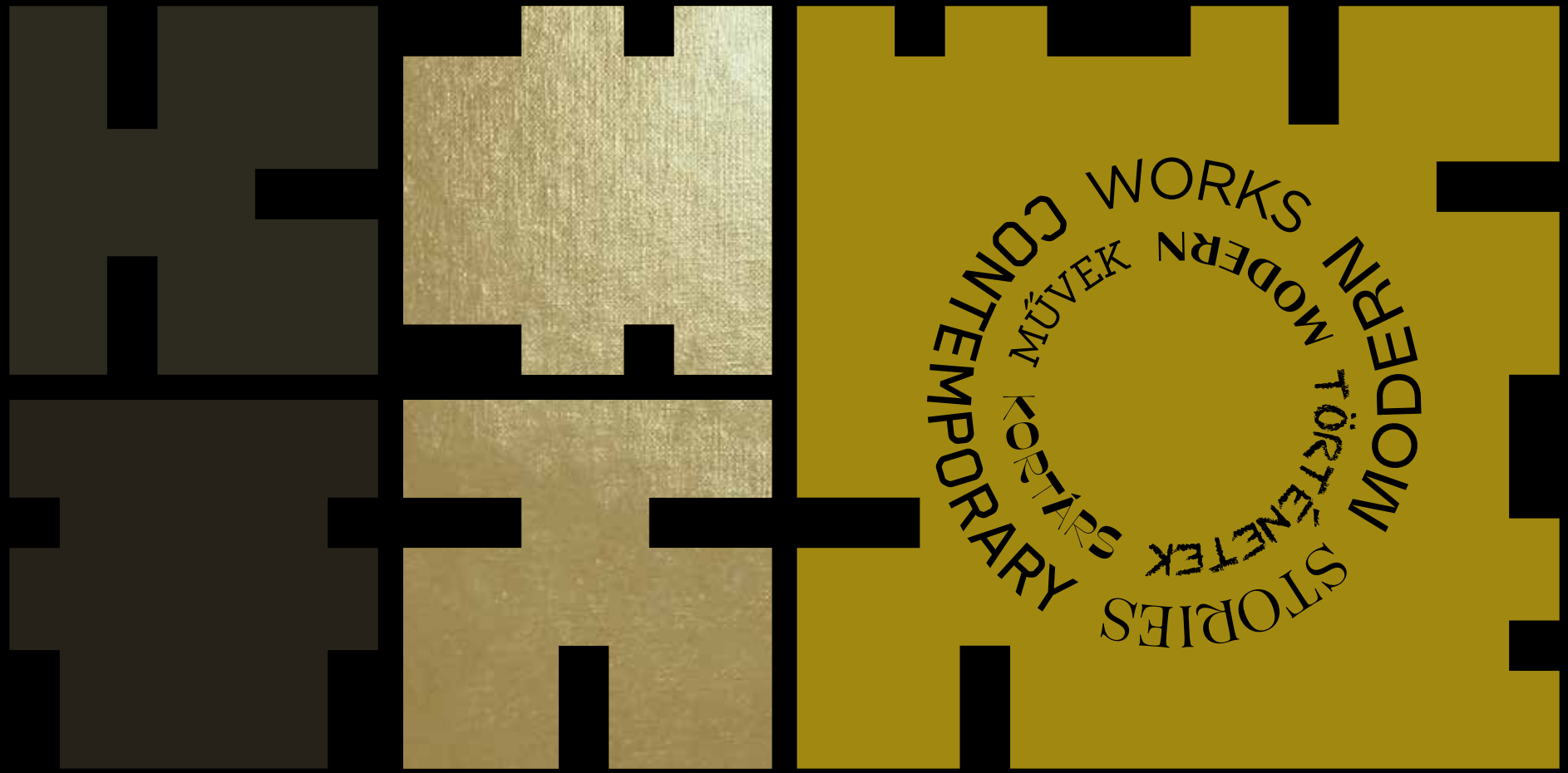
CONTEMPORARY
WORKS
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MODERN STORIES
MODERN TÖRTÉNETEK
WORKS MŰVEK
CONTEMPORARY KORTÁRS

BUDAPESTI TÖRTÉNETI MÚZEUM

BTM VÁRMÚZEUM

BTM FŐVÁROSI KÉPTÁR

BUDAPEST

THE GALLERY OF THE CAPITAL
Works and Stories

BHM KISCELL MUSEUM—MUNICIPAL GALLERY 2026

Exhibition entitled *Pictures and Sculptures from Thirty Years of Art* at the Castle Museum of the Budapest History Museum, 1977

The interior design of *THE GALLERY OF THE CAPITAL—Works and Stories* evokes the interiors of the BHM Castle Museum created in the late 1960s. The exhibition *Pictures and Sculptures from Thirty Years of Art* was the first public presentation of the fine arts collection reestablished in the late 1950s.

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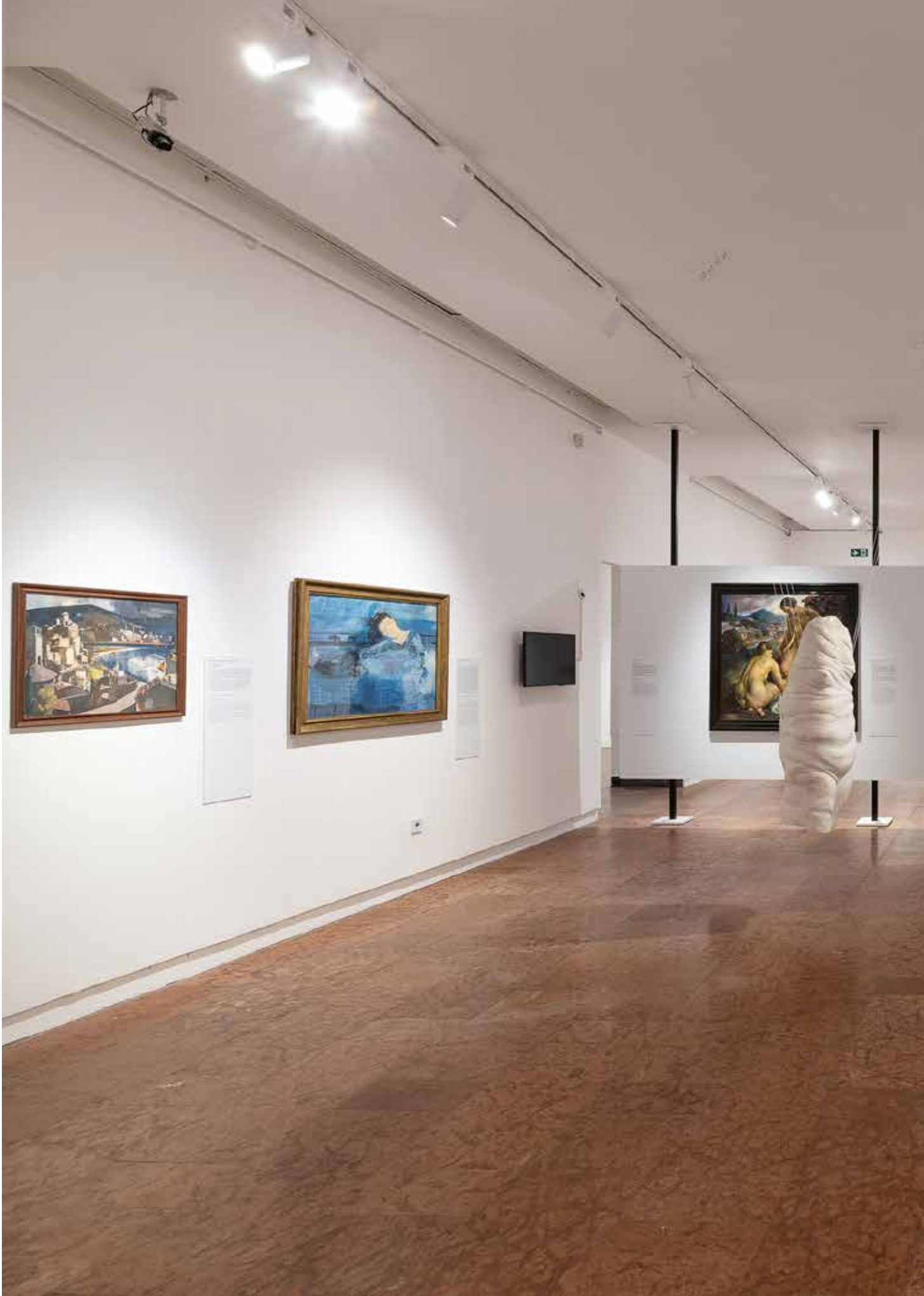
↑↓ *Endre Domanovszky exhibition* at the Castle Museum of the Budapest History Museum, 1971

THE GALLERY OF THE CAPITAL
Works and Stories



Cat. 134 (detail)

INTRODUCTION

The Municipal Gallery of the Budapest History Museum preserves nearly forty thousand works of art, spanning the fifteenth century to the present day. The collection is housed adjacent to the Early Modern Urban History Collection at the Kiscell Museum in Óbuda, a historic building shaped by successive transformations—from an eighteenth-century Trinitarian monastery to a magnate's showroom, and finally to its current role as a museum.

Currently without a permanent exhibition, works from the Gallery's art collection are presented to the public through thematic temporary exhibitions, pop-ups, as well as within the Kiscell museum's permanent historical displays.

This publication presents a broad selection from the Municipal Gallery's collection, tracing Hungarian modernism from its emergence to the present day across nearly 120 years. Through the selected works, the artistic and cultural-historical trajectory of the period is delineated, while the expanded captions examine the Gallery's history as shaped by social, economic, and political dynamics, shifts in acquisition strategies, and the histories and contexts of the donations and purchases that have contributed to the formation of the collection.

Reflecting evolving societal interests, the Municipal Gallery—steeped in a complex history—is intimately connected to the urban development of what is now the Hungarian capital.

Budapest was formally established in 1873 through the unification of Pest, Buda, and Óbuda. In 1887, the municipal administration founded an institution dedicated to preserving and exhibiting the capital's historical artifacts and art collections—an initiative that would later develop into the present-day Budapest History Museum (BHM). Since then, the Municipality of Budapest has pursued continuous collecting activity, encompassing not only archaeological finds, objects, and documents related to its urban history, but also works of art. The emphases of collecting, however, have always been closely tied to administrative and institutional frameworks: at certain

periods, earlier generations of professionals selected artworks in a broader sense of cultural affiliation with Budapest, while at other times acquisitions focused predominantly on thematically defined works directly connected to the city's history.

Opened in 1933, the first comprehensive permanent exhibition of the municipal art collection presented an extensive overview of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Hungarian art. During the interwar period, the institution became one of the most significant fine art establishments in Hungary.

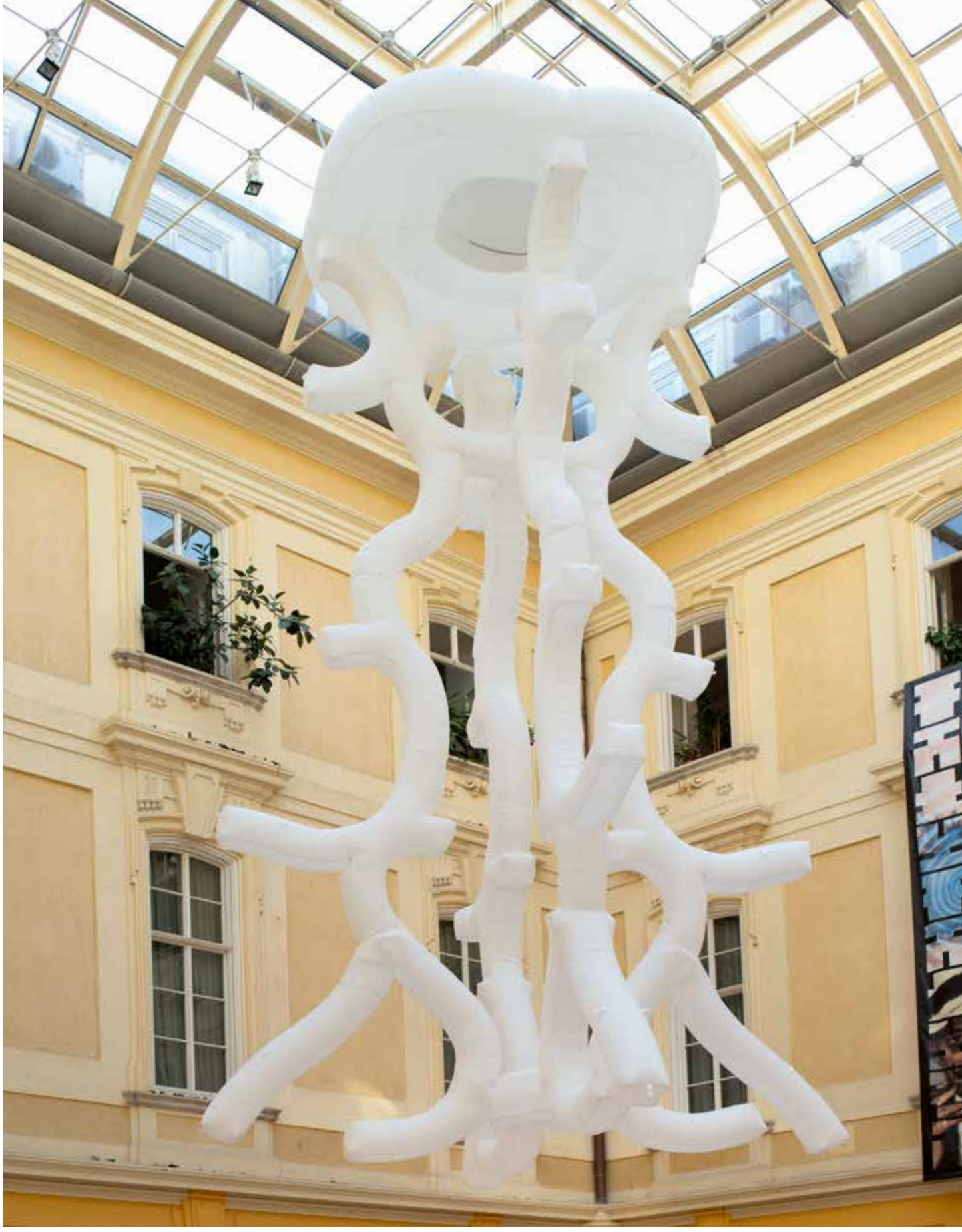
The political shifts in post-World War II Hungary had a profound impact on the history of the Municipal Gallery. Although it was among the first venues in Budapest to reopen its doors in 1946, the Soviet-style political system—which also rejected the principle of municipal self-governance—nationalized its collection in 1953. Most of it was later incorporated into the Hungarian National Gallery, established in 1957. Works considered less representative—such as objects of urban-historical significance and pieces of applied art—were entrusted to the Budapest History Museum (BHM) and housed at the Kiscell Museum.

At the same time, as early as December 1959, the Municipal Council adopted a resolution to re-establish a major fine art collection. Through sustained curatorial efforts, supported by substantial municipal funding, the collection was gradually rebuilt through the dedicated work of our late colleagues and today once again stands as a defining representation of Hungarian art.

The Kiscell building sustained severe damage during the war and again during the 1956 uprising. From the late 1980s onward, the possibility emerged of converting its massive former monastery church—still in ruins at the time—into an exhibition hall. Following a widely acclaimed exhibition of the art collection presenting recent acquisitions, the Municipality of Budapest assumed responsibility for the renovation costs. Refurbished by 1992, the Temple Space has since hosted contemporary art exhibitions and historical displays, complemented by a wide range of public programs, from performances to concerts.

In the 1990s, following Hungary's democratic transition, the Municipal Gallery became one of Budapest's key centers for contemporary art. The collection policy also evolved in new directions: alongside a more systematic acquisition of "unofficial," neo-avant-garde, and subcultural art from the Socialist decades, greater attention was paid to artistic tendencies and practices that had been marginalized for political reasons. The city supported these efforts by providing a regular acquisition budget.

Particularly with regard to post-1945 movements and artists often excluded from the official canon, as well as the international contexts of Hungarian art, from the mid-2010s onward there has been a renewed commitment to critical research and the curatorial engagement of historical and modern works and periods in dialogue with contemporary discourses.



Cat. 1

Cat. 1

The courtyard of the Kiscell Museum

In recent decades, concurrent with the profound transformation of museums' roles and functions and the evolution of institutional discourses on inclusivity, the Municipal Gallery has undertaken a critical re-examination of its own practices. This reflection has revealed how social-historical dynamics, patriarchal power structures, and the resulting patterns of taste and representation have shaped the criteria for collecting and exhibiting works. Particular attention has been given to the inequalities embedded within the collection and its history of representation—from sexual, gender, and racial imbalances to the marginalization of minority communities. Over the past decade, the Gallery's acquisition strategy and curatorial approach have increasingly sought to address and redress these disparities, fostering a more inclusive vision of art and cultural heritage.

Currently, the Municipal Gallery manages an expansive collection within a constrained political and institutional context and limited physical space; consequently, every research project and exhibition demands careful deliberation and entails significant responsibility in determining what is brought to the forefront and what remains in the background for the time being.

Temple Space of the Kiscell Museum

In recent years, we have collectively curated two consecutive, revised collection exhibitions presented as pop-up museums that form the basis of this publication. Throughout the chronological-thematic chapters, we also introduce the historical exhibition spaces and trace continuities between the periods before and after 1989, in order to situate the selection within a broader historical framework.

The Gallery of the Capital—Works and Stories does not aim to offer a conventional "best of" overview. Instead, it proposes a curatorial cross-reading of the collection, shaped by deliberate selections—many of which have not previously been on view—that further illuminate the complex (hi)stories behind the formation of the present collection.

Although this volume cannot comprehensively represent the full scope of our work, it constitutes an initial step toward introducing more than 140 works from the Municipal Gallery's collection to an international audience, while presenting the history of modern and contemporary Hungarian art as a resource for comparative research and the exploration of new connections.

The Curators of the Exhibition

Cat. 1

CATALOGUE

BAROQUE HALL

Following the the 1989–1990 regime change, Budapest, and with it the main building of the Budapest History Museum in the Castle District, saw a sharp increase in foreign visitor numbers. The new permanent exhibition, the medieval vagy Gothic sculptures unearthed at Buda Castle, and the refurbished medieval rooms were garnering public attention. Besides tourists, new approaches in global museology entered into the country, and there was now an emphasis on viewer participation and museum programmes. It was these incentives that reawakened, in the 90s, the idea, first conceived in the late 60s, of covering the museum's Baroque courtyard and turning it into a multipurpose space.

Plans were drawn up at the behest of the museum board, with support from the City Council. In the permission process, the community aspects of the new 400sqm room were being underlined: there was talk of educational programmes, museum pedagogy, and art events, but even of establishing an additional business leg by renting out the space. In 1994, authorities green-lighted changes to the listed building, with the following restrictions: the iron and glass structure covering the courtyard should be connected to the cornice and be dismantlable and the façade should be renovated and painted ochre-yellow. However, financial difficulties delayed the start of construction until 1997. The Baroque hall, designed by János Balázs and Írisz Borsos, opened its doors to the public in 1998, on the 125th anniversary of the unification of Budapest, and has been in use ever since.

Enikő Róka

Josef Palme and the Maria Theresa Chandelier

It was Josef Palme (1705–1747) who made the first Czech crystal chandelier that had arm made entirely of glass. In the period following the great European wars of the 17th century, metals were a scarcity. Glass offered an alternative, due to its similar reflective properties. In 1724, Palme founded the first factory specializing in crystal chandeliers in Prachen (now Prácheň) near Steinschönau (now Kamenický Šenov), and already in the same year, a six-armed crystal chandelier was delivered to the Schloss Hof castle near Vienna. Today, it is kept in the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna. In 1727, King Louis XV of

France and Archduchess Maria Elisabeth of Habsburg, governor of the Austrian Netherlands, also bought chandeliers from Prachen. Daring Palme chandeliers with no central support hung at Maria Theresa's coronation in Prague in 1743 and in 1746, the Empress personally ordered yet another piece from the company. The chandelier in question was the one that inspired Orsolya Drozdik. In 1754, chandeliers made in Prachen were sent to the palace of the Turkish Sultan and in 1756 to the palace of the Russian Tsarina Elizabeth in St Petersburg. At the 1929 Barcelona International Exposition, the oldest crystal chandelier company of the continent was awarded a gold medal. After World War II, the factory was nationalized and the Palme family was forced to move to Germany, where they re-established the company and have been running it ever since. Nowadays, Palme chandeliers hang in the Sultan's Palace in Brunei, in the Royal Palace in Saudi Arabia, in the palaces of the sheikhs of the Gulf States, in the White House in Washington, at the residence of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany and in government buildings in many major European cities.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 1
Orsolya Drozdik (1946):
*Un Chandelier Maria Theres*a, 2009
plastic, metal, parachute canvas, engine, 10×6 meter
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2018.5.1.
Purchased from the artist, 2018

Pages 13, 14 and 18

This piece was created specifically for the Temple Space at Kiscell in 2009 and features a huge white air "pocket," 10 meters in diameter, that inflates into a chandelier and then deflates again. Orshi Drozdik, who lives between Budapest and New York, started out from the famous glass chandelier, of which only descriptions survive, that was produced for Maria Theresa in 1746 in Bohemia. Through artistic research, the chandelier was "dusted off," taken apart (intellectually and in a series of works), transformed into a tool of visual and structural analysis, that is, deconstructed. The artist dismantled the original design and put its pieces back together, giving them new proportions but never losing sight of the original. She interpreted, and re-interpreted, the shape of the chandelier and the way it was designed, manufactured, and ornamented.

The project's aim was to separate the chandelier's representative purpose from its materiality and physicality. As a result of exploring the crystal structure, consisting of hand-polished elements, and of analysing the relationship between parts and whole, the ideas governing the 18th-century designer rise and fall before our eyes in a theatrical manner. As it grows and sinks, we hear the clinking of a real glass chandelier being dusted off inflates and deflates.

When, in 2009, it was first presented, the piece created such a sensation that it had to be reinstalled for various events. *Un Chandelier Maria Theresa* is seen outside Kiscell for the first time here.

Orshi Drozdik graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in 1977. Her career started in the post-conceptual circles of Budapest's Rózsa presszó (espresso bar) and later brought her to Amsterdam (1978) and to New York (1980). A female perspective runs persistently through her work that is informed by poststructuralism, the deconstructions of Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan, and postfeminist theories and is closely connected to academic discourse. Her work spans a range of media—drawing, painting, photography, installation, and performance. She borrows from poetry, literature, video, and other areas of art. The list goes on and is expanding with the advances in media and technology.

Anikó B. Nagy

THE MUNICIPAL GALLERY

The history of the Municipal Gallery—from independence to takeover, abolition to re-establishment—is a prime example in Hungary of continuity despite ruptures. Its stages and turning points reflected, and reflect to this day, the changes in ideas and local policies concerning institutions and museums.

The beginnings of Budapest's role as patron of the arts and its own collection go back to the 1880s. At first, collecting focused exclusively on portraits of persons who had given exemplary service to the city and on cityscapes; later, at the turn of the century, under mayor István Bárczy (1906–1919), a comprehensive plan for a modern art collection was laid out. The long-term vision included a modern gallery, but, as no suitable building was available at the time, it wasn't until the interwar period—when, in 1928, Budapest purchased the Károlyi Palace (today's Petőfi Literary Museum) and turned its garden into a public park—that this was realised. It was here that the Municipal Gallery had its first exhibition in 1933. The collection grew steadily during these years, becoming Hungary's second largest after the Hungarian holdings of the Museum of Fine Arts.

The collection survived World War II with minor losses, staying largely intact, and the Gallery, ruined and looted, mounted an exhibition—a first in post-siege Budapest—in autumn 1945. It was, however, swept away by the wave of nationalisation starting in 1948. In 1949, the Municipal Museum was taken into state ownership and was renamed to Budapest History Museum (BHM) two years later. Starting in 1950, more than thousand pictures pertaining to the city's history from the collection of Municipal Gallery were handed over to BHM, while in 1953, the pieces that were deemed to possess high artistic merit went into the administration of the Museum of Fine Arts. The Hungarian National Gallery was born out of this collection and the Hungarian holdings of the Museum of Fine Arts a few years later, in 1957. Essentially, this spelled out the end of Budapest's first fine art collection; the only works remaining in the hands of the city were the historically relevant ones acquired by BHM between 1950 and 1951.

Soon enough, the Municipal Council resumed its collecting activities. Acquisitions followed no particular strategy and were without a legal framework until, in December 1959, the Council passed a bill that established a new fine art collection within the BHM. Originally, collecting had been limited to contemporary and Budapest-themed pieces, but in 1960–1961 there was a change of plans, and the chronological and thematic scope were broadened to include historical works and, in a liberal interpretation of urban history, any and all pieces that documented the intellectual life of the capital. There was now a chance to build a modern collection that would, at least in part, make up for the first one.

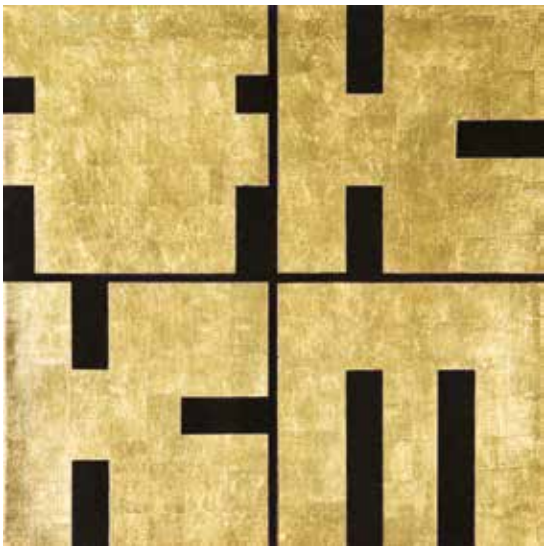
Collecting was funded, on an unprecedented scale, by generous support from the Council over the next three decades. Financial stability and low art prices enabled perceptive museologists to snap up major works from the Consignment Store Company, living artists, heirs, or private collections that had been built in the interwar years and were now being dispersed. In the first period, between 1959 and 1973, we see an emphasis on socialist modernism, Nagybánya and post-Nagybánya painting, as well as the expansion of canons. Acquisitions during these years were managed by Margit Ferencné Tőkei (born Egry, 1931–2018) and Brigitta Péterné Cifka (born Elischer, 1932–2015) under the direction of Vilmos Bertalan (1911–1985). In the mid-70s, there was an influx of young art historians into the museum; working under Margit Tőkeiné Egry, Emília Földes (1946–2002) and Péter Mattyasovszky Zsolnay (1946) brought a fresh perspective to collecting avant-garde pieces, both new and old.

The new collection has been housed and displayed, in temporary and permanent shows, at Kiscell Museum, a satellite of BHM, since the 1960s. The building, a former monastery, was in disrepair; it was here, in the war-ravaged Baroque church, that the collection was put on display, in 1988's *Temp-rom-tér* (a play on the words "temple," "ruin," and "space"), with two important results. First, the Council decreed that the Temple Space be renovated and, second, a year later, in a bid for reconciliation and in the spirit of democratic local governance, that the name "Municipal Gallery" be given back. The fine art collection of BHM was once again called Municipal Gallery and headed by a director. This was a recognition of the efforts of museologists who took on and continued the modern legacy of the original Municipal Gallery.

In 1994, Péter Fitz became the head of Municipal Gallery, who, during his 20 years there, turned it into the most important contemporary art space in Budapest. In the 90s, collecting preferences shifted to well-known artists, and especially to the IPARTERV generation. Despite tightening budgets, museologists in the following decades did everything in their power to cement the Gallery's art scene presence. Enikő Róka served as director between 2014 and 2023 and was succeeded by Eszter Molnárné Aczél.

The Municipal Gallery has not had a permanent exhibition since 2016, which leaves its extraordinary collection virtually invisible. This is what makes temporary exhibitions that lend insight into the collection especially important.

Enikő Róka



Amidst the turbulent and tumultuous history of the Municipal Gallery, its logo has remained the same for twenty-five years. The first art collection of the capital, established at the end of the 19th century, became independent as a result of a decision in 1932, and was named Municipal Gallery. In 1953, however, the Gallery was nationalised and, in 1957, became incorporated into the collection of the newly established Hungarian National Gallery. The capital found it hard to come to terms with the loss. Finally, following a decision of the Budapest City Council at the end of 1959, the collection of fine art pieces restarted with fresh vigour under the authority of the Budapest History Museum. The objects on display in the exhibition are—with a few exceptions—part of this second collection. The work of the generation(s) of museologists who have been preserving the intellectual heritage and the spirit of modernism of the original Municipal Gallery was only recognised by the capital on the verge of the change of regime, in 1989, when the collection was allowed to adopt the name Municipal Gallery again.
From 1994, under the leadership of Péter Fitz and in search of a new identity, the Municipal Gallery, now to be housed in the Kiscell Museum, gave home to the latest artistic endeavours. The exhibition of Tamás Trombitás fit well into the programme. The artist's work, characterised by the use of various media, became consistently abstract in the 1980s. While the geometric approach, which drew on the avant-garde tradition, remained, he became increasingly concerned with letters and writing. His paintings made in the 1990s, using a strict square base, have the contrast between letters, bronze smoke with gold effects and black at their centre; the golden tiles that form a small square grid and the symmetrical, circular compositions suggest spiritual content. The pursuit of symmetry, orderliness and the desire to capture timeless harmony with the help of the golden surfaces, are all perceptible in his work. While preparing for the exhibition, it became quite clear for Péter Fitz, that Tamás Trombitás would be the ideal person to create a logo for the Municipal Gallery. The graphic versions were based on paintings in gold on a black background and its inverse. The clean, geometric, modern form, together with the mandala-like layout and surface reflect the identity of a Municipal Gallery that has finally reclaimed its name, as well as the universe of autonomous art and the unambiguous name and tradition. In the second half of the 1990s, the image of the Municipal Gallery perfectly reflected its mission, namely to cultivate the ideal of modernism that carries on and reaches back to the legacy of its predecessors.

Enikő Róka

Cat. 2-3
Tamás Trombitás (1952):
FK–KM I, 1996
acrylic, bronze fume, iron powder on canvas, 45×45 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.96.29.1.

FK–KM II, 1996
acrylic, bronze fume, iron powder on canvas, 45×45 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.96.29.2.
Purchased from Jenő Trombitás, 1996

THE OLD COLLECTION

Soon after its unification in 1873, Budapest took steps to outline a policy for art patronage. In 1880, a Fine Arts Council was established, and the local government set aside in the annual budget a sum of 4000 forints (approx. 57,000 euros today) for the advancement of the arts. Early commissions included the portraits of public figures of local or national importance, such as a full-body portrait of Ferenc Deák by Mór Than. Exactly 140 years ago, they also launched a cityscape competition, in which 18 artists participated. Commissions were then given for 3 large paintings which were to become part of a 12-piece series. Additionally, history and genre paintings were purchased. Scholarships for promising young artists were meant as stimulants to the production of Budapest-related artworks.

In 1887, the Municipal Museum, the precursor to the Budapest History Museum, was founded. As far as art was concerned, the first director, Bálint Kuzsinszky, encouraged collecting pieces from the city's history. By the turn of the century, however, contemporary art grew in significance; the acquisition strategy for modern art was hugely influenced by the painter Ödön Márffy, who was "keeper of the capital's artworks."

Although much of the initial collection, the result of decades of work, is now in the Hungarian National Gallery, many pieces pertaining to the city's history came to the Municipal Museum, known since 1951 as Budapest History Museum, in the aftermath of the museum restructuring of the early 50s. One of these was János Valentiny's portrait of one of the Kölbers, a family of carriage manufacturers, which, as a historical document, was spared from being moved to the Hungarian National Gallery and here represents the continuity between the first and today's Municipal Gallery.

The female portrait by Miklós Barabás was purchased right before the museum reorganization, in 1949. While the portrait of Baron József Eötvös, the husband of Ágnes Rosty de Barkócz, seen here, was admitted into the Hungarian National Museum's Historical Gallery, the pantheon of the country's greats, already in the 30s, his wife's portrait was seen by the Municipal Museum as not much else than a piece of urban lore. Which is why it stayed in the collection.

There followed, after the post-WWII wave of nationalisation and the radical shake-up of the museum system, "quiet decades of accumulation," when pieces by both modern Hungarian artists and artists from previous centuries who were considered Hungarian, like Friedrich Lieder, János Donát, Mihály Szemlér, Soma Orlai Petrich, Mór Than, or Miklós Barabás, were purchased with the generous support of the City of Budapest. In short, our collection holds a wealth of hidden gems from the beginnings of Hungarian art, waiting to be discovered and put on display.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 4
Miklós Barabás (1810–1898):
Portrait of Ágnes Rosty de Barkócz, 1845
oil on canvas, 65.5×52.8 cm
s.l.m.: Barabás 1845.
Inv. n.: 29.314.
Purchased from
Sándor Knob, 1949

Miklós Barabás was a leading figure in 19th-century Hungarian painting whose popularity rested on the thousands of portraits he painted of illustrious persons in Pest. A founding father of "national painting," he was the portraitist of public life—of aristocrats, politicians, men of letters, artists, actors, and musicians, etc. He was praised by his contemporaries for his sense of colour and for the lifelike quality of his pictures. "Realism" was, in keeping with the taste of the day, the be-all and end-all of portraiture.

Here we see Ágnes Rosty, a woman of aristocratic origin, without a hat, with fashionable coiffure, wearing a black dress with a rose and a red cashmere shawl on her shoulders. Her gaze is directed to the side, as if she is looking at someone. The painting is from the early years of her marriage to Baron József Eötvös. Its twin piece is of her husband, who, in the words of the art historian Éva Bicskei, "turns towards his wife with body and soul. (…) Their interlocking eyes, their singular and exclusive attention, convey an unbreakable emotional union, lending the pictures an intimacy and an intensity that are rare in 19th-century conjugal portraiture." It is indeed a pity that posterity preserved the two portraits in two separate collections, which prevents their reunion in this exhibition: the one of the lawyer, writer, and politician Baron József Eötvös is in the Historical Gallery of the Hungarian National Museum, while the other, seen here, of Ágnes Rosty, was acquired, later, by the Municipal Museum.

Little is known about Ágnes Rosty. They had five children, including Loránd Eötvös, the inventor and world-renowned physicist, the namesake of Eötvös Loránd University. Mountaineering was one of the family's pastimes and several of the children went on to become well-known alpinists. One of Ágnes Rosty's brothers was the traveller Pál Rosty (Rosti) who, by donating his photographs taken in South America, laid the foundations of the Photography Collection of the Hungarian National Museum in 1859.

Following her husband's death, Ágnes Rosty moved to her daughter Jolán Istvánné Inkey, to Iharos, where she died and was buried 43 years later.

The painting was purchased from private hands for the Municipal Museum, known since 1951 as the Budapest History Museum. It was here that art collecting was resumed in 1959, with the addition of earlier pieces during the 70s. This collection is known, since 1989, as the Municipal Gallery.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 5

János Valentiny (1842–1902):
Portrait of Fülöp Kölber Jr. carriage manufacturer, 1866
oil, canvas, 81.5×65 cm
s.r.m.: Valentiny / Paris / 1866
Inv. n.: 51.776.1.
Purchased from private person, 1941; handed over by the Municipal Gallery, 1950

In the second half of the 19th century, the Kölber Brothers' Carriage Factory in Pest was a renowned European woodworking company. The family was represented in the carriage industry for at least six generations. The founder, saddle and carriage maker Kázmér Kölber, opened his workshop in 1784 near what is today called Astoria (then Hatvani Gate), and became the most prestigious manufacturer in the country in the 1840s. The company won a gold medal at the Hungarian National Industrial Exhibition in 1846, and in 1849, during the revolution, Governor Lajos Kossuth paraded into the capital in a Kölber carriage. Members of the fourth generation, the children of Fülöp Kölber—Fülöp Kölber Jr. and his brother Alajos—were both engineers who had travelled all over Europe. In 1869, they took over the Kölber Brothers' Carriage Factory. In the 1870s, they won prizes with their vehicles at the world exhibitions in Vienna and Paris. The fact that they were able to deliver 115 carriages for the Hungarian Red Cross within just a few months, serves as an indication of the factory's performance during the 1880s. The business closed down in the 1930s.

The painter János Valentiny came from a poor family. He studied at the First Academy of Painting in Pest, led by Jakab Marastoni, and then in Munich and in Paris. He was employed by the family of Count Lipót Nádasdy as a drawing teacher for his teenage son, Ferenc Nádasdy, and won the trust of the Nádasdy family for life. They supported his painting career and allowed him to live on the Nádasdladány estate until the end of his life.

It must have been during his studies in Paris that he painted the picture of Fülöp Kölber Jr., who may also have been on a study trip and who later became a member of the board of the National Industrial Association. The composition of the detailed portrait is traditional, the young face of the model, who is wearing traditional Hungarian dress with a braided trim, is sensitively shaped. On the table beside him are the drawing of a carriage and a pair of drawing compasses.

Valentiny has painted portraits for a living throughout his career, but it was his series of portraits depicting the lives of Roma people in the Nádasdladány area that brought him wider recognition. Valentiny, in a progressive manner for his time, painted "charming gypsies" and "in several of his compositions, placed the observer, so to speak, in the circle of the gypsies as well", wrote art historian Éva Kovács about him.

The painting was purchased in 1941 by the art historian Jenő Kopp, the head of the first Municipal Gallery. Before the period of nationalisation in 1953–1957, when the collection of the first Municipal Gallery was handed over to the Hungarian National Gallery, in 1950–1951 several works of urban historical interest were selected and transferred to the collection of the Municipal Museum. Valentiny's painting was one of these, presumably because of its relevance to urban history. After 1951, the Municipal Museum continued to operate under the name Budapest History Museum. Valentiny's painting is one of the few pieces of fine art that was acquired by the first Municipal Gallery and remained in the care of the capital all along. The Budapest History Museum started collecting artworks again in 1959, and this piece was preserved in the art collection of the institution that was renamed to Municipal Gallery in 1989.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

LATE 19TH-CENTURY ART

As a result of the economic growth and social re-stratification following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, the emergence of an art-buying consumer class, art institutions, and Modernist art had been a slow process in Hungary. Higher education for artists remained an unsolved problem into the 20th century and aspiring artists sought training outside Hungary, primarily in Munich and Paris. Besides the Academy, the Hollósy Circle, the school of Simon Hollósy, founded in 1886, where students were united, not by painting style, but by shared ideals, added to the lure of Munich. Their influences came from the cutting edge of art, from realism and plein air. Of the painters featured in this room, István Csók, István Réti, and Károly Ferenczy had been in the Hollósy circle; paying homage to the school's leader is a small, delicate portrait.

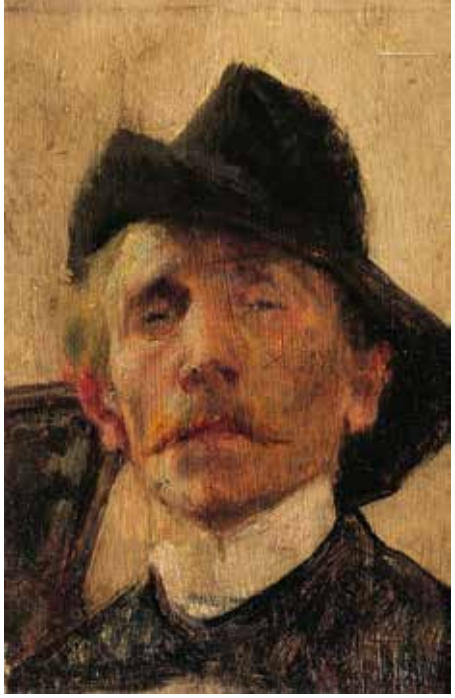
As the turn of the century was approaching, Munich found competition in Paris, where young artists went to study at private schools such as the Académie Julian. Here, instruction was more liberal than at the traditional Academy and was even made available to women in the 1880s. Many Hungarians, including József Rippl-Rónai, also spent time in the Paris studio of Mihály Munkácsy, whose life and work had been deeply influenced by his years in France. The Nagybánya school was founded by Hollósy's Munich students in 1896; it did not, however, present a unified vision of art. The founding member with the strongest personality was Károly Ferenczy, a celebrated progenitor of 20th-century Hungarian art; four of his pictures are seen here. The Ferenczy family had a profound impact on Hungarian art. Olga Fialka (1848–1930), Ferenczy's wife, 14 years his senior, was a gifted painter who recognised his husband's talent early on and abandoned her artistic ambitions to help him achieve greatness. Following the birth of their son Valér and their twins Béni and Noémi, Fialka, an educated woman who spoke 8 languages, gave up painting. The children went on to become successful artists: Valér worked in painting, Béni in sculpture, and Noémi in tapestry.

Reflecting his impact on Hungarian art and the scope of his output, there are three pictures by József Rippl-Rónai in this room. He was the master whose work informed the artistic orientation and modernist ideals of the next generation. It is little known that Lazarine Baudrion (1865–1947), his model, muse, and lifelong partner, was an artist in her own right. During the 1890s in Paris, partly under the influence of his friend Aristide Maillol, the later pioneer of modern sculpture, and the Nabis ("prophets") artist collective, Rippl-Rónai designed carpets which were then embroidered by Baudrion and her sister Claudine. The difficulty of executing his designs and the amount of patient, persistent work that went into them are shown by the fact that each carpet would take a year to make. This was acknowledged when, in 1900, the Paris Exposition's silver medal went to the both of them, József Rippl-Rónai and Lazarine Baudrion.

Lazarine Baudrion, who was mostly known simply as "Lazarine," became the painter's companion early on. However, it wasn't until 1906, after Rippl-Rónai's exhibition became a roaring success in Hungary and his new-found fame made a socially acceptable union a necessity, that the two got married.

The fin-de-siècle masterpieces seen here were acquired during the decade following the re-establishment of Budapest's art collection. From the 1960s on, the city allocated considerable funds for the reconstruction of the collection, swallowed by the Hungarian National Gallery in 1957, and for purchasing works by major artists.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél



Cat. 6
Simon Hollósy (1857–1918):
Portrait of a Man, 1885
oil on wood, 13×8.7 cm
s.r.l.: Hollósy 1885
Inv. n.: 62.541
Purchased at the 6th auction of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1962

Similarly to many of his contemporaries, Simon Hollósy studied at the Mintarajztanoda (Hungarian Royal Drawing School) in Budapest and then at the Academy of Munich. The cradle of modern Hungarian art, thus, was not in Hungary, but in Munich, in Simon Hollósy's free school, which the master founded in 1886 in opposition to the academic style taught in Munich. He operated the school in the Bavarian capital almost until his death, taking a break only in the summers. Similarly to other independent educational institutions, typical of the time, he taught contemporary literature and culture, and rejected Romanticism, Academicism, and studio painting. Their art was diverse, it cannot be classified into a single stylistic category.

Hollósy's free school in Munich was very popular, he was a highly respected teacher and young people gathered around him. Ten years after the school in Munich had been founded, Hollósy, together with several of his students (János Thorma, István Réti, Béla Iványi-Grünwald, István Csók) spent a summer in Nagybánya (Baia Mare) as an experiment. The location was ideal, and it did not take long before an artists' colony was established. The colony became a centre of modern Hungarian art, this time in Hungary.

Simon Hollósy's oeuvre consists of relatively few paintings; it was not so much his art as his spirit and teaching that made him a defining figure for his students. In Munich, too, he presented the works of international masters, mainly French artists (Millet, Bastien-Lepage, etc.), as examples to be followed, emphasising their natural approach, simplicity and sincerity.

In the painting exhibited here, a moustachioed man in a black hat looks down at the viewer from a high vantage point, as if he was looking at his own image in a propped-up mirror and captured what he saw on a wooden panel, a popular material for small-scale portraits at the time. The patches of light on the face give a painterly surface to the subject, who seems to be watching us, the viewers, the recipients of his art, as well as himself. The features of the figure recall Hollósy's *Self-Portrait*, made in 1916, from the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery. The painting was acquired by the museum at the time when the collection of fine art re-started, in the early 1960s.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 7
István Réti (1872–1945):
Béla Thorma, Father of János Thorma, 1890
oil on wood, 20×13 cm
s.l.l.: RÉTI 90
Inv. n.: KM.72.89.
Purchased from István Boldizsár, 1972

István Réti's portrait of the father of the painter János Thorma, Béla Thorma, a treasurer at a tax office, can be considered as a sign of the close, almost familial relationship between the two artists. The painter portrayed the elderly man in a slightly stiff pose, lost in thought, with his back bent, using an intimate atmosphere, painterly sensitivity and a patchy surface. The model of the picture is peaceful, he does not seem to have anything against his son's friend capturing the transience of life by means of painting his portrait. István Réti had not yet visited Munich at this time, and this picture is presumably one of the earliest oil paintings of his career.

