

Patronizing Contemporary Painting in State Socialist Hungary, 1957-1969

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Thesis Abstract

This thesis investigates how the Hungarian socialist state financially supported the creation of contemporary painting in a system of evolving patronage institutions during the 1960s. Through the key institutions of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Art Fund, and the Committee of State Acquisitions, replaced by the National Gallery in 1968, a broad range of artists received financial support from the state. Besides archival documents of the Ministry and the National Gallery, interviews conducted with artists as well as officials of the Art Fund, provide insight into the operation of the state's patronage system. The thesis demonstrates that along with art historians and cultural bureaucrats, artists were involved as members of the jury committees. In several cases, it was the jurors' social connections that influenced the operation of the patronage system. The fact that the socialist state emerged as the main patron of arts thus did not mean that art became "directed" or "committed," the thesis argues; a wide array of professional artists participated in the patronage system. In addition to the documentation of the state's acquisitions, the paintings purchased during these years assisted me in reconstructing the history of the socialist state's art patronage. Visual materials gathered in museum storage rooms and archives illustrate the narrative of this thesis: they show that as a result of the Kádárist cultural policy, by the second half of the sixties a variety of styles and topics received financing in state socialist Hungary.

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Table of Contents

<i>Statement of Copyright</i>	ii
<i>Thesis Abstract</i>	iii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	iv
1. Introduction	1
2. Art Patronage: Some Cases in Art History	9
3. The Reorganization of Hungary's Art World: Consolidation Years After the Revolution (1957-1963)	24
3.1. Re-centering Art Life in the Aftermath of the Revolution	24
3.2. System of State Patronage after the Revolution	35
3.3. Conclusions.....	46
4. State Support for “Unrestricted, Autonomous, Passionate Paintings”: The Inauguration of the Two Million Purchases (1963-1966)	50
4.1. The Crisis of Easel Painting.....	50
4.2. The Inauguration of the Two Million Purchases.....	55
4.3. Diversity of Styles and Topics at the Two Million Purchases	65
4.4. Conclusions.....	83
5. The National Gallery Steps Up (1968-1969)	86
5.1. Dilemmas Around the Narrative of Contemporary Socialist Art.....	87
5.2. The Gallery's Acquisitions in 1968.....	95
5.3. Conclusions.....	111
6. Conclusions	113

<i>Appendices</i>	119
<i>Appendix I: Background for the Interviews</i>	119
<i>Appendix II: Interviews and Interviewees (by date)</i>	123
<i>Appendix III: Illustrations</i>	130
<i>Appendix IV: List of Institutions</i>	138
 <i>Bibliography</i>	 141

1. Introduction

In March 1991, the Hungarian National Gallery opened its breakthrough exhibition entitled *Hatvanas évek* [The Sixties]. A true milestone for Hungarian art historians, artists, and museum professionals, the show had a long-term impact on post-1989 politics of Hungary's art history. As well-known scholar László Beke pointed out in his introductory essay, the primary goal of the exhibition was to create a platform for a “different, independent, and immanent”¹ art history perspective, a perspective that is freed from the moral, political and aesthetic bias of the Kádár regime's ideology. In the midst of the upheaval of the transition years, the sixties of the Kádár era was framed as the continuation of the Stalinist-Rákossist aggression that had haunted the concept of autonomous art – to the point that free art had been forced to move into illegality following the communist turn of Hungary.² Clearly juxtaposed with the “official” art of socialism, the new, post-socialist narrative of “modern art” in Hungary was mostly constructed from the underground and semi-underground forms that had emerged in Hungary from the 1960s on. While the latter was associated with “progression”³ as well as “Western” and “universal” values, the former began to be equated with politicized and retrograde art starting with this 1991 exhibition.

Undoubtedly, the National Gallery's exhibition was not the first scholarly enterprise to

¹ László Beke, “Az 1960-as évek művészetének rejtett dimenziói” [The Hidden Dimensions of the Hungarian Art of the Sixties], in *Hatvanas évek* [The Sixties], ed. Ildikó Nagy (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Ludwig Múzeum, 1991), 21.

² László Beke, “Beszélgetés Németh Lajossal” [Talk with Lajos Németh], in *Hatvanas évek* [The Sixties], ed. Ildikó Nagy (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó – Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Ludwig Múzeum, 1991), 67.

³ Beke, “Az 1960-as évek művészetének rejtett dimenziói” [The Hidden Dimensions of the Hungarian Art of the Sixties], 22.

indicate the politicized, propagandistic nature of official socialist art. Since the 1950s, in parallel with the growing pressure of the Cold War, Western scholars and media had constantly framed socialist artists as soldiers of the new Soviet society – proposing that art is a critical weapon for communist propaganda. It was Hungarian dissident writer and sociologist Miklós Haraszti who introduced a critical perspective of this Cold War rhetoric in 1988. In his groundbreaking book *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism*, Haraszti advanced his theory about the new censorship of socialist countries in the preceding decades. “Like workers, artists are now a thoroughly organized and rationally subdivided group of state employees,”⁴ Haraszti argued in the late 1980s, explaining how creative people all became “directed artists” under socialism.

As a young researcher of Hungary’s socialist art world, I have been puzzled by these politicized narratives of socialist art. Once I started to conduct interviews with “propagated” artists who had been financially supported by the state during socialism, I often felt that framing them as simply “directed” artists greatly obscures the complexity of their lives as well as art production. Certainly, one cannot deny censorship or the fact that politics played an essential role in socialist art life. Still, the very concept of socialist art or artist of socialism seems indeed problematic once we go beyond the most obvious layers of politics.

As Tomáš Pospiszyl argued in a lecture he gave in Budapest in early 2013,⁵ by maintaining the dichotomies of censored versus free art, socialist realism versus modern

⁴ Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 43.

⁵ Tomáš Pospiszyl, “Art in Eastern Europe from 1945-1989: Limits of Official and Unofficial,” tranzit, Budapest, February 11, 2013. I thank Beáta Hock for her kind invitation to this lecture.

art, we are creating gaps in art history. Even though the questions I ask in my research are greatly different from Pospiszyl's,⁶ the overall goal of my thesis is rather close to his argument: to deconstruct the dichotomy of official and therefore politicized versus unofficial but free art. My MA thesis tries to go beyond this dichotomy: by investigating the Hungarian socialist state's art patronage, and more specifically its patronage of living painters, I seek to study what kind of painting was supported in state socialist Hungary during the sixties.

As my thesis lays out, by the mid-1960s, the Hungarian socialist state established a well-designed patronage system for the fine arts. Beginning with 1965, state-sponsored purchases and commissions were organized in a three-fold system through the key institutions of the Ministry of Culture, the Art Fund of the People's Republic of Hungary, and the Committee of State Acquisitions, replaced by the Hungarian National Gallery's purchases in 1968. This three-fold patronage system managed to provide for hundreds of artists each year – for more than 200 painters annually, besides the equally high number of sculptors, graphic designers, and applied artists. Undoubtedly, the patronage system of purchases and commissions did not merely mean livelihood for these artists but also the prestige of professional recognition – an important factor that we cannot dismiss even if it is obvious that socialism's art world functioned distinctively from that of market democracy. In this general sense, the socialist state's patronage system looks quite similar to the reward systems of other ages; it worked as the “apparatus for rewarding creative

⁶ As outlined in his lecture, Pospiszyl aims to revisit the visual anthropology of socialism by considering both “official” and “unofficial” sectors of culture. For instance, he pairs Czech artist Jirí Kovanda's photos with the aesthetics of police surveillance photographs.

artists with money, prestige, and honors,”⁷ with the difference that it wished to provide money for an extraordinarily large number of artists if not all of them.

My thesis thus attempts to describe the variety of political, social, economic, and aesthetic factors that played into the functioning of the socialist state’s patronage system for painters, and therefore the formulation of socialist art. Through the examination of the state’s three patron institutions, my thesis intends to answer the following questions: Which contemporary painters were supported by the state? Who were the direct actors of the patronage system: who were the jurors of the committees that made the decisions? And finally, how did they decide on which paintings should be purchased or commissioned? The specific focus of this MA thesis manifests itself through these research questions: I limit the subject of my thesis to the close study of the functioning of the socialist state’s key patron institutions for the contemporary painters of the sixties. As a consequence, I do not consider the patronage of other genres such as sculpture, graphic design, or applied arts.⁸ Furthermore, I do not explore a variety of forms of the rewarding system: I do not directly focus on prestigious state awards, nor on housing or studio opportunities; well-paying and respected appointments like teaching positions; exhibitions; admissions to art colonies; or wide media attention. Even though I acknowledge the significance of these various rewards in understanding the art life of this era, I merely concentrate my thesis on the socialist state’s painting acquisitions.

⁷ “Part III. Distribution and Reward Systems: Introduction,” in *The Sociology of Art and Literature: A Reader*, ed. Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett, and Mason Griff (London: Duckworth, 1982, c.1970), 347.

⁸ Although the contemporary exhibitions of the Műcsarnok [Kunsthalle] that displayed the results of the socialist state’s art patronage each year from 1966 showed these genres together, their patronage system functioned mostly separately. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to study only the patronage system of painters in my MA thesis.

A great abundance of documents from the 1960s has been preserved in the Hungarian National Archives, yet, the official documentation of the state's art patronage is missing there. Therefore, as a first step of my research, I started to conduct interviews in 2009, with ex-state employees who had participated in the organization of these state purchases. By the time I found the documentation of the Art Fund's Two Million Purchases in the archives of the Hungarian National Gallery, I had become familiar with the names of many artists involved in these acquisitions through my continuous interviews with two ex-workers of the Art Fund, Judit Koplik and József Berkes. It was also in the National Gallery that Livia Orbán, then the Gallery's archivist, first showed me the piles of untouched documents that turned out to be the documentation of the art patronage pursued by the Ministry of Culture and the Committee of State Acquisitions. As a direct continuation of my former research, these are the primary documents that I have processed for this thesis, along with the materials of the Art Fund, which I continued to research and analyze in order to place them into the bigger picture of socialist art patronage.

The interviews together with the official documents already offer a great overload of information about the functioning of the patronage system, yet the paintings themselves are equally crucial resources of this thesis. Since the thousands of paintings purchased during the 1960s in most cases have no visual documentation in the archives, I started to look for the original artworks. I have visited museums and a number of state institutions⁹

⁹ With the help of the research grant that I received from the History Department, I visited the following museums and institutions during my research trip last summer: Vásárosnamény Kulturális Központ;

throughout Hungary such as libraries, mayor's offices, a hospital, as well as a high school dormitory, searching for paintings that had been purchased by the Art Fund, the Ministry of Culture, the Committee of State Acquisitions, and the Hungarian National Gallery during the sixties. I have identified around 1,000 artworks thus far: most of them have been languishing in storage rooms for decades now, all around the country. With the help of curators, art historians, and other museum workers I managed to photograph many of these pieces, building my own visual archive of the art of socialism.

Motivated by my intention to show the complex layers of aesthetic, social, economic, and political factors that influenced the Hungarian socialist state's art patronage, I structure my thesis around the main patron institutions, analyzing their functioning from these different perspectives. Along with the institutional structure, it also seemed inevitable to chronologically organize my narrative; thus, I employed a chronology that reflects the institutional history of state patronage. Following the theoretical chapter that explores the history of art patronage in different ages, the second chapter studies the aftermath of the Revolution of 1956: how art life was re-centered during the so-called "reorganization"¹⁰ or consolidation years in Budapest. In addition to examining the political- institutional changes of the period between 1957 and 1963, this chapter also offers an outline of the paintings purchased by the recently reopened Ministry of Culture, as well as the

Vásárosnaményi Városháza; Vásárosnaményi Kollégium; Vay Ádám Múzeum, Vaja; Xantus János Múzeum, Győr; Savaria Múzeum, Szombathely; Szombathelyi Kulturális Központ; Thury György Múzeum, Nagykanizsa; Nagykanizsai Kórház; Nagykanizsai Városháza.

¹⁰Hungarian historian Melinda Kalmár suggests to conceptually frame the first period of the Kádár regime [1957- early 1960s] as "reorganization" or "disposal" years, as opposed to the more frequently used "consolidation years." Since Hungary's art world was absolutely reorganized between the years 1957 and 1963 (most of the art institutions were closed down in 1957, and then some reopened, while others newly established), I prefer to follow Kalmár's concept. Melinda Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány*:

[Food and Dowry: The Ideology of Early Kadarism] (Budapest: Magvető, 1998).

Committee of State Acquisitions in 1959.

The third chapter concentrates on the inauguration of the Art Fund's so called Two Million Purchases in 1965, which introduced a new era in state patronage, according to my argument. In addition to showing the operation of the Two Million Purchases, the chapter provides a broader analysis of the artists who got supported by the Art Fund in 1965. Through a number of examples from the Art Fund's purchases, I seek to demonstrate the diversity of styles and genres that were acquired from the new fund in 1965.

The fourth chapter discusses the institutional change of the Committee of State Acquisitions: in March 1968, the Committee came to an end, to be replaced by the National Gallery's own "independent" acquisitions. The last research chapter thus primarily focuses on the paintings that the National Gallery bought from contemporary artists in 1968. Finally, I compare the Gallery's rather arbitrary acquisitions with the paintings that were acquired by the Art Fund in the same year.

Overall, the chronological scope of this thesis falls within what scholars call the "long sixties."¹¹ It takes 1957 as a starting point¹² and ends in 1968-69: the years when the new economic mechanism began to rationalize the Hungarian socialist system. Pragmatic

¹¹ See for example János M. Rainer, "A magyar „hatvanas évek” – (politika)történeti közelítések” [The Hungarian Sixties – an approach of (political)history] In *Bevezetés a kádárizmusba* [Introduction to Kádárism] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet – L'Harmattan, 2011), 149-184.

¹² I acknowledge the importance of comparing the post-1956 period with the "fifties"; however, this comparison must be the subject of future research, given the lack of research on the patronage system of the pre-1956 years.

factors also influenced the focus on this period: the documentation of the Ministry's acquisitions has been available for the years between 1957 and 1970. Further research has to uncover documents about the succeeding years, if in fact they have been preserved.

As my analysis suggests, informal relations often counted as much in the acquisitions as aesthetic or political considerations. As a result, the art supported by the socialist state and its various institutions was indeed diverse in terms of styles and forms – and in many cases included artists whom, today, no art historian would claim to have been an “official” artist back then. Therefore, in order to get around the obvious practical and analytical problems of the terminology of “official” versus “unofficial” artists, my thesis proposes to talk about the patronage of *professional artists* – which I will use as an umbrella term for all artists who were considered professionals during socialism, regardless of how much they benefited from the state's rewarding system. As my research shows, there were basically two ways to become a professional artist in socialist Hungary. First, everyone who graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts and Applied Arts became a professional artist in that he or she automatically received membership to the Art Fund and the Association of Fine Artists, and therefore *access* to the state's patronage and other rewards. Secondly, one could earn professional status without proper education but through direct application to the Art Fund: each year, the Art Fund offered membership for those talented applicants who could prove the necessary professional skills in their portfolios submitted to the Fund. The members of these two groups could benefit from the social privileges accessible to their profession – even though it is obvious that not all of them could actually enjoy these advantages equally.

2. Art Patronage: Some Cases in Art History

This theoretical chapter explores perspectives on art patronage through different cases in history. I discuss a body of scholarly work that studies the relationship between art, society and politics, with an emphasis on the tools and concepts employed to describe the creation of “official” art in various ages and political systems. Since Jacob Burckhardt’s now classic work on *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, published in 1860, art historians have revisited the social and political context of visual arts throughout human civilization, pointing out that artists had been inseparably connected to their patrons from antiquity to the 19th-century birth of the modern art market. Due to the vast literature on the social history of art, my theoretical chapter considers several of the most illuminating examples that have influenced my scholarly approach. Additionally, I discuss a body of work that develops more specific claims regarding the relationship between art and politics in 20th-century authoritarian regimes, especially in state-socialist countries.

Overall, the main goal of this chapter is twofold. First, I consult these theories to gain tools and concepts that might point beyond the often-held view that 20th-century totalitarian political regimes created “total,” “political,” and “controlled” art as opposed to previous ages, and during 20th-century market democracy, when art was “free.” Secondly, I aim to show that art patronage can and did produce diverse art in terms of form and style, regardless of the political nature of the system, as for instance the case of fascist Italy shows.

Crafting Fifteenth-Century Painting

“A fifteenth-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship,”¹³ art historian Michael Baxandall states in his influential book entitled *Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. Promoting an approach to art history that is essentially engaging with social history, Baxandall proposes to look at fifteenth-century painting as the product of a legal agreement between painter and *his*¹⁴ patron - or more precisely the *client*, to use Baxandall’s phrase, the latter being an “active, determining, and not necessarily benevolent”¹⁵ actor in this relationship.

Besides the paintings themselves, Baxandall uses letters, contracts, and critical accounts of both painters and contemporary critics as sources in his analysis of the connection between Renaissance artists and their clients. Amongst the numerous examples the case of obedient painter Fra Filippo Lippi is presented to provide an insight into the nature of the artist’s process of creating a piece of art.¹⁶ Baxandall deploys this case not only to show the painter’s inferior status to the customer Medici, but also to point out that money is a critical factor in the history of art, even in terms of how it is handed over to the artist.

¹³ Michael Baxandall, *Painting & Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, c.1972, 1988), 1.

¹⁴ Baxandall takes it for granted that being a Renaissance painter was a male occupation. While the author shows sensitivity towards peasants and urban poor who “play very small part in the Renaissance culture that most interests us now, which may be deplorable but is a fact that must be accepted,” he makes no remark about the gender perspective of Renaissance art. Ibid, 38-39.

¹⁵ Ibid, 1. The author consciously uses the term ‘client’ throughout the book in order to avoid the “many overtones” that the term ‘patron’ carries.

¹⁶ Working on a triptych for Giovanni di Cosimo de’Medici, Filippo composed a letter to his client in July 1457 to inquire about the gold intended to decorate the painting, Baxandall writes. “I have been to see Bartolomeo Martelli: he said he would speak with Francesco Cantansanti about the gold and what you want, and that I should do exactly what you wish... Giovanni, I am altogether your servant here, and shall be so in deed... I shall always do what you want in every respect, great and small,” Filippo concluded his letter. Ibid, 4.

While one patron would pay the artist based on the size of the piece of art, others calculated the costs of the painter's service according to the time and material spent on the work. Consequently, the amount of gold or ultramarine – a color indeed rare and expensive in the early Renaissance, as one learns from Baxandall – on a painting did not so much depend on the painter's taste but was requested based on the client's wish and financial situation. "Paintings are among other things fossils of economic life,"¹⁷ the author notes, underscoring his thesis that the styles and forms of fifteenth-century Italian painting are indeed closely related to the economic relationship between painter and client, as well as the latter's budget.

The fact that painting was a real co-authored product of the painter and the client greatly influenced the social role of art in Renaissance Italy. "The painter was a professional visualizer of the holy stories,"¹⁸ Baxandall suggests, reminding the reader that the function of art has been shifting throughout history. Both by studying the content of paintings and contemporary texts, Baxandall pinpoints that the main mission of paintings was to introduce images for people who could not read religious texts and therefore to help them in certain spiritual- religious activities.¹⁹ However, it also meant that painters had to succumb to what Baxandall calls the "public mind": painters had to operate within a visual culture that was understandable and accessible for the public audience. Rather than creating detailed images based on their own personal imaginations, painters provided "general, unparticularized, interchangeable types"²⁰ that the beholders could use

¹⁷ Ibid, 2.

¹⁸ Ibid, 45.

¹⁹ The author cites for instance John of Genova and Dominican Fra Michele da Carcano. Ibid, 40-41.

²⁰ Ibid, 46.

for their interior visions, Baxandall says, explaining how society played a key role in the art production of Renaissance Italy.

Baxandall provides an intriguing narrative of how money and painters' social experiences in fact influenced fifteenth-century paintings in terms of their topics, styles, forms, and even hues – an important perspective that is often excluded from traditional art history, which rather focuses on artistic genius. His book does not only explain why it is important to look at the social and economic context of art production, which defines the social role of art in a given age, but also the fact that the very practical way of providing money itself greatly impacts the aesthetics of a piece. Money from the artist's perspective is in this sense as much a basic need for creation and living as a source of motivation – a point which will be important to understand the products of the socialist state's patronage.

However, it is the voice of the painters that is excluded from the book²¹, and not merely in the sense that they only appear in formal letters written to their clients: it seems from Baxandall's narrative that their personal skills and imagination had no role in the creation of painting in the 15th century. In his closing chapter, Baxandall lays out how artists' social role as the church's visual mediators impacted the very meaning of 'artistic talent' as well, creating criterions for "artistic genius" indeed different from our modern notions.²² Even though I accept the author's argument that fifteenth-century painting was

²¹ It is obvious that the historian is very much limited in case no other sources are available but the painters' letters to their patrons. Undoubtedly, these letters show how painters were conscious of the politics of their relationships with the patrons, just as the case of the quoted Fra Filippo Lippi shows, but not necessarily their personal voice.

²² About the criterions of artistic talent in 15th-century Italy, see the chapter entitled "Pictures and categories," Ibid, 109-153.

still generally considered as the product of craft rather than individual artistic abilities, I do not think that we can ever eliminate artistic fantasy from the history of art.

Art and Power in Seventeenth-Century Italy

Focusing both on the macro-level political situation of the Roman Church and the micro-level connections between artists and clients, art historian Francis Haskell's book entitled *Patrons and Painters: Art and Society in Baroque Italy*²³ studies the power politics of art patronage in 17th and 18th century Baroque Italy. Leaving behind the strains of the Counter Reformation to enjoy more glorious days, the Roman Papacy became famous for its generous art patronage from the early days of the 17th century, Haskell says. A dizzy place with the excitement of constant inner political rivalries, the Papacy greatly impacted artists' careers through its high-scale commissions. Since these pieces of art figured in Rome's power games, painting became a powerful *instrument of propaganda*,²⁴ the author argues.

Even though there were already different modes of cooperation for an artist and his²⁵ client, at the end of the day not much changed since the Renaissance, Haskell argues. Although it had already emerged as an accepted cultural practice that painters kept some of their works in their studios to display for visiting clients, "artists were still generally

²³ Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters. Art and Society in Baroque Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998 [c.1980]).

²⁴ For example: Ibid, 63.

²⁵ Again we are faced with the same issue as in the case of Michael Baxandall: Francis Haskell makes no reference to the gender question of Baroque art.

looked upon as superior craftsmen,”²⁶ the author suggests. He bases his argument on contracts from the period, which show that prices were agreed in advance, according to the number of figures and materials deployed on the painting. Still, for instance the case of painter Salvator Rosa stands out, even if as an incongruous example. Rosa, who claimed to be painting merely for his own satisfaction and not for the sake of money, did not ignore the option of refusing some less exciting commissions, just as he generally disagreed to set the price before he would finish his piece. Regarded as an utterly eccentric person, “Salvator Rosa had no real followers in his attempts to change the pattern of art patronage,”²⁷ Haskell states, proposing that painters did not seek to challenge the nature of their relations with their clients. Even though setting the prices before the process of creation itself could have limited artists in their inspiration, as Rosa’s position proves, it served their financial stability. Artists are humans who have to make their living and need money for creating art, Haskell’s book shows, which is a crucial point to consider in all ages and political systems.

Haskell pinpoints the case of brilliant artist and architect Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who became Urban VIII’s *official* artist - which in this case meant that the Pope had the authority to keep Bernini working solely for his service. Both as a sign of the appreciation of Bernini’s genius and the Pope’s ultimate power over his officially patroned artists, Urban VIII could lend his artist to the service of others, though he very rarely did that (therefore it evolved as one of his most valued diplomatic gestures).²⁸ In accordance with the highest stature that human could possess, Urban VIII could assign

²⁶ Haskell, 21.

²⁷ Ibid, 23.

²⁸ Ibid, 37.

the most impressive commissions to his favorite artist; after so many small-scale sculptures, Bernini started to work on St Peter's gigantic baldachin in July 1624, only a few months after his client Maffeo Barberini came to power as Urban VIII. The new Pope "probably played a direct part in outlining the iconographical scheme: certainly he made sure that he should be closely identified with it,"²⁹ the author argues, pointing out several symbols, such as the bees, the sun, and the leaves of the laurel running around the columns, that should have immediately reminded contemporary viewers of Urban VIII's prestigious family. Besides Bernini, painters Andrea Camassei, Andrea Sacchi, and Pietro da Cortona also became *officially* associated with the Pope and the influential Barberini family. The total reconstruction of the family palace, previously owned by the Sforzas, provided major commissions for the most precious artists, who were *creating the new Baroque style* as a result of the Barberinis' high-scale assignments. One typical example should suffice to prove this point here, though Haskell provides several further cases: the ceiling of the family palace created by painter Pietro da Cortona was a real aesthetic invention that art historians generally link with the Baroque style. Instead of several separate pieces, Cortona painted one single but huge fresco to cover the whole ceiling; "[its] grandeur and richness of colour awe, almost crush, the visitor with the feeling of his insignificance,"³⁰ Haskell says. Overall, the author does not only describe the politics of the Roman Papacy's art patronage, but also how it directly influenced the aesthetics of Baroque artists, and therefore the emerging style of Baroque art.

²⁹ Ibid, 35.

³⁰ Ibid, 48. Of course, the well-known bees and laurel leaves were also incorporated into the new pieces of the rebuilt family palace: therefore, the new Baroque style expressed the significant power of Rome and also the direct connection between the Papacy and the Barberini family, in this case.

By framing Bernini as an official artist, Haskell does not merely refer to the politicized nature of the artist's production but also to the quality of the connection between artist and patron. Although Bernini worked directly and almost exclusively for Urban VIII, participating in the Pope's propaganda through his works, Haskell very much emphasizes Bernini's unique genius and creativity. "Rome owes some of its greatest achievements"³¹ to the patronage of Urban VIII and the Barberini family, despite the low morality of the politics beyond these artistic achievements, Haskell offers his opinion. This is an indeed essential statement, as it separates the problematic *moral questions of politics* from its aesthetic results. Haskell thus manages to investigate the relationship between politics and arts, pointing out the undeniable connections between the Pope's propaganda and the artists' works, yet without mixing his aesthetic evaluation with moral judgments.

