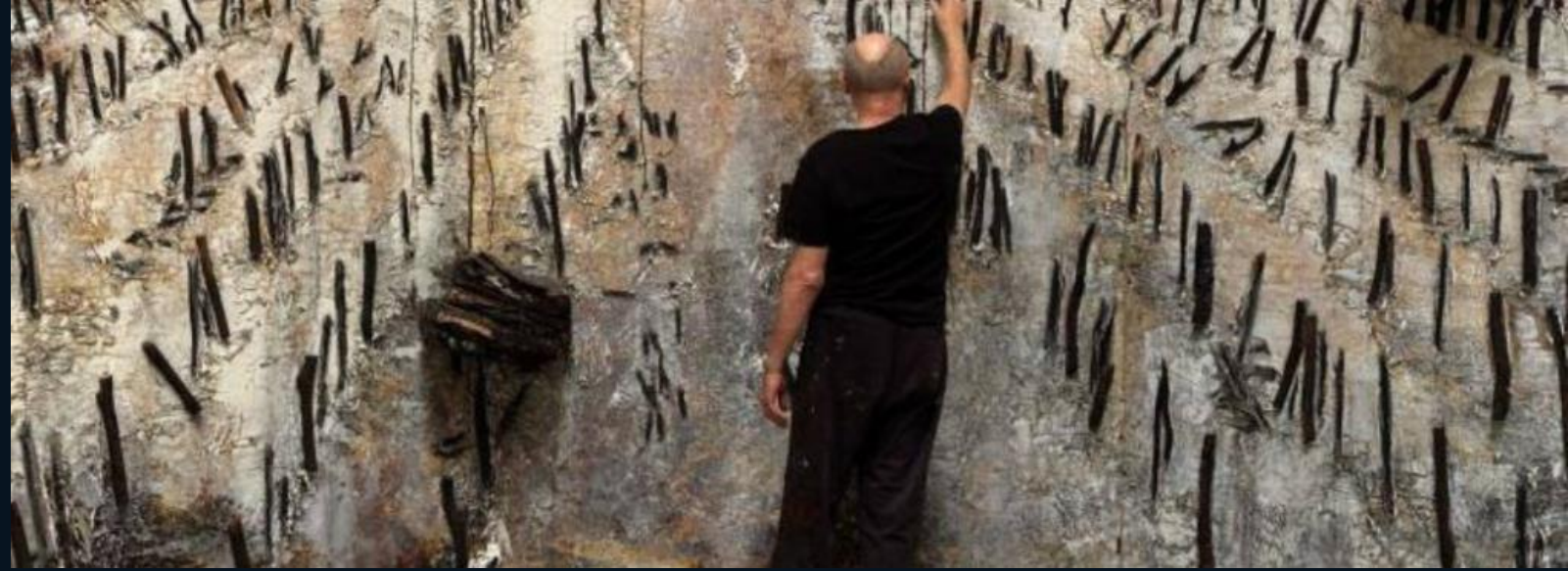




Anselm Kiefer and Victor Vasarely



I would venture that these artists would never be mentioned in the same sentence if it were not for the fact that they both have foundations in Provence. Two very different styles, themes, approaches, techniques, and philosophies. This is the beauty of art: such different creations can elicit deep reactions in our souls.

I invite you to delve a little bit into the production of these two masters, ahead of our visit to their foundations next April.



Anselm Kiefer

Fusing art and literature, painting and sculpture, Anselm Kiefer engages the complex events of history and the ancestral epics of life, death, and the cosmos. His monumental body of work represents a microcosm of collective memory, visually encapsulating a broad range of cultural, literary, and philosophical allusions, from the Old and New Testaments, Kabbalah mysticism, Norse mythology, and Wagner's *Ring* cycle to the poetry of Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan. In reflecting on Germany's postwar identity and history, he also grapples with the national mythology of the Third Reich.

