FROST ACTIVITY

Ólafur Elíasson

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FROST ACTIVITY
Ólafur Eliasson was born, raised and educated in Denmark. The international art world was his chosen field from the outset, and that is where he has triumphed in only a few years. This happened in such a convincing way that experts in the twists and turns of international contemporary art agree that one of the most thought-provoking artists of our times has been identified.

Ólafur is of Icelandic parentage, and has from an early age kept active contact with his family and friends in Iceland; it is therefore quite matter-of-course to assume that the country, its nature, people, weather and wilderness have affected his development as a person and an artist. Icelandic nature has provided him with rich resources for presenting his vision in numerous projects.

Various writers on his works have noted that some kind of Nordic or even Icelandic existence seems to subconsciously permeate the vision of his works.

Ólafur uses the influences of the environment among other things to create new circumstances, where the guest must use all his senses to fathom the work that the artist creates with a new interplay of light, shadow, texture, colour, heat, cold and smell. Familiar natural phenomena are taken out of their natural context and put into new circumstances that in turn lead to the diversity of feelings, which the works invoke in us. This strange paradox of breakdown and rearrangement is one of the most important keys to the influences that disturb the viewer's comprehension when confronted with the works the artist.

Ólafur Eliasson’s first private exhibition in Iceland was at the Reykjavik Art Museum, at Kjarvalsstaðir in 1998. There he showed four works, each of which tested the guest’s every sense with their multiple levels of interpretation. Now, six years later, Ólafur is again exhibiting in the Reykjavik Art Museum, this time in four halls in Hafnarhúsi. It is still the wealth of the senses that the artist tackles in his works, which simultaneously give insight into the variety of installations that he has created all over the world in the past few years. Even the title of the exhibition, “Frost Activity”, can be interpreted in various ways.

Personal creativity is the hallmark of all interesting art. An unexpected re-creation as well as the creation of an original environment is the strongest method that artists have found to get us to stop, look up and take measure of our existence. Ólafur Eliasson has managed to do this in a memorable fashion.
Gunnar J. Árnason

Frost Activity
Spegulalir og kvíksjár

Eins og nafnið gefur til kynna þá stendur Hafnarhusið niður við gömlu höfnina í Reykjavík, stór, hvig og grá bygging á fjörum hæðum, sem gegndi áður margáttuðu hlutverki fyrir starfsemi við höfnina, en er núna að mestu notuð fyrir skrifstofur. Frá götunni sem snýr að miðbænum er fátt sem gefur til kynna að það hýsi listasafn, annað en fleyglaga flótur merkur Listasafni Reykjavíkur, sem virðist eins og hann hafi verið sneiddur úr vegnum og slítur yfir gangstættina yfir inngangi með rennihrúðum. Þegar inn er komið blásar við stór gangur klæddur svörtu þarni, miklu stærri og hærrí undir lofti en maður gæti átt von á, semengur þvert í gegnum bygginguna, og við hinn endann sést út á höfnina í gegnum stóran glugga. Á vinstri hönd er afgréiðsluborð, og þegar gengið er til hægri fram hja þeimur voldugum súlum þá er komið að vegg með þeimur dyrum í sitt hvorum endanum, sem liggja að einum og sama salnum. Inni í salnum bláðar við flisalagd gölf, með margbrøtnu munstri sem byggjast eftir honum endilöngum. Stórar ferkانتar síluð beru uppi loftið, og þegar litið er beint upp þá sést maður horfa á sjálfan sig á hvolfi standandi á flisalögðu gölfinu. Salurinn virðist tömur að oðru leyti en því að það er einhver stadlur inni í honum sem horfi á sjálfan sig og gölfíð speglast í loftinu. Þannig er aðkomar að þyningu Ólafs Eliassona og verki hans Frost Activity.

Hall of Mirrors and Kaleidoscopes

As its name implies, Hafnarhus (harbour house) is located between the old harbour of Reykjavík and City Centre. It is a large white and grey building of four floors, which used to house various companies involved with the harbour and export but it is now mostly an office building. From the street nearer City Centre, there is not much to indicate that there is a museum inside, besides a slice of wall, with the sign 'Listasafn Reykjavíkur', slanting precariously over the sidewalk above a sliding doors entrance. Inside there is a spacious hallway with the walls covered in black iron, much wider and higher than one might have expected, like a hidden world, cutting straight through the building with a large window at the other end with a view of the harbour. On the left there is a reception desk, and on the right past two large columns of rough concrete, there is a wall with two entrances at each end, leading to the same room. Inside the hall there is a tiled floor, with a complex pattern rippling through the entire length of the hall. Inside, large columns of concrete hold up the ceiling, which reflects the floor. Looking straight up, people can see themselves upside down on the tiled floor. This is the approach to Ólafur Eliasson's exhibition and his work 'Frost Activity'. The hall appears to be empty apart from guests gazing at the reflection of themselves and the floor in the mirror on the ceiling.

Marglitað steingölfið er gert úr íslensku grjóti, sem er skorið í fílsar og lagt í munstri sem likist stuðlabergi. Ólafur hefur próðuð munstrið undanfarin tvö ár í samvinnu við Einar Þorgeirsson arkitekt, sem hefur sérhafti sig í rannsóknunum og útfærslum til flóknun geometríkum formum. Gölfið er lagt með þrenns konar flísum í fjörum mismunandi steintengundum, sextrendingi úr ljósu lipari, fætrendingi úr grárýggi, og tveir efnin jarnstórum fertilizingum í mismunandi dökku basalti. Ef munstríð er skoðað gaumgælegileg sest hvernig sjónhverfingin í munstríni breytt í því hvar staðið er í salnum og í hvaða átt er horft. Við sjáum þróppuganginn í munstrínu þannig að dökku og ljósu fletimur virðast ýmist vera løðrittur eða løðáttur, kassalaga form með fjárvíkum sem er fátt að henda reiðar á.

Stuðlaberg er að finna viða á Íslandi, en það er ákveðið jarðfræðilegri fyrirbrigði sem verður til þegar hrauntjörn storknarr og rúmmál hennar minnkrðir við að kólna. Þá klofar bergið í sexhyxnóa stuðla með sléttum flótum. Þetta er ákaflaða sléttu náttúruafbrigði ekki síst vegna þess að það er svo mikil regla í því, í staði og röðum stuðlanna. Stuðlabergið á sér stærkar skírskotanir bæði í myndlist og byggingarlist á Íslandi. Einar Jónsson, myndhöggvari, gerði stuðlabergið að þjóðareinkenni í höggmyndum sínum snemma á tuttugustu öld, og húsmeystari ríkisins, Guðjón Samúelsson, notaðist við stuðlabergstísf af byggingum sínum á þýrim hluta aldarrinna til að gefa þeim þjóðlegt yfirbrigði.

The multicolour floor made of Icelandic rock is cut in a pattern resembling columnar basalt, a distinctive lava rock formation which is widespread in Iceland. Eliasson has been developing the columnar pattern for the last couple of years in cooperation with the Icelandic architect and designer Einar Thorsteinn Ásgeirsson, who has specialised in research and development of complex geometric forms. The floor is covered with three types of tiles, a hexagon in light volcanic rock, and two types of quadrilaterals, one in grey stone and another that is repeated twice in darker basalt. A careful examination of the pattern will reveal how it changes when seen from the viewer's different angles and positions within the hall. The undulating zigzag of dark and light planes seems either convex or concave, like a stack of solid forms in an unfathomable perspective design.

Columnar basalt, called Stuðlaberg in Icelandic, is a common geological rock formation in Iceland. It occurs when a pool of molten lava hardens, and as it cools, its volume decreases, causing the lava to splinter into separate hexagonal columns similar to a crystal formation. It is quite a distinctive natural phenomenon, especially because of the surprising regularity of form, size and order of the columns. Columnar basalt has strong connotations in Icelandic art and architecture. The sculptor Einar Jónsson made columnar basalt a national characteristic in his monumental sculptures early in the twentieth century, and the Official State Architect, Guðjón Samúelsson, used the same theme in his public

Sýning Ólafs Eliassonar, Frost. Activity (frostvirkni), vekur upp minningar um fyrstu meiriháttar sýninguna hans á Íslandi, á

buildings in the first half of the century to imbue them with a national identity.

