

PERCEPTION

1. 'the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses'
2. 'the way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted'.

This resource takes Ann Veronica Janssens' exhibition *Hot Pink Turquoise* at the South London Gallery as a starting point to explore the theme of perception.



Magic Mirror (Blue), 2012 by Ann Veronica Janssens. Photo: Andy Stagg.

Who is Ann Veronica Janssens?

Ann Veronica Janssens is a Belgian artist, who was born in Folkestone, England in 1956, but now lives and works in Belgium. She grew up in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo and her childhood experience of the quality of the light there had a great visual impact on her. She originally wanted to be an architect like her father but then changed her focus to art, which she felt had a freer creative process. She has now been making artwork for over 40 years.

What themes does her artwork explore?

Ann Veronica Janssens is particularly interested in how people experience artwork from their own unique perspective and reality. Her main focus is on perception and in particular how changing physical conditions, like the light, affect how we see things. Light is something that changes all the time and affects how we are able to see everything. She believes artworks that draw attention to the physical experience of how someone is looking at a work and how they are able to see it, can heighten a person's awareness and sense of themselves in relation to the artwork. They are 'active-observers' and it is this exchange between the artwork and the audience that is most important to her.

What does her artwork look like?

She investigates perception through making works that include installations, projections, immersive environments and sculptures. She uses fog, light sources, reflective surfaces, water and glass to explore new ways of seeing things. Her work crosses over into scientific inquiry, as she is often testing out materials to see what different affects they produce. She experiments with and creates new materials, working with them to see how they can change how we can see and understand things.

SPOTLIGHT ON THREE ARTWORKS

Untitled (Blue Glitter)

In the Main Gallery at the SLG, *Untitled (Blue Glitter)* was made from 7 kilos of blue glitter, scattered across the floor in waves. As you walk around it, it takes you by surprise as the glitter catches the light to reveal a hidden pink colour, giving it another dimension.

The glitter isn't fixed to the floor and so is very fragile: it could easily be blown or kicked into a different shape. In fact, Ann Veronica Janssens has been making this artwork since 2015, and each time it exists in a new way, taking on a different shape depending on how the glitter lands. At the end of an exhibition, the glitter is swept up and stored, until it is ready to be exhibited in a new place.

Charlotte Sharman
Year 1 pupils' response:

It's a magic floor!

The glitter looks like the stars



Untitled (Blue Glitter), 2015 – ongoing by Ann Veronica Janssens. Photo: Andy Stagg.

Quick Tip

You could use video clips of the artwork in a way that helps the pupils to explore their perception of what they are seeing. Choose a section in the video that provides an unusual angle or close-up of the artwork. You could also play the video in slow motion (by clicking settings and changing the playback speed to 0.5). Explore the artwork together by asking questions, for example, what is it made of? What am I looking at? [Click here](#) and [here](#) to view video clips of *Untitled (Blue Glitter)*.

If anyone came in the night-time, and tried to steal the artwork, they would get glitter on their shoes and it would be very easy to find them!

Magic Mirror (Blue)

Magic Mirror (Blue) is part of an ongoing series of *Magic Mirror* artworks created from reflective surfaces that distort or add another layer to what is reflected. The artwork is made using three layers of glass: the middle one which is cracked and fragmented is sandwiched between the two outer ones that hold it in place. The glass is treated in a particular way to make it iridescent, which makes the reflection dream-like – almost like a magical portal to another realm, or an in-between space between here and there. [Click here](#) to view a video of *Magic Mirror (Blue)*.

It looks like rainbow, a cracked mirror, like it's been raining on it, I can see someone in it – oh it's a reflection!



Magic Mirror (Blue), 2012 by Ann Veronica Janssens. Photo: Andy Stagg.



Le bain de lumière, Prototype, 1995 by Ann Veronica Janssens. Photo: Andy Stagg.

Le bain de lumière, Prototype

This artwork is called *Le bain de lumière, Prototype*, which in French means 'bath of light.' Four spherical vases filled with water are carefully balanced on top of each other and placed on a windowsill. The effect of the water in the spheres acts like a camera lens: the image of the Peckham Road outside is reflected onto the four bowls to make it look like a film-strip. Everything is flipped upside down, traffic and people moving past on what feels like miniature screens. [Click here](#) to see a video of *Le bain de lumière, Prototype*.

More information about the exhibition can be found [here](#). Please click on the links to see further video clips of artworks:

- [Candy Sculpture 405-805/2-405](#)
- [CL2BK, Pinky Sunset R, CL2 Blue Shadow, Cocktail Sculpture](#)
- [Hot Pink Turquoise](#)

DISCUSSION POINTS

Ann Veronica Janssens would say that you never see the same thing, in the same way, twice. Do you agree?

What are the most important things that make up your reality, how you experience the world?

How we understand the world and how we interpret it is influenced by who we are. What are the things that influence how you understand the world around you? *For example, it could be your feelings, your beliefs, your family, your heritage.*

How do we understand and experience the world through all our senses? Can you name some?

Do you use only your eyes or do you use your whole body when you're looking at an artwork? Think about how you might need to be moving or looking when you're in an art gallery.

What would it be like to listen to a picture, to try to hear what it is saying to us?

There are lots of physical things that influence how we see the world around us. Can you name some? *For example, how tall we are, how well our eyes work, how good the light is.*

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Sensory box: exploring reflectivity

You will need: a collection of shiny objects e.g. iridescent plastic wrap, glitter wigs, sequins, quality street wrappers, glitter etc. Create a sensory box of reflective items that your pupils can explore materialistically. These could be used either in a circle time, or kept on a table for pupils to explore independently during the session.

