

It's Nice That

News / Art

Olafur Eliasson sculpture for Bloomberg depicts the economy as rippled ocean waters

Words by Jenny Brewer, Tuesday 24 October 2017



Olafur Eliasson: No future is possible without a past
Photo: James Newton

This morning (24 October), Bloomberg's enormous new European headquarters opened in the City of London to great fanfare, with London mayor Sadiq Khan and the building's architect Norman Foster speaking to hundreds of gathered press. Officially the most [sustainable major office development in the world](https://www.itsnicethat.com/news/bloomberg-london-headquarters-commissions-michael-craig-martin-olafur-eliasson-art-241017), occupying 3.2 acres – a whole block near St Paul's Cathedral on the site of a Roman temple – and after ten years in the making, it goes without

saying it represents a huge investment for the company, not least in the artists they commissioned to add to the project.

The list of artistic collaborators includes Olafur Eliasson, Michael Craig-Martin, Arturo Herrera, Isabel Nolan, Cristina Iglesias, David Tremlett and Pae White, who created new pieces designed to complement and respond to the architecture. An existing work by Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell is also on display.

Michael Craig-Martin made 12 pieces under the title *Lexicon* for the interior – pop-coloured enlargements of everyday objects that span three floors. Many have been bisected to split across floors, for example a giant yellow watch that can be seen conjoined from a “sweet spot” on the building’s central spiral staircase.

“There’s variety of how they react to the space,” Michael said at the launch. “Some of the images go up, some go down, a door handle goes horizontally. All the people who will be here will be those working here every day. There won’t be visitors. So I’m quite sure these will end up being used as signage by the people who work here. People will say, ‘Oh I’m on the second floor, right near the watch. I think that’s perfect. Each thing is individual, but it makes sense as a single work.’”

At the heart of the office, at the base of the spiral stairs, is an undulating metallic “pool” by Olafur Eliasson. This is one of two visually similar pieces by the artist, titled *No future is possible without a past*, the other installed on the ceiling at the building’s entrance. Made of polished stainless steel and designed to reflect the bustling office around it, Olafur says he came to the title “knowing this would be a future-oriented building built on the site of a Roman temple, and I thought of the relationship between the two”.

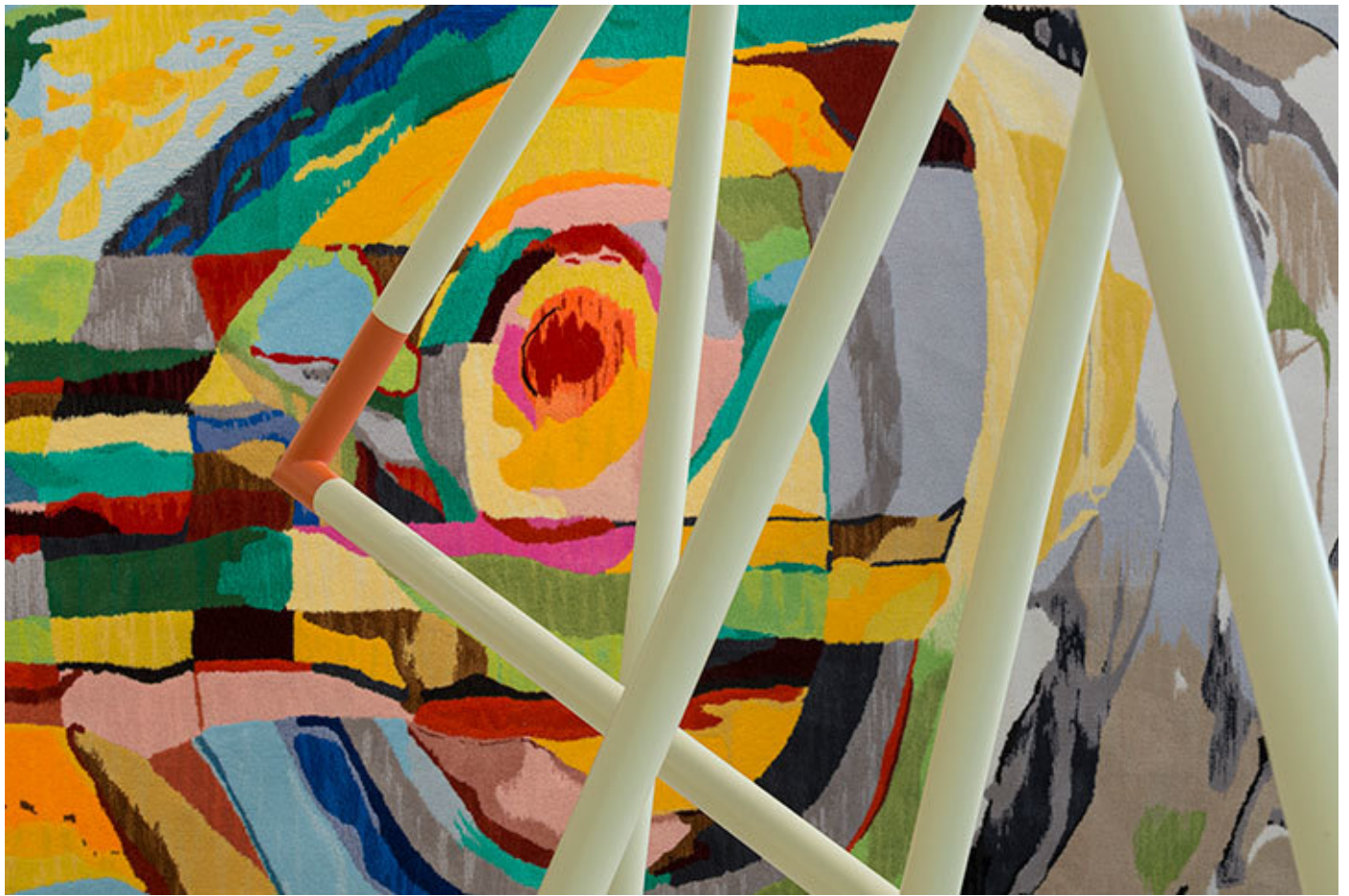
He also looked to depict economic models for society. “The activity in [this building] is an economic machine, which is very much about predicting the future. Water is hard to predict. In this building people will be trying to control what can appear to be uncontrollable. Who knows what the markets, the currencies, the situations of the future will be?”

