

**THE MAYOR GALLERY**

IMRE BAK WORKS 1967-81

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## IMRE BAK IN CONVERSATION WITH HANS ULRICH OBRIST

**Hans Ulrich Obrist:** Maybe to start at the beginning, I thought it would be good if you could tell me a bit about how it all started. How did you come to art, how did art come to you?

Imre Bak: That was almost coincidental as I come from a family in which there was no talk of art at all. And then in elementary school, I had a teacher who suggested that I should go to the Secondary School of Visual Arts. But I had absolutely no idea what art was so I tried to study applied graphics. And then when I went to the Academy I began at the Department of Applied Graphics. Nevertheless, during secondary school, I saw interesting films about French art: about impressionism and about Matisse, among others. These had a huge influence on me so after a while I switched to the Painting Department at the Academy. But it was a slow process and one should also be aware of the fact that at that time, at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Hungary was a closed country. Information about Western art was banned, even at the Academy. Therefore we asked friends to translate texts about the 20th century for us since, back then, we didn't speak any languages.

**HUO:** You said you didn't speak any languages...

IB: We only had to learn Russian, so whenever we came across a seminal text about art of the 20th century, we tried to find a friend or acquaintance to ask to translate them for us. These translations circulated among our colleagues as 'samizdats'. This was a very difficult period – how can one understand what happened during the 20th century in art? Even in Hungary but especially internationally it was even harder to grasp.

**HUO:** You graduated from the Academy in 1963 and you said in an interview that it was in the mid-1960s that you found your own voice. Where would you say the catalogue raisonné begins? What do you consider a student work and where does your own proper work start?

IB: The first works that I would consider as my own proper work were made around 1957 or 1958. However, it was not an easy process. We had very little information in Budapest about what was going on in the international art world; we only knew a little about French contemporary art, about the École de Paris: Jean Bazaine, Alfred Manessier, Jean Le Moal, and others. And we only saw a few reproductions and not the originals. Even the art scenes of neighbouring countries were more fresh and vibrant than in Hungary. In Bratislava, in Prague and Warsaw, we could learn something about tachism and informel. In 1964, a year after graduating from the Academy, I finally received a passport to Western Europe. Through these determinative experiences, I could find my own path.

**HUO: You were also part of the ‘Zugló-Circle’ with István Nádler. Can you tell me more about it – I know that everything happened there in private apartments...**

IB: That was earlier, at college, where we found colleagues who had similar ideas about how we should work and gather information, and so on. The term ‘Zugló-Circle’ was only coined by art historians later, as they like these kind of labels. We just wanted to talk and share information about what’s current in art and how we can understand that, and do it in our own, personal way. Sándor Molnár was practically the leader of this group; he had a small apartment in Zugló, which is a district in Budapest, and that was the only place where we could meet since we were financially in a terrible situation and couldn’t afford to meet in cafés. Whenever we made a trip abroad we always brought back a suitcase full of catalogues and then we had big discussions about them in the apartment...

**HUO: Did you have a manifesto?**

IB: No, no.

**HUO: But what was the ‘common ground’? What brought you together? Was it abstraction?**

IB: Abstraction, yes...

**HUO: I am friends with Karl Heinz Adler, who was a pioneer of abstract art in East-Germany, and he could only do that as architectural art since abstraction was banned in the museums. Here, too?**

IB: Yes, it was banned here too. A system was created by the politicians, the cultural policy of the ‘Three T’s’: Banned, Tolerated, and Supported [in Hungarian: Tiltott, Tűrt, Támogatott]. And that meant for us that we only had a chance to exhibit in an apartment gallery [Fényes Adolf Hall] and only when we paid all the related costs ourselves. Of course, we did not have any money for that but still tried to do exhibitions there.

**HUO: Yve-Alain Bois wrote about Mondrian that his paintings were also social models. How do you see the social dimension of abstraction?**

IB: We could not deal with it that much because we could not reach a wider audience. The exhibitions were closed, banned, so there was always just a small circle of intellectuals who came to our exhibition openings, but that was not really the broader society. Therefore, the ideas of the Russian avant-garde were absolutely unrealistic here. Once we saw what a success they had there in Russia back then. It was something unimaginable here in Hungary.

**HUO: Socially?**

IB: Socially.

**HUO: Once you said that you had been also influenced by the pioneers, being personally acquainted with Lajos Kassák. Could you please tell me about Kassák: what have you learnt from him? And who were your other heroes and heroines: who inspired you?**IB: Kassák was quite old then but he was still very suggestive. In that very difficult political and politico-cultural situation, he also set a very important example for young artists, both as a person as well as an artist. That time I already knew that Kassák had been a pioneer in the 1920s, but I wanted to understand contemporary art, the art of the 1960s. Naturally, there was a huge difference. So although I always found tradition very important, I have never been a constructivist in this sense.

There was another group, the artists of the so-called ‘European School’: Dezső Korniss, Endre Bálint, and others. I got to know them and we were friends for a couple of years. I learned a lot from them as well because they already had some opportunities to work together with the international scene. So that was one reason for me, when I was able to travel west in 1964, to understand a bit better what art was, about tachism, abstract expressionism, and informel. In London, I saw an exhibition at the Tate Gallery [54–64: Painting & Sculpture of a Decade] in which pop art artists also were present. Then, with my colleague István Nádler, we travelled via Paris to Venice, to the Biennale, where the American pavilion was full of similar pop artists to those I saw in London at the Tate Gallery. And Rauschenberg received the Grand Prize there.

**HUO: Then there were influences from outside art; you were also inspired by intellectuals of the post-war period such as philosophers Lajos Szabó and Béla Tábor. What was the influence of Szabó, and what did you learn from Tábor?**

IB: I wasn’t acquainted with Tábor and Szabó personally, but I met Béla Hamvas who was in very close contact with them. Theirs was a very metaphysical, existentialist philosophy, and in that political situation, in which one had to study Marxism at the Academy in a very stupid way, you can imagine how important these texts by Hamvas, Tábor, and the others were. However, they had difficulties publishing, so we tried to get the original manuscripts and then make copies of them, and then we distributed them. And these manuscripts helped us a lot. I believe that my ideas from these early times are still current and valid today.

**HUO: The reason I asked this is because when you look at these early works, they also seem to have a bit of structuralism in them. Can you tell me a bit about these structuralist works from the early 1960s?**

IB: That was actually the influence of French tachism. There was a small bookstore in Budapest where you could buy booklets such as the ‘Musée de Poche’ series, which also included some colour reproductions. In 1958 we bought this booklet where the works reproduced were from just a year ago, so we had the feeling that this was contemporary art, what the French were doing. These early works actually show this strong influence of French art.



Imre Bak, *Orange – Blue – Green*, 1967

**HUO:** You found, however, your own language very early. The pictures from 1966 and 1967 come in a completely different form and colour; it is no longer tachism: there are much larger surfaces and compositions, like in *Orange-Blue Green*.

IB: These were made after my visit to London, that great experience at the Tate Gallery where I saw the young American and English artists. And these works of mine show a bit more influence from the English artists than from the Americans. English pop art was just as interesting to me as the American.

**HUO:** You were inspired by pop art – Marika is indeed a pop-painting. Could you tell me about this influence?

IB: It's hard to say why the early works of pop artists were such a great experience for me and why they had such a shocking effect on me. In Hungary, the situation was so

terribly difficult, conservative, and closely related to politics. So this fresh, visual, sometimes aggressive effect of pop art was really important to a young artist. I was only 26 years old. This is really unimaginable nowadays because today all information is immediately available on the Internet and on mobile phones.

**HUO:** You said somewhere that 1968 was a turning point for you, as you became part of 'Iparterv'. It's not clear to me whether it is a group or a movement. What was 'Iparterv'?

