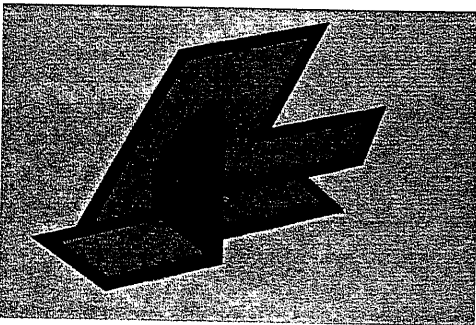
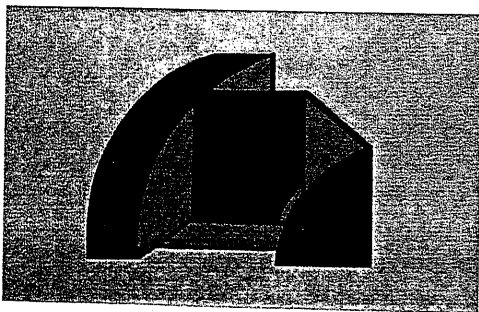


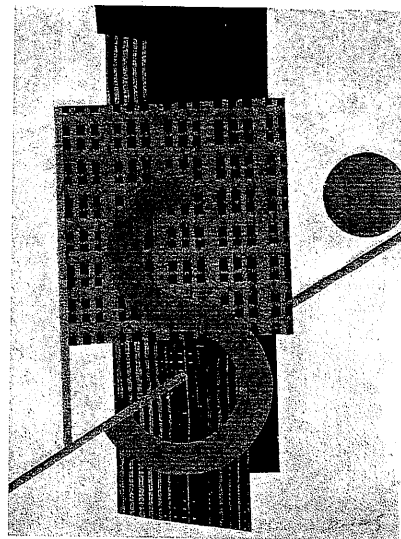
László Péri, *Linoleum Cuts*, No. 12, 1922-1923, portfolio of 12 prints  
Published by *Der Sturm*, Berlin, 24.1 x 25 cm



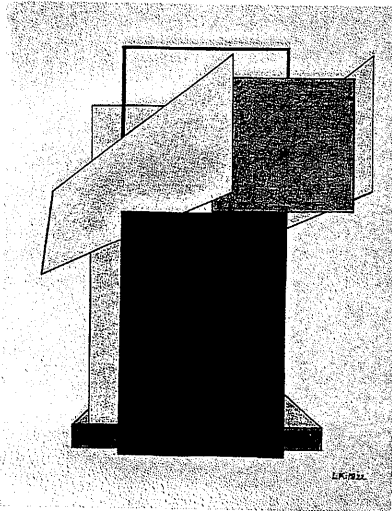
László Péri, *Linoleum Cuts*, No. 7, 1922-1923, portfolio 12 prints  
Published by *Der Sturm*, Berlin, 15.9 x 21.5 cm



László Péri, *Linoleum Cuts*, No. 8, 1922-1923, portfolio of 12 prints  
Published by *Der Sturm*, Berlin, 21.4 x 28.1 cm



Lajos Kassák, *The Red "S,"* 1923  
Collage, 40 x 30 cm



Lajos Kassák, *Image Architecture*, 1922  
Pencil, Chinese ink, 28.3 x 22.8 cm

On the Origins of Hungarian Constructivism in Vienna: MA 1920-25  
The Only Instance of Modernism Between the Wars (2007)

s. 57-71

Hungary and Austria have in common not only many film stereotypes left over from the Habsburg monarchy, but they also share the question of their artistic avant-garde and the function of exile. As in Hungary, Austria's avant-garde, at the time it existed, had to fight bitterly for survival and was then buried in official history. Emigration, at the time, all too often appeared as the only way to resolve the conflict. For Hungary and Austria, the role of exile in the development of their avant-garde is thus related. Even more interesting, then, is the historical case of Hungary's avant-garde going to Austria for exile.

The intention of this essay is, first, to point out the highly interesting and informative fact that, in the first half of the century, Hungary's avant-garde — leading twentieth-century artists such as Vasarely, Moholy-Nagy, Kepes, Béothy, Breuer, and Kassák — brought forth an independent movement, the MA movement, which flourished most successfully in exile — namely in Vienna of the 1920s (of all places). Second, I intend to place the development of Hungarian Constructivism in the general context of logical Constructivist contributions in Vienna. It is interesting to note that, in both Hungary and Austria, the decade from 1910 to 1920 was considered Expressionist. However, under the influence of revolutionary Russian art, the exiled Hungarian avant-garde turned from Expressionism and Activism to Constructivism, while in Austria, Expressionist Activism developed further, leading to the Actionism of the 1960s.

Hungary's Avant-Garde, 1909-1930

According to Éva Kőrner, Hungary's avant-garde between 1909 and 1930 can be subdivided into four phases: 1909-1912, 1915-1919, 1920-1925, and 1926-1930. The two most important phases, the decade from 1915 to 1925, are tied together in the magazine *MA*, published primarily by Lajos Kassák. Kassák himself appeared to be a central figure of the avant-garde movement in the years 1915 to 1930, due to his artistic as well as theoretical and organizational activities.

Phase 1: Nyolcak, 1909-1912

The Nyolcak [or Group of Eight] consisted of painters Károly Kernstok, Róbert Berény, Dezső Czigány, Béla Czöbel, Ödön Márfy, Dezső Orbán, Bertalan Pör, and Lajos Tihanyi. The group combined a social, proletarian mission with Cézanne's early Cubist experiences. The tendency toward formalization led to the abandonment of themes and an Expressionistic focus that aimed at the essential. In addition to still-lives, nudes, portraits, and landscapes, they were also the first urban artists to turn cityscapes into abstract monumental compositions that could have been borrowed from the Renaissance.

Phase 2: Activist Avant-Garde, 1915-1919

The writer and later painter Lajos Kassák (1887-1967), who, stimulated by the writer and later painter, Emil Szittya (1886-1964), had discovered German Expressionism. Inspired by Franz Pfemfert's magazine, *Die Aktion*, which began publication in 1910, Kassák also founded the activist group and magazine, *A Tett* [The action], in 1915. The magazine combined internationalism, socialism, and Expressionism with futuristic dynamics, publishing Apollinaire, Ivan Goll, Marinetti, and others. The October 1916 issue of *A Tett*, with contributions from Emil Verhaeren, George Duhamel, George Bernard Shaw, and Wassily Kandinsky, was banned because of its antiwar position. Kassák initiated a new journal, *MA* [Today], whose first issue appeared one month later in November 1916.

In Vienna in 1924, Kassák began to write his six-volume, two-part autobiography, *Egy Ember Élete* [One man's life]. Kassák, who came from a poor family, was a workman until the age of twenty-two. In Budapest he made contact with the worker's movement early on. At twenty-two he left Hungary and wandered through Europe with his friend, Gödrös, a wood carver. It was then that he met Szittya. Kassák was in Paris in 1909, but in 1910 he returned to Budapest. Familiar with all the "-isms" — particularly with Picasso, Modigliani, Apollinaire, and Cendrars, who was a friend of Szittya — he became their proponent in Hungary.

In the beginning, *MA* had the subtitle *Magazine for Activistic Art* (later *Activistic Magazine*). The painter Béla Uitz was long-time co-editor with Kassák. As the subtitle indicates, in the beginning *MA* still had Expressionist-Activist tendencies, and it developed slowly at first, but quickly in Vienna it became a forum for Constructivism, which to a great degree would become synonymous with the Hungarian avant-garde. But like German Expressionism, *MA*'s program for liberating the human being had developed in Hungary in the direction of abstract forms under the influence of Futurism and Cubism. In addition to the new avant-garde — Sándor Bortnyik, József Nemes Lampérth, János Mattis-Teutsch, László Péri, György Ruttkay, Ferenc Spangher, János Schadt, János Kmetty — *MA* also had contact with the Nyolcak and published or exhibited its members: Tihanyi, Berény, and Kernstok. Between 1916 and 1919 it also published Dezső Szabó, Sándor Galimberti, Valéria G. Dénes, Sándor Gergely, Karl Otten, Rubiner, Goll, Walt Whitman, Paul Hatvani, János

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János Mattis-Teutsch, born 1884 in Breslau. Attended the carpentry school in Kronstadt, and the art school in Budapest 1901-02. Studied sculpture at the Bayerische Akademie der bildenden Künste in Munich, 1902-05. Became a teacher at the Industrial Gymnasium in Kronstadt in 1908. Between 1908 and 1915 he gradually shifted from naturalistic painting with religious and ethical themes to an abstract form of representation. In 1913, he exhibited in the Sturm show in Budapest, and had his first MA exhibition in 1917. Some of his pictures were printed in MA. In 1917, MA published an album of prints featuring twelve of his linocuts. His second show, in 1918, also took place in the MA building in Budapest. He had shows in Berlin and Vienna in 1921. After World War I, he returned to his hometown. In 1918 he joined Der Sturm. Began working with sculpture in 1920. Took part in the 1921 Der Sturm exhibition. Shows in Paris, Chicago, Rome, and Berlin. Visited the Bauhaus in 1925. Editor of *Integral* magazine. His theoretical writings were published in 1931. From 1944 to 1949, taught at the Kronstadt Section of the Romanian Society of Visual Artists, where he was also director from 1957-59. Died in 1960 in Brasov.

Mácsa, Boccioni, August Stramm, Róbert Reiter, Béla Bartók, Picasso, Pechstein, Van Gogh, Johannes R. Becher, Derain, Alfréd Kemény, Zoltán Kodály, Lajos Kudlák, Carl Ehrenstein, and Franz Marc. Naturally there was an active exchange of books and ideas among MA, *Die Aktion*, and *Der Sturm* [The storm].

