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20th Century Hungarian Art at Home and Abroad

edited by
Oliver A. I. Botar

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Articles by

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and STEPHEN L. PELLÁTHY

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edited by Nándor Dreisziger

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Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 1–2 (2004)

Preface

The present volume is the third in a series I have been editing since 1988 on Hungarian fine arts.[1] While the studies gathered here have no unifying theme, they all deal with an aspect of Hungarian modernist and avant-garde visual arts, and they cover the last century from its early years to its very conclusion.

Part of his upcoming detailed biography of László Moholy-Nagy, Lloyd Engelbrecht's article looks in detail at Moholy-Nagy's high school (*gimnázium*) schooling, in order to better understand the later wide-ranging work of this 20th century "Renaissance Man."

In her article, Mariann Mazzone examines the ways in which the *képversek* [picture poems] of Lajos Kassák draw from both the discourses of Dada and Constructivism. In the critique of abstract artistic practices she uses to frame this discussion, she "posit[s] ... that what is now always seen as 'purity' may instead be at times mute geometry, work that has failed in its goal of communication, lost its voice, so to speak."

Ruth E. Iskin looks at Moholy-Nagy as a theorist and practitioner of an art of pure light. Following his writings and invoking the theoretical work of the German art historian Erwin Panowsky she has produced an original reading of Moholy-Nagy's use of light in his work as a way of overcoming Renaissance perspective as a spatial paradigm in contemporary art. She goes on to compare Moholy-Nagy's approach with that of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, and concludes with a look at how some of Moholy-Nagy's ideas have been realized in the field of contemporary art, but in ways that Moholy-Nagy did not foresee.

Drawn from his recent dissertation, James Wechsler's article on the Hungarian-American artist Hugo Gellert, sheds light for the first time on this Leftist artist's connections with his homeland and with the Hungarian community in the United States.

My own piece is on the work of the Hungarian-Canadian artist Endre (Andrew) Bőszin. A student of Jenő Gadányi, and a protege of both Lajos Kassák and Ernő Kállai, Bőszin is a member of a generation of Hungarian artists whose career was interrupted by war, political shifts, revolution, emigration and re-emigration. The present essay, focussing on the artist's Hungarian and British periods, comprises the first scholarly look at Bőszin's work.

Employing social scientific methodologies, Stephanie S. Donlon and Stephen L. Pelláthy conduct a study of the ways in which players on the contemporary Hungarian art scene of the late 1990s have adapted to the new realities of Hungary since the political sea change of 1989.

I would like to thank the contributors to this volume of the HSR, and particularly Dr. Hattula Moholy-Nagy for her generous permission to publish photographs of the art of her father in this issue. Thanks are also due to Mr. Endre Bőszin for permission to publish his works and to Dr. Ferenc Csaplár and the Estates of Lajos Kassák and Hugo Gellert, for permission to publish artworks, articles and poems. Finally I wish to thank Nándor Dreisziger for patiently supporting this special volume during the stages through which it has passed. We all owe him a great debt.

As the finishing touches were being put on this volume, I received the sad news that Dr. Júlia Szabó had passed away. Dr. Szabó was a dedicated scholar of modern Hungarian art, and a selfless supporter of younger scholars. I have included a remembrance of Dr. Szabó and have dedicated this issue of the HSR to her memory.

Oliver A. I. Botar

NOTES

[1] See the special issues of this journal: *The Early Twentieth-Century Hungarian Avant-Garde*, vol. XV, no. 1, (Spring, 1988) and *Hungarian Artists in the Americas,* vol. XXI, nos. 1-2, (Spring-Fall, 1994).

Hungarian Studies Review, Vol. XXXI, Nos. 1–2 (2004)

The Formation of a Renaissance Man: László Moholy-Nagy's Secondary Schooling in Hungary

Lloyd Engelbrecht

László Moholy-Nagy was born July 20, 1895 in Bácsborsod, Hungary, and died November 24, 1946, in Chicago (figure 1, see page 12). As one of the most rounded and versatile creative figures of the twentieth century, he achieved great success as painter, sculptor, theatre and interior designer, industrial and graphic designer, photographer, film maker, writer and editor. What tied all of these activities together for him was his passion for teaching. His principal venues for teaching were in the German towns of Weimar and Dessau, where he taught at the Bauhaus (an innovative school of design) from 1923 to 1928, and in Chicago, where he taught at the New Bauhaus, which he founded in 1937, and at its successors, the School of Design in Chicago, and the Institute of Design.

Because teaching was so crucial in Moholy's career it is worth looking into his secondary education in Szeged, in the classical curriculum of the Szegedi Állami Főgimnázium [Main State Gymnasium of Szeged].[1] The school, located just a short walk from Moholy's now no longer extant home at Pusztaszeri utca 4, occupies an imposing (but not particularly memorable) building, dating from 1899. The architect was Sándor Baumgarten, a staff architect of the Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction.

It was in 1905 that Moholy began his studies in the eight-year curriculum of Szeged's Classical *gimnázium* at the usual age of ten.[2] There is every indication that he had the most rigorous secondary education available in Hungary. In 1905 there were 132 classical secondary schools offering eight grades.[3] Some of these, including the Szegedi Állami Főgimnázium, were maintained by local communities, some were maintained by religious denominations, and a few were proprietary, but all were supervised and subject to inspection by the Minister for Public

Instruction.[4] Moholy had been born into a Jewish family, at a time when the total number of Jews would have been about 5% of the population.[5] The Jewish community of Szeged had considered, but rejected, the idea of establishing a school offering studies beyond the elementary level.[6] Although he attended a non-sectarian *gimnázium*, religious studies were included in the curriculum, as discussed below.

The Szegedi Állami Főgimnázium had opened as a school for boys on September 1, 1898, in temporary quarters; in the autumn of 1903 it moved into the Baumgarten building (figure 2, see page 13), which had originally been used by a girls' secondary school.[7] Instruction was based on eight forms, or classes, and only the first was offered in the 1898-1899 school year. Since one grade was added each year, the first graduates finished their studies in the 1904-1905 school year, just as Moholy was about to enroll. His entering class that year had 174 students, while the entire student body numbered 715. He had only 56 classmates in his last school year (1912-1913); the total student body that year numbered 724.[8]

All students in the Classical secondary schools were required to study three foreign languages, including eight years of Latin, four years of Greek, and six years of German.[9] During Moholy's time at the school, French was also offered and he studied that as well.[10] Other requirements included eight years of mathematics, eight years of religion, five years of natural history, two years of physics, six years of history, three years of geography, one year of philosophy and eight years of the study of Hungarian language and literature.[11] The chart in figure 3 (see page 14) shows the national requirements for Classical secondary schools.

For his required eight years of religion, Moholy most likely engaged in studies in the Hebrew language as well as in Judaism.[12] Raphael Patai summarized religious studies in Hungarian secondary schools as follows:

> In the municipal schools two hours weekly were set aside for religious studies, for which the pupils were divided into three groups: Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish [*sic*; in actuality, provision was also made for Greek Catholics], with each receiving instruction in a separate classroom from a clergyman of his own faith. The courses in Jewish religion were given by graduates of the Jewish Teachers Institute or of the Rabbinical Seminary of Budapest.[13]

Evidently drawing was not offered in Moholy's *gimnázium* when he studied there (though drawing is offered currently).[14] However, according to an official government publication of 1908, "Lectures on the History of Art illustrated by magic lantern slides are delivered every year during the winter months to the pupils of the two higher classes ... of Secondary Schools, upon School premises, at various centres in turn. Each course consists of a series of twelve lectures, the delivery of which is entrusted to some capable teacher of the School ..."[15] This is a very prescient policy by any standards, as the field of Art History was still quite new in 1908. Given that the field had its origins in the Imperial capital of Vienna, however, and that is was already by that point well-established in the sister capital of Budapest as well, perhaps it is not so surprising. These lectures are not mentioned in the otherwise thorough accounts of Péter and Jánosi (see endnote 2), and it may be supposed that an official government publication might have exaggerated the degree to which the art history lectures were available in Hungary's secondary schools. Nonetheless it would seem to be a safe assumption that these lectures were available in the most prestigious secondary school in Hungary's second-largest city. In addition, it is clear that Moholy was interested in art history from an early age. He later wrote about the collection of art books he accumulated after he returned from military service: "In this period I spent all my money on art books and was constantly studying their illustrations. I studied the old masters, the new ones, whatever I could get my hand[s] on."[16] In his recollections of the time, Jenő Nagy said his brother had "at least thirty or forty books," and that, "[h]e especially loved Rembrandt, Holbein, Memling. And Van Gogh."[17]

In Péter's lively account of Moholy's years at the Szegedi Állami Főgimnázium the most curious detail is Moholy's near-obsession with shorthand, an enthusiasm he shared with his younger brother and fellow student, Ákos (1897-1938) and with his best friend in the school, Imre Bach (1895-1966). All three were active in the shorthand club, and served as officers. The teacher who worked with the shorthand club was György Lippay, who was also Moholy's teacher for Greek; Moholy enrolled in Lippay's optional course in shorthand during his fourth year.[18] Moholy won several prizes in the school's shorthand club, as well as a prize from the Shorthand Association of Szeged, in 1910.[19] In one of the club's annual reports, he was cited (along with Ákos and Imre) for "contributions to the theoretical knowledge of shorthand in their papers and lectures."[20] Precisely why shorthand was so important to László and

Ákos (and to other students) at the time is only suggested in Péter's account, but he did name several effective local propagandists, reported that the fad for shorthand persisted as late as the 1920s, and added that an esteemed poet, Attila József (1905-1937), was under the "... influence of this craze during his young years"[21] in Szeged. This interest clearly relates to Moholy's interest in communications.

Péter does describe several of Moholy's educational experiences that more obviously served as preparation for his later life. These include his first active involvement with the theatre. This was during his seventh academic year (1911-1912) when he coached some underclassmen in a dramatized version of a passage from *The Boys of Paul Street* (*A Pál utcai fiúk*), a novel by Ferenc Molnár (1878-1952), in which Moholy himself played the part of the teacher.[22] Moholy followed this up with a performance on March 2, 1913, of the role of the lackey in a one-act burlesque, *Incognito*, by Ney and Pokorny.[23]

Moholy became a member of the literary and debating society of the *gimnázium* during his seventh year, when he won a prize for the translation into Hungarian of Johann Vogl's German-language poem, "Pannonia," in the original metre.[24] In his eighth year Moholy won a first prize for Hungarian, and another for his skill as a critic and lecturer.[25]

Other prizes won by Moholy included books and scholarship money. The latter consisted of the school's Bamberger scholarship won during his fifth year, an award of 60 crowns, and the same scholarship the following year, increased to 80 crowns.[26]

Ambitious "educational outings" were encouraged in the Hungarian educational system. These were facilitated by a combination of cheap rail fares and grants from a special fund.[27] Moholy went on at least one such excursion with his *gimnázium* mates, from May 20 through May 27, 1911. Two teachers and thirty-four pupils visited a number of cities that were then all part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The group travelled from Szeged through Zagreb to the Adriatic seaport of Fiume (now Rijeka, Croatia). Thence they proceeded via the steamship "Gödöllő" to Cattarro (Kotor), and finally on to Ragusa (Dubrovnik) and the nearby island of Lacroma (Locrum). They returned via Sarajevo.[28] Moholy, recalling the trip some years later, seemed to be especially impressed with Dubrovnik.[29]

The Szegedi Állami Főgimnázium was fortunate to have had a faculty of outstanding quality. The founding director of the school, Károly Kárpáti (born 1851), remained as director during Moholy's years at the

school. Kárpáti was a prolific author, writing on German and Hungarian literature, among other topics, including the history of duelling.[30] The faculty members at the school who probably had the most influence on Moholy were form masters who, by Hungarian custom, move up with their class. For five years this was János Horváth (1878-1961), who taught Latin and history and, for part of the five-year period, Hungarian,[31] and he may well have affected Moholy in profound and unexpected ways.

As it happened, Horváth was the author of one of the earliest studies of Endre Ady (1877-1919),[32] now universally recognized as Hungary's most significant modern poet. Horváth's book was published despite pressure from István Tisza, Hungary's former premier and at the time still a leading politician, to leave the subject of Ady alone.[33] When Horváth persisted in publishing his book, even though it was not entirely adulatory (because he made some mild criticisms of Ady from a conservative point of view),[34] some of Horváth's subsequent writings were rejected by conservative journals.[35]

One writer described the impact of Ady on Hungary as being "... like a meteor crashing on a sleepy planet."[36] The art historian Lajos Fülep (1885-1970) once recalled his impression of Ady's initial impact on Hungarian society:

> The sensation was the scandalous fact that such poems were being published at all, such incomprehensible, meaningless, crazy, insane poems, and not just once or twice in some humor periodical as a joke, but week after week, with unerring consistency, in a serious political journal [the *Budapesti Napló*].[37]

Horváth's career suffered no permanent damage, and he went on to become a professor at the University of Budapest, a prolific author, and one of Hungary's leading literary historians and critics. Poet and political activist István Eörsi (born 1931) wrote of Horváth that "[h]is stimulating personality enabled him to exercise a powerful influence on the younger generation of scholars and teachers."[38] One example would be Albert Tezla, who dedicated to Horváth his ambitious work, *Hungarian Authors; a Bibliographic Handbook*, with these words: "To János Horváth (1878-1961) for his illumination and inspiration."[39] Miklós Szabolcsi, writing a few years after the death of Horváth, called him the "most outstanding literary scholar of the age."[40] A recent history of the University of Budapest pointed to Horváth as one of the most prominent professors of the inter-war period.[41] Because of the importance Ady held for Horváth, it is

easy to suppose that the roots of Moholy's life-long interest in innovative writers had its origins in his earliest *gimnázium* years; Moholy no doubt also learned from Horváth that there are times when one must be stubborn and independent.

The next form master was Adolf Wagner, who taught Latin and German;[42] after Wagner went on sick leave in November, 1912, Moholy's form master was József F. Striegl (or Striegel) (born 1874), who taught Hungarian and German.[43] Striegl wrote or co-wrote several works on pedagogy and a text for students studying German.[44] Each of these three men must have had some influence on Moholy's teaching and stimulated Moholy to make heavy demands on himself as a student. Moholy, in turn, later inspired his own students to make heavy demands on themselves. In short, Moholy clearly excelled as a student in the rigorous environment of the *gimnázium*,[45] and evidently applied himself to his studies with great enthusiasm.

The written part of Moholy's "Matura," or final examination, at the end of his *gimnázium* studies in 1913, was given May 16th, 17th and 18th. This included an aesthetic and literary assessment of an epic written by the Hungarian poet and statesman Miklós Zrínyi in the seventeenth century, and a translation from Latin to Hungarian of a passage from Sallust, an encouragement written by Cataline to his accomplice. The oral examination was held between June 9th and 15th.[46]

The high expectations of students at his school, and the outstanding literary education he received from Horváth, had their effect on Moholy's youthful ambitions. Thus, while still a *gimnázium* student, Moholy began to publish his poetry. Two of his poems appeared in *Szegedi Napló*, a Szeged daily newspaper, in its issues of October 6 and November 5, 1911, respectively and another appeared a year later, in its issue of December 3, 1912. Four more poems were published in a literary journal, *Délmagyarország*, three in its issue of October 27, 1912, and one in its issue of November, 1912.[47]

On the basis of his *gimnázium* studies Moholy was admitted to the University of Budapest. The University's Yearbook, or *Almanach*, tells us that he was one of the law students, that he matriculated in 1913, and that he was enrolled for both semesters of the academic year.[48]

Finally, what is significant about Moholy's rigorous liberal arts education during his *gimnázium* years is that it was the foundation on which he built a career dazzling in its multi-disciplinary scope. Moreover, he not only mastered each area of creative activity in which he

worked but he was usually on the leading edge. Moholy wrote frequently on pedagogy, and always insisted that the best way to prepare designers for their careers was to educate the whole person.

Moholy's accomplishments, in contexts quite removed from the atmosphere of a classical Hungarian *gimnázium*, bear testimony to the universality of the education he received there. His own students, in turn, insisted that it was Moholy's broad approach that they remembered most fondly.

NOTES

[1] From 1912 to 1950 the school was known as the Klauzál Gábor Gimnázium; it is now called the Szegedi Állami Radnóti Miklós Általános Gimnázium after an alumnus, Miklós Radnóti (1907-1944), an accomplished poet who was murdered by the Nazis.

[2] He originally enrolled under the name László Moholy Weisz; in his fourth year, begun in 1909, he enrolled as László Nagy (Weisz); during and after his fifth year, begun in 1910, his name appears on school records as László Nagy. See: László Péter, "The Young Years of Moholy-Nagy," *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, volume XIII, number 46 (Summer, 1972), 63; *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," *Tiszatáj*, Number 11 (November, 1971), 1040; and Ilona Jánosi, "László Moholy-Nagy: His Early Life" (M.A. thesis, Indiana University, 1979), 2.

[3] Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, *Education in Hungary* (Budapest: Victor Hornyánszky [Printer to the Imp. & Royal Court], 1908), 132.

[4] Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, *Education in Hungary*, [127]-129 and 134-37.

[5] Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929), 274-75.

[6] Aron Moskovits, *Jewish Education in Hungary (1848-1948)* (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1964), 78.

[7] József Bánfalvi, editor, *A Szegedi Állami Radnóti Miklós Általános Gimnázium, jubileumi évkönyve az 1957-58. tanévről* (Szeged: A Szegedi Állami Radnóti Miklós Általános Gimnázium, 1958), 14 and 16.

[8] *Ibid.*, 104.

[9] Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, *Education in Hungary*, 143.

[10] Péter, "The Young Years, 63; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1040.

[11] Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, *Education in Hungary*, 143.

[12] In any case his brother, Ákos, a fellow student in the *gimnázium*, did enroll in the religion classes for Jewish students. Ákos recalled that in his sixth year he had won a prize of eighty crowns for the best translation of old Hebrew texts. This was in a brief autobiographical memoir written in 1938. I will discuss this memoir, including its location and the circumstances under which it was written, more fully in my forthcoming biography of László Moholy-Nagy.

[13] Raphael Patai, *Apprentice in Budapest; Memories of a World That Is No More* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 146.

[14] The school's drawing-instruction studio was named after Moholy in 1975.

[15] Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, *Education in Hungary*, 149.

[16] László Moholy-Nagy to Antal Németh, July 18, 1924. An English translation of the letter, and a reconstruction by Júlia Szabó of a questionnaire to which he was responding, are included in: Belena S. Chapp, editor, *László Moholy-Nagy: From Budapest to Berlin 1914-1923* (Newark: University Gallery, University of Delaware, 1995), 103.

[17] "Reminiscences of Jenő Nagy, brother of László Moholy-Nagy," in: Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (New York: Thames and Hudson), 385.

[18] Péter, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1039-40. Lippay is not mentioned in the English-language version of Péter's article.

[19] Péter, "The Young Years," 63-65; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1041-42.

[20] Péter, "The Young Years," 65; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1041.

[21] Péter, "The Young Years," 64; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1041.

[22] Jánosi, 7. Péter, "The Young Years," 66; *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1042. Péter speculates that Moholy had probably dramatized the scene himself. On the other hand, Jánosi suggested that the school could have utilized a short sketch written by Molnár himself, *A gittegylet* [The Putty Club]; see: Ferenc Molnár, *Gyerekek* [Children] (Budapest: Lampel, 1905). In any case, the novel proved to have dramatic potential, since it formed the basis for five movies, beginning in 1917; see: Elizabeth Molnár Rajec, *Ferenc Molnár Bibliography* (Vienna: Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1986), 1:111-15. In addition, *The Putty Club* was professionally staged in Budapest in 1923; see: *ibid.*, 2:98.

[23] Jánosi, 7; Péter, "The Young Years," 66; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1042.

[24] Péter, "The Young Years," 65; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1042. Preserving the original forms and patterns in transla-

tions of poetry was an established Hungarian tradition; see: Balázs Lengyel, "Introduction," in: Mihály Babits, *The Nightmare* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1966), 7.

[25] Jánosi, 7; Péter, "The Young Years," 66; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1042.

[26] Péter, "The Young Years," 66; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1042.

[27] Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, *Education in Hungary*, 149-50.

[28] Péter, "The Young Years," 64; Péter, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1041; and Bánfalvi, *Szegedi Állami Radnóti Miklós*, 31.

[29] In the letter to Antal Németh, cited in note 16, Moholy recalled a visit to: "... Dalmatia (Ragusa!) [and] Bosnia." Moholy's exclamation point seems to indicate he enjoyed his visit to the walled sea-side town of Ragusa. (Szeged had been a walled city, but in recent times only vestiges of its walls remain.)

[30] Bánfalvi, *Szegedi Állami Radnóti Miklós, 14; Das geistige Ungarn; Biographisches Lexikon*, herausgegeben von Oskar von Krücken und Imre Parlagi (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, [1918]), 1:609.

[31] Péter, "The Young Years," 63; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László Pályakezdéséhez," 1040.

[32] János Horváth, *Ady és a Legújabb Magyar Líra* [Ady and the Newest Hungarian Poetry] (Budapest: Benkő Gyula, 1910). On Horváth see "Horváth Johann," in: *Das geistige Ungarn*, 1:521-22; and Mario D. Fenyo, *Literature and Political Change: Budapest, 1908-1918*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, volume 77, part 6, 1987 (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1987), 125-27.

[33] On the complicated relationship between Ady and Tisza, see: Fenyo, *Literature and Political Change*, 128-29.

[34] Fenyo, *Literature and Political Change*, 125.

[35] Joseph Held, "Young Hungary: the *Nyugat* Periodical, 1908-1914," in: Stanley B. Winters and Joseph Held, editors, *Intellectual and Social Developments in the Habsburg Empire from Maria Theresa to World War I; Essays Dedicated to Robert A. Kann* (Boulder, Colorado: East European Quarterly, 1975), 281.

[36] Gregory Nehler, "An Introduction to the Study of Babits on Ady" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1991), 119.

[37] Translation by Gregory Nehler; date of original not given. The translation appeared in: Nehler, "An Introduction," 121, quoted from Lajos Fülep, "Ady éjszakái és éjszakája," *Művészet és világnézet* [Art and Weltanschauung] (Budapest: Magvetö, 1976), 45.

[38] István Eörsi, "Biographical Notes," in: György Lukács, *Georg Lukács, Record of a Life; an Autobiographical Sketch*, edited by István Eörsi, translated by Rodney Livingstone (London: Verso Editions, 1983), 189.

[39] Albert Tezla, *Hungarian Authors; a Bibliographic Handbook* (Cambridge: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), [3].

[40] Miklós Szabolcsi, "The Twentieth Century," in: Miklós Szabolcsi, editor, *History of Hungarian Literature* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1964), 233.

[41] László Szögi, *A Short History of Loránd Eötvös University of Budapest* (Budapest: Loránd Eötvös University, 1985), 50.

[42] Péter, "The Young Years," 63; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1040. Nothing further could be found about Wagner.

[43] Péter, "The Young Years," 63; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1040.

[44] *Das geistige Ungarn*, 2:521.

[45] Péter, "The Young Years," 63-64 and 66; *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1040 and 1042; and Janosi, 2 and 7.

[46] Péter, "The Young Years," 66; and *idem*, "Moholy-Nagy László pályakezdéséhez," 1042.

[47] For the original texts, with English translations, see: Chapp, *László Moholy-Nagy*, 33-34, [35], 36 and 39-40.

Regular readers of *HSR* will recall that the earliest republication of poems by Moholy, along with the first published translations into English, appeared in these pages in the Spring-Fall issue of 1994: "Four Poems of 1918 by László Moholy-Nagy," introduced and translated by Oliver A. I. Botar (volume XXI, numbers 1-2, 103-12).

[48] A Budapesti Királyi Magyar Tudományegyetem, *Almanachja az MCMXIII-MCMXIV. Tanévre* (Budapest: Mir. M. Tudományegyetemi Nyomda, 1914), 182. His name was given as "Nagy László."

Figure List

1. Photographer unknown, *László Moholy-Nagy as a Young Man*, date unknown. (Courtesy Hattula Moholy-Nagy). See page 12.
2. June F. Engelbrecht, *Szegedi Állami Főgimnázium* [Szeged State Main Gymnasium], 1994 (Sándor Baumgarten, architect, 1899). (Courtesy June F. Engelbrecht). See page 13.
3. Curricular chart published by Royal Hungarian Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction in 1908. See page 14.

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General Time-Table for the Gymnasiums.

No:	Subjects	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	Total No: of hours
		class								
1	Religion	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
2	Hungarian	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	30
3	Latin	6	6	6	6	6	5	5	4	44
4	Greek	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	4	19
5	Optional subjects in place of Greek	—	—	—	—	5	5	5	4	19
6	German	—	—	4	3	3	3	3	3	19
7	History	—	—	3	3	3	3	3	3	18
8	Geography	3	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	8
9	Natural History	2	2	—	3	3	3	—	—	13
10	Physics	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	8
11	Mathematics	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	2	26
12	Practical Geometry	3	3	2	2	—	—	—	—	10
13	First principles of Philosophy	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	3
14	Calligraphy	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
15	Physical Culture	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
	Total:	28	28	28	28	30	30	30	30	232

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Dadaist Text / Constructivist Image: Kassák's *Képarchitektúra*

Marian Mazzone

Many people, even if they are not art historians, are familiar with the notion that Modern art found its most quintessential form in pure geometric abstraction. Consider, for example, the work of Kazimir Malevich or Piet Mondrian. Some viewers may experience a state of perplexity or even unease when confronted with this mute geometry, sensing in these works a stripping of narrative from the picture's form and content, and an unwillingness to say anything or be anything other than pure opticality. A hostility toward language in favour of the visual has been frequently ascribed to the Modern in art history,[1] and in fact it has been used by many as a quality to distinguish the Modern from the supposedly much more heterogeneous, and genre-bending practices that characterize Postmodernism. I will not argue the whole history of Modernism here, nor resolve the Modernism vs. Postmodernism debate in this essay. However, I will suggest that Modernism's supposed emphasis on opticality is not as pure as one might think. In fact, from its genesis, there is much language embedded in the theoretical and experimental practices that produce abstract work and bring such "purity" about.[2] As W. J. T. Mitchell points out, there are moments when the apparent opposition within Modernism between the verbal and the visual seems to break down, and/or the verbal and visual interpenetrate in practice. What I will ultimately posit is that what is now always seen as "purity" may instead be at times mute geometry, work that has failed in its goal of communication, lost its voice, so to speak. Although some Modern artists did seek an absolute or essential style of geometric abstraction they intended as silent and not beholden to language, one that would speak to all equally and universally in terms of its pure intelligibility,[3] the success of these attempts is open to debate. There are also artists who developed geometric abstraction for different reasons, with different intentions. What is important, and at

times forgotten, is that the abstract work of art in the first half of the twentieth century always had an intention, or something rather specific to "say".

In this essay I am going to analyse the International Constructivist[4] work produced by the important Hungarian avant-garde figure, Lajos Kassák, most especially his theory of *Képarchitektúra* [Picture-architecture], in order to argue that Kassák arrived at such a mute geometry while engaged in Dada-inspired experimentation with language. I choose Kassák as my example not because he is a singular case, but because I find his work revealing of the connections between experimental language and geometric form, implementing both as a way to construct meaning. Kassák most compellingly pursues this connection via his poetry and his Constructivist art works he named *Képarchitektúra*s. Kassák's interest in Dada is first tied to Dada poetic texts and experiments in the visual formation of texts through typography. He simultaneously experiments with shaping form and meaning via typography, *and* with creating visual art in the geometric style now called International Constructivism. He used the avant-garde genre of the manifesto to evoke in textual form what the goals and intentions of his visual works were to be. Therefore, we will also consider the *Képarchitektúra* manifesto as a text that Kassák used not merely as a supplement, but rather as an important partner to his visual works. The combination or simultaneous appearance of Dadaism and Constructivism is typical during this time in a number of Central and East-Central European journals such as *Merz*, *G*, *Mecano*, *Veshch*, and *Zenit*. Also notable are the important collaborations between artists such as Kurt Schwitters and Theo Van Doesburg, Schwitters and El Lissitzky, or Hans Richter and Malevich.[5] Thus, Kassák's simultaneous engagement with Dadaist and Constructivist methods was not unique, but noteworthy in the practice of a single artist. I map out Kassák's engagement with Dada and Constructivism through a close analysis of the texts published and the art reproduced on the pages of his journal *Ma* [Today].[6]

Ma was produced in two stages, from 1916 to 1919 in Budapest, and after Kassak's emigration, from 1920 to 1925 in Vienna. The group of Hungarians working in the *Ma* circle led by Kassák had a vision of avant-garde art that was forged during the massive social and political changes occurring in Central and Eastern Europe during the war. Art was created with the goal of improving the nation, and the first opportunity to integrate fully art into political life came during Hungary's 1919 Republic of Councils, led by Béla Kun. When that political experiment failed, *Ma*

was relocated to Vienna, and became a platform from which to participate in the ideological debates of international avant-garde art. This journal brought the Hungarians the highest international involvement and visibility of any of the Central and Eastern European avant-garde movements, because it interacted with the plethora of avant-garde journals being produced in Europe during the first decades of the 20th century.[7]

A wide variety of very recent and cutting-edge international Dada material was published in *Ma* by Kassák during the Vienna years. A letter from Kassák written during his first summer in Viennese exile thanks the Hannover critic Christoph Spengemann for the material sent concerning Schwitters, including examples of Schwitters' work that Kassák would publish in *Ma* in the January issue of 1921.[8] Another early letter of the Vienna period is from Kassák to the Dada group of Zurich, dated December 1920, seeking to establish a reciprocal relationship for exchanging material.[9] Kassák was not attempting to link up with simply one source, or one geographic manifestation of Dada. Instead he tried to establish contact with Dada practitioners both in Hannover and Zurich. By contacting Zurich, Kassák was attempting to reach Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco, Hugo Ball and Hans Arp, who had instigated Dada at the Cabaret Voltaire. Kassák succeeded in establishing a correspondence with Tzara, and tried to solicit from Tzara information, reproductions and other works by artists such as Hans Arp, Francis Picabia, Man Ray and, of course, Tzara himself.

For example, Arp's poetry appeared in *Ma* several times in 1921 and Kassák published a special Arp issue in March of 1922, containing a number of reproductions of Arp's prints and wood sculptures.[10] Francis Picabia's appearances in *Ma* consisted of a reproduction of his work *Canibalisme* in the Jubilee issue of 1 May 1922, and a Dada poem in the "French Anthology" published in the 10th anniversary issue of January, 1925.[11] Because such material never appeared in publication, we can surmise that some of Kassák's requests of Tzara were not fulfilled, such as those for reproductions of Man Ray's work, more Picabia material, and information on young American and English artists.[12] A few of Tzara's own writings were published in Kassak's journal, however. The first to appear (in translation), in November of 1921, was "Monsieur Antipyrine's Manifesto," a selection from *La Première Aventure Céleste de Monsieur Antipyrine* of 1916. Later, some shorter poems by Tzara were published as well.[13] Tzara did not publish anything by Kassák in his Dada journal,

however, not even his poetry, despite the Hungarian's requests that he do so.

Kassák was also able to establish connections via *Ma* with the Berlin Dadaists such as Richard Huelsenbeck, Raoul Hausmann and George Grosz. In *Ma* Kassák published Grosz's Dadaist collages *Portrait Des Dichters Wieland Herzfelde*, *Deutschland, Ein Wintermärchen*, and two of Grosz's socially critical drawings. The published Hausmann material is more varied, because it includes his theoretical essays "Présentismus" and "Optofonetika" produced when his engagement with Berlin Dada was largely a thing of the past. The essay "Dadaizmus" [Dadaism], Huelsenbeck's introduction to his *Dada Almanach* of 1920, was published in the March 1922 issue of *Ma*.[14] This same issue had a rather pronounced Dada tone, as it also featured Arp's work. Yet it also contained Kassák's Constructivist manifesto "*Képarchitektúra*" [Picture-Architecture], a text that will be discussed in depth later in this essay.[15] Juxtapositions such as this highlight the simultaneity of the engagement with Dada and International Constructivism by Kassák in *Ma*. This mix will appear regularly in *Ma* for several years, and parallels his attempt to balance and integrate Dada and Constructivism in his own artistic production, both in visual art and poetry. Although it has been argued that Kassák largely rejects Dadaism as he develops his Constructivist art,[16] I am less inclined to see the break as having been a sharp one.

Kassák's Dada interests, as indicated by his choice of material published in *Ma*, did not focus on the primitive, sexualized and machine-based aesthetic of Picabia, or on the caustic political jibes of the Berlin Dadaists, but rather on the poetic and textual experiments of Schwitters. The material sent by Spengemann to Kassák was published in the issue of January 1921, the first *Ma* number to fully reveal Kassak's engagement with Dada. Schwitters' most famous and influential poem "An Anna Blume" was translated into Hungarian in this issue. Kassák's initial interest in Schwitters likely came through his awareness of the artist via Herwarth Walden's German Expressionist journal *Der Sturm*, the circle of which Schwitters had joined in 1918.[17] Kassák continued to take an interest in the work of Schwitters, publishing it — especially his literary work — throughout the Vienna years. However, only a few of Schwitters' Merz collages were ever reproduced, probably because Kassák found them flawed in their illusionism and emotionalism. As he put it in the *Képarchitektúra* manifesto: "Schwitters, just like Kandinsky, forms emotions into pictures... expresses his emotions through the totality of

materials.... And what can these pictures give to us? The illusion of a world that exists, once existed, or may exist."[18] The greater value attached to Schwitters' literary output is not surprising, as Kassák himself was first and foremost a poet, and because expressionism was a quality Kassák would never emphasize in his own visual art. The reason Schwitters was Kassák's primary model is that Schwitters was attempting Dada experimentation in both literary and visual media, while Tzara, for example, was more concerned with literary than with visual production.

This same January 1, 1921 issue of *Ma*, the initial one that clearly displays an interest in Dada, is also the first to contain examples of Hungarian works that incorporate Dadaist elements. On the cover is Kassák's first published art work. This work manifests Dadaist inspiration in the mechanical elements such as wheels, belts and train signals included in the composition, as well as in the snippets of surrounding text that lack logical narrative order.

The first full text within this issue of *Ma* is Sándor Barta's manifesto "A zöldfejü ember" [The Green-headed Man], which can perhaps be best described as a diatribe against logic, responsibility and reason.[19] An accomplished poet, Barta was one of the foremost practitioners of Dadaist poetry in Hungarian circles. By 1922, he would be extending the radicalism and anarchism of Dada into a political stance against bourgeois culture, establishing his own journal counter to *Ma*, and eventually joining the Communist party and leaving for the Soviet Union.[20] As Forgács has established, Kassák would later characterize this text by Barta in a letter to a colleague as one that Kassák published merely to appease Barta, whereas he and *Ma* "had nothing to do with the Dadaists."[21] In fact, Kassák would characterize Dada as a "conservative school already", a comment that I would hold betrays Kassák's motives with respect to Hungarian emigre politics rather than his actual artistic inclinations in 1921-1922. Here, Kassák is taking pains to distance himself and his journal from a "school", an already established style (hardly conservative), but not one of his own creation. By early 1922 he would be more interested in promoting and defending his own creation, Picture-architecture.

To return to Barta's text, what is visually interesting about this essay, even if one cannot read Hungarian, is the typography that varies in size and type, and incorporates oversized exclamation marks, small black squares, and varies the spatial disposition of the text. This kind of clean, even printing and clear spacing produces a visually interesting and

dynamic composition of the text on the page that is reminiscent of the typographical work of the German Dadaists.[22] The presence in the Kassák archive of Dada periodicals such as Tzara's *Dada*, Schwitters' *Merz* and Hausmann's *Der Dada*, demonstrates that they were present in his library early on. Thus a familiarity with Dada typography and composition is to be expected among the Hungarians in Vienna.

