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STATUES OF MIND:

Dan and Lia Perjovschi

PREFACE: BIOGRAPHY AS HISTORY

Dan and Lia Perjovschi's art is of singular significance in the development of experimental art in Romania since the late 1980s. The Perjovschis' work matured under the double pressures of Romanian socialism and Soviet communism. In response to these influences, both artists forged original and challenging forms of visual expression in drawing, performance, installation, and conceptual practices, as well as in the analysis and use of mass media (especially television and newspapers). Both artists have also been heralded internationally, included in many biennials throughout the world, and featured in dozens of international group and solo exhibitions. The current exhibition, however, is the first retrospective of their work, one that follows ten years after Duke University hosted their first two-person show in the United States in 1997. That year the Perjovschis served as artists in residence at Duke: Dan taught experimental drawing, and Lia taught performance, installation, and video. [Figs. 354–356] Knowledge of the Perjovschi's lives in pre- and post-Revolutionary Romania is critical to understanding their art.

The Perjovschis were born in 1961 in Sibiu, situated in the center of Romania in the Fagaras Mountains, the highest peaks of the Southern Carpathians; Sibiu's archeological remains date from the Late Stone Age.¹ [Fig. 1] Dan and Lia met as children while attending special schools for the training of artists in Sibiu, and became romantically linked as teenagers. [Fig. 2] During their studies, these art schools were closed by the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, and the Perjovschis graduated in 1980 from a Pedagogical School. Dan entered the Academy of Art in Iasi, a city on the eastern border of Romania; his studies were interrupted by nine months of military service. Lia remained in Sibiu even after their marriage in 1983. The couple was only able to live together after 1985, when Dan finished his studies and was appointed to a museum position in Oradea, on the Hungarian border of Romania. [Fig. 3] There, Lia obtained a post designing stage sets for the theater.

In 1987, Lia was finally admitted to the Academy of Art in the capital city of Bucharest, after six years of being informed that she had annually failed her entrance exams. Such manipulative measures arose



Fig. 1, above
View of Sibiu.



Fig. 2, right
Dan and Lia Perjovschi, art class,
1979, Pedagogic Lyceum, Sibiu.

from the widespread corruption that reflected the repression and scarcity that the Romanians increasingly experienced in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, which only became more severe and punishing. Romanians were not permitted to travel; typewriters were illegal; books were restricted; and knowledge and information from the West were tightly controlled. Shortages of basic goods and services (food, water, and electricity), as well as limited access to professional advancement, resulted in a barter economy that encouraged favoritism and nepotism in exchange for gifts, promotions, and other advantages. This system meant that although Lia may have successfully passed her exams, she might also have been excluded in favor of those from whom the examiners could gain advantages. But their refusal to permit Lia to enter an art academy was also an example of how, in the former Romanian communist system, officials controlled antiauthoritarian behavior, of which Lia was perceived to be guilty as early as high school. The result was that between 1980 and 1985, the Romanian authorities assigned Lia to various forms of manual labor and service jobs: painting ornamental Christmas tree balls; fabricating suitcases in a leather factory; and collecting electrical bills for the state.

A grave example of Lia's resistance to the corrupt system occurred in 1980, when she led a protest by her fellow employees at the Christmas ball factory. She

complained about the appropriation of workers' wages by the managers, showing records of hours worked and balls produced for which they had not been paid. Lia recalled how the director addressed the crowd gathered behind her:

"Really!" he said, "Who agrees with Amalia?" No one spoke. Silence. From that time on, I thought my ears grew because I listened so hard to their silence; I couldn't believe that I could hear so much silence. Then the director said: "You know what, you are an instigator; and if I can, I will put you out [of the factory and future employment] with an I." Workers received the mark of "I" when they were deemed undisciplined troublemakers, dangerous, and unworthy of hire. "In this case," I replied, "I quit."²

Lia stormed out of the room. Later the other women explained their lack of support with a variety of excuses: "Look, Lia, you know I have three kids." "It's not the first time something like this has happened." "I can't be like you." "You have a family to support you." Some women told her that they also worked as prostitutes and feared that if they confronted the director, he would report them to the police. "Somehow everyone had a reason not to support me," Lia remembered. After this event, Lia's parents accused her of quitting her job because she was "lazy."³

The Revolution began on 16 December 1989 in Timisoara, on the borders of the former Yugoslavia and Hungary, and by 20 December had spread to the cities of Sibiu,

Cluj, and Brasov. [Figs. 4, 25–26] Traveling from Oradea and Bucharest, Dan and Lia met in Sibiu to be with their families over Christmas and to participate in the street protests. By 21 December, the Revolution had reached Bucharest and fighting had broken out in Sibiu. Encountering the couple Liviana Dan (an art historian) and Mircea Stanescu (an artist) during the protests, the Perjovschis were fortunate in being able to remain in their friends' apartment for several days to escape the violence, as civilians were being shot in the streets. Meanwhile, Ceausescu and his wife Elena fled Bucharest, were apprehended, accused of crimes against the state, and then shot by a firing squad on Christmas Day 1989. [Fig. 228] The perfunctory execution, which was later televised, was met with cheering and weeping crowds throughout Romania.



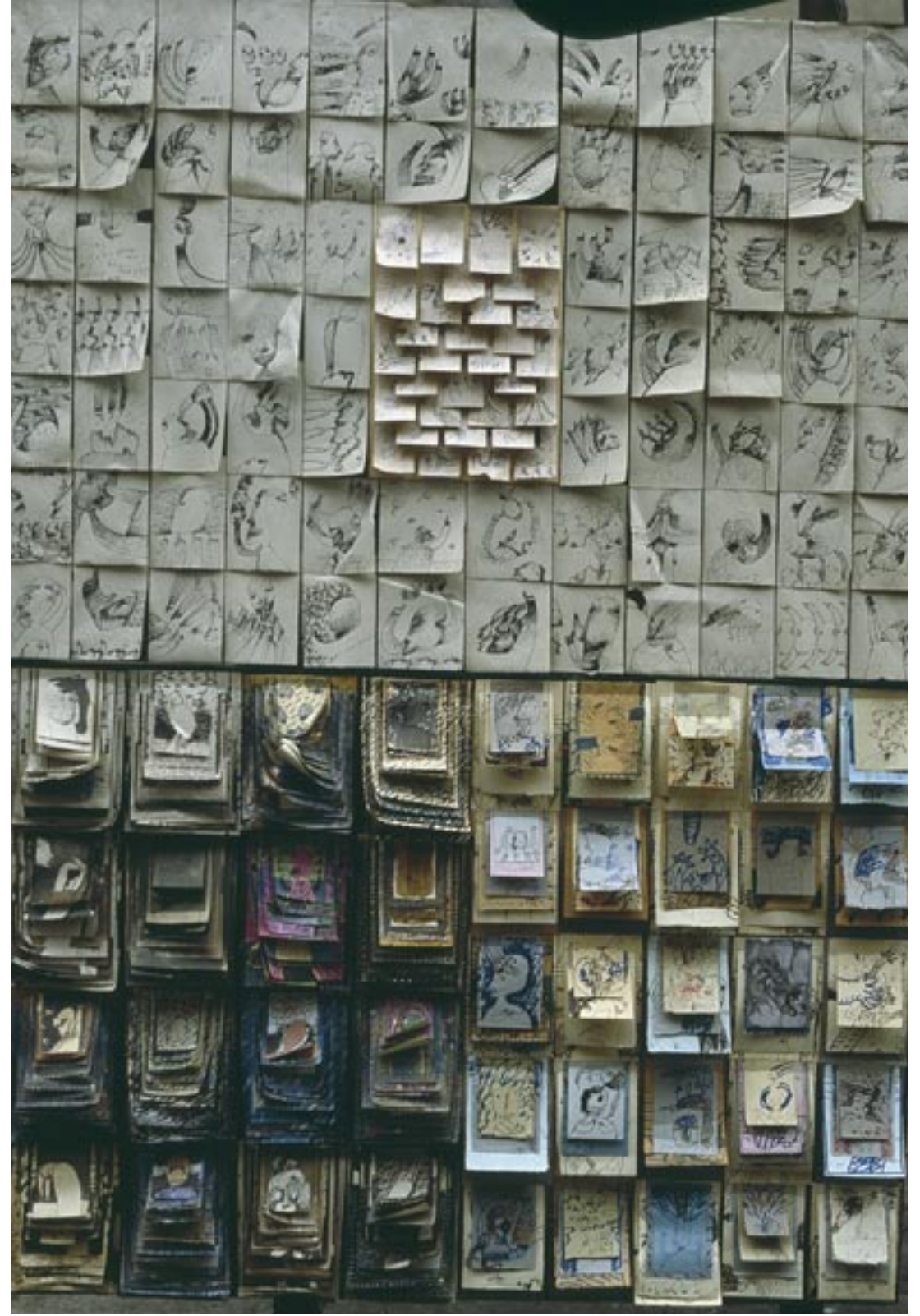
Fig. 4
View of Timisoara.

The tape of the event showed the couple as arrogant, defiant, and unrepentant to the very end. Far from spectacular, the circumstances of the dictators' execution were stunning in their banality: the couple lay dead in a dilapidated, inner courtyard of an army base schoolhouse in the small town of Targoviste, eighty kilometers northwest of Bucharest. This scene stood in marked contrast to the fact that they had exercised absolute control over Romania for over twenty years, during which time they bankrupted the state, in large measure due to having built the ostentatious Palace of the People (Palatul Poporului), one of the three largest buildings in the world. [Fig. 139] For its construction, Ceausescu razed large sections of the middle of Bucharest, including villas, schools, monasteries, and other municipal buildings in a city once described as the "Paris of the East." These offenses (and many others) led to the Revolution, later discovered to have not been a popular uprising, but rather one orchestrated from within the party and those closest to the Ceausescus.

Early in 1990, Lia was approached to take a position in the new Youth Department in the Ministry of Culture as a result of her leadership role in the Art Academy



Fig. 3
View of Oradea.





Figs. 5–7, previous pages and above

Dan Perjovschi, *Anthropoteque*, 1990–1992; details of panels 1 and 4 and installation view; ink and watercolor on pastel on paper.

Courtesy of Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Sammlung Ludwig.

student movement during the Revolution. Seizing the opportunity for Dan to move to Bucharest, and because Dan was more familiar with the National Young Artist

Network (called Atelier 35),⁴ Lia declined the offer and suggested Dan (along with Carmen Popescu, a young art historian) in her place. Dan and Carmen were hired.⁵

In the decades following the Revolution, the Perjovschis rose to prominence both in Romania and abroad. Dan pioneered large-scale, site-specific drawing installations with literally thousands of figures, varying in scale and drawn on everything from the

floor to the walls and ceiling, depending on the site. [Figs. 5–7, 297–299] He would eventually use the fax machine and email to transmit his drawings, which he also collected in a number of artist books. [Figs. 8–9] Dan's reputation in Romania spread rapidly due to the drawings he began creating in 1991 for *Revista 22*, the leading Romanian resistance newspaper, established by



Figs. 8–9

Dan Perjovschi, *I shoot myself in the foot*, 2005, Exit Gallery, Peja, Kosovo: fax project; and detail, fax drawing.



the Romanian dissidents who founded Group for Social Dialogue (to which Dan still belongs).⁶ [Figs. 55–56] Dan continues to this day to work for *Revista 22*, using drawings to respond to and analyze specific social, cultural, and political topics covered by the newspaper. For *Revista 22*, Dan also wrote about contemporary art exhibitions and authored columns on body and performance art. Over time, his commentaries grew from analyses of local topics into discussions of the relationship between Romanian and international art, and he began to write short pieces on art and aesthetics for various magazines. In 1998, at the urging of Gabriela Adamesteanu, a noted Romanian novelist and former editor-in-chief of *Revista 22*, Dan contributed a biweekly column to *Revista 22*. Originally lengthy and discursive, these commentaries have become shorter and more concise over time. According to Dan, this is “because my writings mirror my drawings; because I like to be short and definitive.”⁷

Lia was first recognized for intensely personal body art performances, realized between 1987 and 2005. These actions were primarily concerned with identity but also incorporated interaction with the public. [Fig. 10] Her performance work overlapped with the development of her archive project, “Contemporary Art Archive Center

for Art Analysis (CAA/CAA),” which she began in 1997. [Fig. 161] From its inception, CAA/CAA has operated as an analytical and critical platform devoted to the scrutiny of the construction of history and aesthetic and social formations. Lia situates CAA/CAA in a global context that also analyzes the current evolution from labor- to knowledge-based societies and economies. As an outgrowth of CAA/CAA, she has begun to make drawings and small-scale models for what she calls the *Knowledge Museum*, which will have seven departments (see page 92). [Figs. 169, 226]

Together in 1992, the Perjovschis created their first pair of newspapers, which functioned as catalogues for their work. Lia expanded this practice under the rubric of CAA/CAA, which has produced numerous newspapers on specific themes. [Figs. 146–153] Also through CAA/CAA, Lia performs conceptual/pedagogical actions in workshops, a mode of art-making related to public education at the nexus of art practice, art institutions, and the analysis of history. She also uses drawing to meditate on these themes, sketching what she calls *Mind Maps (Diagrams)*. [Figs. 11, 322, 374] These conceptual diagrams chart dynamic and unexpected relationships culled from the books she reads on many topics. Her *Mind Maps (Diagrams)* reveal the interdependency of



Fig. 10

Lia Perjovschi, *I'm fighting for my right to right to be different*, July 1993; performance in Art Museum, Timisoara.

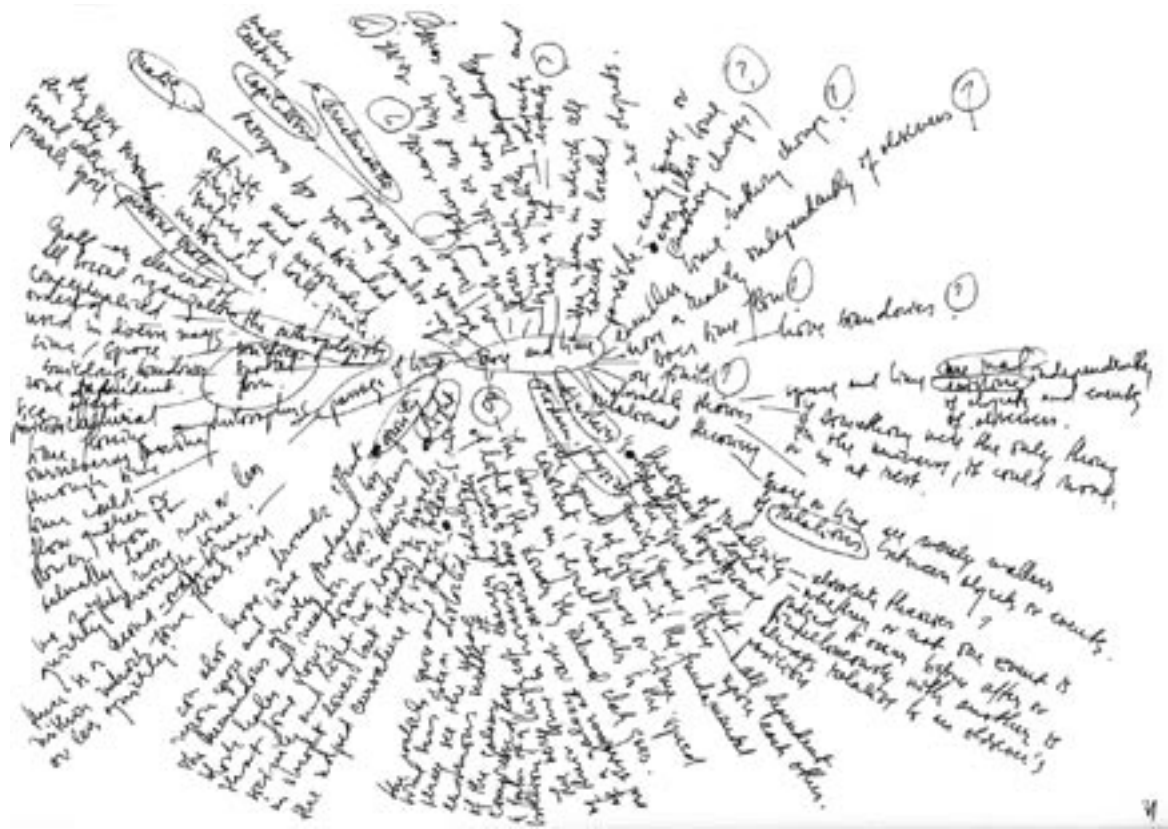


Fig. 11
Lia Perjovschi, *Mind Maps*
(Diagrams), 1999–2006; ink on
paper, two of a series of sixty.



Fig. 12, above
Lia Perjovschi, *Timeline: Romanian*
Culture from 500 BC until Today,
2006; installation in Turkish Bath,
Iasi; collage and drawing.



Fig. 13, above right
Dan Perjovschi, *Nice Show*, 1999;
marker drawing.

and architecture, and covered such topics as the human body, the city, XXI century, center and periphery, art market, cultural policies, and manipulation. Through this program, the Perjovschis succeeded in introducing the general Romanian public to avant-garde performance, installation, video, and conceptual art. The impact on artists, art institutions, and the public of this nationally televised series cannot be overstated. Equally impressive was the openness of Romanian television at that time, which broadcast images of body art performances so radical that few networks in the U.S. would air them even today. In the 2000s, the Perjovschis have traveled extensively and been involved in and commented critically upon the international art scene.⁸



Fig. 14
Dan Perjovschi, *We Have A Lot In*
Common, 2007; marker drawing.

diverse categories of information in ways that recall her *Timelines*, which feature idiosyncratic constructions of history, fleeting lines of development, regression, and circularity that reflect on the inherent artifice of historical time. [Figs. 12, 18, 377]

In 2000, the Perjovschis designed and hosted a television series, titled “Everything on View.” The series ran on Romanian National Television (TVR 1) for three hours (10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.) each Saturday for ten weeks from October to December. [Figs. 156, 360] Produced by Ruxandra Garofeanu and directed by Aurel Badea, the series was hosted by the Perjovschis, who appeared with historian Adrian Cioroianu (currently serving as the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Romanian government). “Everything on View” included sections on visual art, politics, dance, film, theater, literature,

Throughout their personal and artistic developments, Dan and Lia have lived as a couple and grown as individual artists. Despite their shared history and influences, they have developed remarkably consistent individual bodies of work, each internally coherent and distinct from the other. This retrospective exhibition honors the Perjovschis’ separate but mutually enhancing oeuvres in the spirit of an historical record of persistence, courage, and vision.

INTRODUCTION

Two images appear on the front cover of this catalogue: Dan Perjovschi’s drawing *Nice Show* (1999),⁹ and a photograph of Lia Perjovschi’s installation *Timeline*,¹⁰ which was exhibited at the second international Romanian Biennale in Iasi, Romania, 2006.¹¹ [Figs. 12–13] In Dan’s drawing, two viewers congratulate the prone Eastern European artist for his successful exhibition. The artist lies face down on the ground, profusely bleeding from having been stabbed in the back by the hammer and sickle, notorious symbols for the industrial

proletariat and the peasantry celebrated by communism. While the artist suffers from his physical and emotional wounds, the public remains insensitive to the foundations upon which his illustrious work rests; with the feeble word “nice,” it applauds the artist’s “show” without the slightest regard for how his historical experience produced such a critical vision.

Eight years later, in 2007, for his one-person wall-drawing installation at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, Dan made a second, related drawing. Two people stand chatting. One figure has the now-familiar hammer and sickle embedded in his back and the other has been stabbed in the back by his credit card. The man with the hammer and sickle says to the man with the credit card: “We have a lot in common.” [Fig. 14.] In this 2007 drawing, Dan—himself an artist of international renown—levels the playing field between the once suffering Eastern European artist and his previously smug capitalist comrade, who now bleeds to death in credit card debt.



These two drawings address the often false dichotomies between the West and countries of the former Soviet bloc, exposing the destructive potential the two systems paradoxically share. In another related drawing, Dan responds to the West’s caricature of peoples from the Balkans as strange and different, examining the psychological prejudices and xenophobic pretensions—national and ideological—that inform the two drawings described above. After nearly two decades of backbreaking work in the business of art, he writes:

I AM NOT EXOTIC
I AM EXHAUSTED

As a drawing composed only of text, this piece is unusual in Dan’s oeuvre.¹² But the words here function as images, summoning the concepts of exoticism and exhaustion and linking them in a suggested, but unresolved symmetry. While exoticism conjures individualistic notions of how another person comes to be considered different, exhaustion evokes a common sensation of deep fatigue. Dan’s drawing links the universal (the

human feeling of being exhausted) to the specific (the individual’s perception of what is “exotic”) through alliteration in the repetition of a consonant sound, “ex.” As an English prefix, “ex” is derived from the Latin for external, or outside, but it also means past. The wordplay leaves the artist caught in the conundrum of always remaining the other. Forever doomed to the periphery, somewhere other than the center, he cannot escape being seen as the outsider, while equally joining the center as a consequence of being a citizen from an ex-communist country and an ex-Eastern European; even though Romania joined the European Union in 2007. Such knotty paradoxes are a key part of what makes Dan’s drawings funny, even though the laughter is always self-conscious. For viewers cannot help but reflect on the realities he portrays, which contributes to their increasing sense of discomfort.

Figs. 15–16, previous page and above

Lia Perjovschi, *Research File. General Timeline: From Dinosaurs to Google Going China*, 1997–2006; collage and drawing on paper, two in a series of thirty-one.

In an earlier version of the drawing, one that includes a figure, Dan distributed the words in a different way:

I AM NOT
EXOTIC
I AM
EXHAUSTED

This placement of the words on the page is important, since it emphasizes his identity: “I AM NOT” and “I AM.” Dan’s personalized statement does not accuse viewers, but still subtly suggests that it is they who have pictured him as the exotic Romanian. [Fig. 17] When read vertically, the drawing creates a visual pattern, with the vowels A/E/A/E alternating with the phrases “AM EXOTIC” and “AM EXHAUSTED.” This pattern suggests connections between Dan’s work and Concrete Poetry, which emphasizes the visual or auditory content and form of language.¹³ Taken together, these aspects of the otherwise seemingly simple work have the tendency to erase the specific, namely each viewer’s particular relation to the exotic, and replace it with the more common idea of being completely worn out. This approach undermines difference (exoticism) by using humor to level the circumstances in which competition and alienation emerge so that commonality (exhaustion) is emphasized. As Dan has noted, he first made this drawing in 2002 as a way to “escape” what he called “this jail-exhibition . . . the exoticism of ‘After the Wall’ [the exhibition of Balkan art at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 1999].”¹⁴ Given Dan’s sense that the exhibition presented Eastern European artists as exotic, it is ironic that the show was curated by Bojana Pejic, herself a Serbian art historian and, therefore, another “exotic” from the Balkans. In this comment and his work, Dan offers a critique of the impulse of art criticism to turn selected groups of artists and their work into curiosities. In this sense, Dan’s work calls attention to the difficulties that attend the representation of historical processes, as well as the subsequent circulation of those representations outside their original contexts.

For her part, Lia’s work is also engaged with the complexities of history, taking political and personal

experience, as well as representation itself, as its main themes. In her 2006 *Timeline* of Romanian history, she wrote directly on the wall in Iasi, selecting dates that create a narrative of events most significant to her. [Fig. 18] This obstinately personal work has little in common with official, so-called objective histories, which can flatten out and obscure interpersonal relationships and historical interconnections in ways that render events hardly recognizable to those who have experienced them. History lives for Lia. She constantly reinterprets it in relation to her patterns of learning.

Lia’s interest in timelines may be understood as a form of retaliation: it represents the assertion of the subject in control of her sense of time’s meaning, emphasizing the authenticity of individual choice in the narrative of how history develops. Below the handwritten dates of *Timeline*, Lia glued photocopied images that indicate



Fig. 17
Dan Perjovschi, cover of *art of today—yesterday news*, 2002; newspaper.



Fig. 18
Lia Perjovschi, *Timeline: Romanian Culture from 500 BC until Today*, 2006; installation in Turkish Bath, Iasi; collage and drawing.

individuals, places, buildings, and objects—central axes around which history is constructed and unfolds. Although these images are intended to animate and augment the *Timeline*, the pictures actually reinforce the instability of history. For these apparently self-contained and self-evidently meaningful images require captions to articulate their references. Conversely, as German cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer pointed out in 1936, even with captions, images can quickly lose recognizability and meaning. His observations have been repeated, mostly without citation, by theorists especially of photography ever since.¹⁵

Indeed, Lia’s insistence upon accurate citation reveals her passion for righting injustice and correcting history.

Such is the response of one who has been made to submit to the distortion of events by the active reshaping of them, as it was in Romania under the yoke of dictatorship. But her own eccentric renditions of time and events also reiterate such practices by intrinsically questioning the notion of historical fact. Thus, Lia’s *Timelines* are aesthetic models for broader considerations of how history is shaped and by whom; focusing on key historical figures and representations of them, they are also meditations on the complexity of visual images and their importance to notions of time and memory. [Figs. 15–16] In this regard, her work might be said to reflect on the interrelationships among power, prestige, and oppression, such as those immortalized by the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley in his sonnet *Ozymandias* of 1818. In the poem, Shelley described the Egyptian Pharaoh Rameses II (1304–1237 BCE), known to the Greeks as Ozymandias.



Fig. 19
Dan Perjovschi, *Bringing Western Values*, 2003; chalk on wall.

He wrote that the great leader's funeral monument bears this inscription:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!

But Shelley completes this picture by observing:

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.¹⁶

Time sweeps clean the past. The time Shelley invokes here is the same time that in her work Lia simultaneously seeks to capture, contain, and parody. This construction of time is also the time that Dan's fleeting drawing installations (which are almost always destroyed after the exhibition) reinscribe as temporary pictures of the vanity of life and art. In these ways, the Perjovschis' works touch upon the ancient theme of *vanitas* in a new visual vocabulary, one that cautions viewers about the transience of life and the egotism of art.

