

Kényes Egyensúly Fragile Balance (Danger)

Miklós Erdély

Lőrinc Borsos, János Brückner, Márta Czene, Attila Csörgő, Márk Fridvalszki, Andreas Fogarasi, Ferenc Gróf & Zsófia Gyenes, Gideon Horváth, Réka Lőrincz, Martin Piaček, Viktória Monhor, Rudolf Pacsika, Rozina Pátkai, Benedek Regős, Société Réaliste (Ferenc Gróf & Jean-Baptiste Naudy), János Sugár, Csaba Vándor, Tibor Várnagy

Curated by Borbála Szalai

On view: 23.01 - 22.03.2026

Vernissage: 23.01. 2026 (Friday)

7pm, Trafó Gallery

Opening remarks (on video) by Ildikó Enyedi, film director, screenwriter

8pm, Trafó Main Hall

Lecture-performances and music performance: Ferenc Gróf, Viktória Monhor, EM90 Band (Rozina Pátkai, Richárd Melykó, Barnabás Bácsi, Dániel Németh)

Guided tours: 13.02.2026 6 pm; 17.03.2026 6 pm

Finissage: 2026.03.20. 7 pm - closing performance: SZ.A.F. (Judit Fischer & Miklós Mécs)

Professional leader of the reconstruction: Annamária Szőke, art historian

Jury members of the open call: Jakab Erdély, visual artist, art director, grandson of Miklós Erdély; Sándor Hornyik, art historian, Institute of Art History, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (MTA BTK);

„A well-chosen slogan turns into an act.” Miklós Erdély says in an interview.^[1]

In this sense, in a manner similar to a motto or a slogan, the exhibition aims nothing more than to call attention to the most monumental work of Miklós Erdély's glass-based installations: the environment *Fragile Balance (Danger)*, originally shown in Kraków in 1981. Beyond this, and through this, the exhibition attempts to dislocate the art of this remarkable artist of the Hungarian and Central-Eastern European neo-avant-garde from the position that weighs heavily on it, rendering it untouchable and thus invisible. By presenting contemporary artworks that reflect on Miklós Erdély's intellectual and artistic legacy, the exhibition also examines how his intellectual legacy continues to live on today.