The tiled pattern, reminiscent of baroque church floors, is mirrored in the ceiling with a few light fixtures, concrete columns, and along the walls on each side are large shutters reaching from floor to ceiling with heavy iron hinges and bolts. Even though the hall is in a sense empty, Eliasson’s additions encourage us to examine the building, the hall and its dimensions more closely. The exhibition hall is situated in an old storage depot which was designed so that fork-lifts and small vans could easily drive in, straight off the street. This may seem like a minor detail, but when we consider Eliasson’s intervention in the context of the house and its past, the whole project starts to take on a wider significance. The floor and ceiling are altered, and our whole sense of the building is upset with tricks of perspective in the floor pattern and mirror reflections. We also become more sensitive to how the architects have completely altered our perception of the building, leaving parts of it intact and in a raw state, like the columns. The building, the museum and Eliasson’s project fuse into a complex mosaic of historical and cultural references; they too play games with the viewers’ perceptions of space. Such sensitivity toward the surroundings is characteristic of Eliasson’s work, capturing the viewer from the first moment and making him an involuntary participant in his art.

Frost Activity brings back memories of Eliasson’s first major exhibition in Iceland, at the Kjarvalstaðir exhibition hall of the Reykjavik Art Museum, back in 1998. The show took the public by surprise from the start. On that occasion he exhibited one of his amazing kaleidoscopes. One such was the centrepiece of his exhibition at the Venice Biennale in the summer of 2003, where he represented Denmark. The kaleidoscope at Kjarvalstaðir was six and a half meters long and more than two meters high. The narrow end of the cone-shaped funnel was at eye level allowing the viewer to look through at the people and the corridor reflected in the mirrored walls, or to stand in front of the wider end and become an unwitting subject of endless reflection of symmetrical forms. The cone was hexagon-shaped, with the lower end sliced by the floor so that the profile of the wider end of cone was a pentagon, suggesting the shape of a house with a slanting roof. The kaleidoscope was freestanding so one could walk around it and examine how skillfully it was constructed. The guests approached the work like a large toy and a fascinating spectacle. Both children and adults took turns standing inside the cone and looking through the peephole at the intricate patterns of reflection. In many of his works, Eliasson has used mirrors and the different illusions they can conjure. The most magnificent example is without doubt The Weather Project at the Tate Modern Museum in London, where the ceiling of the Turbine Hall was covered with mirrors, similarly to Hafnarhús exhibition. Eliasson plays these kinds of visual tricks, and the public’s strong reaction to and participation in his art is worth considering more closely.
hinum sterku viðbrögðum sýningargestusta, eru einkenni á verkum Ölafs sem vert er að gefa vandrega gaum.

Að sjá sjálfnan sig skynja


Ólafur byrjar greinina á því að lýsa því hvemvigt hann fikrar sig áfram í framandi landslagi og reynir að átta sig á umhverfinu, hver best sé að ganga, hvemvigt eigi að velja bestu leiðina og meta fjalarlegðir. Sú athöfn hans að rata um landið mótar og skerpið skynjun hans. Ñaðtúran beinir manni inn á ákveðna brautir, þannig að hann skapar sér ákveðna mynd af náttúrunni sem landslagi. Á sambærilegan hátt er safninið, sem staður fyrir upplifanir á list, umhverfi sem þarf að læra að rata um og hefur þar af leiðandi áhrif á hvemvigt við skynjunum. Pótt reynt sé að stilla listaverkum upp til sýningar á hlutlausan hátt það sviðsetur safninið þau á þann hátt að það leiðir áhorfandanninn að vissar brautir. Að mati Ólafs hefur samtýlalístin áttat þegar sig á því hvað samhengið skiptir miklu máli fyrir upplifun á list og því hefur áherslan verið að færast af listlútunnum sem stillt er upp til sýningar, yfir að áhorfandann og mógluleika hans til að skynja umhverfi sitt á gagnrýninn hátt.

Greininn skýrir mjög mikilvægan þátt í þeirri hugsun sem liggur að baki verkurum Ólafs, áhersluna á áhorfandann og mikilvægi þess að gera skynjunarafaterli hans að þungamíðju verkanna, ekki einhvern gefinn hlut, sem við getum kallað listlútuninn. Sýningin í Hafnarhúsinu ber þetta með sér þar sem speglaríinn innreimur salinn þar sem áhorfandinn gengur um og sér sjálfan sig speglast í loftinu fyrir ofan sig. Athyglínnir er varpað milli steingólfs og spegillofts og áhorfandinn verður eins og fangaður í samloku gölfins og speglunarrínar. Í sumum sýningum sínnum leiðir Ólafur áhorfandann frá einum sal í annan þar sem skynæritin breystast á dramatískan hátt, eins og hann sé að gera tilraunir með skynærinu og hvemvigt áhorfandinn bregst við övæntum aðstæðum. Á sýningu Ólafs í nútímalistasafninu í Paris árið 2001 þurfti áhorfandinn að ganga þvert yfir salargólfi sem var lagt hraungríti og hlusta á hvemvigt hann
Seeing Yourself Sensing

Vision and perception are fundamental components of the ideas Eliasson bases his work on. He does not shy away from complex philosophical issues in his art work or in prose, as was evident in his show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2001. At the time of the exhibition, the museum was undergoing renovation, and Eliasson seized the opportunity to reflect on the role of museums and how they affect our perception. The work, as such, was simple: the windows were covered in strips of mirror so that when the viewer looked outside, he simultaneously looked through and into the mirror; in other words he could both see outside and inside at the same time. A short but thoughtful catalogue essay accompanying the show, called 'Seeing Yourself Sensing', gives a clear idea of how he understands the role of perception. Eliasson starts the article by describing a situation where he is in unfamiliar territory out in the countryside, trying to find his way about, deciding which route he should take, and estimating distances. The activity of navigating through the landscape affects and sharpens his sense of the environment, which conditions the way in which he finds his way about and the kind of mental picture he constructs of the land. In a comparable way the museum, as a place for experiencing art, is an environment where one needs to find one's way about, and which conditions perception. Even though the museum attempts to display works of art in a neutral manner, the museum stage-manages the presentation to influence how the viewer perceives art along certain lines. Eliasson maintains that contemporary art is aware of how the experience of art is dependent on context, and it has therefore shifted the emphasis from the work of art, as the main centre of attention, to spectators and their possibilities for enjoying meaningful experiences in a self-conscious and reflective manner.

The article clarifies an important aspect of Eliasson’s thought, the emphasis on the spectator or viewer, and the importance attached to the act of sense perception as a central concern of his art, not some particular object, which we can call the work of art. The exhibition at Hafnarhus bears this out, where the mirror hall frames the room, and the viewers walks through the hall gazing at themselves reflected in the mirror above. The attention is tossed between the stone floor and the mirror ceiling, and the viewer is sandwiched between the floor and its reflection. In some of his shows Eliasson leads the spectator from one room to the next, where the sensory effect is dramatic change, as if he were experimenting with the senses and the viewers’ responses to unexpected circumstances. In Eliasson’s show at the Paris Museum of Modern Art in 2001, the spectators had to cross a room covered in volcanic lava rock and listen to the sound of rock crunching beneath their feet. At the other end they entered a room, 'Room for One Colour', which was empty but lit with a yellow light which completely reduced the sense of colour and made everything look colourless or greyish in the curious yellow glow.
látu sem skynjunin tilheyri einstaklingnum eins og eign, að hann eigi sina eigin skynjun. Um leið og eignarhald er komið í spil·ö fylgir ýmislegt fleira í eftirdragi, til dæmis að einstaklingnum sé frjálst að ráðstafa sinni skynjun og túlka hana eins og honum sjálvmælu. Er nokkuð jaft persónuleg og óaðgengileg eins og skynjun einstaklings?etta á alveg sérstaklega við þegar rætt er um skynjun á listaverkum. Því er tekið sem sjálfsgöðum hlut að áhorfandannum sé frjálst að skynja listaverkid eftir eigin geðiðótta. Áhorfendur eiga að hafa samarbælegt frelsi í skynjuninni eins og listamaður í sköpun sinni. Þetta er líka viðskiptum, eftir að listamaðurinn hefur sett verkið á markað, með því að, sjána það í þýningarsal, þar er áhorfandannum sem viðskiptavini frjálst að ráðstafa að eigin vildi í hugafylgjenna sinu því sem henn skynjar.

En með því að blanda eignarhaldi inn í líyningar okkar á skynjun erum við komin út á variables brætur. Það er ekki hægt að tala um að við eignumst skynjarnar okkar, né heldur að við getum glatað þeim til annarra. Það er rangt að hlutgera skynjarnar á þennan hatt, eins og margir samtímaheimspekingar hafa benti á. Ólafur hefur einkum leitað í smiðju fyririðarframféringa eins og franska heimspekinsins Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Skynjun er ávalt í heiminnun, eins og Merleau-Ponty myndi orða það, við lýsum ekki heiminum annars vegar og þeim hlutum sem við skynjum hins vegar, eins og um tvenn ólík fyririðari væri að ræða, sem við getum böríð saman. Síkur ruglingur á rætur sónar

The kaleidoscope at Kjarvalstaðir in 1998, called "Your Compound View", invites various interpretations. It is worth noting, something various commentators have pointed out, that Eliasson addresses the spectator directly with the personal pronoun 'you'. It does not refer to some abstract and impersonal concept of 'compound view', but rather to the particular view of each and every spectator at a given time. So with 'your' compound view, the title is referring to the activity of seeing and how 'you' put it together.

