

*neulák utcai homlokzat.*

**STUDENT DESIGN OF JÓZSEF ÁSÓS,  
1953, BUDAPEST, BTU**

**ŠTUDENTSKÁ PRÁCA JÓZSEFA  
ÁSÓSA, 1953, BUDAPEŠŤ, BTU**

**Source** Zdroj: József Ásós

# Emigration of Architects and the Foundations of Modernism Hungarian Architecture Students Entering the Profession Abroad After the 1950s

Emigrácia architektov so základmi modernizmu  
Maďarskí študenti architektúry,  
ktorí nastúpili do praxe v zahraničí  
v päťdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia

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Predkladaná štúdia má dva ciele. Prvým cieľom je prostredníctvom štúdia existujúcej literatúry prispieť novými poznatkami do témy emigrácie umelcov a architektov. Cieľom druhým je upozorniť na dôležitosť vzdelávacieho a kultúrneho zázemia v živote emigrantov. Štúdia sa sústreďujú na vlnu generácie maďarských emigrantov po porážke revolúcie v roku 1956, keď z Maďarska odišlo asi 200 000 ľudí vrátane mnohých umelcov a architektov.

Štúdia sa zameriava na význam zmeny prostredia na tvorbu architektov a študentov architektúry, ktorí opustili Maďarsko, krajinu východného bloku, a vstúpili do úplne nového politického, ekonomického a kultúrneho prostredia. Ako je možné, že sa im do tohoto nového prostredia tak relatívne ľahko podarilo integrovať? Čo im pri tomto procese mohlo pomôcť? Akú úlohu zohrávala, v tom čase jediná, maďarská architektonická vzdelávacia inštitúcia v Budapešti – alma mater emigrantov generácie roku 1956?

Štúdia na niekoľkých príkladoch ďalej skúma, k akým medzinárodným architektonickým trendom sa architekti „generácie '56“ pripojili v severných a západných štátoch Európy alebo v Amerike, desaťročia po ich novom usídlení.

Pri hľadaní odpovedí na tieto otázky boli okrem odbornej literatúry použité aj rozhovory a spomienky architektov emigrovaných do zahraničia v roku 1956 a ich bývalých spolužiakov. Rozhovory boli realizované od roku 2016. Skúmanie kariéry generácie emigrantov '56 je podporené i fotografiami, skicami a dokumentáciami, ktoré sami architekti zaslali autorom. Začiatky kariéry architektov a ich univerzitné roky v Maďarsku boli preskúmané aj prostredníctvom dobovej maďarskej odbornej tlače. Články a správy uverejňované v zahraničných časopisoch slúžili ako doplnujúce informácie o povahe práce skúmanej generácie architektov v zahraničí.

Bližší pohľad na maďarskú odbornú tlač z rokov 1951 až 1955 by mohol budiť dojem, že architekti a študenti architektúry boli v tomto období z diania medzinárodnej modernej architektúry vylúčení. Počas obdobia diktátu socialistického realistického štýlu nemali oficiálne maďarskí profesionáli umožnené sledovať „západné“ architektonické trendy, ale naopak – boli nútení venovať sa tvorbe v jednotnom špecifickom štýle. Z uskutočnených

rozhovorov však vyplynulo, že vzťah s medzinárodnou architektúrou bol v Maďarsku udržiavaný aj v rámci nutného diktátu jednotného štýlu, a to predovšetkým vďaka niektorým osobnostiam tvorby a pedagógom, ktorí boli modernizmu oddaní. Pri skúmaní osobných príbehov bývalých študentov architektúry je možné skonštatovať, že z odborného hľadiska neexistoval veľký rozdiel medzi štúdiom „generácie architektov '56“ v Maďarsku a ich ďalším vzdelávaním alebo ranou kariérou v zahraničí.

V období diktátu jednotného štýlu interpretovali niektorí profesori a študenti socialistický realizmus ako „aplikačnú metódu“: návrh budovy bol funkcionalistický; avšak bol zakrytý vonkajšou vrstvou – „oblečením“ – s potrebnou ozdobou realizmu. Zahraničné knihy a časopisy, ktoré mali predplatené katedry architektúry a univerzitná knižnica, slúžili profesorom oddaným modernizmu, ktorí tak posúvali svoju vášeň pre modernizmus aj na mladších vnímavých študentov. Vďaka udržiavaniu tohto vzťahu bolo možné sa k princípom modernizmu vrátiť vo vzdelávaní aj oficiálne, a to ihneď po zrušení diktátu v rokoch 1955 – 1956.

Kontinuita a pevné vedomosti získané prostredníctvom vzdelávania v oblasti konštrukcií a kreslenia azda najviac pomohli mladým architektom a študentom, ktorí boli po porážke maďarskej revolúcie z roku 1956 nútení odísť do zahraničia. Vďaka týmto schopnostiam sa takmer okamžite mohli pričleniť k najnovším medzinárodným architektonickým hnutiam.

Mnohí z emigrantov generácie '56, ktorí mali v zahraničí možnosť založiť si vlastnú architektonickú kanceláriu, navrhovali v šesťdesiatych a sedemdesiatych rokoch v duchu štrukturalizmu. Napríklad vo Švajčiarsku pracovali Ferenc Guth a Miklós Hajnos, zatiaľ čo bratia Halászovci sa realizovali v USA. Popri sledovaní nových trendov sa títo architekti podieľali aj na hľadaní neobvyklých konštrukčných riešení. Napríklad Gábor Mertl a Tibor Feckés experimentovali s návrhom výškových objektov so železobetónovým rámom v USA. Gábor Lóránt, ktorého do USA osobne pozval Frank Lloyd Wright, prispôboval návrhy svojich objektov miestnym tradíciám.

Osobitnú pozornosť si zasluhuje otázka postavenia žien v architektúre „generácie '56“, ktoré boli v zložitejšej pozícii ako ich mužskí kolegovia, najmä ak sa usadili v Amerike. V novej

krajine museli čeliť skutočnosti, že aj napriek anomáliám bolo Maďarsko v oblasti emancipácie žien v architektonickej profesii skutočne o desať rokov pred USA.

Štúdia diskutuje aj o príležitostiach nadväzovania kontaktov, ktoré sa po exile otvorili architektom a študentom v zahraničí, a súčasne o udržiavaní vzťahov s profesionálnymi kruhmi v Maďarsku. Jedným z hlavných cieľov študentskej organizácie Americká maďarská študentská asociácia (AHSNA), založenej v USA v roku 1957, bolo vytvoriť podmienky pre ďalšie vzdelávanie maďarských študentov žijúcich v emigrácii. V zámere mali i poskytovanie štipendií študentom žijúcim v Maďarsku: od roku 1964 bolo pridelených dvanásť takýchto štipendií, neskôr im však z politických dôvodov v tejto činnosti znemožnili pokračovať. O viac ako dvadsať rokov neskôr sa architektovi László Pappovi, jednému zo zakladateľov AHSNA, podarilo zrealizovať fungujúci výmenný program s podobným zameraním: sprostredkoval pracovné príležitosti pre mladých maďarských

architektov v USA prostredníctvom Amerického (AIA) a Maďarského (MÉSZ) združenia architektov.

Rozhovory s architektmi, ktorí emigrovali po revolúcii v roku 1956, boli dôležité nielen z hľadiska dôkladnejšieho pochopenia vývoja profesie architekta, ale aj z hľadiska informácií o povojnovom vysokoškolskom vzdelávaní. Išlo o vzdelávanie architektúry v rokoch 1945 – 1956 a jeho dualitu: modernistický prístup, ktorý bol prítomný i napriek diktátu socialistického realistického štýlu. Táto dualita uľahčila integráciu emigrovaných študentov i architektov do zahraničia, a súčasne sa zabezpečila určitá kontinuita s výučbou architektúry z predchádzajúcej éry aj v Maďarsku.

