



JANUARY 2010

Outside/Inside Sculpture

Olafur Eliasson | *Flower observatory*



VISIT THE BMA
and enjoy both the
outside and inside of
Flower observatory
in the Contemporary
Wing.

Olafur Eliasson. Detail, *Flower observatory*, 2004. Stainless steel plate and high polished stainless steel. 114 ³/₁₆ inches high x 145 ¹¹/₁₆ inches wide x 145 ¹¹/₁₆ inches deep. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Fanny B. Thalheimer Memorial Fund, and Collectors Circle Fund, BMA 2003.233 ©Olafur Eliasson

Flower observatory is sculpture that grabs our attention, lures us closer, and draws us in. Standing tall on five legs, it opens itself up in the museum gallery like an enormous flower. Unlike the soft petals of an actual blossom, these spiky petals are made from sheets of hard stainless steel that are cut, creased, and bolted together to form a profusion of cones. Each cone has been sliced off at the tip, creating a dark hole. Here and there a surprising patch of color appears, reflected from vibrant paintings on the surrounding gallery walls.

Danish sculptor Olafur Eliasson thought it wasn't enough for us to simply walk around the outside of his sculpture; he wanted us to walk into his sculpture as well. So he gave it a wonderful secret that we could never guess if we remained outside. Stepping between the sculpture's five legs, we gaze upwards and find ourselves under a dark vault bursting with bright stars or brilliant blossoms. Little by little, we come to understand that the black triangles that we see in this over-size kaleidoscope are actually the highly polished interior surfaces of the very same gray cones that we saw on the exterior of the sculpture. Spots of light entering through the small openings at the cones' tips are mirrored and multiplied many times over as they reflect off the angled planes of polished steel.

The artist has used the same steel on inside and outside to create startlingly different effects. While the outside of the sculpture may look a bit prickly and forbidding, the inside becomes a delightful sparkling retreat.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

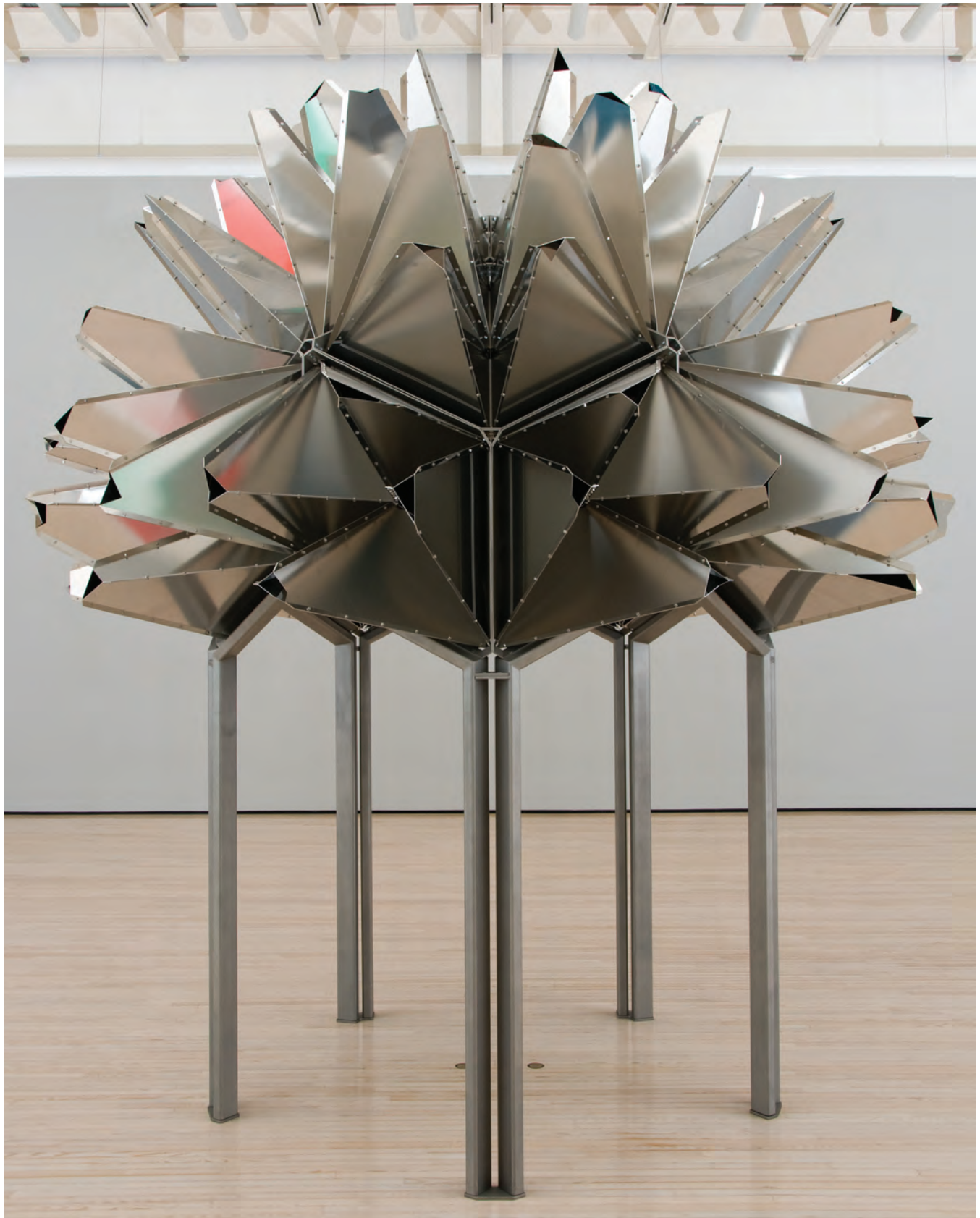
Build an "outside/inside" shelter for a small doll or action figure using a single easily worked material such as cardboard, fabric, foil, twigs, or newspaper. Cut, fold, crumple, shred, roll, punch, rip, or otherwise modify the material so that the outside and inside of the shelter produce different visual effects even though they are made of the same thing.

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



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BALTIMORE
MUSEUM OF
ART **BMA**

Olafur Eliasson. *Flower observatory.*

2004. Stainless steel plate and high polished stainless steel. 114 $\frac{3}{16}$ inches high x 145 $\frac{11}{16}$ inches wide x 145 $\frac{11}{16}$ inches deep. The Baltimore Museum of Art: Fanny B. Thalheimer Memorial Fund, and Collectors Circle Fund, BMA 2003.233 ©Olafur Eliasson