Lia's Romanian *Timeline* also captures qualities of temporal and spatial hybridity, introducing a complexity that troubles historians' attempts to organize and chart time. She installed her *Timeline* in a ruined and recently semi-reconstructed Turkish bathhouse,

a historic monument remarkable for its architecture and for being the only building of its kind preserved within a monastic ensemble of buildings: the Cetatuiia Monastery, a priory of the Eastern Orthodox Christian faith in Iasi.¹⁷ Thus, the very placement of Lia's installation encapsulated the inconsistencies and contradictions of historical hybrids. Using them as a metaphor for the incongruities of the twenty-first century itself, Lia's Iasi *Timeline* points to the conceit in imaging that this moment in history represents the first truly global culture, forgetting the silk and spice trade routes crisscrossing the planet and the great migrations out of Africa that a hundred thousand years earlier gave rise to different races. Lia's *Timelines* plunge viewers into contemplation, stirring them to consider how the onslaught of competing conditions and sources of knowledge mesh national and international narratives in a cacophony of information. In addition to her *Timelines*, she



Fig. 20
Dan and Lia Perjovschi, *4 Us*, 1992; installation in cellar of Podul Gallery, Bucharest.

draws *Mind Maps* (*Diagrams*) on a variety of topics, highly personal schemas that lay out intricate patterns of associations whose materials she culls from her readings on a wide range of subjects and themes. Evident in her *Mind Maps* (*Diagrams*) and in other works, Lia's eclecticism demonstrates how knowledge is constructed through an amalgamate of patterns of interrelationships.¹⁸

What I am pointing out about the two works on the cover of this catalogue is how they demonstrate some of the ways in which the Perjovschis' art explores questions of who possesses the power to shape history and how individuals and collectives are perceived within history. Such concerns are tied both to the distortions of history through which the Perjovschis have lived, and to the contentious historical context they entered in 1990, a situation that put an end to their twenty-seven years behind the Iron Curtain. In this sense, it is both ironic and poignant that voices from the West sought to prescribe, if not curtail, the notion of historical self-determination just at the moment when Romanians began to take charge of it. For in the summer of 1989, just months before the Romanian Revolution, Francis Fukuyama published his infamous essay "The End of History?"¹⁹ Fukuyama, at the time deputy director of the U.S. State Department's policy planning staff and analyst at the conservative RAND Corporation, had already claimed the end of "ideological evolution." He argued that this shift in constructions of knowledge and politics would bring about the advent of universal Western-style liberal democracy — never mind the complexities of the shifting ideological cross-breeding taking place around the world. In this "new world order," as it was



Fig. 21
Lia Perjovschi, *Listen: Report from Belgrade*, 1999, performance taping; interviews with Belgrade citizens after NATO bombings.

called in the 1990s, history would still be dictated from above, even as it simultaneously became a commodity in the global market and, paradoxically, would be prescribed by the only remaining superpower, the United States, which itself had lost credibility and become increasingly suspect.

Into this fray, the Perjovschis unleashed their art and its bold individual, social, and historical critique. Consider Dan's drawing *Bringing Western Values* of 2003, which could be said to have addressed retrospectively the arrogant contradictions of Fukuyama's (later discarded) pronouncements. [Fig. 19] In *Bringing Western Values*, Dan juxtaposed two women: one wears the traditional burqa (the loose garment with veiled eyeholes worn by Muslim women), and the other keeps her head modestly covered with the veil of the burqa, but her body is naked below it. In this drawing, Dan addressed the vanity that informs the project of bringing liberal democracy to "fundamentalist" nations.

His drawing countered the ill-conceived notion that Western civilization is somehow superior with a picture that shows how the West “liberates” women by turning them into sex objects. Dan made this drawing at a time when he was “really mad” (as he phrased it) about the Bush administration’s program of “Winning Hearts and Minds” in the Middle East by alternately dropping bombs and food on populations.²⁰ Dan could not have anticipated that three years after creating *Bringing Western Values*, in 2006, the paparazzi would photograph pop star Britney Spears stepping out of a limousine wearing no underpants. In this context, his drawing became prophetic of just how confused Western values had become at the very moment that Romania was in the process of joining the West by becoming part of the European Union.



Fig. 22
Dan Perjovschi, *Alone and Gray*,
1989; ink on paper.

Lia has also brought attention to such issues. In 1999, for example, she recorded interviews with Serbian citizens soon after NATO forces bombed the capital city of Belgrade in April of that year. Their testimonials recounted the fear and astonishment of being bombed by the very forces intended to protect them. Titling her action *Listen: Report from Belgrade* (1999), Lia exhibited photographs of her intervention, as well as the tapes (to which the public could listen) as her contribution to the exhibition “BELIEF” in Belgrade that summer.²¹ [Fig. 21] In this way, she provided aesthetic witness to traumatic events and exposed the self-satisfaction of triumphal historical pronouncements, as well as the hypocritical actions of liberal democracies.

I began this introduction by discussing the two cover images on this catalogue in order to emphasize how the Perjovschis’ work exhibits densely intricate, overlapping, and shared states of mind. Both artists have emerged from the obscurity in which Romania once found itself with work that testifies to the capacity of art to instruct and heal. The Perjovschis’ art also bears witness to how, before 1990, Romanian artists found their means of expression in humble materials, resourcefully transforming meager assets into powerful aesthetic commentaries on the human condition. Dan and Lia continue today to live and work modestly, to create ephemeral installations and actions, and to eschew the increasingly self-conscious art-world spectacle. To remember the lessons of their past, I have selected an illustration for the back cover of this exhibition catalogue to remind the public of the foundational conditions of their lives and art. It is a documentary photograph of the Perjovschis’ first collaborative installation, *4 Us*, which they made in 1992. [Fig. 20]

In *4 Us*, Lia and Dan lined in transparent plastic the narrow space of a dank, dark, tiny basement room of the Bucharest building that housed the Artist’s Union gallery Podul.²² The installation was part of a group show titled “Transparency,” curated by art historian Alexandra Titu. For this exhibition, the Perjovschis decided to remain at a distance from the other artists. As Dan pointed out: “At the time the habit was to stuff the space



Figs. 23–24
Lia Perjovschi, *Abdeckplane*, 1996;
marker on plastic sheet.

EROII DIN TIMIȘOARA SÎNT
NEMURITORI
SĂ FIE JUDECAȚI
ÎN DICTATURĂ
ȘI COMUNISMUL
ȘI COMUNISMUL
ȘI CEAUȘESCU
LA SIBIU SE TRAGE ÎN POPULAȚIE
ȘI CEAUȘESCU
ȘI CEAUȘESCU
ȘI CEAUȘESCU

with art works, like a huge cacophony, and we wanted a bit of space for us; the gallery was called ‘The Attic,’ so we chose the cellar.”²³ Separating themselves from the others while they continued to participate in the exhibition, the Perjovschis established what would become their signature position within Romanian culture: they remain simultaneously at the center, exemplary of the most advanced experimental art in Romania, and at the periphery, where they critique its institutions and artistic practices.

More important, *4 Us* commemorated the cellar room in which Dan and Lia had lived in Bucharest when Dan first moved there from Oradea.²⁴ Their tiny room—much like the space in *4 Us*—was large enough only for their single bed, which they shared with cockroaches; the toilet and running water, shared with others, was down the hall. Wrapping *4 Us* in plastic, they closed off a symbol of their intimate past, as well as honored the struggle of their lives: packing up an image of their shared history in a manner also permitting its transparency. Is it any wonder, given such experiences, that Dan created a series of works titled *Alone and Gray* (1987–1989)? [Fig. 22] Or that Lia would continue her childhood practice of repetitively “drawing rain” in the creation of works that transformed falling water into whole fields of meditational graphic marks?

Lia’s technique is evident in *Abdeckplane* (1996), a drawing made on plastic sheeting used to protect surfaces during house painting. Lia maintained the German word for the sheet—*Abdeckplane*—as the title for the work, which is a combination drawing and sculpture. [Figs. 23–24] Especially characteristic of the kinds of inexpensive and readily available materials that the Perjovschis would select for making art, the unassuming plastic was made to become a complex image by cross-hatching the entire surface in black marker. When the marker faded in some places, it changed color into shades of purple and beige. When the sheet is arranged in different formations of heaps and folds, a strange but fantastic landscape results. The repetitive process of making the same marks in order to produce such an object is precisely the reflective action

one needed to travel mentally away from the harsh circumstances of life in pre-1989 Romania. Like a magic carpet, an object like *Abdeckplane* could transport its maker to other lands. Once the Perjovschis began to travel in 1990, however, such an object, purchased in one of those previously “foreign” places, became iconic of their journey.

The distance traversed between such works as *Nice Show* and *Timeline*, on the front cover of this book, and *4 Us*, on the back cover, is the expanse charted by this retrospective, the space between Dan and Lia Perjovschi’s past and their present.

BEFORE AUGURS AFTER: PART I DAN

Dan Perjovschi remembered the Revolution, especially as he and Lia experienced it in Sibiu:

Three degrees of people participated in the Revolution: people in the windows making supportive gestures with peace signs; people walking on the walkways as if they are passers by; people in the street protesting. On the 21st of December, Ceausescu was still in power and we joined them.



Figs. 25–26, opposite page and above

Graffiti and tanks during Romanian Revolution, 1989. Translation of graffiti, top to bottom: The Heroes of Timisoara Are Immortal; Let Them Be Judged; Down With The Dictatorship; Down With

Communism; Down With Ceausescu; In Sibiu They Are Shooting At The People. From *Vom muri si vom fi liberi* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1990): 109, 193.

For the first time in my life it took guts to go on the street; we got the first gas and had police pointing guns at us, and the Army pointing guns at us, too. When we got to Sibiu, we left stuff at Lia’s parents house and joined the Revolution; we got caught and spent 8 or 9 days in Liviana Dan’s and Mircea Stanescu’s apartment; we cried when they announced that Ceausescu split. I had a beard so we could not go out. We guarded the building with kitchen knives; we drank water from compote; we lost track of days. In Sibiu more than 100 people were killed, including bad and good people. The Army fought the Securitate. By night we went to give blood; there were bullets; we went to the morgue to give blood; they didn’t need our blood because half the town had come to give blood. There were cars coming with bodies to the morgue. I would never forgive myself if we had gotten shot.²⁵

This is the way the Perjovschis made the transition from communism to representative democracy.

“Communism, like fascism, created an art which was used in the service of its own doctrine,” writes Romanian art historian and curator Ileana Pintilie in the introduction to her book on Romanian performance art, adding: “artists were asked to renounce intellectualism, individualism and cosmopolitanism [signs of the ‘decadence’ of the West].”²⁶ Pintilie further points out that Romanian intellectuals experienced a kind of “gulag” in the 1950s, during a time in which art was “organized in the form of ‘regional’ exhibitions” and “judged by artists and critics from Bucharest” whose authority emanated from the capital and who “imposed the party’s commands throughout the country.”²⁷ In the mid-1960s, pressure on Romanian artists to follow the communist doctrine of socialist realism eased. The relaxation of standards came to a close when the Soviet army and members of the Warsaw Pact invaded Prague in August 1968, ending the famed “Prague Spring,” itself an expression of Western antiauthoritarian youth movements that protested not only the Vietnam War but also Eastern bloc oppression. Unexpectedly Ceausescu

stood against Moscow and declared Romania’s solidarity with Czechoslovakia. For a few months, Romanians believed that their country might align itself with the West. Hopes were dashed as Ceausescu’s “anti-Soviet declarations” were increasingly understood to be “pure rhetoric.”²⁸ The hardening of communist ideology in Romania increased in the 1970s, with “severe tightening of political control in all domains” and with the growth of Ceausescu’s “neo-Stalinist cult.”²⁹ Moreover, while the leaders of the Union of Artists were considered “enlightened” for turning a blind eye to what artists made in their studios, these very same officials were also recognized as “despots,” imposing strict restrictions on public culture and continually regulating artists. In response, “a split artistic personality” developed, dividing artists between their “public style” (practiced for official exhibitions) and “personal style” (practiced in the studio).³⁰

Harsher political conditions in the 1980s affected all aspects of private life. As I wrote in 1993:

Silence was maintained efficiently by the Romanian secret police, the Securitate, which enforced Ceausescu’s crushing control. Its success derived in large measure from the sheer force of rumor, and the fact that the Securitate,

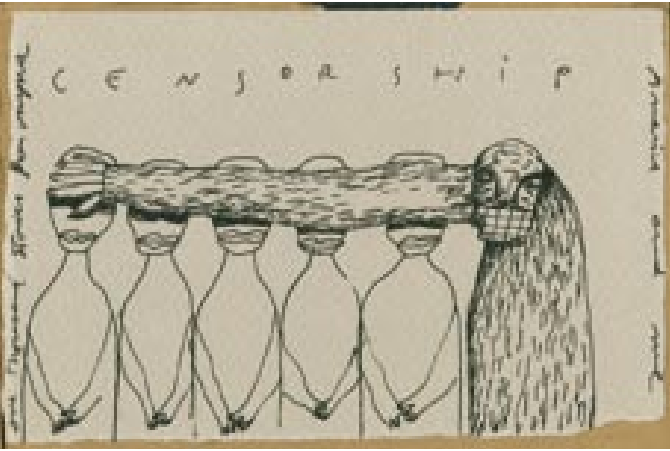


Fig. 27
Dan Perjovschi, one of sixty-seven, *Postcards from America*, 1994;; ink on pastel paper mounted on cardboard. Courtesy of private collection.

with its system of informers, numbered about one in six Romanian citizens. No one remained above suspicion. Fear and secrecy resulted in the effective supervision of all aspects of Romanian life. Stealth was augmented by reports of reprisals against challenges to authority, threats that were invigorated by actual punishments. Extreme even among nations of the former Soviet bloc, Romanians endured their conditions in isolation. Preventing its citizens from travel, the government retained Romanian passports and politically sequestered the nation from exchange with most of the world. Romania resembled a concentration camp especially in the late 1970s and 1980s when the Perjovschis were in their teens and twenties.³¹

The devastating drop in the standard of Romanian living throughout the 1980s resulted, in large measure, from both Ceausescu’s fanatical determination to pay off the national debt and his continued building campaign. During the period, “hope of change or any alternative declined.”³² Coping with their own despair, Romanians developed a wicked sense of humor, typified by the following joke, popular in the late 1980s:

A woman goes into a Bucharest butcher shop and asks the two butchers behind the empty counter for a steak. They reply politely, “We have no steaks.” She requests a chicken. “No chickens.” “How about some bacon?” “No bacon.” Undaunted, she continues: “A sausage?” “No sausage.” “Fish?” “No fish.” Departing as graciously as she entered, she thanks the butchers for their assistance. One butcher observes: “What a crazy woman.” The other butcher replies: “Yes, but what a memory!”

Dan and Lia Perjovschi began their artistic careers in the midst of this disastrous national situation, saved in part by their shared mental clarity and sense of the tragic comedy of their times.

“How it really was in 1985?” Dan began his answer to a question about his years in the Academy of Art in Iasi.



Fig. 28, top
Dan Perjovschi, *Boat*, 4 March 1967; ink on paper.

Fig. 29, above
Dan Perjovschi, *Alone and Gray*, 1988; paint on paper.

“The water in the glass froze in the dorm; I was living on the fat from the pig that my parents sent me with garlic and tomato on it; we got a food card and sold it to buy books; we stole soup.”³³ Dan continued:

Between 1971 and 1975, I was in grammar school. In 1972, Ceausescu launched his “July Thesis,” the first time he interfered in the realm of culture after he came back from North Korea and made guidelines about Romanian culture that explained what should be done in all cultural productions. The repression began in 1973. Lia and I never joined the Communist Party, which



Figs. 30–33
Dan Perjovschi, *Press Stress*, 1999;
installation and details, including
Romanian lei with portrait of
Constantin Brancusi folded into
boats. Courtesy of Collection
Marius Babias, Berlin.



was very unusual for the people who were first in their class. When we graduated, Ceausescu mandated that painting would be taught at only one of the four art academies across Romania; they tried to limit access and they also blocked access to the Union of Artists, which gave one the right to earn money, have a studio, gallery exhibitions, and borrow money to do a catalogue. In the beginning of the 1980s, they froze even the right to join the Union of Artists and froze access to teaching in the art schools.³⁴

Ten years after the 1989 Revolution, Dan reflected on the dire period when he was studying at the Academy of Art in Iasi, performing *Still Life* (1999) during “Periferic 2,” a performance festival in Iasi. [Figs. 270–272] For his performance, Dan set up an artist’s easel and began painting a still life from a composition that artist Matei Bejanaru had arranged for him, using a Romanian hand-carved wooden bowl, a tall brown ceramic water pitcher, and a red ceramic teapot. Bejanaru positioned these objects on a wrinkled bit of unprimed canvas, with an additional piece of cloth appropriately draped for teaching students to draw contour and shadow. Dan sat painting this banal image for four hours, demonstrating his skill at modeling and realism, and invoking the dreary tedium and dogged rigidity of the regime’s outmoded, Stalinist-like approach to artistic training.

The earliest extant images created by Dan were saved by his Aunt Leonida. “Tanti Nono,” as the family called her, played a key role in encouraging and supporting Dan’s desire to be an artist, carefully saving several drawings of elaborate sailing vessels Dan had made in 1967, when he was six.³⁵ [Fig. 28] Fish swim in the water surrounding Dan’s ships—stylized fish that would reappear, doubling as surrealist eyes, in the work he produced at the art academy nearly twenty years later. [Figs. 29, 331–333, 335] Like fish, boats also return in Dan’s oeuvre.³⁶ Small rowboats dot the surface of his installation *Press Stress* (1999). [Figs. 30–33] But in this work the awe of the child has been replaced with the incisive, analytical, and yet playful vision of the mature artist. For Dan made the tiny crafts in *Press Stress* by

folding paper *lei* (Romanian currency) and pinning the resulting boats to pages of the weekly journal *Revista 22*, as well as other Romanian newspapers in which his interviews or drawings appear. These include foreign newspapers like *Letzebuurger Land* with whom Dan published drawings as his contribution to the European Biennale “Manifesta 2” in 1998. With the newspapers as background, Dan intended to present a wall where only drawings, rather than language, could be seen. This wall of images became the metaphorical sea on which the money-*cum*-boats bobbed. Floating on the newspapers, the boats wryly ride the waves of current events that trouble the social waters of Romanian cultural and political life as reported in *Revista 22*. In this way, Dan indicates that, as a member of the media himself, he too is responsible for the stress portrayed in and caused by the press, but can relieve it through the humor of his drawings.

Press Stress also comments on the relation between economics and art. For the historical portrait printed on the lei Dan used for his boats is none other than the renowned Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi. Brancusi’s portrait, however, decorates the lowest denomination of paper lei, money so devalued that it has almost no worth. By using currency to make art, *Press Stress* accentuates the relation between the diminished value of Romanian money and old news; it also underscores the economic poverty of this culturally rich nation whose most celebrated artist appears on its least valued currency. Dan made this work during a period when controversy raged worldwide about how to renovate Brancusi’s famed World War I memorial complex. Brancusi’s memorial had been installed in the Romanian town of Targu-Jiu in 1938, and was a cultural treasure that the Romanian communist government in the 1950s threatened to demolish as an example of “bourgeois art.”³⁷ Under the leadership of Emil Constantinescu, the government sought to renovate this sculptural ensemble—which includes Brancusi’s much-admired sculptures *Endless Column* (1918, 1938), *Gate of the Kiss* (1937), and *Table of Silence* (1937–1938)—as a special millennium project to be completed by the year

2000 at a cost of \$2 million.³⁸ Such cultural expenditures, however significant, appeared excessive during a period of economic hardship, when the Romanian economy struggled to recover from the past and enter the European Union.

Finally, as much as *Press Stress* pointed to the irreconcilable contradictions within Romania, Dan made the work for a Western European audience, and exhibited it first in Stockholm in “After the Wall” (discussed in the Introduction). In this international context, *Press Stress* dryly mocked the West’s tendency to identify Brancusi as the only Romanian artist of interest or value. It also cleverly presented Dan as Brancusi’s heir, juxtaposing a color photograph of Dan (who appears in an interview in one of the newspapers) with the Brancusi/lei boats. In this way, Dan suggested an association between himself and Brancusi that is impossible to miss. Indeed, in his first interview (while still a student in the art academy in 1985), Dan spoke of Brancusi. “After the camp we did near Tirgu-Mures, where I saw some sculpted portals in the manner of Brancusi,” he told fellow artist/interviewer Gabriel Brojboiu, “I tried to

merge these motifs—the portal and the portrait.”³⁹ Although Dan believes today that this statement represents “youngster bravura,” it is significant that Brancusi again appears in *Press Stress*.⁴⁰

A newspaper article saved by Tanti Nono also demonstrates the continuity of themes that have fascinated Dan throughout his life. [Fig. 34] It describes an annual contest in Sibiu that took place in 1967, on the International Day of the Child, when children were invited to draw directly on the pavement. Reflecting on the themes of that article, Dan remembers:

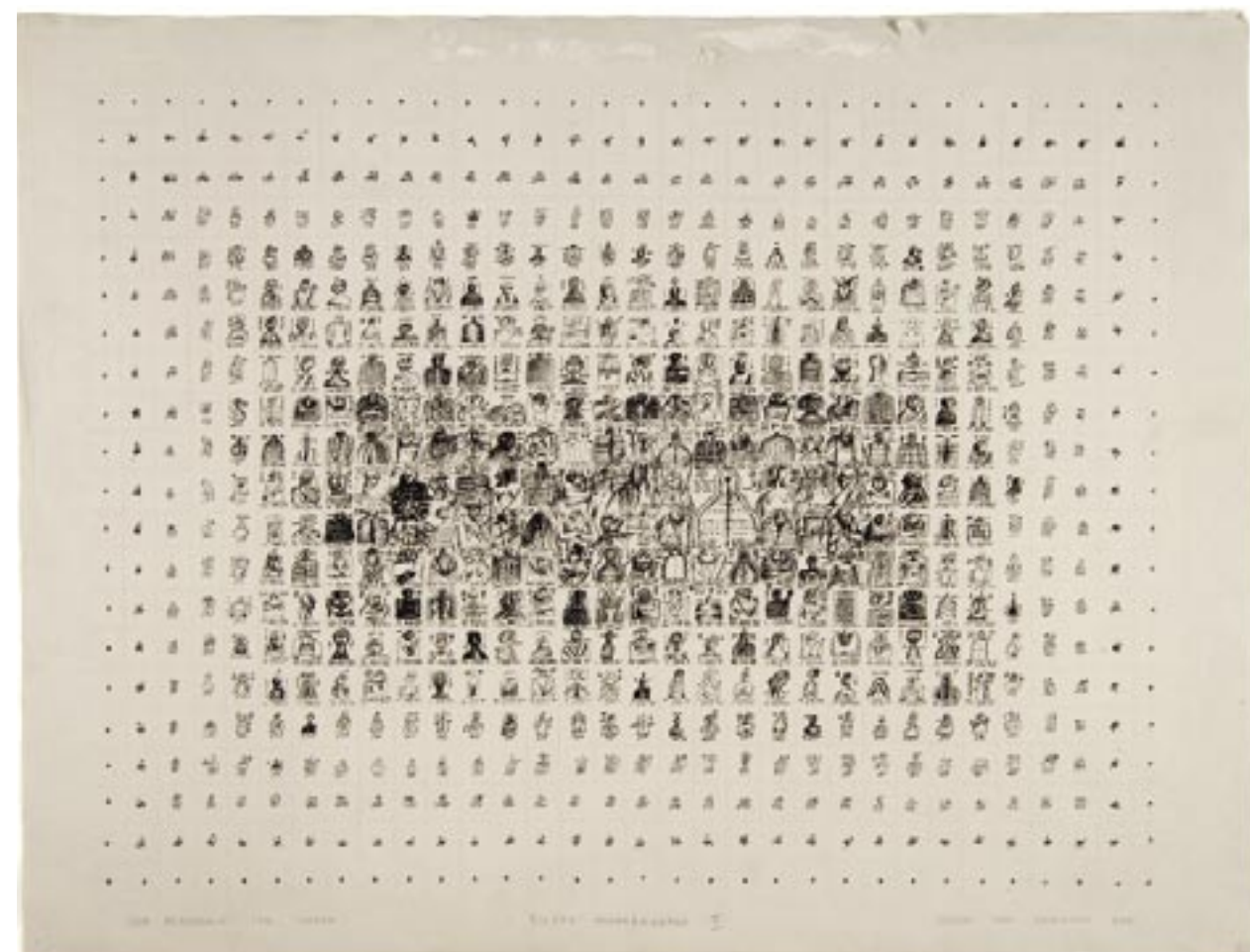
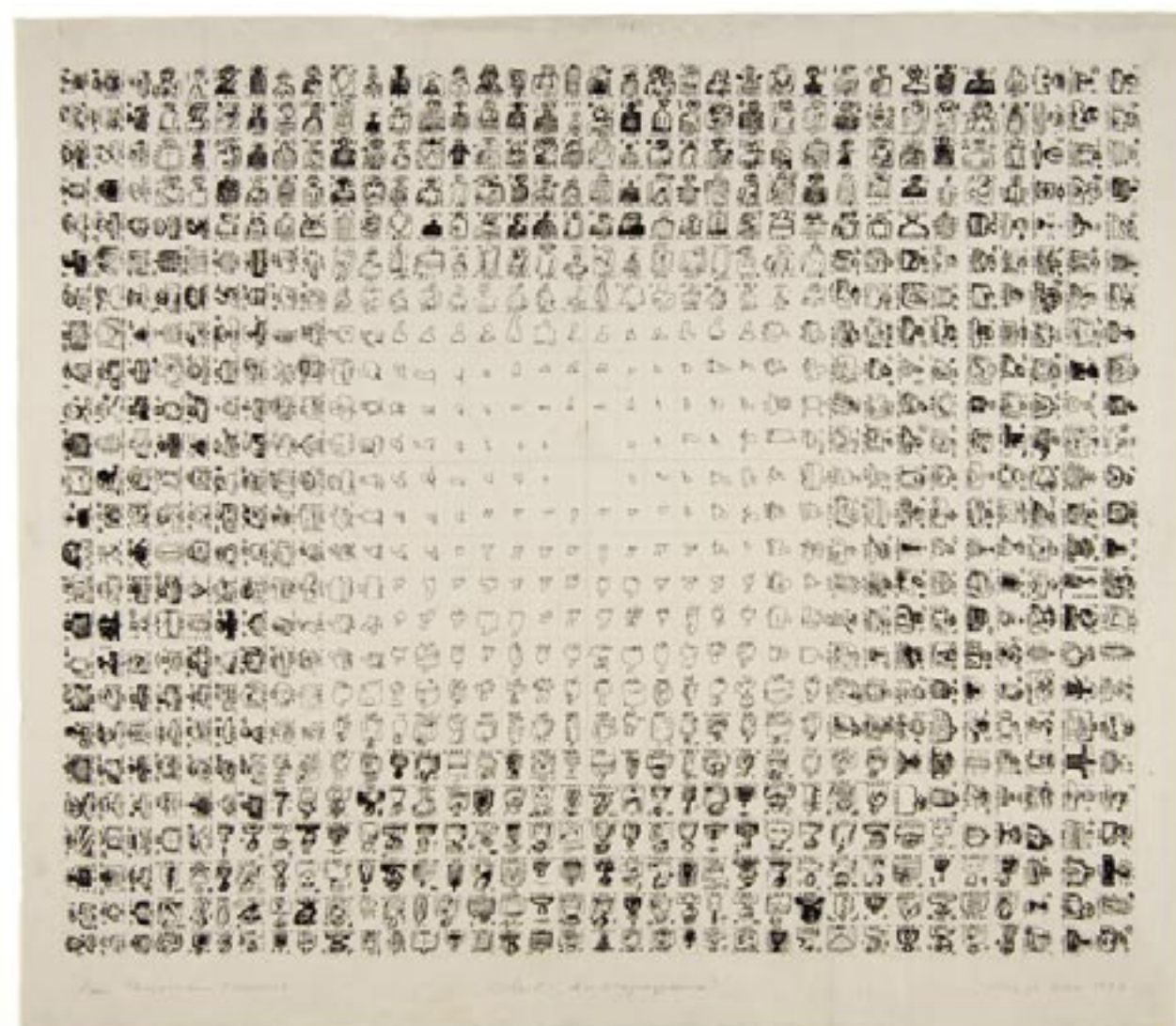
As usual in the communist country, all kids’ contests had to be dedicated to World Peace. This contest was held as a function of the communist kids’ organization called “Pioneers.” At eight years old when you entered first grade, you were obliged to become a Pioneer; they gave you a red tie around your neck and you became part of a quasi-military type of organization. Later on when Ceausescu developed his theory of defending communism and imagined the concept of



Fig. 34–35, above and right
Dan Perjovschi (middle left)
drawing on pavement during
“International Day of the Child,”
1967, and during 9th Biennale,
Istanbul, 2005.

