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**HUNGARIAN EXHIBITIONS BETWEEN MODERNISM
AND NATIONAL MYTHS: EXHIBITION STRATEGIES DURING
THE GREAT WAR**

Between 1867–1914, the Austro-Hungarian Compromise and the outbreak of WWI, the concept of the East had become radically diversified in the Hungarian public debates. More than a mere geographic reference, it was referred to in various concepts about the origins of the nation. Apart from the academic debates on the origin of the Magyars (not discussed in this study), amateurs and enthusiast patriots from all classes of society jumped into lively debates about the origins of the nation. Ideas about the origins of each nation were fundamental points of all nation-building strategies in the 19th century. The position of 19th century Hungarian historiography in this issue was, due to the lack of written sources, often contested. In this discourse, East referred to the mythic homeland of the Magyars, but open debates often appropriated historical facts and sources, interpreted and most often misinterpreted the remaining fragments of the past. India, Japan, Persia, Central Asia, the Middle East or the Caucasian region have become fields of hypothetical investigation. In terms of the appropriation of objects, and the construction of the vernacular as original, it was in the ethnographic village of the Millennium Exhibition of 1896 where the concept of ‘history’ and ‘historical time’ shifted from the retrospective to the modern. A total of 25 fully outfitted peasant houses were installed (half of them Hungarian, half representing ethnic groups of the country). As a modern overview of the country’s population, the ‘Hungarian houses’ also framed one special exhibition: the collection of recently acquired objects from the Caucasus expedition of 1895 and 1896 of count

Jenő Zichy, an amateur historian and a wealthy patron of archaeology and ethnography, which was exhibited in a copy of the church of Magyarvalkó, a village in Kalotaszeg, a predominantly Hungarian region of multi-ethnic Transylvania. The recently acquired Caucasian objects he displayed, however, were labelled as “ancient Hungarian” items. Zichy’s first two expeditions to the Caucasus region were aimed at discovering objects – arms, clothing, and finds from excavations – that had potential connections in form, motif and/or use to ancient Hungarian artefacts dating back to the time of the arrival of ethnic Magyars to Hungarian lands.¹ In this – also very political – act, Zichy anticipated the vernacular modernism of the following decades, in the idea of the peasantry as custodian of the lost ancient Hungarian culture dating back to the time prior to the foundation of the Christian Hungarian State around the year 1000.

An explicit manifesto of the possible further use of Hungarian peasantry’s “original” traditions was the building the Museum of Applied Arts, a chef d’oeuvre of Ödön Lechner. Its inauguration – one of the concluding moments of the Millennium Celebrations in October 1896 – heralded the dawn of a new paradigm in the quest for a modern Hungarian architecture. Ödön Lechner’s quest for a Hungarian national language in architecture and the use of folk patterns and motifs on facades were inspired by German architect and architectural theoretician Gottfried Semper’s *Bekleidungstheorie*.² Lechner’s wide knowledge of the contemporary architectural theory manifested itself in the use of oriental structures (Chinese and Indian outside, Indian and Iranian inside), which were mixed with Hungarian vernacular floral decorations on the panels of the internal facade. The application of floral ornaments from Hungarian vernacular art on innovative Zsolnay pyrogranite ensured a cheap, easy to handle, quickly reproducible, urban and modern, yet national ornamental architectural language – the latter notions – cheap, easy to handle, quickly reproducible, very urban and modern, yet national ornamental – can also be used in the pavilions of our first wartime case study.

THE MILITARY EXHIBITIONS IN LVIV/LVOV (LEMBERG) IN 1916 AND IN BUDAPEST IN 1917/1918

The military exhibition organized in Lviv (Lemberg) in 1916 was created according to the designs of the architect István Medgyaszay (1877–1959). His – architecture represents some continuity with Lechner’s concept of

¹ Zichy Jenő kaukázusi és középázsiai utazásai [Jenő Zichy’s Travels in the Caucasus I–II.], I–II. Hornyánszky, Budapest, 1897; Zichy Jenő oroszországi és keletázsiai expedíciójának beszámolója 1897–1898 [Report on Jenő Zichy’s Expedition to Russia and the East-Asia], Hornyánszky, Budapest, 1899.