Looking from a different perspective

You will need: drawing materials (paper, pencil). Work in pairs to draw each other from a new angle. E.g. you could draw someone upside down. Do you notice anything different about them? What does an upside down nose look like?

Creating temporary artworks

You will need: glitter, foil/paper. Ask the pupils to create a temporary artwork that will only exist for 5 minutes. They can scatter and spread the glitter over their sheet of foil/paper to create a pattern or message. Show them to each other, take a photo if possible and then clear away. How did it feel to know that the artwork wasn't going to last?

Exploring reflections and distortion

You will need: a collection of see-through containers or vases, ideally different shapes and sizes, water, drawings materials (paper, pencil) Fill the see-through containers with water and place them around the room for the class to look through. How does the water change or distort what you can see behind it? Create a quick sketch.

From where I'm standing

Play a game of eye-spy, but instead of using a letter to hint at what you can see, ask a pupil to describe something that they can see from where they are standing, with the class making guesses as to what it is. As a follow-on, pupils could describe something by what it means to them, instead of physically describing it. For example, a pen could be 'a gift that my friend gave me that I love to use to write.' The aim is to recognise together that everyone sees things from their own perspective.

Magic mirrors

You will need: laminate pouches, a selection of shiny, transparent or iridescent items that are flat, a laminator, glue. Each pupil is given their own laminate pouch and a selection of materials. Adding them into the pouch, pupils create their own collage by moving the objects where they want them to be. When they're happy with it, this image is frozen in time by the laminator. Pupils from Charlotte Sharman primary called them their own *Magic Mirrors* and put them up in the window.



Magic Mirror by Year 1 Pupils from Charlotte Sharman Primary School. Photo: Laura Nichols.

**A teacher's perspective from Laura Nichols,
Arts Coordinator at Charlotte Sharman Primary
and Founder of Southwark Arts Network:**

What we're missing at the moment is being able to go out on trips! I wanted to re-create the magic of a visit to a gallery, without actually being able to go physically. We looked up the South London Gallery on Google maps to locate where the gallery is – for us it's in the local area, so children could recognise where it was and have a connection to the place. I also drew together resources that related to the exhibition – lots of shiny things! – so that the class could have a hands-on experience of the materials. This helped them to understand from the images what the artworks were made of, as well as to make their own artworks.

Q&A WITH DAVID ANGUS, THE SLG'S GALLERY TECHNICAL MANAGER

What does it mean to be the Gallery's Technical Manager?

It means that I'm in charge of all the technical aspects of the exhibitions, so I'm the one installing the work with the artists when we change over our exhibitions. I am also responsible for the up-keep of the artworks on display throughout the show.

What was it like to install *Hot Pink Turquoise* in the gallery?

We have a very limited time to install the works, by the time the old exhibition is packed away we generally have about 4 or 5 days. This means we have to be very time efficient and have everything in place ready for those days. Some artworks are quite fun to install like the glitter, which was made by throwing buckets of glitter on the floor in a specific way. Others were more complicated, for example *Blue Glass Roll 405/2*, which is incredibly heavy, around 400kg, and the glass tanks at the fire station which had to be cleaned so that no dust is visible in the artwork.

How long did it take?

The exhibition took about 5 days to install and we worked over video call with the artist as she was unable to travel to the gallery. We had 3D plans to work from and had to confirm everything with the artist and our Director.

What tools and materials did you need?

We used a wide variety of tools to install this exhibition. For *Blue Glass Roll 405/2*, we needed to hire a specific crane machine, in order to lift the heavy object out of its crate and into position. For the glass tanks, we had to fill them with paraffin oil and demineralised water. We also used a variety of items to be able to move heavy artworks around. Lots of different products were needed to clean the glass tanks, which took us about three days to clean.

What skills do you need to be able to do your job?

I have a wide variety of skills, most of which I have developed over the last seven years at the SLG. You need to be quite technically minded and be able to understand and interpret an artist's visions in the real world. You need design and fabrication skills, to be able to manage a team, to be able to plan and research, audio and visual skills, 3D design, carpentry, metal work, budgeting and risk assessments to name a few.

How did you know that you wanted to work in a gallery on the technical aspect of exhibitions?

I studied Photography and Media Arts at the Kent Institute of Art and Design, after which I got a job in a gallery while pursuing my artistic career. After retiring from making art in 2012, I wanted to do something that would satisfy my creative side. After gaining some skills in tech-ing for some galleries, I got my current job as the Gallery Technical Manager. No two days are the same in my job and I find working with artists and makers incredible enjoyable, sometimes stressful but ultimately rewarding.



Blue Glass Roll 405/2, 2019 by Ann Veronica Janssens

Photo: Andy Stagg

Ann Veronica Janssens: Hot Pink Turquoise
South London Gallery
23 September – 29 November 2020

This resource is the first in an ongoing series that takes SLG exhibitions and others as a starting point for discussion of key themes and issues in contemporary art and society. The aim is to facilitate conversation, learning and making in-school that develops skills of: oracy, resilience, making and diversity. It was co-developed and produced with Laura Nichols, Arts Coordinator at Charlotte Sharman Primary and Founder of Southwark Arts Network, and pupils from Charlotte Sharman Primary School year 1 class.

References

- Definition from Oxford Languages, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>
- Ann Veronica Janssens *Hot Pink Turquoise* Exhibition Catalogue, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, South London Gallery 2020

Get in touch

We would love to hear your feedback on this resource and see any images of artworks you have made in response. If you would like to get in touch, please email Heather Kay: heather@southlondongallery.org

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