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**A Women's Reading of the Operations
of the FÉSZEK Artists Club during
the 1970s and 80s through Recollections
of Avant-garde Textile Artists of the Kádár Regime**

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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THESES

1. The Fészek¹ Artists' Club was a state-supported and prominent cultural – and cultural policy – venue of the Kádár era²: a community space that in the 1970s and 1980s was an extremely important new location for textile artists seeking new directions.

2. Art historian Éva Molnár, founder and curator of Fészek's art gallery and library, paved the way for experimental textile artists – thanks to which a special sense of hominess developed among the artists. The interviews with the impacted textile artists, which comprise an important part of the dissertation, indicate how the place attachment and place identity of the examined club members was formed in the spaces of the Fészek.

3. By examining the group of textile artists connected to the Fészek Artists' Club, we gain new knowledge regarding the possibilities of artistic expression and empowerment. These young, mainly female, textile workers were given space to develop their artistic expression and were able to realise significant exhibitions in the club's exhibition spaces.

4. In the Kádár era, it can be observed how industrial activity affected the textile artists employed by the factories. Accordingly, industrial textile experiments could trickle down to the field of textile art, since both parties played a role in the creation of the product – both regarding the end use of the textile, and from the perspective of an artistic product. In my dissertation, I also attempt to highlight these correlations and transitions through the example of the textile artists I give voice to.

¹ *Fészek*, meaning “Nest” in Hungarian, is an acronym standing for “**F**estők, **É**píté-
szek, **S**zobrászok, **Z**enészek,
Énekesek, **K**omédiások”, i.e.,
“Painters, Architects, Sculptors,
Musicians, Singers, Comedians”.

² A period in Hungarian history named after Communist leader János Kádár, who was the General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the de facto the leader of the country between 1957–1989.

5. The Fészek art gallery provided professional publicity for the experimental autonomous works. The temporary space for this was provided by the Fészek itself – as an institution – and Éva Molnár as a curator and gallerist employed by the institution. Applying the concept of Winnicott’s potential space³, it can be shown what the Fészek offered to the embraced textile artists: space, opportunity, and a feeling of security to play and experiment without limits – all during the period of 3T⁴. Taking all of this into consideration, the dissertation examines the concept of “autonomy”, which takes on its own specific meaning and hue in its epoch.

6. The Fészek Artists’ Club played a unique role in the international (East-West) and domestic (provinces-Budapest) cultural policy field. The Fészek was a special gathering place in Budapest in the 1970s and 1980s, where prominent figures on the domestic and international art scene, as well as important representatives of the visual arts – artists, artisans, and industrial designers – could interact with each other.

7. In my doctoral dissertation, I present and examine the venue and the era, based on contemporary press sources and archival materials, as well as my interviews with eight textile artists participating in the research. I delve into the place attachment of the artists who were just beginning their careers, and those who belonged to the Artists’ Club at the time, and I also study the role of the Fészek in their life path and their career.

³ “Potential space” is pediatrician Donald Winnicott’s term for a sense of an inviting and safe interpersonal field, in which one can be spontaneously playful while at the same time connected to others.

⁴ The three T’s are an abbreviation of the Hungarian words: *tiltott, tűrt, támogatott*, i.e., *prohibited, tolerated, supported*. The term was coined by György Aczél, prominent figure of communist culture politics between 1958–1967.