² József Sisa, ‘The Beginnings of Art History and Museology in Hungary. Some Semper Connections’, *Centropa* Vol. 2/2. 2002, 128–135.

architecture referring to the Eastern origins of Hungarians.¹ Medgyaszay's homeland voyages have accurately been chosen to areas, where Hungarian peasantry was meant to represent the most authentic keepers of the origins of the nation. His travels to Szeklerland in 1904 and Kalotaszeg in 1905 (both being predominantly of Hungarian population in Transylvania) were like a revelation for him. His drawings and watercolours made there, as well as the notes of the journey and his published writings recording the quest for a modern Hungarian Architecture were indications of the change of his architectural thinking.²

The Lviv Military Exhibition was organized as a celebration of the victory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's Second Army over the Russians – this military unit reconquered the capital of Galicia, Lviv, together with Pżemyśl and Vilnius. The exhibition was built within a short time, only three months passed from the order given to Medgyaszay, lieutenant and engineer-architect, dated 28 April 1916 until the opening its gates on 27 July of the same year. The make-do solutions forced by the war were not far from the materials used in ephemeral pavilion-architecture: instead of wood and gypsum, Medgyaszay, responsible for the ensemble and for

The Military
Exhibition complex
in Lvov. 1916



¹ András Hadik, 'Lemberg és Budapest hadikiállításai: adalékok Medgyaszay István (és mások) első világháború alatti tevékenységéhez' [Military Exhibition in Lviv and Budapest: Remarques on the Activity of István Medgyaszay (and Others) during the First World War], Pávilon, 2001, 249–254.

² Ferenc Potzner, 'Medgyaszay. Az építészet mesterei' [Medgyaszay. The Masters of Architecture], Budapest, 2004, 46–64.



Entrance
to the Military
Exhibition
in Lvov. 1916

some special pavilions, had to make use of unprocessed wood and tarred paper. The only traditional material inherited from the 19th century exhibition architecture was glass. The pavilions were built by injured soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian army and Russian prisoners of war, headed by the architect and engineer Iván Kotsis. The exhibition complex, created in still unknown outskirts of the city, included the central pavilion by István Medgyaszay, a hospital-pavilion, a restaurant (both by Otto Schöntal), a Military Constructions pavilion (by Kálmán Maróthy) and the pavilion of the Hungarian Red Cross (built by the chief-architect's young brother, Gyula Medgyaszay) a pavilion of Agriculture, a Concert Pavilion and some other constructions.

On the flat exhibition ground Medgyaszay accentuated the main pavilion by placing it on a podium, visitors approached the building from the



entrance of the exhibition park through a pair of obelisk and along the pathway series of captured Russian cannons were installed. The central pavilion was composed of a middle block and was flanked by two side wings. In the middle of the central hall, the statute of Franz-Joseph literally welcomed the visitors, surrounded by trophies of guns and on the walls, monumental paintings depicting important military victories of the Dual Monarchy since the beginning of the Great War were to be seen. The central hall was surmounted by a windowed tambour and topped by the Imperial crown as a sign of the unity of the Monarchy, symbolising the presumed and desired firmness of the unity of a dualist state and its peoples. This idea echoed

Detail of the interior of the central pavilion in Lvov with the bust of Franz Joseph. 1916



The back facade of the central pavilion with artificial pond and detail of a reconstructed Bridge. 1916

also in the external decoration of its main entrance with the coat of arms of the Dual Monarchy and its title: *Indivisibiliter ac Inseparabiliter* (Indivisibly and Inseparably) – both sawn from wood sheets and executed with extreme finesse and delicacy together with the surrounding ornamental decoration. The exhibition in the side wings represented the devastation caused by the war and the efforts of reconstructions beyond the frontline. Reconstruction as the leitmotif of the exhibition represented the main duty of the architect-engineer in the wartime situation: apart of the temporary challenge of the Military Exhibition, Medgyaszay's main duty was to lead the reconstruction of Galician villages, roads and bridges in the reconquered lands. Apart from the exhibition installations, a bridge over an artificial pond facing the back façade of the main pavilion also reflects the bridge construction duty of the army of Medgyaszay.

