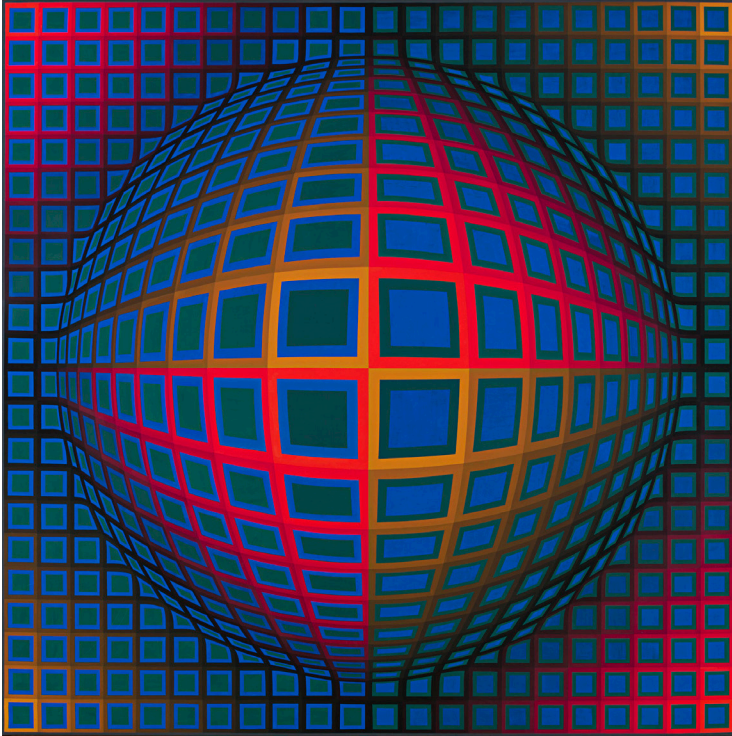## Lesson: Victor Vasarely & Op Art

Artist: Victor Vasarely

Born: April 9, 1906; Pécs, Hungary

Died: March 15, 1997; Paris, France

Period/Movement: *Op Art, Kinetic Art, Modernism and Modern Art*

Victor Vasarely (French, born Hungary, 1906–1997). *Vega-Nor*, 1969. Oil on canvas. 78¾ x 78¾ inches (200 x 200 cm). Collection Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1969 (K1969:29). © Fondation Vasarely / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Enduring Understandings:

Creating and experimenting with a form of art in which graphic design is combined with mathematics and color theory to create optical illusions.

Essential Questions:

How do line and color work together to create a sense of depth?

Lesson Objectives:

Use some of Vasarely's techniques to learn about and create a piece of Op Art. To experiment with line and warm and cool colors to achieve the illusions.

About the Artist

Victor Vasarely was a Hungarian-French artist who provided the world with some of the most distinctive images and optical effects in twentieth-century art. He is considered one of the first artists to create Op art.

His career began in Paris in the 1930s and 1940s where he worked as a commercial graphic designer. He used these skills during the final decades of his career honing what he hoped would become a new universal language for art and architectural design by combining incredible technical precision with a scientific awareness of optical and geometrical effects.

He is best known for his grid-like paintings and sculptures of the 1960s onwards. These play with the reader's sense of visual form by creating illusory, flickering effects of depth, perspective, and motion. The result is a fun interaction with the art where the viewer tries to decipher the difference between what one can see and what is actually there.

Vasarely was perhaps the first modern artist to realize that Kinetic Art did not have to move. Instead, he created a series of paintings and sculptures that used geometrical effects to suggest the idea of motion within static forms. In *Vega-Nor*, he created a semi-spherical image that seems to protrude from a flat background.

PROJECT

Create a piece of Op art using a grid-based system to create and distort lines.

Materials:

- 9 x 12-inch drawing paper (2 per student)
- Pencils
- Rulers
- Crayons or oil pastels
- Glue stick
- Something to trace circles with (a roll of tape, bowl or stencil) or a compass.

Vocabulary:

Op Art: A major development of painting in the 1960s that used geometric forms to create optical effects.

Grid: A network of lines that cross each other to form a series of squares or rectangles.

Warm Colors: Hues that give the feeling of warmth, such as red, orange, and yellow. These colors are often associated with fire, the sun, and heat. They can make an area feel closer and more intimate and create a sense of energy or excitement.

Cool Colors: Include green, blue, and purple; are often more subdued than warm colors. They are the colors of night, water, nature and are usually calming, relaxing and somewhat reserved.