The Emergence of French State Patronage

The birth of the "concept of the state as patron"³² around the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century in France meant a real milestone in the history of art patronage, art historian Daniel M. Fox argues. His article, "Artists in the Modern State: The Nineteenth-Century Background," describes how the emergence of government patronage, as opposed to previous ages' patronage by kings, monarchs, aristocrats, or the church, influenced art's social role. Fox does not investigate how this "patronage

³¹ Ibid, 31.

³² Daniel M. Fox, "Artists in the Modern State: The Nineteenth-Century Background," in *The Sociology of Art & Literature: A Reader*, ed. by Milton C. Albrecht, James H. Barnett, and Mason Griff (London: Duckworth, 1982 [c.1970]), 371.

revolution” influenced the aesthetics of 19th-century French art; rather, he merely focuses on how these changes impacted the ways in which artists live and gain recognition in modern societies.

It was the impact of the French Revolution, and more precisely the influence of “the most famous artist of the period, Jacques Louis David, [who] was also an able politician and administrator”³³ that the system of patronage underwent critical changes.³⁴ Fox refers to David’s 1790 speech at the Assembly, in which he encouraged the inauguration of a self-governing Commune of the Arts, which would assign *public commissions* for artists. “This speech was the first public statement by an artist of the political and social utility of the arts under a government based on consent,”³⁵ Fox states. In this sense, the values of contemporary government patronage originate in David’s revolutionary ideas: the announcement of art’s public role in the long run resulted in the development of a “belief in the necessity of public support for artists,”³⁶ Fox concludes.

Although the new government patronage system helped thousands of artists to create art without the limitations of previous rewarding systems, state patronage also had negative effects: it closely connected artists to the modern state, Fox explains.³⁷ While artists understood that they were producing commodities, they did not merely act as

³³ Ibid, 375.

³⁴ “The perfect example of what the French call an “*artiste engage*,” that is a committed artist, David came to believe... that the power of his work could serve human needs far more important than those of aesthetic delectation alone; and after 1789, he painted primarily to propagate first Republican, and then Napoleonic, faith,” another art historian, Robert Rosenblum describes David’s revolutionary attitude. Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Watson, *Art of the Nineteenth Century: Painting and Sculpture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 24.

³⁵ Fox, 375.

³⁶ Ibid, 371.

³⁷ Ibid, 371, 376.

“businessmen” fighting for creative freedom, free trade, and recognition, but also as “middle-class American farmers,” who required financial stability from the state. Despite the obvious problems of the terminology that Fox’s deploys, he makes a very essential argument about the in-built controversies of artists’ attitude to government patronage. This basic conflict of expecting both stability and freedom from the state did not cause detrimental problems in Western Europe and the United States, Fox argues, as artists there “won their fight for a liberal official arts policy, ...after much frustration and many disappointments.”³⁸ This is, according to Fox, contrary to the practices of the Nazis and the Soviets, whose official art patronage could only produce tools of propaganda.

It is interesting that Fox employs the term “official” art to describe the government patronage of both Western democracies and totalitarian political regimes, even though he assigns different meanings for the same term. While in the former case, official refers to the public’s needs that democratic governments have to protect in the name of public consent, Soviet and Nazi patronage obviously created mere political propaganda that only served the interest of these totalitarian regimes, according to Fox’s argument. Despite his utterly pejorative usage of “official” patronage in the latter case, I think it is important to borrow some of Fox’s tools for the study of socialist art patronage: to look at what artists were expecting from the state, how they could make their living from their artistic work and how they gained recognition, and finally, what ‘recognition’ actually meant in the context of Hungarian state socialism.

³⁸ Ibid, 385.

Aesthetic Pluralism as Authentically Fascist Style

The official art of Mussolini's Fascist Italy was radically different from the anti-modern official aesthetics of both Nazi Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union, Marla Susan Stone argues in her book entitled *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy*. Promoting no single style as Fascist aesthetics, "the official culture of Italian Fascism is best defined by its diversities, contradictions, and ambiguities,"³⁹ Stone suggests. Various styles and forms emerged from Mussolini's cultural policy that promoted aesthetic pluralism as its dominant discourse. Thus, the Fascist state did not exercise control over the aesthetics of official representation but only over the "means of representation,"⁴⁰ the author states.

The Fascist state emerged as the main patron of the arts in Italy during the 1920s, offering both *professional prestige* and *financial assistance* for artists. The state provided "access to money, distribution and visibility"⁴¹ through several centralized cultural institutions, such as the National Confederation of Fascist Syndicates of Professionals and Artists, along with its regional institutions, or the Venice Biennale, which was specifically designated to "be the showcase of official culture."⁴² Thoroughly taking into account all the different practices and policies of the Fascist state's official reward system, Stone studies not only the official purchases and commissions of the state's cultural institutions but also their exhibitions and prizes, in addition to other forms of "material assistance,"

³⁹ Marla Susan Stone, *The Patron State: Culture & Politics in Fascist Italy* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), Stone, 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 23.

⁴¹ Ibid, 23.

⁴² Ibid, 71.

such as loans, relief payments, old-age pensions, and retirement homes. As archival documents show, the National Syndicates had more than 4,500 members by 1939 and organized national as well as provincial exhibitions, allowing each member to show at least one piece each year.⁴³ Certainly, the Fascist state had interest in implementing aesthetic pluralism as its “representational language,” Stone says. By presenting itself as “benevolent patron with an open purse,”⁴⁴ the Fascist state could tie all those artists to the state who were not directly against Fascism.

One of the rare cases of exception when the Italian Fascist regime did not define its cultural policy through its openness for pluralism was the 1932 *Mostra* of the Fascist Revolution, which was an obvious attempt to find a firm aesthetic language for Fascism.⁴⁵ Still, during the 1920’s and ‘30s, the Fascist state’s purchases, commissions, prizes, and even exhibitions were not based on simply political-aesthetic but also social and economic priorities. Stone shows the complex functioning of these different factors by pointing out the diverse actors of the Fascist patronage system. In addition to artists, politicians, and spectators, the author describes the importance of “state cultural impresarios,”⁴⁶ who acted as middlemen, mediating between all the other actors. One such successful bureaucrat was for instance influential artist Antonio Maraini, who became secretary-general both of the national union of fine artists and the prestigious Venice Biennale by the 1930s. These overlapping positions enabled Maraini to position himself as a real “czar” of the artists: while he worked for the artists’ social and economic

⁴³ Ibid, 27.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 67.

⁴⁵ Ibid, “Fascist Self-Representation,” 133-176.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 54.

interest at the syndicate, he also tried to transform the Biennale according to his own political-artistic vision, strongly promoting his own career as well, Stone argues.

“Fascism and variants of modernism worked together and mutually benefited from the relationship,”⁴⁷ Stone reflects on the relationship between art and politics in Fascist Italy. Undoubtedly, the author’s approach that considers state and artists as equally significant actors of art patronage supports the claim that both sides could gain from this relationship. For the study of the socialist state’s patronage system too, it is important to take into account the different actors, as well as the complex factors, which influenced the functioning of the socialist reward system.

State Artists in Socialist Hungary

In 1987, dissident writer and sociologist Miklós Haraszti published his cult book *The Velvet Prison: Artists Under State Socialism*⁴⁸ in English, previously circulated as a samizdat in Hungary under the title *A cenzúra esztétikája* [The Aesthetics of Censorship]. Concentrating on the relationship between arts and politics in socialist Hungary, *The Velvet Prison* describes the emergence of a new aesthetic culture in which “censors and artists alike are entangled in a mutual embrace.”⁴⁹ The old-type oppressive censorship was replaced by a *less visible new censorship*, which has become the “common spirit of

⁴⁷ Ibid, 8.

⁴⁸ Haraszti, Miklós. *The Velvet Prison. Artists Under State Socialism* (London; New York: Penguin Books, 1989, c.1987).

⁴⁹ Ibid, 5.

both the rulers and ruled.”⁵⁰ Since the state controls through this new type of *self-censorship*, which is based on the interests of both sides, artists and the modern socialist state are in a symbiotic relationship, the author explains. “Painful as it is, we must accept that our culture is produced voluntarily,”⁵¹ Haraszti concludes ironically.

“Art flourishes, even within totalitarian regimes,”⁵² Haraszti points out, deconstructing the often-held “fiction” that art by definition must be “free” and “true.” However, all art produced in socialism is necessarily “directed art,”⁵³ the author argues, given the fact that anti-authoritarian art that is independent from the state, would be considered as “anti-art” by the new self-censorship system. The economic context and institutional structure of art play a key role in the creation of “committed art,” Haraszti states. During socialism, the state is the only employer of the total workforce, therefore artists, along with all other professions, are all state employees.⁵⁴ “State artist, too, is an organized professional,”⁵⁵ and everyone who graduates from the art colleges belongs to this profession. “At graduation, students receive a diploma, which is also a license to practice,”⁵⁶ guaranteeing professional status and therefore commissioned works by the state, Haraszti says.

Haraszti thus makes a fascinating two-fold argument. On one hand, he states that the “independence” and “freedom” of art is a mere fiction, as several cases of history prove,

⁵⁰ Ibid, 8.

⁵¹ Ibid, 70.

⁵² Ibid, 12.

⁵³ Ibid, 68.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 18-19, and 68-69.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 129.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 132.

therefore “truth” is not a criterion for art as such. On the other hand, he believes that all art produced during socialism is “committed” or “directed,” and therefore in socialism, “there are only writers and nonwriters, not a variety of writers.”⁵⁷

I think that Haraszti’s statements require critical revision: even though *professional artists* by definition were all part of the state’s institutional net, it did not mean that they became “committed” artists. As compared to the Rákosi era when the state had announced a list of preferred topics for artist⁵⁸, by the sixties, the state offered relative freedom along with its financial support. Instead of directly commissioning artworks, the Kádárist state acquired a great variety of styles, forms, and topics throughout the sixties, as my research shows.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 78. I think this statement is rather similar to what Boris Groys calls the total art of communism. See: Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: avant-garde, aesthetic dictatorship, and beyond* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c1992).

⁵⁸ Gábor Andrási, Gábor Pataki, György Szücs, and András Zwickl, *Magyar képzőművészet a 20. században* [Hungarian Fine Arts in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Corvina, 1999): 136.

3. The Reorganization of Hungary's Art World: Consolidation Years After the Revolution (1957- 1963)

Starting with 1957, the chapter studies how Hungary's art world was reorganized in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution. The first section explores a number of institutional changes that occurred in Hungary's art life during the consolidation years. The second part of the chapter focuses more specifically on the system of art patronage during these years: it examines the state's two patronage institutions, the Ministry's Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions, and their functioning from 1957.

3.1. Re-centering Art Life in the Aftermath of the Revolution

"I believe that... today's May 1st, the May 1st of 1957 will be memorable and outstandingly significant for a long time,"⁵⁹ János Kádár said in his milestone speech at Budapest's Heroes Square. According to contemporary press reports, around 400,000 people gathered to see and listen to the new party secretary at the first May 1st celebration since the "counterrevolution." Kádár's speech signaled the beginning of a new era:⁶⁰ it meant to show that the new leader managed to stabilize the disastrous political situation, and was ready to correct the mistakes of the past. In the last section of his speech, Kádár laid out his priorities for the future; as the fourth point, he expressed

⁵⁹ János Kádár, "Népünk, barátaink örömére, ellenségeink bánatára szabadon ünnepli május elsejét," [Our nation, for our friends' happiness, and for our enemies' sadness is freely celebrating May 1st] *Népszabadság* May 3 (1957): 1.

⁶⁰ The spatial symbolism is also quite striking: at the May 1st celebration of 1957, Kádár did not speak from the usual pedestal of the Felvonulási tér [Square of March], but from a temporary base, installed at the cross of Heroes Square and today's Andrassy street.

his determination to clean out the country's cultural life:

“It is no secret that in certain spheres of education, arts and culture, the counterrevolution was deeply detrimental. ...No one wants to get the schematic mistakes back, nor the administrative methods. But the true lovers and workers of culture, as well as the masses themselves should be more careful and quicken the process of getting rid of the bourgeois trash of culture.”⁶¹



Picture 1: Spring Show at the Kunsthalle, 1957.

A few days before Kádár's speech, Heroes Square hosted another major event; on April 20th, 1957, the Kunsthalle opened its groundbreaking exhibition, the *Tavaszi Tárlat* [Spring Show].⁶² As an illustration of the new cultural policy that was brave and confident enough not to ban any art, the exhibition aimed to represent all styles and movements of the day, the exhibition catalog describes the chief curator Makrisz

⁶¹ János Kádár, “Népünk, barátaink öröme, ...”: 3.

⁶² The exhibition catalog is available at the Kunsthalle's Library: *Tavaszi Tárlat 1957: Műcsarnok, Budapest, 1957. április 20 – június 16* [Spring Show 1957: Kunsthalle, Budapest, April 20 – June 16, 1957] (Budapest: Műcsarnok, 1957). The catalog was edited by Irén Kirimi.

Agamemnón's vision.⁶³ "Makrisz," as all the contemporaries knew the originally Greek sculptor- organizer-politician⁶⁴, emerged as one of the most prominent public figures after he had assumed responsibility for fine arts in Kádár's temporary government in November, 1956. An artist himself who had been experimenting with different modernisms, Makrisz has been remembered for his liberal perspective on art – as well as for his smooth verbal style that managed to soften his superiors' views.⁶⁵



Picture 2: Makrisz, organizing the Spring Show.

For the Spring Show of 1957, Makrisz introduced the pioneering method of deploying four different jury committees responsible for different aesthetic styles.⁶⁶ As a result,

⁶³ Exhibition catalog: 3-5.

⁶⁴ György Spiró provides a fascinating description for Makrisz's character in his latest novel: György Spiró, *Tavaszi Tárlat* [Spring Show] (Budapest: Magvető, 2010).

⁶⁵ In his memoir about the socialist era, János Frank, art historian and curator at the Kunsthalle from 1955, emphasizes the significance of Makrisz, who pushed for the liberalization of art and culture. See: János Frank, "A Műcsarnok negyven éve: 1950-1990" [Forty Years of the Kunsthalle] In *A Műcsarnok történetét feldolgozó kiadvány* [Publication on the history of the Kunsthalle - no specific title, nor publication date]: 25. Available in word document format on the Kunsthalle's site: http://www.mucsarnok.hu/new_site/index.php?lang=hu&about=5&curmenu=305 [Last accessed: April 20, 2013]

⁶⁶ About the juries, see: Exhibition catalog: 6.; and the preserved documentation of the exhibition:

abstract paintings by Lajos Kassák, Tihamér Gyarmathy, Lili Ország, Margit Anna, and Ferenc Martyn were displayed along with realist work. “After ten years’ time, this Spring Show is the first one where abstract artists also exhibit their works. We can find such names among the abstract artists as Jenő Gvadányi (*sic*) who has been silent for a decade now,”⁶⁷ the Hungarian Radio’s evening news reported on April 8th, 1957. Furthermore, respected masters’, such as painters István Szőnyi and Aurél Bernáth, more lyrical, postimpressionist pieces were also exhibited.⁶⁸ A few months after the revolution, the openness of the Spring Show gave hope to artists that aesthetic pluralism would return to the art world.



Picture 3: The Absract Room at the Spring Show.

However, the open and experimenting atmosphere of the Spring Show was rather a short-

TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957 Jelzet: X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.)

⁶⁷ The transcript of the report has been preserved at the Kunsthalle. ‘1476/6-38. IV.8. 20.00h.’ TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957 Jelzet: X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.) Artist’s correct name is Jenő Gadányi.

⁶⁸ The lyrical postimpressionism, represented by Bernáth and Szőnyi, is also known as post- Nagybánya style, which name refers to these artists’ efforts to renew Nagybánya’s plein-air modernism; or as Gresham Circle, which refers to the group’s regular meeting place, the Gresham Coffee House. See for instance: Dénes Pataky, *Bernáth Aurél* [Aurél Bernáth] (Budapest: Corvina, 1972): 5-10.

term illusion, or part of the chaos of this period, as some artists recall today. Among the more than 150,000 people who emigrated from the country during or after the revolution⁶⁹, many artists left, including luminary painter Endre Bálint, who left for Paris in January 1957. Intellectual hubs, such as the Association of Writers, which had become one of the significant hotbeds of the Revolution, were closed down in January 1957.⁷⁰ The Association of Fine and Applied Artists, which was not directly involved in the events of October 1956, could temporarily continue its functioning under the leadership of Makrisz Agamemnón, and the graphic designer Kálmán Csohány.⁷¹ Yet, the artists' association was also disrupted and then re-established, as one of the painters, Lajos Kántor⁷², a member for two years at the time, remembers.

“They kicked all of us out from the Association after 1956... After the change of its leadership, others wrote them [the Association] letters, asking the Association to take them back. I did not write them, if they had kicked me out, then I do not go back to beg them.”⁷³

Finally, Kántor became a member again in 1960, when the Association asked artists who had been excluded thus far to rejoin the organization, on a professional basis.

⁶⁹The exact number of people who emigrated between October 1956 and March 1957 has been a constant subject of professional debates since the late 1950s. While contemporary Western sources reported the emigration of around 190,000 people, the Hungarian state officially registered around 150,000 illegal emigrants in early 1957 (see the digitalized 1957-documents of the Central Statistical Office in a 2007 article: László Habcsek and Sándor Illés, „Az 1956-os kivándorlás népességi hatásai” [The Impact of the 1956 Emigration Wave on the Population], 2007. Available online on the Central Statistical Office's website: http://www.ksh.hu/statszemle_archive/2007/2007_02/2007_02_157.pdf [Last accessed: April 11, 2013].

⁷⁰Éva Ständeisky, *Gúzsba kötve: a kulturális elit és a hatalom* [Shackled: the cultural elite and the power] (Budapest: 1956-os Intézet; Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára, 2005): 173. Ständeisky points out that the reprisal of these intellectuals hubs was postponed until January 1957 only because Kádár and his circle was too busy with other jobs until then.

⁷¹Unlabeled documents from Kálmán Csohány's personal archive. I thank Kálmánné Csohány's help in providing me access to her husband's preserved documents. December 2009, Budapest.

⁷²Kántor had graduated from the Fine Arts College in 1954 and therefore had been a member of the Association of Fine Arts since that year.

⁷³Interview with Lajos Kántor on June 17, 2010, in his apartment on Alkotmány street, Budapest.

There was a shutdown at the Academy of Fine Arts as well. Since some of the Academy's students actively participated in the "counterrevolutionary events,"⁷⁴ the institution was also on Kádár's "guilty list."⁷⁵ Painter Lajos Sváby, who was a third-year student in 1956, recalls the chaos of the year:

"We were everywhere and we saw everything... we were walking around the city, and only realized [that the situation turned into a revolution] when we saw that [they] were giving guns at Astoria, and when we saw the dead corpses on Thököly street - that is when we realized what was happening. And they shot 5 people at the Academy [of Fine Arts]... I did not participate in the Revolution. We only wanted to get back the heating in the Academy building... How am I going to become a Rembrandt or a Van Gogh in these conditions?, I thought."⁷⁶

Besides the physical problems of the building, the "morality" of the Academy also had to be fixed. Painter Sándor Bortnyik, the infamous rector of the Academy during the Rákosi era, retired at the end of the academic year of 1956. As a result, the "extremely strict, military order,"⁷⁷ which had been introduced at the Academy in 1949, came to an end. Endre Domanovszky, realist painter and two-time Kossuth Prize winner, succeeded Bortnyik in the rector position, and began the reorganization of the Academy after the

⁷⁴ One of the students of the College, who then managed to emigrate to Canada with his girlfriend, published his diary of the events of revolution. He describes how he and his fellow students participated in the events both as civilians and artists. See: Laszlo Beke (pseudonym), *A student's diary: Budapest, October 16 - November 1, 1956* (New York: The Viking Press, 1957). The book is available at the Open Society Archives' Radio Free Europe Collection.

⁷⁵ Zoltán Csizmadia and Zoltánné Csizmadia, *A Magyar Képzőművészeti Főiskola részvétele az 1956-os forradalom és szabadságharcban* [The Hungarian Fine Arts College's Participation in the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight] (Budapest: Magyar Képzőművészeti Egyetem, 2001).

⁷⁶ Interview with Lajos Sváby in April, 2009, in his studio-apartment in Budapest.

⁷⁷ Interview with Lajos Kántor, on June 17, 2010.

Revolution.⁷⁸

Significant changes took place in the state's bureaucratic administration as well. The Népművelési Minisztérium [Ministry of People's Culture], headed by György Lukács during the revolutionary days of 1956, came to an end. Its functions were absorbed by the Művelődésügyi Minisztérium [Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs], which opened in late February, 1957. The Ministry was first led by Albert Kónya⁷⁹ and Gyula Kállai, the rehabilitated communist politician, who later became state minister, and even prime minister for two years. In late January 1958, when Kállai was upgraded to state minister status, his position at the Ministry was filled with Valéria Benke, who just arrived from the leading position of the Magyar Rádió [Hungarian Radio]. In September 1961, Pál Ilku replaced Benke and headed the Ministry for more than a decade then.⁸⁰ From 1957 on, György Aczél became the stable deputy of the frequently changing Ministry, functioning in the shadow of the ministers. He emerged as the "pope" of art life during Kádárism, in fact taking over the control of Hungary's art world.⁸¹ The so-called Vásárló Bizottság [Committee of Acquisitions] that had been established by the former Ministry of People's Culture in 1952⁸², continued its operation under Aczél as well. With a slightly modified name, the Állami Vásárló Bizottság [Committee of State Acquisitions], organized by the

⁷⁸ Gyula Bence, "A Képzőművészeti Főiskola száz éve" [100 Years of the Fine Arts College] in Lajos Végvári (ed), *Száz éves a Képzőművészeti Főiskola. 1871-1971*. [The Fine Arts College is Celebrating its 100th Birthday] (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Főiskola kiadása, 1972): 281.

⁷⁹ Kónya was only a temporary solution; he headed the Ministry for two months.

⁸⁰ Dates and names from: Róbert M. Daraboncz and Mihály Fónai, *A magyar kultúrpolitika története, 1920-1990* [The History of Hungarian Cultural Policy, 1920-1990] (Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2005): 148-149; and Katalin Sinkó, *Nemzeti Képtár: A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Évkönyve 2008* [National Gallery: The Annale of the Hungarian National Gallery 2008] (Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 2009): 71-73.

⁸¹ Sándor Révész, *Aczél és korunk* [Aczél and Our Age] (Budapest: Sík, 1997).

⁸² Sinkó (2009): 90.

Ministry, was responsible for acquiring contemporary artworks for the country's most prominent museums between 1957 and 1967.

Along with the establishment of the new Ministry, one of the most significant cultural events of the era was the foundation of the National Gallery in 1957. Although there had



Picture 4: Gábor Ö. Pogány, giving his opening speech at the 1957 Spring Show.

been plans for the creation of a new national art museum since 1949, the final push came from art historian Gábor Ö. Pogány.⁸³ By the end of 1957, thousands of modern and contemporary artworks were transferred from the collection of the Fine Arts Museum to the building of the old Kúria at Kossuth Square, which hosted the new gallery. The National Gallery opened its first exhibition in October 1957. At the same time, the

Gallery and the Kunsthalle co-organized the show entitled *Magyar Forradalmi Művészet*

[Hungarian Revolutionary Art]⁸⁴, which had significant impact on Hungary's post-1956 art history. Pogány and his co-curator, Anna Oelmacher, intended to show the modern, revolutionary art of Hungary – meaning everything progressive and modern except

⁸³ Pogány was mostly inspired by his 1955-trip to Vienna, where he saw and adored the example of the newly inaugurated Österreichische Galerie. About the history of the National Gallery and Pogány's role in its foundation, see historian Katalin Sinkó's meticulous work. Sinkó (2009): 61, 64-65, 71-85.

⁸⁴ "Magyar Forradalmi Művészet: Jubileumi Kiállítás a nagy októberi szocialista forradalom 40. Évfordulója alkalmából" [Hungarian Revolutionary Art: Jubilee Exhibition on the 40th Anniversary of the Large Socialist October Revolution], Kunsthalle, Budapest, November 6, 1957 – February 1958. Curators: Anna Oelmacher and Gábor Ö. Pogány. See Sinkó (2009): 85.

abstract works. As historian Katalin Sinkó points out, the Revolutionary Art show was used to create a counter-narrative to the Spring Show, which by October 1957 came under severe attack for its overt pluralism and the display of abstract works⁸⁵. Yet, the Revolutionary Art exhibition's greatest achievement was that it finally rehabilitated the art of Gyula Derkovits and István Dési-Huber, early 20th-century modern painters; for the first time, the expressionist - cubistic - constructivist pieces of Derkovits could successfully fit the canon of socialist art.⁸⁶

The restructuring of the Ministry, the reorganization of the Fine Arts College, and the foundation of the National Gallery were in fact only the first steps of re-centering Hungary's art life in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution. The era called early Kádárisz, meaning the years between 1956 and 1962, is known as the period of the Kádárist consolidation, restoration, or disposal. "It was the main priority of the early Kádár regime to reinvent the failed communist rule in a reshaped and functioning form, and to enable the system to operate successfully in the long run,"⁸⁷ historian Melinda Kalmár argues. However, the successful renewal of the communist regime required the disposal of both the regime's institutional operation and its ideology. On July 25, 1958, *Társadalmi Szemle* [Social Review] published the Central Committee's decree entitled "A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt művelődési politikájának irányelvei" [Guidelines for the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Policy of Culture and Education], which functioned

⁸⁵ Péter Rényi and Oelmacher Anna were only two of the voices that severely attacked the abstract section of the Spring Show. Péter Rényi, "Személyes megjegyzések a Tavaszi Tárlatról," *Népszabadság* May 5 (1957): 9. ; Anna Oelmacher, "Ami a Tavaszi Tárlatról kimaradt" *Magyarország* May 15 (1957). Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum: TAVASZI TÁRLAT, 1476/6-36.

⁸⁶ Sinkó (2009): 85-87.