Soon after the opening of the exhibition in Lviv, an order was given to Medgyaszay to realise the same exhibition in Budapest within only a month, by the 1st of September. The aim was to compete the *Kriegsausstellung* in Vienna's Prater opened from July to October 1916. Contrary to the Vienna and other exhibitions which focused on illustrating the war for the population, the Lviv show also demonstrated the efforts of infrastructural and housing reconstructions carried out by the K. u. K. army.¹ From an architectural point of view, the Transylvanian Military Exhibition of Archduke

¹ Offizieller Katalog der *Kriegsausstellung* Wien 1916: Mit einem Ausstellungsplan, zwei kleinen Plänen und vielen Illustrationen, Buchdruckerei „Industrie“, 1916

Joseph in Budapest, in 1917-1918 had more novelties to offer. The ephemeral constructions of Lviv had been transported to Budapest; the exhibition was organized in the proximity of the entrance of the Margaret Island, and it bore the name of the Transylvanian Military Exhibition of Archduke Joseph. The purpose of this exhibition was to enhance military passion and to remember the Romanian invasion of South-East Transylvania in August-September 1916, its charity character and the expressed aim of fund raising for the devastated villages in Transylvania differentiated it from other Military Exhibitions. There also were some conceptual changes between the Lviv and the Budapest locations: the continuity was represented by four pavilions, whereas on the Margaret Island there were also some buildings, such as the art pavilion housing fine art works – a typical initiative of the charity exhibition during the war. Most of the timber used for this second exhibition came from the Lviv military exhibition, and due to its rising value because of the shortage of wood and transportation problems, there was less timber to panel the façade of the central pavilion. While the central pavilion of the Lviv exhibition was topped by the Imperial crown referring to the Monarchy's common army, the Budapest exhibition building was crowned by the motif of the Hungarian Holy Crown. The political-patriotic scenery of the exhibition complex, the propagation of loyalty towards the Dual-Monarchy and the members of the Habsburg family were more emphasised in Budapest: while in Lviv the bust of general Böhm-Ernolli was placed in front of the remotely placed agricultural pavilion, in Budapest the main building was surrounded by Habsburg kings, princes and princesses: the standing statue of Archduke Joseph had been placed in front of the building, the bust of Franz Joseph in the main hall of the central pavilion gave place to the over life-size standing figure of King Charles IV (Kaiser Karl I.), ascended to the throne on the 21st November 1916. The exhibition of feminine figures was not practiced in Lviv, it is probably the famous Hungarian admiration of Queen Elisabeth (Sisi), the assassinated wife of Franz Joseph that influenced the installation of the sculptures of Queen Zita and Princess Augusta behind the main pavilion on Margaret island.¹

The main pavilion in Lviv and Budapest derives from two main sources. On one hand, the unrealized project of Medgyaszay of the National Pantheon (1906) to be placed on the most dominant venue of the Hungarian capital, the Gellért Hill. The par excellence ephemeral inspirational source was the Hungarian pavilion at the 1911 Turin universal exhibition (by Dénes Györgyi, Móric Pogány and Emil Tóry), referring to the description of the tent of Attila, described as a huge wood construction in the notes of Rhetor Priscos, a Roman visiting ambassador to the court of Attila.² The pavilion and its

¹ Potzner, Medgyaszay, 141.

² Paolo Cornaglia, 'Il padiglione Ungherese All'Esposizione Internazionale di Torino el 1911', *Pavilion építészeti a 19–20. században a Magyar Építészeti Múzeum gyűjteményéből* [Pavilion Architecture in the 19th and 20th Centuries from the Collection of the Hungarian Museum of Architecture], Budapest, 2000, 89–96.



