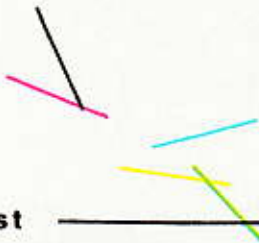


E K L E K T I K A



For many, the transformation and reorganization that has been taking place in the arts in the Eighties seems like a business manipulation aimed at or against the avantgarde. Regarding this reorganization as no more than some kind of passing fashion, many have chosen to disparage it, sometimes with irony, others with real anger. Yet, to explain the growing movement of eclecticism by saying that it is due to the burn-out of creative energy is prejudice which stubbornly disregards the emotional surplus in the new works of art.

Naturally, in the middle of the decade we still cannot speak of the development of the new attitude as something *finished*. It is as yet impossible to define its boundaries. Much has been published about its character, and its nature has been analyzed time and again. Its significance has dwarfed the hasty assumption that, driven by the need to come up with something new, a handful of avantgarde artists are trying out new solutions. It is also a fact that in Hungary especially, several of the well-known members of the avantgarde movements of the Sixties and Seventies have become the champions of the new art. The theory of a change of generations, on the other hand, is only partially true, despite the fact that the relationship of the "younger generation" to tradition is characterized more by a lack of prejudice than by a stance of opposition. There are many who cannot be included in the above grouping, i.e., the connection between their way of thinking to that of the former group cannot be explained from this point of view.

The works presented by *Eklektika '85* belong to a form of art that conveys personal revelation, and within that category, may best be understood as "romantic-subjective-expressionist", to borrow a phrase from Lóránd Hegyi. In these, artistic existence is revealed with heightened intensity via the process of artistic creation, and gains conviction from that same process. As a result of the interaction of art and artist, the prestige of both is enhanced; the artist as an individual is revaluated.

From the above follows the strength of the experience offered by the work, which authenticates the subjective revelation. All this insures the maximum of freedom for the artist, and if we add that the utilization of tradition is frequent, the reason for the variety of choices becomes obvious.

The text which accompanied the show entitled „What is the Avantgarde?“, organized by Miklós Erdély, György Jovánovics and János Major in Balatonboglár in 1973 said the following about the internal contradictions of art which must constantly look for new directions: "With every new work, the avantgarde artist is forced to limit both himself and the other avantgarde artists; from then on, none of their numbers can make anything like it or even anything similar to it, ever again. Consequently, avantgarde art, which began as the art of freedom by toppling many taboos, erects a new one with every new work it produces."

By a shift of emphasis, it was possible to get off this crash-course. By the Eighties, instead of the art of "freedom" attained through the destruction of taboos—and due, precisely, to the subjective character of the modes of expression—the ability to experience defined the character of the relationship to things. To go a step further, value becomes the tangent of the experience released through the process of creation.

The number of artists working within the sphere of influence of the new eclecticism is unusually large. Indeed, for this reason it was impossible to include them all in this exhibition, which wished to stress the many trends rather than act as a roster of the artists.

What is the secret of their success?

There are many possible answers, more than we could list, even if we were to concentrate on any one artist. However, we can draw certain general conclusions by considering the nature of the works presently on display. Furthermore, it must be pointed out that thanks to the new situation, the false dilemma created by the contrasting of universal and Hungarian art, by emphasizing the difference in the hierarchy of values between them, a dilemma through which some have tried time and again to keep in line those artists who wished to turn away from dogmatism in art, has lost its purpose.

The present transformation in art has initiated a responsive in theory and attitude so strong that its wide current has swept many along. Its influence is evident not only in the works of the artist included in this exhibition; it has also given fresh impetus to Hungarian painting in general — indeed, to all of the contemporary fine arts in the land.

