

# Hungary Between the Wars: A Photographic Portrait

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The Thomas Walther Collection at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, contains thirty-two photographs by eight Hungarian or Hungarian-born photographers: George Kepes (György Kepes), István Kerny, André Kertész (Andor Kertész), Imre Kinszki, László Moholy-Nagy, Martin Munkácsi (Márton Munkácsi), Gyula Pap, and József Pécsi. All of these photographers were important artists in the interwar period, both in Hungary and internationally.

Several monographs have already been published in English on the better-known photographers, and a large part of their work is to be found outside Hungary (particularly the oeuvres of Kepes, Kertész, Moholy-Nagy, and Munkácsi). Therefore, it is often easier to research these photographers in the major museums of Western Europe and North America. This essay focuses on the period prior to emigration, investigating the artistic and social milieus of the photographers while they were still working in Hungary. It also seeks to clarify some of the data pertaining to the photographs in the Walther Collection and to offer insights, based on primary sources, of the photos' origins.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Budapest was the venue for several photography exhibitions that greatly influenced public taste and drew people's attention to the medium. The international photography exhibition that opened in 1910 at the Műcsarnok (Art hall) in Budapest exemplifies the manner in which Hungarian photographers sought to shape public taste. This exhibition demonstrated for the first time in Hungary that photography could achieve broad artistic recognition and that art critics were prepared to accept it as an artistic medium.<sup>1</sup> The new century saw the establishment of Hungary's first amateur photography clubs, which in many cases supported artistic progress in opposition to the conservatism of professional photographers and studio owners. However, relative to other countries in Central Europe, photography clubs were rather late to develop in Hungary. Moreover, their members were often drawn from the aristocracy and influenced by German culture. The outdated aesthetic ideals of the clubs tended to put off the young photographers of the era. Indeed, Kertész, Munkácsi, and Pécsi kept their distance.

World War I resulted in a fundamental shift in Hungarian photography. After the war, Hungarian photographers struggled to reintegrate themselves into the mainstream of international photography. In October 1918, István Tisza, the former Hungarian prime minister, acknowledged in Parliament that Austria-Hungary had lost the war.



**fig. 1** André Kertész. *Magda Förstner*. 1926. Gelatin silver print, c. 1929. Image:  $3\frac{3}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ " (9.1 × 3.8 cm); sheet:  $5\frac{1}{8} \times 1\frac{11}{16}$ " (13 × 4.3 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Thomas Walther Collection. Gift of Thomas Walther (MoMA 1731.2001). © Estate of André Kertész

His announcement was followed by a series of political and military developments in Hungary. Mihály Károlyi became prime minister (he was later photographed by Kertész as an émigré in Paris), and shortly thereafter the Hungarian Communist Party was formed and a proletarian dictatorship—the “Republic of the Councils,” or Hungarian Soviet Republic—was established. The armed forces of the neighboring countries launched offensives against the Hungarian Soviet Republic. After its fall and a series of short-lived governments, Miklós Horthy took power as Regent of Hungary in 1920. This marked the beginning of the so-called Horthy era, with its conservative worldview and authoritarian power structures. The Treaty of Trianon that year reduced Hungary to a third of its former size, while the number of inhabitants fell to 43 percent of its prewar population.<sup>2</sup>

During World War I, apart from *Vasárnapi Újság* (Sunday newspaper), none of the Hungarian weekly newspapers had the resources to employ staff as war photographers. Their only option was to publish photographs taken by soldiers at the front. *Az Érdekes Újság* (The interesting newspaper) held contests with the aim of obtaining the best battlefield shots. The first was announced in the third issue

of the newspaper in 1915. Three prizes were subsequently awarded, for a total of 3,000 Austro-Hungarian kronas, a large sum in Hungary at the time. At first, photographs submitted in the contest appeared on the front or back page of the newspaper; later, the editors established a separate photography column. Among those submitting pictures, a number would become well known in Hungary and abroad. For example, participants in the fourth contest included Kerny and Kertész, both of whose works feature in the Walther Collection.

Kertész’s success as a photographer continued in 1917, when two of his pictures were published in *Az Érdekes Újság*.<sup>3</sup> He had enrolled as a volunteer ensign in the Twenty-Sixth Infantry in 1914. Initially, he was deployed on the Polish front, where he took his first photographs of scenes behind the lines.<sup>4</sup> On several occasions during the war, Kertész sent pictures to the press. In 1916, he submitted a self-portrait taken at the front to a contest of drawings and photographs held by the humor magazine *Borsszem Jankó* (Johnny Peppercorn). In the photo, Kertész is sitting by a stream removing lice from his clothes. The visual setting reflects his earlier photographic approach during the years spent in the village of Szigetbecse, when he had taken photographs using a tripod, and with an ironic, humorous twist. However, this particular image is noteworthy for the fact that—unlike most of the other contestants—Kertész made no effort to show the horrors of war. In the end, his picture came ninth among the ten that received an award.<sup>5</sup>

In September 1925, Kertész, thirty years old, moved to Paris against his mother’s wishes. Soon after his arrival in the French capital, he changed his name to André. Concerning this name change, Kertész wrote the following: “Andor is the name given on my birth certificate, but my wife always calls me Andris, while my brothers and friends call me Bandi. In Paris I automatically began using the French version of my name—André. And I now think this is the name I shall die with.”<sup>6</sup>