This is similar to the search by the cubists and futurists in the early twentieth century for a new order composed of fragments, integrated into a continuous whole by the viewer himself. We can conjecture that Eliasson is suggesting that nature does not present itself to us composed in an orderly whole. The world of continuity and order is the world of perception and thought, which we have to work for by piecing together the fragments delivered through our sensory apparatus.

However, this line of thought has parallels in not only art history but also in empirical thought, which can be traced back to the Enlightenment and is the basis of a scientific worldview. From the point of view of science, we cannot take anything for granted from nature, which does not give us any free clues as to how we should interpret her. We can only rely on our raw sensory impressions, and all our ideas are more or less based on them in one way or another. All perception is inevitably perception of a particular individual, and no one can categorically state that his own experience of the world is identical to someone else's, although he may not have any reason to doubt that the experience is in any significant way completely different from others.

There is nothing wrong with describing perceptions in relation to pronouns, what 'you' saw when 'you' looked in the kaleidoscope. However, by using personal pronouns and referring to the perceptions of a particular person at a specific time, there is a temptation to speak of them as someone's property, that is, the person in question owns his perceptions. As soon as the concept of private property enters the picture, a lot of baggage gets dragged along with it, for instance, the idea that individuals are free to handle their perceptions and interpret them as they please. Is there anything as personal and inaccessible as an individual's perceptions? Art is especially susceptible to this kind of talk. It is taken for granted that the spectator is free to perceive the work of art any which way he pleases. The spectator is entitled to the same kind of freedom in regard to his perceptions as the artist with regard to his creative work. It is like business, where the artist puts his work on the market, by showing it in a public place, and the viewer as client appropriates the work by perceiving it, and is therefore free to do with it as he pleases within the confines of his own mind.

By involving the notion of property in our description of perception, we are entering perilous ground. It does not make sense to talk
as if we come into possession of our sensory impressions, least of all that we can lose them to others. Objectifying sense impressions in this way is wrong, as has been repeatedly pointed out by a number of modern philosophers. Eliasson himself has sought inspiration in the ideas of phenomenology, such as the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who wrote extensively on perception. Perception is always in the world, as Merleau-Ponty would say, in the sense that we do not, on the one hand, describe our perceptions and, on the other, describe the things we perceive, as if these were two separate phenomena, and compare them in our mind. Such confusion arises when we read too much into the personal pronoun in our description of perceptions.

In the movie Blade Runner a genetically engineered robot enters the laboratory of the engineer who designed his eyes, seeking his Maker. Holding a sample of artificial eyes the robot muses: "If only you could see what I’ve seen with your eyes." Even if eye transplants were possible in our world, no one sees with the eyes of another. Possession of sensory apparatus does not imply possession of perceptions or experience.

Eliasson might have been reflecting on the problem of the private possession of perceptions in an installation at the Tanya Bonakdar Gallery in New York in 2000, ‘Your Now is My Surroundings’. There the viewer had to open a steel door leading into a room with a skylight window. The surrounding walls, just above eye level, were covered in mirror sheeting, making the room into a kind of kaleidoscope surrounding the viewer, without the viewer himself being reflected in the mirrors. The title tells us that what others see at any particular time and place corresponds to what we would describe as our own surroundings. All perception is related to a particular place and time and is determined by the location and movement of the body of the perceiver, which in itself is part of the surroundings of others. “My” surroundings are what others perceive.

By reducing the importance of the artefact of art, and increasing the importance of the viewers’ perceptions, Eliasson is not making the object of perception more introverted or inaccessible, concealing it inside the privacy of the viewer’s mind. On the contrary, he is making perceptions more ‘extroverted’ by setting up circumstances where the viewer can confront his perceptions of different aspects of his environment that influence the activity of sensing and his need to respond to different kinds of impulses.
Ljós, litróf og vatn

Pegar við erum búa að atta okkur á þessum veigamikla þaeti í hugum Ólafs það reynist auðveldara að skilja hin margbreyttileg birtingarfora sem hann kys verkuð sinum. Þvi eins og sýningin í Hafnarhúsinu ber með sér þar viðrast honum ekki nein tækmark setti í efni og aðferðum og þau gætu jafnvæl virst sundurlaus og ósamstæð. En þvi fer fjærri. Sama grunnþema er fylgt í þeim öllum en hvert um sig nálgast það á nýjan hatt með öllum þaðum áhrifum.

Mörg af áhrifamestu verkuð Olafs nota ljósgjafa að sérlaga mañnaðan hatt, og notkun hans á ljósi hefur tvímælaust náð ákveðnum hápunkti með hinu mikilfenglega verki í Tate Modern safninu, The Weather Project, sem er án efa einhver stórbrotasta sólarímnd nútilmanstar.

Your Activity Horizon (þjónleifarðarhingur athafna þinna), sem hann sýnir í Hafnarhúsinu, er sómuleiðis afar einfalt en áhrifamíkið verki. Hringinn í kringum myrkvaðan sal er mjó, bein lina greyppt inn í þróga glufu í vegnum í augnhæð, sem gefur frá sér ljós sem skiptir litum. Salurinn er að óðru leyti tómur, og ljósið sem berst frá skorruni í vegnum er eina lýsingin í honum. Linan svarar til hugmyndinanna um þjónleifarðarhing, þeirrar imnyduðu linu sem afmarkar svæði sem við getum séð frá tilteknun sjónarpunkt, sjónleif okkar. Yfirleitt köllum við linuna þar sem

Light, spectrum and water

Once we have reached an understanding of this fundamental aspect of Eliasson’s thought, it is easier to understand the many different manifestations his works take. As the exhibition in Hafnarhús exemplifies, there is no boundary to his use of materials and techniques, and each room might appear detached from the others and unrelated. However, this is far from the case; the same central theme runs through them all, but each takes a different approach and creates a distinct effect.

Many of Eliasson’s most impressive shows use a light source, and his use of light reached new heights with the magnificent show, The Weather Project, at the Tate Modern in London, which created one of the most memorable solar icons of modern art.

Your Activity Horizon at Hafnarhús is likewise a simple but impressive work. In a darkened room a thin line of light shines through a narrow gap in the wall at eye level, encircling the room and constantly changing colours, rotating through the colour spectrum every few minutes. Otherwise the room is empty, apart from four columns, and the light is the only source of illumination. The line represents a horizon, the imaginary line that limits the reach of the field of vision from a particular vantage point. Usually we call the line separating earth and sea the horizon, but it is also used in a more general sense, as can be seen in Eliasson’s photographic series, Horizon Series, in the adjoining room, where heaven and earth meet.

The title gives pause for thought, and mentioning activity in connection with a horizon may sound like a riddle. What this signifies is not obvious. Could it be the limit of the achievable or the limits of knowledge? Keeping in mind Eliasson’s interest in phenomenology, it is tempting to put a phenomenological gloss on the interpretation of the title. The German philosopher Edmund Husserl describes how direct sense perception of a particular aspect of things always involves an awareness of other possible perceptions of the same thing. However, there is a limit to these possibilities, and Husserl uses the metaphor of a “horizon of possibilities”4 Our perception of a particular room is composed from what can be seen directly, like the size of the room and colour of the walls, and that which is beyond the reach of the senses, but which we may be aware of and might be able to sense, like the adjoining rooms and the fact that the room is on the second floor. In this respect perception is limited within the horizon of all possible sense perceptions bound by a particular time and space. But if we follow Eliasson and regard perception as an activity, as mentioned before, then the title makes sense. Even though the walls of the room limit our vision, the possibilities may seem limitless, just as when we look out to sea, and the horizon appears to be infinitely far away. Our perceptions are not only affected by what is directly perceivable, but there are also other aspects of
our surroundings influencing our perceptions, experience, understanding and feelings, aspects concerning our expectations, ideas about art and the role of museums, social factors, political and historical, moral considerations and religious convictions, and so on. All these aspects shape our horizon of activity, or what Husserl himself would probably have called our it.

There have been other occasions like Your Activity Horizon where Eliasson has used light exclusively to transform the surroundings and have a direct and unmediated effect on the spectator's senses. We can see a certain resemblance to 360° Room for All Colours that was on display at the Paris Museum of Modern Art in 2002, a specially constructed circular room illuminated with the colour spectrum. In Room for One Colour, mentioned before, an exhibition hall that was entirely empty was illuminated by a yellow light, making everything inside the hall colourless. Eliasson never uses paint or other substances to colour things; all his experiments with colour are based on the different wavelengths of natural or artificial light sources. In Room for one colour and again in The Weather Project, he subverts the colour properties of the surroundings by using a light source that disturbs our normal perception of the colour properties of things. This focuses attention on what happens in sensory perception, how the eye registers colour, much more directly than when colour is made a permanent property of the object by using pigment or other colouring agents.