Réti was born in Nagybánya (Baia Mare), while Thorma moved there with his family when he was 14. Both of them were founding members of the Nagybánya artists' colony, as they were the ones who persuaded Simon Hollósy to take his students for the summer from his free school in Munich to Nagybánya, where they could practise painting outdoors in an ideal environment. Réti and Thorma also lobbied together to make sure that the town's leaders supported the artists' colony in Nagybánya with a substantial amount of money. This support was conditional on them showing their works in Budapest, in the old Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle). Thus, in 1897, Simon Hollósy, István Réti, János Thorma, István Csók, Oszkár Glatz, Károly Ferenczy, etc. exhibited their works together with the artists from Nagybánya. The exhibition was a huge success, the press called the colony "the Hungarian Barbizon", a name that was not only a reference to the painting school that was founded in France around 1835 and strived for natural reality, but also carried a connotation of being modern. Later, Réti ran the painting school in Nagybánya himself for a while and he maintained his lifelong friendship with János Thorma. The painting was purchased in the early 1970s from a private individual who had himself visited Nagybánya with the purpose of painting.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 8
István Csók (1865–1961):
Potato Peelers, 1889
oil on canvas, 94×105 cm
s.r.l. CSÓK / PARIS 1889.
Inv. n.: KM.64.17.
Bequeathed by Mrs József Kuchler, 1964

This early work by István Csók, known primarily for his Züzü series and his light, breezy, and often sensual nudes, is elegantly muted and shows a scene of almost abstract emptiness. His models, women from three generations peeling potatoes, are seen against backlight. One of them looks out at us, inviting us in, and prefigures the women in Csók's later work. The only decorations in the room are a glass on the painted chest and the pottery on the wall. The painting betrays Csók's Munich training: both his naturalism and his subject matter are of his age. At the time of its creation, Csók was more or less living abroad (Munich, Paris) but spent most summers in Hungary, in his hometown. It was there, in Sáregres, that he made the sketches for the painting, which he then finished in Paris for an exhibition.
István Csók's debut was at the 1889 Paris Universal Exposition. It was his *Potato Peelers*, seen here, that was accepted, and praised as "noteworthy," by the hanging committee. Since foreign works at the Expo were hung according to countries, Hungarian, Czech, Polish, and Croatian pieces were displayed alongside Austrian ones. Representing Hungary were, besides Csók, Mihály Munkácsy and József Rippl-Rónai. According to Csók's recollection, he saw the exhibition, and the many congenial, naturalistic, works on display, with Károly Ferenczy and Béla Iványi-Grünwald.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 9
József Rippl-Rónai (1861–1927):
My Parents After 40 Years of Marriage, 1897
oil on canvas, 170×119 cm
s.l.l.: Rónai 97
Inv. n.: KM.68.56.
Purchased from Sándor Völgyessy Szomor, 1968

"(…) surely, there is no one in this whole world with a similar father and mother to mine. Their soul is noble, their heart is noble, everything about them is noble—without it being documented. I cannot hold a candle to them", wrote József Rippl-Rónai to Dezső Malonyay in 1905. József Rippl, a teacher in Kaposvár, and his wife Anna Paulina Knezevich had seven children, four of whom reached adulthood. József, the first-born, originally studied pharmacy, but after an accident he changed course and became an artist.

József Rippl-Rónai had an intimate relationship with his family throughout his life. His parents, "despite the great uncertainty, the great distance, the great poverty and the unpromising circumstances in which I struggled (…) never tried to dissuade me from the path I had taken (…)", he wrote in his memoirs.

The almost life-size picture, made on the occasion of her parents' 40th wedding anniversary, recalls the composition of contemporary photographs. In the second half of Rippl-Rónai's so-called "black period", he depicted his figures with strong contours and subdued colours, making them plastic through the effects of light and shadow. The father is looking thoughtfully at his wife, resting his hand on hers. The mother is looking out of the picture, establishing a connection with the viewer and with her son, the creator. In the background, on the table, a bouquet of flowers may reference the celebration, while the mirror hanging above it evokes the portraits of couples from historical eras.

Rippl-Rónai painted the picture as a tribute to his parents, during a holiday in Kaposvár. He was living in Paris at the time, where he became a member of a group of painters called the Nabis.

The painting became part of Ferenc Völgyessy's collection and was purchased from his heir, Sándor Szomor Völgyessy, in 1968.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 10
József Rippl-Rónai (1861–1927):
My Brothers / Lajos and Ödön, 1918
oil on carton, 76×105 cm
s.l.t.: Rónai / 1918
Inv. n.: KM.63.89.
Purchased from Oszkár Köves, 1963

After leaving Paris for good in 1900, József Rippl-Rónai travelled for two years, then moved back to Hungary in 1902. First, he stayed with his "favourite" younger brother, Ödön, in Somogyaszaló, then he bought a house in Kaposvár. The picture exhibited here—one of his last oil paintings—portrays his two brothers in front of a neutral background. The painting is one of the most outstanding pieces of the "corn style" family portraits made in Kaposvár, painted with bright splashes of colour. In composing the double portrait, arranged with a cropping that almost seems accidental, he left off the tops of the hats and half of the figures' bodies, showing only Lajos hand holding a cigar and Ödön's right hand, in a gesture of contemplation. Both figures seem to be looking at the viewer, or the painter, with expectation.

The features of Lajos, who is somewhat more dominant in the picture, strongly resemble those of their father. Ödön, the painter's favourite brother, appears in all his whiteness from the background, wearing a blue scarf and a red flower pinned to his lapel, with features resembling those of their mother. Similarly to his brother, Ödön tried his hand at painting, whereas Lajos, who worked as an auditor at the finance directorate, played the violin. He appears in a number of other pictures made by Rippl-Rónai, together with his musical instrument. Ödön worked as the head of the railway station Somodor-Aszaló. He adored and supported his older brother, and based on his recommendations, founded a modern Hungarian arts collection and, by doing so, brought together the pieces that later formed the basis of the Museum of Kaposvár (today the Rippl-Rónai Museum). Ödön's collection of objects from and about József, together with his pieces of folk art, came to form the basis of the Rippl-Rónai Museum, which is still open to the public, in the Róma Villa, in Kaposvár. Rippl-Rónai bought the Róma Villa in 1908, after his highly successful exhibition organised in Budapest in 1906, and lived there with Lazarine Baudrion and their adopted daughter, Lazarine's niece, Annette Paris or, as they nicknamed her, Anella, until his death.

The museum bought the painting from collector Oszkár Köves in 1963.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 11
József Rippl-Rónai (1861–1927):
Afternoon Rest / Grieving Women, 1892
pencil, pastel, tempera on canvas, 74×62 cm
s.l.l.: Rónai 1892; s.r.l.: Rónai
Inv. n.: KM.75.23.
Purchased at the 36th auction of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1975

József Rippl-Rónai is one of the outstanding Hungarian artists who became involved in the international world of modern art very early in his career, who is still valued by the great museums all over the world and is recognised in international art history. Similarly to his contemporaries, Rippl-Rónai first studied drawing and painting in Munich, then moved to Paris, where Mihály Munkácsy put him up in his studio and supported him.

It was thanks to Munkácsy that Rippl-Rónai met James Pitcairn-Knowles, a Scottish-born painter who later settled in Germany, with whom he built not only a very close friendship but also developed an intellectual relationship that influenced his art. Once Rippl-Rónai exhibited his works in a solo exhibition at the Austro-Hungarian Empire's embassy in 1892 in Paris, he received critical acclaim and was able to sell his works. His financial situation now enabled him to move in with Lazarine Baudrion—his model, partner and later wife—and with their friend Knowles, in Neuilly, a favourite location of the Parisian art world. Between 1892 and 1902, the three of them rented a house together. It was around this time that he also became friends with the French artist Aristide Maillol, who was to have a substantial influence on his art.

It was in Neuilly that Rippl-Rónai developed the style of painting art historians now call the "black period". "I was very much interested in black and grey, I wanted to figure out what they can be used for in art and how." The painting titled *Afternoon Rest* (Two Women in a Room; Two Women in Mourning), is a masterpiece of this period. It has the effect of a "drawn" painting, accented in black. The strong contours were indeed filled in with only thin layers of paint. The composition of the light and the arrangement of the space are still traditional, but the figures highlighted by sharp contours, almost flat and "hiding", are already the precursors of a completely new era of Symbolism. The painting is a special example of Rippl-Rónai's popular theme, one that he also frequently painted in Kaposvár, the depiction of quietly busy inhabitants in the intimacy of their homes.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 12
Mariann Imre (1968):
Anchoring the Evanescent, 2011
wood, concrete, yellow thread, embroidery, 70×100×80 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2015.16.1.
Purchased from Zoltán Imre, 2015

An ordinary kitchen table. But why is it fitted with a concrete slab? And how come the concrete slab is embroidered? Mariann Imre has been embroidering concrete since the late 1990s. Her pieces have become interwoven into cycles, under the title *Anchoring the Evanescent*. She embroiders hard, rigid surfaces in a Sisyphean manner, stitching together materials and timelines that do not mix. Embroidery and sewing, unlike knitting, crocheting and weaving, do not create new materials but transform existing ones into something new. The fragile mimosa-yellow embroidery makes the unyielding concrete a vehicle for its own perishability. The surfaces—stitched together in a bitter, paradoxical use of materials—evoke images of transience.

"Sidonian maids embroider'd every part", says Homer in the *Iliad*, and indeed, embroidery is traditionally considered a female occupation. Mariann Imre's kitchen table with the embroidered concrete also serves as a testament to the ambivalences of this heritage. Several women doing embroidery in the background appear in this exhibition. Lazarine Baudrion, József Rippl-Rónai's wife, embroidered carpets designed by her husband. Unfortunately, only a few of them survived; one of them is *Woman in Red Dress* which originally decorated the decorated Count Tivadar Andrássy's Dining Room, and is now kept in the Museum of Applied Arts. The job required great perseverance and was captured by Rippl-Rónai in several drawings.

The piece was purchased by the museum in 2015, following an exhibition in the Temple Space of the Kiscell Museum.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 13
Emese Benczúr (1969):
Doing My Duty, 1995
embroidery, blue yarn, webbing, strap
3×1800 cm (2 pieces)
Inv. n.: KM.2024.5.1
Purchased from the artist, 2023

Emese Benczúr created her first text embroidery, *It Must Be Great to Have So Much Free Time* (1994) over the course of three weeks on three strips of unprimed canvas. Only two strips returned from a summer travelling exhibition which were found by her in a dustbin at Epreskert (Mulberry Garden), the garden of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts. "I won't clean them," she said in an interview, "because they serve as mementoes of the prevailing mentalities. It might be that somebody needed them or that they were seen as worthless. When embroidery and text came together in a single work I felt like, 'finally, this is me.' Like, 'this is what's important to me from now on.' In that moment I realised what it was all about, the picture was complete."

Benczúr graduated, in 1996, from the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts as a painter. Despite the reforms of the early 90s, field experiments often ran into a brick wall. Her ideas about technique and subject matter went against orthodox media boundaries and challenged what was, essentially, still a conservative mode of instruction, with hierarchic views on media, genre, and form.

Embroidery is thinking through texts with a mantra-like repetitiveness. *It Must Be Great…* is about the relationship between artist and artistic production, about working under the pressures of time and productivity, about the time carved out for creating art. It poses questions about the autonomy of art and image–text relations. Additionally, it broaches the subject of the financial worries of many early-career artists, the paradox of art as unpaid work, and dissolves some of the mystery surrounding artists. Subverting the clichés of education, such as "repetition is the mother of all learning," her sentences are a play on the notions of punishment, diligence, and duty. With subtle irony, the works touch on the history of embroidery and needlework as traditionally feminine activities. Her graduation project (*Doing My Duty*, 1995), too, explored the limits of traditional categories and hierarchies in art: it took her a whole term to embroider, 230 times, the words in the title on a 38-meter-long webbing strap. Prior to that, a summer's work went into *Today I Didn't Go to the Beach Either* (1994), featuring, in three colours, striped deckchair canvases; also in this group is *Fruit of My Work* (1996) that documents, via 14 embroidered lemon peels, a week's consumption.

Benczúr was included in Manifesta 2, in Luxembourg, in 1997. In 1999, she showed her work *Try to See the World Through…*, a text piece on pink silk, hung above the yard of the Hungarian pavilion, which housed works by Imre Bukta, Attila Csörgő, Gábor Erdélyi, and Mariann Imre, at the Venice Biennale.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 14
Károly Ferenczy (1862–1917):
Children Riding Horses, 1905
oil on canvas, 64×79 cm
s.r.l.: Ferenczy K.
Inv. n.: KM.65.138.
Purchased from Mrs László Steiner, formerly in the Fruchter Collection, 1965

Two styles are often mentioned in connection with Károly Ferenczy: Naturalism and Impressionism. The first one was in fact used by himself in a short explanation for journalists that he published to go with his first solo show in 1903. Here, he described his style as "colouristic naturalism" based on synthetism. Colouristic naturalism is tied up with Impressionism and refers to its use of colour, where paint is applied (at its extreme, directly from the tube) with no mixing, in a way that shades are first produced in the "eye of the beholder." Ferenczy did not go this far, but he did try to ensure that colours, applied side by side in vibrant brushstrokes, assumed their final tone in correlation to each other. This idea of synthetism might be linked to the concept of "natura," as put forward by Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Ferenczy's favourite author. Goethe's notion of nature included ethics, since, according to him, all life comes from an ur-principle which, necessarily, could not have been immoral. In Ferenczy's paintings, the natural state and moral life (civilisation/culture) exist in organic synthesis. This is, probably, what was expressed, with perfect brevity, in his famous words from 1896: "(At Nagybánya) nature has a biblical monumentality."

The Ferenczy family spent the summer of 1905 in the mountains around Nagybánya, at Cavnic. It was here that both versions of *Children on Ponies* and *Children Riding Horses* were made. The first two pictures are impressionistic scenes bathed in sunlight, and show Noémi, wearing a light dress, and one of the boys riding towards a forest with their backs turned. They are dynamic and full of life. In the second pair of pictures, one of which is seen here, we have a tranquil composition—sundown, Noémi on horseback, Valér (whose figure is a mass of colour) dressed in black and facing her. Here and in the portraits painted in 1905, the first signs of the painter's late vision, which strongly transformed the immediate view, can be seen. Formerly in the collection of Lajos Fruchter, this painting was purchased from his daughter in 1965.

Judit Boros

Cat. 15
Károly Ferenczy (1862–1917):
Cézár Herrer and Wife, 1904
oil on canvas, 91×94 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.67.22.
Purchased from
Mrs Béni Ferenczy,
Mária Erzsébet Plop,
1967

This double portrait of Cézár Herrer and his wife was painted by Károly Ferenczy in summer 1904 in his Nagybánya studio. The painter Cézár Herrer (1868–1919) was born in Spain, studied in Madrid and Paris, met Simon Hollósy in Munich, and followed him to Nagybánya in 1896. In 1904, he married a local woman, Alexandrina Drumár, and settled down for good. The double portrait is first mentioned by Ferenczy in a letter from 7 July 1904, and frequently thereafter. Originally, the letters suggest, Ferenczy was commissioned to paint the portrait of Alexandrina (Xandrin) Drumár (he had painted a portrait of Cézár Herrer five years earlier; the new one was, perhaps, intended as its counterpart). Ferenczy, however, went for a double portrait: "I like the double portrait better than Xandrin on her own (…). Together, they look picture perfect," he wrote in a letter to István Réti on 7 July 1904.

Ferenczy made two versions—the first one, now in the Municipal Gallery and sometimes referred to as a sketch, was followed by a "final" version. We see here, in the couple's faces, an inner smile, tenderness, and spiritual union. In the end, it was the second, more subdued, painting that Ferenczy gave to the Herrers; the earlier piece remained in the Ferenczy family and was purchased by the Municipal Gallery from Mrs Béni Ferenczy, the wife of the artist's son.

Judit Boros

Cat. 16

Károly Ferenczy (1862–1917):
Acrobats, 1919
oil on canvas, 89×57.5 cm
s.r.t.: Ferenczy Károly, s.l.t.: 1913
Inv. n.: KM.67.23.
Purchased from Mrs Béni Ferenczy, Mária Erzsébet Plop, formerly owned by Noémi Ferenczy, 1967

Pictures of wrestlers, acrobats, and athletes have a special place in Ferenczy's oeuvre. They were for a long time not only not appreciated but, to a certain degree, ignored. While his compositions with wrestlers could be seen as a reference to, a re-interpretation of, the beauty ideals of Antiquity, his *Acrobats*, which exists in two versions, could not. What do we see here? Two men are shown, from the front, holding hands. They are wearing white leotards and pink silk shorts, holding their heads up high. As acrobats, they are supposed to be on stage, but here a great uniform darkness surrounds them. On the prevalence of dark (black) backgrounds in his late period, Valér Ferenczy remarked that his father had not been interested in astrology because he "could not get his head around the fact that the universe was pitch black and ice cold." It is to this neutral backdrop, then, that the two men stand, in surprisingly sensual clothes and posture. There is no mistaking the erotic, homoerotic vibes. These undertones had already been there in the early *Orpheus*, in (the original version of) *Boys Throwing Pebbles*, in pictures of bathing boys and men undressing on the beach, not to mention his Biblical compositions *Joseph Sold into Slavery by His Brothers* and *The Prodigal Son Returns*. But in these, homoerotic allusions are fleeting—now they are there, now they are not.

It is suggested by the title that one of Ferenczy's inspirations was *The Zemganno Brothers*, a novel by Edmond de Goncourt about two brothers, circus acrobats, who glide through the air and are inseparable, for better or worse. The book was a favourite with Ferenczy, perhaps because he and his brother Ferenc had a similarly close relationship throughout their lives. They were raised, without a mother, by a father who nipped youthful artistic endeavours in the bud. Károly escaped through his unusual marriage, becoming a painter, but, although he was the father of three gifted children, he walled off his private world, glimpses of which were seen only during the summers at Nagybánya.

The Municipal Gallery acquired the painting in 1967, shortly after Béni Ferenczy's death, from his widow.

Judit Boros

Cat. 17
Károly Ferenczy (1862–1917):
Gypsy Girl, c. 1916
oil on canvas, 95×138 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.66.208.
Purchased from Béni Ferenczy, 1966

Gypsy Girl is Ferenczy's last fully complete composition, at the same time, it is one of his most mysterious paintings, part of a series of late nudes. The title is probably a reference to the ethnic origin of the model. Ferenczy referred to the picture as the "Gypsy Nude" in a letter written to his son, Béni, at the end of 1915.

In Ferenczy's oeuvre, the nude who is facing herself, who is contemplating herself appeared as a subject for the first time in 1904 in the painting *Painter and Model*, and in a plein air version in 1905 in the painting *Two Female Nudes on a Podium*. The motif of the lying full-length nude appears in the enigmatic *Idleness* in 1908, and then becomes an oft-used theme of the nude compositions of the 1910s. Considering these pictures, it becomes apparent that after the modern approach of the *Nude in Front of a Green Background* (1910), painted in bright colours, Ferenczy moved on to nudes using studio lighting, portraying them in increasingly enclosed and abstract spaces (*Nude with Red Background*, 1913–1914; *Nude with Pearls*, 1915), the last of this series being the most complex *Gypsy Girl*. Among the universal artistic antecedents of *Gypsy Girl*, we find works with erotic overtones, such as the almost immediate predecessor, Velázquez's *The Rokeby Venus* (1647–1651), which may have been inspired by the antique sculpture *The Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, found in 1608 and soon to become famous, which Velázquez, working in Italy, may have known and Ferenczy may have also seen in the Louvre. Ferenczy might have also been influenced by paintings of Rubens (1615) and Titian (1555) which were compositionally different but had the same subject matter. In all three paintings, Venus sees her own face (recognises herself) in a mirror held up to her by Cupid. Ferenczy got rid of the mirror and placed the model in an abstract space compartmentalised by red velvet draperies: in the interior of the soul, in the heart. All of a sudden, the model sees her own naked beauty almost as if a revelation was made to her. It is noteworthy that the figure watching herself raises her arms in both positions, as if opening herself up, which, although it is in line with the well-known academic setting, can also be interpreted with regards to its content based on *Siblings* (1907). In this picture of twins, Ferenczy depicted the open, communicative Béni in a similar posture next to the introvert, rigidly standing Noémi. The narcissistic introspection, the solitude of the glowing desire and the gesture of devotion are suggestive of the homoerotic orientation of the painter either secretly experienced or merely desired which can be assumed from the pictures, the fragments of letters and the way his correspondence was handled by his heirs.

The painting was purchased by the Municipal Gallery from the artist's son, Béni Ferenczy, in 1966.

Judit Boros

The painting is the final piece of the last series of Károly Ferenczy's life—a series of nudes. The cycle of three paintings, made in Nagybánya, was based on models identified by contemporaries and by Ferenczy himself as "gypsy girls". Although these pieces rhyme thematically with the painter's Roma-themed paintings made earlier, in the 1900s, in the series he created towards the end of his career the painterly gaze was not directed at ethnic specificities but at the painterly relations between the frontally illuminated, shimmering body in the narrow field of vision and the drapery behind it. The ethnic origin of the occasional model appeared only in the title. These "gypsy girl paintings" are not part of the "gypsy portraits"

popular in the period but belong to a group of works which have been present in Ferenczy's whole career, and explored the naked male and female body in an outdoor or studio setting, as seen from a painterly perspective.
Nude studies were of key importance when it came to the training of the first generation of artists at Nagybánya in 1896, as well as at the Mintarajziskola (Model Drawing School) and at the Munich Academy. According to recollections, however, it was quite difficult to recruit models, not to mention female nude models, in the rural region. While the daughters of miners and peasants would not undress at all, gypsy girls did so only reluctantly and only from the waist up. By the end of the 1910s, the situation had somewhat improved but nude models still continued to arrive in the rural art centres primarily from the Roma ethnic communities. It is mostly them who we see—in a large variety of visual narratives—in the pictures made in the region. In the summer of 2019, reconstructed from archival material, Musée d'Orsay held a major exhibition of artworks depicting 19th-century black models, whose names have since been included in the museum's records and on the labels. No one recorded the names of the Roma nude models who visited Nagybánya, though. In European art, dark-skinned women carried connotations of lust and evolutionary backwardness, as a cultural code. When the women were stripped of clothing, these connotations became amplified. When, towards the end of his life, Károly Ferenczy composed the Roma models, who actually lived on the outskirts of the village, into a bourgeois studio interior with burgundy velvet drapery, he might have been professing his own alienation from his environment.

In addition to the above, *Gypsy Girl* summed-up the work of the artist who was already seriously ill. Lying in the foreground on a couch covered with velvet drapery, contemplating a representation of herself on the stage, the back of the nude is a self-quote from earlier paintings (*Idleness*, 1908, *Female Nude with Coral*, 1914). While the characters are the same, the woman sitting in the opening of the burgundy curtain is peering out and over her former body from another time and another space; her gaze is directed somewhere beyond the painting and beyond the spectator. The way in which the lying woman raises her arm above her head rhymes with the raised arms of the other woman, but the two gestures, while they seem to have a pull of gravity, exist in separate, parallel times. The figures, which are composed into the same picture with ease but are still part of different universes, seem to be inner images of Károly Ferenczy, reflecting on his life's journey just before he stepped down from the stage.

Anikó B. Nagy

TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY PATHFINDERS

The Millennium celebrations of 1896 were marked by a conspicuous pride in 1000 years of glorious history and an emphasis on the industrial, agricultural, technological, and cultural advancement of the day. The state-of-the-art iron structure of Ferenc József Bridge (today's Szabadság Bridge), the Museum of Applied Arts (in the Art Nouveau style), and the Museum of Fine Arts (existing only on paper until 1906) were all meant for future generations. Although the duality of tradition and modernity was not lost on contemporaries, an anachronistic revival of historical styles was underway in the art of the day. *Picnic in May*, the 1873 painting by Pál Szinyei Merse, a forerunner of plein air painting, would have been drowned out at the spectacular central exhibition were it not for the school of Simon Hollósy, who were on the move from Munich to Nagybánya (Baia Mare). Scattered throughout the exhibition were the paintings of Károly Ferenczy, János Thorma, István Réti, and Béla Iványi-Grünwald—all founders of the artists' colony at Nagybánya which came to be seen as the cradle of modern painting. In 1905, Szinyei, now head of the Model Drawing School (renamed to Academy of Fine Arts in 1908), invited Ferenczy and, later, Réti to teach there, while some of their students were already travelling to Paris and beginning to follow new trends that challenged the atmospheric/naturalistic manner of their masters.

The pre-World War I period can be described as a changing landscape: groups were formed and disbanded, synthetising and individual efforts intersected and transformed each other. There were wide differences in the attitudes and skills of those joining the rural artists' colonies at Nagybánya, Szolnok, Gödöllő (both founded in 1902), and Kecskemét (1909). In 1907, emerging from debates about worldviews and aesthetics, the Circle of Hungarian Impressionists and Naturalists

(MIÉNK) tried to unite under one roof various generations and a plethora of artistic movements. Inevitably, the group—which covered the full spectrum of modernism and whose founding members included Szinyei, Ferenczy, and János Vaszary, but also József Rippl-Rónai, coming from the French Nabis, and Károly Kernstok, the leader of Nyolcak (The Eight), an artist group started in 1909—was short-lived. Further The Eight members were Béla Czóbel, who started a revolution at Nagybánya in 1906, his so-called "Neoist" friends Dezső Czigány and Lajos Tihanyi, and Róbert Berény, Ödön Márffy, Bertalan Pór, and Dezső Orbán, who worked in a similar vein in Budapest and Paris. Their exhibitions featured pieces by guest artists, such as embroideries by Anna Lesznai and plaques and sculptures by Vilmos Fémes Beck. Exhibition spaces sprung up, providing a non-exclusive but reliable platform for "pathfinders" (Könyves Kálmán Salon, Művészház [House of Artists], Ernst Museum). There was now also a generation of critics (Béla Lázár, Miklós Rózsa, György Bölöni) who appreciated and promoted the latest developments in art.

In France, Imre Szobotka, István Farkas, and Alfréd Réth embraced Cubism; in Hungary, the movement found subtle expression in the works of János Kmetty and its analytical and reductive approach loomed large in the expressive painterliness of Vilmos Perlrott-Csaba and József Nemes-Lampérth. During World War I, Lajos Kassák tried to bring together, around his magazines *A Tett* (The Action) and *MA* (Today), Hungary's leading progressives—Tihanyi, Kmetty, Nemes-Lampérth, lyrical abstraction painter János Mattis-Teutsch, and Béla Uitz and Sándor Bortnyik, two advocates of fragmentation and Constructivism.

György Szücs

Cat. 18

László Mednyánszky (1852–1919):
Old and Young Vagrant, c. 1900
oil on canvas, 60.5×75 cm
s.r.l.: Mednyánszky
Inv. n.: KM.76.10
Purchased from Ernő Kolozsváry, 1976

Hailing from a family of barons, László Mednyánszky personified the artist ideal of the Romantic era, obsessed with drawing and painting. He cared neither for himself—his shoes were scuffed and his clothes unkempt—, nor for anyone else. He distanced himself from his own social milieu to explore fundamental questions of human existence and to capture the different states of mind and the elemental force in both natural phenomena and in human relationships.

"To be content with very little is in itself a great step on the way towards freedom. (…) The ideal to be pursued is absolute freedom and total independence from all things material. A life complete with renunciation, with respect to art", wrote László Mednyánszky in his diary.

Similar to his contemporaries, Mednyánszky studied in Munich and in Paris. The French art and literature of the time had a great effect on him. He abandoned academicism and made use of a large variety of technical innovations. As can be seen in the work exhibited here, he often created his paintings with a palette knife and spatula or other scraping tools, giving a generous and raw quality to the details. In addition to a large number of landscapes, his oeuvre is characterised by a series of portraits of people. Most often, he portrayed vagrants, marginalised people, seeing in them the embodiment of freedom and elemental instincts.

His work was introduced to the audience at an exhibition in the Georges Petit Gallery in Paris, in 1897. The sixty pieces, innovative both in formal and iconographic sense, had a positive press reception. The ragpickers, vagabonds or absinthe drinkers on display formed part of the French tradition of painting and evoked some of Manet's pieces of a similar theme. While Hungarian art connoisseurs, particularly Károly Lyka, welcomed Mednyánszky's modernity in Hungarian painting and considered him a pioneer, the wider public was stunned by the pieces and by their distance from what they saw as Mednyánszky's "sublime" or "intimate" landscapes.

The painting *Old and Young Vagrant* is one of those that made Mednyánszky seem "frightening". Invoking the light and shadow effects of earlier periods, the heads and faces emerge from the dark background, their shapes contrasted by the glowing light—perhaps the light of a fire—falling on them. There is a sense of unease and tension in this picture and in the figures depicted. Mednyánszky regularly portrayed helpless, suffering men, in the throes of their torment, on the verge of existence. At the same time, writing about his ideals in his diary, he noted that "every man is a miracle of greatness".

The Mednyánszky exhibition at the Hungarian National Gallery in the autumn of 2003 was the first occasion when the public and the professionals had a chance not only to get an overview of Mednyánszky's entire oeuvre but also to get acquainted with the artist's diaries. "According to his diary, he struggled with his physical desires and his attraction to men throughout his life. (…) He considered Bálint Kurdi—the great love of his life, a boatman from Vác—as his spiritual leader after his untimely death (1906). Mednyánszky's diary entries—the relevant passages of which were cut out by careful hands from the first edition—are (…) in fact, accounts of events written to Kurdi, mantras of will or prayers addressed to him", wrote Csilla Markója, the artist's monographer and the curator of the exhibition, revealing one possible source of tension in the vagrant portraits.

The collection of the Municipal Gallery also includes many of Mednyánszky's landscapes of Budapest. From the 1880s, the artist had a studio in the capital and although his restlessness kept him constantly on the move between the cities of Europe, in the end, he always returned. This painting was purchased in 1976 by the Municipal Gallery from Ernő Kolozsváry, who had previously acquired it from the collection of Ferenc Glücks.

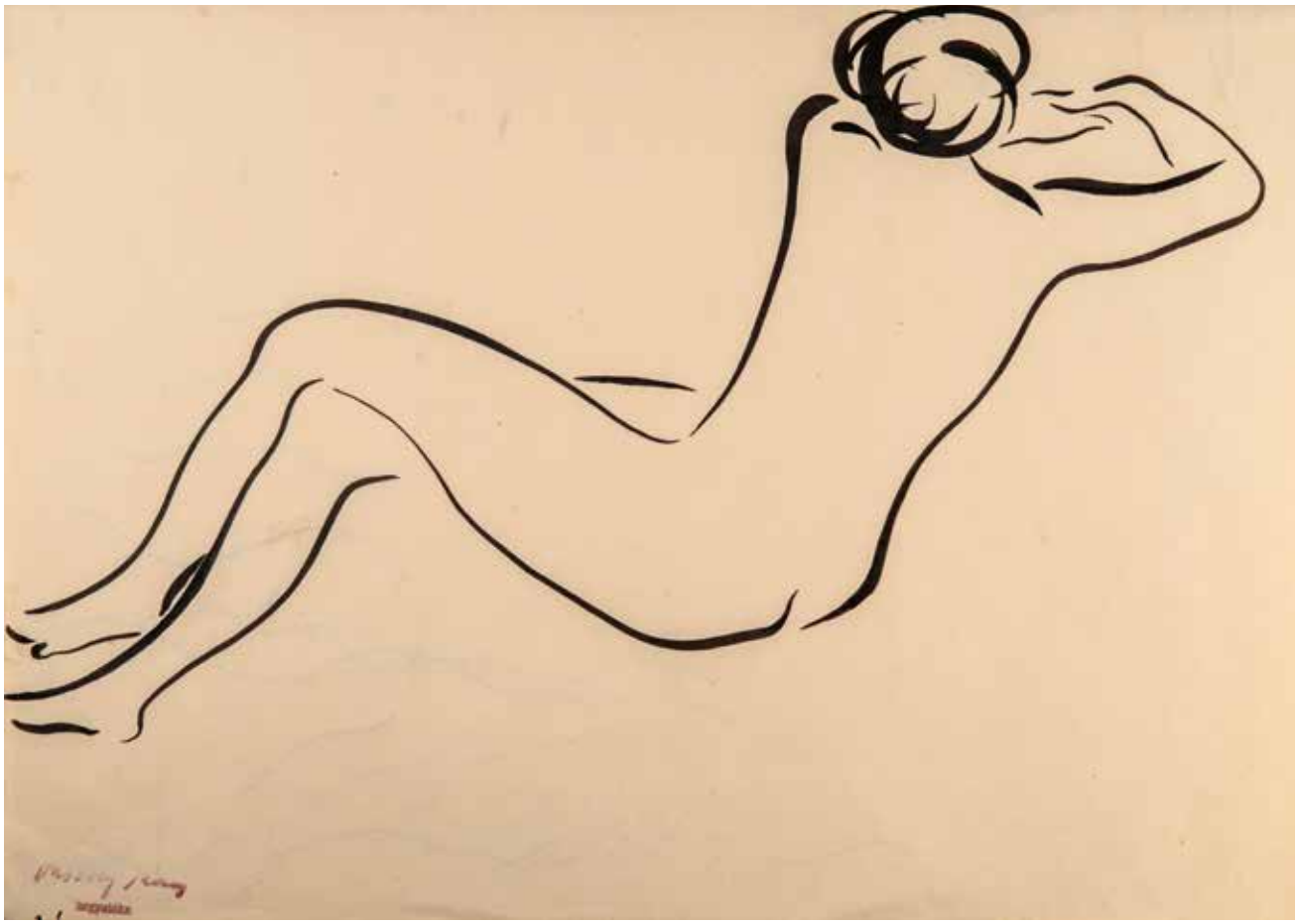
Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 19
Béla Czóbel (1883–1976):
Workman, 1903–1904
oil on canvas, 69.5×51.5 cm
s.l.t.: Czóbel
Inv. n.: KM.66.173.
Purchased from Ernő Czóbel, 1916

Czóbel is traditionally regarded as the innovator of the art scene in Nagybánya. In 1906, he came close to starting a revolution among the young with his radical paintings brought back home from Paris, presenting the achievements of Henri Matisse and the French fauves ("wild beasts"). The narrative, handed down by one of the founders, István Réti, who wrote the history of the art colony in Nagybánya, is now seen in a more nuanced light, which does not diminish Czóbel's pioneering importance. His career, however, seems to have had a number of stages of gradual development. He was one of the first students of the free school that was started in 1902, after Simon Hollósy had left, then he had a taste of the atmosphere of the Munich Academy, until the momentum took him to Paris, where he studied in the freer environment of the Julian Academy. *Workman* is one of the characteristic stages of this maturation. Similarly to his master in Nagybánya, the more experimental Béla Iványi-Grünwald, he tried his hands at different painting techniques all at once. His *Self-Portrait with Hat* (1903, in private ownership), which explores the sharp light-shadow effect of sunlight, is loosely constructed from impressionistic brushstrokes and bears witness to the influence of Károly Ferenczy. In the painting *Workman*, however, the twilight is hardly penetrated by a few rays of light, and despite the heavy brushwork and the uniform tone of light, every single detail of the picture shows a rich, vibrant play of reflexes. The painting seems most closely related to Ferenczy's *Woodcutters Returning Home* (1899), in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery, or to *Girl in the Forest* (1902–1903), a painting by József Koszta, who worked together with Czóbel at the art colony in 1902.

The painting, originally owned by the first Municipal Gallery, was presumably left at the City Hall. It must have been given to the art collection, re-established in 1959, by the City Council.

György Szücs



Cat. 20
János Vaszary (1867–1939):
Reclining Nude, Back View, c. 1910
ink on paper, 300×435 mm
s.l.l.: signature stamp "Vaszary J." with "estate" stamped under it
Inv. n.: KM.63.54.
Purchased from István Révész, 1963

János Vaszary belonged to a group of artists who maintained their experimental spirit and assimilated the lessons of European artistic trends into their art in a unique way throughout their lives. In line with the above, his art can be divided into distinct periods. The female nude exhibited here is an important piece of his so-called synthetic period (1910–1914). In 1910 and 1911, he made several male and female nude studies, entitled *Synthetic Lines*, which form a series. He also exhibited these drawings in a major exhibition at Művészház (House of Artists) in 1912. One of the critics commented on his change of style in mockery, saying that "…Vaszary suddenly took a turn for the stylistic spectrum of »The Eight« so that he could become the ninth…"

These drawings are, first and foremost, studies of movement; it is their original title that suggests artistic intent. They are concise, most of them drawn in a single line, and are characterized by generous shapes. Vaszary was interested in the unity of the motif, a quality he later expected his students to aspire to as a teacher.

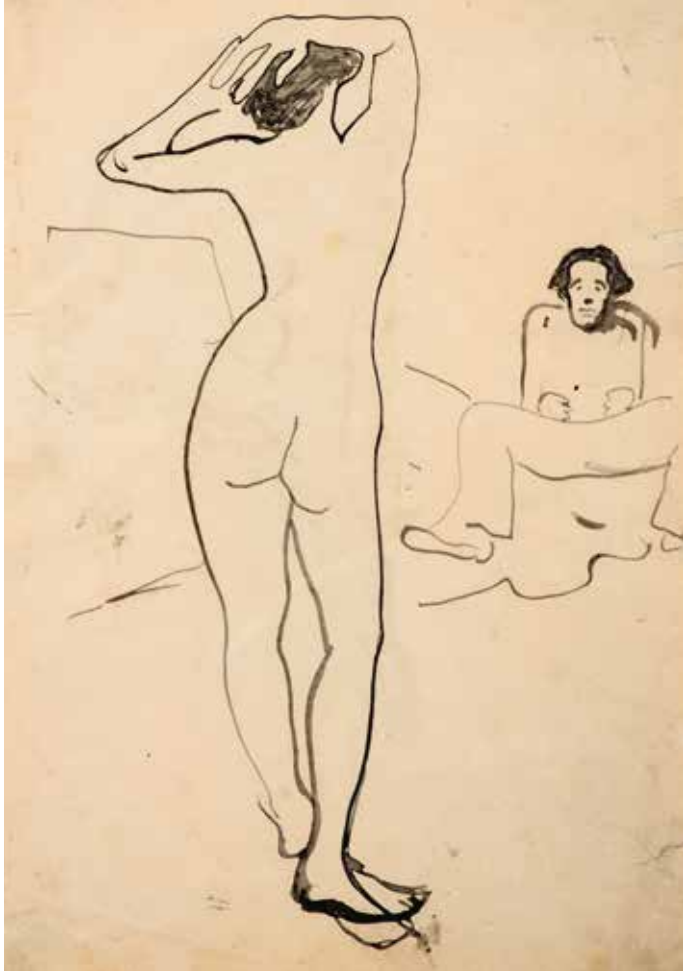
Reclining Nude, *Back View*, however, can be appreciated not as a study but rather as an autonomous graphic work. The sensitive use of lines borrowed from Japanese and Chinese art and the direct expression of artistic creativity and spirit make the drawing exciting. Vaszary used the same pose for his female nude from back view around 1920, in a large oil painting. However, the painting was created in a completely different style and was already the product of a new era.

Anna Kopócsy

Cat. 21
János Vaszary (1867–1939):
Kitten, 1910
ink on paper, 250×345 mm
s.l.l.: Vaszary J. 910.
Inv. n.: KM.63.55.
Purchased from
István Révész, 1963

János Vaszary's drawing of a kitten is one of the outstanding pieces of his artistic period that started in 1910. During his time in Paris, in 1910, he experimented with several different styles, among others, he studied Assyrian, Egyptian, Japanese and Chinese art, as evidenced by the surviving drawings in his sketchbooks. Clearly, the Chinese and Japanese ink drawings are antecedents of the present piece. Béla Lázár, an art writer of the period, in his 1906 review of Vaszary, mentioned the painter's attachment to Japanese art, emphasizing, first and foremost, the influence of kakemonos (hanging scroll pictures). His pieces inspired by oriental art fit into the genre of "reconstructed style investigations" (the artist's own term), where the emphasis is on formal solutions as opposed to content. It is the clever use of the contrast of black and white, of full and empty and of the expressive line that returns to itself which makes this piece truly remarkable. Similarly to the female back nude, what appears on the surface of the paper is the artist's direct invention. The cat motif, also popular in European art, often symbolises female sexuality. It is also a favourite of Vaszary, used as an attribute to enhance femininity in his painting *Woman with Cat* (c. 1909), also a Japonisme, and as an attractive detail of the still life *Roses with a Cat*, from 1910. The ink brush drawing entitled *Cat* (1910), in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery, can be considered as the counterpart of *Kitten*, even though *Cat*, in which the animal lying on its side is depicted in a generous, easy-going but still more detailed manner, makes much less use of the opportunities of a single line and abstraction than the drawing in the Municipal Gallery.

Anna Kopócsy



In the autumn of 1904, during the period preceding the rectorship of Pál Merse Szinyei, Berény tried and tested the methods of the so-called Mintarajziskola (Model Drawing School), but only a few months later, at the beginning of 1905, he moved to Paris and enrolled at the Julian Academy. It did not take long before he took an even more radical path. Similarly to Czóbel, he was beginning to be attuned to the strident colour schemes of the French fauves ("wild beasts"), gathering around Henri Matisse. Between 1906 and 1908, he exhibited at the Salon d'Automne (Autumn Salon) and the Salon des Indépendants (Salon of Independents), and had access to the salon of Leo and Gertrude Stein, where he met the favourites of the time, Matisse and Picasso. As opposed to Czóbel and similarly to two other members of the group Nyolcak (The Eight)—Kernstok and Tihanyi—nude became one of his most important themes. He made numerous sketches and independent graphic pieces in a variety of styles. His series of thinly drawn female figures, his washed-out ink drawings that emphasised the contrasts between black and white, and his series of "shade" or "line" sheets converged into an endless variety of studies. *Standing Female Nude* is also a testament to his capacity for self-irony and caricature. The artist staring at the model, who is standing in an essentially academic contrapposto, might be Berény's bearded alter ego. His features, as if drawn in passing, may carry an element of surprise, perplexity or even shy longing. *Woman With Vase* deals with a more serious, more complex pictorial problem. The sculptural representation of the human figure, the mirror and the backlight, the tilted pictorial space, took final form in the painting *Woman in Front of the Mirror* (in private ownership).

György Szücs

Cat. 22-23
Róbert Berény (1887–1953):
Standing Female Nude, 1906
ink on paper, 310×210 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: 62.59.

Woman With Vase, 1907
ink, ink wash on paper, 310×200 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: 62.58.
Purchased from the widow of Róbert Berény, 1962

Cat. 24
Dezső Czigány (1883–1937):
Still Life, c. 1920
oil on canvas, 83×94.5 cm
s.l.t.: Czigány D.
Inv. n.: KM.72.2.
Purchased at BÁV's (Consignment Store Company) Kossuth Lajos street showroom, 1972

The son of a tinker, Dezső Czigány was born as Dezső Wimmer and changed his name in the early 1900s. His choice was motivated by a spirit of freedom and solidarity: he threw his lot in with the Romani who constituted the lowest stratum of society and whose travelling lifestyle he saw, through the lens of Romanticism, as representing freedom.

He studied in Budapest, Munich (under Simon Hollósy), Nagybánya, and Paris, never staying in one school for long. He found his artistic voice early on. His first exhibition was in 1911, at the National Salon, with Nyolcak (The Eight). The first avant-garde group in Hungary, The Eight advocated for a reform in art and believed in its power for the betterment of society. A 1907 show at the National Salon, which introduced the Hungarian public to the French symbolist Gauguin, to Cezanne, and to others, had a powerful effect on Czigány, as on many of his contemporaries. Although his biography, his striking portraits and self-portraits paint him as someone who lived life to the fullest, his still lifes exude "monumental calm" and are the continuations of Cezannian analysis. Here we see a still life in an interior; a portrait, a clock, and a mirror emerge from the darkness, giving depth and definition to the jug and the lavish bowls of fruit on the white tablecloth. There is reason to believe that the painting was done when Czigány was suspended from the Association of Hungarian Fine Artists for having held a position at the Hungarian Soviet Republic's Directory for Arts and Museums. The suspension excluded him also from showing at the exhibitions of the Fine Art Society and the National Salon between 1920 and 1924.

