

*An Encyclopedia*



STUDIO  
OLAFUR  
ELIASSON

TASCHEN

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ELIASSON**

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# FOREWORD

"To exist is to differ; difference, in one sense, is the substantial side of things, what they have most in common and what makes them most different. One has to start from this difference and to abstain from trying to explain it, especially by starting with identity, as so many persons wrongly do. Because identity is a minimum and, hence, a type of difference, and a very rare type at that, in the same way as rest is a type of movement and the circle a type of ellipse. To begin with some primordial identity implies at the origin a prodigiously unlikely singularity, or else the obscure mystery of one simple being then differing for no special reason."

«Existieren heißt differieren, die Differenz ist nämlich gewissermaßen die substantielle Seite der Dinge, dasjenige, was sie gleichzeitig als eigenstes und als gemeinsames haben. Davon muß man ausgehen und sich davor hüten, es zu erklären, vor allem durch die Identität, von der fälschlicherweise so oft ausgegangen wird. Denn Identität ist nur ein Minimum und folglich nur eine Art und eine unendlich rare Art von Differenz, ähnlich wie die Ruhe nur ein Sonderfall der Bewegung ist und der Kreis nur eine Sonderform der Ellipse. Von einer primordialen Identität auszugehen, heißt am Ursprung eine äußerst unwahrscheinliche Singularität anzunehmen, eine unmögliche Koinzidenz mehrerer Wesen, die gleichzeitig verschieden und ähnlich wären, oder aber das unerklärliche Mysterium eines einzigen sehr einfachen Wesens, das sich später teilen würde, ohne daß man wüßte wieso.»

«Exister c'est différer, la différence, à vrai dire, est en un sens le côté substantiel des choses, ce qu'elles ont à la fois de plus propre et de plus commun. Il faut partir de là et se défendre d'expliquer cela, à quoi tout se ramène, y compris l'identité d'où l'on part faussement. Car l'identité n'est qu'un minimum et par suite qu'une espèce, et qu'une espèce infiniment rare, de différence, comme le repos n'est qu'un cas du mouvement et le cercle qu'une variété de l'ellipse. Partir de l'identité primordiale, c'est supposer à l'origine une singularité prodigieusement improbable: ou bien l'explicable mystère d'un seul être simple et ultérieurement divisé on ne sait pourquoi.»

**GABRIEL DE TARDE**

(1843–1904)<sup>1</sup>

"Just what is being researched and produced? In the art of Eliasson (and, I would argue, much of his generation), the objects being produced, and the sociomaterial technologies they imply, are only part of the story. Seen in a broader context, the physical works are nodes in the ongoing activity of knowledge production. It is as if the "antiretinal" impulse of Marcel Duchamp emerged from the other side of a postmodern wormhole to take paradoxically embodied form (not only retinal, but acoustic, tactile, olfactory) in Eliasson's subject-making machines."

«Doch was genau wird denn erforscht und produziert? Bei Eliassons Kunst (und, so würde ich behaupten, bei vielen seiner Generation), sind die produzierten Objekte und soziomateriellen Verfahren, die sie implizieren, nur ein Aspekt. In einen größeren Kontext eingeordnet, entpuppen sich die physischen Werke als Knotenpunkte einer permanenten Wissensproduktion. Fast scheint es, als sei der «antiretinale» Impuls Marcel Duchamps auf der anderen Seite eines postmodernen Wurmlochs wieder aufgetaucht, um in Eliassons subjektstschaffenden Maschinen eine paradoxe (nicht bloß retinale, sondern auch akustische, taktile und olfaktorische) Verkörperung zu finden.»

«Qu'est ce qui est exactement recherché et produit? Dans l'art d'Eliasson (et je dirai dans une grande partie de celui de sa génération), les objets produits et les technologies socio-matérielles impliquées ne sont qu'une partie de l'histoire. Vues dans un contexte plus large, les œuvres physiques sont des nœuds dans une activité en cours de production de la connaissance. C'est comme si l'impulsion «antirétinienne» de Marcel Duchamp ressortait par l'autre face d'un trou de ver postmoderniste pour revêtir une forme incarnée paradoxale (non seulement rétinienne, mais acoustique, tactile, olfactive) dans les machines-à-faire-le-sujet d'Eliasson.»

**CAROLINE JONES**

Professor of Art History at MIT, Cambridge, MA, USA<sup>2</sup>

Art is a language. In itself it doesn't communicate anything, but what is said with it is what gives it meaning. Art is not exclusive and does not delimit the boundaries of a closed sphere, but reaches beyond. And when the artistic language posits space and its users as its central agents, it can engage easily with architecture, science, and design. It can also raise social, political, ecological, aesthetic, and ethical questions—any area of reality is a potential collaborator and offers ground to be explored. This multitude of realms with which it intertwines is what makes art so complex and exciting.

