

KLÁRA GARAS (1919–2017)

IN MEMORIAM

Art historian Klára Garas, retired director-general of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, as well as internationally the best known Hungarian researcher of the baroque, died at the age of 98, on 26 June 2017. Fate favoured her with a long life. At 90 she was sitting at the opening event of the exhibition Maulbertsch and Winterhalder staged in her honour and to celebrate her birthday in the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest (Fig. 1), listening to Maulbertsch's great contemporary Joseph Haydn's piano trio with the famous "Rondo all'ongarese" movement. The exhibition of the Hungarian National Gallery in tribute to her was a merger of two showings. One was about Maulbertsch's most important pupil, Winterhalder's work. It was organized by Czech art historians under Lubomir Slavíček's guidance, with the participation of Central European researchers. It was first put on display in Langenargen, the native town of Maulbertsch, and brought to Budapest via Olomouc. The other exhibition was the work of Hungarian art historians led by Anna Jávör. It centred on the activity and works of Maulbertsch and Winterhalder in Hungary, with significant pieces also loaned from abroad (Fig. 2).¹ It was a worthy homage to Klára Garas, who published her monumental monograph of Maulbertsch half a century earlier, in 1960. It was undoubtedly her chef d'oeuvre, which has been the foundation of research into the art of Maulbertsch and his circle and into eighteenth-century Central European painting until today. The Hungarian, Czech and Austrian art historians who contributed to the catalogues of the 2009 Langenarten and Budapest exhibitions and to the organization and opening of the festive showing in her honour in

Budapest are all following in Klára Garas' footsteps, continuing her life's work together with other Central European researchers of the baroque.



Fig. 1. Klára Garas at the opening of the exhibition "Late Baroque Impressions. Maulbertsch and Winterhalder" in the Hungarian National Gallery, 2009 (photo: Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest)

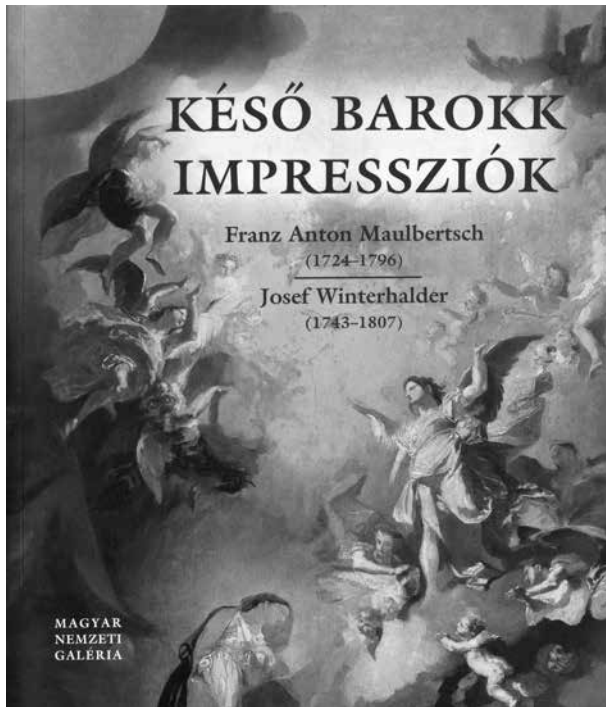


Fig. 2. Cover of the exhibition catalogue of the “Late Baroque Impressions”

Similarly to her painter protagonist’s life and his work, history brutally interfered with the life of Klára Garas several times. There was a peculiar painting on display in the Budapest exhibition, for example: it was one of Maulbertsch’ last works, the former high altar picture from the ensemble of painted decoration of Szombathely cathedral, with was torn to smithereens by a chain-bomb on 4 March 1945, also destroying the ceiling pictures painted by Winterhalder and then Anton Spreng after Maulbertsch’ sketches. It took six decades for restorers and art historians to try and piece together at least the main figures of Mary and Elizabeth in the enormous altar picture of the Visitation, to resuscitate it as a work of art.

The youth of Klára Garas was flanked by two world wars. When she was born in Rákosszentmihály (today the 16th district of Budapest) on 19 June 1919, World War I had just ended and on the ruins of the collapsed Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy the emerging new states tried to achieve the most favourable frontier lines for themselves with arms, before the peace was concluded. Klára Garas was the offspring of the family of a culture-loving, erudite engineer. She attended school in Budapest, the noted girls’ secondary school named after Maria Theresa (and 50 years later, on the occasion of the Maria Theresa jubilee in Austria in 1979 and 1980, she would be asked to introduce the art of the age of Maria Theresa in a book of stud-

ies (Wien–Salzburg 1979) and an exhibition catalogue (Halbtum 1980)). At the age of 13 she decided to be an art historian. She enrolled at Budapest University. When she began her studies in 1937, there was peace in Europe, but when she received her doctorate and published her dissertation in 1941, Hungary was already involved in World War II. Her dissertation, a small monograph was about the Viennese painter Johann Lucas Kracker around the circle of Paul Troger, who spent the last two decades of his life in Hungary with small breaks and left a lot of still extant works behind. One of his main creations, the virtuosic ceiling painting of the library of Eger Lyceum (1779) still almost unknown in Europe was painted here. The topic (chosen upon the recommendation of her professor, Tibor Gerevich) already signposted the path along which she was to progress as an art historian. But the next phase was delayed: she had to survive World War II. She was in Budapest throughout the war and only from 19 March 1944, the German occupation, was she forced to go into illegality, as we would say now. She returned to demolished and ransacked Budapest only after its liberation.

She became an associate of the Museum of Fine Arts in February 1945 and it remained her only place of work for nearly 40 years. But the start was hard. The building had been hit by a bomb, the collections had been transported to the West, the exhibiting spaces were covered by rubble and snow. In the winter of 1945 the employees of the museum began the reconstruction themselves. The group photo of the museum staff cleaning the “Romanesque hall” built for the plaster casts was taken at that time. With a broom in her hand and scarf on her head Klára Garas is in the middle (with Dénes Pataky, art historian, specialist of graphics, next to her) (Fig. 3).

