This text draws on the project in question as a means by which to explore the personal way in which Eliasson’s interventions operate with reference to space and experience. The installation at Tate Modern will enable us to delve deeper into some of his arguments, concepts and strategies, emphasizing the relationships and transformations experienced by the spectator, the space and the support (physical and programmatic), as a consequence of the conceptual and material displacements proposed by the artist. A brief introduction will facilitate the understanding of the aesthetics of the reception between the artistic and the public, in order to continue with the main conceptual mechanisms after the intervention in the Turbine Hall. The article will conclude with an analysis of the significant transformation which takes place in the institution itself, the museum, as a consequence of the complete alteration of the agents of mediation and representation.

THE WEATHER PROJECT: THE WEATHER PROJECT: A RENewed WEATHER MACHINE FOR THE 21st CENTURY

November 2003, London. A dazzling sunset is “trapped” inside the brand-new Tate Modern, unveiled just three years beforehand. After more than two decades of delay, the old Bankside Power Station, designed by architect Giles Gilbert Scott in the 1940s, would be restored by Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron, after winning an important international competition held during the mid-1990s.

The project was a landmark intervention from the moment it was executed, surely yet subtly referencing the industrial language of Scott’s design apparent in each and every detail of the piece. In this well-crafted installation, two operations stand out. The first relates to the piece on the restaurant and terrace, a delicate glass box which, placed on the roof of the old power station, overlooks the Thames in front of St. Paul’s Cathedral. The second takes us inside to the Turbine Hall, which was revealed posteriorly as one of the museum’s great assets. The intervention here is minimal. Once emptied and free of the old machinery, this space has a surface area of 3500m² (155m long, 23m wide and 35m tall), transforming it into the true heart of the building and acting as a huge public square and hallway providing access to the centre. A compelling downward ramp links the interior and exterior. The galleries and glass walkways around the outside which are used on the upper floors, act as viewpoints over this huge covered patio. A platform crosses the room, with a ground-level exterior balcony, bringing the existing unevenness between the interior square and outdoor terrace with a sculptural staircase. The result is a versatile, flexible, multipurpose space thanks to its powerful dimensions and the numerous viewpoints it offers; side, central, elevated, ground-level. It therefore provided an open space which could be experienced time and time again by the public and the artist during the daily running of the institution.

The Weather Project would be one of the installations that would test the capacity and flexibility of this architectural container: its originality and challenges for reconfiguration and alteration. Due to its 6 months on show, the orange sunset was frozen inside the museum, embraced by a fine mist with a density that varied throughout the day. Moments of dense mist would dissipate across the hall, giving way to clearings with which the room doubled, as it was reflected by the huge mirror installed on the back wall and interpreted on the ceiling. In the background, the walls of the Turbine Hall, the place where the installation occupied the Turbine Hall, which opened its doors to a bewildering installation that replaced the gigantic machinery including the electric generators, with another even more monumental machine. This new machine is also powered by electric energy, but this time destined for the production of a perpetual sunset.

EVALUATION AND CRITICISM: “SEE OURSELVES SEEING”

This controlled atmosphere proposed by the artist is overlapped by the organic nature of the visitors’ wandering around, enacting their reflections in the dazzling sky which the ceiling had become… Absorbed, examining their reflections in the dazzling sky which the ceiling had become…

An important aspect of this piece and which also connects with the 1960s environmental practices could be connected precisely on the possibility for reconfiguration and alteration. During its 6 months on show, the orange sunset was frozen inside the museum, embraced by a fine mist with a density that varied throughout the day. Moments of dense mist would dissipate across the hall, giving way to clearings with which the room doubled, as it was reflected by the huge mirror installed on the back wall and interpreted on the ceiling. In the background, the walls of the Turbine Hall, the place where the installation occupied the Turbine Hall, which opened its doors to a bewildering installation that replaced the gigantic machinery including the electric generators, with another even more monumental machine. This new machine is also powered by electric energy, but this time destined for the production of a perpetual sunset.
Eliasson develops a new environment in which the subject is understood actively in the construction of their own realities. The enveloping essence of this work and others by Eliasson facilitates the idea of a dialogue which is not always clearly articulated but collaborative at the same time. In this sense, the way in which this work is interpreted and its interventions is symptomatic, always preceded by the pronoun “you”, as if at any given moment the artist distresses or inverts the synthetic construction which they consider as a thing of art which to be explored or observed. In this case, the words of the artist define the object of knowledge in a question. Thus, Eliasson’s proposals avoid figuration, set forms or images in order to activate the experience and consciousness of the subject in space and in time. From experiments on the reflection and retraction of light, with clear ties to Tansu by Tress or to Kun, the South Star (2002), Your Space Environment (2004), Your Black Horizon (2006) or Your Making Things Explicit (2009), to even more revealing proposals, such as the misty Your Atmosphere (2016). In this way, they all originate from the manipulation of the climatic conditions of a given space to dissolve into vibrant subjective atmospheres that surround the visitor.

On various occasions, the artist has highlighted how in the interior of these “constructed” meteorologicalscapes the traditional notion of abstract space is replaced by that of parliament as raised again by Buren Lauter as a meeting place between the natural and the artificial, between the creator and the spectator, between the spectator and his own experience or between perception and time. In this way, our consciousness of ourselves as inhabitants of a certain personal and collective space is summoned at the same time. It is for this reason that the spaces developed by the artist can be understood as “synthetic constructions in which, by way of a piece or an installation, proposes and makes visible a connection between the individual and the continuity of the environment. It is a sector in the organisation of the energy processes of the environment, or the existing transactions between these systems in which the subject is included”.

