

VANESSA STANLEY

Highly Commended in Contemporary Art Awards 2015

Linking Art and Science

By Dr Julie Rees

If there is one important feature in Vanessa Stanley's art, it is the concern for the natural environment, and nature's elements. Through the creation of sculpture, installation, video, and print, her art practice is an interface between art and science. Vanessa's aims are to connect the individual with nature as well as to alter and challenge their perceptions of the world. The works referred to in this article are an extension of her research into Astronomy and Physics. Vanessa creates large interactive viewing devices that highlight and distort nature's intangible phenomena. As a result, her works present aspects of Astronomy and Physics that are usually hidden, such as perception of light, space, and time.



Vanessa received a 'highly commended' for her installation and video work *Eastern Branch Brisbane River - Outside* (2014) in *Contemporary Art Awards 2015*. By using convex and concave mirrors in her work, she challenges the viewer's perception of the world by visually capturing varying states of change in the environment. This approach engages and provides an interactive experience for the audience. However, it also demonstrates that time and the present simultaneously exist impelling us to question the unfolding experience of the world around us.

Since completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, in 2009, she has had many public art installations showcased nationally and internationally. Reflective surfaces have been a continuous source of inspiration for Vanessa which can be seen in works such as *Below Above* (2015) featured in the *Scenic World Sculpture Exhibition 2015*, and *Total Internal Reflection* (2014) exhibited at the *Swell Sculpture Festival 2014*. In 2012, Vanessa was invited to exhibit in the *Jing 'an International Sculpture Project* in Shanghai, China, with her work *Your Altered Gaze Returned* (2011). Vanessa's work highlights the pivotal role of art in com-

municating scientific concepts to the everyday person.

Vanessa's love for Astronomy and Physics led her to complete an art residency in Norway at the Andoya Space Centre's Rocket Launch Facility, in the Arctic Circle in 2015. This residency allowed Vanessa to further her research into how art and perception might be used to visually express hypotheses and theories commonly associated with scientific disciplines. As a result of this residency, Vanessa secured a solo exhibition titled *Launch 1 Windows of Opportunity* which was held at the *Larkin Art Projects Gallery*, North Tamborine, Queensland in 2015.

Other artists working similarly to Vanessa include James Turrell, Olafur Eliasson, and Anish Kapoor, who all engage with intangible phenomena. These

artists, including Vanessa, use light, space, and time as a strategy that targets our primal and immediate connection to light to enhance, intensify, and heighten perceptions.

Adopting the role of a 'visual scientist', Vanessa creates works that are about looking, observing, perception, and perspective. They transform the hidden areas of scientific observation and research into interactive art installations. Vanessa's artworks offer the audience a mesmerising experience, enhanced by the opportunity to engage physically with each work.

On this page top, *Eastern Branch Brisbane River - Outside* (2014), mirrored perspex and aluminium, Dimensions Variable. Bottom, *Below Above* (2015), mirrored perspex, steel frame / aluminium clips, 2m Diameter.

Images courtesy of the artist

Vanessa Stanley's artwork can be viewed at www.contemporaryartawards.com or by visiting her website <http://vanessastanley.blogspot.com.au/>