

Fourteen views of Studio Olafur Eliasson's sustainability agenda

Studio Olafur Eliasson, founded in Berlin in 1995, comprises a diverse team of craftspeople, specialised technicians, architects, archivists, art historians, web and graphic designers, filmmakers, cooks, and administrators. They work with Eliasson to develop, produce, and install artworks, projects, and exhibitions, as well as on experimentation, archiving, research, publishing,

and communications. The excerpts presented here are from conversations with some of the many people working on making the studio's activities more sustainable. They have been edited for clarity and arranged thematically to give a broad view of the studio's sustainability agenda.

Speakers (in order of appearance)

Olafur Eliasson, artist

Sebastian Behmann, heads the design team at Studio Olafur Eliasson and is co-founder of Studio Other Spaces

Geoffrey Garrison, editor and copywriter in the research and communications department

Margaret Lutz, business development in the design department

Myriam Thomas, heads the development and production team

Lauren Maurer, chef

Britta Kampe, works in the front office and on upgrading the studio's day-to-day sustainability measures

Rabea Welte, department coordinator in the development and production team

Kim Kraczon, conservator in the development and production team

Kerstin Palermo, project manager in the development and production team

Kajana Wagner, artwork coordinator in the exhibitions department

Anna Engberg-Pedersen, heads the research and communications department

Vanja Zanko, Olafur's executive assistant

Caroline Eggel, heads the exhibitions department, responsible for *Sometimes the river is the bridge*

The Big Picture

OLAFUR | A work of art embodies a set of values and ideas. It reflects the artist's convictions—about sustainability and the climate, for instance—and I think there has to be synchronicity between what art is about and how art is made. I don't believe that we can separate the content from how an artwork is produced. It's not always possible, but I increasingly work with this in mind when making everyday choices regarding the artworks.

My studio does not stand outside the shared responsibility that we have towards the planet. Everyone can do a little, including smaller institutions or companies like us. Football clubs can do something. Everyone. At the studio we are doing two things: raising awareness of the climate crisis through projects and communication, and we are focused on improving our own operations. It's important to say that we're still early in the process. We embrace ethical responsibility and data, as well as the ambition to continue to exist as a studio. It is about navigation, about defining the relationships between these components.

SEBASTIAN | The need to produce our artworks in a more sustainable way wasn't that clear, let's say, ten years ago. Back then, there was an artistic idea that we all felt was great, and we thought, let's put it out there. And what it actually meant for the rest of the planet was, I would say, less of interest to us. That aspect naturally developed out of the broader culture we were surrounded by.

A year and a half ago, we came to the point

where we decided it was just not enough to only talk about the subject. We actually have to do the work of reducing our footprint to really achieve anything. The idea was to work on a kind of blueprint or a prototype for improving our footprint, which others could use as a tool as well. And we structured this as we structure any design project—we started with a base concept and a goal. And the goal was to really look into all the aspects of what we do, from waste management to how we produce to the way we do our planning for projects, how much we travel to different countries and how we get things there. Our goal is to plan not only time schedules and the budget of a project but also to calculate and evaluate our environmental impact—to see where and what we can improve. The impact of a project affects our decision to go ahead with it or not.

This process of becoming more sustainable means getting out of your comfort zone and going into, let's call it, the real world. And you have to make compromises, but you also have to always make clear where you are coming from, where you are going. And that kind of friction is something that we feel now in implementing sustainable solutions in transport, for instance. We cannot come with our ethical standards alone. We have to be highly open for other solutions and start a dialogue. So the friction can be very positive.