IB: 'Iparterv' was actually the name of an architectural firm, which had a showroom where the architects would show their new sketch designs. And we had a chance to organise a small exhibition there. But how did the artists come together? It was not really a group: it was around a dozen young artists who had the same idea: to make art that is also understandable in an international context. We also didn't work together for long: we had two exhibitions, the first in 1968 and the second in 1969.

**HUO:** Who was the curator of these shows?

IB: A young art historian, Péter Sinkovits. He knew these artists in Budapest well, but then we made everything together. This wasn't an official exhibition space and the exhibition at Iparterv was shut down by the police after two days.

**HUO:** So it was censored?

IB: Yes.

**HUO:** How come it was considered that dangerous? Because it was abstract?

IB: It wasn't only abstract, there were figurative works, too, in the sense of pop art, which means figurativity not in the socialist sense, which was socialist realism. There were also some objects and sculptures, by György Jovánovics for example. I always say that there were artists who knew something about how contemporary art looked back in the 1960s. With Nádler, we saw the documenta in Kassel in 1968 and then we also had an exhibition at the Galerie Müller in Stuttgart before we came to Budapest and organised the 'Iparterv' exhibition. So that was one of the reasons why this 'Iparterv' exhibition was able to show that at that time we understood what the international art scene looked like.

**HUO:** You used stripes on your canvases, and then, at some point, the stripes became independent. How did the stripes come about?

IB: That's maybe from Frank Stella. I started to use stripes when I saw several of his paintings in London and Venice, and then at the Galerie Müller. Through his work, I understood that the stripes can express a spatial movement. Only I tried to make the stripes a bit different. Everyone has different inspirations, even from folk art as was in my case, which was different for Stella.

**HUO:** Some years after that, László Beke, who was a friend of yours, invited artists to send him conceptual, 'imaginary' works. You also sent him a piece, having begun a series of conceptual works. How did conceptual art come to you?

IB: That's hard to say. I just saw the documenta where the American and English artists were at their peak and I thought I had to step further. And then there was this exhibition by Harald Szeemann [When Attitudes Become Form, 1969] and the exhibitions of conceptual artists such as Joseph Kosuth and Lawrence Weiner, and others. This new trend was interesting for several artists here. I was actually dealing with the problem of how the visual and verbal signs can work together.

Béla Hamvas had a huge impact on me in this regard. He talked quite a bit about ancient cultures. I was also interested in reflections and he wrote about Hermes Trismegistus, who said that what is above is almost below and vice versa. So these reflections were important to me at that time, and I did that with photographic techniques and also with texts.

**HUO:** So you practically made conceptual photography: vertical, horizontal, diagonal...

IB: And what I already mentioned: I was interested in verbal signs. For instance, how the three reds...

**HUO:** Fire, Red, Blood... [Referring to Three Red Squares, 1972]

IB: I wanted to try what has the stronger effect: painting a coloured red square and then writing the words 'blood' and 'fire' beside it. How can they work together or what is the contrast between the verbal and the visual? And what does it mean if I write something in reverse?



Imre Bak, *Splendid IV*, 1970

György Jovánovics, we were invited there in 1971 by Dieter Honisch, curator of the Folkwang Museum. I worked with a white and black plastic foil to show how the tradition was destroyed and whether we could rebuild it today. That was a conceptual idea: it was done in a workshop with machines and so on, with technical assistants. So it would have been good to do similar work but that was practically impossible, it was only possible that one time in Essen.

**HUO: You said in an interview that for this conceptual period, for finding different approaches to art, Béla Hamvas was very important because he showed you how to reveal invisible aspects of reality. What does Béla Hamvas have to do with these conceptual works?**

IB: As I mentioned earlier, he wrote a very interesting and for me important analysis of Hermes Trismegistus. I also learned from him about analogies, that we don't have to see two opposing poles like black and white, good and bad, but a chain of analogies. For instance, what does a circle in a chain of analogies mean: from the sun to the south, to the male, and so on... I learned this from Béla Hamvas. And in concept art, I made similar analyses in small concept books.

**HUO: One of these little books is called 'Do it yourself'. And I'm very interested in the 'do it' idea because I did an exhibition entitled 'Do it'. Can you tell me about this 'do it yourself' idea, what was it? Can the viewer do the work there? Duchamp said the viewer does half the work. Is that related to it?**

IB: Many artists made such small books.

**HUO: Going back to the Imagination/Idea project by László Beke: I am very much interested in unrealised projects and works. Do you have any unrealised ideas?**

IB: I never really had the chance to step out of the confines of painting. Although I made this series of shaped canvases in 1970: a ten-part series [Splendid I-X., 1968] where the size of the paintings always stayed the same, only their shape was different. But I always wanted to make a three-dimensional painting.

**HUO: But in Essen, with Half-timbered Building, you stepped out into three-dimensionality.**

IB: This motif came from a Fachwerkhaus [half-timbered building] in Essen. With my colleague,

**HUO: 'Imagine it yourself' – the viewer imagines the work for him/herself.**

IB: There was only a small circle of intellectuals who were interested in our work. I just wanted to show something to these few people, a new idea that is not about that rationalistic way of thinking but that has a connection with these ancient cultures. I learned that from Béla Hamvas. I continued this investigation into the imagery of ancient cultures. Since the mid-1970s, I had been working – for twenty-five years, I always had to work somewhere – at the Institute for People's Education [Népművelési Intézet] with ethnographers who also dealt with these ancient cultures. I learned a lot from these people. At that time, structuralism was very popular in Hungary. There was also a study on the Avars and their motifs, and I implemented them in my hard-edge paintings. So the bird, the face...

**HUO: That's where local elements come in. And I think this is a question I want to ask because it concerns the question of local and global, which is of great relevance today. You start with the international languages of avant-garde: the Hungarian avant-garde with Lajos Kassák, the Western avant-garde with hard-edge, and it all flows into the work. And then comes this crucial moment: the inspiration from sources in local folklore. You have actually found a third way, where you connect the motifs and patterns of Hungarian folk embroidery with these international languages of avant-garde. So I wanted to ask how you came to this hybrid form.**

IB: Dezső Korniss, whom I have already mentioned, was a very important artist to me in this regard. He had the idea to do what Béla Bartók did in music: to connect folk art with the absolutely newest contemporary art. We were friends and I visited him a lot. He was also practically banned and had great difficulties: he only had a small apartment and no studio, and back then, in the early 1960s, he had no opportunities to exhibit either. It wasn't easy to contact these older artists but it was very important because, thanks to him, as young artists we could understand this problem of local and global. We always knew that we should create something personal, natural and special, and local. In 1968, when we had our exhibition at the Galerie Müller in Stuttgart with István Nádler, there was a review, a journalistic statement about the show, that it was 'hard-edge with paprika'. Paprika is a wellknown Hungarian spice. [Laughing.] So it was very clear to us that we were also expected to bring something local. Not just copy what's current in art but also add something to it.

**HUO: And how did this research into conceptuality and folk art enter painting? It started with hard-edge and then you have a hard-edge but also very simple patterns. And then the patterns become more complex.**



Imre Bak, *Fachwerk*, 1971



IB: The conceptual period, this conceptual analysis of the ancient cultures, actually helped me to make the motifs a bit more complex and multi-layered. And then I immediately made my own 'hardedge' variations based on them. I have created my own motifs: Sun, Bird, Face, and then put them together.

**HUO: Where did the Sun come from?**

IB: The Sun is a spiritual substance, it always plays an important role in ancient cultures. In philosophy, light and life occur a lot, all together. My earlier interest in metaphysical substances and how to somehow grasp the invisible with the help of art was always a program for me. Of course, it wasn't easy to figure out how one can then make his artistic practice out of this because I did not simply want to illustrate these metaphysical ideas but wanted to make contemporary artworks out of them. My previous experience of hard-edge helped a great deal in this.