The idea behind the encyclopedia in front of you is to offer a conglomeration of works and ideas based on the research and production at Studio Olafur Eliasson. All the projects revolve around our experience of spaces, collective and individual, and the ways in which our personal engagement changes both spatial dimensions and our understanding of the social spheres in which we take part.

The backbone of the book is its 26 chapters, each devoted to a letter of the alphabet. The encyclopedia is the result of an extensive compilation of words, made in the early phase of the book development, which we subsequently reduced to one concept per letter. Naturally, this selection is as inadequate as it is simple. We might (almost) as well have decided on:

Afterimage, Body, Consequence, Dimensions, Ecology, Flow, Geometry, Horizons, Individual, Jokla, Knowledge, Laboratory, Memory, Negotiation, *Obstteller*, Potentiality, Query, Relativity, Space-time, Trajectory, Uncertainty, Vehicle, Waves, X-ray, YES [Your Engagement Sequence], and Zone.

However, the concepts in the current encyclopedia were chosen, not to pin down a set vocabulary, but to chart out a field that contains many other ideas as well, some of which make up the above-mentioned alternative list. The encyclopedia is therefore inconclusive. It is not a key to a stable world, but should offer heterogeneous openings. You can create your own sequence by reading it from the end, the middle, or the beginning. Our aim has been to produce a book that provides kaleidoscopic views into the material with which we at the Studio work on a daily basis. These will subtly subvert the conceptual framework of the encyclopedia, inasmuch as similar topics appear and reappear within different chapters and thus in varying conceptual contexts.

Hopefully, when critically engaged with and examined, the material before you will raise as many questions as it affords answers.

## VORWORT

Kunst ist eine Sprache. Als solche kommuniziert sie nichts – was jedoch mit ihr zum Ausdruck gebracht wird, verleiht ihr Bedeutung. Kunst ist nicht exklusiv, statt die Grenzen einer in sich geschlossenen Sphäre zu markieren, wächst sie darüber hinaus. Wenn die Sprache der Kunst dann auch noch den Raum und seine Nutzer als zentrale Agenzien postuliert, ist es ihr ein leichtes, sich auch mit Architektur, Naturwissenschaft und Design zu befassen. Darüber hinaus ist es ihr möglich, soziale, politische, ökologische, ästhetische und ethische Fragen aufzuwerfen – jeder Aspekt der Realität wird zum potenziellen Kollaborator und einem Territorium, das es zu erforschen gilt. Diese Vielfalt verschiedener Bereiche, in die sie hineinreicht, ist es, die die Kunst so komplex und aufregend macht.

Hinter der Enzyklopädie, die vor Ihnen liegt, steht der Gedanke, Einblick in ein Sammelurium von Werken bieten zu wollen, die aus der Forschung und Produktion im Studio erwachsen sind. Dreh- und Angelpunkt aller Projekte ist unsere Erfahrung von Räumen, sei sie nun kollektiv oder persönlich; ebenso wie die Frage, auf

welche Arten unser persönliches Engagement unsere Wahrnehmung räumlicher Verhältnisse und auch unser Verständnis sozialer Sphären beeinflusst, in die wir aktiv eingebunden sind.

Herzstück dieses Buchs sind seine 26 Kapitel, die sich je einem Buchstaben des Alphabets widmen. Die vorliegende Enzyklopädie ist Resultat einer umfassenden Wortsammlung, die in der Frühphase der Entwicklung dieses Bandes zusammengetragen wurde und schließlich auf je ein begriffliches Konzept pro Buchstabe reduziert wurde. Diese Auswahl ist naturgemäß ebenso unzulänglich wie sie simplizistisch ist. Wir hätten uns ebenso gut für die folgenden Begriffe entscheiden können:

Afterimage, Body, Consequence, Dimensions, Ecology, Flow, Geometry, Horizons, Individual, Jokla, Knowledge, Laboratory, Memory, Negotiation, *Obstteller*, Potentiality, Query, Relativity, Space-time, Trajectory, Uncertainty, Vehicle, Waves, X-ray, YES [Your Engagement Sequence] und Zone.

