

# The Museum of Modern Art

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## HUNGARY'S NEW WAVE AT MUSEUM

Hungary's young generation of filmmakers, who are now in open rebellion against what is called in that country "Papa Cinema," or traditional films, will be represented at The Museum of Modern Art. The Department of Film has scheduled a ten-day showing of nine films made in the mid-sixties, and two film directors, Peter Bacso and Istvan Gaal, will come to this country to be present at the first group showing of films from Hungary.

The series starts April 2nd, with "The Upthrown Stone," made in 1969 by Sandor Sara, 35, director, co-author, and cameraman. "The Upthrown Stone" has had no previous showing in this country; five other films will also be seen for the first time, while two of the pictures, "Father" and "The Lady from Constantinople," have been shown once at the Lincoln Center Film Festival.

The new films are, in addition to "The Upthrown Stone," "Cold Days," "My Way Home," "Summer on the Hill," "The Girl," and "Current."

In announcing the Hungarian Film Show, Willard Van Dyke, Director of the Department of Film, who selected the pictures in Hungary, stated that each of the directors chosen was searching for the truth. "Each treats its protagonists as human and therefore imperfect," said Van Dyke, calling attention to the fact that Hungary, because of its geographical location midway between Europe, Russia, and the Near East, has been a battleground for 2,000 years. "Its people have learned that to be able to survive means to be able to face the idea that in any situation there is no simple right or wrong."

Of the eight film directors represented in the show, two are women. Marta Meszaros, daughter of a sculptor, having started in films fifteen years ago, making shorts and documentaries, has contributed her first feature. "The Girl" was

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written by Ivan Mandy, a recognized young novelist, and deals with the anguish of a 24-year old in finding herself.

"The Lady from Constantinople" is the first feature of another woman director, Judit Elek, 32 years old. One of the youngest filmmakers in the group, a novelist as well, she attended the Academy of Dramatic and Cinematographic Arts in Budapest, and later worked at the Bela Balazs Studio. Miss Elek later joined a creative community called Mafilm, a research laboratory composed of Academy graduates, directors, assistants, cameramen, and writers. Mafilm has several units, subsidized by the government, and its members are free to transfer from one unit to another. It is largely responsible for the bold innovations that have come about in the mid-sixties, rejuvenating the cinema in Hungary.

The Bela Balazs Studio in Budapest practically serves as a club for young film artists. The studio is named after the famous writer on film aesthetics whose theories were formed before the twenties, at which time Hungarian filmmakers such as Alexander Korda and Michael Curtiz fled to Vienna as political exiles. They later emigrated to the United States.

Until recent years Hungarian production operated at a minimum level. Even in the early sixties film production was not a force until the formation of Mafilm, which has four units altogether, each of which uses expert technicians who work as a team at the Bela Balazs Studio.

Because of government financial support, the enlarged scope of film activities continues in Hungary, despite the dissident voice of the filmmakers and the questioning films they have produced. Many of these films have been singled out for awards at international film festivals, which seems to indicate that creative freedom exists along with censorship. In fact, Istvan Dosai, head of Hungarofilm, a government agency, claims that no scripts have been rejected since 1966, even though Hungarian filmmakers are recognized among satellite nations as the most outspoken critics of the current scene. Their films are known to explore human

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problems on psychological as well as political levels.

The Hungarians also admit to being influenced by the directors of the French "nouvelle vague" because of their ease of using the camera to convey personal feelings and a subjective message. Miklos Jansco, for instance, states his films are "a self exploration of my own generation and an answer to some of the basic questions it faces." Jansco's film "My Way Home" will be part of the show. The director was formerly a law student.

Peter Bacso, 42, who is responsible for "Summer on the Hill," has scripted twenty-two films. He began as a poet and still writes poetry as well as popular lyrics. After graduation from the Academy of Cinematographic Arts, he became a screen writer. Fifteen years later he directed his first film, using unknowns in the cast. Most of his films focus on the problems of youth in an attempt to investigate the questions of our era.

Bacso, who is one of the visiting directors, does not believe in films of a particular genre. "In reality," he says, "one cannot divide one's own life from politics -- things are interwoven. The film critics cannot act as the jury of a dog show: the tail of the dog has to be so long, the ears such a shape, and the hind so far from the ground. I never wanted to become a prize winning thoroughbred."