The years after the war – like in whole war-devastated Europe – was the time of a feverish restart. In the summer of 1945 the 45 crates of museum objects stuck in the abbey of Szentgotthárd on the Hungarian-Austrian border were returned, but the 80 crates that had reached the “Central Collecting Point” in Munich after an adventurous journey were still missing. They eventually got home for Christmas 1946 and were exhibited in 1947 as “Hazatért remekművek” [Masterpieces back home]. They had not arrived yet when the Museum of Fine Arts opened its first major post-war exhibition with the title “Régi mesterek magyar magántulajdonban” [Old Masters in Hungarian Private Ownership]. That was to lure the public back into the music and to present them a selection of what survived



Fig. 3. 1945: employees of the Museum of Fine Arts cleaning up the war damage in the Romanesque Hall of the museum (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest)

the wartime “Sacco di Budapest”² and remained in Budapest from the old private collections. The photo was taken of Klára Garas at the onset of her career during the opening of this exhibition (Fig. 4).

She was assigned her place in the “Old Masters’ Gallery” abounding in Renaissance and baroque works. It was led by Andor Pigler, later the director of the museum.³ Klára Garas was awaited by the traditional duties of art historians: maintenance, enlargement, research, publication of the collection, exhibitions and all the concomitant chores. Her enormous bibliography reveals with what great commitment and

creativity she had been doing these chores from the start. And at a very early date she found the aspect which was beyond the vision of researchers at that time: history of collecting. The Picture Gallery offered excellent possibilities. A far from insignificant part of the Old Masters’ Gallery had been transferred to the capital of the Kingdom of Hungary, then part of the Habsburg Empire in the age of Maria Theresa, to adorn the palace of the regent/palatine on behalf of the queen’s first in Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia) and from the late eighteenth century in the royal palace in Buda. From there the paintings got into the Museum

of Fine Arts via diverse institutions, and on the way their original provenance was forgotten, their state had deteriorated. It was in the second half of the twentieth century that the pictures began to be rediscovered in Budapest – similarly to the paintings that had got into (or remained in) the Czech royal castle in Prague. The work had much surprise in store in both capitals.

Klára Garas' first scholarly publication in the still extant museum periodical launched at that time (*Bulletin du Musée des Beaux-Arts*, Budapest) was about some paintings of the museum once in the collection of the Habsburg archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1948). Leopold Wilhelm's collection was the largest seventeenth-century collection from diverse sources, and maybe that was the spark that kindled her responsiveness to the challenges of collection history to which she responded with a whole series of excellent discoveries and source publications. Similar possibilities were afforded her by a set of pictures from the Esterházy Gallery which came to Budapest from Vienna in the 1860s and finally got into the Museum of Fine Arts. But even before that, the Art Historical Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences set a new course of research for Hungarian art historiography around 1949/50, which also affected Klára Garas' activity. The Committee started out from the fact that a positivist period was missing from the historiography of

Hungarian art: the entire material of each of the art form should be collected from whole historical Hungary and arranged in a corpus. Also missing were the systematically collected and arranged topographies of historic monuments of smaller areas. Fired by a democratic ideal of culture, they wanted to stop this gap and the program to be executed involved several institutions. Klára Garas was one of the five young art historians mostly in their thirties from the Museum of Fine Arts, who received important assignments in this programme: she was to arrange the corpus of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings originating in Hungary by place name and artist name, and to do its art historical elaboration.

The collection and systematization of all the artists and masters who lived or also worked in historical Hungary for various lengths of time in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries, or maybe only sent here their works done on commission, was an awe-inspiring, enormous job. She had to scrutinize printed and written sources of two centuries: aristocratic, ecclesiastic and municipal archives, publications of local and church history, photos of monuments and earlier art historical and historical studies. The magnitude of the



Fig. 4. Klára Garas and the Hungarian minister of culture (Dezső Keresztury) at the opening of the exhibition “Old Masters in Hungarian private ownership” in the Museum of Fine Arts, 1946 (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest)

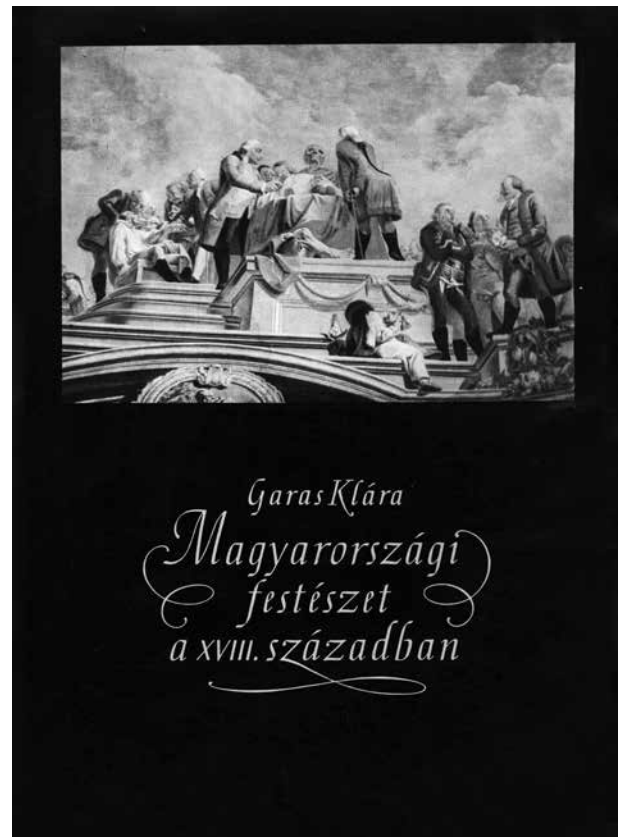


Fig. 5. Cover of Klára Garas' *Painting in Hungary in the 18th century* (1955)

work may aptly be suggested by the fact that the territory of the one-time Kingdom of Hungary was shared at the time of this research by seven countries. Klára Garas' work on seventeenth-century painting appeared in 1953, that of the eighteenth century in 1955 (Fig. 5). The works of the other four young art historians of the Museum of Fine Arts were also carried out with similar methods and commitment. The earliest (and somewhat sketchy) work was Dénes Pataky's *A magyar rézmetszés története* [History of copperplate engraving in Hungary] (1951), followed by more accurately elaborated works used to this day including *A középkori Magyarország falképei* [Wall paintings in mediaeval Hungary] (1954), *A középkori Magyarország táblaképei* [Panel paintings of medieval Hungary] (1955) and *A középkori Magyarország faszobrai* [Wooden sculptures in mediaeval Hungary] (1957) by Dénes Radocsay, around the same time as Klára Garas' works

