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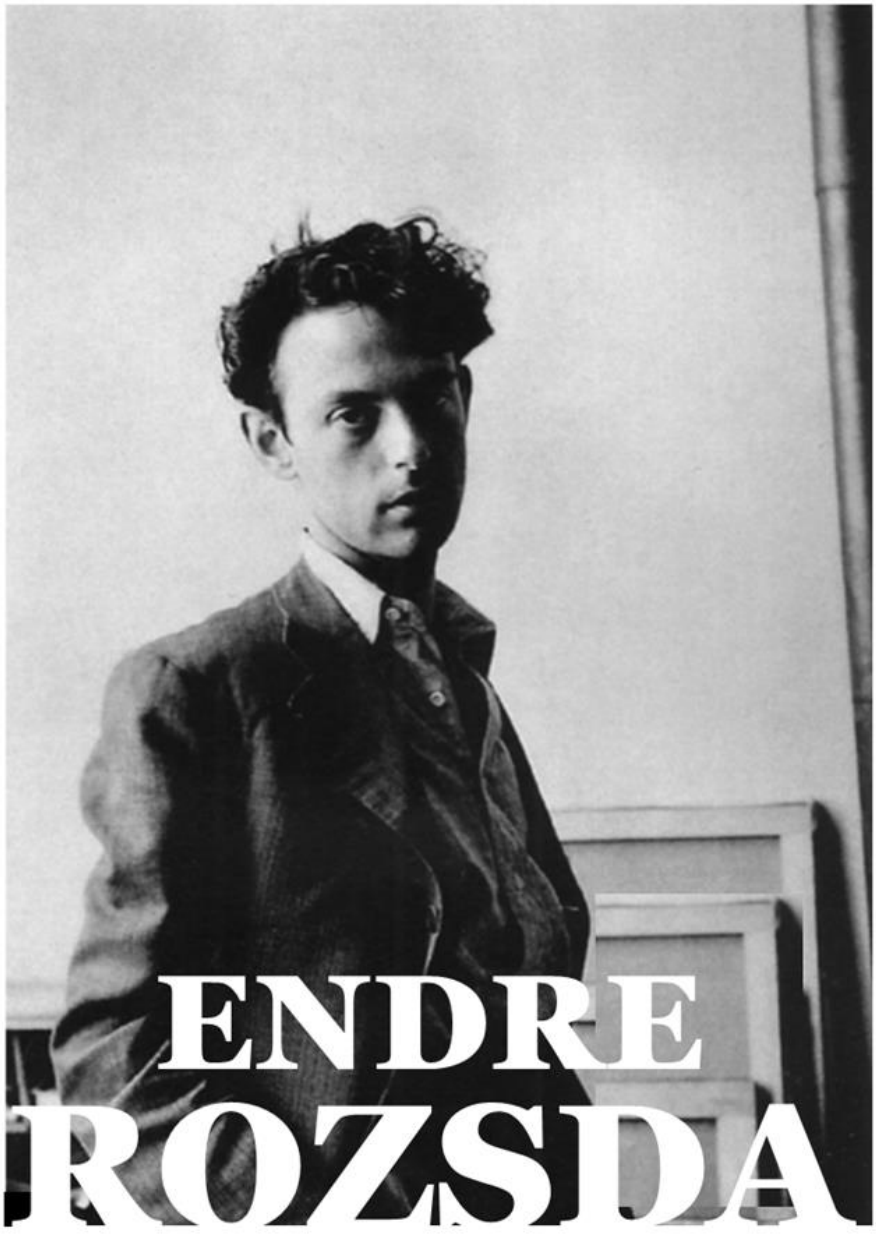

Éditions Mélusine

Journal of the Association Pour la Recherche et l'Etude du Surréalisme

ENDRE ROZSDA

Proceedings of the APRES study-day
held in Paris at the Halle St. Pierre
on 10 March 2018

Articles edited by Françoise Py and José Mangani
translated by Elza Adamowicz and Peter Dunwoodie

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INTRODUCTION

Françoise PY

In February 1957, André Breton prefaced an exhibition of Endre Rozsda (1913-1999) at the Furstenberg Gallery. This was the first solo exhibition of the artist who had escaped from Hungary three months earlier. After Judit Reigl and Hantaï, in 1954, he was the third Hungarian painter to arrive in Paris at the risk of his life that Breton would support. The text he devotes to Rozsda reflects this commitment. The statement on the first page of the modest catalogue reads: "We count on the support of all friends of art and of the Hungarian Revolution". In October 1956, the Soviet repression in Budapest had already mobilized the Paris surrealists, who published the tract "Hungary, rising sun". In his preface to Rozsda's work, Breton salutes "the prodigious leap of Budapest". He explains that Rozsda's work constitutes a "noble example of what was to be hidden if one wanted to survive, but also of what inner strength had to be called upon in the face of extreme constraints".

Rozsda's entire life is linked to the painful history of that country. In 1931, at the age of 18, he adopted the pseudonym Rozsda, a noun meaning rust. His first solo exhibition at the Tamás Gallery in Budapest took place at the same time as that of Csontváry, an original painter praised by Breton. Rozsda arrived in Paris in 1938 where he met Hajdu, Giacometti, Ernst and Picasso. But, wanted by the police, he returned to Budapest in 1943, with false papers his friend Françoise Gilot had obtained for him. After the Nazi invasion of

Hungary, he lived in hiding. He was sentenced to forced labour for failure to enlist in the armed forces but eventually escaped. His parents suffered a tragic fate: his father, bankrupt, committed suicide in 1935; his mother was killed in deportation. In 1956, he took part in the clandestine exhibition of the Seven at Esztergom, on the eve of the Revolution. Threatened because of his political commitment, when the Russian tanks entered Budapest he left Hungary for good for Paris.

His painting is mainly abstract, with the traces of eyes, faces, porticoes, constellations. The relation of his painting to Surrealism can be seen in the light of the link drawn by Charles Estienne at the time between lyrical abstract artists and the surrealists. André Breton sees in his paintings a kind of *humus* in the blended, blurred shades and fragmented and exploded images. He evokes the "magma of leaves turned black and wings destroyed". The paintings are to be read in the context of the awareness of the ambient decomposition. We cannot help but associate humus with rust, the colour of time. Rozsda wrote three short texts, poetically and philosophically dense, *Souvenirs*, *Pensées* and *Méditations*, that reveal his fundamental concern: to paint time. Matta, Onslow-Ford or Jacqueline Lamba, contemporaries of Rozsda and strongly influenced by the art of Yves Tanguy, also sought to express space-time. The quest for the fourth dimension of time, which had fascinated Marcel Duchamp, is central to the second generation of surrealist artists.

Esoteric and symbolic concerns are present in the work of Rozsda, who became a Freemason. His saturated canvases, without any empty spaces, where even white is both colour and form, are perceived as a "dense fabric" that comes alive for the viewer, like a star-filled sky, an illuminated city, a fairytale world. For instance, *Sacred and Profane Love*, chosen by Breton to illustrate his text subsequently published in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*. It is, says the artist, "the mental surface from which I can set off in search of time". The fusion of light

and colours, the interweaving of signs, the superposition of motifs covered here and there by the traces of lace favoured by Victor Hugo, create a shifting surface, a mosaic and kaleidoscopic space, which invites the viewer's long contemplation in order to find, according to the wish of the painter, "the path that leads to it and makes it possible to walk there". The time of the gaze, the time of execution (sometimes several years apart), the multidimensional time of thought militate in favour of a "perpetual present". As he explained: "I dream I am alive in a world where I can walk on the dimension of time, forward, backward, up, down; where I can walk, now an adult, in a time when I was actually a child…".

He also conducted these experiments through photography. A little-known part of his oeuvre, despite the substantial output: 22,000 photographs, housed in the Hungarian Museum of Photography. Superpositions, transparencies, reflections create a world where the spectral and the contingent combine. Multiple self-portraits in which the artist, like Janus, is portrayed from several angles at once, create a layering of space. Reflections turn the world upside down: "Boats of destiny float upstream, downstream. Inside and outside, up and down are interlinked", he wrote. André Breton probably did not know Rozsda's photographs, but he appreciated his drawings, and owned a drawing in graphite of a *Reclining Female Nude*. While the paintings are palimpsests, cryptic by force of layering, the drawings on the contrary explore the void and dialogue with it. The automatic drawings, executed in Indian ink, pen, Rotring pen, or coloured pencils, play with numbers and letters to create figures. They are often double images. They sometimes incorporate the inner words that gave birth to them, such as: "Yesterday, I thought it would be good to die. But today I realized that it's been a long time since I was alive. I am free therefore." In 1961, Rozsda participated in the *International Exhibition of Surrealism* at the Schwarz Gallery in Milan. In 1964, he received the Copley Prize, awarded by a jury which

included Hans Arp, Alfred Barr, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Man Ray, Matta and Roland Penrose. Was he finally to be recognized?

José Mangani, who co-edited this book with me and was a very close friend of the artist, recalls some important events that marked his career and contributed to his reputation. His life was not a bed of roses, in spite of the unfailing support of his friends, because Rozsda, who practiced a slow meditative painting, was not concerned with immediate facile success.

Several of the contributors to this issue treat Rozsda's very special and fundamental relation to time. Like many surrealist artists of his generation, his pictorial experimentation focuses on the expression of a new space-time that takes into account the most advanced scientific discoveries, which do not contradict the intuitions of occult sciences, alchemy and the esoteric. David Rosenberg, who knew the artist well and was one of his finest critics, develops this crucial question in a text with the explicit title: "Rozsda or time regained".

Adam Biro, art publisher and writer, was, like Rozsda, a political refugee, having fled the communist dictatorship in Hungary. His testimony about Hungary before and after the Budapest uprising is particularly valuable for our understanding of the relationship of this artist to time and history.

Patrice Conti pursues this investigation by comparing the work of Rozsda with that of Marcel Proust. He explores the analogies between the writing of *A la Recherche du temps perdu* and the painting of someone who wanted to "paint the way Proust wrote".

This new space-time relation has led to a new approach to the world of sound. François Lescun explores Rozsda's close relationship with music, reflected in a number of paintings. The author, who is also a poet, develops a series of fascinating analogies in which words, images and sounds "glitter like a treasure discovered".

Alba Romano Pace, author of a doctoral dissertation on Rozsda, focuses on the historical context, exploring the impact of this painful context on his work. "This Europe with its troubled soul", according to Ernő Kállai, whom she cites, generates an art which, she tells us forcefully, "plunges into History".

Is Rozsda's search of time linked to his exploration of dreams? This is the question raised by Borbála Kálmán who focuses on the different techniques used by the artist.

Claude Luca Georges is a painter, and it is as a painter that he approaches the work of metamorphosis in Rozsda's paintings, particularly open to convergent practices, and thus anticipating our post-modern era.

The book closes on a major text by Rozsda: "Méditations". It focuses its attention on the concept of time, coupled with an introspective approach, because painting, considered as a machine that goes back in time, opens onto both the outside and the inside. As the artist explains: "Boats of destiny float upstream, downstream. Inside and outside, high and low are interlinked".

1. *Hide-and-Seek*, 1958, oil on canvas, former André Breton collection

TOWARDS RECOGNITION

José MANGANI

André Breton was the first to write about Endre Rozsda's work, followed by Alain Jouffroy, Joyce Mansour, René Micha, Sarane Alexandrian, Edouard Jaguer and Arturo Schwarz.

Welcomed by the press in 1957 as "the only painter to survive the Hungarian revolution", Rozsda enjoyed a moment of "glory" when, after his 1963 exhibition at the Furstenberg Gallery, he received the Copley Award.

After Breton's death and the closure of Simone Collinet's gallery, Rozsda decided to work on his paintings without time constraints, leading a secluded life, without worrying about the art market, fashion or fame. His method and approach led him to work on several canvases simultaneously, placing them on the easel in response to his inspiration. Each one was considered finished, sometimes after several years, only when he felt the painting returned his gaze and stood in front of him.

Major collectors enabled him to satisfy this constraint and to have the freedom necessary to carry out the project.

At the end of his life, encouraged by Germain Viatte, the director of the National Gallery of Modern Art in Paris, Rozsda decided to make his work known (it had been ignored by Stalinist historians) in his native country, while

continuing to show his attachment to France.[1] The mission was continued by his relatives, in the Association des amis d'Endre Rozsda.[2] For 20 years they worked to publicize the different aspects of his art in the major Hungarian museums. A core group of faithful worked tirelessly in this endeavour. In France: Françoise Gilot, Ervin Rosenberg, David Rosenberg, Csaba Benedek, Chantal Hourcade, Antoine de Palaminy et Benjamin Straub. In Hungary: Júlia Cserba, Károly Szalóki et Tamás Ónody.

The retrospective *Le Temps retrouvé* at the Orangerie of the Paris Senate in June 2017 proved to be the start of a movement which was to bring to public attention Rozsda's work in France, the country which had adopted him and where his art reached its full maturity.

This first issue of *Mélusine Electronic Journal*, which presents the proceedings of the first study day devoted to Rozsda (10 March 2018), thus constitutes a new stage in the recognition of his oeuvre.

Many thanks to Henri Béhar, Françoise Py, Sophie Béhar, Loïc Le Bail and the Association pour la Recherche et l'Etude du Surréalisme.

[1] France has shown its support for Rozsda by allowing the repatriation of all his work in 1957, and by providing diplomatic support for the exhibitions organised in Hungary.

[2] Housed in Rozsda's former studio, at the Bateau-Lavoir, where the archives are still stored. This centre for research and encounters is also accessible by appointment (www.rozsda.com).

ENDRE ROZSDA OR TIME REGAINED

David ROSENBERG

Endre Rozsda had a noble idea of art. In this domain he was interested in, or more exactly he loved, only what seemed to him alive, unique, meaningful and honest. And it did not matter if the work was created yesterday or a thousand years ago. Time was abolished from the moment that a living exchange was established between the work and the viewer. If a work was successful, it transformed you and transformed your vision of life. When talking about it, he often mentioned his first encounter with Bartók's work when, one evening in 1937, he attended a concert during which the composer performed his own works, presumably accompanied by his wife. Bartók's music had not only overwhelmed him; it had instantly expanded his idea of art and enabled him to understand that beyond "playing with colours and using one's talents", one had to create one's own language, one's own idiom, and to become, as he rightly said, "contemporary with oneself". Rozsda also often referred to his discovery of the great Russian authors and the work of Marcel Proust. Their works, too, had transformed him. He compared their books to pathways that metamorphosed those who followed them: one did not see things or life in the same way before and after reading them.

Painting, like reading, allowed him to "walk on the dimension of time". The studio was the place to which Rozsda retreated so that memory could gradually take possession of him and his canvas. He let himself drift and slip back not

just into his past, but even more curiously, he wrote, "as far back as the time of his predecessors, as if I were contemporary with very ancient events." He believed the perpetual present encompassed everything.

There was one further element present in his thought but rarely named: the marvellous. In the wall of everyday life, the work creates a crack, a small opening that, if we take the trouble to enlarge it a little bit, allows a glimpse of another dimension of life and thought, richer and more luminous; but at times also duller and greyer, if the artist has nothing substantial to offer.

He was very cautious about the question of the marvellous in art, feeling that it should never be confused with mere distraction or aesthetic seduction. He sought the high peaks of beauty and mystery. And in our opinion, he succeeded.

The following notes help us appreciate the most salient features of Endre Rozsda's life and pictorial quest, from his beginnings in Budapest to his last canvases, painted in the seclusion of his Bateau-Lavoir studio.

PAINTING FROM NATURE (1930-1936)

Rozsda began his career as a painter in Budapest in the early 1930s. After graduation, he enrolled at the Free School founded by the painter Vilmos Aba-Novák, who made Rozsda his apprentice, then very quickly encouraged him to work alone. In both technique and subject-matter he was close to the Hungarian open-air painting of the Nagybánya school, heirs of the Barbizon school and the French Impressionist movement.

But even at that stage, his work is hard to define or summarize under a single label. "Three painters" can be identified in a single person. There is the walker, striding off with canvas and paint in search of a sunny patch of countryside or an inspiring viewpoint; the urban painter, setting his easel in the middle of a living-room, the corner of a kitchen, or at a window; the studio painter whose

carefully studied composition develops slowly. Pictorially, this produces three easily identifiable types of works: canvases painted with rapid and loose brush-strokes, in green, grey or ochre (*Marble Worker*); paintings in grey-blue shades with a more solid composition and drawing (*Girl Smoking*); and finally a few works where the meticulous treatment of the subject is executed in a range of shimmering colours painted with flat brush-strokes, in which a more formal composition evokes the "classical taste" of the 1930s (*Marianne*). The painter's first years are marked by constant shifts between these three styles.

2. *Girl Smoking*, c. 1934

SURREALIST NIGHT (1936-1943)

From his first months in Paris Rozsda emphasized the gestural and calligraphic aspect of his painting. Colours and shapes were applied with single sinuous brush-strokes. The immobility of the subject – usually a still life – contrasted with the dynamism of gestures and paint marks.

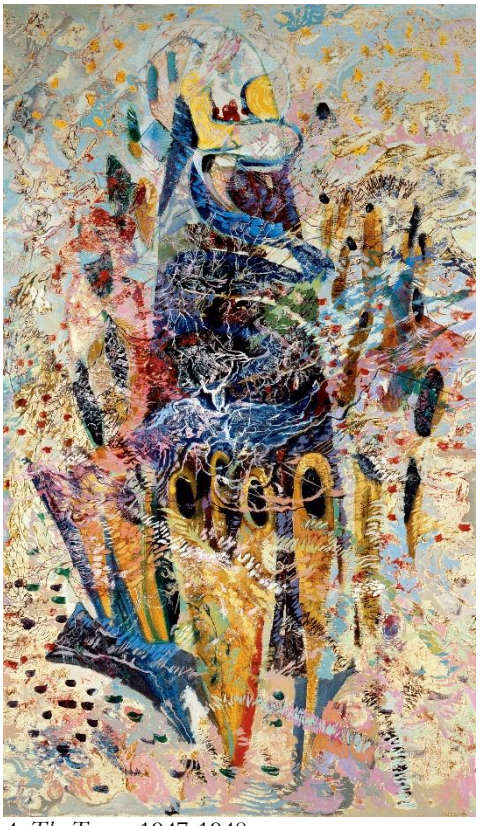
It was at this time that his enthusiasm for the work of the surrealist painters began: Max Ernst, André Masson and Miró. The young painter also took an interest in Salvador Dalí's latent images and in the idea of dreams and automatism. During the German Occupation he could appreciate their works thanks to Jeanne Bucher's gallery and the rare other galleries that continued to exhibit their paintings clandestinely.

3. *Memory of the Navy*, 1942

The starting-point for the canvases of that period was usually observation of a subject set up by the painter or, more simply, framed. Certain elements of the composition were treated according to different scales. Schematic or stylised figures and the use of colours now depended more on composition than on subject. All ideas of naturalism gradually disappeared.

Between 1941 and 1943 Rozsda worked on abstract compositions of imposing geometric shapes, mostly painted in contrasting solid colours. On a smaller scale, signs and graphic elements were sometimes scattered over the

canvas. Lines were flowing and sinuous. Blacks, blues and violets were set off bright, often fluorescent colours, mauves, oranges, reds or greens.



