

VMFA MAGAZINE DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE:

More from Director, CEO, and Curator Alex Nyerges on *American, born Hungary*

In his interview with *VMFA* magazine, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Director and CEO Alex Nyerges also reflected on some of the more personal aspects of curating *American, born Hungary*.

WHEN DID YOU FIRST BECOME INTERESTED IN PHOTOGRAPHY?

Growing up in Rochester, New York—the home of Eastman Kodak—and having a father who loved photography and was an amateur photographer in his own right clearly put me on a path to be a photographer and a photo historian. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my father for this love I have of photography. Two of my three brothers are photographers, as well. One had a career as a library director but has been a full-time photographer since he retired. And then I have my youngest brother, who has been retired for a number of years and is also a photographer and printmaker. We give my third brother a pass because he's a jazz musician.

WHAT ROLE DID THE EASTMAN MUSEUM PLAY IN YOUR EARLY DEVELOPMENT AS A LOVER OF PHOTOGRAPHY?

Just to put it in the perspective of time, we would go to the Eastman Museum often for my father to take pictures of the family in the garden there. And then we would wander around as a family and see the exhibitions.

We would frequently go to the museum



In addition to being a photo historian, Director and CEO Alex Nyerges is also an avid photographer.

on Sundays, after church. We had to put a jacket on to go to church in the 1960s. I came from a very poor family, but the one thing my mother would not do is allow us to go to church without dressing up. Although we had no money and her clothes probably came from a resale shop, she was beautifully dressed from a fashion standpoint. Those memories of our times there as a family are very clear in my mind's eye.

And then when I was a teenager, I would ride my bicycle up the hill to Atlantic Avenue and go visit the museum every day during summer vacations. They screened films there too. In fact, I attended so many of the screenings that they finally gave me a lifetime pass! The Eastman Museum was a large part of my life and world growing up, and clearly had an influence on who I became.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO KNOW THAT *AMERICAN, BORN HUNGARY* WILL ALSO BE EXHIBITED IN A PLACE THAT WAS SO SIGNIFICANT TO YOUR LIFE?

Well, two other photography exhibitions I curated over the years, one on Ansel Adams and another on Edward Weston, traveled to the Eastman Museum. It's poetic that this third major exhibition, which has a lot of personal meaning to me as the son of a Hungarian father, will also be traveling there in September of next year.

AMERICAN, BORN HUNGARY

kertész, capa, & the hungarian
american photographic legacy

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