Doch die Konzepte, die dieser Enzyklopädie in ihrer jetzigen Form zugrunde liegen, wurden nicht etwa ausgewählt, um unanfechtbare Begriffe zu definieren, sondern vielmehr, um ein Feld zu umreißen, das wiederum eine Vielfalt weiterer Vorstellungen umfasst, die sich zum Teil in der oben angeführten Liste wieder finden. Folglich ist diese Enzyklopädie mitnichten definitiv. Sie ist kein Schlüssel in eine unwandelbare Welt, sondern will heterogene Zugänge erschließen. Jeder kann seine eigene Lesart bestimmen, kann hinten, in der Mitte oder auch vorn zu lesen beginnen. Unser Ziel war es, ein Buch zu gestalten, das kaleidoskopartige Einblicke in die Materialfülle erlaubt, mit der wir im Studio täglich zu tun haben. Zweifellos werden diese Einblicke den konzeptuellen Rahmen der Enzyklopädie auf subtile Art und Weise unterlaufen – schließlich tauchen ähnliche Themenstellungen in verschiedenen Kapiteln, und somit in unterschiedlichen konzeptuellen Kontexten, immer wieder auf.

Unsere Hoffnung ist es, dass das vorliegende Material denjenigen, die sich kritisch darauf einlassen und sich mit ihm beschäftigen, ebenso viele Fragen aufwirft, wie es Antworten bietet.

## PRÉFACE

L'art est un langage. En soi, il ne communique rien. C'est ce qui se dit à travers lui qui lui donne son sens. L'art n'exclut rien et ne fixe pas les limites d'un domaine fermé, mais va bien au-delà. Lorsque le langage artistique fait de l'espace et de ses utilisateurs ses principaux agents, il en vient à dialoguer aisément avec l'architecture, la science et le design. Il peut également soulever des questions sociales, politiques, écologiques, esthétiques et éthiques. Tous les champs du réel lui permettent des collaborations et lui ouvrent de nouveaux terrains à explorer. Cette multitude de domaines avec lesquels il s'entrelace le rend merveilleusement complexe et stimulant.

L'idée à l'origine de cette encyclopédie est de proposer un ensemble d'œuvres et de concepts choisis parmi les recherches et la production du Studio Olafur Eliasson. Tous les projets présentés ont trait à notre expérience des espaces communs ou individuels, et aux façons dont notre engagement personnel modifie à la fois les dimensions spatiales et la compréhension des diverses sphères sociales dont nous faisons partie.

L'épine dorsale de ce livre est sa division en 26 chapitres, chacun consacré à une lettre de l'alphabet. Cette encyclopédie est l'aboutissement d'une vaste compilation de mots, que nous avons réalisée au cours de la première phase de mise

au point de l'ouvrage et avons par la suite réduit à un concept par lettre. Naturellement, cette sélection est aussi simple qu'inadéquate. Nous pourrions (presque) aussi avoir opté pour :

Afterimage, Body, Consequence, Dimensions, Ecology, Flow, Geometry, Horizons, Individual, Jokla, Knowledge, Laboratory, Memory, Negotiation, *Obstteller*, Potentiality, Query, Relativity, Space-time, Trajectory, Uncertainty, Vehicle, Waves, X-ray, YES [Your Engagement Sequence] et Zone.

Cependant, les concepts ont été choisis ici non pour fixer un vocabulaire donné, mais pour délimiter un champ qui contient également de nombreuses autres idées, dont certaines appartiennent, par exemple, à la liste proposée ci-dessus. L'approche encyclopédique est donc peu concluante. Elle n'est pas la clé d'entrée d'un monde stable, mais devrait contribuer à des ouvertures alternatives. Vous pouvez créer votre propre séquence en lisant à partir de la fin, du milieu ou du commencement. Notre objectif a été de produire un livre qui propose des vues kaléidoscopiques sur le matériau avec lequel le Studio travaille tous les jours. Elles subvertissent subtilement la structure encyclopédique, dans la mesure où des sujets similaires apparaissent et réapparaissent à l'intérieur de chapitres différents et modifient ainsi les contextes conceptuels.

Une fois que vous vous y serez confronté et que vous l'aurez examiné, ce matériau soulèvera sans doute autant de questions qu'il permettra de réponses. C'est ce que nous espérons.

