

OLAFUR ELIASSON  
**YOUR CURIOUS  
JOURNEY**

This exhibition brochure is published in conjunction with *Olafur Eliasson: Your curious journey*, an exhibition organised by the Singapore Art Museum from 10 May 2024 to 22 September 2024 at Tanjong Pagar Distripark.

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Cover Image:

Olafur Eliasson. Detail of *Symbiotic seeing*. 2020. Lasers (cyan, yellow), fog machine, air ventilation system, audio. Dimensions variable.

Facing page:

Olafur Eliasson. *Symbiotic seeing*. 2020. Lasers (cyan, yellow), fog machine, air ventilation system, audio. Dimensions variable. Installation view: Kunsthau Zürich, Zürich, 2020.

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OLAFUR ELIASSON  
**YOUR CURIOUS  
JOURNEY**

10 MAY

-

22 SEP

2024

TANJONG  
PAGAR  
DISTRIPARK



Olafur Eliasson. *Yellow corridor*. 1997. Monofrequency lights. Dimensions variable.  
Installation view: Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, 2009.  
The Juan & Patricia Vergez Collection, Buenos Aires.

**“In a sense, curiosity has to do with facing forward instead of facing backward to what we know. To face forward is to think of new models for living. Curiosity is also about facing inward, being curious about your inner life and acknowledging that the rationalisation that infects much of our modern lives takes us away from our own sense of presence, of feeling alive and of engaging fully with our senses.”**

—Olafur Eliasson

Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson's practice addresses the exhilarating experience of moving in tandem with others, viscerally emotional encounters with beauty and the anxieties of living amidst a climate crisis. Eliasson's works make the invisible elements of our surroundings, like air or magnetic fields, palpable. They are all-enveloping and enigmatic, and can be communal and personal at the same time.

Philosopher Timothy Morton's concept of "hyperobjects" provides a framework to approach the subject matter of Eliasson's works. Escaping definition, transcending locality and resisting classification, hyperobjects refer to massive phenomena or entities that unfold on a global scale and across vast expanses of time, beyond the limits of human comprehension or imagination.

We use data visualisation tools such as computational models, maps and illustrated charts to wrap our heads around elusive experiences within and outside ourselves, including inexplicable world events. Yet, relying solely on these tools may not provide us with the whole picture. Thinking of immense happenings such as the current ecological crises or the recent Covid-19 pandemic as hyperobjects and leaning into their inherent impenetrability and absurdity may be productive in its own way.

Eliasson apprehends the apparitions of such hyperobjects in his drawings, sculptures and installations to mediate a brief and tenuous brush with the ungraspable.



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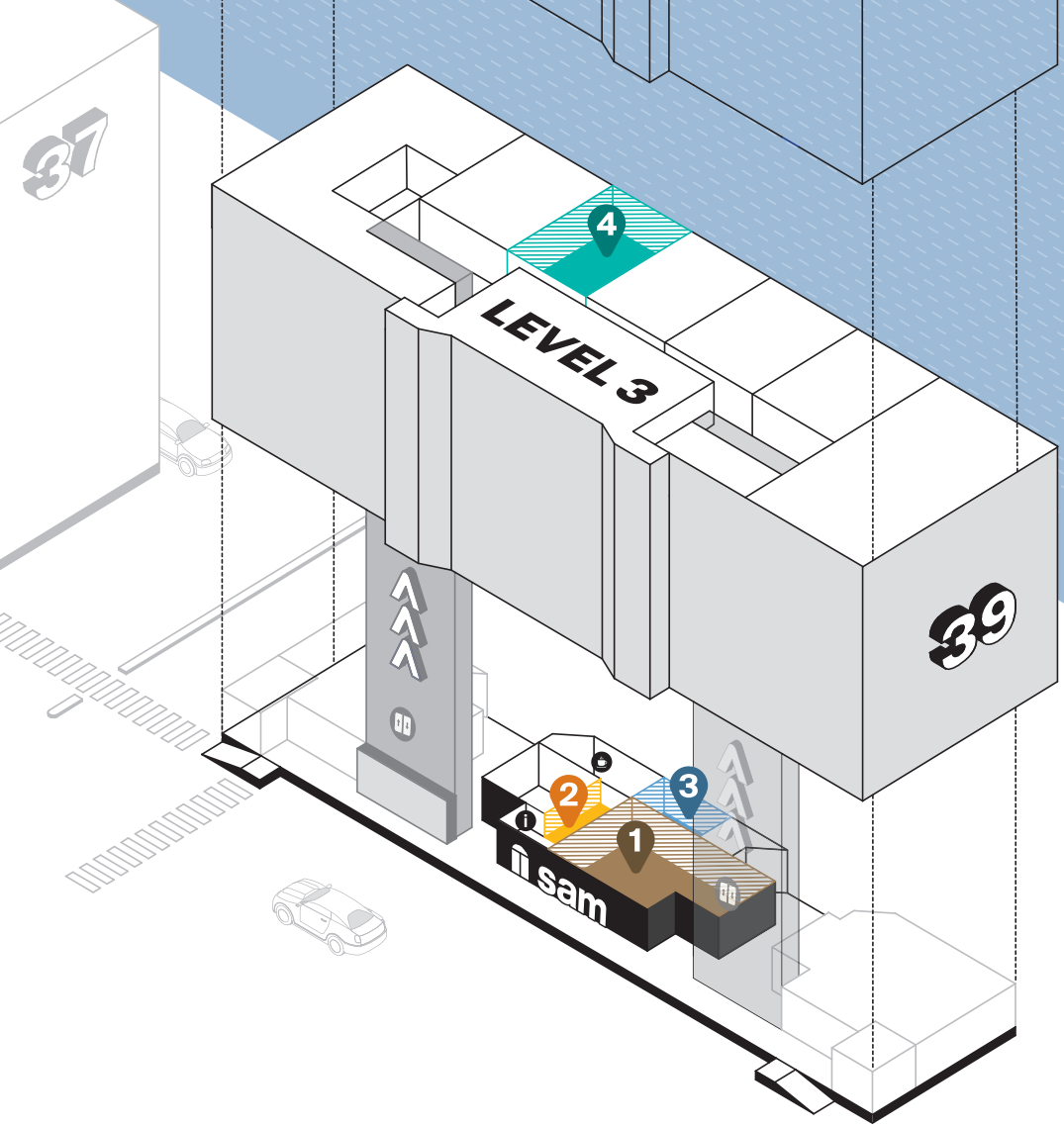
## LEVEL 1