Mattis-Teutsch held the first MA exhibition in October 1917. He was also one of the painters most frequently published in MA, in addition to Uitz and Bortnyik. Still, in a 1971 catalogue from the Galerie im Taxispalais (Innsbruck), below his name (which is listed with the rest of those artists who tended toward Constructivism between the World Wars) one reads: "unknown German painter" — so heavily had the iron curtain of time descended. Bortnyik, who from 1918 to 1922 numbered among Kassák's closest colleagues, had an MA exhibition in July 1919.

The increasing politicization of MA can be seen in a special edition about Lenin (1919), and in MA contributor János Lékey's assassination of the Hungarian minister of defense, Count István Tisza, in 1918. After that, MA ran into conflict with the revolutionary Hungarian Soviet Republic (which began on 21 March 1919) and its commissioner of education, György Lukács. For the cultural political ideology, the MA group's expressiveness and tendency to use abstract forms was an expression of a bourgeois decadence incomprehensible to the masses.

Legend has it that Lukács wanted to force his resolutions on Kassák with the help of a revolver. In a special edition of MA, Kassák published a letter to Béla Kun in the name of art, in which he rejected art's function as direct propaganda — as was desired by Lukács and the Soviet leader, Kun — and instead established an artistic independence. "Progressive artists are obliged to decide for themselves about the specific issues of artistic creation." Due to these divergent ideas concerning the mission of art, the Soviet Republic discontinued MA even though the MA movement had supported the Republic's existence and, in its own way, had helped to bring it about. Lukács's sad reactionary role, which began here, ended, in my opinion, in the state-sponsored art of Social Realism, an erroneous adaptation of nineteenth-century bourgeois realism (Balzac, Zola, etc.). Toward the end of the Soviet Republic, in August 1919, Kassák was arrested; he spent five months in prison and then fled to Vienna. The Hungarian Soviet revolution had raised hopes in the progressive intellectual and artistic circles that a similar event might occur in Vienna. Radical Expressionist poet Georg Kulka, part of the circle of friends around Carl Ehrenstein, was obviously in Hungary himself, when he wrote a poem entitled "Budapest, 1 May 1919":

*Vielleicht hast du, der das Felsige füllt, du, der die Erde rundet,  
Deine Entsagung bizarr an Formerfülltes gehängt —  
Buhltun Bäume unzertrennlich, haben Blüten uns gemundet,  
Blieb die Zukunft vor ihnen, ewige Zukunft, gesenkt.*

[Maybe you, who cut down rocky cliffs, you, who circle the earth / Have hung your renunciation bizarrely on things filled with form — As trees courted inseparably, we have savored blossoms / the future, endless future, remained low before them.]

Kulka also had contact to other Eastern European avant-garde circles, such as the Yugoslavian group around Miroslav Krleža's journal *Zenit* [Zenith] (1918–1921), in which he was published along with Ivan Goll, Max Jacob, Schiele, Prampolini, André Salomon, Marcel Sauvage, Florent Fels, Alexis Brown, A. Blok, Fritz Reichsfeld, and others. (Incidentally, a report about *Zenit* and "Zenitism" appeared in MA in June 1921.) Kulka also dedicated a poem to another Soviet Republic loyalist, namely Gustav Landauer from the German Soviet Republic.

*Dem Geiste Landauers*

*Ein Aufruf goss sich aus. Ein Tod erwacht.  
Schrück auf zum Requiem der Jesusmacht!  
Springt mancher Brunn ins Gras mit rotem Schein —  
Der Freiheit letzter Sieg wird trocken sein.  
Durch die Antike deines Alphabets  
Schien das verlernte sanfteste Cesetz.  
Pflügest du auch mit altem Apparat —  
Es wuchs des Nichtsstaats geistergebne Saat.*

[To the Ghost of Landauer: / A cry poured forth. A death awakes. / Rouse to the requiem of Jesus's might! / Some fountain spouts red into the grass — / freedom's final victory will be sear. / Through the antiquity of your alphabet

/ shone the forgotten, gentlest law. / Even though you plowed with an old machine — / the seed of the non-state, devoted to the spirit, grew.]

We should note here that Landauer proofread Fritz Mauthner's work, *Beiträge zu einer Kritik der Sprache* [Contributions to a critique of language, 1901–1902], a work that influenced the Dadaist Johannes Baader, Jorge Luis Borges, and Wittgenstein, as they themselves attested. Taking this into consideration, it seems that a new image of formal avant-garde art appears, which had been concealed up until then from literary history: namely, that in many cases the artists understood themselves to be part of the socialist revolution. Landauer wrote: "certainly language critique is inseparable from that which belongs to what I consider anarchy and socialism." Unfortunately, Landauer took a negative view of psychoanalysis, especially Otto Gross. The philosophy of language critique also had socialist utopian tendencies, as can be recognized in the position of Otto Neurath, cofounder and promoter of the positivist Vienna Circle: he was head of the central economic bureau of Munich's Soviet Republic in 1919. Neurath also held lectures about his international pictorial language, ISOTYPE, at the Bauhaus in Dessau. From 1915 to 1919, the MA movement also belonged to this suppressed and concealed tradition of cooperation among socialism, language critique, progressive art, and poetry in the name of the revolution.

Also connected with this was the story of the previously mentioned Emil Szittyá (1886–1964), who in 1906 emigrated to Paris and traveled through Germany, France, and Switzerland (Zurich, Ascona). In 1909 he published a magazine with Blaise Cendrars, *Les Hommes nouveaux* [The new men]. In 1908 he and Voyticky published *Über die Literatur der Neuen* [On the literature of the new] in Budapest. He and Dunajec also published *Die Haschischfilme des Zöllners Henri Rousseau* [The hashish films of customs officer Henri Rousseau] in Budapest. From 1914–1918 Szittyá was active in the Dada circle in Zurich. He published the journal *The Mistral* with Hugo Kersten, of which only three issues appeared. The editor of the third number (1915) was Walter Serner, the great Austrian Dadaist and author of the Dada manifesto, *Letzte Lockerung: Ein Handbrevier für Hochstapler* [The final slackening: a manual for con men], written in 1918 in Locarno and published in 1920. Szittyá's novel *Ecce homo ukt* [Ecce Homo is joking, 1911] was an early Dada work. His *Spaziergang mit manchmal Unnützen* [Walk with occasionally useless things] appeared in 1920 with the Austrian Expressionist publisher Strache. *Klapp*, his reckoning with Ascona and the Monte Verità circle — this melting pot of social utopia, life reform, mythology, and art — was published in 1924 by Kiepenheuer. Szittyá came to Ascona through his friend Johannes Nohl (1882–1963), who had worked with Erich Mühsam in the Munich group Tat [Deed] and had studied psychoanalysis in Vienna; in 1916 he had analyzed Hesse. Nohl, who was published in Landauer's journal *Sozialist* [Socialist] between 1910 and 1913, was a friend of Austrian social and sexual revolutionary psychiatrist Dr. Otto Gross, and was often taken into police custody for his so-called "anarchist activities." For Erich Mühsam, he was a "typical bohemian"; for Szittyá, a man "to whom fate probably has bound me for the rest of my life." The life and impact of Otto Gross, who was close to the Ascona circle as well as the Berliner Aktion group, was of importance to Expressionist literature in Vienna, Munich, Prague, and Berlin. They also had far-reaching effects (such as on the works of D. H. Lawrence) and deserve closer investigation. Gross's best friend was probably Expressionist poet Franz Jung. Jung also published in MA, in the April 1921 edition.

The circle comes back around again. Just as Nohl and Szittyá described themselves as good friends, so too were Nohl and Gross. Naturally Gross and Szittyá also knew each other, but they didn't get along. Landauer and Szittyá also knew each other. Erich Mühsam, who also wrote a book about Ascona, also published in the April 1921 MA, as did Jorge Luis Borges in September 1921.

In Szittyá's most famous work, 1923's *Das Kuriositäten-Kabinett. Begegnungen mit seltsamen Begebenheiten, Landstreichern, Verbrechern, Artisten, religiös Wahnsinnigen, sexuellen Merkwürdigkeiten, Sozialdemokraten, Syndikalisten, Kommunisten, Anarchisten, Politikern und Künstlern* [The curiosity chamber: encounters with strange incidents, tramps, criminals, acrobats, religious fanatics, sexual oddities, social democrats, syndicalists, communists, anarchists, politicians, and artists], there are elaborate chapters on the art scene in Vienna and Budapest, naturally including Gross, but, as the subtitle "Café Größenwahn" [Café megalomania] shows, the book maintains an ironic distance and often functions on the level of gossip. Also on the list of Szittyá's most important and influential books are *Das Selbstmörderbuch. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte aller Zeiten und Völker* [The suicide's book: a contribution to the cultural history of all eras and peoples, 1924], *Malerschicksale* [The fates of painters, 1924], and *Ausgedachte Dichterschicksale* [Invented fates of poets, 1927]. Gerhard Rühm, a well-known member of the Vienna Group, certainly knew Szittyá and probably owes much to the *Selbstmörderbuch* and *Kuriositätenkabinett* for the motivation for his poetry collection, *Selbstmörderkranz* [Suicide wreath, Rainer Verlag, 1966]. Like Kassák, Szittyá was not only

Lajos Kassák, born 1887 in Érsekújvár. Finished an apprenticeship as a locksmith and worked in various types of metal-related job between 1899 and 1908. In 1909, he finished his first autodidactic drawings and established contacts in Paris with Apollinaire, Delaunay, Picasso, Modigliani, etc. In 1912, he began writing poems and plays, and became acquainted with Marinetti. In 1915 he became editor of *A Tett* (The action) and MA; founded the Activist group. Immigrated to Vienna in 1920. Developed the theory of image architecture. Published a portfolio of linocuts along with a manifesto in both German and Hungarian. In 1922, he and Moholy-Nagy published the *Book of New Artists*. Shows in 1922 and 1924 at the Galerie der Sturm, Berlin, and in 1924 at the Galerie Würtliche, Vienna. Editor of *Dokumentum* magazine. He, Schwitters, and Tschibold founded the *Neuer Werbesta* (New advertising designers). Editor of *Munka* (Work) magazine between 1928 and 1938. Organized a group of young intellectuals and workers under the same name. Until the end of the 1940s, he published various writings on art, literature, and society. Starting in 1956, he published several volumes of poetry, collages, pictures, and made films. Died in 1967 in Budapest.