**Figs. 36–38, opposite and
following pages**
Dan Perjovschi, detail, *Cycle Anthro-
pograme II*, 1986; *Cycle Anthro-
pograme I*, 1986; *Cycle Anthropograme
II*, 1986; ink on paper.







Total War, a part [of the nation's defense] was allocated to Pioneers (from eight to fourteen years old). I did not know at the time I was part of that machinery . . . so much for World Peace. So I'm afraid I got the second or third prize for some stupid stereotype of a Peace drawing.⁴¹

Although today Dan deprecates his activities as a Pioneer for all that they implied about state propaganda, the clipping shows that Dan's social training accounts, in part, for his commitment to ephemeral and participatory public art. In other words, the techniques Dan learned in youth programs paradoxically shaped his own methods, which would later critique the very apparatus that influenced them. In addition, the competition had the children drawing on the pavement in blocks assigned to them. These squares may also explain part of Dan's predisposition to employ squares in his own early drawings, units that would become grids in his mature floor, window, and wall installations.

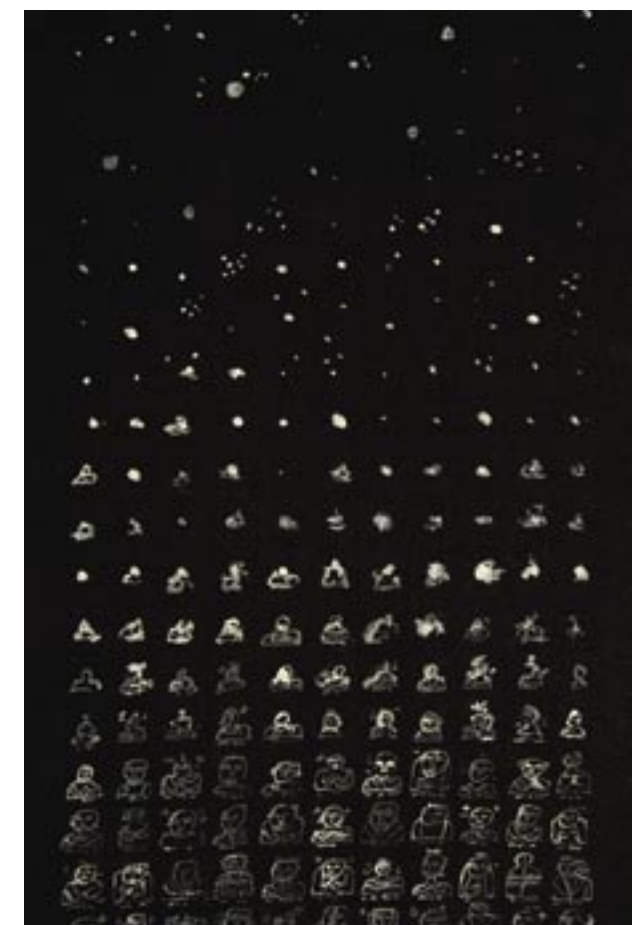
Undeniably, the structure of the grid is foundational in Dan's work, and he arrived at its organizing principle in the mid-1980s, when he began working toward his graduation exhibition at the Academy of Art. As he explained to Gabriel Brojboiu:

I worked for this show for two years. I now look back and see a kind of path that I didn't intend from the beginning. The first works were events in my life. The first work in the show is *The Bride*.⁴² Then I tried to avoid the banality of portraits, which are a familiar genre, by fading the central figure into the background and then painting an egg instead of a head. Then I put some portraits in a triangle, or I dislocated the head from the trunk and put them into a cage, like the self-portrait. . . . The two halves of the portrait or the two halves of the portals come together to form another personality. On the other hand, I assumed symmetry as a provocation, as a problem that has to be solved. And this theme and this problem, I will continue after the show, which is just a pause on a path that is much longer.⁴³

The portal, namely the cube within which he drew his portraits, is the container for a wide variety of figures Dan drew in grids on an equally diverse range of media. As Dan would later add: "These portal characters eventually shrunk into a grid."⁴⁴

Some of the earliest works in which Dan employed the portal-turned-grid are a group of drawings from 1986: *Cycle Anthropograme I* and *II*, *Scroll I* and *II*, and *Confessional*.⁴⁵ [Figs. 36–43, 337] In the two *Scroll* drawings in this exhibition, Dan drew hundreds of small figures inside the portal/grids using white ink on delicate sheets of carbon paper, held together by clear tape.⁴⁶ In *Scroll II*, the figures gradually disappear, as they also do in *Cycle Anthropograme I* and *II*, where the drawings fade either in the center or margins of the compositions, leaving a void. Some of the fantastic and infinitely varied figures in both *Cycle Anthropograme I* and *II* resemble devils, jesters, and other character analogies to individuals of the period. A female figure in *Cycle Anthropograme II*, to the right of the composite central figure with head and shoulders resembling the dome of a church (Dan?), might possibly represent Lia.

For *Confessional*, Dan scratched images of figures both in and outside of grids on all three sides of the structure's walls, which comprise from three to five hanging scrolls per side, depending upon the size of the installation. That the public is invited to enter a confessional where the walls teem with figures suggests that they are being asked to confess to the people, metaphorically represented in Dan's drawings. Dan made and exhibited this work several years before the Revolution, certainly long before Romanian society began to examine its complex informant system: one so pervasive that it is only now beginning to be disclosed and one for which anything resembling a Truth and Reconciliation program will take years to be formed. The metaphorical witnesses scratched on the easily damaged walls of *Confessional* can only be viewed, however, when seen against an exterior source of light. The poetry of viewers' dependence upon illumination as an aspect of *Confessional* is striking for the way it requires both physical and mental insight to come from without before it may



Figs. 39–41, previous page and above
 Dan Perjovschi, *Scroll II*, 1986. ink on carbon paper.
 Courtesy of private collection. Courtesy collection
Scroll I, 1986; detail of *Scroll I*; Brad Marius.

be achieved within. The fragility of the work's construction is also moving for how it also alludes to the intricate and vulnerable task of righting the past and recovering from it.

Seven years later, Dan created *Scan* (1993), a work that relates to *Confessional*, by approaching the question of informants from a different perspective. [Figs. 46, 344] In the later work, Dan first laid out a grid on three large canvases and then drew in the hundreds of portraits that people the portals. Next he asked technicians to construct a system for surveying this populace, one in which a robotic camera systematically roams



Fig. 42–43
Dan Perjovschi, *Confessional I*, 1986; and detail 1986; six panels with drawings scratched onto carbon paper rolls, central panel with mirror.

across the ground of the huge drawing, and transmits the resulting images to a television monitor. By turning captured portraits into observations, *Scan* provides surveillance of the very same figures to whom viewers confessed in *Confessional*. Both works bear another striking similarity in reverse. The thirteen panels of *Confessional* all fit into the small commercial box (approximately 8" × 12" × 3") that originally housed the carbon paper rolls used in the work. These dimensions matter. Dan had few other options in pre-1990 Romania but to work on such humble materials where finer art papers were a luxury and difficult to obtain. But rather than depend on the outer worth of material, Dan focused on the philosophical significance of the inner meaning of art. At the same time, Dan eventually became so frustrated with the complicated and expensive technology needed for *Scan* that he made *Manual Scan* (1995). [Figs. 44–45] This portable sculpture contains a canvas roll (on which he drew a grid with figures). It is embedded in an iron frame, which, when cranked, moves the images in a loop. Ironically, because of its heavy metal frame, *Manual Scan* is also not easy to transport.

The twin themes of surveillance and portability so pervasive in Dan's work are also the subjects of his massive drawing installation *Anthropoteque* (1990–1992), an unsurpassed witness to the impossibility of fathoming cultural secrets and uncovering truths buried in the intertwining of society and individual lives. [Figs. 5–7, 47–49] *Anthropoteque* contains some 5,000 drawings assembled in units containing as many as fifteen flip images in graduated sizes, one on top of another. The whole can be broken down into movable panels so that the huge installation (measuring some ten feet high and sixteen feet long) can be carried in a suitcase—if necessary. Visually stunning, *Anthropoteque* must also be understood to have revolutionized the possibilities for contemporary drawing. For while some artists have worked on a similarly grand scale (Sol LeWitt's wall drawings come to mind), none have created a comparable installation so multilayered that it is simultaneously a drawing, an assemblage (of uneven stacks, varying in size, color, and number of flip drawings),



Figs. 44–45, left and below
Dan Perjovschi, *Manual Scan*, 1994; detail; ink on canvas, iron frame, and crank.

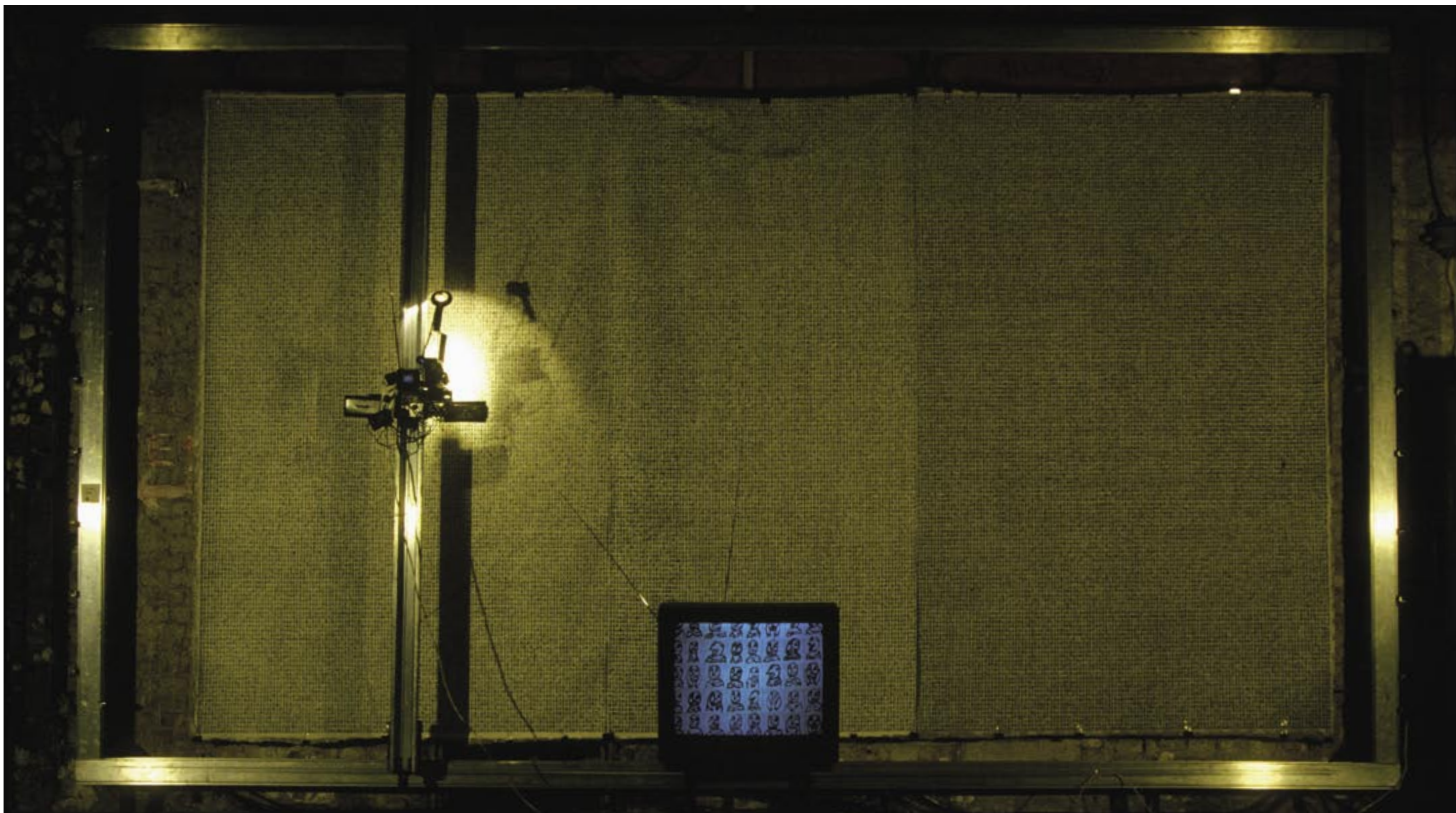
Fig. 46, following pages
Dan Perjovschi, *Scan*, 1993; ink on three canvases, computerized scanner, and monitor, with locally closed circuit video and live Internet broadcast.

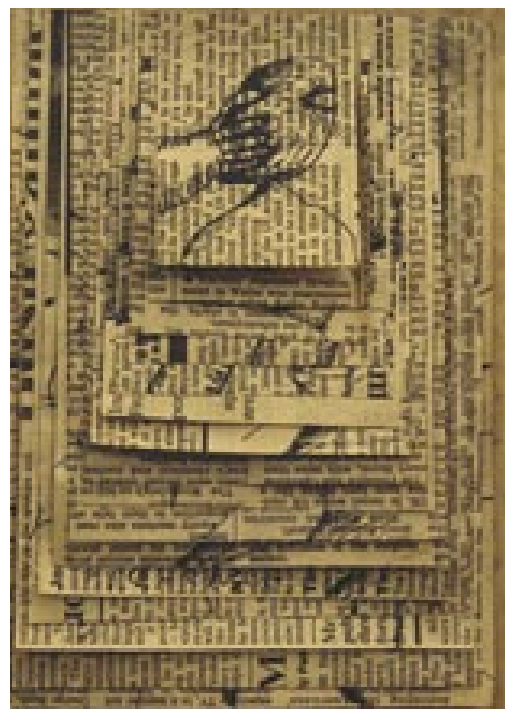
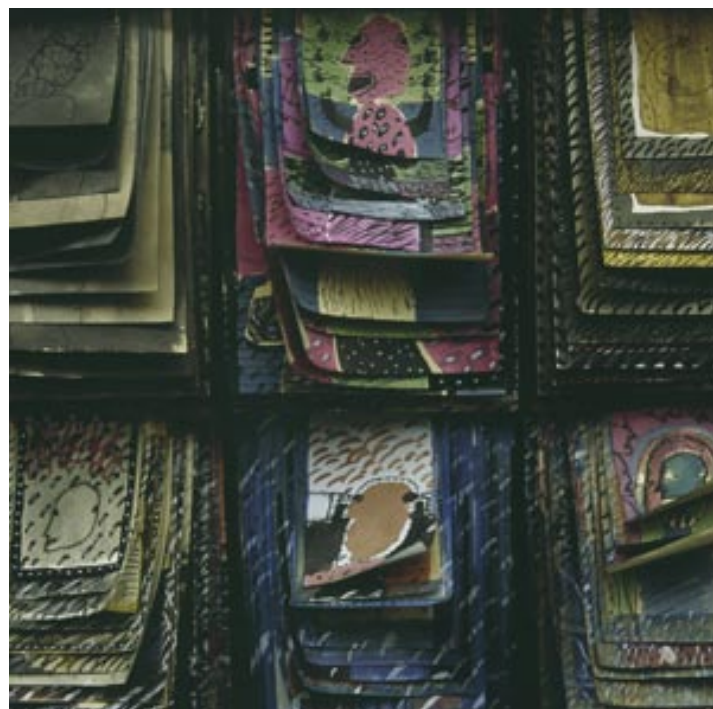
and a painting (with colors ranging from vibrant, mixed shades to muted monochrome tones). Initially, Dan intended the drawings to be handled so that, theoretically, one could flip through and see every image. But even when this was still possible (before the work had entered a museum collection), seeing all the work was a practical impossibility because of the size of the piece, the number of drawings, their inaccessibility (some installed too high, others too low), and the way one drawing nested inextricably within another.

In addition to its commanding physical appearance and potential for audience interaction, *Anthropoteque* is emotionally gripping, especially when considered in the context in which it was created: when the memory of total state control over the Romanian people was fresh, and when the specter of full-scale government surveillance continued to live in the minds of Romanian citizens. But even without that circumstance, *Anthropoteque* is a masterpiece of twentieth-century art and drawing, incomparable in its visual beauty, conceptual scope, textual and material complexity, and scale. It is also a magisterial testimony to the impact of state efforts to obtain private information from and about citizens, efforts that transformed the Romanian

populace into mutual enemies, spies, and informers. But *Anthropoteque* is not limited to a visual commentary on Romania in particular, or on totalitarian dictatorships in general. Its message is even more universal: *Anthropoteque* stands as a warning about the human consequences of surveillance around the globe in the twenty-first century, and an aesthetic condemnation of all Machiavellian regimes. [Fig. 229]







Finally, *Anthropoteque* belongs to a sequence of works bearing similar titles, varying from *Anthropograme* to *Anthropogramming*. In these invented, hybrid, and differently spelled terms, Dan indicated that his drawing functions as visual language at the intersection of anthropology (the study of human culture) and grammar. “‘Gram’⁴⁷ as far as I remember, or somebody told me (actually it was Andrei Oisteanu⁴⁸),” Dan has noted, “is related to grammar; so, for me, *Cycle Anthropograme* meant ‘The Alphabet of People,’ while *Anthropoteque* is a kind of ‘Library of People.’”⁴⁹ As a language of humanity, each figure simultaneously represents the individual and the collective, a theme common in socialist countries such as Romania before 1990. Thinking about this combination in Dan’s work, German art historian and museum director Werner Meyer has observed that Dan managed, “as an academically trained artist, to elude the restraints and the aesthetical dictates of state-controlled cultural activities [by developing] this form of drawing as a popular [and] radical instrument of self-assertion and political and social criticism.”⁵⁰ In short, from about 1983 to 1999, Dan represented ever-vaster assortments of ever more anonymous figures that fit into systematized grids (or units, as in the flip drawings). These collected figures form a commune of unidentified individuals who eventually fade and disappear into nothing (as in *Anthropograme II* and *Scroll II*), or become so imbricated in a system of others that they are lost (as in *Anthropoteque*). In *Anthropogramming* (1995), Dan would take these metaphors of disappearance even further.

Dan made *Anthropogramming* for an artist residency, sponsored by ArtsLink, at the New York alternative space Franklin Furnace, directed by artist Martha Wilson. [Fig. 50] During the first part of his residency, Dan sketched a loose grid on the walls and then for about three weeks carefully drew each figure inside its own unit. At the opening of the show, he provided erasers for the public to begin erasing his drawing:

I realized that the opening was scheduled on December 1st, the National Day of Romania and the day dedicated to AIDS in New York. I could not

ignore the coincidence, so I gave rubber gums at the opening and transformed the work into a destruction party. People enjoyed it a lot. Me not. Then the next ten days I finished erasing it all. When I left New York, there was nothing left behind me.⁵¹

Some critics compared this aspect of the performance/installation to Robert Rauschenberg’s famous *Erased DeKooning* (1953), the drawing that the younger artist requested from the older (who at the time was more famous) and then erased it.⁵² But rather than follow this ancient mythological practice of metaphorically castrating the father to gain his dominion (as Rauschenberg had done in his honorific and obliterating act), Dan made the public complicit in the disappearance of his own art, shifting the focus from two



Figs. 47–49, previous page
Dan Perjovschi, details of *Anthropoteque*, 1990–1992; ink and watercolor on pastel paper. Courtesy of Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Sammlung Ludwig.

Fig. 50, above
Dan Perjovschi, *Anthropogramming*, 1996; newspaper.

competing generations of male artists to the role of reception and the responsibility of the public to art. The strategic introduction of erasure in *Anthropogramming* could be said to reflect a number of elements Werner Meyer observed in operation in Dan's work: the artist's "nomadic existence in the international exhibition business;" his talent in making "a virtue of the necessity of material shortage with his small ephemeral drawings;" and his ability to learn from the past how to "evade the dictatorship," as well as apply that lesson to sidestepping "the Western art market."⁵³

In 1992, Romanian artist, curator, and critic Calin Dan already addressed the ephemeral and disappearance in Dan's work. His perceptive comment bears repeating:

Dan Perjovschi belongs to that rare species of skeptics who do not believe in the object[ive] virtues of culture. The uniqueness, longevity and



Figs. 51–52
Dan Perjovschi, 9th Istanbul Biennale, 2005; installation and detail *Going European*; marker on wall.

Fig. 53, opposite page
Dan Perjovschi, *reEST*, 1999; installation in Romanian Pavilion, 48th Venice Biennale; marker on floor.



loquacity of the object don’t make up values in a fragile world where being present is everything. The artist is present, hence ephemeral.⁵⁴

Indeed, the very fact and quality of Dan’s mental “presentness” accounts for the intensity of his visual analysis, which penetrates and then charts subtle relationships among actions, attitudes, beliefs, and social practices, as well as objects and their uses. In this way, Dan’s work captures the intangible, interactive affect that is the very content of what is called “context:” context is affect.⁵⁵ The intensity of this concentrated presence—the deep extent to which the artist is present in each moment—contributes, paradoxically, to Dan’s ephemeral transience. For to be present in this moment means to exist only for now, not before or after, as French philosopher Henri Bergson pointed out in 1896 about the relationship between matter and memory.⁵⁶

Just as visitors to *Anthropogramming* assisted Dan in erasing his drawings, they gradually scuffed them away in his installation *rEST*, created for the 48th Venice Biennale⁵⁷ [Figs. 53, 358] This wholly sardonic title referred to the demanding installation, which consumed weeks of drawing and was far from a “rest.” In addition, his emphasis on “est” (meaning “east” in Romanian) was

a cipher for Dan’s identity. For this enormous floor drawing, Dan used permanent marker to lay out a grid, each unit of which was about 8 × 12 inches and filled with figures that told a story (rather than the solitary portraits that comprised *Anthropogramming* and *Scan*). When the exhibit opened, the public stepped on *rEST*, “erasing it while walking,” Dan explained. “That freed the drawings and the grid disappeared under the peoples’ feet; I saw a new possibility to float free.”⁵⁸ Dan began to use this freer method in subsequent projects, the first being his 3(6) installation in 2001 for IBID Projects in London, where he drew without a grid on walls, ceiling, and floor. The method of letting the drawings “float free” released Dan from the grid to make bigger, looser, autonomous drawings, and as a result opened his drawing to more permutations, the introduction of text, and a wide variety of new elements that enhanced his notorious sense of humor which is simultaneously biting and self-deprecating.

Departure from the grid also opened Dan’s practice to more individual drawings through which he could more directly analyze social situations, as in the drawings he made for the 9th Istanbul Biennale in 2005. [Figs. 51–52] For example, in *Going European*, Dan depicted two male heads: one sports a long drooping mustache, characteristic of those worn by Turkish (and Slavic) men—as well as Stalin—while the other has a type of mustache made infamous by Hitler. For Dan the “guy with the Stalin-like moustache represents Turks, who want to be European but who have to be careful about what kind of European because they can end up being a Hitler.”⁵⁹ The simplicity of the drawing belies the complexity of its messages: for no matter which political direction a nation goes, the way may be paved with nefarious mustached men (Stalin and Hitler); or, Turkey aims to join the EU and will become fascistic in the process. In either case, Dan Perjovschi, who wears the Slavic/Stalin style mustache, implicates himself in the contradictions.