Interior of the central Pavilion in Budapest with the standing statute of King Charles IV. 1917–1918

installation were an exemplary summary of the political concept of Elek Koronghi Lippich on vernacular modernism, who as a multipotential state official, the head of the art department of the Ministry of Religion and Education since 1899, believed that keeping the Hungarian peasantry's traditions and the revitalization of its Eastern particularities can lead to the creation of the Hungarian modern national art.

The discourse on the Eastern origins of the Magyars not only influenced the construction of the Agricultural pavilion in Lviv – but once transferred to Budapest and renamed the Tatar Pavilion, it displayed artefacts collected by the orientalist Ignác Kunos from “prisoners of war belonging to relative tribes of the Magyars”.¹ The exhibition reflected the political change of the Hungarian Government around 1916. The new diplomatic agenda aimed at deepening political, economic and cultural relations to the

¹ Potzner, Medgyaszay, 141.



“Eastern relatives” of Hungary, among them the war ally Ottoman Empire and some smaller Turkic nations living mostly under Russian rule. Apart from its politicised content, the Tatar Pavilion testified Medgyaszay’s interest in Indian architecture by its double roofing. It was also a step in the attempt to create modern Hungarian architecture, and an example of the applications of an oriental architecture of the Western architectural discourse in the search for the Eastern roots of the Hungarians. This nationalized oriental influence derived from the displayed Indian as well as Chinese architectural reminiscences, which were introduced by Medgyaszay in a new building type, the Fine Art pavilion. Its first sketches date back to the post-Lviv period of Medgyaszay. The pre-roofed shape of the art pavilion building was a motif taken over from Hungarian (again from the Kalotaszeg region) vernacular architecture, whereas the pagoda-like shape of the building showed Chinese influences. The apparently well balanced combination of Hungarian folk architecture decorative motifs with the Chinese reminiscences in the volume of the building are exemplifying not only for the increasing presence of oriental elements in István Medgyaszay’s architectural thinking, but also the popularization of orientalism in Hungarian architecture. The exhibition of Lviv and even more so the one on the Margaret Island, Budapest, witnessed the evolution of Medgyaszay’s conception schooled on Viennese secessionist ornamentation towards the use of folk ornamental elements as inspiration even during war years.

The Pavilion of Agriculture in Lvov from 1916 later transformed in to Tatar Pavilion in Budapest. 1916

ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AND VERNACULAR MODERNISM IN SOFIA IN 1918

Economic partnership and vernacular modernism has already coincided in the pre-war decades. Italy was¹, between 1902–11, the main field of representation of Hungary with three distinctive pavilion constructions at four international exhibitions (Torino 1902 1911, Milan 1906, and Permanent exhibition hall in Venice from 1909).² The “real” territorial and cultural origin of Hungarians was still being researched and discussed, personal beliefs and motifs from Chinese and Indian architecture and travellers’ descriptions from Caucasian–Russian territories served different viewpoints that attempted to elaborate modern Hungarian art and architecture. The quest for vernacular modernism has been very positively received among modernist Italian critics, especially Alfredo Melani and his circle of progressive thinkers and critics. The state secretary Elek Koronghy Lippich, was a strong man between 1902 and 1910 in the Hungarian cultural politics.³ The entire range of his agenda on “modern” Hungarian cultural policy was on display at the Turin universal in 1911: interior design and applied art objects reinterpreted all those motifs, which were considered as reminiscent of the people and the nation’s oriental origin: grave findings, folk ornaments and structural solutions of peasant’s houses from Kalotaszeg and Szeklerland. When a new generation of Hungarian architects turned to grave findings and vernacular traditions in the search of hypothetical reconstruction of Attila’s palace, they fulfilled both the requirements of modern architectural trends and the vision of the Hungarian cultural policy makers.⁴ The external design of the pavilion made use of objects and motifs found in graves of the Hungarian conquest. Wood as the other important element of pavilion architecture besides plaster (stucco) was applied this time not as a hidden structural element, but as a visible, ornamented structural element of vernacular Transylvanian architecture, displaying the connection between materials and structural solutions.⁵ The Hungarian pavilion of 1911 had a great influence on Medgyaszay’s constructions in Lviv and Budapest, an important part of its interiors, applied artefacts and furniture has been reused later at the 1918 Sofia Hungarian Applied Art exhibition.