⁸⁷ Melinda Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány: a kora kádárizmus ideológiája* [Food and Dowry: The Ideology of Early Kadarism] (Budapest: Magvető, 1998): 12.

as Hungary's "cultural constitution" during the coming decades.⁸⁸ A separate section of the Guidelines concerns the situation of the arts (literature, theater, film, music, and fine arts); it states that the "party appreciates the cleaning process that has occurred [in these fields] since the crash of the counterrevolutionary forces, yet acknowledges the ideological confusion that still prevents the future development of arts."⁸⁹ The Central Committee assured that socialist realism was still "the most modern method of creating art,"⁹⁰ and the state's cultural institutions had to focus on promoting and supporting the creation of socially committed art. "Besides the necessary moral and financial support, we also provide extensive freedom for the development of socially committed art; we assign the freedom of topic, method, style, movement, as well as formal experiments,"⁹¹ the Guidelines say. Seemingly, the "cultural constitution" of the Kádár era did not impose absolute rules any more but focused on recommendations and preferences. Since the meaning of socially committed art was not declared in precise terms, this gap could create some flexibility for the art world, slightly opening up the playing field for its actors.

Although Kalmár argues that the 1962-publication of the party's cultural and ideological decrees signaled the end of the ideological reorganization,⁹² significant institutional changes still occurred in the field of fine arts. In 1962, the Képzőművészeti Alap [Art Fund], initially established in 1952 as the artists' key social institution, was appointed to

⁸⁸ Kalmár (1998): 186-189. Original publication of the Guidelines: "A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt művelődési politikájának irányelvei" [Guidelines for the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's policy of culture and education] *Társadalmi Szemle* [Social Review] July (1958): 116-151.

⁸⁹ Guidelines: 147.

⁹⁰ Ibid: 148.

⁹¹ Ibid: 148.

⁹² Kalmár (1998): introduction.

function as the state's ultimate jury. From exhibitions to high-scale acquisition of public artworks, every piece of work was supposed to be checked by the jurors of the Art Fund. However, most of the jurors lacked the necessary educational background to make aesthetic judgments. "I must acknowledge that the officials of the Art Fund are neither artists, nor art historians, even if they have earned a college decree,"⁹³ György Szilárd, the director of the Art Fund stated in 1962. Therefore, in order to overcome the difficulties that the Art Fund's officials often encountered, the Ministry initiated the establishment of a professional institution as well. Thus the Művészeti Bizottság [Art Committee] came to life as the supreme advisor of the Art Fund, with the most prominent living artists as its members. The "Committee of the Nines," as it was often nicknamed after the number of its members, included the new rector of the Academy of Fine Arts, painter Endre Domanovszky; the pro-rector and painter Gyula Bencze; the painter and respected master of the Academy, Aurél Bernáth; the painter János Blaski, who started to teach at the Academy in 1960; the number one master of sculpture, Pál Pátzay; the applied artist Károly Plesznivy; the graphic designer Károly Raszler; the sculptor József Somogyi; and the only female member, the influential art historian Nóra Aradi.⁹⁴ Headed by György Szilárd himself, the Art Committee held its first meeting on September 10, 1962.

The final and probably most influential change of the consolidation period was the

⁹³ Tibor Wehner (ed.), *Adatok és adalékok a hatvanas évek művészetéhez: a Művészeti Bizottság jegyzőkönyvei 1962-1966* [Data and Details about the Art of the Sixties: Minutes of the Art Committee, 1962-1966] (Budapest: Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus, 2002): 1.

⁹⁴ Wehner (ed.) 2002: 1443. I only listed the permanent members of the Committee; sporadically, further artists were also invited to express their opinion in certain cases. Furthermore, this list is only valid for the period between 1962 and February 1964. Then the membership of Nóra Aradi and Gyula Bencze was cancelled; at the same time, three architects and Jenő Barcsay, the well-known painter and professor, became new members.

foundation of the Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus [Institution of Culture and Art] in September 1963. Headed by the applied artist and politician Tibor Ormos, the Institution was established to replace the Art Fund in its censoring function. The Institution began its operation in February 1964 by taking over the control of the Art Committee, and emerged as the central censor over all exhibitions. Following the Institution's takeover, the Art Committee soon lost its prestige and ceased its functioning in 1966 – which meant that the illusion of professional censoring was over.

Despite the Kádár regime's promise of getting rid of the retrograde mistakes of the past, not much changed in the structure of art life. It remained a highly centralized system, with distinct institutions established for different functions. And yet, the concession of some flexibility, offered by the Kádárist state from 1958, was an essential result of the consolidation period, forced by the experience and memory of the October days of 1956. "...Everything changed with 1956...The old communist party was disrupted, and a new one came to life...However, this was a completely different regime now, they could not repeat that [the Rákosi regime] after 1956...",⁹⁵ Lajos Kántor reflects on how the atmosphere changed after the revolution.

3.2. System of State Patronage after the Revolution

How did art patronage operate during these early years of the Kádár era? According to my research findings, painters had two main sources of patronage during the Kádárist

⁹⁵ Interview with Lajos Kántor, on June 17, 2010

consolidation years: the reorganized Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, through its Fine Arts Department, and the Committee of State Acquisitions. The second part of my chapter thus studies the functioning of these two institutions between 1957 and 1963: how they commissioned artworks and what kind of aesthetic preferences they had, based on the results of their purchases.⁹⁶ The renewed Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs began to patronize artists in early 1957. It is interesting to see that the Ministry hardly ever ordered artists to make certain pieces⁹⁷: instead of assigning the topic or the style of the pieces, the Ministry simply chose what it believed was the best of the art produced by contemporary artists. Thus, as the most important form of its patronage, the Ministry, through its Department of Fine Arts, pursued acquisitions at exhibitions organized in Budapest and the countryside, and pre-juried by the Art Fund.

⁹⁶ I acknowledge the importance of the so called “beruházásos munkák” [commissions for newly constructed buildings], financed by the Art Fund and controlled by the Art Committee, yet, I do not consider it in my current thesis, as it did not provide money for easel paintings, only for murals and other large-scale, decorative genres that could fit newly constructed buildings.

⁹⁷ I will provide a few examples for ordered commissions later in this chapter, when I analyze the Ministry’s patronage in 1959.

As archival documents show⁹⁸, the controversial Spring Show, organized by Makrisz Agamemnon at the Kunsthalle, was one of the first exhibitions where the Ministry's Department of Fine Arts chose paintings, sculptures, and graphic works for purchase from the Ministry's central budget. In this case, reflecting Makrisz's liberal policy, more than 300 paintings were displayed, however, only sixteen of them were acquired by the Ministry, along with three graphic works and a single sculpture. Although it would be



Picture 5: *At the Moonlight* by István Szőnyi.

impossible to fit all these purchased paintings into one single style or movement, most of them could be best labeled as figurative but not necessarily realistic works, primarily originating in Hungary's Nagybánya-styled plein-air and naturalistic modernism.⁹⁹ What art historians term as lyrical post-impressionism, or post-Nagybánya-style,¹⁰⁰ is best exemplified here by István Szőnyi's piece entitled *Holdvilágnál* [At the Moonlight]. Szőnyi, who himself had studied in Nagybánya with such luminary masters as Károly Ferenczy and István Réti, settled down in

the small provincial village, Zebegény in the 1930s. There he developed his well-known

⁹⁸ 23010/1989. III/1957. Minisztériumi vásárlások, Nyilvántartás a képzőművészeti alkotások vásárlásairól, Minisztériumi keret. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

⁹⁹ At the turn of the century, Nagybánya became the center for those artists who, in opposition with academic historicism, began to experiment with open air, naturalistic depictions. See for instance György Szűcs, „Az új természetlátás iskolája – Nagybánya” [The School of the New Vision of Nature – Nagybánya] in Gábor András, Gábor Pataki, György Szűcs, and András Zwickl, *Magyar képzőművészet a 20. században* [Hungarian Fine Arts in the 20th Century] (Budapest: Corvina, 1999), 12-21.

¹⁰⁰ See for example: Dénes Pataky, *Bernáth Aurél* [Aurél Bernáth] (Budapest: Corvina, 1972) and Lajos Végvári, *Szőnyi István - Bernáth Aurél* [István Szőnyi - Aurél Bernáth] (Miskolc: Well-Press Kiadó, 2003).

method of painting: at the last stage of the creation, he covered his realistic landscape vision with an extra layer of white paint, turning the vision into an impression instead. *At the Moonlight* shows a young girl, whose figure is clearly recognizable; yet, the girl, just as the cow behind her, is blurry, impressionistic, while the background rather looks like a mystic fog than a real landscape. Undoubtedly, the piece was one of the main attractions of the painting section of the Spring Show: already a few weeks before the opening, the respected master Aurél Bernáth had identified the *Moonlight* as a real masterpiece.¹⁰¹ Finally, the piece was bought by the Ministry for more than triple price of the average paintings.¹⁰²

In terms of the topic of the acquired paintings, rural life and the lives of peasants had been recurring topics for artists of younger generations as well, along with the older masters. A typical example was the work by the recent graduate, Sándor Vecsési, *Falu télen* [The Village in Winter], which was also purchased at the Spring Show by the Ministry. Born in a peasant-worker family in a provincial village, Vecsési was one of those artists who, according to the Rákosi era's policy, if talented enough, could benefit from their social status during the application for the Academy. "Many people used the available opportunities for their own good... me too, I benefited from the fact that I was born in a poor family. I was admitted [to the Academy] as a worker...",¹⁰³ Vecsési reflects retrospectively on his 1949-admission. At the Academy he felt stimulated primarily by the Nagybánya-based master, István Csók's work. The *Village in Winter* is one of the

¹⁰¹ '1476/6-38. IV.8. 20.00h.' TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957 Jelzet: X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.)

¹⁰² According to the Ministry's documentation, the piece was purchased for 15,000 forints.

¹⁰³ Interview with Sándor Vecsési and his wife, Arany Bazsonyi at their apartment in Budapest. June 24, 2010.

early pieces of Vecsési's realistic-naturalistic depiction of the village.

At the Spring Show of 1957, the Ministry's Fine Arts Department was not the only state patron: the Committee of State Acquisitions could also buy up works from the exhibition. In fact, the Committee purchased thirteen paintings, nine sculptural work, and ten graphic works, all of them for the new National Gallery.¹⁰⁴ The list of the Committee's acquisitions is only slightly different from the Ministry's purchases: besides the postimpressionist-naturalist landscapes and village genres, pieces by Béla Czóbel and Tibor Csernus also found their ways to the National Gallery's collection. Czóbel, the Hungarian Fauvist and avant-garde artist who had exhibited his works with Matisse in Paris at the beginning of the century, was represented by one of his earlier paintings, entitled *Kertben* [In the Garden] at this exhibition. *In the Garden* belongs to Czóbel's Szentendre-period: he painted it after the end of World War II, in 1946.¹⁰⁵ Already by the time of the Spring Show, Tibor Csernus was considered by many as the most talented painter of his generation. A year before his 1953-graduation, he had received the prestigious Munkácsy Award for his historicist painting of poet Sándor Petőfi.¹⁰⁶ At the Spring Show, Csernus could display two of his new works, one of which, the *Újpesti Rakpart* [Riverside in Újpest], was acquired by the Committee. This postimpressionistic portrait of men sitting on the riverside of the Danube, with Margaret-bridge in the background, is considered as the last piece of a series of realistic landscapes which he had

¹⁰⁴ 23010/1989. III/1957. Minisztériumi vásárlások, Nyilvántartás a képzőművészeti alkotások vásárlásairól, Állami Vásárló Bizottság.

¹⁰⁵ Mimi Kratochwill, *Czóbel Béla (1883-1976) élete és művészete* [The Life and Art of Béla Czóbel (1883-1976)] (Veszprém-Budapest: Magyar Képek, 2001), Képek [Images] – no page number.

¹⁰⁶ *Csernus Tibor festőművész retrospektív kiállítása*. Budapest, Műcsarnok, 1989. március 2 – április 9. [Retrospective exhibition of Painter Tibor Csernus, Budapest, Kunsthalle, March 2 –April 9, 1989]. Catalog was edited by Mimi Kratochwill.

made before he traveled to Paris in 1957. However, the too strong and therefore unrealistic colors of this picture may already signal his experimentation with surrealism, potentially challenging the boundaries of realist aesthetics.



Picture 6: *Riverside in Újpest* by Tibor Csernus

Both the Ministry's Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions basically supported very similar, if not the same, aesthetic styles. What was then the difference between the Ministry and the Committee's acquisitions and why did the state have two distinct patron institutions? The 1959-documentation of the Ministry's Fine Arts Department provides essential insight into the functioning of the two institutions and thus is of great value for exploring these questions. It shows that the Ministry and the Committee managed their budgets separately because their acquisitions performed different duties. In 1959, just as in other years of the consolidation period, the Ministry's Fine Arts Department could spend around 2 million forints for its commissions. The roughly 500 works purchased by the Ministry each year served the creation of a top

quality collection of contemporary Hungarian art, which could be showed at exhibitions abroad, primarily. “The artworks acquired by the Ministry in 1958 and 1959 are all displayed in shows abroad. The requests from abroad have been so high that we could only fulfill our duty of exhibiting contemporary art, if we had sent our purchased works for display,”¹⁰⁷ the head of the Fine Arts Department, art historian Nóra Aradi wrote in a 1959 letter, explaining why the Ministry had no real capacity to show new works in Hungary. At the same time, the Committee of State Acquisitions budgeted between 500,000 - 600,000 forints each year, in order to provide merely the country’s key museums, namely the new National Gallery, the Museum of Applied Arts, and the Latest Historical Museum, with fresh and quality contemporary works¹⁰⁸. In this sense, even though both institutions purchased contemporary art, and basically the same aesthetic styles, they differed in the final destination: while the works purchased by the Committee became part of the country’s main collections and thus were on display in Hungary, the Ministry’s acquisitions traveled abroad to represent contemporary Hungarian art.

The archived documentation also offers an explanation for the very process of deciding about the acquisitions of the Ministry’s Fine Arts Department: the documents indicate that a variety of personal, social, economic, and aesthetic factors influenced the process by which the Ministry arrived at its purchasing decisions. As mentioned earlier, the Ministry bought a few works that had been specifically ordered by different state institutions, however, only on rare occasions. It was the case for instance with two

¹⁰⁷ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások 73368.

¹⁰⁸ The Committee of State Acquisitions also purchased early 20th-century masterpieces besides contemporary artworks, however, the latter formed the majority of the Committee’s acquisitions.

ceramic works that had represented Hungary at the Global Assembly of Youth,¹⁰⁹ or with Jenő Szervánszky's socialist realist painting entitled *Sztrájk megbeszélés* [Strike Meeting].¹¹⁰ Still, it is important to emphasize that during the period discussed, these were rather exceptions: in most cases, artworks got purchased by staff members of the Department of Fine Arts, who pursued acquisitions at exhibitions that they visited. The head of the Department was Nóra Aradi who emerged as one of the most influential scholars of the period. Following her graduation in 1950, Aradi started to work at the Ministry of People's Culture in 1953, and became the head of the Fine Arts Department in the reorganized Ministry in 1957. From then on, in many cases she personally picked artworks from the exhibitions of the day. The numerous articles and art history textbooks that Aradi published as a scholar precisely reveal her aesthetic preferences. Almost a decade later, in 1964, when Aradi wrote her first account of abstract art, she still believed that non-figurative art was simply incompatible with the values of the socialist countries, as abstract forms "exclude most of the audience" with their incomprehensible ideas.¹¹¹ It is no surprise then that mainly artworks of post-impressionism, realism, and naturalism managed to fit Aradi's taste. In between the realist-naturalist Alföld-style painters¹¹², such as István D. Kurucz and post-impressionist-realist artists, like Simon Sarkantyú or János Jakuba, wide range of artists were purchased under Aradi.¹¹³ Aradi's deputy, József Czéh could also take the responsibility of officially acquiring works – as for instance the case

¹⁰⁹ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások: 73197. Ceramic works by János Majoros and Katalin S. Garányiné.

¹¹⁰ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások: 73906. Szervánszky's piece was commissioned by the Latest Historical Museum.

¹¹¹ Nóra Aradi, *Absztrakt képzőművészet* [Abstract Art] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1964): 73.

¹¹² Realistic painters who depict peasants. Contemporary art historians often labeled this painting style as plebeian realism. See: Edit Lajta (ed.), *Művészeti kislexikon* [Abridged Lexicon of Art] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973): 21.

¹¹³ 23010/1989. III/1959. Minisztériumi vásárlások, Nyilvántartás a képzőművészeti alkotások vásárlásairól, Minisztériumi keret. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

of the annual applied arts exhibition of 1959 shows.¹¹⁴ Yet, archived personal notes and letters show that Aradi was also open for outsiders' requests. Gábor Ö. Pogány often addressed her with specific demands in the name of the National Gallery, which Aradi was mostly willing to satisfy.¹¹⁵ However, along with the museum directors' specific requests, Aradi also received several letters from artists, who asked for the Ministry's financial help.¹¹⁶ A very personal and desperate letter, which arrived to the Department from painter Gusztáv Sikuta in 1959, may serve as an example here.

“I kindly ask the Department to acquire my works that are currently installed in Pécs at the exhibition. My father died a week ago. I cannot afford the serious financial costs of his burial. I have not benefited from state patronage for two years now... I ask the Department to include me in your purchases with respect to my fierce financial situation – in case the quality of my work meets the expectations.”¹¹⁷

As the 1959-documentation of the Ministry's purchases shows, the Department acquired Sikuta's painting entitled *Duna Kismarosnál* [The Danube at Kismaros] for 4,000 forints.

The archival documents also contain information about the inner hierarchy of the Ministry. Each new acquisition, executed by Aradi or Czéh, was subject to the approval of the Ministry's deputy, György Aczél. It is striking that Aczél's signature marks the documentation of each acquisition in 1959 – he thoroughly supervised everything going

¹¹⁴ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások: 74077.

¹¹⁵ See for instance Pogány's special requests from painter Pál Miháلتz's exhibition: MOL XIX-I-m-4 9. Doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások: 73957; or regarding painter Lajos Luzsicza's works: MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.Doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások: 73986.

¹¹⁶ See for instance: MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.Doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások: 73379 – letter from a group of artists who displayed their works at the Ernst Museum.

¹¹⁷ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.Doboz 2.Tétel, Vásárlások: 73181.

on in the Ministry. The archival material does not document disagreement between the Department and the deputy in that year.

The process of purchasing artworks at the Committee of State Acquisitions was different from the procedure in the Ministry. In the Committee's case, a jury of several artists and art historians decided about the annual budget – even though Aczél himself headed the committee, while Aradi functioned as his deputy at these meetings.¹¹⁸ Each year it was the Minister's duty to assign the jury members of the Committee; besides the permanent members, temporary memberships were also granted. Although Aczél had to approve all the final decisions, he was not present at most of the jury meetings. In fact, the artists and the art historians discussed all the works submitted to the jury, and they decided about each work's destiny. Who were these jurors? According to the 1959-documentation of the Committee,¹¹⁹ the list of permanent members included the painter and respected professor of anatomy, Jenő Barcsay; the post-impressionist master, Aurél Bernáth; the retired rector of the Academy and painter, Sándor Bortnyik; the new rector and realist painter, Endre Domanovszky; and several art historians: the dominant Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the new National Gallery; the expert of orientalism, Aladár Dobrovits; and the greatly respected István Genthon, who had just published his first monographs on the post-impressionist French master, Cézanne and the Hungarian master of post-impressionism and pointillism, József Rippl-Rónai. In 1959 the following artists participated as temporary members of the Committee: the socialist realist painter Sándor Ék; the painter and applied artist Gyula Hincz, who had been the rector of the Academy of Applied Arts

¹¹⁸ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.Doboz 2.Tétel, Vásárlások: 73090.

¹¹⁹ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.Doboz 2.Tétel, Vásárlások: 73799.

since 1958; the Greek sculptor Makrisz Agamemnón; the figurative sculptor Sándor Mikus, who is best known for his huge Stalin that was demolished in 1956; the applied artist Ernő Schubert; the art historian György Domanovszky, director of the Museum of Applied Arts; the celebrated ceramist, Margit Kovács; and the architect László Gerő.

The minutes of the Committee meetings would help us understand the dynamics of how this group of diverse artists and scholars worked together, however, only summaries of the meetings have been preserved in the archives. Yet, even the summaries show that many of the members regularly did not show up at the jury meetings – the permanent members were certainly the most reliable participants. Furthermore, the documents suggest that Gábor Ö. Pogány had the most active role at the Committee's acquisitions. He often did even extra work by sending his professional advice about artists and pieces to be commissioned by the Committee. This was the case for example with several graphic works by György Kohán, who held an exhibition at the Kunsthalle in 1959. Pogány recommended for the Committee's purchases four of the Alföld -based artist's displayed works – at the end, one graphic work, the *Asszony kosárral* [Woman with basket] could fit the Committee's taste and budget.¹²⁰ Given the fact that the piece, just as most of the acquired works, ended up in the Gallery's collection, Pogány, as the director of the Gallery, certainly had primary interest in these purchases.

In 1959, the Committee purchased around 40 paintings, 20 sculptures, and substantial amount of graphic works and applied artworks. In terms of style, probably the only surprises in the list of acquisitions are two sculptural works by József Csáky. The old

¹²⁰ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások 73935.

cubist master, who had left to Paris by foot in 1908, spent three weeks in Hungary in 1959, due to an invitation by the Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete [Institute of Cultural Connections].

“ We know from our Paris Embassy that József Csáky has mentioned several times that he would be pleased if his sculpture titled *Táncosnő* [Dancer] could stay in Hungary – which means that he wants us to buy the piece... The Embassy and our Institute believe that Csáky, who is an old man and has always been loyal to the Party even during his emigration, ... would deserve our financial support,”¹²¹

Elemér Kerékgyártó, official at the Institute of Cultural Connections wrote in his letter to the Ministry. According to Aradi’s notes on the letter, the Ministry organized a “small Committee meeting,” where only Sándor Mikus, Gábor Ö. Pogány, and Aradi herself were present. Although no document about this extra meeting has been preserved, the result is visible on the final list of the 1959-acquisitions.¹²² Two works, the *Anya gyermekével* [Mother with Child] and the *Mademoiselle Casson* were commissioned for the National Gallery.

3.3. Conclusions

What conclusions can we draw from the parallel study of the Ministry’s and the Committee of State Acquisitions’ purchases? First, there was no substantial aesthetic difference between the commissions pursued by the two institutions. Between 1957 and

¹²¹ MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások 73321.

¹²² 23010/1989. III/1959. Minisztériumi vásárlások, Nyilvántartás a képzőművészeti alkotások vásárlásairól, Minisztériumi keret. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

1963, both the Ministry and the Committee primarily supported artists who were making figurative art: the work shows either realist- naturalist or postimpressionist style; they were followers of the post-Nagybánya-style. Of course, exceptions occurred as well; for instance, the cubist works of sculptor József Csáky were purchased by the Committee.

Secondly, the detailed examination of the functioning of the state's two patron institutions provides insight into *how* the socialist state supported the creation of modern socialist art. Besides state officials (who in fact were sometimes professionals, just as Aradi's case demonstrates), a circle of artists and art historians also participated in the making of this post-impressionist, naturalist canon of socialist art. Certainly, the jurors of the Committee of State Acquisitions, along with the staff members of the Ministry's Department of Fine Arts, had their personal, aesthetic preferences, either as artists or as scholars. For instance, the painters' respected master, Bernáth, who was one of the permanent members of the Committee, had emerged as a realist-post-impressionist master by the 1940s. "I have already suggested separating abstract arts from the nature-based arts. I am not opposed to these things [abstract works], they do not hurt anyone, they do not destroy democracy, but they should not be mixed with art,"¹²³ Bernáth expressed his taste for nature-based, realistic art in 1963. Similarly, Aradi, the head of the Ministry's Fine Arts Department, was a passionate scholar about realism, while she was indeed skeptical about abstract art, as her books and articles demonstrate.

Additionally, the jurors had to face that the acquisitions had social-economic significance as well, as the example of Sikuta's case demonstrates. The Ministry's and the

¹²³ Wehner (2002): 335.

Committee's acquisitions were a significant source of income for many artists. From the perspective of the economic needs of the artists then, the existence of two, even if in many senses similar, institutions was essential: from more extensive budgets more artists could enjoy the state's fiscal assistance.

And yet, the Ministry and the Committee could only provide for a limited number of artists. It is interesting to look at the Ministry's 1963-data about the financial situation of fine artists. According to the survey that has been preserved in György Aczél's private documents, out of the altogether 955 painters 460 earned less than 10,000 forints in 1963: it means that roughly 45% of the painters could not make a living in Hungary.¹²⁴ Furthermore, the survey reveals severe inequality between the painters; the following examples might provide a sense of the financial imbalance between the artists. While the freshly graduated, post-impressionist Mária Gánóczy received less 1,500 forints, and the abstract master, Dezső Korniss got 4,000 forints from the state during 1963, the realist László Ridovics made almost 200,000 forints from state acquisitions and commissions in the same year. Thus, along with abstract painters, many of post-impressionist and naturalist artists were also excluded from the state's financial support.¹²⁵ Despite the official policy of full employment, the socialist state encountered difficulties with

¹²⁴ MOL XIX-I-4-aaa 64.doboz, 137.dosszié (iktatatlan anyag) Jövedelemkimutatás 1963.évről. [Survey about Artists' Salaries in 1963]. Yet, it is important to point out that the survey calculated even those painters who were not members of the Art Fund, nor the Association, thus who were not professional painters but made some money from their art.

¹²⁵ It is a real methodological challenge to make correct judgments about the number or style of artists who were left without the state's financial help. Yet, the data of the 1957- Spring Show might be useful to make some approximate calculations. There, the Ministry and the Committee together could purchase roughly 30 of the 300 displayed paintings, which – almost without exception, as we have seen - all belonged to the post-impressionist and naturalist canon. Yet, it still meant that “only” between 15 and 20% of the post-impressionistic- naturalistic works were acquired by the state. I would like to emphasize that this is only an approximate calculation, which I made based on the catalog of the 1957-Spring Show.

providing for the artists: even for those who could otherwise fit the aesthetic canon of the Ministry and Committee.

