

# *PLEASE DO TOUCH*

Art Installations about Sustainable Development Goals

**Yaniv Janson**

# Exhibition description

## Please Do Touch concept

The Please Do Touch series of installations make a connection between art, social and environmental topics and disability. The installations are part of the Taking Action! project that Yaniv Janson launched 5 years ago.

The installations focus on high priority themes which address the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yaniv is working on creating new art for this exhibition and plans to travel in New Zealand to consult with the disability community and so be able to integrate their ideas into his work. This would make this project the first collective one of its kind.

Art can facilitate the complex understanding between humankind and its environment through alternative languages involving all our senses. Please Do Touch installations make use of visual, body, oral and kinetic languages to speak to the variety of human experiences - to collaborate and work on humanity's Sustainable Development Goals.

## Project lead background

Yaniv Janson who leads this initiative is a young artist and political commentator. Through his art, he works to raise awareness about environmental and social issues and to move audiences to create impact. He has exhibited his work extensively in New Zealand and abroad. Yaniv's passion is to give a voice to more disabled people whilst contributing back to society:

*"Working towards crucial environmental goals allows Yaniv to give back to his community by proving that disability is not a barrier to achieving and sharing a social message with others" - Bernadette Grosyeux, Presidente, Eg'Art, Paris, France*

Janson's animation on the website of the New Zealand Human Rights Commission [[hrc.co.nz/yaniv-janson/impact](http://hrc.co.nz/yaniv-janson/impact)] and his books featuring art, social change and education illustrate the concepts inspiring his work with international organisations such as the UNESCO and Apple.

## Proposed Installations

The Please Do Touch exhibition advocates for increased access to the arts for people with a disability. *Conversely, this series of installations shows how the disability sector can contribute to the community as a whole, by facilitating sensory art experiences to all community members whilst addressing our core present and future challenges.* The purpose of inviting the audience to interact with the art by touching and listening to it is to engage with the topic on as many levels as possible. The installations unpack the following 5 Sustainable Development Goals.

### Goal 1 - No Poverty

Through his 'Rich, Middle Class and Poor' series, Janson raises awareness about the necessity to bridge gaps and social inequalities. Last year, one of the works in this series was a finalist in the Wallace Arts Trust Contemporary Art Award and nominated by the NZHerald as "Sublime Art for Social Change".

### Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water is a universal human right. Local communities must have the capacity to control their water quality, as it impacts people and environments alike. A [2011 AUT Expanding Documentary conference](#) presentation illustrated Yaniv's early work on water quality.

### Goal 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth

Leading by example, Yaniv creates his own work opportunities. Disability is not an obstacle to active contribution to economic growth - it is a different starting point. In 2013, Janson co-led '[Arts2Gether](#)', a project funded by the Ministry of Social Development, documenting micro-interactions between mainstream and disabled artists thereby reducing disabled artists' isolation. A 2015 Creative NZ grant supported Yaniv to extend his social inclusion creative and work with other marginalised audiences.

### Goal 13 - Climate Action

Yaniv launched the Changing the World - One Painting at a Time campaign in 2010 painting about the ice cap melting and the sea level rising, as reported in the "[Hot Topic](#)" blog of the Royal Society of NZ. He has been active in this field ever since, with the help of the UNESCO APAH (Asia Pacific Art Hub) to disseminate these ideas globally.

### Goal 14 - Life Below Water

Conservation has a vital role to play in supporting our fragile ecosystems. The photo below shows Yaniv pondering over these works - we could either have biodiversity or inert water.