István Dévényi

1. Eclecticism and the Movements in Art

Since the mid-Seventies, the trends and movements in art which were organized according to strict guidelines seem to be gradually abating. The definitive *isms* are disappearing, the "main trends" characteristic of the Sixties and early Seventies are disintegrating, trends which had given direction to the artistic development of a period spreading over almost two decades. In fact, the concept of "artistic development" itself has fallen under scrutiny at last; by the turn of the Seventies and early Eighties, the previously unequivocal "main trends of development" and "main directions" of development themselves became problematic. The "new" as an absolute value and "media innovation" as the driving force behind development lost its significance, and as a consequence, the stages of development, one dependent on the other, the fatalistic "necessity" of the chain of movements embodying the process of development, also were brought to the stand.

By the turn of the decade, the linear, mechanical stages of development, one following from the other, which made up the model of development lost its validity, becoming fossilized, naive and unhistorical. In the approach to the arts in the Eighties, the universally accepted idea of a "dominant main stream" of development regarded as exclusive and unavoidable ("necessary") was replaced by pluralism, the heterogeneity of trends existing side by side, the equality of a multitude of models and the simultaneity of regional cultural forms, aesthetic attitudes, and styles.

The phenomenon of eclecticism does not make itself felt through any "movements", but in the irreducible multiplicity of personal encounter.

It is in this respect that Alan Sondheim speak of "post-movement art" when he discusses the "individual mythologies" of the second half of the Seventies; and it is also in this respect that Janet Kardon calls the Seventies the "decade of pluralism". Furthermore, it is in this connection that Flavio Caroli discusses the "omnipotence" of the personality of the artist in the late Seventies and early Eighties, and it is with the same understanding that Jean-Christophe Amman states that while in the arts of the Sixties and Seventies "dominant stylistic tendencies" and "movements" held sway, in the late late Seventies the movements disappeared from art, the ruling stylistic tendencies were done away with, and the creation of the artistic Ego became the central tendency.

2. The phenomenon of eclecticism, and expansionism

Whether it is hidden or openly declared in the "dominant stylistic tendencies", the crisis of expansionism is closely related to the above. A program of directly stepping into areas extraneous to art is a recurrent motif of the art movements of the Sixties and early Seventies. The avantgarde of the Sixties and early Seventies wished to make itself felt outside of art, too; it wished to change the system of cultural institutions, often, in fact, certain social institutions and social functions as well. So avantgarde art created a close link between the continual renewal of its means or devices and the wish to make a direct effect, i.e., with expansionism.

When conceptual art declared the purely intellectual work of art—the program of developing conceptual means of expression no longer reliant on object-centric solutions—it did not merely advertise the goal of a non-material aesthetics, but at the same time, it declared war on the established

system of institutions in art and along with it, the traditional conception of value in the arts which puts the object d'art in the limelight instead of the artistic ideology.

The system of institutions in the art world guaranteed the publicity and sale of the object d'art, regarded as the ultimate value, making sure that it would be present at exhibitions, galleries, art shops and museum, not to mention the field of art history. When conceptual art radically reduced the process of creation to the documenting of an idea about art, it did not only change the earlier modes of representation, "inevitably" developing it further according to its own views, but it also forced the system of institutions to change, transforming the concept of art and the social function of art, to boot.

The constant renewal of the means and media of artistic expression linked the "inner", "vernacular" development of art with the transformation of the social function of art, with the expansionist program of penetrating extra-artistic territory. The avantgarde artist of the Sixties and early Seventies wished to produce a more direct and more striking effect than his predecessors through the mastery of technical problems — the extensive development of art itself. However, by the end of the Seventies, this concentration on technology and the extensive development of artistic means lead to a greater degree of alienation and contextual poverty than ever before, and with the absolutization of the concept of development, became a self-mutilating, self-destructive process.