It was during his first years in Paris that Kertész made a series of pictures featuring cabaret performer Magda Förstner. Two photographs from this series are in the Walther Collection: *Magda Förstner* (fig. 1) and *Magda, Mme Beöthy, M. Beöthy, and Unknown Guest, Paris* (MoMA 1732.2001). There has been a debate about the dating of Kertész’s pictures of Förstner, the most famous of which, *Satiric Dancer* (fig. 2), was taken in the studio of sculptor István Beöthy. Contrary to the findings of previous researchers and to the recollection of Kertész, the photos of Förstner appear to have been all taken in 1927. First, we have documentary evidence that Förstner took part in two events in Hungary: on October 23, 1926, a performance of *Új Föld estek* (New Earth evenings) directed by Ödön Palasovszky and, on December 2, 1928, an evening of literary readings by Lajos Kassák at the Vigadó Concert Hall in Budapest—between these events, however, she performed in Paris.<sup>7</sup> According to the art historian Gabriella Vincze, who has



fig. 2 André Kertész. *Satiric Dancer*. 1927. Gelatin silver print, c. 1980s, 10 × 8" (25.3 × 20.3 cm). Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét. © Estate of André Kertész

researched Hungarian dance in the period, Förstner did not visit Paris before 1927. In that year, however, she took part in a series of performances abroad, visiting Paris twice and going on a tour of Scandinavia.<sup>8</sup> Second, art historian Krisztina Passuth included in her monograph on Beöthy the statue that features on the left side of *Satiric Dancer*.<sup>9</sup> Beöthy mentions 1927 as the year in which he created this sculpture, titled *Action directe, Heros*.<sup>10</sup> Given the timing of Förstner's visit to Paris and the date of the statue, we may conclude that the photograph was indeed taken in 1927. The dating of the other two pictures to 1927 rests on the likelihood that the photographs were made in the same evening: the dancer is wearing the same clothes in all three images, and at least two of the pictures feature Beöthy or were taken in his studio.<sup>11</sup>

In the aftermath of World War I, several photographic genres and styles developed in Hungary, with only partial overlap and interaction. As elsewhere in Europe, photographers began to specialize. Hungarian art photography developed in a rather unique fashion, and this uniqueness initially brought success to Hungarian photographers in Western Europe, though it later proved to be a dead end. Practitioners of the so-called Hungarian style abandoned the non-silver printing processes of the Pictorialists and published their pictures in the form of gelatin silver prints, employing shiny surfaces while retaining the soft-focus effects of Pictorialism. To enhance their compositions they primarily made use of backlight. Between the wars, this style of photography received the widest recognition in Hungary, and it was also supported by official cultural policy. Adherents of the style, however, were not interested in portraying the harsher realities of Hungarian society, like poverty.<sup>12</sup> Rather than approaching their subject matter from a sociological perspective, they were often driven purely by aesthetic considerations. The Hungary depicted in their pictures inadvertently reflects a nation turning in on itself and away from Europe: "There is no need to photograph the formulaic landscapes of international tastes. Let us stay here, searching for and finding subjects within our own country that will make us successful abroad; let us create a Hungarian photo art, with Hungarian air and a clear Hungarian sky!"<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, some Hungarian photographers — Angelo (Pál Funk), Károly Escher, Pécsi, and Dénes Rónai — made art that was not associated with a particular style or political orientation. Most photography in Hungary was, however, influenced by the debate between "populists" and "urbanists," a dispute that extended to both politics and aesthetics, as exemplified by the social-documentary photographers' critique of the Hungarian style.<sup>14</sup> In this interwar period only a small number of photographers in Hungary adhered to the modernist schools. Judit Kárász, Etel Fodor, and Irén Blüh trained at the Bauhaus, and photography became popular among women intellectuals in Budapest. This period saw the emergence of several

women photographers with significant oeuvres and influence. They included Éva Besnyő, who had been a pupil of Pécsi; Kata Kálmán, who published *Tiborc*, one of the most important photography books of the period;<sup>15</sup> and Rózsi Klein, who later married André Kertész and worked in Paris using the name Rogi André.<sup>16</sup> Those young Hungarians with an interest in modern photography and a desire to learn from the progressive masters tended to move to Germany, often attending courses at the Bauhaus.<sup>17</sup> One example is Pap, who later became a teacher at Johannes Itten's private school in Berlin and generally taught drawing. On several occasions in the latter half of the 1920s, Pap photographed metal objects that he himself had designed, and his print in the Walther Collection is part of this series.<sup>18</sup> In photographs of the so-called globe vase and Saturn vase, he examined the light reflections of nickel-plated objects.<sup>19</sup>

In general, however, at this time the prevailing mainstream art in Hungary was averse to modernism. There was no press coverage of several crucial photography exhibitions and publications. Hungary's photography magazines did not react to the publication, in 1925, of Moholy-Nagy's book *Malerei, Fotografie, Film (Painting, Photography, Film)*, and they were critical of the photographic successes of the Bauhaus. Although the 1929 Stuttgart exhibition *Film und Foto* — an exploration of modernist photography — received months of advance coverage, the response within Hungary during the show was limited, despite its inclusion of more than ninety photographs by Moholy-Nagy and seven by Kertész. Concurrently, those photographers who had left Hungary found particular success in various German newspapers and magazines, including *UHU*, a magazine that was at the forefront internationally of new artistic initiatives. The October 1929 issue included a series of pictures under the headline "New Artists," featuring photographs by Kertész, Moholy-Nagy, and Munkácsi, alongside works by Albert Renger-Patzsch and Erich Salomon.

