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Special Issue: Proceedings of the symposium "László Moholy-Nagy: Translating Utopia Into Action," held in John M. Clayton Hall at the University of Delaware, 20 October 1995. Oliver A. I. Botar and Hattula Moholy-Nagy, guest editors.

Hungarian Studies Review

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Special Volume:
Proceedings of the Symposium:

László Moholy-Nagy

TRANSLATING UTOPIA INTO ACTION

John M. Clayton Hall, University of Delaware,
Newark, Delaware, October 20, 1995

Edited by
Oliver A. I. Botar and Hattula Moholy-Nagy

Papers by:
Oliver A. I. Botar
Lloyd Engelbrecht
Alain Findeli
Éva Forgács
Eleanor M. Hight
Victor Margolin
Jeffrey L. Meikle
Krisztina Passuth

Short stories by László Moholy-Nagy,
translated by Hattula Moholy-Nagy,
introduced by Oliver A. I. Botar

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László Moholy-Nagy: Translating Utopia into Action

INTRODUCTION

Oliver A. I. Botar and Hattula Moholy-Nagy

We are very pleased to publish the proceedings of the memorable symposium "László Moholy-Nagy: Translating Utopia Into Action," held in John M. Clayton Hall at the University of Delaware on 20 October 1995, just a few months after the centenary of László Moholy-Nagy's birth. (figs. 1-5) The Symposium, co-sponsored by the University Gallery and the Department of Art History of the U. of D., was spear-headed by the principal organizer of the exhibition and the editor of its catalogue *lászló moholy-nagy: from budapest to berlin 1914-1923*, Gallery Director Belena Chapp.[1] (figs. 6, 7) Chapp also took on the task of editing the papers presented for publication,[2] but when she left her position as Director, she passed it on to Hattula Moholy-Nagy, who in turn recruited Oliver Botar to share in the work.

While we, the editors, had transcriptions of the proceedings at our disposal, we decided to give the Symposium's speakers the choice of how they wished to be represented in these Proceedings. Eleanor Hight chose to use her paper as the basis for what is essentially a new article (though one related to her fine book on Moholy-Nagy's photography), which she generously prepared for publication. Alain Findeli had held a talk that was built around slides and an outline rendered only in point form.

He used the transcription of his presentation as the basis for a text that "should be read as the personal *Festschrift* of a design educator rather than as a scholarly essay," as he put it.[3] Krisztina Passuth kept her text as it was presented, but the editors worked to improve on the translation of the Hungarian original into English. Because the material of his talk was soon incorporated into his Ph.D. dissertation, after which it appeared in a heavily revised form in an anthology,[4] Oliver Botar also chose to render his text essentially as he delivered it, adding references only to quoted sources. Lloyd Engelbrecht chose to do the same. Éva Forgács, Victor Margolin and Jeffrey Meikle engaged in relatively light editing of their presentations, adding endnotes in the process. We were lucky enough to have recordings available to us of most of the two question-and-answer periods at the Symposium. (Stephen Mansbach's Introduction is missing from these recordings, but he is represented by his further participation in the question period, including his concluding remarks.) The editors have kept to the transcription as closely as possible in order to capture some of the flavour of the event. Thus, what we hope to have produced here is a relatively accurate account of what transpired on that fall day so many years ago, a worthy—if belated— companion to *Über Moholy-Nagy* [On Moholy-Nagy], the volume of essays based on the International Moholy-Nagy Symposium held in Bielefeld, Germany on the centenary of the artist's birth.[5]

The editors have maintained the original order of the speakers' presentations in the present volume. We begin therefore with Lloyd Engelbrecht's introduction to and overview of the artist's career. The remaining presentations may be divided roughly into two groups: the first of these groups focuses on Moholy-Nagy's work and career in Germany and the second on Moholy-Nagy as a design theorist and educator in the United States. Krisztina Passuth's paper discusses Moholy-Nagy's contribution to International Constructivism. Eleanor Hight, who had originally spoken on "Vision in Motion: The Photographs and Films of Moholy-Nagy," chose to keep her discussion focused on Moholy's "Vision in Motion," but this time via an examination of the artist's *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*. Oliver Botar chose to present his proposed re-evaluation of the artist's thinking and oeuvre in light of the results of his research on Moholy-Nagy's engagement with what Botar terms "Biocentrism." In a related move, Éva Forgács's paper takes a first look at Moholy-Nagy's engagement with German Reform Pedagogy. The second group of papers has as its main theme Moholy-Nagy's approach

to design and design education. Alain Findeli, whose dissertation on Moholy-Nagy's pedagogy at his Chicago schools appeared that same year in book form,[6] teases some Postmodern themes out of Moholy-Nagy's decidedly Modernist thinking and oeuvre, underlining the ways in which his work was still relevant to design education in 1995. Both Jeffrey Meikle and Victor Margolin chose to focus on Moholy-Nagy's approach to design, particularly American design. While Margolin traced the utopian-idealist thread in Moholy's thinking throughout his career (an examination he soon incorporated into his excellent volume on this subject),[7] Meikle examines how Moholy's thinking about design fit into, or rather clashed with the business-oriented framework of American design theory and practice. In the discussion a number of themes were raised, including the usage of the terms "biomorphic" and "biocentric," and the effect that Moholy-Nagy's pedagogy had on the American scene. We feel that these papers made a valuable contribution to Moholy-Nagy studies when they were first presented in 1995, and we maintain that they are relevant to Moholy-Nagy studies today.

We conclude this special issue of the HSR with the three known short stories that Moholy-Nagy published during his lifetime, including scans of the original Hungarian publications and translations of the stories into English. We believe that these three texts will underline the fact of Moholy's literary ambitions during the early years of his career as an artist, and that their content will cast light on both his aesthetic and social thinking during this period.

NOTES

[1] Belena S. Chapp, ed., *lászló moholy-nagy: from budapest to berlin 1914–1923* (Newark, Delaware: University Gallery, University of Delaware, 1995), including essays by Lloyd C. Engelbrecht, Levente Nagy, Pamela J. Warner, Júlia Szabó, Éva Bajkay, Krisztina Passuth, Oliver A. I. Botar and Antonella Carbone. The volume also published English translations of a selection of Moholy-Nagy's poems.

[2] Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1995).

[3] Alain Findeli, email communication with Hattula Moholy-Nagy, 9.12.2006.

[4] Oliver A. I. Botar, "Prolegomena to the Study of Biomorphic Modernism: Biocentrism, László Moholy-Nagy's 'New Vision,' and Ernő Kállai's Bioromantik," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1998 and *The Roots of László Moholy-Nagy's*

Biocentric Constructivism, in *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond*, ed. Eduardo Kac (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007), 315-344.

[5] Gottfried Jäger and Gudrun Wessing, eds., *über moholy-nagy* (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 1997).

[6] Alain Findeli, *Le Bauhaus de Chicago: L'oeuvre pédagogique de László Moholy-Nagy* (Sillery, Québec: Éditions du Septentrion, 1995).

[7] Victor Margolin, *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissiztky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917–1946* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Symposium was co-sponsored by the University Gallery and the Department of Art History at the University of Delaware. The Symposium, film presentations and related activities were supported by the Faculty Senate Committee on Cultural Activities and Public Events, the College of Arts and Science, the Office of International Programs and Special Sessions, the Office of the Provost, the Visiting Women Scholars Award Program and the Department of Art History, all of the University of Delaware. Other supporters included the Unidel Foundation, the Delaware State Arts Council/Division of the Arts, the Trust for Mutual Understanding, the Open Society Institute, the Fluor Foundation and some private contributions.

Belena Chapp, who first took on the task of publishing the Symposium's Proceedings arranged for the recording and transcription of its presentations and question periods. This publication is supported by the *Hungarian Studies Review*, the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada and the Moholy-Nagy Foundation. We thank the presenters/authors for their patience and hard work on this project. Hattula Moholy-Nagy supported the publication of the Symposium's Proceedings from the start as copyright holder, editor and member of the board of The Moholy-Nagy Foundation. The Foundation has made possible the publication of illustrations in this volume of the HSR. Prof. Nándor Dreisziger is to be thanked for taking on this project as a special issue of the HSR.

Thanks are also due to Lana Wilson for the initial transcription and correction of Krisztina Passuth's presentation. Hattula Moholy-Nagy's translations of Moholy-Nagy's short stories, "Maris" and "Találkozás," were corrected by Levente Nagy and George Bisztray, while her translation of "A csodálatos angol tánczcsoport" was corrected by Oliver A. I. Botar and Anna Cseke-Gál. Facsimile scans of the original Hungarian stories are by Andreas Hug. Images of the originals were facilitated by Levente Nagy. Thanks to Sabine Hartmann of the Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin, and René Roth for permission to reproduce works by Lucia Moholy and Raoul Francé, respectively. Some of the editing of this special issue was undertaken while I was the recipient of a Standard Research Grant of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

—Oliver A. I. Botar

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Opening Statement on the Occasion of Moholy-Nagy's Centenary

OCTOBER 20, 1995

Lloyd C. Engelbrecht

It is now just over one hundred years ago, on July 20, 1895, that László Moholy-Nagy was born in Bácsborsód, a small village in southern Hungary. This international symposium, "László Moholy-Nagy: Translating Utopia into Action," and the related exhibition, "László Moholy-Nagy: From Budapest to Berlin, 1914-1923," pay tribute to Moholy on the centenary of his birth, and we in turn are all honoured to have with us today his daughter, Hattula Moholy-Nagy. Moholy died relatively young in 1946 at age 51, and surely he gave little thought to what kind of a tribute might be appropriate for future generations. Nevertheless, it is hard to imagine anything more appropriate than this: an exhibition shedding light on aspects of his creative output not yet widely known, and this symposium discussing his career and its continuing relevance for us.

I have been studying Moholy for more than twenty-five years: making notes and Xerox copies of letters and documents, talking to people who knew him, talking with scholars who have studied his career, and visiting sites where he lived and worked. One of the things I have learned is that an open mind is essential: one never knows when surprises are in store. As an example, I had been dimly aware of Moholy's World War I-era drawings on postcards through a few published black

and white reproductions, but I never gave them much thought. It was only recently, through Belena Chapp, that I became aware of the extensive number of postcards preserved, the range of subjects of the drawings on these postcards, and the lively colour harmonies that Moholy used. And as another example, just over two months ago Hattula Moholy-Nagy shared with a symposium audience in Alexandria, Virginia, a collection she had recently acquired of previously unknown colour slides from her father's Chicago period. Hence a new understanding is now possible of Moholy's work in photography during the last decade of his career.

But of course understanding Moholy involves more than discovering additional aspects of his work. He once wrote that: "A human being is developed by the crystallization of the whole of his experience." What this many-sided symposium will do is crystallize a broader understanding for us of Moholy's life and work.

During the next few minutes, I want to outline Moholy's career very briefly and discuss his uniqueness. And I want to add a few words about the contributions of his two wives.

Moholy lived in several small villages during his young years in addition to Bácsborsód, including a village called Mohol, now in Serbia, but still part of Hungary during Moholy's youth. He later adopted the name of that town as part of his compound surname. He attended a gymnasium, or university-preparatory school, in Szeged, then Hungary's second largest city. He studied law at the University of Budapest before his service as an artillery officer in the Austro-Hungarian army during World War I. He sustained an injury to his left hand on July 1, 1917. Although he returned to his legal studies after the war, he filled much of his time with literary and artistic activities. He left law school to return to Szeged to become an artist. Ironically, in view of the fact that he spent much of life as a design educator, Moholy had no formal training in design, and very little formal instruction in art. He exhibited his art in Szeged shortly before the end of 1919, just before leaving Hungary. After a brief stay in Vienna, Moholy moved to Berlin and lived there from 1920 to 1923, and again from 1928 until 1934.

From 1923 until 1928 Moholy taught at that innovative design school known as the Bauhaus, first in Weimar and then in Dessau. Moholy's work at the Bauhaus can be summarized in six categories: (1) practice and theory of the foundation course; (2) service as head of the metal workshop; (3) photography; (4) graphic design; (5) co-editing, with Walter Gropius, of the Bauhaus journal and books; and (6) his writings.

I should add that there were no formal courses in photography or graphic design until after Moholy had left the Bauhaus, but his own work in these fields stimulated interest on the part of the students.

Moholy used his base in Berlin to carry out design commissions in Germany and in other European countries, including Holland and Belgium, before moving to London in 1935. He left London for Chicago in 1937, where he founded the New Bauhaus and its two successor schools, the School of Design in Chicago and the Institute of Design. His design practice was continued in the United States, where his clients included the Parker Pen Company and U. S. Gypsum.

Moholy is unique in twentieth-century culture because of the range of his creative activities. He was active as a painter, sculptor, designer, printmaker, photographer, filmmaker, writer, and teacher. As a designer he worked in the areas of industrial, interior, graphic, exhibition, and theatre design. His theatre designs were for grand opera as well as for the spoken stage. He also worked closely with architects and planners. But a dilettante he was not. He excelled in a wide range of creative activities, and, in fact, was always on the cutting edge.

Another thing I would like to summarize, as will be apparent in the course of this symposium, is that Moholy worked closely with some of the major figures of the twentieth century, and had significant contact with many more. A partial list might sound like a patter song from an operetta from Old Vienna, but it could include filmmakers Sergei Eisenstein and Alexander Korda, semanticist and politician S. I. Hayakawa, musician and composer John Cage, poet and critic Sir Herbert Read, biologist Julian Huxley, psychiatrist Franz Alexander, industrialists Walter Paepcke and Kenneth Parker, sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore, painters Piet Mondrian, Theo van Doesburg and Kazimir Malevich, art historian Sigfried Giedion, *Chicago Daily News* critic C. J. Bulliet, and architects Walter Gropius, George Fred Keck, Ralph Rapson, and Frank Lloyd Wright (Wright was actually invited to teach at the New Bauhaus, but declined). The one thing this diverse group of people and Moholy had in common is that all worked on the cutting edge.

Moholy managed to cram a lot of activity into his days. From the beginning of his work on the postcards, he continued to be active as an artist throughout his career, although being an artist was his sole occupation only for very brief periods.

Finally, I want to supplement the material presented by the other

speakers by pointing to the supportive role played by each of Moholy's two wives.

Moholy's first wife, Lucia (Schulz) Moholy, was born near Prague on January 18, 1894. (fig. 8) Although her native language was Czech, she had a much better command of German than did her husband, and she used this ability to aid Moholy in his writing. Also, she learned English at an early age and helped her husband when he occasionally needed to use that language in his early career. She had also studied philosophy and art history at the University of Prague. She became interested in photography at an early age, and after their marriage in 1921, she helped Moholy begin his work with photograms, and continued to help Moholy with photography over the years. She had a background in book editing and production, and she provided editorial and production assistance to Moholy during the period when he co-edited those fourteen Bauhaus books.

Lucia Moholy's activities as a photographer extended well beyond the collaboration and assistance offered to her husband. While at the Bauhaus, she was the photographer primarily responsible for documenting the Bauhaus buildings in Dessau, as well as the work of the faculty and students. Many of these photographs were published in Bauhaus publications and elsewhere. Hence the mental images we all carry in our heads about the Bauhaus and its activities stem largely from her. After leaving the Bauhaus, she taught photography in Berlin for a few years. But her approach to photography was different from that of her husband. Except for her collaboration with him on photograms, she used photography for documentary rather that expressive purposes, although her skill and insight as a photographer resulted in photographs interesting in themselves.

Lucia Moholy was already living in England when Moholy arrived there. Although they had separated around 1928, and Moholy had already remarried, Lucia continued to aid him with his photography. Moholy later tried, without success, to help her get a visa to enter the United States by offering her a teaching post at his School of Design in Chicago.

In England Lucia Moholy was a pioneer in developing methods of microfilming when this procedure was still new. Some of her work in this area was as a staff member of UNESCO.

While living in England, Lucia Moholy wrote a pioneering history, *A Hundred Years of Photography*, to celebrate the centennial of that medium.

After moving to Zurich in 1957, she wrote a bilingual book, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy/Moholy-Nagy, Marginal Notes*, in which she attempted to set the record straight on numerous points about her and Moholy that had been garbled in various publications over the years. *Marginal Notes* appeared in 1972. Lucia Moholy died in Zurich on May 17, 1989.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, Hattula's mother, was born in Dresden on October 29, 1903. She learned English at an early age, and spoke and wrote it with ease. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy began her career as an actor, appearing in a variety of roles from Shakespeare to light comedies, and appeared in a silent film, "Mädchenschicksale" [Girls' fates] of 1928. She moved on to head the scenario office of Tobis, a motion-picture production company, and then turned to writing.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy met her future husband in Berlin in 1931. (fig. 9) They soon began collaborative efforts as she added some practical knowledge to Moholy's work as a filmmaker. During the early years of their marriage, most of her literary efforts went in to helping him with his publications. In Chicago much of her energy went into helping him with the Institute of Design, in particular with the operation of a summer school at Somonauk, Illinois. Her first book, a novel entitled *Children's Children*, appeared in 1945, with a dust jacket designed by her husband. This was a novel in which she, an ardent anti-Nazi, examined her troubled relationship with her father and brother, both Nazi sympathizers.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy also wrote extensive essays, still unpublished, in which she examined her relationship with her husband, including vivid descriptions of some troubling dreams she had during the years following his death. Not much of this found a place in her 1950 biography, Moholy-Nagy, *Experiment in Totality*. By the time the book came out, she had already turned to the academic life, teaching humanities at the Institute of Design until 1948, and then moving on to Bradley University and the University of California in Berkeley. She taught for almost 20 years at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, and for briefer periods at Columbia University and the University of Houston.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy also lectured widely in her later years, both in the United States and in Germany. She carried on an extensive correspondence with figures such as the theologian Paul Tillich and the writer Hannah Arendt.

A number of publications marked Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's years as an academician. Besides a large number of articles in periodicals,

she wrote *Native Genius in Anonymous Architecture* (1957), *Carlos Raul Villanueva and the Architecture of Venezuela* (1964), *Matrix of Man: An Illustrated History of Urban Environment* (1968), and she collaborated on *The Architecture of Paul Randolph* (1970). She also helped to set up a number of exhibitions of Moholy's work, and fostered Moholy's continuing reputation by donating good examples of his work to important museums.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy died in New York on January 8, 1971.

Since both of these women played key supporting roles in Moholy's career, I wanted to include some recognition of their contribution at today's symposium. And I would like this contribution to be part of that process of crystallization that occupies us today.

Thank you very much.

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László Moholy-Nagy

AND THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT-GARDE

Krisztina Passuth

By 1923, the year that Moholy-Nagy accepted the professorship offered to him by Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany, he was a prominent figure in the international avant-garde. Moholy-Nagy was twenty-seven years old at the time, with no academic training in fine art and with an insufficient command of the German language to enable him to write articles on his own or to hold public lectures. His international artistic career had begun a mere three years previous, in the spring of 1920.

Nevertheless, he was selected for this key position in preference to prominent candidates such as Theo van Doesburg and Lazar El Lissitzky, who were both interested in working at the Bauhaus, the best, or perhaps the only, avant-garde art school in Central Europe. If we are to believe the recollections of Franciska Clausen, Moholy-Nagy's Danish student in Berlin, he was not at all enthusiastic about moving from the exciting cosmopolitan city of Berlin to a sleepy town in central Germany. His economic insecurity forced him, however, to accept the position offered by Gropius, causing him to abandon the romantic role of a starving and independent avant-garde artist in favour of a small-town college lecturer with a steady, even rather handsome, income.

While one can easily accept Moholy-Nagy's decision to compromise, Gropius' decision to appoint him requires some explanation. Gropius had, at least in principle, several candidates from whom to choose, including van Doesburg and El Lissitzky. Yet Gropius entrusted the job to a twenty-seven-year-old émigré painter from Hungary, a decision he never came to regret. On the contrary, the friendship and solidarity that evolved between the two during the course their relationship and collaboration was such that, when Gropius resigned, Moholy-Nagy also left his job, ready to return to the life-and-death struggle for survival he had known in Berlin.

The qualities that attracted Gropius to Moholy-Nagy were precisely those that others might have held against him: his dilettantism and his aloofness from any schools, academies, or groups in Germany except one (an important one in the eyes of Gropius), the circle of Herwarth Walden and his cultural journal *Der Sturm*. Almost single-handedly, the 1922 and 1923 exhibitions held at the Galerie Der Sturm established Moholy-Nagy's reputation as an artist, convincing Gropius that this young man, exiled from his homeland and with only his unquestionable talent to his name, was in fact the right choice for the Bauhaus.

But what did his talent consist of? What was it that allowed him to overcome the formidable obstacles in his path that might have prevented him from being hired to the Bauhaus and from having a successful career there from 1923 to 1928? Recollections and commentaries, both friendly and hostile, clearly indicate that, above anything else, it was his personal—perhaps his Eastern European—charm that was responsible. Moholy-Nagy, who had no special predilections for Hungarian folk traditions, enchanted the Bauhäusler with his ability to dance the Hungarian "csárdás" [czardas]. A part of his charm was no doubt his striking youthfulness and his ability to play the roles of both professor and student.(Frontispiece) His relentless energy, his unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and his fundamental openness to anything new distinguished him from such fellow-professors as Paul Klee or Wassily Kandinsky, who, having been engulfed in the halo of their earlier artistic achievements, went their own sovereign ways, remaining inattentive to any ideas and suggestions that would come from others.

His fellow Bauhaus professors, including Paul Klee, Lyonel Feininger, Wassily Kandinsky and Oskar Schlemmer, had more or less reached the zenith of their artistic careers. Moholy-Nagy's talents, on the other hand, unfolded then and there for everyone to see,

under the guardianship of Lucia Moholy. Moholy-Nagy's best and most mature works were made between 1923 and 1926, when the delicate balance between the artist's internal momentum and his external conditions facilitated the emergence of works that were both harmonious and unquestionably avant-garde.

And so, untangling the threads one by one, we gradually approach not only the motives behind Gropius' decision, but also the secret of Moholy-Nagy's success. In addition to the obvious charm of his personality, Moholy-Nagy was a thoroughly avant-garde artist in every aspect of his character. The essence of the contemporary avant-garde movement was evident in all of his writings (manifestos, brief announcements and theoretical articles), in the freshness of his ideas, as well as in the intricate web of his international connections.

Those Bauhaus members who took a dislike to Moholy-Nagy (Lothar Schreyer, for example), saw him as a representative of Russian Constructivism as practiced by El Lissitzky. What was curious about this view is that the only direct contact with things Russian that Moholy-Nagy had had up to that point were his personal connections with Russian Constructivist artists in Berlin, and with the Russian Constructivist publications he saw in Berlin or to which he gained access through Lajos Kassák in Vienna. As far as artworks were concerned, he had seen some Russian Constructivist works in studios, private collections, and Berlin exhibitions, but generally he gained access to the visual information through black and white reproductions and photographs. Thus, what he knew about Russian or Soviet art he had—for the most part—gathered indirectly from lectures, publications and from the personal accounts of Russian émigré artists. It was in this way that the Hungarian painter became a "Russian avant-garde artist." Most importantly, he had done so without believing in the ideology these works came to represent after 1922. It is only in articles mistakenly attributed to Moholy-Nagy, such as "Constructivism and the Proletariat," that one finds the Communist rhetoric typical of Russian Constructivism in his writings. In other instances, such as the manifesto appearing in the 1923 issue of the Hungarian émigré Communist periodical *Egység* [Unity], Moholy-Nagy added his name to texts written by others, such as Alfred Kemény (Durus) or Ernő Kállai. In only one case did Communist phraseology appear in Moholy-Nagy's writing. It was in an article entitled, "On the Problem of New Content and New Form," which he published in 1922 in the Hungarian émigré journal, *Akasztott Ember* [Hanged Man] when he wrote:

> We, who today have become one with the necessity and the condition of class struggle in all respects, do not think it important that a person should find enjoyment in a picture, in music, or in poetry. … One thing is certain. If all of us who are fighting for the realization of a Communist way of life would band together and concentrate our energies on solving the problems facing us, instead of contending with each other, we would arrive at that goal much sooner.[1]

It is clear that rather than reflecting his own convictions, this text was meant to pave the way for his cooperation with this Communist little magazine. (fig. 10)

Thus, I would argue that there was hardly any political charge to Moholy-Nagy's so-called "Soviet Constructivism," and what there was only applied to a very brief period. Yet his works were clearly made in the artistic spirit of this Russian movement. The paintings, the reliefs, the assemblages, the so-called "telephone-pictures," the surviving sculptures, even the collages, the linocuts, and the photograms, not to mention his students' compositions at the Bauhaus, all were made in tune with Constructivist concepts.

Moholy-Nagy's activities ranged from artistic production to work he did as a teacher, writer, and editor. The spirit he applied to his activities in these other fields can be discovered in the qualities inherent in his works from this period: the liberated and simplified geometric forms, the complex relationships between planes, weightlessness and gravity, massiveness and transparency, and the distinctly "Moholyian" interpretation of intersecting planes and axes. (fig. 11) In this way the Hungarian artist expanded the narrow Soviet interpretation of tone to a lighter shade. He was close to El Lissitzky, so much so that he borrowed from him the technique of rotating compositional elements freely in space. (fig. 12) In spite of this, Lissitzky's cubic forms (of sturdier composition than the Hungarian's) seem to dissolve in the luminescent atmosphere of Moholy-Nagy's pictures. The architectonic structures in El Lissitzky's compositions, usually depicted either from overhead or as rotating, represent a distinct version of the original Russian movement; several almost imperceptible grades and variations of the transition from the rational to the irrational. By contrast, in most of his works Moholy-Nagy surrendered any pronounced rationality, thus also dismissing the parallel application of rational and irrational elements. Instead he produced the almost timeless aesthetic sensation created by diagonals, dark disks, and interpenetrating glass planes.

If Gropius held Moholy-Nagy's painting in high esteem, then presumably he also appreciated Moholy's reconfigured Russian Constructivism, with its weightless and transparent qualities. Because of these qualities, at least to some, Moholy-Nagy represented one of the most radical versions of Russian avant-garde art, but he did so in a way that stripped it of its political content and artistic radicalism, thus making it a more acceptable art form, an example to be followed by Central European artists.

The apparent counterpart to the Russian Constructivist concept of art was that of the Hannover Dadaist Kurt Schwitters. Moholy-Nagy learned much from this artist, in spite of his earlier opinions of his work, which had been based primarily on an exhibition at the Galerie Der Sturm, for example, a rubber stamp drawing entitled *The Critic*, which Schwitters executed for *Der Sturm* in 1921.

Over and over again, in endless variations, Schwitters produced collages of unparalleled virtuosity. By comparison Moholy-Nagy produced few collages, and in fact this medium had no special significance in his oeuvre. Strangely enough, it was not the technique of collage per se that Moholy-Nagy learned from Schwitters, but rather the previously untapped expressive possibilities of the medium. In fact Moholy-Nagy employed collage more as a compositional method than as a technique; the simple forms arranged on canvas, nettle cloth, or paper in his works stand out clearly and with great plasticity against their backgrounds.

His works, even the works on paper, are usually much larger in scale than Schwitters', and can therefore be enjoyed from a distance. With their often concentric compositions based on a diagonal structure and with their logical system of interpenetrating planes, Moholy-Nagy's works are fundamentally related to Schwitters'. This also applies to the small groups of letters and digits occasionally inserted between the geometric elements. They fit into Moholy-Nagy's composition, such as the *Large Railway Painting* of ca. 1921, just as organically as they do into Schwitters' works. (fig. 5)

The alphabetic, numeric, and particularly the structural elements resembling fragmentary metal structures, telegraph poles, and railway bridges, were of central importance in Moholy-Nagy's early and abstract oeuvre. These works show quite clearly the influence of Dada, most notably that of Francis Picabia.

In order to create his unique visual language of recombined machinery parts, Francis Picabia employed illustrations from a popular

science magazine. It was a language in which the carefully but somewhat naively drawn machine elements were presented in an interconnected system. (fig.14) Moholy-Nagy must have known these works from Picabia's album, *Fille née sans mère* [Girl born without a mother], from the Dada magazine, 391, for which Picabia designed a cover, or from the illustrations that Moholy-Nagy himself selected for the May 1922 issue of the Hungarian avant-garde periodical, MA [Today].

Moholy-Nagy was influenced both by Picabia's simplified drawing style and his idea of arbitrarily linking mechanical elements. He employed these elements in his artworks during 1921 and 1922, before his arrival at the Bauhaus. Yet there was something that fundamentally distinguished his art from that of Picabia: the lack of humour. In Moholy-Nagy's case, the mechanical elements were never anthropomorphic as they are, say, in Picabia's *Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity* of 1915. On the contrary, works by Moholy-Nagy such as *Kinetic Constructive System* of 1922 (reworked in 1928), proclaimed the modern era as powerful, exciting, and restless, without ridiculous or absurd features.

Unlike Picabia, Moholy-Nagy really believed in machines. He believed that with the help of the new machine civilization, humanity could embark upon a new era. For this reason he invested machinery parts with heroism and a monumental power of expression appropriate to the heralding of the new age. Perhaps it was precisely because he took everything—machinery, Constructivism, and his teaching—so seriously, that he never became a Dadaist. Nevertheless, Dada, or at least the version of it represented by Schwitters, Picabia, and even Raoul Hausmann, became an organic part of Moholy-Nagy's artistic conception, and it is probably fair to say that, without assimilating their Dadaism, he would never have been able to produce works such as *Architektur I* of about 1922 (fig. 15) or *Eisenbahnbild mit Ackerfelder* [Railroad Picture with Fields] of late l920 or early l921.

Therefore, when Moholy-Nagy arrived at the Bauhaus he represented not an art movement of more or less definite direction, but rather a combination of apparently conflicting tendencies with the help of which he was able to create his own autonomous visual language. This language, now known as "International Constructivism," can be regarded as a characteristic Central European development of Russian Constructivism. While International Constructivism was very close to being a simple epigone of the original Russian movement,

it developed a new spirit, without the political charge and obligatory, politically directed art theory of the original tendency. This produced a new current, replete with fantasy and imagination. International Constructivism was widely dispersed and was practised by neither a coherent group nor by artists working in teams. Nevertheless, their expression and spirit of innovation linked the International Constructivists to each other. From the early twenties until the mid-thirties one of their prominent representatives was László Moholy-Nagy.

NOTE

[1] The translation appeared in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 287–288.

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"Vision in Motion":

THE *LICHTREQUISIT* (LIGHT PROP) OF MOHOLY-NAGY

Eleanor M. Hight

In late 1929 the German Foreign Office commissioned the Deutsche Werkbund to create a German section for the Exposition de la Société des artistes décorateurs français to be held in the Grand Palais in Paris the following May. This was the first opportunity since World War I for the recuperating nation to participate in this important international design event. A society of industrialists, architects, and designers founded in 1907 to strengthen Germany's position in the international marketplace, the Werkbund was a logical choice. Identified with the Bauhaus and functionalism during the late 1920s, the Werkbund sponsored innovative designs for industrial products and architecture through exhibitions and publications, and thus became the visible arbiter of a new "modern style" in Germany. Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and a leader of the Werkbund, was given the task to develop the German contribution to the exhibition. Gropius appointed three former Bauhäusler—László Moholy-Nagy, Marcel Breuer, and Herbert Bayer—to help him organize the five "German" rooms (Moholy and Breuer were in fact Hungarians), which ended up being the most developed and cohesive display to date of the goals of the Bauhaus under Gropius's tenure (1919-1928). In addition, the Paris exhibition offered

Moholy-Nagy, a former Bauhaus teacher and close friend of Gropius, the opportunity to realize his dreams of creating kinetic light art through the fabrication and display of his most important work, the *Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne* [Light Prop for an Electric Stage]. (fig. 16)

Later known as *The Light-Space Modulator*, the *Lichtrequisit* was displayed in the Paris exposition from May 14 to July 13, 1930, and it now resides in the Busch-Reisinger Museum (Harvard University Art Museums) in Cambridge, Massachusetts.[1] The work consists of a variety of metal, plastic, and wood parts in three vertical groupings, each of which is attached to a circular metal disk at the base. These three groups are set in motion as the disk rotates when activated by a motor housed in the base. Though the sculpture has undergone some changes during restorations over the years—chromed metal parts, an added stabilizing frame, the replacement of a glass spiral element with a metal one, changes to the base and motor, to name a few—one can still see the configuration and sizes of the disks, metal screens, and other parts as originally intended.[2] In the Werkbund installation in Paris, the *Lichtrequisit* was housed in a box lined with white and coloured lights. A circular opening in the box enabled the work to be glimpsed and reflected light to be projected when it was in motion. Moholy described its installation in an article in the Werkbund's journal *Die Form* in 1930, and a photograph published in that article provides us with further information on it.[3] (fig. 17)

Although the *Lichtrequisit* is discussed in most surveys of twentieth-century art and sculpture, it has curiously received only cursory attention. Exceptions to this are the pioneering essays written in the early 1970s by Nan (Piene) Rosenthal and Hannah Weitemeier.[4] Three decades later, the work is recognized for its contributions to kinetic sculpture, light art, and abstract film in the 1920s. Yet, how could a kinetic constructivist work of art represent the architectural ethos of the Bauhaus? Why did the German exhibition rooms in Paris have a section devoted to the Bauhaus experimental stage, the section in which the *Lichtrequisit* was displayed? Did Moholy conceive of the work as a sculpture at all, or more specifically as a light prop for the theatre as its title implies? Examining the development of Moholy's theory and work in sculpture, photography, film, and theatre during the 1920s provides insights into these issues and, in doing so, demonstrates the *Lichtrequisit's* centrality to both Moholy's work and to the goals of the Bauhaus. Moholy adapted his theories about kinetic sculpture and light art to stage design in the late 1920s and as a result was poised to capitalize on the opportunity the

Paris exhibition offered in order to realize this complicated and innovative marriage of engineering and art. Like Gropius, Moholy believed in bringing together various fields of creative endeavour, including architecture, to find new spatial relationships that could be used in building a humane environment in a technological era.

In terms of Moholy's own work, the *Lichtrequisit* was the most complete realization of his ideas about the creation of a new art incorporating modern technology, light, and kinetics. This art was founded on Moholy's concept of "Vision in Motion," the title of his last book and the theory that shaped the core of his artistic vision. (fig. 18) In the introduction to the book, published the year after his death, Moholy offered this definition: "vision in motion is a synonym for simultaneity and space-time; a means to comprehend the new dimension … is seeing while moving."[5] Simultaneous representation and the visual analogue of movement over time were rooted, Moholy explained, in Cubism, Italian Futurism, and Russian Constructivism. In addition, recent developments in science, including Einstein's theories of relativity, examined the movement of bodies and light through space. Mindful of these developments in art and science, Moholy directed his own ongoing experimentation with media and techniques toward the representation of motion, simultaneity, and space-time in his paintings, photography, films, and sculpture during the decade of the 1920s.

By 1921, a year after his immigration to Berlin, Moholy had developed his own style of geometric abstraction, utilizing overlapping, often transparent planes of colour that float on a solid coloured ground—a style clearly influenced by the Russian artists Kazimir Malevich and El Lissitzky. (fig. 12) Moholy also began to work in the medium of sculpture, first making relief assemblages on wooden boards and then polished metal sculptures. His sculpture *Nickel Construction with Spiral* of 1921, now in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, is the only surviving example of his metal sculpture from the early 1920s.[6] (fig. 46) Here Moholy combined vertical and horizontal elements in a stable, architectonic structure, but he upset its stability with the implication of movement created through the addition of a spiral attached from the top of the vertical form to the base of the sculpture. The geometric forms, spiral element, and highly polished metal in *Nickel Construction* indicate Moholy's interest in an abstract, non-static art in tune with the industrial age. When Moholy reproduced the sculpture in the English edition of his book, *Von Material*

zu Architektur [From Material to Architecture], published in 1929, his caption called it a "freeing of material from its weight."[7] (fig. 19) Exhibitions of Moholy's paintings and sculpture secured his prominence in Berlin as a leader of what came to be known as International Constructivism; it was this prominence that brought him to the attention of Gropius, who offered Moholy a position at the Bauhaus in late 1922.

The year after creating his *Nickel Construction*, Moholy turned to the medium of photography, and his first published photographs, the abstract photograms made without a camera, were experiments made to test and develop his theories concerning creating images with light. (fig. 47) These theories were outlined in the article "Production-Reproduction," written in 1922 with the collaboration of his first wife, Lucia Moholy.[8] The Moholys explored the idea of using new media—the phonograph, photography, and film—creatively, *productively*, rather than using them, as generally was the case, to *reproduce* recognizable objects or sounds from nature. They defined photography as the fixation of "light phenomena" on light-sensitive materials, and they argued that it should be used in new ways; therefore, many experiments needed to be conducted. The overlapping transparent planes and clean geometric forms—often floating in a seemingly infinite space—in Moholy's photograms relate directly to the forms in his paintings of the mid-1920s.[9]

However, for Moholy the photograms also served as an artistic analogy of the scientific world. They were created with a medium, photography, and a specific technique, the photogram, both used extensively in science.[10] Moholy emphasized this connection in his book, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* [Painting, photography, film], published in 1925, by employing scientific photographs, such as those of a starry sky and a spiral nebula, to substantiate his claim that photography was the most important medium of visual expression because it offered a new, modern way of seeing.[11] (fig. 20) Scientific photographs revolutionized the way people see the world, he argued, and could thus expand their awareness and knowledge of it. "Astronomical pictures (taken through telescopes) and X-ray pictures," he said, "were interesting forerunners in this field."[12] Other scientific photographs found in the book include one of a discharge of an electric current and three of lightning. The immaterial forms in these photographs were made with light, just as a star is an image of light projected through the vast space of the universe. In the same way, Moholy's photograms also depict light forms freed from gravity moving through an unlimited space.

Moholy's photogram experiments came at a time when the most prominent developments in science concerned the movement of light through space. In 1900, with the aid of newly developed spectroscopic equipment that could measure radiation, the German scientist Max Planck formulated the basis for Quantum Theory, that light was composed of quanta, or discrete increments of energy. In 1905 and 1915 Einstein published his theories of relativity in which he hypothesized that light particles moved in groups and could be affected by gravity. This controversial theory was tested in an experiment conducted in May of 1919 during a total eclipse of the sun, when photographs showed that light waves from stars were bent by the gravitational field of the sun. In 1907 the German mathematician Hermann Minkowski postulated that Einstein's model of the universe had a fourth dimension, that is, in addition to height, width, and length, there was a dimension of time that caused objects to change shape as they moved through space. The combination of time and three-dimensional space was commonly referred to as space-time, a term that appears repeatedly in Moholy's writings. The intense interest of both scientists and the public in such theories, and also in new conceptualizations of space travel, made an impact on a number of avant-garde artists who were trying to make their art relevant to this new age. Moholy responded to these developments in science by making light and kinetics the focus of his art.

After his arrival at the Bauhaus in the spring of 1923, Moholy's experiments with creating and recording light formations using the photogram technique undoubtedly benefited from exposure to the moving light displays of the students Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack and Kurt Schwerdtfeger, in conjunction with master craftsman Josef Hartwig. The importance of their *Lichtspiele* [light plays or light displays] to his theories on the potentials of the film medium and on the use of light itself for creative expression can be seen in the attention he gave their work in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Produced independently of any specific course or workshop at the school, these kinetic coloured light experiments utilized cut-out templates through which moving coloured lights were projected onto a screen. Some of Moholy's photograms from the Dessau period have the appearance of light displays on a projection screen, an analogy Moholy made in *Von Material zu Architektur* [From material to architecture]. He captioned one of his photograms: "Photographic surface treatment by light: a 'photogram,' made without a camera. This is the recording of light as it hit a projection

screen—in this case, the sensitive layer of the photographic paper." In the accompanying text Moholy declared "from the standpoint of technical development—that a picture painted by hand is surpassed by the physically pure, 'unblemished' light projection."[13]

However, Moholy viewed his photograms as only an experimental step toward the creation of a more important new art form: abstract film. He thought that the future of visual expression would be found not in photography but in film because of the latter's potential for depicting the movement of light through space. In "Production-Reproduction," his first published essay on photography and film, he wrote that "the main task [of film] is the formation of *motion as such* … the most perfect works are those of Eggeling-Richter."[14] In 1922, the same year the article appeared, Moholy reproduced several drawings for abstract films by the Swedish artist Viking Eggeling and the German Hans Richter, both of whom were friends of the Moholys at the time, in the *Buch neuer Künstler* [Book of new artists], which he published with Lajos Kassák in 1922.[15] (fig. 21) He again turned to Eggeling and Richter in the section of *Malerei, Photographie, Film* entitled "Static and Kinetic Optical Composition," now discussing their work in terms of the artistic integration of light, motion, and time in film:

> In Eggeling's hands the original colour-piano became a new instrument which primarily produced … the *articulation of space in motion* [Moholy's emphasis]. His pupil Hans Richter has—so far only theoretically—emphasized the time-impulse even more strongly and has thus come near to creating a light-space-time continuity in the synthesis of motion. This beginning, long out-dated in theory, has so far failed to handle "light" … The next task: light films which could be shot continuously were introduced in the form of the photogram as made by Man Ray and myself.[16]

Moholy felt that Eggeling and Richter used film "productively," creatively, rather than "reproductively," in order to integrate light, motion, and time. However, they essentially used animation to set their hand-drawn geometric forms into motion. Instead, Moholy thought that film should build more directly on the photogram technique to capture the essence of motion without resorting to animation. As will be discussed below, Moholy was able to achieve his goal of creating and recording on film moving light displays with his kinetic sculpture the *Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne*.

Undoubtedly inspired by the Italian Futurists and the Russian avant-garde, especially Fortunato Depero, Vladimir Tatlin, and Naum Gabo, Moholy began to develop ideas for kinetic sculpture in the early 1920s. However, only a few drawings exist to document any works created in this area before 1929. As Loïs Relin has pointed out, the road for the creation of kinetic sculpture had been paved by the Italian Futurist sculptor Fortunato Depero in his now destroyed sculpture *Motorumorist Coloured Plastic Complex* of 1914-15 (fig. 22).[17] Constructed of industrial materials and parts, the sculpture was actually motorized, rather than merely referring to movement. Depero built the work as a study for the *Futurama*, a kind of mechanical fantasy park proposed by Depero and Giacomo Balla in their manifesto "The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe" of 1915.[18] This early motorized sculpture takes the medium in a direction also advocated earlier by the leading Italian Futurist sculptor, Umberto Boccioni, in his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture" (1912), but never realized. Boccioni proclaimed: "We cannot forget that the tick-tock and the moving hands of a clock, the in-and-out of a piston in a cylinder, the opening and closing of two cogwheels with the continual appearance and disappearance of their square steel cogs, the fury of a flywheel or the turbine of a propeller, are all plastic and pictorial elements of which a Futurist work must take account."[19] Although Moholy was probably unaware of Depero's sculpture or the manifesto he wrote with Balla, he was definitely familiar with Boccioni's ideas and art, as they were discussed and illustrated in various publications, including the *Buch neuer Künstler*.

In this book, Moholy and Kassák also published another, more clearly influential work involving geometric forms, mechanized movement, and film: Tatlin's 1920 model for the *Monument for the Third International*. This fantastic, obviously unrealizable vision of a building consisted of a spiral containing stacked geometric forms that would each house a specific governmental body and would rotate at different speeds. The news services located at the top of the *Monument* would project films into the sky. The great soaring height and the alignment of the moving parts with the length of a day, month, and year point to Tatlin's interest in the laws of the cosmos. Seemingly the paradigm of engineering, the *Monument* was projected to be taller than the Eiffel Tower. However, it was known in Europe primarily in the form of a rendering, and thus it could easily have served as a model for a sculpture much smaller than the *Monument* itself.

Equally pertinent to the development of Moholy's ideas about kinetic sculpture was the work of another Russian artist, Naum Gabo. Although Moholy and Gabo have often been discussed as two of the earliest sculptors to work with kineticism, Gabo's impact on Moholy needs more careful study.[20] Gabo's sculpture, *Kinetic Construction*, 1919-1920, now in the Tate Gallery, was included in the Erste russische Kunstaustellung [First Russian Art Exhibition] in Berlin in 1922 that Gabo helped to organize.[21] Gabo's sculpture consisted of a vertical rod attached to a box housing a motor. When the rod was set into motion, it created a virtual volume through the optical phenomenon of the rod's movement. Commonly known as Standing Wave, but shown in Berlin with the subtitle *Zeit als neues Element der Plastischen Künste* [Time as a new element of the plastic arts], Gabo's sculpture is often erroneously cited as the first abstract kinetic sculpture. Like Depero's work, Gabo's *Kinetic Construction* was created to illustrate a theory, specifically that laid out in the "Realistic Manifesto" written by Gabo in 1920. This manifesto was published in Hungarian in the periodical *Egység* [Unity] in 1922, and Moholy quoted it extensively in *Von Material zu Architektur* in 1929. "The realization of our perceptions of the world in the forms of space and time is the only aim of our pictorial and plastic art," Gabo proclaimed. "We affirm in these arts a new element, the kinetic rhythms as the basic forms of our perception of real time."[22] This excerpt indicates the influence of the contemporary debate about the space-time continuum on Gabo's artistic practice, as Gabo had clearly turned to physics for his sources. In 1910–1914 Gabo studied medicine, engineering, and physics in Munich, where he lived with his older brother Alexei Pevsner, who was studying physics as part of his education as a scientist.[23] Gabo said that he was very interested at the time in the properties of what in physics is referred to as a "standing wave," a type of wave movement seen when a stretched string is put into motion.[24]

Moholy himself seems to have turned his attention to kinetic art in 1922. His 1922 drawing *Kinetic Constructive System* now in the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin, offers direct parallels to Tatlin's schema in its spiral and diagonal axis. When seen in isolation, the purpose and meaning of the drawing are unclear, but seen in conjunction with the essay of the same title he published that year with the Hungarian artist Alfréd Kemény, the drawing becomes an exploration of an artistic theory.[25] Moholy later included the essay in a section of *Von Material zu Architektur* devoted to what is surely the earliest history of kinetic sculpture. The following passage sets out his own goals:

> … Constructivism means the activation of space by means of a dynamic-constructive system of forces, that is, the constructing within one another of forces actually at tension in physical space, and their construction within space, also active as force (tension)…. The first projects looking toward the dynamic-constructive system of forces can be only experimental, demonstration devices for the testing of the relations between man, material, power and space. Next comes the utilization of the experimental results for the creation of freely moving … works of art.[26]

The opportunity and the funding needed to realize Moholy's ideas about kineticism and light art suddenly arose in 1929 when he was asked by Gropius to install one of the five rooms devoted to German industrial products and architecture at the 1930 Exposition de la Société des artistes décorateurs in Paris. Moholy's "Room 2" included lamps designed in the metal workshop he supervised at the Bauhaus, photographs, theatre designs, and the *Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne*.[27] Moholy's designs for the *Lichtrequisit* and its installation were drawn up by István (Stefan) Sebök, a Hungarian architect who joined Gropius's office in 1927, and the sculpture itself was fabricated by Otto Ball in Berlin with financial support from the theatre department of the AEG, the Allgemeine Elektrizitätsgesellschaft [General Electric Company].[28] In the Paris installation Moholy placed the *Lichtrequisit* in a box approximately 1.2 meters on each side, with a large circular opening on one face (fig. 17). The sculpture was illuminated by coloured and white lights located around the opening and on the inside of the box.[29]

Like the works of Depero, Gabo, and Tatlin, the *Lichtrequisit* challenged the most basic concepts of traditional sculpture. It was not a solid mass rooted by gravity to its pedestal. As a kinetic sculpture made up of numerous parts, it was not an immediately comprehensible form. With this work, Moholy seemingly answered Boccioni's call to use "transparent planes, glass, sheets of metal, wires, outside or inside electric lights" to "indicate the planes, inclinations, tones, and half tones [sic] of a new reality" in a "sculpture of environment."[30] And the sculpture could have fit happily into Balla and Depero's *Futurama*. Yet the *Lichtrequisit* also fulfilled other, even more radical goals in keeping with the development of Moholy's ideas and art in the 1920s, as discussed above. The sculpture functioned as a vehicle for producing mobile light displays, and in doing so made it possible for Moholy to create his only

abstract film, *Ein Lichtspiel schwarz weiss grau* [A Lightplay black white gray] of 1930.