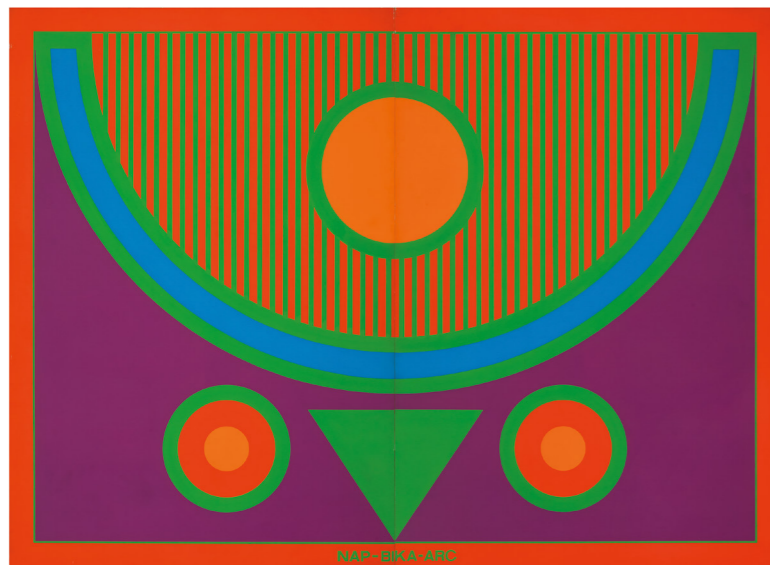
**HUO: And what was the influence of folk art? You use motifs of folk embroideries– is this appropriation from your part?**

IB: I just wanted to understand how, back then, these arts and crafts artists tried to express themselves with these signs, with the combinations of signs, with the complexity of signs and meanings. So the way of thinking, which is different from our rational mentality, interested me a lot and I wanted to translate it into my art.

**HUO: And there, again, also appear texts like Nap-Bika-Arc [Sun-Bull-Face, 1976], so semiotics also seem to play a role here. Or there is this other motif, the flower. What was the role of semiotics?**

IB: In a way, these are the continuations of my conceptual works, where texts played a vital part. I tried to think of different motifs and combinations but they were always figures, like a shaman figure. I used these associations that were forbidden in modernism, in concrete art there was no talk about it either. For me, there was always something present: a face, a figure, a landscape, but the picture still had to remain abstract. And as I was working at the Institute for five years...

Imre Bak, *Sun – Bull – Face*, 1976



**HUO: Exactly, we have to talk about that. Your being there was not just a 'day job', it was also inspiring. This Institute of People's Education, headed by Iván Vitányi, was a very special place as you say, with all those ethnographers working there. I was wondering if it was in any way nationalistic.**

IB: Yes, the danger was always there. How can one turn towards the tradition without being nationalistic or thinking in a nationalistic way? There is a huge difference, and even today

unfortunately, this conservative, nationalist conception of tradition is very strong in Hungary, so I find this dangerous even today.

**HUO: Édouard Glissant, the writer, philosopher and poet from Martinique describes this idea of 'mondialité'. He says that one can question the universalistic, the global, because it destroys many things. But one should also avoid falling into a local nationalism, you have to find a third way. And it seems to me that you have proclaimed such a third way.**

IB: Yes, and nowadays this problem is present everywhere, I believe. If today artists from India, from Africa, try to make contemporary art, they try to bring the local tradition with them. Yeah, that was quite a problem for us often, and I think it was pretty clear what the solution was.

**HUO: You always say that there is not necessarily any contradiction between the international, the cosmopolitan and the local.**

IB: Yes, exactly. One can present the local tradition in a very conservative way and make a conservative art out of it. It has always been important for me to understand the actual, the spirit of the times, and then bring this local tradition together with the actual.

**HUO: With time, you changed your palette: at the beginning, you used primary colours: red, yellow, green, like Barnett Newman, and then the pastel colours came in more and more. The motifs also seem to be more fragmented. Was that the beginning of postmodernism?**

IB: When I made conceptual art, and then later these folkloristic impressions, that was actually, for me, from today's point of view, already postmodern, with all those layers and meanings combined in them. Yet we didn't talk about postmodernism here in Budapest at the time. Postmodern in fine arts was only mentioned internationally at some point in the early 1980s. But I was very interested in architecture very early on. So I learned a lot from postmodern architecture. From the theorists of postmodern architecture and also the designers...

**HUO: From whom? Charles Jencks?**

IB: Yes, for instance, from Charles Jencks, and also designers such as the Memphis Group or the Studio Alchimia had shown me colours and combinations of shapes and colours that were very important to me back then. And this painting for instance, which I exhibited at the Hungarian Pavilion in Venice in 1986, where you can see a motif of Kassák: here I could already reflect on Kassák in a postmodern manner [Homage à Kassák II, 1986]. The quotes and reflections were already common in postmodernism. And here you can also see folk art motifs, too. I could combine everything: different art historical periods, and folk art and the avant-garde tradition. And that was a way for me to go beyond my earlier modernist phase.

**HUO: And then there are also your works with the city, 'The Town'. You designed cities almost like an urbanist in your paintings. What is your vision of the cities? What is the ideal city for you? And how did these architectural motifs in the paintings come about?**

IB: I was born in Budapest. I have been living here for eighty years, and I like Budapest very much. The people who live here I don't always like that much. But this city is really beautiful and I have always been interested in cities. New York, for example, is just as much a miracle to me as Venice is in another sense. The cities, the skyscrapers, the modernist life, so that's something for me. These are not designs for an ideal city. I always try to make sketches without certain programs or ideas: abstract shapes come next to each other. Or sometimes I already have a vision about a city, which is not ideal: it is just an urban landscape made out of shapes, even of colours, built like a picture. Architecture has always been important to me: not just certain buildings, but sometimes entire cityscapes, too.

**HUO: Your paintings are sketched by hand?**

IB: Yes, they are hand-painted, but the sketches, the designs I have been doing for 15 years, or more, with the computer. Then I make small designs, a lot of variations of colours and shapes, and then I can enlarge the sketches so that the proportions, sides, width and length are always similar, as in the sketches.

**HUO: We have talked a lot about the past, the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. In recent years, your pictures have become more abstract again. You seem to have moved away from these more figurative illusionist cities and gone back to the abstraction of your early period. What are you currently working on?**

IB: What is always important to me is space, and, as I have perhaps already said, how can one move from the tangible to the intangible. For me, space is a similar thing. When you look at the sky you can see that it is there in concrete terms, but it is still intangible. And from the beginning, from the middle of the 1960s, it was the acrylic technique that helped me as I have always applied several layers to make the bottom view rather cloudy. When the painting is finished you can hardly see it but it is still clear that the surface is not closed down by the colours, you can go inside it. That was the same with Jackson Pollock or Rothko or Newman or Kooning. And this illusion of space is always important to me, even with new sketches. There are coloured surfaces, and they are rhythmic. The illusion of space is thus two-sided, on one hand, the surface has a certain spatial effect, because one can go into it, but then these forms side by side represent another spatial situation.

