

Parallel Chronologies

“OTHER”REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS

HOW ART BECOMES PUBLIC

An exhibition in newspaper format

PARALLEL CHRONOLOGIES

The research project “Parallel Chronologies”¹ was launched to map, study, and generate curatorial and artistic practices and methodologies dealing with post-war Eastern European art exhibitions and events. Our goal is to present an international network of professional relationships, documents of exhibitions, events, and art spaces instead of the mere display of artworks from the period. We also attempt to propose a methodology with which documents and factual information as well as legends and cults can be researched, processed and displayed in an exhibition.

Creating our own chronologies we looked at why some events, works, figures gain significance as soon as they appear, making them the starting points of anecdotes and legends, while others are quickly forgotten or can only become significant when seen from a later context. We were interested to find out what roles and possibilities for public appearance the era’s political and social climate provided for progressive art, as well as what connections it had with “official art” and international trends.

“Parallel Chronologies” has been presented so far as an exhibition in Budapest in 2009, in Karlsruhe in 2010. In 2011 in Riga, accompanied by Sándor Hornyik’s compilation “Other Revolutionary Traditions” and the contribution of LCCA, Riga, Art History Institute, Tallinn, and Vilnius National Art Gallery.

This publication is an exhibition in newspaper format that considers the immediacy with which events and artworks reflected on the daily reality of their time, and also attempts to restore the then missing public appeal of these progressive practices. It contains two parallel projects, “Other Revolutionary Traditions” by Sándor Hornyik and “How Art Becomes Public” by Dóra Hegyi and Zsuzsa László. Sándor Hornyik deals with the history of cults developed around certain revolutionary figures of art and history. He investigates how Hungarian neo-avant-garde artists appropriated or undermined the heroes and strategies of official cultural politics in the 60s and 70s and how contemporary artists in turn appropriate and deconstruct the cult of avant-garde and neo-avant-garde figures. “How art becomes public” is an attempt to draw up a chronology of exhibitions and events that in the 60s and 70s redefined the relation between art and the public. We present the textual and visual documents of 16 legendary events from Hungary between 1966 and 1977, while an essay describes the turning points of Hungarian exhibition history. Through these case-studies we investigate how innovative models were introduced into exhibition-making, what kind of alternative presentational formats were developed, and how legendary events were preserved and revisited in the collective memory of the Hungarian art scene.



“Parallel Chronologies” exhibition 2010, Badischer Kunstverein Karlsruhe, exhibition design: Tamás Tibor Kaszás



“Parallel Chronologies” exhibition 2009, Krétakör, Budapest

¹ First realized in 2009 as part of the “Art always has its consequences” international collaboration – “The Invisible History of Exhibitions” project www.artalways.org.

INVITATION TO CONTRIBUTE

In the framework of the international collaboration, “The Invisibe History of Exhibitions”, we are organising an archive-exhibition at Labor in May 2009, which endeavours to place the events of the Hungarian art scene of the 1960s and 70s into an international context. Alongside Hungarian archival documents, works, and publications we also present two similar projects from Belgrade and Serbia.

Within the Hungarian art scene of the 1960s and 70s, the majority of progressive events took place in the grey zone of non-official exhibition spaces, which is why their international visibility and availability for research has remained fragmentary and difficult to convey. Numerous chronologies of the era, built up upon each other, have been produced: from the Magyar Műhely’s (Hungarian Atelier) annual art almanac, through the list of events compiled by Dóra Maurer¹ and László Beke² in 1980, up to the chronologies of Artpool Research Centre³ and C3 Foundation⁴. In addition to chronologies, many have treated the era in map and collection/museum formats, such as NETRAF with his “Portable Intelligence Increase Museum”⁵, Little Warsaw’s “Only Artist” project⁶, or internationally, Irwin’s “East Art Map”⁷.

Instead of aiming at an objective history gained from the synthesis or reconciliation of differing individual points of view, we rather would like to trace the idiosyncratic pattern of difference and accordance, the map of blind-spots and legends. It is to this end that we ask for your help.

Name ten events or exhibitions of key importance to you from the Hungarian art scene of the 1960s and 70s! You may also explain your responses.

Thank you for your contribution,
Dóra Hegyi and Zsuzsa László
February 24, 2009.

We sent this email to about 60 artists, curators, art- and cultural historians, of which we received replies from approximately 40 people. Here you can read a selection of responses to our call. Complete answers: <http://exhibition-history.blog.hu>



NETRAF (Neo-Socialist, Realist, International Parallel Union of Telecommunication's Global Counter-Arthist.ory-Falsifiers Front): Portable Intelligence Increase Museum (PI²M) – Pop Art, Conceptual Art and Actionism in Hungary during the 60s (1956-1976) – Presented at Dorottya Gallery, Budapest, 2003. Photo: Tamás St.Auby

Dóra Hegyi
Zsuzsa László:

HOW ART BECOMES PUBLIC

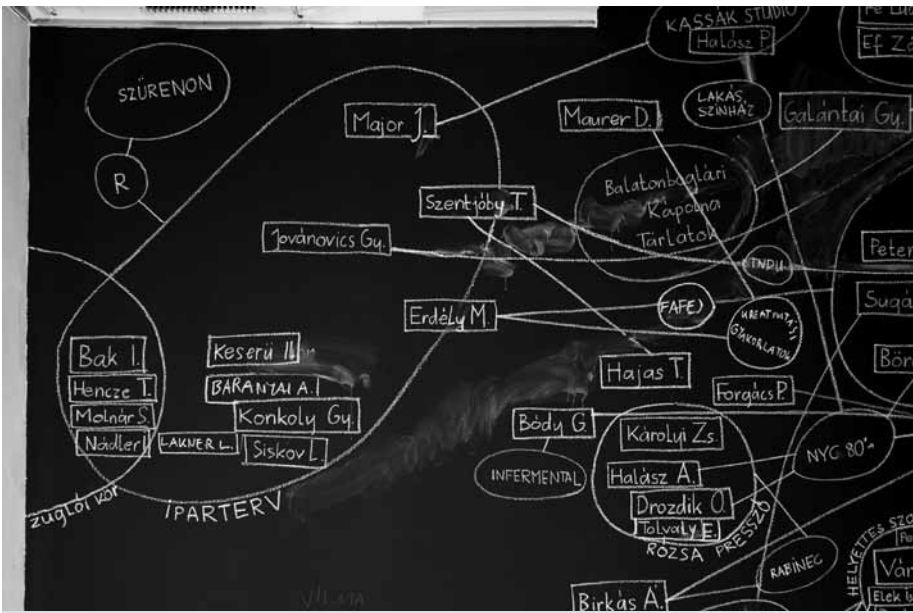
As a starting point we addressed the genre of chronology, an important channel for mediating the art events of an epoch. Chronologies play a defining role in transforming atomised events into histories and canons, especially in the case of East European art events that often happened in the “second publicity”² during the 60s and 70s.

The point of departure for most of the later chronologies is Dóra Maurer’s³ richly illustrated “Attempt at a Chronology of the Avant-garde Movement in Hungary 1966-80” published in the catalogue of an exhibition presenting Hungarian artists in Germany in 1980.⁴ Maurer is a visual artist, who herself travelled a lot, and working as a one-person institution, taking up the role of art historian and curator as she started to record events and exhibitions. Another important chronological account of this era in Hungary was written by Márta Kovalovszky (1939) and Péter Kovács (1939), two art historians from the István Király Museum in Székesfehérvár. They started a series of exhibitions in 1965 with the title Hungarian Art in the 20th Century, with which they described and presented different periods according to the international trends that defined them. The exhibitions displayed mostly conventional objects of art, whereas the catalogues featuring the precise chronology and bibliography of the 60s and 70s also included underground and actionist events, incorporating them in the system of periodisation. After 1989 there were attempts to rehabilitate the neo-avant-garde art that came to life under “political repression” and to rewrite the history of this period. The ambitiously conceived exhibition “The Sixties – New Trends in Hungarian Visual Art” (1991) organized by the Hungarian National Gallery was one of the most influential attempts. In the last two decades several further chronologies were written to explore the “invisible” art events of the 60s and 70s. These chronologies are typically based on archives (such as those of the C3 and Artpool)⁵ or are connected to art projects.⁶

During our research on chronologies we encountered several rival, conflicting readings and memories of this period. We decided to launch an e-mail inquiry asking Hungarian art professionals belonging to different generations and sub-cultures about the art events of the period that they find the most significant in relation to their own practice. Instead of aiming at an objective history gained from the synthesis or reconciliation of differing individual points of views we rather intended to trace the idiosyncratic pattern of disagreement and accordance, the map of blind-spots and legends. We learnt from the approximately 40 answers that competence to deal with actions and exhibitions that happened in



Pages from the chronology published in the exhibition catalogue “Künstler aus Ungarn”, 1980, Wilhelmshaven, compiled by Dóra Maurer



Little Warsaw: “Only Artists”
Installation view at Trafó Gallery, 2006.
(courtesy of the artists)

RESPONSES – SELECTION

Gábor András, art historian, critic, and curator born in 1954
I believe that the pre-supposition that “the majority of progressive events took place in the grey zone of non-official exhibition spaces” in the approach to the period under discussion results in a “one-sided” picture. Exhibitions that wanted to prove the “liberalism” of official cultural policy and state publishing of a similar vein formed and defined the picture of the era jointly and in parallel with the manifestations of the non-official scene. In everyday life and reality, these two spheres were also separate from each other, while simultaneously representing a common “available” cultural space, and allowing for certain passages (e.g., the exhibitions in the Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle of “avant-garde” artists, and their public and mural commissions from the seventies). For this reason, my personal list contains also “official” events and from my point of view, books of key importance, as well.

1. Csontváry-exhibition, István Király Museum, Székesfehérvár, 1963
2. Herbert Read: Modern Painting, Hungarian edition: 1965
3. Kassák- exhibition, Adolf Fényes Hall, Budapest, 1967
4. Vasarely- exhibition, Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle, Budapest), 1969
5. Iparterv - Szűrenon - R exhibition, Budapest, 1968-1970
6. Lajos Németh: Art’s Turn of Fate, Gondolat, 1970
7. Balatonboglári Chapel exhibitions, 1970-1973
8. Werner Hofmann: Turning Points in Twentieth-Century Art: 1897-1917, Hungarian edition: 1974
9. Rózsa-circle, Budapest, 1976-1980
10. Lajos Vajda - exhibition, Hungarian National Gallery, 1978

And as a “supplement” (if I may add) two extra:

1. Tendencias exhibition-series, Óbuda Gallery, 1980-1981
2. Ernő Kállai: Art Under a Bad Sign, Corvina, 1981



Participants of the “R” exhibition (György Jovánovics, János Major, Dezső Korniss, András Baranyay, Sándor Csutoros, György Galántai, Oszkár Papp, Endre Tóth, Gyula Pauer, Attila Csáji, László Méhes, Miklós Erdély, Tamás Szentjóby) Technical University, R Club, Budapest, 1970
Photo: Dóra Maurer (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center)

the second publicity is – even today – almost exclusively assigned to the participants and witnesses of the events themselves. Though the curiosity of younger generations is often held back by the lack of accessible information and the difficulty of untangling the “legends”, still a lot of young artists and curators have established sensitive relationships to certain phenomena of the period (see a selection of the answers published in this publication).



Pages from the exhibition catalogue “The Sixties – New Trends in Hungarian Visual Art” 1991, Hungarian National Gallery

Selecting events for our chronology we intend to place in parallel the activities of the various generations, as well as events that were held at official (public), professional, and ad hoc exhibition venues, such as culture houses or clubs, or ones that never passed the planning stage, or were banned. Since we were also looking for an answer to the question of how an exhibition becomes a work of art or an event and what can happen at an exhibition, we endeavoured to explore the connections between shows that present works of art in a static manner and various actionist and performative practices.

Detour to the Public – a chronology of legendary art events in the parallel culture 1966-77

In Hungary between the 1950s and the 1980s, all public exhibitions had to get permission from the responsible authorities – on the basis of a precise list of artworks – and were fully financed by state institutions. Those tendencies that were not approved had to find alternative sites, means of presentation and strategies of self-organisation. A lot of important events, especially in the first half of the 60s, took place in “airports, club rooms, psychiatric institutes, »cultural centres«, entrance halls of industrial headquarters, ateliers, private flats”⁷ without any institutional background. Some actions taking place in the street or in outdoor venues also became emblematic. We have to recall here the one known

7 László Beke: 12 years Iparterv. In: *Iparterv 68-80*. p VIII. “The “salons” of Pál Petri-Galla [1922–1976] and Gyula Grexa were not only frequent meeting places for writers, painters, musicians and art enthusiasts who gathered there to listen to music and discuss cultural events, they also served – primarily in Petri-Galla’s case – as venues for exhibitions, art debates and readings.(...) Dr. László Végh [radiographer] who worked – both in theory and practice – in the areas of concrete and electronic music made appearances with his group of young actionists [Tamás Szentjóby, Gábor Altorjay]. Ádám Tábor: *Váratlan kultúra*. pp 22-3. Balassi Kiadó, 1997.

1 *Künstler aus Ungarn*, 1980, Wilhelmshaven, (1974), compiled by: Dóra Mauer

2 László Beke: *Dátumok a magyar avantgárd-művészet történetéből, 1966–79. Művészet*, 1980, 21/10. pp 20–22. [Dates from the History of Avant-garde Art in Hungary, 1966-79]

3 <http://www.artpool.hu/kontextus/kronologia>

4 <http://www.c3.hu/collection/koncept/index2.html>

5 NETRAF= Neo-Socialist, Realist. IPUT's Global Counter-Arthist.ory-Falsifiers Front , Agent: Tamás St. Auby, PI²M = Pop Art, Conceptual Art and Actionism in Hungary during the 60s – 1956-1976 “The PI²M contains more than 1100 works (music, film, poetry, prose, painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, etc.) and documents by approximately 70 Hungarian artists’. These artworks – considered by the state as illegal art – formed the local 60s.”

6 “Only Artist” by Little Warsaw (András Gálík and Bálint Havas) discusses the contexts and practices of Budapest artist groups and networks dealing with artists activism, which raises from the actual situation of critical approaches to art making and exhibiting in Budapest. It is a research into the potential for independent thinking and possibilities for autonomous action.

7 <http://www.eastartmap.org/>

Balázs Beöthy, artist born in 1965

I must begin by saying that in my case, the listing of “events of key importance” of the period in question involves not an activization of the memories of a witness, but the foraging through a mass of information sifted out from full-blooded rumours and taciturn descriptions. It is precisely for this reason that I primarily included such events in the list that, in my opinion, on the basis of one or another aspect – referred to in the list – could be a productive meditational object in the course of mapping the era. Of course, the price of this is that other events considered important were left out.

1966 Studio’66 Ernst Museum, Budapest
testing the limits of public sphere

1968 Happenings, actions in Iparterv, Budapest
action and artwork with the same status

1969 Parallel-Course Study Track > Minimal
Subsistence Standard Project 1984 W
radical theory

1970 R exhibition, Budapesti Technical
University, R Club
attempt at collaboration between
different groups

1971 7th Biennale de Paris
international visibility

1972 Direct Week - Balatonboglár Chapel

1972 Actions with Czechoslovak Artists -
Balatonboglári Chapel
life and art, regional relationships

1975-77 Miklós Erdély: Creativity Exercises > Indigo (78-86)
Permeability between media

1976 Exposition, photo /art, Hatvany Lajos Museum, Hatvan
survey of the use of photos in fine art

1980 Tibor Hajas: Wake, Bercsényi Club
radical practice

+ I:

1967 - Lajos Kassák self-financed exhibition, Adolf Fényes Hall, Budapest
in the year of his death

Tibor Hajas: “Wake”, performance, Bercsényi Club, Budapest, 1980
(from the catalogue “Hajas Tibor 1946-1980”, Magyar Műhely, 1985)

Róza El-Hassan, artist born in 1966

The most important image that has remained with me is that of a chair that Tamás St.Auby put out on the sidewalk at the time (Tamás Szentjóbý: Sit out in front of the Duna Inter-Continental Hotel in 1972). It was prohibited to sit in public space. Those who sat outside were considered slackers evading work. From my point of view, this indicates emblematic, silent resistance and the passing of time. We simply have to think about how many people have lied down, sat, begged and sold things on the sidewalk since then.

The other group of events that I would mention is the actions of the Inconnu group, both during that era and today. The group was formed in 1978 and engaged in mail-art, and in order to avoid censorship, wrote a fake address for the addressee and the actual addressee as the sender. The censored post was forwarded to the “sender” with an “address unknown” or “inconnu” stamp, while this identity was not checked.



“Unguarded Money”, street action during the days of the 1956 Revolution in Budapest (courtesy of Miklós Erdély Foundation)

as “Unguarded Money”. A week after the revolution of 1956 had broken out, open military and red-cross boxes appeared at 6 central places in Budapest to collect money for the families of victims. A considerable sum was gathered in the streets, and no one took the money away from the unguarded boxes .This event has been quoted many times in the last fifty years as an exceptional moment of human solidarity. On the other hand, in recent art historical writing this action is connected to Miklós Erdély (1928-1986), one of the most important neo-avant-garde artists in Hungary. Erdély was at that time a writer and architect and was involved in the organization of the money gathering. Later, by the time he had become a participant in visual art circles and an active artist himself, he reinterpreted this as an artistic action.⁸

“The First Hungarian Happening”

The new artistic developments that led Erdély to see this unusual act of solidarity as an artistic act started ten years later with the “First Happening in Hungary”. Most Hungarian and international chronologies that deal with neo-avant-garde art also refer to “The Lunch, the First Happening in Hungary” as a point of departure. The 1966 event was organized in the cellar of one of Miklós Erdély’s relatives by Tamás Szentjóbý (1944) and Gábor Altorjay (1946), who were previously involved in writing metaphysical poetry. Szentjóbý traces back his shift of attention from metaphysics to physics and actionism through his struggle to understand his aversion to Pop Art. The immediate inspiration came from an article published in the Film Theatre Music magazine scornfully describing the happenings of Allan Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, and Robert Rauschenberg.⁹

The event was professionally prepared, invitation cards were sent, photo and film documentation was arranged, and journalists were invited, and even



“The Lunch(In memoriam Batu Khan)”, happening, 1966, Budapest
Photo: Gyula Zaránd, (courtesy of IPUTNPU_Archives)

8 Miklós Petermák: Beszélgetés Erdély Miklóssal [Interview with Miklós Erdély in Spring, 1983 / Hungarian]1983 tavaszán. *Árgus*, 1991/5. pp76-77.

9 Mária Ember: Happening és antihappening. [Happening and antihappening / Hungarian] *Film Színház Muzsika*, 13. May 1966.

It reveals how much change has been caused by history that the Inconnu group was one of the organisations that, reacting recently to the former prime minister’s, Ferenc Gyurcsány’s speech in Őszöd⁸, demonstrated for months in front of the Parliament with right-wing groups. I thought to mention these two cases – Tamás St.Auby’s work because it is closest to me, and the Inconnu group because I imagine that no one else will mention them, and they certainly belong in a historical archive.

Miklós Erhardt, artist born in 1966

I don’t really know what to say. I have no experience (logically) of my own of the period; what I do know is mostly what I have read from those whom you have likewise asked; and even in my own work, I do not relate to the Hungarian art of this time. What I see in the period is on the one hand, a sad isolation, and on the other, ambivalent heroism. If your exhibition could resolve these feelings I have, it would be wonderful. While I thank you for your invitation, I’m sorry that I cannot offer a substantial contribution.

János Fodor, artist born in 1975

Since I was born in 1975, I can only have a poor picture of the period from sources caught in the filter of art history, or from spoken historical recollections. Among others, this recognition has prompted the joint video work I have made with Tibor Horváth (on collections of artists); nevertheless, we know that the victors write history, which means that it is unnecessary to research that which everyone knows, but what should be researched is what no one knows (myself included). With this, I do not mean to suggest an erroneous concept according to which research of curiosities would be desirable, but it would certainly be worth searching among the personal acquaintances of the era (a list of names is a good start). However, only their accidentally dropped remarks could be telling, since: personal reports distort and suppress according to their own interests, while historical views are distorted and suppressed according to a historical interest.

To sum up, I think you need to have the players of the era speak, not me, since you know everything that I could possibly know, and most probably much more. I wish you much success in your serious endeavour: it’s great that finally someone is seriously dealing with the question. This is truly the last minute, because even if enough time has passed for comparisons, it is still not necessary to go to the historical archives for every single piece of data.

Andreas Fogarasi, artist born in 1977

I don’t believe that I would be able to list ten events that have not already become a part of the canon, and which other participants have not already mentioned. Thus, I would like to propose just a single action, which established an interesting and new relationship to official art and to a certain “international” scene, and this is János Major’s one-man demonstration against Victor Vasarely’s exhibition opening at the Múcsarnok/Kunsthalle in 1969. I heard first of the event in 2001, though I unfortunately cannot remember now where I read of it, or who it was who might have described it to me.

It is written about in Géza Perneckzy’s Samizdat volume, entitled “Hogy van Avantgarde, ha nincsen” (How is [there] an Avant-garde, if there isn’t one): “The process of opposite direction, the “mission” of the West is not always successful in its outcome in the East either. When Vasarely’s 1969 retrospective exhibition opened filling all the rooms of the Budapest Kunsthalle and ministers and cultural politicians welcomed the pope of nonfigurative art, János Major, one of the most talented (and most humble) members of the new avant-garde, appeared with a small “pocket-size portable sign”. Whenever he saw an acquaintance in the crowd, he took it out, cast a glance about to be sure the uninitiated were not watching, and held it up: “Vasarely go home!” Could a Western artist understand how little this gesture had to do with envy, aggression or a thirst for professional success, that it was dictated rather by loyalty and self-irony?”

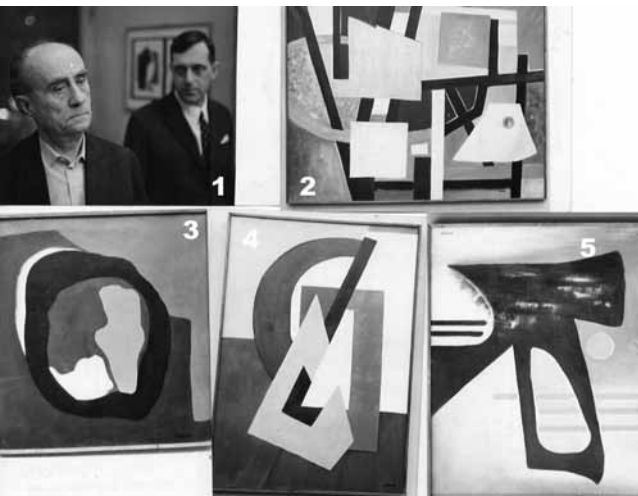
8 He said that his socialist government had been lying.

an entrance fee was charged. At the same time the happening was very radical, pushing against the limits of the participants’ and audience’s physical and mental tolerance. Although only 50-60 viewers were present, “The Lunch” redefined how art was produced and presented in the following years. The concept of “happening”, as a dangerous and “insane” manifestation of disorder coming from the Western world made its appearance also in the non-specialized press and even in the columns of humour magazines. The secret police filed a report on happenings, which explains why the critical evaluation of the genre was pushed to the periphery of public awareness in the following years.

Self-financed Avant-garde

In parallel with the emergence of actionist practices, but first, independently from them, new possibilities appeared in exhibition-making in the second half of the 60s. In addition to the semi-publicity of flat-, studio-, and club-exhibitions, some official venues also admitted avant-garde artworks. The idea (initiated by György Aczél, Minister of Culture) came about that exhibitions which cultural policy did not wish to support for ideological reasons should still be provided a venue. This exhibition space was the Adolf Fényes Hall, where artists that represented different trends were featured on the condition that they themselves finance their exhibition.

The institution of the self-financed exhibition was established by Lajos Kassák’s (avant-garde poet and visual artist; 1887– 1967) emblematic exhibition in the Adolf Fényes Hall in the year of his death. He could not get permission to exhibit his constructivist works anywhere else in Hungary, and they were hardly known among the younger generation. Thus, this exhibition provided exceptional insight into the master’s later oeuvre and also an occasion for progressive art circles and cultural politics to take up polemical stances. At the same time, it was absurd and embarrassing to expect Kassák - a pioneer of Leftist art movements before World War II, who in the 60s was represented in the most prestigious galleries in Western Europe, to pay himself all the costs of his exhibition.



Images from the exhibition “Image Architecture” by Lajos Kassák, 1967, Adolf Fényes Hall, archive of MTI (Hungarian News Agency), courtesy of MTI

Self-organized and Self-documented Neo-avant-garde

While Kassák’s avant-garde work appeared the in realm of tolerated but not supported culture and was accompanied by a catalogue and reviewed in the press¹⁰, the neo-avant-garde artistic practices of the late 60s rarely achieved such a degree of visibility. The Iparterv exhibitions of 1968-80 have a particular significance in the history of exhibitions in Hungary in the sense as they provided a common platform and professional “management” for a new generation of artists engaged in various progressive tendencies from abstract and informel painting and sculpture through pop art to actionist practices. The legend of Iparterv came into existence at the moment of its happening.

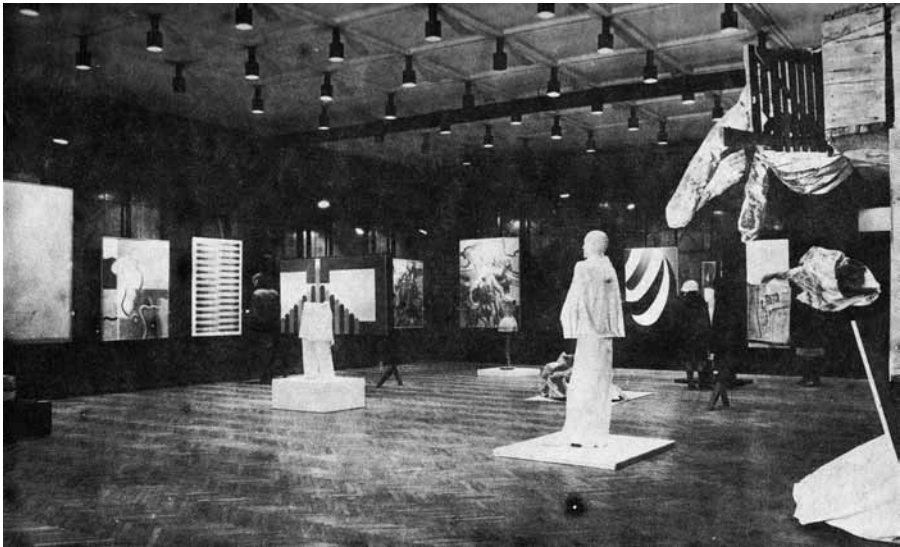


Detail from the first page of the exhibition catalogue “Iparterv 68-80”

10 In English: Éva Körner: Kassák the Painter – in Theory and Practice. *New Hungarian Quarterly*, 1967, no. 28. pp 107-112.

Andreas Fogarasi: "Vasarely Go Home (Announcement)", 2010 (courtesy of the artist)

I consider the first important because here, within the framework of the official institutional system, important, but lesser known, or suppressed artists and artworks were made visible to a wider audience. One might even say that they could rehabilitate individual artists for professional circles. I also consider it important that this was a series which also set out the presented oeuvres in parallel. And I would highlight three of these from the period in question: 1964: Lajos Vajda; 1967: Lajos Gulácsy; 1968:

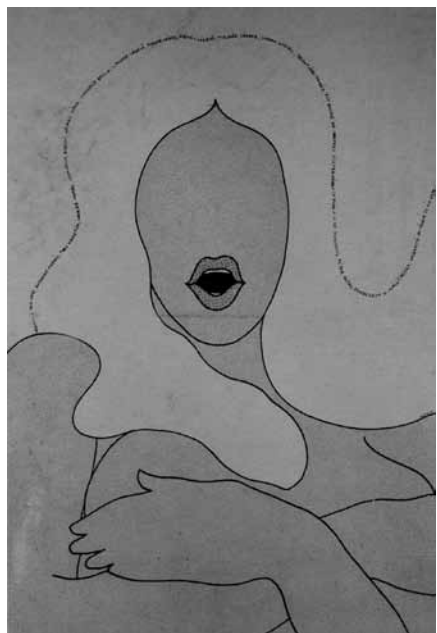


Interior of the "Iparterv I" exhibition, published in the exhibition catalogue "Iparterv 68-80", 1980



The Audience of
"Do you see what
is see" actions
(courtesy of
Tamás St.Auby)

The first exhibition lasted only a few days but as László Beke (1944, critic, curator, and art historian) wrote in 1980, it was “the sharpest, most clear cut event of 1968

[illegible]

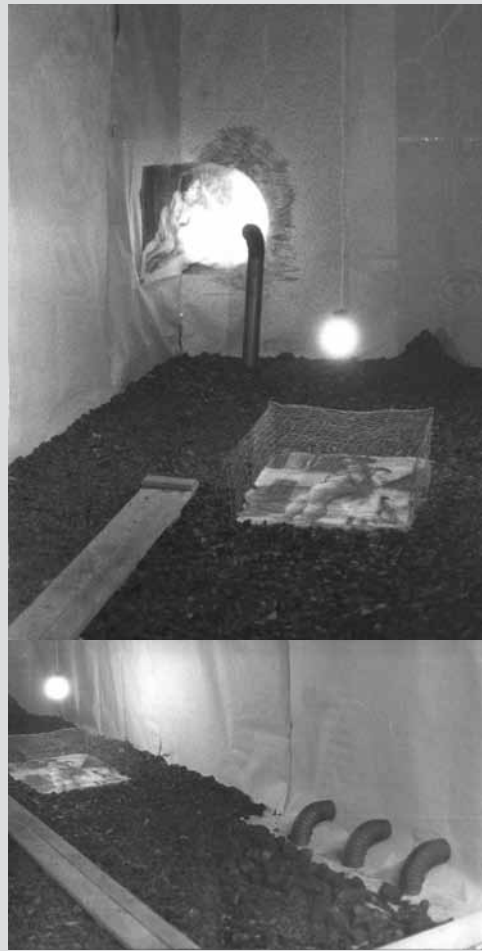
Invitation card of the "Iparterv II." exhibition,
1969. Design by György Kemény

11 Péter Sinkovits: Chronology. In: *Iparterv* 68-80. p 10.

12 Péter Sinkovits: Chronology. p 11.



The Balatonboglár Chapel in 1973,
with a signpost by György Galántai
Photo: György Galántai
(courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)



The exhibition of Indigo group "Sand and its Forms of Movement", MOM Culture Centre, 1979
Photo: György Erdély
(courtesy of Miklós Erdély Foundation)



The exhibition of Indigo group "Coal and charcoal drawing", MOM Culture Centre, 1978
Photo: György Erdély
(courtesy of Miklós Erdély Foundation)

INDIGO's activity was similarly self-evident and obvious. Among other qualities, I believe that the nature of their functioning, their collective spirit, and the ephemeral quality of their exhibitions were important, and in their activity an archetype can be seen of much of today's "alternative" art. As INDIGO commenced towards the end of the period referred to in the call, thus I can suggest two early exhibitions for the list: 1978: Charcoal and Charcoal Drawing, MOM (Hungarian Optical Works), Cultural House, Budapest; 1979: Sand and Forms of Motion, MOM Cultural House, Budapest.

Well, if I take the list of 10 you requested seriously, then there remain four places. And for these four places I would propose four significant flat-exhibitions, about which – due to the low level of research on the era, the lack of published material about it, or other reasons – neither I, nor others interested but of similar age, knew, or could gain much information.

In December 1988, immediately preceding the political transition, a three-part *Hommage á Iparterv* series was launched at the Fészek Gallery, which conjured up the legend in an altered context.¹⁶ *Iparterv* became the emblem of a whole generation, the progressive art of the 60s, moreover, Géza Perneczky derived the paradigm of 20th century modernism in Hungary from *Iparterv* group in his own chronological account.

Exhibitions that instead of displaying separate works of art presented projects and environments that incorporated the entire exhibition space also had to find venues outside state-controlled institutions. Aside from the Adolf Fényes Hall, which was designated for the display of “tolerated” art¹⁸, such works could only be exhibited in



The exhibition of György Jovánovics and István Nádler 1970, Adolf Fényes Hall, Budapest, (courtesy of György Jovánovics)

13 László Beke: 12 years Iparterv. p IX.

14 Az ellenség tanulmányozása. [Studying the enemy] Preliminary textbook for the Police Academy written by Ferenc Gál Police commander, 1972.

15 László Beke: 12 years Iparterv. p II.: "Iparterv became a legend, though there is hardly anyone who knows anything about it. The young generation wants to face the myth."

16 Iparterv also embodied the art of opposition. After the political transition of 1989, most of the participants were invited to teach at the Hungarian Academy of Arts, their oeuvres were rehabilitated with retrospective exhibitions organized by institutions, following from that time on professional standards and not only those of cultural politics.

17 Géza Perneckzy: Produktivitásra ítélve? Az Iparterv-csoport és ami utána következett. [Doomed to productivity. The Iparterv Group and what came after] I-II. *Balkon*, 1996/1-2-3. pp 5-22, 15-28.

18 According to the cultural policy introduced in Hungary by György Aczél in the late 60s cultural production was classified into three categories: Supported, Tolerated, and Prohibited.

Lilla Khoór, artist born in 1978

I try to put together the 10 item list, but the truth is that from this period I only know well the works of Miklós Erdély...

I try to collect information about the art life of the period from the internet, mostly I find things on Artpool, and some on C3, but I do not find my opinion authentic, as all my knowledge about this time is second hand. I was born at the end of the 70ies. I think it must have been in 1999 when I was preparing for the Textile Faculty of the Hungarian Academy of Applied Arts and my art teacher (Marica Sipos, the director of the art school and a sculptor-designer) ordered us all to go to the Múcsarnok/Kunsthalle to see the Miklós Erdély retrospective exhibition, so that we would know what conceptual art was. I cannot remember now why, but she considered it important and I can remember what an enormous experience this exhibition was for me! I completely surprised myself by how interested I was, and I returned to see the exhibition several times(!), taking notes.

I can remember that later I spoke with a number of people who had also returned to see the show several times, including someone who later became an architect. Years later at the Könyvudvar (discount bookstore) near Astoria, where there is a little bookshop in the left-hand corner, where one can purchase all kinds of books at a massive discount, I found a book by Miklós Erdély among all kinds of dubious cookbooks and feng shui, and now I don't even know what the title was, but it was a small volume that was a selection of his writings. I think it cost about 20 forints... it's a bit sad that it was considered to have such a low market value.

2. I don't know whether the fact that even today women are only rarely to be found in determinant positions is due to the fact that there was no feminist movement then in Hungary. Or was there? I know almost NOTHING about the women artists of the period...

During the couple of years that I studied at home, I did not encounter a single feminist art approach, discourse, reflection, critique - nothing. And I went to most of the discussions, symposia, screenings, open days, etc., organised by the Intermedia Department of the Hungarian Academy o Fine Arts. The fact that even today the scene is so macho (also) in Hungary must be due also to the role played by the lack of a feminist movement and subsequent tradition. When I moved to Austria, it was such a relief (I'm not sure if this is the right word) to me to see older women as role models, who taught at university, or who worked at magazines, or who wrote. Or simply women artists, who thought and lived in an emancipated way.

3. Then I remember speaking a lot with Éva Molnár when I helped Gitte Villesen to find a subject in Hungary for a video work. We made recordings of Éva, who showed us old photos and told us countless stories about the life of the Fészek Artist Club in the 1960s and 70s, when on a certain weekday evening the artists regularly met and discussed each other's work, etc.

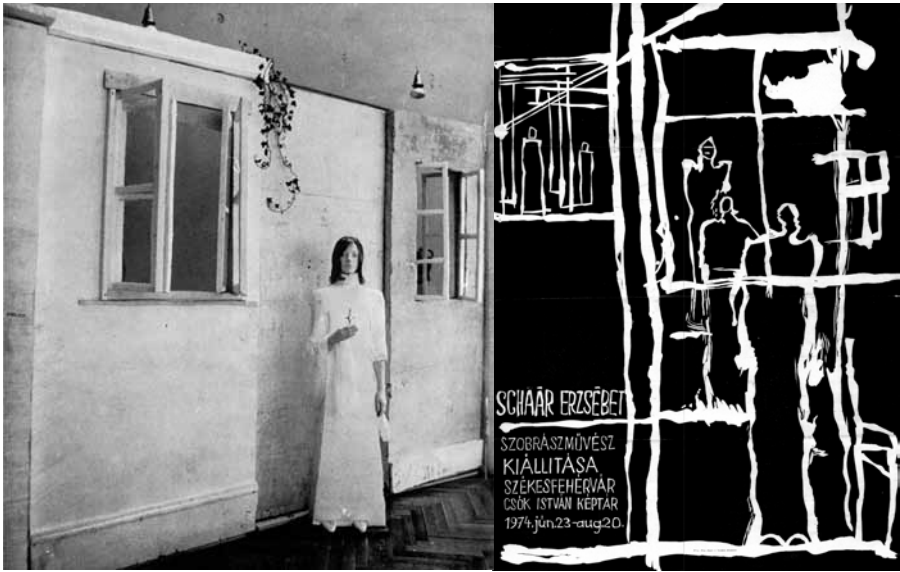
4. I was once at a lecture of Tamás Szentjóby at the Kultiplex (a music pub), where he showed his own work, including his older works.



