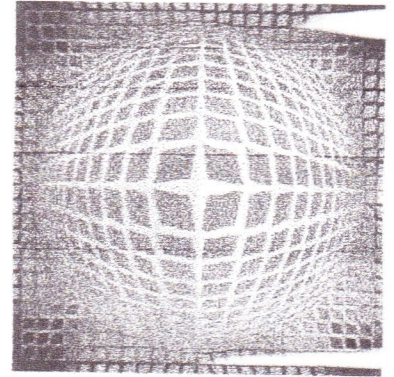


**Artist:** Victor Vasarely  
**Lifespan:** 1906-1997  
**Nationality:** French Hungarian  
**Title:** Vega-Kontosh  
**Date:** 1971  
**Size:** 25 11/16 x 25 11/16 in. (65.09 x 65.09 cm)  
**Location:** Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
**Media:** Tempura on Panel  
**Genre:** Op Art



#### Painting Highlights:

Vega-Kontosh is part of Vasarely's Vega series, which was named after the brightest star in the sky. Vasarely began working on the Vega series in 1957, but the Vonal Vega series, which this painting is from, was begun in 1966. Vasarely uses a palette of six colors (red, yellow, blue green, violet and black). His use of rhombuses, lines and color make the picture appear to come out at the viewer. The colors and shapes are so visually over-stimulating that it gives the effect of pulsating or moving.

"Tribute to the Hexagon," the Vega series consists of endless transformations of indentations and relief, adding color variations, creating a "perpetual mobile of optical illusion." The series plays with spherical swelling grids creating an optical illusion of volume.

#### Artist Highlights:

- Vasarely is widely regarded as the father of Op-Art. Op artists strove to create optical illusions with paint on canvas. Before creating Op-Art, he experimented with cubistic, futuristic, expressionistic, symbolistic and surrealist paintings.
- He is a major master of 20th century art.
- His paintings are in the permanent collections of many important museums around the world.

Vasarely was a classically trained artist with a gift for drawing realistically and well, which allowed him to make a living at creating art from an early age. He abandoned fine art and believed that a romantic version of Painting was a thing of the past and had no part in the present or future. He began to study graphic design and thus developed his own style of optical art.

During the 1960's and 70's his optical images became part of the popular culture, having a deep impact on architecture, computer science, fashion, and the way we now look at things in general. Even though he achieved great fame he insisted on making his art accessible to everyone. His motto was "Art for all".

In 1965, during the MOMA exhibit, Responsive Eye, dedicated to Optical Art, the press hailed Vasarely as the inventor and creator of Op-art.

The breakthrough brought by his "kinetic" visual experiments transformed the flat surface into a world of unending possibilities, book marking an era in the history of art and foreshadowing a new global reality shaped by programming and the Internet.

Vasarely also worked with sculpture, window panes and photography

- How many different shapes does the artist use? (just one, the rhombus. But the effect creates the star-like cross pattern at the center and the "ball" emerging from the painting.)
- How many different colors do you see? (6 including black)
- Was this picture done by computer or by hand? Is it moving or staying still?
- Butterfield, Palma (actual 3D sculpture)
- Dali, Soft Watch (Surrealism, also has a 3D effect)
- Also, use of reds and other bright colors in Gauguin, Ringgold, Morriseau, and even Ghirlandiao

## Master Manual Information Sheet

<b>Artist:</b>	Victor Vasarely
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**Presentation Ideas:** How many different shapes does the artist use? (just one, the rhombus. But the effect creates the star-like cross pattern at the center and the "ball" emerging from the painting.

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**Compare to:** Butterfield, Palma (actual 3D sculpture)

Dali, Soft Watch (Surrealism, also has a 3D effect)

Also, use of reds and other bright colors in Gouain, Ringgold, Morrissey, and even Chirlandia

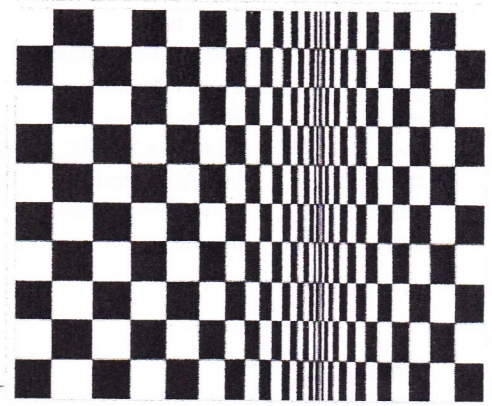


# Op art

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Op art**, also known as **optical art**, is a style<sup>[1]</sup> of visual art that makes use of optical illusions.

