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**Off the Record: Performative Practices in the Hungarian Neo-avant-garde and their Resonances in Contemporary Art**

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On Saturday 18 October 1969 a large retrospective exhibition of internationally renowned optical artist Victor Vasarely opened to the public in Hungary's most prestigious venue for contemporary art, becoming one of the most spectacular events in Múcsarnok's history.<sup>1</sup> Hungarian born Vasarely (1906 – 1997) made his name in Paris as geometrical abstract artist, and while his career was at a peak, the communist authorities decided to reclaim the famous artist by ostentatiously bringing him home. It was also an act that signalled a change in exhibition policies, as for more than a decade exhibitions of abstract art were off the program in major museums and galleries, as a repercussion of the 1956 uprising. This officially organised exhibition in the national Kunsthalle attracted an impressive 90 000 visitors, however not everyone was so pleased about the show. Neo-avant-garde artist János Major (1934- 2008) came to the opening with a small sign which he would occasionally take out of his pocket and show to friends and acquaintances, when no one was looking. It read 'Vasarely go home'.

The small act of disobedience which over time attained the 'status of a local myth' was a starting point for an art project by Andreas Fogarasi (b. 1977), who decided to find out more about the 'double event' at the opening of Vasarely's exhibition. As could be expected, since this one man protest was performed clandestinely there was no record of it, no

photograph was taken and no documentation survived that could highlight the action and all that remained was the imprint it made in the memory of those who saw it or only heard about it. Fogarasi's reconstruction of the event entailed conducting filmed interviews with nine leading Hungarian artists and art historians, which was presented at the exhibition *Vasarely Go Home* first held in 2011 in Madrid's Museo Reina Sofia.<sup>2</sup> Predictably, the recollections of Major's contemporaries did not always match up and questions such as what kind of sign it was – a leaflet or signboard, where it was hidden - in his outer pocket or inside the coat, and how it was shown are refracted through individualised experiences.

Fogarasi's revisiting of Major's inconspicuous act shows how challenging it can be to gain a clearer picture of dematerialized artistic practices that were performed in secret, while relying only on personal reminiscences turns out to be primarily a pretext for further mythmaking. It is also apparent from this account of the double event from 1969 how intertwined art and politics were under socialism. However, this requires very careful understanding of the political, which often was a question of context rather than an explicit issue addressed in an artwork, in order not to reduce the Eastern European neo-avant-garde artists to essentialist political subjects. This tendency is also expressed in the perception of performance art as functioning 'almost exclusively in the East as political opposition in the years of oppression'.<sup>3</sup> How layered and intricate the relationship between art and politics was at the time is also expressed in the view of artist Tamás St.Auby, who in the interview with Fogarasi explained that upon seeing the Major's holding the sign 'Vasarely go home', he felt that 'you couldn't disagree with

this or agree with it' as it was just a profound 'personal action'.<sup>4</sup>

Although Major's subversive intervention was a personal act during the exhibition opening, many Hungarian performances followed the pattern of taking place during the openings of shows. The reasons for that were of a practical nature, as organizing art events entailed obtaining permissions from the authorities, and exhibitions were thoroughly controlled and censored accordingly, however the openings were less strictly policed, which was taken as opportunity for live actions and even the opening speech became 'an art form in itself'.<sup>5</sup> A residue of this practice survives to this day where an exhibition invitation always announces who will be giving the opening remarks, often taking primacy even over the curator of the show. While Czech performances after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968 were mostly private events with a small circle of insiders witnessing them, in Hungary performances were often conceived as segments of exhibition openings with the already gathered exhibition visitors as audience.

Even the opening of Fogarasi's exhibition in Trafó Gallery in Budapest in 2012 was a scene for another parallel event by politically inclined artist Tibor Horváth (b. 1976). Earlier that year Horváth had also referenced one of the legendary works of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde, an act that had been retroactively named *Unguarded Money* by Miklós Erdély (1928-1986), who during the revolutionary days of 1956 was involved in leaving several suitcases on the streets of Budapest with the symbolic notice: 'The purity of our revolution makes it possible for us to collect money in this way for the families of our fallen martyrs'.<sup>6</sup> Horváth's updated version was realised in steal as a

bottomless cash-point machine with the inscription 'Donation for the Health of Democracy', wittily referring to the current situation of politically right coloured everyday in Hungary. At the opening in Trafó, Horváth wrote on the palm of his hand words that read 'Fogarasi come home', re-interpreting Major's original action with a twist that referred to the fact that Fogarasi himself is a Vienna based artist of Hungarian origin, an irony that was instantly clear to the ones to whom the message was shown. (Fig. 1) The action, which this time was recorded and uploaded to internet, confirmed the edgy neo-avant-garde as the unfailing spring for contemporary artistic commentaries.

Sending Vasarely home by older artist or welcoming Fogarasi home by the younger one could also be understood as a metaphor for inclusions and exclusions, issues of belonging and the related feelings of homelessness that have periodically arisen in Hungarian art and culture of the past decades, the extremes of which ranged from enforced internal exiles to the expulsion from home endured by political exiles. Also related is the question as to what extent the art practiced in Hungary corresponded to developments in the international art world and how much it was a 'home product', which is one of revolving topics in national art history and was a conceptual axis for László Beke's 1991 exhibition on the Hungarian art of the 1960s, one of the first in post-communist times to revisit the era. In the catalogue of *The Sixties*, held in Budapest's National Gallery, Beke made a distinction between the artistic styles that belonged to the variant of national modernism and the avant-garde stream, which on the contrary could 'be defined more or less clearly in terms of international isms'.<sup>7</sup>

Following that logic, performance art would belong to the neo-avant-garde set of artistic practices and even the name of it remained in its original English or is used as a loanword spelled as 'performanz', while there is a consensus that the first Hungarian performance actually took place in Warsaw in 1978 where Hungarian artist Tibor Hajas (1946-1980) participated in *I Am* performance festival in Remont Gallery. It was entitled *Dark Flesh* and entailed the blindfolded artist hanging from the ceiling with a rope fastened to his wrists, while trying to take photographs with a flash in a darkened room, a performance that continued until he experienced total blackout and the audience had to urgently release him. Although this daring performance contains all the characteristics of performance art in the strict sense, as it was a live act realized by the artist using his own body in front of an audience, performative practices in Hungarian neo-avant-garde art start earlier and entail a more fluid understanding of the genre.

The implicit resistance of performance to strict definition is also recognizable in the take on it of art theorist Miško Šuvaković, who broadly defined performance art as a 'directed or not directed event/action conceived as artistic work which artist does in front of public or without one, in a public or private space',<sup>8</sup> although the contemporary view of performance requires even broader understanding of the category, in terms of the chosen medium and the role of the artist.<sup>9</sup> The beginnings of performative practices in Hungarian neo-avant-garde are, as is the case of many other national art narratives, related to the staging of happenings.