By making light a central concern of his work, Eliasson is reflecting the great significance of light in the modern scientific worldview and the modern urban environment. The world of the theory of relativity, and all that as resulted from it, can be traced to attempts to explain the nature of light. It is woven into a new world picture and is one of its deepest enigmas. Light, space and time are an inseparable trinity. So it should come as no surprise that many commentators see a strong reference in Eliasson's work to the
Þegar haft er í huga að á fyrri sýningum Ólafs á Islandi þá hefur vatn vegnt stóru hlutverki. Á sýningu hans á Kjarvalsstöðum 1998, sem aður var nefnd, sýndi hann tvö önnur verk. Ice Pavilion stöð utandyra og var gert úr þakgrind af málmleiðslum sem sprautuðu vatni. Í köldu veðrinu myndaði vatnið íspak með glyulkertum, nökurs konar garðskýli úr vatni. Á sömu sýningu var hann með innsetningu sem hann kallaði Parallel Gardens (Samhliða garðar), á lónum gangi tyrfiði hann göfið og við endann á grassplíðunní var brunnur hlaðinn úr grjóti, ofan í brunnnum var vatnsiðum sem virtist soga vatnið niður í kolsvart tóm, en rangsælsil miðlað við það sem venjulegu gerist á norðurhvěli járdar. Síkar vatnsiðum eiga sér hliðstæður í öðrum verkum Ólafs, eins og verkinu Stop Now sem sýnt var í Lofoten í Noregi þar sem hægt var að virða fyrir sér íðuna í gegnum gegnseign glersvalning. Seinn sama ár sýndi hann einnig í gallerínu í Reykjavík, afar sérstakt og eftirminnilegt verk. Galleríð var klætt svart að innan, en inn um grággann mátti.

At the Kjarvalsstaðir show mentioned before, there were two other works where water played a role. The outdoor work Ice Pavilion was constructed from a canopy of metal tubing that sprinkled water. In freezing weather the water froze to form a pavilion of ice. At the same show Parallel Gardens was an installation made from a long strip of turf, and at one end there was a well, constructed from roughly hewn rock. Inside the well was a whirlpool, sucking water down into a black abyss, but flowing counter-clockwise to the normal direction of whirlpools in the northern hemisphere. Such whirlpools have appeared in other works by Eliasson, such as Stop Now in Lofoten, where the whirlpool could be viewed through a transparent glass column. Later the same year Eliasson had a very memorable and striking installation at the i8 gallery in Reykjavík. The gallery was covered in black sheeting, and in the centre of the floor there was a water hose that leaked water into a basin on the floor, where a pump circulated the water. A strobe light illuminated the water leaking from the hose and had the

world of physics and contemporary cosmology.

Light is of key significance not only to our scientific worldview but also in our mundane, everyday life. New light technology has transformed our perception of the environment, not least in the cold North where there are only a few hours of daylight during winter. If we look around us, we see electric light sources of various kinds; in an ordinary home we will find dozens of electric light sources of different sizes and kinds, warm and cold, bluish and yellowish, bright and dim.

Two fundamental elements of nature have featured prominently in Eliasson’s work from the beginning: light and water. Even though water is not involved directly in the exhibition at Hafnarhús, we can hardly avoid mentioning the significance of water in his work, especially since it appears in a number of Eliasson’s shows in Iceland.
illusive effect that the water drops appeared to be transfixed in midair, stopping the flow of time. Water is also important in a commissioned outdoor work he did for an Icelandic biotechnology company, deCode. Their headquarters were built in Reykjavik in an area where there used to be a marsh, so Eliasson reconstructed a patch of marsh within the confines of the company building site. The Icelandic environment is a constant reminder of the presence of water, and Icelanders are very preoccupied on a daily basis with water in one form or another, ice, steam, rivers and waterfalls, rain and fog, hot water from the ground and cold, clear drinking water from springs. In a show at Gallery Kambur, which is a small exhibition space in the South of Iceland, run by an old family friend, the artist Gunnar Órn Gunnarsson, Eliasson showed a photographic series, Looking for Hot Water in the Land of Gunnar, where Gunnar Órn and Elias Hjörleifsson, Eliasson’s father, can be seen surveying for hot water with instruments in the cold and snow-covered winter landscape.

Photographic project: Collecting Iceland

Eliasson started a photographic project in 1993, which he has added to every year, and which he estimates will take years, even decades to complete. The photographs, taken in Iceland, fall into
myndin eru því neðst til hægrí i hnitakerfinu og síu stærsta í efstu röð lengst til vinstri. Stærsta myndin er þó ekki af stærsta húsínum, því stærðin á myndunum endurspeglar ekki raunverulega stærðí húsanna, aðeins innri hlutföll milli hæðar og breiddar. Þegar hnitakerfið er skoðað í heild sinni þá er ljóst að fylgt hefur verið fyrirframfættir reglu við uppróðun á myndum af húsunum, því munurinn milli dálka og raða hvað varðar breidd og hæð er greinilega mjög reglulegur.


Að varðeita reynslu sina með kerfisbundnum hætti með aðstöð ljósmyndavélarinnar er óskop hversdagslegt viðfangsefni nútilmönks, eins og flestir kannast við af eigin raun. Eigum við að líta á ljósmyndimarr sem heimildir um reynslu Ólafs af landinu, eða áminningu um þau áhrif sem ljósmyndataæknir hefur haft á skynjun nútilmanna á náttúrunni, núna þegar hver einasti

building is not in the largest photograph, and the size of the buildings is in no relation to the size of the pictures, only the proportional relation between height and breadth. When the grid is viewed in its entirety it is clear that the photographs of the buildings have been subsumed under a rule, because the difference between the columns and rows as regards height and breadth is obviously very even.

For those who know Eliasson's background, it should come as no surprise that the photographs are based on Iceland. Eliasson is cosmopolitan. His parents are Icelandic, but he is raised and educated in Denmark and has lived in Berlin since 1993. He nevertheless regularly visits Iceland to add to his collection of photographs and has exhibited on a number of occasions since 1998. His relation to Iceland is therefore close, while, at the same time, he can observe both the country and its people with the keen eye of an outsider.

To preserve experiences in a regular fashion with the assistance of the camera is an everyday activity of modern people, as most of us know. Should we view these photographs as testimony of Eliasson's experience of Iceland, or are they perhaps a comment on the influence that photography has had on modern perception of nature, at a time when every nook and cranny of the world has been thoroughly photographed? To answer this question we need to put the photographic series in context with Eliasson's ideas.
about perception. Photographs as such are a fabrication, and it is therefore customary to treat them as a falsification, compared with direct perception. If we are prepared to go all the way with Eliasson and say that the picture we construct of the world through perception is a kind of fabrication based on sense impressions, then we could probably treat them as just as much of a fabrication as photographs. However, the photograph as an object has no analogy to perceptions in the mind. We do not collect ‘photographs’ in the brain, and it is wrong to objectify perceptions by such a comparison. We might say that the activity of taking pictures and accumulating them is to some extent analogous to perceiving as an intentional act. In this sense the camera is like a prosthetic extension of the eye.

In interviews and articles Eliasson has commented that he does not necessarily see ‘nature’ as an antonym of ‘culture’ or the artificial and the real as opposites. All our experiences of nature are culturally conditioned or constructed in one way or another. On the other hand, it is awkward to talk about cultural conditioning if there is no clear distinction between nature and culture. Perhaps it is only possible to talk about different representations, which are described either as ‘artificial’ or ‘natural’, depending on accepted criteria. The framing of certain natural phenomena and sorting into a pictorial series is the consequence of culturally acquired behaviour. The Iceland that can be seen in Eliasson’s photographs, his own version of the country, is one of many representations of the country, and it is ‘true’ in the sense that there is no criterion by which to judge it ‘artificial’, other than Eliasson’s own perception.

Taking this thought further, we can also consider Eliasson’s photographic work in relation to the mechanism of globalisation, and how the world as we experience it has been the commercialised. Iceland is an exotic and unfamiliar territory, a mine for foreign photographers and artists. Photographic books idolizing the country are published every year. Many foreign artists have also based their work on Icelandic nature through the photographic medium. One wonders how much the camera has influenced our
ári og seljast grimmt. Margir myndlistarmenn hafa sömuleiðis nytt sér islenska náttúru í ljósmyndaforma. Það er umhugsunarefn í að hve miklu leyti ljósmyndavæðing islenskrar náttúru hefur haft áhrif á sýn okkar og gildismat á landinu og jafnvel spiltt fyrr upplifun okkar á náttúrunni.

