

FEATURED EXHIBITIONS, EVENTS, BACKGROUND WORKS



”Colorful heralds of our black and white treasures” – Hungarian Sound Film Posters 1931-1944

The *Hungarian Sound Film Posters 1931–1944* exhibition was inaugurated first in the Rómer Flóris Arts and History Museum of Győr on 4 November 2016. The Collection of Posters and Small Prints at NSZL contributed to the event with the restoration and loaning of more than 100 posters. From 31 May 2017, the exhibition, slightly modified according to the properties of the venue, was open for visitors in the 6th floor galleries of NSZL. As the film posters of that era have not been researched till today, this event of two venues was a real curiosity.

Film posters are commercial and cultural advertisements in one. Their purpose is to call the attention to the film with their art and attract the audience into the cinema. In the sound film era, posters were usually subordinated to the films with the main goal of “selling them”. To achieve that, they depicted the starring actors who were the main reason for people to buy the ticket. Most posters just present the portrait of the stars or a scene, without evoking the atmosphere with a subtler work of art. Graphic artists were expected to follow strict guidelines, and their works reflecting respectable professionalism do not belong to the first line of poster art. They often drew up the sketch after a photo taken during filmmaking, with little room for creativity. On top of that, as movies were only profitable if made within two (!) weeks, the artists had to work fast. József Bakó, movie theatre owner at Tiszafüred deplored the quality of contemporaneous film posters with these words in 1941: “*The majority of large and narrow posters show hardly anything more than the portraits of the leading actors, without any scene or depiction of mood. That is not enough!... It is much more interesting and beautiful if the overall mood of the film is expressed by the poster.*” But there were

posters of higher quality, too, for instance: *Hyppolit the Butler* (1931), Graphic artist: unknown, *The Dream Car* (1934). Graphic artist: Ernő József Deutsch, *Gül baba* (1940), Graphic artist: Markos. *People of the Mountains* (1941), Graphic artist: P. Kiss. Naturally, the relevance and value as source of information of the posters, as well as the importance of their preservation for the future is unquestionable, regardless of their quality of art.



The first feature-length Hungarian sound film, *The Blue Idol* (whose posters have not been found yet) was released in September 1931. The romantic crime comedy set in the Wild West and Hungary was a huge

bust. However, the second Hungarian sound film, *Hyppolit the Butler*, released in the same year, was a box office success very popular till today. Following these first attempts, approximately 360 films were made in Hungary until 1944. Our exhibition presented this successful period, the golden age of Hungarian film-making, with the posters of the movies accompanied by cinema-related objects including a contemporaneous motion-picture camera, and various documents (photographs and drawings etc.)

The first section of the exhibition was dedicated to the beginning of Hungarian sound film production. Apart from *The Blue Idol* and *Hyppolit the Butler*, an iconic success of that era, *The Dream Car* was presented with its poster and a huge table with stamps, a favorite item of the visitors, that evoked Gyula Kabos's famous scene and his sentence that became a catchphrase: "one for the stamp and one for the share". The Happy Peace Times section displayed posters made before 1938. It was a period marked by comedies with mostly similar plot: rich man and poor girl meet, undergo difficulties and misunderstandings, and their story is seasoned by humor and sometimes a popular tune, with happy ending and the most sought for stars of the time. These movies were set in the present time, a bourgeois environment and mostly in Budapest. This was the key to sure success.

From 1939, the motion picture industry was affected by the nearing war. Artists of Jewish descent were not allowed to work, and war was depicted in more and more films. Comedies were slowly replaced by melodramas, a typical genre of the era, of bleak mood and distress. The first successful movie of this period was *Deadly Spring* (1939) featuring for the first time the type of woman who seduces and ruins men. This type was impersonated by Katalin Karády who then appeared in several other films in similar role.

Our exhibition highlighted characteristic film topics of that era. Visitors were invited to see the posters of films belonging to the costume, realist, ethnic romanticist, traditional patriotic and war genres, organized in these categories. The National Film Archive brought us a selection of 15 sound film excerpts that could be seen during the exhibition.

Our well-defined purpose of collecting and presenting the posters was to call the attention to them and inspire further research of both posters and films. Soon there was result. After the inauguration of the exhibition



in Győr, but before it was brought to Budapest, National Széchényi Library was offered to purchase a poster that for a long time had been thought to be lost. It is the poster of *Modern Girls* (1937) made by László Győri Gy. Our colleagues purchased, restored and elaborated it in a very short time, to make possible its display on a special place at the Budapest exhibition. We hope it was not a single occasion, and more posters will be available in the future.

