

Inward Eye: Original Serigraphs by Richard Anuszkiewicz and Words by William Blake

A little history...

Op Art was rigorously nonrepresentational. It evolved partly from hard-edge abstraction. The realm of the optical illusions was extended in every possible way by taking advantage of the new materials and processes supplied by science, including laser technology. Much Op Art consists of constructions or “environments” that are dependent for their effect on light and motion and cannot be reproduced satisfactorily in a book.

Because of its reliance on science and technology, Op Art’s possibilities appear to be unlimited. The movement nevertheless matured within a decade of its inception and developed little thereafter. The difficulty lies primarily with its subject. Op Art seems overly cerebral and systematic, more akin to the sciences than to the humanities. It often involves the viewer with the work of art in a truly novel, dynamic way. But although its effects are undeniably fascinating, they involve a relatively narrow range of interests that lie for the most part outside the tradition of modern art. Even so, Anuszkiewicz hoped to create something of a highly romantic yet geometrically mechanistic nature.

- The History of Art, Janson and Janson, 2001, sixth edition.

Richard Anuszkiewicz (pronounced Anna-SKEV-ich) was a member of the group known as Op Artists in the mid-twentieth century. He is widely known for his vibrating color combinations and use of simple geometric and linear forms to explore the nature of color and visual perception. Anuszkiewicz said: I’m interested in making something romantic out of a very, very mechanistic geometry. Geometry and color represent to me an idealized, classical place that’s very clear and very pure.”

The Oxford Dictionary of Art defines Op Art as the abbreviation for Optical Art. This abstract art relies on certain optical phenomena to cause a work to seem to vibrate, pulsate, or flicker. Maximum geometrical precision is sought in the control of surfaces and edges in order to evoke an exactly prescribed retinal response.

In this exhibit you will get to be the judge in determining whether or not something so scientifically mechanical but highly colorful can affect your senses, mind, and heart. And, you will also get to determine how William Blake’s words work with the exhibit or enhance the exhibit.

Begin by reading all of the text by Blake (on the wall or in the box on the next page) at the start of the exhibit. Carefully consider any words, phrases

or lines you do not understand. Try to figure out their meaning in relationship to the other text. After reading and thinking about Blake’s words, do you have an idea about what this entire exhibit is going to be about?

Next, look closely at the prints on display. Choose one to concentrate on as you consider the following questions:

- Compare what you see with what you have read. Do the words seem to fit the visual images?
- Which image seems to you to match the words most accurately?
- Do the colors look the same when you stand close to the work and then when you step back and view it from a distance?

- If not, why do you think there is a difference?
- How many colors did he use in the print you have selected to explore?
- What happens when the artist chooses a single color and then places it next to different colors?
- How important is the placement of the bands of color to what we actually see?
- What part do the lines play in our perception of the shapes we view?
- Pick one of the serigraphs and examine it closely. Are there parts that appear to extend toward you? How about appearing to move away from you? Why do you think that is the case?
- Which is the serigraph that you respond to the most? Is it the color or the geometric shapes that you respond to the most?
- Do you think Anuszkiewicz achieves his goal of *making something romantic out of a very, very mechanistic geometry*?

William Blake (1757-1827)

Blake's words are part of the Anuszkiewicz exhibit. William Blake was a visionary and imaginative poet and artist, whose only formal education was in art: at the age of ten he entered a drawing school and later studied for a time at the school of the Royal Academy of Arts. Blake, who, at age fourteen, served as apprentice for seven years to a well-known engraver, read widely in his free time, and began to try his hand at poetry. Blake gave drawing lessons, illustrated books, and engraved designs made by other artists.

*Nature has no outline
But imagination has.*

Imagination is the divine body in every man.

The Eye sees more than the heart knows.

*I must create a system
or be enslav'd by another Man's.*

*To see the world in a grain of sand
and heaven in a wildflower.
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour.*

*What is a man?
The sun's light when he unfolds it
Depends on the organ that beholds it.*

*We are led to believe a lie
When we see not through the eye.*

*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

*God is not a Mathematical design.
God is not a Mathematical design.*

*Without minuteness of execution the
Sublime cannot exist.
Grandeur of ideas is founded on
precision of ideas.*