

Silvia L. Čúzyová

Tibor Huszár – Everywhere at Home

Abstract

Tibor Huszár (1952 – 2013) was a prominent Slovak photographer. As a photographer, he was interested in “all things human”, ordinary days and holidays, every day and timeless moments from the lives of people around him. Views into courtyards and the privacy of rooms, but also church services, baptisms, communions, weddings, funerals. He did not look for paradoxes, coincidences, or shocking situations; he also did not focus on exclusive beauty. On the contrary, he was inclusive – he was interested in everyone and everything. Huszár photographed “Gypsies”, the Roma people for decades (1968 – 2008), he took pictures of them at home in all corners of Slovakia. It was an initiatory and important cycle that brought Huszár fundamental professional attention, despite the fact that it was a topic already “occupied” by the world-famous Czech photographer Josef Koudelka. Tibor Huszár, like many other well-known photographers, documented specific period themes that he witnessed or participated in. In addition to the visual quality of these photographs, we are also interested

in the context, unique situation, and connections, therefore Huszár’s photographs from the heart of the prisoner revolt in Leopoldov (1989) are unique. Huszár also tries to be an insider in New York City (1991 – 1996) and in various neighbourhoods, racial and religious communities in order to photograph his most prominent themes, with the same interest that we can see in his other books.

Key words

1989. Czechoslovakia. Gypsies. Leopoldov. New York City. Slovak Documentary.

Introduction

As a photographer, Huszár was interested in “all things human”, ordinary days and holidays, every day and timeless moments from the lives of people around him. Views into courtyards and the privacy of rooms, but also church services, baptisms, communions, weddings, funerals. Ceremonies as specific moments of potential encounters with God belong to a motif he followed with interest, every time and everywhere. The specific visuality and atmosphere of these situations are fascinating, and the obviousness and closeness are depicted precisely in Huszár’s photographs of community-intimate moments as well. He did not look for paradoxes, coincidences, or shocking situations; he did not focus on exclusive beauty. On the contrary, he was inclusive – he was interested in everyone and everything: “I photograph kings and beggars.” People of all ages and sizes, anonymous faces in characterful black and white portraits, always looking into the lens with full awareness, captured in their natural environment, unstylized, but sometimes invisibly staged by the author.

GYPSIES

Tibor Huszár photographed the Roma people for decades, he took pictures of them at home in all corners of Slovakia. The unyielding ethnic group with whom we share a common heritage since time immemorial fascinated him. In the past, they

were referred to as Gypsies, and that is also the name of Huszár’s numerous photographic cycles. It was an initiatory and important cycle that brought Huszár fundamental professional attention, even though it was a topic that was already “occupied” by the world-famous Czech photographer Josef Koudelka. Huszár had an authentic relationship with the Roma people, certainly also because he knew them well, so to speak, from his neighbourhood in his youth. He was also fascinated by their freedom, openness and unwillingness to submit to the pressure of the majority population.

The first photo book *Gypsies* (1993) is unique in its selection of images with comments on some of the shots, but also due to the fact that it was spoiled in the printer’s office and the photos are too dark. That is why the second opulent book *Gypsies* (2008) was created, in which Huszár dates the beginning of his photography to 1968, which would mean he started with this topic at the age of 16. The book is remarkable not only for its size, but also because it contains 95 percent of completely new, previously unpublished photographs. He implemented an impressive study by ethnologist Arne B. Mann in both of his books, where we can read a lot of interesting things about the Roma people and the possible causes of the problems associated with this ethnic group. From the first mention of them in our territory in the 14th century, to the tragedy of the Roma Holocaust during World War II.

