

# The Artist Who Is Bringing Icebergs to Paris

By Cynthia Zarin  
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On a clear day with little wind, in early October, a tugboat set out from the harbor of Nuuk, in southern Greenland, in search of a dozen icebergs for an installation in Paris called “Ice Watch,” by the Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson and the geologist Minik Rosing. The installation, a circle of icebergs with a circumference of twenty metres, is installed at the Place du Panthéon during this week’s Climate Change Conference.

The idea of “Ice Watch” is twofold: the ice is arranged like a watch, or a clock face, to indicate the passing of time; and, in real time, observers will be able to watch the ice melt.



Eliasson was waiting in Copenhagen. “I thought, I know what ice looks like—I’ve seen ice frequently, these days! But when I opened the truck, it was shivering and shining in the warm air of Copenhagen. The ice had gotten a shock! I put my hand to it and suddenly I drew my

hand back! I said to myself, The ice is really cold! Cold ice on your hand is very different than reading about how it is melting.” He paused. “From the perspective of the ice, humans look really warm.”

Some of the questions that are preoccupying Eliasson in his work these days include: What is the relationship between data and cognition? How is data translated into doing? Thinking into feeling? Are we more likely to act on knowledge or emotion? Timothy Morton, a British philosopher whom Eliasson calls “our new Arctic friend,” has been part of the ongoing conversations Eliasson likes to have around his art installations. Morton writes an extremely popular blog, and is the author of several books, among them the forthcoming “Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Further Coexistence.” Morton is a proponent of Object Oriented Ontology (O.O.O.), which suggests that, in order to realign our relationship with the planet, we must think of a plurality of perspectives. “In our contemporary ecological emergency,

there's a lot of data, but at this point we're dumping ecological data on ourselves. It's not helping. We don't need to be doing that for one more minute. Olafur is putting pieces of ice there and saying, 'Let's try to start a conversation.' "

The exhibition opened last week, and will be up for two weeks. At the Place du Pantheon, if a passerby puts her ear to the ice, she will be able to hear a little moment of pop and crack. What is released is the cleanest possible air. It is fifteen thousand years old. Eliasson says, "It is a little pop that has travelled fifteen thousand years to meet you in Paris, and tell the story of climate change. "These micro-relationships are interesting. To take all the data, news, and scientific papers and turn it into something you can touch is I think incredibly effective."