

# Folk Artisans and Dissidence in the Nomadic Generation of the 1970s and 1980s<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The dance house and folk artisans movements have developed into such a youth subculture in the cultural scope of the socialist Hungary, which the Kádarian cultural policy could support only partially, it was rather placed at the borderland between the ‘tolerated’ and ‘banned’ categories. The so-called *Nomadic Generation* was attached to the developing domestic dissident opposition just as well as to the cross border Hungarian intelligentsia through many threads, which seemed to be undesirable for those in power. This study outlines a general picture on the characteristics of the folklorist-movement of the 1970s and 1980s, thought to be dissident in nature, then it will show through examples of different life courses and case studies how the search for new paths materialized in folk handicrafts, and what impact this era exerted on the folk artisanship in the period after the political transition.

**Keywords:** Nomadic Generation, resistance movement, folk craftsmanship, revival, authentic source<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

The production of various objects by Hungarian peasantry was fostered by cottage industry associations, co-operatives and ladies’ associations at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in parallel with which their ethnographic research was also started. Traditional knowledge including the decorative inclinations hidden in it has become a possible direction of expressing national and local identity in arts. The new political system in place after World War II did not suppress these – mainly aesthetic and identity building – ambitions but converted them into a means of the socialist ideology. New directions of folk art for the creative people have been drawn up by the applied folk art and cottage industry co-operatives. Products created for representative purposes and intended to be sold as souvenirs were prepared by outworkers from the previously

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delivered raw materials based on pre-designed forms and motifs.<sup>2</sup> Revitalization of folk art was promoted by outstanding personalities in local communities, artists emphasizing the decorative style more and more. The qualification system of the applied folk art rewarded creators meeting expectations by producing high standard products. Object makers held specific technical skills; anybody could acquire a craft or two in courses from the 1960s on. Designers included not only prominent talents of communities famous for their folk art, but applied artists just as well, thus a great number of exciting and highly artistic piece of art has been produced. Beside all these events, however, more and more critics voiced their disapproval since the 1970s on the mass production of trash made to please tourists and the work of outworkers performing on the basis of pre-arranged design schemes. The so-called Nomadic Generation, representing this new approach, put the emphasis much more on the creative freedom of the individuals and searched for the ‘authentic source’ in terms of both object making and the exploration, handing down of traditions in folk music and folk dance: the creators, singers and gifted dancers who have acquired their skills and knowledge in an authentic way and are also able to pass it on to others. The emergence of the movement, pooling mainly the urban intellectual youth, was made possible also by a new political atmosphere implemented in Hungary after 1968 with relatively more room to move. Yet, the sovereignty of creation and indication of the national culture as the main source as well as the bottom up nature of the movement were all arguably problematic features in the face of cultural policy of the era.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not the devotion of the youth meant assumed or real political opposition at the same time, can be best understood from their memoirs.

Albeit the recollection of those involved in the movement is preserved by a number of interviews and a few volumes referred to above, no work of scientific thoroughness has been completed yet, which would, for instance, list the members of the Young Folk Artists’ Studio and present key events, camps objectively. Balázs Balogh and Ágnes Fülemlé compiled an English summary on the dance house movement, joining folk dance and folk music, including its impacts (BALOGH – FÜLEMILE 2008), and Ágnes Fülemlé also provided a paper on the impact of the revival efforts lasting up to date in music, dance, and handicrafts (FÜLEMILE 2018). It is beyond the scope of this paper to fully review the artisan movement of the Nomadic Generation, yet it might be worth to have a closer look on the concept of dissidence and the nature of the movement, trying to dismantle the various layers in the wake of recollections from former participants. Papers published and interviews collected in the past 40-50 years illustrated partly the ambitions of the artists joining the Young Folk Artists’ Studio, their work having an impact up to date and the ideas behind (BESZPRÉMY 2006; JUHÁSZ 2018; CSURGÓ et al. eds. 2018; SZABÓ – JUHÁSZ 2013), which are enriched further herein with remembrances.

<sup>2</sup> See AMENT-KOVÁCS, same issue.

<sup>3</sup> On the formation and underlying causes of the movement see: BALOGH – FÜLEMILE 2008. Memories of movement members are illustrated in: BODOR ed. 1981; ZELNIK 2012.

## THE FOUNDATION OF THE YOUNG FOLK ARTISTS' STUDIO

Beside the mellowing political rigidity in the end of the 1960s the *beat* movement infiltrated the country and young people became open to embrace ever newer segments of culture, voicing their views ever more actively in the field of politics. The successor of the Institute of Folk Art formed originally in 1951, made attempts to promote folk arts and provide people's education whilst serving political needs in the form of the Institute for People's Education, re-organized in the end of the 1950s. Several amateur art forms have been renewed in the end of the 1960s, and the new approaches provided an opportunity to the Institute for People's Education also to stand up as the leader of these changes and to widen the room to move for people's education which was otherwise strictly controlled. The Institute encouraged "opening up of narrow perspectives" and "tried to assist [in the spirit of] the modern educational efforts (...), by which maintaining the initiatives and activities of youth clubs of revolutionary significance, preventing them from getting under the sheer political influence of the KISZ [Alliance of the Communist Youth]" (FÖLDIÁK 1996:6).

The driving force behind the intellectual trends of the 1970s included among others the poets László Nagy and Sándor Csoóri. Csoóri was approached with the idea of forming the Young Folk Artists' Studio back in 1971 (CSOÓRI 1973:87). The Studio was finally established with the support of the Institute for People's Education and its head of department, Pál Bánszky in 1973. Studio members met in the Institute once a month on Sundays where they listened to lectures, followed by professional discussions, talking plans and works in progress through, and finally by a dance house. Members were partly renowned folk artists. The title and competition for the Young Master of Folk Arts was namely set up in 1970, and the KISZ KB (Central Committee of the Alliance of the Communist Youth) organized a ten days workshop and camp for the candidates in Faddombori. Here, young people got to know each other and could learn a lot from the great ethnographers, archaeologists, historians of the epoch. Founders of the Young Folk Artists' Studio and in particular their secretary, József Zelnik wanted to peel off the direct impact of KISZ from the Studio. Therefore the Institute for People's Education supported the idea of organizing another camp in Tokaj – first in 1975 – which was attended by several people from those invited to Faddombori. In the upcoming years, a number of other camps were established beside that of Tokaj, open for young people eager to create during the summers in – among others – Csillebérc, Balatonszepezd, Velem and Magyarlukafa. Campers did not only take part in a kind of further vocational training, many of them were caught up by the joy of common creation and the lifestyle close to nature. Camps also functioned as workshops, but several other workshops were formed nationwide throughout the year such as the Ceramics Studio of Kecskemét, and the Szórákaténusz Toy Museum and Workshop, the weaving house in Etyek, or the Wood Carvers' House of Velem, which still operates as a centre for folk artists.