In 1932 the Hungarian photography magazines failed to properly inform the public about an album entitled *Paris de nuit* (Paris by night) by the Hungarian-born photographer Brassai, and they ignored the books published by Moholy-Nagy.<sup>20</sup> Still, Moholy-Nagy's name and his views were occasionally mentioned. A letter to the editor written by a Bratislava physician named Rezső Limbacher is typical of the complete rejection of the Bauhaus teachings: "They take photos of everything that surrounds us, without making any selection. From the glowing end of a cigar to a plumbing faucet, from a fried egg to a sliced cucumber . . . everything becomes the booty of the Rolleiflex. . . . It is as though the normal viewing perspective has been banished; they take photos of buildings, towers, and factory chimneys from dizzying angles. It is the so-called New Vision, or 'Neues Sehen,' which supporters and followers of the Bauhaus have loudly proclaimed — with Moholy-Nagy at the head."<sup>21</sup>

It was only in the mid-1930s that works were published in Hungarian on photographic modernism. Art critic Kálmán





fig. 3 Unknown photographer. László (Moholy-) Nagy, Béla Hevesy, Margit Hevesy, Iván Hevesy. 1917–18. Gelatin silver print, 5  $\frac{5}{16}$  × 3  $\frac{13}{16}$ " (13.7 × 9.8 cm). Private collection

Brogyányi, who found himself in Czechoslovakia after the Treaty of Trianon, played a large role in the spread of the new ideas.<sup>22</sup> Yet he, too, was criticized in the columns of *Fotóművészeti Hírek* (Art photography news), which called him "the Hungarian-language propagator of Moholy-Nagy's group at the Bauhaus, which has sought a renewal of photography at all costs."<sup>23</sup>

There is no doubt, however, that the publicist Iván Hevesy, an old friend of Moholy-Nagy's, exerted the greatest impact on photography in Hungary. Born in Kapuvár in 1893, Hevesy attended the influential Négyesy Seminar during his university days.<sup>24</sup> It was then that he met Béla Zsolt and Moholy-Nagy (fig. 3).<sup>25</sup> His first book, *Futurista, expresszionista és kubista festészet* (Futurist, Expressionist and Cubist art), was published in 1919. After World War I and the fall of the Republic of the Councils, he was employed as a cultural activist by the Social Democratic Party<sup>26</sup> and then worked for the journal *Magyar Írás* (Hungarian writing). However, his work in the fields of literature, film, and photography criticism

began when he became a writer for *Jelenkor* (Present era) and for Kassák's magazine *MA* (Today).<sup>27</sup> Hevesy belonged to the second generation of writers at the literary monthly *Nyugat* (West), where he was an art critic and the first in Hungary to publish a theory of avant-garde art. His friendship with Kassák, an influential avant-garde painter, broke down after the two men quarreled over artistic issues. Indeed, in Vienna, Kassák even called Hevesy "anti-social" in an essay he wrote for *MA* called "Sándor Bortnyik and Iván Hevesy or the Guided Green Donkey."<sup>28</sup> The Green Donkey was a "revolutionary cabaret" which Hevesy created in collaboration with László Mittay, Palasovszky, and Farkas Molnár.<sup>29</sup>

Hevesy and Moholy-Nagy's friendship also went cold when Hevesy broke with the journal *MA* and Moholy-Nagy moved to Germany. The correspondence between the two men shows that Hevesy was unable to keep pace with the "New Vision" developed by Moholy-Nagy and with other developments in Western Europe. In one letter, Hevesy strongly criticized a photograph that Moholy-Nagy had sent him, to which Moholy-Nagy responded:

*Dear Iván, I regret that you could write such a letter as the last one. You know very well that I learned an immense amount from two people: from you and from Mária. But from neither of you—and not from you—did I learn that one must mock and reject things that are unknown. 'I am flabbergasted by how easily you are influenced,' you write. This is perhaps true with respect to the past when I was still a perfectly receptive person. . . . If you could have breathed different air for years, then after the photograph you too would demand the other photographs and not stick your head in the sand. But now, I have no wish to show the others like at the circus. I would say this with regard to my other things, that there are no foreign influences in my works, and yet today—in May 1921—I stand completely alone in the realm of European—non-Hungarian—art. Perhaps one day you too will understand this. What MA is doing is at the limits of what can be published in Hungarian today.*<sup>30</sup>

Between the wars, various Hungarian publications provided photographic coverage, but two newspapers dominated visual culture in the era. The editorial policies of these two weeklies reflected the conflicting political and artistic conditions prevailing in Hungary at the time. *Új Idők* (New times) supported conservatism, while *Pesti napló képes műmeléklet* (Illustrated supplement of the Pest journal), took a liberal position. The values and perspectives presented in these two publications influenced the types of photographs published in other journals and newspapers in Hungary.

Edited by the writer Ferenc Herczeg, *Új Idők* sought, at least according to its title, to popularize new types of literature and art. At first, the publication's editorial policy did indeed reflect this goal. Later on, however, the journal's progressiveness was gradually replaced by a more risk-averse approach. The journal published novellas and other writings by the most popular authors of the period,

