

Mutineers

Neo-avant-garde and New Wave in Hungarian Photography, 1965-2005

In the last decade an increasing number of art historians, photography historians, collectors, curators and other art world professionals -both in Hungary and abroad - have recognised the fact that between 1965 and 2005 a uniquely rich, intriguing and valuable kind of photography was born in Hungary where it thrived in subsequent years. This was thanks to some 40 mutineer photographers and 20-25 non-conformist artists who used photography too, all of whom rejected the official, kitsch, socialist-humanist "artistic photography" of the era and, inspired by contemporary (American, Western and Central-Eastern European) patterns, started to conduct photographic experiments. To this day, this was the only period in the history of Hungarian photography when our photographers did not lag 15-25 years behind an already outdated, classicized fashion wave which had long been superseded elsewhere, but breathed together with their contemporaries - something that can clearly be seen when looking at representative international exhibitions and publications of the time.

Precisely because of its experimental nature, this period of Hungarian photography was an extraordinarily diverse and varied one. Still, there are two big movements of style - both of them fitting into international trends too - in the framework of which we can place the aforementioned experiments in a way that makes sense: Neo-avant-garde and New Wave. These were not, however, two movements that replaced each other instantaneously. For more than half a decade, between 1980 and 1984, they had a parallel, intertwined existence - and they did, incidentally, get along with one another very well: their representatives would exhibit together, publish their works at the same places, frequent the same underground venues, and so on. Moreover, the two movements should not be regarded as opposites from an esthetic standpoint either, since their relationship was complimentary rather than contradictory.

New Wave, which began around 1980 and reached its apogee in the 1990s, was not the sheer negation of the Neo-avant-garde period (1965-1984); rather, the differences between the two were a matter of emphasis. One was *more* this, the other *more* that. Stresses were moved - and at times they would be moved back to their original places.

Nevertheless:

Neo-avant-garde is more *social*

- New Wave is more *individualistic*

Neo-avant-garde is *utopian*

- New Wave is more *disillusioned, punk*

Neo-avant-garde is more *sombre, it has a sense of mission*

- New Wave is *casual, playful*

Neo-avant-garde`s use of media is *analytical*

- New Wave *takes* photographic innovations *as a given*

Neo-avant-garde is mostly *black-and-white*

- New Wave is often *colourful*, parts of it frequently painted or coloured in
and so on and so forth.

(Sándor Szilágyi, PhD, writer on art photography)

Art+Text Budapest is committed to support the presentation and promotion of Hungarian progressive photography in Hungary and abroad. In 2017, together with Fotókultúra BT, the gallery published the seminal work *Neo-avant-garde Trends in Hungarian Art Photography, 1965-1984* by Sándor Szilágyi in English, and as part of its photographic programme it has organised solo exhibitions in Hungary (Gábor Kerekes, 2016; Csaba Koncz, 2018) as well as group shows abroad (Photo London, 2018; Paris Photo, 2018). The group exhibition presenting progressive photography between 1964 and 2005 at the Kepes Institute in Eger will take place to further extend this programme.

Concept: Gábor Einspach and Sándor Szilágyi

Curator: Gábor Rieder

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