To accompany the exhibition, a beautiful album was published with the same title by the Dr. Kovács Pál County Library and Community Space in cooperation with National Széchényi Library. The first presentation of the volume took place in the Győr Book Salon, within the *85 Years of Hungarian Sound Film* conference. The presentation in Budapest was held on 20 January 2017, the *Day of Hungarian Culture*, at National Széchényi Library. The audience filled our Ceremonial Hall. Out of the 360 films made between 1931 and 1944, there are 300 with known posters, all of which can be seen in the album. If a film had two posters, a large and a narrow one, both can be found in the book. 400 out of the 500 posters presented belong to the largest collection of posters in Hungary, the Collection of Posters and Small Prints of National Széchényi Library, the rest are from the collection of the Hungarian National Film Archive and private collections. Those who saw the exhibition, took interest in looking at the album, as the posters, according to the preface of the editor and creative lead of the book, one of the best connoisseurs of the topic, Dávid Fekete are "colorful heralds of our black and white treasures".

The exhibition was a success both in Győr and Budapest. As I personally guided several tours on behalf of NSZL, I have many experiences to share. One of them is from the Night of Museums, when I made up a quiz for the guests. They had to find out the posters described by short texts taken from catalogue cards prior to the digital era that display these texts together with the title. These neutral descriptions of what is seen on



the posters, sometimes can be really funny. The visitors enjoyed the quiz and sent me answers even weeks after the tour, although by that time I could only offer my appreciation. Some examples of the texts: "Hand of man tries to kidnap girl sleeping in a wide bed, but angry policeman jumps in from above" *I never stole in my life* (1939) Artist: László Győri Gy. "Green man pointing fingers at one side of prison bars, and prisoner with card in his hand, at the other." *Number 28* (1943) Artist: László Muskovszky.

I am not an experienced guide, so I got prepared for each tour separately. You have to speak differently to the young generations with no memories of that era and the elderly above 70 and 80 who lived their youth in it. It was interesting for me to have two tours a day, with these different age-groups. Students



of applied graphics in their twenties were happy to get acquainted with the posters and the thoughts on how to express mood and call attention with images, colors, and letter types. However, when I asked them who Pál Jávör was, and whether they had seen any movie from that era, there was silence. The group of the elderly, however, almost spared me the work of a tour guide, as went enumerating the film titles and the actors' names. I learnt a lot about the ladies' favorite actors and movies, and how they enjoy today remembering the good old days on weekend afternoons when the old movies are on TV. I enjoyed our conversations, but the group's leader might have been worried, as they spent twice as much time on the exhibition as planned!

The closing event of the exhibition was on 7 October 2017, with the last guided tours, a book presentation (Péter Zsolt: *[Do not ask me who I was – In memory of Katalin Karády, The Diva]*), a concert of movie songs performed by Nikolett Gallusz, and a show of Péter Barbinek. The greeting speech of our Director of Research, László Boka, was a playful enumeration of film titles: "Hallo Budapest! Keep Smiling! This is not *The Last Song*, here, *The Dream Car* speeds up to *120 Kilometers an Hour*, although there is *No Entry*. But it is not a *Guarding Post in the Outskirts*, here both *Bence Uz* and *Gül Baba* are welcome, *The Ball is On*, and *One Fool Makes a Hundred*. Sometimes *A Heart Stops Beating...* if a *Salary, 200 a Month fix* is a *Deception for 1 Skirt, 1 Pair of Trousers*, or the *Talking Robe*, although *Ball Dress Required. Pay Madame! Happy Times...* Sorry, *I was wrong.*"

On the closing day, as always when something good is over, we were a bit sad. For me it was a great and exciting experience to study the history of cinema, movies and posters related to the exhibition and the album. And what does remain of the event, what are the benefits for the library? Our restorers, Éva Doubinszki and Orsolya Koppán turned more than a hundred creased and torn posters into beautiful ones of so fresh colors as if they had just come out of the printing press. Our photographers, Ádám Ackermann and Lajos Karasz made images of more than 400 posters for the album and our digital collection. And we discovered some important details, too: for instance, we had been keeping two posters that turned out to be two halves of the same one, and now we finally put them together. It is the poster of *The New Landlord* (1935) Graphic artist: Gehl.

I close this article with the words of Péter Barbinek: "As for the poster exhibition, let me say that all we could see here is amazing."

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Film posters reloaded

In 2016, the Collection of Posters and Small Prints at NSZL contributed with the loaning of more than 100 posters to the *Hungarian Sound Film Posters 1931-1944* exhibition of the Flóris Rómer Arts and History Museum in Győr.

At NSZL, any artwork to be loaned goes first to the Restoration Department where after the evaluation of its conditions, we decide what can be done to make it suitable for display. When the restoration is complete, we issue a document that as part of the loan agreement, describes the conditions of the artwork. When we looked at these posters, we knew that there would be a lot of work to do!

We had 5 months to restore all the items.



During paper mounting, the Japanese paper soaked in starch was put together of many parts.