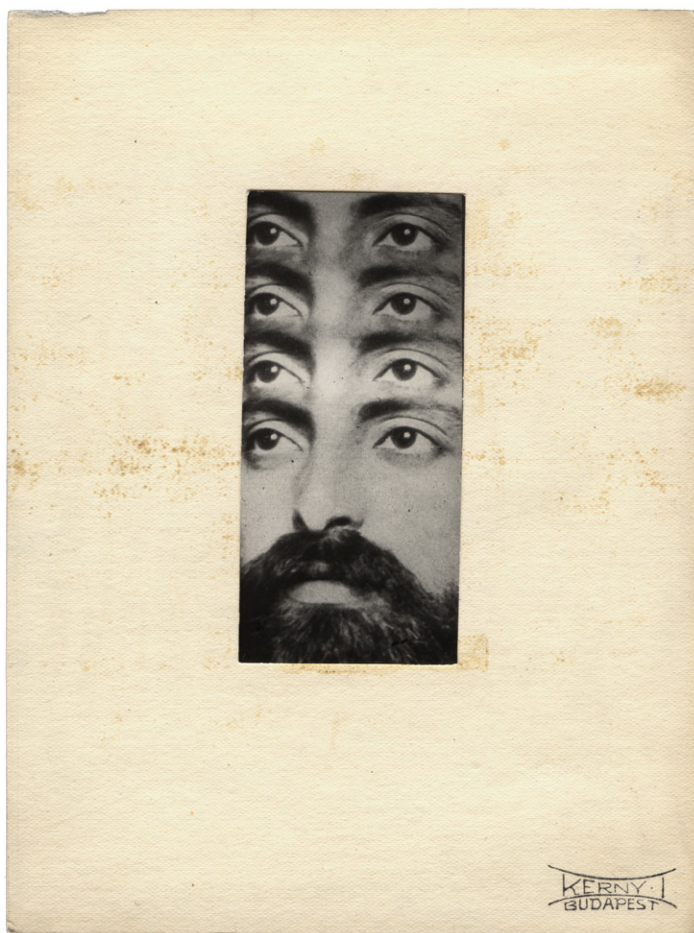


fig. 4 István Kerny. *Trick Self-Portrait* (*Trükk önarckép*). 1917. Gelatin silver print, 4 1/4 x 2" (10.7 x 5 cm). Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét

fig. 5 István Kerny. *Jupiter*. 1917. Gelatin silver print, 3 3/4 x 3 3/8" (9.5 x 8.5 cm). Vintage Gallery, Budapest

including Herczeg and Géza Gárdonyi. It also published novellas and essays by Jenő Heltai and Gyula Krúdy, while in the artistic sphere the art historian Károly Lyka set the tone. The journal tended to publish pictures by photographers Jenő Dulovits, Rudolf Járai, Kálmán Szöllősy, and Ernő Vadas. Other photographers making a regular income from the publication of their pictures included Tibor Csörgeő, Kerny, and Ervin Kankovszky. Csörgeő was a lawyer, Kerny a postal worker, and Kankovszky a bank official, and the three men published only irregularly in *Új Idők* during the 1920s and 1930s. Almost all the photographers publishing in the journal were members of the National Association of Hungarian Amateur Photographers; they knew each other well and had close contacts. Most of the pictures by Csörgeő, Kerny, and Kankovszky depict scenes and people from rural Hungary, which were the themes of most photographs in the Hungarian style. They took their photos on excursions made together, which were reported on in the photography press: "Led by fellow members István Kerny and Iván Vydareny, many of us marveled at the beautiful and colorful ethnography of the region near Budapest."<sup>31</sup>

Of these three photographers, Kerny received the greatest number of opportunities to publish in *Új Idők*, and in the press overall. In the period after 1914, photographs by Kerny

were published in *Vasárnapi Újság*, *Az Érdekes Újság*, *Képes Krónika* (Illustrated chronicle), *Nemzeti Sport* (National sport), and *Pesti Hírlap Vasárnapi Melléklete* (Sunday supplement of the Pest News). They even appeared outside the country, in the *London News*, *Die Woche*, and *National Geographic*. Kerny was a self-taught photographer; he had begun studying photography in 1894. In 1917, he made several "trick photos," most of which are self-portraits (fig. 4).<sup>32</sup> The work *Neptune* (*The Eight-Headed Human Star*), in the Walther Collection (MoMA [1714.2001](#)), is linked to photographs held by several Hungarian museums and private collections, as Kerny produced several pictures of this type around 1917. The photograph *Trick Self-Portrait* (*Trükk önarckép*) in the Hungarian Museum of Photography is linked with this series, while another work, *Jupiter* (fig. 5), is clearly part of the group.

Among the various liberal newspapers, *Pesti Napló* (Pest journal) was not the most important in financial terms or in its influence on society, but it has a special significance for photo-historians. Its *Képes Műmelléklet* (Illustrated supplement), established by Andor Miklós, filled an empty space in the Hungarian press by meeting readers' demand for photography. Miklós's modern approach to newspaper publishing drew strength from recent technical advances in photography and printing as well as from the photo-editing



skills of Ernő Mihályfi. *Képes Műmelléklet* was the first Hungarian illustrated magazine; it used short captions and established a high standard of photojournalism. The first issue appeared on February 1, 1925, as the Sunday supplement of the *Pesti Napló*. Its role among readers was similar to that of *Vu*, published in France from 1928.<sup>33</sup> (However, there was no lack of competition, for both *Pesti Hírlap* [Pest news] and *Magyarország* [Hungary] had supplements, too. The supplements of these two newspapers differed visibly from the *Pesti napló képes műmelléklet*, with its brown underlying tones. The former represented modern photography editing, while the latter made good use of the work of an excellent group of photojournalists.) The realization of modern editing principles was primarily due to Mihályfi's efforts. For a short period—from December 1933 until March 1934—Stefan Lorant, who had already achieved success in the United States, edited the *Pesti Napló* supplement. It was published as six pages until 1928 and mostly as twelve pages thereafter. Most of the foreign photographs came from the Wide World photo agency, while the share of Hungarian photographs was around 10 to 15 percent. In 1927, for instance, 3,092 photographs were published in the supplement, of which less than 10 percent had been taken by Hungarian photographers.

