

TO RESPECT THE WISHES OF ANTONIO SAURA

The signatories of the present declaration would like to make known their concern following the Spanish Supreme Court's decision on 14 December 2005 to ratify the formal legality of the registration of a foundation bearing the name of Antonio Saura, against the express wishes of the late artist and his heirs.

Regardless of the respect that is owed to decisions taken by courts of law, we would like to stress the following points:

1. The Supreme Court came to its decision without examining either the painter's last will and testament or his posthumous instructions (dated 11 July 1998), and without even hearing his heirs.
2. Nevertheless, Antonio Saura (Huesca, 22 September 1930 – Cuenca, 22 July 1998), under point 6 of the instructions addressed to his executor, made plain his last wishes:

'The Foundation:

The majority of the commitments signed in 1995, as well as the promises made subsequently, have not been honoured to this day. My own appeals of February and June have gone unanswered. The failures of the persons and administrations involved have prevented this project from being realised. Its ability to carry on, in both financial and human terms, has not been secured and will surely not be following my death.

I explicitly request that you halt all steps that are currently being taken and put an end to this project by all means that you deem necessary.

No foundation or analogous institution will be created or bear my name without the prior and unanimous consent of Mercedes, Marina, and you.'

Nothing could be clearer. For our part, we cannot allow this voice to go unheard.

3. We are dismayed to see that for almost eight years now the 'prime movers' behind this foundation, contrary to the artist's wishes, have undermined the painter's good image by providing false certificates of authenticity for mutilated works or works that are not in Saura's own hand.
4. We are likewise shocked by the fact that these same persons, directing a foundation that runs contrary to the artist's wishes, with the support of local and regional authorities, have filed a criminal complaint against the artist's heirs and executor.

5. We would like to stress that this foundation enjoys neither moral right nor copyright, that it possesses neither the right to distribute the artist's work nor the right to use his name, and indeed has no right to reproduce a single one of his works. All rights and all of Antonio Saura's archives remain the property of his estate.
6. We are disturbed to read in the press that this foundation, again contrary to the artist's wishes, is apparently demanding at this time from the Reina Sofia Museum the devolution of the 61 works comprising the bequest made by the Saura estate in payment of the inheritance tax imposed on it. We strongly urge the political and museum authorities that are involved not to accede to this improper demand.

Consequently, we feel it is our duty to call upon everyone to respect the clear and conscious decisions of an artist shortly before his death, and hence the moral authority of Antonio Saura. His heirs are the only persons entitled to represent the artist's work, which they have demonstrated with remarkable ability over the past seven years.

For these reasons, we calmly yet firmly appeal to people from the world of the arts as well as political leaders. We solemnly invite the Spanish authorities to withdraw their support from this foundation, which has usurped the name of Antonio Saura and is violating his demands.

At stake here is the natural respect that must exist in any civilised society for the free and unquestionable last wishes of a great painter. Indeed, the image of modern Spain is at stake.

Geneva, 12th April 2006

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