

**OLAFUR ELIASSON AT THE MAC: A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF THE LIGHT, THE SHADOW AND THE SPACE THAT SURROUND US**

**Montreal, June 20, 2017** – Le Musée d'art contemporain (MAC) is pleased to welcome, for the first time within its walls and for the first time in a solo exhibition in Canada, the internationally acclaimed Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. Eliasson will be presenting *Multiple shadow house*, a highly participatory and immersive experience where the spectators become central to each piece. **From June 21 to October 1, 2017**, the MAC invites visitors to literally enter into the artist's work and experience installations that blend light, movement and spatial exploration.

**From Spectator to Participant**

A leading figure in the contemporary art scene, Olafur Eliasson has exhibited large-scale installations all over the world, taking over public spaces as well as galleries and museums to interrogate our relationship with the world, the environment, time and space. Since the mid-1990s, in collaboration with his studio in Berlin, he produces devices that engage the mechanisms we use to perceive light and natural phenomena.

By means of spare and immaterial works that investigate the body, movement and the perception of self and the environment, Olafur Eliasson puts the spectator in the centre of his creations. Rather than simply observing the work, spectators discover that their presence completes it and they become active players. In this way, many of his installations guide our attention not only to what we see, but also to the way in which we look, creating what the artist calls situations of "seeing yourself seeing."

Following the same lines that underlie Eliasson's practice, this exhibition at the MAC will feature a selection of important works that will enable visitors to appreciate the exceptional process of this unique artist.

**A World of Water and Light**

The work resulting from Olafur Eliasson's practice is often, by its very nature, intangible: the play of light, optical illusions, scientific principles and weather elements are key components of his installations. In this exhibition, water and light figure especially prominently.

The exhibition opens and closes with two pieces in which water creates effects of light that in turn evoke opposing time frames: *Big Bang Fountain*, 2014, uses a strobe light to transform a jet of water into an ephemeral sculpture, while *Beauty*, 1993, presents the luminous apparition of a shifting rainbow that appears in a curtain of fine mist falling through a beam of light. The first work produces a fast-moving, apparently endless and constantly changing sequence of momentary compositions, while the second is a continuous but elusive effect that can only be seen when the spectator moves into a certain position.

The exhibition's central work that lends its title to the exhibition, broadly explores the visitor's relationship with architecture and light. *Multiple shadow house*, 2010, is a free-standing "house" where the walls are screens. On both sides of these walls, the shadows of visitors are cast from different angles, in a range of colors. The installation reproduces the minimalism of the museum space while allowing visitors to see the incidental and ephemeral shadow-play created by other visitors behind seemingly opaque walls.

*Your space embracer*, 2004, newly acquired by the MAC, explores light in another way by providing an experience where light hitting a suspended ring is indirectly projected onto the walls and ceiling of a room.

A little like a magician revealing his secrets, Eliasson here shows the surprising result of an effect of light along with the structure that creates it.

### **Dive into Eliasson's universe**

[www.olafureliasson.net](http://www.olafureliasson.net)

 @studiolafureliasson

### **What people are saying about him:**

*"[...] Olafur Eliasson has an impressive history of making art that is accessible, genuinely exciting, and involves its public in a truly pleasurable way."*

– The Guardian

### **Quotes**

*"When you encounter your own shadow on the wall, it is undeniable evidence of your presence in that space. It is a consequence of your being there. If, however, you find yourself following the shadow instead, unexpected things begin to happen. The shadow asks you to move differently. You become activated, so to speak, by your own shadow, so that it is no longer a consequence of your presence, but rather you are the consequence of the shadow's presence. In a reversal of perspective and a loosening of the social strictures we have become accustomed to move and navigate within, your shadow suggests actions and movements that are outside of the conventional ways of moving within an exhibition space. If you follow it closely to where it might lead you, you might even start to dance."*

– Olafur Eliasson, artist

*"For this first and highly anticipated solo exhibition in Canada, the MAC is pleased to present a concise but significant selection of works, dating from 1993 to the present, that are representative of the artist's unique practice blending design, engineering and scientific exploration. [Olafur Eliasson] leads us in a striking perceptual discovery, exploring the relationship of our bodies with space, light and movement through recurrent effects created by shadows, water and natural phenomena."*

– John Zeppetelli, Director and Chief Curator at the MAC

*"These multidisciplinary works present themselves as immersive experiences that investigate the connections between body, movement and perception of self within an environment. Many of his installations guide our attention not only to what we see, but also to the way in which we look, creating what the artist calls situations of "seeing yourself seeing"."*