Táto štúdia má potenciál prispieť k výskumu architektonického vzdelávania v okolitých krajinách v päťdesiatych rokoch 20. storočia. Taktiež môže poskytnúť príležitosť na hľadanie súvislostí a rozdielov, ako aj doplniť poznanie o neskorer moderne a transformáciách, ktoré prebiehajú vo východnej a západnej Európe.

The present study intends, on the one hand, to add to the topic of artistic and architectural emigration provided with relevant literature;<sup>1</sup> on the other, it wishes to draw attention to the importance of the educational and cultural background in the lives of emigrants. For this purpose, this study uses, out of the long history of Hungarian emigration,<sup>2</sup> the wave of refugees after the defeat of the 1956 Revolution, when about 200,000 Hungarians left the country,<sup>3</sup> including many artists and architects.

The paper examines, inter alia, how significant the change was for the architects and architecture students leaving the Eastern Bloc state of Hungary upon entering an environment completely different in its politics, economy and culture. In the light of this difference, how did they manage to integrate into the architectonic profession of their new homes relatively easily? What could help them, and what role was played by the Budapest Technical University, Hungary's only architectural training institution at that time, which was also the alma mater of the '56-emigrant architects before their exile? In addition, the study examines through a few examples what international architectural trends the '56-emigrant architects typically joined in the northern and western states of Europe or in America in the decades after settling there.

Only a limited number of scholarly works<sup>4</sup> is available for answering these questions. To overcome this gap, several interviews and personal recollections have been made in recent years with architects who fled abroad in 1956, and with their former classmates who stayed at home.<sup>5</sup> Among the architects emigrating in 1956, interviews were conducted with those who later had the opportunity to run their own architectural offices abroad or who were able to take part in important design tasks as co-designers. In addition, our awareness of the later career of the '56 emigrants is backed up by the photos, plans and documentations they sent. This is completed by a critical review of the Hungarian professional media where their first works or student plans were published.<sup>6</sup> Also, the articles and reports published in foreign journals can serve as additional information on the work of the examined group abroad.

In Hungary, a rapid political transition took place in the post-war years; the isolation developing with the communist dictatorship had a significant impact on culture and architecture. The examined generation of architects attended university at the end of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s – where educational policy reforms were imposed in connection with the cultural transition, partly in line with the nationalized state control of the construction industry and partly with the expectations of Stalinist cultural policy. Reviewing the Hungarian trade press between 1951 and 1955 might give the impression that in this era, early-stage architects and students were kept isolated from international modern architecture since they were not allowed to follow the “western” architectural trends during the period of the enforced socialist realist style, but instead had to return to design in one specific style. However, interviews made so far have revealed that at some level the relationship with international architecture was maintained even despite the mandatory style guidelines. This connection was maintained primarily thanks to individual designers and teachers

committed to Modernism, and to the libraries of state-owned planning companies and the faculties of architecture. Examining the era through the personal stories of former architecture students, we can say that from the professional point of view there was no great gap between the studies of '56-emigrant architects in Hungary and their further education or early-stage career years abroad. To evaluate this thesis, the research presents the most important early works of these architects as case studies.

Another aim of the study is to explore what kind of contact opportunities the '56 architects had when forced to settle abroad in exile. Further, the paper examines when and how they could rejoin the professional circles in Hungary, and what kind of scholarships and exchange programs they could use to help young Hungarian architects from abroad.

## Hungarian Modernist Architects Abroad

Within the theme of Hungarian architectural emigration, the work of architects and artists who went abroad in the interwar period – either permanently or for a longer time – became the focus of researchers' interest as far back as the 1970s in Hungary, and several research projects have been conducted in this field ever since. In 1970, a publication was published on Marcel Breuer,<sup>7</sup> in 1973 one on Ernő Goldfinger,<sup>8</sup> in 1980 and in 1982 others on László Moholy-Nagy,<sup>9</sup> and in 1976 an exhibition of György Kepes's oeuvre was held in the Műcsarnok (Kunsthalle), Budapest.<sup>10</sup> Moholy-Nagy, Breuer and Kepes were all linked to the Bauhaus school, so, in connection of the 2019 centenary year, their creative activity has come into view again.

The work of architects moving abroad during the era of state socialism (1948 – 1989) was typically highlighted by the Hungarian architectural profession in the few years preceding the change of regime and in the 1990s, above all, thanks to Judit Osskó and Kálmán Timon.<sup>11</sup> In Hungary, the first significant introduction of emigre architects took place in 1983. The exhibition in the Műcsarnok, held with the title *Respect for Homeland – 2nd Exhibition of Hungarian Artists Living Abroad*,<sup>12</sup> received material from many architects practicing abroad, among them several from the '56 generation.

Dealing specifically with the group of architects who migrated in connection with the revolution suppressed in the fall of 1956 is justified for several reasons, since a relatively large number<sup>13</sup> of newly graduated architects and architecture students left the country in a very short time. In their case, the years spent at the Faculty of Architecture of the Budapest University of Technology were particularly important in increasing their cohesiveness as a group. Both the period of mandatory socialist realist style (1951 – 1955) and later the direct participation of the Budapest University of Technology in the 1956 revolution<sup>14</sup> influenced their professional and cultural background. However, it is worth drawing attention to the timeliness of the research on the '56-emigrant architect careers, because we still have the opportunity to listen to this generation through interviewing the living architects.

## The Common Past – The Technical University Years in Budapest

A significant portion of the architects who emigrated in 1956 were students of the Budapest University of Technology between 1945 and 1956. These eleven years were a period of notable changes in which also architecture education was closely linked to the political and cultural policy of the time. For architecture education, three important turning points from this period should be highlighted, all of which changed the structure of the institution, the curriculum and the teaching methodology.

The first turning point was the Communist takeover in 1948, which resulted in the introduction of ideological subjects into the curriculum and in the appointment of new lecturers<sup>15</sup> to replace “politically unreliable” instructors.<sup>15</sup>

The second turning point, i.e. the events of 1951, however, fundamentally shifted even the methodology of architect education. After the conclusion of the “Great Architectural Debate”,<sup>16</sup> in Hungary – like in the other states of the Eastern Bloc<sup>17</sup> – the application of the socialist realist style in architecture and thus in architectural training was made compulsory.<sup>18</sup> From this time on, any identification with international Modernist architecture was rejected both in theory and practice. Instead, the architecture typical of the first decades of the 19th century, i.e. the national-renewal-related Hungarian Reform Era (considered to be a “progressive era”) and the architectural tradition of Hungarian Classicism were used as the starting points in creating Socialist Realist architecture.<sup>19</sup> In connection, new subjects were introduced into the curriculum of the Faculty of Architecture of the Technical University – which at that time was seen as the basis of Socialist Realist architecture<sup>20</sup>

– to teach the students the use of classic building ornaments. The use of these decorative elements was then checked as a requirement in the semester design tasks and diploma plan.

### **Breaks or Continuity in Mastering the Bases of Modern Architecture?**

Hence, with the beginning of Socialist Realism, the process through which Hungarian architecture education had been gradually approaching a Modernist standpoint from the end of the 1920s appears to have been interrupted for a few years. In the background, however, it was possible to discover the results of international Modern architecture even during the Socialist Realism period between 1951 and 1955 – of course not officially and not for everyone. Interviews with former students back up this contention. But what were the methods of its realisation?