The surviving footage is only around seven minutes long, even though Moholy had created a script for a longer, more complex film.[31] Nevertheless, the film embodies Moholy's highest aspirations for art. In the film we are always aware of the *Lichtrequisit's* unique Constructivist forms set in motion—the sculpture is clearly the star of the film—but more importantly, the film can be seen as a veritable moving photogram. Moholy's use of what the Russians called *faktura*—the manipulation of materials with a variety of textures — to create a diversity of light effects, is the closest Moholy came to using film as a medium by which to record moving light forms.

Yet, rather than presenting the work as a kinetic sculpture or a machine to create kinetic light displays, at its inaugural exhibition in Paris, Moholy chose to identify the work with the stage. Its original title, *Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne*, identified it as an appropriate addition to the theatre section of his Room 2 in Paris. Likewise, his 1922 drawing, *Kinetic Constructive System*, had the following text, probably added later by another hand, on its verso: "Design for a Light Machine for Total Theatre." His interest in kinetics and light displays was thus also tied to recent developments in Russian and German avant-garde theatre, yet another area he could not resist expounding upon once immersed in the environment of the experimental Bauhaus stage. In his 1924 essay "Theatre, Circus, Revue," published in 1925 in the Bauhaus Book *Die Bühne im Bauhaus* [Theatre of the Bauhaus], Moholy discussed his ideas for a "Theatre of Totality," which he described as having "multifarious complexities of light, space, plane, form, motion, sound, man—and with all the possibilities for varying and combining these elements...."[32]

Moholy's involvement with the theatre at the Bauhaus was minimal, even though he discussed stage production and theatre design experiments by others in his publications. (He wrote his contribution for *Die Bühne im Bauhaus* little more than a year after he arrived.) Once again, it was his close relationship with Gropius that enabled him to expand into this area through his writings and his work outside the Bauhaus. Gropius was a staunch supporter of experimental theatre, and it is clear that at least in the beginning, Gropius was more than willing to have the theatre department play a major role in the school. In his 1923 essay "Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus," Gropius described the experimental stage as a place where "the special problems of space,

of the body, of movement, of form, light, colour and sound"—issues pertinent to architecture—could be explored.[33] Later, in his introduction to the English translation of *Die Bühne im Bauhaus* published in 1961, Gropius had the following to say about this unusual department's place in the interdisciplinary curriculum at the school:

> During the all too few years of its existence, the Bauhaus embraced the whole range of visual arts: architecture, planning, painting, sculpture, industrial design, and stage work. The aim of the Bauhaus was to find a new and powerful working correlation of all the processes of artistic creation to culminate finally in a new cultural equilibrium of our visual environment … Teachers and students as a working community had to become vital participants of the modern world, seeking a new synthesis of art and modern technology.[34]

Gropius went on to praise Moholy's "theoretical laboratory experiments at the Bauhaus."[35]

However, the driving force in this area was not Moholy but rather Oskar Schlemmer, through productions of his acclaimed *Triadic Ballet* and his leadership in the Bauhaus theatre department. Due to the lack of a suitable theatre in Henry van de Velde's Bauhaus building at Weimar, the Bauhäusler staged a number of productions in the theatre renovated in 1922 by Gropius in the nearby city of Jena. Gropius made sure to design a stage for the new Bauhaus buildings that opened in Dessau in 1926. In 1927 with his Hungarian assistant Sebök, Gropius also designed a "Total Theatre" for the director Erwin Piscator that incorporated a turntable stage, film projections, and flexible seating configurations.[36] This project was never realized, but Moholy included Gropius's plans and models for it, along with Schlemmer's costume designs for the *Triadic Ballet*, in his Room 2 of the Paris exhibition.[37]

By 1927 the importance of the stage to the Bauhaus curriculum was waning. This was due in no small part to the split between those interested in a mechanical theatre (including the three Hungarians Molnár, Moholy, and Andor Weininger, as well as Kurt Schmidt) and Schlemmer's continued interest in incorporating the figure into his productions. Nevertheless, through Gropius's connections, Moholy was able to find work in experimental Berlin theatres during the late 1920s, after he left the Bauhaus, including the State Opera (the Krolloper) and the Piscator-Bühne [Piscator Stage]. Of his realized designs, we now have only

photographs, such as those for Offenbach's opera *Tales of Hoffmann* of 1929 that were included in the Werkbund installation in Paris, to remind us of Moholy's inventive contributions to avant-garde theatre.[38] (fig. 23)

The theatre was only one area that demonstrated the potential for the realization of Moholy's vision of a new environment in tune with the latest developments in science and technology. Everywhere Moholy looked, it seems, he found inspiration for his kinetic light environments. The ingenious connections between his ideas and the urban environment can be seen in the illustrations to *Von Material zu Architektur* (later published in the English edition, *The New Vision*), for example in the photographs of fireworks and of what he called the virtual volume of a spinning carousel (fig. 24). Moholy explained his interest in such images:

> Ever since the introduction of the means of producing high-powered, intense artificial light, it has been one of the elemental factors in art creation, though it has not yet been elevated to its legitimate place. The night life of a big city can no longer be imagined without the varied play of electric advertisements, or night air traffic without lighted beacons along the way. The reflectors and neon tubes of advertising signs, the blinking letters of store fronts, the rotating coloured electric bulbs, the broad strip of the electric news bulletin are elements of a new field of expression, which will probably not have to wait much longer for its creative artists.[39]

In both *Malerei, Photographie, Film* and *Von Material zu Architektur*, he also included an image recording light patterns made by moving traffic lights at night.[40] In Chicago, toward the end of his life, Moholy made numerous colour photographic slides of the patterns of moving traffic and lit signs at night.[41] Moholy, the great synthesizer, was somehow able to integrate the essence of recent scientific discoveries, Bauhaus stage experiments, modernity, and his restless nature into a visionary art form for the future.

While the German rooms of the Paris exhibition generally received favourable reviews for their modernity—for the clean, sleek industrial forms—almost no mention was made of the *Lichtrequisit*. Moholy counteracted this lack of press by publishing an article on it in the Werkbund's journal *Die Form*.[42] However, in Germany the reaction to Gropius' exhibition was not unanimously positive and, in fact, was cause for a heated debate among Werkbund members at a meeting

in Stuttgart in October 1930.[43] The debate was symptomatic of the political division within the Deutsche Werkbund at the time between a conservative, nationalistic faction and a more liberal group, the latter the proponents of international modernism. The conservatives were enraged that in Paris the "Bauhaus style" should represent the Werkbund and indeed Germany as a whole. The irony of this debate is that the National Socialists appropriated the international style of architecture and turned it into the reactionary modernism of Hitler's regime, while at the same time they accused the Werkbund of "internationalism."

The importance of the *Lichtrequisit* to Moholy is underscored by the effort required of the Moholys to move the cumbersome object with them to London in 1935 when they fled Nazi Germany, and then to Chicago in 1937 when he became the director of the New Bauhaus. Indeed, the *Lichtrequisit* represents a kind of summa of the ideas the displaced Hungarian artist developed at the Bauhaus, where stage experiments provided the model for a new art integrating industrial materials and light. The sculpture also reminds us of his foresight in believing that the future of visual expression would be in kinetics, multi-media, environmental art, and film. Conceptualized as a kinetic sculpture, but first exhibited in Paris as a stage prop, it has now become a Constructivist sculpture. As the most impressive realization of László Moholy-Nagy's concept of "Vision in Motion," ironically the *Lichtrequisit* today stands mostly at rest in Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum, its structure too fragile to withstand frequent operation. Nevertheless, it still serves as an active if enigmatic reminder of that era of scientific discovery and artistic experimentation of the 1920s in which Moholy figured so prominently.

NOTES

[1] The original sculpture was given by Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, the artist's widow, to the Busch-Reisinger Museum at Harvard in 1954. Two replicas were built by Woody Flowers at MIT in 1968 and are now at the Bauhaus-Archiv in Berlin and the Stedelijk van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, Netherlands. In 2006 a third replica, intended only for lending to exhibitions, was constructed for the Tate Modern's show, "Albers and Moholy-Nagy: From the Bauhaus to the New World." It is also stored at the Busch-Reisinger Museum. For the various dates and other names given to the work, including the *Light-Space Modulator* and the *Light-Display Machine*, see Lucia Moholy, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy, Marginal Notes* (Krefeld: Scherpe Verlag, 1972), 79–84. The sculpture can

be viewed in motion on the website, *Extra Ordinary Every Day: The Bauhaus at the Busch-Reisinger*, Harvard University Art Museums, http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/sites/eoed/index.html.

[2] Some of the changes, such as the addition of the stabilizing frame and the metal spiral, were made before the *Lichtrequisit* came to the Busch-Reisinger. Other changes, such as the chroming of the surfaces, which obliterated the variety of textures of the original parts and subsequently altered the light reflections produced, were made by William Wainwright during a restoration of the work in 1966. From notes in the files of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums.

[3] "Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne," *Die Form* 5 (7 June 1930), 297–299.

[4] Nan Rosenthal, "Notes on the *Lichtrequisit*, a Motorized Construction of 1930 by László Moholy-Nagy," unpublished paper in the files of the Harvard University Art Museums (Busch-Reisinger Museum). Nan Rosenthal (Piene), "László Moholy-Nagy's Light-Space Modulator," gallery brochure, Howard Wise Gallery (New York, 1970). Hannah Weitemeier, *Licht-Visionen: Ein Experiment von Moholy-Nagy*, exhibition catalogue, Bauhaus-Archiv (Berlin, 1972). See also Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 53–56.

[5] *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 12.

[6] On Moholy's sculptural reliefs, see Oliver A. I. Botar, "Constructed Reliefs in the Art of the Hungarian Avant-garde: Kassák, Bortnyik, Uitz, and Moholy-Nagy," *The Structurist* 25–26 (1985-1986), 87–95. For illustrations of several of Moholy's lost metal sculptures, see Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, Plate 67, and Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995), Plate 15.

[7] He did not use a caption in the first German edition of *Von Material zu Architektur*, Bauhausbücher no. 14 (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1929), but added it for the subsequent English editions, translated by Daphne M. Hoffman, titled *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist* (New York: Wittenborn, 1946), 44.

[8] "Produktion-Reproduktion," *De Stijl* 5 (July 1922), 98–100. English translation in Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, 289-290.

[9] For a more extensive analysis of the Moholys' article "Produktion-Reproduktion" and of the technique and imagery of Moholy's photograms, see Hight, *Picturing Modernism*, Chapter 4.

[10] During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries scientists employed the photogram technique to record plant, animal, and microscopic forms. The German scientist Paul Lindner summed up current scientific applications of the photogram in his how-to-book *Photographie ohne Camera* [Photography without a camera], published in Berlin in 1920.

[11] *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, Bauhausbücher no. 8 (Munich: Albert Langen

Verlag, 1925), 56, 57. Revised edition, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* (Munich, Albert Langen Verlag, 1927); reprint (Mainz and Berlin: Kupfenberg, 1968); English edition *Painting, Photography, Film*, translated by Janet Seligmann (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1969), 4–65.

[12] *Painting, Photography, Film*, 31.

[13] *Von Material zu Architektur*, 89–90; The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist, 39.

[14] "Produktion-Reproduktion," 100. English translation in Haus, *Moholy-Nagy*, 47.

[15] László Moholy-Nagy and Lajos Kassák, *Buch neuer Künstler* [Book of new artists] (Vienna: MA Editions, 1922); facsimile edition, Budapest: Europa and Corvina Publishers, 1977, unpaginated.

[16] *Painting, Photography, Film*, 21.

[17] Loïs Relin, "Two Pioneering Sculptures by Balla and Depero, 1915," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 107 (February 1986), 81–85. See also, Gabriella Belli, *Depero Futurista: Rome-Paris-New York, 1915–1932 and more*, exhibition catalogue, The Wolfsonian, Florida International University, Miami Beach (Milan: Skira, 1999), 15–16, 36–37, 40–43.

[18] "The Futurist Reconstruction of the Universe," signed by Balla and Depero on March 11, 1915. English translation in Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos* (London: Viking Press, 1973), 197–200.

[19] Umberto Boccioni, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture," first published on 11 April 1912. English translation in Herschel B. Chipp, ed., *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 303.

[20] The *Lichtrequisit* and other works by Moholy have been examined in relation to the work of Brancusi and Gabo. Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge, *Immaterial: Brancusi, Gabo, Moholy-Nagy* (Cambridge, 2004).

[21] See Steven A. Nash and Jörn Merkert, *Naum Gabo: Sixty Years of Construction*, exhibition catalogue, Dallas Museum of Art (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1985), Cat. no. 9, 205, with ill.

[22] Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner, "The Realistic Manifesto," published in 1920 in Moscow; reprinted in *Egység* [Unity], 2 (Vienna, 1922), 3–4, fig., 8; and in Chipp, *Theories of Modem Art*, 328–329. According to their brother Alexei Pevsner, Gabo wrote the manifesto in July 1920 and then Antoine asked that his name be put on it as well when it was printed and posted around Moscow in August 1920. Alexei Pevsner, *A Biographical Sketch of My Brothers Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner* (Amsterdam: Augustin & Schoonman, 1964), 24, 28.

[23] "Naum Gabo Talks about his Work," *Studio International* 171 (April 1966), 127–128.

[24] Naum Gabo, "The 'Kinetic Construction of 1920'," *Studio International* 178 (September 1969), 89.

[25] "Dynamisch-konstruktives Kraftsystem," *Der Sturm* 12 (December 1922), 186; Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, 290. Co-authored by Alfréd Kemény, who was most likely the principal author.

[26] *Von Material zu Architektur*, 162f. English translation from *The New Vision and Abstract of an Artist*, 49f.

[27] "Room 2", organized by Moholy, included work by a number of people from the Bauhaus: lamps designed in the metal workshop, which Moholy had supervised; plans, models, and photographs of Gropius' architectural projects; photographs by Moholy, Herbert Bayer, Lux Feininger, and Lucia Moholy; and photographs and drawings of stage and costume designs by Moholy and Oskar Schlemmer. Of the other rooms, the first was set up as a communal room for an apartment building Gropius was designing, the third focused on hotel rooms designed by Breuer, and the fourth and fifth, organized by Bayer, contained German products and furniture. *Deutsche Abteilung—Section Allemande—German Section*, exhibition catalogue for the German section of the Exposition de la Société des Artistes décorateurs français, Grand Palais, Paris (Berlin: Schriftleitung, Verlag und Anzeigenverwaltung, Ala Anzeigen-AG, 1930), unpaginated. In the collection of the Busch-Reisinger Museum (Harvard University Art Museums).

[28] Weitemeier, *Licht-Visionen* (Berlin, 1972), 5.

[29] Moholy described the creation of the sculpture in "Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne," *Die Form* 5 (1930), 297–299. English translation in Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy*, 310–311. The number of lights is unclear, since Sebök's drawing indicates 116, while Moholy's article in *Die Form* seems to indicate 150. In *Vision in Motion* he said there were 140 bulbs. *Vision in Motion*, 238.

[30] Boccioni, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture," in Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art*, 302.

[31] For Moholy's film script, see *Moholy-Nagy*, "Light Display Film" and "New Film Potentialities" in Passuth, Moholy-Nagy, 316-318. The film can be viewed at *Extra Ordinary Every Day: The Bauhaus at the Busch-Reisinger*, http://www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/sites/eoed/index.html.

[32] Oskar Schlemmer, Farkas Molnár, and Moholy-Nagy, *Die Bühne im Bauhaus*, Bauhausbücher no. 4 (Munich: Albert Langen, 1925; reprint Mainz and Berlin: Kupferberg, 1964). Translated by Arthur S. Wensinger as *The Theater of the Bauhaus* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 60.

[33] "Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus," English translation in Tim Benton, *Form and Function: A Source Book for the History of Architecture and Design, 1890–1939* (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, in association with the Open University Press, 1975), 126. This essay was originally published as "Idee und Aufbau des Staatlichen Bauhaus in Weimar," in *Staatliches Bauhaus, Weimar, 1919–1923* (Munich and Weimar: Bauhouseverlag, 1923), 7–18.

[34] *The Theater of the Bauhaus* (Middletown, 1961), 10.

[35] *Ibid.*, 11.

[36] Winfried Nerdinger, *Walter Gropius*, exhibition catalogue, Busch-Reisinger Museum and the Bauhaus-Archiv (Cambridge, MA, and Berlin, 1985), Cat. no. 19, 94–99. For a discussion of Sebök's primary role in developing this innovative theatre design, see Karin Wilhelm, "Stefan Sebök e l'idea di 'Totaltheater,'" *Casabella* 52 (November, 1988), 34-45.

[37] The models and plans for Gropius's *Total Theatre* were listed, with a photograph of a model, under "Room 2" in *Section Allemande*, exhibition catalogue for the German section of the Exposition de la Société des artistes décorateurs français, Grand Palais, Paris (Berlin, 1930), unpaginated.

[38] *Ibid*. Moholy also included a photograph of his set for *Tales of Hoffmann* in *The New Vision*, fig. 42, 63.

[39] *The New Vision*, 50.

[40] *Malerei, Photographie, Film*, p. 53; *Von Material zu Architektur*, 170, 175, 176, 177.

[41] After the death of his wife Sibyl, Moholy's daughter Claudia gave the collection of colour slides Moholy created in Chicago, which were in Sibyl Moholy's teaching collection, to the University of California at Santa Cruz where Nan Rosenthal was teaching at the time. A duplicate set was given to SUNY-Stony Brook.

[42] "Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne," *Die Form* 5:11/12 (June 7, 1930), 297–299.

[43] For more on this debate, see "Die Ziele des Deutschen Werkbundes," in *Die Form* 23/24 (1930), 612–614; and Joan Campbell, *The German Werkbund: The Politics of Reform in the Applied Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 210, 214–216, 231.

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László Moholy-Nagy:

A BIOCENTRIC ARTIST?

Oliver A. I. Botar

Out there—war. Here its thunder dully thuds.
A bird chirps and the myriad sounds and
Fleeting hues of gossamer life rise.
The swallow flies, the fork-tailed swallow!
The shadow's violet silk spreads out.
A thrush's whistling like gurgling gold
Honey flows from the rotten rind
And the delicate seed bursts
Fruitful and happy.

Clouds, those marvellous plants of my life,
Float in blue froth and flower
Their wispy petals on high,
As if on a velvet gown of some maiden's dream.[1]

You have heard an excerpt from my translation of László Moholy-Nagy's poem "Forest. May. War," published in 1918. Andreas Haus and János Brendel have written of the effect that Monist scientists such as Wilhelm Ostwald, Ernst Mach and Raoul Francé had on Moholy's thinking.

Monism is the Vitalist philosophy revived by Ernst Haeckel in the late 19th century which held that matter and spirit, life and non-life are one. Building on their work, today I argue against the common view that Moholy rejected nature early in his career. I maintain rather that his oeuvre is informed by an affinity to nature rooted, as we just heard, in *Naturromantik* [Nature Romanticism] and expressed in Germany through the discourse of *Biozentrik* [Biocentrism]. This is the German term for the early 20th century worldview which, based on scientific trends such as Darwinism and biological determinism, and on a kind of materialist Nature Romanticism, rejected the anthropocentric view of the world, and espoused an ecological and environmental view of the world instead. And I have to emphasize here that Moholy would have rejected the use of the term "spiritual" to refer to his thinking, as would have most biocentrically inclined individuals. For the sake of simplicity, organicism, vitalism and Haeckelian Monism can all be subsumed under the rubric of "biocentrism." I begin by invoking British environmental historian Anna Bramwell's conceptual framework for the discussion of biocentrism or "ecologism," as she terms it. I then place Moholy's German debut into its proper context of the German *Jugendbewegung* [Youth Movement], specifically the *Freideutsche Jugend* [Free German Youth], an outgrowth of the *Wandervögel*. After an exposition of Moholy's interest in the work of the Austro-Hungarian populariser of biocentrism in Germany, Raoul Heinrich Francé, I offer an alternative, biocentric reading of Moholy's theory of New Vision. I conclude with suggestions for new readings of his art.

In her 1989 book *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* Anna Bramwell notes the inability of current political taxonomies to deal with biocentric thinkers given the variability of their attachments to the political Left and Right. Neo-Marxists tend to judge such views as "totalizing," "a-historical" or "anti-dialectic;" as antithetical to a "progressive" social consciousness. Conservative historians identify *Biozentrik* with the vitalist camp of the vitalist /mechanist debate, the side discredited by mainstream biology since World War II. Because a few National Socialists were biocentric, both camps tend to associate biocentrism with Fascism even though there were traditions of Leftist and Anarchist biocentrism. Despite misgivings about aspects of her book, I think it crucial that Bramwell addresses this historical conundrum. She writes: "The apparent contradictions of the ecological movement can be resolved by seeing it as forming a political category in its own right, with

a history, right wings and left wings, with leaders, followers and an epistemological niche all to itself."[2] In 1932 Moholy's friend, the critic Ernő Kállai proposed the term *Bioromantik* [Bioromanticism] to refer to biocentric Modernist art. I see *Bioromantik* as the art-historical equivalent of ecologism, my work as the writing of its history, and Moholy's late biomorphic abstract style as itself bioromantic.

Moholy's poem gives evidence of both his Pacifism and his keen observation of nature by 1918. Apart from the intensity of his colour awareness and his onomatopoeia, one notes in the passage I read the richness of his nature imagery and organic metaphors. This, as well as his review of the Hungarian poet Árpád Garami's poems on a boy's sexual awakening, demonstrates that Moholy—due to his education in the German classics and his participation in the Budapest Galileo Circle—was familiar with the discourses of *Naturromantik* and Bergsonian Vitalism by 1918. He writes: "Employing a cosmic vision [Garami] transforms the sterile lover into the purposive, creative Earth, that the curse might finally be lifted. This self-redemptive and self-consoling feeling is manifest little by little in the desire for a mythic union with nature."[3] By 1918-19 Moholy was involved in Lajos Kassák's circle, inspired by the Leftist and Anarchist politics, Pacifism, and Expressionism of German Activism.

Thus when he landed in Berlin in 1920 and came into contact with members of the Youth Movement such as Reinhold Schairer, Friedrich Vorwerk, and Lucia Schulz, he was receptive to the Anarcho-Pacifism and biocentrism he encountered. (fig. 8) An environmental consciousness was central to the German Youth Movement as illustrated by the fact that at the 1913 founding gathering of the Freideutsche Jugend, the philosopher of biocentrism Ludwig Klages, delivered a rousing ecological manifesto entitled "Man and Earth." But as German social historian Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn has documented in his 1990 book *Auf der Suche nach Arkadien*, most influential in this regard was Raoul Heinrich Francé (Francé Henrik Rezső), who preached that "harmony" within ecosystems is the "biological goal." (fig. 25) The idealism and environmentalism of the Youth Movement was expressed through hiking, the various "new age" practices referred to as *Lebensreform* [the reform of life], and through the founding of agricultural communes.

Moholy's contacts Vorwerk, Schairer and Schulz, had links to what German historian Ulrich Linse has referred to in his 1983 book *Zurück o Mensch zur Mutter Erde*, as the second, i.e. post-war wave of the German

communard movement, that dominated by the Freideutsche Jugend. Schairer, Moholy's mentor, and organizer of student relief in Berlin, was close to the "Neuwerk" group, which established a commune in the Rhön mountains southeast of the city of Fulda, a remote area favoured by communes related to the Youth Movement. Schairer passed Moholy onto Vorwerk, who secured Moholy's lodgings in his own rooming house. Vorwerk was in the left wing of the Freideutsche Jugend. This wing was inspired by pacifist Anarchists such as Gustav Landauer, Leo Tolstoy, the artist Heinrich Vogeler, and the biocentric Anarchist philosopher Prince Kropotkin. It was through Vorwerk that Moholy met Lucia Schulz. (fig. 8)

As art historian Rolf Sachsse has shown, Schulz had been involved with the Bohemian *Wandervögel* from an early age, and she gravitated towards the equivalent milieu in Germany. Schulz and Vorwerk met at Barkenhoff, Worpswede, Vogeler's biocentric Anarchist commune where they spent time in 1918-19. Like Vorwerk, known for radical pronouncements made at a 1919 Freideutsche Jugend meeting, Schulz took an active part in the movement's intellectual life. Not only did she work for the Freideutsche Jugend co-founder and publisher Adolf Saal, she wrote an article entitled "Symbole" for the movement's journal in which she displayed a Monist world view, and under the pseudonym "Ulrich Steffen," she contributed to the Barkenhoff commune's newsletter *Neubau*. Besides Schulz and Vogeler, Ernst Fuhrmann the self-described "Biosoph" and a theorist of German biocentrism, wrote for *Neubau*. Fuhrmann also spent time at Barkenhoff in 1919 and Vogeler came to value Fuhrmann's ideas highly. Thus at Barkenhoff and in the Freideutsche Jugend, Schulz and Vorwerk were exposed to the ideas of Kropotkin, Klages, Francé and Fuhrmann, who were, besides the pervasive Goethe, Fichte, Haeckel, Bergson, and Nietzsche, those most influential on the development of *Biozentrik*. Moholy, living with Vorwerk and then Schulz, had ample opportunity to absorb their knowledge.

As Sachsse, and as Veit Loers, in his 1991 catalogue on Moholy-Nagy published in conjunction with the Moholy-Nagy exhibition in Kassel that year, have shown, Lucia did not give up these contacts or her practice of spending vacations hiking and staying at communes after she teamed up with Moholy. She continued to heed Vogeler's directive: "We abandoned the grey cities and stepped into the forest. The living unity of the desire for community unnerved and moved us. We lay on the beach of the sea; an intangible longing awoke in us to be at one with the eternal natural rhythms which signify the shift toward unity."[4]

During the 20s the Moholy-Nagys regularly vacationed in the Rhön. Of this time Lucia wrote: "It almost went without saying that we then spent our vacations several times in the Rhön, living in one of the many little granny-flat cottages with views of fields and mountains. We soon met numerous other people who, in this, at the time little-frequented area, had also found there the rhythm of their lives."[5] Colour rhythms were at the centre of László's interest when he painted his *Ackerfelderbilder* [farm field pictures] on an as yet undocumented vacation, which took place in the Rhön, during the summer of 1921, I suspect. These pictures also reflect his fascination with the presence of trains and tractors in the rural landscape, an inscription of the technical onto the natural characteristic of Francé's Monist biocentrism. Monism served to legitimize László's enthusiasm for technology within an ecological world view.

The Moholys certainly spent their vacation of July 1922 in the Rhön, at the Schule für Körperbildung Loheland, an anthroposophically inspired women's commune and gymnastics school founded in 1919. This is indicated by the fact that Weyhers, the village in which they roomed, is a mere three-kilometre walk southeast of the school. According to Lucia it is here that they developed their photogram practice and that they formulated ideas published as "Production-Reproduction" in the September 1922 issue of *De Stijl*. Loers points out that in 1926 László acknowledged his adaptation of the photogram from a woman at Loheland who was making them using translucent plants. (fig. 47)

The core idea of "Production-Reproduction"—and, as Alain Findeli argues, of Moholy's entire oeuvre—is both holistic and pedagogical. It concerns the education of the senses through art and reflects biologically-based educational theories of the early 20th century German *Schulreformbewegung* [school reform movement] played out in the Youth Movement. Moholy writes: "The human construct is the synthesis of all its functional apparatuses, i.e. man will be most perfect in his own time if the functional apparatuses of which he is composed—his cells as well as the most sophisticated organs—are conscious and trained to the limit of their capacity. Art effects such a training…."[6] In his 1929 pedagogical treatise *Von Material zu Architektur* [From material to architecture] (fig. 19) Moholy indicates his debt to the pedagogy of the Youth Movement, to Vogeler and the commune schools, which instead of just inculcating knowledge, attempted to teach awareness of each student's place in the cosmos. As the Freideutsche pedagogical reformer Marie Buchold wrote: "By physical education,

we mean the awareness of the human organism within the world organism." [7] The ideas in "Production-Reproduction" reflect concepts encountered through Buchold and her partner Elisabeth Vogler (no relation to Heinrich) whom the Moholys met in the Rhön, perhaps in 1922, and whom they befriended. In the fall of 1923 Buchold and Vogler founded a women's commune and school at Schwarzerden 10.5 km east of Loheland. The Moholys spent the following summer, and that of 1926 there, rooming at Neuwart, two kilometres west of the commune. Lucia participated in the summer program at Schwarzerden, which involved lectures and workshops in pedagogy, literature, music, massage, gymnastics, psychology, holistic health, breathing, *reformkost* [health food]; in other words, in *Lebensreform*, and Vogler remembers that László joined them.

Reflecting upon this experience in 1929 László wrote: "The various pedagogical and youth movements have certainly achieved results of importance, just as the body and breathing gymnastics and naturopaths have."[8] László's participation in the life of the commune is documented by his design, probably in 1926, for the colour scheme of the Gymnastics Hall. Indeed he is the only artist mentioned by Elizabeth Vogler in her account of Schwarzerden. In July 1926 Moholy wrote to Theo van Doesburg how much he loved being "in the Rhön again, among our truly beautiful mountains."[9] The effect Buchold's pedagogy had on him is suggested by a text of that same year: "Man is the microcosm. Over him and in him universal laws hold sway. His whole being and accomplishment is a singular attempt to give form to these laws."[10] With the Moholys' holiday habits in mind, their last vacation together, a 1927 stay at Ascona near Monte Verità in Switzerland, the original counter-culture commune, takes on added resonance. As late as 1931 László was still a regular visitor to the Wannsee nudist colony near Berlin.

It is in the early 20s that the Moholys encountered the writings of the Dresden music teacher Heinrich Jacoby, the most important influence on László's pedagogy. (fig. 26) In 1927 László praised Jacoby's idea of "the common biological basis of all formation" as "one of the most important intellectual achievements of our time."[11] While they might have encountered Jacoby's ideas at Loheland, Lucia had been exposed to Youth Movement pedagogy through her employer Adolf Saal, who published its writings, and through her experience with Heinrich Vogeler. Given their interest in Reformpädagogie it is possible that the Moholys attended talks given in Berlin in the early 20s by Vogeler, Jacoby and

others organized by the Bund Entschiedene Schulreformer [League of Determined School Reformers], an outgrowth of the Freideutsche Jugend. Not only did Moholy derive his idea of the biological bases of expression from Jacoby, he adopted Jacoby's insight that everyone is talented, that rather than inculcating knowledge, the teacher's job is to actualize the abilities inherent in every healthy person. The clearest statement of Moholy's normative biocentric pedagogy is in the introduction to *The New Vision*, the English edition of *Von Material zu Architektur*, into which he inserted a section entitled "Biological needs" to define his terminology for the American readership: "In this book the word 'biological' stands generally for laws of life which guarantee an organic development. If the meaning of 'biological' were a conscious possession it would prevent many people from activities of damaging influence."[12] In light of all this, Moholy's interest at Chicago in John Dewey's biologically-based pedagogy seems inevitable, and given the pedagogical origins of his New Vision, it is less surprising that I should identify its origins partially in the discourse of biocentrism.

Since Moholy's New Vision was at base pedagogical, it is less surprising that I would attempt a biocentric reading of it. It took form as part of what I term "Biocentric Constructivism," which emerged in 1923 among participants in the "Constructivist International" such as Moholy, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Ernő Kállai, Lazar El Lissitzky, Raoul Hausmann and Kurt Schwitters. The emergence of Biocentric Constructivism was marked by a shift in normative thinking from what Peter Collins, in his book *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950*, has termed the "machine analogy," the idea that art and architecture should emulate machinery, towards a "biological analogy," that nature's structures and processes should act as models instead. It served to ground Constructivist artistic practices within an ideology of the natural, and to legitimize its geometric forms with respect to those who would see Constructivism as "anti-nature." Because he was the best-known theorist of a biological basis for technology, Francé was a principal inspiration for Biocentric Constructivism, the shift towards which was stimulated in January 1923 by the publication of a chapter of his 1920 book *Die Pflanze als Erfinder* [Plants as inventors] in the art journal *Das Kunstblatt*. In this chapter Francé discussed *Biotechnik* [biotechnics] (what we would now refer to as "bionics"), his explication of the biological analogy. He held that both natural and human technologies are rooted in the Bios or universal natural system; that the

prototypes of human technologies, e.g. the turbine, are to be found in nature. (fig. 27) "As Francé rightly said" wrote Fuhrmann in 1923 "there is no process, even in the most complex industry that has not been in continuous use by people, animals and plants."[13] Moholy's interest in technology and its creative possibilities has typically been seen as an anti-natural, technocentric drive towards dehumanized automatism. Yet, like Francé, Moholy saw technology itself as organic. He writes: "Technical progress is a factor of life which develops organically. It stands in reciprocal relation to the increase in the number of human beings. That is its justification."[14]

Francé's Kropotkinian biological determinism appealed to Leftist intellectuals such as Fuhrmann, Lissitzky and Moholy because it held that all nature—including culture—is organized into nested hierarchies of ecosystems, the tendency of which is to attain optimal or harmonious states through symbiotic cooperation, more than through competition. Awareness of this led Francé to set guidelines for living in harmony with one's environment in his 1921 work *Bios: Die Gesetze der Welt* [Bios the laws of the world]. Francé's ideas concerning towns as organisms appealed to *völkisch* biocentrics however, and his views, though influenced by Kropotkin, implicitly argued against revolutionary social change. It was for these reasons that Hausmann attacked Francé from a biocentric Anarchist position, arguing against social biological determinism. Though he was an anti-racialist who described himself as the ethnic *Mischling* he was, Francé later joined the National Socialists, presumably because of Walter Darré's and Rudolf Hess' support for ecological causes, only to be expelled in 1938.[15] Francé's politics and the political range of his admirers is typical of the indeterminacy and slippage along the bipolar political scale of 20th century biocentric intellectuals as traced by Bramwell, and it speaks for the adoption of Bramwell's taxonomic system.

There is a possibility that Moholy met Francé, for Francé wrote his book *Plasmatik* in 1923 at Weimar, and he remembers visiting the Bauhaus at the time. Given that they were both from Budapest, it would not be surprising to me that he would have been introduced to Moholy at the time of his visit. In any case, after he was hired to the Bauhaus in April 1923, Moholy taught aspects of Francé's biocentrism, particularly biotechnics. In *Von Material zu Architektur*, the book based on his Bauhaus course, Moholy discussed Francé's *Grundformen*, the seven forms of which all natural structures are built up, and in the English edition published as *The New Vision* he depicted them. In his books

Moholy quoted from *Bios. Die Gesetze der Welt*, and he continued to teach Francé's concepts in Chicago.

Though it appeared in 1925, Moholy completed the manuscript of his first book, *Malerei, Photographie, Film* [Painting, photography, film] during the summer of 1924, effectively at the Schwarzerden commune, because he finished it at Neuwart, which is a couple of kilometres away. (fig. 20) While the standard reading of the New Vision as promoting the creative exploitation of formal possibilities inherent in mechanical imaging technologies is correct, it is incomplete. Just as Francé explains ecosystems to be the optimal expressions of biologically determined interacting elements, Moholy holds that, quote, "'Art' comes into being when expression is at its optimum, i.e. when at its highest intensity it is rooted in biological law, purposeful, unambiguous, pure."[16] As Francé promoted the integrated harmony of nature as a socio-cultural model, Moholy decried the overspecialization of knowledge, and called for the unity of culture. Employing Vitalist terminology he wrote: "What we need now is not the 'Gesamtkunstwerk' … separated from … life …, but a synthesis of all the vital impulses spontaneously forming itself into the all-embracing Gesamtwerk (life) which abolishes … isolation, in which all individual accomplishments proceed from a biological necessity and culminate in a universal necessity."[17] With Moholy's adoption of Francé's biotechnics and his Vitalist poetics in mind, one can, despite his formalist captions, no longer read his photo-juxtaposition of a flock of geese and an aircraft formation in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* as merely illustrating rhyming contrasts of light and shadow; it also functions as an illustration of biotechnic principles and of the Monist idea of the "unity of nature." (fig. 28) Knowing Francé's illustration in *Bios* of galaxies as instances of natural spiral form, Moholy had more in mind than examples of telescopic photography as an alternative image-making device, or as found images with instructive visual values, when he composed a similar layout in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. (fig. 29) This is particularly apparent when Moholy juxtaposes his own photogram incorporating a spiral with a radiogram of a Triton shell first reproduced in the September 1923 "Schelpennummer" [Shell issue] issue of the Dutch periodical *Wendingen*. (fig. 30) In fact, Francé's biocentric functionalist explanation of the spiral's universality being due to it as the path of least resistance—illustrated in *Die Pflanze als Erfinder* by Francé—is in the paragraph immediately before the text on *Grundformen* that Moholy quoted. (fig. 31) With this in mind, one can better understand

the inclusion of no fewer than five photographs of spirals in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*.

While advocating the creative exploitation of imaging technologies such as the telescope, microscope and x-ray, Moholy's main creative suggestion in *Malerei, Photographie, Film* was to view found photographs as sources of visual inspiration: "The camera has furnished us with surprising possibilities, the exploitation of which is only just about to begin. These optical surprises latent in photographic processes were often realized in incidental work by amateurs … natural scientists … etc." (fig. 24) Imaging technologies not only had the capacity to supplement vision, they could actually re-educate it. Moholy's approach derives from the late nineteenth-century phenomenon of aestheticized microscopic imagery—a biological analogy for art—epitomized by Ernst Haeckel in his 1899 album *Kunstformen der Natur* [Art forms of nature]. In his introduction to Lewis Wolberg's 1978 book of microscopic photography, *Micro-Art: Art Images of a Hidden World*, Brian O'Doherty called this phenomenon "the poetics of bourgeois wonder," but as he points out, this wonder is not only one of formal values. It is also, "informed by a quasi-religious sense of a higher order revealed through the microscopic." This sense led to the normative value which Haeckel—who coined the term "ecology" in the 1860s—ascribed to his images. As a founding member, along with Wilhelm Ostwald and Ernst Mach, of Haeckel's Monist League, Francé elaborated Haeckel's construct of ecology as well as his philosophy. As a scientific illustrator, Francé went beyond Haeckel's pictorial strategies by representing entire ecosystems rather than artfully arranged, discrete creatures, as did Haeckel in *Kunstformen der Natur*.

Imbued with Francé's ideas, Moholy's concern with formal values in found photographs was rooted in the normative nature aesthetic of Monism. But how did this affect Moholy's artistic practice? While I can't deal with this question here, let me just say with reference to Moholy's geometric work that biomorphism is no necessary corollary of a biocentric aesthetics. Put another way, Francé taught Moholy that geometry is inherent in nature. Moholy's late work was both biomorphic and abstract, and it is my view that as with Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky and Hans Arp, this style visualizes biocentrism; it is a Modernist replay of artistic *Naturromantik*; a *Bioromantik* as Kállai put it. In Chicago, Moholy's stress on ergonomic design and his increasing concern with ecological issues, "the incoherent use of our rich resources" as he put it,

underlines this.[18] With this in mind, it seems reasonable to draw analogies between Francé's artful scientific illustrations of ecosystems and Moholy's art. I do not see the visual parallels between, for example, Moholy's three-dimensional plexiglas *Space Modulator* of 1945 and Francé's image of a microscopic rotifer, as the random effect of Moholy's biomorphic abstract style. (figs. 32, 33) While probably not based on specific graphic works by Francé, Moholy's work may reflect his familiarity with Francé's art, and the fact that Moholy's worldview incorporated a biocentric concern for the microscopic in motion.

I am not promoting a wholesale repositioning of Moholy's oeuvre into the biocentric discourse. I propose, rather, that to fully understand his oeuvre, it must be sited at the intersection of a wider range of discourses than hitherto acknowledged: of *Naturromantik*, biocentrism, the Schulreformbewegung, Lebensreform, the Youth Movement, Biocentric Constructivism and Bioromanticism, as well as Hungarian Activism, Marxism, Dada, Expressionism, the Neue Sachlichkeit and Constructivism, in the exclusive terms of which his oeuvre has been discussed to date. This enables a richer reading of his New Vision and his art.

Few now recognize the centrality of Moholy's leftist biocentrism: Findeli, who calls Moholy's oeuvre "un fonctionnalisme organique" or "fonctionalisme vitaliste" does so.[19] Crucial in this connection is Andreas Haus' analysis, which sees Moholy shifting from a dialectical and revolutionary organicism towards one co-opted by John Dewey's concept of harmonious society.[20] Yet Moholy's contemporaries such as Menno ter Braak, Carola Giedeon-Welcker and Herbert Read took his biocentrism for granted, and in the introduction to her biography of László, Sibyl Moholy-Nagy placed Francé's concept of Bios at the centre of Moholy's thinking. She wrote: "He was Utopian, I a historian; he the vitalist and I the humanist."[21]

Thank you for your attention.

NOTES

[1] The full translation appeared in: Oliver A. I. Botar, editor and translator, "Four Poems of 1918 by László Moholy-Nagy," *Hungarian Studies Review* 21, 1–2 (Spring-Fall 1994), 108–09. Note that I have chosen to publish here the nearly unaltered conference paper I gave at the Delaware Conference in 1995. Aspects of this talk were worked

into my Ph.D. Dissertation, "Prolegomena to the Study of Biomorphic Modernism: Biocentrism, László Moholy-Nagy's 'New Vision,' and Ernő Kállai's Bioromantik," University of Toronto, 1998 (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2001). A treatment of this topic in particular appeared as Botar, "The Roots of László Moholy-Nagy's Biocentric Constructivism," in *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond*, ed. Eduardo Kac (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007), 315–344. I have provided only the sources of quotations in the present publication. Please refer to the publication in *Signs of Life* for a full referencing apparatus.

[2] Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 4.

[3] László Moholy-Nagy, review of Árpád Garami, "Gyötrödő, szerelmes tavasz" [Anguished spring in love], *Jelenkor*, 1, no. 5 (April 1918), 138–141.

[4] Heinrich Vogeler, "Frühlingsbrief an meine Freunde!" Page 8 in *Der Einbruch 1. Rundbrief der Entschiedenen Jugend Deutschlands*; in Ulrich *Linse, Die Entschiedene Jugend 1919–1921* (Frankfurt/Main: dipa, 1981), 191.

[5] Lucia Moholy, quoted in Rolf Sachsse, *Lucia Moholy: Bauhaus Fotografin* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1995), 108.

[6] László Moholy-Nagy, "Produktion-Reproduktion," *De Stijl* 5, no. 7 (1922). The translation is adapted by me from the one in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 289.

[7] Marie Buchold, diary entry of October 11, 1924, quoted in Marion E. P. de Ras, *Körper, Eros und weibliche Kultur. Mädchen im Wandervogel und in der Bündischen Jugend 1900–1933* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1988), 162.

[8] László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur* (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1929), 13.

[9] László Moholy-Nagy, letter to Theo van Doesburg, 10 July 1922, in: the appendix to Theo van Doesburg, *Grondbegrippen van de nieuwe beeldende kunst* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1983), 102.

[10] László Moholy-Nagy, "Geradlinigkeit des Geistes – Umwege der Technik," *bauhaus* 1 (1926), 363.

[11] László Moholy-Nagy, response to Ernő Kállai's article in *Bauhaus* 10 (1927), 234.

[12] László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision. Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1938), 13–14.

[13] Ernst Fuhrmann, *Der Sinn im Gegenstand. Nebst Beitrag über die Bedeutung der Ornamente* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1923), 29.

[14] László Moholy-Nagy, *Von Material zu Architektur*, 12. In English: "Education and the Bauhaus," *Focus*, volume 2 (Winter 1938), 22.

[15] For a more nuanced discussion of Francé's association with the National Socialists, and particularly of the economic reasons for his membership in the Party,

see Chapter Two of my dissertation, 320f.

[16] László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film* [1925; 1927]. Translated by Janet Seligman (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969), 17.

[17] *Ibid*.

[18] Moholy-Nagy, "Space-Time and the Photographer," *The American Annual of Photography* (1943), 11.

[19] Alain Findeli, "L'esthetique pedagogique de László Moholy-Nagy et son role dans la transplantation du Bauhaus à Chicago." Typescript, 12. Published in German in an abridged version in 50 *Jahre New Bauhaus* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1987).

[20] Andreas Haus, "Sinnlichkeit und Industrie," in *Avant-garde und Industrie*, ed. Stanislas von Moos (Delft: Delft University Press, 1983), 113–114.

[21] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality*, Second Edition (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1969), xi.

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"Everyone is Talented"

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY'S SYNTHESIS OF REFORM PEDAGOGY AND UTOPIAN MODERNISM

Éva Forgács

László Moholy-Nagy's famous statement that "everyone is talented" is rooted as much in modern reform pedagogy as in the utopian spirit of the avant-garde of the early 1920s. The dual inspiration of this view refers to the dual roots of the utopias of the 1920s that, as this paper will argue, had ties to the past as much as to the future. "Every human being is open to sense impressions, to tone, color, touch, space experience, etc. The structure of a life is predetermined in these sensibilities … But only art—creation through the senses—can develop these dormant, native faculties toward creative action …"[1] wrote Moholy-Nagy, explaining what he meant by "talented." Pestalozzi, Rousseau, Goethe, Rudolf Steiner, and others had based their pedagogical attitudes and methods on the concept that humans have great creative potential, they are good by nature, and education should help rather than block the development of their natural gifts and talents.