¹ Maria Cristina Buscioni, ‘Milano 1906. « Esposizione Universale Internazionale »’, *Esposizioni e stile nazionale*, Milano, 1990, 223.

² Mór Gelléri, ‘Olaszország 1911. évi kiállításai’ [Art exhibitions in Italy in 1911], *Újabb kiállítások* [New Exhibitions], Budapest, 1915, 25–26.

³ László Jurecskó, ‘K. Lippich Elek – a hivatalos művészetpolitika irányítója – és a Gödöllőiek’ [K. Lippich Elek – the Head of the official Cultural Politics], *Studia Comitatus*, 10, 1982, 10–28.

⁴ Tamás Csáki, ‘A finn építészet és az „architektúra magyar lelke.” Kultúrpolitika, építészet, publicisztika a századelő Magyarországon’. [Finnish architecture and the ‘Hungarian spirit of the architecture’. Cultural policy, architecture and art criticism in turn-of-the-century Hungary], *Múltunk*, 2006, Vol. 1, 208–210.

⁵ Cornaglia, *Pavilon*, 94–96.



Detail
of the Hungarian
Applied Arts
Exhibition in Sofia.
1918

The concept of the last pre-war exhibition was realised at the very last moment of the conflict in an ally's capital: the applied art exhibition in Sofia was organized in June 1918. Its aim was the preparation for peacetime, searching for new markets for the industry of the Dual Monarchy in the Balkans. Before the war, the countries of the Balkans had an important – if only secondary – place in the foreign trade of the Monarchy. Even so, the Balkan's new nation states explain a further meaning of the East in the pre-war Hungarian public debates. Since the 1890s, in the context of commercial expansion and, related to this, in the development of industrial museums and education, *East* was widely used also to describe not only the hardly definable original mythic land of the Magyars, but it also referred to the markets of the Balkan nation states. The markets of Romania and Serbia were considered to be among the most important ones in the region in the pre-WWI decades. Since the 1880s, two economists, Károly Keleti and Soma Mudrony adapted the Austrian model to the industrial education system in Hungary and this education was supposed to quest and serve the needs of these neighbouring markets. The three pillars consisted of 1) museum and school of applied arts, 2) industrial art museums and vocational schools of woodcarving, carpentry, stone carving and master builder and, 3) a so called Eastern museum with an evident commercial mission. As part of a new, nationalized system of industrial museums and schools from the early 1890s, the Budapest-based “eastern” museum acquisitioned and exhibited manufactured goods from the Balkan countries, the model collection served as basis for new export products for manufacturers and factories of the Hungarian economic expansion in Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Turkish territories in Europe.



Detail
of the Hungarian
Applied Arts
Exhibition in Sofia.
1918

The organization of the exhibition in Sofia was about to put forward a positive image of the industry and applied arts of the Monarchy. It was important from the perspective of the ‘conquest’ of Bulgarian consumers and the future exploitation of the natural resources of the Monarchy’s new wartime neighbour – Bulgaria – due to the new war borders. The idea of industrial promotion of the previously neglected Bulgarian market served the interests of the Dual Monarchy. It also brought up the idea of erecting a permanent exhibition pavilion in the Bulgarian capital, serving the Monarchy’s cultural and economic propaganda. Germany played a pioneering role in the preparation of the postwar economic situation: the construction of the Deutsches Haus in Istanbul and a German warehouse of industrial products – as representative initiatives for the German economic expansion – was a model for both Austria and Hungary.¹

¹ Ferenc Szécsén, ‘Iparművészeti kiállításunk Szófiában’ [Our Applied Art Exhibition is Sophia], *Magyar Iparművészet* [Hungarian Applied Art]. XXI, (1918), 106.

