
Carlos Cruz-Diez

Colour in Motion

21 March – 29 September 2024

Carlos Cruz-Diez (1923-2019) was a leading optical-kinetic artist. In 1960, he left Caracas (Venezuela) to settle in Paris. Within the international Op Art movement, he stood out for his focus on colour as his principal topic of research. His work was entirely devoted to revealing colour as a reality that is both relative and independent. From 1959, his works, which were based on scientific data, were divided into large series that each explored a particular aspect of the chromatic phenomenon. There are, however, two key optical effects that these series highlight and exalt, each in its own way. The first, chromatic induction, concerns all the changes in hue and clarity experienced by the eye when it sees different colours simultaneously. The second effect is "post-image" and concerns the appearance of colours after the eye has been looking at other colours.

Through approximately thirty works, this exhibition offers an overview of one of the most important artists of his generation, who drew on one of the singularities of colour: the fullness of its effects can only truly be experienced through interactive devices.



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AGENCIA PÚBLICA PARA LA GESTIÓN DE
LA CASA NATAL DE PABLO RUIZ PICASSO
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Optico-kinetic art

Promoting visual instability

Optico-kinetic art emerged in the mid-1950s, drawing simultaneously on the goal of optical or “op” art to stimulate the viewer’s retina and the passion for movement found in kinetic art. This type of art features both static works with forms that shift in the spectator’s vision as well as mobile, often motorised works. Artists from this movement developed geometric compositions and frequently used industrial materials. Their works are accessible to a broad audience, due to their spectacular nature.

The 1955 exhibition titled *Le Mouvement* (Movement) at Galerie Denise René in Paris played a major role in the recognition of the kinetic trend. It featured abstract, black-and-white works by Victor Vasarely alongside tutelary figures such as Marcel Duchamp and Alexander Calder as well as pieces by young artists such as Agam, Pol Bury, Jesús-Rafael Soto and Jean Tinguely. During a trip to Paris, Carlos Cruz-Diez visited this exhibition, and it resonated with his artistic research at that time.

While optico-kinetic art was mainly developed in Europe, several of the key representatives were South American: the Argentinian Julio Le Parc, and Venezuelans Jesús-Rafael Soto and Carlos Cruz-Diez. All three lived in Paris. The Vasarely exhibition that toured Latin America in 1959 had a major influence on an entire generation of artists.



Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Labyrinthe de transchromie B*, 1969-2017
Exhibition view “Suspension. Une histoire aérienne de la sculpture abstraite. 1918-2018”, Palais d’Iéna, Paris, 2018
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Carlos Cruz-Diez

The thinker of colour

Following his studies at the School of Fine Art in Caracas from 1940 to 1945, Carlos Cruz-Diez worked as a graphic designer, art director and illustrator for various companies, publications and national newspaper. He then taught at the School of Fine Art. In 1955, he moved to live near Barcelona for a year with his family. During this time, he made two trips to Paris. Upon his return to Caracas, he went back to his work as a graphic designer and teacher, and was named Deputy Director of the School of Fine Art (1958-1960). During this period, he contributed to multiple exhibitions and turned his artistic language towards abstraction, until devoting himself specifically to op art. In 1960, he moved to Paris, though he returned regularly to Venezuela to continue his work there.

Cruz-Diez’s artistic research and writing focused on colour. At the very end of the 1950s, he created pieces aiming to highlight the phenomenon of colour itself: they cause shifting perceptive situations, where changes in the angle of vision alter the luminous intensity and create multiple optical blends

of colours. With this aim in mind, he used industrial materials, specifically plexiglass. He designed various series of devices, each one focusing on specific perceptive or physical phenomena, including *Additive Colours*, *Physichromies*, *Chromatic Inductions*, *Chromo-saturations*, *Chromo-interferences*, *Transchromies* and *Colours in Space*, which are all presented in this exhibition. Most of Cruz-Diez's works presume an active viewer, who interprets the score making up the work thanks to his movements around the space and the choice of his points of observation.

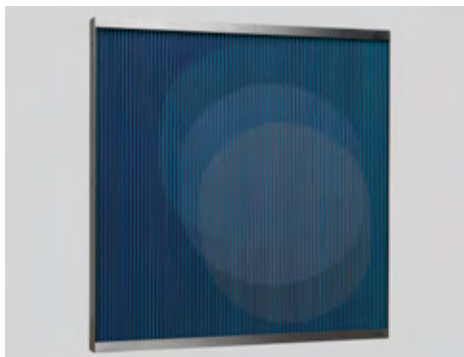
From 1967 on, Carlos Cruz-Diez also designed projects for public spaces, to offer what he calls "shared and manipulatable works" to a broad audience. He considered that optical effects, which directly affect the retina and brain, are the best vehicle for authentically social art.

Physichromies **Light traps**

The *Physichromies* are emblematic of Carlos Cruz-Diez's research. They are "evolving" works, which change in appearance depending on the viewer's position and the intensity of light, which determine the interaction between colours. Cruz-Diez started developing the optical principle of this series in 1959 and would continue to work on it throughout his life.

The forms and colours in the *Physiochromies* change as you move about in front of them, due to the thin vertical strips placed perpendicular to the vertically striped panel. This means that each *Physichromy* contains an endless supply of pictures that the viewer can choose to create by looking at it from various positions. The viewer's experience of these paintings therefore involves not only space (moving in front of the work in one direction and then another, at varying distances) but also time (as the different states of the painting are revealed one after another).

"I propose autonomous colour. Without anecdotes, devoid of symbolism, like an evolving phenomenon that involves us."



Carlos Cruz-Diez, *Physichromie 295*, 1966. Acrylic on cardboard, plastic strips, wood, 61 x 61 cm

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Guided tours

The mediation team offers you guided tours to discover the works from the exhibition, in an active and sensitive way.

Individual tours

Visit in Spanish included in the price of the ticket. Inscription on the same day at the reception.

25 people maximum.

Wednesday at 6 pm

Groups

In Spanish, English and French

25 people maximum

By prior reservation:

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Information

Opening hours

9.30 am to 8.00 pm, every day

Ticket offices close at 7:30 pm

The museum is closed on Tuesdays (except holidays and days before holidays), 1 January and 25 December

Prices

Temporary exhibitions:

€4, concessions: €2.50

Semi-permanent exhibitions:

€7, concessions: €4

Semi-permanent and temporary exhibitions:

€9, concessions: €5.50

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Carlos Cruz-Diez, Paris, France, 2011
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