Kiefer was born in Donaueschingen, Germany, in 1945, during the closing months of World War II. After studying law and Romance languages, he attended the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg im Breisgau and the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste Karlsruhe. From 1971 to 1992, he lived and worked in Hornbach, Buchen, and Höpfingen, Germany; since then, he has lived and worked in France.

Kiefer's oeuvre encompasses paintings, vitrines, installations, artist's books, and an array of works on paper, including drawings, watercolors, collages, woodcuts, and photographs. The physical elements of his practice—from gold leaf, lead, concrete, and glass to textiles, tree roots, and burned books—are as symbolically resonant as they are wide-ranging.

Despite living and working in France since 1992, he has said that 'my biography is the biography of Germany'.



‘I am then in the matter, in the paint, in the sand, directly in the clay, in the darkness of the moment. Because the spirit is already contained in the material. [...] It is a strange, contemplative internal state, but also a form of suffering in its lack of clarity.’



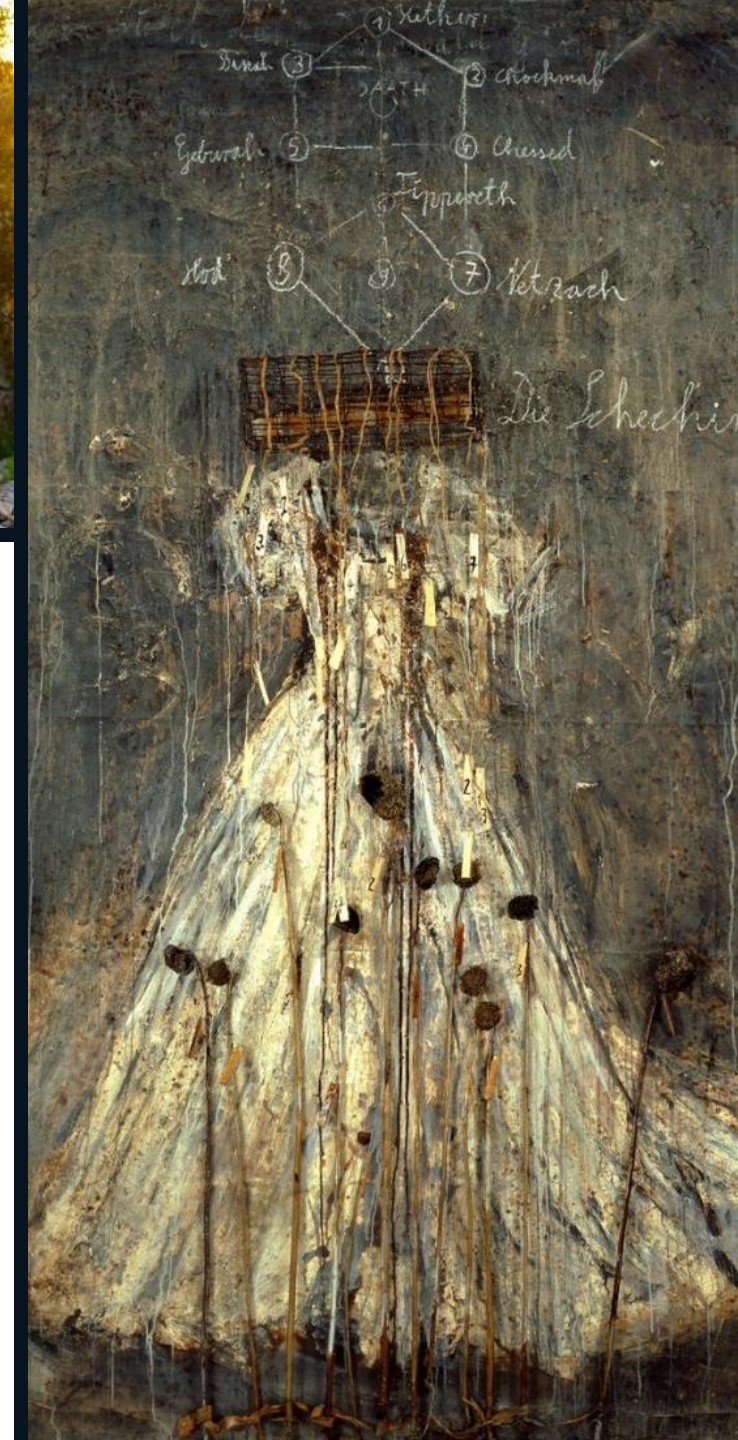
'Let a Thousand Flowers Bloom'