An important role was played in the propagation of the objectives and views of the movement by the ethnographic clubs, the occasions when distinguished ethnographers delivered lectures to the interested audience. "A place called Club for Ethnography was started here, on the Bem Quay. [in 1972 or 1973]. It was felt there that (...) a vivid debate was on. (...) Fieldworks were organized to the Őrség, Szabolcs. Yet, it had no definite purpose at the time. We just made inquiries, collected experiences. (...) We were interested



Figure 1. János Dugár, potter: earthenware musical instruments 1977. (LÁSZLÓ 1977)

in country life, village life. (...) Once upon a time the studio people appeared in the club (...). They started to invite us to get over to the Studio, because you can make handicrafts there.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019) Such clubs formed in several locations countrywide. To quote as Sándor Csoóri put it: “Folk art came into fashion” (CSOÓRI 1973:88). “Somehow it was in the air to just gather these objects. (...) We went to see the village relatives of my husband. Anything we liked there, they simply gave away to us. Everybody put in their rooms these beautiful objects, but I had no idea at the time that these items can also be manufactured.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019).

Applied artists occasionally also included folk art elements into their creations, and many of them were open to the new approach. Art schools and clubs played an important role nationwide in the joining of yet another generation to the objectives of the Young Folk Artists’ Studio by the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties. Authentically trained wood carver, modern architect and ceramist known all over the country were all found among the members of the Studio (CSOÓRI 1973:88).<sup>4</sup>

Artisans of the Nomadic Generation formulated new ideas in the field of object creation, which could well be considered to be revolutionary after the institutionalization and schematizing of folk art and applied folk art in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: instead of pre-designed objects produced in series in the cottage industry co-operatives, they created modern objects by the application of their wide ranging knowledge of their arts and based on their devotion to ‘authentic sources’ of folk culture and their sovereign creatorship. Members of the Young Folk Artists’ Studio Youth strived for complexity, wanted to know the Hungarian folk culture as a whole, artisans visited dance houses

<sup>4</sup> Members of the Young Folk Artists’ Studio included, among others: József Zelnik, Mari Nagy, István Vidák, Katalin Landgráf, Győző Szatyor, Piroska Székely, Erzsébet Rácz, András Galánfi, Antal Rácz, György Csete, Ildikó Csete, Gyöngyvér Blazsek, Csaba Bereczky, Imre Molnár, Kata Lovas, József Kozák, Mara Bárány, Éva Kun. Architecture: György Csete, Imre Makovecz, Kristóf Nagy, János Dugár. The list is incomplete because no complete list of members can be seen in the memoirs published so far.

quite willingly. Instead of a passive audience watching folk art, the movement educated an active personality who is able to make his or her own personal belongings from natural materials and who handles and understands the techniques and decorations of traditional craftsmanship with an appropriate sense of aesthetics. The spontaneity and the mind set allowing free room to individuality manifested the desire of freedom of the young people in the era, accompanied by the wish to leave the cities, and the formulation of an ideal lifestyle close to nature. They were acquainted with traditional object making through children toys in the first place (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019).<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 1)

### PÉCS, MAGYARLUKAFÁ

One of the bases of the folk craftsmanship movement of the Nomadic Generation was Pécs, and the camp organized in Magyarlukafa. Many interview excerpts cited in this paper revoke the experiences obtained there. In the faculty of fine arts of the Pécs Vocational Secondary School for Arts Győző Szatyor held lectures on Hungarian folk art. The Head of Ethnography Department of the Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs, at the time, Bertalan Andrásfalvy also had frequent presentations here. Additionally, the department of ethnography in the museum organized a so called *spinning room circle*,<sup>6</sup> where participants represented a wide cohort of age groups, listened to the presentations of renowned ethnographers,<sup>7</sup> and the event was closed with a dance house each time. These afternoons were also readily attended by high-school students. (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019; Zoltán Takáts, Budapest, November 2019). Additionally, “Pécs had a specialty,” the national open-air market organized on the first Sunday each month. “And at these times, just from the beginning or the middle of the sixties, this Pécs fair had the special feature that many objects of folk art or of folk art interest were carried up to it from the surrounding communities and settlements, quite up to the Sokác region.” These fairs were attended by Pest people just as well who bought up the objects of folk art (Zoltán Takáts, Budapest, November 2019).

The Janus Pannonius Museum opened the Home local heritage museum and ethnographic workshop in Magyarlukafa in 1979, with the creative camps organized by Bertalan Andrásfalvy and Gábor Tarján. The Baranya County Council announced a Request for Proposals where those who wanted to participate in the camp applied. Workshops were set up in the rooms of the cottage by the first campers,<sup>8</sup> and from 1980 on the students of the Pécs Vocational Secondary School of Arts, that is the pupils of Győző Szatyor, as well as – thanks to Ferenc Bodor – college students from the College

<sup>5</sup> A part of the artists participated at the Interplayexpo international exhibition organized in Budapest in 1977 with their respective pieces of art, where artist-craftsmen, companies and co-operatives made up the exhibitors (SOMOS 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Led by Gábor Tarján, later by Zoltán Szabó. The name *spinning room circle* of these events refers to the habit of traditional peasant societies in villages when women gathered in one’s house during winter evenings to spin and to have a talk with each other. This was – at the same time – a public experience, village lads were also happy to join.

<sup>7</sup> Gábor Lükő, Mária Lantos Imre, Mihály Hoppál, among others.

<sup>8</sup> István Vidák, Mari Nagy, János Dugár, Bertalan Nagy, Lilla Lakatos and, from Pécs, Győző Szatyor. (verbal communication from Gábor Tarján, 6 November 2019)



*Figure 2.* Weaving workshop in the Creative House of Magyarlukafa with objects made there. (Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10218554963049139&set=oa.2363768060314772&type=3&theater> accessed November 10, 2019)



*Figure 3.* Dancing youth in Magyarlukafa, 1982. (Photo by Éva Ament)



Figure 4. Hemp working (scutching) in Magyarlukafa 1980. (Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10218539557184002&set=oa.2360748077283437&type=3&theater> accessed November 10, 2019)

of Industrial Arts were the main participants. They can be seen as a second generation of the movement starting in 1973. Camps registered hundreds of campers between 1979 and 1986 (TARJÁN 1981).<sup>9</sup> According to the report by Éva Ament who arrived in 1980: “we were just chicks compared to the youth in their twenties. But nobody sent us away, which was cool, and we kept on a close watch on the elderly all the time. In other words, the old kind of knowledge and information acquisition which worked well in these environments, watch and learn.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019). (Fig. 2–4) Kaptár [Beehive] Association in county Baranya was founded in 1987 by the cooperation of the artisan masters creating and teaching in the Magyarlukafa Workshop of Ethnography.

## LAYERS OF DISSIDENCE

The cultural movements emerging in the wake of the slackening political rigor after 1968 were inclined to be defined by the era as dissident political movements, and to handle accordingly. Indeed, the members of the Nomadic Generation fought against a number of things, formulated new directions, except political goals, which were communicated the least intensively. No doubt, the social and cultural phenomena stemming from the

<sup>9</sup> Also, verbal communication from Gábor Tarján, 6 November 2019. On the Local Heritage Museum and camps in Magyarlukafa see more in details in TARJÁN ed. 1985. On the ethnographic workshop in Magyarlukafa see PÁSZTOR 2019.

political relations of the time conceal multiple kinds of resistance, which is worth to linger upon for a while in order to get better understanding of the nature and trends in the movement in the 1980s and its impact on handicrafts and applied folk art after 1990.