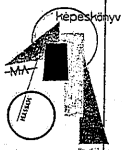
Lajos Kassák



Lajos Kassák  
Cover for the January edition  
of MA, 1921  
Collage



Cover design by Lajos Kassák  
and Ernő Kállai for a planned  
Bauhaus book on MA (never  
realized).



Lajos Kassák  
Picture Book, 1921  
Watercolor

a writer, but also a painter. Based on his example, we can see in the many entanglements of his person and his work that — abstractly speaking — art history is more complicated than the simple black-and-white that academic school wisdom tries to make of it. We can also see how close the connection was between Vienna and Budapest in the 1920s, which culminated in the exile of the Hungarian avant-garde to Vienna. This third phase was the high point of the Hungarian avant-garde before World War II. It is characteristic of a nation that has been suppressed time and again by a foreign regime (be it the Hapsburgs or the Russians) for its primary creative achievements to have been achieved abroad: in Austria, Germany, France, England, and the U.S.A. This is the paradoxical theory of our essay: that between the two wars, Hungary's avant-garde was in its prime in exile, and that the place of exile was the city of Vienna — a city that drove many of its own artists into internal or external exile, a city of which Theo van Doesburg had written to Walter Dexel in 1924 during his visit to Vienna: "Oh, Vienna is completely hopeless and backward."

### Phase 3: MA 1920–1925 in Vienna

The first Viennese issue of MA, which now had its editorial headquarters in Vienna's thirteenth district at Amalienstrasse 26, appeared on May 1, 1920. Although in Hungary MA had remained part of the Expressionist tradition, when rhythm was liberated by Expressionism and dynamic Futurism, as evidenced by the works of Mattis-Teutsch, Uitz, Bortnyik, Nemes-Lampérth, it was in Vienna that MA aspired to pure Constructivism, done in reference to Cubism. It was only in exile in Vienna that the Hungarian avant-garde gained a "trademark" that has remained connected to it up to the present time (through artists such as Vasarely, Kepes, etc.) — namely, that of Constructivism. Tibor Déry, Andor Németh, László Moholy-Nagy, László Péri, Farkas Molnár and the critic Ernő Kállai were the initial Hungarian contributors.

The first Viennese MA number began with an appeal by Kassák, "On the Artists from Every Country," in both Hungarian and German. As of this point, MA no longer appeared exclusively in Hungarian, but also occasionally in German. In his appeal, Kassák wrote: "The watchword is: the human. Along with liberating the actual powers, the abstract concepts must also be reevaluated." The first four numbers were each about sixteen to twenty pages long; they all appeared in 1920. In the spring of 1920, Kassák began to paint. The first MA edition of 1921 (1 January) had a title page from Kassák that combined Constructivist, Dadaist, and Futurist picture poetry elements with the Expressionistic. It was concerned with the outcast and ridiculed wanderer, his experience in exile. This number also contained many images and text contributions from Kurt Schwitters and his "Merz Manifesto." After this initial turn to Dada, the February edition followed with lengthy excerpts from the book, *Wiederkehr zur Kunst* [Return to art], by Adolf Rehne. The March 1921 edition contained MA's first reproductions by Moholy-Nagy, in which both Constructivist and Expressionist elements are still united. The title page was by Kassák and at that point had an entirely Constructivist style. The rest of the contents were poems from Blaise Cendrars, Huelsenbeck, and Hans Arp. The April edition, sixteen pages long like all the previous ones, mentioned Moholy-Nagy as a contributor in Berlin. It was primarily dedicated to the work of Archipenko. In addition were texts by I. K. Bonser (Doesburg's pseudonym), Franz Jung, and Erich Mühsam. The June edition, with a title page by George Grosz, contained a contribution from Marinetti about Tactilism, a number of reproductions from Grosz, and texts by Huelsenbeck, Sauvage, Goll, and others.

The August 1921 edition, sixteen pages long, was legendary and spoke for MA's unique level of quality. It contained Viking Eggeling's manifesto on film, the new art of motion, entitled *Über die Verzeitlichung der visuellen Wahrnehmung* [On the temporalization of visual perception]. Accompanying his text and also on the title page were numerous stills from his films, *Horizontal-Vertical Orchestra* and *Diagonal Symphony*. Also included were drafts for film images by his colleague, Hans Richter. The fact that MA recognized the historical and generative significance of Eggeling, as well as abstract film in general, speaks for its timely awareness.

The September 1921 edition was ornamented by a work by Moholy-Nagy, who was the source for most of the reproductions, now in Constructivist style, but still containing machine-like elements. He was also the subject of an article by Péter Mátyás (a.k.a. Ernő Kállai). In addition, there were texts by Majakovsky, Sándor Barta, Jorge Luis Borges, János Mácza, and Christoph Spengemann. The November 1921 edition was dedicated to Kassák himself (the title page, and numerous reproductions whose Constructivism was purer than that of Moholy-Nagy's; he was also the subject of an essay by Péter Mátyás). In addition, there were texts by Schwitters, Cocteau, Alexander László, Luciano Folgore, and Reverdy. The first edition of 1922, with a typopoeem by Kassák, was dedicated to the dialogue with Cubism (pictures by Picasso, Léger, Gleizes, and an essay by Ernő Kállai). The February 1922 edition was dedicated to Ivan Puni, and included poems by Kassák as well as the manifesto "Präsentismus" [Presentism] by Raoul Hausmann. The March edition belonged to Hans Arp. It also contained Kassák's influential programmatic essay, "Bildarchitektur" [Image architecture] and a report on Dadaism by Huelsenbeck. The May anniversary edition, a double number of thirty-two pages with a now

purely Constructivist title page by Moholy-Nagy, contained a manifesto by Kassák and reproductions by Hausmann, Oskar Schlemmer, Lipschitz, Kassák, Picabia, Oskár Fischer, J. J. P. Oud, Aurél Bernáth, W. Baumeister, Doesburg, El Lissitzky, Mondrian, Man Ray, Gleizes, Vilmos Huszár, and texts from Tzara, Huidobro, Arp, Gorham B. Munson, Cendrars, Andor Adám, Gleizes, a typo-poem from Kassák, an essay about Constructivism and technique from Kállai, N. Punin's essay on Tatlin, and, in between, photographs of industrial plants. This anniversary edition anticipated one of the most important achievements of MA, namely the MA anthology that appeared in 1922, *Buch neuer Künstler* [Book of new artists]. The July 1921 edition was almost entirely dedicated to Theo van Doesburg; the August edition had a title page by El Lissitzky, an essay by Kállai about Constructivism, one by János Mácza on the proletarian cult, and numerous manifestos from the Dusseldorf Congress (29–31 May 1922) from Lissitzky/Ehrenburg, Van Doesburg, Richter/Eggeling/Janco/Braumann, and Lissitzky/Richter). The edition thus summarized the increasingly Constructivist direction of MA.

Correspondingly, the October 1922 edition contained not only Hausmann's manifesto "Optophonetics" (a further development of Eggelingian thought), Schwitters's "Zahlengedicht" [Numbers poem], and Kassák's German version of "Image Architecture" with excellent reproductions, but first and foremost El Lissitzky's manifesto, "Proun." The December 1922 edition, logically, is dedicated to the Russians. It contained reproductions from Lissitzky, Roszanova, Sterenberg, Drewin, Medunetzky, Altmann, Malevich, Gabo, Tatlin, and Rodchenko, in addition to poems by Malcolm Cowley and William Carlos Williams! The twelve-page February 1923 edition contained, in addition to the film-poem "Chaplin" by Ivan Goll and reproductions by Ozenfant and Jeanneret, which were characteristic of the MA members' then-current discussion, and a manifesto about their purist aesthetic. After the influence of Dada, De Stijl, and Suprematism, strong ideological confrontations arose within the MA circle, so that certain members such as Uitz left the MA circle and went on to Weimar, Paris, or Moscow.

The MA circle worked on the revolutionary art of Russia in particular, which was transported in part to Germany and the Bauhaus, where Kállai, Moholy-Nagy, Péri, Molnár, and Bortnyik later worked. After his first encounter with German art, El Lissitzky praised Moholy-Nagy and Péri, whose clear geometry sharply contrasted it. In praising them, he actually praised himself, deservedly so: "Conceived by the revolution in Russia, with us, the Hungarians have become fertile in their art. Moholy-Nagy overcame German Expressionism and is striving for order."

Among other things, Alfréd Kemény was a regular contributor to the German journal *Der Sturm*, and one of the foremost experts on the Soviet avant-garde, along with János Mácza, who wrote about Russia's revolutionary theater. In particular, his illegal trip to Russia, where he heard Arvatov, Malevich, and Ossip Brik lecture on productive art, put him in a position to conduct the theoretical dialogue between the Western and Eastern European avant-garde through in a dialectic article that appeared in both *Der Sturm* and MA. For example, he lectured on the tendencies of German Art at the famous Inchuk conference of 1921.

