

The 1960s and 1970s were a fascinating period in the history of Hungarian modern art, not to mention in the history of the country itself. As the short-lived revolution of 1956 gave way to oppressive communist rule, artists of the neo-avant-garde found themselves increasingly isolated, their work condemned not only by the authorities but also by a largely conservative public. By focusing on the social and political circumstances unique to Hungary at the time, this book provides an unrivalled analysis of the ways in which the neo-avant-garde practised within a system – of doublespeak and more – that was determined to deny them their autonomy.

Art in Hungary

1956 – 1980

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Doublespeak and Beyond

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Edited by  
Edit Sasvári  
Sándor Hornyik  
Hedvig Turai

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ISBN 978-0-500-23978-0



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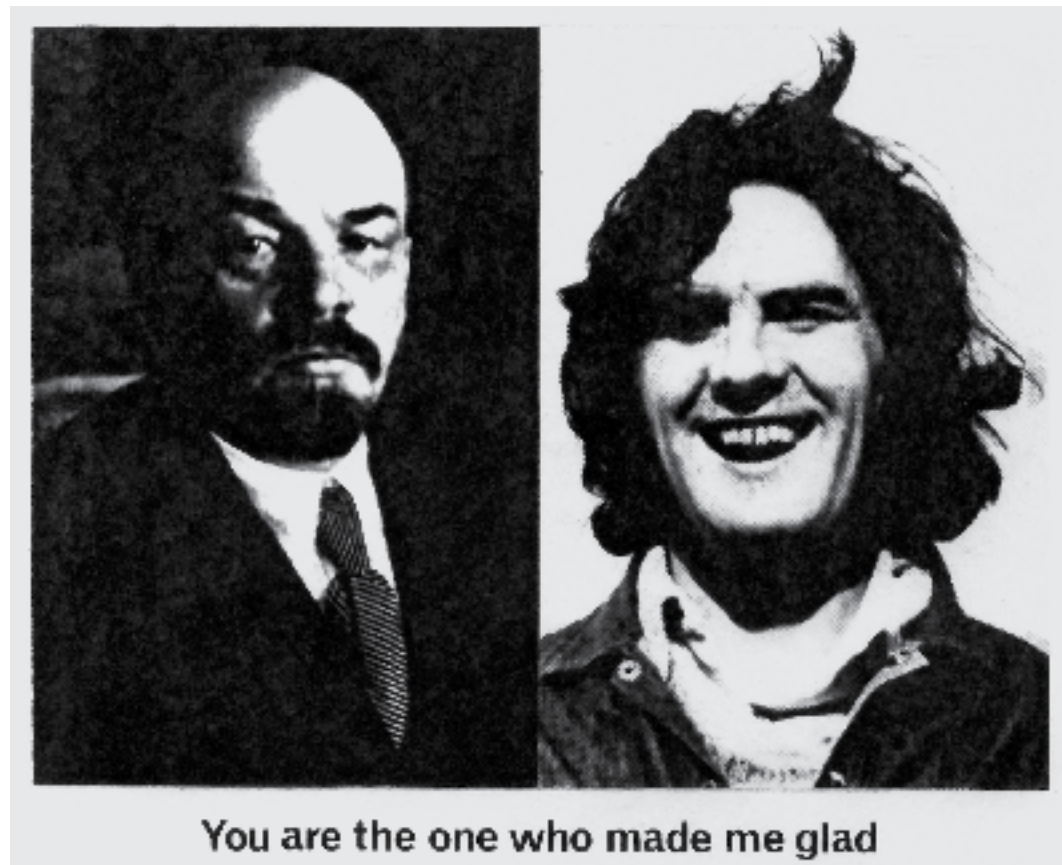
Hungary

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# Institutions

- 8 Autonomy and Doublespeak:  
Art in Hungary in the 1960s and 1970s  
*Edit Sasvári*
- 21 Under Eastern Eyes  
*Péter György*
- 39 Hungarian Culture +/- Europe:  
Positions and Self-images  
of Avant-garde and Modernist  
Movements in Hungary, 1915–68  
*Gábor Dobó and Merse Pál Szeredi*
- 59 The Art Sphere as a Grey Zone:  
Techniques of Power and the  
Context of Artistic Practices  
*Júlia Perczel*
- 77 Liberty Controlled:  
Institutional Settings of the East  
European Neo-avant-garde  
*Maja Fowkes and Reuben Fowkes*
- 95 Creative (Dis)Courses:  
The Forms, Methods and Locations  
of Alternative Art Pedagogy in Hungary  
*Flóra Barkóczi*
- 113 Reforming Socialist Realism:  
Encounters of Eastern Modernization  
and Western Modernism  
*Sándor Hornyik*
- 137 (Dis)figuring Reality:  
New Forms of Figuration in  
Hungarian Painting, 1957–75  
*Dávid Fehér*
- 161 Abstract Boundaries: The Changing  
Principles of Art Policy in 1958–68  
*József Mélyi*
- 179 Domesticated Modernism:  
The Role of Western Émigré Artists in  
the Cultural Politics of the Kádár Era  
*Lóránt Bódi*

# Discourses

# Disguises

- 193 Taboo and Trauma: 1956  
*Géza Boros*
- 209 The Holocaust and the Arts:  
Paths and Crossroads  
*Daniel Véri*
- 229 Out of Private Public Opinion into  
Shared Personal Opinion: The Public,  
the Private and the Political  
*Edit András*
- 251 Limited Access to Greatness:  
The Position of Women Artists  
*Hedvig Turai*