– Mark Lanctôt, MAC Curator and *Multiple shadow house* exhibition curator

### **Noteworthy**

- This exhibition is the first solo show by Olafur Eliasson in Canada.
- The artist gave a free lecture at Concordia University on June 19, where he discussed this exhibition and his work in general.
- In conjunction with the exhibition, the MAC is organizing two Gallery Talks by curator Mark Lanctôt on **Wednesday, June 28 at 6 p.m. (in French)** and **7 p.m. (in English)**.
- The MAC is also organizing a series of Gallery Talks over the course of the exhibition, by architect and artist Alexander Pilis on **Thursday, June 29 (in English)**; independant curator Aseman Sabet on **Thursday, July 6 (in French)**; art historian Anja Bock on **Thursday, August 10 (in English)**, and artist Michel de Broin on **Wednesday, September 13 (in French)**. All talks start at 6 p.m. at the MAC.

## **Biography**

Born in 1967, Olafur Eliasson grew up in Denmark and Iceland. In 1995, after studies at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, he moved to Berlin where he founded Studio Olafur Eliasson, which today comprises about ninety craftsmen, artists, specialized technicians, computer specialists, architects, archivists, administrators, graphic designers, filmmakers and cooks.

In 2003, Eliasson represented Denmark at the 50th Venice Biennale and presented *The Weather Project* at the Tate Modern in London, a spectacular installation seen by two million visitors. *Take Your Time: Olafur Eliasson*, a survey show organized in 2007 by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), toured until 2010 to various venues, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 2014, *Contact* was the inaugural exhibition at the Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris. In 2016, Eliasson created a series of interventions for the palace and gardens of Versailles, including an enormous artificial waterfall that cascaded into the Grand Canal.

Eliasson's projects in public space include the crystal-like facades for the Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre in Reykjavik (2011); *Cirkelbroen* (The circle bridge), Copenhagen, Denmark, 2015; and *Ice Watch*, for which Eliasson brought melting icebergs from Greenland to Paris on the occasion of the COP21 Climate Conference in 2015.

Together with engineer Frederik Ottesen, Eliasson founded the social business Little Sun in 2012. This global project produces solar lamps and mobile chargers for use in off-grid communities and spreads awareness about the need to expand access to sustainable energy to all. In 2014, Eliasson and long-time collaborator Sebastian Behmann founded an international office for art and architecture, Studio Other Spaces, to focus on interdisciplinary and experimental building projects and works in public space.

## **Organization**

The exhibition was curated by Mark Lanctôt, curator at the MAC.

### **A presence at the MAC Boutique**

In conjunction with the Olafur Eliasson exhibition at the MAC, two of the artist's books will be available at the MAC Boutique : *Studio Olafur Eliasson*, published by Taschen (\$77.95) and *Unspoken Spaces*, published by Thames and Hudson (\$123.00). Visitors will also be able to purchase, at a cost of \$39.95, the lamp produced by the artist's Little Sun social business.

## **Acknowledgements**

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The MAC would also like to thank its partners Loto-Quebec and Ubisoft Montreal, as well as its media partners, La Presse and Publicité Sauvage.

**Also at the MAC: [In Search of Expo 67](#)**

At the same time as the Olafur Eliasson exhibition and to mark the 50th anniversary of Expo 67, the MAC is presenting a major exhibition of new works by contemporary Québec and Canadian artists, all inspired by this famous world's fair. The presentation is organized around three axes: the creation of new work; the recreation of work from 1967 with today's technology, and the activation of archival material.

[In Search of Expo 67](#) gives the artists a unique opportunity to research this fertile ground and produce works that resonate with a contemporary public. Curators of the exhibition are Lesley Johnstone, Curator and Head of Exhibitions and Education at the MAC and Monika Kin Gagnon, a researcher, curator, writer, and co-director of the Concordia University research group CinemaExpo67. **June 21 to October 1, 2017.**

**Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal**

Located in the heart of the Quartier des Spectacles, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal makes today's art a vital part of Montréal and Québec life. For more than fifty years, this vibrant museum has brought together local and international artists, their works and an ever-growing public. It is also a place of discovery, offering visitors experiences that are continually changing and new, and often unexpected and stirring. The MAC presents temporary exhibitions devoted to outstanding and relevant current artists who provide their own particular insight into our society, as well as exhibitions of works drawn from the museum's extensive Permanent Collection. These may feature any and every form of expression: digital and sound works, installations, paintings, sculptures, ephemeral pieces, and more. In addition to its wide range of educational activities familiarizing the general public with contemporary art, the MAC organizes unique artistic performances and festive events. It is a window onto a myriad of avant-garde expressions that extend the reach of art throughout the city and beyond.

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