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**SFMOMA PRESENTS *YOUR TEMPO: OLAFUR ELIASSON*  
Artist's BMW H<sub>2</sub>R Project Showcased in First Public and Sole U.S. Presentation**

From September 8, 2007 through January 13, 2008, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) presents the exhibition *Your tempo: Olafur Eliasson*. Organized by Henry Urbach, SFMOMA's Helen Hilton Raiser Curator of Architecture and Design, this special exhibition marks the first public presentation and only U.S. engagement of *Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project*, 2007, a new work by contemporary artist Olafur Eliasson created in conjunction with BMW's Art Car program.



Olafur Eliasson, *Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project*, 2007; installation view at SFMOMA; Courtesy the artist; © 2007 Olafur Eliasson

Eliasson's project transforms an object of advanced industrial design into a work of art that critically and poetically reflects on the relationship between global warming and the automotive industry. The BMW H<sub>2</sub>R race car, a hydrogen-powered vehicle, was developed to attain speed records while pursuing a sustainable future based on the use of regenerative fuel. Eliasson has removed the car's outer shell and replaced it with a complex, translucent skin made of steel mesh, reflective steel panels, and many layers of ice. Heavily weighted by its frozen mantle and immobilized in a room-size, chilled microclimate (powered by renewable geothermal energy), the car becomes a poignant allegory of our postindustrial moment, at once wondrous and unsettling.

"Eliasson's transformation of the H<sub>2</sub>R car is a powerful provocation to design and a reminder of the profound effect design can have on our lives," Urbach remarks. "He has given us a work that challenges the way we understand cars now and helps point us toward a different future. It's an experiment, really, as much a social and political intervention as an aesthetic one, and one whose effects will likely be felt for years to come. One can hardly imagine a better place to exhibit this work than SFMOMA, situated in the heart of a region where driving and environmental politics claim such a strong, yet contradictory hold on our imagination."

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Eliasson's life-size steel-and-ice-covered automobile, like his overall body of work, evokes multiple associations. First, it reflects the artist's long-standing interest in natural phenomena and the sense of dislocation and awe they can inspire. In this context, the ice also draws our attention to hydrogen, which liquefies and becomes fuel-ready at sub-zero temperatures, as well as to the fuel's only byproduct: water. Moreover, the ice challenges viewers to think about the planet's disappearing polar regions, the glaciers and ice caps now threatened by global warming.

"Our movement in space implies friction: not only wind resistance, but also social, physical, and political frictions," Eliasson comments. "Thus, movement has consequences for self-perception and the way we engage with the world. One can look at the body as a mobile vessel or a vehicle that changes the parameters of time and space. In driving a car, one obviously also negotiates the way time-space is constructed. What I find so interesting in the research on movement and environmentally sustainable energy is the fact that it enhances our sense of responsibility in how we as individuals navigate in a world defined by plurality and polyphony."

Widely heralded as one of the most important artists of his generation, Eliasson nimbly merges art, science, and natural phenomena to create multisensory experiences that engage the viewer as an active participant. Born in Denmark in 1967 to Icelandic parents, he is best known for his alluring, site-specific installations that harness optical cognition and recontextualize meteorological elements such as light, wind, temperature, and especially water, in all its various stages. He electrified the art world in 2003 with *The weather project*—a gigantic artificial sun installed inside the Turbine Hall of London's Tate Modern. Made primarily with light, mirrors, and mist, the immersive environment provided a highly sensory experience that few museumgoers are likely to forget. For some 15 years, in fact, Eliasson has been making similarly innovative works on a variety of scales. From indoor rainbows to backward-flowing waterfalls to walk-in kaleidoscopes, his uniquely participatory works examine the boundary between the organic and the artificial. At once extraordinary and familiar, Eliasson's art is intentionally simple in construction but thrilling to behold, sparking profound, visceral reactions intended to heighten one's experience of the everyday.

After more than two years in development, and many form studies and technical experiments, *Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project* will have its official public debut at SFMOMA. The piece will be constructed on-site inside an 800-square-foot custom-made cooling unit in SFMOMA's architecture and design galleries that will preserve the car's icy skin. Fitted with Eliasson's steel-mesh and reflective-steel covering, the stripped-down car frame will be sprayed with 260 gallons of water over the course of several days to gradually create layers of ice (amounting to nearly two tons). Lit from within and glowing in its frozen atmosphere, the resultant work measures more than 4 feet high, 18 feet long, and 7 feet wide. Viewers enter the environment in limited numbers to enjoy an intimate, immersive, and social engagement with the artwork—a fundamental aspect of Eliasson's art.

"The work is so much about an experience," Urbach continues. "You go into a cold space with a small group, almost like a little expedition. There you encounter something you've never seen before that is

completely magical. At the same time, it's a serious and trenchant critique that leaves one with plenty to think about."

In an effort to mitigate the exhibition's carbon footprint, SFMOMA has partnered with Constellation NewEnergy to supply the presentation with regional, renewable energy. The cooling unit that houses *Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project* will be fully powered by energy from the Geysers, the largest complex of geothermal power fields in the world, located just 72 miles north of San Francisco. Using steam from beneath the earth to turn turbine generators that produce electricity, geothermal power is cleaner and safer for the environment than fossil fuel sources, and currently supplies less than half of one percent of the world's total energy needs, though it is estimated that there are sufficient reserves to power the planet for several millennia.

