

OLAFUR ELIASSON

DENMARK

Olafur Eliasson’s central motivation is to bring awareness to the world’s ecological decline. From photography to experiments with light, research groups to huge public installations, the Danish-Icelandic artist’s work poetically crosses the lines between art and science. *The glacier melt series (1999/2019)* is one of the most direct examples of how he uses art to inspire climate action. This work consists of images of Icelandic glaciers, photographed 20 years apart. Their decay is unquestionable, and like much of Eliasson’s work, call for action. He uses exhibitions and art to raise wider awareness. Eliasson’s best-known projects have been large phenomenological installations, such as *The Weather Project*, which turned

the Turbine Hall in London’s Tate Modern gallery into an internal sunlit atrium, and his *Waterfall* series, which consists of curtains of water pouring in midair. However, he has also made works on a much more intimate scale.

Little Sun is a social business project created with engineer Frederik Ottesen, which aims to bring clean, affordable solar energy to the 1.1 billion people around the world who live without electricity. To coincide with his retrospective at the Tate Modern, he had 30 blocks of glacial ice from Greenland placed outside the museum for people to see, touch, and hear as the ancient, opaque blocks cracked and melted away. *Ice Watch*, the artist explained, aimed to raise awareness of climate change and explore “how feelings of distance and disconnection, of proximity and relevance, hold us back or make us engage.” In the face of distance and apathy, Eliasson calls for motivated change and “individual and collective decision-making.” He continues, “Our mark, our footprint, on the Earth is real.” Rather than inducing fear, Eliasson uses art and culture as a tool to inspire. “I am hopeful that we can create inner transformation and push for systemic change,” he says. (FG)

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Little Sun
2012–ongoing, social
business project
in cooperation with
Frederik Ottesen

2–3
The glacier melt series
1999/2019
2019, detail (Fláajökull)
30 C-prints
each 91×31×2.4 cm