It was to this situation that the young generation of artists addressed themselves when, in the late Seventies, they turned, with the anger of true avengers, against the reign of technology with its loss of the self and its sterily conceptualization which had grown into tautology. Having centered its attention on "linguistic" innovation to the exclusion of everything else, the absolutization of technique, coupled with medium-centric thinking, had annihilated the ties to history as well as the more concrete cultural milieu. In the same way, the motif of the creation of the artistic Ego was wiped away, since the creation of clean, abstract, im-material models demanded that art free itself of everything even remotely personal, of all elements related to time and place, of all regional and historical references. Indeed, what is personal can never be made into a perfect model, for its depths can never be exhausted; at the same time, the personal is always related to a given moment in time, a specific historical situation, a concrete intellectual and spiritual milieu, a specific place and culture, and therefore cannot be generalized via abstract, sterily models.

The new movements in the arts which appeared in the late Seventies and the early Eighties have made the search for identity the central motif of the artistic process,

3. The phenomenon of eclecticism, and style

With a certain amount of simplification we might even say that whereas the avantgarde art of the Sixties and early Seventies involved process-oriented or device-oriented work methods, in the "trans-avantgarde" art of the late Seventies and the Eighties, the development of style, more specifically, of subjective „stylistic metaphors", are of primary consideration.

The change in the roles of method and style can also be explained by the change in the roles of the future-oriented, utopistic attitude and the present-oriented, disillusionist attitude which draws part of its inspiration from tradition. While the former was defined by the drive to create clear and generally valid models, and the reductionism that necessarily accompanied it, the latter approach to art is characterized by an anti-reductionist attitude, by complexity, and an anti-model orientation. Here, style is the stage for the aesthetic, cultural-historical and art historical "adventures" of the artist in search of himself. It is like a motley, colorful, custom-tailored coat which, regardless of how the artist may handle it, will always fit him. It is a costume which bears upon it, for all to see, signs of the search for the artistic personality.

In the new art of the late Seventies and first half of the Eighties, a unique subjective eclecticism has taken shape. In this subjective form of art teaming with references or "quotations" from the history of style, laden with emblems and pictorial clichés, a major role has been given to the expression of the concrete cultural milieu of the artist.

The new eclecticism does not revive stylistic elements with an eye to reconstruction; it does not evoke certain forms or pictorial clichés in the service of an objective historicism, but subordinates everything to the self-realization of the artist's personality. This brings about a certain subjective historicism in which the artist looks for elements of use to him and searches for meaning which will be of relevance to us today. This attitude embodies an intimate, subjective relationship with history and "cultural metaphor". For the artist today anything goes that will help him convey the typically Eighties intellectual and spiritual attitudes, existential experiences and revelations. The realities of previously experienced things, already shaped and turned into cliché, cast their shadow on today's reality, and due to their historical "charge", can turn into the convincing expressions of the reality of the Eighties, overburdened as it already is with symbols and references, clichés and emblems.

The new eclecticism of the Eighties creates artistic form from the personal reference to "cultural metaphor". At the time of defining its own identity, the artistic personality expresses itself as the new personification of "cultural metaphor".

Consequently, in the art of the new eclecticism, the most personal and intimate motifs—whatever bears the least amount of generalization or can least be turned into a model—and become indivisible through interaction from the elements of cultural history and the history of style, with elements of the "past" and of "place", with the actualized motifs of cultural tradition. The art of the Eighties is subjective to the extreme, but this subjectivity contains cultural history applied subjectively, the subjective redefinition of history, a new, closer relationship with tradition. This is why this new art cannot be analyzed by appealing to the categories of the previous decades. The artistic categories and methods of analysis are just as historical as art itself.

Indeed, one of the major lessons of the Eighties in the strengthening of historicity, the decrease of the validity of models of general import which disregard the definitive aspects of "past" and "place", and the eclipsing of reductionism which is incapable of expressing the historical aspect of the personality, its dependence on culture and the multiplicity of its emotional and intellectual orientation. In short, the new eclecticism is the art of heterogeneous stylistic formulas based on personal understanding.

The artist of the Eighties may turn anywhere for his source of inspiration; he may incorporate elements of any style into his own creative world. He regards all of cultural history as the treasure house of forms and meanings that can be coaxed out of clichés shaped by previous experience, forms and clichés that can help him define his own spiritual states, and which become authenticated by the aesthetic sensitivity and richness of the artistic personality. The new eclecticism is the art of individual authenticity.