Printed posters of colors have been used as advertising media for a long time. As they are made for the moment, their material is usually cheap and thin acid-made paper of poor quality. They are of different sizes, but most posters are large, including items of 130 x 100 centimeters. As their storage is not easy, they often get folded, and because of their size and their thin paper of poor quality, they are extremely vulnerable. Acid-made paper sooner or later will break along the

folding lines, and its edges get damaged, which leads to the loss of parts. During the restoration of the posters, we first perform dry and wet cleaning and deacidification. Then we mend the damages, replace the missing parts, and mount the posters on Japanese paper (in old times it used to be cloth) with starch glue.

We had restored more than half of these 106 film posters before, but as some of them were folded for storage, they got damaged along the edges, and now we had to fix them again. The rest had never been treated before, and needed full restoration. Poster restoration needs room, large mounting tables, as well as other tools and materials, and the coordinated work of two specialists. In this case, the task was assumed by Éva Doublinszki and Orsolya Koppán. Due to the large size of the posters, our colleagues rolled them up between sieves in our largest pool.

The same method was used for deacidification. During paper mounting, even the tiniest parts found their place, and the missing pieces got replaced. Thin Japanese paper of large size, put together of smaller parts, was glued on the back of the posters for support. This step was followed by gentle drying under plates of felt and weight. The replacements were retouched with aquarelle paint by Zsuzsanna Tóth, to offer the posters a unified look. Thanks to the successful teamwork, the restoration of the 106 film posters was ready on time. We packed them carefully

for transportation, and then they were put in frame in Győr, according to the guidelines we had discussed earlier with the specialist.

Our restored film posters could also be seen at NSZL, on the exhibition inaugurated on 31 May 2017.

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The Japanese paper was fixed on the back of the posters.



The paper mounting glue was smoothed by a paint roller and a Japanese paintbrush



A mounted poster before drying

Spoiled for Choice – Chamber exhibition of the treasures of the Collection of Posters and Small Prints (24 October 2016 – 3 February 2018)

An integral part of the national library, and yet so unique, the Collection of Posters and Small Prints became an independent division of NSZL in 1935. Our exhibition *Spoiled for Choice* celebrated 80 years of its existence in this form, with a presentation of the colorful variety of its treasures.

It might need an explanation why we waited a year to celebrate the anniversary. The answer lies in the very title: because we were “spoiled for choice”.



A poster of József Bottlik

On one hand, we found difficulties at narrowing down the scope of small prints to be exhibited in this small area. The abundance of treasures can really be confusing when you have to set up a well-considered selection of a collection of approximately 4 million items. On the other hand, some prints originally very interesting in terms of historical context and content, can look somewhat meaningless and bland in a show-case or a display cabinet.

We do hope, however, that our visitors did not notice much of these concerns, and their experience was mainly the abundance of things to look at. Following the motto ‘treasure, value and variety’, chosen by curators Ágnes Kopcsay and Attila Tasnády, the exhibition reflected our collection in variety of time, genre, material, topic and categories.

We exhibited 183 items organized in nearly fifty document categories, all of them small prints with text and image, of one-page and booklet format, big and small, colorful and less spectacular. We presented historical eras from the 17th to the 21st century. Apart from the types of prints still in use today (graphic posters, postcards, obituary notes) there were also coats-of-arms of death, counting slips and guild letters typical in certain historical periods, but now only seen in museums, libraries and other collections. All the exhibited items belong to the Collection of Posters and Small Prints at NSZL.

