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DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

**Performativity and Theatricality in
József Marx's Photography**

ABSTRACT

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Introduction

Scope of study

I have been preoccupied by the theatrical character of photography as well as by the mechanism of effect of József Marx's photos for many years. I have always been interested in deciphering those elements which make Marx's photos and photography special and theatrical. A new possibility has opened when I have learned that the legacy of the Tirgu Mures photographer, József Marx, is to be found in the Rezső Haáz Museum, in Odorheiu Secuiesc, and it can be researched. The collection of photography consists of approximately 27000 rolls of photo negatives – mostly theater and reportage photography –, as well as albums and developed photos. This extensive material hasn't been processed or systemized before. The collection of photography carried a special significance for me since I have considered Marx my mentor at the beginning of my carrier as a photographer and photo reporter.

The first task I proposed to myself was to explore the legacy; to digitalize, systematize and sort the negatives. Most of the legacy was kept in the form of negative due to the lack of a support system that would enable the museum to do such work.

I had begun with choosing the photos made at performances that took place at the István Szentgyörgyi Institute of Theatrical Arts (today University of Arts). Later I have processed photos taken at other performances also, and portrait- and reportage-like photos, as well. I have managed to digitalize and process 2000 negatives so far. My aim is to continue the work in the future, too. The processed material constitutes the corpus of my research.

During processing several questions aroused: why is more effective and expressive a photography taken in a certain genre than the other? Which constituents raise the level of plasticity? Most of József Marx's photos are composed with certain theatricality regardless if they were shot during a performance or in a quotidian environment. Most of them contain some kind of introduction in a story. Which elements pertain to the story, and which ones contribute to the creation of the conditions of narration? What is the influence of the photography as genre in this respect? I have included in my area of research other iconic photography from around the world. In order to be able to raise these questions on a general level, besides the Marx photos I have studied and analyzed works by world-famous photographers.

In respect to performativity and theatricality, I have researched the narrative and theatrical character of photography; the influence theatricality and performativity have on photographic narration, as well as the mechanism of effect of photography.

The underlying hypothesis of the dissertation is that not only theater photography is theatrical, but other photography as well.

Structure of dissertation

The thesis consists of two main parts. The first one charted the theoretical background and conceptual net of the thesis. It deals with the specificity of theater photography that leads to a delineation and examination of the photos. I have investigated the processes that occur in front of the camera, then, I examined the documentary as well as the artistic character of theater photography.

In order to examine the photos, I considered necessary presenting the traditional way of looking at photography. Since the corpus of my analysis is constituted by the photography of József Marx, and his photos were made using analog technology, I have considered indispensable the comparison between analog and digital technology.

The methodology of research is based on theory of theater written by contemporary authors such as Christopher Balme, Andreas Kotte, Hans-Thies Lehmann, and on theatrical iconographical works by Christopher Balme, Patrice Pavis, Philip Auslander. The analysis of photography was informed also by the highly influential work of Roland Barthes. I have relied in my research on the scholarly literature regarding classical theatrical photography (Maria Giulia Dondero, Ugo Volli), as well as on the general theoretical and aesthetical literature of photography (Róbert Tasnádi, Susan Sontag, Francois Soulage, Friedrich Kittler, Sándor Szilágyi, William J.T. Mitchell, John Szarkowski). Furthermore, Hans Belting's anthropology of images, Vilém Flusser's philosophy of photography, and different sociological theories (Erving Goffman) served as points of reference in my thesis. I have made use of *oral history* also in order to document the photographic methodology and the process of taking photos of Marx. Also, I have elaborated a personal image analysis which I have applied to photographs taken by well-known authors. Studying the subject-matter of narrativity in photography, I have also relied on works by famous photographers.

Since the thesis's main concern is theater photography, I have analyzed the specificity of the genre. The same type of theatricality is to be found on the staged pictures as on the

theater photographs, subsequently I have analyzed in detail few iconic staged photos. The technique used here helps us understand the technique of making theater photographs. Also, I considered important to examine the technique used by József Marx's contemporaries, as well as that of recent photographers.

The next issue is the performative aspect of the process of making pictures, followed by the question of the performative space.

Based on an interdisciplinary theoretical approach, I have studied the portrait photography including the actor portraits, reportage photography and theater photography.

The second part of the paper is concerned with the application of all the above-mentioned thematic to the photographs of József Marx.

