

**JOURNAL OF THE
ACADEMIE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA PIPE**



Edited by
Anna Ridovics and Peter Davey

**VOLUME 3
2010**

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Académie Internationale de la Pipe
Liverpool
2010

INVITATION

The Gift of the White Goddess

Meerschaum carvings from the Pipe Collection of the National Museum

The exhibition has been organised to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the International Pipe Academy, on the occasion of its annual conference held in Budapest, October 2009.

Date: 8th of Oct. 2009 at 18.30

Place: Hungarian National Museum, Banquet Hall

Greetings:

Dr. Tibor Kovács

General Director of the Hungarian National Museum

Dr. Peter Davey

President of the International Pipe Academy

Opening address:

Mr. Ben Rapaport

Founding member of the International Pipe Academy

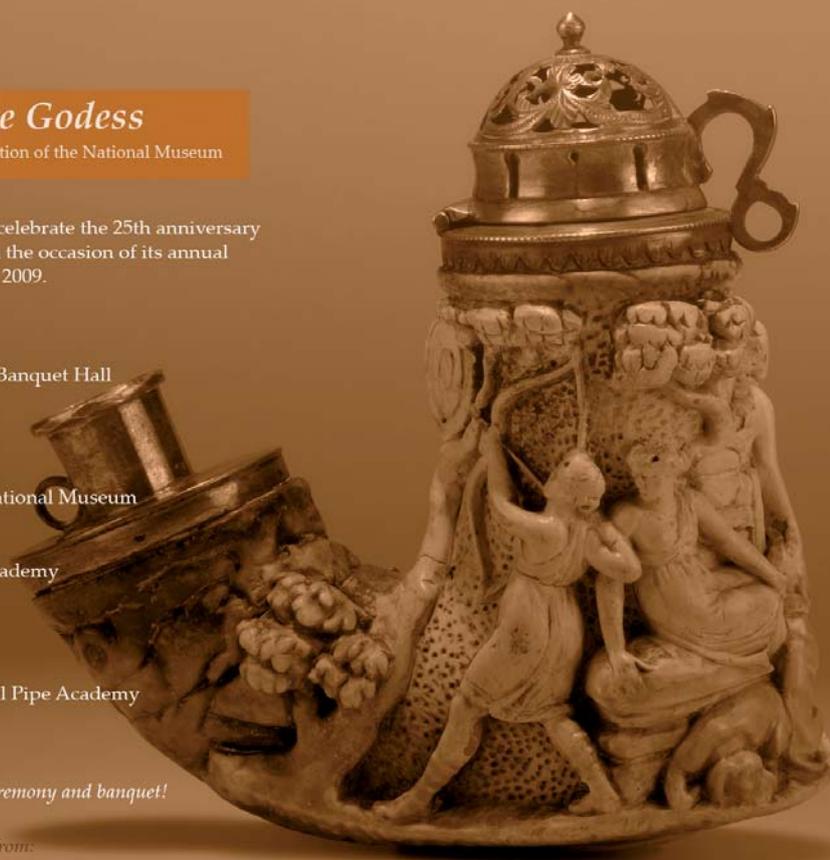
Music: Istvan Csörsz Rumen

You are warmly invited to the opening ceremony and banquet!

The exhibition will be open to the public from:

17th Oct to 31st Oct 2009.

Organiser: Dr. Anna Ridovics



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Opening address at the Annual Conference of the Académie Internationale de la Pipe, Debut of the Exhibition: *The Gift of the White Goddess*, at the National Museum of Hungary, October 8, 2009

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. First, I would like to echo the warm welcome to everyone expressed by the Museum General Director, Tibor Kovács, and by the Academy's President, Peter Davey. And, before I forget, a very special vote of thanks to Anna Ridovics whose extra effort made this evening and this entire week possible.

I consider it quite an honour to be chosen to give this opening address. For me personally, I am especially pleased to be among my fellow Academicians and surrounded by the exhibits in this museum, one of the few remaining holy grails of the antique pipe in Europe.

I am not quite sure what Anna had in mind when she asked that I say a few words about the meerschaum pipe as the central theme, to speak for about 10 minutes; frankly, when it comes to meerschaum, there is no possible way to limit a discussion to a few words, or to 10 minutes for all that need be said about the queen of pipes, the white goddess, Venus of the Sea, the choicest and rarest of pipe mediums... but I shall comply with her request.

The written record is rather replete with the history of tobacco pipes crafted in many mediums during the past 400 or so years, and in particular, the history of meerschaum, whose origin, genesis, dare I say, nativity began here in this country. Every student of the pipe accepts the fact that Budapest became the first centre of the meerschaum trade and then it spread to Vienna and other parts of Europe. But a substantive chapter on Hungary has been absent until recently. Credit for adding that chapter goes to Hungary's own. Initially, there is a debt of gratitude to the late Dr. Irnák Osskó who now has a special place in pipe heaven. Together with his friend Ferenc Levárdy, as devoted students of the pipe, they researched and wrote about their lifelong passion as collectors and historians in order to reveal the untold stories of Hungary's tobacco pipe industry, to document and detail the role that their country's pipe carvers have played. Their intimate knowledge, dedication, commitment and love of pipes produced in their native country can now be shared with the entire world in *Our Pipe-Smoking Forebears*. The book had been completed by Levárdy just before his death, Osskó edited the manuscript and prepared it for publication in 1994.

