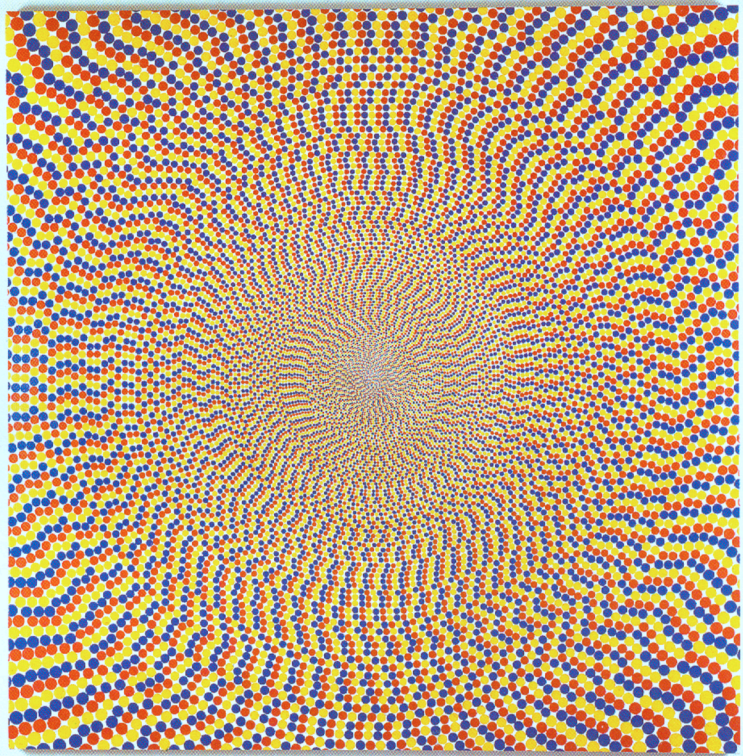
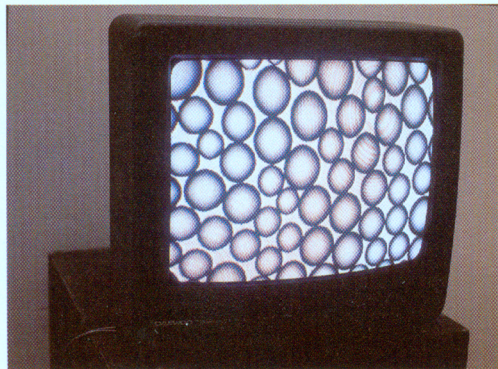


For example, both Rapp and I use the computer as a tool, but resist its value-system of streamlined perfection. Rapp's video loops of spheres growing and shrinking, made on a simple animation program, bear the same relation to the "trip" sequences of Hollywood science fiction films as a Yugo does to a Mercedes—they're clunky but get the job done. Viewers can be momentarily transfixed by these pulsating mini-spectacles, and then walk away, in contrast to the theater experience, where one is hemmed in and relentlessly bombarded. Similarly, my own work treats the computer as a crude means rather than an all-encompassing end. Spheres and tubes are "painted" with a mouse, printed out in bulk, cut apart, and reassembled into giant quilts or mosaics, held together (from the back) with strips of linen tape. As aggressive as '60s or '80s Op, these ruffled sheets have an ephemeral, disposable presence.

Even more evanescent, Alicia Wirt's installation pieces tug at our neurotic desire for closure. What appear to be recessed lights on a chevron-shaped ledge give off a multicolored glow. They're actually painted bands of color, spewing reflections onto the white walls, but the height of the ledge keeps one on tiptoes, straining to know for sure. Clarkson, on the other hand, puts everything in open view, like Penn and Teller explaining a magic trick. Affixing plugged-in, low-wattage light bulbs to the surfaces of his monochromatic panels, he tweaks the mystical pretensions of Op and color-field painters, who all too often substituted retinal trickery—afterimages, vibrating hues—for metaphysical experience.

In Dagley's work, a premise that could have originated in a '60s art education textbook ("make a spiral of circles using primary colors") becomes a Herculean ritual of self-imposed labor. Thousands of dots growing from a few millimeters in diameter in the canvas's center to a mere inch and a half at its outer edge coil outward in an undeviating sequence of red-blue-yellow, red-blue-yellow, red-blue-yellow. Rocking the eyes like a Bridget Riley, the work has a temporal aspect—and edge of monomania—largely absent from '60s Op.



The sheer resilience of Op over the last three decades suggests that it is an unfinished project rather than the "failure" its '80s practitioners claimed it to be. Regardless of what form it takes, it obviously addresses some deep, ongoing need—for pleasure, the "magical," an understanding of what seduces us, and other fundamental but hard-to-talk-about things.

The preceding text accompanies the exhibition "Op at Up," opening at UP & CO, 257 Church Street, New York, NY (212-966-7847), May 16, 1998, featuring the work of David Clarkson, Mark Dagley, Tom Moody, Ray Rapp, and Alicia Wirt, organized by Tom Moody.

Opposite Page

Tom Moody, *Jump*, 1997, photocopies and linen tape
David Clarkson, *Afterimage Painting*, 1996, enamel on wood, lightbulb
Alicia Wirt, *Light Shelf*, acrylic on wood, 1996

This Page

Mark Dagley, *Concentric Sequence*, 1996, acrylic, pencil on canvas
Ray Rapp, *bubblemation*, 1997, computer animation with TV