4. State Support for “Unrestricted, Autonomous, Passionate Paintings”¹²⁶: The Inauguration of the Two Million Purchases

By the mid-1960s, the problem of financial inequality among painters, as discussed in the previous chapter, had become intertwined with a professional debate about the crisis of the genre of easel painting. The second research chapter thus examines how these discussions led the Art Fund to the inauguration of a new state funding system for painters, called Two Million Purchases. Based on the available archival documents, and interviews that I have conducted with state officials and painters involved in these purchases, the second half of the chapter studies the operation of the Two Million Purchases. Finally, the last section of the chapter presents a description of the paintings that were acquired during the first year of the Two Million Purchases, in 1965.

4.1. *The Crisis of Easel Painting*

How could those painters who were excluded from the state’s patronage make their living in post-1956 Hungary?¹²⁷ Besides the state’s patron institutions, the socialist art market, the *Képcsarnok Vállalat* [Company of Picture Hall, in short: Company] had growing

¹²⁶ Quote from painter Ervin Tamás’s comment at the November 30, 1965 meeting of the Art Fund’s Advising Committee. MOL XIX-I-4-m 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képzőművészeti Alap, 102032. 1965.december 7. Az Alap Tanácsadó Testületének 1965.november 30-án tartott ülésének jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the November 30, 1965 Meeting of the Art Fund’s Advisor Committee].

¹²⁷ Even though I acknowledge the importance of the so-called “beruházásos munkák” [commissions for newly constructed buildings], often nicknamed as “2‰” commissions, controlled by the Art Committee, I do not consider this commission system in my current thesis, as it did not provide money for easel paintings, only for murals (yet, these large-scales murals were essential sources for several painters). Neither can I include the ARTEX Company in my analysis, due to the lack of sufficient information at the current stage of my research.

significance in providing income for artists, who were members of the Art Fund¹²⁸. Established in 1954 as the successor of the *Művészeti Alkotások Nemzeti Vállalata* [National Company of Artworks]¹²⁹, the Company functioned under the supervision of the Art Fund. For centrally-planned prices, which were controlled by the Art Fund, the Company sold “good-quality artworks” to average people, as art historian Zsuzsa D. Fehér reported in the press:

“The pre-war period’s exclusive picture galleries have been replaced by the Company, and thus simple people have inherited what previously had been the privilege of rich art collectors...The paintings that illustrate this article by now decorate the apartment of a simple worker and a primary school teacher.”¹³⁰

Amongst the referenced paintings are a still life with flowers by figurative painter Judit Csernó, and a post-impressionist landscape by Simon Sarkantyú; in order to replace kitch, these “quality works” were available for inexpensive prices at the Company. On average, one could buy a painting for 500 or 600 forints from the Company during the 1960s¹³¹;

¹²⁸ Boglárka Debreczeni, *Kép-csarnok: értekezés a Képcsarnok Vállalat megalakulásáról, működésének körülményeiről, az úgynevezett képcsarnoki művészetről és a hálózat magyar társadalomban betöltött szerepéről* [Picture-Hall: Study about the Foundation of the Company of Picture Hall and its Operation, about the so-called Company-style Painting and about the Company’s Function in the Hungarian Society] (2008) Dissertation, 13. [I thank Judit Koplik for sharing with me the electronic form of the study] As pointed out in my introduction as well, painters had two options to become members of the Art Fund. Those who graduated from the Academy of Fine and Applied Arts, automatically received a membership to the Art Fund. Additionally, one could apply for the Art Fund without proper educational background as well; once a year, the Art Fund accepted “unprofessional” members based on submitted portfolios.

¹²⁹ The *Művészeti Alkotások Nemzeti Vállalata* [National Company of Artworks] came to life in 1949 as a socialist state company as a result of the nationalization of the art market. Károly Borbély, “A művészet anyagi alapjairól” [About the Financial Basis of Art] *Művészet* 11 (1979), 4-7.

¹³⁰ Zsuzsa D. Fehér, “A Képcsarnok feladatai” [The Responsibilities of the Company] *Művészet* 3 (1960), 10-11.

¹³¹ György Horváth, “Kortárs művészet a magyar múzeumokban és az állami vásárlások 1945-1980”

the Company paid artists for their work according to these centrally decided, low prices.¹³² For comparison, the Ministry's Fine Arts Department paid painters between 3,000 and 5,000 forints on average for a piece of painting already in 1957.¹³³ Despite its initial malfunctioning, by 1959 the Company made 7 million forints from selling paintings, Fehér claims in her article.¹³⁴

And yet, as Fehér pointed out, the Company's operation generated several fundamental problems as well. Due to central efforts to rationalize the economic system, the Company was not allowed to aggregate huge piles of unsold paintings in storage.¹³⁵ Therefore, even if the Company intended to shape average people's taste, it still had to satisfy the customers' expectations to some extent. "The audience is mostly interested in two genres: landscapes and still lifes, and maybe genre paintings and nudes. These limited options cause the most damage for the artists themselves,"¹³⁶ Fehér argued. As some of the artists recall today, besides these topical restrictions, they mostly suffered from the financial limitations that the Company imposed on them. The centrally controlled, cheap prices pushed artists to increase the quantity of their work, however, these circumstances

[Contemporary Art in Hungarian Museums and State Acquisitions, 1945-1980] in Ferencné Keszthelyi (ed) *Kortárs művészet múzeumi gyűjteményekben 1988-1999* [Contemporary Art in Museum Collections, 1988-1999] (Budapest: Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus, 2001): 15.

¹³² Information from Judit Koplik. Debreczeni does not discuss in her dissertation how much money artists received from the Company, as she could not identify archival documents that would offer relevant information.

¹³³ 23010/1989. III/1957. Minisztériumi vásárlások, Nyilvántartás a képzőművészeti alkotások vásárlásairól, Minisztériumi keret. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

¹³⁴ Unfortunately, the Company's documents have not been preserved, therefore it is impossible to give a correct account of the Company's functioning, as Debreczeni points out. As no other data was available, I used Zsuzsa D. Fehér's information from her 1960-article, even though it is not possible to check this data from other sources.

¹³⁵ MOL XIX-I-4-m. 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képzőművészeti Alap, 101881. 1965.november 11. Felmérés a Képcsarnokban felgyülemlett, eladatlan képekről [Survey of the Company's Unsold Paintings]. Despite efforts to rationalize the Company's functioning, there were still hundreds of unsold artworks languishing in the Company's storage room, as this 1965-survey shows.

¹³⁶ Fehér (1960), 11.

worked to the quality's disadvantage. Painter József Bartl, who graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in 1959, was one of the artists who tried to make his living by becoming a 'Company-painter.'

"I went down to the bank of river Duna, and made 5-10 aquarells in an hour...and they [the Company] always bought three or four of them each week. I think only Kokas Náci [Ignác Kokas, painter] was better in making aquarells, or maybe he was on the same level... So this is what I could do, I was good at still lifes, and these were popular at the Company."¹³⁷

Since Bartl was a fresh graduate, his paintings were not acquired by the state's patron institutions, he argued during the interview I made with him. Thus, his best option was to produce series of landscapes and genre paintings, which could be sold through the Company for cheap prices. Along with Bartl, for instance painter Lajos Kántor shares similar memories about how he worked for the Company.

"I sold at least 90 or 100 paintings through the Company...So to answer the question how I made my living: I was painting a piece for three months – in my dreams, probably. In reality, I worked on a piece for three or four days... but in the meantime, I could live my own life, I could experiment and read."¹³⁸

The serial production of paintings became a common practice for those who tried to earn their living from the Company. The phenomenon soon was regarded as a serious problem

¹³⁷ Interview with József Bartl on June 10, 2010, in his apartment in Budapest.

¹³⁸ Interview with Lajos Kántor on June 17, 2010, in his studio-apartment on Alkotmány street, Budapest.

for the profession: it became a recurring topic of discussion for the press¹³⁹ and for professional meetings as well. During the fall of 1962, the Art Committee¹⁴⁰ devoted special attention to the crisis of easel painting and the problems of the “képcsarnoki festészet” [Company-style painting], which had gained pejorative overtones by the 1960s. As painter Endre Domanovszky, the rector of the Academy of Fine Arts pointed out at an Art Committee meeting in 1962, at the core of the problem was that the state did not provide sufficient support for the genre of easel painting.

“Easel painting should be considered as a higher-quality genre [as compared to the Company-style painting]. Therefore, in addition to the Company’s work, there is a need for supporting the creation of a more professional culture of easel painting.”¹⁴¹

According to Domanovszky’s argument, who was himself an active painter, easel painting deserved the state’s financial assistance, equally to other art forms such as high-scale sculptures or murals. György Szilárd, the director of the Art Fund and the leader of the Art Committee, took the lead in trying to find a solution for the crisis of easel painting, in the form of a new state fund. The minutes of the Art Committee allow us to

¹³⁹ Besides Fehér’s article, see for instance the longer article written by Gábor Ö. Pogány, the National Gallery’s director. Gábor Ö. Pogány, “Festészetünk problémái” [The Problems of Our Painting Culture] *Művészet* October (1964), 3. Pogány’s article is also quoted in György Horváth, “Kortárs művészet a magyar múzeumokban és az állami vásárlások 1945-1980” [Contemporary Art in Hungarian Museums and State Acquisitions, 1945-1980] in Ferencné Keszthelyi (ed) *Kortárs művészet múzeumi gyűjteményekben 1988-1999* [Contemporary Art in Museum Collections, 1988-1999] (Budapest: Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus, 2001): 16.

¹⁴⁰ See my brief description of the Art Committee in Chapter 3.

¹⁴¹ Minutes of the Art Committee’s meeting held on September 24, 1962. In: Tibor Wehner, *Adatok és adalékok a hatvanas évek művészetéhez: A Művészeti Bizottság jegyzőkönyvei 1962-1966* [Data and Details for the Art of the Sixties: Minutes of the Art Committee] (Budapest: Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus, 2002): 43.

follow step by step how György Szilárd, with the active participation of the members of the Art Committee, developed a solution for the painters' problem.¹⁴² After months of discussions and planning at the Committee's weekly meetings, the final design of a new funding system was agreed by the Committee in February 1963.¹⁴³ Following the approval of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Szilárd installed the new system of acquisitions on a trial basis during the summer of 1963.

4.2. The Inauguration of the Two Million Purchases

“The ‘Two Million Purchases’ came to life to support Hungarian painting... it was a funding that served as an absolute support for the development of art, as quality was the only measure there. Every work that counted was bought at the Two Million Purchases.”¹⁴⁴

This is how painter József Baska describes retrospectively the significance of the new funding system that was officially started in 1965, following the success of the trial year. Often nicknamed as the “Two Million Purchases” or the “Million Purchases,” the new fund came to life under the auspices of the Art Fund. From January 1965 on, György Szilárd, with the approval of the Ministry¹⁴⁵, managed to guarantee annual two million forints from the Art Fund's budget, specifically devoted to finance the genre of easel

¹⁴² See the minutes of the following meetings as published in Wehner (2002): September 24, 1962 (p.43); January 21, 1963 (p.327); February 1, 1963 (pp.419-420); April 1, 1963 (pp.515-516).

¹⁴³ Minute of the meeting held on February 4, 1963, reprinted in Wehner (2002): 419-420.

¹⁴⁴ Interview with József Baska, Katalin Rényi, and Judit Koplik at Rényi's and Baska's apartment, on July 1, 2010.

¹⁴⁵ MOL XIX-I-4-m 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képzőművészeti Alap, 102032. 1965.december 7. Az Alap Tanácsadó Testületének 1965.november 30-án tartott ülésének jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the November 30, 1965 Meeting of the Art Fund's Advisor Committee].

painting.

How did the “Two Million Purchases” differ from the state’s already existing patron institutions, such as the Ministry’s Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions ¹⁴⁶, and why does Baska, among many other artists whom I have interviewed, remember it with such nostalgia? As the new fund was designed as a cure for the crisis generated by the Company’s malfunctioning, painters had primary interest in the inauguration of the Two Million Purchases. In order to counterbalance the financial and topical restrictions of “Company-style painting,” the new fund propagated high quality as its crucial criterion. Additionally, the Two Million Purchases also intended to balance the inequalities of the state’s patronage system: it planned to promote specifically those painters who had been excluded from the state’s financial support thus far. “[With] priority [given] to those artists who otherwise have not been involved in state commissions, high quality must always be considered as top priority,”¹⁴⁷ the Art Fund announced, without formally defining what “high quality” meant.

The functioning of the Two Million Purchases suggests that the Art Fund, with the Ministry’s approval, gave relatively wide autonomy to painters in fundamental respects. First, the Million Purchases operated with an open submission system: every painter, who was a member of the Art Fund and/or the Association, and was thus considered a professional artist, could freely submit works three times a year, without fulfilling any

¹⁴⁶ See Chapter 3 for more information about the funding system of the Ministry’s Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions.

¹⁴⁷ “Felhívás” [Announcement] *Művészet* June (1963), 25.

preliminary expectations.¹⁴⁸ “There was no given topic or anything... I myself selected the work that I wanted to submit, here at home. I always chose the best ones, my favorite ones,”¹⁴⁹ painter Baska recalls, emphasizing how liberating the Million Purchases’ system was.

The Two Million Purchases’ open submission system gained even greater importance due to the changes that had occurred in the practice of the Ministry and the Committee of State Acquisitions since 1964. Previously both the Ministry’s Department of Fine Arts and the Committee of State Acquisitions had acquired works from exhibitions that had been pre-juried by the Art Fund.¹⁵⁰ By 1965, the recently founded Institute of Art and Culture had taken over the Art Fund’s juror responsibility.¹⁵¹ Apparently, the Institute turned out to be a much stricter and centralized judge than its predecessor. In addition to carefully watching every exhibition, in each case the Institute’s jurors specifically defined which ones of the displayed pieces were eligible for purchase by the state patrons, as archival materials from 1965 show.¹⁵² It means that the Institute of Art and Culture precisely defined which artworks had a chance to be considered for acquisitions. In this highly controlled atmosphere, it is striking that there was no preselection at all at the Two Million Purchases: neither the Institute nor the Art Fund intervened in the submission

¹⁴⁸ According to the initial plan, there would have been a fourth open submission as well, however, the Art Fund finally decided to order commissions, replacing the fourth purchases in 1965. MOL XIX-I-4-m 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képzőművészeti Alap, 102032. 1965.december 7. Az Alap Tanácsadó Testületének 1965.november 30-án tartott ülésének jegyzőkönyve [Minutes of the November 30, 1965 Meeting of the Art Fund’s Advisor Committee].

¹⁴⁹ Interview with József Baska, Katalin Rényi, and Judit Koplik, on July 1, 2010.

¹⁵⁰ About the acquisition system of the Ministry and the Committee of State Acquisitions, see Chapter 3.

¹⁵¹ About the foundation of the Institute of Art and Culture, see Chapter 3.

¹⁵² MOL XIX-I-4-m 48.doboz, 1965. 3.tétel, Vásárlások.

policy of the Two Million Purchases.¹⁵³ At least on the level of submission, the operation of the Two Million Purchases allowed for real competition; every style, form, and topic could be submitted and considered for acquisition – as long as it was an easel painting. One stylistic limitation was introduced in 1966, when the Art Fund announced that they organized an additional, fourth submission as well, however, they specifically expected realist, figurative works for this extra, winter submission.¹⁵⁴ Art historian Judit Koplik, who had begun to work at the Art Fund as a young graduate in 1963 and was primarily responsible for organizing the Two Million Purchases between 1965 and 1980, recalls the contradictory way in which these figurative submissions worked out.

“In the first years, they [the Art Fund] kept this rule that only figurative works were accepted at the fourth submission, but then they canceled it. But this rule was anyway quite ridiculous. They only accepted realist work, but then Kokas’s [Ignác Kokas painter] total abstract works could somehow always fit the realist selection, they could ideologize it as figurative. But he was one of the real favorites.”¹⁵⁵

The figurative criterion of the fourth submission was either canceled, as Koplik suggests, or it was simply not pursued in practice in a consistent way. In any case, the official documentation of the Two Million Purchases indicate that stylistically diverse paintings were acquired, even at the fourth submissions, which the Art Fund regularly organized

¹⁵³ MOL XIX-I-4-m. 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képző- és Iparművészeti Szövetség, 100.041/1965. 1965.január 9. “Kétmillió forintos vásárlási keret: A Szövetség Javaslat” [Two Million Forints Purchases: Proposal by the Association]

¹⁵⁴ “A Magyar Népköztársaság Képzőművészeti Alapjának körlevele a festőkhöz” [Letter by the Art Fund of the Hungarian People’s Republic to the Painters] *Művészet* 9 (1966), 13.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with József Baska, Katalin Rényi, and Judit Koplik, July 1, 2010, Budapest.

from 1966 on.

Besides the open submission policy, the Two Million Purchases' jury system was equally unique at the time. Along with György Szilárd, the director of the Art Fund, a wide range of artists was invited to decide about the Art Fund's acquisitions.¹⁵⁶ The Art Fund rotated two jury committees in 1965,¹⁵⁷ with 15-15 artists as members; the jurors could only send their own paintings for every second submission, when they were not jury members. It is worthwhile to compare the Two Million Purchases' 1965-jury list with the jurors of the Ministry's Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions in the same year. In the case of the Committee of State Acquisitions, three major art historians, Nóra Aradi, Gábor Ö. Pogány, and István Genthon, and four artists decided about the acquisitions in 1965, namely: the post-impressionist master of painting, Aurél Bernáth; the Greek sculptor, Makrisz Agamemnón; the socialist realist painter, Sándor Ék, who - even in 1965 - still created realist paintings with direct political messages; and the constructivist, geometric painter Jenő Barcsay, who had also emerged as the professor and master of anatomy at the Academy of Fine Arts.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, an official from the Ministry's Fine Arts Department, Elza Kmettyné participated in the Committee's jury. At the same time, the Ministry's Fine Arts Department pursued most of its acquisitions based

¹⁵⁶ "Tájékoztató az 1965-ös állami képzőművészeti vásárlások bemutatásáról" [Information about the Display of the Results of State Acquisitions in 1965], 3. In Az 1965-ös állami képzőművészeti vásárlások, X1965 Állami vásárlások (84.doboz), Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Adattára.

¹⁵⁷ It is interesting that all my interviewees firmly state that four different committees, with altogether 60 artists as jury members, operated at the Two Million Purchases. Yet, the written sources clearly describe two committees in 1965: MOL XIX-I-4-m. 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képző- és Iparművészeti Szövetség, 100.041/1965. 1965.január 9. "Kétmillió forintos vásárlási keret: A Szövetség Javaslat" [Two Million Forints Purchases: Proposal by the Association of Fine and Applied Artists]. It is possible that later, during the 1970s, the Two Million Purchases operated with four juries, however, future research needs to clarify this point.

¹⁵⁸ List from: MOL XIX-I-4-m 48.doboz, 1965. 3.tétel, Vásárlások, 100390.

on the decisions of two jurors¹⁵⁹: the head of the Department, Endre Gádor, and his deputy, Elza Kmettyné¹⁶⁰. In most cases, these two officials picked artworks from exhibitions, which had been pre-juried by the Institute of Art and Culture.

As compared to the Committee of State Acquisitions and the Ministry's Fine Arts Department, it seems striking that art historians and state officials (with one exception, György Szilárd) were excluded from the Million Purchases's jury. Instead, altogether thirty painters¹⁶¹ shared the responsibility of acquiring easel paintings from the Art Fund's two million forints budget. In 1965, the two rotating committees were headed by the rector of the Academy of Fine Arts, realist painter Endre Domanovszky, and the post-impressionist master, Aurél Bernáth.¹⁶² Undoubtedly, painters of realism –naturalism (László Ridovics, Sándor Vecsési, János Szurcsik, András Balogh, or for instance the neorealist István Mácsai and Gábor Szinte, and the socialist realist Sándor Ék) and post-impressionism (Ervin Tamás, Szilárd Iván, or Pál Miháltz) formed the majority of the jury, in addition to the more decorative - and sometimes expressive - painters, like József Breznay, Rudolf Bér, László Óvári, György Konecsni (mostly known for his political

¹⁵⁹ MOL XIX-I-4-m 48.doboz, 1965. 3.tétel, Vásárlások.

¹⁶⁰ Some of my interviewees, Lajos Kántor [Budapest, June 17, 2010], as well as József Berkes and Judit Koplik [Budapest, June 25, 2010], talked about Kmettyné's involvement in the Ministry's acquisitions. All of them talked about Kmettyné as Elzusa, the wife of respected painter János Kmetty, who had personal connections with many artists.

¹⁶¹ It is worth noting that no single female painter participated in the Two Million Purchases' juries in 1965.

¹⁶² MOL XIX-I-4-m. 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képző- és Iparművészeti Szövetség, 100.041/1965. 1965.január 9. "Kétmillió forintos vásárlási keret: A Szövetség Javaslat" [Two Million Forints Purchases: Proposal by the Association of Fine and Applied Artists] I would like to note here that I could not identify any other documents that would provide further information about the 1965-jurors. The list I reference here was created by the Association, as a proposal: on the archived document we can see Endre Gádor's handwritten note that advises to double-check the list. A later letter from February 1965 (100.321. Ko400/1965.), written by Gádor to György Szilárd says that the Ministry accepted the Association's list. However, we do not know whether there was any further correspondence between the Ministry and the Association in the meantime. One reason to be skeptical whether it was the final list is the fact that painter Tibor Csernus is included as one of the jurors, however, he had probably already left the country by this time. Further research is required to clarify this point.

posters), István Eigel, János Blaski, Jenő Béres, Simon Sarkantyú, Tibor Csernus. Yet, the geometric abstract Jenő Barcsay, the constructivist-expressive Géza Fónyi, the more and more abstract Pál Gerzson, the symbolist Tibor Duray and László Patay, or the lyrical abstract Ignác Kokas and László Bartha also participated in the jury.¹⁶³

It was the Association of Fine and Applied Artists who had the right to delegate this wide range of painters to the jury committees. Yet, as archival documents show, the Ministry had the final say over the jury list. “The committees represented different movements and styles, in order to ensure that every artist and trend has the same chance. It was such a clever system,”¹⁶⁴ Judit Koplik, official of the Art Fund said in an interview in 2010. Even if high quality was the key criterion, artists certainly had their own aesthetic preferences, Koplik explains; therefore the diversity of painters was necessary to enforce the equality of styles at the Million Purchases. Painter and juror Sándor Vecsési, who has been a follower of the early 20th-century naturalist Nagybánya school, and an admirer of its master, István Csók, describes how he juried the submitted works:

“I am considered as a realist painter, right? Or as a naturalist, or what the hell...

As long as I saw that a painting had no talent, it did not matter at all what kind of style it belonged to...It was not interesting from my perspective. But if I had to choose between an old master from Szentendre or a piece with an experimenting

¹⁶³ I must acknowledge the preliminary character of these stylistic categorizations. I mostly used Edit Lajta (ed.), *Művészeti kislexikon* [Abridged Lexicon of Art] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973), and the articles of artportal.hu online art lexicon.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with József Baska, Katalin Rényi, and Judit Koplik at Rényi's and Baska's apartment, on July 1, 2010.

style, well, I did choose the former... But I anyway would like to slap everyone who does not like the art of István Csók!”¹⁶⁵

In order to further ensure that the equality and high quality of the Two Million Purchases, the jurors first had a clandestine vote, and only then, in the second round, an open debate about the paintings. All the submitted works were displayed without the painter’s name, specified only by a number, Koplik tells:

“The jury members would all put down the numbers of the pictures they liked, and then I collected their notes to count the votes... every painting that received more than six votes was then discussed in an open debate by the jurors. The main idea was that if a picture got at least six votes from the fifteen then that was a high-quality work.”¹⁶⁶

Yet, certain styles and unique features, not to mention artists’ signatures on the canvas, could be easily identified, even without the names being displayed along with the works. Equally hypocritical was the fact that many jurors had to vote for example about their spouses’ work. Painter Sándor Vecsési, who has been married with painter Arany Bazsonyi and, was a member of the Two Million Purchases’ jury from 1965, often experienced this controversial situation. “When I was at the jury and my wife’s picture was on stage at the debate, then I automatically left the room...but sometimes the others

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Sándor Vecsési, Arany Bazsonyi, and Judit Koplik, June 24, 2010, in Vecsési and Bazsonyi’s apartment.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with József Breznay, Mária Gánóczy, and Judit Koplik on June 3, 2010, in Breznay and Gánóczy’s apartment.

did not let me leave... but how absurd is that?”¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, many of my interviewees admit that the Two Million Purchases had a significant social aspect as well: the artist-jurors tried to use the Art Fund’s budget to provide financial help for their fellows. “At that time, we really paid attention to each other – if someone was in desperate need of financial support, we tried to help each other. But of course, the work always had to be of good quality,”¹⁶⁸ Vecsési says. Similarly, expressivist painter Lajos Sváby emphasizes that the Two Million Purchases, along with the Company, meant an essential source of living for many painters, including himself.

“...Of course, there was this role for the Two Million Purchases to provide money for painters, and thus there were certain must-buys for the jurors, because of the living artists’ social situation or public position... Undoubtedly, there are some painters on these lists whom I would not purchase today, according to my present way of thinking. But then, at that time, I did not even question my decision to vote for their works, it would have been impossible not to acquire their paintings. ... But has there ever been an age when all of the favored artists are good ones?”¹⁶⁹

It is interesting to look at the acquisition documents of those artists who were members in the jury committees: a special dynamic can be detected in the acquisition of their work.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Sándor Vecsési, Arany Bazsonyi, and Judit Koplik, June 24, 2010, in Vecsési and Bazsonyi’s apartment.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Lajos Sváby in his Budapest apartment and studio, April 2009.

