

**LES DOUCHES  
LA GALERIE**

*PRESS RELEASE*

## **Rodolf Hervé ON THE GROUND (1989-1994)**



**Exhibition January 21 – March 7, 2015**

From Wednesday to Saturday, 2-7pm and by appointment

**Opening reception – Thursday, January 20, 2015, 6-9pm**

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## On the Ground

Rodolf Hervé spent the early 1990s living and working in Budapest where he felt he belonged, in a society that had lost its bearings after the fall of Communism and had to start from scratch. The future was completely unpredictable. What has happened since is unfortunately another story!

Rodolf Hervé had a habit of turning things upside down, but in Paris at that time, the world had become rigid and materialistic. It was in Budapest he felt the most free.

In all his pictures – maybe I should use the word “images” here, as in holy images, except that these would be unholy images – one gets a sense of partying, even though desperation is never far away. We should remind ourselves when viewing these pictures that they pre-date those of Martin Parr or Antoine d’Agata. The pictures seem to emerge rather than appear. They reveal a meteor unable to halt its journey. Even though Rodolf was particularly fond of Lautréamont, he reminds me of Rimbaud and I read every one of his pictures as if it were a poem. His work is never superficial; it is corrosive and passionate – as well as festive and funny. The subject matter is serious but not taken seriously. Rodolf Hervé knew where he came from and had a rich cultural background. He was a child of Auschwitz, a child of Communism, a child of art. But at the same time, Rodolf knew he was going nowhere and he was going there fast. Too fast. This incandescent outburst is what’s left of him.

Olivier Beer

## A Short Introduction to Rodolf Hervé's Selected Videos

Through the videos he made of musical events and artistic performances, Rodolf Hervé became a documentarian of contemporary Budapest subculture in the first half of the 1990s: of musical and other art events as well as the associated venues. Still, we are not dealing with documentaries here. Rudi captured events in which he himself was a participant. He was a “videocamera-maniac”, in András Szirtes' words. Except for the difference between the lens and the human eye, his perspective was neither more “objective” nor more preconceived than the viewpoints of the rest of the participants. Instead of attending exhibition openings or gatherings as an outsider assigned to “document them”, he went there as someone who was genuinely interested. In his choices about what to record with his camera, which he usually carried everywhere during the period in question, the only thing that mattered was that he should find it personally interesting. He set up the camera somewhere and let it run by itself; he could then move it somewhere else or use a remote control to move it around. The duration of the different takes was not necessarily determined by how “interesting” the action in the scene was. Sometimes Rudi got distracted by something else that was taking place outside the camera's field of view and forgot about the recording altogether. Occasionally the focus of the camera may have coincided with Rudi's interest, which could have resulted in the real-time recording of the entire concert or exhibition opening. The recording itself was secondary, however; the only thing that really mattered was the happening – the things that were going on just then – and the arbitrariness of it was captured on camera in all its technical offhandedness.

The recordings can be grouped according to whether they are about private or public events, with the films designated by Rudi as artworks forming a separate category. The latter includes *Langyosvíz* (Tepid Water), a film shot in the thermal baths of Dagály and Lukács, as well as *Gerjedések* (Inductions) and the “Tram No.6” series, which was based on Dániel Erdély's idea with episodes shot on the No. 4-6 tram at various times of the day. The family and friendly gatherings and parties make up the category of “private events”, which in the initial classification was quite simply labeled “life”. A half-breed between the categories of “life” and “public event” was a group of recordings made at bars and nightclubs, featuring various art performances, most of all concerts. The latter belonged to the category of art events designated as “public events”, which included Rodolf Hervé's own exhibitions and public appearances and the appearances and performances of artists and groups close to his heart, as well as concerts by various groups and other, larger events (the Agora Festivals of 1992 and 1993, the Art Expo of 1994). However, the private affairs and the public events, in other words, the private and the public spheres, could not be separated unequivocally, and thanks to Hervé's video recording technique these two categories often overlap, not just between themselves but sometimes also with the category of “artworks”.

The recordings allow viewers a glimpse into the (sub)cultural milieu of Hungary, and most notably of Budapest, after the democratic transition, in a period that was probably more euphoric and free-spirited than the present one. This was counter-pointed by the scenes of ordinary life in “Tram No. 6” and *Tepid Water*. The recordings also provide viewers with a view of the spirit and mood of the era. In addition to the chronological and thematic aspects, we could arrange them according to numerous other principles as a subject for methodical study. One of the obvious candidates is the viewpoint of the private history of their maker, Rodolf Hervé. Due to the partial mixing of the private and public spheres, the pictures also report on a certain way of life. Through the individual commentaries, the discussions taking place in private homes can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of “the life of artists”: we can listen in to private chats at art events and the friendly visits provide occasions for interesting technical experiments, when the communication merely serves to produce the pictures. The images reproduce the emotional and intellectual world which inspired Hervé in that period, and which he chose as his theme.