In the first book *Gypsies*, short comments are published for some of the photographs, as if they were quotes directly from the events in front of the lens. For example, the well-known photograph of an elderly couple, where the woman is holding a large cross, later briefly called only: Zohor (1989), has an interesting comment in the first book: “My friend is Gadžo, he is blind and old, he taught me to love God” (Huszár, 1993, p. 20). Or Huszár’s iconic photograph Senec 1977 – 78 Mulo, is commented on in the first book: “A few days of punishment, where with respect and glory they remember the one who has left” (Huszár, 1993, p. 132). As part of the research on terminology, a potentially more developed explanation is also possible: MULO means the dead in Romani culture, or the ghost of the dead. All Romani communities believe in these beings. It appears to people, for example, to warn them of something, to cause fear, to settle unresolved scores, to suffocate them, to bruise people, but it can also kill them. Mulos appear in human or animal form such as a dog, cat, bird, etc. They can be recognized by walking sideways, but their faces cannot be seen. They can also walk into the world unnoticed. Roma people show great respect for the souls of the deceased. They observe various rituals, for example, leaving a place at the table and a plate of food at Christmas as if the deceased were alive. Nowadays, a cigarette is lit in the grave, people talk to them and pour alcohol for them. At the funeral, they put various things that the deceased liked in the coffin

(cigarettes, alcohol, jewellery,...), but also money that is used to pay for getting to the “other shore”. The first book of Huszár’s *Gypsies* (1993) itself has its own specific fate, although it contains, according to historians and experts, the best-chosen collection of Huszár’s photographs. However, this book has basically disappeared from awareness and was completely overshadowed by its subsequent version.

LEOPOLDOV

Tibor Huszár, like many other well-known photographers, documented specific period themes that he witnessed or participated in. In addition to the visual quality of these photographs, we are also interested in the context, unique situation, and connections, therefore Huszár’s photographs from the heart of the prisoner revolt in Leopoldov are so unique. They form an unforgettable and powerful collection that has never received a separate publication, but some of the images have appeared in several collection books about the Velvet Revolution, the political party Public Against Violence (VPN), and the events of the revolutionary year of 1989 in Czechoslovakia. In the photographs from Leopoldov (the series was published in Huszár’s cross-sectional book *Retrospective*, 2007), the author captures incredible images – fragments of situations during the prisoner revolt and some of the characters who participated in the negotiations. A double portrait stands out, showing the spokesman for the rebel prisoners – an all-round interesting figure of a Slovak moun-

taineer with a tragic fate – Pavol Pochylý (also nicknamed “Spider” in the climbing community). Tibor was there and took a photo of it all.

A truly first-hand commentary on the moments when the photographs were taken – nuances and facts that may have been lost over the years – was written by a direct member of the political party VPN Fedor Gál (2009) in the book *From First Hand*: “At the entrance to the prison complex, we were met by Palo Pochylý, who was sentenced, I think, to thirteen years for economic crime. He was my classmate from elementary school, whom I remembered from those days as a reclusive and shy boy. Later, I received various fantastic reports about him – about his mountaineering and entrepreneurial achievements. I think that for one of them, through which he wanted to arrange a mountaineering expedition to the Himalayas, he was still in prison. He led us into a kind of corridor, where we found ourselves face to face with several dozen emaciated, thin prisoners. We looked at each other in silence for a while and then they pounced on us, took us on their shoulders and carried us past the prison walls and barred windows, from which a deafening roar could be heard, past the shillings thrown from the windows (there was a hunger strike in the prison), to the room where the discussion with the convicts’ negotiators was to take place. They demanded humane treatment, an investigation of their cases, improved diet, medical care, simply changes to the humanitarian conditions of serving their sentences.” (Gál, 2009,

p. 54) These lines also indicate the possible date of creation of Huszár’s photographs: December 27, 1989.

