



Media Information
August 2007

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art presents the 16th BMW Art Car showcased in the exhibition "Your tempo: Olafur Eliasson"

Munich/Berlin/San Francisco. From September 8, 2007 through January 13, 2008, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) will present 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 H₂R project, 2007*, a new work by contemporary artist Olafur Eliasson created in conjunction with BMW's Art Car program.

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 H₂R 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.

"Movement has consequences for self-perception".

"Eliasson's transformation of the H₂R 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 that dedicates equal passion to driving and to environmental politics."

Eliasson's 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.

"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."

Company
Bayerische
Motoren Werke
Aktiengesellschaft

Postal Address
BMW AG
80788 München

Telephone
+49 89 382 24753

Internet
www.bmw.com



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The artist Olafur Eliasson.

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.

Your mobile expectations: BMW H₂R project.

After more than two years in development, and many form studies and technical experiments, *Your mobile expectations: BMW H₂R 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 530 gallons of water over the course of several days to gradually create layers of ice. Lit from within and glowing in its frozen atmosphere, the resultant work measures more than 5 feet high, 17 feet long, and 8 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 the beholder with plenty to think about."

Accompanying the artwork is a short film that offers a behind-the-scenes view of Eliasson's team at work on *Your mobile expectations: BMW H₂R project*, as well as two seminars that took place in his Berlin studio in conjunction with the project, the first in June 2006 and the second a year later. These seminars



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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 H₂R 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 in 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. Venues will include the Museum of Modern Art, NY, and the P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center.

The BMW H₂R Car.

With the hydrogen-powered BMW H₂R as their latest Art Car, the BMW Group is continuing in the true tradition of the BMW Art Car Collection. The BMW H₂R research vehicle has established nine records for hydrogen-powered vehicles featuring a combustion engine. On the high-speed track at Miramas (France) the company proved that hydrogen can replace conventional fuels, without the driver having to forego the driving dynamics offered by modern cars.

The technical specifications of the H₂R are verification of this. The twelve-cylinder, six-litre engine delivers more than 210 kW/285 bhp. With such power available, the prototype accelerates from 0-62 mph in around six seconds, achieving a top speed of over 300 km/h (186 mph). The hydrogen combustion engine is based on the petrol-driven power unit featured in the BMW 760i, consequently it is equipped with state-of-the-art technologies such as Valvetronic fully variable valve control.

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



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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 2005, BMW selected Eliasson for its 16th 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, where the board of curators held their meeting during two days in April 2005.

Your tempo: Olafur Eliasson is organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and is supported by BMW.

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.

For further information please visit:

www.sfmoma.org
www.olafureliasson.net
www.bmwgroup.com/culture
For questions please contact:

Corporate Communications

Thomas Girst, Head of Cultural Communications
Telefon: +49 89 382 24753, Fax: +49 89 382 28017

Holger Lapp, Vice President Public Relations
Telefon: +49 89 382 17700, Fax: +49 89 382 25454

Media Website: www.press.bmwgroup.com, www.bmwgroup.com/kultur
e-mail: presse@bmw.de



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