The first question raised was that of the narrativity applied to József Marx's photography. My endeavor was to delineate the narrative elements on the pictures using image analysis, and to determine their narrative potency.

Next I have studied the specificity of Marx's portraiture photography used in the case of actors' photos, as well as in reportage and ethnographic photography. Following this, I examined Marx's style of work and artistic style. I considered important to analyze the technique used by József Marx's contemporaries, in order to find similarities or differences between them.

The same applies to the subject-matter of reportage photography, where I have studied other famous photographer's technique and way of thinking. Then, I turned to Marx's technique used in theater photography. Here I have relied, among others, on my interviews made with directors and actors who worked with him. A style of work as well as an artistic style of the photographer started to take shape. I examined the performative process of the making of portraiture, reportage and theater photos, applying the theoretical considerations mapped in the first part of the thesis to Marx's photography. The last part of the paper deals with the question of the aim of Marx's photo: who constituted their viewers? What were their function and publishing platform?

In the case of theatre photos, I did not consider necessary to analyze the source performances, but I did include the information about them. The medium of photography, the constituting elements and effects of the photos are in the foreground of the research.

Thus, the first part of the thesis deals with the theoretical background of the research, while the second part contains the application of the above to the photography of József Marx.

The chapter entitled **Theater photography** examines theatrical iconography.

According to Christopher Balme the theatrical iconography is a sub-discipline of theater historical research, where the focus lies not on the written or oral sources but on the visual ones. In this case the theatrical iconography deals with theater as a theme and subject of a visual art.¹

Balme thinks of the theater photograph belonging to the field of theatrical iconography. Although the photograph is able to seize all the major elements of the theatrical performance, most of the researches in the field accord special attention to the relationship between the new medium and the performance. Balme underlines that: “Like the stage itself, the theatre photograph is always an image of an image, because it never represents a piece of found, authentic reality, but something that has already been shaped and staged”.² Furthermore, I try to describe and delineate the concept of the theater photograph.

The specificity of the theater photograph, first of all, lies in the fact that it has its own, separate tradition. Christopher Balme, as we saw it, points out that the theater photograph is an image of the image of the stage-opening; made about a body-object-space layout.³

Ildikó Ungvári Zrínyi in her study entitled *Test-képek, dialogikusság és performativitás* [Body-images, dialogicity and performativity] points out that in the momentum of the photographic theatrical staging the photographer’s motivation is manifested to build an aesthetical bridge between the private and the public. Most probably, the goal is to show in his or her medium the truth and human values of a world created in a different medium.⁴ It seems that in Ildikó Ungvári Zrínyi’s point of view the event-like character of the theater photograph is emphasized.

Patrice Pavis deals with the question of the theater photograph in a rather different way. He examines their characteristics based on the location of the photo shoot, but he

¹ Christopher B. Balme: *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 103.

² Christopher B. Balme: *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, 106.

³ Id. 106.

⁴ Ungvári Zrínyi Ildikó: *Test-képek, dialógikusság és performativitás*. In: Lázok János (szerk.): *A Szentgyörgyi István Színművészeti Intézet története II*. Marosvásárhely, UartPress, 2018. 30.

underlines that defining the theater photograph based on the location is problematic, because there are no rules regarding the object, place, time, momentum or theatrical work. Some of the photos taken in theater are capable of making us forget that their object is some kind of theatrical performance; their aesthetical value surmounts their communicative function.⁵ According to Pavis, theater photography is simply photography, and it should be interpreted regardless of the theatrical object represented on the image. Not unlike Balme, he points out that the theater photograph is a visual conveyance of an image, and it has to grab a reality that already is a representation of something.⁶ Thus, according to him, the most important characteristic of the theater photography is that it grabs a reality that in and out of itself is a representation or image of a situation or mood.⁷

Éva Németh examines the roles of theater photography in a similar way in her writing called *A színészfotók emlékezete* [The Memory of the Actor-photos]. She emphasizes that theater photography has an important role in theater-historical research, and analyzing the pictures we can reconstruct the relationship between the contemporary society and their theater.⁸

Susanna Virkki considers the theater photograph a double-image. In her study entitled *Finnish Theatre Photography and the Influence of Technology*, she examines the method of making them as well the ways their role has changed due to technological advances. Virkki compares the theater photograph to a stage where the photographer, the production and the audience meet. The signs and meanings are in a constant dialogue on this stage. The theater photographer mediates between theater and audience, while he or she snaps out momentary images from the performance with the help of his or her apparatus in accordance with his or her own aims.