(Fig. 6), as well as Mária Aggházy's *A barokk szobrászat Magyarországon* [Baroque sculpture in Hungary] I-III (1959) and *A magyar kőrajzolás története* [History of Hungarian lithography] by Teréz Gerszi, a researcher in her twenties (1960). Their works, including Klára Garas' in salient place, form the foundations of respective investigations, in spite of the fact that in the six decades that have passed since a wealth of new findings have been reached and the research environment and apparatus have changed radically. This needs special emphasis, for younger generations are still baffled by what they conceive of as an irresolvable contradiction: notably that perhaps the most fertile decade of Hungarian art historiography, the 1950s, produced outstanding and irreproducible achievements (including the four "classic" topographies of historic monuments: *Sopron és környéke* [Sopron and its environs] 1953, 1956², *Nógrád megye* [Nógrád county] 1954,



Fig. 6. Klára Garas and Dénes Radocsay at the opening of exhibition of Fülöp Ö. Beck in the Museum of Fine Arts, 1947 (photo: Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest)

Budapest I, Budai várnegyed [Buda castle district], Pest megye [Pest county] 1-2, 1958) when “the socialist transformation of society” on Soviet model and with Soviet support assumed the form of the toughest communist dictatorship in Hungary, too. The Hungarian revolution of 1956 broke out against it with perfectly justified elementary force. The question their example inspires today is whether cultivating art history may be a refuge in the teeth of growing political autocracy in any country.

This sudden detour in Klára Garas’ career did not cause a break, quite to the contrary: the enormous source material she had to explore for the elaboration of seventeenth–eighteenth-century painting in Hungary was not delimited to Hungary but encompassed the whole of Central Europe. The most outstanding masters working for the Viennese court, for the Austrian, Czech and Moravian aristocracy and monastic orders also appeared in the Kingdom of Hungary, a part of the Habsburg Empire. That applies to the professors and leading artists of the Viennese Academy in the eighteenth century, who also sojourned in Hungary or their works were also present, and besides, hundreds of students studied in Vienna from the country.

The knowledge Klára Garas thus accumulated about Central European baroque art, its artistic life, leading artists and the role of arts coalesced into a firm foundation to launch – still in her thirties – a would-be monograph about Franz Anton Maulbertsch. The elaboration of the enormous oeuvre of Maulbertsch was a real challenge. There was no other artist of the baroque age in Central Europe whose activity encompassed such a large area in the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. Only the list of places where Maulbertsch was painting his frescoes in person ranges from Innsbruck through Vienna and Heligenkreutz-Gutenbrunn and Schwechat to Hungary, and there from Szombat hely through Sümeg and Kalocsa to Eger, Vác and Pozsony, and from there in Moravia through Mikulov, Brno and Kroměříž to Prague. His art was held in high esteem equally by bishops and abbeys, diverse monastic orders, the Viennese court, aristocratic clients and urban communities. It was a significant task of the painter’s monographer to explore their motives, to understand their attraction to Maulbertsch’ art. Klára Garas was clearly aware that an important part – in the last decades of his life the most important portion – of Maulbertsch’ activity took place in Hungary, and his clients of stature were the leading ecclesiastics of the Hungarian Catholic Church. However, the special literature written in Hungarian about the Maulbertsch

works commissioned by them was inaccessible for the researchers of neighbouring countries, owing to language problems. Not hindered by language difficulties, Klára Garas thought the Maulbertsch monograph was to be written by a Hungarian art historian, by her. She received assistance from Austrian and Czech colleagues, and her museum background was a great help as well. Help came from all over the world from where the scattered multitude of sketches, smaller oil paintings, drawings by Maulbertsch and his workshop could be collected for the monograph. The monumental oeuvre catalogue, including the immense item bibliography, list of source publications for the works appeared in an unprecedented richness in the large-format monograph of 560 pages (Fig. 7).

Monographs had been written about Austrian baroque *architects* before her work – about Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1956), Johann Lucas von Hildebrand (1959), Joseph Emanuel Fischer von Erlach (1960) – but Klára Garas’ was the first among baroque painter monographs in Central Europe. All the subsequent *painter* monographs (career outline and “catalogue raisonné de l’oeuvre”) took Klára Garas’ Maulbertsch monograph as their model in scholarly method and demand for quality: the monographs on Bartolommeo Altomonte (1964), Paul Troger (1975), Martino Altomonte (1965), Franz Sigrist (1977), Johann Michael Rottmayr (1981), Kremser Schmidt (1989), František Karel Palko (1990), Michelangelo Unterberger (1995), Ádám Mányoki (2003), Johann Lucas Kracker (2004), Joseph Ignaz Mildorfer (2011), Paul Troger (2012), Václav Vavřinec Reiner (2013), Anton Schmidt (2013), to name a few from the long list.

In addition to tracing Maulbertsch’ life path, rich pictorial oeuvre, his responses to the changes in tastes, his network of relations, Klára Garas was the first to outline the role and composition of the Maulbertsch workshop constantly changing over the decades. Maulbertsch became a popular painter within a relatively short time and had to organize a workshop around him to cope with the increasing commissions. Contemporaries graduating with him from the academy, his pupils, assistants, architecture painters worked with him. Adopting the suggestive manner of Maulbertsch’ painting had an important role in the workshop, and several collaborators achieved it successfully. Since several of them were well-trained artists with oeuvres of their own, it is hard, sometimes impossible, to differentiate the work done in the Maulbertsch workshop or outside it in the wake of the master, challenging

