



Light Sensitive

Learning Resource



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'Light Sensitive' is a major exhibition at Town Hall Gallery showcasing the narrative potential of light and its innovative application in art. The exhibition features artists Leslie Eastman, Kinly Grey, Taree Mackenzie, Jazz Money, Sanja Pahoki and Meagan Streader.

Drawing on the symbolic, conceptual, and functional qualities of the medium, the featured artists have a sensitivity to light in various forms, from natural to neon. In this exhibition artists share their personal stories, heritage, or responses to place through a sophisticated blending of artistry and science.

This exhibition provides a range of thought-provoking contexts which offer opportunities to explore the scientific concept of light through photography, installation, and projection.

This learning guide is aimed at supporting students and teachers to engage in discussion and activities before, during and after a visit to the 'Light Sensitive' exhibition.

Through images and information about the artists and artworks, students are encouraged to participate in discussion and research to enhance their understanding of key themes around the exhibition.

This resource includes:

1. Preparation for teachers
2. Learnings and the Victorian Curriculum
3. Curriculum Links: Levels 3-6 Learning Areas and Capabilities
4. Discussion points and activities relating to some of the featured artists and artworks

More Information:

For more information about the Learn with Boroondara Arts program, education resources and activities, please contact us:



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1. PREPARATION FOR TEACHERS

Structuring your Tour:

This document includes a description of each artist's work in the exhibition, questions to ask your students followed by information which can help you inform their responses and conclude the conversation when your class is ready to move on.

There are four artists featured in the 'Light Sensitive' learning resource and six artists in the exhibition. Allocate up to 15 minutes to discuss each artist with your class and adjust as required.

The curatorial team have provided recommendations for which artists to focus on depending on how much time you have allocated to view 'Light Sensitive' with your class:

Tour Length	Recommended Structure
35 - 55 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk through the exhibition with your class and allow students time to contemplate the exhibition independently (5 - 10 minutes) 2. Taree Mackenzie (10 -15 minutes) 3. Leslie Eastman (10 - 15 minutes) 4. Jazz Money and conclusion (10 - 15 minutes)
45 - 70 minutes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk through the exhibition with your class and allow students time to contemplate the exhibition independently (5 - 10 minutes) 2. Sanja Pahoki (10 - 15 minutes) 3. Taree Mackenzie (10 -15 minutes) 4. Leslie Eastman (10 - 15 minutes) 5. Jazz Money and conclusion (10 - 15 minutes)



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2. LEARNINGS AND THE VICTORIAN CURRICULUM

This guide is designed to navigate the artworks in 'Light Sensitive'. It has direct connections to the Victorian Curriculum F-10: Levels 3 - 6

There are four components to this tour which involve:

- Visual arts
- Science
- Critical and creative thinking, and
- English (Speaking and Listening)

LEVELS 3 AND 4

<https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/level3>

<https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/level4>

Visual Arts

In Levels 3 and 4, students explore how and why artists, craftspeople, and designers realise their ideas through different art forms. They enhance their perceptual skills by observing the world around them and expressing these observations through different practical applications of art making. Through observational, imaginative, and sensory investigations, students become more knowledgeable and discerning about their practices as a visual artist.

Science

In Levels 3 and 4, the curriculum focus is on recognising questions that can be investigated scientifically and undertaking investigations.

Critical and Creative Thinking

In Levels 3 and 4, the curriculum focuses on developing the knowledge, skills and understanding to improve and monitor thinking. Students learn and consider the advantages of different thinking techniques. Students learn there are different ways to respond to problems, visualise thinking and think more effectively.

English

In Levels 3 and 4, students communicate with peers and teachers from other classes and schools in a range of face-to-face and online/virtual environments.





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2. LEARNINGS AND THE VICTORIAN CURRICULUM (CONT)

LEVELS 5 AND 6

<https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/level5>

<https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/level6>

Visual Arts

In Levels 5 and 6, students explore how and why artists, craftspeople, and designers realise their ideas through different visual forms, practices and processes. They develop conceptual and expressive skills.