"Optical art is a method of painting concerning the interaction between illusion and picture plane, between understanding and seeing."<sup>[2]</sup> Op art works are abstract, with many of the better known pieces made in black and white. When the viewer looks at them, the impression is given of movement, hidden images, flashing and vibration, patterns, or alternatively, of swelling or warping.



*Movement in Squares*, by Bridget Riley 1961

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- 2 Origin of "op"
  - 2.1 *The Responsive Eye*
- 3 How op art works
  - 3.1 Black-and-white and the figure-ground relationship
  - 3.2 Color
    - 3.2.1 Color interaction
- 4 Exhibitions
- 5 Photographic op art
- 6 Artists known for their op art
- 7 See also
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## Historical context

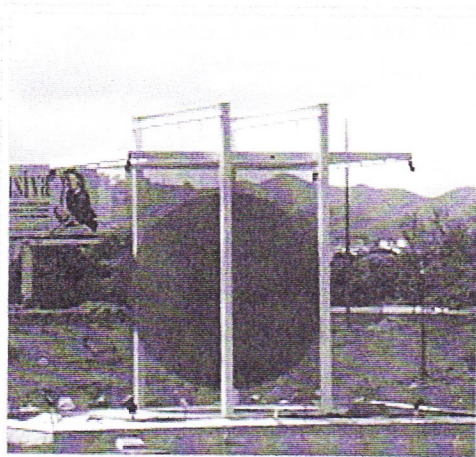
Op art is derived from the constructivist practices of the Bauhaus. This German school, founded by Walter Gropius, stressed the relationship of form and function within a framework of analysis and rationality. Students were taught to focus on the overall design, or entire composition, in order to present unified works. When the Bauhaus was forced to close in 1933, many of its instructors fled to the United States where the movement took root in Chicago and eventually at the Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina, where Anni and Josef Albers would come to teach.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Origin of "op"



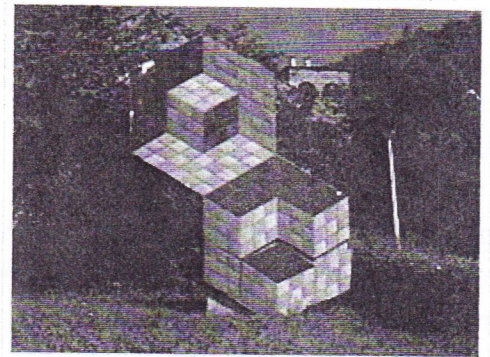
The term first appeared in print in *Time* magazine in October 1964 in response to Julian Stanczak's show Optical Paintings at the Martha Jackson gallery,<sup>[3]</sup> though works which might now be described as "op art" had been produced for several years previously. For instance, Victor Vasarely's painting, *Zebras* (1938), is made up entirely of curvilinear black and white stripes that are not contained by contour lines. Consequently, the stripes appear to both meld into and burst forth from the surrounding background of the composition. Also the early black and white Dazzle panels of John McHale installed at the This Is Tomorrow exhibit in 1956 and his *Pandora* series at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1962 demonstrate proto-op tendencies.

In the 1960s Arnold Schmidt (Arnold Alfred Schmidt) had several solo exhibitions of his large, black and white shaped optical paintings exhibited at the Terrain Gallery in New York.<sup>[4]</sup> Some members of the group



Jesús Soto, Caracas

Nouvelle Tendance (1961-1965) in Europe also were engaged in Op art as Almir Mavignier and Gerhard von Graevenitz, mainly with their serigraphics. They studied optical illusions. The term "Op" irritated many of the artists labeled under it, specifically including Albers and Stanczak. They had discussed upon the birth of the term a better label, namely perceptual art.<sup>[5]</sup>



An optical illusion by the Hungarian-born artist Victor Vasarely in Pécs.