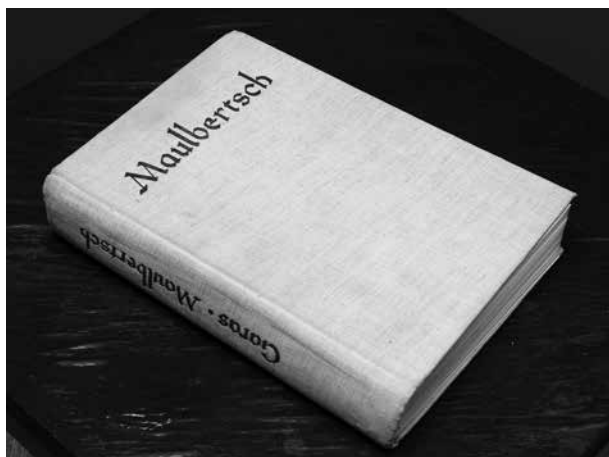


Fig. 7. Klára Garas' monograph of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, 1960

Central European art historians to zealous work to this day. This is one of the most vivid strains in the Maulbertsch research, producing convincing results and at times startling attempts. The Maulbertsch and Winterhalter exhibition of 2009 belongs to the former. Prior to the publication of the Maulbertsch monograph Klára Garas already wrote about masters in contact with Maulbertsch in the museum Bulletin (Johann Bergl, Felix Ivo Leicher, Josef Winterhalter), and after the monograph she kept returning to her protagonist's activity from time to time. She published addenda and new observations, organized an exhibition in Budapest on Maulbertsch and his contemporaries, took part in the collective work of exhibitions related to Maulbertsch abroad, saliently with Bruno Bushart, Ivo Krsek, Pavel Preis, Alice Strobl for the commemorative exhibition in Vienna in 1974, and her new synthesis of the Maulbertsch oeuvre was released in Salzburg at the same time. She was the first (with other Hungarian colleagues) to support from the start the building out and maintenance by the painter's native town Langenargen of the Maulbertsch cult with exhibitions, exhibition catalogues (1970, 1984, 1994, 1996, 2006).

The method how she traced the evolution, development and changes of Maulbertsch' original painting style gave energetic impulses for her further career. A great asset of her monograph is the authentic and subtly detailed presentation of the inspiring painterly solutions Maulbertsch – who had never visited Italy – gleaned with great sensitivity from the works of contemporary Italian artists painted in (or sent to) Vienna (e.g. Sebastiano Ricci, Carlo Carlone, Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini, Antonio Galli Bibiena, Gregorio Guglielmi), from works of his contemporaries who had been to Italy (particularly those of Daniel Gran, J. M.

Rottmayr and P. Troger), or again, from the ideas of his French and Flemish professors (Jakob van Schuppen, Peter van Roy). She was not only interested in the influence they exerted on Maulbertsch, but in the artists themselves. Her bibliography testifies that she devoted a lot of studies to the trans-Alpine activity of Italian artists thanks to this focus of her interest, complemented with writings on the Italian paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts collection. In the long list of names gleaned from her bibliography Carlo Carlone (†1775) is one to whom she returned several times and compiled (with a co-author) a book on his work, also organizing an exhibition (Salzburg, Barockmuseum). One of her favourite *trouvailles* (1962) was the attribution of the monumental ceiling fresco (around 1702) adorning the blue staircase in Schönbrunn Castle as the chef d'oeuvre of young Sebastiano Ricci. When asked, she gladly reminisced about that Sunday afternoon when visiting Schönbrunn castle she glanced at the ceiling and recognized the mural believed to have perished. It was not the only Schönbrunn finding of hers. She is credited with the identification of the painter of the ceiling picture as Johann Ignaz Mildorfer in the Menagerie pavilion of the castle park. Hers is the attribution to Mildorfer of the ceiling fresco in the gala room of the Esterházy palace in Eszterháza/Fertőd, which Prince Nicholas Esterházy ordered for his residence, the venue of Haydn's activity.

These examples, and her entire life's work and bibliography attest that Klára Garas had a keen eye, extraordinary visual and textual memory and immense knowledge of sources – way before computerized art history and collections of innumerable digital photos and textual databases. These faculties in concert allowed her to encompass a broad area of art history. In addition to research in Central European baroque painting, with special emphasis on Maulbertsch and his circle, she gained broad knowledge of the Italian Renaissance and baroque art while searching for the art historical places of paintings in the Old Masters' Gallery of the Museum of Fine Arts. She published the *Italian Renaissance Portraits* (1965, in Hungarian, German, and French, too) and *Eighteenth Century Venetian Paintings* (1968, also in four languages plus Russian).

She had a special liking for Venetian painting. Not only for the settecento, on which theme she read several papers in conferences from the 1960s, but also for masters of earlier ages and the tracing of their impact. Between 1964 and 1967 she published three studies with the title *Giorgione et Giorgionisme au XVII siècle* in the bulletin of the Museum, and the writing

published posthumously in this issue of our periodical (but completed much earlier) also belongs to this theme. She published studies on works by Raphael, Titian, Piombo, Caravaggio and the Caravaggisti, Veronese, Correggio and often combined her analyses with the aspect of provenance and collection history. She was an excellent collection historian, having the knowledge and ability, as well as a legendary faculty of remembering, to retrace the history of works sometimes to the first owner, or track the fate or migration of a complete collection or some of its items.

Her “debuting” study in this field was about the Ludovisi collection in Rome published in 1967 (*The Burlington Magazine*, which carried another writing by her with co-author Éva Nyerges in 2009). She was preoccupied with the collections of Emperor Rudolf and Leopold Wilhelm of Austria several times, and more emphatically with the paintings of the Esterházy Gallery. She persistently studied them (1968, 1969, 2001) and could gradually reconstruct more and more completely the picture collection wandering from the imperial collections to the castle of Buda.⁴

Beside her intensive art historical activity, Klára Garas was the director-general of the Museum of Fine Arts in 1964–1984. She succeeded Andor Pigler (1956–1965) and led the museum for two decades. The politics of the period could be described with the phrase “slow thawing” in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, which allowed for some museum collaboration in the “socialist camp”: joining forces, Budapest, Dresden, Warsaw and Leningrad brought about several thematic exhibitions. It was also her directorial ambition to link the Museum of Fine Arts to the international museum life by loaning out art works (whereby her colleagues could get to Western European museums as escorts of art objects from an Eastern Europe also shackled with travel restrictions).