Virkki states that the photographer captures, records and condenses in time and space the movement of the performance. In the mean time, theater photography is subjected to the theatrical performance, as the representation of a different event. And it is, indeed. The actors are present, but their character isn't. Virkki states that for the actors the performance is the reality in which they live, and the theater photographer is another creator of the reality of the performance. Thus, the theater photos are double images: they represent the situation and in

⁵ Patrice Pavis: *Színházi szótár*. Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2006. 156.

⁶ Id. 157.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Németh Éva: *A színészfotók emlékezete*. In: Gajdó Tamás (szerk.): *Digitális színháztörténet. Színháztörténeti és módszertani tanulmányok*. Budapest, OSZMI, 2009, 129–137.

the mean time they are images of presence and absence. It is like the phenomenon of the double seeing.

Virkki alludes to director Annette Arlander in connection with the double seeing. Arlander points out that the double seeing is inseparable from the situation of the theater audience. The spectator perceives the illusion created by the performance, but she/he also is aware of its conditioned nature. Nevertheless, the spectator accepts the collaboration.⁹

The chapter entitled **Processes in front of the camera** relies upon Andreas Kotte's *Bevezetés a színháztudományba* [Introduction in the science of theater].

Kotte analyzes that process which happens while becoming an image.¹⁰ The camera is capable of capturing whatever lies outside the field of vision of the human eye, and it processes and forwards it to a storing or transmitting medium.¹¹ In this process of becoming an image something "unrestrictedly storable" is being born, which dismisses the corporeality. The disappearance of corporeality is what makes the image seductive. The scenic process is suspended in the image, the interaction is frozen, the game vanishes, not unlike in the case of death.¹² In consequence, states Kotte, the highlight acquires an absolute dominancy.

If we analyze the process of taking theater photography, the scenic process happens between the actors who act in the given performance and the audience. In the case of staged photos, the audience is constituted by the director, the lighting designer, the set designer and the photographer. The actors have to meet different requirements determined by the act set by the director, following the director's instructions, but first of all those set by the photographer, who has his/her own concept, impression, and a certain angle from which he/she intends to take the picture. The actors have to deal with the presence of the camera also, which influences their acting. The actors are highlighted through the choice of place as well as the set and lighting design. Kotte gives an in depth analysis of this type of highlighting.¹³

The chapter entitled **Theater photography between different media** brings up the question of the theater photo as witness of the performance. Here I am relying on Maria Giulia

⁹ Annette Arlander: *Esitys tilana. Acta Scenica 2*. The Theatre Academy, Helsinki, 1998, pp. 23, 62.

¹⁰ Andreas Kotte: *Bevezetés a színháztudományba*. Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 2015, 235. (Ford. Edit Kotte)

¹¹ Id. 235.

¹² Id. 236.

¹³ Andreas Kotte: *Bevezetés a színháztudományba*. Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 2015. 20. (Ford. Edit Kotte)

Dondero's observations.¹⁴ Dondero emphasizes the main issue of the theater photography, namely that it connects two art forms that work both with light and space.

According to Ugo Volli, beside the fact that the photography is a witness of the theatrical performance, it is capable to direct the attention of the theater – through focusing, framing and printing of the image – to its own technological needs. On the other hand, theater's capacity to give form to movement and to the most elusive thing: words, constitutes a challenge to photography.¹⁵

Dondero considers the photograph an inter-semiotical transmitter which moves between the theatrical and literary – the capturing of moments from the process shows whatever is lasting from the performance.

Important part of the thesis constitutes the chapter of **Image analysis**. I have used the image analysis as a methodology during my research. With its help, the technique, specificity and meaning of the examined image become describable. We use words when we analyze an image, which is a different sign system from the visual one. Reading of an image is problematic, because the images contain indescribable components which may lead to misunderstandings.¹⁶ During analysis, we break up the image to its components; examine and describe the components, and compare the different components to each other and to the whole image.

The visual analysis of the images is based on three methods: description, reflection and formal analysis. The three methods secure the frame for the perception, examination and description of images.

Description of images

The first step in a visual analysis is the description of the image. First we look attentively at the photo, paying attention to the details. The description has to be objective, confined to whatever is seen in the image, without jumping to interpretations and conclusions. It might be useful at the beginning to present the thematic of the image, then we can turn to the details.

