

## Gyözö

My grandfather, or “Gyözö”, as his wife Claire, his sons André, Jean-Pierre and myself, affectionately called him, in private, loved to evoke his attachment to Hungary and to Pécs, his native city, whose history he knew so well. Victor Vasarely bore witness, as soon as he had the chance to do so, to what had been his crucial luggage when he left Hungary in 1930 for Paris, at the age of 24 and not 22, having been born in 1906 and not in 1908, as he would flirtatiously claim ...

He would recall with great tenderness his primary school years, his education at the “citizens school”, equivalent to secondary school, and his brief studies in the Faculty of Medicine. From then on drawn to art, his choice centred on Alexandre Bortnyik, the great Hungarian Master, who relayed the key lessons from the Weimar Bauhaus School to those of the Műhely Academy in Budapest. In the space of three years of rigorous training, Bortnyik, would inculcate in him the fundamental principles which underpinned his creation, all the techniques minutely acquired which would contribute to his success in the art of advertising first of all, then, in the visual arts afterwards.

It was also in the Műhely that Victor Vasarely would meet Claire, a highly gifted pupil, who would become his wife, and who would abandon her own creations in order to devote herself, until her death in 1990, exclusively to the oeuvre of her husband, thus arraying it with such great importance for the latter.

As his fame as an internationally recognised visual artist dated from 1955, Victor Vasarely would endow Gordes in 1970, Aix-en-Provence and Pécs in 1976, then Budapest in 1986, with a set of major works in favour of a French Foundation and two Hungarian museums designed to house them. In this way, he would show his gratitude to the two countries which were dear to him; one, for having awoken in him the pride in his roots and the other, for having enabled him to achieve a life whose sole purpose was art. Vasarely’s oeuvre is universal: in fact, it introduced a development on the notion “form – colour” based on a language understood by all.

As the folklore and the language of his origins had always inspired him, many works thus bear Hungarian names; but the discipline and diversity of his country of adoption would contribute to his world influence. That is what this travelling exhibition illustrates:

- in the Art Museums of Donegal : July-August,
- in the Vasarely Foundation of Aix-en-Provence : September-October,
- to finish up in the Vasarely Museum of Pécs : November-December.

The special initiative of these three European structures merits our thanks, in particular for the loans from the Hungarian museum and from several individuals. Once again, the fascination of the “Vasarelian” creation will enchant and enrich the visual arts world of visitors.

With my wife and my children, I had the opportunity to stay with our friends Mireille and John, in Ardara, over Easter 2005, which let us get to know Donegal. It is, therefore, with much emotion that I return to this beautiful warm region which would not have gone unnoticed by Victor Vasarely, he who was so close to nature, as his period known as “Belle Isle” testifies, Breton island, his own Ireland. I must thank the following: the Vasarely Museum of Pécs, represented by its Director, Mr József Sárkány, for its key contribution; the Vasarely Foundation, administered by Mr Xavier Huertas; – and not forgetting Mr Jacques Mandelbrojt, my visual artist friend from Marseilles, without whom I would never have met Messrs Adrian Kelly and John M. Cunningham, curators of the Regional Cultural Centre and of the Glebe Gallery, so prompt to vote for paying homage in 2008 to the “father of Op-Art”.

**Pierre Vasarely**