Science

In Levels 5 and 6, the curriculum focus is on recognising questions that can be investigated scientifically and undertaking investigations. Students explore how changes can be classified in different ways. They explore observable phenomena associated with light and begin to appreciate that phenomena have sets of characteristic behaviours. Students begin to see the role of independent, dependent, and controlled variables in performing experimental investigations and learn how to look for patterns and relationships between variables. They develop explanations for the patterns they observe, drawing on evidence.

Critical and Creative Thinking

In Levels 5 and 6, the curriculum focuses on developing the knowledge, skills and understanding to test the strength of thinking. Students develop their capacity to deliberately manage their thinking. Students explore common errors that can occur in thinking.

English

In Levels 5 and 6, students communicate with peers and teachers from other classes and schools, community members, and individuals and groups, in a range of face-to-face and online/virtual environments.

Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. They listen to, read, view, interpret, and evaluate spoken, written and multimodal texts in which the primary purpose is aesthetic, as well as texts designed to inform and persuade. These include various types of media texts including newspapers, film and digital texts, junior and early adolescent novels, poetry, non-fiction, and dramatic performances.





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3. CURRICULUM LINKS: LEVELS 3-6 LEARNING AREAS AND CAPABILITIES

VISUAL ARTS

Levels 3 and 4

Identify and discuss how ideas are expressed in artworks from a range of places, times, and cultures, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (VCAVAR028)

Levels 5 and 6

Identify and describe how ideas are expressed in artworks by comparing artworks from different contemporary, historical and cultural contexts, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (VCAVAR032)

SCIENCE

Levels 3 and 4

Represent and communicate observations, ideas and findings to show patterns and relationships using formal and informal scientific language (VCSIS072)

Levels 5 and 6

Light from a source forms shadows and can be absorbed, reflected, and refracted (VCSSU080)

Communicate ideas and processes using evidence to develop explanations of events and phenomena and to identify simple cause-and-effect relationships (VCSIS088)

CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

Levels 3 and 4

Construct and use open and closed questions for different purposes (VCCCTQ010)

Examine and use the structure of a basic argument, with an aim, reasons, and conclusion to present a point of view (VCCCTR013)

Levels 5 and 6

Examine how different kinds of questions can be used to identify and clarify information, ideas and possibilities (VCCCTQ021)

Investigate common reasoning errors including contradiction and inconsistency, and the influence of context (VCCCTR024)

Examine the difference between valid and sound arguments and between inductive and deductive reasoning, and their degrees of certainty (VCCCTR027)





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3. CURRICULUM LINKS: LEVELS 3-6 LEARNING AREAS AND CAPABILITIES (CONT)

ENGLISH

Levels 3 and 4

Learn extended and technical vocabulary and ways of expressing opinion including modal verbs and adverbs (VCELA273)

Listen to and contribute to conversations and discussions to share information and ideas and negotiate in collaborative situations and use interaction skills, including active listening and clear, coherent communications (VCELY275)

Levels 5 and 6

Present a point of view about particular literary texts using appropriate metalanguage, and reflecting on the viewpoints of others (VCELT336)

Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences, and opinions, and use interaction skills, varying conventions of spoken interactions according to group size, formality of interaction and needs and expertise of the audience (VCELY366)



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4. DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE FEATURED ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS

With your class, stand in front of Sanja Pahoki, 'A message from the future', 2016.



Croatian-born, Melbourne-based artist Sanja Pahoki utilises everyday mediums and materials such as photography, neon, video and text to display her nuanced observations from everyday domestic life. Pahoki's work documents herself and those most important to her - particularly her family - and explores universal concerns including identity, family, sickness and death, often in a humorous way. Sanja is interested in the different ways we experience and understand the world.

The video work 'A message from the future' features Pahoki's parents playing the role of time-travelling aliens, delivering a message to us from the future to look after the health of our eyes. As a photographer, Pahoki is sensitive to light and often thinks of her eyes like the aperture and shutter of a camera, letting in light to create an image in her mind. Sanja is interested in perception and the many different ways we take in and interpret information about the world, including through our eyes. In this video, Sanja's parents wear funny outfits and perform instructions and act out different eye exercises taken from an old book of Eastern philosophy they kept as reading material in their bathroom.



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ASK YOUR CLASS:

Sanja Pahoki has asked her parents to act in her video. What part of the body are they talking about?

