

Ann  
Veronica  
Janssens  
  
Hot Pink  
Turquoise

23 September –  
29 November 2020  
South London Gallery

23 September – 29 November 2020  
Main Gallery & Fire Station Galleries  
Free

At the core of Belgian artist Ann Veronica Janssens' (b. 1956) practice is an interest in light and its impact on our perception and experience. Over four decades, she has created an extensive body of work including installations, projections, immersive environments and sculptures, a selection of which are brought together in this exhibition which spans the SLG's Main Gallery and three floors of the Fire Station.

For the first weeks of the show, *Untitled (Blue Glitter)*, 2015 – ongoing, an expanse of reflective, blue glitter scattered across the floor, is shown in the Main Gallery. The ephemeral nature of this work is emphasised when, from 28 October, it is replaced by the installation, *Bikes*, 2001. Visitors can cycle round the space on custom-made, chrome coated bicycles, which reflect light as the wheels turn.

In the Fire Station, works drawn from Janssens' diverse practice further explore ideas around perception, transparency and the play of light. An early sculpture, *Le bain de lumière*, 1995, is comprised of four water-filled spherical vases stacked one upon the other. Other, more recent works, include *Blue Glass Roll*, 2019, a circular sculpture made of glass at such a density that it appears to be blue rather than transparent. Small bubbles produced during the long cooling process lend an impression of airy lightness to what is in fact an extremely heavy structure.

Continuing this fascination with the properties of different materials, and often those associated with architecture, is *IPE*, 2009–10, a raw steel I-beam with one surface polished so highly as to make a mirrored surface. Concluding the exhibition is one of Janssens' light installations *Hot Pink Turquoise*, 2006, shown on the second floor in Gallery 4.

*Ann Veronica Janssens: Hot Pink Turquoise is presented in collaboration with Louisiana Museum, Copenhagen*

## Main Gallery (23 September – 25 October)

Clockwise from left:

### *Canicule #2*, 2011–2015

Corrugated aluminium structure gilded with  
23 3/4 carat gold leaf  
Edition of 3 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, 1301PE, Los Angeles and  
Esther Schipper, Berlin

### *Untitled (Blue Glitter)*, 2015 – ongoing

Polyester, C37  
Unique

Courtesy the artist, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples,  
Esther Schipper, Berlin and Bortolami Gallery, New York

### *Magic Mirror (Blue)*, 2012

Dichroic polyester film, securit glass, float glass  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples,  
Bortolami Gallery, New York, kamel mennour, Paris/London,  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, and Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

## Main Gallery (28 October – 29 November)

### *Bikes*, 2001

Chrome coated bikes with chromed brushed  
aluminium wheelcaps  
Edition of 10

Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin

### *Phosphènes*, 1997–2018

Black and white print on paper  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist

## Entrance to Fire Station

Clockwise from left:

### *In The Absence of Light*, 2020

120gsm B2 Arcoprint EW Uncoated S2  
Edition of exhibition copies only (please take one)

Courtesy the artist

### *Claudio (Espace Infini)*, 2007

Black and white photograph on aluminium  
Edition of 5, 2 A.P. and 1 E.C.

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark.  
Acquired with support from Museumsfonden af  
7. december 1966

## Gallery 1

Clockwise from left:

### *21 Avril, 2014*

Glass, engraved magnifying glass  
Edition of 1 and 2 A.P.

Courtesy the artist and Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

### *Blue Glass Roll 405/2, 2019*

Glass  
Edition of 1 and 2 A.P.

Courtesy the artist and Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

## Gallery 2

Clockwise from left:

### *Le bain de lumière, Prototype, 1995*

Glass filled with demineralised water  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist

### *Golden Dream, 2011–2015*

Glass, paraffin oil, serigraph, wooden base  
Edition of 1 and 2 A.P.

Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark.  
Acquired with support from Museumsfonden af  
7. december 1966

### *IPE 285, 2009–2010*

Steel beam, 1 polished surface  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples,  
Bortolami Gallery, New York, kamel mennour, Paris/London,  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, 1301PE, Los Angeles and  
Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

## Gallery 3

Clockwise from left:

### *CL2BK, 2015*

Annealed glass with vertical ribs, PVC filter  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples,  
Bortolami Gallery, New York, kamel mennour, Paris/London,  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, and Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

### *Pinky Sunset R, 2019*

Annealed glass with vertical ribs, PVC filter  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples,  
Bortolami Gallery, New York, kamel mennour, Paris/London,  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, and Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

### *CL2 Blue Shadow, 2015*

Annealed glass with vertical ribs, PVC filter  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples,  
Bortolami Gallery, New York, kamel mennour, Paris/London,  
Esther Schipper, Berlin, and Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp

### *Cocktail Sculpture, 2008*

Glass, demineralised water, paraffin oil, wooden base  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist

## Fox Terrace

### *Candy Sculpture 405-805/2-405, 2019*

Glass  
Edition of 1 and 1 A.P.