Gitte Villesen – Sebestény Kodolányi: "Script for a Silent Movie", 2006 (courtesy of the artist)

out-of-the-way cultural centres and exhibition spaces outside the capital.

“The first significant environment in Hungary” – according to Géza Perneckzy¹⁹ - was György Jovánovics’ (1939) huge plaster sculpture, exhibited in the Adolf Fényes Hall in 1970 together with István Nádler’s paintings, whose ground plan was identical to the ground plan of the irregular inner space of the Hall. Reflecting on the limited publicity of this venue, the exhibition was opened by a fictive, made-up radio program that reported on the event amongst the most important international news of the day. As Jovánovics remembers, his plan was to drop the elements of his huge environment made for the exhibition and oblivion into the Danube after the exhibition closed in the semi-official gallery. The “actionist” Miklós Erdély proposed another solution, so the sculpture was transported to his garden where it became a site for spontaneous actions without audience documented by photos.²⁰ Though no catalogue was issued to accompany the exhibition, the photos of the piece and the exhibition opening also appeared in various significant publications and projects: the “Dokumentum 69-70” catalogue of Iparterv II., Gyula Pauer’s index – card project in 1971 that established a collection of progressive art in the form of index cards documenting conceptual works²¹, and the catalogue of the exhibition of six Hungarian artists in the Foksal Gallery, 1972. János Sugár (1958) inspired by Jovánovics’ ’70 exhibition, created his first solo exhibition in the Adolf Fényes Hall in 1985, which was the location for the shooting of his film “Persian Walk”. György Jovánovics himself also reconstructed the event in a lecture held in 1999, in which he called the opening of the exhibition the best work of his life.²²



Detail from Erzsébet Schaár’s exhibition “Street”, 1974, Csök István Gallery, Székesfehérvár
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum, Székesfehérvár)

Poster of Erzsébet Schaár’s exhibition “Street”, 1974, Csök István Gallery, Székesfehérvár (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum, Székesfehérvár)

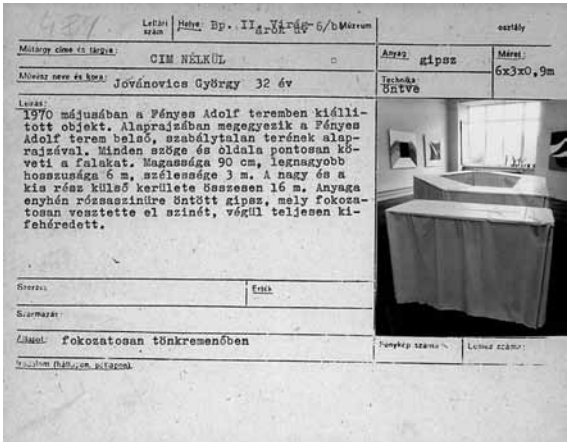
Another candidate for the title of “first environment” was exhibited later in the same year by Gyula Pauer (1941) in an off-site cultural house. The “Pseudo” show accompanied by Pauer’s “First Pseudo Manifesto” created a sculptural space-illusion within the exhibition space. It was on for only two days and was able to get permission as a location for shooting János Gulyás’ graduation work at the Hungarian Film Academy. The film documented the opening and destruction of the exhibition too. Géza Perneckzy, the reporter, read out texts by Pauer and interviewed the visitors. As evidenced by the film, visitors had to reinterpret their ideas not only about sculpture but about exhibitions too. The art historian and critic, László Beke (1944), who was also interviewed in the film, called the work the first successful environment in Hungary.

¹⁹ Géza Perneckzy: Produktivitásra ítélve? 1996/3. p.24.

²⁰ György Jovánovics: Emlék-képek. *Orpheus*, 1992/4. pp.92-115.

²¹ Pauer made this collection for the call “Idea – Imagination” by László Beke from 1971, which was an exhibition on A4 papers and today is an important document of Hungarian conceptual art., László Beke: Elképzelés. *A magyar konceptművészet kezdetei. Beke László gyűjteménye, 1971., Idea / Imagination.* Beginnings of Hungarian Conceptual Art. The Collection of László Beke 1971.] Nyílt Struktúrák Művészeti Egyesület OSAS-transzit.hu, Budapest, 2008.

²² “The best work of my life...” - public lecture by György Jovánovics in Artpool Art Research Centre, Budapest, 1999.



György Jovánovics' index card documenting his 1970 exhibition at Adolf Fényes Hall in Gyula Pauer's collection of index card works (courtesy of Gyula Pauer and László Beke)

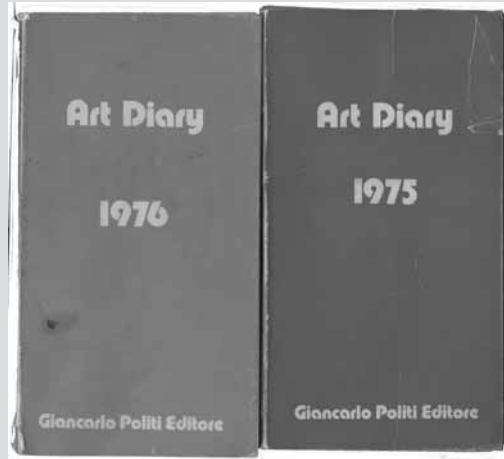
5. My father once recounted to me that when they were teenagers, their parents strictly forbade them in the summer to get off the train in the vicinity of Balatonboglár, when they were on their way to the other part of the Balaton, to the family's summer resort...

Szabolcs Kisspál, artist born in 1967

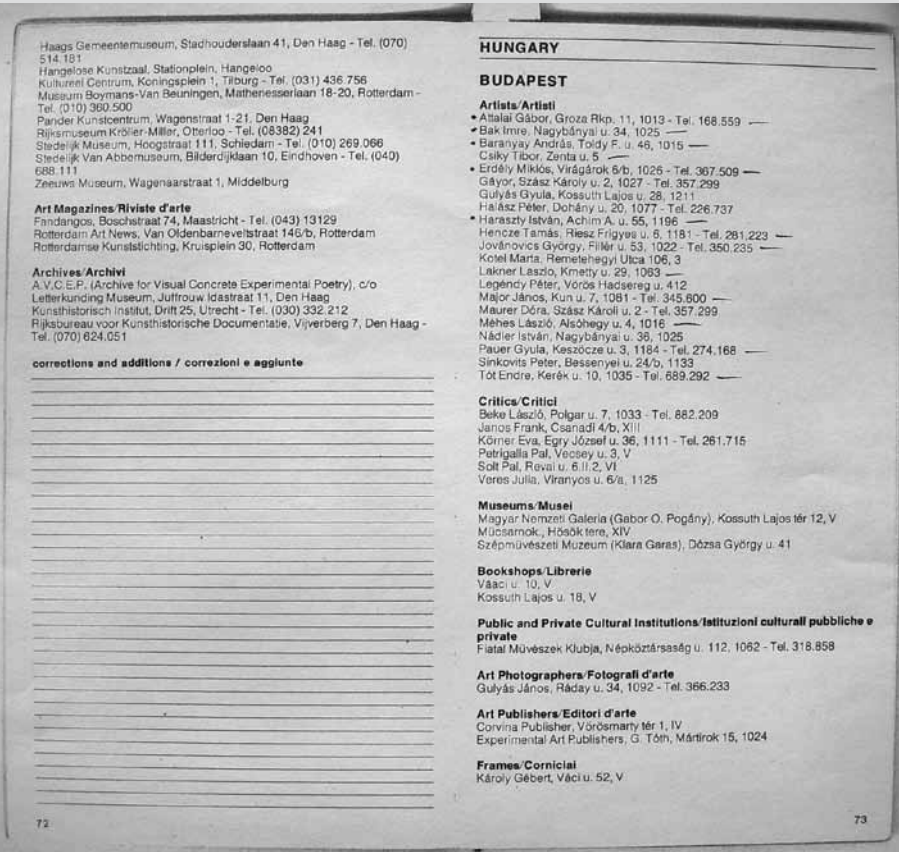
In my own view, what is most invisible from the era at hand is the international reception of the Hungarian avant-garde. This is most probably connected to the current international “invisibility” of Hungarian art; thus, I feel that the exploration and representation of this history is important.

30. April 1972. Avant-garde Festival, Bercsényi Club (Balatonboglár, 8 July 1972.)

1975.- The world's greatest art directory “ART DIARY 1976” is published by Giancarlo Politi, 250 page paperback, 5000 addresses from 22 countries: artists (23 Hungarian), critics (6 Hungarian), galleries, museums, hotels, restaurants, etc.



The covers of “ART DIARY 1976” and “ART DIARY 1975”



20 April – 20 May 1976. - Galeria Sztuki Najnowszej, Wroclaw, Poland “Węgierska 1976”, film screening and action series, Hungarian participants: Gábor Attalai, Imre Bak, Miklós Erdély, Tibor Gáyor, Dóra Maurer, László Lakner, Gyula Pauer, Péter Legéndy, Endre Tót.

18 September 1976. – Club of Young Artists, Budapest, Robert Filliou-Joachim Pfeufer “Real Space-Time Poipoidrom No. 1.” project, installation with the collaboration of club members, organized by: László Beke.

26 June – 30 July 1977.- Galerie Lometsch, Kassel, Germany, “Neue Ungarische Kunst “(SUMUS), same time as the opening of Document, participants: Tibor Gáyor, Halász Károly, Ádám Kéri, Dóra Maurer, János Megyik, László Méhes, János Nádasdy, Sándor Pinczehelyi, Péter Prutkay.

4 April 1978. - Galeria Remont, Warsaw, Poland, Tibor Hajas's action “Dark Flash” in the “I am” international Performance Festival – the first Hungarian Performance, Miklós Erdély: “Godconcept” – exhibition action with carbon-roll. [Memory-model]

June, 1978. - Wroclaw, Poland, International Drawing Triennial, organized by: Andrzej Lachowicz, Natalia LL, Andrzej Will, Hungarian participants: Zsuzsa Albert, Imre Bak, Tibor Gáyor, Miklós Erdély, Ferenc Banga, Tibor Hajas, András Halász, Péter Kovács, Árpád Szabados, Imre Szemethy. Miklós Erdély won second prize, Dóra Maurer és Endre Tót Triennial medal.

Géza Perneckzy also called the “Street” exhibition in Székesfehérvár by Erzsébet Schaár (1908-1975) an environment. The artist, a representative of a previous generation already active in the 30s, started to examine the relationship of space and figure, to use non-traditional materials, and to mix everyday pop and a certain refined, tragic pathos only in the second half of the 60s. The installation, made of plaster and styrofoam and representing a street with human figures, filled and recomposed the entire exhibition space. The exhibition was opened by János Pilinszky (1921 – 1981) who read out his poems next to certain pieces of the “Street”, and was documented from its installation to the opening by the film of Péter Fitz, János Gulyás, and Pál Vilt, entitled “Spaces”. Schaár created a national mausoleum featuring the most important cultural personalities (using her earlier portrait sculptures) escorted by mysterious female figures. With this work presented in the gallery of the local art museum, Schaár transferred to the first publicity²³ the avant-garde idea of “environment”.

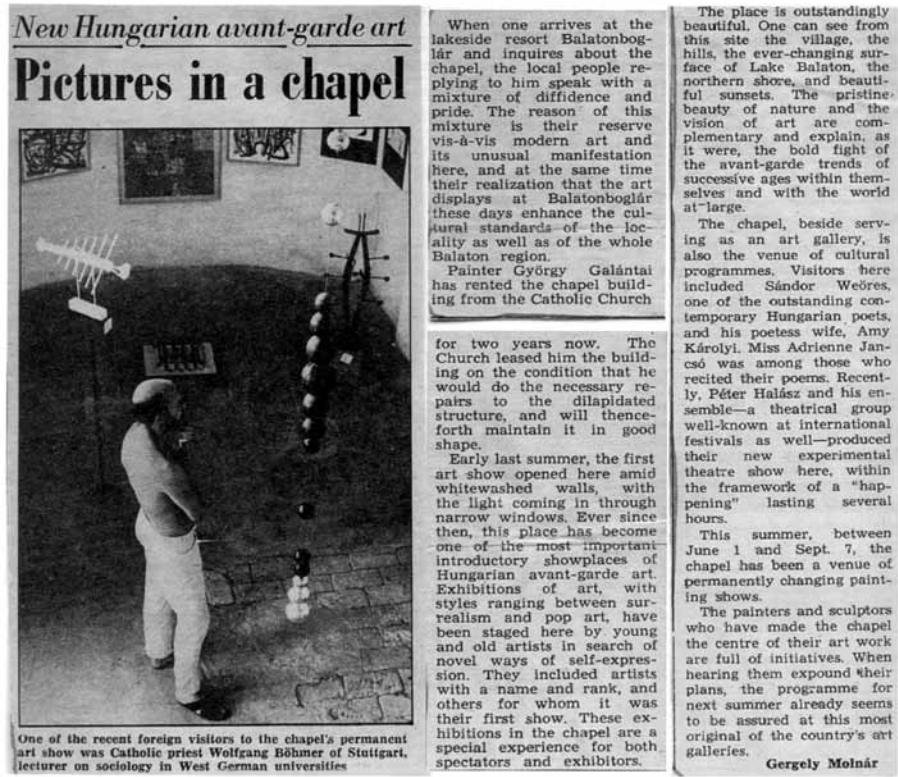
Independent Venue

The István Csók Gallery in Székesfehérvár, led by Márta Kovalovszky and Péter Kovács, was an exception in the sense that in the sixties hardly any exhibition space or gallery could develop a progressive profile. The organizers and participants of non-conformist events could only occupy semi-public venues, sporadically, on a few occasions, and then had to move on. In 1971 László Beke organized a large-scale concept exhibition, entitled “Idea / Imagination” in an A4 folder, as no other location was available for such a show.

In 1966 György Galántai, a recently graduated visual artist, found an abandoned chapel in Balatonboglár at Lake Balaton, and decided to open a studio and exhibition space in the empty building. Following a long and testing procedure of acquiring permission, the first exhibition opened in 1970. The initially more traditional exhibitions – which also allowed room for “tolerated” trends – gradually gave way to experimental, performative and time-based events as well as to projects articulating institutional critique and political statements. When acquiring the permission of the authorities for more and more non-conformist exhibitions and events became a hopeless endeavour, Galántai gave up the official procedure and renamed the Chapel Gallery the Chapel Studio – that from this time on could only house non-public events.²⁴

In principal, all events were designated “private”, although they often dealt with the concept of audience and current issues. From the program of the three summers between 1970 and 73 we selected five events that relying on the independence, transitory, and semi-public position of the venue, transformed exhibitions into actions and urged the audience on to active participation.

In 1972 on 15 March, the anniversary of the revolution and war of independence of 1848, a couple of hundred people demonstrated against the dictator-



Gergely Molnár: New Hungarian avant-garde art. Pictures in a chapel. *Daily News*, 29 August, 1971 (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

²³ However, according to Géza Perneckzy this exhibition was not juried either as the curators found a legal loophole permitting them to avoid this procedure. Géza Perneckzy: Produktivitásra ítélve? 1996/3. p.25.

²⁴ The history of the Chapel Studio was published in the book *Törvénytelen Avantgárd.* [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003.

April, 1979. - Sydney, Australia, Biennale of Sydney – the East-European part was compiled by László Beke Hungarian participants: Anikó Bajkó, Miklós Erdély, Tibor Hajas, György Jovánovics, Dóra Maurer, Gergely Molnár, László Najmányi, Gyula Pauer, Zsuzsa Szenes, János Vető

September, 1979. - Stichting De Appel, Amsterdam “Works and Words” – Avant-garde from Eastern-Europe – artist-meeting, exhibition, and experimental film screenings, Hungarian participants: Miklós Erdély, Tibor Hajas, György Jovánovics, Péter Legéndy, Dóra Maurer, Gyula Pauer, János Vető

6 December 1983. “The Avant-garde dies”, Bercsényi Club, Budapest.

Miklós Peternák, art historian, curator, born in 1956

1 3X10 (for Dóra Hegyi and Zsuzsa László)

I have received the request sent by e-mail – together with the list of potential participants – and I have tried to interpret it, since the condition of cooperative assistance (and it is in this that I see the essence of the request) is that the one to whom the question is posed should understand the intention and aims of the one who asks, i.e., should realise in her/himself: what, how and why? The essential part, it seemed, was this sentence: “Name ten events or exhibitions of key importance for you from the Hungarian art scene of the 1960s and 70s!” This, however, was in contradiction with the section of the text below from the call entitled “Parallel Chronologies” from the collaborative project, entitled “Invisible History of Exhibitions”: Instead of aiming at an objective history gained from the synthesis or reconciliation of differing individual points of views we rather would like to trace the idiosyncratic pattern of difference and accordance, the map of blind-spots and legends. The specification “of key importance for you” namely cannot be here the equivalent of the “blindspots of reception”, if only the players (addressees) have not been considered from the outset as those having the blind-spots (I would not deem to assert this about any the part of the list besides myself), nor can the rejection of an “objective event-history” be compatible with the essence of chronology, an auxiliary science to history. In order to be more precise, I asked once again in an e-mail, what exactly would be my task, what exactly the initiators would like, and here I will quote two parts of the response I received: “This is now the background research for the exhibition, with the aid of which we would like to structure and contextualise the documents of the Hungarian archival documents; in other words, we are not going to derive statistics from the responses, this is not a “best of”; moreover, we would like to highlight precisely such things that are not present even in Professional circles.”“...we are looking for approximately 10 events that occurred during the 1960s-70s, which you consider important for some reason, or you would like to propose for our attention.” From the above, I finally understood that it is not a chronology that is being assembled here, but rather a context-map of the (art-)historical consciousness of the current actors of the art scene – chosen according to some viewpoint, and representative from the point of view of the initiators.

On this basis, I respond to the request – limited somewhat by the strictly defined timeframe at my disposal – with this memorandum entitled “3x10”, which the prospective reader currently reads.

1. Ten sentences on chronology

1. The essence of a chronology, as is expressed by its name, is to construct stories, in certain cases meaningful histories from a mass of events that

ship at various places in Budapest. As a reaction, and inspired by Gyula Gazdag's cult film “The Whistling Cobblestone” (1971) László Beke phrased a call that time for artworks using grave-and cobblestones , which already had precedents in the photos of János Major (1936-2008). In April an “Avangard Festival” was organized by Szentjóby with more than 40 participants, poets, visual artists, film directors, musicians and art historians, who would present readings, screenings, lectures, actions and more traditional artworks as well. The event was banned after the flyers were printed.

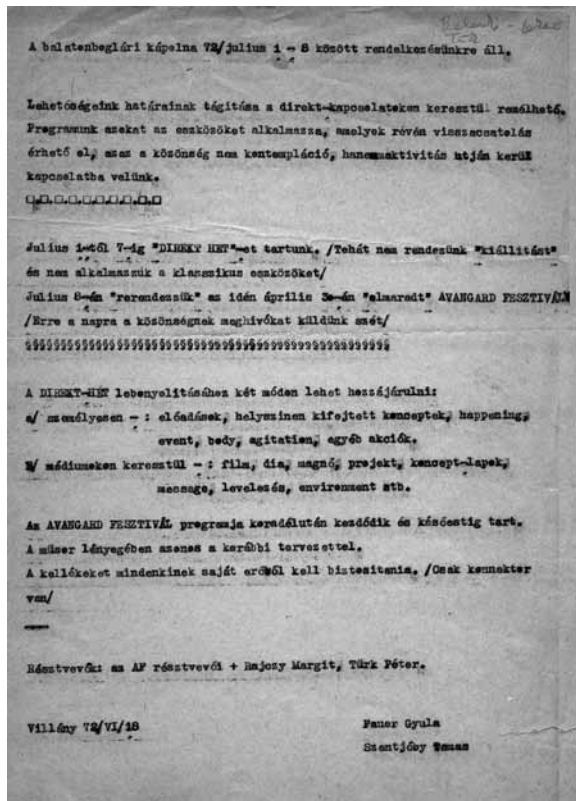
In the summer of the same year Gyula Pauer and Tamás Szentjóby wrote and distributed a call for what today might be called an interactive - exhibition happening in the Chapel Studio, which had offered to hold the cancelled Avant-garde festival there at the same time. The event series and exhibition entitled “Direct Week”, according to the concept formulated in the call for participation, aimed to establish direct contact with the audience instead of exhibiting art objects. It was during this exhibition that Tamás Szentjóby presented his action entitled “Exclusion Exercise - Punishment-preventive Auto-therapn”: with a bucket over his head he “punished” himself for a week, for eight hours a day while also inviting the audience (occasional local visitors and art professionals) to interrogate him. During the “Direct Week” László Beke held his slide-lecture on cobble and gravestones in Hungarian Art that he later called the best lecture of his life.²⁵



Miklós Erdély: Brushwood is the Proletariat of Fuel – action and object. Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

Shortly after the “Direct Week” the action entitled “Today You Open the Exhibition – Responsibility-taking action” was organized by György Galántai and István Haraszty (1934). The organizers' recollections reveal that they wanted to call attention to the responsibility of the visitors viewing exhibitions without official permissions. In Galántai's Chapel Studio, there was also an opportunity for progressive artists from the Eastern bloc to meet and exhibit their work together (of course without permission). The same summer in 1972, in an event organised by László Beke, Czech and Slovak artists collaborated with their Hungarian colleagues. The exhibition directly reflected on the trauma that had characterized the relationship of the two countries. They ritually tore up a magazine article reporting on Hungarian soldiers who aided in crushing the 1968 Prague revolution, and then

²⁵ Törvénytelen Avantgárd. p 141.



“Direct Week” (courtesy of Tamás Szentjóby)

stand in a coordinative relation to one another, without correspondences through selecting and arranging sensibly the temporal-data at one's disposal.

2. If someone holds the content of the previous sentences to be a mistaken statement since the science of chronology (in the words of Imre Szentpétery: kortan – the study of time – the translator) is a system for the historical examination of the measurement of time and timing, i.e., serves for the precise establishment of exactly when (and where) something happened, according to a currently interpretable chronological order, then one must admit that the person is right.

3. The use of chronology is precise (time-)measurement, which must fulfil the expectation that during the search for a relationship of “before” or “after” it would also aim to weigh it up against current, important facts; and this is why it is a historical science, since a thorough study of sources on multiple levels is necessary to derive the precise data: e.g., it is not enough to believe the data on a printed invitation card, but this must be compared for example to the diary entries of the individual who has taken part in the event, or in the worst case, to her/his memory.

4. A personal chronology does not mean a diary: it is typical to attempt to fix the parallel data of many, which often have a distant relation to each other, and if the life of the individual at hand holds a connection to the public in some way. Thus alongside the turning-points in the life of an artist, lists of works (the data for a future oeuvre-catalogue), exhibitions, publications and lists of sales (or viewed from the other side: inventory of acquisitions to a collection), reference lists (critics, reviews, awards), etc. are also present.

5. The map of mentioned and imaginable temporal series is a network that overlaps and intersects on various levels, where the given nodes become the base-points of a new, possible network, as potential meta-data, or in other words, potential chronological data.

6. If there were a camera in every artwork that would record who stood in front of it (saw it) when and where, this list would not have even a nodding acquaintance with the other list that would specify by whom, when, and where it was written about.

7. Every event that becomes an element of a chronology-attempt is already a happening through which there will be precedents and consequences – thus, ideal events are those which all such lists of data neglect.

8. A chronology is organised around the rhythm of the year, month, day, hour and minute, whose construction today can be assisted by (mobile) telephone call-lists generated and recorded by computer, as well as the EXIF data that records the space-time co-ordinates of digital photographs, with a precision unknown until now.

9. Exact time in the eternal present condition is no longer a question: it functions at the push of a button.

10. The current chronology is the temporal order of personal reception.

2. (3.) Imprecise and partially precise data for the “chronology” This list (2/1-10) contains information that is publicized and annotated to various degrees, and is only partially verified; i.e., it is “unfinished”, but perhaps suitable as a response. Matching some date in the items of the previous list, I selected international art data at random from the Wikipedia “List of years in art” pages (under development) (3/1-10). The latter I did not check at all.

2/1 The (History of) Adolf Fényes Hall. Kassák Lajos, self-financed, on his 80th birthday, (b. Érsekújvár [today Nové Zámky in Slovakia], 21 March 1887 – Budapest, 22 July 1967), in the year of his death could organise an exhibition of his constructivist picture architectures (3-24 March 1967. Arranged by: Agamemnon Makrisz (later, e.g., Kondor exhibition, Jovánovics – Nádler 1970 ...) Bori Imre-Körner Éva: Kassák irodalma és festészete. (The Literature and Painting of Kassák) Budapest, 1967.



Visitors entering the Chapel at the event “Today You Open the Exhibition – Responsibility-taking action”, 1972 Balatonboglár
Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

all the Hungarian and Czechoslovak artists shook hands, and the event was captured in the form of a photo montage.

In the summer of 1973, exceeding the traditional framework of exhibition, presentations of significant conceptual works, performative and collaborative actions as well as performances by representatives of the underground theatre organically succeeded one another, creating a continuous “festival” of progressive art.



Tibor Hajas: “Freedom- Industry Broadcast Channel 4” reading action and happening, Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár, 1973
Photo: Júlia Veres (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

One of the first artistic manifestations of Tibor Hajas (1946-1980), the internationally-recognised poet, action and performance artist, also happened in Balatonboglár in July, 1973. He read out his “Freedom- Industry Broadcast Channel 4” and while reading, tied the audience together, then burnt the ropes. The text creates a highly ambiguous interrogating voice aimed at the audience, evoking the authoritarian, bureaucratic tone of official public speech, and at the same time, that of the provocative or even irrational rebel, who touches upon sensitive political issues excluded from public discussion. Reflecting on the illusory, artificial, propagandistic character of the public sphere both in a political and consumerist sense, it demonstrates the difficulties of constituting an authentic, individual voice that can make straightforward public statements.

In 1973, the instances of objections raised by the authorities against the Chapel Studio were increasing from all directions. Finally, the progressive artists were “evicted” a month after Hajas's action. In the so called “Leaving action” György Galántai left the chapel with a prop from an underground theatre action: a sign reading “Friendly treatment”.



György Galántai with the sign reading “Friendly treatment”
Photo: György Galántai, (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

3/1 Sol LeWitt publishes Paragraphs on Conceptual Art in Artforum.

2/2 15 March 1970, radio opening-action for the exhibition of György Jovánovics (and István Nádler) in Adolf Fényes Hall. See "14 April 1999. 18:30, Artpool P60: "THE BEST WORK OF MY LIFE..." lecture by György Jovánovics" and the environment following the ground plan of the Adolf Fényes Hall during its realization in the cellar-studio (1970) Orpheus, 1992/4/102-103

3/2 Prix Puvis de Chavannes - Daniel du Janerand.

2/3 1973 Gábor Bódy: Infinite Mirror-tube – lecture at the Congress on Semiotics in Tihany.

3/3 Deaths/1973: 8 April - Pablo Picasso, Spanish painter, draughtsman, and sculptor (b.1881).

2/4 Tamás Szentjóbý: Make a Chair!, 1975, FMK, action photo (Photo: Éva Körner)
"In December 1975, Szentjóbý had to leave Hungary" = Vető János: A fény éjszakái. (Nights of Light)

3/4 Mona Hatoum leaves her native Lebanon to study at the Byam Shaw School of Art in London.

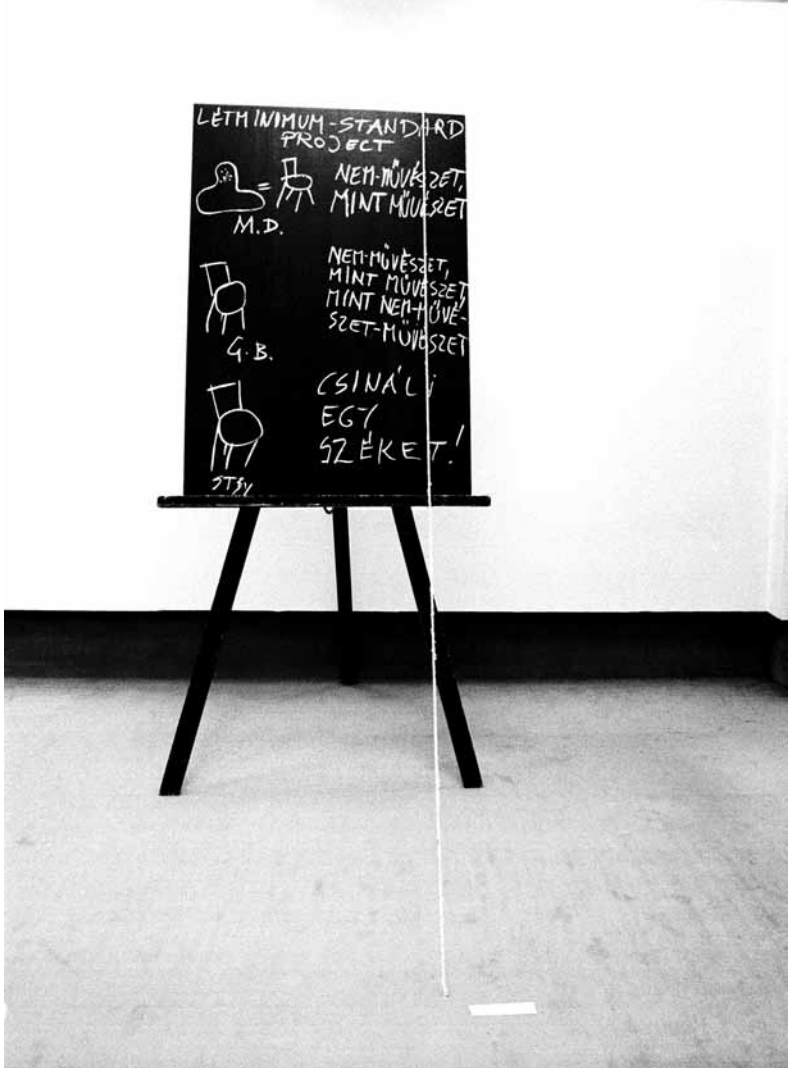
2/5 "Schroeder's Death". Premiere of the piece by László Vidovszky, Új Zenei Stúdió (New Music Studio), Budapest, 1975. Published: Vidovszky László: Schroeder halála preparált zongorára (for prepared piano). Piano score, February, 1979. Published by: Editio Musica Budapest, p 20., and Edition Zeitklang. Also: Vidovszky László: Schroeder's Death, Zoltán Kocsis – modified piano, the author; Zoltán Jeney .László Sály – preparation. Recorded: Budapest, Rottenbiller u. 47, 1985. 08. 10-11.) "Schroeder's Death was played 54 times between 1975 and 95, from Genova to Stockholm, from Salgótarján to Toronto" 2001 Salzburg:

Non-Art as Art

From the early 70s stricter control over progressive practices endangered individual careers too. At the end of 1975, Tamás Szentjóbý was expelled from the country, as his artistic activities had been deemed overly provocative by the cultural authorities (he had been observed by the secret police since the 1960s). We selected three significant events from his activity in the 70s in Hungary²⁶ that introduced new genres and also draw attention two important venues of the period. The first was an event hold at the University Stage, which was a venue that housed various conventional and progressive practices in the 60s, 70s and 80s from pop music to theatre, screenings, and fine art actions²⁷. Tamás Szentjóbý performed several actions there, most notably "He Ropes the Cow with Rope" a didactic action-reading, in 1973. The lecture, taking the structural change in wage-distribution initiated by Che Guevara as an example, describes how traditional culture based on the appreciation of rare talent could be deconstructed. Using language, which is stated to be the scheme of life, in a non-conformist way "we recognize that we are free, and we are capable of reorganizing and regrouping the elements of life.²⁸ The text read out was accompanied by absurd, conjurer-like, didactic actions involving a pigeon, a cat and a dog tied to various objects. Prior to his departure, Szentjóbý organised an exhibition collecting together his works produced between 1966 and 1975 for his own retrospective, so to say, at the Club of Young Artists. The Club of Young Artists was an institution (with community-exhibition spaces and a pub) functioning in a villa between 1960 and 1998, and was the haunt of followers of underground culture, but also of informers. It had a progressive period in the 70s when it provided a location for semi-public neo-avant-garde exhibitions, pop concerts, educational lectures, readings, and screenings. In this exhibition organized and initiated by Szentjóbý himself, he presented about 150 pieces, visual poetry, objects, environments, photos and the



Tamás Szentjóbý: "He Ropes the Cow with Rope", 1973, University Stage, Budapest, action lecture (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)



"Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984 W" in the exhibition The First Generation of "Hungarian Neo-avant-garde", Kunsthalle Szombathely, 1998. Photo: Tamás St.Auby (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

26 Szentjóbý spelling his name differently (St. Auby) moved back from Switzerland to Hungary in 1991.

27 A big-scale Flux-concert organized by Szentjóbý and Beke in 1973 however was cancelled however the program guides had been printed. The program program was reconstructed 20 years later, when a multimedia documentation was created of the event.

28 Szentjóbý also made an ironic remark in the text referring to the authorities observing him getting puzzled by the unconventional use of language.

"At the end of the closing night, the performance of László Vidovszky's piece Schroeder's Death was drowned in scandal."

3/5 Salò o le 120 giornate di Sodoma (Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom) ... 1975 film written and directed by Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini.

2/6 1977 Miklós Erdély: Screening of his film Álommásolatok (Dream Reconstructions) at the Kossuth Club in Budapest. Cinematography: Gábor Dobos

3/6 Births/1977: March 6 - Bubba Sparxxx, rapper

2/7 1977 Peter Weibel's exhibition at the GM Gallery in Budapest (the gallery of the Ganz Mávag Cultural Centre that also hosted Erdély's Creativity Exercises). Vernissage: László Beke: 14 Points on video

3/7 documenta 6 takes place.

2/8 Gyula Pauer: Protest-Sign Forest, 20 October 1978. "Pauer set up his forest of demonstration-signs, entitled "Protest-Sign Forest" (...) at the Nagyatád art colony with the aid of Zoltán Érmezei and the members of a brigade. Approximately half an hour after the completion of installing the signs, members of the local police smeared mud over the captions of the signs. Later, the employees of the art colony sawed the handles off the signs embedded in concrete at their base, and after marking the stumps, heaped the signs in a shed. Subsequently, the expert commission arriving on the scene nullified the artistic value of Pauer's work." SASVÁRI EDIT: „ÉLJEN A TŰNTETŐTÁBLA-ERDŐ” (Long live the Protest-Sign Forest!)

3/8 Gehry House by Frank Gehry in Santa Monica, California.

2/9 Xertox – Diligent meditation, from 1982
"9-(30) May 1982 - Pesterzsébet Museum, Budapest, "EMBERKÍSÉRLETEK" (Human Experiments), international mail art exhibition (XERTOX 3rd diligent meditation) – banned, despite the jury.
17 September – October 1982. Hungarian National Gallery (MNG), Budapest, in the "Atelier series" Exhibition of Róbert Swierkiewicz entitled "Atelier-test" (XERTOX 7th diligent meditation)
19 October – 1 November 1982. Bercsényi 28-30 Club, Budapest, "Human Experiments" international mail art exhibition organised by Xertox. (The material of the banned Pesterzsébet Museum.) Opening event: Xertox group's 8th diligent meditation and György Galántai's documentary-sound



Gyula Pauer: "Protest Sign Forest", Nagyatád Art Colony, 1978 (courtesy of Gyula Pauer)

documents. Displaying framed concrete poems, action objects, and documents of his actions he invented an archival methodology with which new progressive practices could be incorporated in the format of an exhibition. Later in the same year Szentjóbý also performed a lecture, "Make a Chair! (Homage á George Brech)", in the Club of Young Artists using only the most traditional educational device, the blackboard, as a prop. In the this lecture he proposed the imperative "make a chair" - the symbolic object of strike - to go beyond the "use a chair!" imperative in George Brecht's events and the "look at the chair" imperative of Duchamp's ready-mades. The International Parallel Union of Telecommunication's (IPUT, superintendent: Tamás St. Auby) "Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984 (SLSP1984W)"²⁹, whose 5th phase is still in force, was first announced with this lecture that was repeated in 1977, during Documenta 6, in Kassel, within Joseph Beuys' Free International University.