Another vital source of information for Kassák about Dada — particularly its German variant — and other avant-garde art in 1921/22 was László Moholy-Nagy in Berlin. Although Moholy-Nagy had some contact with Kassák's group of Activists in Hungary in 1918-19, and was profoundly influenced by their ethical and social attitudes toward art, he was by no means in the forefront of artistic activity in Budapest.[23] Like many others, he left Budapest after the fall of the Republic of Councils, and eventually made his way to Vienna. After a short period there, he moved on to Berlin by April of 1920. In the German capital he would mature into an independent and highly significant artist, a process culminating in the invitation to join the Bauhaus staff in 1923. It is precisely during this period that he had his most significant contact with Kassák and the journal *Ma*, and my treatment of Moholy-Nagy will extend only to these direct connections with Kassák rather than his other activities.

As Berlin during this period was the centre of international avant-garde activity, Moholy-Nagy was able to act as a vital pipeline of information for Kassák, as well as a source for numerous reproductions of the latest in avant-garde art that were published in *Ma*.[24] The first of his works in *Ma*, a Dadaist-inspired woodcut, appeared in the March 1921 issue. In September of 1921 Kassák published a special issue of *Ma* devoted to Moholy-Nagy, including the reproduction of a work on the cover, followed by an introductory essay on his work by Ernő Kállai, and ten more reproductions. We know that Moholy-Nagy was in contact with Hungarian artists just returning from Moscow late in 1921 and early in 1922, and that he met El Lissitzky around that time as well. These were the two most important sources for information on what was currently happening culturally in Soviet Russia, and so provided a crucial advantage to the development of Moholy-Nagy's artistic style at the time.

The January issue of *Ma* that proclaimed the interest in Dada also contains a report on the first public artistic matinee the group held in Vienna. Significantly, the report on the substantially Dadaist program of this matinee follows directly upon a synopsis of the Russian Evening held by the members of the *Ma* group on 13 November 1920, the Hungarians'

first chance to see some proto-Constructivist works being produced in the nascent Soviet Union.[25] The First Viennese Matinee was held on 20 November 1920, and consisted of a variety of readings from the work of Hungarian poets, performances of the music of Bartók and Debussy, Kassák's wife Jolán Simon's reading of poetry by Huelsenbeck, Schwitters and Apollinaire, and Barta's reading from his Dadaist work "The Green-Headed Man." The Dada emphasis of these programs is apparent in their content, and this emphasis would continue. For example, a fall 1921 matinee included Simon's reading of poetry by Schwitters, Arp and Huelsenbeck, Kassák reading from his epic Dadaist poem "The Horse Dies and the Birds Fly Away" (discussed below), and Andor Németh's reading from Tzara's "The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine."[26]

The *Ma* group took a program on the road to Prague on March 16, 1922.[27] This program consisted of a lecture on the *Ma* group, followed by the recitation of poetry by Kassák and others connected with the journal, as well as poetry by the Italian Dadaist Libero Altomare, by Arp, Huelsenbeck, Schwitters, and finally, a multi-media performance by Barta that included music, puppets, choruses, projections and posters.[28] Karel Teige, who was in the audience, described the Hungarian program as an early example of Dadaism appearing in Czechoslovakia.[29] The Hungarian tour continued in Czechoslovakia, including visits to the former Hungarian cities of Kassa [Koşice] in Slovakia and Ungvár [Uzhorod] in the Ruthenian region.[30]

I will now focus specifically on a number of Kassak's poems and typographical layouts in *Ma*, in order to identify Dadaist and nascent Constructivist elements within them. The theory and visual forms of *Képarchitektúra* arise, I argue, through the experimentation with and combination of both Dada and International Constructivist practices within texts. One especially accomplished text by Kassák that includes a strong visual component is "Este a fák alatt" [Evening Under the Trees, poem #18], which was published in the January 1, 1922 issue of *Ma* (figure 1, see the appendix of illustrations to this article, page 40).[31] It is the most lengthy, accomplished and visually striking of what Kassák called his *képversek* [picture-poems]. Kassák was producing a number of visual poems during the early 1920s, a practice that parallels his new-found engagement with visual art, and one that serves as an excellent example of his combined literary and visual thinking and practice. As noted by János Brendel, this work is actually composed of four self-contained poems that coincide with the four columns of the layout in the journal.[32] Although the four

poetic units vary in internal length and number of words, Kassák balances them on the page through varying the weight and size of the typography, as well as through their spatial disposition. As Brendel has suggested, the cycle is likely Kassák's reaction to Hungarian events in 1919, and the despair of those involved in that failed political experiment who were forced into exile.[33] The latter two units of the cycle, which I will focus on here, are representative of Kassák's visually abstract form of poetry wherein the poetic text is arranged on the page like an abstract artwork on a plane. They are composed of discontinuous verbal elements, which vividly evoke feelings or certain images, but do not lend themselves to linear narrative readings. The non-narrative quality of Kassák's poetry is here underpinned and even heightened by the variations in the typography and the spacing of the textual elements on the page. Kassák's real accomplishment is the orchestration of the verbal and the visual in a way that makes the expressive intention of the work, rather than its narrative sense, its most notable characteristic. In fact, it makes this dynamic expressivity visual. The poem is visually more advanced than the poetic work of Tzara, and far more composed and meaningful than Marinetti's Futurist verse, that in comparison reads as staccato and disconnected listings of words with little intelligible cohesion. It is evocative, expressive, and formally structured on a level that is most similar to the various productions of that other poet/artist Kurt Schwitters. Indeed Kassak makes direct reference to Schwitters' "Anna Blume" ("Anna Virág") in this piece.

Kassák balances the varying size and weight of poetic units on the page through the manipulation of typography and graphic elements. The eleven-word unit on the right reads: "Anna, my little Anna / the Lord appeared above the waters and bitterly cries." The poem is dominated by the heavy lettering of the words "az Ur" [the Lord] and "sír" [cries]. The two lower halves of the page are integrated through the placement of the equally despairing words "jaj jaj" and "sír" in large, heavy lettering at the bottom of the left-hand unit. The upper and lower half of the poem on the right are connected by the elongated, transverse placement of the word "keservesen" [bitterly], that leads the eye downwards, and halts it at "sír" [cries]. The visual interest of the word "sír" is emphasized by the large, black disk above it, that can be likened to a black tear spot, but also functions visually to give weight and presence to this poem, one that is composed of relatively so few words.

I find Krisztina Passuth convincing in her comparison between the cover of the first issue of *Der Dada*, for example, and some of the work

produced by the Hungarians at this time, particularly Kassák.[34] It resembles "Este a fák alatt" in that letters and/or numbers are arranged vertically and diagonally as well as horizontally, and large amounts of blank space function as aspects of the overall spatial composition. We know that Kassák owned a copy of *Der Dada* number 2 of December, 1919, since it is housed in the Kassák archive today. This is not to suggest that the Hungarians simply copied the Germans. The members of the Ma circle were — given their collective experience with the failure of the Republic of Councils — in a different cultural and political mind-set than the German Dadaists by the early 1920s. Kassák is taking his Dadaist typographical experimentation in the direction of an integration of a Constructivist sensibility, and that is something that most of the German Dadas never did.

The dynamic placement and size of lettering used to visually express the vitality and disruptive force of the words even without narrative logic, characterizes Kassák's Dadaist verse. However, unlike most Dada poetry, "Este a fák alatt" is a highly crafted work that attempts to merge the vitality of the words with the carefully and subtly composed visual elements, in order to bring about a powerful and effective cohesion. It is my contention that it is Kassák's *combination* of the emergent principles of Constructivism with the textual practices of Dadaism that make this poem what it is. One important visual clue to follow in this text is the black disk. I would hold that this black disk has its source in Malevich's black disk. This form, which along with the black square had first appeared in print in 1916,[35] appeared again on the cover of Malevich's book *On New Systems in Art*, designed by El Lissitzky in 1919,[36] and was seen regularly in various journals throughout the early 1920s from *De Stijl* to *Veshch* to *G*. The quadrangular form would be featured in El Lissitzky's *The Story of 2 Squares*, designed in 1920 and published in Germany in 1922, a copy of which Lissitzky signed and sent to Kassák in 1922.[37] In the hand-drawn version of Kassák's poem that was published as a *Ma* picture book in 1922, the poem does not end only with the black disk, but with a more complex geometric form composed of a circle, square and several rectangles (figure 2, see page 41). Dawn Ades has pointed out that the black square, although a Suprematist form closely related to Constructivism, at times appears within the context of Dadaism, connoting a kind of Ur-form that indicates both destruction and construction.[38] It is the notion of construction that is especially relevant to Kassák's crafting of his *képversek*. I do not think that at this relatively

early date (the poem would have been written in 1921 to be published by the January, 1922 issue), Kassák (or any other European for that matter) had a complete grasp of the principles of Russian Constructivism or of Malevich's Suprematism. There are substantive claims that Kassák had access to some of the primary documents of Russian Constructivism and Suprematism by late 1921, and that he was thus familiar with the basic geometric forms and principles of these two styles, if even in a cursory way.[39]

I will take this point up again when discussing Kassák's visual art works of 1921-22 below, but for now, what strikes me is that these geometric forms are imported into Kassák's literary texts as a partner to his words, not as singular visual elements on their own. Within the European context, these geometric forms generally carried the connotation of new construction, creation, and thoughtful placement and balance of forms, which are the composing principles underlying Kassák's two versions of "Este a fák alatt". Kassák adopted them into his poetry to establish the structured effect of his literary text. As mentioned above, some German Dadaist typography has also been identified as similar in its spatial disposition of elements on the page and its large areas of *reserve*, or white space. The addition of geometric Ur-forms to the poem reveals that Kassák is thinking about the disposition of the elements (both textual and formal) on a geometric plane. Kassák's accomplishment here is the integration of these primary geometric forms of the type used both in Suprematism and Constructivism, as geometric elements working in their spatial disposition with the freedom, vitality and expressive spirit of Dadaist text. These combined forces create the spirit and intention of Kassák's poem.

In the issue of *Ma* following the appearance of "Este a fák alatt", the journal featured two short visual poems by Kassák. These had originally appeared in *Világanyám*, the same volume of verse that "Este a fák alatt" had first appeared in.[40] (figure 3, see page 42) These works contain fewer words, and are more free-form in their structure than the previous example. With fewer words, Kassák could further explore the possibilities of the typography and structure of these poems on the page. Number seventeen takes a relatively simple text and repeats it with minor changes. Beginning at the upper left, above the small portrait, the poem's text that begins "Este várlak a kapúban" [In the evening I wait for you at the gate], is broken down into short segments that are arranged in a fan-like disposition. Only two words are not included in this arrangement,

"Teremtés" [creation], and "virágok" [flowers]. Completing the composition are four geometric abstract forms, that are reminiscent of the kind of artworks being produced and published in *Ma* by artists such as Bortnyik and Moholy-Nagy, compositions often identified as Dadaist and/or Constructivist in inspiration. This poem has been interpreted by Esther Levinger as a visual rendering of the concept "in the evening I wait for you at the gate with flowers," with the portrait, the word "flowers", and the geometric forms attempting to establish the three main components of the text's idea.[41] It is not a particularly well-integrated or successful combination of words, forms and images, however. The portrait is little more than a caricature, and seems out of place in the company of the geometric elements, while the fanned layout of the text on the upper left seems too centripetal to successfully integrate with the sharp lines of the overall geometric structure of the piece. It does successfully function as a contrast to the other poem on the page that, instead of being characterized by linear geometric forms and lighter typography, is a rounded, and weightier work featuring heavy, black letters.[42] In fact, it resembles the original, hand-drawn version of "Este a fák alatt" (figures 4 and 5; see the appendix, pages 43 and 44). Both are small-scale experiments with the idea of integrating text with geometric form, of treating text as form, and attempting to make the verbal and visual elements work in tandem.

There is yet another composition relevant to my discussion, that of Kassák's epic poem, "A ló meghal és a madarak kiröpülnek" [The Horse Dies and the Birds Fly Away], which was published in Kassák's parallel and short-lived journal *2 x 2* in 1922.[43] (figure 6, see page 45) In a letter of December, 1922 Kassák proposed that Tzara might be interested in having Kassák's "somewhat epic poem" translated into French and published so that Kassák could have some "financial and moral success".[44] Kassák was likely referring to "The Horse Dies and the Birds Fly Away," his only poem of epic length.[45] Within the same letter Kassák notes that he is sending Tzara a copy of his single-issue journal *2 x 2*, the very place where "The Horse Dies and the Birds Fly Away" originally appeared. However, it was that promoter of German Expressionism, Herwarth Walden, rather than Tzara, who first published this poem in a language other than Hungarian. Because of the rarity of *2 X 2*, and the fact that it was published in Hungarian, it was in this period most accessible in the versions published by Walden. Walden featured the poem in *Ma-Buch*, the anthology of Hungarian avant-garde poetry he published, and he printed an excerpt from it in the journal *Der Sturm* in

1923. However, he greatly changed and simplified its original structure and typography. I will here discuss Kassák's original version.

The poem has been described as either Futurist or Dadaist in its imagery, use of language and typographical layout. In my estimation, both the emphasis in this work on a controlled, highly regulated structure of the textual element, and the accompanying visual compositions, are Constructivist-inspired, whereas the hand-rendered quality of the typography and the content of the poem are Dadaist in spirit. The poem relates Kassák's round-trip journey on foot from Budapest to Paris while a young man. The highly expressive and personal text was originally published in a rigorously controlled format consisting entirely of lower-case letters (and the occasional word rendered in capitals), and a solid body of text with line breaks marked by black asterisks and interspersed with full-page illustrations. The freely expressive, inventive language of the text is tightly encapsulated within a visual framework that asserts a high degree of control and measure, and that strongly affects our visual apprehension of the poem, and our overall appreciation of it. In my experience, the visual element dominates to the point that it colours the actual text. In other words, it affects its reading. We should recall that during this period of 1921-1922, Kassák shifts from being primarily a poet to being both a poet and an accomplished visual artist, and this shift is parallelled on the pages of *Ma*. Indeed, one could argue that the visual aspect of his poems at times dominate the content of the work, to a degree resulting in a lack of cohesion.

Kassák's development of *Képarchitektúra*, his variant of geometric abstract art, was not grounded in Russian Constructivism, but instead within a combination of Dadaist and Constructivist sensibilities that had largely West- and Central-European sources,[46] a combination that Kassák was also exploring in his poetry. Kassák's interest in Dadaist pictorial verse, for example, was unrelated to Russian avant-garde literary work, and is closest to that of his European contemporaries such as Schwitters or Theo van Doesburg. Although the Hungarians in Vienna during the 1920s were learning more about developments in Russian art, both through first-hand visits to Moscow and via the amount of primary Russian documents on art being translated into Hungarian in émigré journals,[47] Kassák refused to publish this material in *Ma*, publicly taking a stand to indicate the difference between his artistic interests and those of the Russian Constructivists. When one reads the *Képarchitektúra* manifesto, written to elucidate Kassák's intentions and goals about the power

of his visual art in the geometric style, the allegorical complexity and messianic tone is entirely unlike the workman-like pragmatism of Russian Constructivist texts. To quote a small sample: "*Képarchitektúra* does not resemble anything, tells no story, has no beginning and no end. It just is. Just like an unwalled city, a sailable sea, a wanderable forest or that which it most resembles: the Bible. It may be entered anywhere, and its whole can be apperceived at its any point. It just is, because it had to be born of its own strength. And in this existence it is merciless."[48] This poetically-modulated manifesto postulates a transformation and positive change in the very soul of mankind via Constructivist art, and that goal brings it closer to Malevich's Suprematism. Kassák could have read some of Malevich's texts on Suprematism, as Uitz would claim that he did. But I am struck as I read Malevich's texts that Kassák could have had access to, such as Malevich's introduction to his 1920 portfolio "Suprematism 34 Drawings,"[49] how very differently Kassák expresses himself. Words are critical to a poet like Kassák, and his manifesto reads as if on fire with the specificity and vitality of words intended to express and inspire. For him, visual art should be no less motivating, and its goals no less earth changing. Kassák, I have been arguing, develops his visual sense in tandem with his words and literary work, not separately from them. Malevich, no poet, writes text as a philosophical explanation of his art, and the text stands as a key that can be used to decode the political and cultural intentions of his visual work. His text reads not like poetry, but like very dense, even obtuse prose, drawing connections between Suprematist forms and modern machinery, utilitarian needs, and movement in space. Kassák's text reads as a poetic and elegant evocation of the purposes of artistic creation. Both use abstract geometric form to make visual art, but as their texts reveal, they thought very differently about how and why they did so. There are many tracks Kassák could have followed into the use of abstract geometric form, Russian and European, but given his dual development in poetry and visual art, and his spiritual or even mystical belief in art's ability to change the world (here his Expressionist roots are fully revealed), Russian/Soviet sources cannot fully account for Kassák's *Képarchitektúra*.

Both Dadaist and Constructivist interests were being explored during Kassák's development of *Képarchitektúra*, and a number of scholars have noted the role of both in Kassák's *visual* art. For several, Dadaist experimentation in his collages and other visual art, are identified as the paths by which he began to develop his art toward the next level of

abstraction formally, namely toward non-objective geometric art. This can be understood as a progression of formal elements toward increasing non-objectivity, and/or a strategy to create art more conceptually purposeful. Brendel has also noted that Kassák would at times use words not as signifiers, but instead as material elements in collage compositions.[50] My continuing emphasis is on Kassák's integrated developments in poetry *and* visual art.

The pages of *Ma* provide crucial visual evidence of Kassák's simultaneous engagement with Dada and with structured geometric art in 1921-22. By November of 1920, Bortnyik was developing an album of new works that would be the first examples of art that Kassák would label *Képarchitektúra*, and they were already underway before the Ma group's first exposure to contemporary Russian art via Umansky's slide lecture that same month, calling into question the notion of a Soviet source for Hungarian geometric abstract art. As noted, the year 1921 marked the height of the publication of Dada material in the journal, but in March of that same year Kassák signaled the development of *Képarchitektúra* with one of his own geometric works on the journal's cover. March was also the month that Kassák first used the term *Képarchitektúra* in print, in the introduction to Bortnyik's album of linocuts. Inside the March issue, Kassák, among other things, published Dada poetry by Blaise Cendrars, Arp and Huelsenbeck, plus Dada-inspired woodcuts by Moholy-Nagy. The June cover featured a Grosz collage, September's issue featured Moholy-Nagy's primarily Dadaist works, and the *Képarchitektúra* manifesto was first published as a separate booklet in September as well. That was followed by the Kassák issue in November, showcasing three full-page *Képarchitektúra* works. (figure 7, see page 46). The contents of this November issue demonstrate Kassák's interest in both spheres during this period, as it presents in sequence Schwitters' typographically inventive poem "Cigarren", an essay on Kassák and his geometric works by Kallái under a pseudonym, and Tzara's "The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine" as well as another text by Barta, interspersed among the *Képarchitektúra* works.

We can now return to Kassák's image verse "Este a fák alatt," which appeared in the following issue of January 1922, and draw some conclusions. Seen in the context provided by *Ma*, "Este a fák alatt" can be recognized as the fruit of the combination of Dadaist poetry and *Képarchitektúra*. Here Kassák has melded the Dadaist text with the structure and geometric elements of his *Képarchitektúra* compositions. He has

framed the passion of what is being expressed in the words within the discipline of the ordered structure of the arrangement on the page. We can now recognize the source of that order and structure as being Kassák's contemporaneous experiments with creating geometric compositions in the *Képarchitektúra* mode. In comparing one of the *Képarchitektúra*s reproduced in the November issue (figure 7, see page 46) to the page from "Este a fák alatt" (figure 1, see page 40), one might note that the visual similarities are striking. Thus, the directional elements provided by diagonal lines and the diagonally arranged lines of text; the curved lines and arcs of text; the black disk, and the blocks of text acting as compositional elements on the page, all function visually as do the equivalent geometric shapes in the *Képarchitektúra* composition. More comparisons could be made with several of the compositions published in *Ma*, such as the cover of the January 1922 issue. Recall, too, that "Este a fák alatt" was produced in several different versions, and each reveals the spirit of combination as well. The hand-drawn version produced as a separate *Ma* picture book in 1922 breaks the text down differently on the page, and mixes within it visual compositions, some clearly geometric in character, others more Dadaist (figures 2, 4 and 5, see pages 41, 43 and 44). The major poem of 1922, "A ló meghal és a madarak kiröpülnek," submits the Dadaist poetry to the rigid structure of a continuous block paragraph with lines of the poem indicated by an asterisk, the title encased in a geometric composition, and the poem interspersed with thoroughly geometric illustrations, again a combination of the two modes.

The foregoing examples indicate a period of experimentation in Kassák's work during the period 1921-22, during which the artist was negotiating a fission between Dadaist literary experimentation on the one hand, and Constructivist visual form on the other. But how did Kassák understand the connection between the two? The standard account of this connection in terms of visual art is that Dada acted as a way of effecting a *tabula rasa*; both a sweeping clean and a new start for art in order to be able to communicate the future as newly envisaged. Constructivism then follows as the style of visual art to best construct that vision. This evolutionary relationship is expressed by Kassák's composition *Romboljatok hogy épithessetek és épitsettek hogy györhessetek* [Destroy so that you may build and build so that you may be victorious].[51] Dada also advocated the destruction of traditional formal strategies. It used radically new materials, and it pushed the limits of what could be considered to be a work of art. All of these were important lessons for Kassák during this

period. In the pivotal Jubilee issue of 1922 of *Ma*, a statement was published that was both a summation of the group's recent history, and a position statement on the future plans of the journal and the group.[52] In it, Kassák makes clear that for those who want to move forward, it is not only necessary to make changes in the current environment, but it is also crucial to enact a "*tabula rasa*" within oneself.[53] Kassák would later separate himself publicly from the "conservative school" of Dada, as noted above, in his efforts to position Picture-architecture as a development beyond Dada. It is significant that this involves primarily his visual art, and that the resistance gravitates around Kassák's unwillingness to be labeled as representing a certain style or school. Instead of seeing Dadaism as the opposite of the sobriety, seriousness and geometric rigidity of International Constructivism, it can be better understood as an important and sometimes simultaneous part of the entire process of imagining the world anew during the 1920s. It is very likely the case that an acquaintance with elements of Russian Suprematism and Constructivism would have encouraged Kassák to continue experiments in the vein of geometric abstraction. But these connections speak of the relations between varieties of *visual* art. What is missing in these accounts is the realization that — despite his production of Dadaist collages and drawings — Kassák's primary engagement with Dada was in the sphere of literature, essentially poetry. At the centre of Kassák's experiments with Dadaist poetry and Constructivist structure — which would culminate in *Képarchitektúra* — was a concern with how these two modes produce meaning, especially through the means of the arrangement and interaction of text and form on a two-dimensional surface before the viewer.

I would consider both facets of Kassák's work as *texts* in the expanded sense described by Elizabeth Grosz: "Texts, like concepts, do things, make things, perform actions, create connections, being about new alignments. They are events — situated in social, institutional, and conceptual space."[54] While Kassák was first and foremost a poet, a man of words who would continue to write poetry throughout his life, he also made works of visual art. In 1921-22 he combined these two aspects of his creative self in order to express his views on the human condition in modernity, and to communicate his vision of the future. Both Kassák's poetry and *Képarchitektúra*s are exhortations that communicate a message, and attempt to reach and uplift the reader/viewer. In other words, they are proactive texts of a sort, produced in tandem, with like goals.

Kassák was not alone in believing that structured, geometric constructive art could communicate much about the planned future. Actually, most Constructivists, both International and Russian, artists and theoreticians, also believed this. What I wish to point out here is that Kassák reached this conclusion via a particular path — as a poet who saw a vital connection between poetic text, visual arrangement, and how both can be shaped or structured to produce meaning. Kassák was devoted to the notion of art having a moral and transformative purpose for society, and his poetry and other texts were crafted with that goal in mind. There is no reason to believe that he would intend anything less for his visual art, and he was, in fact, especially adamant throughout his career that visual art's purpose was never to be merely decorative or to be *l'art pour l'art.* Kassák's trajectory followed a path between literature and visual art, and along that path, Dada and Constructivism were conceptual and stylistic elements that the artist wove together. For Kassák, it would be a logical step to relate the disposition of words in a text to the arrangement of geometric elements in visual art, both composed to convey content and communicate an intention. Kassák intended the viewer to project herself or himself mentally into the space of the *Képarchitektúra*s in a dynamic, experiential way, as one might project oneself into the experience of the words of a text. But can abstract, geometric art such as Constructivism function successfully in this manner? Kassák clearly hoped that it could. Much of the *Képarchitektúra* manifesto consists of a string of single lines of text that motivate or enlighten, rather than define or explain: "The artist's only scale of values is his world view. The artist with a world view can create anything. Creation is the constructive good deed. Construction is architecture... Art is that which does not give us order, but which makes us capable of the most. Art transforms us and we become capable of transforming our environment." Within the manifesto, Kassák describes the power of the works as reaching out to the viewer, transferring a vision of the new utopia, changing ways of thinking, and moving the viewer to action. Clearly Kassák intended that the *Kép-architektúra* works would convey these goals directly to the viewer, via their geometric forms on the plane. Here there is no interwoven poetic text, because the manifesto is detached from the visual works.

The problem is that it is necessary to read the text of the *Kép-architektúra* manifesto in tandem with the works in order to receive the content of Kassák's ideology; the works of art do not communicate this on their own. This is a serious problem for Kassák given the specific goals

and intentions of his art. Not to see his meaning, not to be transformed or enlightened, is for the works not to achieve what Kassák made them for. To merely enjoy their formal arrangements as visual compositions is to grossly miss Kassák's point. They are of course stylistically similar in their geometric abstraction to other examples of International Constructivism or Malevich's Suprematism, but that estimation does not account for what is different about Kassák's Constructivism, nor why and how it appealed to him or seemed right for his goals. This is more serious than the issue of not recognizing the artist's intentions due to changes in audience reception, this is closer to a failure of the work to visually communicate right from the beginning.

It was primarily the Berlin-based Hungarian art critic Ernő Kállai's essays on Constructivism published in *Ma* that explained the political and social implications of the style.[55] The primary differences between types of Constructivism, and the various intentions and goals of the producers of this work, are available foremost and most immediately in the manifestos and other written texts, not in the visual works themselves. Sophisticated art viewers can discern visual qualities that vary from a Malevich to a Mondrian to a Kassák, and know the importance of reading Constructivist theory. However, sophisticated art viewers were not the target audience of the Constructivists, European or Russian. The public at large was, yet it had neither the training nor preparation to receive this work in the manner intended. The gap between the visual work of art and the complex theories it was made to convey, may explain the inability of the Constructivist style to speak to the majority of the population as intended, and therefore, it may account for its failure to enact the change it was hoped it would enact. In Kassák's work more than that of many of his peers, we witness the shuttling between Dada and Constructivism; we may follow the attempt to forge new possibilities and meanings out of the combination of the two, out of the interplay of the verbal and the visual. Both were central to Kassák's activity in the early 1920s, and he was struggling with varying degrees of success to interrelate them. Kassák engaged in this process as a means to communicate, not in a pursuit of an art of pure opticality - one that verges dangerously on being merely decorative.

At the beginning of this essay I spoke of the muteness of such geometric abstract works, the fact that they are now usually seen to be a largely aesthetic and/or optical enterprise, even one that is purely decorative; in any case a visual enterprise that alienates many of its viewers.

Now we may suspect that such work is mute not because it necessarily intended to be purely optical, but rather because of its failure to successfully translate its intended message — that is communicated only through textual addenda — fully into the visual medium. Perhaps it is time to reconsider much Constructivist art on these terms.

NOTES

[1] This point of view was given one of its most persuasive articulations in Rosalind Krauss, "Grids", in *The Originality of the Avant Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985). Krauss' take on abstraction cannot be reduced to this text, but it does at least rehearse the main points of the argument.

[2] I was helped in my thinking about the relationship between language and abstraction by W. J. T. Mitchell, "*Ut Pictura Theoria*: Abstract Painting and Language," in *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[3] Mark A. Cheetham has discussed the issue of purity versus language in conjunction with abstraction in the early 20th century, most compellingly in the work of Mondrian and Kandinsky. See Mark A. Cheetham, *The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[4] In this study, I will be differentiating between what Stephen Bann has referred to as "International Constructivism," i.e. the the geometric-abstract Central and West-European-based manifestation of Constructivist art of the 1920s, and Russian Constructivism. On this difference, see Bann's introduction to *The Tradition of Constructivism* (New York: Viking Press, 1974; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1990), 25-49 (page references are to the reprint edition) as well as John Elderfield, "On the Dada-Constructivist Axis," *Dada and Surrealist Art* No. 13 (1984): 5-16, and Christina Lodder, *Russian Constructivism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 2-3, 237. For the sake of brevity in this essay when I use the term "Constructivist" I will be referring to International Constructivism, and when referring to Russian Constructivism, I will name it so directly.

[5] Andrei B. Nakov, "Dada gives me an intolerable 'malaise...'," in *Dada–Constructivism: The Janus Face of the Twenties*, ed. Annely and David Juda (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 1984), 12-13. See also the article by Dawn Ades, "Dada–Constructivism," in the same catalogue.

[6] All references to the journal are based on the facsimile reprint of *Ma*, published in Budapest in 1971 by Akadémiai Kiadó.

[7] The role of *Ma* as a platform for the Hungarian avant-garde, and as a medium of interaction with international avant-garde culture is the subject of my unpublished dissertation *Modernism Between East' and West: The Hungarian Journal Ma (1916-1925) and the International Avant-Garde*, The Ohio State University, 1997. For those wanting more background on Hungarian modern art, an extensive bibliography is available in *Standing in the Tempest: Painters of the Hungarian Avant-garde 1908-1930*, ed. S. A. Mansbach (Cambridge: MIT Press for the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1991), 213-27, compiled by Oliver A. I. Botar.

[8] Reproduced in Ferenc Csaplár, *Kassák az európai avantgárd mozgalmakban* (Budapest: Kassák Múzeum és Archívum, 1994), 18. The letter is dated to July 25, 1920, and is in the Schwitters Archive in Hannover. A number of Kassák's letters to various members of the avant-garde are included in this source, 18-23.

[9] In *Ibid.*

[10] *Ma* 7, no. 4 (March 15, 1922). This issue includes a cover by Arp.

[11] This "Anthology" contained a wide variety of French poetry, including works by Arthur Rimbaud, Pierre Reverdy, Paul Eluard, Guillaume Apollinaire, Jean Cocteau, Marcel Sauvage, and Philippe Soupault.

[12] Tzara did provide material for Kassák and Moholy-Nagy's *Book of New Artists* of 1922, which is mentioned several times in the letters between Kassák and Tzara. Tzara also sent Kassák more manuscripts and other material, but requested their return in mid 1922, as Kassák did not have the budget to print the material. Csaplár, 22, letter dated to August 25, 1922.

[13] *Ma* 7, no. 1 (November 15, 1921): 140, 142. The Hungarian title is "Antipirin úr elsö menybeli kalandja" (sic), [The First Celestial Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine]. For the French original see Henri Béhar, *Tristan Tzara Œuvres Complètes: Tome I (1912-1924)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 77-84. The other poems are "Kis falu szibériában" [Little Village in Siberia], *Ma* 8, nos. 5-6 (May 1, 1922), 6 and "Tavasz" [Spring], *Ma* X. Évfolyam Jubéliumi Szám (January 15, 1925), 183.

[14] *Ma* 7, no. 4 (March 15, 1922): 54-56. The inclusion of this essay in *Ma* garnered criticism from the Hungarian community in Vienna, including Béla Balázs, the dramatist, film theorist and colleague of György Lukács, as noted in Lee Congdon, *Exile and Social Thought: Hungarian Intellectuals in Germany and Austria 1919-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 143.

[15] An English translation of this manifesto is available in a translation by George Cushing in *The Hungarian Avant-Garde: The Eight and the Activists* (London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980), 114-17. A revised English translation of the manifesto is appended to Oliver A. I. Botar, "Constructed Reliefs in the Art of the Hungarian Avant-Garde: Kassák, Bortnyik, Uitz and Moholy-Nagy 1921-1926" *The Structurist* no. 25-26 (1985-86): 96-98.

[16] See Éva Forgács, "Constructive Faith in Deconstruction: Dada in Hungarian Art," in Stephen C. Foster, ed., *The Eastern Dada Orbit: Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, Central Europe and Japan,* Volume IV of *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1998), 63-91 and "Between Cultures: Hungarian Concepts of Constructivism," in Timothy O. Benson, ed., *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation 1910-1930* (MIT Press for LACMA, 2002), 146-164.

[17] For a thorough discussion of the importance of Schwitters, German Expressionism, and its poetic style to the work of Kassák, see my article "The Art of Visual Poetry in Central Europe: Kassák & Schwitters Between Dada and Constructivism" *Hungarian Studies* 12, no. 1-2 (1997): 205-221.

[18] Quoted from Botar's revised translation of the manifesto, 97, as in note 15.

[19] *Ma* 6, no. 3 (January 1, 1921): 22-23.

[20] For more on Barta's politics and his journal *Akasztott Ember* [Hanged Man], see Oliver A. I. Botar, "From the Avant-Garde to 'Proletarian Art': The Émigré Hungarian Journals *Egység* and *Akasztott Ember,* 1922-23," *Art Journal* 52, no. 1 (Spring, 1993): 38-39.

[21] Forgács, "Constructive Faith,": 89, note 42. She believes the letter to have been written in early 1922.

[22] Krisztina Passuth first noted the similarity of the German pamphlet "Dadaisten gegen Weimar" to the kind of typography being produced by the Hungarians, especially Kassák. See Krisztina Passuth, *Magyar müvészek as európai avantgarde-ban 1919-1925* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1974), 112.

[23] See Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 13-16. More information on the early years of Moholy-Nagy is also available in *László Moholy-Nagy: From Budapest to Berlin 1914-1923* (University of Delaware: The University Gallery, 1995).

[24] Some indication of the volume and variety of material being exchanged is contained in a letter from Moholy-Nagy to Kassák of February 1922 translated and reprinted in Ferenc Csaplár, *Kassák az európai avantgárd mozgalmakban 1916-1925* (Budapest: Kassák Múzeum és Archívum, 1994), 21.

[25] *Ma* 6, no. 3 (January 1, 1921): 36. This "Russian Evening" has garnered considerable attention in art-historical accounts of the development of Hungarian variants of Constructivism, and has fostered an emphasis on possible Russian influence on Hungarian art. Esther Levinger in "The Theory of Hungarian Constructivism", *Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (September, 1987): 466 suggests that it was only after disappointment with the Russians that Kassák turned to various representatives of International Constructivism, a claim that does not seem to be born out in the pages of *Ma*, where we see the Hungarians publishing examples of, and responding to the major issues and players in International Constructivism far more than any interest Kassák would display in Russian art. Oliver Botar has

also pointed out that any art shown in November of 1920 by Umansky could not have been strictly speaking Constructivist since the Constructivists had not yet organized at the time. See "Constructivism, International Constructivism and the Hungarian Emigration," in *The Hungarian Avant-Garde, 1914-1933*, ed. John Kish (Storrs, Conn.: The William Benton Museum of Art, 1987), 90-97, and "Constructed Reliefs": 91. What is significant for my argument, is that the introduction to and further exploration of a Constructivist spirit in art takes place *simultaneously* with a processing of Dada, not *after* Dada.

[26] *Ma* 7. no. 1 (November 15, 1921): 151.

[27] This is described in Csaplár, *Kassák az európai avantgárd mozgalmakban*, 12.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.* This was actually not the Prague public's first exposure to Dadaism. As discussed by Elderfield in his *Kurt Schwitters* (123, 175), in September of 1921 Hausmann, Hannah Höch and Schwitters had visited the city on their "Anti-Dada und Merz" tour.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ma* 7, no. 2 (January 1, 1922): 18-19.

[32] János Brendel, "The *Bildgedichte* of Lajos Kassák: Constructivism in Hungarian Avant Garde Poetry," in *The Hungarian Avant Garde: The Eight and the Activists*, Arts Council of Great Britain (London: Hayward Gallery, 1980), 33. The author notes that this cycle of poems was first published in the book entitled *Világanyám* [My World-Mother], where it covered seven pages and was not so clearly divided into these four parts. For more on Kassák's poetry of the Vienna period, the reader may also consult Pál Deréky, *Ungarische Avantgarde-Dichtung in Wien 1920-1926* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1991).

[33] Brendel, 34-36.

[34] Passuth, *Magyar müvészek*, 112.

