The American psychologist James J. Gibson publishes the book *The Perception of the Visible World*, with his account of how our image of the world is formed by visual input.

The Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto moves to Paris and makes his first geometric artworks using optical effects. With inspiration from his works, he continues working over the next few years with a focus on progression, repetition, and vibration.

Hungarian Victor Vasarely creates his first photogram works and exhibits them at Galerie Denise René. They consist of black-and-white patterns on acrylic plates laid one over another which seem to vibrate and change with the movements of the viewer in front of the work.

In Paris the Hungarian artist Nicolas Schöffer presents a series of works, where the viewer can manually make parts of the work rotate.

Venezuelan architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva incorporates decorations by among others Alexander Calder, Vasarely and Soto at the new university in Caracas. Shown here is Vasarely’s ceramic wall Hommage à Malevich (1954).

The Israeli artist Yaacov Agam exhibits his first kinetic works in Paris, as well as reliefs whose surfaces are covered with a variety of geometrical forms. The first mobile reliefs by the Belgian artist Pol Bury are exhibited in Brussels. Since 1959, Bury, inspired by Alexander Calder, has worked his way from painting towards three-dimensional works focusing on motion.

Soto makes his first silkscreen prints on layers of Plexiglas plates which have a dynamic optical effect when one moves in front of them.

The German-born theorist and psychologist of perception Rudolf Arnheim publishes *Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye*, in which he uses psychology to reach a better understanding of art.

The Swiss artist Jean Tinguely presents reliefs at Galerie Aarsaald in Paris in a series titled Mito-Malevich. The works consist of geometrical forms that move on the black background with the aid of an electric motor.

Several science-fiction films premiere, including *The Day the Earth Stood Still*.

The barcode is patented by Joseph Woodland and Bernard “Bob” Silver in the US.

The structure of the DNA molecule is mapped by two molecular biologists, American James Watson and British Francis Crick, an epochal event in the understanding of human biology.

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The author J.D. Salinger’s novel *The Catcher in the Rye* is published in the US. With its account of a teenager’s angst and alienation it becomes an instant classic.

Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, dies.

Denise René, the leader of the Soviet Union, dies, and there is a brief hope that the Cold War will be de-escalated.

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The Manhattan Project is established in the US. By the next year the Soviet Union is testing its first atomic bomb.

James Watson and Francis Crick, American biologists, publish their discovery of the structure of DNA.

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Denise René is established in Paris as a central figure in the kinetic and optical art movements, and her gallery in Paris became a rallying point for the artists. René wanted to promote the new art and the techniques that had either been sidelined during World War II or that represented a new chapter for art. In 1944 she opened her first exhibition of works by Victor Vasarely, and in succeeding years she presented a number of exhibitions that showed developments in concrete and geometric art.

René was internationally oriented and was involved in the mounting of exhibitions in both South America and Scandinavia, including the exhibition *Clear Form* at Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 1951.

In 1955 Denise René opened the exhibition *Le Mouvement*, seen today as the earliest manifestation of the kinetic and optical movements. Marcel Duchamps, Retoreliefs and Alexander Calder’s mobiles were shown alongside works by Victor Vasarely and artists who were less well-known at the time such as Jean Tinguely, Jesús Rafael Soto, Yaacov Agam and Pol Bury, as well as Danish Robert Jacobsen.

René was also a consultant on the pioneering exhibition *The Responsive Eye* at MoMA, New York, 1965.

Over the next four years she opened galleries in New York and Düsseldorf to accommodate the growing interest in optical and kinetic art. The gallery in Paris still exists today.
Along with the Swiss artist Daniel Spoerri, Yves Klein, Bury, Tinguely and the ZERO artists Matz, Piene and Uecker organise the exhibition Vision in Motion / Moteur in Vision in Antwerp. Later Macks and Piene mount the exhibition Dymata in Wiesbaden and in that connection come into contact with the Italian artist Piero Manzoni. The same year Manzoni opens Galerie Axmann in Munich and launches the periodical of the same name, which functions as an international platform where artists associated with the kinetic art movement can present works and exchange ideas.