But Dan’s drawing *Going European* (2005) was not the first time he had made such open, polyvalent drawings. In 1988, Dan created his first installation, *Red Apples*.

[Figs. 54, 273–275] He made it as a homecoming present for Lia, who was returning to Oradea from Bucharest where she was studying in the art academy. In *Red Apples*, Dan completely lined the couple’s flat in white paper and drew on every surface in black pen. He then lined a drawer in the room in white. Leaving it open, he placed two bright red apples in it, a symbol of erotic pleasure, reinforced by the many times Lia’s name appears on the walls of the room along with drawings of interpenetrating male and female figures. Dan and Lia lived in the installation in their apartment from 10 to 24 April that year.

Two years later, in 1990, Dan began working for the journal *Contrapunct*, and later for *Revista 22* in 1991. [Figs. 55–56] For both publications, he used individual drawings to amplify news items, a drawing style that also contributed to the large installations so characteristic of his work in the 2000s. What I am underscoring is that Dan’s international renown for making “public art” derives from and directly relates to his real-time employment in visually analyzing news. Yet while Dan’s actual wage-earning labor responds to the lived concerns of Romanian daily life and to the fight for a more just Romanian society, his capacity to penetrate present circumstances—by reading local and international newspapers, watching television,



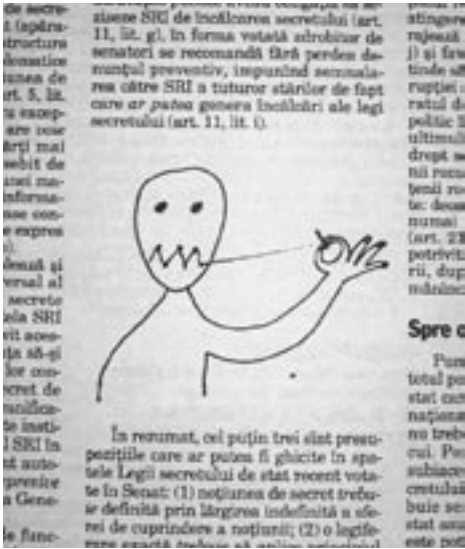
Figs. 55–56
Dan Perjovschi, first cover drawing for *Revista 22* [Bucharest], no. 100 (1991); a drawing from this issue.

and paying close attention to local customs and practices—permits him to speak directly to any audience, anywhere on the globe.

One drawing for *Revista 22* provides a key point of ingress into Dan’s remarkable capacity to visualize concepts, attitudes, and practices. In this work from 1994, Dan draws a simple figure that has just sewn his own mouth shut in a zigzag pattern; his hand still holds the thread connected to the suture. The image floats (one of the features of Dan’s art that differentiates it from cartoon narratives), hovering in the middle of a news item devoted to “state secrets” and the Securitate. The drawing punctuates the article visually, supporting the author’s discussion of state policies



Fig. 54
Dan Perjovschi, *Red Apples*, 1988; installation in the artist’s flat in Oradea; drawing on paper.





Figs. 57–58, above and below
Dan Perjovschi, *State of Mind Without a Title*, 1991; three-day installation/performance in Timisoara.

Figs. 59, opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *Nameless State of Mind*, June 1991; performance in Timisoara.

regarding the identification, definition, and structure of the Romanian laws regulating state secrets. Dan explained that under these laws, “what is not explicitly permitted is implicitly forbidden to be spoken:” in other words, even things unspoken might have once qualified as state secrets.⁶⁰ Until the open discussion of this issue that resulted from the *Revista 22* article, Romanians had to guess what was permitted or forbidden to be discussed in public, a policy that resulted in silencing and self-censoring.

“The dramatic change in Romania,” Dan further pointed out, “is that intellectuals now try to imagine what might happen *before* it happens, instead of waiting until it happens.”⁶¹ Dan’s drawings contributed to this change by making the affective response generated by such experiences visibly palpable. As Dan illustrates an

idea or situation, he attempts to imagine himself experiencing the issue and asks himself: “How would I live in this situation?” In trying to draw an image related to state secrets, Dan experienced a “dramatic situation,” and responded emotionally: “You will tie my lips, again?!” He continued:

I was considering this to be the major achievement of the revolution—to speak, to act free. So if I have to self-censor my own drawings because I might be prosecuted for telling a state secret, that’s too much.⁶²

In this way, Dan’s drawings for *Revista 22* continue to extend his life experience and function as models for free speech.

Working regularly each week to comment visually on the news, Dan did not initially consider that his job at *Revista 22* constituted a form of art practice different from, though equal to, his work in the art world.⁶³ But while it took some years to appreciate the relationship between the two, Dan had already made free-floating drawings in two prior installations: *Red Apples* (as I mentioned earlier) and his public installation/performance *State of Mind Without a Title* (1991) for an exhibition with the same name, curated in Timisoara by artist Sorine Vreme and art historian Ileana Pintile.⁶⁴ [Figs. 57–58, 277] In the latter work, Dan lined the walls of



the janitor’s room in the Timisoara Museum of Art with white paper (as he had done in *Red Apples*). He lived in this room for four days, drawing on the walls, floor, and ceiling of the tiny space until they were almost entirely black. Dan identified this installation/drawing and performance as a “happening,” because the public could participate by viewing him through a window in the door. The last photograph of *State of Mind Without a Title* depicts the artist drinking coffee in near darkness—an emotive but highly critical reference to the bleak living conditions that continued to prevail in Romania until the mid-1990s and in some regions still today.

Lia also participated in the exhibition “State of Mind without a Title,” using but altering its title for her performance, *Nameless State of Mind* (1991). [Figs. 59, 95, 220] First Lia constructed a large collaged textile and paper silhouette-like, shadow object, which she painted black and gray. For the performance, she glued

her “shadow” to her shoes, and then hung what she called her “character doll” (a doll that doubled as a shadow) from her back. Scuffing along with her shadow under her feet, carrying the doll trailing behind on her shoulders, Lia walked in the streets of Timisoara like a somnambulist. Lia walked through Victoria Square (known as Opera Square before the Revolution) and from the Metropolitan Cathedral to the Opera House, where tens of thousands had demonstrated, founding the “Free of Communism—Area” only two years before. Then Lia walked beyond these civic spaces to a district of domestic houses where she randomly and spontaneously abandoned her shadow, that dark shape of nameless things contingent with the body. So it was in Romania.

Nameless State of Mind can be taken as a microcosm of the many ways Lia used performance from 1987 to 2005 to demonstrate how the body is the physical being



effected by historical and political circumstance and contains ephemeral will, that force necessary to move about in and change the world. Unsurpassed in Romanian post-1989 performance, Lia’s actions have metaphorically addressed the circumstance of a nation and its citizens dragging their past behind them while also actively engaging in the effort to heal and to construct a different future. I will return to *Nameless State of Mind* below. For the moment, let me now turn to the development of Lia’s art and begin, more or less, at the beginning.

BEFORE AUGURS AFTER PART II: LIA

No childhood art by Lia survives. The earliest known works are from a series of Ex Libris bookplates that she exhibited at the Astra Library in Sibiu, following graduation from high school.⁶⁵ These tiny, delicate drawings, sometimes depicting harsh content, were collected in 1988 in a small book published in Italy by Mario De Filippis (who also published a book of drawings by Dan that has since been lost). The bookplate *In Memoriam, Thomas Mann* exemplifies how Lia condensed complex experiences into notations related to various authors’ lives. [Fig. 60] Lia’s drawing reflects on an aspect of the great German novelist Thomas Mann’s life, referring to the drug addiction of the author’s son Klaus, who died by suicide. Lia’s *J. L. Borges* bookplate likewise refigures its subject, making rich use of Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges’s interest in heteroglossia; the result is

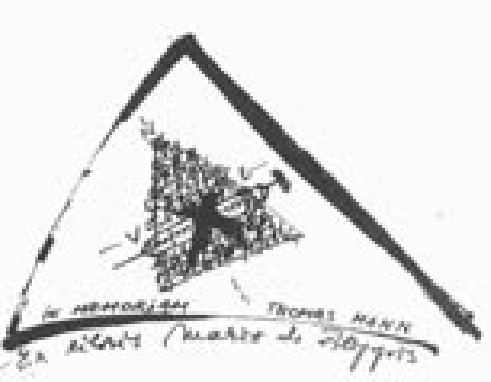


Fig. 60
Lia Perjovschi, *In Memoriam, Thomas Mann*, 1980–1987; bookplate, ink on paper.

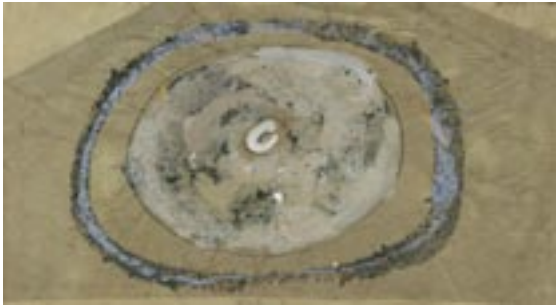


Fig. 61, top
Lia Perjovschi, *J. L. Borges*, 1980–1987; bookplate, ink on paper.

a drawing that represents the process of dismantling language in a hermeneutics of pure sign.⁶⁶ [Fig. 61] Both bookplates attest to the sophistication of the then nineteen-year-old artist, and document the critical role literature played for Lia, tutoring her in the resolution of life conflicts and showing her ways to imagine alternatives to her existence in Romania.

Her earliest works investigate the relationship between language and inscription, but graphic marks also appear—this time on Lia’s body—in *Test of Sleep* (1988), an action she performed for the camera in the Perjovschis’ Oradea apartment, where Dan photographed her. [Figs. 69–70, 200–208] (Lia sent the photographs of her action to an international Mail Art⁶⁷ exhibition in Mexico on Visual Poetry.⁶⁸) In *Test of Sleep*, Lia first drew directly on her skin, making the marks of an untranslatable and private language that resembled hieroglyphics. She animated these elusive marks with hand, arm, and body signals that she made in prone, sitting, or standing positions, actions that suggested that the indecipherable words could be grasped only by reference to

Figs. 62–68, above and opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *Mail Art/Discreet Messages*, 1985–1988; dyed and collaged envelopes.





Figs. 69–70
Lia Perjovschi, *Test of Sleep*, June 1988; performance in the artist's flat, Oradea, with *Mail Art/Discreet Messages* as backdrop.



her silent, corporeal movement. As her comment on the work explained, Lia associated *Test of Sleep* with the verb “to complain,” indicating that the performance signified “grief, pain or discontent, [and] a formal accusation or charge,” presumably leveled against the conditions of Romanian life.⁶⁹ *Test of Sleep* also presented a warning that sleep is a metaphor for other states of mind, and stood as an admonition to remain awake to one’s purpose and action in life.

Lia characterized *Test of Sleep* as a “discreet” form of communication, a description that shows how this action relates to her earlier series *Mail Art/Discreet Messages* (1985). Two photographs of *Test of Sleep* depict Lia standing before a wall on which she has assembled envelopes from her Mail Art practice; the envelopes form a temporary backdrop for her performance. [Figs. 69–70] She made the color-impregnated *Mail Art/Discreet Messages* by boiling otherwise commonplace envelopes in textile pigments, infusing them with rich tones of deep yellow, dark red, and forest green, among other colors. [Figs. 62–68, 72, 304] Then she dried and ironed them before mailing them through

the international postal system. Some envelopes have no decoration except color; others are enhanced with paintings of abstract images (one closely resembles her *Borges* bookplate); a small quantity have the commercial imprint of leaves and flowers on the inner flap; and she collaged a few with strips of paper from a French travel guide, cutting vertically to ensure that no words would be legible.



Fig. 71, top
Lia Perjovschi, *Our Withheld Silences*, 1989; strips of paper, printed text, and mixed media. Courtesy of private collection.

Fig. 72, above
Lia Perjovschi, *Mail Art/Discreet Messages*, 1985–1988; dyed and collaged envelope.

Several of the collaged envelopes bear a striking resemblance to a series of balls she made between 1988 and 1991, titled *Our Withheld Silences*.⁷⁰ Intended simultaneously as round books and sculptures, the individual balls that constitute *Our Withheld Silences*, like her performance *Test of Sleep* and the envelopes of *Mail Art/Discreet Messages*, defy readability, confronting a history that is both national and personal with an inscrutable silence. [Figs. 71, 73, 334] Lia's own formative years were spent reading, and Romania itself is a culture of bibliophiles noted for their multilingual abilities and interest in foreign cultures.⁷¹ *Our Withheld Silences* belongs to and comments on Romania's long tradition of reading, a practice that became especially important during the Ceausescu period, when books and travel were forbidden and restricted. Indeed, Lia treasures books so much that she lamented having cut up "that beautiful French travel guide" to make *Our Withheld Silences* and *Mail Art/Discreet Messages*, and commented: "As a child, I didn't have friends; I had books."⁷²

The balls that comprise *Our Withheld Silences* were included in an important exhibition, "cARTe" [Book-Art] (1991), devoted to object-books made by many Romanian artists. Critic Aurelia Mocanu has

written that "cARTe" commemorated "the destruction of cultural values when the Central University Library (former King Charles II Foundation) was bombed and set ablaze" on 22 December 1989 in Bucharest.⁷³ Calin Dan commented further:

The smoke rising over the body of the Library was by no means an offering to freedom and reconciliation. . . . No revolution broke out there; it was an offering whose meaning remained hidden, insofar as the deity it had been destined [to acknowledge] has not shown up yet.⁷⁴

As this comment suggests, the senseless destruction of the library sacrificed Romanian culture to the Revolution, joining the question of who caused the library conflagration to that of who instigated the Revolution—two problems that have never been sufficiently addressed or solved. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that the Revolution was a coup d'état and the fire a flagrant and violent attack on this erudite society, one intended to incite further protests.

While commenting on the relationship between text and politics, Lia's book-objects also possess another history, one traced to visual poetry, object-poems, and



object-books in Romania. In an essay on this subject, Andrei Oisteanu cited Romanian Christian manuscripts and pictograms used in Romanian church songs of the sixteenth century, before moving to a discussion of "Romanian magical folklore." Next he summoned the collective history of Romanian artists' contributions to a variety of art historical movements: Symbolism (Iordache Golescu), Dada (Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco), Surrealism (Victor Brauner), and proto-Situationist International work (Isidor Isou, founder of the movement of Lettrism in 1942). Oisteanu then positioned contemporary artists, including Dan and Lia Perjovschi, within this rich tradition.⁷⁵ In another essay, Oisteanu linked these artists' aesthetic productions to the book as a "Tree-Book" (as in the "Tree of Knowledge"), a "Food-Book" (as imagined in the Old Testament,⁷⁶ and personified in a contemporary novel like *The Name of the Rose* by Italian linguist Umberto Eco),⁷⁷ and the "Temple-Book" (as in the "Tower of Babel"). In the context of this thematic lineage, one must remember Dan Perjovschi's book-object, *Babel* (1988), also made for "cARTe," and now destroyed. Dan made this book



Fig. 73
Lia Perjovschi, *Our Withheld Silences*, 1989; three balls with strips of paper, textile, printed text, and other media.



Figs. 74–76
Lia Perjovschi, *Map of Impressions: White*, 1989; two details of the costume/sculpture: paper, newspaper, paint, thread, textile staples, and other media.

Figs. 77–80, following pages
Lia Perjovschi, *Map of Impressions: White; Fashion; Paper Drawing; Black*, 1989; costume/sculptures: paper, newspaper, paint, thread, staples, and other media.



by twisting a long drawing into the form of a tower, but a tower that could be drawn out in the form of a tail.⁷⁸ [Fig. 338]

The links between text and image in Romanian art run even deeper. In an evocatively titled essay, “Image, Writing, Breathing” of 1993, Andrei Plesu, philosopher and former Romanian Minister of Culture, summoned the time-honored “*con-substantiality* between image and writing” (Plesu’s emphasis), and pointed out that “writing came into being as a pictogram, that is as an epiphenomenon of the image” associated with divine origin and revelation.⁷⁹ Lia’s sculptural series, *Map of Impressions* (1989–1992), anticipated Plesu’s suggestive connection between text and body in material aesthetic form. [Figs. 74–81, 306–307, 314, 342]



Fig. 81
Lia Perjovschi, *Map of Impressions: Paper Drawing*, 1989; costume/ sculptures; paper, newspaper, paint, thread, textile staples, and other media.

Map of Impressions features composites that fuse costume with sculpture. Lia fabricated them from paper, newspaper, cloth, string, and other collage elements. Each is subtitled according to its appearance, and identifies a different quality or aspect of the body: “White” simulates pubic hair on a woman’s body through stitching and a sharply articulated bra (made with the same kinds of strips of print that Lia used in *Our Withheld Silences* and *Mail Art/Discreet Messages*); “Black” and “Sexy/Frivole” are, as their titles suggest, smoky and dark, one with gold bra, and with intricate overlays of fabric that suggest a woman’s sex; “Ripped From Wall” is white and was literally stuck to and ripped from the wall on which it was made, incorporating plaster that adhered to it. “Paper Drawing” is white and covered with Lia’s distinctive, highly expressive line-drawings, demonstrating the topological qualities that all the *Map of Impressions* share.⁸⁰ Together these works visualize different aspects of the body/psyche nexus, from the pure to the erotic, verbal to nonverbal, light to dark; they offer a glimpse of the shape, complexity, and “color” of the spirit/body they surround.

When Lia exhibited the whole series of *Map of Impressions* in 1992 (together with the entire series *Our Withheld Silences*), she wired all of the *Map of Impressions* with sound, creating an installation, which had a barely audible hum, buzz, or scratchy noise. [Fig. 307] In this way, Lia signaled the sounds of embodiment, both in corporeal substance and in acts of reading, as *Our Withheld Silences*, stationed below the costumes, were also implicated in the sound. Lia has compared the *Map of Impressions* series to a Möbius strip, that object with only one surface and one edge created by twisting a strip of paper in the center and attaching the ends.⁸¹ This comparison emphasizes the phenomenological reality of the interconnectedness of interior mind (or emotion) and exterior body (or form), making it clear how *Map of Impressions* amplifies Plesu’s interpretive comment: “Writing is embodied breathing, a hieroglyph of the vital soul itself.”⁸² “Everyone in Romania silently calls out loudly,” Lia once noted, foreseeing Plesu’s language. “I wanted to draw attention to that

inner life, to make it possible for people to understand it without words.”⁸³

All these varied objects, from *Mail Art/Discreet Messages* and *Test of Sleep to Our Withheld Silences* and *Map of Impressions*, address in one way or another the nexus of language and action also examined in Mail Art, Concrete Poetry, and Performance Art. Early in her practice, Lia utilized these experimental forms, which played significant roles throughout the world, especially where communication was constrained and/or censored.⁸⁴ All three genres were part of a semantic field that permitted her to invent alternative forms, that imagined new ways of using visual language to share corporeal narratives. Mail Art offered artists in totalitarian nations access to an antiauthoritarian, international network below the radar of censors, and in democratic countries it permitted resistance to the voracious art market that transformed art into goods bought and sold at extravagant prices. Performance recovered the social force of art, and became one of the last and most effective modes of resistance to multiple forms of domination, a claim supported by the fact that performance artists throughout the world, from the 1960s to the present, have been the most frequently arrested and incarcerated artists.⁸⁵ Finally, Concrete Poetry bypassed language as context and grammatical structure in favor of imagining the individual letter and word as an isolated instance of objective truth. According to Augusto de Campos, a member of the Brazilian Noigandres Group, which pioneered visual poetry in Latin America in the 1950s, Concrete Poetry reestablished “contact with the poetry of the vanguards [at] the beginning of the century (Futurism, Cubo-Futurism, Dada et. al.),” recuperating work that “the intervention of two great wars and the proscription of Nazi and Stalinist dictatorships had condemned to marginalization.”⁸⁶ It is no surprise, then, that these media entered Lia’s oeuvre in the years 1985 to 1989, when political repression in Romania was at its most severe.

Indeed, Lia performed *Test of Sleep* the very year that Dan was first visited by the Securitate, after he had received the Grand Prize at “The Biennial of Portraits”

in Tuzla, Yugoslavia (now Bosnia-Herzegovina), for one of his *Scroll* drawings. When Dan applied for the papers necessary to travel to Tuzla, the Securitate promised to get him a passport, as well as other means of support, if he would become an informer. Dan refused. In subsequent visits by the Securitate, he held firm. This threatening context confers the additional meaning of the artists being under direct surveillance and, thus, accounts even further for Lia’s interest in and use of her body as a field of “discreet” communication. Moreover, in such a circumstance, the title *Our Withheld Silences* redoubles the meaning of silence, marking these objects simultaneously as forms communicating a mute state (on the part of the Romanian citizenry), an intention to deny speech (on the part of the government), and a will to repress speech (by those very same citizens suppressed by the government).

Lia’s works represent a microcosm of the conflicts and themes in Romanian culture during a period when the populace and artists alike learned to do what Alexandra Cornilescu called “hedging.” In Romania before 1989, hedging was a critical necessity where every word and deed was under constant scrutiny. Hedging in this context meant that one needed “to say one thing and to mean something else, to speak in layered codes impenetrable to informers, and often confusing even to friends, and to use one’s eyes and gestures as if they were words.”⁸⁷ This was the “discourse of fear” common in Romania, where if “an object, phenomenon, or person was not named, it did not exist.”⁸⁸ I have written elsewhere that Romanian silences, such as those articulated in both Dan and Lia’s work, must be understood in the context of a “conspiracy of silence,” namely a complex traumatic environment that culminates in the sense of being contaminated.⁸⁹ Romanians felt contaminated by their traumatic past, and journalistic metaphors in the early 1990s referred to the nation as a “dead” or “diseased body,” an “organism . . . undergoing some form of therapy . . . severe pain . . . nightmares,” and in need of “shock therapy.”⁹⁰ As Harvard literary critic Elaine Scarry has argued, such painful experiences “actively destroy” language, a process that



Figs. 82–83, above
Lia Perjovschi, *Don't See, Don't Hear, Don't Speak*, December 1987; performance at Academy of Fine Arts, Bucharest.

Figs. 84–85, opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *For My Becoming in Time*, October 1989; performance at Academy of Fine Arts, Bucharest.

brings about “an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language.”⁹¹ Scarry insists that trauma sometimes causes so much suffering that “the person in pain is . . . [so] bereft of the resources of speech . . . that the language for pain should sometimes be brought into being by those who are not themselves in pain but who speak on behalf of those who are.”⁹² Lia’s work repeatedly conjures that “anterior state,” much like the apparatus of a dream, condensing and displacing meaning. Mute, but gesturing, Lia’s art spoke on behalf of Romanians’ somnambulant existence, exposing how the internal spaces of an otherwise unreadable private suffering belong to the surface of silence, as in a Möbius strip.

Once Lia arrived at the Bucharest Academy of Art in 1987, she immediately began producing performances with (and for) her peers in an “Experimental Studio” that she organized. These events were primarily performative, serving as a kind of visionary mental training for the Revolution to come. In this context, one cannot overemphasize the fact that in Romania at that time, few dared to share their knowledge of experimental art for fear of exposure or repression, and when they did it was often only with a small and trusted group of artists. Thus, Lia came to performance initially through her work in the theater, Mail Art, and her interest in Hungarian television, which she watched (using a

dictionary, as she did not speak Hungarian) while living in Oradea, a city on the border of Hungary. She only began systematically to learn about the rich history of Romanian avant-garde performance after meeting artist Geta Bratescu and anthropologist Andrei Oistaneau in 1989.⁹³

Lia defined her first event at the art academy, *Moving Picture* (November 1987), as “an operation carried out under controlled conditions in order to discover an unknown effect.” It was also, she said, an effort to simulate “something like the motion of iron file dust on a sheet of paper by means of a magnet.”⁹⁴ *Moving Picture* included students standing behind movable panels (a kind of corporeal film strip), moving in such a way that each person’s actions elicited further movement from others behind their screens. *Don't See, Don't Hear, Don't Speak* (December 1987) had students enacting the famous maxim—“see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil”—by first covering their eyes, then their ears, and finally their mouths. [Figs. 82–83] The communicative strategies of both these performances, coming as they did two years before the Revolution, must be described as being similar to the “hedging” I discussed above, as both works indirectly addressed the quixotic Romanian situation of the late 1980s: while a desperate need for communication and response existed, any rejoinder





Figs. 86–87
Lia Perjovschi, *Annulment*,
September 1989; performance in
the artist's flat, Oradea.

Fig. 88
Lia Perjovschi, *Magic of Gesture/
Laces*, November 1989; perfor-
mance at Academy of Fine Arts,
Bucharest.

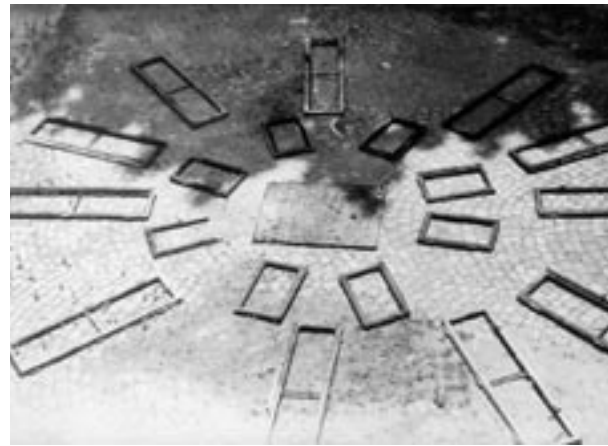


Figs. 89–92
Lia Perjovschi, *Prohibited Area to
Any External Utterance*, 1991, per-
formance in Costinesti, Black Sea
Coast; different texts balled up
in red tissue paper and thrown
to the audience. Reproduced text
is the title of the performance.

would have been suppressed in a paralyzed society encouraged neither to see, hear, nor speak, even as it was expected to report on itself using those faculties.