Most of the students interpreted the expectations of mandatory socialist realist style as a kind of “application method”. Basically, a functionalist building was designed, which was finally concealed with an outer layer, a “dress” featuring the required ornamentation.<sup>21</sup> There were some students whose professors even allowed them to prepare two plans at the same time: one in the style of Socialist Realism to meet the official subject requirements, and a secret plan for their own use in a Modernist spirit.<sup>22</sup> Some professors gave lectures on Modern architecture to a small number of trusted audiences in an inner circle.<sup>23</sup> On such occasions, images from foreign journals and architectural books helped the presentation of Modern architecture. It is hard to imagine today how important a role the professional literature played in the era. At that time, there was hardly any opportunity for study trips abroad or travel at all, so studying books and magazines was the only way for architects and architecture students to increase their knowledge of international Modern architecture to some extent. Previously collected literature was still available in departmental libraries and state-owned planning companies – where, with special permission, students could also work during their studies. Additionally, some departments of the University of Technology<sup>24</sup> and the main library<sup>25</sup> still subscribed to some of the “western” architectural journals even in the 1950s: these publications were only available under controlled conditions, but the committed students, with good relationships, could get them.<sup>26</sup>

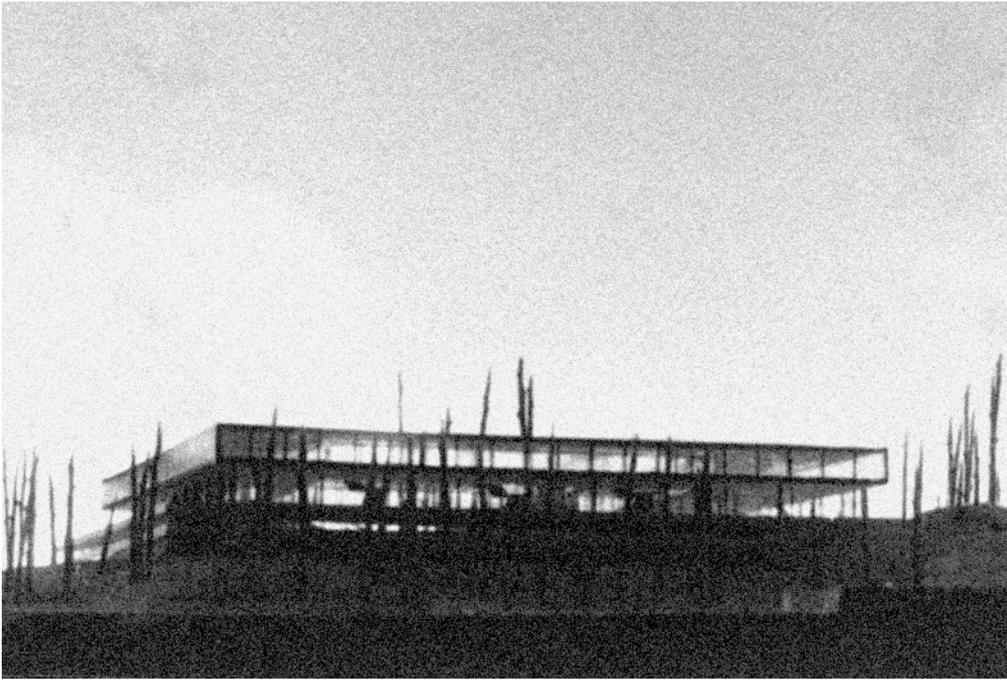
Certain tools of international Modern architecture could be used without any compromise even within the limits of style dictation. One of them was the architectural tradition of Scandinavian Neoclassicism,<sup>27</sup> of strong interest in Hungarian architectural education even in the interwar period. Interest only increased with the return to Hungary of the members of the “Danish course”: after the end of World War II, a group of architects and professors<sup>28</sup> were “resettled” to Germany in December 1944 and could work in Danish offices thanks to aid organizations. They returned from the Scandinavian states to Hungary only in 1946 – 1947, where they re-entered education and practice. The professional books<sup>29</sup> they brought home quickly reached the classmates as well.

Moreover, the expectations related to the socialist realist style were not the same at each design department. For example, within the subject of industrial and agricultural building design<sup>30</sup> the students enjoyed a great deal of stylistic freedom, although façade designs sometimes featured some Classicist details even here, such as a serrated cornice.<sup>31</sup> Despite the promotion of Soviet urban planning as exclusively the example to follow, students also found freedom in urban planning, as they did not have to take a stand on the style of the individual buildings.<sup>32</sup> Many of the students who specialized in urban planning later continued their career in this field in the US after their emigration.<sup>33</sup>

December 1954 brought another turning point in the history of Hungarian architecture and architecture education. After Khrushchev’s speech on architecture,<sup>34</sup> the engineering side came to the fore in the discipline instead of the artistic side, and in parallel the expectations of enforced Socialist Realism were also eliminated. The quest could begin for new directions of socialist architecture in Hungary,<sup>35</sup> only the architects and students who fled in 1956 could no longer participate in this search.

Those who emigrated apparently left Hungary empty-handed, yet in their minds they held the “solid knowledge” or “solid base” that could help them easily integrate into the architectural profession of a given country, despite their poor knowledge of the language.

Above all, this “solid base” meant the skills acquired at the Technical University. Among others, the increased interest in international Modern architecture, which, because of the ban, especially applied to some of the students under cover of the forced socialist realist style. After settling abroad, ’56-emigrants had the chance to experience what they had only seen before in pictures.<sup>36</sup> All



**STUDENT DESIGN OF FERENC GUTH, 1950S, ZÜRICH, ETH**

ŠTUDENT FERENC GUTH, PÄTDESJATE ROKY 20. STOROČIA, ZÜRICH, ETH

Source Zdroj: Ferenc Guth archive

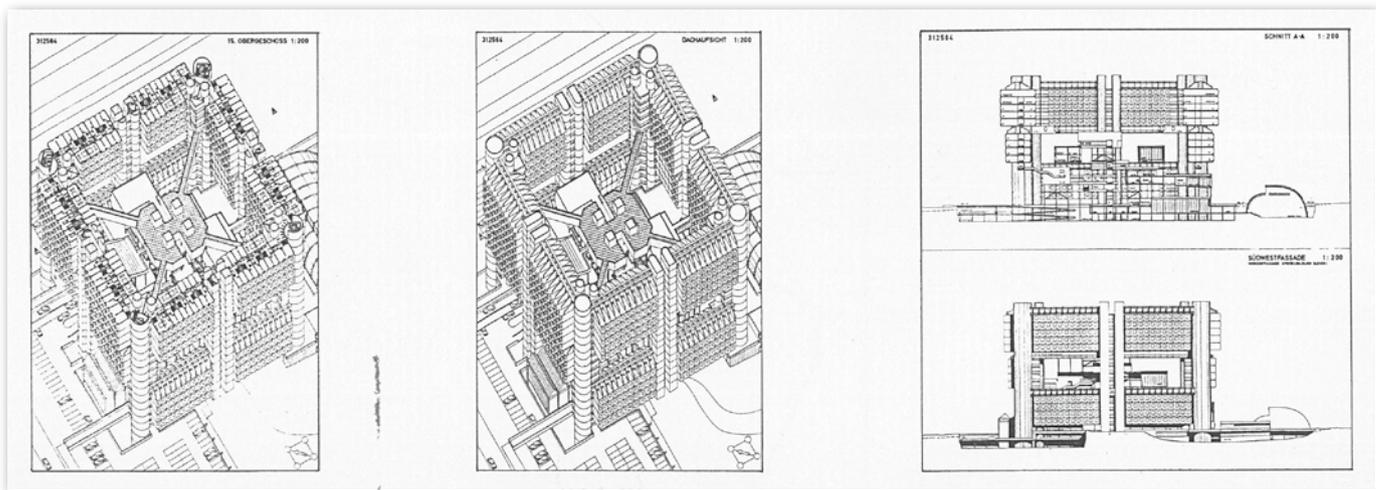
of these experiences strongly influenced the architects' own design work. In addition to developing a sense of responsiveness to Modern architectural trends, students also received high-level art education at the Technical University, in particular the ones who attended the design specialization during the Socialist Realism era and thus had extensive classes in drawing and watercolor.<sup>37</sup> Thanks to this background, they were almost immediately able to make themselves understood abroad in drawing, the common language of architecture. Although the artistic side of architecture was brought to the forefront under Socialist Realism, engineering education was hardly neglected either. For example, both the civil engineering (building contractor) and the architecture (design) faculties had high-level classes of Building Constructions (lecturer: László Gábor) and Structural Engineering (lecturer: Pál Csonka). If emigrant Hungarian architects might have not immediately appreciated this "solid knowledge" around 1956; decades later, almost without exception, all interviewees admitted the role of the educational background in their career abroad.