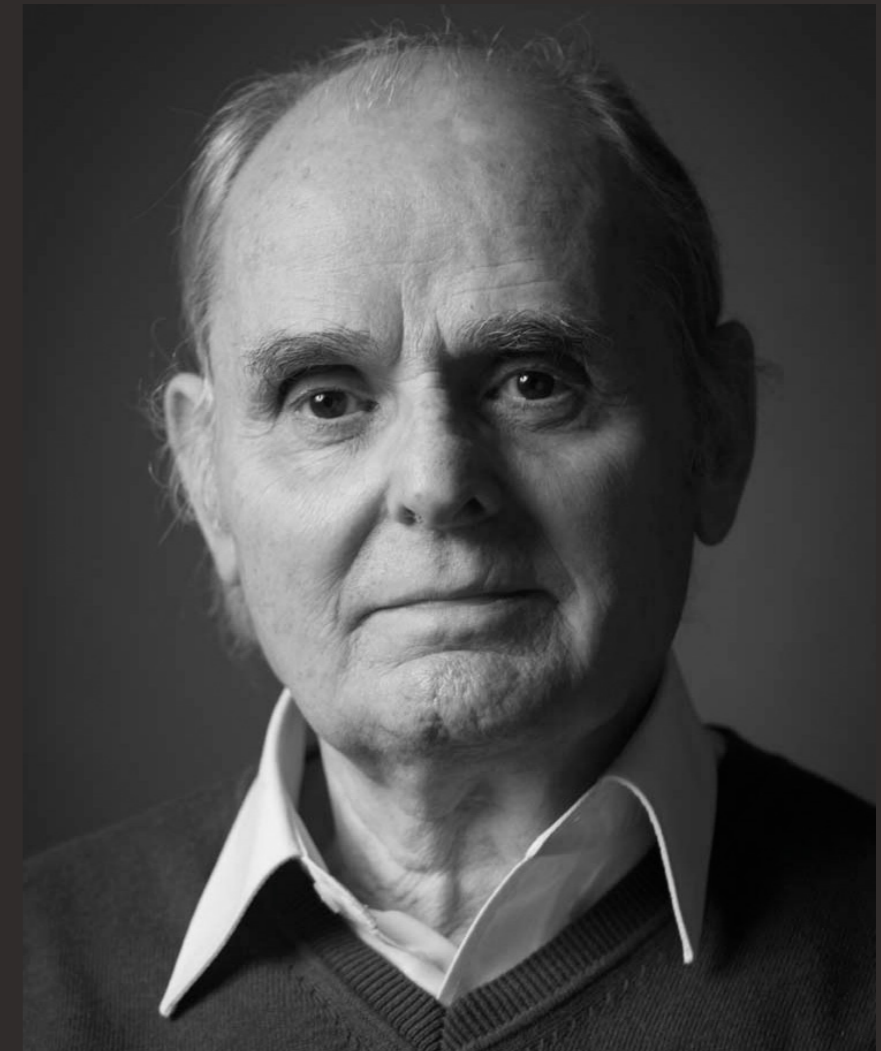
**HUO: This you present on quite sizable canvases as I can see here in your studio. What is your largest work?**

IB: That would be Light Stories V. from 2014. It is six-metres wide.

**HUO: What is 'light'?**

IB: Light is also a mystical thing for me. The process when you start with the paints, which are matter, and then you try one of them and it becomes a colour. As a next step, it can also be light or shadow, a spatial substance. It is a symbol for me in art and it can also be a symbol in life: how can one get from matter, from the tangible, to the intangible. For that is our task, even as human beings: to achieve a spiritual quality from the material.

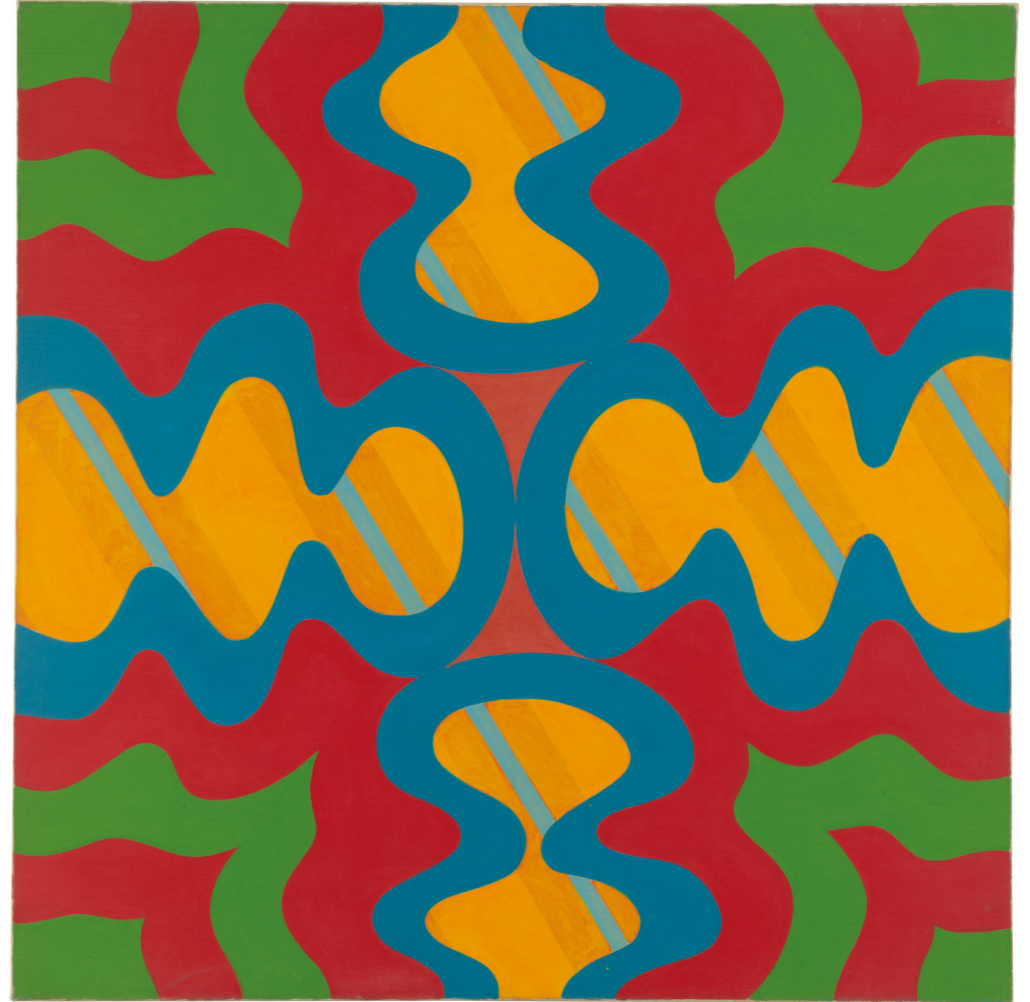
**HUO: Thank you very much!**



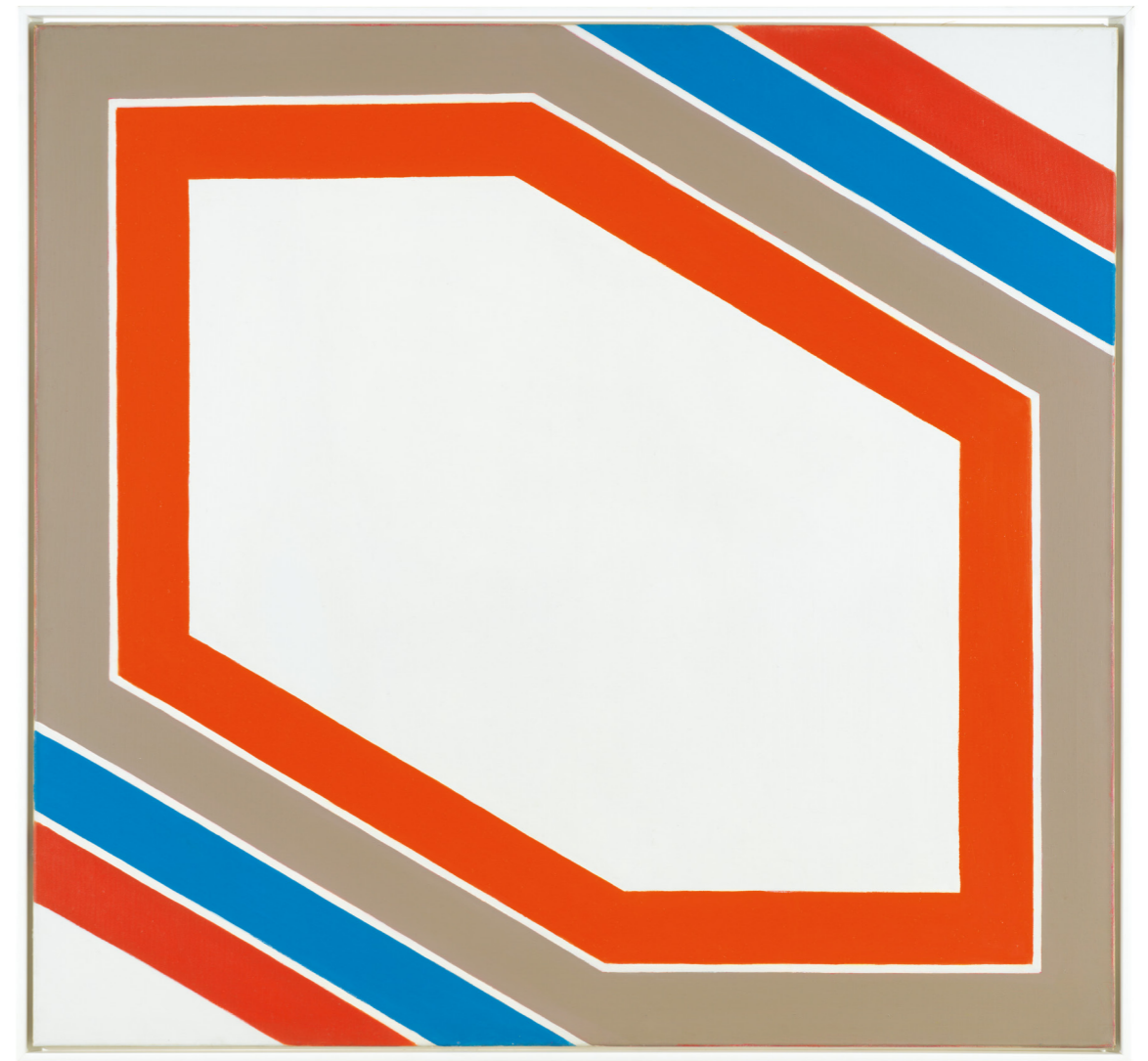
Imre Bak (b.1939) portrait by Miklós Sulyok

