

## Recent Publications in Hungarian Art History

Reviews by Alfonz Lengyel

*Christian Art in Hungary, Collections from the Esztergom Christian Museum.* By Miklós Boskovits, Miklós Mojzer and András Mocsi. (Budapest: Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1965. \$14.50)

Miklós Mojzer presents a short but excellent analysis of the collection at the Christian Museum in Esztergom, András Mocsi wrote the notes for the Trecento and Miklós Boskovits those for the Quattrocento periods respectively. The importance of the book lies in the fact that it introduces the Hungarian medieval masters to the English speaking public: specifically, it evaluates the works of Master Bat I., Tamás Kolozsvári, Master of Janosrét, Master B.E. and Master M.S.

The painting *The Legend of Sta. Catherina* by Master of Bat I. is a most unusual pictorial representation in that Sta. Catherina, a princess of Alexandria, appears on either side of the canvas which is divided by the image of a romanesque column. However, Master of Bat I. followed the Italian Quattrocento practice of including a Trecento icon within the composition. This typical Quattrocento representation is well documented in the book.

Tamás Kolozsvári, the most celebrated painter in Hungary during the reign of Sigismund, followed the practice of the Italian early Quattrocento by placing the figure of King Sigismund, portrayed as a Roman captain, into the scene of the *Crucifixion*.

The development of an Italian Renaissance in Hungary was not accompanied by the immediate demise of the Gothic influence and a dualism of styles prevailed for a time. This phenomenon is clearly apparent in Kolozsvári's altarpiece. Despite the strong Renaissance influence apparent in the picture, the miniature kneeling figure of the donor is presented in typical Gothic style, complete with medieval inscription. Such an inscription also appears above the head of King Sigismund; it is written in Latin, utilizing Gothic style letters and reads: "*Vere filius die erat iste.*"

Other artists such as Master of Janosret and Master B.E. followed the Flemish school, while Master M.S. echoed the great German Renaissance masters and Schongauer and Durer belonged to the Danube school.

The *Crucifixion* by Master M.S. was painted in 1506 in a flamboyant Gothic style. The portrayal of a Turkish figure as the executioner is remarkable. This type of anti-Turk propaganda appeared

often in art works after the Turkish massacre at Otranto in 1480. (See: A. Lengyel: "Turken" in *Lexicon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, Vol. 4. pp. 391-392, Herder Verlag, Freiburg, 1972).

It is notable that the authors present a well balanced cross section of the foreign masters. Starting with the Ducento through Taddeo Gaddi and Lorenzo di Credi several Florentine and Sieneese Trecento and Quattrocento painters are also reviewed. Among others, Giam-pietrino, Scarsellino and Carlo Crivelli are chosen to represent the late phase of the Italian Renaissance. Northern Italian and Umbriañ painters and the painters from the Marche region and Romagna are also reviewed.

In addition to the Italian Masters, the book introduces German, Austrian and Flemish painters. Thus the works of the unknown masters of Salzburg, Lubeck, Witzendorf and Brussels as well as those of several known masters (Crispin van den Broeck, Hendrick van Balen, Jacob van Amsterdam Cornelis, Johan Zick, Christian Ernest Dietrich) are discussed and the studio of Lucas Cranach the Elder receives mention.

Due to limitations on the size of the publication, important Italian, German, Flemish and Dutch 19th Century masterpieces could not be included. In order to make the entire collection known a second and third volume would need to be published.

Unfortunately, the analogies do not make reference to findings of western art historians. In order to supply the western scholars with sufficient data the notes on the page opposite to the colour plates would need more detailed iconographical, technical and analogical analysis. For the half tone plates the same kind of analytical notation would also be desirable.

*A művészet Mátyás Király udvarában* [Art at the Court of King Mathias]. By Jolán Balogh. (Budapest: Akadémiai Könyvkiadó, 1966. 2 Vols.)

This basic reference book, published in two volumes, has been long overdue. Dr. Balogh, inspired by Professor Antal Hekler, started this work in 1925. Through decades she carried out her untiring, zealous research which finally resulted in this extremely important compilation. The first attempt at publication was defeated by World War II. Dr. Balogh resumed her work in 1952, when her project became part of the research program of the Hungarian Academy of Science. Thus, the findings of the excavations in Buda and Visegrad after World War II were incorporated into the work. Her ultimate goal was to write a monograph similar to Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri's *La*

*Corte di Ludovico il Moro*, but she also added a thematic catalogue of descriptive data.

The first volume is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the documentation of the artistic and architectural remains of Mathias' epoch. The second part contains all documented data on the artists and artisans who worked for Mathias. In the third part Dr. Balogh introduces Mathias as a man of science and letters. I would have preferred a different arrangement in which part three and part one were interchanged, followed by those parts dealing with the documentation related to the artistic and architectural remains and their creator artists and architects. In the third part Dr. Balogh documents the education, personal development and ambitions of Mathias. She gives a clear picture of the culture of Mathias, his attitude towards religion, and his political connections. At the end of the volume she provides documentation on the activities of the members of the court of this great humanist king of the Hungarian Renaissance.

The second volume is a collection of photographs of the most important archeological remains. The fragmentary documentation is grouped in the form of an archival catalogue, while the results of Dr. Balogh's specific research appears in the footnotes. In addition, she often makes comments and explanatory notes. For example, when she presents a catalogue type description of some architectural decorative remains, she footnotes the related Italian analogies.