[35] Susan P. Compton, *The World Backwards: Russian Futurist Books 1912-1916* (London: The British Library Board, 1978), 112.

[36] *Ibid.*, 113.

[37] This copy remains in the Kassák archive, and a reproduction of the dedication page is reproduced in Csaplár, *Kassák az európai avantgárd mozgalmakban*, 25.

[38] Dawn Ades, "Dada–Constructivism," in *Dada–Constructivism: The Janus Face of the Twenties*, ed. Annely and David Juda (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 1984), 35.

[39] Uitz was the one to primarily press this claim. See Botar, "From the Avant-Garde to 'Proletarian Art'", 34-37.

[40] *Ma* 7, no. 3 (February 1, 1922): 34. This is the volume entitled *Világanyám*, published in Vienna in 1921. These two small works are poems number seventeen and fifteen (seventeen was numbered differently in the book),

"Este a fák alatt" had been number eighteen. The poems published in *Ma* written by Kassák were henceforth numbered.

[41] Esther Levinger, "Hungarian Avant-garde Typography and Posters," in *The Hungarian Avant-garde 1914-1933*, ed. John Kish (University of Connecticut, Storrs: The William Benton Museum of Art, 1987), 115.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] The single issue of this journal edited by Kassák and Andor Németh appeared in October of 1922. During this period Németh was on staff at the Hungarian émigré newspaper *Bécsi Magyar Ujság* [Viennese Hungarian News], that funded the journal (Congdon, 143-44). Congdon describes this journal as Dada-inspired. He bases this assessment on the fact that the two editors agreed to each edit half of the journal, unaware of what the other was preparing. The resulting combination was to benefit from the possibility of any happy accidents due to this blind juxtaposition. For a list of the contents of the journal see Ilona Illés, *A Tett (1915-1916) Ma (1916-1925) 2 x 2 (1922) repertórium* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Muzeum, 1975), 195-98. All subsequent reproductions of the poem under discussion broke it down into verse lines, and deleted the original striking typography and illustrations. The original layout and illustrations are reprinted in György Somlyó, *Arion 16: Nemzetközi Költöi: Kassak 1887-1967* (Budapest: Corvina, 1988), 59-68.

[44] Csaplár, 23. Letter from Kassák to Tzara, dated December 10, 1922.

[45] *Ibid.* Kassák describes it as being approximately 500 lines in length.

[46] For a good account of the development of Hungarian Constructivist art and theory, see Levinger, "The Theory of Hungarian Constructivism,": 455-66. While I do not entirely agree with her emphasis on the role of Russian Constructivism in Kassák's development of *Képarchitektúra*, there is much of value in this article. I follow Oliver Botar in his questioning of whether we can speak of anything consistent and unified enough to be called "Hungarian Constructivism," especially if we consider the diversity of the interactions with Constructivism among artists such as Kassák, Béla Uitz or Moholy-Nagy. See Botar, "Constructivism, International Constructivism and the Hungarian Emigration," 92.

[47] To be noted is the pioneering role of Hungarians such as Uitz and Alfréd Kemény, who were among the first foreigners to have knowledge of events at the Soviet VKhUTEMAS and INKhUk, after their visit there in 1921. All Hungarians in Vienna had access to this material in Hungarian translation by mid-1922, in rival journals. See Botar, "From the Avant-Garde to 'Proletarian Art': 34-45, especially on Uitz' claims concerning Kassák's knowledge of, and failure to admit to, Russian Constructivist and Suprematist influences.

[48] Quoted from the Botar translation, 98.

[49] K.S. Malevich, *Essays on Art 1915-1933*, ed. Troels Andersen (New York: George Wittenborn, Inc., 1968), 123-28.

[50] See in particular Passuth, "Képarchitektúra (Dada és abstrakció)" in *Magyar müvészek*, 93-126; Júlia Szabó, "'A nagy kerék'" *in A magyar aktivizmus müvészete 1915-1927*, (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1981), 93-101; Loránd Hegyi, "Adalékok Kassák képarchitektúrájának értelmezéséhez," in *Kassák Lajos 1887-1967*, 51-63; and Brendel,"From Material to Architecture: On the Hungarian Avant-garde of the 1920s." *Polish Art Studies* no. 4 (1983): 49-52. A scholar who has dealt with Kassák's poetry extensively is Géza Aczél, *Kassák Lajos* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999). He has described Kassák's *visual verse* as both Dadaist and Constructivist, a combination of poetry and visual art, but has dealt less with Kassák's visual art. Brendel's work remains the most interesting and suggestive in terms of considering Kassák's work in both the verbal and visual realms as interconnected in important ways.

[51] *Ma* 8, no. 1 (October 15, 1922): 9. Kassák noted this as an important function of Dada in several essays, and in the *Képarchitektúra* manifesto Dada is mentioned as something that *Képarchitektúra* has "stepped over." On page 145 of his book Congdon notes the importance of this graphic, as does Passuth in *Magyar müvészek* (p. 113), where she also describes it as illustrative of the fusion, or simultaneity of Dada and Constructivism in *Ma*.

[52] "Mérleg és tovább", *Ma* 7, nos. 5-6 (May 1, 1922): 2-4. The article was signed by Kassák, but no doubt was understood as a statement on behalf of the journal and its contributing Hungarian members.

[53] *Ibid.*, 3.

[54] Elizabeth Grosz, "Architecture from the Outside," in *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995): 126.

[55] There are a number of studies on Kállai. Three that are available in English are two by Éva Forgács, "Ernő Kállai: The Art Critic of a Changing Age," *New Hungarian Quarterly* 27, no. 64 (Winter, 1976): 174-81 and "New Perspectives on Ernő Kállai's Concept of Constructivism," *Acta Hisotriae Artium* 35 (1990-92): 29-33, and Oliver A. I. Botar, "Ernő Kállai and the Hidden Face of Nature," *The Structurist* no. 23-24 (1984-85): 77-80. Levinger, "The Theory of Hungarian Constructivism" also deals substantially with Kállai's writings. In German, see Monika Wucher, "Attribute des Konstruktivismus–Die Ordnungsversuche des Ernő Kállai," in *Die Konstruktion der Utopie: Äesthetische Avantgarde und politische Utopie in den 20er Jahre*, ed. Hubertus Gaßner, Karlheinz Kopanski and Karin Stengel (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 1992), 190-96.

Figure List

Figure 1: Lajos Kassák, "Este a fák alatt" (#18) [Evening Under the Trees], *Ma* Vol. 7, no. 2 (January, 1922): 18-19. (Courtesy of the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest). See page 40.

Figure 2: Lajos Kassák, hand-drawn version of "Este a fák alatt", as printed in *Ma képeskönyv* [The Illustrated *Ma* Book], Vienna, 1922. Page unknown. (Courtesy of the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest). See page 41.

Figure 3: Lajos Kassák, two picture poems, *Ma*, Vol. 7, no. 3 (February, 1922), page 34. (Courtesy of the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest). See page 42.

Figures 4 & 5: Lajos Kassák, hand-drawn version of "Este a fák alatt" [Evening under the Trees], as printed in *Ma képeskönyv* [The Illustrated *Ma* Book], Vienna, 1922, pages unknown. (Courtesy of the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest). See pages 43 and 44.

Figure 6: Lajos Kassák, "A ló meghal és a madarak kiröpülnek" [The horse dies, the birds fly away], *2 x 2*, 1922, page 40. (Courtesy of the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest). See page 45.

Figure 7: Lajos Kassák, *Ma*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (November, 1921), page 141. (Courtesy of the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest). See page 46.

EsTe

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BATYUJÁT ÁTVIT
TEM A PATAKON

s hiába hogy valaki homlokunkra kente

→ **A CSILLAGOT** ←

szamarak nem mernek vizbe
ereszkedni a sószsákokkal

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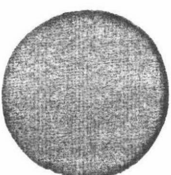

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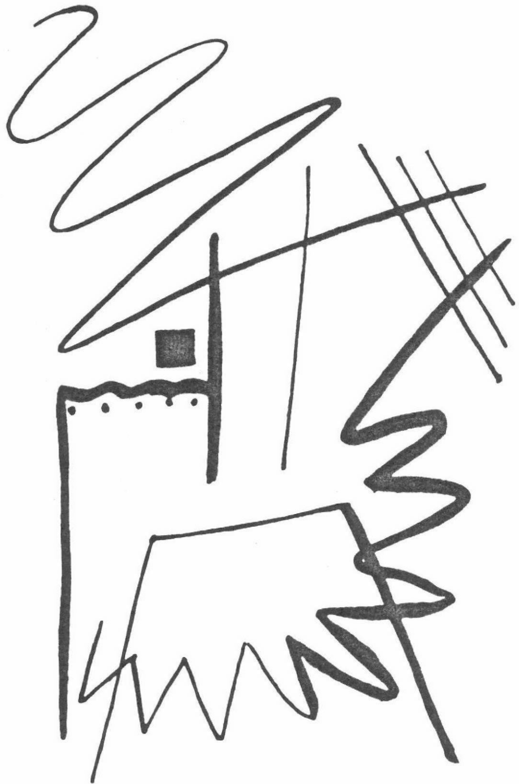

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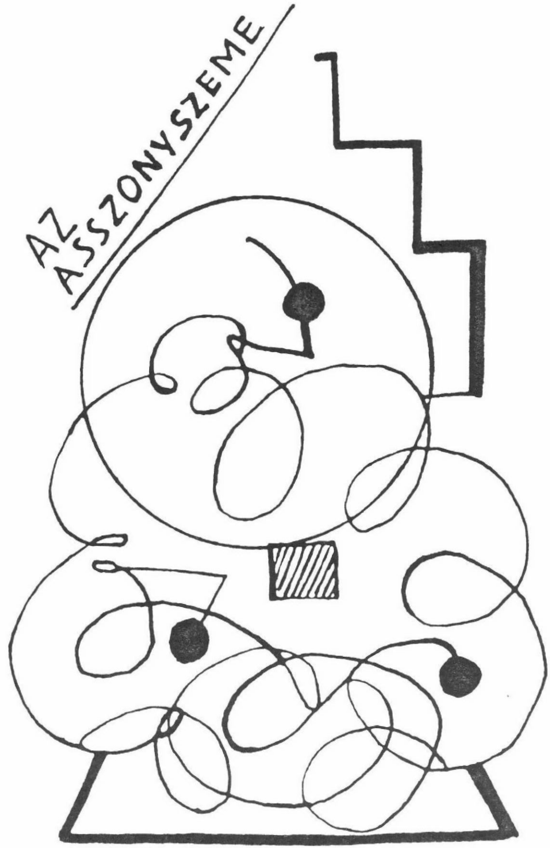

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AZ ÖREGASSZONY BATYUJÁT ÁTVITTEM A PATAKON
hidakat cipel a szemeiben s hiába
hogy valaki homlokunkra kente

→ A CSILLAGOT ←

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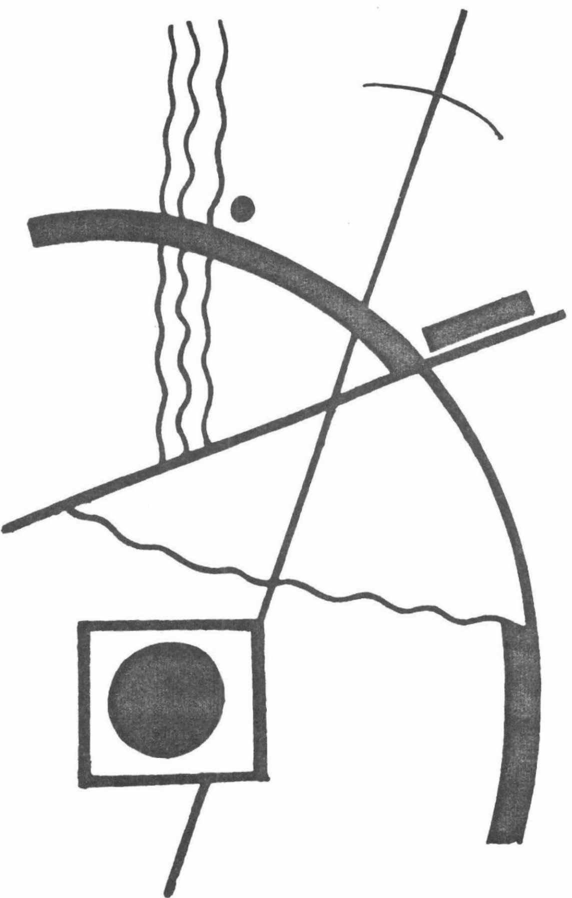

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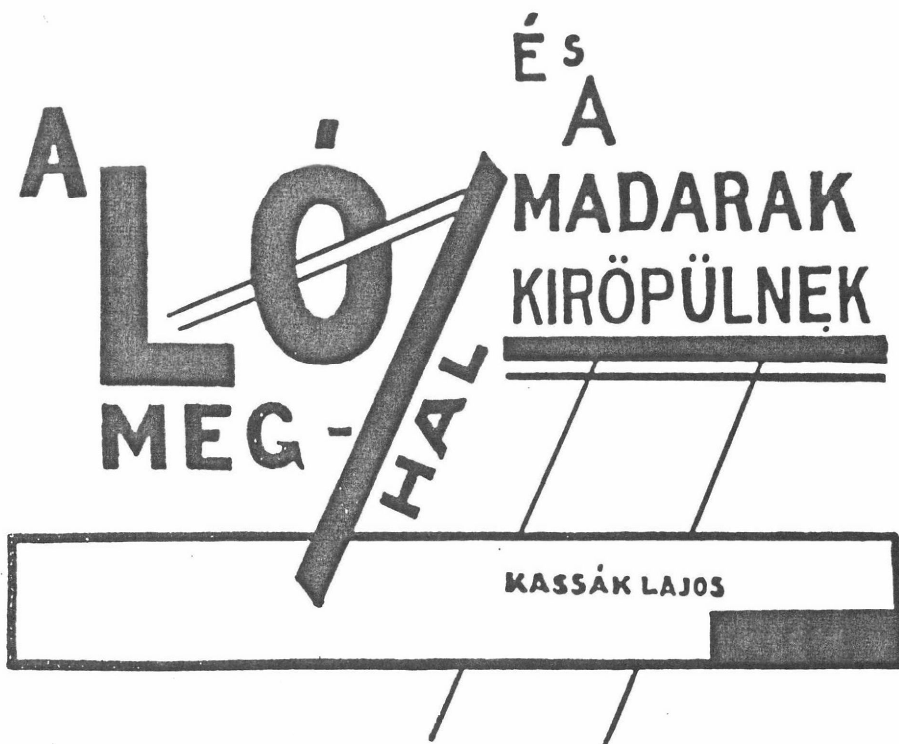
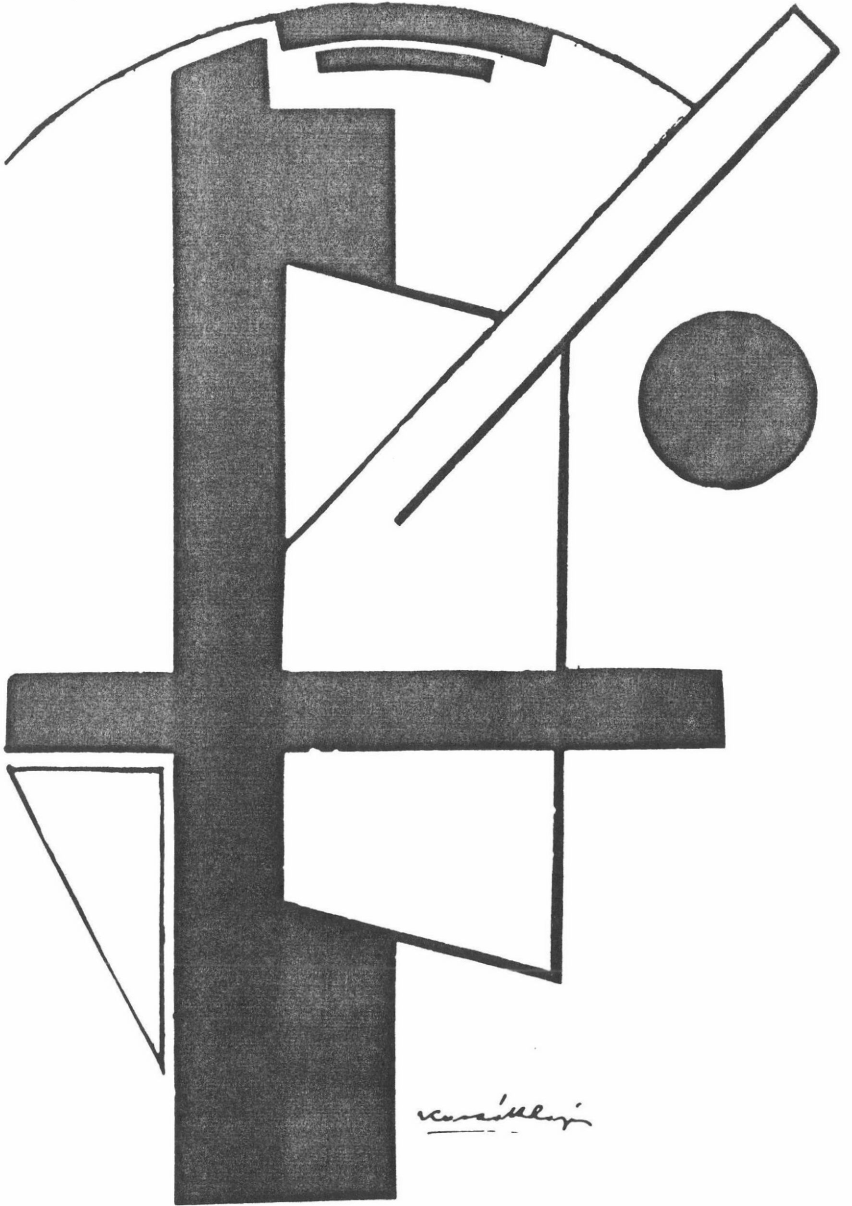


Az idő nyeritett akkor azaz papagályosan kinyitotta a szárnyait mondom széttárt vörös kapu * szeretőmmel kinek fekete gyémántok voltak befalazva az arcába s 3 gyereket cepelt a kétségbeesésében * a gyárkémények alatt ültünk * tudtuk holnap a görbe vonalak * ho zsupp ho zsupp * azt mondta elmész KASIKÁM és én elszáradok a pódiumokon s nádler ur mázolmányaiban * nyilván * nyilván * az uristen megfeledkezik a szépasszonyokról * már jött is a félkrisztus faszobrász * fiatal volt és gyalázatosan igazságszagu * holnap tul leszünk a magyar határon * hát igen hm igen * nyilván nyilván * a város rohant mellettünk * ide-oda forgott és néha fölágaskodott * láttam az apám kajla szalmakalapját amint uszkál a hóüveg fölött a patikától a szentháromság-szoborig és vissza * valamikor azt hitte az öreg 21 éves koromban káplán leszek az érsekujvári plébánián * de épen 10 esztendővel előbb sporni ur lakatosmühelyében ettem a füstöt * az öreg már csak nagyon ritkán járt közénk haza * később az én szépen elgondolt jövőmet is beitta és kipisálta a sörrel * szerelmes lett egy öreg takaritónőbe * kihullott a haja s csak a cigányokkal barátkozott * 1907 április 25 * Párisba készültem gyalog a faszobrásszal * a kisváros ült a pocsolyában és harmonikázott * leveszem rólad a szárnyaimat ó szent kristóf te sohse leszel az apád fia * egy részeg ember krokodilkönnyeket sirt az „Arany Oroszlán“ szálló falának



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"From Pigment to Light": Moholy-Nagy's Art and Theories on Light as a New Medium

Ruth E. Iskin

> "From the first he recognized that the light in itself must be regarded as a medium of form." Siegfried Giedion, 1935.[1]

> "Ever since the invention of photography, painting has advanced by logical stages of development 'from pigment to light.' We have now reached the stage when it should be possible to discard brush and pigment and to 'paint' by means of light itself." Moholy-Nagy, 1936.[2]

> "The capacities of one man seldom allow the handling of more than one problem area. I suspect this is why my work since those days has been only a paraphrase of the original problem, light." Moholy-Nagy, 1944.[3]

Working in numerous media including painting, sculpture, photography, film, design and stage design from 1918 to 1944, Moholy-Nagy investigated light as a new medium in his art and in numerous essays. Light is clearly not a medium in the sense that, for example, oil painting or television are. Yet, as Moholy-Nagy conceived of it from the early 1920s onwards, light functions as a medium within several media, including photography and film. How might we understand light as a medium that is crucial to diverse luminous media such as photography, film, digital and electronic art? In this essay I explore these questions by focusing first on Moholy-Nagy's theories of light and on his use of light in artworks. In its latter part I analyse the related issue of Moholy's opposition to the Renaissance perspectival paradigm and examine the ways in which

Jacques Lacan's theories on perspective illuminate Moholy-Nagy's call for the discarding of perspective and the adoption of new light-based media. The essay concludes with remarks on Bill Viola's work *Passions*, as an example of how we might interpret contemporary developments through Moholy-Nagy's conceptualization of the "from pigment to light" trajectory.

"Since the invention of photography," wrote Moholy, "painting has advanced by logical stages of development 'from pigment to light.'" He proclaimed "We have now reached the stage when it should be possible to discard brush and pigment and to 'paint' by means of light itself."[4] Today it is becoming increasingly evident that light may be recognized as a "meta medium" that enables a wide range of technological media. Furthermore, light is crucial in numerous modes of contemporary art and communication, from photography, film, video, and television, to electronic, digital, and fibre-optic media. It is visible in diverse luminous media, most often on lit screens, which have become ubiquitous during the last decades. Luminous images emanate from film projections, and from the screens of television, computers, video games, cell phones, digital cameras, and digital billboards, in both public and private environments.[5] They are visible on monitors of varying sizes, from large-scale public ones, to mobile miniature-size screens designed for private use. Light-based media are also increasingly becoming standard in contemporary art exhibitions and museums, many of which include video art and other light projections. This tendency was prominent, for example, at the 2001 Venice Biennale, which was dominated by video art. Luminous media thus play a crucial role both in today's "high" art spaces and in the everyday environment. Given this state of affairs, this essay reconsiders Moholy-Nagy's theorizing on light as a medium from the dual perspectives of subsequent developments and their own historical contexts.

Moholy-Nagy's Art and Theories on Light as a New Medium

Moholy-Nagy investigated issues concerning light in his art and theoretical writings, from his early years in Germany during the 1920s to his last years in Chicago, where he settled in 1937 after being forced to leave Germany in 1934 due to Hitler's rise to power. Light played a central role in his theories — both in his sharp criticism of old modes of representation and in his enthusiastic embrace of new media. His advocacy of light-

based media was accompanied by his call, along with other Constructivist artists, to abandon easel painting and the Renaissance system of perspective, which he considered as outworn modes of representation.[6] Moholy argued that light was a new medium that enabled new modes of representation, which would have great influence on society. As early as 1925, in his Bauhaus book *Malerei-Photographie-Film* [Painting, Photography, Film], Moholy stated, "We know today that work with controlled light is a different matter from work with pigment. The traditional painting has become a historic relic and is finished with."[7] His ongoing interest in light as a new medium motivated not only his work in photography and stage design, but also his experimentation with sculpture (using new materials such as plastics), his written proposals for environmental and architectural light displays, and even his thinking on typography.

Working in collaboration with his first wife, the photographer Lucia Moholy from 1922 on, he pursued his interest in light as a medium by working with photograms, a form of camera-less photography.[8] Though photography had been conceptualized as a medium of light from its inception, Moholy offered a different perspective on the issue. Originally inventors and early apologists conceived of photography as a technology that reproduced images from reality automatically, by mediating the action of natural light and the sun. For example, explaining the new invention of photography, Arago stated in 1839 that photographs are "images drawn by nature's most subtle pencil, the light ray."[9] Joseph Niépce, the inventor of photography, named his invention "heliography" and defined it as "automatic reproduction, by the action of light."[10]

In contrast to these early formulations of photography as "automatic reproduction" with natural light, Moholy-Nagy stressed deliberate human intervention, stating that: "the photographer is a manipulator of light; photography is manipulation of light."[11] In placing the emphasis on manipulation, Moholy's exploration of light in photograms clearly did not treat light rays as "nature's pencil." Rather he augmented his creative interventions by using various translucent, transparent and opaque mediating materials. In effect, Moholy's photograms represented light as plastically shaped by the artist. In his 1923 essay "Light — A Medium of Plastic Expression," Moholy described his work with light in photograms thus:

> Instead of having a plate which is sensitive to light react mechanically to its environment through the reflection or

> absorption of light, I have attempted to control its action by means of lenses and mirrors, by light passed through fluids like water, oil, acids, crystal, metal, glass, tissue, etc. This means that the filtered, reflected or refracted light is directed upon a screen and then photographed. Or again, the light-effect can be thrown directly on the sensitive plate itself, instead of upon the screen. (Photography without apparatus).[12]

Further describing the visual effect of light in his photograms, Moholy writes, "The effect is sublime, radiant, almost dematerialized."[13] Moholy-Nagy's 1922 photogram, *Self Portrait Profile*, merges the profile with the semi-abstract shape of a glowing moon, illuminating it like an immaterial skin and so thematizing light itself as a medium. (Figure 1, see page 74). It exemplifies how light in Moholy's photograms is not merely presented as mediating the figure, but as itself a featured theme. Thus in addition to the function of light as actual medium, it is also the thematic focus of the photograms. In choosing to work with photograms Moholy strove to use light and photographic materials directly, without cameras, thereby constructing abstract compositions of light and shadow that avoided traditional mimesis. By not using the camera in his photograms Moholy also bypassed traditional perspective, a mode of representation structured into the camera apparatus itself.[14]

Moholy-Nagy's focus on light in photograms was, in some ways, different from that of Man Ray, the Surrealist artist who used camera-less photography extensively. Andreas Haus points out that Man Ray (who started working with camera-less images in 1921), usually fixed the shadows of three-dimensional objects on light-sensitive paper, achieving a sense of "magical objects appearing out of nothingness."[15] Moholy on the other hand, "extracts from the black field a space... which is gradually activated through forms of light."[16] In Moholy's photograms "the forms are not individually put down but owe their effect rather to a 'stepping into the light' of spatial structures that were already contained in the darkness."[17] Moholy's work with photograms extended the potential properties of light as a medium by specifically investigating the structuring of space through light, resulting in abstractions of light-structured space. Furthermore, light became the prevailing non-objective theme of the compositions.

Moholy embarked on an ambitious exploration of light as a medium by designing his *Lichtreqisit einer elektrischen Bühne* [Light-Prop for an Electric Stage] (later known as the *Light-Space Modulator)*

probably around 1930 (Figure 2, see page 75). This kinetic sculptural apparatus did more than merely mediate light effects, which the artist manipulated, as he had done earlier in photograms. It actually generated light effects and put them into motion. In the words of the artist, the *Light-Prop for an Electric Stage* demonstrated the possibility of "creation with light."[18] The *Light-Prop for an Electric Stage* was a rotating three-dimensional sculptural apparatus operated by an electric motor, which was originally meant to be contained in a specially designed box. The work was designed to be electrically lit by some one hundred bulbs.[19] Moholy-Nagy engaged the help of his compatriot, the professional engineer István Sebők who worked in Gropius's office, and was assisted in its fabrication by a technician, Otto Ball, in the theatre department of the Allgemeine Elektrizitäts–Gesellschaft (AEG), the German electrical company.[20] He may have designed this work explicitly for the German Werkbund's display at the Exposition de la Société des Artistes Décorateurs, which opened in May of that year at the Grand Palais in Paris, or he may have conceived it as part of his work in stage design.[21] He likely made it for both of these purposes.[22] Walter Gropius (who organized the German display through the German Foreign Office as an official representation of the German Reich) offered Moholy-Nagy a small gallery in the exhibition.

Moholy considered the *Light Prop* to be an exceptionally important work in his oeuvre. This was evident from the fact that when he went into exile from Germany in 1934, and had to leave behind much of his work, he took the *Light Prop* with him, no matter how much trouble was involved in doing so, transporting it first to Holland, then to England, and finally to the United States.[23] The *Light Prop* was designed to create a dynamic abstract light/shadow spectacle, which through these projections would, in effect, use the three-dimensional environment as integral to the art work. In other words, the artwork did not consist merely of the apparatus itself, but also of the light spectacle that it generated. In his 1930 essay titled "Light-Prop for an Electrical Stage," Moholy discussed this work as "regulatable artificial light. Electric light effects made it possible to realize different precalculated movements."[24] In this brief text he described the effects as "illuminating continuously" a "moving mechanism consisting of translucent, transparent and perforated material."[25] The artist explained the structure of the box and light bulbs, which illuminated the "mechanism," generating the light/shadow display:

> The model consists of a cubical box, measuring 120 x 120 cm, with a round hole (stage aperture) at the front. Around the hole there are yellow, green blue, red and white electric glow-lamps mounted on the rear side of the plate (ca. 15 watt bulbs for illumination and five 100 Watt spotlights). Inside the box, parallel to the front, there is another plate, with different electric glow-bulbs mounted equally around the hole. The glow bulbs flash at different places according to a prearranged scheme. They illuminate a continuously moving mechanism consisting of translucent, transparent and perforated material.[26]

In 1923, about a year after he began to work with photograms, Moholy realized that since light effects are usually visible in motion, film would be their most suitable medium.[27] He wrote that "the manifestations of light are fluid, and all photographic procedures achieve their highest point in film (the fluid relationship of light projection)."28 Not surprisingly, soon after he made *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*, Moholy-Nagy made a film about it, which was produced explicitly to translate the object into the cinematic medium and "into photographic 'light' values."[29] The seven-minute-long black and white film *Lichtspiel Schwartz-Weiss-Grau (Lightplay Black-White-Gray)*, presents the effects of the *Light Prop for an Electric Stage* by using the film medium.

Moholy's film begins with a fascinating opening sequence. While featuring the title and credits, this opening symbolically represents the cinematic film medium as a creative medium of light. It presents a swirling filmstrip and a rotating translucent sphere on which the words of the title appear in a circular motion. A silhouetted hand indicates the authorial presence of the film-maker/editor.[30] This opening "scene" presents the iconic emblems of the film medium while featuring motion and light, the two abstract elements that, according to Moholy, define film. Thus Moholy precedes the filmic presentation of the light performance generated by his apparatus through the presentation of a symbolic entry into the cinematic medium. Furthermore, as animator István Kovács notes, the film sets up a spectatorial standpoint that creates a physical proximity with the light-generating machine:

> The light machine is introduced in the film by the focusing of the camera on a perforated sheet through which the rest of the apparatus can be seen, already drawing the viewer into the machine itself... The involvement with the apparatus through

> spatial manipulation and light moulding increases gradually until the cinema becomes a total kinetic experience. Beginning by simply viewing the machine in its manifold gyrations — but always being so close to it that a separation can never take place between viewer and object — the artist continues by substituting negative frames, juxtaposing negative and positive in the same frame, and proliferating the movement by multiple exposure.[31]

It appears that Moholy almost immediately realized the potential of the *Light Prop* for making a film and saw both the apparatus/sculpture and film as ways of exploring light. Writing in 1931, he states that "The systematic use of light and shadow in film may result in discovering a new, specific dimension for film: that of light."[32] The following year he wrote that the *Light Prop* was created "for the purpose of experimenting with painting with light."[33] Moreover, Moholy critiques conventional film as still "conceptually derived from traditional studio painting," whereas "the essential medium of film is light not pigment."[34] He points out that film projection in the cinema is also limited by outdated conventions of easel painting: "the rectangular canvas or metal screen of our cinemas is really only a mechanized easel painting."[35] By contrast, his own film was a demonstration of what he believed the cinematic film medium was about — a moving display of light and shadow. Moholy's film proved to communicate his ideas about light most successfully. As Moholy discovered, most people were best able to understand his *Light Prop* by viewing the film rather than by encountering the object itself.[36] This was the case, not only for an anonymous audience at an exhibition, but also for Sibyl Pietzsch, who met Moholy in the winter of 1931 and became his second wife. She reports that when she first saw the Light *Prop* shortly after having seen the film, she found the apparatus "almost as beautiful as the film."[37]

In Moholy-Nagy's view the *Light Prop* was but a "modest beginning, an almost unnoticeable step in advance" towards much greater plans.[38] He dreamed of producing light displays and light architecture, conceiving of a "light-apparatus" which would "produce visions of light, in the air, in large rooms, on screens of unusual nature, on fog, vapour and clouds."[39] He attempted to interest architects in a "light fresco, a light architecture" which, with the mere "turn of a switch, could be flooded with radiant light, fluctuating light-symphonies."[40] One of his ideas was "a bare room with twelve projection devices, so that the white void

should come to life" with "crossing sheaves of colored light."[41] Moholy also conceived of creating a light display with giant searchlights, of the kind that flash, "grandly and violently, shooting its arrows of light" into the distance, by changing their cut-up rhythm with a composer's score. In effect, he advocated painting directly "with light, transforming two-dimensional painted surfaces into light architecture."[42] Writing about light displays, Moholy deliberately departed from the reigning cinematic tradition, envisioning that "light displays of any desired quality and magnitude will suddenly blaze up, and multicoloured floodlights with transparent sheaths of fire will project a constant flow of immaterial, evanescent images into space."[43]

This kind of on-going preoccupation with light as a medium was also central to Moholy's theories on, and innovative work in stage design. In his essay "Theater, Circus, Variety," he theorised the potential of light as an important medium of the modernist stage.[44] He proclaimed that "color must undergo great transformation" (64), and envisioned the role of film on the stage as projected "onto various surfaces" (67). He imagined experiments in space illumination, which will "constitute the new ACTION OF LIGHT, which by means of modern technology will use the most intensified contrasts to guarantee itself a position of importance equal to that of all other theater media." (67). Naming several examples for the innovative use of light on the stage he wrote of "the potential of light for sudden or blinding illumination in light synchronized with climaxes or with the total extinguishing of lights on the stage" (67). His comments on his stage design for "The Tales of Hoffmann," provide further insight into his implementation of his ideas on using light effects on the stage: "[it] was an attempt to create spaces out of light and shadow.... Flats and backdrops turn into tools for the interplay of shadow effects. Everything is transparent, and all these transparencies combine into a rich yet still perceivable space articulation."[45]

Concerns with light entered even his discussion of typography: "The typographical process is based on the efficiency of visual relationships.... An articulated visual experience relies on light and dark or colour contrasts. If light is completely absent, that is, in blackness, we are as unable to distinguish objects as in the case of its total presence, that is, whiteness (dispersion)."[46] Finally, he argued that studying light was crucial to pedagogy in the era of photography and film because they were light-based media. Moholy thus advocated forming an Academy of Light:

> It is an astonishing fact that, although photography has been in existence for a century and the cinematograph for forty years,... there has never been a systematic course of instruction in the use of light. There ought to be an Academy of Light, which would be devoted to teaching and would educate its students to an artistic and economic consciousness of the new creative factor."[47]

Moholy's enthusiastic vision of light as a new medium of art and communication could not tolerate another, older system of representation, namely geometric perspective.