Reform pedagogy, which began in the 18th century, had as its goal the protection of children from the untimely deterioration of their creative talents by what the reform pedagogues saw as the corruption and opportunism of society. Raising better human beings was their way of improving the society of the future. Reform pedagogues operated

outside the religious spheres of society and imagined a secular future for education. They wanted to keep children happy and turn the process of learning from hard and gruesome work into joyful activity, convinced that pleasure fosters creativity and ensures better results than pressure. They avoided censuring and humiliating students and emphasized encouragement, motivation, and freedom in education.

Although reform pedagogues received good marks from posterity, their educational methods remained marginalized, and the mainstream school system kept on firmly grounding education in discipline. Concepts like 'joy' and 'happiness' connoted sin or frivolousness rather than the desirable free atmosphere in schooling.

The fact that Moholy-Nagy followed, actually replaced, the Bauhaus's reform-pedagogue Johannes Itten, who dominated the early Bauhaus, has somewhat blurred the fact that Moholy-Nagy himself was aware of, and deeply interested in, the philosophy and methodology of education. Later in life, he wrote about the individuals and institutions of reform pedagogy:

> Our educators have the task of coordinating the requirements of a normal development of human powers, laying the foundation for a balanced life even in the elementary school.
>
> From Pestalozzi to Froebel up to the present time this problem has been in the foreground. This program extends from the kindergarten up to the university, from the single assignment up to the formation of the adult. We have sought to free the child's capacities in drawing and manual training, in language, in the plan of teaching as a whole. Czizek [sic], Montessori, the Lichtwark school, Wendekreis, Worpswede, Lietz in Ilsenburg, Wyneken in Wickersdorf, Heinrich Jacoby in Hellerau-Berlin, the Dalton system–country educational homes, work schools, experimental schools, etc., have in the last decade striven toward an organic structure of education for the child.
>
> Nevertheless, the oncoming generation is even today turned over, for the most part, to the traditional branches of study, which supply information without clarifying its position in the environment and in society.[2]

The program to raise free and creative citizens and thereby shape the future of society was the point where reform pedagogy and

the social utopias of the post-World War I avant-garde crossed paths. While we have consistently contrasted the early Expressionist Bauhaus to the post-1922 pragmatic and increasingly Constructivist Bauhaus, their commonalties and similarities are also worthy of attention. Moholy-Nagy, committed to new media and a future-bound spirit both as a teacher and as a progressive artist, in fact combined the two. When he took over the preliminary course from Itten in 1923, he proved to be pragmatic and rational, in contrast to Itten, as Gropius had expected. While his teaching differed from Itten's in putting the social commitment of art before self-expression, he also drew upon the innovative concepts of reform pedagogy and harnessed them in freeing the creative potential of his students. Moholy-Nagy was, according to many of his colleagues, an intuitively natural teacher,[3] who encouraged the students' unusual ideas, supported their radical views, and provided a student-friendly atmosphere in class without Itten's quasi-religious ideology.

Having studied in Stuttgart with the painter and outstanding teacher, Adolf Hölzel, Itten also brought into the Bauhaus the teachings of the dualist quasi-religion, Mazdaznan, of which he was a priest, along with the principles and methods of reform pedagogy. The teaching of Mazdaznan aimed at freeing creative energies in order to help the "powers of light" to win victory over the "powers of darkness." In that respect, it differed from the disciplining and oppressive tendencies of mainstream religious education. Representing this teaching along with the methods of reform pedagogy, Itten united spiritual exaltation and the modern attitude toward students in his personality; thus he was the incarnation of modernity-in-the-appearance-of-medievalism in post-World War I Germany.

Medievalism was a major intellectual current in the wake of World War I.[4] It swept through Germany from 1918 until 1921-1922. Postwar agony and disillusionment propelled most people's thinking into the past to settle on the nearest solid philosophy unaffected by the nihilism of the present: that of the Middle Ages. The very name of the Bauhaus reflects Gropius's nod to this, as the neologism "Bauhaus" plays on the word "Bauhütte" or "building huts" of the Middle Ages, meaning the lodgings of the medieval cathedral builders. Rediscovery of medieval thinkers such as Meister Eckhardt and Jakob Böhme had an impact on the religious symbolism of the early Expressionist Bauhaus stage led by Lothar Schreyer. Schreyer himself remembered the ambivalence of the Bauhaus population toward the ideas of the remote past in which they also recognized ties to concepts of the future:

> We plunged ourselves into the spiritual adventures of those hard times. The Bauhaus was the 'fortress' of Expressionism that was generally seen to signal the end of the world. In our artistic work we were hardly influenced by the various world views that stirred up the Bauhaus: Häuser, the wandering prophet with his vagabond life, the Mazdaznan teaching brought in by Itten…anthroposophy, theosophy, Catholicism, spiritualism—all driven by the hope of a new world.[5]

The various currents of postwar mysticism and irrationalism had a lot in common with the avant-garde's hopes for a new world. Medievalist ideas and stylistic citations were part of the modern discourse on many occasions. Even utopian architecture had mystical connotations, as the February 1919 exhibition of utopian architects showed; the catalogue essay was the first draft of Gropius's Bauhaus Manifesto.[6] The architectural designs of Gropius's colleagues in the Gläserne Kette [Glass Chain] society[7] were also associated with vaguely medieval references, as was the 1921 hand-painted album edited by Itten titled, *"Utopia—Dokumente der Wirklichkeit"* [Utopia—Documents of Reality]. The ideas expressed in talks, discussions, and correspondence that constituted discourse in the early Bauhaus were also part of mysticism-clad thinking and artistic expression for about three or four years into the Bauhaus' existence. "Medievalist modernity," the "dark matter" of the avant-garde, was the underside of the rationalism and pragmatism that were clearly the dominant driving forces of Modernist thinking and design from 1921–1922 on.

With very few exceptions, the student body, which had enrolled in the Bauhaus with the hope of building a future and of a new society, fell for Johannes Itten's Mazdaznan teaching from day one. Walter Gropius also had to switch from pragmatism and dreams of high technology design concepts to a program that reckoned with both the reality of postwar poverty and the general philosophical disorientation. Gropius found a middle ground in the image of the Socialist Cathedral, which illustrated his Bauhaus Manifesto of April 1919. Lyonel Feininger's woodcut visualized the emblematic embodiment of both a collective engineering effort and a time-tested, Gothic-style symbol of a collective faith. (fig. 34)

The avant-garde of the 1920s reinterpreted the concepts of community, artist, and artistic talent. One of the key phrases of Gropius's

1919 Bauhaus Manifesto was that "art cannot be taught." Instead he suggested "the world of the pattern designer and the applied artist must become a world that builds again." Right from the beginning, Gropius made it clear that the Bauhaus was not going to be a hothouse of geniuses. The very idea of the genius belonged to Expressionism and Romanticism. Gropius, and later Moholy-Nagy, replaced the concept of the artist who expresses individual creativity with a new type of creative man who was more an engineer and designer of the world than what used to be called the artist or artistic genius. Moholy-Nagy's phrase "Everyone is talented" was also rooted in this post-romantic and post-expressionist concept.

Nineteen twenty-three, when Gropius hired Moholy-Nagy as a professor at the Bauhaus, was a year of crisis in the school. Gropius had to announce the end of the subjectivist, Expressionist era and bring the Bauhaus community together for an exhibition and the building of a model house of the future. The Bauhaus that Moholy-Nagy joined was a school that restored the value of design, and put emphasis on those fields of creativity that were accessible to everyone who commanded imaginative pragmatism and common sense.

In his first book *Malerei, Photographie, Film* [Painting, Photography, Film] Moholy-Nagy argued that photography was superior to painting because it was objective.[8] (fig. 20) Suggesting that artistic creation was an option for virtually everyone, he wrote "that painterly methods of representation suggestive merely of past times and past ideologies shall disappear and their place will be taken by mechanical means of representation and their as yet unpredictable possibilities of extension."[9] Everyone, he believed, can be taught to take a reasonably well-composed photo and develop it in a darkroom.

Moholy-Nagy, however, made use of light in painting, too. Transparency, that is, dematerialization by light, appeared in his paintings, indicating a new concept of space. He pursued a synthesis of science, technology, and art for a happy, balanced future. It had to be possible, because "everyone is talented"; "any healthy man can become a musician, painter, sculptor or architect, just as when he speaks he is 'a speaker.'"[10]

Postwar poverty and medievalism notwithstanding, the scientific and technological progress of the prewar years had so profoundly changed the world and the worldview of the progressive intelligentsia, that it was impossible not to consider, or be inspired by, its results. Scientific and technological progress had been out of view in the immediate postwar turmoil, but made a triumphant comeback by 1921–1922.

Moholy-Nagy's tenure at the Bauhaus started in 1923, when the school was finished with irrationalism and religious fervours both Christian and Mazdaznan, but the formative experience of Itten and the spiritual leanings of the artists on the faculty—particularly Kandinsky, Feininger, Klee, and Schlemmer—were far from being history. However, Moholy-Nagy belonged to that younger generation that associated social progress with the new developments of the sciences and technology, because these had taken center stage by the time he came of age.

The year of his birth, 1895, was the midpoint of two and a half decades of the most radical developments in science and technology prior to personal computers and the Internet, which significantly changed everyday life in the Western hemisphere. Not a single field of human knowledge remained without having been challenged, rewritten or revaluated during that period.

Let us look at a few examples. In 1877, eighteen years before Moholy-Nagy was born, Edison demonstrated the first phonograph. Two years later, in 1879, the first light bulb lit up. In 1884 the first synthetic fibre was made. In 1885 emulsion-coated photography paper appeared in the shops, followed in 1888 by Kodak's first portable box camera. The electric engine was also invented in 1888. In the year 1893, Ford built the first successful gasoline-powered engine. The first radio broadcast aired in the year of Moholy-Nagy's birth. This was the year of the first telegram, movie camera, magnetic sound recording, and the invention of the X-ray. A year later in 1896, Becquerel and the Curies discovered radioactivity. Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899. Moholy-Nagy was ten years old when Einstein created the Special Theory of Relativity.

The more distance we have from this historical period, the more we see how radical and transformative these changes were. Pure vision and optical observation, the most important instruments and methods of the visual arts from Leonardo to the Impressionists, became increasingly irrelevant. For the first time in history, mere human eyesight proved to be inferior to magnifiers, microscopes, optical lenses, and the X-ray. The eye could not but scan the surface, whereas the instruments were able to penetrate material and reveal the inner structure and its processes.

Hardly any significant artist was unaffected by these radical changes, which paved the way to an entirely new perception. In the wake of World War I, in spite of temporarily arrested industrial development, the rewritten map of Central Europe and the deep restructuring of

societies from Russia to Germany amplified the impact of scientific progress and fostered Modernist visions of a new, technically advanced age, where the machine would replace labour and warrant for social equality. Everything technical, including such new media as photography, film, radio, and the telephone, projected that new vision.

Soon after László Moholy-Nagy arrived in Berlin in 1920,[11] he experienced the tangible results of how technological development had transformed everyday life as well as artistic expression. Photography, film, Dada photo-collages, and phonographs were all around, and the use of the telephone had become part of everyday life. The first official radio broadcasts in Germany were made from the attic of the Vox building in Berlin on October 30, 1923,[12] the year Moholy-Nagy joined the Bauhaus faculty. As though anticipating Marshall McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message," Moholy-Nagy understood that new media, the use of new technologies and materials, provide just as accurate information on a historic era and carry as much symbolism, as the artworks created through them. Photography, photograms, film, and everything that could be set into motion mechanically or electrically, entailed the future world for Moholy-Nagy that he, like his fellow avant-garde artists, saw as imminent.

Everything mechanical and rationally organized was, for the avant-garde, the appropriate expression of modern times. Moholy-Nagy's early Berlin pictures feature the imagery of railway systems that he admired in Germany; the immense pre-planned and engineered networks that spread out over whole continents worldwide as proof of the power of rational thinking and the constructive potential of humankind. (fig. 13) Moholy-Nagy saw an anticipation of the technological future in the encoded character of the system that operated with coordinated signs, semaphores that signalled instructions, and that kept a large system in harmonized movement. He admired the perfection of the closed mechanical system, which functioned according to man-invented, man-made and mechanically transmitted rules.

In 1921 in a short article, the first interpreter of Moholy-Nagy's art, the critic Ernő (Ernst) Kállai, underlined the role of these motifs and the concepts they entailed in Moholy-Nagy's paintings and drawings (fig. 35):

> In his use of the landscape motifs of the railway tracks … [forces] are gathered into a compact architecture of form. Details of bridges and architectural structures, having lost all their utilitarian references and

> practical functions, freely elevate themselves into a self-willed order … Semaphores of joys, forms and colors are standing on all points of space. … Anarchy is getting perceptibly arranged into a system of unified law. … Here, the mechanism of the modern machine and its kinetic system has been converted into art …[13]

Like many of his fellow avant-garde artists, Moholy-Nagy had a vision of the future that not only spelled turning the page on previous art, but also celebrated the end of the tragic dimension of life. "Everyone is talented" also entailed a new, shared joy of life in creativity. Anticipating the new man of the new era, Moholy-Nagy took science and technology as the tokens of social equality and a happy life. Just like the students of the reform pedagogues, the new man of the utopian future had to be free of pressure and hard work, the latter to be done by machines, and revel in the pleasures of new, liberated life.

The ideas of scientific progress and the transcendence of the boundaries of the material come across in a short programmatic piece of writing that Moholy-Nagy co-authored in Berlin with the Hungarian art critic, Alfréd Kemény. Intending to supersede even the latest development in progressive art, Russian Constructivism, the authors of *Dynamic-Constructive System of Forces*[14] contend that "the material is employed only as *the carrier of forces*." Kemény was probably the first Westerner who had first-hand knowledge of Russian Constructivism, because he visited Moscow in December 1921 and gave a talk at INKhUK, the Institute of Artistic Culture, where he criticized the Constructivists for what he called their "technical naturalism."[15] *Dynamic-Constructive System of Forces* raises the sights higher than the creation of objects to "freely moving (free from mechanical and technical movement) works of art," emphasizing the exploration and harnessing of the forces, as opposed to the material, of the universe.

Underpinning the pedagogical and philosophical view that "Everyone is talented" was the anonymous functionalism, beauty, and myth of the machine. From Raoul Hausmann's 1920 collage *Tatlin at Home*, representing a fictitious Tatlin with a machine in his head, to the great number of Constructivist images evocative of machines and Ernő Kállai's series of essays on contemporary art, the motif of the machine dominated the imagination of progressive artists throughout most of the 1920s.

When Kállai, probably the first art critic to turn against this

mechanical vision of the new world, criticized it in 1923, as if returning to Moholy-Nagy's early railway pictures, he once again invoked railway motifs:

> This new-fangled *pre-stabilized harmony* would run human lives as smoothly as the carriages of toy electric railway systems, without collisions and catastrophes. And without community …. Without the dimensions of the past and the tragic, human relations cannot be but mechanical and superficial.[16]

Moholy-Nagy did not change his mind, however. In the midst of all his enthusiasm for the new perspectives opened up by the machine, he always believed what he put into words shortly before he died: that "it is industry that follows vision, and not vision that follows industry."[17]

NOTES

[1] László Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision. Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1938), 15. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969), 44.

[2] László Moholy-Nagy, "Education and the Bauhaus", 1938, in *Moholy-Nagy: An Anthology*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991), 167–168.

[3] E.g., "Ein geborene Pädagoge," in *Bauhaus Pädagogik*, ed. Rainer Wick (Cologne: DuMont, 1982), 112, quoted from Alexander Dorner's statement "The overflowing will to act, to convey, to cooperate and to learn from new and younger experiences made Moholy a born educator." In: Dorner, "In Memoriam Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946)", a talk at the Art Institute, Chicago, September 17, 1947. Typescript, 5, Bauhaus Archiv, Berlin, cited in Wick, 146, fn. 2.

[4] See among many works on this subject Ulrich Linse, *Barfüßige Propheten* [Barefoot Prophets] (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1983).

[5] Lothar Schreyer, "Hoffnung auf eine neue Welt" [Hope of a New World], in *Bauhaus und Bauhäusler* [Bauhaus and Bauhaus People] ed. Eckhard Neumann (Bern: Hallwag, 1971), 53. My translation.

[6] Walter Gropius, "Unbekannte Architekten" in: *Ausstellung für unbekannte Architekten*, [Exhibition for Unknown Architects] (Berlin and Weimar, 1919).

[7] The Glass Chain Society founded by Bruno Taut was active in 1919–1920, and counted Max Taut, Walter Gropius, Hermann Finsterlin, and others among its members. Paul Scheerbart's essays on utopian glass architecture greatly inspired them.

[8] László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting Photography Film* (London: Lund Humphries, 1969), 13.

[9] Ibid., 15.

[10] Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision*, p5.

[11] On Moholy-Nagy's Berlin debut and first experiences, see Oliver A. I. Botar: *Technical Detours: The Early Work of Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered* (New York: The Art Gallery of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and The Salgo Trust for Education, 2006), in particular "Moholy-Nagy's Encounter with the Radical German Youth Movement in 1920," 86–92, and "Not Yet Standing in *Der Sturm*: Moholy-Nagy Enters the Berlin Art World," 93–95.

[12] http://www.hermanboel.eu/radiohistory/countries-germany.htm; Bärbel Schrader and Jürgen Schebera: *The Golden Twenties: Art and Literature in the Weimar Republic* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 119, give Oct. 29, 1923 as the date. On the gramophone, see their chapter "At Home I Have a Gramophone," 116–119.

[13] Ernő Kállai (under the pen name Péter Mátyás), "Moholy-Nagy", *MA*, vol. 9 (Sept. 15 1921). English transl. Judy Szőllőssy, in Timothy O. Benson, Éva Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes 1910–1930* (Cambridge, MA, and Los Angeles: The MIT Press and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002), 424–425.

[14] László Moholy-Nagy and Alfréd Kemény: "Dynamisch-konstruktives Kraft System," *Der Sturm*, no. 12, 1922. English transl. Judy Szőllőssy, in: *ibid*., 471.

[15] Alfréd Kemény, Vorträge und Diskussion am „Institut für Künstlerische Kultur", Moscow, 1921, based on the minutes edited by Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, in Hubertus Gassner, ed., *Wechselwirkungen. Ungarische Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik* (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1986), 227. See also: Oliver Botar, "Constructivism, International Constructivism, and the Hungarian Emigration," in *The Hungarian Avant-Garde* 1914–1933 (Storrs, Connecticut: The University of Connecticut, 1987), 90–98.

[16] Ernő Kállai, "Korrektúrát! A De Stijl figyelmébe," MA, vol. 8, no. 9–10 (Jan. 7, 1923), English transl. John Bátki, in: Benson and Forgács, eds., *Between Worlds*, 442. Slightly altered by the author.

[17] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality*, 241.

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Is Moholy-Nagy's Design Pedagogy

RELEVANT FOR TODAY'S GENERAL EDUCATION?

Alain Findeli

THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE PICTURES

This morning we all heard Lloyd Engelbrecht tell us that he has been studying Moholy for more than 25 years. For my part, I would say that I have been *practicing* Moholy for more than 15 years. This is indeed a little different than being an art historian (which I am not), because a design educator is closer to the practice of design. So please don't ask me any questions about art history, because I don't feel competent to answer them.

A more provocative title of my talk this afternoon could have been "Why Moholy Was More Postmodern than Anybody Would Think." By "Postmodern," I don't mean the style we see everywhere in architecture and design, with those expressive and sometimes enigmatic features that characterize the outer shape of the products. By "Postmodern" I mean the breakthrough in theory and philosophy that has challenged the so-called modern way of looking at the world. This is sometimes also called *the new paradigm*.

The title of my talk actually refers to one of Moholy-Nagy's quotes and deep convictions. He used to say that he was convinced that

the educational aims of the Bauhaus were still universally valid. My purpose is not only to prove that what Moholy said in the forties made sense; I am trying to demonstrate that what he said and what made sense in the forties can still be valid, relevant, and useful in the nineties. In other words, my working hypothesis is that Moholy's deep and challenging philosophy contains some very useful concepts and a way of looking at things that could enrich not only design and architectural education, but education in general.

Let me start with an observation drawn from my own experience in design education. That the Bauhaus has been thrown out of the window everywhere in architecture and design schools, except in history courses, is quite easy to observe. Basic design courses have disappeared; studio teaching has gone back to the very traditional Beaux-Arts style. The concept of the *atelier* has made a comeback with the big boss in the front and the students trying to imitate what the big boss is (or was) doing, or copying what was published in architectural magazines, and so on. But how did we come to believe that Bauhaus educational and pedagogical principles could not or should not continue to be valid today? The reason we tend to believe that Bauhaus education is not good anymore is, I believe, because we have seen too much visual material, too many pictures of and about the Bauhaus. It is possible that the Bauhaus *style* is somewhat outdated today (but isn't that the fate of any style?) and that a Postmodern style was timely in furniture, architecture, and so on. But a change in style doesn't necessary mean that the philosophy behind the objects must be changed as well and that the philosophy is not valid. Indeed, even in the German years, Bauhaus director Walter Gropius insisted on the fact that the Bauhaus should not be considered a style but rather a new way of looking at and acting in the world. I'm afraid that by throwing the Bauhaus out of the window, we've thrown the baby out with the bath water.

The problem is that the philosophy behind the picture takes more time and trouble to catch than the picture. You just can't "see" Moholy's philosophy at a glance, like a photograph. Moholy left us with about two thousand pages of written material, and in order to really understand the philosophy behind the text it is not enough to read it, even closely; it is necessary to *experience* it deeply, that is, to *practice* it literally. Only by studying and interpreting Moholy by this method can one answer some of this morning's questions, for example, the following. It is indeed hard to believe that the style of abstract and geometrical painting

Moholy did in the twenties is in line with the biocentric worldview Oliver has so convincingly described to us. Quite to the contrary, nothing seems to be more foreign. But if we consider Moholy's philosophy, it becomes easier to understand, as I will try to demonstrate in my talk.

The latter will consist of three parts. A short history of the New Bauhaus/School of Design/Institute of Design will first be presented as context. I will then outline three central concepts of our Postmodern paradigm—phenomenology, complexity, and ethics—and finally I will try to show how these concepts relate to Moholy's philosophy and art.

AN AMERICAN BAUHAUS IN CHICAGO

As you know, Moholy was called to open the "New Bauhaus" in Chicago in 1937. (fig.36) During its first years, the institution moved five times to different areas of Chicago and its name was changed twice, a sign of an extremely difficult birth. First called the "New Bauhaus," it was renamed "The School of Design in Chicago" a year later when it relocated to a downtown loft, a building still existing today. In 1949, under Serge Chermayeff, it lost its autonomy to become a department of the Illinois Institute of Technology, after its name had been changed in 1944 to "The Institute of Design," by which it is still known today. Moholy was, of course, not alone in running the school. He hired a very impressive faculty of lecturers, teachers, and assistants. Three other important persons were behind the founding of the New Bauhaus in Chicago: Walter Gropius, first director of the German Bauhaus, who acted as pedagogical consultant, especially during the first years; Walter Paepcke, president of the Container Corporation of America, who first secured the survival of the school after the withdrawal in 1938 of its original sponsors, the Association of Arts and Industries, then stabilized it in 1944 when he became president of the board, and finally facilitated its integration into IIT in 1949; and finally György Kepes, a good friend of Moholy since the Dessau period and reportedly one of the most respected teachers at the School of Design. Kepes became particularly famous later as founder of MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies.

The structure of the curriculum was very much like that of the four-year structure of the original Bauhaus curriculum: a first-year preliminary course that would lead into four, five, or six workshops, depending on the period we're considering. There are, however, various

differences in content between the German and the American Bauhaus, two of which I would like to emphasize.

Although the circular image illustrating the centripetal progression of the students through the curriculum remained identical, Moholy radically reconceived and updated the specialized workshops. (figs. 37, 38) At the German Bauhaus, the workshops were evntually named after the specific material the student-apprentices were working with (wood, clay, glass, etc.), a feature which gave it a kind of medieval atmosphere, whereas in Chicago, the workshops were named according to the respective design *professions* they were leading to, such as product design, graphic design, architecture, textile design, photography, and so on.

The second important difference lies in the very basic concept of the curriculum, in its core philosophy. The original Bauhaus concept Éva just mentioned and discussed, "Art and Technology: A New Unity," was conceived by Gropius as a fundamental polarity. (fig. 39) At the New Bauhaus, Moholy transformed it into a ternary model, in which science was added to art and technology. The difference is radical both in theoretical and pedagogical terms. The model is much more dynamic than a polarity, which has consequences for the underlying theory of design. This model was influenced and introduced by pragmatist philosopher Charles Morris of the University of Chicago, who not only lectured at the New Bauhaus, but was also in charge of the "intellectual integration" (Morris's own term) of the three central poles of its curriculum. "Art, Science, and Technology: A New Unity," such was the central concept of Morris's philosophy. (fig. 42)

As in Weimar, the first published curriculum started with a manifesto, a feature that has somehow disappeared in our contemporary schools. We don't have time to read the manifesto here, but I must admit it is still a good idea to read it again in 1995, and maybe find some fresh inspiration there.

FORM DOES NOT FOLLOW FUNCTION

What, then, was the central design idea discussed in the studios in Chicago? It all revolved around the relationship between form and function. The legend goes that "form follows function" was the holy gospel of the Bauhaus, and that Sullivan's famous dictum found its strongest field of application there. This is misleading. It is correct that there *is*

indeed a relationship in any design product between form and function; however, the relationship need not be of a causal, deductive, and deterministic nature. In other words, form does not *follow* function; the matter is more complex. The central problem of the workshops at the Bauhaus was to find out what kind of relationship existed between form and function. In order to determine this relationship, said Moholy, you have to think about the "essence" of the product.

Now, what did he mean by the essence of the product? Let's take the following example. If you go to a farmers market, you will find these nice little baskets of wood, and let's say, for some reason, you have to design a new kind of basket. There can be many reasons for that redesign, but that's not what interests you now. So, let's say you have to make a new design, and this is your design workshop assignment for today. Moholy said you have to find the essence; not the function, but the essence of this product. If you use a new material, like plastic instead of wood, there is no reason to come up with the same shape, color, and manufacturing process as with wood, since this would be a mere imitation of what it was before, only in a new material (*speaker exhibits two baskets: a traditional one of wood and another of red plastic of the same shape*). The red basket is bad design because you were not looking for the essence. It is mere imitation, lacking both imagination and theoretical work. In order to find the essence, one has to look at things in a different way. And this is where Moholy's philosophy comes in.

MOHOLY-NAGY'S EARLY POSTMODERNISM: PHENOMENOLOGY, COMPLEXITY, AND ETHICS

One of the first concepts of Postmodernism that can be related to Moholy's philosophy is the idea of a new phenomenology of perception or of vision. Moholy first called it "New Vision," later "Vision in Motion." (fig. 18) He maintained that if we want to change the world (and designers do indeed want to change the world!), we must first look at it in a different way. Only then can we act responsibly in it. In order to look at the world in a different way, more "objectively," we must become like children and forget what we already know or think we know. This principle can be found in Husserl's philosophical phenomenology, a philosophical framework much valued in Postmodernist social science.

Let's take an example. Here is one of Moholy's photographs. (fig. 40) Everybody will recognize a tree, its shadow, and so on. Wrong! Moholy would say it is not about a tree and its shadow. The way we should look at this photograph (*speaker asks picture to be put slightly out of focus*) is to forget what we know about this familiar scene and look at it as if we had never seen it before. And Moholy would add that if you look at the world in this way, you will discover a new world not only outside, but also inside, in your inner world. Moholy's photographs tell a more objective story than the anecdotal one pictured by the figurative scene: the story of polarity, of black and white, of shadow and light, and so on. The same holds for the films we saw this morning. He even stated a bit provocatively that you can look at his pictures any way you want, upside down for instance, that it didn't really matter because the artistic value of the picture remained the same. According to Moholy, one may use any visual medium—photography, photogram, painting, or whatever else—in order to reach the New Vision. In his writings he gives many clues for interpreting his own and the students' visual production. In substance we read that "one should see with the eyes, not with the mind" or "vision should be visual, not literal" or "pictures are not narratives, they are purely visual." This is why he thought, as Éva told us earlier, that the camera should be preferred to the human eye and mind in order to see objectively, to acquire the New Vision. Indeed, Moholy would say, the camera is a lifeless artefact. It has no biography, no cultural background, no feelings.

Another typical example is the light modulator. We look at light modulators as sculptures, as plastic experiments, experiments with (new) material. Well, that's not correct. (figs. 32, 41) A light modulator should be considered a scientific instrument that reveals essential features of the world, like light qualities for instance (*speaker exhibits a plexiglas light modulator he made for the conference and moves it in the beam of the slide projector*). Play around with it, look at light reflections, moving patterns, and so on. This was Moholy's concept: use whatever you feel is right in order to acquire the New Vision and make the familiar strange.

Another aspect of the New Vision is that it has to be dynamic, it must be vision in motion, be simultaneous. This idea of vision in motion and of simultaneity, which Moholy adapted from Cubist principles, brings us to a second central concept of Postmodern theory: complexity. Complexity was central in Moholy's writings and teaching. The point is

that the world is too complex to be understood analytically; one must grasp it in a more global, "organic" way. On page 42 of his book *Vision in Motion*, we read the word "complex" three, four, or five times, pointing to an interrelated whole, which reminds us of what Oliver talked about this morning. In this context the organic idea has an epistemological status.

Let's look at a design project, any design project. It is complex by nature because it has numerous, usually mutually conflicting dimensions: economic, technological, social, aesthetic, cultural, and so forth. You cannot understand a design project analytically, by breaking it into parts, by cutting it into slices. You have to look at it organically, topologically, so to speak. Here are pictures proposed by contemporary mathematicians in order to try to understand complexity, because complexity is beyond the reach of analytical thinking (*speaker shows mathematical curves and diagrams that look like geographical landscapes with peaks and valleys*). This is precisely why Moholy insisted we educate contemporary man (*sic*) as an "integrator." An integrator is someone who has this New Vision, this vision in motion, someone who can grasp and understand contemporary complexity. Moholy believed that intuition is the only proper way of looking at problems. The "whole man," who is capable of "thinking in relationships," is a key concept in *Vision in Motion*. To paraphrase him: if one doesn't adopt such organic way of looking at the world, if one looks at it in an aggregative way, the world will remain meaningless and useless for the biological and cultural nourishment of man. There is only one page in his book where he uses italics and bold characters to emphasize a passage, something which should therefore be considered the key phrase of the book: "*the* key to our age—*seeing everything in relationship*" (p. 68).

One pedagogical way of experiencing complexity is working with photograms, an exercise practiced by students during the preliminary year. (fig. 47) Aesthetic qualities of a photogram are not especially important, and this is true for all basic design assignments. Basic design has been widely misunderstood because emphasis has been put on the formal qualities of the student's work. Again, this is the result of looking at photographs without inquiring about the underlying pedagogical assignment. Basic design is a preparation for the understanding of systemic theory and complexity.

Here, as an example, is a first-year assignment (*speaker shows a Mondrian-like picture composed of two horizontal lines and one vertical line crossing each other*). Students are asked to arrange the three lines

so that the system is in equilibrium. Then we ask them to add a second vertical line. This will disturb the previous system, so that they have to find a new equilibrium by rearranging the lines. With such an extremely simple exercise one can discuss central issues of complexity, objectivity, subjectivity, organicity, wholeness, gestalt, aesthetics, all matters having to do with a biocentric approach. We may go on with this exercise and add colors to the rectangles, that is, add complexity to the picture. This explains, I think, how very abstract Constructivist art can be biocentric. Many other exercises could be considered along the same line. With this in mind, one is bound to understand Moholy's projects, art works, and propositions in a new, more integrated way, in "totality."

The third concept characteristic of our Postmodern sensibility is the concept of ethics. Ethics was very central to Moholy's philosophy, although the term rarely appears explicitly. But by *practicing* Moholy, one understands the following: It is difficult to teach ethics to young people, since ethics cannot be taught like history or mathematics. Ethics has to do with practice and therefore must be experienced; otherwise one doesn't really understand what is at stake. The same is true for art, says Moholy: "Art cannot be taught," it has to be experienced. According to John Dewey, who praised the Chicago Bauhaus, the main task of educators is to make such experiences possible by providing adequate contextual conditions, both material and intellectual. (fig. 42) What holds for art holds for ethics. However, it is more difficult to design pedagogical situations for experiencing ethics. The idea, therefore, is to consider ethical decisions somehow analogous to aesthetic decisions. Both are value judgments, both deal with complex situations, and both need a kind of intuition to reach a satisfactory decision followed by action. A moral decision is indeed difficult to make, because the complexity of the situation is due to the influence of many conflicting factors. Although the analogy between aesthetic complexity and ethical complexity is formal, not substantial, what Moholy says between the lines is that if you educate young people in aesthetics, you prepare their education in ethics. This was a fundamental aspect of his pedagogical philosophy.

But, as we all know, ethics and the responsibility of designers were also substantially present in Chicago long before the issue of ethics emerged in the Postmodern world. Here is how things were considered by Moholy. We are used to looking at objects completely abstracted from their environment, like in these glossy magazines (*speaker shows photograph of a product in a typical design magazine*). Again, we must beware

of pictures! Products stand here in a completely abstract world, like on a cloud, detached from the context of the contemporary world. But for responsible designers this is the wrong way of looking at objects. Design products aren't art works or merely technological performances. Design criteria are not restricted to technology, for instance, or aesthetics. To understand a design product, it must be put in its social, political, and cultural context. This is precisely what Moholy meant when he wrote that in design and therefore in design education "not the product, but man was the end in view," because, eventually, the product was meant to be used by humans, individually and collectively, not to be put under glass in a gallery. A product, said Moholy, has to be both useful and meaningful. He didn't say form has to follow function, he didn't say a product has only to be functional and useful; it must be meaningful, too. Meaningfulness has to do with culture, with the spiritual dimension of human social life. Moholy maintained that, due to the tremendous changes in the contemporary world, a new morality, a new ethics, was necessary for designers and artists. They must be socially conscious and concerned with their moral obligations toward the entire society. Art can press for social/biological solutions to problems, writes Moholy, just as efficiently as political action. I could present numerous quotes where terms like "responsibility," "essential duties," and so on appear in Moholy's writings. Only by a careful examination of his pedagogical philosophy can we imagine how they were put into action in educational situations and thereby understand why the practice of art, and even the contemplation of art works, can have a political dimension.

MOHOLY THE VISIONARY

I have tried to show that Moholy-Nagy the educator was even more visionary in his worldview than the avant-garde artist praised by most art historians. Key concepts of his philosophy have only appeared recently in our Postmodern world. My argument has drawn heavily on a close consideration of his own writings when put into pedagogical situations, that is, the actual practice of his key concepts.

Of course the seemingly provocative and iconoclastic title of my talk should be qualified. Moholy would certainly have disagreed with many aspects of Postmodern design and, more generally, with the relativistic and sceptical character of our Postmodern worldview.

Utopian ideas were too important to him. But I hope I have shown that—when subsumed under concepts like the New Vision, complexity, and the social responsibility of the designer—his utopia could still be relevant for us today.

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Negotiating Modernity:

MOHOLY-NAGY AND AMERICAN COMMERCIAL DESIGN

Jeffrey L. Meikle

The constantly shifting career of László Moholy-Nagy suggests that he was a flexible individual capable of assuming a variety of perspectives, often simultaneously, as he experienced in art and in life what he described as "vision in motion." (Frontispiece) His photographs, for example—with their violations of "normal" perspective, their playing with vertigo—reveal an individual who exulted in the disruptive fragmentation of modern life even as he attempted to achieve a totalizing vision. (fig. 48) Like many another migrant or exile, whether literal or figurative, he was constantly negotiating space between himself and the cultures in which he operated. In a life that contained so many career changes and physical removals, there must have been moments when Moholy himself took comfort in the energy, enthusiasm, and verbal incandescence that so often won others over to his visions. If so, then one of those moments might have occurred in 1937 when he accepted an invitation from a group of people he didn't know to revive the Bauhaus in Chicago, in effect to establish a new Bauhaus in the New World.

That decision shaped the rest of Moholy's short life, which ended in 1946 when leukemia took him at age 51. For nine years he struggled to preserve in America a vision destroyed by the Nazis in Europe—a vision

of universal liberation through humane, "biotechnic" use of technology. The story is nothing short of heroic. After a successful first year, financial backing collapsed late in the summer of 1938, and the New Bauhaus dissolved. With little choice but to plunge ahead because he had burned his bridges, Moholy used personal savings to open the School of Design with a faculty of friends and acquaintances serving without pay. (fig. 36) Uncertain enrolments, frequent moves to new premises, the eternal pressure of fundraising, and wartime cutbacks marked the history of the school, which eventually gained a measure of security after being reorganized as the Institute of Design in 1944 with an outside Board of Directors. (fig. 41) But that story is not quite what I will focus on this afternoon. Instead I am going to explore a juxtaposition of the dominant design cultures of Europe and America during the immediate postwar years. Much of Moholy's difficulty in Chicago arose from the fact that his revival of the utopian Bauhaus concept of design conflicted with a brashly commercial American method of practicing industrial design that had proven successful for over a decade.

As Moholy considered the offer of a new career, he conceptualized America in typically European fashion, as a *tabula rasa*. From a European perspective, Americans also often seemed like savages, noble savages, perhaps, considering their willingness to fund a new Bauhaus, but savages all the same. Writing to his wife, Sibyl, during the initial negotiations, Moholy was puzzled that the "future trustees" had invited him to Chicago at all, "knowing what I stand for," because "their homes, the style of their furniture, their architectural preferences, [even] the pictures they hang on their walls" revealed "not the slightest influence of any modern taste." He couldn't decide whether to assume, optimistically, that "everyone is a potential student" (and thus a *tabula rasa*), or pessimistically to "forgive them for they know not what they are doing" (thus suggesting a lack of civilization).[1] Choosing a more positive wording in 1938, after a year of experience in Chicago, Moholy discussed a need to "keep alive in grownups the child's sincerity of emotion, his truth of observation, his fantasy and creativeness," a need to maintain, in other words, that "characteristic pioneer spirit which we find unimpaired in our American students."[2] Trying to remain open to the lessons of the New World, he told reporters that he disliked "foreigners who come to this country to criticize." By contrast, he had come "not alone as a teacher, but as a pupil." It was as an attentive student that he hoped "to learn as much from my pupils as they from me."[3]

Even so, it is not clear that Moholy was ready or willing to learn the obvious design lessons of the New World. No matter how traditional the period furnishings of his wealthy patrons, no matter how compelling the myth of the frontier, the United States was hardly a *tabula rasa* when it came to designing in response to the exhilarating, disorienting forces of modernity. Europeans from Le Corbusier to Moholy had celebrated the efficiency of American engineering and the productive genius of Henry Ford. But European observers tended to disparage as too commercial the dominant American mode of modern design, which was organized around stimulating consumption rather than engineering production. Rooted in the jazz age of the 1920s, and accepted as an indispensable business tool by the late 1930s, industrial design had evolved, in the United States, independently of the Bauhaus and of such Bauhaus champions as the Museum of Modern Art. The success of American industrial design, revealed in both the extravagant praise of business magazines like *Fortune*, and in a headlong rush to embrace it on the part of manufacturers of all sorts of products, suggests, in fact, that the United States was a decade or two ahead of Europe in developing a consumer economy, and thus could not afford the luxury of a utopian approach.

Dramatic proof of the economic benefit of designing for mass consumption had come in 1927, as Henry Ford learned the "most expensive art lesson in history" when he abandoned production of the Model T and spent eighteen million dollars retooling for the Model A. As the Depression took hold, manufacturers turned to product redesign as a tool for stimulating consumption. By the mid nineteen thirties, industrial design often appeared as a panacea for restoring the nation's economic health. The new industrial designers, most of whom came from careers in advertising, illustration, or stage design, created a national style. Within a few years, streamlining spread from cars to trains to non-moving artefacts at every scale, from pencil sharpeners and vacuum cleaners to storefronts and gas stations. The most telling defense of industrial design as practiced in the 1930s came from a publicist who maintained that "streamlining a product and its methods of merchandising is bound to propel it quicker and more profitably through the channels of sales resistance."[5] As a nearly universal commercial style, streamlining also expressed a widespread assumption that social processes had to be made smoother and less complex, frictionless, if at all possible. Above all, streamlining and the commercial design process that fostered it revealed

a Depression-era obsession with control, not so different, really, from the impetus behind much of Moholy's work. It wouldn't be far-fetched to suggest that designer Raymond Loewy's famous promotional slogan, "everything from a lipstick to a locomotive," was a breezy, less intellectual version of Moholy's invocation of the idea of "totality."

In any event, by the time Moholy arrived in Chicago to recreate the ferment of the Bauhaus foundation course, American commercial designers were already busy defining a new profession. Although the organization of a professional society was still several years away, both the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh and Pratt Institute in Brooklyn had begun degree programs in industrial design. Even designers who had emerged from advertising or stage design recognized that a rapidly expanding profession with clients at all scales of industry could no long rely on young, unemployed architecture graduates to fill its drafting rooms. In 1940 the profession gained its first textbook when Harold Van Doren published what he called a "practical guide." (fig. 44) Covering everything from model making to cost accounting, he also discussed the current state of design education, including attempts to "transplant … Bauhaus methods to this country." Although Van Doren admired Bauhaus dedication to "a philosophy of life as well as a method of design," he warned that these attempts lacked "the realistic qualities that we Americans, rightly or wrongly, demand." Characterizing the writings of many *Bauhäusler* as "vague to the point of complete unintelligibility," he concluded that it would prove "difficult … to acclimatize the esoteric ideas of the Bauhaus in the factual atmosphere of American industry."[6] Van Doren's comments echoed those of an art journalist who came away from a visit to the New Bauhaus warning of a "danger … that the progressive and wholly praiseworthy point of view which motivates the enterprise may lose itself in theory and become a hot-house product too far removed from the ebb and flow of American life to influence it."[7]

In fact, Moholy's own rhetoric often did outrun the comprehension of ordinary businessmen seeking practical methods for stimulating sales and increasing profits. In 1945, for example, the head of Sears, Roebuck complained that none of seventy apparently "open-minded" Sears executives who attended lectures by Moholy "got anything out of it" because they couldn't understand what he was talking about.[8] Nor did Moholy help matters by allowing journalists to publicize his Chicago school by spinning incredible tales similar to those that had plagued industrial design from its beginning. While cautious promoters

like Van Doren were dismissing "eager prophets and over-fanciful press-agentry" as destructive of a "serious profession," Moholy gave *Saturday Evening Post* the impression that he was "a modernist … so far ahead that he is almost out of sight." Rather than emphasizing practical implications of work at the Institute of Design in the 1940s, journalists marvelled over light projection machines, machines "of emotional discharge," experimental wooden bedsprings, walls composed of jets of compressed air, and an automobile, supposedly already realized, "that runs by sunlight."[9] Although Moholy could not dictate press coverage of his work, he seemed not to understand the danger of such fantastic visions to his school's reputation.

Equally significant was Moholy's apparent ambivalence about the profit motive as a stimulus to design. In *Vision in Motion*, for example, a masterful summary of his philosophy written shortly before his death and posthumously published, he disparaged the "bid for a quick sale" as far too typical of contemporary design. (fig. 18) The only valid goal of design was "to produce for human needs, not for profit." Even so, Moholy professed admiration for the "successful industrial designers" of his adopted country, who were moving away from "imagination and fantasy" toward an awareness of "the demands of industrial production, its technology, sales and distribution techniques," with his wording definitely suggesting a practical concern for the dictates of business, including profits.[10] A few years earlier, looking back at the original Bauhaus, he had expressed pride that his "young apprentices" of the metal workshop had successfully produced "models for industrial production … which industry bought and for which royalties were paid."[11] Profit was the sign of a job well done. But for the most part, especially after exposure to the commercial culture of the United States, Moholy attacked a narrow materialism that ignored humanity's real biological needs.

He stated this view most convincingly in *Vision in Motion*, in a passage that contrasted America's economy of abundance with Europe's economy of scarcity. Since the United States was "rich in resources, raw materials and human ingenuity," its people could "afford to be wasteful," he wrote. The result in terms of design was artificial obsolescence, the use of superficial styling changes to promote unnecessary consumption. Obsessed with stylistic novelty and technological gadgetry, Americans discarded perfectly functional possessions and replaced them with an ever-proliferating array of new products. In Europe, on the other hand, scarcity of resources had stimulated a reliance on true efficiency.

While Moholy couldn't help admiring the bounteous wastefulness of Americans, he concluded that "artificial obsolescence leads—in the long run—to cultural and moral disintegration because it destroys the feeling for quality."[12] Returning to economics, he argued that competition for international markets would soon force Americans to abandon artificial obsolescence in favour of a more timeless functionalism. It was on exactly this point that Moholy's analysis clashed with that of an up-and-coming young American designer named J. Gordon Lippincott, a graduate of Pratt Institute's new industrial design program. Lippincott's provocatively titled book, *Design for Business*, was published in Chicago in 1947, almost simultaneously with Moholy's *Vision in Motion* and by the same publisher. (fig. 45) Among other things, Lippincott offered a comparison of Europe and America that was identical to Moholy's in every respect, except in its prediction that Europeans would have to adopt the American system of artificial obsolescence if *they* hoped to survive in global competition. Above all, Lippincott wrote in his book's most quoted line: "There is only one reason for hiring an industrial designer and that is to increase the sales of a product."[13]

Such a straightforward cash value design philosophy would seem to indicate little or no common ground between the Bauhaus émigré Moholy and the native-born Lippincott. A detailed comparison of their two design statements, *Vision in Motion* and *Design for Business*, would reveal much about the conflicted motives of postwar American designers, torn between their primary economic role as promoters of consumption and their secondary cultural role as shapers of the material world of an expanding middle class. While there isn't time for a detailed comparison this afternoon, I would like to discuss Lippincott's book for a few minutes, paying particular attention to some rather unexpected parallels to Moholy's ideas as expressed in *Vision in Motion*. (Not that Moholy and Lippincott were by any means theoretical, rhetorical, or pedagogical equals; they weren't.)