Istvan Gaal, another visiting director who will represent Hungarian Cinema to Americans, is responsible for "Current," which dramatizes the reaction of individuals to a tragic experience in their lives. Gaal, also a graduate of the Hungarian Cinema Academy, received a scholarship to study at the Centro Sperimentale in Rome. He has made several shorts, newsreels, and documentaries, and also on occasion has acted as cameraman. He edits his own films.

Other Hungarian directors who have made contributions to this showing are Istvan Szabo, born in 1938, a director of shorts at 23 who made his first feature, "Father," at 26. It was made on location in Budapest where, he points out, one-fifth of Hungary's population lives. Most filmmakers do not focus on city life as does Szabo, who also writes his own scenarios.

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Sandor Sara, whose film "The Upthrown Stone" will open the program, worked with Istvan Szabo as an assistant director. He was formerly a cameraman, and his first documentary was "Gypsies," followed by "Concerts," "Variations on a Theme," and "You," all recipients of international prizes. Sara is considered the "most talented cameraman of contemporary Hungarian cinematographic art," according to Claude B. Levinson in his book, entitled "Jeune Cinéma Hongrois." A student of geology and cartography before he became a filmmaker, Sara developed an approach to space that has led to his own special sense of photographic composition, which he applies in his movies.

Today Hungary has emerged on the international film scene, according to Willard Van Dyke, of the Museum's Department of Film. The country has not been notable for its film accomplishments since the years before World War I. Between 1911 and 1917, however, it was distinguished by its literature on film. Theories which became popular around the globe were initiated by Bela Balazs. Another young man, Alexander Korda, insisted that this new art was created largely by the director, but that he in no way resembled the director of a stage play. In that same period a benedictine monk, philosopher, and psychologist, Cecil Bogner, wrote: "The film itself is actually only an instrument, a raw material like paint or type...The film may be art but it may also be the means of scientific communication, even of perception." Finally, Balazs himself, said to have inspired André Bazin, noted French theorist of film, wrote that film art understands how to show you at each moment only what you should see. The director who influences the movement of your emotions must conceal everything that he does not need, lest the shape of alien objects should distract the attention of the audience.

Coming from so thoughtful a view of the past, when cinema was only beginning, the Hungarians are now offering practical efforts, as well as theory, to indicate their belief in the medium.

The schedule of pictures, all subtitled, follows:

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The schedule of the Hungarian Film Series

All films have English subtitles

Thursday, April 2 (2:00, 5:30, 8:00)

THE UPTHROWN STONE. 1969. Directed by Sandor Sara. With Lajos Balazsovits, Todor Todorov, Nadyezhda Ranzheva.

Friday, April 3 (2:00, 5:30)

COLD DAYS. 1966. Written and directed by Andras Kovacs. With Zoltan Latinovits, Ivan Darvas, Adam Szirtes, Tibor Szilagyi.

Saturday, April 4 (3:00, 5:30)

WINDOWS OF TIME. 1969. Directed by Tamas Fejer. With Miklos Gabor, Beata Tyszkiewicz, Ivan Andonev.

Sunday, April 5 (2:00, 5:30)

MY WAY HOME. 1964. Directed by Miklos Jansco. With Andras Kozak, Sergey Nikonenko.

Monday, April 6 (8:00)

FATHER. 1966. Directed by Istvan Szabo. With Miklos Gabor, Klari Tolnay, Andras Balint.

Tuesday, April 7 (2:00)

FATHER. (see Monday)

Wednesday, April 8 (2:00, 5:30)

SUMMER ON THE HILL. Directed by Peter Bacso. With Lazlo Mensaros, Jozsef Pecsenske, Katalin Gyongyossy.

Thursday, April 9 (2:00, 5:30, 8:00)

THE LADY FROM CONSTANTINOPLE. 1969. Directed by Judit Elek. With Manyi Kiss.

Friday, April 10 (2:00, 5:30)

THE GIRL. 1969. Directed by Marta Meszaros. With Kati Kovacs, Adam Szirtes, Teri Horvath.

Saturday, April 11 (3:00, 5:30)

CURRENT. 1964. Directed by Istvan Gaal. With Andrea Drahota, Marianne Moor, Sandor Csikos.

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Additional information available from Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. (212) 956 - 7296, 7501.