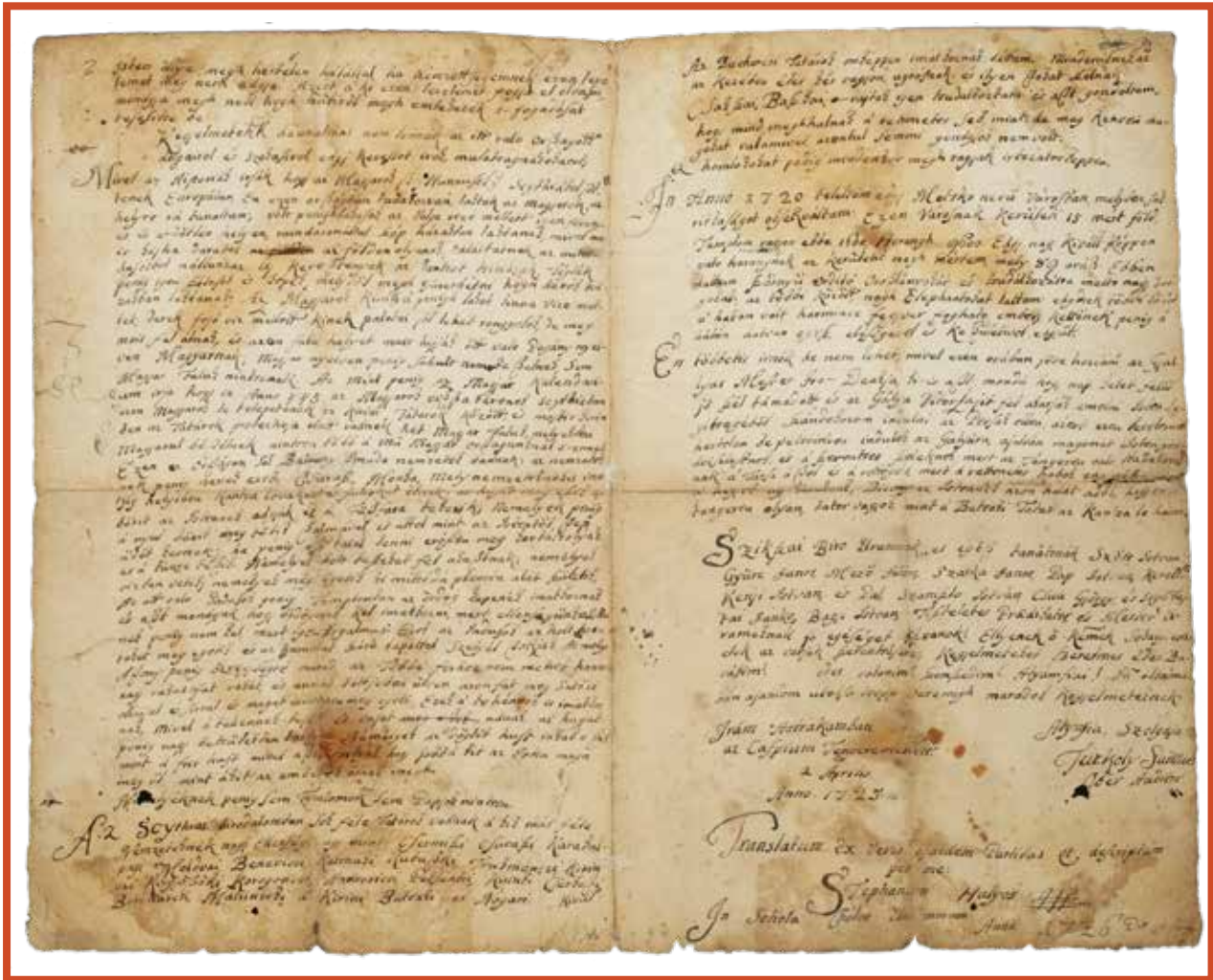
The curators were happy to see that all the visitors who saw these 183 prints, found among them something to remember.

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Hungarians in the Caucasus

Hungarians in the Caucasus – (Re)searching the Caucasian Homeland in 19th Century Hungary, the large-scale exhibition of the national library was held in the spring of 2015. It was dedicated to the idea of Hungarians and their ancient homeland in the Caucasus, an interesting chapter of Hungarian archaeology, national identity and historical consciousness. The exhibition of items from NSZL and several other collections in Hungary and abroad including paintings, maps, manuscripts, photographs and prints, took place in our Ars Librorum Space and Corvina Rooms between April and June 2015. The curator was historian Péter Pál Kránitz, PhD student of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University.

During the 19th century, a row of ancient homeland theories was published, but unlike the Turkish-Tartar, Finno-Ugric and even Sumerian-Parthian theories dominant since the 18th century, the idea of a Caucasian ancient homeland did not identify the origin of



The first report on Hungarians in the Caucasus. A letter by Sámuel Turkoly, 1724. Astrakhan. NSZL Manuscript Collection

the Hungarians in a language or ethnic group but in a well definable territory: The Caucasus. Nearly all the Caucasian ethnic groups got compared to the Hungarians by historians or laymen like travelers, journalists and scholars of other disciplines affiliated to this thought. The possible Caucasian homeland had a great influence on public thought, inspiring poets like Mihály Vörösmarty and, by the end of the 19th century, fascinating also the lowest strata of society. More than a dozen expeditions set out to the Caucasus from Hungary to find the Hungarians left behind, the peoples related and our ancient homeland.

The first of these endeavors was the 1804 expedition of Gergely Jaksics and János Orlay, followed by several others up to the beginning of the 20th century, including the ones led by János Károly Ógyallai Besse and Count Jenő Zichy. These expeditions had enormous publicity. Zichy's travels, for instance, were regularly

covered by the weekly periodicals on their front page. The Hungarian research of the Caucasus got such a great momentum that dozens of monographs and essays were published on its ethnography, geography, history, zoology etc. The expeditions brought home a vast number of artworks, some exhibited at the end of the 19th century, that are still researchable today in Hungarian public collections like the Museum of Ethnography and the Museum of Applied Arts. As the ancient Caucasian homeland was visually represented in Miklós Szerelmey's 1847 *Illustrated History Album*, and by Carl Wuttke, an artist who participated in the Zichy-expeditions, the idea of Hungarians in the Caucasus made its way to fine arts.

