

C the entrance to a residence. hooks on

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



CA large wooden door is situated in a corner of a room or corridor. This corridor has a continental feel from its design and its decor is basic and uncared for. The wood of the door is painted with ivory coloured paint that is yellowing with age. It has six panels.

There are locks present on the righthand side indicating that this is the entrance to a residence. Hooks on the back of the door are possibly for outdoor coats. The walls surrounding the door and frame are painted white. The floor is tiled and grubby.

There is an electric light switch to the right hand side of the door, its cables are surface mounted and run upwards and to the left, crossing over bare wires from another direction, they disappear into the left adjacent wall.

There is a large jagged circular cut to the top half of the door, it penetrates through the panels and casing to the other side. The circular section has been rotated out of line with the rest of the door. It disrupts the surface, causing an unbalancing, an interruption to the flow of the image. It evokes an unnerving to the conscious mind a feeling of something that is wrong. The viewers eye is drawn to the cut or slice while your mind struggles to interpret its meaning. This dissertation will focus on the processes of human vision.

It will investigate theories such as perception, phenomenology and the laws of the Gestalt. It will consider the works of Bridget Riley, Tomma Abts and Lucas Blalock and how their practice engages with the subjectivity of visual perception and how they as artists explore the visual language of optical illusions. Chapter One introduces the artist Bridget Riley contextualising her

practice in the framework of Op art and giving an insight into her material approaches.

It will consider the stimuli to which the viewer responds and investigate how as humans we interpret and process this information. This essay will argue that the optic over the haptic is the overriding sensation informing perception. Chapter Two will consider the science behind perception and phenomenology. It will investigate the history of philosophy and the differing views of classical phenomenologists, such as Husserl and Heidegger. It will give examples of different optical illusions in history and evaluate their meaning through visual critical analysis. The Gestalt Theory and Artist and Turner prizewinner Tomma Abts will be introduced in chapter 3.

A comparison analysis will be made focusing on of the laws of the Gestalt and how they apply to Tomma Abts's works. The meaning of a good Gestalt and interpretation of a disrupted Gestalt from when the harmony of an image when denied. Chapter four will look at photographer Lucas Blalock, his use of photoshop and how he challenges the viewer by the distortion of images. We will look at the cut and the slippage and analyse the effects of their disruption. The research for this dissertation began after an encounter with a large painting by Bridget Riley 'To a summers day 2.' I had taken a trip to the Tate Modern, as I walked into room 8, on the wall to my left hung a huge painting of 1155 x 2810 cm. Initially, I stood and viewed this vast picture with indifference, then on closer inspection, what seems like a carnival of multiple colours was in fact just four; blue, pink, violet and ochre. Each line consisted of three colours at a time, varying widths and thinness

were ever-changing as the rise and fall of the curves travelled forwards from left to right.

As I moved back from the canvas and started to turn away, suddenly I became aware that the entire picture surface was moving. 'My eyes can no longer keep up with the struggle to separate and locate the blues and greens within their bounding of red, and the whole colour change of the picture seems to detach itself from the canvas and come free in my eye.' Andrew Forge (Riley and Moorhouse, 2003 p. 85) It was an extraordinary experience. The delineation of each curve, and the combination of changing colour that encompassed the repeat twist, presented the viewer with a feeling of motion.

The waves appeared to undulate across the surface with an ebb and flow. Clearly this painting needed to be viewed from a distance and as a whole, so that the visual affect of repeat and movement could be perceived at its maximum. From this experience, I realised that this painting held complex questions of its creation. This has challenged me to look deeper than the surface aesthetic and investigate Bridget Riley's practice. How it relates to Op art and the science behind what we see and how and how our brain interprets these neurological messages. Optical illusions also known as Op art have a wide following, the subject of illusion has interested generations of scientists and also given popular interest to the masses by providing entertainment through tricks of the eye.

Illusory phenomena have given academics and artists invaluable insights into how we perceive and understand things visually and how our brain

interprets what we see. Technology has advanced imaging and dramatically increased the range of illusions available creating new ways to examine how the brain constructs our perceptual world. (Anon, 2017,)

Fig. 4 Bridget Riley, Fall 1963

When speaking of her Op

art painting ' Fall' Bridget Riley says, ' I try to organise a field of visual energy which accumulates until it reaches maximum tension'(Tate, 2017)

Horizontal lines cascade down into a soft curve that compacts as the layers descend. Reminiscent of folding fabric, squeezing and compressing as it reaches the bottom of the pictorial space.

The repeat creates an illusion from the different amounts of optical frequencies. Bridget Riley's early 60s paintings worked with the contrast of black and white and simple forms such as a triangles, oval, curve or zigzag. Keeping to black and white as a constant, she worked with different modulations until the shape started to lose its identity. Her paintings of that time represented a dematerialised vibrating sensation of space. (YouTube, 2017) In 1965, Riley was part of a large scale exhibition of Op art in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

This exhibition brought optical or retinal art to the forefront of the New York art scene. What attracted the most attention was the sense of movement that some works created. The exhibition was titled ' Responsive eye,' it proved to be one of the most visited exhibitions in the history of the MoMA at that time. This was the era of Op arts greatest publicity, Pamela M. Lee, professor of Fine Art and Author states that at that time, ' Op art was

described as an art of high science and technology, a rigorous, retinal art linked to theories of perception and the historical study of optics’.

Rosalind Krauss attacked *The Responsive Eye* in her essay ‘After thoughts on Op’ She argued that, ‘Op art was regressive and that the term optical, expresses its self only to the one sense, that of vision. She stated ‘Paintings which employ the conventions on which illusion is built, are essentially haptic rather than optic.’ (Jstor. org, 2017) When speaking of the history of tromp l’oeil paintings, Krauss believed that by suggesting to the viewer that behind the surface of the picture plane rests a three dimensional object, the viewer will in turn experience an imagined tactile response of that imagined object. Heightening the feeling of the haptic as the primary sensation felt in response. Lee argues that Krauss’s idea of the haptic, goes against extensive art critical literature on Op art.

She states, ‘She is alone in linking her argument to a longer Riegelian tradition that sees the haptic and the optic in historical tension with one another.’ Lee states that Krauss’s views were of a modernist’s thinking. (Lee, 2006. p. 179) Later Bridget Riley introduced colour into her art. Her practice became a continual experimentation to find out what the eye can see, an exploration into the possibilities of vision. She discovered that movement depended on stability, as one cannot perceive change without a constant.

With the introduction of colour she felt there needed to be a restrictive system. She Choose a limited group of colour pigments, for their brilliance and tonal value. Her idea was that when each colour was juxtaposed against each other, the visual combination would generate new colours that were

not actually there. (Riley, 1984) Speaking of her work she said, ' Colour is the proper means for what I want to do because it is prone to inflections and inductions existing only through relationship; malleable yet tough and resilient. I do not select single colours but rather pairs, triads or groups of colour which taken together act as generators of what can be seen through or via the painting.'(Riley 1984)