

January 29, 2016

Review: Artist Ann Veronica Janssens takes us inside the rainbow

<http://www.star-telegram.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article57258623.html>

By Gaile Robinson

Gaile Robinson reviews the enlightening experience of walking through Ann Veronica Janssens' "Blue, Red, and Yellow" fog-filled installation piece at the Nasher Sculpture Center.



Ask your children if they would like to take a walk in a rainbow. The answer should be a unanimous yes.

You can deliver on this enticement at the Nasher Sculpture Center in a new exhibit by Belgian artist [Ann Veronica Janssens](#).

Janssens is an artist who manipulates light, and in her piece titled *Blue, Red and Yellow*, a rainbow of light is encased in a large rectangular box in the Nasher's garden. She fills the box with fog from a fog-producing machine, and as the

sunlight streams into the box made of colored plastic panels, it transforms the fog into clouds of color.

Unexpectedly, though, the fog is so saturated that as soon as people enter the cube, they disappear. You can hear them; in fact, audio perception is heightened, but you cannot see them. All that can be seen are the billowing colors that change through the prismatic palette and the tiny optical floaters that are always there on your eyes but are rarely noticed.

It's beyond weird in a wonderful way.

To be in a room with others who cannot be seen, only heard, while enveloped in clouds of colorful mist can be quite intoxicating. Although some people find it claustrophobic. It is the kind of transformative experience you expect from hallucinogenic drugs, but here it is, delivered drug-free with a wallop. (While some of my group took a few steps into the box, then turned right around and bolted, I had to be herded out like a recalcitrant 4-year-old.)





Janssens has a more cerebral way of describing the intended phenomena: “By pushing back the limits of perception, by rendering visible the invisible, these experiences act as passages from one reality to another,” she writes.

“Gazing at mist is an experience with contrasting effects. It appears to abolish all obstacles, materiality and resistances specific to a given context, and at the same time, it seems to impart a materiality and tactility to light.”

A profound experience is obtained that heightens all the viewer’s sensory preceptors to such a degree that it can be physically unsettling, just by walking into a box filled with mist.

There are more traditional sculptures by Janssens inside the Nasher’s main gallery. Here are four large glass boxes, vitrines, that are layered with paraffin oil and distilled water. Again, a simple recipe with dynamic results. Depending on the angle of view, the clear box can look empty or filled with glass blocks, as if it is topped with a solid slick of color, or fractured into many glass boxes.

The effects are the result of optical effects of the liquids in the box — two layers, one oil, one water, and a piece of colored paper between the vitrine and the stand.

The view changes with each step you take around the vitrine, and again, the response is one of incredulity. Knowing there is so little at play that can distort so readily is quite impressive.

This exhibit engages the viewer’s perceptions in ways that are not usually experienced, and in doing so, imposes itself on the memory as something new and quite different.

How often does that happen to you?

