and naturally by this time the political 
esting mixture of Hungarians, Germans, 
came from this territory. It was an inter-
time .... I lived there for a couple of 
years, until I became very sick and had to 
from the bed - which is not the best van-
to go back to Hungary.

When I recovered from my sickness, 
Moholy asked me to come to Berlin again. 
So I went back to Berlin. But it was the 
Nazi period, which was not for my taste. 
And then Moholy went to London, and he 
asked me to join him. It was an exciting 
time of my life, of everybody's life. It was 
before the second World War. Life 
was full of question marks, full of trouble, 
but full of promise, too.

And then Moholy went to Chicago. 
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start a new Bauhaus in this country; but 
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met some of the great filmmakers, for in-
stance Dovzhenko and Pudovkin. 
Dovzhenko was the great poet of the be-
ingning of filmmaking. He had indie po-
etry, and created images in films that I felt 
were really grand and deep — wonderfully 
sensitive. He impressed me immensely as a 
person.

I gave up painting. I wrote to my Hun-
garian friend Moholy-Nagy, who invited 
me to Berlin to work with him, and in 1930 I went from Budapest to Berlin. It 
was a complicated part of history — full 
of upheavals and soul searching and mean-
lessness and greatness. There was the major 
political change from the so-called Weimar 
Republic to the Nazi era. It was not the 
architectural history of the world itself, 
the things which were so beautifully 
expanded visions of the world, science 
and art. So I had an almost schizophrenic 
feeling.

At MIT — I think I came to MIT in 
1946 — I started to paint again.

My work is a dream world of somebody 
who lives in the 20th century and is still 
nostalgic for some aspect of the world 
which got bypassed in the 20th century. 
My paintings are almost Romantic paint-
ings. They try to reach the palpable reality 
of the world around me; most of them are 
textured images. And if I can understand 
my own self, it came because the world 
seems to move away without any tangible, 
tactile reality, and I needed for my own 
consumption this quality of texture. 

I have a great love for [the German writ-
er] Novalis. He was a novelist trying to 
break the richness of the total — touching 
the total reality, not the details of the 
reality. That interested me for many 
years. I tried to feel the hidden rich-
ness not at the concrete, pragmatic level, 
but at the embracing, if you like, Roman-
tic level.

This has been an invariant in transfor-
mation. It went through all my work. I 
was always interested to grasp a key, the 
sense of the total. So most of my work, if 
i am correct, is a sometimes hopeful, 
sometimes hopeless struggle between the 
visible and the invisible.

"Klee had a great impact on me. As a 
young painter, I was influenced by the 
Russian Constructivists — Malevich, Li-
stinsky, Rodchenko. I looked down on Klee 
as an artificial scientist, who played a 
child's game. Later, in 1935, I met him in 
Switzerland, and he impressed me im-
mensely. There was a French autocratic 
lady, Madame De Mandrot, who had a 
castle near Lausanne. She invited every 
year some artists who were searching for 
other work. I snuck in to one of these in-
vitations. Grosz was there, (the painter) 
Max Ernst, Moholy. .... During this time 
we visited Klee in Berne.

When I went to see him, he was not my 
hero. But after, he was, and actually, the 
experience was a significant key for me to 
my own self. After some chatting around, 
one of us who visited him asked him how 
he thought of himself as a painter. And 
Klee said: I am not a painter, I am a gar-
dener who has to come every day to water 
the plants in the garden; what I am doing 
is research into my own self. It was an im-
portant new key to see that a painter is not 
always making paintings, but muddling 
paintings.

I almost dare to say that from this mo-
ment on, my painting ways changed. In-
stead of a Constructivist type of painting, 
I was exploring the hidden world with the 
hand of Klee to guide me.