4. *The Tower*, 1947-1948

THE DAWN OF EUROPE (1945-1947)

At the end of the war, Rozsda ran a workers' painting workshop in Budapest, and cofounded the European School, a movement which, during the three years of its existence, influenced the artistic and intellectual life reawakening in Hungary. Artists, poets and philosophers met occasionally in Rozsda's studio,

transformed for the occasion into a meeting-place, to discuss Surrealism and the need to create bridges between the arts, peoples and cultures.

The works Rozsda produced in that context are formally very homogeneous. The characteristic features of this period are clearly identifiable as early as 1945: a mass of tiny details, frames and structures, capillary networks. Rozsda used a complex system of multiple planes, transparent or opaque, overlapping or interlocking. The painter's starting-points were images of nature, both animal and vegetable: truncated or severed, reconstructed or assembled, enlarged or reduced, these forms created a vocabulary of graphic and pictorial elements. It is as though the viewer is peering into a cell or into ocean depths alive with a mysterious life. When compared to the canvases produced just before he left for Paris in 1943, it is clear that his palette had become much lighter. But the luminous space of the canvas would occasionally darken, saturated by clearly delineated motifs. The artist's activities were brutally halted when the Stalinists came to power and from one day to the next Rozsda, like so many other artists, was obliged to hide his work.

THE REALM OF MEMORY (1956: EXILE AND AFTER)

From 1948, freedom of expression in Hungary was suddenly suppressed and only "official art" was allowed. Rozsda largely abandoned painting and turned to drawing, working in hiding until 1956, when he was definitively exiled to Paris. *Father and Mother in a Carriage* (1954) is one of the rare paintings from that period. Memory-time and story-time merge to form a composition in which landscapes, objects and people from the painter's childhood mingle. The nostalgia of this work is echoed in the delicate tracery and bright colours of the drawings produced in the midst of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, using a technique that he would continue to refine, as his last drawings show.

5. *Father and Mother in a Carriage*, 1954

When Rozsda went back to painting in the late 1950s, memory and memories played a leading role in his work. Anamnesis informs each canvas, but it is accompanied by intense work: a host of tiny details, interlocked with each other, produce a dense and complex world in which, occasionally, a recognizable figure or architectural fragments appear.

For Rozsda "the raw material creates the mental surface" from which he sets off in search of time. A memory or even a shape – an eye, a window, a tree leaf, a letter or a number – is transformed into a coloured geometrical motif or the reverse. Abstraction and figuration merge, thus creating a dense fabric of "shapes fusing and dissolving in front of the viewer".

THE EYE THAT LISTENS, or ROZSDA AND MUSIC

The relationship between Rozsda's painting and music goes as far back as 1938 at a Bartók concert where the composer, accompanied by his wife, played one of his own pieces: the *Sonata for two pianos and percussion*. The discovery of

Bartók's music crystallized all the questions that confronted him at the time: "What to paint? Why paint? What is the meaning of art?"

6. *Mask and Bergamask*, c. 1979

Hence, it was thanks to classical and contemporary musicians, just as much as, if not more than, avant-garde artists, that he began to understand what modernity in painting could be like. Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, Mozart's sound world, the *Masques et Bergamasques* by Fauré and Debussy: such works revealed the extent to which painting and music were linked for Rozsda.

The works that explicitly refer to music, he maintained, were less a homage to the artists than a visual transcription of the auditory and emotional experience produced by their work.

7. *Initiation*, 1976

INITIATION (1969-1999)

In the late 1960s Endre Rozsda was initiated into freemasonry. Without changing his technique he nevertheless introduced in his paintings numerous symbols from that tradition. But the central question of his work was to be time. This led to a profound change in the way he understood the act of looking and that of painting, a mutation that the works of the previous decade had hinted at. Henceforth Rozsda was to search for a new model of perspective, "replacing the depth of space by that of time".

As he wrote on this topic: "When I start painting I do my best to eliminate from the canvas everything white, everything that might disturb. I endeavour to create a blurred surface on which I can then search, hesitatingly, for a certain order that will, bit by bit, disrupt the former order and create a new disorder. It is the raw material from which I can set off in search of time". It is as though paint was a sediment, made up of vision, memory and the fugitive premonitions that cross the painter's consciousness.

For Rozsda, it is as though the delicate assembling of shape and colour, the play of light, can evoke the workmanship and ornamentation of medieval jewels, the art of stained-glass windows, church architecture, oriental carpets or Byzantine mosaics. All his works eschew symmetry and repetition. Each canvas is a geological layer with innumerable strata in which are preserved – at once frozen and vibrant – images, memories and thoughts, like a "dense fabric of light and memories", brought to life by the eye.

THE NAME OF DISORDER

Adam BIRO

Rozsda and I have four things in common that allow me to talk about him: we were both political refugees from Hungary, Jews indifferent to religion, associated with Surrealism (he as participant, I as spectator) and passionate artlovers, living for and off art.

As a kid in Budapest, I did not know anything about Rozsda. In communist Hungary art had to be socialist realism. (When I think of it! These people, our leaders, who called themselves revolutionaries and who imposed the most banal and down-to-earth art, the most conformist and bourgeois, the most petty-bourgeois art you could imagine ...) Surrealism, or any tendencies in the least bit modern or experimental, were damned, forbidden, punished. I heard about the existence of Rozsda and discovered his works in Paris when I was working on a dictionary of surrealism. His paintings attracted me. Although they were not surrealist in the strict sense of the term, they were surrealist insofar as they were dreamlike, instinctive, automatic and transgressive. I loved his colours, the apparent disorder of his paintings – apparent only because his paintings were very organized. Freedom was the name of this disorder.

I phoned him to ask him to send me the Ekta of one his works to be reproduced in the dictionary. (For the younger generation: an ektachrome was a colour film, ready to be used for photo-engraving reproductions.) We spoke Hungarian, to my delight. A few days later I received a tiny, mediocre Ekta (still

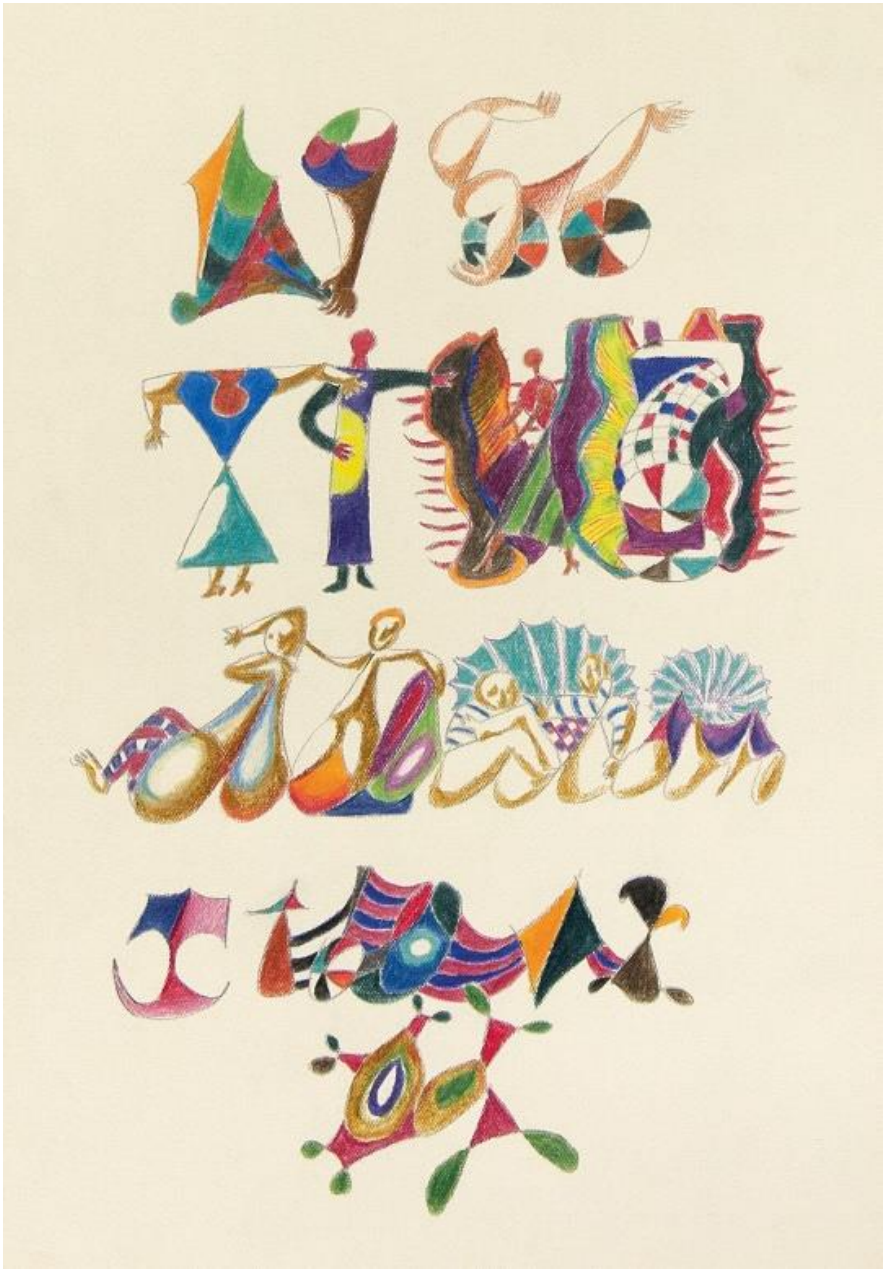
in my possession), obviously made by an amateur – by Rozsda himself, as he told me when I called him back to complain. (I suddenly recall a similar anecdote: when I was working on a book with another surrealist painter, Max Ernst, I told the artist that the poor quality photo-engraving I had just received "did not reproduce his work". He reprimanded me: "Dear Mr. Biro, did you intend to reproduce my work?")

I subsequently had the opportunity to meet Rozsda himself at the Bateau-Lavoir where I was introduced by a Hungarian friend, an art journalist, Julia Cserba. I had never been to this mythical building before, and was exhilarated and impressed by Rozsda's studio which, quite naturally, occupied a fine space in one of the great centres of modern art. As if I had been told, come to an informal dinner tonight with some friends, Picasso, Giacometti, Turner, Caravaggio ...

I can remember the scene very vividly: Rozsda standing in a large, bright room where some succulent plants were growing (was it really like that? Memory distorts and transforms, and this memory goes back to the beginning of the 1980s), showing us a large, very colourful painting (which one?) with small figures, full of humour. (Have we paid enough attention to the humour omnipresent in Rozsda's work?) We spoke of his relations with surrealism, of Hungary ... He had a Hungarian accent.

He was little known at the time but appreciated by a small circle of amateurs of good taste; helped by Françoise Gilot, his reputation was not long in extending beyond this circle and internationally.

Another memory, this time a posthumous one: I was invited to a private view of Endre Rozsda in a Budapest gallery, on 4 November 2006, at 4 (or 6?) in the morning, exactly fifty years after the solemn call by Imre Nagy, head of



8. *Revolution I*, 1956

the Hungarian revolutionary government, a desperate, pathetic, and vain call, as we now know, addressed to the whole world, the free world (who showed little interest in a revolution doomed to fail in a small, unimportant country), to come and save Hungarian democracy, which was only twelve days old. The Soviet tanks were being sent at precisely that time to crush this democracy, with the success and consequences we all know. And, I don't know why, this exhibition corresponded perfectly to this artist and his works, in spite of the extraordinary gap between a cruel moment of History and this place and public and this moment in time. (Out of anecdotal – or historical? – interest, the exhibition took place in the building of the Central European University subsidized by another Hungarian refugee, Soros, whom the government of the far-right Prime Minister Orbán has just driven out of Hungary…)

This moment fifty years earlier was inseparable from Rozsda's career and life: shortly after the invasion, having understood that he had no future in his defeated homeland, he left it for the second and last time. He left his country and his language ... but he saved his art: the illustrator - that's how he had survived in Stalinist Hungary – became the painter we know. A free painter.

I have just realized that we are 4 November (2018). Chance coincidence does not exist, unless it is objective chance.

IN SEARCH OF OUT-OF-TIME:
Endre Rozsda and the figure of Marcel Proust

Patrice CONTI

This study[1] was inspired by the title chosen by the curators of the retrospective of Rozsda's work held in Budapest at the end of 2013: *Endre Rozsda - Le Temps retrouvé*.

With this title, which echoes that of the last volume of Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the exhibition curators had chosen to highlight the themes of time, memory and memories at the heart of Endre Rozsda's work and thought.

No doubt there was also the desire to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Rozsda, which coincided, within a few days, with the publication of the first volume of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. The Rozsda retrospective was opened on 18 November 2013, exactly one hundred years after the birth of the artist, and one hundred years after the publication of *Du côté de chez Swann* on 14 November 1913.

Other elements seemed to justify an exploration of Rozsda's connection to Marcel Proust the individual and writer. Rozsda has referred to Proust in his

[1] I would like to thank the organizers of this study day, Henri Béhar and Françoise Py, for inviting me to present the initial results of a research project on what links Endre Rozsda to Marcel Proust. I also want to thank José Mangani: this work owes a lot to our exchanges and to the account of his memories, as well as to the trust he showed me in allowing me to access the archives he keeps and values. Finally, my thanks also go to Marc Kober who, like José Mangani, kindly read an early version of this study.

interviews. His family and commentators quote what he has said about Proust's work, the impression it made on him, as well as the link between his own mature work and the major themes developed by Proust.

I have chosen to base my argument mainly on a set of documents recording Rozsda's own words. These are texts written and published by Rozsda in the 60s and 70s, interviews (filmed or published) made in the 80s and 90s, as well as an unpublished document written after 1975. They are late texts from his mature years, at a time when the artist was looking back on his work as a whole.

This choice was reinforced by the fact that, as Françoise Gilot has shown, from 1957 onwards, Rozsda was experiencing "a fragmentation of sensory space whose gradual replacement by an existential personal space-time continuum certainly makes one think of *La Recherche du Temps Perdu*".[2] For his part, David Rosenberg has shown that "memory and memories play a dominant role" in Rozsda's work from the end of the 1950s, and that the question of time became central to his work from 1969 onwards.[3]

In a text entitled "Méditations", Rozsda compared himself to "the Fate who weaves the thread of time".[4] Echoing this image, I should like to draw some threads to see how Proust, the individual and his work, might have attracted Rozsda's attention, which might also allow us to read his work and his creative approach. To do this, I will focus on the factual evidence of Rozsda's interest in the writer, as well as a few Rozsdian themes echoing Proustian themes.

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[2] Françoise Gilot, "Un peintre pour les peintres", *Rozsda 100 – Le fil de la Parque*, Budapest, Várfok Galéria, 2013, p. 23.

[3] *Endre Rozsda : Le Temps retrouvé. Rétrospective*, David Rosenberg and Róna Kopeczky (eds), Budapest, Hungarian National Gallery, 2013, pp. 117 and 137.

[4] Endre Rozsda, "Méditations", *Rozsda, l'oeil en fête*, David Rosenberg (ed.), Somogy Editions d'Art, 2002, p. 82.

THE "MEETING" WITH PROUST – IN A DREAM

What about Rozsda's interest in Marcel Proust as individual and writer? To find out, it is essential to go through the references in the writings and the interviews at our disposal.

The archives of Rozsda's studio contain an unpublished typescript of a dream account in which Rozsda meets Marcel Proust. This document is not dated, but could only have been written after 1975, since there is mention of the "Carte Orange", a monthly Parisian transport ticket launched on 1 July 1975.

What is this dream account, entitled "Rencontre", about? Rozsda takes the bus to go to an appointment. After being checked by the conductor, passengers are asked to get off the bus. It is then, says the text, that:

> *At the first stop, I met a familiar face. It was Proust. Where had I met him before? I could not remember. He leaned over to ask me a question, in a friendly way ... coughing a little.*

The text ends thus:

> *Afterwards everything became softer and whiter. The street's wrinkles were smoothed out. Worries vanished. Everything became very pleasant. – What was my appointment? What did I want to debate? – I can no longer remember.*[5]

Here we find an opposition between an "appointment" and a "meeting": an appointment, programmed in time, that we anticipate by projecting ourselves into the future so as not to miss it; and a meeting which happens unexpectedly. Rozsda's meeting with Proust makes him supremely happy. And this absolute happiness coincides with memory failure (he no longer remembers the nature of his appointment) and the suspension of what Rozsda elsewhere calls "clock time".[6] The disappearance of the street's wrinkles – wrinkles being the sign of

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5 Unpublished text, Rozsda Studio Archives.

6 David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *Endre Rozsda: Le Temps retrouvé. Rétrospective*, *op.cit.*, p. 35.

the passage of time – symbolizes here the abolition of time conceived as a linear succession of events.

9. *I Imagine Myself Small in my Mother's Childhood*, c. 1980

THE MEETING WITH PROUST – IN TEXTS

Rozsda met Proust in a dream, but he probably also met him in his reading, as evidenced by two of his interviews. In the film Andras Solymos[7] devoted to him in 1985, Rozsda declares: "My own paintings allowed me to understand Freud and the writers I was reading: Proust [...]". In his 1987 interviews with David Rosenberg, Rozsda evokes the transformation produced by the crossing, the moment of passage that is the reading of a book. He does not mention Proust, but David Rosenberg confirms in a 2013 text that Rozsda made the same remarks about reading Proust.[8]

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[7] *Endre Rozsda*, documentary film by Andras Solymos, 1985.

[8] David Rosenberg, "À propos d'Endre Rozsda", *Endre Rozsda: Le Temps retrouvé. Rétrospective*, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

When did Rozsda first discover Proust? This seems difficult to establish, since there are no books by Proust in the studio library. We are therefore led to make assumptions. A Hungarian translation of *Du côté de chez Swann* was published in Budapest in 1937.[9] He might have had access the year before his first stay in Paris to what must be Proust's first translation into Hungarian. But it is more likely he first read Proust, in French, at the end of his first stay in Paris between 1938 and 1943, during which Rozsda learned French with the support of Françoise Gilot.[10] Whatever the case, the presence of three introductions to Proust in the studio library testify to Rozsda's interest in the writer. Rozsda owned a reprint dating from 1957 of Claude Mauriac's *Proust par lui-même*. He also had André Maurois's biography entitled *A la recherche de Marcel Proust* in a new edition dated 1985, as well as the shortened, illustrated version of the same text published in 1960 under the title: *Le Monde de Marcel Proust*.[11]

AT 16 ROZSDA DREAMS HE IS LÁSZLÓ FÜLÖP

The dream account entitled "Rencontre" and the books kept in his library testify to Rozsda's interest in Proust. Additional information on this topic can be found in the 1987 interviews with David Rosenberg.

In these interviews,[12] after describing the transformation the work provokes in its viewer or reader, Rozsda distinguishes between "false painting, banal and decorative" and "real painting". He then declares that he was never seduced pictorially by decorative art, but that as a child he was seduced "by all that surrounded this superficial art".

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[9] I have traced Albert Gyergyai's translations of *Du côté de chez Swann* and *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*: Proust, *Az eltűnt idő nyomában: Swann*, Budapest, Grill, 1937; Proust, *Az eltűnt idő nyomában: Bimbózó lányok árnyékában*, Budapest, Grill, 1938.