I hvert sinn sem einhvers konar ímyndir náttúrunnar hjá norrænum listamönnum ber á göma þá eru þær sjálfvirk kenndar við náttúrurómantík. Hún lóðir við norræna listamenn, eins og Ólafur hefur sjálfr fundið fyrr. Í viðtali í listatímaritinnu Flash Art á síðasta ári kemur skýrt fram að Ólafur er gagnrynninn á rómantík, sem honum finnst að þvingi ákeðna sýn og gildismat upp á áhorfandann, og hann hefur gengið svo langt að segja að hún drafi dám af alraðishyggju.4 Endurtekningin í ljósmyndaserið num og sú fyrríframerða regla sem hann fellir myndfnið inn í hvað varðar staðarhlutföll og uppróðun vinnur gegn tilfinningasemi og þeirri náttúruinniflon sem hefur verið kennd við rómantík, og eyðir upphafningunni á hinu einstaka og óviðjafranlega, hinu heilaga augnabliklum samkennadar milli manns og náttúru. Með því að búa til myndaraf og safna þeim saman er verið að gera náttúruna viðraðanlega, tenjja hana. En varla er það tilgangurinni með myndráðunum? Eru ljósmyndaseriurnar írónískar á dreppur á firringu hins tæknivæða núttímanæs gagnvart náttúrunni? Svarið er kannski að finna í hugmynd Olafs um útopíur sem einstaklingsbundið aforn sem fellst í því að bygga upp eigin mynd af veroldinni. Ljósmyndaverkin eru áminning um þófr okkar fyrr útopíur, sem þvinga ekkki upp á okkur tiltekna sýn eða gildismat. Útopían svarar til hugmynda okkar um eitt íhvað sem er utan seilingar, en sem við látum okkur dreyma um og reynum að finna stað í umhverfi okkar.

Likón og önnur tæki til skynjunar

Ljósmyndataknin í var lýst hér að framan sem fraðað ganga á skynjun okkar. Tæki af ýmsu tægi koma miklu við sögu í verkum Olafs, flest aftar eintöld að vísu, þannig að aðhjálf að að átta sig á gerð þeirra, en sum eru margbrotn og smiðuð með of nature and set of values, and he has even gone so far as to say that there is a totalitarian tendency inherent in romanticism.5 The repetition within the photographic series and the presupposed formal rule he imposes on the subject matter, in regard to proportion and presentation within a grid, resist sentimentality and the kind of experience of nature associated with romanticism. It dispels the sublimation of the unique and original, the glorified moment of communion between man and nature. By constructing photographic series and collecting them, he is domesticating nature, so to speak. But this can hardly be the main point. Are they not ironic comments on the alienation of modern man confronted with nature? The answer might be found in Eliasson’s ideas about ‘non-normative utopia’ that does not impose a certain vision and set of normative values. It is a notion of utopia corresponding to our urge for something beyond our reach, but which we fantasize about and try to locate in our surroundings.

Models and other devices of perception

We described photography as an extension of perception. Technology and devices of all sorts appear in Eliasson’s work, most of them so simple that their mechanisms can be easily understood, but others complex and designed by experts in electronics. Apparently Eliasson’s devices fall into three categories. First, there are devices that are meant to have a direct impact on the senses, and sight in particular. Various light devices fall into


Öll slik tæki hafa áhrif á skynjum okkar á einn eða annan máta. En það er líka hægt að hafa áhrif á skynjun okkar að hlutum með líkónum. Á sýningunni í Hafnarhúsinu eru tveir salur þar sem á þetta reynir, annars vegar salur sem hefur að geyma safn af líkónum sem Ólafur hefur smiðið í nánini samviðu við Einar Porstein Ásgeirsson arkitekt, hins vegar er salur sem er nokkurs konar leikherbergi þar sem er að finna leikföng, sem sérstaklega eru ætluð til að setja saman líkón.

Að Islandi er Einar Porsteinn einkum þekktur fyrir að hafa innleitt og útfært kúluhús (geodesic domes), sem byggð eru á hönnum bandarískra uppfinningamannsins og hagmyndamönðsins Buckminster Fuller. En Einar hefur einnig stundað rannsóknir og sett fram hugmyndir um vistræna byggingarlist, hvolfbyggingar og létbyggingar, þrívíða flatarmálfræði og kristalla. Einar stundaði nám í arkitektur í Hannover á sjóunda áratugnum og vann síðan á Atelier Warmbronn, vinnustofu hins framsýna þybska arkitekts Frei Otto í Stuttgart á árunum 1969-

Language' was played as an accompaniment to the projected eye image.

All these devices influence our perceptions in one way or another. But there is another way of shaping perceptions, and that is through models. At Hafnarhúsi there are two rooms with models. One room has a collection of models by Eliasson and his collaborator, Einar Thorstein Ásgeirsson, architect and designer. The other is a model construction room, with toys that are especially designed for modelling. Einar Thorstein is best known in Iceland for having introduced and built geodesic domes, which are based on the design of the well-known inventor and visionary Buckminster Fuller. Einar Thorstein has always been involved in research alongside his architectural practice and has published studies on ecological building, geodesic domes and other light structures, geometry and crystals. He studied in Hanover in the sixties and later at the Atelier Warmbronn near Stuttgart, where he worked in the studio of the German architect Frei Otto from 1969 to 1971. During that time Otto was working on the roof structure for the Olympic stadium in Munich.

Einar Thorstein and Ólafur Eliasson crossed paths first in 1993 and then again three years later by coincidence, when Eliasson was working on a project, By means of a sudden intuitive realization, for the Manifesta sculpture show in Rotterdam in 1996. Eliasson wanted to use a light dome structure to cover a small fountain,
similar to what he had seen used to cover hot water wells at the Nesjavellir geothermal power station in Iceland. He later discovered that the very same Einar Thorstein he had worked with three years earlier had designed the domes. This was the start of collaboration between the two that grew in the following years, especially after Einar Thorstein settled in Berlin. Eliasson has since used geodesic domes in some of his works, for instance in The Drop Factory at the St. Louis Art Museum in 2000, where he used a dome made of mirrors to wrap a baroque fountain in the museum.

Their collaboration is clearest in the model room, which can be seen as a common experimental laboratory, and has been developing steadily in recent years. They have designed a system of shelves as a backdrop to the models that is itself like a large model. Within the structure there are models of buildings, as well as mock-ups for various large-scale projects. The models are mainly of three kinds, those that are based on the geometric principles of the geodesic dome, kaleidoscopes and other mirror works, and the latest addition are the models made of an intricate lattice of wire mesh or bands. Looking a bit like basket weaving, the models are in the shape of all sorts of soft, curved, three-dimensional forms. But there is nothing casual about these lattices. Many of them follow exact mathematical principles, so-called Ammann
sjá bæði líkon af byggjum, einnig líkon sem hafa verið smiðuð við undirbúning staðir verkefnía Ólafs. Líkonin er einkum þrenns konar, líkon sem eru byggð á reglum um hvolpök, líkon af kvikjsám og öðrum speglaverkum, og svo nýjustu líkonin gerð úr viravirki eða bóndum og líkja einna helst veðnaði í tágakórum. En það er ekkert léttauð við gerð þeirra síðanstefnu því sumir þeirra fylgja nýkaum stærðfræðilegu regulm, byggðum á svokölluðum Ammann linum, nefndum eftir Robert Ammann sem uppgoðaði þær, og sem mikið hafa verið rannsakaðar meðal stærðfræðinga á undanforníum árum.7


lines. Named after their inventor Robert Ammann, they have been attracting growing attention in mathematical circles. 8

Models can be seen as a sort of mental device, helping us simplify complicated structures. Architects build models to help them perceive how an unbuilt house will look. Chemists make models of material components, and mathematicians draw models of complex geometrical forms. In fact, models have even led to new discoveries, because of their ability to make it easier to perceive how things are built and relate to each other. Model construction involving connecting elements and trying out new combinations has a playful element. We might even say that modelling occupies a grey area between scientific investigation, artistic creation, and games. The American philosopher Nelson Goodman has pointed out that there is no fundamental difference between the way in which a scientist and an artist construct a picture of the world. The question is rather what purpose those pictures play. Goodman mentions five main methods shared by artists and scientists: composition and decomposition, weighting, ordering, deletion and supplementation, and finally deformation. 9 If we view model construction in the context of Eliasson’s art, we can see that it is yet another variation on the theme of perception and construction, an extension of the activity of perception in material form, where things are made manually not mentally.

After the model room it is entirely fitting to offer a room where the spectators can themselves exercise their own imagination.

