HUNGARIAN MODERNISM

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Exhibition organized by
Robert Kashey and David Wojciechowski
in association with
Gallery Minotaure, Paris - Tel Aviv and Janos Gat

Catalog edited by Leanne M. Zalewski

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Shepherd & Derom Galleries, with the cooperation of Gallery Minotaure, Paris-Tel Aviv, and Janos Gat presents a survey of Modernism in Hungary by artists who began their careers between the 1910s and 1920s and lived and worked through the turbulence of the century.

In Hungary, as in most of the Western world, the influence of Abstract painting and Cubism came into its own during the Art d’Aujourd’hui exhibition in Paris in 1925, the first international “non-imitative” art exhibition in France. Side by side with the French, Dutch, German, Italian, and Russian artists were Hungarian artists. The introduction of the exhibition catalogue asked the question: “Why this exhibition? Not to show examples of the various trends of the day, but to produce an encyclopedic exhibition, as complete as circumstances would allow considering the political and geographic difficulties of gathering these works.”

The trends represented in the Art d’Aujourd’hui exhibition were born in Berlin, Moscow, Amsterdam, and Budapest, as well as in Paris. They were at times parallel and independent, but more often mutually influenced. During this part of the 20th century, an important communication network—an art magazines often doubling as manifestos—connected artists and studios. Paris seemed to be the catalyst, even for the artists who did not settle there permanently.

Replace Paris with Berlin, Cubism with Expressionism, and you would have the same international participation in any exhibition in Berlin. Then try Milan and Futurism. Much of the same applies. István Beöthy (1897-1961), József Csáky (1888-1971), István Fárkas (1887-1944), Béla Kádár (1877-1956), Anton Prinner (1902-1983), László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946), Alfred Reth (1884-1966), György Román (1903-1981), and Hugó Scheiber (1873-1950) belonged to a true “Internationale.” The revolution that may have been condemned to fail in history had triumphed in art history (and still lives on).

And as a footnote, just as with the political activists, most of these artistic instigators came from a Jewish background. The artists of this exhibition, with few exceptions, are Hungarian Jews, or as some of them might have put it, Jewish Hungarians. They, or their parents, in many cases had taken Hungarian names, not to deny their ties to Judaism but to distance themselves from its religious aspect. Artists, in general, tend to be progressive, and quite a few of this group, at least for a while, were committed socialists or communists, as befitting the times. The common background of individuals with similar strivings can be called a coincidence. However, during this period when Central European societies were embracing a Nationalistic mode, it is no coincidence that the switch to an International style was made by their most worldly members.
COVER ILLUSTRATION: Béla Kádár, *Woman with a Blue Necklace*, c. 1930, mixed media on paper, 27 9/16” x 19 11/16” (70 x 50 cm), catalog no. 8.

TECHNICAL NOTES: All measurements are in inches and in centimeters; height precedes width. All drawings, prints, and photographs are framed. Prices on request. All works subject to prior sale.

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Catalog
Sculptor and painter, István Beöthy (Jászapáti, 1897 – Paris, 1961) joined the Ma [Today] circle and Lászlo Moholy-Nagy after studying architecture in Budapest. In 1919, like many of his friends, he left Hungary and studied sculpture in Paris, settling there permanently in 1926. In 1931 he was a founding member of the Abstraction-Création group, which later continued as the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles. He served as the latter group’s vice president. In 1936 he organized an exhibition of the Musical Artists in Budapest and two years later organized an exhibition of Hungarian artists in Paris. In 1939 he published the book Section d'Or [The Golden Section], in which he explained his theories about the relationships between art and the foundations of mathematics. In 1948 he organized another exhibition of Hungarian artists in Paris and participated in the activities of the Groupe Espace together with André Bloc and Del Marle. In addition, he collaborated with Le Corbusier and Fernand Léger on the magazine Forme et Vie. He exhibited frequently, notably at the Galerie Bonaparte (1930), the Galerie Denise René (1946), the Galerie Maeght (1952), as well as in Brussels, Antwerp, Cologne, and Pécs. Since 1990, the Modern Art Museum in Grenoble has devoted a room to his work.
István Beöthy, *Draped Female Figure*, 1933, wood, 29 15/16” (76 cm).
István Beöthy, *Gravitation Opus 064*, 1934, wood, 35 1/16" (89 cm).
István Beöthy, The Sea, 1934, wood, 12 3/16” (31 cm).
István Beöthy, *Untitled*, 1947, oil on canvas, 39 3/8” x 31 7/8” (100 x 81 cm).
István Beöthy, *Woman in Equilibrium*, 1949, oil on canvas, 39 3/8” x 28 3/4” (100 x 73 cm).
József Csáky