An Invisible Female Position

The same venue, the Club of Young Artists housed the "Nude/Model" exhibition of Orsolya Drozdik a member of the post-conceptualist artist group Rózsa Circle working together and organizing collective actions and exhibitions between 1975 and 1977. This circle appeared at the end of the 70s with young artists raising new issues like self-management or gender relationships. Organizing collective actions in a bar they adopted the language and genres of conceptual art, but they were much more concerned with their own identity as individuals and artists than the earlier generation of neo-avant-garde. Drozdik's action reflected on the male-centred perspective of traditional art education. Her action involved drawing a female nude, doing the most essential activity of traditional art education, and presenting this activity as an exhibition, as a sight for contemplation. The visitors could not enter the room, but only look in through a gauze curtain that blocked the entrance. Drozdik invited various male artists and an art historian to open her exhibition each day. In addition to the consciously-assumed female position, the critique on art history also indicates a new, postmodern approach. In 1978, Orsolya Drozdik emigrated to the Netherlands, and then to New York, where her instinctive approach of a woman artist unfolded in line with feminist theories.

Several other artistic events happened in this period that renewed the genre of the exhibition and the norms of exhibition-making. We could mention street actions, samizdat art publications, and work groups engaged in educational projects, which appeared as alternatives to the presentation formats tied to the exhibition space and cultural institutions. To bring this discussion to a close, we may take one such example, Dóra Maurer and Miklós Erdély's "Creativity Exercises".³⁰ The course functioned between 1976-77 at the Ganz Mávag Cultural Centre and instead of the individual, artwork-centred creative process, introduced an alternative educational model that was based on community experiences and the deconstruction of traditional art education. The study circle later continued under a different name and in a new location, finally transforming into the INDIGO group, which made its appearance at a number of exhibitions at the end of the 1970s. Dóra Maurer documented the workshops and then in the 80s, she edited the footage into thematic



Orsolya Drozdik: "Nude/Model", 1977, exhibition and action, Club of Young Artists, Budapest (courtesy of Orshi Drozdik)



Miklós Erdély opening Orshi Drozdik's exhibition, "Nude Model", Club of Young Artists, January 9, 1977

²⁹ The mission of the project is that everyone be guaranteed the minimum subsistence level standard.

³⁰ Kreativitási gyakorlatok, FAFEL, INDIGO. Erdély Miklós művészetpedagógiai tevékenysége 1975-1986. [Creativity Exercises, Fantasy Developing Exercises, and Interdisciplinary-Thinking. Miklós Erdély's art pedagogical activity] Compiled by: Sándor Hornyik and Annamária Szőke. Ed.: Szőke Annamária. MTA Művészettörténeti Kutatóintézet-Gondolat Kiadó-ZB Alapítvány-Erdély Miklós Alapítvány, Budapest, 2008. The publication has an English summary at the end.

work, “Scandal Art” 11 November 1982. Újpest Mini Gallery, Budapest, “ELDORADO” mail art exhibition, organiser: István Szirányi, vernissage: Tibor Kulcsár’s musical action, live presentation by Péter Sarkadi, Ernő Tolvaly’s acoustic experiment, Xertox 9th diligent meditation (d.m. 9), selection from the Artpool sound archives

3/9 Andy Warhol “falls in love” with Duran Duran at a Blondie concert.

2/10 Dóra Maurer: Projekt Buchberg / Spatial Painting Buchberg Project (1982-83), Vernissage: Buchberg am Kamp (on view, even today), the film was premiered in 1983. (BBS) – MDL (Maurer inventory): 191. ill 192.

3/10 Nobel Prize for Literature: William Golding
Budapest, 21-27 March 2009

Tamás St.Auby, non-art artist born in 1944

I cannot willingly answer this exaggeratedly superficial, childish question. Nevertheless, I will answer, likewise superficially, but in good faith. The IPARTERV exhibitions including also the KFKI exhibitions on Budafoki út, the R-exhibition, a few FIKA (FMK – Club

of Young Artists) exhibitions, Krisztián Frey’s exhibition (in a house of culture of an outlying district), Sándor Altorjai’s exhibition (in Mednyánszky Hall), Gyula Pauer’s Pseudo-exhibition (in a house of culture of an outlying district), Csaba Koncz’s photo exhibitions, the activity of

Dr. László Végh (a physician who organized progressive art, literature and music events in the 60s) the activity of Pál Petri-Galla (famous for flat-exhibitions and his progressive music collection), the activity of Éva Körner (art historian), the activity of László Beke (art historian), the activity of Miklós Erdély, the Lunch happening (1966), Flux-concert (1969), and the action-evenings at the Egyetemi Színpad (University Stage), the Lakásszínház (the Apartment Theatre),



Concert of the band Kex
(courtesy of IPUTNPU-Archives)



“Creativity - Visuality” exhibition (displaying the documents of the Creativity Exercises: drawings, task descriptions, and photos), Józsefváros Exhibition Hall, 1976
Photo: Tamás Papp (courtesy of Miklós Erdély Foundation)

sections at the Balázs Béla Studio producing a film entitled “Creativity-Visuality”.³¹ We have focused on a period that brought radical change in exhibition-making through direct reaction to international trends as well as to the local reality on a social, political, and cultural level. The chosen case studies offer insight into all those historical conditions that determined how art could be presented to the public in Hungary, from the apartment exhibitions and events of the 60s, till the emergence of postmodern tendencies in the late 70s. The traditional objects of art produced in the period have been more or less integrated into the international history of art through collections, publications and retrospective exhibitions, while the events and exhibitions still compose an invisible history. Here we present a collection of documents that need committed and critical readers to make a fragment of this history visible.



Miklós Erdély and Dóra Maurer:
“Creativity exercises”
Photo: Tamás Papp (courtesy of
Miklós Erdély Foundation)

31 Dóra Maurer: “Creativity – Visuality”, film (1987), 25’ Béla Balázs Film Studio



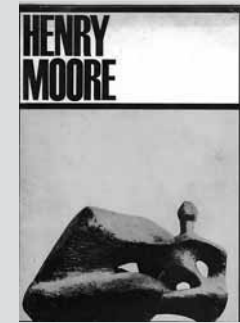
Tomas Schmit’s “Zyklus” (1963) performed by Tamás Szentjóbny in the “Fluxconcert”,
Cultural House of Pesterzsébet Constructors, Literary Club, Budapest, 1969
Photo: Ottó Bojtór (courtesy of Tamás St. Auby)

Tibor Hajas’s actions, some of the shows at the Balatonboglár Chapel, the concerts at the Új Zenei Stúdió (New Music Studio), KEX concerts, Spions concerts, and “House-parties” as the art of the era.

János Sugár, artist born in 1958

In the 1960s, I was in elementary school, and in the 70s I was mainly in high school; I remember exhibitions from 1980 onwards. Nevertheless, there are two exhibitions I remember from my childhood:

Henry Moore’s 1967 exhibition in the Múcsarnok/Kunsthalle: it was about then that I realised that sculpture exists.



Catalogue cover of the
Henry Moore exhibition,
Kunsthalle Budapest,
1967

And what has remained with me very powerfully was the national caricature exhibition organised in 1968, filling the entire Múcsarnok/Kunsthalle, and caused enormous interest. It was most probably censored quite differently than the fine arts, and a few works that might even be referred to as Pop Art were included.

Much later, during my high school years, I found a pile of invitations to (Balatonboglár) Chapel shows on a forgotten shelf of a cultural institution, which I carefully studied.

Also important was Tamás Fekete’s 1975 exhibition in the Petőfi Literary Museum, where he showed unbelievably refined, realistic plaster casts of small sculptures, e.g., someone leaning on the door of a car and talking with someone.

I saw the photos of Béla Kondor’s maquettes in an exhibition (1972, Helikon Gallery), which I likewise took note of.

In January of 1980, Jovánovics had an exhibition at the Institute Français, where he presented the exhibition that had opened 15 March 1970 in Adolf Fényes Hall (in collaboration with István Nádler) and even afterwards it made a strong impression on me (this work was later named the artist’s best work).

Bálint Szombathy, artist born in 1950 in Voivodina

Though I had some connection with the progressive Hungarian art and artists of the specified epoch, and I also participated in exhibitions here, my overview of the events of this period in Hungary is quite incomplete. I have ascertained this in retrospect, as it has become increasingly clear to me just how much I missed here as the citizen of another country.

Tibor Várnagy, artist and non-profit gallerist born in 1957

In 1970, I was 13, in 1971 14, in 1972 15, etc., which means that either I should choose the path of trying to name with my mind of today 10 events, where I was not present, nor did I even hear of them – but only 10-15 years later, or I could recount what influenced me as an adolescent, or what touched me then.

I decline the former, while for the latter, I cannot compress it into the events of 10 exhibitions.

Thus, I will try to put together something of an outline: What made an impact on me, and I think many other Budapest adolescents of my age who came to their consciousness between the 1960s and 70s, were: rock film (and in part, TV) and the illustrated weekly and monthly magazines, and from the early 1970s, books. Within rock, I mean not only the music, but also, e.g., the visual imagery, offered by the record covers, and within film, starting with the Beatles’ A Hard Day’s Night, within 2-3 years, it was possible to see Antonioni’s Blow-Up, Zabriskie Point, and then through the films of Bergman, Fellini, Tarkovsky and Jancsó, up till Jean Vigo, and beyond; in music, from the Beatles and the Stones up till Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Miles Davis,

Bartók, Kurtág, Syrius, Kex and Rákfogó.

By way of the weeklies and magazines, by the time I was in the higher levels of elementary school, I took note of Vajda, Kassák, and through the volumes of the library of the classics of art, in 1971-72 of Duchamp. If I remember well, in 1973-74, I saw in a museum exhibition – at the Petőfi Literary Museum – Kassák, and at the Múcsarnok/Kunsthalle, Endre Bálint (about whom I had read in the volume of Csoóri-Kósa: Forradás [Scar], and whose texts I had read in the memorial volume for Lajos Vajda, and in his own book, entitled Hazugságok naplója [Diary of Lies]), and in 1971-72 we saw the exhibition of György Román in Adolf Fényes Hall, where we also met him. It was only in about 1973 that we came upon Kassák’s books, but it was also then that the first Ginsberg was published, while Camus and Kafka also came into the picture, as well as, e.g., Ágnes Heller, and then Mérei, Konrád, etc.

We first read about Szentjóbny, and Gilbert & George, in the magazine Művészet (Art), thanks to László Beke, who informed us about the Paris Biennial (of 1973-74), while we saw Jozef Szajna’s exhibition and performance at the Ernst Museum. We read about Miklós Erdély through the public correspondence of Gyula Rózsa and Béla Kondor in the periodical Kritika (Critique), where however, he was not mentioned by name.

In a word, I might say that in fact, it was only in the second half of the 70s that we began to become acquainted with the Hungarian neo-avant-garde; i.e., we discovered it after the fact, when StAuby, Péter Halász, Baksa-Soós, Lakner and Perneczky had already emigrated, and with time there was samizdat, and the new wave, in the framework of which Hajas-Vető emerged, just as Vető-Zuzu, Erdély, Bódy, and StAuby, but this is already a story that commenced with the turn of the 70s-80s with Mozgó Világ, Magyar Műhely (magazines), and the exhibitions and concerts of the period.

I think that it is nearly impossible to analyse the history of the 1960s-70s without a knowledge of the cultural policy / art-sociological aspects of the era, so please don’t fall into the trap of ignoring them!! At the same time – and I recognise this – it is not easy because the cultural policy / art-sociological aspects also changed almost from month to month: for instance, the illustrated weekly, Tükör (Mirror) reported on Szentjóbny’s first happenings, which means that I saw this at the age of 10 or 11, though of course I didn’t yet know what to make of it, and years passed until I received new information, even about the genre itself. On the other hand: no further information came through the weekly, Tükör, because it was banned, and in general this kind of cultural policy began to increasingly prevail in the Hungarian cultural public sphere, with prohibitions from 1971-72. For instance, the weekly youth and monthly cultural magazines from Yugoslavia in Hungarian could still enter the country since the work of the Hungarian censors was not uniform. There were things which could pass here, while over there they could not and when an event itself did take place, it was so much on the periphery that it didn’t reach those who could be interested in it.



Review by László Kamondy: “Meditation on the first Hungarian happening: The Lunch (in memoriam Batu Khan)”, published in the weekly “Tükör”, 13 September, 1966

Though what didn’t reach us directly, or immediately through the press, did reach us a few years later, when finally complete suppression reigned over it, e.g., through private conversations. Namely, in the case of our generation (also), the general problem was that, even if from the outset we began to instinctively be attracted to contemporary culture due to the various cultural policy prohibitions of the epoch, we could not necessarily access everything – on the contrary! It was already some kind of achievement that we in Budapest could view the modern classics, such as for instance, Kassák, Endre Bálint and György Román, and read their contemporaries, Ginsberg and Konrád, or hear György Kurtág at the Zeneakadémia (Academy of Music), or Syrius.

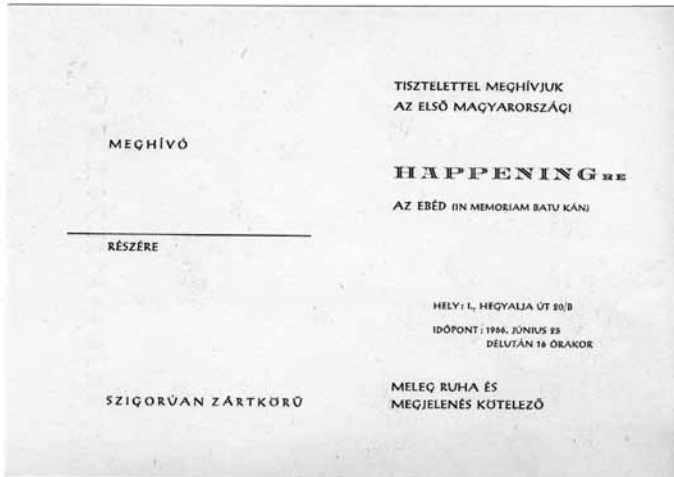
THE LUNCH (IN MEMORIAM BATU KHAN) the first happening in Hungary

Date: 25. 06. 1966.

Participants: Gábor Altorjay (1946), Tamás Szentjóbý (1944), (with the assistance of Enikő Balla, Miklós Erdély, Miklós Jankovics, and István Varannai)

Location: Cellar of István Szenes, Budapest

Comments: The happening was organized in the cellar of a private house by Gábor Altorjay and Tamás Szentjóbý. There were about sixty viewers. In addition to a short film and several photographs there are three detailed written descriptions of the happening: a review of the happening published by László Kamondy in the weekly magazine, "Tükör"; the recollections of Gábor Altorjay published two years later as an appendix to the article by Ottó Tolnai entitled "On the Newest Hungarian Poetry" in the Novi Sad Hungarian language magazine "New Symposium"; and a secret police report also written in 1968. All three texts differ at points regarding how and what happened, and what sense it made.



Invitation card:
"Invitation to:
You are kindly invited to the first Hungarian happening
The Lunch (In Memoriam Batu Khan)
Location: I. Hegyalja St. 20/B
Date: 25th June 1966, 4 p.m.
Strictly private event
Warm clothing and attendance are obligatory"
(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)



The Recollection of Gábor Altorjay

The happening took place in a vaulted cellar that was built in the fifteenth to sixteenth century and allegedly used as a torture chamber. From the front of the garden an arbor led to the entrance of the cellar. At the front of the arbor, participants were welcomed by a baby carriage with two disintegrating dolls inside it locked in an embrace. Upon exiting the arbor, the invitees were greeted by the other initiator of the happening, T. [Tamás Szentjóbý], who was buried in the ground up to his waist, typing. There was a shovel placed next to him that was tied with ropes to a duster opposite it. At the end of the rope, a pot had been hung with a live chicken inside it, which T. occasionally pulled out of the ground and then released back down with the help of the rope.

Behind the typewriting figure, a baby carriage was in flames.

Next, the invited participants descended the stairs leading into the darkness of the cellar. The indicator lights of a powerful stereo amplifying system were the only source of light. After a nearly fifteen minute wait in the nerve-wracking darkness, Pendereczky's "[Threnody to the Victims of] Hiroshima" exploded from the speakers with a frenetic volume, distorted, and chopped up to a state of virtual unrecognizability. As soon as the music was over, in the front area left empty to allow for free movement a vase full of roses on a table was set on fire. The burning rose bouquet provided the space with some minimal light. In the front there was a dining table set for two with a vase and a food carrier on it. Two of us were sitting at the table on Secessionist chairs thickly covered in mold. In the background, a human-size frame had been placed with a dresser to its right and a rusty bicycle wheel suspended above with a stopped clock in its center. There were prop chests on both sides and a chair in the middle. Next to the audience, a moldy chair had been fixed to the wall with rotten raffia, on it sat a small blue pot with holes. The chicken tied into the pot was visible next to the table. Our attire was completely casual: suit jacket, white shirt, tie, and green sunshade on our heads. J. [Miklós Jankovics] was also similarly dressed. He was the third person, who, after the burning of the roses, switched on the lights. As it later became apparent, one of the main inadequacies was the absence of sufficient lighting. In the meantime, the microphone and the speakers continued to be in operation—as they were for the duration of the entire happening—amplifying and resounding even the smallest noise. According to a number of the participants, the sound effects were one of the strongest points of the happening, although originally we did not intend to give the sound system such a significant role.

We began eating. Our lunch consisted of cold paprika potatoes. While eating, I stood up and started up the pendulum clock on the bicycle wheel. Because the key had been removed from the clock, the hands began to rotate at a great speed. This was not a prepped clock; it had already had this property before it was chosen as a prop for the happening. Later, I replaced the key, causing the clock to stop again. During the happening, the clock was stopped and restarted a number of times. The clock gently hummed and turned together with the bicycle wheel around its own axis. While we continued to eat, a few randomly placed and set alarm clocks went off. T. tried to shove some paprika potatoes down the chicken's throat, then held the squawking animal in front of the microphone. The beak met the microphone producing a sound that resounded in the cellar with the strength of a steam-hammer. Upon finishing our lunch, we drank from a thermos. Then we took out a large plastic bag and began to vomit into it. This did not go smoothly; the sounds of heaving filled the whole cellar. T. put the chicken into the bag and pulled the whole thing over my head. Then he hammered nails into the plates. I produced three pairs of kid gloves from my prop chest, which, in a joint effort, we pulled onto the hands of J., who was standing next to the frame. From here on, I am not sure of the chronology of events, it all gets blurry with repetition; the goal—staying alive—obscured the order of events. For the most part, I only remember the things I did in order to survive. From this point on, our actions were separate, but we continued to stay unified in the concept. I grabbed a cleaver and attempted to shatter the table and the chairs into small pieces. We detached a small handbag from J.'s frame and smeared him with toothpaste. The small handbag contained two white mice, which I handed to a woman sitting in the front row. Later the mice were running back and forth among the participants. Sometimes they threw them back to us and we gave them back. We placed a combat helmet in front of J.'s face and tied him to the frame. We then stood a bicycle frame and two rusty rollers on the broken table, tying them together so that the wheel was stuck between the handles of the two rollers. Later someone named this the sculpture of "The Roller That Is Not Going Anywhere." We took out some liquid soap and smeared this creation, as well as J., with the soap. Some toothpaste was also applied to the wheel. After this, we took a large amount of feathers and threw it into the air, covering the roller and J., and then placed the chicken on our creation. The rest of the feathers were thrown at the participants, who threw them back, only to have the feathers thrown back at them again. We got hold of some fly catching papers and made quite a bit of effort in smashing them and throwing them around. In the meantime, some participants in the back row started setting things on fire. I put out the fire using a watering can. T. mixed some plaster and colored it with red and blue paint. We smeared some plaster on J. and also threw some at him. We threw plaster on the wall and at the audience as well. We were ankle deep in feathers colored by the red paint. We mixed pink plaster and filled a condom with it, as a consequence of which the rubber stretched to considerable dimensions. In the meantime, the amplified stereo sounds of Beethoven's "Symphony No. 9" filled the room. We tied the stretched-out, pink condom into a large circle, fixed a burning candle under it and hung this rotating structure from the ceiling. The following half hour, which was spent sustaining the ecstatic mood of an urge for immersion, I can barely describe.

The activity picked up in pace once again. T. hung objects—legs of the table and chairs—on the ceiling and the walls. Filling a woman's shoe with plaster and tying it to the frame, he fixed it to a barely standing J. and also



Photos: Gyula Zaránd (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

stuffed feathers behind the helmet. The rest of the plaster powder was poured on J.'s head and I tied him even more tightly to the frame. T. tore the moldy chair off the wall (which someone, referring to the mice and the dry ice, named "The Altar of Frozen Mice"). Next to J., the suspended tablecloth hung like linen. We threw rotting seaweed on him, we tied tons of strings to the frame and to J. The chicken hung from J.'s neck. We tied strings to the objects hanging from the ceiling, connecting the objects to J., J. with the participants; we tied all these together, with J., with the space of the cellar. There were too few of us for tying, the two of us tried to tie sixty people together. J. and I were wandering between the rows when T. broke the light bulb and it was dark again.

We waited.

People started moving around. The entrance had been barricaded with the baby carriage, the duster, and a heater. Later the participants began to leave through the cleared up entrance.

We walked down the arbor, dusting and cleaning ourselves off.

According to M. E. we with T. and J. looked like soldiers with burnt out gazes coming from the front lines. I didn't feel otherwise.

Published: Új Symposion, no. XXXIV (1968), p. 12–13.

Agent Report - summary report and action plan

A happening, as regards its philosophical aspect, is a declaration of nihilism, darkness, irrationalism and the denial of healthy human activity. Its religion is aggression and hysteria. Its practical realisation serves the purpose of scandalising the public and asserting exaggerated decadence. Its U.S. variant, in its final stage, lead to a torrent of violence, mass drug abuse and open clashes with the police.

(...)

Although 150 invitations were sent out for the event, only 50-60 people turned up.(...)

An entrance fee of 10 Ft per person was collected. When the signal was given, the audience moved to the garden in the back, where, at the entrance of a very old basement, a half-naked Szentjóbý standing waist-deep in the earth wearing a green sunshade was typing onto a sheet of newspaper. A cat tail, which was attached with string to the typewriter, was dangling into a pot of paint. In the background, a gasoline-drenched baby carriage was in flames. A few of the wooden stairs leading to the basement had been removed and there was no lighting – these were the circumstances in which the audience were to make their descent. Downstairs, in the darkness, Stockhausen's electronic piece entitled "Victory" could suddenly be heard. The first two movements were played, whose first part consists of the sound of an airstrike mixed with incoherent fragments of conversation from a French group in an air-raid shelter that has been buried underground.

After the light was switched on, a kitchen table could be seen in the background with two people sitting next to it. Behind them, a third person was busying himself with a chicken tied to a red pot. While eating, they occasionally let out a great belch, amplified for the audience with the help of a microphone and speakers. When they finished lunch, a large plastic bag was produced into which one of the participants vomited the contents of his stomach.

Next, they retrieved a black handbag from an old refrigerator, which they handed to the audience. This contained white mice. Then they grabbed some hammers and shattered the plates, the table and the chairs. The third participant was tied to the doorframe. In a bowl they mixed water and lime and poured it on the clothes of the tied person, and then they also smeared a tube of toothpaste on his clothing. The feathers from a torn up duvet were poured partly on the tied up person and partly on the audience. A condom was filled with some kind of sticky, red material, and then hung up with a candle lit under it. The cassette player was switched on and distorted music could be heard. Then one of the participants tied a string around the room in a spider web-like fashion, went back to the middle and smashed the light bulb with a thermos. In the meantime, someone had blocked the basement entrance, slowing down attempts to exit.

(...)

The audience generally expressed appreciation for what they had seen; they were afraid to object, lest they be regarded as conservative and opposed to novelty.

(...)

Action Plan

Based on the above, it can be stated that the spread of the happening phenomenon is harmful to the intellectual and political development of youth. Furthermore, it is an occurrence that goes against progress and facilitates the decentralising politics of imperialist circles.

(...)

The key organising figures of Hungarian happenings, as well as their possible foreign contacts, must be placed under surveillance.

(...)

Public appearances by the organisers of happenings must be prevented. It must be made impossible for them to use public forums for spreading and popularising the happening phenomenon.

(...)

The main organisers of happenings must be warned against involvement in future happenings, with special regard to Tamás Szentjóbý, who is the most active person in this respect. Szentjóbý is to be told that if he does not refrain from organising such events in the future, a recommendation will be made for his treatment in a mental institution.

Source: <http://www.c3.hu/collection/tilos/docs.html#103>

IMAGE ARCHITECTURE exhibition

Date: 03. 03. 1967.
Participant: Lajos Kassák (1887-1967)
Opening by: Máté Major (1904-1986, architect, editor)
Organized by: Makrisz Agamemnon (1913-1993, sculptor, and exhibition-organizer)
Location: Adolf Fényes Hall, Budapest
Comments: The occasion for this exhibition was the 80th birthday of the artist, who since 1949, was hardly able to get official permission to exhibit his abstract works in Hungary. The Adolf Fényes Hall was an exhibition space offered for self-financed shows that were not funded by the state - as all other public exhibitions – but by the artists themselves. The author of the text, Ferenc Csaplár (1940-2007), was the director of the Kassák Múzeum from its foundation in 1976 until 2007. This article was written on the occasion of an exhibition with the same title.

From Prohibition to Tolerance
Kassák's Work and the Cultural Politics of the 1960s

Ferenc Csaplár

Back in April 1965, Kassák had asked for a personal meeting with János Kádár¹. After this meeting, the matter of the exhibition came before the Political Committee of the *Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party*. This body came up with the idea of “self-financed exhibitions.” Kassák was allowed to have an exhibition in a state institution, but only if he paid all the costs himself. Although as the result of the “debate on realism” shows, the official viewpoint in 1965 was that abstract art was to remain prohibited, the decision-makers were most probably taking into consideration Kassák’s upcoming 80th birthday and also Kádár’s opinion, who had known Kassák from the 1930s and thought highly of him as a writer.

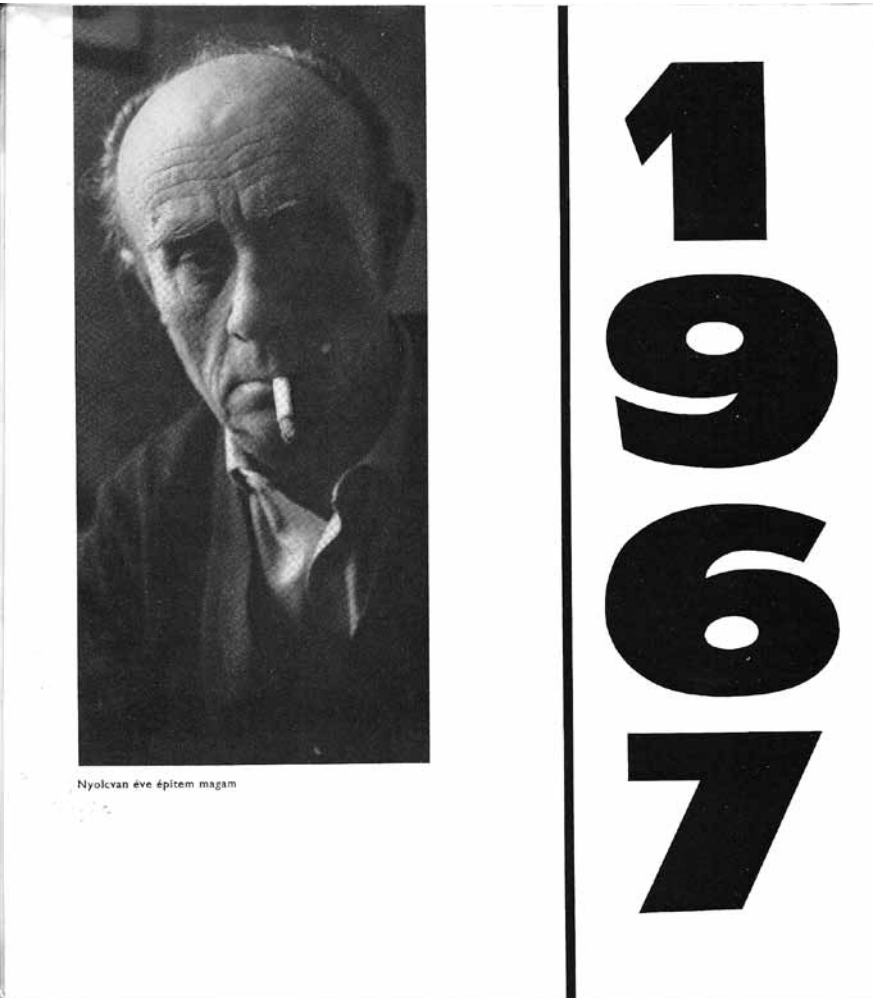
(...)
Kassák saw this event, which also promised a sudden change in the situation of contemporary Hungarian avant-garde art, as his personal victory. A victory over his professional adversaries, too, especially over Aurél Bernáth and Pál Pátzay. He wrote this to Károly László on 12th September 1966: “in March 1967, on the occasion of my 80th birthday, I shall have an exhibition in Pest. This will be the first introduction of constructivism. The gate has opened, and I am walking through it.” He commented on what had happened in a similar tone to Victor Vasarely, too: “This will be the first constructivist exhibition here. See, I have broken through the concrete wall.”

(...)
What Kassák said in defence of modern Hungarian art, when opening an exhibition entitled “The Eights and the Circle of Activists” in October 1965 in Székesfehérvár, also contributed to the weakening of prejudices. It soon turned out that what Kassák got, after waiting so long when he asked for a chance to make an exhibition, was a concession from cultural politics, given with bad grace – a cultural politics that still had its reservations about modern pursuits in art, and voiced its political anxiety, while at the same time being in a sorry plight because of both leftist critics and conservative professional cliques. The Adolf Fényes Hall, converted into an exhibition space out of one of the first-floor apartments in a tenement house at Rákóczi Boulevard 30, constituted one of the more out of the way galleries in Budapest at the time. Artists who were not allowed to exhibit in the Kunsthalle or at the Ernst Museum for some reason, most often because of the “character of their work” (to use the official formula of the time), were able to organize exhibitions there. In December of 1966, Kassák received the estimates concerning the costs of the exhibition. The Kunsthalle, which was responsible for the operation of the gallery, included cleaning costs, the cost of addressing the envelopes for the invitations, and the price of the ceremonial bouquet for the opening in its estimate. These were all to be paid for in advance.

1 Prime minister of Hungary that time.



Cover of the catalogue



Page from the exhibition catalogue. Photo of Lajos Kassák. Caption: “I have been constructing myself for eighty years.”



Poster of the exhibition

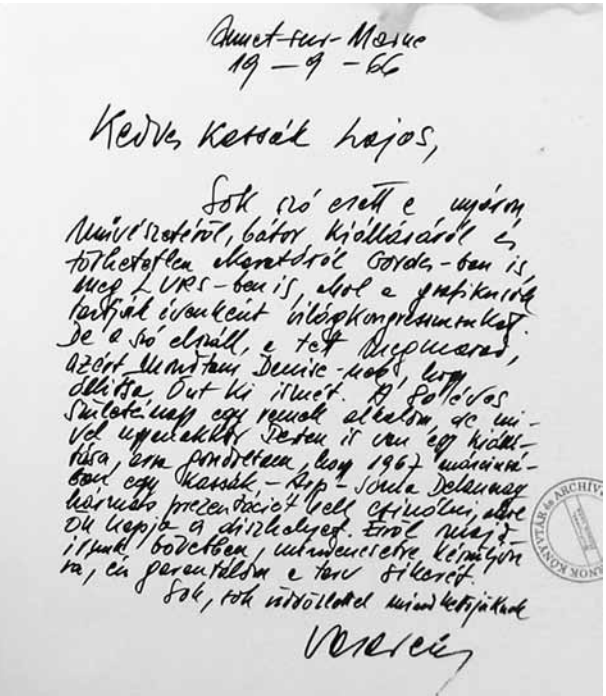
Annet-sur-Marne
19 September 1966

Dear Lajos Kassák,

Your art, your bearing and your unbreakable will were often mentioned this summer in both Gordes and Lurs, where graphic artists hold their annual world congress. But words fly away and deeds remain, so I told Denise that she should organize an exhibition of your work again. Your 80th birthday would be a wonderful occasion, but since you are having an exhibition at the same time in Pest, too, I thought of doing a Kassák-Arp-Sonia Delaunay threefold presentation in March 1967. Of course Yours would be the place of honour. Let's write about this more, but please begin to prepare – I guarantee the success of this plan.

With many greetings to both of you,
Vasarely

Victor Vasarely's letter to Kassák, from the catalogue.



- 2 He organized the exhibition.
- 3 Secretary of Culture that time.



The opening of the exhibition, with Máté Major, János Frank , and Lajos Kassák in the photo
Photo: Géza Szebellédy (courtesy of Kassák Múzeum)

The opening of the exhibition, the audience
Photo: Géza Szebellédy (courtesy of Kassák Múzeum)

However, Kassák managed to arrange for the competent employees of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts to pick a panel of experts (who were needed to examine the material of the planned exhibition) according to his taste. (...) What happened in the Adolf Fényes Hall at the opening of the exhibition on 4th March pointed way beyond the birthday celebration of an artist. Máté Major, who gave the opening speech, talked not only about the works of art, but also about cultural politics when talking about their reception. Those who knew the studies published by the cultural theory working group of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and its leaders on the tasks of literature and art in 1965-66, as well as the articles whose authors undertook to write agreeable comments about them, could have no doubt about who Major's words referred to, who they were aimed at, and who they criticized. We can get a sense of the atmosphere of the opening from the following part of the speech: “But there is something in Kassák's being a poet and a painter, something in his poetry and art that should make those who accept the poet (and even, rightly, honour him with the Kossuth prize) while considering the artist as someone who got lost, the representative of ‘degenerate art’, think about their stance. [...] Can someone with common sense imagine that Kassák, when he does this in his poems, tries to do just the opposite in his pictures and with a peculiar schizophrenia, strives to be ‘unclear to all?’ That is, while he does not ‘deny’ the reality of nature and society and does not strive to ‘escape’ from the human and artistic obligation to take up a position in his poetry, he does just that, ‘denying’ and ‘escaping’, in his paintings? Of course not!”

Those who filled the room and the corridor could hear other things, too. Kassák spoke not only to thank Makrisz Agamemnon² and Máté Major, according to his contemporaries, he also “gave a lengthy and bitter talk about the cultural politics of the age.” The atmosphere was special, as the guests included György Aczél³ and his wife, too. Others remarked (not only during the opening but later, too), that the exhibition deserved a more worthy venue and better conditions.

One day, when the exhibition had been officially closed, Kádár himself visited it. This was a surprising gesture, as the first secretary seldom went to see artists' exhibitions. This was probably the first and last time he entered the Adolf Fényes Hall, a venue reserved for

“tolerated” artists. He was interested. Someone noted that two years later, when he visited Aurél Bernáth, who was working on a wall-painting entitled “The Workers' State” for the Party's headquarters, he defended Kassák and his paintings against the condemnatory remarks of his colleague.

The directors of cultural politics did not intend to publicly rehabilitate Kassák the artist. Their reservations were indicated by Kassák having to pay for the venue of the exhibition, which visitors also criticized, and the unfair conditions. It was also a telling sign that the panel of experts of the Department of Fine and Applied Arts, whose task it was to price works, did not recommend any of the pieces exhibited for public purchase, considering the official stance on abstract art. (...)

Published: Élet és Irodalom, Vol. 50., Nr. 49., 8th December 2006.

DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? actions

Date: 29. 11. 1968.

Participants: Miklós Erdély (1928-1986), László Méhes (1944), Tamás Szentjóbý (1944)

Location: Iparterv State Architectural Office, Budapest

Comments: Tamás Szentjóbý planned an exhibition in July 1968, in the Iparterv Office, but it was cancelled after the invitation leaflet was printed. and distributed. Three months later and three weeks before the famous first Iparterv exhibition he organized actions in the same location with Miklós Erdély and László Méhes. In the Iparterv catalogue issued in 1980 Erdély described these actions as his connection to the Iparterv group.



Invitation leaflet
"3 quarks for king Marke" dirac in front of the box office – clips
- miklós erdély – world világ! - presentiments - tamás szentjóbý –
film – distance – lászló méhes – images – just to say an example.
- 29. 11. 1968. 19:00 Iparterv, V. Deák F. street 10 HUF"
(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)
1 pun – "worldflame"



Invitation leaflet: "Donor - The KISZ (Communist Youth Union) of Iparterv invites you to the exhibition of Tamás Szentjóbý – Opening by Miklós J. Erdély on the 5th of July 1968, 6 p.m. – On view till the 13th from 10:00-20:00 –"
The exhibition was cancelled.
(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

Tamás Szentjóbý: "Rap Brown's letter to Jeanne d'Arc" (action-object – suitcase, ash)
(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)



Miklós Erdély describing in the "Iparterv 68-80" catalogue the actions performed by him

The IPARTERV group had only loose connections to native cultural life in 1969. And I had only loose connections to the IPARTERV group. This situation has changed within ten years. The group /as for its members at home now/ has become an organic part of cultural life here. And I have only loose connections to recent cultural life.