When the fine art collection was re-established, the focus was on turn-of-the-century works from key periods of modern artists, but regular exceptions had to be made for earlier or later pieces that were characteristic to particular oeuvres. No collection would be complete without Czigány; this painting was purchased from BÁV in 1972.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 25
Adolf Fényes (1867–1945):
In the Kiscell Mansion, 1913
oil on canvas, 73×96.5 cm
s.r.l.: Fényes A. 1913.
Inv. n.: KM 74.39.
Purchased at the 35th arts auction of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1974

The decorative interior paintings and still lifes of Adolf Fényes, created roughly between 1907 and 1913—after a period of "colouristic naturalism" associated with the Szolnok artists' colony and depicting poor people—were seen already by his contemporaries as a move in the direction of Paul Cezanne's pieces and post-impressionism in general.

In this picture, Fényes breaks with the guiding principles of his interior paintings made between 1910 and 1912. It is not the contours which outline the architecture that have a decorative function; they are of secondary importance. The basic structure is dominated by the latent main lines of perspective. The stove becomes the protagonist; the lines of force that create the depth of field are directed towards the light that glints off the stove's gilded ledge. The overhead view, a compositional "trick" typical of Fényes' still lifes, the slightly distorted "optics", appears in this interior image, while the strong contouring of still lifes disappears. Due to the almost complete lack of shadows, the objects depicted seem less realistic. They become pastosely painted, coloured surfaces, which Fényes, who is viscerally familiar with the compositional method of Academicism, incorporates into an inertial system of perspective.

The painting was put up for auction by its former owner, Baron Adolf Kohner, in 1934. According to the auction catalogue of the world-famous collection, the figure of the man sitting on the sofa is Baron Ferenc Hatvany, a great admirer of Fényes' art.

The former trinitarian monastery of Kiscell, later used as a warehouse for military clothing, was bought by furniture maker and art collector Miksa (Max) Schmidt in 1910. He converted the building into a mansion and decorated it with his art collection and with the products of his interior design business. The mansion was opened to the public on the 28th of September 1913; it was the venue of an "art walk" organised by the St. George's Guild, which had some of the country's most important art collectors among its members, including Ferenc Hatvany and Adolf Kohner. It might have been during this afternoon that Fényes painted the millionaire and fellow painter in the Kiscell Mansion.

Péter Rostás

Cat. 26
Ödön Márffy (1878–1959):
Sketch of one of the murals in the kindergarten-school in Kiscelli Street, c. 1911
fresco, secco, cement tile, 75.5×100 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.99.2.
Donated by the artist's family, 1999

During István Bárczy's time as lord mayor of Budapest, between 1909 and 1912, a comprehensive architectural programme saw the completion of several school buildings of lasting value throughout the capital. One of these was the elementary school and kindergarten in Kiscelli Street in Óbuda, designed by Kálmán Reichl. A modern, contemporary artist, Ödön Márffy, was commissioned to paint the murals of the indoor playground. He was a member of the avantgarde group called Nyolcak (The Eight), and held the position of "curator of artefacts" at the municipal museum. While his position and his resulting professional network may well have played a role in him receiving the honour of the commission, the choice also testifies to the enlightened, modern spirit of the Bárczy programme. The complete mural, which was divided into three sections, can only be seen in photographs today. It was badly damaged in the siege of Budapest 1944-45, and later a boiler room was built in front of the walled-up work. However, the artist's family still had a detailed sketch, which the artist supposedly made as a material test on a hand-moulded cement slab. This invaluable piece of cultural historical importance was donated to the museum by the family of Ödön Márffy in 1999.

The mural depicted a seaside scene with figures of women, children and horses. Our sketch shows the two female figures of the middle panel up to their waist, with the sea behind them. During the first decade of the century, the art of Rippl-Rónai made a profound impression on Márffy. The figures of the women, painted with vibrant, yet decorative colours, and dynamic, delicate contours, act as a reference to the movement art of the end of the century. At the beginning of the 20th century, representatives of the fine arts considered dance as an expression of a universal, spiritual state of the soul, the real unity of body and soul, in which the relationship between space and figure becomes organic and alive. Hence, Márffy adjusted most of the shades of colours used for his two female figures—keeping in mind the requirements of the public space—to the greenish blue of the sea that filled the background. The light red of the head-scarves playfully counteracts this limited palette. The artistic, gentle, stroking gesture of the hands adheres to the environment the mural was made for, as a caress intended for the children. The balanced, rhythmic composition exudes an idyllic, distant harmony.

Péter Köblös

Cat. 27
Lajos Tihanyi (1885–1938):
Street in Nagybánya (Landscape with bridge), 1909
oil on canvas, 81×82 cm
s.l.l.: Tihanyi L. 09.
Inv. n.: KM.68.57.
Purchased from the heir of Ferenc Völgyessy, Sándor Völgyessy Szomor, 1968

Having completed his training at the School of Technical Drawing, Tihanyi first travelled to Nagybánya in 1907, where he worked with artists outside of academic art education. It was at this time that he became friends with Józsi Jenő Tersánszky, who originally also studied to become a painter but was already on his way of becoming a writer. Tihanyi was not only inspired by the experiments of the young local artists; he had already seen the exhibition titled *Works by Gauguin, Cézanne, etc.* at the National Salon in May. His first journey led to Paris, where, as he later recalled, Gauguin, Matisse and Cezanne were his "first ideals". Considering the above, it does not seem surprising that by 1908 he was fully equipped to create such varyingly themed masterpieces of so-called Neoist painting in Nagybánya as *Intérieur* (Petőfi Literary Museum), which used to be in the ownership of author Endre Ady, *Gypsy Madonna* (Janus Pannonius Museum) or his street scene from a top view, *View from the Tower* (Hungarian National Gallery), akin to the works of Sándor Ziffer. During the following year, he continued to create townscapes. Having completed the "St. Victoire of Nagybánya", the mountain called Kereszthegy with the mills on the banks of the Zazar river, he did not capture the other emblematic motif of the neighbourhood, the red-domed Reformed church, but—literally turning his back on it—decided for the old wooden bridge, already in ruins at the time. The exciting geometric carpentry and the purples of the undulating silhouette of the Morgó mountain rhyme with each other, and the houses and foliage arranged in plastic shapes surround the almost luminous orange "emptiness" of the street. Crossing the river, figuratively speaking, he also painted the curve of a street using a narrower cut and even larger fields of colour (*Nagybánya Landscape*, in private ownership), around the same time. The motif, which Ziffer had painted from the other side the previous year, is of documentary value, because by 1911, people walking or taking a carriage from the main square to the town park already used a new, ferro-concrete bridge.

György Szücs

Cat. 28
Imre Szobotka (1890–1961):
Landscape of Saint-Brieuc VI, 1915
pencil, watercolour on paper, 182×135 mm
s.r.l.: Szobotka
Inv. n.: KM.75.21.
Purchased from the widow of the artist, 1975

Imre Szobotka was twenty years old when he travelled to Paris with his friend, Ervin Bossányi. At first, they stayed with József Csáky, a sculptor who had already been living in the French capital for a couple of years and whom they had met at the School of Applied Arts in Budapest. Csáky introduced them to the cubist circles. Between 1911 and 1913, Szobotka studied at the painting school La Palette with cubist masters. He was one of the Hungarian painters who encountered the artists and the achievements of the then only a few years old movement early and directly, in the Paris of the 1910s. His works were exhibited in the cubist section of the Salon des Indépendants, as early as 1913 and 1914. In the summer of 1914, he travelled to Bretagne with Bossányi to paint; the news of the outbreak of World War I reached them in the small town of Saint-Brieuc. While József Csáky volunteered to join the French army, Szobotka could not identify with the idea of the war at all. He did not want to return home, lest he would be enlisted. In February 1915, he and Bossányi were interned in Saint-Brieuc as enemy aliens and were only allowed to leave in 1918.

At the beginning, they were granted permission to leave the camp so that they could paint. The exceptionally fine watercolour, which was purchased by the museum from the artist's widow shortly after his death, was probably made during this time. The strong structural composition is softened by blurry contours, cast shadows and lights that seem like an extension of the shapes, and harmonious, vivid colours. Szobotka's style transcended Cubism in the strict sense; his personal, relaxed, lyrical style of painting is more akin to the orphic branch of the movement led by the Delaunays.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 29
Imre Szobotka (1890–1961):
Still Life, c. 1913
oil on canvas,
22.5×26.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.75.19.
Purchased from the widow of Imre Szobotka, 1975

Following the advice of his practical, chief technical engineer father, the son studied decorative painting at the School of Applied Arts, where he, as well as his friend and future companion in France, Ervin Bossányi, learned about the daily routine of applied drawing and painting. After a study trip to Italy, they arrived in Paris in 1910, where, following the suggestion of the sculptor József Csáky, they continued their studies at the La Palette Academy, which followed the principles of Cubism. István Farkas also studied there at the time. An exhibition at the Salon des Indépendants in 1911, where representatives of "cube art"—including Szobotka's teachers, Jean Metzinger and Henri Le Fauconnier—exhibited in a separate room, Szobotka became quite convinced about the possibilities of a new way of creating images. In the same year, in Székelyudvarhely, he exhibited his—in comparison with Cubism—more traditional Parisian paintings at his father's place of employment. By 1913, he became a regular member and exhibitor of the Salon of Independents. His paintings testify of an attempt to find balance between the initial, rigorous cubist pictorial structure and the restrained colours subordinated to the broken forms, i.e. the "intellectual and emotional" components, in accordance with synthetic cubism. In *Still Life*, the thick contours, the visible brushstrokes, the partially recognisable objects or the objects we believe we recognise (book, vase, mirror, plant) testify of a need for objectivity and preservation of painterliness. In 1914, after the outbreak of World War I, Szobotka and Bossányi—who were happily painting in Saint-Brieuc, Brittany—were interned as representatives of an enemy country. Both of them started to work on illustrations for Paul Claudel's mystery play *The Annunciation of Mary*. Thanks to the easily accessible medium of watercolour, Szobotka's style became more and more transparent and luminous, and so his art approached Orphic Cubism (*Landscape of Saint-Brieuc VI*, 1915). (Cat. 28)

György Szücs

The central bud, sprout or anthropomorphic motif also appears in Mattis-Teutsch's carved or clay sculptures made in the mid-1910s, often painted in colour or monochrome. The dynamic, yet soft lines of his sculptures made in this period, shaped as "organic bodies" still bear the legacy of Art Nouveau. *Sculpture Composition*, painted white, is a significant piece from Mattis-Teutsch's early period. The sculptural work, built up of curved surfaces, depicts a natural motif, reminiscent of an abstract, budding flower or shoot, and recalls the design of the *Flowers of the Soul* series of paintings. The recurring shape can also be interpreted as a symbol of the budding of life, birth or rebirth. The organic mass, formed along an upward, curved line of force, gives the impression of being propelled by an invisible inner force. The sensual, dynamic shaping of the stylized flower already shows some of the characteristics of late Art Nouveau lines. The playful change of light and shadow on the sculpture's white surface lends the composition a sense of movement. In the early stages of his career, Mattis-Teutsch bridged the way from formulating a reduced visual world of natural forms to creating abstract compositions reflecting a cubo-futurist vision. *Flowers of the Soul* and *Sculpture Composition* are important milestones of this process.

Viktória Oth

Cat. 30
János Mattis-Teutsch (1884–1960):
Sculpture Composition, 1916–1919
painted terracotta, 21×11×6.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.94.8.
Purchased from Dr. András Vincze and his wife, 1994

Cat. 31
János Mattis-Teutsch (1884–1960):
Composition (Flowers of the Soul), 1910-es évek vége
tempera, oil on paper,
300×380 mm
s.r.l.: MT
Inv. n.: KM.86.24.
Purchased from
Geraldina Bakos, 1986

Born in Brassó (Brasov), Mattis-Teutsch became gradually involved in the art scene of Budapest from the early 1910s. He was closely connected to the circle of Lajos Kassák. He had studied at the School of Applied Arts in Budapest and the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, and published his woodcuts and linoleum engravings, removed from visible reality, among others in the magazine *MA* (Today), edited by Lajos Kassák. His first solo exhibition in Budapest in 1917 was also organised by *MA*. By the end of the decade, Mattis-Teutsch had become acquainted with the most modern trends of European art; his pieces were even published by the German art magazine *Der Sturm* in Berlin. He had exhibitions in several Western European cities. Due to his expressive use of line and colour, his work is often seen as having spiritual kinship to German Expressionism. From the second half of the 1910s, Mattis-Teutsch created increasingly abstract compositions, later referred to in the literature as the *Flowers of the Soul* series. His paintings of the second half of the 1910s and the early 1920s are characterised by a composition of curved forms and bands of colour built around each other, with a highly abstracted central figure, often depicted as a kind of human, tree or plant motif in the centre.

Viktória Oth

Cat. 32
János Kmetty (1889–1975):
City Park, 1912
oil on canvas, 58×44 cm
s.r.l.: Kmetty / 1912
Inv. n.: KM.64.76.
Donated by the artist, 1964

János Kmetty was one of the modern painters who was strongly influenced by early Cubism, which remained a major source of inspiration in his later oeuvre as well. In 1911 Kmetty spent several months in Paris and he was enchanted by the Pellerin Collection in Neuilly, which contained several pieces by Cezanne. Kmetty was first and foremost attracted to the so-called Plastic Cubism, typical of Cezanne. In the first half of the 1910s, he developed his own method, always respectful of the spectacle, but restructuring natural forms geometrically, while breaking down the colour palette into shades favoured by Cezanne—mainly green and blue—and dividing them into smaller or larger colour planes.

There are other ink drawings of a similar composition of the City Park from around the same time; the studio paintings were probably made based on these. The trunks of the trees reach up to the sky, form a kind of a pyramid but meet only in our imagination, beyond the frame of the picture. The sunlight, filtering through a foliage compressed into forms of colour, is also arranged in planes; the depth of space is made perceptible by the staffage figures and benches placed at an angle, regularly spaced apart. This rigorous, geometric basis of the composition is dissolved into a pulsating pictorial rhythm by the light and the forms of colour.

In 1909, Kmetty was a regular visitor of Károly Ferenczy's evening course in nude drawing, organised in the Epreskert (Mulberry Garden), where he made friends with several artists, who later formed an activist circle. Ferenczy's students regularly went to draw to the City Park, not far from Epreskert. When Kmetty returned from his trip to Paris, he rented a flat in the neighbourhood, in Hernád Street, and—already independently from Ferenczy—continued to visit the City Park. Another memento of the same experience is a landscape painting created with a similar approach by József Nemes-Lampérth, another former student of Ferenczy. His painting, also on display here, shows a more relaxed, more painterly version of the same motif.

Anna Kopócsy

Cat. 33
József Nemes-Lampérth (1891–1924):
Trees, 1912
watercolour on watercolour paper,
400×280 mm
s.l.l.: 1912 V. 11 Lampérth J
Inv. n.: KM.69.114.
Purchased at the 21st auction of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1969

Becoming a member of the free school of Nagybánya, in the summer of 1911, was a milestone in the artistic awakening of József Nemes-Lampérth. At this time, his landscapes already followed the ideals of Cezanne, which is mirrored in his series—of which this picture is part of—made in the City Park, and in the Epreskert (Mulberry Garden), in 1912. This was one of the most productive years of his career, or at least, this is the year most of his surviving pieces were made in. While the vibrant, flashing, eye-catching colours still reference the school of Nagybánya, the composition suggests constructive awareness. The high horizon and the bold cropping of the image shrinks the foreground and enlarges the midground, making the tree trunks seem huge and turning their ensemble into an abstract grid of lines. The rhythmically alternating fields of colour have already taken on the particular crescent shape so characteristic of Nemes-Lampérth's more mature works. Their diagonal hatching lends the painting an agitated momentum, akin to Expressionism, while the planar execution of the individual parts of the scene points in the direction of Cubism. The modest use of tools—watercolours, coloured inks—may be attributed to the artist's frequent financial difficulties, but it also represents a conscious preparation for large-scale oil paintings. While the painting is outstanding in itself, it also foreshadows the summary of this series of studies, the oil painting of a similar title, which constructs and interprets the detail of the City Park as an individual scene, using the same consistent structure—only with a lower horizon—as the watercolour here.
Nemes-Lampérth's art was rediscovered in the 1960s, and the purchase of the painting at a BÁV auction also took place in this period.

Péter Köblös

Following his high school studies specializing in Ancient Greek language and culture in Debrecen, Ferenc Medgyessy graduated at the University of Medicine in Budapest in 1905. As a forensic medical officer, Medgyessy improved his knowledge of anatomy by obsessively drawing the cadavers on the autopsy table. "The more dead bodies I drew, the more I became an artist and not a doctor", he wrote later about his change of career. With the patronage of Károly Lyka and Ede Kallós, he moved to Paris, where he studied at the Julian Academy, the Grand Chaumière Free School and the Académie des Beaux-Arts. His artistic vision was not only formed by his academic training but also by the archaic Greek sculptures he saw in the museums in Paris, as well as by the Egyptian, Assyrian and Sumerian idols, and the Etruscan relics he visited during his trip to Florence in 1908.

On his return home, he moved to the Artists' Colony in Százados Street. The pieces he made in the 1910s—such as his small sculptures *Fat Thinker* (1911) and *Washing Woman* (1915), as well as his bronze relief *Dancers*, with which he won one thousand Crowns at the 1912 exhibition of Művészház (House of Artists)—brought a fresh perspective into the world of Hungarian sculpture, otherwise restricted by folk art and academicism. *Scrubbing Woman*, sometimes referred to as *Scrubbing Girl*, made in 1913, is also from this period. The tiny bronze sculpture presents a woman doing housework in a posture that would be completely natural in real life, but unusually grotesque in sculpture. It is a bold combination of archaic grotesque and modern aspirations. Deep squats with spread legs were a recurring theme in the visual arts during this period—especially when it came to the female body. The highly expressive posture appeared in the creations of many early 20th century painters and sculptors. The exalted form resulting from the hunched posture references Michelangelo's marble block, in which the artist's thoughts and ideas are imprisoned.

Medgyessy may well have seen Gustave Caillebotte's 1875 painting *Parquet Planers*—the first picture to turn the labour of the urban proletariat into a painterly subject—as it was exhibited in the Musée du Luxembourg during Medgyessy's time in Paris, and he was no doubt familiar with Rodin's 1882 *Squatting Woman*, although, at this time, he was already disillusioned with the master he had previously admired. *Scrubbing Woman* has also been compared to Aristide Maillol's tiny bronze sculpture *Washerwoman*, made in 1896. Maillol's piece was intended to be a door-knocker; it was only later that it became a much-publicised exhibition piece. The slender figure of the mopping girl, who is wearing a long skirt, is seen from the back—guests who want to knock have to grip her bottom. Her face, which is turned to the door anyway, is crudely finished. However, the graceful Art Nouveau lines of the piece are only thematically related to Medgyessy's *Scrubbing Woman*, who, with her skirt tucked between her legs, glances back at the inquisitive artist—and thus at the viewer—more in a gesture of mockery.

Maillol's 1895 painting of washerwomen hunched over the floor—discovered through Rippl-Rónai—and its zincograph copy also published in an album, as well as his *Woman With Crab*, a small sculpture made of bronze in 1903, are undeniable forerunners of the Medgyessy sculpture, both thematically and formally. This is underlined by the fact that the first owner of the Medgyessy statue was József Rippl-Rónai, then Ferenc Völgyessy acquired it from his estate and finally it came to the museum from Völgyessy's heir in 1968.

Modern interpretations of the *Scrubbing Woman* are laden with critical overtones due to the inquisitive looks and the obscure content the female body is endowed with.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 34
Ferenc Medgyessy (1881–1958):
Scrubbing Woman, 1913
bronze, 18×18×16.5 cm
s. on the pedestal: mF
Inv. n.: KM.68.80.
Purchased from Sándor Szomor Völgyessy, 1968

Cat. 35

Gitta Gyenes (1887–1960):

Tie Pin, 1915

fired, painted, convex porcelain with colourless glaze, in silver mount with a pin, 7.2×1.7 cm

unsigned

Inv. n.: 12.260.

Handed over by Department VII of the Magistrate's Office of the Capital, 1916

This tiny object is the work of a painter, graphic artist and porcelain maker, forgotten for decades after World War II, someone whose "artistic charm is far superior to the studio rubbish signed with glittering names and bought at a high price by the snubs"—as it appeared in the magazine *Hét* (Week), at the time of the first introduction of Gitta Gyenes, in 1908.

Little is known about the life of the artist who created this oval-framed nude that comes with a needle. The figure is folding her arms across her chest, against a turquoise background, under billowing clouds. No comprehensive art historical treatment has yet been published of Gyenes' work, and some of her pieces still lie hidden somewhere or are lost.

Her mother, Lujza Barcsai (Bettelheim), had a promising start as an actress, but retired after the birth of her children; her father, Ferenc Gottlieb, was a bridge engineer. Gitta Gyenes learned to draw from her father, and, from 1906, spent three years at Bertalan Karlovszky's painting school for women, located in the master's apartment in Városligeti fasor. Later—together with his brother, architect Lajos Gyenes—she continued her education in Nagybánya, then in a free art school in Vienna, and in Rome. Here she met Jenő Wallesz, a journalist, whom she married in 1907. It is from this time that she used the name Gyenes.

The artist, who, between 1908 and 1948, exhibited regularly, was received very favourably by art critics, even if in the kind of peculiar, condescending manner women were thought to be deserving. Artúr Elek considered her work to be "serious art even by male standards". Her early pieces were characterised by lyrical decorativeness, and from the second half of the 1920s she was influenced by cubist and expressive forms. During the years of her marriage, she also drew newspaper illustrations. In 1944, after a long period spent in hiding, she and her daughter Luca were forced to live in the Budapest Ghetto. Her husband had already died in 1943, while her brother was shot dead in the street by fascist Cross thugs in November 1944.

After the war, she mainly created series with anti-fascist themes. Her last exhibition, however, was deemed by the art critic of *Szabad Nép* to be pretentious and makeshift. After that, her public appearances became sporadic. The Hungarian National Gallery organised a commemorative exhibition of her work in 1978. The overwhelming majority of the sixty-seven pieces on display were made available by the artist's daughter, Luca Wallesz—only eight of them were in the ownership of the Hungarian National Gallery. We know for a fact that until 1957, four of the pieces owned by the National Gallery were housed by the Municipal Gallery. In 1957, however, pieces of the collection that were considered valuable from an artistic point of view were nationalised and reassigned to the Hungarian National Gallery. The tie pin—perhaps because it was considered a work of applied art—escaped requisition, and, as a single piece associated with Gitta Gyenes, remained in the Municipal Gallery.

In the decades following World War II, the artist's name was primarily associated not with art history, but with poet Attila József. From the 1920s, Gitta Gyenes hosted a literary salon in their apartment, in Zugló (Budapest), which was regularly visited by Attila József, Frigyes Karinthy, Lajos Kassák, Dezső Kosztolányi and Józsi Jenő Tersánszky. From the time of her meeting Attila József in a café in 1924, the poet paid daily visits to the Wallesz-Gyenes apartment, in Andor Németh's words, "as a cavaliere servente, as a life reformer and political agitator". He expressed his affection and admiration for Gitta Gyenes; and somewhat later, for her daughter,

Luca, too. He courted them around the same time, taking turns. Teasing, friendship, maternal care, companionship and loving adoration were mingled together in these interactions. Their close relationship, which lasted for years, was preserved in a charcoal portrait of the nineteen-year-old Attila József, drawn by Gitta Gyenes, and in numerous poems. Even in 1936, six months before his death, Attila József was probably still thinking of the painter, as testified by his poem *Az a szép, régi asszony* (That Beautiful Woman from the Old Days).

Gitta Gyenes has been making porcelain objects throughout her career, but her ceramic works have been dispersed over the years. She gave some of them away, and—supposedly during the difficult times—she sold some others. As far as we know, apart from the pin in Kiscell, none of them form part of a public collection. The piece in our keeping, which was purchased for the museum by the Municipality

of Budapest in 1916, dates from the period when Gitta Gyenes was exhibiting twenty-five porcelain works in the international section of the Panama–Pacific International Exposition, in the fine arts section of the world's fair held in San Francisco, in 1915, in the midst of World War I. Some three hundred and fifty objects represented Hungarian art at the fair, selected by an American art critic of Swedish origin, John Nilsen Laurvik, with the assistance of the Museum of Fine Arts, from a variety of periods and movements. Nine of the one hundred and twenty-six Hungarian artists were women, a proportion that probably seemed fair at the time. The event was one of the first world exhibitions where preparations were overseen by a special women's selection committee, and the Hungarian selection may well have been influenced by the fact that two years earlier, Chief Curator Laurvik had met his wife, Elma Pálos, at the conference of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance in Budapest. The foreword to the catalogue relating to the Hungarian material was written by György Bölöni. Due to the circumstances during World War I, once the exhibition was over, the European material shown in San Francisco was facing a chaotic future. Some objects were bought, others were taken on an American tour and only returned years later, some disappeared, while Róbert Berény's Bartók portrait remained in the possession of Laurvik till the end of his life.

Twenty-three of Gitta Gyenes' silver medal-winning pieces were brought back home over time but were later scattered. As the titles were included in the catalogue, we know that all of them were figural pieces. Some of the titles could even refer to the pin in Kiscell. There are at least four female nudes listed in the catalogue, one of them named *In Blue Background*.

The object identified as a brooch in the inventory book and on the catalogue card of the museum was originally not worn by women but by men, as a tie pin or a shawl pin. Prominent Englishmen would pin a discreetly set pearl, gemstone or cameo on silk, satin, batiste or muslin cravats beginning from the late 1840s. From the 1850s, personalised, extravagant versions—monogrammed, studded with precious stones—came into fashion, and in the 1860s, the tie pin, stuck into a fold of the cloth or under a knot, became a status symbol among upper-middle-class men as well. By the end of the century, as a result of the idea of the "new woman", several, originally men-only garments and fashionable accessories became part of womenswear. Tie and shawl pins were worn ostentatiously by modern and bold women up until the end of World War I. Gitta Gyenes' pin was made in an era when such an object could be worn both by men and women—although a nude on a man's tie gives quite a different impression than one on a woman's collar. Neither in major European public collections, nor among the pins in the collections of art dealers have we found a similarly enigmatic, naked woman, so it remains a question whether the artist intended it to be worn by men or women, whether it is a brooch or a tie pin. While the work of the other female artists who exhibited in San Francisco—based on the list of objects—did not include a nude, the theme that accompanied Gitta Gyenes' career from the start was also strongly present in her porcelain works exhibited overseas.

Considering the tie pin in question, it seems that the woman who emerges all alone from the blue cosmos and expands the accessories genre is a kind of avatar for Gitta Gyenes, created with artistic ambitions far beyond the dimensions of jewellery and utilitarian objects.

Mária Árvai, Anikó B. Nagy

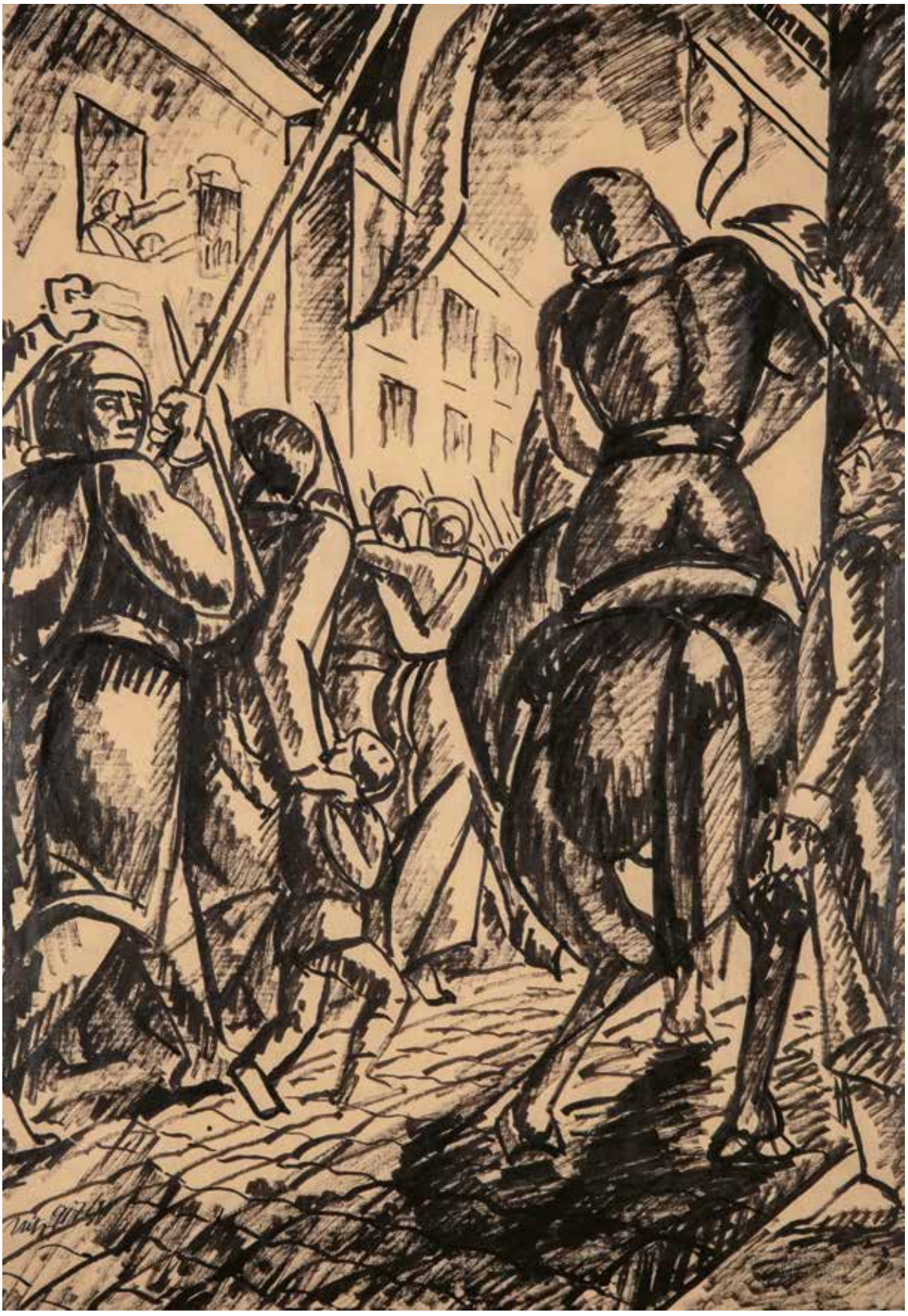
Cat. 36
Ö. Fülöp Beck (1873–1945):
Kuruc Head, 1912
black granite,
38×24×14.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.86.12.
Provenance unknown

Ö. Fülöp Beck graduated as a goldsmith from the School of Applied Arts and made a name for himself as a sculptor and medallist. The "Ö" in his name, which he adopted himself, stands for "ötvös" (goldsmith)—for a short period, he was known as Fülöp Beck Ötvös.

This black granite relief is monumental without being monumental. It is of a "kuruc" man (an anti-Habsburg insurgent) with a feathered cap and a moustache, carved with perfect economy of stone. It was, according to him, his overall intention to match, as best he could, the composition to the dimensions of the stone. He was at the time one of the few sculptors who carved their stone sculptures themselves. To minimise waste in materials and workhours, he simplified shapes and followed the natural forms of the stone. This he, no doubt, took from his work as a medallist, where compositions have clear limits. In the early 1910s, this was seen as very modern. The graphic quality of facial features and the texture of the hair and the moustache, however, reveal the influence of the high Art Nouveau of the turn of the century.

Also during the same period, Ö. Fülöp Beck produced medals with the Kuruc head design, some of which are held at Municipal Gallery.

Orsolya Veress



Béla Uitz, under the influence of the Nyolcak (The Eight), József Nemes-Lampérth and an exhibition of futurist and expressionist pieces at the National Salon in 1913, moved away from the naturalistic-impressionist style he had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, early in his career. From the beginning of the 1910s, he made large charcoal drawings, the dynamic shaping, expressiveness and texture of which foreshadowed the mature style of the second half of the decade. As a brother-in-law of Lajos Kassák, Uitz quickly became part of Kassák's circle. In 1915, he joined the journal *A Tett* (The Action), and then, after it was banned, *MA* (Today) in 1916, which gradually became the most important forum of the avant-garde. Uitz published several prints in both periodicals.

Uitz shared Kassák's anti-militarist stance, consistent from 1915. From the mid-1910s, his expressive skills, already evident in his early work, became even more explicit, as a result of both the war and German Expressionism. In his anti-war ink drawings, he depicted the fierce struggle of man against man, the fleeing population, the wounded, and the pain he felt for those who fell. Even though the pieces do not unequivocally form a series, they reflect the serial character of war graphics: modern war can no longer be visually compressed into a single scene, the age of battle scenes is over. War can only be captured in fragments, in single moments deemed typical or characteristic. These can, however, be organised into a sequence and hence create a coherent visual narrative.

Marching Squadron (Going to War) is a snapshot of war, too. Uitz divided the picture into two vertical parts. On the left, in front of the town houses, soldiers are marching accompanied by women and children, and are seen off by jubilant onlookers standing in the street and in the windows. In the foreground, a new recruit carrying a flag glances back at the spectator, one last time. The squadron is heading towards the vanishing point outside the picture, one could say they are literally about to vanish. The use of foreshortening in a way that it becomes loaded with meaning testifies of the creator's familiarity with classical painting. Similarly, the depiction of the military officer on the right who guards the marching squadron, draws on the tradition of Christian iconography. The horse, seen from the back, and the rider, in timeless attire, evoke images of the Roman soldier of the Renaissance crucifixion scenes. Just like in the depictions of the biblical story, he is the ruthless executioner, whose monumental and plastic figure looms menacingly over those marching towards the depths of the picture. The composition, based on the contrast of the black ink and the luminous white of the paper, was drawn in thick pen. The artist's agitated linework and the vibrancy of the surface lend the image a dramatic quality.

The piece was purchased from the collector Rudolf Bedő for the purposes of the art collection re-established a few years earlier.

Enikő Róka

Cat. 37
Béla Uitz (1887–1972):
Marching Squadron (Going to War), 1917
ink wash on paper,
440×310 mm
s.l.l.: Uitz 917
Inv. n.: 62.532.
Purchased from
Rudolf Bedő, 1962

Cat. 38
Béla Uitz (1887–1972):
Archives, 1918
ink, ink wash on paper, 460×310 mm
s.r.l.: Uitz B. / Levéltár Bpest 918 V
KM.63.34.
Purchased from the widow of Dr. Béla Radnai, 1963

Béla Uitz's traditional composition of an expressive portrait of a building was met with huge success at the National Salon's 1914 exhibition of young artists, where Uitz, who had been expelled from the Academy of Fine Arts, put his charcoal drawings on display. Art collector Marcell Nemes bought all of his drawings without further ado and entered them in the international fine arts section of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, organised in San Francisco in 1915. Uitz was awarded a gold medal and hence had the chance to study and to spend the first couple of months of World War I in Rome and in Florence with his wife. The ink drawing depicts the building of the National Archives in the Buda Castle from below, in a style that mirrors not only the newest futurist trends but also the soft painterly effects of Renaissance frescos studied with devotion by Uitz. The building of the Archives was partially finished by 1918 but the collections could not be transported here due to the war, so during the months in question it served as temporary storage for the Ministry of Defence. The gloomy, uninhabited building is surrounded by ghostly black clouds. Drawn from a low angle, the field of the picture is pierced by the tower. The tower itself served as a chimney and, according to the original, much-criticised plans, would have also contained a water tank to be used in case of a fire. In the winter of 1945, during the breakout attempt of the Hungarian and German troops from the Castle, the tower was badly hit and was blown up altogether after the war.

Uitz, who was not only a member of Lajos Kassák's inner circle but also his brother-in-law, became a member of the Art Directorate during the Hungarian Soviet Republic. He was involved in the democratic reform of art education, designed agitational posters and organised events. After the fall of the Soviet Republic, he was arrested, and emigrated in 1920. He lived in Vienna until 1924, in Paris until 1926 and then settled in the Soviet Union. He moved back to Hungary only shortly before his death. Similarly to Derkovits prints, Uitz's work came into the possession of the museum in 1963, from the widow of the private collector Dr. Béla Radnai.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 39
Vilmos Fémes Beck (1885–1918):
Dancing Woman, 1917
carved white marble,
32.5×16×3.5 cm
s.r.l.: FÉMES BECK VILMOS / 1917
Inv. n.: KM.86.11
Purchased from the artist, 1917

Vilmos Fémes Beck was not only a gifted goldsmith but also a pioneer in small-scale, turn-of-the-century sculpture. Trained as a goldsmith at Budapest's School of Applied Arts, he perfected his craft through travelling. In 1906, he spent several months at the Darmstadt artists' colony under the wings of Joseph Maria Olbrich, an all-round talent in fin-de-siècle art and the champion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In Munich, he was introduced to Adolf von Hildebrand's theories on classicism which stressed the importance of clean shapes and structure and well-defined contours. Returning to Hungary, his efforts ran parallel to those of Nyolcak (The Eight). Many of his works deal with dance and eurythmy, with emotional expression through gesture.

There is a duality to *Dancing Woman*, a white marble relief. The slight projection of soft shapes and the delicate play of shadows are counterbalanced by the chunky figure. A sense of archaism is achieved through the use of the figure convention of ancient Egypt—the woman's athletic torso is seen from the front, her legs and head from the side. Art Nouveau influences are seen in the dancer's veil.

Viktória Oth

Cat. 40
Elza Kövesházi Kalmár (1876–1956):
Thanatos, 1932
glazed ceramic,
39.5×59×6 cm
s.r.l.: KE
Inv. n.: KM.83.86.
Purchased from
Ákos Vörösváry,
1983

The Greek words on Elza Kalmár Kövesházi's relief reveal to us that the work depicts Thanatos, the personification of death. In Greek mythology, the task of Thanatos was to meet people whose last hour came and deliver their souls to Hermes so that he could accompany them to the Underworld. Thanatos was most often depicted as a frightening or terrifying young man, who carried a sword and a torch, holding the latter upside down.

The decorative lines and stylisation that characterise this relief originate from the artistic movements of the early 20th century, such as Art Nouveau or Art Deco, and were characteristic of Elza Kalmár Kövesházi's sculpture in general. The portrait incorporated into a horizontal rectangle shows a young man who has wings, his eyes are closed and turned downwards and there is a wreath of poppies on his head, i.e. the classical symbols of Thanatos are missing. However, the poppies, generally popular in the Art Nouveau period, do not only have a decorative role—they symbolise both death and dreaming, thus serving as a reference to the mythological role of Thanatos. The choice of subject suggests the influence of symbolism.

In the features of the young man, one may recognise Ödön Palasovszky, poet, actor, theater director, a legendary figure of Hungarian avant-garde movement. Elza Kövesházi Kalmár probably knew him personally, because her daughter, Ágnes, often took part in Palasovszky's performances as a dancer.

Orsolya Veress

Cat. 41
Elza Kövesházi Kalmár (1876–1956):
Dancing Boy, c. 1909
bronze, 29.5×9×7.4 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.91.6.
Purchased from József Benczik, Győr, 1991

Originally, Elza Kövesházi Kalmár wanted to become a painter. She studied in Vienna and in Munich, then, between 1900 and 1902, in Paris and in Florence. She changed her name to Kövesházi ("from the stone house"), as a reference to both her profession and her hard circumstances. She mostly created small sculptures, ceramics and plaques.

Her early bronze sculpture of a dancing boy in full control of his movements was made at a time when Hungary was an important centre of the modern dance movement. Prominent modern dancers performed regularly in Budapest. As early as in 1902, Isadora Duncan achieved great success with her barefoot dance performed without a corset. The dance which freed the body was based on classical ideals. There were heated debates in the Hungarian press about the possibilities and limits of expression by means of the body and dance. The twisted movement of the lithe boy, who is taking a diagonal step with impetus, was partly conceived as a result of this experience. The naked bodies of boys were a popular subject anyway, in the period of avant-garde painting under the spell of Matisse and Picasso. During the first decade of the century, members of the Hungarian group of artists called Nyolcak (The Eight) also tended to turn to this theme. The graceful movement of the dancing boy stretching his arms above his head and the interplay of the scale of the small plastic create a tension within the bronze form.

Elza Kövesházi Kalmár remained close to modern dance throughout her career. She designed costumes and stage sets to help performances popularise the art of movement and designed as well as created expressive dance costumes with a strong visual charge for her daughter, Ágnes Kövesházi, a movement artist and choreographer. The knowledge of the body she gained partly as a sculptor, partly as a theatre person helped her out in difficult times as well. In the early 1930s she learned how to make orthopaedic shoes and opened a cobbler's workshop under her studio apartment in Maros Street. "The shoemaker will make a living for the artist", she said. After the war, following the ideological ban on movement art resulting in a lack of artistic commissions, she was forced to make a living solely from this profession.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 42-43

Anna Lesznai (1885–1966):

Illustration for the Tale of the Little Mouse, 1920s
pencil, ink, watercolour on paper, 117×190 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.78.13.
Donated from the estate of the artist (Tibor Gergely), 1978

Yellow Horse, 1920
gouache on paper, 285×372 mm
s.r.l.l.: Instead of the Garden of Eden and other delights, with love I give this little chubby horse to Gyuri (whose dimensions I no longer dare describe with light-hearted adjectives) Aunt Máli 1920 Körtvélyes
Inv. n.: KM.73.3.
Purchased from Klára Korolovszky, 1973

Born as Amália Moscowitz, the poet, writer, graphic designer and commercial artist Anna Lesznai changed her surname later to that of a village near her family's estate called Leszna. The rural experiences of her childhood and her youth, the time spent in the castle of Körtvélyes (today Nižný Hrušov) played a decisive role in her life, as well as in her artistic career. She learnt to embroider from the local women before she started studying applied arts in Budapest and in Paris. Her early poems appeared in the literary magazine *Nyugat* (West) with the support of her cousin, Lajos Hatvany, but her pieces were also published by *Szép Szó* (Nice Word), *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century) and by *Munka* (Work). The poet Endre Ady wrote an introduction to her first volume, and in turn she designed the cover of the first edition of some of Ady's poetry collections, including *Ki látott engem?* (Who Has Seen Me?). The woven and sewn motifs of the cover are preserved by the famous "Ady cushion". She was a prominent member of the so-called Vasárnapi Kör (Sunday Circle), founded in 1915 and led by film critic, writer Béla Balázs and philosopher György Lukács, and she also participated in the first exhibition of the group of artists called Nyolcak (The Eight), in 1911. Through her second husband, Oszkár Jászi, she also became involved with groups of middle-class, radical intellectuals.

Her art combines a wide range of inspirations and motifs, from Slovak and Hungarian embroideries to traditional, Persian carpets owned by her family, to Hindu and Asian tales and even Hasidism. In Lesznai's pantheistic conception of life, which identifies God with nature, this colourful ornamentation is a world view edited into fairy-tale format. Writing fairy tales together was just as much a part of their social life as discussions about the relationship between content and form, a topic of interest in the early years of the century. The ornamental theory of their friend, art historian, painter and critic Leó Popper, as well as pieces of writing by art philosopher and art historian Lajos Fülep, and by György Lukács played an influential role in her life. During the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Lesznai helped to develop plans for art education, as a result of which she was forced to emigrate. Between 1919 and 1931 she lived in Vienna together with her third husband, Tibor Gergely, but spent the summers in Körtvélyes, which already belonged to Czechoslovakia at the time. Fleeing fascism, she moved to New York in 1939.

Lesznai's rich literary and artistic oeuvre is often seen as a world of fairy tales that can be integrated into a large whole. Her manuscripts include 160 fairy tales and drafts. Her most prolific period was the second half of the 1910s and the early 1930s. It was from the late 1910s that stylised animals appeared in her designs, as part of the ornamentation. In Vienna, Lesznai regularly visited the Schönbrunn Zoo, where she made ink and watercolour sketches. Her favourites were bears, deer, gazelles, antelopes and all kinds of birds. She also studied the character of animals in fairy tales. Her work is characterised by a lack of pictorial perspective and by free contours, there is no distinction between narrative and ornamental items. The pieces in the series *Yellow Horse* and *Tale of the Little Mouse*, shown here, recall the style of the Viennese years, when delicate Art Nouveau ornamentation was replaced by strong contours.

Lívia Páldi

Mária Kósa, née Mária Molnár is a little-known figure of early 20th-century Hungarian sculpture. First, she was a student of Ödön Moiret at the Budapest Metropolitan Industrial Drawing School, then, between 1916 and 1919, she studied sculpture with Márk Vedres at the Elemér Kónyai Free School of Fine Arts, and graphic art with Károly Kernstok. Her first public exhibition at the Free School was in 1918. Her pieces must have been well received because, afterwards, two of her sculptures became published in the magazine *Magyar Írás* (Hungarian Writing) in 1922.