The art historian may identify certain trends in this multiplicity of styles without, however, seeing the outcome of this great transformation or change in point of view. The process of rearrangement which began slowly in the mid-Seventies and picked up speed after 1979 is still very much in evidence today, and it would be impossible to define any kind of final goal at this point in time. Yet even today, we can safely say that in the art of cultural regions not totally independent of each other, yet more or less bearing an individual character, the actualization of cultural tradition, dramatic "directness" and the self-revealing momentum of the new expressivity plays a different role in them all. While in the art of the Italian "trans-avantgarde", of the older generation inspired, first of all, by "individual mythologies", of the younger "wilder", more expressive and dramatic generation, the subjective historicism and the motif of radical eclecticism is stronger, a drive which alloys mannerist, futurist and metaphysical stylistic elements, the new German, Dutch and Scandinavian art reminds us of the expressionism of the 1910s and the abstract expressionism of the Forties and carries stylistic metaphors which spring from a more emotional and sentimental need for self-revelation. And to go a step further, the art of the American "trans-avantgarde" bears, on the one hand, the stylistic marks of a frivolous decorativeness, the ornamentality of art nouveau, and the more heated, more daring decorativeness of fauvism found in "pattern painting", on the other hand it evidences, in the form of "narrative painting", a love of the neo-primitive and naive-fantastic, and thirdly, in the

from of the "metropolitan style", it carries the signs and emblems and graffiti-marks of the sub-cultures of the great cities, and may be considered as the subjective re-manifestation of these.

4. *The phenomenon of eclecticism in Hungary*

Without attempting within the limited confined of these pages an analysis of the new aspects of Hungarian art in the Eighties, we must still highlight certain things if we are to understand the state of art in present-day Hungary.

First of all, it was not by chance that this exhibition is being staged at the end of the first half of the present decade. Those phenomena which have surfaced during the past five years, at first sporadically, then with the appearance of groups and the opening of galleries, and finally, with a whole series of important group shows, have, by today, clearly changed the face of the new Hungarian art.

What, then, where the most important events and individual accomplishments which helped create the art of today? In the short survey that follows, we shall attempt to pinpoint the most significant stations along the way.

In the autumn of 1980, seemingly unexpectedly and out of the blue, an unusually personal, subjective informal style based on the subjective handling of the brush appeared in the art of István Nádler. With this, Nádler made a spectacular break with the geometric, abstract painting he had pursued for the past fifteen years, and which meant a substantial contribution in the development of painting based on structural principles. By the spring of 1981, he had enough new material for an exhibition — paintings which were largely inspired by contemporary music.

Ilona Keserű began to deal with pictorial problems which brought with them the possibility of a new eclecticism in 1981. Her "landscape" of Gellért Hill, painted in 1981, in which the earlier emblematic approach to form was "slipped onto" the visual elements of reality, brought about a new alloy of a kind of artificial light and of natural light caught in a moment of extremity, and all this appeared as a surprising, mysterious, equivocal and subjective vision on Keserű's "post-modern cityscape".

Both Nádler and Keserű began with the radical reinterpretation of the painterly elements they had employed previously, and moved the earlier, homogeneous conception of painting in the direction of a conscious heterogeneity and formal multiplicity. Nádler's canvases evidence contrasting forms which result in an unprejudiced mixture of the most varied motifs.

Also in 1981, an exhibition entitled "The New Sensibility" opened in the Fészek Gallery in Budapest. This constituted the first attempt at presenting under one roof all those new trends which are proceeding in a direction away from analytic art with a clearly defined program, and towards an art that is eclectic, subjective and anti-reductive. In retrospect, the exhibition may seem less than exhaustive. On the other hand, it was the first to point to the possibility of an essential change in approach in contemporary Hungarian art.