“The economic models we build our society on are about inclusion and caring for the least resourceful, trying to create a system to allow people who have less to have access to more. Then if we look to the future where there seems to be a polarisation in the economy, a postmodern era where the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, the idea of bringing the past narrative and the future together, I think, is a relevant point. The title could also be about which values we act upon when we try to control the future.”

At the press conference, Michael Bloomberg said that the artistic investment throughout the project was based on the idea that “the arts help cities thrive”.



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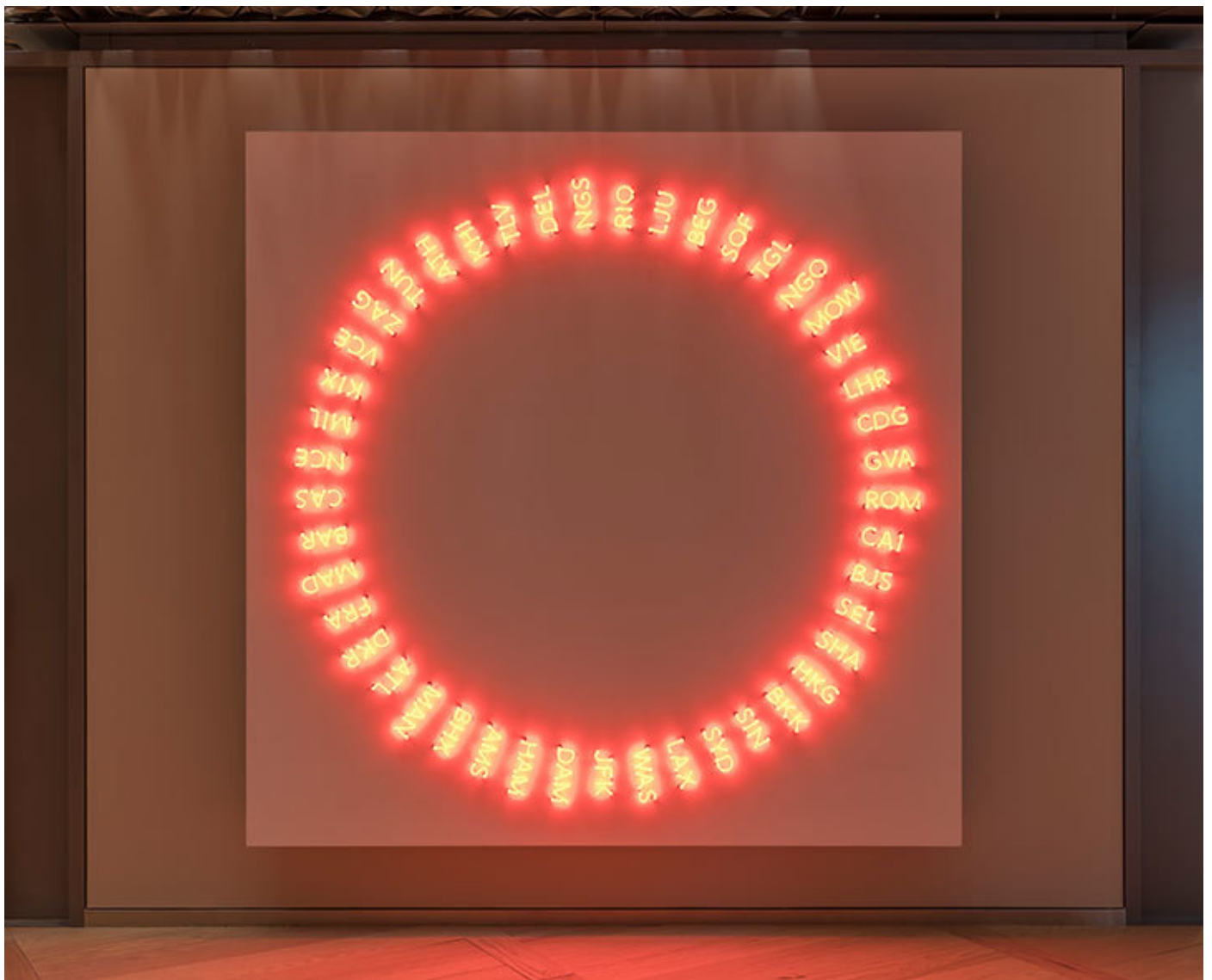
Isabel Nolan: Another View from Nowhen
Photo: David Morgan



Pae White: Pomona
Photo: James Newton



Arturo Herrera: Sortario
Photo: James Newton



Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell: Frozen Sky
Photo: Nigel Young/Foster + Partners



David Tremlett: City Drawing #1
Photo: James Newton



Cristina Iglesias: Forgotten Streams
Photo: Nigel Young/Foster + Partners



Michael Craig-Martin: Lexicon
Photo: James Newton



Michael Craig-Martin: Lexicon
Photo: James Newton

www.fosterandpartners.com/projects/bloomberg

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