The title of this series is knowingly ironic. It refers both to the epic, blooming landscapes of these pictures and also to a common misquotation in the West of a well-known phrase pronounced by Chairman Mao in 1957, which, while ostensibly encouraging cultural plurality, led to the deaths of millions and the final curtailment of all forms of dissent.

These monumental paintings depict bountiful fields of flowers, thickly painted in neutral colors, which suggests natural profundity and fertility, but also entropy, as the display seems just past its point of perfection. Sunflowers, poppies and other flowers sit atop a mass of tangled stems, stalks and foliage which have been partly ruined – a dissolving mass of plant matter that holds the possibility of its imminent collapse.



The Women of Antiquity



The series, which also incorporates Kiefer's representations of the 'Women of the Revolution', the 'Queens of France', and other celebrated female figures from history and myth, such as Lilith or the Roman matron Claudia Quinta, celebrates the epic but forgotten role that women have played in history and culture.

It is for this reason that the figures in these works, which also often take the form of sculptures, are always represented as headless women standing in white bridal-like gowns, their heads supplanted by a weighty symbol of the particular branch of history or culture to which they have contributed but which has itself, over time obliterated their memory.





Eschaton-Anselm Kiefer Foundation

The mission of Eschaton—Anselm Kiefer Foundation is to advance the artistic legacy of its founder, Anselm Kiefer, by maintaining and cataloguing his archive and by preserving La Ribaute, his former studio-estate in Barjac, France, for future generations. Eschaton fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary art by organizing and supporting exhibitions, facilitating research and publication projects, and by presenting Kiefer's artworks as well as works by other artists to the public at La Ribaute. The Foundation's name, Eschaton, refers to life's cyclical nature and the concept that creation and rebirth arise from ruins and are enabled through demise and destruction, a significant leitmotif in Anselm Kiefer's artistic practice.