The following year at the art academy, just months before the Revolution, Lia organized two even bolder performances: *For My Becoming in Time* (October 1989) and *Magic of Gesture/Laces* (November 1989). [Figs. 84–85, 88, 209] In the former, she again placed fellow students behind panels. This time, however, after they thrust their anonymous hands (painted in various colors) through the panels, Lia cleansed the hands by “washing” them with white paint. Then, turning to the audience with her own hands covered in white, Lia shook hands with the viewer/participants. With its symbolic white paint, *For My Becoming in Time* suggested that through personal action one could purify the past and forgive the other. In *Magic of Gesture/Laces*, Lia explored even further the relationships between past and present, self and other. For this work she tied twelve students together in a circle so that if one moved, each motion would tighten the laces binding the group. For Lia, this performance represented an experiment in choice, requiring participants to agree to connect and affect each others’ positions in space and over time, and to decide whether or not to disengage and untie themselves. Some struggled to get out of the ropes, while others wanted to remain connected. In both *For My Becoming in Time* and *Magic of Gesture/Laces*, Lia sought to awaken fellow students from their conditioned collective slumber, a theme to which *Test of Sleep* had earlier been dedicated.

In the midst of such performances in Bucharest, Lia also performed *Hopeless Dialogue* in Sibiu in April 1989, and *Annulment* in Oradea in September 1989. These two works referred directly to her intimate life with Dan at a time when their marriage was severely tested and strained. She performed *Annulment* (like *Test of Sleep*) at home alone, while Dan took photographs.⁹⁵ [Figs. 86–87, 211–219] In this action, Lia and Dan bound her body with medical gauze and then tied her up with strings so that she had to struggle to break free (an action that she then translated into *Magic of Gesture/*



Figs. 93–94, above and opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *About Absence*, Academy of Fine Arts, Bucharest; 1990, installation inside yard of found burned windows, rope, stones.

Laces two months later). Lia has written that *Annulment* simulated healing and self-protection, explaining that the work referred to both a “legal declaration that a marriage is invalid” and a form of “self-defense.” She associated her bindings (and her will to free herself from them) with the self-protective defense martial art of Japanese Aikido.⁹⁶ In *Hopeless Dialogue*, Lia again meditated on the relationship between truth and lies in the obscurity of both personal and national affairs. Seating fellow artists in front of a light and behind a screen, she placed viewers in front of the screen so that they could only see dim movement behind it.⁹⁷ Following Plato’s *Republic*, viewers were positioned such that they “would in every way believe,” in Plato’s words, “that the truth is nothing other than the shadows of . . . artifacts.”⁹⁸ Lia condemned her audience to know reality as mere shadow, like the prisoners Plato described chained to the ground inside the cave. Meanwhile, Lia stationed herself on the same side of the screen as the audience. Standing with her back to viewers and writing in white chalk on the screen’s white surface, she had images of her own art works projected onto her back. In these ways, Lia doubled and redoubled the obscurantism of shades of truth and reality by creating shadows of shadows, written in white on white: the truth of one’s own experience, unseen and unknown, carried on one’s back. While *Hopeless Dialogue* had its sources

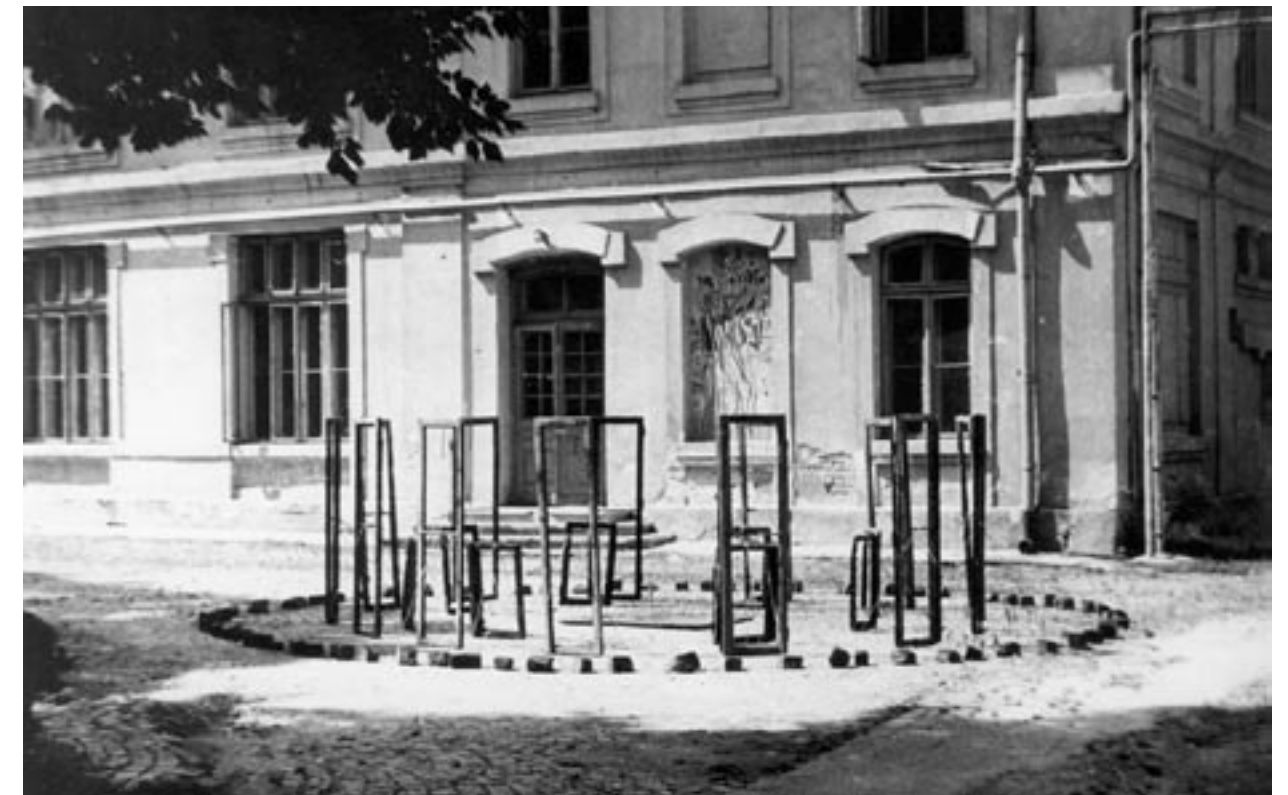
in personal issues posed by her intimate life with Dan, the performance also spoke to general questions about certainty and authenticity raised by the Revolution. She amplified these topics in three works: a temporary installation titled *About Absence* (1990), and two performances of 1991, *Prohibited Area to Any External Utterance* and *Nameless State of Mind*.

About Absence related to the period immediately following the Revolution, when Lia asked Ion Stendl, her professor, how to proceed. His response was direct: “Now you can take your colleagues and make your installations—be free.”⁹⁹ Lia recalled that although “we enjoyed the idea of being free to no longer draw the human figure realistically, the question became: ‘What to do out of nothing?’”¹⁰⁰ [Figs. 93–94] Lia met this challenge in *About Absence*, using found, burned window frames that she supported in a vertical position by black ropes tied to cobblestones. Although today she criticizes this work as “too romantic and metaphorical,”¹⁰¹ the photographs of the exquisite installation attest to an

ability to convey the central point of *About Absence*: truth and freedom arrive initially in the form of a void. Like the ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu, *About Absence* reconfigures the relationship between presence and absence:

Thirty spokes unite in one hub;
It is precisely where there is nothing,
that we find the usefulness of the wheel.
We fire clay and make vessels;
It is precisely where there’s no substance,
that we find the usefulness of clay pots.
We chisel out doors and windows;
It is precisely in these empty spaces,
that we find the usefulness of the room.
Therefore, we regard having something
as beneficial; But having nothing as useful.¹⁰²

Tzu’s thoughtful text confirms the lesson that *About Absence* underscores (with its use of passageways—windows—as metaphors for this reversal): “nothing”





is itself a possibility. Today, *About Absence* eloquently tutors viewers about the burden of making art in a condition no longer restricted by rigid, prescribed, academic canons; it also instructs them about how Lia met the sudden unknown of boundless possibility—equally experienced as emotional and psychological emptiness—with a temporary solution fabricated from a charred Revolution.

In a different but parallel way, *Prohibited Area to Any External Utterance* further amplified the political-aesthetic situation. [Figs. 89–92, 339] With her mouth taped closed, Lia undertook a series of puzzling actions and then threw cryptic “messages,” balled up in red tissue paper, to her audience. This work reiterated a continuous theme in her art: the ambiguous conditions under which information is constructed, and the external and internal exclusions entailed in any utterance. In this regard, *Prohibited Area to Any External Utterance* referred directly to, and must be situated within, its historical context.

At this time, Lia was a leader of the Student League in the Bucharest Art Academy, an organization involved in sustaining the growing protest movement, “Piata Universitatii [University Plaza].” This was the name given to the anti-neo-communist, several-months-long demonstration for a democratic society that took place in the city center by the University of Bucharest. The situation heightened between May and June 1990, when Lia and Dan were both active in street protests and demonstrations. The plaza at the city center was later branded “Romanian Tiananmen” after Romanian coal miners were surreptitiously brought (probably by the Securitate) to crush the protest, a violent event that took place between 13 and 15 June 1990. Given this context, *Prohibited Area to Any External Utterance* reminds viewers of an actual battle for freedom of speech, travel, and for the general conditions of democracy.

As noted above, many of these works relate to *Hopeless Dialogue*, perhaps none more than *Nameless State of Mind* insofar as Lia projected images on her back in the former and carried her character doll on her back and her shadow on her feet in the latter. [Fig. 95] Her complex use of the shadow and doll demand more attention. One year after performing *Nameless State of Mind*, Lia hung upside-down nine silhouette-like shadows



Fig. 95, top left
Lia Perjovschi, *Nameless State of Mind*; June 1991, performance in Timisoara.

Figs. 96–97, above and opposite page, top
Lia Perjovschi, *Topsy Turvy World*; 1992, installation in Art Museum of Timisoara; paper, cloth, and paint.



in the central hall of the eighteenth-century “Hall of Honour” in Timisoara’s Baroque Palace, now the Art Museum situated in Piata Unirii [Union Square]. [Figs. 96–97] For the exhibition “The Earth: Intermedia,”¹⁰³ Lia constructed the shadows of fabric and paper and painted them in black, gray, and white. She called the installation an “intervention,” and titled it *Topsy Turvy World* (1992). The show’s premise issued from what its curator, Ileana Pintilie, identified as Romanian folk culture’s cosmological notions of earth: “the joint work of Good & Evil (God and Devil).”¹⁰⁴ Pintilie described *Topsy Turvy World* as “a whole procession of uncertain characters walking ghost-like past walls [evoking] the negative energies of a world at odds with itself.”¹⁰⁵ Certainly, Lia’s silhouettes acknowledged the reversal of Romania’s direction two years after the Revolution, but suggested a fate met with joy, fear, and anxiety as well. For these figure/shadows hanging upside-down against a wall could equally have signified that Romanians were “up against the wall,” like their dictator and his wife, threatened by the firing squad of history.

Even before the Revolution, Lia had used “silhouette/shadows” and a *Map of Impressions* in various installations to indicate such experiences. In 1989, she

installed a *Map of Impressions* flat against the corner of a wall, titling the piece *Work for the Vertical Edge of a Wall*. The installation of a “shadow” in a niche in Bucharest, and the introduction of a *Map of Impressions* in a similar niche in Galeria Noua in Sibiu (1990), followed. [Fig. 98] Six years later in 1996, she would also do a performance titled *Approach*, which included picking people at random and following them: “I would imitate his position (like a shadow) then I would leave, in search of



Fig. 98, above
Lia Perjovschi, untitled, 1990; installation of paper shadow in niche, Galeria Noua, Sibiu.

Figs. 99–110, following pages
Lia Perjovschi, *I’m fighting for my right to be different*, July 1993, performance in Art Museum of Timisoara.





Figs. 111–112, above
Lia Perjovschi, *Pain H Files*,
1996–2003; detail of two dolls:
twenty-four mass-produced
dolls, hair removed, wrapped in
gauze and painted.

Figs. 113–114, opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *Pain H Files*,
1996–2003; detail of
three dolls: seventeen plaster
of paris painted dolls.

another.”¹⁰⁶ Whether at the abyss of the vertical edge of a wall, cornered in a niche, hung from and/or projected onto one’s back, or shadowing another person, these objects point to experiences that are known but unseen and only vaguely recognized. Such a state of indefinite understanding is associated with traumatic dissociation where realities too painful for the conscious mind to acknowledge hover to be repeated unconsciously in life. Lia’s shadow in *Nameless State of Mind* may be compared to the scars from lashings that formed the image of a cherry tree on Sethe’s back, the heroine in Toni Morrison’s Nobel Prize–winning novel *Beloved* (1987).¹⁰⁷ Although Sethe could not see this image, she could feel the scar with her fingers, re-experiencing the memory of traumatic physical pain with so much emotional agony that she murdered her child “Beloved” rather than condemn her to live as a slave. What I am suggesting is that the character-doll Lia carried on her back in *Nameless State of Mind* resembles the murder of *Beloved*, insofar as Lia abandoned her creative effigy in the streets of Timisoara, she herself a damaged child of Romania.

Lia’s shadow-turned-character-doll emerged full blown again two years later, this time transformed into a life-sized, stuffed double of Lia. She interacted with this doll in her performance *I’m fighting for my right to be different* (July 1993).¹⁰⁸ [Figs. 10, 99–110, 308] Taking up the question of difference, vivid in her concept of herself as an “alien and a dreamer,”¹⁰⁹ Lia performed a series of intense emotional and physical interactions with the doll, ranging from gentle to aggressive and violent. Lia began the performance dressed in a man’s black suit (under which she wore a black shirt and tights). Sitting next to the doll, Lia talked to it quietly, then took off her suit and put it on her “character.” Shifting the gender of the doll to male, and describing it as “bad, dirty, and spoiled,”¹¹⁰ Lia doused in black paint the displaced male alter ego of herself and began throwing it around the room. She heaved the doll/self, heavy and soaking, against the wall and at the public. No one moved. After each difficult assault, Lia lay down next to the doll and assumed its fallen and abused position.



The performance ended when she kicked the doll down a flight of stairs and out of the performance space. The last images of the artist lying on the ground with the doll splattered with black paint are pictures of distress, sorrow, and mourning, emotions easily read on the faces of viewers observing this scene of self-directed savagery.

I’m fighting for my right to be different could be understood as an exorcism and a double suicide, leaving the question: Which Lia won? The performance could also be read as an after-image of the bodies Lia witnessed in the streets of Sibiu and on national television during the Revolution. The character-doll, or alter ego, may also be taken to represent simultaneously father, husband, and fatherland, a shadow of Romanian patriarchy. It could stand for the gendered aspects of the artist herself and her many invented male personae, wrestling with such social conventions as the dilemma of being artist, wife, and potential mother. Indeed, Lia performed *I’m fighting for my right to be different* ten years after suffering an illegal abortion in 1983, during the period when Ceausescu mandated that birth control was illegal,

prohibiting condoms and other birth control devices. Abortion was banned, too, and women were expected to surrender their unwanted children to the State. These children were known as “Ceausescu’s children,” and were the very people who were severely neglected in the notorious Romanian orphanages. The political conditions of a tumultuous Romania and the intense trials of her repeated attempts to enter an academy of art meant that having a child would further compromise Lia’s ability to work as an artist. This dilemma is not confined to women of the former Romania and totalitarian societies. Renowned female artists from Mary Cassatt and Georgia O’Keeffe to Carolee Schneemann, Eva Hesse, and Judy Chicago have all written about their decision not to have children in ways that reiterate Lia’s choice.¹¹¹

A further essential reference for the meaning of *I’m fighting for my right to be different* is one that Lia inserted in her monograph *amaLIA Perjovschi*. There, in a two-page spread featuring pictures of the performance, she added a small photograph of the two women in Ingmar Bergman’s film *Persona* (1966). This gripping drama explores the psychological encounter and life-threatening battle of identity between Elisabet Vogler (played by Liv Ullman), a famous stage actress recovering from a nervous breakdown, and Alma, her nurse (played by







Fig. 115, previous pages
Lia Perjovschi, *Pain H Files*, 1996–2003; twenty-four mass-produced dolls, hair removed, wrapped in gauze and painted, with homeopathic pill containers in foreground.



Figs. 116–118, above
Lia Perjovschi, *Pain H Files*, 1996–2003; ink and marker on paper.



performance and healing. In this regard, Lia’s performance *I’m fighting for my right to be different* is immediately connected to a series of small sculptures she produced on the role of healing titled *Pain H Files* (1996–2003). [Figs. 111–112, 115, 361] This work consists of a set of twenty-four commercially produced dolls that Lia altered by first pulling out their hair and then wrapping the dolls in gauze (just as she had wrapped herself in her performance *Annulment* eight years earlier). Next, she painted her physiological symptoms on the dolls in black and occasionally in red so that she could more precisely articulate to her homeopathic doctor her own bodily sensations. These ranged from tingling and becoming flushed with heat and numbness to sharp pain, throbbing feelings, headaches, and even temporary blindness.¹¹² She also produced a set of drawings to accompany the figures, drawings that also identified places on her body where painful or uncomfortable sensations had occurred. [Figs. 116–118, 362] Gradually becoming dissatisfied with the altered mass-produced dolls, Lia fabricated a second set of seventeen dolls from plaster of paris and painted each figure to express corporeal pain. [Figs. 113–114] Together the two sets of dolls, the drawings, and the actual homeopathic remedies in tiny colored plastic tubes prescribed by her doctor comprise the sculptural whole of *Pain H Files*.

Bibi Andersson). *Persona* presents a series of intertwined psychological situations: the fraught condition of transference in the psychoanalytic relationship between therapist and patient; the perplexity of dissociation and memory in multiple personality; the reality and therapeutic challenge of self- and other-directed physical and emotional violence; the complexity of sexuality; the test of motherhood; and the emotional devastation of betrayal. All these issues, while too complex to unpack here, have played some role in Lia’s life, which her work (until the mid-1990s) required viewers to consider directly. But one point demands more attention: the special role of art in healing, made early in the film. Nurse Alma says to patient Elisabet: “I have a tremendous admiration for artists; I think that art has enormous importance in people’s lives, especially for those who have problems.”

Art historians, clinical psychologists, and psychoanalysts alike have long argued for the therapeutic value of art, and those specializing in the history of performance art have also drawn direct parallels between

For Lia, *Pain H Files* represents the aesthetic equivalent of a “case history” (the word she uses in Romanian is *anamneza*, which derives from the Greek word for “reminiscence” and is adapted from the French into Romanian). Beginning with the idea of the investigation and accumulation of data about an illness and progressing to mediation on the processes or patterns of a life, *anamnez* also refers to the evolution of Platonic and Socratic theories of memory, including speculation on the immortality of the soul. Lia writes that her interest in these concepts derives from “remembering ideas that the soul contemplates in another existence, or reminiscence theory.”¹¹³ In this sense, her shadow reenters the *Pain H Files* as an aesthetic theme in the form of the familiar character-doll (another recurrent subject), insinuating that the foundation of illness resides in memories that continue to elude the artist and take root in the body.

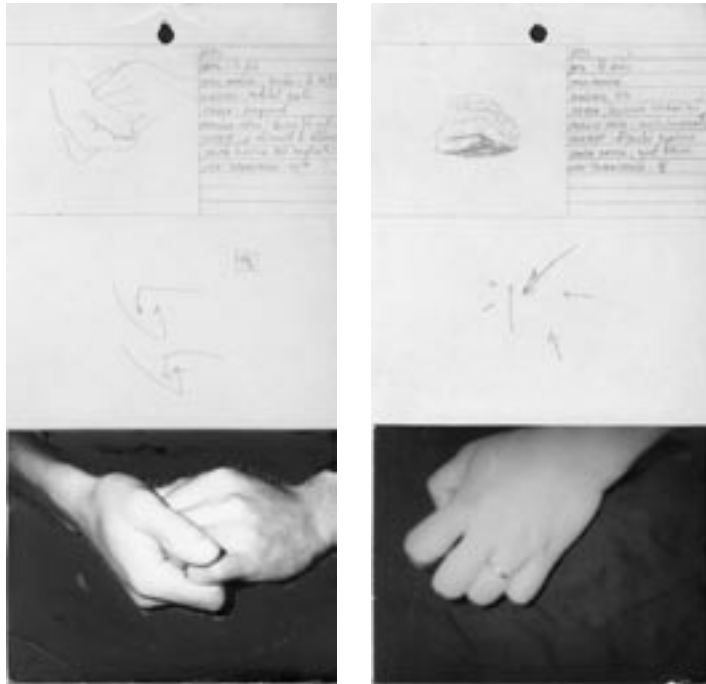
I know of no work of art quite like *Pain H Files*, either for its originality or intrinsic beauty, a unique aesthetic born of the combination of eccentricity, concept, and execution. On the one hand, Eva Hesse’s odd materials and uncommon shapes are perhaps the closest in quality and character to the *Pain H Files*, even though Hesse’s work is abstract rather than figurative. On the other hand, while the *Pain H Files* are figurative they have nothing in common with the vogue for figurative abjection and sentimentality in the 1990s. Moreover, they could not be further in meaning or use from the magical dolls associated with voodoo, the term derived from the Fon language of the African Dahomey peoples, meaning “spirit” or “deity” and used to affect (or protect against) affect in or from another person. The dolls of Lia’s *Pain H Files*, together with their accompanying refined drawings, are matter-of-fact and meant for use in diagnosis: works of art addressed to real symptoms related to actual physiological and psychological problems. To make this case even more strongly, Lia adamantly insists that the dolls should not be photographed in a manner that would make them “appear to gesture; they must be seen like bodies lying on a flat surface in an MRI machine for analysis.”¹¹⁴ But

even standing, the dolls appear like zombies, awaiting reanimation of the unhealthy body with the powers of homeopathy.

In July 1996, the same year that she began making the *Pain H Files*, Lia undertook to “measure” fellow artists in a performance titled *Searching, selecting, measuring (height and weight)*. [Fig. 351] She staged this action during an international performance festival held at St. Anna Lake in Romania organized by artists Uto Gusztav and Konya Reka. Lia dressed in white to distinguish herself from the other artists (who were mostly dressed in black) before she stood next to or lay down in front of each selected person. The mixture of this unconventional approach to art with such rational objectives as “selecting and measuring” is characteristic of the *Pain H Files*. This work makes it clear how Lia’s aesthetic investigations reside at the intersection of conflicting and converging impulses, such that I would describe her art as follows: neither both, nor neither, art nor life.



Fig. 119
Lia Perjovschi, installation view of units of 32 *Moments in the Life of Hands*, 1993; oil paint on canvas, photographs, and drawings. wooden box, multi-paned,



Figs. 120–121
Lia Perjovschi, *32 Moments in the Life of Hands*, 1993; photograph and graphite on paper.

In this simultaneous avoidance and embrace of both art and life, Lia’s work succeeds where so many artists’ practices aim but miss the intangible, subtle mark.

The second group of dolls that comprise *Pain H Files* bears the exact shape of the character-doll that Lia used in *I’m fighting for my right to be different*, which, in turn, is identical to the two life-size dolls that she made the same year for an installation on the subject of her parents’ marriage. [Fig. 119] Titled *About Couple or The Pinky Life of My Parents* (1993), this installation was produced for Lia’s graduation exhibition at the Bucharest Academy of Art. It comprised a room-sized box painted pink with a mirrored, multi-paned window as a ceiling, which was propped ajar to reflect the interior where the two character-dolls (her parents or a couple) sat in their domestic setting. The title refers ironically to the former communist period when it was obligatory to join the party. (Only one of each set of Dan’s and Lia’s parents joined: Dan’s mother and Lia’s father were required to join, as a kindergarten teacher and a worker

in an electrical plant, respectively.) In her commentary on this now-destroyed installation, Lia quoted from an English dictionary entry for the word couple: “a man and woman married, engaged, or otherwise paired; two equal and opposite forces that act along parallel lines,” a definition that applied as aptly to her own marriage as to that of her parents.¹¹⁵

In addition to *About Couple or The Pinky Life of My Parents*, Lia exhibited *32 Moments in the Life of Hands* (1993) in her graduation show. [Figs. 120–125, 309–310] For this work, she produced three variations on the language of hands in three media: photography, drawing, and painting. Each variation is a set of thirty-two works comprised of a slim sheet of paper containing a photograph of her hands, which she has positioned in different expressive attitudes, and a drawing that graphically translates the gestures in the photograph. Next she produced a painting, again interpreting the chain of media through which she had explored expressive moments in the photograph and drawing. *32 Moments in the Life of Hands* demonstrates the conceptual relation between, and the translation from, one medium to another. Painted in sweeping gestures and thick impasto, the paintings exhibit the emotive qualities of color and convey a sense of physical and mental animation; the photographs capture Lia’s performative hand events much as the camera also displayed her performances; and the drawings communicate the tension and conceptual intensity of precise moments in the life of hands, hands that are the sources for making art.