Design curators and historians, including me, have tended to represent Lippincott as promoter of a narrow creed of artificial obsolescence. Aimed at potential clients, *Design for Business* is filled with snappy statements that would have been distasteful to purists like Moholy. "Gadgets date a car stylewise," Lippincott declares, and thus offer "a means of moving automotive merchandise." [14] A successful designer is "a person who has his finger on the pulse of consumer acceptance."[15] A successfully designed product may not always be one that its designer "thinks is good

looking nor again something he would like in his own home."[16] And, to cite a final example, "since nearly 90 percent of all consumer products are bought by women, our problem of style forecasting is largely one of anticipating feminine tastes."[17]

Despite such statements, Lippincott often moved toward positions that echoed Moholy. In fact, it is possible to see *Design for Business* as a Trojan horse, pandering to businessmen with lots of cash value talk at the outset, but then smuggling in a host of contradictory ideas. On the issue of streamlining, for example, so often dismissed by purist critics as an applied style with no relevance for products that didn't have to move swiftly through the air, Lippincott himself dismissed the once popular style as outmoded. But he also discussed a major ongoing shift in manufacturing and construction from "tectonic design," the traditional assemblage of artefacts from various discrete parts bolted together, to "plastic design," the moulding or welding of integral, one-piece monocoque structures supported by their own curving skins. Urging industrial designers to "present" such innovative artefacts "in good taste" in order to win popular acceptance for them, Lippincott moved decisively beyond the narrow advocacy of profits.[18] This discussion of tectonic and plastic design directly mirrored Moholy's own defence of non-vehicular streamlining as the sign of a former "age of assemblage" yielding to technologies of "welding, molding, shaping and stamping." Even the streamlining of an automobile rendered it "a kind of 'steel egg,' structurally sound."[19] Here I am reminded of Oliver Botar's talk this morning about the biotechnic side of things and the evolution from an engineering perspective of assembling parts, and an Eiffel Tower type of design, to something that appears more organic, more holistic.

Even more astonishing was Lippincott's insistence that "the purely creative artist working in abstract design is, in reality, the prime mover of nearly all the expressions of the industrial designer." Accompanying his discussion of abstract art with photographs pairing Picasso with an amoeboid coffee table, Mondrian with the severe lines of an executive desk, and Brancuşi with a streamlined toaster, Lippincott insisted that the industrial designer "primarily … is an artist." Even more, he declared, "the distinction between the fine and the applied arts is so small that … no distinction whatever should be made."[20] While Lippincott nowhere approached the complexity of Moholy's aesthetics, the American designer's insistence that the federal government should provide funds for education and research in the arts would have pleased Moholy, who was

continually enmeshed in the uncertainty of fund-raising among the same businessmen likely to be impressed by Lippincott's book, those who would have found Moholy's *Vision in Motion* to be impenetrable.

Most astounding of all were sections of *Design for Business* where Lippincott completely rejected the wastefulness of artificial obsolescence, which he had celebrated so enthusiastically in the opening chapters. "Every manufacturer who contemplates bringing out a new product," Lippincott insisted, "should ask himself critically whether he is *really* contributing to the betterment of American living—whether it is really a necessity." Even further, "is this object really necessary; does it really make living easier, more gracious and pleasant, or is it adding to the complexity of daily existence?" Ironically contradicting his earlier rhetoric of artificial obsolescence, Lippincott maintained that "products … based on genuine human needs survive longer than products based on fancy, fad, or appeal to luxury" and ought to be encouraged. Because the industrial designer "is playing a key role in shaping tomorrow's world," Lippincott wrote, he must "eternally [ask] *why* we do things the way we do." "Far more" than a mere "applied art," industrial design offered a "concept of living," a conclusion not so far removed from Moholy's concept of "design for life." Lippincott ultimately pulled back, however, perhaps fearful of alienating potential business clients, and concluded that Americans might also enjoy "a few gadgets thrown in." Indeed, they had to have them in order to attain full "productive capacity" and thus "achieve full employment and national prosperity."[21]

The central point of my talk this afternoon is not that *Design for Business* in any way approaches the intellectual complexity or aesthetic significance of *Vision in Motion*. But I do want to suggest that the dichotomy of Bauhaus purism and American commercialism was never as clear-cut as is sometimes portrayed. Although Moholy's approach to design had an impractical visionary side, his ideas were indeed making their way in the world, if only by osmosis, as part of the general "atmospheric conditions" of the age, of which he viewed the artist as a "seismograph."[22] Had death not prematurely removed him from the scene, American commercial design might have developed somewhat differently. In November 1946, only a few days before his death, Moholy kept a commitment to attend a "Conference on Industrial Design as a New Profession" at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Actively participating, in spite of the fact that he was deathly ill, responding vigorously to sharp criticism and to what he described as "some nasty

personal attacks," Moholy argued against artificial obsolescence, against specialization, against narrow professionalism.[23] As Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. recalled the debate in an obituary for *Arts and Architecture*, Moholy repeatedly "brought before the gathering the essential social, creative responsibility of designers, urging more cogently than anyone else the obligations that make every designer, if he fulfills them, a professional man." Regarding design education, to which he had devoted much of his life, Moholy "urged the teaching of fundamental attitudes as the only reliable learning in a world where technological change is so rapid that skills may easily become obsolete." As Kaufmann reported, "even those who saw design education largely as training for earning a living, were at times won over."[24] Even so, with Moholy's passing from the design scene, it was a lesson that went largely unheeded for the next two decades, as American designers dedicated themselves to fulfilling the least altruistic aspects of Lippincott's *Design for Business* agenda.

Thank you.

NOTES

[1] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 144.

[2] László Moholy-Nagy, "Foreword," *The New Vision; Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture* (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1938), unpag.

[3] Moholy-Nagy as quoted in "Hungarian Professor Directs New School in Chicago," *News-Week*, 10 (Sept. 20, 1937), 36.

[4] Ralph Abercrombie, *The Renaissance of Art in American Business*, General Management Series, No. 99 (New York: American Management Association, 1929), 6–7.

[5] William J. Acker, "Design for Business," *Design*, 40 (November 1938), 12.

[6] Harold Van Doren, *Industrial Design: A Practical Guide* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940), 79. On education see pp. 75–79.

[7] E. M. Benson, "Chicago Bauhaus," *Magazine of Art*, 31 (February 1938), 83.

[8] Unnamed chief executive of Sears, Roebuck, in a letter to Walter Paepcke, June 12, 1945, as quoted by James Sloan Allen, *The Romance of Commerce and Culture: Capitalism, Modernism, and the Chicago-Aspen Crusade for Cultural Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 65.

[9] Van Doren, *Industrial Design*, xvii; Robert M. Yoder, "Are You Contemporary?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 216 (July 3, 1943), 16; and "Message in a Bottle," *Time*, 47 (Feb. 18, 1946), 63.

[10] László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 34, 25, 33.

[11] László Moholy-Nagy, "From Wine Jugs to Lighting Fixtures" (1938), reprinted in *Moholy-Nagy*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Praeger, 1970), 80.

[12] Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 33–34.

[13] J. Gordon Lippincott, *Design for Business* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 20; see also pp. 215–216.

[14] *Ibid*., 47.

[15] *Ibid*., 21.

[16] *Ibid*., 19.

[17] *Ibid*., 53.

[18] *Ibid*., 110-113.

[19] Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 51–53.

[20] Lippincott, *Design for Business*, 92, 88.

[21] *Ibid*., 140, 198; and Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 42.

[22] Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion*, 57, 352.

[23] Moholy-Nagy, *Moholy-Nagy: Experiment in Totality*, 243.

[24] Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., "Moholy," *Arts and Architecture*, 64 (March 1947), 25.

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"The Inexhaustible Wonder of Life":

LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY'S UTOPIAN LEGACY

Victor Margolin

As we rapidly approach the dawning of the next millennium, we arrive at a moment of taking stock. Our legacy from the present millennium includes a long history of utopian thought that carries us from the mythic visions of ancient cultures to the humanistic hopes of recent times. Among those who have participated in this grand tradition of envisioning an ideal world is László Moholy-Nagy. He did so originally as a member of the artistic-social avant-garde of the 1920s, at a time when artists in Paris, Milan, Berlin, Vienna, and Moscow strove to turn the innovative art forms of their day into signifiers of a new spirit. The ambition of these artists was to pursue a social purpose for art, one that secured for the artist a significant role in the organization and building of social life. We can still look back with excitement at the dramatic struggles of the 1920s, when it seemed that the avant-garde might actually endow art with a power to transform culture.

This was certainly the hope of Moholy-Nagy, a member of the first generation of artists that was in a position to test the relation of a radical art language to a terrain of revolutionary social practice. As an artist, Moholy rejected the received traditions of representational painting for a new visual language of abstraction. He also broadened his

praxis from the purely discursive sphere of art to include various pragmatic forms of design. He was a painter, sculptor, and photographer, as well as an advertising artist, exhibition designer, product designer, filmmaker, and creator of theatre sets. As an educator, he directed the metal workshop at the Bauhaus, supervised part of the school's foundation course, and then headed his own design schools in Chicago.

What gave direction to all these activities and affirmed the relation between them was a set of convictions about the means and ends of the modern artist. The political and artistic events of Moholy's early years formed the context for three beliefs that animated his subsequent praxis: 1) artists belonged in the vanguard of social change and should strive to make the characteristics of a utopian society visible through material practices; 2) art was not an isolated discursive activity on its own aesthetic terrain; 3) forms and images could be grounded in a shared universal perception.

From the beginning of his artistic career in Hungary to its end in Chicago, Moholy-Nagy sought to put these beliefs into action, albeit in vastly different social and political circumstances. He moved from the brief Communist regime of Béla Kun in Hungary to the social democracy of the Weimar Republic, and when the Nazis came to power in Germany, he had to leave, passing through Holland and England before settling in Chicago and ending his career as head of a design school supported by American Capitalists.

There is much in Moholy-Nagy's career that can serve as an example for artists and indeed everyone: his intense curiosity, his flexibility in shifting between artistic media, his collapse of the boundaries between art and design, and most of all, his belief that human beings possess deep wells of creative energy, which they can use to transform themselves and their culture. As Moholy-Nagy moved from one situation to another, always exploring new media and forms of expression, he continued to confront the question of how he, as an artist and educator, might help to bring about a more egalitarian and humane society. (Frontispiece) He left us no explicit vision of society as did that earlier comprehensive artist, William Morris, whose work of utopian fiction, *News from Nowhere*, explicitly represented the bucolic, craft-based culture in which he believed. Instead, Moholy's utopianism can be located more readily in the way he lived his life and in the values that animated his actions.

However, the struggle for utopia proved to be a difficult and complex process for Moholy, as it did for others of the avant-garde, and

he shifted his ideals and strategies many times during his life as the possibilities for action changed. He continually asserted his values in concrete situations where they came into relation with the equally strong values of others. This resulted in a tension between the meanings he intended his art and writings to have and the meanings they were given by those who sought to contextualize them. The result in each instance was some form of negotiation, where the vigour of Moholy-Nagy's own intentions was inevitably tempered by the responses of others. It is to this process of negotiation that we have to look for the results that might still invigorate us today.

When considering issues of contextualization, we need to realize that meaning is a continually shifting phenomenon. As we all recognize, we continually give new meanings to works of art and to ideas, as we submit them to new scholarly investigations and bring them into relation with changing issues and interests. Thus, even if one can demonstrate that Moholy's own ambitious projects were often marginalized by his contemporaries, this does not mean that they cannot be rediscovered by new generations who will find new value in them.

My aim here is to briefly review certain incidents in Moholy-Nagy's life and to convey my sense of what in his career can guide us as we move forward in the twenty-first century. In late 1919 Moholy left Hungary, a few months after the short-lived Tanácsköztársaság [Soviet Republic] headed by Béla Kun collapsed. Moholy did not play an active role in the Kun regime, nor did he distinguish himself as an artist before his arrival in Germany, where he remained throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s. In Berlin he became a non-objective artist, and first contributed to the German discourse about a new modern art when he and three other artists signed the manifesto "Aufruf zur elementaren Kunst" "A Call to Elementarist Art]" Published in Theo van Doesburg's journal, *De Stijl*, it invoked an art that expressed an inner, universal spiritual feeling. The manifesto emphasized the term, "Elementarist art," which the authors defined as an art that is "built up of its own elements alone."[1] The manifesto's egalitarian vision of a universal creative spirit in which all can share remained part of Moholy-Nagy's credo throughout his life. It came into play in his teaching at the Bauhaus between 1923 and 1928 and was a cornerstone of his educational philosophy when he headed the New Bauhaus, School of Design, and Institute of Design in Chicago between 1937 and 1946. (figs. 36, 41)

While in Berlin, Moholy-Nagy was not aligned with a single

group of artists and, in fact, operated within several different alliances. During the early 1920s, the Hungarians in exile formed a particularly intense group. Initially, Moholy-Nagy affiliated himself with the artists around Lajos Kassák, who resided in Vienna. (fig. 21) For a brief time, he was the Berlin correspondent for Kassák's journal, *MA*, and he was a signatory to a manifesto, most likely drafted by Kassák, that took issue with a proposal for a Constructivist International that Theo van Doesburg published in *De Stijl*. The Hungarians' criticisms of van Doesburg's proposal, which centered on the role of Constructivist artists in building a future society, seem highly nuanced and arcane to us today. Yet, in 1922 the debate about it took place on a battlefield of intense feelings, where the role of the artist in the society of the future was at stake. Neither the Hungarians nor those siding with van Doesburg espoused an alliance with the Soviet revolution, nor did they envision the artist as subservient to the tenets of any political order. The Hungarians called for a "permanent revolution" of creative expression that would allow artists their individuality, while still preserving the sense of a collective endeavour. This argument, in which Moholy-Nagy played only a minor part, was characteristic of the way many artists of the early 1920s considered the relation of art to politics. After the initial volley between the Hungarians and the International Faction of Constructivists, the alliance of those who signed the Kassák manifesto fell apart, and within a year Moholy-Nagy had joined yet another configuration of Hungarian colleagues, who published a manifesto in the exile journal, *Egység*. There they were more explicit in promulgating a Constructivist art that emanated from a Communist ideology, although one that was not identified with party politics.

Throughout his career, Moholy-Nagy used left wing political terminology to characterize the society of the future, although he joined neither the Communist Party nor the Socialist Party in Germany, England, or the United States. His advocacy of a collective avoidance of party politics might have been inspired by Lajos Kassák, an early influence, who, in 1919, spoke out against the restrictive measures of the Kun regime in Hungary.

During 1922 and 1923, the most intensive years of the Constructivist debates in Germany, Moholy-Nagy's non-objective paintings and sculptures were the result of his *personal* attempt, rather than that of a group, to express the values of contemporary life in art. (figs. 46, 15) Therefore, he used the term "Constructivism" in an individual way,

rather than as a description of a developed collective program. Because his work was not anchored in a context that was framed by shared social aspirations, as was the case of the Russian Constructivists, it was open to multiple interpretations, not only by fellow artists, critics, and the general public, but by Moholy-Nagy himself.

The issue of context was always central to Moholy-Nagy's utopian projects, and his experience demonstrates the fragile relation between artistic discourse and a climate of reception for it. In numerous instances others reframed his utopian pronouncements so that their meaning became a support for someone else's agenda. This is particularly true of his relation to the "new typography" and "new photography" in Germany during the 1920s. (figs. 8, 48) In the summer of 1923, shortly after he joined the Bauhaus faculty, Moholy-Nagy published a short manifesto entitled "The New Typography" in the catalogue for the first public Bauhaus exhibition, which was held in Weimar. Although the manifesto's title suggests that it was about typography, the first line, "Typography is an instrument of communication," placed Moholy-Nagy's emphasis on the relations between people rather than on designed form.[2] In the past, he said, society had evolved towards a "collective-amorphous" relation, just as humans were now moving towards a "collective-exact" one. The new "collective-exact" relation was characterized by photography, whose objectivity, he wrote, "liberates the receptive individual from the crutches of the author's personal description…."[3] He ignored the typographer's traditional concern with matters of letter forms and layout, predicting instead that in the future it would be as easy to make a film as to produce a book. What we can recognize in this brief manifesto is Moholy-Nagy's connection between vision and communication, how we see and how we relate to one another. This manifesto was closely related to "Production-Reproduction" which embodied the argument for a photographic practice that would break cleanly with the past by producing new sensory experiences rather than representing the world as it had already been processed by the senses. (fig. 47)

Moholy-Nagy's emphasis on the liberation of the senses and the role that visual forms such as photographs could play in mediating relations between people was not addressed by the typography, Jan Tschichold, when he included Moholy's essay on "elementary typography" in a special issue of the German printing magazine, *Typographische Mitteilungen*, in 1925. What differentiated Tschichold's approach from Moholy-Nagy's was the former's focus on the appearance of the

typographic page, rather than the issue of expanded human perception that Moholy-Nagy believed typographic reform would bring about. Moholy's essay, entitled "Typo-Foto," addressed the question of how new media could represent an expanded consciousness that would ultimately take the form of a collective and cooperative society. It thus endowed Tschichold's more pragmatic propositions with a visionary aura.

A similar relation between Moholy's idealistic vision and its materialistic reception occurred with his discourse on photography during the 1920s. In his 1925 book, *Malerei, Photografie, Film* [Painting, Photography, Film], Moholy presented his argument for a new photography.[4] (fig. 20) What made a photograph good, he claimed, was its capacity to kindle a new sensory experience in the viewer. He spoke of a "new feeling for the quality of chiaroscuro" and he found value in "the precise magic of the finest texture: in the framework of steel buildings just as much as in the foam of the sea—and all fixed in the hundredth or thousandth fraction of a second."[5] But these results could only be achieved when photography fulfilled its own special task. "The unity of life cannot emerge," he wrote, "when the boundaries of the works created are artificially blurred into one another. *Rather will unity have to be produced by conceiving and carrying out every creation from within its fully active and therefore life-forming propensity and fitness*."[6]

We can see in Moholy-Nagy's insistence on exploiting photography's unique properties the outline of a social vision. This vision, he argued, was to be objective and could best be produced by the camera. In that revised and expanded edition of his book, published in 1927 as *Malerei, Fotografie, Film*, he described the consequences of this objectivity: "Everyone will be compelled to see objectively the optically true, when it is explicable in its own terms, before he can generally arrive at a subjective position."[7] This optical truth, which corresponds, he said, to the "collective-exact" social relations he called for in "The New Typography," would thus draw people together in a community based on a shared relation to the world. Therefore, Moholy had much at stake in advancing photography as a new creative medium. He saw the camera as an extension of human vision, a physiologically enhancing prosthesis to present the world in ways that people had not seen before. It would expose what he called "the inexhaustible wonder of life."

As the discourse on the new photography developed in Germany during the late 1920s, the emphasis came to be placed on how photographers could create innovative images, rather than on what it meant to

see the world in a new way. This shift is not surprising, given the context in which the discourse developed. The new photography was processed into the larger discourse on modernization as a means of production. Photographers were admired for their ability to produce novel images, just as a manufacturer might invent a new product.

The creation of new images was also consistent with the cultural discourse on modernity, which argued that the forms of the past were no longer expressive of contemporary sensibilities and had to be replaced by new ones. Hence the artist and curator Walter Dexel saw Albert Renger-Patzsch and Moholy-Nagy, despite their profound differences, as both representing a cultural modernity that negated outmoded art forms of the past. The incorporation of the new photography into a discourse on modernity was also the basis for the summative photographic display known as FiFo" (Film und Foto), which was directed by Gustav Stotz, and for which Moholy-Nagy curated a major introductory gallery. According to Stotz, "things are important to us today which were hardly noticed before, i.e., shoe trees, a gutter, spools of thread, material, machines, and so forth. They interest us in their material substance, in their simple thingness …."[8] Stotz's emphasis on materiality was the very antithesis of what Moholy-Nagy was concerned with as a photographer, even though he played a leading role in the conceptualization of FiFo. His assimilation into the German discourse on modernity thus had the effect of suppressing his concern with photography's utopian potential. I don't mean to sound harsh in my account of these negotiations, but I do want to emphasize the danger that all avant-garde artists faced in the 1920s of having their work framed by discourses that gave it entirely different meanings.

When Moholy-Nagy came to Chicago in 1937, after having worked briefly in the Netherlands and England, he had to confront the fact that the New Bauhaus, which he was invited to head, was supported by a cadre of Chicago industrialists. Because he believed that education should first and foremost be a transformative experience for the student, Moholy-Nagy resisted vocational training as his school's primary concern. At a time when design education consisted of narrowly conceived vocational preparation, he brought in several professors from the University of Chicago, including Charles Morris, the noted philosopher and semiotician, to create an intellectual framework for the students that was grounded in a knowledge of science, technology, and philosophy. (fig. 42)

Moholy's curricular initiative was extremely important and has still not been fully digested by contemporary design educators. It was, however, not balanced by a strong grounding in design methods for industry. Moholy's feelings about industry were, in fact, ambivalent. In his last book, *Vision in Motion*, which we can consider to be the summation of his life's work, he referred to "the ruthless competitive system of capitalism"[9] and warned of "the hazards of a planlessly expanding industry which, by the blind dynamics of competition and profit, automatically leads to conflicts on a world scale."[10] (fig. 18) As an antidote, he speculated on the possibilities of a "planned cooperative economy."[11]

While in Chicago, Moholy frequently spoke of a dichotomy between business profits and social needs. Discussing late 19th century design in *Vision in Motion*, he noted "the rise of socialist doctrines and antiauthoritarian republican tendencies supported a movement towards true, functional design."[12] The subtext of socialist idealism that runs through *Vision in Motion* echoes similar statements in some of his earlier writings and recalls his left-wing polemicizing during the early 1920s with Hungarian émigré colleagues.

Moholy's political values did influence the philosophy and curriculum of his schools in Chicago, though not explicitly. While he and his faculty encouraged students to create products to satisfy social needs, they did not teach the students how to relate the development of new products to the existing system of production. Design for Moholy-Nagy was meant to lead industry, not follow it. This was a difficult proposition to maintain, because he depended on industrialists for support and, in fact, his position did contribute to frustrating relations between him and many of his corporate supporters.

He was also reluctant to adopt the professionalism of the American consultant designers. At a conference convened by the Museum of Modern Art in 1946 to discuss industrial design as a new profession, Moholy listened attentively to the clear accounts that Raymond Loewy and Walter Dorwin Teague gave of their working methods, but he viewed their work as "appearance design," which he claimed was divorced from the real value of a product. In his final remarks to the conference, he proffered a critique of the conference agenda: "That is why I say that designing is not a profession, but that it is an attitude which everyone should have; namely the attitude of the planner—whether it is a matter of family relationships or labor relationships or the producing of an object of utilitarian character or of free art work, or whatever it may be."[13]

Perhaps we can see in Moholy's role at the MOMA conference a microcosmic picture of his larger social role as an artist and educator. From his first manifestos in Berlin twenty-five years earlier, he had forcefully and articulately voiced his belief that the role of the artist was to expand human consciousness. Moreover, he continued to emphasize in his writings and his actions the belief that artistic ability was not the province of the few, but that it was inherent in everyone. While his colleagues often ignored his opinions as oppositional or impractical, the way he lived his life by remaining open to new experiences, continually expanding his own horizons, and inspiring others to develop the best in themselves, made an enormous impact.

In assessing what we can carry forward into the future from Moholy's life and career, perhaps we should consider his optimistic and humanistic spirit, rather than his ideological constructs, as that which can best nourish us. Moholy's strong faith was in the individual's capacity for transformation, rather than in the merits of a specific political system. Of course political systems are comprised of individuals, and if we had a world filled with the kind of people Moholy believed in, we would surely have the kind of political system for which he also yearned.

NOTES

[1] Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Ivan Puni, and László Moholy-Nagy, "A Call for Elementarist Art" (1921) in *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephen Bann [The Documents of 20th-Century Art] (New York: The Viking Press, 1974), 52.

[2] László Moholy-Nagy, "The New Typography" in *Moholy-Nagy* [Documentary Monographs in Modern Art], ed. Richard Kostelanetz (London: Allen Lane, 1970), 75.

[3] *Ibid*.

[4] *Malerei, Photografie, Film* (Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925).

[5] László Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film*. Transl. Janet Seligman (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969), 33.

[6] *Ibid*., 17–18.

[7] *Ibid*., 28.

[8] Gustav Stotz, Werkbund–Ausstellung, 'Film und Foto,' Stuttgart 1929," *Das Kunstblatt* 13 (May 1929), 154 [the author's translation].

[9] László Moholy-Nagy, *Vision in Motion* (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), 340.

[10] *Ibid*., 14.

[11] *Ibid*., 22.

[12] *Ibid*., 49.

[13] "Conference on Industrial Design: A New Profession" (1946), transcript, Museum of Modern Art Library, 292

Symposium Question Period and Discussion

20 OCTOBER 1995

Moderator: Stephen Mansbach
Transcribed from audio tape by Belena Chapp
Edited by Oliver Botar and Hattula Moholy-Nagy

[Introduction by Stephen Mansbach missing from tape]

[Question from an unidentified speaker, addressed to Eleanor Hight]: In your presentation of the various media and materials, as well as the metaphors [Moholy-Nagy] used for motion, one of the things that seemed to register most effectively is the metaphoric use of transparency, that somehow motion through things tends to reinforce the sense of visual transparency. Can you say something about the relationship between transparency, both literal and metaphoric, and how it might work with your notion of vision, as well as motion?

Eleanor Hight: That's a very interesting [question] and a very important concept here. Transparency is something that he probably got from Lissitzky, Lissitzky's use of transparency around 1920, 1921, and 1922. He knew Lissitzky quite well. The writer Ilya Ehrenburg talked about how he would see Lissitzky and Moholy arguing about art in the Romanisches Café in Berlin. And he corresponded with Malevich; he [edited] one of Malevich's books [for publication as one of the Bauhausbücher]. He corresponded with Rodchenko, and there were other Russian artists going

back and forth through Berlin. Lissitzky used transparent planes in his paintings, the *Prouns*. There were two things: I think it became a way to show passing through one plane to something beyond, which moves you back in space, and also in his photograms, they tended to be beams of light. He used transparency to create rays of light or to create his light forms moving through space. So it is an important element of these compositions, both in Moholy's paintings using transparency and in his photograms, too.

[Same Questioner]: Might there be a metaphoric dimension to that as well? You mentioned quite effectively the role of X-rays as new modes through which you penetrate the surface into, let's say, the heart of the matter. Can the metaphor be sustained in the work we saw today?

Eleanor Hight: That's an interesting subject, and actually the spiritual world will be handled by the next talk, when Oliver Botar gets up to speak, but it is an interesting idea that while Moholy is so fascinated with technology and machinery, he uses it to take us into some higher place, which is actually separated from the material world.

[Same Questioner]: In the films we saw this morning, one of them, obviously, the one related to the light machine [*Ein Lichtspiel schwarz weiss grau*], is almost completely abstract, and the other two have abstract elements because he is emphasizing things like the falling of shadows across streets and things like that. But in the first film [*Berliner Stilleben*, 1932], there's a sort of anthropological social consciousness as well, which I don't see as being congruous with a Bauhaus background. But in the third film [*Gross-Stadt Zigeuner*, 1932], it's not anthropological, but it has a sort of romantic, picturesque quality. I see that film as almost exploiting the sort of exoticism of these Gypsy bands, and I find that very incongruous with the Bauhaus philosophy. Am I just reading something into this film?

Eleanor Hight: Let me talk about two things here, and even though [the program] says I am talking about films, I am not an expert on his films at all, except for the abstract film [*Ein Lichtspiel schwarz weiss grau*]. The [Berlin] film, and I'm not positive on this, but I believe it's thought by some people such as Jan-Christopher Horak that it couldn't have been made in 1926 and it was actually made later, possibly 1930

[probably 1931]. It is essentially a series of still photographs. He directs the camera in one direction, stays there, then cuts to another one, and in those kinds of still photographs he creates with the [movie] camera, you see stylistic characteristics that are found in his camera photographs, which I didn't talk about today, that is, the odd angles of view—the bird's-eye view looking from above to below where the horizon is cut out—a way of turning the environment into a series of abstract, and in this case moving, patterns.

Now for the last movie, the *Gypsies*, I don't know too much about that either, except that I think there must have been a kind of personal identification with the subject. He came from [what was then] Hungary, and some Gypsies [Roma or Sinti] also came [from] Hungary … so it was part of his culture that he was familiar with, and then I also wonder if maybe he identified [with them]. So, on the one hand he would see the Gypsies and [they] would remind him of his old culture, and on the other hand, maybe he identified at least a little bit with their homelessness. When we think of Moholy moving from Szeged to Budapest to Vienna to Berlin to Weimar to Dessau, Amsterdam, London, finally to Chicago, he was essentially a man without a country, and you could really understand why he wanted to create a kind of international language of art and vision. I thought of that, too, when I saw the film, all these scenes with fighting. You know it doesn't really say good things about the Gypsies, but I think it's probably a kind of affinity with them [that] I never really noticed before. Ellen Frank, who was his companion in the late twenties, and he took a number of photographs of her, was the [woman] who held out her [hand] to have her [palm] read. That's something I had never [noticed]. I don't know if that answers your question, I'm not a specialist on the films, really.

[Question from an unidentified member of the audience]: Just as an [aside] about the last [film]: in the late twenties there was a series of [German] laws to limit the influx of Gypsies for the winter. These same discussions are taking place today, and only this week was it resolved by the Berlin city council to allow Hungarian Gypsies to settle in Berlin for the winter months. And again, this is a kind of reprise of what took place earlier, and it [may] very well be as Eleanor [Hight] says, that [it] is a kind of personal identification [when] émigrés, particularly those from already dissolved empires to the east, were coming into Berlin in such huge numbers. More than 385,000 Russians had come within three

years, 260,000 from Hungary and Romania. So this was a problem in the late twenties and early thirties and remains a problem today.

Eleanor Hight: And how did Gypsies make money? Often through entertainment, through kinds of circus acts, and through music. I grew up in Toledo, Ohio, which has a large Hungarian population, the Midwest does, and Gypsy violinists and musicians could be seen in various places. There was a long period when he focused on that aspect of Gypsies in the film, too.

[Question from an unidentified speaker addressed to Eleanor Hight]: Could you develop further the connection between Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy? There seem to be a lot of sympathies and common interests in their work, but how much actual contact was there, and what are some of the important differences?

Eleanor Hight: As far as I know there was no contact. There might have been, Moholy did go to Paris, I mean it is possible, but as far as I know there was no contact. [They certainly met in the United States, as they were photographed together at an exhibition in Chicago in April, 1945.] There is a kind of competition, and you could see this in the literature of the sixties and seventies, for instance, about who invented the photogram.

Eleanor Hight [in response to a missing question concerning Moholy-Nagy, Alexander Rodchenko and photography]: [… Moholy] really had completely developed his theory before Rodchenko started writing and publishing his photographs and articles in the late twenties. I maintain that while, in terms of photography, they developed somewhat separate although parallel paths, and their careers are also parallel in many ways, I think Moholy's own developments were more original, and not tied to his in photography.

[Question from an identified speaker addressed to Oliver Botar]: You didn't mention the Bauhaus connection and, as I guess everybody knows, Moholy came to the Bauhaus as a place to [missing words]. How does Itten fit in with all this pedagogical philosophy that influenced Moholy? It seems to me that he was like-minded, yet Moholy came and brought with him a complete shift. So did Moholy have to give up his

beliefs in order to be accepted as a proponent of the new direction at the Bauhaus?

Oliver Botar: There is a lot that I wasn't able to get into in this brief time. This is a very good question, because, in fact, Itten and Moholy shared many views. I think the chief difference between them was that Itten was more spiritually minded, if I can use that term. He was an adherent of the Mazdaznan sect, some people would call it a "cult," which was related to the *Lebensreform* movement and it had Youth Movement adherents, yet was more oriented towards the transcendental. Moholy, on the other hand, was not. What appealed to him in Monism, and especially in Haeckelian Monism, I would assume, is its materialism and its idea that matter and spirit are, so to speak, one and are manifest in matter, so that when you look at matter, then you find manifestations of basic structures throughout nature. Just to speak very briefly to the *Gypsy* film, I see that film not so much as purely anecdotal and anthropological, but rather as a film that gives evidence of Moholy's fascination with life and the patterns of life. If you look at the film you see that he collects actual snippets of similar types of activities, be it fighting or be it dancing, which of course was another interest of the *Lebensreform* movement: rhythms of life expressed in dance, and I see him looking for patterns, actually visual patterns, within these patterns of behaviour within communities. So, just to finish my answer: their ideas were related, but their approach was very different, and I think it was that difference in approach that was key to Gropius in his decision to hire Moholy. The biocentric Constructivist discourse emerged in 1923, coincident with the point at which Moholy was hired to the Bauhaus. The appearance of the "Schelpennummer" [Shell Issue] of the Dutch journal *Wendingen*, the one that appeared with X-ray images of triton shells, was one of the impetuses to the development of this discourse as was the appearance in 1923 of [Raoul] Francé's chapter in [the Berlin art journal] *Das Kunstblatt*, which everyone read. So these views were developing within Moholy as they were within Lissitzky at that time. Let me just emphasize that Francé was very popular with members of this circle. Mies van der Rohe owned almost every one of Francé's books, and they are in his library at the University of Illinois, in Chicago. Hausmann was reading and rejecting him. Francé was quite popular.

[Question from an unidentified speaker]: You talk about the movements

of Bioromanticism and Biocentrism in art. What are some other artists who might be associated with them?

Oliver Botar: First, I would hesitate to use the term "movement" with respect to either because they are historical or critical constructs. I am now reclaiming the German term *Biozentrik* from its early 20th century usage. *Bioromantik* was a critical construct proposed by Kállai in 1932, so it is not a "movement" in terms of a self-conscious group of people who shared ideas and put out a manifesto. Kállai, in defining *Bioromantik*, talks about the biocentric point of view combined with biomorphic abstract style. Everyone from Franz Marc to Brancuşi would be very typical; Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, the list could go on and on. Basically, classic Modernist artists who engaged in a stylistic discourse of biomorphic abstraction, and concomitantly shared one or another of the biocentric philosophical views, were part of it. It is this pairing of style and world view that Kállai would refer to as *Bioromantik* or "Bioromanticism."

[Same questioner]: And it had to be abstract?

Oliver Botar: Actually, no. That is a very good question, because Kállai never insisted that it be abstract, and he included the work of Surrealists as well, but it had to be Modernist. "Biomorphic Modernism" may be a better term than "biomorphic abstraction."

[Same questioner]: Does Karl Blossfeldt, the photographer, fit in?

Oliver Botar: Karl Blossfeldt and photography would have been a whole other chapter that I would have liked to include in my talk. I will discuss it in my [Ph.D.] dissertation. Where I disagree with Kállai in some aspects of his view toward photography [which in general he felt was less expressive than painting as a medium]. Actually, Kállai really appreciated Blossfeldt's photographs, as did Moholy-Nagy. I mean [Moholy] included Blossfeldt's work—that Kállai, as far as I can tell, brought to the Bauhaus in 1929—in the Film und Foto [FiFo] exhibition held in Stuttgart that year, in the room Moholy curated for that exhibition [Raum 1]. However Kállai appreciated Blossfeldt precisely because he wasn't an art photographer, per se. He was a metal smith, and he took these photographs, close-ups of plants for those of you who don't know Blossfeldt's work, he took them mostly around the turn of the [19th–20th]

century as models for his students to imitate in producing their metalwork. They were "aestheticized" [and commercialized] by Karl Nierendorf, a Berlin dealer and publisher, in the mid 20s and [that's how] they became well-known. Blossfeldt then influenced photographers to work in a similar style. This whole aesthetic of close-up nature photography was practiced not only in Germany by Blossfeldt and later by Albert Renger-Patzsch (who, by the way, was discovered by Ernst Fuhrmann and first published by Moholy-Nagy within the discourse of the avant-garde), but also in North America. I'm thinking of Imogen Cunningham, Edward Weston [and others in the F-64 Group]. These American photographers were then exhibited at the Film und Foto exhibition. And because some of these American photographers were also, in effect, "biocentric" in their world-views, I would actually describe their work as "Bioromantic Photography." This is again, and I must emphasize this, a *historical* construct.

[Question from an unidentified speaker]: How can geometric abstractions be "bioromantic?"

Oliver Botar: I hesitate to use the term "bioromantic" for geometric abstraction, just because that would cast the net too widely. However, for example Lissitzky was biocentric in 1924; I mean … his manifesto *Nasci* or "Nature" in Latin is a rejection of the machine analogy, a call for the adoption of the nature analogy, and clearly biocentric. Lissitzky was so enamoured of Francé that he sent this special issue of [Kurt Schwitters' journal] *Merz* entitled *Nasci* to Francé [for his opinion]. We don't know whether Francé got it or not, but Lissitzky was totally into Francé at that time. And yet his art continued to be geometric. If you think about [Francé's seven] *Grundformen* that I showed, that Moholy drew very nicely—and you can see what pure geometric forms they are—you can understand that for artists who were really wanting to link themselves with a natural philosophy, with nature, to "re-link" themselves with nature, would have been ecstatic to discover this popular scientific writer who was saying that basic geometric forms are the building blocks of all nature. So that, then, would make their geometric paintings reflective of this idea.

[Same questioner?]: I think the purest form of your argument would be [Vladimir] Tatlin himself.

Oliver Botar: In Tatlin's case, I would argue that, intuitively or otherwise, already his *Monument to the Third International* itself, as a spiral, reflects this interest at that time. This doesn't seem so far-fetched because one of the most important circles of organicist avant-garde artists was that around Mikhail Matyiushin and Pavel Filonov in what was then Petersburg, members of which were creating art parallel with this, in an even more biomorphic, abstract [manner]. Later on, Tatlin's *Letatlin* which was ergonomic [would have demonstrated his interest in organicism].

Stephen Mansbach: If I were a bioromantic or biocentric artist, it wouldn't just be forms that appealed to me, as you have beautifully demonstrated; it would be particular media that would have resonance. One would think of woodcuts, here as a medium that has a long history, but is by nature "natural." Why was, for example, in Moholy's vast experimentation, such a little role devoted to something which, on the surface, particularly from Worpswede onwards, played such an instrumental role in, let's say, Expressionism, that is, the woodcut?

Oliver Botar: I would disagree with your premise [that the woodcut is by nature more "natural" than other media]. From the point of view of biocentrism, every material is natural. There is no privileged material, such as wood, apart from the fact that even if you use wood in the production of a woodcut, you are still actually applying pigment to paper, normally.

[Question from an unidentified speaker]: Is there any relationship between Buckminster Fuller and this group, because he eventually came to teach [garbled recording] [at Moholy-Nagy's Chicago schools?]

Oliver Botar: I actually haven't had the chance to research the relationship between Fuller and Moholy-Nagy yet, but maybe Alain or someone else might know about that. I am sure that Moholy-Nagy was interested in Fuller's work. Fuller was definitely what I would term a "biocentric," although let's not forget that this is a German term, employed by Ludwig Klages, by Hans Prinzhorn, by Raoul Francé, and I am kind of reviving it and expanding it, I'm distorting it to some extent, but I would definitely describe Fuller as a "biocentric." In fact, I would love to find out what the relationship between Fuller and Francé was, because Francé

was not only promoting his idea of *Biotechnik*, that is learning from technology that was already being employed in nature, such as the turbine—Francé made money by patenting various inventions, which he copied directly from nature. So the relationship between biotechnology [i.e. what is now termed "bionics"] and Francé is not just coincidental with his term *Biotechnik*.

[Comment addressed to Stephen Mansbach from an unidentified speaker]: Just a comment regarding your question. I think that these abstract prints from the twenties are sometimes woodcuts, sometimes linocuts. Linoleum is much easier to work with, the woodcut is very time-consuming, so that someone who was always in a hurry and doing a million things would not want to rework woodcuts when linoleum is much easier to rework. He [Moholy-Nagy] used a lot of man-made materials, plastic and linoleum, and [Indiscernible].

Oliver Botar: Let's not forget that, from the biocentric point of view, anything made by people was itself organic, because we are part of that whole natural system. Is there time for one more question?

[Question from an unidentified speaker]: That was quite an impressive list of "isms" with most of which Moholy was connected. You mentioned that in one of his summer vacations he spent time with a group associated with anthroposophy. I was wondering if you could say a little more about what connections or affinities Moholy-Nagy had with them.

Oliver Botar: [The German women's commune] … Loheland was inspired by Rudolph Steiner, that esoteric philosopher who was situated somewhere between the really "out-to-lunch" esoterics in theosophy ("out-to-lunch" from the point of view of a person who doesn't appreciate this kind of stuff), and let's say a more scientifically based view of the world. Steiner was in between. Steiner wrote a dissertation on Goethe's colour theory, he was a respected scientist, and he was, in fact, the inventor of organic farming. (The term "organic farming"—*organische Landwirtschaft*—was an adaptation by the Nazis of Steiner's *biodinamisches Landwirtschaft*, or "biodynamic farming"). I don't think that Moholy was really interested in anthroposophy, at least I have not found any evidence of this. On the other hand, one could describe Steiner as being biocentric … so that would be the connection.

[Question from an unidentified speaker or audience member]:Dr. Forgács, I wondered what role, if any, the KURI movement or Hungarian students at the Bauhaus might have had in Moholy's appointment.

Éva Forgács.: I don't know of any evidence that the KURI group played a part in his appointment. Adolf Behne called Gropius's attention to Moholy, and Gropius chose him over van Doesburg and El Lissitzky. Moholy's exhibition at Der Sturm impressed Gropius. Nobody else could have really played a part in that; it was quite a special constellation. I think the KURI group could not possibly have had much contact with Moholy-Nagy prior to his appointment.

[same questioner]: So when they were pushing for Constructivism … [Indiscernible]

Éva Forgács: [Indiscernible] … wanting to keep a balance between various Constructivist tendencies … [Indiscernible] Gropius seemed really anxious and wanted to secure that. Obviously, International Constructivism seemed to be so strong and significant in Germany that he certainly wanted someone in the Bauhaus who was an important representative. The problem, as I said, was that he wanted an important representative of this important tendency, but not an all-too-powerful personality, and Moholy-Nagy was very young at that time. I'm not saying he was not a powerful personality; I am saying that in terms of prestige and a leading position in the international avant-garde, at the time he was hired for the Bauhaus faculty, he was not a leading personality. I think that was one of the very important reasons why he was selected.

Oliver Botar: I have a comment for Éva Forgács. I was interested that you mentioned Kállai's use of the word "objectivist." It occurred to me that Francé's philosophy was referred to as "objektive Philosophie" and this is, in fact, the exact term (Éva Forgács: Which year are you talking about? 1921-22. Good.), and he was trying to decide between [the terms] "objective philosophy" and "biocentric philosophy." He actually decided on "objective." I think it is a coincidence; I don't think Kállai was reading Francé that early, if ever, so I just wanted to comment on that coincidence.

I also wanted to comment on Alain's talk. You mention the

aesthetics leading to the ethics. Again, an interesting parallel; this is exactly the idea of Ernst Haeckel, which is why he published the album, *Kunstformen der Natur*. He wanted to present to artists models from nature that were aesthetic, but would lead to an ethical sense of art. I thought it was an interesting parallel.

Alain Findeli: If you look at natural forms as the result of a process, it is easy to make the connection between aesthetics and ethics. If you look at the shape and the form you are in aesthetics, but if you look at the object as the result of a process, if you look at the process, you are in ethics. A process is active. This is how we can make the connection. (Oliver Botar: Right.) Absolutely, but on the problem of objectivity, this is why I used quotation marks when I was talking about objectivity. It is very dangerous to use this word because it can have opposite meanings depending on the context in which you use it. If you look at objectivity in the way the rationalists and positivists look at it, it has precisely the opposite meaning that Francé was talking about or Moholy when he was talking about *exakt* and *objektiv*. *Objektiv*, in this context, has more to do with phenomenology, that is, a way of looking at an object without prejudices, patterns, inherited methodology, and so on, so we have to be very careful about that.

Éva Forgács: I should like to clarify that, because I don't think it is confusing. We just need to know which year we are talking about. Because there were so many tendencies at the time and so many different currents of ideas, certain words seem to have different meanings every year. This is precisely the case in the 1920s. When Kállai used the term "objectivity" in 1920-1921 in a series of articles titled "New Art", he gave an account of what he knew of the latest contemporary tendencies to an émigré journal, *MA*, edited by Kassák and published in Vienna. He was the first to give a reasonable, comprehensible account of Cubism so late in 1920-1921. He called it "objectivism," obviously not yet being familiar with the term "Constructivism." But what he wanted to express, and did express, was that he was tired of Expressionism; he was tired of all kinds of emotionalism and subjectivism in art, because he thought that all of that belonged to a past era that was passé. He welcomed Moholy-Nagy as someone who was a representative of the new, fresh tendency that he identified with at that time. If we frame his usage this way, I think we avoid confusion.

[Question from an unidentified speaker addressed to Alain Findeli]: A point of disagreement: you talked about Raoul Francé's* Plants as Inventors. *Moholy did not necessarily ascribe to the idea that "form follows function," but if he taught Francé's biotechnics and agreed with it, then he would have followed that idea, since Francé's idea was that nature was a process within which form always directly followed function. I was wondering if you could clarify or discuss that.

Alain Findeli: I should have my text, because I have a quotation by Moholy from *Vision in Motion* on this question. Moholy said that nature should be regarded as the ideal, and we as designers try to imitate nature. But we are not capable of doing so because nature is much more intelligent. (It doesn't say "intelligent," but that is what it means.) Nature is much more intelligent than we are, number one, and number two, nature has much more time to develop these ideal forms in a trial and error process than we do. So we, as designers, can imitate nature in this way, but it is not possible to attain the ideal.

On the question of "form follows function," he does say, more or less, that form follows function, but function has to be taken not only on the material plane, but also on the psychological, the sociological, and another one I don't remember here. So, what the Postmodern designers say—one of the critiques the Postmodernists have made of the functionalists—is that the concept of function is taken too strictly by the Modernists. They propose to extend the concept of function to the symbolic aspects, as well. But Moholy already said this in 1940-1945. He didn't use the word "symbolic." He couldn't use "symbolic" for the reasons that you mentioned; the term was too loaded. He said that function had to be considered not only as material, but also as psychological, social, and so on. Is that clear enough?

[Unidentified speaker or audience member]: I'd like to address my question to Prof. Meikle. My question is that you talked about the theory of the Bauhaus in Chicago as being an influence on industrial design in the United States. I wondered if you could address the Bauhaus formulation of ideas and Moholy-Nagy's theories before this period, whether designers such as Teague and Bel Geddes had all interacted with Bauhaus …

Jeffrey Meikle: That's a good question. I think that in the last thirty or

forty years, probably thirty years, we've schematized different styles, different approaches, made things far more categorized, far more than people did at the time they lived through it. When I think of the 1920s and 30s and the designers who were making a profession, like the people you referred to (Teague, Dreyfuss, Raymond Loewy, Norman Bel Geddes were the major ones, Van Doren was another one), none of these people were trained as designers, they were advertising illustrators or stage designers, or whatever. Van Doren worked in an art museum doing design and came into it accidentally. The interesting thing is that these people were aware of what was happening in Europe, and they all had copies of Le Corbusier's book *Towards a New Architecture*. They got it as soon as it came out in English in 1927. Some of them had been in Paris in 1925 for the Art Deco exposition. When Teague came back from Paris in 1925 a very successful ad illustrator, and his New York office already had French period furniture. He decided to become a designer and he refurnished his office with Bauhaus steel-tube chairs and French Art Deco cabinetry. This was a very eclectic approach, bringing in everything that was happening in Europe, using it in whatever way he saw fit. So I think they were aware of the Bauhaus. They were certainly aware of Corbusier, but they weren't in any way aligning themselves with one intellectual school or another. It was very fluid, just taking things out of the air and using them. I guess it is a cliché, but in a very pragmatic, American way.