In 1965, the Art Fund purchased one to four paintings from each member of the jury, with the exceptions of Endre Domanovszky, Jenő Barcsay, and György Konecsni.¹⁷⁰ The rotating juries never bought paintings made by any of the current members – however, it seems that they took turns at purchasing each others’ work. For instance, the jurors of the first committee did not participate in the first and the third submissions. Yet, they were not excluded from the generous financial support of the Two Million Purchases: at the second submission they could offer more paintings for acquisition, which the second committee accepted, according to the documents. Numerous cases show this tendency; amongst others Pál Miháltz, András Balogh, József Breznay, Ignác Kokas, János Szurcsik, László Óvári and István Mácsai could serve here as examples.¹⁷¹

Once the painter-jurors managed to come to a final decision about the works that they wanted to acquire from the Two Million Purchases’ budget, the so-called *Intézőbizottság* [Control Committee] appeared to double-check the acquisitions. In 1965, along with György Szilárd, the director of the Art Fund and therefore the leader of the Control Committee, painters Aurél Bernáth and Endre Domanovszky, the heads of the two jury committees, Tibor Ormos, the director of the Institute of Art and Culture, Endre Gábor, the head of the Ministry’s Fine Arts Department, Ervin Tamás, painter and secretary of the Association’s Painters Department, as well as Károly Plesznivy, the main secretary of the Association served as members of this controlling jury.¹⁷² However, according to Judit

¹⁷⁰ MNG 22915/1989/I. 1-361. A Művészeti Alap vásárlásai. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

¹⁷¹ In the next section of my chapter, in which I show some of the paintings purchased in 1965, I point out when a painter also served as juror during the same year. However, due to the rotating committees that took turns, I never mean that the juror actually bought himself.

¹⁷² MOL XIX-I-4-m. 45.doboz, 2.tétel. Képző- és Iparművészeti Szövetség, 100.041/1965. 1965.január 9. “Kétmillió forintos vásárlási keret” [Two Million Forints Purchases].

Koplik and József Berkes's memories, the Control Committee rarely rejected any of the paintings. "Szilárd [the Art Fund's director] had to approve every decision. But he was a real gentleman, he did not go against the profession [the painters' juries],"¹⁷³ Koplik claims. Berkes, who was the head of the Art Fund's Fine Arts Department, remembered one case when the Committee firmly objected the jury's decision: in the early years of the Million Purchases, Szilárd once opposed to purchase a piece by surrealist – abstract painter Endre Bálint, who had returned in 1962 from his Paris emigration.¹⁷⁴ Yet, this was a unique and single case, Berkes said; as the documents also prove, Bálint's paintings were acquired at the Two Million Purchases from 1968 on.¹⁷⁵

4.3. Diversity of Styles and Topics at the Two Million Purchases

Which artists and styles were supported by the Art Fund, as a result of the Million Purchases' unique operation? In 1965, paintings of 144 contemporary painters were bought from the Art Fund's budget through the Million Purchases. Altogether, the jury purchased 305 paintings and paid between 2,000 and 16,000 forints for each piece, primarily depending on the size of the work.¹⁷⁶ Along with portraits, still lifes, and landscapes, the Art Fund bought genre paintings as well, which depict images from everyday life. Even though many of the genre paintings show workers and peasants, none of these images, with one exception, bears a similarity to the idealized, heroic depictions

¹⁷³ Interview with Judit Koplik, József Baska and Katalin Rényi, July 1, 2010, Budapest.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with József Berkes and Judit Koplik at Berkes's apartment in Budapest, on June 25, 2010.

¹⁷⁵ MNG 22915/1989/I./28. Bálint Endre. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

¹⁷⁶ 22915/1989/I. 1-361. A Művészeti Alap vásárlásai. MNG. The National Gallery's archives have preserved personal documents for each painter from whom the Art Fund acquired works between 1965 and 1980. Since I have not been able to discover any further written sources about the Two Million Purchases, I used these personal documents to reconstruct the annual lists of the Art Fund's acquisitions.

of the early fifties. Instead, expressionism, cubism, and constructivism influenced these works, besides postimpressionism and naturalism-realism, which had been strongly represented during the consolidation years as well. In this last section of the chapter, based on the forty-six paintings that I have managed to visually identify thus far,¹⁷⁷ I will analyze the paintings of the first year of the Two Million Purchases according to themes, as listed above. Within each theme, I seek to identify styles and movements¹⁷⁸, as well as artists' different generations.¹⁷⁹

Landscapes and Cityscapes

¹⁷⁷ The Art Fund gave away all the purchased works to different state and party institutions, as well as to museums all around Hungary. Even though I have been looking for paintings that were given to for instance Communist Party offices or state orphanages, most of the works have disappeared during the transition years of the early 1990s. Thus I could primarily work with the paintings that I have managed to find in museums. Furthermore, the National Gallery's archives have preserved a box of untitled photographs, some of which I could identify with the help of the Two Million Purchases' documents. I will use the relevant materials from this photo collection as well.

¹⁷⁸ Further research and art historical analysis is required to examine the formation of the different styles and movements of the Two Million Purchases; my brief description only intends to serve as a sketch. I used art historian Katalin Dávid's 1966-essay about the Two Million Purchases as a guideline for my analysis. Dávid gave a general overview of contemporary Hungarian art and its representation at the Two Million Purchases. She described four main styles that dominated the 1965-scene: (Hungarian) post-impressionism; Hungarian colorism, which had derived from the Fauves' movement; a distinctively local version of constructivism, which, as opposed to older masters' cubism, constructs a realist vision from shapes; and finally, decorativism. Katalin Dávid, "A kortárs magyar festészet alakulásáról" [About the Directions of Contemporary Hungarian Art], March 1, 1966, 20 pages, Unpublished (according to an article by Géza Pernecky, Dávid was requested by the head of the Art Fund to write her professional analysis of the 1965-Two Million Purchases as an outsider expert [Géza Pernecky, "A „vásárlási kiállításról“ tanácskozott a Képzőművész Szövetség" [The Fine Artists' Association Discussed the Exhibition of the [Million] Purchases] *Magyar Nemzet* September 30 (1966)]). I thank Judit Koplik for kindly sharing with me the digitalized format of Dávid's original stencil study.

¹⁷⁹ To gather basic information about the artists, I mostly used the 1973-edition of the Abridged Lexicon of Art: Edit Lajta (ed), *Művészeti kislexikon* [Abridged Lexicon of Art] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973) and the online articles of artportal.hu. Further sources are noted.

Lake Balaton and its region was a recurring topic for landscapes: artists of different styles and generations painted the lake for the first Two Million Purchases. One of the jurors, Lajos Szentiványi¹⁸⁰ represents the older generation of artists who had studied with Nagybánya's plein air masters at the Academy during the



Picture 7: *Windy Balaton* by Lajos Szentiványi.



Picture 8: *Landscape of Balaton*, Kornél Szentgyörgyi.

1930s. Szentiványi submitted a strongly colored, postimpressionist piece, entitled *Szeles Balaton* [Windy Balaton] in 1965.¹⁸¹ The picture, which was purchased for 6,000 forints, is dominated by the intense green color of the reed bed. The mid-generation is featured by the work of Sándor Bakky and Kornél Szentgyörgyi: they both graduated from the the post-

Nagybánya master István Szőnyi's class in the early 1940s. Szentgyörgyi¹⁸², who had been awarded with the Kossuth Prize for a co-authored socialist realist work in 1953,

¹⁸⁰ Zoltán Nagy Vécsi, *Szentiványi Lajos*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/szentivanyi-lajos-246> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

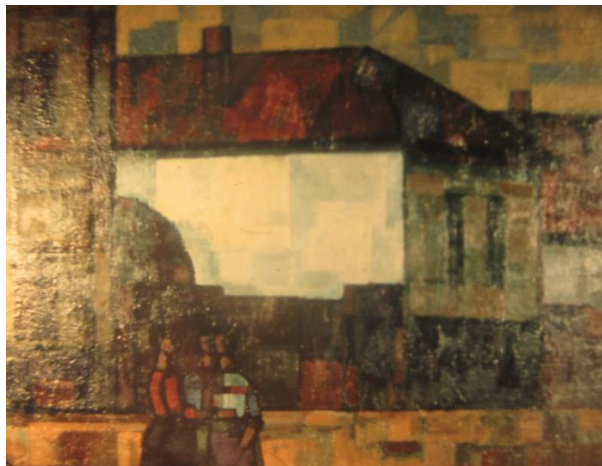
¹⁸¹ MNG 22915/1989/I./301. Szentiványi Lajos. I/48. 1965.

¹⁸² Zsuzsa Simon + MAOE, *Szentgyörgyi Kornél*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/szentgyorgyi-kornel-6435> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

painted a decorative landscape in 1965. On his way to total abstraction, as his later career shows, the *Balatoni táj* [Landscape of Balaton]¹⁸³ is still based on scenery. Yet the branches of the trees, the sky, as well as the hills are made out of splashes of expressive colors. Sándor Bakky's piece entitled *Táj* [Landscape]¹⁸⁴ shows the influence of painter József Egry's late, expressive period.¹⁸⁵ Just as Egry, Bakky here used sketched lines with expressive colors to make his vision of the Lake.



Picture 9: *Landscape* by Sándor Bakky.



Picture 10: István Moldován, *Nagymaros*.

István Moldován, who also studied with Szőnyi from 1940, painted this cubist-constructivist image of a street in Nagymaros, a city in North Hungary.¹⁸⁶ Besides the ground under the chatting

¹⁸³ MNG 22915/1989/I./299. Szentgyörgyi Kornél. III.236./1965.

¹⁸⁴ MNG 22915/1989/I./13. Bakky Sándor. I.621./1965.

¹⁸⁵ László Heitler, *Bakky Sándor*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/bakky-sandor-3855> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]. About József Egry, see: Gábor András, et al. *Magyar képzőművészet a 20. században*, 92-93.

¹⁸⁶ MNG 22915/1989/I./227. Moldován István. I.193./1965. [Title: Nagymaros]

figures, the sky and the house are also constructed from differently colored shapes: the sky is made of yellow and dark greenish, almost grey rectangles.

The youngest, post-1956 generation is represented by Ferenc Kóka's landscape of the Shipyard Island.¹⁸⁷ Instead of the older painters' plein air naturalism, inherited from Nagybánya, Kóka, a fresh graduate (1960), chose a scenery in which nature contrasts industrial, urban Budapest.

Undoubtedly, Kóka's painting accords with his master, Aurél Bernáth's postimpressionist style.¹⁸⁸

Similarly, Pál Deim¹⁸⁹ belonged to the youngest painters in the mid-sixties. Graduated in 1963, Deim



Picture 11: Landscape of the Shipyard Island by Ferenc Kóka.

Painted a cityscape entitled

*Lágymányosi telep*¹⁹⁰ [Housing Project in Lágymányos] in 1965, which was purchased at the Two Million Purchases for 6,000 forints. As one of his early pieces, the *Housing Project* is still rather post-impressionistic, yet, the abstract colored shapes already seem to signal the constructivist Jenő Barcsay's influence.

¹⁸⁷ MNG 22915/1989/I./183. Kóka Ferenc. III.295./1965. [Title: Hajógyári táj]

¹⁸⁸ Andrea Verba, *Kóka Ferenc*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/koka-ferenc-732> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

¹⁸⁹ Ildikó Nagy, *Deim Pál*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/deim-pal-60> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

¹⁹⁰ MNG 22915/1989/I./79. Deim Pál. ST/II. 16/5./1965.



Picture 12: Pál Deim, Housing Project in Lágymányos.

I would like to highlight one further painting here, even though it is not exactly suitable for the category of landscapes. A 1956-graduate of the Academy, László Patay was one of the jurors in 1965. He painted the piece entitled *Birkózás* [Fight] for the first Two Million Purchases, which was bought for 12,000 forints.¹⁹¹ Illustrating a mountain or rock, this piece seems to belong to symbolism.

¹⁹¹ MNG 22915/1989/I./257. Patay László. III.266./1965.



Picture 13: *Fight* by László Patay.

Genre Paintings



Picture 14: János Jakuba, *In Front of the House*.

Workers and peasants appear on many of the genre paintings that were purchased by the Art Fund in 1965. János Jakuba, who had graduated from the Academy in 1931, painted *Ház előtt* [In front of the House]¹⁹² with two faceless men. With his distinctive usage of pale colors, Jakuba made an idyllic image of rural lifestyle. Peasants examine the result of their work on the realist *Cséplés után* [After Treshing],¹⁹³

Painted by juror László Ridovics, who had graduated in 1951 from Szőnyi's class, following his return from

a year-long scholarship in Leningrad. The jury also purchased a piece by Gyula Magos,

¹⁹² MNG 22915/1989/I./154. Jakuba János. I.156./1965.

¹⁹³ MNG 22915/1989/I./268. Ridovics László. IV.52./1965.

who had finished the Academy in 1957. The *Kenderkötöző* [Tying Hemp]¹⁹⁴ follows the heritage of Alföld-style painting, and primarily István Nagy's harsh usage of the pastel.¹⁹⁵



Picture 15: *After Treshing* by László Ridovics.



Picture 16: *Tying Hemp* by Gyula Magos.

¹⁹⁴ MNG 22915/1989/I./207. Magos Gyula. ST/I.20/2./1965.

¹⁹⁵ Pál Szuromi, *Magos Gyula*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/magos-gyula-2069> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

Ignác Kokas's piece, entitled *Este a falun* [The Night in the Village], also illustrates a rural scene. Kokas, who had studied with Aurél Bernáth at the Academy, graduated in 1952; his diplomawork, *Az asztalos* [The Carpenter] made him immediately well-known in the profession.¹⁹⁶ On his way to his distinctive, lyrical abstract style, *The Night in the Village* belongs to his so-called “green period.”



Picture 17: Ignác Kokas, *The Night in the Village*.



Picture 18: Detail of the *Foundry Workers* by Sarkantyú.

Kohászok [Foundry Workers]¹⁹⁷ by juror Simon Sarkantyú was one of the spectacles of the 1965-purchases: the almost two meters high and three meters wide huge piece was acquired by the jury for 15,000 forints. At the front of the constructivist background, Sarkantyú placed three standing men figures; the close-up of one of the faces shows the

¹⁹⁶ Katalin Szabó Sinóros, Kokas Ignác. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/kokas-ignac-137> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

¹⁹⁷ MNG 22915/1989/I./270. Sarkantyú Simon. III.335./1965.

expressive painting style that Sarkantyu, who had studied with the post-Nagybánya master Gyula Rudnay during the 1940s¹⁹⁸, used for this large-scale work.



Picture 19: Simon Sarkantyu, *Foundry Workers*.

Another juror József Breznay submitted one of his earlier works for the first Two Million Purchases. A 1939-graduate of Szőnyi's class, Breznay abandoned the post-Nagybánya-style plein air painting



Picture 20: *Female Workers* by József Breznay.

¹⁹⁸ Attila Tasnádi, *Sarkantyu Simon*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/sarkantyu-simon-1001> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

during the late fifties, to make colorful, decorative genres of everyday life.¹⁹⁹ The *Munkáslányok* [Female Workers]²⁰⁰ belongs to this period; painted in 1957 (the same year as his visit to Paris), the painting is a detailed description of two female electricians. A young, female painter, Mária Túry's cubistic- geometric worker depiction was also acquired by the jury in 1965. Although she had studied with the realist master, Endre Domanovszky (she graduated in 1953), the *Öreg cipész* [Old shoemaker]²⁰¹ rather shows Jenő Barcsay's geometric, constructivist influence.



Picture 21: Mária Túry, *Old Shoemaker*.

Besides rural lifestyle, peasants and workers, many painters created genres of modern (urban) life too. Juror András Balogh's idyllic - realist piece, entitled *Tihanyi este* [Evening at Tihany],²⁰² shows a young couple who peacefully enjoy their evening wine at the bank of lake Balaton. Another juror, Ervin Tamás's *Zenehallgatók* [Listeners]²⁰³ was also acquired at the first Two Million Purchases. Tamás, who had graduated from

¹⁹⁹ József Breznay, Breznay József: festményei köz- és magángyűjteményekben valamint a művész tulajdonában/ public and private collections (Budapest: Breznay József, 2007): 5.

²⁰⁰ MNG 22915/1989/I./58. Breznay József . IV.49./1965.

²⁰¹ MNG 22915/1989/I./328. K. Túry Mária. IV.8./1965

²⁰² MNG 22915/1989/I./14. Balogh András. IV.7./1965.

²⁰³ MNG 22915/1989/I./315. Tamás Ervin. IV.30./1965.

Szőnyi's class in 1946, distanced from post-impressionism by the early sixties; as the *Listeners* shows, Tamás moved closer to decorativism and then pop-art in a few years' time. This 1965-piece depicts three young women who sit around a gramophone; instead of a realist portrayal, the girls' faces are blue and white. Also a graduate of the 1946-class,



Picture 22: András Balogh, *Evening at Tihany*.

Ferenc Mohácsi belongs to the same generation as Tamás. By 1965, he had emerged as a follower of the Barcsay-style constructivism, as the geometric *Koncert* [Concert]²⁰⁴ shows.



Picture 23: Ervin Tamás, *Listeners*.

²⁰⁴ MNG 22915/1989/I./226. Mohácsi Ferenc. IV. 47./1965.



Picture 24: Ferenc Mohácsi, *Concert*.

Historicizing Political Image



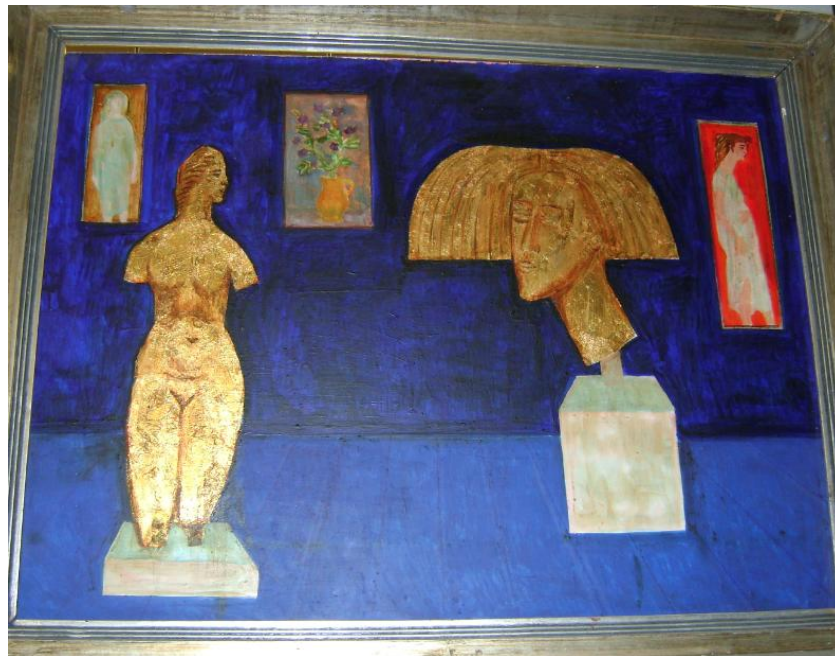
Picture 25: Sándor Ék, *The Red Army's Oath*.

From the list of the Art Fund's 1965-acquisitions, I could identify one painting that shows connection with the fifties' heroic socialist realism: juror Sándor Ék's piece, entitled *A Vörös Gárda esküje* [The Red Army's Oath].²⁰⁵ Ék, who had joined the Communist Party at the age of sixteen, in 1918, became a member of the illegal communist movement from

1919. After decades of emigration, he finally returned to Hungary in 1944, as an officer of the Red Army. Even though his realist painting of the Army and its strong, young, and cheerful soldiers must have seemed quite retrograde in 1965,²⁰⁶ it was purchased for 8,000 forints at the Two Million Purchases as a commission during the winter of 1965.

Still Lives

The strong blue and the vibrating gold dominate Lipót Böhm's colorist piece entitled *Csend* [Silence]²⁰⁷: as if the archaic works of art floated timelessly in the museum's silence. Poldi, as the contemporary art world knew the painter, graduated from the post-impressionist master, Szőnyi's class in 1946.



Picture 26: Lipót Böhm, *Silence*.

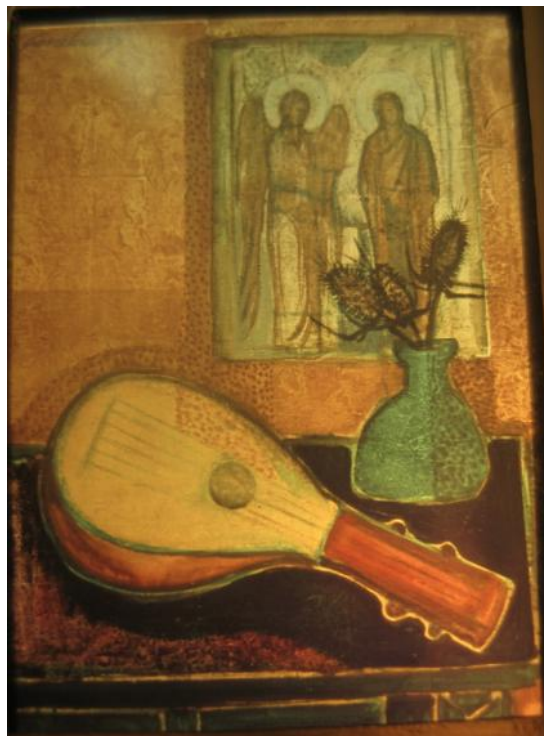
²⁰⁶ Initially, Ék created this image of the Red Army as a graphic design in 1939. See Nóra Aradi, *A szocialista képzőművészet története* [The History of Socialist Fine Arts] (Budapest: Corvina, c.1970), 153.

²⁰⁷ MNG 22915/1989/I./57. Böhm Lipót. II.52./1965.

Along with several older masters' figurative, decorative still lifes, such as juror Jenő Béres's watermelon still life²⁰⁸ or Andor Kántor's still life with a Buddha sculpture²⁰⁹, members of the youngest generation submitted their still lifes for the 1965 Two Million Purchases. József Bartl was one of the young painters who had tried to make his living from working for the Company after his graduation in 1959. In 1965, three of his paintings were accepted



Picture 27: József Bartl, *Still Life*.



Picture 28: Ágnes Garabuczy, *In Front of Icon*.

for acquisition at the Two Million Purchases. One of them is the flower still²¹⁰ that belongs to Bartl's figurative, colorist pictures.

Ágnes Garabuczy, who graduated in 1960, was also represented by a still life at the first Million Purchases. Her painting,

²⁰⁸ MNG 22915/1989/I./40. Béres Jenő. I.512./1965. [Title: Dinnye (Watermelon)].

²⁰⁹ MNG 22915/1989/I./162. Kántor Andor. I.84./1965. [Title: Csenedélet Buddha szoborral (Still Life with Buddha Sculpture)].

²¹⁰ MNG 22915/1989/I./22. Bartl József. III.133./1965. [Title: Csenedelet (Still life)].

entitled *Ikon előtt* [In front of an Icon]²¹¹ depicts Picasso's mandolin at the front of an icon. The latter has been a recurring theme for the painter since her visit to the Soviet Union: Garabuczy has created several images with saints.²¹²

Portraits



Picture 29: Rudolf Bér, *Sitting Woman*.

An elegant woman reprovingly looks at the viewer from Rudolf Bér's painting; even though the strong hues almost deconstruct the image, the woman's expression comes through, despite the visual confusion of shapes and boundaries on the *Ülő nő* [Sitting Woman]²¹³. Bér had graduated from the postimpressionist master, Bernáth's class in 1949;

he found his strongly colored style after making some socialist realist works during the early 1950s.

²¹¹ MNG 22915/1989/I./115. Garabuczy Ágnes. I.294./1965.

²¹² Ferenc Matits, *Garabuczy Ágnes*. <http://artportal.hu/lexikon/muveszek/garabuczy-agnes-4595> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

²¹³ MNG 22915/1989/I./38. Bér Rudolf. I.451./1965.

Zoltán Szabó, who had finished the Academy in 1958, painted the strongly colored *Kesztyűs nő* [Woman with Gloves]²¹⁴ for the Two Million Purchases; while József Dezső, who had graduated in 1960 from Bernáth's class, submitted his realist depiction of a pregnant woman.²¹⁵



Picture 30: Zoltán Szabó, *Woman with Gloves*.

The symbolist master and juror, Tibor Duray submitted a realist self-portrait for the 1965 Million Purchases.²¹⁶ The then 53-year-old painter, as opposed some earlier editions, is not in the midst of painting on this piece: he is standing in front of a sculpture, and

²¹⁴ MNG 22915/1989/I./291. Szabó Zoltán. I.544./1965.

²¹⁵ MNG 22915/1989/I./81. Dezső József. ST/I.20/13. [Title: Várandós asszony (Pregnant Woman)].

²¹⁶ MNG 22915/1989/I./88. Duray Tibor. III.218./1965.

staring at us, turning away from the artwork in the background.



Picture 31: *Self-portrait* by Tibor Duray.

Summary

Overall, the list of the painters, together with some of the pieces, suggests that a great variety of themes, styles, and generations were acquired by the artist jury of the first Two Million Purchases. As art historian Katalin Dávid summarized in her 1966-study, the first acquisitions of the Art Fund's Two Million Purchases managed to provide for a wide array of contemporary Hungarian artists and movements, yet, not for all of them.

“...This collection [of the first year of the Million Purchases] shows such a vast array of today’s Hungarian art that it can provide - not an entire but - a general picture of it. By saying that it is not an entire picture of Hungarian art, the author only means that we cannot see all the problems of our contemporary art from this collection.”²¹⁷

Although Dávid never specified what was missing from the Art Fund’s first acquisitions, retrospectively we can identify at least one group of artists who did not make it into the first year’s purchases. Those abstract artists, who showed their works at the 1957 Spring Show, were still not represented at the state acquisitions in 1965. Yet, it seems impossible to reconstruct why these artists were missing from the first Two Million Purchases: we do not know whether they submitted their works but then were not purchased by the jury, or they did not even try the submission.

4.4. Conclusions

By the inauguration of the Two Million Purchases, the socialist state had emerged as an incredibly generous patron of the arts. From 1965 on, the Art Fund, the Ministry’s Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions spent altogether 5,4 million forints for art patronage each year.²¹⁸ Inside this system, painters had a specifically desirable position, due to the Art Fund’s benevolent new support that specifically focused

²¹⁷ Dávid, “A kortárs magyar festészet alakulásáról”, 2.

