

ART

How is the technique of movement created in Optical Art? What effects does it produce?

With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the 19th century, new art styles and movements appeared and disappeared at an increasingly fast pace, thus reflecting the growing rate of changes in our society. How is movement created in Optical Art? And what effects does it produce? Op Artists, Bridget Riley (1931-) and Victor Vasarely (1908-1997) demonstrates this clearly in their unique paintings, which will be explained in this essay. Optical Art, also commonly known as 'Op Art' is a movement, which was most prominent between the years 1965 and 1968. Op Art first grabbed public attention when an article appeared in Americas "Time" magazine, October 1964, through works that might now be described as 'Op Art' had been produced for several years previously. It has been suggested that Victor Vasarely's 1930s works such as *Zebra* (1938), which is made up entirely of diagonal black and white stripes curved in a way to give a three-dimensional impression of a seated zebra, should be considered the first works of Op Art. Vasarely was one of the pioneers of Optical art - Op Art - that developed alongside Pop Art in the 1960s. Bridget Riley is perhaps the best known of the Op artists. Taking Vasarely's lead, she made a number of paintings consisting only of black and white lines. Rather than giving the impression of some real-world object, however, Riley's paintings frequently give the impression of movement or colour. Riley later produced works in full colour, and other Op artists have worked in colour as well, although these works tend to be less well known. Violent contrasts of colour are sometimes used to produce similar illusions of movement. Many critics denounced Op art, saying that it had been done before and that it was just glorification of basic design and psychology textbooks. However, for those three years, Op art influenced a variety of fields, such as fashion, fabrics, poster design and interior decor.

Op Art is a style popular in the 1960s that was based on optical principles and optical illusion. Optical Art is a mathematically oriented form of Abstract art, which is defined in which real objects in nature are represented in a way that completely or partially neglects their true appearance and expresses it in a form of sometimes-unrecognisable patterns of lines, colours and shapes. There are several characteristics that create Op art; Generally characterized by hard-edged black and white patterns or geometric shapes which use repetition of simple forms and complex colour interactions, to the point where colours and lines seem to vibrate before the eyes, moiré patterns, an exaggerated sense of depth, foreground-background confusion, impressions of movement, flashing and vibration, or alternatively of swelling or warping and other visual effects. Op Art greatly influenced fashion, commercial design, and other aspects of the popular culture of the era. Op Art began with the desire to involve a correlation between seeing and understanding. The movement involved in Op Art is that it manipulates the eyes or creates an optical illusion. Similar to other movements, the Op Art artists did not use conventional paint and brush techniques. Instead, the artists used a limited colour scheme, and a limited style to draw shapes and objects. Each painting or design had its own way of escaping the human eye. Although this movement was relatively short, the artistry they displayed was important to all art movements and art lovers. In a sense, all painting is based on tricks of visual perception, using rules of perspective to give the illusion of three-dimensional space, mixing colours to give the impression of light and shadow. With Optical Art, the rules that the eye applies to makes sense of a visual image are themselves the "subject" of the artwork. An Op artist must be aware of how the eye sees to be able to create such art. Op art relies on how we see, how our eyes move over a picture plain. Through the mathematically planned placement

of line, shapes, and colour, an Op artist is able to control the movement of the eye, not allowing it to stop and concentrate on one certain area of the painting, therefore accelerating the movement of the eye on the picture surface. That may contribute to the feeling of tired eyes after looking at Op art for long periods of time. This movement is achieved mainly by the repetition of simple elements in a grid formation. In Op art, there is no figurative or representational objects for the audience to associate with, which leaves the art to direct perceptual appeal.

Many early works of British artist Bridget Riley (1931-) involved curving parallel lines that seemed to undulate in waves across the painting's surface. Hungarian-born artist Victor Vasarely (1908-1997), considered one of the founders of op art, used warped geometric forms to create powerful spatial illusions, including dizzying descents into the "depths" of the painting.

Victor Vasarely (1908-1997), French painter, sculptor, and graphic artist, the father of Op Art. He is internationally recognized as one of the most important artists of the 20th century. He is the acknowledged leader of the Op Art movement, and his innovations in colour and optical illusion have had a strong influence on many modern artists. He studied in Budapest at the Podolini-Volkman Academy, then at a school of graphic arts. Victor's work through out the 1930s consisted of designing posters, he settled in Paris and worked as a commercial graphic artist, he liked to use effects of graphic patterns and space illusions, which concentrated mainly on painting. His first exhibition contained many different patterns such as zebras and chessboards. In the late 1940s Victor focused on paint geometric abstraction that promoted Op Art in the 1950s with compositions based on different kinds of patterns. The basic components were squares, circles, and triangles, and horizontal and vertical parallel lines; by drawing lines at varying distances from one another and introducing undulations, Vasarely created the illusion of three-dimensional space. He later introduced vibrant colours, which further enhanced the optical illusion. In their fully developed form, Vasarely's geometrical abstractions produce mesmerizing, almost hallucinatory effects. Throughout the 60's his style could be compared to that of Bridget Riley who exploited colour and the creation of space by it. She was also interested in optical effects, in the early 60's she worked initially in black and white and then onto colour by 66. Her work follows the same pattern as Vasarely and like Vasarely her work shows a complete mastery of the effects characteristic of Op art. Artists such as Riley influenced Vasarely's use of colour and with these two artists on the scene together the genre of Op art begun. During the 1960's and 70's his optical images became part of the popular culture, having a deep impact on architecture, computer science, fashion and the way we now look at things in general. His paintings are in the permanent collections of the world's major museums. All his work was so new and revolutionary for his time. Along with Bridget Riley and other leaders of the Op Art movement he created a sense of refreshment, a new beginning in the world of art. His work was created for people to enjoy and ask for them to think for themselves what it represents or shows as it is always evident if they look carefully and logically. Everywhere you look today his work is evident and related to everyday objects and constructions. He aimed to stimulate visually and achieved his goal as a master of his own work and dominator of popular culture and society.