Later that year, Lia expanded her dialogue with hands into a video installation, *Similar Situations* (1993). She produced this work for the first Romanian video exhibition “Ex Orient Lux,” curated by Calin Dan, in which Dan Perjovschi also participated (with *Scan*, discussed above). [Figs. 311–313] In his exhibition catalogue statement, Calin Dan emphasized that Romanians had traditionally been “suspicious of new media;” that media art was rarely produced by artists in the period before 1989; and that the exhibition sought to “prove to the skeptical Romanian audience that media

are more than a consumer good and possibly more than a political weapon.” He continued: “Media are self-definition and self identification of the human being in the postindustrial, posttotalitarian era.”¹¹⁶ Lia’s *Similar Situations* certainly bore out that claim. Animating the static representations in *32 Moments in the Life of Hands*, the work engaged her hand movements in a silent, lively dialogue with the camera that was displayed on nine monitors. In *Similar Situations*, Lia also combined this hand movement with an installation of rain, comparing the movement of hands to “winking of eyes,” and juxtaposing the “blink” that can “ignore . . . the facts” to the “flowing freely . . . smooth and unconstrained in movement” of water.¹¹⁷ Such unusual contrasts also

appear in her video *Loop*, made in 1997. For *Loop*, Lia jumped up and down for twelve hours before the camera. The record of her hopping motion, combined with the contour of her hair, appears to record the explosion of an atomic bomb, a visual commentary on the outer and inner worlds of the artist. [Frontispiece and Fig. 199]

Once again, through a diverse exploration of media and themes, Lia’s conceptual approach to her own hyper-expressivity hides as much as it exposes. She took up the tension between revelation and concealment in a body of work titled *Hidden Objects* (1996) and *Hidden Things* (1996). [Figs. 126–129] *Hidden Objects* is a series of small balls covered in handmade paper. On the surface

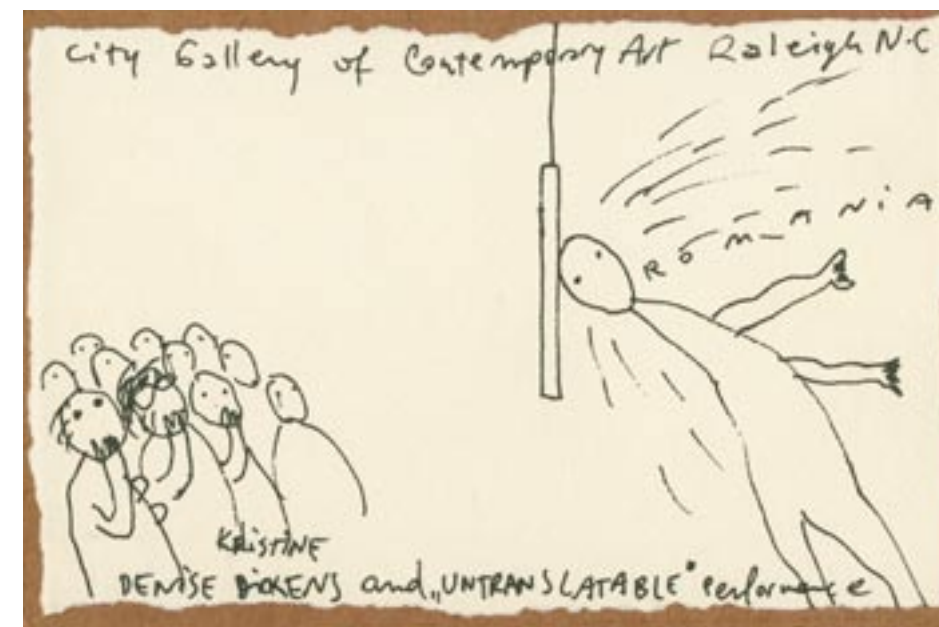


Figs. 122–125
Lia Perjovschi, four paintings from, *32 Moments in the Life of Hands*, 1993; oil on canvas.



of one ball is a drawing in Lia's tentative, tentacle-like hand, similar to the drawings in one of the two series of *Hidden Things*.¹¹⁸ The drawings in *Hidden Things* trace her comings and goings in enigmatic ways that screen as much as they depict. Equally impenetrable are the second series of *Hidden Things*, where ethereal squares embedded in gossamer, handmade paper refuse to unveil even the slim information of the drawings.

It may be difficult to imagine how such inscrutable tiny sculptures and works on paper can resemble two performances realized by Dan—*Untranslatable* (1994) and *Live! From the Ground* (1998)—but the effort to narrate through nearly opaque means links the two in a marriage of things and acts exceedingly hard to grasp. In *Untranslatable*, performed at City Gallery in Raleigh, North Carolina, Dan stood behind a piece of glass suspended in space, recounting a history of his life as he repeatedly hit his head on the pane, sometimes with force and other times barely audibly. [Figs. 130–131] Three years later in 1997, he performed a variation of this piece for a performance festival, "Akeja [Action]," in Krakow, Poland. Dan also punctuated this second performance of *Untranslatable* by tapping his head on a



Figs. 126–129, opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *Hidden Things*, 1996; collage embedded in paper handmade from banana bark; *Hidden Things*, 1996; ink on handmade paper; *Hidden Objects*, 1996; four styrofoam balls covered in handmade paper. Detail of ball two with graphite drawing of the artist's movements through a city; handmade paper. Courtesy of private collection.

Fig. 130, above
Dan Perjovschi, *Untranslatable*, 1994; performance at City Gallery, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Fig. 131, left
Dan Perjovschi, one of sixty-seven, *Postcards from America*, 1994; ink on pastel paper mounted on cardboard. Courtesy of private collection.



Figs. 132–134
Dan Perjovschi, *Live! From the Ground*, 1998, performance in Chisinau.

piece of suspended glass. He then turned to the wall and began drawing. Next he invited the audience to come up and erase his drawings. When no one complied, Dan began erasing his own work and then drawing again. Erasing and drawing, erasing and drawing, until viewers trickled forward to erase, Dan gradually created a tense interaction in which his own work, no matter how quickly he drew, was challenged with disappearance.

Live! From the Ground (1998) was Dan's contribution to the performance festival "Gioconda's Smile from Mythic to Techno-Ritual," organized by Octavian Esanu in Chisinau, Moldova.¹¹⁹ [Figs. 132–134] For this performance, Dan crawled inch by inch (like a soldier in basic training) along the main boulevard of the capital city of Chisinau. He called out statements such as: "Ground to center! Ground to center! Come in! Come in! Do you hear me? I can't hear you! Please come in!" In addition to his concerted attempts to communicate with "the center" from "the periphery," Dan also called out descriptions of what he saw along his route, describing the landscape inches away as enormous, filled with "gorges" (cracks in the sidewalk), a "forest" (some grass), boulders (bits of rock or sand on the street), and so forth. "If you have no perspective," Dan stated later, "everything looks huge, every crack seems impossible to pass."¹²⁰ Of his performance, Dan has written:

The Romanian "tradition" is based on the "acceptance of fate." The sword spares the swooping head. The whole communist and post-communist period was a crawling movement. We do not want to tear ourselves off the ground. (The earth we glorify so much.¹²¹) Our expectations have always been low. Our future has been buried. "Technology" has become a goal for its own sake. Ceausescu made our heads swim with "technology growth" and "computerization." And look what came out of it! Now it's the same. Romanian and Moldova do not live in (and do not need) technology. Computers are bought, but human relations are still based on files, stamps, registrations. The new invention

after communism is to use technology as a façade. Instead of increasing productivity, of leading to a more elastic decision, technology became the excuse for hyper-bureaucratization, the laptop and the cellular phone became what Kent cigars and blue jeans had been some years ago. . . Labels. What's the use of the Internet if we look at the World FROM THE HEIGHT OF A FROG'S KNEE!¹²²

Both *Untranslatable* and *Live! From the Ground* were excruciatingly painful to watch. The fear of broken glass injuring the artist in *Untranslatable* was matched with the recognition of the intellectual, emotional, and physical danger Dan has experienced in his life. In *Live! From the Ground*, both male and female viewers choked with



Figs. 135–137, above and following page
Dan Perjovschi, *Romania*, 1993; performance in Timisoara: tattoo.

Figs. 138, following page
Dan Perjovschi, *Erased Romania*, 2003; performance in Kassel: removal of tattoo. Courtesy of Galerija Gregor Podnar, Ljubjana, Slovenia.







Figs. 139–140, previous page and above
Building previously called Palace of the People, 1984–1990; House of the People, 1990–2003; and Palace of the Parliament, 2003–present.

emotion as they viewed the tall, striking, self-possessed artist—a man of caustic wit with an enormous capacity to identify and empathize with human frailty, as well as to transform it into compassionate humor—crawl along the street calling for help from “the center.” Dan’s action, however, was not simply on behalf of himself alone. Seeking to attain a higher position in life, he also called out for Romania and the Republic of Moldova (the former lands of Bessarabia, which were the birthplace of his father and ancestors). Neither sentimental, maudlin, nor kitschy, these two performances evoked responses similar to those viewers experienced while watching Lia perform *I’m fighting for my right to be different*: a sober confrontation with unfathomable realities articulated and conveyed by two relentless artists.

“Dumb but true,” Andrei Codrescu has written in another context about Romanian experience, “like all things evacuated by the very truth they claim.”¹²³ I interpret Codrescu’s “dumb” (in the context of Dan and Lia Perjovschi’s work) to represent the density of truth and “hidden things” that never shed their obtuse character even as they empty out the very events they enunciate.

This is certainly the case with Dan’s dual performances *Romania* (1993) and *Erased Romania* (2003), two connected performances that involved Dan first in having his upper arm tattooed with the word “Romania” and, a decade later, having the same tattoo removed. [Figs. 135–138, 141, 300, 343]

LIADAN: DIZZYDENTS FROM DIZZY

Dan performed *Romania* at the performance festival “Zone 1,” organized by Ileana Pintilie in 1993, where Lia also performed *I’m fighting for my right to be different*. As I wrote that year, Dan’s tattoo externalized the mark of his oppressor and simultaneously breached the code of secrecy that governs trauma:

With the word “Romania” emblazoned on the surface of his body, Dan Perjovschi staked the authenticity of his existence on a name. His tattoo divulges the dependence of his identity upon his country. . . . But his tattoo is also an indeterminate sign signifying the synchronicity of a visible wound and a mark of honor. A symbol of resistance and icon of marginality, it is a signature of capture, a mask that both designates and disguises identity. As a symbol for the charged complexity of Romanian national identity, the tattoo brands his body with the arbitrary geographical identity agreed upon by governments, and displays the ambiguous



Figs. 141
Dan Perjovschi, *Erased Romania*, 2003, performance in Kassel. Courtesy of Galerija Podnar, Ljubljana, Slovenia.

psychological allegiances such boundaries inevitably commit to the mind. His action-inscription also conveys some of the content of the accreted spaces of Romanian suffering and guilt, guilt that Dan Perjovschi addressed when he explained that in Romania, where both prisoners and citizens alike habitually were transformed into perpetrators, guilt and innocence intermingle inseparably. And he asked, “Who may point a finger?”¹²⁴

Nine years later, Pintilie again invited Dan to participate in “Zone 4.” He responded with a promissory letter that his contribution to “Zone 4” would be the performance of the removal of his tattoo on its tenth anniversary, or whenever he received funds to undertake the process. [Fig. 363]

In 2003, Perjovschi performed *Erased Romania*, having his tattoo sequentially removed during René Block’s exhibition “In the Gorges of the Balkan” at the Kunsthalle Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany. In Dan’s words:

The Block show scanned the Balkan region and I used this project to get out of the Balkanic umbrella. Kunsthalle Fridericianum paid for the [necessary] three sessions and partially for the trip and accommodations while I underwent the treatment. It was obligatory to have at least three weeks in between laser sessions. First one I did at the opening (30 August); second at the mid-term (30 September); and the last session at the [closing party] of the show (November 23). As far as I know, they spent about 1,500 euro.¹²⁵



Fig. 142
Lia Perjovschi, *CAA Kit*, 2002. Poster documenting CAA activities.

With the tattoo erased, Perjovschi declared himself “healed” of Romania. Dan’s declaration coincided with the moment when he and Lia began to identify themselves as “dizzydents” (dissidents) from “Dizzy” (Romania), a declaration made after the artists became embroiled in conflicts with Romanian curators and artists over the proposal to found the first National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) in the Palatul Parlamentului (Palace of the Parliament). [Fig. 139]

In order to appreciate this clash, and the full extent of the Perjovschis’ contribution to Romanian culture, it is important to understand that their practice is a time-based, socially engaged model of art that supports public education, the production of knowledge, and cultural renewal. This is particularly true of Lia’s work in the late 1990s and 2000s. But it is equally true of Dan’s later large-scale drawing installations, which use the psychology of laughter to comment critically and ethically on political and cultural conditions. The Perjovschis’ oeuvre can be divided into two mutually enhancing phases: the first loosely characterized by more private, intimate work, and the second by public



art addressed to public concerns. These later works reach beyond the individual instances of their production, as for example Dan’s work for the newspaper *Revista 22* and Lia’s newspapers such as *Zoom* (1998). [Figs. 143, 146–153] The point is that after the mid-1990s, their work did, indeed, change, and although the conflict over the National Museum of Contemporary Art only came to a head in the early 2000s, the Perjovschis’ decision to identify as “dizzydents” from the land of “Dizzy” makes the division between the two periods of their art more explicit. [Fig. 145] In their confrontation with MNAC, they not only challenged the construction of Romanian history directly (as some Romanian artists, especially Romanian filmmakers, have done), but they also demanded change by carrying out courageous dissident acts against influential figures in Romanian culture. At the same time, Dan and Lia recognized the folly (their dizzydence) of their insistence that Romanian culture openly address its past in a land (Dizzy) where such resistance has primarily been met with censure.

The Perjovschis’ practice entails a conceptual approach to cultural engagement that also includes a willingness to put themselves on the line for their society. Their response to the placement of MNAC in the Palace of the Parliament is an object lesson in what is entailed, culturally and personally, in a commitment to resistance. Much critical and art historical attention has focused over the last decade on the notion of artists as “social workers.”¹²⁶ But this term simply revises conceptual

approaches to art that have been in place since the social activism of the early twentieth century, especially in communist and socialist countries where putting art at the service of the nation is a cultural tradition, one that the Perjovschis inherited in Romania. In order to examine these aspects of the Perjovschis’ practice, it is worth recounting the history that led to the conflict over MNAC.

After the Revolution, the monstrous building—Palatul Poporului (Palace of the People)—was scaled down in nomenclature alone to Casa Poporului (House of the People). But it was popularly known as Palatul Nebunului, or the Madman’s Palace. In the mid-1990s, officials scaled the building back up to Palatul Parlamentului (Palace of Parliament), setting off a cunning linguistic chain that manipulated meaning (and through it, history) by transforming a “Palace” into a “House,” only to return it to a “Palace.”¹²⁷ The subtle but significant shifts in taxonomy reveal the connections between the new Palace of the Parliament and the old, oppressive Socialist Republic of Romania: the word “palace” is retained for both regimes, and with it the memory of the once exiled Romanian monarchy, the shadow at the



Fig. 143, top left
Dan Perjovschi, stack of eleven bound volumes of *Revista 22* [Bucharest], containing Dan’s drawings from 1991–2006.

Fig. 144, above
Lia Perjovschi, Presentation of CAA documents as *Detective table*, Ljubljana and London, 2000.



Fig. 145
National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) wing in Palace of the Parliament, 2006.

center of Romanian parliamentary democracy. Other new titles for old buildings conveniently folded the unsavory past into a present-future void of history: the self-conscious naming sublimated historical misery, thereby resisting the acts of remembrance and mourning necessary to healing.

No matter. In 2003, Donald Rumsfeld (Secretary of Defense under U.S. President George W. Bush) determined that Romania was to be part of the “New Europe,” and after this designation it became a “training range and military port” for U.S. military expansion in its “fight against terrorism.”¹²⁸ These developments shed light on two further aspects of the Palatul Parlamentului affair: the structure is the third-largest building in the world. In 2004, this colossal public works project—second only in mass to a U.S. military headquarters (the Pentagon) and an American shrine to capitalism (the Chicago Merchandise Mart)—became the site of the National Museum of Contemporary Art.

With the MNAC now added to Palace of Parliament, the infamous structure combines all the features of the military-industrial-communication-complex, with the additional benefit of now being an entertainment center as well. [Fig. 145]

The Perjovschis refused to participate in any exhibition on this site, or to sell their works to MNAC.¹²⁹ They described their rationale in the following terms:

- 1) In an emerging art scene with no production funds, no mobility funds [for travel], and basically not enough white cubes [exhibition spaces] to show the art works [of contemporary artists], the making of such a cultural Pentagon is not the solution. More than 2 million euro were spent to adjust the building [House of the People] for





Figs. 146–153, previous pages
Lia Perjovschi, CAA and CAA/CAA
newspapers, 1998–2005.



Figs. 154–155
Meetings and presentations in
the Perjovschi's "Open Studio"
from 1996–present.

art purposes; 2) The building is the Parliament. On one hand, we do not know of any good art institutions located in the parliamentary buildings [of other nations], and, on the other, after having culture under [the thumb of] politics for 50 years to put it [here] is like a bad joke; 3) This is the ugliest building on Earth. This is the dictator's Palace; 4) Between the city and the building is about one mile of empty fields. That is exactly the distance between the leaders and the citizens. Now this distance will apply to visual art too; 5) Absolutely nobody was consulted. This

is Romania where the process should be more transparent. The Prime Minister (an art collector) is quoted as saying about the location: "Either here (Ceausescu Palace) or nowhere. . . ."; 6) The museum was established, putting all the state spaces together (6 venues) under the same umbrella. This was the year, 2002, when things were supposed to go the other way, decentralizing State Power.¹³⁰

Backing up this commanding argument with action, Dan also refused the invitation to contribute his art to the opening exhibition of the museum, and promptly posted the official invitation on the Internet so that any Romanian artist could respond. Officials were inundated with offers from artists they did not want, but who ironically sought to participate and to belong to the new museum. Lia was never invited. This was no oversight, but rather confirms the fact that some in the official Romanian art community fail to grasp the significance of her work. This snub also delivered overt punishment for Lia's aggressive critique of Romanian cultural practices, particularly through her development of the *Contemporary Art Archive Center for Art Analysis* (CAA/CAA). [Figs. 144, 367, 370] The Perjovschis' resistance to the Palace of Parliament scheme has resulted in a prolonged, ongoing standoff between them and some Romanian critics and curators.

The Perjovschis simply refused to be complicit in the association of contemporary art with the historical crimes signified by the Palace building; their stance also represented a refusal of the implicit co-option of living artists by the state. They have pointed out that those in control of the museum have the power and authority to marginalize artists who do not conform. Further, they emphasize that the new authorities exercise this power in ways consistent with those used by the more explicitly repressive Union of Artists before 1990. Dan and Lia suggest that an old (and all too familiar) structure of intimidation has reappeared in a new guise under the democratic system. Making the difficult decision to remain outsiders, the Perjovschis identify themselves as "dizzydents" for the purpose of collaborating in the

reconstruction of "Dizzy" and its cultural institutions and practices.

The Perjovschis initially accomplished this goal by opening their studio to the public in 1996, offering an open meeting place for discussions among international and Romanian artists, journalists, art critics and historians, writers, filmmakers, and philosophers. [Figs. 154–155, 325] (See the *AutoChronology* in this book for an extensive list of meetings hosted in their Bucharest studio.) This open practice evolved from Lia's original impetus for *Contemporary Art Archive* (CAA), which she began in 1997 and expanded in 2001 to *Center for Art Analysis* (hence the title CAA/CAA) for the purpose of "preserving a space for criticism" in a country where criticism of institutional practices could quickly isolate artists.¹³¹ Collecting masses of information and images, Lia conceptualized the archive as an "institution" with an obligation to share its knowledge with the public. Teaching at Duke University in 1997, both artists realized that they needed to begin "to teach Romanian students, not Americans!!!!"¹³² They set about this task upon returning to Romania in 1998.

Drawing on Lia's archive, the Perjovschis began a rigorous series of public programs and lectures throughout

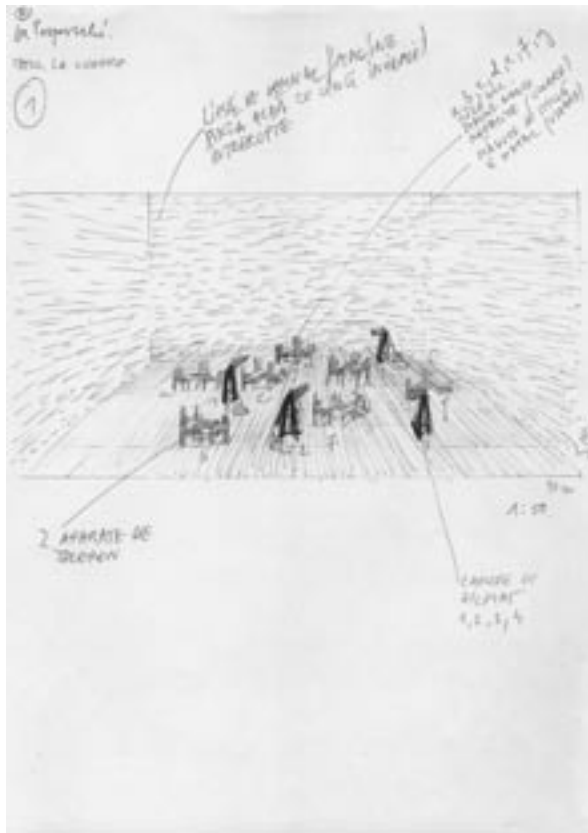
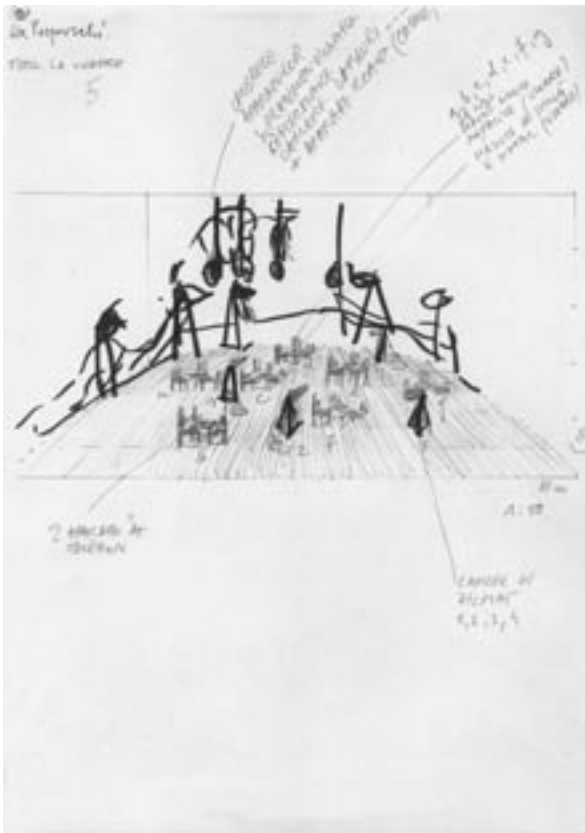


Fig. 156
Dan and Lia Perjovschi, *Everything on View*, 2000; television screen capture of the live broadcast.

Romania and eventually Europe. With each presentation, they distributed and displayed catalogues and books on the topic of their lectures, and under the umbrella of CAA, wrote and assembled newspaper publications, distributed free, but sometimes printed at their own personal expense. [Figs. 146–153] They began these publication practices in 1992, with their first two-person exhibition "Perjovschi/Perjovschi," at Simeza Gallery in Bucharest, and they continue publishing newspapers both collaboratively and individually today. [Figs. 276, 314]

Other ways that CAA/CAA helps foster the development of Romanian art include providing support for numerous young Romanian artists; backing the independent art scene in Romania throughout the 2000s; lobbying for artist-run spaces like H.Arta (in Timisoara), Protokoll (in Cluj), and Vector (in Iasi); and providing assistance with contacts, funding opportunities, and media coverage. The Perjovschis mounted the exhibition "Position Romania" in Vienna in 2002, using forty percent of their allocated budget (from Forum A9 Transeuropa, MuseumsQuartier 21, Vienna) to bring young Romanian artists to Austria, many for the first time. Their mentorship has extended even beyond funding, however, to their active involvement in artists' careers. The Perjovschis' help enabled Maria Crista, Anca Gyemant, and Rodica Tache, the three artists who founded H.Arta, to secure an artist residency fellowship in Vienna. Similarly, Raluca Voinea, who now edits the online art journal *www.e-cart.ro*, was able to study at the Royal College of Art in London, an opportunity facilitated by introductions to British critics made possible by Lia.¹³³ In addition, the Perjovschis acted as advisers to artist Attila Tordai S (Protokoll's manager), who spent time studying in Germany after receiving a Rave Scholarship for Curators, Restorers, Museum Technicians and Cultural Managers. Through workshop sessions, debates, lectures, meetings, and even direct advocacy, Dan and Lia coached emerging artists and introduced them to principles of managerial organization. [Figs. 161, 370, 373]

CAA also launched a public art and education program, mounting numerous exhibitions such as "Dia(pozitiv)"



Figs. 157–158
Lia Perjovschi, sketches for the set of *Everything on View*, 2000; ink on paper.

(1998), a show Lia organized at Bucharest’s Atelier 35 to expose the public to new art forms, such as installation art. For this show, Lia made some one hundred slides of a variety of art installations from around the world. Together the Perjovschis provided a gallery lecture for the exhibition and organized a program featuring speakers from various fields. Two years later, in 2000, the couple organized an installation and public dialogue on the subject of “Kitsch” with Razvan Exarhu, a well-known FM radio announcer again at Atelier 35. For this event, they designed the exhibition space as if it were an apartment, including common objects appropriate to a home, placing things on the floor as if in a flea market. They hung nothing on the walls. The entire arrangement was a tutorial aimed at rethinking artistic practice and refiguring conventional dichotomies between life and art, culture and commerce. During the exhibition’s two-week run, and unsolicited by the artists, the public spontaneously brought objects to add

to those on the floor: the exhibition transformed into an installation-happening. As Dan recalled, “It was not a great project, but a popular one!”¹³⁴ The following year, 2001, Lia mounted “CAA Kit: Visual ID/Defragmentation” at Atelier 35, an installation that examined Western visual and conceptual strategies for exhibition design. In 2003, Dan and Lia together presented “Waiting Room: Several Artistic Positions from South-East Europe” as part of the conference “Enlargement of Minds/Crossing Perspectives.” Held at the Theater Art Institute in Amsterdam, this three-day event brought together artists from countries described by the Perjovschis described as “leftover from the European process of accession (Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Albania, Turkey).” Between 2003 and 2007, these extensive activities have only multiplied and the network in which the Perjovschis participate has grown internationally.