The location was the festive hall of the military club in Sofia, the exhibition was arranged in two equal exhibition parts joint by a common entrance hall. The Hungarian exhibition, ordered by governmental decree and organized by the Hungarian Applied Art Society was designed by Géza Maróti (1875-1941), the recognized interior designer and the architect of the Hungarian pavilion in Milan in 1906 who was by that time in the service of the military press headquarters group. The most characteristic motifs of the hall, the large embossed flowerpots, reminded of Maróti's 1906 Hungarian pavilion interior in Milan. The Hungarian section in Sofia echoed the vernacular modernism of the pre-war period and most of the exhibits came from the Milan and Turin exhibitions. Ceramics of the Zsolnay factory, goblins of János Vaszary, József Rippl-Rónai, Noémi Ferenczy, carpets of the Gödöllő Artist colony – an artist circle regrouping Koronghy's preferred artists –, the School of Applied Arts, plaques, small sculptures, China, pottery, interior design sketches. The Hungarian exhibits, based on the collection of State institutions, were composed of mainly high quality *pièces uniques*, the Austrian exhibition served directly the purpose of market enlargement, it focused on affordable and easily marketable, mass applied art products.¹ During the opening of the joint exhibition, the designer of the installation the Austrian applied art show, professor Otto Prutscher (1880-1849) and the Hungarian interior designer Géza Maróti jointly prepared the concept of an Austrian-Hungarian permanent exhibition gallery to be built in Sofia.²

MODERNS BEHIND THE FRONTS

Even if the very modern aspect of the Hungarian exhibition in Turin was appreciated by some leading art critics, another kind of modernity was also present during the wartime exhibitions. The only permanent building of the 1915 San Francisco world exhibition that housed the fine arts exhibition was the Palace of Fine Arts. Hungary was not an official participant of the exhibition.³ The significance of the fine arts exhibition was mostly due to the fact that none of the West Coast cities of America possessed at that time a publicly accessible fine arts collection, and the show aimed to compensate for this deficiency.⁴ The exhibition comprised the works of seventy-four fine artists from Hungary, forty-four graphic artists and twelve sculptors. It was considered as a very modern or “progressive” exhibition, following the Italian futurists: this was primarily due to the works of the members of the Eights (Róbert Berény, Dezső Czigány, Károly Kernstok, Ödön Márffy, Bertalan Pór, Lajos

¹ Szécsén, *Iparművészeti*, 107.

² Szécsén, *Iparművészeti*, 108.

³ Barki Gergely, 'A magyar művészet első reprezentatív bemutatkozása(i) Amerikában' [First representative exhibition(s) of Hungarian Fine in the United States.], *Nulla dies sine linea*, Budapest, 2007, 99-121.

⁴ Barki, *A magyar*, 100.

Tihanyi – a group of artist that exhibited together between 1909–1912).¹ The same group would be present three years later with different artworks.

The Hungarian art exhibition organized in Belgrade in 1918 was a charity exhibition helping the orphans of war of the 37th Regiment of Nagyvárad (today: Oradea, Romania). The art exhibition was initiated by the Imperial and Royal military press headquarters in the last months of the war, when the victory of the central powers still seemed possible. The show was opened on 15 September 1918 (closed in October, just weeks before the collapse of the Dual Monarchy) and can be considered as a rare example of over-the-fronts charity exhibition displaying high quality artworks. The Hungarian fine art exhibition in Belgrade, in an officially occupied city, was a very special event; the organization of transport and its visit from over the borders was itself a complex logistical task. The preliminary of the exhibition was the charitable exhibition of 32nd Regiment organized in the Budapest National Hall in January 1918. The idea of the Belgrade exhibition came from intellectuals and artists enrolled in the military press headquarters of the famous regiment 37, nominally k.u.k. [Imperial and Royal], mainly composed of Hungarian soldiers and mixed Austrian-Hungarian officers. Its realization was largely due to Lieutenant Egon Kornstein, musician and musicologist, member of the Waldbauer-Kerpely Quartet.² The material of the exhibition, originally collected from the works of the artists working at the military press headquarters, reflected wartime scenery: Serbian and Bosnian still lifes, landscapes, military situations. This collection of quasi-amateur artworks was later considerably completed by the works of post-impressionist and modernist Hungarian painters and sculptors.