Courtesy the artist and Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

## Gallery 4

### *Hot Pink Turquoise, 2006*

Size L 2 × 700/1000 watt halogen lamps,  
dichroic colour filter, 1 tripod  
Edition of 1 and 2 A.P.

Courtesy the artist, kamel mennour, Paris/London  
and Bortolami Gallery, New York

## Making the Invisible Visible

Ann Veronica Janssens in conversation  
with Margot Heller

*Margot Heller*

You have used light in your work in all sorts of ways over the years, to wonderful poetic effect, but exploring the ways in which we perceive things is an even stronger thread throughout your practice. Is it fair to say that perception is the single most important subject of your work?

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

That's correct because my work is about perception, and light is just one of several media through which I explore that process. Light is amongst my most useful tools but not the only component of my work, and this links to my investigation into perception which, in turn, relates to another reality – my reality. This questioning of the act of perception connects back to one's own condition, to movement and the transitory nature of any given set of conditions and phenomena.

*Margot Heller*

It's true that more or less all your works heighten self-awareness in the viewer, prompting an exaggerated consciousness of their own position in relation to the works and of the experience of viewing them, of being an active observer.

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

Exactly, and an awareness not only of their position but of its temporary nature, or in other words, of movement.

*Margot Heller*

Yes, and also of the context, of the spaces occupied by both the works and by the viewer, and the relationships between them. This is very relevant to the new work from the *Glitters* series, 2015 – ongoing, that we've chosen to show in the South London Gallery's main space, where glitter scattered across the floor creates a glistening expanse of reflective colour that will be swept away half way through the exhibition. Although this is a temporary and incredibly fragile work, its presence very strongly impacts on the way in which people navigate the space it's shown in.

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

Yes, for sure. It's difficult to know where to start talking about the glitter pieces but the very simple gesture by which they are made is hugely important. They refer to picture-making but even more so to sculpture, only they're open sculptures because they are ephemeral. You make them and you try to keep them for a while and then you brush them away. Then there is the question of light and how it permeates the materiality of the glitter, and also of how your perception of the colours depends on the way in which the light and the specific position of the visitor affects them.

*Margot Heller*

The ephemerality of your work will be highlighted at the SLG when, half way through the exhibition, we clear away the glitter to make space for five custom-made *Bikes*, 2001, with highly-reflective wheels which create light effects on

the walls and floor. Visitors can ride them around the gallery and themselves become part of the work, however briefly, as though they are performers in an installation. How important are ideas of performance in relation to this and various other works you've made in which viewers actively participate?

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

I think it comes back to a question of temporality – of things which escape and can't be made permanent. Performance is related to perception and it's difficult to disconnect the two things. Even the *Gaufrettes*, which are quite static works, are performative in a way. I think they are active within themselves: even if there is nobody there to see them, they have this quality of being changeable and in a state of flux, reacting to the light and the context. They have a particular texture and something within them which is independent of the observer, so there is a kind of performance and movement encapsulated within the glass panel. There is no need for a viewer because all these qualities and properties are there, contained within the work.

*Margot Heller*

Colour is so important in the *Gaufrettes*, but also in the *Glitters* series and many other of your works. Can you say something about the role of colour in your work?

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

I started working with colour in earnest in the mid-1990s, when I first used stage lights and began to programme light projections, experimenting with the effects of combining multiple colours. Prior to that, I tended to focus on the hue of the materials that I happened to be using. I'm very concerned with how we perceive things and with how viewers can see colour, space and movement.

*Margot Heller*

Reflectivity is another recurring theme in your work, an early example of which is *Le Bain de Lumière*, 1995.