Presented alongside *Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project* is a related work titled *The glacier mill series, 2007*. Photographed by Eliasson during a three-day hike in July 2007, this suite of 30 color prints depicts huge shafts that cut through Vatnajökull, a glacier in southeastern Iceland. Europe's largest glacier, it is now being eroded by an accelerated process of melting, currently estimated at an average of four feet per year. This vast, mobile mass is rife with shafts, known as mills, that have been carved by water from the melting ice. Eliasson's photographs capture the stunning variety of voids in this great glacier.

The exhibition is completed by a short film that offers a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Eliasson's team at work on *Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project* in his Berlin studio. Combining documentary footage with images of drawings, models, and other design tools, the film includes excerpts from two seminars that took place at the studio during the past year. These seminars brought together more than 40 scholars, artists, architects, scientists, and other experts to discuss this and other Eliasson projects and their relation to various artistic, social, political, and environmental issues. The film further demonstrates the degree to which Eliasson's studio, a large workshop composed of many specialists, functions as a site of research, a space of debate, and a sphere of social action.

*Your mobile expectations: BMW H<sub>2</sub>R project* will be accompanied by a fully illustrated book of the same title published by Lars Müller Publishers and featuring Eliasson in conversation with various architects and scientists (available spring 2008).

*Your tempo: Olafur Eliasson* is presented in conjunction with a separate exhibition also organized by SFMOMA. Curated by Madeleine Grynsztejn, in close collaboration with the artist, *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson* (September 8, 2007 through February 24, 2008) marks the first major U.S. survey of Eliasson's projects from 1993 to the present, and will travel nationally following its San Francisco debut. An independent, yet complementary exhibition, the car presentation will resonate with the survey show at SFMOMA, refracting its overarching themes through this single project.

## **The BMW Art Car Collection**

Established in 1975, the BMW Art Car Collection now includes 16 works by prominent artists—including David Hockney, Jenny Holzer, Roy Lichtenstein, Frank Stella, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol—each making a unique artistic statement about the appearance and meaning of cars in our time. It was the French racing driver Hervé Poulain who first commissioned an artist—his friend Alexander Calder—to paint his BMW racecar in the early 1970s, and this was the spark that led BMW to develop the Art Car program. Apart from being permanently displayed at the BMW Museum in Munich, cars from the collection have been exhibited by numerous museums and galleries worldwide, including the Louvre in Paris, the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, and the Guggenheim museums in New York and Bilbao.

In April 2005, BMW selected Eliasson for its 16<sup>th</sup> Art Car commission, with input from an international board of curators comprising Bruce W. Ferguson, dean of Columbia University in New York; Pi Li from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Peking; Suzanne Pagé, director of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Larry Rinder, dean of California College of the Arts in San Francisco; Donna de Salvo, chief curator at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; and Carla Schulz-Hoffmann, director of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich.

## **Special Public Program**

### **Colloquium**

*Our Tempo: Reflections on Your mobile expectations*

Friday, November 16, 1–6 p.m. • Phyllis Wattis Theater

\$10 general; \$7 SFMOMA members, students, and seniors. Ticket includes both programs.

Taking Eliasson's frozen vehicle *Your mobile expectations: BMW H2R project* as a starting point, the speakers at this colloquium address the literal, metaphoric, and historical connections among art, design, science, and technology, tracking how invention and imagination suggest new ways of living in a threatened world.

#### 1 p.m.: MAKING YOUR MOBILE EXPECTATIONS

Sebastian Behmann, Olafur Eliasson Studio; Verena Kloos, president, BMW Group DesignworksUSA; Henry Urbach, Helen Hilton Raiser Curator of Architecture and Design, SFMOMA.

#### 3 p.m.: SITUATING EXPECTATIONS, ART, AND TECHNOLOGY

Michael Hays, Eliot Noyes Professor of Architectural Theory, Harvard University; Andreas and Ilka Ruby, architecture critics, curators, and founders of Texbild, Cologne; Felicity D. Scott, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, Columbia University, and founding editor, *Grey Room*.

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*Your tempo: Olafur Eliasson* is organized by SFMOMA and generously supported by BMW. Renewable geothermal energy is provided by Constellation NewEnergy. Media support is provided by *Dwell* magazine.

Through its devotion to artistic endeavors, BMW aims to support activities that promote an intercultural dialogue, and is currently involved in more than 100 cultural events, programs, and organizations

worldwide. BMW Group Cultural Communications recognizes that creative freedom is just as much a guarantee of groundbreaking work in art as it is in any commercial enterprise. With this latest project by Eliasson, BMW continues its innovative cooperation with artists while exploring the complex social and environmental issues that attend to producing and driving cars today.

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**Museum hours:** Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The Museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

**Koret Visitor Education Center:** Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:30 p.m. Summer hours: Open at 10 a.m.

**Admission prices:** Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

**Visit our Web site at [www.sfmoma.org](http://www.sfmoma.org) or call 415.357.4000 for more information.**

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by Koret Foundation Funds, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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