PLATES

*Composition*  
1967  
Acrylic on canvas  
120 x 120 cm  
47¼ x 47¼ inches



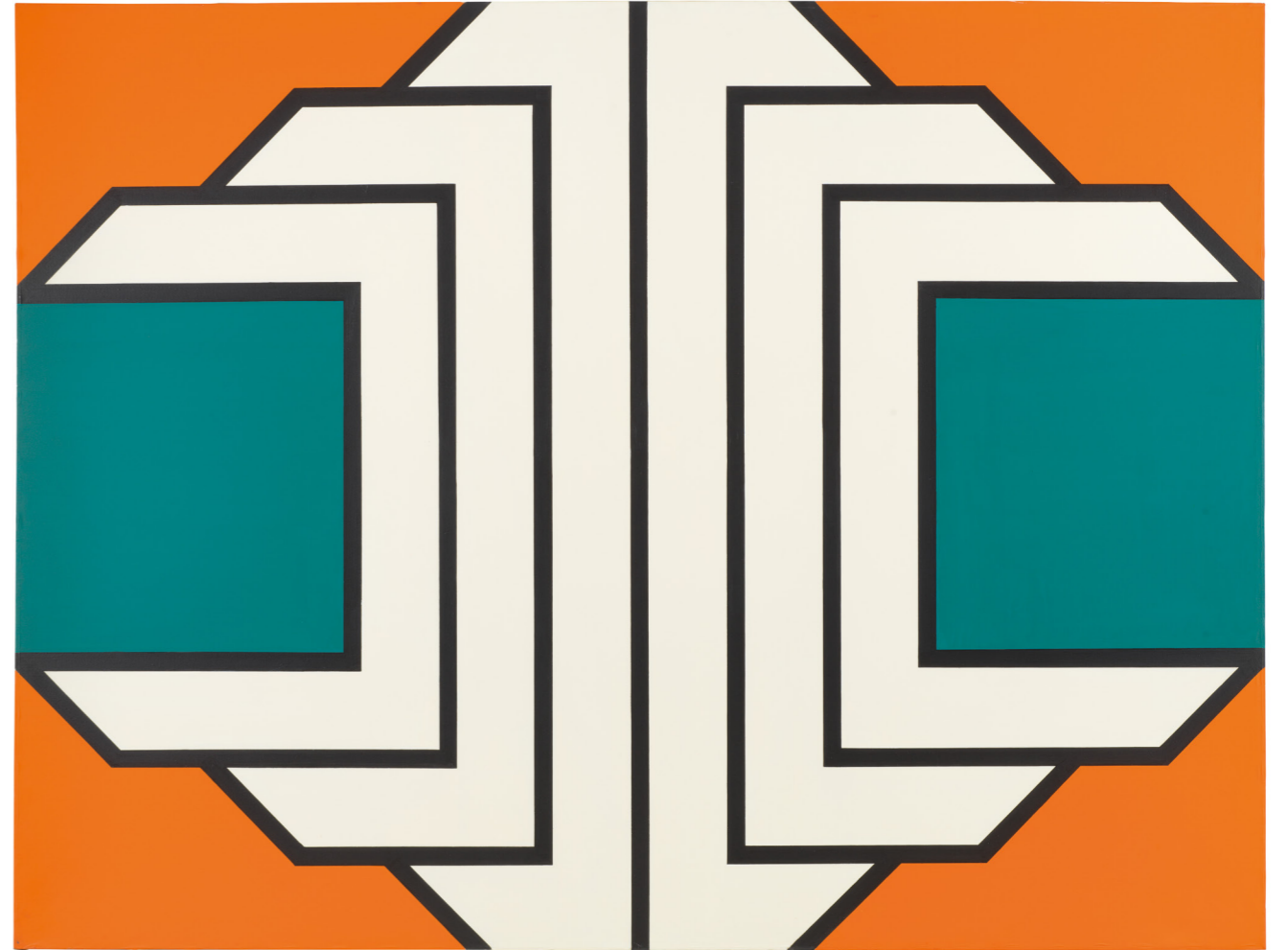
*Stripes VII*  
1967  
Acrylic on canvas  
140 x 150 cm  
55½ x 59 inches





*Green-Purple-Black*  
1968  
Acrylic on canvas  
120 x 150 cm  
47¼ x 59 inches

*Blue*  
1969  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 x 200 cm  
59 x 78¾ inches



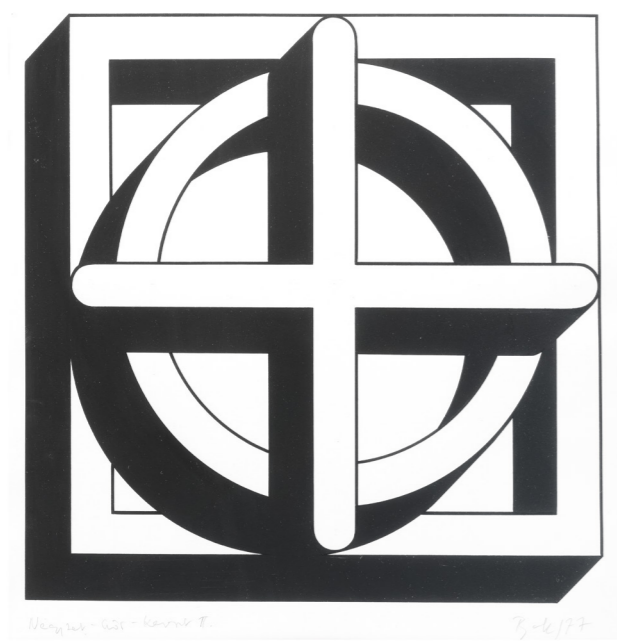
*Composition*  
1970  
Acrylic on canvas  
130 x 130 cm  
51½ x 51½ inches



