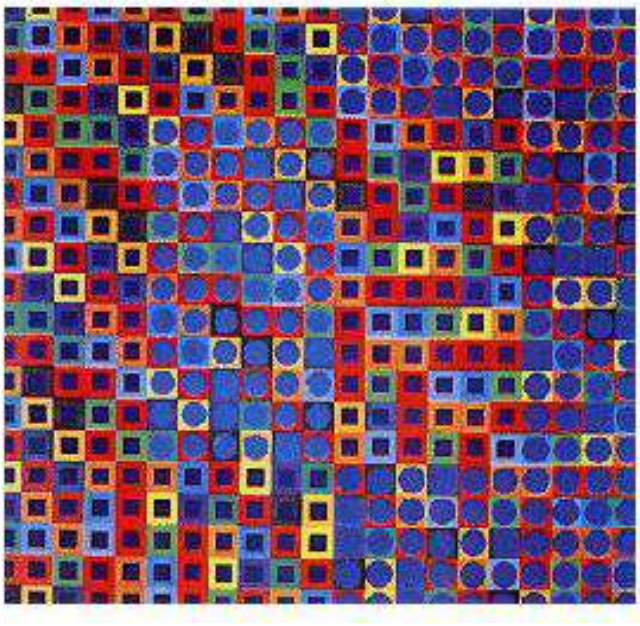
Masterpiece: *Zebegen, 1964*
by Victor Vasarely



Keywords: Op art, optical illusion, Color theory
Grade: 2nd Grade
Month: September/October
Activity: Op Art Spinner
TIME: 1.25 hours

Op Art is a math-themed form of abstract art, which uses repetition of simple forms and colors to create optical effects.

Meet the Artist:

- He was born in Hungary in 1906. As a child he enjoyed drawing.
- Originally he wanted to study science and medicine. Eventually, he became a graphic artist and used science and mathematical calculations for his work.
- As a young man, he moved to Paris and worked for several advertising agencies. He married in 1931 and had two boys.
- He was fascinated with repeating shapes and patterns. He began to repeat images like tigers, zebras and checkerboards.
- He used scientific methods and created geometric shapes in combination with dazzling opposing colors. This combination would trick the mind into thinking the canvas was moving. These were optical illusions. This is the basis for Op Art.
- Op art is defined as repeating shapes such as circles, squares, rhomboids, rectangles, and triangles are used in a composition of contrasting and complementary colors. This unique combination results in illusion of movement.
- The press hailed him as the inventor of Op Art.
- By the 1940s he was able to devote all of his time to art. Objects like shells, pebbles, tiles, lines and even houses were his inspirations.
- His friends and family remember him as warm, funny, charming, and intelligent.
- He died in Paris in 1997.

Possible Questions:

- What would you name this painting?
- Who likes this painting?
- What are complementary colors? (Show the color wheel) Explain that colors directly across from each other are complementary.
- What colors do you see? How would you describe the colors?
- What repeating shape do you see? Are there any other shapes?
- Does this painting look like it moves?
- Why do you think he liked drawing zebras, tigers and checkerboards?
- Would you want to own this? Where would you hang it?

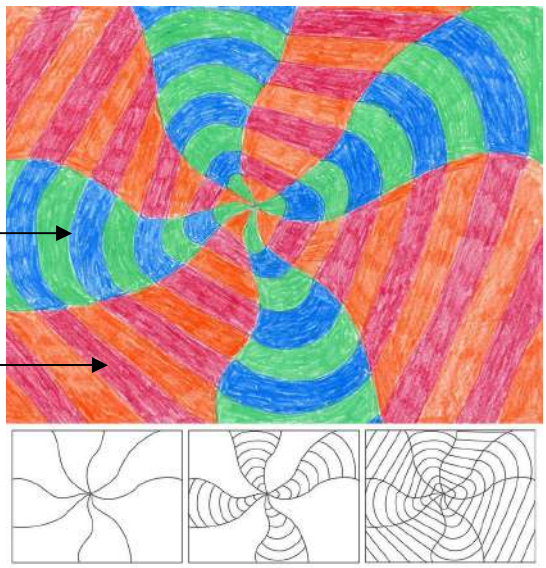
Activity: Op Art Spinner

Note to Grade Coordinator or Art Guide: Prior to this lesson you will need to pierce the center point of the paper plates. Stack several and pierce the center with a small nail. Make the hole large enough to be visible and for the student to be able to stick a brad into the hole on their own.

Materials Needed: Paper plates, colored markers, a brad, students own pencil, ruler

Process:

1. Pass out paper plates to each student and 3 sets of the colored markers for each workstation. Have students label the back of plate with their name.
2. Have students draw four or five sets of wavy "triangle" shapes radiating outward. The shapes need to be done in pairs for the coloring to work out correctly.
3. Next, students draw lines within in "triangle" group that all curve outward. See the blue/green group.
4. Next they connect all the curved lines with lines that are straight as possible within the other "triangle" group.
5. To enhance the pattern that has been drawn, the students are to choose two warm or cool colors for all the curved lines. To finish, they use two other colors to fill in all the straight lines. The result is an image that has a dimensional look. *Hint: Complementary Colors will have the best effect!*



6. For best effect, have them color the rim of the plate with the black marker when finished coloring the shapes.
7. When students are completely finished coloring, give each a brad. The brad must go into the center hole so the head is on the underside of the plate.
8. Place their plate on a flat surface and give them a spin. Observe how the colors mix.

Photograph of Victor Vasarely and other Paintings