Sculptor József Csáky (Szeged, 1888 – Paris, 1971) studied briefly in Budapest before settling in Paris in 1908 and taking a studio at La Ruche where his neighbors included Alexander Archipenko, Marc Chagall, Henri Laurens, Fernand Léger, and Chaim Soutine. Picasso and Braque had just begun experimenting with Cubism, and Csáky and Archipenko were among the first to create Cubist sculptures. Marcel Duchamp included his sculptures in the Salon de la Section d’Or of 1912. Unfortunately, Csáky’s enthusiastic and significant participation in the Parisian avant-garde was curtailed by World War I. He volunteered for the French army and became a French citizen in 1919. After the war, he incorporated Léger-esque smooth geometric shapes, cones, and discs into his sculptures and paintings. Late in the decade, his stylistic development led away from avant-garde practices towards figurative art, and his name virtually disappeared from art history. A recent resurgence of interest in his work resulted in several monographs.
József Csáky, *The Circus*, c. 1920-25, oil on carton, 12 3/8” x 9 13/16” (31.5 x 25 cm).
Béla Kádár

Painter Béla Kádár (Budapest, 1877 – Budapest, 1956) studied in Budapest and briefly in Munich. He was particularly influenced by József Rippl-Rónai. In 1913 he painted frescos for the Hungarian theater in Budapest. He actively exhibited in that city, then began exhibiting internationally in the 1920s when he oriented himself toward Abstract Expressionism. In 1921 he rose to prominence after exhibiting works, along with Hugó Scheiber, at Max Hevesi’s salon in Vienna. Two years later Der Sturm Gallery in Berlin held their first one-man exhibition of his work, followed by another one-man show as well as group exhibitions. His expressionist style merged with classic, surrealistic, and folkloric elements. In 1926, he participated in a modern art exhibition organized by the Société Anonyme at the Brooklyn Museum and in an international group exhibition held at the museum a year and a half later. His international reputation spread, but his career declined after the Nazis selected one of his Der Sturm works for the catalog cover of the exhibition *Entretête Kunst* [Degenerate Art]. During World War II, Kádár lived in the Budapest ghetto, lost his wife and two sons, and later died in poverty. In 1977 the National Gallery in Budapest dedicated a retrospective exhibition to him.
Béla Kádár, *Two Horses*, c. 1922, charcoal on paper, 8 1/4” x 10 5/8” (21 x 27 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Woman with a Blue Necklace*, c. 1930, mixed media on paper, 27 9/16” x 19 11/16” (70 x 50 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Mother and Daughter*, c. 1925-26, charcoal on paper, 11 13/16” x 9 7/16” (30 x 24 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Urban Abstraction*, c. 1928-30, gouache and crayon on paper, 9 1/8” x 11 13/16” (23.2 x 30 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Three Dancers*, gouache on paper, 7 1/4” x 7 7/8” (18.5 x 20 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Fantasy*, c. 1940, gouache on paper, 17 3/4” x 11 1/4” (45 x 28.5 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Lady at Her Toilet*, charcoal on paper, 8 1/2” x 10 13/16” (21.5 x 27.5 cm).
Béla Kádár, *The Violin Player*, charcoal on paper, 8 1/4” x 13 3/16” (21 x 33.5 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Composition*, charcoal on paper, 11 13/16” x 11 7/16” (30 x 29 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Couple with Horse*, charcoal on paper, 9 3/4” x 13 3/4” (24.7 x 35 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Women*, charcoal on paper, 9 7/8” x 6 11/16” (25 x 17 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Maternity*, charcoal on paper, 9 7/16” x 6 11/16” (24 x 17 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Scene in a Village*, charcoal on paper, 7 1/8” x 9 7/8” (18 x 25 cm).
Anton Prinner