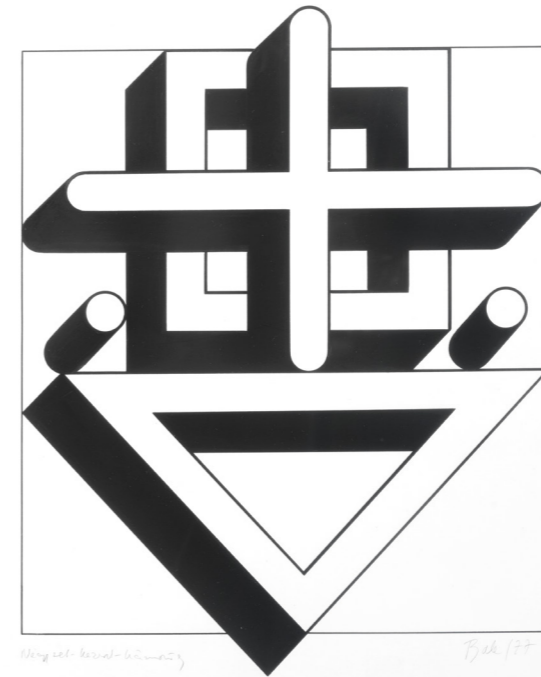


*Feynes No.3*  
1970  
Acrylic on canvas  
130 x 170 cm  
51½ x 67 inches

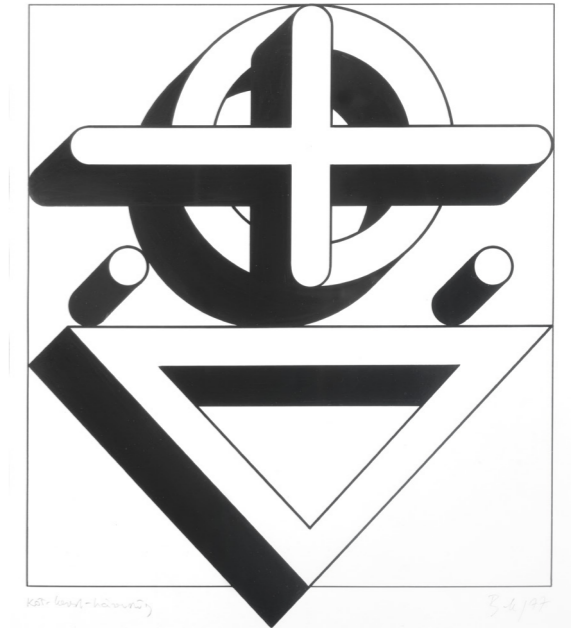




*Square-Circle-Cross II*  
 1977  
 Ink and tempera on paper  
 28 x 28 cm  
 11 x 11 inches

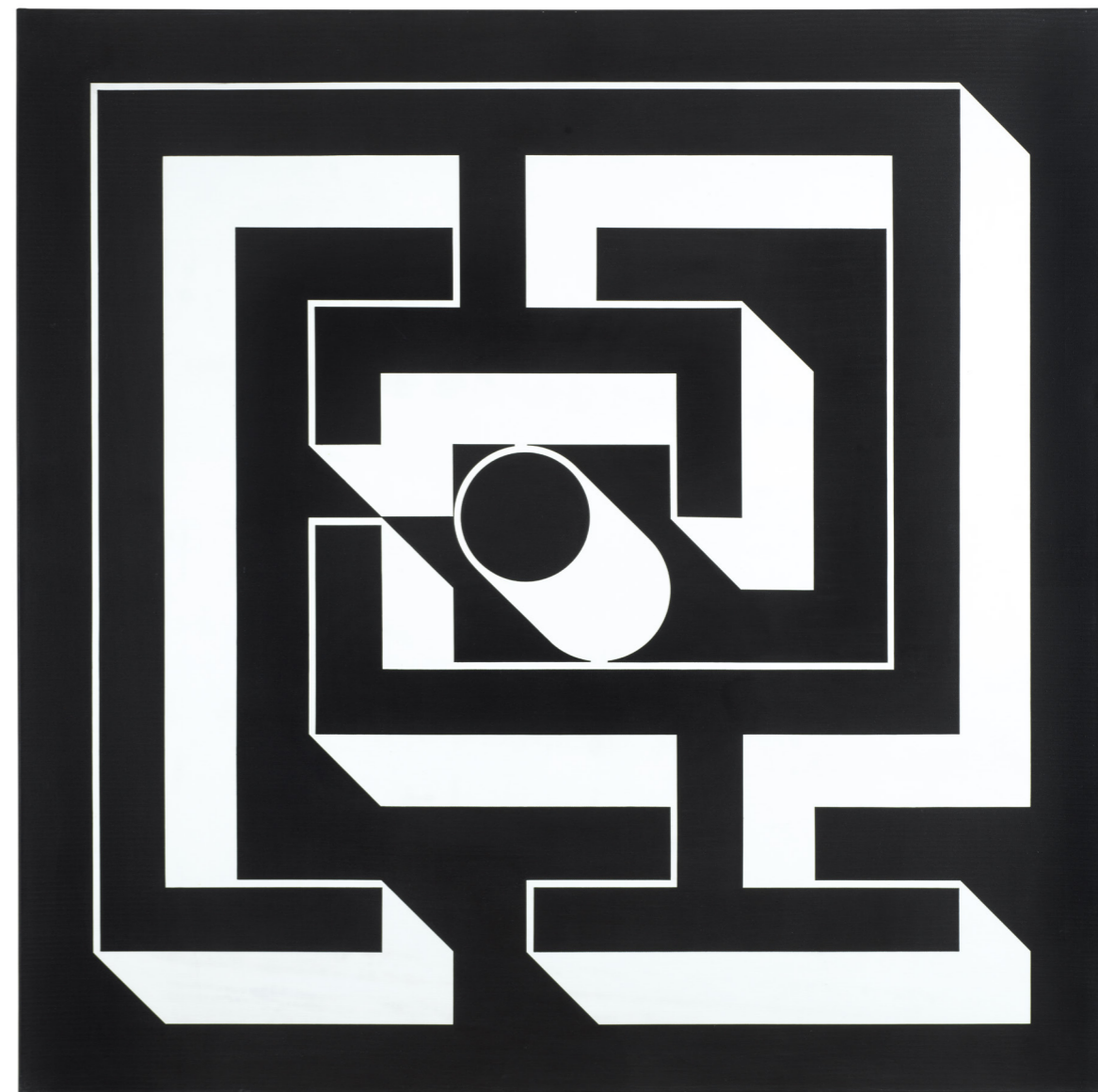


*Square-Cross-Triangle*  
 1977  
 Ink and tempera on paper  
 34 x 28 cm  
 13 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 11 inches



*Circle-Cross-Triangle*  
 1977  
 Ink and tempera on paper  
 32 x 28 cm  
 12 $\frac{5}{8}$  x 11 inches

*Labyrinth*  
1979  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 x 150 cm  
59 x 59 inches



*Black and White No. X*  
1981  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 x 150 cm  
59 x 59 inches



## LIST OF WORKS

p. 21 *Composition*  
1967  
Acrylic on canvas  
120 x 120 cm  
47¼ x 47¼ inches

p. 23 *Stripes VII*  
1967  
Acrylic on canvas  
140 x 150 cm  
55½ x 59 inches

p. 25 *Green-Purple-Black*  
1968  
Acrylic on canvas  
120 x 150 cm  
47¼ x 59 inches

p. 27 *Blue*  
1969  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 x 200 cm  
59 x 78¾ inches

p. 29 *Composition*  
1970  
Acrylic on canvas  
130 x 130 cm  
51½ x 51½ inches

p. 31 *Feynes No.3*  
1970  
Acrylic on canvas  
130 x 170 cm  
51½ x 67 inches

p. 32 *Square-Circle-Cross II*  
1977  
Ink and tempera on paper  
28 x 2 cm  
11 x 11 inches

p. 33 *Square-Cross-Triangle*  
1977  
Ink and tempera on paper  
34 x 28 cm  
13¾ x 11 inches

p. 33 *Circle-Cross-Triangle*  
1977  
Ink and tempera on paper  
32 x 28 cm  
12⅝ x 11 inches

p. 35 *Labyrinth*  
1979  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 x 150 cm  
59 x 59 inches

p. 37 *Black and White No. X*  
1981  
Acrylic on canvas  
150 x 150 cm  
59 x 59 inches