**OLAFUR ELIASSON AND  
ANNA ENGBERG-PEDERSEN**

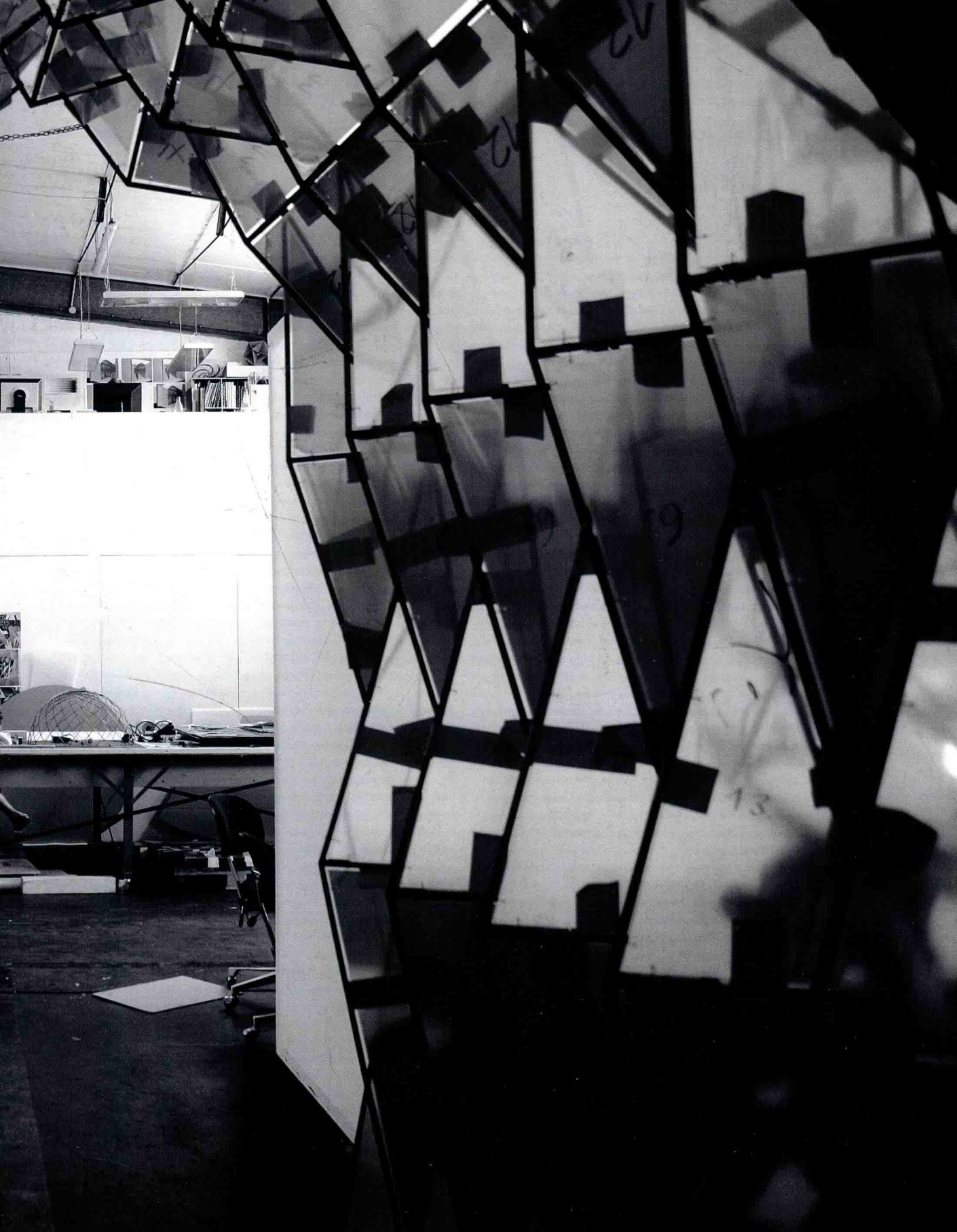
<sup>1</sup> Tarde, Gabriel de, *Monadologie et sociologie*, 1895, pp. 72–73, as quoted in Latour, Bruno, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford University Press 2007, pp. 15–16.

<sup>2</sup> Tarde, Gabriel de, *Monadologie et sociologie*, 1895, S. 72–73, zitiert nach Latour, Bruno, „Gabriel Tarde und das Ende des Sozialen“, in: *Soziale Welt* 52 (2001), S. 361–76.

<sup>3</sup> Tarde, Gabriel de, *Monadologie et sociologie*, 1895, p. 72–73, cité par Latour, Bruno, *Changer de société, refaire de la sociologie*, La Découverte/Poche, Paris 2006, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, Caroline, „The Server/User Mode“, in *Artforum International*, October 2007, p. 318.





# FROM OBSERVER TO PARTICIPANT

IN OLAFUR ELIASSON'S STUDIO

BY PHILIP URSPRUNG

I had heard how, at Olafur Eliasson's Studio in Berlin, a whole group of artists, architects, and technicians work and experiment together as they would in a laboratory, so I arranged a visit as part of my research for an essay on the modern-day artist's studio. On an icy-cold day in January 2006, I stood in front of the Studio, located in a warehouse right next door to the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum for Contemporary Art. This part of the city had always fascinated me. For decades, it lay on the edge of West Berlin, close to the Wall, but has now once again regained its position at the heart of the German capital, a place where the "East-meets-West" feeling still pervades. On one side are construction sites, warehouses, small industrial companies, and haulage contractors. On the other, the main railway station, the Federal Chancellery and Reichstag building—an ideal neighborhood for the studio of an experimental artist like Eliasson.