[10] In conversation with José Mangani (02/02/2018).

[11] Claude Mauriac, *Proust par lui-même* (1953), Seuil, coll. Écrivains de toujours, 1957; André Maurois, *A la recherche de Marcel Proust* (1949), Hachette, 1985; André Maurois, *Le Monde de Marcel Proust*, Hachette, coll. Tout par l'image, 1960.

[12] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 23.

To illustrate this type of painting and its context, Rozsda refers to the society painter of Hungarian origin named László.[13] Rozsda comments:

> *Proust spoke of him. Proust lived among extremely refined people, and it was very fashionable to have own's portrait painted by [László] Fülöp.*

As he observes here, Rozsda discovered in Hungary a painter he had admired in his youth. It is unlikely, however, that the anecdote associating Proust with László goes back to Rozsda's youth. The association of these two names is more likely to be linked to a later rediscovery of László's paintings, for example in *Le Monde de Marcel Proust* owned by Rozsda, in which André Maurois evokes "Comtesse Greffulhe, in whom Marcel Proust saw the future Princesse de Guermantes", and where a portrait of her by László is reproduced.[14]

Rozsda then comments how, seduced as a child by the legend of László, he took him as a model. But he also declares that he abandoned "the dream to be László of a sixteen-year-old", and that "this ideal was supplanted by another ideal".

Rozsda abandoned his childhood dream of being a society painter in favour of another ideal leading to what he calls "real painting". The path followed by Rozsda resembles in some ways the story of the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* or the legend of Proust himself, both succumbing to the attractions of society life before finally withdrawing from the world to write. Rozsda's biography[15] testifies to the artist's withdrawal from the artistic scene from the 70s. Rozsda withdrew from the world to avoid "measured time", "artificial time, which is a perfect fiction",[16] in order to devote himself fully to his creative work.

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[13] Philip-Alexius de László de Lombos (1869-1937).
[14] André Maurois, *Le Monde de Marcel Proust*, *op.cit.*, p. 32.
[15] *Cf.* Róna Kopeczky and Borbála Kálmán, "Rozsda et son temps. Une histoire des coulisses", *Endre Rozsda: Le Temps retrouvé. Rétrospective, op.cit.*, p. 69.
[16] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 35.

TO PAINT THE WAY PROUST WROTE

I would now like to look at some observations by Rozsda reported to me by José Mangani. According to the legatee of the artist's work, "Rozsda said: 'I paint the way Proust wrote'".[17] José Mangani also told me during this conversation that Proust's writing method could be compared to Rozsda's working method.

Speaking of his "working method" in the interviews with David Rosenberg, Rozsda states: "Now I paint six to eight paintings a year. Each painting represents a great deal of work".[18] A change of working method occurred after the Second World War, when the painting of a work would absorb all of Rozsda's time. It sometimes took him several years to complete a painting, in the manner of Proust devoting many years to writing his novel.

But, as has been suggested by José Mangani, a comparison can also be made between the bits of paper Proust added to his manuscripts and, in Rozsda's painting method, the thickness of the layers of oil paint superimposed on each other, covering over each day what was painted the day before, sedimenting on the surface of the paintings executed over several years. The papers are long pieces of paper stuck by Proust end to end onto his manuscripts. These papers contain changes sometimes written over "a period of several years".[19] Once unfolded, they can reach up to two metres long and reveal the time of writing spatial in terms. For Rozsda, the time taken to execute the work is materialized in the thickness, the superposition of layers of paint on the surface of the canvas. A thickness nonetheless invisible to the naked eye and which, as José

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[17] In conversation with José Mangani (17/07/2017).
[18] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 19.
[19] *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, Honoré Champion, coll. Champion Classique Dictionnaire, 2014, p. 718.

Mangani observed to me at the time, would need to be checked by x-raying one of his paintings.

As Françoise Gilot has pointed out: "From 1957 [...] the breaking up of Euclidean space is a fait accompli".[20] The longer time taken to execute a painting coincides with Rozsda definitively giving up representational perspective. Depth gives way to the superimposition of layers of paint as a sign announcing another form of depth, that of the thickness of time sedimented in the work. Just as Rozsda said he painted the way Proust wrote, it is possible to say with J.-B. Pontalis that, for his part:

> *[...]* La Recherche du temps perdu *[...] evokes the work of the painter who, layer after layer, pentimento after pentimento, although operating on a flat defined surface, forgetting preparatory sketches, manages to give his canvas something better than depth: the thickness of time.*[21]

THE KALEIDOSCOPE

Françoise Py has observed in the work of Rozsda:

> *The time of the gaze, the time of execution (sometimes several years apart), the multidimensional time of thought militate in favour of a "perpetual present".*[22]

We have just seen how, after the Second World War and especially after 1957, Rozsda worked several years on his paintings. I would now like to turn to what Françoise Py calls "the time of the gaze", by referring to the theme of the kaleidoscope shared by Proust and Rozsda.

Rozsda does not mention the kaleidoscope, but it is a theme that is often present in Rozsdean criticism. Several commentators have discussed the kaleidoscopic aspect of his paintings. Thus, to mention only two of them, Edouard Jaguer has said that "this kaleidoscopic aspect cannot escape most

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[20] Françoise Gilot, "Un peintre pour les peintres", *op.cit.*
[21] J.-B. Pontalis, *En marge des nuits* (2010), in *Œuvres littéraires*, Gallimard, coll. Quarto, 2015, p. 948.
[22] *Dictionnaire André Breton*, Henri Béhar (ed.), Classiques Garnier, 2012, p. 899.

viewers",[23] while Tamás Ónody has emphasized the "misleading character of this comparison".[24]

10. *Erzsébet's Walk*, 1946

The later paintings, particularly those painted in his last years, evoke the fragmented image of the kaleidoscope and, at the same time, depart from it through the absence of symmetry and the repetition of forms and colours arranged on the canvas. So what could the justify the resemblance of Rozsda's works to the kaleidoscope?

In his interviews Rozsda states that as early as 1946 he began to rotate his "paintings continually until [he] found the side by which [he was] going to finish them".[25] He links this practice to one of the experiments that led Kandinsky to

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[23] Édouard Jaguer, "Endre Rozsda, archéologue du regard", *Rozsda, l'œil en fête*, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

[24] Tamás Ónody, "L'œil de Dieu", *Endre Rozsda: un peintre photographe*, Budapest, Hungarian Museum of Photography, 2004 and 2009, p. 17.

[25] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 33. In the film *La Peinture – la vie. Endre Rozsda*, La Sept-Arte, Metropolis, 1999, Rozsda says of *Erzsébet's Walk* (1946): "That is the first painting you can see as it is, but it can be turned round".

abstraction. Coming home one evening, Kandinsky, who understood that "objects harmed [his] painting", suddenly saw on the wall "a painting [of his] which had been hung upside down", a painting in which he saw only "shapes and colours, the content of which remained incomprehensible".[26] It seems to me that Rozsda's method of rotating his canvases could have at least three meanings.

Firstly, the rotating movement described by the canvas on the easel, like the movement of a kaleidoscope, evokes time passing, by analogy with the rotating hands on a clock face. We can imagine Rozsda turning the canvas anti-clockwise, in order to go back in time.

Then, following Kandinsky's model, turning the canvas and rotating the cylinder of the kaleidoscope reveals an image presenting new "relations between shapes and colours".[27] One could suggest that it is this practice that produces Rozsda's "blurred surfaces" on which, as he says in "Méditations", he can "search tentatively for a certain order which, gradually, modifies the previous order and creates another disorder", and thus "set off in search of time".

Finally, as Sándor Hornyik has shown,[28] the practice of rotating the canvas during the painting process "annihilates to a certain extent the illusion of depth" and produces an effect of "disorientation". I would add that it is as if the centrifugal force resulting from the rotation process served to explode Euclidean space.

One might be struck here by the similarity between identifiable themes in Rozsda's working method with the opening of *La Recherche*. The book opens with the whirling dreamlike visions of the narrator who, during a sleepless night,

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[26] See Dora Vallier, *L'Art abstrait*, Livre de Poche, 1967, p. 67. Rozsda owned this book in which Vallier (who was a friend) compares *Regards sur le passé* (1913) and *La Recherche*, arguing that in this text Kandinsky "recounts his life in the manner of Proust", *cf.* pp.56-58.

[27] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 33.

[28] Sándor Hornyik, "Amour sacré, Amour profane. Endre Rozsda et le surréalisme des années 1940", *Rozsda 100 – Le fil de la Parque*, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

explores the rooms of his childhood. The "hallucinatory experience" by which one enters into the novel, this "opening in the confusion of space and time", thematizes, as Antoine Compagnon has shown, the question of "loss of bearings and recognition".[29]

Similarly, to the disorientation of the painter during the execution of the work, corresponds the spectator's loss of bearings as he contemplates the canvas and is led to identify, images that at first appear to be non-figurative (some of which can be looked at from every angle), images that compel us "to find the path that leads to it and allows us to walk in it", according to the artist.[30]

PHOTOGRAPHY

On to this initial movement of the viewer's loss of bearings whose gaze wanders across the canvas in all directions, another movement is superimposed, that of recognition and identification. Thus, stopping and focusing on a part of the painting, the eye can focus[31] and see figures and memories emerge from the thick magma of shapes and colours, which disappear as soon as the gaze resumes its journey.

In this second movement the spectator once again follows the model of the painter's experience during the painting process. As Rozsda observes:

> *During the working process a beam of light sometimes illuminates one of the masses that comes out of the darkness. Faces from the past light up.*[32]

This movement describes precisely the mechanism of the eye's adaptation that allows us to perceive with clarity an object seen up close. This movement is similar to focusing a camera lens.

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[29] Antoine Compagnon, *Proust en 1913*, Lecture at the Collège de France (29/01/2013) https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/antoine-compagnon/course-2013-01-29-16h30.htm (accessed on 07/03/2018)

[30] Endre Rozsda, "Souvenirs", in *Endre Rozsda: Le Temps retrouvé. Rétrospective*, *op.cit.*, p. 77.

[31] For the distinction between global vision and focal vision, I am indebted to an unpublished article by Claude-Luca Georges, "L'heureuse contradiction d'Endre Rozsda".

[32] Endre Rozsda, "Pensées", in *Endre Rozsda: Le Temps retrouvé. Rétrospective*, *op.cit.*, p. 151.

Rozsda was not only a painter and draftsman, he was also a photographer. The similarity between the visual mechanism that allows us to recognize figures, see memories or thoughts emerge in his paintings, and the optical mechanism in photography, probably did not escape him.

Indeed, as José Mangani told me:

> *What fascinated Rozsda was the gradual appearance of the image during the development process. It was like a memory surfacing.*[33]

Had Rozsda sensed in Proust the importance of photography and the possible correspondences between "the functioning of involuntary memory" and "the stages of photographic production"?[34] Brassaï, a photographer of Hungarian origin, underlines:

> *[…] the profound affinity between the developing bath which restores in full an image of the past and these other "revealers", the madeleine and the cup of tea, the uneven pavement, the starched towel, the boot, the spoon hitting a plate, the book* François le Champi*, all capable of bringing out distant memories.*[35]

OUT-OF-TIME

This double movement in exploring a painting, during which figures, thoughts and memories emerge, introduces both painter and viewer to a time different from that of the chronological and linear sequence of events. As the image of the journey through time shows us, Rozsda conceives of time in spatial terms,[36] in the form of a space-time continuum, a time that has incorporated the characteristics of space. In his interviews with David Rosenberg, Rozsda states that he moves within what he calls a "global time made up of past, present and future."[37] Spatialized thus, time no longer presents the fundamental

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[33] In conversation with José Mangani (17/07/2017).
[34] *Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, *op.cit.*, p. 766.
[35] Brassaï, *Proust sous l'emprise de la photographie*, Gallimard, 1997, pp. 169-170.
[36] József Készman has analysed Rozsda's concept of time, basing his analysis on the artist's texts and statements, in "Le rêve du temps. Dans le tissage des Parques: une peinture faite de temps?!", *Rozsda 100 – Le fil de la Parque*, *op.cit.*, pp. 66-90.
[37] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 37.

characteristic of irreversibility, and it becomes possible to come and go within this "mix of different times".[38] Based on the model of space, time as Rozsda conceives it is thus characterized by the simultaneous presence of all its different parts, and presents itself as a medium in which one can no longer distinguish any privileged direction.

11. *Kerek*, 1971

The paintings of the last period seem to me to be marked by the absence of a privileged direction or meaning ascribed by the painter to the work. Rozsda does not prescribe any specific form of contemplation, the works of his maturity can be looked at in all directions. Nor do the paintings present any

[38] *Ibid*., p. 35.

ultimate meaning to be found behind what the painter offers to the eye of the spectator. When contemplating his works, observes Tamás Ónody, "each one of us receives projections of that other world which is, for us, our memory".[39] Thanks to this, Rozsda opens his paintings to the multiple and infinite meanings produced by the subjective trajectories experienced by those who contemplate them.

Rozsda's paintings give us access to a space-time continuum, a global time allowing comings and goings, displacements within different moments of time. Rozsda's description of what he also calls a "perpetual present"[40] is reminiscent of the space of dreams, which also mixes different times that the dreamer can explore in all directions.[41] A dream space where (quoting Rozsda in "Méditations") it is possible to "walk, as an adult, in a time when [he] was actually a child" and to "awaken the dead".

Armed with this working method, Rozsda manages to open up time for the spectator and, leaving the course of time, to reach a space outside time. It is as if, creating paintings "based on the trajectory of the memory within [him]"[42] allowed him to enter a space outside time. Through his paintings Rozsda rediscovered what Proust and Freud had discovered; Proust and Freud who, as Jean-Yves Tadié has pointed out,[43] thanks to involuntary memory and dream memory, arrived at a space where there is no time.

I will end, as I started, by mentioning Clotho, the Spinner, one of the three Fates Rozsda identified with in "Méditations".

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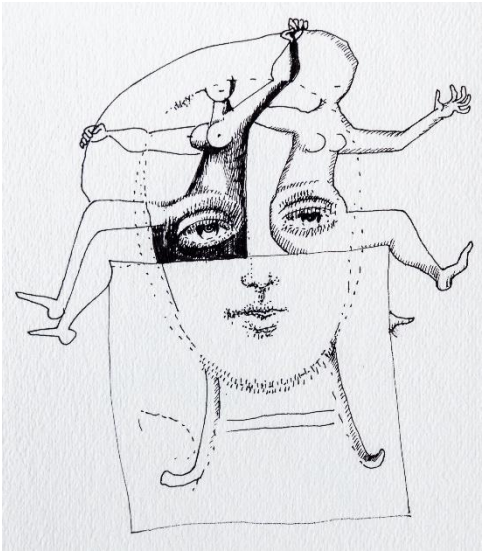
[39] Tamás Ónody in *La Cause freudienne, Revue de psychanalyse*, n° 39, 1998, p. 2.
[40] Endre Rozsda, "Méditations", *op.cit.*
[41] I am indebted here to J.-B. Pontalis, "La saison de la psychanalyse", in *Ce temps qui ne passe pas* (1997), Gallimard, coll. Folio essais, 2005, p. 17.
[42] David Rosenberg, "Entretiens avec Endre Rozsda", *op.cit.*, p. 39.
[43] Jean-Yves Tadié, *Le lac inconnu. Entre Proust et Freud*, Gallimard, coll. Connaissance de l'Inconscient, 2012, p. 84

Comparing himself to "the Fate who weaves the thread of time", Rozsda draws an analogy between the distaff containing the fibres and the spindle used to spin, with the palette and brush of the painter. A painter, who "leaps here and there, brush in hand, intent on quickly fixing the past," who "weaves multicoloured threads" from the "blurred time", which braids the associative threads of his thoughts and memories, endlessly intertwining to compose the canvas. The painting is thus like a fabric or, as in Proust,[44] a tapestry.



12. *The Fates at Play*, c. 1970

[44] *Cf. Dictionnaire Marcel Proust*, *op.cit.*, pp. 987-989.

ENDRE ROZSDA AND MUSIC

François LESCUN

I should like to say from the outset that I am not a musicologist, merely a music lover since early childhood. A few years of piano, a year of harmony, many concerts and especially records, many records, about 5,000 CDs all listened to six or seven times and, for some, much more often. I have an Agrégation in Classics and have lectured for 32 years at the University of Paris-X-Nanterre, primarily in French and Comparative Literature and, for the past eleven years, the history of music in the Art History Department and the Free University of Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

Nor am I an art critic or a specialist in Rozsda's work like David and Alba here. One day in 1978, I discovered at a friend's two paintings by him that immediately fascinated me. Shortly afterwards I was able to meet the artist in person and it was the beginning of a friendship that allowed me to get to know this man of genius, easy-going, often mischievous, but intimidating nevertheless. After his death, I wrote a poem largely inspired by his work that appears in my book *Réfractions* and that you can also find in the book *Rozsda l'oeil en fête* published by Somogy.

In seeking to establish, or attempt to establish, a relationship between Rozsda's pictorial works and music, it seems to me that three questions arise; was Rozsda a "musician" and what place did music have in his life and work?

Next, are there paintings that, in their title at least, refer to music? Finally, we will look at these paintings together to see how music is evoked, if indeed it is.

There is no doubt that Rozsda loved music, as all his friends confirm. An imposing stereo system had pride of place in his Bateau-Lavoir apartment, and I sometimes listened to recordings while dining with him. He had a genuine musical culture but, I believe, as an enlightened amateur, not having practiced an instrument. His favourite composers seem to have been Mozart, Beethoven, Debussy and Bartók, above all Bartók, his great countryman.

Did he listen to music while he was painting? My colleague and friend Danièle Sallenave told Jacques Chancel that, in order to write her novels, she would put a record on endless replay, for example a Haydn quartet unrelated to what she was writing, to surround herself with a climate of beauty and harmony. Well, in Rozsda's case there is nothing like that. He used to switch on France Culture and surround himself with a flood of indifferent words, background sound, a protective rampart of voices. As for music, he would listen at home, when he got back from his studio. I hope he had understanding neighbours! It's true that they were artists, so we can imagine they were music-lovers. Let's hope so.

Sometimes he went to concerts or the opera. I met him there at least once with José, at a performance of *Bluebeard's Castle*. But ... I am sure you are waiting for this: he once had a major encounter with music, the story is well known, an encounter that did not decide his vocation (from the age of 14, a passion for painting had already taken hold of him), but which revealed to him a new, radical and life-changing demand that was to remain with him as an artist. He told the story to David Rosenberg in the long and fascinating interview he gave towards the end of his life:

> *Just a year before I left for Paris, I met by chance a couple of painter friends. (...) They invited me to a concert at the Academy of Music. Bartók would be playing tonight, they told me.*

Until then, he did not even know the name of Bartók. But, after a first section on Bach and Beethoven, let's return to the interview:

> *Bartók played one of his own pieces with his wife, a* Sonata for two pianos and percussion. *In my opinion it is one of the most important works of the twentieth century. It was a world première. I was sitting in a seat which allowed me to see Bartók's hands. I was dazzled. I had never thought about what music could be beyond Bach, Mozart or Mussorgsky. I was absolutely intoxicated by this music.*

This was an artistic revelation for the young man of 24 or 25. We can understand that the hands of the pianist-composer could have caused a tingling in those of a painter so early in his career. Rozsda would prove to be fascinated by hands all his life and drew them repeatedly. And here is the end of the story:

> *At that moment I understood that I was not my own contemporary. (...) I thought I was a good painter, but in fact my painting could exist without me. I thought: If I die, nothing is missing. It's just a small colour that is fading away.*

We are reminded here of Rimbaud's exclamation in the last poem of his *Saison en enfer*: "We must be absolutely modern!" Not the slave of ephemeral artistic fashions, but the inventor of a radically *new* language, because radically original, a language of "one's own", an irreplaceable language.