## *The Responsive Eye*

In 1965, between February 23 and April 25 an exhibition called *The Responsive Eye*, created by William C. Seitz was held at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.<sup>[6]</sup> The works shown were wide ranging, encompassing the minimalism of Frank Stella and Ellsworth Kelly, the smooth plasticity of Alexander Liberman, the collaborative efforts of the Anonima group, alongside the well-known Victor Vasarely, Richard Anuszkiewicz, and Bridget Riley. The exhibition focused on the perceptual aspects of art, which result both from the illusion of movement and the interaction of color relationships. The exhibition was enormously popular with the general public, though less so with the critics.<sup>[7]</sup> Critics dismissed op art as portraying nothing more than *trompe l'oeil*, or tricks that fool the eye. Regardless, op art's popularity with the public increased, and op art images were used in a number of commercial contexts. Bridget Riley tried to sue an American company, without success, for using one of her paintings as the basis of a fabric design.<sup>[citation needed]</sup>

The Op Art movement got a new lease of life in the first decade of the twenty-first century as new forms started once again emerging. In 2005, Indian artist, Devajyoti Ray started a new genre of art called Pseudorealism. Though the concept and the name of the movement was brought from the film-world, much of Pseudorealism depends on the intuitive use of colours and understanding the relationships between them.

## How op art works



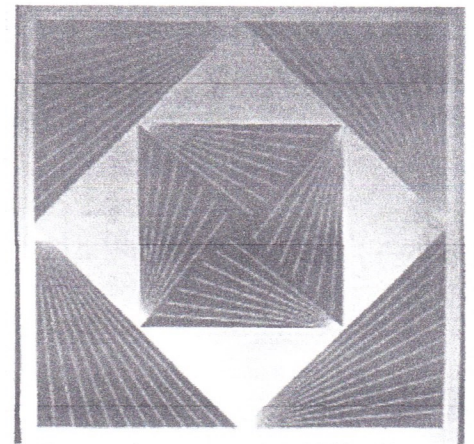
## Black-and-white and the figure-ground relationship

Op art is a perceptual experience related to how vision functions. It is a dynamic visual art, stemming from a discordant figure-ground relationship that causes the two planes to be in a tense and contradictory juxtaposition. Op art is created in two primary ways. The first, and best known method, is the creation of effects through the use of pattern and line. Often these paintings are black-and-white, or otherwise grisaille, as in Bridget Riley's famous painting, *Current* (1964), on the cover of *The Responsive Eye* catalogue; here, black and white wavy lines are placed close to one another on the canvas surface, creating such a volatile figure-ground relationship that one's eyes begin to hurt. Getulio Alviani chose aluminium surfaces, treated in order to create patterns of light which change as the watcher moves (vibrating texture surfaces). Another reaction that occurs is that the lines create after- images of certain colors due to how the retina receives and processes light. As Goethe demonstrates in his treatise *Theory of Colours*, at the edge where light and dark meet, color arises because lightness and darkness are the two central properties in the creation of color.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

## Color

Beginning in 1965 Bridget Riley began to produce color-based op art,<sup>[8]</sup> however, other artists, such as Julian Stanczak and Richard Anuszkiewicz, were always interested in making color the primary focus of their work.<sup>[9]</sup> Josef Albers taught these two primary practitioners of the "Color Function" school at Yale in the 1950s. Often, colorist work is dominated by the same concerns of figure-ground movement, but they have the added element of contrasting colors which have different effects on the eye. For instance, in Anuszkiewicz's "temple" paintings, the juxtaposition of two highly contrasting colors provokes a sense of depth in illusionistic three-dimensional space so that it appears as if the architectural shape is invading the viewer's space.

Stanczak's compositions tend to be the most complex of all of the color function practitioners. Taking his cue from Albers and his influential book *Interaction of Color*, Stanczak deeply investigates how color relationships work. "Stanczak created various spatial experiences with color and geometry; the latter is far easier to discuss. Color has no simple systematized equivalent. Indeed, there may be no way to describe it that is both meaningful and accurate. Descriptions of it (the color wheel or color solids, for example) are all necessary distortions. While color derives from the electromagnetic scale that corresponds to the magnitudes of energy expressed by musical pitch, in fact, the neurological occidentals by which we experience color make it seem multidimensional, while musical pitch (not timbre, volume, or duration) is experienced as a linear relationship...Stanczak's 'gift is for layering. He arranges transparent patterns upon patterns so that you see through them as gauziest screens, each one seeming to fold as if it moves.'"<sup>[10]</sup>