### GALLERY 1

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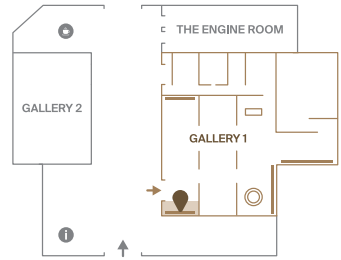
**23** *Symbiotic seeing*  
2020

# The glacier melt series 1999/2019

2019

30 C-prints  
31 x 90.5 cm each  
Edition 6 of 6

LEVEL 1  
GALLERY 1



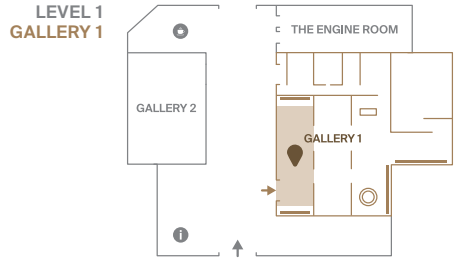
*The glacier melt series 1999/2019* is a series of aerial photographs that documents 30 glaciers in Iceland. The prints are presented in pairs. In each pair, the image on the left portrays a glacier in 1999, and the image on the right shows the same glacier 20 years later. In every pair, the ice sheets have clearly receded over time to reveal more of the rocky and mossy earth beneath. Though Eliasson did not set out to make a work on climate change when he first photographed the glaciers in 1999, he was cognisant of the landscape's vulnerability. By comparing the same glaciers in 1999 and 2019, the work corroborates how these primordial environments have and continue to be shaped by human activity.



# Ventilator

1997

Fan, wire, cable  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of MoMA



In *Ventilator*, a lone electric fan hangs from the ceiling. The fan pushes air out as its blades turn and the air reciprocally propels the fan in the opposite direction. This oscillatory cycle continues as the electric fan whizzes tirelessly within the gallery. Though the fan's movement is constant, its swing pattern is erratic and unpredictable. A simple contraption composed of no more than three components, *Ventilator* is a playful study of how we can be made to perceive invisible elements such as air. Whilst steady streams of wind often serve the practical function of cooling us down, the fan in *Ventilator* circulates air without objective, rendering a utilitarian object effectively rudderless.

***Wind writings***  
**(22 March 2023)**

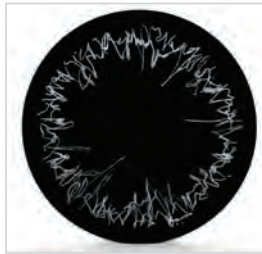
***Wind writings***  
**(20 June 2023)**

***Wind writings***  
**(23 March 2023)**  
**2023**

***Wind writings***  
**(28 June 2023)**  
**2023**

Black acrylic ink on canvas  
Ø 140 cm

White acrylic ink on black canvas  
Ø 140 cm



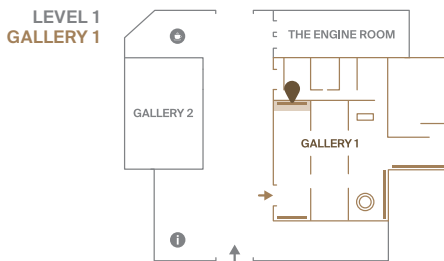
In a recent exhibition at the National Museum of Qatar, Eliasson wanted to present works that spoke to the landscapes that lay beyond the museum's walls. Key to the exhibition was a series of drawings made in concert with the desert environment. To create these site-specific drawings, two different drawing machines were situated outdoors near the Al Thakira mangrove in the northern part of Qatar.