This artistic "road to Damascus" has sometimes been criticized. Of course, the famous *Sonata for two pianos and percussion* did not have its first performance in Budapest but in Basel, where the patron and conductor Paul Sacher, the sponsor of the work, performed on 16 January 1938, that is shortly before Endre's departure for Paris, and not, as he says, "a year before". These are small inaccuracies that do not seem to call into question the ever-burning memory of a meeting more than 50 years earlier. It is very likely that this Basel performance was followed soon after by a Hungarian performance in the first months of 1938, because Bartók was then a controversial composer, but very famous. This was just before Endre's departure for Paris.

That Rozsda was fascinated by Bartók's hands is hardly surprising on the part of a painter. But it also proves the musical intelligence of the young man, precisely because one of the most revolutionary contributions of Bartók's music and technique (he was also a recognized virtuoso) was that they returned to the piano its natural role of percussion instrument, in both composition and performance: a percussion instrument, like the xylophone, the celesta or the cymbals, that Bartók was also fond of, at a time when the evolution of the music written for the piano tended, like music for voice, organ or violin, to turn it into a *melodic* instrument, thanks to the *legato* pedal. Chopin wanted to compete on the piano with Bellini's sublime arias, and Liszt transcribed for the keyboard Schubert's, Schumann's and his own lieder.

Thus, Rozsda immediately grasped, even if implicitly, the radical novelty of this sonata: the two pianos are percussion instruments, like the complementary instruments played by the two percussionists.

Here is a brief audio illustration of this modernity, the introduction *assai lento* (very slow) and the brilliant rhythmic opening of the first movement of this sonata, which is actually very classical in its structure in three movements, lively slow lively, the first movement in sonata form, with a dual thematic, like all the sonatas written since Carl-Philip Emmanuel Bach. Here, the opening is performed by the pianists Heisser and Pludermacher, with percussionists Cipriani and Perotin.

I now turn to the information given by the titles.

Ah! Rozsda's titles! what an adventure, and what an exciting question! It is one of the features which most clearly links him to Surrealism. His titles are never just *pleonastic* vis-à-vis the image. On the contrary, they almost always stand by themselves, and their link with the image is usually a complicitous wink or an enigma to be deciphered. Such examples abound among surrealist poets

too: the title, far from introducing the subject of the poem, is there to propose multiple directions, or even to blur the tracks altogether.

The first reason is that, following the appearance in painting of abstraction around 1910, the work no longer sought *to represent* the real – if it ever had such a prosaic goal ... Before that, the painter had started from a concept: a religious scene (for example the Nativity), a mythological (the birth of Venus) or a historical scene (the massacres of Scio), or else from an object to be represented more or less mimetically. *To re-present*, to propose a new image. Hence the art of portraiture, landscape, still life. From that point, and I am quoting Rozsda's answer to David Rosenberg:

> *It is stupid to ask the question: What does it represent? It represents itself. Nobody asks a mountain what it represents and why it is so high. A flower. it looks like itself.*

So, one might well ask, why give titles? Why not label one's paintings, like Kandinsky, *Improvisation* 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on; or present them, as do so many contemporary artists, simply as *Untitled*? Precisely because it quickly became a fashion, and if Rozsda, after his discovery of Bartók, wanted to be resolutely modern, it was in relation to himself; and nothing annoyed him more than *trends* in painting (*modish* lurks in the term *modernity*, after all). Recent painting often seems to suggest that he was right. Thus, in all his work, I note only three paintings titled *Untitled* and two *Composition*. And these are precisely paintings full of precise details that could have called for a title!

Rozsda did not make a complete break in 1938 with the figurative style of his early work which is often found in the details. As he said to David: "In my painting there is still the urge to paint details". As the proverb says, "the devil is in the details" – the devil, or rather figuration, which continued secretly to feed his painting more or less allusively.

Rozsda's paintings remind me of a lush forest. At first sight and from a reasonable distance, it is a compact wall of shapes and colours, like a forest seen from the edge: the vertical axes of tree trunks; then the foliage, caught in a tangle

of curves and spirals. But in Rozsda's case, there are almost never verticals or actual geometric forms as we see in Mondrian. Rozsda is baroque, resolutely turning his back on classical rationality. And then, if we gradually look closer, the depth of the picture emerges, it opens up to meet you, and just like entering a forest, a swarm of details then appear, birds in the branches, lichens on the trunks, flowers, mushrooms and more. And this is what Endre tells us himself: "I found walks in paintings much more enjoyable than walks in nature".

So Rozsda almost always plays the little game of titles that are more or less enigmatic or disconcerting. Some can seem really mischievous. As with this little picture, his smallest one ever, painted on a handkerchief: he calls it *A Fly's Sunday Best*: I challenge you to find anything that looks like a fly or clothes. In the masterpieces of the years 1942-1948, this game of equivocal titles was at its best: why does this canvas saturated with blues, pinks and greens where we can glimpse mossy corals, octopuses and jellyfish, have the strange title *My Grandmother's Lorgnette*? Why does this other one, which clearly shows a flamboyant decapitated duck, bear the title *Erzsébet's Walk*? And the one that is more traditionally titled *The Tower* could well hide a much more erotic subject. *The Tower of Babel*, on the other hand, in no way represents a tower, were it as fantastic and gigantic as Breughel's. The title could be more about the babble of languages or, just as easily, the labyrinthine library imagined by Borges.

No doubt the links between these titles and canvases can allude to the secret associations of private memories that the painter preferred to keep to himself: his painting avoids the anecdotal and, above all, the autobiographic mode. Yet sometimes he opened a window onto these secret networks. Thus, for instance, the painting titled *Saint Sophia* vaguely resembles the concave architecture like the interior of the famous basilica built by Sinan in Constantinople; but the artist told José Mangani that what he first had in mind was the royal crown of Hungary offered by Charlemagne to Saint Stephen, set with uncut precious

stones; and behind all this, perhaps the face of his mother, if one believes another comment he made to David Rosenberg. Moreover, he writes: "I am often told that I construct my paintings (...). No, it's the painting that constructs me".

Some titles point us towards a symbolic reading of the painting, especially after he joined the Freemasons: *Initiation*, *More Light*, *Hermetic Symbol*, *Eternal Mystery of Existence*, and even *God* and *Death*. Numerous others have intertextual links, revealing the artist's rich and diverse culture: tributes to past masters, especially the Venetians, that he adored, as in 1944, *Sacred and Profane Love*, although the viewer has problems finding Titian's two allegorical figures. As for his idol, Tintoretto, while no title names him, the magnificent painting *Carousel Towards the Light* (1975) clearly references the circle of saints whirling in concentric petals in his *Paradise*. There is also a *Homage to Rubens*, from 1956, which he told us was secretly a tribute to Françoise Gilot, his first Paris student and best friend. Or the two very different versions of *Explosion in a Cathedral* that recall that strange French visionary from the Neapolitan Baroque, Monsù Desiderio or Mr. Didier.

Other titles refer us to the movies, a medium that this passionate photographer adored: *City Lights*, *Bicycle Thief*, *Metropolis*, there are worse choices ... Others invoke architecture: the "Towers" already mentioned, and also *Baroque Ceiling*, *The Arcades* or *Cathedral*. Or else art objects: *Icon*, *Magic Carpet* or *Oriental Cloth to Cover the Twilight*. Such a title is a poem in itself, just like this equally perfect one: *A Nymph's Family Tree*.

Music, as we would expect, is also present, at least in the titles: I noted nine or ten occurrences. In chronological order, *Danse Macabre* (1947), which takes up a subject that haunted the 15th century as late as Holbein the Younger, after the Great Plague that ravaged Europe, but also, I think, the bitter symphonic poem of the same name by Saint-Saëns. Then, in 1969, *The Magic Flute*, by

Mozart of course, and two titles suggesting more imprecise musical works: *Concerto for My Birthday* and another, *Lively and rhythmical*, which seems borrowed from a musical term indicating *tempo* we often find at the top of a partition.

There was a new group in 1976, with *Skies for Mozart*, *Homage to Stravinsky* and *Song of Light for Béla Bartók*. And, crowning it all, the monumental *Bluebeard's Castle* that Endre worked on for fourteen years, between 1965 and 1979. Also from 1979, *Mask and Bergamask*. While this title is, oddly, in the singular, it obviously refers to the second verse of the opening poem of Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes*, *Clair de lune*:

> *Your soul is a chosen landscape*
> *That charms masks and bergamasques.*

But musicians have risen to the challenge of this musically charged poem: Fauré set it to music very early, then towards the end of his life renamed his *Suite d'orchestre* Op. 112, *Masques et Bergamasques*; while Debussy, having also written a sublime melody on this poem, later added a suite for piano titled *Suite bergamasque*.

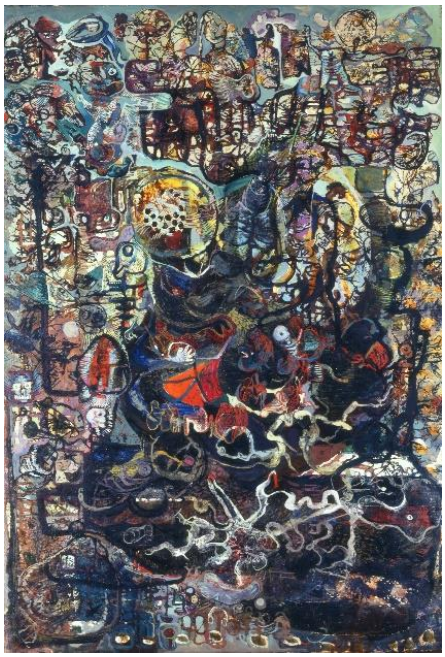
There is one notable absence, Beethoven – unless *Castle for Élise* (1981-82) contains, under its architectural mask, an allusion to the *Für Élise* that every novice pianist has stumbled through.

Nine or ten titles, in just over a hundred catalogued paintings, that is certainly not negligible. And to help make us appreciate Rozsda's deep understanding of music and what it shared with painting, I will quote again what he says to David Rosenberg:

> *If everything is perfect, it becomes imperfect. There must be moments of emptiness. Painting grows out of the moments of emptiness, like music out of silence.*

It is now time to look at these few works and see whether their musical titles have enlightened us or, on the contrary, mischievously misled us.

1 – Here, first of all, is the impressive *Danse Macabre* of 1946-1947, which reflects the horrors of war, as rampant as the Great Plague in the paintings and engravings of the 15th and 16th centuries that dealt with the subject. This tragic masterpiece, dominated by red and black, blood and smoke, one of the darkest of Rozsda's works, is also one of the clearest examples of the figurative *details* that gradually emerge from the confused and entangled forest of shapes and colours. Two skulls in the lower left quarter, one full face, the other, closer to the centre, in profile. A skeletal hand, right in the middle. Finally, on the right, a lanky skeleton that seems to be dancing a frenzied jig. What look like snakes in the lower area and, more clearly, a bird's head à la Chagall, above the two skulls, as though offering hope a chance.



13. *Danse Macabre*, 1946-1947

This is a tragic and symbolic painting, like the works with the same title by Otto Dix or Claudel and Honegger; I cannot help but see something burlesque

there too, if only because of the unusual figurative precision, here almost caricature. And that's what makes me think that the all too famous, *Danse macabre* by Saint-Saëns (1874), with its frantic and derisory jiggle of the xylophone in the opening bars, like bones knocking against each other, might also have been a reference.

2 – *The Magic Flute*, one of the works of 1969, is clearly a more serene painting. Can we spot, once again in the details, allusions to Mozart's magnificent testamentary opera (1791), which is simultaneously a Masonic High Mass in an entirely symbolic Egypt, and a cheerful, fairytale comedy – although Richard Strauss maintained that such music could only have been brought to earth by angels?

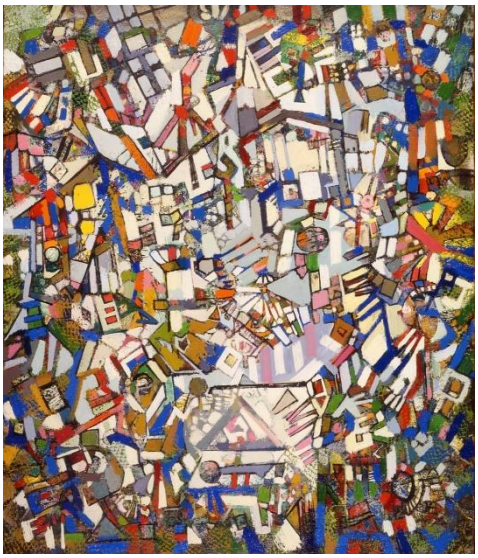
The painting belongs to what could be called Rozsda's "blue period", like *The Eyes* or *Saphirogramme*. And for him blue is also the colour of Mozart's music, that of a fine spring morning. The complex composition is marked by a set of vertical or slightly curved axes, perhaps the pillars of the temple, or the very "age of Enlightenment" wisdom of the High Priest Sarastro. We can perceive a number of Masonic symbols too, like the candelabra hoisted at the top of the canvas. Should we go further and see, in these two great forms rising to face each other, the very fragmented silhouettes of Sarastro and the Queen of the Night, symbols, which would later be reversed, of Good and the Evil? I remain undecided.

3 – Dating from the same period, *Concerto for My Birthday*, refers to a widespread form of classical music, opposing a solo instrument to the rest of the orchestra.

4 – The reference to music is clearer in *Lively and Rhythmical*, also from 1969. This work, which also dates from his "blue period", is at least as complex and yet harmoniously ordered as the earlier work. There is a resemblance with *The Magic Flute* in the two tall figures confronting each other, but the relation

between title and music is quite clear: the multiple vertical lines often opening into lozenges or exploding into fans give the work a liveliness and rhythm worthy of a musical *scherzo*.

5 – Seven years later, Rozsda returned to his beloved Mozart, but this new painting, titled *Skies for Mozart*, is closer to symbol than to allusion. We find Mozartian blue, a little darkened, but also white, ochre and red in thin slats that could evoke piano keys, and above all a lot of white, the "silence" at the heart of painting according to Rozsda. And this canvas rich in detail comes alive in a vast clockwise rotating movement around a central octagon dominated by white. At the bottom of the canvas a Masonic triangle is clearly visible.



14. *Skies for Mozart*, 1976

6 – Dating from the same year, *Hommage à Stravinsky* is in my opinion one of Rozsda's most sumptuous masterpieces. Here the reds are dominant, with a dazzling intensity and only a little yellow and blue for contrast. Perhaps the scattered feathers of *The Firebird Suite*, the famous score that thrust Stravinsky,

a Russian become Parisian, into the limelight, a major success with Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1911. But I believe above all that, like blue for Mozart, red is for Rozsda the colour of Stravinsky's music, symbolizing here the frenzy of the scandalous *Rite of Spring* of 1913, with its hectic barbaric rhythms and the gleaming colours of its rich orchestration.

7 – Bartók could not be omitted. Well, here he is firstly with this painting, also from 1976, titled *Song of Light for Béla Bartók*. The "for" of the title expresses the fervent tribute paid to this brilliant innovator, without alluding specifically to one of his works. Red still dominates here, but this time accompanied by an airy white, as we can see in *Skies for Mozart*. The composition seems to superimpose lopsided rectangles and lozenges which are miniature paintings,

15. *Homage to Stravinsky*, 1976

16. *Song of Light for Béla Bartók*, 1976

yet scarcely figurative. Perhaps a way of celebrating Bartók's brilliant synthesis of elements from his initial training, Wagner, Debussy and especially his great compatriot Liszt, and borrowed elements, taken very freely from the folklore of Hungary, Transylvania and Romania that he had collected and studied during his early years; synthesized finally with new revolutionary rhythmic features, with its odd measures in the harmony- the famous second and seventh chords - and in the timbre of the orchestra, with the key role of the percussion instruments, gongs, celesta, cymbals and, once again, the piano itself.

8 – But the picture that most explicitly refers to Bartók's work is, of course, *Bluebeard's Castle*, which obsessed Rozsda for so long. This was Bartók's only opera, completed in 1911, but rejected as "unplayable" by the Budapest Commission of Fine Arts. It was not performed until 1914 and its relative success was brief, since the war broke out and the government of the day was shocked by both the text and the music.

The beautiful libretto of Béla Balázs was clearly inspired by the popular tale known throughout Europe, but he gives it a personal dreamlike, Freudian and poetic twist. The dark colossus Bluebeard brings his new wife Judith into the

vast cellars of his castle. A creature of light and love, she believes she can save the brooding soul of her husband, whose darkness she hardly suspects. But Bluebeard opens seven symbolic doors for her: his torture chamber (his sadism), his armory soon dripping with blood (his will to power, perhaps), his treasure (the appetite for wealth), his secret garden, at first blooming with tenderness, but soon bloodied too; then, on a sumptuous brass chorale, the outer door, opening onto his extensive estates (his pride); and a sixth door, charged with the most pathos, from which springs a deluge of tears (his despair). There remains only one door to open, and it is Judith herself who must open it: it conceals his four previous wives. Judith continues to believe they are still alive, but she must resign herself to defeat and let herself be locked in with them. "Henceforth, only shadows ... shadows ... shadows", murmurs Bluebeard in a dying voice.

I should have liked you to hear at least some excerpts of this prodigious work! Alas, it would take too much time to give even a glimpse of this fabulous kaleidoscope, full of shifts and contrasts, where the darkest colours of Bartók's orchestral palette dominate. And that is precisely what we find in Rozsda's monumental composition; it was his largest, the longest in gestation, and the most reworked.

Ogival vaults are visible in the upper section, perhaps also doors, two or three at most; but above all we are struck by the extreme diversity of colours used, corresponding perfectly to Bartók's orchestral imagination. An owl in the lower left quarter, stares at us with desperate eyes, he has the look of Bluebeard. Perhaps we can make out, once again, two tall silhouettes face to face around the white that dominates the centre of the painting, Bluebeard on the left with his heavy stature, and on the right, Judith, light and sweet, in gently curving shapes. Perhaps ...

17. *Bluebeard's Castle*, 1965-1979

9 – Finally, here is *Mask and Bergamask* from 1979. I mentioned earlier the probable intertext of this painting. In this extraordinary proliferation of details, one can distinguish, of course, many and various masks, perhaps dancers too, in a dance typical of the region of Bergamo. There are also many rhyming effects, such as the amusing one of the second verse of *Clair de lune*, in the forms and colours that at times correspond symmetrically. But that is an interpretative step, therefore inevitably subjective, but legitimized in advance by Rozsda himself.

