

ABSTRACTS

János Mátyás Balogh: Stickyback and Photomaton: Trends in Portrait Photography in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century

The study, publishing the first findings of an international basic research project, describes the technology behind the so-called Stickyback Photography and the Photomaton photobooth, with special attention to their corporate background and social use. The paper is the first to point out that the Phenomenon of the Stickyback Photography, a term coined by the author to describe cheap, small identical portraits printed on strips of twelve, coexisted in several countries at the same time: besides a number of other countries, it was known as “Stickyback” in the UK, “enyveshát” (i.e. ‘sticky back’) in Hungary, “Leimrücken” (i.e. ‘sticky back’) in Austria, “American Automatic Photo” in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands (also known as “tip top” in the latter), and “photo mécanique” in France. This fact, however, is seemingly absent both from the history of photography in specific countries, and from international scholarship in the field. Besides the lack of international context, this also led some scholars to incorrectly identify these photos as direct positive photography or photobooth images. On the contrary, the 1911-1912 continental spread of Stickyback Photography, which existed in England as early as the first couple of years of the twentieth century, was in fact the adaptation of this technical and technological know-how in a number of countries. The founder of the first Stickyback shop in Budapest was the cousin of the owner of the Brighton office, the new business model was then taken to Vienna by Hungarian entrepreneurs, whence the phenomenon reached the German, Dutch, Belgian and French markets. This trend in portrait photos flourished in the continent in the 1910s, and its representatives included both individuals and regional or international enterprises. Certain varieties of Stickyback photographs had an adhesive coating on the back, in other countries the clients were given the illusion of automatism by pressing a button to snap the photo themselves.

Anatol Josepho’s invention, the Photomaton photobooth – patent applied in 1923/1925 in New York – was, however, genuinely automatic. The machine was capable to make a series of 6 or 8 different photos on a paper strip within a few minutes. The Photomaton was not simply an invention, but an international brand promoted by an expertly managed and widely disseminated media campaign. For the first time in scholarship, the paper tracks the development of this “world conqueror” business chain, even embroiled in stock market speculation, from the time when the first company was launched some time before achieving world fame, until its demise when the Photomaton-bubble burst in

September 1929. Josepho's Photomaton was, in many respects, similar to Sticky-back Photography, especially the format and the "nature" of the product and its whirlwind international spread, peppered with occasional cases of insolvency. In addition both were used by the widest possible layers of society and both became a source of entertainment besides their practical use to take ID photographs. The common denominator behind these two influential – yet unknown or wrongly identified – portrait photography trends was the very inventor of the Photomaton. Now identified for the first time by his original name, he was the same person who, from 1913 onwards, worked in his cousin's company, the first Hungarian Stickyback shop. This is where he submitted his first patent for a rather basic photo automaton. The initial backers and investors of the Photomaton included several members of his Russian-born American family, which is an overlooked detail in his story. Understanding his support network certainly nuances the inventor's heroic "self-made man" image created by contemporary media, which subsequently made its way into modern scholarship as well.

Tímea Bata: "Village Album": Rural Photography in *Új Idők* Magazine

The study analyses photographs of rural subjects taken by the so-called "Hungarian style" photographers for the conservative illustrated literary weekly *Új Idők* (1894–1949), and their use in the press. This entails the examination of 481 photographs, from 52 different locations, by 36 photographers, with special emphasis on photos taken in Csömör. From around 1925 onwards, almost from the moment of their birth, the photographs following this new trend inundated the contemporary press, and out of all media *Új Idők* was the most receptive for these images from the second half of the 1920s. The majority of the photos that can be classified as "Hungarian style" depict rural life, especially folklore attires. The number of these images peaks around World War II: nearly 40% of all the photographs taken in 25 years were published between 1938 and 1944.

With 46 images published, the most frequently featured settlement photographed for *Új Idők* was Csömör. Since the title of the photographs was a description of the scene or the atmosphere capture and did not include the name of the location, it is justifiable to assume that the selection of the photographs to be published was largely governed by aesthetic considerations and photo-technological novelty.

Éva Bodovics: Pictures of Destruction: Disaster Photography in Hungary in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Natural disasters have always been in the crosshairs of attention, and with the increasing access to press they have become so-called media-born events. From the birth of photography onwards, people endeavoured to capture the impact of natural disasters. The present study examines the earliest examples of disaster photography from Hungary, images of major floods in the 1870s. The photos of two Budapest floods (1875, 1876), as well as of those which devastated Miskolc (1878) and Szeged (1879), allow a comparison of the images created by the new technology with graphic depictions of previous eras. In order to draw a general picture of the perception of floods, the study also focuses on the representation of nature, city and people in photography.

The photographs examined retain the previous era's Classicist or Romantic approach to content and stylistic character, while offering unique and novel ways of disaster representation using the language of photography. On one hand, due to technological limitations, the flood narrative created by photography lacks the traditional dramatic style of earlier graphic representations using depictions of motion and emotions. As opposed to these, photographs communicate the silent drama of floods: similarly to post-battle images, the tragedy is encapsulated in the tension between the subject (the destruction) and the extreme serenity of its depiction. On the other hand, due to the – unintentional – departure from the previous dramatic narrative, floods depicted in photographs lose the primary reason that made them a disaster: the extraordinary. Floods are no longer catastrophic – stripped of their extraordinariness, they become everyday phenomena, mere misfortune.