OLAFUR | Maybe I should give some context to the climate question because it's actually not new within my work, although I used to think

and speak about it in different terms. I used to think that nature exists, that there's something beyond human reach. But as Bruno Latour has said: 'there's no outside,' no undiscovered nature or reservoir of resources. And I've come to realise this over the last decade. So when I talk about Iceland today, I talk about its landscapes, not its nature. I've been photographing landscapes in Iceland for years. In 2007 I made a series of photos, called *The glacier mill series*, in which I documented these deep shafts that form in the glaciers when the melt water from the surface of the glacier bores down into the ice. And there was the *Jokla series* (2004), which documents the original path of the river Jokla in Iceland before it was dammed to create a new hydroelectric power plant. So you could say that my interests in the disappearance of nature, in landscapes, and in the climate have existed for long and I have been refining the way that I talk about these interests over the years.

In 2003, when I created *The weather project*—the big sun that I installed at Tate Modern—it wasn't yet about the climate for me. It was about atmospheres and weather systems and about a constructed weather situation. It was about how we organise ourselves in social contexts and how we use the weather as a shared point of reference. Today, when people think about this artwork, they often think of it within the context of the climate. And I welcome that. One measure of an artwork's success for me is when it has the capacity to travel from its origin and maintain relevance at a much later time, when thinking

and outlooks have changed.

More recently I created a large-scale public intervention called *Ice Watch* with Minik Rosing, who's a geologist. Photos don't really convey the beauty of the ice blocks that we harvested from fjords in Greenland for this project. They're just *incredibly* beautiful! To touch a block like that, to see the vivid blue and white tones, feel the cold—that activates such a strong register of perceptions. Minik and I both believe vehemently in science and data, but also agree that they often cannot spur action on their own; a compelling narrative or a direct, visceral experience can make the data felt in a different way.

GEOFF | Communication and outreach were central to *Ice Watch*. At the same time, the exposure gave rise to a vibrant conversation on social media about the wisdom of consuming CO₂ in order to raise awareness of climate change. And we decided to engage with this issue directly by saying, Yes, this has a carbon footprint, it consumed 55 tonnes of CO₂, and let's talk about why we do not usually talk about this side of an artwork.

MARGARET | At the studio, I think, we are just starting to grasp the magnitude of the climate challenge. The one thing we learned in this whole process is that the obvious solution is often not the most sustainable. When we started looking into the details of where our trash goes or where fuel comes from and where energy comes from, sometimes what looks like a sustainable solution

for a small operation like ours, although probably not enough.... It's important to me to be a part of society, a part of the climate movement, and I want the studio to be a part of that. I want us to have some common goals that we are all striving towards. I have no illusions about micro-actions being enough, but with enough micro-actions we can accelerate actions at the macro-level, such as a tax on carbon, which will ultimately be key in creating change.

Micro-actions in Everyday Studio Life

OLAFUR | One of our former chefs, Asako (who's also an artist), brought in a book by Vandana Shiva while we were still at the old studio in Invalidenstrasse, sometime before 2008. She was inspired by Shiva's food activism and her radical thoughts on seeds, biodiversity, and the relationships and networks of all things. And we realised that if this were to be our target, the kitchen would have to become vegetarian. And it did. And then, not long ago, it actually became vegan.

We have a great and dedicated kitchen team at the studio, who have championed climate-conscious work for longer than any other part of the studio. Their produce is delivered from Apfeltraum, a community-supported-agriculture farm just outside Berlin. For some of the events that we have held in recent years, the kitchen team put together carbon-neutral dinners, like the launch of Mary Robinson's great book

is not.

MYRIAM | It's really like a new growing plant here in the studio. In the beginning, it was a little bit hard and there was not so much fun in it. It was more like a burden for everyone.

And then there was this moment when it turned into a project everyone was excited about and happy to work on. The sustainability topic and the new materials created new ideas. I think there is a lot of creative potential here. It's a limitation, but it also means new developments, new research, new materials. Also for Olafur it was inspiring. It influenced the art. It wasn't that we just use another material for the same purpose, but we develop a new generation of artworks now.

SEBASTIAN | We've set up a model for organising the types of compensation we can do to balance a project's climate impact:

First of all, we use the creativity of the studio itself, investing more thinking and manpower to find ways to reduce the impact of a project. That, of course, costs money, but it is a form of compensation.