To conclude. I have tried, quite subjectively I grant you, to uncover something of the mysterious relationship between painting and music in Rozsda's work, allied to the equally strange links between titles and paintings. I am not sure I have succeeded. I hope Rozsda will forgive me! It seems to me that he did so in advance when he said to David, and here I see his little mischievous eyes sparkling:

I often think that instead of speaking a comprehensible language, I speak Javanese. As if I had thrown the key into a lake, and no one could decipher what is written.

I have probably not unearthed the key, but I hope I have shown that painting and music, each with its own idiom, come together in the same quest, namely poetry, in the etymological sense of the term, creation. Creating a world – or rather a multitude of worlds – able to compete with the real world, and perhaps to console us somewhat in the face of its disorder and its sadness. And we poets, with the instrument that is ours, language – shared by all, but hackneyed, ignored, an underestimated treasure – we also try to paint pictures with our images, to compose music with our rhythms and sounds, to make our words sparkle like a newly unearthed treasure.

ENDRE ROZSDA, PAINTER OF THE UNKNOWN

Alba ROMANO PACE

This text seeks to analyse the elements of Surrealism, abstraction and biomorphism in Endre Rozsda's post-war art, during a period in which his work, secret and mysterious, oneiric and visionary, resorted to the language of the unconscious. This art is inscribed in a specific historical moment and is defined as the unique expression of a *vocabulary of freedom*.

Eric de Chassey, curator of the major exhibition *Repartir à zéro*[1], where Endre Rozsda is one of the painters displayed, notes:

> *The solution of the tabula rasa was formulated by fusing two formal vocabularies – those of abstraction and Surrealism – that the interwar years had violently opposed to each other, that the late 1930s had begun to reconcile under the label of biomorphism, and that the opposition of the Nazi and Communist dictatorships to any formal modernism had combined from the beginning of the 1940s into a vocabulary of freedom.*[2]

When Rozsda arrived in Paris in 1938, the *International Surrealist Exhibition* at the Beaux-Arts Gallery, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré, had just closed its doors. For the occasion, Breton and Éluard had published a *Dictionnaire abrégé du surréalisme* as a catalogue which listed all the objects and key individuals in the movement. Did Rozsda know of this text? Quite probably since, as Simone de Beauvoir wrote, the exhibition was "the most significant event of the winter".[3]

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1 *Repartir à zéro, comme si la peinture n'avait jamais existé* (1945-1949), Musée des Beaux-arts de Lyon, Oct. 2008 – Feb. 2009. Curator Éric de Chassey in collaboration with Sylvie Ramond.

2 Eric de Chassey, *op. cit*, p. 28.

3 Simone de Beauvoir, *La Force de l'âge*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, p. 127.

While Endre Rozsda did not meet André Breton until 1957, during his second stay in France (a stay that was to prove permanent), he was already leaning towards surrealist ideas and art between 1938 and 1939: "What interested me about Surrealism at that initial stage [he wrote later] was the shock and deliberate scandal."[4]

After settling in Paris, Rozsda and his friend the sculptor Lajos Barta organised an exhibition in their apartment on rue Schœlcher. This was a chance to meet the other artists in Montparnasse and, in particular, their compatriot the painter Árpád Szenes and his wife Vieira da Silva, also a painter. They became friends, and it is therefore possible that it was thanks to these two artists that Endre Rozsda began to frequent the gallery of Jeanne Bucher, who was a close friend of Szenes and Viera da Silva.

It was in this gallery that Rozsda claims to have seen his first surrealist paintings. Françoise Gilot, Picasso's future wife, whom Rozsda met at that time and to whom he gave painting lessons, also remembers "the evenings spent with Endre in the cellar of the gallery discovering the surrealist paintings of Yves Tanguy, Miro and Max Ernst."[5]

The cellar of the Jeanne Bucher Gallery housed the surrealist collection which had come from the Gradiva Gallery, run by André Breton between 1937 and 1938. On 2 April 1938, Breton with his wife Jacqueline Lamba left for Mexico, where he was invited to lecture and where, more importantly, Léon Trotsky was living. Since they left in a hurry, Breton asked Yves Tanguy to move the collection to the Jeanne Bucher Gallery.

Rozsda became acquainted with surrealist painting at precisely the point where it was consciously returning to automatism. In line with Rozsda's quest to express feelings through abstraction, the younger generation of surrealist

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4 *Ibid.*

5 Françoise Gilot in conversation with the author, Paris, June 2009.

artists born, like the Hungarian painter, between 1910 and 1915, found in a new interpretation of surrealist automatism the method which best elucidated relations with the unconscious in this extremely troubled period that preceded by a few months the outbreak of a world war.

In the September 1939 issue of *Minotaure*, André Breton wrote an important article titled "Les nouvelles tendances de la peinture surréaliste", where he relates how Surrealism, thanks to the younger generation of artists who joined the group from 1935, was moving away from the *trompe-l'oeil* painting represented by Salvador Dalí's dream images, and ever closer to Yves Tanguy's mysterious biomorphic figures:

> *surrealist painting, in its most recent manifestations, among men young enough not to have, in artistic terms, to account for their personal antecedents, is making a marked return to automatism [...] Deep, real monotony already stalks Dalí's painting [...] If, on the contrary, Tanguy's star is rising, it is because he is ideally honest and intact, [...] To date, Tanguy's painting has revealed only what is charming: soon it will reveal its secret.*[6]

Clearly, a new type of surrealist painting was emerging, seeking to explore non-Euclidean geometry, the third and fourth dimensions, as well as the fractal geometries to be found in nature (already discussed by the Musicalist group that Rozsda appreciated). The Chilean painter Matta who, in 1938-1939, was involved in theorising this new trend in surrealist painting, was to give it the label "psychological morphology". Matta and the younger surrealist artists mentioned met up with Breton in summer 1939 at the Château de Chemillieu, at a moment when they were highly impressed by the work of Yves Tanguy, seen as biomorphic, enigmatic and calling on ancestral forms.

Rozsda's first surrealist work dates from this period: *Dishevelled* (1939).

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[6] André Breton, "Des tendances les plus récentes de la peinture surréaliste", *Minotaure* n°12-13, May 1939, and *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, *op.cit.* p. 524.

18. *Dishevelled*, 1939

In this work, Rozsda paints a totally abstract figure evolving in a liquid or aerial space. Is it a totem, a biomorphic being, an oneiric object? The form painted by Rozsda evokes a painting by Kurt Seligmann, encountered most likely in 1938, before Seligmann left France because of the war to settle in the United States. Kurt Seligmann was a friend of Le Corbusier and Giacometti, he had studied at André Lhote's studio, which Brassaï visited, and he was a frequent visitor to Montparnasse. It is very likely that Rozsda and Barta met him through Brassaï or Giacometti, who were their friends; not least because Kurt Seligmann had also been part of the Abstraction-Création group that Rozsda was interested in. Seligmann had also had his first exhibition at the Jeanne Bucher Gallery in 1932 and, following his meeting with Breton, officially joined the surrealist movement. Rozsda, for his *Dishevelled* canvas, could therefore have been inspired by Seligmann's shapes, which, emerging like

totems, fill the vertical space. These forms seem to be aerial roots or, as the title of a later Seligmann[7] painting puts it, chrysalids.

The abstract geometry found in nature is thus transposed into a new form of painting which, as Matta explains, edges towards architecture and seeks to build the painting according to construction laws.

In seeking to further his art, Rozsda followed the same path as the artists of his age, experiencing the same constraints dictated by the period. It was a time when the desire for freedom and love was growing even as the war approached; a time of scientific discoveries, in the fields of mathematics, chemistry and, especially, physics. With the invention of the atomic bomb during the Second World War, it was an entire system of values that was called into question. Surrealist artists saw themselves as spokespersons for this break which was, at the same time, a form of renewal. Endre Rozsda's vision had changed completely after discovering the surrealist movement. As he himself was to say later:

> *I draw a parallel between the discovery of light and my arrival in Paris. When I discovered the surrealists. [...] these two discoveries changed my life. In both cases I felt that what was at issue was a broader point of view. [...] I kept silent, I paid attention and I watched.*[8]

Forced to return to Hungary, a country still free, once France had entered the war, Rozsda and Barta decided to exhibit their new paintings in Budapest. On the occasion of their exhibition at the *Alkotas Muveszhaz* (Artists' House), the work of Rozsda was the object of very positive reviews:

> *His personality is extremely sensitive and reacts with ardour and force to the sadness that weighs upon our times. [...] For us, this method of deconstructing forms is not the search for a new world; it is, rather, the decomposition of the old. [...] this time of fear has given birth to an art of escape, and we must recognize the honesty and inner strength of the artist's expression.*[9]

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[7] Kurt Seligmann, Isis, 1944, http://www.artnet.com/artists/kurt-seligmann/isisc7OudqB_Dv0z4KyZrRsgtQ2

[8] Rozsda, *Écrits inédits*, in Atelier Rozsda Archives.

[9] Anonymous press cutting, Atelier Rozsda Archives.

At the onset of the war, artists responded to the idea of destruction by countering it with the idea of "creative chaos". They painted a universal entropy where fear and hope intermingled. They expressed the ambient instability through the use of indefinite forms, dense colours that create clusters of germinating material in perpetual metamorphosis. Composition expressed a new universe in gestation in which the life and death impulses fought, exploding in space. The canvas was plagued by convulsions surfacing via strong shades mixed with others almost fluorescent. Line disappeared. And one recalls what Breton had written in *Nadja*: "beauty will be convulsive or will not be".[10] In 1934, in "Convulsive Beauty" (*Minotaure* no.5), and again in *L'Amour fou*, he added: "Convulsive beauty will be erotic-veiled, explosive-fixed, magical-circumstantial or will not be".[11]

In this series of oxymorons Breton sets out the new features of convulsive beauty, made up of movement and mystery. In *The King of Truth* (1942) Rozsda paints two black masses against a ground composed of blue, brown or flaming red streaks. From within these dark masses large strokes of bright colours emerge. One is confronted by a primordial landscape where water, fire, earth and air seek to merge in order to bring life back to a now-destroyed world. The large black stains in the foreground could symbolize death and ashes; the swathe of red recalls the glowing volcanic lava bubbling across the ground of a land now burnt; the white resembles vapour rising from the land.

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[10] André Breton, *Nadja*, in *Œuvres complètes*, *op.cit.* vol. I, p. 753.

[11] *Idem*, "La beauté convulsive", in *Minotaure*, n°5, Paris, mai 1934. This text was to become the first chapter of *L'Amour fou* (1937).

19. *The King of Truth*, 1942

The symbols of death and resurrection in this painting become the mirror of the historical times lived by the artist:

> *[...] during the war, I was afraid and that is what I painted (fear). I got drunk in the piano-keyboard streets tipped into colours, awash with flames. Heads rolled and shadows lengthened enormously. It was not for nothing that I was afraid, because I was then engulfed by the horrors of war. But these horrors did not look at all like my paintings.*
> *I saw disgusting and low things. People who sank to the most despicable dirt. Crime, murder, blood.*
> *Of course, even in this dreadful world there was light - love - and humour - laughter - and sometimes the end was even forgotten.*
> *The war and its aftermath completely shook my materialist faith. I started learning to think again. The value system of things changed and everything appeared in a new light.*[12]

The artist sublimates the trauma of lived experience through the force of colour and light. His positive personality makes painting, as he puts it, "an insurance against death and disappearance".[13]

The canvas becomes for him a setting for memory and above all a non-place where space explodes in a dimension without continuity, full of energy and sublimated desires. The forces clash to give life to what is no more.

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[12] Rozsda, *Écrits inédits*, in Atelier Rozsda Archives.
[13] *Ibid.*

If one turns to the definition of automatism in the *Manifeste du surréalisme* of 1924, one finds very strong links with the paintings of the Hungarian artist:

> *Surrealism is pure psychic automatism by which one proposes to express either verbally, in writing or in any other way, the actual functioning of thought. The dictation of thought outside any control exercised by reason, outside any aesthetic or moral concern.*[14]

The link can be confirmed by an exhibition in Budapest in 1944 at the Tamás Gallery. The exhibition *Nouveau Romantisme* was originally to have been called *Hungarian Expressionists and Surrealists*.[15]

It was in this spirit that in 1945, in the apartment of Béla Tábor and Stefánia Mándy, poet and art historian, Pál Kiss, Ernő Kállai, Arpad Mézei and his brother Imre Pán,[16] launched the group *Európai Iskola* (European School) that Rozsda was to join soon after. Born out of a need for hope in a Europe in ruins, but which was in the midst of post-war reconstruction in 1948, the activities of the European School came to an end because of the communist dictatorship, and they chose to end with an exhibition of Lajos Barta and Endre Rozsda[17], the thirty-first exhibition of the European School organized at the Muvesz Gallery; it included a catalogue with a preface by Arpad Mezei.[18] When discussing this event Krisztina Passuth writes: "Marcel Jean argued that Rozsda was more modern than his contemporaries in Paris."[19]

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[14] André Breton, *Manifeste du surréalisme*, in *Œuvres complètes*, *op.cit.*, vol. I, p. 810.

[15] *Cf.* Gabor Pataki, 'Du Minotaure au minotaure', *Mélusine, Cahiers du Centre de recherche sur le surréalisme*, N° XV, *Ombre portée: le surréalisme en Hongrie*, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

[16] In 1924 Imre Pán founded the Dadaist periodical IS

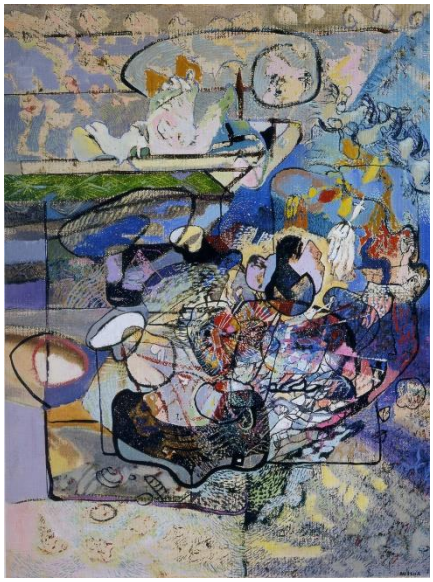
[17] *Cf.* Krisztina Passuth, « Endre Rozsda: biographie de l'artiste jusqu'en 1957 », in *Endre Rozsda*, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[18] Vedi sopra pp. 164-165.

[19] Krisztina Passuth, "Endre Rozsda : biographie de l'artiste jusqu'en 1957" in *Endre Rozsda*, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

20. *Self-Portrait under Glass*, c. 1945

(painting turned 90o)



21. *Sacred and Profane Love*, c. 1945

22. *Valamint*, 1947

Rozsda forged his own surrealist practice, which he called "reiterated automatism". He painted automatically and then picked out parts that gave birth to a second canvas, and so on, until he found the final composition. *Sacred and Profane Love*, chosen by Breton to illustrate *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, was thus the synthesis of two rather different paintings, but which, if we turn them

round, reveal a similar composition, with repeated identical forms. Certain forms express Rozsda's feelings better than others: round shapes, compound forms made of superimposed layers of dense and glossy paint. The composition thus becomes a gelatinous ensemble inviting touch, in an erotic flowing movement. Rozsda told David Rosenberg that he liked to rotate the paintings repeatedly "until the canvas no longer reflects my gaze".[20]

The same process was used for *My Grandmother's Lorgnette* (1947): a version exists in the form of a study that illustrates the artist's humour. If one turns the canvas round, the drawing in the study is replicated: a skull, a pig's snout, spectacles. In *My Grandmother's Lorgnette* colourful masses, dominated by dark blue, mingle their graphic forms, hiding and merging them in masses that seem to move across the canvas, giving birth to a new being. It is an aquatic spring, a dive into the depths of the ocean.

The hues of his paintings are sometimes fluorescent, sometimes dark with a strong presence of black, as in *Danse Macabre*, 1946-1947 or in *Full Flight* (1946). The memory of the war is very present here, as Kállai writes:

> *We are faced with a modern form of catacomb art. We perceive fantastic hieroglyphics, dark memories. Something is happening in this deeply troubled Europe.*[21]

[20] David Rosenberg, "Entretien avec Rozsda", *op.cit.*

[21] Ernő Kállai, quoted by Gabor Pataki, "Art under dangerous constellations. The so-called 'New Romanticism' as a special form of escapism in Central-European art during World War II', *op.cit.*

23. *My Grandmother's Lorgnette*, 1947

(painting turned upside down)

24. *Surrealist Composition*, 1947

Rozsda's painting is an example of art that plunges into history.

His canvases are the expression of a surge of love, revealed by surrealist art from 1939, standing against hatred, war, dictatorships and fear. André Breton was quick to recognize it and include Rozsda among the surrealist painters. In *Surréalisme et la peinture* he draws a link between the art of the Hungarian painter and history, a link to the telluric forces of nature that resonate with the invisible energy of the human psyche:

> *Here the forces of death and love confront one another: the most irresistible escape is being sought from all sides under the magma of leaves turned black and wings destroyed, so that nature and spirit might be renewed by the most luxurious of sacrifices, the one that in order to be born requires spring.*[22]

[22] André Breton, "Endre Rozsda", *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, Gallimard, Paris, 1965.

FOLLOWING THE THREAD OF FATE:
exploring rozsdean strata

Borbála KÁLMÁN

Endre Rozsda was born on Tuesday 18 November 1913. The child, who drew ceaselessly on the walls of the family home, declared a few years later: "I will be a painter". And as "in the case of the person who declares: 'I want to be a train driver'"[1], he did in fact become a train driver, or more precisely the driver of his own machine to travel back in time. "It's the raw material that creates the mental surface from which I can set off in search of time. The time machine transports me into the past and makes me discover things I did not understand when I lived them."[2]

Reading these lines, we suddenly have a strong desire to join Rozsda in his time travels, or simply to have access to these experiences. Unfortunately, the Rozsda machine is not to hand; however, there are still *memories* capable of transporting us into the past and thanks to which the ambiguity of some aspects of the painter's career, which have to date been little explored, become more comprehensible for us, late viewers of his works. Take for example the connection between Rozsda and Surrealism, or the vision that some of his contemporaries had of him. More specifically, we can begin to follow a cross-

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[1] István Szakály, Róbert Római and Gyula Stenszky, *Entretien avec Endre Rozsda*, unpublished film interview, Paris, 1991, 53 minutes.

[2] Endre Rozsda, "Méditations", in *Endre Rozsda – Rétrospective* exhibition catalogue, David Rosenberg (ed.), Műcsarnok, Budapest, 1998, p. 61.

section represented by the years 1957-1965: the start of Rozsda's second stay in France, as well as his first exhibition at the Furstenberg Gallery - the international recognition of his relation to Surrealism and the inclusion of his work in one of André Breton's key publications. These are the significant events surrounding these few years, characteristic of a short but very intensive period. By examining more closely the strata of this cross-section, highlighting theories, practices and pictorial techniques, we will be able to explore the aspects of Rozsda's work that have incited influential actors of French Surrealism to count the Hungarian painter as part of the group, enabling us to highlight the true meaning of Endre Rozsda's "specific Surrealism".