Moholy-Nagy on Perspective

Moholy-Nagy opposed the system of perspective because, in his view, it was an old mode of representation. In a 1945 essay he voiced the utopian assertion that abstract painting and kinetic light displays had the ability to free the human subject from "monocular perspective" and explained the constricting effects of perspective as dictating the "Unbearable fixed relationship of the spectator to the painting. Paintings had to be viewed from one certain point whence the scene would appear undisturbed. We find unbearable the fixed relationship of the spectator to the painting in which his observation is permanently bound."[48]

Moholy-Nagy, who believed that working in luminous media would break the stronghold of the Western system of perspective, articulated the problem caused by perspective as beginning during the Renaissance:

> The decay started with the vanishing point perspective, which seemed to be a dazzling performance, since the painter could render scenes as the eyes perceived them. Suddenly every effort was concentrated on the perfection of imitation, with the result that three hundred years of practice by the 'perspectivists' taught everybody to evaluate painting by its illusionist potency. Their method of rendering became the automatic possession of generations...[49]

Instead of the stationary one-point perspective that fixed the spectator, Moholy advocated a "vision in motion," which he associated

with Futurism: "the spectator, stimulated by the specific means of rendering, re-creates mentally and emotionally the original motion."[50] He defined vision in motion as "a simultaneous grasp," which is a "creative performance -- seeing, feeling and thinking in relationship and not as a series of isolated phenomena. It instantaneously integrates and transmutes single elements into a coherent whole." Thus, vision in motion, "simultaneity in space-time" and "a means to comprehend the new dimension" are a "projective dynamics of our visionary faculties."[51]

Moholy discussed the fact that photography could mechanically render perspective and thus free modernist painting from the Renaissance tradition of illusionist perspectival painting. In much of his own photography, made both with the camera and without, he attempted to produce works that defied the constrictions of traditional perspective by manipulating viewpoints. Moholy-Nagy's strategy was to introduce unexpected viewpoints that defied the more common earth-bound perspectival vision associated with Renaissance perspective. Moholy's camera-mediated photographs often created a sense of extreme nearness or great distances through intersections rather than through the use of perspective. He pursued radically different points of view that avoided the normative "horizontal view line," to use Franz Roh's term.[52] Roh notes that Moholy-Nagy's photographs avoid the usual way of presenting sections of reality and instead present a "daring sight from above and from below by sudden change of level" related to the new technologies of airplanes and lifts, which up to that point had not yet been much used in pictures.[53] Roh explains that many of these photographs "open astronomic perspectives" and this type of "radical position" corresponds "to an imaginary center of the earth."[54] Furthermore, these viewpoints disorient the viewer accustomed to a picture space based on Renaissance perspective."[55]

While Moholy-Nagy explored photographs and photograms as ways of overcoming the perspectival regime, other artists, including the Cubists, Mondrian, and El Lissitzky experimented with different methods of freeing the representation of space from Renaissance-based perspective.[56] Erwin Panofsky, whose study on "Perspective as Symbolic Form" was originally published in 1927, did not specifically mention Moholy-Nagy, but rather El Lissitzky's notions (shared by Moholy-Nagy) that the "limited space" of older perspective closed space off, making it "finite."[57] Panofsky argued that El Lissitzky and avant-garde artists who believed they broke with the bonds of Euclidian geometry (which they defined as "rigid three-dimensionality") did not actually go beyond Euclidian pers-

pective. In Panofsky's opinion the space of the "'imaginary' rotating bodies" in El Lissitzky's paintings "is no less 'Euclidian' than any other empirical space."[58] A similar criticism could be applied to Moholy-Nagy's photographs in which he so often used the "bird's eye" and "worm's eye" viewpoints — namely that in defying normative perspective, these photographs ultimately depended on Renaissance perspective. Nonetheless, Moholy-Nagy, like El Lissitzky, Man Ray, and other avant-garde artists, succeeded in destabilizing the spectator's secure viewpoint designated by traditional Renaissance perspective. Furthermore, Panofsky's own framing of his object of study — perspective as a symbolic form — was no doubt enabled precisely by the fact that while he was working on this issue, avant-garde artists were criticizing the Renaissance perspectival paradigm in their writings and were exploring alternative means of depicting spatial relationships. It was during this period, that Moholy and other avant-garde artists were reframing perspective as an 'old' paradigm and making claims for a new one.

Moholy-Nagy's camera-less photograms offered another solution to the problematic of freeing representation from the regime of perspective. His photograms avoid perspective altogether by exposing objects with light onto a sensitive paper, frequently superimposing objects. The results, as described by the critic Franz Roh, "appear like weird spheres of light, often of marvellous transparency, that seem to penetrate space. Sublime gradations, from gleaming white through a thousand shades of gray down to deepest black."[59]

Man Ray, like Moholy-Nagy, regarded light as a way of avoiding perspective. He referred to his own work as "Rayograms," or "Rayographs," claiming the medium as his own invention by using his last name, and playing on "light ray."[60] Ray dubbed this period as "the age of light" (publishing a brief essay by that title — "L'age de la lumière" — in the Surrealist journal *Minotaure* in 1933) and stated in a letter of 1922: "I have freed myself from the sticky medium of paint and am working directly with light itself."[61] The fact that other avant-garde artists shared these interests with Moholy-Nagy is not entirely surprising. It is, however, notable that the Paris-based French psychoanalyst and theorist Jacques Lacan discussed the issue of perspective in ways that had much in common with Moholy-Nagy's and other avant-garde artists' concerns. Lacan was close to the Surrealists and familiar with avant-garde art discourses during his formative years in the 1930s.

Lacan's Theories on Perspective, Anamorphosis, Light, and the Subject

Lacan's writings on the role of the perspectival system of geometric optics as opposed to light optics in the formation of the human subject illuminate what was at stake in avant-garde artists' opposition to the system of perspective during the first decades of the twentieth century. Lacan's theories, which address the impact of the perspectival system of representation on the human subject, provide a broader framework for understanding some of the issues involved, amplifying the more familiar avant-garde art discourses on the abolition of perspective in Cubism and Futurism.[62] In turn, considering Lacan's writing on perspective and on light in the context of avant-garde artists' theories helps explain Lacan's ideas on these issues.[63] This kind of analysis, based on a comparison between Lacan's and Moholy-Nagy's ideas on perspective and light, differs from most studies on Moholy-Nagy, which analyse his work within the immediate context of art movements that influenced him or in which he participated — from the Hungarian avant-garde, Russian Constructivism, and Berlin Dada to the Bauhaus. Unlike the analysis of Moholy's participation in these ambients, the comparison with Lacan's theories focuses on an area of parallel concerns. Since there is no evidence that Moholy-Nagy and Lacan knew of each other, the argument is not based on claiming direct "influence" in either direction.[64]

Because some of Moholy-Nagy's art and writings did gain exposure in France during the early 1930s, it is not out of the question that Lacan may have come across Moholy-Nagy's work or ideas in the form of exhibitions, film projection, or publications. As we have seen, in 1930 Moholy-Nagy exhibited his most ambitious work, the *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*, in Paris. The exhibition drew a lot of attention and influenced the presentation of photography in France.[65] It is possible that Moholy's film *Lightplay Black-White-Gray* was shown there as well. Sibyl Moholy-Nagy states that Moholy-Nagy began to make this film in 1929 and that it was "shown for the first time at the International Building Exhibition in Paris in 1930 where the light-display machine formed the center attraction of the hall."[66] Moholy's paintings were also exhibited in Paris in 1934, at an exhibition of the Abstraction-Création group.[67] In addition, in 1932 Moholy published an article on film in *Cahiers d'Art*, in which he boldly criticized the film medium as relying on the outdated conventions of easel painting and proposed radically new

possibilities for film as a light-based medium.[68] It is thus possible that Lacan could have encountered some of Moholy's work or ideas in France.

Unlike Moholy-Nagy, Jacques Lacan did not discuss photography explicitly as a new light-based system that opposed the spatial order of perspective. Nonetheless, as I shall argue, Lacan did propose a light-based system that was not medium-specific as an alternative to the paradigm of perspective. Lacan discussed geometric perspective explicitly, arguing that it produced and reinforced a mastering subject. Moreover, according to Lacan, geometric perspective inaugurated what he termed "the Cartesian subject." In Lacan's words: "we cannot fail to see" the "relation" of the "research on perspective with the institution of the Cartesian subject, which is itself a sort of geometrical point, a point of perspective."[69] Geometric perspective provides a point of spatial and visual orientation for subjects.[70] This visual-spatial system parallels the linguistic, and implicitly verbal enunciation of the *cogito*. Lacan notes that the subject constituting himself through geometric perspectives is the equivalent of Descartes' cogito, "I think therefore I am." Both perspective and the cogito constitute a subject with a point of orientation that bestows certainty.[71]

According to Lacan, perspective constitutes the spectator as sovereign. We might add that the subject who is able to symbolically occupy the position of a sovereign spectator is determined by historically specific social positions related to gender, class, and race. This point becomes clear when we observe Albrecht Dürer's woodcut, *Draughtsman Drawing a Nude*, of 1525, which depicts an artist drawing a female nude using the system of perspective. In the woodcut, Dürer contrasts the upright position of the fully attired masculine artist — the author whose gaze and standpoint shape this three-dimensional perspective-based representation — with the horizontal position of the partially draped female model who functions as the object/ground. The authorial gaze and standpoint of the male artist shape this three-dimensional perspective-based representation and constitutes the position of the sovereign spectator. While the regime of perspective endows the subject with certainty and positions him in control — anamorphosis, its opposite — destabilizes the subject.

Lacan discusses anamorphosis, the distortion of one-point perspective (a topic that was of great interest to his friend, the Spanish Surrealist artist Salvador Dali), in Hans Holbein's 1533 painting *Ambassadors*.[72] Lacan employs a brief discussion of this painting to sharpen his theory about the influential role of geometric perspective in reinforcing the subject. The following interpretation elaborates Lacan's discussion of

Holbein's painting, addressing the issues of perspective and anamorpoh-osis. Holbein's portrait of a diplomat and a bishop includes a strange image depicted from an oblique angle in the centre of the painting.[73] Viewed from the front, it is not clear what the object represents. (Its prominent position in the centre front of the painting is further emphasized by its larger scale in comparison to the heads of the two men and the terrestrial and celestial globes on the shelves). This large unidentified object casts a shadow, suggesting that although it appears inexplicable, it is some sort of physical object in space.

The shadow has another important function. Cast beyond the horizontal band that delineates the threshold of the painting, it adds to the precarious status of the object in space. The placement of the shadow as transgressing the horizontal limit of the painting creates an illusion that this strange object is about to rotate outwards towards the spectators of the painting. Its dynamic thrust threatens to invade the spectator's space rather than confirm a spectatorial position of control outside of the painting. This is the case when one views the painting from the centre, the point normally assigned to the spectator in the regime of perspective. However, when the painting is viewed from the extreme right, the unidentified object turns out to be entirely legible — it becomes a skull.

The skull in Western painting often appears in still life paintings as a symbol of mortality. In contrast to this well-established tradition, Holbein renders the skull anamorphically, transforming it into a startling visual effect. Thus, in his painting the anamorphic skull does not merely signify mortality, it embodies it. Representing mortality, the skull belongs to a different spatial and visual order. This is visually represented by the different direction of the shadow of the skull compared with shadows of other objects in the painting.[74] The anamorphically rendered skull represents the potential of the unsettling of the solid spatial order presented in the painting. Like mortality, which renders life uncertain, the anamorphic skull introduces instability into the world of two firmly grounded and self-assured men steeped in material luxury and signs of knowledge.[75]

If the spatial order represented in the painting, just like the world of the diplomat and the Bishop, does not seem radically destabilized so much as potentially subject to destabilisation — this is because the anamorphic skull is presented within the overall spatial regime of geometric perspective. Nonetheless, the impact of the anamorphic skull in this painting challenges the normal regime of perspective by unsettling the spectatorial position. If the spectator remains in the central position in

front of the painting, s/he does so at the price of being confronted with an illegible strange object that cannot be deciphered. Thus the spectator who remains in the normative location for viewing the painting actually vacates the mastering viewpoint illustrated by Dürer's woodcut. Holbein's painting deploys anamorphosis to dislodge its own spectators from a position of mastery. In order to make sense of a central object in the painting, the spectators are literally forced to abandon the viewpoint normally assigned by perspective and move to the extreme right. The skull thus demonstrates the effect of anamorphosis as the opposite of perspective: anamorphosis destabilizes rather than anchors. It causes disorientation and undermines the confirming effect of perspective. Whereas perspective inaugurates the subject, anamorphosis unravels him. In Lacan's words, it is "the subject annihilated."[76]

Like anamorphosis, light-based media can counteract the stabilizing effects of perspective. Lacan distinguishes between the system of geometric lines of perspective as spatial, and light as visual.[77] The essence of the visual "is not in the straight line, but in the point of light — the point of irradiation, the play of light, fire, the source from which reflections pour forth."[78] Lacan contrasts the spatial with the visual and associates the former with painting, and the latter with light. Unlike Moholy-Nagy and others, he does not explicitly discuss photography and film as light-based media. He does, however, elaborate his ideas on the role of light in relation to the subject in his well known sardine-can story, which he states is a "true story" of a memorable experience he had as "a young intellectual."[80] Accompanying a few fishermen on a boat he sees a small floating object, a sardine can reflecting the sunlight. He concludes that though it does not see him, it is looking at him "at the level of the point of light, the point at which everything that looks at me is situated."[81] In this story, I propose, Lacan contrasts the subject shaped by light, a subject who is not in control, with the mastering subject constructed by geometrical perspective.

Lacan positions light as an alternative to geometric perspective in the chapter entitled "The Line and Light" of his book *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. This, I propose, is the point of his story about the glittering tin can. The anecdote introduces his theory on the fundamental difference between the subject shaped by the regime of light, and the subject constructed by the system of geometric perspective. Lacan clearly sets his story in this context, saying that he will tell his story: "in order to give you some idea of the question posed by this

relation between the subject and light, in order to show you that its place is something other than the place of the geometrical point defined by geometric optics..." Lacan articulates the moral of his story thus:

> I am not simply that punctiform being located at the geometrical point from which the perspective is grasped. No doubt, in the depths of my eye, the picture is painted. The picture, certainly is in my eye. But I am in the picture.
>
> That which is light looks at me, and by means of that light in the depths of my eye, something is painted — something that is not simply a constructed relation, the object on which the philosopher lingers — but something that is an impression, the shimmering of a surface that is not, in advance, situated for me in its distance. This is something that introduces what was elided in the geometrical relation — the depth of field, with all its ambiguity and variability, **which is in no way mastered by me. It is rather it that grasps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the landscape something other than perspective**, something other than what I have called the picture.[82]

These statements suggest that the subject shaped by luminous media, such as photography and film, is mesmerized by flickering lights, like the young Lacan looking at the glittering tin can. This subject is solicited by light and attracted to it like a visual magnet: "It is rather it that grasps me, solicits me at every moment."[83] She or he is dazzled rather than placed in a position of confident sovereignty from which to survey the depth of a picture, rendered by perspective, from a distance. The key difference between the systems of line on the one hand, and light, on the other, according to Lacan, is that line, namely geometric perspective, affirms the subject's mastery. With light on the other hand, "the depth of field, with all its ambiguity and variability... is in no way mastered by me."[84] Thus, the regime of light does not merely fracture a unitary self; it utterly disperses its possibility.[85] In following this line of argument, Lacan does nothing less than sketch out a post-Cartesian subject of uncertainty. No longer anchored on the solid ground of geometric perspective, this subject is attracted to luminous media, and solicited by their radiance. Lacan's ideas on light are, I propose, related to photography, which had been linked to light since its inception.

"I am photo-graphed" — Lacan on the Mediation of the Subject by the Gaze and by Light

It is notable that Lacan makes only one mention of the word "photography" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis.* Though brief, it is a formulation that crucially inserts photography into the perpetually repeated moment in which the human subject is constituted through the gaze and light:

> What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied and through which — if you will allow me to use the word, as I often do, in a fragmented form — I am photo-graphed.[86]

The subject shaped by light systems is constituted in the realm of the visible through the gaze — this is the meaning of "I am photo-graphed." Furthermore, this is not a mastering subject, of the kind Dürer illustrates as occupying a reigning point through perspective. One might say that this is not the "photo-graphing" subject, but the subject who is "photo-graphed" in a regime of light.

If Lacan's ideas on light are, as I propose, related to discourses about photography during his time, why then does he not mention photography explicitly? The answer, I suggest, is that photography haunts Lacan's text like an unconscious. This may not be entirely surprising since photography's widespread visibility during the 1920s and 30s, the period in which photojournalism flourished, could be said to participate in shaping Lacan's theories at their deepest levels. On a mundane, day-to-day level, photography in books and journals, undoubtedly mediated Lacan's looking at various paintings. Yet, as Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" clarifies, photography was regarded as detracting from the status of the original artwork.[87] As a form of reproduction, photography did not have the "aura" of high art, to use Benjamin's term. Yet, photography was all-pervasive. For example, Lacan likely saw a photograph of the detail of the anamorphic skull of *The Ambassadors* (shown without the full context of the painting), as an illustration to an article by Salvador Dali published in *Minotaure* in 1935. Lacan was familiar with this journal, since he

himself had published in it.[88] Nonetheless, while Lacan does discuss paintings, he does not discuss photographs. If photography functioned as an unconscious for Lacan, this partially explains why he barely mentions photography. On the rare occasion when photography does surface explicitly in Lacan's text — as in "I am photo-graphed" — its meaning is far from trivial. Rather, his mention of "photo-graphed" helps explain the central notion about the formation of the subject.

The overall implication I draw from Lacan's writings discussed in this essay is that in the scopic regime of luminous media (from still photography, film, and television to digital media's lit screens) the subject is constituted differently than is the Cartesian subject of geometric perspective. Accordingly, subjectivities are not only shaped by imagery, stereotypes, representations of power relations and so on, but are also deeply affected by the specificities of media and their historically specific discourses.[89] The subject in a regime of luminous media during the late twentieth- and the early twenty-first century, is one who faces flickering screens and flaring fluorescent colours on monitors. Lacan's description of light as "refracted, diffused, it floods, it fills," can be read as describing the qualities of luminous media. Accordingly, photography in its diverse incarnations — from the earliest daguerreotype to Moholy-Nagy's photograms, and from early motion pictures to today's electronic transmissions and video art — can now be understood as having contributed to a post-Cartesian subject and an aesthetics of intensified luminosity. Given these developments, Moholy-Nagy's conceptualization of a historical trajectory that he describes as "from pigment to light" gains a new relevance.

Bill Viola's *The Passions* and Moholy's "Pigment to Light"

Bill Viola's video art exhibition, *The Passions*, is a noteworthy example of how Moholy-Nagy's theories can retrospectively be better understood, having acquired further resonance during recent decades. Held at Britain's National Gallery in the fall of 2003, the exhibition of Viola's *The Passions* was the first time this venerable museum exhibited video art.[90] It was a meaningful step in the "encroaching" of luminous media into the auratic territory of old-master painting. One of the reasons that Viola's works were startling in this context was because they were made to look like luminous "canvases." Viola's choice of the shape and dimensions of these video works, presented on large, rectangular plasma screens, likened

them to the paintings in the other galleries of the museum. Though made in video, the character of Viola's presentations was brought closer to "still" paintings by virtue of their restrained slow motion, fostering an illusion of the subtle animation of a painting. It is as if the medium of video/film has been refashioned within the theoretical and material framework of paintings on canvases; or, as if canvases covered with pigment were transformed into paintings made with light.

Eschewing earlier conventions for the display of video art as straightforward projections or as a part of site-specific installations, these deliberately ambiguous video works appear like "next generation" paintings, or, to some, may seem to be unexpected "intruders" into the museum's painting galleries. Yet, they ingeniously adapt video to the framework of the canvas and the time-honoured tradition of the display of old-master paintings in museums. Gently "masquerading" as canvases, these plasma-screen projections appear like paintings with light. Their intensified luminosity and subtle movements that change the scene slowly, clearly distinguish them from paintings painted with pigment.

Viola's paintings with light (to use Moholy-Nagy's terminology) play with the medium of oil on canvas as a conceptual frame. They infuse the older paradigm with new technologies. In turn, they adapt the properties of video and of the plasma screen to the tradition of the discrete painting hung in a museum. Moholy-Nagy would most likely have objected, because this could be apprehended as an innovative artist using light as a medium only in order to turn around and conform to what Moholy believed was a limiting tradition of framed oil paintings. This, after all, was Moholy's line of criticism towards film as "conceptually derived from traditional studio painting,"[91] and towards conventions of film projection as "only a mechanized easel painting."[92] Nevertheless, I suspect that Moholy would likely have applauded Viola's *The Passions* series because these twenty-first century "mechanized easel paintings" toy with the very tradition they take on. Seen within Moholy-Nagy's theoretical framework, these works may actually destabilize the tradition of painting. Viola's *The Passions* constitutes a case in which video art cunningly claims the prestige of an artistic masterpiece for art works made with a mechanized medium of light. Thus, placed within Moholy's "pigment to light" trajectory, Viola's video works ingeniously embody their own unique post-modernist version of the dream of painting with light.

Concluding Remarks

Moholy-Nagy understood the coming developments of light as an important medium in communication and art. Today, the lit screen has outstripped the painted canvas in its ubiquity in everyday life. It has also made important inroads into the museum and gallery space and thus the domain of high art. Yet, Moholy's modernist enthusiasm for abstract forms and the discarding of both perspective and mimetic representations, prevented him from foreseeing the plurality of developments in art that employs light as a medium. If "high" art has been moving in Moholy-Nagy's charted trajectory of "pigment to light," so has mass media. Marshall McLuhan found some of Moholy-Nagy's ideas a fertile ground for his own sweeping theories on media, though he did not publicly acknowledge this debt.[93] Since then, media studies have mostly taken different directions. It is becoming clear that the ubiquitous presence of media images in general, and luminous media in particular, within the contemporary environment requires additional approaches to media studies. Contemporary media studies need to take into account notions of the "medium" in new ways. It is hoped that this essay contributes to this emerging direction by interpreting the work and ideas of Moholy-Nagy across the disciplinary lines of contemporary art, media, theory and art history with a view to the longer trajectory that Moholy sensed was unfolding.

NOTES

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[1] Siegfried Giedion (written 1935), reprinted in Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Moholy-Nagy, an Anthology* (New York: Da Capo, 1991), [1970], 202.

[2] Moholy-Nagy, "Letter to Frantisek Kalivoda," (written 1934) *Telehor* (nos. 1-2, Brno, 1936): 30-32, reprinted in Krisztina Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1985), 332.

[3] Moholy-Nagy "Abstract of an Artist," Chicago, 1944. Reprinted in Passuth, 362.

[4] Moholy-Nagy, "Letter to Frantisek Kalivoda," Passuth, 332.

[5] For an analysis of computer screens in public space see Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

[6] Moholy-Nagy did return to painting after some years (and explained his reasons in "Light Architecture" *Industrial Arts,* I/1, London, Spring, 1936, reprinted in Kostelanetz, 155-159), while continuing to experiment with various media.

[7] Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film,* (*Painting, Photography, Film*) (Bauhaus Book no. 8), Munich, 1925 (first edition) (Expanded second edition, *Malerei Fotographie Film*, Munich, 1927). English ed., *Painting Photography Film,* 1969, reprinted (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press 1973), 44-45.

[8] Lucia Moholy (née Schulz) was described as "a brilliant photographer" (*"eine glänzende Fotografin"*) by Moholy's later girl-friend — Ellen Frank, a dancer, actress, and the sister of Walter Gropius's wife Ilse — in an interview conducted by filmmaker Jens Schmohl, about her memories of Moholy-Nagy during his Bauhaus years. (Interview transcript from c. 1995 in Hattula Moholy-Nagy archives, p. 36). Born in Prague in 1894, Lucia Schulz initially studied philosophy, philology, and art history in Prague, and moved to Berlin in 1920, where she met Moholy-Nagy and married him in early 1921. She studied photography, built a darkroom, and had the technical darkroom expertise Moholy-Nagy did not acquire. She worked closely with Moholy until 1929, when they separated. Her command of the German language, which Moholy lacked at the time, supports her claim that she collaborated with Moholy on his theoretical writings during the Bauhaus years, and Moholy acknowledged her help with some of his writings. See Hight, 1985, 130. On the role of Lucia Moholy in Moholy-Nagy's photograms, see Andreas Haus, *Moholy-Nagy: Photographs and Photograms* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 12-17, and Eleanor M. Hight, *Picturing Modernism: Moholy-Nagy and Photography in Weimar Germany* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 57-93. For Lucia Moholy's account of her creative and technical collaboration with Moholy-Nagy see Lucia Moholy, *Marginalien zu Moholy-Nagy, Moholy-Nagy, Marginal Notes* (Krefeld: 1972), 59-64.

[9] D. F. Arago, cited in A. Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven: Leete's, 1980), 18.

[10] Cited in Trachtenberg, *ibid.*, 5.

[11] Moholy-Nagy, "Photography is Manipulation of Light," *Bauhaus* No. 1, 1928, reprinted in Haus, 47-50, at p. 47.

[12] Moholy-Nagy, "Light — A Medium of Plastic Expression," *Broom*, IV, No. 4 (1923), reprinted in Passuth, 293.

[13] Moholy-Nagy, "Photography is Manipulation of Light," reprinted in Haus, 47.

[14] See Joel Snyder's argument about the continuity between the Renaissance system of geometric perspective and photography produced by cameras, which were designed to produce realistic-looking pictures in the geometric perspective tradition of painting. "Picturing Vision," in *The Language of Images*, ed., W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980), 219-46.

[15] Haus, 16.

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] Moholy-Nagy, "Fényjaték-film" ("Light Display Film"), *Korunk*, No. 12, 1931, 866-867, reprinted in Passuth, 316-317.

[19] Sometimes the German title is translated as *Light-Display Machine*, and Moholy also refers to it on occasion as the "Light Prop." The reference to "Light Prop" is in "Abstract of an Artist," 1944, reprinted in Passuth, 381. "Light-Space Modulator (sic) for an Electrical Stage" appears in Moholy-Nagy's brief essay, "*Light-Space Modulator (sic) for* an Electric Stage," ("Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne") *Die Form*, V, nos. 11-12, (1930), reprinted in Passuth, 310.

[20] See Hight, 1995, 91; Passuth, 55; Hannah Weitemeier, *Licht-Visionen: Ein Experiment von Moholy-Nagy* (Berlin: Bauhaus-Archiv, 1972), 5.

[21] See Letter from Moholy-Nagy to Sonia Delaunay, March 27, 1930, printed in Passuth, 404-405.

[22] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy reports that Moholy stated that he and his assistant had worked on the *Light-Prop for Electric Stage* for some ten years. *Experiment in Totality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969) 66. According to Nan Rosenthal the sculpture was made between March and May of 1930, and Moholy designed the *Light-Prop* for his stage design work. In unpublished paper in folder, "Lazlo (sic) Moholy-Nagy," Harvard University Museums, Busch-Reisinger Museum, "Notes on a motorized construction of 1930 by Lazlo (sic) Moholy-Nagy," no date. Cited in Andrea Kalisky Miller, "Films" in Hight, 1985, 128.

[23] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy discusses the difficulties of moving the work (which she referred to as the *Light-display machine)* in *Experiment in Totality*, 67.

[24] Moholy-Nagy, "Light-Space Modulator (sic) for an Electric Stage" ("Lichtrequisit einer elektrischen Bühne"), *Die Form*, V, Nos. 11-12 (1930), reprinted in Passuth, 310

[25] *Ibid.*, 311.

[26] *Ibid.*, 310.

[27] Moholy-Nagy, "Light – A Medium of Plastic Expression," Passuth, 293.

[28] Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film,* 26. (Expanded second edition, *Malerei Fotographie Film, Munich,* 1927). English ed., *Painting Photography Film*, 1969, 33.

[29] For the relevant screenplay see Passuth, 316-18. For different opinions on the date of this film, see note 66. For Moholy's earlier thoughts on the possibilities of cinema see Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Photographie Film,* 26. (Expanded second edition, *Malerei Fotographie Film, Munich,* 1927). English ed., *Painting Photography Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1973), 41-43.

[30] I am grateful to the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, California, for making the film available for my viewing.

[31] Istvan Kovacs' in *Forum,* cited in Kostelanetz, 13.

[32] Moholy-Nagy, "Light Display Film," Passuth, 316.

[33] Moholy-Nagy, "New Film Potentialities," [originally in *Munka*, no. 24, 1932, 685-687], reprinted n Passuth, 317.

[34] Moholy-Nagy, "Problems of the Modern Film," reprinted in Kostelanetz, 131.

[35] *Ibid.*, 137.

[36] "Abstract of an Artist," Passuth, 381.

[37] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy, *Experiment in Totality, 64.* Apparently she saw the film and apparatus during the winter of 1931.

[38] Moholy-Nagy, "Light Architecture," reprinted in Kostelanetz, 156.

[39] *Ibid.*, 155.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] *Ibid.*, 156.

[42] *Ibid.*, 155.

[43] Moholy-Nagy, "From Pigment to Light," (1923-26) *Telehor*, Brno: 1936, reprinted in Kostelanetz, 34.

[44] Moholy-Nagy, "Theater, Circus, Variety," in *The Theater of the Bauhaus*, eds., Oscar Schlemmer, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Farkas Molnar, intro. Walter Gropius (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), 49-70.

[45] Cited in Hans Curjel, "Excerpts from Moholy–Nagy and the Theater," reprinted in Kostelanetz, 95.

[46] "Contemporary Typography – Aims, Practice, Criticism," *Gutenberg Festschrift,* 1925, reprinted in Passuth, 294.

[47] Moholy-Nagy, "Light Painting," *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, eds., J. L. Martin, Ben Nicholson, N. Gabo, Faber and Faber, 1937, reprinted in Passuth, 343.

[48] L. Moholy-Nagy, "In Defence of 'Abstract' Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, IV, 1945, reprinted in Kostelanetz, 45.

[49] *Ibid.*, 46.

[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Franz Roh, *Moholy-Nagy: 60 Fotos*, and Berlin: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1930, reprinted in Kostellanetz, 49.

[53] *Ibid.*

[54] *Ibid.*

[55] Hight, 1985, 43.

[56] Moholy-Nagy wrote about this issue on Cubism and Futurism in his "Abstract of the Artist," Passuth, 360-383.

[57] See Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form.* Trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York: Zone Books, 1991), note 73, 153-154. [Originally published in German as: "Die Perspektive als 'symbolische Form,'" in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg 1924-1925*, Leipzig & Berlin, 1927, 258-330].

[58] *Ibid.*, 154.

[59] Franz Roh, 49.

[60] Man Ray's use of photograms predated Moholy-Nagy's, but others used the technique prior to Man Ray. See Hight, 1985, 48-49 and Herbert Molderings, "Laszlo Moholy-Nagy und die Neuerfindung des Photograms" in *Kunst und Fotografie,* Renate Heyne, ed. (Jonal Verlag, 2003).

[61] "Age de la lumière." *Minotaure* 1, 1933, 1-3. Letter to Howland, Ferdinand Howland Collection, cited in Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, in *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray*, M. Foresta et. al, eds., (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art Smithsonian Institution, New York: Abbervile, 1988), 116.

[62] See for example Moholy-Nagy's addressing these issues in Cubism and Futurism in "Abstract of the Artist."

[63] Some of the following discussion on Lacan draws on ideas analysed more extensively in my essay "In the Light of Images and the Shadow of Technology: Lacan, Photography and Subjectivity," *Discourse*, Vol. 19, no. 1 (Spring, 1997), 43-66.

[64] Though it is not known to what extent Lacan may have been familiar with the art and theories of the German Bauhaus, it is known that he associated with Dali and the Surrealists in Paris during the 1930s and was familiar with their ideas, see David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London, 1988).

[65] As attested by the special March 1930 issue of *Arts et métiers graphiques*, which featured photography, and was the first in a series of annuals devoted to photography in France. See Sandra S. Phillips in *Perpetual Motif*, 205.

[66] Sibyl Moholy-Nagy's statement appears in notes by her written for the presentation of "Six Films by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy," at The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, February 22 – April 19, 1970 (in archives of Hattula Moholy-Nagy). Some scholars differ on the exact date of the film. Passuth dates the film 1930 (p. 58); Hight mentions that the film was shown in the Paris exhibition (in the "Chronology" section of *Moholy-Nagy: Photography and Film in Weimar Germany*, 139); and Haus states that the film was made

"following" the Werkbund exhibition (p. 54). (These texts do not provide sources for this information.) Jeanpaul Goergen concludes that Moholy-Nagy completed the film only in 1932 based on German documents stamped by the censor "March 1932," which he interprets as proving that 1932 was the date that the film was first shown. ("Vortrag 20. Juli 1995: Laszlo Moholy-Nagy zum 100 Geburstag," p. 1, in archives of Hattula Moholy-Nagy). This conclusion does not necessarily follow, however, because while the film may indeed have been first exhibited in Germany in 1932, it may well have been shown earlier in Paris at the 1930 Werkbund exhibition.

[67] For a photograph of the installation see Passuth, Fig. 242.

[68] "Problems of the Modern Film," *Cahiers d'Art*, VII/6-7, Paris 1932, reprinted in Kostelanetz, 131-138. (Written between 1928 and 1930).

[69] Jacques Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. A. Sheridan. Ed., J. A. Miller (New York, Norton, 1990), 86, hereafter referred to as *Four*. [*Le séminaire livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Ed., Jacques–Alain Miller. Paris: Seuil, 1973.]

[70] For a critical discussion on perspective, that takes into account Lacan's writings, see Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective*. Trans. John Goodman (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994). For a critique of Damisch and an analysis of Lacan, see M. Iversen, "Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspectives," *Oxford Art Journal*, 18.2, 1995, 81-84.

[71] *Four*, 224.

[72] On Dali's interest in anamorphosis see Haim Finkelstein, *Salvador Dali's Art and Writing 1927-1942: The Metamorphoses of Narcissus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and "Dali's Anthropomorphic Landscapes," *Bruckmann's Pantheon* (XLVI, 1988): 142-148.

[73] The painting is a double portrait of Jean de Dinteville, the French Ambassador to England in 1533 on the left, and Georges de Selve, Bishop of Lavaur, on the right.

[74] Several scholars have noted the different direction of the skull's shadow. See for example Susan Foister, Ashok Roy, Martin Wyld, *Making and Meaning, Holbein's Ambassadors* (National Gallery Publications, London, 1997), 48. For a different interpretation of *The Ambassadors* in relation to Lacan, see Henry Krips, *Fetish: An Erotics of Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 97-117.

[75] The objects on the upper shelf are related to celestial knowledge, astronomy, and time measurements while those on the lower shelf include a book for the study of arithmetic, instruments for geometrical calculations, musical instruments and a hymnbook. See S. Foister et. al., 33.

[76] *Four*, 88.

[77] Lacan: "the classic dialectic around perception derives from the fact that it deals with geometric vision, that is to say, with vision in so far as it is situated in a space that is not in its essence visual." *Four*, 94.

[78] *Ibid.*, 94.

[79] *Ibid.*, 95.

[80] *Ibid.*

[81] *Ibid.*

[82] *Ibid.*, 96 (my emphasis). The English translation is adapted. The original in French reads:

> Je ne suis pas simplement cet être punctiforme qui se repère au point géometral d'ou est saisie la perspective. Sans doute, au fond de mon oeil, se peint le tableau. Le tableau, certes, est dans mon oeil. Mais moi, je suis dans le tableau.
>
> Ce qui est lumière me regarde, et grâce à cette lumière au fond de mon oeil, quelque chose se peint – qui n'est point simplement le rapport construit, l'objet sur quoi s'attarde le philosophe – mais qui est impression, qui ruissellement d'une surface qui n'est pas, d'avance, située pour moi dans sa distance. C'est là quelque chose qui fait intervenir ce qui est élidé dans la relation géométrale – la profondeur de champ, avec tout ce qu'elle présente d'ambigu, de variable, **de nullement maîtrisé par moi. C'est bien plutôt elle qui me saisit, qui me sollicite à chaque instant, et fait du paysage autre chose qu'une perspective,** autre chose que ce que j'ai appelé le tableau.

Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*. Ed., Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1973), 89. (My emphasis).

[83] *Four*, 96.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] Mark Poster discusses a "decentered" and "dispersed" subject in relationship to television and computer writing, in the context of his interpretation of Baudrillard and Derrida. See Ch. 2 and 4 in The *Mode of Information* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990). Paul Virilio's emphasis on the lost dimension, disappearance, and immateriality is of interest in this context. See *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. Trans. Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991).

[86] Lacan's one mention of photography is not in his discussion of "The Line and Light," but in another chapter, entitled "What is a Picture," *Four*, 106.

[87] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*. Ed. and Intro. Hannah Arendt. Trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 117-252.

[88] In two issues of *Minotaure* in 1933.

[89] For an example of a study that contextualizes the new technology of electricity in social practices and discourses, see Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1988). Jonathan Crary writes of a new "observer" being constituted in the 1820s and 1830s as the result of physiological research on vision and various apparatuses deriving from this research, before the advent of the photograph in *Techniques of the Observer* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990).