In 1921, she married György Kósa, a composer and pianist. From that time on, she used the name Mária Kósa. Her versatile talent is shown by the fact that she wrote the libretto for her husband's fairy tale opera *The King's Cloak*, composed in 1927, based on a story by Hans Christian Andersen.

In the 1920s, she participated in several group exhibitions organised by the National Salon and the Ernst Museum. In 1931 she took part in the exhibition of the Association of Women Artists (AME) at the National Salon. In the '30s she created a series of woodcuts and linocuts. She had only one solo exhibition, in 1939, in her own studio.

Mária Kósa often turned to biblical themes, especially stories from the New Testament, and she was fascinated by relationships between people and connections with the supernatural. Her sculptures are characterised by both Expressionism and Symbolism. She expresses strong emotions, while the depiction of the layers of meaning hidden beneath the surface, and the ability to represent them are also of outstanding importance in her art. In her ars poetica, she says that she does not strive for naturalism, but instead starts from the mass, and is only interested in the details, inasmuch as they divide the mass and make a rhythmic pattern.

The above is apparent in the patinated plaster sculpture exhibited here, too. At the centre of the multi-figure composition is the seated figure of Jesus, surrounded by his kneeling-crouching disciples. The figures are somewhat crude and stylised, but their posture, their position and thus the composition as a whole, give the impression of them being drawn to Jesus, who is sitting in the centre.

In February 1945, Mária Kósa and her daughter, Éva were most possibly killed by fascist Arrow Cross thugs. Part of her estate—a number of patinated plaster sculptures and prints—was donated to the Municipal Gallery by György Kósa's family.

Orsolya Veress

Cat. 44
Mária Kósa (née Molnár) (1899–1945):
Jesus With His Disciples, 1920s
patinated plaster, 47×55×65 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.86.21
Donation of Mrs György Kósa (Anna Kepes), 1986

ART IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Art flourished in the Hungary of the 1920s and 30s, despite historical odds and difficulties. One has only to think of the isolation caused by World War I and the Treaty of Trianon, or, more generally, of the financial crisis coming in the wake of the Great Depression and of the intellectual/existential one of the 30s that would lead to global cataclysm. The art world revolved, by and large, around groups committed to various artistic movements, with the Ernst Museum and the National Salon being their primary venues.

Following World War I, Hungarian art was cut off from Europe; young artists gravitated towards the classical periods of art history and there was a fresh appreciation for the spirit of the Nagybánya artists' colony, which came to be seen as the cradle of modern, national art, for early plein air, and for the synthetising tendencies that came after it. Members of the so-called Szőnyi István Kör (Szőnyi Circle) were the first post-war representatives of this artistic attitude. In a simultaneous development, many avant-garde artists associated with Hungarian Soviet Republic art policies left the country; Vienna was a popular destination with immigrants, and it became home to Lajos Kassák and his Constructivist circle, including, for example, Sándor Bortnyik. Although many artists returned to Hungary after the general amnesty of 1926, avant-garde tendencies (Constructivism, Surrealism, non-figurative art) did not attract a loyal, or widespread, following before 1945.

As the grip of political isolation was loosening, starting in the mid-20s, Europe—and especially Paris—became once more the guiding star of Hungarian art; the shift manifested itself most visibly in the work of the New Society of Fine Artists (KÚT). István Farkas, a member of both KÚT and the École de Paris, having developed his unique, visionary style, returned to Hungary in 1932. In 1928, with ideological support from art historian Tibor Gerevich and political backing from Minister of

Culture Kunó Klebelsberg, the Rome Scholarship was established to put, as a source of inspiration for young artists, Italian art in the place of French and German influences. Its first recipients, including István Szőnyi, Vilmos Aba-Novák, Károly Patkó, and Tibor Vilt, turned what they saw in Italy into art in idiosyncratic ways.

From the gaps and overlaps between art institutions and artist groups, there emerged, without much fanfare, the Gresham Circle, a group of artists, critics, and collectors who met in cafés and rose to art world prominence in the late 20s. The Circle was home to the artists whose work is seen here, to István Szőnyi and Aurél Bernáth, and to affiliates like Noémi Ferenczy and József Egry. They were looking for new, eternal, forms in figurative art, which Egry thought to have found in the world of Lake Balaton, and Szőnyi, in Zebegény a picturesque village along the Danube River. Bernáth distilled his ideas about landscapes and human beings in his metaphysical pieces; Ferenczy created her monuments to labour in the unusual medium of tapestry.

After education for both genders had been introduced at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1920, women started challenging prejudices and making their voice heard in exhibitions and artist groups, often through daring compositions. Mária Barta, with her Art Deco-adjacent, dynamic, and playful works that verge on the abstract, was one of them.

Most of the interwar pieces seen here have been purchased by the Municipal Gallery during the 1960s and 70s. This goes to show that, once socialist realist norms and requirements were dropped, works that had been termed "formalistic" in the 50s were being allowed back into the modern Hungarian canon of art Kádár era.

Anna Kopócsy

Cat. 45
Gyula Derkovits (1894–1934):
At the Funfair, 1927
watercolour on paper,
165×145 mm
s.l.l.: Derkovits Gy
Inv. n.: 51.761.
Transfer from Municipal Gallery, 1950

This palm-sized watercolour got its title at 1965's commemorative exhibition for Gyula Derkovits. The title seems strange, since what we see is a nondescript street that looks like one of Derkovits' suburban scenes. There is a butcher's shop in the back, with a pointy-roofed stall in front of it, a stream of people on the left, seen from above, and a gypsy woman, in billowing skirt, holding a child, in the foreground. The cobblestones are hit by a sharp light that comes either from a low sun or a streetlamp or inside the shop. Where does, then, the title come from? The only year-round funfair in Budapest, featuring shows, puppet theatres, merry-go-rounds, shooting galleries, games of chance and skill, and other forms of popular entertainment, was at Városliget (City Park). Breaking away from the monotony of everyday life, blue-collar workers, who had almost no free time in the modern sense, could enjoy themselves there. During holidays, funfairs also popped up in squares and parks, for the amusement of the petit bourgeoisie, factory workers, day labourers, servants, and soldiers. Organ grinders and street performers were a frequent sight in the city.

In *Organ Grinders (Travelling Fire Eater)*, Derkovits emphatically portrayed, from the perspective of someone looking down from a window, the drudgery of entertainment. Elsewhere, the onlooker himself makes an appearance, watching the narrow street from behind open shutters. Here, too, we see the scene from above. Something is going on: a worker-looking man and a customer at the counter turn their heads towards the street. Coming from the right is a bright orange horse, with its harness hanging idly, pulling something we do not see. The cart of the showmen, perhaps? One thing is for sure, it is not one of the workhorses seen in Derkovits' other works; it looks more like a pony or a horse from a merry-go-round. Might not the stall on the corner be the instrument of an organ grinder? This interpretation is contradicted by the fact that the woman looks in a different direction. Her attention is directed at the child. Is she a performer, resting?

Generic suburban street or an event interrupting everyday routine, Derkovits, in his usual manner, invests the moment with meaning. The piercing blue of the stall and the blue reflections of the sidelight are in marked contrast with the radiant orange of the horse and the warm hues of the clothes of the gypsy woman and of passers-by. This creates, together with the play of lights, a firework-like intensity. The specifics of watercolour, colours intensified by the white of the underlying paper, are used to maximum effect.

This piece was among the works that had been transferred from the original Municipal Gallery to the Municipal Museum, renamed into Budapest History Museum in 1951.

Katalin Bakos

Cat. 46
Gyula Derkovits (1894–1934):
Ceremonial Speaker, 1931
ink on paper, 240×197 mm
s.r.t.: D.Gy.
Inv. n.: KM.63.27.
Purchased from
Mrs Béla Radnai, 1963

The unveiling ceremony, on 26 May 1929, of the Memorial Stone of Heroes left such a powerful impression on Gyula Derkovits that he dedicated several pen drawings to it. The event, the speeches, and the subsequent military parade were extensively covered in the press. Assembled on the square in front of the Millennium Memorial (the name Heroes' Square comes from 1932) was the guard of honour, in grandiose groups of bodyguards (with halberds and helmets) and palace and crown guardsmen (in feathered shakos, attilas, and long capes). Opposite to them were the leading dignitaries of the country in, as per the dress code, white-tie or "díszmagyar" i.e., Hungarian ceremonial dress. Speeches were given by prime minister István Bethlen and Jenő Sipőcz, the mayor of Budapest.

Derkovits perfectly captured the scene with just a few lines whose width ebbs and flows according to the pressure applied to the pen. Everything is concentrated into one small picture—the opulent festivities and the Millennium Memorial, which is a physical as well as a spiritual setting here—through a worm's eye view. The nape of the soldiers' necks and the awe on the listeners' faces are shown in a rather unflattering way. In his irredentism-tinged speech, Bethlen set the self-sacrifice and courage of those who died defending their country as an example. The memorial stone, he said, was not a gravestone but a foundation on which thousand-year-old Hungary would be rebuilt. Derkovits' drawing is no portrait: it is neither of the angular Bethlen nor of the mayor, a man, as seen in photographs, with symmetrical features, an air of civility, a pince-nez, and a moustache. The beastly, aggressive-looking figure—who is attired in "díszmagyar," has a Bocskai cap dangling grotesquely from his head, and is close to ripping the tablecloth apart with his ham-fisted hands—cannot be identified as a single person: he is the amalgamation of all the people and ideas in the crosshairs of the artist's biting satire. Derkovits, whose sympathies were with the social democrats and communists, had firsthand experience of the horrors of war, where he was scarred, physically and psychologically, for life, and considered war to serve the interests of the ruling classes. His drawing is an out-and-out protest against privilege and war propaganda.

Katalin Bakos

Cat. 47
Gyula Derkovits (1894–1934):
Sketch for Worry, 1931
tempera on paper,
115×94 mm
s.r.l.: Derkovits 1931
Inv. n.: KM.63.25.
Purchased from
Mrs Béla Radnai, 1963

A palm-sized drawing—a few dots of colour in visible brushstrokes and yellowish paper left untouched—and yet there is a world within. The world of Gyula Derkovits, of the poor, the vulnerable, the exploited. The greyish white clouds—silvery snow. A red triangle—human life, the warmth of emotion. Ice and snow, the fiercest adversaries of the poor, have a symbolic meaning in many of the artist's works. Standing in falling snow and bracing the wind, a working-class woman hides her child in her shawl, their only protection. This gesture of motherly love is a recurring motif in Derkovits' drawings and paintings and is shown from different angles, in close-ups or from afar, in a sketchy or a more finely detailed fashion, with emphasis shifting from the topography of the body to the protective gesture and to the facial expressions of sadness, worry, or caring. Here, the woman's attentive gaze remains elusive. A single soft line contours the figure, giving volume to her body. Everything else is colour. A sense of threat, struggle, coldness, bodily warmth, and a menacingly beautiful city is conveyed by soft touches of paint. Figure and background are almost one, the colour grey segues from dress to shawl and to city, blending in and out with the whiteness of snow. The yellow of the paper is like a frame on the right, the wall of a house on the left, enclosing the figure into a strip of grey, and skin tone in the middle. Everything moves, vibrates, waves. In this quivering mass, however, the woman's body assumes a certain solidity, highlighting her powerful embrace. What do we see, a sketch for a larger work or an autonomous piece? It fits in with Derkovits' solemn works in which he gives evidence, even amidst everyday struggles, to the value and beauty of life.
Both works on paper were acquired by the museum from the widow of collector Dr. Béla Radnai in 1963.

Katalin Bakos

Cat. 48
Gyula Derkovits (1894–1934):
Family (Proletarian Family), 1932
oil on canvas, 75×69 cm
s.l.t.: Derkovits
Inv. n.: KM.63.7
Purchased from Mrs László Steiner, formerly in the Fruchter Collection, 1963

The door opens, and we are greeted by warmth, high spirits, and harmony. We see the loving trio of mother, child, and grandmother. We are, undoubtedly, in the flat or kitchen, opening onto the corridor, of an urban working-class family. Where do, then, "warmth," "high spirits," and "harmony" come from? Well, the answer lies at the heart of Derkovits' art, who, however humble his subject, infuses human gestures and material surroundings, uses colours, and employs space with an abundance of expressivity. The glass door, which could just as well be closed, serves an important purpose: while it positions the viewer as the witness of an intimate scene, it also separates us from the small family space. This, the frame within a frame that cuts off imaginary spaces from each other and zooms in on the scene, is a common tool with Derkovits. There simply is no space, no air, between things and people for them to assume dimension. The rules of perspective do not apply here: we see the table from the side, when, clearly, the viewer's eyes are above the eye level. The "distortion" is intentional, since it brings the group closer together and highlights individual gestures.

A sense of calm radiates from the fusion of soft shapes. Warmth and joy, from the colours. It was in the early 30s that Derkovits' signature palette of oranges and pinks—their shades and combinations, balanced out and enlivened, like in this picture, by dashes of blue—appeared. The reflections on the door give a silvery tinge to the warm colour scheme. It is as though the scene has been bathed in light. A light without source; there is no window, no lamps, no fireplace—and how could there be, in a proletarian kitchen? And yet, behind the glass door, everything swims in uniform light.

Time has stopped; but, through a hidden iconology that is Derkovits' own, the scene is part of a greater whole. The three generations represent the past, while the unborn child is an emblem of the future. As often with him, the painter introduces an object that materialises the significance of time—there is a clock on the cupboard. Bread, water jug, and milk bottle—they are material and telltale signs of a spartan environment, but also the paraphernalia of everyday life. Placed next to them, the clock becomes the cruel instrument of early hours and the daily grind. As in many contemporary paintings on the subject, the father is absent, leaving the women to constitute the family. But, unlike elsewhere, where robust female figures are standing in the cold and rain, overshadowed by gendarmes, worrying about their detained or unemployed husbands, or about their children, there is no feeling of painful absence, of vulnerability and crippling poverty. Here, Derkovits captures a fleeting and precious moment of working-class family bliss. This piece was purchased for the museum from the Fruchter Collection in 1963.

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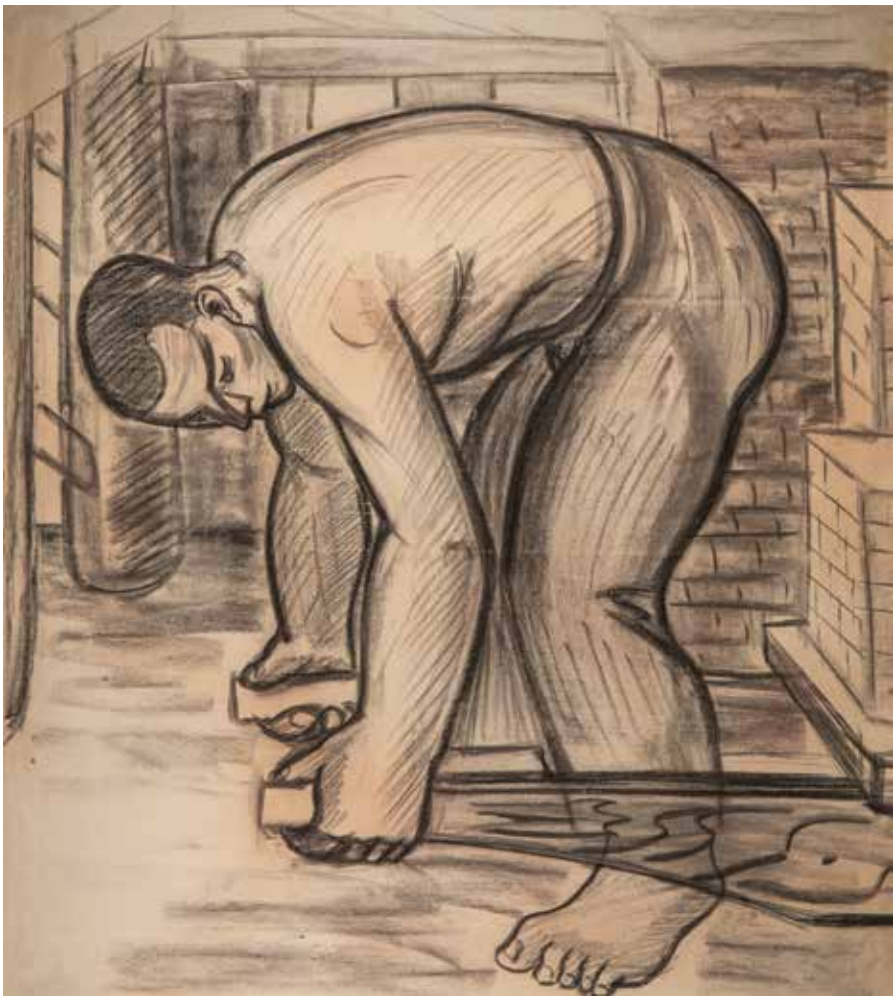
Katalin Bakos



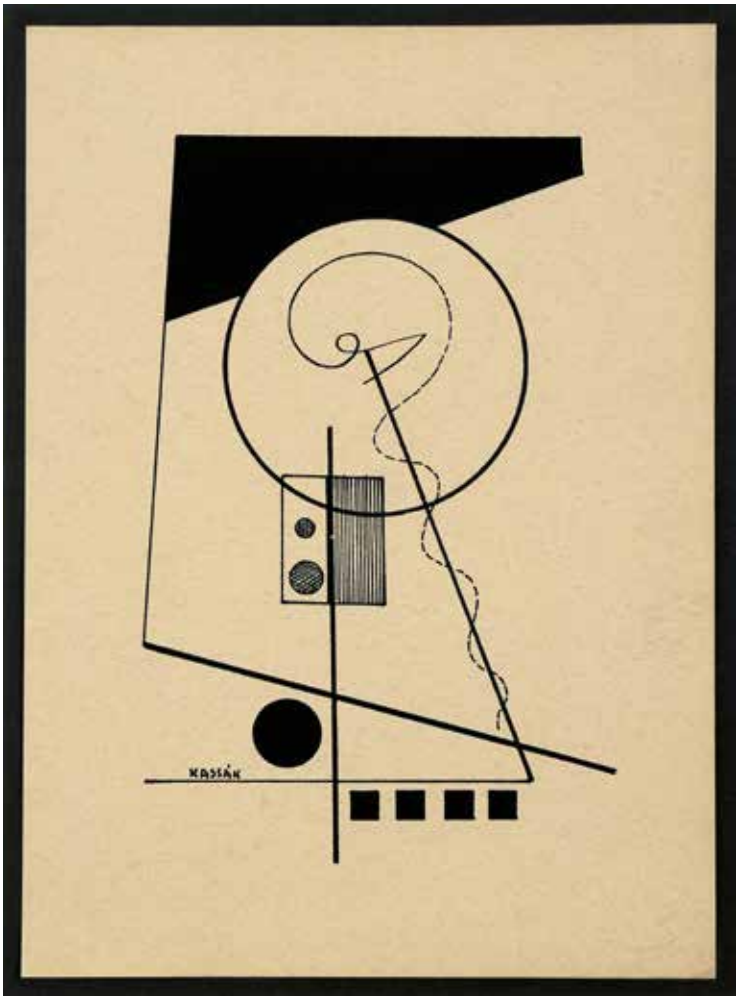
Cat. 49
István Dési Huber (1895–1944):
Construction Worker, 1930s
charcoal on paper,
735×660 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.64.85.
Purchased from the artist's widow, 1964

This large charcoal work by István Dési Huber is from the early 1930s, when the artist was interested in workers as a subject. He and his artist friends, all committed to the labour movement, worked—with models of varying ages and occupations, including, in Dési's words, "proud workers, down-and-out bureaucrats, funny proletarians, diggers, peasant boys new in the city, in short, the various strata of the working classes"—in a Vasvári Pál utca studio. Retaining something of the immediacy of studio drawings, the sketch seen here captures the distinctive motion of the mason lifting a handbarrow but takes a step towards a larger composition. The figure's round shapes cover almost the whole picture; the construction site and the tools are but hinted at. Dési lifts the youthful, strong, able-bodied worker out of time, increasing him to gigantic proportions. With its emphatic lines and shaded/rubbed bulges, the drawing could easily be the sketch for a tempera painting like *Ironworker* or *Groundworker*. In these, the workers assume a statue-like dignity, holding their tools like saints hold their attributes in altarpieces or church windows.

While *Construction Worker* preserves some of the original dimensions of the human form, figures in the latter paintings are flat, their roundish features constrained within rigid geometry. A solemn tone and the apotheosis of labour and labourer are also present in the works of Noémi Ferenczy, a friend of Dési's, and in the last period of Gyula Derkovits, a role model of his.

Katalin Bakos

Cat. 50
Lajos Kassák (1887–1967):
Page from the DUR folder, 1924
ink, brown paper on photo cardboard, 340×245 mm
s.l.l.: KASSÁK
Inv. n.: KM.89.5.
Donation of Sándor Piros, 1989



After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, left-wing Hungarian intellectuals and artists fled to Vienna to escape the White Terror and political repression of the Horthy regime. Hungarians formed a large community in the Austrian capital. Some of them were political emigrants, some left Hungary because of the numerus clausus law introduced in 1920, which limited the proportion of ethnic minorities and Jews in higher education. It was only after the general amnesty order of 1926 that those in emigration in Vienna went their different ways.
Lajos Kassák and his brother-in-law, Béla Uitz, editors of the journal *MA* (Today), were involved in the writers' and art directorate during the Hungarian Soviet Republic. After its fall, Kassák was imprisoned for a couple of months. He probably arrived in Vienna in the winter of 1919, where the first issue of the relaunched *MA* appeared in the spring of 1920. Kassák worked as an editor of the journal between 1920–1925. An excellent arts organiser, he convened not only activist artists in emigration but also European creators. Once they familiarised themselves with the newest trends, the formal qualities of Expressionism were replaced in *MA* by Dada and Constructivism. It was also during his emigration in Vienna that Kassák started to engage in artistic activities. His work published in Vienna testify of a dual attraction towards Dadaism and Constructivism, drawing from the playfulness of Dada as well as geometry. In the 20s, it was thanks to graphic albums printed in a few hundred copies that artists managed to establish contacts with other European art centres. Originally, the *DUR folder* appeared in 15 numbered and signed copies and included 5 ink drawings and a cover page. The compositions, drawn in black, are characterised by a dynamic design. The artist guides the eye through the strict geometric shapes using simple tools, such as wavy, broken lines. The rhythm, the movement and the title—a reference to the major key ("dúr" in Hungarian)—evoke musical associations. Josef Matthias Hauer, composer and prominent representative of atonal music, joined the *MA* staff in the beginning of 1924. In 1924, Kassák published Hauer's studies on music theory in a number of issues of *MA*. There is only one complete, original copy of the *DUR folder* in public collections; it is kept in the Picture Gallery of Szombathely. The single original sheet that forms part of the collection of the Municipal Gallery was donated to the museum by a private collector, Sándor Piros. In 1971, the original folder was reprinted in Germany.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 51
Farkas Molnár (1897–1945):
Two Dancers (Stage Scene), 1922
collage and mixed media on paper, 240×210 mm
s.r.l.: molnár farkas / 922
Inv. n.: KM.83.85.
Purchased from Ákos Vörösváry, 1983

Farkas Molnár originally wanted to become a painter, so he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1915–1916. He was involved with Lajos Kassák and his group, and several of his studies and drawings appeared in the journal *MA* (Today). Molnár enrolled at the Bauhaus school in 1921, and although he continued to work in the fine arts for a few years afterwards, he became increasingly interested in architecture. There were a couple of artists with whom he formed closer relationships, not only because they shared the same views but also because Marcel Breuer, Jenő Gábor and others had all started their career in the Artists' Circle of Pécs and their studies were similar, too. Their visual world was primarily influenced by the German moderns from Munich and their study trips to Italy. After his early Expressionism inspired by Béla Uitz, during his time in the Bauhaus school, Molnár's artistic attention turned towards Constructivism.

In his theatrical works, he followed the Bauhaus view of a rigorously structured, controlled, unified, "mechanical stage". Although Oskar Schlemmer became the head of the Bauhaus theatre workshop only in 1923, he had already taught Molnár in the wood sculpture workshop in 1922, and thus he was familiar with both Schlemmer's stage experiments conducted since the 1910s and his abstract ideas on the relationship between man and space. Apart from the Dutch Theo van Doesburg, Molnár's dramatic pieces were influenced by the work of Andor Weininger, who also had ties to the town of Pécs.

Molnár's work made in 1922, entitled *Two Dancers (Stage Scene)* shows two typified figures without faces, constructed from geometric shapes. Their movement affects their surroundings: the space around them forms cubist, abstract beams. It is as if the two figures were standing in the spotlight, and we were watching the geometric shapes created by the projections. The question whether it is in fact a stage design, or rather a real or imaginary scene from a dance variety show still remains unanswered today.

Theatre and architecture met again in the oeuvre of Farkas Molnár a few years later, in his plans for the U theatre, published in 1925.

The piece was purchased for the fine arts collection from Ákos Vörösváry, the founder of the First Hungarian Visual Library.

Péter Köblös

Cat. 52
Sándor Bortnyik (1893–1976):
Mrs Endre Gáspár (born Kata Fenyő) / Portrait of a Woman, c. 1921
oil on canvas, 99.5×70 cm
s.l.l.: BORTNYIK WIEN
Inv. n.: KM.70.30.
Purchased from Mrs Endre Gáspár, 1970

This portrait of Kata Fenyő, sitting in a cobalt dress, at an elegant tea table, with a cityscape in the background, was painted by Bortnyik during his Vienna exile. Fenyő was married to the translator and essayist Endre Gáspár, who spoke 10 languages and who, having played an active role in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, had to flee the country in 1919. The couple belonged to the circle of left-wing immigrant intellectuals in Vienna.

Endre Gáspár worked as a translator for Theater an der Wien and was a close friend of Lajos Kassák, eventually becoming his first biographer. It was through Kassák that Bortnyik met the couple. The magnetic intellect of the young wife, a translator in her own right, was proverbial among their friends. Attila József, who was going through his expressionistic free verse period in Vienna, dedicated several poems to her. In the 1930s, the Gáspárs translated the works of Hungarian, Danish, Spanish, and Italian authors into German; Kata Gáspár translated, for example, Zsigmond Móricz's Erdély trilogy into German while raising her daughter Jutka.

The Anschluss forced them back to Budapest. Endre Gáspár was deported in 1944; Kata Gáspár took her own life before his return.

There is at first a cubistic feel to the geometric composition. Although objects, perspective, and light are dissected in an analytic fashion, the woman's facial features (left intact), her expressive look and bob, the dynamism of hands and dress, and a decorative, picture book-like quality point towards the influence, not only of Cubism but also of Bortnyik's record as a graphic designer.

The painting was acquired by the museum 50 years after its creation, in 1970, from Endre Gáspár's second wife.

Anikó B. Nagy, Péter Köblös

Cat. 53
Vilmos Aba-Novák (1894–1941):
Italian Port / Italian Landscape, 1930
tempera on plywood, 50×60 cm
s.r.l. ABA-NOVÁK
Inv. n.: KM.76.50.
Purchased at the 40th auction of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1976

In 1928, Vilmos Aba-Novák received a scholarship, founded by then-director Tibor Gerevich, from the Academy of Hungary in Rome. Rome had a powerful influence on both the art and the career of the painter, also a gifted draughtsman. He realised that it was the tempera paintings that were best preserved, in luminous colours, throughout the centuries. Consequently, he started using tempera on gesso wood panels. He made his paints himself, and even ventured into paint manufacturing, hoping to make a living out of quality products cheaper than their German counterparts.

Seen here is a landscape that bears all the hallmarks of Aba-Novák's Italian period: the quintessentially Italian towns, on steep hillsides along the sea, are executed in bold brushstrokes. Popping out from the *chiaroscuro* (of twilight or tempest) are bright spots of colour, a red roof, orange sails. Aba-Novák explored the city of Rome and more, roaming around the Italian peninsula with painter Károly Patkó, a friend from his youth.

Aba-Novák's painting, the only one in the Municipal Gallery's collection, was acquired in the 1970s at a BÁV auction.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 54
István Szőnyi (1894–1960):
Sunday Afternoon, 1934
tempera on canvas,
110×140 cm
s.r.l.: Szőnyi I.1934
Inv. n.: KM.65.211.
Purchased from
Sándor Szilágyi,
1965

The period between the two World Wars marked the renewal of tempera painting in Hungarian art. Members of he so-called Gresham Circle, i.e. artists following in the footsteps of the Nagybánya School, were at the forefront of the revitalisation. First and foremost, István Farkas and István Szőnyi brought tempera to the forefront. Their art is similar in its expressive, rhythmical colouring and the equal importance of compositional details.

However, while Farkas, despite his expressly dream-like quality, avoided idealisation and portrayed the disharmony of his time with elemental force, in his mature works, Szőnyi strove for a kind of elevated, idyllic balance. The founder and leading artist of the former Arcadia circle, later a fellow of the Rome Academy, had no other choice. Just like his fellow artists, Károly Patkó, Vilmos Aba-Novák and others, as a reaction to the restless progressive currents of the turn of the century and to the shocking historical events, he longed for a timeless classicism that had never existed.

In 1923 he moved to Zebegény, where he developed the tempera technique he used until his death. Unlike Farkas, who applied the tempera to woodblocks in a manner similar to the ancient Italian method, Szőnyi applied the rigid, fragile paint to the more flexible canvas developed for oil painting.

The bright, serene colours of the painting radiate a calm, weightless harmony, while they also transmit the achievements of previous eras, such as 19th-century realism and the plein air painting of Nagybánya. The only partly depicted, schematic faces—which in Farkas work symbolise helplessness and the inability to communicate—in Szőnyi's work convey a sense of unity and security of belonging to a community—to the "innocent", "natural" peasant community, which the painter, having been born in Újpest, preferred to the chaos of the big city, and about which he sincerely believed that, with its power of connection, it would be the guarantee of a hopeful future.

The Municipal Gallery purchased the piece from collector Sándor Szilágyi in 1965.

Péter Köblös

Cat. 55
Károly Patkó (1895–1941): *After Bathing (Bathing Women)*, 1926
oil on canvas, 115×115 cm
s.r.l.: Patkó 1926.
Inv. n.: KM.76.51.
Purchased at the 40th auction of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1976

Károly Patkó was a representative artist of the neoclassical movement that started in the first half of the 1920s. Beside him, it is Vilmos Aba-Novák and István Szőnyi who get the most mention in the literature. In the dramatic historical situation following World War I, the painters of the so-called Szőnyi circle turned away from the reality of everyday life—they did not create utopian pieces but turned to the past and portrayed visionary images of a golden age. Strong figurative painting was characteristic of all of them: they showed respect for classical painting, especially for Renaissance and Baroque, for the traditions of the so-called Nagybánya colony and Nyolcak (The Eight), as well as the Activists, and used a solemn way of expression. Alongside landscapes and self-portraits, perhaps the most characteristic genre they used was nude painting, depicted in a mythological or biblical, sometimes arcadian setting, painted boldly, plastically, making the most of light and shadow effects.

Similarly to the other members of the group, Károly Patkó was devoted to nude painting, and created several pieces on the subject of bathing. The exhibited piece, from 1926, marks the end of his monumental nude portraiture.

The composition is a variation of a well-known piece, titled *Bathing*, created by István Szőnyi, who, in turn, was paraphrasing *Bathsheba at Her Bath* by Rembrandt. The motif of the mistress and maid is repeated in Patkó's painting with slight variations. The landscape in the background is very similar to the one in his picture titled *Felsőbánya*, made a year earlier. Researchers suggest that *Bathers* is a studio painting, the ink sketch for which might have been made in 1925 in Felsőbánya, a mountain village where Patkó worked with Aba-Novák in the summer of 1925. This is also the setting for *Harvesters' Rest*, which is described in the literature as one of the main works of his farewell to the golden age.

Anna Kopócsy

Cat. 56
Villő Turcsány (1972):
Nell Shell, 2009
synthetic resin (acrystal), white thread,
124×44×40 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2014.6.1.
Purchased from the artist, 2014

Villő Turcsány studied sculpture at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in the 1990s. In her early pieces, she systematically explored human gestures, qualities and states. Already at this time, sculptural problems of how the body is wedged into space and the questions of suspended objects appeared in her works.
Her installation *Nell Shell*, made in the second half of the 2000s, is an amorphous form of a human shell suspended on strings, reminiscent of a pupated insect. It is a shell from which the essence of the human has already hatched: it is gone and has left only the shell of the "soul" behind. Or is it, perhaps, just the contrary and it is the deserted substance that contains the essence? The structure of the shell, fixed at eight points, can be seen as parallel with the artist's later explorations of the pendulum; in the course of the artistic treatment of the pendulum—a rigid body suspended at a point outside the centre of a mass—it is the problem of dependence on external factors, the instability of human existence that takes shape. Similarly to the movement of the pendulum, *Nell Shell* depicts the unpredictability of human existence—the alternating states of the initial push, the oscillation and the equilibrium.
Villő Turcsány's piece is ominous in its surroundings. It was acquired by the Municipal Gallery in 2014, following the artist's exhibition in the Temple Space of the Kiscell Museum.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 57-58
Noémi Ferenczy (1890–1957):
Reading Girl, 1947
tapestry woven in wool
43×36.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2024.10.1
Purchased from
Ernő Kolozsváry, 1969

Muse, 1938
tapestry woven in wool,
126×135 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.71.22.
Purchased from
Mrs Béla Radna, 1971

It took Noémi Ferenczy, the founder of modern Hungarian tapestry and a member of an influential dynasty of artists, a long time to find her medium and her voice. She never went to school and grew up with the pressure of becoming an artist—her father, Károly Ferenczy, was one of the leaders of the plein air school at Nagybánya (Baia Mare), her older brother, Valér, following in his father's footsteps, also became a painter, and her twin brother, Béni, studied sculpture. Her travels in Europe, the salons at their Nagybánya home, and her mother, Olga Fialka, who was cultured, spoke many languages, and put her children's education before a career in art, were the cornerstones of Noémi Ferenczy's upbringing and open world view. First, the family pushed her towards tailoring and fashion, and she apprenticed at Munich and Vienna fashion houses.

It was at Paris' Musée des Arts Decoratifs that she saw the masterpieces of 14th- and 15th-century French tapestry for the first time. Her devotion to tapestry had one of its roots here. In 1911, she was staying in Paris to learn the foundations of the craft at the renowned Manufacture des Gobelins. "What's easy in tapestry lies in its difficulty," she wrote in her diary. "For through the long, arduous work a richness goes into it which is unknown in painting where there is always the possibility, the loophole, of repainting. This 'now or never' teaches one absolute absorption, and everything is about the heightening of this absorption." Now regularly exhibiting and internationally recognised, the artist worked ten- and twelve-hour days, in perfect concentration and discipline. Contrary to common practice, she wove her tapestries herself, using detailed sketches, colour maps, and painted cartoons which she modified along the process. Designing and weaving were two sides of the same coin to her.

In the late 1910s, she was introduced to Budapest's left-wing intellectual circles, to the Vasárnapi Kör (Sunday Circle) of film critic Béla Balázs and philosopher György Lukács, where poet, writer, graphic artist, designer Anna Lesznai was also a member. She, like Béni Ferenczy, participated in the cultural political work of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, and served a short term as head of the Gödöllő weaving workshop. Her experience as a contributor to a utopian society's new ideal of man, her subsequent Vienna exile, and the workers' strike in Romania transformed her outlook and subject matter. She started her series dedicated to labour, featuring large figures on monochrome backgrounds, at Nagybánya in the early 20s. These closed compositions are decidedly flat and monumental, yet also quietly intimate. The stylistic pluralism of the interwar years (post-Nagybánya, neo-classicism, Expressionism) led Ferenczy down various artistic and intellectual

avenues but left her outsider position, specific to her medium, untouched. She was invited to the 1924 Vienna International Exhibition, where she, a Baia Mare resident, showed as a Romanian artist.

Following her mother's death in 1932, the Baia Mare family house was emptied, and Noémi Ferenczy moved to Budapest. It was here that she made *Muse*, a tapestry in the aesthetic and intellectual vein of her labourer pieces and showing a figure absorbed in work, which can be interpreted as a hidden self-portrait or as a metaphor of her ideas on art. In a letter to her friend Károly Tolnay, a leading art critic of the time, she says the following about the background's blue: "Frightfully important, the blue background, and intellectually, too—clear, unambiguous, bright, gleeful, brave, and 'beauty ideal.'"

It took her great effort to return to work after the World War II. Her threads and loom rollers perished in the siege. She was grappling with financial worries and loneliness. But her 1947 exhibition at the Hungarian Communist Party's gallery in Budapest's 2nd district was a success and gained her commissions. *Reading Girl*, with sickles round its borders, is, on the one hand, a variation on *Muse* and, on the other, references both her earlier political/ideological stances and worker figures.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 59
Aurél Bernáth (1895–1982):
Brooder, 1930
chalk pastel on paper, 70×100 cm
s.l.l.: BA
Inv. n.: KM.67.37.
Purchased from Mrs László Steiner, formerly in the Fruchter Collection, 1967

Aurél Bernáth led a revolution in pastels in the 1930s, which can also be seen in his oils from this period. It is with pastels that he achieves a whirlwind of bright, hazy, and velvety surfaces, conveying a sense of fleeting memory. Here, the painter, who, since his youth, has been a self-avowed leftist, puts on a display of European bourgeois comfort and prosperity: in a fashionably light dress, closing her eyes and half asleep, a young woman leans over a table with a wrought iron railing and the sea in the background bathed in afternoon sun. We are witnessing an intimate idyll: the somewhat generic features of the woman's face turn out to be those of the physician Dr. Alice Pártos, the artist's wife and a significant figure of Hungarian balneology.

The afternoon, or after-hours, slumber, that caught her at the family table, lends her face an almost girlish quality. Behind her we see the marine blue of the Italian "Riviera" at Genoa, a colour that transforms the fluttering curtains into an undulating veil of quintessentially Mediterranean cirri, and the objects on the table, into seashells. The figure, and, with it, the whole picture, emerges from a cloud of abstraction. Surfaces and lines oscillate between light and dark, positive and negative. What seem to be the figments of the lover's imagination are counteracted and recontextualised by the concrete details of the figure's environment, the waves in the light reflecting from the sea or the arabesque of the railing. The sharp contrast between spatial elements and lighting calls to mind avant-garde photomontages and graphics, phenomena not unknown to Bernáth who, not much earlier, during his exile in Vienna after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, was in contact with the circle of activist artists around Lajos Kassák. The notion of montage finds expression on both a spatial and a temporal level. As the elusive grid on the right metamorphoses into the tablecloth pattern on the left, so too do Bernáth's earlier styles culminate in one picture. The expression on the doll-like face of Alice Pártos, almost a mask, says that brooding is now a state of the deepest introspection.

Originally in the collection of Lajos Fruchter, the piece was purchased from his daughter in 1967.

Péter Köblös

In the early 1930s, Mária Barta produced several pictures, oils as well as collages, a technique she had learned to appreciate in 1920s Paris, of theatre dance scenes. *Ribbon Dance* is, in fact, part of a series with similar subjects—totem dance, moon dance, vaudeville, spiritual tree dance. After her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Budapest under Géza Udvardy, József Rippl-Rónai, and Béla Iványi-Grünwald, she spent the 1920s at the Academy of Applied Arts Vienna—where she worked in stage and costume design, developing, perhaps, a taste for theatre dance—and in Paris. Collage making, which entered the repertoire of avant-garde art with Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, and a sense for decorative patchwork style compositions might have been souvenirs from her Paris days. Back in Hungary, she frequently exhibited until 1948, but opportunities dried up for her in the following decade. It wasn't until 1959 that she made her comeback, in exhibitions at the Ernst Museum and Fényes Adolf Hall. Academic and commercial interest in her work gathered momentum first in the late 1980s. *Ribbon Dance*, then in private hands, was shown at Szombathely Gallery in 1999 and acquired by the Municipal Gallery in 2000.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 60
Mária Barta (1897–1969):
Ribbon Dance, 1932
oil on canvas,
49.5×58.5 cm
s.r.l.: Barta Mária / 1932
Inv. n.: KM.2000.4.
Donated by the artist's niece Zsuzsa Barta, 2000

Cat. 61
Jolán Gross-Bettelheim (1900–1972):
Bridges 2., 1930s
lithography on paper,
sheet: 405×490 mm;
print: 318×423 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.83.108.
Purchase from
Ákos Vörösváry,
1983

Following the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, in the summer of 1919, Jolán Gross interrupted her studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest, left the country and emigrated to Vienna. After a one-year stay in Vienna, she spent two years in Berlin, where she was introduced to the world of Expressionism and Constructivism. She married Frigyes Bettelheim, a Hungarian doctor in exile, and they settled in the United States in 1925. In America, she created graphic prints, her lithographs and etchings were published in portfolios. Her subjects were similar to the European Expressionism of the 1920s: industrial constructions, bridges, railways, skyscrapers and factories. One significant difference, however, was that while in Europe, this was more of a representation of the desired future shown in the *New Artists' Book* (Vienna, 1922) published by Lajos Kassák and László Moholy-Nagy; in the America of the '30s, due to huge infrastructural investments, it was a depiction of the present. In parallel with the rise of fascism in the 1930s, she became an increasingly committed anti-fascist, and not only her constructivist imagery, but her left-wing thinking and her communist allegiance were akin to those of Béla Uitz.

In May 1933, Béla Uitz, who was living in the Soviet Union, wrote a letter to comrade Ternovets, director of the Museum of Modern Art in Moscow, to draw his attention to the oeuvre of Jolán Gross-Bettelheim, which he had acquainted himself with recently. The museum in Moscow found her works remarkable and did indeed buy some of her pieces. The industrial landscapes of her lithographs radiate power and astonish the viewer not only with the beauty and rationality of the engineering achievements, but also with the dynamism of the composition. The structure of her picture *Bridges* overrides reality—the industrial motifs, bridges and railways are arranged in an abstract pattern that fills the entire frame; the sweeping arcs set the space in motion. The slightly alarming monumentality of it all makes one feel as if one were walking on the expressionist film set of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).

After World War II, in the McCarthy era, she became isolated as a result of her communist convictions. Her husband died in 1956, and she returned to Hungary a month before the revolution. After her death, her estate landed in private hands. The Municipal Gallery acquired Gross-Bettelheim's works in the 1980s.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 62
Lenke Földes (1896–1986):
Kneeling Woman, 1930s
carved, polished white marble, 11.5×5.5×9.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.93.170.
Transfer from the Hungarian National Gallery, 1993

Lenke Földes (Sonnenfeld) started her training in Budapest and finished it in Vienna, where she fled with her husband István Földes, a social democratic lawyer who held a position at the home commissariat, and, on the suggestion of Márk Vedres, in Paris. She studied under Antoine Bourdelle (1861–1929), a sought-after sculptor who provided her with exhibition opportunities, at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, a progressive alternative to traditional academies. Her other obvious influence was Aristide Maillol. Starting in 1925, she was a household name at the Salon des Tuileries and the Salon des Indépendants. Following her internationally acclaimed exhibition of 1930, the Musée de Luxembourg purchased several of her pieces.

Her small, figural sculptures are mostly made of Carrara or Ruschita marble. She direct-carved her figures, without clay or plaster models. Her works reveal an introspective, contemplative artist. She also made portraits, including one of Vilmos Vázsonyi (1927) which stood in the Lipótváros Democrats' Circle's offices in Budapest until it was removed, in 1944, when the organisation's assets were seized.

Though small, her works, mostly of solitary female figures with archaic connotations, have a monumental feel. Motherhood is a recurring theme in her art, which might have to do with her having to leave her two small children behind, who were raised by grandparents until the amnesty of 1925.

Despite the self-enclosed composition and the stark surfaces, the kneeling, or crouching, woman, seen here, radiates tenderness and benevolence.

Made in 1944, the sculpture was featured in a 1945 album that had photographs of 32 works by Földes and contributions by Bourdelle, Lajos Kassák, Aurél Kárpáti, Béla Révész, and Sándor Szerdahelyi. Despite being lauded by both Ernő Kállai and Lajos Kassák and shown at post-war group shows, as well as at a 1949 solo exhibition at the Vérhalom tér Gallery of the Hungarian Working People's Party, her work went largely unnoticed in Hungary.