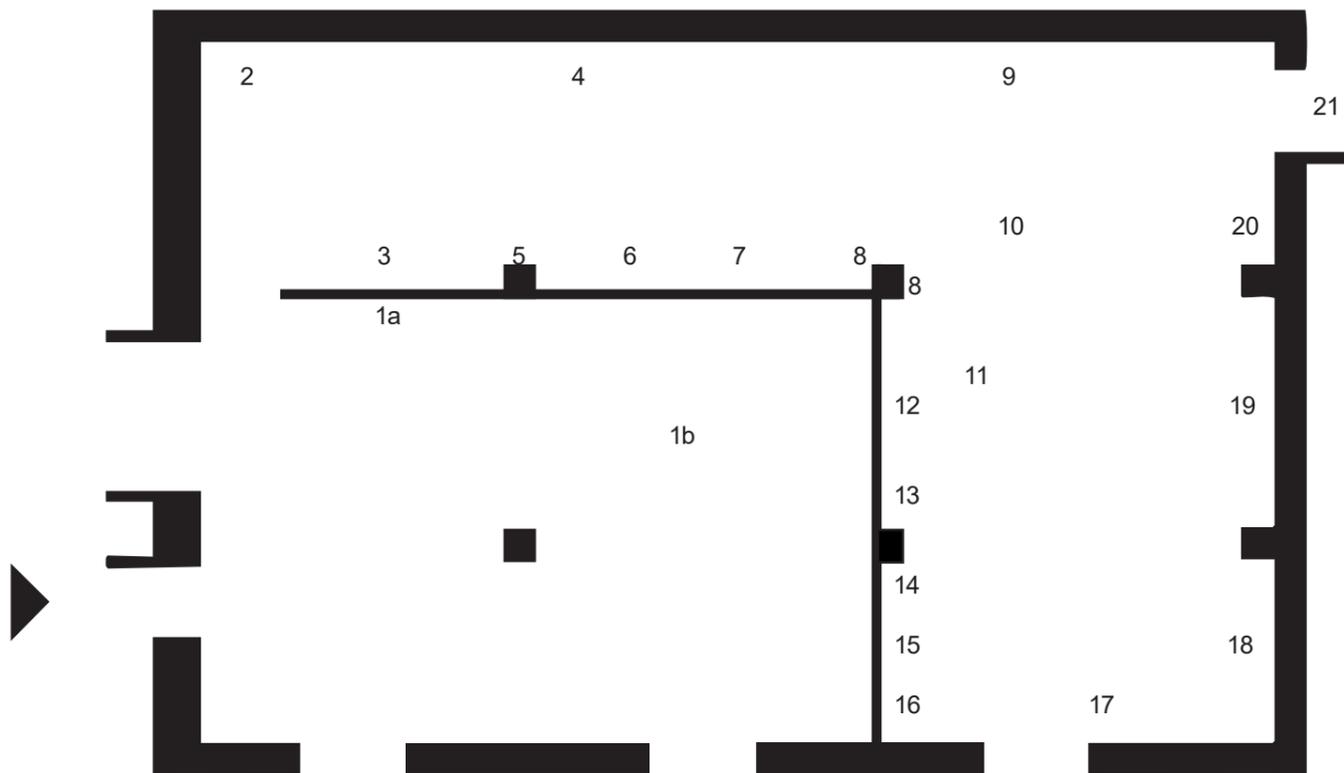
Each element of the exhibition can therefore be understood as an experiment with an uncertain outcome, addressing questions such as whether an artwork so deeply dependent on the artist's personal presence can be reconstructed at all – particularly when its realization is not only uncertain but explicitly dangerous; how does an artwork that was originally presented in Poland in 1981, just one month before the the declaration of the Martial law, resonate with today's social and political realities; and whether Miklós Erdély's intellectual

and artistic legacy can still be activated today.

In 1981, a few months before the realization of the environment, Erdély stated in a lecture given at the Department of Aesthetics at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest that the revolutionary energies associated with the neo-avant-garde movement, which reached their peak around the student uprisings of 1968, had since significantly subsided. "...only a single faint tremolo – let's call it that – can still be heard, the thinning operation of the post-neo-avant-garde. Yet this faint tremolo casts doubt on whether the musical piece has truly come to an end."^[2]

In 1981, Erdély saw this tremolo, this thinning of art – as only a temporary condition. He believed that, over time, this state could be overcome, "...the ingenuity of necessity will somehow find a way around it, will eventually arrive at the possibility of contact with what is essential, and whatever has become obsolete will lose its validity in the light of – or at least in the hope of – some new revelation."^[3]

While it remains uncertain whether the promising future envisioned in the *Optimistic Lecture* has arrived already; what can nevertheless be stated with confidence is that the faint pulse of that tremolo can still be heard today.



1a. Miklós Erdély: *Fragile Balance (Danger)*, 13 November 1981 (environment, part of The IX Cracow Meeting, Pawilon Wystawowy, Kraków, Poland) 13.11.1981 (Installed by: Miklós Erdély, Ildikó Enyedi, unknown person), Photos: Ryszard Bobek, Jacek Szmuc, Stefan Zbadynsk. Original prints: property of Ildikó Enyedi, László Beke, Miklós Erdély Estate

1b. Reconstruction. Trafó Galéria, Budapest 23.01.2026

2. Rudolf Pacsika: *Recycling*, 2015 (a pencil reassembled to its original form with the used shavings) Courtesy of acb Gallery

3. Andreas Fogarasi: *Glass Library (Time Travel)*, 2026 installation (glass, wood, aluminum, ink drawing: Zsuzsa Szenes: *Violinist boy on the roof of the house under construction*, date unknown)