Announced as a 'strictly private event', the invitation for the 'first Hungarian Happening' informed the chosen guests to arrive at 4 pm on

25 June 1966 to the address in the I district on the Buda side of the capital with the special request for 'warm clothing and obligatory attendance'.<sup>10</sup> The instruction for attire was related to the fact that the event, enigmatically entitled *The Lunch (In Memoriam Batu Khan)*, took place in a medieval cellar, where the main protagonists Tamás Szentjóby (b. 1944) and Gábor Altorjay (b. 1946) orchestrated an extravaganza of sound, visual and sensory effects. Even upon arrival at the venue, in the garden on the way to the cellar, the visitors got a taste of what was to be expected with a scene of Szentjóby half buried in the ground typing on a typewriter and occasionally pulling a rope on which a shovel was fixed to a dusting rack, while on the end of it hung a kettle with a live chicken inside. Nearby, a children's pushchair was set on fire. Downstairs an ecstatic atmosphere was created with the help of loud music, irregular ticking of clocks, bicycle wheels, chicken and white mice, the smashing of furniture, fire, as well as formally dressed artists eating raw potatoes and vomiting, while the audience was also involved in the ongoing processes. (Fig. 2)

What accompanied the organization of the happening were noted sketches of the event, while the artists also wrote down theoretical contemplations on the meaning of happening. In Altorjay's view, happening is 'photographable poetry, visible music, ephemeral sculpture, audible painting' and significantly, he found 'the archetype of all happenings' in the 'Holy Mass', relating it to the ritualistic aspects of myths, which were a continuous source of references for Hungarian neo-avant-garde artists.<sup>11</sup> Szentjóby's take on happenings was more cosmic, as for him it was 'an active environment: it coerces the human being, who has been coerced into dependence by natural

history, into interdependence.<sup>12</sup> Later Altorjay published his recollections mostly concentrating on the descriptions and impressions of the performative afternoon in a text in 1968, while more recently Szentjóby highlighted some additional aspects of the happening, which the two artists in their early twenties staged with the help of their colleagues.<sup>13</sup> He elucidated the allusion to lunch as having down-to-earth connotations of the physical necessities of life, the cellar being a symbolic venue for artistic activities which were at the time also pushed to the underground, while the reference that caused most speculation in later accounts was an homage to legendary Mongol leader Batu Khan, that was apparently related to the medieval origins of the cellar.

By comparison, the first happening in Zagreb, which took place the following spring, also followed a scenario with destructive elements that consisted of noise produced by musical instruments, the destruction of furniture using hammers, live chickens, and included various aspects of food and eating that aimed to break down the barrier between art and life, artists and the audiences.<sup>14</sup> Although it was coincidentally also staged in a cellar, in the Croatian version it was not a private setting but a local cultural centre, nevertheless both events had in common what Šuvaković termed as typical for the Eastern European happening, namely being 'part of the battle for artistic freedom within the framework of real existing socialism'.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of motivation for the organization of the first Hungarian Happening, Szentjóby situated it in the widely felt exhaustion with abstract expressionist painting in the mid-sixties, and the search for innovative forms of expression, which he first encountered in an

article in the Hungarian press that reported about American and West European Happenings and their protagonists, such as Allan Kaprow and Joseph Beuys.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after realizing their own version, they came across a book edited by Wolf Wostell and Jürgen Beker entitled *Happenings: Fluxus, pop art, nouveau réalisme. Eine Dokumentation* from 1965, from which they learned that they were not 'isolated madman, but rather part of a major intercontinental movement.'<sup>17</sup>

However, while the Hungarian artists were on the one hand synchronous participants in the international art trend, on the other they were also firmly based in the everyday reality of socialist Hungary. For example, as the last on the long list of names under which Szentjóby operates, such as Tamás St. Auby or Tamás St. Turba, registered recently on the occasion of his solo exhibition in Prague in 2011, there appeared the name of Kurt Schwitters.<sup>18</sup> This is actually the code name for Szentjóby used by the secret police officers who followed him since the staging of the first Happening, indicating how knowledgeable the communist agents were, since they awarded him with a name of a famous collage artist who uniquely combined surrealism and geometric abstraction. After the opening of the secret police archives in post-communist times some of these reports became publically available and were occasionally placed alongside the artists' texts as historic documents of the era.<sup>19</sup> What comes to the fore from the analysis of these secret reports is the astonishing level of professional observation, as well as a considerable amount of fabricated information. Comparison of the artists' own accounts of the first happening with the police narrative reveal numerous discrepancies, raising the questions of how involved the informants were with the

circles of contemporary art, as well as what were the reasons for placing deliberate disinformation.<sup>20</sup> This shows how complex the recovery of art history through the secret police archives can be and how cautiously the data has to be approached in order to gain a critical understanding of the art practice of the time.

These files were, however, not included in the 2011 publication on the first happening co-edited by Szentjóby himself, which in general was conceived as a more historic documentation of what actually took place on that early summer afternoon of 1966, stripped both of the concurrent tendentious reports as well as of contemporary critical contextualisation. Nevertheless, there is one minor intervention which should not pass unnoticed, namely that the reprinted invitation card was addressed to Béla Hamvas, the guru of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde. The writer and philosopher Hamvas (1897-1968) with remarkable linguistic skills, including reading of Greek, Sanskrit and Hebrew texts, devoted his life-time to the comparative research of sacred books of the world in search for metaphysical thought that rejected the 'illusionary reality of a type of existence which had slid into a permanent state of crisis', most of which were published in the early 1940s in his *Scientia Sacra*.<sup>21</sup>

Hamvas's determination in questioning the realness of reality was also tangible in a text written with his wife in 1947 entitled 'Revolution in Art: Abstraction and Surrealism in Hungary', in the movements of which they saw magical evidence of the 'tremendous presence of higher existence' that cannot be found in art dealing with realism. This provoked the rage of Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács, who was a staunch defender of literary realism,

as a consequence of which Hamvas lost his position as a librarian and was forced to work as an unskilled worker in the countryside, while also being banned from publishing.

Nevertheless, Hamvas's writings in samizdat editions circulated among the artists during the 1960s, finding fruitful ground in the younger generation, who were eager to learn more about myths and cosmic existence at a time when the counter-cultural craze for eastern philosophies was as synchronous as the urge to stage happenings, but information channels were interrupted by the weight of the Iron Curtain. As a consequence, the interest in mythology on the one side and the nourishing of the legacy of Béla Hamvas on the other would remain a long lasting concern of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde art. Gábor Altorjay, for instance, who left Hungary in 1967, due to reoccurring problems with the authorities, and settled in Germany, turned the translation of Hamvas's novel *Carnival* into his long-term project.

One of the most commonly encountered images of the first Hungarian happening is that of the half buried Szentjóby typing on the typewriter, against the chaotic background of the burning pushchair. Symbolically sitting between the two worlds, with his eyes hidden behind shades, the artist distanced himself from the reality of the material world and ritualistically performed the act of writing. The centrality of texts in Hungarian neo-avant-garde's performative practices is not only related to the position of myths, or narrations of sacred history concerned with 'how reality came into existence'<sup>22</sup> in the conceptual aspects of their works, but also has another dimension to it. Namely, many of the artists working with performances had actually started as poets, or remained poets throughout their careers,

including Tamás Szentjóby, Miklós Erdély and Tibor Hajas, while many more used texts or forms of speech as part of their performative practices. The link that J. L. Austin established between the utterance of a sentence and 'doing of an action' in his seminal book *How to do Things with Words* that introduced the term performative,<sup>23</sup> could be argued to be of special relevance in the Hungarian context of the neo-avant-garde. In that sense, if the origins of American happenings could be traced to the action paintings of Jackson Pollock,<sup>24</sup> in Hungary performative practices developed out of the making of poetry or *poiesis* in its original Greek meaning to make.