In *Saltwater-drawing observatory*, two circular canvases—one white, one black—turned slowly on their axes, powered by motors. Each canvas sat beneath a mechanical brush, which was connected to a small tank of saltwater. Mixed with black and white pigments respectively, the drawing apparatuses were driven by the rhythms and forces of the winds, leaving myriad undulating marks across the surfaces of the turning canvases: a record of a specific time and place. With marks that oscillate between aggressive and placid, the drawings, each titled *Wind writings* and appended with the date of their production, materialise the trajectories, energy and gestures of the weather, which invite us to imagine the Al Thakira mangrove's atmospheric conditions.

## Sun drawing (21 June 2023)

## Sun drawing (22 June 2023) 2023

Burned white paper on composite board  
Ø140 cm

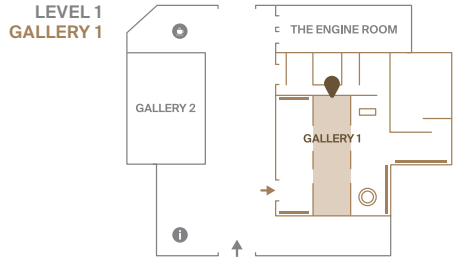


In *Solar-drawing observatory*, a separate outdoor machine produced a second series of drawings. Two rows of glass spheres sat upon adjustable racks above a round sheet of fireproof watercolour paper. Serving as lenses, these glass spheres focused sunlight on specific points to burn marks onto the paper. As the position of the Sun changed over the course of the day, the marks left on the paper tracked the Earth's movements around the Sun. These movements were further accentuated by motors, which rotated the paper in a clockwise direction. The drawings, each titled *Sun drawing* and appended with the date of their production, can thus be said to be co-created by Eliasson, our planet and the Sun around which it revolves. Just as we leave footprints where we tread, the Sun left tracks across the paper, resulting in drawings that bear witness to cosmic movement and the passage of time in the Al Thakira mangrove.

# Multiple shadow house

2010

Wood, metal, fabric, LED lamps (orange, red, blue, green), glass, projection screen, transparent projection screen  
Dimensions variable

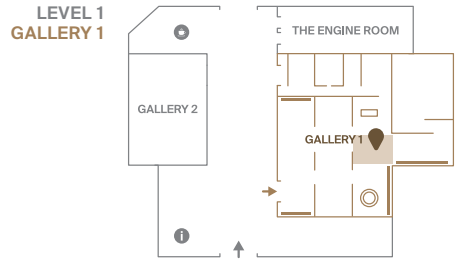


*Multiple shadow house* comprises a series of free-standing rooms that are lit in multiple shades of colours such as blue, purple, yellow and green. When we enter these rooms, our shapes are cast as an array of glitched shadows onto translucent projection screens. This effect encourages us to try out various dramatic movements to produce a range of effects: walking back and forth, moving closer to the screen or interacting with fellow visitors. As the silhouettes are visible from both inside and outside these rooms, the work can be thought of as a life-sized stage for shadow play, on which we perform alone but also together with others.

## Adrift compass

2019

Driftwood, magnets, paint  
(blue, black, yellow, white)  
38 x 134 x 24 cm

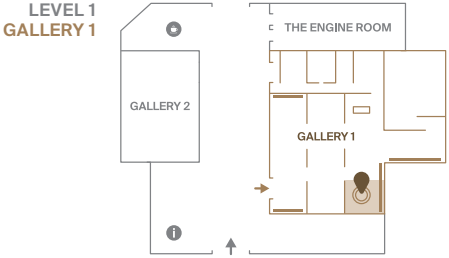


Carved out of driftwood found on the coast of Iceland, *Adrift compass* is a log that has been sharpened on one end and painted with a compass rose. Commonly found on maps or nautical charts, compass roses help users find their bearings by pointing out cardinal directions. Mirroring this function, strong rare-earth magnets are suspended beneath the sculpture, ensuring that it is always aligned along a north-south axis. Since 2009, Eliasson has combined found objects such as rocks, pieces of glass and wire with magnets. His fascination with compasses stems from their ability to provide a clear sense of place and direction.

# Double spiral

2001

Stainless steel, motor  
200 x 95 x 95 cm

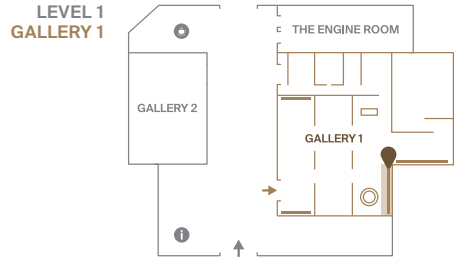


*Double spiral* takes the form of a single steel tube rolled into a double helix. The sculpture is motorised and, when activated, half of the spiral inches upwards while the other half slowly descends. Despite the impression of movement, the sculpture's actual position does not shift. At eye level, the sculpture's double-helix form is distinct and reminiscent of the organic structure of DNA. Yet, the sculpture casts a very different shadow on the ground—one of concentric circles that overlap one another like the moving cogs of a clock.