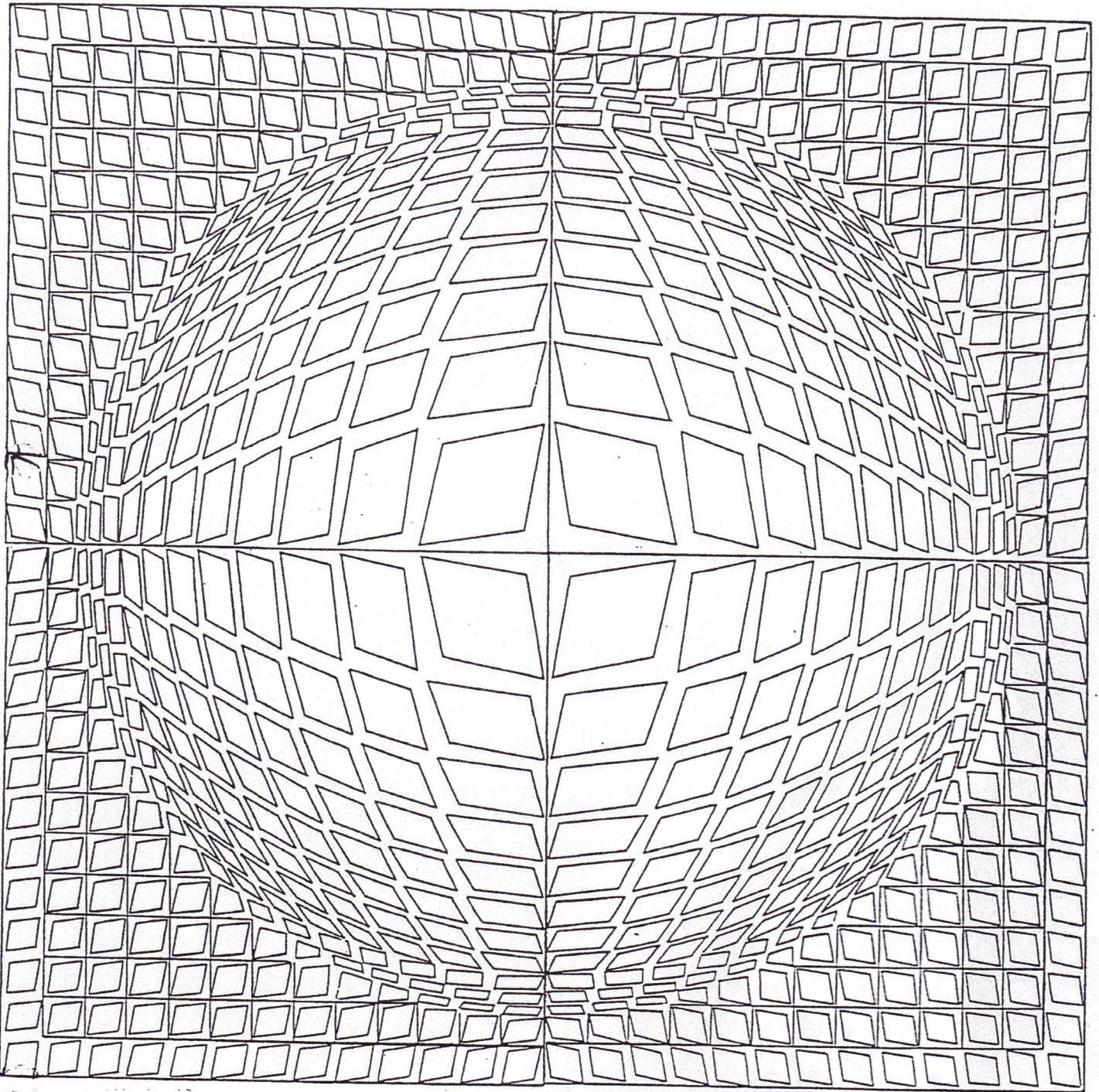
*Intrinsic Harmony*, by Richard Anuszkiewicz, 1965

## Color interaction

There are three major classes of the interaction of color: *simultaneous contrast*, *successive contrast*, and *reverse contrast (or assimilation)*. (i) Simultaneous contrast may take place when one area of color is surrounded by another area of a different color. In general, contrast enhances