²¹⁸ “Tájékoztató az 1965-ös állami képzőművészeti vásárlások bemutatásáról” [Information about the Display of the Results of State Acquisitions in 1965], Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Adattára.

on the genre of easel painting. Moreover, this substantial state fund was, on some levels, controlled by the artists themselves: 30 painters purchased the work of roughly 150 artists, including themselves. “From my perspective, I can only be grateful that, for good prices, they [the Art Fund] purchased our work...or we purchased each other’s paintings...so that they purchased us,”²¹⁹ painter Sándor Vecsési, who was also a constant member of the jury, ironically reflects on the Million Purchases.

As interviews with some of the artist-jurors revealed, artists had several criteria when they considered the submitted paintings for acquisition: the quality and the aesthetics of a piece could as much matter as the creator’s social situation. As articles from the period show, contemporary critics soon began to label the Million Purchases as “social acquisitions.” Yet, painters whom I have interviewed remember the Two Million Purchases as important professional events where they could all show the best of their work. “We were waiting for it, we were preparing for it, we were talking about it,”²²⁰ artist Katalin Rényi nostalgically describes the excitement that the Two Million Purchases generated in the art world’s public sphere.

Certainly, the number of artists who could enjoy the Two Million Purchases’ financial assistance is rather impressive: almost three times more painters were supported by the Art Fund than the Ministry in 1965.²²¹ Even though there was certain overlap – more than

²¹⁹ Interview with Sándor Vecsési, Arany Bazsonyi, and Judit Koplik, June 24, 2010, in Vecsési and Bazsonyi’s apartment

²²⁰ Interview with Judit Kopik, József Baska and Katalin Rényi, July 1, 2010, Budapest

²²¹ My calculation, based on the 1965-documentation of the Ministry’s acquisitions. 23010/1989. III/1965. Minisztériumi vásárlások, Nyilvántartás a képzőművészeti alkotások vásárlásairól, Minisztériumi keret, 1965. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára.

half of the painters who were acquired by the Ministry also received support from the Art Fund in 1965 -, the Two Million Purchases certainly meant an opening for painters; a substantially larger number of painters managed to make their living from state patronage from 1965 on.

Finally, we must point out that, along with painters, the Two Million Purchases meant extensive support for museums as well. The paintings that the Art Fund had purchased from its annual two million forints budget, mostly ended up in different museum collections as free gifts from the Art Fund. Each year, museum directors could look through the Art Fund's recent acquisitions and select works that appeared as good fits for their own collections. In addition to the National Gallery, which had absolute privilege in this final selection process, further major museums and even local collections had a chance to request paintings from the Art Fund. Moreover, the documentation of the Two Million Purchases shows that in many cases, state and party organizations could also receive gift paintings from the Art Fund. As a result, today, the Two Million Purchases' painting acquisitions can be found all around Hungary, in museum storage rooms as well as state institutions, such as schools, city halls, cultural centers, or even in hospitals.

5. The National Gallery Steps Up

The foundation of the Two Million Purchases put painters into a greatly privileged situation: from 1965 on, painters had relative freedom to divide a substantial annual budget between themselves.²²² However, art historians and museum professionals were dismayed by the Art Fund's new patronage system, and mainly by the fact that they were excluded from its jury. Scholars felt that the Two Million Purchases worked to the detriment of their autonomy in building contemporary collections: each year, most of the Art Fund's freshly acquired paintings ended up in museums, even though museum professionals did not have a say in what they would have wanted to acquire in the first place. In the National Gallery's case, this controversial situation changed in 1968, when the Ministry assigned an extensive budget of 300,000 forints for the Gallery's acquisition from contemporary artists.

The first section of this chapter describes the political, aesthetic, and practical dilemmas of creating a representative account of post-1945 Hungarian art, which I define through the example of a prominent 1969-exhibition, entitled *Hungarian Art, 1945-1969*.²²³ As my chapter aims to lay out, the problems of this exhibition were intertwined with the challenges of the National Gallery's permanent exhibitions, and thus with the issues of

²²² Later on, the Art Fund provided a less extensive budget for sculptors (from late 1965) and graphic designers (from 1971) as well. See György Horváth, "Kortárs művészet a magyar múzeumokban és az állami vásárlások 1945-1980" [Contemporary Art in Hungarian Museums and State Acquisitions, 1945-1980] in Ferencné Keszthelyi (ed) *Kortárs művészet múzeumi gyűjteményekben 1988-1999* [Contemporary Art in Museum Collections, 1988-1999] (Budapest: Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus, 2001), 17.

²²³ I use the 1969-exhibition to illustrate my points here, even though the changes in the National Gallery's acquisition system had started a year before, in 1968. I had one key reason for choosing the 1969-exhibition for my narrative: according to my best knowledge, this was the first exhibition that attempted to provide a representative account of post-1945 art in Hungary.

collection building, which the Gallery had to face since its foundation in 1957. These issues lead my narrative towards the Gallery's acquisition system, and its changes in 1968. The second part of the chapter then discusses the paintings that the Gallery purchased from its new, "independent" budget in 1968.

5.1. Dilemmas Around the Narrative of Contemporary Socialist Art

On the evening of September 20, 1969, the Hungarian Television's news service reported about the sensational opening of a new exhibition at Budapest's Kunsthalle.²²⁴ Dedicated to the post-World War II development of Hungary's fine arts, the show entitled *Magyar művészet: 1945-1969* [Hungarian Art: 1945-1969] was more than just one of the symbolic events that celebrated the 25th anniversary of the "country's liberation." The opening of this new exhibition coincided with the 22nd International Congress of Art Historians, held in Budapest that year with the participation of several hundreds of scholars from all around the world. As several articles highlighted, Kunsthalle's representative account of Hungary's contemporary art was primarily prepared for the weeklong international conference of the profession.²²⁵ Art historian Lajos Vayer, who was the chief organizer of

²²⁴ "1969. IX.20. Tv. 20.00. Ka. Tv-Híradó" 1660/4-33. Magyar művészet, 1945-1969, X1969 Magyar (109.doboz), Műcsarnok. The opening also signalled the beginning of the 1969 *Budapest Art Weeks* Festival.

²²⁵ The press covered quite extensively both the preparation and the outcomes of the Congress. Some of the articles provide a detailed list of the exhibitions planned for the visit of international scholars; most importantly, Budapest's museums prepared three major representative shows: along with Kunsthalle's contemporary art show, the National Gallery and the Fine Arts Museum co-organized an overview of Hungarian art between the 13th and the 19th centuries, while Ernst Museum prepared the exhibition on 19th and 20th-century art, up to 1945. See for example: "A világ műtörténetései Budapesten" [The World's Art Historians in Budapest] *Népszabadság* September 11, (1969); "Háromnegyed évezred magyar képzőművészete" [The Hungarian Fine Arts of Three Quarters of the Millenia] *Hétféi hírek* August 14 (1969); H.GY., "Huszonöt ország hétszáz művészettörténésze szeptemberben Budapesten" [Twenty-five Countries' Seven Hundreds Art Historians in Budapest in September] *Magyar Nemzet* August 17 (1969). Press clippings, X1969 Magyar (109.doboz), Műcsarnok.

the prominent conference, emphasized the significance of the *Hungarian Art* exhibition in the catalog:

“We must highlight, as an essential circumstance for the current exhibition, the fact that this is the first time in the history of this prestigious congress that the program of the scientific discussions expands into the middle of the twentieth century. We repeat it: this fact not only makes our huge exhibition necessary and interesting, but even exciting for the many hundreds of international experts, as it shows the already historical near past from the perspective of the near future.”²²⁶

However, the example of the *Hungarian Art* show suggests that the creation of a historically correct, politically acceptable, as well as aesthetically pleasant exhibition about the art of the past 25 years triggered several dilemmas. The task of satisfying all these criteria put the curator, Makrisz Agamemnón into a rather impossible position. The narrative to be presented of the fifties posed one of the supreme difficulties: by the late sixties, the “retrograde” socialist realism of the Rákosi era was framed as the product of a “difficult era that is complicated to describe.”²²⁷ Thus the display of the “classics” of the fifties’ socialist realism, even if historically accurate, was not desired - and mainly not in front of the international, professional audience.²²⁸ Although the exhibition catalog promised a somewhat critical reflection on the fifties, as the period when “the respected

²²⁶ *Magyar művészet, 1945-1969/ L’art hongrois, 1945-1969*. September 20-October 5, 1969, Kunsthalle. [No page numbers] Introduction by Lajos Vayer; curated by Makrisz Agamemnón. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum.

²²⁷ Gyula Rózsa, “Öt esztendő kritikátlan története” [Five Years’ Uncritical History] *Népszabadság* October 8 (1969), 7. Press clippings, X1969 Magyar (109.doboz), Műcsarnok.

²²⁸ Krisztina Passuth, “Magyar művészet, 1945-1969” [Hungarian Art, 1945-1969] *Tükör* October 7 (1969). X1969 Magyar (109.doboz), Műcsarnok

tradition of academism became a strong force against development,”²²⁹ the artworks displayed did not create a critical narrative. As some of the critics pointed out, the *Hungarian art* show exhibited “bad works” in the fifties room, however, not the “worst” ones: it showed paintings that could be labeled as socialist realist due to their realist forms and socially committed content, yet, none of the pieces with direct political message was displayed at the 1969-exhibition. “These intermediate works could neither represent their time, nor our current opinion about the art of that era in an authentic way,”²³⁰ art historian Krisztina Passuth claimed already at the time.



Picture 32: Hungarian Art, 1945-1969. Exhibition poster.

The exhibition had to respond to a further, equally problematic question: how to represent the novel movements of the day? By 1969, Hungary’s art scene had transformed quite

²²⁹ Vayer (1969).

²³⁰ Passuth (1969).

significantly: while abstract or non-figurative art had quietly begun its canonization,²³¹ pop-art, op-art and the further new trends were becoming sensations.²³²

“Pop-art and op-art, this *dernier cri* of the world, and what has arrived after them, are truly not history yet, they cannot be selected historically yet. As a result of our time’s overdeveloped communication methods, these are rather fashions, curiosities and sensations than art movements, isms or styles,”²³³

Lajos Vayer explained in the exhibition catalog. And yet, the *Hungarian Art* show tried to be inclusive of contemporary Hungarian artists: even László Lakner’s pop-art inspired piece, entitled *Menekülő* [Escape]²³⁴ was selected by Makrisz for display at the Kunsthalle. In this regard, the 1969-exhibition was rather similar to the *Spring Show* of 1957: Makrisz aimed to represent all styles and movements of the time.

Following the opening of the *Hungarian Art* show, the curator’s concept, or more accurately the lack of any coherent concept or historical interpretation, was severely attacked by the profession. Numerous art historians gave voice to their dismay at the failure of this comprehensive overview²³⁵: they had hoped for a thoughtful, critical

²³¹ As mentioned earlier, Nóra Aradi published her book on abstract art in 1964; even though she offered an indeed critical account of abstract art, the book was still, probably unintentionally, a significant step in grounding a public discussion on non-figurative art. Furthermore, I would argue that the 1968 Venice Biennial was an important event, where the lyrical non-figurative painter, Ignác Kokas, the modern sculptor, Tibor Vilt, and the indefinable and thus in the state officials’ eyes always problematic graphic designer, Béla Kondor represented Hungary. Catalog of the Hungarian Pavilion: *XXXIV Biennale Venezia 1968 Ungheria*, Műcsarnok Könyvtár. Further archived materials about the 1968 Venice Biennial: Vilt-Kondor-Kokas, Róma, X1968 Vilt-Kondor-Kokas Rómában (105.doboz), and X1968 Velencei Biennálé (105.doboz).

²³² About the “neo-avant-garde” trends see for example: Eva Forgacs, “Does Democracy Grow Under Pressure? Strategies of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde throughout the late 1960s and the 1970s” *Centropa* January (2008), 36-48.

²³³ Vayer (1969).

²³⁴ Image of the *Escape* by Lakner is available online on the National Gallery’s website: <http://www.mng.hu/kiallitasok/allando/177/oldal:11/242> Last accessed: May 27, 2013.

²³⁵ Along with Passuth’s article, see also Horváth’s essay (referenced below), and Gyula Rózsa, “Öt

examination instead of Makrisz's "anything goes" policy, which resulted in the crammed walls of the Kunsthalle. "It is not a sin, but 'simply' a mistake to miss such an opportunity. This is all what happened here. We did not pursue what we should have done, we did not use this lucky opportunity to report about how we dealt with all that talent that has appeared since the days of our liberation,"²³⁶ György Horváth, the art critic of *Magyar Nemzet* [Hungarian Nation] concluded. What appeared as a fiasco, or the "missed opportunity" of a thorough study about post-1945 Hungarian art, has to be read in light of the fact that even in 1969, none of the museums offered a permanent exhibition, and thus an accepted narrative, about the art of the socialist era. Although the critics did not state it, the National Gallery was mostly responsible for this gap in the representation of Hungarian art history. By the fall of 1957, the then recently established National Gallery had prepared a permanent exhibition on the 20th-century history of art, yet, only a few works represented the post-1945 period there.²³⁷ This troublesome situation did not change with time: more than a decade later, in 1970, the Gallery's permanent show basically still concluded in 1945.²³⁸

esztendő kritikátlan története" *Népszabadság* October 8 (1969), 7. Press clippings, X1969 Magyar (109.doboz), Műcsarnok.

²³⁶ György Horváth, "Egy elszalasztott lehetőség: Utószó a „Magyar Művészet 1945-1969” kiállításához” [A missed opportunity: Postscript of the *Hungarian Art 1945-1969* Exhibition] *Magyar Nemzet* October 12 (1969). Press clipping, X1969 Magyar (109.doboz), Műcsarnok.

²³⁷ About the National Gallery's first permanent exhibitions, see Sinkó (2009): 85-87.

²³⁸ This description of the National Gallery's permanent exhibition on 20th-century Hungarian painting, written by the director, Gábor Ö. Pogány himself, was first published in 1965, and then, without any changes, in 1970. "From the interwar period, Gyula Derkovits's and István Dési Huber's pictures impress the viewer with their socialist content; along with them, works by some of the victims of fascism, István Farkas, Imre Ámos, György Kondor, Jenő Szabados, are displayed on the walls of the last rooms. The leading masters of the era, Vilmos Aba-Novák, Aurél Bernáth, József Egry, István Szőnyi, János Vaszary also have important status in the exhibition, which concludes with pictures by Jenő Barcsay, Rezső Burghart, Rudolf Diener Dénes, Endre Domanovszky, Géza Fónyi, János Halápy, János Kmetty, Pál Miháltz, Pál Molnár C., Károly Patkó, Jenő Paizs Goebel, Géza Vörös." Gábor Ö. Pogány, *A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria* [The Hungarian National Gallery] (Budapest: 1965, and 1970) [The publications do not have page numbers].

Besides political challenges, the Gallery also faced practical and administrative problems that prevented the creation of a post-World War II narrative of Hungarian art.²³⁹ On the one hand, the Gallery suffered from a real shortage of space: as the old Kúria building turned out to be insufficient for the Gallery's collection, only the plans of moving the Gallery up to the Buda Castle could promise a solution.²⁴⁰ On the other hand, Katalin Sinkó argues, the overall system of state patronage caused serious problems for the Gallery's collection. Museums did not possess adequate budget²⁴¹ to pursue their own acquisitions; thus, the National Gallery, just as all Hungarian museums during socialism, mostly expanded its collection through non-museum, state institutions. Since 1957, the Committee of State Acquisitions²⁴² had been responsible for acquiring artworks for the Gallery's collection. This meant that art historians and curators of the Gallery had no say in what was purchased for their collection, Sinkó argues, and thus had been circumscribed in their ability to curate shows. Some changes occurred due to the inauguration of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968 and its preparation from the mid-1960s, Sinkó notes: in 1967, the Országos Múzeumi Tanács [National Committee of

²³⁹ Sinkó suggests that this was also a real professional dilemma, due to the supposedly conflicting relationship between Pogány and art historian Nóra Aradi. Even though the study of post-1945 art belonged to the academic interest and topics of the Gallery, Aradi was chosen as the author of the topic at the Academy of Sciences. See: Sinkó (1969): 83.

²⁴⁰ Albin Márffy, dr, and Erna Rukavina, "A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria elhelyezése a Budavári Palotában" [The Placement of the Hungarian National Gallery in the Castle of the Buda Hills] *Magyar Nemzeti Galéria közleményei V* (1965), 153-160. See also Sinkó's chapter, in which she explains in details the politics of moving the Gallery to the Castle: Sinkó, "A Nemzeti Galéria a Budavári Palotában" [The National Gallery in the Castle of the Buda Hills] (2009), 95-107. The new National Gallery, located in the Castle, opened in October, 1975.

²⁴¹ The National Gallery had possessed a small but "independent" budget since 1957, Sinkó points out. However, from this limited budget, the Gallery's curators could only purchase works without restrictions as long as the prices were less than 10,000 forints. Above this limit, the Gallery had to discuss the possible purchase at the Committee of State Acquisitions. Sinkó (2009): 89-90, 97-98. See also Zsuzsa Csengeryné Nagy's official summaries about the Gallery's new acquisitions, in which she always points to the Gallery's "own acquisitions." Zsuzsa Csengeryné Nagy, "A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria az 1962-1963-as évben" [The Hungarian National Gallery in 1962-1963] *Magyar Nemzeti Galéria közleményei V* (1965), 161-167.; and "A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria az 1964/65-ös esztendőben" [The Hungarian National Gallery in 1964/65] *Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Évkönyve 1* (1970), 240-246.

²⁴² About the Committee of State Acquisitions, see again Chapter 3.

Museums] discussed whether museums could have greater autonomy in shaping their collections.²⁴³

Bearing in mind Sinkó's statement about the connection between the system of state patronage and the Gallery's collection, I would still argue that the Gallery was in a relatively privileged situation, as compared to the rest of the museums. As previous chapters showed, the Committee of State Acquisitions invited several artists and art historians as its members, along with one of the officials of the Ministry's Fine Arts Department. Undoubtedly, the Committee was organization appointed by Ministry– yet, Gábor Ö. Pogány, the head of the National Gallery, was a permanent member since 1957. Pogány had a prominent role in the Committee's acquisitions: the several letters he wrote to the Ministry's Fine Arts Department show how he was trying to use his position to get for the Gallery what he wanted through the Committee.²⁴⁴ Additionally, following the 1965-inauguration of the Two Million Purchases, the Gallery also had a privilege in selecting paintings from the Art Fund's acquisitions. The Gallery was amongst the institutions that could first choose from the Art Fund's freshly purchased works for its collection.²⁴⁵

Yet, even with these privileges, it is certainly true that up until 1968, the National Gallery,

²⁴³ Sinkó (2009): 89. Sinkó refers to the minutes of a 1967-meeting of the National Committee of Museums, preserved in the Archives of the National Gallery: 24.400/2006, 121.dosszié/7.

²⁴⁴ See again Chapter 3 and the operation of the Committee of State Acquisitions.

²⁴⁵ Interview with József Berkes, the head of the Art Fund's Fine Arts Department, which was responsible for organizing the Two Million Purchases. The National Gallery's Office preserved a 1968-letter, written by György Szilárd, the head of the Art Fund to Gábor Ö. Pogány, the National Gallery's director. In the letter, Szilárd stated that in 1968, as in previous years, the National Gallery had absolute privilege in selecting paintings from the Two Million Purchases, without any specific limitation. 863-673/1968. Szilárd György levele Pogány elvtársnak, 1968. július 29. [György Szilárd's Letter to Comrade Pogány, July 29, 1968] Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

along with all the other museums, did not have the right to fully decide about the new acquisitions by itself. From the Two Millions Purchases, the Gallery could choose as many pieces as it wished²⁴⁶ – but only from a collection of new works that had been pre-selected at least twice already.²⁴⁷ And in the Committee’s case, Pogány did not have total hegemony over the other members: he shared the responsibility of acquiring artworks for the Gallery with other art historians and artists.

The latter situation, however, changed in 1968. In late February, 1968, Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the National Gallery received a short letter from the *Központi Múzeumi Igazgatóság* [Central Directorate of Museums]. The note, which was written by dr. Gáborné Pogány (most probably Pogány’s spouse), the head of the Directorate’s financial department, informed the museum director that with the Ministry’s approval, the National Gallery received an extra budget of 300,000 forints in 1968 for “direct execution of fine arts acquisitions.”²⁴⁸ Soon enough, the Ministry’s official notification also reached the Gallery. In March, 1968, the Ministry declared that it had dissolved the Committee of State Acquisitions on March 4, 1968²⁴⁹, and assigned the Committee’s former budget for the National Gallery “to organize acquisitions through its own internal committee.”²⁵⁰

The Ministry wished to set basic guidelines for the Gallery’s future acquisitions, as the

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ First, artists themselves decided about what to submit for acquisition; secondly, the artist jury selected what to purchase from the submissions; and at the end, the Control Committee double-checked the jury’s choices. See Chapter 4 about the jury system of the Two Million Purchases.

²⁴⁸ 863-222/1968. 1968. március 6. Központi Múzeumi Igazgatóság értesítője [863-222/1968. March 6, 1968. Notification from the Central Directorate of Museums] Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

²⁴⁹ Further research is required to learn about the circumstances of how or why the Committee ceased its functioning.

²⁵⁰ 863-320/1968. 1968. Március 28. Verő Gábor, Művelődésügyi Minisztérium főosztályvezető-helyettesének levele dr. Pogány Ö. Gáborhoz. [March 28, 1968. Letter by Gábor Verő, the deputy at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs’ Chief Department, to Gábor Ö. Pogány] Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

letter proves. On the one hand, the available budget could only be spent on acquisitions from living artists; on the other hand, the Gallery had to provide the Ministry's Fine Arts Department with an overall report about its purchases twice a year. The Ministry thus still preserved the right to control the Gallery's acquisitions at least by checking the final results. Yet, the inauguration of this new "independent"²⁵¹ fund certainly meant a significant change for the National Gallery – or at least for Gábor Ö. Pogány, who, in his position as director of the National Gallery, had the final word over acquisitions, as archival documents demonstrate²⁵².

5.2. The Gallery's Acquisitions in 1968

How did the Gallery use its new, independent budget? The museum's different departments shared the 300,000 forints amongst themselves: contemporary paintings, sculptures, graphic designs, and medals were acquired from the budget.²⁵³ In addition to the museum's acquisitions, gifts from artists, the Ministry, or the Art Fund also expanded the collection.²⁵⁴ For instance, in 1968, the National Gallery's collection grew by 160 new paintings, out of which 73 arrived from the Art Fund's Two Million Purchases as gifts.²⁵⁵ Since the Art Fund only acquired paintings from living artists, all the 73 gift

²⁵¹ "Tájékoztató az Állami Képzőművészeti Vásárlások IV. Kiállításáról, 1969.december" [Press Release about the Fourth Exhibition of the State's Fine Arts Acquisitions, December, 1969], Állami Képzőművészeti Vásárlások IV. Kiállítása, X1969 Állami (115.doboz), 1708/5-1, 5-2. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archivum.

²⁵² Documents preserved in the Archives of the National Gallery's Office, as referenced below.

²⁵³ 863-320/1968. Dr. Pogány Ö. Gábor levele a Művelődésügyi Minisztérium önálló Képzőművészeti Osztályának 1968. július 12-én. [dr. Gábor Ö. Pogány's letter to the Independent Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs on July 12, 1968] Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

²⁵⁴ Zsuzsa Csengeryné Nagy, "A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria az 1966-70-es esztendőkből" [The Hungarian National Gallery during the years 1966-1970] *Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Évkönyve* 2 (1974), 213-225.

²⁵⁵ Ibid: 215. According to the system of the Two Million Purchases, the Art Fund bought the paintings

paintings were added to the Gallery's contemporary painting collection. From its new own budget, the Gallery only bought around 15 paintings from living artists.²⁵⁶

Who were the living painters whose work was acquired by the National Gallery from its own budget? Actually, Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the Gallery, had to answer the same question in 1972, when a general inspection took place at the Gallery, by order of the Ministry, Sinkó notes. According to Pogány's response to the Ministry in 1972, the Gallery sought to purchase works from artists who were otherwise not supported by state patronage.²⁵⁷ The list of the Gallery's 1968-acquisitions partially confirms Pogány's answer: amongst the fifteen painters there are several artists who were not financed by the state. Mária Kovács, István Kun, János Bozsó, Zoltán Bertha, and Klára Róna were painters whose work was not supported by the Art Fund's Two Million Purchases, the Ministry, or - before 1968 - the Committee of State Acquisitions. Some of them belonged to a much older generation who had been mostly active during the 1920s and 1930s (for instance, Mária Kovács was born in 1883 and studied and exhibited with the Alföld-style master János Tornyai²⁵⁸; Klára Róna, who was born in 1901, had finished her studies in Paris and came back to Hungary in the late 1920s²⁵⁹). Additionally, the Gallery also

from its own budget, and then provided the acquired pieces as free gifts for museums.

²⁵⁶ "Nemzeti Galéria festmény vásárlásai" [The Painting Acquisitions of the National Gallery] Állami Képzőművészeti Vásárlások IV. Kiállítása, X1969 Állami (115.doboz), 1708/6-1. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum. This document lists 18 paintings. I also checked the accession register of the National Gallery's Contemporary Art Department [Jelenkori Gyűjtemény], where I could identify 15 painting acquisitions in 1968. Finally, according to a letter written in June, 1968, Pogány reported about 14 painting acquisitions to the Ministry. 863-320/1968. 1968. június 28. [June 28, 1969] Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda. Further research is required to clarify which is the correct number. For my analysis below, I used the data of the Contemporary Department's accession register, as it can be considered the most trustworthy source from the three.

²⁵⁷ Sinkó (2009): 93.

²⁵⁸ Ákos Szabó András, dr., *Magyar festők és grafikusok életrajzi lexikona. A-K I.* (Nyíregyháza: NBA Kiadó, 2002): 648-649.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. *L-Zs II.*: 334-335.

purchased rarely represented painters like Géza Pogány or László Félegyházi in 1968. Furthermore, pieces by rather popular artists such as Tibor Duray, László Bencze, Sándor Baranyó, László Bényi, László Ridovics, Sándor Bortnyik, József Csáky-Maronyák, or Endre A. Fenyő, also became part of the Gallery's collection.