Eliasson had been obliged to cancel our planned meeting at short notice, so it was one of his assistants, the art historian Caroline Eggel, who led me through the Studio. The heating had broken down, and the few staff who had come in to work wore thick jackets and gloves as they sat huddled together in the small office, which had a separate heating system. Eliasson graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 1995, but had been living in Cologne since 1993. In 1994, he moved to Berlin, where he set up home and studio on Rungestraße. There he worked, at first alone and then with three assistants, until moving to new premises in 2002. The unexpected chill of the place reminded me that Eliasson's art also points out the fragility of man-made systems like art and technology and how likely they are to break down.

At the heart of the Studio is a large, well-lit space, where finished and half-finished works of art stand around, and materials for various projects are spread out on large tables. Scattered about the place are instruments for measuring spatial and chronological phenomena, along with refractors, mirrors, and prisms of every shape and color. Here, installations are tested, built and dismantled, geometric shapes are explored and adjusted, parts of façades erected, prototypes hung on walls and scrutinized, and reflections of light studied. I visited the Studio several times and on each occasion it looked different.

The first time I was there, I noticed the chassis of a BMW on which Eliasson was working, having been commissioned to turn it into an "Art Car." Another time, small-format prints of photos of his most recent trip to Iceland were spread out on large tables. From among them he was choosing suitable shots to be enlarged and assembled in a series. The hall has a fitted kitchen and a long table, at which everyone can eat lunch or take a break.

Above the large central area is a gallery. There, a group of about eight architects was working under the supervision of Sebastian Behmann. (More of this later.) In the basement is the work space of Einar Thorsteinn, an Icelandic architect, theoretician, and artist with whom Eliasson has worked for a good ten years—their first joint project was a pavilion built in 1996—and whose geometric models in cardboard, paper, and plastic are among Eliasson's many sources of inspiration. From 1969 to 1971, Thorsteinn worked with the architect Frei Otto. Nearby is the workshop where various assistants assemble artworks, saw wood, solder wires, and weld metal. A specially designed white room is used to test optical effects and find out how our perception of objects changes when they are lit with varying shades of white light. Everywhere there are wooden crates for transporting artworks to galleries and museum spaces all over the world. Next to the office and administration department at the entrance is the archive managed by Biljana Joksimović. It contains files of the numerous projects worked on since the mid-1990s, along with stacks of catalogues and publications. And this is where data is organized, which is available to assistants and other interested parties who want to refer back to earlier projects, whether or not they came to fruition.

The atmosphere in the Studio is relaxed, professional, and productive—a mixture of architect's practice and laboratory—and usually as busy as a small city. Eliasson has a staff of around 30. Some are permanent and have been there for several years; others are hired short-term to work on specific projects. On my first visit, I was struck by a table covered with jars of white powder. I was told that the artist Daniel Lergon was engaged in finding out everything about the color white and collecting all the different pigments now on the market. Eliasson was in the process of exploring how the once-rich range of pigments had changed in response to market pressures in the course of the 20th century. Before 1900, there were hundreds of different pigments on sale, but there are now very much fewer. Architect Andreas Eggertsen was researching the mechanisms of the harmonograph, a device widely used in the late 19th century but now virtually forgotten, which translates pendulum movements into images. In the course of experimentation, Eliasson had the harmonograph, which makes two-dimensional drawings, reconstructed and modified so that, using LED (light-emitting diodes), it could produce three-dimensional drawings to be used in architectural plans. Meanwhile, another architect, Kerstin Schmidt, was gathering information on the history of the camera obscura and building models of different sizes in order to combine several of these devices in a single work—for example 15 are used in *Dream house* (2007) [see under S]. Eliasson has long been interested in this piece of equipment, which links photography and architecture and enables several people to observe visual phenomena at the same time. Between 1999 and 2006, he created five such works: *360° camera obscura* (1999), *Camera obscura* (1999), *Camera obscura for the sky* (2003), *Camera obscura für die Donau* [*Camera obscura for the Danube*] (2004) [all, see under S], and *Kaleidoscope with camera obscura* (2006).