My belonging to as well as staying outside the IPARTERV group were determined by personal relations. Cooperation was, however, realized in my taking part in the second catalogue as well as in a series of actions previous to the first exhibition, accomplished in an IPARTERV room by Tamás Szentjóbý and myself. The show was the more important. Its title was "Three quarks for king Marke". I made three actions.

1. Clip

/I made the bed on a folding one, washed a white baton and a cabbage in a basin with a nail-brush, baby—powdered them both and put them under the comforter. I put a radio set on the pillow, and wanted to turn it on at the time of the Evening News to listen to it sitting by the bed, with two five-kilogram weights fastened to my ears. Unfortunately, time troubles made me use a ready-made tape instead of the radio.

The bed was illuminated by colour focus./

2. Dirac in front of the box office

/A prescribed, dialogue-like text was recited by myself, Miklós Urbán, Tamás Cseh, Tamás Szentjóbý as we were standing in a single file. The one having said one sentence stepped forward, which meant we were moving towards the exit step by step. At the same time, the room was moving backwards, alluding to Dirac's hole theory. A large sign and an arrow pointing to the direction opposite to our movement indicated the "direction of the flow of truth".

3. Conjectures

/I read prescribe sentences. After each sentence I threw a dart at a large-sized photo portrait of a woman./

"Iparterv 68-80", pp 75-76

Miklós Erdély: "Dirac in front of the box office"
(courtesy of Miklós Erdély Foundation)



Miklós Erdély: "Presentiments"
(courtesy of Miklós Erdély) Foundation)



tamás szentjóbý distance action with tape recorder

Tamás Szentjóbý: "Distance"
(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

1.
performer marks a spot on the floor with chalk.
he starts in one direction at a normal pace, while reciting to himself the first sentence of a previously prepared text.
at the end of the sentence, he stops.
he marks a spot on the floor, and then
– following the route –
connects the two dots with chalk.
he records the first sentence on tape.
he stands at the endpoint of the first sentence.
reciting the second sentence to himself,
he sets off in a new direction at a different speed, stopping at the end of the sentence.
he marks this spot on the floor, and then
– following the route –
connects the end of the first sentence with the end of the second.
he records the second sentence on tape.
he records 6 or 7 sentences like this, moving at a different pace while reciting each sentence to himself
– some he recites while standing in place –, facing different directions.
the last sentence is SO BE CAREFUL!
- fast, resolute and frightening,
it is directed towards the audience, reaching between the rows.

performer places the recorder on a wheelbarrow
at the beginning of the marked path and pushes the wheelbarrow along the designated path,
while playing the recorded sentences according to the original pace.

the previously prepared text:
(normal pace)
peace gushing from amonasro's nose and mouth

(standing in place)
near the church

(very slow)
when one of them, seen from here, climbs out

(fast)
lo and behold, seen from there, climbs in

(slowly)
the river mouth at napata is a mere memory

(resolutely, fast, backwards)
so be careful!

2.
the performer places the microphone in the hand of an audience member, who is asked to say a sentence.
he records the sentence on tape.
the same words are repeated 6 or 7 times.
in between recordings, the recorder is pushed in the wheelbarrow
in different directions,
at different speeds.
the sentences are played by the recorder, while it is pushed in the wheelbarrow along the already traveled path
at the appropriate speeds.

2a.
each sentence is spoken into the microphone by a different audience member.

2b.
groups speak into the microphone.

3.
the performer writes the recorded sentences on the traveled path on the floor with chalk, while playing them back at the spots where they were recorded.

3a.
the performer writes the pace on the traveled path in chalk, while playing the sentences back at the spots where they were recorded.

3b.
the performer erases the written sentences from the floor, while playing them back along the path.



Tamás Szentjóbý: "Distance" (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)



Tamás Szentjóbý: "To Read" (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

tamás szentjóbý: to read action-reading

performer/a attaches a 6 to 8 cm-long strap to his waist.
he hands the end of it to 5 or 6 audience members.
performer/b holds an open book in front of performer/a.
performer/a reads the text out loud.
performer/b places the book just outside the range of readability,
performer/a can only approach the book to the extent that the audience, holding the end of the strap, allows.
when performer/a is able to read, he reads aloud,
performer/b adjusts the limit of readability.
performer/a knocks the book out of performer/b's hand in the 3rd or 4th minute of the reading-effort.

IPARTERV I exhibition

Date: 20. 12. 1968.

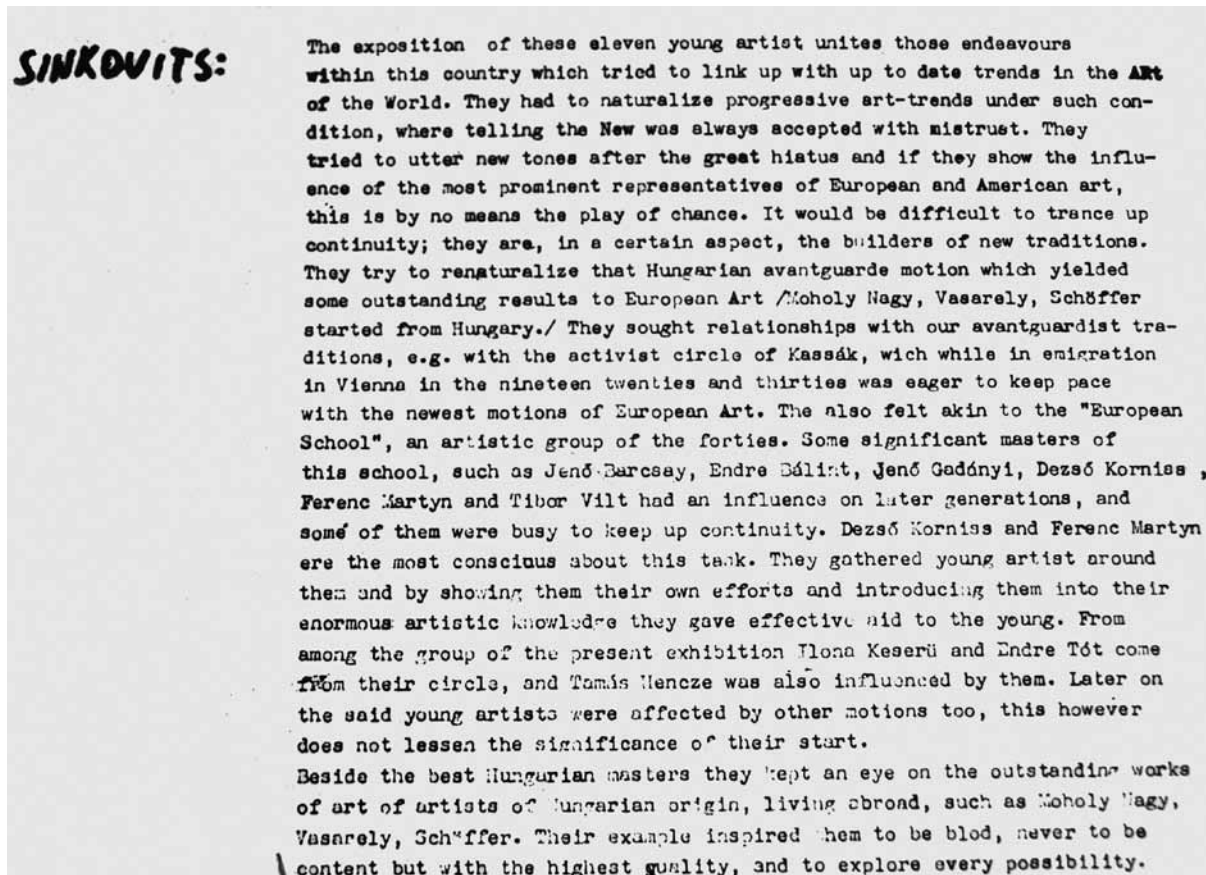
Participants: Imre Bak, Krisztián Frey, Tamás Hencze, György Jovánovics, Ilona Keserű, Gyula Konkoly, László Lakner, Sándor Molnár, István Nádler, Ludmil Siskov, Endre Tót

Organized by: Péter Sinkovits (1943)

Opening by János Tölgyesi

Location: Iparterv State Architectural Office, meeting hall, Budapest

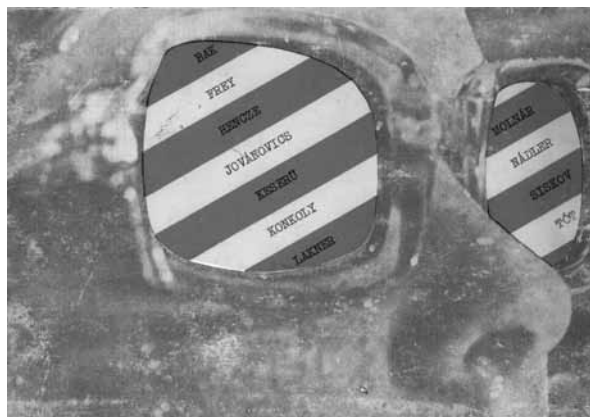
Comments: The hall was not used regularly for exhibitions and the show was open only for a few days. It was accompanied by a small catalogue containing a short introduction by the curator and the reproduction of the works and the CVs of the participants.



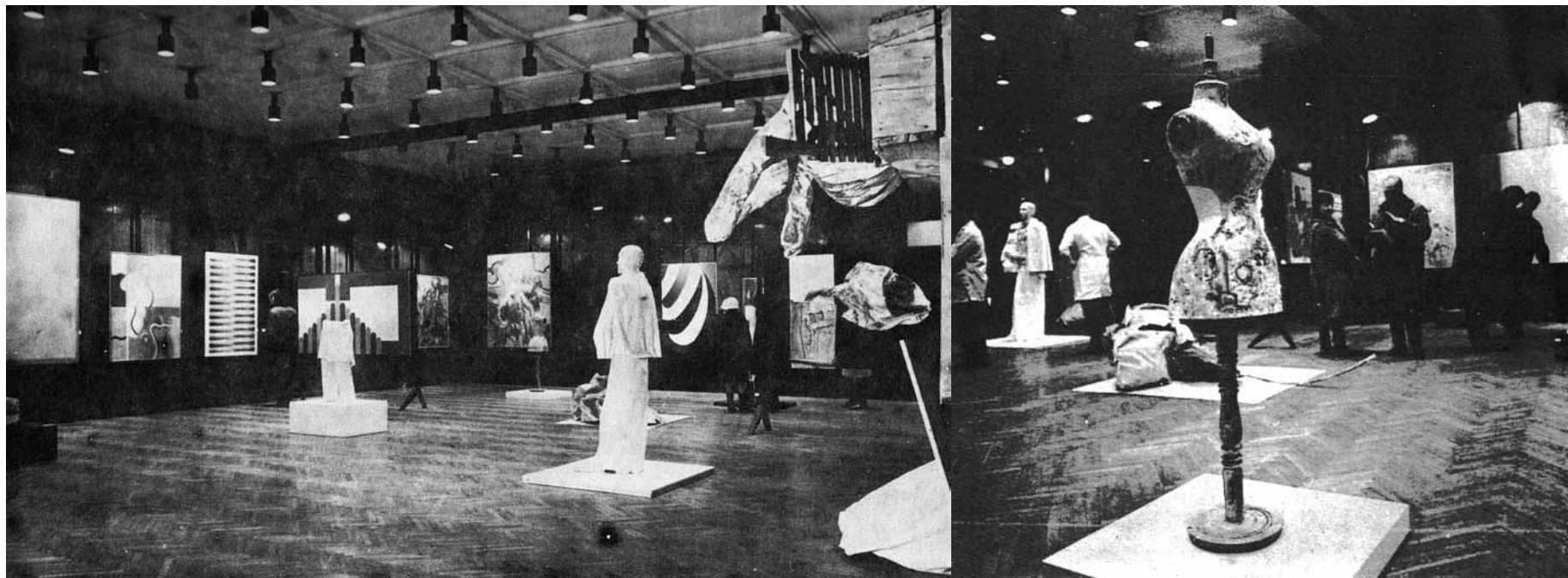
Péter Sinkovits' leaflet for the catalogue "Iparterv I" (quoted in the catalogue "Iparterv 68-80")



Invitation leaflet



Cover of the exhibition catalogue. Design by György Kemény



Photos of the exhibition from the "Dokumentum 69-70" and the "Iparterv 68-80" catalogue

IPARTERV II exhibition

Date: 24.10.1969.

Participants: Imre Bak, András Baranyay, Krisztián Frey, Tamás Hencze, György Jovánovics, Ilona Keserű, Gyula Konkoly, László Lakner, János Major, László Méhes, Sándor Molnár, István Nádler, Ludmil Siskov, Tamás Szentjóbby, Endre Tót

Organized by: Péter Sinkovits

Location: Iparterv State Architectural Office, meeting hall, Budapest

Comments: Four more artists, András Baranyay, László Méhes, János Major, and Tamás Szentjóbby accepted Sinkovits' invitation. The exhibition was examined by an official jury. The catalogue was printed illegally in the printing house of the Iparterv State Architectural Office a year later with a slightly different list of artists (Tamás Szentjóbby and Sándor Molnár was left out, Miklós Erdély and Attila Pálfalusi included). The catalogue was used in a course book of the police academy as an example for illegal publishing. In 1980 a commemorating exhibition was initiated by art historian, Lóránd Hegyi (1954). On this occasion a comprehensive English-Hungarian publication was issued containing several studies and also documents of the previous exhibitions in addition to the work of the participants.



Photo of the exhibition "Iparterv II." showing the works of Gyula Konkoly, Tamás Szentjóbby, and Imre Bak



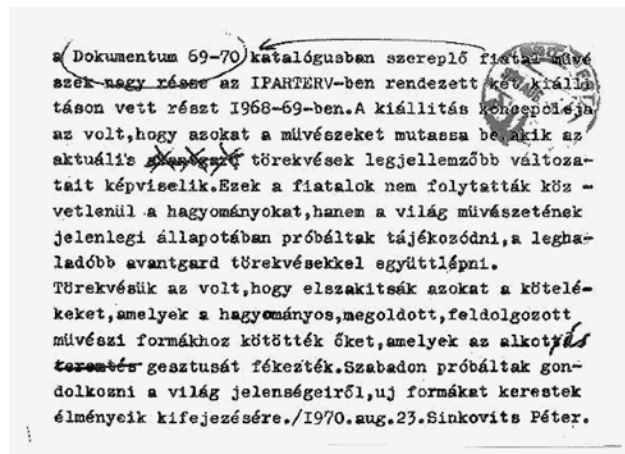
Photo of the exhibition „Iparterv II.” showing the works of István Nádler, Tamás Hencze, Gyula Konkoly, and Krisztián Frey

Document 69-70

The majority of the young artists featured in the "Document 69-70" catalogue participated in two exhibitions held at the IPARTERV in 1968-69. The concept of the exhibition was to introduce artists who represent the most characteristic versions of recent [the word "avantgarde" crossed out] tendencies. Instead of directly continuing tradition, these young artists have attempted to orient themselves in the present state of the international art world and keep pace with the most progressive ambitions of the avantgarde.

They have sought to sever the ties that bind them to traditional, elaborated, processed forms of art, which stand in the way of their creative gestures. They have attempted to think freely about the phenomena of the world, searching for new forms of expression for their experiences.

23 August 1970. Péter Sinkovits



Introduction to the publication "Document 69-70"

Document 70

In December 1970, it came to our attention confidentially that a group of visual artists have printed – and been distributing – an anthology without authorisation. A portion of the works featured in the anthology is of antagonistic content.

In April 1971, the Ministry of Culture also filed a report pertaining to this.

A confidential investigation on the matter yielded the following information:

16 artists had an anthology of their works printed and published under the title "Document 70". The material featured in the publication has already been presented at exhibitions. The project was initiated by Gyula Konkoly who defected after collecting the materials.

From this point on, the organisation of the project was continued by P. S. (Sinkovits). The face value funds necessary for publishing the anthology were first gathered. Then a printer from an architectural institute (Iparterv? [presently: Industrial Buildings Consulting Co.]) was won over to the cause, who agreed, in return for the collected sum, to print the material without authorisation (illegally). The artists bound the pages together themselves in 500 copies, which they distributed among themselves in accordance with the paid amount. The paper required for the publication (150 kg) was stolen by the printer from the institute of his employment.

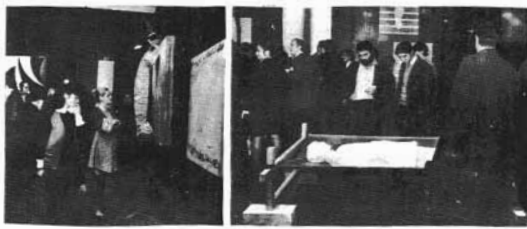
Of the contents of "Document 70", 3 engravings (sic) were politically antagonistic and objectionable. One of the painters with the surname Erdély made an engraving (sic) which depicted a human corpse. The title of the work was "Error". In the upper left hand corner of the picture the name of the artist was written with large block letters: ERDÉLY and underneath it, the title: "Error". Clearly, the picture displayed in this format easily lent itself to political misinterpretation. It should be noted that, it was not, however, objectionable in the legal sense; one could say, "it should not be misunderstood". The other engraving was explicitly and strongly anti-Semitic. For example, one had the telling title of "Kike Washing Up." The question was made more complicated by the fact that both anti-Semitic images were authored by an artist of Jewish origin who lost all of his relatives during the holocaust. It should be noted that the artist, during the investigation of the case, declared that he made the engravings with semitophilic motivation and was deeply shocked that it gave the impression of an anti-Semitic disposition.

research by Edit Sasvári

"Studying the enemy: provisional notes for the Police Academy". Topic 17: on the principle questions of antagonistic activities in the sphere of culture. Published by the Directorate on the Study of Propaganda, Ministry of Interior, 1972 (Strictly Confidential). Source: Historical Archives of Hungarian State Security, ÁSZTL – AB 370



The cover of the catalogue "Dokumentum 69-70" (courtesy of György Jovánovics)



IPARTERV II., 1969. /Works of: Nádler, Hencze, Konkoly, Frey /John Jafa / Jovánovics: Párvó figura / Living figure / Balcony right

Page from the "Iparterv 68-80" catalogue showing the interior of "Iparterv II." exhibition

GYÖRGY JOVÁNOVICS - ISTVÁN NÁDLER self-financed exhibition

Date: 15. 03. 1970.

Participants: György Jovánovics (1939), István Nádler (1938)

Opening action with János Frank (1925 - 2004)

Location: Adolf Fényes Hall, Budapest
Comments: After the exhibition, Jovánovics transported the work to Miklós Erdély's garden, where the sculpture became the setting for a number of spontaneous events, some of which were documented in photographs. Later Jovánovics called this work, more precisely the opening "the best work of my life" in a lecture reconstructing the event held in Artpool Art Research Centre. In the 80s it also inspired János Sugár (1958) to make an exhibition and shoot a film in the same gallery.



Opening of the exhibition of György Jovánovics and István Nádler (courtesy of György Jovánovics)

It's 7 p.m. Evening Chronicle Good evening!

From the reports of news agencies:

The Hungarian delegation lead by Jenő Fok has arrived home from a session of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in Warsaw.

Gromiko, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs continued preliminary talks with Egon Bahr, Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office of West Germany, about a pact that would cease the use of force on the part of both countries.

The communist parties of Western Europe held a conference on the situation in Indochina.

Nixon's cabinet members, in a separate meeting, requested the support of the senators of the president's party in reference to the Cambodian offensive. Senator Goodell, who was also present at the meeting, stated that only one participant of the discussion agreed with the Cambodian intervention. The other participants unanimously refused the request for mediation and expressed their disapproval of the offensive.

Two more protesting students were shot in the United States. Last night in Jacksonville, the police attacked students protesting against the Cambodian offensive. They opened fire on a dormitory building because its residents allegedly threw bottles and stones at the police who were beating protesting students in the street. Two students died, 11 have been injured.

Libya has acknowledged Cambodia's National Government. A number of incidents have been reported from the frontlines of the Near East. Palestinian fighters launched a successful missile attack against a semi-military settlement in Israel. Egyptian and Syrian artillery units were also firing at Israeli positions. Israel's artillery launched attacks against two Jordanian villages.

At the Adolf Fényes Hall, the exhibition of painter István Nádler and sculptor György Jovánovics is just in the process of being opened. István Nádler presents 4 older and 8 recent works, as well as silkscreen graphics. From the entrance to the left, the graphic works are displayed first. The first canvas painting of 200 x 120 cm is entitled "Movement". The three paintings of identical size (120 x 120 cm) along the longer wall engage with forms that can be formulated within a square. After the window, a 120 x 200 cm horizontally oriented painting is entitled "Lowlands". The main wall features a 4-piece series with the continuous return of two motifs in an AB-BA rhythm, 180 x 130 cm in size, casein tempera technique. The larger painting behind the radio, "Homage a Vajda", was painted by the young artist in honour of Lajos Vajda. The smaller work is 100 x 120 cm. Finally, to the right of the entrance we see a 200 x 150 cm painting from 1968. It is a re-articulation of the flower motif known from folk art.

György Jovánovics has only put a single artwork on display. What you see in front of me, surrounded by the audience, is identical in its ground-plan to that of the interior, irregular space of the Adolf Fényes Hall. Every one of its angles and sides follows the walls with precision. Its height is 90 cm. Its greatest length is 6 m, its width is 3 m. The total outer circumference of the small and large parts together is 16 m. It is made of slightly pink plaster, which gradually loses its colour with time, until it finally turns completely white. Perhaps it is difficult to see at the moment, but if you look at the top piece that is closest to us, located on the side of the larger piece of the sculpture that is parallel to the smaller, separate piece, you will see a slight difference in colour compared to the other parts. If you touch it, you will feel that the plaster is still wet there. This piece was only cast by the artist yesterday.

And now, as soon as Janos Frank turns the radio off, please consider the exhibition opened.

We, on the other hand, will continue our Evening Chronicle.

János, please turn it off then.

And now: reports from our correspondents.

István Zoltán Vass reports from Szeged.



Event in the garden of Miklós Erdély with the sculpture of György Jovánovics. Photo: György Erdély (courtesy of György Jovánovics)

The tapescript of the opening action. (courtesy of György Jovánovics)

"THE BEST WORK OF MY LIFE..."

PUBLIC LECTURE BY GYÖRGY JOVÁNOVICS

14th April, 1999, 14:30

The photographic and audio documentation can be watched until 23rd April 1999, 4-6 p.m. on Wednesday and Friday

It was one year less than 30 years ago, on 15th March, 1970 that György Jovánovics's and István Nádler's memorable exhibition was opened in the Adolf Fényes Hall. Remembering the event, the art historian Ildikó Nagy wrote the following in an article: "When György Jovánovics organized his first exhibition in 1970, he showed an approximately 90 centimeters high, table-like two-part work of plastic art, made of plaster and covered by a veil, which 'represented' the ground-plan of the exhibition hall. This strange work of art shocked the audience as well as his fellow artists. It was very different from what the public expected of 'sculpture'. We can regard this work symbolically as the beginning of a new way of thinking about sculpture in Hungary." According to Miklós Erdély "this is the work that brought Hungarian art to a world standard." (He probably meant that it had brought it back to a world standard lost since the Second World War.)

Interestingly enough, the phrase "the best work of my life" does not refer to the object displayed in the exhibition hall. Looking back from the perspective of his 60th birthday, when Jovánovics talked about the best work of his life, he was talking about the opening of the exhibition and not the exhibition itself. A rare occurrence in art history!

Jovánovics is replaying the original voice recording of the opening of the exhibition (which the public had only heard once before, during a performance by Jovánovics 2nd January, 1980 in the French Institute, then still in Szegfű Street, with the title "The opening of an exhibition 10 years ago"). Then he will talk, for the first time publically, about how it was made. He'll introduce the photos made at the opening, including a snapshot in which people surround a radio. We can find out why Miklós Erdély was standing there gaping, why János Major was chuckling into his hands, what made Jovánovics himself so self-satisfied, and what were János Frank and István Nádler smiling at so innocently. Why was Károly Tamkó Sirató applauding? We can find out what happened to the work that was meant to decay, and what his intentions were concerning the work. In the end, we can hear Jovánovics's opus entitled "Iron Music:" a "piece for concrete-iron fabric." (A photo documentation will present the "musical instrument" that can no longer be played, as it has been fixed in concrete.)

Invitation leaflet for György Jovánovics' lecture, 1999. (courtesy of György Jovánovics)



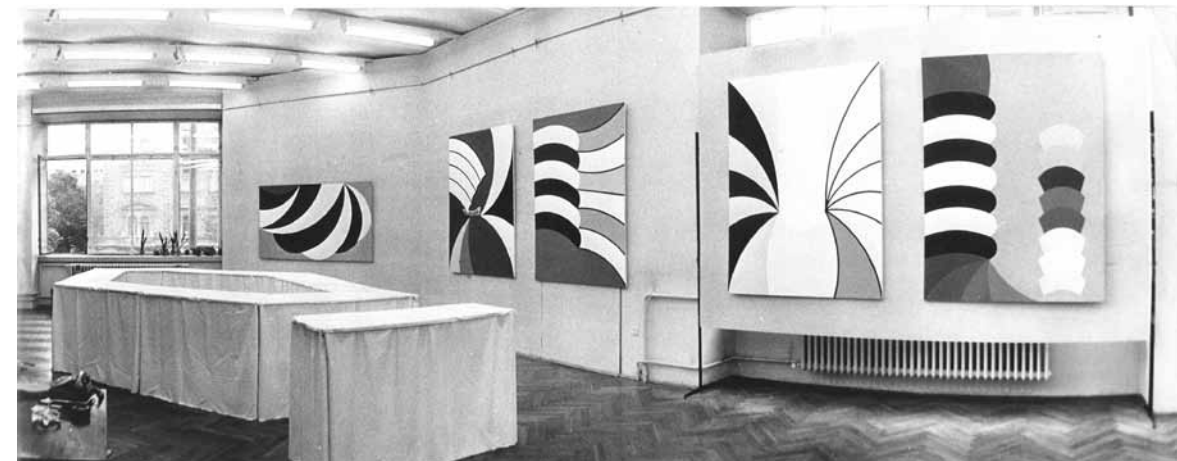
Opening of the exhibition of György Jovánovics and István Nádler (courtesy of György Jovánovics)



György Jovánovics's sculpture in his studio before the exhibition
Photo: András Baranyai



Design by György Jovánovics for his page in the catalogue "Hungarian Artists" (Foksal Gallery, Warsaw, 1972), for which he used a photograph taken at the opening of his 1970 exhibition at the Adolf Fényes Hall



The exhibition of György Jovánovics and István Nádler (courtesy of György Jovánovics)

János Sugár on the Adolf Fényes Hall, his film "Persian Walk" and exhibition "Exhibition Scenery"

As the BBS (Béla Balázs Studio) accepted a film plan of mine in 1984, the producer applied to get the Adolf Fényes Hall as a venue. That is, one year after I finished with the Academy of Fine Arts (to be more exact, they kicked me out), I got the Adolf Fényes Hall, which I had always thought highly of, for 3 days to shoot a film. As the exhibition hall was an exhibition hall in the film too, I could get things done on the film's budget. They prepared the whole exhibition based on my plans. We finished shooting that five minute long scene within half an hour, and I had an exhibition for 3 days, under ideal circumstances, at a venue I could not have dreamed of. I thought it was the most beautiful gallery in the city, and among the best ones: not too big and not too small, with a huge courtyard on the first floor; memorable exhibitions had taken place there – it is a place where the spirit and context of former exhibitions live on. Unfortunately, the place has been given to the Artists' Association, and nothing has happened in it since then; moreover, they have it a new and quite boorish name: the Arcade Gallery. As far as I know, Adolf Fényes was an art collector and a Sunday painter. The opening took place in February 1985. The speech was made by Anikó Szőke: this was her first (!) opening of an exhibition. She made a reference to an earlier work by Jovánovics at my request: one of my favourites, an astonishing work that had been exhibited in the Adolf Fényes Hall.

Excerpt from János Sugár's letter to György Galántai (The co-director of Artpool Art Research Centre), 1999. (courtesy of György Jovánovics)

PSEUDO exhibition

Date: 03. 10. 1970.

Participant: Gyula Pauer (1941)

Location: József Attila Culture House, Budapest

Comments: Gyula Pauer's two day exhibition could be realized in an off-site culture house as scenery for János Gulyás's graduation film at the Hungarian Academy of Theatre and Film. The reporter, Géza Perneczky, art historian and artist, interviewed the audience, critics and the artist. The room's walls, ceiling and floor was covered with plastic foil that was spray painted in a folded state. Gyula Pauer's First Pseudo Manifesto was distributed as a flyer during the opening.

Visitors say

At first I didn't know that this was an exhibition-type thing, the form was so unexpected and unusual.

What I would have loved to ask was if this was an exhibition at all.

I feel like I am inside a sculpture, really, inside the sculpture itself, so that there doesn't even need to be a sculpture anymore, and it no longer matters what is around me; it doesn't matter if it is an exhibition or a sculpture, I am so inside it that I don't care at all.

Finally an environment has been created that no one else in Hungary has managed so far. And I liked the fact that the flyers were randomly scattered, the whole thing had a casual feel about it, an extremely strong grey feeling. This is more than exploring possibilities, Gyula has definitely made a 180 degree turn, but in the best possible direction I think.

He has completely gone against everything he has done till now and it seems that this is very good as well. The only mobile part of the exhibition at the moment – aside from the people who move around in it, of course – is this rotating disc.

(...)

I believe in such initiatives, because as it is realised for two days, people come to see the concept, they pass it on, talk to others about it, take pictures of it, and then the day after tomorrow it will all be taken down. If it was 20 metres, it would still have to be taken down. So existentially it does not prevail, only the concept survives.

I think this is the absolute exhibition when you don't even need sculptures. What for?

(...)

I am a sculptor myself and I am surprised to see this.

[the artist]

I feel that this exhibition, which I have organised, has not been successful.

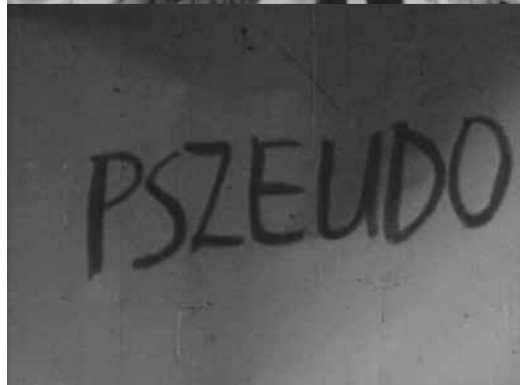
(...)

I feel a little disappointed. But what I wanted I have more or less achieved. I was able to point out and outline the problem. At the moment I feel uncomfortable in this environment and I would really like to get out of here.

As you sit inside the space, you have the feeling that you are in the right place. The interviewer will ask me why I am in the right place. That is difficult to answer. You usually operate in the world with two kinds of impressions: you are either lost or moving in the right direction. Whenever I walk on a nice and straight path, I immediately have the suspicion that I am lost. This diverse, moving, bumpy illusion, which resembles life's accidents, and which in the meantime is as smooth as glass, resembles the real world. And I feel good in it.

Excerpts from the film "Pseudo".

Stills from the film "Pseudo" (director: János Gulyás, 1970, 13' graduation film, Hungarian Film Academy)



The First PSEUDO Manifesto, October, 1970

The English equivalents for the expression PSEUDO are: false, deceptive, unreal, and seemingly real. In the field of sculpture, the term has been used in connection with the works made by Gyula Pauer in 1970. It refers to one of the striking features of sculpture, and therefore one of the new aspects of sculpting. The PSEUDO sculpture does not seem to be what its genuine form actually is. The PSEUDO sculpture is not about the medium of sculpture itself, but rather the circumstances of the medium of sculpture.

One of the historical antecedents of PSEUDO sculpture is MINIMAL ART. MINIMAL sculpture is a kind of plastic art that has been reduced to a few simple geometric forms, the shocking effect of which lies in their pure, almost puritanical appearance and their deliberate avoidance of ornament and sentimentality. Its other antecedent was the illusionist technique of OP ART. The pure form in OP ART is dissolved in the endless possibilities of motion. However, OP ART has remained a two-dimensional art of decorative illusionism.

PSEUDO misleadingly creates the impression of the surface of another sculpture over the puritan forms of MINIMAL sculpture, giving the image of two sculptures simultaneously. This effect is achieved by projecting the picture of a more complex object onto the surface of simple geometrical forms. This is done by means of a photographic process. On the surface of the sculpture there appears the surface of another sculpture. The PSEUDO sculpture thus portrays reality and illusion, the material and the

immaterial, on the same object at the same time. The exact forms are discernible, but perception is always hampered by the illusionist image. Essentially, PSEUDO includes the following questions:

1. the existence of sculpture
2. the absence of sculpture
3. the PSEUDO-like attitude, the manipulated nature of the object

These themes move beyond the material space of sculpture and demand functional interpretation. We consider the following interpretation correct:

The PSEUDO quality depicts the manipulated nature of the sculpture as a work of plastic art. This manipulated nature may characterize the existence of art in general. The manipulated nature of the PSEUDO sculpture, both in its form and in its technique, is only a symbol of the existential manipulated nature of plastic art (and the arts in general).

In the last third of the 20th century modern art entered into the maelstrom of social manipulation by following the path of consumer goods. Of course, PSEUDO cannot tell us about the manipulated nature of the

price, commerce, advertising strategies and functions of art objects, because PSEUDO sculpture is not a historical treatise or sociological essay, nor is it an illustrated popular lecture. The PSEUDO sculpture is a sculpture representing itself as a manipulated sculpture, thus proving the existence of the state of manipulation. PSEUDO reveals itself as a false image, or at least as a complex object that also gives a false image.

But PSEUDO does not commit itself merely to the act of exposure. PSEUDO sculpture carefully sets new surfaces on the surfaces of simple and concrete objects, and these visual elements, settling gently on the surface of the object, present the forms from a new perspective. Consequently PSEUDO not only negates manipulated existence, but affirms it as well, exposing its complexity and structural richness. Finally, PSEUDO cannot be interpreted as an unambiguous stance. With the dialectical unity of affirmation and negation it gestures towards the world beyond it, but it also reverts into itself.

PSEUDO remains neither philosophy nor history, but what it was at the very moment of its birth – sculpture. PSEUDO will exist as long as appearance is a real factor, and vice versa.



Stills from the film „Pseudo“ (director: János Gulyás, 1970, 13' graduation film, Hungarian Film Academy)



The exhibition
Photo: László Beke and János Gyulyás



The exhibition
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of János Gulyás)



Preparing the installation
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of János Gulyás)



Dóra Maurer: "Once We Departed", (1972), photo-action
(Miklós Erdély, Tibor Gáyor, György Jovánovics, Tamás Szenjőbý)
(courtesy of Dóra Maurer)

DIRECT WEEK

Date: 07. 06. 1972.
Participants: László Beke, Miklós Erdély, Gyula Gulyás, Miklós Haraszti, László Haris, Ágnes Háy, Tamás Hencze, Péter Lajtai, Péter Legéndy, József Molnár V., Gyula Pauer, Margit Rajczy, Tamás Szentjóby, Endre Tót
Organised by: Gyula Pauer (1941), Tamás Szentjóby (1944)
Location: Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár
Comments: Direct Week was an exhibition and event series that incorporated works and actions replying to Pauer's and Szentjóby's call, as well as lectures and screenings that were originally in the program of the Avantgarde Festival planned in April in a Budapest Club, but banned shortly before its scheduled date.

The chapel at Balatonboglár will be available to us between July 1–8, 1972

We can hope to broaden our possibilities through direct contacts. Our programme makes use of means through which we can obtain direct feedback. In other words the audience comes into contact with us not through contemplation but through activity.
From July 1st to 7th we will hold a “DIRECT WEEK”. (So we are not organizing an “exhibition” and we don't make use of classical means)
On July 8th we will “re-organize” the “cancelled” AVANGARD FESTIVAL, which was originally to be held on April 30th
(We will send out invitations to the events of the day)
One can contribute to the completion of DIRECT WEEK in two ways:
a/ personally - : presentations, concepts evolved on site, happenings, events, body, agitation, other actions
b/ through various media - : film, slide, tape recorder, projects, concept-sheets, message, correspondence, environments, etc.
The AVANGARD FESTIVAL program will begin in the early afternoon and continue until late evening.
The program is essentially identical with that previously planned.
You must provide whatever accessories you may need. (There are only sockets)
Participants: the participants of the AF + Margit Rajczy, Péter Türk.



Visitors sleeping in the Chapel during the “Direct Week”
The work “Conflagration Mock Up” by Tamás Szentjóby can be seen in the background
Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

Villány, June 18, 1972
Gyula Pauer, Tamás Szentjóby



Call for the Direct Week (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

Tamás Szentjóby: Exclusion exercise - Punishment-preventive autotherapy

- I. You can ask anything from the self-sentenced and
- II. You can ask the following:
- Are all life-schemes that exclude even one other human being immoral?