¹⁴ Maria Giulia Dondero: Photography as a witness of Theatre, 2008.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/revues/rssi/2008-v28-n1-2-rssi3913/044587ar/> (Utolsó megtekintés: 2019.09.02.)

¹⁵ Dondero cites Volli: „Not only can photography »witness« the transitory performance of theatre, but it can 'bend' it to meet its own technological needs (through focusing, framing and printing). The same is true for theatre: it challenges photography's ability to give shape to movement and to the most *elusive* thing of all: the word.” In: Dondero

¹⁶ Bergström, i.m.

Reflection

During reflection we concentrate on those emotions and interpretations which are produced in the viewer. Different viewers might give different interpretations to the same picture. Also it is useful to have knowledge about its historical background.

Formal analysis

The formal analysis concerns artistic conceptions and components.

Roland Barthes's concepts of *studium* and *punctum* are important elements of image analysis as of today, too.¹⁷

The chapter called **Narrativity** constitutes an important part of the paper.

According to Patrice Pavis, narration in a theatrical environment is a way of telling of certain facts and events using different sign systems, mostly that of language, but also of gestures and scenic images.¹⁸ Obviously, only the visual elements might function as narrative signs on the theater photograph.

Edward Branigan gives us a definition of the narrative in a wider sense as an arrangement of data in a certain way, and a certain mode of perception which might be oriented toward narrative or non-narrative texts. In short, the narration is a process that refers to the mode of the telling of a story.¹⁹ In our case this definition carries a special interest, since it includes the non-narrative texts also, and the photo essentially is non-narrative, bearing visual, simultaneous information.

In Beáta Thomka's view, the narration-creator activity of the viewer is based on the narrativity of the reader's consciousness, its visual affinity and its fantasy in producing fiction and creating images. Many times we can observe that on the photo the participants play a certain role – as in theater – in a visual action, which carries a certain emotional value that affects the viewer. Thus the accent is shifted from the object of the image to its presentation. In these cases, the narration's purpose is to represent the art of narration.²⁰

¹⁷ Roland Barthes: *Világoskamra. Jegyzetek a fotográfiáról*. Budapest, Európa Könyvkiadó, 1985, 12–13. (Ford. Ferch Magda).

¹⁸ Patrice Pavis: *Színházi szótár*. L' Harmattan, 2006, 297.

¹⁹ Edward Branigan: *Narrative Comprehension and Film*. London and New York, Routledge, 1992.

²⁰ Thomka Beáta: Képi időszerkezetek. In: Thomka Beáta (szerk.): *Narratívák 1. Képleírás, képi elbeszélés*. Budapest, Kijárat Kiadó, 1998, 7–17.

Following Branigan's definition, the setting and the perception of a photo is the arrangement and perception of such elements which are capable of creating a narrative in a theatrical environment also, for example through gestures and the position of objects and bodies. Details and elements of a photograph function as traces; they carry the vestiges of a story.

Philip Auslander's *The performativity of Performance documentation* serves as foundation of the chapter called **Documentation of the theater performance**. Auslander makes a distinction between documentarian and staged (theatrical) documentation of the theatrical performance. The documentarian type refers to the traditional way of documenting a performance. In this sense, the document records the context, location, space, action of the performance, and, based on it, the performance might be reconstructed, furthermore it serves as a proof that the event really happened.²¹ Here, the accent is transferred from the relationship between the document and the performance on the relationship between the document and its viewers. Looking at a document, the audience does not replay in its imagination an event that happened in the past, but it activates the performance in the present. It experiences the performance as if it happened in the present, regardless of the time and space that separates it from the event.²²

Under the category of the theatrical documenting of a performance Auslander includes such artworks as the "performed photography".²³ He shows that there were performances that were staged for the only purpose of being photographed. Thus, the performance appeared only in documentation.

József Marx' staged photos are oriented toward the actors. In order to present the actors, he often rearranged the act and/or the set, to the extent that sometimes the act became unrecognizable. Consequently, his photography might be included in the category of the performed photography.

The chapter called **Theatricality of the photo** includes a definition of theatricality. Although it is relatively new, the word theatricality has a wide range of meaning. In a

²¹ Philip Auslander: The performativity of performance documentation. 2006.
<http://homes.lmc.gatech.edu/~auslander/publications/28.3auslander.pdf>
(Utolsó megtekintés: 2015.10.15.)

