

Roman Opalka – The Polish Artist Who Spent Half His Life Painting From 1 To Infinity



Roman Opalka was a Polish conceptual artist who spent almost his entire career painting a progression of numbers design to symbolize the passing of time. He began with the figure “1” in 1965, and spent every day after that painting about 400 consecutive numbers. At the time of his death, in August, 2011, Opalka’s decades-long count had reached 5,607,249.



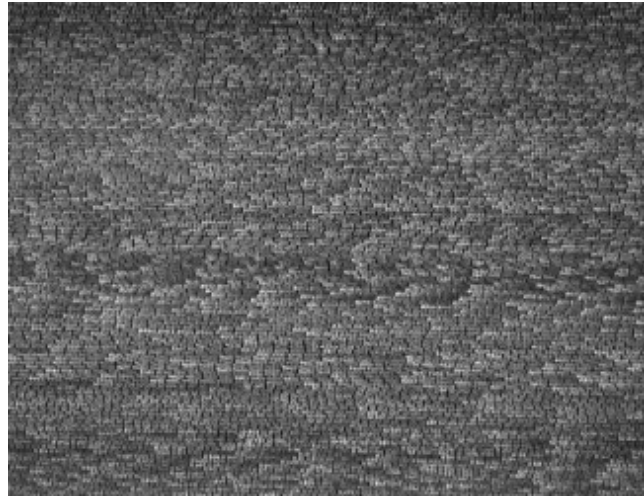
BUILDING

For his first canvas, or “detail” as he called them, Roman decided on a 195 x 135 black background, with the height corresponding to his own physical height, and the width derived from the girth of the door to his Warsaw studio. He started by picking up a fine brush and painting a small “1” in the upper-left corner of a black canvas, and continued painting neat rows of tiny consecutive numbers from one side of the canvas to the other. By the time he reached the lower-right corner, he had already reached 35,327. But that was just the beginning of a journey to infinity.

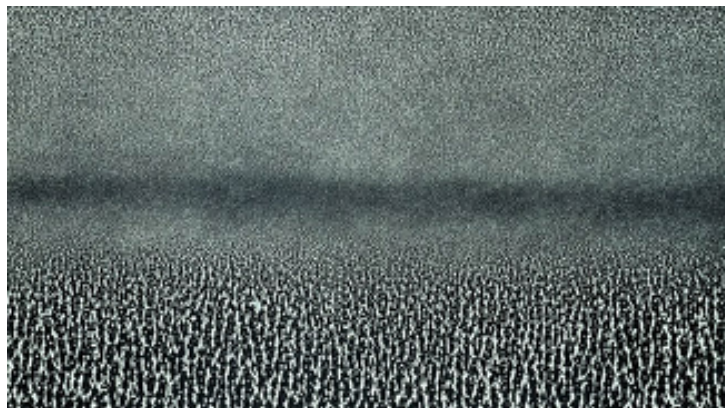


That's what Roman Opalka set out to reach when he painted that first "1", in 1965, but he was obviously very aware of his mortality. "All my work is a single thing, the description from number one to infinity. A single thing, a single life..." he once said. "The problem is that we are, and are about not to be."

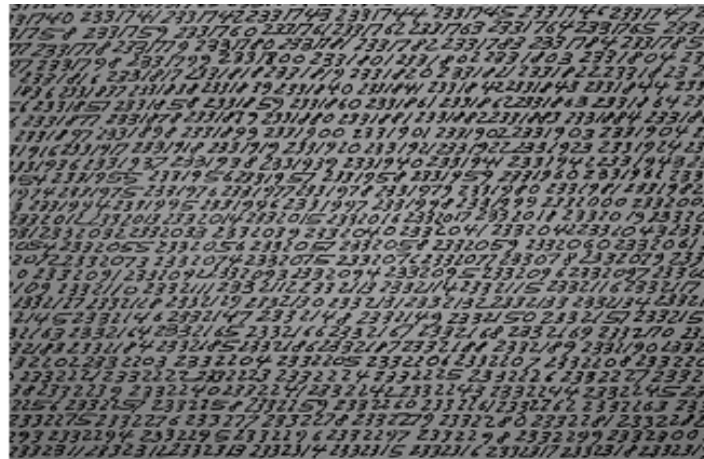
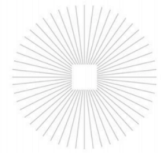
06 Maggio 2019
Designyourtrust.com



Over the course of the 46 years he spent painting his sequence of tiny numbers, Opalka completed a total of 222 canvases, or details, and despite once saying that he hoped to reach 7,777,777 – a number with “a profound, philosophical and religious meaning” – before he died, he stopped short of 6,000,000. The last number he painted was 5,607,249, although it’s tough to tell without checking up close, because it was painted with white paint on a white canvas.



