



Planetary Folklore Participants No.1

Victor Vasarely

Not on display

Title/Description: Planetary Folklore Participants No.1

Artist/Maker: Victor Vasarely

Born: 1969

Object Type: Relief

Materials: Metal (magnet), Polystyrene (Polystyrol)

Measurements: h. 528 x w. 528 x d. 25 mm

Accession Number: 31237

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Europe, France

Victor Vasarely used magnetism to offer an interactive composition. Each of the circles and squares in his *Planetary Folklore Participants No.1* could be interchanged to give different colour and form variations across the relief. Not only can the internal shape be changed, but each square within which they sit. So the colours, and where the circles and squares fall, are variable. In total there are 390 individual elements in 19 different colours.

The relief was made as a multiple in an edition of 3,000 giving the possibility of endless variety. Vasarely pioneered working in multiples, which he considered as a steppingstone for the unification of art and mass production. *Planetary Folklore Participants No.1* was produced by William Wise in France and Editions Pyra in Switzerland, in collaboration with Denise René. Vasarely had helped to found René's Parisian gallery and he had his first exhibition in Paris there. René produced a number of multiples by artists such as François Morellet [31268], as she, like Vasarely, wanted to rethink how the artworld functioned, making art available to all.

Of multiples, Vasarely wrote:

Today we are aware of the possibility of recreation, multiplication and expansion. Thus, together with craftsmanship, the myth of the unique work of art will disappear, and the multipliable work of art will triumph at last through the benefit of the machine.

Let us not fear the new tools which technique has given us. We can only live authentically in our own time. Achieving large-scale distribution is necessary to answer the vast demand which comes to us from the world. [1]

Planetary Folklore Participants No.1 came with an instruction sheet, which opened with the line, 'How to create an unlimited number** of your own original works of art or 3 original Vasarelys'. [2] The stars direct the reader to a note '** According to the giant computer of the Compagnie Internationale pour l'informatique, 78 Louveciennes, France, the mathematical possibilities for different original compositions are unlimited. (5,971,415,683,544,067 followed by 265 zeros or 281^{10}). [3]

With the relief and information booklet came five blank sheets for the participant to record their varying creations. Each of the separate pieces had a unique code on the back. Vasarely gave the following instruction in the booklet:

Make each of your compositions freely, seeking that which satisfies you the most. Then copy the codes on a blank programming sheet. You may assemble the unities face down in the frame, box, or elsewhere, noting the code, and then turning them face up in the frame, or work in the opposite way. [4]

Planetary Folklore was the title of a number of works by Vasarely and a book published by him in 1973. For him, 'Planetary Folklore' indicated a 'world of colour'. [5] Vasarely was interested in how his work may be integrated into the urban fabric, which he thought was achievable through his simple forms in units and repeated colours. He had ambitions to create such prefabricated works on a monumental scale to be integrated into walls.

Tania Moore, June 2021

[1] Victor Vasarely, 'Towards the democratisation of art' in Anthony Hill (ed.) *DATA: Directions in art, theory and aesthetics; an anthology* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p.104.

[2] Booklet with *Planetary Folklore Participants No.1* (Sainsbury Centre archive)

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Victor Vasarely, *Planetary Folklore* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1973), unpag.

Exhibitions

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 02/10/2021 - 17/07/2022

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Djanogly Art Gallery, UK, 07/03/2023 - 23/07/2023

Further Reading

Tania Moore and Calvin Winner (eds.), *Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre, 2021), p.44.