The Perjovschis have been especially successful in utilizing mass media to educate Romanians about art. Their work in this area has engaged them in television interviews and events that they broadcast on national television from their studio. Moreover, they also became part of a team with Ruxandra Garofeanu, an art historian and tv producer, collaborating on the unprecedented television series *Everything on View*, a title that captures the Perjovschis’ goal to make communication in Romania transparent. [Figs. 156–158, 360] Lia and Dan served as moderators for the show, and much of its visual material came directly from Lia’s CAA archive. The program’s unconventional content and new forms of visual presentation demonstrated to a general audience how experimental art intersects with politics and society, making *Everything on View* especially popular with audiences in Romania.

Dan has described the Perjovschis’ television adventure as a “splendid failure” for the ways in which the team “lacked the time to cover their complex subjects adequately,” for the sharp differences in individual member’s cultural knowledge, and for the fact that—for Lia and Dan—their work was a kind of “performance art before the nation,” while for other members of the team, the program was just a “job.”¹³⁵ These discrepancies resulted in battles that “made everybody nervous,” Dan remembered, “which was good.”¹³⁶ To whatever degree the Perjovschis felt their concept had failed, commercial television programmers quickly identified the artistic and experimental nuances of the program, and they adopted ideas from technical failures on the show that ironically became cutting-edge innovations. What the Perjovschis knew to be mistakes on air, such as conversations off-camera that could be heard on-camera between Dan and Lia and the team were the very things that spurred aesthetic experiments in the media. In addition, aesthetic choices such as the Perjovschis’ use and simultaneous presentation of both black-and-white and color material was quickly adopted, a style of production that is currently fashionable in the United States. The program also proved successful enough for the editor for the literature section, Daniela Zeca-Buzura,

to be later appointed director of the Romanian Cultural Channel, State Television 3.

All these activities show how Dan and Lia’s actions as dizzydents have made four fundamental contributions to Dizzy (Romanian) culture over the past decade. They have supported the independent art scene by helping establish emerging artists’ alternative spaces, magazines, and visibility abroad. They have partnered with various cultural institutions and collaborated with the media. They have responded to the cumulative impact of decentralizing art away from Bucharest by emphasizing the expansion of art centers and maintaining cultural dialogue with artists throughout the country. They have made determined efforts to ensure transparency in culture and a remembrance of the past.

AFTER AS FUTURE

The dizzydents do not only contribute to Dizzy. Dan and Lia Perjovschi’s art has also had a growing impact around the world. [Fig. 159] In 2007, Dan completed a



Fig. 159
Dan Perjovschi, *My World Your Kunstraum*, 2006; marker on wall.



large-scale drawing installation, *WHAT HAPPENED TO US?* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as part of its “Projects 85” series; and Lia installed a study for her *Knowledge Museum* in the exhibition “Timeout! Art and Sustainability” at the Kunstmuseum in Liechtenstein. [Figs. 169, 226, 297–299] Dan also did a drawing installation at the Venice Biennale, and both participated in the “Venice Agenda V” series, speaking on the panel “Is Art a Form of Debate?” Indeed, in 2007 alone, one or both of the Perjovschis have worked in Austria, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, the Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. What is it about the Perjovschis’ art and projects that capture the imagination of the global public and international art world? The last section of this essay contemplates this question.

The context for Lia’s *Knowledge Museum* in Liechtenstein is telling. The exhibition considered the relationship

between selected contemporary artworks and the concept of sustainability, a multivalent term that refers generally to the goal of managing the environment in order to provide for current and future world populations. But as the materials for the exhibition make clear, sustainability also applies to the economic, social, institutional, and cultural welfare of the earth, and signifies the concomitant desire for discovering alternatives to the accelerated pace of life in the new movements focusing on “slow food, slow city, slow medicine, and slow sex.”¹³⁷ Much of Lia’s work since the mid-1990s can be understood as a response to this quickening of life in an era of globalization. Certainly this is one of the topics suggested by Lia’s *The Globe Collection* (1990 to the present). This body of work includes about 1,500 items in the shape of, or imprinted with, the image of the planet. [Figs. 160, 316–321, 324] In addition to actual globes, there are postcards, books, balloons, toys, T-shirts, umbrellas, balls, change purses,



perfume bottles, hats, kitchen articles, stationery, coins, stamps, beer cans, advertisements, and much more. Lia chooses objects carefully based on their intrinsic interest and design, as well as their cultural significance. Together with such works as *Knowledge Museum*, *Mind Maps (Diagrams)*, *Research Files*, and *CAA/CAA, The Globe Collection* aesthetically models the way information can be collected, organized, and analyzed. In this way, Lia’s installation implicitly suggests how a more integrative, self-reflective life might be lived. By modeling a collection as a practice that responds to an individual’s actual needs, experiences, and goals, rather than to the imagined needs generated by capitalism and the culture of consumption, Lia’s work suggests, further, that such a life might help ensure sustainability more broadly.

When she first began to travel in 1990, Lia was immediately drawn to popular cultural artifacts that reflected the planetary impact of globalization and

Fig. 160, opposite page
Lia Perjovschis, *The Globe Collection*, 1990–present; installation in 2005 at the Generali Foundation, Vienna.

Fig. 161, above
Lia Perjovschis, *CAA Kit*, 2006, installation view with *Mind Maps (Diagrams)*, *Timeline*; posters, and *Detective* materials, Ljubljana.

its implications for the quality of life. At that time, she began three collections: plastic bags from Romania and the former Eastern European countries, unavailable before 1989; all variety of objects featuring the image or form of angels, called *Angels*; and *The Globe Collection*. All three collections are ongoing. Lia exhibited these bags in 1994, when she installed the collection in the meeting hall of the Group for Social Dialogue, a collective founded to monitor the transition from communism to a civil society. [Fig. 348] Dan is a member of this group, which also publishes *Revista 22*. In this context, the plastic bag collection visibly signified the transit of goods to and from Romania from the perspective, in Lia’s terms, of “a person who judges the value, worth, beauty, or excellence of something.”¹³⁸

To better understand Lia’s fascination with objects that conjure images of commerce, one needs to appreciate the absence of such things in Romania well into the 1990s. For example, in 1991, while traveling in northern Romania, it was necessary to light matches to negotiate three flights of stairs to a room in a good hotel in the university town of Satu Mare. Why? There were virtually no light bulbs in the country. [Fig. 239] This is why the satellite map revealing Romania as a black hole in the 1980s has become so infamous. [Fig. 162] During this period, shops were completely devoid of goods; restaurants also had nothing, despite customers being given multipage, leather-bound menus by embarrassed waiters who could not provide what the menus offered. Few can imagine the shame such scarcity imposed upon a proud people. Upon landing at Otopeni in 1991, the international airport in Bucharest, travelers entered a tiny room with one bare bulb hanging from an electrical cord. There they surrendered their luggage to an ancient, noisy conveyor belt that nearly ground suitcases to pieces before spitting them out on

the other side of the wall. Military aircraft and guards surrounded the entire airstrip, and sullen, suspicious guards met passengers. These sentries were as threatening as any East German border guards in the 1970s and 1980s. Everything suddenly changed in 1995, at least in appearance. Seemingly overnight, cappuccinos, for example, could be had in a new airport café where one could pay in u.s. dollars, handing over money that represented the wages of days of Romanian labor.

Like aesthetic radar, Lia’s plastic bag collection and *The Globe Collection* anticipated these radical and abrupt changes, showing how “outside” and “before”—terms Romanians used to indicate the times before the Revolution—now concretized what I titled this section, “after as future.”¹³⁹ By the end of the 1990s, major cities like Bucharest, Timisoara, and Iasi were inundated with commercialism, manifested in mammoth advertising banners that literally covered the entire façades of most buildings in the city centers. What was desired arrived as an avalanche. “The great hum of truth that was in the



Fig. 162, left
1980s satellite map of Europe at night, showing Romania with almost no lights.

Fig. 163–168, opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *Research Files. General Timeline: From Dinosaurs to Google Going China*; 1997–2006; collage and paper, six details.





Fig. 169
Lia Perjovschi, *Knowledge Museum*, 2007, installation, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein; ink and collage on paper.

Revolution, “became the generalized din of consumption.”¹⁴⁰ My point is that Lia’s works of the late 1990s and 2000s are not about sustainability per se. They meditate on the globe itself, and on the endless consumption and self-absorption of that part of humanity able to own and produce such goods. But also secreted away in *The Globe Collection* (as in Lia’s *Hidden Things*) is the unseen but palpable presence of those unable to own such objects, those absorbed in their own survival,

and those who nevertheless (along with and because of the others) also despoil the planet as an effect of global poverty.¹⁴¹

The related work, *Knowledge Museum* (with its seven departments: The Body, Art, Culture, The Earth, Knowledge and Education, The Universe, and Science), derives from Lia’s intrinsically interdisciplinary approach to art and information, and belongs to the long tradition of artists’ similarly arcane systems of accounting for the world, from esoteric museums to museums in a hat.¹⁴² *Knowledge Museum* is also a contemporary Cabinet of Curiosities, “an interdisciplinary Museum [where] everything is connected and not isolated . . . [as if] you enter inside of a mind.”¹⁴³ One enters Lia’s mind first through her *Research Files*, which anticipated *Knowledge Museum*. [Figs. 163–168] Each *Research File* is comprised of collaged images and texts devoted to a particular subject. For example, “Subjective Art History from Modernism to Present” explores areas of visual interest to Lia and the impact of art on culture. “My Visual cv, from 1961 to the Present” details her biography. “Detective Draft” surveys contemporary culture, alluding as much to the legacy of Romania’s massive spy system as to current regimes of global surveillance and their detective apparati. Such *Research Files* as “Subjective History of Romanian Culture in the Frame of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, from Modernism to the European Union” and “Subjective General Knowledge, from Dinosaurs to Google Going China” ask viewers to consider idiosyncratic frames of reference and expand upon Lia’s long-standing preoccupation with arresting and reshaping time. [Figs. 241–268] Like the photographs, drawings, and paintings of *32 Moments in the Life of Hands*, *Research Files* plunge viewers into Lia’s world of allusion and memory. While the form of aesthetic contemplation in *Research Files* is unusual, viewers are invited into an artist’s mind in the same way that they would enter into and engage with a traditional work of art, where one confronts an artist’s concepts through color, expression, and form as in a painting or sculpture. *Knowledge Museum*, *Research Files*, and the sixty drawings that comprise *Mind Maps*

(*Diagrams*) constitute evidence of Lia’s distinctive mind, busy at work scrutinizing the world. She does so with a rare combination of skepticism and awe, a mixture of uncertainty and reverence replaced in global culture by pseudo-sophistication and faux cynicism.

In addition to engaging with topics like sustainability, other themes have also been important for Lia’s work, which has been included in an international series of exhibitions, panels, and symposia on the subject of the Academy.¹⁴⁴ This movement grew out of the critique of the museum launched by experimental artists throughout the world in the late 1960s and 1970s from Hélio Oiticica (Brazil) and Art & Language (England) to Joseph Kosuth (U.S.) and Michael Asher (U.S.). It was sustained over the next two decades in self-consciously political art that assumed the language of platforms and was usually installed outside the walls of museums.¹⁴⁵ Today, the consortium of academics associated with the Academy attempts to build upon this trend at the same time that it seeks to reverse it by posing the questions: “What does the museum make possible beyond itself? How can the museum become a series of exchanges and responses, and how can it move beyond acting as a vehicle of established values?”¹⁴⁶ Such queries bring



Fig. 170
Dan Perjovschi, *Do You Remember My PIN?* 2006; marker on wall.



Fig. 171
Dan Perjovschi, *Beautiful Bird Flu*, 2006; marker on wall. to mind a 1966 essay by artists Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson titled “The Domain of the Great Bear.” This text analyzed the American Museum of Natural History and concluded: “History no longer exists.”¹⁴⁷

Bochner and Smithson’s essay anticipated Fukuyama’s announcement of the end of history (quoted in the Introduction to this essay) by nearly twenty years. Yet the earlier pronouncement was significantly different in content from Fukuyama’s post – Cold War political analysis. Resisting the Academy and the Museum, as well as academic and museological histories, Bochner and Smithson posed an alternative to such institutional structures by invoking Jorge Luis Borges’s notion of a “labyrinth that is a straight line, invisible and unceasing.”¹⁴⁸ Lia’s 1980 *Ex Libris, J. L. Borges*, belongs to this tradition. Already as a teenager, Lia had intuitively acknowledged the conundrum of history — its institutions and representations — and was beginning to forge a new form of art through the most traditional of means, a bookplate. Her *Mind Maps (Diagrams)* are her most visible manifestation of the Borges maze, models of history and mind dependent upon but separate from the Academy and the Museum. [Figs. 11, 161, 322] They, along with her work since the late 1990s, respond to the question of Academy and Museum by being sympathetic to, but distant from, both critical traditions.

And Dan? What is the central significance of his drawings? Dan pays attention to the prattle of everyday life, picturing such nattering on the huge walls of the most illustrious museums of the world, walls that have been constructed to both intimidate and impress. But Dan's drawings do not participate in this posturing: he mocks himself and pokes fun at the mores, customs, beliefs, prejudices, and general behaviors of the audiences that adore him for his honest self-deprecation, ironic humor, and sincere affection for humanity. *Do you remember my PIN?* illustrates a man at an ATM machine. [Fig. 170] Forgetting his PIN number, he turns to the camera behind him, the very surveillance system that has repeatedly recorded his daily or weekly transactions, and asks with the anticipation of an answer: "Do you remember my PIN?" *Beautiful Bird Flu* depicts only a floating, gracious swan, serene and unknowing. [Fig. 171] *Global Warming* shows an ice cream cart where the vendor has crossed out the word "ice" and left only "cream." [Fig. 172] Dan laughs wickedly, but his eyes reveal a grave expression.

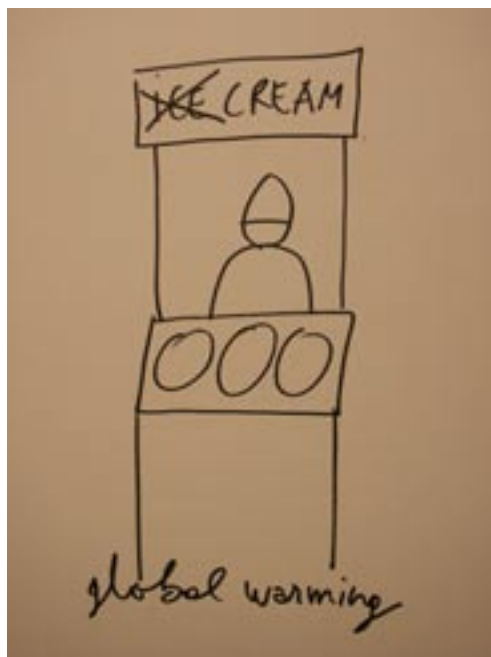
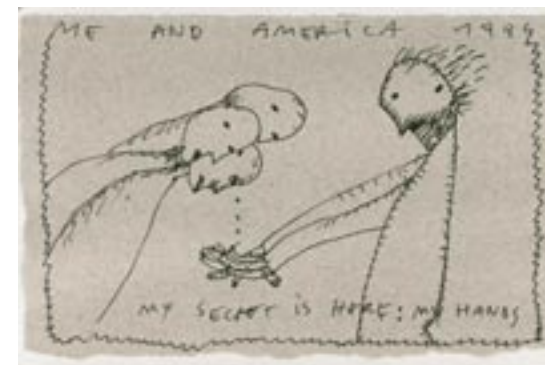


Fig. 172
Dan Perjovschi, *Global Warming*, 2006; marker on wall.

Everyone wants a Perjovschi, no matter how ephemeral his astonishing installations may be. Of all the illustrious museums that have exhibited his work, however, only the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, has gotten wise: it will lease Dan's installation rather than destroy it. Why not? These are magnificent works, commanding in their breadth and depth of analysis, bold in technique and drawn with a sense of immediacy, confident as any Jackson Pollock painting. This suggests that Dan masks self-doubt similar to Pollock's anxieties, even as his drawings are also arrogant in their knowledge of their own technical facility, just as Pollock was when he painted. [Fig. 347] When I summon Pollock here, it is not in the spirit of a shameless hagiography about Dan Perjovschi; that would be the result if I did not permit myself to make such contemporary comparisons with historical figures. Dan knows how to fill and balance aesthetic information in large expanses of space, and his work has changed the scale and language of drawing. He comes prepared when he faces the walls of such institutions as the Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, and the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. [Figs. 178–180] Dan spends hours analyzing television and the news; he reads dozens of international newspapers and magazines; he watches people all over the world in order to discern and translate local customs and ideas into universally understood visual representations of human experience; and he fills dozens of notebooks with notations and drawings that do so. [Figs. 278, 375] Dan Perjovschi works hard.

Dan attracts what activist artists from the Situationist International to the present have not: a multinational, multigenerational, multiethnic audience whose languages he speaks in visual form. But Dan is not a conventional activist. Instead he translates the complexities of social behavior into art. Dan is funny. This gift is exceptional in an international art scene that takes itself too seriously, relying upon easy slapstick, banal cartoons, and salacious pornography as substitutes for rigorous, philosophic dissection of human inconsistency, anomaly, and desire, some of



Figs. 173–177
Dan Perjovschi, five of sixty-seven, *Postcards from America*, 1994. Courtesy of private collection. Cover of artist book *Naked Drawings*, 2005.





Fig. 178–180, previous pages
Dan Perjovschi, three installation views: *Naked Drawings*, 2005, DC Space, Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany; *Dan Perjovschi*, 2006, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands; *May 1st*, 2006, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; marker on walls.

Fig. 181, above
Dan Perjovschi, one of sixty-seven, *Postcards from America*, 1994. Courtesy of private collection.

the essential elements that comprise the foundation of laughter and humor. In order to achieve his astutely perceptive vision, Dan turns to himself, to the life of an artist, and to the everyday world, taking the incongruity of ideologies, the ineptitude of sociability, the absurdity of strangeness, and the inability to come to terms with “the other” (that inelegant and alienated manner of describing human beings supplementary to ourselves) as the subjects of his work.

Many of the images in *Postcards from America* (1994) attend to the simultaneity of pride and self-doubt in an artist’s life. In *My Secret is Here: My Hands*, Dan provides only half of the key to the sources of his work. The other half may be found in *Artist Thinking*, where masses of ideas, like mental noise, pour from the artist’s brain while he cradles his head from the strain. Heads



litter the floor in *I Try to Change My Style*, which sympathizes with the artist’s effort to cope with the need to be flexible in a market voraciously in search of the new. In *America is Exciting*, Dan’s own male body becomes a landscape of phallic skyscrapers, alluding simultaneously to scopophilia (the erotic pleasure in looking) and to how human beings anthropomorphize their environment. *Look at Me and My Drawings* presents the artist as a flasher, acknowledging his sensual relationship to his art and to the erotic nature of the gaze. [Figs. 173–176] But Dan’s use of the naked body is always subtle, exceedingly polite, modest, and funny—as is the cover of his 2005 artist book *Naked Drawings*, where, in the mere act of reaching to draw, the artist exposes himself. [Figs. 177] While the unobtrusive phallus peeking



Figs. 182–183, above and left
Dan Perjovschi, *Wonderful World*, 1995, with detail of one page from the set of flip drawings; ink on paper. Courtesy of private collection.

out from under the artist’s smock brings a smile, on a deeper, often unconscious level, viewers may recognize the double entendre: the artist’s emotions, intellect, and artistic abilities are exposed to scrutiny. Dan’s work is intelligent, simultaneously provoking laughter and understanding, and it is intimate. Drawings like *Naked Drawing* must be understood in content as similar to *Alone*, which is as telling of Dan’s private emotions as Lia’s apparently more personal expressions. [Fig. 181]

The theme of the artist is only one of numerous subjects that appear in *Postcards from America*, which consists of over 500 handmade cardboard cards faced with the pastel paper on which Dan drew. [Fig. 286] Other topics include the huge size of commodities in the United States, from super-size sandwiches and supermarkets to the super prices of hotels. [Figs. 287–293] Images of the dollar bill or its sign permeate *Postcards from America*, and are often juxtaposed with images of violence. But Dan also draws about friendships, as well as the loneliness a foreign land and his longing for Lia. [Fig. 227] Throughout the series Dan visually narrates manifestations of the power that accounts both for his attraction to and criticism of the United States of America.

Wonderful World, begun in the early 1990s and finished in the mid- to late 1990s, is similar to *Postcards from America* in its focus on specific topics. [Figs. 182–183, 283–285] *Wonderful World* delves more deeply into such topics as HIV/AIDS, drug addiction, violence, the media, and religious conflict, unpacking cultural confusion and malaise all while filled with wonder at the world’s fullness. In formal terms, *Wonderful World* picks up where *Anthropoteque* concluded: the flip drawing. The number of drawings in any specific unit of *Wonderful World* can vary widely, from eight or ten to over twenty, and the drawings are usually on various shades of pastel paper, as in *Postcards from America*. Exiting primarily in two large assemblages, containing forty and sixty units of flip drawings respectively, some different iterations of the work also exist. [Fig. 184] For Dan originally conceived *Wonderful World* to consist of both individual or groups of units. One unusual example includes a

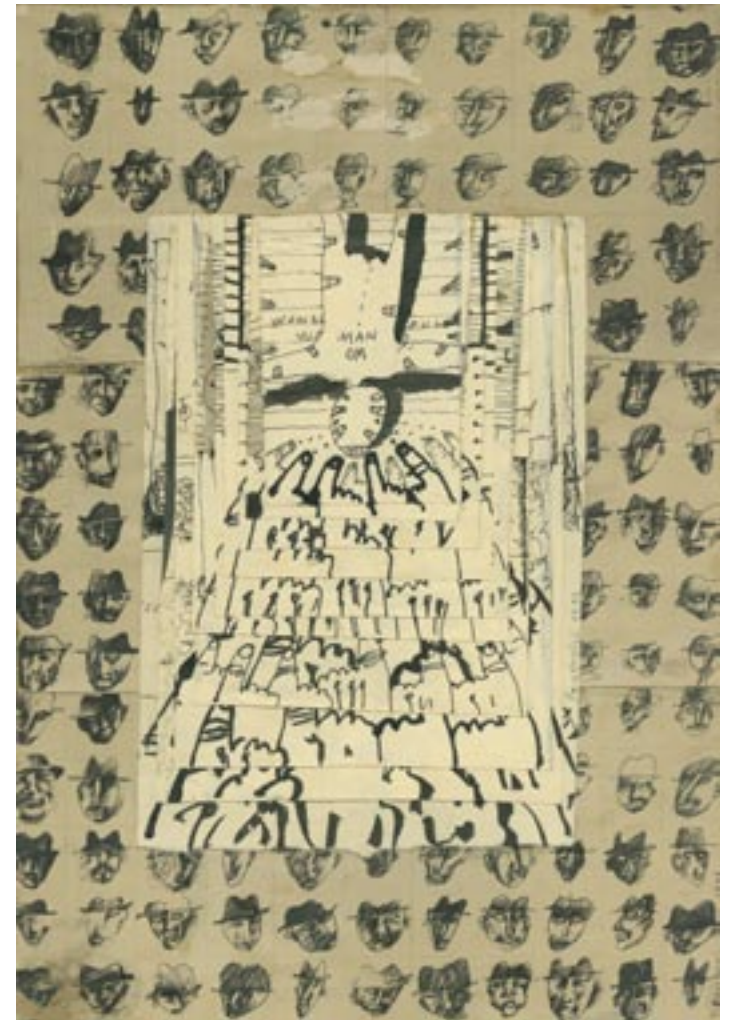


Fig. 184
Dan Perjovschi, *Wonderful World* (flip unit), background drawings, 1988, flip drawing, 1994; collage on pastel paper. Courtesy of private collection.

background containing portraits of a mélange of men wearing different hats, which Dan drew in 1988, on top of which he pasted a flip drawing from 1994. This piece demonstrates how Dan’s earlier work continues to inform his current work. Another unusual example from *Wonderful World* is a series of portrait drawings in a grid, over which Dan pasted a small contact print of a photograph of protestors on the streets in Bucharest during the Revolution. *Wonderful World* provided Dan with a flexible format through which he experimented with a wide range of possible combinations.

CEA MAI FRUMOASĂ ȚARĂ DIN LUME



ÎNSETAȚI DE LIBERTATE



Wonderful World also reminds viewers that forty-five years of life in Romania taught Dan the truth and the practice of what French philosopher Henri Lefebvre wrote in 1945: “The theory of superhuman moments is inhuman. . . . Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all.”¹⁴⁹ Forgiving Lefebvre’s gender exclusive terms as artifacts of the past, Lefebvre’s insistence on the “*greatness in everyday life*” (his emphasis) is what counts, and that greatness constitutes the stuff of Dan’s wonderful world.¹⁵⁰ Lefebvre concluded his comments on humanity with the following admonition:

Going beyond the emotional attempts by philanthropists and sentimental (petty-bourgeois) humanists to “magnify” humble gestures, and beyond that allegedly superior irony which has systematically devalued life, seeing it merely as back-stage activity or comic relief in a tragedy, the critique of everyday life — critical and positive — must clear the way for a genuine humanism, for a humanism which believes in the human because it knows it.¹⁵¹



Figs. 185–188, previous pages
Dan Perjovschi, *Post R*, 1995;
four posters. Translation of posters, top left to bottom right:
The most beautiful country in the world; Always between two empires; Freedom thirsty; A tiny people with such a big house.