The German artist Gerhard von Graevenitz begins his investigation of the vibration that occurs in the eye when one looks at repeated geometrical forms.

The artist group Gruppe T (left) is established in Milan and Gruppo N (centre) in Pescia, Italy.

The British artist Bridget Riley paints Copy after Le Pont de Courbevoie by Georges Seurat (right). Riley uses Seurat’s 1886-87 work in an exploration of the significance of colour in perception. The dotted, shimmering surfaces of Seurat’s pointillistic brushstrokes are transformed by Riley in subsequent years into abstract geometrical forms.

The Belgian artist Jef Vanote, who later becomes one of the inventors of computer graphics (centre), premieres at the Montreal International Film Festival. The film’s visuals illustrate the main character’s vertigo and visual disturbances. The title sequence and poster are designed by the American graphic designer Saul Bass and the animator John Whitney, who later becomes one of the inventors of computer graphics (centre). The Campagne pour Nucleaire Désarmement (CND) is founded in Great Britain, its characteristic logo designed by Gerald Holtom (right). The movement achieves great cultural significance, among other ways by organizing “ban the bomb” marches over the next years, including in Denmark. The logo later becomes widespread as the “Peace Symbol.”

The Danish toy manufacturer Lego puts its first plastic bricks on the market. In 1961, Lego is designed by Gerald Holtom (right). The movement achieves great cultural significance, among

The Space Age begins in earnest with the launch by the Soviet Union of the satellite Sputnik. Later in the year this is followed by Sputnik 2, which for the first time sends a living being into space – though Laika the space dog (left) does not survive the mission.

At the popular amusement park Disneyland, the Monsanto Chemical Company has opened the Future pavilions, featuring a complete interior in plastic and a futuristic space-age design in the spirit of the age (right).

The European Economic Community (EEC) is established in Brussels, and in that connection comes into contact with the Italian artist Piero Manzoni.

The group Equipo 57 is founded in Paris. At the same time they publish a manifesto to provide a collective basis for their individual works.

The Business Group T (left) is established in Milan and Gruppo N (centre) in Pescia, Italy.

The Argentinean artist Julio Le Parc moves to Paris, where he makes the acquaintance of the abstract art movement around Galerie Denise René. Prior to this he has seen an exhibition by Vasarely at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires.

At the exhibition Mouvement in Le Corbusier’s Cité Radieuse in Marseilles, Nicolas Schöffer presents the installation C5SP’9 (left), his first independently moving sculpture. Shown together with the French choreographer Maurice Béjart’s dancers, it combines abstract kinetic sculptures with bodily motion.

The exhibition This is Tomorrow opens at Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. One of its themes, “Classical Optical Illusions Developed by Albers and Duchamp” addresses the optical in art. The exhibition, which deals with aspects of popular culture, is also considered one of the first exhibitions of Pop Art. The British artist Richard Hamilton’s collage Just What Is It That Makes Today’s Homes So Different, So Appealing? is created as a poster for the exhibition (right).

Schröder’s mobile sculptures are described as “mobile paintings” by the French art historian Guy Halsabue. Schröder himself calls them “tactileodynamic sculptures.”

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The ZERO group is founded in Düsseldorf.

Günther Uecker invites the viewer to participate and rotate the work Light Circles, the surface of which is covered in nails.

Heinz Mack finishes his first Light-Reliefs and Light-Dynamics. The Argentinean artist Julio Le Parc moves to Paris, where he makes the acquaintance of the abstract art movement around Galerie Denise René. Prior to this he has seen an exhibition by Vasarely at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires.

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The Bandung Conference, held in Indonesia, is the first international meeting of Asian and African states. This event coincides with the second Egyptian Revolution and the expropriation of French and British concessions in the Middle East.

The period is typified by the humiliation of the old colonial empires. The period is typified by the phasing out of the European empires in Africa. The period is typified by the phasing out of the European empires in Africa.

The Louisiana Museum opens on 14 August.