*His motto was "Art to all".
"Every form is a base for colour, every colour is the attribute of a form."
-Victor Vasarely*

Quotes from: www.vasarely.org/intro.html

Bridget Riley (1931-), English painter, a leading figure in the 1960s art movement Op Art. She was born in London and studied there at Goldsmith's College (1949-1952) and the Royal College of Art (1952-1955). She was influenced by her study of the Neo-Impressionist technique of Pointillism, which is an area of French impressionism where colour is broken up into dots or points. These points compose forms that are visible to the viewer only from a distance where the eye blends the points to create such forms or objects, but taking up 'Op Art' in the early Sixties she worked initially in black and white. In 1958 she was deeply impressed by the large Jackson Pollock exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. This was one of the reasons that led her to pursue her own art, finally leaving her job as illustrator at the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in 1962. She creates carefully calibrated shifting of abstract shapes designed to produce striking optical illusions of movement and other effects. Riley's paintings fuse space, light, and drawing in a complex relationship with colour such that perception becomes a medium. She made her reputation through her abstract works of the 1960s, such as 'Breathe' (1966) and 'Zing' (1971). Riley produced numerous black and white paintings where she created a series of geometric shapes, subtly varied in size and form in order to create a sense of movement. Since her first solo exhibition in London in 1962, Riley's work has been exhibited widely in Europe, Japan, and Australia. In 1966 Riley turned to colour with 'Chant' (1967) and 'Late Morning' (1967). Later, Riley experimented with another kind of optical device: painting lines of complementary pure colours, whose positioning adjacent to one another affects the perceived brightness of the individual colours. Awarded the International Prize for Painting at the Venice Biennale in 1968, she also holds honorary doctorates from the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge. After a major retrospective in the early Seventies, Riley begins to travel extensively. Up until early 1980 she had been working on her 'curve' (the trace of a point whose direction of motion changes) paintings, but these came to an end after a particularly inspiring sojourn in Egypt. Her extensive exploration of colour and contrast began after this. In 1983 she designed a mural made up of soothing bands of blue, pink, white and yellow for the Royal Liverpool Hospital. In the same year, she made her first set for the ballet 'Colour Moves' first performed at the Edinburgh Festival. Three years later she met the post-modern 'Simulationist' painters Philip Taaffe and Ross Bleckner, and inspired to introduce a diagonal element to her work, thus adding another dimension to her fascination with the juxtaposition of colours. Bridget Riley is one of the finest exponents of Op Art, with her subtle variations in size, shape and position of blocks within the overall pattern. Her work is characterised by its intensity and its often-disorientating effect. Indeed the term 'Riley sensation' was coined to describe this effect of looking at the paintings, especially her early black and white pictures. Riley is fascinated with the act of looking and in her work aims to engage the viewer not only with the object of their gaze but also with the actual process of observation. Bridget Riley's work is based on repetition of form and colour plays on energy, heat, and light, creating rhythmic optical effects.

"For me Nature is not landscape but the dynamics of visual forces - an form as vibration, moving, feeling aren't from all descriptive or functional roles." every painter has a natural appearance - these forces can only be tackled by reading colour and form.
Bridget Riley

"I want my paintings to exist on their own terms. That is to say they must speak to engage and use in you. There are paintings that, deceptively simple - telling no tales as if were - resisting, in a well-behaved way, all attempts to be questioned, probed or

~~...for those with open eyes, serenely disclosing some intimations of
the splendors to which the sign alone was the key.'~~
- ~~Bridget Riley~~

Quote from this book: The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley. Collected Writings 1965-1999.
Edited by Robert Kudielka.

The reason I was attracted to Vasarelys and Rileys work was due to the outstanding dazzling optical effects producing movement created in so many of their entirely unique paintings. The portrayal of movement is important in art to produce outstanding effects, visual perspective and to create meaning. Op Artists would manipulate our eyes by repeating and/or distorting patterns with lines, colours, and shapes to produce visual illusions. By doing this they were experimenting with three dimensionality on a two dimensional space. This work was always non-representational. Bold geometric patterns create the illusion of movement in some cases and depth in others.

Bibliography

Books

- The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley. Collected Writings 1965-1999. Edited by Robert Kudielka.
- Bridget Riley Paintings 1982-1992. Verlag Fur Moderne Kunst Nurnberg and the authors.
- Bridget Riley. Exhibition supported by TATE Members. Edited by Paul Moorhouse.

Websites

- http://harel.org.il/nadav/Bridget_Riley/
(Bridget Riley Optical Art Images)
- http://www.robertsandelson.com/bridgetriley_bio.html
(Bridget Riley Biography Timeline)
- http://www.robertsandelson.com/victorvasarely_bio.html
(Victor Vasarely Biography Timeline)
- <http://www.vasarely.org/intro.html>
(Victor Vasarely Official Website)
- http://www.grafos-verlag.com/graphics/english/vasa_ga.htm
(Victor Vasarely Optical Art Images)
- <http://www.the-artists.org/MovementView.cfm?id=8A01EEC2-BBCF-11D4-A93500D0B7069B40>

Places Visited

- Tate Modern and Tate Britain, Bridget Riley Exhibitions and Displays (26th June – 28th September).

CD-ROMS

- The Hutchinson Educational Encyclopedia 2000

Plan For Presentation

- White board, Size- 60inchX30inch
- Paint black wave stripes (Using this pattern style)



- Between the white waves I will insert my writing (essay) in the gaps.

Between the black waves I will insert my images and paintings (Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely) in the gaps.