[Same questioner]: Do you think … [Indiscernible] … were published in the 1930s, do you think that their writings and the style of their writings were very utopian, were they in any way influenced by the Bauhaus manifesto?

Jeffrey Meikle: The only way I can answer that is that I don't recall any real mentions or references. Norman Bel Geddes, for example, was very much influenced by Erich Mendelsohn. The connection is there. He met Mendelsohn in 1924 when the architect came to the States. I think it was Mendelsohn's streamlined Expressionist style that led Bel Geddes to pick up on streamlining. In fact there is evidence that Mendelsohn gave Bel Geddes a sketch of his Einstein tower. For many years Teague corresponded sporadically with Corbusier. I don't recall specific references to people at the Bauhaus, and I don't know the degree to which they were familiar with what was happening there.

Lloyd Engelbrecht: Joseph Sinel, who was more or less part of the group Jeffrey was speaking about, had some contact with Moholy while Moholy was still living in Europe. On March 3, 1931, it was announced that Moholy had received honourable mention for his work shown at the Exhibition of Foreign Advertising Photography held at the Art Centre in New York. Among the judges were Joseph Sinel and famed motion-picture director, D. W. Griffith.

Jeffrey Meikle: That would be interesting. I hadn't heard that.

Oliver Botar: I think it was more people like Alfred Barr and Philip Johnson who were the first to really make the connection. During the twenties, Bauhaus knowledge filtered back in various ways, in a sort of random sense, but Johnson and Alfred Barr actually visited Dessau and kind of processed what was going on, and I think what they saw there was a big influence on what they conceived in the design department of MOMA when they opened it in 1929.

[Unidentified speaker or audience member]: I'm interested in the fact that one misconception about the Bauhaus has to do with the perceived style that results from the activities. What's interesting to me in the success or failure of the philosophy is that in Germany and Chicago, many of these ideas as taught in the foundation courses manifested themselves in very similar forms in the product. A hand sculpture was a hand sculpture in 1923 to, well, I don't know the time line in Germany exactly, but say 1928, to the New Bauhaus in 1938. We tend to associate this particular outcome with this particular idea, and the Bauhaus philosophy was meant to encompass many more things. It was about discovery. But for two generations you had students "discovering" the same thing. I'm wondering, by the time it was in Chicago, if they were really inclined to increase the range of solutions developed during the Bauhaus years in Germany.

Alain Findeli: I think Moholy is also partly responsible for these interpretations, because there are many aspects of what he writes about that I can't agree with, and that we shouldn't agree with today. One, specifically, is illustrated in a series of film strips mounted to illustrate the design process, the progression of the students from basic design to fourth-year workshop, from abstract forms to concrete recognizable

products (pp. 410–411 of my book; see also *Vision in Motion*, p. 73). And then he adds in substance: "Well, first-year students play around with materials in abstract form." He pictures two or three examples of basic design assignments and production. Then from these exercises they go to useful products, and that's the error I'd like to point out. This is a very rationalistic, positivistic, and modernistic way of looking at things, theoretically speaking. This is wrong today. Well, it is not wrong, because you can't reproach him for having looked at things in this way, because in the contemporary *Zeitgeist* there are things you can't think about because it is too early to think about more sophisticated or more complex things. So there are many misinterpreted aspects of the teachings for which he is also responsible. Now, about formalism: If you think materialistically, you will end up with products, with material objects, that will describe the philosophy you are relying on. You will end up with a style. And Gropius said, I don't know how many times, "the Bauhaus is not a school for style," but finally they ended up with a style. Of course! You can't avoid it. Postmodernism means the same thing. You can take it seriously or you can take it superficially. If superficially, you get the Postmodern style. But if you look at Postmodern philosophy, you will find things that are more universal than the cycle of styles. We must avoid remaining on the superficial level of style. We have to go deeper in order to find what is more universal.

Lloyd Engelbrecht: I think one of the things that is interesting in Chicago, when I talk to people, is that the New Bauhaus students also participated in the WPA, and the artist's union of the time, and many, outside of school, produced what would be considered realist or Regionalist works, American scene works, and what I kind of find interesting is that Moholy didn't seem to mind that as long as it went on outside of the school. He was supportive of it, and the artists could resolve for themselves working with this sort of Constructivist language, on one hand, and this very realist language on the other. Part of the connection there, I think, has to do with what someone talked about: social responsibility. They were, as American regionalists, responsible for speaking to their time and place, and in that case the environment of that time affected that form. I see them as connected, although art history is trying to compartmentalize all this and not let us see Bauhaus-influenced objects outside the Constructivist types of very functional, very minimal expressions.

[Unidentified speaker]: I have a question. I don't know if Dr. Meikle or Dr. Findeli could answer this. Both of you talked a lot about* Vision in Motion*, and the way I understand it, the book that had greater impact on art education in the United States from maybe the 40s on was* The New Vision*. Over the years, when I've worked with Moholy's* The New Vision*, people in their late 50s and in their 60s say, "Oh, I remember, I used his book as my textbook." Wasn't it one of the only textbooks for art education, I don't know when that would have been, in the 50s maybe? And, for instance, my copy was my brother-in-law's, who is now sixty years old. There are places where he underlined it for study, and I just wonder if you could say what impact that English edition of* From Material to Architecture *had on design education here in the United States, rather than* Vision in Motion*, which is a hardback and more expensive?

Jeffrey Meikle: I'm sorry I can't address your actual question as to how much impact one or the other of the works had. I chose *Vision in Motion* because it was published in 1947, it's a postwar book and, in fact, my original comparison was going to be Harold Van Doren, and then I went back and looked at Lippincott just to get that one juicy quotation that everyone uses, and read the whole book, and realized, "Oh no, this says Paul Theobald, 1947. I've got to use this book." There are more interesting ideas in it. I took *Vision in Motion* abstractly as being a summing up of everything that Moholy stood for at the end of his life, and that's why I used it. It may be an ahistorical choice on my part.

[Same questioner]: I agree with that. I don't know anything about the history of the time, but people have come up to me over the years and said they had this book in school.

Jeffrey Meikle: That may be a result of the paperback price, as you suggest. I don't know.

Lloyd Engelbrecht: May I speak to that? There were three principal instructors, as we heard today, of the Foundation Course at the Bauhaus: Josef Albers, Itten, and Moholy. Unlike Moholy, the other two wrote only briefly about the foundation course prior to 1929; they wrote [about it] in some depth only after World War II, but even then, they wrote only about part of what their foundation course consisted of. Moholy

brought out the last of the Bauhaus books in 1929, his *From Material to Architecture*, known in the United States as *The New Vision*, with illustrations, many of them of student work. And the first American edition came out in 1932, the second in 1938, with a lot of work of New Bauhaus students, and this is the book that had so much influence in the United States. Also, particularly art and architectural education was still tied to Beaux-Arts models and Moholy's book provided both teachers and students with an actual pedagogy that they could use, and they did. I hear the same thing, by the way, from people. Moholy-Nagy, and right away they talk. Allen Porter, you had a comment?

Allen Porter: I wanted to say that before I knew about Moholy's book, it was *Language of Vision* that got me there. I discovered Kepes' book while I was in the army, but when I was in school, all the way through high school, I wasn't aware of even the earlier book. It was *Language of Vision* that started the spark of familiarity with what was going on, and no one even mentioned it.

Alain Findeli: I'm glad you brought up *Language of Vision*, because there you find the theory of the impact of visual arrangement of material in a picture or in a poster or in a photograph. In the last chapter, Kepes explains how visual material can have psychological and political effects; it is very clearly and unambiguously explained. This is what completes Moholy-Nagy's theory of phenomenology of vision very well. They go together. It is very important to read the last chapter, absolutely. I'm glad you mentioned it. Now, *The New Vision*: Moholy's key concepts are already in *The New Vision*, especially in the second American edition of 1938 that Lloyd mentioned. It is only expanded in *Vision in Motion*. I didn't mean to say that the two books were different, only that it was more convenient to use the more comprehensive *Vision in Motion* because everything is there.

[Unidentified speaker or audience member]: Maybe Dr. Margolin can answer. What is going on in … [Indiscernible: the Institute of Design?] … the last repository [indiscernible: of the ideas?] of Moholy-Nagy? Had it all evaporated, or was there anything explicit there?

Victor Margolin: I think the break came in the early 1950s when Jay Doblin came in. There was a real bloodletting and many of the people

who had studied under Moholy and were then teaching at the Institute of Design left. A number of them went down to Southern Illinois University, where Harold Cohen brought in Buckminster Fuller. That was all a direct outgrowth of Moholy's teaching. At the Institute of Design Jay Doblin, who had come from Raymond Loewy's office in New York, began to move in a very different direction, though not explicitly toward a model of commercial design. He became very interested in computers, for example, and ID became one of the first schools to really start doing software design. Then they got involved in training a lot of people from Japan and so forth, and so from the time Doblin came in, there wasn't a connection anymore to the old ID. Of course now, for public relations purposes, the Institute of Design has reclaimed Moholy and it serves them well to have him as a predecessor, but after Doblin arrived they never took his ideas very seriously. Now they emphasize the computer kind of high-tech CAD, corporate orientation, design management, things of that sort.

[Same questioner]: So Southern Illinois, Carbondale, is a place to go.

Victor Margolin: It was, but is no longer. Many places have their moment and then people disperse. But Carbondale was really kind of exciting at one time. I don't remember what year it was, around 1955, when Davis Pratt and his wife, a graphic designer named Elsa Kula, went down there, and Harold Cohen persuaded the president of SIU to bring Bucky Fuller in as a distinguished university professor, which he did, and Fuller built a geodesic house there and used it to hang his hat while he was traveling all over the world. They did a lot of things down at Southern Illinois University that really grew out of the Moholy spirit. I heard a very good talk on that topic by Al Gowan, who teaches at the Massachusetts College of Art and who had studied at SIU. There was also a group in Chicago that coalesced around Jay Doblin. Larry Keeley was one. He didn't go to the ID, but he learned a lot from Doblin about strategic planning. There is a whole line of thinking that came from Doblin, but that led into corporate planning, and it had no reference to the earlier Moholy period.

[Same questioner]: So there is no place now, is what I'm trying to say.

Victor Margolin: Not that I know of. Alain Findeli may know better than I do.

Lloyd Engelbrecht: A lot of people did go to the University of Illinois.

Victor Margolin: Forgive me. This is a classic case of suppressing your identity, I guess! [Laughter] In fact, yes, well, we were, my school continued a Moholy legacy. Anyway, maybe I didn't think of it as such, because the University of Illinois, Chicago (UIC) is a big university and, yes, a number of people came from the Institute of Design to the art department there. When Hans Wingler wrote his book about the Bauhaus, he missed Southern Illinois but put UIC in the lineage. He said that it went from Weimar to Dessau to Berlin to Chicago and UIC came after the New Bauhaus, School of Design, and Institute of Design. Wingler also left out the Hochschule für Gestaltung, Ulm. UIC had a number of people, not many who had studied under Moholy, but some who had come just after that, who did, for a number of years after that, try to keep the ID spirit going.

Lloyd Engelbrecht: John Walley was one.

Victor Margolin: Yes. Lloyd Engelbrecht is, of course, the one who really studied all of this some years ago. I don't have any evidence that there was a cadre of students who came out representing a UIC approach. The School of Art and Design became part of the big university program, and until very recently, there have been, and still are, people on the UIC faculty who reference back to that earlier period, but the School of Art and Design doesn't represent that Moholy influence today.

[Unidentified speaker or member of the audience]: There was an article in the paper recently that said in Southern Illinois apparently there is some kind of dispute going on about whether to tear down the Porter House or not. The odd thing is, there are people who would just as soon see it torn down and not to be left to disintegrate. The other comment was that nobody in Carbondale even knows who Porter is anymore.

Steven Mansbach: Allow me, then, to pose a question to the panel. The nature of the symposium we've celebrated today, and indeed the commemorative exhibition that we'll see at the reception in a few minutes, focuses on Moholy the individual. As a result, we have a natural tendency to celebrate his signal accomplishments and influence. I wonder whether his greatness may lie not so much in originality,

but in his unique ability to synthesize. To what extent might we recognize that one of his greatest accomplishments is his singular ability, or certainly distinctive ability, to bring together opposing ideologies, conflicting thought patterns, and resolve these in a way that has served as a foundation, as opposed to creating a series of original events, or perhaps original thoughts, or original works of art. So much perhaps may stem ultimately from his ability to synthesize the work of many others, and through that synthesis to establish something that might be, as pointed out this morning, the very foundation for modern creativity.

Éva Forgács: You have halfway answered your own question. (Stephen Mansbach: That's why I asked it! [Laughter]) Of course it is a very complex question and not easy to answer, but I will give two answers to it. One is that I think that Moholy-Nagy was, in a way, a very original and very innovative artist, because he seemed to be so receptive to everything technical and new. He also had a feeling for exactly what technical novelty stands for. I think we can see evidence in his work that he found that everything technical and new was a metaphor for previously unexpressed states of mind. That was something that he was very strongly aware of and did convey. On the other hand, as far as his painting is concerned, and in a way his achievement as an artist, I would say, if you'll excuse the simile, that if he were a musician, I'd rather compare him to a soloist than to a composer. I think that in this sense I would rather say he was a synthesizer. He was very sensitive to playing tunes that other people composed. But I would partly attribute this to his sense for innovative thinking, his technical ingenuity.

Victor Margolin: In fact, I would respond to that by looking at particular media, and I'd like to bring up a body of Moholy's work that mostly falls between the cracks, because it never really fits the grid of how we define him, and that's the photoplastics, which I think are extraordinary, brilliant works. They are full of narrative that also gets suppressed in most readings, because there is no good way of reading Moholy-Nagy in terms of narrative. Everyone tries to relate things to the abstract and the universal. I rather enjoyed seeing that photomontage image where a man is looking at a woman in the photoplastic entitled *Jealousy*. I think there are all kinds of narrative elements that are yet to be extracted from those works, which I feel would bring Moholy to the fore of narrative modern art. I find the photoplastics really quite extraordinary. Some of

his photographs also come to that level. As far as the painting, I would agree with Éva Forgács. None of his paintings really get me going in the sense of being works that are uniquely expressive or defining a direction in a way that will make them stand out. In response to your question, I would say that in some areas Moholy is a synthesizer, and yet I would like us not to forget the particular bodies of work that may well be rediscovered with some new reading that would reposition him.

Éva Forgács: May I just add something? I think it is important at this point. One of his key abilities was that he was able to have certain visions that nobody else apparently had, like when he made his telephone pictures. I don't think the great achievement was that he created geometric compositions that other artists also created, but the fact that he got the idea of translating the visual signs into sound signs, so to speak, coding them, having the image created in another system of codes, and retranslating those codes into images. If you want to push it a little bit far—but it is not really too far—we can say he anticipated computer thinking. That is exactly what it was about. As far as I know, this was a vision that no other artist had at that time.

Jeffrey Meikle: I'd like to add something to what has been said so far. I don't know if I see him as effecting a synthesis so much as himself serving as a kind of example of what can be done in an era in which people tend to be overspecialized, and I think we are becoming more [words missing] you don't have to be narrow; you can be a broad individual. In that regard I think he escapes synthesis, because he was involved in so many areas.

Lloyd Engelbrecht: Let me just make one point, since Victor raised the point about innovative artwork. I think it should be obvious for a special reason that he did something else. Alain, you brought that little mock-up of the Chicago-era bent Plexiglas sculpture. I think that was innovative. For one thing, there were very few artworks in which a plate is bent into complex curves, and that is the case here, and also that was intellectually, I think, part of some of the design of those post-world war chairs, such as those by Charles and Ray Eames, where the plywood was bent into complex curves. Also, some of those Plexiglas sculptures were combined with metal, and of course metal and fibreglass furniture evolved in the few years after Moholy's death. So I would place the Chicago-era Plexiglas sculptures as innovative artworks.

Victor Margolin: Maybe we could heat this up a little; it's been a very even day. Now it might be fun to raise some issue where we disagree. In a way, Moholy has benefited justifiably from the kinds of readings of his career that we've been giving in the sense that he represents, as Jeff Meikle says, a kind of comprehensive artist and obviously does stand as an example to anyone today, as an inspiration for what can be done, and against much specialization. On the other hand, I think by awarding that kind of identity, we perhaps don't look closely enough at particular works. I mean, for example, he wasn't a very good typographer in my estimation; there were a few pieces out of many that he did that I would really put with what I consider the best. If I compare his work to Lissitzky's, for example, I feel Lissitzky was much more inventive and contributed more to the field of typography. On the other hand, there are other fields where he did make really good contributions, and maybe the next step in all of this is, as Eleanor Hight has done with photography, to look more closely at works in relation to other works of their type, acknowledging, of course, this broader sense, but then trying to understand particular aspects of Moholy's career.

Stephen Mansbach: One of the reasons why I think it is a worthy topic to pursue, as you are doing, is that during his mature phase, as all of us have discussed in one way or another, that is, primarily in the 1920s although it continued to the end of his life, the era was characterized by an intolerance, an aesthetic absolutism, where so many theoreticians, so many innovators, took a very hard line on everything, were extraordinarily intolerant, unsympathetic, indeed fundamentally antipathetic towards embracing larger visions. As we've dissected Moholy and presented him today in various talks, we tended to focus on his breadth of vision, as well as his depth, and I wonder whether that is in some way the result of his ability to synthesize so many things, as opposed to identifying himself with, or limiting himself to, one or two rather restrictive stances as one might say, for example, van Doesburg, with whom he was in interaction for a great deal of time. He'd celebrate and cite many figures who contributed in manifold ways to the evolution of what we understand as Modernism and modern art. And yet, many of these individuals were extraordinarily narrow-minded and restrictive in their views, and yet this is a man who, I think, we all recognize as perhaps best characterized by the breadth of his vision. And I wonder whether that, indeed, is a partial result of his ability to embrace so many different sources and reconcile them.

[Unidentified speaker]: I was going to ask, before you mentioned this issue of complexity: I wasn't even thinking about other debates of Modernism, for example, the debate over Moholy's work and Lissitzky's. I remember the same question was asked about Lissitzky in another symposium. Are we to understand him as a great synthesizer in terms of what you mentioned about Moholy?

Alain Findeli: I can try to answer the question. The way I look at it is the following. We cannot use traditional concepts and categories to try to circumscribe what can be called the complexity of an artist like Moholy or Lissitzky. I used the term "complexity" because it is a contemporary concept we can use to understand artists who are difficult to understand. The term "synthesis" is not good enough because we have read many times that Moholy was an eclectic, a jack-of-all-trades, and so on. His activity was spread out on a horizontal plane, so this reading of the horizontal plane—breadth, as you say—results in complexity. But we have to look at complexity on a vertical plane, too, which makes Moholy's complexity more complex. This is why I used the metaphor of the alchemist, why I present Moholy as an alchemist. He was not only working on the horizontal plane, he was also working on the vertical plane. The horizontal plane, from a logical standpoint—I borrow the term from rhetoric—is the topical plane. The vertical plane is the hermeneutical plane.

Let's take a concept like transparency. You can read transparency in the material world in Moholy's work, but then you can climb the ladder and go higher and higher (i.e., deeper and deeper) into the concept. You can track the concept of transparency in the activity of the artist. Then you look for the concept of transparency in his teaching, for instance, on the psychological level, like transparency as an ideal to obtain in each student. Then you can use the concept of transparency on the social and collective level, where it can be looked at as an ideal that has to be achieved in political, social, and collective action. This is the vertical, hermeneutical dimension that makes complexity even more complex.

Stephen Mansbach: As you can see, we need another symposium to follow up on this, but may I ask you to join me in thanking all the speakers for their contribution to today's gathering, and our thanks to the organizers for making it possible.

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The Erotic Bases of "Enhanced Reason" and "Intensified Senses":

THREE SHORT STORIES BY LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY

Oliver A. I. Botar

These three stories appeared in Moholy-Nagy's friend Iván Hevesy's journal *Jelenkor* [The Present Age], of which Moholy-Nagy was himself an Editorial Board member, and perhaps more significantly in *A hét* [The Week], the liberal Budapest literary journal edited by Ferenc Kiss that had been an important precursor to *Nyugat* [Occident], the journal to whose stable of writers Moholy-Nagy aspired the most during this period. The fact that Moholy-Nagy was the member of the Editorial Board of a not-insignificant Budapest literary journal is an indication of how seriously he took literature around 1917-1918. As I have discussed at length elsewhere, it is crucial for those interested in Moholy-Nagy to understand that his early ambitions were first and foremost literary, and that he maintained this interest in literature, particularly drama, poetry and experimental prose, throughout his career.[1]

There are a number of themes raised by Moholy-Nagy in these stories. They include his relationship with his absent father, his concern with the rigid class structure of Hungary and his place within that structure, gender politics during an age of rapid social change, his own sexuality, and the relationship between eroticism and sensual experience, particularly of vision. I will only be able to touch on some of these

themes in this short introduction, focusing on the last of them, because it relates to Moholy-Nagy's place within the early 20th century Biocentric discourse, the focus of my research on Moholy-Nagy. Given that I introduced this research topic publicly in the talk I gave at the Delaware Symposium published in this volume of the HSR, I think it is appropriate to focus on that theme here.

Perhaps the most poignant tale—at least from the point of view of Moholy-Nagy's own life—is "Meeting," in which the budding writer publishes an account of two boys' encounter with their otherwise absent father. Given that Moholy-Nagy's narrator is a small boy and that in the story he actually uses the first names of his two brothers in real life, we can only assume that this is, in effect, a first-hand account of his own boyhood experience. It is the most penetrating glimpse into his longing for a father that we have. Seen this way, it is also one of the few autobiographical writings by him that remains to us.

The voices he assumes in "Meeting" and "The Wonderful English Dance Troupe"—that of himself as a rural middle-class boy and that of an urban middle-class young man—are his own. In "Maris," however, Moholy-Nagy assumes a working-class voice. One would have thought that he would do so in order to demonstrate his (essentially non-existent) working-class *bona fides* at a time (late 1917) when he was being increasingly drawn into the Leftist circles of the Budapest avant-garde.[2] However, rather than an edifying picture of struggle against oppression, this glimpse into the world of young (probably suburban) butchers and house-maids reveals a sordid pattern of erotically driven misogyny, even on the part of the narrator, whose attitudes echo those of Corley, a young man who exploits young working-class women for sex and money in James Joyce's short story "Two Gallants" published in his seminal 1914 collection *Dubliners*. While it is unlikely Moholy-Nagy knew Joyce's story at the time, it is uncanny how close they are in mood and theme.

A similar pattern of erotically driven misogyny, more than tinged with class snobbery, is presented to the reader in the remarkably mature telling of "The Wonderful English Dance Troupe." Like much of his poetry of the time,[3] both "Maris" and "Dance Troupe" are permeated with (his own) late adolescent sexual tension. In "Maris" there is even a decidedly Freudian passage in which the narrator relates a dream he had of his fellow worker and rival for a girl's affections, Jóska: "That night I dreamt of a large, naked pig. I must have tossed about a lot because in the

morning the quilt was completely twisted up. As I stared, scared, at the pig, it suddenly turns into a big, naked man. So big that I was barely able to turn my head to look up at him. He was like Jóska, but it was as if it wasn't him after all. I run to the door, I want to yell, but he's already caught me, choking me like a kitten. From outside I thought I heard Jóska laugh. What could this mean?" But Jóska is only one of the foci in this story, the other is Maris, the pretty young maid from across the way with a secret. Moholy-Nagy clearly felt that women were getting the short end of the stick, so to speak, in the sexual politics of the time: these are stories of appalling misogyny and do not portray the male youth of the time—working class or middle class—in a positive light. They are either callous, or cowardly, or both. They are unable to channel their erotic impulses into healthy, balanced relationships with women. Moholy-Nagy is clearly sympathetic towards the women in these stories, and critical of the men. One cannot help but think that Moholy-Nagy's engagement with the Feminist photographers of Olga Máté's circle through his friendship with Erzsébet (later Ergy) Landau), and his later ready willingness to engage with the Feminist women's communes of central Germany, were in part spurred on by this sympathy.[4] While the break between the mother and father in "Meeting" is not specified (the boys were ignorant on this count), the Grandmother's suggestion that the boys' father is a *csavargó* (translatable as bum, but also as tramp) hints at unrecorded sexual transgressions as much as it does of a father who abandons the family.

"The Wonderful English Dance Troupe" also manifests the young Moholy-Nagy's fascination with big-city life, from its public entertainments and public transportation systems (especially street-cars) to its telephone system—and this combination of the erotic and metropolitan calls to mind some of the poems, such as "Like a Telegraph Wire Conveying Strange Secrets" and "Together All Day, and Now Homebound Alone"[5] that he was publishing in *Jelenkor* at the time. For Moholy-Nagy, Budapest represented a utopian dystopia or rather a dystopian utopia that was both highly technologized and intensely erot-icized, and this eroticization of the technological, this combination (in other words) of the biological and the technological, is perhaps one of the keys to understanding his subsequent oeuvre. In a sense, the erotic charge of his youth folded—after he moved to Berlin in 1920 and began his married life with Lucia Schulz (they wed in January of 1921)—into his engagement with the *Biozentrik* (Biocentrism) of Raoul Heinrich

Francé (Francé Henrik Rezső), who held that all technology, including the "human" variety, was "natural."

Thus it may be worth reading Moholy-Nagy's engagement with technology and nature not only through Francé (as I have done)[6], but also through the thinking of another apostle of biocentric thought in early twentieth century Central Europe, Francé's one-time collaborator Wilhelm Bölsche. Bölsche held that the "life force" was literally identical with the sex drive, and he revolutionized the thinking of many a young person at the time through his influential books such the turn-of-the-century *Liebesleben in der Natur*, published in Hungarian as *Szerelem az élők világában* in 1913. Given Bölsche's popularity in Hungary at the time,[7] it is worth speculating that Moholy-Nagy read Bölsche's books while he was still in Hungary. There certainly seem to be echoes of Bölsche's conception of the life force as the sex drive in Moholy-Nagy's review of his fellow *Jelenkor* Editorial Board member László Garami's poems of adolescent sexual awakening, published in the April 1918 edition of *Jelenkor*. As I have already stated elsewhere, this review clearly demonstrated Moholy-Nagy's early engagement with European nature-centric thought.[8] Thus, when Moholy-Nagy writes of the "mysterious force" which causes the woman's thighs to "vibrate," he seems to be referring to Bölsche's sexual/life-force as much as to (or even rather than) Bergson's *élan vital*.[9]

Elsewhere (for example in my contribution to this volume) I have discussed the ways in which Moholy-Nagy's interest in our sensory apparatus and its training, indeed expansion, was rooted in his essentially rational and biocentric view of the world, and the way in which this pedagogical notion came to be a central part of his aesthetic conception by the summer of 1922.[10] But there is clear evidence in these stories that his notion of the close association between the rational, the sensory and the erotic, indeed the notion that the *heightening* of the rational and the sensory was achieved through the erotic, is present in his thinking as early as 1918. Hesitant to approach a young dancer in whom he had an intense sexual interest, but anxious to have her explain why she had stood him up a couple of days before, the young protagonist of "The Wonderful English Dance Troupe" confronts the girl nervously in a popular restaurant. When she responds favourably to him, his nervousness is transformed into a kind of erotic/perceptual frenzy: "I drew out a card and next to the address I added my telephone number. I said goodbye and bolted like a half-wit. I think I was feverish,

but this fever was pure, one that enhanced reason and intensified my senses. The scene of the two girls and four young men sitting at the table was fixed clearly in my consciousness…. The whole room etched itself sharply into my vision with its overflowing, foamy beer, gaping mouths and fluttering waiters; the definitively outlined pattern of a colourful kaleidoscope." It was the young man's erotic and emotional frenzy that cast everything around him into such high—and kinetic—relief.

One cannot help but notice that this state was immediately preceded by the protagonist's addition of his office telephone number to his name card: his access to this relatively new communication device is clearly linked to the experience described in the story. Indeed, later in the story, the telephone becomes the direct conveyor of sexual tension in what must be one of the earliest descriptions of such an exchange in Hungarian literature: "The next day at three in the afternoon she telephoned me. I should bring along the poem this evening, the Ann Lee. 'Couldn't we meet this afternoon,' I asked? 'No, no,' and her voice sounded uncertain through the receiver. 'Oh, why not?' I badgered, I insisted. 'No, no, it's not possible. But you'll bring it this evening? You'll come, won't you?' she purred. I promised." The eroticization of communication technologies such as the telephone and the internet during the late 20th century are suggested and predicted by Annie's sensual invitation at the end of this conversation.

These moments of heightened perception became the goal for the more mature Moholy-Nagy. But rather than through late-adolescent horniness — presumably as his own hormonal states slowly subsided, he sought to achieve them, and to teach others to achieve them, through a "New Vision," a "Vision in Motion," as he later termed it. This "Vision in Motion" was first expressed within Moholy's oeuvre as a "colourful kaleidoscope" brought on by erotic desire. If the sensory is always, to some extent, erotic, Moholy-Nagy's "Vision in Motion" always carries with it a certain erotic charge and the erotic charge of Moholy-Nagy's entire oeuvre cannot be ignored.

As mentioned, I have only been able to discuss a few of the several important themes that Moholy-Nagy introduces in these stories. It is to be hoped that the re-publication of these stories will spur further scholarly interest in them. Along with his poems and early critical writing, they both prefigure and *begin* his life-long artistic project, and thus take on a greater importance than mere juvenilia would.

NOTES

[1] On *A hét*, see Judit Frigyesi, *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-century Budapest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 71. On Moholy-Nagy`s early literary ambitions, see Oliver A. I. Botar, *Technical Detours: The Early Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered*, (New York: The Graduate Center, City University of New York and The Salgo Trust, 2006), 24 ff. and Oliver Botar, Introduction to "Four Poems of 1918 by László Moholy-Nagy," *Hungarian Studies Review* (Spring-Fall 1994). See also Valéria Majoros, "Moholy-Nagy László két világháborús verse" [Moholy-Nagy's two World-War One poems], *Enigma*, 7, 28 (2001).

[2] See Botar, *Technical Detours: The Early Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered*, 24 ff.

[3] Botar, "Four Poems of 1918 by László Moholy-Nagy."

[4] Oliver A.I. Botar, *Természet és technika: Az újraértelmezett Moholy-Nagy 1916–1923* [Nature and Art: Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered 1916-1923] (Budapest: Vince Kiadó, 2007), 72–75.

[5] Botar, "Four Poems of 1918 by László Moholy-Nagy."

[6] See my contribution to this volume and my publication "The Roots of László Moholy-Nagy's Biocentric Constructivism," in *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond*. Ed. Eduardo Kac (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 315–344.

[7] Wilhelm Bölsche, *Das Liebesleben in der Natur. Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte der Liebe* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs, 1898–1902). In Hungarian: *Szerelem az élők világában: A szerelem fejlődéstörténete és földi vándorútja*. Transl. Ödön Wildner, József Merényi, Zoltán Sidó and Dezső Kremmer, (Budapest: Athenaeium, 1913). In English: *Love-Life in Nature. The Story of the Evolution of Love*. Transl. Cyril Brown). (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1926). Many of Bölsche's books appeared in Hungarian translation before 1920.

[8] László Moholy-Nagy, Review of Árpád Garami, *Gyötrődő, szerelmes tavasz* [Anguished spring in love], *Jelenkor* [The present age], (April 1918), 1, no. 5, 138–141. See also my lecture published in this volume.

[9] As Moholy-Nagy analyzes it in Garami's poems, this force is an all-consuming, general energy. Garami's narrative voice no longer "searches for the object of this desire," but rather for "only the abstract image of this all-incorporating beauty." *Ibid.*, 159.

[10] Botar, *Technical Detours: The Early Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered*, Parts Two and Three.

Maris

by László Nagy

Jelenkor [The Present Age], vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 7–10, November, 1917, Budapest

Translated by Hattula Moholy-Nagy, translation corrected by Levente Nagy and George Bisztray, final edit by Oliver A. I. Botar.

The factory was close to the butcher shop, and if the girls came, we stood in the doorway, our aprons and our caps beautifully white, we were really some handsome. A lot of girls flirted with us and we talked with them and teased them.

Once a really good-looking girl with a polka-dot head scarf came for some meat, and as I'm joking with her—the owner wasn't there, he wouldn't have approved—well, I see that Jóska's staring at her. I think to myself, "Let 'im look, he can look all right!" But as the girl is saying that she needs a thick cut of sirloin for a roast and not to give her make-weight, well, if he doesn't shout across the room, "Come to me, my chickadee, here's the best cut for a roast." The girl laughs at him—she really was a pretty pink—and turns to him, "Well, where is it?" I get mad at him for interfering with my fun, this is no way to behave, but I don't

show it. I ask, "What's your name, little girl?" "Not telling," she says. "You can't make me." But she's blushing and she laughs. "Well, what is your name?" I inquire, but she just giggles. "What's it to you, what good will it do you?" she taunts. "But let's hear it!" Finally she blurts out that she's Maris. This pleases me because it's a pretty name. I told her, too. Jóska also grins, then sulks and I see him pulling the ring off his finger. So, I think, this sure is going well, but I say nothing. I could almost picture his wife, such a withered sort. No wonder.

As Maris paid, both of us looked to see which way she headed. Well, she lived just across from here. Going home, she swayed like a hollyhock. As she reaches her gate, she turns, looks back, and glows. I really fancied her. So did Jóska. We both exchanged smiles with her from the doorway, but as she vanished we stared each other down as mad as two stags. Though we usually did, we didn't discuss this girl.

The next day as Maris chooses among the marrow bones—just then Jóska's in the cold room—I whisper to her to be at the corner by the vacant lot at eight o'clock that evening. "Can't"—she pouts—"only at quarter after nine." Then Jóska comes, eyeing us suspiciously, wondering what we could've been talking about, carrying a large side of veal on his shoulder and brushing it against Maris out of fun. She says angrily, "Can't you watch out?" At which the blockhead is completely crestfallen. As I recall, I was pleased at this. As the girl left, Jóska watched me rather than her. I felt his eyes burning.

We had a lot to do 'till evening. We moved a new ice-box into the pantry and we got miserably hot. Jóska kept his distance, saying very little, and as we're about to screw the lead panel into the wall, as I was bent over, I happened to glance up and saw that he held it like he wanted to drop it on me. Thanks a lot, I thought—four hundred pounds—and quickly jumped away from underneath and grabbed the other side of it. Jóska looks at the ground darkly and gives a little cough: "So, you got scared, what?" At half past seven he asks me to go over to their place to talk a bit, but he lives far and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to get back by nine fifteen, so I said no. "Let's go to Horváth's for a spritzer instead." That he didn't want to do. The courtyard's too dusty at Horváth's. Let's just go to his place. I keep saying, "No, no." He looks at me. "You're meeting with Maris!" he says suddenly, like a detective. "No, no I'm not!" I say suddenly, not really knowing why I'm lying. "No?" he shakes his head. "Well, see ya." With this he left. I shrugged my shoulders, but by no means liked the matter. Even as I was with Maris, I wondered why he'd be so damned smitten by this girl.

At a quarter after nine Maris was there at the corner in her head scarf. I would've preferred her to be bare-headed, but she said she preferred it so. Well, so be it. I proposed that we go to the Green Hunter to jump around a bit, but she wasn't for it, so we headed over to Horváth's. A couple of train cleaning women and conductors were there talking way too loudly. We just kept sipping our wine quietly, maybe three bottles worth. Suddenly Maris says, "Look, what beautiful blonde hair," and pointed to a woman with really ugly yellow hair. "You think it's pretty? It's dyed for sure, look at how rusty and dark the roots are," I say. "Yours is prettier for sure. Let me see," and I want to look, but she grabs her head. "Boy, are you worried about you hairdo!" But from under the scarf she pulled out a lock, pretty, chestnut brown. "Like mine." "Yes," she answers, "but yours is much nicer." "Why would it be nicer?" But she just keeps on insisting and pouts. "Typical female," I think to myself, I better drop it, especially since she's already a bit tipsy. So was I. I was scarcely able to get her home. On the way she kept mumbling that she liked me a lot, but by the time we reached her gate she was already almost asleep. "Tomorrow night I'll come and see you," and with that I left, staggering a bit as I trudged homeward.

That night I dreamt of a large, naked pig. I must have tossed about a lot because in the morning the quilt was completely twisted up. As I stared, scared, at the pig, it suddenly turns into a big, naked man. So big that I was barely able to turn my head to look up at him. He was like Jóska, but it was as if it wasn't him after all. I run to the door, I want to yell, but he's already caught me, choking me like a kitten. From outside I thought I heard Jóska laugh. What could this mean? I was really upset by it. At the shop I was quiet and scrutinized Jóska, but I couldn't see anything about him that would resemble a pig. He stood around all day like an idiot, as if he were waiting for Maris. I really didn't know what to do, though I would've liked to chum around with him like we used to, but I didn't know how to go about it. We hardly talked to each other all day, and when we did, it was reluctantly. In the evening as we put our aprons in the drawer, he says, "Aren't you coming tonight either?" "No," I stammered, but I was such a blockhead that he immediately figured out why. He boiled with rage, then burst out laughing, and walked out. "Boy, are you caught up with her!" I thought, and the pig came to mind. What could that've been? If only there'd been a Gypsy nearby, I would've gone to see her.

As I'm there with Maris, I see that her head's covered again. I'm surprised. "You know, you could take the scarf off," but she just resists.

I joked, "Are you scared I'll cut your hair off and sell it to the barber?" But no, still she'd rather wear a scarf. We kept horsing around till suddenly I snatched it from her head. Well, son of a…! Her hair came off with it. There she stood in front of me, bald. I got real mad that she fooled me like this. I turned on her, and hit her good. But she just stands there, not saying a word, not even crying, looking really silly standing in her wide skirt and bodice, nothing on her head but the downy fluff of a baby. "So that's why you wanted to be in a shawl, that's why you liked my hair!" I say. She says nothing to this either. I'm about to go, I'm not sticking around, when all of a sudden she cries out and throws herself face-down on the floor wailing and moaning, "Oh my God, oh my God, look upon your unfortunate daughter," crying, heaving like a swing.

I didn't know what to do. There she bawled, shrieked, "Oh my God, you've punished me so, oh my God," and beat her head on the ground so hard that I was afraid someone would come out. Maris had just been telling me what a shrew of a mistress she had, this situation didn't suit me at all. I left her there and that was that. In the yard I could still hear her crying. Such a cheat! I was real angry at having been so taken in, and on top of that, I even fell out with Jóska on account of her. No matter, at least he showed his true colours as a friend. It was no accident that I dreamt of a pig. He would've strangled me, if he could have. I kept thinking of Maris. So pink and pretty, and bald! The hell! What a girl's capable of! And then she's the one doing the crying! I'll be! …

I didn't know where I should head then. It was the fourth day I hadn't gone out with Jóska. He wouldn't have wanted me to go to his place. Anyway, tomorrow we're butchering a steer. We'll have enough trouble with that. I went to bed. I thought I'd dream again, but I didn't.

In the morning, as we're leading the animal, I see Jóska staring piercingly, angrily, just like the steer.

"What are you fuming about?" I say to him. "You're mad about nothing. She's bald." "Who's bald?" "Well, Maris." "Maris?" And he looks dumbfounded like a calf. "She's bald, not a bit of hair." "Well, what does she have on her head?" "Fake hair. It's all fake." "Fake?" And he laughs so hard that he almost lets go of the steer. Of course I laughed along with him. Meanwhile Jóska grunted and sniggered "Bald, heh, heh, d'you hear? Bald? But how could she have gotten bald? Heh, heh, how? She probably ate a lot of potatoes, or because she fancies the lads."

The steer lunged and bucked, we had to pay it more attention. Well, we didn't talk much anymore. From then on Jóska was friendlier,

but I didn't much dare to trust him since he'd already once shown his true hand. Then we started talking about Maris sometimes and waited for her to come to the butcher stall so that we could make fun of her. But she didn't come. But one time, one of the housemaids, as I grandly recite to her "I'm eating your precious little ruby-red mouth, 'Cause nine jam dumplings it ate in one gulp," leaves off her giggling and says—as I'm still laughing at her—"You're a real scoundrel!" Chuckling, I ask, "Why?" "It's really not nice that you're laughing about poor Maris, now that she's thrown herself in the Danube."

"You don't say!" I was real surprised, I stood there gaping. "But she was such a cheerful girl."

Maris.

A mészárszékhez közel volt a gyár és ha a lányok jöttek, kiálltunk az ajtóba, a kötényünk, meg a sapkánk szép fehér, egész csinosak voltunk, sok lány oda-odapislogott és beszéltünk, meg csipkelőztünk velük.

Egyszer egy nagyon jóképű, babos fejkendős lány jött húsért és ahogy viccölődök vele, a gazda nem volt ott, az nem szereti, hát látom, hogy Jóska nagyon néz. Gondolom, nézzen, nézhet, de ahogy a lány szól, hogy őneki a vastagjából köll rostélyosnak és hogy ne adjak nyomtatékot, hát nem odakiált, jöjjön hozzám tubicám, itt van a legszebb rostélyosnak való. A lány neveti, de nagyon szép piros volt és odapöndörödik eléje, hogy hát hun van? Engem ett a méreg, mit avatkozik bele a mulatságomba, ez nem eljárás, de nem mutattam. Kérdem, hogy hijják kislány? Sehogy, mondja, engem nem lehet. De piros és nevet. Hát mi a neve? faggatom, de csak egyre viháncol. Minek az magának, mit ér vele? kötözködött. De csak halljuk! Végre kiböki, hogy Maris. Ennek megörültem, mert szép név. Mondtam is neki. Jóska is vigyorgott, kelletlenkedett és látom, hogy közbe lehúzta az ujjáról a karikagyűrűt. No, gondolom, ez jól megy, de nem szóltam semmit. Szinte láttam a feleségét, olyan összeszáradt-féle volt, nem is csuda.

Ahogy Maris fizetett, mind a ketten néztük merre mén. Hát ép átellenbe lakott. De amíg hazáig ért, úgy ringott, mint a mályvarózsa. Ahogy a kapu alá fordul, visszatekint, csakúgy virult. Nagyon tetszett nekem, Jóskának is; mindaketten összenevettünk vele az ajtóból, de ahogy eltünt, olyan dühösen meredtünk egymásra, mint a szarvasgémek. Nem is beszéltünk a lány felől egy szót se, pedig szoktunk mindig.

Másnap, hogy Maris a velőscsontok közt válogat, Jóska épp a hűtőbe ment, súgom neki, este nyolckor legyél a sarkon, ahol az üres telek van. Nem lehet, szomorodik el, csak negyed tízkor. Akkor már jött Jóska, gyanusan méregetett végig bennünket, hogy mit beszélgethettünk, vállán egy nagy bornyúoldal és tréfából súrolta vele Marist. Az azt mondja mérgesen: nem tud vigyázni? amin az ökör egész elbúsulta magát, én meg, úgy emlékszek, örültem neki. Ahogy a lány kiment, Jóska nem őt nézte, hanem engem. Éreztem, úgy sütött a szeme.

Estig sok dolgunk volt. Uj jégszekrényt állítottunk be a

kamrába és kutyául kimelegedtünk. Jóska egyre húzódott mellőlem, alig szólt pár szót, és ahogy be akarjuk csavarni a nagy ólomfalat a kőzfalba, én le voltam hajolva, de csak úgy véletlenségből fölsandítok, látom, hogy úgy tartja, mintha rám akarná ejteni. Köszönöm szépen, gondoltam négy mázsa és gyorsan kiugrottam alóla, megkaptam a másik oldalát. Jóska rém sötéten néz a földre és elkahhantja magát: hő, meg voltál ijedve, mi? Félnyolckor hí, menjek el hozzájuk, beszélgessünk egy kicsit. De messze lakott és féltem, hogy nem érek negyedtízre vissza, nem akartam. Inkább gyerünk egy spriccerre a Horváthoz. Ezt meg ő nem akarta. Hogy a Horvátnál nagy a por az udvaron. Csak menjünk hozzá. Én váltig hajtogattam, nem, nem. Rámnéz, te a Marissal találkozol! mondja hirtelen, mint egy detektiv. De nem, nem! tagadtam gyorsan s szinte nem is tudtam, mért hazudok. Nem? s a fejét csóválta, hát szerbusz. Evvel elment. Én vonogattam a vállamat, de nem tetszett a dolog sehogy. Még ahogy Marissal voltam, még akkor is egyre azon tanakodtam, mért reszeli úgy a fene ezért a lányért?

Negyedtízkor ott volt Maris a sarkon, fejkendősen. Én jobb szerettem volna, ha hajadonfőtt, de mondta, hogy ő így szívesebben. Hát legyen. Ajánltam, menjünk a Zöld Vadászhoz kicsit ugrálni, de nem igen volt rajta, így belógtunk a Horváthoz. Egy pár kocsitakarítónő, meg kalauz volt ott, hangoskodtak erősen, mi meg csöndesen dörgölgettük a borokat, tán három üveggel is megittunk. Egyszerre azt mondja Maris, te nézd, milyen gyönyörű az a szőke haj — és mutatja az egyik nőszemélyt, igazán ronda sárga haja volt. Az szép? hisz az festett, nézd a töve milyen feketerozsdás — mondom — mán akkor a tied csak szebb. Muti, és meg akarom nézni, de nagyhirtelen a fejéhez kap. Ej, de félted a frizurádat! De előhúzott a kendő alul egy csomót, szép gesztenyést. Olyan mint az enyém. Igen, feleli, de mennyivel szebb a tied. Már mért volna szebb? De csak erősködik és búsul. Gondolom, asszonyfajta, hagyni köll, pláne kicsit már be volt állítva. De én is. Alig tudtam haza vinni, útközben csak motyogta, hogy nagyon szeret engem, de a kapunál már majdnem aludt. Holnap este fölmegyek hozzád, így hagytam el és én is szédültem egy keveset, ahogy hazafelé ballagtam.