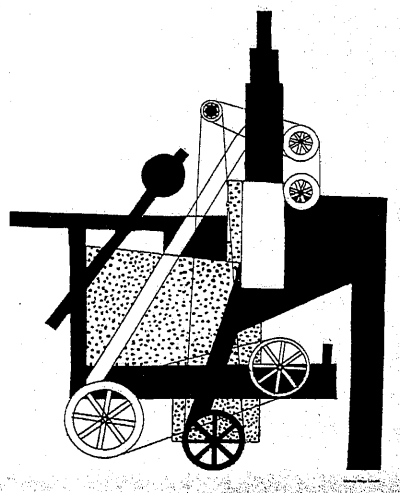
The development of Constructivism flourished at a rapid pace in Vienna. This can be seen in Moholy-Nagy's work: an artist who joined the MA group in 1918 with Bortnyik and Péri. In spring 1919, he showed a purely Expressionist painting at the "Exhibition of War Victims" in Budapest. Moholy-Nagy went to Vienna in December 1919. How long he was there is unclear; according to his own accounts, it was only six weeks. In any case, he wrote letters from Berlin in 1920 and had his first Berlin exhibition in 1920 at Fritz Gurlitt's gallery with Nemes Lampert. In 1921 his book appeared as part of the series, *Horizont* [Horizon], in Vienna.

Although Moholy-Nagy had painted an Expressionist portrait of his benefactor, Reinhold Schaefer, practically in Schiele's style; during his months in Vienna in 1920 and in Berlin from 1920 to 1921, he was fully taken with pure color and form. Since MA was involved in active discourse with other avant-garde magazines, Moholy-Nagy was perfectly up-to-date within a year. In Vienna, on 21 March 1920, he dismissed the communist party as "part of the bourgeois world," unable to accept nonrepresentative art as a revolutionary weapon. He discovered composition as the arrangement of relationships between color, form, and position, which he most closely approached through non-perspective geometry. In 1921 he met El Lissitzky. In a 1921 exploration, in which he attempted to free his pictures "from all elements recalling nature," he joined sides with the Russian Abstractionists. Although Kassák and Kállai, in accordance with the nature of their Expressionist development, initially saw abstraction as a continuation of Expressionism, they soon rejected Kandinsky, as had El Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy, who said that his pictures reminded him of an underwater world. Moholy-Nagy saw in Constructivism the logical continuation of Cubism, which had made considerable headway in uncovering the constructive elements of an image. In May 1922 Moholy-Nagy published his essay "Konstruktivismus und proletariat" [Constructivism and the proletariat] in MA, in which he defined Constructivism as neither capitalist nor proletarian, but rather as an expression "of the direct color of spatial rhythm, the equilibrium of form."

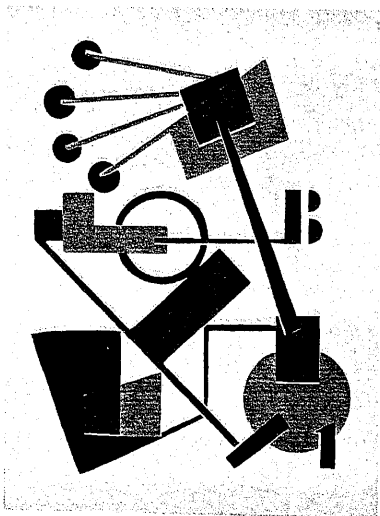
Sándor Bortnyik, born 1893 in Siebenbürgen. Studied at the Budapest Free School under Kernstock and Rippl-Rónai, 1910. In 1918, joined the MA group and became one of its most important members. Immigrated to Vienna in 1920. Developed image architecture with Lajos Kassák. In 1922 published in various magazines put out by Hungarian emigrants in Vienna: Lived in Weimar between 1922 and 1924, was interested in the Bauhaus and O. Schlemmer's theater workshop, and attended Van Doesburg's De Stijl classes. Exhibited at the Galerie Der Sturm in 1922 in Berlin. Participated in the Congress of Dadaists and Constructivists in Weimar. Returned to Budapest in 1925 and founded the avant-garde theater, Zöld Számár (Green donkey). In 1927, art editor for *Uj Föld* (New earth) magazine. Founded and directed the school for advertising design (Műhely, or little Bauhaus) from 1928–38. Edited *Plakat* magazine in 1933. Taught at the college of applied arts in 1948–49. Director at the college of fine arts in Budapest between 1949 and 1956. Died in 1976 in Budapest.



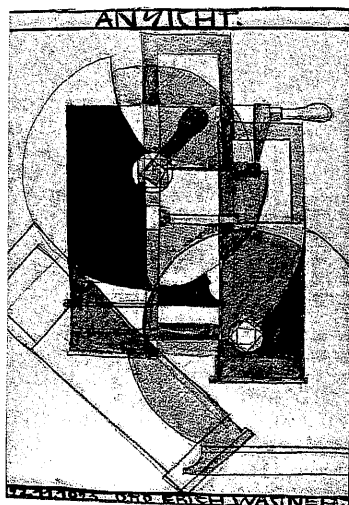
Sándor Bortnyik



László Moholy-Nagy, *MA cover*, 1921  
 Reproduction 1970  
 © VBK, Vienna, 2005



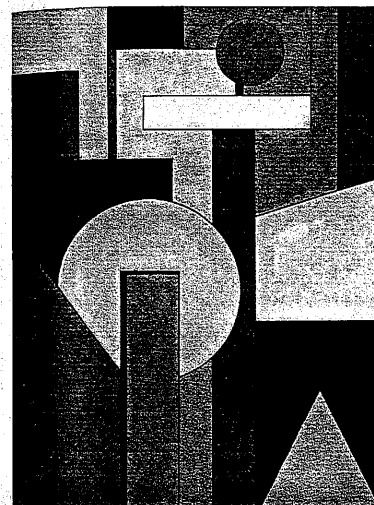
Sándor Bortnyik, *Image Architecture, MA Album II*, 1921  
 Reproduction 1970



Otto Erich Wagner, *View*, 1923  
 Charcoal, Indian ink on wrapping paper, 45 x 31 cm



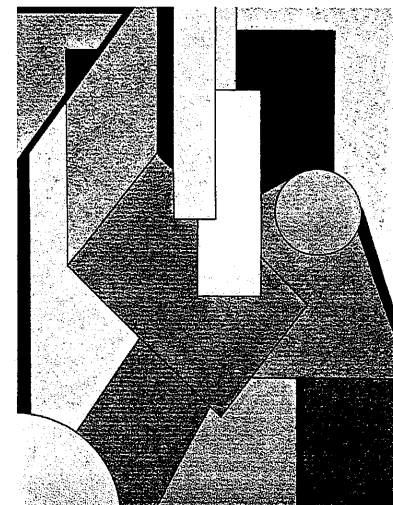
Lajos Kassák, *Steyer Car (poster design)*, c. 1924  
 Collage, 29.8 x 21.8 cm



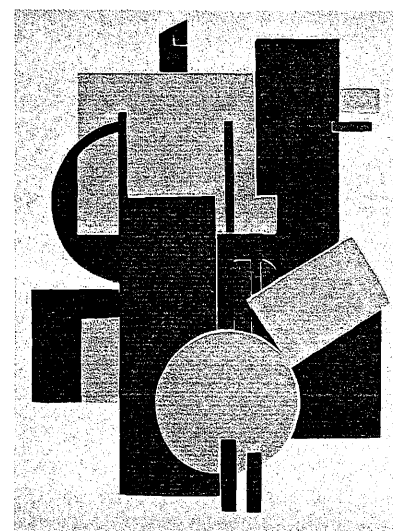
Lajos Kassák, *Composition*, 1921  
 Gouache, 39 x 32.3 cm



Sándor Bortnyik, *Image Architecture, MA Album IV*, 1921  
 Reproduction 1970

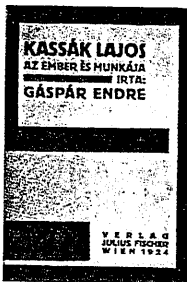


Lajos Kassák, *Untitled*, 1921  
 Colored Indian ink, 26.2 x 20 cm



Sándor Bortnyik, *Image Architecture, MA Album III*, 1921  
 Reproduction 1970

László Péri, born 1899 in Budapest. Finished an apprenticeship as a bricklayer and became a student at the workshops for proletariat fine arts in 1919. He was in contact with Kassák and the Activists. In 1917 he began his career as an actor at the MA theater school, studying with János Mácsa. Studied architecture in 1919-20 in Budapest and Berlin. Moved to Berlin in 1921, where he created his first abstract geometric reliefs. In 1922 his portfolio containing twelve linocuts was published by Der Sturm Verlag. Showed at the 1923 Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung and the November Group's exhibition. Constructivist design for a Lenin tribune for the German art exhibition in Moscow. Worked for the Berlin city building office from 1924 to 1928. Member of Die Abstrakten and Die Rote Gruppe. Shifted to realist sculpture and agitprop art. Immigrated to London in 1934. Moved to Camden in 1934. Co-founder of the Association of Artists for Revolutionary Proletarian Art. Contact with J. Heartfield. Died in 1967 in London.



Endre Gáspár, Lajos Kassák. *Az ember és munkája (Man and His Work)* Vienna: Julius Fischer, 1924.

In the 1920s the divisions between the diverse aspects of abstraction were not as clear as they were, for example, in 1950. Among the Expressionist-influenced abstraction of Kandinsky, the Cubist-influenced abstraction of El Lissitzky or the De Stijl movement-influenced Theo van Doesburg, the similarities were more noticeable than the differences. All published, more or less, in the same journals or taught in the same schools. However, as became evident decades later, secret deep-seated divergences existed between them. For example, in 1920-22, Kassák leaned more in the direction of Ozenfant's and Jeanneret's painterly purism, but also toward Mondrian and De Stijl. (Doesburg, Van der Leek, and Vilmos Huszár, a Hungarian who had immigrated to Holland in 1905, co-founded De Stijl in 1917.)