After the workshop staff, the architects make up the largest group in the Studio. Sebastian Behmann showed me some of the current projects, including a vision for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C., which explores the communicative potential of the building in order eventually to optimize it. Further on, I saw a kaleidoscope that was to feature in a planned hexagonal walk-in installation with three entrances. The intention was that viewers would be able to step into it as they would into a small garden pavilion and observe a variety of refractions and patterns created by light entering from above. Just at that moment, Portuguese architect Ricardo Gomes was working on a series of geometric color samples from which Eliasson would select a few for further processing. A British colleague, Ben Allen, was busily making sketches of the movements of the sun. This is one of the basics of an architect's training, enabling him, for example, to calculate how shadows cast by buildings will affect neighboring structures. In this case, however, it was not about anything so practical, but an exploration of how solar curves could be used to generate a design for an arts center in Iceland. The walls were covered with print-outs of different variations, with analog and digital representations in a variety of colors.

A large part of the work, as Behmann pointed out, consisted of independently researching one's own ideas, sketching models, and producing series of drawings. What they were used for and whether they would be included in an actual project was of secondary importance. He told me that, from an architect's point of view, Eliasson sometimes seemed almost like a client. Behmann described him as someone who provided concepts and ideas, who approached the team of architects with precise wishes, asked for suggestions, and then selected the ones to be developed further. I was fascinated by this notion that, under certain conditions, the artist could seem like a client in his own studio, since it goes against the popular image of the artist as a totally independent creator demanding full control at every stage of a project, from the first sketches to finished product. Later visits confirmed my initial impression that individual members of the team were allowed plenty of room for their own

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creativity, and that they not only used other people's ideas, but could also bring their own imagination and critical faculties to the design process.

**THE PRODUCTION OF PRESENCE,  
THE PRESENCE OF PRODUCTION**

As one of those rare places in an industrial society where physical labor and complete production cycles remain visible, most people find an artist's studio fascinating. For an art historian like me, who spends so much time alone at a desk, they are particularly appealing. It seems that Eliasson never works alone. And no one in his Studio remains a detached observer. I, too, experienced the Studio not as an enclosed entity that I could reflect upon and observe, but as an efficient machine, inviting not only Eliasson and his team but also me to improve or change things—maybe tightening a screw here or adjusting a valve there. I very soon became part of the Studio. Was I using the machine? Or was it exploiting me? Was I beginning to influence it? Or would it absorb and take control of me, changing my attitudes and my way of looking at things? Although Eliasson himself was not there during my first visit, I immediately felt I was partly responsible for the smooth running of the machine. In the twinkling of an eye, I had been transformed from interviewer to participant. I genuinely had the feeling that I had embarked on a daring adventure. So it came as no surprise when, somewhat later, Eliasson asked me whether I would like to collaborate with him on a project—the project being this book.

In many respects, the Studio resembles Eliasson's exhibitions, because they too are frequently part of a whole series of experiments and tests. I remember the installations standing around the Studio that, not long before, I had seen in the exhibition *The body as brain: Projekt Sammlung (3)*, at the Kunsthau Zug, Switzerland [see under I]. As is so often the case, Eliasson's idea was very simple. He had diverted the stream that usually flowed around the outside of the museum so that it ran through the building. Simple though the concept might be, the realization itself was highly complex. As one can imagine, it is every curator's worst nightmare to find water running through the inside of a museum. It was a pleasure to follow the course of the water, to enter the museum by the back door and observe the play of the light on the little waterfalls that Eliasson had constructed. Internal and external space became one; the surroundings encroached on the museum and became part of the installation. Inevitably the viewer wanted to join in.

In the Studio, all the equipment standing about, the plans on the walls and the models on the tables, had precisely the same effect on me. It is less important to know what the machine is producing than to see how it works. The product becomes secondary to the production process. The studio-machine is there not so much to create anything specific as simply to keep moving. Its purpose is to keep changing, to cast new light on its environment, and to push the boundaries of knowledge. The product of this "equipment," if we can really call it that, I would describe as "presence," in other words the creation of concrete presences, of a "here and now." By "presence," I do not mean that feeling we experience when we encounter something that overwhelms us, bursting through its own boundaries in the way described by American painters and theoreticians in the 1950s and 1960s. Nor do I mean the quasi-religious experience of looking at works of art that the art critic Michael Fried had in mind when he wrote "presence is grace" in his famous 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood." And I do not mean the effect of the sublime so important to many artists since the 1980s, from James Turrell to Anselm Kiefer, and from Andreas Gursky to Mariko Mori. Rather, I use "presence" in the sense of a communal presence of people, a bond forged in

the here and now, and a situation in which all those present are engaged in what can best be described as "paying attention." Our industrial societies are organized in such a way that we are nearly always focusing on the future or the past, whether in politics, commerce, science, or even art. We await the fulfillment of our wishes in the future or look back to events of the past. The "here and now" is a scarce good, and the tourism and entertainment industries are booming precisely because there is an ever-growing demand for events that allow us to enjoy mere presence. Could that be why so many observers see Eliasson's Studio and his art as "cutting edge"? Is it precisely because they produce this substance, this "presence"?