Letters and further documents that record the Gallery's acquisitions would be crucial sources about the purchase policies of the Gallery, however, further research is required to identify these documents.²⁶⁰ Yet, based on the sources that I could find in the National Gallery's Office, it seems that the Gallery pursued its acquisitions in different ways. Gábor Ö. Pogány personally arranged the details of a purchase from painter László Bényi, who was also his intimate friend and colleague at the Gallery, as Pogány's letter shows.²⁶¹ Dr. Éva Bodnár, art historian of the Gallery, initiated an acquisition from the exhibition of painter József Molnár, which she had seen at the István Csók Gallery.²⁶² Painter Tibor Duray's piece was purchased at the deputy director, art historian István Solymár's request.²⁶³ Finally, artists could most probably offer their works for acquisitions – in painter László Bencze's case it was in fact his former spouse who hoped to sell the still living ex-husband's piece to the Gallery.²⁶⁴ At the end of each case, it was Gábor Ö. Pogány who made the final decision: due to his director position, each

²⁶⁰ I could identify documents for four cases so far, all in the Archives of the Gallery's Office: László Bényi, László Bencze, Tibor Duray, József Molnár. Further research is necessary to find out what has happened to the rest of the acquisitions documents. The Office's own accession register notes the documentation of all acquisitions, yet, the documents themselves did not make it into the Office's Archive. I thank here Csilla S. Mester-Csiky's help at the Office.

²⁶¹ 863-352/1968. Bényi László vételi és ajándékozási ügye. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

²⁶² 863-552/1968. Vétel Molnár Józseftől. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

²⁶³ 863-257/1968. Duray Dózsa című kép vétele a művésztől. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

²⁶⁴ 863-414/1968. Bencze László Öregasszony c. festményének vételi felajánlása. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda.

acquisition had to go through his final control.

In the following section, I will try to describe these artists based on their paintings that I could identify at the National Gallery's Contemporary Department. I will group these artists according to the genre of their work, when possible. Amongst the Gallery's 1968-acquisitions, I have identified historical paintings, landscapes and cityscapes, genre paintings, and portraits.



Picture 33: *Dózsa* by Tibor Duray.

Historical Painting

Three of the Gallery's fifteen acquisitions could be best labeled as historical paintings. In 1968, the Gallery acquired a large-scale picture of *Dózsa*, painted by the symbolist master Tibor Duray (1912-1988). Certainly, György Dózsa was one of most popular historical figures during socialism: he was praised for his leading role in the peasants' uprising of 1514. Duray's painting is a 2-meter high, full-size depiction of the 16th-century hero of peasants. However, the strong purple and green hues of the background rather strengthen the painting's surrealistic impact. The piece was purchased for 9,500 forints²⁶⁵ from the artist, even though Duray surely did not fit into the category of dismissed artists. His works had been regularly acquired both by the Art Fund²⁶⁶ (where, as the previous chapter showed, he was one of the jurors in 1965), as well as the Ministry²⁶⁷ during the 1960s.

²⁶⁵ All information about prices come from the card catalogues of the National Gallery's Contemporary Department. I thank László Százados, Zsolt Petrányi, and Péter Jakab for their help during my research at the Contemporary Department.

²⁶⁶ MNG 22915/1989/I./88. Duray Tibor. Eleven of his paintings were acquired at the Two Million Purchases between 1965 and 1968.

²⁶⁷ MNG Minisztériumi vásárlások. 1989. VI/2., III. Kötet, 23010/1989./1957-1969.



Picture 34: Endre A. Fenyő, *Auschwitz*.

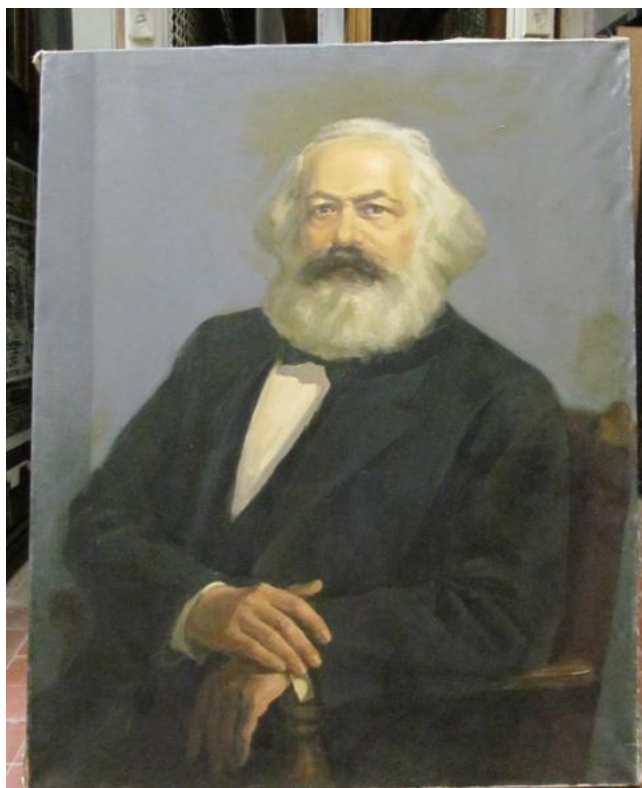
Similarly, Endre A. Fenyő (1904-1971) was one of the most supported artists by the 1960s: the Art Fund itself bought sixteen of his paintings between 1965 and 1968.²⁶⁸ Fenyő had been one of the founders of the Socialist Artists' Group in the 1934²⁶⁹, but left the country for almost a decade in the late 1930s; he lived in Sweden and Finland between 1938 and 1947.²⁷⁰ Since his return, he had often participated in exhibitions and his work had been regularly acquired by the state; he mostly painted expressive landscapes about Lake Balaton. However, the piece that the Gallery bought in 1968, differs from his landscapes: *Auschwitz* shows a group of men and women in the concentration camp. This 1966-painting was purchased from the artist for 8,000 forints.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ MNG 22915/1989/I./104.Fenyő A. Endre.

²⁶⁹ The Szocialista Képzőművészek Csoportja [Socialist Artists' Group] came to life in the interwar period as a group of progressive (often non-figurative) artists, who sympathized with the socialist, and the illegal communist party.

²⁷⁰ Edit Lajta (ed), *Művészeti kislexikon* [Abridged Lexicon of Art] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973): 176.

²⁷¹ This is only a black-and-white photo illustration of the original painting, which is located in the National Gallery's underground storage room.



Picture 35: *Image of Karl Marx* by József Csáky-Maronyák.

Certainly less popular than Duray or Fenyő, József Csáky-Maronyák (1910-2002) was still one of the painters whose realist portraits and genres with fishermen were often acquired by state patrons.²⁷² In 1968, the Gallery purchased two of his paintings²⁷³: one of them is the realistic portrait of Karl Marx. *Marx Károly képmása* [Image of Karl Marx] is similar to Marx's famous 1875-photo: only the hands' position seems to differ on the painting. Although we do not know why the Gallery spent 10,000 forints for acquiring a Marx-portrait in 1968²⁷⁴, we might assume that the director of the Gallery, Gábor Ö.

²⁷² MNG 22915/1989/I./66. Csáky Maronyák József. The Art Fund bought three of his fishermen pictures between 1965 and 1969, along with historical portraits.

²⁷³ Csáky- Maronyák's other painting, entitled *Este fele* [Around the Night], is listed in the Department's acquisitions, however, I could not detect the painting itself. It is either lost, or it decorates a state building (however, we could not find any document that would prove the latter option).

²⁷⁴ The document that would provide information is not preserved in the National Gallery's Office.

Pogány supported this purchase. Pogány himself had been previously one of the painter's models, as Csáky-Maronyák's 1953-painting proves²⁷⁵; furthermore, Pogány published a monograph about the painter in 1975.²⁷⁶

Landscape and Cityscape

In 1968, the Gallery acquired a landscape by István Kun (1908-1980) and a cityscape by Zoltán Bertha (1914-2003).²⁷⁷ It is interesting that they were both painters who had not been supported previously by any of the state's patron institutions. It seems that they had been less known artists, who lived in provincial towns of Hungary; the 1973-version of the Art Lexicon does not even mention them. It is unknown why or how the Gallery decided to purchase these paintings. The Gallery paid 3,000 forints for each of the paintings.

Genre Paintings

²⁷⁵ József Csáky- Maronyák, *Pogány Ö. Gábor*, 1953, in: *József Csáky-Maronyák* (Orosháza: Petőfi Művelődési Központ, ?): 37.

²⁷⁶ Gábor Ö. Pogány, *Csáky- Maronyák József* (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Alap Kiadóvállalata, 1975).

²⁷⁷ The Contemporary Department only has black-and-white reproductions of these works, as the original paintings have been decorating the Constitutional Court of Hungary and the Office of the President of the Republic for decades now, according to the National Gallery's documents. Since the reproductions have such bad quality, an analysis is impossible in these cases.



Picture 36: *Market* by László Bényi.

The Gallery bought several paintings in 1968 that show peasants and rural lifestyle – one of them is the piece entitled *Piac* or *Kecskeméti Piac* [Market or Market in Kecskemét] by painter László Bényi (1909-2004).²⁷⁸ The strongly colorist picture is divided in the middle by a tree: purple figures decorate both sides, yet, the most striking part is probably the green house at the background. Bényi was not just a respected painter (his works had been purchased by the Committee of State Acquisitions in 1966 and 1967 as well²⁷⁹), but a well-known public figure and curator, too. Along with his wife, the prominent art historian Magdolna Supka, Bényi worked at the National Gallery as a curator. For the *Market*, the Gallery paid 8,000 forints for the artist.

²⁷⁸ This is only a black-and –white illustration of the original painting. See a colored illustration of the piece in Zoltán Nagy, *Bényi László* [László Bényi] (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Alap Kiadóvállalata, 1982).

²⁷⁹ MNG Minisztériumi vásárlások. Állami Vásárló Bizottság. 1989. VI/2., III. Kötet, 23010/1989./1966-1967.



Picture 37: Sándor Baranyó, *Peasant Couple*.

In 1968, Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the Gallery, published a book about five prominent painters of the Alföld: one of them was Sándor Baranyó (1920-2001).²⁸⁰ Baranyó belonged to the younger generation of Alföld-style painters: at the Academy, he had studied with the post-impressionist master István Szőnyi, and graduated from his class in 1945. His painting entitled *Parasztpár* [Peasant Couple], acquired by the Gallery for 8,000 forints in 1968, shows a peasant couple at the front of their white house.

Portraits

In addition to the portrait of a peasant woman by László Bencze²⁸¹, the National Gallery

²⁸⁰ Gábor Ö. Pogány, *Öt magyar alföldi festő* [Five Hungarian Painters of the Alföld] (Budapest: 1968).

²⁸¹ Bencze László, *Öregasszony* [Old Woman]. The piece was originally painted in 1948 and acquired by the National Gallery in 1968 for 6,000 forints. Only a black-and-white photo illustration was available, with quite bad quality.

added László Félegyházi's (1907-1986) pastel portrait to its collection in 1968. Félegyházi's piece, entitled *Leányarckép* [Female Portrait], is an impressionistic portrait from 1968, which was acquired by the Gallery for 6,000 forints. Félegyházi, who had visited Paris during the 1930s, was mostly inspired by the art of Bonnard and the post-impressionists.²⁸² He had returned to this early inspiration by the 1960s, after his realist period in the fifties.²⁸³



Picture 38: *Female Portrait* by László Félegyházi.

Further Paintings

In 1968, the National Gallery purchased two paintings by painter Sándor Bortnyik (1893-

²⁸² Ákos Szabó András, dr., *Magyar festők és grafikusok életrajzi lexikona. A-K I.* (Nyíregyháza: NBA Kiadó, 2002): 312.

²⁸³ See for example his photorealist painting entitled *Bútorgyári sztahanovista* [Stakhanovist of the Furniture Factory] from 1950. http://artportal.sigmanet.hu/lexikon/kepek/butorgyari_sztahanovista Last accessed: May 26, 2013.

1976), the rector of the Academy of Fine Arts between 1949 and 1956. Both the *Mona Lisa XX.század* [Mona Lisa 20th Century] and the *Buffet-Rembrandt* belong to Bortnyik's so-called *Korszerűsített klasszikusok* [Contemporary Classics] series.²⁸⁴ With this series of satiric paintings Bortnyik revisited classical works from art history and recreated them in the style of 20th-century, mostly contemporary painters. This is Bortnyik's 'That is How You Paint'²⁸⁵ series, Gábor Ö. Pogány wrote in 1969, when the National Gallery devoted a larger show for Bortnyik's art.²⁸⁶



Picture 39: *Mona Lisa 20th Century* by Sándor Bortnyik.

²⁸⁴ The first edition of the Contemporary Classics was shown in Budapest in 1954, and then in Moscow the following year. By 1969, Bortnyik had added several new works to this series, for instance the two pieces that were acquired by the Gallery in 1968.

²⁸⁵ Pogány referred to Hungarian writer Frigyes Karinthy's famous literary parodies, entitled „Így írtok ti” [That is How You Write], published in 1912.

²⁸⁶ Bortnyik Sándor kiállítása. Rendezte: N. Péntes Éva és Pogány Ö. Gábor. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1969. március-április. [Exhibition of Sándor Bortnyik. Curators: Éva N. Péntes and Gábor Ö. Pogány]. Exhibition catalog.

The *Mona Lisa 20th Century* is a portrait of a long, black-haired woman who poses in the style of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. However, the original *Mona Lisa*'s elegance is missing from this picture: according to Bortnyik's version, *Mona Lisa*, accompanied by a cup of coffee, has bushy hair and strong make-up. At the background, skyscrapers and a red car replace the original landscape. The Gallery paid 15,000 forints to Bortnyik for this piece in 1968, which he had painted in 1963.



Picture 40: Sándor Bortnyik, *Buffet-Rembrandt*.

For the *Buffet- Rembrandt* Bortnyik used the French painter, Bernard Buffet's (1928-1999) expressionist style to reinterpret Rembrandt's classic piece, *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*. On the original, 1632 painting Dr. Tulp worked with the corpse of a criminal – on Bortnyik's 1959-version, the modern Dr. Tulp explains the anatomy of a

dead goose. Amongst the white-dressed doctors sits a woman in black who is probably mourning for her loss. The Gallery purchased Bortnyik's painting for 7,000 forints.

Finally, the last piece from the Gallery's 1968-acquisitions that I would like to highlight is a decorative painting by Géza Pogány (1927-2001). Pogány had entered the Academy of Fine Arts in 1947 and studied with the post-impressionist master Aurél Bernáth. However, in 1950 Pogány was removed from the Academy; he still managed to get a job at the Opera House, where he later created set designs.²⁸⁷ His 1963-piece, entitled *Figurális kompozíció* [Figurative Composition] is a sketched, grey image of a studio with a naked model in the middle. The Gallery bought Pogány's piece for 2,500 forints.



Picture 41: Géza Pogány, *Figurative Composition*.

²⁸⁷ Ákos Szabó, dr., *L-Zs II.* (2002): 278-279.

Overall, the list of the Gallery's 1968-acquisitions from living painters shows an absolutely mixed picture. Along with rather unknown and often older painters, the Gallery purchased works from popular and well-supported artists too. While some of the choices seem rather arbitrary, unrelated to the Gallery's collection and exhibitions, in several cases we can detect connections between the Gallery's academic interest and acquisitions. Certainly, the latter often equaled with the interest of Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the National Gallery. In this sense, the Gallery's acquisitions manifest how Pogány's parallel positions as the head of the National Gallery, the chief editor of the magazine *Art*, and as a scholar of art history were intertwined.



Picture 42: Endre Bálint, *From Ibiza to Szentendre*.

It is interesting to look at the paintings that the Gallery received as gifts from the 1968-acquisitions of the Two Million Purchases.²⁸⁸ In 1968, besides the realist, post-impressionist, colorist, and decorative paintings, the Art Fund bought several non-figurative pictures as well through the Two Million Purchases. Endre Bálint's surrealist-abstract piece entitled *Ibizától Szentendrétig* [From Ibiza to Szentendre], Pál Deim's

²⁸⁸ As mentioned earlier, the Gallery, as the most prominent public collection, had a privilege in selecting paintings from the Art Fund's fresh acquisitions: the National Gallery was one of the institutions that could first choose paintings for its collection.

constructivist-abstract work, *7 órától 7.30-ig* [Between 7 and 7:30 in the morning], as well as Ignác Kokas's lyrical abstract *Vízáról és növényekről* [About Water and Plants] reached the Gallery's collection as gifts from the Art Fund.²⁸⁹ Thus, surprisingly, the non-figurative pieces of the National Gallery's collection, which art historians today retrospectively consider as the progressive, modern art of the sixties, were not acquired by the Gallery itself but the Art Fund.



Picture 43: Pál Deim, *Between 7 and 7:30 in the morning*.

²⁸⁹ MNG 22915/1989. I. Kötet. Művészeti Alap vásárlásai, 1968.



Picture 44: Ignác Kokas, *About Water and Plants*.

5.3. Conclusions

Further research is required to identify documents that would explain us the exact circumstances of why the Ministry decided to dissolve the Committee of State Acquisitions and instead assign half of its former budget²⁹⁰ directly to the National Gallery. Yet, at the current stage of my research, I suggest to see this institutional change in the context of general professional dilemmas that the National Gallery faced during these years. As the first part of this chapter sought to explain, the system of state patronage directly influenced the process of collection building at museums, since the latter did not possess sufficient independent budgets to manage their acquisitions for themselves. Museums thus worked with whatever they got from the state, as opposed to

²⁹⁰ Since the Committee of State Acquisitions originally purchased both fine and applied artworks, we might assume that the other half of the Committee's budget was assigned directly to the Museum of Applied Arts for purchases. Further research is necessary to clarify these details.

pursuing acquisitions based on their own professional principles. This is what significantly changed in the case of the National Gallery in March, 1968, when the Ministry assigned a comparatively large budget and relative autonomy for the Gallery's acquisitions. One motivation behind this change could have been a strong complaint and push from the National Gallery: without professional independence over their collection building, museum workers could not curate a sufficient representative exhibition about contemporary art, even though it belonged to the duties of the National Gallery.

Given the fact that the Art Fund continued to offer the National Gallery unlimited number of paintings from the Two Million Purchases, the Gallery often used its own budget to purchase works from painters who had been otherwise excluded from state patronage. Additionally, the list of the 1968-acquisitions suggests that personal connections, and Pogány's professional interest also often determined the Gallery's independent purchases. Overall, quite ironically, the Gallery acquired indeed mixed, and seemingly arbitrarily chosen paintings in 1968 from its new own budget.

6. Conclusions



Picture 45: Sándor Bortnyik, Artists Marching Into the Art Fund.

As part of the *Contemporary Classics* series²⁹¹, Sándor Bortnyik painted the piece entitled *A művészek bevonulása az Alapba* [Artists Marching into the Art Fund] in 1959. Playing with the Dutch master, Rembrandt's famous *Night Watch*²⁹² from 1642, *Artists Marching into the Art Fund* is one of the most interesting pieces of Bortnyik's satiric

²⁹¹ About the Contemporary Classics series, see Chapter 5,

²⁹² See the painting and information about the piece on the Google Art Project: <http://www.googleartproject.com/collection/rijksmuseum/artwork/officers-and-other-civic-guardsmen-of-district-ii-of-amsterdam-under-the-command-of-captain-frans-banninck-cocq-andlieutenant-willem-van-ruytendurch-known-as-the-night-watch-rembrandt-harmensz-van-rijn/326424/> [Last accessed: May 30, 2013]

series. Although today's art historians generally do not attribute high aesthetic quality to Bortnyik's *Contemporary Classics*, this piece offers an acid yet quite accurate picture of how artists since the consolidation years were demanding state financial support. Who are the characters of the painting? According to Bortnyik's own description²⁹³, on the very left is the post-impressionist master and professor of the Academy, Aurél Bernáth, standing in his blue apron; next to him is one of his professor colleagues, the painter and graphic designer György Kádár in red, armed with a large brush and a palette. Art historian and prominent critic Zsuzsa D. Fehér is sitting on the floor in a yellowish dress; at her back is figurative sculptor Sándor Mikus, marching with a huge flag, with the artists' request on it. The sign on the flag, "2‰" refers to the state's generous art commissions for newly constructed buildings, which provided extensive money for sculptors, primarily.²⁹⁴ On the picture, it is Mikus who is promoting more commissions for artists with the flag – of course, he was one of the regularly commissioned sculptors at the time. Behind Sándor Mikus is an unnamed painter who is holding his still life with flowers high up in the air; we might assume that this unknown, unimportant figure at the background represents the Company-style painters' struggle for money and professional acknowledgment. In the middle of the canvas is painter Endre Domanovszky, who had replaced Bortnyik as the rector of the Academy of Fine Arts in 1956. On the side of Domanovszky is socialist realist painter Sándor Ék, posing in his outdated, theatrical costume and with his bold red booklet in his hand. Behind them it is art historian Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the National Gallery, discreetly standing in his elegant suit. The always philosophical Jenő Barcsay is also present at the scene: the constructivist

²⁹³ Bortnyik provided an explanatory description, which is attached to the back of the piece.

²⁹⁴ See my footnote 127 in Chapter 4.

painter and professor of anatomy is entering the Art Fund with a skull in his right hand. At his back is art historian Katalin Dávid, who is slightly hidden by the hand of painter and applied artist Gyula Hincz. On the very right is the bellicose art historian, Nóra Aradi, who is providing the rhythm on her drum. Last but not least, we see the Greek sculptor, Makrisz Agamemnón in the air, on the upper right side. Makrisz, whose figure is transformed into a real legendary hero, is flying in the air, with a naked but certainly combative woman on his back.²⁹⁵

Most of these figures, who have been recurring characters of my thesis, were deeply involved in the state's system of art patronage. Aradi was primarily responsible for the acquisitions of the Ministry's Fine Arts Department in 1959. In the same year, Bernáth, Barcsay, Domanovszky, Pogány, Ék, Hincz, Mikus, Makrisz, and Aradi were all members of the Committee of State Acquisitions – in fact, one of the jurors who is missing from the painting is Bortnyik himself.²⁹⁶ Thus, the characters who are demanding money in the first row on Bortnyik's painting were in a greatly privileged position: behind the deputy minister, György Aczél, these artists and art historians had supreme role in the state system of art patronage. Undoubtedly, Bortnyik was masterly ironic with this piece.

The system of art patronage, which had been managed by this group of scholars and artists during the consolidation years, primarily supported realist and post-impressionist paintings between 1957 and 1963, as the third chapter of this thesis discussed. Yet, personal connections as well as social factors could also influence the decisions of the

²⁹⁵ György Spiró writes about Makrisz's stormy personal life and open relationships with women. Spiró (2010).

²⁹⁶ About the 1959-members of the Committee of State Acquisitions, see again Chapter 3.

Ministry' Fine Arts Department and the Committee of State Acquisitions. As a result, even some of the abstract artists could enjoy the state's financial support, even though in public discourses, non-figurative art had become excluded from the Ministry's "permitted" category by late 1957.

In response to the public debate over the crisis of easel painting, as well as painters' growing dissatisfaction with their insufficient financial situation, the socialist state installed a new funding system in 1965. The so-called Two Million Purchases, organized and financed by the Art Fund annually from 1965 on, provided substantial amounts of money for painters. Every painter who was a member of the Art Fund and/or the Association of Fine Artists could freely submit works, regardless of form, style, or topic. Two rotating committees of altogether thirty artists juried the submitted works: although many of the jurors represented the aesthetic paradigms of post-impressionism and realism, paintings of a rather surprising mixture of styles were purchased through the Art Fund. Still, the majority of the acquired paintings were figurative: it rarely happened that the jury bought abstract pieces. Besides László Bartha's lyrical abstract paintings, the works of younger artists, like Ignác Kokas or Pál Deim, signaled experimentation towards non-figurative art at the Two Million Purchases of 1965.

By the time a growing number of supported painters found their financial situation tolerable, it was the art historians' and museum professionals' turn to push changes in the patronage system. In order to provide the National Gallery with autonomy for building its collection, the Committee of State Acquisitions was dissolved by the Ministry in March

1968. From then on, the Gallery could pursue its own acquisitions from living artists independently, without the involvement of any outsider committee. As my last research chapter revealed, Gábor Ö. Pogány, the director of the Gallery obtained primary responsibility for these acquisitions from 1968. The result was a rather arbitrary acquisitions policy, which often supported Pogány's own scholarly and social interests. Pogány remained in his position for a further decade: he finally retired from the Gallery's director position in 1980.

Overall, how did the socialist state's patronage system of living painters evolve during the sixties? According to the Guidelines for the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Policy of Culture and Education, which the Central Committee published in June, 1958, the state supported the creation of socially committed art. Within this category, the state announced the freedom of topic, method, style, movement, and form. During the late fifties, everything could fit into the broad category of socialist art but abstract art – by the late sixties even non-figurative art could occasionally meet these undefined criteria. Undoubtedly, post-impressionism, realism, constructivism, and expressive decorativism were at the core of what the state financially supported throughout the sixties; in this sense, both socialist realism, with direct political messages attached to it, and abstract art were in minority at the state's acquisitions. Still, a great mixture of styles was financed by the socialist state by the end of the sixties – this variety is what appeared to art historian Lajos Vayer as “socialist universalism” in 1969:

“As an experiment with terminology, we might call it socialist universalism, the way

in which our artists' work of free art production is provided [by the state]. Let's further define this too nice word so that it can be understood within and outside the country's boundaries as well: by now, Hungary's art life has been able to mobilize all of its talents and energies -be it individual or collective, monumental or intimate, figurative or non-figurative, fine arts or applied arts -, which can move forward Hungarian people's culture of [visual] arts."²⁹⁷

Certainly, Vayer's overt optimism was uncritical about the proportions between the state's support for figurative and non-figurative art, which were far from balanced. Yet, the socialist state, through its generously financed patronage institutions, provided adequate financial support for a basically non-defined approach to the styles and topics of painting during this period.

The wide array of professional painters supported during this period, and the latitude of styles and topics in their art production, challenges the idea of state controlled, committed, official art. Instead, it supports the reinterpretation of the "official art" of the sixties as created through artists' open submission system, as in the case of the Two Million Purchases from 1965 on, as well as selection process by artists, art historians, and state officials.