It was during her directorship that in 1964–1975 the Corvina Press issued a quadrilingual series including the mentioned volumes on Venetian seventeenth-century painting and Italian Renaissance portraits by her, and the rest of the finely illustrated and deservedly popular volumes by her colleagues at the museum (Early Italian Panel Paintings, Dutch Landscapes, Dutch Genre Paintings in Hungarian Museums, The Masters of Mannerism, French Paintings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, German and Austrian Paintings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Spanish Masters, Early Netherlandish Painting, Fifteenth Century German and Bohemian Panel Paintings, Tuscan Paintings of the Early Renaissance,

Rembrandt and His Circle, Bruegel and His Age, Sixteenth Century German Panel Paintings, North Italian Fifteenth Century Paintings, Spanish Painting from the Primitives to Ribera, Cinquecento Paintings of Central Italy, Italian and Spanish Sculpture, Collection of Old Sculpture in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts).

In another series of the Museum (A Szépművészeti Múzeum legszebb rajzai [Finest drawings of the Museum of Fine Arts]) she released a volume entitled *Deutsche und österreichische Zeichnungen des 18. Jahrhunderts*. A row of selections and albums were also released of the museum material like “Remekművek a budapesti Szépművészeti Múzeumból” [Masterpieces from the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts], with her as chief editor, publisher, collaborator. That applies to the two major exhibitions, one in Bordeaux in 1972 and one in Tokyo in 1979, which presented the pictures of the Museum of Fine Arts (the latter also of the Hungarian National Gallery). These marked the first appearance of this type by the Museum abroad, followed by several similar exhibitions until now.

She had a hard job as director-general. The museum building stretching along one side of Heroes Square preserved relics of universal art with collections from Egyptian and ancient classical objects of art through early European art to contemporary works, with enormous exhibiting spaces, with a large library and restorers’ workshops then still inside the museum, and a large museum staff. Yet a look at the bibliography of works published in those years clearly reveals that her writings appeared in the most important European art historical periodicals and in Hungary just as regularly as earlier. She was present at different international art historical congresses and sessions (Bonn 1967, Budapest 1969, Venice and Veneto 1975, 1978, 1980, 1982, Granada 1978, Moscow 1979, Vienna 1983, Udine 1984), her papers are preserved in congress archives and volumes of symposia proceedings. Of salient importance was the congress held in Budapest in 1969 for her (and for Hungarian art history). It was the first international meeting of the *Comité International d’Histoire de l’Art* (CIHA) staged in a country “on this side of the iron curtain”, and several Western European art historians visited Budapest for the first time on that occasion. As director-general, Klára Garas introduced the museum, and she was also the guide of the high-ranking politicians interested in the museum. When in an interview she was asked about them, she mentioned UN secretary Pérez de Cuellar, who almost knew the exact place of all the famous pictures in the house, or the German Chancel-

lor Helmut Schmidt, who was inspired by a youthful experience of a Greco exhibition to visit all the places where there were Greco paintings or collections, as he told Klára Garas. Besides Spain, Budapest has a distinguished place on this list.

Klára Garas spent 40 years at the museum, 20 as its director-general. But at the age of 65, before she could submit her application for retirement, she was faced with the toughest ordeal of her directorship in its very last months: on 3 November 1983 burglars broke into the museum and stole seven paintings including the two best-known and most dearly cherished pictures, Raphael's *Esterházy Madonna* and *Portrait of a Young Man*, earlier known as *Pietro Bembo*. Their loss was an awful shock for everybody. Nerve-racking months of international investigation followed, with the greatest burden – the uncertainty of whether the stolen pictures would ever be found – weighing down upon the director-general. Overtly or covertly several voices held her responsible. The pictures stolen by professional Italian art work thieves were eventually tracked down in Greece and Hungary, and they got off the adventure with just smaller damage. Klára Garas' nightmares – though slowly – disappeared. She was a museum director of the old stock: when the paintings had returned to Budapest, she resigned from leadership and her museum posts and applied for retirement. But she went on working, with the same intensity for some time as during her directorship, which is clearly proven by her bibliography (Fig. 8).

In the next year, in 1985, she was elected ordinary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (from 1963 she had been a corresponding member). Her inaugural lecture was entitled: *Művész és megrendelő, közönség és kritika. Változások a 18. század második felének művészeti életében* [Artist and patron, public and criticism. Changes in the art life in the second half of the eighteenth century]. It was a novelty in Klára Garas' activity, or more precisely, the shift of the titular theme into the focus was new. This theme was not avoided in her Maulbertsch monograph and it can be discerned in several of her studies. She also planned that – inspired by Francis Haskell's influential work⁵ – she would write a similar summary of Central Europe. The book remained a plan, but a volume of studies could be compiled of her scattered publications on this topic. Besides having an excellent sense of style and form, Klára Garas had an affinity to history. That was why she could communicate effectively with representatives of diverse related disciplines. She was gladly invited to conferences, books of studies,



Fig. 8. Klára Garas, 1988 (photo: MTI/Edit Molnár)

teams of authors of exhibition catalogues by specialists of history, historians of literature, of music, which also broadened her large network of relations. Impressive is the list of names for whose *Festschriften* she was asked to write a laudatory study (only mentioning foreigners): Stanisław Lorentz (1969), Antonio Morassi (1971), Jan Białostocki (1981), Kurt Rossacher (1983), Gerhard Franz (1986), Eduard Hindelang (1986), Kruno Priatel (1992), Bruno Bushart (1994), Pavel Preiss (1996), Egidio Martini (1999), Emilijan Cevc (2000), Anica Cevc (2006).