Sanja's parents are talking about eyes. They are talking about how the eyes affect different things about a person's body and mind. While this is very interesting, the artist wants you to think about how you see things. We see things because when you look at an object, light reflected from the object enters the eyes through the pupil. 'Seeing' can mean what we physically see, or it can mean how we think about and interpret the world around us. This is what we call 'perspective'.

Can you name some examples of when your parents give you advice on how to look after your eyes or other parts of your body and why do you think they do this?

Answers will vary. Perhaps students will say their parents ask them to wear sunglasses when it's bright outside or not look at television, phone or tablet screens for too long.

Wearing sunglasses outside is a good example. The way eyes work is that they take in light and turn it into information for your brain understands. Very bright light, like the sun, can damage your eyes, especially after prolonged or direct exposure. However, these effects don't usually happen immediately, and you may only notice something is wrong with your eyes once you are much older.

The most common way to protect your eyes from the sun's UV rays is by wearing sunglasses. Your parents want you to wear sunglasses now so that your eyes stay healthy in the future.

Why do you think the artist has asked her parents to wear silly outfits and pretend to be aliens from the future?

Sanja Pahoki sometimes likes to use humour in her work. Her parents appear to enjoy the funny role they are playing as aliens with an important message from the future.

Even though the message is about something quite important, humour lightens the seriousness of the message. The artist also likes to use humour and characters so audiences forget that the people in her video are her family. This makes the characters more relatable to others watching, not just herself.

Does being silly help you feel better?

Sometimes, being silly is the best medicine when you feel sad or scared. When Sanja feels anxious, she creates works that are fun to make to help her work through challenging feelings.

The humour in Sanja's video is another reminder that sometimes we can see the world differently depending on our perception. Have you ever heard the expression 'is your glass half full or half empty'? We can see things in a positive or negative light, a topic as serious or funny. It's all about perspective!



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4. DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE FEATURED ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS

With your class, stand in front of Taree Mackenzie, 'Pepper's ghost, diamonds, blue and green', 2023.



Taree Mackenzie explores the perceptual effects of colour, light and space through video and installation. Her works use constructed sets and basic visual devices such as lighting and framing to create simple but surprising effects. Mackenzie creates a sense of wonder and surprise, encouraging the viewer to try different ways of looking.

On display is a new work, part of the artist's series titled 'Pepper's Ghost', which draws on an old theatre effect of the same name. Invented in the 1860s during the Victorian era, the Pepper's Ghost effect was typically used in stage shows, movies and amusement park rides to trick the audience into thinking they could see a semitransparent image, often a ghost or other illusion. To create this effect, a light box would sit in a corner with a moving object that sat between it and a transparent screen at a 45-degree angle. The screen would reveal the lit object to the audience as an illusion without revealing the source.

While users of this effect traditionally presented the ghost image while hiding the lights and glass used to create it, Mackenzie reveals how everything works so viewers can explore and understand the effect. The suspended shapes in 'Pepper's ghost, diamonds, blue and green' block out the colours from each light box, and the viewer is encouraged to seek different spots to experience different effects of colour mixing with light; a scientific experiment creating optical illusions that alter our perception.



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ASK YOUR CLASS:

Take some time to try and look at the artwork from different angles. What do you see?

Two large lightboxes, one blue and one green, on separate walls. A large pane of glass on an angle is between both light boxes. Two large diamonds are hanging from the ceiling between each lightbox and the mirror.

As students move around the artwork, they may notice that the diamonds suspended appear in the glass.

Depending on the angle, it is possible to see one diamond reflected in the glass while also being able to see the other diamond through the glass. The reflected image changes shape and colour as the suspended diamonds slowly rotate.

Look at the glass. How do you think is it possible to see the two floating diamonds in the glass?

Students may notice one triangle reflected in the glass, depending on the angle. However, it is still possible to see through to the other side, meaning the glass works as both a mirror and a window to the other side.

Reflection is caused when light bounces off an object. When the object's surface is smooth and shiny, like a mirror, you can see clear images of other things lit by the light on the surface of that object. The light shining from the lightboxes is very bright, while the rest of the room is quite dark, meaning it's the most powerful light source. As a result, the light's reflection

bouncing off the shapes is more visible, even though the glass isn't as reflective as a mirror.

How can you see both colours in the reflection in the glass from certain angles?