NEW YORK CITY

Huszár left no other evidence of his work in New York City than photographs. In his official biography, he states that he worked as a teacher in NYC: 1991 – 1992 – Columbia University /Teacher’s College/, NY, USA; 1992 – School of Visual Arts, NY, USA; 1993 – New York University, NY, artist – invitation was made by Prof. Fred Ritchin; 1993 – West Side High School /Visual Art and Multimedia/ NY – invitation was made by Prof. Christine Cipriani /Columbia University/. But those who remember recall that Huszár’s life in New York City circled around the person of the Czech photographer Jan Frank, whose New York Studio produced Huszár’s photographs. In addition to Huszár’s New York book, it surprisingly also produced photographs for his first photo book *Gypsies* (1993) and for the book *Portraits* (1995). Huszár’s legendary collection of portraits has its undeniable pearls, because he really photographed everyone around him. We also find a portrait of the now deceased Jan Frank who, for a change, is the author of Huszár’s portrait in Manhattan with the twin towers of the no longer existing World Trade Centre in the background. The caption for the photograph states: “This is me, Tibor Huszár, in New York in 1993 on a roof in Chinatown, where I lived with a four-meter boa constrictor. The two tall buildings in the background are the World Trade centre. My friend Jan Frank photographed me.” (Huszár, 1995, p. 186)

Although Tibor Huszár probably stayed mainly within the Central European immigrant community in NYC, as a foreigner he achieved undeniable success there. The main one is his book *New York: City of Tolerance* (2000), in which the then NYC mayor David N. Dinkins has an introductory word. “Tibor Huszár’s photographic essay *City of Tolerance* is a penetrating chronicle of everyday life in an extraordinarily rich artery of the American urban experience. His studies of New Yorkers depict what is probably the most richly structured cultural scene in the world – from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, from river to river, and from apartment building to high-rise building. Part of everything colourful in this world is found in New York, creating what I have proudly described as a ‘magnificent mosaic’” (Huszár, 2000, p. 6). The photographs in the book are dated from 1991 – 1995. Huszár also tries to be an insider in New York and in various neighbourhoods, racial and religious communities to photograph his most prominent themes, with the same interest that we see in the books *Gypsies*, *Reca*, or *The Rings of Eternity*. Community – events – mapping traditional existing narratives – not fictional worlds. He is fascinated by the visuality and fashion of the 1990s. Another of his extensive collections is dedicated to the Jewish community in Brooklyn.

According to available sources, NYC has the largest Jewish community outside of Israel. Huszár was not of Jewish origin and so how the Orthodox Jewish community accepted him among them and allowed themselves to be photographed from all sides,

unfortunately we do not know. On the back cover of the book, as it is customary with foreign publications, various well-known personalities including Cornel Capa, Miloš Forman or Karol Kállay, declare their praise.

This text is based on primary research by art historian Silvia L. Čúzyová and was conducted as part of the processing of Huszár’s estate.

Tibor HUSZÁR

Tibor Huszár (1952 – 2013) was a prominent Slovak photographer originally from the village of Reca near Senec. He discovered photography at a young age and soon, with his will, sovereignty and undeniable talent, established himself as a photojournalist for the magazine *Nö / Woman* (1972 – 1973). In 1976 – 1983, he graduated from the Department of Art Photography at FAMU in Prague under the legendary professor Ján Šmok. Here he also met a strong generation of photographers of the so-called Slovak New Wave. Huszár himself was a decade older and devoted himself to “subjective document”, so he seemed more like a loner. During his studies and then for many years, he photographed the Roma ethnic group in the cycle *Gypsies* (published in 1993 and 2008). The somewhat eccentric cycle of portraits of Slovak writers, published in the book *Portraits* (published in 1995), still resonates today. Later, he expanded his collection to include personalities from global cultural and social events, and the emphasis on portrait qualities can be found in all of his photographic cycles. Huszár was a participant in the

Velvet Revolution, photographed activities of Slovak political movement VPN, and unforgettably captured the prisoner revolt in Leopoldov (1989).