The early performative practices in the second half of the 1960s followed the pattern of happenings or fluxus events and took place in secluded venues, either in private settings or appropriate cultural institutions, such as local districts' culture halls. For example, the happening *Golden Sunday* staged by Altorjay at the end of 1966 was organised at Miklós Erdély's place and included scenes such as bread nailed to the wall and sprinkled with wine and a piece of beef attached to the head of a dummy, with a meteorological balloon hovering above.<sup>25</sup> Erdély's own action form 1968 characteristically combined poetry, myths and latest scientific discoveries in its peculiar title *Three Quarks for Muster Mark*. This is a line from James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* about King Mark, the deceived husband in the legend of Tristan, mocked in the poem through the squawking of birds, which was taken by scientists to denominate elementary particles and fundamental constituents of matter that became known as quarks. Erdély's performative piece was an assemblage of action readings and actions with objects, which came about during preparations for the *Iparterv* exhibition that

would leave a mark as the first show that introduced the new generation of Hungarian neo-avant-garde artists, and was named after the banquet hall of the headquarters of a construction company, where the actions and the exhibition took place.<sup>26</sup>

While several more action-concerts and fluxus events performed at the time were also held behind closed doors,<sup>27</sup> some individual artistic actions also took place in public spaces of Budapest, which could be viewed in the frame of changes that 1968 brought to political landscapes across the globe. In contrast to Czechoslovakia where the Prague Spring was a mass movement attempting to transform the stale ideology of communism into 'socialism with a human face', or Yugoslavia where student movements across the federative republics formulated their demands on the grounds of a left critique of actually existing socialism, in Hungary, where the scars of 1956 Uprising still had not healed, 1968 did not turn into a big public affair.<sup>28</sup> However, the ideas of general disagreement with official ideology also spread among cultural and artistic circles, which were expressed in their anti-Soviet and anti-bureaucratic views by searching for alternatives, including brief flirtations with Maoism, until these were interrupted by the crushing of all illusions when Warsaw Pact troops, including Hungarian forces, invaded Prague on 20 August 1968. After that, as one of the leading figures of the Hungarian dissident movement and participant in many neo-avant-garde art events Miklós Haraszti explained: 'my whole generation just realised that all we want is freedom and not ideology.'<sup>29</sup>

The demand for freedom would become a driving preoccupation for the neo-avant-garde artists and several actions staged in the public

spaces of Budapest in the period that followed the revolutionary moment of 1968 addressed that question in different ways. One of the most daring performative interventions in public space was Tamás Szentjóbby's *Sit Out – Homage to Bobby Seale* from 1972, which was an inversion of the 'sit ins' of the student protests. It was dedicated to the black American activist Bobby Seale, founder of the Black Panther Party, whose credo was 'Freedom by any means necessary', and who was imprisoned at the time for his involvement in the Chicago riots of 1968. Blindfolded and bound up, Szentjóbby sat in front of an international hotel, staging a solidarity protest before the prompt arrival of police. Since this was one of those events performed in secrecy, off the record, the fame of this heroic act spread among the alternative circles, but most responses to the question 'have you seen it?' get the reply 'no, just heard of it'.<sup>30</sup>

Also taking place in 1972, at the moment just after the official program of the Mayday celebrations had finished, when participants in the public march started to break from the formation of coordinated steps to find again the individual rhythms of walking, Bálint Szombathy (b. 1950) joined the crowds on the streets of Budapest carrying a signboard with a poster of Lenin, the communist leader of the Russian revolution. (Fig. 3) *Protesting with Lenin in Budapest*, interfering into the public sphere in a way that resembled both the officially support marches as well as demonstrations in the spirit of '68, shows how delicate the artist's approach was to the situation of real existing socialism. Szombathy's placing of the communist leader in the 'trivial daily life of a real-socialism' as he carried the poster 'without authorisation' was interpreted as signifying 'a kind of slippage from state control' since a 'symbol of revolution

outside the field of party control could have presented a challenge to the bureaucratic system'.<sup>31</sup> The Vojvodina born artist of Hungarian descent came from neighbouring Yugoslavia for a short visit when this intervention took place, bringing with him an air of Yugoslav new artistic practice, where performances were more open and interventions in public space freer. Interestingly, this was another action which took place publically but anonymously, with an accidental audience only, and although it was documented in numerous photographs, it first belonged to accounts of the Yugoslav neo-avant-garde, becoming better known in Hungary only as part of the slow process of establishing art historical narratives in post-communist times.

The posters that Endre Tót (b. 1937) carried in public spaces of Budapest as well as the cities of Western Europe beginning in 1973 were part of his TOTaIJOY series, which all started with the statement 'I'm glad if...' pointing to humorous and ironic comments on society. Messages written on the banner proclaiming 'We are glad if we can demonstrate' that were carried on the streets of Amsterdam, Paris and Bonn in 1979 were regularly taken by the critics on the Western side of the divide as the artist's response to the experience of living under totalitarian regimes characterised by censorship and isolation, where street marching in support of the party were mandatory, while for the ones that observed it from the East, these were 'obvious expression of thanks for the freedom that existed in West'.<sup>32</sup> Tót's focus on the humour, laugh and joy invokes anxiety about existence in social systems which try to limit the freedom of expression.

The economic policy of János Kadar, the Hungarian communist leader who came to power in 1956 after the crushing of the anti-soviet uprising and retired only in 1988, would become known as 'goulash communism'. It started with reforms that were introduced in 1968 under the name of New Economic Mechanism, which promised limited economic restructuring and cultural freedom, allowed small scale private businesses and eased foreign trade restrictions, resulting in a short lived lightening of the political atmosphere around 1970. This more liberal period however was brought to a halt by the Soviets in 1972 and subsequently the situation gradually deteriorated again. The short episode of liberalisation was of huge significance for Hungarian contemporary art, with innovative neo-avant-garde practices that uncompromisingly examined the role of art in society inexorably spreading among the young generation of artists.

The inclination of the time to question the status of the art object was also expressed in the short introduction to the pivotal R exhibition held at the Technical University in 1970, with participants from neo-avant-garde artistic circles. It proclaimed in a science-fiction scenario that after centuries of gathering together 'large heap of paintings, sculptures and applied art objects all over the world', strict measures should be taken 'to restrict artistic production', as 'depots became too small, and the works had to be stored on the streets' which could now only be reached by 'air-liner or in tunnels pushed through the hills of "nudes", 'paysages" and "busts", calling artists to take action 'to save art from going too wild'.<sup>33</sup>

The approach of the communist authorities to preventing art from 'going too wild' was to

efficiently divide the art production of the time into the categories of supported, tolerated and forbidden, notoriously known as 'Three Ts',<sup>34</sup> and the artworks examined here belonged to the last section, as a consequence of which artists were forced to find loopholes in the system in order to proceed with their vocation. When young artist György Galántai (b. 1941) rented a chapel from the Catholic Church in the holiday resort on the Lake Balaton in 1966 for his studio, he had little idea that it would become a special chapter in the album of global conceptual art. He renovated the abandoned place of worship and in 1970 started with organising summer exhibitions, however it was only after the political climate in Budapest changed to the extent that more and more cultural events were forbidden, that the neo-avant-garde made the move to Balatonboglár. Most prominently, when the 'Avant-garde Festival' initiated by Tamás Szentjóby and Gyula Pauer (1941-2012) in Spring of 1972 in Budapest was banned by the authorities, they decided to restage it in July in Balatonboglár under the heading 'Direct Week', as a reference to their call for 'direct feedback' to the programme, explaining that 'the audience comes into contact with us not through contemplation but through activity'.<sup>35</sup>