## Moss wall

1994

Reindeer moss, wood, wire  
Dimensions variable  
Tate Collection, London UK



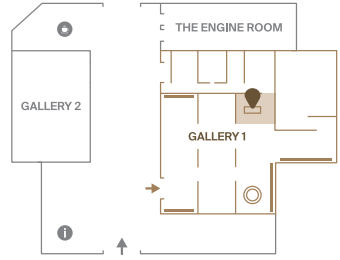
Located squarely within Eliasson's relationship with Iceland is *Moss wall*. An organic, vertical carpet, this work comprises reindeer cup lichen (*Cladonia rangiferina*), also known colloquially as "reindeer moss," which is a symbiont of at least one fungus and one alga and covers immense areas in northern tundra and taiga ecosystems. Here, the lichen is woven into a wire mesh to blanket an entire gallery wall. Disrupting an otherwise homogenous museum space, it collapses the boundaries between interior and exterior, bringing one of nature's great wonders directly to the audience as they come face-to-face with a living and breathing wall.

# The last seven days of glacial ice

2024

Bronze, glass spheres,  
stainless steel, aluminium  
152.5 x 300 x 70 cm

LEVEL 1  
GALLERY 1



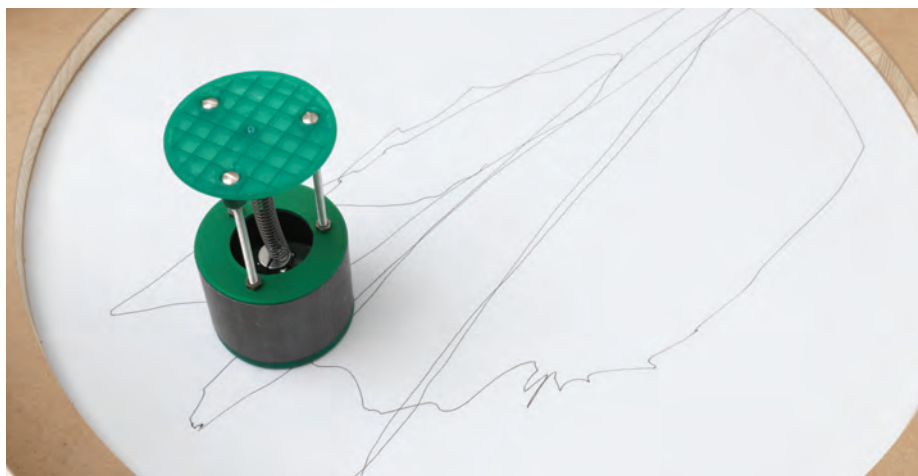
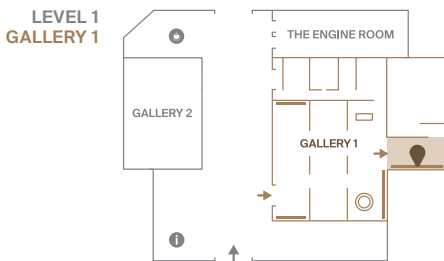
The susceptibility of grandiose glaciers to climate fluctuations is emphasised in *The last seven days of glacial ice*. A single ice block, originally found on Diamond Beach in the south of Iceland, was visualised in its various stages of melting. Each stage, cast in bronze, evokes a semblance of permanence. Every cast is paired with a clear orb of glass—a volumetric representation of the water that is lost. As an exercise that may be described as elegiac data visualisation, *The last seven days of glacial ice* prompts us to consider the steady process of degradation, and the sum total of what is lost in the process.



# The seismographic testimony of distance (Berlin–Singapore, no. 1 to no. 6)

2024

Wood, paper, ink (black)  
57.8 × 57.8 × 3.8 cm each



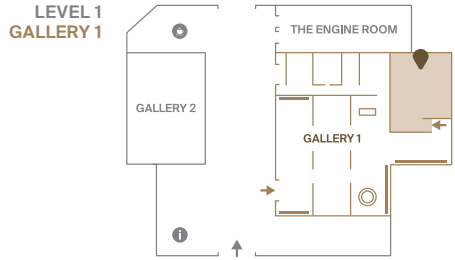
Drawing machines feature prominently in Eliasson's practice, including the series *The seismographic testimony of distance (Berlin–Singapore, no. 1 to no. 6)*. Despite incurring higher levels of carbon emissions, goods are often transported by air for expedience, and artworks are no exception. Mindful of the exhibition's carbon footprint, the artist chose to ship most of the artworks shown in *Your curious journey* to Singapore by sea instead. To document their journey across land and sea, six rudimentary drawing machines were included in the shipment. Set up over blank paper sheets, ballpoint pens were attached to each mechanical arm and allowed to run free, marking every bump and turn the crates took, resulting in a series of unique seismographic sketches.

