

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Oliver A. I. Botar

NOTES

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