The work of the artists of the "Rabinec" ("Rabinext") Gallery provided the next step in this change of attitude. The oeuvre of Károly Kelemen, Zsigmond Károlyi, András Koncz, János Vető, Lóránt Méhes and János Szirtes embody the new, boldly tradition-oriented, anti-reductivist approach of Hungary's "trans-avantgarde". By now it became clear that the new art would also have to produce its own, new institutional forms and must address itself to the clarification of theoretical problems.

The large collective exhibition held at the Lajos Vajda Gallery of Szentendre in the summer of 1983 presented the most important representatives of the new Hungarian eclecticism with the full force of its numbers, while "The New Sensibility II" of 1983 presented the stylistic multiplicity of the transformation in ideology; i.e. it pointed out the very significant fact that this transformation in ideology cannot be tied to any one stylistic tendency or system of forms, but is rather characterized by the wealth of its subjective "stylistic metaphors", the pluralism of its individual means of creating a work of art.

1984 brought another qualitative leap when several large, by now comprehensive shows presented the various phenomena of the Hungarian "trans-avantgarde" and "new sensibility", thus lending a thrust to the trend of eclecticism and "subjective historicism". In February, 1984, the Pécsi Gallery presented a group exhibition of Imre Bak, Ákos Birkás, Sándor Molnár and János Szirtes, which

raised the questions of the new interpretation of myth and the new relationship to tradition. Then, between March and May of the same year, four consecutive exhibitions presented the latest works of the representatives of the "new painting" and „new eclecticism" in Hungary. This was the first time that the youngest generation were out in force alongside those artists of the middle generation such as Tamás Hencze and Gyula Gulyás, whose latest works represent another model of the "new eclecticism". The "Picture '84" exhibition also proved that in Hungarian art the appearance of the "trans-avantgarde" is not restricted to the appearance of the young generation of painters on the scene, i.e., the historicizing handling of subjective "stylistic metaphors", but is also part and parcel of the endeavors of those painters whose art was also of significance to the Sixties and Seventies. On the other hand, while the art of the younger generation is characterized by a larger doze of expressivity and an attraction for the absurd in its choice of themes, the art of the middle generation is motivated by more refined, more complex "stylistic metaphors".

In August, 1984, an exhibition entitled "Freshly Painted: The New Wave of Hungarian Painting" opened at the Ernst Museum in Budapest. Except for a few very young painters, this show included just about a complete roster of the representatives of the „new subjectivity" and "trans-avantgarde".

The exhibitions of 1984 prove that the last couple of years did not simply bring new artistic impulses with them, but a change in the thinking about art, the personality of the artist, the relationship of the avantgarde to tradition, and about Central-European cultural identity as well. This process was also furthered by the writings and lectures of Imre Bak, Ákos Birkás, Ágnes Gyetvai and Lóránd Hegyi, and the debates surrounding the new art. The "New Sensibility III." exhibition in 1985 presented the works of 19 artists and manifested the pluralist development of "trans-avantgarde".

In the wake of the above, by now we have a relatively clear idea of the creative endeavours of the Hungarian "trans-avantgarde", of the ideology and stylistic orientation of the "new painterliness", "radical eclecticism", and the "new sensibility". "EKLETIKA '85" wishes to offer a by now retrospective picture of such development in the year and a half that has passed since August, 1984. Furthermore, it presents the works of the youngest generation of painters, exhibited alongside the works of the older artists for the first time within these walls. In this way we hope to give a better and clearer idea both of the similarities and differences in their approach.

In fact, here we must emphasize one again that the new eclecticism must be understood first of all as the generic term for ideological rather than stylistic tendencies. Its anti-reductionist stance rejects all types of rigid stylistic norms. In short, it is the art of subjective "stylistic-metaphors" and of the radical imagination through which the artists wishes to find a new identity the the subjectivization of "cultural metaphor".