Hervé's recordings made at the time run to more than a hundred Hi8 cassettes. To watch them all would take more than a week. This exhibition, which presents a selection made by Rudi's former colleague, the cameraman and director Tamás Szűcs, covers the entire spectrum of the oeuvre. An interesting aspect of the compilation is the tableau format, which also works as an individual visual element. The viewer is confronted with a mosaic of motion pictures and, instead of a real-time clipping, will receive impressions about Rodolf Hervé's vanished world in the pictorial time of the exhibition.

Annamária Szőke

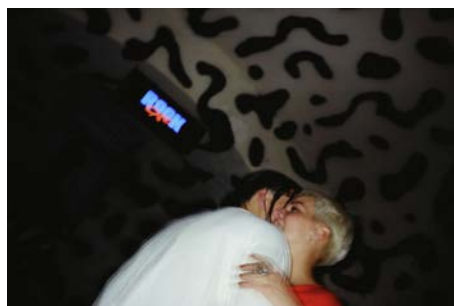
## Selection of the works

Archival ink jet prints on paper Iridium Silver Gloss, Tecco, 250g, made in 2014 by Vimagie.  
© Rodolf Hervé/Courtesy Les Douches la Galerie

*Fekete Lyuk [Black Hole], night club,  
Budapest, 1990*



*Rock Café, night club, Budapest, 1990*



*Gyöngyi Spitzer (Soma), singer,  
Budakalász, New Year's Eve, 1992*



*Budapest, 1990*



*Tamás Király fashion designer's birthday party in ZanziBár, Budapest, 1991*



*Fekete Lyuk [Black Hole], night club, Budapest, 1990*



*Fekete Lyuk [Black Hole], night club, Budapest, 1990*



*Rock Café, night club, Budapest, 1990*



*Tamás Király fashion designer's  
birthday party in ZanziBár, Budapest,  
1991*



*Budapest, 1992*



*Slaughterhouse, Budapest, 1991*



*The COMECON market in Kelenföld,  
Budapest, 1991*





## Rodolf Hervé

Rodolf Hervé was born in Paris on May 2, 1957. He started taking photos quite young and was only nineteen at the time of his first major exhibition in Paris in 1976 in the Olympic Entrepôt premises. There Frédéric Mitterrand organized an exhibition of his abstract photographs. After his studies he worked in a printing firm and as of 1975, for the international architectural magazine called Le Carré Bleu. In 1989, at the time of the centennial of the Eiffel Tower's construction, his series of photographs of the monument was published in a portfolio.

He left Paris in 1990 to settle in Hungary where the same year he was presented to the public with a one-man exhibition at the Musée Vasarely. The exhibition was crowned with success. Thanks to his talent, to his way of thinking, to his "eye" close to that of the surrealists, to the wealth of his imagination and to his rebellious nature, he quickly became one of the determining figures of the Hungarian underground. His performance presented in 1990 at "Tilos az A" with the French group Résonances, as well as the musical performance "Viragvasarnap" (Blossoming Easter) presented at the same place in 1993 and "Dobszerda" (Wednesday Drum) remain memorable events. In 1991, he participated in the occupation of the future "Trafoház" (House of the Transformer) and became a founding member of the action group called "Nulladik Kilometer" (Zero Kilometer).

A multi-faceted artist, he created remarkable works in almost every area of the visual arts (photography, film, video, collage, painting, electrographic work). His video films of great documentary importance—like "Tramway n. 6 le Soir" (a group work) or at the Agora Festival '92 on Fő Square in Budapest, the Kiraly Tamas Birthday Party organized at the "Zanzibar"—are above all works that reflect their times with frank sincerity and at the same time a touching human sensitivity.

The parallel use of the computer and the recorder preoccupied him already early in the 1990s. His graphic work on paper is also significant. The conception of many posters (the Parisian exhibition of Burle Marx, the International Mail Art exhibition at the Kassak Museum of Budapest, Radio Tilos), as well as cassette jackets are linked to his name. An illustrated calendar with his electrographic works with a forward by Dr Laszlo Beke was published in 1993. His photographs and his texts have been published in numerous periodicals (Arnyekkötok, Laza lapok, Magyar Muhely, Foto, Fotomuveszet, Nagyvilag). In addition to his artistic activities he played from time to time in ethno-groups, as well as in rock and jazz groups. His career was broken off—following a long illness—13 October 2000.