The main goal of the Young Folk Artists' Studio was to search for folk art originating from authentic sources, as opposed to the goods production of folk art-like trash and kitsch, managed by the cottage industry co-operatives. "Commerce and trade dictates considerations to folk artists working for cottage industry co-operatives (...), which has an effect on the commercialization of their style." (BÁNSZKY 1981:81)<sup>10</sup> What is more, a newspaper article inviting to the first exhibition of the Studio back in 1973 scorns at any kind of former practice following the heritage of folk arts, hailing the new approach as a kind of Messiah:

"In the meantime, kitsch and trash intrude in our applied art: the nothing precipitates like salt in a test tube. Folk wood carvers live their ephemeral lives; trains roll out with daubing women on them – they are coming in the news columns of papers. Naive painters conclude the unholy alliance: turning out of themselves, twisted and turned, turning their backs to each other. The common mother tongue of our material culture was similar to the Babel mode. The Studio appeared at this point and swung successfully from this nadir into a direction of examples worth to follow." (PINTÉR 1973)

The movement urged to educate creating personalities, possessing a creative self-recognition expected in both the fine arts and applied arts (CSOÓRI 1973:81–82). Who do not produce decorative objects for the show cases, but whose purpose is to make personal belongings from natural materials which can be readily used in day to day life.

"It hit our minds in those days that it should not be treated as a thing from a museum, but something which is alive, functioning, existing in real life. (...) NIT [Council of Hungarian Applied Folk Art] and HISZÖV [National Association of Cottage Industry Co-operatives] were declared main enemies at any rate. (...) There was a rigid refusal present in the narrower circle among the people with whom I was at friendly terms. If you have to forget anything, well, this is the Folk Art Shop in Váci Street<sup>11</sup> and all the likes. (...) Which is, see, the commercial, touristic exploitation of folk arts. No, we don't endorse that." (Zoltán Takáts, Budapest, November 2019).

You must never forget, however, when you stand the cottage industry co-operatives and the Young Folk Artists' Studio in opposition that changes occurred in the co-operative just as well. Bence Ament-Kovács calls the attention to the fact that thanks to the slackening political suppression and some fortunate economic decisions more raw materials have become available in the co-operatives during the seventies and designers were not forced or compelled any more to popularize folk art by having autocratic symbols made. Designers and artists were in the position to enforce their individual creativity more and more, even if the primary goal continued to be the preparation of decorative objects and souvenirs to increase profit in the co-operatives (AMENT-KOVÁCS 2020).

<sup>10</sup> On the activities of the cottage industry co-operatives see AMENT-KOVÁCS 2019a, 2019b, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Popular folk art shop in the tourist centre of Budapest.



“Whom I also belonged, this was the FNS [Young Folk Artists’ Studio] and the people associated with it, we were the more relentless and hostile. (...) I know there were initiatives in the NIT [Council of Applied Folk Arts] (...) to have applied artists open towards contemporary folk artists. (...) We also had a common exhibition with my wife [Ágnes Bartha goldsmith designer], and her friend, who is a dress designer, (...) Klári Bein, who also worked as a designer for the Karcag co-operative, we had a common exhibition in the exhibition hall of NIT” (Zoltán Takáts November 5, 2019).

Although former Studio members talk about clear unfriendliness and a resistance against the works of the co-operatives, it might be better to consider it as a new direction and new attitude in their case, having regard to the transformation of the co-operatives and the history of the revival movement – discussed also below. “We looked down upon the co-operative. (...) While there was ample of professional knowledge and skills there. Obviously, today I have quite a different look at co-operatives, because now I know that this preserved a lot of knowledge but we did not think of that at the time, we scorned at them.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019).

The movement was criticised on several points, one of them being that the young people reach back to obsolete and outdated things when they want to revitalize the values of peasant culture. The movement refuted by saying that even if peasant class does not exist anymore, folk culture can still be of value, and they did not want to revitalize it, much rather to use and apply what was it in a new kind of object making and lifestyle. “They do not want to renew folk art within its own world in the first place. But within a kind of different sets of relations.” (Csoóri 1973:88) Object making, due to its nature, could represent the ambitions of the Studio in a spectacular way, since the goals of the bottom up approach defined as opposed to mass culture were materialized in unique pieces of art.

However, independent creation and individual approaches did not exclude, on the contrary, correlated strongly with the community experience object creating was made into by the *studio members*. Both summer camps and workshops provided the opportunity to create a building, a playground, a major piece of art with joint efforts. Even when everybody worked on their respective own creations, the exchange of experiences and teaching each other was very important. “It was typical in Hungary only to create buildings, to set up workshop systems, to construct so many playgrounds, playing spaces which were done here in this country, using own energy, own time, for own purposes, so to say in public works.” (László Péterfy, sculptor)<sup>12</sup> “The mood of the summer camps was badly needed. The kind of presence, the very intensive work. (...) We kept on watching the great continuously—this is how traditional knowledge transfer worked” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019). That is, participants did not only acquire traditional technologies and decoration methods by common creation of various objects, they also were given a kind of traditional values. “To get to know the work: not for craftsmanship, but to make it myself, right from the raw material. The honor of work.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019). Since public education was kept in strong hands of central control supervised by the government through state-owned

<sup>12</sup> Estate from Ferenc Bodor <http://www.okotaj.hu/szamok/09/maradt.html> (accessed November 2, 2019)

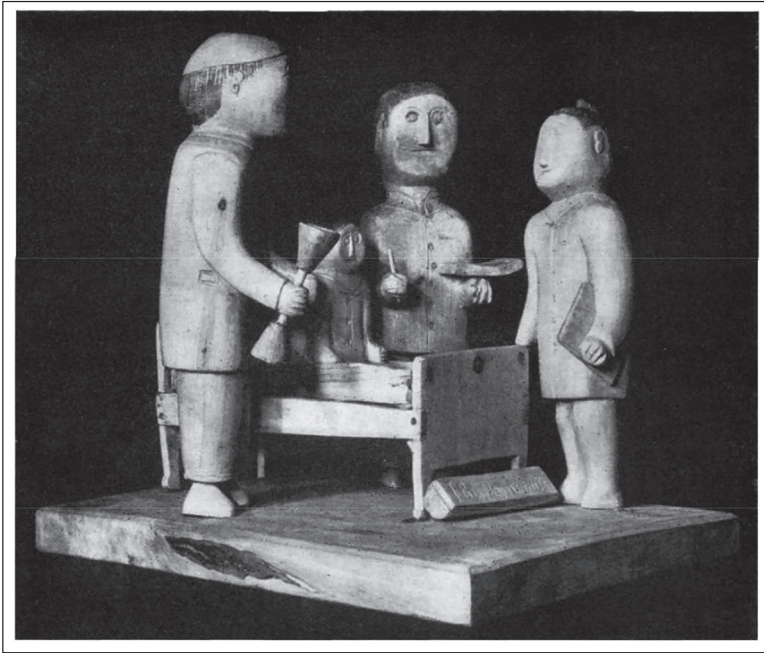
institutions since the 1950s, bottom up creative approaches and initiatives agitating large communities were treated with special suspicion by the state leadership. Even though this rigor mellowed somewhat after 1968, the *Nomadic Generation* was still seen as an oppositional movement.