Our exhibition included a letter by Sámuel Turkoy from 1725 that first informed the Hungarian public about the Caucasian homeland and is therefore regarded as the starting point of the idea. Visitors could also



The first depiction of the city of Magyari. Miklós Szerelmey: *Hungarian past and present in realistic drawings with explanatory text*, Pest, 1847. NSZL General Collection

look at the maps used by the first Hungarian expeditions; some manuscripts of the funding of the travels signed by Miklós Jankovich and István Széchenyi; the passport and the handwritten reports of János Besse; the first edition of the epic poem fragment *Magyarvár* [The Castle of Magyari] by Mihály Vörösmarty set in a Hungarian castle in the Caucasus; paintings of Caucasian landscapes by Carl Wuttke and Ferenc Eisenhut; the correspondence between Jenő Zichy's companion Bálint Gábor Szentkatolnai and Géza Gárdonyi on the Caucasian homeland; Karabakh Armenian and other Caucasian weavings and carpets; Mór Déchy's map of the Caucasus, the most detailed such map of highest resolution of that time; photographs of Caucasian Cirkassians and Karachays, Dagestan Avars, Georgians and Armenians – ethnic groups that were thought to be close relatives to Hungarians.

The plethora of material and written items of the exhibition is presented by a Hungarian-English-Armenian trilingual catalogue, a joint publication of NSZL and the Armenian Cultural Centre published in 2016. The 136-page volume of the title *Hungarians*

in the Caucasus – In Search of the Hungarian Homeland in Armenia and the Caucasus was edited by Péter Pál Kránitz who also offers a detailed introductory study of the topic of the exhibition and the catalogue: the idea of Hungarians and the ancient Hungarian homeland in the Caucasus.

In 2017, the artworks presented at the exhibition and in the catalogue were rearranged by the curator for another event. The exhibition *Hungary in Georgia* took place in Tbilisi, the capital of the Caucasian country, in the Zurab Tsereteli Museum of Modern Art, within the framework of the Hungarian Days in Tbilisi.

Péter Pál Kránitz

Zichy's pencil-drawn heroes

The purpose of *Zichy's pencil-drawn heroes*, the exhibition of National Széchényi Library of Mihály Zichy's book illustrations, was to call the attention of our visitors from around the world to NSZL's precious but mostly unknown collection of illustrated albums.

The idea of the exhibition inaugurated in our Relic Space on 15 June 2016 was brought by the library approach of the works of the great Hungarian illustrator Mihály Zichy, deceased 110 years ago. The countless material of Zichy's six decades long career, great part of which he spent in Saint Petersburg as the court painter of the Russian Tsar, reveal the interesting personality of an outstanding artist. In 1891, a lady of Russian descent made a surprising statement to a journalist: in her opinion, Mihály Munkácsy was like the Eiffel tower, while Zichy was only comparable to Saint Peter's Cathedral. Later it could be learnt that her point was how extremely undervalued Zichy was in Hungary. From the 1880s, Munkácsy who emphasized the use of colors, was regarded the Hungarian national painter, while Zichy with his exquisite pencil-drawing technique remained Hungary's "Drawing Prince" (as the title of the 2007 National Gallery exhibition remembered him). He was a master of technique who worked with all kinds of material including oil, aquarelle, pastel, tempera, ink, sepia, charcoal and color chalk, but in terms of theme remained always selective and rigorous.

Zichy made illustrations for literary works by Hungarian authors with the clear purpose of promoting abroad the masterpieces of our national poetry with easy-to-understand pictures. This endeavor shows his patriotism and it is not by chance that Zichy's most beautiful works, apart from the grandiose paintings, are the illustrations for the poems of great Hungarian poets like Arany and Madách. A romantic painter and realist illustrator, Zichy always followed the requirements of the work to be illustrated. He captured the story and the details to express the same content as the author. And although the general practice of the era was to simply attach an illustration to the text, and the conditions for creating artistic publications



Image of a kiss as an illustration for *Demon*, a poem by Russian poet Lermontov

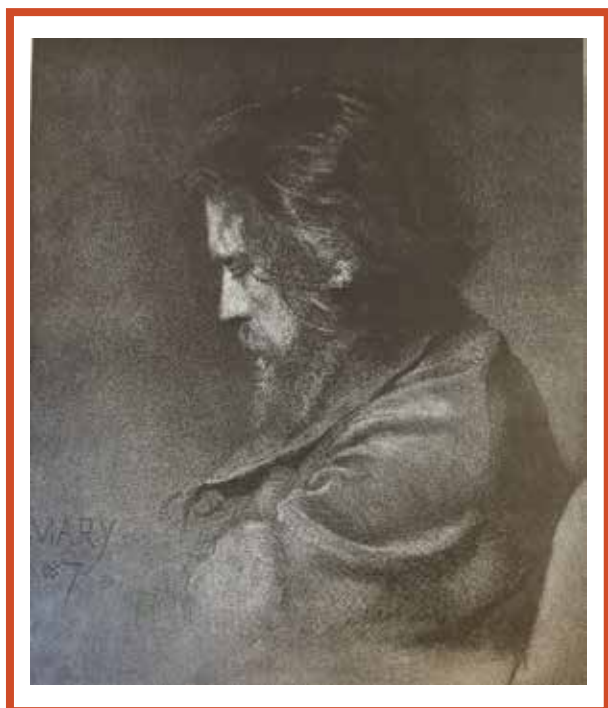
were lacking for long, Zichy in his last great project, the edition of the ballads of János Arany, achieved the so desired typographic unity of illustration and text.