Once the guests have taken in the illuminated horizon of activities and proceeded to the next room to look at the photographic series, which leads further into the model room, they are thereafter led into a room full of toys. There they can try their own hand at constructing models with specially manufactured toys called Zone Tools, which have been used for teaching geometry and the natural sciences. They are made of simple sticks and joints that can be conveniently combined to form geometric shapes of all kinds. When Eliasson is suggesting that perception involves construction and creativity, he means it literally, whether we do it with our hands or in our minds. He is not just encouraging us to reconstruct our own mental picture of the world. The model construction room is offering us the opportunity to practice our skills for our own amusement.

Mediation and the radical museum

Recently Eliasson’s art has developed towards more direct involvement with the architectural setting of his works. For the catalogue of the The Weather Project show at the Tate Modern in London, he wrote an essay, ‘Museums are radical’.7 There he describes his ideas about mediation and how the art museum itself mediates. This idea should not be too difficult to fathom, primarily because anything can be seen to mediate in some way: a mountain can be seen to mediate the divine; man can mediate power. But what does the museum mediate? This question has been debated for a long time, and artists of the modern era have
Miðlun og hið róttæka safnhús

Það má merka ákveðna próun í list Ólafs í þá átt að fást með beinum hætti við arkitektúr sem umgjörd listrænnar upplifunar. Í þessu sambandi ritaði hann afar athyglisverða hugleiðingu í grein fyrrir sýninguna í Tate Modern nú á dögunum, Sófn eru róttæk.9 Þar byrjar hann á að lýsa hugmyndum sinum um miðlun og hvernig listasafni getur sjálft gegnt því hlutverki að miðla. Pessi hugmynd ætti ekki að vera svo erfið að meðtaka, því hvaða hlutur sem er getur miðlað með einverju móti, fjall getur gegnt því hlutverki að miðla guðdóminum, maður getur gegnt því hlutverki að miðla valdi. Hverju miðlarr safnhús? Petta hefur í raun lengi verið bitbein og nútímalistin hefur verið þrúguð af þeirri hugmynd að safnið sem stofnun miðli sögunni, hefðinni og menningararfinnum, það er að segja öllu sem tilheyrir fortiðinni, á þann hátt að það heftr framsækna og skapandi hugsvun, sem tilheyrir framtíðinni.

Miðlunarhlutverk safna er Ólafi greinilega mjög hugleikið eins og kemur skyrt fram í Tate verkefni, Weather Project. Eitt meginmarkmið verkefnisins var að skoða sérstaklega hlutverk safnsins í miðlun listar og hvaða áhrif það hafði á samskipni við safngestí. Ólafur stofnaði til samræðna við starfsmenn safnsins og arkitekta sem hönnuðu safnið, um hvernig safnið rækti hlutverk sitt. Að nota listrænt verkefni til að skoða hvernig kerfið virkar er kannski ekki nýlunda innan listarinnar, en Ólafur

been burdened by the notion that the museum, as an institution, mediates history, tradition and heritage, that is, everything that represents the past, in a way resisting progressive and creative thought, which belongs to the future.

Eliasson is clearly preoccupied with the mediating role of museums in the The Weather Project. One of the main aims of the project was specifically to examine the role of the museum in mediating art and how this shaped its relation to the public. Eliasson entered into a dialog with the museum’s staff, architect and others involved in running the museum, discussing how the museum fulfilled its role. Examining the inner workings of system within the context of an art project is not an unprecedented approach in itself, but Eliasson put forward quite a radical idea, especially when read in the context of critical discourse about museums and their role in society, namely, that museums themselves can be radical. Usually it is taken for granted that museums are inherently conservative establishments. Scores of artists have taken it to be their mission to work against the establishment, find ways to confront the museum, undermine the museum’s authority, refuse to work within the museum’s confines, take art out of the museum and into the streets, and so on. It is typical of Eliasson, to see possibilities where others see none, to try and reconstruct the accepted picture of things, by choosing to work with the museum. His idea is basically that the museum can be a place where the artist and the public can find an opportunity to reconsider social and cultural
setur fram býsna nýstárlega hugmynd, sérstaklega með tilliti til ráðandi umræðu um söfn og hlutverk þeirra í samfélaginu.

Með syningu sinni í Hafnarhúsinu er Ólafur Eliasson ekki aðeins að veikja áhorfandann til athafna og gera hann meðvitaðan um þau ólíku öfli, hvort sem þau eru lífðlisfræðileg, menningarleg eða félagsleg, sem móta hvernig hann fæst við umhverfi sitt. Hann skorar beinlinis á áhorfandann að taka til hendiinn við að endurskapu þá mynd sem hann gerir sér af heiminum. Listin er hvati til slikar endursköpunar. Ólafur gerir safnhúsí ekki aðeins að vettvangi fyrir list sina, heldur vekur það upp og virkar sem lifandi þátttakanda í sjálfsrýni áhorfandans.

6. Angela Rosenberg, sama.
7. Einar Thorstein and Ólafur Eliasson, To the inhabitants of space in general and to the spatial inhabitants in particular, Bauwig Foundation, Vienna, 2003.
9. Ólafur Eliasson, Museums are radical, The Weather Project, Tate Publishing 2003

conditioning, examine the forces that affect perception, thought and action.

Ólafur Eliasson’s exhibition at Hafnarhús not only urges the spectator to react and become self-conscious of the different forces, whether physiological, cultural or social, shaping how he deals with his surroundings, but it also challenges the spectator to reconstruct his picture of the world. Art can motivate such reconstruction. Eliasson makes the museum building not only a place for his art, but he also awakens and mobilizes it to become an integral part of the spectator’s self-scrutiny.

Translation by Gunnar J. Árnason
In so much as the physical presence of the work is now less significant than the images bouncing off it here and there, what, today, is the ART OF PLACE? Since the appearance of Land Art, this question has dogged art lovers and art critics alike. But there is actually a more radical question: DOES ART TAKE PLACE? Outside of architecture and stage design, this question also has a bearing on urbanization and urban development, and, in a more general way, on the geopolitics of nations. Whence the enigma surrounding what, for want of a better word, people call the installation—that of a community, living or otherwise, of a population of objects, animate or inanimate. So what is the state of play, now, with the LINK OF PLACE? With what places the work, be it pictorial, sculptural, architectural, or societal... Lastly, the word "space" and, even more so, the nebulous term "environment" have helped to shroud being here (here or there), that representation-less presence which borders less on "exhibition" than "appearance". Where the erstwhile (static) aesthetics of appearance still left a mark, an imprint, the aesthetics of (cinematic) disappearance have ruined one thing after another, both the classical imprint, and the over-precisely theatrical notion of REPRESENTATION.

The enduring mistake of pictorial abstraction has been to cling to "disfiguration", and even, at a later date, to the more ambitious notion of "deconstruction"—with the philosophical issue shifting from "being", in the HIC ET NUNC, to "being here", here and now, place, the site of appearance and disappearance alike, taking precedence over "being per se".

In 2003

Ólafur Elíasson
An Exorbitant Art
Translated by Simon Pleasance
nú, staðinn, svæði birtingar jafnt sem brottværs og varð þannig mikilvægari „verunni í sjálfrli sér“ (l’être en soi).

Pá fer maður að skilja betur að í samtímanum ríki SKJÁRINN yfir RITMÁJINU, „ramminn“ yfir miðlun myndar á stuðningsflót sem hverfur með kvímkyninni og rauníma rafrænnar myndmiðlunar. Pannig hefur súakinn hráði sjónarhornmaskipta valdið rótækti breytingu á því hvemig við skynjum CONTINUUM rýmis og tíma þar sem húsgarðarlístin er ekkki lengur fólgin í byggjafraðafélagi mótwán ákvæðins svæðis heldur er hún á leið inn í upprunalegt rými sitt: gagnrínið rými (for-rúmfraðilegt) sem tuttugustu úldinni tökt að innleiða með öllum sinum barðarisma sem kenndur er við bytingar og frelsun.

Um þessar mundir, í upphafi nýrrar þúsaldar, er ljóshróðun á öllum skynsvisum, allt frá hnaattrænu samtíma stjórnvélagla og landafraða til húsgarðarlístrar og svønefnur „samtíma“-listar sem er í raun tímalaus; þáð ætti kannski kalla þetta SAMTÍMALUSA list.