Procedure:

Step 1: Collect supplies.
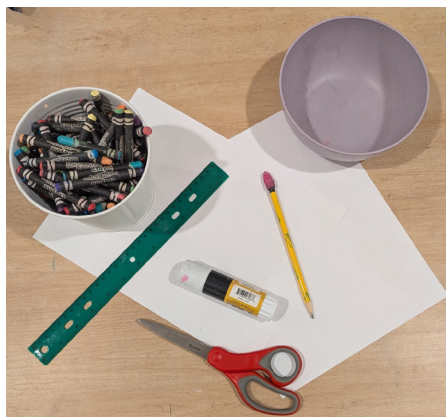
Step 2: On one piece of paper, use a ruler to divide the paper into a grid. Use the ruler to make 1-inch marks across the top and bottom of the paper. Connect the marks. Then make 1-inch marks along each side and connect those marks to make a grid.
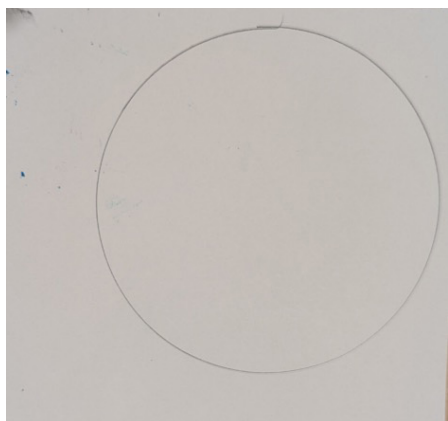

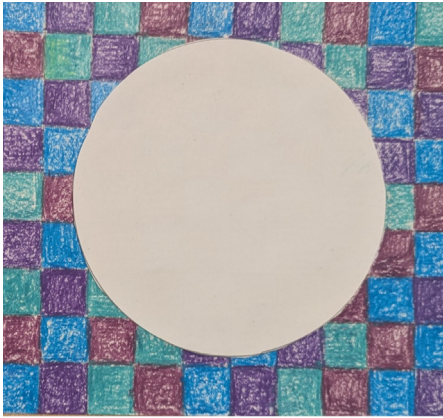**Step 3:** Color the grid in using cool colors.
(Note: If you know where you are going to place your circle in the next step, you may color lightly or omit coloring that area.)


Step 4: Trace and cut out a circle from the second piece of paper.

Step 5: Glue the circle onto the grid background.

Step 6: Using the background grid as a guide, connect one side of the grid with the other using a curved line across the circle. Do 3 curved lines where the curve goes towards the top of the circle and 3 where they curve towards the bottom of the circle. Repeat with curved lines connecting the top and bottom grid. If needed, add more curved lines in the middle area.
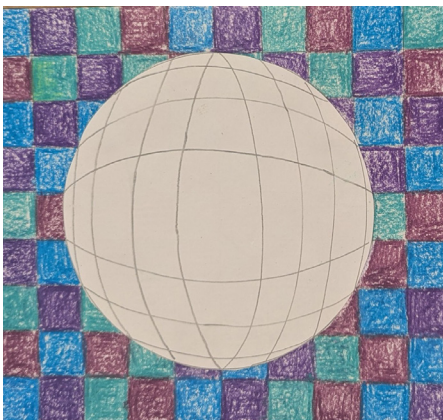
Step 7: Add warm colors to the circle. Start with the brightest warm colors in the center of the circle grid, and fade to the darker warm colors at the edges of the circle.
You may experiment with mixing colors as well.

Optional:

- Experiment with the grid. The background lines may be wavy, diagonal or spaced wider apart.
- Instead of warm and cool colors, use one color and color every other square.
- Use multiple, different sized circles.

Optional Wrap Up:

- Discuss how the lines and colors work together to create an illusion of depth. How does the use of warm and cool colors add to the illusion?

Standards:

Artistic Process: Creating

Process Component: Investigate, Plan, Make

Enduring Understanding: Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

Essential Questions: What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creative risk taking and innovative thinking? How does collaboration expand the creative process?

New York State Standards:

Grade	Code	Standard
K	VA:Cr1.1.K	Engage collaboratively in creative artmaking in response to an artistic problem.
1	VA:Cr1.1.1	Use observation and exploration in preparation for making a work of art.
2	VA:Cr1.1.2	Create art of design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.
3	VA:Cr1.1.3	Apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies, to investigate personal ideas through the artmaking process.
4	VA:Cr1.1.4	Work individually and collaboratively to set goals and create artwork that is meaningful and has purpose to the makings.

5	VA:Cr1.1.5	Identify and demonstrate diverse strategies for artistic investigation to choose an approach for beginning a work of art.
6	VA:Cr1.1.6	Use brainstorming to formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art.
7	VA:Cr1.1.7	Develop criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.
8	VA:Cr1.1.8	Collaboratively shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life by using a contemporary practice of art and design.

Grade Level 9-12	Code	Standard
Proficient	VA:Cr1.1.HSI	Use multiple art making approaches. To begin creative endeavors.
Accomplished	VA: Cr1.1.HSII	Formulate, individually or collaboratively, new creative problems, based on students' existing artwork.
Advanced	VA: Cr1.1.HSIII	Visualize and hypothesize to generate ideas and plans for creating art and design that can affect social change.

AKG: