

Activity: Photographic Distortion

This activity, conceived by photographic artist Gisela Torres, invites you to use every day recyclable and household objects to create and share a series of distorted photographic portraits. The key aim of creating portraits in the style of a funfair amusement attraction is to learn through playing with lens distortion, light sources and printed portraits.

You will begin by constructing a 'distortion tool' or lens adaptor for your smartphone. Then choose a portrait print that you've made or from a book, magazine or any other type of printed matter. You'll try out using different light sources – shooting in daylight, warmer interior light and directional light using a torch. In the final step, you will select an image taken from three different light sources, experiment with cropping and make a triptych using a free Instagram app.

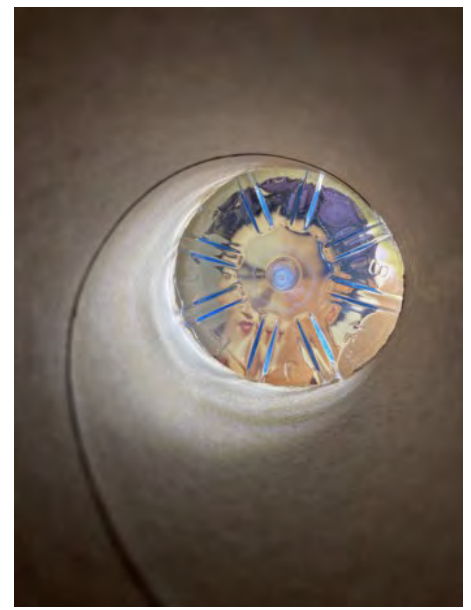
Share your photographs #TPGActivity



Photograph 1: Daylight



Photograph 2: Indoor light



Photograph 3: Indoor light

You will need:

- A kitchen towel or loo roll cardboard tube
- Clear, recyclable plastic water bottle
- Scissors
- Glue
- A portrait image
- A torch
- A smart phone
- Photo Grid app on Instagram



Instructions

Step 1.

Gather your materials and equipment together – a cardboard tube, a clear plastic water bottle and a portrait print; and a torch and smartphone.



Cardboard tube



Clear plastic bottle



Printed portrait

Step 2.



1. Carefully cut out the bottom end of the plastic bottle to create a circular form. The size should be a little larger than the circumference of your tube.



2. Apply the glue generously around the rim of the cardboard tube.



3. Place the cut out circular form on top of the tube rim, convex side pointing inward, and press down gently until it holds.



4. Wait about 10 minutes until the glue has completely dried and voila! You have your distortion tool.

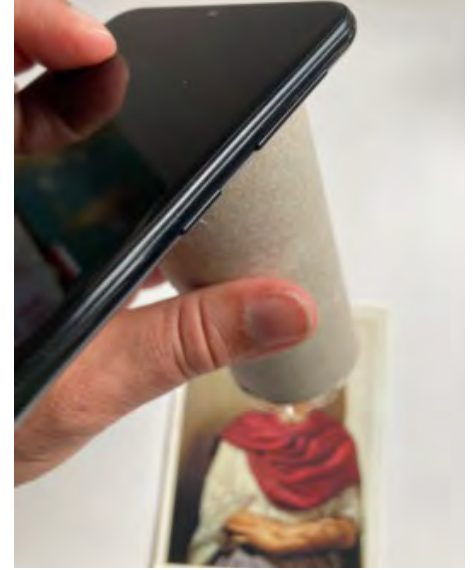
Step 3.



1. In daylight, put your chosen portrait print on a flat surface and place your distortion tool over top with the plastic side closest to the image.



2. You may need to lift the distortion tool slightly to allow daylight to illuminate the part of the image you will be photographing.