* 


Pannig kom að endalokum fagurfræðilegara jafnt sem politískra SVÍDISSETNINGAR og fram kom hrein og klár FRAMSETNING í rauníma þar sem ný fjallvand gesir hvers kyns fjallræg að engu, eydir öllum runaverulegum fróði því hinn hlytur avall að byggja á „fjallrægum“, með öðrum orðum vali á sjónarhorni með fjarrvidardýsa á framtíð heimsins. Sænnleikurinn er sá að nú á dögum er ekki lengur hægt að skilja hugtökinn rými, rúmtak, yfirforði, án þess að taka hráða og hróðunarmerk með í reikninginn. Hins vegar er að sama tíma ekki hægt að skilja hugtakini ljóshræði án þess að taka rýmið með í reikningin, tíminn einn nægir ekki. En fyrst hráðinn er ekki yfirrædry heldur tengl fyrirræða, þá er aukning og minnkun á hráða alla ekki spurning um tíma og tímaætingu eingöngu heldur rými-tíma og þar með afstaði – og þá sama gildir um hugtök sem koma bæði inn á jardalóíslafraði og rúmfraði og tengjast NÁLÆGD.

Hið nálæga og hið fjallræga hafa þannig gjörþreyt síðan „frelsunarhráðinn“ kom til sögunnar, hráði runaverulekabyljanna sem flytja okkur atburði dagsins í of immediacy and ubiquity which, with the old dimensions, does away with any kind of classical perspective – that “real time perspective” of the Quattrocento which influenced not only how the visual arts were viewed, but, in an even more general way, the geopolitics of nations.

Whence the end of REPRESENTATION, aesthetic and political alike, and the emergence of a pure and simple PRESENTATION in real time, where the new perspective suddenly does away with all distance and thus all real peace, since this latter can only be an "effect of distance" – otherwise put, the adoption of a perspectival viewpoint on the future of the world. Today, it is actually no longer possible to understand notions of space, volume and surface, without the notions of speed and extreme speeding-up. Likewise and conversely, it is not possible to grasp the notion of the speed of light, without the notion of space, and not just time. Since speed is not a phenomenon but the relation between phenomena, the composition of acceleration and deceleration speeds is in no way a question of time, or exclusive temporality, but of space-time, and thus of relativity – and the same applies to the at once geophysical and geometric notions of PROXIMITY.

The near and the far have thus undergone sea changes since the acquisition of the "speed of liberation,", that of those waves of reality which now convey our topicality – political, economic, artistic... Whence the recent reversal of the albeit fundamental
...Hugtökin inni í og utan við eru vissulega grundvallahugtök en samt hafa þau nýlega snúist við, orðið hefur viðsnúningur á innri og ytri. Ítrasti bylgjumál eftir þannig breyst í umhverfi (míleu), nokkur konar TERRA INCognita sem þarf að kanna, þar sem þið HNATTRÆNA er allt sem er innan í endanlegum heimi – (hímintunglinu jörðinni) – og það sem er fyrir utan þessara jörðslafraðileg þægir þöð við STADBUÐNÚNA, sem hægt er að staðsetjía hér eða þar, allt sem er IN SITU.

En þetta eru engar jörðhraðingar heldur fagurfræðilegar hræringar þar sem þið staðbundna hefur leitað út og við hnaattræna inn á við og ég held að þessar hræringar geti skýrt út þverstæður veraldar sem er orðin samtíma endalokum sínun, það er að segja „hnaattvæðinguna”. Æður fyrir var aðalhlutverk mynda yfirleitt að vera nokkurs konar mælirkvöð fyrir gljúndra hins sýnilega en nú á dögu tekur hin hráskreidda ræfræna mynd þátt í að rugla hvers kyns skynjun og vinnur þar með að glöptun þeirrar heimissýnar sem var eitt afalmarkmið fjárvíddarfraða Quattrocento, fimmtándu aldarinnar itólsku.

Með þessum harkalega sjónraða árekstri, þessum fjárvíddarlega umferðarhnut, breyst þjón okkar úr hlutlægr sýn yfir í aðráttarsýn þar sem fjárlægum myndrómmum lýstur stöðugt

notions of inside and outside, interior and exterior. So the extreme speed of waves has become a medium, a kind of TERRA INCognita to be discovered, where the GLOBAL is the interior of a finite world – the world of planet earth—and the LOCAL is the exterior of this geophysical globality, in other words of everything that can be precisely located here and there, of everything that is IN SITU.

I think that this no longer telluric, but aesthetic upheaval of an exteriorized localness and an ateriorized globalness explains the set of paradoxes of a world that is now contemporary with its end, i.e. globalization. If the essential role of the image used to be to lend measure to the chaos of the visible, today, the speeded-up audiovisual image is actually part of the disorientation of all perception, and thus of the loss of that vision of the world which was the very aim of the invention of the Quattrocento perspectivists.

* With this “concertina-ing”, this “telescoping” accident of perspectival circulation, our vision is no longer so much objective as “tele-objective”, because distant planes are forever being crushed on the close-to planes of the perceptible. In this sense, the work of Olafur Eliasson reveals less in terms of the absent temporality of what is still traditionally called “contemporary art” than it does in terms of the eccentric spatiality of his new “medium” which underpins planetary globalization. Through the amazing diversity of position and not simply of genre – installation, sculpture, intervention... –, Eliasson shifts his works into the very last circle, or, more accurately, into the sphere of this “speed medium” which is now superseding the time-image. It is an eccentric medium if ever there was, which has completely changed our ordinary perception of the real, for which I have already proposed the term DROMOSPHERE!

Eliasson actually plays on the uncertainty principle of DIMENSIONS, in other words of that CONTINUUM which no longer has anything to do (and this is as good a place as any to make the point) with the specifically geometric dimensions of the space of forms of representation; of those “volumes”, “surfaces” and “lines” which have made up our vision, ever since the Italian Renaissance.

In a way, this sudden iconic break goes way beyond the break made by Baroque art, that earthquake of artistic figures which shook Europe from the 17th century on, shaking off the rules of composition of the classical age one by one. Just recently we have been dumbfoundedly witnessing a suddenly spacequake (2), since the spectacular ambiguity is no longer so much that of some “theatre”, of a stage upon which the play of beliefs is enacted, but that of appearance, of all the appearances of concrete reality which thus lose their DE VISU credibility, one by one. Because composition of “dimension” and composition of “speed” are
nokkurs konar rýmisskjálfta því nú er margræðni sjónarspilsins ekki sambærilag við einhvers konar „leikhús“ eða leikvöld þar sem leikin er kómedia alls kyns átrúnaðar, heldur er hún óll tengd birtingu, öllum birtingarförmum hins ábreiflanlega raunveruleika sem glata þannig hvert á fætur öðru trúverðugleika sinum DE VISU. Myndbygging „viddar“ og myndbygging „hraða“ renna níuðið saman í eitt og þá hverfur gegnsæi fjärsviðarinnar en í staðinn kemur vafasöm GEGNSÆISBIRTING (trans-apparence) sem trufar bæði þá sem er sýnilegt og jafnfram í alt mynd- og hljóðmiðlað.

Abstraksjón eða figúrasjón... þessi tvö hugtök missa þar með tilverugrundvöll sinn því nú er það kjarni hvers kyns SVIDSSETNINGAR sem leyðist upp, missir kraft sinn og FRAMSETNINGIN ein ræður ríkjun, oft tengd hörmundum þar sem raunveruleikabygjur mynd- og hljóðmiðlunar metta vitund okkar með það að yfirlystu markmíði að stæða brátt algjörlega skynjun hvers og eins og öðlast þannig með öðrum orðum heimssýn sem er optískt rétt. Í þessu samhengi sitjum við máttvana og fylgjumst með ótímabærri upplaun hinna friðsamlegu sambúðar „forms“ og „innihalds“ ásamt STADSETNINGU STAÐARINS og jafnfram í anda hans, genius loci. Í þessu algjóra oggnsæi koma verk Ólafs Eliassonar fram, handan við land-listina, og þau virðast reýna að ráðast inn í sjónrænt þykkt hinns sýnilega, þess sem sýnist vera. Á einstakan máta færa þessi verk tilviltarinn tímanins inn í rými myndlistarinnar, á þessum síðustu tínum þegar við búum skynilega við „sjónvarps-alnán“ þá koma verk Ólafs Eliassonar okkurr háváðalaust aftur í kynni við ráðgátu þess að eittvæð birtist, ráðgátu birtingarinnar, sem er skilyrði þess að eittvæð sé trúverðugt.


henceforth one, perspectival transparency is disappearing to the dubious advantage of that TRANS-APPEARANCE which disturbs not only the set of the visible, but the set of the audio-visual, too.

Abstraction or figuration... these two terms are now losing even their raison d’être, since it is now the actual substance of all REPRESENTATION that is losing its relevance, to the exclusive advantage of a usually catastrophic PRESENTATION, where the waves of reality of the audiovisual audience saturate our consciousness with the declared aim of one day culminating in a standardization of perception – otherwise put, in an optically correct vision of the world. In this context, we are powerlessly witnessing the premature end of the old peaceful coexistence between “style” and “content”, where the LINK OF PLACE gradually becomes blurred with its spirit, its genius loci. In this context of maximum opaqueness, Olafur Eliasson’s work locoms beyond Land Art, like an attempt to break into the optical depth of appearances. Lastly, it offers a good example of the accident of time in the space of the visual arts, in the age of this sudden “tele-presence” which is ours today; his works quietly reintroduce us to the enigma of appearance which affects all manner of probability.