# Speech Acts

- 273 Soft-spoken Encounters:  
International Exchanges and  
the Hungarian 'Underground'  
*Klara Kemp-Welch*
- 291 Poetry in Action: Language as  
a Performative Medium in the  
Hungarian Neo-avant-garde  
*Emese Kürti*
- 315 Working in the Twice-mined  
Semantic Minefield: The Politics  
of Hungarian Neo-avant-garde  
Movements  
*Magdalena Radomska*
- 331 The Influx of Images:  
Photo, Experimental Film and Video  
Art in the Hungarian Neo-avant-garde  
*Katalin Székely*
- 357 Biographies
- 369 Notes on Contributors
- 372 Acknowledgments
- 373 Picture Credits
- 375 Index

## Creative (Dis)Courses

### The Forms, Methods and Locations of Alternative Art Pedagogy in Hungary



1

The visual arts of any given period are intertwined with issues related to artists' education. The system, approaches, institutions and teachers of art education have always left their mark on developments in art, particularly in Eastern Europe. In Hungary in the 1960s–70s, if young people wanted to become professional artists and to integrate into the state system of art, they could only do so within an institutional structure based on solid nineteenth-century conservative traditions and following Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The training system was heavily centralized and politicized in Hungary in the years of socialism from the end of the Second World War to 1989. Its key institutions – the Képző- és Iparművészeti Gimnázium (Secondary School of Fine and Applied Arts) and the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola (Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts) – both operated in the capital, Budapest (figs 1 and 2). Both schools were regarded as elite institutions to which one was admitted only after a series of competitive exams, yet the majority of the students were disappointed by them. Neither the spirit and pedagogical methods of the colleges, nor the knowledge they provided, showed any awareness of the explosion that was taking place in international art in the 1960s–70s. In order to keep up with the dynamic developments in contemporary art, a student artist had to rely almost exclusively on themselves and undertake a form of self-education. This dual orientation meant that students simultaneously had to conform to the expectations of an ideologically governed college education, totally isolated

from international contemporary art, and to realize their own needs and desires. It was the personal, internal demands that shaped the colourful scene of alternative art education during the decades of socialism.

#### Artists' training in the state system

From the late 1950s to the late 1970s, the principles of art education kept shifting in Hungary with changes in the political situation. The dogma of socialist realism still played a major role in the cultural politics of the 1960s, but no longer as exclusively as in the 1950s, and there was a degree of relative freedom within the state system of education as well (figs 3 and 4). The most important instruments of socialist education were the state educational institutions, which required a growing number of teachers. This training of teachers en masse resulted in an odd situation in the 1960s: graduates of the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola received degrees for art education (as 'teachers of drawing') rather than art. This was linked to a shift in emphasis from autonomous artistic activities, and an elite culture in general, to an expansion of the social role of art. Politics, and more specifically the politics of education, focused on the culture of the environment and visual education for society as a whole, and the educational reforms of the 1960s and 1970s were meant to serve this policy. This change in emphasis was an international phenomenon rather than a peculiarly Hungarian one, and



recast the role of the artist within society across the world.

The Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola was the only state institution of higher education that trained artists in the 1960s–70s. This situation, which would not change until the political transition at the end of the 1980s, prevented competition, and eliminated any institutional motivation for development and renewal.<sup>1</sup> The director of the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola was Endre Domanovszky in 1956–74; as a painter, he was one of the key figures in interwar modernism and became a prominent socialist realist in the 1950s. The curriculum and teaching methods embraced the ideas of academic realism and the post-Nagybánya tradition (following the style of the artists' colony at Nagybánya that was an influential *plein air* movement from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1930s). Yet students could also encounter a more up-to-date approach to art, departing from academism, through teachers like Jenő Barcsay, Aurél Bernáth, Gyula Hincz and Károly Koffán. A number of artists (such as Tibor Csernus and Béla Kondor) who were influential in the 1960s were their former students, while figures of the young generation, such as László Lakner and Ákos Szabó, were former students of Aurél Bernáth in particular.

A number of significant artists gave up on the prospect of earning a degree in art in the state system after multiple applications and rejections. These included Tibor Csiky, who became a geometric abstract sculptor after graduating in mathematics and physics and then teaching Hungarian language and literature; István Harasztý, who trained himself in art having been an engine fitter; and Gyula Pauer, who developed his radical conceptual programme (called *Pseudo*).

### Intermediate forms

The training of so-called 'amateur' artists took place in the Népművészeti Intézet (Institute of Folk Art) established in 1951 and modelled on the Soviet Folk Art Centre, Dom narodnogo tvorchestva. It was subsequently renamed the Népművelési Intézet (Institute of Public Education) in 1956. The concept of popular education began to make its mark in

2 & 3. Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola (Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts), 1960s

4. Jenő Barcsay's anatomy lesson at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts, 1960s

5. Péter Forgács's course, held at a primary school in Budapest, animation after Ferenc Lantos's book *Természet – Látás – Alkotás* (Nature – Vision – Creation), c. 1977–78



2



3



4

Hungary in the 1950s and primarily included extracurricular cultural activities. The main task of the institute was to educate and orientate the receptive masses while aiming to popularize a uniform 'socialist culture'. This included popular science, library work, amateur art and science projects, workshops and various leisure activities. The institute had to manage, coordinate and support the art activities of the trade unions, associations and cultural centres; and it had to scout for and train talented 'amateur artists' and educate art professionals. The term 'amateur', which had a pejorative connotation, was reserved for those participants in the art scene who did not have a college degree. At the same time, the label 'amateur' was a badge of honour outside the official scene, as it lent an aura of independence to artists outside the system.