Constructivism, which would also one day split, had, in its formulation as pictorial, painterly problematic, led to Constructivist painting. Its formulation as architectonic problematic, for example, by Malevich and Rodchenko, led to concrete art. The Viennese MA circle took a middle position and developed "Image Architecture," as the title of Kassák's manifesto called it, and to which Bortnyik, L. Kundlák and Moholy-Nagy, were obliged for a time. In these two years, 1920 to 1922, Moholy-Nagy quickly worked out a great number of avant-garde ideas and jumped on the right train — namely that of Russian Suprematism and Productivism. This brought him an exhibition in winter 1922 at Herwarth Walden's famous Sturm Gallery in Berlin. Typically for him, Kassák first exhibited in 1924 (or in 1922, as he claims). However, this move also caused people to accuse Moholy-Nagy of eclecticism, as well as of plagiarizing Lissitzky's later works and those by Alfréd Kemény (alias Durus), a former friend, with whom he wrote a manifesto called *Dynamisch-konstruktives Kraftsystem* [Dynamic-constructive system of forces]. In a 1924 edition of *Kunstblatt* (Art magazine), Kemény accused Moholy-Nagy of promoting himself under false creative premises, as his "sterile work did not contribute to the task of finding a visual expression for our era." Gropius obviously had another opinion: in spring, 1923, he called the twenty-eight-year-old Moholy-Nagy to the Bauhaus, to lead the metal workshop. This was a rapid advancement, occurring as it did two years after his arrival in Vienna in December 1919. A crucial factor was that he had left Vienna after about two months, as he said in a letter on 5 April 1920: "I was decaying actually; as I see it, you can't do anything else there." His career was also helped by a book that he and Kassák had prepared in Berlin: *Buch neuer Künstler* [Book of new artists], which portrayed the peak MA activity in Vienna. It was published in Hungarian and German in September 1922 by the MA press in Vienna.

Kassák wrote the story of the origins of this legendary book, which was probably the first great anthology of the avant-garde, as follows:

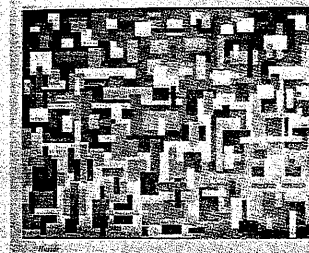
*Back then in 1921 I lived in Vienna. Moholy-Nagy was in Berlin, which had become a focal point for art undergoing a process of fermentation. He had access to a larger circle of personal acquaintances, had more opportunity to correspond with people, which is why he took over the task of collecting pictures for the book. We took care of the journalistic work together. I wrote the foreword, designed the typography and the title page. It was the first attempt to show the close, mutually supportive connections among painting, sculpture, architecture, and technology.*

In a letter dated 22 February 1922, Moholy-Nagy urged Kassák on: "When will the anthology appear?" The main work had been finished in 1921. In the spirit of the Machine Age, Kassák and Moholy-Nagy included reproductions of pictures from the most diverse magazines (from Dada to Mecano), which were listed in an index, to provide an overview of modern artistic efforts and their complicated development and references. The choice of pictures is indeed remarkable, and we can certainly thank Moholy-Nagy for their subtly differentiated placement and depth. The anthology contains several excellent pictures of what were then relatively little-known artists, but it is also a very pure visualization of thought about the connections of art movements, in which pictures from industry, daily life, and the world of machines allow for important comparisons and stimuli. This approach to design — comparing and contrasting photographs from the world of machines and pictures or sculptures from the art world — was also found in the journal, *L'Esprit Nouveau* [New spirit], co-published by Le Corbusier and the painter, Amédée Ozenfant, starting in 1920. (In 1923 Le Corbusier published a collection of his articles as the book, *Vers une architecture nouvelle* [Towards a New Architecture].)

In addition to *Buch neuer Künstler* and *L'Esprit Nouveau*, I must mention yet a third significant book from the epoch, *Die Kunstismen 1914-1924* [literally, The artisms], by El Lissitzky and Hans Arp (Zurich 1925). Also, the series of Bauhaus books from 1923 must certainly be considered a further development of Kassákian typography and the style of the *Buch neuer Künstler*. Gropius and Moholy-Nagy were the co-editors, and Moholy-Nagy also served as typographer; Kállai was also occasionally involved. Most especially, there were Moholy-Nagy's own books, *Malerei, Fotografie, Film* [Painting, Photography, Film, 1925] and *Von Material zu Architektur* [From material to architecture, 1929].



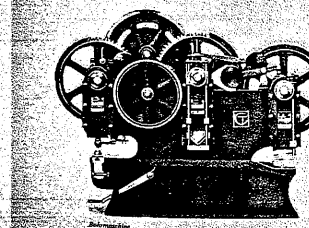
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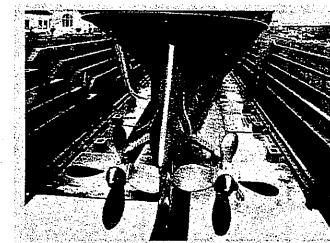
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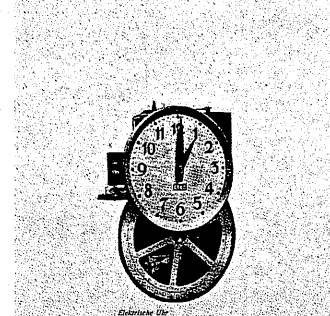
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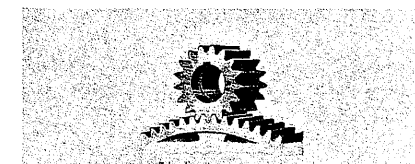
Lajos Kassák, László Moholy-Nagy, *Book of New Artists*, (Vienna 1922), reprint: Lars Muller Publishers, 2002



Duck



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G. R. Steiner

Alfréd Forbáth, born 1857 in Pécs. Studied architecture at the technical university in Budapest, 1914. Member of the Galilei Circle, 1918. Moved to Munich; finished his studies with Theodor Fischer in 1920. Worked at Gropius's studio at the Bauhaus, 1920. In 1923, he and Borinyik founded the Neue Reklame Gestaltung company (New advertising design). Chief architect for the Sommerfeld concern between 1925 and 1928. Exhibited at the Weimar Bauhaus in 1926. Started his own office in Berlin in 1928. Taught urban and suburban architecture at the Itten school between 1929 and 1932. In 1932-33, he and Ernst May went to the Soviet Union as city planners. Returned to Hungary in 1933. Immigrated to Sweden in 1938. City architect in Lund between 1938 and 1942. Took over city planning tasks in Stockholm in 1942. Professor at the technical university in Stockholm from 1949 to 1950. Worked at the Institute for Space Exploration in Bonn in 1950. Retrospective of his work was shown at the Bauhaus Archive in Darmstadt, 1969. Died in 1972 in Stockholm.

Caricature depicting the plagiarism trial against Kiesler, printed in *Die Stunde* on 25 January 1925



I am amazed that this unique work met with no resonance in Vienna. In the years 1920 to 1924, thanks to the activities of *MA*, the Expressionist poets, and Friedrich Kiesler's theater exhibitions in 1924, Vienna took a prime position in the contemporary avant-garde. It would be well worth a more specific investigation to find out why this epoch fell into such disregard and why these efforts remained so isolated that each one knew little about the activities of the other. For example, in Kiesler's International Exhibition of New Theater Techniques in the Great Concert Hall and in the corresponding catalogue (copy deadline, September 19, 1924), no *MA* members except Moholy-Nagy were present. Doesburg wrote to Walter Dexel on 11 November 1924:

*In Vienna there was an excellent exhibition organized by Kiesler. A lot of people met there: Marinetti, Léger, Prampolini, etc. Marinetti ate holes in the Viennese mentality.*

Kiesler's theater exhibition only appeared indirectly in *MA*, namely in the plagiarism battle between Jakob Levy Moreno and Kiesler concerning the precedence of the round stage form. Moreno had been one of the most important Austrian Expressionist poets since 1914. In 1918 he published a monthly called *Daimon*, on which Brod, Wassermann, Weiss, Béla Balázs, Werfel, and Goll also worked. From 1919 the *Neue Daimon* was published by the cooperative publishing house of Alfred Adler, Ehrenstein, Moreno, Sonnenschein, Werfel, and Lampf. In 1923 Kiesler's *Stegreiftheater* (Spontaneity theater) was published by the Kiepenheuer Press. In this work, he evaluated his experience with the stand-up improvisational theater that he founded in 1922, a "theater without spectators." Together with the architect Hönigsfeld, Kiesler designed a model for a theater with a round central stage, where the borders between actor, audience, and director become blurred. Although Moreno's name was mentioned in Kiesler's catalogue, in a quote at the beginning, his *Stegreiftheater* was only mentioned in connection with Hönigsfeld, not Moreno. At the same time, however, Kiesler was exhibiting a model for a theater with a central circular stage. A battle over plagiarism developed.

Xanti Schawinski pointed out that Moreno's experiments also had an influence on the Bauhaus stage. Moreno immigrated to America in 1925, where he developed his spontaneity theater — which was known as theater ad absurdum by 1923, used for psychodrama and group psychotherapy.

The connections of *MA* to the Viennese Kineticism of Franz Cizek, who taught at the Viennese School of Arts and Crafts, remain uninvestigated. L. W. Rochowski's book, *Formwille der Zeit* [The current will to create, 1922], features illustrations of works by Cizek's students from his department for ornamental forms. In striving for form and their high degree of abstraction, these works were more radical than some of the *MA* works. Cizek's work, although it had an influence on people such as Roller, Hoffmann, Koloman Moser, Peche, and Loeffler, was, however, rejected and pushed aside by his school, so that his class' yearly exhibition scarcely penetrated the public consciousness. In 1924 Cizek had to accept a new class for form theory, as approved by the administration. Marianne Ullman, Erika Giovanna Klien, R. L. Reutterer, Paul Kirnig, Heinz Reichenfeller, Gertrude Neuwirth, Franz Molnár, Ernst Plischke, Hansi Reismayer, Johanna Reismayer-Fritsche, and Georg Teltcher were among Cizek's students of Kineticism (1920–1924). It was very likely that, at the time, Rochowski's book identified Franz Molnár as Farkas Molnár, who left Hungary in 1920 and who, in all probability, also lived in Vienna. In 1921, he joined Gropius's Bauhaus. The well-known architect Plischke also learned his vocabulary of form from Cizek, before studying with Oscar Strand (1921–1923) and Peter Behrens (1923–26). Georg Teltcher also studied at the School for Arts and Crafts (1919–1920), before going to the Bauhaus (1921–1923) and then later to England. In Vienna for Kiesler's theater exhibition in October 1924, Marinetti, Prampolini, and Doesburg visited Cizek's class with Rochowski, and were deeply impressed.