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The French artist François Morellet has his first solo exhibition abroad, at Galerie Aujourd'hui in Milan, the first of 12 exhibitions shown in various places over the next two years. They publish a folder entitled *Arte programmata* (Programmed Art: Kinetic Art, Multiplied Works, Open Work) which he calls “a machine to produce poems”: 10 sonnets of 14 lines which he arranges in different combinations. The artist group GRAV exhibits at the 2nd Paris Biennial and publishes a brochure entitled *Événements de mystifications* (No More Mystifications), underlining that they are fighting for an art for everyone. The same year the group decides to give up painting and instead explores new sculptural possibilities and media, including electric light.

The exhibition *Motion Théorie de l’Époque bleue* (New Tendencies), held in Zagreb, gathers international artists who work with the physical involvement of the viewer and the creation of optical effects through motion. Five of these exhibitions take place up until 1973.

The exhibition *Movement in Art* opens at the Louvre (center). Previously shown at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and at Moderna Museet in Stockholm (exhibition catalogue left), it is considered a breakthrough for the optical and kinetic movements. After seeing the exhibition in Amsterdam, the German artist Hans Richter declares that “movement has become a movement.” Bridget Riley (right) begins painting works exclusively in black and white. Only at the end of the 1960s does she reintroduce colour into her paintings.

**1960**

The first TV-broadcast presidential debate in the US (left) between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy, who wins the election by a narrow margin.

The art movement *Nouveau réalisme* is established by, among others, the French art critic Pierre Restany and the French artist Yves Klein. Instead of creating a personal idiom the group’s members experiment with techniques that can more directly represent reality. An example is Klein’s performance *Antropométrie de l’Époque bleue* (Anthropometry in the Blue Period) at the Galerie Internationale d’Art Contemporain, Paris (right), where nude models are rolled in paint and their bodies are used to make imprints on a canvas.

The first laser (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation) is presented by Theodore H. Maiman at the Hughes Research Laboratories in the US.

**1961**

The Russian Yuri Gagarin (left) becomes the first man in space with the launch of the Voskhod spacecraft on 12 April, orbiting the earth and landing successfully. As a response President Kennedy announces the creation of optical effects through motion. Five of these exhibitions take place up until 1973.

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Bridget Riley (right) begins painting works exclusively in black and white. Only at the end of the 1960s does she reintroduce colour into her paintings.

**1962**

The exhibition *Arte programmativa* (Arte cinetica, opere moltiplicate, opere aperte) (Programmed Art: Kinetic Art, Multiplied Works, Open Work) is shown in Milan in the showroom of the typewriter company Olivetti and afterwards in London, Washington, New York and Düsseldorf. It features works by, among others, GRAV, Gruppo N, Gruppo T and Enzo Mari. In the exhibition catalogue (right), the Italian philosopher Umberto Eco introduces the principles behind kinetic art.

The first meeting of the group *Nouvelle Tendance* is held at GRAV’s studio in Paris.

*Mack, Piene and Uecker present their first spatial installation, Lichtraum, at the Malìa exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum (left).*

**1963**

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The German-born artist Josef Albers publishes the book *Interaction of Color*, in which he describes his painterly and sculptural investigations of the effects of colour.

In connection with the 3rd Paris Biennial GRAV makes the first of its Labyrinthe installations at the Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris.

Bridget Riley creates her only sculptural installation, Continuum, a black-and-white panel stretched over a spiral structure that the viewer can walk into.

**A new look at the world**

Technology and science played crucial roles in the conceptual world in this period. Man’s world opened out into space and down to the microperspective of the DNA molecule, and the advances in research quickly impacted everyday life with synthetic materials, contraceptive pills and transistor radios. World War II formed a clear mark between the world of yesterday and its old empires, traditions and values. Now people lived in the “jet age,” the “nuclear age” or the “space age.” The time demanded, in the worlds of Britain Prime Minister Harold Wilson from 1964, that a new Britain had to be “forged in the white heat of the scientific revolution” – a message that resonated in the rest of the world. The world was viewed as a machine that could constantly be optimized through the intervention of man. “Make good times better” read a Social Democratic election poster from the Danish general election in 1960, showing a family in front of its new TV set.