The Népművelési Intézet ran hundreds of workshops,<sup>2</sup> cultural centres, creative camps and artists' colonies in the country, motivated partly by the desire to break Budapest's near-monopoly on culture. Although the role of popular education was closely connected to the programme of socialist indoctrination, the Népművelési Intézet could function as a less controlled and somewhat freer space, thanks to some enlightened members of the institute, such as Pál Bánszky, who headed the Vizuális Művészeti Osztály (Department of Visual Art), painter Imre Bak and sociologist Iván Vitányi. Bak, who began working as a neo-avant-garde visual artist in the mid-1960s, helped the Népművelési Intézet play an important role in the dissemination of contemporary art. He was on the staff of the Módszertani Intézet (Institute of Methodology) at the Vizuális Művészeti Osztály in 1974–79 and visited cultural centres all over Hungary in that capacity. He gave talks to art teachers, those involved in popular education and amateur artists, typically discussing issues relating to contemporary Hungarian and Western visual art, topics that were almost completely unknown to people living in the Hungarian countryside.

The institute also held sway over the structural transformations of art institutions: it established the system of 'small galleries' in the mid-1970s. Unlike art galleries in the West, these sites had no commercial activities, since there was, in fact, no commercial art trade in Hungary during that period. Yet, these

mini-institutions became crucial sites for experimentation in contemporary art. For example, neo-constructivist artist János Fajó ran a small gallery named the Józsefvárosi Galéria from 1976, which became a home for contemporary exhibitions and various innovative programmes involving applied art, visual art and visual culture.

A number of progressive artists came into contact with the Népművelési Intézet in the 1970s: on behalf of the institute, Péter Forgács, who worked primarily as a performance artist in the second half of the 1970s, held experimental art events at a primary school from 1974 (fig. 5); until he emigrated in 1976, the institute also supported Péter Halász's productions at the neo-avant-garde theatre, Kassák Ház Stúdió (Kassák House Studio).<sup>3</sup>



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### Alternative forms of art training

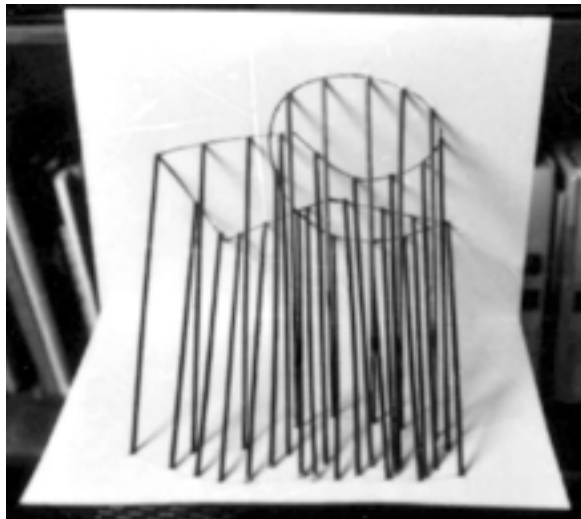
The restrictions and conservatism of official art training pushed young visual artists towards alternative forms of self-education. Fluxus, which appeared in Hungary in the mid-1960s, as well as later developments in conceptual art had a major influence on this trend, since they strengthened the already existing concepts of self-education and alternative pedagogy in Hungary. The mid-1960s also saw an upward swing in travel to and contacts with the West, which also contributed to Hungarian artists' increasing familiarity with new Western models of creativity and pedagogy. For instance, the work of Joseph Beuys became a point of reference for a number of Hungarian visual artists in the 1970s, and artists could meet the French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou in person at the Fialat Művészek Klubja (FMK, Young Artists' Club) in Budapest in 1976. It was there that Filliou's work *Poipoidrome* – originally planned in 1963 – was realized for the first time; the installation, which the artist called the 'institute of permanent creation', was meant to be both a monument to and a workshop of creative production and alternative pedagogy.

### The workshop as a site of art education

The first initiatives of alternative art pedagogy in Hungary date from the 1970s and were linked to artists who were already active in contemporary art at the time. While Imre Bak tried to acquaint a relatively broad public with the latest developments in contemporary visual art through the channels of the Népművelési Intézet, alternative art pedagogy was based on intimacy, transpired in closed circles and reached only few people. Miklós Erdély and Dóra Maurer's projects were no exception (see Géza Boros, 'Taboo and Trauma: 1956', pp. 193–207, for more on Miklós Erdély's early career). They launched their first joint workshop in the mid-1970s at the Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház (Ganz-MÁVAG Culture House). Erdély and Maurer's courses were mostly attended by the young avant-garde generation of the 1970s–80s. Their pedagogical activities were based on an experience in 1971, when they attended composer Mauricio Kagel's



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6. Model at the Creativity Exercises workshop, Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház (Ganz-MÁVAG Culture House), Budapest, 1976

7. A piece from Dóra Maurer's drawing course, Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház (Ganz-MÁVAG Culture House), Budapest, 1975–77

8. Active-passive exercise at the Creativity Exercises workshop, Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház (Ganz-MÁVAG Culture House), Budapest, 1976–77



8

course at the Kunstzone art fair in Munich.<sup>4</sup> Experiencing the creative exercises, combined with musical experimentation and movement, made such an impact on them that they launched their own movement-based workshop, 'Mozgástervezési és kivitelezési gyakorlatok' (Motion Planning and Performing Exercises), in Budapest in 1975. It was Tamás Papp, a popular educator at the Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház in the 1970s, who approached Erdély and Maurer about running the workshop. Thanks to Papp, the place became an important institution for the avant-garde projects of the period.