Albeit the establishment of applied folk art awarded the prizes of *Master of Folk Art* and *Young Master of Folk Art* since 1953 and 1961, respectively, yet due to the nature of the genre and the mass production managed by the cottage industry co-operatives folk craftsmanship was difficult to find a place in the system of arts. As it was mentioned earlier on, the Young Folk Artists' Studio made an attempt to achieve creative freedom and fulfilment, young designers applied traditional knowledge with an accomplished conscience of an artist. "These young people were not recognised officially. There was nothing like selling your product yourself as a folk artist. A wall had to be crashed down. (...) I had a dream of strengthening the potters and the character of Hungarian folk art, to make a contemporary art category." (János Probstner, ceramist).<sup>13</sup> "We would like to join forces and break down the incomprehension which appears against our works. We would like, for instance, if interior designers took us seriously, for their own sake just as well, if many of them did not rank us among the bunglers, who – I had to admit – are teeming around us in all too big numbers." (József Kovács, smith. SZABADI 1973). However, the company of the *Studio people* was quite mixed, since they included not only applied artists, but authentic creators, who never learnt any history and theory of art and design, or who came from quite different professions. This is how critiques appeared which could not evaluate the revivers of traditional folk handicrafts as real artists. Dilemmas emerging in relation to the possible interpretations of the concepts of *folk art* and *artist*, *folk artist* also contributed. Exhibition reviews disclosed in the initial period of the Studio witness these dilemmas and doubts. Contradictory opinions can be read simultaneously on the creators of the sculptor and wood carver exhibitions organized in 1974 in Hatvan and in Debrecen, respectively, with the title *Folk sculpture 1974*.<sup>14</sup> "Quite different concepts are present in these days about folk art and inspirations from folk art," R. Gy. writes on the exhibition in Hatvan (R. Gy. 1974). The monogram is assumed to refer to Gyula Rózsa, who formulated his doubts with respect to the Debrecen exhibition also (again, in the same paper) about the new attitude to folk arts:

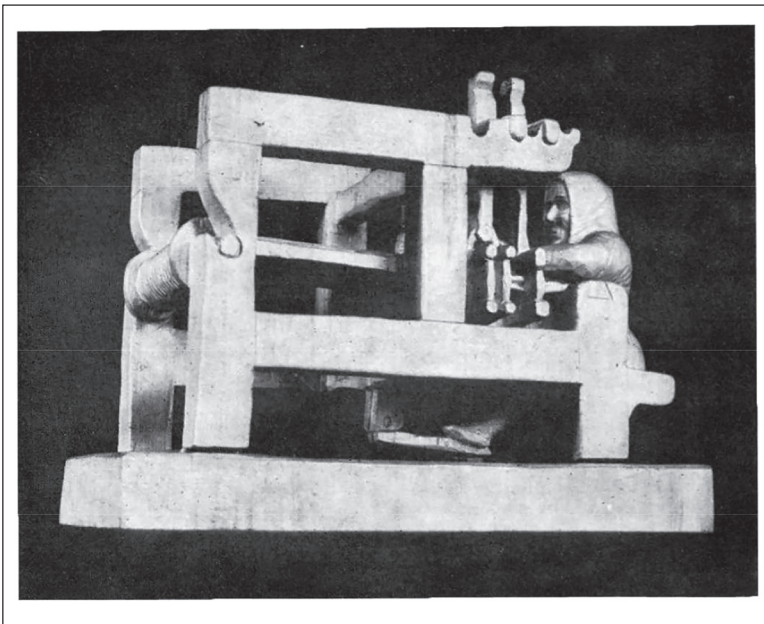
"imagine something which has never been seen before, let's assume there is a young man in today's world packed with information, who has preserved the ancient forms, the folk art 'untouched.' Why a studio for this? Folk art, if any way, is handed down, passed on by old masters and not trained in organized studios. Because, should these young people merely skilful craftsmen, they might be folk craftsmen – folk artists – and they will learn their trades in vocational schools. However, if they are young talents, future fine artists and applied artists, you must not teach them some kind of a narrowed down type of 'folk art,' but *all kind of arts* in formative education. I do not think, enclosing young people in their twenties in the 'folk' box in 1974 would be compliant with the norms of socialist humanism and educational policies." (RÓZSA 1974). (Fig. 5)

<sup>13</sup> Estate from Ferenc Bodor <http://www.okotaj.hu/szamok/09/maradt.html> (accessed November 2, 2019)

<sup>14</sup> Reviews on the Hatvan exhibition: R. Gy. 1974; b. i. 1974. Reviews on the Debrecen exhibition: SZABÓ 1974; PAP 1974; RÓZSA 1974.



*Figure 5a.* Lajos Bakos: Round. Sculpture on the exhibition organized in 1974 in Debrecen. (PAP 1974:25)



*Figure 5b.* János Gaál: Weaver. Sculpture on the exhibition organized in 1974 in Debrecen. (PAP 1974:25)

Back in 1975 Pál Bánszky put it this way: “In public education the decisive factor is not to create art, but to promote the emergence of a material culture and culture of interior decoration with good taste.” (Pál Bánszky, TORDA 1975). Yet, since independent creation was a sharp feature of resistance against centrally controlled management, the issue of the creative personality constituted an integral part of self-definition, bringing about the development of the identity of the artist. Openness towards avant-garde artistic ambitions played an important role in all this (SZILÁGYI 2005:327). “Much debate went on about this; we did not want to separate these things from each other. Those involved in the Nomadic Generation were real creators. They have always considered something which was only their own. Like any other creative artist.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019) In other words, looking for creative independence represented a kind of resistance against the controlled object making and serial production dominating the scene earlier on, just as well as against the prevailing concept of art, by emphasizing that traditional knowledge and object creation have a place on the market of particular personal belongings just as well as on the exhibitions set up for the general public. This way – even though they wanted to get objects and personal belongings based on natural materials back into day to day life including their traditional making, which proved to be an illusion in the dumping of factory products accessible ever more easily and cheaply and in the changing, urbanizing lifestyle – traditional object creation was also separate from the average person, since it was integrated into the public awareness as a curiosity, a new fashion looking for ‘amateurs.’

It might be worth mentioning the object makers for whom the pleasure of independent creation and the freedom of creative identity not necessarily meant the consciousness of the *folk artist* at the same time (and it doesn’t still), even when they were rewarded for their skills by the titles of *Young Master of Folk Art* or *Master of Folk Art*. For them, inclusion among applied folk artists meant survival for their dying trades, the attitude of which in preserving traditions they shared (see also SZILÁGYI 2006).

“I got the title of the young master of folk art in 1974 on the current competition. I have become an applied folk artist in 1976 or so. (...) Well, when I have become the young master of folk arts for instance in 1974, it was just a title at the time, and did not entail any real licenses, but it could be used readily to exist as an independent creator. As I started to work in my own workshop, any time, when the local council asked me on which basis this workshop is operated, I could reply: well, this is a studio and not a workshop, I’m an artist, here you are my diploma of the young master of folk arts. These titles could be used properly for these purposes. So much so, that when I had the first apprentice, a lot later, though, at the end of the eighties, and he had to be enrolled into a vocational school, and they made a lot of fuss about it, saying »all right, we admit the chap, he will attend this school, but practical exercises will be accomplished in your workshop. Why, what kind of licences you got for this?« »Oh, I’m the young master of folk art.« »All right, then!«” (Zoltán Takáts, Budapest, November 2019).

“I tell you confidentially, we have nothing to do with folk art, or art as such. We are handicraftsmen, dyers in blue. You seen, what kind of manual labor it is! Art is only involved that we try to do it well.” Miklós Kovács dyer in blue declared in 1985, whose daughter, Gabriella Kovács attended folk art camps in Velem and Tokaj and received the title of *Young Master of Folk Arts* (BORZÁK 1985:15).

