

CONNAUGHT BROWN

Béla Kádár: 1877 – 1956

16 September – 21 October 2020



Denes Ronai, *Béla Kádár*

Béla Kádár, one of the leading Hungarian artists of the early 20th century, strove to create a new and unique visual language that fused his native folk imagery with important contemporary movements such as Orphism, Neo-Primitivism and Cubism.



Budapest, 1903

Born on June 4 1877 to a working class Jewish family in Budapest, Kádár became one of the best known artists of his generation. After only six years at school he became an apprentice iron-turner, before taking an influential trip across Western Europe in 1898 (by foot due to insufficient funds) that inspired him to become an artist.



Béla Kádár, *Two Figures with Horse and Cow*

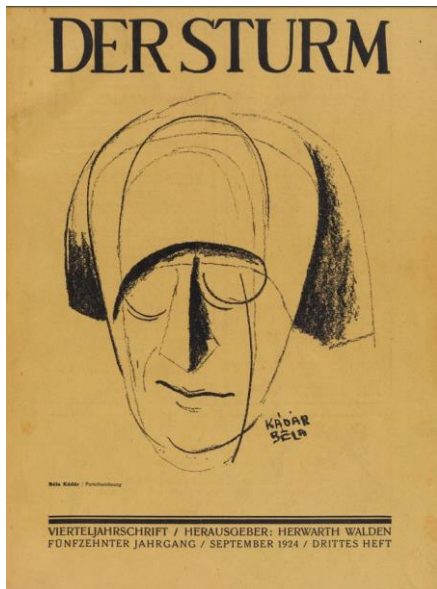
First studying at the Budapest School of Industrial Drawing and then the Pattern Designer Institute, Kádár enjoyed early success exhibiting at the Műcsarnok (Art Hall) and Nemzeti Szalon (National Salon) from 1906, and winning great acclaim for his murals at the Hungarian National Theatre and Erzsébet baths.

However, the wake of World War I halted the development of Modern art in Budapest for many years, and although not politically persecuted, Kádár's left wing politics began to put him out of favour with patrons. In 1918 he left his family behind and armed with introductions from friends in Budapest, sought success in Berlin.



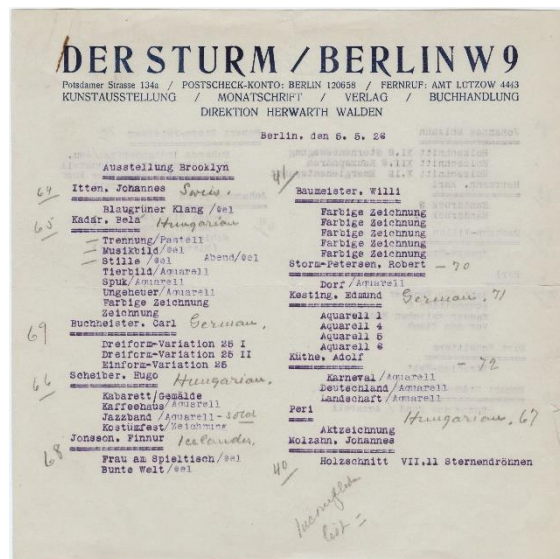
Herwarth Walden opposite Willaiam Wauer's *Herwarth Walden*, 1918

Berlin was an epicentre for the arts at the time, with many émigré artists finding their place in the bustling metropolis. There was no greater gallery for Modern art than Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm*.



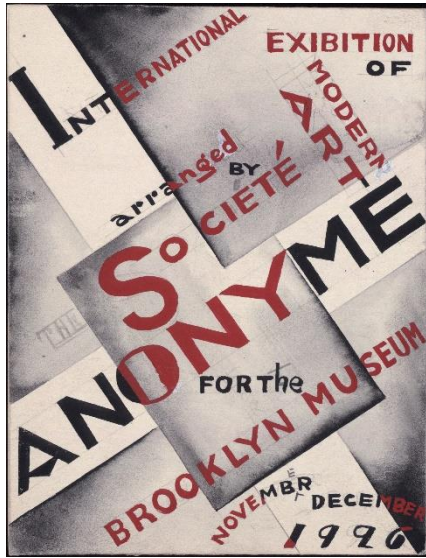
(left) Der Sturm magazine, September 1924, cover illustration Béla Kádár, *Self Portrait*
 (right) Béla Kádár, *Self Portrait, Caricature*

Walden mounted two solo exhibitions of Kádár's work in 1923 and 1924, and his pieces were regularly included in group exhibitions alongside Marc Chagall, Franz Marc and Paul Klee.



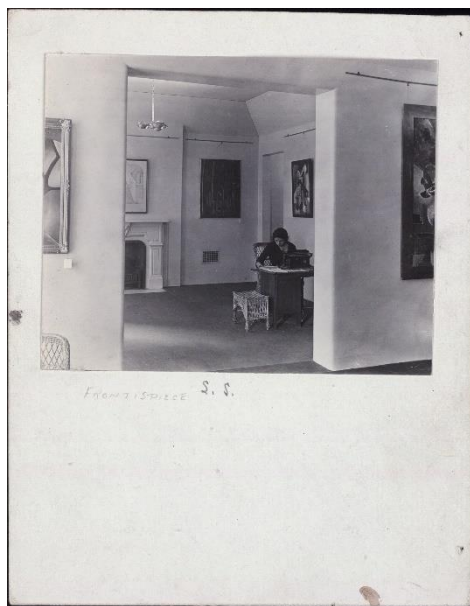
Katherine Dreier's annotated list of artists from a 1926 exhibition at Der Sturm featuring Kádár

Kádár's early style changed during the course of his Berlin years. The powerful graphic tone that characterised his work before the 1920s was replaced with a more romantic mood and complex surfaces as he harmonised the work of Klee, and other artists he had met in Berlin, with the imagery from Hungarian folk tales.



(left) International Exhibition of Modern Art arranged by Societe Anonyme, 1926, catalogue cover
 (right) Katherine Dreier and Marcel Duchamp, Yale University Art Gallery, 1945

Gaining notoriety through his exhibitions, Kádár was propelled onto the international stage after Katherine Dreier saw his work at Der Sturm and decided to include him in Société Anonyme. Organised by Dreier, Man Ray and Duchamp, Société Anonyme was instrumental in bringing the European avant-garde to New York. Kádár's work was chosen to feature in the 1926 and 1928 *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, organised by the society, at the Brooklyn Museum.



(left) Katherine Dreier at Société Anonyme
 (right) Installation of *International Exhibition of Modern Art*, Société Anonyme, Brooklyn Museum, 1928. Bela Kádár's *Silence* on the right and *Separation* third right.



New York Herald Tribune, 5 December 1926, featuring Kádár's *Separation*

The New York Times, New York Herald Tribune and Brooklyn Times praised Kádár's work, as did the great American critic and collector Christian Binton, who recognised in Kádár's village scenes 'a genre treated with great force and imagination'.



Mór Erdélyi, Bela Kádár in his studio on Százados street, c.1921, Budapest Historical Museum Metropolitan Gallery

With the German occupation of Hungary in 1944 Kádár and his family were forced out of his Százados street studio to the ghetto. Although Kádár survived the Second World War, tragically he lost both his wife and sons. After the War his work was neglected, and Kádár died in poverty in 1956.

Kádár's work can now be found in many museums including the Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest; Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid and Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.