Sculptor Anton Prinner (Budapest, 1902 – Paris, 1983) studied at the Fine Arts School in Budapest. After arriving in Paris in 1927, she created a male persona and maintained an androgynous identity for the rest of her life. Mondrian's neo-plasticism and Russian constructivism influenced her early work. In Paris she studied at the free school of the Grande Chaumière, became friends with Arpad Szenes, and became a prominent figure in the constructivist movement. In 1932 she studied engraving at the studio of British surrealist painter and printmaker Stanley William Hayter and invented a new process called papyrogravure. From 1937 Prinner turned to figurative sculpture, notably with the plaster, Double Personality. Her interest in the occult, mysticism, and transmutation informed her work. Between 1947 and 1949 she illustrated sixty-six tablets of the Egyptian Book of the Dead and later illustrated a work on Tarot.

Prinner was well-connected with the avant-garde in Paris. Jeanne Bucher and Maria Elena Vieira da Silva frequented her studio in Montparnasse at rue Belloni (now rue d'Arsonval). In the early 1940s she met and befriended Picasso, who introduced her as "the small man who makes large statues." Other friends included André Breton, Jacques Prévert, Pierre Loeb, and Jean Paulhan. From 1950 until 1965, she collaborated with the Atelier du Tapis Vert [Green Carpet Studio]. She returned to Paris in 1965 and exhibited at the Galerie Yvonne Lambert, and in 1968 at the Galerie Arnad Zerbib. In 1979 the Anton Prinner Friends' Association was created. A retrospective was held at the Musée de l'Abbaye Sainte-Croix, Sables d'Olonne in 2006.
Anton Prinner, *Untitled*, 1937, plaster, 24” x 12 5/8” x 8 5/8” (61 x 32 x 22 cm).
Alfréd Réth

Alfréd Réth, born Róth (Budapest, 1884 – Paris, 1966) was a disciple of Károly Ferenczy in Nagybánya. After a long study trip in Italy with painter István Farkas, he arrived in Paris in 1905 and settled there permanently. He enrolled in the painting academy of Jacques-Émile Blanche, but his style was mainly influenced by Cézanne’s paintings, as well as by Hindu and Khmer art, which he had discovered at the Musée Guimet. In 1910 he exhibited at the Salon d’Automne and in 1912 at the Salon des Indépendants. That same year, he participated in an important Cubist art exhibition in Budapest where his works were shown alongside those of Fernand Léger, Jean Metzinger, Robert Delaunay and Vassily Kandinsky. In an exhibition at Der Sturm the following year, he exhibited eighty paintings and drawings. His work paralleled Cubist works that led to abstraction. He explored the relationship between lines and background. His paintings from the 1920s are a game of colored circles, curves, and lights, in which one is challenged to find simplified forms of the human body.

Réth became a French citizen in 1927. In 1933, he participated in the activities of the Abstraction-Creation group. Two years later he made his first multi-dimensional painting. After the war and up to the early 1960s he continued to make compositions of circles and arcs, but materials interested him more than forms. He began using sand, wood, and metal and called these works “Harmony of Materials.” The figurative works made during the five last years of his life sum-up the entire experience he accumulated during several decades. His works were exhibited at the Abstract Art Exhibition, and as part of the first generations (1910-1939) of the Saint-Etienne Art and Industry Museum in 1957, but the most complete exhibition of his work took place in 1984 in Albi at the Toulouse-Lautrec Museum, celebrating his 100th birthday. An exhibition at the Hungarian Institute devoted to retrospectives of the Budapest Gallery and the French Institute in Budapest held in Paris in 2003 led to a rediscovery of his work.
Alfred Reth, *Little Boy with Apron*, 1910, mixed media on canvas, 24 3/4” x 20 1/2” (63 x 52 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Study and Still Life*, c. 1910, crayon on paper, 8 1/4” x 6 5/8” (21 x 16.8 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Man in a Hat*, c. 1918, watercolor, 8 5/8” x 6 11/16” (22 x 17 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Horse and Cart*, 1913, crayon on paper, 7 1/2” x 9” (19 x 23 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Portrait of a Woman*, 1914, crayon on paper, 11 13/16” x 7 11/16” (30 x 19.5 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Bathers*, 1920, oil on canvas, 14 11/16” x 17 5/16” (37 x 44 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Rue animée*, 1925, mixed media on paper, 7 1/2” x 9” (19 x 23 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Gare du nord*, 1926, crayon on paper, 8 1/4” x 6 1/4” (21 x 16 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Card Players near the Seine*, 1926, oil on canvas, 31 1/2” x 58 1/4” (80 x 148 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Forms in Space*, 1935, oil, cement, and plaster on wood, 12 5/8” x 12 3/16” (32 x 31 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Forms in Space*, 1935, oil and sand on plywood, 35 7/16” x (90 x 60 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Composition*, 1938, mixed media, 30 11/16” x 24 3/4” (78 x 63 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Abstraction*, 1938, mixed media on panel, 18 11/16” x 41 3/8” (47.5 x 105 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Composition*, 1942, mixed media and cement, 8 7/8” x 9 7/16” (22.5 x 24 cm).
Alfred Reth, *Harmony of Materials*, 1947, mixed media on panel, 15 3/4” x 14 3/16” (40 x 36 cm).
Alfred Reth, Composition, 1953, mixed media on paper, 25 3/16" x 18 7/8" (64 x 48 cm).
Alfred Reth, *A Character*, c. 1963, mixed media on carton, 18 1/8” x 15” (46 x 38 cm).
Hugó Scheiber