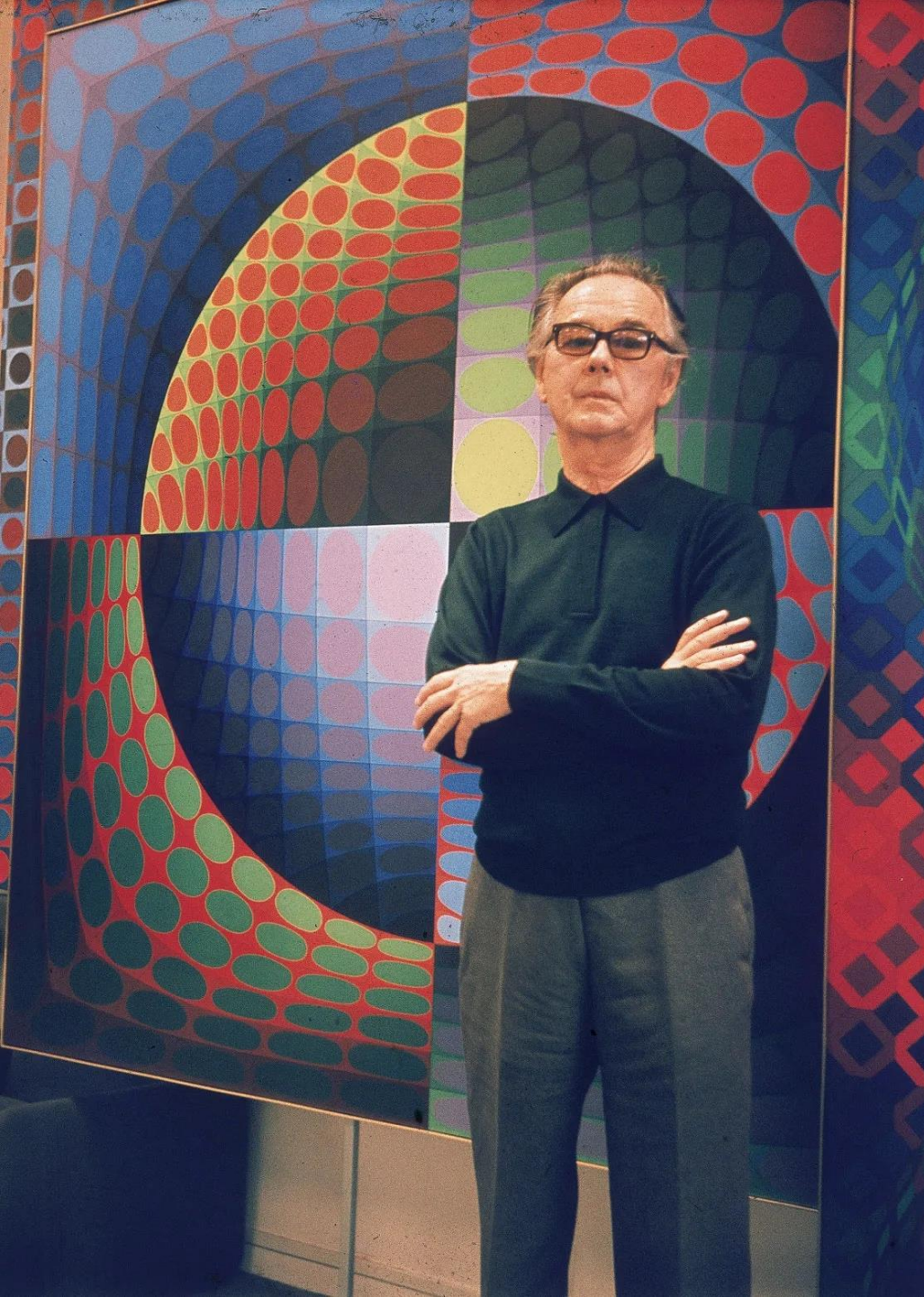
Sources For Anselm Kiefer

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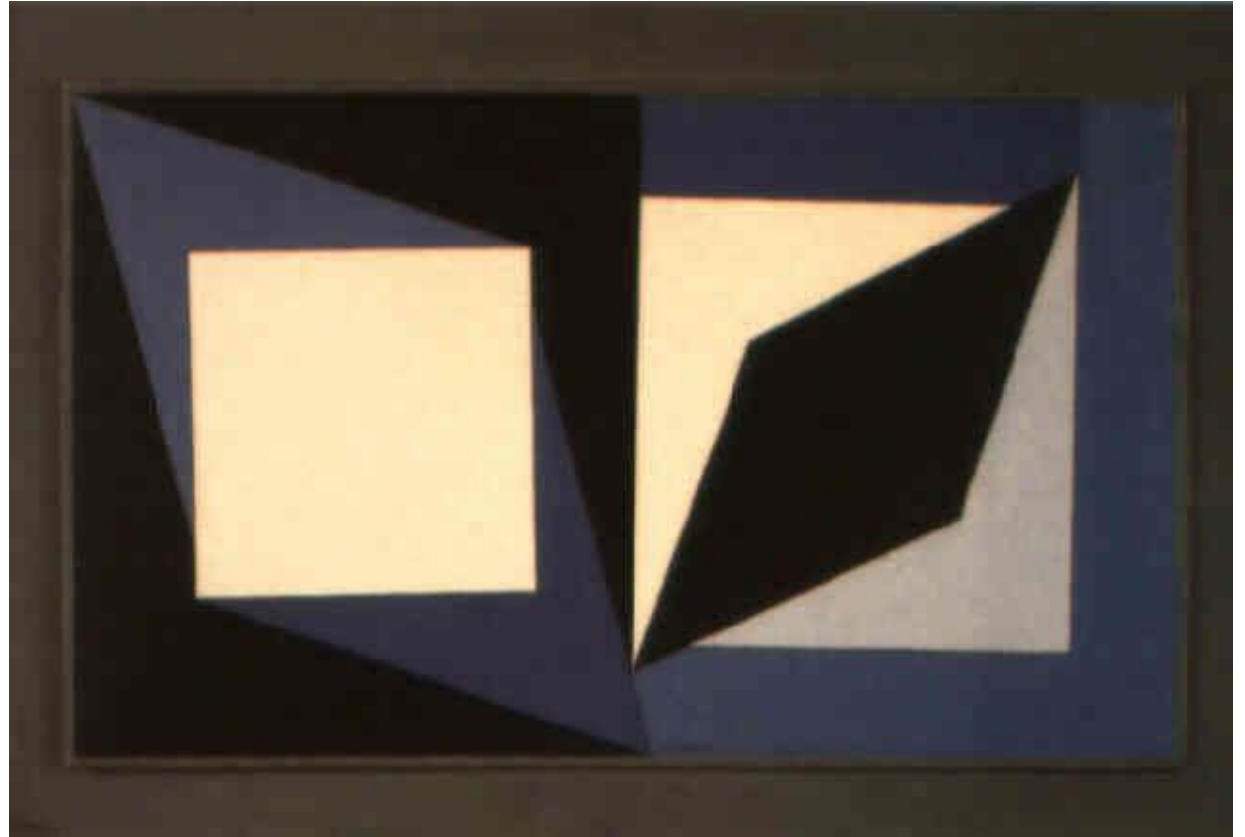
Victor Vasarely – The Father of Op Art (Hungary, 1906-France, 1997)

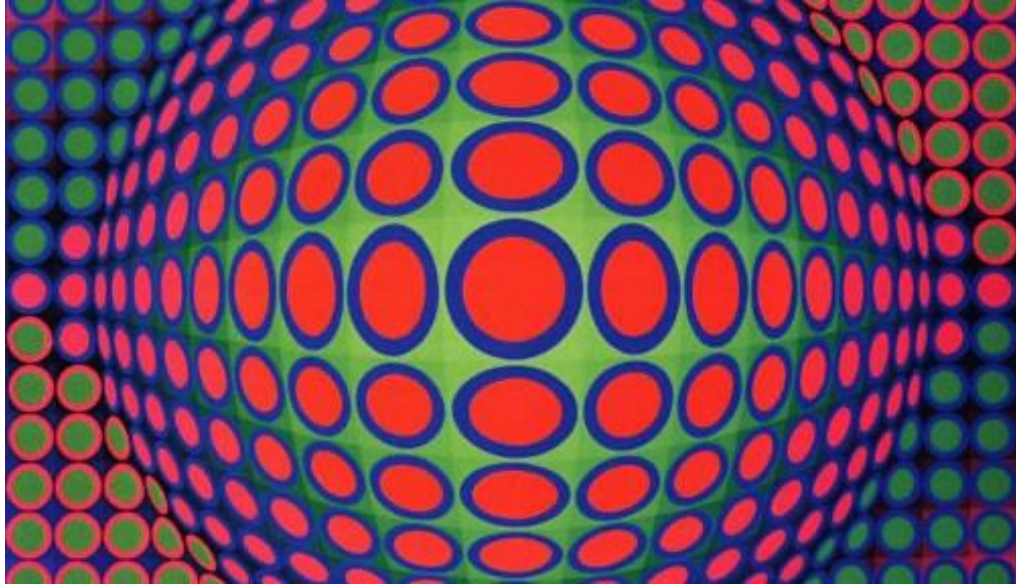
Victor Vasarely is a very special artist in the history of 20th-century art. He gained fame during his lifetime and distinguished himself in contemporary art by pioneering a new trend: optical art. His work is part of a remarkable coherence, from the evolution of his graphic art to his determination to promote a socially accessible art form.