Members of the Nomadic Generation found research on folk arts and ethnography deficient. Instead of reading 'boring' descriptions of objects they wanted to find the origin, explanation and reasons behind traditional object making. This is why the interdependence of folk art with ancient history and cosmology was very popular, "this was a kind of a revolution against the official 'sterilized', 'boring' research projects on folk arts" (ZELNIK 2012:26). An additional shortcoming was felt, the objective description of the technologies, which could be indeed researched rationally. Collection and description laid the foundations for disseminate knowledge and enabling creation. "Key objectives included collecting, documenting, disseminating." (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019)

Initiatives of the youth in the 1970s (the name Nomadic Generation was given to the movement only in 1981) were attempted to be worked in the ideology and cultural policy of the era by the political leaders: it was interpreted as a community art, which corresponded to the idea of the Communist society (VITÁNYI 1981:45). The concept of the Young Folk Artists' Studio was co-opted by the (...) Central Committee of the Communist Youth Alliance (KISZ KB) all at once, "because they dreaded any alternative youth movements. »Anti-regime, anti-Soviet«. We never noticed this, that we were supposed to be a youth movement, just sat down to have a good talk once a month."<sup>15</sup> When the Studio was founded, their ideas and mission had to be formulated in accordance with the expectations of the KISZ KB. József Zelnik, secretary of the Studio cited from the comments received to the lecture by Pál Bánszky in the Institute for People's Education in 1973 when the Studio was formed: "»People in Europe expect us socialist countries to step further, – in terms of thinking, culture, arts – because we live in the state of the people.« (...) »We can create such a social cooperation in a socialist country, which could not be accomplished in any Capitalist system. We could create a community art.«" (ZELNIK 1973:73–74) After a citation from Lenin, Zelnik adds: "This initiative is an example of the new kind of socialist attitude of the young people towards homeland, land, people and arts, which I have talked about with partiality." (ZELNIK 1973:74) "We are looking for methods and forms, which could employ liberated energies of society having more and more leisure time in the service of culture. Possibilities through which the young people could become a useful and active member of the socialist society in their leisure time and entertainment." (ZELNIK 1974). The Nomadic Generation, and the Young Folk Artists' Studio were not formed with the intention to pull a regime down, much rather to overcome a world view, which definitely correlated with a given political and economic concept. And they did so by turning to traditions, dancing, playing music and making objects. Former studio members stress frequently that they were not a political resistance movement. "They looked for freedom, the freedom of social existence, this is why they escaped this way" (József Zelnik 2012). "»We are not against anybody. We want something new. A quantum leap.«"<sup>16</sup> It is quite clear, however, that indirectly the situation in which their concepts and ideas were born and which encouraged them to take action and to build communities was created by the political and economic environment.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with József Zelnik in 2012 <https://vho.videotorium.hu/hu/recordings/4760/interju-zelnik-jozseffel-a-nomad-nemzedek-egyik-alapitojaval> (accessed February 20, 2020)

<sup>16</sup> (Comments to the lectures held at the establishment of the Folk Arts Studio for the Youth. ZELNIK 1973:73)

Their feelings of the time were expressed by a long time member of the Studio like this: “The ethnography club always ended up with politics. This was tolerated just like the FNS [Young Folk Artists’ Studio]. (...) It was somewhat more relaxed since the beginning of the seventies. Of course, we were watched. (...) There was something in the air. (...) It was uplifting. Everybody felt that we wanted something good, something else, which could not be done so far. (...) Maybe it was so inspiring because you had to work a little bit against something. It could be done, and still could not be done.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019) The KISZ tried to keep the processes under control by organizing the *Pioneer folk artist camp* in Csillebérc<sup>17</sup>:

“The Hungarian pioneer movement, celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> birthday at the time, formerly was also nourished by ‘glorious fair winds.’ The traditions of the socialist children’s movement were also shaped by the people’s democratic transformation era. This way the cult of folk arts is extremely strong in the ‘heroic age’ but is still important up to date in this set of traditions and activities.” (TRENCSÉNYI 1981:105).

The author stresses the community nature of the movement, which could be readily reconciled with the Communist ideas. The complexity of the issue can be illustrated by a remark of the author of a study published in 2002 and dealing among others with the playhouse movement when it comes to the Young Folk Artists’ Studio: “The Young Folk Artists’ Studio – this was the self-given name of the community organized in 1972, which gathered in regular intervals for a training in the class rooms of the Institute for People’s Education. (It should be added, that a protective shelter was raised above them by the KISZ, which looked for new allies).” (TRENCSÉNYI 2002). The truth is a lot more complicated, since – according to the recollections – it was absolutely necessary for the functioning of the Studio that its secretary, József Zelnik and the director of the Institute for People’s Education, Iván Vitányi held an umbrella above the heads of the Studio artisans, and mediated towards the KISZ. “They destroyed communities and put top down approaches in the play, KISZ, and like (...) Compared to this something could be done. Jóska Zelnik mediated and Vitányi was supportive of the whole thing.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019)

The spreading of the Nomadic Generation attitude, the possibility for personal accomplishment against central control might have jeopardized the maintenance of the cultural policy of the Kádár era unanimously. This is way the community was continuously monitored. Former studio members still mention ‘peachers’ with care. “When we visited Transylvania (...) it’s so embarrassing, I don’t know if I should mention this, but there was someone who was a spook.” (Nameless 2019).<sup>18</sup> For the members of a former community it has also become clear only a few years ago, who was among them who reported all their activities. “It turned out only subsequently and it was a great disappointment (...) This person was a III/III [agent], and reported regularly. It was a slap in the face. Said, we were a »Catholic commune«. But we only learnt this retrospectively. (...) It leaves a nasty after-taste, you know. (...) But nobody was hurt.”(Nameless 2019).

<sup>17</sup> One of the best known pioneer camps in those days, situated in an outlying district of Budapest.

<sup>18</sup> Having regard to the sensitive nature of the topic in certain cases the name of the informant is not disclosed. In such cases it is annotated ‘Nameless’ and the year of data collection is given.

The Nomadic Generation was initially blamed with *Nationalism* quite frequently, since for many young people this was indeed the first place to encounter folk art and memories hallmarking national identity. National identity was manifested in the search for the new way of life, and in correlation with this, in the dressing and artistic activities. In that time, however, Nationalism was considered something very undesirable attitude, having regard to the political regime of the past decades and the sustenance of the ideas dominating the Soviet Union.