Erdély and Maurer's courses broke with earlier traditions of art education and replaced the classical drawing of models and scenes with exercises developing creative thinking, experimental methods and tasks aimed at fostering the experience of community. Dóra Maurer also ran a drawing workshop in 1975–77 at Ganz MÁVAG Művelődési Ház (fig. 7). She commuted between Budapest and Vienna in the mid-1970s (she had Austrian and Hungarian dual citizenship), so her Western European experiences also contributed to the appearance of cutting-edge forms of art dissemination, previously unknown in Hungary,

in a cultural centre in Budapest. Maurer once said that her work as a workshop leader was simply 'instinctively consistent pedagogical practice',<sup>5</sup> which is related to the fact that her art pedagogy stemmed from her own creative activities and remained closely interlinked with it throughout. According to her recollection, their courses were terminated in 1977 due to a scandalous photo exhibition in which pictures of naked bodies were displayed. The exhibition was organized by the members of the Dziga Vertov Fotó- és Amatőrfilm Szakkör (Dziga Vertov Amateur Photo and Film Workshop), which was based at the cultural centre. Erdély and Maurer's contracts were not renewed after that event, but Erdély continued to run workshops at other locations.

Erdély, who was known as a representative of Fluxus, conceptual art and actionism, had begun but never completed his studies as a sculptor at the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola. He became a legendary figure of Hungarian visual arts in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. This was due to his charismatic personality and inspiring mind, but also to his unique methods, primarily based on the principles of holistic and interdisciplinary thought. After his aforementioned

9. INDIGO group, The exhibition 'Coal and Charcoal Drawing', Marczibányi Téri Ifjúsági Ház (Marczibányi Square Youth Centre), Budapest, 1978



'Mozgástervezési és kivitelezési gyakorlatok' and 'Kreativitási gyakorlatok' (Creativity Exercises, figs 6 and 8), Erdély led two more workshops, the titles of which expressed his pioneering approach quite vividly: 'Fantáziafejlesztő gyakorlatok' (Fantasy-developing Exercises, 1977–78) and 'Interdiszciplináris gondolkodás' (Interdisciplinary Thinking, 1978–86). Erdély used innovative methods to develop the course concepts, including brainstorming as a basis for the project-based and informal teaching, which aimed to engage learners in a collaborative process based on active participation and thinking together, rather than a unidirectional transfer of knowledge by the teacher. The current issues of contemporary art (performativity, conceptuality) and new media (action, video) were also included in the course content. Erdély's pedagogy was not based on drawing models and scenes, which developed copying skills, but rather on exercises that could be actively shaped by the participants and fostered creative thinking, interdisciplinarity and skills of creative collaboration. Although Erdély tended to use the concept of creativity ironically, he was familiar with the theories of creativity that arose in Western Europe in the early 1950s, some of which were published in Hungarian translation in the 1970s.

Around 1978, Erdély's art pedagogy shifted from thinking to artistic representation and public display: the workshop named 'Interdiszciplináris gondolkodás', functioned less as an art course than as an artists' group, later called INDIGO. The workshop was attended mostly by students of the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola, who were eager to display their works publicly. They organized several thematic shows centred on various media and concepts of art. The exhibition 'Coal and Charcoal' explored coal, but departed from traditional charcoal drawing and included not only discarded charcoal drawings by students of the academy, but also hundreds of kilograms of coal, some of which was in fancifully tall heaps, stove pipes and sugar-filled balloons (fig. 9). The starting point for the exhibition was a short story about poverty by Franz Kafka ('The Bucket Rider'), but the goal was to present as many layers of the meaning of coal (social, physical and chemical) as

possible. Such exhibitions would be preceded by brainstorming sessions, the memory of which is preserved on index cards that might also be considered materials of conceptual thinking. The emphasis on a collaborative creative process did not fade in the thematic exhibitions, as Erdély considered exhibitions a device for displaying the interdisciplinary, critical and creative thinking of the group.

INDIGO attracted the attention of the powers-that-be in 1980, when the exhibition 'Aquarelle' was closed down after an inquiry ordered by the management of the Bercsényi Kollégium of the Műegyetem (Bercsényi Dormitory, University of Technology), the location of the exhibition. By focusing on watercolour, the exhibition ironically reacted to the expressive tendencies in painting emerging at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s; it became a target of censorial attention due to works by Ildikó Enyedi and Miklós Peternák. Enyedi's *Attempt at Disproving the Four Colour Theorem* reflected on the problem of colouring the regions of a map by using four different colours. However, the Soviet Union, as represented in her map, was right under Italy's boot, which seemed to trample on its socialist ally. Miklós Peternák presented a photographic work in which the text 'we are on strike' appeared on the wall of a Polish shipyard. An arrow and the word 'painting' superimposed on the photo identified the text itself as a painting and thereby art.

In the wider East-Central European region, Oskar Hansen was engaged in pedagogical activities just as significant as those of Erdély during the same period. An architect, painter and urbanist best known for his theory of Open Form, Hansen aimed to develop a new structure that could be freely shaped, opposing the standard, allegedly closed system of architecture. Hansen's theory inspired countless visual artists in Poland from the 1950s onwards, including KwieKulik (the duo Zofia Kulik and Przemysław Kwiek) and Grzegorz Kowalski. Unlike Erdély, who also had a degree in architecture, Hansen had the opportunity to teach in an official capacity at the Akademia Sztuk Pięknych (Academy of Fine Arts) in Warsaw, which testifies to the Polish system being that much more open. His methods spread widely thanks to his students, unlike the practices of Erdély's workshops,



which only reached a small circle. And yet, Erdély's effect on art education in Hungary has remained powerful to this day; a number of people who had previously attended Erdély's workshops joined the faculty of the Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem (Hungarian University of Fine Arts) after the political transition and integrated his approach into their own educational practice.