Op art, short for optical art, emerged in the 1960s and quickly gained popularity for its ability to create mesmerizing illusions and effects through the use of precise geometric patterns and color combinations. Vasarely's artworks often feature repetitive forms, interlocking shapes, and vibrant colors that create a sense of movement and depth. Through these optical illusions, he aimed to challenge the viewer's perception and engage them in an interactive visual experience.

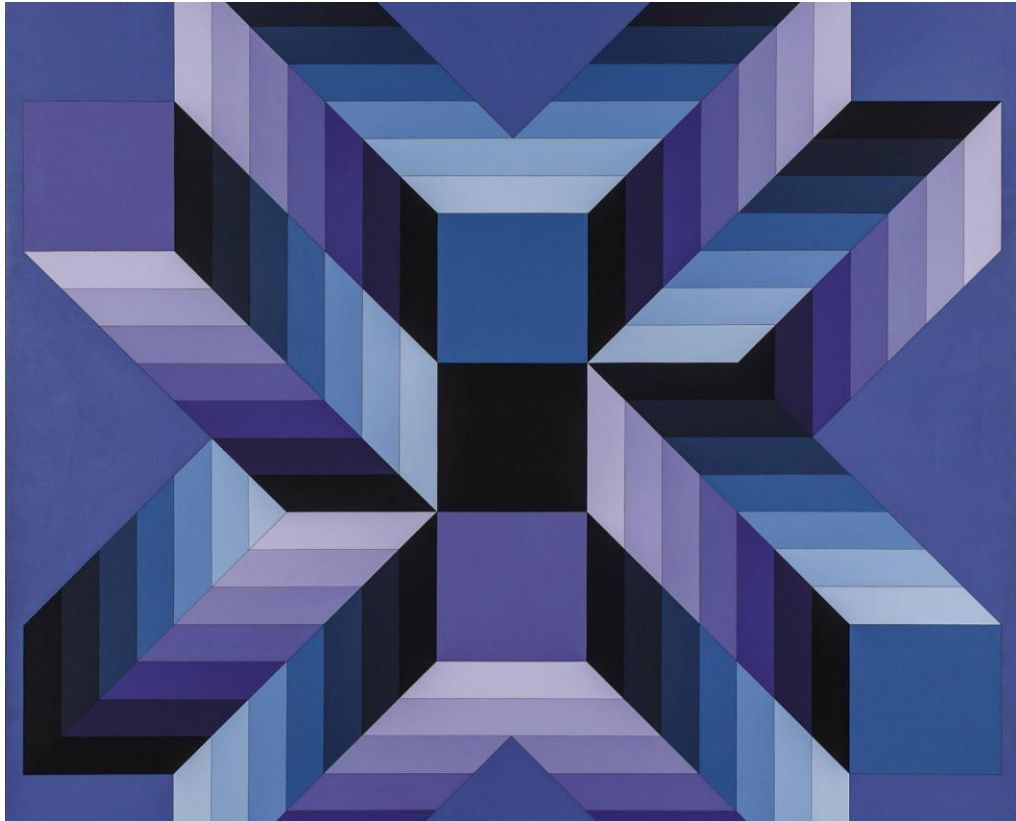
The beginning: Homage a Malevich, 1955-58

Hommage à Malevich, which takes its cue from the Russian painter's 1913 Carré noir sur fond blanc, which preceded the Carré blanc sur fond blanc of 1918, the ultimate stage of Euclidean geometry in art that Vasarely understands as a degree zero, the declaration of death of a thousand year old tradition: "One could not manifest in a more limpid way the urgency to do something else. His "homage" is a kinetic situation: the square moves. "By slightly rotating the square, I obtain a rhombus, creating a new illusionist space.