“There are skeptics who are worried by the contemporary interest in folklore because they are afraid of the revival of Nationalism. Arguably, former waves of interest entailed Nationalist tendencies of minor or greater strength. The concern is well founded the more so because, since it is an important field of the national culture, such threats may always haunt us. Yet, the affection to folk culture has nothing to do with nationalism. The fashion of ethnography is a European trend which is attached primarily and most naturally to the proprietary folklore determined by the mother tongue and to one’s own past in this country just as much, as elsewhere. At the same time, it is also susceptible to that of other peoples. In particular towards those whose folk traditions are vivid, or even more vivid than one’s own. The Hungarian folk culture is not overestimated as the absolute one and not raised above the culture of other peoples, it does not turn them against each other. It is not nourished with exclusivity, much rather with a wide ranging interest.” (KÓSA 1975:48)

The ideal images created about object making and peasant lifestyle were closely intertwined, looking for the *original*, the *ancient*, the *archaic*: “the thought that cosmological relations of pre-historic cultures are conserved in Hungarian folk art (...) had a striking force” (ZELNIK 2012:26). “For me the sense of identity and a little bit my attachment to the nation was confirmed by our talking about folk art and our own ancient culture.” (János Probstner, ceramist)<sup>19</sup> “We started to be aware of everything which was not given to us by our existence in Pest and at school, that is we are Hungarians, live in a specific culture which was strange and unknown to us up to that time.” (István Vidák, Mária Nagy, felt makers)<sup>20</sup> Nomadic Generation thus nourished not only a new thinking, but new emotions and identity awareness. “This inspired us to do something new. (...) Nowhere, ever at school had we any impact about our own national identity.” (Mara Bárányi, Budapest, November 2019.)

The Nomadic Generation movement was founded by urban intelligentsia, advertising a lifestyle close to nature and do-it-yourself object making of personal belongings. All this happened in an era when all the villages strived for the urban lifestyles and modernization: villagers sold out, discarded their old belongings, abandoned their folk costumes and purchased factory made consumer goods whenever they could. On the other hand, the young city folks arrived to the summer camps to collect and to search for the possibilities of how the complex traditional knowledge could be preserved. Distinguished characters showed the way to those searching for a new lifestyle.

<sup>19</sup> Estate of Ferenc Bodor <http://www.okotaj.hu/szamok/09/maradt.html> (accessed November 2, 2019)

<sup>20</sup> Estate of Ferenc Bodor <http://www.okotaj.hu/szamok/09/maradt.html> (accessed November 2, 2019)

“This was a role model. The Remseys’ and the Vidák, who were free. (...) István Vidák left the city life behind, including his well-to-do doctor parents to work as a basket maker. He did not accept anything from his parents. (...) He lived in Gödöllő (...) They lived creatively and freely. (...) You could see that these guys do everything, they have no jobs, employment, yet they survive. It was all right for a couple of years, as long as they are young, but then the children will be born (...)” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019).

The experience gained with them inspired Mara Bárány also, to decide to quit her job, a printing workshop in 1979. In addition to the financial support received from her parents and the creative work she was able to earn some money as the museum educator and as a casual worker of the Museum of Ethnography.

Leaving the city life was the cause for conflicts not only for István Vidák. A similar tension was built up when a young person, born in a village environment but educated in the city, wanted to get back to country values. Éva Ament was born in 1964 in the community of Diósberény, she spent her childhood in Hőgyész (Tolna County), where the family moved in the hope of providing better chances for the children to schooling. “I was meant to be an economist by my parents, (...) but I loved drawing since I was a small child.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019) As a student on the applied graphics faculty in the Pécs Vocational Secondary School for Arts she attended the Magyarlukafa camp frequently. Her parents found the school of art odd already. They could not understand why she went to the countryside ‘to wear rubber boots.’ “They wanted to raise me from this fate, this was why we moved from Diósberény, and for them it was a real shock. (...) My parents really felt sore about it. My dad said – and it hurt, because I knew, this was not the case – that <<You were brainwashed in that art [school].>> This world view was quite the contrary which my parents wanted for me.” Like all her peers and members of the movement, Éva Ament also was fond of wearing costume dresses, partly which were left over from her grandmother and partly those purchased in the Pécs fair.<sup>21</sup>

“Mummy felt it was a shame. (...)»People would think we don’t have the money for new cloths!« (...) This was the period, when those in the dance house, city folks just as well as those who (...) got from the country to the city, visited the Pécs fair and purchased all folk costume elements for money. I didn’t dare to confess this to my mum, she would have lived this through as a shame. So that I give money for peasant dresses. Which was soaked in the sweat of others. (...) These old dresses were not washed too much, they were only aired in the fresh air. So it was a shame. (...) Outsiders considered it as resistance. For us, it was coolness. Excel from the crows.”

Éva Ament belonged to the second generation of the studio people, for whom the interest in folk culture also meant a fashionable school of style at the same time. By the time the second generation went to camps and made objects, the community of the Nomadic Generation fought and overcame the initial aversions even though individual life stories confirm that the urban-rural contrast was still very typical. Village knowledge could also be taken advantage of in the camps. “I brought many things from home, I did not even realized that it was skill, albeit it was, indeed. I managed to contribute with this.

<sup>21</sup> On the dress code and accessories worn in the dance house movement more in detail see: JUHÁSZ 2006.



My dad mended woven seat chairs during the winter. (...) In Lukafa or in Pécs this was considered as a special know-how.’ (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019). Thanks to this know-how from home, Éva Ament was kept occupied with woven seat chair making in the camps over a period of 6 years.

The Magyarlukafa workshop attracted young people who were not only campers in the summer camp but chose the rural lifestyle permanently and settled down in the village. The county council purchased vacant houses in the village for them, and they moved in as tenants in 1984. “Because there was such a plan, to populate abandoned, dying villages with young people and artisans. (...) There were some, who had such a philosophical attitude and lifestyle, as well as vegetarianism.” (Gábor Tarján, Budapest, November 2019). Two couples moved to Magyarlukafa for a few years. Tóbiás Kékes and Kata Lovas organized the camps beside being caretakers to the local heritage museum and making personal belongings, while Sándor Ponoczky and Gyöngy Terényi also needed some additional income for livelihood beside their handicraft activities (Kovács 1987:58–59; Gábor Tarján, Budapest, November 2019) In a couple of years, however, both families moved out from Magyarlukafa. In lack of the appropriate capital, the lifestyle of the newcomers, the so-called *Lukafa model* could not provide sufficient financials for sustenance (PÁSZTOR 2019:56).

It is quite spectacular how the presence of young city dwellers influenced the inhabitants of Magyarlukafa. Locals were quite willing to assist the youth with their know-how, but, in fact, just like Éva Ament’s villager parents did not comprehend, why these young folks wanted to acquire skills deemed to be useless today. “I take the thread, weave the satchel with a lot of work just to wear and carry it afterwards. This was awful.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019). In the film entitled *Ethnography camp* shot on the Magyarlukafa camp in 1984 the reporter asked Ádám Kaiser, master thatcher:

“- What do you think about it, that these folks moved here to Lukafa?

I have to wonder, indeed. Why? Maybe they wanted to move out from the city to a quiet, cozy place and they liked here.”<sup>22</sup>

“This was also a very strange, controversial thing. In fact, these plain people did not look and did not appreciate what they do, or that they moved in, or visited at all. But they looked at the man or woman, what kind of persons they are, how they behave. How they can accept them, integrate into that society, (...) when do they get up, how much they work, whether or not they keep their word. Does he or she say hello, for instance.” (Gábor Tarján, Budapest, November 2019)

With the revitalization of the traditional knowledge, the local heritage museum could be restored in Magyarlukafa, and the installation of the basic infrastructure needed for facilitating the day to day life of the village could be urged with reference to the camp. Katalin Kovács social scientist maintained in a research project carried out in the period between 1983 and 1985 that the most urgent tasks to be completed included the piped waterworks and pavement of the roads, since these are such fundamental social services

<sup>22</sup> Directed by László Bükkösi.

which ought to be ensured for all people in Magyarlukafa, and additionally they would “naturally represent further comfort and convenience for campers and settled artisans” just as well (Kovács 1987:59).