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

*Le Bain de Lumière* is a very simple gesture: it's made of a stack of four spherical vases that are filled with water to capture the light, but it's also like a film strip because each individual vessel reflects a different moment, another view, as though a unique film still within a sequence. But it's also a kind of lens: I am interested in lenses and the mechanics of their manufacture, but most of all I liked the idea of making a sculpture from emptiness. There is also *Aquarium*, 1992, which I filled with water and alcohol and then added just enough silicon oil for the effect of hypertension to create a lens. I enjoyed the idea of it being a way of making a sculpture but relinquishing control.

*Margot Heller*

Your use of lenses is linked to your interest in perception, of course, but also relates to the repeated use of transparency in your practice. *Le Bain de Lumière* is just one of many works you've made that harness transparency, or the act of seeing, be it through a particular surface or material, either completely or partially. Your coloured mists are hazy but translucent, and the transparency of the *Gaufrettes*, 2015, is interrupted by their colour and texture, whereas in a work like *Hot Pink Turquoise* the overlapping of coloured patches of light play on different types of transparency. There are works that are completely clear,

such as *Le Bain de Lumière* and the *Aquarium*, and others that probe varying degrees of transparency or, in the case of *Blue Roll*, 2017 and 2019, the moment at which a transparent material begins to appear opaque due to its density.

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

It's true that I've worked with the effects of transparency since the beginning, and with moments when the interface with light can make slight but important shifts in appearance by infiltrating the material. Again it's about perception. I have even made exhibitions that are almost completely lacking in colour so as to focus on transparency and the effects of light, movement and duration. Most of these works are made of glass but not exclusively: in essence, I'm trying to reveal the limits of perception, I am trying to make a form that is at the limits of being almost nothing.

In certain works, I've tried to push this limit to the maximum by using less and less colour and in the course of that process discovered that if you repeat the same material, or engrave it, or combine it with another transparent material, you can create other forms or shapes. In a way, I am trying to make the invisible visible, to give form to something that is barely perceptible.

*Margot Heller*

*Blue Roll* is an example of that, where you've worked with the density of glass to create a sculpture that comes across as being light and airy but is actually extremely heavy. This is because you've exploited the point at which glass appears to be blue rather than transparent. It is also very beautiful, as is much of your work: it has a clear sensuality to it and can be very seductive. Can you say something about your approach to beauty?

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

I don't want my work to be seductive and some of it is very rough. I start with complex things and try to take a simple approach: perhaps this simplicity gives a sensation of beauty and calm. I don't think about beauty when I work. You are right to suggest that it is present, at times, but it's not something I really consider. Sometimes, my work can even be aggressive or violent, which can make it difficult and uncomfortable to endure. I don't set out to create psychological situations but they can arise, depending on the ability of the visitor to sense such things. I try to make visible the invisible, so perhaps an effect of this is beauty.

*Margot Heller*

It clearly is, whether intentionally or not, and in some of your works you take hard, rough materials that are associated with construction and transform them into beautiful, luminous objects.

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

I am very concerned with architecture, form and function. I'm interested in the rational approach of modernists who made buildings from concrete. I-beams are an important part of modernist architecture and I liked the idea of taking this very ordinary object, which is made from a dense material, and unleashing a luminosity from within it through the simple act of polishing. I also like the fact that the shiny surface will rust if exposed to water. In a way, these works also have a fragility and ephemerality to them.



*Margot Heller*

That transformation of materials and ephemerality might be what makes that work so magical. There is a sense of magic about much of your work and that relates to many of the things we've been talking about. I think it links quite directly to the aesthetic of much of your practice and this question of beauty – but also to the trickery involved in achieving certain light effects and illusions, and the way in which things vanish and then reappear.

*Ann Veronica Janssens*

This could be related to the levity and even the humour in some of the work. *IPE 650*, 2009–2017, for example, in which a base object acquires new properties, resembles an alchemical exercise. My proposals tend, with relatively technical means, to intensify natural, physical and scientific phenomena. This, in turn, can lend them a certain charm or attraction. It is perhaps also to do with the relationship between my propositions and the viewer and the impression given when, as you noted, the observer becomes part of the work.

*The extended version of this conversation is published in a fully illustrated catalogue to accompany the exhibition, available to buy from the SLG Bookshop.*

*The fully illustrated exhibition catalogue includes contributions by Anders Kold, Matthieu Poirer, Elizabeth Gollnick, Lise Skytte Jakobsen, Mieke Bal and Catherine de Zegher, as well as a text by the British artist Darren Almond, and a conversation between Ann Veronica Janssens and SLG Director Margot Heller.*

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Let us know your thoughts #HotPinkTurquoise

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