#### Artists' groups as an alternative environment for art education

The story of Miklós Erdély's workshops vividly illustrates how the lack of up-to-date art education at the academy drove students away from an intensely individual type of art training to alternative forms of learning, and

to creating and thinking in groups. INDIGO as a group testifies not only to Erdély's pedagogical role, but also to the significance of collaborative creativity during that era. The neo-avant-garde artist groups that emerged in the 1960s were typically held together by a shared interest in a given medium or genre. The Zuglói kör (Zuglói Circle) was such a group, with members such as Imre Bak, Pál Deim, István Nádler and Sándor Molnár sharing an interest in abstract art (see also József Mélyi, 'Abstract Boundaries', pp. 161–77). The group included young artists, freshly graduated from the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola, who gathered around Sándor Molnár and regularly met at his apartment in the Zugló district of Budapest. They met as an intellectual circle rather than a creative group in 1958–68, holding discussions and readings and

occasionally showing their works at one of the alternative venues of the period, the apartment of Pál Petrigalla (see also Júlia Perczel, 'The Art Sphere as a Grey Zone', pp. 59–75).

The members of another creative group, the Pesti Műhely (Budapest Workshop), were former members of the Zuglói kör. The Pesti Műhely's programme was developed by Imre Bak, already on the staff of the Népművelési Intézet, and two collaborators, János Fajó and István Nádler, in 1971, and it operated until 1981 as an intellectual and creative workshop as well as a publishing house. Bak, Fajó and Nádler drew on constructionist traditions for their unique formal language, and their work showed the influence of structuralism and hard-edge painting as early as the 1960s (fig. 10). The Pesti Műhely experimented primarily with applied genres and reproduction techniques, through which they aimed to disseminate artworks. All of this was also connected to Imre Bak's work for the Népművelési Intézet, as he distributed prints (including works by Lajos Kassák, Jenő Barcsay, Ferenc Martyn, Dezső Korniss, Tamás Lossonczy and Gyula Hincz) during his visits to cultural centres in the countryside.<sup>6</sup>

The Pécsi Műhely (Pécs Workshop), formed by the students of Ferenc Lantos, an avant-garde teacher at the Pécsi Művészeti Szakközépiskola (Pécs Secondary School of Fine Arts), provided a similar intellectual environment. Members of the group (Ferenc Ficsek, Károly Halász, Károly Kismányoki, Sándor Pinczehelyi and Kálmán Szijártó), which was active between 1968 and 1980, worked on renewing avant-garde and constructivist traditions in Pécs, thereby establishing a second avant-garde centre of art in the country beside Budapest. In the early 1970s, the Pécsi Műhely primarily engaged in land-art actions, but several of the artists also turned to photography under the influence of conceptual art (see also Katalin Székely, 'The Influx of Images', pp. 33–55). The pedagogical role of Ferenc Lantos was not limited to holding the group together, but also contributed significantly to the development of the local formal language of the Pécsi Műhely: Lantos looked at abstract art within a wider system of visual arts, aiming to create a potential new approach to socialist art. This attitude

would profoundly influence the oeuvres of the members of the Pécsi Műhely as well.

Besides groups led by emblematic artists of the period, there were also cases of the spontaneous creation of self-organized groups. The formation of the Rózsa Presszó Circle in 1976, for example, was motivated by dissatisfaction with the rigid curriculum of the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola. When classes ended, students would walk over to the Rózsa Presszó café across from the college building to continue their discussions about contemporary art and to work on joint art actions and events. The artists, who mostly attended the Graphics Department, were interested in expanding the genre of graphic arts and its range of media (combining drawing with silkscreen, text and photo), as the academy provided no opportunity for that. The students chose titles by Beuys as their motto ('Rose for Direct Democracy'/'We Won't Do it without the Rose'), which conveniently suited the site of their meetings, where they gave readings and debated contemporary art, conceptual art, Fluxus and Western visual art events.

The Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház, the location of Erdély and Maurer's workshops, was also the site of various popular science talks and events involving other avant-garde figures. One of these was the Fluxus event *Here comes the boogeyman! Actions in learning and general orientation practices* in 1973 with László Beke, Miklós Erdély and Tamás Szentjóbó as participants (fig. 11). The Fialat Művészek Klubja, which was founded in 1960, had a similar function and operated under similar conditions. The FMK was an important meeting place for young visual artists in or freshly out of college in the 1960s and 1970s, where exhibitions, popular science talks, readings, performances and international gatherings were held. The club was monitored by the regime, and events deemed overly avant-garde or oppositional were banned. Another location for professional discourse and the exchange of ideas was the Fialat Képzőművészek Stúdiója (Young Artists' Studio), established by the state in 1958. The studio's original goal was to help early-career artists: it was an official organization and a branch of the Magyar Népköztársaság Művészeti Alapja (Art Fund of the Hungarian People's Republic)



10

10. Imre Bak, *Still Life*, 1972, paper, ink, 50 × 70 cm, Vintage Galéria, Budapest



11

11. Miklós Erdély, *CETI (Communication with Extra-terrestrial Intelligence)*, action within the programme 'Here comes the boogeyman! Actions in learning and general orientation practices', Ganz-MÁVAG Művelődési Ház (Ganz-MÁVAG Culture House), Budapest, 2 May 1973



in the 1960s and 1970s; it was home not only to annual group exhibitions but also individual exhibitions by members of the studio from 1972 onwards.

The private apartments of a number of visual artists began to play a significant role in the 1960s: Lajos Kassák's home in Óbuda became a frequent meeting place for young people involved in the avant-garde (including Imre Bak, István Nádler, Tamás Hencze and János Fajó). Kassák was an important master for this generation despite lacking a formal teaching position (see also Gábor Dobó and Merse Pál Szeredi, 'Hungarian Culture +/- Europe', pp. 39–57).