Art Op can be seen as an expression of the age’s new look at the world: an attack on the timid andassist ant, precise and progressive, removed from traditions, reconcile symbol and fiction and the past. It was the here and now, on the road to the future, an attack on the eye and a call to keep up at a time when much was in a process of reconstruction.
The Canadian philosopher and communication theorist Marshall McLuhan states that “the medium is the message,” meaning that the media themselves are more important than the message they convey. The artists in Gruppo N separate as a result of disagreements about rules in the group’s collaboration.

The term “Op Art” is coined in an article in Time Magazine with the heading “Op Art: Pictures that Attack the Eye” (see p. 8). The phrase subsequently becomes a catch-all term for paintings that work with optical effects. The exhibition The Responsive Eye opens at MoMA in New York and is afterwards shown in several American cities. The exhibition gathers more than a hundred international artists and consolidates the importance of the Op Art movement in the US.

Under the curatorship of Harald Szeemann, Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland organizes an exhibition entitled Licht und Bewegung/Lumière et Mouvement/Light and Movement: Kinetische Kunst. Szeemann describes it as a living exhibition, where both children and adults are invited to play with art.

Gruppo T and their collective collaboration.

The exhibition Le Mouvement, 2, the successor to Denise René’s previous 1955 exhibition Le Mouvement, opens at Galerie Denise René. Gruppo MID is founded in Milan.

Documenta III is held in Kassel, where an entire section is dedicated to light and motion featuring, among others, GRAV, Soto, Tinguely and ZERO.

The Responsive Eye is an exhibition held in Kassel in 1964. The exhibition included artists from various European countries, and was accompanied by works from the US and Japan. The exhibition was curated by Harald Szeemann and included works by artists such as Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Cy Twombly. The exhibition was a major event in the development of kinetic art, and helped to establish the movement as a major force in contemporary art.

The Responsive Eye influenced the development of other movements, such as Op Art and Minimalism. It also had a significant impact on the development of new technologies, such as computer graphics and video art. The Responsive Eye is considered a seminal event in the history of contemporary art, and its legacy can still be seen in the work of contemporary artists.
The exhibition Lumière et mouvement: art cinétique à Paris opens at Musée d’Orsay moderne de la Ville de Paris, organized by the Czech-French cultural theorist Frank Popper. The same year he publishes Réalités de l’art cinétique/image du mouvement dans les arts plastiques depuis 1890 (Origins and Development of Kinetic Art), based on his doctoral dissertation, in which he conducts a scholarly and aesthetic classification of kineticity and investigates the emergence of both virtual and real movement in art.

The exhibition Optical and Kinetic Art opens at the Tate Gallery in London, featuring, among others, Le Parc, Mack, Riley, Soto, Ucisk, Vasarely and his son Yves.

The American director Stanley Kubrick’s ambitious space epic 2001: A Space Odyssey premieres (left). The film experiments with optical effects and thematizes the relationship between mankind and technology, and human existence in the space age. Mexico hosts the Olympic Games. The graphic look of the event is inspired by traditional Mexican art as well as the Op Art movement of the time (right). Design by Eduardo Terrazas and Lance Wyman in 1967.

The Prague Spring, the Czechoslovakian First Secretary, Alexander Dubček’s attempt to reform the country’s communist regime, is brutally put down by the Soviet Union.

Robert Smithson creates Spiral Jetty off the coast of the Great Salt Lake, Utah. It is considered one of the most prominent in examples of Land Art.

The Irish art historian Cyril Barrett publishes the book Op-Art on among other subjects Riley’s and Vasarely’s use of visual mechanisms. Barrett emphasizes that the effect of Op Art should not be understood as abrupt optical stimulus but as direct physical reaction. Barrett regards Op Art as a more democratic artform – experience-based rather than theoretical.


The hallucinogenic drug LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), with which the American intelligence service has experimented, is made legal. The first heart transplant is performed in South Africa by the surgeon Christian Barnard.

The halluciogenic drug LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), with which the American intelligence service has experimented in the 1950s, is prohibited by the American authorities after widespread use among young people. Meanwhile, the psychedelic style and the hippie culture exploded in the “Summer of Love.”

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