The drawing apparatus depicted in the image above was not used for the work on display in *Your curious journey*. It is a similar one from an earlier work, *Memories from the critical zone*, which also recorded the movement of the artwork while in transit by sea. Above: detail of *Memories from the critical zone (Germany–Poland–Russia–China–Japan, no. 1 to no. 12)*. 2020. Wood, paper, ink (black), 57.8 × 57.8 × 3.8 cm each. Work in progress: Studio Olafur Eliasson, Berlin, 2019.

# Beauty

1993

Spotlight, water, nozzles, wood, hose, pump  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of The Museum of Contemporary Art,  
Los Angeles

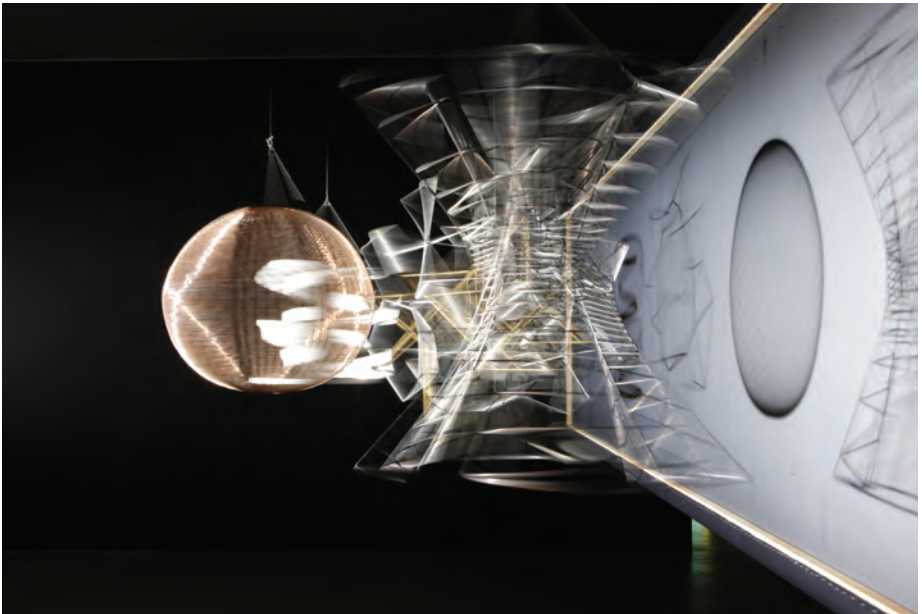
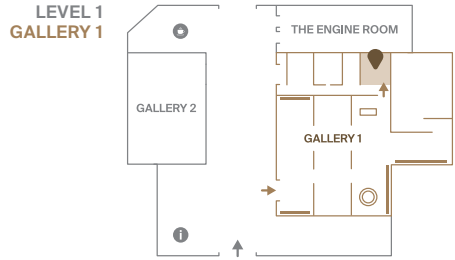


In *Beauty*, a fine sheet of mist, reminiscent of a light drizzle, is illuminated by a singular spotlight in a darkened space. When viewed at just the right angle, a prismatic reflection of light reveals itself—a luminous rainbow that illustrates its namesake: beauty. Eliasson leaves *Beauty*'s mechanisms in full view—a simple combination of a spotlight, a punctured hose and us, the viewers—paring the rainbow down to its most essential constituents and demonstrating his continued interest in the formation of natural phenomena. Though the water is constantly flowing, the appearance of this apparition varies depending on our position relative to the artwork. As light is refracted and reflected on the water droplets differently, no two viewers see the same rainbow. The subject of *Beauty* is thus both the light and the viewer, which begs the question: Does the rainbow exist independently, or does it exist because we perceive it? This reflexivity that *Beauty* facilitates—combined with the exposed apparatus of the work—heightens our awareness of the very act of perception and our experience of seeing.

# *Life is lived along lines*

2009

Stainless steel, brass, copper, motors,  
projection screen, wood, HMI lamp  
Dimensions variable



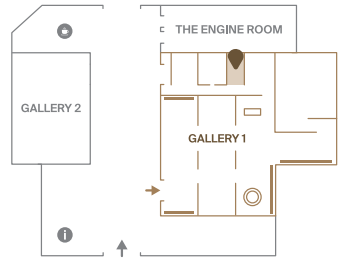
Walking into the installation space of *Life is lived along lines*, we first encounter the rear face of a projection screen with shadows cast upon it along a horizontal line. These shadows hint at what lies behind. Laying bare his methods of production, Eliasson allows us to walk around the screen to discover the apparatus that flattens three-dimensional forms into two-dimensional outlines—five object models, a set of blinds and a spotlight. As the object models rotate slowly along a central axis, their shadows follow suit. This shared movement creates synchronicity between the image and the object, reminding us that they are but two sides of the same coin.