# Art Goes to School

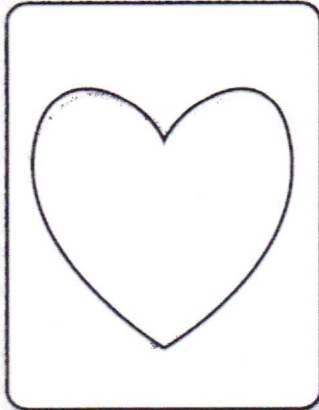


Vega Kontosh

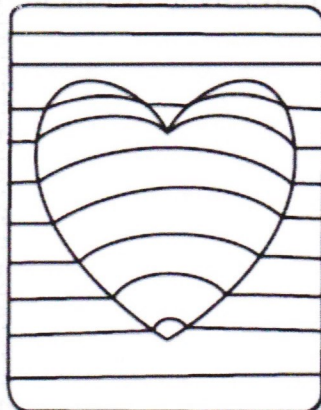
by Victor Vasarely, 1971



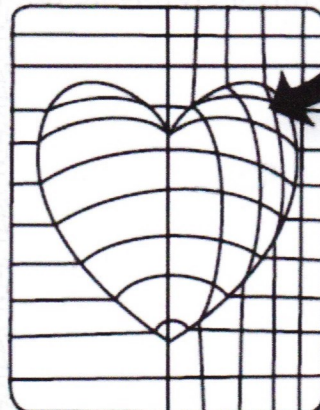
# Bulging Heart



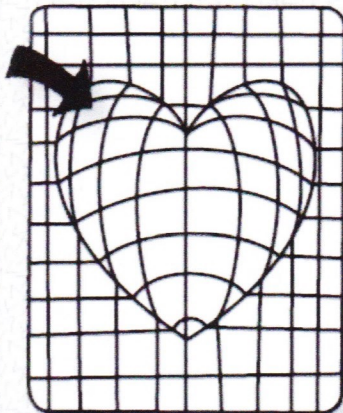
Draw a large heart.



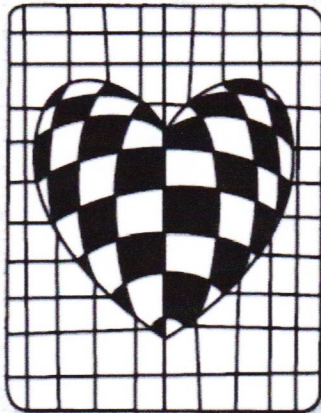
Add horizontal lines that curve up inside the heart.



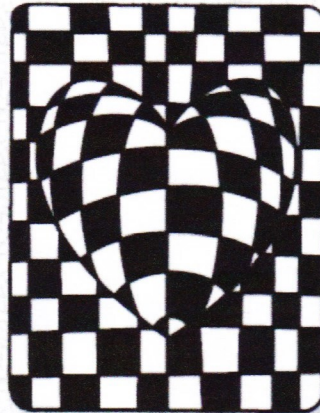
Add a straight vertical line down the middle of the heart. Curve lines to the right.



Add vertical lines to the left of the middle line. Curve lines to the left in the heart.