### '56-Emigrant Architects in the World

In the last days of the revolution, before its crushing by the military intervention of the USSR, tens of thousands of Hungarians migrated to the west before the border was closed for decades, thus isolating Hungary behind the Iron Curtain. According to our research, about one hundred and fifty qualified architects and architecture students fled from Hungary at this time. Hereinafter, the study would like to illustrate through some examples which direction their careers took, and who had the opportunity to run an independent office a few years after the exile. In the 1960s and 1970s, their responsiveness to new architectural trends oriented many of these architects towards Structuralism. Miklós Hajnos and Ferenc Guth practiced in Switzerland while Imre Halász worked with his brother Antal in the USA, where they found entry to the international stream through their work.

Miklós Hajnos and Ferenc Guth – like many Hungarian architecture students<sup>38</sup> – were able to continue their interrupted Hungarian studies at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zurich, where they immediately joined the Modern Architecture course to complete their semesters and diploma projects.

*Miklós Hajnos* (Budapest, 1936 –) found his theoretical background in Structuralism. Contributing to his choice was his opportunity to listen to Louis Kahn's lectures in Zurich personally, and encountered significant discussion about the work of the American architect at Professor Bernhard Hoesli's university classes. Following his early structuralist plans, Louis Kahn was just formulating his architectural *ars poetica* around this time, a vision which soon took shape in his unique version of Monumentalism. Shortly afterwards, in his own design practice the young Hungarian architect



**MIKLÓS HAJNOS, DESIGN  
OF A DORMITORY, 1968,  
HÖNGGERBERG, SWITZERLAND**

MIKLÓS HAJNOS, NÁVRH  
INTERNÁTU, 1968, HÖNGGERBERG,  
ŠVAJČIARSKO

Source Zdroj: Miklós Hajnos archive



**FERENC GUTH AND FRÉDÉRIC  
BRUGGER, BUILDING OF  
A NURSERY SCHOOL, 1966,  
LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND**

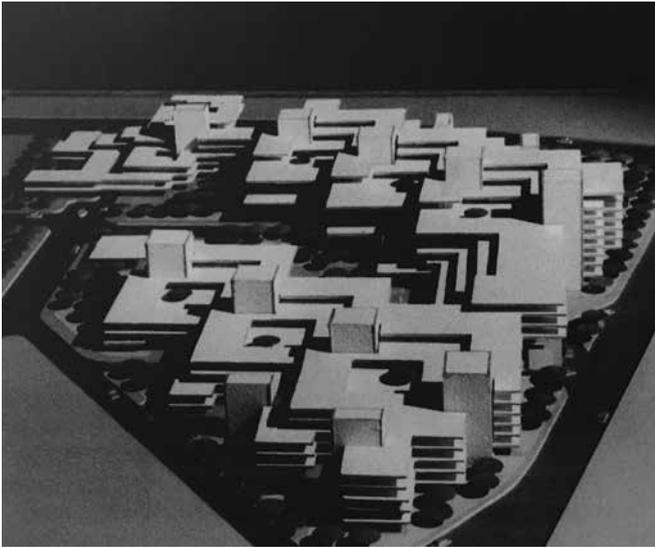
FERENC GUTH A FRÉDÉRIC  
BRUGGER, STAVBA MATERSKEJ  
ŠKOLY, 1966, LAUSANNE,  
ŠVAJČIARSKO

Source Zdroj: Ferenc Guth archive



tried to design building ensembles of roughly the same units in order to create a kind of “living organism” with change and growth as its primary features.<sup>39</sup> For example, this design concept occurs in the building complex of the Hildesheim campus in Germany (1962 – 1964) capable for further expansion, the expansion concept for the Aarau Central Hospital (1968 – 1978), and the mega-structure of the ETH student dormitory in Hönggerberg (1968).<sup>40</sup> In the latter plan, which won the architect 4th prize at the 1968 design competition, the theoretical background can be clearly perceived on the entry sheets. In line with some of the works of Japanese architecture of the era, the architect placed the dorm rooms in capsules that can be suspended in the wall structure of the cube-shaped building in any number. The load-bearing and circulation systems are placed in towers, in this way separating from the so-called “serviced” building parts (the dorm rooms and the community spaces inside the cube) even in their form.

Similarly, *Ferenc Guth* (Budapest, 1933 –) started his career by joining the trend of Structuralism. The architect, who settled in Lausanne, took part in a competition in 1966 together with Swiss architect Frédéric Brugger to design a kindergarten and daycare to be built in the city. Their plan was awarded first prize; and later, at the beginning of the 2000s, the building was declared a monument of regional importance.<sup>41</sup> The ensemble consists of two-storey small units spread on a large area, a point of comparison with the Orphanage in Amsterdam, a work of Aldo van Eyck completed in 1960. Although the building of Ferenc Guth and his colleague is far smaller in scale than the orphanage and perhaps less strictly constructed, we can observe the house-like units with skylight



**ANTAL HALÁSZ AND IMRE HALÁSZ,  
CAMBRIDGE WEST RESEARCH  
CENTER, MA, 1964**

ANTAL HALÁSZ A IMRE HALÁSZ,  
CENTRUM VÝSKUMU V CAMBRIDGE  
WEST, MA, 1964

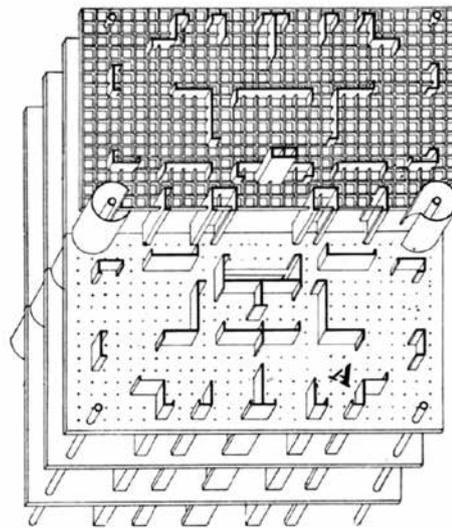
**Source** Zdroj: TIMON, Kálmán and  
GÁSPÁR, Zsuzsanna, 2008. (cop. 2002).  
*Imre Halasz, Anthony Halasz.* Budapest:  
Annata, p. 9



