

Teaching Resource

ANN VERONICA JANSSENS

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Nothing is more beautiful than a person's own perception. I try to push it to its limits. – Ann Veronica Janssens



ANN VERONICA JANSSENS

- Born in 1956, Folkstone, England
- Lives and works in Brussels, Belgium
- Educated at L'Ecole de la Cambre, Brussels

Over the past three decades, Belgian artist Ann Veronica Janssens has become best known as a light artist, working with spotlights, projections, fog and other materials to create experiences that heighten viewers' perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. Janssens's sculptural works engage viewers with shifts in surface, depth, and color, challenging perception and destabilizing their sense of sight and space.

PERCEPTION

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

Blue, Red, and Yellow (2001) is a pavilion coated with and named for the three primary colors. The pavilion is filled with artificial fog, a substance that Janssens uses as a way to give sculptural form to light. This environment allows for an immersive encounter with light and its dynamic properties.

- What factors can affect your perception of a space? How can light and color change the way a room feels?
- Imagine what your experience will be like inside the pavilion. Describe what you expect to find when you enter.
- As you enter and move around the room, consider how your senses are affected: What does the air feel like? What do you see, smell, or hear? How does your body react with limited visibility? What happens to your sense of time?
- Can you see or hear other people? How does the fog change the way you relate to them?



TOP: Ann Veronica Janssens. Photo © Ivan Put. BOTTOM: Ann Veronica Janssens, *Blue, Red and Yellow*, 2001 (exterior and detail). Steel, wood, polycarbonate, blue, red, and yellow films, and fog machine. Courtesy of the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles. Photos: Kevin Todora.

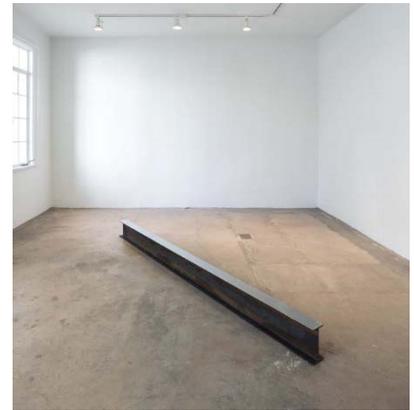
Nasher Sculpture Center

REFLECTION AND REFRACTION

I always experiment with the possibilities of rendering fluid the perception of matter or architecture which I see as some kind of obstacle to movement and sculpture. – Ann Veronica Janssens

IPE 700 (2009 – 2016) consists of an I-beam polished to a mirror-like surface and installed on the floor. Reflections on the steel beam's surface capture the surrounding architecture of the room. Janssens's idea for the work came from observing railroad tracks; she noticed how the trains' repeated friction on the steel changed the surface to look like liquid mercury or flowing water.

- Observe the reflective surface of the sculpture and draw what you see. How is the image of the building changed in the reflection?
- In the garden, find another reflective surface to draw. How does this reflection compare to your previous sketch?
- At your school, position mirrors on different floors and see what effects they have on that space. Take photos to document what you see.
- Think about the role of a mirror in your home. How can it seem to make a space larger? Smaller?



Ann Veronica Janssens, *IPE 250*, 2009–2016. Steel beam polished on one side and paraffin oil. Photo: Courtesy of the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles. © Ann Veronica Janssens.

Orange 55 (2010) is part of a series of glass cubes filled with water and paraffin oil that Janssens sometimes calls "aquariums." The works create prismatic effects and their geometry seems to change as a viewer walks around them.

- As you look at these sculptures from different angles, can you see a prism or rainbow effect? Identify the colors and record the order in which you see them, from left to right.
- As you walk around the sculpture, what other things do you notice? What geometric shapes do you see?
- In your classroom, make your own "aquarium" with a clear glass or bottle. Which do you think is lighter – water or oil? Pouring with a funnel, fill your container with oil and water to determine which rests on top.
- Shine a flashlight at an angle through the glass. How does each liquid affect the light passing through? Try placing a mirror at an angle in the water for different light effects.



Ann Veronica Janssens, *Orange 55*, 2010. Glass, paraffin oil, distilled water, and painted wood base. Photo courtesy of the artist and 1301PE, Los Angeles. © Ann Veronica Janssens.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Esther Schipper Gallery <http://www.estherschipper.com/Ann-Veronica-Janssens>
- Galerie Micheline Sz wajcer http://www.gms.be/index.php?content=artist_detail&id_artist=29
- Video: Ann Veronica Janssens <https://vimeo.com/68529385>
- Video: *Blue, Red, Yellow* <https://vimeo.com/19938405>

GLOSSARY

Perception is the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.

Reflection occurs when a light ray hits a surface and bounces off.

Refraction is the bending of light as it passes from one substance to another.

A **Prism** is a glass or other transparent object with refracting surfaces at acute angles that separate white light into a spectrum of colors.