4. Márta Czene: *Erdély Number*, 2018 (coloured pencil on paper)

5. Société Réaliste: *Over the Counter (OTC)*, 2008 (digital print)

6. Ferenc Gróf & Zsófia Gyenei: *The Price of a Fecske*, 2025 (digital print, acril, canvas, photogram, paper, tobacco)

7. Benedek Regős: *Art history textbook without illustrations*, 2015 (modified book)

8. Borsos Lőrinc: *Scale Blasphemy I. (feat. William Blake)*, *Scale Blasphemy II.*, 2025 (oil, acrylic, enamel, wood)

9. Attila Csörgő: *Möbius Space*, 2006 (installation (lightbox, digital print, transparent film) Sándor Gönczy Collection

10. Rudolf Pacsika: *Untitled*, 2017 (installation; scissors, glass vessel, string)

11. Gideon Horváth: *Collapse*, 2026 (installation; porcelain, steel, aluminum)

12. János Sugár: *Silence (with black swans)*, 2017 (C-print)

13. Tibor Várnagy: *H Ó (Snow)*, 1991/2026 (thermal image, photograph, gelatine silver print) Courtesy of the Artist

14. Pátkai Rozina, EM90, Erdély Dániel és Erdély György: *A legszebb szó a már*, 2024; *Gyönyörködik az Úr*, 2023; *Semmi van*, 2023; *Jövőidejű találmány*, 2023

15. János Brückner: *Timetravel streptase*, 2016 (animated GIF, 0'10") Courtesy of the artist and Longtermhandstand

16. Martin Piaček: *O*, 2020 (video, 3'32")

17. Réka Lőrincz: *Point of View*, 2023 (installation)

18. Fridvalszki Márk: *Hagere Geometrie (Hommage an Kriegsgeheimnis)*, 2025 (pigment transfer; acrylic on canvas)

19. Viktória Monhor: *Scale*, 2025 (installation)

20. Réka Lőrincz & János Sugár: *Let's deal - Cognitive nonsense*, 2018 (gold-plated brass)

21. Csaba Vándor: *Turning point*, 2025 (light and sound installation)

In 1975, Erdély published an open call in connection with an exhibition he organized at Young Artists' Club (Fiatal Művészek Klubja). The aim of the *Möbius Presentation* was to draw attention to the aesthetic value of pure thought, in opposition to the attitude described by physicist Max Born as naive realism – an outlook that “rejects unusual intellectual movements distant from direct experience – of which the Möbius strip may serve as a model –, that turns to the common sense while labelling pure thought as abstract in order to deprive both others and itself of the capacity that is the most human in us.” [4]

The exhibition at Trafó Gallery was likewise preceded by an open call, to which **Attila Csörgő** applied with a proposal to apply to the 1975 open call with his 2006 piece entitled *Möbius Space*. This piece is based on a camera operating on the principle of the pinhole camera, rotating through 360 degrees while the cylindrical element containing both the slit and the photographic paper behind it completes a half-turn. As a result of these combined movements, the same spatial element appears twice; in the beginning and in the end of the exposure upside down. The transparent negative can thus be assembled into a continuous image in the form of a Möbius strip. “If you live with the awareness that you can return to every moment, you are either redeemed by or enclosed within your own salvation.” Erdély writes in his essay *Time–Möbius*.

János Brückner's GIF is likewise a response to *Time–Möbius* and to the related photographic sequence *Time Travel*; the GIF was created in front of the photographs exhibited at King St. Stephen Museum in Székesfehérvár. On the images of the *Time Travel* series, Erdély appears alongside long-deceased relatives or earlier versions of himself. In the work presented here – as also in Brückner's practice in general – the gesture of confusion as an artistic strategy, occupies a central position. “The artist seeks to cause disturbance in people's minds.” Erdély writes. “It is assumed that people are only capable of thinking nonsense, full of conventions and contingencies – things that have no aesthetic, ethical, or any other value. The artist aims nothing other than disturbing this. The artist cannot offer a programme, he can only disturb this nonsense. For me, the disturbing power of a work is a typical, absolute value category, since our consciousness can only ever be flawed. I have no idea where the good is to be found, perhaps in a forest, with a hermit. My own consciousness is not good either, but when I disturb it, or when it is disturbed, that feels very good.”