With this analysis Dr. Balogh provides a great number of questions for the future generation of Quattrocento scholars, not only in respect of Hungary but of Italy as well.

The work should be translated into English.

*A Budai Vár feltárása* [The Excavation of the Royal Palace in Buda]. By László Gerevich. (Budapest: Akadémiai Könyvkiadó, 1966. Pp. 352. Illus.)

This is the first comprehensive book ever written regarding the excavation of an important Central European royal palace, which was almost totally destroyed by artillery fire and bombardment in Budapest toward the end of the Second World War. Two other important ancient Central European royal palaces, the Hradczin in Prague and the Palace of Pozsony (Bratislava) are not yet entirely excavated and their archeological analysis is long overdue.

During the late 19th century, when Hausmann was preparing the urban plan of Budapest, some remains of the old palace of King Zsigmond and King Mathias were discovered by accident. The excavated walls were recovered and the findings were removed to the National Museum. This important research work was not resumed until 1946 when preparations were made for a systematic excavation of the site. László Gerevich was placed in charge of the project. He

used a technique of such precision as is known only to prehistoric archeology. The scrambled nature of the remains, due to several violent assaults on and destructions of the palace through the centuries, made this technique necessary.

In recent years Gerevich published the most significant and important findings from particular layers. This gave rise to a dispute on the exact chronology and other pertinent data of the findings, mobilizing historians of Hungarian art, culture and architecture. With their aid Gerevich was able to come up with a definitive analysis covering all facets of the Royal Palace in Buda.

In the course of the excavations certain parts of the palace were reconstructed and a "museum in situ" was erected. Over eighteen thousand artifacts and study material, consisting of architectural decorations and carved work, as well as doors, windows, and small statues, were placed within the museum part of the Palace.

An important feature of Gerevich's book is the publication of the entire building plan. First he describes the results of work done in a particular excavated unit, then he correlates the results with the Medieval and Renaissance archives and new bibliographic material. His conclusions are compared with material covering the whole of the European Medieval and Renaissance periods.

Gerevich's book will serve as a very important source for any further study of Central and Northeastern European fortified castles. One of Gerevich's conclusions is that, though similarities of construction methods were shared by Toscana in Italy and Buda, the latter is closer to the "Vorburgstadt" idea which was likely imported to Hungary by twelve and thirteenth century German settlers.

Recent Hungarian research on Medieval church architecture proved that the Benedictine and Cistercian styles originated from Italy. This fact indicates a very strong architectural contact between Hungary and that country which was accelerated during the reigns of King Zsigmond and King Mathias. The reviewer is at present excavating a small Augustinian church; the Santa Lucia near Rosia (Siena), and has found one meter and a half above the floor, triple Gothic starting ribs at the corner of the apse, similar to those discovered among the ruins of the Chapel of the Palace in Buda. It would be useful to extend research into this direction before we can fully accept Gerevich's theory of the Germanic origin of the architecture of Buda.

Gerevich, with an excellent pedagogical instinct presents the photographs, diagrams and architectural drawings within the text itself, and brings together at the end of the book a series of selected illustrations related to the art and architecture of the Palace.

The new methods of archeological excavation applied and the technique employed in utilizing related research, serves as a useful model and example for similar excavations. I strongly recommend the translation of the book into English, perhaps by UNESCO.

## Reviews

*The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453.* By Dimitri Obolensky. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971. Illus. \$15.00.)

A good number of excellent monographs have been published on the peoples who one way or another came into the sphere of influence of the Byzantine Empire in the Balkan or Danube area. Such are, for instance, Runciman's *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, Jireček's *Geschichte der Bulgaren* and *Geschichte der Serben*, Dvornik's *The Slavs in European History and Civilization* and *The Slavs: Their Early History and Civilization*, Macartney's *The Magyars in the Ninth Century*, and others. As their titles indicate, these works are mostly concerned with the development of these peoples as racial and national units; their points of contact with Byzantium are viewed only as one of its chapters.

There are several works, on the other hand, whose main focus is the relationship of any one of these nations to the Empire. Among them we have Lipsic's *Byzanz und die Slaven: Beiträge zur byzantinischen Geschichte des 6.-9. Jahrhunderts*, Dvornik's *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Darko's *Byzantinisch-ungarische Beziehungen in der zweiten Hälfte des XIII Jahrhunderts* and Heisenberg's *Ungarn und Byzanz*.

The uniqueness of the work under review is that in a compact volume it brings together the interaction of all the peoples who, as foes or allies, affected the life of Byzantium in Eastern Europe, and were affected by it, from the sixth century till the end. Professor Obolensky seems to have been aware of the need for a book like this from the time he wrote the lively chapter for Vol. IV of the new edition of the *Cambridge Medieval History*. This book is a welcome and vast amplification of that chapter.

The title itself of the work, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, would be misleading if one does not read the introduction of the author in which he justifies it as an ambiguous translation of the ambiguity contained in the Byzantine terms used to express the unique relationship to the Empire of the nations which invaded its eastern European territory. Actually, the book embraces more than that area; it goes further: to the Caucasus and the Russian southern steppe belt whose inhabitants held the access to the Balkans and whose friendship