



THE GOOD LIFE

Who is this 30-year-old Hungarian artist whose comic-like paintings are paid the price of a Rolls-Royce?



Little Judit

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Szabolcs Bozó, the only 30-year-old Hungarian painter from Pécs but currently living in London, took off on the auction market last year. It was one of his paintings for which more than HUF 50 million was sold, and his comic book-like paintings were not sold for much less at Sotheby's and Christie's auctions in Hong Kong last year. He has already had solo exhibitions in Beijing, London, Shanghai, Brussels, and Palma de Mallorca. This year, he is preparing for a big launch in New York and his name is slowly becoming known at home.

At the end of last year, the Hungarian art finder, advertiser and news portal [mútárgy.com](#) updated and published its publication ["Auction Market of Hungarian Artists"](#). According to their data, the auction turnover of living Hungarian artists showed much stronger growth in 2022 than that of non-living artists, and compared to the results of 2021, it almost tripled. The total sales of the twenty best living Hungarian artists at domestic and international auctions exceeded HUF 1.6 billion last year, compared to a turnover of HUF 575 million in 2021.



• HIRBETÉS

#	Név	Születés éve	Teljes aukciós forgalom 2022-ben, millió forint	Teljes aukciós forgalom 2021-ben, millió forint	Adatok 2013-2022 között	
					Teljes aukciós forgalom, millió forint	Aukción el nem kelt tételek %-os aránya
1	Bozó Szabolcs	1992	401.4	0.0	401.4	12.5%
2	Keserü Ilona	1933	312.6	58.7	496.6	12.1%
3	Maurer Dóra	1937	216.8	78.5	344.8	15.3%
4	Bak Imre	1939	211.2	158.9	520.1	14.8%
5	Nádler István	1938	142.9	94.8	488.1	19.4%
6	Molnár Vera	1924	115.8	23.7	241.9	38.7%
7	Lakner László	1936	45.7	93.6	352.7	23.4%
8	Ackermann Rita	1968	39.9	10.3	119.2	36.4%
9	Ludmil Siskov	1936	30.2	4.6	60.5	26.7%
10	Ujházi Péter	1940	26.2	3.6	30.3	29.4%
11	Wahorn András	1953	22.9	7.8	32.7	18.2%
12	Mengyán András	1945	20.1	3.8	32.9	16.7%
13	Bukta Imre	1952	19.8	12.9	38.9	24.4%
14	Jovánovics György	1939	16.1	0.0	36.7	0%
15	Molnár Sándor	1936	15.4	0.1	25.9	40%
16	Szmrecsányi Boldizsár (BOLDI)	1970	14.3	0.0	14.3	33.3%
17	Taubert László	1966	11.4	8.1	23.3	52.4%
18	Szűcs Attila	1967	10.6	3.5	40.5	13.3%
19	Tót Endre	1937	10.6	0.4	35.2	22.6%
20	Fehér László	1953	7.8	12.7	69.1	20%

Source: artefact.com

“ The 30-year-old Szabolcs Bozó, who made his debut at auctions in April of last year, burst onto the top of the list of works by living artists with no small amount: his auction turnover last year was HUF 401.4 million, which means that his pictures were bought for this amount worldwide.

He overtook the big guns in his first year

This number rivals the sales of such "big guns" and well-known names as Ilona Keserü and Dóra Maurer. By way of comparison: although Dóra Maurer's auction sales also jumped in 2022 (they approached HUF 217 million), her nine-year total auction turnover of HUF 344.8 million between 2013 and 2022 is much lower than Szabolcs Bozó's annual sales last year, which exceeded 400 million forints.



Some of Szabolcs Bozó's paintings. Photos and prices: Sotheby's, Christie's (8 images)

Bozó has been through several successful auctions in Hong Kong and the United States:

“In 2022, his three most expensive paintings are *"Untitled"* (HUF 51.4 million, Christie's Hong Kong, but he has several paintings with the same title, this is the last picture in our gallery), *Red Flamingo* (HUF 40.7 million, Sotheby's Hong Kong) and *Rule of Six* (almost HUF 38 million at the exchange rate at the time, Sotheby's, USA).

What if this is the last one I sell?

"Who would have thought? I don't...that in 2022 my pictures painted a few years ago will be bought for as much as a Rolls-Royce", Szabolcs summarizes his recent years. We caught up with him in London, where he talked about his career so far in an online interview. He was born in Pécs, and after he was not accepted to Győr to study design, he went to London to try his luck at the age of 19. He originally went to study the language for a year, but he has been out for almost 12 years, now he paints full-time and rents his own studio.