**GÁBOR MERTL, OFFICE BUILDING,  
1973, HARRISON, NY**

GÁBOR MERTL, ADMINISTRATÍVNA  
BUDOVA, 1973, HARRISON, NY

**Source** Zdroj: Gábor Mertl archive



**STRUCTURAL SYSTEM BY GYÖRGY  
SÁMSONDI KISS AND OLGYAY &  
OLGYAY**

KONŠTRUKČNÝ SYSTÉM,  
AUTORI GYÖRGY SÁMSONDI KISS  
A OLGYAY & OLGYAY

**Source** Zdroj: Új Építészet. 1(3), 1946, p. 7

and the harmonic ratio of the exterior and interior in this case too. The system of  $4 \times 2$  “houses” make a home for children of different ages. These units are east-west oriented, while the two slightly larger units in the center – the interconnected playroom and dining room – are stretching to north and south. On the one hand, the structure of small, house-shaped building parts can be explained by the program specification that intends to satisfy the slightly but not significantly different needs of four age groups. On the other hand, architects wanted to set up a scale for interior spaces that can be perceived and easily interpreted by kindergarten children.<sup>42</sup>

The *Halász brothers*<sup>43</sup> achieved their first successes in the US with two joint works in the 1960s. When preparing the plans for the Cambridge West Research Center (MA, 1964) and the NASA Research Center in Cambridge (MA, 1968), they were striving to create a building complex that organically fit into the existing environment and could be expanded and further developed later.<sup>44</sup> Community spaces and outdoor and indoor courtyards played an important role in both plans; and the circulation units placed in the columns (=the stairwell-towers) are clearly separated in both ensembles.<sup>45</sup>

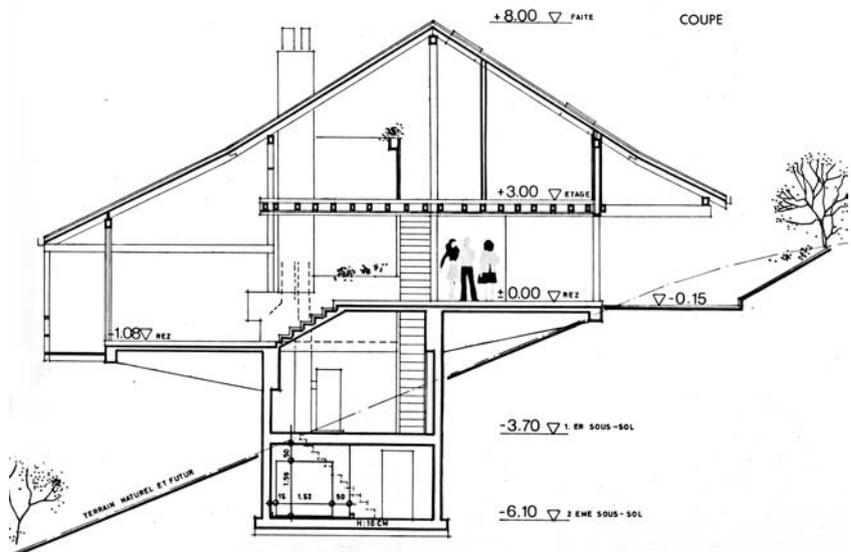
Working in New York, US, *Gábor Mertl* (Budapest, 1933–) initially followed the international Modern trend, especially the architecture of Mies van der Rohe, by designing office buildings set on pillars and surrounded with curtain walls. However, in the case of the Harrison office building (1973), he enclosed the “fragile” glass box in a robust reinforced concrete frame.



**FERENC GUTH, RESIDENTIAL BUILDING, 1979, LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND**

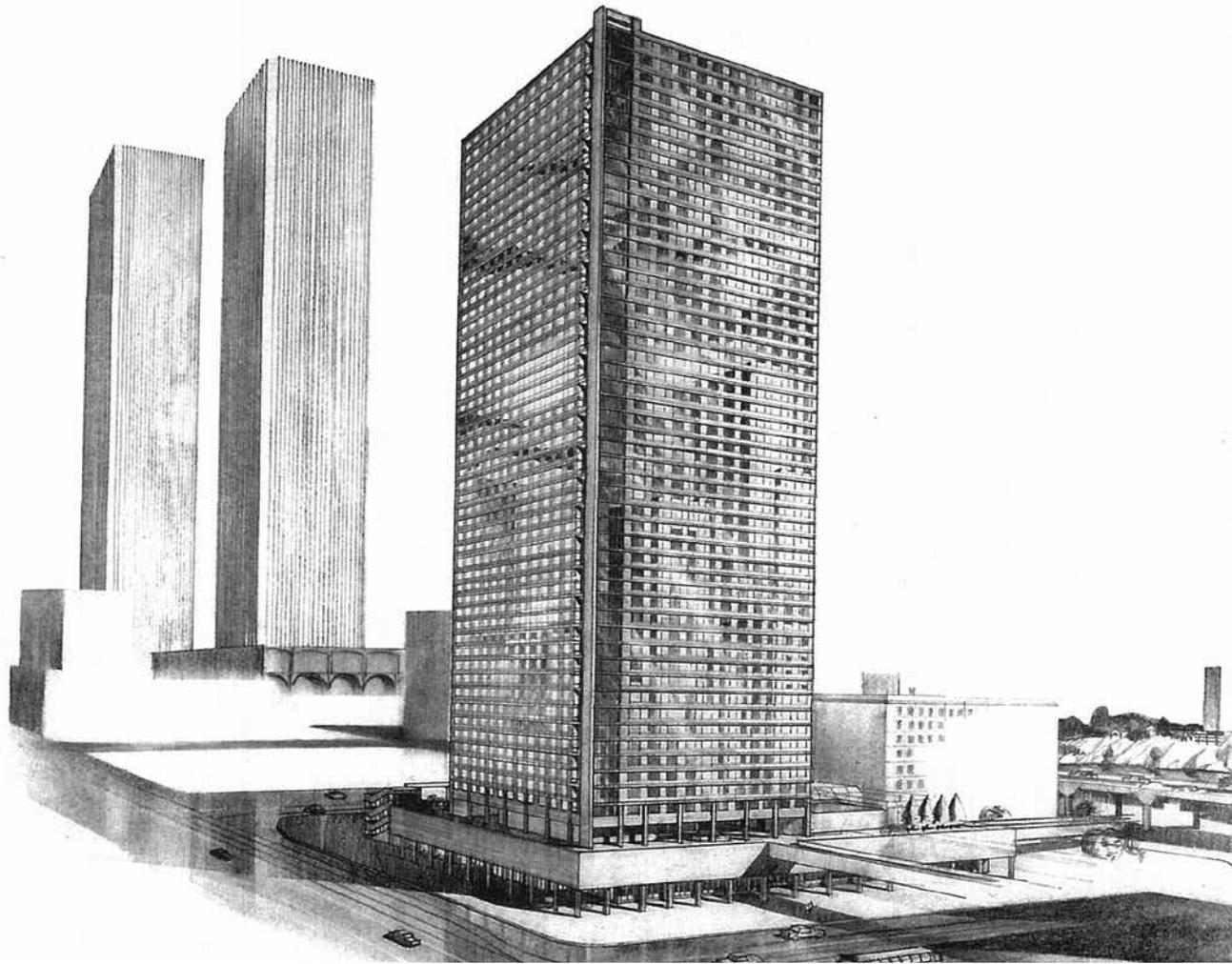
FERENC GUTH, OBYTNÁ BUDOVA, 1979, LAUSANNE, ŠVAJČIARSKO

Source Zdroj: Ferenc Guth archive



In addition to a strong theoretical background, an increased interest in special structural solutions and technologies can also be traced back in the work of Hungarian '56-emigrant architects. It is no coincidence, because during the time spent in Hungary, they could learn about the Olgyay brothers' innovative professional activities,<sup>46</sup> or Béla Sámsondi Kiss's structural inventions.<sup>47</sup> A commission in 1979 in Lausanne meant an exciting task for Ferenc Guth and his co-designers, which was to design a family house on a steep hillside. The solution is based on a two-storey reinforced concrete foundation with a floor area of  $5 \times 5$  meters, which supports a cantilevered reinforced concrete slab. This slab is the ground floor of the house, and everything above it is built with a wooden structure, as an important design aspect was to make the building as easy as possible to construct. Due to the foundation dimensions, the architects designed the floor plan with a  $5 \times 5$ -meter grid.<sup>48</sup>