# Circumstellar resonator

2018

Prismatic glass ring, colour-effect filter glass (yellow), LED lights, ballast, stainless steel, brass, paint (white), cable  
98.5 × 98.5 × 75 cm

LEVEL 1  
GALLERY 1

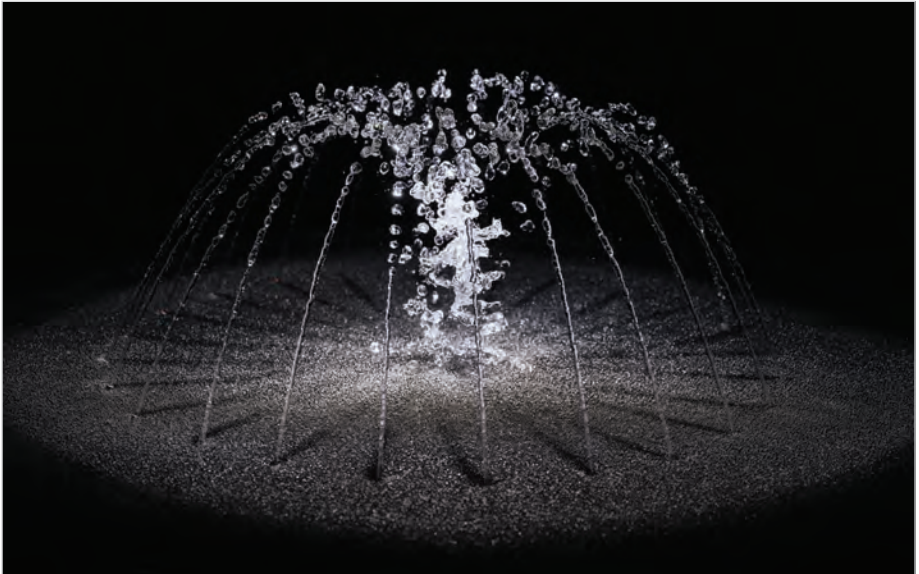
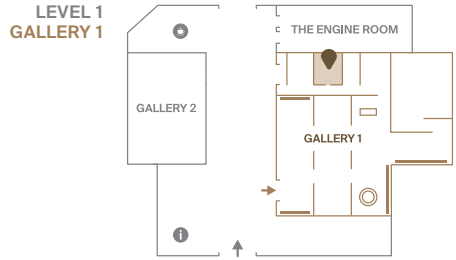


In *Circumstellar resonator*, light is passed through a prismatic lenticular surface, before splitting into multiple rings that radiate from a central point. It draws upon the principles of a Fresnel lens, a piece of glass that captures peripheral beams from a single source to produce an intensified beam of light. Fresnel lenses were used in lighthouses to transmit light to ships farther out in the open sea and guide them to safe harbour. *Circumstellar resonator's* bands of light are a different kind of beacon, extending the scientific properties of this invention beyond practical applications and tuning them towards an aesthetic experience.

## Object defined by activity (then)

2009

Water, stainless steel, foam plastic, plastic, pump, nozzles, strobe light  
Dimensions variable



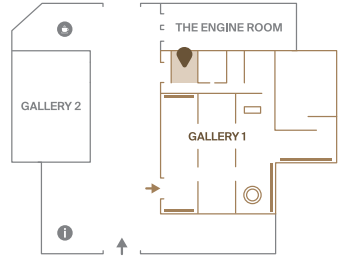
*Object defined by activity (then)* consists of a water feature housed in a pitch-dark room. Its exuberant bursts of water are lit solely by a strobe light, which flickers ceaselessly at an aggressive tempo. Illuminated each time for a mere fraction of a second, we are barely able to register each fugitive image of the water's mesmerising, organic and ever-changing form. While the consistent, uninterrupted sound of running water grounds us in real time, the work's speed, high-key lighting and relentless, stroboscopic siege of spectacular imagery fragments and freezes this ongoing process into a multitude of micro-fissures in time. At once a dynamic physical installation and a series of still, fleeting frames, *Object defined by activity (then)* is perceived as simultaneously kinetic and static.

# Movement microscope

2011

Video, 16:9 (1920 x 1080 px), colour,  
sound (stereo), 16 min 26 sec

LEVEL 1  
GALLERY 1



*Movement microscope* is a film set within the artist's studio. The studio team are seen going about their daily routines: making coffee, inspecting artworks and having meetings. These occurrences may appear mundane but are inextricably intertwined with art. This entanglement is brought forth with improvisations by a group of dancers, who move interpretively in synchrony with the activity around them. Whilst the dancers may initially seem out of place within the studio, their theatrical movements begin to blend into the environment, and it becomes increasingly difficult to spot them as the film progresses. As physical artworks are planned and devised in Eliasson's studio, the performers present another form of creative energy by making "drawings" with their limbs.

