

MUNKÁCSY. By *Géza Perneczky*. Translated by *Lili Halápy*. Translation revised by *Brett Elliott*. Photographs by *Alfréd Schiller* and *István Petrás*. Budapest: Corvina Press, 1970. 51 pp. text, 40 full-page color plates, 20 black and white plates. 100 Ft.

HUNGARIAN VILLAGE FURNITURE. By *Klára K.-Csilléry*. Translated by *Paul Aston*. Photographs by *Károly Koffán* and *Kálmán Kónya*. Hungarian Folk Art, no. 4. Budapest: Corvina Press, 1972. 74 pp. text, 30 drawings, 37 black and white plates, 19 color plates.

HERDSMEN'S ART IN HUNGARY. By *János Manga*. Translated by *Kornél Balás*. Translation revised by *Leila Kooros*. Photographs by *Tamás Kovács* and *János Manga*. Photographs in color by *Károly Koffán*. Illustrations by *Emília Grynacus*. Hungarian Folk Art, no. 5. Budapest: Corvina Press, 1972. 85 pp. text, 42 black and white plates, 16 color plates.

Mihály Munkácsy (1844–1900) was, and to a certain degree still is, a Hungarian national monument. It is therefore not only the exaggerated esteem of Munkácsy's art but also national pride that Perneczky sets out to undermine, a formidable task even after several earlier, somewhat timid attempts by cautious art historians.

Perneczky does not, however, dismiss Munkácsy's work completely; rather he shifts the credits from the monumental paintings to the small-scale, more intimate studies, from the vast historical tableaux to the inner vision revealed in the details of his flower still lifes and landscapes. Some of the lesser paintings are almost expressionistic in the vibrant beauty of the brush strokes, in the freely whirling colors, or in the intentional disarray of the arrangement. Especially the two versions of the *Dusty Road*, analyzed and contrasted in detail by Perneczky, show how Munkácsy moved from naturalism to a personal vision of nature, to a heroically interpreted cosmos, almost in the manner of Turner.

The disparity between Munkácsy's major and minor works stems from his inner uncertainty. In all his intentions and aspirations he was basically sincere, yet his early and unexpected success, the gold medal of the Paris Salon in 1870 when he was only twenty-six, unknown and relatively untrained, compelled him for the rest of his life to prove himself, and his sole measure of success became the praise of the Academy and the admiration of the public. Munkácsy's natural gift was eminently exploitable, because fame singled him out before he had any firm artistic convictions of his own.

Munkácsy's prizewinning picture *The Condemned Cell*, in spite of its constructional uncertainties and the inevitable overdramatization of reflected emotions (the distress of the condemned highwayman can be gauged only from the gestures and facial expressions of the crowd surrounding him), is in the realistic, Courbet-like style—a more natural idiom to the young painter coming from the depths of rural Hungary, laden with bitter memories of childhood and adolescent sufferings in joinery workshops, than his later frilly society pictures, where the pattern of the carpet is the detail most deserving of attention.

Munkácsy's art sank to its lowest level when he was reaping his greatest financial successes. The shrewd gallery owner Sedelmeyer set him the scenarios for the superproductions designed to tour and eventually be sold to the highest bidder in the United States. Yet when interested, Munkácsy was eager to rethink the problems proffered by the suggested themes; an example of a striking solution can be found in his *Christ Before Pilate*, a painting owing much to Renan.

One can only agree with Pernecky when he passes judgment on Munkácsy as a fashionable academician of his time whose merits do not deserve more than passing references in a slim essay. It is indeed more fascinating to ponder on his failure as an artist than on his place in the hierarchy of nineteenth-century painting.

Klára K.-Csilléry's book on Hungarian village furniture most convincingly proves that chests, tables, chairs, and cupboards used in rural households were made and decorated by professional craftsmen from the earliest times on. Even rigid specialization within the industry can be observed: the very word *asztalos* (table-maker) shows that there was a distinct group of joiners manufacturing only tables. The decoration too, especially of painted furniture, was entrusted in most cases to specialists, to painter-joiners, and with good reason: it is more the decoration than the construction which lends aesthetic quality and interest to a particular piece. It is therefore undeniable, though Miss Csilléry never draws this conclusion, that much of the so-called folk art was, at least partly, imposed on the peasantry.