The aim of the young artisans was to popularize former rural know-how among city dwellers, to learn the source and use it for creations. They wanted to make it part of the high culture, the very essence of which was just closeness to nature and the rural lifestyle. Village communities, on the other hand, did not feel this knowledge as their own (except a few excellent settlements and regions, such as Mezőkövesd, Kalotaszeg, Kalocsa, Sárköz, who wanted to maintain their decorative art), while city public looked at it as an exotic specialty. High art also had difficulties to interpret it within its own conceptual framework, while industrial production poured out cheaply and ever more easily, readily available mass produced bulk goods.

## RESULTS OF THE MOVEMENT

Members of the Nomadic Generation wrote a number of technical books and craftsman study groups, play houses, fairs, exhibitions keep on confirming the viability and necessity of artisan tradition from year to year. Several disappearing crafts or artisan activities thought to be extinct (such as felt making, weaving horse hairs) were revived within the groves of folk art. Applied artist members of the Young Folk Artists’ Studio searched an authentic source for their grand art, others for their new kind of attitude and way of life, which all got intertwined with searching one’s identity in the age of repression. The original concept was not to produce for sale, since the objective was to create individual pieces of art. However, if artisans really did not want to abandon object making but earn a living on it, they had to choose two ways: product manufacture and teaching. They had to get integrated into an institution, into the establishment in both cases. Anybody who wanted to sell his or her products – which was the harder way according to many – had to get them juried, in other words to meet such criteria (minimum on the qualification sessions) which the Nomadic Generation fought against.

“I am fortunate in this respect. You cannot think about the region, etc. in the case of a blacksmith. Such a handicraftsman could get the kind of [applied folk artist] titles, but it was a lot easier. You could make your own way more easily than an embroiderer or a cottage industry handicraftsman. And this is the case up to date. (...) If you wanted the applied folk artist smiths to make things with folk roots only – which can be clearly accounted for and detectable, which forerunners [it draws upon] – it would be depleted in fact in no time ...” (Zoltán Takáts, Budapest, November 2019).

Although members of the Nomadic Generation did not endorse the principles of the applied folk art developed since the fifties, yet the creators representing various viewpoints started to open up towards each other over time. “Kata Landgráf and her friends were members of the Studio as applied artists and they encouraged us to get evaluated by the jury, to get weighted. On the level of attempts.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019). It’s also clear that artisans who sympathized with the ideas of the Nomadic Generation were – in the same time – members of the jury of the qualification system. These facts show that the opposition between the different views wasn’t so

emphatic as the informants and the sources may underline. Naturally the approach of the Studio members also looked for a place in the qualification criteria of applied folk art, the success of which was questioned by the creators. Modern category was introduced in the jury in 2013 only, which allows more room for individual approaches.

“The first jury: I submitted a blanket – I remember – and some pillows (...) back somewhere in the beginning of the eighties (...), and then the person who was there said to me I should not weave of wool because she can’t judge it; I should make it of linen. I knew that weaving linen is good even with the machine, because if you have a good design, the thin linen can be accomplished beautifully on the machine. On the other hand, wool is woven a little unevenly, that kind of material has a quite different surface texture. I did not agree with this approach, therefore, at the end, I did not submit any more. (...) Of course, this has changed since. (...) We usually say, that even today it would not go, what we made at the time. (...) The set of criteria the jury works upon is always lagging behind the object creation.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019).

Changes occurring in the institutional set up and individual walks of life in the 1980s also induced object makers to get integrated into the establishment. Sales figures of the cottage industry co-operatives gradually declined since 1981. HISZÖV (National Alliance of Cottage Industry Co-operatives) was dissolved in 1982, and the legal successors failed to survive the turn of the millennium. Tasks of the Council of Applied Folk Art were transferred to the Hungarian Institute of Education upon its elimination in 1992, operating from 2004 on in the form of the Department of Applied Folk Art in the House of Traditions. The department was divided up in two parts in 2015, today the Department of Applied Folk Arts deals with jury activities while the Museum of Hungarian Applied Folk Art preserves the stock of the works of art owned by NIT, displays and documents contemporary applied folk art (FÖLDIÁK 1996:7; AMENT-KOVÁCS 2019a; SZABÓ 2013:10). In 1982 the Folk Art Association uniting artisans and handicrafts was established and the Festival of Folk Arts was launched in 1987 which is still a success up to date, organized in August each year, providing an opportunity for artisans to introduce themselves. However, the livelihood warranted by the co-operatives earlier on cannot be ensured by either the Department of Applied Folk Arts, or the Association of Hungarian Folk Artists (NESZ) uniting the artists. Creators pursue their occupation as entrepreneurs, or in part time jobs or as a hobby. “It was very radical and impulsive in the beginning. Over time, (...) personal problems emerged. Radicalism faded away. So you had to enter society then and there. Maybe this played a role. (...) It was an idealism, to carry over this lifestyle. Well, of course, the outer world is about something quite else.” (Gábor Tarján, Budapest, November 2019) “We aged in the meantime; everybody started different careers beside folk arts. We would have become over centralized. There were less and less young people. (...) the most gifted ones have become applied artists. Some became teachers: Katalin Landgráf (Fót), András Galánfi (Nádudvar). István Vidák, Mária Nagy.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019). Some of the former studio people have found their place on the training course of the House of Traditions which provided OKJ<sup>23</sup> certificates, and on the study circles organized in multiple locations in

<sup>23</sup> National List of Vocational Trainings, a nationwide system of vocational training programs providing qualifications recognized by the state.

the country as trainers,<sup>24</sup> and on the qualification sessions of applied folk art as jurors. In other words, the members of the bottom up movement were compelled to get incorporated into an establishment which was possible to be transformed because of the institutional and attitude changes influenced by the political and economic transition after 1990.

The Nomadic Generation did not only brought a fresh blood in the passing on of traditional object making (as well as folk music and folk dance), but the more than ten years long intensive momentum and impact of the Young Folk Artists' Studio helped value creation through the critical period when the cottage industry co-operatives were discontinued and the establishment of the applied folk art has been transformed. The nineteen eighties and nineties resulted in radical changes not only in the establishment, but due to the changing political environment in the attitudes and approaches just as well. Stripping down the coercion of compliance with Communist ideas, communities dealing with folk arts could set off on the road marked out by the Nomadic Generation were now able to articulate their objectives freely. Among the object makers, more and more individual personalities stand out these days; their valuation triggers discussions in the qualification system frequently, which confirms the existence and intensity of this school of style. Members and successors of the Nomadic Generation brought a real subculture into existence, the key value of which is the high standard and aesthetic quality. Objects and techniques formerly produced and used as necessities and to meet the essentials of life are now kept alive provided that they have aesthetic quality or can be endowed with it. This material culture, however, has become a part of the urban culture, a possible alternative for the user.

“Very few of the ideas could be realized. (...) The thing was that these matters got into the public awareness. These elements appeared in certain part of the national culture. The dance house movement is an even better example (...) Partly it was successful that these things and information about folk art could be included in education. In my mind, not sufficiently, this is the worst thing. (...) Visual culture ought to have established a *Kodály method* of its own.” (Gábor Tarján, Budapest, November 2019).