## BIOGRAPHY

- 1939 Imre Bak is born in Budapest, Hungary
- 1958- Studies in the painting department at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts
- 1963
- 1979- Becomes editor of the weekly newspaper *Film Theater Music*
- 1987
- 1987- Is director of the Institute of Cultural Theory and Teacher Training of the Hungarian College of Applied Arts
- 1991
- Imre Bak lives and works in Budapest

## SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 1968 Galerie Müller, Stuttgart, Germany
- 1970 *Bak-Konkoly*, Fényes Adolf Hall, Budapest
- 1971 *Bak-Jovánovics*, Museum Folkwang, Essen, Germany  
Galeria Wildeshausen, Wildeshausen, Germany
- 1972 Art Agency, Bad Salzdetfurt, Germany
- 1973 Galeria Akkumulatory 2, Poznań, Poland
- 1976 Galeria Sztuki Naajnowszej, Wrocław, Poland
- 1977 Kunsthalle, Budapest
- 1978 Wegiersky Institut Kultury, Warszawa; Gdansk; Mielec; Ostroleka
- 1979 *Bak-Fajó: Art and its elements*, Cultural Centre, Ózd, Hungary  
Cultural Centre, Dombóvár, Hungary
- 1985 Galeria Mana, Vienna  
*Bilder, Collagen, Graphik* 1980-1983, Galeria Steinek, Vienna
- 1986 *XLII. Biennale di Venezia, Ungheria: Bak, Birkás, Kelemen, Nádler*.  
Biennale di Venezia, Italy
- 1988 *Imre Bak: Gemälde*, Galerie Eremitage, Berlin
- 1989 *Adrian-Bak (Marc Adrian – Imre Bak): Positions I.*, Fészek Gallery,  
Budapest
- 1990 *Imre Bak, István Nádler*, Karlovy Vary, Galerie Umeni, Czech Republic  
*Art alive: Imre Bak*, April 12., Kunsthalle, Budapest

- 1991 *Die Konfrontationen der Zeichen*, Z-Galerie, Operngasse, Vienna
- 1992 Galerie Gaudens Pedit, Innsbruck, Austria
- 1993 Fészek Gallery, Budapest  
Galerie Gaudens Pedit, Lienz, Austria
- 1994 *New Pictures*, Exhibition Hall, Budapest
- 1996 Galerie Waszkowiak, Berlin  
Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest
- 1998 Coutts Bank, Vienna  
*Bilder von Imre Bak*, Galerie IHK, Würzburg, Germany
- 2000 *Imre Bak/Thomas Lenk*, Goethe Institut, Budapest  
*Bak Imre und Thomas Lenk*, Kulturinstitut der Republik Ungarn, Stuttgart,  
Germany
- 2002 *As if... (II)* Vadni Gallery, Budapest  
*Farbfeldmalerei*, Art Garage, Zug, Switzerland
- 2003 *“What is down, it conforms to what is above”* Vintage Gallery, Budapest  
*Imre Bak/János Fajó*, Ateliers Pro Arts, Budapest
- 2006 *New paintings*, Museum Corvin János, Gyula, Hungary
- 2010 *Imre Bak*, Galéria umenia v Novych Zámkoch, Nové Zámky, Slovakia
- 2015 *Exhibition of Imre Bak*, Fészek Gallery, Budapest
- 2016 *Actual timeless. Layers of an oeuvre*. Gallery of Paks, Paks, Hungary  
*Shifts*, acb Attachment, Budapest  
*Imre Bak*, Carl Kostyal, London
- 2017 *ÖN – ARC - KÉP*, acb Gallery
- 2018 *Imre Bak*, Galerie EIGEN + ART, Leipzig

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1966 *Studio 66. The 6th Annual Exhibition of the Studio of Young Artists.* Ernst Museum, Budapest
- 1968 *Iparterv.* Iparterv, Budapest  
*Kunstmarkt – 68.* Kunsthalle, Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany
- 1969 *Iparterv II.* Iparterv, Budapest  
*International Exhibition of Graphic Art.* Galerija Moderna, Ljubljana
- 1970 *Sechs Ungarische Künstler.* Kunstverein, Oldenburg, Germany  
*Konkrétistická grafika. Sín Umení,* Brno, Czech Republic
- 1971 *Experimental exhibitions in the Hungarian National Gallery II.,* Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest  
*Bak, Fajó, Hencze, Nádler, Pauer, Tót, '71.* Galerie im Griechenbeisel, Vienna  
*International Exhibition of Graphic Art '71.* Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana
- 1972 *Ungarische Avantgarde '72.* Jürgen Weichhardt Sammlung, Vechta, Germany  
*2nd International Graphic Biennial.* Kunstverein zu Frechen, Frechen, Germany  
*Budapester Avantgardisten.* Kunst-mark, Göttingen, Germany
- 1973 *Ungarische Künstler '73.* Acht Konstruktivisten. Kunstverein, Frechen, Germany  
*Bilder, Objekte und Konzepte.* Aus der Sammlung Jürgen Weichhardt. Stadtmuseum, Oldenburg, Germany  
*Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa.* Galerie Katakombe, Basel, Switzerland  
*Aspekten vsn hedendaagse horgaarse Kunst.* 't Hoogt, Utrecht, The Netherlands; Prinsentún, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands
- 1974 *3rd International Graphic Biennial.* Kunstverein zu Frechen, Frechen, Germany  
*2. Norske Internasjonale Grafikk Biennale.* Bibliotek, Fredrikstad, Norway  
*Aspekten van de aktuele kunst in Ost-Europa 1965–73.* International Cultural Centre, Antwerpen, The Netherlands  
*4th International Drawing Triennial.* Museum Architektury, Wrocław, Poland
- 1975 *Neue Ungarische Konstruktivisten.* Städtische Museen, Bonn, Germany  
*Ungarische Avantgarde.* Galerie R Johanna Ricard, Nürnberg, Germany
- 1976 *3.Norske Grafikk Biennale.* Bibliotek, Fredrikstad, Norway  
*Ungarische Avantgarde.* Galerie von Bartha, Basel, Switzerland  
*Zehn Jahre Internationale Malerwochen in de Steiermark.* Künstlerhaus, Graz, Austria
- 1978 *Hongaarse konstruktivistische Kunst 1920–1977.* Museum Hedendaagse Kunst; Kruithuis, s-Hertogenbosch; Museum Moderner Kunst, Arnhem, The Netherlands  
*5th International Graphic Biennial.* Kunstverein zu Frechen, Frechen, Germany  
*The International Drawing Triennial.* Wrocław, Poland
- 1979 *Ungarische konstruktivistische Kunst 1920–1977.* Kunstverein, München, Germany  
*Ungarische konstruktive Kunst.* Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf, Germany  
*Junge ungarische Maler und Grafiker der Gegenwart.* Esplanade 39, Hamburg, Germany
- 1980 *Ungarsk Konstruktivisme.* Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden, Norway  
*Ungarske Konstruktivister.* Kunstmuseum, Aalborg, Denmark
- 1981 *Ungersk konst. 1905–1980.* Liljevalchs Konsthall, Stockholm  
*14. International Biennial of Graphic Art.* Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- 1982 *National Fine Art Exhibition.* Kunsthalle, Budapest  
*Artisti Ungheresi.* Galleria d'arte San Carlo, Napoli, Italy  
*Hungarian Artists: Bak, Csiky, Fajó, Gulyás, Gyarmathy.* International Art Expo, Stockholm  
*Ungersk konst. 1905–1980.* Konstmuseum, Göteborg, Sweden; Konsthall, Malmö, Sweden
- 1983 *Landscape.* Pécsi Gallery, Pécs, Hungary  
*Hungarian Graphics '83.* International House, First World Trade Center, New Orleans, USA  
*Makó Artists' Colony 1979–1983.* József Attila Cultural Centre, Makó, Hungary
- 1984 *Wet paint: The new wave of the Hungarian painting.* Ernst Museum, Budapest  
*National Fine Art Exhibition '84.* Kunsthalle, Budapest  
*L'art hongrois contemporain.* Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris  
*Grenzzeichen 1984.* Neue Kunst Aus Österreich und Ungarn. Landesgalerie im Schloss Esterházy, Eisenstadt, Austria
- 1986 *Eclectic '85.* Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest  
*Cinco pintores contemporaneos húngaros.* Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas; Galeria las Malvinas, Buenos Aires
- 1987 *Contemporary art from Hungary.* Galerie de Künstler, München, Germany; Kunsthalle, Budapest  
*Modern and Contemporary Art from the Property of Artunion affiliated with the Hungarian National Gallery.* Christie's, Amsterdam  
*Bachman, Bak, Birkás, Fehér, Kelemen, Kovács, Rajk, Wahorn.* Espace Lyonnais d'Art Contemporain. Lyon, France  
*Imre Bak, Ákos Birkás, István Haraszthy.* Galerie Eremitage, Berlin  
*Cinco pintores contemporaneos húngaros.* Museo Nacional, Bogotá; Museo Carillo Gil, Mexico
- 1988 *Post-war and Contemporary Art.* Blenstock House, London  
*5. Biennale der Europäischen Grafik.* Schloss und Alte Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany  
*Konstruktion, Struktur, Utopie. Der Neue Konstruktivismus in Ungarn.* Dausder Ungarischen Kultur, Berlin
- 1989 *Kunst heute in Ungarn.* Neue Galerie, Sammlung Ludwig, Aachen, Germany  
*Bilder für den Himmel: Kunstdrachen.* City Art Museum, Himeji, Japan; Hara Museum Arch, Gunma, Japan; Prefectural Museum of Art, Shizouka, Japan; City Art Museum, Nagoya, Japan; Haus der Kunst, München, Germany  
*Symmetry and asymmetry.* Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest
- 1990 *Bilder für den Himmel: Kunstdrachen.* Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany; Zentrale Kunsthalle, Moscow; Deichtorhalle, Hamburg, Germany  
*Kunstszene Budapest.* Salzburger Künstlerhaus, Salzburg, Austria