What was meant by that could be illustrated by the performative reading of Pauer's second *Pseudo Manifesto* which declared 'if you are manipulated, manipulate back' with the concept of pseudo that is 'false, deceptive, unreal and seemingly real',<sup>36</sup> demonstrating the artist's preoccupation with the familiar questions of what constitutes reality and at the same time exploring the possibilities of rejection of the reality of actually existing socialism that was imposed upon them. The readings performed by Miklós Haraszti and Júlia



Veres in Hungarian, English and Russian were recorded, mixed with musical numbers and played back during the week. Pauer also exhibited *Marx-Lenin* which consisted of a press cutting of a huge sculpture of Marx's head erected at the time in Karl Marx Stadt, which was covered with a sheet of paper in which a contour of Lenin was cut out, so that Marx's face becomes Lenin's, wittingly pointing to the phenomenon of pseudo appearances in life.

Another landmark work realised during the Direct Week was Szentjóby's *Exclusion Exercise – Punishment- Preventive Autotherapy*, which also called for the active participation from the audience, who were invited to ask the artist, sitting on a chair with his head under a bucket, any questions they liked or alternatively to choose from ones that the artist suggested and stuck on a wall nearby. The long list of proposed questions examined the notions of individual freedom, the relationship of fate and history, necessity in life, the meaning of time, while the meander of queries was set around the issues of sin and punishment. The artist performed in this position for eight hours every day for the duration of the Direct Week, subserviently sitting with his head covered, whereby symbolically demonstrating moral and spiritual blindness, while his last question 'do you feel particularly exposed because you cannot see to whom you are talking' provoked uncanny associations both of confession and of psychotherapy.

This work was re-enacted in 2005 in the Budapest studio of Little Warsaw, when the artist duo made up of Bálint Havas (b. 1971) and András Gálik (b. 1970) invited Szentjóby to restage the action after more than thirty years, as part of a series of events that questioned the present perception of the artworks from the

past. (Fig. 4) Later Little Warsaw explained their own stance towards neo-avant-garde art, which they observed from the distance of a generation. For them it seemed as if 'artists who lived and worked in the previous (Communist) era tend to mythologize their own activity', while Little Warsaw 'seek to de-mythologize and de-sacralize them, in other words, approach them in a more matter-of-fact way' in order to get away from the habit of older generation to 'see their own activity in a heroic light and dramatize themselves through a sort of political mythology'.<sup>37</sup> The remake of *Exclusion Exercise* in the mid 2000s belonged to then widespread trend to revisit ephemeral works of art from the 1970s, usually involving new protagonists in the initial roles, however in the case of Little Warsaw, which represents the most iconic re-enactment in recent Hungarian art, the act was repeated by Szentjóby himself. The artist duo made a film recording of it and so claimed the authorship of the re-enactment, which they entitled, no less mythically, *Cyril and Method*.

The staging of various actions and active participation was also on the agenda during the weekend in August of 1972, when Czech and Slovak artists came to Balatonboglár at the invitation of curator László Beke to meet their Hungarian colleagues in an act of reconciliation after the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Beke initiated several activities, including the staging of tableau vivant based on a special issue on Czechoslovakia of a Western magazine in which a photograph showed Warsaw Pact troops playing tug-of-war during the intervention. In the restaging of the picture, Hungarian and Czechoslovak artists recreated the scene by pulling apart the magazine. (Fig. 5) For Beke, this was 'not only a political allusion but also, in some way, the magical annihilation

of a photograph, while also being a scenario of a picture within a picture.<sup>38</sup>

Beke also arranged a dictionary in progress of those words that could be understood between all three languages and stuck the terms on the wall of the chapel - significantly the first line in Czech, Slovak and Hungarian was the local variant of the word 'action'. One of the most notable actions which took place during the meeting was a symbolic demonstration of friendship in which each participant was asked to shake hands with everybody in front of a camera. The photographs were later structurally arranged with Hungarian artists, including Galantai, Erdély, Pauer, St. Joby in one row and Czechoslovak artists, including Petr Štembera, Rudolf Sikora, Jiří Valoch and Stano Filko, in the other, then stuck together into a mosaic of the meeting that left strong impressions in the memories of the partakers,<sup>39</sup> while future links were also forged among the artists that would result in further visits and collaborations.

The following summer of 1973 turned out to be the last for the Balatonboglár meetings, as the chapel studio was finally successfully closed by the authorities, who had observed it closely throughout its active period to the extent that after the system change of 1989 and the opening of secret police archives, the whole history of the events taking place there could be quite accurately restored based on numerous reports from the informants on the scene.<sup>40</sup> During that final summer, one exhibition took place there at which several iconic works of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde were presented, including Szentjóby's *Be Forbidden*, Erdély's *God is Little* and collective *János Major's Coat*, while Major himself staged *Living Tomb*. Major, who was a graphic artist involved in many neo-avant-

garde activities, had already made his signature work in 1971 with photographs of tombstones, especially one dedicated to someone whose surname was 'Cubist', which made the artist develop the thesis that in Hungary artistic movements come to die, calling it a necropolis of ideas.<sup>41</sup> In Balatonboglár, Major stood naked upon a stone with only drapery around his waist, in a pose that resembled the much adored classical Greek athletes. Under his feet lay a copy of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda*, as a subtle reference to political reality as well as a questioning of the truth that the name of the paper proclaimed, while on the tomb was an epitaph that read: 'I lived for your art, I became the martyr of it'.

Sin and punishment, suffering and sacrifice are all elements which point to the fascination with mythology and archetypes that are reoccurring themes in the performative works of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde. The original role of the myth as 'a guide' designed 'to help us cope with the problematic human predicament'<sup>42</sup> could also be recognised in the artists' focus on the complex issues of reality which underlie the visible material world and can reach depths beyond everyday experiences, while living in the black and white world of actually existing socialism, it is hard not to ascribe the interest in transcendental as a reaction to it, a denial of it and an option for escape. It is also important to note that the neo-avant-garde artists in principle did not resort to national myths of, for example, *honfoglalás*, or the arrival of Hungarians to the Pannonian Plain, the epic cycle of Atilla and Árpád, the *turul* bird and so on, which were also re-surfacing in the 1960s, but instead they referred to classical antiquity, finding fixture points that were much older and more persistent than the chaotic flux of events in recent history, by opting for more

cosmopolitan themes, closer in spirit to the international counter-culture.