PERCEPTION AND RECEPTION

The year in question is 1961. Rozsda's painting (*Window*) is displayed alongside those of Meret Oppenheim and Toyen, among others, at the *Mostra Internazionale del Surrealismo* (International Surrealist Exhibition) in Milan. André Breton is the curator of the exhibition, its organisers are José Pierre, a faithful longstanding member of the vessel piloted by Breton, along with Tristan Sauvage who is none other than Arturo Schwarz. One of the first exhibitions held in his library transformed into a gallery was in collaboration with Breton.[3] A total of 1,500 copies of the catalogue left the printing press as a record of the event, together with 50 copies each containing original engravings by some of the artists exhibited.[4] The edition immediately strikes the unsuspecting viewer because of its cover: a black and white photograph coloured in yellow, occupies the entire space of the vertical format; it represents a group photo of twenty-two or twenty-three human figures.

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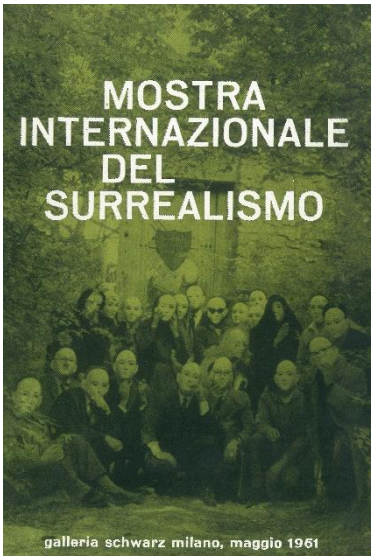
[3] For more information on Arturo Schwarz see *Rozsda100 // A Párka fonala | Le Fil de la Parque | The Parca's Thread*, Várfok Gallery, Budapest, 2013, p.17; including texts by: Esterházy Péter, Francoise Gilot, Hornyik Sándor, Kálmán Borbála, Készman József, Arturo Schwarz.

[4] *Mostra internazionale del Surrealismo*, Galleria Schwarz Milano, May 1961, inside cover.



25. Cover of catalogue

Each figure wears a mask over his face, some with added sunglasses or pipes. They resemble ghosts, stiff expressionless spirits, who have taken on human form. Eighteen artists participated in the exhibition,[5] hence it was probable that, alongside the participants, the "organizers" would also be present in the photograph. To date, this is the only existing published photograph in which Rozsda, relentlessly photographing his environment and himself, but only appearing in an insignificant number of shots taken by others, was "visible alongside" Breton and several of his artist colleagues. In the background there is a wall covered in ivy with at its centre a wooden door with metal fittings; the group is surrounded by rich vegetation.

The town we are in is Milan. The first page of the catalogue presents the text, "Le désespoir des jardiniers ou le Surréalisme et la peinture depuis 1950"

[5] Artists participating in the exhibition: J. Benoit, GJ Bodson, A. Dax, Y. Elléouet, EF Granell, R. Lagarde, Y. Laloy, Le Maréchal, ELT Mesens, JH Moesman, P. Molinier, M. Oppenheim, W. Paalen, M. Parent, E. Rozsda, F. Schroeder-Sonnenstern, MW Svanberg, Toyen.

(The despair of gardeners or Surrealism and painting since 1950).[6] The organizers are clear about the purpose of this group exhibition: to prove that Surrealism is still alive and even prospering. The artists exhibiting at the *Mostra* are among its leaders – clearly dissociated from the "ersatz" artists who had invaded galleries and museums over the past fifteen years.[7] The text, signed by José Pierre, "warns" the public on the one hand against surrealist "second-rate products" using one of the well-known recipes of some of the great predecessors (Max Ernst, Roberto Matta, André Masson), and on the other hand against the "vulgar arrivistes" who, unable to obtain the recognition of their work in their own name, mobilize an army of reporters around their "allegedly surrealist activity", quoting as an example Salvador Dalí and Simon Hantaï.[8] Pierre also undertakes to shed light on a few ideas: "[…] Surrealism is not defined by the means used, but by a revolutionary conception of existence extended to moral as well as to creative behaviour".[9] The exhibition in question

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[6] José Pierre, "Le désespoir des jardiniers ou le Surréalisme et la peinture depuis 1950", *Ibid*., p.1.

[7] Breton returned from the United States in May 1946, after having travelled across the American continent while indefatigably pursuing his work with others and attracting serious attention; he came up against a French artistic scene where the majority of artists having experienced the trauma of war felt the need to make a clean sweep and go so far as to question the very foundation of the visual arts. Breton tried to pursue his own reasoning on a (surrealist) stage increasingly in disagreement and where certain tensions (of a political and artistic nature) surfaced, which would remain more or less hidden until his death. The last years of the surrealist group are summarized in the following work: Alain Joubert, *Le Mouvement des surréalistes ou Le fin mot de l'histoire: Mort d'un groupe, naissance d'un mythe*, Paris, 2001. Joubert, formerly a member and witness of the events, expressly uses a personal tone and aims to lift the veil on "the self-dissolution" of the surrealist group in 1969. Joubert presents for example José Pierre's activities after Breton's death from a rather unfavourable angle. However, the objectives of the group still sailing in the same boat in 1961 seem to be in full agreement and can thus serve as a starting point.

[8] *Mostra Internazionale*, *op.cit.*, p. 4. The evocation of Hantaï on this point is not surprising if one takes into account the position of Pierre: in the mid-50s, serious debates broke out (among other things) because of the provocative statements made by Hantaï within the group. The loss of his faith in surrealist methods and perception led Hantaï to consider the dissolution of the surrealist group as the only way forward, and this is what he proposed to Breton. The followers of the latter, in an "understandable" way, considered this way of "coming and going" in the movement unacceptable.

[9] *Ibid*, p. 3.

was, according to his statements, strictly free of big names, did not wish to be a retrospective, and had the sole purpose of representing the "current situation" of Surrealism (with works dating back to no more than 10 years). And, perhaps most importantly, only works "painted by surrealists in the true sense of the word" are displayed in the exhibition. Pierre distinguishes within this circle artists who, "discovered and welcomed with enthusiasm by the surrealists, have accepted to be considered as one of them". Endre Rozsda is mentioned specifically as belonging to that group. It becomes obvious that the Hungarian painter, who avoids most of the time any "categorization" and classification of his art, considers this "label" acceptable. From the point of view of research on Rozsda's work, the 1961 Milan catalogue, long in the shadows, highlights the fact that the contemporary spokespersons of this era of Surrealism refer to the works of the Hungarian painter as being among the most up-do-date of the movement.

The relation between Rozsda and the French writer, poet and theorist André Breton dates back to his introductory text written in 1957 for the Rozsda exhibition at the Furstenberg Gallery in Paris. This text has been treated as emblematic of Rozsda's work,[10] but it is not the only document to testify to Breton's professional interest in the Hungarian painter, as revealed for example by the Milan exhibition.

The project for a special issue of the French magazine *L'Œil*, in the form of an anonymous draft typescript, undeniably shows that, according to the group of professional writers composed of Breton, José Pierre, and Joyce Mansour, Rozsda belonged to the category of the *dreamer* among the five types of *surrealist painters* identified within a broad grouping of illustrious names related to

[10] The text has been published several times, eg in *Rozsda - Rétrospective,* Műcsarnok, *op.cit.*, p. 52.

Surrealism.[11] This new, more specific "classification" highlights an essential element of the present essay, the clearly dreamlike aspect of Rozsda's art.

In another statement Rozsda recalls:

> *Once, when Breton, his second wife and Simone Collinet were dining at my house, I showed them my recent paintings and asked them if they thought I was really a surrealist because I had the impression that my paintings were no longer really surreal. To which Breton replied: 'Naturally, because it is your perception of life that is surreal, and that is what matters'.*[12]

That occasion may have coincided with the publication of the new edition of Breton's "artistic bible", *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, the "Breton pantheon" in which the author added an illustration of a painting by Rozsda to his 1957 text.[13]

26. Françoise Gilot and Endre Rozsda in 1963

[11] Namely: "dissolution in sleep - loss of the sense of identity; fusion with natural forces - negation of space and time; vision of the unknown." Source: http://www.andrebreton.fr/en/ item /?GCOI = 56600100742020 # (accessed September 2013). The issue was never published. For further details see Borbála Kálmán, *Le Temps en images – L'œuvre d'Endre Rozsda*, MA memoire, PPKE-BTK, Piliscsaba, 2011, pp. 61-62.

[12] Júlia Cserba, "Rozsda és a bronz" [Rozsda and bronze] in *Új Művészet*, 1995/5, p. 56.

[13] André Breton: *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*, Gallimard, Paris, 1965, p. 249.

These publications and anecdotes, as well as the Copley Prize awarded to Rozsda in 1964 (one of its most important aspects is that several of those who had awarded him the prize, at that stage already quite independent of Breton, had also witnessed the birth of Surrealism, therefore Marcel Duchamp or Max Ernst had a different view of the winner as surrealist) are evidence that serious attention should be paid to Rozsda's Surrealism and to his importance - especially in light of certain remarks by the French group -, based first of all on the 1957-1965 cross-section referred to earlier. To come back to Breton's position, it is necessary to decipher Rozsda's general perception in order to be able to understand why his artistic activities had such an important significance for the surrealists: Rozsda embodied - even in spite of himself - some of the "criteria" declared revolutionary some forty years earlier by a certain group in their desire to apply the method aimed at liberating human existence and consciousness.

TRACING

Two almost inseparable notions are at work in Rozsda's thought and creative approach: time and dreams, two notions that unite to form a single dimension intertwined with reality, able nonetheless to operate in parallel and permeable to each other.

> *I dream I am alive in a world where I can walk on the dimension of time, forward, backward, up, down; where I can walk, now an adult, in a time when I was actually a child. [...] I pick up sounds, I weave multicoloured threads to catch them and I listen to their calls. I leap here and there, brush in hand, intent on quickly catching the past in paint".*[14]

Although we can see these paintings, traces of fleeting events, how can we conceive Rozsda's ability to "walk in time"? He certainly did not exercise it in the physical sense of the term. *Méditation* is about crossing into another

[14] Rozsda, "Méditations", *op.cit.*, p. 61.

dimension (another psychological field), the result of the dream state that Rozsda "consciously" reaches. The *journey* is therefore the consequence of an intellectual activity, a *state* reached through the creative process. "It's the raw material that creates the mental surface from which I can set off in search of time", he states. The statement echoes across the work. For Rozsda, dream - as an unconscious mental activity – was not only grasped in sleep, since he was capable of triggering this process in a waking state when he was painting. Since these were mental journeys, the meetings with the past (through acquaintances, strangers, events and historical places) cut him off from reality but crystallized into "real" memories. This state was therefore constantly available to him, as well as the freedom to "journey in time".

Interestingly, Rozsda's first observations in the field of dreams are based on his experiences as a young man, while he consciously aspires to open up new dimensions. The artist Françoise Gilot recalls his early years as a painter:

> *I'm always surprised by biographies because it actually started in 1942. [...] It was progressive, [...] like something coming from the side and gradually eliminating its previous period, [...] a rather metaphysical motivation. [...] He said all the time that he wanted to put himself in a dream state, that is to say to proceed exactly as did the surrealists, who wanted to stop reasoning with reason, but on the contrary [to make use of] the unconscious. [...] It is in a way through drawing that he changed course, towards this much more surrealist aspect, [...] faster than [in] his painting.*[15]

Without therefore taking into account the "prophetic" visions of childhood recounted several times by Rozsda, nor his relation to painting that had manifested itself very early,[16] the painter was absorbed by the rediscovery of a method which had been forgotten after his early years, during his first stay in Paris, and even towards the end of this period, creating the possibility of

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[15] Conversation between Françoise Gilot and Borbála Kálmán, unpublished, 12 June 2013, Paris.

[16] What was happening on the canvas interested him much more than what was happening in life; he would "walk in the paintings" for hours, sitting in an armchair, looking at the paintings hanging on the wall, In: Rozsda: "Souvenirs", *Rozsda - Retrospective*, Műcsarnok, *op.cit*., p. 57.

penetrating into another reality. After waking up in the morning, he would lie down again consciously to dream and then try to capture in his own pictorial language what he had seen. This method has undoubtedly contributed to the fact that Rozsda could later dissolve his formal universe thanks to his own vocabulary.

In a work published in 1974, Sarane Alexandrian examines the relationship between "Surrealism and dreams" as "knowledge of the unconscious".[17] The originality of Alexandrian's book lies in the fact that he completes the account of the early activities of the surrealist group with stories, events and unpublished or unresearched documents – based on the history of research on dreams, via the beginnings of Breton's career (how the neurology student at the army's psychiatric centre a few years later developed the technique of automatic writing and created the surrealist group and his manifesto), all this while trying to clarify the network of interconnections between Surrealism and dreams which are almost impossible to unravel. Thanks to this book, the surrealists' relation to dreams and the role they played in all their activities becomes obvious. The technique of automatic writing first developed is the recording, the copying on paper, of the flow of images accumulated in the unconscious, a source uncontaminated by the need for meaning, free from any control, any aesthetic or moral concern.[18] Surrealism was born primarily as a method that influences existence and thought in their entirety: automatic writing thus served rather as the recording of an unconscious state on a linguistic level and not the

[17] Sarane Alexandrian, *Le Surréalisme et le rêve*, Gallimard, coll. Connaissance de l'Inconscient, Paris, 1974. Alexandrian was a close member of the late branch of surrealism. He contributed to the catalogue of the exhibition of Rozsda at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest (Szépművészeti Múzeum, 2001) with a text in which he underlined that he was surprised to notice the similarity of the drawings of the first period of Victor Brauner he knew so well and Rozsda's drawings of the 1950s.

[18] *Ibid.*, III. *Psychogenèse de l'écriture automatique*, pp. 71-102.

representation thereof. Breton was unhappy to see the "trompe l'oeil" images of dreams transposed (by making duplicates, copies being in no way original transcriptions).[19] From the year 1922, we see the multiplication of experimental sessions, during which several members of the group entered a trancelike state, a form of hypnosis: these exclusive meetings and the activities of the group, who wanted to elucidate the unconscious by getting deeper and deeper into it, became absolutely decisive. Simone, Breton's first wife, the future owner of the Furstenberg Gallery,[20] was a regular participant at these sessions. The journals published by the group, increasingly important and regular, recorded the different experiments and their results, as well as the surrealists' growing relationship with dreams: they had already largely gone beyond existing (scientific) conceptions on the role of dreams and contributed to the revolution of thinking on dreams. The journal published from 1930, *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, clearly emphasized, for instance, the analysis of the phenomenon of sleep and dreams, a method by which the surrealists sought increasingly to attain the unconditional liberation of the human mind.[21]

If we continue to follow Breton's argument, because dreams are the perfect liberation of the inner being thanks to their pure essence, they are superior to

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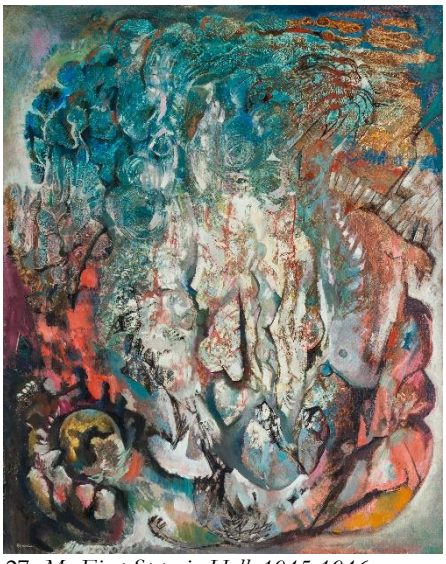
[19] Rosalind Krauss: "La photographie au service du surréalisme", in *Explosante-fixe. Photographie et surréalisme*, Dawn Ades, Rosalind Krauss and Jane Livingstone (eds), Centre Georges Pompidou, 1985, p. 20. "I have always been very careful in the appreciation [of what is said to be surrealist painting], because originally we had thought that there could be no surrealist painting. The material that is used in painting being very ill suited to the automatism that we wanted to promote for example in language. [...] It is perhaps only at the time of the last war that this kind of handicap concerning automatic painting was lifted. It was by key players such as Jackson Pollock and, practically, it gave rise to the movement of lyrical abstraction". From André Breton's interview with Judith Jasmin, 1961. The programme (*Premier Plan*) was produced for Canadian television. [http://archives.radio-canada.ca/emissions/568-14416/] (accessed September 2013).

[20] Simone Collinet organized several exhibitions of Rozsda in her Furstenberg Gallery: two solo exhibitions in 1957 and 1963, and in 1965 she presented some of his new works. Collinet closed her gallery in 1965 for personal reasons.

[21] Alexandrian, V. *La clé du Surréalisme*, *op.cit.*, pp. 133-148.

automatic texts, as well as to the process of recording the unconscious. Dreams must, however, be isolated from memory, which is its enemy. In relation to Breton's very strong criteria, this last *criterion* is far removed from Rozsda since in his art and thought, (the ivy of) memory and memories played an essential role (as raw material). On the other hand, Rozsda's "journeys" with the help of (lucid) dreams, his reflection and creative method were far from negligible to a surrealist mind, as Breton states:

> *Surrealism has always lived in relation to what we have called the marvellous, promoted in the 1924 manifesto, where it was said that the marvellous is beautiful, that only the marvellous is beautiful. We have always shown the greatest curiosity for dreams, and this idea of the marvellous in dreams has always attracted us.*[22]



27. *My First Steps in Hell, 1945-1946*

One of the criteria listed in the special issue mentioned above, characteristic of the artist as a "dreamer" painter, is "dissolution in sleep", which in the case of Rozsda is quite conceivable. The "*negation* of space and time" is only partly

[22] Interview André Breton with Judith Jasmin, *op.cit.*

valid for Rozsda, since it was not a question of negation in the literal sense of the term: it was rather a question of a kind of transvaluation that took into account how he used and conceived of space and time in relation to the general definition of these two terms. They thus constituted a separate dimension where he could move at will. "Fusion with natural forces": in Breton's 1957 text, as in that of Joyce Mansour published in 1961,[23] as well as in many other documents published on Rozsda,[24] it is a question of the universality of Rozsda paintings, the force of his materials incorporating the cosmos, so to speak (it is interesting to refer here to Rozsda's technique of integrating the imprints of various [organic] object in his works). "I am often told that I construct my paintings. There is no question of that, because it is the painting that constructs me. It transports me in such a way that I am different when I have finished a picture from what I was when I started it".[25] Rozsda's technique seems even more captivating in light of Breton's words:

> *[the hand of the painter] is no longer the one that traced the shape of objects but the one which, enthralled simply by its own movement, describes the involuntary figures that, as experience shows, these shapes are destined to reincorporate.*[26]

The mechanism of Rozsda's painting is therefore produced in a state of "lucid dreaming" discussed above. One can thus consider his works as direct copies of his "mental journeys". The term automatism proves on the other hand to be excessive in the present case, since Rozsda did not seek to find a trancelike or ecstatic state, he did not aspire to extract "raw material" from his unconscious. Breton's affirmation remains valid however: "A work cannot be held to be surrealist unless the artist has sought to reach the total psychological

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[23] Joyce Mansour, in *Mostra Internazionale* ..., *op.cit*.
[24] Rozsda, *L'Œil en fête*, David Rosenberg (ed.), Somogy Art Éditions, Paris, 2002.
[25] Rozsda: "Méditations", *op.cit.*, p. 61.
[26] Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture, op.cit.*, p. 68

field (where consciousness is only a small part)".[27] Rozsda's memories become raw material and Rozsda's paintings become stories, but in vain do we look for a narrative, given that what was for him unsayable - that is to say his answers to the world - were formulated through the lines, colours and forms that condensed in a dense fabric the flow of images crossing the artist's mind. "I am the Fate who weaves the thread of time, who creates things, but not the one who completes them."[28]

STRATIFICATION

Let us then follow Rozsda's invitation and immerse ourselves in his paintings, let us walk in his paintings. Whether in his works on paper or his paintings, the use of imprints of various objects becomes apparent. This probably began in the years following the Second World War when the painter Marcel Jean, "ambassador" in Hungary of French Surrealism, may have played the role of intermediary in the evolution of the artist, who was in his early thirties. Jean had good relations with Rozsda at the time,[29] so it is not unlikely that the use of the technique of decalcomania (or *transfer*) would come from him.[30] Rozsda must have used it as a starting-point for some of his works on

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[27] *Ibid*, p. 70. It is interesting to note that some of André Masson's drawings, notably those of the 1930s, dating from a much later period than the first automatic drawings, show a remarkable similarity to certain works on paper by Rozsda, done with Indian ink.