Young people who were eager to combine or contrast folk culture and avant-garde traditions (for instance, Ilona Keserű, Tibor Csiky, Tamás Hencze and Endre Tót) formed a similar circle around Dezső Korniss. György Galántai's Balatonboglári Kápolnaműterem (Balatonboglár Chapel Studio) also offered space for the development of avant-garde art in the early 1970s, acting as a location for a series of exhibitions and art events for four years (1970–73), with most participants being young artists who graduated from the academy (see Maja Fowkes and Reuben Fowkes, 'Liberty Controlled', pp. 77–93, and

Klara Kemp-Welch, 'Soft-spoken Encounters', pp. 273–89).

Theatrical groups worked quite similarly to those of the neo-avant-garde visual arts in the same period. The amateur theatre company Kassák Ház Stúdió (see also Katalin Székely, 'The Influx of Images', pp. 331–55) was founded by Péter Halász and Anna Koós in 1969 on the outskirts of Budapest, at the Kassák Művelődési Ház (Kassák Culture House) in the Zugló district (fig. 12). Group members had received no training on the official courses at the Színház- és Filmművészeti Főiskola and emphasized self-education, developing their productions in response to audience feedback after performances. Each member of the company could participate in shaping productions. Kassák Ház Stúdió's productions were provocative from the very start, and its permit was revoked by the censorship authorities in 1972 in response to obscene and politically allusive scenes in the play *The Village Museum Killers*; it was accused of misleading the supervising committee by omitting the scenes in question at the dress rehearsals visited by the authorities. After the revocation of Kassák Ház Stúdió's permit, they performed in the Dohány Street Apartment Theatre and other private apartments for

several years and illegally at various events abroad. The company appeared in Wrocław, Poland, for instance, at the Open Theatre Festival in 1973, putting on a performance without a permit in a college dormitory in order to evade official paperwork. According to the members' own description, the performance consisted of the following: 'semi-nudity, drawing blood, drinking bloody milk, boiling milk, chopping off male heads, incarnation, pietà, nursing babies and a dwarf'.<sup>7</sup> After the emigration of Péter Halász and members of the company in 1976, they continued in Western Europe and later in New York under the name Squat Theater. The theatre of Halász, who saw the American Robert Wilson as someone to emulate, completely revised the concept of theatre and the role of the actor in Hungary: the actor appeared on stage no longer as a 'player', but as a real person.<sup>8</sup>

Alternative forms of education appeared in other East-Central European countries besides Hungary in the 1960s–70s, and they were frequently linked to neo-avant-garde art practice. Jiří Valoch, Milan Adamčík and Július Koller all operated on the borderline of official and alternative culture in Czechoslovakia, reinterpreting the role of the 'amateur artist' in one way or another. Milan Knižák, who was in touch with several international Fluxus artists, established the Aktual group in 1963 in Prague. The Grupa šestorice autora operated in Zagreb in 1975–81, working in public spaces due to the limited opportunities for exhibition. The majority of the group members had not received any official art training and were mostly involved in areas at the margins of the visual arts (amateur film, amateur photography, visual poetry, etc.). A comparable formation in Poland in the 1960s was Grupa ZERO-61, whose collaborative works involved painting, photo and film. Another Polish group, called NET, began as an avant-garde community originated in the spirit of Fluxus; it was launched with a manifesto in 1972 by Jarosław Kozłowski (linked to Foksal Gallery in Warsaw), Andrzej Kostołowski and Andrzej Turowski as an alternative to the academy there (see also Júlia Perczel's 'The Art Sphere as a Grey Zone', pp. 59–75, and Klara Kemp-Welch, 'Soft-spoken Encounters', pp. 273–89).



12. Dohány Street Apartment Theatre, *Sand Table*, theatre play, Budapest, 1975

13. Imre Bak, *Visual Creation and Shaping* (book cover), Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, Budapest, 1977



## Options offered by individually initiated art pedagogy programmes

Artists attempted to expand the possibilities of the visual arts partly by forming artist groups, workshops and communities, and also by developing either complex or focused pedagogical programmes. As part of his responsibilities at the Népművelési Intézet, Imre Bak developed a curriculum for art education at secondary schools and cultural centres in Hungary. The curriculum was published in book form by the Népművelési Intézet under the title *Vizuális Alkotás és Alakítás* (Visual Creation and Shaping), and contains the course content for a three-semester visual arts workshop (fig. 13).<sup>9</sup> Bak's book was modelled on Bauhaus publications and was published with the intention of expanding knowledge of contemporary art. It featured international artists like Jackson Pollock, Jasper Johns and Frank Stella – whose names were never mentioned in the official courses at the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola. The book's design also conveyed an avant-garde approach, with typography and explanatory illustrations having affinity with Bak's works at the time, such as his *Do it yourself!* notebook, a collection of images calling for interaction and based on conceptual ideas (fig. 14). Although the book had a small print run, it reached students at numerous cultural centres and schools thanks to Bak's distribution activities.

At roughly the same time, in 1974–76, Gábor Bódy developed a pedagogical programme called *Film School*, one of the most influential and internationally well-known works on Hungarian experimental film and video art in the 1970s–80s (fig. 15). The three-part instructional film series was made for Iskolatelevízió (School Television), and each part covered a topic of media studies. The methodology, pedagogy and film language of the series were influenced by neo-avant-garde aesthetics, as was Bódy's video oeuvre more generally. His video works, which were driven by semiotic and art-theory problems, were pioneering in Central Europe. Bódy's work in practical education continued in Western Europe in the 1980s thanks to his international success as a filmmaker: he taught at the Deutsche Film und Fernsehakademie in West Berlin in 1982–84.