As in the aforementioned artistic concepts, the intervention of the Tate is presented as an alternative to the overloaded contemporary visual consumption. The aesthetic experience proposed by the Nordic artist encourages the spectator to pause, an introspective immersion in the surroundings based on the realisation that they are both absorbed and surprised by the way in which they move through interlinking swampy, misty, natural landscapes. The Weather Project, for example, is the arrival point for other previous experiences which are centred upon the sun. The Work by the Danish artist arises from a metamorphosis of perception which thus strangely invaded by a nature that is somewhat alien to them, in a displacement that attends to different levels, to synthesise natural phenomena.

The Weather Project masterfully represents the truthful, infrastructural space between art and science that is so characteristic, proposing to transform the space in a work that is created. This is a space from which the scientific condition in the skin of an artist is articulated by way of three principal strategies: the displacement of a natural landscape, the construction of a system synthetic constructions in which, by way of a piece or an installation, proposes and makes visible a connection between the individual and the continuity of the environment. It is a sector in the organisation of the energy processes of the environment, or the existing transactions between these systems in which the subject is included”.

As is the case with other interventions held in the public sphere, the personal crossroad developed by Eliasson is both self-referential and collective at the same time. In this sense, the way in which Eliasson baptises many of his interventions is symptomatic, always preceded by the pronoun “you”, as if at any given moment the artist distresses or inverts the synthetic construction which they consider as a thing of art which to be explored or observed. In this case, the words of the artist define the object of knowledge in a question. Thus, Eliasson’s proposals avoid figuration, set forms or images in order to activate the experience and consciousness of the subject in space and in time. From experiments on the reflection and retraction of light, with clear ties to Tansu by Tress or to Kun, the South Star (2002), Your Space Environment (2004), Your Black Horizon (2006) or Your Making Things Explicit (2009), to even more revealing proposals, such as the misty Your Atmosphere (2016). In this way, they all originate from the manipulation of the climatic conditions of a given space to dissolve into vibrant subjective atmospheres that surround the visitor.

Eliasson’s infrastructure demonstrates to us that the artist does not want to depict. His concept does not aim to substitute reality, but instead, install itself within it in order to construct a new text within which the spectator, figure and ground, remain recognisable entities. This account is shared between nature, support space and the spectator. It is not the image of nature presented to us by the artist, with the Tate sunset, but instead, the image of another image: that of nature inside an laboratory. An experiment in which a small sample of the natural world has been reduced in the interior with a test piece or reproduced thanks to a scale model. In addition, it is a model which is also a coproducer p.112 of reality, capable of completely altering the meaning of a determined context through the way in which it overlaps in the Weather Project. As in Mediated Motion, the spectator is conscious of the displacement, both conceptually and physically. T echnological frameworks and translucent at the same time. The Turbine Hall becomes a fabulous magic box which disappears and reappears into a daydream, an observatory with the establishment of the new orange horizon that goes beyond the limits of the architectural enclosure. The interior becomes a new and sumptuous exterior. This hall is no longer obscure. Eliasson has built a sun, sky and air: a landscape, in short. It is at this moment that the architecture disappears, dematerialised to be explored. Nor is it designed to be observed from one fixed point. Eliasson invites us to wander around it. In fact, only by roaming around does the piece become complete and truly begin to obtain meaning. However, this route is not easy. There is an implicit effort in crossing this space, occasionally in semi-darkness. The spectator therefore establishes a new relationship with space in the installation, which is paradoxically opaque and translucent at the same time. The Turbine Hall becomes a fabulous magic box which disappears and reappears as the visitor moves around its interior via the ramp, the intermediate platform or the windows. The installation space acquires a new character which is almost topographic, inviting the spectator to find “their” position. It is thus here that the visitor transforms into the 18th century traveller, fascinated by the powerful image of a strange landscape which is continuously being reconstructed before their own eyes.

As in Mediated Motion, The Weather Project aspires to a broader scope, a space that goes beyond the production of suggestive images “extracted” from borrowed landscapes. The subtle change in temperature and the airflow, the environment produces the feeling of air or sand blowing in the air, orange colour, the compromise of the sun on the roof, the results of this man-made light machine, in pantheon mode, would enable the sun to shine through into the exhibition space. During
La destrucción del tiempo producida por Eliasson no deja de causar un deseo de reforma de nuestro mundo océncico con las consecuencias que constituye el entorno, un mediado público, un espacio en el que nuestra experiencia puede participar de una base objetiva. Primero el importante proyecto fomenta humanamente hoy el “weather project”.

2. Mes en mes desde el 2007, Olafur Eliasson ha sido invitado a diversos países. Él transforma un espacio y lo transforma en un medio público. En este último, la experiencia se construye de una base objetiva.

MEDIATION AND REPRESENTATION: THE SUN TRAPPED IN THE MUSEUM INTERIOR

Eliasson’s atmospheric intervention would have a tremendous repercussion. The spotlight of a diverse audience made from the previous present, the sunlight was drawn into a shared nature...