[28] Rozsda, "Méditations", *op.cit.*, p. 61.

[29] Conversation between Antal Székely, Borbála Kálmán and Krisztina Kovács, unpublished, Várfok Galéria, Budapest, 2009. Jean worked for the Goldberger textile factory. It seems that as a French citizen he helped Rozsda in Hungary to hide his paintings during the war. He had opened the exhibition of Rozsda and Lajos Barta in 1948 at the Artists Gallery (Művész Galéria). See Péter György and Gábor Pataki, *Az Európai Iskola és az Elvont Művészek csoportja* [The European School and the Group of Abstract Artists], Budapest, Corvina, 1990, p. 154.

[30] *Surrealist Vision and Technique. Drawings and Collages from the Pompidou Centre and the Picasso Museum* (Paris), exhibition catalogue, Clark V. Poling (ed.), Michael C. Carlos Museum / Emory University, 1996, p. 46. According to Poling, the technique of decalcomania invented by Oscar Dominguez and later developed by Marcel Jean was considered by Breton as an example of the "delirium of interpretation", Breton even quotes it in relation to "objective chance", since the figures drawn from spots are considered "found objects".

paper after 1945: paint spread with a sheet of paper and manual pressure. This technique, alongside *frottage* (rubbing) invented by Max Ernst, had a stimulating effect on the artist, or more specifically, it opened the possibility of practicing free association.

On the other hand, the technique that Rozsda used most frequently thereafter, almost to the end of his life, is not part of surrealist pictorial techniques in general. The term "object imprint" probably describes it best. These imprints become an integral part of the creative technique and of the work itself as abstract fixed "stains" (textures). It is hard to distinguish Rozsda's works on paper from the ones that may have been created at the same time as paintings such as *The Tower*, *My Grandmother's Lorgnette* or *Sacred and Profane Lov*e; these paintings contain the imprint of certain elements. In addition, in *Perpetual Ghost* - although it is probably a slightly later work - Rozsda uses, albeit in a controlled way, the method of spraying paint onto the surface of the canvas. On some of his paintings, the scattered dots are connected, to evoke spiders' webs or astronomical constellations. The imprints of objects (scarcely identifiable) appear clearly around the 1960s and continue, especially in his works on paper produced with Indian ink: sponge, lace, crumpled fabric, leaf, feather, etc. combine with his extremely fine pointillist technique to create an indissoluble entity. "I lie down on the grass and watch the clouds rolling by; I'm looking for the giraffe, fish, galloping horses".[31]

The spots usually work like a game of association, but in some cases it seems that the work builds itself in this way, like an "exquisite corpse" played by one person: each turn brings up a new imprint and a new supplement, until the last

[31] Rozsda, "Méditations", *op.cit.*, p. 61.

stroke has found its place.[32] Rozsda associates and links forms, lines and shapes with unbridled freedom, moving playfully between figuration and total abstraction. One of these works, entitled Le Rêve (ca1960), is in the permanent collection of the National Museum of Modern Art at the Pompidou Centre.[33]

The artistic principles used in Rozsda's paintings are the same as in his works on paper, with the addition of the vibrant universe of his colours, as well as his method of rotating his works during the phase of creation until they find their appropriate direction, and even, according to Rozsda himself,[34] until they become independent sovereign entities. Imprints are superimposed in his paintings like archaeological layers, juxtaposed with his formal universe, creating a fabric soaked in light (*Babylon*, *Symmetry is Broken*). The different imprints often function as starting-points, turning into a sort of "self-generating" surface: in a new painting, Rozsda first eliminated all that was white on the canvas to create a new, blurred surface and build a new personal order. Sometimes, on the surface of his paintings, a kind of scraping technique becomes perceptible, evoking the experience of the teenager Rozsda with the painters of his hometown Mohács: according to Rozsda, the artists restoring frescoes scraped the surface to repaint them: the layer thus emerging reflected both the previous and the later ones, thus exposing the starting-point of the work.

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[32] We do not have information about the timing of the process, whether Rozsda applied the imprints in one go or incorporated them into the work step by step. He "stained" his works most of the time by soaking the objects with paint and then pressing them on to the surface, but on some works, the objects are pressed in layers of paint which have already been applied.

[33] According to the register of the Centre Pompidou, accessible on its site [www.centrepompidou.fr], this work was acquired by the State in 1960 (inventory no: AM 2551 D). The genre of surrealist drawings is well represented in the department of graphic works in the collection.

[34] Rozsda, "Pensées", in *Rozsda – Retrospective*, Műcsarnok, *op.cit.*, p. 59

After the European School period, in a context where free creation was not self-evident, and the artist's equipment was not really plentiful,[35] Rozsda used colour pencils to create his works on paper.

The range of Rozsda's technical arsenal used to create painted surfaces becomes easily conceivable just by listing some of his solutions: spraying, stratifying, imprinting (the world of (organic) objects)... He used special solutions in his photographs too, such as double exposure - obviously thanks to a similar technique - allowing the superimposition of different shots and, without further laboratory work, he would arrive at compositions escaping reality and yet making full use of real elements. Faithfully following his inner voice, Rozsda gradually discovered the path that led him to his own brand of Surrealism without necessarily wanting to be explicitly "welcomed" by the group.

The Dream (detail)

The Dream (detail)

[35] Cserba, "Rozsda és a bronz", *op.cit.*, p. 56.

28. *The Dream*, c. 1960, MNAM - Centre Pompidou

EXPLORATION

The copy of a draft letter is kept in the Archives of Rozsda's studio at the Bateau-Lavoir in Paris. Simone Collinet was writing to a distant friend; her letter is dated March 1980, with no mention of a precise day (Collinet died on 30 March that year). Its two and a half pages deal solely with the art of Rozsda. She asks herself why Rozsda's art had not been properly recognized to dayte and why he was not celebrated as he should be:

> *If you compare him with those who are enjoying success today, you are overcome by a revolting injustice. [...] a master has the right to be recognized. And he is indeed a master: by the strength of his personality, his talent as a colourist, by his inventiveness, his technical skill that allows him to save his art while so many others are leading it to a dead-end. I can say this with confidence, for all the painters I have been interested in have become more or less famous. Although one too often has to resort to Jacques Villon's saying: 'The first seventy years are the most difficult!'. [...] To make Rozsda known would be, in my opinion, to have him admired, admired and appreciated.*

Collinet had witnessed the early years of the surrealist group, she was therefore fully aware of what the group "demanded" from a so-called surrealist mind. She believed in Rozsda and, during the "post-Breton years", thanks to her gallery, she made every effort to offer the Hungarian painter the opportunity to "take off".

Rozsda would have been 100 years old on 18 November 2013. Over the thirty years that have passed between Collinet's letter and that date, Rozsda's art has progressively conquered more and more distant places. Our exploration of his work takes us through multiple strata, helping to resurrect particular memories, long closed by *the shadow of memory*, which are finally exposed to the public.

This essay was written during the series of exhibitions in Budapest to celebrate the centenary of Endre Rozsda, in the volume published by the Várfok Gallery:

Rozsda100 // A Párka fonala | Le Fil de la Parque | The Parca's Thread texts by: Péter Esterházy, Françoise Gilot, Sándor Hornyik, Borbála Kálmán, József Készman, Arturo Schwarz. Galerie Várfok, Budapest, 2013.

29. *Turbulent*, c. 1969

ENDRE ROZSDA: ABSTRACTION AND PRESENCE-OF-THE-WORLD

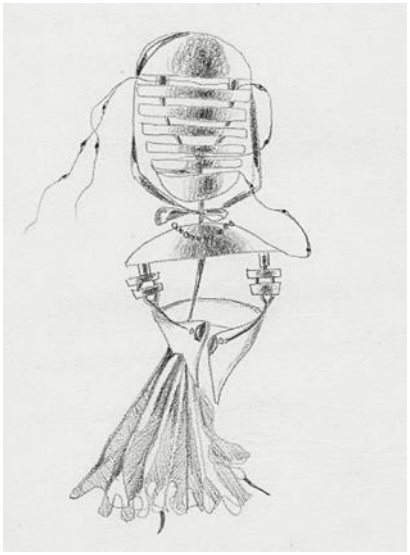
Claude Luca GEORGES

Endre Rozsda occupies a unique place among twentieth-century painters. He loved the two most daring and quite separate paths of modernity, namely abstraction and Surrealism, but without resigning himself to their divorce; a lone figure, he sought to make them coexist. This dual desire oriented his work towards the reconciliation of meaning and meaningless that heralds the current quest for a painting appearing successively abstract, then evocative or even figurative.

Finding the way in which his two aims for painting could come together took him a quarter of a century. A century rich in remarkable works in which various influences are felt.

His first great period, from the early 1930s to 1943, led him, via a greater freedom of treatment of the subject, to the threshhold of abstraction (a native of Mohács, he lived in Budapest until 1938, then resided in Paris).

Budapest, where he took refuge in 1943, became for him, between 1945 and 1948, the site of a major exposure to Surrealism, especially with the decisive influence of Marcel Jean, a major player in the surrealist movement first in France, then in Budapest, where he settled to create fabric designs in a textile company. Thanks to Surrealism, Rozsda entered the world of metamorphoses



30. *Surrealist Figure I*, c. 1945

31. *Woman-Temple*, c. 1953

where, as Françoise Py writes: "the image born from bringing together two realities as far apart as possible, acquires a power of alchemical transmutation".[1]

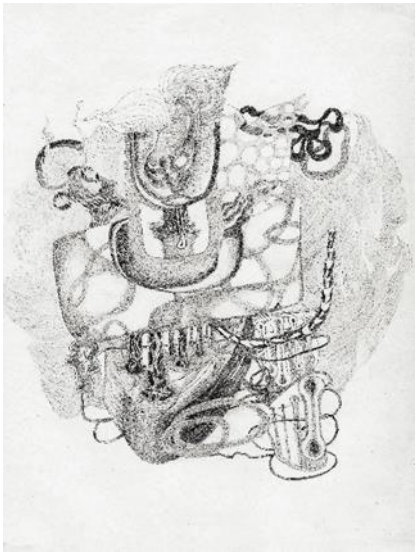
In the drawings, what first appears are figures incorporating elements that are foreign to them.

This was followed by composite figures.

Metamorphosis is not really the dominant feature of the paintings of this period. They are closer to the bio-romanticism theorised by Ernő Kállai, as well as to surrealist automatism.

[1] Françoise Py, "Le surréalisme et les métamorphoses : pour une mythologie moderne", *Mélusine* n° XXVI, "Métamorphoses", Lausanne, L'Age d'Homme, 2006, p. 10.

32. *Still Life with Reel and Needle*, c. 1955



33. *Dragon*, c. 1955

If the period between 1948 and 1956 can be called "white", it is because there are no paintings, artistic creation being muzzled by the Soviet authorities. It was probably for Endre Rozsda the period in which he made his most significant progress, the period in which he finally discovered the way in which abstraction and a certain presence of the world could merge. It would be hard otherwise to account for the fact that the first works created in Paris in 1958, shortly after his return in 1957, immediately revealed the main elements that would mark the evolution of all his work.

These works give rise to two successive visions. The first one, abstract, is followed by a second one marked by a multiplicity of details where figuration, sometimes precise, sometimes vague and evocative, elicits the fleeting impressions of a certain presence of the world.

The graphic elements are still present, nevertheless, but they no longer determine the structure of the work. They are, as it were, embedded in a

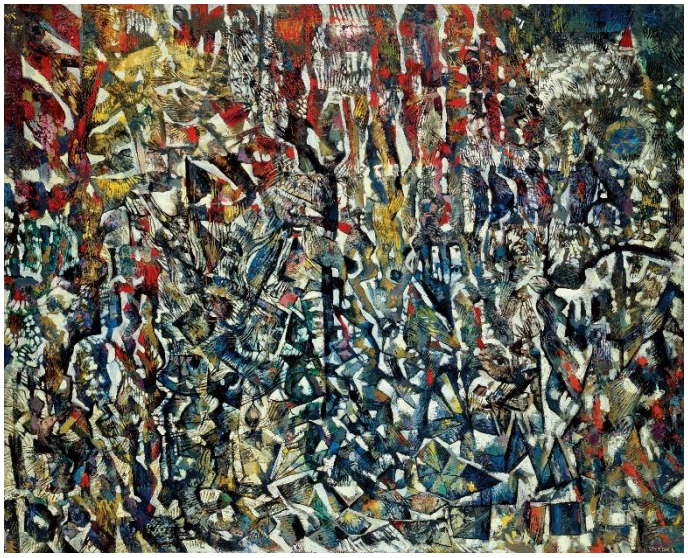
harmonious whole swarming with a multiplicity of small, largely geometrical, elements.

From the 1970s the abstract structure becomes more prominent, especially through the heightened colour effects. It is likely that this evolution was particularly influenced by a short stay in New York in 1969. Endre Rozsda acknowledged that he was struck by the *all-over* technique of Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey.

If, when one first looks at Endre Rozsda's paintings, they appear to resist interpretation, it seems to me that this is due to the geometric forms, both small and very numerous, that create a very dense network of correspondences between formal and coloured aspects. The harmony of the whole thus overrides the vision of the individual elements that gave birth to it, imposing itself with a quasi-musical presence that excludes meaning. We cannot therefore relate this initial vision to Surrealism. It lies outside the field of what has been called surrealist abstraction.

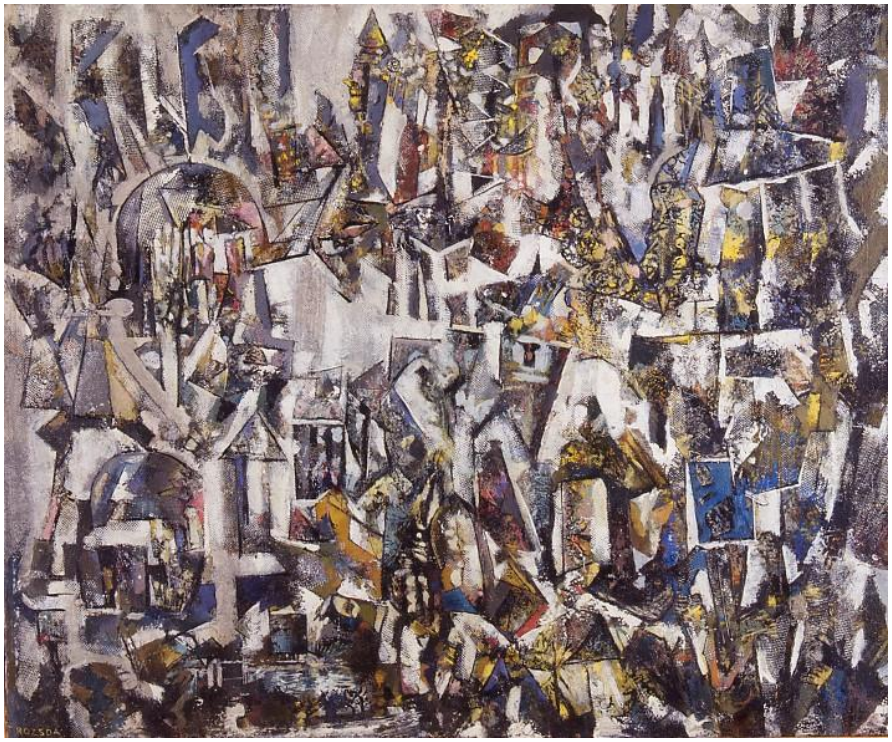
And yet ... when we look at a Rozsda, the eye is at first caught up in the overall harmony, in a global vision where pleasure eschews curiosity; it then tends to focus, attracted by features provoking a questioning gaze in search of what is identifiable: frames, small spots scattered here and there, streaks, cross-shapes, a series of small closed forms which often include vaguely egg-shaped elements, etc. These signs, eliciting interpretation, encourage the same process with less evocative elements.

In this focused vision, details like those seen below often become real paintings.



34. *The Tower of Babel*, 1958

35. *Metropolis*, 1979



36. *Bird's Eye View*, c. 1958

Bird's Eye View (detail)

Bird's Eye View (detail)

37. *Future Ghost*, 1976

Future Ghost (detail)

In the early stages of maturity the features which encourage that second vision are essentially graphic. They originate in drawing. Then, bit by bit, they combine with more pictorial features resulting from their mutation.

There are also clearly figurative elements.

In this way Endre Rozsda can turn a canvas into a poetic journey among his many paintings. Joyce Mansour put it perfectly:

> *A painting by Rozsda is reminiscent of the extravagant waste of the autumn forest, apple blossoms after the death of the sun, of ocular gold, malleable and changeless, fresh from the songs of the land of the Magyars, of the sharp melody of carts passing time and again in the half-sun without losing the branch of a single star [...].*[2]

Does this second vision of his paintings not belong to Surrealism? Less by the multitude of paintings within the painting than by the host of connotations that arise each time one looks at them? Here, a single feature can transport us in turn to a childhood garden, a funfair or the bright colours of a summer beach.

Rozsda's works appear today in a new light. By combining, thanks to his dual vision, abstraction and metamorphosis, it opens on the present time, beyond the clashes that have rent modernity in the past, a time in search of converging paths where many admire Jackson Pollock or Pierre Soulages as much as Marcel Duchamp or Louise Bourgeois.

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2 In *Mostra internazionale del surrealismo*, Milan, Schwarz Gallery, 1961, p. 42.

ENDRE ROZSDA

Texts

MY THOUGHTS

Endre ROZSDA

« You are your own master only insofar as you are detached from the self. Self-fulfilment is possible only when you have mastery of yourself. »
Master Eckhart

My thoughts: surface and depth, colours juxtaposed, shapes that knot and unravel.

From my memories and light, I make a dense fabric and contemplate it until it comes alive, returns my gaze, stands before me.

