

Right of Reply

The article published in the December 29, 2023 edition of the newspaper LIBÉRATION, under the title "FONDATION VASARELY: A Scandal of Variable Geometry," implicates me personally and in my capacity as President of the Fondation Vasarely.

Under the right of reply provided for in Article 13 of the law of July 29, 1881 on freedom of the press, I would be grateful if you would publish the following response:

"Your article of December 29 last, entitled 'FONDATION VASARELY: A Scandal of Variable Geometry,' portrays me as playing a 'murky game' and seeking to 'rebuild a reputation.' Among the 'maneuvers' attributed to me, it states that I 'multiply legal proceedings' to the point of abuse, to the detriment of Victor Vasarely's work. Yet my fight, and that of the Fondation Vasarely, is entirely legitimate and has been recognized as well-founded by numerous court rulings, which you could easily have looked into.

Thus, when Victor Vasarely's will, which named me sole heir, was set aside upon the opening of the estate then handled by Maître Pierre Dubreuil, I had to take legal action (1998). The Tribunal de Grande Instance (2003) and then the Paris Court of Appeal (2005) ruled in my favor.

When it became necessary to have my status as sole holder of the moral rights over Victor Vasarely's work recognized, and to obtain the return of his archives, held by Michèle Taburno, I had to take legal action. The Tribunal de Grande Instance (2009) and then the Aix-en-Provence Court of Appeal (2011) ruled in my favor. The archives have, however, still not been returned.

When Michèle Taburno permanently left France to settle in Chicago in 2004, then in Puerto Rico in 2012, taking with her most of the works from the unsettled estates of my grandparents and my father, I had to take legal action. The Paris Tribunal de Grande Instance (2013), upheld by the Court of Appeal (2022), ordered the judicial division of the estates and the return of the works to France. These works have, however, still not been returned.

When Yann Streiff put up for sale at Artcurial 21 works from the Fondation Vasarely's inalienable collections, it again became necessary to involve the courts. These works were seized and returned to the Fondation Vasarely (2018).

Your article also damages the credibility of the Fondation Vasarely, of which I was appointed President in 2009, and implicates me in that capacity as well. I would like to point out, however, that the Fondation's building — itself a work of art — was listed as a historic monument in 2013. Restoration work on the main structure was undertaken for an amount of 11 million euros, financed by local authorities, the State, and private patrons between 2013 and 2019. The Fondation received the "Musée de France" designation in 2020. It has restored 23 of the 44 monumental works it houses. Going from 19,000 visitors in 2009 to over 100,000 in 2019 is a source of pride!

So yes, it is true that when a private entity called 'Fundación Michele Vasarely LLC' is created in Puerto Rico, and speaks of the 'inexorable decline' of the Fondation Vasarely 'due to its persistent association with the legal world and the political arena,' I remain vigilant. When a commercial exhibition is organized in 2022 in a London gallery by Arnauld Pierre, a member

of the 'Fundación Michele Vasarely LLC,' and presents inalienable works removed from the Fondation Vasarely, as well as works belonging to unsettled estates, I react. When an exhibition in Seoul devoted to Vasarely's work — whose organization had initially been proposed to the Fondation Vasarely — was ultimately carried out in 2023 by Marton Orosz, a member of the 'Fundación Michele Vasarely LLC,' I react. However, contrary to what is claimed in your article, which speaks of my alleged 'legal assaults,' in these two cases I did not go to court but simply alerted the third parties concerned; the Seoul exhibition was neither prevented nor blocked, and began 8 days before your article was published — which was easily verifiable.

Echoing claims that my grandfather supposedly accused me of stealing his paintings, and that I supposedly transported his works carelessly in the back of my car, strikes me as particularly unworthy. My grandfather had no doubt about my ability to ensure respect for his work, having named me in his will as: 'the only person capable of ensuring the continuity and perpetuation of [his] work within the Fondation Vasarely bearing [his] name.'

To present as a sordid inheritance dispute what is, in fact, the stripping of an institution of its substance in defiance of the wishes of its founders — Victor and Claire Vasarely — is a mystification. I wish in particular to recall that the 1995 arbitration, through which the Fondation Vasarely was stripped of nearly all of its collections (and in which, contrary to what Yann Streiff claims, I did not participate in any way), was ruled fraudulent and irrevocably annulled by the Paris Court of Appeal in 2014, which described it as a 'sham.' The circumstances surrounding its implementation are the subject of criminal proceedings for breach of trust, receiving stolen goods, and money laundering. Contrary to what Libération suggests, these two proceedings were not initiated by me but by the Fondation Vasarely's court-appointed administrator, in the case of the civil proceedings, and by the Paris Public Prosecutor's Office, in the case of the criminal investigation. That same Paris Public Prosecutor's Office and the investigating judges in charge of the case considered the facts serious enough, and damaging enough to France's cultural interests, to request FBI assistance so that a French judge could travel to Puerto Rico and carry out the seizure of about a hundred works held by Michèle Taburno.

As for me, unlike many people whose statements you reproduce, I have not been implicated, let alone placed under formal investigation, in any matter whatsoever.

I have merely pointed out a few examples of inaccurate and incomplete information contained in your article, which reveal a clear imbalance directed against me.

The partnership between the Centre Pompidou and the Fondation Vasarely, which you describe as 'prestigious,' would, according to you, allow me to 'rebuild a reputation.' What exactly should I be ashamed of? The Centre Pompidou's cooperation is public recognition of the Fondation Vasarely's place in the cultural landscape and of its recovery. It contradicts the picture painted by Libération's article."

Aix-en-Provence, February 2, 2024

Pierre Vasarely