The curators of the show, all leading artist of the pre-war Hungarian art scene, József Rippl-Rónai, Márk Vedres and Dezső Czigány chose besides five members of the group “Nyolcak” (The Eights), several important members of the mid-generation of pre-war Hungarian painting also took part in the exhibition: Béla Iványi-Grünwald, Károly Kernstok, Dezső Czigány, Róbert Berény, Elza Kövesházi-Kalmár, Márk Vedres. Contrary to the applied art exhibition in Sofia with its reused artworks, in Belgrade, the fine art exhibition offered many novelties: some critics argued that such an exhibition would have been an outstanding artistic event even in peacetime.³ It offered the very first exhibiting possibility for Pál Pátzay, a young emerging artist and a leading figure of the Hungarian sculpture of the interwar period.⁴ During its

¹ The list of the exhibiting artists and the introduction by György Bölöni are published in: Valéria Vanília Majoros, Tihanyi Lajos. *A művész és művészete*. [Lajos Tihanyi. *The Artist and his Art*], Budapest, 2004, 334–336.

² Zoltán Bálint, ‘Magyar képzőművészeti kiállítás Belgrádban 1918 őszén’ [Hungarian Fine Art Exhibition in Belgrade in the Autumn 1918], *Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, XV, (1966) 2, 119.

³ Ferenc Gáspár, ‘A belgrádi magyar képzőművészeti kiállítás 1918’ [The Hungarian Fine Art Exhibition in Belgrade 1918], *Ars Hungarica*, 2005, Vol. 1, 145.

⁴ Magyar képzőművészek műkiállítása Belgrádban. 1918 szeptember – október. Katalógus. [The Exhibition of Hungarian Artists in Belgrade. September–October 1918. Catalogue] 1918. 24–25.

opening time, the artistic standard exceeded even that of Budapest. The propagandistic purpose was evident, besides its marketing for charity it aimed to prepare for the cultural imperialism of the postwar times. Contrary to the requested wartime propaganda, a relatively small part of the 187 works of art, only 16 works represented some military or war-related subject. The majority of the works represented landscapes, still lifes, portraits, genres. Although the exhibition was open to the Serbian inhabitants of Belgrade, the public restrained from visiting it, during its two-week long opening, the show remained a closed project of the Austro-Hungarian officers and soldiers.¹

The Hungarian exhibitions organized in the period of the First World War continued the paradigm of the cultural policy of the *Belle Époque*. Although the shift in territorial scope (from France and especially Italy to Bulgaria and Serbia) was the consequence of the war logic, the decade long intention of the cultural and industrial administration remained unchanged even in the moment before the great collapse. The role of the intelligentsia significantly augmented: instead of the realisation of the exhibition complex, intellectuals and artists working at the military press headquarters felt encouraged to initiate certain shows. Their purposes were similar to those of peacetime exhibitions, the design of the pavilions reflected the primordial debates on the origin of the nation, applied art exhibitions aimed at extending national industry to other selling markets. Fine art exhibitions, besides their charitable functions, were a means of introducing and recognising the very modern aspect of Hungarian art. Apparently, war caused mainly technical, logistical troubles, the war itself, with all its novelties concerning life, culture and social issues were left unreflected in the exhibitions.

¹ Bálint, Magyar, 120–121.