Gábor Mertl experimented with unconventional structures in New York. In the 1970s and 1980s, he made two skyscraper plans, but as a result of political and economic considerations of that time, they were eventually not realized. They are characterized by their reinforced concrete structure instead of the commonly used steel frame. Additionally, the building Mertl designed for the Holiday Inn hotel chain is also special for its bold shaping. Two side walls of the 40 – 42-storey 560-room hotel end in a curve, widening the construction at the bottom. Only a narrow opening, in line with the middle corridor, perforates the almost completely closed walls. In the six middle axes of the main façade, the rooms are bordered by French-window-like glass surfaces, while in the two



**GÁBOR MERTL, APARTMENT AND COMMERCIAL COMPLEX, 1980S, NYC**

GÁBOR MERTL, BYTOVÝ A KOMERČNÝ KOMPLEX, 1980, NYC

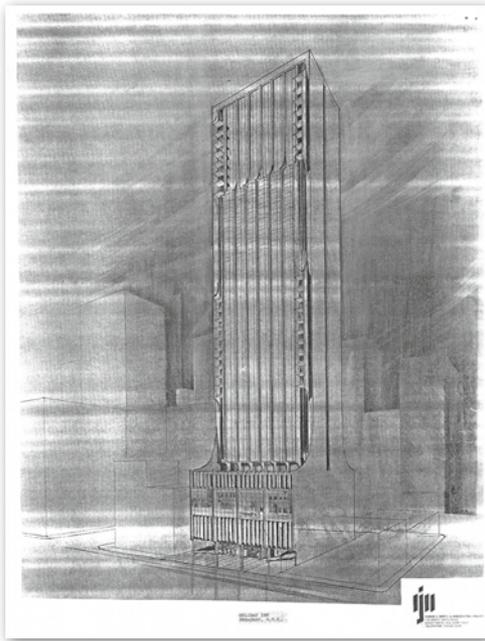
Source Zdroj: Gábor Mertl archive

outermost axes, the building is articulated by 18 terraces protected from the top and bottom and from two sides.

In 1964, a high-rise building, ‘The Summit’, was constructed in San Francisco with arched additions. The architect of the 32-storey luxury apartment building was *Tibor Fecskés* (Szeged, 1919–2016), who taught at the Department of Residential Design, Budapest University of Technology together with Imre Halász before 1956. Again, the structure is reinforced concrete instead of a steel frame: the curved elements enclosing the building on the sides not only define the form, but also play a significant role in supporting the reinforced concrete slabs.<sup>49</sup>

*Gábor Lóránt* (Lóránt Zsitvay Gábor, Budapest, 1933–2005) found it easier to adapt to the American architectural traditions, since in some of his planning tasks he directly followed Frank Lloyd Wright’s footsteps. Unlike most refugees, the Hungarian architect was not forced to spend weeks or months in the refugee camp established on the east coast of the United States in 1956, because – through the intercession of his sister’s family living in the US – Wright personally invited him to the country.<sup>50</sup> At that time, the master was already in his 90s, but his work could well have influenced the young Hungarian architect – at least as can be inferred from some of his plans. Lóránt might have been aware of Wright’s architecture even during his university studies in Budapest, because some instructors discussed among other instances, Wright’s Fallingwater as a “negative example”.<sup>51</sup>

Gábor Lóránt’s buildings are primarily linked to the style of Wright by their use of natural materials and certain formal solutions. The formal design of the Seattle Opportunities Industrialization Center (1974 – 1982) can be compared to the SC Johnson complex (F. L. Wright, 1936–44): the striped appearance of the six-storey construction is achieved with the glossy white cladding,



**GÁBOR MERTL, HOLIDAY INN  
BROADWAY, 1970S, NYC**

GÁBOR MERTL, HOLIDAY INN  
BROADWAY, 1970, NYC

Source Zdroj: Gábor Mertl



**TIBOR FECSKÉS, THE SUMMIT  
RESIDENTIAL TOWER, 1964, SAN  
FRANCISCO, CA**

TIBOR FECSKÉS, SUMMIT – OBYTNÁ  
VEŽA, 1964, SAN FRANCISCO,  
KALIFORNIA

Source Zdroj: HaeB, Wikipedia.org

the reflective ribbon windows, and the recesses appearing as dark stripes. Raised in the formerly stagnant downtown area of Seattle, the ensemble consists of three main parts: the southern wing is mainly for shops, the corridors are located in the withdrawn middle part, while the northern wing includes classrooms and offices.

The issue of the '56-emigrant female architects, who were in a far more difficult position than their male colleagues especially when they settled in America, is particularly worthy of consideration. In the USA, Olga Szokolay Vállay (Budapest, 1932 –), Erzsébet Rozsnyainé Váró (née Erzsébet Póczy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, 1927 –), Charlotte Sivo (née Sarolta Sáfrány, Szentes, 1930 –) and Éva Vecsei (née Éva Holló, Vienna, 1930 –) had to face the fact that, in spite of the anomalies, Hungary was actually a decade ahead of the USA in the field of female emancipation in the architectural profession. While in Hungary – as in the other states of the Eastern Bloc<sup>52</sup> – the postwar reconstructions and socialist ideology made it necessary for women to work in traditionally “male professions” like architecture, in the '50s and '60s America, people could hardly imagine a woman being an architect. However, it was completely accepted for a woman to do interior design and furnishings.<sup>53</sup> At the beginning of her career in Hungary, Éva Vecsei achieved several competition successes, so she was not hindered abroad either: in Canada, despite all prejudices, she started to work as an architect and, in co-operation with other female architects, took part in the spread of Modern architecture in the province of Quebec.<sup>54</sup> In the new environment, the intention of compliance was satisfied by engaging in an expressive architectural style: her buildings designed in the 1960s – 1970s as co-architect or as independent architect represent the powerful trend of New Brutalism. The best known of them is the Place Bonaventure building associated with the 1967 Montreal World Expo (ARCOP & Associates, 1962 – 1966).

### **Architectural Relationships and Migration of Ideas across Borders**

These few examples clearly show that the '56-emigrants chose different directions after moving abroad: in their oeuvres they were involved with Modernism, Structuralism, New Brutalism, and the architectural solutions specific to the country of practice. While the role of the Hungarian educational background – mostly because of the functionalist design practiced throughout the curriculum – can be traced back in their integration, in their work it would be hard to find concrete relationships with Hungarian architecture of the time. For many years, it was impossible for them

**GÁBOR LÓRÁNT,  
SEATTLE OPPORTUNITIES  
INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER,  
1974 – 1982, SEATTLE, WA**