The glass is positioned at an angle in relation to both sources of light, which creates layers of colour in the glass.

Refraction is a term used to describe how light can bend as it passes through a transparent object or substance onto another surface. The more angled the object is compared to the light source, the more the light appears to bend.

The glass is a transparent object angled in front of both lightboxes. As a result, the light from both sources is bounced at an angle, directed towards the diamond on the other side of the glass. The light is then reflected back onto the glass. This effect gives the illusion that you can see both colours layered together. Where the diamond appears black in the glass, the two diamond shapes have blocked both light sources at the same angle.

Why do you think the artist wanted to make this artwork?

Taree Mackenzie is very interested in the science of colour and light. She also loves exploring how things work, particularly illusions that trick us into seeing things that aren't there. Once Taree figures out how to create an illusion, she will use her art to show others how they are made.



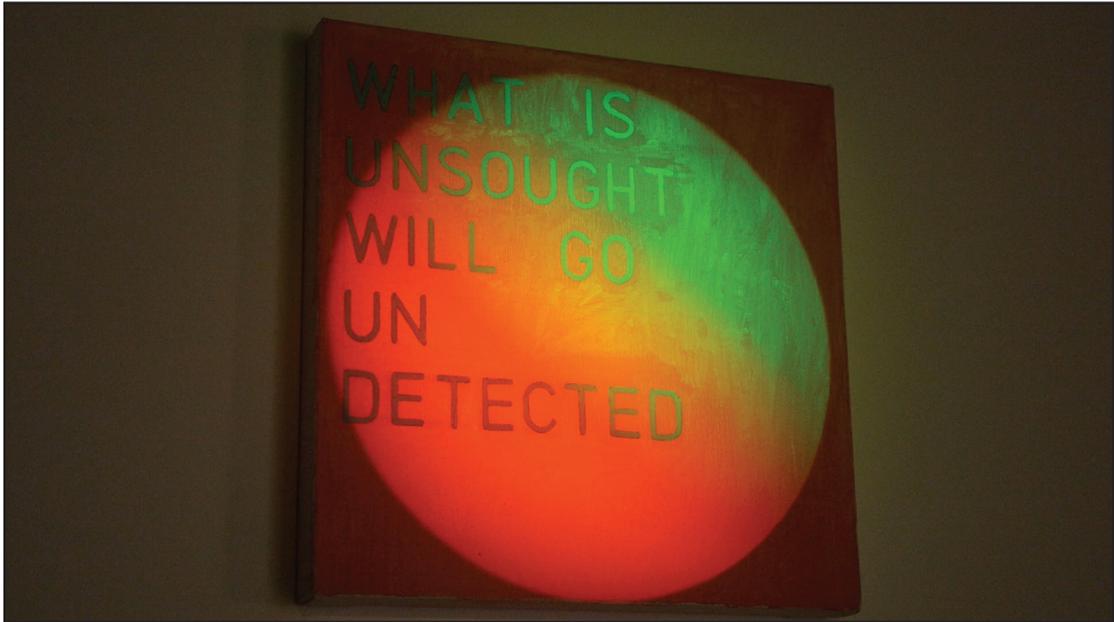


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4. DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE FEATURED ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS

With your class, stand in front of Leslie Eastman's installation.



Transforming space through light and colour, Melbourne artist Leslie Eastman uses the camera obscura, alongside large-scale mirrors, lenses, lights, drawing, and video, to create innovative site-specific installations that explore how things appear depending on our experience and perception. Using a manufactured approach to light, Leslie examines the possibilities of phenomenology, the study of how things appear and how we experience them.

Leslie Eastman has created a new installation for the exhibition exploring the effects of different lights on various painted services. Through the shifting of the light, the viewer's perception of the painted walls and the colour variations created with programmable lights that move around the installation. As the light shines on the paint, it alters the appearance of each hue and shifts our experience of the colours in the work.



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ASK YOUR CLASS:

Look closely at this work. What can you see, and how does it change over time?

Leslie has painted blocks of colour directly onto the gallery walls. Bright lights are moving across the painted surface. As time goes by, the source of light changes colour. As the colour changes, students may notice that the colours on the painted canvas also appear different.

Is it the paint or the light changing colour, and how can we tell?