In the first half of the 90s, he repeatedly returned to the USA, where he photographed the book *New York: City of Tolerance* (published in 2000). The implementation of the election campaign of Vladimir Mečiar and the political party HZDS (1998) caused controversy in the cultural and photographic community. After 2000, he focused on his book photography projects, which he produced under his own direction (*On the Wings of Eternity* – 2006; *The Rings of Eternity; Retrospective* – 2007; *Reca, Cigáni* – 2008). The book *Cigáni [Gypsies]* was also accepted as an official gift by the British Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to the Slovak Republic. Huszár worked as a teacher in Trnava (UCM – University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava) and in Banská Bystrica (AU – Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica), completed his doctoral studies at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava and qualified as an associate professor (2006). He photographed in many places around the world, and participated in countless exhibitions. However, from 2013 (the year of his death) to 2023, it was not possible to exhibit Huszár’s work or even see it outside of his book.



Komárno, 1989.



Rakúsy, 2001.



Smířany, 1979.



Zlaté Moravce, 1990.



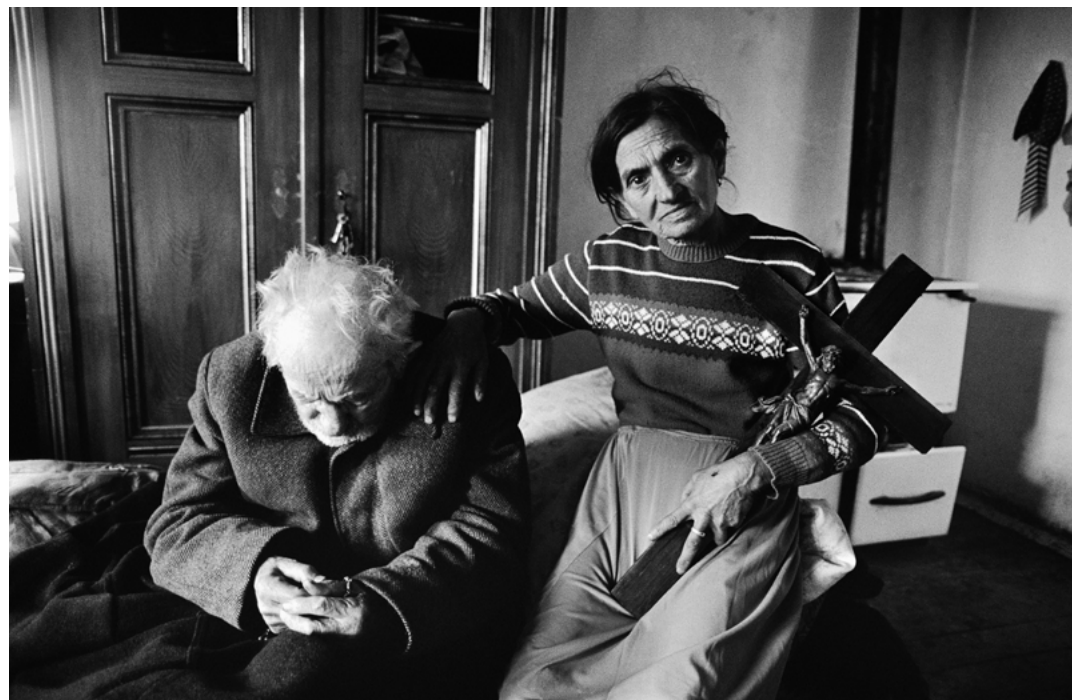
Košice, 1975.



Tomášovce, 1980.



Spišská Nová Ves, 1980.