ÓLAFUR ELIÁSSON
Born: Fæðdur
Denmark/Danmark 1967
Living and working in Berlin, Germany
Byr og stæði í Berlin í Fyrístökinum

Education/Mennstun
1989-95 Royal Academy of Arts, Copenhagen, DK

Upcoming Exhibitions/Hæstup sýningar
2004
Hafnarhús, Reykjavik, IS
Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, NO
Kunsthaus Wolfsburg, DE
The Menil Collection, Houston, US
Kunsthaus Zürich, CH
Arcadia University Art Gallery, Philadelphia, US
Aspen Art Museum, US
Árhus Kunstmuseum, DK
Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, NL
Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, GB

Solo Exhibitions/Einkasýningar
2003
The new geometry, São Paulo, BR
Delight and other luminous movements, Galleria Emi Fontana, Milano, IT
The Weather Project, Tate Modern, London, GB
The Blind Pavilion, The Danish Pavilion, Biennale di Venezia, Venedig, IT
Olafur Eliasson, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, US
funcionamiento silencioso, Palacio de Cristal, Parque del Retiro, Madrid, Spain
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, ES
Sonne statt Reger, Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbauden, Munich, DE

2002
The Cartographic Series I-III, Niels Borch Jensen Verlag Druck, Berlin, DE
Udsgiten der aldrig tænkte, Galeri Kirke Sonnerup, Kø-Såby, DK
Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK
Ib Gallery, Reykjavik, IS
Chaque matin, je me sens différent – chaque soir je me sens le même, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, FR

2001
The structural evolution project, Mala Galerija, Lubljana, SI
Die Dinge, die du nicht siehst, die du nicht siehst, neugierigenschmied, Berlin, DE
Surroundings surrounded, ZKM, Karlsruhe, DE
The mediated motion, Kunsthauz Bregenz, AT
Your only real time is the life, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, US

2000
Your now is my surroundings, Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York, US
Surroundings Surrounded, Newie Graiz, AT
The only thing we have in common is that we are different, CCA, Kitakyushu, JP
Your orange afterimage exposed, Gallery Koyanagi, Tokyo, JP
Your blue afterimage exposed, Masakichi Hayakawa Gallery, Tokyo, JP
The Curious Garden, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, IE
Your intuitive surroundings you see your surrounded intuition, The Art Institute of Chicago, US
Kunstverein Wolfsburg, DE
IAGIS, Stockholm, SE
Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, US

1999
Your position surrounded and your surroundings positioned, Dundee Contemporary Art, Dundee, Scotland
De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam, NL
Kunstverein Wolfsburg, DE
Marc Foxx Gallery, Los Angeles, US
Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan, IT
Castello di Rivoli, Turin, IT
Ib Gallery, Reykjavik, IS

1998
Museum für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, DE
neugierigenschmied, Berlin, DE
Tell Me about a Miraculous Invention, Árhus Kunstmuseum, DK
Photoworks, Bildmuseet, Umeå, SE
Aquarium, Galleria Enja Wonneberger, Kiel, DE
Bonakdar Jancou Gallery, New York, US
Kjörfestad – Reykjavik Art Museum, IS
Galerie Peter Klicthmann, Zürich, CH

1997
Your summation, Marc Foxx Gallery, Santa Monica, US
The curious garden, Kunsthalle Basel, CH
Stall Out of Space, Copenhagen, DK
Kunsthalle Leuven, Belgium, AT
Your foresight endured, Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan, IT
Your strange certainty still kept, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, US
Tell me about a miraculous invention, Gallerie Andreas Brändström, Stockholm, SE
Kunstmuseet, Malmö, SE

1995
A Description of A Reflection, or a Pleasant Exercise Regarding Its Qualities, neugierigenschmied, Berlin, DE
Künstlerhaus, Stuttgart, DE
Thoka, Hamburger Kunstverein, Hamburg, DE
Tomm Y Lund Galerie, Odense, DK

1994
Stall Out of Space, Copenhagen, DK
Some People Remember Walking That Night, Lukas & Hoffmann, Cologne, DE
No Days in Winter, No Nights in Summer, Forumgalleriet, Malmö, SE

1991
Galleri Overgaden, Copenhagen, DK

Group Exhibitions/Samsýningar
2003
Fra objektiv til objekt, Copenhagen, DK
Einbundung – Das Wahrnehmen in der Kunst, Landesmuseum Joanneum – Kunsthaus Graz, AT
Art Against Stigma, Statens Museum for Kunst (Danish National Gallery), Copenhagen, DK
Rent-a-bench, Trapholt, Kolding, DK
Moving Pictures, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, ES

No Art – No City, Städtische Galerie Bremen, DE
Spoleto Science Festival, Spoleto, IT
2nd Tirana Biennale, Albania
Svetlana/Brightness, Museum of Modern Art Dubrovnik, HR
Manifestation Internationale D’Arte De Québec, Quebec, CA
Frankenstein, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, US
New Projects, Fundación NMAC, Cádiz, ES
Everything can be different, Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, US
The Origin of Things, Design Award Rotterdam, Imagining Futures, University of Dundee, Rotterdam, NL
Island in Denmark, Galleri Kirke Sonnerup, Såby, DK
Imperfect Marriages, Galleria Emi Fontana, Milano, IT
The Straight or Crooked Way, Royal College of Art Galleries, London, GB
Art: James Cohan Gallery, New York, NY
Revisar Canarias/The Canary Islands Revisited, Galeria Elba Binitz, Madrid, ES
Rent-a-bench, Los Angeles, US
el aire es azul. el aire es azul, Exhibition at the Luis Barragán House, Mexico-City, Mexico
Der reflektierende Kommissar, Entwurf zum Strassen des freien Falls, Zentrum für internationale Lichtkunst, Unna, DE
Mirror Mirror, MASS MoCA, North Adams, US
the object sculpture, The Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, GB
XXVIII Bienal de Arte de Pontevedra, Pontevedra, ES
Diamante, Arte Storia Scienza, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Roma, IT
From the cool light, Niels Borch Jensen, Berlin, DE
ars lucis et umbrae, Museum im Kinsky, Vienna, AT
Moving Pictures, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, US
Regarding Landscape, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Ontario, CA
Claude Monet, bis zum digitalen Impressionismus, Fondation Beyeler, Riehen, CH
tomorrow’s fish and chips, Autocenter, Berlin, DE
void, Rice Gallery G2, Tokyo, JP
From the Observatory, Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, US
Everything can be different (organized by Independent Curators International), New York, US
Außobachtung, Museum Dohna-Oskanens, Deurle, BE
The Waste Land, Atelier Augarten, Galerie Belvedere, Vienna, AT
Form follows Fiction, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, IT
En plein terre, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, CH
Palomino, Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, DE
Black Box, Kunstmuseum Bern, CH
Vrai que Nature, cap/Musée d’art contemporain, Bordeaux, FR
Freestyle-Werke aus der Sammlung Boros, Museum Moskres, Leverkusen, DE

Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst, Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin, DE
Raumkörper, Kunsthalle Basel, CH
Vision and Reality, London, UK
Photoviews, Niels Borch Jensen, Berlin, DE
Wonderland, St. Louis Museum of Art, US
Naust, Oyagarden, NO
FonwArt, BBL Brussels, BE
Over the edges, SAMAK, Gent, BE
The Greenhouse Effect, Serpentine Gallery, London, GB
Wanas 2000, The Wanas Foundation, Knokking, SE
Under the same sky, Kazuma, Helsinki, FI
Drawings, Bonakdar Jancou Galerie, New York, US
Overlook, curated by Mag O’Rourke and Caroline Schneider, New York, US
La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, IT
To the People of the City of the Euro, Frankfurter Kunstverein, DE
Photography: An Expanded View, Recent Acquisitions, Guggenheim Museum, New York, US
Landscape: Outside the Frame, MIT List Visual Art Center, Cambridge, GB
Schopfing, Dioxin Museum, Freising, DE
Photography from the Martin Z. Margulis Collection, The Art Museum at Floridana International University, Miami, US
Gegenwartskunst in Deutschland, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, DE
Ante Continua, San Gimignano, IT

Somerens mærke og lyse nætter, Árhus Kunstsbygning, Árhus, DK

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Myndir / Plates


36-41. Model Room - Models constructed in cooperation with architect Einar Thorstein Aageirsson.


68-69. Galleri Kambur, 1998

70. Looking for Hot Water in Gunnar's Land 1995

71. Galleri Kambur, 1998