Andreas Fogarasi's installation also engages with the *Time Travel* series. At the centre of his artistic inquiry are the political, economic, cultural, and sociological deep structures that take shape – and become visibly articulated – through surfaces of different materials found in public space (such as facade elements, metro stations, paving stones, windows, etc.), as well as through the constantly changing structure of the city, together with the architectural materials associated with these processes. His installation created for the exhibition focuses specifically on glass as a material. Glass from different historical periods appear to look past one another's shoulders toward earlier times.

The reconstruction of **Tibor Várnagy's** 1991 work is a photograph taken without a camera. Using a lighter, the artist drew into the air on the reverse side of light-sensitive paper, as a result of which soot formed the image on the back of the sheet, while heat traced the word HÓ (SNOW) on its front. The work can be linked to Erdély's practice at several points, most notably to *The Snow is Black* (1971), presented at the Egyetemi Színpad (University Stage) in 1971 prior to Erdély's reading of his theses on film language. On a large sheet of photographic paper coated with developer, Erdély wrote the

words A HÓ FEKETE (THE SNOW IS BLACK) using fixer; by the time he reached the word “black,” the light-sensitive paper had developed to such an extent that the inscription dissolved into the blackness itself.

In **János Sugár's** work *Silence (with Black Swans)*, the swan of the *Patyolat* laundry logo appears in black. The black swan, associated with the mathematician and writer Nassim Nicholas Taleb, refers to significant, high-impact, unforeseeable events that fundamentally alter existing conditions and can only be explained retrospectively. The print features four inscriptions: Silence; Silence and Cry (the titles of films by Ingmar Bergman and Miklós Jancsó, respectively); Sign and Cry (the title of a volume by Miklós Szabolcsi on avant-garde and neo-avant-garde literature); and Extinguishing of meaning, a key concept in Miklós Erdély's theoretical work. “The elimination of paradoxes is possible only at the cost of the self-prohibition of consciousness. We call this self-prohibition of consciousness the extinguishing of meaning, which constitutes comprehension at a higher level that leads to the attainment of a total level of meaning.” In this, “the same continuity prevails as in the emotional realm, from which the formation of analogies and metaphors can be derived, and from which the various means of artistic expression may branch off,” Erdély writes.

The work entitled *Cognitive Nonsense* by **Réka Lőrincz** is based on a piece by **János Sugár**. It is a version of Sugár's 1994 etching, itself based on his 1981 mail-art work, and thus takes the form of a small, wearable brooch.

In *Scale Blasphemy I, II*, **Lőrinc Borsos** examines scale as a worldview-shaping question. The piece appears in the characteristic icon format and scale of Lőrinc Borsos: the red dragon, miniaturized and pinned like a specimen in a butterfly collection, becomes an image of absolute evil reduced to human measure. The other work, by contrast, employs the gesture of over-scaling: the dragon seems to outgrow the frame of the icon, pressing against the physical limits of the image in a form of hubris that demands scale. The title refers to Miklós Erdély's work *Scale Blasphemy*, presented in 1973 at the Chapel Studio in Balatonboglár, where, on a large print of the Earth photographed from space, the barely perceptible inscription “God is small” appeared in the lower right corner. Erdély's gesture relativized divine omnipotence through a single shift in perspective. Lőrinc Borsos's two pieces further unfoldsunfolds this idea, holding in tension reduction and overgrowth, the ordering human gaze and the imaginary that demands the scale of the absolute.