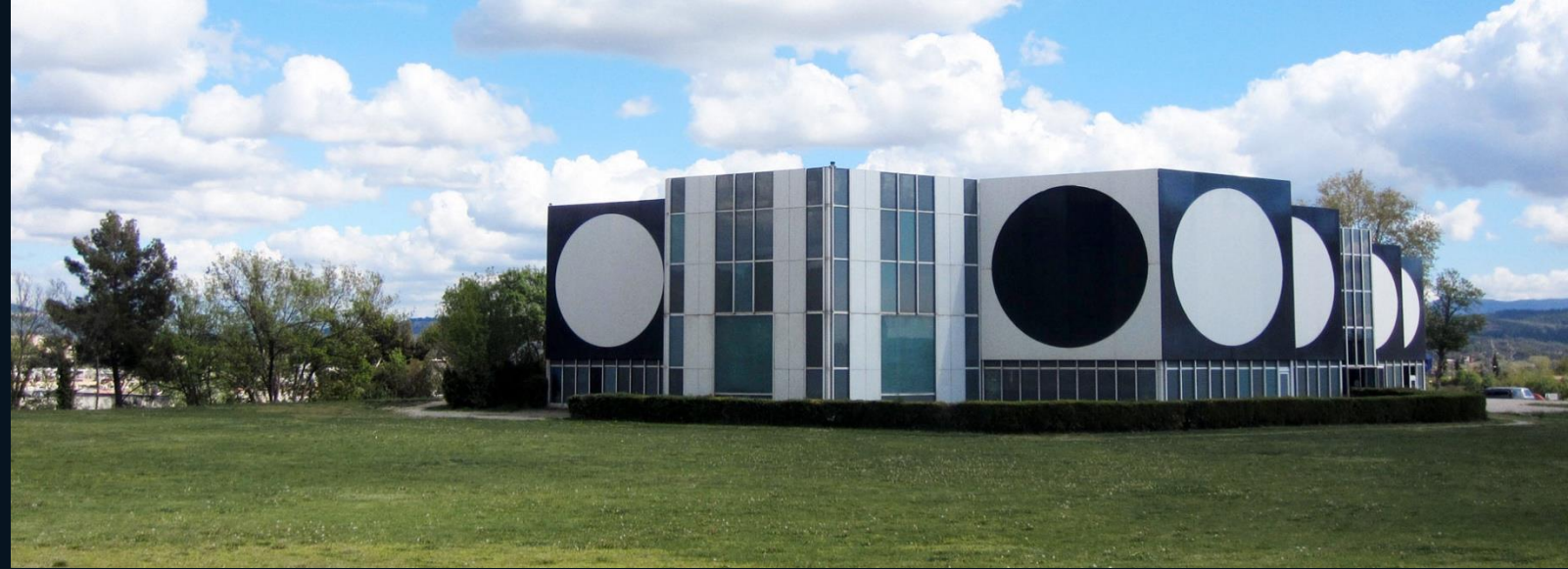
“I fight for the debunking of the artist and an end to individual pictures.”



Vasarely viewed the arts as a collective effort, moving away from the cult of individual genius.

Vasarely aimed to democratize art and make it accessible to everyone. He believed that art should be part of daily life and worked to break down the barriers between art and viewers. To do this, he created multiples of his works, made prints and posters, and even designed architectural and industrial projects that featured his signature style.

“Every form is a base
for color, every color
is the attribute of a
form.”



Vasarely was trained as an artist in Budapest in the Bauhaus tradition. He settled in Paris in 1930, where he initially supported himself as a commercial artist. He was influenced by Constructivism, but by the 1940s, his characteristic style of animated surfaces of geometric forms and interacting colors emerged.