Katalin Bognár: Photograph Albums for Mátyás Rákosi's Birthday. Visual Propaganda in the Hands of the Working People

The paper examines the photographic albums presented to celebrate communist leader Mátyás Rákosi's sixtieth birthday (1952). The photographs in the "Rákosi-albums," now kept in public collections, reflect the methods and topics of communist visual propaganda; many albums even contain popular paper prints disseminated by the state-owned Magyar Fotó Company (Hungarian Photo). These recycled photographs, originally and primarily created to secure the loyalty of the "working people" for the regime and its aims, were used in the gift albums by the workers as a means of communication with the leader. In order to explore the complexity of the albums' contexts, both the contents of the images and the materiality of the sources must be taken into consideration. The order and the grouping of the photographs, the captions, the texts

and the graphic components were all important part of the communications in which the albums' senders presented the life and the achievements of a given working community. Although the compilations convey the image of a virtual Hungary, the study also cites examples where the idealised self-representation does include accounts of problems or shortcomings. Finally, the paper presents the changes which the evaluation of these complex sources underwent during their life in public collections. In the years of their production and gifting, the albums were seen as evidence how the current political practice benefitted the country. Following the condemnation of the personality cult phenomenon in 1956, museum experts interpreted them as tangible evidence of a harmful and wrong method of governance. The author points out that the social life of the albums as objects, and the social life of the image contents of the album's photographs went separate ways. Taking both materiality and image content into consideration equally, the paper is an attempt to examine the complex meanings of these sources.

Orsolya Elek: About the Photograph as Historical Source

Photography is a unique medium that can convey information about events and actors of the past for the present. This is where its primary value lies as a historical source; and this is what can be used in historical research in versatile ways. At the same time, a photographic image can go beyond its primary documentary character by also attesting to its past and present audience as well as cultural, ideological, and power relations.

The essay explores the statement that a photograph – as any narrative or visual representation – is both interpretation and selection at once. Further, Elek examines the ways in which a photograph can interpret and select, that is, the layers of meaning that the very characteristics of the medium has to offer for historical research. Following a brief overview of the theory of photography, the essay moves on to tackle questions of the visual turn, and the attributes of the technical image. The author then turns to the issue of memory in photography from the angle of memory studies, which have been the subject of increasing attention in historical research in general.

The study aims to demonstrate that using photography as a historical source necessitates uncovering a number of various meaningful layers. Raging from the motifs found in the image, the subject of the image, and the technological factors, through the institutional background conceiving and adopting it, to the paradigms of the history of science, many factors are involved in the ways we integrate visual sources into the study of past and present society.

Judit Antónia Farkas: The Images that Informed and Divided the World: The 1956 Photographs in *Life Magazine*

Out of all the western press photographs and illustrated reportage taken during the 1956 Revolution, the ones published in the leading forum of international photojournalism, *Life Magazine*, were the most influential at the time. The magazine delegated three reporters and three photographers during the first days of the revolution. Their reportage was published on November 12. Thanks to the conscious publishing policy of Time Inc., the photos of the Hungarian revolution became known around the world almost immediately. Besides the English issue, the Special Edition of *Life Magazine* was also published in Italian and Spanish, and the Arabic version issued in 1959 was to become a bestseller in the Middle East.

John Sadovy's photographs about the Köztársaság Square siege, the disturbing images of the subsequent mob rule, accompanied by his personal report, comprised the most divisive material of all. It is not a coincidence that the violent images were adopted for propagandistic purposes both by the anti-Communist and Communist media, as well as the Kádár regime. The study describes photographers' circumstances during work, the strategies of publishing their photographs, and the reception of the images. In addition, the essay also addresses how the photos became globally known, how they were used in anti-Communist and Communist propaganda, and how they were manipulated to fit the agenda of various ideologies and political considerations. The essay is concluded with a brief analysis of the afterlife and reception of the images in post-1989 Hungary.

Hanga Gebauer: Proselytizing in Photographs – Far-off Cultures at Second Hand: Photography through the Eyes of the European Beholders

The study presents and interprets two collections of Hungarian missionary photographs – photographs in the Ethnological Archives of the Hungarian Museum of Ethnography, and the photography bequest kept in the archives of the Hungarian Province of the Society of Jesus – in comparison with similar examples from other countries. The nearly six hundred photos in the Museum of Ethnography arrived in the country in 1896 from various missionaries operating across the world, responding to the call of Kispest vicar, Antal Ribényi. This is currently the oldest and largest known missionary photography collection in the country. The Jesuit collection was created 20-30 years later, between the two world wars. It is made up of photographs taken at the Hungarian Jesuit mission in Taming, and photographic materials created and used for the promotion of

the missions, primarily associated with the *Catholic Missions (Katolikus Missziók)* magazine published by the order. Regarding the format and use, this collection – similarly to missionary photography elsewhere – comprises three basic groups of images: missionaries' photo albums, projection slides for presentations, and images printed in various missionary publications. The study follows this tripartite division, focusing on the subject matter of the images, as well as their composition, their visually conveyed messages, and their changes across time. It concludes that the photography associated with missionary activities and use of images was consciously designed as a communication tool to be used in an intercultural space, and it served multiple aims for various target groups.