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FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY  
STUDIES**

*The Artistic Movement In Cluj And The ‘Securitate’.  
Case Study: Abodi Nagy Béla*

**DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY**

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## Key-Words

Artistic movement, Securitate, Abodi Nagy Béla, intellectuals, Hungarian community, art, superior education in Hungarian, Transylvania, communism, Union of Visual Artists, „Ion Andreescu” Institute of Visual Arts, tracking file, informats of the Securitate.

The present research pursues a depiction of the life and personality of the artist Abodi Nagy Béla from Cluj, especially as seen by the Securitate. A prominent personality of the artistic and academic fields since the decade of the Second World War, in the post-war period he becomes a renowned man of culture and art, and also an appreciated teacher. The artistic legacy left behind by Abodi is equaled by the spirit with which he participated in educating new generations of visual artists, and the way in which he contributed to the development and preservation of the values of the Hungarian community of Transylvania.

Since its establishment, Abodi Nagy Béla has been a teacher at the "Ion Andreescu" Fine Arts Institute in Cluj. Initially as an assistant, he would then carry out the tasks received along with the position of lecturer until 1955, when he was appointed associate professor of the painting department, and then professor. He held the position of head of the department of painting (painting and sculpture) between 1951-1957, respectively from 1970 until his retirement, in 1983. Abodi Nagy Béla was the laureate of several awards throughout his career. In 1953, he was awarded the Order of Merit for Work, 3rd Degree along with the Medal of Labour. During the following two years, he received the State Prize of the People's Republic of Romania for the works *Arrest of Fónagy* (1954) and *Critique* (1955). Also, in 1968, he was awarded the 3rd Degree of the Order of Cultural Merit. In 1951, shortly after the establishment of the Union of Visual Artists (UVA), he became a member of this union, receiving various tasks: he was put in charge of the armament collective, secretary of the Cluj Branch of the UVA, in charge of the permanent jury of the UVA.

From these two positions, Abodi is actively involved in the developments of the two organizations and, due to his affinities and his attitude towards the regime, he becomes the subject of investigation by the Securitate. From the moment the first file was opened in his name until the fall of the communist regime, his actions were put under various question

marks. Most often, he was categorized as a chauvinist and nationalist, some even criticizing his talent or vocation as a teacher.

Regarding the structure of the present thesis, I started by establishing the context of the Transylvanian artistic movement at the beginning of the 20th century. Then follows the case study, namely the analysis of data and information regarding the artist and his entourage. In the second chapter, I present the essential biographical and artistic milestones of Abodi Nagy Béla's life from the communist period to the post-communist era, as well as his inclusion in Cluj's higher artistic education. Then follows the presentation of the artist from the point of view of the Securitate officers who, starting from the 60s in particular, began to follow him carefully, especially due to some aspects of his ideology, visible through his art. However, initially the Securitate hoped to enlist Abodi Nagy Béla as an informer, an aspect presented in detail in the fourth chapter. In the last chapter of the thesis, chapter five, Abodi Nagy Béla – Informational/individual tracking file, I present and analyze the intensification of the Securitate's interest in the artist, the follow-up and continuous checks on him, as well as aspects of his activity as a promoter of Transylvanian Hungarian culture.

By studying the documents in the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the Securitate's (CNSAS) archives, the present research had a double set of objectives: Firstly, it aims to recreate an image of Abodi from the perspective of various individuals who had more or less close ties with the Securitate. Through this analysis, a descriptive framework was created, of events and discussions that were the basis of some developments in the artistic and academic fields in Cluj. Of course, the information found in these files was correlated with the little existing data about the events described in the documents of the Securitate. Oral history, memoirs (relatively few) or other scientific or journalistic sources were correlated with the existing descriptions in the archive. Where certain dates or events appeared distorted in the file documents, this fact was noted and the publicly known versions were added. Unfortunately, the Securitate's methodical way of working did not allow for many descriptions to be inaccurate, information from one source was matched with information provided by another source, and the case officer each time made sure there was a verified description. We do not wish to imply that the Securitate acted in good faith, but the information in the files and other oral or written sources correlates in a relatively satisfactory manner. On the other hand, studying these files also gives us a chronology of events that, correlated with the biography of Abodi Nagy Béla, can give us a broader picture of his evolution as a teacher, organization leader and as an artist.

The second set of objectives revolves around analysis and correlation with existing information about Abodi Nagy Béla's social connections, interactions and views towards people and subjects. Here the deductive mechanism and the analysis of various events in wider or narrower contexts played a more significant role. An eloquent example in this case is the fact that Abodi Nagy Béla, at some point, becomes aware of the fact that he is the subject of denunciations, but there is no evidence by which the debunking of the denunciations (perhaps with the exception of one case) is present in the documents of the officer of case. On the other hand, by extending the mechanism of document analysis and correlating with various sources of written or oral history, the research managed to create a fairly clear picture of Abodi Nagy Béla's relationship with the academic environment or with that of Union of Visual Artists.

In terms of chronology and context, the research focused on creating a framework for analysing the personal and professional evolution of Abodi Nagy Béla. Last but not least, the present research brings us some new information about the people who were part of the academic and artistic environment of Cluj. Although in the documents of the Securitate it is mentioned that Abodi Nagy Béla was marked by the spirit and values promoted by the student organizations in Budapest during the interwar period, we can say with certainty that this contact did not mark him as much as the Securitate or its informants believed. The Szekler Students Association (Székely Egyetemista és Főiskolai Hallgatók Egyesülete – SZEFE), within the definition of the context of the time, could be categorized as a revisionist organization or with a nationalist views. On the other hand, the role of SZEFE is overestimated by the Securitate and its informants.

Another element of this chronological contextualization is the information and general framework of developments in the fifth decade of the 20th century. Abodi Nagy Béla is incorporated, sent to the front, becomes a prisoner, is stationed in a camp in Hungary, then is moved to a camp in Armenia, and finally returns to a deeply changed Cluj and Transylvania. Regime change clearly becomes the main impediment for Abodi Nagy Béla who, by education and mental structure is closer to the spirit of Budapest, Bucharest, Vienna or Munich before the Second World War. The communist regime, the pressures on the act of creation, the new political environment and the fate of the Hungarian community in Romania become the main contexts to which Abodi Nagy Béla must adapt. What emerges from the documents is, for the most part similar to the information relayed by the few studies

written about him, but in the light of what is presented in the follow-up files, some events and actions of Abodi Nagy Béla take shape and find an explanation.

Last but not least, the present research brings us some new information about the characters who populated Cluj's academic and artistic environment. Benign and malignant sources each add a small brick to the understanding of some events and developments within the "Ion Andreescu" Institute of Fine Arts from the years of the communist regime, respectively it introduces us to the world of information that gravitates around the way in which the Cluj Branch of the Union of Visual Artists operated. Of course, these being files that contain the statements of people whose motivation is not entirely known to us, the information provided, analyzed and used by correlation with existing sources, can provide and elucidate the evolution of an academic and artistic environment under the influence of a regime willing to shackle artistic thought and instrumentalize it politically.

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