Tibor Hajas, the most illustrious Hungarian performance artist of the 1970s had all these components present in his work, which was an intensive combination of poetic texts, cutting edge actions and the conceptual employment of photography. Hajas, who throughout of his short but intensive career 'considered himself a poet'<sup>43</sup> rather than an artist, experienced the reality of actually existing socialism already at the age of 19 when he was imprisoned for 20 months as a consequence of his poem entitled 'Fascist Comrade' in the mid 1960s. A notable presentation in Balatonboglár in 1973 involved reading out his text *Freedom Industry Broadcast, Channel IV* to an audience that was tied up with a rope and therefore confined to non-action till the interrogation on the contagious subject of freedom was over, after which the listeners were encouraged to burn their ropes. A year later he dealt with the problem of the copy and the original, in his conceptual text 'Person Multiplication', which called for everyone to find a person in whose name one could publish, write letters, make phone calls and so on. Arguably, this could be understood more in terms of the mythical conceptions according to which 'every reality is only a pale shadow of its archetype, the original pattern, of which it is simply an imperfect copy',<sup>44</sup> rather than a call for political engagement, since it is more of a contemplation on the issue of pseudo, imitation and fake as opposed to truth and reality, than a comment on the communist ideology of collectivism.

On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *Exposition* in the small Hungarian town of Hatvan in October 1976, Hajas realised an action which in Hungarian art history is referred

to as 'pre-performance' after the term assigned to it by László Beke.<sup>45</sup> It entailed the artist sitting blindfold on a chair in the middle of a circle marked with chalk, holding a camera and following the directions of his assistants who guided him in attempt to take a snap of another camera with self-exposition switched on, which was suspended from a rope. Subsequently he realised several works with elements of photography, flash and darkness, such as the previously mentioned performance *Dark Flesh* performed in 1978 in Warsaw, and *Conciliation* from the same year, which was presented in Bercsényi Kollegium in Budapest. The latter performance took place behind closed doors in a darkened room in which loud music was playing, while Hajas began to read a long text that starts with the words: 'Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me part of your time. Thank you for being here; thank you for placing yourselves at my disposal. You have done so out of ignorance...' until there was an explosive flash and the audience could suddenly see the unclothed performer tied to the wall.<sup>46</sup>

Hajas sometimes replaced the flash of the camera with explosions of magnesium, and in general his performances took place in darkness, with flashes of light revealing uncanny scenes, which indicates his take on the medium of photography as a metaphor for the relation between existing reality and its appearance. The instrumental role of photography for his practice is also visible from his collaborations with the artist and musician János Vető, whom he met in 1974 and who since then became an assistant in public performances and made documentation for those that Hajas realised privately, only for the camera, such as *Flash Paintings*, which were paintings made with the

artist's own body and *Picture Whipping* from 1978/79, with explicit sexual allusions.

The performances realised in front of an audience, often as part of an introduction to film screenings, were more concerned with the idea of the artist as a martyr. In *Csöd*, which was performed in Bercsényi dormitory in Budapest on 18 December 1979, the audience listened to loud electronic music by German band Kraftwerk, after which a text-montage of Bela Hamvas's *Tibetan Mysteries* could be heard from the stereo, while the cold quartz light shone on a huge painted canvas with an upwards pointing white arrow sign. (Fig. 6) The artist knelt in front of it, with his head wrapped in bandages and slowly pulled a chest expander, while his wrists were fixed with a rope, it all ending with a magnesium explosion and a blackout. The title of his performance refers to a meditation technique within Tibetan Buddhism where it stands for 'cutting through the ego' and is a method of overcoming the illusion of the material world or *maya* that is represented through the skin of a body, which needs to be exposed to torment to get beyond the surface reality.

In comparison to Marina Abramović, who in her 1975 performance *Lips of Thomas* cut the shape of the five pointed star onto her stomach, critically referencing the social system she grew up in, Hajas's injuries with fire, needles, electric shock and burns with quartz light were physically serious, but without direct political overtones. Furthermore, the inevitable analogy between Hajas's practice and that of the Vienna Actionists ranges from charges of epigonism to claims that 'the resemblance of Hajas' work to the Viennese Actionists' does not extend far beyond appearances'.<sup>47</sup> Although the documentation of Hajas's unconventional and

often disconcerting practice exists in abundance, it remains an uncharted territory for art historians, who instead act as if following Wittgenstein's proposition that 'what we cannot talk about, we must pass over in silence'. That his work is treated with reservation is visible from the artist's monographs, which either focus solely on the photographic illustrations without commentary, such as in the publication *Image Whipping*, or exclusively on his own writings, which were published on the occasion of his retrospective exhibition in Székesfehérvár in 1987. Nevertheless, judging from both compatible lines of the artist's photography and his writings, it is evident that when Hajas's performative practice became violent, brutal and explicitly self-mutilatory and started to test the physical limits of the body, it remained firmly bound to the world of fantasy, nightmare and the mystery of death.

These preoccupations were also manifested in his emblematic performance *Vigil*, from 18 May 1980 and also realised in the Bercsényi Collegium, where Hajas and his assistants, all dressed in white, stood in front of a white wall, while a puppy lay on a drum. The blindfolded artist threw a bucket of water onto the floor, then held a cable with a bright shining bulb in one hand and a hooked stick in the other and as he moved backwards smashed the light into the pool of water, then as the quartz lamp illuminated the room, the artist crawled to the edge of water and like Narcissus gazed at his reflection on the electrified surface. The dog was running and sniffing around, while Hajas lay down in the middle of the floor and had an anaesthetic injected in his vein and breathing tubes inserted into his mouth, soon falling unconscious, then his assistants drugged him across the floor and left. His text playing from a

tape recorder warned the audience: 'I'm awake; I keep vigil over you, over your passing minutes, over your waiting...'

The roles were ironically reversed only a few months later, when news of the tragic death of Hajas, who lost his life at the age of 34 in a car crash at the end of summer 1980 on his return from an artist colony in Southern Hungary, reached his colleagues and the art audience. The catalogue of the most recent exhibition *Emergency Landing* held in Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art in Budapest in 2005 features a scholarly essay that focuses on the interpretation of the artist texts, however it ends poetically with the words: 'In the flaring light he stepped in to the world beyond, leaving us behind. And he became forever that which he had always wished to become: A MYTH',<sup>48</sup> summarising the general attitude of local art historians towards his work. This is even more present in the introductory text that talks about the artist who 'heroically' bore his position 'between life and death' as a 'true missionary' and therefore curating an exhibition about his work is just as impossible 'as it is impossible to exhibit a Communion, a secret, a Torah, or an initiation rite.'<sup>49</sup>

A different approach was taken recently by Edit András, who viewed Hajas's bodily exposures through the loop of gender construction, arguing that what at first sight appears as the 'traditional male role of active subject' could actually be perceived as a 'scream directed against hidden layers and definitions of masculinity in socialism, which only seems to correspond with the traditional powerful male roles if taken at face value.'<sup>50</sup> The issue of gender also surfaced in Hungarian neo-avant-garde art in the period of the 1970s, when for example Orsolya Drozdik (b. 1946) staged a live

exhibition in the Young Artists Club in Budapest in 1977 called *Nude/Model*. (Fig. 7) The artist drew a live female model who posed for her on a chair covered in drapery positioned so that the viewers, who were restricted from entering the room and had to observe the act of drawing through the open doors, could only see her back. The event lasted for four days and each day another art world personality was invited to open the exhibition. From the same period originates Drozdik's series entitled *Individual Mythologies*, in which she distanced herself from the dominant male oriented artistic climate, and made photographic performances in which she, for instance, superimposed images of dancer Isadora Duncan, who liberated the modern dance by looking for inspiration in ancient Greek art, over the artist's own dance moves.<sup>51</sup>

Trained as textile artist, Judit Kele (b. 1944) began to investigate the notion of art object and to experiment with the exhibiting herself as an artwork in a 1979-84 series entitled *I'm the Work of Art*. Most prominently in 1980 she installed herself in the exhibition room of the Hungarian Museum of Fine Art in front of an empty space, where a painting of El Greco had been removed for an exhibition loan and sat there for three days. (Fig. 8) For the Paris Biennial of the same year the artist decided to auction herself as a work of art by publishing an advert in the French daily paper *Libération*, in which she offered herself as a Central European artist-bride to the potential husband, who was encouraged to place a bid, which eventually resulted in a marriage. Kele, who then moved to France, stopped producing art in the mid-1980s and turned to filmmaking, a consequence of which was that 'her scarcely recorded works and performances, including *I Am a Work of Art*, remained practically forgotten and unknown

even to local art historians',<sup>52</sup> which changed only recently through her participation in the 2009 exhibition *Agents and Provocateurs* and the acquisition of her work by the Ludwig Museum Budapest in 2011.