Miss Csilléry's book is full of information about the history of village furniture, from the style of the most primitive beds and tables fixed to the ground to the more recent appearance of the chest of drawers and kitchen cupboards and the logic of their arrangement in the house. She describes in great detail how the ancient construction of hewn chests with their incised geometrical decoration was superseded by the superior dovetailed construction and by painted floral ornaments of mainly Renaissance and Baroque origin. It is, indeed, the wealth of detail that diminishes the pleasure of reading this book. The reader easily loses his way in the web of historical references, the unnecessarily great number of names and dates, and the repetitions. What might remain of his enthusiasm is soon drained by the constant effort to find the plates and figures referred to in the text.

In contrast, the *Herdsmen's Art in Hungary* by János Manga is a sheer delight to read. The material is excellently organized around major topics: the way of life and customs of the herdsmen by region, the description of the various objects they use and their function, the materials and techniques of their construction, and their decoration. In elaborating the social effects of economic changes in animal husbandry the author does not omit such equally important but frequently forgotten details as the swineherd's alleged magical powers and the herdsmen's belief in witches and their fear of black cats or spotted dogs. Manga is always ready to provide appropriate remarks and comparisons—for example, in enumerating the items in the herdsman's "pouch" (a bit of steel, a flint and a tinderbox to make fire, a knife in its leather sheath, and a mirror in a richly ornamented frame, all hanging on leather straps from a brass ring fastened to the belt), Manga aptly calls it a sort of rustic version of the gentleman's dressing case.

The book is concluded with a well-presented argument about the possible sources and inspirations of the ornaments of the herdsman's work. These objects are decorated with the flowers we know from peasant art, but the observation of nature, even when it leads to highly stylized forms, is revealed in the abundance of the more typical oak leaves and acorns, birds, snakes, pigs, and other animals. Even more typical is the depiction of herdsmen and highwaymen (*betyár*), who were closely associated in the first half of the nineteenth century, and their sweethearts. The survival of these motifs (a late example is a horn made in 1948) indicates the importance of tradition, perhaps more than the author allows us to

believe. After all, the first onslaught on the independence of the herdsmen came more than a century and a half ago, and as they moved from the forests and the *puszta* to the vicinity of the villages, their group identity slowly disintegrated. Yet the forms of their distinct "pastoral art" have survived long enough to be rescued by the interest that has since emerged in folk art and by official encouragement—to fill the souvenir shops with fancy ashtrays and cigarette boxes.

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ERDÉLY KORMÁNYHATÓSÁGI LEVÉLTÁRAK. By *Zsolt Trócsányi*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973. 785 pp.

This impressive, bulky volume is the fifth in a series entitled *Publications of the Hungarian National Archives I: Archival Inventory Lists*. Dr. Trócsányi's book gives a detailed description of the archival material in the Governmental Archives of Transylvania (housed in the Hungarian National Archives of Budapest) and identifies the more important and larger units of that collection. By doing this, the author provides the researcher with a penetrating insight into the treasure house of information on Transylvania's long and eventful past.

Apart from the descriptive part of the volume, the author, in his general introduction and at the beginning of each chapter, also gives a scholarly account of the institution, agency, or branch of government which issued the documents kept in a certain part of the collection. He provides full information on the sphere of authority, *modus operandi*, and restrictions and limitations of the issuing agency in question. All this is done in a meticulous way, in clear and readable style. The introductory material gives the reader not only a clear picture of the collection discussed but also a familiarity with the main lines of the governmental and administrative systems of historical Transylvania, including its system of government during the years of independence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This is a commendable achievement indeed. It should be added, however, that the most profitable use of this volume rightly presupposes an acceptable background in the history of Hungary and Transylvania.

There are two main sections in the Governmental Archives of Transylvania. The first one is the Archives of the Transylvanian Chancery, an authority residing and operating in Vienna since about 1695. It very soon became a supervisory authority over the local governmental and administrative bodies in Transylvania, including the gubernium itself, the highest body of government established by the Diploma Leopoldinum of 1691, after the disposal of the Apafi family. In 1765–66, during the reign of Maria Theresa, the archives underwent a serious weeding procedure, but the surviving material had been fully registered. From that time up to 1848 and, with a short interruption, to 1867, the material was kept well organized and carefully registered. It has nine separate units, among them the *Libri Regii* of Transylvania, the register of privileges granted since the time of the independent princes of Transylvania. Most of the papers document the day-to-day business of the Chancery. There are a few, scattered reports from special agents, commissioners, and imperial authorities. The material also contains two—rather peripheral—collections: those of Royal Commissioner Vlasits and of Royal Commissioner Prince Ferdinand de Este, both of them from the third decade of the nineteenth century.