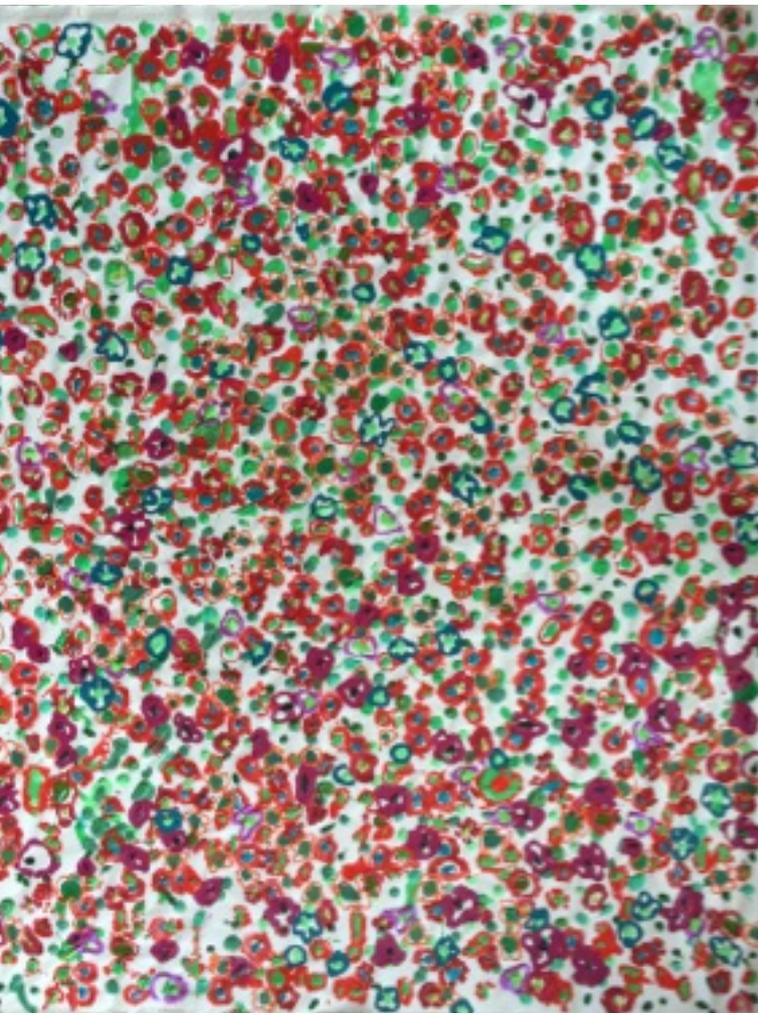
## **Please Do Touch ethos**

*"I am on the autistic spectrum and live with epilepsy. I feel that this installation would be a meaningful contribution to community. Please Do Touch facilitates sensory art experiences for all audiences, including people with visual impairments and special sensory needs, such as people on the autistic spectrum like myself. I choose to challenge traditional art 'rules' by inviting the audience to touch the art and engaging with audiences that were traditionally excluded from the experience of art. Conversely, this demonstrates that the disability community is keen to participate in mainstream society - by experimenting with different experiences of art for all to try" (Yaniv Janson, Project Lead).*

## **Description of the exhibition**

A series of 5 diptychs - pairs of paintings. Each diptych addresses one of the 6 goals described above. The pairs will describe the results of a sustainable approach to each goal and that of an unsustainable scenario. For example, in the photos above (work in progress) a healthy sea is populated by a diversity of fauna and flora - life abounds. If the sea environment is not protected on the other hand, much of this diversity is in danger as it is extremely susceptible to even micro-changes in temperature and composition. These diptychs will address the "with" and "without" scenario in a blunt and bold way. The 5 pairs of works are produced in acrylic on unframed canvas. Each work measures about 160 X 120 cm - with the only specification that each pair be installed together to outline the tension of opposite outcomes.

*"Poverty is when people become shadows of themselves - and cannot experience happy colours"*



## Appendix - Yaniv Janson Bio

Yaniv Janson has exhibited his work extensively in New Zealand and abroad - France, the USA, Israel and Canada. His favourite exhibition was at the Paris Galerie Celal, near Centre Pompidou where he hopes to exhibit one day.

One of Janson's early 'Please Do Touch' works was a finalist in the 2016 National Youth Art Award and was exhibited with a soundtrack and an invitation to interact with the art in a tactile way.

Janson also directs the Taking Action! UNESCO-based project. His second book and educational resource 'Changing the World - One Painting at a Time' has been adopted by the UNESCO and is showcased on the Asia Pacific Art-educators Hub/UNESCO website. Janson donated it to the UNESCO for distribution to art teachers worldwide. Since then Janson has lead a series of interventions aimed at raising expectations from disabled people to match their motivation to contribute to their communities. Working in close partnership with Apple Education Australasia, Janson designed the first accessible Art electronic book ([free iBook](#)) - a multimedia-training resource for workers supporting disabled artists. His work has been the backdrop for 4 academic conferences and events involving the themes he paints about. This showcases how people can overcome communication challenges to take full part in societal life through environmental activism and professional success. In the past 2 years, the Wallace Arts Trust has acquired 5 of Janson's works.

Janson was the first Kiwi invited by the Paris-based Eg'Art organisation providing direct exposure to the European Community Association that implements the UN Conventions on Human Rights on Disability.

Over the years, has received over 18 awards, academic scholarships, business sponsorships (Resene, Forster, Sofrana) and grants (Creative Communities Grant towards social inclusion work, Creative Hamilton Artistic Development Grant). He completed a Diploma of Arts and Creativity (Hons.) from The Learning Connexion. Janson lives with disabilities but this does not stop him from sharing his message; he sees himself as a contributing and global citizen. He has been nominated a role model for creating a micro-business and for his support of other disabled artists. The Please Do Touch project installations are traveling to Europe with funding from Creative New Zealand.

### Media Coverage and Media Pack

The project **Media Pack** is at: [tinyurl.com/taking-action-unesco](http://tinyurl.com/taking-action-unesco). It covers:

- national and international media coverage on Yaniv Janson, including from NZ Herald and RadioNZ
- the video clip that accompanies the launch of the **Please Do Touch** project

### Publications

Beehives Hidden in Trees; Since the Beginning; Changing the World - One Painting at a Time; Portfolio

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Climate action is more than vital - we must act before the no-return point