The first significant exhibition of her works was held in autumn 1959 at the Fényes Adolf Hall, curated by art historian János Frank. The pieces in her estate were donated by her son to the Hungarian National Gallery in 1988.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 63
István Farkas (1887–1944):
Encounter in the Cemetery (Black Women), 1931
tempera on wood,
80×100 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.66.200.
Purchased from
Mrs László Steiner,
formerly in the Fruchter
Collection, 1966

Settling in Paris in 1926, István Farkas was a full and respected member of the artists' circle at Montparnasse, a fact clear from the free verse poems written to accompany his 1926–28 works by André Salmon, a prominent art critic and a champion of Cubism, as well as from *Correspondances*, their joint effort from 1929, which marked a turning point in Farkas' career. There followed a period of extreme fertility, the fruits of which were presented at 1932's show at the Ernst Museum. It might be said that it was in these works that Farkas found his voice, a style that was radically different from that of the École de Paris. *Black Women* is part of a larger group of figurative paintings from this time *(Evening, Italian Memory, Red Table)*. These works, created in 1931, had been described by the monographer Jenő Nyilas-Kolb as "scene compositions" that do not capture any specific events: "His figures are actors, characters in a play that is nameless, ineffable, yet always present. The black, blurry-faced women in the picture melt into a single vision; their intentions—unknown. Their black clothes must have to do with grief and death." The sawn-off tree and the spectral figures reinforce each other's presence. These strange women are immaterial, lacking personality, as in a nightmare. The picture is architectural, with a strong verticality. Its dominant tone is a brownish grey punctuated by emphatic whites and blacks and by flashes of blue and orange. It is closed, like a prison, but also open. A gate and buildings frame the scene, while open shutters and steps present us with a way to escape. The world of István Farkas is twofold. What he shows is his demons, but also the bleakness and horror of reality.
Originally, this emblematic piece was in Lajos Fruchter's collection, whence it was purchased by the city of Budapest.

Anna Kopócsy

In the late 1920s, Tibor Vilt spent several years in Italy on a scholarship from the Academy of Hungary in Rome. The programme of artistic modernisation designed by art historian Tibor Gerevich, director of the Hungarian Institute in Rome, aimed at artistic progress free of the avant-garde, and set the Italian neo-classical aspirations of the time as an example. The idea was that having studied Italian art, the fellows would acquire a clear, non-radical style that would enable them to honourably represent the country in international exhibitions. This early piece by Vilt fits in with the Roman School's efforts to renew Christian ecclesiastical art. Considering the way it was formed, the contemplative figure of Saint John of God—a monk who was selfless in helping his fellow human beings on the margins of society and was later canonised—is reminiscent of Gothic pillar or niche sculptures. The expressive, dynamic details of the surface of this classicist, enclosed sculpture foreshadow the artist's later periods.

Viktória Oth

Cat. 64
Tibor Vilt (1905–1983):
Saint John of God, 1937
bronze, 90×21.5×21 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.77.40.
Purchased from the Szent István Boulevard branch of BÁV (Consignment Store Company), 1977

THOSE WHO LEFT AND THOSE WHO STAYED: THE POST-WAR GENERATION

World War II left destruction and ruins everywhere. Many artists with Jewish origins had perished: Lajos Vajda was killed by tuberculosis aggravated by labour service, Imre Ámos died in a concentration camp in Germany. 1945 marked a new beginning in art; on 13 October, the European School was founded with the aim of rehabilitating previously oppressed modern and avant-garde tendencies and to create a Hungarian art that was in touch with contemporary European developments. Between March 1946 and November 1948, they had 38 exhibitions. There was no one prevailing style within the group; their post-war output came under the headings of abstraction, Expressionism, and Surrealism. Some of the members were already successful artists by 1945; others spent the next three years in exploration; yet others found their voices during this period. It was European School artists like Endre Bálint and Dezső Korniss that were sought out as masters by the succeeding generation.

The situation of women was not much easier now than it had been during the interwar years. Almost all female members came to the group through living or dead husbands. Their art was judged by patriarchal standards; Margit Anna and Júlia Vajda were seen first and foremost as artists' widows; married women were more readily accepted as muses than as artists. Many of them depended on other jobs to make a livelihood; Lili Ország worked at the State Puppet Theater; Margit Anna painted ceramic buttons.

After 1945, positions at the Academy of Fine Arts were filled by former members of the Gresham Circle. Contemporary Western art trickled down to students, including young European School members, through, for example, writer, language teacher, and press attaché to the French embassy in Hungary François Gachot, who had a lasting effect on their artistic outlook.

The "abstraction debate" gained momentum in 1946 and portended the radical cultural political turn of 1948–49. Already in 1946, abstract art was met with

hostility and damning criticism. Although the older masters stayed, many young artists never returned from their travels abroad—Simon Hantaï, Judit Reigl, Vera Molnár, and Ferenc Fiedler settled in Paris, joining there the post-war wave of Surrealism in 1947–48. Following the communist transition, avant-garde artists in Hungary were forced to choose: it was either conforming to the party line and meeting the requirements of cultural policies, which would earn them commissions and exhibitions, or engaging in "double-entry book-keeping," which meant doing official commissions in public and relegating free, unfettered work to the private studio while having a 9 to 5 job. Modern artists like Margit Anna, Lili Ország, and Dezső Korniss went a long time without exhibitions in Budapest.

The fall of the 1956 Revolution launched a fresh wave of emigration. Among the leavers were Endre Rozsda, Ervin Pátkai, and Anna Mark. Endre Bálint, too, went to Paris in 1957 but returned in 1962, resuming his career in Hungary. The 1960s brought an easing in cultural politics, which, however, did not engender artistic freedom—far from it, artists were still performing a balancing act between their livelihood and artistic integrity. This was what Lajos Barta did before he left the country and settled in Germany in 1965.

Starting with the second half of the 70s, the acquisition strategy of the Municipal Gallery focused on post-1945 pieces. In 1973, Margit Tőkeiné Egry was appointed to the head of the Fine Art Department; her deputy was Emília Földes, who, together with Péter Mattyasovszky, oversaw acquisitions. Soon, a substantial body of works by Dezső Korniss, Endre Bálint, and Margit Anna was acquired; a significant part of Lili Ország's estate also ended up in the museum in 1980. The fact that the works of avant-garde, European School artists were now in a public collection represented an important milestone on the road towards canonisation.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 65
Lajos Vajda (1908–1941):
Icon (Icon of a Girl), 1936
pastel on paper,
545×398 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.80.126.
Purchased from
Mrs Imre Kelemen, 1980

Lajos Vajda is an outstanding point of reference in twentieth-century Hungarian avant-garde art. A posthumous member of the European School, his inspiration has been of great importance not only for his contemporaries but also for later generations. After his return from Paris in 1935, he regularly walked around the towns of Szigetmonostor and Szentendre, collecting motifs with his fellow painter, Dezső Korniss. He gave account of their shared artistic principles and plans in a letter to his wife-to-be, Júlia Richter (Vajda), in August 1936. The concept, referred to in Hungarian art history as the Szentendre Programme, was inspired by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály's efforts to collect folk music. The idea was to renew contemporary art on the basis of folk art, seeking a synthesis between national and universal, Eastern and Western, old and new.

Szentendre's Serbian Orthodox tradition must have awakened nostalgic feelings in the artist, who had lived and studied in Serbia from the age of eight to fifteen. His series of icons, drawing from both orthodox icon painting and Western modern art, fits well with the aims of the Szentendre Programme. His half-length portraits, with their frontal setting, symmetry, solemnity and stillness, recall the world of the icons of the Eastern Orthodox churches, while the extreme formal reduction, which simplifies the human face almost into symbols, the construction of geometric elements and the free use of colour are tools used in Western modern art.

The icons in question are not of saints or Christ and no inscriptions identify the depicted. The emphasis is much more on the form itself, a form that evolved over centuries and hence is eternal. In his picture listed as *Icon of a Girl*, the round shape of the head rests on a rectangle formed by the neck and the middle part of the body. As opposed to naturalistic details, the abstract, simple, geometric construction gives the image a more intellectual quality by elevating the visual reality into the realm of the spiritual. Forming the body out of a rectangle or a square and a circle is also used in psychological tests—the two shapes together evoke associations of a human figure. The rectangle can also be understood as a reference to the material world, the world on Earth, as a solid base, while the circle is a symbol of perfection, of the celestial or spiritual sphere. This kind of dualism is also present in the use of colours. While the outline of the body is warm, red and green, the head is cold, light blue. The shimmering, mysterious, greenish background evokes an ethereal sphere. The body of the figure, in keeping with its icon-like nature, disappears behind the rhythmic lines that replace the creases of a garment. The delicacy of the lines and the tiny modifications of the shapes—such as the slanted eyes, the narrow nose, the soft curves of the shoulders and the arms—may convey a feeling of femininity.

Mária Árvai

A victim of the WWII persecution of Jews, painter Imre Ámos died in a concentration camp. His Jewish origin and faith had always been his compass in life, and he accepted his fate. He was a gentle soul and he showed forbearance even in the worst of times, forever waiting for a miracle, a stance not unfamiliar in Judaism. He grew up in Nagykálló, in a strict religious environment that observed Jewish holidays and customs. He was born as Imre Ungár, changing his name—after the prophet Amos—to Ámos when he started college. That Amos' prophecies about the downfall of the people of Israel would come true he could not have guessed during this peaceful period of his life.

His approach as a painter transcended the boundaries of the visible world; blurry, dreamlike visions appear next to physical reality, growing in intensity to revelations over time and completely subsuming the pictures in his later years. Fire, a key element in his system of symbols, is doubly present in *The Prophet*, an ink drawing. The flames raging at the head symbolise dedication, commitment, purity, while the fire over the shoulder are reminders of the actual state of the world, of destruction and cataclysm. The seer, the image-bearer of God, turns inwards, towards his tragic vision.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 66
Imre Ámos (1907–1944):
The Prophet, 1940s
ink and ink wash on paper, 590×460 mm
s.l.l.: Amos
Inv. n.: KM.67.89.
Purchased from Margit Anna, 1967

Cat. 67
Pál Pátzay (1896–1979):
Snake Killer, c. 1947
bronze, 69×47×13 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: 61.396.
Purchased from the artist, 1961

While at the beginning of his career, Pál Pátzay was associated with the avant-garde, later, in the 1930s, as an artist of the Roman School, he took interest in the forms and motifs of classicism. His small-size model of the *Snake Killer* was made for a Raoul Wallenberg memorial, his first public piece after the war. During the Holocaust, Wallenberg worked at the Swedish Embassy in Budapest and tried to rescue persecuted people. In 1945, he was on his way to Debrecen, in an effort to try and get in touch with the Provisional National Government, when he and his entourage disappeared. For quite some time, the circumstances of his death were unknown. By now, it seems certain that he died in a Soviet state security prison. Already in the year of his disappearance, the capital initiated that a sculpture should be made to commemorate the Swedish diplomat, who saved tens of thousands of lives. The memorial was to stand in Szent István park, in Újlipótváros (a typically Jewish neighbourhood of Budapest), however, following its erection, it was ordered to be dismantled before it was unveiled. Later, in the 1950s, it was re-erected near the pharmaceutical factory in Debrecen. The recast statue was returned to its originally intended location only at the end of the 1990s. While the man wrestling with the snake in Pátzay's small-scale model serves as a reference to humanity's fight against eternal evil, at the given moment in history, it symbolised the fight against fascism.

Viktória Oth

Cat. 68
Margit Anna (1913–1991):
Angel, c. 1948
oil on canvas,
28×22.5 cm
s.r.l.: Anna M
Inv. n.: KM.77.16.
Purchased from
Ernő Kolozsváry, 1977

During the 1930s, Margit Anna studied painting at the school of János Vaszary and at the graphics workshop of the National Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association (OMIKE). It was in the latter that she met painters Lajos Vajda, Júlia Vajda, Endre Bálint, and Imre Ámos, whom she married in 1936. Starting in 1938, the group spent summers at Szentendre.

In the early 1940s, her husband was regularly called up for labour service, where he died in 1944. Joining the European School with her artist friends in 1945, Margit Anna showed at several of its exhibitions. Her solo show was also the last one organised by the School. The catalogue leads us to believe that *Angel*, painted about 1948, was shown here. Appearing in the role and with the attributes of an angel, the doll, with its large head of crude shapes, conjures up the world of children's drawings. The childish quality of thick lines and simple shapes is a conscious choice on the artist's part. In this way, the artist assumes a child's wide-eyed perspective, while also freeing herself from the conventions of representation.

The "primitive" drawing flies in the face of the canon of beauty and can be interpreted as a natural reaction to the horrors of war.

The sad-eyed *Angel* holds a sword against his/her face. There is in the oeuvre a later counterpart to this painting. In *Gabriel* (1969), an angel is wielding a red sword, engulfed in flames, that is similar to the one seen here. It was Gabriel, whose name means "power of God," who expelled the first man and woman from Paradise after the Fall. Henceforth, a flaming sword blocks the way to the tree of life. The sword is Gabriel's attribute, as well as a symbol of war. But there is hope, too, in the softer colours and in the figure of the angel (messenger, guardian). Suffering and joy, fear and hope, scared and menacing are the dualities which make up Margit Anna's angel. The Kolozsváry Collection holds one of the largest bodies of the artist's work to this day; this piece was purchased from Ernő Kolozsváry, in an effort to enlarge the museum's European School holdings.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 69
Dezső Korniss (1908–1984):
Dancer (Spider), 1947
enamel paint, yellow paper, 251×210 mm
s.l.l.: Korniss D; s.r.l.: 947
Inv. n.: KM.78.75
Purchased from Ákos Vörösváry, 1978

Dezső Korniss attended the Academy of Fine Arts between 1925 and 1929. His teachers, István Csók and János Vaszary, had a western, French-leaning orientation and encouraged independent artistic expression. This is where Korniss met Lajos Vajda. An exhibition of the students' work, organised in 1928 in Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle), turned into a scandal because of the progressive, experimental nature of the exhibited pieces. Korniss got his degree in the summer of 1929, Lajos Vajda, however, did not get a chance to finish his studies—he was expelled. Both Korniss and Lajos Vajda spent a longer period of time in Paris. After Vajda's return to Hungary, from the middle of the 30s they worked together in Szentendre and in Szigetmonostor. Following the method of Bartók, who collected pieces of folk music, they gathered architectural folk motifs and objects of local folk heritage. They turned to folk art consciously and intentionally, they saw it as the source of renewal for art.

During World War II, Korniss served on the Russian front and became a prisoner of war. He was released in 1945. A founding member of the European School, he began to work with great vigour after the war, still focusing on folk art. He found his source of inspiration in weaving, embroidery and folk music; he experimented with different techniques and materials. By slowly pouring enamel paint, he created strange shapes and figures, which reminded him of weird creatures.

His picture titled *Dancer/Spider* is made up of only two colours, the yellow background and the poured, black, enamel paint. Due to its asymmetries, the inner, sometimes anthropomorphic forms, its intensity and especially the allusions of the title, it can be regarded as a precursor to the painting *Cricket Wedding* (1948). The large-scale painting is based on the theme of a humorous wedding song. The song, which is a mockery of the human world, has several versions and is part not only of Hungarian but also of international folklore. The contorted figure of the spider has wings reminiscent of the veins of a hand, which lends the creature human character and fragility.

The purchase of Korniss painting fits in well with the acquisition strategy of the 1970s, which concentrated on the artists of the European School. Collections were often enriched by purchases from private collectors, on this occasion from Ákos Vörösváry.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 70
Endre Bálint (1914–1986):
Potato Wraiths, 1949
oil and tempera on grey paper mounted on cardboard, 20.8×25.8 cm
s.r.t.: Bálint 49
Inv. n.: KM.85.2.
Purchased from Sándor Piros, 1985

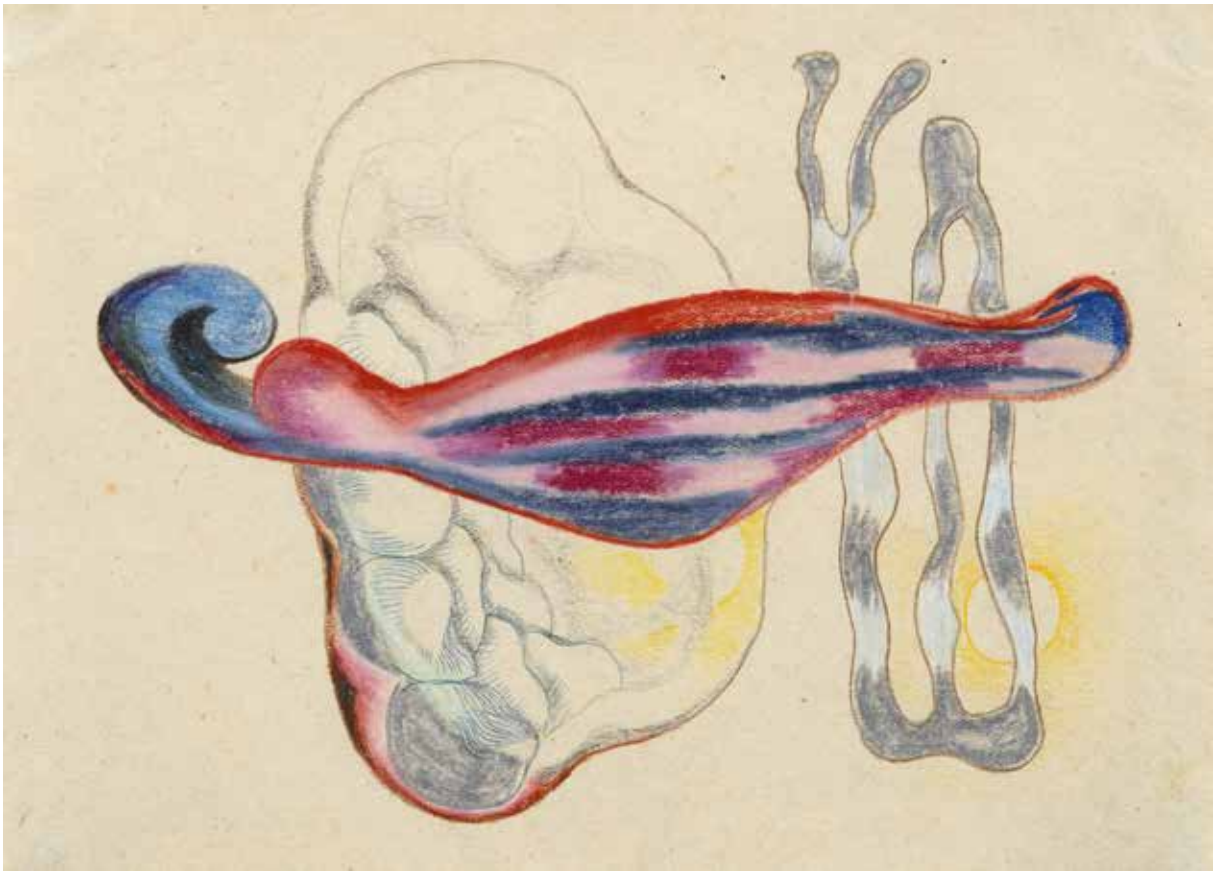
Endre Bálint was a founding member of the European School. Although he was on the exhibition circuit and was well received, his stint with the School was of little artistic importance and he spent the post-war years searching for his voice. Drawing on his experiences in France, he produced portraits and still lifes of heavy lines and bright colours.

In 1948, Bálint faced several crises. As a result of the cultural political turn, the European School was shut down. His family was forced out of their house in Ady Endre utca because a police officer staked a claim to it. He moved to Rottenbiller utca 1 with his son, his wife Irina Richter, her sister Júlia Vajda (née Richter) and her husband József Jakovits, into a flat which went on to achieve legendary status. Living in close quarters and having no studio to paint in took their toll on him. His lung problems worsened and were accompanied by attacks of suffocation. His painting went through significant changes. His small pictures after 1948/49 are populated by goblins, wraiths, elves, and funny little creatures. Figures that are playful and impish but also often alien and frightening. One of their sources was Bálint's 1947 visit to Paris, where he showed at the international exhibition of Surrealism, but they might also be seen as reiterations of the masks shown at the exhibition *The Busó of Mohács* at the Gallery to the Four Directions in the same year. Another major inspiration behind their playfulness is the immediate stimulus of puppetry. József Jakovits, Bálint's brother-in-law, started making puppets in 1947 to make ends meet, becoming, two years later, the workshop manager of the National Puppet Theatre, where Bálint was a frequent guest.

The painter gives his imagination free rein in *Potato Wraiths*; the weird, antennaed, insect-like creatures seem almost to fly. However, the uneasiness, caused by the bizarre shapes and the evil associations in folklore of wraiths, is not extinguished by the playfulness, the thin brushwork, or the cheerful colours.

Bálint's *Potato Wraiths* was acquired in the 1980s, from the private collection of Sándor Piros.

Mária Árvai



Cat. 71-72
Endre Rozsda (1913–1999):
Composition, 1946
pencil, coloured chalk, coloured pencil on paper, 207×150 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2006.37.1.
Purchased from Miklós Müller and the 2B Foundation, 2006

Female Bust With Horse Head, n.d.
ink, coloured pencil, chalk on paper, 188×115 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2014.13.26.
Purchased from Péter Keleti, 2014

In search of an artistic path on the one hand and due to the growing anti-Semitism and the ever-shrinking opportunities on the other, painter Endre Rozsda moved to Paris with his partner, sculptor Lajos Barta in 1938. They attended courses at the École du Louvre and gradually warmed up to contemporary art forms. It was during these years that Rozsda found his own artistic voice, a particular, organic, dreamlike version of surrealist abstraction. The dreamlike quality originated in his work method as a painter. In the mornings, he went back to bed and spent the mornings in a consciously induced wakeful sleep, which he used as a kind of automatism to help him create art, in line with the working methods of Surrealism.

In 1943, the German invasion of Paris forced Barta and Rozsda to return to Budapest, which seemed safer at the time. They survived the years of persecution in Hungary. Rozsda became a founding member and active participant of the European School, where his abstract, sometimes floral and biomorphic art with surrealist traits fitted well. After World War II, the surrealist movement saw a revival throughout Europe. In 1957, Rozsda left the country and moved to France as a dissident. It was only at this time that he became acquainted with the members of the surrealist movement. Together with them, he participated in international exhibitions and became a major figure in the last period of Surrealism. In the history of Hungarian art, the group of works of art from which Makarius Sameer—an Egyptian-born painter who was also a member of the European School and who also intended to leave Hungary for good in the summer of 1946—organized an exhibition in Zurich is referred to as the *Makarius portfolio*.

His fellow artists entrusted him with their works in the hope that he might be able to sell them. Endre Rozsda wanted to sell the picture entitled *Composition*, exhibited here. The *Makarius portfolio* was one of the first attempts of the artists associated with the European School to exhibit their work abroad and establish contacts with contemporary artists internationally.

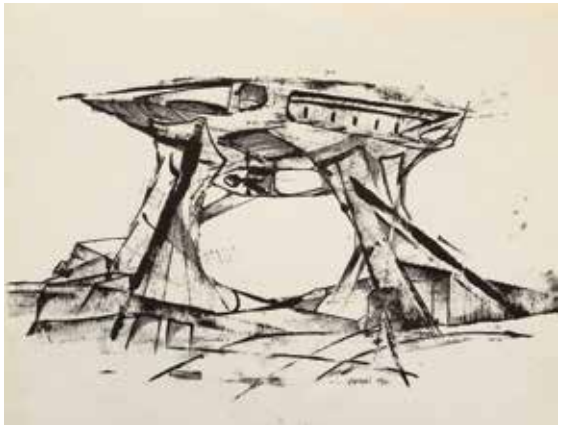
Female Bust With Horse Head is also connected to the Sameer family, but this drawing comes from the estate of Éva Reiner, the wife of Makarius Sameer. The hybridity favoured by Surrealism is present in the form of the half-horse, half-human creature. The purposefully created non-classifiability was an expression of the surrealists' subversion and desire for freedom. During World War II, the Reiner family lived in a yellow-star house appointed for Jews. This was the house where Endre Rozsda and Lajos Barta moved in after their return to Budapest. Barta, Rozsda and the Reiner family went into hiding together. After the war, in 1946, the Reiner family settled down in Argentina. Éva Reiner remained in touch with her artist friends—Margit Anna, Lajos Barta, Endre Rozsda and Tamás Lossonczy—who gave her small works and intimate drawings as a present. She kept these and looked after them with great care. After her death, the pieces were found among her letters, and were purchased by the Municipal Gallery in 2014.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 73
Lajos Barta (1899–1986):
Relief with Horn, 1951
pencil on paper,
300×220 mm
s.l.l.: Barta; s.r.l.: 51
Inv. n.: KM.2021.9.1.
Donated by
Géza Perneczky,
2021

Lajos Barta's life was fraught with peril. He was persecuted for being Jewish, for being homosexual (illegal at the time), for his relationship with Endre Rozsda, and, under the new cultural policy in Hungary, for his artistic medium, abstraction.
In the wake of the "First Jewish Law" of 1938, Barta and Rozsda fled to Paris, where they were introduced to the Abstraction-Création group and the latest achievements in Surrealism and Constructivism. In 1943, the German occupation forced them back to Budapest, considered by them to be safer. It was then and there that Barta found his artistic voice and started to produce his abstract, non-figurative works. After the war, he was a founding member of the European School; his output from this period is characterised by free-flowing, organic forms, vitality, and sanguine radiance.
The communist takeover strangled the School; going down the Soviet route, art yielded to politics and abstract works were banished from the galleries. Barta was in crisis. To survive, he chose the path of least resistance, taking state commissions and putting independent work on hold. As a graphic artist, however, he bypassed authorities in an attempt to protect his artistic integrity.
He went into internal exile, working for pleasure in his studio. The results were autonomous drawings and compositions, freed from the constraints of execution. No corresponding sculpture is known for the unique, surrealistic drawing seen here and made during this period, in 1951. Creating an air of tension and impending doom are two three-dimensional bodies, a sinuous, pointy horn and an orb, that emerge from a relief of organic layers.
Worn out by the undeserved attacks received at tenders and exhibitions, Barta left Hungary in 1965, at age 66. Settling in Cologne, he spent the last 20 years of his life as a sought-after creator of public sculpture.
This piece was gifted to the Municipal Gallery in 2021 by Cologne-based artist/art historian Géza Perneczky, a friend and monographer of Lajos Barta.

Mária Árvai



Ervin Pátkai, who played an active part in the revolution, left Hungary in 1956 to study in Paris at the École des Beaux-Arts. Following an early, cubist period, he immersed himself in a quest for the right material and technique and from that time on, his career was characterised by constant experimentation. He made small sculptures of lead, bone and plaster, experimented with negative moulds made of polystyrene and with paraffin, used plastic and concrete. While he was interested in construction, space and movement, he was also greatly influenced by medieval architecture. He was fascinated by cathedrals, in the monumentality of which he thought he recognised man transcending himself. He was not religious, but he was looking for something similar to medieval sacral architecture and sculpture—the unity of thought and art. For this reason, he described himself as definitely not a modern artist.

His series of *Cathedrals*, created from the second half of the 1960s, is characterised by striving for symmetry and monumentality. By using layered casting, i.e. by pouring negative mould layers on top of each other, Pátkai wanted to create a unified structure similar to that of cathedrals. In the sculptures, strong vertical and horizontal shapes, the parts and the whole become arranged into one unit, the empty and filled parts create an interesting dynamic and a special light-shadow effect.

In 2017, the Municipal Gallery purchased 12 sculptures and 4 graphic works by Ervin Pátkai from the artist's heirs.

Enikő Róka

Cat. 74-76
Ervin Pátkai (1937–1985):
Building utopia, 1966
ink on watercolour paper, 239×309 mm
s.r.l.: PATKAI 1966.
Inv. n.: KM.2017.15.1.

City utopia II, 1965
ink on paper, 239×309 mm
s.l.m.: PATKAI 1965.
Inv. n.: KM.2017.17.1.

Cathedral I, 1969
bronze, 29.4×18×16.2 cm
s.: engraved at the base of the statue: PE 69 1/1 B3
Inv. n.: KM.2017.5.1.
Purchased from Julianna and Katalin Pátkai, 2017

Cat. 77

Béla Kondor (1931–1972):
Renovation of Old Houses, c. 1960
pastel, crayon, watercolour on paper, 74×65 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.75.48.
Purchased from Ernő Kolozsváry, 1975

Béla Kondor, who lived only forty-one years, was one of the most extraordinary and inspiring Hungarian artists of the second half of the twentieth century. While his art may contain some features of the different trends of his time, he cannot really be classified as a representative of any of them. He chose his masters from the universal art history of the distant past to serve as his intellectual predecessors and, alluding to their heritage, he developed a perspective of the world which helped him to see it in its totality and complexity, using his own mythology and symbolism, detached from everyday reality.

Considering its format, the piece on display here is a forerunner of his literary illustrations (Swift, Blake, etc.) made for a living in the 1960s. The theme, however, is more mysterious, more obscure, and its tone is quieter than that of the direct literary references. This already might suggest that we are dealing with a personal matter. The composition, divided into several fields, shows a side view of a building, with some figures working on it, using a hoist and some other construction tools.

Mechanical tools and machinery are a recurring motif in Kondor's art; they serve as a symbol of human presence as well as the trauma of World War II and the Cold War, which affected the painter's whole generation. In the strict, orderly lines and the geometrical division that form a net against the more playful, free-flowing, libertine background, we can recognise the rigorous, constructive imagery of one of Kondor's Hungarian masters, Jenő Barcsay. The delicate facial details within the assumed contours also allude to Barcsay's influence. For Kondor, who had worked as an ironworker before college, portraying workers was an obvious choice. He continued to define himself as a manual labourer, and his pieces were imbued with a strong social outlook. Looking at this piece more closely, however, we realise that there is no actual work being carried out. The walls are not getting higher, the wooden scaffolding is empty, the building block tied to the hoist is aimlessly swaying in mid-air. The transparent figures become transposed into ghosts. The worker standing on the right—with his eyes closed and wearing archaic women's attire—is holding the rope of the hoist and looks like someone who has just stepped out of Dürer's *Melancholy* (1514). The mason working at the bottom on the left is not holding a brick but thin air, with the blessing gesture so characteristic of Eastern Orthodox icons and ever-present in Kondor's pieces, while far above him appears a cloaked, haloed silhouette—the trumpeting angel of doom. What we are witnessing is not victory but ruin; construction executed by deconstruction. The scene was actually inspired by the demolitions in the artist's home district of Pestszentlőrinc. Kondor may have sensed that the construction works, started at the beginning of the 1960s, were heralding the demise of century-old traditions. The ghosts of the doomed house, the "genius loci" appear one last time, like a vision. Kondor does not glorify the "building" of socialism but quietly mourns the transformation, inadvertently questioning the usefulness of the mechanical, spiritless "development" advertised by the propaganda.

In the 1970s, the focus of collection shifted towards art from the post-1945 period. The museum made several purchases from important private collections; the pieces acquired from the Kolozsváry collection were of outstanding quality. The picture titled *Renovation of Old Houses* also used to be part of Ernő Kolozsváry's collection.

Péter Köblös

Cat. 78
Lili Ország (1926–1978):
Vision / Jewish cemetery of Prague, 1968
oil, bronze paint on fibreboard, 50.5×60 cm
s.r.l.: ORSZÁG L.
Inv. n.: KM.78.37.
Purchased from the artist, 1978

Lili Ország had several ties to the European School and considered Endre Bálint as her master. At the heart of her consistently constructed oeuvre stood the exploration and representation of history and memory, individual and collective fate. She was interested in the problem of the construction, destruction and preservation of cultures.

Letters and characters first appeared in her paintings around 1960 and became the main motif between 1966 and 1970. The pictures with writing on them—as suggested by the titles (*Lamentation, Petrified Lament, De Profundis, Cry,* etc.)—mostly portray prayers in an abstract, painterly language. *Vision / Jewish Cemetery of Prague* (1968), while made during the same period, stands out in that it has a slightly different subject. It is a kind of "hommage" to the German-speaking Jewish writer Franz Kafka, who used to live in Prague's old town. Lili Ország became acquainted with Kafka's work in the 1950s, partly through Anna Márkus (later to become a renowned painter in Paris under the name Anna Mark), a former college classmate with whom she worked in the set painting workshop of the State Puppet Theatre. Ország was an avid reader of Kafka's writings, hunted for new editions in bookshops, and read the books not yet translated in German.

Based on the themes he chose to discuss, Franz Kafka can be considered a twentieth century forerunner of existentialism. He wrote about uncertainty, alienation, anxiety and the absurdity of human existence. Before 1945, his work was very little known in Hungary, his renaissance came only after the war. The shocks, traumas and suffering of World War II and the Holocaust made readers more receptive to Kafka's messages.

Lili Ország considered Kafka a kind of artistic ideal; she kept his photo on her desk. She collected quotes from Kafka's letters to Felice Bauer in a notebook, among other subjects, about the vital importance of the writing profession. Lili Ország too, felt that creation was a prerequisite of her existence. In her painting, *Vision*, Kafka's mask-like features appear in the background of monotonous lines of typewriter-like Latin letters and larger, painted Hebrew characters. The rather abstract pattern imitates sheets of paper filled with writing. The overcrowded composition also evokes the old Jewish cemetery in Prague, a major source of inspiration for the painter in the 1960s. The mysterious colours, the crowdedness, the ghostly mood of the looming face do actually evoke Kafka's world. The title is a clear reference to the visionary power that Ország attributed to Kafka, whose books foreshadowed the atmosphere of the 1950s. It is perhaps not too far-fetched to recall the ode of Horace here. The classical poet referred to writing as an antidote to death, claiming that he would not die completely, since he would be remembered through his works.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 79
Vera Molnár (1924–2023):
My Mother's Letters (Lettres à ma mère) 1, 1988–1990
silkscreen, paper, 320×417 mm
J. l.: V. M./90 és b. l.: e. a.
Inv. n.: KM.2022.4.1.
Donation of Júlia Cserba, 2022

"My mother had beautiful handwriting.
A bit gothic, a bit agitated.
She started each line with regular, strict Gothic letters, which became more and more anxious, nervous, and almost hysterical by the end of the line.
As she grew older, the letters became increasingly restless and agitated. Slowly but surely, the gothic quality disappeared, and only the hysterical remained.
She wrote one letter a week, and that was an important event in my visual world.
They became less and less legible, but they looked beautiful.
After she died, there were no more letters…
I continued to write her gothic-hysterical letters, «simulating» them to myself."
Vera Molnár became world famous as a pioneer of computer art. She studied at the Budapest Academy of Fine Arts, then, like many of her peers, went to Rome on a scholarship and settled in Paris with her future husband Ferenc Molnár in 1947. She studied mathematics, combinatorics and information theory from the late 1950s, and learned several programming languages. She was one of the first artists to experiment with computer-generated art, from 1968 she generated graphics using various algorithms and printed them on plotters. In the algorithms that define her series, she always attached great importance to the randomness and the resulting "messiness" generated by the computer.
In her series *My Mother's Letters*, she experimented with the compositional system of lines and shapes created by stylising her elderly mother's handwriting: she varied the symmetry of the lines, the slant of the letters, the degree of irregularity in the simulated writing. Thinking about order and disorder, she also investigated the relationship between writing and scribbling, writing and drawing, text and image.
Her work, which was based on serious theoretical grounds, remained largely invisible for a long time. In an interview with art historian, critic Júlia Cserba she said, "For decades, many people considered me as the Molnár family's cook who drew squares in her spare time." In the predominantly masculine world of mathematics, computer science and perceptual psychology surrounding her, she had to fight to carve out a space for herself as a female creator.

Mária Árvai

Anna Mark belongs to a generation of Hungarian artists who started their careers after World War II and achieved fame in France. She graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in 1950, taking a job at the scenography department of the State Puppet Theater. Her intellectual circle included avant-garde members of the European School, which she was introduced to while in high school, and the artists working at the Puppet Theater in the 50s. After the fall of the 1956 revolution, she left Hungary. She wanted to be an artist, a free one. Her work has been on continuous display in France since 1964. In Paris, she was exposed to the contemporary art scene and to new influences, discovering a light, organic, mode of painting. Gradually, she distanced herself from the Surrealism of her earlier work, that was informed by WWII persecution and the Kafkaesque world of 1950s communist Hungary, and turned towards lyrical abstraction. To her, abstraction was not so much a style as a technique which enabled her to free herself from the literary bent of Hungarian art and from narrativity.

To this day, health permitting, she draws on a daily basis, capturing architecturally inspired motifs of existing places close to her heart. Her boundless imagination and sensitivity find expression in a galaxy of detail and nuance. Shapes, of an almost geometric starkness, are achieved through, but not overdetermined by, the variation of architectural elements.

There are no perfectly straight lines or right angles; the shapes are organic, the surfaces, inhomogeneous and uneven, bear the mark of passing time. An archaic world emerges from the simplicity of lines and the faintness of colours. In her gouache pieces, which represent a significant body within the oeuvre, the radiance of colours—the earthy tones of yellow, brown, rust, and ochre in the 2000s—are enhanced by white screen-printed bases. Her pictures are "open," but there is always an element of inaccessibility or surprise. Compositions that defy gravity, an abrupt break in lines, a hiatus.

Our senses are captured by warm colours, bold yet fragile lines, and a multitude of surfaces, while our intellect is seized by notions of time unfolding from the many layers and impressions; also, there is playfulness and humour in the minute details and intentional irregularities.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 80-81
Anna Mark (1928):
Untitled (G103), 2003
gouache on paper,
650×500 mm
s.r.l.: Mark 2003
Inv. n.: KM.2004.7.1.
Gift from the artist, 2004

Untitled (G107), 2003
pencil and gouache on
paper, 755×555 mm
s.r.l.: Mark 2003
Inv. n.: KM.2004.6.1.
Purchased from the artist,
2004

Cat. 82
Judit Reigl (1923–2020):
Unfolding (Abstract), 2011
ink on paper,
620×1570 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM. 2016.7.1.
Donated by the artist, 2015

Judit Reigl studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in the 1940s. Once she graduated, she went to Italy, where she spent two years thanks to a scholarship. On her return home, she became aware of the situation in Hungary and fled to Austria via the green border in 1950, after several attempts. From there, she made her way mostly on foot across Germany to Paris, where she quickly became acquainted with the surrealists. In 1954, Simon Hantaï took Reigl to the studio of André Breton, who organised an exhibition of her work at the prestigious Galerie À L'Étoile scellée in Paris, already the same year. From the second half of the 1950s, however, the artist sought new paths, and her pieces started to bear the signs of automatism and lyrical abstraction. From the seventies, every now and then, human figures started to reappear in her pictures. Altogether, her figurative pieces were just as rich and important as her abstract art. The output of her individual periods can be arranged into coherent series, as they testify of a painter who was constantly searching and seeking her own way.

From the second half of the 1950s until the end of the 1960s, she was very much preoccupied with the problem of black and white contrast, alternating between creating tension by the use of black paint on a white background and white paint on a black background. Already from the second half of the 1950s, it was musicality, automatic writing, letters and experiments in action painting that marked the artistic directions of her series. Judit Reigl used her whole body in the process of creation, the intensity of which she controlled herself. "These are gestures of rhythm, pulsations, which I write into the given space", she said about her creative method. In her series *Unfolding (Abstract)*, made between 2010 and 2011, and so in the piece in the Municipal Gallery, these features are present together: the rhythm, the powerful gesture that requires the physical strength of the artist, image and writing, and the seemingly endless creative process itself, written on stretched-out rolls of paper.

In 2016, Judit Reigl donated this large-scale graphic work, made a few years earlier, to the Municipal Gallery.

Enikő Róka

PEACE, UNREST, CONSOLIDATION

In this room we present a selection of pieces from the period between 1945 and 1965 that have a strong atmosphere and bear the evident mark of state-sanctioned art and art policies. The narrative starts with Pál Pátzay's Wallenberg memorial, made in 1945 using donations and immediately removed after its completion, a small model of which is on display in the section on war trauma.

The Soviet-inspired centralisation of the system of art world institutions and the stylistic standards of communist ideology set clear boundaries for art after 1949. The socialist realist directive brought about not only the banishment from the canon of modernism and other avant-garde "isms", but also a politically and ideologically charged repositioning of pre-war conservatism and of modernised versions of traditionalism.

János Dienes' painting (*The Map*, 1953), a throwback to Munich academism, is an example of the former, while the pieces by Jenő Kerényi (*Marchers*), Gyula Hincz (*Friendship of Peoples*), and Barna Búza (*Hungarian–Soviet Friendship Memorial*) to the latter. Antal Révész's graduation piece from 1953 (*French Dockworkers' Strike*) puts a new spin on 19th-century French depictions of barricades via a cinematographic close-up.

The two works in the middle—a monolithic fragment of Sándor Mikus' Stalin and Zsolt Keserue's *Equestrian Statue Without Horse*, an ironic, contemporary take on memorials—generate a clash between grandiose style and meagre substance. Tibor Vilt's suicidal centaur (*The Death of the Centaur*) is a powerful expression of the turbulences of history and of stylistic demands, but also of existential anxiety.

Sándor Vecsési's melancholy snapshot of Budapest life (*Twenty-Year-Olds*) provides a segue into the lax yet divisive art policies of Kádárism.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 83
Antal Révész (1931–2016):
French Dock Workers on Strike, 1953
charcoal, paper, mounted on plywood, 200×124.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2024.3.1.
Donation of dr. András Rév, 2019

Antal Révész studied graphic art at the College of Applied Arts from 1948, then transferred to the Academy of Fine Arts as a member of György Konecsni's class. He graduated at the same time as his creative partner and wife, Judit Wigner, in 1953. Both of them belonged to the great generation of graphic designers who started their career after World War II and were very popular until the late 1980s. Several of their works were made jointly and inscribed with the monogram RW. The charcoal drawing, also referred to as *Strike in Marseilles*, was made for Antal Révész's dissertation. Following his diploma exhibition in the Ernst Museum, the drawing went missing. Decades passed before it reappeared, startling many, in 2016 in an exhibition about the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in the period between 1945 and 1956, in the Barcsay Hall.

With regards to the lack of the necessary drawing skills and the imperfect representation of perspective and space, the large-scale composition, which depicts an international peace fighter event, was described already at the time by Teréz Gerszi, the art historian who reported about the diploma exhibition, as a challenge that exceeded the capabilities of the artist. The subject matter of the monumental charcoal drawing did not belong to the socialist realist themes on offer but depicted an imaginary and dramatic moment of the French dock workers' strike that took place in the 1950s and was interpreted differently by all sides of the political propaganda of the time. The composition is in line with the barricade genre made well-known by Francisco Goya, Eugène Delacroix and Édouard Manet. Due to a lack of sources, the Hungarian news did not publish any pictures or footage of the port strikes. The inscriptions, costumes and props in the drawing, however, are surprisingly authentic, which may mean that Antal Révész had access to some visual documents. One of these might have been a film made between 1949 and 1950 by Robert Ménégoz—a communist filmmaker involved in the French Resistance—about the struggles of French dock workers who stood up against the Marshall Plan, German rearmament and the Indochina War by blockading ships carrying military supplies. *Long Live the Dockworkers*, a film that captured one of the most important social conflicts of the Cold War, was banned by the French censors, but on the other side of the Iron Curtain, it won the Documentary Grand Prix at the Karlovy Vary Film Festival in 1951 and was shown in domestic cinemas in 1952 to great acclaim. It may have been at this time that Antal Révész became attracted to the subject.

The charcoal drawing, which theatrically evokes the heavy atmosphere of the early 1950s, was brought to the Municipal Gallery in 2019 by the heirs of Antal Révész and Judit Wigner, together with the rest of their graphic design work, which is waiting to be reviewed.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 84
János Dienes (1884–1962):
The Map, 1955
oil on canvas,
90.5×100.5 cm
s.l.l.: Dienes János / 1955
Inv. n.: KM.2023.14.1.
Old, not inventoried work.
Presumably from the Economic Office of the Executive Committee of the Budapest City Council

In 1949, the opening speech of the Soviet painting exhibition at the present-day Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle) was given by József Révai, a leading cultural politician and ideologist of the totalitarian Rákosi era. Setting the art on display as a model, he proclaimed the programme of socialist realism and declared the ideological and formal requirements for artists.

János Dienes picture depicts the classic social realist theme—a young proletarian, a representative of the "generation of the future", is educating an older man about the greatness of the Soviet Union, showing it to him on a map, and telling him about the brave new world to come. In the picture created with sensitive painterliness, the young man is looking at the old with expectation. He seems to be curious to find out whether his speech had the required effect; based on their gestures, one would think their relationship to be intimate. The setting is simplistic—the lamp, the bare walls and the wooden table with the pipe on it, the glasses and the books, and the map in the middle dominate the scene. The clothes the figures are wearing are neat and clean, it may be their Sunday best, as they are wearing white shirts under the grey coats. The painting does not say much about the characters themselves, instead it generalises, emphasising the idea that members of the older generation, who bear the marks of years of manual labour on their hands, should listen to the new teachings and learn from the young.