[90] Viola's *"The Passions"* was exhibited earlier at the J. Paul Getty Museum.

[91] Moholy-Nagy, "Problems of the Modern Film," Kostelanetz, 131.

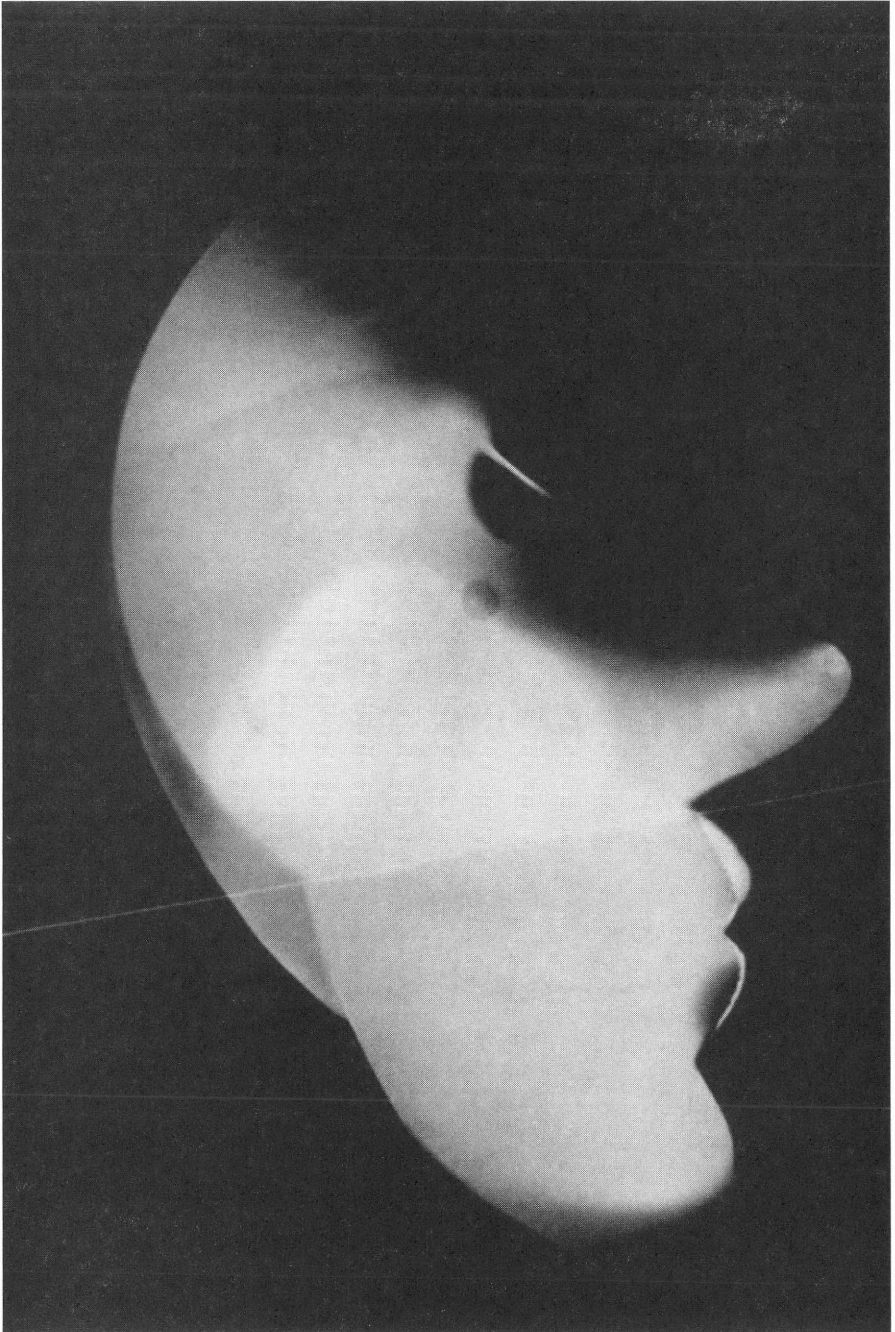
[92] Moholy-Nagy, *ibid.*, 137.

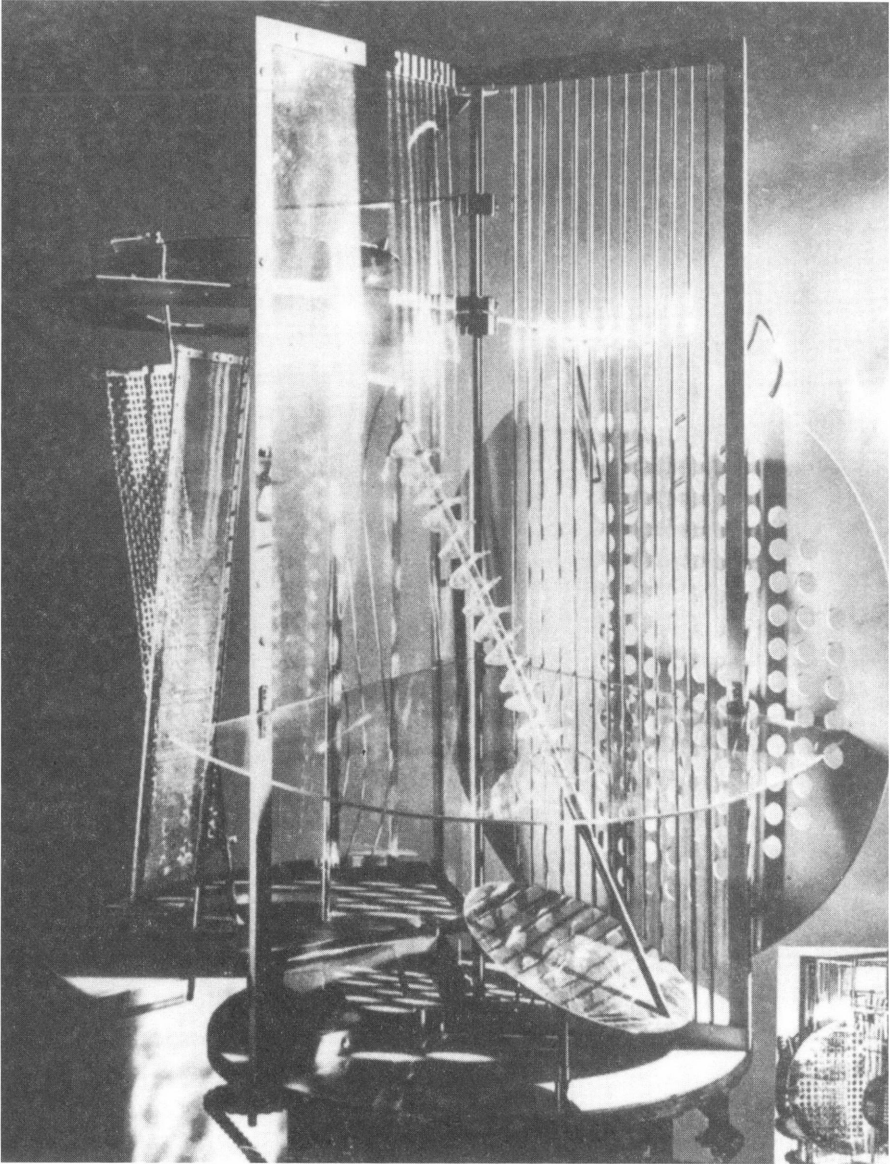
[93] Kostelanetz, 214.

Captions for Figures

1. László Moholy-Nagy, *Self Portrait Profile*, photogram, 1922. 37.4 x 27.4 cm. Courtesy of George Eastman House, The International Museum of Photography, Rochester. Reproduced with the permission of Hattula Moholy-Nagy. See page 74.

2. Photographer unknown. László Moholy-Nagy's *Light Prop for an Electric Stage*, silver gelatin copy print, courtesy of Oliver Botar and Hattula Moholy-Nagy, with permission of Hattula Moholy-Nagy. See page 75.





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Retaining the Accent: Hugo Gellert and the Hungarian Cultural-Political Nexus

James M. Wechsler

Best known for his fiercely trenchant prints and drawings of the 1930s, Hungarian-American artist Hugo Gellert was an extraordinarily influential figure in American art of the early twentieth century. (figure 1, see page 101) Gellert was extremely prolific artistically, and, as a member of the American Communist Party (CPUSA) notoriously active politically. Though born in Budapest, Gellert spent most of his entire long life in the United States. He is rightly considered an American artist, however, Gellert's connections to his mother country remained deep and complex.

Hugo Gellert was born Hugo Grünbaum on 3 May 1892, the eldest child of the tailor Adolf Grünbaum and Katicza (Schwartz) Grünbaum.[1] A working class Jewish family, the Grünbaums lived at Magyar utca 25, in the Jewish, industrial neighborhood of Újpest, [New Pest, since 1950 the Fourth District] on the outskirts of Budapest, Hungary.[2] Both Adolf and Katicza came to the city from villages in the Hungarian countryside, Adolf from Zempléný County to the northeast (in present day Slovakia), and Katicza from the Lake Balaton region to the southwest. It appears that in the late 1890s Adolf and his young family joined Katicza's family and Adolf's brother Hermann in downtown Budapest on Kazinczy utca, in the Pest Jewish Triangle.[3]

Gellert attended public school at the Lovag utca *gimnázium*, a few blocks from home. There he made his earliest connection between art and revolution, recalling that "Professor Kiel was my history teacher. He lectured with special enthusiasm about the Renaissance of the 15th Century and about the Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49 and its poet, Petőfi."[4]

The family remained in the Pest Jewish Triangle while Adolf Grünbaum made his way to the Netherlands in the autumn of 1905. From Rotterdam, on 7 October, 1905 the forty-one year old tailor crossed the Atlantic on the Noordam to the United States, arriving in New York ten days later on the 17th.[5] He soon sent for the family, who arrived early in 1906. Many Hungarian citizens made the similar decisions to emigrate around this time. In fact the Grünbaums came to America during height of Hungarian immigration, between 1900-1910, when some 311,682 immigrants from Hungary arrived in the United States.[6] The Grünbaums settled in Yorkville, a neighborhood on the Upper East Side of Manhattan that had a significant Hungarian immigrant population.[7] The family soon anglicized the name to Greenbaum. However, rather than Americanize the name even further to Green, for instance, as did many Jewish immigrants, they Magyarized it. The name became the distinctly Hungarian "Gellért," perhaps in reference to Gellért Hill in Budapest. It appears that Hugo was the first to officially use the new name instead of Greenbaum. In 1909 he registered as a student at the School of the National Academy of Design as "Hugo Gellert," while his father was still using Greenbaum as late as 1915, when Adolf Greenbaum, tailor, was listed in the New York City Directory at 336 E. 82nd Street.

Gellert began his education at the National Academy by attending classes in drawing from antique casts. He was admitted to the program the following year and remained until the spring of 1914. During this period he won a noteworthy total of nine awards, four of which included cash prizes. Though he did not win the prestigious seven-hundred-dollar Ella Mooney Travel Scholarship awarded to the most advanced pupils such as Maurice Sterne (1905) and Leon Kroll (1909), Gellert used the one-hundred-forty-five dollars in prize money as his own travel scholarship. Hoping to continue his academic training, Gellert intended to enroll in the Académie Julian in Paris when it re-opened after the summer. As he recalled:

> I thought I would go to visit my relatives in Hungary. Not having money I started out on foot. I got as far as Strasbourg at the German border. There I took a train to Munich, and from Munich to Vienna and from Vienna on a boat down the Danube to Budapest. Then as I arrived in Budapest, news came that war had broken out between the monarchy and Serbia.[8]

Gellert stayed with his aunt, uncle and cousins, as Budapest began the painful transformation from splendid, thriving capital city to home front. While he was there the family endured a scare when they received a telegram from the army. Gellert described how his uncle's hands shook trying to open it. Expecting the worst, he was relieved when it simply informed him that his son would be passing through Budapest on his way to the Eastern front. However, in the winter of 1915, after Gellert returned to New York, he learned that his cousin had died from frostbite while stationed in the Carpathian Mountains.

According to Gellert, he became involved with Socialism at this time through his younger brother Ernest and the Hungarian-American workers' movement. He participated in the events, outings, and picnics at the Előre Cultural Club, which was formed in 1909 around the socialist, Hungarian-language newspaper *Előre* [Forward].[9] Soon he began contributing drawings to *Előre Képes Folyóirat* [Forward Illustrated Journal], *Előre's* Sunday cultural supplement. The first six covers feature his drawings.

Gellert's debut *Előre Képes Folyóirat* cover on the 23 January 1916 issue depicted a society lady with a little dog in her arms entering a building as a black doorman holds open the door. Observing this is a poor newsboy, whose thoughts are revealed in the caption below. *"De szeretnék kis kutya lenni!* [Boy, would I like to be a little dog]." (figure 2, p. 102) Using the naïve remarks of poor children to reveal their dire conditions was a popular formula in cartoons published in the radical journal *The Masses*. See, for instance, Alice Beach Winter's drawing of an impoverished girl walking past a wealthy mother, infant, and young, wavy-haired, Lord Fauntleroy-type boy in the January 1913 issue of *The Masses*. The girl, misunderstanding the boy's clothing style, thinks "He ain't got no stockin's, he's poorer nor [sic.] me." Another example is Art Young's October 1911 drawing of two indigent city kids looking at the night sky. The caption reads "Observation De Luxe. Young Poet: 'Gee Annie, look at the stars! They're as thick as bedbugs.'"

Yet, if Gellert's message was modeled on the social reformist *Masses* illustrations, his fluid style and facile draftsmanship was not. Compared with the rough aesthetic of Stuart Davis' *Masses* work such as his deliberately unsophisticated June 1913 *"Gee, Mag, Think of us Bein' on a Magazine Cover!,"* or Maurice Becker's ill-mannered, May 1916 *Harbinger of Spring*, Gellert's aesthetic is more polished and refined. Where Davis and Becker were looking to their Ashcan School mentors

John Sloan and Robert Henri, Gellert was responding more to European models. Perhaps he had seen the late 19th century French journal *La Revue Blanche*. Aesthetically his work is evocative of the graphics published in it by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Pierre Bonnard, and especially Felix Vallotton.

After this first *Előre Képes Folyóirat* cover, Gellert embarked on a series that addressed the war. On the 30 January, 1916 cover, a soldier stands over his vanquished enemy and prepares to deliver the *coup de grace* with his bayonet. The prostrate one holds the end of the victor's rifle. "*Miért?*" [Why?], the question printed at the bottom of the page, could be read as a plea. Yet the standing soldier's body language indicates a moment of indecision as if he also asks it of himself. Ultimately, since there is no clear indication of which soldier represents right and which represents wrong, it is meant to prompt the viewer to question the war itself. Similarly, the 6 February, 1916 cover also pointed to the futility of the war. Captioned *Háboru után* [After War], it is a domestic scene showing a young woman in traditional peasant dress spoon-feeding her invalid, armless husband, while their daughter stares blankly into space. Perhaps his most powerful anti-war statement was the 20 February, 1916 cover, *Militarizmus: "Te kellesz nekem* [Militarism: "I Want You"] in which the specter of conscription emerges from the shadows to reach for a terrified schoolboy.

After these covers, Gellert stopped contributing to *Előre Képes Folyóirat* until late in 1920. The reason he stopped when he did is unclear. It may have been in part because in the spring of 1916 Gellert himself became involved with *The Masses*. In his own words, "I picked up two of my black-and-white drawings and took them down to *The Masses*, because they were against the war, as I was. When the next issue appeared, it had my drawings and I became a regular contributor."[10]

Strangely, however, in his *Masses* designs Gellert moved away from the overtly social themes of war and poverty. When compared to the *Előre Képes Folyóirat* covers and especially to the confrontational, political art for which he became known during the 1920s and 1930s, Gellert's *Masses* drawings may seem incongruent. He explained,

> I was a purist. I only made artistic... drawings at first. It took me some time before I made cartoons. I... made cartoons for the Hungarian paper because I thought that was suitable for a newspaper... [*The Masses*,] that was an art magazine so my

> works were artistic. It was called a magazine of art and literature and I still believed that art was one thing and a cartoon was another.[11]

Yet his decorative works are by no means conservative. Within them are echoes of turn-of-the-century Hungarian revolutionary nationalism, which strove to articulate an indigenous expression that was distinct from the Neoclassical Austrian Imperial style. Looking at Gellert's drawings from the 1910s and early 1920s it becomes clear just how much he was a product of this "Golden Age" of Hungarian culture. Budapest's tremendous growth during the 19th century provided sufficient foundation for a thriving intellectual culture in the 1890s. By the 1896 millennial celebrations, marking the 1000th anniversary of the Magyar tribe's settlement of the Carpathian basin, artists, architects and designers of the avant-garde had begun to theorize and produce work that rejected the dominant culture. Receptive to international modernism, the Hungarian avant-garde looked towards the French Art Nouveau and the Viennese Secession as paradigms of anti-academicism. Yet, in their pursuit of an independent, specifically Hungarian identity, they imbued these designs with forms derived from Hungarian folk art.

Significantly, in numerous early drawings, Gellert used the theme of a deer hunt, which was important in pagan Hungarian mythology. (figure 3, page 103) This theme is found in some of the most ancient legends that describe the origin of the Hungarian, or Magyar people. During the nationalistic *fin de siècle* the revival of the deer hunt motif functioned as code for Hungarian autonomy. It was prevalent on monuments and public projects such as Alajos Stróbl's 1898-1904 *Fountain of King Matthais* in the inner courtyard of the Buda Castle, and Sándor Nagy's façade decorations of István Medgyaszay's 1908 Theater of Veszprém, about fifty miles south of Budapest. Similarly, the influential, avant-garde architect Ödön Lechner revived vernacular forms from Transylvanian architecture. Remarking on the aesthetic similarities between these and the modernist, Art Nouveau designs, he incorporated them in a number of high-profile projects in the 1890s such as the Museum of Applied Arts and the Geological Institute. Lechner's pupil Béla Lajta took these ideas to a new level. In his designs of the 1910s, Latja referred to the repetitive, geometric, patterns of traditional Hungarian applied arts — such as chip carving, weaving, and embroidery — as decorative details on his buildings. When Gellert visited Budapest

in the summer of 1914, Latja's status was at its height. Gellert could have seen Latja's Jewish Institute for the Blind (1908) on Mexikói Street, the Jewish Infirmary for Incurable Patients (1911) on Amerikai Street, and, in his old neighborhood, the István Széchenyi Secondary School (1912) on Vas Street, as well as the Center of the Orthodox Jewish Religious Community on Kazinczy Street, designed by Latja followers, the brothers Béla and Sándor Löffler. All of these buildings feature façades illustrated with highly stylized, geometric reliefs that synthesize vernacular traditions and the modernist idiom. Gellert's similarly used decorative border devices to set off a modernized folk motif in much of his graphic art of the1910s and early 1920s.

Through his association with *Előre Képes Folyóirat*, *Előre,* its successor *Új Előre* [New Forward], and even *The Masses*, and *The Liberator*, the magazine that began publication after *The Masses* was forced to fold, Gellert would have been exposed to more overt political statements by the radical artists of the Hungarian avant-garde, such as the poet and impresario Lajos Kassák, as well as Mihály Bíró, Sándor Bortnyik, Gyula Derkovitz, János Tábor, and Béla Uitz who advocated political as well as aesthetic revolution. United in opposition to the war, their agenda was to create a new art in service of international socialism. At war's end they supported the short-lived Hungarian Communist regime of 1919 led by Béla Kun, though Kassák and a number of others eventually came into conflict with it. To reach the working class, as well as intellectuals the avant-garde advocated the media of mass production, particularly the poster and the little magazine. Kassák declared that painters should learn from the poster artist:

> We desire with all our hearts that just as the poster is a magnificent compliment to the modern town, the picture too should fill our room with a life outside us, one that subdues all industrial objects; and as posters jostle for position on the colorful hoardings with their stubborn, world-shattering zest, so let pictures vie with each other in today's musty and soporific exhibitions![12]

Gellert followed social, political and cultural developments in Hungary. He was aware of the radical avant-garde, and Kassák's journal *Ma* [Today], published from November 1916 to June 1925.[13] Yet, Gellert was most likely first introduced to Kassák's writings before *MA* was published. In March 1916 *Előre Képes Folyóirat* published Kassák's

modernist narrative of childhood, *A rossz emlékek köözül* [From Among the Bad Memories], which told the story of a free-spirited woman who rented a room in the home of the narrator's family. *Előre Képes Folyóirat* and its successor *Új Előre* continued to feature Kassák's poetry throughout the late 1910s and early 1920s.[14] Significantly, these journals also published Hungarian translations of articles and drawings by Gellert's colleagues from *The Liberator*, such as "*A kultúra szerepe a munkás-társadalomban*" [The role of culture in working class society] by Mike Gold[15] and Maurice Becker's ironic cartoon *A porosz militarizmus a szabadság földjén* (Prussian militarism in the land of freedom).[16]

Furthermore, through these journals Gellert would have been able to see reproductions of Hungarian revolutionary art. The 28 December, 1919 *Előre Képes Folyóirat* reproduced Uitz' agitational poster *Vörös Katonák Előre* [Red Soldiers Forward]. But examples of Hungarian Activist art and literature were not limited to the Hungarian-language press. In the summer of 1919, the journalist Crystal Eastman was invited to Hungary to report on Béla Kun's Communist republic, which seized power from the post-war liberal-pacifist Károlyi government that March. As the third Communist revolution following the Russian revolution and the failed German Spartakist revolt, Hungary was seen as a domino that could launch a revolutionary chain reaction in Europe. Appearing in the August, 1919 *Liberator* magazine, Eastman's "In Communist Hungary" explained the inner workings of Kun's revolutionary government, and described in detail agitational posters *in situ* in the Budapest streets.

> The revolutionary placards are all red, almost wholly one color. They are everywhere, on every street — enormous sheets many of them, some good drawings some bad; very daring and simple; all emphatically modern. One is a great bold red figure running with a flag — "To Arms!" There is a soldier charging with a bayonet — "He who is not with us is against us!" "Save the Proletariat," "Defend the Revolution," "Join the Red Guard!" — these are the phrases repeated again and again — but never a word about Hungary, never a note of nationalist appeal.[17]

Non-Hungarian-speaking Americans would have had an opportunity to see one such poster before Eastman's vivid description in the *Liberator*. The cover of the July 1916 *Masses* featured Mihály Bíró's red, sledgehammer-wielding figure, which he used repeatedly in a number of graphic

projects. An unused 1920s Gellert gouache study intended for a *Liberator* cover depicting a nude red man with a sledgehammer, is likely a response to this image or to Bíró's numerous variations on this theme. (figure 4, page 104.) Similarly, Gellert's cartoon *Just a Look In* is compositionally and conceptually similar to Bíró's 1919 poster for the radical political newspaper *Politika* (Politics).[18] Both picture a tremendous workingman looming over the diminutive domes of government buildings that house the heads of state. In Bíró's case the revolutionary behemoth easily lifts the distinctive neo-gothic roof of the turn-of-the-century Hungarian Parliament building. He literally overpowers the obstruction — symbolized by the architecture of an empire at the height of its pre-war power — in order to shed light on the formerly inaccessible space. In Gellert's drawing the enormous proletarian expresses his wish to look inside the United States Capitol. But, because his class does not yet control the machinery of government, the Capitol dome remains a barrier. Throughout his career Gellert continued to find inspiration in Bíró's posters. He used the artist's 1912 anti-war poster *A háború borzalmai ellen...* [Against the Horrors of War] as the source for a lithograph in his 1933 portfolio *Karl Marx Capital in Pictures*. In each image a uniformed skeleton heaves a shovelfull of tiny figures, who it has just scooped up from the crowd at his feet, into the back of a cannon.

Gellert's activity with the Előre Cultural Club led to experiments with design for the performing arts. At the beginning of the war in Europe the Hungarian playwright and journalist Andor Garvai became stranded in the United States. Under Garvai's guidance, the Club's theater grew from an amateur troupe staging one act plays into a professional organization, which performed in New York and in the industrial New Jersey towns that had large Hungarian communities. Gellert designed and painted the sets and Garvai directed the plays. "As master of ceremonies," Gellert recalled, Garvai "was also without equal. Between the acts while we transformed the stage, he amused the audience."[19] Playwrights of the group included Lajos Egri and Francis Faragoh, who would become a Hollywood screenwriter in the 1930s, working on such films as *Little Caesar* (1930) and *Frankenstein* (1931).

Though none of Gellert's sets from these productions survives, during the early 1920s he illustrated a published version of Faragoh's one-act play, *The Plug in the Hole*. (figure 5, page 105) These abstract ink drawings relate to Gellert's friend Louis Lozowick's contemporaneous black and white mechanical abstractions inspired by Russian Construc-

tivist El Lissitzky. Moreover, they are evocative of Kassák's geometric *MA* covers.

Gellert pursued a more complex project with his set designs for Egri's eight-act play *Hakuba and Hekuba* (c. 1923, translated into English by Faragoh). The title referred to the twin countries Hakuba and Hekuba, whose inhabitants live for only twenty-four hours. Everyone wears "small clockworks in the region of the abdomen. These clocks indicate the amount of air consumed and the number of steps taken by the individual."[20] Inspectors stop each citizen after every fifteen steps to read these meters and collect walking and breathing tax. Though the customs, religion, and language of the Hakubanians and the Hekubanians are identical, their fierce nationalism destines them to go to war.[21] Imre Szabó, a stranger to both lands arrives in Hakuba and lives among the populace. Because he sees no difference between them and the Hekubanians, Imre tries to convince them all to live in harmony. For this he is ostracized, jailed, and sentenced to death as a traitor in a decree that proclaimed that he

> attempted to incite to revolt against the Government, law, order and the constitution; furthermore, that he had demanded equal rights for all; furthermore, that he had sought to hinder our just war against the dastardly oppressors of our country; furthermore, that he had thus given aid to the enemy by calling upon the people to refuse payment of special taxes...[22]

Though influenced by Constructivism, *Hakuba and Hekuba* does not present machinery as the liberator of the working class, as an entirely Constructivist work would have. Rather, like German Expressionist dramas of the late 1910s and early 1920s (and films later in the decade such as Fritz Lang's 1927 *Metropolis*), the ruling class was shown controlling the means of production, and machinery was presented as a source of oppression for the working class.

It is unknown whether the play was ever performed or whether Gellert's sets were constructed, but three gouache studies exist, indicating his ideas for the *Hakuba and Hekuba* sets. According to Egri's instructions, the curtain rises on Scene I revealing an old, white-haired bespectacled scientist inserting a cogwheel into the chest of a female figure on an operating table. "About him there are other wheels, too, of various sizes and shapes, and there are minute springs and intricate bits of delicate machinery..."[23] Gellert's solution was a large standing pressure

gage in the foreground in front of an array of cogwheels and steel beams, or crane arms, all within a triangular outline indicating the sloped walls of an attic garret. (figure 6, page 106.) Though Gellert's design is two-dimensional in format and it is unclear if he intended the sets to exist as stationary backdrops or as three-dimensional environments with moving parts, the cogs and beams bring to mind Liubov Popova's innovative 1922 moving sets for Vsevolod Meyerhold's production of Fernand Crommelynck's *The Magnanimous Cuckhold.*

Political events in Hungary led Gellert to take a more direct political direction in his art. On 1 August 1919, after a mere 133 days in power, Béla Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic fell. It had been severely weakened by internal opposition and external aggression. Within Hungary, the peasant class, as well as the bourgeoisie, initially enthused by the liberal post-Hapsburg reforms, resisted the anti-religious propaganda, appropriation of family savings, and the nationalization of all businesses and rural estates. As a result of this popular unrest the advancing Romanian army met little resistance.

In the wake of the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic the leaders of the two dominant counter-revolutionary factions, former Austro-Hungarian admiral Miklós Horthy and aristocratic Count István Bethlen, filled the power vacuum. In March 1920, with the tacit backing of the military, Parliament elected Horthy as "Regent" of the Kingdom of Hungary — newly purged as it was of communist, and even liberal, ideas and tendencies. In June Hungary was forced to sign the Versailles peace treaty according to the terms of which the nation lost two thirds of its pre-war territory and 60 percent of its pre-war population to Austria, Romania, and the new states of Czecho-Slovakia, and Yugoslavia. By September the *numerus clausus* law was enacted, limiting the number of Jews in institutions of higher learning to their proportion of the population. Count Michael Károlyi, former President of the post-war, pre-Kun liberal Hungarian Republic explained that this policy was based on a belief, commonly held in contemporary Hungary, that Jews alone had been responsible for Bolshevik excesses in 1919. He added:

> The Horthy anti-Semites have an adage, which they apply indiscriminately and bitterly — "Every Bolshevik is a Jew and every Jew is a Bolshevik." And because the country was terrified by the "Red Menace," because they feared Béla Kun, who was also a Jew and a Communist, the Jew became and is the scapegoat of their hatred.[24]

The following year, in April 1921, Horthy appointed Bethlen prime minister, completing the transformation of the Hungarian government to right wing nationalism. This conversion from a Bolshevik-style revolutionary government to ultra-conservatism deeply troubled the American left, especially Hungarian-American leftists like Gellert, who had expressed opposition to Horthy since the Admiral rose to power. Gellert's full-page cartoon *Magyarország 1920-ban* [Hungary in 1920] depicting Horthy as a vulture perched over a bound and wounded young man representing Hungary, appeared in *Előre Képes Folyóirat* in December 1920. *New Masses*, the Communist cultural journal Gellert co-founded in 1926, labeled Horthy "Hungary's Bloody Mary," and published editorials condemning the admiral's "reign of terror" which "managed to kill off, or imprison, or exile, or shut up, intimidate, and castrate every decent contemporary exponent of the arts and sciences" in Hungary.[25] A call to action came in the spring of 1927, when Hungary began treaty negotiations with Mussolini's Fascist Italy. *New Masses* reported that upon his return from Rome, Bethlen declared "my government will undertake in the immediate future a thorough study of the fascist system, especially its social aspects...we shall adopt those fascist reforms which have been tested and found practicable."[26]

With a number of other Hungarian immigrants, including the novelist Emery Bálint, Rabbi Dr. Samuel Buchler (President of the Federation of Hungarian Jews), and the artist Wanda Gág, Gellert organized the Anti-Horthy League. [27] As the Hungarian American Communist paper *Amerikai Magyar Szó* [Hungarian American Word] later recounted,

> this League was organized on March 15, 1927, with 136 delegates from 36 Hungarian American societies present. The work of organizing was carried out by ELORE (Forward), one of our paper's ancestors, in that movement which carried on a ceaseless struggle against Horthy type gangsters and to open their base deeds to American opinion. And also to hinder the building of political and economic support among Hungarian Americans by Horthy's agents.[28]

To be sure, the Communists played a vital role in the League, but it was not a Communist, or even a specifically political organization *per se*. Rabbi Buchler sought to distinguish his group from the Communist

element when he declared his resentment at "being treated like a Bolshevik!"[29] As Gellert described it,

> the overwhelming majority in the Anti-Horthy League [was] made up of sick and benevolent societies, cultural societies, athletic clubs, singing societies and even semi religious organizations. They [were] non-political in character and the common bond, which [united] them all under the banner of the Anti-Horthy league [was] their hatred for the Horthy regime and their hatred of Fascism as an international menace.[30]

This organized "hatred of Fascism" coalesced around a specific event in the fall of 1927. The Horthy government presented the city of New York with a gift of friendship, a monument to Lajos Kossuth, leader of the 1848 Hungarian revolution against the Austrian monarchy. On 5 November, workmen broke ground on the site in Riverside Park at 113th street amid ceremonies that included a procession from Yorkville to Riverside Drive of one thousand traditionally costumed Hungarians, gypsy music, and speeches by Senator Royal Copeland, Congressman Fiorello LaGuardia and Hungarian dignitaries. The Anti-Horthy League attempted to distribute pamphlets and incite antagonism toward the Hungarian Regent. As a result,

> several blows were struck by policemen when the anti-Horthy-ites offered resistance in being driven from the meeting. The handbills, which they sought to distribute, called attention to a protest meeting at the Yorkville Casino, 210 East Eighty-sixth Street.[31]

At that meeting Gellert "charged that the Hungarian Government [was] supporting persecutions and granted no liberties."[32] The irony of the conservative Horthy regime erecting a statute to Kossuth the liberal reformer was not lost even on some non-communists. Buchler remarked, "the idea of a monarchical Government, which is still persecuting Jews and which in no way embodies the principles of Kossuth, taking a part in the erection of the statue, is a joke." *New Masses* offered this explanation:

> The gesture is calculated to produce two results: one is that the poor Hungarian workingmen of his country, blinded by the glorious name, will fork up the shekels; the other, that the

> American bankers will so much more readily cock their eyes in the direction of Hungary.[34]

The following spring, when a group of three to five hundred Hungarian delegate "pilgrims" arrived in New York to dedicate the monument, the Anti-Horthy League was more prepared to confront them with a show of defiance intended to draw attention to the "oppression" they perceived to exist in Hungary of the mid- to late-1920s. As the ship carrying the delegation from Hungary reached the pier, the Anti-Horthy League confronted it with an organized protest that delayed the disembarkation for hours. The demonstration continued peacefully until "a flashbulb exploded in the hands of an American photographer and the police believed a bomb exploded, the waiting crowd [believed] that the police threw something into the crowd. A riot broke out, the police began to fight."[35] Eventually the Horthy delegates "came down the freight elevator, jumped into taxis and buses and went to their hotel where other Hungarians picketed, bearing Gellert's placards, protesting the Hejjas [sic.] lads and other sins of the Horthy regime."[36]

The next day, as the delegation attended events in the city they were again met by Anti-Horthy League protests. According to the *New York Times*, "the city sent forth such an army of its blue clad soldiers of peace that any possibly contemplated disturbance developed no further than the silent circulation of Anti-Horthy handbills."[37] But the following day at the dedication of the statue in Riverside Park, an elaborate disturbance did develop. Gellert and novelist Charles Yale Harrison "made arrangements with an ace pilot of the war to fly (them) over the unveiling ceremony." Gellert recalled that they "arrived in New Jersey with a bundle of leaflets to meet the pilot. A few of the leaflets had nothing but 'Greetings to the Mayor' printed on them. We showed one of them to the pilot." What they did not show the pilot were the majority of leaflets printed with Gellert's drawing "showing how Horthy had transformed the gallows into a statue of Kossuth."[38] From the air they showered the ceremony with Gellert's anti-fascist propaganda. *The New York Times* downplayed the incident.

> The only trace of discord at the unveiling ceremonies was the hum of an airplane circling above the Hudson River to scatter anti-Horthy leaflets. Most of these floated on the breeze to some other section of the city. A few, however, fell into the

> crowd and found their way to the speaker's stand, just north of the monument. They were copies of the same leaflet distributed at the City hall exercises on Wednesday when more than five hundred "Kossuth Pilgrims" were welcomed by Mayor Walker.[39]

That night, the Anti-Horthy League held a meeting at the Central Opera House on Third Avenue and Sixty-seventh Street. Gellert was among the numerous speakers — including Francis Faragoh and novelist/playwright John Dos Passos — who protested the scheduled reception of the Horthy representatives in Washington by President Coolidge. Making good on their threat to picket the White House should Coolidge receive the visiting Hungarians, a small group including Gellert, his wife, the musician Livia Cinquegrana, and two other Anti-Horthy League activists made the trip to the capital.

According to the *Washington Post*, "one of the strongest police guards ever called upon to protect a visiting foreign delegation" surrounded the Hungarian Kossuth Commission as they made their way to the White House. There, an additional "50 metropolitan police, 12 additional White House guards and a special detail of Park police" met them. However, "shortly after the delegation arrived a party of Hungarian pickets bearing placards criticizing the Horthy government began to march down West Executive Avenue."[40] Immediately, the four protesters were arrested, "taken into custody by park police and charged at the Third Precinct with carrying banners and signs without a police permit. They gave their names as Hugo Gilbert [sic.], Emory Balint, Camilla L. Cinquegrana and Paul Delco, all of New York City."[41] The placards they carried were not shown in the photograph of the four with the arresting officers that accompanied the story. However the text of each message was reported in detail.