The thousands of drawings Zichy made in the court of the Russian Tsars, including pictures of everyday events like hunting, aquarelle portraits and paintings of court chronicles, endowed him with vast experience and a mature individual technique. The high standard of his impressive illustrated album to celebrate the crowning of Alexander II brought him fame in Russia.

He was a widely read man of letters with a fine taste who himself wrote with pleasure and well. He liked romantic literature and knew the great Russian realists, illustrated the prose of Goncharov, Gogol and Lermontov, and wrote with admiration of Balzac. He constantly added quality books to his own collection he started during his studies in Vienna; on one occasion he spent his last 8 forints on Cervantes's *Don Quixote*.



The decorative album for the coronation of Tzar Alexander II of Russia from 1856



Portrait of Mihály Zichy, by his disciple Mary.

The *Zichy Album* published in Hungarian and German at the turn of the 19th and the 20th century and then in a second edition in 1927 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of his birth, is a gap-filling document in spite of the fact that it does not include all of his favorite works.

In addition to the works of Petőfi, Madách and Arany represented thoroughly in our exhibition, Zichy illustrated the following volumes: Géza Zichy's *The Witch of Leányvár*, Jókai's *The World of Hungarian Tales and Legends* and short story *Unarmed* (in: *Vasárnapi Újság*, 2 February 1902, No. 2.), and Garay's *The Veteran*.

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Library Salon IV–VI.

In 2014/2015, we presented for the fourth time our literature and culture history series, *Library Salon*, with the sponsorship of the National Cultural Fund of Hungary. This activity of our library is part of the mission we assume in the progress and promotion of the Hungarian culture. The theme of the fourth season was *Crisis and Innovation. Those nineteen-tens...*, related to the centenary year of World War I. We offered our visitors a colorful experience of the various facets of that exciting era full of changes and contradictions. The lectures were always followed by high-standard musical and theatre performances, and our staff set up each evening a small exhibition of our treasures that could only be seen on that occasion.

In the opening evening of the season, *Light and Shadow, the Reviving Cities of the Monarchy*, renowned experts of the field Gábor Gyáni and Noémi Saly gave us an insight into the characteristics of the urban life of the fast-growing cities Vienna and Budapest at the beginning of the 20th century. The focus was on the most typical place of that time's social life, the café, and Bohém Ragtime Jazz Band brought us really into the mood.

The next program was dedicated to the new ideas that appeared at the beginning of the 20th century in some academic disciplines and art. Our first guest, historian of science Judit Mészáros talked about the Budapest school of psychoanalysis, then historian of

art András Bán presented the history of photography explaining how photography became an everyday practice of the average people. The closing performance was an improvisation show of Juli Bácskai's Pszichoszínház [Psychology Theatre].

The effervescence of the 1910s theatre and opera life had also a place in our series. Kossuth Award winning director Miklós Szinetár and historian of literature András Veres introduced us into that fascinating world. The monodrama performed by Kossuth Award winning actress Kati Lázár paid tribute to one of the most famous actresses of the Hungarian theatre history, Mari Jászai.

In our December festive event we presented a talk between historian of art Zoltán Rockenbauer and Kossuth Award winning pianist Tamás Vásáry on avant-garde art. The performances that followed brought back to life the one-time art-loving Budapest.

The January program of the *Library Salon* series celebrated the *Day of Hungarian Culture*. Historians of literature Zoltán Kenyeres and András Kappanyos discussed change and unchangingness, literature and modernity, and then a concert was held by the Classicus Ensemble group.

Jászai Mari Award winning actor István Verebes and theatre historian Zoltán Imre talked about the the entertainment world of Budapest in the shadow of the imminent war, and presented the worldwide known genres of Hungarian cabaret and operetta. The musical literary cabaret show that followed just added to the mood: the Márton Rátkai Theatre Workshop presented



Hot Jazz Band



István Verebes

Megint gyermek szeretnék lenni [I would like to be a child again], a play based upon the works of Ernő Szép.

To celebrate International Women's Day, historians of art Tünde Császtvay and Edit Zsadányi explored the changes of women's roles in the turn of the 19th century to the 20th. Their lecture *Shield and Veil* offered a presentation of women's organizations and press publications founded at that time. Singers of the Budapest Operetta Theatre, Attila Dolhai, Anita Lukács, Károly Peller and Szilvia Szendi sang excerpts of *The Czardas Queen*.