Previously presented in France at the Galerie Agnès b. alongside works by Lucien Hervé, the first one-man exhibition of his Polaroids that were taken mostly in Hungary was dedicated to him in Paris in 2008 at Les Douches la Galerie.

### Solo shows

- 2014 « On the Ground 1989-1994 », Hungarian Institute, Warsaw, Poland
- 2013 « On the Ground 1989-1994 », Emlékpont, Hódmezővásárhely, Hungary
- 2012 « On the Ground 1989-1994 », Centrális Galéria, Budapest
- 2010 « Fulgurance », Été photographique de Lectoure  
« Rodolf Hervé », Széchenyi National Library, Budapest
- 2008 « Fulgurance », Les Douches La Galerie, Paris
- 2006 « Monuments en folie », Carrousel du Louvre, Paris
- 1993 Vasas Művészegyüttes Galériája, Budapest.  
Intercisa Múzeum, Dunaújváros, Hungary
- 1992 Fialat Művészek Klubja (Young Artists' Club), Budapest  
« Rodolf Hervé százada, húsa », Cinéma Vörösmarty, Budapest  
Xantus János Múzeum, Győr, Hungary



- 1991 « Fragments d'un discours social (suite dyslexique) des mondes et des sphères », Hunnia Art Cinema, Budapest  
 « Fragments d'un discours social (suite dyslexique) le corps céleste, le champ social », Vörösmarty Cinema, Budapest  
 « Pogánytánc - Langyosvíz III », Széchenyi thermal bath, Budapest  
 « Pogánytánc VIII. », traveling exhibition first shown at the Vasas Művészegyüttes Galériája, Budapest
- 1990 Vasarely Múzeum, Budapest
- 1986 « Réalité et irréalité des nouvelles images » with Guillaume Allaire, Centre International de Séjour de Paris
- 1976 Cinéma Olympic-Entrepôt, Paris

## Group shows

- 2010 « Revolutionary Decadence. Foreign Artists in Budapest since 1989 », Kiscelli Museum, Budapest  
 « Budapest 20 », Budapest History Museum, Budapest
- 2008 « ...que des européens ! », Galerie du Jour agnès b., Paris
- 2007 « Lucien Hervé, Rodolf Hervé », Erdész & Maklár gallery, Budapest
- 2001 « Lucien Hervé, Rodolf Hervé », Hungarian Institute, Paris
- 2000 Galerie du Jour agnès b., Paris
- 1999 « Petites Baies et Grandes Fenêtres », Aix-en-Provence, (traveling exhibition)
- 1993 « Önösszeszerelő délutánok », with Dániel Erdély, Artpool Művészetkutató Központ (Artpool Art Research Center), Budapest  
 « Magyarország akkor és most » (Hungary now and before), Kiscelli Museum, Budapest  
 Art Expo, Budapest  
 « Festival de l'Image », Le Mans  
 « Image et Page », Médiathèque André Malraux, Tourcoing  
 « Images électroniques », Hungarian Institute, Paris  
 « Studió '93 », Budapest Galéria, Budapest  
 Art Expo, Budapest  
 « Mail Art », Hungarian Institute, Paris  
 « Art Electro-Images », Maison de la Hongrie, Berlin  
 Fiala Művészek Klubja (Young Artists' Club), Budapest
- 1992 « Nemzetközi Mail Art kiállítás » (International exhibition of Mail Art), Kassák Museum, Budapest  
 « International Biennial of Art », Vasarely Museum, Budapest  
 Art Expo, Budapest
- 1991 Art Expo, Budapest  
 « Képzőművészeti portrék Kassákról » (Portraits of Lajos Kassák), Kassák Museum, Budapest  
 « Magyar Műhely Találkozó » (Rencontre de la revue Magyar Műhely), Szombathely, Hungary  
 « Egyesült Képek Egyesülete » (Images Réunis), Somogy Megyei Művelődési Központ (Cultural Center in Somogy County), Kaposvár, Hungary  
 « Tatarozás » (Renovation), Műcsarnok (Art Center), Budapest.
- 1990 Mois de la Photo, Hungarian Intitute, Paris
- 1989 « Tour Eiffel », Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne, Switzerland  
 « Architecture 13 sur 13 », mairie du XIIIe arrondissement, Paris

- 1983 « Tisztelet a Szülőföldnek » (Hommage to Hungary), Múcsarnok (Art Center),  
Budapest
- 1980 « Les Hongrois », Espace Canon, Paris

## **Collections**

Private collections  
Artothèque de la ville d'Annecy