János Dienes graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest, at the beginning of the 20th century, as a student of Tivadar Zemplényi, who was a representative of the Munich Academism in Hungary. Dienes practised realistic, naturalistic painting throughout his life, preserving the tradition of the Munich school and rejecting the aspirations of modernist movements. Hence, it was not really his style but rather his subject matter that changed with the emergence of socialist realism. In 1909, he moved to Debrecen and taught drawing at the Dóczi Girls' School. He was one of the organisers of the art scene in Debrecen and, after World War II, his paintings were regularly exhibited together with the works of other socialist realist artists.

Eszter Molnárné Aczél

Cat. 85
Tibor Vilt (1905–1983): *The Death of the Centaur,* 1956
bronze, 18.3×14.5×6 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.66.203.
Purchased from the artist, 1966

Between 1922 and 1926 Tibor Vilt studied art as a pupil of Lajos Mátrai and Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl. Later, he became a member of the Új Művészek Egyesülete (Association of New Artists) and participated in the exhibition of the Képzőművészek Új Társasága (New Society of Fine Artists). Between 1928 and 1930, thanks to a scholarship he received, he studied in Rome. After the war, he became a member of the European School, a school committed to modern art. After World War II, Vilt's sculptures became increasingly expressive and suspenseful, and they often included surreal or grotesque features. The distinctive formal approach of this period continued to characterise his sculpture for a long time. The piece on display is also part of this phase. The stylized form of the centaur, stabbing himself with his own spear, in some places resembles a skeleton, and the wound-like appearance of the surfaces depict pain and suffering tragically and with unusual intensity.

Centaurs, known from Greek mythology, are half-horse, half-human creatures. In some stories, they appear as wise teachers, but most myths emphasise their animalistic characteristics, their violence or their excessive nature.

From 1956 until the beginning of the 1960s, Vilt made several sculptures of centaurs. Their common feature is the stylistic tendency towards the surreal, which may have been meant to depict the suffering brought about by the historical period, the tragic fate of the Hungarian nation, the horrors of the '56 revolution and the subsequent repression.

Orsolya Veress

Cat. 86
Barna Búza (1910–2010): *Hungarian–Soviet Friendship Memorial*, 1970s
painted terracotta, height 34.5 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2021.30.1.
Transfer from Budapest Gallery, 2013

The pyrogranite version of Barna Búza's memorial was erected in 1975 in Budapest's Hungarian–Soviet Friendship Park (today's Óhegy park), on top of what turned out to have been a massive landfill site. On this model, like on the monumental memorial, we see two female figures holding a flag. Above them are peace doves and the red five-pointed star. The description on the pedestal reads "The pledge of our freedom and peace is eternal Hungarian–Soviet friendship 1945–1975." Originally, the memorial was to be executed in a collaboration between a Hungarian and a Soviet sculptor, but both Yevgeny Vuchetich (1908–1974), a prominent figure of socialist-realist sculpture, and Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl (1884–1975), an artist with considerable experience in Soviet memorials, died before work began. The assignment was now handed to Barna Búza who produced an original design, using their surviving sketches as not much more than inspiration. István Zilahy oversaw the architectural plans, and construction was carried out at the Zsolnay factory in Pécs. After the fall of communism, the statue was removed to the Memento Park. Its Soviet counterpart was erected in 1976 at VDNKh Park in Moscow, where it stands to this day.
The redevelopment of Óhegy park, during which the hazardous waste in the landfill was encased in concrete, was completed in 2012.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 87
Zsolt Keserue (1968):
Equestrian Statue Without Horse, 2020
3D printing, LA filament, 29×12×15 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2021.31.1.
Purchased from the artist, 2021

Zsolt Keserue uses various genres and often works together with colleagues to create video installations and films. He has been preoccupied with the nature of historical memory and national identities for a long time. He regularly uses documents as the basis of his unemotional pieces infused with ironic political activism. He launched the project *National Textbook* (2010–2019), a collage of Hungarian historical references taken from secondary school textbooks published abroad, in collaboration with secondary school teachers and students. The project was later expanded with a collection of stereotypes about Hungarians abroad. Carried out with a methodological approach to critical pedagogy, the programme challenged the entrenched positions of Hungarian self-awareness from a number of different perspectives.

The "equestrian statue," the model of a non-existent, lavish public sculpture, displays the twisted narratives conceived in national pathos and demystifies heroic public monuments. The equestrian warrior, who clutches a sword in a riding stance on a pedestal but has no horse, was created using 3D printing technique. This parody of a monument received new layers of meaning when a larger-scale version of it was erected on Ferenc Square in Budapest. For two weeks in the spring of 2023, it appeared as real public art, as it formed part of the Ferencváros district's public art programme. The irony carried by the large-scale version—a counterpoint to the imposing equestrian sculptures of public parks throughout the city—is the result of the "cavalier" swinging his sword sitting on his non-existent horse and also of the transience of the material the sculpture is made of, while the satirical collision of miniature size and grandiose form has lost some of its prevalence. For two weeks, this small version appeared to be a sculptural study for a real public work of art; it regained its original, autonomous meaning—not completely exempt of resistance—after the sculpture was dismantled.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 88
Jenő Kerényi (1908–1975):
Marchers, 1953
bronze, 75 cm high, pedestal: 50×37 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: 61.122.
Purchased from the artist by the Budapest City Council, 1960

Jenő Kerényi's sculpture entitled *Marchers* is a small sample of a monumental piece of work. The large, public version of the group of statues was made of aluminium and decorated the so-called Road of the Hungarian Youth, which led to the People's Stadium (today Puskás Ferenc Stadium), built as part of a huge prestige investment. In the 1950s, support for culture was often provided by means of ordering art pieces to complement larger construction projects. Only artists who were active within the centralised institutional system of arts, who accepted the official arts programme and created socialist realist pieces in line with it were commissioned.

The People's Stadium was inaugurated in 1953, and the parade route (dromos) leading up to it was flanked by a sculpture gallery of sixteen sculpture groups made of bronze and aluminium. The almost three-metre high, socialist realist compositions were placed on small pedestals and were separated from each other by panels. These partitions were both a dynamic way of dividing the groups and a background for the compositions when viewed from the side. The sculptures depicted everyday events during the days of socialism—scenes of sporting life and the life of the youth. The concept of the parade route was linked to the construction of the People's Stadium metro station: the crowds arriving for the events by metro would have been able to get from the station to the stadium along this "educational" route. However, the idea failed to materialise, because the commissioned artworks were not ready at the time of the inauguration of the People's Stadium. The sculpture gallery was completed in the second half of the 50s, by which time, the socialist ideology and the associated aesthetics that defined the first half of the decade had already started to change.

Kerényi's three-figure composition still bears the stylistic traits of the official art of the Rákosi era: the gestures of the figures, the dynamic movement of the group of young people interacting with each other and the shape of the flag-bearer lends a strongly agitational character to the sculpture. At the same time, the fashioning of the figures shows signs of alienation from the canon of socialist realism and hints at the kind of expressive moulding that later became so characteristic of Kerényi.

In the 1990s, following the change of regime, the fate of sculptures serving socialist propaganda became uncertain. The General Assembly of Budapest has placed the building complex of the People's Stadium under local heritage protection. Concerning the removal of the sculptures, there were spirited debates. In the end, they did not end up in the Memento Park—opened in 1993 on the outskirts of Budapest to serve as an open-air museum of public art from the socialist era—but remained at their original location.

In the early days of the collection, efforts were made to acquire small versions or sketches of public sculptures in Budapest. This is how this piece came to the Municipal Gallery in the first year of its re-establishment.

Viktória Oth, Zsóka Leposa

Cat. 89
Gyula Hincz (1904–1986):
Friendship of Peoples, 1956
wool, woven, 76×132 cm
s.r.l.: H (Hincz), Hungarian Gobelin trademark
Inv. n.: 61.211.
Purchased from the studio of the artist, 1961

The tapestry made in 1956 is an early version of a larger-scale series, originally meant to decorate the Fészek Artists' Club. Friendship of peoples was an oft-repeated, typical topos during the decades of the rule of the party-state, with connotations of crude ideological threats to those living in the sphere of Soviet influence. Hincz's tapestry, while suggestive of an unclouded idyll, bore heavy overtones. The friendship of peoples was, in fact, a coercive alliance enforced by bloody violence.

In the post-Bolshevik revolutionary period, the primary aim of the Soviet apparatus was to abolish the difference between social classes; the 1924 constitution, as well as texts of propaganda, presented this concept using terms of classical Marxism such as the brotherhood of peoples. These were supposed to stand in contrast to the national and class antagonisms of the capitalist world. It was not until the late 1920s that the ethnic map of the multi-ethnic country was outlined and redrawn. The new order with regards to national minorities took shape in the 1930s, following the designation of five republics and five autonomous regions, as well as the deportations and bloody ethnic cleansing of the peoples of the western border regions. The 1936 constitution no longer defined the peoples as brothers but as friends, and thus based communist social practices on chosen bonds rather than on unquestionable blood ties, sending a threatening message to all who might have felt inclined not to choose their friends correctly. The road from brotherhood to friendship was paved with significant changes. The Soviet leadership abandoned the idea of world communism and was primarily engaged with the internal reorganisation of the country. The move from brotherhood to friendship, a term inherited from the French Revolution and from Marxist phraseology, was a symbolic expression of the above. The ethnic communities that survived the genocides, population exchanges, forced reforms and were ready to be "friends" with the Bolshevik authorities, experienced an unprecedented revival of their traditional national cultures in the years to come. Folk traditions, costumes, musical traditions and exotic rites became the emblems of the new

Soviet communal identity, popularised and performed all over the world. A significant architectural landmark of the ideological turn was the Sverdlov Square underground station in Moscow, inaugurated in 1938. Its majolica half-reliefs of seven boys playing music and seven girls dancing illustrated the music and dances of the seven largest friendly republics. The phrase "friendship of peoples" was even included in the lyrics of the Soviet anthem, written in 1944. Until 1991, it was also the name of a prestigious Soviet state decoration, which has by now been replaced in the Russian Federation by the Order of Friendship. It is telling that both medals were designed by the same artist, Alexander Zhuk.

The recurring iconography of a large number of similar pieces suggests that Gyula Hincz's tapestry of four boys may also have had a pair, with four girls on it. The composition is united by the profile of the boys symbolising the four human races – reaching out in a friendly handshake in front of the red flags of the working classes and blue flags representing peace—and by the interrelated colours and associations of the green border, dotted with peace doves—a visual novelty at the time. The pledge of the friendship of the peoples is thus the labour movement, peace and homeland. The wide frame with the birds may have been inspired by the borders of Noémi Ferenczy—similar to those of Renaissance tapestries—who was preparing for a collection exhibition at the National Salon at the time. The format of the decorative, brightly coloured carpet is reminiscent of a panel painting, which suggests that technicalities such as reproducibility and distribution were taken into consideration when creating the design.

With time, Gyula Hincz became one of the most frequently employed designers of monumental tapestries, which played an increasingly important role in the decoration of public buildings. His plans were executed by the weavers of the Company of Applied Arts.

The tapestry became part of the collection of the Municipal Gallery in 1961, thanks to the Budapest City Council.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 90
Sándor Vecsési (1930–2015):
Twenty-year-olds, 1965
oil, canvas, 110×90.5 cm
s.r.l.: Vecsési 965
Inv. n.: KM.65.77
Purchased from the artist, 1965

The painting was made for a public art competition organised by the Budapest Council to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of the capital and won second prize in the genre painting category. No first prize was awarded in this category, and the third prize went to Ignác Kokas portrait of entitled *Welder in the Crane Factory*.

Born into a poor family, Vecsési worked as an electrician's apprentice in Nyergesújfalu. Thanks to the educational provisions providing support for talented people living in rural areas, in 1949 he was admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts, to the class of Aurél Bernáth and Géza Fónyi. In the 1960s, he created portraits and figurative compositions using geometric lines and a puritan harmony of colours, a modernised formal language going beyond socialist realism. He also produced a number of public works in this style.

Twenty-year-olds depicts girls born in 1945, in the year when peace and freedom became a reality—an oft-used phrase at the time—, girls who, unlike members of the previous generations, were looking forward to a bright future abundant with security and prosperity. During the Kádár era, the press used to celebrate every anniversary of the liberation with stories of people born in 1945, stories of lives full of cheerfulness and optimism. We do not know why the jury of the art competition did not award a first prize, but this painting, which was awarded second prize, certainly does not exude the politically expected cheerfulness and optimism. The three girls, sitting on a bench on a Danube cruise boat wearing cool colours, are not looking at each other, they are gloomily staring into the void; the group is surrounded by subtle sadness. One of the girls appears to be Vecsési's wife, Arany Bazsonyi, also a painter, who, due to her origins, was expelled from college in 1951 and whose whole family was persecuted. In the background, on the Pest side, there is the Vigadó, on its left the Thonet House, built in 1871 and still there today, on the right Hotel Bristol, which was still standing when the painting was made but was demolished in 1969, right before Hotel Duna Intercontinental was opened. The post-impressionist outline of the buildings and the cold arrangement of the planes make the panorama of Pest look like a series of ghost houses with blind windows. The thematic juxtaposition of the idyllic village and the threatening metropolis accompanied Sándor Vecsési throughout his career. The painter's personal attitude defined by latent bad feelings may serve as an explanation for the pictorial mood, which deviated from the intentions of the tender, and perhaps from the conscious painterly intentions, too.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 91
Sándor Mikus (1903–1982):
A Piece of Stalin's Statue, 1951
bronze, 85×100 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2024.16.1.
Old, non-inventoried piece

From 1948, the Stalinist political system was becoming introduced in Central and Eastern Europe too, which meant that the personality cult of Stalin formed part of the Hungarian scene from then on. In the spirit of the above, and in preparation for Stalin's 70th birthday, the Legislative Committee in Budapest decided in December 1949 to rename Andrássy Avenue to Stalin Road, and to erect a monument and a statue of Stalin.

The statue was put out to tender by invitation. It was specified that it had to be completed within one year. The selection committee considered the quality of most of the entries to be very poor. In the end, four sculptors, Miklós Borsos, Aladár Farkas, Zsigmond Strobl Kisfaludi and Sándor Mikus were invited to a second round and were given one more year for the execution. The jury of politicians and artists made their decision based on one-metre-high plaster models and selected Sándor Mikus sculpture as the winner.

Mikus started out as a self-taught artist, but his talent was recognised by the profession, and he gradually became a renowned artist. In 1949 he became a teacher at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts. His winning entry portrayed the leader as an easy-going, open and humane figure. The 8-metre plaster model of the statue was completed by the spring of 1951. By the summer it was decided that the statue's pedestal would also serve as a ceremonial tribune and that a square would be created in front of it to serve the purposes of ceremonies and parades. A section of Dózsa György Road, near Városliget (City Park), was chosen for the purpose. As a consequence of the decision, the Regnum Marianum church, the Városliget Theatre and a tram terminal had to be demolished. Work started in August 1951 and proceeded at a forced pace. By December, both the huge square and the 10-metre-high tribune were completed, and the statue—which rose 18 metres above the square—could be erected.

Quite understandably, the statue was seen by many as a symbol of Stalinist tyranny and political repression. The demands made at the 23 October demonstrations leading to the 1956 Revolution included the removal of the statue. In the end, on the eve of the revolution, the rebels brought the sculpture down, using saws, steel wire ropes and trucks, leaving only the man-high boots on the pedestal. The fall of Stalin's figure, his symbolic downfall, had a euphoric effect. The statue was later towed to Blaha Lujza Square and cut up. Small pieces of it were taken away as a souvenir by the people present. His right hand and left ear can be seen in the Hungarian National Museum. The piece shown here is probably a part of his left arm.

Orsolya Veress

ART IN THE 60S AND 70S

By the 1960s and 70s, there was a duality to Kádárian cultural policy—it tried to meet criteria coming from the Soviet Union while implementing reforms to strengthen its Western links that were paramount to the country's economy. Between the second half of the 60s and the early 70s, there was a temporary easing in cultural politics. The Hungarian neo-avant-garde, still in its infancy, had its grand debut at *Iparterv I and II* (1968, 1969), held at the office of the Industrial Architecture Design Firm (IPARTERV) in central Budapest, and at *Szürenon* (1969). The exhibits wore their contemporary European and American influences on their sleeves (informel, pop art, hard edge, minimalism) and hinted at the idea of catching up with and running parallel to Western tendencies. György Jovánovics's piece for *Iparterv I* (*Detail of Le Grand Gilles*, 1967–1968) and the paintings of Ilona Keserü and László Lakner are distinctly Central European takes on pop art, which they discovered on their trips abroad; Imre Bak developed his geometric style under the influence of American hard edge and colour field painting he encountered in Western Europe.

This was also the time of the birth of conceptual art that came to full bloom in the 1970s. Its prominent manifestations—actions, environments, photos, mail art, objects—are characterised by a wide range of techniques, latent political messaging, social criticism, and—a regional specialty—intellectualism and a philosophical streak.

Amidst the emphatically masculine world of 1960s and 70s neo-avant-garde, Novi Sad-born Katalin Ladik's sound poetry performances, that incorporated her own (at times naked) body and are among the greatest works of Hungarian conceptualism, strikes one as unusually radical.

Neo-avant-garde art, Budapest-centric in many respects, had more room to play in the countryside. There were exhibitions and artist collectives in Székesfehérvár, Győr, Szombathely, and Balatonboglár. Of especial importance was the Pécs Workshop run by the students of the painter and artist teacher Ferenc Lantos (Ferenc Ficzek, Károly Hopp-Halász, Károly Kismányoky, Sándor Pinczehelyi, and Kálmán Szíjártó).

It was during the 70s that the Hungarian and international Roma civil rights movement came into fuller swing. A crucial figure of Roma emancipation was cultural organiser and painter Tamás Péli who fought for a reform in cultural education.

Key pieces from the period were purchased, often directly from the artists, by the Municipal Gallery from the early 80s onwards.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 92
Tibor Csernus (1927–2007):
Reeds, 1964
oil and glued paper on canvas, 134×152 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.77.39.
Purchased from András Sylvester, 1977

Tibor Csernus studied painting under Aurél Bernáth at the Academy of Fine Arts between 1946 and 1953. His fascination, enhanced by a visit to Paris in 1957–1958, was with modern French painting. In Paris, he gained recognition with book cover designs and illustrations. His main influences were Georges Mathieu, Simon Hantaï, Max Ernst, and Yves Tanguy. For years he was hailed by critics as the leading figure of "Surnaturalism." In the 1990s, his work started to be reinterpreted as a new strain in realism, as the deconstruction of Social Realism, and acquired new political dimensions as a critique of ideology.

Reeds, a key work of the movement also known as "magical socialist realism," is a synthesis of Csernus' prolific work as a graphic artist and his expertise in textures, of his stylistic and cultural hybridity. A wide range of tools—sponge, painting knife, razor blade—were used to create the painterly—abrasive, smeared, "blistery"—surfaces of this collage which bears the influences of both the dynamically distorted figures of the Irish-born British painter Francis Bacon as well as the silkscreen montages and the solvent transfer technique of the American Robert Rauschenberg.

In this seemingly idyllic scene, a blissful gathering is underway on a pier over a summery lake. Our eyes are, however, directed by the high horizon line at the swirling swampy area in the foreground covered with reeds and in litter. Floating in a forest of kelp are a boat and a corpse. From among watermelon rinds and sundry knick-knacks emerges an issue of the Italian magazine *Vie Nuove*, with the 1960s film star Monica Vitti on its cover. This bacchanalia, with its makeshift Parnassus, amorphous creatures, and natural surroundings, references a 1936 painting by Max Ernst, which in turn is a parody of Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe (The Luncheon on the Grass)* from 1863.

The absurd details carry so many allusions to the unspoken arrangements between state and society that were made in the early 1960s in Hungary, in the wake of the failed 1956 Revolution, and powered by a steady increase in the quality of life and the possibility of eventual prosperity. Csernus' art—in a dialogue with hundreds of years of art history, exploring free associations, and experimental at its core—went against the grain of socialist cultural politics. Doors started to close for him; he was not allowed to exhibit. For a while, his friends continued to supply him with work, and he earned a living from book illustrations and (film) posters.

His years-long tug-of-war with the authorities ended in 1964, when he was allowed to show at Galerie Lambert and gained permission to escort the works to Paris with his wife, the sculptor Katalin Sylvester. The following year marked the Hungarian debut of *Reeds*, at the 10th Hungarian Fine Arts Exhibition. His visa, however, was not renewed, owing, probably, to the critical reception of *Reeds*. Thus Csernus decided to stay abroad. In the 1970s, his art took a turn towards hyperrealism.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 93
László Lakner (1936):
Saigon, 1969
oil on canvas, 120×200 cm (2 pieces 120×100 cm)
j. vakkereten j.f. LAKNER / LÁSZLÓ
Inv. n.: KM.78.77.
Purchased from Ákos Vörösváry, 1978

Between 1965 and 1974, when he finally moved to Berlin, Lakner painted some explicitly political pictures, reflecting on the state of the world determined by the Cold War and the Iron Curtain, on armed conflicts, and on the moral dilemmas and the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Soviet regime and the dictatorship of the Kádár regime. He was interested not only in political events but also in everyday atrocities. Using photographs, media images and montage-like fragmentary editing, he created a unique painting style that synthesised influences from American and British pop art. The Robert Rauschenberg retrospective he saw at the Venice Biennale in 1964 was a defining moment for him. A number of his paintings focus on the US intervention during the Second Indochina War (1965–1973), an armed conflict that claimed millions of lives. It was also one of the longest armed conflicts in US history and the first war to be televised.

Similarly to *The Protest of the Buddhist Monks of Saigon* (1965) made earlier, *Saigon* is also based on a press photograph, a detail of which Lakner enlarged. The photograph was made in 1966 and today forms part of the collection of the Bettmann Archive (Getty Images). It shows a US Marine carrying a blindfolded young woman with her hands tied behind her back (presumably accused of collaborating with the Viet Cong). In the painting, Lakner tilts the body, bringing the head into focus. Removed from the original time and setting, the poster-like portrait became a new, emblematic symbol of political violence.

Saigon is one of a series of twin paintings that repeat the same motif (*Bone*, 1968; *Rose*, 1969). As opposed to Andy Warhol's screen-printed serials, Lakner painted the repeated motif by hand, which resulted in many subtle variations.

"For these", he said in an interview, "I did not even draw sketches. The cca. 1:10 enlargement of the photos posed enough technical problems. The main issue I was concerned with during this period was the selection of the photos. The creative gesture was the selection itself. The act of painting, the 'transcription', required only technical skills on the side of the painter."

The piece was purchased by the Municipal Gallery from collector Ákos Vörösváry.

Lívia Páldi

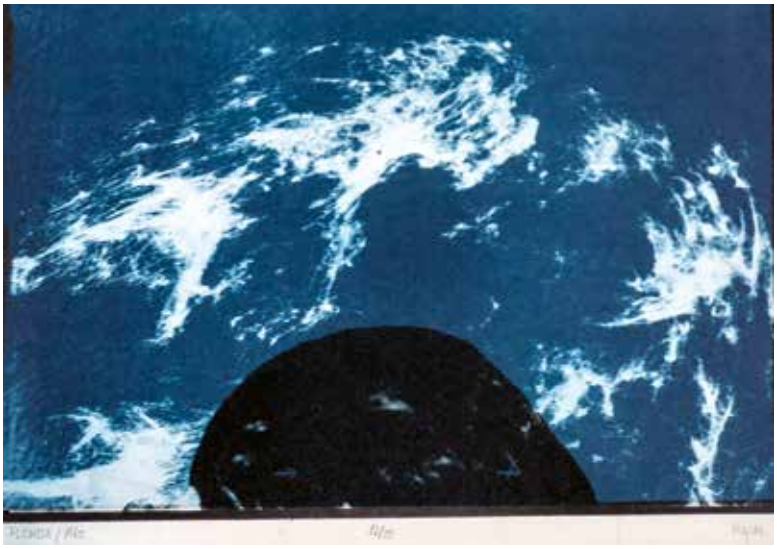
Cat. 94-95
Katalin Ladik (1942):
Blackshave Poem I, 1979
vintage gelatine silver enlargement on photographic paper, 240×180 mm
Inv. n.: KM.2019.40.1.

Blackshave Poem II, 1979
vintage gelatine silver enlargement on photographic paper, 240×180 mm
Inv. n.: KM.2019.40.2.
Purchased from the acb Gallery, 2019

Born in Novi Sad, Katalin Ladik is a performer active in literature and visual arts as well as theatre. She was a member of the Bosch+Bosch group, participated in numerous happenings and actions, and has been involved in the mail art movement. The Hungarian alternative, oppositional culture, from which performance art sprouted, was essentially male-centred. Ladik's performances, in which she used her own body, her own nakedness and recited erotically charged poems, introduced a new dimension to this field.

She faced quite a lot of public scrutiny after her performance in Budapest in 1970. She recited her onomatopoeic poems, not decipherable by conventional interpretation, dressed in bearskin, which barely covered her half-naked body. Her appearance, which strongly emphasised her femininity, was considered a provocation in the male community of the contemporary neo-avantgarde underground scene as well as in the official press, with sharp criticism accusing her of stripping for money. The performances of onomatopoeic poetry that took place in underground theatres had, in the end, political repercussions. In 1975, the Yugoslavian authorities expelled the artist from the party, on moral grounds. Her performance *Blackshave Poem*, staged a number of times from 1978, can be understood as a reaction to the negative press and as a way of reflecting on her own work. It was an inverse striptease, at the beginning of which the artist was wearing a black dress. When she took it off, she appeared in white lace lingerie, under which, however, there was a pair of black trousers and a turtleneck sweater. The striptease became an ironic gesture in that, against all expectations, it did not lead to nudity. The grotesque nature of the performance was further strengthened by the motif of shaving. The imitated shaving of the armpit and the face became a means of questioning ideas of beauty and traditional gender roles, from a humorous and feminist perspective. The production can be seen as the criticism of erotism, pervasive in pop culture, and of the objectification of the female body. Ladik's performances were usually not attended by art photographers; photos were mostly taken by her friends and acquaintances. The present photo documented the performance of *Blackshave Poem* in February 1979, in Budapest, on the occasion of the opening ceremony of Ladik's exhibition in the Young Artists' Club. The pictures were probably taken by György Galántai. Two photos were bought for the collection of the Municipal Gallery in 2019.

Mária Árvai



Before becoming a key figure of Central and Eastern European performance and body art and of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde of the 70s, Tibor Hajas was a poet. He read English literature, but his studies ended when he was arrested after a demonstration. Upon his release, he worked as a bookbinder. His first text-heavy street actions as a self-taught artist took place in the early 70s (*A Letter to My Friend in Paris*, 1975). During the second half of the decade, he started producing films and videos (*Self-Fashion Show*, 1976; *The Guest*, 1978; *The Jewels of the Night*, 1978) at Balázs Béla Studio, the hub of neo-avant-garde art that, in the late 60s and early 70s, provided a platform for artists, including Dóra Maurer, Miklós Erdély, and Tamás Szentjóby, who were not professional filmmakers. Simultaneously, starting in 1978, he staged private performances that explored liminal states of the human condition and were photographed by János Vető. The photographs were then turned into tableaux, and signed, by Hajas. Rituals, the search for the "essence of self," and transcendence had a magnetic effect on him. He created (self-)destructive, thanatotic, sexualised spaces that erased the boundaries between life and art. He was introduced to Tibetan cultural and religious practices by Béla Hamvas (*Tibetan Mysteries*, 1944). His writings deal extensively with the concepts of "bardo," a kind of liminal state, and "chöd," a tantric ritual for cutting through the ego.

Most of his works, including *Chöd* (1979), a performance and photo exhibition, and *Wake* (1980), co-produced by István Csömöri and János Vető, were shown at Bercsényi Club, a hotbed of experimentation. His practice has ties to *Wiener Aktionismus* (Viennese Actionism), especially to the photographic performances of Rudolf Schwarzkogler and Günter Brus.

Hajas wrote poems, prose, and radio dramas, and gave regular lectures on film at the Ganz-MÁVAG Cultural Centre. In summer 1980, he was invited to the Makó Graphic Artists' Colony; he was on his way back to Budapest when he had a fatal car accident.

Founded in 1977, the Makó Graphic Artists' Colony was a key venue of photo-based graphic art, where artists with widely divergent persuasions and interests worked side by side. Traditional techniques (etching, woodcut, lithography) were dropped in favour of photo-based offset and screen printing and experiments were carried out with printing presses that would normally have been off-limits for reasons of state security. On the suggestion of the art historian István Dévényi, who worked as a secretary at Makó from 1978 onwards, the pieces created at the Colony, held yearly in July, were compiled into a limited run of numbered portfolios (the *Makó Portfolio*). The themes and motifs (head wrapped in gauze) of Hajas' last photo actions (*Chöd, Last Round I–II*) are found in his Makó pieces. The folder was purchased from the heir in 2019.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 96-98
Tibor Hajas (1946–1980):
The Makó Portfolio, 1980
offset on paper, various sizes
Inv. n.: KM.2019.38.1–7.

IODINE "B"
offset on paper, 300×419 mm
Inv. n.: KM.2019.38.3

LEAD SEAL
offset on paper, 300×420 mm
Inv. n.: KM.2019.38.2

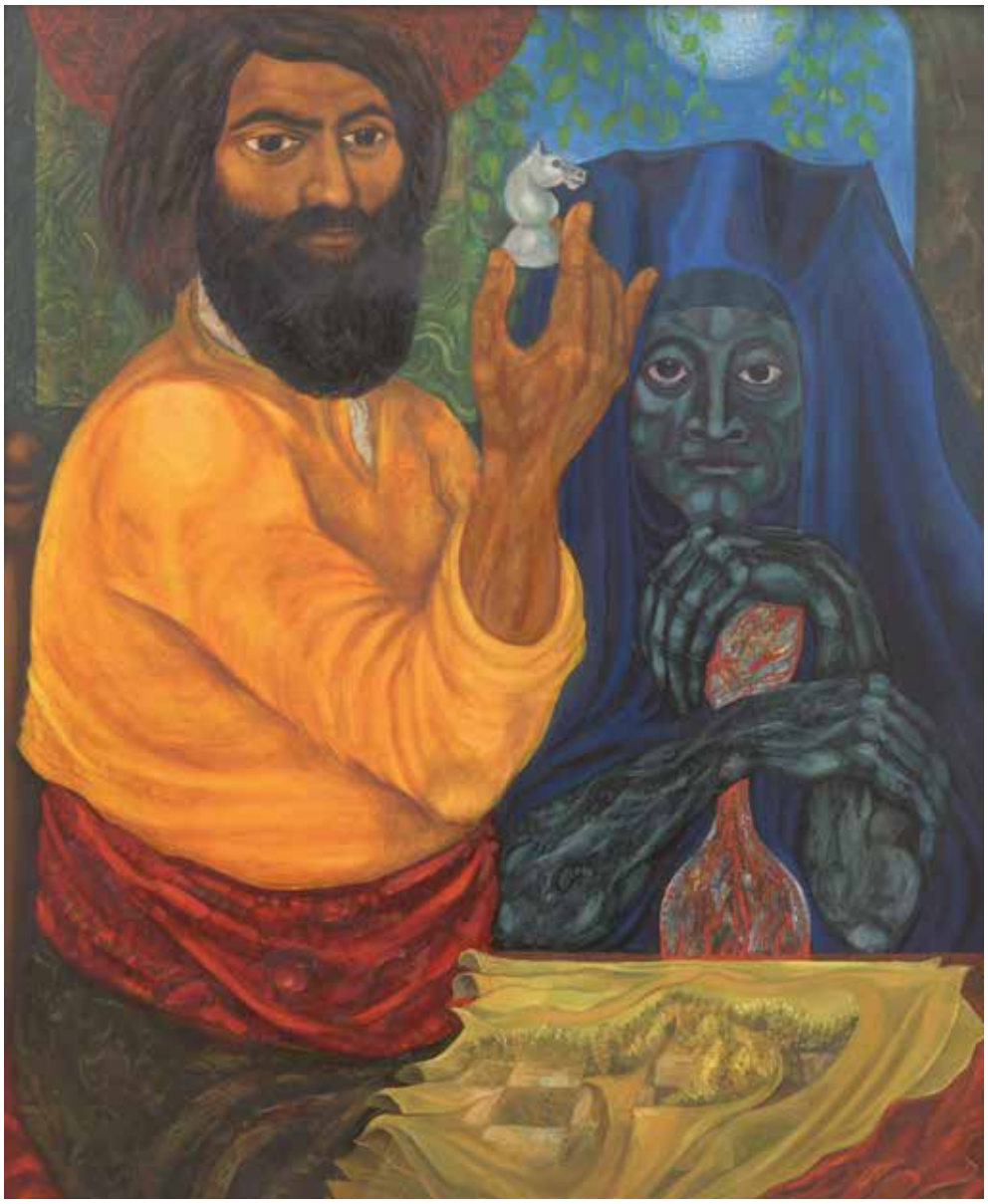
Untitled
offset on paper, 388×288 mm
Inv. n.: KM.2019.38.6
Purchased from Dániel Frankl, 2019

Cat. 99
Tamás Károly Péli (1948–1994):
The End of Things II (The Last Game), 1978
oil on fibreboard, 120×100 cm
s.l.l.: PTK 1978
Inv. n.: KM.2024.9.1.
Purchased from the artist by the Budapest Council, 1979

In May 1979, a special exhibition was opened in Budapest, in the exhibition hall of the Pataky Cultural Centre (now Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Kőbánya Cultural Centre): "The National Exhibition of Self-Taught Gypsy Artists". The venue, in itself, indicated the ambivalent attitude of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party that made the exhibition possible. The Kádár regime was characterised by a tendency to cover up and ignore the problems of the Roma. For a long time, the existence of Roma as an ethnic group and national minority were denied, the vulnerable conditions of the communities were presented merely as a social issue. By the late 1980s, the first state-supported Roma organisations had been established, but the thinking of other state bodies remained unchanged. The exhibition in question was organised in spite of fierce opposition, under the auspices of the Institute for Popular Culture, led by sociologist Iván Vitányi—relatively speaking a "refuge" to dissident intellectuals. The reception was not unanimously enthusiastic either, the exhibition itself and the studies published in the catalogue were accused of "nationalism" or even "separatism" even by renowned experts. Yet, this was the first time that artists who not only declared themselves to be Roma in their origins but also emphatically so in their works, were shown together in public in Hungary. The Municipal Council, which bought pieces from several exhibitors, purchased one of Tamás Péli's major works, presented here, in the same year.

The End of Things II summarises and, at the same time, practically closes Péli's visionary period of the seventies. It is a multifaceted piece, both in its form, in its theme, and in its cultural and mythological references. The static composition and theatrical gestures testify of a growing interest in mural painting—after graduating from the Vocational School of Fine and Applied Arts in Budapest, the painter studied murals at the Royal Academy of Visual Arts in Amsterdam. The vivid, saturated fields of colour and sometimes almost luminously transparent surfaces reflect not only the earlier, highly successful glass window commissions from Amsterdam, but also the achievements of the Hungarian painting tradition of the early 20th century, Nyolcak (The Eight) and KÚT (New Society of Fine Artists). The clothing, the plant motifs and the architectural surfaces of the sensitively and diversely painted background were inspired by a journey to Turkey. The two-figure composition evokes the central scene of Ingmar Bergman's emblematic film *The Seventh Seal* (1957), the chess game between Man and Death.

The beginning of Péli's career coincided with the rise of Roma intellectuals in Hungary. Péli aspired to play the same role in the visual arts as his friends and idols Menyhért Lakatos, József Choli Daróczi, Károly Bari, József Holdosi, József Hontalan Kovács and others in the field of literature. In addition to painting, he took up writing, participated in ethnographic collection excursions, and campaigned for the reform of the cultural education of the Roma. His huge efforts brought about, among others, a Roma class in the school of Újpalota and the "Gypsy Club" in Rákospalota.



In 1983, after lengthy preparations, he painted a mural entitled *Birth* for the state foster home in Tiszadob, in which he summarised, within the shared Hungarian history, the creation myth of the Romani people while also taking stock of the achievements of Roma intellectuals of the time. The monumental and impressive mural was introduced to the public here, in the Baroque Hall of the Castle Museum of the Budapest History Museum in 2021, as part of OFF-Biennale Budapest.

Tamás Péli died young; in his last years he strived to promote the cause of Hungarian Roma society as a Member of Parliament, working directly alongside political decision-makers.

Péter Köblös

Cat. 100-101
Dóra Maurer (1937):
Greenhouse, 1963
copper engraving on paper,
print: 200×295 mm;
paper: 350×500 mm
s.l.l.: Melegház; s.l.m.: 18/50;
s.r.l.: Maurer 1963
Inv. n.: KM.2017.26.1

Metamorphosis, 1968
drypoint, aquatint, mezzotint,
copperplate engraving on paper,
print: 294×335 mm;
paper: 378×537 mm
s.l.l.: Metamorphosis Zst. V./6;
s.r.l.: Maurer 1968
Inv. n.: KM.2017.27.1.
Purchased from
the Vintage Gallery,
2017

Dóra Maurer is a leading figure of the Hungarian neo-avantgarde generation and an internationally renowned artist. She studied at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts between 1955 and 1961. At the beginning of her career, she worked with reproduced graphics. It was János Major, a year her senior, who introduced her to the technique of etching. Just like Major, Maurer saw etching as a medium of experimentation. In the first half of the 1960s, she tried treating the surface of the copper plate in an unusual manner to create special textures and a particularly rich surface. Her pieces are not organised around the line drawing, she considers the whole surface as one unit, and uses materials such as cotton wool, tissue paper or textiles, the imprints of which are often random. Her biomorphic structures are made up of montage-like layers of textures, created by various etching processes.

In the copper engraving *Greenhouse*, the centre of the picture is filled with a flourishing biomass, a plant tissue. The surrealistic loam is fed by water taps along the edges of the sheet, however, apart from these realistic features, the picture is rather abstract as the natural forms reminiscent of plants cannot be identified. Maurer's vision is akin to the approach of the Hungarian bio-romanticism of Ernő Kállai, which explores the interrelations between micro- and macrocosm and establishes a link between realistic and abstract representation. Maurer's experiments carried out in the early sixties are strongly related to Surnaturalist painting—she incorporated the same principles into reproduced graphics.

The Municipal Gallery purchased the artwork from Vintage Gallery, which represented the artist, after a Maurer exhibition organised in the Barcsay Exhibition Hall in 2017.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 102
Ilona Keserü (1933):
Form, 1969
oil, string, sewing, embossed canvas on canvas, 160×80×8 cm
s.l.m.: Keserü 1969
Inv. n.: KM.83.130.
Purchased from the artist, 1983

Ilona Keserü was a unique, prominent figure of the so-called IPARTERV generation of the 1960s (the name refers to the exhibitions held at the headquarters of the Industrial Building Design Company—IPARTERV for short). She created a peculiarly lyrical painting style that relied heavily on the use of colours and forms of folk art, but also had a certain level of affinity to pop art. As the student of Ferenc Martyn, one of the most important members of the art scene in Pécs, it did not take her long to become acquainted with the Francophile perspective of her master. From 1952, she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts. In these early years, the friendship of writer Géza Ottlik and the intellectual environment that surrounded him played a formative role in her life. In 1962, a one-year scholarship in Rome and her experiences there (such as the art of Cy Twombly and Alberto Burri) helped her find her own voice.

In 1967, the artist discovered the heart-shaped Baroque gravestones of Balatonudvari. Their double-arched motif, a kind of "found geometry", started to serve as the basis of her analyses of colour, form and space. In the composition titled *Form*, the double-arched motif becomes a peculiar body landscape. Keserü departs from the traditional system of pictorial structure by combining the painting with an embossed canvas, whose characteristic flesh tone and undulating rhythm lend the work a sensuality. The crack along the middle of the composition, with the black "tangles" around it, carry associations of intimate details of the female body. In addition to the motivic allusions, the raw canvas, which evokes traditional women's work (weaving), can also be interpreted as an expression of embraced female identity. At the same time, according to Katalin Aknai, in compositions like *Form*, "the discomfort (i.e. the impossibility of description) caused by the representation of the stylized female genital organ 'put on public display' illuminates the problem of the impossibility of assimilation of gender differences in Hungarian studies of art history."

Mónika Kumin

Cat. 103
György Jovánovics (1939):
Detail of Le Grand Gilles, 1967–1968
plaster, 93×46×34 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.93.173.
Purchased from the family of the artist (studio purchase), 1993

Right from the beginning, György Jovánovics has almost exclusively used snow-white, fragile plaster to create his sculptures. His figural pieces made in the 1960s seem like ephemeral monuments, in conversation with the traditions of art history. One of his recurring motifs is the hieratic figure of a man with a piece of textile covering the body like an empty shell. *Detail of Le Grand Gilles* is one of the most important pieces of his early period. Its starting point is Jean-Antoine Watteau's monumental painting, formerly known as *Gilles* (now referred to as *Pierrot*), made around 1718–1719 and kept in the Louvre. At the heart of the scene stands the familiar face from the commedia dell'arte with an awkward posture, dominating the composition. Despite his prominent placement, he exudes a sense of loneliness and vulnerability. Jovánovics's sculpture portrays not the human figure itself but its memory. The imprint of the garment envelops thin air; by enclosing nothing, he makes it almost tangible. It is like a newly discovered fragment of the distant past, comparable to Auguste Rodin's sculptural study for Balzac's dressing gown (1897). Jovánovics's piece gives the impression of an incomplete fragment and a study in progress, at the same time. It is a de-heroised monument—its organising principles are incompletion and absence. The imprint of the robe also evokes the traditions of illusionism, investigating the relationship between reality and illusion, between the original and the copy. At the same time, the painterly motif reinterpreted as a motif of plastic art goes back to the old paragon of painting and sculpture. Decades later, at the Venice Biennale, Jovánovics presented his work Detail from *The Tempest* (1995), which evokes another period painting, Giorgione's *The Tempest* (c. 1508). By totalising a single detail of the original image, the piece refers back to the questions of the early period of plastic art, and reinterprets the dilemmas of reality and illusion, painting and sculpture, absence and memory, transience and timelessness, as well as the traditions of art history and topicality.

Dávid Fehér

Cat. 104
Erzsébet Schaár (1908–1975):
Interior (Gates), 1968
bronze, height 39 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.71.30.
Purchased from the artist, 1971

Erzsébet Schaár studied at the School of Industrial Drawing and then at the College of Fine Arts. That is where she met Tibor Vilt, whom she married in 1935. The two sculptors' marriage, full of tension and artistic rivalry, proved fruitful. They often went their separate ways; Erzsébet Schaár, for example, did not take part in the exhibitions of the European School, where her husband participated several times.

From the second half of the 60s, an important change started to take place in Schaár's small sculptural works, as she started surrounding her individual figures with a built environment. An ancient image of the house appeared in different parts of the space, a familiarly human milieu, which, with its irregular, curving lines, was personal, lyrical, and somewhat dreamlike. She probably took inspiration from her own home, the happy world of her childhood, the house in Leányka Street in Budafok. She lived there for several years also as an adult, together with her husband, father and sister, Magda Schaár.

The bronze sculpture titled *Interior/Gates* is an inner space, consisting of three tracts that narrow towards the back, with a chair placed inside. The chair motif recalls Schaár's small bronze series, *Chairs* (1967–1972), which pays tribute to her turbulent marriage. Dezső Szilágyi staged a puppet theatre production—entitled *Chair Story*—of the sculpture series in 1975. The chair, which marks the scale, both replaces the human presence and refers to its absence. It is facing the viewer, it is static. In contrast, the narrowing layers of space dynamically direct the gaze inwards and then, through the rearmost part of the space, outwards through the half-open door, implying the possibility of escaping the narrow space of the sculpture, of leaving. The side walls are not completely closed—the light coming in from the sides makes the interior of the sculpture seem mysterious. While the inner space seems cosy and familiar, the world beyond the doorway is unknown.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 105
István Harasztÿ (1934–2022):
The Unknown Side of the Coin—Rat Catcher, 1979
turned, polished bronze, diameter: 18 cm, height: 5 cm; the height of the rotor: 6.1 cm
s. on the side: H HARASZTY / 1979
Inv. n.: Él. 81.7.
Purchased from the artist by the Budapest City Council, 1980

István Harasztÿ was a prominent figure of the avant-garde generation that emerged in the 1960s. Having completed his studies to become a locksmith, he started working as a teacher at an industrial vocational school, while also studying sculpture at the Dési Huber Art Circle. From the late 1960s, he created interactive and mobile structures that he already defined as artworks. In the early 1970s, he coined the term "play art" to describe the light-hearted approach of his artworks, which aimed to alleviate (societal) tension and involve the audience in interactive experiences. The conceptual nature of his works became increasingly significant by the 1970s. The sculptures and objects not only showcased a playful aesthetic but also grew increasingly enigmatic, a quality often heightened by the artist's deliberate titles such as *Birdcage* (1972), *Central Control* (1973), *A Red Button / Give and Take* (1972–1987) and the *Rat Catcher* (1979) featured in this exhibit. Due to the humorous moral and political references, the pieces testify of a critical attitude. The *Rat Catcher* plaque, to be manually operated, too, has an ironic quality. Like other media, the medal and plaque genre experienced a widening of its borders in the 1970s. With his "playful", kinetic plaques and mobile coins made at the end of the 1970s, Harasztÿ straddled the line between medal and small sculpture. In 1979, the artist created a seven-part conceptual series of medals for the Sopron Medal Biennale, one piece of which was the *Rat Catcher*. The coin is a trap, and the way in which it snaps shut when touched can be understood as a comical gesture referring to the distance between cultural politics and autonomous art.