All the more amazing, then, is the absence of a direct connection between *MA* and the progressive Austrian artists in Vienna, with the exception of indirect relationships and awareness, or direct contributions from artists such as musician J. M. Hauer (1925) and Georg Teltcher (1925), of the Bauhaus.

Tihanyi had an exhibition in 1920 in the Moderne Galerie in Vienna. The tenth *MA* exhibition, featuring Béla Uitz, also took place in Vienna in 1920. At the premises of the Freie Bewegung [Free movement], the artist's group led by A. Loos, which was located in Vienna's first district at Kärrntner Strasse 4, the *MA* circle offered an evening about Russian art on 13 November 1920. About the Russians, Kassák said,

*our painting was also shown the path it had to take if we wanted to realize our ideals and achieve a constructive form of life. They are the sons of the future.*

On 16 October, there was an *MA* evening in the concert hall, featuring poems by Schwitters, Arp, Tzara, and some young Hungarian authors. The conversion of

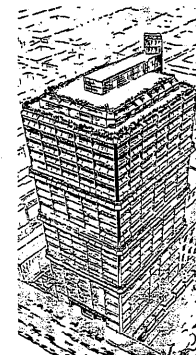
Kassák's theories into pictorial praxis, begun in the spring of 1920, led to the first exhibition of his paintings, gouaches, sculptures, collages, typographies, and picture poems in the Viennese Würthle Gallery in 1921. On 15 September 1921, the *MA* circle gave a matinee on Activism, Expressionism, and Dadaism, with contributions from Arp, Moholy-Nagy, Sándor Barta, János Kudlák, and Jorge Luis Borges. In 1921 Kassák also met Marinetti at the Hotel Erzherzog Josef.

Horizont proposed a series of books on Archipenko, Huelsenbeck, Schwitters, Grosz, Klee, and Marinetti. The first, on Archipenko, was published, followed by one on Moholy-Nagy in 1921. In the September 1921 issue of *MA*, six future editions of *MA* were announced: the poet Sándor Barta, Kassák's image architecture, János Kudlák, János Mácza, Simon Andor, and thirteen reproductions from Moholy-Nagy. The Viennese Bän Publishers published a verse and novel series by Kassák in 1921, as well as an *MA* portfolio of image architectures by Borinyik. Published in 1922: an Auréli Bernáth print portfolio, and the famous *Buch neuer Künstler* by Kassák/Moholy-Nagy in September.

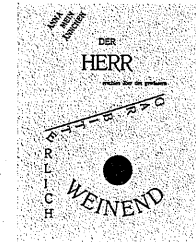
In 1923 Kassák's poems were published as the first *MA* book, then a second volume of poetry and Tristan Tzara's "Gas-Coeur." A special German edition of *MA* also appeared in 1923, with contributions from Karl Peter Röhl, Adolf Behne, Werner Gräff, and Hans Richter: Eggeling/ Hausmann's "2. präsentistische Deklaration" [Second presentist declaration] addressed the international Constructivists. Also featured were Ludwig Hillersheimer [Über die Bewegungskunst von Eggeling/Richter [On the motion art of Eggeling/Richter]] and Gert Caden; among others. In addition to Constructivist works by Egon Engelen, Josef Peeters, and Röhl, the Märch *MA* presented a new Viennese colleague, the painter and poet Hans Suschny, who painted interesting variations of "image architecture." The July 1923 *MA* contained contributions from Léger, Baumeister, Richter, Farkas Molnár, Henrik Glauber, M. Brommer, Cocteau, Suschny, and Kállai. The September *MA* contained contributions from Tibor Déry, Kassák, Doesburg, Henwarth Walden, Schwitters, Huidobro and another Austrian, R. N. Coudenhove-Kalérgi. In 1924, contributions and/or reprints by Lenin and Trotsky appeared, as well as a great many architectural essays and reproductions, primarily by A. Korn and Gropius; in April 1924 there was a first-time contribution from Josef Matthias Hauer, the founder of twelve-tone music. In 1924, Kassák had a Sturm exhibition in Berlin. On 22 March 1924, *MA* also hosted their first German propaganda evening in the Schwarzwaldsaal (Herrengasse 10, Vienna 1) on the subject of Hungarian art, with the aid of Miriam Schnälbel-Höfflich, Paul Emerich, Hadank, Zyperowitch, Leo Halpern, Max Kuhn, and Hans Suschny. In September 1924, before Kiesler's theater exhibition, a music and theater volume of *MA* appeared with contributions from N. Altman, A. Vesnin, Kassák, Stepanova, Marinetti, Kamardinonko, H. Walden, Schwitters, G. Caden, Léger, El Lissitzky, Tairoff, Suschny, Moholy-Nagy, Coop, Grosz, Chagall, Prampolini, Picasso, Stuckenschmidt, Georg Teltcher, Josef Nádass, Günter Hirschel-Prottsch, and Josef M. Hauer. The anniversary edition of 15 January 1925 contained a contribution from Moreno-Lévy about the *Théâtre Immédiat*, and a French anthology on Surrealism with Max Jacob, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, Tzara, Picabia, and Pierre Reverdy. On the last page, in capital letters, was printed, "propagate the art of the avant-garde." On 15 June 1925, the last *MA* number was published, "Das Junge Schlesien" [Young Silesia], with contributions from G. Hirschel-Prottsch, Hans Leistkow, Max Berg, and others. Kassák most likely met Marinetti once again, either in 1925, or at the Kiesler's 1924 theater exhibition, where Marinetti was also present. On 8 May 1926, *MA* presented a retrospective of 1925–26, once again in the Schwarzwaldsaal, with the title "Konstruktive Kunst" [Constructive art]. Works included poems (Kassák, Nádass, Suschny, Surrealists, Dada), music (Bartók, Milhaud), dance (Gertrud Krauss), and the event included such participants as Jolán Kassák, Krauss, Ernst Bachrich, H. Rodenberg, Franz Wrangler, and Josef Kalmer. Kassák and Kemény published their "Manifesto of Kineticism" (1924) in the magazine *Der Sturm*, in which they proposed dynamic constructivism as a solution to the problem of time in pure painting: the unity of material, movement, and space. On 14 June 1926, there was an *MA* matinee in Paris, opened by Paul Dermée, with Ivan Goll, Phillip Soupault, and Michel Seuphor in attendance. In Paris, Kassák got to know Léger, Arp, and Le Corbusier personally. There was also finally a bit of international recognition, for example, the eighteenth Bauhaus book, *MA Ungarische Gruppe* [MA Hungarian group], by Kassák and Kállai was announced, although it was never completed. However, Kassák, who, unlike Moholy-Nagy, did not follow the trail leading to an international career, went back to Hungary after the end of the counter-revolution in the autumn of 1926. In 1926 he received a postcard from Paris upon which was



From left to right: Kiesler, Marinetti, Van Doesburg, Prampolini, and Rathe in Vienna, 1924



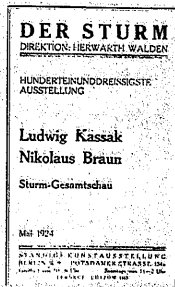
Competition entry from the "Workshop for Mass Form" for *The Chicago Tribune*, 1922



Lajos Kassák  
Image Poem, 1924-26



Lajos Kassák (middle) and his circle



Lajos Kassák, poster for the Galerie Der Sturm, Berlin, 1924



Lajos Kassák, Constructive Art, 1926, poster design

written, "Nos amitiés internationales à Kassák," [our international friendship to Kassák]; it was signed by Mondrian, Seuphor, and Prampolini.

As we can see, there was active international cooperation on a personal as well as a professional level. There were also several MA activities in Vienna, but basically only a small amount of necessary collaboration with Viennese artists. The success abroad was much greater, as shown in a late greeting by Arp:

*Dearest Kassák, the news that Kassák will soon come to Paris in person surprised me more than if I had heard that Santa Claus himself wanted to come here. I received the first news of you in Zurich — that was a long time ago — from Sophie Taeuber, after her return from Vienna. She brought one of your works with her, which we carried around with us like an icon. Sophie also brought your publication, "Das Buch der neuen Kunst." She was so excited that she designed a project, "Monument à Kassák."*

It was through MA and the Hungarian exile avant-garde artists, who had more contact with international artists than with local artists, that Vienna became a center of the Constructivist avant-garde, despite the strong attraction of Paris, Weimar, and Moscow — and the corresponding departure of the Hungarians. For in turning MA into a forum for Constructivism, Kassák lost many old comrades. His co-editor from 1920, Béla Uitz, broke with Kassák in 1922, and after a stay in Moscow in 1921, became a co-worker for the Hungarian communist monthly, *Unity*. In 1923, Uitz had an exhibition at the Vienna Austrian Museum, before he moved on to Paris and Moscow. The poet Sándor Barta also went with Uitz.

János Mácza also immigrated to Russia for ideological reasons. Inspired by Farkas Molnár, whom he met in Vienna, Bortnyik left as well. He had been one of the most active MA members since 1917/1918; he came to Vienna in 1919 but left in September 1922 and went to Weimar, where he stayed until 1924. In Weimar, although he didn't work at the Bauhaus, he was in close contact with Bauhaus people, living in Doesburg's studio when he was abroad. In 1925 Bortnyik went back to Budapest. While in Weimar, Bortnyik visited Mattis-Teutsch, who had been an MA member from 1917 to 1925 before going back to Romania around 1930. Between 1921 and 1930, Bortnyik was present at a number of avant-garde group exhibitions in Rome, Berlin, Chicago, and Paris.

