

The Trinity College Dublin Art Collections

Artist: Victor Vasarely
Title: *Blue Serigraph*
Medium: silkscreen
Edition: 169 of 200

b. 1906, Pecs, Hungary d. 1997, Paris, France

Born in Hungary in 1906, Vasarely originally studied Medicine. After two years however, he made the drastic decision to suspend this study and to become an artist. As his career progressed and his personal style solidified, Vasarely became widely renowned as the 'father' of the Op Art movement in the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1925, having left medical school, and at the age of just 19, he began studying art at the Podolini-Volkman Academy in Budapest. In 1928, he transferred to the Műhely Academy, known as the Budapest Bauhaus where he immediately became fascinated by contemporary colour research conducted by artists such as Malevich, Kandinsky and Josef Albers.

Vasarely moved to Paris in 1930, and spent thirteen years working as a graphic artist. Here he pursued an interest in linear patterning. A notable series of works from this period is the *Zebres* series in which the artist used a series of swirling black stripes on a white ground to demonstrate how the simple device of the line, could be used to create a sense of dynamism and movement, without any formal, definitive outline. The dissimulation of the real and figurative in this way, coupled with an interest in science prevailing from his youth, were the seeds to his later body of Op Art.

In the 1950s Vasarely wrote a series of manifestos on the use of optical phenomena in art, which won him both admiration and accolades. His *Yellow Manifesto*, 1955, discussed his theories on 'plastic kinetics'. For him, "*Movement does not rely on composition nor a specific subject, but on the apprehension of the act of looking, which by itself is considered as the only creator.*" <http://www.op-art.co.uk/victor-vasarely/> This manifesto won the critics award in Brussels and the Gold Medal at the Milan Triennial that year. For Vasarely, science had found all the answers it could, and it was art which could make scientific models more visually comprehensible. Throughout the fifties Vasarely continued to develop monochrome manipulations of geometric shapes which centred on linear compositions, parallelisms, checkerboard deformations, and spatial illusions.

In the 1960s Vasarely moved into his *Permutations* series, which explored his theory of the *Unité Plastique*, in which the unit was the single building block in the work, but also in which he explored the unity of colour and form. There is a series of *Permutations* works by the artist in the Trinity College Collection which are notable for their use of all over pattern constructed through the repetition of the colour-form unit. In these works Vasarely's goal to achieve a universal or scientific language is clearly expressed.

In 1970 Vasarely opened a museum of his own work in Gordes, France. This later closed in 1996. However, there remain several museums dedicated to his art, including the Vasarely Foundation at Aix-en-Provence, France, and the Vasarely Museum in Pecs, Hungary. His work is also housed in the collections of the Irish Museum of Modern Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the Tate Gallery, London, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The information contained in this article is from www.vasarely.com, www.op-art.co.uk/victor-vasarely/