Our next topic was the psychology of war. Historian Eszter Balázs described the roles Hungarian writers, artists and scholars assumed during the war, and the new trends of intellectual activity inspired by it. The lecture of literature historian György Tverdota analyzed the anti-war poetry and writings of Mihály Babits. The playful and abstract tunes of contemporary jazz performed by the Dzsindzsa group made the evening unforgettable.

The evening entitled *The Beauty and the Beast* gave an overall picture about how Hungarian artists responded to the chal-

lenges of the turn of century. Culture historian Edit Fabó told about the art of representing the tension caused by lost illusions, historian of art Gergely Barki (known as a 'detective' of his field) presented through the story of a lost and found piece of artwork how the search for these items can influence our understanding of a certain era's art. Finally, the Tóth Evelin Trio brought to us an amazing musical variety of traditional African music, Hungarian folk music and electronic compositions.

The last part of the series, with the contributions of historians of literature Lajos Sipos and Orsolya Rákai, explored the opinions of Hungarian poets and writers of the social and political reality after World War I and the closing peace treaty. Actors from the Miskolc National Theater performed excerpts from Sándor Bródy's *A tanítónő [The Woman Teacher]*.

This closing topic of the fourth season describing the complex and manifold relation between politics and literature served already as a transition to the next season of *Library Salon*, entitled *Propaganda in the 20th century*. The new series was also linked to the centenary year of World War I and the grand exhibition of our library *Propaganda in World War I*. Consequently, it explored the various aspects of propaganda in function especially in 20th century context. The season gained remarkable popularity for its renowned guest lecturers, excellent performing artists, and the actuality of its topic.

The opening lecture of the series, *The anatomy of propaganda, or how we swallow the bait*, was held by



András Kepes

journalist-writer András Kepes. He explained how our behavior is controlled by emotions rather than intellect, and how our dreams, desires, vanity and fears make us vulnerable. This evening's music was brought by Jazzical Trio lead by world-renowned pianist Norbert Kael.

In October, we tried and answer the question of how the irredentist propaganda between the two world wars functioned. Our guide was Miklós Zeidler who explained how propaganda was present in that era's everyday life, how symbols functioned, and who the central figures of built-up cults were. The closing accords were played by Kossuth award winning Hot Jazz Band that celebrated its 30th birthday in 2015.

At the end of autumn we invited one of the Hungarian scholars who have been publishing on the history of Russia and the Soviet Union for the longest time, historian Miklós Kun. He presented the variations of Stalinist propaganda that influenced not only the imperialist thought, but also patriotism and even the Orthodox Church in Russia. Then we saw the monodrama *Pokolbéli világnéző Faludy Györggyel* [*Looking at the World in Hell with György Faludy*] performed by Miklós Turek. The show of Versszínház [Poetry Theater] evoked the adventures of poet György Faludy, a contemporary of Attila József and Miklós Radnóti.

The guest of the year's last event was professor emeritus and Catholic priest Ferenc Tomka who analyzed the relation between church and propaganda, and how during the centuries of their history churches found

themselves in the most diverse statuses of society and politics from total power to total persecution. The lecture was followed by the concert *Provoked Traditions – Music another way...* by ContrasTon.

The January evening of *Library Salon* is related traditionally to the *Day of Hungarian Culture*, and its topic this time was “accomplice acoustics”. University professor Magdolna Jákfalvy explained double speech and censorship in theatre, and then the theatrical group of Ódry Színház presented the play *A sütemények királynője* [*The Queen of Cookies*] based upon the powerful script of the iconic Béla Pintér performance.

In our following event, film critic András Réz analyzed the relation between power and motion picture arts. In his interpretation, the institutions of power may forbid, tolerate or support, apply preventive censorship or just induce love and fear. The performance of the Rita Góbi Group, *Memento Mori dance road movie*, presented in the language of dance and movie how memory and time intertwine.

To celebrate International Women's Day, and with the help of the lecturer of the University of West-Hungary Judit Kádár we learnt about how social expectations and norms regarding women had changed between the beginning of the 20th century and World War II, and how women were targeted and used by propaganda. The concert by Viharlámpa Projekt with the title *Az időben eltűnt férfiak* [*Men Disappeared in Time*] and built up by several musical styles also elaborated upon the topic of female roles.



The performance of Ódry Színház: [*The Queen of Cookies*]

When it comes to propaganda, the relation between humor and politics cannot be overlooked. The lecture of historian Róbert Takács on the next *Library Salon* evening focused on the role humor and caricature played in state socialism, presenting famous characters like Reakczy Jóska ('Reactionary Joe') and items like "Jucika's hat". A selection of old footages from our archives featuring *Ludas Matyi* (a satirical journal of the state socialism era) was then presented to the audience.

In May, Children's Day nearing, the most renowned Hungarian expert of the history of children's literature, Gabriella Komáromi explained how the different historical periods left their mark on the sensibility of young generations through literature. At the end of the evening a more cheerful performance of 100 Folk Celsius brought to us *Puff the Magic Dragon* and his friends.