As will be seen by the example of the younger generation of Hungarian avant-garde artists, the Bauhaus (and to a lesser degree, Moscow) drew the Hungarian Constructivists out of Vienna. Many still worked on MA from Weimar. Vienna was also a springboard for exhibitions and careers in Berlin and Weimar — a destiny that others have encountered to this day. Doesburg was also interested in MA early on, but by the winter of 1921, he had turned more to the Bauhaus.

A particularly interesting case of being lured from Vienna by the Weimar Bauhaus is that of Johannes Itten, who from 1916 to 1919 worked in Vienna as a painter as well as in his own private art school. Represented by Alma Mahler (at the time Alma Mahler-Gropius, later Alma Mahler-Werfel), who was interested in Itten's painting, he became acquainted with Gropius in the summer of 1919 and at Gropius's urging, moved to Weimar that autumn. Itten's students followed him: Carl Auböck, Josef Breuer, Max Bronstein, Friedl Dicker, Vally Neumann, Franz Probst, Franz Scala, Naum Slutzki, Margit Téry-Adler, Walter Heller, Anni Wottitz, and Gyula Pap. Pap already had his first group exhibition behind him, in the Haus der jungen Künsterschaft [House of young artists], but Itten's departure and Gropius's Manifesto led him to move to Weimar, where he remained from 1920 to 1924. Between 1926 and 1933, he was a teacher at the Itten School in Berlin. In 1934 he opened a private art school in Budapest, where Ernő Kállai, the long-standing MA and Bauhaus collaborator who had returned home, also worked. In 1947 Pap founded a painting school for poor but talented children of workers and farmers.

Bauhaus drew numerous Hungarians into its fold: Moholy-Nagy, Farkas Molnár (1921–1925 with Gropius, returned to Hungary in 1925); Marcel Breuer (1920–1924 Bauhaus in Weimar, 1925–1928 Master at Bauhaus in Dessau); Andor Weinger (1921, in Weimar with Itten; 1925 at the theater workshop in Dessau); Gyula Pap, and Bortnyik. In short-term residence were artists such as Mattis-Teutsch, Alfréd Forbáth (1921–1922 with Gropius; a freelance architect from 1923 on, later in Sweden), Kállai, Berger, Téry, Henrik Stefán, and László Péri (1920 Vienna, 1921 Berlin, where he made the first cement reliefs, architect as of 1924, 1933 London). The following members of the Hungarian avant-garde either lived in Vienna or had a connection with the Viennese MA circle: János Mattis-Teutsch, Moholy-Nagy (1919–1920), Aurél Bernáth (1921–1922 in Vienna,

where his graphic portfolio appeared in 1922, Sturm exhibition, 1924; 1923–1926 Berlin; returned to Hungary in 1926); Sándor Bortnyik (1919–1922); Alfréd Forbáth (MA reproduced his Constructivist drawings); Vilmos Huszár (co-founder of De Stijl, left in 1923, in contact with MA from 1920–1925); Farkas Molnár (1919, 1920, spring 1922 in Vienna); Nemes-Lampert (MA member as of 1918; 1919 in Berlin, 1920 exhibition with Moholy-Nagy in Berlin at Gullitt; died in a sanatorium in 1924); László Péri (MA member as of 1918; 1920 Vienna, 1921 Düsseldorf, later Berlin); György Ruttkay (MA member as of 1918; 1920 Vienna, 1922–1923 Berlin); Ernő Kállai, Alfréd Kemény, Andor Németh, Sándor Barta, Béla Uitz (1919–1923), Kassák (1920–1926), Tibor Déry, János Mácza, Andor Weinger, Gyula Pap (1919), János Kmetty, the two excellent and unfairly forgotten futurist Expressionists, Hugó Scheiber and Béla Kádár, who exhibited together in Budapest in 1921, and afterward often at Sturm and elsewhere; János Kudlák, Bertalan Pór (from the Nyolcak, which was in Vienna for a short time after the counter-revolution; 1928–1948 Paris, then Budapest); Gyula Derkovits (student of Kernstok 1919, 1923–1926 in Vienna, then again in Budapest); Károly Kernstok (1920–1926 in Berlin, returned to Hungary in 1927); Lajos Tihanyi (1919–1921), Robert Reiter, Gáspár Endre, and others. Lajos Tihanyi moved to Berlin (1922) and Paris (1923) after his exhibition at the Moderne Galerie in Vienna in 1920; he thus belonged to that group of avant-garde artists who chose exile in Paris instead of Vienna, Moscow, or Berlin. In Paris, Tihanyi became a member of the group, Abstraction-Création, in 1933; the Surrealist Robert Desnos published a book about him in 1936. Important Hungarian founders or members of Abstraction-Création, which Van Doesburg also later joined, were notably István (Étienne) Béothy (from 1920 in Paris, where he and Herbin founded Abstraction-Création in 1925); Henri Nouveau alias Henik Neugeboren (1927–29 Bauhaus in Dessau with Klee; 1929 Paris) and Alfréd Reth (1905 Paris, 1913 Sturm exhibition, 1932 Abstraction-Création).

The inner MA circle was most solid between 1920 and 1922; after this the migration began. However, MA still moved on to become a center for the international avant-garde, thanks to the collaboration of its members from outside Vienna. After MA opened up to Berlin Dada, Futurism, Russian Constructivism, and finally even early Surrealism, it mainly helped to lead the first phase of International Constructivism to its peak in 1925. According to his biographer, Tomas Straus, Kassák discovered himself while in exile in Vienna, but I would add that he also founded Hungarian Constructivism. The Hungarian path, from Expressionism to objectlessness; to geometric and optic abstraction, maintained a worldwide reputation, thanks to the work of Moholy-Nagy, Béothy, Kassák, Huszár, Kepes, Schöffer, Vasarely, and Marcel Breuer (in architecture). Perhaps painters and architects Mattis-Teutsch, Bortnyik, Péri, Tihanyi, Molnár, Weinger, Antoine Pinner, Béla Uitz, and Henri Nouveäu deserve the same acknowledgement. A collection of prints by Kassák (six serigraphs from 1920–1923) and Vasarely (likewise six serigraphs), which appeared in 1961 at Denise René's in Paris, clarified the arc of Hungarian Constructivism's international reputation and affirmed the MA circle's exile in Vienna from 1920 to 1925 as its most important source.

MA is indebted to Vienna for exile only. Vienna is indebted to MA for making it one of the centers of the international avant-garde. The MA epoch in Vienna between 1920 and 1925 was possibly the only moment of the modern fine arts between the wars — and, typically, Austria passed that up as well.

### Epilogue

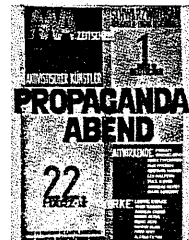
#### Phase 4: 1926–1930

During the period following the end of the counter-revolution, it seemed possible to many artists that a continuation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 could provide consolidated freedom; therefore, many returned to Hungary. Farkas Molnár had already returned to Hungary in 1925, where he died in 1945. Károly Kernstok (1927), Alfréd Forbáth (1933–1938), Róbert Berényi (1926), Moholy-Nagy (for one week in 1930), Sándor Bortnyik, Gyula Pap (1934), and Aurél Bernáth (1926) also went back to Hungary.

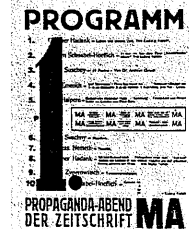
Bortnyik, who had gone to Budapest in 1925, founded a private school named Műhely [Workshop] or Kis Bauhaus [Little Bauhaus], which he led for ten years, until 1938. The most famous student at this school was Vasárhelyi, world-famous under the name Vasarely — who, after he learned Constructivism from Bortnyik, carried on the trends created by Hungarian Constructivism and the Hungarian representatives of Abstraction-Création (Nouveau, Béothy, Reth) to Op Art. The worldwide experiments conducted by Hungarian Constructivists in Vienna, Weimar, and Paris culminated in a victory over time with the omnipresent popularity of Vasarely. Where this victory comes from, which source can be thanked for it, on which geographic and cultural background it is constructed, is clarified by the history of MA. In a foreword for a 1961 catalogue published in Paris by Denise René, Jean Cassou wrote about the prints of Kassák and Vasarely, "It is actually Kassák who leads us to a better understanding of the real sources of abstraction."

In December 1926 in Budapest, Kassák started a journal called *Dokumentum*. The articles, which appeared alternately in German, French, and Hungarian, were about architecture, the Russian avant-garde, Surrealism,

Gyula Pap, born 1899, in Orosháza. Attended the Imperial Graphic Teaching and Experimental Institute. Military service, 1917. In 1918 he returned with the Hungarian revolution to Budapest. Studied at the Budapest school of arts and crafts. Immigrated to Vienna in 1919, moved on to Berlin. Studied at the Bauhaus under J. Itten, 1920. Worked at the metal workshop at the Bauhaus from 1921 to 1923. Lithographer between 1924 and 1926. Edited *Elettudomány* (Science of life) magazine as part of the pacifist movement. Taught painting at the Itten school in Berlin between 1928 and 1933. Returned to Budapest in 1934. Designer at the Goldberger textile factory between 1937 and 1940. Civil service at the Hungarian steelworks, 1944. Founded the János-Nagy-Balogh painting school for the children of workers and farmers, 1946–47. Professor at the college of fine arts in Budapest from 1949 to 1962. Died in 1983 in Budapest.