She also received marks of attention from her East-Central European, saliently her Hungarian colleagues, in publications. At 65 she was greeted by the most important Hungarian art historical periodical (*Művészettörténeti Értesítő*, 1984). At 70, she was honoured by a two-tome *Festschrift* (Fig. 9) issued by the Museum of Fine Arts (*Ex Fumo Lucem. Baroque Studies in Honour of Klára Garas*, ed. DOBOS, Zsuzsanna, 1989), at 80 our periodical, the foreign-language journal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1999) greeted her (she served as a member of the editorial board of

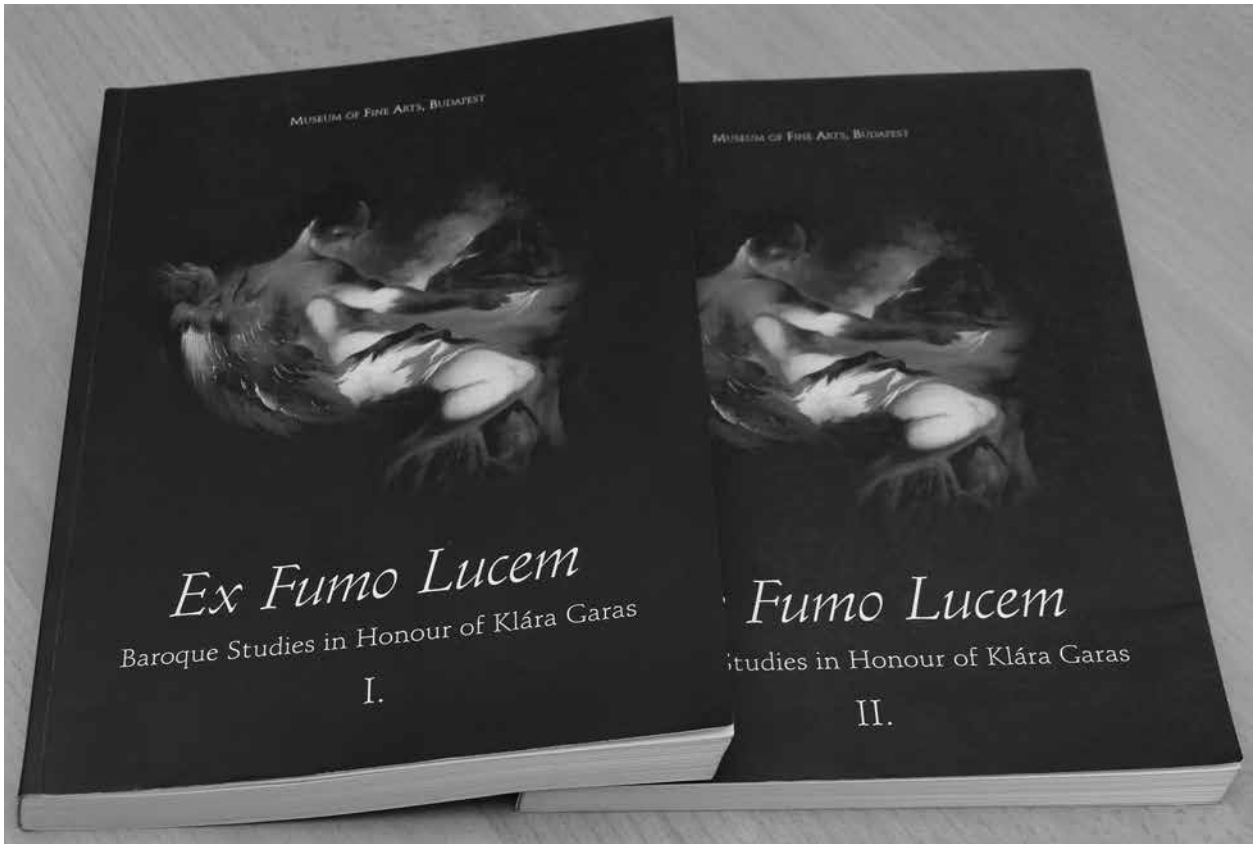


Fig. 9. Covers of the *Festschrift* for the 70th birthday of Klára Garas

the *Acta Historiae Artium* between 1969 and 1993), and at 90 the Hungarian National Gallery dedicated to her the mentioned Maulbertsch and Winterhalter exhibition (2009). When asked, she gladly wrote for museum yearbooks, periodicals and festive volumes celebrating round anniversaries of Hungarian art historians: Miklós Mojzer (1991), Endre Csatkai (1996), Zoltán Szilárdfy (1997) Susan Urbach (2003), Hedvig Szabolcsi (2006), Géza Galavics (2010). The latter was Klára Garas' last writing that appeared in her lifetime.

So far, the emphasis was mainly on Klára Garas' individual professional achievements, but it needs mention that she had humility enough to be part of teams working for designated goals. Three examples are adduced in proof from three different genres, one from her early career, one from later in life, and one from a major exhibition. The first one is a summary study of baroque art in Hungary in a handbook presenting the history of the country's art from the beginnings to the present. After the war, when the damage caused in souls, buildings, art works had been somewhat mitigated by the 1950s–1960s, in several countries (even historical regions) of Europe there was strong need to have new summaries of the his-

tory of their countries' art: both as new art historical narratives and as buttress for identity. The two-tome history of art in Hungary was one of them; it was meant, apart from the professional community in a strict sense, for the educated public, for related disciplines and for university education alike. It was edited by the art philosopher Lajos Fülep first in 1956, and in ever newer editions for two decades, with Klára Garas' summary of baroque art in it. She belonged to the last generation of art historians at the Museum of Fine Arts who dealt with the history of both Hungarian and universal art.

Another of her collective works involved her in the creation of Volume 3 of the Summary Catalogues of the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest Old Masters' Gallery, co-authored by Susan Urbach and Éva Benkő (2003) (Fig. 10). The monumental two-tome catalogue of the Old Masters' Gallery was published by Andor Pigler in German back in 1967, as a one-man undertaking (*Katalog der Galerie Alter Meister*, Budapest). It is a basic work to this day. In 1991, specialists of the museum began to elaborate the paintings in the Old Masters' Gallery by schools, integrating into it the new acquisitions and new research results.

The completed checklist contains three volumes now: 1. *Italian, French, Spanish and Greck Painting*, 1991, ed. TÁTRAI, Vilmos; 2. *Early Netherlandish, Dutch and Flemish Painting*, 2000, eds. EMBER, Ildikó – URBACH, Susan. In the mentioned 3rd volume (*German, Austrian, Bohemian, and British Paintings*, eds. EMBER, Ildikó – TAKÁCS, Imre) her experience and knowledge of many decades have been incorporated into the catalogue items.