Successors and heirs of folk culture look at popularization, maintenance and dissemination of values as widely as possible as a challenge. Object makers still intend to produce personal belongings which can be accessed for a wide range of people. This is why we can talk about a kind of counter culture, a culture against globalization: “[After the political transition] the intellectual dissidence and in particular the myth of opposition projected on the existing socialism lost its meaning. [But we were transferred] into the globalized world of external oppression.” (József Zelnik 2012).<sup>25</sup> This is not only the resistance against the products offered by mass industry, but it also relates to the desired way of life, embodied by artisanship. This is however still limited by means and resources. “In the 1980s you still could live on less. (...) This was the big change,

<sup>24</sup> Of the informants, authors and stakeholders mentioned in the paper: Éva Ament, Mara Bárány, Gyöngy Terényi, Katalin Beszprémy.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with József Zelnik in 2012 <https://vho.videotorium.hu/hu/recordings/4760/interju-zelnik-jozseffel-a-nomad-nemzedek-egyik-alapitojaval> (accessed February 20, 2020)

that earlier on there were political restrictions, while, as I see this in retrospect, later on these financial restrictions. It is still more difficult to get over.” (Mara Bárány, Budapest, November 2019).

The identity building role of the Nomadic Generation is a dominant feature among artisans up to date. József Zelnik published his memoirs on the 40 years old movement back in 2012 (ZELNIK 2012). The House of Traditions organized the collected exhibition of *Nomadic Generation - 40 years of the Young Folk Artists' Studio* in 2013, and the movement got a separate hall in the exhibition organized in 2018 with the title *Hand/Craft/Art – National Salon 2018. Folk Art* in the Art Gallery in Budapest (GÖTZ ed. 2018).

## CONCLUSION

The Nomadic Generation cannot be considered as a deliberate and targeted political resistance, even though its critics tried to define it as such. It looked for new paths in object making and lifestyle, as well as in the research of handicrafts, which seeking ways seemed to be too radical in the given epoch. Members of the Nomadic Generation rightly felt as if they countered the deep-rooted concepts and ideas of the existing establishment and older generations. This feeling might have given sufficient impetus to the young people to preserve the values of folk culture and to re-formulate its hosting institutional system during the nineteen eighties and nineties. As all movements, this one also had a trajectory. The revolutionary feeling of the 1970s (maybe as a result of the slackening control) has calmed down by the 1980s but it still remained for a young generation the seeking of new possibilities. “As politics melted, no serious and honest revolt could be fired any more. It also has become more accepted. More and more such camps existed.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019). “Outsiders might have thought it was resistance, on our side, I think, as teenagers, it was seen as cool. (...) This environment [the city and the school of art] meant also that we don't want any dull mass.” (Éva Ament, Tárnok, November 2019).

The ethnographer, Miklós Szilágyi (former jury member of the applied folk art system) expressed a strong opinion in 2005 about the movement presented here. It is absolutely necessary to quote his notion in length, since ethnography has not formulated its views on the phenomenon so decidedly and categorically up to date.

“These »easy to acquire techniques«, however, were more and more accompanied by human intellectual ideas fetishizing the »primitive simple«, the »the more archaic the better« into – national and universal all at once – values. Before long, the example to follow was the set of the most archaic peasant objects – even if not proven in all of its elements – which was independent, as it were, from the value distorting impact of the market, and which was created by everybody at the time for their own pleasure with the intention to make their homes, their environments cozy and comfortable. Theoreticians of this approach and their faithful followers (who were not necessarily intellectuals, merely revolting instinctively against the institutionalized applied folk art!) claimed that everything, referred to by professionals (and a part of ethnographers also) as »valuable tradition«, »folk heritage to be preserved« was excluded mainly from the notion of »true folk art«. Instead of such a heritage, the object reconstruction procedures requiring the operation of personal fantasy and the object creating

techniques dedicated to furnish evidence of the ideologically laden phrases alluding to the »heroic Hungarian past«, the »ancient Hungarian creative force« were put into the forefront. The results could be studied on the representative exhibitions organized in the spirit of the millicentennial, received by me with the skeptic approach of »it is by no means sure that such objects existed at any time in the first place, but if they did, definitely not at the time of the Hungarian conquest«, but they still emerge every now and then on folk art fairs and exhibitions as quasi-archaic products claimed to be 'folk' pieces of art, but definitely with no connection to peasantry." (SZILÁGYI 2005:327)

Maybe it can be questioned whether or not the process described must be attributed by all means to the different attitudes and cultural background of intellectuals and non-intellectuals, since the leading personalities of the group defining itself as the nomadic generation were arguably the intellectual heads of the given and later eras with substantial influence. And it is by far not only the instinctive revolution against the applied folk art. Besides, ethnography itself does not have a consistent methodology and uniform position with respect to what can be seen as folk art and how object creating activities can be defined (see VEREBÉLYI 2019). Doubtlessly, however, the ardor searching for the historical and national identity swept everything to the newly constructed court of folk art with great enthusiasm, including quite 'alien' objects and techniques desiring to revoke the epoch of the Hungarian conquest and ancient history. Yet, the comments made by Szilágyi should be supplemented with the note that small industry trades requiring a proprietary scale of values and lifestyle, frequently serving urban needs under urban conditions did not stand any closer to the peasant lifestyle and material culture they intended to revoke. Yet, the strong wish for an identity and needs for aesthetics developed a specific trend of style standing on very diverse grounds in the 1970s, and even more in the eighties.

However, neither the studio people nor the members of the official applied folk art system – with the desire of creating and having objects of artistic value – took into consideration the changing lifestyle. Studio members heralded the longing for freedom incited by resistance by the freedom of creation just as well, and many expected an idealized close-to-nature milieu where the making and use of objects, personal belongings are in harmony with the lifestyle. They resisted and still resist up to date against the making of objects which is under the influence of the industrialized lifestyle, since it does not represent any aesthetic value developed with artistic endeavor. Pál Bánszky scorned at the demijohns woven with plastic threads (including the ethnographers who approved them), which in his mind does not comply with the requirements of authentic object creation (BENCsik 1997:63; BÁNSZKY 2004:374., see also AMENT-KOVÁCS 2020). This view is followed today by the qualification system of applied folk artists, when it criticizes the application of new materials (such as plastic beads or buttons) on the objects. Using the filter of the qualification system, the revival movement also excludes those object makers, who are acknowledged in their own closer community as folk artists, with their creations decorating even public places and institutions, but whose aesthetic quality does not meet the taste of the applied folk art jury, that is the style of applied folk art. József Zelnik formulated in connection with the community of the nomadic generation that they climbed under the glass-bell, instead of carrying freedom into everyday life. "Yet, there was no day to day freedom; we created freedom then and there, under the

glass bell.”<sup>26</sup> In some sense, the studio people and the successor generations implement the conservation of the object making heritage, albeit arguably in excellent quality, yet under the glass bell created by the conceptual framework of art. And they do all this because it is an illusion to keep a material culture used in a bygone peasant and urban lifestyle and created by cottage industry and handicrafts as well as the high standard knowledge and intellectual heritage represented by them alive in an industrialized way of life in its original context and function. The only way to do this is a genre defined as an independent style. This style is still to find a niche in the system of arts.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> This is hallmarked by the role and position of the folk art exhibitions in the series of exhibitions by the National Saloon. (FÜLEMILE 2019; JUHÁSZ 2019; CSEH 2019)

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