

Guiding Light

Artist Olafur Eliasson Utilizes Smoke and Mirrors for his Works

Written by Max Padilla

Berlin-based artist Olafur Eliasson knows a few things about making his sculptures come alive — or appear to anyway. His works are known for using natural elements such as water and sunlight, where he manipulates the pieces in fantastical ways through mirrors and prisms. He has created sublime pavilions of ice, a giant sun and manmade waterfalls.

Eliasson's work and photography are the subject of a new book entitled *Studio Olafur Eliasson: An Encyclopedia* (Taschen). The Danish-born artist, who was raised in Iceland, operates his Studio Olafur Eliasson in the German capital with a team of 30 architects, craftsmen, engineers and assistants who help design and construct installations that have been exhibited in museums and public spaces in Japan, the U.S. and Europe.

In 2003, Eliasson created "The Weather Project" — a giant man-made sun created from lamps, mirrors and water vapor for the Tate Modern in London — a work that gave him instant international recognition. The sun gave a haunting and realistic



Tile for Yu-un, 2006,
Obayashi
Collection, Tokyo,
Japan



"The Weather Project," 2003.
Installation view:
Turbine Hall, Tate
Modern, UK
Photo by Jens Ziehe

experience that attracted more 2 million visitors during its run.

Two years later, Eliasson took over a modernist house in Pasadena, Calif., in the hills above the Rose Bowl as part of Emi Fontana's inaugural West of Rome public art project (that Fontana continues this year with "Women in the City") around Los Angeles. For his installation, "Meant to be Lived in," Eliasson moved the owners out and blacked out the living room to create a prismatic hanging light project and let the sun shine into a dining room through colored screens and mirrors.

Following a major mid-career retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, New York's

Museum of Modern Art and PS1 Contemporary Art Center, this summer Eliasson will construct "The New York City Waterfall" — a massive public arts project in which the artist designed and built four man-made gargantuan waterfalls on the waterfront in Lower Manhattan, Brooklyn and Governors Island to open on June 26 and run through October 13. The standalone waterfalls are 90 to 120 feet tall and will be illuminated after sunset. The waterfalls run on "green power" using electricity generated from renewable resources and are lit by LED light. A special Circle Line New York harbor ferry will offer a tour around the installation.

"In developing 'The New York City Waterfalls,' I have tried to work with today's complex notion of

public spaces," Eliasson says. "The Waterfalls appear in the midst of the dense social, environmental and political tissue that makes up the heart of New York City. They will give people the possibility to reconsider their relationships to these spectacular surroundings, and I hope they will evoke experiences that are both individual and enhance a sense of collectivity."

The artist also founded a charity with his wife, 121ethiopia.org, that does work in Ethiopia such as renovating an orphanage.

**See the waterfall at www.taschen.com
www.nycwaterfalls.org
www.121ethiopia.org**