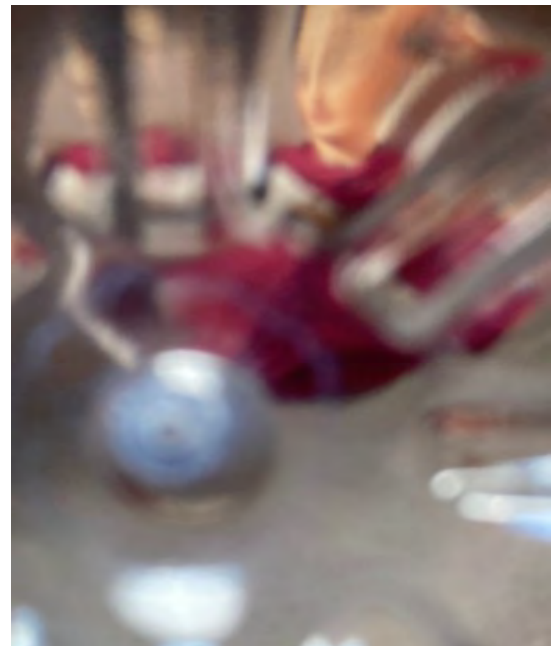


3. Place your smart phone lens closely against the other end of the tube. (Try tilting and moving the tool to capture a range of different distortions but make sure to hold the camera close to the tube's edge to prevent light leakage through the top.)

Top Tips!



Cropping: Play around with cropping the tube out of the image to centre on the distortion.

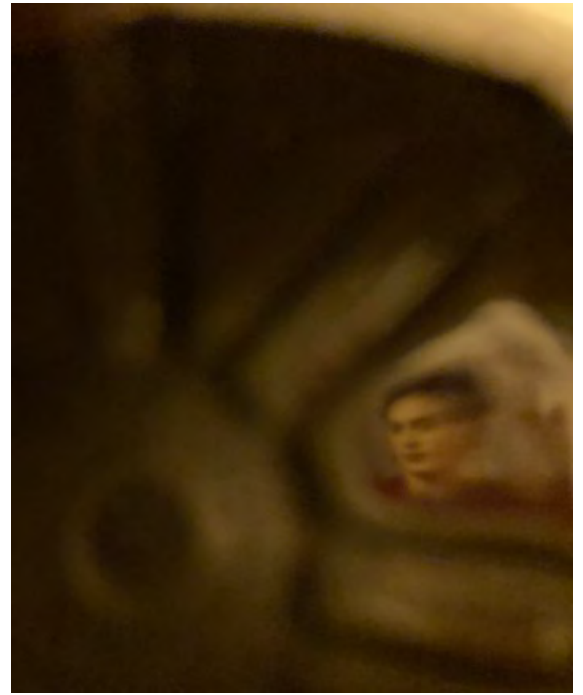


Soft focus: Try turning the tool around so that the plastic side is close to the lens. This will create a softer effect.

Now play around with different light sources and cropping!



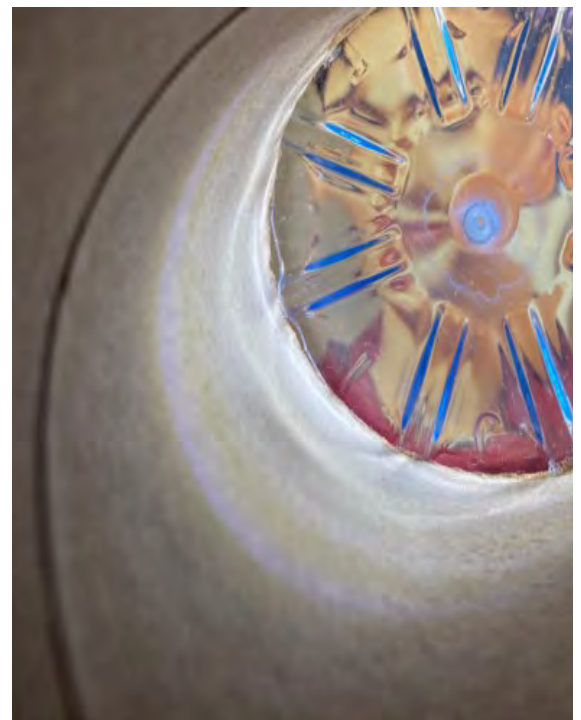
Warm lighting: Try using a reading lamp or a warm-toned indoor room light.



Cropping suggestion: Try cropping your image to make a close up of the face within it.



Torch lighting: Try using a bicycle – white or red – or household torch or phone light to create directional light.



Cropping suggestion: Try cropping the image but this time experiment with incorporating the tube too.

Make a triptych and share

Using Instagram's Photo Grid app, select the three images that you feel are most successful but also work well together – perhaps because of their differences or because of their similarities – and share them with friends and family.

Share your photographs more widely by tagging them with #TPGActivity