The ratio did not change significantly in subsequent years. Edited by Mihályfi, the supplement included pictures by photographers who are now known as some of the major figures of Hungarian photographic history: Angelo, Rudolf Balogh, Escher, Munkácsi, Pécsi, and Rónai. At first, Munkácsi mainly took pictures of sporting events—particularly auto racing and soccer—for the supplement. A photograph by Munkácsi in the Walther Collection was taken during this period—Untitled (*The Defeated Goalkeeper* [*Der besiegte Torwart*]) (MoMA 1796.2001)—as part of a series made in Hungary.<sup>34</sup> It was published in the October 14, 1928, issue of the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*.

Pécsi—alongside Balogh and Escher—was one of the most interesting interwar photographers in Hungary. His career began in the 1910s, and he learned the basic skills of photography in Munich, where he studied under Rudolf Dührkoop and was considered an outstanding pupil. He became known for his photographs in the Pictorialist style, but later turned to *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity), an approach he used for advertising photographs. In 1913, he helped establish photography courses in Hungary, but was later dismissed from his job on account of his left-wing views and his role in the Republic of the Councils.



fig. 6 Ödön Palasovszky. *Karmazsin* (Crimson). Budapest: Új Föld kiadása, 1927.  
© Hungarian Museum of Photography



fig. 7 József Pécsi. *Ödön Palasovszky*. 1926. Gelatin silver print, 4 × 3" (10 × 8.1 cm).  
© Hungarian National Museum, Budapest

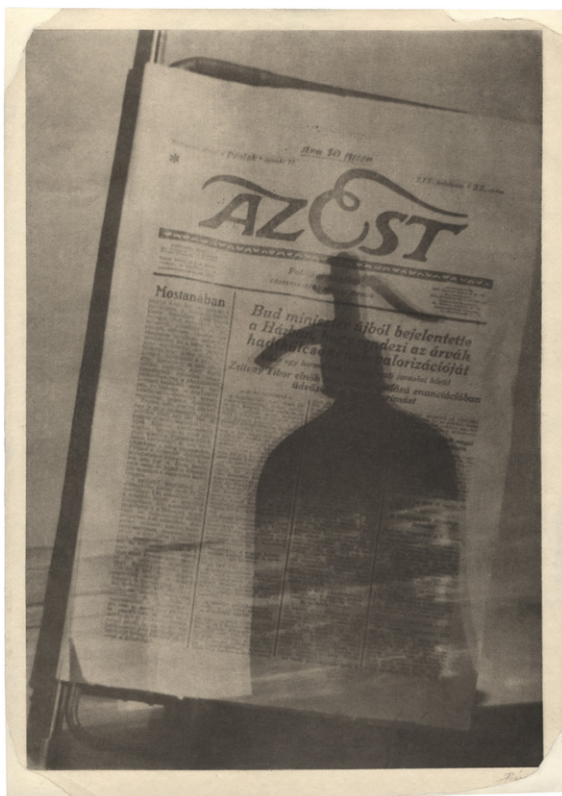


fig. 8 József Pécsi. *Az Est*. 1928. Oil print,  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{5}{16}$ " ( $40 \times 28.8$  cm). Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét. © Hungarian Museum of Photography



fig. 9 Aladár Székely. *Az Est*. 1928. Bromide oil print,  $20 \times 15$ " ( $51 \times 38$  cm). Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest

There is a photograph in the Walther Collection that, until now, has wrongly been considered by experts at the Hungarian National Museum to be the work of Ergy Landau but is in fact the work of Pécsi.<sup>35</sup> The photo, published on the cover of a book of verse by Palasovszky entitled *Karmazsin* (Crimson),<sup>36</sup> is of the Green Donkey co-founder, who was instrumental in the birth of Hungarian avant-garde drama (fig. 6). It differs from Pécsi's typical work, however. When this photograph was made, another was also taken, produced using photographic solutions more typically employed by the artist; this work is held in the collection of the Hungarian National Museum (fig. 7).

In the period after World War I, the role of advertising changed in Hungary, as it did elsewhere in Europe. Before the war, distributors had tended to take photographs of their products, which were then used in press publications. From the 1920s onward, this task was undertaken by the manufacturers, a development that resulted in the increased uniformity of advertising photography. Many of the early, pre-1920s advertising photographs had more in common with art photography than with modern advertising photography. The transition between the two periods is exemplified by Pécsi's *Newspaper Advertisement* (*Újságreklám*), in the Walther Collection (MoMA [1806.2001](#)). The photograph was presented in exhibitions as an oil print (fig. 8), a method

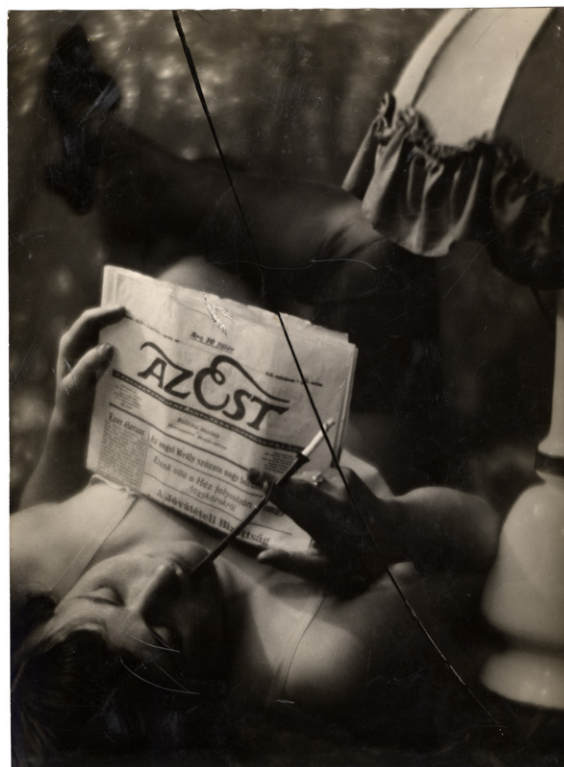


fig. 10 Dénes Rónai. *Az Est*. 1929. Gelatin silver print,  $15\frac{3}{4} \times 11\frac{1}{2}$ " ( $39.9 \times 29.5$  cm). Hungarian Museum of Photography, Kecskemét



