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**Existence and Transience
The Ancient Idea of Number in Conceptual Art**

In ancient art, numbers are used as tools to give works appropriate proportions. They served the purpose of making the artwork harmonious and to guarantee that it achieved a timeless beauty. Greek reflections on numbers pertain to eternal order and an understanding of the cosmos as both a spatial structure and a recurrence of cyclic movements in time. The reflections on human limitations towards the concept of eternity and the enormity of the universe caused the ancients to develop an interest in numbers as rules to construe human works. This contemplation on human transience in the world has always been present, and in different ways has manifested itself in art. Conceptual artists also contended with the mystery of our existence within the passing of time. The two artists discussed in this article – On Kawara and Roman Opałka – use numbers to express the deepest sense of human existence. In this way mathematical concepts found their place in conceptual art in the purest known application of ancient philosophy.