²⁹⁷ Lajos Vayer, Introduction to the exhibition catalog: *Magyar művészet, 1945-1969/ L'art hongrois, 1945-1969*. September 20-October 5, 1969, Kunsthalle. [No page numbers] Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum, Budapest.

Appendices

Appendix I: Background for the Interviews

Initially, I started to study the socialist state's art patronage as a BA student of journalism at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest: in late 2008, I began to research the history of the Art Fund's Two Million Purchases. In the midst of Hungary's political transition in 1989-1990, the Art Fund ceased its functioning without any legal successor. As a result, the institution's archive seems to have disappeared along with the socialist system. The Art Fund's archive was not submitted to the Hungarian National Archives²⁹⁸, even though legally it should have been part of the dissolution process. With no access to written documents about the Two Million Purchases, I decided to look for other sources, people who had participated in the Art Fund's acquisitions. This is how I first got in touch with Judit Koplik, through the networks of an elder co-worker of the Ministry of Culture.²⁹⁹ Koplik, who had graduated as an art historian in the early 1960s and had worked at the Art Fund since 1963, has become one of the key figures of my research; I have been in touch with her since early 2009. Koplik has helped me in multiple ways: first, she has become a crucial source about the functioning of the Two Million Purchases. Between 1965 and 1980, Koplik was responsible for organizing the Two Million Purchases; her memories often provide insight into such details that written sources, even if preserved,

²⁹⁸ All the relevant documents that I have identified in the National Archives in the meantime have been preserved in the archival fonds of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, as part of the Ministry's correspondence with the Art Fund.

²⁹⁹ I thank here Hédi Szepes, the co-worker of the Ministry of Culture, who contacted me with Judit Koplik in 2009.

would not allow for. Furthermore, it was through Koplik that I learned about what happened to the official documentation of the Two Million Purchases.³⁰⁰ Finally, Koplik also helped me to build further connections; most importantly, she connected me with her former boss, József Berkes, who, along with other positions, had been the head of the Art Fund's Fine Arts Department during the sixties. Between the spring of 2009 and the summer of 2010, I regularly met the two of them on Berkes's apartment, two or three times a month. Most of the time we discussed in details the artists from whom the Art Fund acquired paintings between 1965 and 1980. Undoubtedly, our meetings became indeed personal by the end; yet, these discussions meant invaluable help for me to learn about artists and to understand the logic of art life during socialism. The information they provided has been the basis for further research. In the chapter about the functioning of the Two Million Purchases, I refer to one of our meetings that I recorded. As it had been agreed beforehand, I recorded our meeting on June 25, 2010 with a video camera; this time, I specifically asked them about details of the operation of the Two Million Purchases. Bearing in mind that they both had been deeply involved with the Two Million Purchases, the interview is still a unique source about the functioning of the Art Fund's purchases, and I am more than grateful that I had had a chance to get to know them and interview them before Mr. Berkes passed away in December 2012.

³⁰⁰ While the Art Fund was in the process of dissolution during the late 1980s, Judit Koplik decided to save at least the documentation of the Two Million Purchases. She took the documentation and gave them to art historian György Horváth, whom she had known as the head of the Fine Arts Department at the Ministry of Culture (between 1980-1988). Since 1988, Horvath had been the deputy director of the National Gallery – through him, the official documentation reached the National Gallery's Archives.



Picture 46: The Fine Arts Department of the Art Fund, 1970s. József Berkes (second from right) and Judit Koplik (third from right).

Furthermore, Berkes and Koplik offered supreme help in contacting me with artists from their networks. With their help, I managed to make interviews with the following painters during the summer of 2010³⁰¹: József Breznay and Mária Gánóczy; József Bartl; Lajos Kántor; Sándor Vecsési and Arany Bazsonyi; József Baska and Katalin Rényi. These painters, with the exception of Katalin Rényi who was born in 1951, all had been greatly supported by the Art Fund from 1965 on. Yet, their narratives about their socialist past and the Art Fund's purchases differed at certain points: some made utterly ironic remarks about their own past position, while others remembered the Two Million Purchases with absolute nostalgia. In cases of couples, these different views sometimes even triggered debate between the spouses. The dynamics of these interviews were further complicated

³⁰¹ See exact dates and places under Appendix II section.

by the presence of Judit Koplik, who joined me for all these meetings and actively participated in the discussions. I am grateful for all my interviewees that they shared their memories and reflections with me, which I recorded on audio recorder.

Appendix II: Interviews and Interviewees (by date):

Lajos Sváby. Budapest, his studio-apartment (April, 2009).

Born in 1935 in Abádszalók, Hungary, painter Lajos Sváby studied at the Academy of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary, between 1954 and 1960, under the guidance of Bertalan Pór and János Kmetty. Primarily inspired by Austrian artist Oscar Kokoschka, Sváby's paints in expressive style. He received the prestigious Derkovits scholarship in 1963, which provided for his living for three years as a young graduate. Between 1965 and 1980 the Art Fund regularly purchased his work through the Two Million Purchases. Additionally, from the mid-1960s his name often appears on the annual lists of acquisitions pursued by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. He began to teach painting at the Academy in 1975. In 1990, Sváby became the first rector of the Academy after the transition. He retired in 1995.

Tape-recorded. The original tape has deteriorated, but the transcript remains available.

József Breznay, Mária Gánóczy, and Judit Koplik. Budapest, in Breznay and Gánóczy's apartment (June 3, 2010).

Painter József Breznay was born in 1916 in Budapest, Hungary. Breznay studied at the Academy of Fine Arts between 1934 and 1939; from 1938, he became the post-

Nagybánya master István Szőnyi's teaching assistant. His first exhibition opened in 1946. After losing two wives, he married painter Mária Gánóczy in 1954; they lived together until Breznay's death in 2011. Breznay's style went through significant shifts throughout his life; first, during the 1930s, he mostly made realist, naturalist paintings, which then gradually changed into impressionist depictions. From the 1950s, he traveled to Western Europe several times, and his work became more decorative, surrealist, and symbolic. He often painted historical, biblical topics. Along with his painter career, he emerged as an important public figure of the art world from the 1950s. His work was regularly purchased both by the Art Fund and the Ministry.

Painter Mária Gánóczy was born in 1927 in Budapest, Hungary. Gánóczy studied at the Academy of Fine Arts between 1945 and 1950, under the post-impressionist master Aurél Bernáth, and Sándor Bortnyik. She married Breznay in 1954, and gave birth to seven children. Although she did not have much time to paint, as she recalls, the jury of the Two Million Purchases regularly acquired one or two of her paintings between 1965 and 1972. She mostly depicts grotesque, weird situations.

Art historian Judit Koplik was born in 1939 in Újpest, Hungary. She studied art history at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and graduated in the early 1960s. From 1963 she had worked at the Art Fund; as part of her duties, she was responsible for organizing the Two Million Purchases between 1965 and 1980. She stayed at the Art Fund until the dissolution of the institution; after 1989, she worked in the emerging market-based system until her retirement. She is the widow of well-known painter Ervin Tamás.

Audio-recording and transcript available.

József Bartl and Judit Koplik. Budapest, in Bartl's apartment (June 10, 2010).

József Bartl was born in 1932 in Soroksár, Hungary. He became enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1952 and graduated in 1959. He names Aurél Bernáth, Géza Fónyi and Gyula Papp as his influential masters. Bartl received the Derkovits scholarship between 1964 and 1966. Additionally, in the first years after his graduation, he mostly made his living from selling paintings through the Company of Picture Hall. From 1965 on, he was primarily supported through the Two Million Purchases. Many of his paintings are decorative still lifes.

Judit Koplik: see above.

Audio-recording available.

Lajos Kántor and Judit Koplik. Budapest, in Kántor's studio-apartment (June 17, 2010).

Painter Lajos Kántor was born in 1922 in Vajdácška, Hungary. He studied at the Academy between 1949 and 1954, with masters such as Endre Domanovszky, Aurél

Bernáth, and Gyula Hincz. In the early years, he made his living from the paintings that he could sell through the Company of Picture Hall. Between 1958 and 1964 Kántor exhibited his paintings in a group called *Hatak* [The Six], who wished to transform socialist realism into a modern, progressive style. Although the group failed in a few years time, they all became well known members of art life. Both the Art Fund and the Ministry regularly purchased his work during the sixties. Along with realist portraits, he mainly painted decorative pieces. Since the seventies, his work has been known for its geometric, abstract forms.

Judit Koplik: see above.

Audio-recording and transcript available.

Sándor Vecsési, Arany Bazsonyi, and Judit Koplik. Budapest, in Vecsési and Bazsonyi's apartment (June 24, 2010).

Painter Sándor Vecsési was born in 1930 in Nyergesújfalu, Hungary. He became enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in 1949, in the same year as Lajos Kántor, and graduated in 1954. He studies with Géza Fónyi and Aurél Bernáth, however, he names Alföld-style painter István Csók as his chief inspiration. He was awarded with the Derkovits scholarship between 1959 and 1961. By the sixties he had become a well known artist and active participant in public life. From 1965 on, he regularly juried at the Two Million Purchases. His work was purchased both by the Art Fund and the Ministry from the late

fifties on. He mainly painted realist, naturalist genre paintings of village life and portraits of peasants. He married and lived with painter Arany Bazsonyi until her death in 2011.

Painter Arany Bazsonyi was born in 1928 in Gyulaj, Hungary. She became enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in 1948, however, she could not graduate, due to her kulak family background. After Sándor Bortnyik, the rector of the Academy fired her in 1951, Bazsonyi became an art teacher in rural villages. She married painter Sándor Vecsési in 1954. By the sixties, her work became known despite her insufficient educational background. She was a member of the Art Fund and could submit works for the Two Million Purchases. Along with the Art Fund, the Ministry also regularly acquired her works from the sixties. Arany Bazsonyi passed away in October 2011.

Judit Koplik: see above.

Audio-recording and transcript available.

József Berkes and Judit Koplik. Budapest, in Berkes's apartment (June 25, 2010).

József Berkes was born in 1930 in Kisterenye, Hungary. Although Berkes did not have university education in art history, he trained himself throughout the decades he spent in the art world. He had worked at the Art Fund since the 1950s; by the sixties he had become the head of the Art Fund's Fine Arts Department, which organized the Two Million Purchases. He had close relationship with both the leadership of the Art Fund,

and specifically with the director György Szilárd, and artists. He left the Art Fund in the seventies, and worked at the Ferenczy Museum, Szentendre, until his retirement. He remained passionate about art; he devoted much of his time to visiting exhibitions. József Berkes passed away in December 2012.

Judit Koplik: See above.

Video-recording available.

József Baska, Katalin Rényi, and Judit Koplik. Budapest, in Rényi's and Baska's apartment (July 1, 2010).

Painter József Baska was born in 1935 in Dernő (Drnava), Slovakia. He graduated from the Academy of Applied Arts in 1960, and stayed there, first as Gyula Hincz's teaching assistant, then as teacher. Altogether he spent 45 years teaching at the Academy. Following his initial realist period he turned towards geometric abstraction. He actively participated in art life from the late sixties, he held several positions at the Association for example. His work was regularly purchased by the Art Fund from the sixties. He has been married with artist Katalin Rényi. For decades now he had been primarily working in Szentendre, Hungary.

Artist Katalin Rényi was born in 1951 in Budapest, Hungary. She had studied painting and graphic design at the Academy of Applied Arts, where she graduated in 1975. She

has been teaching at the Academy since 1985. She is active both as graphic designer and painter. She has been married with painter József Baska for more than three decades.

Judit Koplik: see above.

Audio-recording available.

Appendix III: Illustrations

The copyright in the illustrations of this thesis rests with the following institutions: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest; Műcsarnok, Budapest; Damjanich János Múzeum, Szolnok; Thúry György Múzeum, Nagykanizsa. Copies of the illustrations may not be made by any process in any circumstances, and the illustrations may not be used in any context.

Picture 1: “A Tavaszi Tárlatról,” TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957, X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.) [“About the Spring Show,” SPRING SHOW, Kunsthalle, 1957, X1957 Spring (Box 22)]. Black-and-white photo. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum, Budapest.

Picture 2: “Makrisz Agamemnón, Kossuth-díjas szobrászművész rendezi a kiállítást,” (KI 7415/3-4) TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957, X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.) [“Makrisz Agamemnon, Kossuth Prize-awarded sculptor curates the exhibition,” (KI 7415/3-4) SPRING SHOW, Kunsthalle, 1957, X1957 Spring (Box 22)]. Black-and-white photo. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum, Budapest.

Picture 3: “Az absztrakt terem,” (ZE 7503/1.) TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957, X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.) [“The Abstract Room,” (ZE 7503/1.) SPRING SHOW, Kunsthalle, 1957, X1957 Spring (Box 22)]. Black-and-white photo. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum, Budapest.

Picture 4: "Pogány Ö. Gábor, a Szépművészeti Múzeum helyettes főigazgatója megnyitó beszédet mond," TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957, X1957 Tavasz (22.dob.) ["Gábor Ö. Pogány, the deputy director of the Fine Arts Museum, giving his opening speech," SPRING SHOW, Kunsthalle, 1957, X1957 Spring (Box 22)]. Black-and-white photo. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Adattár, Budapest.

Picture 5: "Holdvilágnál," Kiállítási dokumentáció Szőnyi István festőművész gyűjteményes kiállításáról ["At the Moonlight," Exhibition documentation about painter István Szőnyi's collection]. Black-and-white photo. Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Adattár, Budapest.

Picture 6: Csernus Tibor, *Újpesti rakpart* [Tibor Csernus, *Riverside in Újpest*], 1957. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 7: "Szentiványi Lajos, *Szeles Balaton*." Régi festmény diák ["Lajos Szentiványi, *Windy Balaton*." Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 8: "Szentgyörgyi Kornél, *Balaton téj*." Régi festmény diák ["Kornél Szentgyörgyi, *Landscape of Balaton*." Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 9: "Bakky Sándor, *Táj*." Régi festmény diák ["Sándor Bakky, *Landscape*." Slides

of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 10: “Moldován István, *Nagymaros*.” Régi festmény diák [“István Moldován, *Nagymaros*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 11: “Kóka Ferenc, *Hajógyári táj*.” Régi festmény diák [“Ferenc Kóka, *Landscape of the Shipyard Island*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 12: Deim Pál, *Lágymányosi telep*. [Pál Deim, *Housing Project in Lágymányos*]. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 13: “Patay László, *Birkózás*.” Régi festmény diák [“László Patay, *Fight*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 14: “Jakuba János, *Ház előtt*.” Régi festmény diák [“János Jakuba, *In Front of the House*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 15: “Ridovics László, *Cséplés után*.” Régi festmény diák [“László Ridovics, *After Treshing*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 16: “Magos Gyula, *Kenderkötöző*.” Régi festmény diák [“Gyula Magos, *Tying Hemp*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 17: Kokas Ignác, *Este a falun* [Ignác Kokas, *The Night in the Village*]. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 18: Detail of the *Foundry Workers* by Simon Sarkantyu. Thúry György Múzeum, Nagykanizsa. Photo by the Author.

Picture 19: Sarkantyu Simon, *Kohászok* [Simon Sarkantyu, *Foundry Workers*.] Thúry György Múzeum, Nagykanizsa. Photo by the Author.

Picture 20: “Breznay József, *Munkáslányok*.” Régi festmény diák [“József Breznay, *Female Workers*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 21: “Túry Mária, *Öreg cipész*.” Régi festmény diák [“Mária Túry, *Old Shoemaker*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 22: “Balogh András, *Este Tihanyban*.” Régi festmény diák [“András Balogh, *Evening at Tihany*.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 23: “Tamás Ervin, *Zenehallgatók*.” Régi festmény diák [“Ervin Tamás, *Listeners*.”

Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 24: “Mohácsi Ferenc, *Koncert*.” Régi festmény diák [“Ferenc Mohácsi, *Concert*.”

Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 25: “Ék Sándor, *A Vörös Gárda esküje*.” Régi festmény diák [“Sándor Ék, *The*

Red Army's Oath.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 26: Böhm Lipót, *Csend* [Lipót Böhm, *Silence*]. Damjanich János Múzeum, Szolnok. Photo by the Author.

Picture 27: “Bartl József, *Csendélet*.” Régi festmény diák [“József Bartl, *Still Life*.”

Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 28: “Garabuczy Ágnes, *Ikon előtt*.” Régi festmény diák [“Ágnes Garabuczy, *In*

Front of Icon.” Slides of Old Paintings]. Colored slide. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Adattára, Budapest.

Picture 29: Bér Rudolf, *Ülő nő* [Rudolf Bér, *Sitting Woman*]. Thúry György Múzeum,

Nagykanizsa. Photo by the Author.

Picture 30: Szabó Zoltán, *Kesztyűs nő* [Zoltán Szabó, *Woman with Gloves*]. Damjanich János Múzeum, Szolnok. Photo by the Author.

Picture 31: Duray Tibor, *Önarckép* [Tibor Duray, *Self-portrait*]. Thúry György Múzeum, Nagykanizsa. Photo by the Author.

Picture 32: Plakát. Magyar művészet, 1945-1969, Műcsarnok, Jelzet: X1969 Magyar (109.doboz) [Poster. Hungarian Art, 1945-1969, Kunsthalle, Score: X 1969 Hungarian (Box 109)].

Picture 33: Duray Tibor, *Dózsa* [Tibor Duray, *Dózsa*]. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 34: Fenyő A. Endre, *Auschwitz* [Endre A. Fenyő, *Auschwitz*] Black-and-white photo. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.

Picture 35: Csáky-Maronyák József, *Marx Károly képmása* [József Csáky-Maronyák, *Image of Karl Marx*]. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 36: Bényi László, *Piac* [László Bényi, *Market*]. Black-and-white photo. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.

Picture 37: Baranyó Sándor, *Parasztpár* [Sándor Baranyó, *Peasant Couple*]. Black-and-

white photo. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.

Picture 38: Félegyházi László, *Leányarckép* [László Félegyházi, *Female Portrait*].

Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 39: Bortnyik Sándor, *Mona Lisa XX.század* [Sándor Bortnyik, *Mona Lisa 20th Century*]. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 40: Bortnyik Sándor, *Buffet-Rembrandt* [Sándor Bortnyik, *Buffet-Rembrandt*].

Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 41: Pogány Géza, *Figurális kompozíció* [Géza Pogány, *Figurative Composition*].

Colored photo. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.

Picture 42: Bálint Endre, *Ibizától Szentendrétig* [Endre Bálint, *From Ibiza to Szentendre*].

Colored photo. Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.

Picture 43: Deim Pál, *7 órától 7.30-ig* [Pál Deim, *Between 7 and 7:30 in the morning*].

Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 44: Kokas Ignác, *Vízzől és növényekről* [Ignác Kokas, *About Water and Plants*].

Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest. Photo by the Author.

Picture 45: Bortnyik Sándor, *A művészek bevonulása az Alapba* [Sándor Bortnyik, *Artists Marching Into the Art Fund.*] Jelenkori Gyűjtemény, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest.

Photo by the Author.

Picture 46: The Fine Arts Department of the Art Fund, 1970s. Black-and-white photo.

Judit Koplik's private photos.

Appendix IV: List of Institutions

Art Committee [Művészeti Bizottság]

The Art Committee was the supreme advisor of the Art Fund between 1962 and 1966. With the most prominent living artists as its members, it was often nicknamed as the “Committee of the Nines” [Kilences Bizottság].

Art Fund [Képzőművészeti Alap]

The Art Fund was initially established in 1952 as the artists’ key social institution; from 1954, György Szilárd headed the Art Fund. Szilárd created an economic system that made the Art Fund greatly successful financially; most importantly, the Art Fund had hegemony over postcard and international sellings (through the ARTEX Company). Thus the Art Fund could generously provide social services for artists. In 1965, the Art Fund established the so-called Two Million Purchases, with annual two million forints budget, which worked from the Art Fund’s budget until 1980.

Association of Fine and Applied Artists, in short: Association [Képző- és Iparművészek Szövetsége; Szövetség]

Artists’ professional institution; membership to the Association was automatically granted for those who had graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts or the Academy of Applied Arts. The Associations’ members could submit their works for the Two Million Purchases.

Committee of State Acquisitions [Állami Vásárló Bizottság]

Committee of prominent artists and art historians, who, along with an official of the Ministry, purchased contemporary and 20th-century fine and applied artworks for the key public collections between 1957 and March 1968. The Committee of State Acquisitions was organized by the Ministry. From the annual budget of 500,000 – 600,000 forints, this committee primarily pursued acquisitions for the National Gallery, the Fine Arts Museum, and the Museum of Applied Artists. The Committee of State Acquisitions had been preceded by the Vásárló Bizottság [Committee of Acquisitions], between 1952 and 1957.

Company of Picture Hall, in short: Company [Képcsarnok Vállalat]

Socialist art market, which functioned under the supervision of the Art Fund. The Company was established in 1954 as the successor of the *Művészeti Alkotások Nemzeti Vállalata* [National Company of Artworks]. Artists who were members of the Art Fund could submit their works to the weekly jury of the Company. The Company purchased the accepted works from artists, and then offered them for sale for the public. The Company worked with centrally-controlled low prices: it paid low money to the artists (who could not influence the prices), and then sold them for cheap prices to the customers.

Institution of Culture and Art [Képző- és Iparművészeti Lektorátus]

Founded in September 1963, the Institution of Culture and Art began its operation in February 1964. Headed by the applied artist and politician Tibor Ormos, the Institution of

Culture and Art became the state juror of all exhibitions in Hungary.

Kunsthalle [Múcsarnok]

Museum, located in Budapest's Heroes Square.

Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, in short: Ministry, or Ministry of Cultural Affairs [Művelődésügyi Minisztérium]

The reorganized Ministry began its operation in 1957, as the major state institution of cultural life. While it was headed by often changing ministers between 1957 and 1969, György Aczél remained the stable deputy minister during this period (his title changed in 1967, however, it did not influence his power position). Through its Fine Arts Department, the Ministry functioned as the state's major patronage institution from 1957 on.

National Gallery, in short: Gallery [Nemzeti Galéria]

The National Gallery was founded in 1957, and headed by art historian Gábor Ö. Pogány between 1957 and 1980. The Gallery was initially located at Kossuth Lajos square, until 1975, when the Gallery moved up to its current location in the Buda Castle.

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Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Iroda [Office of the Hungarian National Gallery]:

863-673/1968. Szilárd György levele Pogány elvtársnak, 1968. július 29. [863-673/1968.

György Szilárd's Letter to Comrade Pogány, July 29, 1968]

863-222/1968. 1968. március 6. Központi Múzeumi Igazgatóság értesítője [863-222/1968. March 6, 1968. Notification from the Central Directorate of Museums]

863-320/1968. 1968. március 28. Verő Gábor, Művelődésügyi Minisztérium főosztályvezető-helyettesének levele dr. Pogány Ö. Gáborhoz. [863-320/1968, March 28, 1968. Letter by Gábor Verő, the deputy at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs' Chief Department, to Gábor Ö. Pogány]

863-320/1968. Dr. Pogány Ö. Gábor levele a Művelődésügyi Minisztérium önálló Képzőművészeti Osztályának 1968. július 12-én [863-320/1968, dr. Gábor Ö. Pogány's letter to the Independent Fine Arts Department of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs on July 12, 1968]

863-352/1968. Bényi László vételi és ajándékozási ügye [863-352/1968. Acquisition and Gift from László Bényi]

863-552/1968. Vétel Molnár Józseftől [863-552/1968. Purchase from József Molnár]

863-257/1968. Duray Dózsa című kép vétele a művésztől [863-257/1968. Acquisition of the painting entitled Dózsa by artist Duray]

863-414/1968. Bencze László Öregasszony c. festményének vételi felajánlása [863-414/1968. Offer to sell László Bencze's painting entitled Elder woman]

Műcsarnok Könyvtár és Archívum [Kunsthalle Library and Archives]:

TAVASZI TÁRLAT, Műcsarnok, 1957. Jelzet: X1957 Tavaszi (22.dob.) [Spring Show, Kunsthalle, 1957. Score: X1957 Spring (Box 22)]

Az 1965-ös állami képzőművészeti vásárlások, Jelzet: X1965 Állami vásárlások (84.doboz), "Tájékoztató az 1965-ös állami képzőművészeti vásárlások bemutatásáról" [The State's Fine Arts Acquisitions in 1965, Score: X1965 State Acquisitions (Box 84), "Information about the Display of the Results of State Acquisitions in 1965"]

Magyar művészet, 1945-1969, Műcsarnok, Jelzet: X1969 Magyar (109.doboz) [Hungarian Art, 1945-1969, Kunsthalle, Score: X 1969 Hungarian (Box 109)]

VILT- KONDOR- KOKAS, Róma, Jelzet: X1968 Vilt-Kondor-Kokas Rómában (105.doboz), X1968 Velencei Biennálé (105.doboz) [VILT-KONDOR-KOKAS, Rome, Score: X1968 Vilt-Kondor-Kokas in Rome (Box 105), and X1968 Venice Biennial (Box 105)]

Állami Képzőművészeti Vásárlások IV. Kiállítása, Jelzet: X1969 Állami (115.doboz), 1708/5-1, 5-2. "Tájékoztató az Állami Képzőművészeti Vásárlások IV. Kiállításáról,

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MOL XIX-I-m-4 9.doboz 2.tétel, Vásárlások. 73090; 73181; 73197; 73321; 73368; 73379; 73799; 73906; 73935; 73957; 73986; 74077. [MOL XIX-I-m-4. Box 9, Item 2, Acquisitions: 73090; 73181; 73197; 73321; 73368; 73379; 73799; 73906; 73935; 73957; 73986; 74077]

MOL XIX-I-4-aaa 64.doboz, 137.dosszié (iktatatlan anyag), Jövedelemkimutatás 1963.évről [MOL XIX-I-4-aaa Box 64, Folder 137 (Unfiled Material), Survey about Artists’ Salaries in 1963]

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MOL XIX-I-4-m 48.doboz, 3.tétel, Vásárlások, 1965, 100390 [MOL XIX-I-4-m Box 48, Item 3, Acquisitions, 1965, 100390]

Kálmán Csohány’s personal archive

Unlabeled documents, owned by Kálmán Csohány’s family, stored in Mrs. Kálmánné Csohány’s Budapest apartment. I consulted the documents in December 2009.

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Interviews

See Appendix II.