Az éjjel egy nagy meztelen disznóval álmodtam. Rém foroghattam, mert reggelre egész össze volt csavarodva a pap-

lany. Ahogy ijedten bámészkodok a disznóra, egyszerre egy nagy meztelen ember lett belőle. De olyan nagy volt, hogy alig győztem tekerni a nyakamat, úgy köllött fölnézni rá. Hasonlított a Jóskára, de mintha mégse ő lett volna. Szaladok az ajtóhoz, szólni akarok, de akkorra már rámkapott, úgy megfojtott, mint egy kis macskát. Jóska meg kivülről, mintha nevetett volna. Mit jelenthet ez? Meg voltam törve nagyon. Az üzletbe hallgattam és egyre Jóskát kémleltem, de nem látszott rajta semmi, hogy hasonlítana a disznóra. Álló nap úgy állt, mint egy pupák s mintha folyvást Marist leste volna. Én nem igen tudtam, mit kezdjek, pedig szerettem volna elkomálni vele, mint régen, de sehogyse tudtam, hogy lássak hozzá. Nem is igen beszéltünk egész nap, csak úgy immel-ámmal. Este, ahogy beraktuk a fiókba a köténYt, szól: Ma se gyüsz? . . . Nem, habogtam, olyan marha voltam, hogy mindjárt látta mért. Csak úgy forrt a dühtől, fölnevetett és otthagyott. De odáig vagy! gondoltam és a disznó járt az eszembe. Mi lehetett az? Csak lett volna valami cigányasszony a közelben, elmegyek hozzá.

Ahogy ott vagyok Marisnál, nézem, be van kötve megint a feje. Csudálkoztam; tudod, levehetnéd a kendőt; de csak ellenkezett. Tréfáltam, tán félsz, hogy levágom a hajad, oszt eladom a borbélynak? De nem, csakhogy kendőben jobb szeret. Addig-addig játszódtunk, míg hirtelen lekaptam a fejéről, hát uramfia! legyütt vele a haja is. Ott állt előttem kopaszon. Rettentő méregbe jöttem, hogy így becsapott, nekiestem, jól megpofoztam. Az meg csak áll, áll, de nem szól egy szót se, se nem sir, rém mulya, ahogy ott áll széles szoknyában, rékliben és a fején nincs, csak olyan pehelyforma szösz, mint a gyerekén. Hát ezért szerettél jobban kendőbe, ezért tetszett neked az én hajam! mondom. Erre se szól semmit. Akarok ép menni, én itt nem maradok, egyszerre elsikítja magát és arccal levágódik a pallóra és jajgat, nyöszörög: jajistenem, jajistenem, szerencsétlen lányodra tekints és úgy rázkódik a sirástól, mint a hinta.

Nem tudtam, mit csináljak. Ott bőgött, sikoltozott, jajistenem, de megvertél engemet, jajistenem és verte a fejét a földbe, hogy egyre attól féltem, hogy kijön valaki; Maris ép mesélte, milyen sárkány egy gazdasszonya van, ez meg nem nagyon smakkolt nekem. Otthagytam és kész. Az udvaron is még hallottam, hogy kiabál. Ilyen csaló! Nagyon dühös voltam, hogy így bedültem és ráadásul még Jóskával is összevesztem

miatta. Ugyan nem baj, legalább kilátszott, milyen az igaz barát, nem hiába, hogy megálmodtam a disznót. De igaz is, megfojtott volna, ha teheti. Maris is folyton a fejembe motoszkált, ilyen szép piros és kopasz. Gazemberség! Hogy egy lány mire képes! És még ő jajgat. Na! . . .

De nem tudtam, hova menjek most. Negyedik napja nem voltam Jóskával, nem igen akarózott, hogy hozzá menjek. Eh, holnap úgyis bikát vágunk, lesz avval elég baj. Lefeküdtem. Még gondoltam, megint álmodok, de nem álmodtam semmit.

Reggel, hogy vezetjük az állatot, látom Jóska olyan szúrosan, mérgesen meregeti a szemét, akár a bika. Mit dühöngsz, vetettem oda neki, hiába csahogtál! Kopasz. Kicsoda, értetlenkedik. Kicsoda? hát a Maris. Maris? és bámul és bámul, mint egy bornyú. Az, az, kopasz, egy szikra haja sincs. Hát ami a fején van? . . . bizonytalankodik. Csinált haj, csinált az egész. Csinált? — és nevet, de olyan jóizűet, hogy a bikát majd eleresztette. Persze veleröhögtem én is. Jóska dörmögött és vihogott közbe: kopasz, höhö, hallod? kopasz? Ugyan mitől kopaszodhatott meg? Höhö, mitől? Sok krumplit evett bizonyosan, vagy mert szerette a legényeket.

A bika ugrált, vetette magát, arra köllött ügyelni. Hát nem igen tárgyaltunk többet. Ettől kezdve mintha megenyhült volna Jóska, de én nagyon nem mertem bízni benne, hogy már egyszer kimutatta a foga fehérjét. Most már beszéltünk Marisról is néha és vártuk, hogy jönne a székbe, hogy kiviccölnénk. De nem jött. Hanem egyszer az egyik szobalány, ahogy nagyba szavalom neki

Eszem azt a drágalátos rubintos kis szádat,
Mert kilenc lekváros gombóc egy falás,

alábbhagy a vihogással és azt mondja, még nevetek is nagyba rajta. Nagy hóhér maga! Röhögök: mért? Na, igazán nem szép, hogy még nevet is szegény Marison, mondja, ha már a Dunába ölte magát.

Ugyan ne beszéljen! Jó meg voltam lepve, szinte tátva maradt a szájam. Pedig egész jókedvű lány volt.

Nagy László.

Találkozás

[MEETING]

by László Moholy Nagy

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Translated by Hattula Moholy-Nagy, translation corrected by Levente Nagy, editing by George Bisztray, final edit by Oliver A. I. Botar

Mother stood next to the apple tree and took from Ákos those apricots that were still green. Zsuzsi and I were selecting the ripe ones for cooking jam and my face was already a yellow mess from all the tasting. Grandmother sat at the end of the table and fumbled with the bean-slicing machine. Shadows of leaves scampered on her face as she kept swatting a stubborn fly from the red wart at the base of her nose. Buzzing bees from the rose garden circled above us, in the vineyard the cat vexed two cheeping chicks and Grandmother furiously commanded the yardman to chase the chicks into the poultry yard and not to let her catch sight of them inside again. "They pluck off the grafts from the vine stocks!" A wormy apple plopped from the tree, Ákos immediately pocketed it. We played with these while swimming, when Uncle Horváth took us down to the Tisza.

True, it was sad that our father didn't take us to the pool like

the other children's fathers did. We were taken as a favour by others. But then we didn't have a father. Only since we began school did we write two letters to him. "Thanks to God we are well and we wish you all the best, your loving sons Dezső and Ákos kiss your hand." Mother ruled lines on the paper with a hairpin so that the letters would run in straight rows. Mother and Grandmother never spoke of him. Once, when Grandmother scolded Ákos for eating too many green plums, she said that he'd become a bum like his father. That was all. So we thought that Father was a bum. On the other hand we were surprised, because Ákos and I knew that we were princes and that we were only boarding out with Mother's family. But once Mother had told us of a king, who had been a bum, and then we knew for sure.

Uncle Holló chased the chickens and had already upset four stakes when, to his shame, he somehow trampled one of the chicks. Well, Grandmother noticed right away, went red as a poppy, and shouted, "It just had to be the leghorn, of which there was only one," which she had gotten from Mrs. Bizinger, the rarest one! and she practically choked with rage. Uncle Pista, the overseer, came with a letter and delivered it to Grandmother. Someone had summoned the young gentlemen. Grandmother slashed open the letter, read it, and impatiently tossed it to Mother. What a time for this to happen! Mother read it, sat down on the bench saying nothing and stared sadly. "Well," said Grandmother, "what are you staring at? We'll just have to send them." Mother didn't answer, got up as if shaking something off. "Leave the apricots, come to the bathroom," and Grandmother nodded in approval and summoned Uncle Holló (who was in the process of slinking away) and promised him three slaps in the face. We were pleased at this because recently, when Csákó had a little calf, Uncle Holló didn't want to let us in the barn. Serves him right! In the corridor Ákos asked Mother, "Who wrote?" "Your father," said Mother. "He wants to see you." We were surprised. We didn't know whether we should be happy or not. What could he be like? Did he really want to see us? Did he have a moustache like Uncle Horváth, and did he have a pince-nez and can he blink like Uncle Macskáski? As Mother washed us, Ákos didn't cry as he usually did, and we wondered if from then on he'd be taking us swimming. Mother instructed us to kiss his hand nicely, not to shout, and not to start off with what he had brought us, but rather to behave politely. "And if he asks about me—" here she sighed deeply and forgot what she was going to say, just staring into the bath. Ákos asked if we had to cross

our arms on our chests. I said, "You dummy, we're not going to school," and Mother smiled, but then was sad again. "But why isn't he coming here?" I really was curious. Mother thought about it. "Because Grandma is angry with him," she said. Immediately we felt sorry for him and Ákos asked, "He's been a bum since then, hasn't he?" Mother looked surprised and exclaimed immediately that we shouldn't dare to speak such stupidity and from whom did these children learn such things? Though I remembered that we had heard it from Grandmother.

Uncle Pista escorted us to the restaurant. I was very proud of my piqué spencer and that my trousers had small red speckles, which Ákos' trousers didn't have. Mother had tied our neckties the same way, but Ákos had a short neck and so his stuck out like a bun. I made fun of him, calling him "bun-head" and we almost got into a fight, but then Uncle Pista shook his head disapprovingly, "Weren't the young gentlemen ashamed, *at a time like this*?" And surely enough we were stirred into good behaviour, and when we encountered Jani Göblös and he asked us where we were going, Ákos and I only looked at each other and we said, "To the restaurant," and didn't say anything else.

At the restaurant Father came towards us.

He had a big gray moustache and his eyes ran back and forth over us like small mice. It was very odd. And as he kissed us, his moustache felt prickly. We weren't used to this. Mother and Grandmother didn't have moustaches. And he said, "Hello, lads." You must be Dezső, and you must be Ákos, right? But he had gotten us mixed up and we laughed hard that he gotten it wrong. This confused him and he apologized. And I told him (so that he wouldn't be embarrassed) that it didn't matter, that Uncle Jani had also mixed us up the other day, it was no problem. "No problem, is it, my little Dezső, no problem?" and he laughed with a little cough. But I saw he wasn't pleased. How we had grown. "And what is Jenő doing?" he said. Jenő is our big brother. He was in Budapest at school. We said it too: "He's in Budapest with Aunt Sárika, he'll be home in August." Up to that point we had behaved properly, but that monkey, Ákos suddenly began to giggle. Father was surprised, "what's he laughing at?" Ákos laughed so hard that he could barely say that then, that in Aug - - - ust - - - he - - - would - - - come - - -" "But why is that funny?" Of course Father could not have known, 'cause he didn't know Uncle Macskáski, but I knew, so I started to grin, 'cause he had taught us "*O du lieber Augustine, keldesztin*," and the necktie was choking me so much I could barely tell him, and as I looked at Ákos he

was already as red as a balloon, I had to giggle and laugh even harder. Father also laughed a little and kept saying, "Well, this really is a big laugh, really!" And slowly we grew abashed at such bad behaviour and I looked angrily at Ákos and he signalled with his eyes that I should lay off, which I did. But then we went into a room where the curtains were drawn so that the sun wouldn't shine in. But the curtains were ripped and so the sun shone in through the tear and flickered on Ákos's nose like when were playing with mirrors, and we heard the zither players bowling in the courtyard. There was a red cloth on the table, half of which was faded by the sun like ours in the maid's room at home. Father fumbled with the match holder, and we didn't know what to say, because by then, we really weren't laughing any more. So we just stared at him. Strangely enough, there were two furrows on his face, just like the ones we'd seen Thursday in a picture in the Sunday paper, and now his eyes no longer darted about, but were as if they had clouded over. Maybe he had looked into the sun, that would sometimes make you cry. At the pool Uncle Horváth always put green mulberry leaves over his eyes when he lay in the sun. "Ring that bell over there," Father turned to Ákos, and Ákos rang and Csillag came in, "What would the esteemed gentleman care for?" "Two bottles of beer and pretzels," said Father. "Do you like that?" And he kept rapping the table with the porcelain match holder. We'd never had beer before, we said "yes" at the same time, and could hardly wait to try it. "So, tell me something about yourselves, children." "So you little Dezső, you're a big boy. So, what's going on?" We really didn't know what to tell him. Then Csillag brought the beer and three glasses and we had some too, not daring to mention that it was bitter. It was really very bitter. And Ákos had also thought that its foam would be sweet.

Father then asked us which books we'd like, and Ákos asked for *The Three Gallant Hungarian Soldiers*, I for *Sir Bruin's Travels*. Father took out his notebook, it was a beautiful shiny brown leather notebook, and he made a note in it, and the coach came because he now had to go to the railway station, and he took us home in it. He kissed us and sent regards to Mother as well as to Grandmother, and let us off at the gate. We watched him as he left and thought, "This is what a father is like?" Mother and Grandmother asked, what happened? Well, what happened, nothing really happened, and did he ask about them? He didn't, however, ask anything about them and that afternoon we went swimming with Uncle Horváth, and from then on we waited for the books.

Finally they arrived. The cover of *The Three Gallant Hungarian Soldiers* was a beautiful red, that of *Sir Bruin* was blue.

2.

Hallomás.

Köröttem szétterül nagy, szürke szomorúság.
Sík mint a Hortobágy; be nincsen rajta semmi!
És fárasztó egén egy fáradt madár húz át,
S lekárog: Hé, te, hé! jobb lessz már hazamenni.

Mit jársz, mit lődörögsz, ha nem tudod a célod?
Mit vársz derüre még? vagy mit vársz zivatarra?
Nézd: milyen karcsú, szép jegenye feketél ott,
Keress egy ágat és kösd fel magadat arra!

Gábor Andor.

Találkozás.

Anya az almafa mellett állott és Ákostól azokat a barackokat vette át, amelyek még zöldek voltak. Én Zsuzsival az érettjét válogattam, amiből a lekvárt főzik és már egész sárga maszat volt a képem a nagy kóstolásban. Nagymama az asztal végén ült és a babvágó géppel motoszkált, az arcán a levelek árnyékocskái szaladgáltak és állandóan egy makacs legyet hajkurászott az orra tövén a vörös szemölcsről. A rózsáskertből zümmögő méhecskék keringtek fölénk, a szőllös-kertben két csipogó csirkét zargatott a macska és Nagymama dühösen parancsolta az udvarosnak, kergesse a csibéket a baromfiudvarba és meg ne lássa még egyszer bent őket. A tőkéről mind lecsípik a szemet! A fáról kukacos alma pottyant, Ákos rögtön zsebredugta. Evvel játszottunk a fürdőben, ha Horváth bácsi levitt a Tiszára.

Igaz, az szomorú volt, hogy bennünket nem az Apánk vitt az uszodába, mint a többi gyereket, hanem csak szivességből más. Dehát nekünk nem volt Apánk, mi csak azóta, hogy iskolások vagyunk, írtunk neki két levelet, hálisten jól vagyunk és minden jót kivánunk és kezét csókoljuk szerető fiai Dezső és Ákos. Anya vonalazta a papirost hajtüvel, hogy egyenesen álljanak a betük. Anya meg Nagymama sose beszélt róla. Nagymama egyszer, mikor Ákost megszidta, hogy összeette a sok zöld szilvát, mondta, olyan csavargó leszel te is, mint az apád. Ez volt az egész. Igy csak gondoltuk, hogy Apa csavargó. Ugyan akkor meg voltunk lepve, mert mi Ákossal tudtuk, hogy királyfiak vagyunk és Anyáékhoz csak kosztba vagyunk adva. De egyszer Anya mesélt egy királyról, aki előbb csavargó volt és akkor megint egész biztosan tudtuk.

A Holló bácsi kergette a csirkéket és négy karót kidöntött már, amikor szégyenszemre rátaposott valahogy az egyik csirkére. Hú, Nagymama mingyárt észrevette, piros lett, mint

a pipacs, kiabált, ép a lankszhánt, amiből csak egy volt, amit a Bizingernétől kapott, a legritkábbját! és majd megfúlt mérgében. Pista bácsi jött, az ispán, egy levéllel és átadta Nagymamának, hogy egy ember az ifijurakat hivassa. Nagymama fölszaggatta a levelet, elolvasta, türelmetlenül odadobta Anyának, ennek is ép most köll jönni! és Anya is elolvasta és leült a padra, nem szólt semmit, csak szomorúan nézett. No, mondja Nagymama, mit nézel? Csak el köll küldeni őket. Anya nem felelt, mintha lerázna magáról valamit, fölkelt, hagyjátok a barackot, gyertek a fürdőszobába és Nagymama bólintott, hogy jól van és visszahítta az elsomfordáló Holló bácsit és három pofont igért neki. Mi örültünk, mert a multkor, mikor a Csákónak kis borja lett, nem akart a szinbe beereszteni, úgy köll neki! Ákos kérdezte a folyosón Anyát, ki írt? Édes Apátok — mondta Anya — látni akar benneteket. Csodálkoztunk. Nem tudtuk, örüljünk-e? Milyen is lehet? és igazán bennünket akar látni? Vajjon van-e bajusza, mint a Horváth bácsinak és van-e cvikkerje és tud-e úgy pislogni, mint a Macskáski bácsi? Ahogy Anya mosdatott, Ákos nem bőgött, pedig mosdásnál mindig szokott és egyre azon töprengtünk, hogy ezután ő visz-e le bennünket fürdeni. Anya tanitott, csókoljunk szépen kezet, ne kurjongassunk és ne kezdjük avval, mit hozott, hanem illedelmesen viselkedjünk. És ha rólam kérdez — itt nagyot sóhajtott és elfelejtette tovább mondani, csak nézte a fürdőkádat. Ákos kérdezte, keresztbe kell-e rakni a mellünkön a kezünket? én mondtam, te mafla, nem az iskolába megyünk és Anya elmosolyodott, de aztán tovább is szomorú maradt. De hogy mért nem jön ide? Igazán kiváncsi voltam. Anya gondolkozott. Mert a Nagyma haragszik rá, mondta. Mingyárt sajnáltuk és Ákos kérdezte és azóta csavargó, ugy-e? Anya nagyot nézett és rögtön szólt, hogy ilyen butaságot ne merészeljünk mondani és hogy kitől tanulnak ilyesmit ezek a gyerekek? pedig hát én is emlékeztem, hogy Nagymamától tudjuk.

Pista bácsi jött velünk a vendéglőig. Én nagyon büszke voltam piké kabátkámra és hogy a nadrágomban kis piros pontocskák voltak, az Ákosében egy piros pötty se volt. A nyakkendőnket egyformára kötötte Anya, de Ákosnak rövid nyaka volt és úgy kipukkadt belőle, mint egy cipó. Csúfoltam is, te cipófejű és már majdnem verekedtünk, mikor Pista bácsi fejcsóválva rosszalta, hogy nem szégyellik az ifijurak *ilyenkor?* És tényleg egész ünnepélyesre zavarodtunk és ahogy a Göblös Janival találkoztunk és kérdezte, hová megyünk, csak összenéztünk az Ákossal és mondtuk, hogy a vendéglőbe és mást nem szóltunk.

A vendéglőnél jött elébünk az Apa.

Nagy szürke bajusza volt és a szeme ide-oda szaladgált rajtunk, mint a kis egér. Nagyon furcsa volt És ahogy megcsókolt, szúrt a bajusza. Ezt se szoktuk. Anyának, meg Nagymamának nem volt bajusza. És mondta szervusztok. Te vagy a Dezső, te meg az Ákos, ugye? De fordítva mondta és mi

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nagyon nevettünk, hogy hogy lehet ezt eltéveszteni. Ezen meg ő zavarodott meg és restelte magát. És én mondtam neki, (hogy ne szégyelje már magát) ez nem baj, a Jani bácsi is a multkor eltévesztette, nincs abba semmi. Nincs, ugye Dezsőkém, nincs? és köhintve nevetett. De láttam, nem tetszett neki. Hogy megnőttetek. És mit csinál Jenő? mondta. Jenő, az a nagy testvérünk. Pesten járt iskolába. Mondtuk is, Pesten van most a Sárika néninél, majd augusztusban hazajön. Egész eddig illedelmesen viselkedtünk, de az a majom Ákos egyszerre elkezdett röhögni. Apa csodálkozott, hogy min nevet? Ákos alig tudta megmondani, úgy bruhogott, hogy azon, hogy auguszt — — — us — — — ban — — jön — — — ha — — — De mi van ezen nevetni való? Persze Apa ezt nem tudhatta, mert nem ösmerte a Macskáski bácsit, de én tudtam, de én is elkezdtem vigyorogni, mert ő tőle tanultuk, hogy ódúlíber augusztinkeldisztin és úgy szorította a nyakkendő a nyakamat, alig tudtam megmondani és ahogy néztem Ákost, egy vörösség volt már, mint egy luftballon, még jobban kellett vihogni, meg röhögni. Apa is nevetett kicsit és egyre mondta, na ez nagy nevetni való, de igazán! és lassan elszontyolodtunk, hogy ilyen illetlenül viselkedtünk és mérgesen néztem Ákosra és ő integetett a szemével, hogy most hagyjam. Hagytam is. Hanem bementünk egy szobába, ahol le volt függönyözve, hogy ne süssön be a nap. De a függöny rossz volt és a hasadékon mégis besütött és az Ákos orrán úgy ugrált a nap, mint mikor tükörrel szoktunk játszani és hallatszott, hogy az udvaron kugliznak a tamburások. Az asztal piros abrosszal volt leterítve, az egyik felét ép úgy kiszítta a nap, mint nálunk otthon a cselédszobában. Apa a gyufatartóval babrált, mi meg nem tudtuk, mit szóljunk, mert már igazán nem röhögtünk. Hát csak néztük. Az arcán ép olyan két ránc volt, érdekes, mint a Vasárnapi Ujságban láttuk csütörtökön egy képen és a szeme most már nem futkosott, hanem mintha elhomályosodott volna. Lehet, hogy a napba nézett és attól könnyezni szokott az ember. A Horváth bácsi is mindíg zöld eperfalevelet tesz a szemére az uszodában, ha a napra fekszik. Csöngess csak, ott a csengő — fordult Ákoshoz Apa és Ákos csöngetett és bejött Csillag, hogy mit parancsol a nagyságos úr? Két üveg sört és sóskiflit, mondta Apa, szeretitek? és a porcellángyufatartóval az asztalt ütögette. Mi még nem ittunk sose sört, egyszerre mondtuk, hogy igen és már szerettük volna megkóstolni. No meséljetek valamit, gyerekek. No, te Dezsőke, te már nagyobb vagy. Hát mit? Nem is igen tudtunk mesélni. Akkor Csillag már hozta a sört és három poharat és ittunk mi is, de nem mertünk szólni, hogy keserű. Pedig nagyon keserű volt. És Ákos is azt hitte, hogy a habja édes lesz.

Apa aztán kérdezte, milyen könyvet szeretnénk és Ákos kérte a Három vitéz magyar bakát, én meg a Maczkó úr utazásait és Apa elővette a noteszát, szép fényes barna bőrnotesz volt és abba fölírta és jött a kocsi, hogy az állomáshoz köll

már menni és vele mentünk hazáig és megcsókolt és tisztelettette Anyát, meg a Nagymamát és letett bennünket a kapunál és mi néztünk utána és gondolkoztunk, hogy ilyen egy Apa? és Anyáék kérdezték, mi volt? Hát mi volt, semmi se volt és hogy kérdezett-e róluk? pedig nem kérdezett semmit róluk és délután Horváth bácsival lementünk fürdeni és ettől kezdve mindig vártuk a könyveket. Egyszer aztán meg is jöttek. A Három vitéz magyar bakának szép piros volt a kötése, a Maczkó úré meg kék.

Moholy Nagy László.

A fekete kert.

Ó szörnyű kert az éji kert,
benn minden borzalom kikelt,
amerre surransz hallgatag
szeges rémcserje arcba csap.
Lábadnál árkok és ürök,
a partokon csalán, bürök,
hínárok és iszallagok
fejtőző könny- és vérmagok . . .
Gyümölcsfa rezgi: „Rajta, szedj,
mérges vizű, de szép a meggy!"
A gyöp zizeg: „Aludni jó!
álmodban ér a skorpió!"
A meggyet enni nem mered,
gyöpön halálos szendered,
amerre lépsz, botlaszt a lonc,
tikkadtan, álmosan bolyongsz.
Ó szörnyű kert az éji kert,
benn minden borzalom kikelt.

* * *

Az útakon salak roszog,
zápult a lég, tüdőm nehéz.
A zord kertészek szorgosok:
a Szenvedély s a Szenvedés.
Földjén őrjöngők körme szánt,
nem tépi pendülő kapa,
véres robotját verte ránk
a szörnyű kert, az éjszaka . . .
Kaparjuk mérges húmuszát,
és poshadó sárral behint,
sorvadt kezünk porban kuszált
s vérrel szegettek körmeink.

* * *

A csodálatos angol tánczcsoport

[THE WONDERFUL ENGLISH DANCE TROUPE]

by László Moholy Nagy

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Translated by Hattula Moholy-Nagy, translation corrected by Anna Cseke-Gál and Oliver Botar, final edit by Oliver Botar

I.

When I became acquainted with them, "the famous English dance troupe," they were without an engagement. Makói introduced me to them and jokingly remarked that I would be able to get them in somewhere.

A young man was already with them; next to the table was a champagne bucket and the gypsy fawningly playing from afar. The girls gathered around with exuberant gaiety and discombobulated me with a hundred questions. Whom did I know? Which manager? Where could I get them in? And the eldest snatched up her small handbag, took out photographs in which the costumed, sparkling troupe shone forth.

In the heat of the moment I did not dare to admit how little I had to do with artistes and furthermore that I hadn't any connections that would be useful to them. I only made excuses with exaggerated, but completely understandable modesty.

Their passionate desire for an engagement was at last set to rest, the unknown young man became my good friend and the revelry flowed back into its previous quietly merry channel. On that evening I didn't talk a lot, although, to judge by their behaviour, it was apparent that the girls accorded me special attention. This was a little worrisome, but then I began to pay attention to them with decidedly intensifying cheer. I soon knew that there was absolutely nothing English about them, and that only Annie understood a little English, I liked Annie the best and to my good fortune she fell to me, because Makói was with Clara, and Sáros, the young man who was already seated, occupied himself with Mary. As far as I could see, they were on very good terms.

Annie seemed like a cheerful and talkative girl. She was the smallest and the youngest. Still, she, as well as Clara, doted on Mary, the middle one. Annie was always smiling, her forehead exuded clarity while her hair gave off a fresh scent. In those days I would soon get slightly worse for drink and at such times would become quite happy. Now as well, after a couple of glasses, I sat so cheerfully that my face strained from the self-satisfied smile fixed onto it. Annie's chin jutted forward so provocatively, her face flushed so red, that I would have loved to take a bite out of her. However, I guarded the sweet thought and looked at the other two girls with the pleasure of concealed appraisal. Makói had a disgusting habit of drinking nothing but champagne; the next two glasses stoked me up still higher and already I began to fear I would misbehave. As I remember, Annie slapped my hand away three times. Clara's narrow oval face, her small blonde curls dangling on her forehead, her longish nose, very thin mouth and pointed chin made an unpleasant impression on me. Drunk as I was I could somehow only imagine her as an old woman with a thousand wrinkles on her withered face, and shuddering, I was wryly surprised that that ass Makói was wooing such an old prune. I turned my gaze from them and marvelled at Annie. What a charming, incomparably sweet little woman. As I glanced at Mary, I was actually taken aback. They, she and Sáros, submerged themselves in one another with such drunken enthusiasm and with eyes so inflamed, that perhaps they hadn't been drinking from just one glass when they clinked glasses with us, but from five. I grew serious and with uncertain hands I kept swirling the champagne, the little pearls danced wildly in the whirl, they jostled upwards, the small stirred spoon clinked sharply. These two must love each other.

"Aren't you drunk?" I asked Annie with curiosity.

"By no means," whispered Annie. "I'm just happy," and she flicked my nose.

"Very happy?" I inquired enthusiastically and I caught her wrist, at which she laughed with bubbling, sibilant gaiety. I myself couldn't resist this laughter and giggled along with her. From that moment we laughed at everything. The gypsy suddenly looked like a barrel, golden chains around its staves. I called some ladies cows as a joke. I think I must have been seriously drunk, because on hearing the word "nosy" I laughed so hard that my eyes started tearing, and I wasn't even able to tell Annie what I was guffawing about. Later we accompanied them home. 30 Liget Street, echoed in my head.

II.

I didn't see the troupe for a while after that. Nor did I run into Makói. I didn't think about them. In retrospect, however, it seems to me that at the Octogon,* taking the streetcar home, I once saw Mary and Sáros in the jostle, with arms around each other, laughing at the crowd, their faces shining with happiness and the secure feeling of belonging to each other. But being in a rush I only wondered about their familiar faces for a moment and so did not realize who they were. But that was a good while ago, perhaps two or three months back.

A few days later I passed by the Royal** when unexpectedly among the photographs the three familiar faces flashed at me and the posters suddenly glittered with little ballerina skirts, snowy pink legs, and the sweet charm of the three girls' heads. It really was them:

MARY, ANNIE, CLARA
! 3 SISTERS 3 !
THE WONDERFUL ENGLISH DANCE TROUPE.

I decided then and there to look them up and renew the old acquaintance. I didn't succeed. I received a telegram that I would have to go away on official business; later some relatives arrived; then I didn't feel well and that condition dragged on for about two weeks, meanwhile, however, it was constantly running through me that finally I should go, finally I should go, until *finally* I did get there.

Annie was still the old charmer; Clara smiled rather affectedly, and it was on their own like this, that it became apparent that she was the

head of the family, the nurturing, doting one, but I scarcely recognized Mary. Her face was shrunken, her eyes downcast, her mouth as if narrowed and her glance was so strange, absent-minded, that my heart constricted.

"How are you, Mary? Mary?" I asked with an anxiety not even entirely comprehensible to myself.

"Oh, I'm all right," she said and something of a fearsome beauty spread over her face as a faint smile shone upon it.

Annie nudged me under the table. I looked at her. She made a sign for silence. I was surprised. She pressed a small note into my hand. "Tomorrow afternoon at five by the Memorial." I was a little indignant: why didn't she wait for me to extort this rendezvous? But my vanity immediately overcame my astonishment. She wants to meet with me. *With me*! And all evening long I flirted with the next day. The girls spoke about their contract, about life abroad, about their acquaintances, asked some questions about Makói, at which point Sáros came to mind: Well, where is that black-haired boy? Annie immediately knew who was meant and looked alarmed. Also horrified, Clara threw back her head, warning me with wide open eyes, and looked at Mary, who with downcast eyes, absent-mindedly fiddled with her napkin. I still hadn't come to my senses: "What's going on? Why?" Annie shoved my leg, reproachful that she always had to remind me (and I began to feel shame at this myself) and with ebbing enthusiasm related how they had starved in Brno, how very badly they had eaten, and they were there for three weeks, but that they had still managed to spend 1200 crowns of their savings just for meals. Imagine! I imagined it in my discomfort and felt weighed down by the forced cheer.

Later a railroad official came to the table, bringing Mary flowers and sugar. We introduced ourselves. The girls must have known him well for a long time, because all they discussed were household matters. The official apologized that the coal could not be delivered that day, but there was no one at the co-operative. They should let him know again if they needed more lard and he went on about trivial matters that didn't interest me nor, I noticed, Annie. Mary continued to sit solemnly, only Clara brightened up a little, despite the fact that the railroad man was evidently paying court to Mary addressing her in a gentle, respectful tone.

I was fired up about the next day and felt uncomfortable. I didn't believe that the evening would bring anything new that was any good, at most yet more awkwardness and excuses. I leaned towards Annie.

"Who is he?"

"Her fiancé!" and raised a precautionary finger to her mouth.

Aha, her fiancé! It dawned on me and I regarded them. The fiancé was what one would consider a "good-looking" young man. His small, black, curly moustache was the focal point of his face and his other, rather less sympathetic features branched out from it. And yet the face as a whole, his ordinary forehead, neither too high, nor too low, assured one of some tranquil goodness.

The veins showed through Mary's wan skin, branching out on her temples like crestfallen, hazy saplings and shrubs emerging from some fog. The large, crimson mouth glowing on her pale face and the clear blue of her eyes flooded me. A regal, beautiful woman, I mused, and a chill ran through me. I looked at my dear Annie and sunshine and blonde gold showered me intoxicatingly.

"What about Sáros?" I asked.

Annie became serious. She encircled her left ring finger with the fingertips of her right hand.

"Married!"

The light-bulb finally lit up in my head. Now I understood: Sáros abandoned Mary, who is still in love with him. Does this explain this evening's alarm-bells and sheltering gestures? The wound still aches. "Now I understand," I nodded repeatedly. "I understand completely."

But none of this was amusing. I was a bit bored. If I conversed with my dear little Annie, Clara looked at us so intently and earnestly, that the possibility of any kind of closeness, hand-holding, caressing, was excluded. This was annoying. After all they're only dancers—I thought to myself, and we're at the Royal, in a booth. Well, what do you expect?—And the drunken vision of an old woman rose up again. You old prune, jealous …? I fumed. If Annie's mouth hadn't been so provocative, flaming with so much passion, the promise of so much pleasure, I would have gone home long ago. But then the following day came to mind and the possibilities of our walk home ….

"Annie, have you ever read 'Annabel Lee'? Poe wrote it, a beautiful poem."

"No, no. Bring it along, Sanyi, will you bring it?"

"I will, I will. Tomorrow at five o'clock," I forced my words through my teeth so that Clara would suspect nothing. I don't know if she heard me. Not even her eyes showed any reaction.

"Oh, let's go home already!" whined Mary and then she stretched with pursed lips and fluttering eyes. "Let's go!"

Annie was in white, from head to toe. From her fluffed up fur only the tip of her nose appeared with merciless cheer. Why are the others here? Oh, to take her in my arms! To rush away! I shivered at the thought that I must take the lead with Annie. How could I avoid it?

"Onward, youngsters!" I commanded with a smile and pushed Mary and the railroad man with two hands to the fore. Clara? Ah, she'll remain with us anyway. My head drooped: there's no cure for death. I took Clara's and Annie's arms. Clara was a bit reluctant. Annie's hand reposed in my mine—I glanced sideways carefully: did her sister notice?—and impatiently, with finger-wringing excitement, I twisted, curled, clasped, and fondled her fingers within mine; unforgettable sweetness.

"Poor Annie Lee," I murmured and my hand slipped out of hers and flitted about beneath the fur in happy ardour and I felt the silk of her blouse and the velvet of her skin—Annie, Annie … I became aware of the cool left side and began also to squeeze and knead Clara's hand.

Ahead of us Mary tottered peculiarly with her fiancé: they were also arm in arm, but at times Mary would pull an arm away, which would then swing up wildly. The stars glittered frigidly, the moon twinkled.

"Clara!" Mary turned back to her, "come here a moment," and they stopped. The girl went forward. They were right at the corner. We'll have to turn the corner. Trembling, we slowed down. I was almost angry with myself for being so excited and I vibrated with the useless counter-argument: "she's only a dancer," "she's only a dancer," "she's only …" As her white skirts gleamed before the edge of the dark house, I swooped down to her mouth and not knowing what came over me, I thought I'd go crazy if I had to end this kiss. Languidly, reeling, I saw the pleasure smouldering in the girl, and was astonished, in the white heat of my passion, to feel her breast against my chest. Suddenly she pulled her mouth away from mine; like a light flickering out—Ann–ie —I caught my breath and she rushed 'round the corner after the others, dragging me helplessly after her.

"Sanyi, come on!" She pulled me with emotion, almost sobbing —"come on—do you love me?" Why didn't you come earlier?

III.

I was at the Memorial at five o'clock. I waited for her until half past five. She didn't come. Yet hope penetrated the despair and anger. Her form

flickered at the end of the row of trees; then she seemed to appear by the side of the museum, behind the narrow bridge, perhaps she was the veiled lady? Trembling, my illusory glance rushed to and fro about the darkening landscape. It's so sad when one is duped.

Growing numb, I rambled among the trees alongside the Memorial. I made excuses for Annie and consoled myself. Surely Clara had not let her leave. Or visitors had come just then, or God knows what else? Annie would have come, would come, surely, only some important matter detains her. But is this really true? I was frightened and began to shiver with cold. She had stood me up.

In the evening I hung around the Royal. My pride wrestled with my feverish blood. I went in. On the stage, in the brilliance of the splendid, magnificent lighting danced the three sisters. Annie, the girlish adolescent, moved stiffly and earnestly, pulsating between her older sisters, her gestures mimicking those of a woman. My eyes teared up. Stirred up and furious, I went out for my overcoat. I wanted to punish myself for this weakness. Despondent, my head swimming, I went home.

For two days I didn't look in their direction. I worked restlessly. I wrote, I read without pause. In the evening it came to me that I hadn't understood the book. The unintelligible lines sailed away from my eyes and I would have to recommence each sentence four times so that it wouldn't slip, wouldn't drop from my brain. Later I went to dinner with my mother. But I must have been very distracted, because all I can recall is that I suddenly jumped up and took leave of my greatly surprised mother, dashing off to the Royal.

Four young men sat at the girls' table. I was taken aback and circled around Annie's blonde head distractedly, but I didn't want to mingle with so many strangers. Annie caught sight of me and hurried over to me with a joyful mien. I stammered something; I didn't like the newcomers and quickly passed on to the burning question: Where was she the day before yesterday? Why hadn't she come? The girl grew serious and pursing her lips as if about to whine, stammered some lie, I no longer even know what sweet nothings. I was happy, but also excited and nervous, I couldn't find my bearings. I was loath to converse standing there among the tables, but I couldn't sit down with them, I hated the unfamiliar faces so much. I also heard her mention that she would have notified me, but she didn't know my address. I drew out a card and next to the address I added my telephone number. I said goodbye and bolted like a half-wit. I think I was feverish, but this

fever was pure, one that enhanced reason and intensified my senses. The scene of the two girls and four young men sitting at the table was fixed clearly in my consciousness. Mary leaned with resignation towards the sleek, stylish young man, who—face frozen—feasted his eyes on them. Clara stared worriedly and ignored the chattering, muscular youth whose weight nearly crushed the chair. The other two regarded Annie and me with the inane smile of the disappointed. The whole room etched itself sharply into my vision with its overflowing, foamy beer, gaping mouths and fluttering waiters; the definitively outlined pattern of a colourful kaleidoscope.

On the stairs I sensed that Annie, offended and on the verge of tears, stared at me dumbfounded. The sight of her dear blue eyes burned shame onto my face. I had never regarded her more warmly or with such intense longing and I beat my head at the thought that I would abandon the one I love the most in such a stupid manner. Even the cold wind couldn't bring me to my senses. My face burning, I hurried over the bridge, ghostly reflections of the lamplights undulating down below, and groaning, sighing, I threw myself on my bed.

The next day at three in the afternoon she telephoned me. I should bring along the poem this evening, the Ann Lee. "Couldn't we meet this afternoon," I asked? "No, no," and her voice sounded uncertain through the receiver. "Oh, why not?" I badgered, I insisted. "No, no, it's not possible. But you'll bring it this evening? You'll come, won't you?" she purred. I promised. But I wasn't able to go after all. I called for a messenger boy and sent the poem to her. But in the meantime I became completely delirious. Annie reeled before my eyes, a monotone orchestra clattered within me, this is no joke! I was panicking, this is no joke. I applied a cold compress to my head, I shivered feverishly, tomorrow I'd go to the doctor. By morning I had calmed down. By noon a tormenting restlessness came over me again. "Annie, Annie, Annie, Annie," I murmured, trying to soothe myself with the thought of her face, her snow-white body. 30 Liget Street—the afternoon swirled around me in eddies, but it was simply not possible to leave the office. Important work was stacked on my desk. The mass of numbers, the repetitious pages managed to narcotize me. Around six o'clock I was called to the telephone.

"Annie?" my heart stopped beating.

"Come. Mary drank sublimate. We've already called the ambulance!" she cried into my ear.

"Sublimate?" I stared into the dark mouthpiece, but the other apparatus had already clicked. She was gone.

The tram churned, clattered. As if carried by some icy channel hurling its dreadful flood at me, choking, gasping for breath, incapable of thinking I arrived at the house. The ambulance was already there. A crowd was around it.

A small, dark foyer. From within, from the bedroom, gurgling, splashing fragments of sound poured out. Through the open kitchen door to the left a crystalline flow of water from the open tap. Before me, something like a bathroom. The door burst open. An ambulance man came out with a basin. Annie beside him with red eyes.

"My God, my God!" she greeted me wailing.

In the bedroom's mire, the ambulance doctor's cap glimmered bluish. Next to the window, a sewing machine, in front of it on a small chair was Mary, on the floor a pink bucket. The doctor stood next to her, a red rubber hose in one hand, the other holding the poor girl's sunken head. Anxiously I drew back, the ambulance man went in, Annie remained outside with me.

"The poor thing is having her fourth stomach lavage," and she began to sob. "Imagine, in the afternoon she dissolved twelve tablets and drank them. We didn't notice. Around four o'clock she began to feel dizzy and fell on the sofa. "What's wrong? What's with you?" we asked, but she just said, nothing. Her voice was but a whisper by then. Her throat was completely consumed. At half past four she became very ill and in the bathroom Clara chanced upon the jar, its bottom completely red. Then we instantly saw what she had drunk. Oh no, what shall we do?" She began to wail without any transition. "Oh dear Sanyi, what a way to meet!"

The icy flood kept gushing within me, already racing through my throat. And not a word about why?

"I'll go to the Charité and get a bed for her!" I said and was already giddy from the acrid, salty damp that slicked my forehead.

An hour later she was at the hospital.

"She went down to the car on her own two feet," Annie whispered. "She didn't allow us to carry her."

Clara didn't say a word. She sat there at the head of the bed and looked at Mary's colourless, convulsed face distorted in pain.

"I really want to live!" she breathed.

She couldn't talk, the sublimate had completely ruined her larynx. "I really want to live!"

We were quiet and looked at each other surreptitiously.

"I can't bear this!"

I went out into the corridor with Annie. Clara looked at us aghast. We stood in the large bay window. She pressed her head against my chest and her trembling, twitching little breast kept beating against my arm. I nervously caressed, calmed her and my body burned.

"That wretch! … Sáros … son of a bitch … rascal!" she was crying.

Yes. Sáros. Or me! … I thought to myself. Truly we were despicable.

Clara opened the door. I blushed. We went in on tiptoes. Mary was talking in a confused way. Clara choked back her tears. I saw that her eyes were bleary.

"Now my feet are getting cold!" panicked Mary. "The … now my legs … oh … now my stomach … now my…"

She flung her head back into the pillow. Clara caressed and stroked her.

"Nonsense! You'll be all right. Even the doctor said that everything is fine now."

Mary breathed deeply and painfully.

Annie turned her tearful eyes to me and I thought of Sáros' cold, sharp-featured face when I first met him. What sort of coldness was it then? I asked her as if in trance. He just mirrored the girl's happiness.

I hung my head. What was I doing here? I looked at Annie, the picture of devotion, and the other two "dancers," one struggling with death and the other a haggard old maid. I was afraid of them. Ungrateful girls! They pay for love with death. And I was afraid of Annie, too.

I slunk out of the room and ran down the corridor so quickly that I became dizzy at the confluence of the disappearing and reappearing glare of the windows. I stopped a moment on the street and pondered: what? why? The railroad official—oh, helpless fiancé!—his drawn, frightened face shocked me as he stormed past. I threw myself into a tram and I let my head, my tired, tortured head bounce, rattle along with the flickering coach.

The next day I read that Mary had died. Since then I have not met with the girls. Once Annie telephoned. I wanted to go to the telephone, but on the way my legs failed me and became so heavy that I had to sit down and like a coward, trembling, I had them telephone her back that I was no longer in this office.

NOTES

*A well-known public plaza in Budapest.

**A well-known Budapest hotel and cafe.

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Óra.

Idő szíve: óra, dobogd el a dalt,
Amely az enyém is, nemcsak tied.
[illegible]

[illegible]
Idő szíve: óra, [illegible]
[illegible]

Idő szíve: óra, [illegible]
Ki a [illegible] perczekre [illegible]
Tudom, hogy az [illegible]

[illegible]
Hogy [illegible]…
És [illegible]

Falu Tamás.

A csodálatos angol tánczcsoport.

Irta: MOHOLY NAGY LÁSZLÓ.

I.

Mikor megismertem őket, a híres angol tánczcsoportot, épp szerződés nélkül állottak. Makói mutatott be nekik és tréfásan odavetette, hogy majd bejuttatom én őket valahova.

Egy fiatalember volt már velük; az asztal mellett pezsgős vödör s a czigány [illegible] húzta. A lányok kitűnő vidámsággal fogtak körül és száz kérdéssel ejtettek zavarba. Kit ismerek? Melyik igazgatót? Hova hozom be őket? S a legidősebb fölkapta kis táskáját, fényképeket hozott elő, melyeken kosztümösen, csillogva [illegible] a csoport.

Hirtelenében nem mertem bevallani, hogy kevés közöm van az artistákhoz s még kevésbé, hogy olyan összeköttetésem, melylyel hasznukra lehetnék, nincs, csak szabadkoztam, tulzott, de teljesen érthető szerénységgel.

Végre elült a szerződtetés heves vágya, az ismeretlen fiatalember is jó barátom lett s az előbbi csendes-vidám mederben folytatódott a mulatozás. Akkor este nem sokat beszéltem, bár a lányok modorán látszott, hogy megkülönböztetett figyelemmel bánnak velem. Egy piczit aggasztott ez, de aztán határozottan növekvő örömmel figyeltem őket. Nemsokára tudtam, hogy még az ujjuk hegye se angol s angolul csak Annicska ért ugy-ahogy. Nekem Annicska tetszett legjobban s szerencsémre ő is jutott rám, mert Klárával Makói, Maryvel pedig a már ott üldögélő fiu, Sáros, foglalkozott. Nagyon [illegible] voltak, ahogy láttam.

Annicska vidám és csacsogó kisleánynak tetszett. A legkisebb volt s a legfiatalabb. De azért ő is, meg Klára is, Maryt becézték, a középsőt. Annicska állandóan mosolygott, a homloka tisztaságot, a haja friss illatot árasztott. Ő, mostanában hamar be szoktam csipni s olyankor igen [illegible], most is, két pohár után, olyan vidoran üldögéltem, hogy az arczom szinte feszült az állandó [illegible] mosolytól. Annicska álla meg oly ingerlőn ugrott előre, arcza oly pirosra tűnt, hogy legjobb szerettem volna beleharapni. A kedves gondolatot azonban titokként őriztem s a rejtett birlalás gyönyörűségével néztem a másik két lányt is. Makóinak szokatlan szokása, hogy a pezsgőt csak [illegible] engedi inni; a következő két pohár még jobban fütött s már-már magam kezdtem félni, hogy rendetlenkedni találok. Ugy emlékszem, Annicska háromszor [illegible] a kezemre. Klára keskeny oválarcza, homlokába lógó szőke fürtöcskéi, hosszukás orra, tulvékony szája, hegyes álla kellemetlen benyomást keltett bennem. Kábult fővel valahogy csak öreganyósnak tudtam elképzelni, ezer ránczczal kiaszott ábrázatán és megborzongva, fanyarul csodálkoztam, hogy az a szamár Makói ilyen vén szilvának udvarol. Elfordítottam rólok a szemem s Annicskát bámultam, milyen bájos, utolérhetetlenül aranyos nőcske. Ahogy Maryre esett a pillantásom, szinte megdöbbentem. Talán ők, ő meg Sáros, nem egy pohárral ittak, mikor velünk koczintgattak, hanem mindig öttel, olyan részeg hévvel, lobogó szemmel merültek egymásba. Elkomolyodtam és bizonytalan kézzel kavargattam a pezsgőt; a gyöngyöcskék vad forgatagban tánczoltak, [illegible] fölfelé, a [illegible] kanálka meg élesen csengett. Ezek szerethetik egymást.

