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Apart from professional circles, average men of any country are not always fully aware of the successes that their country has achieved at international contests. This is also true for Hungary whose people could be proud of the outstanding performances of Hungarian inventors, scientists and artists at international world trade fairs since the foundation of this type of exposition in London, in 1851. To my knowledge, no comprehensive study either in Hungarian or in English has ever been written on this particular theme. For this reason, the recognized Hungarian historian and museologist Vilmos Gál's book, *Hungary at the World Fairs: 1851-2010* (Budapest: Holnap Kiadó, 2010), fills this gap in the academic literature of Hungarian cultural history. Relying on ministerial reports, catalogues, objects and documents in Hungarian museums with material related to the world fairs, Gál and his assistant, Teréz Striczki, aim to give as clear a picture as possible of Hungary's participation in world fairs from 1851 up to 2010, the year of the book's publication. As world fairs have adapted to the requirements of our constantly changing world, by undergoing significant transformation over their 160-year history, they have become from important destinations of the developing tourism industry of the mid-nineteenth century into one of the many forms of recreation of the twenty-first century, as Gál argues "expos still enjoy enormous popularity today" (Gál 2010a, 5). Instead of confining to merely set of data, this book of descriptive character provides a colourful narrative of the history of twenty-seven world fairs covering various fields of disciplines comprising politics, natural history and technology, industry and agriculture, history of fine and applied arts. The text of the previous edition, *Világkiállító magyarok: 1851-2010* (Budapest: Holnap Kiadó, 2010), was translated from Hungarian into English by Richard Robinson. There is no objection to the quality of the translation, even though the reader sometimes has got the impression as if the original text had been translated into English word by word.

The structure of the whole book is well organized and transparent. From 1851 to 2010 there were forty-eight world exhibitions among which Gál examines twenty-five ones, either because of their international significance or their enormous size, namely London in 1851; Paris in 1855; London in 1862; Paris in 1867; Vienna in 1873; Philadelphia in 1876; Paris in 1878; also Paris in 1889; Chicago in 1893; Paris in 1900; St. Louis in 1904; Milan in 1906; Turin in 1911; Barcelona in 1929; Brussels in 1935; Paris in 1937; New York in 1939; Brussels in 1958; New York, Montreal, Osaka and Tsukuba in 1964, 1967, 1970 and 1985, respectively; Vancouver in 1986; Brisbane in 1988; Seville in 1992; Hanover in 2000; and finally Shanghai in 2010. As a separate chapter is devoted to each one of these world fairs, the book consists of twenty-five chapters in chronological order. Every chapter follows the same general format: after first discussing the host country's political, social, economic motives, possibilities and realization of organizing a world fair, attention turns to Hungary's reasons, preparation, participation and achievements. Furthermore, there is special emphasis on the location, the budget of the discussed fair and those events, characters and products that Gál considers more important or interesting so much that, travelling through time and space, the reader happens to greet some re-emerging figures and companies (for instance the world-famous Herend and Zsolnay factories) as old acquaintances whose life stories from rise to fall are followed from one world expo to the other. In parallel, the evocation of extracts from the testimonies of participants and visitors, in contemporary press and in Hungarian literary

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works – such as Mór Jókai’s novels (1825-1904) – enlivens the author’s descriptions. At the end of the book tables on the *Chronology of the Most Important World Fairs* and the *Prizes for the Hungarian Participants of World Fairs* provide additional information for the reader. Clearly arranged for those wishing to make further research in this topic, the vast *Bibliography* is divided into subcategories such as, among others, *World Fair Catalogues*, *Organs of the Press* or *Memoirs and Literary Works*; however, the majority of the bibliographical items is in Hungarian. In addition, the *Index of Names*, the *Index of Firms*, the *Index of Pictures* and the *Full-page Illustrations* – counting approximately 330 colour and black and white pictures from public institutions, from countless contemporary press and exhibition catalogues – make the usage of this study easier.

The author’s preparedness in diverse disciplines ranging from natural history to humanities is indisputable. Moreover, keeping objectivity as a guiding principle in mind, Gál’s perspective is even-handed: he deals with not only the positive sides of Hungary’s taking part in world fairs, he also unabashedly depicts the difficulties and the unfortunate disappointments the Hungarians had to face inside and outside their home. Mention should be made of the incompleteness of the last chapter upon the world trade fair in Shanghai in 2010, for which the book cannot be blamed. However, by now in 2012, it should and could be supplemented by the reader, for which the best source may be the event’s official website itself (“Expo 2010 Shanghai China” 2012). I also miss general summaries or some concluding remarks at the end of each chapter or at least at the end of the study.

In all fairness, Vilmos Gál’s *Hungary at the World Fairs...* with its broad cultural horizon ultimately contributes to the understanding of the role Hungary has played in the “significant review[s] of human progress” (Gál 2010a, 26). Taking the thorough and detailed descriptions, the follow-able style and the easiness of the reader’s orientation into account, the book serves as a valuable source for researches on Hungarian culture. This study is, in particular, recommended to those who are interested in the international reception of Hungary’s best products. Moreover, in my opinion Gál’s book may have its best place in the hands of a Hungarian lector introducing not only Hungarian language, but also its culture to foreigners.

### Works Cited

“Expo 2010 Shanghai China.” 2012. In *Expo 2010 Shanghai China*. Available: <http://en.expo2010.cn/>. Access: 24 July 2012.

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