

Artists have manipulated the way we look at the world to stimulate audiences for centuries, from the Renaissance ambiguities of Archimboldo to the geometric illusory art of Bridget Riley during the modernist explosion of the mid 20th century. Indeed the post-modern ubiquity of some of this has lessened the impact, with much of what once would have delighted now being more associated with airports and fast food outlets. It is well worth celebrating then when an exhibition comes along which re-ignites the fascination we all have when we are asked to view things in a way that makes us think about how we see things.

The Light Show at the Hayward Gallery, London is such an exhibition. It comprises 20 or so installations which all make use of light and the way it is radiated and reflected to great effect. As a response to the demands of the Futurist manifesto from 1909 to 'murder the moonlight', Katie Paterson has produced a lamp that emits a wavelength closest to that of moonlight. Suspended in isolation, it perfectly reminds you of the beauty of a blue silver moonlit night time in the wilderness. Ann Veronica Janssens uses a circles of seven equally spaced spotlights pointing inwards through a dry iced fog to produce the appearance of a solid floating star (see picture above). The Gestalt view that the 'whole is other than the sum of the parts' is demonstrated by the ascending sequence of fluorescent tubes from Brigitte Kowanz. Viewed from the front, the simple installation becomes a sweeping stairway that completely transforms a large empty space into a



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Light fantastic

A new light show at the Hayward Gallery, London exploits visual function to maximum effect. **Bill Harvey** and **Kitty Harvey** report

grand hallway and staircase. From the side you just see some lamps hung from the ceiling.

Ivan Navarro's telephone kiosk-style exhibit uses one-way mirrors so that, when inside, strip lighting makes you feel as if you are floating in the middle of a very tall shaft. The real impact, however, that of being conscious of the scouring eyes of those in the queue outside, only really hits home when you know that the artist was inspired by the use of such mirrors in interrogation cells during the Pinochet dictatorship in his native Chile.

The best displays are where the artist

has a good understanding of visual processes. Conrad Shawcross uses moving spotlights within a honeycomb mesh box and the changing geometric projections on the walls have the same impact on perspective as the famous Ames room illusion. We saw Japanese tourists grow in front of our eyes. The precisely lit square of Doug Wheeler astounds by removing any shadowing that normally gives clues to perspective. Then the Troxler effect kicks in and changes the original view markedly. Anthony McCall uses lasers and dry ice to produce apparently solid sculptures but ones that interact with you, unlike solid state sculpture. Olafur Eliasson has set his strobe lights to just the right frequency to make jets of water appear as unworldly amoeboid structures. Best of all, though, are the three chambers created by Carlos Cruz-Diez (pictured), each lit with a source set at the peak sensitivity of one of the three cone receptor photopigments. For showing the way light can evoke temperature sensation, for seeing how peak sensitivity can make for uncomfortable viewing and for showing how secondary and tertiary colours are made from component colours, this should be installed in any vision science department. ●

● The exhibition runs until April 28. **Kitty Harvey** is a foundation arts student in London



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