GÁBOR LÓRÁNT, CENTRUM  
INDUSTRIALIZÁCIÉ V SEATTLI,  
1974 – 1982, SEATTLE, WA

Source Zdroj: Gábor Lóránt



**ARCOP & ASSOCIATES, PLACE  
BONAVENTURE, 1962 – 1966,  
MONTREAL, CANADA**

ARCOP & ASSOCIATES, PLACE  
BONAVENTURE, 1962 – 1966,  
MONTREAL, KANADA

Source Zdroj: Jeangagnon, Wikipedia.org

to keep not only professional but even family relationships. Initially many of them thought they were only “on a study trip” abroad and could return to their homeland over time, where they would be able to take advantage of their knowledge acquired in a foreign country. At least this concept was included in the founding document of the American Hungarian Student Association, established in 1957 (since 1958, after Canada joined: the *Association of Hungarian Students in North America – AHSNA*): “We want to assist all our fellow students either to carry on their studies or to complete them, in order to use the knowledge acquired here in the best interests of our country after our return home.”<sup>55</sup> However, as they soon realized that there would be no possibility of return, the organization continued to focus on supporting studies. After a few years, they wanted to provide personal and financial support to Hungarian students at western universities as well. In 1964, a program was launched under which AHSNA could provide 12 scholarships, though the National Central Office for the Control of Foreigners in Hungary prevented them from pursuing this kind of activity.<sup>56</sup> More than 20 years later, at the end of the 1980s, architect László Papp, one of the founders of AHSNA, managed to implement a well-functioning exchange program of a similar purpose exchange: he organized job opportunities for young Hungarian architects in the USA through the American (AIA) and the Hungarian

(MÉSZ) association of architects. The model of the program was the English initiative launched by Ernő Goldfinger, which allowed 18 architects to work in England in the 1960s.<sup>57</sup>

Architects and students leaving Hungary in 1956 helped each other not only through student organizations but sometimes also worked together in the professional field. For example, János Rákos (Budapest, 1929–) participated in design projects in the USA in cooperation with his former classmate, István Safáry (Budapest, 1932–) several times. This friendship also made it possible to collaborate in the 1970s, in the course of which the firm of Wladyslaw O. Biernacki-Poray, emigrated from Poland, and Robert Catlin's office – in which companies the mentioned Hungarian architects worked as co-owners – jointly designed a new urban district in Saudi Arabia.

## The Flow of Modernism between East and West

Research based on oral history may have seized the opportunity at the last minute to examine the special lives and careers of one architect generation who left Hungary due to a decisive political turn. After the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, around one hundred and fifty architecture students and recently graduated architects decided to flee from Hungary before the descent of the iron curtain. Exploring the period of emigration through interviews with the '56-emigrants contributed not only to a better understanding of each career, but also highlighted the role of the educational background of that time: namely the presence of the Modernist approach despite the appearance of the compulsory socialist realist style suppressing everything. To circumvent this cultural policy that prevailed only for a short time but left a significant built heritage, several methods were used by architecture professors who had been educated in a Modernist attitude between the two world wars. As a result, functionalism and Modern aesthetics could remain a living tradition, and their continuous presence in the architectural education provided a sufficient basis for those leaving the country, allowing them to integrate smoothly into the uninterrupted environment of Modern architecture in the first years of emigration.

This creativity acquired in the home country provided the affinity necessary to keep up with the emerging architectural trends. Our study presented a few examples to reveal the international architectural trends toward which the new impulses (appearing as a direct influence on their theoretical plans and works already in progress) directed the '56-emigrant architects living in Switzerland, Canada and the USA in the two decades following their settlement. A large percentage of emigre architects chose the above-mentioned countries, but the '56 refugees were characterized by a much more significant dispersal: many were granted asylum in northern Europe or Austria, Germany or Australia and even Africa.

Both the recorded recollections and the small number of publications clearly show that living abroad, initially considered a temporary study trip but later turned into a permanent existence, and the further isolation of the Eastern Bloc countries limited professional relations significantly. However, political easing brought changes; and scholarships organized by already practicing foreign architects provided new opportunity for the free flow of ideas between the architects living in Hungary and abroad. At the same time, for Hungarian architects who had emigrated in 1956 – or one or two decades earlier or later – there was always the possibility to co-operate across borders. Further research may also help to discover on what works and to what extent the '56-emigrant architects worked jointly with those emigrating to Western Europe or overseas from other Central and Eastern European countries or at other times.

This study and any further research on the emerged new topics can form a contribution to the research of architecture education of the surrounding countries in the 1950s. Also, our findings can give the opportunity to search for connections or differences and add to the literature on late modernism and the transformations taking place in the eastern and western parts of Europe.

1 CLARKE, Alison J. and SHAPIRA, Elana, 2017. *Émigré Cultures in Design and Architecture*. London – NY: Bloomsbury; NICOLAI, Bernd, 2003. *Architektur und Exil*, Trier: Porta Alba Verlag; *Arts is Exile* website. [Accessed 15. 02. 2019] Available at: <https://kuenste-im-exil.de/KIE/Web/EN/Home/home.html>

2 BORBÁNDI, Gyula, 1989. *A magyar emigráció életrajza 1945 – 1985*. Budapest: Európa.

3 CONGDON, Lee, KIRÁLY K. Béla and NAGY, Károly, 2006. *The Hungarian Revolution and War for Independence*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 707.

4 ISTVÁNFI, Gyula, 2015. Adatok a magyar építészképzés műegyetemi történetéhez 1945 – 1990. Rendszerváltástól rendszerváltásig. *Építés – Építészettudomány*, 43(1 – 2) pp. 1 – 54.

5 Since 2016, Rita Karácsony, co-author of this study, has identified a hundred and fifty architects who

had to leave Hungary in 1956. This research process has been primarily based on the memories of former classmates belonging to the personal networks of the architects concerned. Most of the emigre architects who are still alive are in their nineties, which has made it urgent to save their recollections using the methodology of oral

