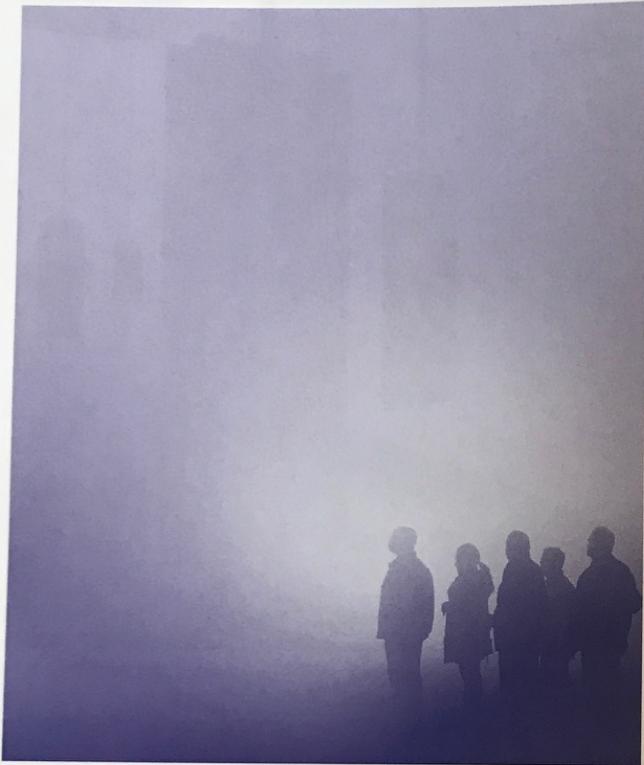


Olivia Erlanger's immersive space is a dispersed narrative



Ruba Katrib Can you tell me about the new commission you're working on?

Olivia Erlanger The project *Body Electric* is a new Frieze/BMW commission curated by Attilia Fattori Franchini, including an installation during Frieze London 2017 and a website. The commission's name, Open Work, is based off the title of the seminal text by Umberto Eco, "Opera Aperta." With this in mind, the project as a whole is a dispersed narrative that looks at how our relationship to an "outside" is changing. For example, the passive car user, embedded within climate control and automated driving technologies, is disembodied from not only the experience of driving, but also the landscape. As new surveillance technologies within an integrated grid system are introduced into public life, from cameras on street corners to the insides of cars themselves, our sense of private space and subjective experience is called into question.

RK How are you imagining these ideas playing out within the work? You often put together very specific relationships between objects that create a particular sensation.

OE Creating an immersive environment is a natural extension of my interest in architecture and space, but this will be my first experiment in designing an experience. The installation will have a lighting system and atmosphere-shifting intensity over new sculptures, which are modified park benches. The park bench is an object usually found in public domain, a place for contemplation, rest, or conversation. The benches measure the stillness of audience

members. Thinking of economies of attention, if a viewer can be still enough, one of five different narrator's testimony will play, as they describe being witness to an ecological event.

RK So the relationship between the bench and the viewer generates the light and sound? Are viewers immediately aware that their movements affect the work? Can you say more about the narrative?

OE The audience members become part of the instrument of the sculpture, their movement acting as a bow would across a violin. The audio track starts and stops or switches between different spoken testimonials according to their movement. The light and atmospheric effects are controlled by the shifting price of oil. The benches will have headphones on them; this is the invitation for the viewer to participate. While in the space of the installation, you'll see the light intensity growing or dimming, feel the atmospheric shifts and listen to the witness testimonials as they start and stop. While on the website, you'll be able to watch the video works, which act as character portraits, and listen to the audio files from the installation. Told through witness style testimonials, the five characters evoked in the work—The Drifter, The Child, The Luddite, The Storm Chaser and The New User—recount their subjective experience of seeing an ecological phenomena that occurred "yesterday." Drawing inspiration from Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, Adolfo Boily Casares' *The Invention of Morel* and composer Robert Ashley's *Perfect Lives*, the story never fully resolves. As each narrator explains their perspective, they slowly implicate one another and themselves. **K**

interview by Ruba Katrib