



Victor Vasarely in Black & White

21 October – 17 December 2005

For the first time in 50 years, a major retrospective of Victor Vasarely's black and white paintings.

In the autumn of 2005, Robert Sandelson presented *Victor Vasarely in Black and White*, a collection of key works from the artist's black and white period of the 1950s and 60s. Not only some of the most visually arresting and iconic works, they also represent the groundbreaking turning point in Vasarely's artistic career that would establish his reputation as founding Op Artist and revolutionary of Modern Art.

It was whilst working as a graphic designer in Paris in the 1930s that the young Hungarian produced his first *Zebra* paintings, now considered as the first works of the Op Art movement, which featured in the inaugural exhibition of *Galerie Denise René*, Paris (1944). However, it was his show *Naissance* (1951) that marked the dawn of Vasarely's defining monochromatic period and became the catalyst for the overwhelming series of optical and kinetic experiments that followed and were revisited throughout his lifetime.

Influenced by nature and society, works from the periods such as *Denfert* and *Belle-Isle* (1949-1954) for instance, were inspired by the cracking white tiles lining the walls of the Denfert-Rochereau metro in Paris, or by the natural forms of waves, shells and pebbles found at the seaside village of Belle-Isle respectively. The creative visionary was able to translate these ideas into manifold geometric, kinetic designs that strive to achieve optimum visual impact.

Vasarely's influence resonates in the work of Bridget Riley, particularly through her own use of black and white in her early paintings of the 1960s. The Museum of Modern Art, New York celebrated their success in the landmark exhibition, *The Responsive Eye* in 1965. Today, Vasarely's esteem in Modern Art and society is venerated through his impact on architecture, fashion and design.

Following the widely acclaimed exhibition on Optical and Kinetic Art at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Strasbourg held in the summer of 2005, *Victor Vasarely in Black and White* emphasized the artist's importance as a pioneer, like Riley in the development of Op Art. It formed the first significant show of his black and white works since his seminal exhibition in 1951.

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