At the end of the season we could not help mentioning the redressed propaganda of the 21st century, so we asked psychoanalyst Annamária Tari to talk about the effects of social media on our everyday lives and consciousness. A worthy ending of the season was the great summer night concert of FunkInfection.

Our series of lectures was a successful deep drilling into the world of propaganda, an approach of the topic from several viewpoints, and a good occasion to present the cultural treasures in our collections.

The theme of the 2016/2017 season of our cultural knowledge dissemination series was *The Body*, and it focused each month on a body part. All the lectures of our guests and featured library treasures were organized accordingly. A novelty of this season was that instead of a chamber exhibition, we presented a *Magic Ball* section with one single exceptional item of our collections that as opposed to previous practice, was taken out of the display case by our colleagues so that the audience could have a closer look.

In the first evening, with focus on the MOUTH, Géza Balázs told about how and by what means the body talks. The presentation was followed by a comedy pantomime sketch by Dániel Molnár, and finally some interesting details of the first edition of *The Siege of Sziget* by Miklós Zrínyi were presented.

In October, guided by the LOOK, we had an interesting conversation with photographer Gyula Czimbala about his own point of view and the moments he made eternal, while on the screen his photo series of artists and their works lined up. In the display case, we presented the photo album of poet Mihály Babits's wife, Sophie Török.

In November, our FEET took us to new paths. Biologist Tamás Vásárhelyi, in his lecture *Let's take our feet in our hands!* explained what incredible and amusing variety is hidden in the shape and function of the limbs, and with a broader perspective he told about the ecological footprint we have left and keep leaving on Planet Earth. Our guests could have a look at Comenius's masterpiece *Orbis Sensualium Pictus*, and the evening was concluded by a Latin dance show.

In December, Christmas nearing, people often think about the tasty dishes the season may offer. This gave us the idea of inviting writer András Cserna-Szabó to prepare on the site a *Black Soup* according to a receipt in the *[Little Book of the Art of Cooking]*, a cookbook from 1695 that we exhibited. The soup was ready by the end of István Váncsa's lecture, and our guests could taste a real specialty.



100 Folk Celsius



Tamás Vásáry's performance

On the new year's first *Library Salon* evening, psychologist Tamás Vekerdy guided us into the mysteries of the HEART. After his lecture *The Art of Loving*, the inspiring tunes of Jazzation entertained the audience, and then the *Magic Ball* revealed autograph manuscripts of the stormy relationship of poet Endre Ady with his muse Léda.

The next event was organized around HAIR. Is hair a status symbol, or a tool of self expression? What has been changed in the past decades and centuries in the way we see it? Our guide in this journey was ethnographer Zsuzsanna Tátrai, whose lecture was followed by the piano performance of Pál Mezei. Out of the treasures of our library, we presented this time *Legenda Aurea* (1488) including the legend of martyr Saint Agnes.

In March, we focused on one of our most complex organs, the BRAIN: neurologist András Csókai elaborated on the topic of why human thinking cannot

be solely explained by the function of nerve-cells. At the end of the evening, a volume of Diderot's famous Encyclopedia was presented to our visitors with a 17th century illustration of the brain.

In our closing event in April, Catholic priest Feri Pál told about the development of spiritual power, and the SOUL that makes us live. His lecture was followed by the chamber concert of the Valaki Alfonz Band. The *Magic Ball* this time brought a special meditational print of the Hungarian devotional life of olden times, the *Booklet of the Heart* written by Jesuit friar Mátyás Hajnal, and published in Vienna in 1629.

Those who missed the events and would like to see them, can find them on NSZL's YouTube channel, for the first time in 2016/2017.

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Orientalists at NSZL – The beginning of a new tradition

National Széchényi Library launched a new cultural history series in 2017 with the title *Orientalists at NSZL*, to introduce the results of Hungarian Oriental studies to the broader audience.

The main goal of the lectures, discussions and book presentations held once a month, on a Wednesday at 5 PM, is to convey updated information to the interested audience of various areas and historical periods, as well as the most recent results of research with the help of Hungarian experts renowned also in the international academic world.

In the first season of the series, Géza Komoróczy looked at the historical role and formation of the intelligentsia and scholars, then Balázs Sudár evoked the poetic and musical culture of Hungary under Ottoman rule.

Finally, Pál Fodor talked about his most recent research of the Ottoman siege of Szigetvár in 1566.

The lectures of the second season mostly elaborated on topics related to the world of Islam and the Near East. Miklós Maróth, in his lecture *Ethics of philosophy and religion in the world of Islam* studied the survival of the Aristotelian and Oriental Christian thought in the Islamic culture. István Hajnal cleared up the common misunderstandings regarding Shiites and Assassins, then Balázs Major presented the new results of archaeological research related to the Crusader castles in Syria. Tamás Iványi analyzed the mystical interpretation and exegesis of the Quran.

As the series of lectures was received well among the specialists and the interested audience, we prepare a third season of *Orientalists* for 2018.

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