– Can one form a community with another person without being completely free oneself?

– Is culture's real purpose to make one conscious of the fact that one's fate is identical to history?

– Is it the most important thing to discover and realise what is needed in life?

– Those who bear the unbearable, do they know nothing about life? - Know nothing about that interdependence that is contained in life: - Can he bear himself without us, is everything hopeless without us?

– Can the blockade of the present be broken only by a new type of behaviour?

– Is the realisation of the future in the present an acceleration of our lives?

– Because historical time applies to the totality and not to the individual, would you try to live the facts of the present and your future desolation simultaneously?

– Is this all to manifest difference and therefore there to activate a potentially different?

– Can the changeable also be unfinished? Is the unfinished to be changed? Is unchange: suffering? Is incompleteness: suffering?

– Do you hope that you can make us conscious of interdependence by demonstrating that we are all at each other's mercy?

– Is there punishment in your action?

– Is there action in your punishment?

– Is action a sin? Is punishment a sin?

– Is sin action?

– Is action punishment?

– What is a sin?

– Is sin that action that causes suffering?

– Is sin that action that causes no change?

– Is there anything at all that you can call an action that would not produce a change, and whose existence is not aimed at reducing suffering?

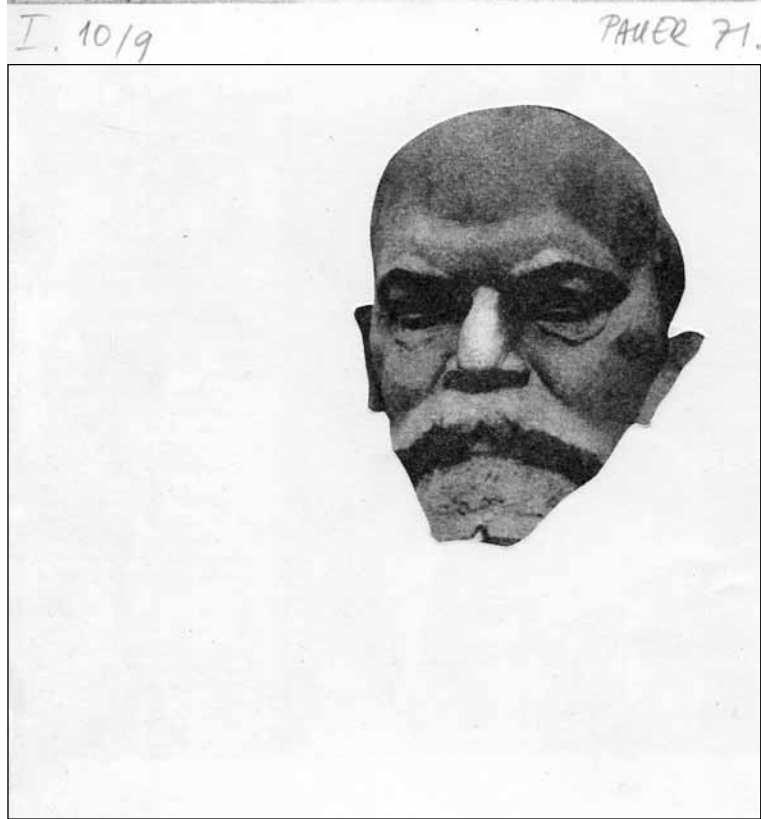
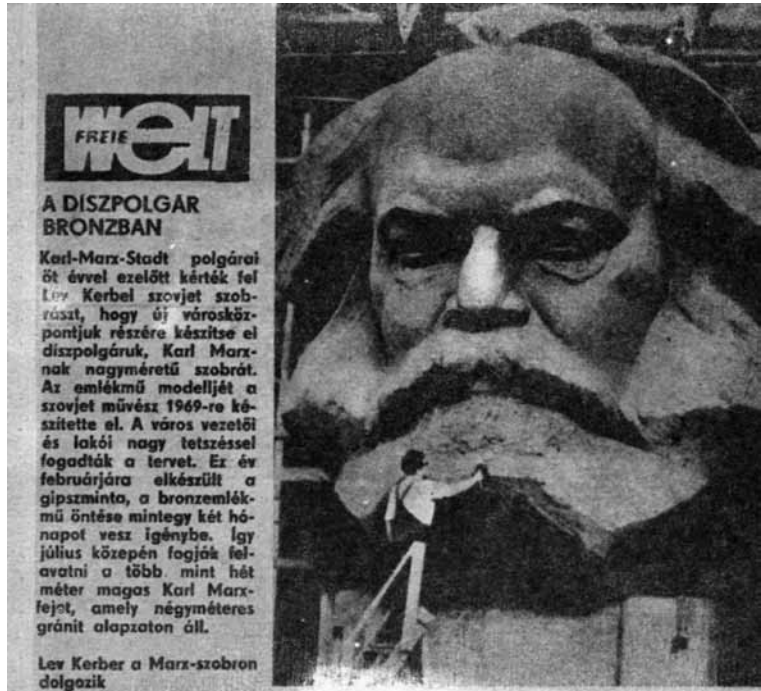
– Are you punishing yourself because by self-punishment taking the punishment of self-punishment t you release the punisher from the punishment that is not action: that is sin?

– Do you feel particularly exposed because you cannot see to whom you are talking?”



Tamás Szentjóby: “Exclusion Exercise - Punishment-Preventive Auto-Therapy”
Photo: Benke László (courtesy of Tamás St. Auby)

Mihály Kornis, Gyula Pauer, Júlia Veres, Miklós Haraszti (from left to right) recording Gyula Pauer's “Pseudo Advertistment”
Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)



Gyula Pauer: “Marx-Lenin”, 1971. It was exhibited as a leaflet with the cut out contour folded on the newspaper clipping so that the visitors could open it. (courtesy of Gyula Pauer)



Miklós Erdély: “Brushwood is the Proletariat of Fuel”
Captions: Semi-Brushwood, Miscellaneous Brushwood, Brushwood to “Épater Le Bourgeois”, Birch, Stone Stricken Brushwood, Brushwood Against Demagogy, Packed Brushwood Brushwood As You Need! Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

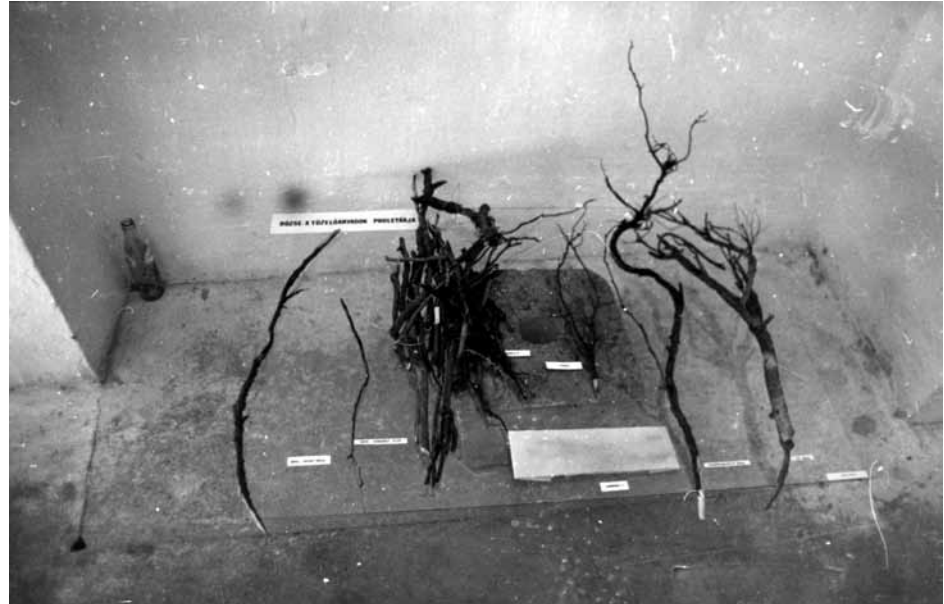
Gyula Pauer: Pseudo advertisement

PSEUDO: FALSE! DECEPTIVE! UNREAL!
PSEUDO: SEEMINGLY REAL!

DOWN WITH UNCERTAINTY!
FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH PSEUDO and you will never be embarrassed in the company of erudite people again, because PSEUDO is the mode of existence of modern man, the secret to self-assurance!
YOU ARE UNIMAGINABLE WITHOUT PSEUDO!
With the help of PSEUDO you can gain insight into the most profound problems of our day!
PSEUDO IS A VIEW OF ART!
Don't fall for MINIMAL ART!
Could you ever be sure that you are witnessing a real conflict caused by the real collision of true elements? PSEUDO persuades you with the greatest ease that you cannot be certain of this because believe it or not PSEUDO DOES NOT SEEM TO BE WHAT ITS GENUINE FORM ACTUALLY IS!
Neither should you purchase from the OP ART firm! It is a cunning narcotics factory!
IF YOU ARE MANIPULATED, MANIPULATE BACK! PSEUDO provides you with the opportunity by exposing its own manipulated manner.

Practical, advantageous! It includes CONCEPT ART as well, because CONCEPT ART can also be PSEUDO and PSEUDO can also be CONCEPT, in fact, PESUDO can be PSEUDO and PSEUDO-PSEUDO is also PSEUDO, even PSEUDO-PSEUDO-PSEUDO is PSEUDO. DON'T HESITATE! PUT YOUR TRUST IN PSEUDO, BECAUSE PSEUDO IS YOUR FRIEND!
Thanks to PSEUDO you can know that what is sold to you as art is only a tool in the economic and ideological manipulations of the prevailing authority. Be you a farmer, an engineer, a civil servant or a technician, whatever layer of society you inhabit, in the future you must know:
PSEUDO-QUALITY MEANS THE MANIPULATED MANNER OF THE ARTWORK! THE MANIPULATED MANNER CHARACTERIZES THE EXISTENCE OF ART IN GENERAL! THE MANIPULATED NATURE OF THE EXISTENCE OF ART IS A SYMBOL FOR THE MANIPULATED NATURE OF LIFE IN GENERAL!
Let me pose three questions and you will concede that PSEUDO is right:
IS ARTWORK THAT IS MANIPULATED STILL ARTWORK?
IS ART THAT CREATES UNTRUE WORKS STILL ART?
WHAT KIND OF LIFE DOES NOT CREATE ART?
Don't fret over this! PSEUDO will resolve it for you!
ARTWORK THAT IS MANIPULATED IS INDEED ARTWORK, IF IT ADMITS TO BEING PSEUDO!
ART THAT CREATES MANIPULATED WORKS IS INDEED ART IF IT ADMITS TO BEING PSEUDO!
LIFE THAT CREATES PSEUDO ART CAN STILL BE SAVED!
I autograph the phenomena of Pseudo every Tuesday:
Gyula Pauer May, 1972.

The text of the “Il. Pseudo Manifesto” performed by Júlia Veres and Miklós Haraszti in several languages and recorded on tape with contemporary hit songs during intermissions was played in the chapel during the “Direct Week” (courtesy of Gyula Pauer and Artpool Art Research Centre)



Miklós Erdély: “Brushwood is the Proletariat of Fuel” – action and object
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

TODAY YOU OPEN THE EXHIBITION responsibility-taking action

Date: 07. 28. 1972.

Participants: György Galántai (1941),
István Haraszty (1934)

Location: Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár
Comments: The action took place during the exhibition of the Pécs Workshop (Ferenc Ficzek, Károly Halász, Károly Kismányoki, Ferenc Lantos, Sándor Pinczehelyi, Kálmán Szijártó, Katalin Nádor) and István Haraszty's kinetic sculptures.

Interview with István Haraszty, 1998

[...] for example there was an action that I came up with there, a ribbon bearing the three colors of the Hungarian flag was stretched across the entrance with a sign next to it about how "Today YOU open the exhibition". Well now, scissors were also fastened to the door post on a short string so that no one could cut this ribbon. I was well aware of how much sweat and sacrifice had gone into what we were exhibiting there, as was the case for the members of the Pécs Workshop as well. And I said, whoever enters should bow down and slip under this ribbon. So those who bent down and slipped under the ribbon, that was so gratifying to us, that lo and behold, we had not worked in vain. And then comrades of the various councils from nearby towns like Kaposvár slipped under the ribbon, in dark attire, to verify that nothing had been put on exhibit that they had not signed.

Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)



György Galántai, manuscript, 1998

In the first version the ribbon was a shred of toilet paper and you could cut it, in other words I thought that everyone should open the exhibition at their own risk, the artists should not be responsible for everything, so I called it the action of assuming responsibility. Since so many people came and we had to replace the ribbon continuously, Haraszty came up with a better version, which I documented with a series of slides.

Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 138.



MEETING OF CZECH, SLOVAK AND HUNGARIAN ARTISTS

Date: 26.08.1972.

Participants: Imre Bak, Peter Bartos, László Beke, Miklós Erdély, Stano Filko, György Galántai, Péter Halász, Béla Hap, Ágnes Háy, Tamás Hencze, György Jovánovics, J. H. Kocman, Péter Legédy, János Major, László Méhes, Gyula Pauer, Vladjimir Popovic, Petr Stembera, Rudolf Sikora, Tamás Szentjóby, Anna Szeredi, Endre Tót, Péter Türk, Jiri Valoch

Organized by: László Beke (1944)

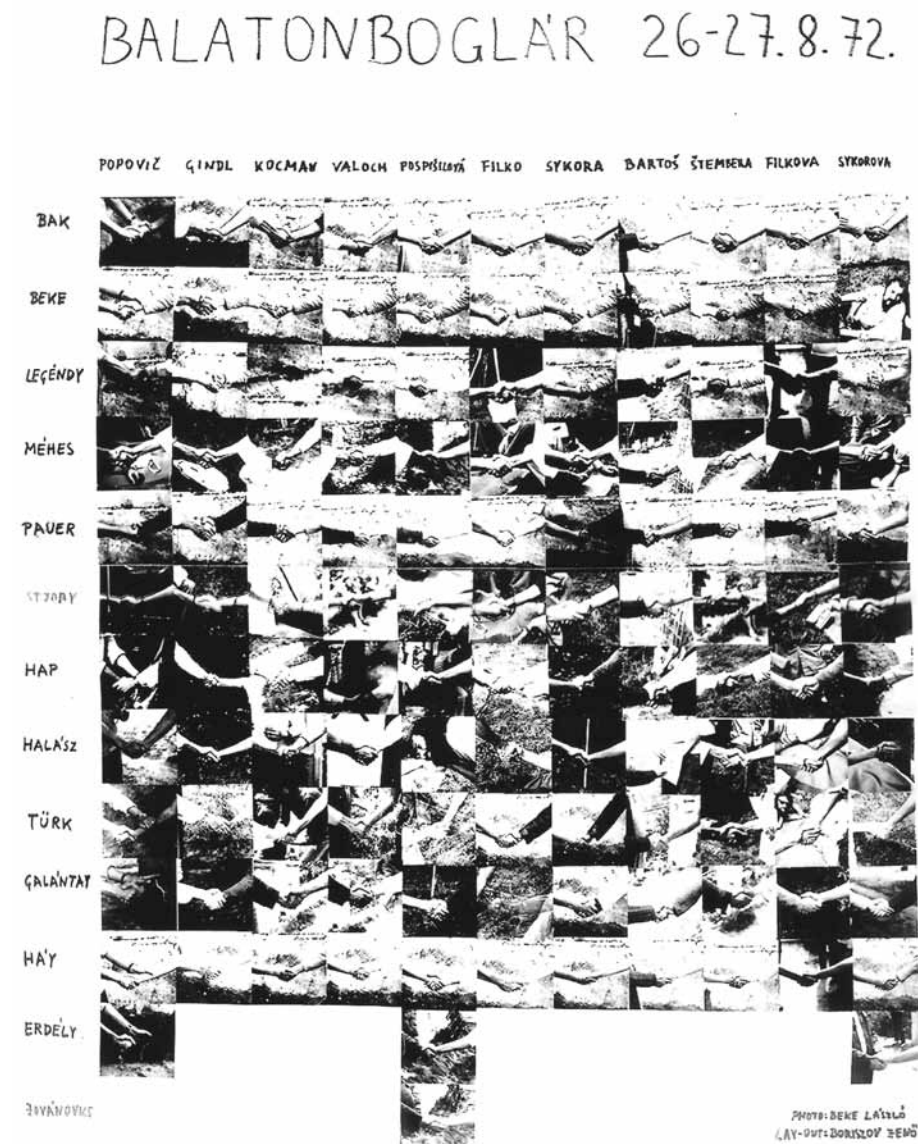
Location: Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár

Comments: During the two-day meeting an exhibition and various actions were organized by László Beke, who invited artists from Czechoslovakia and Hungary to create contacts with each other.

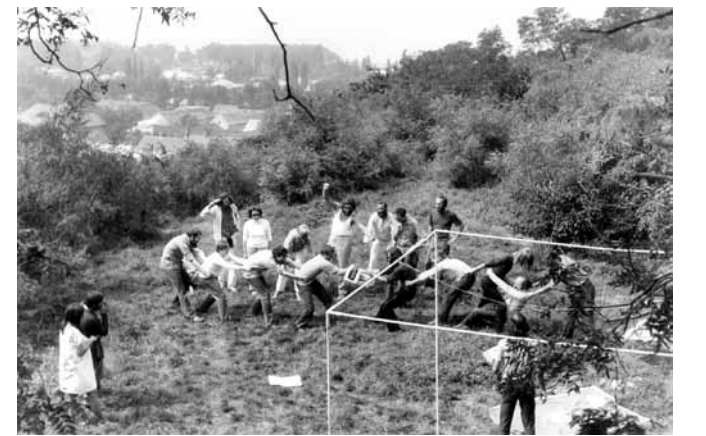
An interview with Gyula Pauer, 1998

The weekend was organized by Beke, and we had a great time together. I almost learned to speak in Czech and Slovak, and they almost learned Hungarian. We closed the event with a photo demonstration, where everyone shook hands with everyone else, and we took photos of this, hands holding hands, one by one, and put the small cubes next to one another like a mosaic. In the end, all those who were shaking hands signed the photos. By this action, we symbolically made peace with each other, at a time when our political system was still in conflict with Czechoslovakia. We made peace, and that's what was important.

Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 142.



"Shaking hands" action board
Photo: László Beke (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)



Tug of War Action
Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

Interview with László Beke, 1998

In this period I tried to work in liminal fields. There had been a few things in Boglár already that I made in order to demonstrate that even though I was not an artist, a critic could produce art, too. I was and am also oddly attracted to Central Eastern Europe, and I had always been irritated by the fact that while Slovaks and Hungarians have seemed to hate one another for 150 years, whenever we take a closer look at things, we can co-operate in really productive ways. So I began to learn Slovak, because I wanted to do something personally to melt this tension. This is also significant, as I think that 10-15 Hungarians and perhaps even more Slovak artists still rely on this: that they could and can have such great ideas together. This event was also initiated because of this. I somehow happened to come across an English language periodical with a special issue on Czechoslovakia. It featured a fascinating photo of the unified troops, which had just marched into Czechoslovakia, lining up to play a game of "tug-of-war", immediately before or after occupying a village. Thus, I organised a tableau vivant to this effect in Balatonboglár. The whole thing was put together in a very naïve manner, of course: instead of using a rope, Hungarian and Czechoslovakian artists, separated into two groups, played tug-of-war with the issue – this photo – of the aforementioned periodical. The story is a bit forced, as I suddenly realised that this was not only a political allusion but also, in some way, the magical annihilation of a photograph, while also being a scenario of a picture within a picture. It was similar to composing a tableau vivant to reconstruct an event for a historical painting. I had a great time coming up with this idea and, all in all, it is good that we did this.

Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 141.

György Galántai's diary, 27th August, 1972

Saturday: a conversation outdoors. The basic plan of the meeting is the documentation of the meeting itself. There were approximately 15 Hungarian and 15 Czech artists who took part. They were together from 2 p.m. on Saturday until 2 p.m. on Sunday. There were actions in the meantime.

Beke: on three walls facing the door

Czech - Slovak - Hungarian

words - words - words

On the big wall: Beke's handshake concept

Beke's action: approximately 15x15 photos of Czech and Hungarian artists shaking hands.

Pauer: pseudo-cards on the right-hand side of the door, made together [with the participants]

Szentjóby: Rob Nieco Aby

Som Mohol

Pomahat!

Imre Bak brought exercise-books and handed out envelopes; everyone put their fingerprints inside, then sealed it and put their names and the date on it, Balatonboglár, 27. 08. 1972. 12.03

Miklós Erdély's photo on the right-hand side of the door, on the column next to Pauer's wall: three photos of girls (portraits), the bottom and the top are x, the middle one y (twins)

J. H. Kocman Stamp Activity Love cards on the wall, to the left from the entrance.

Péter Türk's complaint wall

Endre Tót's telegram

László Méhes wrote a text with white chalk on a white base

Legédy: filled in the appeal

Stano distributed Filko's catalogues

Péter Halász's suggestion was not realized: everyone would have gone to the chapel, blindfolded, holding hands. (Documented by photographs).

Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 142.

LÁSZLÓ BEKE, MIKLÓS ERDÉLY, GYÖRGY JOVÁNOVICS, PÉTER LEGÉNDY, JÁNOS MAJOR, GYULA PAUER, AND TAMÁS SZENTJÓBY exhibition and actions

Date: 24. 06. 1973.

Participants: László Beke (1944), Miklós Erdély (1928-1986), György Jovánovics (1939), Péter Legéndy (1948), János Major (1936-2008), Gyula Pauer (1941), Tamás Szentjóbý (1944)

Location: Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár

Comments: This exhibition – presented two months before the Chapel Studio was occupied and closed by the police—did not have any title and was completed spontaneously with works and actions during two weeks. The works exhibited were used as props for theatrical performances in the next few weeks.



Visitors viewing the exhibition. Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center)

Interview with Tamás St. Auby, 1998

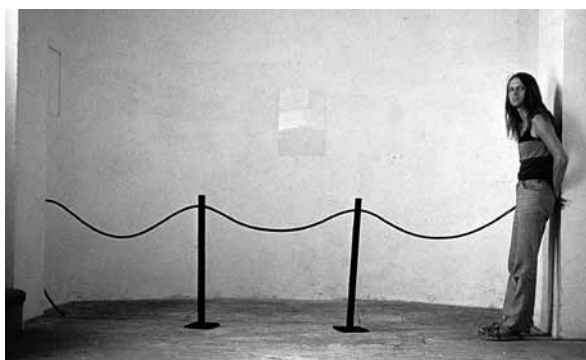
I exhibited a construction in Balatonboglár, too, which dealt with what was forbidden.

Art historians often assume that this is related to the three categories: supported, tolerated, and forbidden.¹ It is related to these, too, but the basic concept is embedded in an aesthetic system – it refers to what is determined as forbidden by the state and the church. Not in the order of socialism or state socialism and its church, actually, but world-wide. What was important for me was to name this territory, the territory of what is forbidden, and to suggest that this should be forbidden, as art has always been expressly such for us.

In Balatonboglár, I put an A4 size sheet of paper in the altar's place. It had one sentence written on it with very small letters: Be forbidden! I set up a cordon in front of it, so when the audience reached it, they could not read what it said, as it was too far away. In order to be able to read it, one had to climb over the barrier, and when someone did that, they could read: Be forbidden! So they could read exactly what they had done: they had stepped over a barrier.

Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 151

¹ Classification used for cultural practices in this period.



Tamás Szentjóbý in front of his work "Be forbidden!" Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)



Miklós Erdély in the Chapel, above his work "God is Little", in the background "János Major's Coat" Photo: Júlia Veres (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)



János Major as a living tomb Photo: György Galántai (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

Interview with György Jovánovics, 1998

"This work entitled "János Major's Coat", which became paradigmatic in Hungarian art [...] was born during a train ride. I was travelling to Balatonboglár with Erdély and Major, and we knew that the three of us would exhibit something, but as it turned out, I was not the only one who did not know what to show. I thought I would improvise, like I had done with the small white square in plaster; Major and Erdély had not prepared either. While we were travelling, Jancsi Major took his coat off, as he was hot, and hung it up. God only knows who was the first to declare that this was a work of art... I have not heard of Erdély claiming this for himself, and Major has never said so either."

Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 154

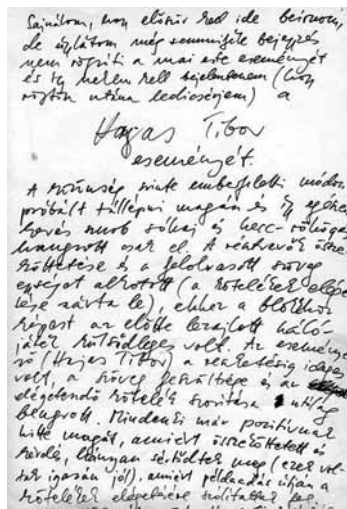
FREEDOM INDUSTRY BROADCAST, CHANNEL 4 reading action and happening

Date: 21.07.1973

Participant: Tibor Hajas (1946-1980)

Location: Chapel Studio, Balatonboglár

Comments: The text was read as part of an action performed in the Chapel Studio in Balatonboglár in 1973. While reading out the text Hajas tied the audience together, then burned the ropes according to a guestbook entry.



Miklós Haraszti's entry in the guest book (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Centre)

A Guest-Book Entry

I am sorry that I am the first to write a note here, but as I see, there are no notices yet of tonight's events, so I have to announce (and then slash)

Tibor Hajas's event.

The audience tried to get over itself almost heroically, so there were only a few snobbish sighs and bothering guffaws. The tying together of the participants and the text read out formed a good union (closed by the burning of the ties). The previous net game had been external compared to this block. The event-creator (Tibor Hajas) was shaking with nervousness. One has to think of the tension of the text and the ties to be burned subsequently even after the event. Everyone considered themselves positive because they were tied up, and it's a question how many were offended (those were the ones who felt really good) by being called upon to burn the ties in an exemplary way.

21st July, 1973. Miklós Haraszti

What kind of country doesn't have a capital city? Undeveloped? Inferior? And what if it has more than one? Or if it is in the process of changing locations?

What country only has a border to the north and not to the south? Or the other way around. Non-autonomous? Not fit to negotiate? A joke?

What kind of power block doesn't have ruling power? Defenseless? Weak? Is it even a power block?

What kind of army doesn't have a general staff? A disorganized mob? Impotent? Boring?

What kind of general order refers to the day before? Historical? Fair? Obscene?

What kind of a flag is one which is only partially used? Secret? Unhealthy? Diluted?

What kind of monument doesn't refer to anything? Nonsense? A private matter? Illegal?

What kind of code of law can be censured by anyone? Illegal? Pornographic? Unclean?

What kind of a punishment doesn't manifest in any form? Cowardly? Counterrevolutionary?

Domestic industry-like?

What kind of solidarity has opinions and programs that change from one person to the next?

Soft? Commercial? Kitsch?

What kind of family has generations that continuously switch roles? Undisciplined? Sexually immature? Truant?

What kind of job is one that is not performed by anyone? Non-productive? Unpayable? A nightmare?

What kind of qualification is valid for only fifteen seconds? Does it allow for abuse of power? Does it break the rules? Is it cruel?

What kind of identification card is that in which I replace the photo twice a day to reflect the changes in me? Unscientific? Lacking in art? Expressly urban?

A question makes a statement—about a possibility, a probability, a conceivability—without making me its prisoner. The question of which I can be a prisoner is unrealized freedom. Unrealized freedom is a trap.

Realized freedom is a trap. It is a statement of which I can be made prisoner. A free prisoner of my free statement. I make myself compellable to my freedom and punishable if I act against it.

Realized freedom is a standard. A standard is the basis of mass production. Realized freedom is suitable for mass production.

The possibility of becoming independent: freedom in the process of realization; self-contradiction, contradicting myself, an instant exit from my choices.

I make statements against my conviction so that I am held accountable for it by others.

I submit a lawful application to commit an illegal act.

I make intellectual efforts in order to prove that the human brain is not meant for thinking.

I make demands. When they are met, I demand withdrawal.

I play falsely so that I can cry cheater.

Every day, I file a written complaint about myself.

I must know my interests; I must remember the present immediately. I am to try and upset my plans. I am to pull the rug from under my feet. I am to compromise myself. I am not to leave any time for defending myself. I am not to expect any goodwill from myself. I am to be ungrateful to myself. I am to undermine my self-esteem. I am not to share my joy and pain with myself.

I am to slander myself. I am to refrain from considering my problems. I am to doubt my sincerity.

I am to be public. I am to doubt my sincerity publicly.

I am to upset my plans publicly. I am to contradict myself publicly. I am to be democratic with myself.

Everything that is public is a proclamation, if you will.

Every action is a proclamation, if you will.

Every existence is a proclamation, if you will.

Performed in Balatonboglár on July 21, 1973



Tibor Hajas: "Freedom- Industry Broadcast Channel 4." reading action and happening Photo: Júlia Veres (Törvénytelen Avantgárd. [Illegal Avant-garde] Eds.: Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári. Artpool. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 2003. p 160.)

HE ROPES THE COW WITH ROPE

action-reading

Date: 1973. 04. 08.
Participants: Tamás Szentjóby (1944) with the assistance of Péter Turcsány (poet, the owner of the dog).
Location: Univestity Stage, Budapest
Comments: The action in form of a lecture was delivered as part of the “Cultural Messenger ‘Holmi IV’ “. The text was read by the artist accompanied by Fluxus-like actions, and was published 16 years later in an anthology (Szógettó) including relevant texts from the neo-avant-garde period.

There is a music stand in the foreground of the stage, on which sits a pigeon. Along the length-wise axis of the stage a rope is stretched out on the ground. The performer enters and reads aloud from the text placed on the music stand. The performer removes the music stand with the pigeon. The rope rises, and attached to one end, on the right entrance to the stage, a barking Alsatian dog appears, which has so far been controlled by its owner. And on the left entrance to the stage, on the other end of the rope, a table is being pulled by the rope tied to a pulley located behind the right entrance. The table is covered with a white tablecloth with a bulge in the middle. A cat is tied to the leg of the table. As the dog approaches the table and thus the cat, he draws them towards himself. When the dog and the table with the cat reach center stage, the performer enters and rips open the tablecloth at the bulge. On the table stands the pigeon.



Tamás Szentjóby: He Ropes the Cow with Rope

Ernesto Che Guevara, President of the Cuban National Bank, said in a statement to French journalist Jean Marcilly:

“Of course it is very unfair when a very intelligent person earns exactly the same as an intellectually stunted person. In fact a very intelligent person ought to earn *less*, since either nature or God (it doesn’t matter what we call it) granted him at birth the lifelong investment of the creative spirit, a treasure that cannot be bought, unlike others who were at a disadvantage the moment they were born. Che created an unusual structure from three elements – the gifted, the untalented and money.

What sort of structure had been familiar until then?

The first: where the able person received more than the less able.

The second: recognizing the absurdity of the above, life was so organized that everyone, the able and the less able alike, received exactly the same.

Che’s suggestion transcends these structures and offers a new one. Clearly, it is not simply just that he reorganized these three elements by arbitrarily inverting their usual order, but he also reconstructed its inner meaning according to an original idea. In order to create a new structure from a pre-existing structure we must recognize our fundamental, true interests. When we become conscious of our true interests, a demand is formed – almost spontaneously – in which the particular new structure can be created. Che was compelled to submit his suggestion within a system of relations in which money had to be taken into consideration. This is important to note so that we do not assume that the new proposed structure is no longer exchangeable with a radically new one. Che Guevara, President of the Cuban National Bank, hated money, and had other elements of reality allowed, would have withdrawn money from circulation. This would be clearly the most far-reaching change in the person-money relationship. I’m saying all this because I would like to thank the present forces of structural change that have appropriated Che’s splendid project, adapted it as their own and to current circumstances, and thus have given me the opportunity to talk about a re-classification of cultural politics, a structure that has so far given a forum only to the very talented or those showing great promise.

Because I have now the opportunity to experience this new structure, that is that I permitted to hold an educational lecture in front of a substantial public, my obligation, as I see it, is to speak – while expressing my gratitude – precisely about the nature of this change.

So my topic is the new classification of the elements of reality.

In the Che quote the linguistic structure of the elements were left unchanged when compared to the previous state of affairs. The elements have been inverted resulting in a new relationship to reality effecting change internally on the prior linguistic form. So it appears that language is the schema of life. It’s schema, that is it’s coffin, which the act, the form-giving act, reveals and permeates. If we devote our lives to freedom, to changing our lives and to the homo ludens program, then starting from such a structure, investigating the possibilities enables us to construct instructions for ourselves that clash with the limitations of surrounding life, the schema, the coffin; they will permeate it, and give us the possibility of living our life within a broader framework.

Let us choose a sentence as an example:
He ropes the cow with rope.

In this sentence, elements, structure, and meaning fit into our lives with the same infinite simplicity and naturalness as the sentence “He is talented and is therefore well-paid”. Starting from the idea of a new form of classification we leave intact the linguistic structure itself, but we bring it into connection with other elements of reality – that is, we transform it into action – it transpires that we are not dealing simply with the inner relations of linguistic form, but the restructuring produced by these new methods creates confusion in its environment, forces confrontation and stimulates it to change. It stands out as a foreign element in its environment, producing the same effect as when, in an imaginary police record, in place of every noun this sentence appears: “*He ropes the cow with rope*”. Undoubtedly, this will open new perspectives on our lives, and thus we may boldly state that the old structure brings forth new structure, a new phase of life. If we recognize that we are free, and we are capable of reorganizing and regrouping the elements of life, then we at once realize also that while we live we cannot do otherwise than continuously break through the given, existing schema, coffin.



If we recognize that we are free, and we are capable of reorganizing and regrouping the elements of life according to our interests, then we must use our freedom to demonstrate this very freedom.
He ropes the cow with rope!

Examples of reclassification of linguistic form:

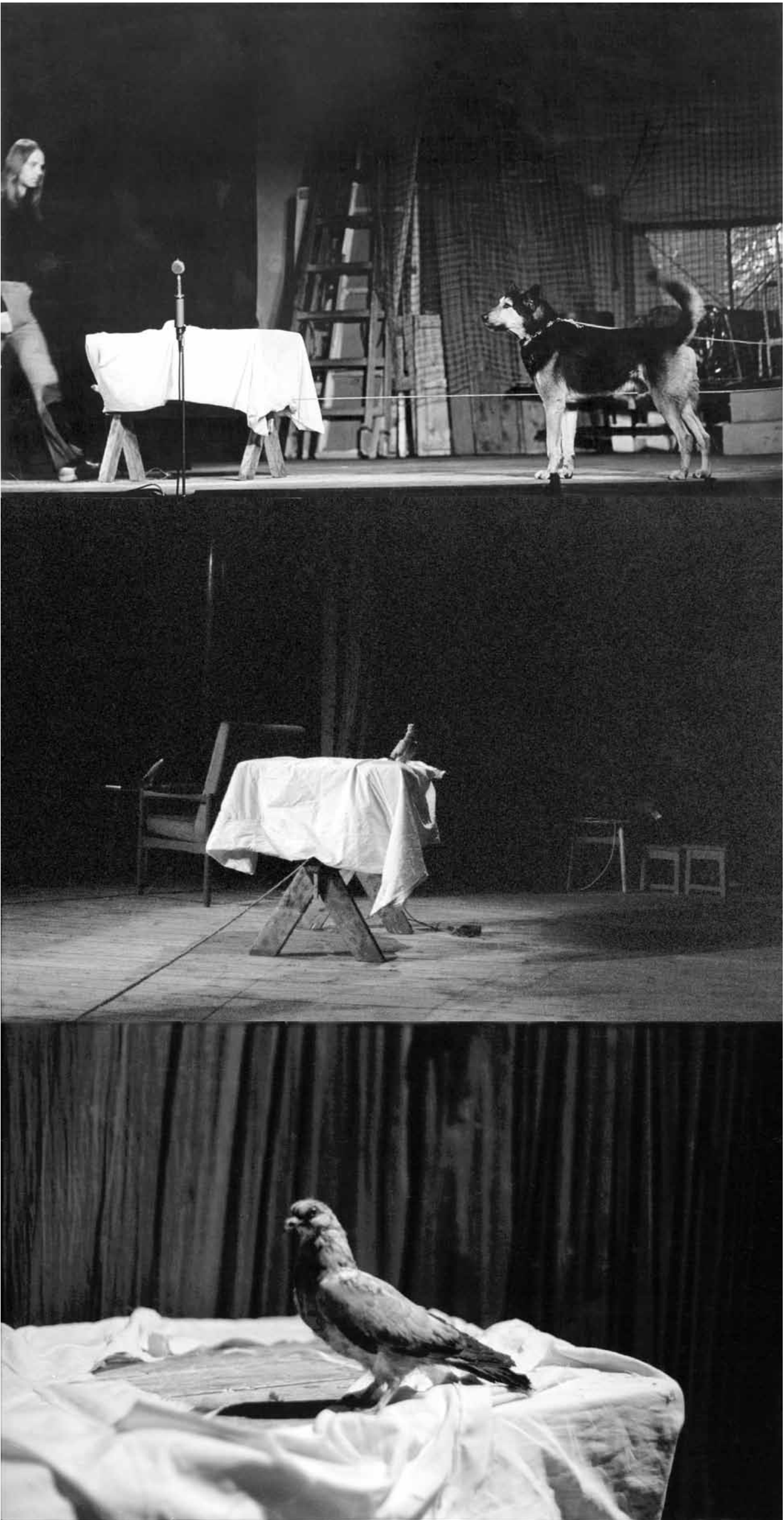
He ropes the rope with rope.
He milks the cow with rope.
He grazes the cow with milk.
He grazes the shoe with mustard gas.
He washes his back with skis.
He sniffs money with a gas-mask.
He sings the anthem with sugar.
He reads the denunciation with joy.
He hits the trousers with a stick.
He ties the wreath with wire.
He forgets the sorrow with wine.
He destroys the gun with a cudgel.
He strokes herbs with embers.
He misunderstands the constitution with good intentions.
He chases birds with a boat.
And so on.