Second, we use the reach and reputation of the studio to help other companies and partners become more sustainable and get their voice out in the world. In this communication capacity, we also work on articles, take part in symposiums and conferences to bring more and more people on board.

Third, we are investing in infrastructural

Climate Justice. There was a report not long ago about 'Food in the Anthropocene,' in which the authors advocate a Great Food Transformation to achieve healthy diets for the growing world population and respond to climate change. I am proud that our kitchen has already adopted this.

They are also involved in smaller experiments that bring excitement to the studio work, such as turning vegetables into pigments for a new series of ecologically infused watercolours. I really believe in these larger systems of interconnectivity.

LAUREN | Having a vegan, plant-based kitchen makes a big difference to our carbon footprint—especially when we are this many people, four times a week. And then there's the packaging. We are trying to get everything delivered in bigger packages, also biodegradable when possible. Once you see the numbers, you can't really get it out of your mind.

It is a challenge for us to cook only vegan meals, because it's so easy to add a labneh or some chèvre to a salad to make it tasty. It's really a lot easier to have a vegetarian rather than a vegan kitchen, but we're constantly discussing, experimenting, and learning new techniques, finding balance within the plant world.

BRITTA | I think awareness in the studio has grown over the last year. If you want to buy a pen, you ask: OK, do I need it? That's the first thing. And then: does it need to be plastic or can it be wood? But then, where is the wood being

improvements to the studio to become more sustainable, installing, for example, solar panels on the studio roof, combined with a charging station for electric cars in front of the studio. Investing in these kinds of changes also has a return, of course; it's not just money you spend. It has a positive effect on your energy costs, for example.

And the fourth is to provide economic support to like-minded companies or thinkers who are in the early stages of developing sustainable projects that might not yet be suitable for markets but need support. It is important for us as a studio to use our creativity and Olafur's name to support companies and people working in this field.

To become a sustainable studio in the next ten years, we need to be more radical in redefining the way we do art and the way we do commissions, exhibitions, the whole thing. I would like to see us devote five per cent of our income to sustainability, in terms of work hours and effort, making sure that it is part of the overall way of conceiving and planning any project or exhibition. To make this happen we have chosen one person from each department to oversee the sustainability push and have created a position at the studio devoted to sustainability. If every company invested five per cent of their income, that would be a huge amount of money that, properly spent, could have an enormous impact in a very short time to improve the situation.

OLAFUR | We should be able to cut fifty per cent of our carbon emissions by 2030. That's a lot

produced? We started to replace items with ecological alternatives and, of course, colleagues come and say, 'OK, I used to have this pen for ten years, why can't I have it anymore?' And you say, 'Yeah, well, it's plastic.' And then you're all of a sudden in a discussion—and people have good ideas to even dive deeper into things.

We found a new supplier for the office supplies and have started using recycled paper. This is still a challenge, however. We needed, for example, plotter paper, and after a lot of research, we finally found recycled plotter paper and bought all they had, but now we have used it all and it's not being produced anymore, because architects don't want to have greyish plots where they can't see the details. So we tested a lot and now we're back to zero on that. This is what looking into sustainability leads you to: you look at the next step and the next step and you can get lost in it.

LAUREN | We don't throw anything away that we have cooked. Nothing. It's either eaten in the afternoons or people take it home or we recycle it in the next day's food, or two days later, like the Ethiopian food we had yesterday, it will come out again in little dishes for some of the tables. We made a mushroom consommé and then used the mushrooms that we had cooked to make a spread for the bread. So we are really thinking about that a lot.

RABEA | Recycling the glass we use for artworks is really difficult because the normal recycling system in Germany is only for bottles. There

are no recycling processes for other things made of glass. We mostly use glass spheres and hand-blown glass sheets and coated glass. We are talking to other companies who use glass as a production material, to learn how they recycle it. Lamberts recycles parts, but it's only possible to mix brighter glass in with darker glass, so if they produce dark glass waste, they just have to throw it away. It's not being recycled or reused in any way.