— Maga nincs berugva? — kérdeztem kiváncsian Annicskától.

— Dehogy! — mondta Annicska — csak épp hogy jó kedvem van — és ezzel fölkaczagott.

— Nagyon jó? — érdeklődtem hangján és megfogtam [illegible], amin [illegible], [illegible] vidámsággal kaczagott. Magam sem tudtam ezt nevetés nélkül megállani s együtt viháncoltam vele. Ettől a perctől kezdve mindenen nevettünk. A czigány hordónak látszott, dongái körül aranylánca, néhány asszonyt [illegible] gondolom, hogy [illegible] berughattam, mert ezen a szón: kandi, annyira röhögtem, hogy a könnyem is kicsordult és Annicskának meg sem tudtam mondani, min [illegible]. Aztán hazakisértük őket. Liget-utcza 30, zavargott fejemben.

II.

Sokáig nem láttam aztán a csoportot. Makóival sem találkoztam, megfeledkeztem rólok. Most utólag rémlik ugyan, hogy az Oktogonon a villanyosra szállás tülekedésében láttam egyszer Maryt és Sárost, amint egymásba karolva nevették a tolongókat és arczukon a boldogság, az egybetartozóság biztos érzése tündöklött, de épp siettem s csak perczig tűnődtem ismerős arczukon s végül sem jöttem rá, hogy kik. De az jó régen volt, 2—3 hónapja talán.

A Royal előtt mentem el pár nap multán és egyszerre szemembe villámlott a fényképek közül a három ismerős arcz s a plakátok is hirtelen rám[illegible] ballerina-szoknyácskákkal, [illegible] lábakkal a három lány[illegible] kedves kellemével. Tényleg ők voltak:

MARY, ANNIE, CLARA

! 3 SISTERS 3 !

A CSODÁLATOS ANGOL TÁNCZCSOPORT.

Nyomban elhatároztam, hogy felkeresem őket és felújítom a régi ismeretséget. Nem sikerült. Egy sürgönyt kaptam, el kell utaznom hivatalos ügyben; aztán [illegible]; egyszer én nem éreztem jól magam és [illegible] két hétig [illegible] ez az állapot, közben pedig folyton motoszkált bennem, hogy el kell végre mennem, el kell végre mennem, míg végre tényleg eljuthattam.

Annicska a régi báj; Klára kissé megilletődve mosolygott, így társaság nélkül látszott igazán, hogy ő a családfő s a [illegible], anyáskodó, csak Maryre nem

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akartam ráismerni. Arcza megfogyott, szeme beesett, szája mintha megkeskenyedett volna és tekintete oly különös, réveteg, hogy összeszorult a szivem.

— Hogy van Mary? Mary? — kérdeztem magam előtt is érthetetlen aggodalommal.

— Oh, jól! — mondta s valami félelmes szégyen futott el az arczán, ahogy halvány mosoly csillámlott meg rajta.

Annácska megállt az asztal alatt. Ránéztem. Hallgatást intett. Elcsodálkoztam. Egy kis czédulát nyomott a kezembe: »Holnap d. u. 5-kor az Emlékműnél.« Kicsit megütődtem: miért nem vár, míg én csinálom ki ezt a találkát, de hiúságom rögtön felülemelkedett a meglepetésen: ő akar velem találkozni. *Velem!* És egész este a mámorban éleltem. A lányok meséltek a szerződésükről, külföldi életükről, ismerőseikről, kérdezősködtek Mal-ról s akkor eszembe jutott Sárca: hát az a fekete fiu hol van? Annácska rögtön tudta, kiről van szó, ijedt arczot vágott, Klára is elsáppadt, hátrakapta a fejét és tágra nyilt szemekkel, engem figyelmeztetőn nézett Maryre, aki lesütött szemmel, szórakozottan egy szalvétával babrált. Még föl sem ocsudtam: mi az? miért? Annácska erősen megnyomta a lábamat, szemrehányón, hogy engem mindig figyelmeztetni kell (amit már kezdtem magam is röstelleni) és felcsattanó buzgósággal mesélte, hogy mennyire éheztek Brünnben, milyen hegyetlen rosszul étkeztek és három hétig voltak ott, de megtakarított pénzükből elküldtek csak a hosszra még 1200 koronát. Képzeljem. Zavartan elképzeltem s nyomasztott a kényszerű vidámság.

Később egy vasutas tiszt jött az asztalhoz, Marynek virágot és czukrot hozott. Bemutatkoztunk. A lányok régebbről és jól ismerhették, mert csupa olyanról beszélgettek vele, ami a bizalmasukra vonatkozott. A tiszt bocsánatot kért, hogy a szenet aznap nem küldhette ki, de a Szövetkezetben nem volt ember. Ha máskor lesz szükségük, szóljanak megint s csip-csup dolgokról, ami engem nem érdekelt s úgy vettem észre Annácskát sem, Mary tovább és komolyan ült, egyedül Klára vidult föl valamiként, bár a vasutas szemmel láthatóan Marynek udvarolt és tiszteletteljesen, gyöngéden beszélgetett vele.

Engem fűtött a holnapi nap és képzelmetlenül éreztem magam. Nem hittem, hogy ez az este még valami uj jót hozna, legfeljebb uj ügyetlenséget és magyarázkodást. Annácska felé hajoltam.

— Ki ez?

— A vőlegénye! — és óvólag a szájára tette ujját.

Ahá, a vőlegénye! derengett bennem s figyeltem őket. A vőlegény csinos fiú. Kis fekete, kunkoros bajusza volt az arcza középpontja s szinte ebből ágazott szét a többi kis-erkölcsös vonás. De azért az egész arcz, a szabványos: se magas, se alacsony homlok, valami nyugodt jóságról bizonykodott.

Mary halvány bőrén átrajzolódtak az erek és mintha csüggedt ködbevesző fecskékké, bokrokká lombosodtak volna halántékán. A sápadt arczból kiégő nagy piros száj és a szemek tiszta kékje elárult bennem. Fejedelmi, szép nő — töprengtem és átfutott rajtam a hideg. Annácskámra néztem és napsugár és szőke arany zuhogott mámoritón rám.

— Hát Sárca? — kérdeztem.

Annácska elkomorodott. Bal gyűrűsujját körülfogta a jobbkéz ujjhegyeivel.

— Megházasodott!

Most már teljes világosra gyult fejem. Most már értem! Sárca otthagyta Maryt, aki még most is szerelmes belé. Ezért hát a ma esti riadozások, óvó mozdulatok? Fáj még a seb. Most már értem — bólogattam én is. Teljesen értem.

De mindez nem szórakoztatott. Kicsit unatkoztam. Ha drága kis Annácskámmal beszélgettem, Klára oly figyelmes-komolyan nézett bennünket, hogy mindenféle közeledés, kézfogás, simogatás lehetőségét kizárta. Ez bosszantott. Utóvégre, mégis csak táncosnők — gondoltam magamban és a Royalban vagyunk és szeparéban. Mit akarsz hát? — és fölémerült megint a réveteg látás öregasszonya — te vén szüvg, ugy?... — dühöngtem. Ha nem lett volna oly ingerlő, annyi édvvel, forrósággal tüzelő Annácska szája, rég hazamentem volna. De eszembe jutott a másnap és talán a hazakisérésnél...?

— Annácska, olvasta maga már az Annabell Leet? Poe irta, gyönyörű vers.

— Nem, nem. Hozza el, Sanyi. Ugy-e, elhozza?

— El, el. Holnap ötkor — eregettem fogaimon átszűrve a két szót, hogy Klára ne gyanakodhassék semmire. De nem tudom, hallotta-e? Nem felelt rá még a tekintetével sem.

— Jaj, gyerünk már haza! — fájdalmaskodott Mary és elbiggyedt ajakkal, rebbenve hunyó szemekkel nyujtózott. — Gyerünk!

Annácska fehér volt, talpig fehér. A duzzadt prémből kíméletlen vidámsággal csak az orra hegye látszott. Hogy minek vannak itt mások is? Ölbe kapni! Elrohanni! Előre borzongtam, hogy elől nekem kell mennem Annácskával. Mit tehetnék ellene?

— Fiatalok előre! — kommandiroztam mosolyogva és két kézzel toltam Maryt, meg a vasutast. Klárát?... Ah, ugyis velünk marad... Lekókadt fejem: halál ellen nincs orvosság. Belekaroltam Klárába és Annácskába. Klára kicsit szabadkozott. Annácska keze — félrenéztem óvatosan: a nénje látja-e? — kezemben nyugodott és én türelmetlen, ujjfürkésző ingerlemmel csavartam, szöktettem, kulcsoltam, kötöttem ujjaimmal ujjait; felejthetetlen kedvesség.

— Les Annácska, szegény!... — mormoltam és kezem kicsusszott kezéből s már a prém alatt szállongott boldog forróságban s a hűs selymét éreztem s a bőr bársonyát — Annácska, Annácska..... eszembe jutott a hűvös baloldal és megszorongattam, tördeltem Klára kezét is.

Mary furcsán imbolygott előttünk a vőlegényével. Karolva mentek ők is, de Mary vad mozdulattal kirántotta néha a karját, amely ilyenkor földördült a magasba. A csillagok hidegen szikráztak, a hold hunyorgott.

— Klára! — fordult hátra Mary — gyere egy pillanatra — és megálltak. A lány előrement. Egy sarok jött. Be kellett fordulni. Rosszkedve lassítottunk, én szinte haragudtam magamra, hogy ilyen ingatott vagyok és haszatlan ellenkezést állandóan vitatkoztam belül: »de bizon csak táncosnő«, »de bizon csak egy táncosnő«, »de bizon csak egy...« Ahogy elvillant előttünk a sötét ház éle mellett a szeknyék fehérje, ráhajoltam a szájára és én nem tudom, mi történt velem, azt hittem, megőrülök, ha e csókot abba kell hagynom. Tikkadtan, szédülve láttam, hogy gomolyg a lányból a gyönyörűség s megdöbbenve, elcsüggedve szemöldökjével éreztem mellecskéjét melegen, egyszerre elrántotta a száját a szájamról; mint a kiloböző lány — An—nács—ka — fuldokoltam s ő rohant túl a sarkon a többiek után és engem irtetetlenül vonszolt magával.

— Sanyi, de gyere! — kiáltott felindulva és majdnem zokogás érzett a hangjából — jöjjön, szerel? Miért nem jött előbb?

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III.

Otkor az Emléknél voltam. Félhatig vártam rá. Nem jött. A kétségbeesésben, a dühön keresztül még átütött a remény. A fasor végén az ő alakja libegett; majd oldalt a muzeumnál rémlett föl, hátul a keskeny hidon, tán ő a fátyolos hölgy? Csalóka tekintetem erszketve futkosta be az alkonyuló képet. Oly szomoru, ha becsapják az embert.

Megszomorodva tévelyegtem a fák közt, az Emlék mentén. Mentegettem Annácskát magamban és vigasztaltam magamat. Bizonyosan Klára nem engedte el. Vagy épp látogatójuk jött, vagy isten tudja micsoda? Annácska eljött volna, eljönne, biztos, csak valami fontos ok tartóztatja. Ha ugyan igaz? — rándultam meg és vacogni kezdtem. Felüdültem.

Este ott tébláboltam a Royal körül. Büszkeségem vánkodott véremm lázongásával. Bementem. A színpadon a pompázatos és nagyszerű fények nagyragiáiban táncolt a három lány. Annácska merev-komolyan, a serdülő lánykát amszonyutánzó mozdulataival kiktetett nénjei között. Könnyes lett a szemem. Felindultan, bosszankodva mentem ki a köpenyemért. Meg akartam büntetni magamat e gyengeségért. Elkeseredve szédültem haza.

Két napig felejük se néztem. Nyugtalanul dolgoztam, szakadatlanul írtam, olvastam. Este észrevettem, hogy nem értem a könyvet. A sorok értelmetlenül futottak ki a szememből és négyszer kellett ujrakezdenem minden mondatot, hogy el ne szalasszam, ki ne ejtsem a fejemből. Anyámmal vacsorázni mentem később. De meglepően szórakozott lehettem, mert az estéből nem emlékszem másra, csak hogy egyszerre felugrottam és anya nagy csodálkozására elköszöntem és elrohantam a Royalba.

Négy fiu ült a lányok asztalánál. Meghökkentem és zavartan keringtem Annácska szőke feje körül, de nem akartam a sok ismeretlen közé elegyedni. Annácska megpillantott, örömtéljes arccal sietett hozzám. Hebegtem valamit, én nem szeretem az idegeneket s gyorsan áttértem az égető kérdésre: hol volt tegnapelőtt? Miért nem jött? A lány elkomolyodott és pityergésre álló szájjal hanadozott, már nem is tudom, milyen édes semmiségeket. Boldog voltam, de ingatott és ideges is, nem leltem helyemet, rösteltem, hogy az asztalok között kell beszélgetnünk, de nem tudtam közéjük ülni, annyira gyűlöltem a rossz és idegen arcokat. Azt hallottam meg, hogy emlitette, hogy értesített volna, de nem tudta a címemet. Elővettem egy névjegyet és a cím mellé még a telefonszámomat is odaírtam. Köszöntem és félbolondként elszaladtam. Azt hiszem, lázas voltam, de valami tiszta és az értelmet nagyító, érzéseket sokszorozó lázban. Öntudatomban világosan tűnött az asztalnál ülő két lány és a négy fiu képe. Mary ellágyulva dőlt a fényes választéku fiatal ember felé, aki fagyott arccal járatta rajtuk a szemét. Klára aggódón nevett maga elé és nem hallgatott egy hevegő, erős fiura, aki állát szinte tenyerébe a szék. A másik kettő a hoppon maradtak bamba mosolyával nézett rám és Annácskára. Élesen rajzolódott az egész terem is a szememben: a csárdás, habos sörrel, a tátott szájakkal, lobogó pincérekkel; tarka kaleidoszkop biztos körvonalu mintázata.

A lépcsőn éreztem, hogy Annácska megsértődve, sírásra hajlón bámul utánam. Kedves kék szemét láttam és szegyent sötött az arcomra. Soha szégyenben, vágyakozásban nem gondoltam rá és ökölbel verdestem a fejem, hogy ilyen oktalan módon hagyom ott, akit legjobban szeretek. A hűvös szél sem téritett magamhoz. Égő arccal siettem át a hidon, kisértetiesen lobogott a lámpák visszfénye alant és nyögve, sóhajtozva vetettem magamat az ágyba.

Másnap délután három órakor telefonon fölhivott. Este vigyem be a verset, a Lee Annácskát. Délután nem találkozhatunk? — kérdeztem. Nem, nem — és hangja bizonytalanul hallatszott a kagylón át. Ó, miért nem? — nyaggattam, erőszakoltam. Nem, nem. Nem lehet. De este behozza? Bejön? Ugy-e? — dorombolt. Megigértem. Nem tudtam bemenni magam. Egy boyt hozattam, avval küldtem be neki a verset. De én közben egészen kótyagos lettem. Annácska motollált a szemem előtt, monoton zenekar kalapolt bennem, ez nem tréfa! rémüldöztem, ez nem tréfa, és hideg borogatást raktam a fejemre; lázban dideregtem, holnap orvoshoz megyek. Reggel megnyugodtam. Délben ismét kinzó nyugtalanság fogott el. Annácska, Annácska, Annácska, Annácska, — motyogtam állandóan és az arcával, hófehér testével akartam csillapitani magamat. Liget-utca 30 — gomolygott a délután, de nem lehetett sehogy odahagynom az irodát. Fontos munkát raktak az asztalomra. Valamennyire mégis narkotizált a sok szám, az oldalak ismétlődése. Hat óra tájt hivnak a telefonhoz.

— Annácska? — előlt a szivem verése.

— Jöjjön. A Mary szublimátot ivott. A mentőknek is telefonáltunk már! — sírta a fülembe.

— Szublimátot? — meredtem a sötét tölcsérbe, de azott már kattyant a készülék. Elment.

A villanyos zakogott, csörömpölt. Mintha valami jeges csatorna hömpölygetné rám rettenetes árját, elfulladva, zihálva, gondolkozni képtelenül értem a ház elé. A mentő-autó már ott volt. Kiöntve csöndület.

Kis, sötét előszoba. Bentről, a szobából szörpögő, porkoló hangrezdatok dőltek kifelé. Balról a konyhaajtó tárva, a vizvezeték nyitvafelejtett csapjából kristályosan csörrent a víz. Szemközt valami fürdőszoba rémlett. Kivágódott az ajtó. Egy mentő jött kifelé. Annácska vörös szemekkel mellette.

— Istenem, istenem! — fogadott nyöszörögve.

A szobában furcsa zavarban kiklett, aranylott a mentőorvos sapkája. Az ablak mellett varrógép, előtte kis szőkén Mary, a földön rózsaszinű vödör. Az orvos mellette állott, egyik kezében vörös gummicső, másikkal a szegény lány lecsukló fejét tartotta. Szorongva léptem vissza, a mentő bement, Annácska kint maradt velem.

— A negyedik gyomormosást kapja már szegény — és zokogni kezdett. — Képzelje, délután fölbontott tizenkét pasztillát és megitta. Mi nem is vettük észre. Ugy négykor elkezdett szédülni és levett a díványra. Mi a bajod? Mi van veled? — kérdeztük, de azt mondta, semmi. Nagyon halk volt már akkor is a hangja. A torkát egészen fölette. Félötkor nagyon rosszul lett és a Klára a fürdőszobában megtalálta a domaños üveget, az alja egész piros volt. Akkor mindjárt láttuk, hogy mit ivott. Jaj, jaj! mit csináljunk? — kezdett minden átmenet nélkül jajgatni. — Jaj, jaj, édes Sanyi, hogy is találkozunk?

Bennem émelyít, áradt tovább a jeges ár, már a torkomon is keresztülhatott. És egy szó se esett, hogy miért?

— Bemegyek a Charitéba és helyet csinálok neki! — mondtam és szédültem már a lányra, sőt pletöltő, ami a homlokomon kiverte.

Egy óra mulva a kórházban volt.

— A kocsiig a saját lábán ment le, — sugta Annácska — nem engedte, hogy vigyék.

Klára nem szólt egy szót sem. Ott ült az ágy fejénél és nézte Mary fakó, torz kínban rángó arcát.

— Úgy szeretnék élni! — lehelte.

Nem tudott beszélni, gégéjét teljesen szétroncsolta a [illegible] Mindét. — Úgy szeretnék élni!...

Hall... unk és lopva egymásra néztünk.

— Nem bírom én ezt ki!

Anácskával kimentem a folyosóra. Klára rémülten nézett utánunk. Beálltunk a nagy ablakmélyedésbe. A mellemre hajtotta fejét és remegő, vonagló mellkasához karomat szögette. Idegesen simogattam, nyugtatgattam és forró lett a testem.

— Az a nyomorult!... Sáros... gazember... nyomorult! — sirdogálta.

— Igen. Sáros. Vagy én!... — gondoltam magamban. — Valóban nyomorultak vagyunk.

Klára kinyitotta az ajtót. Elvörösödtem. Lábujjhegyen mentünk be. Mary zavarosan beszélt. Klára elfojtotta könnyeit. Láttam, fátylos volt a szeme.

— A lábam hidegnek most! — rémüldözött Mary. — A... most a combjaim... jaj... most a hasam... most a....

Hátravetette a párnára fejét. Klára becsúzte, idegesítte.

— Ugyan miket beszélsz? Jól leszel. A doktor is mondta, hogy semmi baj már.

Mary nagyokat és kinosan lélegzett.

Anácska könyebenszó szemét rámvetette és szembe jutott Sáros hideg, markáns arcza, mikor először találkoztam vele. Milyen hideg volt az akkor tulajdonképp? — révültem fel. — A lány boldogságát tükrözte csak.

Fejem lecsüggedt. Mit keresek én itt? Anácskát néztem, a szemfényét, s a másik két táncosnőt, a halállal vivódót és a sirkár aggatott. Úgy féltem tőlük. Hiábavaló lányok! A szeretetért halállal fizetnek. S féltem Anácskától is.

Kisompolyogtam a szobából s végigrohantam a folyosón oly gyorsan, hogy beleszédültem a fül- és előttünő ablakok egybefolyó csilloglásába. Az utczán egy pillanatig megálltam, gondolkodtam: min? minek? A vaustus tüzt. — ó, gyámoltalan vüzgörgy! — dult, zettegő arcza dőbbenetét még meg, ahogy elvibarozott mellettem. Belevágtam magam egy villanyosba és hagytam, hogy fejem, fáradt, megkinzott fejem együtt zubogjon, csörömpöljön a pislogó kocsival.

Másnap olvastam, hogy Mary meghalt. Azóta nem találkoztam a lányokkal. Anácska egyszer telefonált. En oda akartam menni a telefonhoz, de utkőben megvoggyant s olyan sulyos lett a lábam, hogy le kellett ülnöm s gyáván, resztelve azt telefonáltatam vissza, hogy már nem vagyok ebben az irodában.

Sütnet. ürünet., Egy kis történetről. Csak ők, a nyomorúságban, hajban összefort eutente-hatalmak nem jutnak hírkezthez! De persze, megáll az offenziva! Már hogyne állana meg, de miket, csak az a kérdés? Kell egy kis dopping, hogy a vérvesteségtől elsüppadt tagok, tört derekak és legyöngült szárnyak ismét föllendjenek! A francziu premiér szerint a dolgok kezdenek valamelyest tisztázódni. Mi is úgy gondoljuk, ahogy ők, de Clémenceau ur másképp mondja. Ami belőlről csupa alája, kivülről csupa malasat az elámitottak számára. Szegény franczlák, akik vér- és verejtékpatakkal fizettek, ime, mosolygó szolgaszokat ajándékoznak nekiek: 1914-ben is megtámadt a németek offenzivája, mikor az angolok jöttek.» Igy Clémenceau! Körben eltünt egy darab Franczlaország a föld színéről. Hegyek, falvak, városok. 1918-ban a germán előretörés ismét eltüntetéssét fog mondani, amikor majd az amerikaiak megérkeznek.« Az amerikaiak, akik Wilson vezényelte alatt szárax lábbal átgázolnak a Vörös-tengeren! Tehát 1918 az amerikai Messiás eljövetelének napja! Elég rövid terminus! Várhatunk. De idéreznek-e 1918-ra? És ha igen? A gall kakas a német virradatnak kukorit és a monicsiót gyásztó derék jenkik, ha átérnek szárax lábbal a partra, vérpocsolya helyett a világ békéjének szent hegyére fognak beléütkőzni.

A LAKÓK SZERVEZKEDNEK, *a sznaux partjain megmozdulnak, lassan és sokáczon, hogy legalka tömöríthessék a hátrunk ellen? A hátrunk frontja még szilárdan áll és négy év óta makacsul gyűri a hábaru ostromát. Olyan Gorlice még sem akadt, amely keresztülvitele volna a tőlünk szülött győzőjét, a közlönyegyedek rettenő erőtornáját? Sz. lajok és könyek repülő fajdái, könnyű kis szerpilánok verődnek vissza csonka szárnyaikkal és hullanak a mélybe, amint közé merészkednek, a földdomdás 42-es vonalunk közös dzsgettik ezt a hihetetlen szilárdságú hadrendű falat, alkotóit minden tömadásunk — könyörgés, hisztéria, ész, szünet és ész meg nem ingatta. A közelmúltban nagy ágyuja, mint szárnyaszegett madár, lesett előttünk a porban. És most jön a nagy tavasz! A lehét szerencsésebb. Azok a komisz és szélsőes pesti pavéjaink! Egy szabad, kitűnőgyakorlat hindenburgi offenzíve közelkezik. Szegény tankok és szegény pavéjaink! Bizony mondom, hogy fejjel menniek neki a falnak, melyet közlevelőjük tartanak össze szilárdan. Az offenzíva sajó mindenesetre megindul, talán sikerül az áttörés is. De vajjon mit nyernek vele? A hátrunk frontja megjöng; az erczvonal megnyílik és az ellenlábon legörbített fal elnyeli a lehétet — a felmerült hétköznapokkal egyetemben.*

—

Toll és tőr.

— *jan. 7.*

A NYUGATI OFFENZÍVA már megint megáll! — hirdetik odalit derék ellenségeink. Sütnet. Vérvesztesség. Tartalékcsapatok-hiány. A könnyű pengőjű nyelvek jótorzsik megint a szavakkal és a szivekkel és Clémenceau, a gall kakas kukorit, mintha már látná a piros virradatot. Pedig ez a piros csak vér, megint vér, még mindig vér, mely a dühöt és szégyentől szegyakba szükken és kilolyik szivükből a győzet csatahőst egyetlen lendületére. A Kemmel-hegyen német sasok lebegnek. Sütnet. Alsottől délre, Soissonstól nyugatra a germán gárda nyomul előre. Ismét sütnet. Brüsszel lángokban áll.

A NAGY PENOKRÁCIA leette a vizsgát. Az alapvizsgát. Ezt valahol Hágában vagy meg. II. Miklós cár elnökletе alatt, miután az interparlamentáris konferenciákon elég szegalmasan kellekerült. Most Oroszországba ment tüntetni és tőrére szigorlatra. A vizsgáló-bizottság Tocskij volt, bizottsági elnök: Lenin. Szigoru tanár. Tárgy: a forradalom vívmányai. A kérdések özönéből valahogy furcsán került ki az emlentei szigorló. Mi a világmegváltás, a népek önrendelkezési joga, népek, tengerek szabadsága? Lenin kilogyhatatlan volt a kérdésekben, mire a zavarba jött szigorló, aki a hatalmas vizsgaanyagot nem tudta megemészteni, kinos drukkjában kivágta az —

Contributors

OLIVER A. I. BOTAR was born in Toronto of Hungarian refugee parents. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Urban Geography from the University of Alberta. From the University of Toronto, he received a Master of Science in Urban and Regional Planning, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. in art history. Early twentieth-century Central European Modernism with a focus on Hungary and Germany plus "Biocentrism" and Modernism in early to mid-twentieth-century art, architecture and photography are his specialties. He is Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg, Canada and is the author of *Technical Detours: The Early Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered* (2006), *Természet és technika: Az újraértelmezett Moholy-Nagy 1916-1923* [Nature and Art: Moholy-Nagy Reconsidered 1916–1923] (2007) and *A Bauhausler in Canada: Andor Weininger in the 50s* (2009). He is co-editor of the forthcoming anthology *Biocentrism and Modernism*.

LLOYD ENGELBRECHT is Professor Emeritus of Art History at the University of Cincinnati and author of *Moholy-Nagy Mentor to Modernism* (Cincinnati: Flying Trapeze Press, 2010). He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Chicago after completing undergraduate

studies at San Francisco City College and the University of California, Berkeley. He wrote a prize-winning biography, *Henry C. Trost: Architect of the Southwest* (1981), in collaboration with his late wife, June-Marie.

ALAIN FINDELI is honorary professor of the École de design industriel of the Université de Montréal, where he taught from 1973 to 2006. He concluded his extensive study of the history of design education in his book *Le Bauhaus de Chicago: L'oeuvre pédagogique de László Moholy-Nagy*' (1995). His current research interests and recent publications address general issues in the theory and practice of design (logics, aesthetics, ethics), and more specifically pedagogical aspects of design research education at the doctoral level. He is also founder of the research master's program in 'Design & Complexity' (University of Montreal, 2001) of which he was the scientific and pedagogical advisor until 2006. He is currently Full Professor at the University of Nîmes in France where he co-founded *Les Ateliers de la recherche en design*, a Francophone design research community. Since 2008 he has been visiting professor and researcher at the Universities of Art and Design of Geneva and Basel in Switzerland.

ÉVA FORGÁCS is an art historian, critic, and curator. She received her M.A. in Art History at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, and her Ph.D. in Art History from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest. A former curator at the Hungarian Museum of Decorative Arts and professor at the László Moholy-Nagy University in Budapest, she has published a number of essays and monographs on the Hungarian avant-garde, modernism in Central and Eastern Europe and on contemporary art in various edited volumes and journals. Forgács is Adjunct Professor of Art History at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, she teaches at Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles, and is Senior Curator of the Nancy G. Brinker Collection. Her books include *The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics* (1991, 1995), *El Kazovsky* (1996), *László Fehér* (1998), and *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes* (co-edited with T. O. Benson, 2002).

ELEANOR M. HIGHT is Professor of Art History at the University of New Hampshire. She received her B.A. in Art History from Skidmore College, and her A.M. and Ph.D. in Fine Arts from Harvard University. She is the author of *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in*

Weimar Germany (1995); *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, which she co-edited with Gary D. Sampson (2004); and *Capturing Japan in Nineteenth Century Photographic Collections* (forthcoming in 2010). She lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

VICTOR MARGOLIN is Professor Emeritus of Design History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is the founding editor and now co-editor of *Design Issues: A Journal of History, Theory, and Criticism*. Margolin is also the author or editor of numerous books including *Design Discourse: History Theory Criticism* (1989), *Discovering Design: Explorations in Design Studies* (co-editor, 1995), *The Idea of Design* (1996), *The Politics of the Artificial: Essays on Design and Design Studies* (2002), and *The Struggle for Utopia: Rodchenko, Lissitzky, Moholy-Nagy, 1917–1946* (1997). He is currently working on a world history of design.

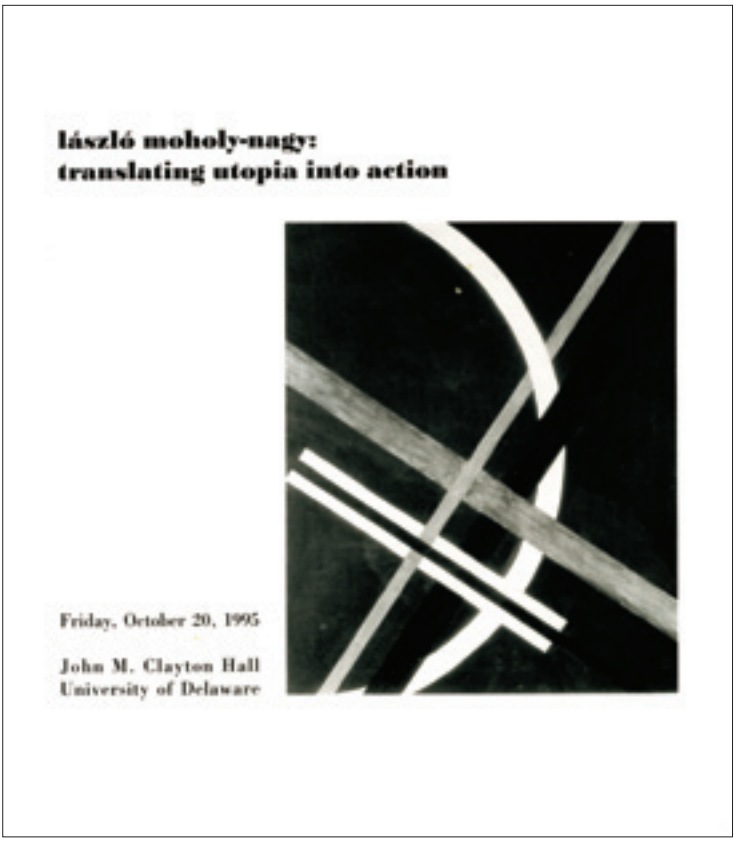
JEFFREY L. MEIKLE is professor of American Studies and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin. He is a cultural historian whose interests include industrial design and technology, visual representation in popular print media, and alternative cultures from 1960 to the present. He is the author of *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America, 1925–1939* (1979), *American Plastic: A Cultural History* (1995) which was awarded the Dexter Prize by the Society for the History of Technology, and most recently *Design in the USA* (2005), a historical survey running from 1800 to the present.

HATTULA MOHOLY-NAGY is a Mesoamerican archaeologist. For the past three-and-a-half decades, however, an additional research interest has been the life and work of her father, László Moholy-Nagy, and the history of the Institute of Design when it was under his direction. Her publications include a two-volume report on the artefacts of Tikal, Guatemala (*Tikal Reports 27 Parts A and B*, 2003 and 2008), *László Moholy-Nagy Color in Transparency: Photographic Experiments in Color, 1934–1946* (co-edited with Jeannine Fiedler, 2006), as well as articles for several Moholy-Nagy exhibition catalogues. She lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

KRISZTINA PASSUTH is retired Professor and Chair of the Department of Art History at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. She received her M.A. (1961) and Doctorate (1966) in Art History from that same institution. Her Doctorat d'Etat was awarded in 1987 by the Université

Paris I, Pantheon-Sorbonne. She has been curator at the Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, the Budapest Szépművészeti Múzeum and at the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris. In 1978 she co-curated the major exhibition "Paris–Berlin" for the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris and more recently she co-curated "A magyar vadak" [The Hungarian Fauves] for the Magyar Nemzeti Galéria. Her major publications include *A Nyolcak festészete* [The painting of the Eight] (1967), *Magyar művészek az európai avant-gardban* [Hungarian artists in the European avant-garde] (1974), *Moholy-Nagy* (1982 in Hungarian, 1984 in French, 1985 in English), *Les avant-gardes de l'Europe Centrale 1907–1927* (1988) and *Tranzit* (1996).

Illustrations



1. Cover of the program brochure for the symposium "László Moholy-Nagy: Translating Utopia into Action." Designers: Sandra Wortham and Jill Ruckelshaus.

2. Stephen Mansbach introducing the symposium "László Moholy-Nagy: Translating Utopia into Action."

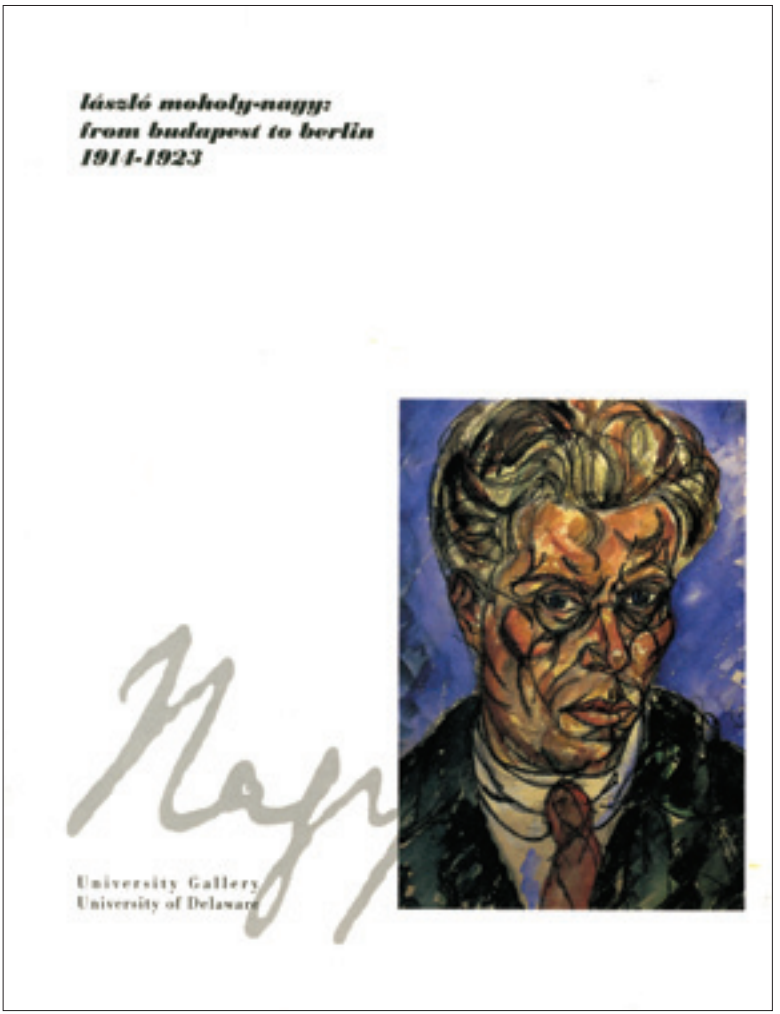
3. The afternoon session panel of speakers (L-R): Lloyd Engelbrecht, Victor Margolin, Jeffrey L. Meikle, Éva Forgács and Alain Findeli.

4. Hattula Moholy-Nagy and Edith Nagy within the exhibition.

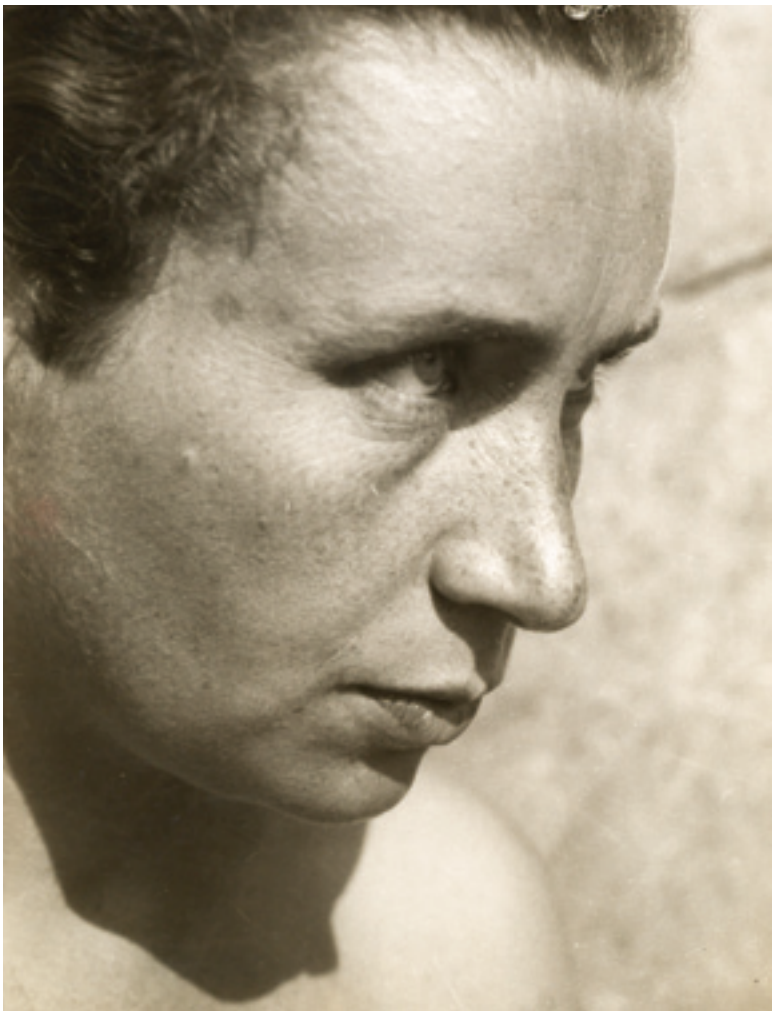
5. Symposium reception (L-R): Alain Findeli, Éva Forgács, Eleanor Hight, Stephen Mansbach, Michael Szarvasy.

6. Belena S. Chapp within the exhibition *László Moholy-Nagy: From Budapest to Berlin, 1914–1923*, University Gallery, University of Delaware.


Moholy



7. Cover of Belena S. Chapp, ed., *László Moholy-Nagy: From Budapest to Berlin, 1914–1923*, Newark DE: University Gallery, University of Delaware, 1995. Designers: Sandra Wortham and Jill Ruckelshaus.



8. László Moholy-Nagy, *Portrait of Lucia (Schulz) Moholy*, 1924, vintage silver gelatin print mounted on white card, 43.6 x 31.8. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

9. Frank Levstik, *Portrait of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy*, silver gelatin print. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

AKASZTOTT EMBER

Az egyetemes szocialista kultura orgánuma

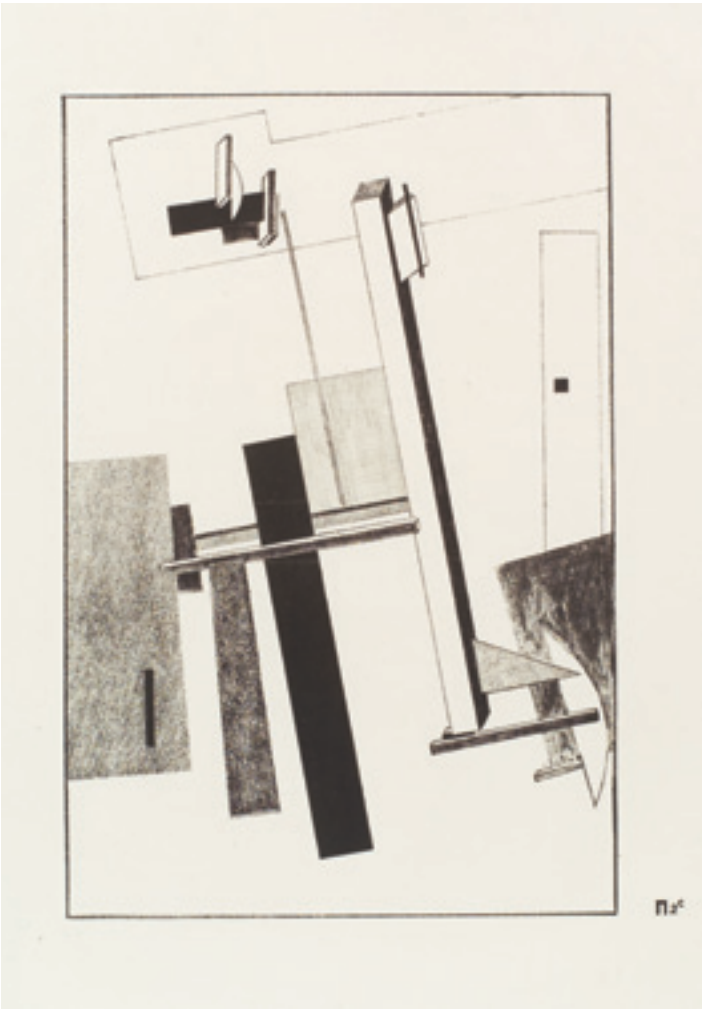
Manifesztumnak

Als Manifest

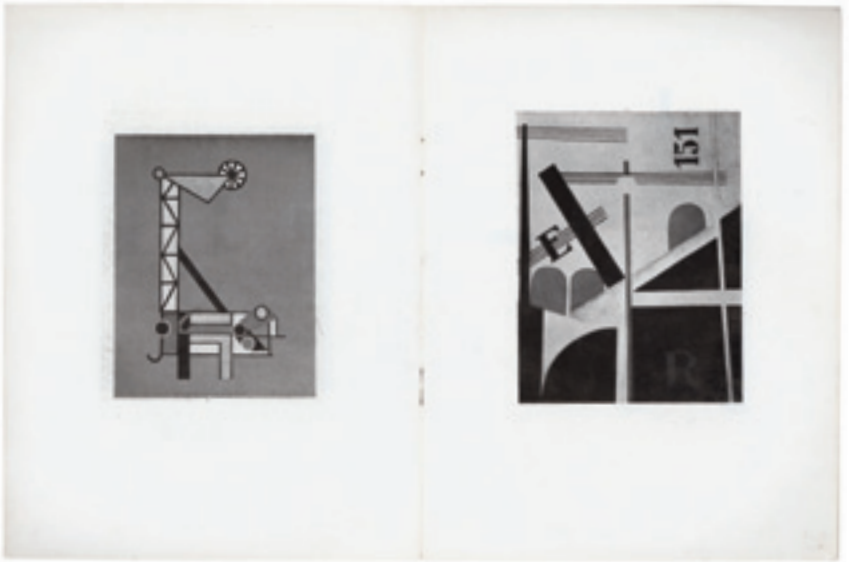
Kettős szám ára: 4500 osztr. korona, 5 c. korona, 8 dinár, 12 lei, 120 márka.

10. Sándor Barta, designer and editor, *Akasztott Ember* [Hanged man], no. 1–2, November 1, 1922. Ferenc Kiss collection, Budapest.

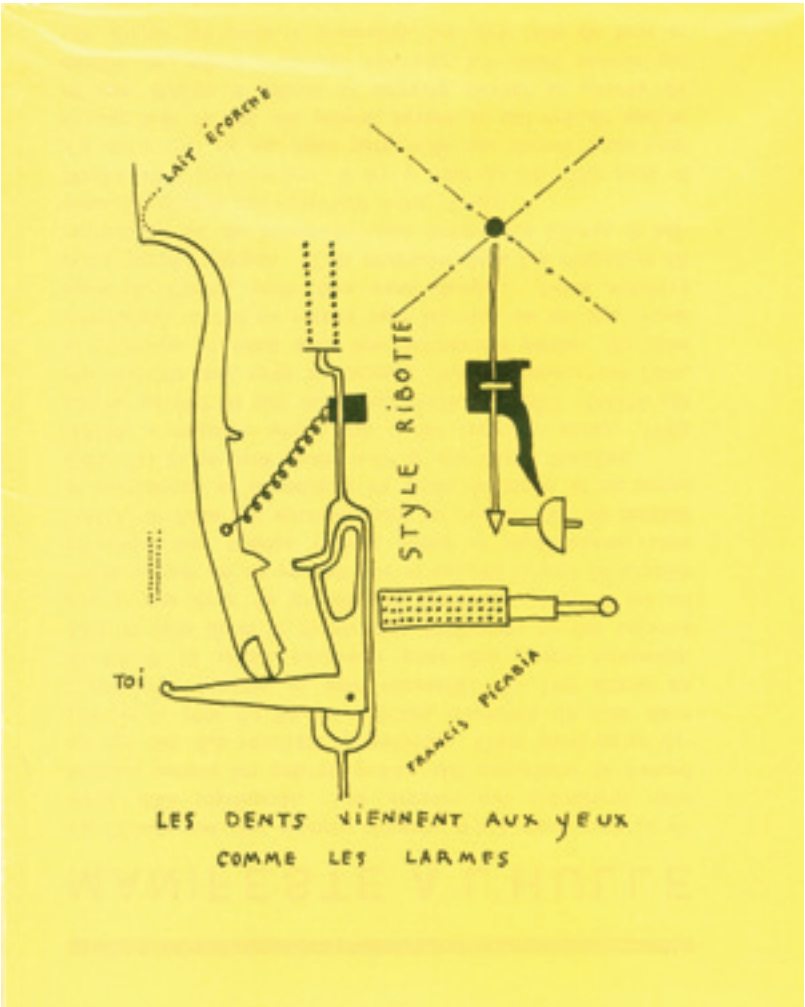
11. László Moholy-Nagy, untitled, n.d. [1923], linocut on paper, 30.5 x 24. LL: "1. Abzug," LR: "Moholy=Nagy." (This linocut appeared in *Het Overzicht*, Antwerp, nos. 22–23–24, February 1925, p. 186.) Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.