> The placards carried by the picketers who said they were members of the anti-Horthy League of America, read "Hejjas a mass murderer." They Dishonor Kossuth." Perenyi a Hapsburg lacky." "They jailed Hatvany." "Tomscauy [sic.] reinstated the whipping post." The charges referred to members of the Hungarian delegation, it was explained.[42]

Though only four members of the Anti-Horthy League were involved with the action, through the *Washington Post* report their message was

carried to thousands in the general population. Of course the Communist press paid even more attention to the Washington incident. From 17 March through 21 March *The Daily Worker* featured the story in blazing headlines and photographs, heroizing the four.[43]

The Anti-Horthy League remained active for the remainder of the decade, organizing demonstrations to draw attention to oppressive conditions in Hungary. As president of the Anti-Horthy League Gellert acted as escort to Count Károlyi in the spring of 1930, during the former Hungarian leader's lecture tour of the United States. Beginning in New York, the two traveled through the heavily Hungarian regions of industrial New Jersey and Pennsylvania, to California, where, in Los Angeles, Károlyi was fêted by Hollywood celebrities including Charlie Chaplin. In San Francisco on 1 May Károlyi and Gellert went to San Quentin Prison to visit Tom Mooney, the anarchist activist who, with Warren Billings, was wrongly convicted of murder for bombing a 1916 Preparedness parade that advocated U.S. intervention in World War I. Gellert's jailhouse portrait of Mooney appeared in the *San Francisco Call-Bulletin* a few days later. Significantly, Gellert did not depict Mooney as a noble victim. He is "all smiles" and "bathed in sunshine" as "he and Károlyi were absorbed in animated talk" on that May Day.[44]

During the early 1930s the tasks of the Anti-Horthy League were taken over by the John Reed Club. As *New Masses* reported in June 1931, after the Hungarian writer Sandor Gergely and editor Árpád Molnár were imprisoned in Hungary for sedition, it was not the Anti-Horthy League but the John Reed Club of New York that "cabled protests against this latest action of the fascist Horthy government of Hungary."[45]

The Anti-Horthy League may not have been a Communist organization, but the John Reed Club was. Formed as the stock market reached bottom in October/November 1929 by Gellert and a group of other militant artists and writers involved with *New Masses*, the John Reed Club literally began as an informal club in New York. Soon branches formed in other American cities. At the November 1930 Second International Conference of Revolutionary Writers held in Kharkov, Ukraine, (the "Kharkov Conference") the John Reed Club established an affiliation with the other Comintern (Communist International) artists and writers groups. At the Kharkov Conference, writers and visual artists from some twenty-three countries were represented. Illustrators Fred Ellis and William Gropper attended with the delegation from the John Reed Club. But the emphasis of the five-day conference was on literature. It was,

after all, a conference of revolutionary writers. However, the International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists (IBRA)[46] was formed during the conference under the supervision of Béla Uitz, who moved to Moscow in 1926. Though IBRA was an official Party organization, it stood in the shadow of its more powerful literary sibling, the International Bureau of Revolutionary Writers (IBRW). IBRA functioned as an umbrella organization, that united the various international Communist artist organizations such as the John Reed Club, the French *Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Revolutionnaires* (l'AEAR), the German *Assoziation Revolutionärer Bildender Künstler Deutschlands* (ARBKD), and the Mexican *Unión Internacional de Escritores y Artistas Revolutionarios* (UIEAR). The IBRA declaration proclaimed:

> We revolutionary artists, using the accumulated artistic experience and achievements of past centuries in the domain of our work, the domain of pictorial art, must struggle:
> For revolutionary content and new forms in art, intelligible to the broad working masses and based on the class struggle;
> For the synthesis of class content and new form in revolutionary art.[47]

IBRA encouraged this synthesis through incentives such as international exhibitions and prizes. For example in the summer of 1932 as preparations for the 15th Anniversary of the Revolution were being made, Uitz sent notice that

> the revolutionary artists of the Soviet Union have decided to invite the sections of the IBRA to participate in the preparations and carrying out of the international art exhibition. At the same time, at the proposal of the Soviet artists, the International Bureau will call upon all revolutionary and sympathizing artists in the capitalist countries to participate in the exhibition by displaying their own works of art (paintings, sculpture, designs, and drawings).[48]

Some of the suggested subjects included "The Hungarian Red Army of 1919, The Red Army of Finland in 1918, The Bavarian Red Army of 1919, The Latvian Red Army of 1919, the Chinese Red Army," as well as "portrayals of military and semi-military fascist voluntary organizations, showing their true aims," and "the Soviet Union as the shock brigade and

fatherland of the world proletariat."[49] Works selected by the John Reed Clubs would be shown in the Soviet Union. If a work were purchased the artist would receive 2,500 rubles and an invitation to visit the Soviet Union for six weeks.

It is unclear whether Gellert was involved with this exhibition, but he did travel to the USSR in the fall of 1932. He was issued a passport on 1 November, and arranged his passage with the Party-affiliated World Tourists, Inc. to sail on the Aquitania on 4 November for Cherbourg, France.[50] According to Gellert, he initially intended to only visit Paris, where he was to have his portfolio of sixty-two lithographs illustrating Karl Marx' *Capital* editioned at the Eugène Desjorbet studio. However, on the Aquitania he met former *Új Előre* editor Lajos Bebrits, who was being deported. Bebrits suggested that he try to have the *Capital* portfolio published in the Soviet Union, where they might even do it for free. Gellert agreed and went directly to Moscow. When Gellert arrived in the Soviet capital, the Hungarian poet Sarolta Lányi took him to see her husband, Ernő Czóbel, who was an official at the Marx-Engels Institute. Gellert and Czóbel showed the prints to Béla Kun, who was then the liaison between the Marx-Engels Institute and the Comintern. With Kun as translator, Gellert visited the different graphics workshops, but, as he recalled, the workshops only had low-quality paper that could not be used to print archival-quality editions.

Though Gellert could not have the *Capital* lithographs printed in Moscow he remained to visit with members of the community of exiled Hungarian revolutionaries including the art historian and theorist János Mácza, editors of the IBRW publication *International Literature* Antal Hidas and Béla Illes; and the writer Máté Zalka who, under the pseudonym General Lukács, would die a few years later fighting for the loyalists in Spain.

In addition to the shortage of high quality paper, Gellert also encountered other hardships Soviet artists endured. For instance, when he visited Uitz at his studio, Uitz was working on a cartoon for a mural. As Gellert later wrote,

> Uitz was painting onto newspaper fastened to the wall.
> "This is an experiment...we are not ready to paint on walls yet. But by the time we have appropriate walls for it we want to be ready."
> "This drawing is exceptional," I said, "But why the anemic colors?"

> "Because we only have earth tones. This is our 'starvation palette'" he said. "but when the time arrives, we'll have good colors as well."[51]

With money from Bill Weinstone, an American Communist Party representative, who was also in Moscow, Gellert made arrangements to go to Berlin to buy paint for Uitz. Upon hearing that Gellert was going, Kun asked him to pick up a pair of shoes that a friend was holding for him. In the German capital, the Hungarian editor of *Rote Fahne* [Red Flag], the publication of the German Communist Party [ARBKD], Alfred Kemény [a.k.a. Durus] met Gellert and arranged for him to make an illustration for the publication. Gellert's crayon drawing depicting three monumental workers operating machinery inside a Berlin gas works appeared in *Rote Fahne* on 15 December. In it the industrial environment does not dwarf the men. On the contrary, they dominate the muralistic composition, connecting top to bottom like three human pillars. Gellert's illustration is about the laborers. The factory paraphernalia is literally relegated to the shadowy background.

After a brief stay in Berlin, Gellert returned to Moscow with Kun's shoes and "a bagful of the best colors: the most vivid vermilions, cadmiums and cobalts"[52] for an appreciative Uitz, who, as General Secretary of the IBRA, must have been involved with Gellert's subsequent commission. On 16 December, 1932 Gellert signed an agreement committing him to execute a painting of 8 square meters on the theme "Class against Class" for the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR. This contract, countersigned by V.I. Mutnyh, required that the "painting must be finished and given to the jury for consideration no later than 1 February, 1933."[53] If the jury accepted his design, then Gellert would receive 400 rubles. The artwork would become the property of the Revolutionary Military Council of the USSR; the artist, however, would retain the right of reproduction, except for the production of a postcard. Apparently this project was realized because another contract reveals that a poster was indeed made from the mural. It appears that Gellert also sold work to Moscow's Museum of Western Art. An article about the museum in the April 1933 *New Masses* noted,

> Boris Ternovetz, a distinguished Russian critic and authority on modern art is the curator of the Museum of Western Art in Moscow, which houses one of the finest collections of modern art to be found anywhere in the world.... The museum was

> very actively building up a special section of post war art with particular attention to revolutionary art. For the latter section, the museum has recently purchased works by Gropper, Burk, Bard, Pass, Gellert, Lozowick, Wolfe and others.[54]

By 9 March, 1933, Gellert was back in Paris, where he finally had the *Capital* lithographs editioned at the Desjorbet lithography workshop. As he did in Moscow and Berlin, Gellert established contact with the local arm of the IBRA, the French *Association des Ecrivains et Artistes Revolutionnaires* (l'AEAR), which exhibited some of the *Capital* prints later that month. Gellert remained in contact with a number of the IBRA artists and IBRW writers he met in Moscow. Subsequent correspondence with Kemény in the mid 1930s indicates that Gellert was to be included in a "series of monographs on Progressive Revolutionary Artists of Europe and America to be published by the International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists."[55] At first the artist Jacob Kainen was selected to write the text, but Gellert chose the "proletarian" author, Henry Hart for the task instead. It seems, however, that the project was never realized.[56]

As harassment of Communists in the United States escalated during the Cold War, Gellert retreated from the mainstream art world and became devoted exclusively to Party activities and the Hungarian language journal *Amerikai Magyar Szó*, which succeeded *Előre*, *Új Előre*, and its immediate predecessor, *Magyar Jövő* [Hungarian Future].[57] *Magyar Szó* and other Hungarian American Communist organizations functioned in many ways as sources of support during these difficult times. In 1955 the paper sponsored a series of banquets at Hungarian cultural clubs across the United States celebrating forty years of Gellert's career and the Gellert exhibition in Budapest at the Hungarian Center for Cultural Relations. It appears that during the mid-1950s Gellert also conducted business with the Government of the Hungarian People's Republic. He received almost $3,500 from their embassy for art-related activities such as the hanging of photographs at exhibitions in New York and Detroit as well as for sales of prints and the commission of a painting of "an American President."[58] Gellert's relationship with the Communist government of Hungary culminated in 1968 with a retrospective exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery.

Because of his devotion to the Communist cause, Gellert's reputation has suffered. However, the political map of the world has changed a lot since his death in 1985. Interest in Gellert and his circle has

been revived through a number of scholarly publications and exhibitions in recent years. Through them we are learning more about the complexities of early 20th century American modernism. Through his responses to Hungarian cultural and political events in his art, Hugo Gellert further adds to these facets and challenges traditional notions of what constitutes American art.

NOTES

[1] The spelling of the name was Anglicized to Greenbaum in the United States before being changed to Gellert.

[2] The Grünbaum family consisted of Adolf and Katicza and their six children, Hugo, born 3 May 1892, Hungary, d. 1985; Theodor, born 8 June 1893, Hungary d. 19??; Ernest, born 12 January 1895, Hungary d. 1918; Otto, born 5 June 1896, Hungary, d. 1989; Louis (called Lawrence), born 14 September 1898, Hungary, d. c. 1979; Celia (called Billie, m. Niedich), born 19 January 1900, Hungary, d. 1994. Information taken from Adolf Greenbaum's Petition for Naturalization # 21915, 17 July, 1912, State of New York Supreme Court Archives, NY, NY, from Gellert family gravestones, Mt. Hebron Cemetery, Flushing, NY, and from correspondence with descendants of Otto Gellert, and Celie (Billie) Niedich).

[3] The Budapest City Directory for 1894 lists a Hermann Grünbaum, *paplanos* (quiltmaker) living at Kazinczy utca 12. On Hugo Gellert's birth certificate (Budapest National Archives, roll A3565, certificate number 995) his godfather Mór Schwarz, *szabó* (tailor), is also listed at Kazinczy utca 12. The precise relation of Mór Schwarz to Katizca Schwarz is unclear. My presumption is that Mór was Katizca's father, but he could have been a brother, uncle, or cousin. My belief that Hermann Grünbaum was Adolf's brother is based on Gellert's reminiscence of his (unnamed) paternal uncle's family, who lived with Gellert's family in Budapest while Gellert was a boy. The fact that Mór Schwarz and Hermann Grünbaum shared an address at Kazinczy utca 12 led me to surmise that these men were in fact close relatives of Gellert's family. The 1894 Budapest City Directory lists Hermann Grünbaum, *paplanos* (quiltmaker) at Kazinczy utca 12, no Adolf Grünbaum is listed. The 1896-97 Budapest City Directory lists Hermann Grünbaum, *paplanos* (quiltmaker) at Kazinczy utca 12, no Adolf Grünbaum is listed. The 1898 Budapest City Directory lists no Hermann, but it shows an Ármin Grünbaum at that address, Kazinczy utca 12. The same directory contains the first listing of Adolf Grünbaum, at Kazinczy utca 6b. The 1899 and 1900-1901 Budapest City Directories contain two listings for Adolf Grünbaum, Kazinczy utca 30 and Klauzál utca 4, which are within a few blocks of each other. The 1902-1903 Budapest City Directory lists Adolf Grünbaum

only at Klauzál utca 4. The 1903-1904 Budapest City Directory contains no Adolf Grünbaum listing, The 1904-1905 Budapest City Directory lists Adolf Grünbaum in the same neighborhood, on Károly karut 17, The 1905-1906 Budapest City Directory lists Adolf Grünbaum back at Klauzál utca 4.

[4] Hugo Gellert, "My Teachers," in Hugo Gellert Memorial Committee (Zoltan Deák, James Gellert, Susan Joseph, Charles Keller), *Hugo Gellert 1892-1985, People's Artist* (New York: Hugo Gellert Memorial Committee, 1986), 12.

[5] Adolf Gellert's Petition for Naturalization declared that he arrived on 16 October, 1905 (Adolf Greenbaum, Petition for Naturalization # 21915, 17 July 1912, State of New York Supreme Court Archives, NY, NY.) The Noordam's manifest is dated 17 October, 1905. American Family Immigration History Center (AFIHC), Ellis Island Passenger Record Archives.

[6] *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s–1970s: An Annotated Bibliography; Volume 2: Migrants From Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, ed. Dirk Hoerder (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), 313.

[7] Interview with Hugo Gellert conducted by Paul Buhle, 4 April, 1984, transcript, Gellert papers, box 1; and Petition for Naturalization # 21915, 17 July, 1912, State of New York Supreme Court Archives, NY, NY.

[8] Interview of Hugo Gellert conducted by Sofia Sequenzia, 11 December, 1981, audio tape, Gellert papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (hereafter AAA).

[9] *Előre* was published from 1905 to 1921. The publication changed its name to *Új Előre* (published from 1921 to 1937), to which Gellert contributed sporadically.

[10] Hugo Gellert interview by Jeff Kisseloff, in Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 483.

[11] Sequenzia interview, cit.

[12] Lajos Kassák, "The Poster and the New Painting," *MA*, vol. I, no. I (November 1916). In Haywood Gallery, *The Hungarian Avant Garde THE EIGHT AND THE ACTIVISTS*, London: The Arts Council of Great Britain, 1980, 112-113.

[13] Buhle interview, cit., 4; "PB: What about those revolutionary artists who were sympathetic with the Béla Kun government, were you related to them in any way? HG: In a way I was interested. They were modern. There was even a paper called *Today*."

[14] "*A rossz emlékek kozül*" (Several of the Bad Memories), *Előre Képes Folyóirat*, vol. 1, no. 10, (26 March, 1916): 11-12; "Szegény kis gyermek dala" (Poor Little Child's Tune), *Előre Képes Folyóirat*, vol. III, no. 20 (12 May, 1918): 6; "A vilagirodalom fele" (Towards World Literature), *Előre Képes Folyóirat*, vol. VI, no. 11 (13 March, 1921): 6-7; "Aktivista müvészet és forradalom" (Activist Art and Revolution), *Új Előre*, (2 June, 1922); "Az idö szomo-

ruságában" (In the Sorrow of Time), *Új Előre*, (18 June, 1922), Magazine Section, 6; "Fiatal Munkás" (Young Worker), *Új Előre*, (8 July, 1922), Section 3, 3; "Boldog köszöntés" (Happy Greeting), *Új Előre*, (3 December, 1922), 3; Untitled, 4 stanzas, *Új Előre*, (11 February, 1923): 6.

[15] *Előre Képes Folyóirat*, vol. V, no. 6, 8 February 1920.

[16] *Előre Képes Folyóirat*, vol. VI, no. 10, 6 March 1921.

[17] Crystal Eastman, "In Communist Hungary," *The Liberator*, vol. 2, no. 8 (August 1919): 9.

[18] *Liberator*, vol. 6, no. 8, (August 1923): 6.

[19] Hugo Gellert "The Előre," in Deák *et al.*, *This Noble Flame*, 78.

[20] Lajos Egri, *Hakuba and Hekuba*, unpublished manuscript, c. 1923, The Library of Congress rare books and manuscripts department, Washington, DC. The c. 1923 date from the Library of Congress catalog cannot be corroborated. Gellert's set designs could be from 1923, but they relate more closely to his work from 1924, such as the drawings for Faragoh's *Plug in the Hole* (*Playboy* no. 9, July 1924). If Gellert's constructivist style evolved through his association with Lozowick, the 1924 date makes more sense since Lozowick did not return to New York until the very end of 1923 or early in 1924.

[21] *Hakuba and Hekuba*, Scene 2, 21.

[22] *Ibid.*, Scene 8, 107.

[23] *Ibid.*, Scene 1, 1.

[24] "Count Károlyi Decries Hungarian 'Pogroms,'" *The Jewish Journal*, (7 May, 1930): 3.

[25] "Hungary's Bloody Mary," *New Masses*, vol. 2, no. 3 (February 1927): 25.

[26] "In Hungary," *New Masses*, vol. 2, no. 7 (June 1927), 21.

[27] Hugo Gellert, "The Anti-Horthy League," in Zoltán Deák ed., *This Noble Flame: An Anthology of a Hungarian Newspaper in America, 1902-1982*, (New York: Heritage Press, 1982), 84. In November 1927 the *New York Times* named Buchler as the President of the Federation of Hungarian Jews in America and Gellert as the President of the Anti-Horthy League ("Police Rout 'Reds' in Kossuth Meeting," *New York Times*, 6 November, 1927, 27), On 15 March, 1928 the *New York Times* named Buchler as the Anti-Horthy League's leader and Gellert as an official of the league ("Hundreds of Police Guard Hungarians," *New York Times*, Thursday, 15 March, 1928, 12, section 1).

[28] Dr. Béla Pogany, "Hugo Gellert on the Front Line of Social Values: An Appreciation of the Art and labor Movement Role of Hugo Gellert," *Amerikai Magyar Szó* (Hungarian American Word), 28 October, 1954, 1. Translation from the original Hungarian in FBI Hugo Gellert file, File Number 100-19719, Section 1.

[29] *New York Times*, "Police Rout 'Reds,'" *op. cit.*

[30] Hugo Gellert, "The Mystery of a Cablegram — Or a Study in Yellow," *New Masses*, vol. 5, no. 10 (March 1930): 23.

[31] *New York Times*, "Police Rout 'Reds,'" *op. cit.*

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *New Masses*, "Hungary's Bloody Mary," *op. cit.*

[35] Pogany, "Hugo Gellert on the Front Line," *op. cit.*

[36] *Ibid.* Gellert's placards singled out "White Terror" paramilitary commander Iván Héjjas, whose unit perpetrated the 1919 "Orgovány Affair" in which sixty-two Communists and suspected Communists were murdered in the town of Orgovány.

[37] "Hundreds of Police Guard Hungarians," *New York Times*, *op. cit.*

[38] Hugo Gellert, "The Anti-Horthy League," In Deák et al., *Noble Flame*, *op. cit.*

[39] Anonymous, "Two Nations Unveil Statue of Kossuth," *The New York Times* (16 March, 1928), 3, section 1.

[40] "Hungarian Group Heavily Guarded; Pickets Arrested," *Washington Post* (20 March, 1928), 24.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] *The Daily Worker*, vol. V, no. 66 (19 March, 1928), 1, "Workers Resume Horthy Protests, Picket Line is Planned for White House," *The Daily Worker*, vol. V, no. 67 (20 March, 1928), 1,"5 Anti-Horthy Pickets Jailed in Washington," *The Daily Worker*, vol. V, no. 67 (21 March, 1928), 1, "Horthy Exposed at While House, Coolidge Greets Hejjas, 'Mass Murderer.'"

[44] Hugo Gellert, "Touring the Country with Count Károlyi," in Deák, et al., *Noble Flame*, *op. cit.* 89.

[45] "Hungarian Writers Imprisoned," *New Masses* (June 1931), 22.

[46] Also known as the International Union of Revolutionary Artists (IURA).

[47] The Committee for the Organization of the International Bureau of Revolutionary Artists (IBRA), "To All Revolutionary Artists of the World," *Literature of the World Revolution*, Special Number, Second International Conference of Revolutionary Writers (1931), 11.

[48] Béla Uitz, General Secretary of the IBRA to all John Reed Club members," n.d. (Spring 1932), Records of the Communist Party USA, Reel 235, folder 3049, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. It is likely that translations of this announcement were sent to all the members of the IBRA.

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] On 13 November, 1956 The House Committee on Un-American Activities asked Gellert about this trip. His testimony was paraphrased in an FBI memo to J. Edgar Hoover. "During the course of this hearing in which the

subject testified that he had visited the Soviet Union in 1927 and in 1932, he was asked with respect to his latter trip, 'Were you the guest of any group or organization in Moscow?' Gellert answered, 'No.' He was then asked, 'Or in Leningrad?' to which the subject replied, 'I was not the guest of any group. I paid my way.' (Hugo Gellert File, FBI, unnumbered Memorandum from William F. Tompkins, Assistant Attorney General, Internal Security Division, to Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation [J. Edgar Hoover], 29 November, 1957). According another FBI document in Gellert's file, Gellert was identified as one of a group who "sailed on the 'S. S. Aquitania' From New York, New York on November 4, 1932 bound for Cherbourg, France." (File Number 100-19719, Section Number 1, c. 1954, 29-page dossier of Gellert's Affiliations, Organizations and Other Activities compiled by New York Field Office, Section L, 22).

[51] Hugo Gellert, untitled, Hungarian manuscript, Gellert papers, AAA. I thank Eddee Kolos for translating this document.

[52] *Ibid.*

[53] Contract between Gellert and the Revolutionary Council of the USSR, Gellert papers, AAA, box 3.

[54] "John Reed Club Art in Moscow," *New Masses*, vol. 8, no. 8, (April 1933): 25.

[55] Alfred Durus to Hugo Gellert, 23 Nov. 1935, Gellert papers, AAA, box 1.

[56] Lozowick did write a monograph on Gropper, which was published by A.C.A Gallery in conjunction with a March 1937 Gropper exhibition, but it is uncertain if this text is related to the IBRA series.

[57] *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, op. cit.*, 320.

[58] Amendment to Registration Statement to the Internal Security Division of the Department of Justice, 26, December, 1957. United States Department of Justice, Criminal Division file on Hugo Gellert.

For the illustrations see pages 101-106.

Figure 1. Hugo Gellert, "De szeretnék kis kutya lenni!" [Boy, Would I Like to be a Little Dog]. *Előre Képes Folyóirat* cover, 23 January, 1916 (Mew York Public Library).

Figure 2. Hugo Gellert, *Előre Képes Folyóirat* cover, 31 October 1920 (Mew York Public Library).

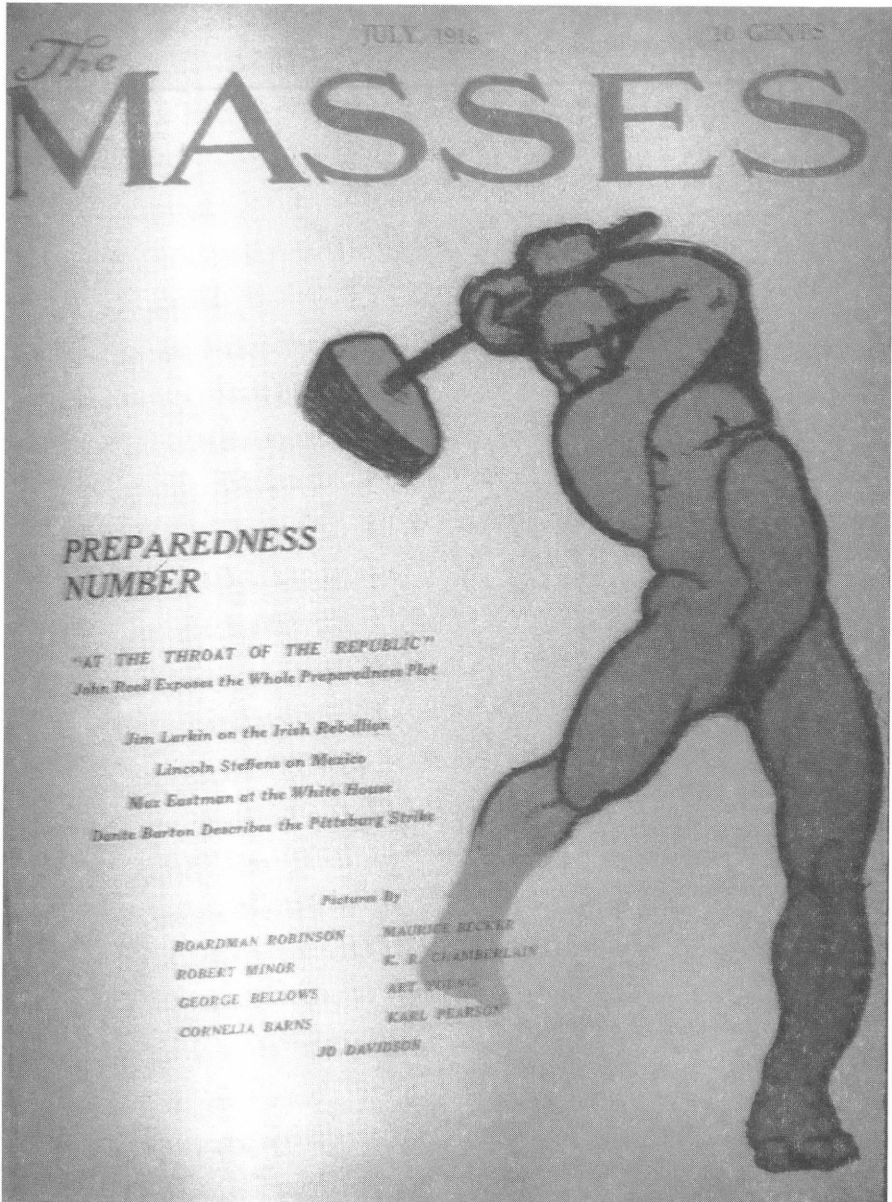

Figure 3. Mihály Biró. *Masses* cover, July 1916 (Reference Center for Marxist Studies, New York).

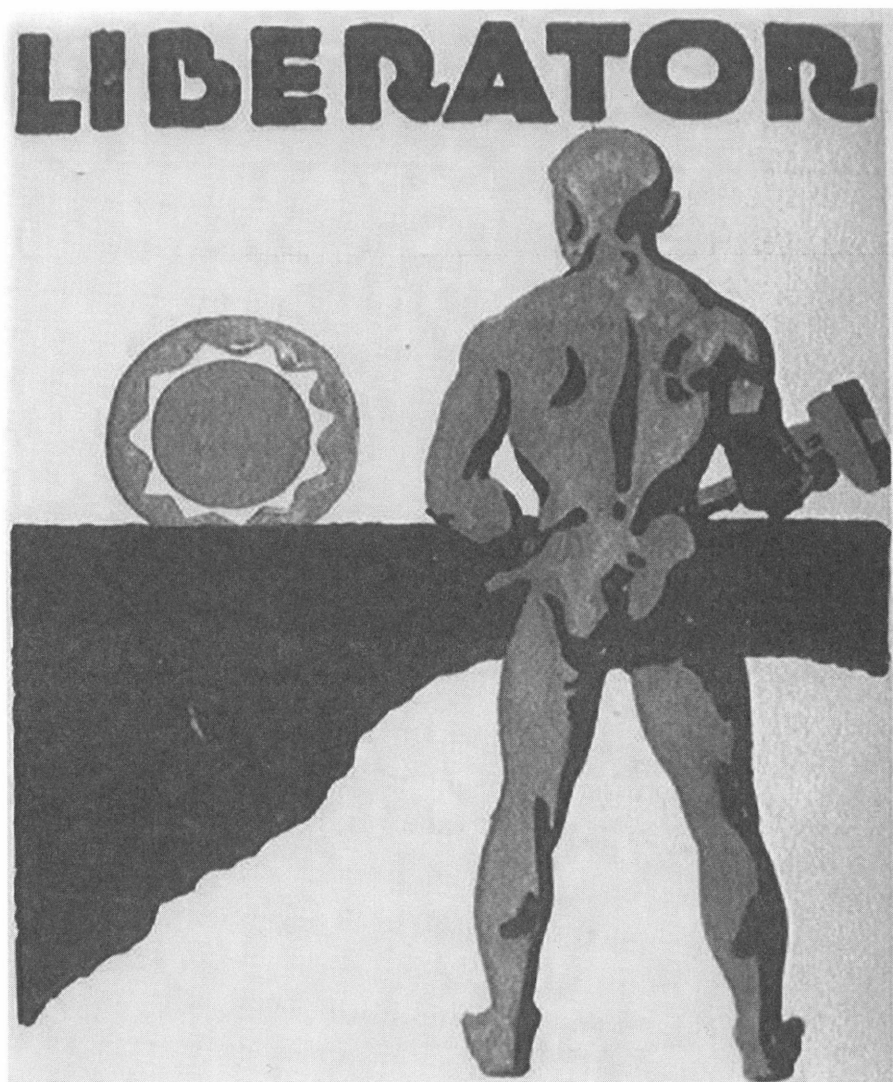

Figure 4. Hugo Gellert, study for *Liberator* cover (not used), gouache and pencil, c. 1918-24 (Mary Ryan Gallery, New York).

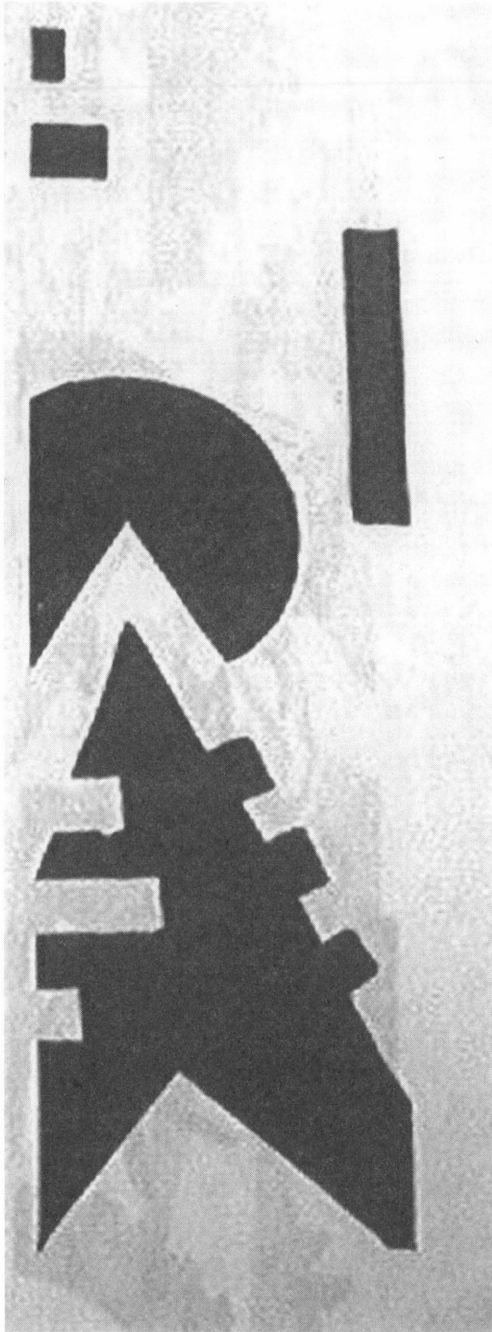

Figure 5. Hugo Gellert, Decoration for Francis Faragoh's *The Plug in the Hole,* in *Playboy*, July 1924 (New York Public Library).

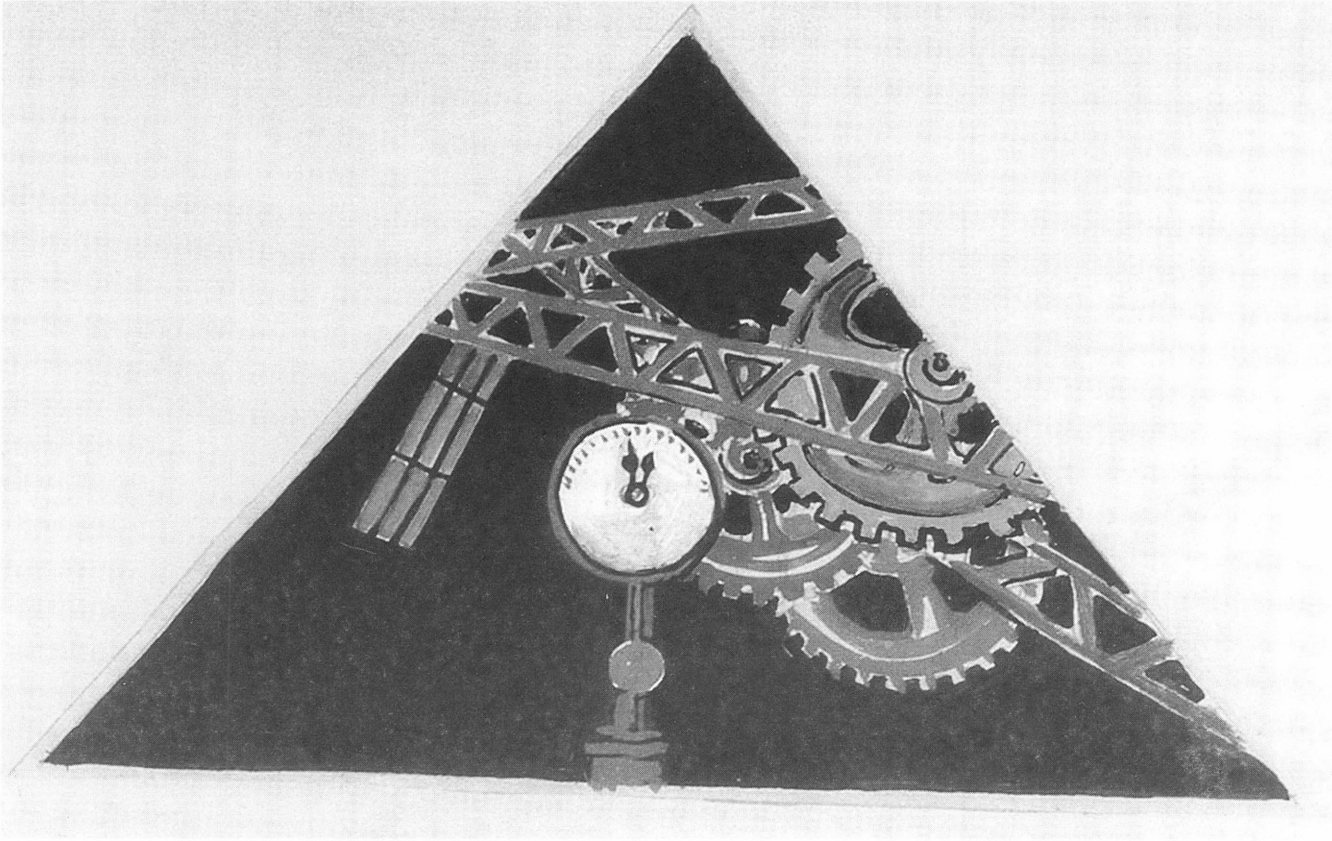

Figure 6. Hugo Gellert, *First Scene of "Hakuba-Hekuba,"* gouache and pencil on paper, c. 1923 (Mary Ryan Gallery, New York).