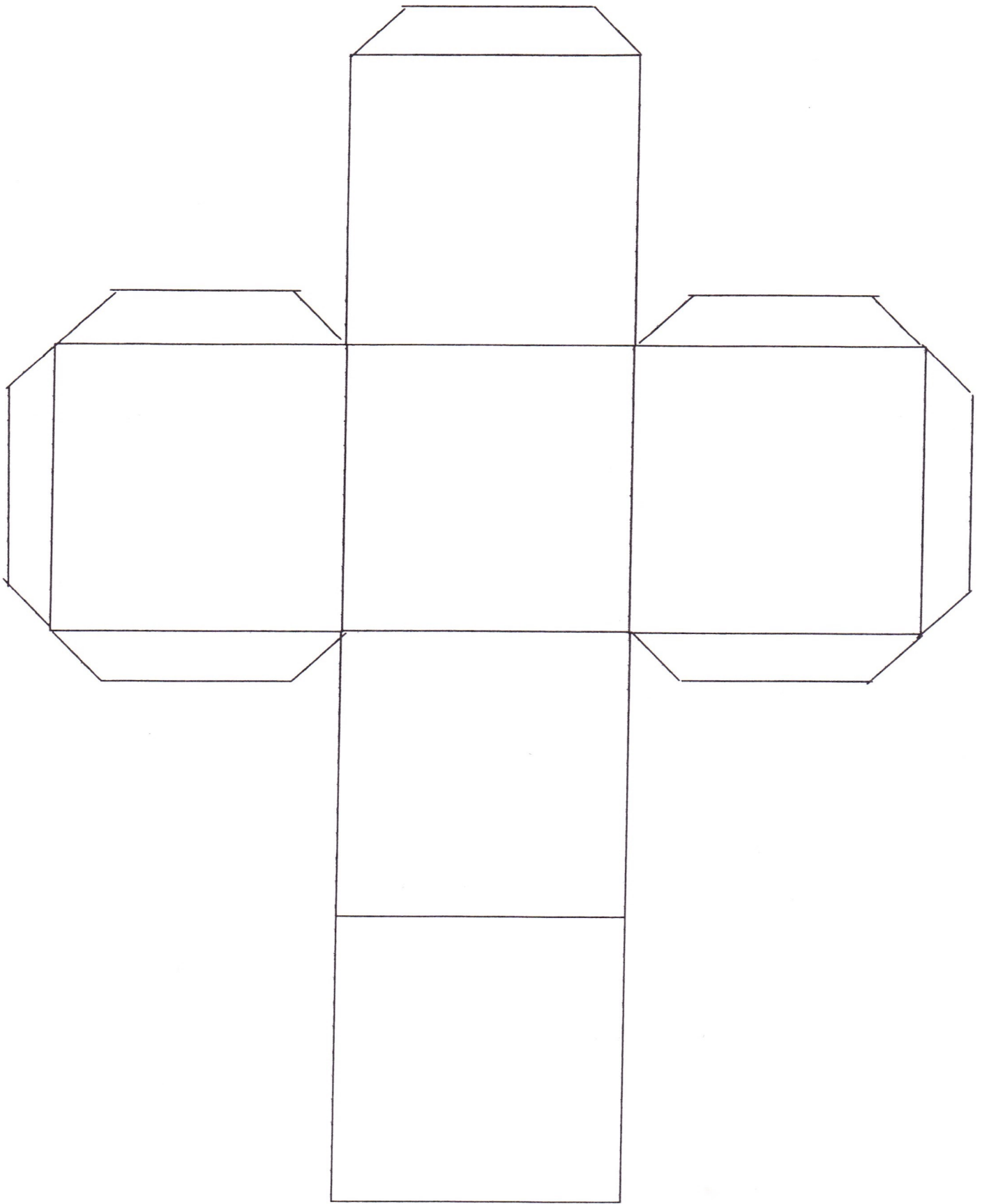


Add black shapes in the heart in a checkered pattern.