Klára Garas was 84 years old at that time. The greater part of her life was lived in the less fortunate half of Europe rent apart by post-war political blocs, artificial rifts. What she thought of Europe, European culture, its integrity and diversity is present in her writings, the art historical and historical stance she assumed and in her interpretation of culture. Even in shorter writings, such as the one with the title incipit “Migration d’artistes, relations artistiques...” published in France in 1976. Actually, the entire Maulbertsch monograph (1960) was built on the basic conception to demonstrate the large and indivisible unity of Europe – its history, culture, traditions, value system – through the presentation and analysis of the career of an outstanding artist. This is not promulgated in theses but emanates from the spirit of the work. Since the work was written and published in the “other” half of politically divided Europe, one of the reviewers (four reviews appeared in Munich alone) said: “That scholarship has re-united this enormous Maulbertsch oeuvre torn apart by political geography is not to the credit of German or Austrian researchers – whose debt of honour it would have been – but to the Hungarian Klára Garas, giving us the hope of the strengthening of the inner unity of the Old Continent and the spirit of Europe.”⁶ It was an important sentence for Klára Garas, for nearly four and a half decades after the review she cited it in a long interview speaking about the reception of the Maulbertsch monograph.⁷

At the time of the interview in 2007–2008, Hungary had been a member of the European Union for four years (from 2004). However, nearly two decades before, around the political turns (when the Berlin wall had collapsed, the frontiers became trespassable with a passport, the Soviet troops were withdrawing, or left already and free elections were held) the idea put down at the reception of Klára Garas’ Maulbertsch monograph cited above – notably that baroque art, like that of Maulbertsch, was capable of manifesting the cultural and historical coherence of Europe, came into prominence again. Around that time Western European politicians began searching for a possibil-

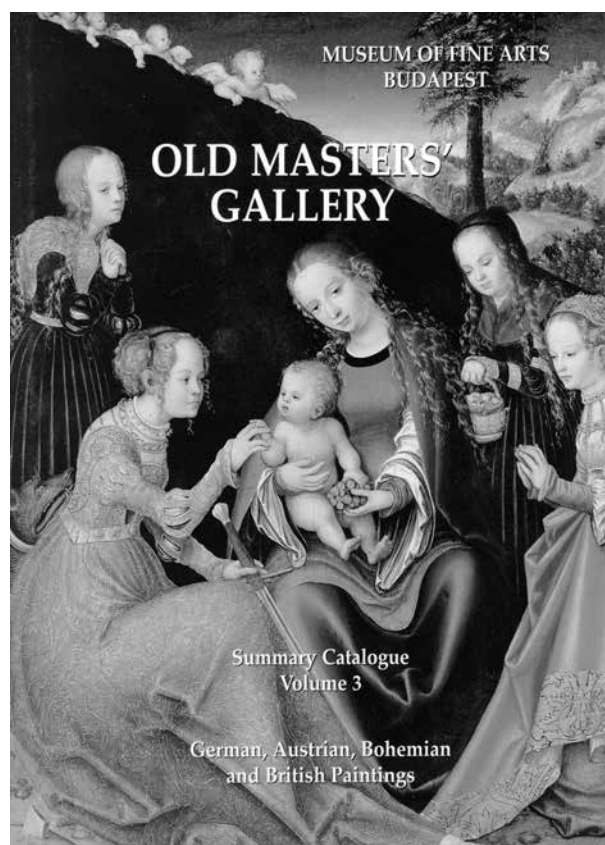


Fig. 10. Cover of volume 3 of the Summary Catalogues of the Museum of Fine Arts Budapest Old Masters' Gallery: German, Austrian, Bohemian, and British Paintings (2003)

ity to symbolically display in East-Central Europe on the verge of major changes that the EU was looking upon the eastern part of divided Europe as the integral part of formerly united Europe with unified culture, common past and spirit, and that the aim was the restoration of former unity. The Paris-based Cultural Department of the Council of Europe decided that a politics-free means would be a series of exhibitions on the theme of the BAROQUE to be staged in countries of Central Europe. The point of departure for the decision was the art historical – social historical fact that “the baroque was the last great historical style by which the unity of Europe was manifest in a visible form.” The decision was taken, political support was acquired, only the frames of execution changed, several times. Eventually, exhibitions were staged on diverse baroque themes in Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia and Poland out of the Pentagone countries in 1992–1993, nearly around the same time, together with catalogues of great scholarly precision. There has not been a similarly comprehensive common program mediated by art exhibitions in Central Europe ever since.

One of the most impressive participations in this cooperation was Hungary's coordinated by the Museum of Fine Arts with Klára Garas' active and constructive presence. Two exhibitions were organized in Hungary. One at Székesfehérvár (entitled *Zsáner-metamorfózisok / The Metamorphoses of Themes* presenting secular genres), the other in Budapest aimed to encompass the entire topic, with the title *A barokk Közép-Európában. Utak és találkozások / Baroque Art in Central-Europe. Crossroads* (Fig. 11). The themes of the two exhibitions were worked out by Klára Garas, together with Miklós Mojzer (her successor as director-general) and the present writer. Both exhibitions were international, with several loaned works and with Czech, Austrian and English contributors of studies and catalogue items in addition to Hungarian authors. Through the selection of the exhibits alone we wished to indicate that the baroque art of Central Europe was born of the array of most diverse European trends, and that this diversity and multifarious character was the essence of this art. When the viewers or readers took note of the birthplaces of the exhibited artists too, they found a rich list of masters of the baroque age working in Central Europe or present through their works who had arrived from widely different parts of Europe from Stockholm to Naples, Antwerp to Paris and Nagyszeben in Transylvania (today Sibiu, Romania), bringing with them the artistic traditions of their native places and thus enriching the baroque culture of Central Europe. This brought it close to the recipients how the art of this region absorbed the major artistic trends of entire Europe.

Klára Garas was involved in preparations for the exhibition with great elan. We created an assortment diversified also by genre of rarely exhibited paintings of the Old Masters' Gallery, targeted foreign loans (including for the first time a whole collection from the Brukenthal Museum in Nagyszeben), from private collections, recently restored altarpieces, peculiar graphic works. Klára Garas played a decisive role not only in elaborating the conception of the exhibition but also in working out studies and some items for the catalogues. She wrote the paper *Itáliai festők Közép-Európában / Italian Painters in Central Europe*, asked her Czech colleagues to present a study and she described 74 catalogue items, most of the finest pieces of the exhibition, together with the biographies of the respective artists.