As a child, Hugó Scheiber (Budapest, 1873 – Budapest, 1950) helped his father paint and decorate the Prater amusement park in Vienna. After returning to Budapest, he studied at the School of Decorative Arts in Budapest and became a sign painter. Café scenes, dancers, musicians, clowns, and the circus were repeated subjects of his paintings. In 1900, at the Universal Exhibition in Paris, his nudes were presented in a group exhibition. Later, he exhibited expressionist works with Béla Kádár at Max Hevesi’s salon in Vienna. His one-man exhibitions at Der Sturm in 1924 and 1925 catapulted his career. Soon after he exhibited at the Rehearsal Theater, Popler Town Hall in London, and at the Gallery Anderson and in the modern art show at the Brooklyn Museum. In 1933, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti invited him to participate in a large exhibition of the futurists in Rome. In his last years he presented his expressionist and futurist works at the National Salon of the Ernst Museum in Budapest. He was a member of KUT (New Artists Society). By the 1940s, he had fallen into obscurity. In 1964 the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest devoted a commemorative exhibition to him.
Hugó Scheiber, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1920, gouache on paper, 18 7/8” x 7 7/8” (48 x 20 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Man Seated in a Chair*, c. 1925, gouache and pastel on paper, 26 9/16” x 18 1/2”(67.5 x 47 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Circus*, 1925, oil on carton, 37 13/16” x 25 3/16” (96 x 64 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Coffee House*, 1925, pastel on paper, 24 1/4” x 16 15/16” (61.5 x 43 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Night Boat*, c. 1930, gouache on paper, 20 1/16” x 16 1/2” (51 x 42 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Circus*, c. 1930, oil on paper, 25 3/4” x 12” (65.5 x 30.5 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Concert*, gouache on paper, 24 1/4” x 16 15/16” (61.5 x 43 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Futuristic Woman*, gouache on paper, 26” x 19 1/2” (66 x 49.5 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Dreaming Woman*, gouache on paper, 27 1/8” x 20 1/2” (69 x 52 cm).
Hugó Scheiber, *Cubist Self-Portrait*, 1933, gouache on carton, 26” x 19 1/4” (66 x 49 cm).
István Fárkas