In the Studio, "presence" also seems to operate within a timeframe all its own. While in most architects' offices pressure to meet deadlines can be felt and the atmosphere seems tense and breathless, processes here are often long-term. It is not about finding the fastest way to achieve the final result, but to create a dynamic of experimentation, continually producing variations that can also be used for completely different projects. It is about constantly asking new questions, which also affect the structure of the Studio itself. And, of course, Eliasson has to meet deadlines for exhibitions or commissions. At the same time, however, there is an ongoing project involving the entire team: namely, the development of and continuing changes to the Studio. On some visits, I gained the impression that the Studio would function even if there was no actual work to be done. This is made clear in the title *TYT (Take your time)*, which Eliasson chose for the Studio magazine, published about three times a year and directed at those working in and with the Studio, as well as the wider public. The form of the publication fits in well with the Studio's way of working. It serves as a tool that lends itself to change. The "take your time" concept can, on the one hand, be seen as a call to allow oneself enough time to achieve the best possible result. On the other, in a society based on the division of labor, it can also be read as a challenge not to allow oneself to be told how to use one's time, and to take all the time one needs. While most well-established art journals present their readers with information from the art world—thereby helping them to pass their (spare) time—*TYT* offers a platform for experimentation and reflection, as well as the potential to make the most of that time.

With this concept of presence, the Eliasson Studio occupies an important place in the most recent developments in the history of art. It is part of the function of art to move the observer, to arouse religious, aesthetic, or political emotions, and to set off thought processes and encourage exploration and discourse. For me, one of the great virtues of art is its ability to let us see the world anew and through different eyes. It is crucial to know where art comes from—in other words, to know the studio, especially since the 1950s, when American art focused attention on the relationship between artwork and viewer. The studio is not only the place where the work of art is produced. It is also a showplace where art can be seen, indeed it molds our idea of how art functions. It makes clear that artworks cannot be reduced to isolated and complete objects in an exhibition space. Their primary role is to make the connection between production and reception, acts and decisions, trial and error. So it was that in 1950, Hans Namuth filmed and photographed Jackson Pollock as he worked on his Action Paintings. It was as though Pollock himself were standing right in the paintings. And anyone who has seen Namuth's pictures will never again experience Pollock's works as easel paintings created to be viewed from a distance, but rather as a kind of stage and backdrop for the artist's—and the viewer's—performative action. The most spectacular attempt to extend pictorial space and involve the viewer as Pollock had done was Allan Kaprow's "environments." In 1958 at New York's Hansa Gallery, he created an environment filled with scraps of canvas, wire netting, colored light bulbs, newspaper, broken mirrors, electronic sounds, and even artificially cre-

## IT IS LESS IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT THE MACHINE IS PRODUCING THAN TO SEE HOW IT WORKS.

ated smells, which viewers could enter. Under the title "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art," he stated his intentions: "In the present exhibition we do not come to look at things. We simply enter, are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us, passively or actively according to our talents for 'engagement,' in much the same way that we have moved out of the totality of the street or our home where we also played a part."<sup>1</sup>

Kaprow's environments were aimed at transforming the remote and largely passive observer into an active participant. In Kaprow's art there were no longer viewers, only collaborators. As he said himself, the success of his works depended significantly on the engagement of the spectator. For these works, he invented the term "Happenings." His Happenings—most of which took place not in normal gallery spaces, but in caves, at construction sites and rubbish dumps, or on the beach—were created alongside a new conception of sculpture, which was designed not to be viewed from a distance within an autonomous space but to share space with the viewer. The protagonists of Minimal Art, such as Donald Judd, Frank Stella, and Robert Morris, who also featured as dancer and performer, completely rewrote the rules on the relationship between a work of art and its surroundings. To put it simply, for these artists it was all about taking paintings out of their frames and lifting sculptures off their plinths. For a "specific object," as Judd called his blend of painting and sculpture, or Frank Stella's "shaped canvases," the entire gallery space, or "actual space," was brought into play. Confronted with this kind of art, spectators are required to keep moving about—in other words, to perceive the relationship between the objects and their own physical presence in the exhibition space.