In searching for a way to recycle glass, we came across a company who reuse glass by breaking it into small pieces and using heat to fuse the shards into a semi-transparent construction material for architecture. So maybe it's possible to use the glass sphere waste as a production material for artworks in the future.

It's the Packing, It's the Transport, It's Everything Around the Artworks

KIM | We don't really want materials in packaging that attract moisture and release harmful gases or become acidic and disintegrate around the artworks. A lot of these nascent materials—especially the foam made from mushrooms—a lot of it is conceptual, coming out of design studios and art studios, and it's not meant for mass consumption.

But there are foams that are made out of up to 100% recycled material, although they are slightly less archival, because the polymer chains are shorter, which means they will break down

certain budget. It's still quite up to the subjective judgement of the project leader, but we now at least have the numbers in a table to quantify the project's potential carbon footprint.

Thinking about carbon also affects the planning of fabrication. For example, we are working on a commission in Sydney, and in order not to have to ship so many materials we are looking into the possibility of producing as much as possible close to where the work will be installed. We are even looking into 3D-printing something in other parts of the world, so that all the design process happens here and then we send the file to have it printed there. Similarly, we would like to build up a network of trusted companies around the world, so that we could conceivably just send a completed plan to them to fabricate. We really would almost never have to transport heavy materials at all.

Artworks on the Move

SEBASTIAN | We have begun inserting clauses into our contracts saying that we will not fly heavy installation parts around the world even though this could mean that we might not meet deadlines. And of course this is a big decision that everyone has to support, starting with the clients and the galleries and also the people running the projects in our teams.

And I think this is related to the way we produce and design projects. There are no standardised products in the art world. We

quicker, unfortunately.

One of the main points is to just reduce the need for it: come up with clever packing solutions that don't involve packing materials; I think that is the foremost issue that needs to be addressed.

SEBASTIAN | If you think about packing material, what is it actually for? To hold the work in place to make sure it does not get damaged in transport. And there are other ways of doing this. So we've come up with a system of springs that can be screwed into the crate to hold the artwork in place. Once the work has arrived, you can take the spring system out of the package and install it in another.

MYRIAM | The material for the artworks itself is not so bad. As it is an artwork, it is made to last forever, so it will never be thrown away. And the way it's produced, it's something we wouldn't change so much. But it's the packing, it's the transport, it's everything around it, it's how we work, what liquids we use here in the workshop. It's more this.

We talked to nearly all of our production partners who we are working closely with. We thought we would have to push and really force them to change, but it turns out nearly everyone working with us is already working on sustainability. They said, 'We are happy Studio Olafur Eliasson is supporting this and also flexible enough to maybe then use other materials, wait a week longer until something is delivered.' So, very open.

always have to think of special, new ways of doing something, so that the same effort we make in the creative process of designing something we also have to put into the shipping of it. This brings us closer to a more holistic way of thinking about a project.

MARGARET | In shipping, we have started looking into the possibility of using trucks and trains, whenever possible, and it turns out that for a recent commission in China, a large steel spiral built for a new museum building, transporting it there by truck is faster than putting it on a plane. And not only is it faster, but it's a lot cheaper, because with a plane, it's such a big artwork, it would have to leave Germany from a certain airport, and we would have to wait for a plane with enough space for the artwork, and then it would arrive in Beijing at a certain airport that is not close to the site.

SEBASTIAN | We're beginning to see more acceptance today if something does not arrive on time because we chose to send it by truck or train rather than by air. Of course, we want the work to get there and be installed on time, but people are willing to accept some delay and complication in planning as long as it is for a good reason. All partners have to be on board with this. They have to accept the risks of sustainable transport options. Being radical on the environment means accepting certain risks.

KAJANA | A lot of transport is based on

KERSTIN | We are now at the point where we have to rethink every step, and maybe we have to change our aesthetics. Instead of having, for example, a very beautiful, large surface that is perfectly black it will maybe be a bit more rough, because it's very difficult to achieve this using old-school methods, without any toxic components. Ecological colours don't have this power and this is an aesthetic question also.