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'An Inner Content Inexpressible Through Words': The Art of Endre Bőszin

Oliver A. I. Botar

When looking at Endre (Andrew) Bőszin's work, one is reminded of the wealth of imported talent that Canada has benefited from. Central Europe has been a particularly heavy exporter of this talent, and Bőszin is part of the wave of emigration of Modernist East-Central European artists, who escaped the limiting, indeed repressive art policies and directives of their native countries, which had well-developed Modernist traditions before the Soviet occupations of their homelands. Educated in the Hungarian tradition of Modernist art, one typified by dark, brooding, intense colours, Bőszin left his homeland after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, and spent time in Britain, before finally settling in Toronto in 1966, and taking part in Toronto's Modernist Hungarian ambient of the 1960s and 1970s. In this article, for the first time, I will look at the entire career of this artist, placing him into the various contexts in which he has worked.

Bőszin was born in 1923, in the small Hungarian town of Pilis south of Budapest, the son of Mária Csontos and of local merchant Gyula Bőszin. Like many artists, he early on showed an interest in drawing, but had few opportunities to see art locally, apart from the altarpiece of the Lutheran Church, and the Sunday supplements of a Budapest daily, the *Pesti Újság*. Encouraged by the local painter József Gamel (1893-1974), Bőszin began painting in oils when he was 17.[1]

Sometime in the early 40s, he moved to nearby Budapest, where he worked during the day, and attended the Alkotás Művészház [Creation Artists' House], a free school of art, in the evenings. At the Alkotás Művészház Bőszin was fortunate enough to study with Jenő Gadányi (1896-1960), a left-wing artist who was one of the principal figures of Hungarian Modernist painting at the time.[2] Gadányi was a good friend

both of Lajos Kassák, by that time the "Grand Old Man" of Hungarian Modernist culture, and of Ernő Kállai, the former editor of *bauhaus* magazine, and the principal Modernist art critic of the period in Hungary.[3] Thus through Gadányi, Bőszin had an entré into the very core of Hungarian avant-garde visual culture of the time. For example, Bőszin had the opportunity to meet Kállai on one of his visits to the school around 1942.

The effect of Gadányi's earth-toned palette and lyric, synthetic-cubist way of building up his compositions has been apparent in Bőszin's entire oeuvre. That the young man found in Gadányi a sympathetic teacher is apparent in the anecdote Bőszin tells of how, on his first day at the Alkotás Művészház (coincidentally also Gadányi's first day there teaching), the master asked his class to sketch the model. Seeing that his class was sketching the figure in a naturalist manner, Gadányi complained to them that this was evidence of an outdated manner of seeing, and encouraged them to draw in the Cubist style. As Bőszin had been drawing in an analytical mode on his own, he had no problem following Gadányi's directive — but he was the only one in the class capable of this feat. Bőszin often had difficulties with later teachers because of his essentially Modernist approach to art, and the Cubist mode of analytical representation remained a constant in his art.

Before the end of the war, Bőszin enrolled at Budapest's prestigious Iparművészeti Főiskola (School of Applied Art), where he was considered to be precocious enough to warrant a studio exhibition of eleven of his expressionist linoleum cuts, in conjunction with his classmates and friends Péter Brusch, Antal Prunkl and Zoltán Bérczy, at the last possible minute before the Arrow Cross reign of terror, in October of 1944.[4] He was unable to complete his studies before both Fascism and war reached the capital in the winter of 1944-45, however.

With the Soviet occupation of the city complete by the early spring, Bőszin and some friends left the city, which had become dangerous because men were being picked up off the streets at random and deported to labour camps in Siberia, and moved to the provincial town of Csongrád, in the south of the country. The group of friends survived by their wits, but they also managed to produce bodies of work inspired by the local scenery. It was in Csongrád that, already in December of 1945, Bőszin held an exhibition along with János Kiss and Antal Prunkl at the MADISZ Centre. The mayor of Csongrád was so impressed, that he purchased one of Bőszin's works for the City Hall. A

second show, held at the Csongrád House of Culture in October of 1946 was very well-received. The reviewer for the local newspaper wrote: "The intuitive strength and emotional richness of this artistic spirit's depth is reflected in every watercolour by Endre Bőszin... artistic beauty is eternal. In his pictures, this artistic beauty is built up — first and foremost — of colour harmonies."[5] This was the first of a number of reviews during the artist's career that commented on his use of colour. Bőszin had clearly, and it seems, self-consciously, placed himself within the rich Hungarian tradition of dark, brooding, colour harmonies, that characterized artists otherwise as varied as Mihály Munkácsi and Béla Czóbel.

This provincial idyll soon came to end, as, when it was safe to do so, the group returned to the capital. They arrived in Budapest just as the city's artistic life was beginning to recover from the ravages of the war. Politically, the country was in the "Coalition Period," the time during which, though under Soviet occupation, a multi-party system was operational, and the country's economy was rapidly recovering. The population was cautiously hopeful, though wary of the Soviet occupation, and of the constant pressure being exercised by the Soviets to promote the Hungarian Communists, who had not done well in the free elections of 1946.

Kassák was head of the National Arts Council, and through his journals *Alkotás* [Creation] and *Kortárs* [The Contemporary] he set the liberal tone of public cultural life in the country. Ernő Kallái and others had formed the "European School," a broad coalition of Modernist artists who held regular exhibitions.[6] Out of this, under Kállai's leadership, the "Abstract Group" emerged, whose members — including the later Canadian-Hungarian Modernist artist Gyula (Julius) Marosán, whom Bőszin did not yet know — showed at Kállai's Galéria a Négy Világtáj-hoz [Gallery to the Earth's Four Quarters]. One of the most important events of this period was Kállai's organization in 1947 of the exhibition "Új Világkép [New World Image], which was meant to illustrate the deep connections between a stream in modern art Kállai referred to as "Bio-romantika" (Bioromanticism), and the deep structure of the world as made visible through scientific, especially X-Ray and microscopic photography. Accordingly, Hungarian abstract and Surrealist paintings and sculptures, as well as photographs of unavailable international Modernist works, were displayed next to scientific photographs. Kállai had originally published his article "Bioromantik" in 1932,[7] but in conjunction with the exhibition, he published a small book on the subject which he entitled *A természet*

rejtett arca [The hidden face of nature].[8] That this exhibition and booklet made a deep impression on Bőszin is evident from the fact that he would later borrow the book's title to name an exhibition he curated in London.

With the assistance of Kassák — who had praised the young Bőszin in a 1945 review of his work in the journal *Új Idők* [New Times][9] — four young artists (including Emánuel Giron, Péter Brusch and Bőszin), were allowed to occupy the attic of an old warehouse building in the industrial suburb of Újpest. They gave this communal live-in studio the evocative name of Bagolyvár [The Owl Castle]. Canvas was unavailable, so Bőszin worked with oils on cardboard and on paper, as did other artists of the time. Thus began his first important creative period, the products of which are, however, not available for study. The Bagolyvár group held annual exhibitions locally in Újpest, and there were purchases by the local authorities.

By the end of 1946 Bőszin was accepted as a member of the Hungarian Artists' Association, which at the time meant that he received basic financial assistance from the government. He was emerging as the most ambitious artist of his group, and starting to take part in the avant-garde artistic life of the capital. The years 1947 and 1948 were the high point of his early career in Hungary. Thus, at a meeting with Kállai in the offices of Kassák's journal *Alkotás*, the critic was impressed with the young artist's work, and encouraged him warmly. In May of 1947 Bőszin participated in the Spring Show of the "Free Association of Hungarian Fine Artists" held at the Alkotás Művészház, along with another rising young artist, Gyula Marosán.[10] A year later Bőszin's status as an artist was demonstrated by the facts that he was included in an exhibition of Hungarian graphic art at the National Museum in Stockholm,[11] and that he had a one-man show at the old Műcsarnok [Palace of Exhibitions], one of Budapest's most important exhibition venues. By 1948 Bőszin's livelihood was ensured by the fact that he took over the position of managing director of the Fókusz gallery, one of the centres of modern art in the city at the time.

The Coalition Period came to an end late in 1948, however, with the forced unification into a single party of the Social Democrats and the Communists, and the formation of a Soviet-style one-party state under the dictatorial leadership of Mátyás Rákosi and his "Muscovite" group. Kassák was relieved of his position on the Council, and his journals ceased publication. The European School and the Abstract Group were forcibly dissolved, Kállai was fired from his professorship at the School

of Applied Art, and he resigned from the Arts Council. Stalinism had arrived in Hungary. Bőszin refused to join the Communist Party, or even to attend the Marxist seminars organized by the newly-formed cultural bureaucracy, promoting the only officially-condoned style of art, Socialist Realism. More an art of wishful thinking than of realism, in the decidedly grey and poor Hungary of the early fifties, Socialist Realist works tended to depict happy workers in factories and jolly peasants amoung tractors. It was the only style artists could use to receive government work, which at the time was almost the only work one could get.

To support himself, Bőszin, like many other artists, turned to the applied arts. At this juncture in his career, his School of Applied Arts training, however brief, stood him in good stead, and he took a job at the recently nationalized (and renamed) "Rákosi Steel Works" in the huge industrial complex on Csepel Island on the southern outskirts of Budapest. There he worked first as a quality controller, and then on Stalinist political displays and decorations.

While carrying out what was essentially propagandistic design work, Bőszin, again like other artists of the period, painted mostly "for the desk drawer," that is for private consumption. His works of the time were not abstract enough to be dangerous (it was considered seditious to paint in the "decadent bourgeois" abstract or Surrealist modes), but too Modernist for official acceptance. Thus, they were created and were seen only in the twilight world of the studio and of private homes. Bőszin and his friends Péter Brusch, László Hován and József Nemes did manage to secure a show at the Endre Ságvári Cultural Centre in Budapest during the brief, post-Stalinist period of liberalization in 1954, but this was an exceptional occurrence.

Still, the early 1950s was a period of great creativity for Bőszin. His portraits of friends and lovers, and his self-portraits, display an intense observation of character, a psychological realism, which contrasts markedly with the psychological abstraction of official Socialist Realist art. The works of 1949 still display the effect of the art of the French Roman Catholic painter Georges Rouault (available through reproductions in Hungarian and foreign art journals of the Coalition and pre-War periods), who had also been influential on Marosán. In later works, however, one can discern the delicate colour transitions, strong outlines and solid ("constructive") compositional structures of Gadányi's work. The influence of the outstanding interwar Budapest painter Gyula Derkovits is

visible in some of his works of the time, e.g. in a 1951 *Self Portrait* and a still life of 1953.[12] This inspiration is evident despite the fact that even Derkovits, probably the greatest Hungarian left-wing artists of the inter-war period, was on the proscribed list until 1954, because his work was too Modernist for the authorities.[13] In his *Still Life with Eggs* of 1950, one of the few works of this era I was able to inspect first hand, Bőszin achieves a synthesis of influences and individuality, of his skilled colour sense and his strong compositional abilities, which mark the artist as having come of age. Bőszin achieved artistic maturity at the dawn of the post-Stalinist era. (Fig. 1)

The liberalization which had begun in 1954 was reversed in 1955, but again progressed in 1956, depending on the vagaries of the Hungarian Communist leadership and its revolving door of office, which itself depended almost totally on the whims and moods of Soviet leadership. As Julius Marosan said in an interview given in Toronto in 1966, "How can you work not knowing what the next policy change will bring?"[14]

When the Hungarian bid for independence from this state of affairs was crushed by Soviet troops in November of 1956, Bőszin, like hundreds of thousands of his compatriots (including many artists) decided to leave. On the19th of that month he and his wife Sarolta crossed the border into Austria, and arrived in Edinburgh, Scotland, a month later.[15] There he was helped by the Serbian-Hungarian, and later Canadian artist, art teacher and critic Zeljko Kujundzic, who arranged for a solo exhibition of his work by February 1957 at the Edinburgh Art Centre. As they were unable to bring works with them, this show consisted of art Bőszin had produced since their flight to Austria, quite a feat for someone on the run. This first show in exile resulted in no fewer than fifteen sales for the 33-year old artist, a major boost, not the least financial, to the penniless refugees. This was followed by a show of "strikingly Turneresque" watercolours and linocuts at the Little Gallery in Glasgow that May.[16] Kujundzic then included Bőszin in a three-person show at the Art Centre of his own and the Scottish artist James Chisholm's work within the parameters of the Edinburgh Festival. Like the others, this show too was well-received in the press.[17] The critics tended to comment on his technical proficiency and talent with handling colour. One wrote that "his particular merit is in a luminosity which envelopes and sometimes dissolves his forms."[18] Some of these works such as *Light of the Highland* and *Sunrise at the Hebrides*,[19] display a new looseness of composition and airiness of colour no doubt reflective of his new-found

creative freedom in the West.[20] Such a looseness may also have been evinced both by the — to him — unaccustomed northern light, and by his decision to return to working with watercolours. Encouraged by his Edinburgh success as an artist, but unable to secure a living for himself and his family, Bőszin made his way to London early in 1958.

In the British capital, the effects of British neo-expressionist painting and of the COBRA group made themselves felt in Bőszin's art.[21] Even during this neo-expressionist phase, the constructive impulse inculcated in him by Gadányi continued to make itself felt in strongly built-up, indeed geometric compositions. His colours, like those of his teacher, remained on the dark side. This strongly composed, geometric abstract impulse already evident in the oil paintings of his Edinburgh period continued in London in the "Window" series (*Window*, 1958; *Country Scene*, 1959)[22] as well as in his colour monotopyes and water colours of the early years in London. The strong compositions of these works were modulated, however, by loose, expressive brushwork. Bőszin worked in this constructive-expressionist style throughout his London period.

His first major exhibition in London took place at the Woodstock Gallery in London from 23 March to 4 April 1959. Bőszin was received a thoughtful if rather florid review from his colleague Oswell Blakeston:

> His oils vary in success although the approach is often similar in so far as the artist seldom knows what he is going to paint before he starts to handle his material and then one run or drip of colour will lead to another and perhaps finally to a rich lyricism or, less happily, the emergent may be saved by reversion to cubistic formulae. All, however, are touched with a dignity which seems a personal gift and to which is added, in the best work, an emotion that might poetically be called plum-coloured.[23]

At this point, the attention payed the Woodstock show must have inspired the British-Hungarian art dealer Gustav T. Siden's to take Bőszin on at his Chiltern Gallery. By November of 1959, Bőszin's works were displayed, again together with Kujundzic's, at the Chiltern, where Bőszin was soon installed as the gallery's director. In July of 1961 Bőszin had his second show at the Chiltern, this time with the English painter Bruce Clark. The unnamed reviewer for *Apollo* magazine commented on the "dark and heavy tones" of the colours. "In this respect and in their

technique, the paintings are extremely close to expressionism, although here the expressionism becomes almost an understatement."[24]

Bőszin's arrival on the British art scene as part of its neo-expressionist undercurrent was marked by his inclusion in the exhibition "Expressionistes de Londres" at the Galérie Raymond Creuze in Paris in 1960.[25] As part of this London neo-expressionist ambient, and through the connections gained during his work at the Chiltern, Bőszin founded "Taurus Artists" in 1961.[26] The group's first show was held in the Chiltern Gallery that same year. Taurus Artists was a loose and international grouping of about 40 artists (including Oswell Blakeston), with a core of about 20, some of them fellow Hungarian exiles. In some respects Taurus Artists was more a guarantee of an opportunity to exhibit regularly than it was a coherent art grouping, but most of the members did share an expressive-constructive mode of Modernist painting.

Marosán, who had ended up in Holland in 1956, and who emigrated to Canada in 1957, met Bőszin in London in the early summer of 1962, at which time he joined Taurus Artists, and subsequently exhibited with the group regularly. In May of 1962 there was a showing of self-portraits by members of Taurus Artists at the Chiltern Gallery, and the works by Bőszin and Marosán were cited by Max Chapman as being among the most interesting.[27] Taurus Artists' June 1962 showing at the Chiltern Gallery, organized by Bőszin, was entitled "The Hidden Face of Nature," a name, as we have seen, borrowed from Kallai's "Bioromantic" exhibition of 1947 that had made such an impression on Bőszin. The London show was thus an homage to Kallai, who had died in obscurity and isolation in 1954.

A work by Bőszin which reflected his interest in the structures of nature is *Square Cage*, exhibited at the "Art in Science" show held at the Piccadilly Gallery in London in 1961, at the Chateau de Blauvac exhibition of Taurus Artists as part of the Festival de Provence in 1962, and at the Grand Prix International de Peinture et de Sculpture de Monte Carlo, in the Salon Bosio that same year.[28] (Fig. 2) On a carefully textured ground of blue, white and red vertical fields that suggests the French Republican flag, the artist has placed a black oblong, "behind" which appears a complex set of interlocking square forms, the "square cage" of the title. At its rear, this cage interpenetrates with the opened vertical "pipe" that the slightly diagonal central white flag strip formed by the central white area. In the depths of this pipe a kind of deep "fire" burns. Since some of these squares are painted in heavy black oil paint,

another in blue, and yet others are formed by scraping away the pigment right down to the board underneath, and since they are at odd angles to one another, the suggestion of several simultaneous dimensions, of n-dimensionality within the same space, is made. This quasi-scientific edge of the work, combined with the implied ritualism of the "hearth," result in a hybrid scientific/esoteric feel that echoes important 20th century Modernist concerns. This, and the combination of intense, if toned-down blues and reds, with the ochre of the zones of *réserve* formed by the scraping away of pigment, the simple composition harbouring the complexity of the central zone, make for a *tour de force* within the artist's oeuvre. One anonymous reviewer of the show at the Chateau de Blauvac near Carpentras cited Bőszin's four works as being "solides, sombres," while Guy Fargepallet singled them out as the best in the show: "De fait, il s'impose par quatre peintures de visions grillagées aux couleurs puissantes mais dépouilleés."[29]

If 1962 marked the high point of Bőszin's career in London, by the mid 1960s, it was losing momentum. He continued to run the Chiltern Gallery as well as Taurus artists, the combined administration of which must have been daunting. In his art he was tending towards complete abstraction for the first time, sometimes towards orthogonal-geometric schemas and sometimes to a more purely expressive style, but he was receiving less critical attention than previously.[30] He decided to approach the Douglas and Foulis Art Gallery in Edinburgh, the scene of his initial success in exile, where a show of his work was held in February of 1966. This was to be his final show in Britain. The only critical response, by Sidney Goodsir Smith, was that his palette was too "sombre."[31] In the Britain of the 1960s, Bőszin's subtle, and toned-down, often dark palette could not compete with the brightness and boldness of the contemporary art scene.

Meanwhile, in 1963, Julius Marosán, along with Stephen Mezei and Bert Kolberg, had founded the Minotaur Gallery in Toronto. The gallery's name was a reference both to the eponymous Surrealist journal, and to Bőszin's Taurus group.[32] Marosán organized a showing of the Taurus Arists at the Minotaur Gallery in September 1963. That same year Bőszin took part in the Minotaur Gallery's "International Group Exhibition," and he had a one-person show there in 1964. Later that October, he had a one-person show at the Parisienne Gallery in Toronto. These were not the only occasions on which Bőszin had shown in Canada up to that point. Zelko Kujundzic had settled in the British Columbia

interior in 1958, where he had organized a show of Bőszin's work at the Nelson School of Fine Arts in March of 1960.[33] As a result of the activity in Toronto, Bőszin was impressed by the openness of the art scene there, then at the height of a boom in art production and sales.[34] He was encouraged by Marosán to emigrate to Canada, and did so in 1966.

The new artistic environment of Toronto resulted in two major changes in Bőszin's art: he became heavily involved with the production of sculpture (which he had begun in England), and his painting style changed dramatically. In 1968 and 1969, he went through a brief, though very intense period of producing works that parallelled the work of North American hard-edged, geometrical-abstract painting. Bőszin's powerful compositional abilities, honed over two decades of abstracting from nature, as well as his excellent colour sense, served him very well indeed. Works such as *Separated Forms* (fig. 3) as well as the "Pendulum Drawings" of 1968-69 (black ink on paper),[35] demonstrate this delicate compositional balance Bőszin was able to carry over from his abstractions into these geometric inventions. Though he did not know these works at the time, Bőszin's hard-edge paintings bear a resemblance to some of Kassák's late abstractions of the 1957-67 period, as well as to his abstract graphic works of the early twenties, placing Bőszin's work into the line of development of another of his mentors. The fact that these works were executed either as reproducible graphic works, or were painted on board, reflect Bőszin's avoidance of painting on canvas, a tendency that dates back to his inability to obtain canvas when he began working after the war, and one that has followed him throughout his career. These works are painted, instead, on chipboard, which produces a rich, textured, surface that contrasts with the hard-edged precision of the images. The hard-edge period culminated in a one-man showing at the Hungarian-Canadian dealer Karl Hahn's Gallery of Fine Art on Toronto's Eglinton Avenue in 1969. The fact that, later that same year, he produced a series of geometrical-abstract silkscreens on canvas, only underlines his avoidance of traditional oil or acrylic paintings on canvas.[36]

Introduced to The Sculptors' Society of Canada by Marosán, Bőszin became more interested in the production of sculpture, and served as the Society's president during the periods 1971-73 and 1979-83. In England he had made a small figure of a king inspired by the work of Max Ernst, and akin to sculptures by the former European School artist living in New York, Marosán's friend József Jakovits.[37] By the late sixties, Bőszin, along with Marosán, was experimenting with the use of

sculpted styrofoam as models for the casting of bronze and aluminum works, as well as with styrofoam itself as a medium for sculptural constructions.

In 1972 and 1973 Bőszin, Marosán, the Hungarian-Canadian sculptor Imre Szebényi, as well as Wyndham Lawrence, the head of the Sculptural Department at Central Technical School in Toronto and Leonard Oesterle, professor at the Ontario College of Art, showed together as "Five Sculptors From Toronto." Their two shows, at Charlotte Rayner's Pennel Gallery in April of 1972, and at the Gallery Schonberger in Kingston a year later, received good press coverage. As Anthony Thorn wrote of the Pennel show in the *Toronto Citizen*: "Bőszin is showing cast aluminum abstractions with a most unusual and appropriate use of added colour. His forms are very strong and massive, and are greatly enhanced by the very vigorous and free use of colors."[38] Toronto *Globe and Mail* critic Kay Kritzweiser meanwhile notes how "Andrew Bőszin's aluminum composition is a good example of how a small form can take on illusionary proportions." Unlike Thorn, she is not happy with the addition of colour, however, stating that "The addition of shiny, painted surfaces — blue, red, black — somehow spoils the symmetry of the Castle piece."[39]

Like his fellow Hungarian-Canadians Marosan and Dora de Pedery Hunt, Bőszin became interested in medallic art and produced a beautiful series of these delicate works during the medium's Canadian heyday in the late sixties and early seventies.[40]

Bőszin's sculpture, like his painting, passed from the constructive-expressionist art of his London period to geometrical constructivity around 1968. Just as Bőszin's most geometric paintings of 1968-69 maintained textural effects through his application of the pigment onto textured surfaces, he was careful to ensure the preservation of textures throughout the casting and polishing process of his aluminum works and bronzes, no matter how "abstract." (Fig. 4)

By the seventies Bőszin was restless, and he returned in his painting to a style which was essentially a development of the expressive-abstract style he had begun in 1965-66, a continuation of his London period. Beginning with *Appearance* of 1970,[41] Bőszin effectively turned his back on his hard-edge work, not to return to that mode of painting for two decades. It is as if the artist felt that the hard-edge period had been too easy a way out of the artistic dilemma he had found himself in after his arrival in North America; how to integrate the art of this continent,

and of the Toronto scene in particular, into the natural course of development in his art. Some works of this period I find to be too easy compositionally (although done with his usual mastery), too close to works of 1965-66, inspired by the Cubist Mondrian of the teens. Other paintings such as *The Hope* and *Storm over the Bay of* 1972 meanwhile, are more successful in that they dare to break up this grid into free, painterly fantasy, akin to his best work of the mid 1960s.[42]

As a further complication, during the mid to late seventies Bőszin reintroduced figuration into his works, in an apparent attempt to integrate the power of his frontal portraits of the early fifties into his contemporary work. While Bőszin was exhibiting regularly (indeed he exhibited more during the seventies than during any other decade of his career), and he continued to exhibit often during the eighties, the late seventies and the eighties were rather fallow years for his art.

The attempt of the late seventies at reintegrating his earlier impulses had led to an impasse of sorts, one which the artist was not able to overcome until the late eighties. It is curious that despite his neo-expressionist past, and apart from some graphic works and watercolours, Bőszin was not able to reinvigorate his own art during the Neo-Expressionist phase of the Toronto art scene during the early eighties. It seems that the problems faced by the younger artists involved in that scene were not Bőszin's. Indeed, it is possible that this renaissance of expressive representational art acted as a psychological barrier to Bőszin's own development.

Towards the end of eighties, as the Neo-Expressionist wave crashed on the Toronto scene, Bőszin, logically enough, again took up his hard-edge oil painting on chipboard, almost where he had left off with it nearly two decades previous. These new, shimmering oils and paper collages, as well as his aluminum, styrofoam and wood sculptures — shown in an important exhibition with works by Marosán and Aileen Hooper Cowan at Toronto's John B. Aird gallery in May 1990 — display a purity of form and of structure Bőszin had been unable to attain in his art of the late sixties. In works such as *Angel* and *In Memory of the Last Forest*, the artist achieves a unity of purpose and material.[43] His return to abstract painting in the early 1990s, using a spray technique on paper, and working also in oil on plywood, was masterful.[44] His sure sense of composition and colour are solidly in evidence in these late works. (Fig. 5) They are, as Kassák had written of the artist's works in the late forties, "filled with the silence of eternity."[45]

Bőszin is a serious and very good artist, one who, endowed with a talent for colour, texture and composition, as well as a sense of the timeless, and fortunate enough to have had early mentors, and teachers such as Gadányi, Kassák and Kállai, has produced an oeuvre of dark, brooding power, one in which he did not shy away from returning again and again to problems raised early in his oeuvre. While his works frankly display the struggles he has gone through, they are the evidence of honest struggles. As the great Canadian-Hungarian poet Tamás Tűz wrote about his art: "even his sometimes dominant dark colours, rather than depressiveness, reflect the calm of a summer night; some warm, soft, darkness; the vibration of animate life." His art is, Tűz continues, "pure lyricism, in line, form and colour; an inner content inexpressible through words, a unique view of the world projected onto our retinae."[46]

NOTES

[1] This article is based on a series of interviews conducted with the artist in Toronto in 1991, with the support of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Fellowship. The present article was completed with the support of an SSHRC Standard Research Grant. I thank the Council for its support over the years. Otherwise unnoted factual information in it is derived from these interviews. I thank the artist for his cooperation with this project, and for making his private archives available to me. An earlier version of this text appeared in abbreviated form in *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, Foreword by Marianne Elizabeth Barnett, (Toronto: Studio A, 1992): 2-7.

[2] On Gadányi see, e.g. Magdolna Supka, *Gadányi Jenő Emlékkiállítása* (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1967); "Részletek Gadányi Jenő naplójából, művészeti feljegyzéseiből," *Művészet*, 24, 3 (March 1983): 26-32; and *Gadányi Jenő Emlékkiállítás* (Szentendre: Szentendrei Képtár, 1986).

[3] Ferenc Bodri, "Gadányi és Kassák," *Művészet* 24, 3 (March 1983): 17-21.

[4] The brochure of this show, including a rare reproduction of one of his early linoleum cuts, is in the collection of the artist. The name of the gallery has been torn off the brochure.

[5] Unknown author, "Bőszin Endre képkiállitása," *Csongrádi Újság* 6 October 1946.

[6] On the art of this period, see Péter György and Gábor Pataki, *Az Európai Iskola és az Absztrakt Csoport* [The European School and the Abstract Group] (Budapest: Corvina, 1991).

[7] Ernő Kállai, "Bioromantik," *Forum* (Bratislava) (1932): 271, 273, 274 and *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 75, 1 (January 1933): 46-50.

[8] Ernő Kállai, *A természet rejtett arca* [The Hidden Face of Nature] (Budapest: Misztótfalusi, 1947).

[9] Information from Endre Bőszin. I have not been able to see this review.

[10] *A magyar képzőművészek szabad szervezetének tavaszi tárlata* exh. cat. (Budapest: Alkotás Művészház XXXIV Kiállítás, May 1947).

[11] *Ungerska Grafiker och Technare av idag* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, Nationalmusei utställningskatalog 145), April 1948: #46.

[12] Nos. 7 and 11, respectively, in: *Andrew/Endre Boszin*. This is the only compendium of illustrations of Bőszin's works published, all in black and white. Some of the works discussed were seen in the original at the artist's home and studio in 1991. Compare these, e.g. with Derkovits' self portraits of 1921, and with his well-known *Sill Life with Fish I* of 1928. See, e.g., Éva Körner, *Derkovits Gyula* (Budapest: Corvina, 1968): figs. 89-99 and 223, respectively.

[13] Interview with Éva Körner, Budapest, 1990.

[14] Author unknown, "The Artist," *The Daily Star* (Toronto, 22 October 1966).

[15] The dates are reported in the *Scottish Daily Mail* (22 February 1957).

[16] P. "Hungarian Artist," *Weekly Scotsman* (25 May 1957): page unknown and Z.[elko] K.[ujundzic]. "Talent needs encouragement," *The Glasgow Herald* (18 May 1957). On the February show: G.S.M. "Hungarian's Art Show. First Exhibition in Scotland," *The Glasgow Herald* (22 February 1957); and, author unknown, "A Painter from Hungary: Exhibition of the Work of Endre Boszin," *The Scotsman* (23 February 1957): page unknown. A photograph of the February opening is reproduced in the Edinburgh *Evening Dispatch* (25 February 1957).

[17] Author unknown, "Exhibition in Edinburgh," *The Glasgow Herald* (16 August 1957). A photograph of the three artists is included in the *Edinburgh Evening News* (16 August 1957): 9, under the heading "The Festival."

[18] G.R. "Three-Man Art Exhibition. Hungarian, Scots and Yugoslav painters," *The Scotsman* (19 August 1957).

[19] *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, nos. 24 and 36 respectively.

[20] *Ibid.*, nos. 18 and 19.

[21] C.f., e.g. *ibid.*, nos. 28 and 30. Though he does not remember doing so, Bőszin might also have seen the works of the Cobra artists Corneille and Jacques Doucet, who spent time in Budapest during 1947 and whose works were shown there in 1947–48. On this see Krisztina Passuth, "Between East and West: The European School of Budapest (1945-1948)," in Gabor Pataki, ed., *Cricket Wedding: The European School. The Hungarian Avant-Garde 1945-1949* (Amstelveen: COBRA Museum, 2002), pp. 41ff.

[22] *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, nos. 35 and 44, respectively.

[23] Oswell Blakeston, "From Budapest," *Art News and Review* (28 March 1959): page unknown. See also: Author unknown, "Refugee Artists," *The Kensington News and West London Times* (13 November 1958); and, author unknown, "A Painter Out of the Ordinary: Unity Imposed on Variety," *The Scotsman* (6 April 1959).

[24] Author unknown, "Boszin and Clark at the Chiltern Gallery," *Apollo*, 75 (July 1961).

[25] H. H. "Expressionistes de Londres," *Journal de l'Amateur d'Art* (10 April 1960): page unknown.

[26] Conrad Wilson, Introduction, in: Endre Bőszin, ed., *Portraits of the Taurus Artists* (London: Taurus Artists, 1963): 1. See also: author unknown, "St. Ives artists' hold neighbouring shows," *The St. Ives Times and Echo* (6 October 1961); and, author unknown, "A Taurus Művészek első kiállítása," *Irodalmi Újság* (Munich) (3 June 1961).

[27] Max Chapman, "Reviews of some Current Shows, *What's On In London* (8 June 1962). See *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, nos. 57, 59.

[28] J. H. "Deux artistes anglais remportent les prix de poésie et de peinture de la Fondation Nathalie," *Le Dauphine* (16 August 1962).

[29] Anonymous, "Visite au Chateau de Blauvac ou la Groupe Taurus Artists expose," *Le Comtadin* 18 (17 August 1962). See also Guy Fargepallet, "Peinture et Poésie au chateau de Blauvac," *Rencontres* (Carpentras) (July-August 1962).

[30] *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, nos. 69, 72, and nos. 73, 75, 76, respectively.

[31] Sydney Goodsir Smith, "Using Too Sombre a Palette," *The Scotsman* (9 February 1966). See also: author unknown, "Hungarian Painter Comes Home," *The Scotsman* (5 February 1966).

[32] *Taurus Artists, London, England* exh. cat. (Toronto: Minotaur Gallery 1963)

[33] Author unknown, "Somberness Mark of Hungarian Artist's Work," *Nelson Daily News* (5 March 1960).

[34] On this boom, see Oliver Botar, *Julius Marosan: Art in Emigration 1957-1993* exh. Cat. (Budapest: Mucsarnok, 1993): unpag..

[35] These works are in the collection of the artist.

[36] He produced a single series of oil paintings on canvas in 1972. See *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, nos. 81-84.

[37] *Ibid.*, no. 104.

[38] Anthony Thorn, "The Veil of Illusion," *Toronto Citizen* (20 April – 4 May 1972): 16.

[39] Kay Kritzweiser, "Wit and Warmth in Picasso roundup," *The Globe and Mail* (29 April 1972): 30.

[40] On this, see Botar, *Julius Marosan: Art in Emigration*; also, Phileen Tattersall, "Medals, Miniatures and More: The Art of Dora de Pédery-Hunt," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 26, 1-2 (1999): 133-45.

[41] *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, no. 74.

[42] *The Hope* is reproduced in: *Multicultural Fine Arts Exhibition* exh. cat. (Toronto: St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, 1973), 3. *Storm over the Bay* is no. 83 in *Andrew/Endre Boszin*. On his shift away from hard-edge painting, see author unknown, "Andre Boszin," *Onion* (28 February 1977): 5.

[43] *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, nos. 147, 148, respectively.

[44] These were shown in his homecoming exhibition to Hungary, at the Vasarely Museum. See: *Bőszin Andrew/Endre* (Budapest: Vasarely Museum, 1995).

[45] Quoted in *Boszin*, a pamphlet produced by the artist, Toronto, n.d. [ca. 1974].

[46] Tamás Tűz, "Boszin Endre," *Krónika* (Toronto), 5, 1 (January 1979): 25.