Márk Fridvalszki's acrylic painting *Hagere Geometrie (Hommage an Kriegsgeheimnis)* was created using a pigment-transfer process on impregnated cotton fabric that was formerly used by the Hungarian Defence Forces as tent canvas. The painting constitutes a reversal of the purist tendencies of austere geometric abstraction: while it visually adheres to the principle of strict reduction, on a contextual level it overwrites this reduction through the cultural and technological embeddedness of materials, colours, and motifs derived from the aesthetics of the military-industrial complex. For Fridvalszki, the colour grey – which, in place of nature-adjacent green, has become the defining tone of contemporary military machinery – appears as a ghostly hue. Miklós Erdély's installation *Military Secret* (1984) served as an important point of reference for Fridvalszki, responding above all to that aspect of Erdély's piece which presents the military-industrial complex as a technological, spectral entity and foregrounds its invisible dimensions. Continuing the questions raised by *Military secret*, Fridvalszki's work asks „what remains visible of that which is intended to be concealed, and how technology itself becomes the medium of a spectral presence. High technology does not embody the

promise of the future, but rather the hidden power of the present. Form becomes the bearer of secrecy, and the terrain of war unfolds not only in geographic space, but within the perceptual field.”

Martin Piaček's performance video focuses on the senselessness and absurdity of fight. **Rozina Pátkai's** video work is composed of music based on texts by Miklós Erdély, along with accompanying videos derived from Super 8 footage shot by Dániel Erdély and György Erdély.

In **Márta Czene's** complex network diagram, the figure of Miklós Erdély emerges within a system of individuals who carry forward his artistic and theoretical legacy and influence. The diagram's scientific appearance and its seemingly calculation-based reasoning serve to evaluate members of the contemporary art scene solely according to the nature of their relationship to Erdély – such as the number of exhibitions, publications, or other collaborations in which they participated with him during his lifetime.

Benedek Regős's work also focuses on revealing the layered structure of systems. In relation to Miklós Erdély, the piece refers to the inaccessible and invisible layers of his oeuvre, while in a broader sense it also reflects on the absurdity of art history having been removed from the Hungarian national core curriculum.

Société Réaliste's *Over the Counter (OTC)* is a project realized in 2007–2008 by Ferenc Gróf and Jean-Baptiste Naudy that responds to the three questions posed by Documenta 12 – “Is modernity our antiquity?”, “Is bare life the apocalyptic horizon of political experience?”, and “What is to be done?” – through the performative use of contemporary financial infrastructure, specifically a banking system. Société Réaliste's response is strikingly concrete: they created a bank account with its details – including its IBAN, username, and password – made fully public, thereby transforming a category of private law into a functioning communal space. Users could enter the system not only as donors but as actual “co-owners”: they could transfer money into or out of the account, check the balance, and even change the access credentials. The project's “call for donation” visual material does solicit contributions, yet it offers no moral or political guidance as to what constitutes “correct” behavior. The artistic gesture thus does not illustrate a position, but instead establishes an experimental situation in which ethical, political, and economic decisions are delegated to the users themselves. *OTC* is directly connected to Miklós Erdély's work *Unguarded Money*, in which unsecured donation boxes containing money were placed in busy public spaces in Budapest in 1956 to support the victims of the revolution. The stake of Erdély's action was to examine trust, solidarity, and responsibility within physical space: the money was visible and accessible, yet did not function as private property. Société Réaliste transposes this situation into the digital financial sphere, examining how trust and collective responsibility operate at the infrastructural level of neoliberal financial systems. Within a few months, the bank account was hijacked and privatized, and in 2010 the gendarmerie in Audierne (Finistère) launched an investigation on suspicion of illegal banking activity.