I think in our art practice, we might move to the more valuable materials we know already. So copper you can recycle. Wood in general, hardwood, will always be OK. The composites of wood are not. So I think we should go to these very pure and valuable materials.

OLAFUR | A question that I sometimes get is: Would you compromise artistically to make a work of art more sustainable? And for me the answer is, no, I cannot make an artwork that I don't consider good, so I wouldn't make a good decision for the climate that leads to a bad artistic outcome. I'd rather in that case not make the work at all. So based on a subjective evaluation, I have to balance considerations of the work's carbon footprint and its aesthetics. This also means that there are groups of works that I will stop making until more sustainable production methods have been found.

MARGARET | We've come up with a tool for assessing the sustainability of a project, just as we assess whether it can be realised within a

routine. And I think for 'sustainable' shipping—in quotation marks because it is not really sustainable still, of course—there are no routines for that yet. It has a lot to do with breaking a habit, on our side as well as on the side of the shippers and the institutions. It's the same for flying and things like that. You start something and you see that it hasn't been done before or not so many times or it's not the norm. And people are, in the beginning, just not so into it, and then you just push through the first three hurdles, and then it actually comes together quite easily.

People on the Move

GEOFF | While the lion's share of the carbon footprint for *Ice Watch* resulted from transporting the ice from Greenland to London, the second largest factor was actually air travel to London for meetings and for installation and communications purposes. Flying, although it was only responsible for sixteen per cent of the work's total emissions, was the one thing we could have most reduced had we taken this into consideration beforehand. Seeing this in the carbon footprint report was certainly food for thought.

BRITTA | We've started tracking the emissions of our flights to get an idea of what our carbon footprint is and considering how we can reduce it. Surprisingly, Ryanair is one of the companies with the lowest CO₂ footprint, but of course

there are other things to keep in mind when you choose an airline. Flying business class almost doubles the CO₂ footprint because of the space that it needs.

And then we tried to find alternatives to going by plane and this is kind of adventurous sometimes. Now, we always try if it's within Europe to at least go one way by train, and this halves the emissions. Although it turns out that in some directions, there are no train connections. If you want to go to Spain, it's very complicated. You can go to France and then take the bus and then go by train again. So it's always a challenge of what is really practical, what makes sense for us as a company that still needs to travel.

In 2019 the studio's carbon footprint from flying was almost a third of what it was in 2018. Of course there are a lot of factors that play into how often we need to fly every year and how far, so it's hard to be sure how long this trend will hold, but we will see how this develops over the next few years.

ANNA | My life is complex. I live with my husband and three kids in one country and work in another. For four years I commuted to the studio every week by plane, travelling from Copenhagen to Berlin on Tuesdays and back on Thursdays. It wasn't particularly enjoyable but it was fast. Airports tend to shatter your feeling of continuity; it is broken up, reduced to strings of small and quite boring actions. In June 2019 I switched to a combined plane/train model, where I fly to Berlin and then return to Copenhagen

communicating to everybody that we are not traveling for meetings unless it is absolutely necessary.

Now we are also exploring the possibility of carrying out meetings in virtual reality, allowing clients and architects to move through the architecture or installation before it is produced. This will make planning meetings for the most part unnecessary as well as the production of physical architectural models.

Sometimes the river is the bridge at MOT, Tokyo

CAROLINE | *Sometimes the river is the bridge* is the first exhibition for which we have kept a constant eye on the carbon footprint and attempted to reduce its impact in terms of production, transport, and travel. So, from the beginning, sustainability was a key subject in the conversations we had with Olafur and the curator, Yuko Hasegawa.

In general, we wanted to make a very artistically strong show. At first glance, the aspiration to do an exhibition sustainably really restricted Olafur's artistic freedom. But then he had to reconsider every step, which really inspired him and led to new ideas.