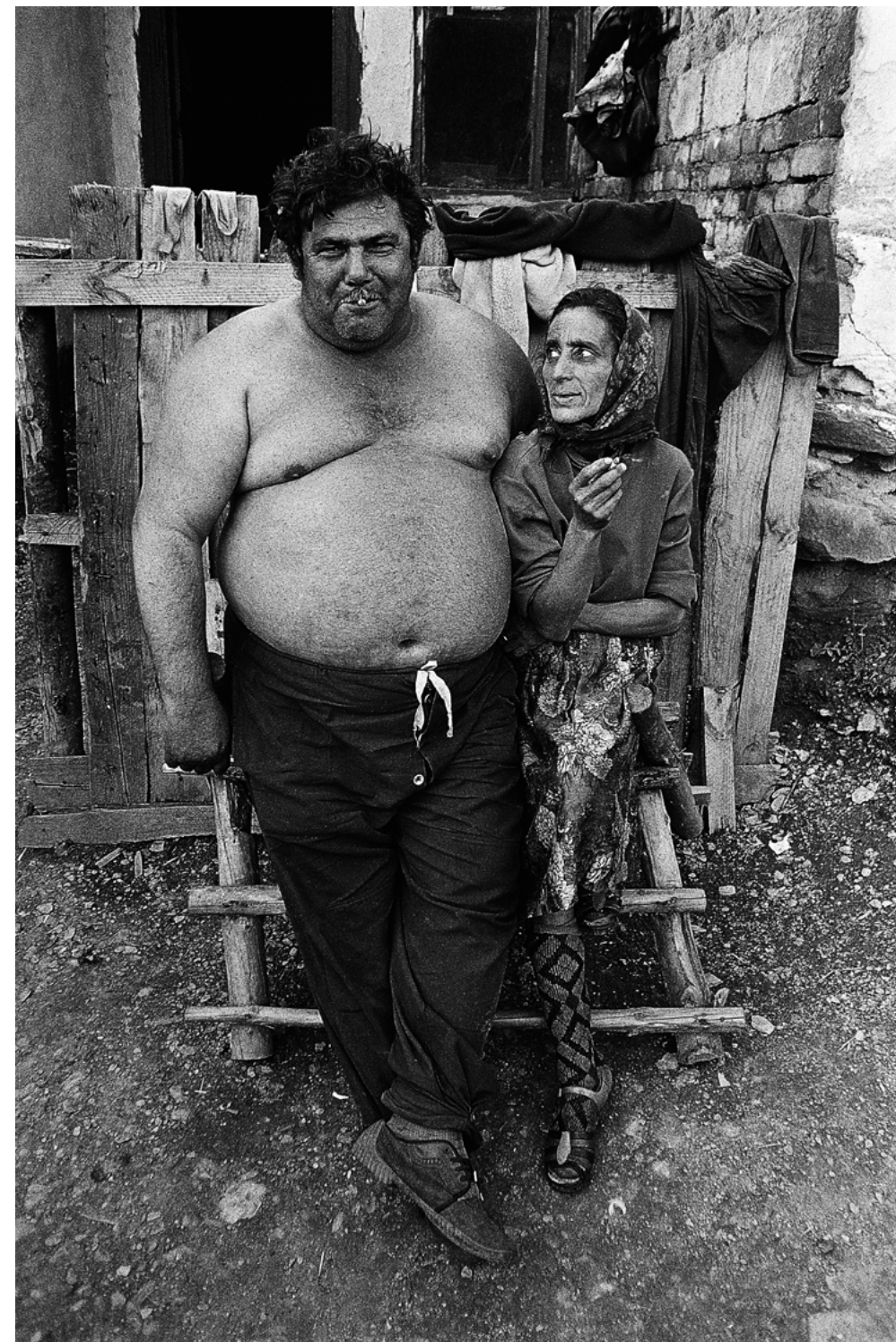
Zohor, 1989.



Revúca, 1976.



Stráne pod Tatrami, 2001.



Hrabušice, 1981.



Veľká Lomnica, 2001.



Rakúsy, 2001.



Bratislava, 1977.



Senec, 1977.



Senec, "Mulo", 1977 – 78.



Letanovce, 2006.



Václav Havel, Bratislava, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



Leopoldov, 1989.



The New York City, 1992.