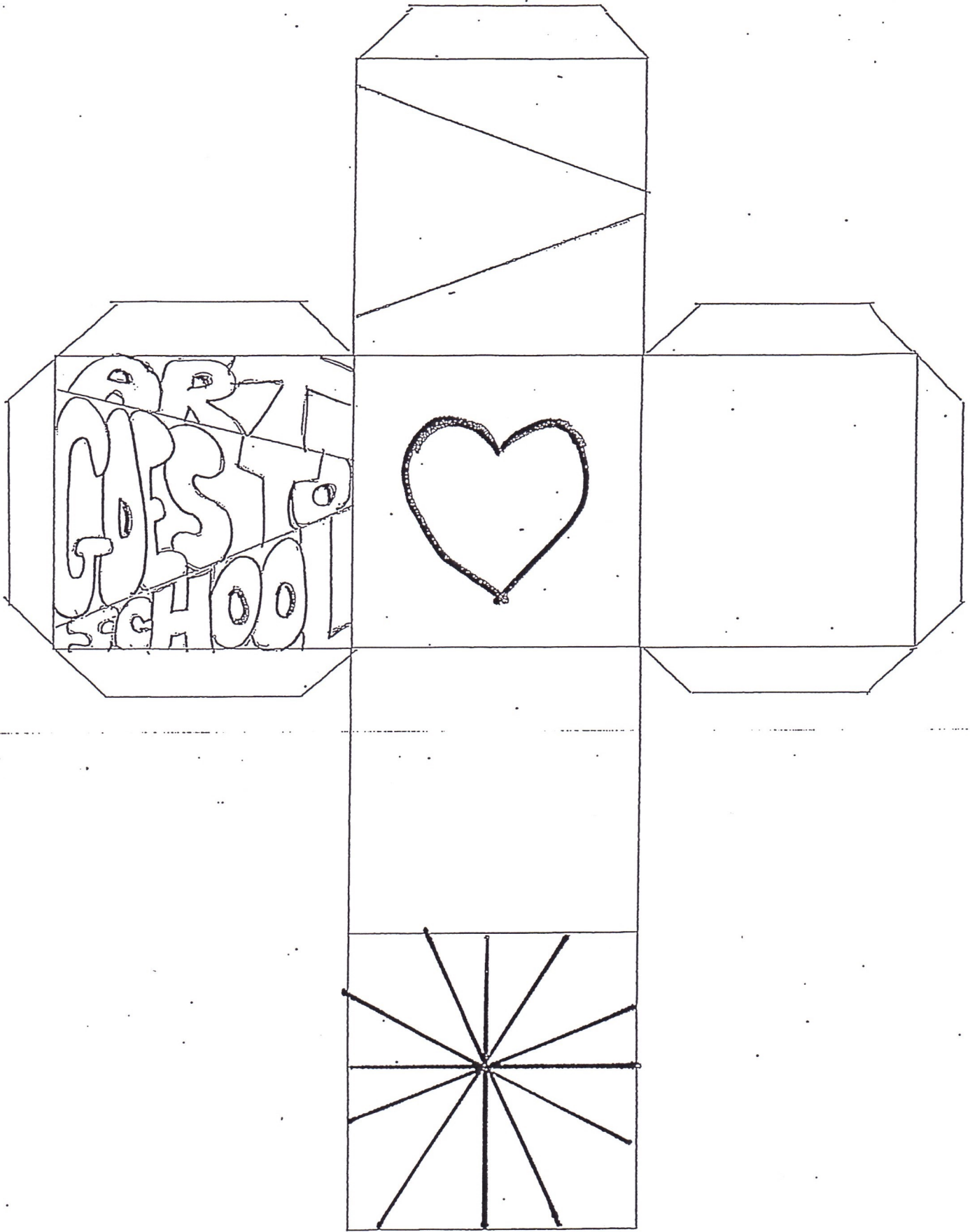


Add black shapes in the background in a checkered pattern opposite of the heart.