Students will likely identify that the light is changing colour. However, we notice this because the paint colours appear to be changing when we look at the canvas. Even the sections of colour that aren't being lit by the light look like they are changing colour over time.

The only reason we know the spotlight is changing colour is that our brain uses logic to tell our eyes that the light can change colour, but the paint can't change colour. One option is possible while the other isn't. If we rely entirely on what we see, our answer might be that it is the paint colour is changing.

Can you tell what the real colour of the paint is on any of the squares?

There may be different answers among the group. Point out to the class that they perhaps feel confident about their answer in the beginning, but as the light changes the colour of the painted areas, it may cause them to second-guess their original answer.

The bright light is so powerful that it changes our perception of the paint colour. As a result, it is difficult to confirm what the real colour of paint is in any of the sections, even though we know it can only be one colour.

The lights are turned down very low for this exhibition. What would happen to Leslie's work if the ceiling lights were brighter?

It would be harder to see the colour variations if the other lights in the gallery space were turned up. However, it would also be easier to tell what the real colour of the paint is because the spotlight is no longer the most powerful source of light in the room, and the other lights in the space would stay the same colour.

The gallery needs to be dark so that there is no light pollution.





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4. DISCUSSION POINTS AND ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE FEATURED ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS

With your class, stand in front of Jazz Money, 'dissolve your edges', 2022.



Jazz Money is a Wiradjuri poet and artist based on Gadigal land, Sydney Australia. Their practice is centred around poetry while producing works that incorporate installation, digital media, performance, film, and print.

'dissolve your edges' features seven framed works on paper, each holding a section of a poem that references light, shadow, movement, and form. Instead of using ink, the text of the poem has been pressed into pieces of paper, each with hand torn edges. This printing process is called debossing, where text or imagery is pressed into the surface of the material and may protrude on the reverse side. The only way to read the poem is when the light of the room and surrounding artworks casts a shadow across the indents in the paper.

The artist is interested in the rules and conventions that dictate how written language works and the way those conventions can be adapted and altered to create new meaning. Written accounts of history are often highly valued in Western cultures, including in Australia which was colonised by the British Empire. The artist has chosen not to use capitalisation or punctuation within this text, as a method of resisting written language conventions. Money's work speaks to First Nations memory and how spoken language facilitated the sharing of stories, history, and culture tens of thousands of years before the first form of written language was even invented.



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ASK YOUR CLASS:

When you look closely at the pieces of paper in the frames. What can you see?

Students may first think they are looking at blank pieces of paper but as they look closer, they should be able to see either letters or words that span across all seven sheets.

The poem says 'dissolve your edges / breath upon contours / of this shadow soft bending light / light moving softness / edge to dissolving edge / held in glowing balance'

The Artist has written a poem on the paper but didn't use a pen or pencil. How can you tell something is written?

Jazz Money has pressed the letters into the paper to create an impression. The raised edges around the letters cast a shadow when light shines on the page, which tricks our eyes into seeing an outline of each letter in the page.

The letters are still quite faint, but the shadows each letter creates means we can still read the words even without ink, paint, or pencil. This is a technique referred to as 'blind debossing'.

Do you notice anything else about the poem, specifically about the letters?

There are no capital letters or punctuation.

It is more common for people to learn how to talk before they learn how to read and write. Spelling, punctuation and capital letters aren't always obvious or

easy to detect when a person is talking however, they are considered very important to convey meaning through writing. Often, people must go to school to be taught these rules. As a result, reading and writing are skills which take longer to learn than talking.

The poem has been created on multiple pieces of paper, which means it can be rearranged to create a different poem. Prompt students to imagine rearranging the text in their own order to see if they can create a different meaning.

When you have stories about your day, your family, or yourself, do you prefer to tell other people in person or write them down?

Responses may vary across the two options. Encourage students to explain the reasoning behind their preference. Perhaps one option feels easier. Maybe sharing a story verbally means you can tell it faster before you forget the details. Maybe writing it down gives you a chance to think carefully about how you describe things.

First Nations people have been sharing stories, memories, and histories verbally across generations for tens of thousands of years before the first known written language was invented. This artwork features a written poem however Jazz Money has avoided using pen, pencils, and paints to write it down and has also removed capital letters and punctuation to recall a time before written language existed.

