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ORGANIZING EXPERIENCES IN THE 37TH NATIONAL STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE (OTDK) ARTS AND ART THEORY SECTION¹

As the executive chair of this year's 37th National Student Research Conference (OTDK) Arts and Art Theory Section, Hungary, I would like to share a few organizational experiences. After the great success of the 2013 OTDK in Eger, it was a real challenge to organize a new OTDK art section at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University (EKCU) 12 years later, a section that would meet the profession's expectations in advance and achieve or even surpass the successes of that time. We succeeded in achieving all of these goals to the fullest extent possible. The art section entered the ranks of the "major sections" in terms of the number of works presented, and we significantly increased student participation at Hungarian institutions of higher education such as SZFE, BCKF, and MOME. The organization of the Section was the first major test for the Faculty of Arts, which was established at Eszterházy Károly Catholic University in February 2025. It can be said without modesty that the new faculty passed the test with flying colors. We hope that we have managed to pass on the momentum that characterizes the Section to the next administrations.

Due to the larger than ever number of participants, the organization of the Arts and Art Theory Section required particularly careful planning and sophisticated logistical solutions.

Number of papers presented: 411

Number of students presenting their paper: 494

Number of sections implemented: 50

Number of jury members: 205

¹ This article is based on the Professional Report of the 37th OTDK Arts and Art Theory Section, available on the OTDK website.

The section leaders were responsible for meeting and coordinating the needs of a wide range of artistic fields. This year, these fields were expanded to include stage performance and creation. The OTDK Artistic Committee and the Section Committee held daily consultations in the months leading up to the Section. The ongoing dialogue between the management and the committee ensured the smooth running of the Section and the consensual resolution of any issues that arose. The members of the Artistic Committee actively participated in the work of the section juries and in the judging process. The cooperation between the two plenary sessions was exemplary, and this joint professional work will also serve as a basis for the organization of future artist sections.

The record number of presented projects posed a serious challenge for the organizers of the theoretical sections. According to the rules of the Section, written reviews are prepared in the theoretical sections. This affected seven sections: Art Theory 1-5, Architecture Theory, and Music Theory. When preparing the reviews, it was important that they convey a constructive, edifying message to the students. It should be noted that a small number of entries that advanced to the OTDK were not considered appropriate based on the unanimous opinion of the reviewers, the Artistic Committee, and the management. This will need to be discussed at the next meetings of the Artistic Committee, with the involvement of the TDK representatives of the individual higher education institutions.

The 50 sections required a record number of jury members. The fundamental criteria were the exclusion of conflicts of interest, the representation of leading experts in each field, and the presence of representatives from all educational institutions in the country as well as institutions beyond its borders. These criteria were met in full, with artists who had won the Kossuth, Munkácsy, Liszt, and Béla Balázs awards agreeing to serve on the jury. The only withdrawals were for administrative reasons (jury members serving in other sections at the same time).

The logistics of the visual works (transportation, storage, installation) required particular attention, in which the student assistants played a significant role, as they did in the organizational tasks carried out during the three days of the Section. In the implementation of the music divisions, the most delicate tasks were on-site rehearsals, sound reinforcement, instrument transport, and tuning.

There was a decrease in the number of high school students participating in the 37th OTDK art section compared to the 36th OTDK, where there were 32 such participants. (36th OTDK beszámoló) Most high school students participated in the music and performing arts divisions. The sending institutions were:

ELTE Apáczai Csere János Gyakorló Gimnázium és Kollégium
Szentendrei Móricz Zsigmond Gimnázium
Nemes Nagy Ágnes Művészeti Szakgimnázium Budapest
SZE Győri Tánc- és Képzőművészeti Szakgimnázium

The involvement of high school students is largely due to the work of ELTE's Art and Music Institute, so it would be worthwhile to motivate other universities to introduce TDK work among high school students and make it attractive.

Experiences from the Tamás Roska Scientific Lecture: The lecturer, Dóra Dávid, graduated as an architect from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME) in 2018 and obtained her DLA degree in 2025 from the BME Doctoral School of Architecture. Since 2022, she has also been working as a teaching assistant in the Department of Explorative Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture at BME. The title of her scientific lecture was Relocated Communities, and its topic was relocation resettlement.

Sports and cultural programs: The programs were announced and promoted on the Section's website and social media platforms. The sports programs were popular among Section participants, and weather conditions were optimal for outdoor programs. Despite the busy Section schedule, participation in cultural programs was high, justifying the existence of such programs. The meals provided by the organizing institution (opening gala dinner, lunches during the sessions, refreshments, closing gala dinner) were excellent opportunities for professional exchange and networking. We strongly recommend that future section organizers hold such events.

Innovative aspects: We created a registration interface for section participants, where they could indicate their intention to participate in accommodation, meals, and additional programs. This interface allowed the system to manage applicants, jury members, accompanying persons, topic leaders, and other participants according to their position (accommodation, registration package, etc.). In addition to the promotional items provided by OTDT, 3D-printed prizes were made for the winners.

A popular gift from EKCUC to the winners and jury members was a bottle of 2018 Egri Bikavér wine dedicated to OTDK by the university's Academia wine estate, which was produced especially for the occasion and featured a wine label displaying the Eger OTDK logo. Another popular gift was a dark blue T-shirt and canvas bag bearing the logo of the 37th OTDK artist section.

The Section's program booklet (2025) was available for download at www.37otdk.uni-eszterhazy.hu. We placed great emphasis on informing the media: press conferences, podcasts, and interviews characterized our activities, in which we reported on and announced events. Based on the number of participants, our communication activities can be considered successful.

Of the 50 sections, 31 were streamed. This represented nearly half of the projects presented, which was the second highest number of streams among the OTDK sections. During the preparations, it was not clear whether the recordings of the streamed sections would be kept, as they may be needed in the future due to the extraordinary interest. The section was actively present on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, reaching over 7,000 people. All of our programs were available on these platforms, and based on the feedback, many people used them to get information and participate in the section events. The publication of photos and videos from the event series was particularly popular and useful.

The number of entries determined the number of prizes that could be awarded. The general rule was that a maximum of 50% of the entries could be awarded a prize in each category. Placings could not be shared! A special prize could be awarded instead of any of the prizes. Participating high school students did not receive placings or special prizes, but the jury could give them verbal praise and they received a certificate of participation.

The results of the OTDK were announced publicly at the closing ceremony. The jury made substantive recommendations for the rankings and special prizes, which did not need to be announced during or after the sectional defenses. A recurring problem was that the winners did not accept their awards, and instead contacted the management weeks later. This is particularly thought-provoking in cases where no one from a university that achieved a number of placements attends the awards ceremony.

References:

- A 37. OTDK Művészeti és Művészettudományi Szekciójának Szakmai beszámolója. <https://otdk.hu> (a letöltés dátuma: 2025.12.22.)
- A 36. OTDK Művészeti és Művészettudományi Szekciójának Szakmai beszámolója. <https://otdk.hu> (a letöltés dátuma: 2025.12.22.)
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