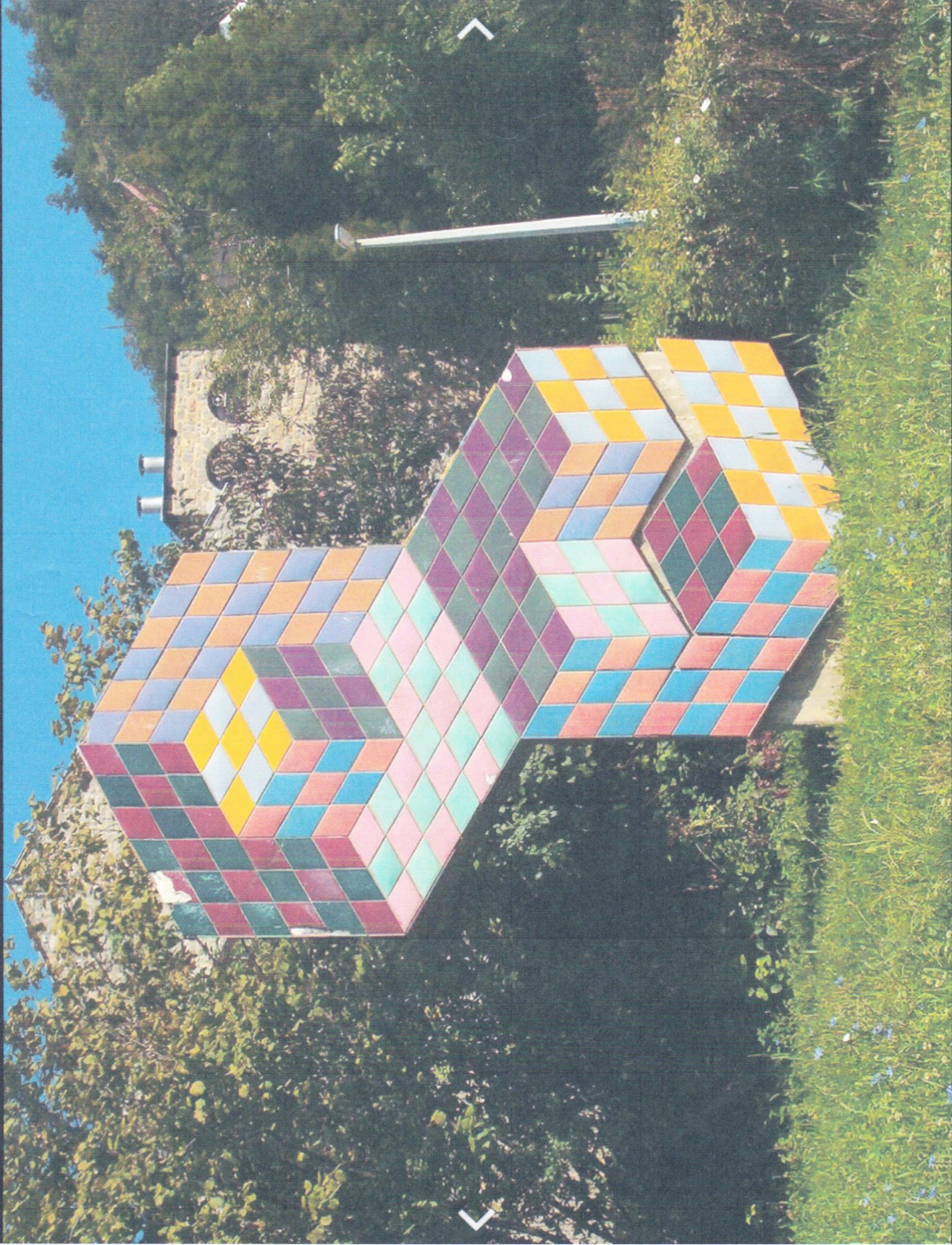






OPTICAL ILLUSION SCULPTURE BY VASARELY





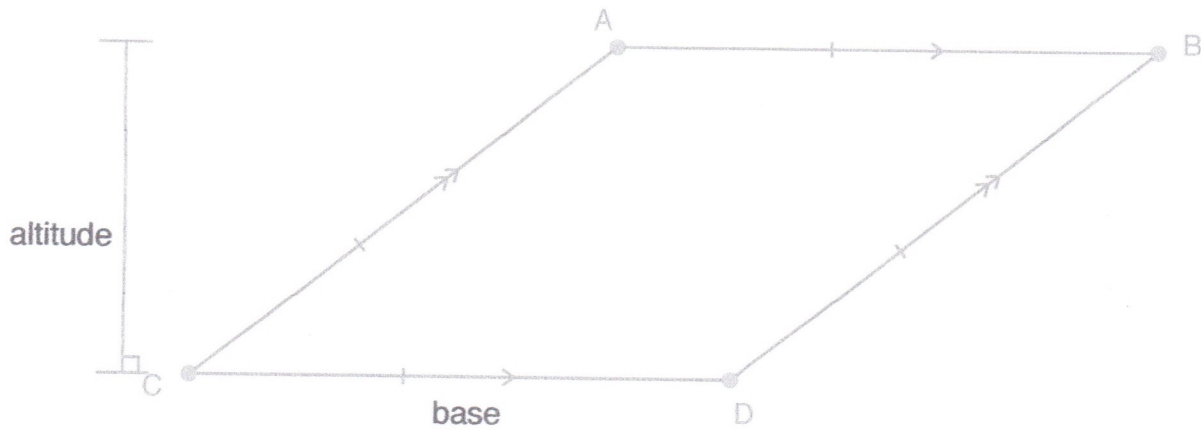
An optical illusion by the Hungarian-born artist Victor Vasarely in Pécs.

[More details](#)





# RHOMBUS



With a rhombus, *all four* sides are the same length.

It's a bit like a square that can 'lean over'

Sometimes called a 'diamond' or 'lozenge' shape.