"In 2013, I took up a brush more seriously for the first time, then I started to try on canvas on a larger scale, but I always liked to draw, both my grandmothers painted." He worked in a bar and restaurants and only painted small pictures as a recreation, and in 2018 his brother persuaded him to post his work on Instagram. At first, he only uploaded his drawings, then half a year later a private collector came across his works. He probably had a good eye for talent, because he told an acquaintance of a Spanish gallerist, who then invited Szabolcs to paint in Palma de Mallorca for two weeks.

“He bought me canvas and paint and I got an independent studio in the gallery. That's when I started painting on larger canvases. Before, I only had a small corner in London, five of us sharing a studio.”

When the two weeks were over, all his works painted there were bought by the invited collectors. "They said that my pictures are honest and that they feel that I enjoy painting. As long as that comes across in the pictures, I'm doing my job well." Before that, he only sold a drawing to an acquaintance for 80 pounds (about HUF 35,000 at the current exchange rate). "It was surreal to go there and go home with thousands of euros. I was almost always at zero....It's not easy to make a living from catering in London."

After the success in Mallorca, he worked part-time for another year, "I thought that I wouldn't give up everything suddenly, because what if this is my last picture to sell?", but in the end he devoted himself completely to painting. Since 2020, he has been creating full-time, renting his own studio in London.

Before his early pictures appeared at the public auctions of Sotheby's and Christie's, his works had a high turnover on the secondary market. Szabolcs sold his pictures that sold for tens of millions at the big auction houses last year for 4,000-5,000 euros (1.5-2 million forints). "It hurts that they were included in the auctions so soon," he says about purchases for investment purposes.

“ *At the moment, even in a low tone, he sells one of his typically 2X4 meter pictures to private collectors for ten times that amount (!).*



Szabolcs' studio in London.

His works traveled the world

Szabolcs' first group exhibitions were in London and Palma de Mallorca in 2019. His paintings were in galleries in New York, Miami, Stockholm and Shanghai, and last year in the contemporary gallery Q Contemporary in Budapest, under the title Animated. The latter exhibition was presented jointly with the Carl Kostyál Gallery in Stockholm, and alongside Bozó's paintings, the Hungarian public was able to see the paper-based works and animations of the Americans Austin Lee and James Ulmer.

"All three artists examine the tragicomic in their works, and as a starting point

“ *they often choose characters and cartoons and movie stories they watched in their childhood and use them to express a kind of childlike joy,*

which is not constrained by the trials and pressures of adulthood, but also expresses a kind of yearning or nostalgia for that period, often mixed with some kind of darker sadness or sense of isolation and loneliness. Their subject matter maps the alienation of the human figure in various forms in our digital technocracy," wrote Q Contemporary.

Bozo also had a number of independent exhibitions: among the first in 2020 in Paris and Mallorca, then in 2021 under the title Balaton in Shanghai, under the title Busójárás in Brussels and London, and last year in Beijing and Miami. He told Forbes.hu that he will have a group exhibition in Switzerland in February, and then take part in an art fair in Texas in May.

“ and then in the fall he will have a solo exhibition in New York, Manhattan.

Unprecedented from the gut

Gábor Pados, the owner of the acb Gallery in Budapest and an art collector, told Forbes.hu: Szabolcs's talent - although this is only one of the basic conditions for success in art - is obvious, besides, he probably felt it viscerally and found such a trend in the fine arts in a very good rhythm. in his world, which dates back to the painting of the 1980s. According to Pados, we are now experiencing the renaissance of this world, which many people call postmodern and characterized by a kind of figurality as a new trend. And within this, the naive world is a novelty, which goes back to the Eastern European animation world of the 1970s and 1980s.

“ There are several representatives of this genre in both Europe and America: for example, Robert Nava, Oli Epp, Mátyás Erményi, Barnabás Lakatos Gelléri.

He added that individual works can spread at lightning speed on social media, and Szabolcs also started his career with his paintings uploaded to Instagram.

The prices for which Szabolcs' works are sold are very high for Hungarians of his age, but in many cases he even competes with the prices of older Hungarian masters. We have some big stars whose early works sell for similar prices at auction, 'but I can safely say that

“ His prices are unprecedented in Szabolcs's generation, and what's more, the value of his works is very serious in international terms”.

Gábor Pados was of the opinion of how sustainable these are: constant renewal and constant, very serious gallery representation are very important in the life of a visual artist. In addition, international communication, continuous presence, and luck, as well as human aspects cannot be neglected: how mature someone is to process quick successes. Gábor Pados emphasized that it is important not only for the pictures of a new star to appear at auctions, but also for the galleries representing him to constantly deal with him, to exhibit and take his works to international fairs.

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