Adhering to the structure of the sample sentences produces new classifications that in part realize manageable life-phases, and in part end in absurdity.

If we devote our lives to freedom, changing our lives and the *homo ludens* program, then starting from such a structure, investigating the possibilities enables us to construct instructions for ourselves that clash with the limitations of surrounding life, the schema, the coffin; they will permeate it, and give us the possibility of living our life within a broader framework.

The next operation derives from a new classification of the sample sentence “*He ropes the cow with rope*” in a version that is both within and without itself, that is, a new relation is brought about in the environment, even if it is limited by the space and time in which it happens.

Long live the new classifications!
Long live the structure of cultural politics, where those with minimal abilities can plan their lives as freely as the very talented.
Long live the cultural-political structure that permits the introduction of new classifications.
Long live the forum for the untalented!
Long live the new classifications!



(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

STREET exhibition

Date: 06. 23. 1974.

Participant: Erzsébet Schaár (1908-1975)

Opening by: János Pilinszky (1921-1981)

Location: Csók István Gallery, Székesfehérvár

Comments: The last exhibition of Erzsébet Schaár was accompanied by a catalogue containing the poems of János Pilinszky coupled with the art pieces, next to which they were read out. The process of building the exhibition and the opening with reading of the poems was filmed by János Gulyás (1946). The installation was later displayed in Lucerne and then, finally, in Pécs, where the temporal styrofoam components of the sculptures were replaced with pieces made of concrete. Géza Pernecky writes about Schaár in his comprehensive essay about the Iparterv group and the neo-avant-garde in Hungary.

Géza Pernecky on Erzsébet Schaár

(...)

The Neoclassical Branch of the Neo-Avantgarde

There were two others who died of the Hungarian model: Miklós Erdély and Erzsébet Schaár. They both fully understood and experienced 100 per cent this artificial swamp of narrow-mindedness and blunt mortal danger, day to day, and they were also the ones who had to pay the highest cost, even though very differently, for their day-to-day struggles with this permanent state. Erzsi has hardly been mentioned, so I should write about her.

Did she have anything to do with the Hungarian avant-garde, or did she simply become a significant artist because she was a significant artist? Of course she did not belong to the Iparterv generation (a group of neo-avantgard artists operating in the late 1960s). She was married to Tibor Vilt, and thus in fact was closer to the generation of the European School. She, however, refused to be placed among them, and perhaps there was indeed no more basis to this than her birth date.

For decades, she was known as a sensitive portrait sculptor. It was only in the second half of the 1960s that something suddenly threw her *in front* of the Iparterv-group. An outsider could feel that Schaár suddenly stepped over the constructivism, post-surrealism and abstract expressionism that had been surrounding her, going beyond even concept art or things made in the spirit of *samizdat*, to become a master of architectural space and the human figure. At that very moment, she started to form the *pas de deux* of human beings and houses out of folding shutters and plastic tablets. I use the reference to dancing in pairs in this way, in this unusually broad sense of the word, to conjure up theatrical tragedy and sacred space, too. The music stops, the figures make a last stir, making polystyrene rustle for a last time, and then they stiffen forever. While the light is withdrawing with a frightened squeak between the mirrors and glass panes standing on both sides, I can see Erzsi holding forth, an ashtray in her left hand, and a smoking cigarette raised high in her right hand, coming forward slowly in this environment, looking behind us, seeking the horizon, her shoes pattering. She was the only *living* organism in this scenery created by herself, which left every mildly tempered event behind. What was she looking for?

And here we are: autonomy. The inner light, warmth and independence Hungary was never able to give her (think it over: her first exhibitions took place in the 1930s!). This is where she got her obstinacy from, her headstrong hardness, her strength that could desiccate gentleness and create from it dried flowers, with which she walked around in the world and acted in the field of art. (...)

As for the dry facts: her most important work was the one entitled *Street* set up in Székesfehérvár. She built this in 1974, but it stood there only temporarily, for one month: then she herself demolished it. She rebuilt it one year later in Luzern, in a reduced form, and this is the version that can be seen in Pécs today, made of lasting material. However, there are many things one cannot find in this finalized version: forms joined by the tranquillity of decomposing leaves, the melancholy of forgotten portrait-sculptures, the naturalness of passing, this penetrating and worn mausoleum-effect – things that were really personal in her work. It became a sculpture and ceased to be an environment. However, her middle-sized and smaller works did manage to preserve and still radiate her original intention: the superhuman attempt to decide how big her world is and who should be part of it. To catch and hold pieces of furniture, walls, human beings. This world is repeating the classical dimensions of architecture, but can only be the home of human beings made of paper and ephemeral personalities, the residence of such dissolving figures in the 20th century. A cemetery in front of the gate to paradise, the white consolation-garden of those who cannot get in there. It was perhaps this relentlessness and clarity that shattered the whole of the Hungarian avant-garde when Erzsébet Schaár died suddenly in 1975. All of us could see for a moment our place at the light of surprise as it flamed up.

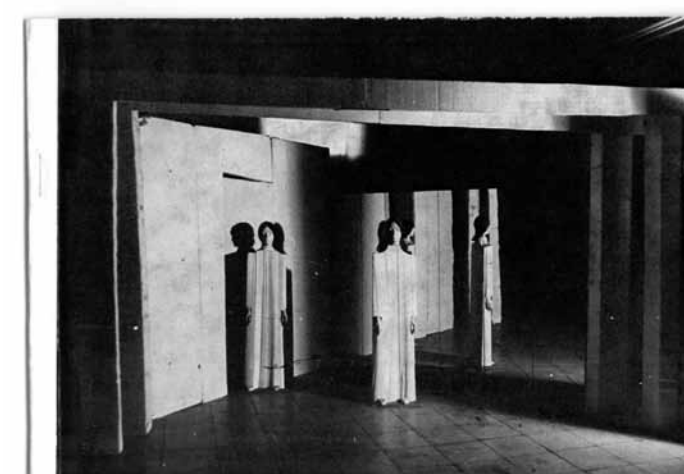
Source: Géza Pernecky: *Produktivitásra ítélve? Az Iparterv-csoport és ami utána következett. I-II. Balkon*, 1996/3. p 15.



Erzsébet Schaár installing the exhibition
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum)



The opening
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum)



SCHAÁR
ERZSÉBET

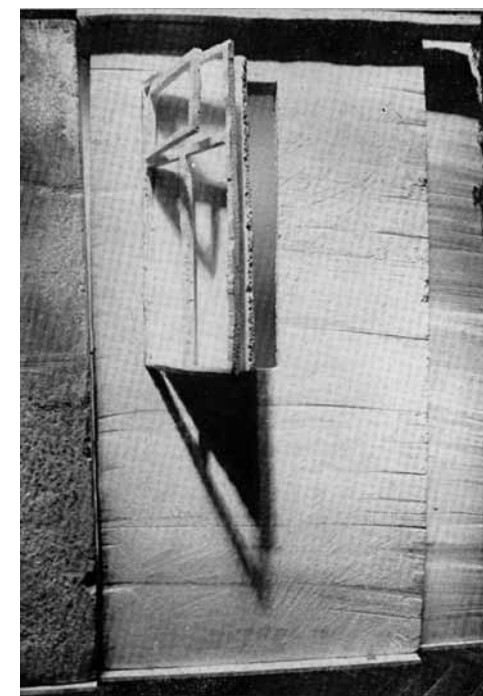
The cover of the catalogue



The exhibition
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum)



Pieces from the installation
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum)



Pieces from the installation
Photo: János Gulyás (courtesy of Szent István Király Museum)

TAMÁS SZENTJÓBY: WORKS 1966-1975 retrospective exhibition

Date: 25. 04. 1975

Participant: Tamás Szentjóbý (1944)

Location: Club of Young Artists, Budapest

Comments: The retrospective exhibition was organized by the artist himself. He presented visual poetry, documents of his actions, and action-objects, few of which were previously exhibited in famous group shows, like Iparterv II.

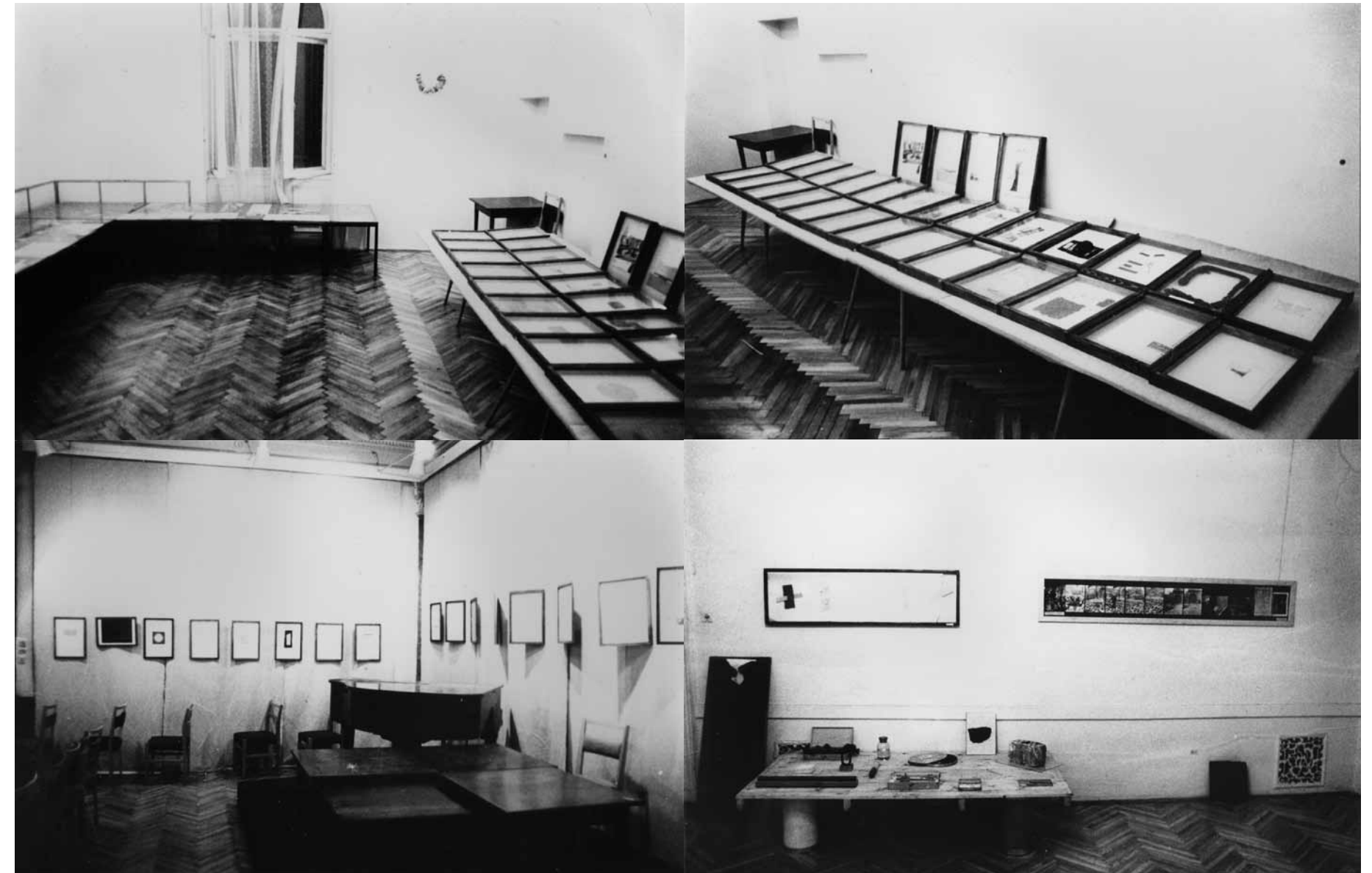


"Portable Trench for Three Persons", 1969 (wood, reed, gauze, aluminium, sulphur - first exhibited, "Iparterv II."),
Seven Suggestions, 1969 (wood, paint)



First row, from left to right: "New Measurement Unit", 1965 (lead pipe - first exhibited in Iparterv II.), Parallel Course / Study Track - Emblem, 1968 (wooden box, sulphur powder, joiner tool), "Unit I.", 1969 (wooden box, sulphur powder, wound clips); "Polylocal object", 1969-73 (metal plate, photo, mirror, magnet), second row: "Unit II.", 1971 (wooden box, sulphur powder, medical wafer), "Fragrant Magnet", 1965 (wood, magnet, ambergris), "Prima Materia", 1969 (test tube, cork, wax, heated mercury, salt, sulphur), "Mask", 1969 (7 sulphur plate, rope, caption: ILLUSION); third row: Happening relics - "The Lunch", 1966 - (nylon tights, net, etc. in a wooden box), "Cooling water", 1965 (chemist bottle, warm water - first exhibited in Iparterv II.), "Bloody Film", 1968 (film box, film, blood - first presented in "Do you See What I See"), "Poem Object", 1968 (wood, paper, text, asphalt), "Conflagration Mock Up", 1972 (brick, flame - first exhibited in Direct Week).

Photo: Tamás Szentjóbý (courtesy of Tamás Szentjóbý)



Excerpts from FIKA* – Interview with Tamás St.Auby

"Make a chair!" (Homage à George Brecht) was held at 8:00 p.m. on 6 June 1975. What was it all about?

- Éva Körner suggested that I should do something for Fika. (...) Körner's idea came just at the right moment for me as on the one hand, I had something important to say that I had wanted to make public for about a year then. On the other hand, I knew at the time that I would emigrate soon, so I wanted to make my declaration and get it over with. (...)

So from October 1974 till my going into exile, December 1975, I wanted to get certain things done, tie up loose ends in my life here. For example, I intended to make a retrospective exhibition, which I managed to accomplish, right there at Fika in the spring of 1975 – as well as this thing with Brecht. The Brecht issue is a bit complicated, and it leads very far. That is one of the reasons why my introduction took that long, to reach escape velocity, so to say.

Simply, briefly, quickly. I was intrigued by a particular case of the "new". It was related to an issue of a broader nature, a mutation that had fascinated me since the first time my voice went hoarse in childhood. Change is mutation itself. Changing back is not change but repetition. As opposed to the professional standpoint, mutation can occur only at a level higher than the previous stage, in other words, at a level that better enhances survival. Whatever adapts regresses, and whatever transforms is the mutant itself. Even in changes concerning art and art history, the "Aufhebung" or sublation is "aleatorically contrapunctual" – to put it in a simplified way. To give you a graphic model: sublated Romanesque art was followed by Gothic art, sublated Gothic art was followed by the Renaissance, the sublated Renaissance was followed by the Baroque, etc. By the beginning of the 20th century, art as a whole had become sublated. Duchamp's mutation took place. However, this did not surface as an organic part of the series of internal mutations of the history of art up to then. It did not happen like e.g. post-impressionism took the place of sublated impressionism; instead, art as such was modified by it. One could believe that the reason for Duchamp to act like that was his hatred for art as a whole. Duchamp's act pertains not only to certain readymades handpicked by him, but to the whole of the artificial world, the techné as well. (...) There is no need to dwell on the fact that some time earlier, during Romanticism, nature itself was aestheticized – hence Duchamp's analogical model – as it was only a romantic detour, and it would be the same now. By hanging in the museum the walking stick of Caspar David Friedrich's wanderer staring into the fog, Duchamp achieved - through this mental act of aestheticizing - the readymade through which the whole of second nature became art. It is quite incredible, yet it is true: a single human will simply overrode the given. "Non-art as art" was established. (...)

During Duchamp's prime in the 1960's, this whole mania for novelty was not just about manoeuvring for free market success – which was non-existent in the COMECON slave market – or at the most, for the title of inventorship. Its main purpose was to accelerate time, to achieve goals faster, and to reach the future from the past by increasing the escape velocity of the present. It did not mean arrival in the future of the liberal or Nazi/Bolshevik historical utopia, but the unknown, "aleatorically contrapunctual" future.

continued on the next page



Photos of the street action "Sit out", 1972

MAKE A CHAIR! (HOMMAGE À GEORGE BRECHT) lecture

Date: 06. 06. 1975
Participant: Tamás Szentjóbý (1944)
Location: Club of Young Artists, Budapest
Comments: The lecture was the first presentation of the “Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984 W”. The “SLSPI984W” was further developed by the International Parallel Union of Telecommunication (IPUT) in five phases up until now. Superintendent Tamás St. Auby repeated the lecture in 1977, after he had been expelled from Hungary, during Documenta 6, in Kassel, within Joseph Beuys’ Free International University. The board made here was later included in Beuys’s environment entitled Das Kapital Raum 1970-1977. The excerpt from the unpublished FIKA (short form for Club of Young Artists coined by Szentjóbý meaning “snot”) interview reconstructs the line of thought of the ’75 lecture.



Photo of the lecture in Budapest, 1975
Photo: Éva Körner
(courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

On the one hand, the future drops from the sky, but on the other, it is realized as mankind accomplishes it. Therefore, you have to notice what you are supposed to do. Intuition + action = the representation of the future. And George Brecht noticed and did what surpassed the stage of Duchamp. Duchamp did not use the readymades; he aestheticized the universe of use by placing it into a state of non-use. He turned it into the object of artistic pleasure; he extended the field of aesthetic sensitivity, the mental apparatus and the vocabulary of mankind. Brecht channelled back into use the perception and the evaluation of non-art as art, that is, he aesthetized the action itself. Brecht transformed this “non-art as art” into “art as non-art-art” by putting it to use again. In Duchamp’s opinion, it is the spectator of the work of art that gives sense to the work, so Duchamp denies the autonomous aesthetic reality of the work of art. Brecht considers this notion unsatisfactory: not only does he activate the spectator mentally, but by interpreting activity literally, he transforms the amateur of art into an artist, an active artist. It sounds a bit complicated, but that is how Duchamp’s universe is turned upside down, or rather set back on its feet. Brecht changed the Fountain back to a Urinal. He re-channelled it. Here is the bottle rack, let us hang bottles on it or some tampons found or invented by him, or let us use it as a corkscrew or a reel, or let us moisten it in the same river, or in the eternally fluctuating river or let it be swept away by the romantic readymade flow, etc. He involved the readymade in the event, in the action, in “practical” life or rather, by involving them, he created the event, the action, the occurrence, the happening. It was the interactive union of contemplation and action. This is a radical change compared to Duchamp: mutation. Duchamp’s dripping, or rather clogged/sublated water tap + Pollock’s dripping, or rather dried up/sublated paint = Brecht’s Drip Music.

The question was the following: “since all has become non-art-art, what could surpass even that? What happens when the Drip-Music unavoidably becomes quiet/sublated, when the water evaporates/becomes sublated in Tomas Schmit’s Ziklus, when my Cooling water cools down/becomes sublated?” (...)

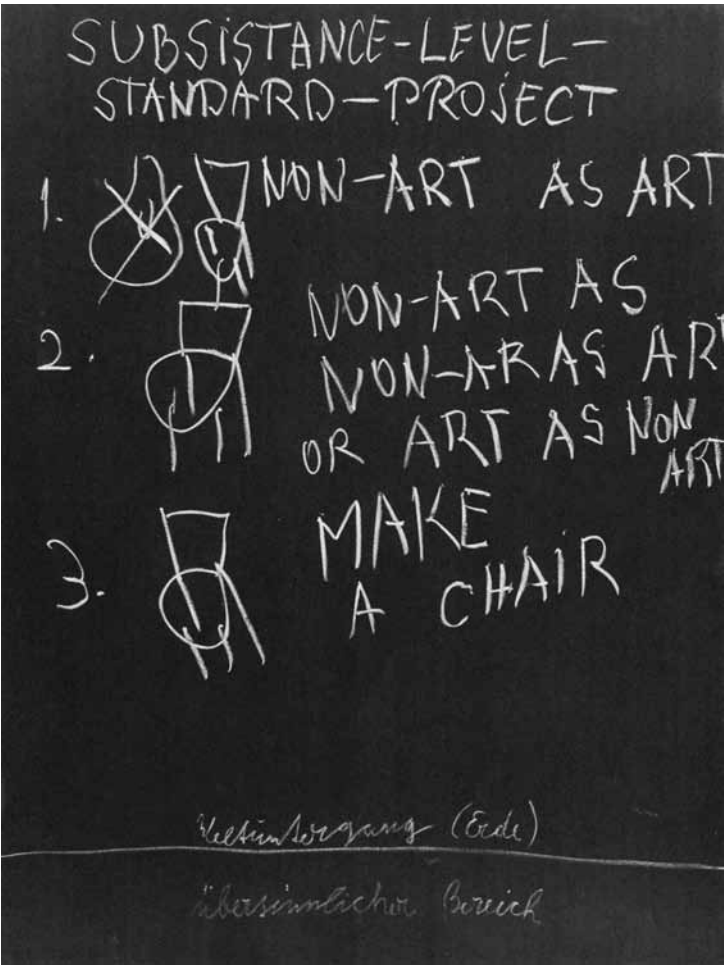
- When the question was pronounced, the aesthetic universe could be seen from a bird’s eye view or even with the eyes of an astronaut – it is not by chance that the first spatial pictures were taken of the Earth at that time.

Consciousness “surpassing as such” became material for art. On the one hand, Duchamp’s operation is not a form-creating operation – and that is emphasized by the “indifference” applied when selecting the readymade (although, contradicting himself, he enthusiastically praises the unsurpassable beauty of the boat propeller on other occasions) – , but a mental transformation. This intervention proved that the modification, the broadening and even the re-evaluation of the concept of art are not only possible thanks to the pure manifestation of creative will, but that is in fact the only way to proceed. On the other hand, the Brecht event – “sitting” – brought a series of mutations to a closure. But we cannot turn the Urinal, the coin in three ways: a new coin has to be struck now. So the whole thing has to be started all over “again”, from the beginning. Then democratically, we leave out everything that we know not to function: anything that would not function in breaking away from the myth blockade, in surpassing, in mutation – and we already know that mutation is the proper inherent programme of our myth. Just as Duchamp was blocked within the aesthetic circles of contemplation, Brecht was blocked within the aesthetic circles of activity. The eyes of Brecht sitting on a readymade piano stool are staring at his own ear reflected in the water poured by his own hand from one readymade container to the other one as it listens to the water gurgling. That is the Gordian knot that has to be cut. Thus, although the entire Flux was a great sign towards returning to direct reality, I did not just force its surpassing artificially, but I had a critical reason to do that: the event pretended that we could rule the status quo through it as if the revolution were over.

Since “starting all over” is not spontaneous or “natural”, but conscious, planned and thus directed by will, “naturally”, it can only happen at a higher level, to be more precise: where it happens, the “new” is placed on a higher level “naturally” by definition. This level is the democratic-teleological function riddle. Fewer and fewer tools are caught or maintained. The ones that are maintained are those capable of supporting mutation for survival. Now that we have to “start over”, when we have to produce the basic readymade that seizes by the root the idea that had been “seized only in an aesthetized form”, it becomes clear that we are working not only with the mutation variants of the aesthetic universe, but the reality of the ethical universe also appears – and as an equal to the aesthetic one. It is the unity of aesthetic and ethical in the unity of contemplation and action. It was very elevating to reach this new level of consciousness, to ascend to the level of riddle where the history of art and even history itself became raw material for the aesthetic-ethical operation in the same sense as, for example, sound is raw material for music. And that this level of consciousness was not a false level of consciousness for the moment could be seen from the fact that it had to do with proportions, proportions that art and non-art-art, hence everything and everybody – consciously or unconsciously – deal with.

As all of this manifests itself overtly in our myth, that is by flowing into it, it manifests the myth itself, it is the Jewish–Christian myth and even the validity of the collective ancient tradition that is manifested. The allegedly inalienable and allegedly unshakeable human condition, or as we would say today, the inferior genetic and the superior memetic limits reveal themselves. The first conscious act of taking consciously the basic standpoint raised to the conscious level as a starting point is the production of the first medium of the aesthetic-ethical origin and target. This basic-readymade medium is the chair. We could designate almost anything as this medium, but the chair is the first artificial object that went into mass production right away

Excepts from FIKA* – Interview with Tamás St.Auby continued



– it was not an axe and not work that turned men into men, but strike –, therefore the chair has a symbolic significance. I substituted the Fountain with the chair, also because the readymade chair is often used by Brecht in his partitions.

This object made conscious on a higher level is placed into a higher-level context: into the context of the Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984 W (SLSP1984W). “1984” is Orwell’s uncertain date among others, whereas the “W” is a wave of limited quantity among others.

One should not contemplate a chair, one should not use a chair, one should make the Chair – consequently, produce it with one’s bare hands, nails, teeth, so without tools. It is not a tool that should be made first, but the very first artificial object – totally unprecedented. Poesis must manifest itself in Techne in the most direct way possible. It is redundant to produce the redundant. Either way, the aim is complete and perfect automation. The sensible robot. The Holy Automaton. There is no need for detours.

Naturally, the Unprecedented Chair has only theoretical significance, it is but poetic “Dichtung”, one does not have to get started in any woodworking. The Chair is a prism which shows us that the SLSP1984W based on our myth has made us realize “once again” while setting it as a condition that we should not consume the excess of the first nature and that nothing redundant should be prepared as a second nature. The Chair is a reduced readymade. It does not mean that life should come to a halt; it means that on the one hand, we have to establish what the Myth really needs, and on the other, that the natural teleological process has accelerated due to artificial planning

and execution. We live in a Myth, just like everyone else at any time in history, nowhere else. There is only a myth - that is the mythical statement. Many texts have been written on this subject. Here is the most recent one: “There is no stinky pasture, there is no stinky tent. There is no stinky plough-land, there is no stinky house. There is a sweet-smelling myth.” We experience the myth also through the myth. So we should not believe that we are a kind of extramythical cosmopolitans. Ernst Cassirer says that “In the relationship of myth and history, myth is the primary factor and history is the secondary, derived one. The mythology of people is not determined by its history, quite on the contrary: its history is determined by its mythology.” And James H. Bedford affirms that “Myth is the recipe of immortality.” We live in a myth just like the Aztecs, the Hindus, the Greeks, the Bantu, the Chinese, the Yankees, etc. And it is upon our myth that everything is based, from which everything is derived to the tiniest detail, to the proportions of a chair, there is a mythologem that states the following – in my interpretation: if you overconsume, women will have to give birth in suffering, the offspring will have to be tempted constantly to overconsume, men will dominate women, you will have to labour and you will have to die. Do you happen to remember that small incident?

- This is pronounced at the expulsion from paradise...
- Yes. This is the expulsion itself. This verdict is not a law-defying case, but rather, an inherent consequence of the crime. According to the Law, everything belongs to them, except the surplus. If they take away from that, if they pick from the forbidden tree, in other words, if they overconsume: this and that will happen as a result, in other words, they will have to work, moreover, they will have to produce a surplus through their work, and on top of that, they will have to consume it. In the concurrent sentences – although the partial verdicts do not seem to be related on the surface –, everything is bound up psychedelically. This brilliant mythical economic-legal-cultural balance is the root of the basic conflict. This is what we have to get out of. (...)
Quite simply, we just have to determine what we need. I defined it as a chair. The chair is necessary because men are sitting animals or sitting angels. What is more, the chair has several versions, for instance electric chair, throne, deckchair, armchair, bench, stool, seat, swivel chair, wheelchair, dental chair, abortion chair, latrine, saddle, etc. And from this follows everything else that follows. Starting all over is not returning. Starting all over is post-experience mutation. There is no need to get scared, it is already visible that this will render a family tree with nice prospects and full of rainbows and not just a bleak, grey hermit-like misery. The Subsistence Level is the Maximum Level.

- What is redundant?
- Like a mould, whatever is necessary carves out simultaneously what is redundant. Anything that is the power of the necessary is redundant, so it is work carried out for the sake of strategy. That is surplus. That is luxury. That work is work itself. That work is punishment itself. That work is the forced labour conviction resulting from the consumption of the fruit of the forbidden tree. If mankind does this redundant and destructive work invested into strategy, then it is punished by itself. It falls continuously into sin and is continuously confronted with the punishment. Thus with SLSP1984W, the indifference of Duchamp and Brecht towards military industry efforts was surpassed. That is that. Neo-Socialist-Realism. (...)

In the spring of 1975, before I obeyed the exile notice, I organized this exhibition because I wanted to tie up loose ends in my life here. I exhibited about 150 items created in the spirit of mono-, mixed and intermediality, picture poetry, photos, objects, environments, and so on, as well as documents.

Let me just add one more thing to the Retrospect: when the KISZ (Communist Youth League) leader of the Fika wanted to ban one of my pictures, I handed over to him the psychedelic recipe: “150-1=0”. It was efficient: the KISZ did not dare to risk a scandal. A banned exhibition would have had a greater influence on the general atmosphere than the exhibition itself. And it is common knowledge that scandal is the true non-art-art.

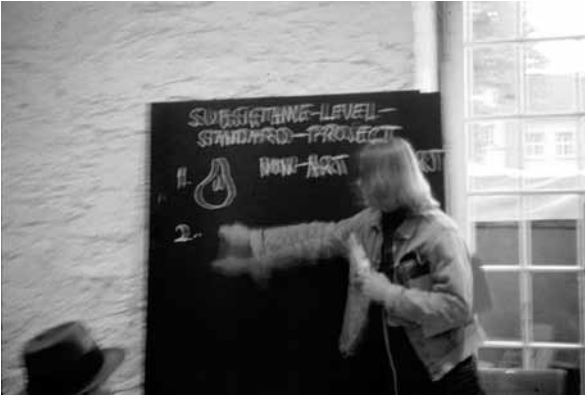


Photo of the lecture in Kassel, 1977
Photo: László Beke (courtesy of Tamás St.Auby)

NUDE/MODEL exhibition and action

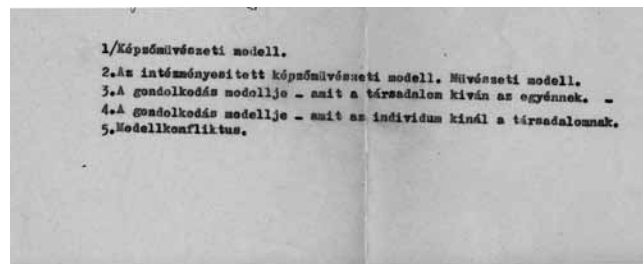
Date: 04. 01. 1977

Participant: Orsolya Drozdik

Opening actions: András Halász (1946), Zsigmond Károlyi (1952), Károly Kelemen (1948), Miklós Erdély (1928-1986), László Beke (1944)

Location: Club of Young Artists, Budapest

Comments: Orsolya Drozdik – then member of the postconceptualist artist group, the Rózsa Circle (1976-77) – drew a female nude model in the exhibition space for four days. The exhibition was opened every day by different male artists and an art historian. The visitors were not allowed to enter the room where the artist and the sitter were working but could only see them from the door through a gauze curtain. Emese Süvecz (curator) made oral history interviews with the participants to reconstruct the event.



- 1/ Fine art model.
2. The institutionalized fine art model. Art model.
3. The model of thought - that society wishes for the individual.
4. The model of thought - that the individual offers to society.
5. Model conflict.

Orsolya Drozdik

Notes for the exhibition. (courtesy of Orshi Drozdik)



Emese Süvecz's interviews with the participants

András Halász: Piroska was a professional nude model. She may have been a gypsy. We liked her a lot. However, her role remained that of a model.

Orshi Drozdik: Her name was Piroska Szabó.

Zsigmond Károlyi: You know, these people were usually quite unfortunate. It was pretty depressing to realize this. But Piroska was different. She was a bewitching flower, in the springtime of her life.

Orshi Drozdik: I invited some artists and critics to participate in my performance in order to legitimize my work. Oh, yes, their names are: András Halász, Zsigmond Károlyi, Károly Kelemen, László Beke, and Miklós Erdély. They were my friends rather than just colleagues. They could do whatever they wanted. They opened my show.

András Halász: I liked it a lot: it was a silent, relatively small room. And behind these big wooden doors, they were sitting together. Piroska was sitting naked on a chair, and Orshi was at her drawing bench on I found it beautiful, because it somehow showed the truth of this situation. She went to school for six or seven years, and she was looking at the nude, with unerring precision. I found it very funny, it was not erotic at all.

Zsigmond Károlyi: I can remember that there were five of us, and I wrote a text. But I don't remember what text it was. Then Orshi and Piroska walked into this room, which was somehow closed off first with a cordon, then with a gauze curtain, so you could not enter. The spectator could see them as a picture framed by the doorway.

Orshi Drozdik: They didn't understand the work – art history and the audience. On the visual level it was very pleasurable and complex. It was comprehensible in a modernist way too. They understood the work this way. But the use of the female body and its complex structure they did not understand. Unfortunately, I did not explain clearly enough why I chose a female nude. I should have elaborated more what the conflict is about. Even though I consider secrecy as a very important component of art, this work was didactic; still, I did not provide any guidance to its reading. The intention was to show the grotesque nature of the situation – that a woman artist has to draw a naked woman.

Zsigmond Károlyi: I do not want to judge the work, but to tell you the truth, the idea of drawing a nude model, as a performance, did not impress anyone that way. One rather said: how nice the chicks are, how nice it is that one of them is drawing the other. Usually this is how things go. But let's take this as a social condition: it is mandatory for everyone to draw; in this constellation you try to define yourself, that you either like or dislike the model, either feel disgust or empathy with her situation – this is interesting to analyze.

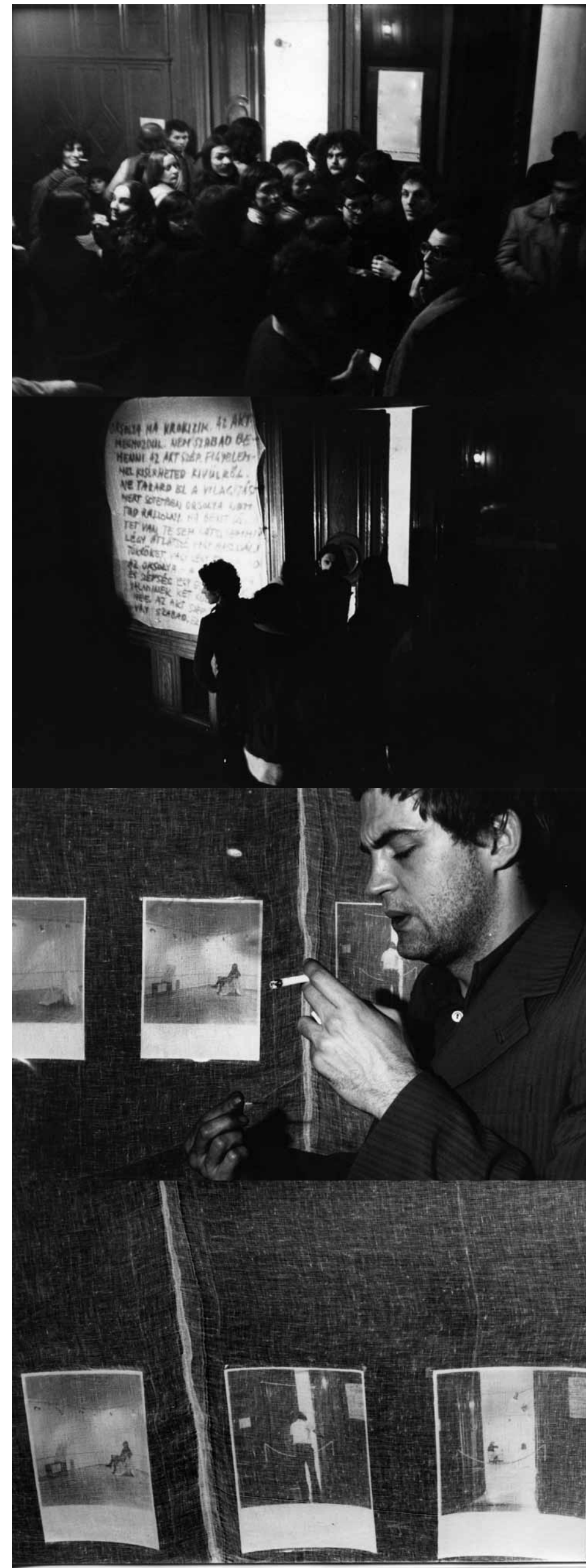
András Halász: In 1977 the Rózsa circle was still active. It was Kelemen's and my idea to establish women's art in Hungary. But, at first, we thought of others, not only Orshi; for instance, El-Kazovszky's name emerged.

