

Olafur Eliasson
at Fondation Louis Vuitton,
Paris

A JOURNEY THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

Although Olafur Eliasson has been credited with reorienting viewers from standing to lying down, 'Contact' rather traverses some mix of astro-theater, live cinema, fun-house antics and smoke and mirrors. If 'living sculptures' present living matter, then live cinema tenders participants enacting scripted experiences, however asequential, thus propelling performers on a journey through space and time that continues long after they pass below the Sortie sign. Recent City of Light exhibitions by Thomas Hirschhorn, Pierre Huyghe, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Julio Le Parc, Philippe Parreno and Hiroshi Sugimoto, attest that live cinema is en vogue.

Since spectators do the acting here, calling 'Contact' theater seems inaccurate. Most museum exhibitions are no less scripted and staged, yet none demonstrably modify visitors' situations and stations, so as to insinuate changing scenes, scales, and roles. 'Contact' performers experience the world from the perspective of objects that range in size from actual to macro to micro and bear witness as participants in the real and voyeurs of the virtual.

Despite long lines to enter both the museum and 'Contact,' performances proved comparatively

brief. I suspect that films like 'Interstellar' and 'E.T.' play formative roles here. 'Touch' (all works 2014), an invitation to caress a meteorite initially orients actors. Like Proust's madeleine story, 'Touch' transported me backwards in time to Sugimoto's meteorites on view at Palais de Tokyo and forwards to the giant meteorite in Sigmar Polke's painting installation upstairs, as well as the pocked, manhandled surfaces of Alberto Giacometti's sculptures exhibited nearby.

My 'E.T.' moment occurred in 'Map for unthought thoughts,' where moving shadows cast from five concentric fences project a giant basket-like

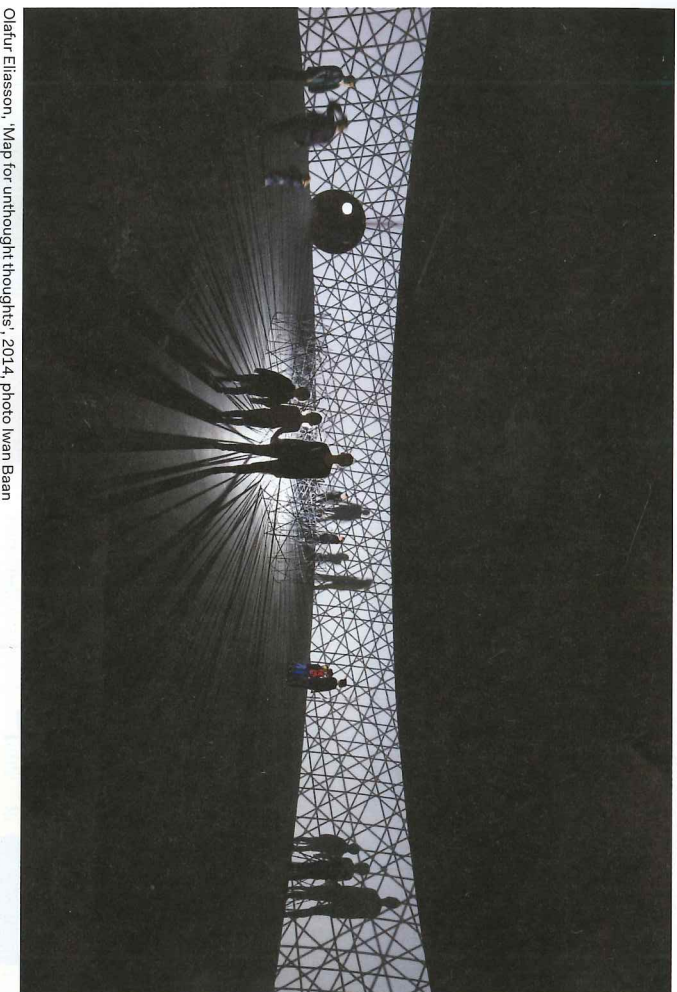
shadow, inlaid with overlapping human bodies. People discovered their figures as shadows cast onto a corral encircling the room or reflected on the mirrored wall. After basking in the seeming glow of a campfire, I suddenly noticed a rather ominous, black circular shadow spreading across the ceiling, as a single, revolving light-source grew brighter and then darker. The more the basket-like shadow bounced up the wall, the more I sensed the ceiling closing down on me, simulating an eclipse. Although the giant basket-like shadow bonded me to the room's occupants, emotions provoked by this work were all my own. One

can share one's thoughts, but somatic experiences, including unthought thoughts, remain personal.

I was visibly impressed by the proto-holographic effects of three autostereoscopic spheres, one of which projected a water fountain's vertical chute, reconfigured here as a spinning toroid, orbiting the glass globe's surface. Two other autostereoscopic spheres let participants observe other parts of the building, sometimes zeroing in on people visibly excited by being on camera, just as those walking amongst the mirrored-facades of 'Inside the horizon,' a corridor of 43 prism-shaped columns commissioned for the grotto, stop to groom themselves. Comprised of nine interwoven spirals modeling the turbulent flow of whirlpools, tornadoes or twisters, 'Bridge to the future' thrusts spectators into a faraway void. 'Big Bang Fountain', which temporarily freezes sprays, is surely the crowd pleaser, but it is also the least disorienting.

'Contact,' the exhibition's namesake encircles performers in a glowing golden-orange neon ring, as if one is atop the world witnessing an advancing planetary body block out the sun. 'World illuminator' features two sun trackers installed on the building's roof deflecting captured light onto 'Dust particle,' a complex polyhedron suspended from the ceiling like a chandelier. On the topic of blocked sunlight, the day I visited was way too cloudy to bear witness to this effect. Although this exhibition's shifting scales were inspired by the Grand Unified Theory, each performer is left to blaze his/her own memorable voyage.

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Olafur Eliasson, 'Map for unthought thoughts', 2014, photo Iwan Baan

Olafur Eliasson: 'Contact' until 16 February 2015 at Fondation Louis Vuitton, 8, Avenue du Maratna Ganilh, Bois de Boulogne, Paris, FR. www.fondationlouisvuitton.fr