Further dramatic proof of Hungary's contribution to the remarkable evolution of the meerschaum pipe, as well as in other local expressions in wood, ceramic, and clay is illustrated in *The History of the Pipemaker's Craft. Hungarian History Through the Pipemaker's Art* organized and written by Edit Haider and Anna Ridovics, the retrospective catalogue published in conjunction

with Hungary's millennial celebration in 2000. For those of you who may not know, it was Dr. Osskó who, I am told, proposed the idea to the National Museum of Hungary, to use the tobacco pipe as the keynote theme and as a symbol of national pride to honour its 1,000-year anniversary. Additionally, Haider and Ridovics jointly wrote another book in 2005 illustrating the antique pipes in the Blaskovich Museum, the country's second largest collection. Together, these three volumes now preserve for posterity, in word and picture, the art and craft of Hungarian pipes, and vividly illustrate the breadth, depth, and substance of this country's significant and singular contributions to the annals of tobacco lore. In his book, Dr. Osskó states: 'And now? Now we can only rummage in books and look at pipes to discover that forgotten science.' How prescient he was when he wrote that, not knowing that other relevant publications would follow after his own opus. Now, every pipe collector, researcher, and historian will be familiar with the once 'Who's Who' of Hungarian pipe makers, among them, Adler, Donath, Goldberger, Nagy, Pfeifer, Schmidt, and all the others.

Tonight, in this small, but impressive, exhibition of early pipes, 'The Gift of the White Goddess,' we all can see the products of deft hands, skilled execution, and artistic inspiration at work by an unknown number of nameless artisans in an ever-burgeoning eighteenth and nineteenth-century cottage industry. Whether the 1723 tale of Count Andrassy and the cobbler, Karl (Károly) Kovács, who allegedly carved two meerschaum pipes, is fact or fancy, the prolific production by meerschaum carvers, wood, amber, horn and ivory turners, silver- and goldsmiths, all the designers, fabricators and assemblers of so many magnificent examples of the pipemaker's art on display here tonight are a testament to these craftsmen of the Kingdom of Hungary and, after 1867, to a yet larger contingent of artisans in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, at their finest in plying their trade, working their hands, eyes, and imagination. Parenthetically, one of the Academy's working groups is studying meerschaum, and this year it has created a global database of the names of individuals and workshops affiliated with meerschaum; the number of those working in the environs of Budapest from about 1730 to about 1900 exceeds those in all other continental countries who worked in this field. These statistics indicate that Hungary started earliest and stayed the longest of any European country involved in the manufacture of meerschaum smoking utensils; interestingly, many of this country's native sons immigrated to the United States in the mid- to late 1800s, and set a very high standard in executing meerschaum pipe masterpieces for American consumers. And America has its own legend similar to the story about the Count and the cobbler. Charles Pollak was

said to have carved the very first meerschaum pipe in New York City in 1860; Pollak supposedly got his lump from a Rev. Dr. Tyng of Brooklyn, New York, who brought it back from Turkey. Pollak learned how to carve from his father-in-law in Old Buda.

Unfortunately, in our study so far, we have been unable to determine the precise role each individual and workshop played and for how long, what their special skills were, or how vast was their respective, or collective, output. Nonetheless, if we were to include all the wood pipe carvers, clay pipe makers, and associated craftspeople, Hungary's combined influence and impact on pipe formats, configurations, designs, and trade is overwhelming.

I know that many of the Academy members present are wholly devoted collectors and researcher-archaeologists of clay tobacco pipes, but on this evening, and during this conference, I would hope that you will broaden your interest and come to appreciate these Hungarian examples as pipe-worthy companions of the clay and, as important, to acknowledge these exhibits as representative expressions of this nation's contributions to the enduring legacy and evolution of tobacco pipes through time.

On behalf of the Academy, an obligatory vote of appreciation to the Director and all the staff members of this museum who continue to play a role in acquiring, restoring and preserving these pipes and, from time to time, sponsoring exhibitions of these rare *objets d'art* to the public at large. Within the last twenty or so years, several important museums have been closed, among them the Reemtsma Museum in Hamburg, the SEITA Museum in Paris, the Austrian Tobacco Museum in Vienna, the Larsen Pipe Museum in Copenhagen, the Galerie du Coq Muet, Lausanne, the Dunhill Museum in London, the Museum of Tobacco Art and History, in Nashville, Tennessee, and a few smaller museums that also had a substantial quantity of tobacco-related artifacts, including antique pipes. Sadly, for us, the number of museums we will be able to visit and where we can conduct relevant research in our special field is rapidly shrinking. But, as keepers of this tradition, which is particularly evident during this special week, the National Museum of Hungary and the other museum on the schedule to be visited on October 10, are not following this tragic trend. For this, and I know I speak for all those present, we of the Academy are thankful... and we salute you!

Unless there is another scheduled event that follows my brief introduction, I believe now is the time to wander around, observe, survey, inspect, examine, ogle, admire, and enjoy this exhibit in honour of the 25th anniversary of the International Academy of the Pipe.

*Ben Rapaport
Founding Member of the
Académie Internationale de la Pipe
October 2009*