Orshi Drozdik: I did not look at the nude model with desire. To be frank, my nude model was the mistress of those friends of mine who I had invited. She was the object of their sexual desire. And I inherited an academic method, which is totally ambiguous: for women to depict naked women is an ambiguous procedure. It was a normative condition that women painted female nude models, and no one had changed this.

Zsigmond Károlyi: It was about women's art, but I was not sensitive to it at all. I was not really interested in it. On the level of theory, I did not work with it either. But it is a fact that Orshi pretty much advocated the idea, so we agreed to it.

András Halász: Orshi undertook this role, she organized this "Ship Excursion," but somehow it came about that she was very much an independent artist and detached herself from the movement very soon. She did not become a soul of the movement.

Zsigmond Károlyi: Piroska was very different from the average, everyone was in love with her. Very many men were courting her – to put it in this way. Many things can be said about Piroska, because she was really everywhere: at parties, in the neighbourhood pubs, as if she had gone to the Art Academy like us, but in another manner. She was not the one who made drawings, but she was drawn.



(courtesy Orshi Drozdik)

Details from various oral history interviews recorded and typed in Budapest and Malmö, in November 2007 – January 2008.

Miklós Erdély’s Recollections of Béla Kondor (1981)

I have yet to meet anyone as avant-gardist as Béla Kondor. His entry onto the scene was completely unexpected and induced a now unimaginable resistance. At the same time, his program represented a now unimaginable traditionalism.

His work was characterized by a strange tension: he used the strongest traditionalism to attack this relatively progressive, post-impressionist and realist trend. Because **socialist realism** fostered progressive traditions, too. Our progressive tradition went back to, say, **Miklós Barabás**, and was suddenly stranded there. They acknowledged that the great masters, **Tiziano**, **Rembrandt**, **Leonardo** were indeed great, but only as fossils of the past. Kondor’s huge invention was that he said that if they think Leonardo is not a reactionary artist, I will draw for them like he did and not the way they represent the **whistling conductor**. And if I want to paint a whistling conductor, I’ll try and do it like Leonardo. And well, no one was expecting this that someone would begin to draw in this way. (...)

He must have been a third-year student when he invited me and showed me the Dózsa-series, his etchings that were being made at that time. So I could see those strange chessboard figures, a study of draperies drawn by pencil. His style was basically formed – it did not change much from that time on. He found his way when he was a third-year student, and an experimental work of his was already published in the *Új Hang* magazine in 1955-56. Strangely enough, no one thought about its connection with the events of 1956. **It is astonishing that in March 1956, while everything was still relatively peaceful, a huge etched engraving of his was published by the Új Hang under the title “Preparing for the Revolution”, or something like that.** (...)

The ominous recording, in which he spoke out against me, was made here in Szentendre. **Gyula Rózsa** simply published it attached to his obituary written for the *Kritika* magazine. I had never seen such a shady business. They published this recording in which Kondor was actually complaining about me, but without knowing that his words were being recorded. He was talking to Dezső Korniss, Gyurka Hegyi and a few others in the garden, and this guy walked up to them and recorded this conversation without him knowing. **And Gyula Rózsa wrote a firmly anti-avantgardist pamphlet stressing that he was not hand in glove with “men of the minute”, and so on, and to prove this, he published this recording, Kondor’s words referring to a case that had actually hap-**

Sándor Hornyik:

“OTHER” REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS¹

“Official Culture”, “Neo-Avant-Garde Art”, and Contemporary Critical Practices

Before 1989 (the symbolic date of the Eastern-European Regime Change), the notions of “revolution” and “revolutionary tradition” belonged to the rhetorical arsenal of Hungarian communist party cultural policy. Nevertheless, the subversive tradition of the avant-garde also continued, even under official communist culture after 1949. Moreover, the revolutionary consciousness of the avant-garde was based on cults of symbolic figures in a similar manner to the ideology of the communists. Thus the cults of revolutionary figures constitute a curious and thorough discursive relation between official culture and non-official counter-culture. So the rhetorical trope of “revolutionary tradition” allows us to interweave the official doctrine of socialist realism with adversarial, avant-garde art and even with the critical practices of contemporary art. Part of this contemporary critical art relies on historical research and refers to former artistic events, micro-histories, or significant figures, and stages in the canonical processes of art history.

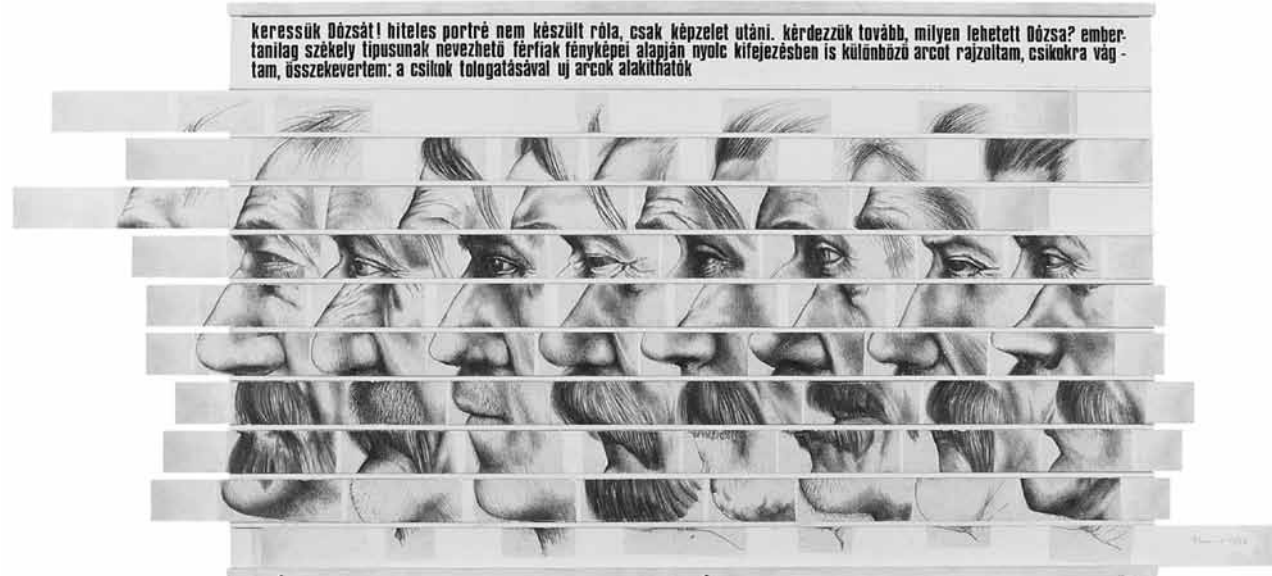


Gyula Derkovits: Dózsa on the Bastion, (1928), woodcut, 49,7 x 44 cm (Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)

One of these micro-histories is about the avant-garde appropriation of György Dózsa (1470-1514), the most famous Hungarian peasant leader who was the brutally executed military commander of the peasant uprising of 1514. In their work entitled *1979*, the French-Hungarian duo, **Société Réaliste** remixed a woodcut representing Dózsa made by the most prominent pre-war Hungarian communist painter, **Gyula Derkovits** (1894-1934) to evoke simultaneously the significant Hungarian historical events of 1919, 1949, and 1989, when – as a consequence of revolutionary processes – the political regime had become authoritarian, or had changed to a democratic one. In the case of the figure of Dózsa and these revolutions one has to reckon with another infamous Dózsa print-series that was made by another cult artist, **Béla Kondor** (1931-1972). The etchings of **Kondor** were partly inspired by **Derkovits**, however, **Kondor’s** work was not connected to the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, but to the Revolution of 1956 (which was referred to as a counter-revolution before 1989!). Besides its political connotations, **Kondor’s** etchings (made for an academic degree) have become significant since they were an early and eminent testimony to the talent and skills of a “genius”. Later these technical skills were used not only by **Kondor** himself, but also as part of the official cultural policy of discrediting avant-garde art. The most important Hungarian neo-avant-garde artist, **Miklós Erdély** (1928-1986), who was a close friend of **Kondor**, reflected on this process already with a work of art entitled *Black Obituary* (1979). Besides the official cultural policy, the neo-avant-garde “artworld” also tried to acquire the symbolic figure of **Kondor** through his photographic practice, as his photographs were exhibited in 1976 in the *Exposure – Photo/Art* exhibition that collected together generations of avant-garde artists using photography from **László Moholy-Nagy** to **Tibor Hajas**. But this recuperation leads to another “microstoria” on the controversial friendship of **Erdély** and **Kondor**, and his debates on the avant-garde.

In the search for national and historical legitimisation, not only was communist cultural politics interested in Dózsa, but the neo-avant-garde as well, although in a slightly different manner. **Dóra Maurer** portrayed “another” Dózsa in her film entitled *Searching for Dózsa* (1973) which deals with the unpleasant fact that nobody actually “knows” the most well-known Hungarian socialist hero since the real, historical person was never depicted. There is no “genuine” Dózsa, so Dózsa could be anyone’s property, even the avant-garde artists’. So he could even be the critical hero of the avant-garde that investigated ironically the apparatus and strategies

pened. You probably know that **Imre Sarkadi** fell **out of his window**. (By the way, we had walked past his house with Pilinszky only two or three minutes before this happened. We were standing under his window that night, saw that they had the lights on, and were thinking about going up to visit him, but in the end we decided not to. It seems that it’s always a mistake to not to go up somewhere: it seems something might happen everywhere. If we had gone up, Sarkadi would not have begun to run around on the window sill, as we would have begun to talk. But anyway.) **László Beke** announced a competition around 1972, or some time during those last years, on the theme of cobblestones. I had the intention to throw a cobblestone from that window in memory of Sarkadi. It was a cobbled street, so **Sarkadi** was smashed on cobblestones. I thought I would throw a cobblestone from his window on the seventh floor and let that break. Its fall and impact would have been filmed. Kondor disagreed. And this is what he was talking about: he complained about this, told the others that I wanted to drop a stone from his window in memory of Sarkadi. I didn’t know how to react when it was published, really. It is so horrible for such a document to be published in an obituary against one of his closest friends. I never intended to and never did mention my friendship with Kondor in my artistic activity. There were commemorations and all that, on Bercsényi Street, too, and I never attended these. But this was really unpleasant, and I eventually reacted to it in the **photogram exhibition**: I photographed this article, enlarged its negative, so it became as big as the article itself, and then covered the text with it. So where the article would have shown through, it was covered by black letters from beneath. It was exhibited under the title “A Black Obituary.” But, strangely enough, it disappeared. Someone took it on the second day. I made it again, and the National Gallery bought it for some 5000 Forints, to my surprise. Anyway, what this critic called Gyula Rózsa did was awfully negative and immoral. I understand why he did it. He was panicking over the possibility that Kondor’s death would bring about changes, that this completely forbidden and oppressed thing would gain momentum using Kondor as a reference. Of course Kondor was also a little bit of a nuisance for them. **They somehow absorbed and accepted him, but he always had this subversive attitude, ready to break free, and they were most probably afraid of me and my friends making the most of his death, which we did not even think of.** It was this that they wanted to prevent by publishing that recording. Their precaution was exaggerated and awfully unfair. As for our debate: we did disagree. There is always an immanent factor in the working of the avant-garde related to the democratization of art. That is, that being professionally trained should not be a requirement, that people should be seen purely as themselves. So those who view the world through the avant-garde find those things and acts beautiful that could be done by anyone. This indeed becomes an aesthetic cat-

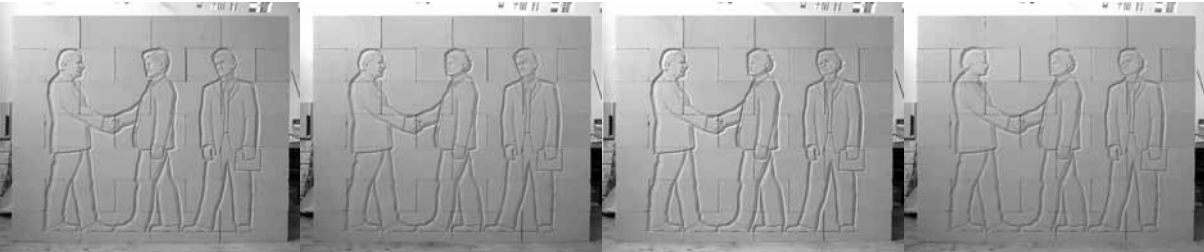


Dóra Maurer: Searching for Dózsa, (1972), object, 60 x 110 cm (Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs)

of official power, while actually establishing its own cult figures. Besides **Miklós Erdély**, the other main cult figure was **Tamás St.Auby**, who is the most important contemporary artist of Hungary according to the East Art Map and its Hungarian contributor, professor of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, **János Sugár**.² In 2005, one of the better-known Hungarian artist groups internationally, **Little Warsaw**, reconstructed **St.Auby’s** (aka **Szentjóbý**) canonical work, the *Exclusion Exercise - Punishment-Preventive Auto-Therapy*, which was originally performed as an artistic action in a well known (and now well-documented) neo-avant-garde cult place (Chapel Exhibition at Balatonboglár, 1972).³ With this reconstruction, another rather different story begins.

In **Little Warsaw’s** scandalous work *Crew Expendable* (2007), there emerged a previously forgotten figure of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde canon, **János Major** (1934-2008), who had not really regarded himself an avant-garde artist, since, like **Kondor**, he believed in the technical skills of art. Although **Major** participated in some prominent neo-avant-garde exhibitions (*Iparterv*, 1969; *Imagination*, 1971; *Chapel Exhibitions*, 1973), his main artistic practice (graphic arts) had not been included in the avant-garde canon, while at the same time, one of his few conceptual artworks (*Fact Art with Lajos Kubista’s Gravestone*, 1971) had become emblematic. Moreover, the *Crew Expendable* not only reflected critically on the intertwined history of canons and cults, but also performed the problems of representing an identity (either communist, or avant-garde, or even **Major’s** Jewishness) that was a crucial question in the work of **Szentjóbý**, **Major**, and **Erdély**. The fact that **St.Auby** created a **Major** Prize from his official (state given) **Munkácsy** Prize in 2007 belongs to the paradox of “countercultural” criticism of the history of cult, as the second winner was **Major** himself the following year.

The questions of the artist’s identity, social role, and status appear in another, but also cult perspective, through the activity of **Plagium2000** group, who multiply, among others, the artworks of **Erdély** and **St.Auby**, following and re-situating **St.Auby’s** own multiple Fluxus objects from the 1990s. The activity of **Plagium2000** reflects on the status of the object of art, just as it does on the art historical canon and the cult history of art. Moreover, their activity represents the way in which the status and characteristics of art in the culture and politics of the past sixty years featuring cults of “personalities” and “revolutionary” traditions have both changed and in certain regard remained the same. It has become particularly interesting in the contemporary culture of re-enactment and recuperation that the production of official and unofficial culture was grounded on similar strategies. **Miklós Erdély’s Stamp** (2008) exemplifies this similarity with its inscription: “to my best friend”. This work combines the culture of administration and the cult of the avant-garde in an explicitly ironic manner. What’s more, artworks can also be found that point to the cultic aspects of contemporary critical art as well. **Ádám Szabó’s** relief *Little Warsaw is getting the Munkácsy Prize* (2008) investigates rather ironically the anatomy of success since **Little Warsaw** became successful with research into the official and unofficial art of the communist era. **Szabó** however projected socialist-realist imagery of official ceremonies onto his “avant-garde”, or critical praxis, which was carved into building blocks that additionally have an aura of “constructivism”. One year later came another twist in the story. **Szabó** got the most significant state prize for the fine arts, too. Then he made a photo series on the original relief, in which he had replaced the carved faces of **Little Warsaw** (**András Gálik** and **Bálint Havas**), and even the Minister of Culture, with his own portrait. At the end, minister



Ádám Szabó: Munkácsy Prize (2009) 4-piece photo series, each 50 x 60 cm (courtesy of the artist)

1 The “other” refers to the work of Michel Foucault that inspired a specific Hungarian research field: “Literary Cult Studies”, Michel Foucault, “Des espaces autres. Hétérotopies”, (1967), *Dits et Écrits*, (1984), <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.fr.html>. The Literary Cult Studies investigates the rhetorical, social and political background of literary cults – mainly the reception of the “greatest” Hungarian poets (Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Attila József) – using the methods of discourse analysis and cultural studies. In his programmatic book, Peter Davidhazi interprets literary cults as a sort of religious practice: *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare*, MacMillan, London, 1989. The approach of cult (or cultural at least) history is rather sporadic in the Hungarian art history of the avant-garde. See György Péter, “A hely szellem [The Spirit of Place]”, *Buksz*, 2004, (4), 328-335. The standard interpretation focusing on the originality and the innovative potentials and works of neo-avant-garde art: László Beke, “Conceptualist Tendencies of Eastern European Art”, in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s – 1980s*, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1999, pp. 41-51.

2 See János Sugár’s essay in IRWIN’s project: “Schrödinger’s Cat in the Art World”, (2002), <http://www.eastartmap.org/text/knowledge/selectors/sugar.pdf>

3 An avant-garde art institution, the Artpool Art Research Center has been playing a crucial role in the canonisation and cult of the neo-avant-garde since the 1980s. One of its founders, György Galántai was one of the main organiser of the Chapel Exhibitions in the early 1970s. Later in the 1990s he and the co-founder, Júlia Klaniczay made significant memorial exhibition focusing on the issues of Fluxus art, and on the activity of Miklós Erdély.

egory. That is what we find really beautiful. Of course this is not general, but a very strong factor. To have, say, a pair of spectacles and a glass – everyone can place them next to each other. You don’t need a college degree to be able to do this. There is this strong **democratic charge** in avant-garde. This is what is at work in arte povera, too: things for which one need neither money nor a college degree, nothing really, only a human standard that can always show through. But Kondor demanded that artists should have the knowledge of masters. He always stressed that this was a profession, a craft that people must study like anything else, and one has to express things through this professional knowledge. (...)

The sad thing is that even though the activity of the avant-garde does not demand resources or a diploma, I still notice that the avant-garde has become a terrific profession. Almost everyone is doing it now. And I sometimes catch myself in the act of saying that something is bad professionally. Of course I mean something different by profession than Kondor did. It’s not about being professional, really, but I think it’s a problem if someone simply does not know the considerations, does not know what this whole thing is about, is not knowledgeable enough, and is a bad epigon. 99 per cent of the avant-gardists are epigones. And 10 per cent of those are good epigones, while the others are bad.

Those who dare to create something really new and not be encouraged solely by existing patterns but by their own fate, those who are, to put it in this extreme way, encouraged by their own fate to make certain decisions, well, those people are horribly rare. And since we live in this world of epigones, I think that if someone is an epigone, he or she should at least be knowledgeable, know what has been going on, why the whole thing was begun, and go on with it properly. I do not want to suggest that everyone should copy others, I think people should understand and continue in the direction they chose, the way someone has started at a certain point, and does not misunderstand it. But well, this is a delicate matter.

And the avant-garde, unlike art in general, is characterized by utopian programs. One of these is its ambition to shape life in a direct way. For Kondor, this was a groundless, silly conception. What does it have to do with life? For life, there was Milán Füst’s theorem: those who confuse life with art, do not know much about either. They are completely separate in this traditional approach, and according to Kondor, too.

While avant-garde acts, contrary to this, exist in the knowledge that the structures created by art represent a moral (and aesthetic) power, suggest such solutions, socially, too, or within the family, and contain such models of behaviour that can be directly and concretely transmitted at any time. **This was the fundamental principle of the creativity exercises I conducted.** It’s not that we should do something funny and be happy as monkeys. Our purpose is to be constantly awake and ready, as we have to react in different ways, and to a certain extent creatively, to all kinds of situations. For example, if my mother

Ádám Szabó handed the **Munkácsy** Prize to **Ádám Szabó** and **Ádám Szabó**. It is a very obtrusive artefact concerning the location of the borders of culture and politics, official and critical art, that asks how could “other spaces” exist at all, when the rhetorical figures of the past and the “microphysics of power” pervade everything.

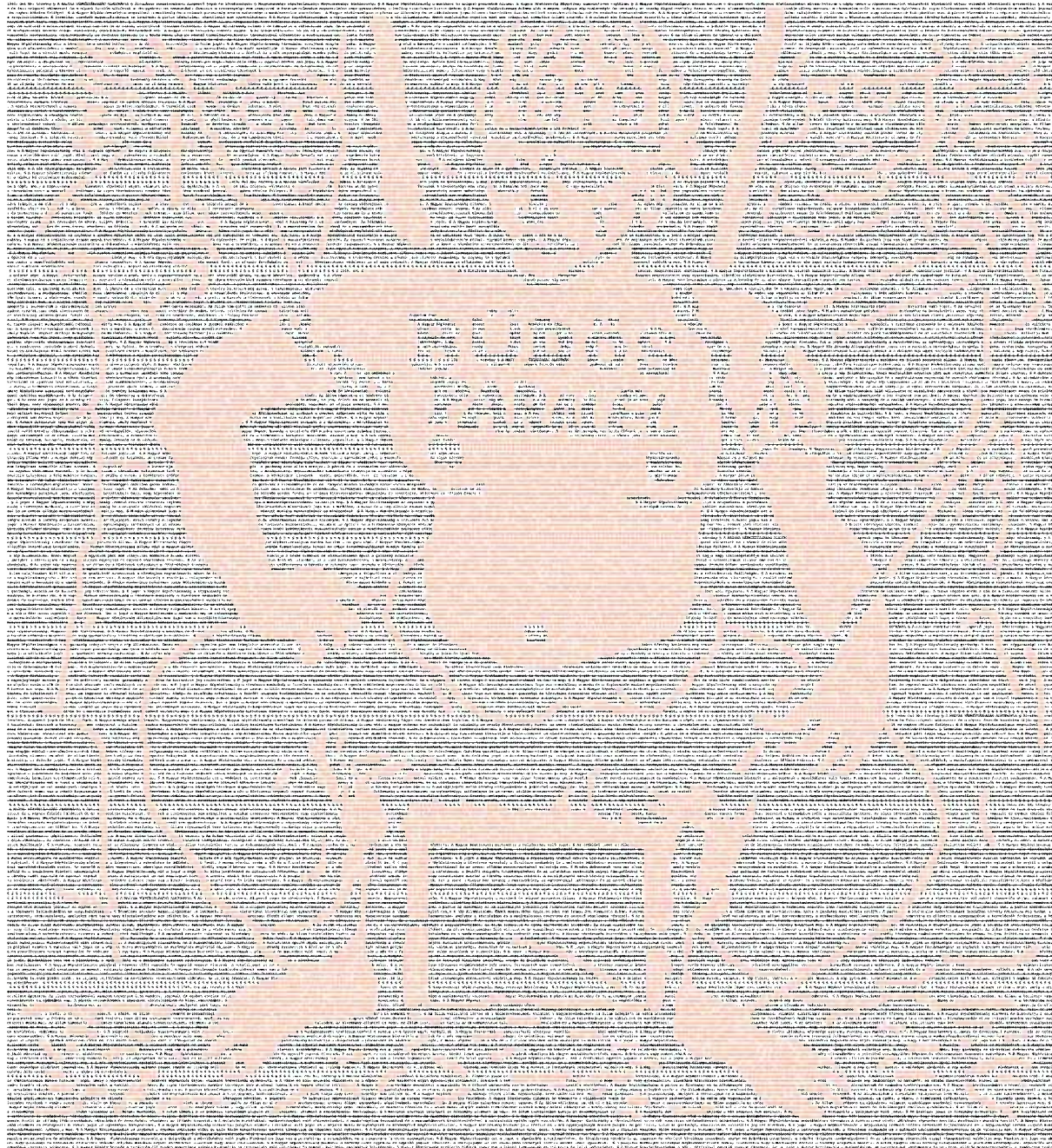
Dózsa’s People



Gyula Derkovits: Dózsa on the Fiery Throne (1928), woodcut, 51,5 x 44 cm (Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)

Beside the Revolution of 1848 and its poet hero, Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849), the leader of the peasant uprising of 1514, György Dózsa, played a crucial role in the revolutionary traditions of Hungarian communist cultural policy. In 1947, both figures were placed on the Hungarian national currency. Beyond the revolutionary, anti-capitalist traditions, the figure of Dózsa was important for the communist party in another aspect, too. Dózsa and the popular phrase “Dózsa’s people” connoted the peasantry in a mainly agricultural state, and the leadership very much emphasised the importance of the alliance of workers and peasants. After the new “soviet” constitution of 1949 (the declaration of totalitarian, single-party regime) and the socialisation of land, new collective farms arose one after the other. The third most popular name for such farms, after “Red Star” and “Red October”, was “Dózsa’s People”. Dózsa was important for communist ideologist not only as an antecedent of people’s democracy and people’s revolution, but by virtue of his potential role in historically legitimating and nationalising the

essentially foreign soviet ideology. He and his revolution became an important subject of the new socialist-realist painting, but his figure was not brand new in communist culture, since Dózsa had been a popular hero from the beginning. Gyula Derkovits had already evoked the dictatorship of the proletariat of 1919 in his woodcut series of 1928 entitled *1514*.



Société Réaliste: 1979 (2010), c-print, 80 x 80 cm (Institute of Contemporary Art, Dunatújváros)

scolds me for getting home late, I should not reply with a stereotype, so that she can tell me the same things and I can answer in the same way every time. **We have to move things from their place, as everything is trying to settle, petrify, and obtain a deadly repetitive form. This is why we must constantly find ways to overflow and be connected to things through different contexts and based on different motives.**

Miklós Erdély

Béla Kondor 1931–1972 (1973)

Béla Kondor died at the age of 41, having fulfilled his mission. We should acknowledge rather than lament this. One of course may be shaken by the death of a forty-year-old man who looked like an adolescent, and one may and has to think about it, scrutinize oneself and, almost uselessly, have a guilty conscience about it. But it is facing the facts that is the most unpleasant: that the mission he died for was necessary and useful for us.

In the beginning of the 1960s, Hungarian painting turned from a three-decade long crisis into the phase of a purified and committed fertility – we can see that more and more clearly as we get further away from that time. **The thirty-year long crisis began with the death of Derkovits, the weakening of the post-Nagybánya school, and the strangulation of the socialist and anti-fascist avant-garde; then it continued with hesitation after the second world war, the conflict of a left-wing art that does not always understand history correctly and history that does not understand left-wing art, then with a spontaneous belief suppressed by directives, followed by narrow-mindedness, falsity and weak results; and culminated in the experience of 1956, which ruined almost everything in this area, too.**

Kondor struggled and lived through the last two phases of the crisis: he was a child, a symbol and finally a victim of this struggle. He got his degree in 1956 and thus appeared in front of the public at a time when the fine arts defined itself as socialist, and did not admit even to itself, that neither the genre-painting of the last century that they loudly praised, nor the bourgeois-humanist painting they silently made their leading ideology, were fit to raise up a really committed, socially resolute and aesthetically fighting-fit painting and graphic art. Kondor discovered the clean lines of the German renaissance and the sharpness of Hungarian revolutionary activism at a time when other members of his generation knew nothing about them, and he had the firmness of mind, the morality and the aesthetic creativity to regard these forbidden or unknown ideals as examples and not images to imitate. I am sure that someone will one day write a detailed analysis proving that the work Kondor prepared as his diploma piece and continued to work on faithfully for years between 1956 and 1960, **the etched engravings representing Dózsa, is a huge summary and proof of the graphic cycle of Hungarian fine arts, having a sense of tragedy and seeking solutions to drama. The author of**

Engaged in the investigation of leftist critical traditions and conjuring up the Dózsa cult, **Société Réaliste** produced *1979* for the *Over the Counter* exhibition (Kunsthalle, Budapest), which dealt with the economic processes of post-communism.⁴ At first sight, one can observe two main differences to the original print. The one is that they have replaced the date of “1514” on the smouldering crown of tortured Dózsa with the date “1979”, which evokes simultaneously the Bolshevik revolution of 1919, the communist political turn of 1949, and the Fall of Communism in 1989, with the emergence of “true” democracy. The other is that one can read the inscription “Dirty Parallel” on Dózsa’s chest instead of the original “Dirty Peasant”. However, on closer inspection, the “icon” and the “cult” disintegrate into words and behind the black and red lines of the image appear phrases of the Hungarian communist constitution of 1949 and the “new” democratic one of 1989. With this gesture, **Société Réaliste** stresses that the new constitution is rather similar to the old, “damned” one, and also reflects on the not so well known fact that the communists only rewrote the former bourgeois constitution. Moreover, the deconstructive, critical act of “line through” points out formally the Marxist utilisation of the technique of sublation (Aufhebung). Beyond this, in the context of the Fall of Communism, the “Dirty Parallel” represents criticism of the “silent”, democratic revolution, while there is a widespread opinion that the economic and political elite remained mostly the same.



István Kiss: 1514, (1961), statue (György Dózsa square, Budapest) (Photo: Société Réaliste)

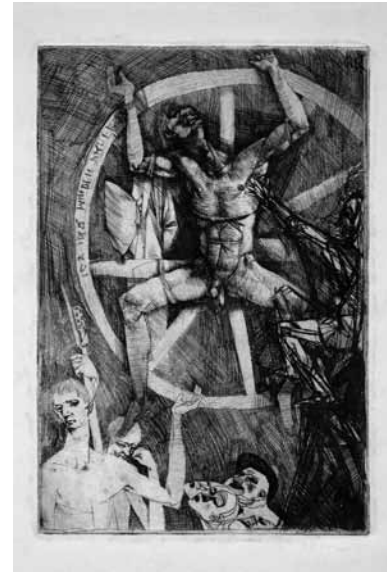
Reflecting on the György Dózsa sculptural group made by the socialist realist sculptor **István Kiss** in 1961, another work of **Société Réaliste**, a digital photo entitled *2014*, deals with the micro-politics of power. They noticed that Dózsa is positioned further away from his “People” in the monument erected in the age of political consolidation after 1956, than he did on the original plans before the revolution, as if the politicians of the communist party wished to attenuate the ‘revolutionary’ spirit. Representing the contemporary “spirit”, **Société Réaliste** irrationally enlarged the distance between the solitary Dózsa and his People, and used the 500th jubilee inscription of “2014” instead of the original “1514” in their work. The Dózsa cult and the above mentioned Dózsa series

of **Derkovits** are exciting not only for their subject but also for their “style”. In the hard age of communism, in the era of the cult of personality – under the leadership of Mátyás Rákosi – the official, formal artistic “model” was not the expressionism of **Derkovits**, but the academic realism of **Mihály Munkácsy** (1844-1900), the celebrated national painter hero who won gold medals – even in the Salon de Paris – with his Armeleute Malerei. The debate over **Derkovits** had restarted in 1955 after the fall of Rákosi, and his style became a revolutionary form of expression due to an ideological turn that reinterpreted his former “decadence”. So **Derkovits** was rehabilitated after the Rákosi era and his work was considered the most important antecedent of socialist modernism, while the new official scholarship for young artists was named after him in 1955.



Société Réaliste: 2014 (2010), photo, 15 x 150 cm (courtesy of the artists)

This issue and the debate probably had an impact on **Béla Kondor**, but he chose another, strange artistic language for his Dózsa-series, that differed both from **Derkovits** and **Munkácsy**, and was basically non-ideological. Committed to the historical period as a matter of fact but somehow in an atavistic manner, he applied and recuperated the “northern” realism of **Rembrandt** and **Dürer**. His *Scenes from the Life of György Dózsa* were produced as his masterwork in the Academy of Fine Art in the first half of 1956, but he made some etchings after the Revolution as well. So his Dózsa was not only a communist hero but had become an allegory of the “counter-revolution” in which the people demolished the huge statue of Stalin on György Dózsa street in Bu-



Béla Kondor: The Fate of Prophets (1956), etching, 17,5 x 11,8 cm (Photo: Zsuzsa Bokor, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)



Béla Kondor: The Assumption of the Peasant Leader, (1956), etching, 19,8 x 13,8 cm (Photo: Zsuzsa Bokor, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)

dapest, before the Soviet troops marched in. Official art criticism did not notice this aspect under the aegis of constrained collective amnesia, and **Kondor** soon turned into a revolutionary reformer of socialist-realist graphic art, since the cultural policy needed young (unsoiled) and talented artists who were not explicitly hostile to the regime. So **Kondor** rapidly turned into a slightly strange though manageable star, who got his official exhibitions and represented the new, “soft” communism of Hungary in international exhibitions (Tokyo Biennale, 1964; Sao Paulo Biennale, 1965; Venice Biennale, 1968).

⁴ For further reading on the critical strategies of Société Réaliste, see Olivier Schefer’s “Utopie et langage: une politique des formes”, in *Société Réaliste: Empire, State, building*. Catalogue de l’exposition, coédition Amsterdam, Éditions du Jeu de Paume, Paris et Ludwig Múzeum, Budapest, 2011.

this study will also have the right to elucidate the parallel between Kondor's and Derkovits's *Dózsa series*, arguing that they resemble one another not merely in their theme or their artistic, "inner" values.

The social science of mass hysteria, and especially mass hysteria among artists, needs to analyse how the age refused the first painfully strong builders with their clear glances and the worn-out but beautiful children of Kondor's 1960 exhibition. The exhibition was met with a lack of comprehension on the part of visitors, while critics looking upon it with a jaundiced eye, and the decisions of juries were unfavourable. These builders and children were the only authentic and cathartic representations of and for a society that remembered 1944, could not forget 1949–50, and still felt the pain of 1956 so strongly. The examination of how the artist was destroyed in the meantime pertains to the psychology of creation, and unfortunately, to pulmonary medicine and the study of heart diseases.

And what pertains to the history of art and human coping is how loyal Kondor was, despite moral and sometimes physical hardships, to a society that did not at all want his loyalty in the beginning. Articles commemorating him should give up analyzing his style superficially, and should desist from list the intellectual spares Kondor eagerly built in, devoured and passed on, formed into a life's work, from cubism to the Bible, from surrealism to classical jazz, from William Blake to Miklós Zrínyi, and from László Nagy to the first people flying across the ocean. With all these, he actually worked for higher ethical and social values. That he was enraged in the meantime? That he was unmanageable, cynical and disappointing? Even people who are less sensitive than painters would be enraged and unmanageably cynical and disappointing if their commissions by public institutions were regularly withdrawn, their pictures were not bought, their exhibitions misinterpreted, mispraised or hushed up. **And one has to be really strong to be able to have a look at his fellow outcasts, and not accept this community of men of the minute, even if they are consequently mentioned together. We are publishing a document below: a coarse, free-spoken speech by Kondor that may hurt finer souls again. It shows that Kondor did not bargain and did not do business; not even when he was seen to be hand in glove with more than suspicious connections; not even when these suspicious connections praised him, or called him a traitor.** Kondor just walked along the path his age and his humanity marked for him, unambiguously and with the stubbornness of a genius. He was not walking alone, and those who were there with him did not die. However, they had the advantage (if they were older) of being able to rely on their own past or (if they were younger) to wait for experiences. Kondor gained experience by himself, and we must acknowledge without being moved that he had to pay for this dearly. **And although few have mentioned the word "socialist" related to his work in his life, and hundreds of refined people will exclaim if we place it on his life's work (belatedly, like the Kossuth prize was bestowed on Derkovits's oeuvre after his death),**



Portraits of Béla Kondor from the catalogue of his memorial exhibition entitled „Dear Samu...” (Hatvany Lajos Museum, Hatvan, 1981) (Photo: Kálmán Kónya)

Kondor's Death



Miklós Erdély on the Shooting of Train Trip (1981)(Photo: György Erdély)



Detail from Miklós Erdély's film, Train Trip, (1981)



Miklós Erdély: Black Obituary (1979), photogram and photo, 40 x 30 cm (Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)

Besides official cultural policy, the avant-garde also established a claim to **Kondor's** legend after his sudden death. Although his revolutionary graphic style attracted many followers even in his lifetime and it rapidly turned into an academic "language", his figure and his disengaged, "renaissance" spirit were appreciated in the avant-garde subculture as well. Moreover, due to his personal connections with the neo-avant-garde, or counter-cultural circles, he became a cult figure. **Miklós Erdély**, for example, made a film on the occasion of his memorial exhibition in 1981. The *Train Trip* ostensibly presented the fact of **Erdély** and his young disciples (the so-called **Indigo Group** including present-day professors of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts) filming each other's movements and conversation on a train trip to the exhibition. However, the film has a particular structure of time and the "actors" permanently and systematically refer not on the cult of **Kondor**, but to the actions of the camera. Actually, **Erdély** gave the paradoxical instructions to the cameraman that the camera had to record what the recorded person or thing(!) saw. With this particular movement of the camera and special editing – **Erdély** systematically inserted subsequent and preceding images into the texture of the linear story – the film mixes the past, the present and the future – as **Erdély** himself said: "the film itself predicts and remembers". So the *Train Trip* is not only a simple story of a cultic event, or a recollection of **Kondor**, but also a description of the workings of the human mind that constructs the present from the memories of the past and imaginings of the future. Apropos of the memorial exhibition, **Erdély** recollected his own memories in an insightful personal talk in which he declared that he consciously avoided the squeamish and disgusting act of remembrance, even though they had been the best of friends. There is only one exception. In 1973, juxtaposed by a fragment of a conversation in which **Kondor** mocked **Erdély's** conceptual art, a **Kondor** obituary appeared in the official critical review (*Kritika*). According to **Kondor**, **Erdély** planned an action at the window of **Kondor's** flat in memory of a Hungarian poet, Imre Sarkadi, who fell from that window in 1961. Erdély intended to photograph and film the falling of a cobble for a proposed conceptual exhibition about cobblestones (a "revolutionary" element of barricades) and grave-stones, while **Kondor** thought that

we are placing it there. Not only because this is what he himself said about himself, after drinking a glass of cognac, being less tense and aggressive, having only one witness to this confession; but because this is what his works suggest, and this can be verified.