However, unlike Kaprow, the practitioners of Minimal Art did not demand that the onlooker should actually join in. They confined themselves to letting the perceptions and emotions of the viewers become more apparent. Eliasson builds on and extends this tradition. Where he stands out from the rest is in his interpretation of what it means to perceive. Perception, he believes, is not a dispassionate, neutral act, but the product of cultural and historical conditions. As distinct from the sculptors of the 1960s, he does not regard space as a naturally occurring substance but as a completely cultural product, which changes as time passes and as it is used in different ways. In this respect, he shares the view of Robert Smithson, who in the 1970s criticized the romanticism of his colleagues, stating that "Nature is simply another 18th- and 19th-century fiction."<sup>2</sup>

## STUDIOS PAST AND PRESENT

Is Eliasson's Studio a special case? How does it stand in relation to the history of the artist's studio and vis-à-vis other studios on the contemporary art scene? Isn't an artist's studio, in any case, the product of its times? Didn't the conceptual artists of the 1970s promote "post studio art" and dismiss the notion of the studio as the place where things were produced as hopelessly outdated? And, even before, didn't the artists of the 1960s declare war on the glorification and fetishization of the artist's craft, delegating the production process to specialists? Could not some, like Tony Smith, be

said to have created sculptures "over the phone"? And, since then, have we not seen how the practice of art is not restricted to an enclosed space but can happen anywhere? One only has to think of an artist like Daniel Buren, who claims to work *in situ*, or others like Andrea Fraser or Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose art consists of site-specific, ephemeral performances that rarely, if ever, produce tangible objects. In fact, we can legitimately ask whether today there still exist permanent, self-contained, creative spaces—in an age in which many artists such as Eliasson, just like museum directors or the owners of large architectural practices, spend so much time on planes and have projects all over the world. On the contrary, an insight into the everyday life of the art world shows that, far from being an anachronism, studios are an integral part of the production process. A studio with assistants and facilities for administration and logistic handling is essential to nearly all today's internationally active artists, from Jeff Koons to Pipilotti Rist, from Jeff Wall and Vito Acconci to Tacita Dean and Thomas Demand, whose studios are next door to Eliasson's in Berlin.

Eliasson's spacious and well-organized Studio is nothing unusual on the current scene. However, he is much more engaged than his fellow artists in the processes and structures created by the Studio. This does not mean that, like some artists—Bruce Nauman, Paul McCarthy, Matthew Barney, or the late Jason Rhoades—he mythologizes the Studio and makes it the subject of his art, with performances, installations, and films revolving around the tradition and aura of (masculine) artistic creativity and its phases of melancholy idleness and productive creativity. Eliasson has no interest in reflecting on the history of the Studio. For him, the Studio is not the *subject* of his art but the *instrument* with which he produces it. Therefore he strives constantly to expand and improve its precision and efficiency. At the time of my first visit, I did not realize that Eliasson was already looking for a new, bigger studio. In addition to production, he wants to create space where he can work on projects with students and broaden the field of experimentation. Clearly, he uses the Studio as a means of overcoming the separation between the "practice" of the artist's studio and the "theory" of academic education. He makes it a place for projects that, because the structure of our society is based on the division of labor and bureaucracy, have no hope of being realized anywhere else.

What makes his Studio so different from those of his fellow artists and architects is that it underlines the experimental nature of his art and leaves the various stages of the production process exposed to view. It does not separate the conditions of production from the finished work of art, but makes them clear to see. The place where the work is produced is interwoven with the place where it is displayed and admired. This is most obvious at exhibitions where the Studio is effectively reconstructed to accommodate the visitor, in examples such as *The curious garden* (1997) [see under J] or *Surroundings surrounded* (2001) or *Model room* (2003) [see under B], which are variations of a continuing process of radical change and successive experiments with absolutely no ambition to find any kind of "solution." In such exhibitions or works, he turns the structure of the Studio inside out and transforms the surroundings into an experimental laboratory. Likewise, many individual works of art seem to lay bare the mechanics of their production, implying that they form part of a greater whole and are elements of an overall process.

Eliasson's Studio is certainly one of the largest on the current art scene. But if we cast an eye over the history of the artist's studio, we notice that, in days gone by, studios employing large numbers of people were commonplace. Studios like those of Rembrandt and Rubens were run like small businesses employing a range of specialists, enabling the artists to take on numerous commissions. Even in the Middle Ages, when our modern term "artist" was not yet in common use and artists were regarded as tradesmen and belonged to guilds, such as the goldsmiths' or architects' collectives, studios were more like workshops, where whole teams of workers went about

<sup>1</sup> Allan Kaprow, "Notes on the Creation of a Total Art," in *Allan Kaprow: An Exhibition*, The Hansa Gallery, Nov. 25–Dec. 13, 1959, quoted from the slightly modified version in Allan Kaprow, *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, Jeff Kelley (ed.), University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993, pp. 10–12, quotation from p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Smithson, "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art" (*Art International*, March 1968), reproduced in Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*, Jack Flam (ed.), Berkeley, University of California Press, Berkeley 1996, pp. 78–94, quotation from p. 85.