

summary

PORTRAIT

The 1960s was a decade of fundamental changes in the Hungarian museum scene: a complex of several institutions was established in the Buda Castle in Budapest, while the maintenance of museums – both small and larger ones – in the countryside that had difficulties were integrated into county centres, ensuring the required professional standards of operation and supervision for all public collections and exhibition venues. Members of a new generation with a more modern approach also appeared in the leadership and some of them introduced crucial changes in the Hungarian museum profession with their impact having lasted to the present day. Issue 69-70 mainly focuses on those 'heroes' and prominent figures of Hungarian museology who have sunk into oblivion or were doomed to be forgotten despite playing the greatest role in laying the foundations of a new system. In addition to the main theme, research results in other areas are also contained in this issue of MuseumCafé (MC).

After a brief period working at the Christian Museum in Esztergom, art historian Miklós Mojzer joined the staff of the Old Masters' Gallery of the Hungarian National Gallery, actively participating in mounting the permanent exhibition of the museum's winged altars in 1973. Then, already the director-general of the Museum of Fine Arts, he was at the helm of a large-scale reconstruction project of the building. Throughout his career he was driven by an ambition to identify Master M S, the foremost artist of Medieval Hungarian painting, and to make new attributions linked to him.

Ferenc Fülepi held the longest tenure – thirty-five years – as the director-general of the Hungarian National Museum. Included among his achievements is restructuring the system of archaeological operations in Hungary and the re-arrangement of the museum's collection with a fresh approach. Moreover, the Hungarian Holy Crown, which had been kept in the USA for more than thirty years after WWII, became a permanent exhibit in the museum under his directorship. Fülepi's efficient work was facilitated by his political background too, which, however, he always placed at the service of promoting a more improved operation of the National Museum, and later, as a ministerial department head, that of the entire domestic museum scene.

- ¶ Several articles discuss the defining figures of the Hungarian municipal museum system who played an important role in organising county museum centres or the management of smaller but nationally renowned institutions. Ákos Kovács, director of the museum in Hatvan, mounted exhibitions autonomously of the official cultural policy of the time, while, as an ethnographer with an independent mind, he chose research fields like tattooing, the 'celebration of the new bread' and the National Park at Ópusztaszer as the site of myth-creation. Archaeologist István Éri, who started his career with the excavations of the castle in Nagyvázsony, made it to the directorship of the Veszprém county museum; his seminal achievement was launching the Regions-Eras-Museums movement, which 'mobilised' millions of visitors during its decades long history can be regarded one of the greatest marketing initiatives to this day.
- ¶ Endre Füzes, the director of the largest open-air museum in Hungary (Hungarian Open-air Museum in Szentendre) taught generations of researchers and the museum's area was significantly expanded under his management, while he also accelerated the establishment of the exhibitions presenting Hungary's ethnographic regions and adopted the new visitor services of a European standard. Károly Mezősi, the first director of the museums in Pest County, is primarily remembered today for his research into the oeuvre of Sándor Petőfi, one of Hungary's greatest poets, since at the beginning of his career he lived and worked in Kiskunfélegyháza, where Petőfi spent his childhood. Gábor Bándi, the head of the Vas County museum centre, and Nándor Ikvai, the director of Pest County museums, devoted their efforts to projects beyond their own institutions; moreover, they analysed and took a constructive critical approach to the entire domestic museum scene, which eventually led to their compulsory resignation. Some of the propositions they made in their studies at the time should be considered by today's professionals.
- ¶ This issue of MC pays a short tribute to literary historian Lóránt Kabdebó, who was the head of the Audio Archives of the Petőfi Literary Museum; his interviews conducted with the giants of Hungarian literature are preserved by the museum and are also published in many thematic volumes and used in radio programmes.
- ¶ You can read interviews with Zsuzsanna Bakó and Gabriella Dománszky, researchers of 19th-century Hungarian fine art, both of whom significantly facilitated the process of publishing research results and contributed to making the art of Mihály Munkácsy and his contemporaries better known abroad. Another two interviews take a look at the events preceding the period discussed in MC's issue 69-70: Antal Filep, an ethnographer, and Tibor Kecskeméti, the doyen

of the museum studies of natural history, talk about the museum scene in the fifties and sixties, the state of education and the problems of small museums, while Kecskeméti also speaks about the still ongoing 'home-seeking adventures' of the Museum of Natural History, as well as the destruction of its world famous permanent exhibition and a major part of its collection during the revolution of 1956. Photo restorer József Ormos explains how daguerreotypes can be salvaged and the present situation of his fledgling profession.

- ¶ Marking the centenary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, which was in power for five months in 1919, the nationalisation of private collections, the exhibition of nationalised fine and applied art works at the Múcsarnok, and the return of the works to their rightful owners after the fall of the commune. (You can read the full-length text at <http://muzeumcafe.hu/en/>.) One of the collectors, Gyula Bischitz, is featured in the study about the Netsuke collection he donated to the Ferenc Hopp Museum of Asiatic Arts and a unique, 15th-century Italian sketchbook, which was saved from falling into decay by restorers of the Museum of Fine Arts a few years ago.
- ¶ Eleven canvases of Alfons Mucha's *Slav Epic* were exhibited in the Obecní dům in Prague to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the foundation of an Independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. MC also devotes an article to the creation of the monumental work and Mucha's life's work. (You can read the full-length text at <http://muzeumcafe.hu/en/>.)
- ¶ MuseumCafé's annual award recognising an outstanding achievement in the museum profession in the previous year was received in 2019 by ethnographer Zsófia Frazon, whose career stretches from documenting and archiving contemporary objects to developing a new museum approach based on participation and cooperation. Her 600-page ...OPEN MUSEUM... is in effect a manual, a team project in which, commenting on each other's work, researchers and curators published case-studies and entries, and drew up the conceptual map of 'the social museum'. Zsófia Frazon was recognised for her work as the project's leader.

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Zsófia, Sári Zsolt

Szerkesztőség: 1068 Budapest, Szondi utca 77.

E-mail: muzeumcafe@szepmuveszeti.hu

Kiadó: Kultúra 2008 Nonprofit Kft.,

1146 Budapest, Dózsa György út 41.

Lapigazgató: Lévay Zoltán

Lapmenedzser: Bacsa Tibor

bacsatibor.hatvan@gmail.com

Szerkesztőségi koordinátor: Sarkantyú Anna

Nyomdai munkák: EPC Nyomda, Budaörs

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