It was clear that the first challenge would be to get the works to Japan, so *Sometimes the river is the bridge* became a pilot project for developing a new approach to transport. Having researched the best possible solutions for sustainably

on the train. The train ride is more than twice as long as flying, which has costs: I get to be a bit less with my colleagues in the studio and a bit less with my family. I don't get to work less, though—on the contrary. The train is my mobile office and I've come to realise that I am incredibly efficient there. It creates a rather unique condition for thinking, what with the landscape flowing past me outside. My work life consists of a myriad of thoughts, pieces of information, etc., that have to be developed, tested, distributed, connected, revised, recirculated... My everyday has me jumping from topic to topic in endless sequences of reflections, decision-making, and micro-actions. The train actually consolidates my focus. In the rare weeks where I cannot go by train, I have come to miss it. Not the fatigue that comes with a long transit, but the atmosphere of that contained, focused, moving space. Being forced to be slow has surprising benefits.

VANJA | For some time now we have been gathering Olafur's obligations on one continent into a single trip whenever possible so that Olafur can actually travel the least possible to have the biggest impact. As a result, he spends less time flying.

We've also been trying to gather information about drivers who use electric cars. And this is going quite well, although it doesn't always work, because in smaller cities, there are simply no electric cars. What sometimes happens is we find out much later that the car had to come from another city which is around 500 kilometres

shipping the individual works of art, we decided to send works from Europe to Japan by land and sea rather than air. The artworks travelled from Berlin by truck to Hamburg and then on by train via the cargo port station in Malaszewicze, Poland, to Zabakalsk, Russia, and to the port of Taicang, China, where they were loaded onto a ship to Japan. This journey then became part of the exhibition: each crate was accompanied by a specially devised drawing machine that recorded the movements of the train and the ship along the way on circular sheets of paper that are on display in the exhibition.

KAJANA | Insurance was one of the first hurdles we encountered, because the museum and the shipping company said we are not going to insure this; this is too risky. And it makes sense. There is more risk of damage because it takes a longer time and you have more vehicle changes. It's a lot of loading and unloading of crates. We had to find our own way, we had to insure the works ourselves, we had to make decisions that normally the shipper or the institutions would make. Normally it's all being built for us and we just take it. And this time we had to build it ourselves: the system and order of things and the ingredients, so to speak.

Once it was on track, though, it was not so hard. It was totally feasible.

CAROLINE | When it comes to the selection of artworks, we started really to take the carbon footprint into account—looking for works

away. And it really takes time to understand when it's actually a good decision to do this or not.

In the past, we prioritised Olafur's flexibility and the fastest way to reach a certain place. But now, we are prioritising sustainability. So if he takes a little bit longer with a train than with a plane, and if it's a direct train, now we prioritise the train. We negotiate meeting times, we negotiate opening times, we negotiate obligations according to whatever we think fits better into our sustainability agenda.

Connecting Digitally

VANJA | Recently, video conferencing has resulted in Olafur avoiding two trips to other continents for really big meetings that five years ago would have seemed unavoidable. There is this big effort now to make our video conferences as comfortable, professional, and natural as possible, so when people use video conferencing, the feeling should be the closest to having somebody personally in the meeting. The IT team is working a lot on where to set up a camera, how the room looks, who is sitting where, to really have this cosy feeling of a meeting.

SEBASTIAN | The video conferences turned out to be a very valuable thing, although it has a very bad image, surprisingly. We have saved significantly on the planning meetings we have with clients around the world. It's also about

that were already located nearby to reduce shipping distances—and also now in editing or changing the selection of works, because Olafur is continually optimising and this leads to a lot of changes. We have to face the fact that in the end we will have to ship some parts on short notice, though, so we will have to find ways to do this. Maybe we can bring them ourselves in our suitcases. We have to be inventive there. In any case, it's a lot less than usual.

Olafur also chose artworks that use recycled or repurposed materials—such as driftwood that he scavenged from seashores in Iceland over the years and has used in numerous artworks. There's also a special display that we conceived for the exhibition, which presents ongoing research that the studio is engaged in into innovative and sustainable materials.