While the golden age of heroic performance art in general passed by the end of the decade of the 1970s and artists either gave up art for good, as in the case of the Czech performance artists Petr Štembera, Karel Miler and Jan Mlčoch, or returned to their studios and started to paint, as Marina Abramović observed, as an explanation for her own move to nature and the desert at the time,<sup>53</sup> in Hungary the changes were even more dramatic with the passing of Tibor Hajas. Furthermore, Judit Kele and Orsolya Drozdik left Hungary by 1980, as did Endre Tót, while Szentjóby had already been forced to emigrate in the mid-70s, which left its mark on the art scene, however performance activities in Hungary did not stop, on the contrary the 1980s brought new protagonists and directions to the genre.

The smooth changeover into the new decade developed organically in the case of artists associated with Indigo Group, the name of which derived from the concept of 'inter-disciplinary thinking', as well as from the preferred medium for drawing on carbon paper of Miklós Erdély, the founder of the group, who previously engaged in experimental pedagogical activities, such as *Creativity Exercises* and *Fantasy Developing Exercises*. Among those artists who worked with performance, János Szirtes (b. 1954) turned it into one of his permanent forms of expression, continuing the thread of Hajas's bodily endurances of actual danger in his early works such as *Passing Sickness* from 1981. In a darkened environment, props that included a table tennis table, a high

referee's chair and a stage were installed, while scenes involving dogs and theatrically dressed-up male and female figures interchanged at the same time as the sound of ping-pong balls and music were amplified to an unbearable level, delivering the message of the agony of an artist, who at the time was suffering from a life-threatening illness.

Also members of Indigo, András Böröcz (b. 1956) and László L. Révész (b. 1957), both studied painting and developed a type of performative practice which consisted of a series of actions set on a stage with numerous participants, including singers, musicians, dancers, who were also regularly accompanied by the philosopher Gábor Bora, who read out his texts. The participants were dressed in oversized costumes and performed on a stage crowded with props and visual effects including slides, film projections or paintings and sculptures, following absurd narratives, which usually coalesced around a single subject. In *Jubilee* from 1982 the artists were dressed as knights in armour, made coffee and smoked cigars, to the accompaniment of songs performed in Esperanto, while theorist Bora referred to their earlier performances and analysed the connections between Frankenstein and Einstein through mythological reinterpretations. In the performance *Max and Moritz* from 1983 the artists took as their starting point the classic German children's tale about two mischievous boys, and turned it into a series of bizarre acts, which involved the artists dressed as chimney sweeps setting a table by piercing plates and sewing them like buttons to the tablecloth, interrupted by ballet inserts, films and speeches.

In another appearance entitled *The Love of the Watermelon Vendor Boys* in 1984 the stage was

set with two meter tall watermelon slices and scenes of everyday family life around the dining table, when the artists entered as watermelon murderers and started to 'stab everybody around the table with the slice of watermelon'. (Fig. 9) The lecturer warned that their performance was 'not about turning imitation into realisation' but instead 'we are talking about dissolving both in a realised fiction, where the emphasis is not on the realisation but on the fantasy.'<sup>54</sup> Indeed, their practice could be viewed in terms of postmodernist affection for textuality and eclecticism, while Révész and Böröcz rather associated themselves with the Dadaist cabarets and the avant-garde performances of Hungarian Bauhaus artist Sándor Bortnyik, in order to make a sharp distinction from the seriousness of the performative practices of the neo-avant-garde artists from the previous decade.

Together with János Szirtes, Révész and Böröcz appeared with their performances in Documenta 8 in Kassel in 1987, however this was also the year when the two artists ended their collaboration and stopped producing performances. In their absurdist, ironic and surreal stage appearances, which were in a sense theatrical extensions of their paintings, the artists strayed into the world of fantasy and did not bridge the gap into the real world of political reality, and in that way actually continued the practice of their predecessors, who in general also opted to stay within the secluded world of art in search for a deeper meaning to existence.

Hejettes Szomlyazók was another artist group active in transition years whose members included artists Balázs Beöthy (b. 1965) and Tibor Várnagy (b. 1957), who occasionally staged actions. They took part in the

performance festival *Expanzió* which was organised in Vác, a small town near Budapest, between 1989 and 1993 and approached the medium of performance as 'free transition through art, music, theatre, literature', which was reflected also in the program that featured artists at the intersection of those fields, foremost of whom were the associates of the Vajda Lajos Studio from Szentendre.<sup>55</sup> Hejettes Szomlyazók, meaning 'substitute thirsters', stripped their performative practice of the layers of theatricality, as well as intellectual pretensions and for example in one action they fried toast in front of an audience, while in *Beach – An Action to Enjoy Heat*, which took place in the Young Artist Club in Budapest in the winter of 1989, they recreated a beach scene in a galley space heated up to 38 C°. The artists in their swimming trunks sat on beach mattresses, played cards, drank beer, ate ice-cream, filled crosswords and encouraged the visitors to the exhibition opening to take off their coats and join them in their leisure.

'In the 1980s, everything was simple. Time stood still, the rules were clear. Freedom of speech was scarce and rare, trips abroad were few and far between, dictators were real dictators, the secret police was no secret, we were all unimportant and often happy. The people in power, the collaborators with the occupying forces — they were the bad guys.' This is how young Hungarian writer Péter Zilahy recently pictured the era, pointing to the challenges that the change to democracy brought with it.<sup>56</sup> The fall of communism in Hungary is referred to as the 'system change' and although it went smoothly, according to Zilahy, 'under the camouflage of free trade the old system had continued to thrive with its secret loopholes to get around the rules.'