²² Philip Auslander: Pictures of an Exhibition, 2008.
<http://lmc.gatech.edu/~auslander/publications/Auslander-Pictures.pdf> (Utolsó megtekintés: 2015.10.15.)

²³ Philip Auslander, The performativity of performance documentation, 2006.
<http://homes.lmc.gatech.edu/~auslander/publications/28.3auslander.pdf>
(Utolsó megtekintés: 2015.10.15.)

quotidian sense it means, according to Andrea Tompa²⁴, “exaggerated”, “pathetic”, “sensationalist”. If we apply this to the theatricality experienced in theater, we have to take into consideration the given period’s cultural and social norms, because only based on these can we decide what was at that time considered exaggerated, pathetic or sensationalist. Theatricality determines the relationship between life and theater, since both imitate each other. This might be examined from three different points of view.

The first one relies on the idea that theater represents, models and mirrors life. The second viewpoint inverts this relationship. The last one refers to the case when we look at life as theater. In this sense, we accentuate the created character of life. This last point of view proves most useful in the analysis of the theatricality of the photograph. Here we rely on the work of Elisabeth Burns, who examines the theatricality of life.

Elisabeth Burns, in her book entitled *Theatricality. A study of convention in the theatre and social life*²⁵, states that theatricality determines life and theater. The common denominator between social life and theater is the presence of conventions. The norms, codes, regulation accepted by public life and theater in a certain period time, rule and determine their functioning. This includes the mutual understanding of an action, gesture or word. Each historical period has its own system of value, and the research of theatricality has to take this into account.

Pavis defines theatricality as all that in a performance or in a dramatic text has a specifically theatrical, stage-like character.²⁶ He proposes it as opposed to literary. The theatricality of a text becomes perceivable when we place the dramatic text in space, visualize the text and emphasize its auricular character.

According to Andreas Kotte the theatricality sheds light on the relationship between the processes of life, the scenic processes and theater. He too asserts that while the text receded into the background, theatricality was proven to be the specificity of theater.²⁷ He quotes Lehmann, according to whom the specificity of theatricality lies in the combination of different systems of sign (light, sound, corporeality, space) in a concrete staging situation, as

²⁴ Tompa Andrea: „Színház és teatralitás V. Nabokov műveiben”, PhD Disszertáció, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kar Irodalomtudományi Doktoriiskola „Az orosz irodalom és kultúra a Kelet és Nyugat vonzásában” című programja, 2004.

²⁵ Elisabeth Burns, *Theatricality. A study of convention in the theatre and social life*, New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1972.

²⁶ Patrice Pavis, 2006. *Színházi szótár*. L’ Harmattan, 434.

²⁷ Andreas Kotte: *Bevezetés a színházstudományba*. Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 2015, 249. (Ford. Edit Kotte)

well as the spatial-temporal unity of the emitting and receiving of signs in the “here and now” of the performance.²⁸

Balme thinks that it is important in the studying of theatricality to extend it to the sphere of such structured forms of behavior as rituals, festivals and ceremonies. We may surmise that any form of the staged reality might be connected to theater or performance.²⁹ The staged reality refers to such territories also as politics or communication, where today theatricality plays an important role.

Thus an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach is useful in the examination of theatricality in the case of photography also. Furthermore, if we perceive life as theater, then the photographic representation might be studied as theatrical act. The reportage and the performed photograph consider life as a stage, and the human being as an actor.

Following Pavis’s description of theatricality, the components of photographic theatricality are the scenography, the gestures, the distances, the matter and the light. In case of photography we find the same spatial and visual mode of expression, which transforms the represented reality into theatrical. And we can add to this Lehmann’s “concrete staging situation”, which also is applicable to photography, excluding, of course, the sound. And in the case of the theatricality of rituals and ceremonials, acting and movement always constitutes a part of it, which photography is capable to reproduce with its own means, achieving a theatrical effect.

At this point of my research, I have focused my attention on the question of the relationship between **Theatricality and performativity**. In a general sense, performance means all action, movement that has an instant effect.

Joachim Fiebach has an in-depth analysis of the connection between theatricality and media. Fiebach quotes Victor Turner, who considers the performance the foundation of social life.³⁰ Human beings present themselves by performing different roles, using verbal and non-verbal instruments, as well as dramatic methods. Goffman in his book entitled *The*

²⁸ Hans-Thies Lehmann: „Theatralität” szócikk. In: *Theaterlexikon* (szerk. Manfred Brauneck), Gerard Schneilin, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1990, 986.

