

Press Release | 18th August, 2020

Olafur Eliasson Awarded the 11th Obayashi Prize



Photo: Brigitte Lacombe, 2016 © 2016 Olafur Eliasson

The Obayashi Foundation is pleased to announce that artist Olafur Eliasson is the recipient of the 11th Obayashi Prize. The Obayashi Prize recognizes and honors outstanding achievements in research and other activities related to cities. The award is presented to scholars, whose research have helped solve various urban issues, as well as individuals who have made great contributions to society by indicating the future of cities and realizing these visions. The prize is awarded biennially and each awardee receives a cash prize of 5 million yen.

About the Obayashi Foundation

The Obayashi Foundation is a public interest incorporated foundation based in Japan that supports scholarly research related to cities.

In order to create a rich and healthy city, where people can live with a sense of fulfillment, it is crucial to study ways of harmonizing urban structures and functionality with culture and the environment. The Obayashi Foundation was established with an understanding that the support from the private sector was imperative for promoting such comprehensive and interdisciplinary research.

The foundation provides grants to support original research projects in the areas of urban planning, cityscapes, urban environments, transportation systems, the history of urban architecture, city and culture, urban policies, and so on. The foundation also gives grants to artists, who work with city-related themes.

<https://www.obayashifoundation.org/english/>

| Reasons for Selection

With a firm belief that art and design have the power to change the world, Olafur Eliasson has been creating awareness-shifting experiences, which in turn, have inspired people to take concrete actions to resolve urgent urban issues, such as the issues of the environment and poverty. The Obayashi Prize commends Mr. Eliasson for such exceptional achievements through his creative activities and various remarks he has made over the years.

| Comment from Olafur Eliasson

"It is a great honour for me to receive the Obayashi Prize, an award that recognizes that art can instigate change. In my work, I conceive of urban and public spaces as sites of debate and urge people to engage actively with society and, ultimately, with our shared future. In recent years, I have become committed to environmental action and, through my Little Sun project, to expanding access to sustainable energy.

Over the last twenty years, I have developed a deep relationship with Japan, and I have always been inspired by its cultural traditions and extraordinary hospitality. Despite the physical distancing that keeps us apart at present, my thoughts are with its people, and I look forward to continuing our ever-growing dialogue".

—Olafur Eliasson



Olafur Eliasson and Frederik Ottesen

Little Sun, 2012

Photograph: Merklit Mersha, 2012

| About Olafur Eliasson

Olafur Eliasson Artist

Born in 1967. From 1989 to 1995, studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. In 1995, he moved to Berlin and founded Studio Olafur Eliasson, which today comprises a large team of craftsmen, architects, archivists, researchers, administrators, cooks, programmers, art historians and specialised technicians.

In 2020 the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo (MOT) is presenting Eliasson's most recent solo show *Sometimes the river is the bridge*.

He lives and works in Copenhagen and Berlin.



Olafur Eliasson, *Beauty*, 1993
Installation view: Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2020
Photo: Kazuo Fukunaga

Olafur Eliasson's art is driven by his interests in perception, movement, embodied experience and feelings of self. He strives to make the concerns of art relevant to society at large. Art, for him, is a crucial means for turning thinking into doing in the world. Eliasson's works span sculpture, painting, photography, film and installation. Not limited to the confines of the museum and gallery, his practice engages the broader public sphere through architectural projects, interventions in civic space, arts education, policy-making and issues of sustainability and climate change.

Since the mid-1990s, Eliasson has realised numerous major exhibitions and projects around the world. In 2003, Eliasson represented Denmark at the 50th Venice Biennale, with *The blind pavilion*. Later that year, he installed *The weather project* in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, London. In November 2005, his solo show *Your light shadow* opened at the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo. *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*, a survey exhibition organised by SFMOMA in 2007, travelled until 2010 to various venues, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York. *Innen Stadt Aussen (Inner City Out)*, at Martin-

Gropius-Bau in 2010, involved interventions across Berlin as well as in the museum. Similarly, in 2011, *Seu corpo da obra (Your body of work)* engaged with three institutions around São Paulo—SESC Pompeia, SESC Belenzinho, and Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo—and spread out into the city itself. In 2014, *Riverbed* filled an entire wing of Denmark's Louisiana Museum of Modern Art with stones and water, emulating a river in a rocky landscape; later that year, *Contact* formed the inaugural exhibition at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. *Verklighetsmaskiner (Reality machines)*, at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2015, became the museum's most visited show by a living artist. In 2016, Eliasson created a series of interventions for the palace and gardens of Versailles and mounted two large-scale exhibitions: *Nothingness is not nothing at all*, at Long Museum, Shanghai, and *The parliament of possibilities*, at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul. *Green light—An artistic workshop*, created in collaboration with TBA21 (Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary), offers a response to the challenges of mass displacement and migration. Originally hosted by TBA21 in Vienna in 2016, the project was part of Viva Arte Viva, the 57th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia, in 2017.