István Fárkas (Budapest, 1887 – Budapest, 1944) was the son of Jozsef Wolfner, the foremost publisher in Hungary. By age fifteen he was traveling and painting with László Mednyanszky, and two years later he exhibited in the National Salon in Budapest. At the artist colony in Nagybanya, he painted alongside Károly Ferenczy and István Reti. In addition, he studied in Munich and in Paris, where his circle of acquaintances included Rainer Maria Rilke, Le Fauconnier, Jean Metzinger, and André Dunoyer de Segonzak. His participation in World War I battles interrupted his work. In 1918-19, he was imprisoned in Italy, and returned to Hungary after his release, but was back in Paris by 1925. During this seven-year stay, his closest friends were Le Corbusier and the poets Jean Follain and André Salmon. Salmon compared him to Picasso “with whom Etienne Farkas has nothing in common except this Luciferian ability of formulating dreams through the most complete signs of reality."He exhibited his work at the Salon des Tuileries and at the Galerie le Portique, which represented Raoul Dufy, Henri Matisse, and Maurice Utrillo. His art is symbolic, personal, and spiritual. According to art historian Eugene Kolb, Fárkas “created a complete universe out of images that cannot be compared to any other kind of painting: an opulent world which is mostly terra incognita today.” In 1930, prominent American collector Chester Dale exhibited a group of his still lifes alongside works by Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse. Two years later Fárkas was obliged to return to Hungary to take over his father’s publishing company. He is now recognized as a leading artist there, his fame akin to that of poet Attila Jozsef and composer Béla Bartók. Unfortunately, his life was cut short because of World War II; he was arrested, deported, and killed in Auschwitz.
István Fáráks, *Still Life*, 1926, tempera on wood, 15 1/2” x 10 1/2” (39.4 x 26.7 cm).
István Fáráks, *Lady in a Pink Hat*, 1923, oil on canvas, 19” x 15 1/2” (48.2 x 39.4 cm).
László Moholy-Nagy

Hungarian-born American artist, designer, filmmaker, photographer, and prolific theorist László Moholy-Nagy (Bácsborsod, Mohol Puszta, 1895 - Chicago, 1946) was committed to the social value of art. His theories involved an exploration of man’s interaction with the forces of light, space, and time. Early in his career, he was influenced by the Hungarian avant-garde, including the Ma circle—Sándor Bortnyik, József Nemes Lampérth, and Béla Uitz, themselves influenced by Cubism, Futurism, and the art of Rembrandt and Vincent van Gogh. After the Budapest Communist revolution (March–July 1919), in which Ma painters and others participated, Moholy-Nagy went to Vienna, but after only six weeks moved to Berlin, where Dadaism, De Stijl, and Russian Constructivism converged. There he signed manifestos, represented the Ma journal, and published Buch neuer Künstler (1922), along with Lajos Kassák. That same year Der Sturm toured his work nationally, and Walter Gropius gave him a post at the Bauhaus. Before and during World War II until his death, he taught at the New Bauhaus and Institute of Design in Chicago.
László Moholy-Nagy, *Self-Portrait*, 1919, watercolor, 16 1/2” x 11” (41.9 x 28 cm).
*Loan courtesy of The Nancy G. Brinker Collection.*
György Román

György Román (Budapest, 1903 - Budapest, 1981), who lost his hearing as a toddler, intended to become a writer, but instead began painting after visiting the Budapest exhibition of state-confiscated art during the 1919 Socialist Revolution. Between 1920 and 1928, he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest and in Munich. During summer 1924, he developed his characteristic impasto-like handling of paint after spending the summer in Nagybánya (today Baia Mare, Rumania). Unable to make a living as a painter, he began boxing, and fought in Budapest, Berlin, and Vienna while also continuing to paint. Later he took up candy making after his father’s family business went bankrupt. Between 1932 and 1936, he lived in Shanghai and Tokyo working as a painter, boxer, and candy maker. While there, he studied Chinese and Japanese prints. He returned to Budapest in 1936 and participated in exhibitions of the Group of Socialist Artists. During World War II, he escaped a call for forced labor service, and in the 1950s stopped painting but published novels (Ports of Asia, 1951, Gray House, 1958) and a collection of short stories (Revolt of the Lilliputians, 1958). By the end of the decade, he was painting again and exhibiting regularly. His autobiographical novel, Out of Solitude, was published in 1963.

Representing almost the entire spectrum of the classical modernist pictorial tradition, his painting suggests links to the art of surrealism, primitivism, and symbolism—and to that of the avant-garde in Paris and German Expressionism in the 1920s—though his work does not fit neatly into any category. His idiomatic work presents itself without the slightest overtone of affected mannerism. It asserts that originality, the fundamental, if most controversial, element of the mythology of modernism, can be fully achieved without the primacy of the production of a style.
György Román, *Blossoming Plum Tree*, 1980, oil on masonite, 26 3/4” x 32 1/2” (68 x 82.5 cm).
Béla Kádár, *Arkadia*, 1912, oil on board, 17 3/4” x 19 1/4” (45.1 x 48.8 cm).