²⁹ Christopher B. Balme: *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*. Cambridge University Press, 2008, 89.

³⁰ Joachim Fiebach: Teatralitás: a szóbeli hagyományoktól a televíziós „valóságokig”. (Ford. Gyulai Zoltán) *Apertúra*, 2010. ősz.

Presentation of Self in Everyday Life affirms that people use the same technique in presenting their image as the actor uses in forming a character.³¹

Fiebach raises the question: how do theatrical exercises become performative and what is their effect? He arrives at the conclusion that the key is in the concepts of the symbolic behavior and action, which are exercises structured in a theatrical way.³² The symbolic behavior in the case of rituals and ceremonies always present a surplus of meaning. Fiebach asserts that actions that generate meaning are “performatives”.³³ In this sense, the concepts of theatricality and performativity mostly overlap each other; both might be considered performatives or manifestations.

Performativity is clearly traceable in the case of theater photography also. The scenes captured from a performance represent an action, a dramatic situation. The staged reality is recognizable through the symbolic action and the forming of the characters by the actors. The use of non-verbal communicative instruments is clearly detectable on the pictures.

The chapter called **Photography as performative process** begins with Richard Shusterman’s assertion that the photographic operation of taking a picture of a human subject might be the locus of a true aesthetical experience and value.³⁴ Photography has a dramatic, somatic and performative dimension also. There is an important difference between the photograph and the taking of a photograph. The first is the end result of the action, whose vehicle might be paper or digital screen. In the case of the operation of the taking of pictures we have to take into consideration the photographer, the subject-matter, the camera and other devices used, the location, and the spatial and temporal situation of the subject matter.

The choice of location, the set-up of the location, the preparations, as well as the interaction between the photographer and the subject constitute parts of the performative process.

The second part of the thesis deals with the question of theatricality and performativity in the case of József Marx’s photographs made in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The chapter entitled **The portrait in the legacy of József Marx** deals with the countless public and

³¹ Erving Goffman, *Az én bemutatása a mindennapi életben*. Budapest, Pólya Kiadó, 1999.

(Ford. Berényi Gábor)

³² Id.

³³ Fiebach idézi Sally F. Moore – Barbara G. Myerhoff: *Secular Ritual*. Assen/Amsterdam, Van Gorkum, 1977.

³⁴ Richard Shusterman: *A gondolkodó test. Szómaesztétikai esszék*. Szeged, JATEPress Kiadó, 2015, 311. (Ford. Konkoly Ágnes, Antoni Rita, Krémer Sándor, Csuka Botond, Pavlovski Róbert, Bodóné Hofecker Zsuzsanna)

private portraits, actor's photos made in the studio and on the stage, staged photographs and photos taken in the dressing-rooms, etc. Most of the pictures are staged, partly due to the contemporary technical possibilities. Marx worked out his own method to make the best use of it. This constitutes the subject-matter of the next chapter: **József Marx's style of work and artistic style**. In general, we can conclude that all of Marx's theater photographs are staged photos, while his ethnographic and reportage photos contain captured images also. Regarding **József Marx's techniques used in reportage photography** we can assume that is in line with the contemporary technical means, way of thinking, and choosing of subject-matters.

The next chapter studies **The production technique of József Marx's theater photos**. Marx's theater photography combines two forms of art. The art of directing of the performance meets with the art of the photographer, and a new work of art is being born, which might be a personal interpretation of the scene captured from the performance, based on the vision of the photographer.

Summary

The corpus of the thesis consists of analog photos that I have transposed through digital processing into a new medium. I have created through selection and processing an A-archive (archeological, interpreted archive), containing some two thousand negatives, from the D-archive (documentary archive) from Marx's legacy.

The selection was accidental due to the size of the legacy. I favored those photos which were taken at performances staged at the Szentgyörgyi István Institute of Theatrical Arts, between 1960 and 1980. I itemized the selected material, and labeled them based on the subject-matter. Thus I created a monument-type archive, which I have tried to present and describe in the thesis. An achievement of the work is that most of the photos in the József Marx Legacy were accessible only in the form of negative film. The A-archive facilitates the further research of the photos as well as the safe-keeping of the negatives.