Olafur Eliasson, *Colour activity house*, 2010
21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa
Photo: Keizo Kioku

Eliasson's site-specific installation *Reality projector* opened at the Marciano Foundation, Los Angeles, in March 2018, the same month as his solo exhibition *The unspeakable openness of things* at Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing. *Olafur Eliasson: WASSERfarben* opened at the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in the Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, in June 2018. In July 2019, Eliasson's *In real life* opened at Tate Modern, London, and, in 2020, the exhibition travelled to Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. In 2020 Eliasson also opened *Symbiotic seeing* at Kunsthaus Zurich.



Ice Watch by Olafur Eliasson and Minik Rosing
Supported by Bloomberg
Installation: Bankside, outside Tate Modern, 2018
© 2018 Olafur Eliasson

Eliasson has also produced numerous public projects. *Green river* was carried out in various cities between 1998 and 2001. Eliasson designed Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007 together with architect Kjetil Thorsen for London's Kensington Gardens. *The New York City Waterfalls*, commissioned by the Public Art Fund, were installed along the city's waterfronts in 2008. *Your rainbow panorama*, a circular coloured-glass walkway atop ARoS Museum, Aarhus, Denmark, opened in 2011. Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre (2011), for which Eliasson created the façades in collaboration with Henning Larsen Architects, won the Mies van der Rohe Award 2013. *Ice Watch* brought melting icebergs from Greenland to Copenhagen in 2014 and to Paris on the occasion of the COP21 Climate Conference in 2015. Fjordenhus in Vejle, Denmark, the first building designed entirely by Eliasson, Sebastian Behmann and Studio Olafur Eliasson, was completed in June 2018.



Olafur Eliasson and Frederik Ottesen, *Little Sun*, 2012
Photograph: Michael Tsegaye, 2012

In 2012, Eliasson and engineer Frederik Ottesen founded a social business, *Little Sun*. This global project provides clean, affordable energy to communities without access to electricity, encourages sustainable development through sales of *Little Sun* solar-powered lamps and chargers, and raises global awareness of the need for equal access to energy and light. <www.littlesun.com> In 2019, Eliasson was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for renewable energy and climate action by the United Nations Development Programme.



Olafur Eliasson, *The glacier melt series 1999/2019*, 2019, detail
Installation view: Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
Photo: Erika Ede

| About the Obayashi Prize

The Obayashi Prize recognizes and honors researchers, who have provided benchmarks for the future of cities.

As one of the commendation projects of the Obayashi Foundation, the Obayashi Prize presents biennial awards to individuals, who have indicated groundbreaking ideas about the state and the future of cities and put these visions into practice. The awardees include researchers, whose scholarly works have contributed extensively to the solution of various issues related to cities.

| Recipients of Obayashi Prize

Please refer to the foundation's website below for more details.

<https://www.obayashifoundation.org/english/obayashiprize/>



The 10th Obayashi Prize (2018)

Jack LANG

President of the Institut du monde arabe
(Arab World Institute)



The 5th Obayashi Prize (2008)

Mark LEVINE

Staff Senior Scientist and Leader of China Energy Group, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL)
(at the time of receiving the prize)



The 9th Obayashi Prize (2016)

Alejandro ECHEVERRI

Architect



The 4th Obayashi Prize (2006)

Karl GANSER

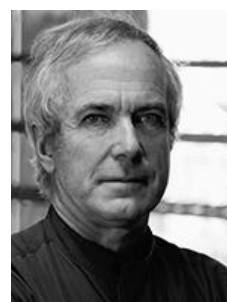
Former President of IBA Emscher Park GmbH



The 8th Obayashi Prize (2014)

Kathryn GUSTAFSON

Landscape Architect



The 3rd Obayashi Prize (2004)

Germain VIATTE

General Curator of Heritage (Conservateur general du Patrimoine), Museology Project Director, the Musee du quai Branly
(at the time of receiving the prize)



The 7th Obayashi Prize (2012)

Antony GORMLEY

Sculptor



The 2nd Obayashi Prize (2002)

Paul KRUGMAN

Professor, Department of Economics, Princeton University
(at the time of receiving the prize)



The 6th Obayashi Prize (2010)

ZHOU Ganzhi

Member of the Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Engineering of China / Special consultant, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China
(at the time of receiving the prize)



The 1st Obayashi Prize (2000)

Vann MOLYVANN

President and Executive Director of the APSARA Authority (Authority for the Protection and the Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap) and Minister of State and Senior Advisor to the Royal Cambodian Government
(at the time of receiving the prize)

| Award Ceremony, Commemorative Lecture & Symposium

The 11th Obayashi Prize Award Ceremony, Commemorative Lecture & Symposium

With the prize recipient, Mr. Olafur Eliasson, as the invited guest, we plan to hold an award ceremony along with a commemorative lecture and a symposium.

Date: 2020 or 2021 (to be determined)

Place: Tokyo, Japan (to be determined)

* To be finalized after the consideration of the latest situation with the new coronavirus infection. Further announcements will be made once the details are confirmed.

| Contact

The Obayashi Foundation

KONWA BLDG 5F, 1-12-22, Tsukiji, Chuo-ku, Tokyo

104-0045, Japan

E-mail : obf-zaidan@obayashi.co.jp

Press Contact:

TM PRESS, Akihiro Mochizuki

E-mail : mochizk@gmail.com