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**Hungarian Salon – The Transformation of the Institutional System of Fine Arts in  
the Process of the 1989 Regime Change**

In the countries of the former Eastern Bloc a centralized institutional system operated which kept the fine arts under strong ideological control, but at the same time it also secured a safety net for the artists. In Hungary the Union of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists functioned as the administrative body of fine arts, and the Art Fund of Hungary was responsible for financing the art world. Since the early 1980s, the system has undergone significant changes. While the marketization of the system took place at an increasing pace, the art policy of the late Kádár-regime gave more and more space to artists who followed international contemporary trends and who had previously been marginalised. After 1989, these processes accelerated, and the newly emerging artistic field had become divided into camps of winners and losers of the system change. The rehabilitation process of the neo-avant-garde generation went together with the institutional takeover of the art that was considered contemporary. This process took place in most of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc and provoked resistance from artists associated with the fine art traditions represented by the Artists Unions. In Hungary the biggest and hottest debates were triggered around the exhibition policy of the Kunsthalle [Múcsarnok] and especially around the so-called Salon exhibitions, which were mainly fuelled by the needs and ambitions of those artists who had enjoyed financial security in the old system, but after 1989 found themselves in existential crisis. These conflicts didn't stop at the edges of the field of artistic production, rather also became the subject of political battles between the leading liberal and national-conservative factions. During my PhD program I have researched the history of the pre-1989 institutional system of fine arts, the process of political and economic reorganisation after 1989 and the post-1989 history of the Kunsthalle, the Union and the successor-organizations of the former Art Fund. In my dissertation after presenting the history of the institutions mentioned above I am focusing on the debates around the exhibition-policy of the Kunsthalle, on the conflicts between the

leadership of the Kunsthalle and the Union and especially on the disputes around Salon-type exhibitions.