preferred by the Pictorialists, seeming to add to its artistic value. In the early 1930s, Pécsi was still using these old techniques, which were generally regarded as outdated by that time. There was still no great distinction between his photographs produced for advertising and those for artistic self-expression. Even so, he was the first Hungarian photographer to make his advertising photography known and to publish a book on the subject in Germany. In 1930, Pécsi gained an international reputation with his book *Photo und Publizität* (Photo and advertising).<sup>37</sup> The book, displaying the extent and depth of Pécsi's work in advertising photography, includes thirty-two photographs. The preface outlines the role of advertising and criticizes the excessively ornate photography customarily employed in advertising. His pictures were also published in the German journal *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* and in *The Studio*, from London.

Pécsi applied the Bauhaus approach to his advertising photographs, arguing that the brash colors traditionally used in ads were being replaced by a method that emphasized the advertised objects' pure forms. The publication of *Photo und Publizität* marked the zenith of Pécsi's work in both advertising and art photography. The advertising photos in the book (including *Newspaper Advertisement*) emphasize the importance of typography, and in this regard, too, the Bauhaus perspective was influential. Kepes and Victor Vasarely, two Hungarian-born artists, helped develop the typography used in the book. *Newspaper Advertisement* is considered today to be one of Pécsi's best art photography works; however, its provenance lies closer to advertising photography. Indeed, the picture was made for a competition in which the best-known photographers in Hungary took part. In 1926, with a view to consolidating its leading position in the press market, *Az Est* (The evening) asked its readers to write to the editors, telling them which advertisements they preferred and on what grounds.<sup>38</sup> The excellent gimmick made the newspaper even more popular, especially among readers in Budapest.<sup>39</sup> In response to this success, the editorial board announced a second competition and then a third. Readers, too, were now permitted to submit pictures: "*Az Est, Magyarország* and *Pesti Napló* will pay four thousand pengő to the designers of the best adverts."<sup>40</sup> *Newspaper Advertisement* was made by Pécsi for this 1928 competition. Among the submissions were works by artists and photographers who are now regarded as the leading Hungarian artists of the first half of the twentieth century. Several (including Sándor Bortnyik and Tibor Pólya) submitted posters, and we have documentary evidence that Pécsi, Rónai, and Aladár Székely were among the photographers submitting pictures to the editorial board. In view of their friendship and collegiality, it comes as no surprise to learn that Pécsi and Székely (fig. 9) entered pictures that were published on successive days in *Az Est*—on January 26 and 27, 1928.<sup>41</sup> After a pause, the competition resumed and Rónai took a picture of an unidentified man with the front page of the newspaper *Az Est* (fig. 10).<sup>42</sup> The editors of *Az Est* held an



fig. 11 Arnold Gara. *Pesti Napló, Az Est, Magyarország*. 1928. Offset print, 21 × 37 ½" (53 × 95 cm). Athenaeum Nyomda, Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Budapest. © Athenaeum Nyomda, Budapest, National Széchényi Library, Budapest

exhibition of competition entries and published photographs from the show in the illustrated supplement.<sup>43</sup> On the page accompanying the announcement of the exhibition are a photograph by Pécsi and a poster designed by Arnold Gara (fig. 11). The latter became one of the publishing company's most successful advertising posters.

The thirty-two Hungary-related photographs in the Walther Collection are not necessarily the best Hungarian pictures from this period, but they do represent the best, or most interesting, period of Hungarian photography. These photographers played a crucial role between the two wars in the development of Hungarian photographic art. Most of the pictures in the collection are not found in Hungary in vintage prints, and so their presence here may facilitate research in Hungary. It is particularly welcome that the Walther Collection includes works by Hungarian photographers who chose to stay in Hungary and who—unlike those who went abroad—are still almost unknown to researchers of international photography.<sup>44</sup> The photographers who remained in Hungary were not in a position to achieve the professional success of those who worked or settled outside of the country. Still, the former were not necessarily any less talented. On their return visits to Hungary, the successful expatriate photographers could not bring about change in Hungary's photographic life. For this reason, advances in the photography of Western Europe exerted little influence on developments within Hungary.<sup>45</sup>