Another complex pedagogical utopia was connected to Tamás Szentjóbý, who was already living in Switzerland by this time. Szentjóbý published his model, called the International Parallel Union of Telecommunication (IPUT) under the title *Parallel Course/Study Track* in 1968 (see also Emese Kürti, 'Poetry in Action', pp. 291–313). According to his own interpretation, the concept of a 'parallel course' referred to a system of instruction proceeding in parallel with traditional education, and to an alternative reality existing alongside socialism. Szentjóbý considered public and collaborative creativity to be both the aim

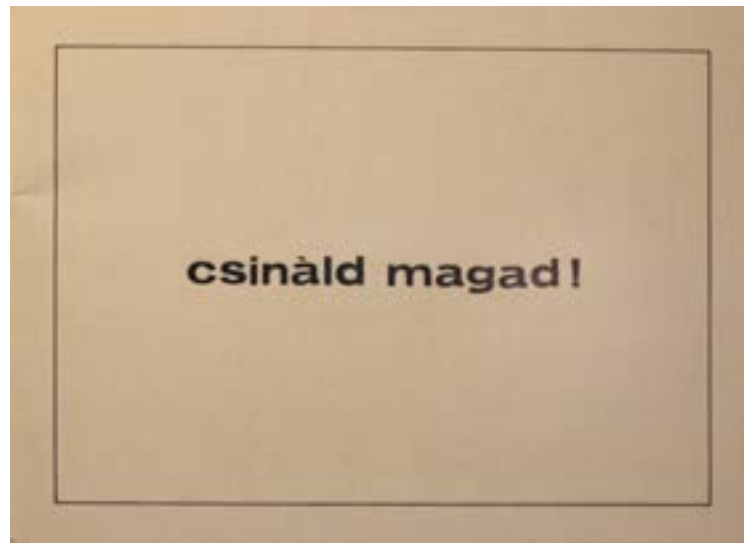
and the methodology of the *Parallel Course*, and his programme's synthesis of practical philosophy, politics and pedagogy was driven by the core principles of direct democracy or direct representation.<sup>10</sup> *Parallel Course* was inspired by the ideas of the international Fluxus movement and the New Left: he was familiar with the works of Joseph Beuys and Robert Filliou, who were similarly drawing on both modern Western and ancient Far Eastern philosophies.<sup>11</sup>

Beuys's Free International University at 'documenta' in 1977 provided a framework for Szentjóbý to present his action *Make a Chair! (Homage à George Brecht)*. The action, which was first performed at the FMK in 1975 (p. 88, fig. 12), builds on the art of Marcel Duchamp and George Brecht and defines the concept of art through a denial of both traditional art practice and the aesthetic concept of art, summed up in three statements: '1. Non-art as art (Marcel Duchamp) 2. Non-art as art as art as non-art (George Brecht) 3. Make a Chair! (Szentjóbý)'.<sup>12</sup> Szentjóbý's neo-avant-garde action not only reflects critically on Duchamp's concept of the readymade and on American artist Joseph Kosuth's conceptual art (*One and Three Chairs*), but also on Fluxus artist George Brecht's *Three Chair Events* in 1961, in which he called for immediate direct action.

Though differing in their methods and approaches, the alternative pedagogical initiatives in Hungary in the 1960s and 1970s all aimed at educating and informing citizens. Imre Bak carried out this transfer of knowledge in the form of popular science talks to a provincial and amateur audience; by contrast, János Fajó – who was connected to Bak in many ways – ran his own graphic arts workshop, in which media, such as folders of reproduced graphic works, were used democratically and made accessible to the general public. Tamás Szentjóbý's utopian yet ironic approach is a counterpoint to Bak and Fajó's activities, as he proposed a globally valid programme heavily influenced by Fluxus without defining a target audience. The programme, which encouraged the broadest possible social access to creativity, was only known to the narrowest neo-avant-garde circles. Comparable in spirit and framework to Szentjóbý's programme, Miklós Erdély and Dóra Maurer led courses