The first part of the paper charted the theoretical background of the research while the second part dealt with József Marx's photography from the theoretical point of view of narrativity, theatricality and performativity.

The iconographical research lead us to the conclusion that the historical context determines the technique of the photographic production and the aesthetics of the photo in Marx's oeuvre.

I have asserted that through theater photography the photographer interprets and translates the theatrical performance. The cultural context in which the interpretation happens is also crucial in the research of the photography, especially in the case of the staged photography.

I examined the process occurring in front of the camera, which helped me understand the production process of Marx's photos. In the case of the staged reportage photographs, the participating human subjects are called *actors*. This concept does not refer only to the theatrical actors, but also to the everyday people. Following Dondero's ideas, I asserted that the theatrical photographs – even though their primary role is that of documentation and recording of the performance – might reach an aesthetic evaluation depending on the context of their presentation or the location of their exhibition. I have demonstrated this in the case of Marx's photos (with the analysis of his *Tartuffe* image).

I stated that the definition of photography has to include that complexity, according to which it is simultaneously a phenomenon, a process and a medium that has aesthetic, documentary and mnemonic function, and as such, it is powerful.

Since I digitalized analog photos in order to create the A-archive, I have considered important to compare the two image producing techniques. As a result, I have concluded that the digital photography is a different medium with its own characteristics and limitations, and the medium, be it analog or digital, has an impact on the style of photography also, as I have demonstrated in Marx's case.

Regarding the documentary function of the photography instead of snapshot I used the term *captured image*.

I assembled a conceptual base for the research of photography. I used image analysis as a method to study the specificity of the pictures, the technique of their creation, and the examination of their interpretation. Thus the ideology of the picture might be read from its composition and from its narrative elements. I have demonstrated different modes of access through the analysis of the photograph entitled *Migrant Mother*. My image analysis relies on an interdisciplinary approach.

I tried to find an answer to the question: to what degree is the photograph capable of telling a story or creating a narration? I analyzed different photos and series of photos in this regard. My conclusion is that the narrative and theatrical elements, and visual traces present

on the images might help the viewer to create his or her own story. In the case of the theatrical photography, if the photographer is familiar with the performance, and assumes the view of the director, he or she is capable of creating in the medium of the photo almost the same narrative as in the performance.

Since Auslander considers the *performed photos* theatrical photos, I have examined the staged photos. The staged theatrical photos have a lot in common with the staged reportage photos.

As opposed to Barthes's *operator*, I used the term of scenic director for the photographer, who directs the scenes to be photographed, chooses the persons who will be featured in the image, arranges the composition and designs the lights. Since this is the case in Marx's photos, too, I consider him also a scenic director. I use the term *operator* mostly in the cases when the photographer took captured images.

In order to acquire a comprehensive view of the procedures used by Marx, I studied other photographers' oeuvre from the same period of time.

From my studies regarding theatricality I have extracted those viewpoints and elements, which are useful in the examination of the theatrical aspect of photography. I joined the viewpoint that perceives life as theater. In this case the photographic representation might be considered a theatrical scene. The framing is the stage-opening, and the subjects correspond to the actors. The reportage as well as the performed photograph view life as a stage, where the subjects are actors. Using the terms of theatricality and performativity I described the way how the photo is capable of being scenic and effective in a staged manner, using the language of the contemporary art of photography, as well as symbolic elements; and how is it capable of creating the effect of movement, and becoming ceremonial.

The elements of the performative procedure of photographing are: the operator or scenic director, the theme (or scene), the communication with the subject, the technical apparatus and photo instruments, and the location. I described their influence on the aesthetical experience.

I included in the performative process the ulterior viewing of the image by the photographer and his or her subject.

My studies of the performative space lead me to the conclusion that the exhibition space has its own contribution to the meaning-generation of the photo.

Regarding my studies of the selected Marx's photos, I have come to the conclusion that his photography is strongly influenced by technical limitations and difficulties of the period, nevertheless, he was able to work out a personal repertory of instruments with which he was able to create works of art.

On his portraits we see an interpretation of the person represented, in accordance with Marx's artistic conception. He was building on his own impressions and mental images, and used a specific visual language in which the composition, framing and lightning acquired a special emphasis.

József Marx belongs to the group of the classical-styled photographers. The technical means conserved his style and, most probably, his way of taking theater photographs. This might constitute the subject-matter of a further research.

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