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Hungarian Aristocratic Art Patronage in the Second Part of the 19th Century. The Case of the Count Andrassy and Károlyi Families

My doctoral dissertation is placed at the juncture of art history with social history and focuses on the art patronage of two Hungarian aristocratic families in the late 19th century. While mapping up the collections in their country houses and palaces, the aim is also to place the commission of the art works and the collection's concept into a larger socio-cultural context which sheds light on the artist – commissioner – art institution triangle in the framework of 19th century modernization.

There was a growing demand for institutional modernization in Hungary from the 1820s; the initiatives (from economic, political to social and cultural) were set off by a group of enlightened nobles, many of whom came from the aristocracy. The doctoral project wishes to investigate the ways and mechanisms in which private aristocratic art patronage acted as a substitute or initiator for the lacking institutional structures in the field of art before the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise, and how it provided the foundation stones for these after 1867. My hypothesis is that the agency of the aristocracy in constructing the institutional structures for the arts was more significant than presented in the literature.

Arno Mayer's classic and much debated book *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (1981) is in line with this hypothesis and can be considered the basis of an emerging trend in the research on nobility and aristocracy. Mayer has argued that the aristocracy held much more power well into the 20th century – especially in the sphere of art and culture – than it was originally thought by historians. David Cannadine, Dominic Lieven, William D. Godsey Jr., Heinz Reif, László Péter and others have started testing Mayer's theory and the results are giving us a more nuanced picture about the social history of the aristocracy and the theory of "aristocratic decline and fall".

19th century art history in East-Central Europe cannot be fully understood without looking at the agency of the elite – which in large part consisted of aristocracy. Art for the aristocracy was part of their tool-kit of representation. Country houses with ancestry galleries, newly built palaces in the modernizing Budapest in which they hosted social events, charity exhibitions from the family treasury and scholarships for young, talented artists are all proofs of their interest for the arts. These activities together with their role in cultural politics shaped the developing art life in 19th century Hungary.

Within the conceptual framework of social change and modernization my research aims at finding, analyzing and interpreting sources about the aristocracy's support of the arts. The research is based on two case studies: the Count Andrassy and Károlyi families. On the Second International Forum for doctoral candidates in East European art history I would like to present one case study – the interactions between Count István Károlyi (1797–1881) and the landscape painter Antal Ligeti (1823–1890) – to illustrate the larger socio-cultural implications of aristocratic art patronage in the mid-19th century.

The dissertation is building on various types of sources: family archives, correspondence of the artists, contemporary newspapers and (art) magazines, contemporary visual material, exhibition catalogues of the time, inventories of the country houses and palaces, memoirs, etc.

One of the long term aims of the dissertation is to compare the case studies with similar researches in East-Central Europe and to incorporate them into a broader analytical framework of aristocratic agency in the field of 19th century art history.