Figure List

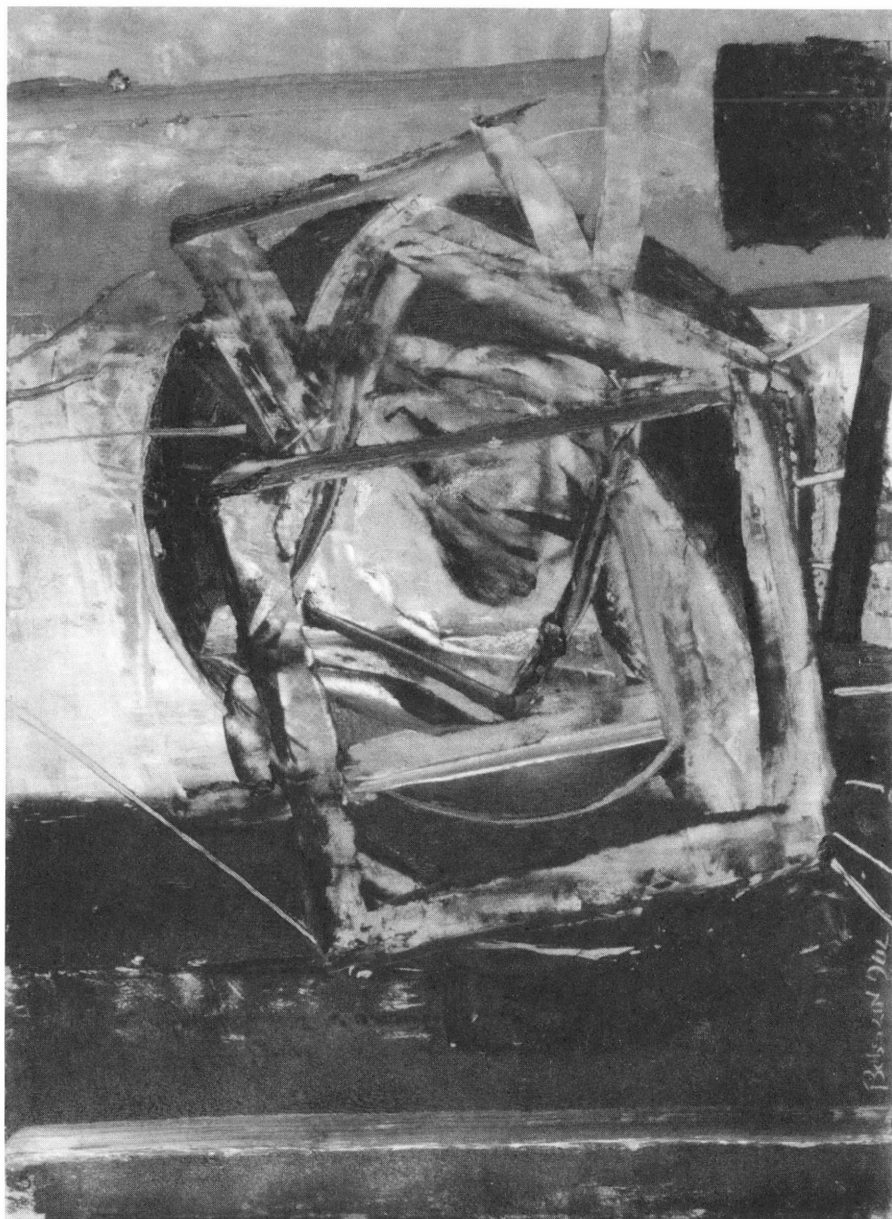
1. Endre Bőszin, *Still Life with Eggs*, oil on paper, at lower right: "Bőszin Endre 1950", 48.5 X 32.5 cm. Photograph by Oliver Botar. (Collection of the Artist) (Reproduced with permission). See page 124.

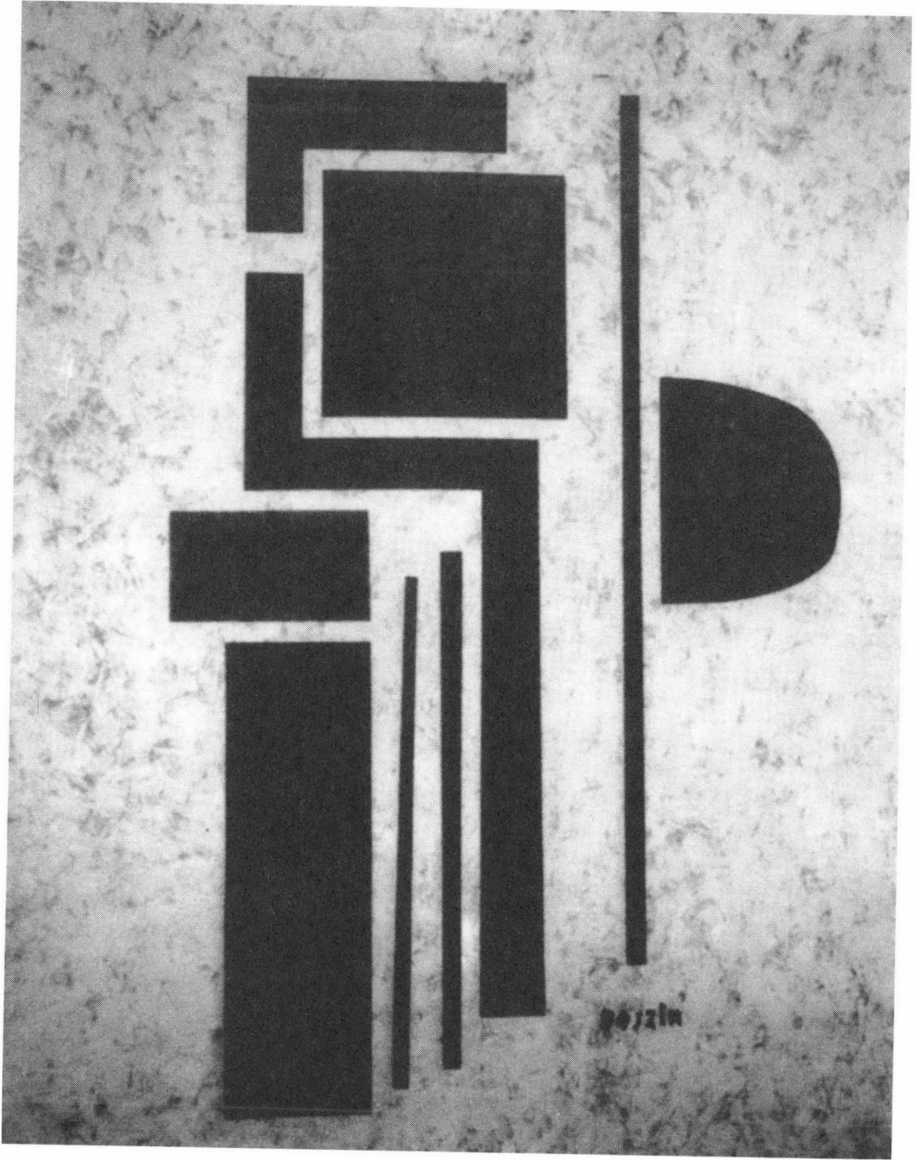
2. Endre Bőszin, *Square Cage*, oil on masonite, 1962, 56 X 77 cm. Photograph by Bob Talbot. (Private Collection) (Reproduced with permission) See page 125.

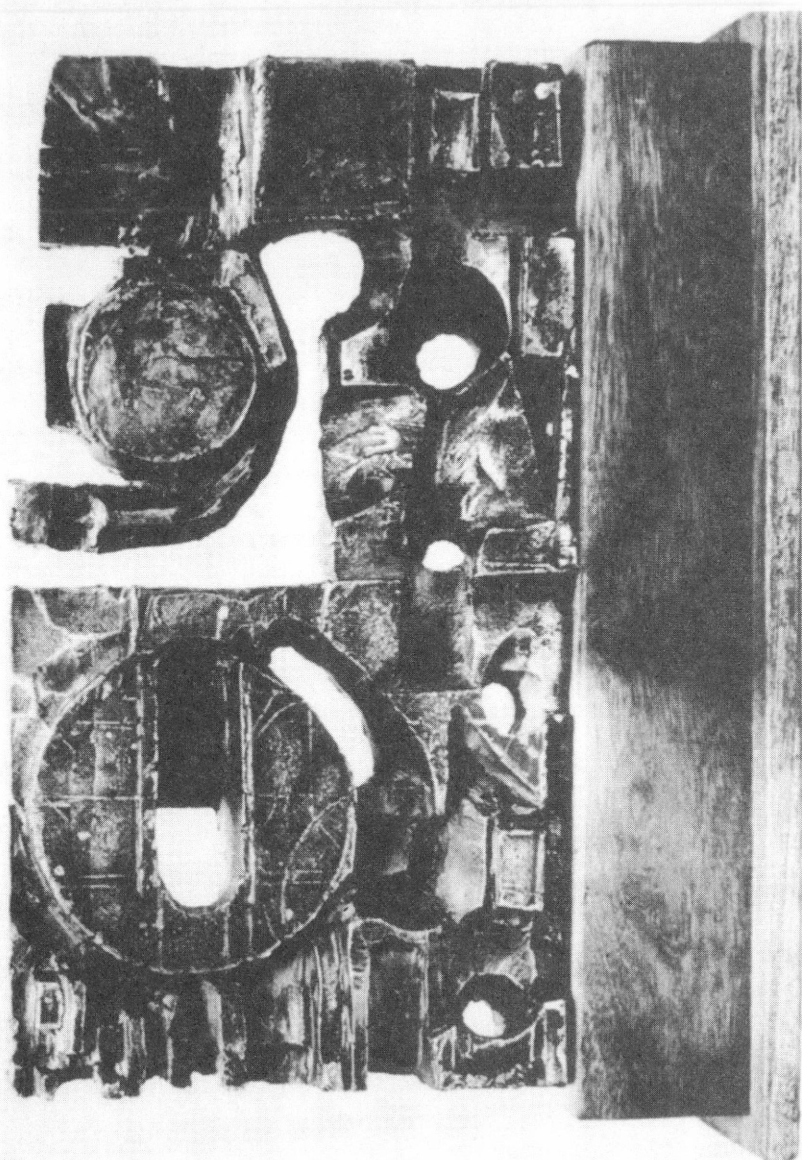
3. Endre Bőszin, *Separated Forms*, oil on chipboard, 1968, 180 X 121 cm. After: *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, Foreword by Marianne Elizabeth Barnett, (Toronto: Studio A, 1992): 53. (Reproduced with permission) See page 126.

4. Endre Bőszin, *Jericho*, cast bronze (edition of one), 42 X 24 X 3.5 cm. *Andrew/Endre Boszin*, Foreword by Marianne Elizabeth Barnett, (Toronto: Studio A, 1992): 76. (Reproduced with permission) See page 127.

5. Endre Bőszin, untitled, spray pigment on paper, 199410.5 X 14.7 cm. Photograph by Bob Talbot. (Private Collection) (Reproduced with permission) See page 128.







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In Search of Identity: The Influence of Democracy on Young Hungarian Artists in the Late 1990's.

Stephen L. Pelláthy and
Stephanie S. Donlon

During the summer of 2000, the authors travelled to Hungary in order to interview individuals directly involved in the Hungarian art scene, including eight top contemporary artists. The main theme of the interviews was the question of identity among young artists. Following the fall of communism in 1989-90, art critics, art historians, and curators have spoken of a 'crisis of identity' among Central and Eastern European artists. Vast changes have occurred during democratization. Overlapping international and domestic economic, political, and historical shifts have led to a questioning of identity among young Hungarian artists, both within and without the country. The transition continues to affect the Hungarian art scene in many respects. For instance, public funding has both declined and changed focus, while private institutions and a well-developed gallery system have not yet filled the resulting support gap.

In this paper, we first review commentary concerning the identity crisis. We then address those components of Hungary's political and economic changes that may contribute to the question of identity. We explore how the transitions that occurred within Hungary and the changes in Hungary's relations with other nations resonate in the art scene. Next, we present the comments of witnesses to this time of change. We categorizes their answers into three types:

1) Perceptions on the identity crisis from an insider's point of view. In this part, we investigate how those participating in the current art scene perceive their roles. The artists themselves generally dismissed the question of identity, whereas other interviewees affirmed the notion of a crisis.

2) An overview of the current situation of young artists regarding the art market. The ambiguity of artists' roles and their relationship to other players in the art market constitutes one aspect of the alleged crisis. Hungary's newly developing art market has not received enough attention. Briefly, the comments of the interviewees describe an art market in flux, within which the identity of young artists cannot be definitively articulated. Artists and gallery owners struggle to survive continual change, at a pace Westerners are unaccustomed to. Economic changes have created and continue to create a new art scene.

3) The future impact of entry into the European Union. Future entry is seen by some as a stabilizing process, while others fear dominance by other European Union nations. We conclude with comments on the current situation and the future.

Background on Identity

Opinions identifying an "identity crisis" have come from both inside and outside of Hungary. Within Hungary, for instance, Lászlo Beke, the former director of the Műcsarnok [*Kunsthalle*], wrote in 1995, "I sensed that the artists, curators, critics and art historians of East Central Europe are in a transitional (or acute) identity crisis."[1] Commentators outside of Hungary have made similar remarks. American art critic, Susan Snodgrass surveyed the Budapest art scene and questions, "How does Hungarian culture reconstruct its fractured identity, while at the same time make a place for itself in the international mainstream?"[2] The Hungarian art critic Edit András writes, "Thus it sometimes happens in this ambiguous, transitory period... [that] theory and practice conflict with each other..."[3] A series of more recent exhibitions have explored the identity crisis as well. Central and Eastern European countries that have recently emerged from communism have been grouped together by Hungarian and other curators in exhibitions. These exhibitions have toured both in Hungary and internationally.[4]

In order to investigate identity, we must first define it. Identity is "an abiding sense of the self and of the relationship of the self to the world."[5] This identity makes life predictable. Identity provides a set of ready-made interpretations of social issues or events. When habitual structures are realigned, when massive transitions occur, individuals and groups adjust their identities to the new circumstances. Periods of change

are normal, but periods of extensive, intense change are not, and may lead to crisis.

We now wish to highlight some of the components of internal and external transitions during the last decade that may have contributed to this crisis of identity . The following list is not exhaustive, but rather points to several interrelated domestic factors and global influences that shape the art scene. Within Hungary there have been vast structural changes. To begin with, the "3 T" system of support under communism, "támogatás, türés, tiltás," in which an artist was either (respectively) supported, tolerated, or prohibited, based on the ideological position of the artist and his/her art, has been replaced by full freedom of expression. In terms of economics, Hungary has endorsed a free market system. Coupled with this, state support for artists has lessened.

Countrywide, changes in the Hungarian system for the state support of culture affect artists at the individual level. Artists now must compete for grants and scholarships, seek out domestic and foreign galleries, file tax returns, and look for means of advertisement.[6] Snodgrass agrees that Hungary's economic transition to a market economy and private sponsorship leaves many cultural institutions, galleries, and artists "in a tenuous position with limited resources."[7] The Soros foundation, which played a seminal role in supporting Hungarian culture during the democratic transition, has withdrawn most of its support for the arts.

Due to the democratic transition, leadership and institutional changes that endorse this new freedom of expression have also occurred. Árpád Szabados became president and rector of the Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem [Hungarian University of Fine Arts] in 1995 and a new Intermedia department was established there. Szabados had already shown his works abroad and by the late 1990's he was with a gallery in Germany. The Ludwig Múzeum [Ludwig Museum] was founded in 1991. Founded by a German philanthropist, it focuses on American Pop, German and Italian Neo-Expressionism and the Russian avant-garde, movements with very little representation in Hungary prior to the democratic transition. The second floor of the museum, housing contemporary art, was founded in 1996. Under the directorship of Katalin Néray, it provides another venue for young artists. The leadership of the Műcsarnok, initially under Néray in 1990, and later successively under Katalin Keserü and Lászlo Beke, has contributed to the promotion of the work of young artists. Another new player, founded in 1997, is the Kortárs Művészeti Intézet [Institute of Contemporary Art] in

Dunaújváros. Also, a semi-private gallery called MEO Kortárs Művészeti Gyűjtemény [MEO Contemporary Art Collection] opened in Újpest, a suburb of Budapest. Artists now in their late twenties and thirties have lived through these many changes, feeling the effects in a variety ways. This summary of developments indicates major changes within a brief period of time. Though the list of events may not seem long, almost every major institution was affected, and several new institutions were created and took their place of importance along side more established institutions. The scale of the change is difficult to fathom in the United States. Imagine five museums of national importance opening in New York City within five years, not to mention the number of private galleries and changes to other institutions that would need to occur to effect a similar change.

Hungary has historically aligned itself with the West, but was forcibly realigned towards the East during the time of communist rule. After the fall of communism, Hungary's westward looking tendencies were once again able to assert themselves, and this had a strong impact on the arts. Hungary has already joined NATO, and in May of 2004, the European Union. Formal negotiations began with the EU in March of 1998. Hungary's motivation to enter the European Union brings both hope and uncertainty for the arts. As noted in an annual speech given by the then Administrative Under-Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry for Cultural Heritage, Gergely Pröhle, "Hungary's entry into the European Union will not only have economic consequences, for entry will create a new situation for the country in virtually all fields of life, including culture."[8]

Economically, it is thought that entry into the EU will help level the economic playing field. However, Hungary will also be more vulnerable under the competition of the single market. Artists may face marginalization as well. As Jeremy MacClancey states, "Non-western artists, by entering the capitalist world-system, in however marginal a manner, surrender a degree of autonomy, and may well end up minor actors in a play scripted and directed by others."[9] It remains uncertain how EU entry will affect Hungarian cultural and national identity. Hungary's art community is influenced by paragraph 128 of the Maastricht Treaty, which states that the "EU supports cultural concepts which strengthen common European awareness."[10] In the speech mentioned above, Pröhle called for specific criteria by which to judge the cultural activities that would qualify for European support. He called for

culture to take the initiative stating that, "At the end of the 20th century, the task of cultural policy must surely be to create markets for culture as well."[11]

In light of the above perspectives and documented changes, we undertook a survey of how young artists now manoeuver in this new art scene within Hungary and internationally. If, as the above comments suggest, the question of identity arises in a time of transition rather than being a chronic condition, then up-to-date information becomes increasingly important. The interviews explore what artists and others involved in the art scene think about these commentaries on identity, how artists survive in an open market economy, and how future shifts toward EU membership will affect artists.

Methodology

To answer these questions, between June and July 2000 we interviewed fourteen individuals in Budapest involved in the arts. Eight were young artists, mainly painters. We also interviewed two gallery owners, one art historian, a critic, the directors of the Műcsarnok and the Ludwig Museum, the rector and president of the Képzőművészeti Főiskola [Academy of Fine Arts]. A sampling of perspectives provided for a more comprehensive study. We chose a non-schedule structured interview format that lasted approximately one hour. Some of the interviews were conducted in Hungarian. Previously drafted open-ended questions guided the discussions. Once the interviews were transcribed, the content was analysed using NUDist *Nvivo* software, to uncover patterns of responses in the data. The software coding highlighted several categories that a majority of interviewees addressed, providing a framework for our analysis.

Data analysis and discussion

We categorized responses according to three major themes. The first two address the current situation, while the third deals with the outlook for the future. Most or all of the interviewees offered remarks on the above themes. Their comments are presented anonymously.

1. Perceptions on the identity crisis from an insider's point of view.

Respondents did not give an overt, uniform answer as to whether or not there is a shared feeling of identity crisis among young Hungarian artists. Seven of twelve respondents mentioned a crisis of identity directly. Of these seven, three respondents indicated that there is a crisis of identity among young artists. One respondent felt that this crisis was more important for the older generation, in their sixties and seventies, than for young artists in their twenties and thirties. Three respondents did not feel that young artists were experiencing an identity crisis. Thus, responses were fairly evenly divided among the seven participants, either believing in or rejecting the presence of an identity crisis. In the following discussion, we explore these responses further.

Of those who held that there was an identity crisis, one respondent placed young artists into a much larger context of crisis in Hungary: "Hungary these days has an identity problem in everything. That means that you have and identity problem in [the] art field, too."

Those who dismiss the identity crisis also rejected the idea of a uniform identity in favour of individualism. For one respondent, a "mask, an image, a façade means death!" This artist favours originality and uniqueness over belonging to a group. His/her sense of security derives from knowing that he/she is not in any one category. His/her use of the word "mask," or "façade," indicates his/her belief that a unified image is false, something that veils a unique persona. At least one other artist concurred in this view: "Most of the people learned that the question is in you. You should not just base yourself on being Hungarian, being Eastern block." Yet another artist's comments supported the idea of a lack of unity among artists, without, however, considering this lack as a negative factor. Rather than finding artists engaging in communal activity, this artist and teacher finds individualism in the students he/she teaches: "Nowadays, everybody is working to find a gallery where he could sell his things, to find a scholarship so that he could travel abroad, maybe there he would be more successful." Once again, in this comment, it is the factor of individualism that is being stressed.

2. An overview of the current situation of young artists regarding the art market.

Due to the narrative nature of our data, we chose to synthesize our results into a fictitious composite artist we have named "Edina." The following overview of the art market will be presented in the form of

Edina's narrative (in italics), with commentary based on our interviews. Her story relates six important issues concerning Hungary's young artists: 1) funding, 2) marketing, 3) the gallery system, 4) short-term versus long-term goals, 5) national concerns, and 6) the international market.

Edina, our composite artist, finds time to paint a series of new paintings, despite working full time at another job. She has had several local exhibits in the last year. Yet, she cannot sustain herself by her painting alone. Exhibiting one's art is not enough, as one artist stated, "In Hungary, even though you have exhibited many, many times, you cannot quit your job."

The Studio Yearbook reports that only 14% of an artist's income derives from sales of art.[12] To subsidize living expenses, the artist might pick from several other professions or grants. Eleven percent of support comes from the artists' families. The artists we interviewed were also teachers, web-page designers, graphic artists, or storyboard illustrators for films. Some artists took on two or more jobs to meet their minimum standards of living. For one artist, teaching alone is not enough: "The money I get from teaching is nothing. I could not even buy [a] soda for my kids [from it]."

Economic hardship may constrict an artist's choice of materials, such as the size of her canvasses or the quality of her paints. Some of our respondents have family support. Half of the interviewees mentioned grants as a funding source. One artist interviewed lived in his/her family home and was supported by a state grant, the Derkovits prize. Only one artist claimed to live on the sale of his/her art alone.

Our fictitious artist Edina has made enough money to paint. She has painted a new series, and she is ready to sell. She wants to create a catalogue; lack of a catalogue hinders Edina's ability to attract buyers. Yet, she runs into several obstacles. The catalogue is the main form of advertisement. However, the infrastructure to support artists in this regard is weak. Only three artists we interviewed even have catalogues, one of whom created and produced a catalogue by taking his/her own photographs, writing the text, and paying for the printing. Others do not have such resources. A grant or a gallery can in some rare cases pay for catalogues, but even then the artists must do much of the preparatory work for the printing.

Edina then contacts several galleries in order to show her works. Ten years ago, there used to be mainly state support of the arts and artists. With the dissolution of state subsidies, an art market developed,

extending beyond the handful of existing private galleries that dealt mainly in historical art. Our research indicates that there has been a positive, though slow, progression. There now are between thirty and fifty galleries in the country. Artists and gallery owners feel the stress of the changes, and have yet to settle into clear roles. Our background research indicated that artists do not have allegiances to galleries.[13] This commentary was supported by the results of our interviews. All twelve respondents indicated that the gallery system is in transition. One respondent, a commercial gallery owner, finds a challenge in changing artists' perceptions of the gallery's role in a free-market world.

Edina shows her art simultaneously at several galleries to better her odds of selling a painting. She has no contract with any particular gallery; no gallery has exclusive rights to her work. Instead, she shows work on 'consignment.' Because there is no systematic way of showing and selling art, she finds it more appealing to sell out of her studio than to show at a gallery. In fact, by looking to make money in the short-term, artists undercut themselves by ignoring the law of supply and demand. Showing art at several galleries floods the market, and paintings actually lose their attractiveness to potential buyers. There is no anticipation or suspense in revealing everything at once, rather than releasing one's artwork incrementally and thus building demand. Selling on consignment (receiving money only if the painting is sold) hampers the continuity and security of an artist's work. Not knowing when the next sale will occur places tremendous stress on the artist. Typically in the West, artists have contracts with galleries, ensuring a stable working relationship. Resorting to selling paintings from one's studio, though beneficial in the short-term, also undercuts the developing art market. The galleries need the income generated by the sale of paintings by artists to in turn offer support to artists.

It takes a great deal of money to successfully publicize an artist by producing a catalogue, advertising in magazines, and holding exhibitions. Hungary is not yet ready for this level of expense. Artists' main complaints are that there is no system by which to promote artists due to a lack of funds. Because the gallery system is still developing, attracting buyers, nationally and internationally also poses problems for artists. Nationally, there is a need for education of both potential buyers and gallery managers. There are few Hungarians seriously collecting contemporary art of the last two decades and there are limited attempts to educate and cultivate potential buyers. At the level of the gallery

manager, there is no schooling in arts management. The creation of a viable art market necessitates the creation of a commercial 'art culture', including better advertisement of exhibitions, hosting gallery walks, and the education of a new generation of art professionals.

Edina also tried to make her way in the international scene. International acclaim does not better her position in Hungary. In fact, she shows at an International Biennale and returns to Hungary with no more added value to her work, nor additional sponsorship. As one artist stated, "You notice there is a progress[ion] in the West." But in Hungary, "They took very young artists to the Venice Biennale, which is a very important thing, but their life hasn't changed!"

In the international art market, Edina faces economic discrimination. Many foreign buyers want to pay well below Western prices for equivalent art. One artist lamented,

> I am using the same materials as Western artists do. I even buy the material at a higher price. But when I want to sell my work, for example through Knoll, the buyer says the price is high! Because I am from the East! And I am using the exact same material.

Another interviewee commented,

> When you ask a French [artist], you don't ask: Why don't you make a French piece? That isn't a question. But if they [foreigners] come here [to Hungary, they ask]: Why don't you make an East European [piece about the] cultural life.

Throughout this narrative, one theme remains clear: The main concerns for the success of this system are economic. The success of the art culture rests upon the artist's ability to survive economically and to continue art production. Obstacles include an undeveloped art market, emphasis on short-term gains, lack of education among buyers and dealers, and economic inequality between Hungary and international art markets.

Entry into the EU.

In looking toward remedying economic problems, several commentators trust that entry to the European Union will advance the Hungarian

economy. This projection would, in turn, quickly propel the Hungarian artist into the mainstream. Here, we present our interviewees' opinions on the changes the EU will make on the Hungarian art market, and specifically, on their lives, some time before actual membership was realized in 2004.

Three interviewees connected the euphoria surrounding the changes of 1989 with the euphoria surrounding pending entry to the EU. However, with the new democracy and transition, immediate improvements did not appear. Likewise, as Hungarian entry becomes imminent, "the faults are getting more visible," according to one respondent. Some of the excitement about changes accompanying EU entry has worn off.

In tandem with the discussion of current problems with the art market, there is also a great hope that entry into the EU will stabilize the Hungarian market in general, and will improve connections for the art market. Two thirds of respondents felt that this would be a gradual process. One respondent indicated:

> But also, gradually, if the country became more capable and more educated about art, and contemporary art and sponsorship and that kind of stuff, maybe other things will happen, collections and corporate collections, those things which you can't find, or which you can find but it is not working properly.

Another interviewee indicated a foreboding that Hungary is not planning ahead. Hungarians in the art community should be visualizing the future. And yet, the interviewee states,

> Hungary does not have teachers who know late 20th century art. We have brown bag lunches to talk about this. The scene is difficult. We don't have gallery walks. In five years, when Hungary is part of the EU, they [current Hungarian curators and teachers] could be working in Berlin for other galleries, but they are not thinking ahead.

Suggestions were also given for better promotion of Hungarian artists within the EU system. One interviewee advocated using an existing network, "Cultural attachés could use their connections to promote Hungarian art throughout Europe." Another suggested setting up an office in several countries in Europe that would "promote Hungary in the cities

throughout Europe... put the word out more [about] what is going on." While there are generally positive feelings about entering the EU, the Hungarian artistic community is also cautious about this transition. While it presents opportunities, the community will need to prepare in order to take advantage of the benefits of this union.

Conclusion

In this paper, we discussed several areas regarding the 'identity crisis' of young artists—present and future—the present being the artists' perception of this crisis and the economic impact on the art market, and the future being the impact of joining the EU.

Concerning the first point, we end with a comment on the exhibition "After the Wall," that sums up some of the results of our research:

> Wherever we look in Eastern and Central Europe, be it Russia, Hungary, Latvia, or Macedonia, as these governments open up we see political hotbeds in the throes of short-term triumphs and misfortunes. "After the Wall," too, is an expression of something provisional. Perhaps at the moment, we should expect nothing more, for as social, economic, and political conditions continue to adjust and readjust, so too will the interim state of the culture.[14]

This passage stresses the quickly changing atmosphere of the Hungarian art scene. What was and is still by some referred to as a "crisis," does not have all the signs of a crisis. "Crisis" implies a lack of a system. At present, however, a system is visibly in formation. Hungary has chosen to pursue the construction of an open market system. Likewise, Hungarian art is finding its way in a Western style art market. The blueprints are in place. What remains to be done is the actual construction. Ten years ago, the question was "What are we going to do?" Now, goals have been formulated. The current question is, "*How* are we going to reach our desired goals?"

In the narrative, several problems with the Hungarian art market have come to light. Simultaneously, we can see that the art market, as it develops through the activities of a series of players, is solving some of those problems. We gathered some positive information that supports the

idea that this construction of a system is underway. Prior to the democratic changes, the art world was dictated by governmental and hierarchical demands. Now, support structures developed through artists and patrons, complement the state system. For example, young artists belong to some collectives or unions, such as the Young Artists Studio. The Center for Culture and Communication Foundation, C3, a derivative of Soros' support of the arts, provides space and supports artists at the forefront of innovation in new media. The Institute of Contemporary Art, co-directed by a young, energetic János Soboszlai, supports art production, shows, and residencies for young Hungarian artists. A leading gallery, Knoll, run by a Viennese gallery owner, creates a viable link between Hungarian artists and other European markets. Despite growing pains, these examples show that the construction of a comprehensive system for the support of the arts is progressing.

One final aspect of the Hungarian art scene which has not been discussed in the role of state foundations. The role of foundations did not come up in our interviews; the focus was mainly on the gallery system. Regarding state funding, museums started receiving less money during the 1980's, forcing changes in response, such as better service to the clientele.[15] More specifically, in 1992 the state-run Art Fund was divided into the Hungarian Art Foundation and the National Association of Hungarian Artists, the latter which now has a special section for young artists. Through these foundations, museums and cultural institutions still receive some subsidy. A more detailed exploration of the changes and influences of state funding would help to fill in the picture of the current scene, though it is clear from our interviews that direct support of artists by the state is limited and insufficient.

Continued research is necessary to document changes as they occur. The impact of the transitions of the past decade on the lives of Hungarians continues. As more studies are done, Hungarian artists and others in the art scene will be able to read analyses of their situation from outside perspectives. In our view, the successful future of artists depends on at least three factors: 1) Artists' ability to continue to create, 2) Interest in their work in terms of buyers and researchers, 3) Meta-level analysis by all concerned parties of the art scene as a whole. Our study falls into the second tier and allows the third tier to be founded on accurate data and suppositions.

NOTES

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[1] Lászlo Beke, "East Central Europe from the Perspective of a Hungarian Curator," in *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), 87.

[2] Susan Snodgrass, "Report from Budapest: In a Free State," in *Art in America*, 86, no. 10 (October, 1998): 85.

[3] Edit András, "A Painful Farewell to Modernism: Difficulties in the Period of Transition," in *Omnia Mutantur: The Catalogue of the Hungarian Pavilion at the 47th International Biennale of the Visual Arts* (Venice, 1997), 22-29. Also in this catalogue, see Gábor Andrási, "Beyond Modernism: New Generations and Shifts in Perspective in the Hungarian Art of the 90's."

[4] Recent shows include: "After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe," originally at the Moderna Museet [Modern Museum] in Stockholm in 1999; "Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe," originally at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in 1995; "Artists of Central and Eastern Europe," at the Mattress Factory in Pittsburgh in 1995. For commentary, see, for example, Judith E. Stein, "Out of the East: Two Shows Recently Introduced American Audiences to the Stylistic Freedoms and Provocative Content that Infused East Central European Art after the Collapse of the Iron Curtain," in *Art in America*, 86, no. 4 (April 1998). Another important show in this series is "Europa. Europa," held at the Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn in 1994, which focussed on the past century of avant-garde art in Central and Eastern Europe.

[5] Terrell Northrup in *Intractable Conflicts and their Transformation*, eds. Louis Kriesberg, Terrell Northrup, and S.J. Thorton (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1989), 55.

[6] Beke, "East Central Europe from the Perspective of a Hungarian Curator," 92.

[7] Snodgrass, "Report from Budapest: in a Free State," 85.

[8] Gergely Pröhle, "The Task of Cultural Policy is to Create Markets," in *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 40, no. 155 (August, 1999): 26.

[9] Jeremy MacClancey, "Anthropology, Art and Contest," in *Contesting Art: Art, Politics, and Identity in the Modern World*, ed. Jeremy MacClancey (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 15.

[10] Pröhle, "The Task of Cultural Policy is to Create Markets," 26.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Stúdió Évkönyv 1994-95* [Studio Yearbook 1994-95] (Budapest: Fiatal Képzõmûvészek Stúdiója Egyesület [Studio of Young Artists Association], 1996), 65.

[13] See, for example, Snodgrass, "Report from Budapest: in a Free State," 10. She writes, "Although artists may be represented by one gallery, they think nothing of showing at another, and most sales take place in the studio, bypassing the gallery altogether."

[14] Ronald Jones, "After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe," in *Artforum* (March, 2000).

[15] Agnes Kovacs, "The State of the Art: Hungary," in *Artmargins*, 1999. Online. Available: http://www.artmargins.com/content/feature/kovacs.html.

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In Memoriam Júlia Szabó

Oliver A. I. Botar*

It is with both sadness and gratitude that I remember Dr. Júlia Szabó as one of the foremost scholars of Hungarian art history of the modern period. Her work was wide-ranging, extending with equal facility throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Perhaps best-known for her work on the history of Hungarian Activism and the Hungarian avant-garde in general, she was also one of the foremost scholars on 19th century Hungarian art, and from 1994 she acted as curator of the mainly 19th century art collections of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Dr. Szabó completed her degree in 1962 in the Faculty of Arts of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, majoring in art history and English. Her thesis was on Gyula Derkovits' graphic art. It was while analysing Derkovits' woodcut series *1514* that she first delved into iconographic questions, employing both visual and literary sources. This kind of richly based iconographic analysis remained her primary method of art historical scholarship throughout her scholarly career.

She began her working career in 1962 as an assistant curator in the Graphic Art Department of the Hungarian National Gallery, later being promoted to curator. She defended her doctoral dissertation on Hungarian Activism in 1969, at which time she was hired to the Művészettörténeti Dokumentációs Központ [Art Historical Documentation Centre] and in 1971 to the Művészettörténeti Kutató Intézet [Art Historical Research Institute] of the Hungarian Academy of Science. It was in her 1973 publication *Antik romok a XIX. század festészetében és rajzművészetében* [Antique ruins in 19th century painting and drawing] that she began to systematically deal with the iconographic questions of the 19th c. landscape, and she defended her *Kandidátusi disszertáció* on this theme in 1996. Her study of 19th century representations of Saint Ladislaus, King of Hungary, grew out of this interest. Through an analysis of Tivadar Csontváry's paintings depicting cedars, she became interested in the iconography of the cedar tree, on which she produced a whole series of first-rate publications. Related to this work was her interest in the "emotional" landscapes of the early 20th century Hungarian and

international avant-gardes, on the then-popular thematics of *Einfühlung* (the projection of feeling *into* the landscape), particularly in the paintings of the Activist artist János (Hans) Mattis-Teutsch.

While she never held a permanent teaching position at a university, from the 1970s onwards she did teach occasional courses in modern art history at the art historical and *Népművelés* (Continuing Education) departments of ELTE, in the program for foreigners of the Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetem [University of Economics, Budapest], and for three terms at the Central European University in Prague, when it was still located there. Starting in 1998, she taught regularly in the Art History Department of Pázmány Péter Catholic University near Budapest.

It was in this capacity as a research associate at the Art Historical Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Science that I first met Dr. Szabó in 1979, while I was in Hungary by the good graces of the Hungary/Canada Exchange Scholarship for undegraduates. She was not only gracious and open to assisting a young Hungarian-Canadian scholar, she encouraged and supported my research at the time on Dada elements in the Hungarian avant-garde in many different ways. I remember one particularly memorable afternoon when she took me along on her visit to the ailing Ödön Palasovszky in his apartment off the Margit Körút. It became clear to me on that visit that she was not only researching and writing about this early 20th century generation of Hungarian artists, she was their friend and supporter in their old age as well. One of the most impressive aspects of her person was her uncompromising attitude towards honesty, generosity, and hard work, in an environment in which it was not always easy to maintain such values. She was unfailingly generous with her time and knowledge, she and her husband Dr. Ernő Marosi, also a highly respected art historian, never failed to invite me to their home on visits to Budapest. Always curious about my work, she provided commentary and assistance when I asked for it. She provided a human and moral, as well as a scholarly model for me and for many other young art historians.

Dr. Szabó passed away suddenly in Budapest on 30 June, 2004. She will be sorely missed by her colleagues in the museum and scholarly worlds, as well as by her students, both in Hungary and abroad.

* This text is partly based on the autobiography of Dr. Szabó generously provided by Ernő Marosi.

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