Though the idea was sparked by a political intention, the exhibition on Central European baroque was not the illustration of a political thesis. The participat-

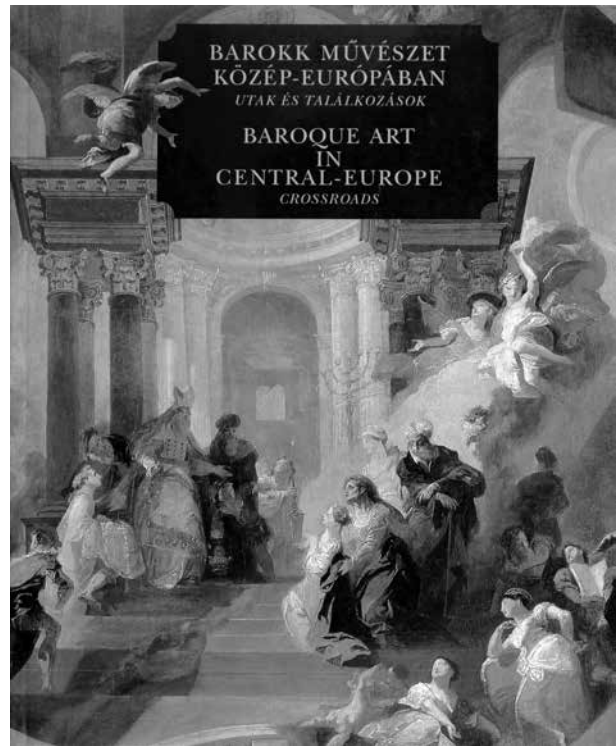


Fig. 11. Cover of the catalogue of the exhibition "Baroque Art in Central-Europe. Crossroads" (Budapest History Museum, 1992–1993)

ing art historians worked by the value system, requirements and methods of their discipline, and presented the visitors with a rich, original, highly informative and still valid art historical image of Central Europe. The political support was merely used for easier foreign loans and for publishing the entire Hungarian catalogues bilingually, in Hungarian and English, with excellent typography and a wealth of illustrations, thanks to the financial support greater than customary in the practice of Hungarian museums. These were the first exhibition catalogues by European standards not only in contents but also in outward appearance. Our studies and item descriptions are used and cited regularly to this day.

As a political gesture, the exhibition closed in 1993 adequately expressed the desires and hopes that lived in the Central European countries just liberated from Soviet dependence on the one side and in the peoples and politicians of the European Union on the other side, around the great turn and for a few more years after the EU integration of some countries of the Eastern bloc. They shared the hope that with the building out of the system of democratic institutions and the functioning of a regulated market economy the former unity of Europe could be restored and the different levels of development could be evened up.

However, as time passed it turned out that the preferences of the two sides were different, and what has evolved by today is more eloquently described along the centuries-old tensions between the centre and the periphery instead of categories of diverse value systems. When in this situation a political elite seizes power in any country which builds out its political system not in consideration of but in opposition to the common values, conditions that in the eastern part of Europe were already in effect during the decades after the war evolve – or are restored.

This is mentioned apropos the commemoration of Klára Garas' career because during her long life, before and after 1945, she lived and worked under widely different and often dictatorial, restrictive political systems. It was not easy for her to proceed as art historian along the course that she had chosen for herself, not allowing any autocratic system to deviate her from the chosen path. Her puritanical way of life, strong motivation, never-slackening curiosity and mental freshness sustained her fresh to the end of her life. The cyber world remained outside her sphere of interest. She had acquired her immense knowledge with traditional art historical research methods and preserved it in her unfailing memory. She lived alone, and only entered a retired home first in the countryside and later in Budapest in her early nineties. She kept working there, for herself toward the end. She could

not be without work. "That's what I'm used to, that's what I like", she commented with noble simplicity. Her younger associates at the museum and colleagues interested in Renaissance and baroque art sought her out there. She welcomed them warmly, listened to what they were preoccupied with, and often gave good advice, a card with useful information, a story or anecdote from the past. Sometimes her colleagues took her to the museum to show their new exhibitions. She had the ambition to follow the novelties in international and Hungarian art history. The librarian of the museum, Eszter Illés, who prepared for us the complete Klára Garas bibliography below and also helped this work with data and pictures – supplied her with books and periodicals, as did her colleagues. She followed the events of her special field, knew what the younger contemporaries had written about. She was sincerely happy that her works were still quoted after decades too. She did not care for her ranking by the "citation index" but she was curious to know if her writings published several decades earlier were still alive, whether they could serve the young generations with still valid observations. As a Hungarian art historian, a Hungarian researcher of the history of Renaissance and baroque painting, she was integrated in European and universal art historiography to such an extent that very few in this region have equalled. Her rich oeuvre is our common legacy.

Géza Galavics

NOTES

¹ *Későbarokk impressziók. Franz Anton Maulbertsch (1724–1796) és Josef Winterhalder (1743–1807)* [Late Baroque Impressions. Franz Anton Maulbertsch (1724–1796) and Josef Winterhalder (1743–1807)], eds. JÁVOR, Anna – SLAVÍČEK, Lubomir (exhibition catalogue: Hungarian National Gallery), Budapest, 2009.

² See MRÁVIK, László: "Sacco di Budapest" and Depredation of Hungary 1938–1949, Budapest, 1998.

³ PIGLER, Andor: *Barockthemen*, Budapest, 1956; 19742.

⁴ Gerlinde Gruber of Vienna could rely on her findings in her effort to reconstruct the similar but richer collection

of the former Hungarian capital Pozsony. *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen*, 2006/2007.

⁵ HASKELL, Francis: *Patrons and Painters, Art and Society in Baroque Italy*, 1963.

⁶ BACHMANN, Erich in *Südostforschungen* XXIII. 1964. 386–387

⁷ The interview was part of a documentary about her which launched the series of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences entitled "Women in Scholarship". Its edited version was also published separately with the title *Garas Klára művészettörténész* [Art historian Klára Garas]. The director of the film and editor of the book was Ferenc Herzka, 2008.

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