It is the aesthetic and ethic conscience of the new Hungarian society that talks from these works. And our specialist literature always failed to notice this, amid its loud appraisal and loud fulminations. No one found the true essence of Kondor's art and wrote about this in his lifetime.

And if we, participants in contemporary Hungarian art criticism, have reason to lament, this is a good one.

(R.)

A document by Kondor

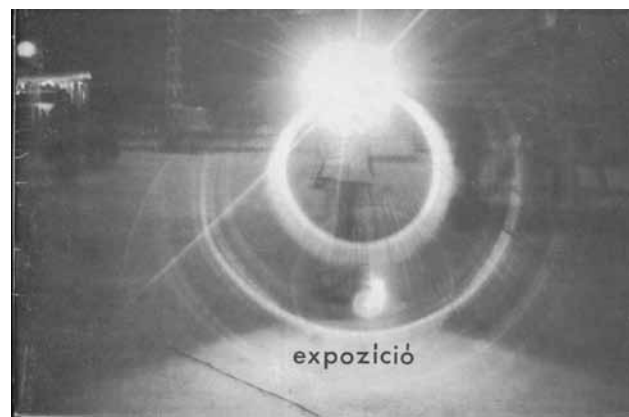
We travelled to Szentendre with my photographer colleague for the opening of the new artists' colony.

At the end of the celebration, a few participants walked into the garden: Dezső Korniss, János Pirk, the Klimós, the Hegyis and Kondor were among them. They were talking, standing under a huge tree. I arrived when Kondor was telling a story about concept art. I switched on my tape recorder; Kondor was just beginning to talk. I didn't know who he was at that time. Here is a transcription of the recorded text.

Gábor Varga

This is sensational! When M. dropped in on me, as I've said, I showed him a few conceptual photos. But guys, even a blind man takes better photos! A good camera makes better pictures by itself! I first recommended that we should set up an institution: he'd supply the capital, and we'd obtain all sorts of crap: a tape recorder that only mews or scrapes, a camera that does not contain an objective and cannot take photos at all, and we'd place an ad in Magyar Nemzet: "Conceptual Laboratory!" Anyone can use it for 500 Forints a day. They can make as many photos as they want, of course there would be no film in the camera, but there would be nudes, and they'd get all kinds of rubbish, saying that they had done that. I have a small French typewriter – I cannot use it properly – and we'd use this for writing things like "krogyomotyo, rotyo." And we'd stick these under the photos, as well as yellow celluloids, and all that. We talked about other things, too. And then he calls me two days later, when I am not at home. Jutka answered the phone, and he told her he had to talk to me, it was important. I called him back later, and he told he had the following idea: we'd throw a cobblestone out of my window (I live in Bécsi Street, a very busy street in the city), and someone from beneath would be photographing the stone falling, a stone falling, with a camera, and another person would film it from above. Do you have the stone? I ask. That's not important, he says, we'll find one. Who has a cine camera? You do. And who has a camera? You have that, too. But this is his concept! And he'd have to hand it in for an exhibition in a few days! Now listen! **Who is the ass who stands**

the whole concept was ridiculous and devoid of sense as art. The author of the **Kondor** obituary, "R." (supposedly the significant critic, Gyula Rózsa) wanted to support this evaluation with his own arguments concerning the fact that **Kondor** was not an avant-garde figure. Despite all the rumours, **Kondor** did not accept the principles of avant-garde art and did not want to be on the platform of "ephemeral artists". In 1979, **Erdély** photographed this insinuating article with the evocation of his "work of art" and covered the black and white print with its own enlarged negative that rendered the meaning of the text "extinct", making the original article unreadable. **Erdély**, who was not only an artist and a director but also a remarkable art theorist, demonstrated with this work the functioning of his "principle of the extinction of meaning", which took avant-garde theories of montage to absurd lengths. According to his theory the reason for art is the confrontation of different, even opposite meanings, in order to raise the spectator to a level of understanding of the paradoxical complexity of art and reality.⁵



Exposure – Photo/Art (curated by Dóra Maurer and László Beke) details of the catalogue, (Hatvany Lajos Museum, Hatvan, 1976)

On **Kondor's** photographs entitled *Silence* and *Catastrophe*, on one part typical motifs (airplanes, machines, and strange constructions) of his specific artistic world appear, on the other, he used not only the principle of montage and the attitude of constructivism, but also experimented intensively with different photographic techniques. He combined photos and photograms, multiple exposure, and manipulated the developing



Béla Kondor: Catastrophe I-XIX (1972), 2 photos, 41,5 x 29,5 cm (Photo: Zsuzsa Bokor, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)



⁵ For further reading on Erdély's theory of art in the broader context of the history of ideas see my "A 'Post-Neo-Avant-Garde' Utopia Realized", *Exindex*, (2007), <http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=517>. For an ironic but still cultic historical interpretation of Erdély's impact on the Hungarian art scene: Peterákn Miklós, "Interdisziplinarität und neue Medien in der Ungarische Kunst der vergangenen drei Jahrzehnte", in *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit: Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert*, (Hrsg. Hans Knoll), Verlag der Kunst, Dresden, 1999, pp. 234-255. For a detailed analysis of Erdély's artistic practice see Annamária Szóke's excellent study for the project of Vivid Radical Memory revisiting conceptual art: "Miklós Erdély: Moral Algebra – Solidarity Action (1972). A Case Study", (2007), http://www.vividradicalmemory.org/html/workshop/stu_essays/szoke.pdf

there, a stone falling right next to him, and can take a photo with that silly machine, when it had probably hit him in the head in the first place, or ruined the machine, and nothing can be seen. And what happens if I am watching a stone falling down from the 6th floor, and can see nothing but an ant? Well, what is this? And why at my place? Because Sarkadi fell out of my window. Well, that is his concept.

Béla Kondor

Fact Art (1971)

1. Lajos Kubista was interred in the Farkasret cemetery in Budapest
2. Cubism was not born in Budapest
3. No “ism” was born in Budapest
4. Victor Vasarely was born in Hungary
5. Op Art was not born in Hungary
6. Nicolas Schöffer was born in Kalocsa
7. Kinetic Art was not born in Kalocsa
8. Tivadar Herzl was born in Budapest
9. Zionism was not born in Budapest
10. The father of the nuclear bomb, Leó Szilárd was born in Hungary, but died in the USA
11. Pop Art was born in the USA, its influence extended to Hungary
12. Béla Bartók was born in Hungary, but died in New York
13. Concept Art was born in New York; since not a single concept has been born in Budapest
14. János Neumann, outstanding mathematician and the inventor of the computer was born in Hungary and died in the United States
15. Cybernetics has been used for the successful production of artworks in numerous technologically developed nations, whereas in Hungary—as far as I know—we have never got round to it.

If, as I claim, all the assertions in the above concept are incontrovertible facts, then in this case “Fact Art” would be a more fitting title than “Concept Art.”

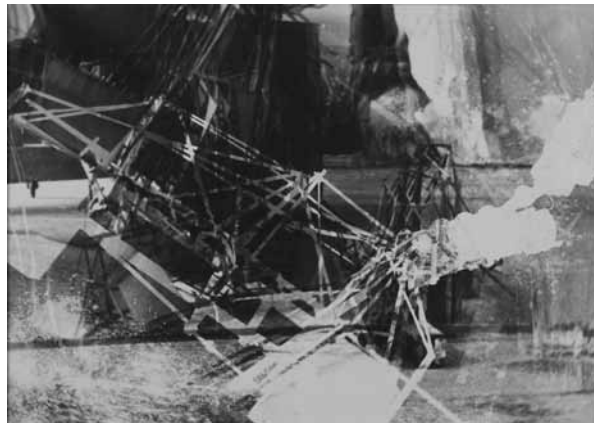
Would Fact Art have originated in Budapest?

This hypothesis can only be maintained if its founding arguments are actual facts. When I reviewed the accuracy of the arguments, I found that the 3rd argument is false. Consequently, Fact Art was still-born in Budapest, because one of the arguments, from which we concluded its coming into being — the one, according to which no ism was yet born in Hungary — is wrong, no fact.

16. There was one ism that was born in Hungary: Bicsérdism.

17. Béla Bicsérdy died in America.

János Major



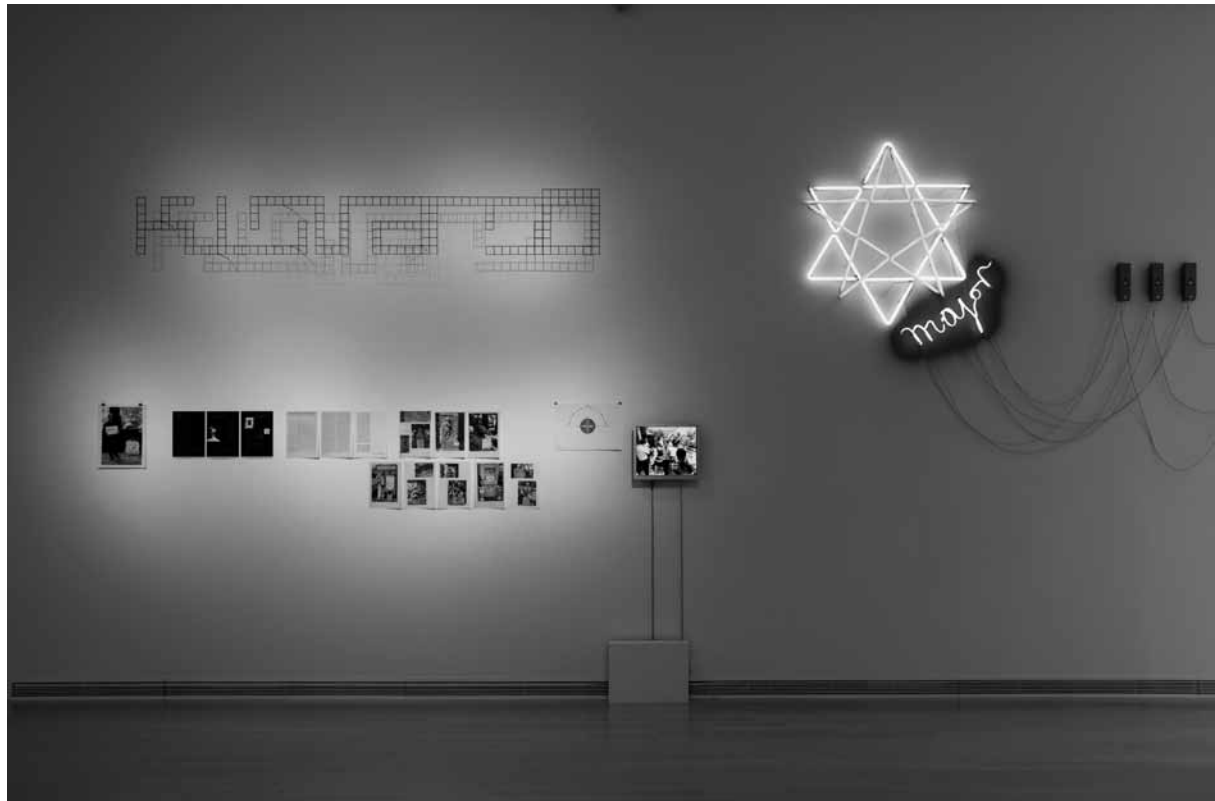
Béla Kondor: Silence I-XII (1972), 2 photos, 29,5 x 41,5 cm (Photo: Zsuzsa Bokor, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)



processes. His photographic works demonstrated that **Kondor** used and appreciated the avant-garde and conceptual art just as he did classical graphical techniques. Through the craftsmanship of photography, the avant-garde infiltrated his “mannerist” art even in a technical sense, although we still do not know how **Kondor** himself evaluated his own photographic experiments in the context of his grand art (easel-paintings and frescoes).

Major’s Star

In 2007, **Little Warsaw** exhibited a provocative installation entitled *Crew Expendable* that even drew the attention of the mainstream media.⁶ The central motif of the work is made up of neon tubes and combines a red pentacle and a yellow hexagram with an inscription “major”. Referring to the unpleasant fact that the crew of the spaceship is expendable for the success of the mission, the title of the installation came from the science-fiction film, *Alien*. Hence the title and the central motif together are strongly invocative of the spirit of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, while also reflecting implicitly socialist management (suppression) of the so-called “Jewish Question”. What is more, the installation is engaged in the production of art history as the word “major” denotes a Hungarian artist, **János Major**, beyond its political and military connotations. On the grounds of his lineage, **Major** permanently dealt with his Jewish identity and even his most famous graphic work, *In Memoriam Móric Scharf*, represents the complexity of the subject.⁷ **Little Warsaw** borrowed the idea of the combination of the Red Star and the Jewish Star from one of his drawings that was inspired by a real gravestone photographed by **Major**.



Little Warsaw: Crew Expendable (2007), installation, 300 x 500 x 40 cm (Photo: József Rosta, courtesy of Ludwig Museum, Budapest)

However, *Crew Expendable* – on the basis of its other elements – is not primarily about the Jewish Question, but rather art historical canonisation. The installation contains reproductions of **Major’s** photos of grave-stones, produced in the late 1960s, that he used to create conceptual art when its theory appeared in Hungary. The most important Hungarian theoretician of conceptual art, László Beke, even wrote an article on these photos and on **Major’s** “semiotic” cemetery photography. This legitimating interpretation also became part of *Crew Expendable*. Representing the “canon” - the prominent artists of the neo-avant-garde

6 On their previous activities including the Nefertiti project on the 2003 Venice Biennale and on their seemingly “post-conceptual” but actually cultural (even memorial) historical attitude, see Edit András’s study: “Transgressing the Boundaries (Even those Marked out by the Predecessors) in the New Genre Conceptual Art”, in Alexander Alberro (ed.), *Art After Conceptualism*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2006, pp. 163-178.

7 On Major’s entire oeuvre see Dániel Véri’s unpublished master’s thesis (Major János, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 2009) and his article on Major’s “cemetery project”: “Major János sírkőfotóiról [On János Major’s Photos of Gravestones]”, *Műemlékvédelem*, 2010, (5), pp. 355-359.

Dear Comrade Dr. Szita! (1970)

Please let me explain the message of two of my etchings, as they have been misinterpreted by many who came up with various explanations. One of them is entitled “In Memoriam Móric Scharf.” You probably know a lot about the blood libel case in Tiszaeszlár, which was a notorious manifestation of anti-Semitism in its time, as well as an interesting chapter in the development of modern criminalistics. I am especially concerned about the actual victim: Móric Scharf, a child who was forced to give evidence against his parents. Károly Eötvös analyzed his state of mind in “The Great Trial” claiming that his disdainful attitude towards his parents during the trial, his hatred of them, was caused, besides physical abuse, by seeing the defencelessness of his own kind. He did not want to belong to a people so unprotected against humiliation. The tragic figure of the child refusing his own parents made me think of representing and emphasizing mental deformity, mixing images recalling the horrors of Nazism with provocative symbols expressing a reverse state of mind – like that of Móric Scharf. To continue this train of thought I wanted to affect viewers by provoking them with the other piece entitled “Self-portrait”, and to achieve my goal mainly through this provocation. If an artist represents himself in the distorting mirror of anti-Semitism, smiling acquiescently at a shameful sight, this unnatural state must surely shake up viewers and urge them to take a stand. Unlike the Dreyfus-case, the trial in Tiszaeszlár is almost unknown, so I felt it was my duty to bring attention to it, using Móric Scharf’s figure as a memento. Besides, I deluded myself by thinking that I could contribute to restoring what had been fucked up methodically by our ancestors for thousands of years. I am sorry to have disturbed you with my letter. I will be very glad if I have managed to generate sympathy towards my work.

Sincerely,
János Major, graphic artist

What is Avantgardism? (1973)

Can we consider it an avant-garde act that Miklós Erdély, György Jovánovics and János Major exhibited a coat?

The word avant-garde means “advance group”.

Avant-garde artists cannot be content with following the beaten track of established aesthetic rules, they aspire rather to reveal new aesthetic fields and create new aesthetic categories. The art of the great avant-garde masters (e. g. Picasso, Mondrian, Le Corbusier) is appreciated all over the world: avantgardism has defeated prejudice and is gaining in esteem among more and more people. In spite of this, avantgardism seems to be proble-



János Major: Gravestones (before 1970), 3 photos (private collection)



András Baranyay: Group Portraits of the „Iparterv Group” (1969), 2 photos, each 11,5 x 16,5 cm (courtesy of the artist and Vintage Gallery, Budapest)



János Major: Lajos Kubista’s Gravestone (before 1971), photo (private collection)



Cover of the catalogue Document 69-70 containing the works of the „Iparterv” exhibitions, (1970), (Photo: András Baranyay)

“**Iparterv Group**” (named after the place of their legendary first exhibition with the meaning “industrial planning” that has a nice avant-garde aura) blink in a slide show as part of the installation. Besides, there is an enigmatic diagram that inserts the later canonised names (from **Erdély** to **Szentjóby**) in a Pan Am logo and stresses the importance of two figures, the “avant-garde” **Erdély** and the dethroning “post-modern” **Ákos Birkás**. The diagram even “argues” that they had become paradigmatic figures already in the 1980s on the basis and with the assistance of two groups of artists. One of them was the **Indigo Group** (an abbreviation of Interdisciplinary Thinking that sounds not so bad in the scientific culture of socialism) established by **Erdély**, and the other was the **Rabinec Studio**, theoretically headed by the painter, **Birkás**. As an ironic and self-reflexive commentary on canonisation, one member of **Little Warsaw**, **András Gálik** also emerges in the installation behind a gravestone in a photograph, and the artists tell the spectator in an interview that they have consciously wandered through cemeteries following and remembering **János Major**.

The theoretical background of the neo-avant-garde canon is displayed all too well in the fact that **Major’s** best known work of art is still the *Lajos Kubista’s Gravestone* – the name means ‘follower of cubism’. Pieced together with his satirical manifesto, *Fact Art*, it got into the canon through Beke’s famous conceptual exhibition, *Imagination* (1971) and Klaus Groh’s book, *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa* (1972). According to **Major’s** manifesto, Hungary is an “Idea Necropolis”, as even cubism died here. **Major** also gave the reason for this fact: in Hungary nothing significant was born, here “things” only end. All the famous Hungarians (the noted **Nicholas Schöffer**, **Victor Vasarely**, and John von Neumann) left the country and made their groundbreaking achievements somewhere else, notably op art, kinetic art, and cybernetics. Supposedly, there was also a four page version of this *Fact Art* concept that contained another important etching entitled *The Yid is Washing Himself (Aftoprtret)* (1967) and a letter about Hungarian anti-Semitism. In this letter, **Major**

matic nowadays. The main source of the problem is the essence of avantgardism itself, its main requirement: the continuous aspiration to the new.

An avant-garde artist restricts himself and the rest of the avantgardists with the creation of each new work, because no one can make a similar thing anymore.

Although it started as the art of freedom, destroying taboos, avantgardism sets more and more limits on itself with each new work of art.

I consider the coat that we exhibited together to be an attempt to set avantgardism free.

This work of art contains no novelty: it is not new to exhibit a piece of clothing, because trousers were exhibited by Claes Oldenburg in 1962.

It is not new that three artists sign a single work of art. The Kukryniksy Group is well known.

An object d'art accompanied by a text that interprets it is not new, either, as it is the main characteristic of conceptual art. (Joseph Kosuth)

But it is not a problem, either, as it is also not new that there is nothing new in it.

Miklós Erdély

Tamás Szentjóby: Exclusion exercise - Punishment-preventive autotherapy

- You can ask anything from the self-sentenced and
- You can ask the following:

- Are all life-schemes that exclude even one other human being immoral?
- Can one form a community with another person without being completely free oneself?
- Is culture's real purpose to make one conscious of the fact that one's fate is identical to history?
- Is it the most important thing to discover and realise what is needed for life?
- Those who bear the unbearable, do they know nothing about life? - Know nothing about that interdependence that is contained in life: - Can he bear himself without us, is everything hopeless without us?
- Can the blockade of the present be broken only by a new type of behaviour?
- Is the realisation of the future in the present an acceleration of our lives?
- Because historical time applies to the totality and not to the individual, would you try to live the facts of the present and your future desolation simultaneously?
- Is this all to manifest difference and therefore there to activate a potentially different?
- Can the changeable also be unfinished? Is the unfinished to be changed? Is unchange: suffering? Is incompleteness: suffering?



János Major: *The Yid is Washing Himself* (1967), 40 x 25 cm etching (private collection)



János Major: *In Memoriam Móríc Scharf* (1966), 46,6 x 26,8 cm etching (private collection)



Miklós Erdély – György Jovánovics – János Major: *János Major's Coat* Chapel Studio of György Galántai, Balatonboglár, (1973) (Photo: György Galántai, courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest)

for a couple of Euro, while the “original” ones are purchased for a huge amount (thousands of Euro), and what is more, they even publish the recipes of the artworks. So, in the spirit of Fluxus, anyone could produce the artwork at home if s/he was capable of reckoning with the sanctity of art and the artwork. Furthermore, they have a “conceptual” multiple that existed only as a supposed plan previously. In 1974, Miklós Erdély allegedly – actually no “original” stamp has remained – invented a stamp with the inscription “to my best friend”, with which he planned to dedicate his first published collection of poems entitled “Collapsus med.”, which had won the avant-garde *Kassák* Prize. This conceptual stamp action simultaneously would have been an early mail art work and the ironic paraphrase of it, since it would have created not personal but non-personal relationships. Besides, it could reflect on the phenomenon that the “culture of stamping” was strongly

interpreted even his “other” infamous etching, the *In Memoriam Móríc Scharf* evoking the main “actor” of the “Tiszaeszlár Blood Libel” of 1882. Further, Erdély also adapted the story in his film, the *Version* (1979) inspired mostly by previous books on the Hungarian “Great Trial” that corresponded to the “Dreyfus Affair”. Supposedly, Major’s surreal imagery also had an impact on Erdély’s interpretation of the indictment that was based heavily on the psychological analysis of enforced confessions that invoked the communist “show trials” of the Rákosi era. In 1882, on grounds of fictitious accusations (based primary on Móríc Scharf’s confession) a few member of the Jewish community was sentenced to prison because of an irrational murder. The “culprits”, allegedly, cut the throat of a young Hungarian girl to use her blood for a Jewish ritual.

Besides *The Yid is Washing Himself*, Major considered the “Móríc Scharf” etching his most important artwork, and, as he recollected, he even started to engage in conceptual art to become the most famous graphic artist after Béla Kondor. On the first draft of the etching, Major even depicted the victim, Eszter Solymosi, but eventually chose a more abstract and brutal “female portrait” describing an abject anatomical torso with a turned out womb to reflect the unnatural surrealism of the enforced but internalised confession. Besides the evocation of the “ritual murder”, the central motif of the shower has strong associations with the Nazi concentration camps and the Holocaust. Beyond this, the clipped article on the etching recalls the case of a German actress, Renata Müller, who was killed by the Gestapo because of her liaison with a Jewish writer. *The Yid is Washing Himself* also deals with the issue of anti-Semitism and reflects on the repression of Jewish identity and the interiorisation of ideology. Portraying himself as a cartoon-like devil, however, Major grotesquely exaggerates the feeling of self-reproach, which was not really appreciated even in the avant-garde circles.

Erdély was also involved in the issue of the Jewish Question, which might have contributed to the origins of another cult artwork entitled *János Major's Coat* (1973). The “ephemeral” object was exhibited in the *Chapel Exhibition* at Balatonboglár under the authorship of Erdély, Major and György Jovánovics. Moreover, the work of art was completed by a manifesto (“What is Avant-Gardism?”) that discussed the issues of conceptual art and the ready-made. But the seemingly referential title of the work has a further meaning, as there is a Hungarian phrase for

a clearly innocent delinquent accused of being involved in a “coat-theft”, when he was actually the victim. In 1995, Tamás St.Auby “remade” this ready-made in an exhibition entitled *Autocatylisis* as a conscious reflection on the cult of the avant-garde.

Erdély’s Stamp

On the one hand, the group Plagium2000 produce multiples of cult art objects; on the other, they criticise the capitalist cult of the object of art and its value, as they minimise the price of art. They sell them

- Do you hope that you can make us conscious of interdependence by demonstrating that we are all at each other’s mercy?
- Is there punishment in your action?
- Is there action in your punishment?
- Is action a sin? Is punishment a sin?
- Is sin action?
- Is action punishment?
- What is a sin?
- Is sin that action that causes suffering?
- Is sin that action that causes no change?
- Is there anything at all that you can call an action that would not produce a change, and whose existence is not aimed at reducing suffering?
- Are you punishing yourself because by self-punishment taking the punishment of self-punishment you release the punisher from the punishment that is not action: that is sin?
- Do you feel particularly exposed because you cannot see to whom you are talking?”

Once We Departed (1972)

Spontaneous actions in a chapel, photographed by Dóra Maurer and published under the title *We once went*. Participants: Miklós Erdély, Tibor Gáyor, György Jovánovics, Dóra Maurer, Tamás Szentjóby

An interview with György Jovánovics (1998):

This work, Dóra Maurer’s photo series, stemmed from my idea. That is, it had several authors: the final version is the one developed by Miklós Erdély, Tibor Gáyor and Tamás Szentjóby. What happened was that the five of us - myself, Dóra Maurer and three other friends - were coming close to the gate of the chapel. I noticed that the chapel’s improvised iron gate was a piece of wrought iron fencing brought from somewhere and shifted by 90 degrees. To show my friends what I meant, I jumped over there and got myself into a horizontal position. I remember that when Dóra first photographed me, Miklós lay down on the ground, was covered by the inside of the church from his waist down, and took a position as if he had bent over by 90 degrees, too, and as if he had been talking from a pit. I only found out about the two most splendid ideas, that of Tibor Gáyor and Tamás Szentjóby later, as I could not see them at that moment. Szentjóby gave a Tintoretto-like aspect to the photo, as he was hanging upside down, patiently reading a book. He is plunging headlong through the leaves of a tree, almost hitting the ground. But I find Tibor Gáyor’s appearance even more interesting. He brought a wonderful, turn-of-the-century, gentry-like, easy-flowing aspect into the photo, smoking a cigarette, like someone on a summer holiday. He is looking at the Lake Balaton or the butterflies, his cigarette half smoked, and glances at something from behind a wall with an incredible tranquillity. What was most surprising was that Gáyor was actually

intertwined with socialism’s compulsive administration and extensive bureaucracy, was appropriated by Erdély for his absolutely nonofficial ends. From the historical perspective of cults, the irony and the humour of this appropriation is not only based on the manner in which Erdély multiplied his best friends in the age of technical reproducibility, but also on the fact that he may have foreseen the future value of being “the best friend of Miklós Erdély”, thereby mocking his own cult.



Plagium2000/Erdély Miklós: *Last Year's Snow*, (1970), 2010



Plagium2000 (Orsolya Gaál – Kitti Gosztola): Miklós Erdély's Stamp, (2008), 2010



Plagium2000/Szentjóby Tamás: *Cooling Water*, (1965), 2010



Plagium2000/Tamás Szentjóby: *Czechoslovakian Radio 1968*, (1969), 2008

Plagium2000 also multiplied a real Erdély artwork, *Last Year's Snow* (1970), which was also an ironic version of an avant-garde strategy. Nevertheless, Erdély’s thermos is a ready-made at first sight, frozen precisely for the purposes of an exhibition - the artist really did put last year’s snow into it. But the identity of the snow and the reality of the artistic action are unverifiable. The common spectator does not even know what is inside the thermos, and if s/he dares to look into the bottle, would only see water and not be able to determine the origin of it. Besides, the title – invoking the Hungarian proverb concerning novelty’s transitory aspect: “where is last year’s snow” – self-reflectively debunked the avant-garde cult of originality and newness. Plagium2000 has multiplied legendary objects by Szentjóby as well. His *Cooling Water* (1965) is generally regarded as one of the first Hungarian Fluxus artworks. It was made in the same year as Joseph Kosuth’s first conceptual artwork, the *One And Three Chairs*, although Szentjóby’s work was “originally” made for a neo-dadaist exhibition.

Beside its conceptual “objectivity”, Szentjóby’s *Czechoslovakian Radio 1968* (1969) become a cult object due to its political subject.⁸ In 1968, according to urban legend, Russian troops confiscated not only weapons, but also telecommunication devices - namely radios - after their march into Prague. After this, the citizens of Prague held bricks covered in paper to their heads to deceive and disorient the invaders. Giving a new dimension to the banal phrase “spiritual nutrition”, Erdély’s *Newspaper Cake* was also connected to the media, while reflecting the fact that the communist leadership fed people’s head with sweet lies across all possible communicational channels. Incidentally, Gábor Altorjay produced Erdély’s conceptual artwork, the *Newspaper Cake* (which was actually only Erdély’s idea) for the first time in 1967. Then it was remade in 1993 for the Fluxus exhibition (entitled 3 x 4) organised by Artpool to commemorate the First Hungarian Happening (*The Lunch–In Memoriam Batu Khan*, 1966), which was performed by Altorjay and Szentjóby in the cellars of István Szenes, who was Erdély’s relative. Although Erdély may have been connected to this event, he didn’t participate in the happening.⁹ But cults are always fed by facts – by some kind of facts.

Little Warsaw, from another viewpoint, investigated the cult of Szentjóby – at that time a professor of the Academy of Fine Arts – in a certain sense more critically, since they re-enacted together with him one of his legendary happenings, the *Exclusion Exercise – Punishment-Preventive Auto-Therapy* (1972). Their work had the provocative title, *Cyril and Method* that has an explicit religious reference to Saint Cyril and Methodius (apostles of the Slavs), and also refers to the theory of art and to the possibility of teaching it. Moreover, the presentation of the re-enactment ironically “stages” the contemporary critical practices of appropriation and recuperation that were subject to

⁸ For a further analysis of Szentjóby’s early period – characterised by his “Be Prohibited” project – see Emese Kürti, “To Disorient the Troops. Tamás St.Auby’s exhibition in Karlsruhe”, *Exindex*, 2010. <http://exindex.hu/index.php?l=en&page=3&id=773>

⁹ Altorjay, Erdély, and Szentjóby featured the Hungarian section of a huge exhibition of conceptual art organized by several institutions in the frame of Vivid Radical Memory project: *Subversive Practices: Art under Conditions of Political Repression 60s–80s / South America / Europe*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, 2009.

lying on his back in the brushwood. His wife, Dóra Maurer, managed to catch Tibor's profile and the front of his shoulders and chest, but I don't think she herself knew it would have that effect. We can see this fantastic image of tranquillity, a very still tranquillity, while Gáyor is lying on his back in filthy, unkempt brushwood. Dóra always told me that she would publish my idea or my photo – she almost said 'your photo', even though it was she who exposed it, while everyone else added their own idea."

An interview with Dóra Maurer (1998):

"I think it was Miki Erdély's or Tamás Szentjóbý's idea that we should go to Balatonboglár in May 1972. We asked Galántai for the key to the chapel and shot 36 photos - the full capacity of a camera - on the square and the ideas we had around the chapel. That was when the photo series was made. It was Jován's idea. There was a grid put across the chapel door, originally from a fence, but applied horizontally and not vertically. Jován stood on it, and the others automatically began to find their places, too. Szentjóbý lay down on a branch and stuffed his long hair into his shirt, so his hair was not floating like Jován's in the photo. Erdély placed himself in the door, bent over, as if he had been glancing out from there, while Tibor lay on the ground, as if that had been another direction, too, and only the smoke of his cigarette revealed where upwards was. Erdély held up a poppy and said that if we photographed it, it might look as if it were the chapel bell. Then they were jumping down from a bench, Erdély, Tibor and I think Jován, too, as if they were jumping on top of the Badacsony, that is, as if they had been touching the mountain with the shape of their bodies."

Parallel Chronologies – exhibition and publication

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Little Warsaw: Cyrill and Method, (2005), (Photo: Lenke Szilágyi)

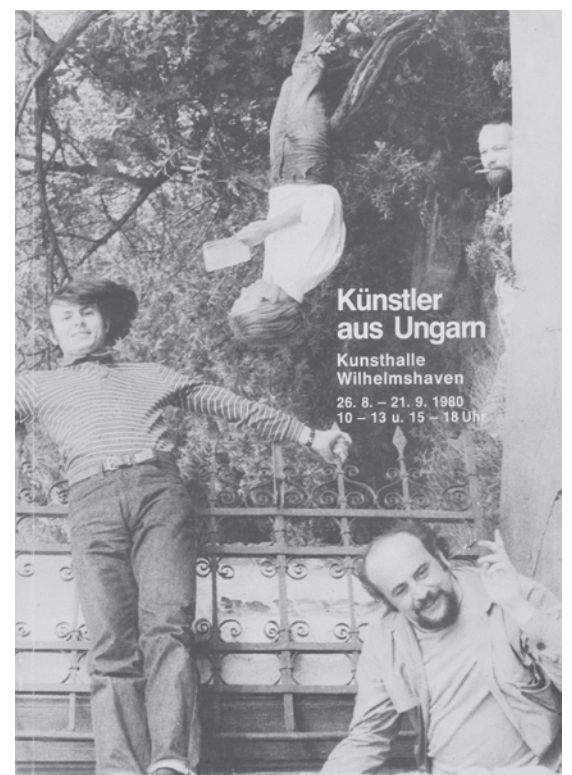
"self-sentenced". The existentially, sociologically and ethically oriented questions refer to the possibility of autonomy, as well as politically and aesthetically conceived freedom in a totalitarian regime.

Discrediting the "youthful" artists and closing the "illegal" space, the state agencies seriously reacted against the *Chapel Exhibitions*. Szentjóbý euphemistically "had an opportunity" to leave the country – eventually, he immigrated to Switzerland in 1975 – that contributed to the constitution of his cult. In 1980, he and Erdély (with his fellow avant-garde artists) represented Hungarian contemporary art on the cover of a catalogue of a significant West-German exhibition (Kunsthalle, Wilhelmshaven). The cover photo made by Dóra Maurer is the "documentation" of a spontaneous "action" at Balatonboglár entitled *Once We Departed* (1972). The simplicity of the title has manifold reference to the spirit and the reception of the avant-garde. Despite the fact that the artists went to Lake Balaton only by chance on a sunny summer day, they created an everlasting work of art that has become an iconic representation of the spirit and community of the neo-avant-garde. Showing the features of a cult, the photo also has critical qualities. This piece of the photo

series received the subtitle *Space Disarray* that on the one hand, obviously refers to the subversive, confusing, revolutionary activities of the avant-garde; while on the other, travestying the cult of self-representation and traditional portraiture, points to their often forgotten self-irony. Similarly, another photo also had cult status in the 1980s, which also represented an avant-garde company, the *Iparterv Group* on the balcony of one of its members, László Lakner. This renowned photo is also a part of a photo-series that is less familiar, but *Little Warsaw* staged the whole series in the *Crew Expendable*. On one of them, a tall, lanky, young man with glasses, János Major is leading the group, as if he were the epitome of the avant-garde. It could be that he represented himself too ironically, even sarcastically during his lifetime, so the task of situating him in the avant-garde "pantheon" has been left to others.



Dóra Maurer: *Once We Departed*, (1972), photo-action (Miklós Erdély, Tibor Gáyor, György Jovánovics, Tamás Szentjóbý) (courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest)



Cover of the exhibition catalogue entitled *Künstler aus Ungarn* (Kunsthalle, Wilhelmshaven, 1980) (Photo: Dóra Maurer)