



# Art Heard: Olafur Eliasson Beams into Art Basel Miami Beach Conversations

November 19, 2013

by Sandra Hale Schulman

The beautiful beast that is Art Basel Miami Beach will be rearing its head from Dec. 5 through 8, 2013, bringing together an international roster of high-profile artists, museum directors, collectors and curators in the monster Miami Beach Convention Center.

While the fair is about seeing (and also being seen), one of the most intriguing programs will be about listening: the Conversations and Salon forums scheduled daily in a new auditorium space this year.

Featuring a stellar lineup of artists, the hour-long talks, each followed by a Q&A, will be available online afterwards for all to see at [artbasel.com/miamibeach/talks](http://artbasel.com/miamibeach/talks). Archived talks dating back from 2002 are on the site now.

Featured artists in this year's Art Basel Miami Beach Conversations series, launching on Thursday, Dec. 5, include, among others, Doug Aitken, Cory Arcangel, John Baldessari, and Dara Birnbaum. One of the more intriguing artists to speak is Olafur Eliasson, an Icelandic artist known for his unusual sculptures and large-scale installation art that incorporates such elemental materials as light, water, and fluctuations in air temperature and humidity.

He made *Waterfalls* rage beneath the Brooklyn Bridge in 2008, and bathed the Tate Modern in London with golden faux sunlight in 2003 with *The Weather Project*, installed in the open space of the museum's Turbine Hall.

Eliasson used large humidifiers to create a fine mist in the air from a mixture of sugar and water. Suspended from the ceiling was a semicircular disc made up of hundreds of uniformly colored lamps radiating yellow light. The ceiling also held a mirror so visitors could see themselves reflected as tiny black shadows detailed by the mass of light overhead.

Many visitors lay down as if sunbathing or sun worshipping, spelled out words or aligned their bodies to create peace signs. In six months, the work reportedly attracted two million visitors.



"The Weather Project" by Olafur Eliasson. Photo courtesy The Tate Modern.



Viewers of “The Weather Project” by Olafur Eliasson sunbathing on the floor. Courtesy The Tate Modern.



“Waterfalls” by Olafur Eliasson installed in Brooklyn, NY. Courtesy of the artist.

Eliasson’s newest project, Little Sun, is a global initiative to bring clean, affordable light to off-the-grid areas using small solar-powered lamps shaped like goofy but cheery little daisy suns.

In a statement on the Little Sun website, Eliasson asserts that “Light is for everyone—it determines what we do and how we do it. This is why Frederik Ottesen and I have developed the solar-powered lamp Little Sun. One part of the artwork is the lamp and the activities it enables. The other is the successful distribution of Little Sun in off-grid communities, its journey from production to usage.

“In everyday life, it is important that we critically engage in global initiatives and local contexts. Our actions have consequences for the world. Little Sun is a wedge that opens up the urgent discussion about bringing sustainable energy to all from the perspective of art.”



Olafur Eliasson with his Little Sun design.

This is a fascinating route for using art in a practical way to meet an urgent need. The Little Sun lamp, which Eliasson designed, was launched just last year and so far has distribution in Africa and Japan.

A 3-hour charge in the sun produces up to 5 hours of light. Safer and cleaner than kerosene or gas lamps, this little portable beacon can be worn as a pendant, carried as a hand-held lantern, hung on a wall, used as a table lamp, or attached to a bike.



Man riding a bike with a Little Sun. Courtesy  
[www.littlesun.com](http://www.littlesun.com).

Calling it a “work of art that works in life,” Eliasson notes that the small solar lamps profit the distributors as well as the local users. It’s also being used in on-grid areas to bring down electrical costs.

The uses and ramifications of this small, smart design are immense, and illuminate just how broad a reach a contemporary global artist can have.

**BASIC FACTS:** In Miami Beach, Olafur Eliasson will speak from 3 to 4 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 5, in Conversation with Klaus Biesenbach, Director of MoMA PS1 in the Hall C Auditorium of the Miami Beach Convention Center.

The talk is part of Art Basel Miami Beach’s Conversations. Each morning talk features pairings of prominent members of the international art world, each offering their perspective on producing, collecting and exhibiting art. For a full lineup, visit [www.artbasel.com](http://www.artbasel.com).

Conversations take place daily from 10 to 11:30 a.m. throughout the fair at Hall C auditorium. Please note: This is a newly created auditorium for 2013. Entrance through Lobby C, free public access. One-hour panel discussions are followed by a 30-minute Q&A session. Videos of all the talks will be posted at Art Basel’s website after the fair.

For information on Olafur Eliasson, visit [www.olafureliasson.net](http://www.olafureliasson.net). For further details, visit [www.littlesun.com](http://www.littlesun.com).

[Little Sun in 2 Minutes](#) from [Little Sun](#) on [Vimeo](#).

---

Copyright 2013 Hamptons Art Hub LLC. All rights reserved.