- 1991 *Hungarian Modern Art Exhibition*. Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, South Korea  
*The 60s*. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest
- 1992 *Bilder für den Himmel: Kunstdrachen*. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Roma; Expo, Sevilla, Spain  
*Contemporary Hungarian art*. Sotheby's, Budapest
- 1993 *Hungarica*. Museo di Roma, Roma  
*Identité d'aujourd'hui*. Centre de Conference, Brussels  
*Bilder für den Himmel: Kunstdrachen*. Documenta Halle, Kassel, Germany; Musée des Beaux Arts, Montreal, Canada  
*Hungary before and after*. IMF Visitor Center, Washington; Consulat of Hungary, New York
- 1994 *Bildauflösung*. Medien Zentrum, Salzburg, Austria;  
*The 80s*. Ernst Museum, Budapest
- 1995 *Pictures for Sky*. Sydney, Australia
- 1996 *An overview of the recent decades of the Hungarian art*. The Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius  
*3x3 from Hungary*. Annendale-on-Hudson, Centor for Curatorial Studies Bard College, New York, USA  
*Beyond art*. Ludwig Museum – Mueum of Contemporary Art, Budapest  
*Hommage à Kassák*. Kassák Museum, Budapest  
*A Legacy Envisioned: A Century of Modern Art to Celebrate Hungary's 1100 Years*. The World Bank, Washington D.C.
- 1997 *Jenseits von Kunst*. Neue Galerie Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria  
*Oil – canvas*. Kunsthalle, Budapest
- 1998 *Art International New York*. Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York, USA;  
*Ungarn Avantgarde im 20. Jahrhundert*. Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Linz, Austria  
*Humanity and Values (Körmendi-Csák Collection.)* Vienna  
*Voorbij de Kunst*. Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerpen, The Netherlands
- 1999 *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Ungarn*. Museum Bochum, Bochum, Germany  
*Flexible*. Kassák Museum, Budapest; Ausstellungshalle, Frankfurt am Main, Germany  
*Aspekte/Positionen*. Palais Lichtenstein und 20er Haus, Vienna  
*Budapest–Berlin '99*. Akademie der Künste, Berlin  
*Ungarn 2000*. Galerie der Künstler, München, Germany
- 2000 *Dialogue. Painting at the turn of the millenium*. Kunsthalle, Budapest  
*Aspects – Positions*. Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest  
*Konkret*. Residenzschloss, Dresden, Germany  
*Bilder für den Himmel*. Art Kite Museum, Detmold, Germany  
*“Artistes Hongrois en France 1920/2000”*. Salle Bessonneau, Angers, France
- 2001 *Konstruktive Malerei und Skulptur*. ACP Galerie, Zürich, Switzerland  
*Die Brücke über die Zeit*. Stadtmuseum, Oldenburg, Germany
- 2002 *Situation Ungarn*. Max Liebermann Haus, Berlin
- 2007 *The story continues...* Budapest Galéria, Budapest
- 2009 *AKZENT UNGARN. Ungarische Kunst der 1960 bis 1990-er Jahre aus der Sammlung der Neue Galerie Graz*. Neue Galerie Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria
- 2010 *Symmetrische Kunst aus Ungarn*. ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany
- 2011 *Objects of Meditation – A selection from Bodnár Collection*. REÖK Palace, Szeged, Hungary
- 2012 *Beyond Corrupted Eye*. Galeria Akkumulatory 2, Poznan. 1972-1990.
- 2013 *Conceptualism today*, Paksi képtár, Paks, Hungary
- 2014 *Ludwig 25*, Ludwig Museum – Mueum of Contemporary Art, Budapest
- 2015 *A Second Autumn*, Art Stations Gallery, Poznań, Poland  
*Bookmarks – Hungarian Neo-Avant.garde and Post-Conceptual Art from the late 1960's to the Present*, special exhibition at the Art Cologne, Cologne, Germany; OFF Biennale, Budapest  
*Ludwig Goes Pop + The East Side Story*, Ludwig Museum – Mueum of Contemporary Art, Budapest  
*Kunst von 1800 bis heute aus der Sammlung der Neuen Galerie Graz*, Graz, Austria
- 2016 *Image Tactics – The Makó Graphic Artists' Colony*, Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest  
*Wasted Time – The central exhibition of Art Capital 2016*, Ferenczy Museum Center, Budapest
- 2017 *With the Eyes of Others – Hungarian Artists of the Sixties and Seventies*, Elizabeth Dee Gallery, New York  
*Abstract Hungary*, Künstlerhaus, Graz  
*Westkunst – Ostkunst*. A Selection from the Collection, Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest  
*Summer Show*, acb Gallery, Budapest  
*Separate Ways. Karl-Heinz Adler and Hungarian Abstract Art*, Petőfi Literary Museum – Kassák Museum - Kiscelli Museum – Municipal Picture Gallery, Budapest
- 2018 *Bookmarks – Revisiting Hungarian Art of the 1960s and 1970s*, The Vinyl Factory Soho (presented by acb, Kisterem and Vintage galleries), London  
*The Hungarian Avant-garde – Third Generation*, Tajan Artstudio, Paris  
*Media Networks*, Tate Modern, London  
*Within Frames – The Art of the Sixties in Hungary (1958-1968)*, Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest  
*“We believe in life before death”* – Selection from the contemporary and neo-avant-garde works of the IROKÉZ collection, House of Arts – Dubniczay Palace, Veszprém, Hungary



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