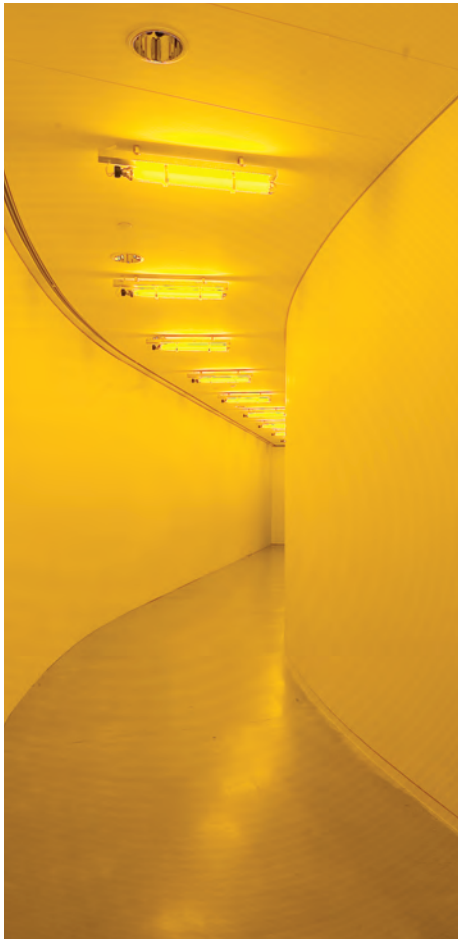
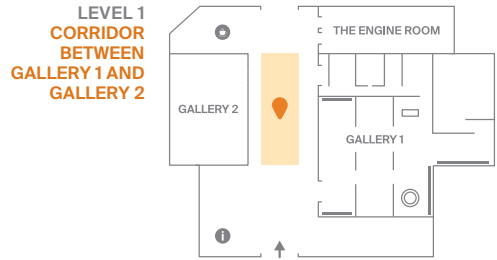
## Yellow corridor

1997

Monofrequency lights

Dimensions variable

The Juan & Patricia Vergez Collection,  
Buenos Aires



Light features as a tensile material and marker of space in *Yellow corridor*, in which a row of monofrequency yellow lights illuminates the passageway between two galleries. At its most concentrated, the light desaturates everything it touches into shades of grey, limiting our visual spectrum of colours to a reduced range, which most are unaccustomed to. Here, Eliasson facilitates a somatic experience with the passage, which usually functions as a utilitarian connector between gallery spaces. Whilst Eliasson has applied similar monofrequency lights in other contexts, *Yellow corridor* is notable as an early example of his sustained interest in real-time colour grading. Towards the end of the corridor, the harsh yellow light is tempered by the daylight streaming in from the museum's windows, allowing us to gently transition back from an altered sensorial state.

# The cubic structural evolution project

2004

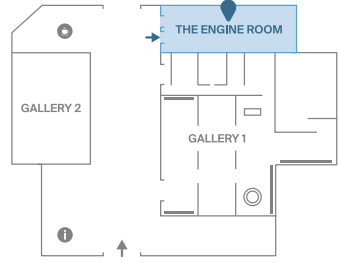
White Lego bricks (various sizes), wood, mirror

Dimensions variable

Collection of Queensland Art Gallery

| Gallery of Modern Art

LEVEL 1  
THE  
ENGINE  
ROOM



*The cubic structural evolution project* encourages active participation in the reforming of a Lego cityscape. Strewn atop a long table are heaps of white Lego bricks amongst towering skyscrapers and imaginative complexes. These buildings can be constructed and deconstructed, often at the same time, according to the whims of those seated around the table. By inviting us to add our own architectural masterpieces, Eliasson creates a welcoming space for free play and creativity. *The cubic structural evolution project* is an artwork that does not have a final form; it is made complete through our spirited engagement.

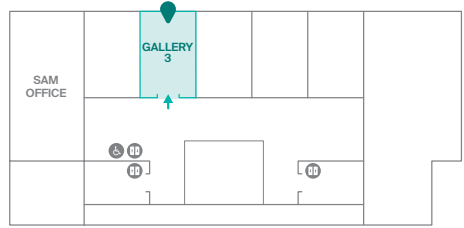


# Symbiotic seeing

2020

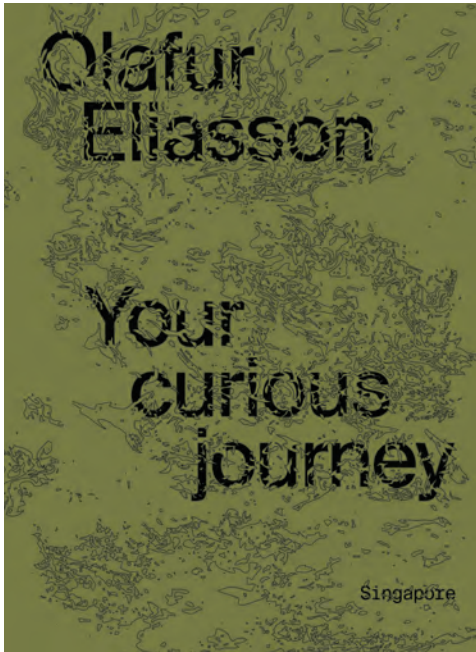
Lasers (cyan, yellow), fog machine,  
air ventilation system  
Dimensions variable