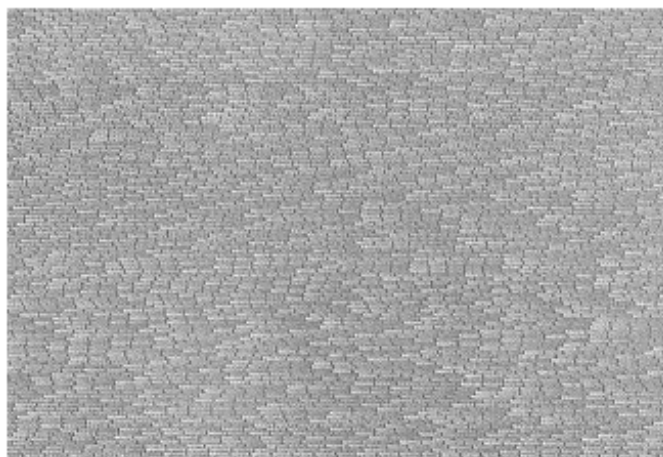
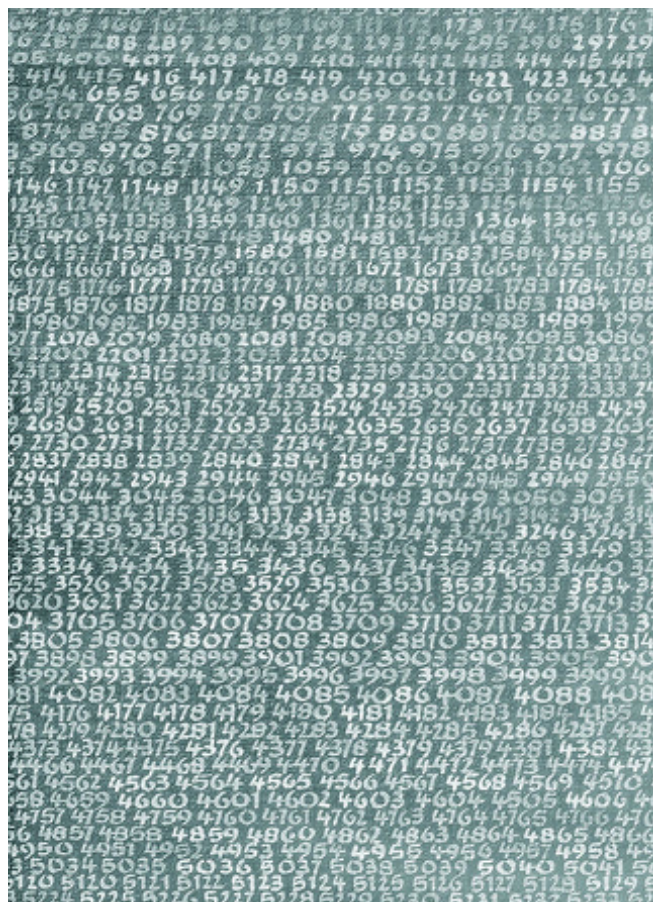
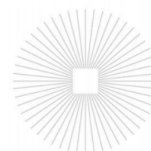
In 1972, Roman Opalks made the decision to make each canvas 1% whiter than the one before, so that one point he would end up painting white on white, something he called “blanc mérité (well deserved white). He achieved his goal in 2008, and the numbers painted during the last three years of his life are all white on white.



Roman Opalka described his impossible challenge of painting to infinity as a metaphor for human existence. “Time as we live it and as we create it embodies our progressive disappearance. We are at the same time alive and in the face of death — that is the mystery of all living beings,” he wrote in an 1987 essay.

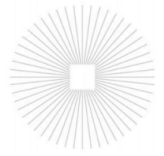


BUILDING



06 Maggio 2019
Designyoutrust.com

BUILDING



06 Maggio 2019
Designyoutrust.com