*Translated from the Hungarian by Andrew Gane*



1. The title of the exhibition was *A Magyar Amatőrfényképező Országos Szövetsége I. Nemzetközi fényképkéllítása* (The First International Photography Exhibition of the National Association of Hungarian Amateur Photographers). The exhibition was held at the Műcsarnok, Budapest, in June–July, 1910.
2. Ferenc Pölöskei, Jenő Gergely, and Lajos Izsák, eds., *20. századi magyar történelem 1900–1994* [Twentieth-century Hungarian History, 1900–1994] (Budapest: Korona Kiadó, 1997).
3. *Az Érdekes Ujság*, no. 12 (1917): 10, 13.
4. Pierre Borhan István Katona, Károly Kincses, László Lugosi Lugo, and Miklós Mátyássy, *A. Kertész, 1894–1985–1994* (Kecskemét and Budapest: Hungarian Museum of Photography and Pelikán Kiadó, 1994).
5. *Borsszem Jankó*, February 20, 1916.
6. André Kertész, letter to the Hungarian photographer András Balla, April 23, 1981. Courtesy András Balla
7. See Gabriella Vincze, “Adalékok a magyar mozduatművészek párizsi korszakához” [On the Paris Era of the Hungarian Motion Arts], *Enigma*, no. 4 (2013): 25–28.
8. See *ibid.* for more details on Vincze’s research findings on Magda Förstner’s career in dance and the photograph *Satiric Dancer* by Kertész.
9. Krisztina Passuth wrote the first monograph on László Moholy-Nagy; it was published in three languages. Passuth, *Moholy-Nagy László* (Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 1982).
10. Passuth, *Beöthy István. Az Aranysor szobrásza* [István Beöthy. The Sculptor of the Golden Row] (Budapest: Enciklopédia
- Kiadó, 2010), pp. 47–52. (In István Beöthy’s oeuvre catalogue, the statue *Action directe*, *Heros* is op. no. 19 from 1927, while *Femme*, the majolica relief at the right in *Satiric Dancer*, is op. no. 17 from 1925.)
11. The two best monographs on Kertész date the photographs to a year earlier, on the basis of Kertész’s own recollections, as he always wrote 1926 on the back of the pictures. See Sarah Greenough, Robert Gurbo, and Sarah Kennel, *André Kertész* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), pp. 104–05; and Michel Frizot and Annie-Laure Wanaverbecq, *Kertész* (Paris: Jeu de Paume, 2010), pp. 86–87. In her dissertation, a catalogue raisonné of the work of Kertész conducted in close collaboration with the artist’s estate, Sandra Phillips explains the debate thus: “Beöthy’s wife, Anne Beöthy-Steiner, contends [*Satiric Dancer*] was made in 1927, however Kertész disputes this.” Phillips, *The Photographic Work of André Kertész in France, 1925–1936*, vol. 2 (New York: City University of New York, 1985), p. 59. Following the direction of the artist, scholarship has traditionally sided with the 1926 date, which has also been maintained in the cataloguing of the Kertész prints in the Thomas Walther Collection.
12. Major exponents of the Hungarian style were Rudolf Balogh, Tibor Csörgeő, Frigyes Haller, Kálmán Szöllősy, and Ernő Vadas.
13. Rudolf Balogh, “Az olvasóhoz” [To the Reader], *Fotóművészet*, no. 1 (1914): 2. The quotation was published in Péter Baki, “‘Let Us Stay Here’: Twentieth-century Photography within Hungary,” in Baki, Colin Ford, and George Szirtes, eds., *Eyewitness. Hungarian Photography in the Twentieth Century* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2011), p. 26.
14. See Béla Albertini, *A magyar szociográfia története* [History of the Hungarian Social Documentary Photography] (Kecskemét: Hungarian Museum of Photography, 1997).
15. Kata Kálmán, *Tiborc* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, Szolgálat és Írás Munkatársaság könyvei 3, 1937). The significance of this publication is indicated by the fact that it features in a book by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger, *The Photobook: A History*, vol. 1 (New York: Phaidon, 2004).
16. Csilla E. Csorba, *Magyar fotográfusnők 1900–1945* [Hungarian Photographers, 1900–1945] (Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiadó, 2000).
17. For more details, see Éva Bajkay, ed., *A művészettől az Életig — magyarok a bauhausban* [From Art to Life — Hungarians in the Bauhaus] (Pécs: Baranya County Museums Directorate and Janus Pannonius Museum, 2010).
18. Untitled, 1928 (MoMA 1800.2001). The same photograph is dated to 1929 by Gyula Pap’s biographer, his widow Lenke Haulisch. See Haulisch, *Pap Gyula fotói* [Photographs by Gyula Pap] (Budapest: Hungarian House of Photographers, 2008).
19. Haulisch, *Pap Gyula fotói*, 2008.
20. See Brassai, *Paris de nuit* (Paris: Arts et métiers graphiques, 1932).
21. Rezső Limbacher, “Üzenet” [Message], *Fotóművészeti Hírek*, no. 11–12 (1936): 257–64.
22. Béla Albertini, *A fotósza-kíró Brogyányi Kálmán* [The Photography Writer Kálmán Brogyányi] (Bratislava: AB-ART, 2003).
23. *Fotóművészeti Hírek*, no. 1 (1934): 19. Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 131–33.
24. See Mihály Szegedy-Maszá, ed., *A magyar irodalom története II. kötet. 1800-tól 1919-ig* [The History of Hungarian Literature, vol. 2, 1800–1919] (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2007), p. 477.
25. He later became godfather to Moholy-Nagy on his Lutheran baptism.
26. He was not, however, a member of the party.
27. Anna Hevesy, Katalin Hevesi, and Károly Kincses, *Hevesy Iván és Kálmán Kata könyve* [The Book of Iván Hevesy and Kata Kálmán] (Kecskemét: Hungarian Museum of Photography and Glória Kiadó, 1999), p. 31.
28. K-k L-s [Lajos Kassák], “Bortnyik Sándor és Hevesy Iván vagy az elővezetett Zöld Szamár” [Sándor Bortnyik and Iván Hevesy or the Guided Green Donkey], *MA*, nos. 3–4 (1925): 78.
29. A portrait of Palasovszky — actor, director, and poet — can be seen in a photograph by József Pécsi in the Walther Collection (MoMA 1805.2001).
30. Extract from Moholy-Nagy, letter to Iván Hevesy, Berlin, May 26, 1921. Manuscript Archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, MS 4512/133–139. A copy of the letter was displayed at an exhibition entitled *Százhusz éve született Hevesy Iván* [Iván Hevesy was born 100 years ago], Hungarian Museum of Photography, November 22, 2013–January 26, 2014. Albertini curated the exhibition.
31. Dezső Dózsa, “MAOSZ hírek” [News of the National Association of Hungarian Amateur Photographers], *Fotóművészeti Hírek*, no. 6 (1932): 119.