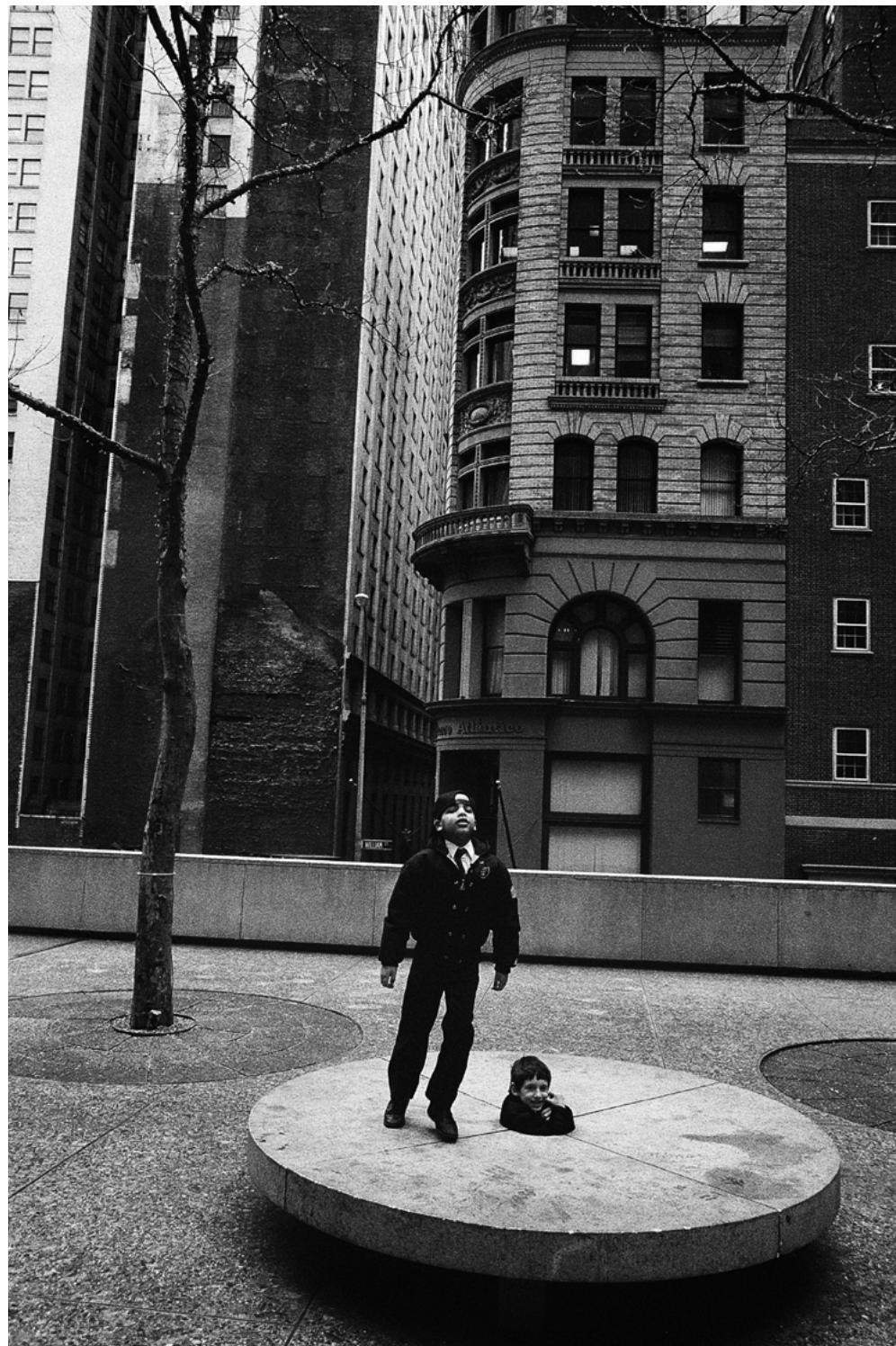
The New York City, 1995.