The collaborative work by **Ferenc Gróf and Zsófia Gyenes** is a response to Miklós Erdély's *The Price of a Fecske* (1978). In Erdély's photogram, white circles appear against a black background: four forints and forty fillérs thrown onto light-sensitive photographic paper – the price of a pack of Fecseke (swallow) cigarettes, which was one of Hungary's first filter cigarettes, introduced in 1962, and remained a widely popular brand throughout the socialist period. Gróf and Gyenes's work presents, as the result of a complex calculation

that takes into account the inflation of the forint over the past forty-seven years as well as the forint–euro exchange rate, the price of a box of Fecske recalculated for 2025. With deliberate simplicity, this value is rendered through euros and cents scattered across photographic paper.

During the last years **Gideon Horváth** has worked with fragile states of balance in his installations. His new work, *Collapse* – whose title also alludes to Miklós Erdély's poetry volume *Collapse (med.)* – takes the form of a nearly three-metre-high tower of porcelain bells suspended one above the other. The work reflects on inherited narratives, the layering of shame, and the seemingly coherent yet fundamentally fragile structures of memory and history. In doing so, it also draws attention to the persistent fear of collapse – whether in relation to social crises, oppressive systems, personal failures, or the experience of shame.

A similarly fragile state of balance is evoked by **Rudolf Pacsika's** glass vessel suspended above the visitors' heads, which is at once threatening and playful. In his work Recycling, Pacsika glued back together the shavings produced while sharpening a pencil, thereby creating a new pencil from one that had been almost entirely used up. The work connects to Miklós Erdély's intellectual legacy at several points: through its emphasis on process, its engagement with unnecessary and irrational labour, and through ideas articulated in *Time–Möbius*, such as: “Only that which turns back and impacts itself as a cause is capable of molding itself. That which impacts itself as a cause is already in the form in which it would like to mold itself. Nevertheless, it could not have become such as it is, had it not molded itself into the form it is, albeit the same self that it has become is what molded it into what it is. The more highly developed reach back in order to be more highly developed.”

Viktória Monhor's work *Scale* consists of spirit levels fixed into a circular formation. The precisely calculated perfect circle presents a condition in which equilibrium is never achieved within the individual elements; viewed conversely, elements that do not function on their own nonetheless appear to operate as a system when taken together.

Réka Lőrincz's installation *A Point of View* examines the notion of viewpoint not as a visual position, but as a state of consciousness. It proceeds from the assumption that perception cannot be separated from the individual and from its context, and that truth is neither unified nor exclusive, but emerges through relations and at the intersections of differing perspectives. As a result, reality appears not as a single fixed meaning, but as a dynamic, shifting system. In her work, Réka Lőrincz explores what happens when we let go of the belief in a single, “correct” point of view.

Csaba Vándor's installation *Turning Point* (presented in the space next to the gallery and can be viewed exclusively during events accompanying the exhibition) consists of a chair placed in a dark space. The chair sways slowly and rhythmically – recalling a Zen mantra or a looping film sequence – so that one of its legs touches a rusted metal tray filled with water. Light illuminating the tray reflects the rippling of water and the chair's moving shadow onto the wall. The work relates to the notion of dislocation characteristic of Miklós Erdély's thinking: an artistic gesture that unsettles static interpretative frameworks and shifts habitual modes of perception.

„**There is no other task than to reach out into nothingness and pull yourself across.**”

[1] Sebők Zoltán: *Új misztika felé – Beszélgetés Erdély Miklóssal* – HÍD (Novi Sad) 1982/3. 366. o.
[2],[3] Erdély Miklós: *Optimista előadás*, 1981. In: E. M.: *Művészeti írások (Válogatott művészeti elméleti tanulmányok I.)*. Szerk.: Peternák Miklós. Képzőművészeti Kiadó, Budapest, 1991. 133-147.
[4] Erdély Miklós: *A Möbius-bemutatóhoz*
[5] Erdély Miklós: *A filmről*. 1995. 148. p.
[6] Szóke Annamária: *Erdély Miklós festészetéről*. In: E. M. kiállításának Katalógusa, Budapest Galéria - Műcsarnok Soros Alapítvány Művészeti Dokumentációs Központ Kiadványa, Bp. 1986. 38.