LEVEL 3  
GALLERY 3



In *Symbiotic seeing*, the ceiling of a room seems to inhabit three states of matter at once. At first glance, it may appear flat and solid. Yet, upon closer inspection, this ceiling looks like a layer of liquid skin, with tiny swirling and eddying ripples. These effects are the result of coloured laser lights coalescing with periodically released fog. By incorporating ephemeral materials, *Symbiotic seeing* appears to occupy a liminal space between physical states and becomes an organic environment for contemplative movement that unfolds both personally and communally.

## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



### ***Olafur Eliasson: Your curious journey – Singapore***

Paperback | Approx. 152 pages  
\$40 (including GST)  
ISBN: 978-981-18-8614-0  
Available for purchase from  
the Epigram Coffee Bookshop at SAM

Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson is internationally renowned for installations that challenge the way we perceive and co-create our environments. Approaching issues such as our changing understanding of climate, time and space, this exhibition showcases a range of artworks that immerses audiences within a shared experience.

This exhibition catalogue features full-colour documentation of the artworks, including large-scale installations and sculptures. The plates are complemented by a curatorial essay and newly commissioned texts; a conversation with the artist as well as itinerant marginalia that illustrate the entanglements between his practice and artistic approaches.

# CURATORIAL CHAPTERS

## PERCEPTION

As a visual artist, Eliasson pays close attention to the different ways in which we perceive the world around us. Eliasson's playful experiments with physics in his work explore the gaps between appearance and experience. More than art objects, Eliasson's works may also be viewed as visual paradoxes, scientific experiments or even illusory experiences whose mechanisms are laid bare.

*Your curious journey* features works by Eliasson that engage with the complexities inherent within visual perception.



*Double spiral*, 2001



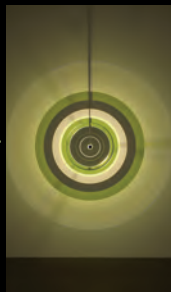
*Object defined by activity (then)*, 2009



*Life is lived along lines*, 2009



*Ventilator*, 1997



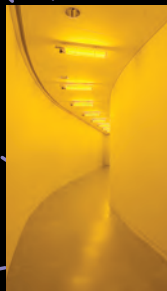
*Circumstellar resonator*, 2018



*Beauty*, 1993



*The cubic structural evolution project*, 2005



*Yellow corridor*, 1997



*Multiple shadow house*, 2010



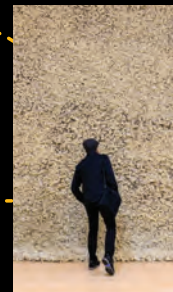
*The glacier melt series 1999/2019*, 2019



*Symbiotic seeing*, 2020



*Movement microscope*, 2011



*Moss wall*, 1994



*The last seven days of glacial ice*, 2024



*Sun drawing and Wind writings*, 2023



*The seismographic testimony of distance (Berlin-Singapore, no. 1 to no. 6)*, 2024



*Drift compass*, 2019

## PERSPECTIVE

Etymologically, "phenomenology" derives from the Greek word "phainomenon" ("appearance"). In that sense, we can think of phenomenology as the study of appearances (as opposed to reality) and our inevitably subjective experiences of them. By using the prenominal "you" in the titling and formulation of his works, Eliasson emphasises the first-person perspective, intimating that his works depend on and are defined by our first-hand encounters with them.

By emphasising intersubjectivity, the works in *Your curious journey* remind us of the active roles we play in producing our experiences of the world and its events.

## PLACE

Our experiences of phenomena, be they event, object or hyperobject, are tied to the places and ecological systems in which we exist.

Whilst melting ice caps may be an evocative representation of ecological decline for those who live in a temperate climate, they may be wholly abstract to people based in equatorial climates, such as that of Singapore. In the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons unfold in a rhythm inverse to that of its Northern counterpart. The environments in which we live are far from inert landscapes. We may be able to pay more attention to their abundant and symphonic voices by retuning our senses to listening more closely to them.

## ABOUT SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM

Singapore Art Museum opened in 1996 as the first art museum in Singapore. Also known as SAM, we present contemporary art from a Southeast Asian perspective for artists, art lovers and the art curious in multiple venues across the island, including a new venue in the historic port area of Tanjong Pagar.

SAM is building one of the world's most important public collections of Southeast Asian contemporary art, with the aim of connecting the art and the artists to the public and future generations through exhibitions and programmes.



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