What followed shortly after 1989 in the political sphere was reflected in changes brought to the art world, which saw the 'legalisation' of those initiatives that were under communism considered as illegal, underground and unofficial, along with the return of some of the exiled artists, including Szentjóby. He marked the spirit of the time with his public art intervention *The Statue of Liberty's Soul* in 1992, which entailed wrapping the communist monument to liberation erected in 1947 with white fabric, purifying it from its previous life and ensuring its new future. It was precisely public art and socially engaged practices that captured the attention of the young generation of artists, who paradoxically continued the self-organising strategies of their predecessors, which was the subject of the exhibition *Budapest Box* held in Ludwig Museum in Budapest in 2002, that focused on the 'hidden scene of the 1990s'.<sup>57</sup> The artists who continued with performative practices, such as Bálint Szombathy and János Szirtes, joined the international artists meetings in Nové Zámky in Slovakia, where Studio Erté had organised an annual festival of alternative, multimedia and performance art since 1987, which eventually became known as *Transart Communication*, commenting on the current issues and personal preoccupations of the participants.<sup>58</sup>

More recently, younger artists' interest in the ephemeral works of the neo-avant-garde has gone hand in hand with art historical research conducted in the area, while some also saw the opportunity to revisit the burning issues that once ignited the art scene. When Little Warsaw publicised a call with a photograph of an old man holding a cigarette in his hand and a library of books behind him with a text underneath that invited 'anyone who looks like the person on the picture to come forward', it served the

purpose of testing public memory about the most famous Hungarian philosopher, György Lukács, who had fallen into disrepute for his involvement with the communist regime, while at the same time it was a means to organise an audition for the most suitable impersonator of beloved Bela Hamvas's most obnoxious opponent. Amidst an evening of artistic interventions and philosophical discussions, which took place in May 2010 in the philosopher's archive, which is housed in his apartment overlooking the Danube in central Budapest, the selected lookalike, equipped with some original Lukács's items, such as his hut and walking stick, entered the flat, went straight to the desk, searched through some papers and promptly left again, before most of the visitors had even managed to catch a glance of him.<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 10)

This subtly staged and barely noticeable appearance of the ghost of Lukács by Little Warsaw could be seen as an indirect and non-coercive intervention into a past that remains hidden and unexplained. Personified in the Lukács's act of rummaging around the desk, looking for lost documents, it is a comment on the fact that so many parts of the puzzle about the art and culture of actually existing socialism are still missing. In this brief appearance at the intersection of myth and reality, which went beyond the straightforward aims of re-enactment to challenge assumptions about a contested historical figure, the artists managed to momentarily bridge a cavernous divide in historical consciousness, with the time warp of the Lukács archive providing an ideal setting for a performance that both recreated the intimacy of East European neo-avant-garde circles and represented a refreshing take on contemporary performance.



<sup>1</sup> Victor Vasarely: *A megsokszorozott művek* (The multiplied works) exh.cat. Budapest. 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Andreas Fogarasi. *Vasarely Go Home*. Website of the project, <http://vasarelygohome.museoreinasofia.es>, accessed September 2012.

<sup>3</sup> RoseLee Goldberg. *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*. London. 2011. 214.

<sup>4</sup> See note 2.

<sup>5</sup> László Beke. "The Hungarian Performance – Before and After Tibor Hajas", *Body and the East: from 1960s to the Present*. (ed: Zdenka Badovinac). Ljubljana. 1998. 105.

<sup>6</sup> For the historiography of this work see: Dóra Hegyi and Zsuzsa László. "How Art Becomes Public", *Parallel Chronologies*. Budapest. 2011. 4.

<sup>7</sup> László Beke. "The Hidden Dimensions of the Hungarian Art of the 1960s", *Hatvanas évek: új törekvések a magyar képzőművészetben* (Sixties: new pursuits in Hungarian fine arts). Budapest. 1991. 315.

<sup>8</sup> Miško Šuvaković. *Konceptualna umetnost* (Conceptual art). Novi Sad. 2007. 657. My translation.

<sup>9</sup> See: Claire Bishop. "Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity" *October*. 140. 2012. 91-112.

<sup>10</sup> As reprinted in: Zsuzsa László and Tamás St. Turba. *The Lunch (In Memoriam Batu Khan)*. Budapest. 2011. 29.

<sup>11</sup> Reprinted in László and St. Turba. *The Lunch (In Memoriam Batu Khan)*. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>13</sup> Idem. Specially mentioned were Miklós Jankovics, István Varannai, Enikő Balla, Miklós Erdély and Csaba Koncz.

<sup>14</sup> See: Marijan Susovski. *Inovacije u Hrvatskoj umjetnosti sedamdesetih godina* (Innovation in Croatian art of the 1970s). Zagreb. 1982. 28-29.

<sup>15</sup> Šuvaković. *Konceptualna umetnost*. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Mária Ember. "Happening és antihappening" [Happening and anti-happening], *Film Színház Muzsika*, 13 May 1966.

<sup>17</sup> Szentjóbý in interview with Dóra Hegyi and Zsuzsa László published in *Galerija Nova Newspapers*. (Zagreb) 19/20. 2009. 38.

<sup>18</sup> See website for the exhibition *IPUT/ Tamás St. Auby* on: <http://cz.tranzit.org/en/exhibition/0/2011-11-02/iput-tams-staubu>. Accessed September 2012.

<sup>19</sup> *Parallel Chronologies: How Art Becomes Public – "Other" Revolutionary Traditions* (ed: Hegyi Dóra, Sándor Hornyik and Zsuzsa László). Budapest. 2011. 17.

<sup>20</sup> The comparative analysis of the secret police files on the First Hungarian Happening was a subject of a paper given by Kata Krasznohorkai entitled 'Code Name: "Schwitters" - The First Hungarian Happening in the Reflection of a Secret Agents Report' at Socialeast Seminar on Art and Espionage at Courtauld Institute of Art, London on 27 February 2007. See: <http://www.socialeast.org/seminars.htm>. Accessed 2012 September.

<sup>21</sup> Arpad Szokolczai. "The Non-being of Communism and Myths of Democratisation", *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe*. (ed: Alexander Wöll and Harald Wydra). London. 2008. 51.

<sup>22</sup> Mircea Eliade. *Myth and Reality*. Prospect Heights, Illinois. 1998. 5.

<sup>23</sup> J. L. Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford. 1962. 5.

<sup>24</sup> See for example discussion on "Pollockian Performative" in Amelia Jones. *Body Art: Performing the Subject*. Minneapolis. 1998. 53-102.

<sup>25</sup> For this and more actions see: *A Magyar Neoavantgárd Első Generációja 1965-72* (The first generation of Hungarian neo-avant-garde). (ed: Fabényi Julia). Szombathelyi. 1998.

<sup>26</sup> For more information about the exhibition and accompanying actions see: *Iparterv 68-80: Exhibition in the Meeting Hall of Iparterv* (ed: László Beke, Lóránd Hegyi and Peter Sinkovits). Budapest. 1980.

<sup>27</sup> *Fluxus East: Fluxus Networks in Central and Eastern Europe*. (ed: Petra Stegmann). Berlin. 2007.

<sup>28</sup> See: *Revolution I Love You: 1968 in Art, Politics and Philosophy*. (ed: Maja and Reuben Fowkes). Manchester. 2008.

<sup>29</sup> "Miklós Haraszti and Tamás St. Auby in Conversation", *Loophole to Happiness*. (ed: Maja and Reuben Fowkes). Budapest. 42.

<sup>30</sup> "Oral History" - discussion of art historian Emesé Kürti and performer László Najmányi in 2011, see: <http://www.freewebs.com/wordcitizen18/interviews.htm>. Last accessed September 2012.

<sup>31</sup> Miško Šuvaković. "Performing of Politics in Art – Transitional Fluxes of Conflict", *Szombathy Art*. (ed: Nebojša Milenković). Novi Sad. 2005. 178.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Strauss. "Endre Tót: The Action Artist", *Endre Tót: Semmi sem semmi* (Nothing Is Nothing). Budapest. 1995. 17.