Today, in the mid-Eighties, at a time of repeated crises and shocks, stress and disillusionment, in these confused and restless days, the new art is making an attempt through the redefinition of "cultural metaphor" to create new forms capable of embodying and conveying the new, authentic system of values and experiences of the artists themselves. Rejecting the abstract, rigid, schematic and impersonal models, thoroughly disillusioned with the sway of technology and disgusted with the absolutization of the naive-utopistic principle of development without a sense of history, the "trans-avantgarde" has discovered, through the actualization of the cultural milieus and tradition those values that can be drawn from the utilization or exploitation of "cultural metaphor".

The new eclecticism of the Eighties is reevaluating avant-garde art itself in the light of the above and creates its own new identity-image through the subjective reinterpretation of the motifs of "past" and "place" and the personification of "cultural metaphor".

Lóránd Hegyi
(june, 1985)

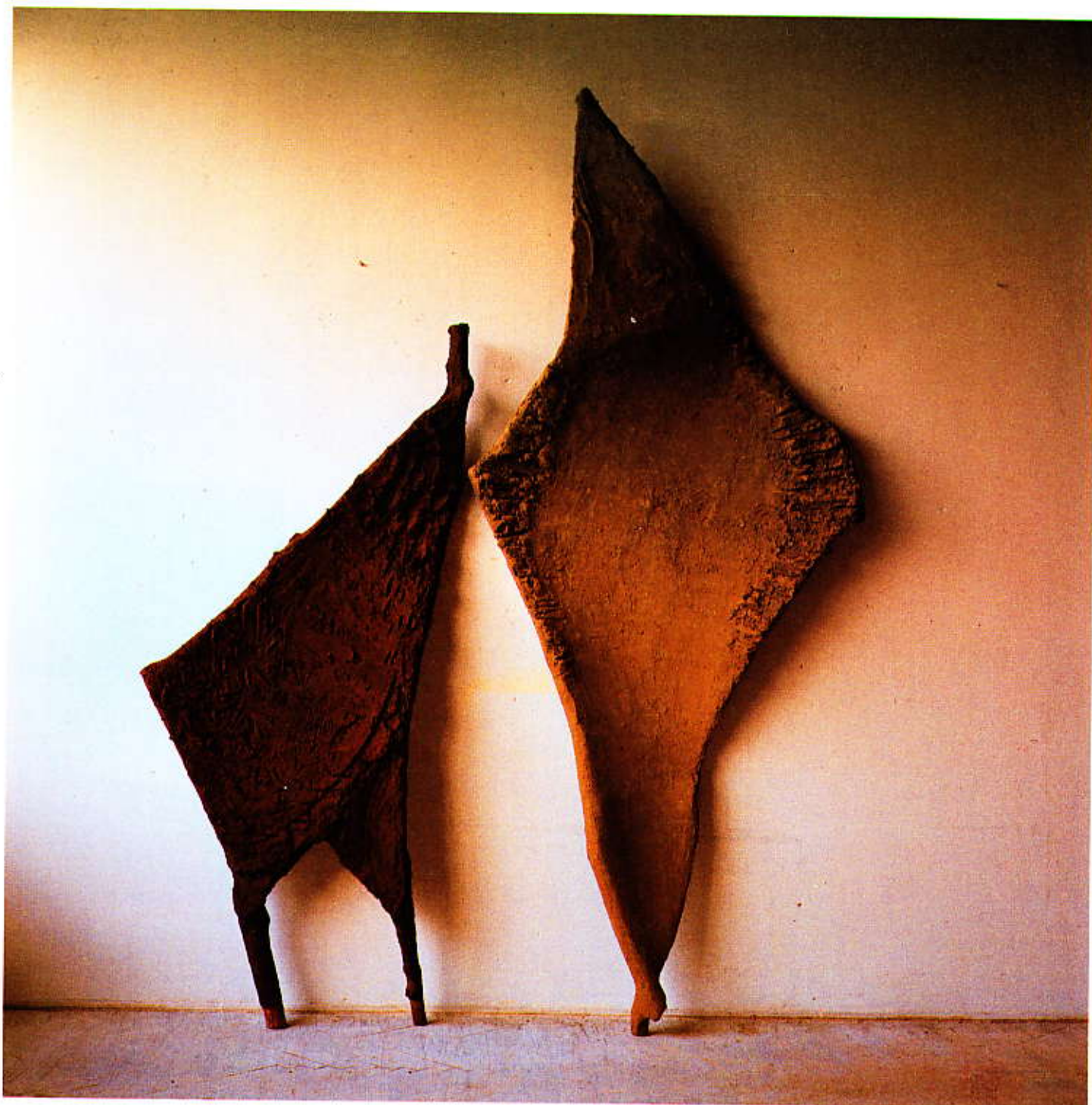
ZÁBORSZKY GÁBOR

1950-ben született Budapesten.
Tanulmányait a Magyar
Képzőművészeti Főiskola festő
tanszakán végezte 1970—1974-ben,
továbbképzőn grafikai és murális
technikákban 1974—1976-ban.
Mesterei: *Kádár György, Kokas Ignác,
Kocsis Imre*



GÁBOR ZÁBORSZKY

Born in Budapest in 1950.
Education: Hungarian Academy of Fine
Arts, faculty of painting, 1970—1974;
postgraduate courses in graphic and
mural techniques, 1974—1976
His teachers: *György Kádár,
Ignác Kokas, Imre Kocsis*



Duet, 1985, fa, vászon, plextoll, homok, tapasztás, 270×250 cm *Duet*, 1985, Wood, canvas, plexpen, sand, plastering, 270×250 cm

Záborszky Gábor

Lakcím: 1121. Budapest, Béla király út 33.

