

PREFACE

The mathematician's best work is art, a high perfect art, as daring as the most secret dreams of imagination, clear and limpid. Mathematical genius and artistic genius touch one another.

—Gosta Mittag-Leffler

The idea for this collection was born in 2010, when I organized an exhibition, entitled “Art in the World of Mathematicians,” for the 70th birthday of my husband, Endre Szemerédi.

The exhibition’s theme of “mathematics and art” generated such great public interest, from mathematicians and non-mathematicians alike, that I decided to create a book gathering the writings of mathematicians on art.

It occurred to me: Why not let mathematicians speak for themselves and express their thoughts on art? I was interested to hear what art means to them.

The color palette is vast. Mathematicians range from being devout opera fans and art enthusiasts to being playwrights, musicians, painters, photographers, actors, and dancers themselves, often at a professional level.

I asked world-class mathematicians to contribute to this book and many have graciously consented. Working with them has been a thrilling experience.

Naturally, many other mathematicians could have contributed to this book but did not due to various reasons such as time constraints or simply the fact that I did not know of their artistic interests and therefore did not contact them. I hope that some of them will be inspired by this book and will share their perspective in a future edition.

Acknowledgements. I cannot thank enough all of the brilliant mathematicians who have been eager to share their priceless thoughts in writing. I am

immensely grateful for their time, patience, and the enthusiasm with which they have contributed to this project.

I would like to express special thanks to Sergei Gelfand for having faith in my idea for this book and his help in bringing it to publication.

I greatly thank my husband, Endre Szemerédi, for his support and comments. I am grateful too for the opportunity to meet all his great colleagues and friends, many of whom have contributed to this book.

Finally, I would like to thank my daughters for their patience, time, and sometimes unvarnished critical comments while I was working on this collection.

I dedicate this book to my grandchildren hoping to teach them that mathematics is everywhere.

Anna Kepes Szemerédi