The New York City, 1993.



The New York City, 1991.



The New York City, 1992.



The New York City, 1993.



The New York City, 1993.



The New York City, 1992.



The New York City, 1992.



The New York City, 1992.



The New York City, 1992.

TIBOR HUSZÁR - CURRICULLUM
VITAE

Individual Exhibitions		2000	ZŠ Skýcov, Skýcov, SK Koloman Sokol Center, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK P. M. Bohúňa Gallery, Liptovský Mikuláš, SK <i>New York: City of Tolerance</i> , book launch, speech by the US Ambassador to Slovakia, Mr. Carl Spielvogel, Mr. Minister Eduard Kukan, and the editor-in-chief of the <i>Financial Times New York</i> , Hotel Devín, Bratislava, SK Profil Gallery, Bratislava, SK <i>Koloman Sokol</i> , book launch, SNG, Bratislava, SK Synchronicity Space Gallery, Soho, New York, USA
2008	Tamasi Kindgl Gallery, HU Slovak Cultural Center, Moscow, RU		
2007	Palazzo d'Accursio, Sala d'Ercole, Piazza Maggiore, Bologna, IT Synagogue, Center for Contemporary Art, Jan Koniarek Gallery, Trnava, SK	1998	1998
2006	Gypsies, Caisa, Helsinki, FI Selection, Ernst Museum, Budapest, HU <i>Children of God</i> , City Museum, Galanta, SK Fontana Gallery, Piešťany, SK Turčianska Gallery, Martin, SK	1996	1996
		1995	1995
		1992	1992
2005	<i>Shadows and Light</i> , House of Art, Bratislava, SK Salon of Artists, Modra, SK <i>Portraits of Koloman Sokol</i> , National Gallery, Budapest, HU <i>Children of God</i> , Gallery of Contemporary Art, Dunajská Streda, SK	1991	1991
		1990	1990
2004	Photographs for the book <i>New York: City of Tolerance</i> , Slovak Pavilion Geneva, CH Gypsies, Town Hall, Mittelbach, AT	1989	1989
2003	Palugyai Palace, MFA SR, opening by Minister Eduard Kukan, Bratislava, SK	1988	1988
2002	Opening of the Gallery of Czechoslovak Writers,		

1987	Sukhumi, RU Gypsies, Exhibition Hall Slovak Writer, Bratislava, CS
1985	Gallery, Budapest, HU Czechoslovak Cultural Center, Budapest, HU <i>Portraits</i> , Exhibition Hall Slovak Writer, Bratislava, CS
1983	Kecskeméth, HU
1982	AMU Gallery, Prague, CS
1976	Gypsies, Tourclub, Banská Bystrica, CS
1973	Cultural House, Senec, CS
1970	Folk School of Art, Senec, CS
Awards	
2011	European Cultural Award Trebbsia, Prague, CZ
2007	Photographer of the Year 2007, Bratislava, SK
2002	Memorial Plaque of <i>Koloman Sokol</i> , Liptovský Mikuláš, SK
2001	Prize of the Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic, <i>New York: City of Tolerance</i> , Bratislava, SK
1999	The Most Beautiful Book of the Year, <i>Koloman Sokol</i> , Bratislava, SK
1984	Prize of the Fine Artists Fund, Bratislava, CS
1983	Golden Plaque – International Triennial of Theatre Photography, Novi Sad, YU The Most Beautiful Book of the Year, <i>New York: City of Tolerance</i> , Bratislava, SK

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Huszár

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Mgr. Silvia L. Čúzyová, PhD. (1981) is an
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She completed her master's degree
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Gallery in Bratislava, then a researcher at
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She lectured on the history of art at the
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DOI: [https://doi.org/10.34135/
ejmap-25-01-02](https://doi.org/10.34135/ejmap-25-01-02)

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