Poster by Hans Suschny, 1925



Poster by Lajos Kassák, 1924

Lajos Tihanyi, born 1885 in Budapest. Attended the school of arts and crafts in Budapest, 1904-05. Co-founder of the Nyolcak avant-garde group in 1909, which presented an exhibition at the Berliner Secession in 1910. Exhibitions in 1914 in Vienna, and in 1918 at the MA Galerie. Emigrated to Vienna in 1920. Exhibited at the Moderne Galerie, Vienna. Lived in Berlin from 1920 to 1923 and painted Expressionist portraits. Shows in Berlin and Paris, where he finally settled in 1923. Went to America in 1929. Member of the Abstraction-Création group. Died 1938 in Paris.



Lajos Tihanyi

and film aesthetics; they included an article by Walter Benjamin, "Über die neue russische Filmkunst" [On the new Russian cinematography], written in Moscow. In May 1927 the magazine ceased publication due to a lack of interest. Under more difficult conditions involving police and censorship, Kassák published *Munka* [Work] from 1928 to 1938. Throughout the years, Kassák fought for his communist convictions, enduring court cases, the impounding of his publications, imprisonment, and confiscation. Until 1930, the artistic emphasis of *Munka* was photography. Photocollages and montages led to a social photography movement in Hungary. Among the young new avant-garde, for whom photo and film was their actual medium, the most important were Sándor (Alexandre) Trauner, Lajos Vajda, Gábor Peterdi, and the later world-famous György Kepes. Under the influence of Russian film, they created brutal photomontages, a unity of Constructivist and social elements, which were in accordance with the new demands of the period. The contact with artist colleagues abroad remained intact — for example, Moholy-Nagy published his essay "Über das totale Theater" [On total theater] in *Dokumentum*. However, the rising fascist activities made free artistic endeavors more difficult — for example, the Hungarian chamber of engineers denied membership, based on the race principle, to Marcel Breuer, who wanted to return home.

After 1930 these young avant-garde artists also left Hungary — Vasarely, Kepes, Trauner, Sándor Vajda, and Peterdi. Vajda returned to Hungary from Paris in 1933. Trauner first went with Kepes to Berlin and then, around 1930, to Paris. He became an excellent film set designer, working with Marcel Carné, Howard Hawks, and Billy Wilder (*The Apartment*). Gábor Peterdi, who was a member of the Munka circle from 1930 to 1933, moved to Paris in 1933 and then in 1939 to the United States, where he later became a professor at Yale University. Kepes went to Berlin, where he became a colleague of Moholy-Nagy's. Later, he and Moholy-Nagy worked together the New Bauhaus in Chicago in 1937, where the semiotician Charles W. Morris, Xanti Schawinsky, Herbert Bayer, and Archipenko all taught. He was also at its successor school, the School of Design in Chicago, from 1939 to 1946. Afterward he became a professor for visual design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, where, in 1947, he founded the world-famous Center for Advanced Visual Studies, which he led until 1974. His successor was Otto Piene. As an author (*Language of Vision* [Chicago, 1944]) and publisher (*vision + value*, 6 vols. [New York, 1966]), as an artist and teacher, Kepes — next to Moholy-Nagy, Breuer, and Vasarely — represents a further international triumph of the MA circle's efforts.

This article was written between 1977 and 1979 and is published here for the first time. Parts have been published in Éva Bajkay, *A magyar grafika külföldön. Bécs 1919-1923*, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria Grafikai Osztálya [Hungarian National Gallery Print Collection], Budapest 1982.



The Hungarian avant-garde group, MA, in Vienna, 1920. From left to right: Sándor Bortnyik, Béla Uitz, Erzsébet Újvári, Andor Simon, Lajos Kassák, Jolan Simon, and Sándor Barta

During the second half of the nineteenth century in Hungary, opportunities for education in the arts were still limited, and so many students of painting went to Munich. There, at one of the strongholds of conservative academics, their professors were (paradoxically) Hungarians such as Benczur, Liezen-Mayer, and Wagner. One hundred and ten years ago, in 1886, another Hungarian, Hollosy, opened an independent painting school in Munich, where students were taught to value individual intuition and to strive for an ideal union with the modern zeitgeist. This explains why, in the early twentieth century, Hungarians looked upon Germany as the place for advanced art education. It should be noted, too, that German art schools had always seemed especially appealing to Central and Eastern Europeans. After World War I and the revolutions, their importance was reinforced by the Weimar Republic's democratic system, where foreigners were welcome. Moreover, the inflated German Mark made life relatively cheap.

In 1919, when new conditions prevailed, the successor to the Saxon Imperial Academy, the Bauhaus of Weimar, was opened as a contemporary, small, utopian cultural model of the young German Republic. It is worth mentioning, however, that neither the authorities, nor the artistic world, nor the general public were as yet prepared to accept the principles of a progressive, open, international, and creative educational community, as proclaimed by this academy.<sup>1</sup> This situation had its obvious impact on the history of the Bauhaus: its critical moments clearly indicate the historical changes and the gradual shift toward the right. Thus, unlike the academies, which were well adjusted to the outdated nineteenth-century social system, the Bauhaus, endeavoring to create art for a modern industrial civilization, remained in utopian isolation during the 1920s. For that reason, the school had a special appeal to the young talents from less industrially advanced countries with a more conservative political system, which explains why it attracted so many Hungarians.

With the exception of Breuer and Moholy-Nagy (instructors), little is known about the activities of the other Hungarians at the Bauhaus: Bánki, Berger, Fodor, Frölich, Hollós, Johann, Kárász, Lichtenthal, Markor-Ney, Molnár, Müller, Pap, Schwarz, Stefán, Téry-Adler, Thal, Weiner, and Weininger (students) Kallai (aesthetician), Forbát (architect), and Neugeboren (sculptor, painter, musician). The activities of the whole group are grossly neglected by Leo Kohut.<sup>2</sup> Only in the past few years have there been exhibitions of these artists.<sup>3</sup>

The Hungarian students of the Weimar Academy were young; they were not political migrants like the majority of artists working in Vienna and Berlin after 1919. The Bauhaus was preferred by German-speaking art students, who were mostly of Jewish origin. On the one hand, this group consisted of students who had finished secondary school in Vienna and were adherents of Itten (Margit Téry-Adler, Gyula Pap), and, on the other hand, students from Saxon, Serbia, and the Hungarian communities of southern Hungary (Marcel Breuer, Farkas Molnár, Henrik Stefán, Johan Hugó, Andor Weininger). The latter went to the school on the advice of Alfréd Forbát, an architect from Pécs, who worked with Gropius. It may be of interest to note that Breuer first attempted to study in Vienna on a scholarship, but he only stayed for a couple of months. "I entered the Academy, but immediately left: I knew that it was not for me," he wrote about his departure from Vienna.<sup>4</sup>

He began by studying painting, and his early, dynamic watercolors, containing Dadaist elements, indicate the impact of Itten's and Klee's teaching, which emphasized individual expression.<sup>5</sup>

The most obvious example of how the Hungarians of the Viennese Itten School were incorporated into the Bauhaus can be found in Margit Téry-Adler's work. Like several Austrian students, she followed her teacher to Germany in 1919 and spent a year at the Weimar Academy as one of his adherents. Nevertheless, it is important to note that of all possible work, it is hers — from the silhouette experiments with form to her analyses of light and form in Giotto's frescoes — which were to choose to represent Itten's "Vorkurs" (preparatory course) method in the Bauhaus publication.<sup>6</sup> Margit Téry and her husband, art historian Bruno Adler, also worked with Itten and Schlemmer as editors of the journal *Utopia*, reflecting the spirit of Weimar.<sup>7</sup>

Itten's impact, which dominated the first Expressionist period of the Bauhaus up to 1923, can also be seen in the works of another Hungarian student, Gyula Pap.<sup>8</sup> He and Breuer began the Vorkurs in 1920, and there is evidence that, as early as 1921, he substituted for the teacher during his absences, which was certainly a great honor. The biophysiological and emotional effect of the Itten method, which



Margit Téry-Adler, *Untitled*, 1920

Hungarians at the Bauhaus

1. Karl-Heinz Hüter, *Das Bauhaus in Weimar* (Berlin: 1976); John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period. The New Sobriety 1917-1933* (New York: 1978); Éva Forgács, *Bauhaus* (Pécs: 1991).
2. Leo Kohut, "Bauhaus. Ungarn – Tschechoslowakei. Zur Bauhaus-Rezeption in Osteuropa," *Bauhaus*, catalogue (Berlin: 1981) pp. 283-287.
3. *A magyar grafika külföldön. Bécs 1919-1933*, Print Collection, Hungarian National Gallery (Budapest: 1982); Krisztina Passuth, *A magyar művészeti avangárdában. 1919-1925* (Budapest: Corvina, 1974); *Wechselwirkungen. Die ungarische Avantgarde in der Weimarer Republik* (Marburg: Jona Verlag, 1986); *A magyar grafika külföldön. Nemzetország 1919-1933*, Print Collection, Hungarian National Gallery (Budapest: 1989); *Wille zur Form in Österreich, Tschechoslowakei und Ungarn* (Vienna: Academy for Applied Arts, 1993); *Hungarian Constructivism 1918-1936* (Tokyo: Watarai-um, 1994).
4. Peter Blake, *Marcel Breuer – Architect and Designer* (New York: 1949); *Utak árkádából Utopiába*, cat. (Pécs: Múzeum Galéria, 1997).
5. *Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919-1923* (1923; reprint Munich, 1980) p. 204.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 49, 54, 55.
7. Éva Bajkay, "From Medieval Cathedral to the Modern Mechanical Stage," *Annales de la Galerie Nationale Hongroise 1989-1990* (Budapest: 1993/94) pp. 33-47.
8. "Documents of the correspondence between Gyula Pap and Johannes Itten," *Ars Hungarica*, nr. 2 (Budapest: 1988), pp. 201-211.



Margit Téry-Adler, *Dynamic Composition*, 1920