

Zebegen

by Victor Vasarely

Print Facts

- Medium:
- Date: 1964
- Size:
- Location:
- Period: Bauhaus
- Style: This painting belongs in a category called optical art. Optical art creates the illusion of depth or movement.
- Genre: Optical Illusion
- Pronounced (Zeh-BEG-ehn)

Artist Facts

- Vasarely is pronounced [Vass-ah-RELL-ee]
- Born 1908 in Hungary
- Died March 15, 1997 in Paris, France
- As a child he liked to draw trains and animals in motion, and he drew three-dimensional shapes.
- He originally studied medicine, but stopped to study at an art academy.
- In 1930 (age 22) he moved to Paris where he worked as a graphic designer and began working on his style of abstract art.
- He became a successful graphic designer, designing fabrics with his wife for a company in Paris.
- He also produced abstract sculpture.
- Vasarely created optical illusions (unreal or misleading objects in vision – your eyes play tricks on you) in his art by using contrasting colors and geometric shapes. He became known as the originator of optical art or “Op-Art”.

Key Principle of Design to Teach

- **Repetition and Rhythm:** Repetition occurs when an artist repeats an item or element in a work of art. By repeating a particular element or combination of elements (such as color, shape or lines), artists can sometimes create the illusion of motion or stability or represent patterns and textures. Often this is done to help unify an artwork. The regular repetition of a particular element can make the artwork seem active or suggest visual vibration.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Repetition and Rhythm

- What shapes do you see in this painting? Can you see a rectangle?
- What kind of shapes are they? (Geometric, two-dimensional)
- What colors and patterns are repeated? (The middle circles are all blue and the middle squares are all black.)
- Are the shapes all the same? Color? Size?
- Do you think the artist planned which colors he put with which shapes?

- Do you think he planned where to put the shapes or did it randomly?
- Does nature repeat itself?
- If you have one, show something like a toy car that shakes. Tell them that Vasarely was creating movement by using repetition and rhythm. This creates a visual vibration.
- Repetition and Rhythm create the illusion of movement. Stare at this painting. What happens to some of the smaller shapes? (They may seem to float or move around.) Does it look like this painting is moving? Why?
- Why do you think the artist did this all over the painting and not in just one spot? (It unifies the painting, makes it interesting to look at – if it was only done in just one spot it would look out of place – so artists repeat things)
- Do you think the artist intended to make it look like it was moving or floating?

Keywords

- Repetition, Rhythm, Pattern, Movement, Optical Illusion, Abstract, Color, Shapes

Other Possible Questions and Suggestions

- Cover this painting with several different pieces of paper. Remove a piece at a time and ask students what they see. Do you see people, animals, or a landscape? Why would an artist just paint circles and squares?
- Which parts of this painting seem to stand out the most? (The yellow squares.) Why? (They are the lightest value and warm colors move forward.)
- Can you identify where the artist has used complementary colors?
- How many different colors do you see?
- What colors do you see the most? Would you describe them as bold/shy/weak or strong?
- Do you see primary or secondary colors?