

Statement from Olafur Eliasson

To my mind, being able to think spatially and formulate your ideas through a space-based process is an important aspect of realising and defining your identity.

Meeting as a group and as a more or less planned community to build an idea, a vision, a fantasy city or an urban landscape requires that you formulate your ideas spatially and are able to enter into a spatial dialogue with people with whom you are sharing your "spaces".

To me, the LEGO brick project is a "micro-model" of the situation in which the people of Tirana must often find themselves today: Building a stable society is only possible with the involvement and co-operation of each individual. And it is my sincere opinion that it is in the belief that something like this can happen - that your participation matters and has consequences - that the individual's self-awareness and identity are formed. People of the city meet around the large LEGO landscape table: passers-by, adults, children, teenagers, parents with young children, taxi drivers, a relaxed policeman, a class of schoolchildren who saw it on TV, cigarette-selling street urchins and pensioners - who in the old communist days wandered across the same square - to build, create, push, move, topple or tear down.

Altogether a random but broad selection of Tirana's inhabitants who use spatial play - alone or in company - to create their fantasy structures. A mixture of how people see - and what they expect of - the future, and especially a material view of how the past still necessarily plays a major part in defining the spaces of present-day Tirana. Thinking spatially and coming to grips with your own identity must mean a blending of the personal history of the individual and his or her expectations for a personal future. Most important of all, it must be seen and used from his or her present vantage point - this very instant in time.

Blending the past and the future - and metaphorically renegotiating where you currently stand and who you are as an individual - can be clarified by a spatial awareness of your surroundings: Playing with a spatial toy - for example, like LEGO - can strengthen your ability to see your own body - or physicality, if you like - in a causal relationship with your surroundings. And that kind of personal causality strengthens the idea that your or my existence is of consequence to our surroundings - and especially that in the process our surroundings become less dogmatic and more open to negotiation. Perhaps not a very new standpoint - but I do think, from the tendential point of view, that the often increasing level of abstraction between individual (body) and society (space) cuts across our ability to negotiate our own identity and especially our existence in the immediate moment, in contemporary time.

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