32. For more details, see Balázs Zoltán Tóth's entry on István Kerny in *A fotóművészet születése—A piktorializmustól a modern fotográfiáig (1889–1929)* [The Birth of Art Photography—From Pictorialism to Modern Photography (1889–1929)], ed. Baki (Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 2012), p. 341.
33. See Michel Frizot and Cédric de Veigy, *VU—The Story of a Magazine that Made an Era* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009).
34. A photograph from this period in the artist's work features in F. C. Gundlach, ed., *Martin Munkacsí* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2006), pp. 28–29.
35. A print of this work is also held by the Hungarian Museum of Photography, but the records indicate the wrong photographer and the wrong year: Ergy Landau, *Palasovszky Ödön*, 1921. As a result of this error, the wrong data for this picture also appears in a book on Hungarian photographic history: Csorba, *Magyar fotográfusnők 1900–1945*, p. 147.
36. On the reverse side of the cover page: "A címlapon Pécsi József főlvétele. Tipografizálta Bortnyik Sándor" [A picture by József Pécsi on the front page. Typography by Sándor Bortnyik]. Budapest, National Széchényi Library.
37. The book *Photo und Publizität*, published in Germany in 1930, was later published in Hungary as *Fotó és Reklám* [Photography and Advertising] (Budapest: Intera Könyvkiadó, 1997).
38. *Az Est*, November 3, 1926: 11. *Ma kezdődik a százmilliós hirdetési verseny* [The one hundred million advert competition begins today.] "... százmilliót fizetünk annak, aki a lapjainkban 1926. november 1. és 1927. január 31. közt közölt hirdetések közül a legkiválóbbat felismeri és pár szóval meg tudja mondani, hogy ez a hirdetés miért különb, mint a többi?" [ ... we will pay a hundred million to the person who recognizes the best advert published between November 1, 1926, and January 31, 1927, and can explain what makes the advert stand out from the others.]
39. *Az Est*, March 3, 1927: 3. *Négy pályázó között osztja meg a bírálóbizottság Az Est-lapok hirdetési versenyének százmilliós első díját* [The jury is to divide the first prize, worth a hundred million, among four competitors.] "Nagy örömmel láttuk, hogy a legtöbb pályázó éppen a mi hirdetési versenyünk ötletét ítélte a legkitűnőbb hirdetésnek, amikor úgy fogta fel az egész hirdetési versenyt, hogy az egy nagyszabású reklám Az Est-lapok számára." [We have been delighted to see that most contestants viewed our idea for a competition as the best advert, in that they have regarded the competition as a huge advertisement for the newspaper group Az Est.]
40. *Az Est*, October 9, 1927: 7. "A pályázat további feltételei a következők: [ ... ] 2. Az első nap, melyen a pályamunkákat átvevünk 1927. október 15. – Az utolsó nap, melyen pályamunkákat átveszünk, 1928. január 31." [The further conditions for the competition are as follows: ( ... ) 2. The first day on which we will accept submissions for the competition is October 15, 1927, and the last day will be January 31, 1928.]
41. The cover page visible in Székely's photograph is the front page of a Thursday edition of the newspaper (January 26, 1928). Its identification was facilitated by the title of the article on the left side of the cover page: "Apró porszemek" [Tiny particles of dust], and an extract from the leading article: "Rothermere lord Newyorkba érkezett" [Lord Rothermere has arrived in New York]. The cover page visible on Pécsi's *Newspaper Advertisement* (see fig. 8 and MoMA 1806.2001) is the front page of a Friday edition of the newspaper (January 27, 1928). Its identification was facilitated by the title of the article on the left side of the cover page: "Mostanában" [Nowadays], and by the title of the leading article: "Bud miniszter újból bejelentette a Házban, hogy rendezi az árvák hadikölcsönének valorizációját." [Minister Bud has restated in the House that he will settle the valuation of the orphans' war loan].
42. The cover page visible on Rónai's photograph is from a Wednesday edition of the newspaper (April 24, 1929). Its identification was facilitated by the title of the article on the left side of the cover page: "Ezer életunt" [A Thousand Unmoved], and by the title of the leading article: "Az angol király szózata nagy feltűnést keltett, Élénk vita a Ház folyosóján a nagy fagykárokról, A Jóvátételi Bizottság elcsapta a kötvényhamisító Blumenstein mentő koronatanúját." [The statement by the King of England has caused a great stir, Lively debate in the corridors of the House on the frost damages, The Compensation Commission has struck down the crown witness exonerating the bond forger Blumenstein.]
43. *Pesti napló képes műmelléklet*, February 26, 1928, p. 76.
44. For a notable exception, see Matthew S. Witkovsky, *Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918–1945* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2007).
45. For an in-depth account, see Albertini, "Vonzások és taszítások: (Fotográfiánk és a nagyvilág a húszas évektől a hetvenesekig)" [Attractions and Repulsions: (Hungarian Photography and the World at Large from the 1920s until the 1970s)], *Alföld*, no. 3 (1993): 52–60.

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