- history. Over the course of the past three years, it has been possible to get in touch with nearly thirty of the architects concerned either directly or through their family members and all in all, a total of twenty-one of them as well as fourteen of their former classmates have been interviewed. The majority of the interviewees still live abroad, so in most of the cases, the interviews have been conducted by means of phone calls or, in the more fortunate cases, by means of arranging personal meetings either abroad or in Hungary. The interviews have on the one hand focused on the interviewees' individual careers, while on the other hand, addressing the interviewees' "common past": memories related to the education of architecture at the Technical University of Budapest and their life and years at the university in general.
- 6** Új Építészet (1946 – 1949), Építés-Építészet (1949 – 1951), *Magyar Építőművészet* (from 1951).
- 7** MAJOR, Máté, 1970. *Breuer Marcel*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó
- 8** MAJOR, Máté, 1973. *Goldfinger Ernő*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó
- 9** BEKE, László, 1980. *Moholy-Nagy László munkássága*. Budapest: Corvina; PASSUTH, Krisztina, 1982. *Moholy-Nagy*. Budapest: Corvina
- 10** Exhibition of *György Kepes (USA): Múcsarnok*. 7 – 30 May 1976, Budapest: Múcsarnok, 1976.
- 11** Books: TIMON, Kálmán, 1996. *Papp László*, Budapest: OMF MÉM; TIMON, Kálmán – GÁSPÁR, Zsuzsanna, 2008. (cop. 2002). *Imre Halasz, Anthony Halasz*, Budapest: Annata; films: *Arcok és városok – Magyar építészek Amerikában*. MTV, Oskó, J. (ed.): Papp, László: *New Canaan (Kütvölgyi, Katalin)* 1986; *Fecskés, Tibor* 1986; *Krivátsy, Ádám* 1987; *Keleti, Péter – Sas, Márton* 1987; *Arcok és városok – Magyar építészek Kanadában*. MTV, Oskó, J. (ed.): *Vecsei, Éva – Vecsei, András – Vecsei, Andrea – Schoenauer, Norbert* 1992; *Kálmán, Tamás – Koroknay, Imre* 1992.
- 12** BARANYI, Judit, 1983. *Tisztelet a szülőföldnek – külföldön élő magyar származású művészek II. kiállítása [Respect for Homeland – 2nd Exhibition of Hungarian Artists Living Abroad]*. Budapest: Múcsarnok
- 13** Based on research by Rita Karácsony between 2016 and 2017, we know about more than 150 architects who left Hungary in 1956.
- 14** The pre-revolutionary assembly on October 22 was held in the hall of the Technical University, and the stated demands of the revolution were formulated here. Congdon, L., Király, K. B., and Nagy, K., 2006. pp. 840 – 842. (The Ideas of the Revolution: The Sixteen Points of the Revolutionary Hungarian Youth)
- 15** Istvánfi, G., 2015, p. 5.
- 16** In the spring of 1951, in the course of a largely artificial cultural policy debate, it was decided to break with the use of international Modern architecture and to follow the principles of the Stalinist cultural dictation. FERKAI, András, 1998. *Hungarian Architecture in the Postwar Years*. In: Wiebenson, D. and Sisa, J. (eds.): *The Architecture of Historic Hungary*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 280 – 281.
- 17** GABRIČ, Aleš, 2013. Europe at the time of totalitarian regimes. In: Zupančič, T., Ifko, S., Fikfak, A., Juvančič, M. and Verovšek, Š. (eds.). *Manual of Wise Management, Preservation, Reuse and Economic Valorisation of Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century*. Forli and Ljubljana, p. 17.
- 18** AMAN, Anders, 1992. *Architecture and Ideology in Eastern Europe during the Stalin Era*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 95 – 117.
- 19** PRAKFULVI, Endre and FEHÉRVÁRI, Zoltán, 2014. *Hungarian Architecture 1945 – 1959*. Periodization outline. In: Stiller, A. (ed.). *Ungarn – Bauten der Aufbruchszeit 1945 – 1960 / Hungary – Architecture in the era of awakening*. Wien: Mury Salzmann, pp. 34 – 37.
- 20** Detailed information on ideas and plans can be found in the Issue 1952(5 – 6) of *Magyar Építőművészet* [Hungarian Architecture], which has been devoted almost entirely to the topic of architecture education.
- 21** Interview with Egon Szörényi, 2017; interview with Olga Vállay, 2019.
- 22** Interview with Miklós Hajnos, 2017; interview with György Sámsondi Kiss, 2018.
- 23** Károly Weichinger and later Frigyes Pogány and Alajos Sódor held such lectures. (interview with Zsuzsa Kiss, 2016; interview with György Czurda, 2018)
- 24** For example, for the Department of Public Design. (*Domus, Architectural Forum*)
- 25** KÓSA, Győző, 1956. *A hazai műszaki egyetemek külföldi folyóiratainak leleheljegyzeke, 1955 – 1956*. Budapest: BME KK.
- 26** Interview with Olga Vállay, 2019; interview with Mária Sváb, 2019
- 27** Building R of the University of Technology is an example of this among the buildings planned in the state-owned planning offices. (1950 – 1954) Prakfulvi, E. and Fehérvári, Z., 2014, p. 37.
- 28** PALASIK, Mária, 2006. *A műegyetemisták Odüsszeiája 1944 – 1946*. Budapest: Műegyetemi Kiadó.
- 29** For example, the following books were brought to the departmental libraries by the "Danes": BRUNNBERG, Hans and NEUMÜLLER, Hans-Fredrik, 1943. *Trettioalets byggnadskonst i Sverige*, Stockholm: Rabén och Sjögren; BUHL, Ole, 1941. *Socialt boligbyggeri*, København.
- 30** HABA, Péter, 2014. *Autonomous Universality Attempts at systematization in Hungarian industrial architecture in the early Kádár period*. *Architektúra & Urbanizmus*. 48(3 – 4), pp. 178 – 201.
- 31** Interview with Antal Molnár, 2019.
- 32** Interview with Csaba Téglás, 2016.
- 33** Csaba Téglás, János Rákos and Ádám Krivátsy.
- 34** Prakfulvi, E. and Fehérvári, Z., 2014, p. 40.
- 35** SIMON, Mariann, 2013. *Progressive, Forward-looking and Advanced*. *Hungarian Architecture and Modernity 1956 – 1962, Architektúra & Urbanizmus*. 47(2), pp. 20 – 33.
- 36** For example, István Botond visited Corbusier's chapel in Ronchamp in 1959.
- 37** When examining the class schedules between 1950 and 1956, one can see that while the students specialized in design had drawing classes in almost all semesters, the construction-specialized ones typically had drawing classes only in the lower study stages.
- 38** for example, Péter Balla, Aladár Ékes Kummer, Dezső Ercsi, Attila Főnyad, György Fráter, Ágnes Füzesséry, Tibor Gosztonyi, Ferenc Guth, Miklós Hajnos, Károly Horváth, Miklós Koromzay, Ervin Nagy, Péter Schwéger, Ferenc Szikszay
- 39** interview with Miklós Hajnos, 2017. The real unfolding of Structuralism would characterize international architecture in the coming years, in the work of the Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger and the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange.
- 40** KREHL, Heinz, 1969. 'Wettbewerb für eine Studentenwohnsiedlung auf dem Hönggerberg in Zürich'. *Bauen + Wohnen*. 23(9), pp. 25 – 28.
- 41** Interview with Ferenc Guth, 2017
- 42** Interview with Ferenc Guth, 2017
- 43** Antal Halász left Hungary in 1948, Imre Halász joined his brother in 1956 in the USA.
- 44** TIMON, Kálmán and GÁSPÁR, Zsuzsanna, 2008. (cop. 2002). *Imre Halasz, Anthony Halasz*, Budapest: Annata, p. 9.
- 45** Timon, K. and Gáspár, Z., 2008, pp. 36 – 41.
- 46** In 1947 they settled in the USA. OLCYAY, Aladár, 1946. *Architects Olgayay and Olgayay építészek / Olgayay, Olgayay*. Budapest.
- 47** WEIDLINGER, Paul, 1951. *Partitions Function as Columns*. *Architectural Record*. 109(1), pp. 134 – 139.
- 48** Interview with Ferenc Guth, 2017.
- 49** WEINSTEIN, Dave: *The Summit*. [Accessed: 15. 02. 2019] Available at: <http://www.eichlernetwork.com/article/summit-aka-eichler-summit?page=0,0>
- 50** Correspondence with Jan Lorant, son of Lóránt Gábor, 2017.
- 51** Interview with Olga Vállay, 2017.
- 52** BARTOŠOVÁ, Nina, 2018. 'Women's Creativity in Post-war Reconstruction of Socialist Europe'. In: Garda, E. and Franchini, C.: *MOMOWO, Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement*. Turin: Politecnico di Torino, pp. 194 – 200.
- 53** Interview with Erzsébet Rozsnyainé Váró, 2017; also HABA, Péter, 2017. 'At the forefront of socialist 'development''. In: Pepchinski, M. and Simon, M.: *Ideological Equals, Woman architects in socialist Europe 1945 – 1989*. London: Routledge, pp. 34 – 37.
- 54** ADAMS, Annamarie and TANCRED, Peta, 2000. *Designing Women: Gender and the Architectural Profession*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 59 – 60.
- 55** PAPP, László, 2006. 'Hungarian Students in the New World'. In: Congdon, L., Király, K. B., and Nagy, K., p. 715.
- 56** PAPP, László, 1988. *ÉMEFESZ, 'Az amerikai magyar egyetemisták mozgalma az 1956-os forradalom után'*. New Brunswick: Hungarian Alumni Association, p. 72.
- 57** SIMON, Mariann, 2005. 'Kalandozások kora, Magyar építészek a '60-as évek Angliájában'. *Architektúra Hungariae*. 7(1), Available at: [http://arch.et.bme.hu/arch\\_old/korabbi\\_folyam/25/simon.html](http://arch.et.bme.hu/arch_old/korabbi_folyam/25/simon.html)