Viktória Oth

Cat. 106
Margit Szilvitzky (1931–2018):
100×100 square (8), 1976
sewn, folded canvas,
22×22×4 cm
s.b.m.t.: Szilvitzky– / Helsinki / 1976
Inv. n.: KM.2022.72.1.
Purchased from the acb Gallery, 2022

The 1970s saw the rise of state-commissioned tapestry art for architectural decoration, and the parallel renewal of Hungarian textile art. At the beginning of the decade, a series of Wall and Spatial Textile Biennials was launched in Szombathely, and in 1975 the Velem Textile Art Workshop was founded with the aim of providing a place and opportunity for the new, young generation to experiment with and research textiles. Margit Szilvitzky is one of the most important representatives of the "new textile" movement. She graduated from the College of Applied Arts in 1954 and worked as a well-known textile designer. Her multifaceted artistic work, her organisational and teaching activity all had a large influence on later generations. Already at the beginning of the 1970s, her sensitivity to the problems of space became apparent as she investigated the sculptural possibilities of textiles and looked for opportunities to turn plane figures into spatial ones. A new turning point came in the middle of the decade, when she abandoned the organic forms and colourful materials used so far and started working with natural but industrially produced white canvases, using them as "ready-made" material. During this period—which can be described as analytical but also as related to minimal art and conceptual art—she thought in terms of a geometric system of forms. It was around this time that she "discovered" the square—a basic shape that later defined many of her series. She often started off with experiments using paper, the results of which she carried onto textile; folding became one of her main creative tools.

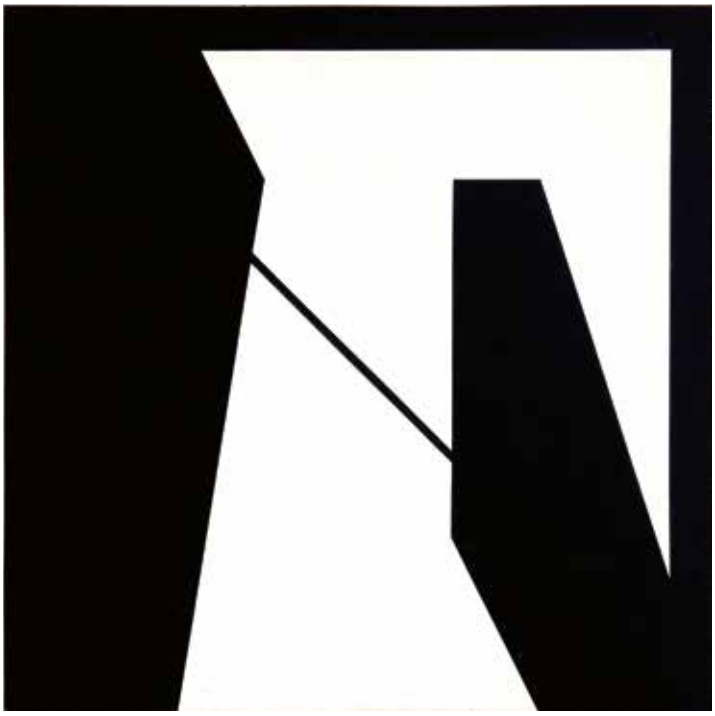
Her *100×100 squares* series bears the characteristics of both relief and panel painting. She made squares from canvas using various triangular folds and a sewing machine. Along the folds several layers were formed, at the places where she used coloured inserts, fictive space appeared. From a frontal perspective, the edges seem like a drawn shape—which gives the impression of planarity and rationality—while the shadows along the edges emphasise the plasticity and sensuality of the object. Folding also served to represent time, the process of creation expressed through textile. Her methodical geometric shaping, her serial thinking and her use of folding remind one of the works of Dóra Maurer and László Lakner made in the seventies and eighties. The series *Studium/Positions* (1972) by László Lakner, part of the graphic art collection of the Municipal Gallery, consists of delicate, trompe l'oeil pencil drawings of the folding of a textile handkerchief, which in their confrontation of planes and spaces, in their processuality and conceptual approach, are as important parallels to Margit Szilvitzky's 100×100 square series as are Dóra Maurer's frottages titled *Hidden Structures* (1977–1979), which consist of folded sheets of paper rubbed over with graphite.

Mária Árvai

Cat. 107
Károly Hopp-Halász (1946–2016):
Modulated and Classified Humans from the Pop Art Series, 1968
tempera on cardboard, 490×645 mm
s.r.l.: Halász Károly; s.l.l.: 1968; signed and title on the verso
Inv. n.: KM. 2019.28.1.
Old, non-inventoried piece

Hopp-Halász's distinctive artistic practice was shaped by his time with the Pécs Workshop (1969–1980), a group formed by the students of Ferenc Lantos. He spent the 60s studying and working in Pécs. In the late 70s, he moved back to his hometown where he set up, in 1979, the Experimental Visual Art Camp of Paks. In 1990–91, he started Art Gallery Paks with his friends. His work covers a broad spectrum of subjects and techniques spanning painting, photography, performance, graphic art, objects, installation, film, and land and body art.
Hopp-Halász kept his finger on the pulse of international trends in art and was greatly influenced by geometric art, op art, Vasarely, pop art, and the "light play" films of László Moholy-Nagy. "Radial" compositions and overlapping networks of lines can already be found in his early graphic and enamel pieces and paintings. It was during this experimental period that he made his *"Pop Art Series"* that plays with the morphology and proportions of the male body.
The bond between the body and geometry is a theme that runs through his work. Questions of style can never be divorced from questions concerning identity and male experiences outside heteronormativity when looking at Hopp-Halász's art.

Lívia Páldi



Observing and being observed are among the themes of Hopp-Halász's *High Stand*, a series of studies in abstract structures. In summer 1972, he and his fellow Pécs Workshop members (Ferenc Ficzek, Károly Kismányoky, Ferenc Lantos, Sándor Pinczehelyi, Kálmán Szíjártó) received invitation to the Balatonboglár Chapel Exhibition. They were working on "landscape corrections."

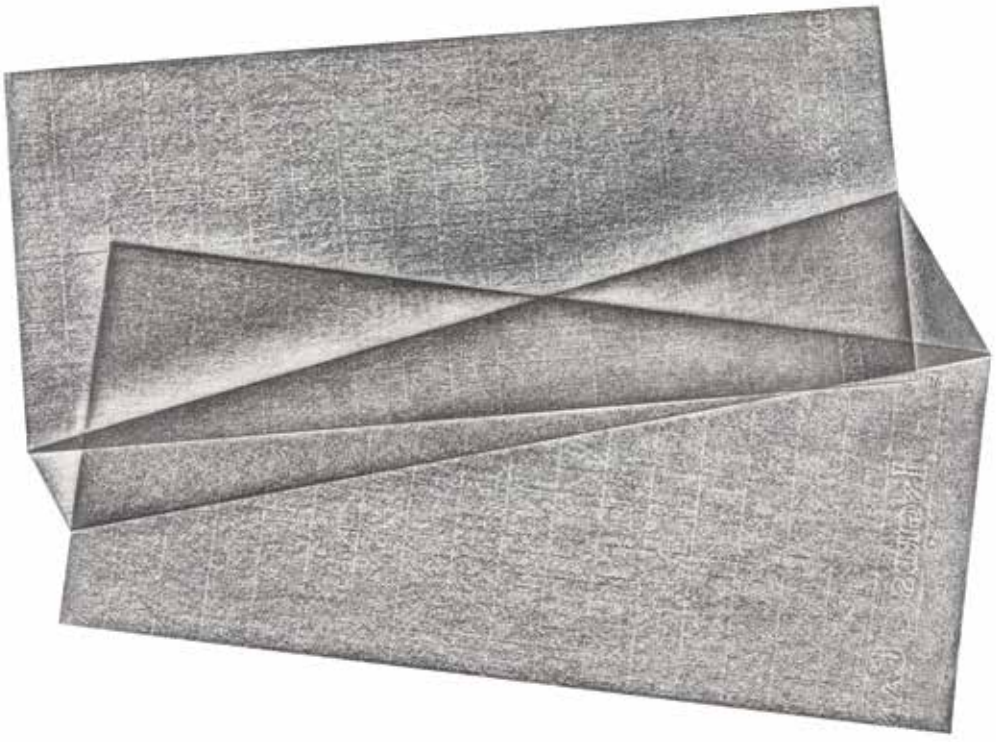
At Balatonboglár, the motif that had preoccupied Hopp-Halász found one of its first expressions, in an object constructed out of Dexion's slotted angle shelving and red canvas strips, which he also showed in Pécs six years later.

Several of his series—paintings, sculptures, and works on paper—feature grids of vertical, horizontal, and diagonal lines and exist in different sizes, techniques, and colour combinations. As a motif, the high stand brings together his interest in the constructivist tradition, the analysis of shape and form, symbols of explorations into 2 and 3D, the existential angst of Kádárian Hungary, and the experience of being closeted, hiding in the private sphere, as a person with a non-heteronormative identity.

This piece, a sketch for a large painting in the series, was a gift from the artist to the Municipal Gallery.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 108
Károly Hopp-Halász (1946–2016):
High Stand-Reference, Sketch 2/B (140×140 cm work), 1972–1976
acrylic on plywood,
50×50 cm (without frame)
s.b.r.l.: Halász
Inv. n.: KM.2001.10.
Donated by the artist, 2001



Cat. 109
Dóra Maurer (1937):
Hidden Structures, 1977
graphite frottage on watercolour paper, 500×650 mm
Inv. n.: KM.93.163.
Purchased from the artist, 1990

In the late 1960s, Maurer's interest turned to photography and to conceptual artistic thinking; both film and personal action entered her practice around this time. She was primarily interested in the process of making prints, which led to even more radical results from the early seventies. In the course of the actions, the unpredictable deterioration and transformation of the printing plates not only documented the impact, but the resulting object, which functioned as a dummy, created the imprint of the image. The process of leaving a mark is traced by the various recorded phases, which capture the intention of destruction and preservation, one of the characteristics of reproduced graphics.

From the mid-seventies, random changes were replaced by systematic alterations and shifts based on mathematical rules in her works. The period of working with shifts was followed by an interest in the technique of folding. At the time, it was not only Maurer, but also László Lakner and Margit Szilvitzky who were preoccupied with unfolding plains and three-dimensional spaces using paper and textiles.

Maurer experimented with different folded variations on printing plates and textiles as well as paper. The graphics in the series *Hidden Structures* are geometric analyses that condense problems investigated before, such as the dynamics of hiding and revealing, the desire to trace the changes of shapes, the need to capture a phase by rubbing the folded form, or the need to leave a mark, in so far as the folds of the unfolded paper can be used to reconstruct the folded position of the sheet. These pieces, however, also reference the mechanisms of reproduced graphics. Just like in the case of etching, where the image only comes together in the final stage, when the piece leaves the printing press, when working with frottage the artist cannot immediately see what the final result will be either. The result of rubbing unfolds gradually; the printing form and the foundation are the same: the printing plate is in fact the same paper on which the image appears.

Enikő Róka

Cat. 110
Imre Bak (1939–2022):
Shaped Canvas / Bright, 1970
acrylic on canvas, 130.5×170 cm
s. on the side of the canvas r.t. Fényes II. Bak / 70
Inv. n.: KM.93.174.
Purchased from the artist, 1993

Geometric shapes have defined Imre Bak's art almost from the start. He was a leading proponent of hard edge, colour field painting, and post-painterly abstraction, and was one of the first artists in Hungary to use shaped canvases. His early compositions are constructed from dynamic stripe sequences and are linked to both American new abstraction and local strains of geometric abstraction.

The composition of *Shaped Canvas / Bright* is based on colourful stripe sequences that run along the canvas edges, framing, as it were, the "empty" whiteness in the middle and creating, through the contrast of cold and warm shades, a sense of depth. This piece is part of a series that was first shown at the Fényes Adolf Hall, in an exhibition by Bak and Gyula Konkoly, in 1970. The title (bright translates to "fényes" in Hungarian) is an allusion to the venue but can also be taken as a nod to the power of primary, "industrial," colours or to the "brightness" of the dominant white. Bak authored an important introductory essay, *Notes on the Latest Developments of Modern Art*, for the original exhibition catalogue, where he explored the art historical context of his work with theoretical insight, delving into the question of shaped canvases that challenge the traditional rectangular format and reinterpret the painting as an object. "The picture, then, that leaves the wall and materialises itself in space, is not only in perfect keeping with our scientific world view but also signals that it wants to enter our daily lives and shape our immediate surroundings. The strive for the third dimension is, simultaneously, an intensive expression of the process of objectification. Already in the earlier stages of modern art history there was the possibility for pictures, not to represent objects ('transfiguring' or imbuing them with artistic meaning), but to be a 'transfigured' art object. This is why, today, they talk more about objects of art and less about pictures." Anticipating several themes in his later work, these words—"leaving the wall," "shaping our surroundings", "art object"—could just as well refer to the piece held at the Municipal Gallery.

Dávid Fehér

DOBOS CABINET

Gábor Dobos (1947–2022), was an artist of great originality. As a cinematographer, photographer, and filmmaker, he was involved in virtually all major independent photography and film ventures of the 60s and 70s. His photographs and films bridged the gap between the art events of the avant-garde subculture and the private lives of its prominent and lesser-known figures. There is hardly anyone in the period's film and performance art scene who has not had, at some point, Gábor Dobos as co-author (Ágnes Háy, László Najmányi, Tibor Hajas, Péter Donáth, Árpád Ajtony, András Wahorn, Miklós Erdély, Péter Dobai), which makes his oeuvre an index of important venues and names. Rejected by the Academy of Drama and Film, he pursued his interests at the Balázs Béla Studio and in underground culture. He spent some years working for the Hungarian Television.

Starting in autumn 1975, he led the Dziga Vertov Photography and Film Workshop at Ganz Cultural Centre, which was where the Kovács István Studio and Studio K also operated, where Miklós Erdély and Dóra Maurer held their *Creativity Exercises*, and where Miklós Erdély, László Beke, László Rajk, Zsuzsa Szűcs, and Gergely Molnár gave memorable theoretical lectures in a series called *Utopia*.

It was Dobos who filmed the first performances at the Dohány utca apartment theatre, and it was also him who took photographs of the group in New York, where they were forced to emigrate in 1976.

In 2006, Municipal Gallery dedicated an exhibition to Dobos' work. Ten pieces by him are held in the collection.

Anikó B. Nagy

We see the members of the underground theatre from Dohány utca 20 in the lounge of Ferihegy airport. With "one-way passports" in their pockets: half of them left for Paris on that day, the other half, three weeks later, on 12 February. The richly detailed picture was taken with a Pentacon Six, an East German 6×6 camera that was known for its unreliable frame spacing which resulted in overlapping. Gábor Dobos made frequent and conscious use of this glitch, which produced a 180-degree panorama and a duplication of some figures in this picture.

The people seen here, and forced to emigrate, are: Anna Koós, Péter Halász, Marianne Kollár, Péter Breznyik, Galus Halász, István Bálint, Eszter Bálint; they are seen off by Endre Bálint, Iri Bálint, László Beke, Géza Beremény i, Dániel Bíró, Yvette Bíró, András Bojti, Andrea Bősze, Zsolt Csalog, Mihály Dés, Margit Dobner, Emő Dobos, Péter Donáth, Pál Fazekas, Éva Forgács, Zsuzsa Gáspár, Gusztáv Hábermann M. (also known as László Algol, his code-name was Zoltán Pécsi), András Jeles, Panka Kis Kovács, Miklós Kovács, Mária Körmendy, György Kurtág, Péter Lajtai, Júlia Láng, Péter Sziámi Müller, Péter Nádori, Péter Rácz, Judit Rácz, Sándor Simon, Gyöngyvér Szász-Bogdán, Éva Szendrei, András Szeredás, Ádám Tábor, Can Togay, Pierre Vajda, Júlia Veres, and Attila Virágh.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 111
Gábor Dobos (1947-2022):
Those Who Left, Those Who Were Leaving, and Those Who Stayed Behind (Goodbye at Ferihegy, 20 January 1976), 1976/2024
gelatine silver print, from negative, on Baryta paper
Inv. n.: KM.2024.23.1.
Purchased from Édua Dalma Engi, 2024

Cat. 112
Gábor Dobos (1947–2022): *Marianne Kollár, Anna Koós, and Péter Breznyik in Don Giovanni*, 1974/2006
vintage, gelatine silver print
Inv. n.: KM.2009.3.1.
Purchased from Ágnes Tursic, 2009

Don Giovanni von Leporello, a black and white film shot, in late summer of 1975 at Nagymaros, at an abandoned house and the tiny chapel and forest nearby, is a visually captivating exploration of music, theatre, art, and philosophy. Its precursor was the Dohány utca apartment theatre's *Prologue to Don Juan*. Produced by Balázs Béla Studio and edited by Anna Koós, the film's cinematographer was Gábor Dobos.

The group was still together at this point, with almost all of them appearing in or working on the film (Eszter Bálint, István Bálint, Andrea Bősze, Éva Buchmüller, Emő Dobos, Péter Donáth, Galus Halász, Péter Halász, Éva Koós, Borbála Major, Rebeka Major, Gergely Nádori, Péter Nádori, Anna Petri, Péter Rácz). When later that year authorities forced most of the members and their families into exile, the film, now larger than life, came to bookmark the end of an era. An illegal copy was bootlegged to the West. In the portrait pictures, we see Marianne Kollár as Donna Elvira, Anna Koós as Donna Anna, and Péter Breznyik as Don Giovanni.

Anikó B. Nagy

The photograph shows Emma Imre, one-time actress at Kaposvár's Csiky Gergely Theatre and wife of Gyula Pauer, posing for a silk print for the sculpture *Maya*. In the next step, Pauer would spray white paint on the bright areas of the fine silk fabric, imprinted with the face of the model, and black paint on the dark ones, before stretching the dry textile over the head of a life-sized wooden puppet. The same procedure was used for full-body prints.

The print's patterns of light and shade turn *Maya*, an oak wood sculpture, into a pseudo-sculpture. This piece, a touchstone of Pauer's pseudo-pieces, was made of Nagyatád oak in 1978, at the end of his time at the artists' colony there, and has been held in the Hungarian National Gallery since 1982.

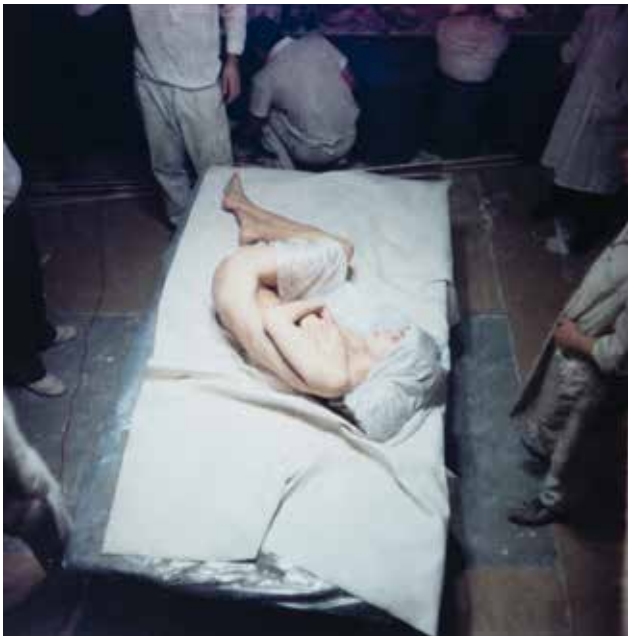
Emma Imre was also involved in *Pseudo-Performances*, a performance series by Pauer from the 80s, documented, again, by Gábor Dobos.

Anikó B. Nagy

Cat. 113
Gábor Dobos (1947–2022):
Emma Imre Modelling for Gyula Pauer's Maya, 1978/2024
coloured hand print on Fujifilm photo paper
Inv. n.: KM.2024.25.1.
Purchased from Édua Dalma Engi, 2024

Cat. 114-116
Gábor Dobos (1947–2022):
Plastering of Female Model I-III, 1985/2024
Inv. n.: KM.2024.26.1.
coloured hand print on Fujifilm photo paper
Purchased from Édua Dalma Engi, 2024

Gyula Pauer's sculptural fascination with body prints continued into the 80s. In connection with the first socialist beauty pageant in 1985, a series of nudes were made in his Budapest studio. Launched as a side event to the official programme, his *Beauty Action* documented successive stages in the pageant, where he took plaster casts of the naked bodies of contestants. Pauer and his large team were not the only ones present at these sessions, which, through the connotations of art and in spite of apparent ethical issues, enjoyed more than a semblance of legitimacy; László Hartai and András Dér documented the events in *Szépleányok* (Pretty Girls), a film containing explicit scenes of abuse. Two authorised photographers, János Fenyő and Béla Bacsó, took what they thought to be open-license photographs which then appeared in the erotic magazine *Lui Deutschland* without the models' consent. As in the pageant so too in the studio, money and power were pursued at the young women's expense.



Gábor Dobos was in Pauer's hired crew. He made close-ups of the excruciatingly painful and vulnerable moments of the mould-making, which he never sold. The negatives of the photos seen here have recently been discovered in his estate. One of these shows Henrik Pauer, Gyula Pauer's son, in a white smock, leaning over one of the "beauties," in a scene that is highly reminiscent of late-19th-century paintings of mortuaries that popularised the idea of beautiful female bodies lying on slabs and being scientifically examined by doctors.
More on this episode, as well as on Ágnes Eperjesi's project that addresses and redresses it, can be found in another segment of our exhibition.

Anikó B. Nagy

ART IN THE 80S AND 90S

A sense of economic and political crisis and widespread social discontent were becoming palpable by the mid-1980s. Control slipped out of state hands, and with it went the first pillar of cultural dominance. The regime change brought a new, republican constitution, laying the foundation for a plural political structure and a civil society.

Ideologically, the state lost track of, or was lagging behind, cultural changes. In 1981, the art historian Lóránd Hegyi launched *New Sensibility*, an exhibition series that started a dialogue between Hungarian painting and international trans-avant-garde developments, at Fészek Artists' Club. This figurative, expressive, personal painting style was a reaction to the crisis of the avant-garde and the postmodern condition.

In the 1990s, technological advances transformed the ways people thought about seeing and visuality; there was a pressing need to ask questions about digitalisation and emergent media. It was also then that, as well as "new museology," feminist and critical art history, moulded by different generations, approaches, policies, and conflicts, reached Hungary's cultural sphere.

On the eve of the end of communism, the institutional system began to change; in 1989, Knoll Gallery Budapest opened, showing works by Hungarian and Eastern European artists; 1991 saw the first international art fair in Hungary, the Budapest Art Expo. Ludwig Museum Budapest was founded, with a collection—the first of its kind—focusing on Central Eastern Europe. A heightened international awareness of what used to be the Eastern Bloc was bolstered by the Soros Centers for Contemporary Art, a network that facilitated regional collaboration and that, in Hungary, acted primarily as a catalyst for research on the contemporary art scene and for international promotion. In 1993, the National Cultural Fund was established.

Younger generations sought out and created exhibition and project spaces (Újlak Cinema, Tűzraktér, Hungária Bath) away from slow-moving institutional structures. Newly appointed professors, including Dóra Maurer and Zsigmond Károlyi, were invited after non-violent student protests at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts,

inaugurating a new era. The League of Non-Profit Art Spaces was established (Studio of Young Artists' Association, Stúdió Gallery, Institute of Contemporary Art Dunaújváros, Liget Gallery, Óbudai Társaskör Gallery, Óbudai Pincegaléria and the Hungarian Látványtár Art Foundation) that ventured into new territories of cultural studies like post-colonialism, feminist theory, and curatorial studies. These interests found expression, for example, in two exhibition series and the accompanying publications, in *Water Ordeal* (Óbudai Társaskör Gallery—Óbudai Pincegaléria, 1995), dedicated to Hungarian and international women artists, and in ****Erotics and Sexuality in Hungarian Art (1999)*, which dealt with body politics and representation.

Not everybody adapted to the rapid changes, and there was intellectual uncertainty among members of the middle generation. Miklós Erdély, the neo-avant-garde mastermind who turned towards painting in the years before his death in 1986, remained highly critical of "new painting." Artists like El Kazovszkij were untouched by new theories and went on with their idiosyncratic artistic programmes. On the other hand, the period opened new chapters—chapters dominated by painting and rooted in the photographic and conceptual experiments and experiences of the previous decade—in the work of many established artists (Ákos Birkás, Zsigmond Károlyi, Dóra Maurer, Károly Hopp-Halász).

The new generation, artists like Mária Chilf, whose works are seen in this room, or Emese Benczúr, Ágnes Eperjesi, Csaba Nemes, and Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi, to whom the next one is dedicated, came into an art world defined by a wide range of techniques, an awareness of new media, and an international perspective.

In 1992, Kiscell Museum's restored Temple Space was opened. Covering 550 square meters and divided into three parts, this one-of-a-kind space came to house, primarily, site specific installations. It would also define, up until 2014, the exhibition and acquisition strategies of the Municipal Gallery, led after 1994 by Péter Fitz. However, exhibition-related acquisitions have been made with a consideration for the museological possibilities and the historical scope of the existing collection.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 117
Károly Hopp-Halász (1946–2016):
Trampled Picture, 1980
acrylic on canvas,
123×133 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2001.13.
Donated by the artist, 2001

In December 2000, a Károly Hopp-Halász exhibition, entitled *Trampled Pictures*, was organised at the Temple Space of the Kiscell Museum. In addition to paintings from the early 1980s, new pieces, specifically made for this space formed part of the exhibition. The trampled compositions were inspired by a performance in Amsterdam in 1978, where Hopp-Halász trampled on a constructivist drawing of his, as part of a video action. The series itself was launched two years later, when he created a one-square-metre black and white trampled composition for an exhibition in Veszprém. The marks of paint left behind by walking around barefoot result in intense, almost monochrome surfaces that capture the temporal and spatial dimensions of the performance.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Pécs Workshop, which had shaped Hopp-Halász's work, was dissolved, while things were drastically changing with regards to scale and approach in the Hungarian art scene. The expressive painting of the post-modern New Sensibility, which emphasised subjectivity and visuality, combined many different traditions and styles. Hopp-Halász was one of those who participated in exhibitions of these new trends. His sensual and meditative trampled canvases, his eccentric "new painting" recycled elements from his photographic actions and abstract works, while the strong geometric patterns express his isolation and confinement, the conflict of "going, going and staying". The work was donated on the occasion of his exhibition in Kiscell.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 118
Miklós Erdély (1928–1986):
Nature I, 1984
pencil, chalk, and spray on paper, 610×860 mm
s.r.l.: 84 Erdély
Inv. n.: KM.2019.49.1.
Purchased from Zsuzsa Szenes, the artist's widow, 1986

The late 60s saw the emergence of philosopher/artist Miklós Erdély as a powerhouse of neo-avant-garde art, a movement of experimental tendencies on the fringes of "official" culture, who worked in art, experimental film, architecture, literature, and everything in between. His oeuvre is made up of concentric circles of artistic problems that have montage, the principle of creating something new out of existing elements, at their core. His work as an artist, teacher, and philosopher, his intellectual concerns (set theory, creativity, entropy, parapsychology, semiotics, utopia, Zen koans), and his idea that "everything is connected with everything else," were in constant, critical dialogue with the latest developments in the thought of his time.

Between 1946 and 1947, Erdély studied sculpture at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts before graduating as an architect from the Budapest University of Technology in 1951. In the years that followed, he worked as a construction manager and set up a business that specialised in commercial and architectural mosaics. His workshop provided a basis for his artistic independence and functioned as a laboratory for Hungarian pop art. Designers at the workshop included, among others, Gizella Rákóczy, Gyula Pauer, and László Lakner.

His first poems and short stories appeared in the early 60s. Later in the decade, his and his artist wife Zsuzsa Szenes' family house in Virágárok utca became an inclusive hub of intellectual ferment welcoming happenings and art events. A disregard for convention, with a penchant for the absurd or grotesque, was one of the driving forces behind his reflective attitude as an artist. It was his aim to marry the natural with the human sciences, scientific thought with an artistic/visual one. His preoccupation with painting, in partial dialogue with the new painting of the day, lasted from 1983 until his death. His central theme was the imaginary unit, or *i*, a solution in modern mathematics for the problem of equations that cannot be solved within the set of real numbers. Part of a larger series, *Nature I* is the ironic/playful exploration of this abstract concept. The fluorescent sunspot, the "valley" of the radical symbol, and the de-winged "1" transform the radical expression into a symbolic landscape. To Erdély, painting is a tool, an "intellectual aid," the link between visual and intellectual experiments, which he described as "painterly geometry." In portraying a mathematical expression, he maps the highways and byways of knowledge and understanding, while breaking away from derivative modes of thought.

This work was purchased, not long after the artist's death, from his widow Zsuzsa Szenes.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 119
Ákos Birkás (1941–2018):
Head 9, Bt. 128, 1994
oil on canvas,
185×115×5 cm (total size)
j.h..: 2×Ákos Birkás
Inv. n.: KM.94.5.
Purchased from the artist (atelier), 1994

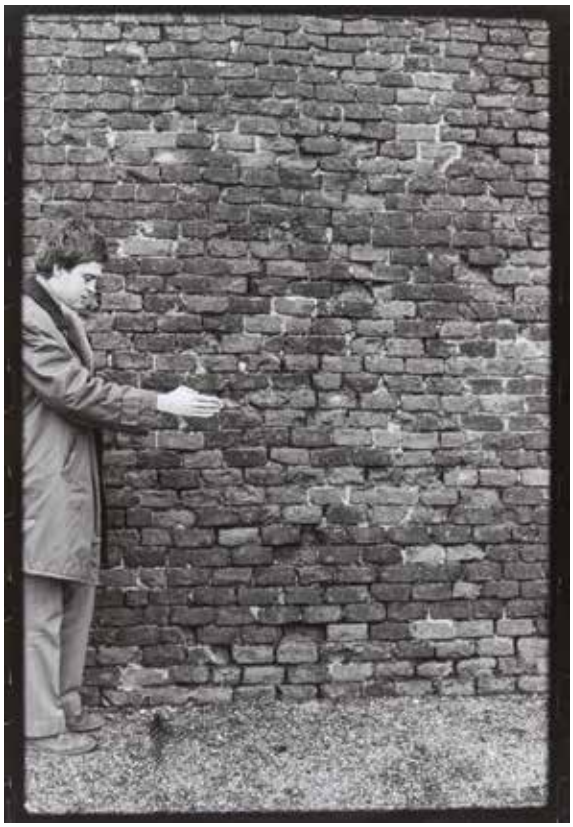
Following a brief excursion into hyperrealism in the mid-70s, Ákos Birkás, a Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts graduate (1965), turned towards photography and film, the media of choice of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde, and explored the relationship between image and object, viewed and viewer. In the early 80s, he spent six months in the US, which brought him back to painting. His fascination with the interfaces between society, economics, and culture—the arena of art—never ceased. Not only did he show at the exhibitions of Hungarian new painting (*Freshly Painted*, 1984; *New Sensibility*, 1985), but became, alongside the art historian Lóránd Hegyi, one of its leading theorists.

Starting in the mid-80s, he spent long periods working in Austria, Germany, and France. Then came *Head*, a series which grew to about 200 pieces over the course of almost 15 years. The first *Head* was painted in 1984. Using primary colours (blue, yellow, red, black), he created "two-panel symmetries" with an oval filling the whole double picture. Bleeding into each other, the horizontal and vertical layers, applied with a painting knife, are, in some pieces, in a contrasting, and, in others, in a more homogenous, almost monochrome, palette. The head that emerges from the many layers of paint (after, in Birkás' words, the compression) is different with each pair of panels as they are moved closer or further from each other. Working on several types of pictures simultaneously, the artist shaped the dynamics of oval and background through differences in texture, colour, and tone. *Head 9, Bt. 128* belongs to a group of works where the colour red, as a resource of and anchor for bodily presence, takes precedence over problems of proportion.

In the early 2000s, this consistent artistic programme gradually gave way to politically and socially engaged painting. .

"… I continued painting those oval pictures until 1999," he said in an interview, "but, not wanting to mute the colours, I cranked them higher and higher. In the end, the pictures were destroyed by colour. The swathes of colour destroyed my actual subject, of some psychological depth, the fragile, spatial triad of two illusive spaces, within and without the oval, and the actual one between the panels. At first, I just wanted to see what happens if I intensify colour. Then, when I saw that it destroys the pictures, I watched in delight. I was already interested in something else, really."

Lívia Páldi



Cat. 120-121
András Koncz (1953–2024):
Systematic Order in the Soul (Zsigmond Károlyi) I–II, 1977
black and white enlargement, photo paper on cardboard, 1000×700 mm
s.l.l.: caption; s.l.m.: I.; s.r.l.: 1977 Koncz András
Inv. n.: KM.2008.13.1., KM.2008.13.2.
Purchased from the artist, 2007

As an active member of the Rózsa Circle, András Koncz made photographs during his college years, between 1974 and 1980, which he sometimes called performance phases. He captured his ephemeral action installations (*Line Diversion* 1976, *Television Reassessment*) and, similarly to his contemporaries, was preoccupied with the problems of movement, time, reflection, light and space. His pictures and series are imprints of an era in which conceptual photography and private documentarism walked hand in hand. They show events of the everyday life of the Rózsa Circle, reflections, art actions, openings, as well as studio experiments and shared urban walks, portraits of artists, family and group photos. This period ended with an action and exhibition entitled *Opening*, organised at the Young Artists' Club in 1982. Ten artists took ten photographs each, using Polaroid cameras with a flash in the pitch-dark room, thus revealing a randomly cut-out slice of reality. András Koncz later became an important representative of the Hungarian transavantgarde, as a painter.

The two contemporary prints are part of a series of 35 photographs (*Photos with Zsigmond Károlyi 1*, 1977), in the estate of Ákos Birkás, which documents a walk in the Buda Castle and a visual dialogue between Birkás and Károlyi. It was probably András Koncz who took several of the pictures, while one of the photographs of the series, which is not included in the estate and was presumably taken by Birkás, shows Koncz together with Károlyi. Details of the photographs and some of the settings also appear in Károlyi's conceptual analyses of 1977 (*Border Motifs from '77; I'm on my way out / Straight Labyrinth*).

The Municipal Gallery purchased the photographs from the artist in 2007.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 122
Zsigmond Károlyi (1952):
Double Images IV, 1992
oil on canvas, 114×34×5 cm
s.b.m.: KÁROLYI ZSIGMOND / KETTŐS KÉPEK 1992 / IV.
Inv. n.: KM.94.2.
Purchased from the artist (studio purchase), 1994

Zsigmond Károlyi studied painting at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts between 1971 and 1976. He was a regular member of several important intellectual workshops, among them Rózsa Circle, which hosted discussions, reading clubs and other activities, and of the Rabinec Community Workshop.
From the 1970s, Károlyi based his foundational reflections on pictorial meaning and painterly image on his observation of the conditions in his immediate urban environment and in his studio. His basic motifs originate from private spaces, from the interplay between objects in the different corners of his studio, the irregular, abstract geometry of the reflections of light and its playful changes of perspective. His paintings made at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s can be considered as an expansion of his earlier series of conceptual-formal experiments made using a variety of media (painting, graphics, photo, film, action, environment). His works developed in parallel to his monochrome-radical painting class are in dialogue with his earlier Light-grid paintings, his photo paintings and with his quasi-realist pictures based on the principles of the Chinese tangram game. He started teaching at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts in 1990. He started a monochrome-radical painting programme with his first class. Monochrome, originating from avant-garde modernism, limits painting to its essential elements (canvas, frame, brushstroke) and to the act of making through the dominance of a single colour or hue. This kind of painting considers itself as its object, and encourages critical thinking about the potentials and boundaries of the medium, as well as an analysis of the practice of art by means of experiments with the relationship between colour, composition and tonality. The radical painting programme also provided an opportunity for Károlyi to elaborate on problems that had been occupying him since the 70s, to reflect on art and representation, to question the potentials of abstraction and to contemplate his position in the context of the philosophy and theory of art.
His work made at the beginning of the 90s reinterpreted his previous experiences and the issues he had already raised by means of using different media (painting, video, graphics, photography). In his *Double Images* series, by shifting the layers of the canvas-base and the painted picture plane, he considered one of the fundamental questions of the monochrome-radical painting, i.e. the relationship between the base, the painted surface and the environment.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 123
Gyula Czimra (1901–1966):
Spatial-Form, 1963
oil on plywood,
33×18 cm
s.r.l.: CZIMRA / 963.
Inv. n.: KM.2022.242.1.
Purchased by Budapest City Council from the artist, 1965

In the late 1910s, Gyula Czimra worked as a draftsman for Ganz Machinery Works while simultaneously taking an evening drawing class at the School of Applied Arts. In 1923, he went to Paris; he spent the summers, with his friends Jenő Paizs Goebel and Ernő Jeges, painting at Barbizon. His style was greatly influenced by the neo-classicism of the Szőnyi Circle in the 20s. In 1929, he worked at Nagybánya (Baia Mare) and, later in that year, was a guest exhibitor at the Szentendre Artists' Colony. He was a founding member of the Szentendre Painters' Society and a close friend of Jenő Barcsay. In the early 30s, after getting married, he settled at Rákoshegy (a town that was later incorporated into Budapest) and found subjects in his immediate surroundings. In the post-war decades, he produced stripped-back still lifes of austere interiors.

It was in spring 1973 that visual artist Zsigmond Károlyi saw the Czimra retrospective at the Hungarian National Gallery. He was never to lose his fascination with the oeuvre. He analysed its compositions and spatial relations in countless drawings and photographic works. Czimra, together with the early Renaissance masters in the Museum of Fine Arts and his contemporaries in Rózsa Circle, provided Károlyi with an alternative to, an escape from, the "scruff-grey, greasy, clammy dispiriting studio milieu" of the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts. Already, he was interested in questions relating to the fundamental elements of painting—reflection and the relationships between pictorial and physical space, painting and object, picture and frame, wall and medium. His theoretical and conceptual considerations relied on the reductionism of Czimra's nigh-empty spaces and artistic attitude. Many of Károlyi's works, including *Studio Corner for Gyula Czimra* (1975), *Easel, Twice* (1977), *Mirror Edge—Mirror Turn (Paraffin Lamp Behind the Mirror 2)* (1976), are variations on his themes. In 1976, he mounted a "Czimra memorial exhibition" at what used to be the Academy's KISZ (Young Communist League) club. On display were, behind a white line, not pictures by Czimra, but objects seen in them—a table, a chair, a paraffin lamp, an easel, and a maulstick. In this "straight labyrinth," he created a hidden picture plane, a system exploring the notions of reality, reproduction, object, image, and the conceptual frameworks of still life painting.

Lívia Páldi

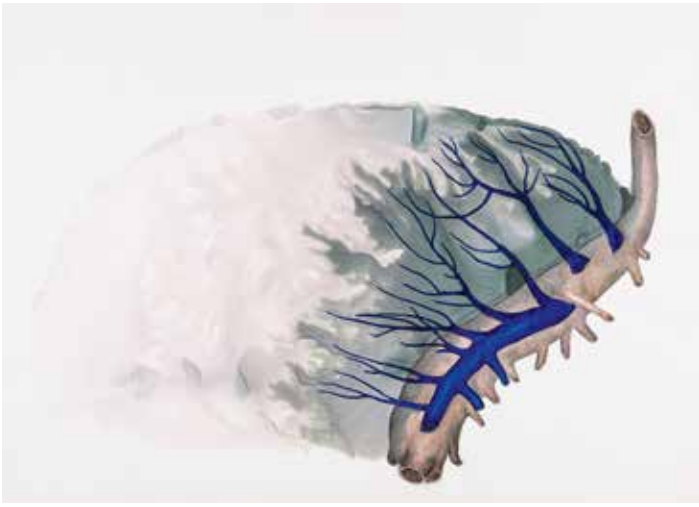
Cat. 124
István Nádler (1938):
Triangle, 1994
oil on canvas,
160×120 cm
s.b.: Nádler István / 1994. / Háromszög / VIII.
Inv. n.: KM.95.12.
Purchased from the artist, 1995

István Nádler became a member of the Zugló Circle, led by Sándor Molnár, at the beginning of the 1960s. The aim of the Circle was to discuss and present abstract art—which neither received mention nor was exhibited at the time—by means of evening debates and in-home exhibitions. In December 1968, the first exhibition of a group of artists, called the IPARTERV Group, was opened in the lobby of the headquarters of IPARTERV in Deák Ferenc Street. This was the debut of the neo-avantgarde. Within the group, István Nádler and Imre Bak represented geometric abstraction. Although the next exhibition of the group, in 1969, was closed down by the authorities after three days, the new direction and István Nádler's paintings started their legal journey in the art world and in the exhibition halls.

The artists of the IPARTERV Group took inspiration from North American trends, Nádler and Bak from hard edge, which created a clear, objective order using firm outlines and colour fields without tones, altogether banishing the communication of content. Nádler's inherently lyrical artistic style, however, also revealed traits of Abstract Expressionism, i.e. immediacy and spontaneity. Influenced by pieces of European music and the rhythms of folk art, the cool, rational forms of the hard edge were, again and again, overridden by spontaneous gestural painting, by irregular, messy surfaces. This is also the case with the painting here, which is at once a stylistic quotation, a paraphrase and the result of a meditative process.

Kazimir Malevich's work often served as a point of reference for Nádler. The shape of one of Malevich's pieces, *Yellow Rectangle on a White Background*, made in 1918, became the basic motif of many of Nádler's compositions from the mid-1980s—first as a trapezoid, later reduced to a triangle. In his painting, which is part of a series, the yellow, self-contained, regular two-dimensional shape, painted first, is transformed into a blurred, deep red, almost foreboddingly smouldering spatial formation in the middle by radically interfering with the layers of paint that made it up, and by creating the tone fields and stripes typical of landscapes. The ensemble of the foggy, floating, "negatively" translucent and the firm, sharp surfaces, conveys an experience that cannot be put into words, something that Malevich's erstwhile piece meant to Nádler. By allowing open access to the creation process of a piece of an abstract subject matter, the artwork recalls images of action painting, while the gestures of flickering tones, reminiscent of scripts from the Far East are already foreshadowing Nádler's calligraphic series, which embraced the spirit of Zen Buddhism and unfolded at the turn of the millennium. The Municipal Gallery organised two solo exhibitions of his work, first in 1995 and then in 2017. On both occasions, the artist presented his work to the public first in the Temple Space of the Kiscell Museum.

Péter Köblös



Mária Chilf studied at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts from 1990 to 1995 and, between 1997 and 1998, at HdK Berlin. Her work covers the fields of drawing, graphic art, painting, installation, and media art. She made her first hybrid, space specific installations in the early 90s.

Her art explores existential themes and the relationship between materiality, transformation, and transience. The pieces of *Untitled*—a series from the early 90s that include ephemeral installations made of paraffin, metal, wood, and organic materials—often take found objects as their starting point and deal with death in a symbolic way. Her 2003 DLA thesis focused explicitly on trauma and trauma processing.