That is the time I want to capture, order and evaluate. Time, multicoloured and luminous oblivion; pleasure and suffering, time makes its pearls. Around it I braid the ivy of my memories. I wish neither to assess nor explain, but to understand. I place my head on time and I listen to what it tells me. Groups of memories orbit within me and pass each other without a greeting.

While working, a beam of light sometimes illuminates one of these masses that emerges from the shadows. Faces of yesteryear lighten up. A mute mouth opens and speaks. Sentences emptied of meaning are revived and reappear, carrying new meaning.

To a timeless being, if we consider time as an external dimension then the present is analogous to the past, it is a question of more or less, as all things are intermingled.

My best friends and my enemies, my loves are present in my paintings, as well as the murderers. We examine and judge each other ceaselessly.

The painting is finished when it detaches itself and takes flight. If it is successful it exists in its own right; in possession of its own language, origin, universe. It is born.

MEMORIES

Endre ROZSDA

One of my earliest childhood memories is of a painting hanging over my bed. I kept looking at this intriguing picture. It showed a girl dressed in red. Every day I wondered when she ate, when she slept. And I could never catch her out, not even see her moving. I pretended to close my eyes to discover her secret. In vain. So I asked the grown-ups who was this lovely girl. One replied, "It's Little Red Riding Hood", no doubt to satisfy my curiosity. I continued to spy and question. One fine day, I was told: "This picture was painted by Aunt Irene", my mother's sister. When Aunt Irene came, I asked her endless questions about how she could have produced such magic. She said, "If you're interested, when you grow up you can go to art school and learn how to do it too." I thought it was a miracle to be able to create a creature beyond the human condition, and art school became for me a sort of magicians' school. I would think about it for a long time and imagined a mysterious place where fairy creatures were created using supernatural gestures.

The other defining event came much later. I think I was at least seven years old. I discovered the other paintings in our apartment, banal landscapes in which I walked, discovering real or imaginary details, all of them marvellous. I could hear birds singing, streams running, etc. I would crouch in an armchair, lost in contemplation, outside time. It was my life. I was happy. But the adults intervened and ruined everything. "What are you doing here?", they asked me.

I'm walking in the paintings, I answered frankly. That started a struggle to force me to go for walks "in the fresh air" in nature. But I resisted. Nature seemed to me infinitely less true and less attractive than its representation.

Later, in my life as a painter, I kept all that. I also understood that I was not the only one looking. An exchange takes shape and the painting alive in front of me also looks at me, bewitches me.

Of those who will look at my paintings, I would simply ask that they do as I did as a child and devote enough time to the contemplation of the images that I am offering for them to find the path that leads to them and makes it possible to walk among them.

MEDITATIONS

Endre ROZSDA

When I start painting I do my best to eliminate from the canvas everything white, everything that might disturb. I endeavour to create a blurred surface on which I can then search, hesitatingly, for a certain order that will, bit by bit, disrupt the former order and create a new disorder. It is the raw material from which I can set off in search of time.

The time machine transports me into the past and opens onto things that I did not understand when I lived them. It is now that their meaning appears.

But what is most curious is that these shifts backwards tend not only towards my past but also towards the past of my predecessors; I find links with today. I am the contemporary of events long gone; I do not experience the past like history, but as a perpetual present.

Obviously, I do not forget that I am painting. Or, more exactly, I forget, without it being forgotten. I am constantly searching for colour relationships, correlations of shapes, that make a painting.

I am often told that I construct my paintings. There is no question of that, because it is the painting that constructs me. It changes me in such a way that I am different by the time I complete a canvas from what I was when I started it. I'm the figure of Fate that braids the thread of time, creates things, but not the one that completes them.

I dream I am alive in a world where I can walk on the dimension of time, forward, backward, up, down; where I can walk, now an adult, in a time when I was actually a child. And as a child, now that I am old. I open the windows to look outside. I open the closed windows to look inside.

I throw light on objects and people, wake sleepers, awaken the dead. I make them talk about events they may never have experienced. I pick up sounds, I weave multicoloured strands to catch them and I listen to their call. I jump here and there, brush in hand, busy fixing the past as quickly as I can.

Old smiles shine again. Twinkling teeth-smiles.

Friendship for forgotten beings overcomes me. When I open the first lid to penetrate further, in the multiple layers, I meet the people whose path I was to cross. I reorganize things, I find balls long lost that I can throw again in blurred time. I stretch out on the grass and watch the clouds swirl around; I look for the giraffe, the fish, the galloping horses. I photograph what is no longer there, what flees.

Good and evil are already elsewhere. I stay, I fish without a line or net, I catch strange fish: talking fish, I the silent fisherman.

I walk in ancient streets; I run behind flying words, thrown hoops, lost loves.

Sitting on the terrace, I look at myself from a distance.

I am looking for new links and trying to find answers that raise new questions. Once I have found the question, I set off again. Is there a goal, a meaning, a becoming? What is good, what is evil, and why? Why does love hurt and why does one seek it nevertheless? I braid, I spin the ropes needed to go up and down, to reach heights and depths, from where one can see things from below or above.

I bear the perspectives within me, the horizon is at the top, or the bottom, or outside the painting, and the running lines meet somewhere.

The blue sky is sometimes white; green grass is often red.

The web of capillaries encompasses everything, everything is alive, the stones are soft; the water stands, petrified, on tiptoe. The light radiates and transports me.

Children not yet born snooze, grown old, their beards ash-coloured, in abandoned parks where trees have not even been planted.

In long-dead skulls new ideas are born, turned towards a distant past but which is for us still in the future.

Grandmothers and grandchildren are the same age. Adults become children and old people get younger. I walk in the park with my nanny; short trousers, a Latin inscription on the ribbon of my sailor's beret.

I drag destiny-boats upstream, downstream. Inside, outside, up and down take turns.

BIOGRAPHY

1913

Endre Rozsda was born on 18 November 1913 in Mohács, a small town on the banks of the Danube in southern Hungary.

He was the second child of Ernő Rosenthal and Olga Gomperz, a bourgeois family. His father owned a brickyard; and his mother was the descendant of a large Jewish family of Portuguese origin.

1918

He draws every day on a small wall of the family home. Every two weeks, the wall is whitewashed so that he can continue to draw. Rozsda is already conscious of what he wants: to be a painter.

1927

He gets a camera. Looking through the lens, he discovers that it is "shortsighted", that is to say much better at restoring the beauty of detail than of vast subjects. These visual experiences, he maintained, form one of the bases of his future painting, the drive to make and contemplate details.

He paints his first painting: a copy of Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*, in which the face is turned into a self-portrait.

1931

Endre decides to officially change his name. He chooses an unusual surname, Rozsda, a Hungarian noun meaning "rust", both colour and oxidation.

1932

After graduating from secondary school he enrols at the Free School of Painting, recently founded by the Hungarian painter Vilmos Aba-Novák.

1935

Numerous financial difficulties drove Rozsda's father to commit suicide, shortly after finding a studio-apartment for his son.

1936

First solo exhibition at the Tamás Gallery in Budapest. The exhibition was a critical and commercial success. The director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest acquired one of the works on show.

1937

He attends a public performance of a composition by Béla Bartók, performed by the composer and his wife. It is a decisive revelation, bringing about a total questioning of his work as a painter: "His technique enchanted me, his music was overwhelming. I felt that he [Bartók] was criticizing my own artistic trajectory. He showed me that I was not my own contemporary".

1938

Rozsda decides to leave and settle in Paris. He moves to Montparnasse in a studio on rue Schoelcher with his friend the sculptor Lajos Barta. Exhibitions in this workshop.

1939

He meets Árpád Szenes, István Hajdú, Vieira da Silva, Giacometti, Max Ernst, Picasso. He teaches painting to Françoise Gilot who, a few years later, would live with Picasso. He studies at the Ecole du Louvre (as an un-enrolled student) for three years.

1942-1943

Wearing a yellow star becomes mandatory with effect from May 29, 1942. He finds out that the French police are looking for him. Françoise Gilot helps him obtain false papers. She accompanies him to the Gare de l'Est where he takes the train with his rolled canvases.

1944

After the German invasion, he lives in hiding. Sentenced to hard labour for failure to enlist in the armed forces, he finally manages to escape. His mother is murdered when the Jewish families of Mohács are deported.

1945

At the Liberation, he teaches as an art teacher in the Workers' Cultural Association. He becomes friends with Imre Pán and joins him as one of the founding members of the movement Európai Iskola (European School), an avant-garde group that brings together painters, sculptors, poets, writers and intellectuals.

He participates in group or solo exhibitions organized by the European School and other independent exhibitions.

Major surrealist works date from this period, among which André Breton chooses the painting *Sacred and Profane Love* to accompany his article on Rozsda in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*.

The authorities ban all non-official art. The European School shuts down.

1949 - 1955

Following Stalinist laws governing "socialist realism", Rozsda is prevented from painting. He draws a lot, without ever being able to exhibit his work. He illustrates children's books.

His sketchbook remains the only way to exercise his eye as a painter. He rediscovers in his pre-war academic training the tools needed to capture, with the remarkable precision of the portrait painter, the world around him: people in the street, in cafes, concerts, the theatre, in the public baths and swimming pools.

1956

He signs a manifesto and participates in the unofficial exhibition of the "Seven". Shortly after the end of the exhibition, the Hungarian revolution breaks out.

At the end of December, he leaves Hungary illegally and goes to Austria.

1957

Rozsda moves back to Paris.

Shortly after his arrival in January 1957 André Breton and his first wife Simone Collinet organise an exhibition at the Furstenberg Gallery (February 1957). Rozsda exhibits the paintings of the period 1945-1948, brought back from Hungary with the help of the French Institute.

In the catalogue to the exhibition André Breton writes: "Here is the supreme example of what was to be hidden if one wanted to subsist, but also of what inner necessity obliged one to snatch away from the worst of constraints. Here the forces of death and love confront one another; the most irresistible chink is sought beneath the magma of blackened leaves and broken wings, so that nature and the spirit can be renewed by the most luxurious of sacrifices, whose birth demands the spring".

Henceforth, Rozsda exhibits regularly with the painters of the Furstenberg Gallery.

1961

He is invited to take part in the International Surrealist Exhibition at the Schwarz Gallery in Milan, organized jointly by André Breton, José Pierre and Arturo Schwarz.

Rozsda showed his painting *Windows*. The poet Joyce Mansour writes on this occasion: "Rozsda's painting is reminiscent of the extravagant waste of the autumn forest, of apple trees in bloom after the death of the sun, of ocular gold, malleable and changeless, fresh from the songs of the land of the Magyars".

1964

Rozsda receives the Copley Award, with a panel made up of Hans Arp, Alfred Barr Jr., Matta, Max Ernst, William S. Lieberman, Man Ray, Roland Penrose,

Sir Herbert Read, Barnet and Eleanor Modes, Darius Milhaud and Marcel Duchamp.

1966

Travel to the United States. Exhibition at the Cleveland International Gallery.

1970

Rozsda acquires French nationality.

Exhibition in Brussels. Catalogue prefaced by the poet René Micha.

1972

Rozsda takes part in the exhibition "Surrealism 1922-1942" in Munich and Paris.

1977

Trip to California. Exhibitions in Claremont and New Orleans.

1979

Endre Rozsda moves into the Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre.

1983

Presentation to the Mobilier national of the tapestry produced by the workshops of the Manufacture des Gobelins, based on the painting *Initiation*.

1984

A retrospective in the Bateau-Lavoir, opened by the Minister of Culture, Jack Lang.

1987

Rozsda is awarded the title of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters.

1991

Participation in the exhibition *André Breton, La beauté convulsive* at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

1998

Retrospective at the Grand Palace (Műcsarnok) of Budapest. On this occasion, the Hungarian Minister of Culture and Education decorates him with the title

of Officer of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary, awarded by the President of the Republic Árpád Göncz.

1999

Exhibition at the Várfok Gallery in Budapest, opened by the writer Péter Esterházy.

Always true to his vocation Endre Rozsda continues to paint and draw until the end. He died in Paris and is buried in the cemetery of Montmartre.

CONTRIBUTORS

Adam BIRO was born in Budapest in 1941. He directed the Art Books department of Editions Flammarion before creating Editions Adam Biro. He is the author of novels, short stories and essays, most recently the *Dictionaire amoureux de l'humour juif* (Plon, 2017). He co-edited with René Passeron the *Dictionnaire général du surréalisme et de ses environs* (PUF, 1984).

Patrice CONTI studied philosophy at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. He was board member of the Association pour l'étude du surréalisme, 2008-2010. He has published in the journals *Supérieur Inconnu* (first semester 2009) and *La Sœur de l'Ange* (n° 8, autumn 2010). He is currently working on Endre Rozsda's archives.

Claude Luca GEORGES is a painter. His work engages with a certain contemporary pictorial sensitivity, open to diversity. He paints in Paris, at the Bateau-Lavoir, on supports with very free forms, made in his Burgundy workshop with material of his own design. He found Endre Rozsda particularly interesting because he welcomed the most daring aspects of modernity without consenting to the widely-accepted divorce between abstraction and presence of the world.

Borbála KÁLMÁN studied art history and French language and literature in Budapest. In 2017, she obtained a Masters in History and Management of Cultural Heritage at the Central European University. From 2007 to 2014, she was an Art Historian with the Várfok Gallery. Since 2015 she has been curator of the Ludwig Museum - Museum of Contemporary Art in Budapest.

François LESCUN is the pen name of Jean-Noël Segrestaa, Honorary Lecturer at the University Paris-X-Nanterre. He is the author to date of ten books of poetry, the last six available from Editions Caractères: *D'un monde à l'autre* (2011) and *Miroir en éclats* (2014). *Réfractions* (2005) contains a poem inspired by a Rozsda painting which is also included in the book published by Somogy.

José MANGANI has a degree in architecture from the National University of the Littoral (UNL) in Argentina. He was close to Rozsda from 1974 until his death. Legatee of the work of the artist and vice-president of the Association des amis d'Endre Rozsda, he promotes the work of Rozsda and makes the Atelier du Bateau-Lavoir available to researchers and art lovers.

Françoise PY is professor of Art History at Paris 8 University. She and Henri Béhar conducted a colloquium at Cerisy entitled *L'Or du temps: André Breton, cinquante ans après* (August 2016), and published the proceedings in the journal *Mélusine*, No. 37, L'Age d'Homme (2017). She recently published *De l'art cinétique à l'art numérique: hommage à Frank Popper*, L'Harmattan, 2017.

Alba ROMANO PACE is an art historian and curator. She currently lives in Palermo. Associate member of the HiCSA Laboratory (Cultural and Social History of Art) at the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, she has a doctorate in Art History and is author of the thesis: *Endre Rozsda, pluralité du regard surréaliste* (2013). She is the author of *Jacqueline Lamba peintre rebelle, muse de L'Amour fou*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. Témoins de l'Art, 2010. She regularly contributes to the art journal *ArteDossier*, Giunti Editori, Florence.

David ROSENBERG has been passionate about Endre Rozsda's work for over 30 years. Close to the artist, he was curator of the first Rozsda retrospective at the Műcsarnok Palace in Budapest in 1998. He has since been curator of the main exhibitions dedicated to the artist (Budapest Museum of Fine Arts in 2001; National Gallery of Budapest in 2013; Luxembourg Orangery in 2017). He has also directed all the major publications related to his work.

ILLUSTRATIONS

1. *Hide-and-Seek*, oil on canvas, 1958
   37.6 x 46 cm, private collection (former André Breton collection)

2. *Girl Smoking*, oil on canvas, c. 1934
   60 x 80 cm, private collection

3. *Memory of the Navy*, oil on canvas, 1942
   92 x 65 cm, private collection

4. *The Tower*, oil on canvas, 1947-1948
   110 x 65 cm, Atelier Rozsda

5. *Father and Mother in a Carriage*, oil on canvas, 1954
   60.5 x 80.5 cm, private collection

6. *Mask and Bergamask*, oil on canvas, c. 1979
   49.5 x 60 cm, private collection

7. *Initiation*, oil on canvas, 1976
   93 x 74 cm, Atelier Rozsda

8. *Revolutions I*, graphite and crayons on paper, 1956
   29 x 21 cm, Atelier Rozsda

9. *I Imagine Myself Small in my Mother's Childhood*, oil on wood, c. 1980
   25 x 20 cm, private collection

10. *Erzsébet's Walk*, oil on canvas, 1946
    76 x 79 cm, Atelier Rozsda

11. *Kerek*, oil on canvas, 1971
    60 cm diam, Atelier Rozsda

12. *The Fates at Play*, Indian ink on paper, c. 1970
    12 x 9 cm, private collection

13. *Danse Macabre*, oil on canvas, 1946-1947
95 x 65 cm, Atelier Rozsda

14. *Skies for Mozart*, oil on canvas, 1976
55 x 47 cm, Atelier Rozsda

15. *Homage to Stravinsky*, oil on canvas, 1976
100 x 82 cm, private collection

16. *Song of Light for Béla Bartók*, oil on canvas, 1976
33 x 24 cm, private collection

17. *Bluebeard's Castle*, oil on canvas, 1965-1979
130 x 162 cm, Atelier Rozsda

18. *Dishevelled*, oil on canvas, 1939
65.5 x 92 cm, private collection

19. *The King of Truth*, oil on canvas, 1942
60 x 116 cm, Atelier Rozsda

20. *Self-Portrait under Glass*, oil on canvas, c. 1945
25 x 35 cm, Atelier Rozsda

21. *Sacred and Profane Love*, oil on canvas, c. 1945
115 x 75.5 cm, Musée des Beaux-arts, Dijon

22. *Valamint*, oil on canvas, 1947
50 x 40 cm, Atelier Rozsda

23. *My Grandmother's Lorgnette*, oil on canvas, 1947
95 x 77 cm, Atelier Rozsda

24. *Surrealist Composition*, oil on canvas, 1947
74 x 90 cm, private collection

25. Cover of catalogue, *Mostra internazionale del surrealismo*,
Milan, Galerie Schwarz, 1961.

26. Françoise Gilot and Endre Rozsda in 1963
on occasion of Rozsda's second exhibition at the Galerie Furstenberg.

27. *My First Steps in Hell*, oil on canvas, 1945-1946
81 x 65 cm, Atelier Rozsda

28. *The Dream*, Indian ink on paper, c. 1960
28 x 22 cm, MNAM - Centre Pompidou

29. *Turbulent*, oil on canvas, c. 1969
92 x 73 cm, private collection

30. *Surrealist Figure I*, graphite on paper, c. 1945
20.6 x 14.3 cm, Atelier Rozsda

31. *Woman-Temple*, graphite on paper, c. 1953
29 x 20.5 cm, Atelier Rozsda

32. *Still Life with Reel and Needle*, graphite on paper, c. 1955
40 x 29.7 cm, Atelier Rozsda

33. *Dragon*, graphite on paper, c. 1955
40 x 29.7 cm, Atelier Rozsda

34. *The Tower of Babel*, oil on canvas, 1958
81 x 100 cm, Atelier Rozsda

35. *Metropolis*, oil on canvas, 1979
88 x 91 cm, private collection

36. *Bird's Eye View*, oil on canvas, c. 1958
54 x 65 cm, private collection

37. *Future Ghost*, oil on canvas, 1976
92 × 73 cm, private collection

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