

THE SYMMETRY OF THE QUINCUNCX

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In his seminal book Hermann Weyl makes just two tantalising references to "Thomas Browne's quaint account in his Garden of Cyrus (1658) of (...) 'quincuncial' symmetry".

During the early 1970's, as a sideline to my main research, I looked for examples of the aesthetic use of this relationship and found only two. The first was the familiar "knight's move" in chess, the second was in certain paintings by the Swiss Constructivist painter Richard Paul Lohse.

I explored some of its implications in a small number of paintings and drawings begun at that time, and this research was carried much further in many subsequent works, including relief constructions, by my (then) pupil Richard Bell.

Five is, in any case, a notoriously difficult number to accomodate aesthetically and the symmetry of the quincuncx is also quite distinct from the D₅ (pentagonal) symmetry to be found, for example, in some compositions by Poussin.

Some of these problems will be introduced using slides and diagrams.