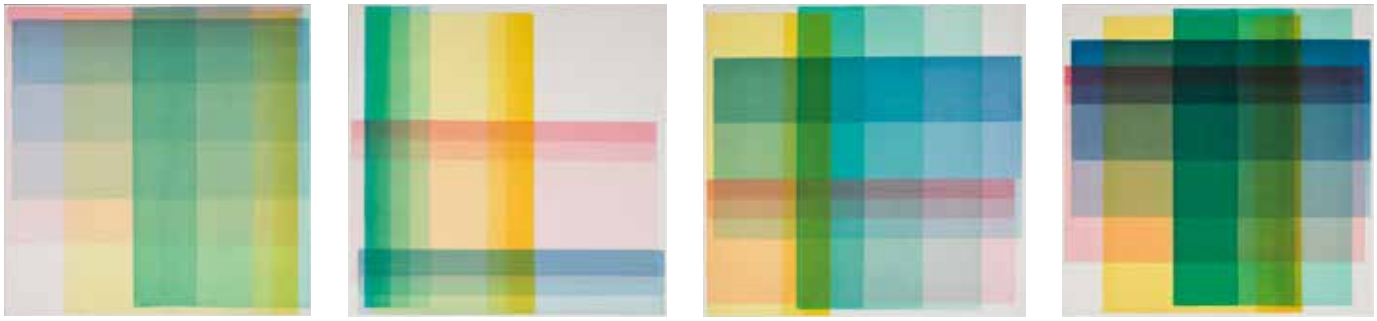
Her drawings and watercolours are rich in detail and are characterised by colourful and organic compositions. Themes of human anatomy, nature, and biology come to play a marked role in her work from the second half of the 90s. In her watercolours, reminiscent of anatomic imagery, floral motifs, and technical drawings, there is a continuous and organic flow between inner landscape and external environment, between nature and the human body, often to surrealistic effect.

The watercolours seen here were created for *Under the Tulps' Sky*, her 1998 exhibition with creative and life partner Gábor Szörtsey (1951–2004) in the Kiscell Museum Temple Space. The title is a reference to the 17th-century Amsterdam anatomist Dr. Nicolaes Tulp, whose anatomy lesson was immortalised by Rembrandt in 1632. In the first piece, we see, on a thin background of grey, a mesh of branches that looks like a lung, complete with larynx and bronchi, while the second one visualises the vibrations and sounds created by the heart and "heard" on the skin. For the exhibition, Chilf created, in addition to biomorphic watercolours, installations which paid homage to the anatomy theatre, a key instrument in early modern medical instruction. The pieces seen here were acquired from the artist's atelier a year after the exhibition.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 125-126
Mária Chilf (1966):
Untitled (Heart Sound), 1998
ink and watercolour on paper, 500×700 mm
s.b.r.l.: Chilf Mária 1998
Inv. n.: KM.99.10.

Untitled, 1998
ink and watercolour on paper, 500×700 mm
s.b.r.l.: Chilf Mária 1998
Inv. n.: KM.99.9.
Purchased from the artist, 1999



Cat. 127-130
Gizella Rákóczy (1947–2015):
Four Tones of Four Colours (Fibonacci prototype), 1/4, 1998
pencil, watercolour on watercolour paper, 590×580 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2019.31.1.

Four Tones of Four Colours (Fibonacci prototype), 2/4, 1998
pencil, watercolour on watercolour paper, 593×600 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2019.31.2.

Four Tones of Four Colours (Fibonacci prototype), 3/4, 1998
pencil, watercolour on watercolour paper, 590×600 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2019.31.3.

Four Tones of Four Colours (Fibonacci prototype), 4/4, 1998
pencil, watercolour on watercolour paper, 590×595 mm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2019.31.4.
Purchased from Anna Rákóczy, from Gizella Rákóczy's estate, 2019

Gizella Rákóczy's consistent, coherent oeuvre is a significant contribution to Hungarian and international geometric art. Her methodical creative system used permutation and combinatorics to explore characteristics of four-armed spirals and the serial opportunities of their geometric-ornamental shapes. The basic shape she used in her paintings was a square divided into four equal parts; the colours of the squares were yellow, red, blue and green.

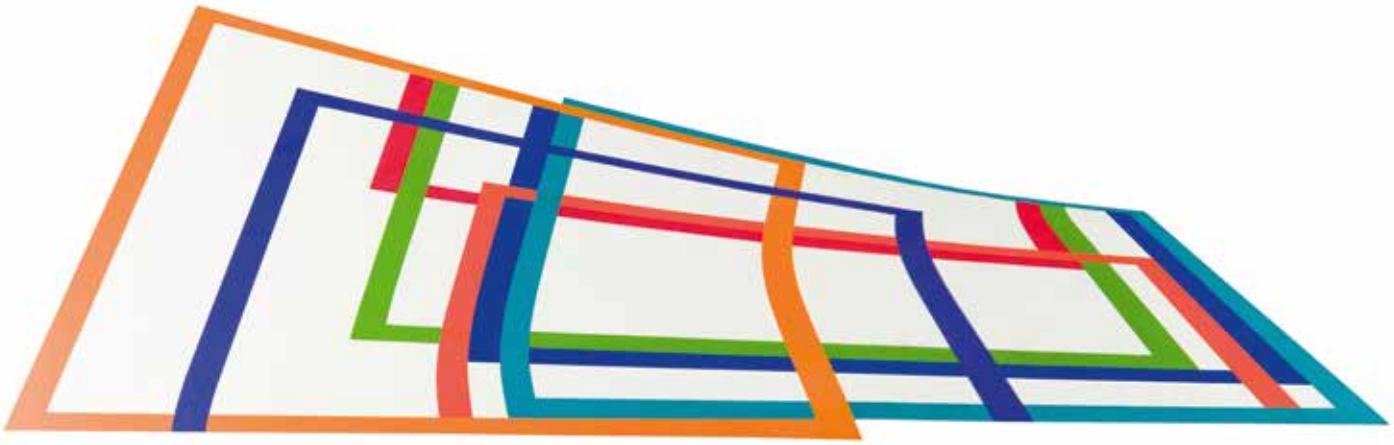
There were two important experiences leading to these shapes and colours. Having graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, she visited the Cathedral of Saint-Denis in Paris. The primary colours of the light coming through the Gothic windows that survived were projected to the floor in kaleidoscopic patterns, which left her with an experience of transcendence and sacredness. The painterly rendering of this experience, the most perfect representation of the translucent, interpenetrating brilliance of colour, remained one of the guiding principles of her art.

She discovered the other element of her systematic painting, the four-armed spiral, on a gravestone decorated with Celtic ornamentation, in 1976, during another trip, this time to the British Isles. Rákóczy realised that these shapes could be connected in a number of different ways.

While developing the structure of the four-armed spirals that start off from a square field divided into four parts, she used permutation, matching numbers with corresponding colours or tones. Her systems are fixed, the number and location of the colour fields is pre-determined and finite.

Originally, she worked with tempera but from the second half of the 1990s, she tried swapping the opaque tempera for the transparent watercolour. It was in the autumn of 1998 that she decided to mix watercolours according to the linear recurrence of the Fibonacci series. The four pieces donated to the Municipal Gallery from the artist's estate document the first successful experiment with the Fibonacci method. The sense of mobility present in these pieces is due to the fact that the shades of the individual colours appear in each of the pieces three at a time, i.e. each piece contains three shades of the four colours (yellow, red, green, blue), next to each other. The use of the formula resulted in a gradual darkening of the transparent layers, while preserving their glow.

Mária Árvai



Dóra Maurer has been a prominent figure of the Hungarian art scene for more than fifty years. She is primarily known as a representative of geometrical abstraction and systemic painting, both in Hungary and abroad. However, she defines herself as a visual artist, emphasising the inherently conceptual nature of her thinking. In her creative practice reproduced graphics, experimental film, installation, painting and conceptual works become mutually interpretative forms of expression.

During the 1960s, copper etching gradually became a field of experimentation with materials and techniques for Maurer. From the beginning of the 1970s, her interest centred around the analysis of types of movement—shift and continuity. "Shifting (…) either builds up or destroys a shape systematically. Time comes between two things once in direct contact with each other like a wedge and forces them apart. The result: an awareness of new relations," summarised the artist. In her series, one can observe dynamic equilibria, or the lack of it, along the shifts—a kind of back and forth between construction and deconstruction. From the 1980s, painting became the most important medium for Mauer. Her increasingly exact series are based on a colour grid of definite proportions. Initially, she was interested in the layering of rasters, the "thickening and thinning" of the layers (*Displacement* series), then later in the highlighting and enlargement of a single detail (*Quasi-images*). From the 1990s, in her *Overlappings* series of colour frame structures, she became increasingly occupied with the problem of the interplay between shapes and colours and the relativity of the perception of space and colour. In the receding form of *Curved Space, Concave* the colourful raster becomes a light, floating plane of colour, which also shows how systemic geometry becomes a form language expressing (among others) personal vulnerability.

Mónika Kumin

Cat. 131
Dóra Maurer (1937):
Curved Space, Concave, 1996
acrylic on hardboard, 64×200 cm
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.96.32.
Purchased from Mr and Mrs Dénes Komárik, 1996

Cat. 132-133

El Kazovszkij (1948–2008):

The Last Animal and the Story of the Rumelian Star A/5, 1986
tempera, red and black silk ribbon, white plastic ships, tinfoil, and red plastic wrap on corrugated fibreboard, 78×78×2 cm
s.l.l.: El Kazovszkij 1986
Inv. n.: KM.88.40.13.
Purchased from the artist, 1988

Animal at the Theatre XIII, 1986
black and coloured ink, white paint, and collage on cardboard, 500×700 mm
s.l.l.: El Kazovszkij „Állat a színházban" XIII, s.r.l.: El Kazovszkij, h.o.: 1986
Inv. n.: KM.2022.74.1.
Gift from the heir, 2016

El Kazovszkij, who received early recognition and defies easy categorisation, was born in Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and grew up there and in Nizhny Tagil, at his grandparents' place. He studied in Budapest, graduating from the Academy of Fine Arts. Working as a costume and stage designer had a strong influence on his art. Verbality (the trauma of forgetting Russian), the body as sculpture, capturing the momentary intensity of metamorphoses, and transcending binary oppositions were his main artistic concerns.

He found his voice early in his career, at the centre of which stands the personal figure of the dog/wolf (sitting upright and alert), or, as he put it, the "hybrid" or "travelling" or "last" animal.

The dog doubles as a self-portrait in his complex personal mythology, fusing his cultural heritage with his identity—his childhood in Soviet Russia, his transsexuality, his masculine presentation, and the emotions, desires, expectations coming with these, as well as the conflicting experiences of exclusion and otherness.

His influences included classical sculpture, Russian literature, classical music, ballet, but also punk as, in his words, "theatre, image, ideology, as a state and feeling." He put on a ritualistic play every year between 1977 and 2000, a series of performances which were the fetishistic celebrations of unfulfilled desire, love, and the suffering and pain of objectified, androgynous beauty. Revisiting the stories of Pygmalion and Galatea, the stylised world of the *Dzhan Panopticon* is an encyclopaedia of the artist's work.

El Kazovszkij produced many series of small pictures. Related to comics and storyboards, these collages are variations on the theme of *Dzhan Panopticon*, a sort of life theatre. In *Animal at the Theatre XIII*, we see a scene, a visual diary, featuring the artist, in a cut-out from a performance, and his alter egos.

The fifteen-part series *The Last Animal and the Story of the Rumelian Sky* can also be seen as a comic strip with all the characters and scenes of his mythological universe. There are dogs and androgynous torsos, ballerinas, meandering rivers, a desert, swans, towers, Purgatory, and the Parcae. The bodies of the two dogs, Siamese twins connected by ribbons, are executed in oil on fibreboard and covered with numbers and letters referring to enigmatic encounters and significant figures in the artist's life. Moreover, the ribbons have connotations of BDSM roleplay.

El Kazovszkij's 1992 exhibition *Small Purgatory* was staged at the crypt under the Kiscell Museum Temple Space. *The Last Animal* series was acquired four years earlier from the artist, while the collage was gifted to the museum by the artist's heir in 2016.

Lívia Páldi

THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Since 2015, the Municipal Gallery's exhibitions and publications have focused on in-depth investigations linking past and present, shaping the development of the collection. Emphasis has been placed on dialogue across generations and artistic positions, the relationship between art and power, and art understood as an ongoing exchange rather than isolated works. Key areas include artists who emigrated to France after World War II, Hungarian art of the 1960s and 1970s, and contemporary practices.

The social turn of art and the emergence over the last 10 years of artistic research are indications that, in collections and collection-based exhibitions, contemporary pieces should act as springboards for an ongoing process of (re)interpretation and critical analysis. There are clear connections between different generations, artistic strategies, and styles; Kamilla Szíj's drypoint series, for example, can be related back to the analytical thought and visual toolkit of Vera Molnár and Gizella Rákóczy.

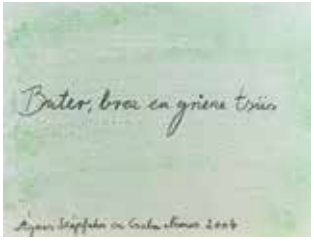
By the 2000s, participatory practices have grown in significance and a more nuanced understanding of community collaboration has gained ground. Modelling the dynamics of collective work and responsibility is the alternative memorial of

Krisztián Kristóf, founding member of Randomroutines. Csaba Nemes and Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi, who created a new, narrative form of art in the 90s, made one of their last collaborative storyboards in 2004.

Cute Little Aquarelles II, a series by Borsos Lőrinc (János Borsos and Lilla Lőrinc) who often explore the interplay between collective and personal memory, reclaims oppressed narratives from recent history.

Focusing on women artists, their practices, and feminist approaches from a theoretical and historical perspective that takes account of cultural, social, and political realities has been a priority in our work with the collection. *You Should Feel Honoured*, a piece acquired last year, focuses on the tragic events of the 1985 beauty pageant. Ágnes Eperjesi not only addresses the moral dilemmas surrounding the emancipation of women in a crumbling political system, but also explores the underbelly of our inherited patriarchal power relations and hierarchies. Dominika Trapp's painting, one of the latest acquisition of the Municipal Gallery collection, is a study in the mechanisms and forms of domesticated and disguised violence.

Lívia Páldi



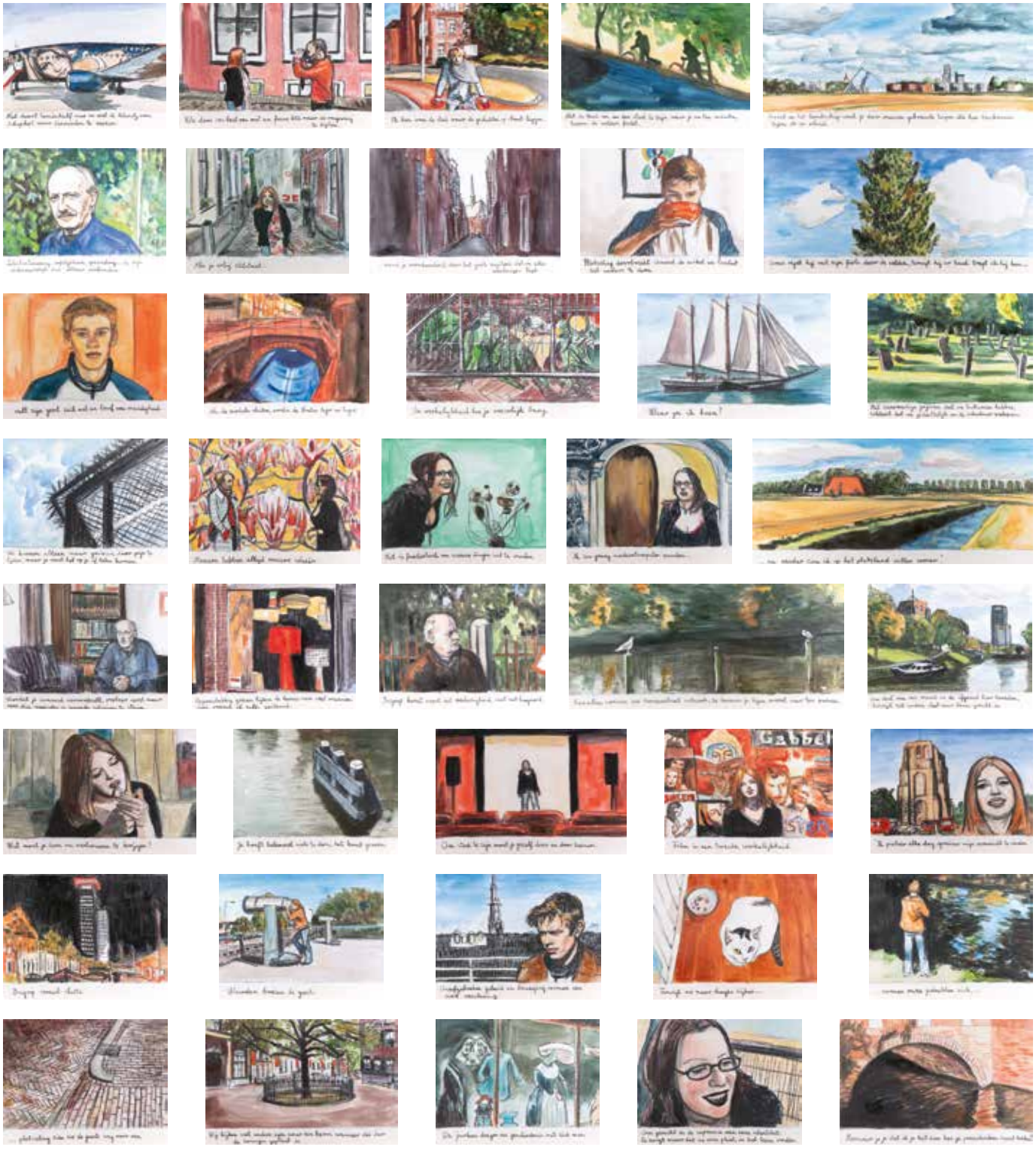
Cat. 134
Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi (1965)
Csaba Nemes (1966):
Bûter, brea en griene tsiis (Butter, rye bread and young cheese) / Storyboard / I–XLI, 2004
gouache, charcoal on plywood, 27×58 cm 4 pieces, 27×41 cm 9 pieces, 27×35 cm 28 pieces
s. on the first board l.l.: Ágnes Szépfalvi en Csaba Nemes 2004
Inv. n.: KM.2006.46.1-41.
Purchased from the artists, 2006

Between 1996 and 2004, Ágnes Uray-Szépfalvi and Csaba Nemes made 17 storyboards in collaboration. Storyboards are used in film production and animation as a technical script that helps to visualise the story before the shooting or the animation begins. For Szépfalvi and Nemes, this process of film production only served as inspiration; during their collaboration they transformed it into a new visual art form, which makes it possible for the viewer to move freely in the "story". Both of them graduated in painting from the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts. They also have experience in film production

Nemes made experimental films at the Balázs Béla Studio, while Uray-Szépfalvi drew storyboards at the former film factory. The dramaturgy of their series was shaped by films, current public events, theoretical and artistic issues, everyday observations, existential and relationship crises, media events. Image and text are closely linked, they provide descriptions, tell stories, create associations and visions. Some of the texts came from Uray-Szépfalvi's ever growing collection of quotations, the sources of which include media theory, psychology, films, literature and tabloids, but often a surprisingly fitting phrase for the story was found in a book, picked up at random. Montage played an important role in shaping the internal composition and editing the flow of images, both as a tool and a theory. They often improvised, letting things they accidentally "came by" become part of the shared creative process.

One of their last storyboards, *Bûter, brea en griene tsiis*, was commissioned by the Buro Leeuwarden-Fries Museum as part of the Season of Hungarian Culture in 2004 in the Netherlands, after the artists had taken part in a residency programme. Focusing on the local context, Uray-Szépfalvi and Nemes did not create a specific story but rather a visual essay based on various personal impressions, interviews with locals, anecdotes and interesting facts about the history of the city. "We do 'nothing else' but tell stories. We do not need a gigantic budget, and, what is more, the hand-drawn illustrations have a direct impact on the viewer. The resulting series are still not like comic books because each drawing is somewhat unique, and, just like the stories, the drawings keep changing, too. The process of work, the process of making has an effect on the drawings, and the drawings influence the creative process. The stories are concise, there is no room for chit-chat. Even though we delegate some of the tasks between us, we always work together and the end-result bears the mark of both of our hands", they wrote in 2007.

Lívia Páldi


Gabbe

Cat. 135-137

Borsos Lőrinc (János Borsos 1979; Lilla Lőrinc 1980):

Cute Little Aquarelles II, Óbuda Brickworks, 2015
pencil and watercolour on watercolour paper, 130×200 mm
s.b.: title inscription, Lőrinc Borsos, artist's seal
Inv. n.: KM.2020.3.1.

Cute Little Aquarelles II, The Arrow Cross House, 2015
pencil and watercolour on watercolour paper, 130×200 mm
s.b.: title inscription, Lőrinc Borsos, artist's seal
Inv. n.: KM.2020.3.2.

Cute Little Aquarelles II, Bíró Dániel Hospital, 2015
watercolour on watercolour paper, 130×200 mm
s.b.: title inscription, Lőrinc Borsos, artist's seal
Inv. n.: KM.2020.3.3.
Purchased from the artists, 2020

Borsos Lőrinc (János Borsos and Lilla Lőrinc) produced the series *Cute Little Aquarelles II* for *Vanishing Points*, a contemporary art exhibition about tragic, and forgotten, WWII sites in Budapest. All three works are of Budapest sites with links to the Arrow Cross rule and the German occupation, with histories that are unexplored, little known, and erased from collective memory. The buildings are shown in their current state, in a style reminiscent of Adolf Hitler's watercolours. Hitler picked up painting in 1908. He wanted to become a painter, but was rejected, twice, by the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. His watercolours possess little artistic merit; most are signed, often as "A. Hitler." In a nod to Hitler's artistic ambitions, Borsos Lőrinc provided their series with his signature, creating fictitious works of art that, like Hitler's watercolours, show seemingly innocuous places in a naïve manner. Symbolically, the reverse of each piece is black and contains a short description of the part played by the respective buildings during the war. Once revived, these forgotten stories add a grim element to familiar places, charging them with sinister memories and connecting past and present.

The *Óbuda Brickworks* (1032 Budapest, Bécsi út 134–136, now home to shopping centres) served as a relocation camp, one of the last ones in Hungary, for people sent, by train or on foot, to be murdered in Nazi Germany. The facility was unsuitable for accommodating thousands, with no water, food, beds, or bathrooms. Many were killed by the gunmen, others took cyanide or committed suicide.

The *Arrow Cross House* (1146 Budapest, Thököly út 80, today Szaletly, a restaurant) was, in 1944–45, the headquarters of an Arrow Cross contingent led by Vilmos Kröszl. Here, as well as in other places around the 14th district, they tortured and killed, with heinous brutality, 200 to 300 people (mostly Jews). The captured people were robbed, stripped naked, beaten, burnt with cigarettes, and murdered. Often, women would be raped before being shot.

The *Bíró Dániel Hospital* (1122 Budapest, Városmajor utca 64–66, redeveloped as housing) was a modern Jewish hospital in Városmajor utca, whose staff and patients were subjected to Arrow Cross atrocities starting in December 1944. On 14 January 1945, they stormed the building. There was a general inspection of personal documents. About 160 Jewish patients and doctors were shot dead in the massacre.

Mária Árvai


A. Hitler


A. Hitler

Cat. 138
Krisztián Kristóf (1976):
Werkphoto, 2007
giclée print on luster paper, 837×560 mm
s.b.l.l.: artist's stamp / KRISTÓF KRISZTIÁN WERK FOTÓ, 2007. / GICLÉE, LUSTER
Inv. n.: KM.2021.17.1.
Purchased from the artist, 2021

In the early 2000s, following a residency, Krisztián Kristóf spent a couple of years in Finland, where he organized improvisational performances, mini public actions, which served the purposes of a kind of "sketching". He called the documentation of these "werkphotos".

The picture was taken in a clearing in Finland with members of the local Nykarleby student society (Ninni Wager, Tuuli Toivola, Rabbe Sandström, Jim Videgård) and the artist. The living tower refers to a long-standing tradition in Finnish forestry, namely that a stump without a canopy is left standing in the middle of every large clear-cut. The stump is vital in that it provides habitat and food for many species of fungi, plants and animals, as well as moisture and nutrients for the germination of the seeds of the still-living trees. In this tableau, which also evokes the act of erecting a Maypole, the members of the group stand above each other on wooden cubes that are attached to the stump. *Werkphoto* was featured in Kristóf's exhibition *Bend Yourself Back and Forth*, organised at the Liget Gallery in 2008. Several earlier drawings and sketches, including the *Infinite Seal Plan* (2005), had also explored this motif.

In December 2017, a sculpture titled *Burden or Resource?* ("Břemeno, nebo potenciál"), welded from metal panels by Randomroutines (Tamás Kaszás and Krisztián Kristóf), was unveiled in Třinec, in the Czech Republic. The three-view, blue and white drawing depicts a group of people sitting on each other's necks, forming a pyramid. The female figure balancing on the top is holding a wrench in her hand. She seems to be fixing something that looks like a cracked glass panel. The piece was commissioned for a pedestal that had been empty since the 1970s. The raised, semi-circular platform in front of the Cinema Cosmo, which is still operating, was originally intended for a semi-abstract, modernist sculpture. The title of the work refers to the dynamics of community action and responsibility, but it also had a topical political reference, i.e. a much-quoted, outrageous statement by the former Minister of Human Resources, deeply offensive to the Hungarian-speaking Roma communities living beyond the border.

The *Signal Jamming Station*, made for documenta 15 in 2022, can be understood as the elaboration of *Burden or resource?*. It was presented at Bootsverleih Ahoi in Kassel, organised by the OFF-Biennale Budapest. The chair ensemble of the Czech installation, bent and welded from metal rods, also appeared here.

Krisztián Kristóf has been working with Tamás Kaszás since 2003, occasionally together with other artists, under the name Randomroutines. They have been making reinforced steel pictures and objects for (public) spaces for more than ten years. Their collaborative-spiritual working method is based on experimenting with a wide variety of techniques and approaches. They rely heavily on the "do-it-yourself" attitude of "learning by doing", which is also suggested by the name of the collective. Many of the motifs used by Randomroutines are from the duo's ever-expanding archive, which predominantly contains popular works from the 1950s and 1960s, mostly decorative elements of architectural objects, facades, gardens, fences, and their inventive functional diversions, characteristic of the scarcity economy. Kristóf has also been compiling an archive of predominantly figurative drawings—figures, structures, fragments of dreams, abstract situations and psychological games—for more than twenty years. The raw sketches and diary-like fragments made in various media do not only serve the purposes of the collective but also appear at Kristóf's solo exhibitions, in a variety of causal relationships.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 139
Dominika Trapp (1988):
Enmeshed, Engaged, Ensnared, 2023
acryl on canvas, 80×110 cm
Inv. n.: KM.2024.
Purchased from the Kisterem Gallery, 2023

Dominika Trapp spent more than three years studying the trap collection of the Museum of Ethnography, as a result of which she made an installation for the exhibition *The Suspension of Disbelief*. In her project *The path narrowed into the hollow* (2023), she chose animal traps as a scientific and metaphorical starting point, which in her artwork functioned as a kind of portal, a gateway between human and animal, technology and landscape, nature, life and death. She made a series of drawings and paintings as part of her research and presented the ink and acrylic paintings of *Enmeshed, Engaged, Ensnared* at the exhibition *On Violence* at the Budapest Gallery in 2023.

After several research-oriented works, including the complex installation *"Don't lay him on me..."* (Trafó Gallery, 2020), she returned to the intuitive painterly practice of her early period. The central metaphors of the *Escaping Water* series (2022) are water and fluidity—uncontrollable pulsation, flow (of energy) and sweeping intensity. The intricate web of *Enmeshed, Engaged, Ensnared* takes us back to these landscapes, which are sometimes evocative of phantom organs, sometimes of classical natural imagery. The covert scenes are based on the familiar-intimate environment of domestic violence, its interweaving traps and deceptive disguises. While we may discover familiar-looking objects or spaces—a vegetable patch overgrown with weeds or a gazebo decorated with elaborate bird traps—the basic dynamic of these paintings is still determined by a kind of subversive tactility which quickens our bodily perception, a wide range of our senses. As the poet Miklós Borsik put it, "the ambivalent interplay of root-organs and hairy surfaces, interlocking opposing qualities, shows abuse and trauma in such a way that it is not the sufferer or the cause of suffering that becomes important, but the intensity that put an end to the appearance of coziness".

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 140
Ágnes Eperjesi (1964):
Pathos and Critique, 2019
3D print, PLA Filament, iron scaffolding, 180×40×40 cm, (1/3)
Inv. n.: KM.2023.147.1
Purchased from acb Gallery, 2023

Next page

In her work, Ágnes Eperjesi often explores the instrumentalisation of the female body and the social roles of women from the historical perspective of politics, mentalities, and art. In 2018, also urged by #MeToo, she started a project that investigated the media representation of the naked female body in the Hungary of Kádárism. Her research mapped the critical reception of *Miss Hungary 1985*, a bronze statue by the neo-avant-garde sculptor Gyula Pauer. The life-size piece, that spent decades in a side corridor of the Hungarian National Gallery, is of Csilla Andrea Molnár, who was 16 when she won Hungary's first beauty pageant. Pauer made plaster casts of several contestants in what was called a *Beauty Action* and was an official prize. The process, abusive in many respects and including physical contact, was documented by András Dér and László Hartai in *Szépleányok* (Pretty Girls), a critically acclaimed 1986 film produced at the Balázs Béla Studio. During the process, the young, naked, women were photographed, on the pretext of "documentation" and under licence from organiser Hungarian Media, by two photographers (Béla Bacsó and János Fenyő). Eventually, the pictures ended up in the erotic magazine *Lui Deutschland*, under the title "Free Yourselves, Comrades!" causing a public outcry. Growing pressure from sponsors and the media played a not unimportant part in Csilla Andrea Molnár's suicide. *Miss Hungary 1985* was made years after the incident and gifted to the Hungarian National Gallery by Pauer himself.

Eperjesi's project was originally planned, with curator Kata Oltai, as an exhibition for the Hungarian National Gallery and based on a juxtaposition of articles, photos, and archival material pertaining to the body culture, the sexism, and pornography regulations, including loopholes, of state-socialist Hungary. In October 2018, Eperjesi gained permission, if only for a few hours, to use the hall under the Gallery's dome, where she draped Pauer's work in the emblematic red carpet of the fashion industry/celebrity culture. She applied, one by one, the letters in the title to a 15-metre-long fabric, which she then hung on the walls. *You Should Feel Honoured* was the title of both the performance and the subsequent exhibition held at Fészek Artists' Club and refers to the cynicism of the beauty pageant, the *Beauty Action*, and Pauer's statue.

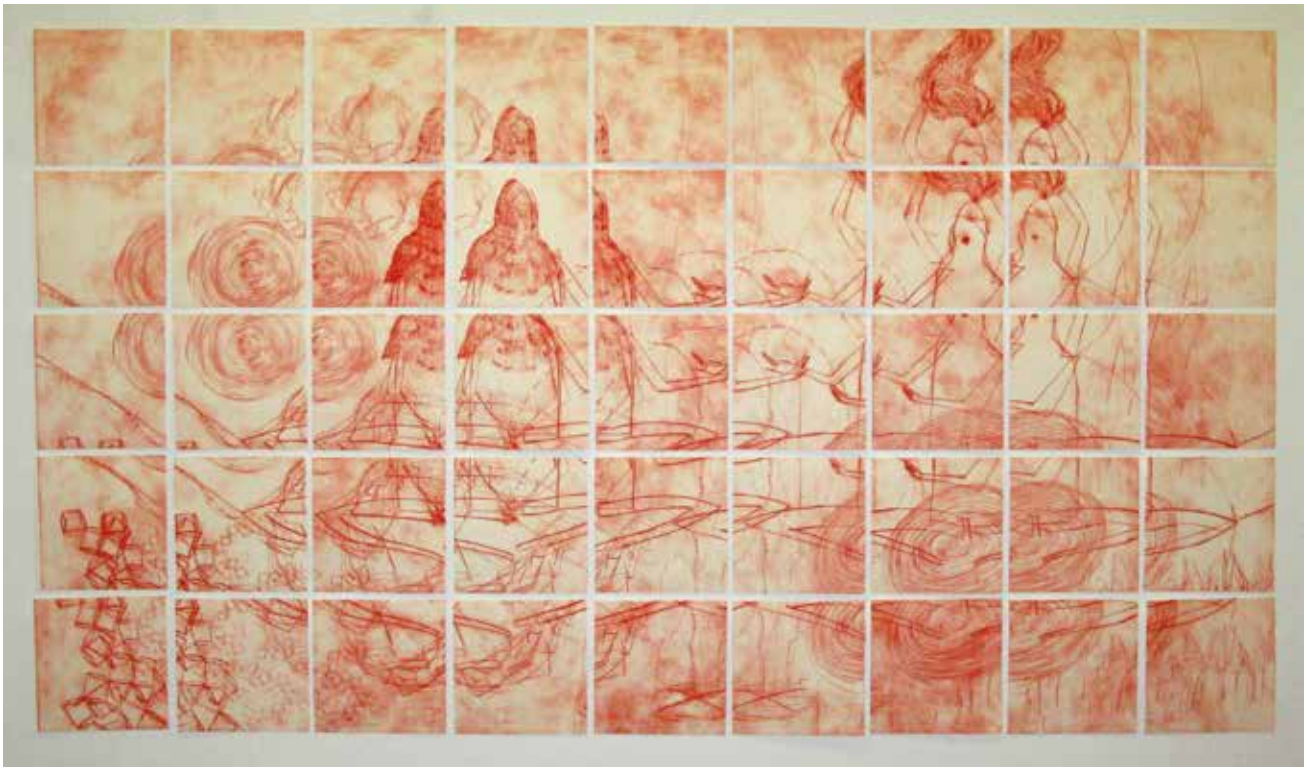
Pathos and Critique reproduces the head of Pauer's piece as a 3D printed sculpture, arranged on an iron scaffolding, and was made after photos, without touching the "original." It was installed in the empty Herman Hall of Fészek Artists' Club

while the research materials and the performance documentation were exhibited in the gallery space. The "pathos" in the title, which comes from Greek and means suffering, bodily/psychological trauma, was on the lips of many of the contemporary critics of Pauer's sculpture. Rich in meaning, the word establishes a personal link between artistic homage and memory.

As the final, concluding, chapter of her project, Eperjesi published a book containing essays, conversations, exhibition documentation, as well as her critical research on the history and contexts of Pauer's sculpture and his *Beauty Action*. Eperjesi's project, of unparalleled importance, has unearthed a pervasive legacy of abuse and shed light on past and present issues that need to be addressed. The works seen here were acquired between 2022 and 2023, through donation and purchase.

Lívia Páldi

Cat. 141
Ágnes Eperjesi (1964):
You Should Feel Honoured (performance documentation), 2019
giclée mounted on Gatorfoam, 500×500 mm, (1/3) (framed size: 49.5×49.5×2 cm)
Inv. n.: KM.2022.70.1
Purchased from acb Gallery, 2022

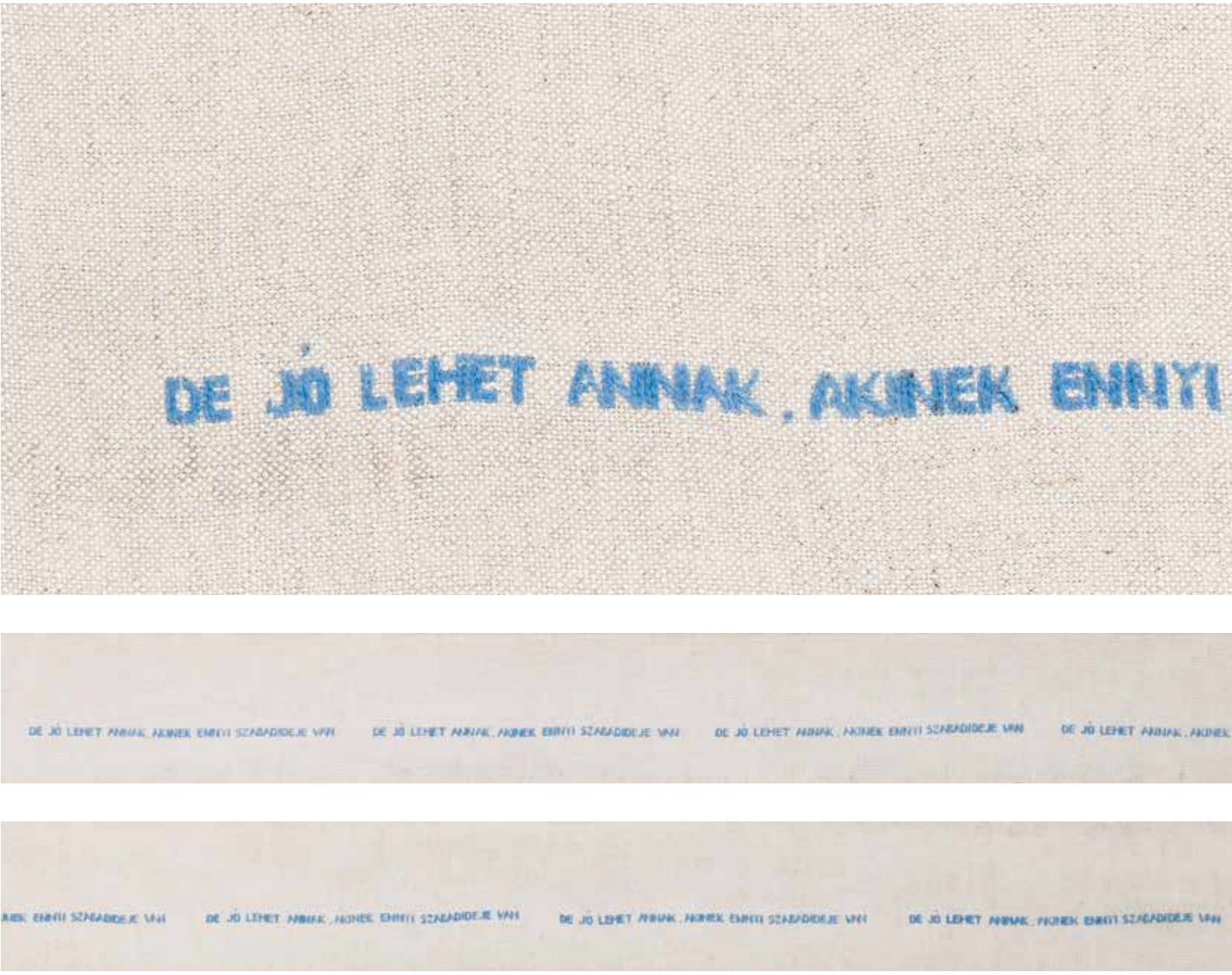


Cat. 142
Kamilla Szíj (1957):
Untitled, 2007
drypoint on paper,
100×180 cm, 45 pieces
20×20 cm, 1/1
Inv. n.: KM.2022.89.1
Purchased from
the Vintage Gallery,
2022

Kamilla Szíj is one of the innovators of contemporary drawing. She creates her fragile, meditative fields of images with very simple, traditional graphical tools. She studied in Germany, then at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. Her work of several decades is highly consistent. On the one hand, her creative activity is characterised by a rigorous discipline, insofar as she works with reduced, traditional tools: graphite pencil, pen, ink, drypoint and etching; a few colours and only a couple of motifs. On the other hand, she crosses the boundaries of graphic design or the genre of reproduced graphics with ease, by increasing the size of her pieces, by the use of unusual formats, such as scrolls, double-sided or corner works, and by creating graphic installations. Her thesis, completed in 1989, was the first piece created using the drypoint technique. It consisted of a combination of 12 sheets. Thereafter, she regularly returned to drypoint but always used it to create unique pieces. Her work reflects a systematic approach; she creates systems based on her own, subjective rules. In the piece here, the principle was to make a shift sideways and upwards, so part of the grid is repeated on the adjacent sheets. Her motifs balance on the border of abstraction and figurative representation. With the deliberate interruption of the red lines and the patches, with the strange repetition of the details shifted in time and space, the piece encourages the viewer to wander around the surface, to decipher the principle of order and the abstract structure, and to try to assemble these observations of the parts into some kind of a whole.

The exhibited untitled piece, made with drypoint in 2007, is one of the most recent acquisitions of the Municipal Gallery. Its purchase was made possible thanks to the National Cultural Fund of Hungary. This new piece fits well with the works of Vera Molnár and Gizella Rákóczy, already in the collection of the gallery. Kamilla Szíj's systematic thinking and reduced toolkit are in many ways akin to the repetitions, shifts and mathematical patterns of Vera Molnár and Gizella Rákóczy.

Mária Árvai



For the description of the work, see page 79. Cat. 13

Cat. 143
Emese Benczúr (1969):
It Must Be Great to Have So Much Free Time, 1994
embroidery, blue yarn, raw canvas, foam board, 12×200 cm, 2 pieces
unsigned
Inv. n.: KM.2020.8.1.
Purchased from the artist, 2020

Cat. 12 (detail)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

s.l.m. = signed left, middle
s.r.m. = signed right, middle
s.r.l. = signed right lower
s.l.l. = signed left lower
s.l.t. = signed left top
s.r.t. = signed right top
s.b.m. = signed back middle
s.b.r.l. = signed back right lower
s.b.l.l. = signed back left lower
s.b.m.t. = signed back middle top

Cat. 78 (detail)

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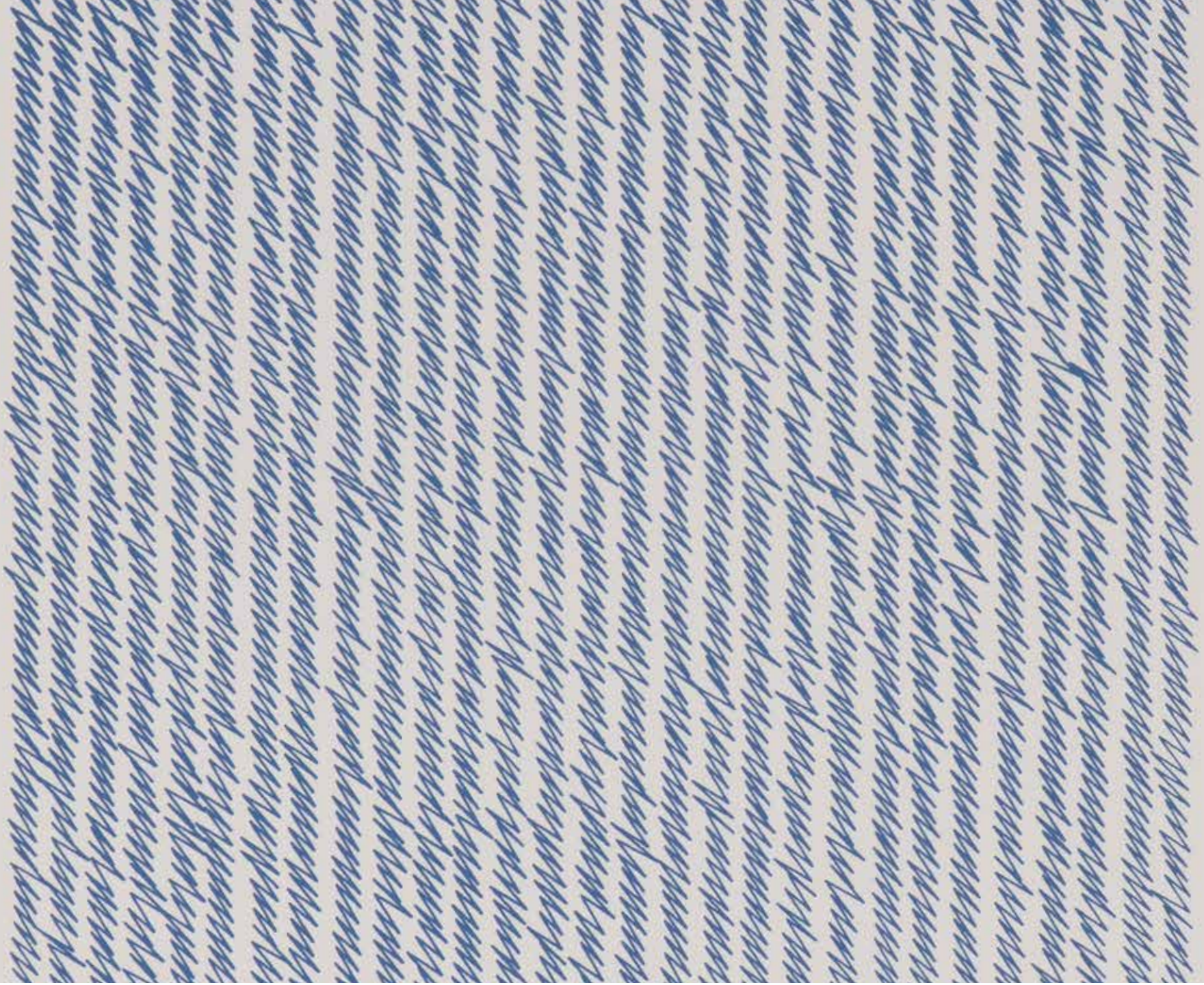

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