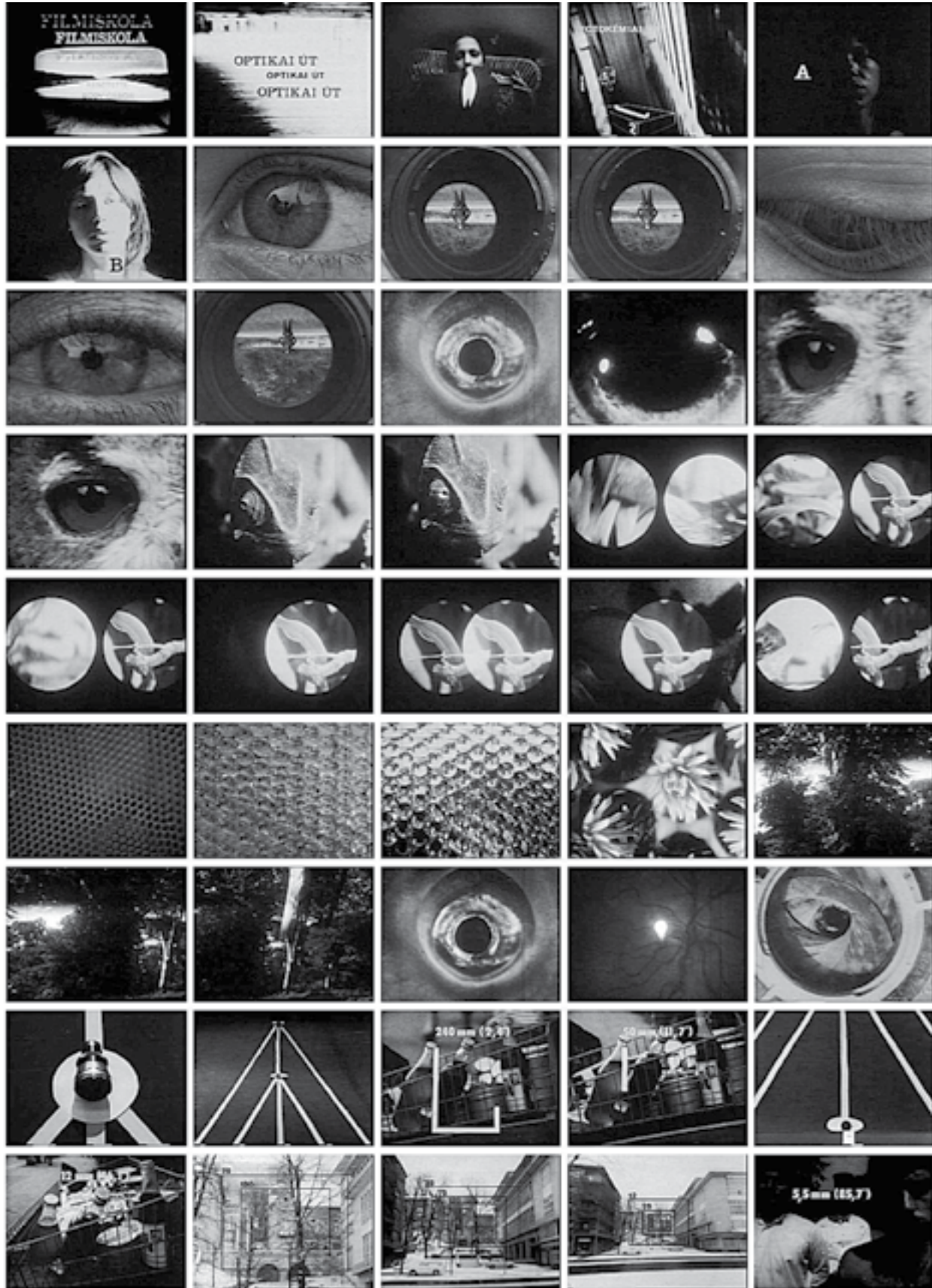
and, later, artist groups with the intention of developing the thinking and creative behaviour of young visual artists with an interest in the avant-garde. As well having distinct aesthetic and political characteristics, these alternative pedagogical programmes reveal much about the era, since they tried to achieve their objectives while navigating circumstances imposed by the socialist system.

14



14. Imre Bak, *Do it yourself!*, 1973, leaflet cover (self-published), 11 x 15 cm

15. (overleaf) Gábor Bódy, *Film School*, 1976, 16 mm film, 82', Magyar Nemzeti Filmarchívum, Budapest



- 1 There were three institutions of higher education in the broader sphere of the arts in Hungary in this era besides the Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola: the Színház- és Filmművészeti Főiskola (Theatre and Film Academy), Magyar Iparművészeti Főiskola (Hungarian Academy of Applied Arts) and Liszt Ferenc Zeneművészeti Főiskola (Ferenc Liszt Music Academy), all situated in Budapest.
- 2 Pál Bánszky (ed.), *Az amatőr képzőművészeti mozgalom fejlődése: Tartalmi-szemléleti kérdések napjainkban* [The Development of the Amateur Visual Art Movement: Current Issues of Content and Method]. Budapest: Népművelési Intézet, 1975, 10.
- 3 Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári (eds), *Törvénytelen avantgárd: Galántai György balatonboglári kápolnaműterme, 1970–1973* [Illegal Avant-garde: The Balatonboglár Chapel Studio of György Galántai 1970–1973]. Budapest: Artpool–Balassi, 2003, 363.
- 4 Sándor Hornyik and Annamária Szőke (eds), *Kreativitási gyakorlatok, FAFEJ, INDIGO. Erdély Miklós művészetpedagógiai tevékenysége 1975–1986* [Creativity Exercises, FAFEJ, INDIGO. Miklós Erdély's art pedagogical activities 1975–1986]. Budapest: MTA MKI/Gondolat/2B/EMA, 2008.
- 5 Dóra Maurer, 'Tanulmány-vázlat vizuális nevelés ügyben' [Notes for a Study on the Issue of Visual Education], in *Tanulmányok a vizuális nevelés köréből* [Studies on Visual Education]. Budapest: MTA Vizuális Kultúrakutató Munkabizottság, 1978, 139.
- 6 Imre Bak, interviewed by the author, 24 March 2016.
- 7 'A Kassák Színház kronológiája' [Chronology of the Kassák Theatre], Artpool, <http://www.artpool.hu/AI/a111/KHS-3.html> (21 July 2017).
- 8 Magdolna Jákfalvi, 'A Halász Péter Archivum' [The Péter Halász Archive], in *Színházi Kreativitási Eszközök: Színészképzés és neoavantgárd hagyomány* [Theatrical Devices of Creativity: Actor Training and the Neo-avant-garde Tradition]. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2013, 21.
- 9 Imre Bak, *Vizuális Alkotás és Alakítás* [Visual Creation and Shaping]. Budapest: Népművelési Propaganda Iroda, 1976.
- 10 Emese Kürti, 'Pedagogy on Reality: Tamás Szentjób'y's Parallel Course/Study Track Program', in Dóra Hegyi, Zsuzsa László and Franciska Zólyom (eds), *Creativity Exercises*, Sternberg Press, 2018.
- 11 Joseph Beuys's project: *Freie Hochschule für Kreativität und Interdisziplinäre Forschung*; Robert Filliou's text: *Teaching and Learning as Performing Art*.
- 12 Sándor Hornyik, 'A nem-művészet, mint nem-művészetelmélet: A TNPU kiállítása a Ludwig Múzeumban' [Non-art as non-art-theory: The Exhibition of IPUT at Ludwig Museum]. *Exindex*, 2013, [http://exindex.hu/print.php?l=hu&page=3&id=887#\\_ftn3](http://exindex.hu/print.php?l=hu&page=3&id=887#_ftn3) (21 July 2017).