Jelentősebb egyéni kiállításai:

1977. Stúdió Galéria, Budapest
Wola Galéria, Varsó, Lengyelország
Sztuki Galéria, Torun, Lengyelország
1978. Fészek Művészközpont, Budapest
Uitz Terem, Dunaújváros
1980. Stúdió Galéria, Budapest
Magyar Kulturális Intézet, Varsó, Lengyelország
1981. Nemzetközi Sajtóklub, Czesztopova, Lengyelország
Actual Art Gallery, Stockholm, Svédország
Színház téri Galéria, Pécs
Galerie Slavia, Bréma, Német Szövetségi Köztársaság
Fiatal Művészek Klubja, Budapest
Madách Galéria, Vác
1982. Bástyá Galéria, Budapest
1983. Műcsarnok, Budapest
1985. Lágymányosi Galéria, Budapest

Gábor Záborszky

Address: H-1121. Budapest, Béla király út 33.

Major One-man shows:

1977. Studio Gallery, Budapest
Wola Galeria, Warsaw, Poland
Sztuki Galeria, Tourn, Poland
1978. Fészek Artists' Club, Budapest
Uitz Gallery, Dunaújváros
1980. Studio Gallery, Budapest
Hungarian Cultural Institute, Warsaw, Poland
Actual Art Gallery, Stockholm, Sweden
Gallery at Theatre Square, Pécs
Galerie Slavia, Bremen, Federal Republic of Germany
Young Artists' Club, Budapest
Madách Gallery, Vác
1982. Bástyá Gallery, Budapest
1983. Art Gallery, Budapest
1985. Lágymányos Gallery, Budapest



Madár, 1985

plexitoll, homok, vászon, tapasztás, 97 × 136 cm

Bird, 1985

Plexpen, sand, canvas, plastering, 97 × 136 cm



Duett, 1985

fa, vászon, plexitoll, homok, tapasztás, 270 × 250 cm

Duet, 1985

Wood, canvas, plexpen, sand, plastering, 270 × 250 cm



A Föld meséi III., 1985

plexitoll, homok, vászon, tapasztás, 165 × 120 cm

The tales of the Earth III., 1985

Plexpen, sand, canvas, plastering, 165 × 120 cm



A Föld meséi I., 1985

plexitoll, homok, vászon, tapasztás, 160 × 195 cm

The tales of the Earth I., 1985

Plexpen, sand, plastering, canvas, 165 × 195 cm