His style reached maturity in the mid-1950s and 1960s, when he began using brighter, more vibrant colors further to enhance the suggestion of movement through optical illusion. Vasarely became a naturalized French citizen in 1959. Much of his work is housed in the Vasarely Museum at the Château de Gourdes, in southern France, and the Vasarely Museum in Budapest. In 1970, he established the Vasarely Foundation, which relocated to Aix-en-Provence in 1976, occupying a building he had designed.

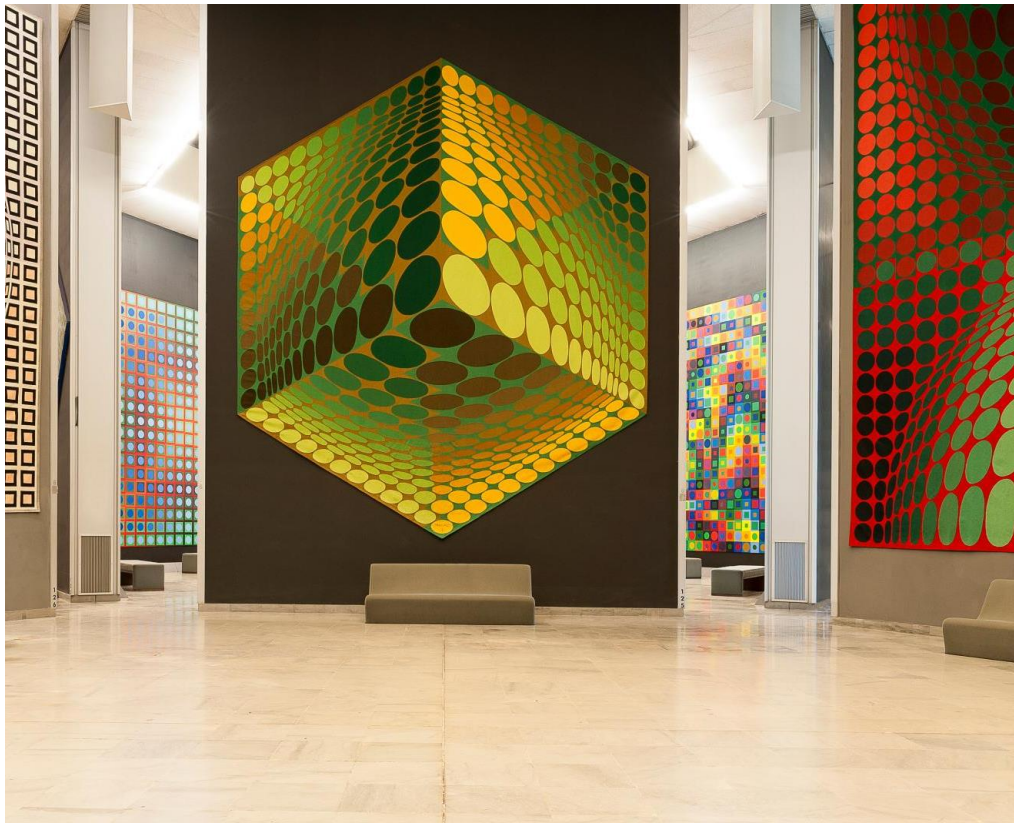


Vasarely Foundation

The building was built between 1973 and 1976 (year of its inauguration). Its architecture adheres to no specific movement, even though its aesthetics do refer to the style of the Seventies, both in the choice of materials (glass, anodized aluminum) and in the very idea of bringing together architecture and technological design.

As a “Lumino-kinetic” monumental sculpture, it is a remarkable example of the synthesis between architecture and plastic art. In its blueprints, the artist and the architect Jean Sonnier opted for a system of 16 hexagon-shaped cells: a geometric shape which Victor Vasarely often used in his series “Hommage à l’hexagone”.

With 5,000 sq. meters of floor space, a remarkable amount of skylight shines through the building’s fourteen pyramidal cupolas. From outside, a creased curtain- like wall displays a binary alternation of black and white circles and squares. The animation of the facade and its optical illusions prepare the visitor for the kinetic and optical tricks that they will discover once they enter the building.



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