


to what we are going to take as our next step.

This, I think, is something artists could contribute to. It's not possible alone, I think, but essentially it has to do with dreaming up the imaginary that holds the possibility of hope. The painter Gerhard Richter said, "Art is the highest form of hope," and in that sense the issue here is to somehow show people that, yes, there is a doom and gloom element, and that's fair enough because it is so unbelievably urgent, but it's also about saying, well, we do need to have some direction. This is how we're going to go, these are the institutions we are not going to vote for or support, these are the private sector companies we're not going to buy the products of. We need to take as a civic society a clear position on this and understand that for each individual person, there is actually a way to impact on the legislative, on the private sector, on the companies. It's only a question of actually organising ourselves into movements but also having the self-confidence to say, well, I matter, and that is maybe the last thing.

What I think, particularly, in art – unlike a politician, unlike a pair of sneakers – is that art can say this is an option, this is a possibility, and you, as a visitor to the Tate Modern, you say, I know that feeling in that painting, or in that dance, or in that book or that theatre. This is how I feel, this is somebody giving my feelings language. Leaving Tate Modern, you might

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have the impression, "Wow, I went to the Tate and I was listened to, I was seen. I didn't go to see a work of art, I came here to be seen," and if you think about politics and so on, where are we being seen? The reason why there is so much populism is that there are so many people who say, "Well, nobody's listening to me." 

Olafur Eliasson's exhibition *In Real Life* is at Tate Modern until 5 January 2020.

Bidisha is a broadcaster, journalist and artist working mainly in film and photography.

This is an edited extract from the Tate Modern discussion 'Art in Real Life: Addressing the Sustainability Challenge' held in partnership with London Climate Action Week. Olafur Eliasson was joined by designer and activist Clare Farrell, Malini Mehra, climate campaigner and Commissioner to the Mayor of London on Sustainable Development, and Mary Robinson, Adjunct Professor of Climate Justice, Trinity College Dublin. The discussion was chaired by Bidisha and introduced by Frances Morris, Director of Tate Modern. To listen to the full talk, visit tinyurl.com/tate-real-life-conversation



Kids studying with Olaf Eliasson's Little Sun Original.
Photograph: Michael Tsegaye