12. Lazar El Lissitzky, *Proun EZ*, lithograph on paper, 1920–21, sheet: 45.1 x 34.3, image: 29.7 x 19.8. Print Collection, Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

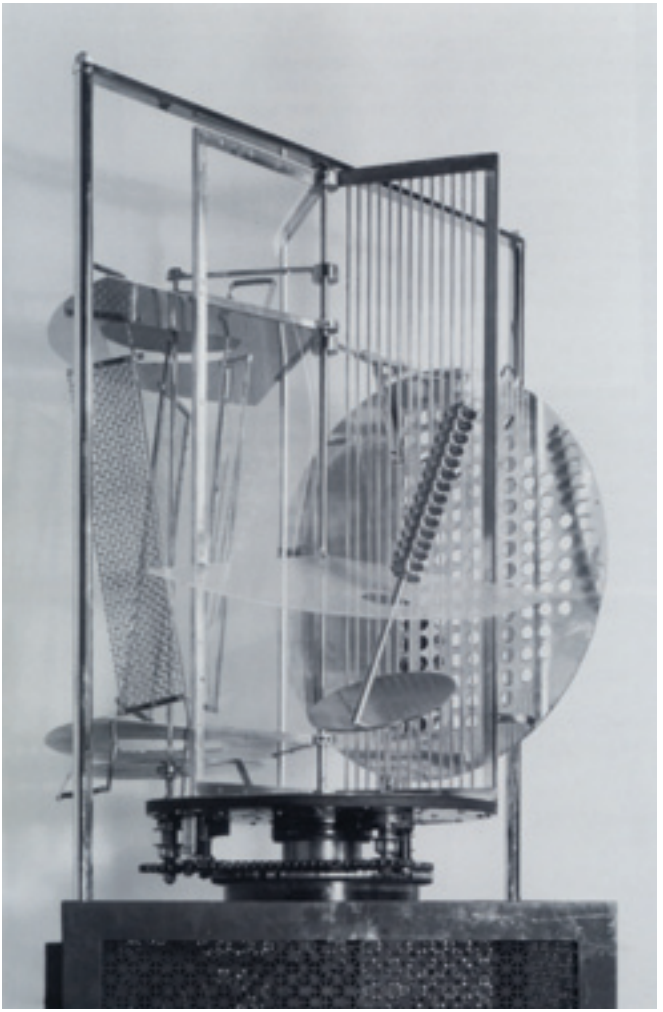


13. *Horizont 2 Moholy-Nagy* [Horizon 2], Vienna, 1922. With reproductions of: *Machine Construction*, [ca. 1921], oil on canvas, (dimensions and location unknown) and *Large Railway Painting*, n.d. [ca. 1921], oil on linen, 100 x 77 (Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sophia, Collection Thyssen Bornemissza, Madrid). M. Szarvasy Collection New York.

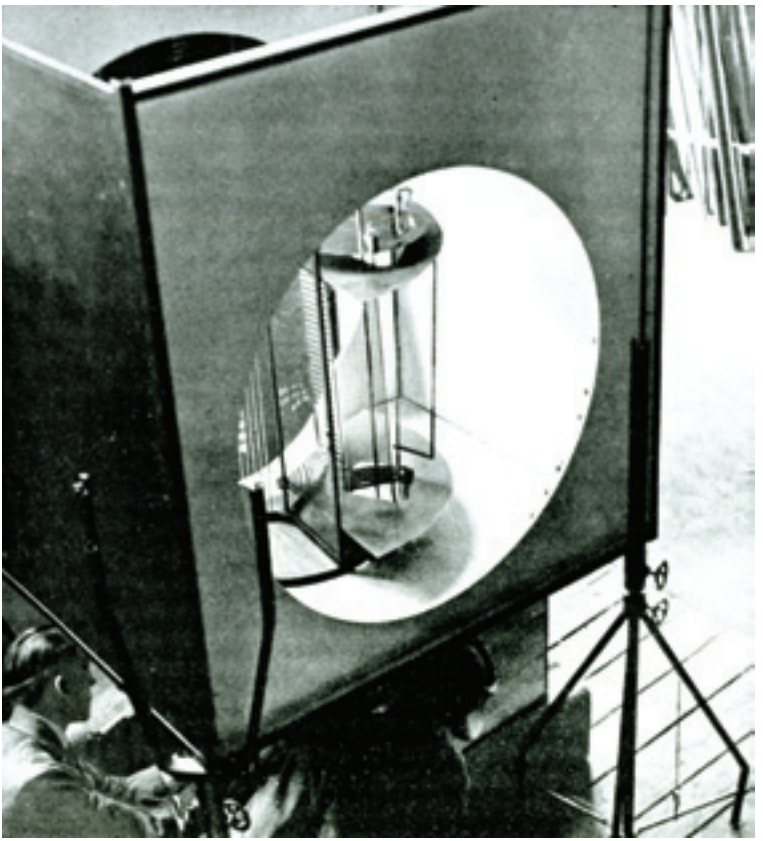


14. Francis Picabia. *Les dents viennent aux yeux comme les larmes*, drawing reproduced in: Theo van Doesburg, *Mécano*, no. 1, 1922. After: Facsimile edition of *Mécano*, Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1980. Private Collection.

15. László Moholy-Nagy, *Architektur I* [Architecture 1] or *Konstruktion auf blauem Grund* [Construction on a blue ground], n.d. [1922], oil, metallic oil pigment and graphite on fine linen fabric, 65.2 x 55.4. Collection of The Salgo Trust for Education, New York.



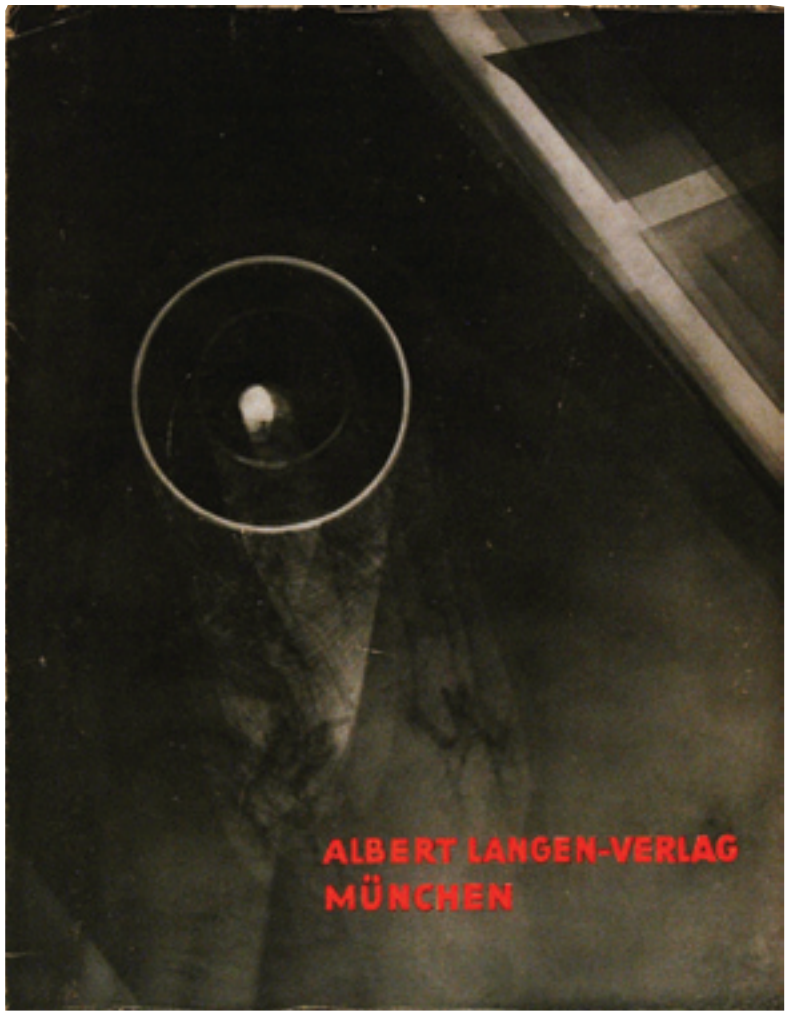
16. Photographer unknown, László Moholy-Nagy, *Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne* [Light Prop for an Electric Stage], 1922–1930. Harvard Art Museum/ Busch-Reisinger Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

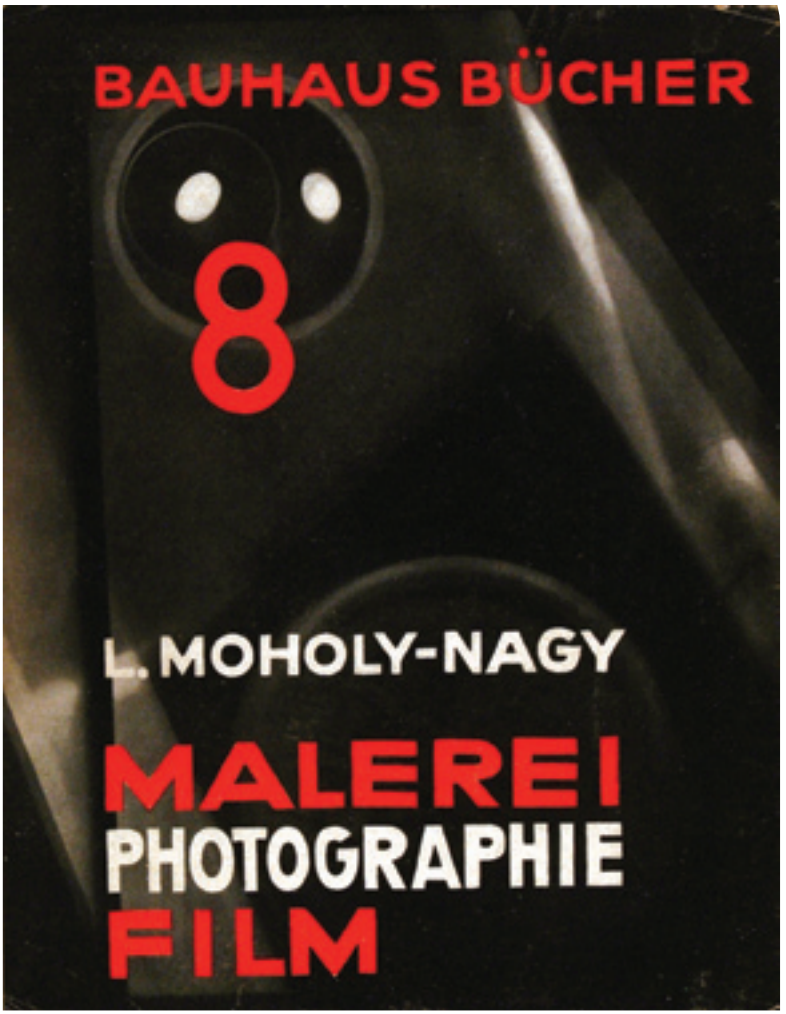


17. Photographer unknown, László Moholy-Nagy, *Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne* [Light Prop for an Electric Stage], 1922–1930, after: *Die Form: Zeitschrift für gestaltenden Arbeit*, Vol. 5, no. 11–12, June 1930.

18. László Moholy-Nagy, dust jacket design and authorship of *Vision in Motion*, Chicago: Paul Theobald & Co., 1947. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

19. László Moholy-Nagy, cover design and authorship of *Von Material zu Architektur* [From material to architecture]. Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1929. Bauhausbücher 14. Private collection.


ALBERT LANGEN-VERLAG
MÜNCHEN

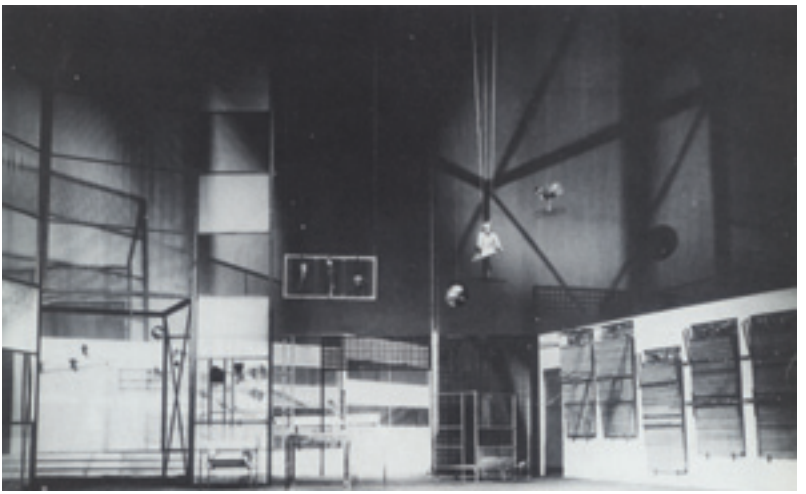


20. László Moholy-Nagy, cover design for and authorship of *Malerei, Photographie, Film* [Painting, photography, film]. Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925. Bauhausbücher 8. Moholy-Nagy's photograms on the covers were made between March 1923 and April 1925. M. Szarvasy Collection New York.


LUDWIG KASSÁK
L. MOHOLY NAGY
WIEN
MA

21. Lajos Kassák and László Moholy-Nagy, *Buch neuer Künstler* [Book of new artists]. Vienna: Ma Editions, 1922. Cover design by Lajos Kassák. M. Szarvasy Collection New York.

22. Fortunato Depero, *Motorumorist Coloured Plastic Complex*, 1914–1915, destroyed.



23. László Moholy-Nagy, Stage set for Jacques Offenbach, *Tales of Hoffmann*. Krolloper, Berlin, 1929.

24. Illustration from Moholy-Nagy, *The New Vision. Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1938, p. 13, with the caption: "Virtual Volume. A lighted merry-go-round revolving (Blackpool, England). Virtual, but visible volume (motion)." Private collection.

25. Sigmund Lipinsky (1873-1940), Portrait of Raoul H. Francé, n.d. [ca. 1920-21], etching, dimensions unknown. After: Frontispiece for Raoul H. Francé, *Bios: Die Gesetze der Welt*, Munich: Franz Hanfstaengl, 1921. Private collection.

26. Lucia Moholy, Portrait of Heinrich Jacoby, modern print from original negative. Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin) © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn, 2009.

27. Raoul Heinrich Francé, layout from *Die Pflanze als Erfinder* [Plants as inventors], Stuttgart: Kosmos, Gesellschaft der Naturfreunde, 1920. Private collection.

28. László Moholy-Nagy, layout from *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925. After the English edition, *Painting, Photography, Film*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1969. Private collection.

Abb. 17. Ein Teil des Fixsternhimmels mit dem großen Nebel bei S Monocerotis

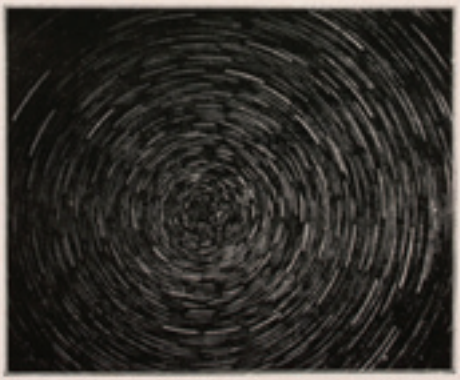
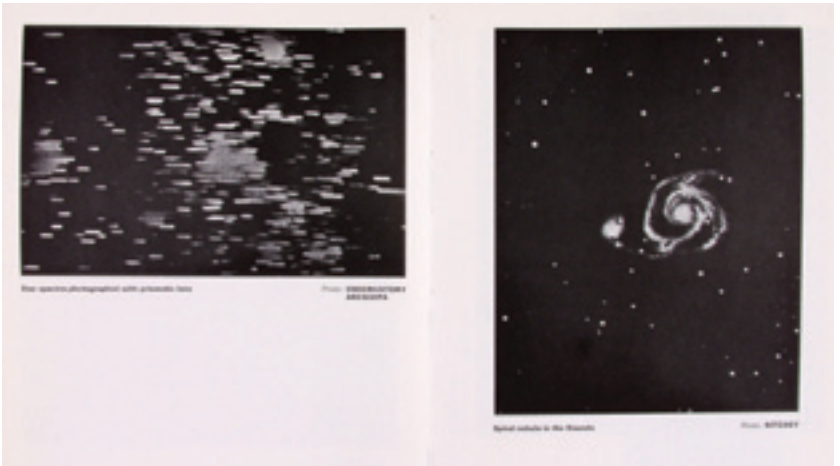
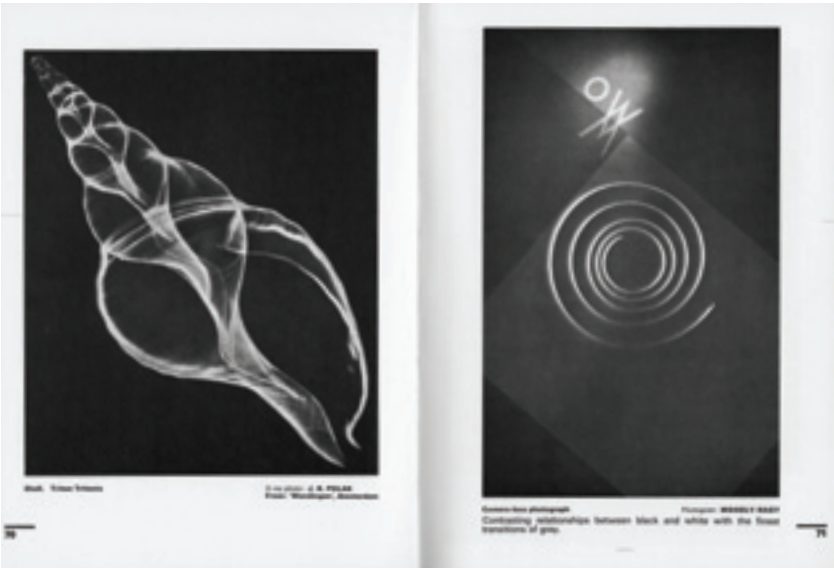


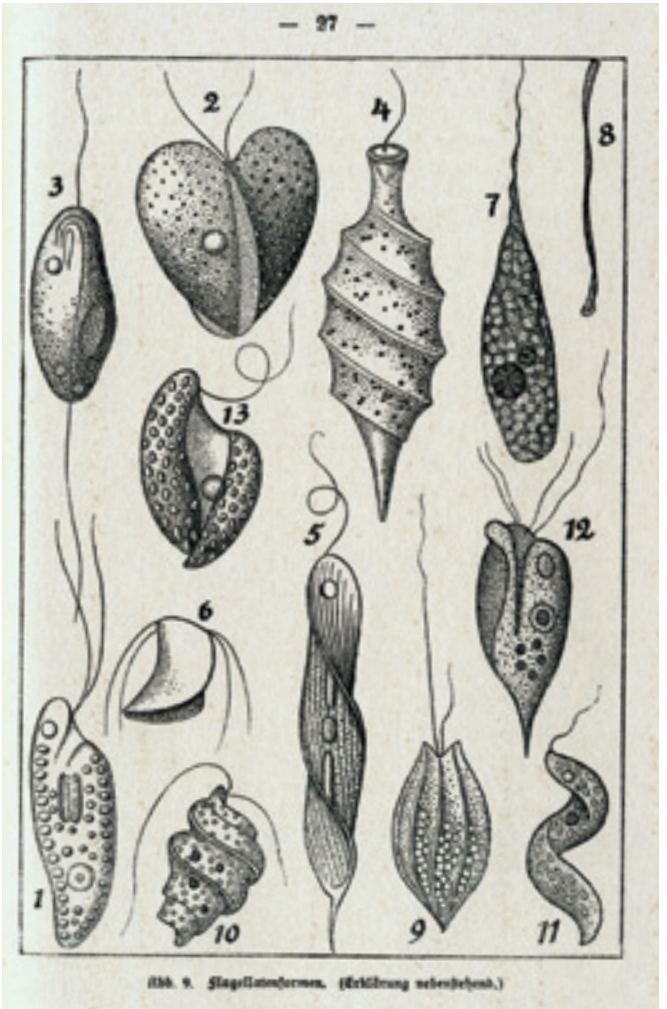
Abb. 18. Himmelsphotographie aus der Gegend des Polarsterns
Dem Fernrohr folgte hierbei nicht den scheinbaren Bahnen der Sterne. Dadurch zeichneten sich diese als Kreise ab, und die Achse ihrer Bahnen wurde sichtbar.



29. L: Raoul H. Francé, layout from *Bios: Die Gesetze der Welt* [Bios: The laws of the world], volume 1. Munich: Franz Hanfstaengl, 1921. R: László Moholy-Nagy, layout from *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925. After the English edition, *Painting, Photography, Film*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1969. Private collection.



30. László Moholy-Nagy, layout from *Malerei, Photographie, Film*. Munich: Albert Langen Verlag, 1925, pp. 66–7. After the English edition, *Painting, Photography, Film*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1969. On the right is a photogram by Moholy-Nagy and on the left J. B. Polak's radiograph of a nautilus shell first published in *Wendingen*, 5, no. 8–9 (1923) Private collection.

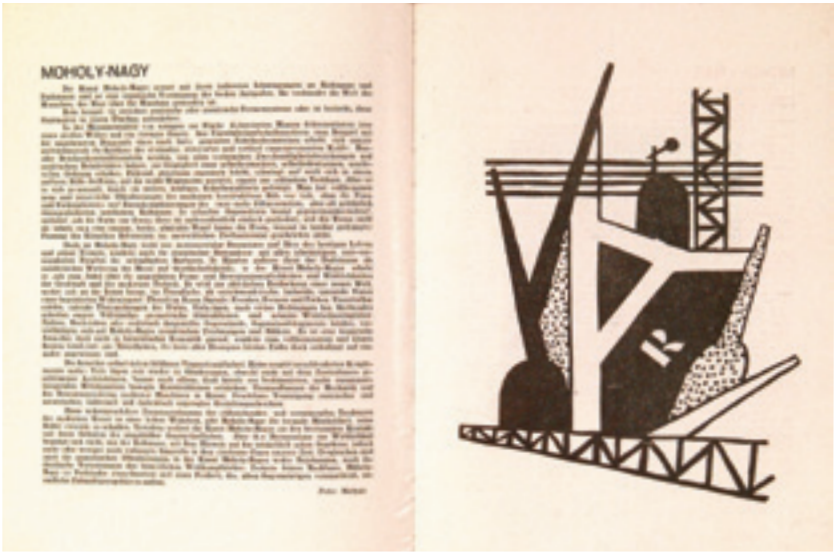


31. Raoul H. Francé, *Flagellatenformen* [Flagellate forms], from: *Die Pflanze als Erfinder* [Plants as inventors], Stuttgart: Kosmos, Gesellschaft der Naturfreunde, 1920. Private collection.

32. László Moholy-Nagy, *The Spiral*, plexiglas, 1946, 49 x 37.5 x 40. Private collection.

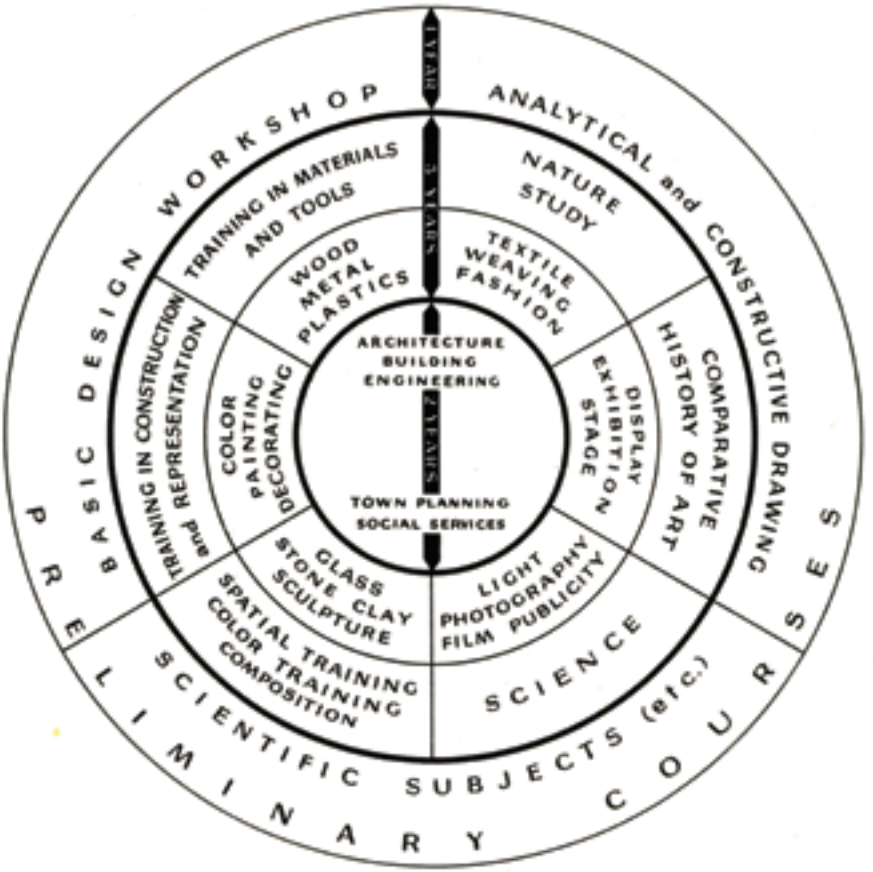
33. Raoul Heinrich Francé, *Das letzte Geheimnis des Eros* [The final secret of Eros]. After: Rudolf Engel-Hardt, *Francé als Graphiker. Ein Weg zum 'wirklichen Naturbild'*, Stuttgart: Walter Seifert Verlag, 1925. Private collection.

34. Lyonel Feininger, *Kathedrale der Zukunft* [Cathedral of the Future], woodcut on cover of: Walter Gropius, *Manifest und Programm des Staatlichen Bauhauses in Weimar*, Weimar, 1919. After: Facsimile edition, Weimar, 2009. Private collection.

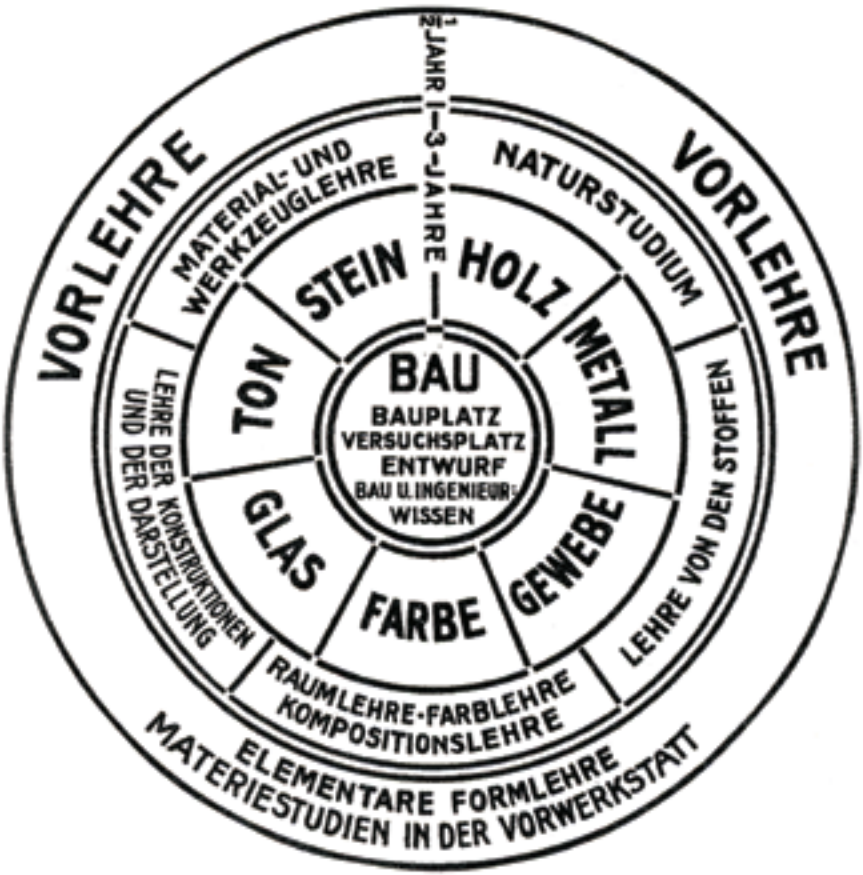


35. *Horizont 2 Moholy-Nagy* [Horizon 2 Moholy-Nagy], Vienna: Ma Editions, 1921. Open to the essay by "Péter Mátyás" [Ernő Kállai], and an untitled ink drawing on paper by László Moholy-Nagy (variation on *Bild R*), [ca. 1921] (dimensions and location unknown). M. Szarvasy Collection, New York.

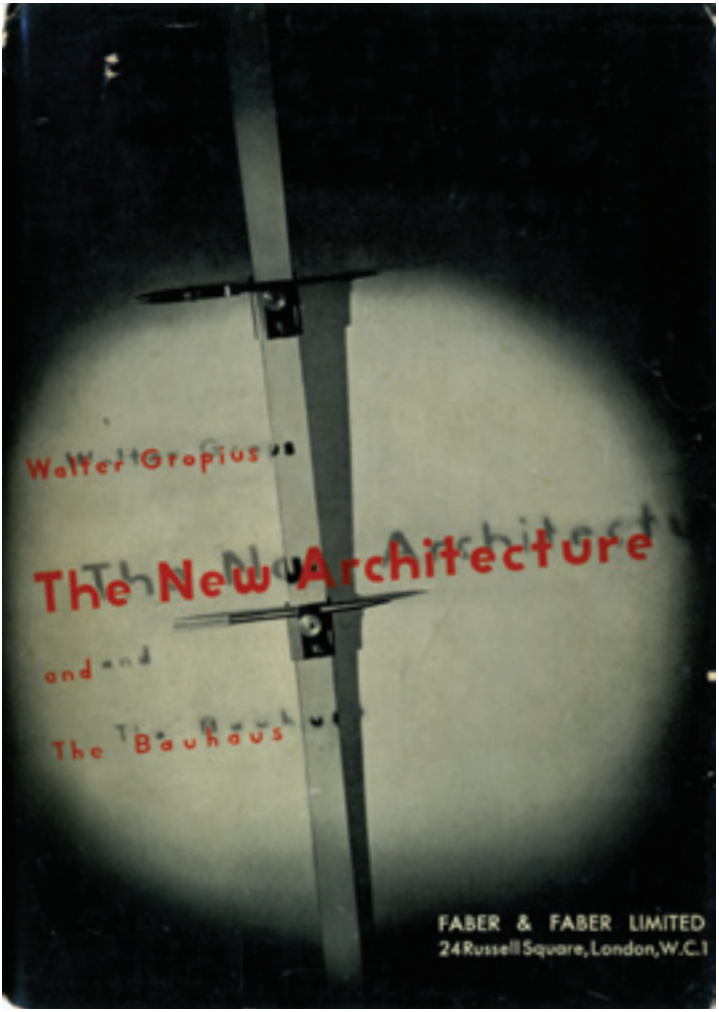
36. Brochure of the New Bauhaus. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.



37. László Moholy-Nagy, New Bauhaus Curriculum Diagram, 1937/1938.

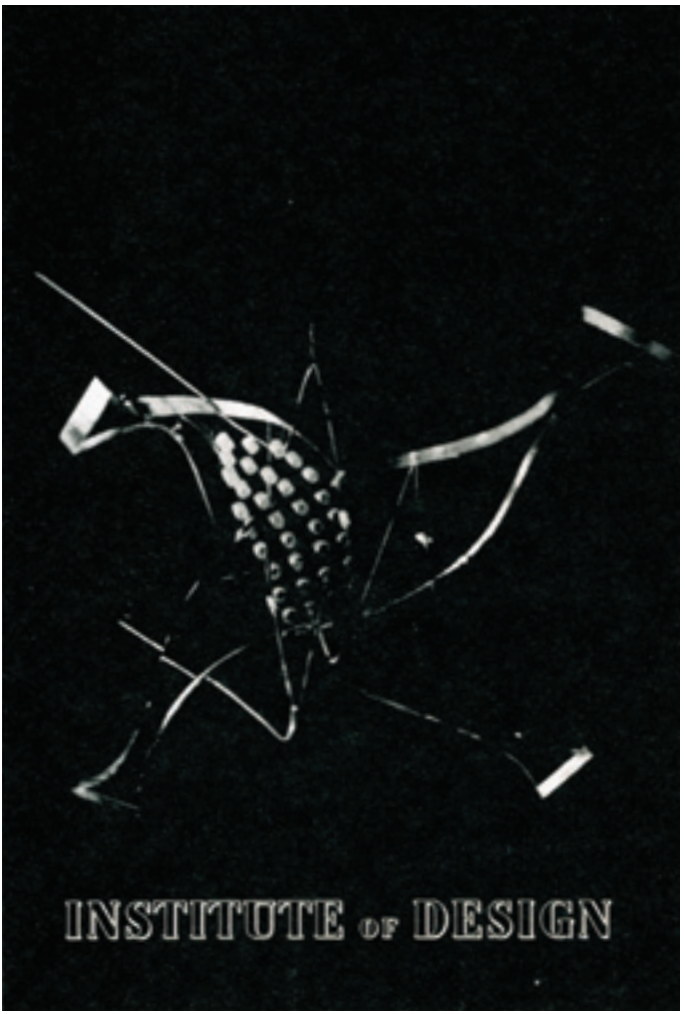


38. Walter Gropius, diagram of the Bauhaus curriculum, 1922. After: *Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919–1923*. Weimar and Munich: Bauhausverlag, 1923.

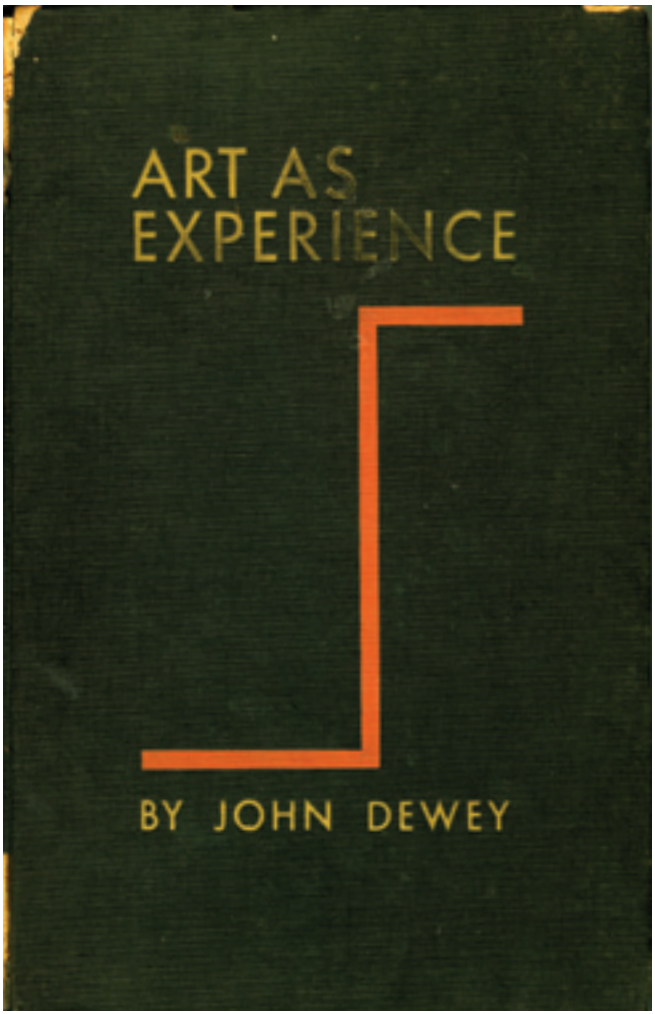


39. László Moholy-Nagy, dust jacket design for Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*, London: Faber and Faber, 1935. Private collection.

40. László Moholy-Nagy, *Glyzinienbaum* [Wisteria], dated "1924" [may be later]. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

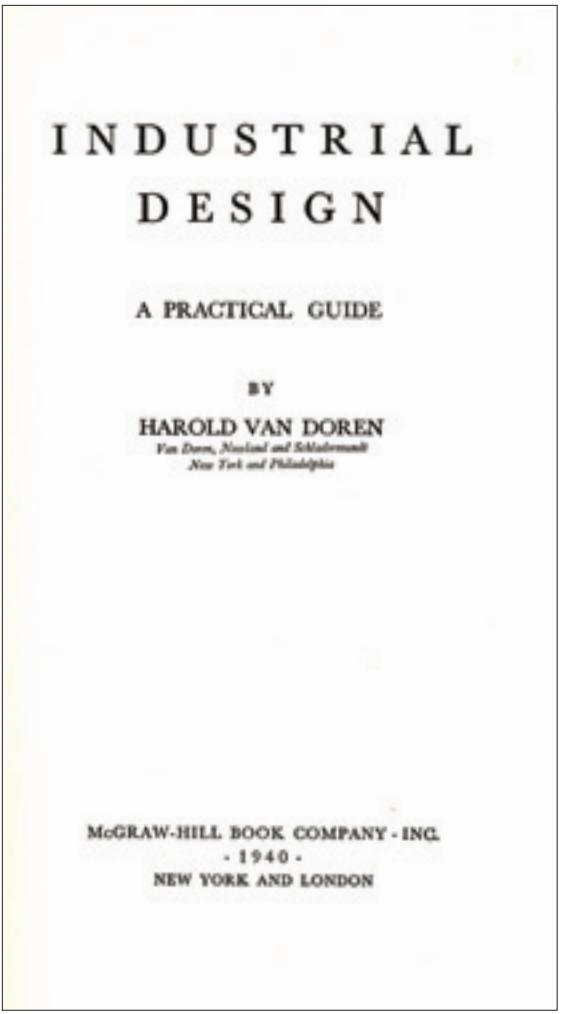


41. Cover of a prospectus for the Institute of Design, with a *Space Modulator* in plexiglas by László Moholy-Nagy, 1944. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

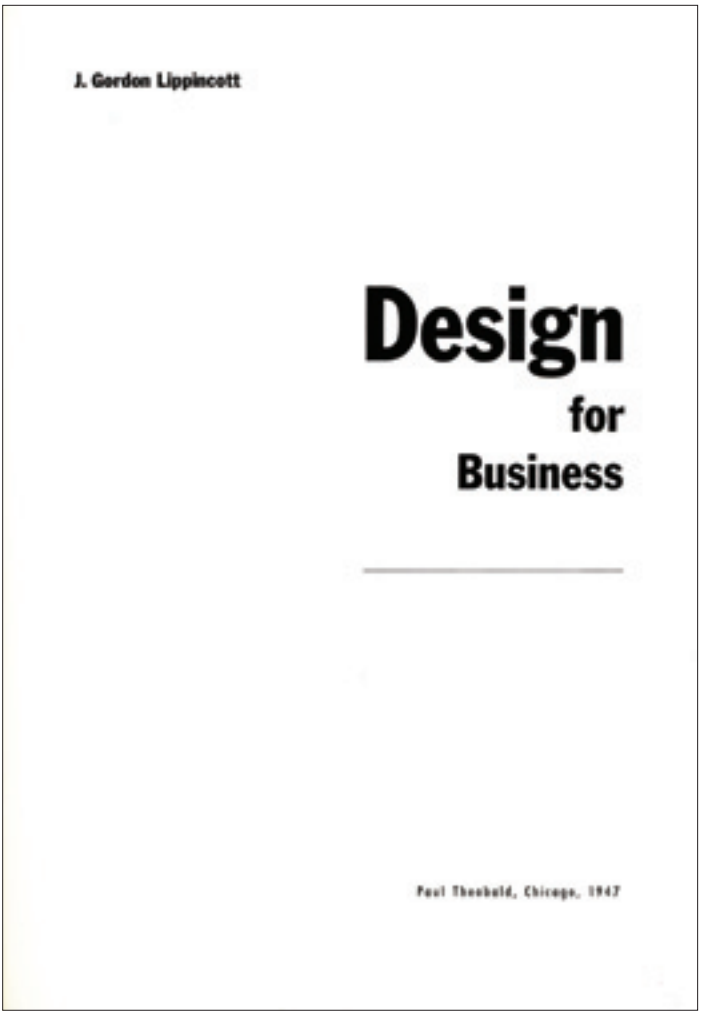


42. John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934. László Moholy-Nagy's personal copy dedicated "To L. Moholy-Nagy. In memory of the First Year of the New Bauhaus! June 1938 Charles W. Morris." Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

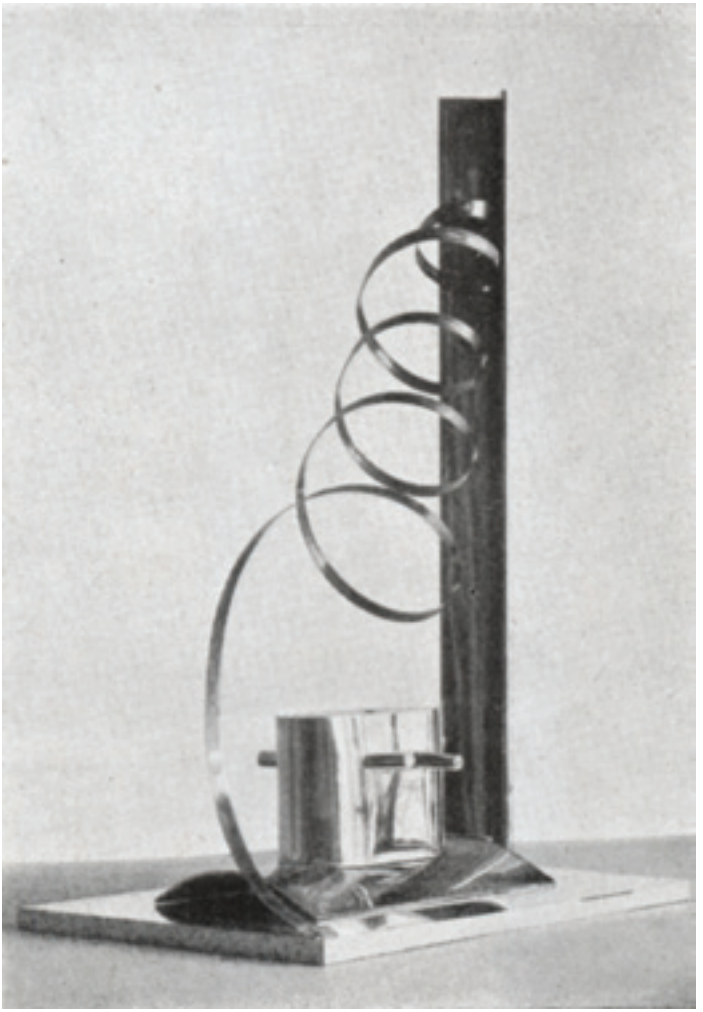
43. László Moholy-Nagy, dust jacket design and authorship of *The New Vision. Fundamentals of Design, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1938. Private collection.



44. Harold Van Doren, *Industrial Design: A Practical Guide*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1940. Private collection.

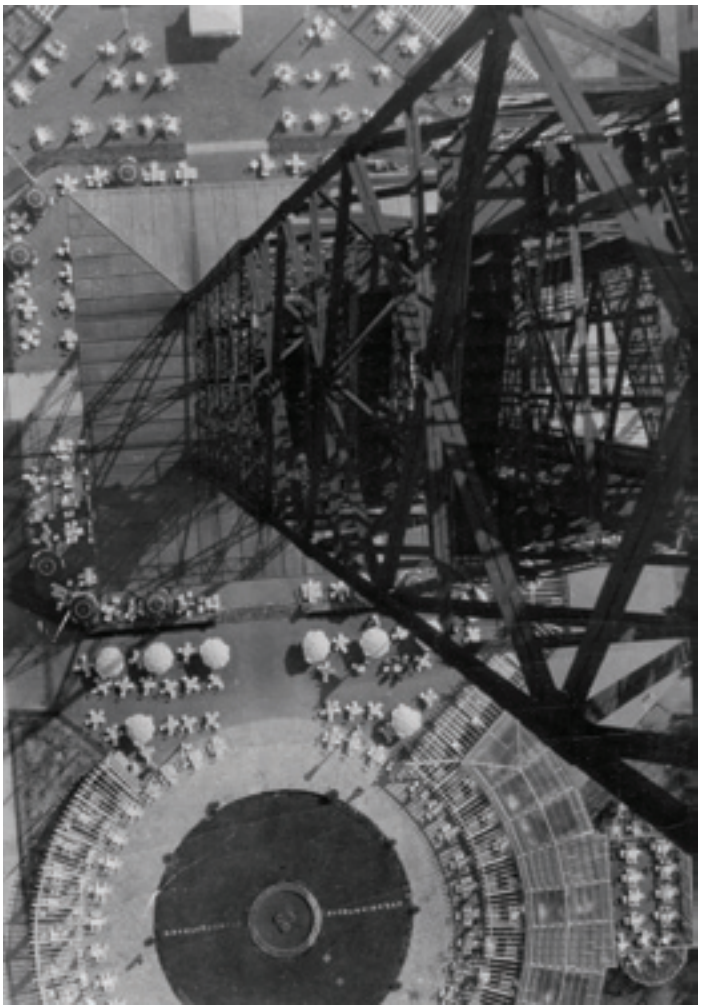


45. Gordon Lippincott, *Design for Business*, Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1944. Private collection.



46. László Moholy-Nagy, *Nickel Sculpture with Spiral*, 1921. (Museum of Modern Art, New York) After: Moholy-Nagy and Lajos Kassák, *Új művészek könyve* [Book of new artists], Vienna: MA Editions, 1922. Private collection.

47. László Moholy-Nagy, untitled (flower), n.d. [probably made between March 1923 and April 1925], photogram on printing-out paper, 17.8 x 12.8. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.



48. Moholy-Nagy, *Berlin Radio Tower*, c. 1928, vintage silver gelatin print, 9 x 6. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy .

49. *Jelenkor* [The present age], vol. 1, no. 1, November 1917. Collection of Katalin and Anna Hevesy.

IMAGE CREDITS

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Front Cover: Photographer unknown, (László Moholy-Nagy in a check jacket looking back), n.d. (ca. 1930?). Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

Frontispiece A: Photographer unknown, untitled (László Moholy-Nagy on a sailboat in the Baltic Sea), 1930. Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

Frontispiece B: Photographer unknown, untitled (László Moholy-Nagy with an unknown woman), modern silver gelatin print from original negative. Private collection.

Back cover illustration: Photographer unknown, untitled (László Moholy-Nagy in a check jacket), n.d. (ca. 1930?). Collection of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.