<sup>33</sup> László Beke in *R* exhibition. Budapest. 1970. n.pag.

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<sup>34</sup> It stands for 'támogatni, tűrni, tiltani'. See: László Beke. "Dulden, verbieten, unterstützen: Kunst zwischen 1970 und 1975", *Die Zweite Öffentlichkeit: Kunst in Ungarn in 20. Jahrhundert.* (ed: Hans Knoll). Dresden. 1999. 213.

<sup>35</sup> Gyula Pauer and Tamás Szentjóbby. "Direct Week", *Parallel Chronologies.* 30.

<sup>36</sup> *Törvenytelen avantgárd: Galántai György Balatonboglári kápolnaműterme 1970-1973* (Illegal Avant-garde: György Galántai's Balatonboglár Chapel Studio). (ed: Julia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári). Budapest. 2003. 128.

<sup>37</sup> The Shifty Art of András Gálik and Bálint Havas (interview). <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/interviews/503-the-shifty-art-of-andras-galik-and-balint-havas-interview>. Accessed September 2012.

<sup>38</sup> László Beke. *Törvenytelen avantgárd.* 141.

<sup>39</sup> *Rudolf Sikora: Against Myself* (ed: Helena Musilová). Prague. 2006. 15.

<sup>40</sup> See: Klaniczay and Sasvári, *Törvenytelen avantgárd: Galántai György Balatonboglári kápolnaműterme 1970-1973.*

<sup>41</sup> László Beke. *Elképzelés: A Magyar Konceptművészet Kezdetei Beke László Gyűjteménye, 1971* (Idea/Imagination, the beginnings of Hungarian conceptual art from the collection of László Beke, 1971). Budapest. 2008. 130-131.

<sup>42</sup> Caren Armstrong. *A Short History of Myth.* Edinburgh. 2005. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Image Whipping: Photo-works by Tibor Hajas and János Vető* (ed: László Beke). Budapest. 2004. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Armstrong. *A Short History of Myth.* 5.

<sup>45</sup> László Beke. "A performance és Hajas Tibor" (Performance and Tibor Hajas) *Mozgó Világ.* (Budapest) 10. 1980. 104.

<sup>46</sup> *Hajas Tibor 1946-1980: Emlékkiállítás* (Tibor Hajas: Retrospective exhibition). (ed: Júlia Szabó). Székesfehérvár. 1987. n.pag.

<sup>47</sup> John P. Jacob. "Recalling Hajas", *Nightmare Works: Tibor Hajas.* (ed: Steven High). Richmond, VA. 1990.

<sup>48</sup> Kriszta Dékei. "The Texts of Tibor Hajas (1946-1980)", *Tibor Hajas: Emergency Landing.* Budapest. 2005. n.pag.

<sup>49</sup> Dr. Vera Baksa-Soós. "Emergency Landing: An Homage to Tibor Hajas", *Tibor Hajas: Emergency Landing.*

<sup>50</sup> Edit András. "Do I Dream Freely or on Command? Imagined Masculinity in Socialist Hungary", *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of*

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*Eastern Europe.* (ed: Bojana Pejić). Cologne. 2009. 124.

<sup>51</sup> See: *Orshi Drozdik: Adventure and Appropriation 1975-2001.* (ed: Dóra Hegyi). Budapest. 2002.

<sup>52</sup> Beata Hock. "Agency Gendered: Deconstructed Marriages and Migration Narratives in Contemporary art", <http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/2-articles/636--marriages-and-migration-in-art>. Accessed September 2012.

<sup>53</sup> See interview with Marina Abramović in *Performance, Ritual, Prozess: Handbuch der Aktionkunst in Europa.* (ed: Elisabeth Jappe). München. 1999. 142.

<sup>54</sup> *András Böröcz, László Révész, János Szirtes.* (eds: Gábor Bora and Lóránt Hegyi). Budapest. 1987. n.pag.

<sup>55</sup> *Expanzió 1989-93.* (ed: József Bárdosi). Vác. 1994. 18.

<sup>56</sup> Péter Zilahy. "The Aftertaste of Goulash Communism", *New York Times.* January 13 2012.

<sup>57</sup> Maja and Reuben Fowkes. "Hidden Scene in Budapest" *Umělec.* (Prague) 2. 2002. 28-30.

<sup>58</sup> *Transart Communication: Performance and Multimedia Art, Studio Erté, 1987-2007* (eds: Gábor Hushegyi, József R. Juhász and Ilona Németh). Bratislava. 2008.

<sup>59</sup> On other interventions in the archive see: Maja and Reuben Fowkes. "Reclaiming Lukács: Interventions in the Archive of a Marxist Philosopher" *Idea* (Cluj) 35. 2010. 52-57.

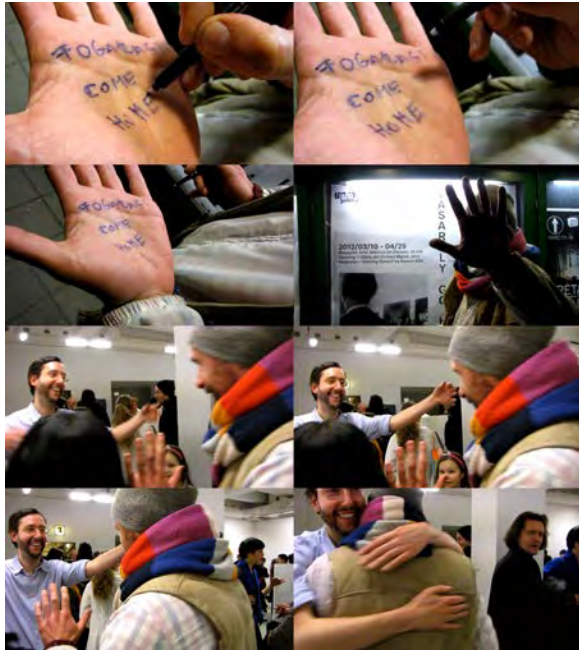


Figure 1 Tibor Horváth. "Fogarasi Come Home". 2012. Courtesy of the artist. Photo by Tibor Várnagy.



Figure 2 Tamás Szentjóbby and Gábor Altorjay. "The Lunch (In Memoriam Batu Khan)". 1966. Courtesy of IPUTNPU-Archive. Photo by Gyula Zaránd.



Figure 3 Bálint Szombathy. "Lenin in Budapest". 1972. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4. Little Warsaw. "Reconstruction". 2005. Courtesy of the artists.





Figure 5. Chapel Studio of György Galántai, Balatonboglár. "Meeting of Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian Artists: Tug of War Action". 1972. Courtesy of Artpool Art Research Center. Photo by György Galántai.



Figure 6. Tibor Hajas. "Csöd". 1979. Courtesy of the Estate of Tibor Hajas. Photo by György Galántai / Artpool Art Research Center Archive.



Figure 7. Orshi Drozdik. "Nude/Model". 1977. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 8. Judit Kele. "I'm a Work of Art". 1979. Courtesy of the artist.



Figure 9. András Böröcz and László L. Révész. "The Love of the Watermelon Vendor Boys". 1984. Courtesy of the artists.



Figure 10. Little Warsaw. "Shocked Scene". 2010. Courtesy of the artists. Photo by Tamás Soós.