KERSTIN | The materials lab idea began with a project we have been working on with the textile company Kvadrat. We wanted to make a very sustainable curtain together. Now we are working with a few other external companies. We also do a lot in-house—for example, the pigments made from food waste.

And then we found a few materials which worked for us in terms of both aesthetics and sustainability, because the idea of the material workshop was that we only show materials we can use for artworks. For example, the red tiles which come from residue left over from aluminium production. If you want to have one ton of aluminium, you produce one and a half tons

of this highly alkaline material, which is toxic and has to be specially disposed of. But the guys from Studio ThusThat found out if they burn it like terracotta in the oven, then the alkalinity disappears. It becomes stable, fixed together. Olafur has a few facade tile ideas, so instead of using fresh terracotta or any other brick-like material, we could use this waste material instead. It's very complex to do this holistically, but we're trying.

CAROLINE | Many of the artworks were chosen for their thematic connection to sustainability, works which represent Olafur's approach to nature or questions about the climate. *The exploration of the centre of the sun*, for example, incorporates sustainable energy: a solar panel placed in the museum's courtyard directly powers the light that illuminates the work and the motor that keeps it turning. The Little Sun project is also featured in the exhibition because it promotes access to clean, sustainable energy. This is, of course, about using sunlight or solar power instead of kerosene, and importantly about raising awareness of alternative energy. And *The glacier melt series 1999/2019, 2019*, brings together aerial photographs Olafur took in 1999 of several dozen glaciers in Iceland with images he took last summer—twenty years later—of the same glaciers from roughly the same position. The thirty pairs of images reveal the dramatic impact that global warming is having on the

world.

Olafur also wanted to include in the exhibition experimental works and research that are relevant to the topic but not physically present in the museum, and for us this led to a new approach—the idea of presenting documentation of older actions and interventions on posters, representing these artworks in photography. It was an idea that was very much due to the fact that he wanted to create a sustainable show—it is also a way of reducing our carbon footprint. Of course we still put together a number of very immersive works as well.

New Energy

KAJANA | I asked Hasenkamp, our main shipping partner, 'Do you get a lot of requests like this?' And then they said that we actually were the first ones to ask, which I found really shocking. And Hasenkamp said, 'We can't tell the collectors and institutions how to do their work, but actually you can.' We, as the studio, can. We can say, 'If you want this exhibition, we have to calculate two months for shipping because we are not going to fly it.' But you cannot transition immediately to doing everything at once. So we're getting started and from our side, we are pushing as much as we can. But it's not in our hands alone.

CAROLINE | The MOT exhibition was a tipping point for us. We really made a lot of effort, we had a lot of discussions, and we can continue to use all this research in the long-term, artistically. Because now the companies understand that they have clients who are willing to go with them, who are on board. It is our intention to stop shipping by air. So now we really have to figure out how. This is the future.

SEBASTIAN | People ask, 'Why do you want to do this, because it's only symbolic?' They say it's a concept, it's a thought more than proper action, and they say, 'Why do you want to risk the relationship to the client for a concept?' Whereas we feel this is much more about showing what the future of our work needs to be. I consider this to be a step into a new world, into a really exciting new world by trying different things.

And I think we need to bring this interest, this excitement, to our collaborators, and once they understand, I think they are also able to rethink their position, to some extent at least, because they feel it's not an obligation or a hurdle or an obstacle—it's a new energy that makes you feel you are part of something that is moving forward, that transcends this quite depressing view that society has at the moment about burning forests and the serious actions people have to take. And from being in a state of worrying to taking proper and realistic action, I think that is something that moves people and that gives energy to people.

未来を聴くアーティスト オラフ・エリヤソン — ヒロコ・ハセガワの展覧会レポート | 峯谷川祐子

Olafur Eliasson, the artist who listens to the future: Art as the practice of ecology | Yuko Hasegawa