Fig. 189, above
Dan Perjovschi, *Beliefs*, 2005;
marker on wall.

Dan knows what it means to be human, and a series of four posters, *Post R* (1995), evince that knowledge. [Figs. 185–188] The title puns on the words “poster” and “R” (for Romania), as well as suggests “post” for the function of a poster. In each of the four posters, Dan appears with a thoughtful look on his face, while carefully displaying his bicep tattoo, “Romania.” Thus does he show himself to be coextensive with his country, both the object and author of his critique. In each poster, Dan presents a site or a situation steeped in Romanian myth contrasted with history and the aftermath of actual life following the dictatorship. Poster #1 portrays the Romanian countryside where, next to a rushing river, a dilapidated wooden outhouse leaks toxic waste into the flowing water. The accompanying text states: “The most beautiful country in the world.” Poster #2 shows an elegant, well-proportioned Eastern Orthodox church squeezed between two ugly contemporary high-rise buildings. “Always between two empires,” Dan quips, summoning the history of a Romania sandwiched between Eurasia and the Roman Empire, the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires, the Soviet and Western Empires, and now between the outer reaches of the European Union and Eurasia. In #3, a homeless man sleeps on the ledge of an empty shop window: “Freedom thirsty,” Dan announces matter-of-factly. #4 presents Palatul Poporului/Casa Poporului/Palatul Parlamentului, that grand building of multiple personalities, with the comment: “A tiny people with such a big house.”

The smiles that *Post R* produces are grins of recognition, which Freud analyzed in “Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious.”¹⁵² Dan’s work deploys what Freud recognized comprises the structure of humor: juxtaposition of dissimilar elements that surprise and unseat expectations; mixing of words and images; condensation of complex meanings into contradictory and double valent meanings; plays on words, ambiguity, punning, displacement; and unification of disparate ideas and concepts. *Post R* is particularly rich in all these elements, as is a recent drawing: *Beliefs* (2007). [Fig. 189] There Dan shows three vertical elements: the steeple

of a church, the minaret of a mosque, and the upright barrel of a machine gun (something like the the AK-47 or AKM assault rifle). Dan’s message is as biting as the subject is deadly: beliefs cause wars and wars are waged and supported by the multibillion-dollar international weapons industry. This drawing is not funny; precisely why it causes the nervous laughter of recognition.

Though laughter was once believed to be the preserve of humans alone, scientists now suggest that it derives from the animal kingdom. “Indeed, neural circuits for laughter exist in very ancient regions of the brain,” psychologist Jaak Panksepp reports. He continues, “ancestral forms of play and laughter existed in other animals eons before we humans came along.”¹⁵³ In addition, laughter is social, and pioneering areas in the treatment of depression have discovered that it is a key mode for accessing nonverbal feelings and emotions. Dan’s art connects with the pre-cognitive animal source of the human disposition toward laughter, with animal/human sociability, and with laughter’s capacity to relieve tension. Dan’s work conjures laughter that emerges from deep sources in the human psyche. Thus is Dan’s art potent, necessary, and dangerous.

CONCLUSION: INSTEAD OF NOTHING,
OR ON THE OTHER HAND

In 1990, soon after the Revolution, Lia performed an agitprop action aimed at inciting students to become socially engaged. [Fig. 190] Disturbing a class in session, she entered one of the rooms of the Theological Institute in the University of Sibiu and asked the seminarians to act for a just future. “A priest interrupted me,” she explained, “and asked me to leave, but not before he advised his students, ‘You need her motivation and passion.’” Next Lia handed out her manifesto in the streets, “urging people to act rather than accept the current situation.”¹⁵⁴ Finally, she scattered the tract over the famous medieval walls and “Passage of Stairs” of Sibiu, calling her action *Instead of Nothing*.

Lia Perjovschi has devoted her life to creating art that is conscious of its purpose and aware of its role in society.



Fig. 190
Lia Perjovschi, *Instead of Nothing*,
1990, agitprop action in Sibiu.

From the delicate yet
exacting drawings
she made for the instal-

lation of the CAA/CAA archive to her designs for theater and television, from sculpture and painting to performance, Lia has attempted to awaken viewers to the present in order to act for the future. [Fig. 367] No visual image is more representative of this aim than her *Visual Archive of Survival*, a series of pillowcases on which she printed images of her performances and art objects in 1994. [Fig. 191] The significance of *Visual Archives of Survival* in Lia’s oeuvre may be measured by the fact that in 1996, after the publication of her first monograph, *AmaLia*, she had a second set of pillows emblazoned with the entire contents of the book. [Fig. 193] This set of pillowcases included photographs of her art, the book’s essay, and even the captions for the photographs.

Lia first exhibited *Visual Archives of Survival* in 1994 at the Art Museum in Arad, Romania, in an exhibition titled “Complexul Muzeal” (The Museum Complex), curated by Judit Angel. The show examined the relationship between the display and the meaning of works of art, questioning how the content and reception of art is altered by the mode of its installation. For her work, Lia chose a room displaying antique Victorian chairs. There she arranged her pillows in small piles on top of each seat, placing some on the floor underneath the fragile chairs. [Fig. 192] In addition, she put a few plastic bags from her collection under some chairs. In an extremely complicated and subtly evocative set of metaphors, *Visual Archives of Survival* connected the way in which sleep renews the body to the thesis that art can be an agent for survival and healing. The pillows on top of the chairs served, further, as a cautionary reminder not to sleep through the present by being overcome with reverence for the past (symbolized by Victorian chairs), and to be conscious of shifts in history (represented in the plastic bags). As this installation also acknowledges, pillows have a significant role in Romanian culture, especially in Romanian folk culture, where beds are traditionally covered in intricately designed, colorfully dyed hand-loomed carpets and pillows, decorations



that also function as practical household items, transforming beds into sofas. By joining her academic training as an artist to an appreciation of her culture and its traditions, *Visual Archive of Survival* exhibits Lia’s ability to produce experimental art both engaged with the past and suggestive of alternative ways of being in the world.

Dan’s work, too, assumes the mantle of experiment, but from a decidedly contrarian perspective. *On the*



Figs. 191 – 193, above, left, and opposite page
Lia Perjovschi, *Visual Archives of Survival*, 1994, 1996; screen-printed pillowcases; 1994 installation of pillowcases on top and beneath Victorian chairs in Museum of Art, Arad; detail of images on one pillowcase from 1996 series.



Other Hand, the title of Dan’s installation at Portikus (an exhibition hall for contemporary art), declares the conditions of debate always latent in his work. [Fig. 194] Confirming his focus on “the clash of heterogeneous political contexts that briefly interact before they drift apart or dissolve completely,” Dan drew (in white chalk on the gray surface of the Portikus floor) a partial circle of stars representing a section of the European Union flag.¹⁵⁵ He left the circle incomplete with a cluster of stars near the breach and also next to the question: “ARE YOU AFRAID?” The cluster represents those stars (countries) waiting to enter the EU and both symbolizes and names Europeans’ fears of the social ramifications of religious diversity and the economic costs of absorbing especially Slavic and Turkish nations into their Union. The title of the installation, *On the Other Hand*, points to a variety of alternative directions the EU might take. By presenting his aesthetic dialogue in Germany with such an open proposition, Dan also flagged the history of that nation, intimating that its response to the question —“ARE YOU AFRAID?”—had historical antecedents that would impact the future. But because the phrase “on the other hand” neither condemns nor resolves the question, Dan signals how, as the most powerful state in the EU, Germany might redress its past in its present relationship to countries entering the EU, or not.

Dan’s drawings have challenged the European Union, Germany, Romania, and many other nations in the same way that he threw down the gauntlet to the United

States in *WHAT HAPPENED TO US?* This was the title of his 2007 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated by Roxana Marcoci. [Figs. 297 – 299] His title served two purposes: it implicated the general public —“us” — in the drawings’ messages, and it offered a pointed commentary on the current negative reputation of the United States in the world. One of Dan’s drawings from that exhibition even visually questioned whether the citizens of the United States still have the capacity to stand for the principles embodied in the Stars and Stripes. In this drawing, Dan depicted the flag as if the stripes were window shades, and placed a figure before the flag, timidly peeking through its strips/slats. [Fig. 195] As an admirer and defender of the core values for which the U.S. has always claimed to stand, Dan created a seemingly simple drawing addressed to extremely difficult and complicated questions.

Taking his title as the source of the query, one might ask: What happened to U.S. to make it hide behind the Stars and Stripes as a symbol of justice, at the same time that it instigates war and aggression around the world? What happened to U.S. that it permits tampering with elections and allows its Supreme Court to select a president? What happened to U.S. that it enables the government to trespass upon freedom, arrogantly violate international laws, torture prisoners, incarcerate detainees without trial, and pass laws that permit governmental agencies to spy on its own people? What happened to U.S. that it turned its back to genocide in Rwanda and then in Sudan, permitted rampant consumerism that made it dependent upon oil, and ignored international treaties that would protect the environment? What happened to us?

“My drawings are not funny at all,” Dan insists:

I disguise them under the humor stance, because humor is a kind of international language, no? But after you laugh, it strikes you in your stomach. I am also coming from the media. The way media picks up a subject and how they deal with it. Sometimes you look at the TV and it looks so infantile.¹⁵⁶



Fig. 194
Dan Perjovschi, *On the Other Hand*, 2006, Portikus, Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany; marker on walls, chalk on floor.

Fareed Zakaria's article, "After Bush: How to Restore America's Place in the World." The cover also illustrated the U.S. flag, and conveyed a message far from laughable.

Dan's large installations are as much about performance as they are about drawing. While Dan realized his first performance, *Tree*, in 1988, he has never been quite comfortable with performing, sometimes participating awkwardly in a festival by doing precisely what his titles suggest: *Begging for Contemporary Art Museum* (1996) and *Doing Nothing* (1996).¹⁵⁷ At one festival, he simply read aloud for five hours a text by Paul Goma, the Romanian writer and anti-communist dissident.¹⁵⁸ [Fig. 357] Given his growing dissatisfaction in the late 1990s with performance as a medium, it is ironic that *Have a*

One month after Dan's MOMA exhibition opened, the cover of *Newsweek* (11 June 2007) announced

nice day (1997), a performance that Dan does not hold in particularly high regard, is one that could be said to demonstrate most accurately how his highly sociable character informs his art. [Fig. 353] Realized in Israel for the performance festival "Blur," curated by Sergio Edelsztejn, *Have a nice day* was a three-day performance, which Dan spent shaking hands with strangers on the street. But not just any street. Dan positioned himself on the sidewalk outside a military installation in Tel Aviv. Flagrantly calling attention to himself as an outsider (and a Slavic one at that), knowing that his approach to strangers would be scrutinized, aware that the foreigner is always suspect in a country forever under attack, Dan put himself in the middle of the same type of charged political situation that his drawings continually address. All the elements intrinsic to Dan's work were present.

Dan mentally boxes his way through life, and his approach to drawing might be compared to a



Fig. 195
Dan Perjovschi, untitled drawing, 2006; marker on wall.

three-minute boxing round. He angles, sizes up, and intellectually dances around an idea before choosing an unusual, exceedingly concise perspective and rapidly executing it. "I find myself in the situation, to invent a drawing to illustrate a text," Dan has remarked. But the drawing "has to survive without the text: text is gone, drawing remains."¹⁵⁹ In representing a "text," Dan refers not only to actual texts (like newspapers or magazines) but also to behavior, attitudes, and ideologies, the social texts that his drawings decipher. Dan's process may be compared, in its quick but elliptical approach, to the special "bolo punch" in boxing: a curved short jab, shot from the arm and hand. With this analytical and defensive strategy, Dan Perjovschi delivers knockout drawings that are impossible to counter. *Think Positive* is one such drawing. [Fig. 196]

One of hundreds Dan made for his multi-room installation *White Chalk Dark Issues* (2003), *Think Positive* is a devastating image.¹⁶⁰ *Think Positive* displays a gravely ill victim of HIV/AIDS in his or her hospital bed, attended by someone urging the patient to positive thoughts. But the word "positive" is the most dreaded declaration someone tested for the disease will ever hear. In the chalky light, Dan unveils a murky darkness, the shadow

of infirmity and death cast by AIDS. He visually probes the complexity of the word "positive," which suggests certainty in the midst of soul-wrenching doubt; an affirmative and explicit sign, the word can also be the bearer of harm, negativity, and destruction.

With similar attention to ambiguity, in *Common Grave, Bunker, Oil* Dan drew the image of three consecutive shafts dug into the earth at the bottom of which he depicted ever larger round chambers. [Fig. 198] Tiny figures at the top of the shafts gaze into the subterranean hollows. Dan labeled the first shaft "common grave," but it has no corpses; the second space is a "bunker," also empty; the third and deepest shaft is "oil," suggesting the black gold of an oil reserve shown equally as a void.

Dan indicts those who would profit from controlling oil in the bunkers where so many have been killed during war. Although the drawing points a finger at an any-



Fig. 196
Dan Perjovschi, *Think Positive!*, 2003; chalk on wall.

mous target, in a global economy of multinational military and business consortiums, viewers recognize who the nefarious culprits are. In case the criminal remains anonymous, in *Patriot*, a strategic drawing positioned not far away, Dan depicts another figure hiding behind the stars and stripes of the u.s. flag. [Fig. 197] In it, a blindfolded man holds a flag containing no insignia. Empty of content, it covers half of his face, revealing as it conceals the hollow patriotism the drawing names. Dan takes no prisoners in his battle with global ethics. But as usual, throughout the inspiring installation, Dan also implicates the artist in the human tragicomedy. In his drawing *Ugly Nice*, a figure views a painting with the word “Ugly” written on it, and comments: “Nice.” Dan knows that the best art will itself foil the artist’s attempt to create a socially responsible meaning, a moral that reaches outside of the work itself. Art—at least Dan’s art—may name the ugly, but in the very act of naming makes it nice.

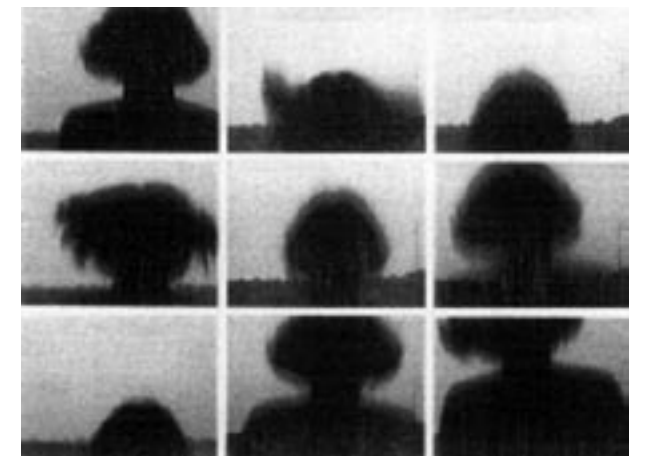


A temporary work that was destroyed at the end of its exhibition, *White Chalk Dark Issues* remains, nevertheless, one of the most stunning ephemeral installations of the opening years of the twenty-first century. For with white chalk on the mottled, stark, gray walls of the industrial space, Dan confronted confounding issues of the new millennium with a determined and uncompromising honesty.

In drawing after drawing, Dan unpacks the venal, the treacherous, the aesthetic, and the comic absurdities of human nature in a manner that visualizes the beauty of truth. Lia shows the impact of world truths on the body, as in her video *Loop* (1997). A simple work with a chilling message, Lia merely jumped up and down. But the image of her hair and neck also resembles the icon of the atomic age, the mushroom cloud rising in the sky. This is how close humanity is to its own demise. [Fig. 199]

For nearly thirty years, Lia and Dan Perjovschi have made art that is true to history, nation, and self. They have produced very different oeuvres. But as the composite LiaDan, they remained within the confines of a couple, illuminating the meaning of each other’s work, collaborating on behalf of other artists and Romanian society, and seeking, through art, to make global history more transparent. Both artists have produced astonishing works with the delicate, fragile, ordinary, and ephemeral materials available to them, without ever fetishizing either their art or actions. But in working with common materials, the Perjovschis’ art must not be confused with the ideologies represented in “poor art” associated with the Arte Povera movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. For the materials the Perjovschis used embodied the very situation with which they and their art were coextensive. Rich in content, if initially poor in opportunity, they have continued to maintain the initial integrity and purpose of their art in global contexts.

Never tethered to the past but always cognizant of history, the Perjovschis are at the center of a growing international conversation about the state of the planet. Their aesthetically and politically charged art assists the public to think, feel, and laugh, all at the same time. This rare combination is vital in a political and cultural environment where questions of freedom and autonomy, the construction of knowledge, and the need to confront actual experience with candor are ever more demanding. Dan and Lia Perovschi have made art about crisis, change, and endurance that reaches beyond the personal to engage the world and inspire viewers to live with courage.



Figs. 197–198, opposite page and top

Dan Perjovschi, installation view of *White Chalk Dark Issues*, 2003, Kokerei: Zollverein Zeitgenössische Kunst und Kritik, Essen, Germany; and one drawing from the installation, *Common Grave, Bunker, Oil*, 2003; chalk on wall.

Fig. 199, above
Lia Perjovschi, *Loop*, 1997; video still.

NOTES			
1	Transylvanian Saxons settled Sibiu (known as Sibiu/Her-mannstadt) in the twelfth century. A thriving trade and cultural center with a multicultural population and the site of many important innovations in Romanian history, Sibiu was brought under the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires before finally becoming a part of Romania.	11	Periferic Biennial was founded in 1997 by artist Matei Bejenaru.
2	Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, February 1992, Bucharest.	12	See cover of Dan's newspaper <i>art of today—yesterday news</i> (Bucharest: Dan Perjovschi and KulturKontakt, 2002).
3	Ibid.	13	The international movement of Concrete Poetry began in the early 1950s, treating words and letters as material and auditory objects. The intersection of Concrete Poetry and Performance Art is central to the development of both forms.
4	On the Union of the Artist, see Ileana Pintilie, <i>Actionism in Romania During the Communist Era</i> , trans. by Silviu Pepelea with Dorothy and Stuart Elford (Cluj, Romania: Idea Design & Print, 2000, 2002): 17.	14	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 7 May 2007.
5	Dan worked for the Ministry of Culture from 1990 to 1991.	15	See Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" (1936), in <i>Critical Inquiry</i> 19 (Spring 1993): 421–36.
6	Group for Social Dialogue brought out <i>Revista 22</i> one week after the Revolution began. Dan stood in line for "two or three hours just to buy this magazine where all these famous people were telling the truth for the first time!" Dan Perjovschi in conversation with the author in Bucharest, 1 May 1997.	16	Percy Bysshe Shelley, <i>Shelley's Poetry and Prose</i> . Selected and Edited by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977): 103.
7	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 14 May 2007.	17	This site was chosen by Marius Babias, curator of a section of the Biennial in Iasi. Dan also exhibited in the Turkish bath.
8	See <i>AutoChronology</i> in this volume.	18	Lia's <i>Mind Maps (Diagrams)</i> address the following topics, whose titles reflect their eclectic range: "Critical Theory," "Contemporary Literary Theory," "Cognitive Science," "Form Follows Fiction," "Film Studies," "Objects," "History of Art," "Utopia," "Quantum Theory," "Deconstruction," "Projects," "Glossaries," "From Text to Action," "Memory Study," "Postmodern Postmodernity-Modernism Modernity," "Power," "Cool," "Subculture," "Artist," "How to Survive," "Memory," "Trauma," "Space and Time," "Totalitarianism," "Cultural Center 21 st Century," "Anthropology,"
9	See <i>Piece and Piece</i> , Dan's first publication in newspaper format, sponsored by Norrtalje Kunsthalle, Norrtälje, Sweden.	19	Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History," <i>National Interest</i> 16 (Summer 1989): 3–18.
10	This installation was adapted from <i>Lia's Research Files: Time-line Romanian Culture from 500 BC until Today</i> , 1997–2006.	20	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 13 May 2007.
		21	These taped interviews were damaged beyond repair.
		22	Before 1990, all Romanian artists were required to belong to the Artists' Union to gain employment, exhibit, and sell works.
		23	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 5 February 2007.
		24	In Oradea, they also lived temporarily in such a room.
		25	Dan Perjovschi in conversation with the author, February 1992, Bucharest.
		26	Pintilie: 11.
		27	Ibid: 14.
		28	Ibid: 16.
		29	Ibid.
		30	Ibid: 17.
		31	Kristine Stiles, "Shaved Heads and Marked Bodies: Representations from Cultures of Trauma," <i>Strategie II: Peoples Méditerranéens</i> [Paris] 64–65 (July-December 1993): 95–117.
		32	Pintilie: 17.
		33	Dan Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 7 October 2006, Bucharest.
		34	Ibid.
		35	For Dan's account of his patrilineage in Bessarabia, see Dan Perjovschi, "HISTORY/HISTORY: A Project by Dan Perjovschi," in Octavian Esanu, ed., <i>MESSAGES FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE: REFLECTIONS IN RE</i> (Chisinau, Moldova: Soros Centre for Contemporary Art, 1997): 72.
		36	Dan collected boats as a child.
		37	Targu-Jiu is near Hobita, where Brancusi was born.
		38	Emil Constantinescu was president of Romania from 1996 to 2000.
		39	Gabriel Brojboiu, "Interview with Dan Perjovschi," in <i>Dan Perjovschi</i> . Exhibition Catalogue (Iasi: Conservator George Enescu, Iasi Sectia Arte Plastice, and Galeria Cronica, March-April 1985). Translated from the Romanian by Dan Perjovschi and Kristine Stiles in Bucharest, 7 October 2006.
		40	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 29 May 2007.
		41	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 19 May 2007.
		42	<i>The Bride</i> referred to Dan's marriage to Lia in 1983.
		43	Brojboiu, "Interview with Dan Perjovschi."
		44	Dan Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 7 October 2006, Bucharest. During this period Dan also developed two additional motifs: <i>Urzeala</i> (meaning to weave or to plot, as in conspire) and <i>Marele chip</i> (meaning big face).
		45	Confessional has been exhibited in different versions, comprised of drawings from 1986 up to 1994. Dan's use of the grid dates to about 1983. He began working on tiny figures, drawing on his lap while living in closet-sized spaces.
		46	Dan made other scrolls in brown ink on beige paper.
		47	"Gram" comes from the Romanian term <i>grammatica</i> .
		48	Andrei Oisteanu is a researcher at the National Museum of Romanian Literature.
		49	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 20 May 2007.
		50	Werner Meyer, "The Absurd Illuminates Cognition," in <i>Dan Perjovschi AutoDrawings</i> (Göppingen: Göppingen Kunsthalle, 2003): 5.
		51	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 29 May 2007.
		52	Janet Koplos, "Dan Perjovschi at Franklin Furnace," <i>Art in America</i> 84 (July 1996): 91–92.
		53	Meyer: 7.
		54	Calin Dan, in <i>Perjovschi: DAN</i> (Bucharest: Lia and Dan Perjovschi and Galeria Simeza, 1992): 1, quoted in Judit Angel, "Report II," in <i>Dan Perjovschi rEST</i> (Bucharest: Romanian Ministry of Culture and Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1999): 9.
		55	For more on affect, see Charles Altieri, <i>The Particulars of Rapture: An Aesthetics of the Affect</i> . Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.
		56	Henri Bergson, <i>Matter and Memory</i> (1896). New York: Zone Books, 1988.
		57	Dan represented Romania along with the group SubREAL, comprised of Calin Dan and Iosif Kiraly.
		58	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 29 May 2007.
		59	Ibid.
		60	Dan Perjovschi in conversation with the author April 1996.
		61	Ibid.
		62	Ibid.
		63	Dan has credited my 1997 article as the moment when he first realized that his work for <i>Revista 22</i> could also be understood as his art. See my "Concerning Public Art and 'Messianic Time,'" in Marius Babias and Achim Konneke, eds., <i>Art & Public Spaces</i> (Hamburg: Kulturbehörde, 1997): 48–65.
		64	Timisoara has been a crossroads between the West and Eurasia for millennia.
		65	The Astra Library has a celebrated history dating to the mid-nineteenth century. Lia spent days there and "felt it was like mine." Lia Perjovschi email to the author, 17 May 2007.
		66	Mikhail Bakhtin used this term to describe the multiplicity of voices in language. See Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel," in Michael Holquist, ed., <i>The Dialogic Imagination</i> (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981): 259–422.
		67	Between 1985 and 1988, Lia and Dan participated in the international and amorphous Mail Art movement, which emerged in the late 1950s. Dan explained that he and Lia enjoyed doing Mail Art so much that they would stay home on such special nights as New Years Eve, sitting together at a table working on art to send abroad. Dan Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 8 October 2006.
		68	Lia remembers Mexican poets of the Nucleo Post-Arte group, organized by César Espinosa, who also sponsored International Biennials of Visual and Experimental Poetry in 1985–86 and 1987–88. Brazilian poet Philadelpho Menezes organized the first "International Show of Visual Poetry" in 1988, likely the exhibition in which Lia first exhibited <i>Test of Sleep</i> photographs.
		69	Lia Perjovschi, <i>amaLLA Perjovschi</i> (Bucharest: Soros Foundation for Contemporary Art, 1996): 11.
		70	This title has been translated both as <i>Our Collected Silences</i> and <i>The Book of Our Silences</i> .
		71	Romanians' keen interest in other languages does not mitigate the conservative, xenophobic aspects of their culture.
		72	Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, February 1992, Bucharest.
		73	Aurelia Mocanu, "Cartea-Object: Reactia la bibliocid [The Object-Book: Reaction to Bibliocide]," <i>Arta</i> [Bucharest] 38:5 (1991): 17.
		74	Calin Dan quoted in Mocanu's "Cartea-Object," <i>Arta</i> : 17.
		75	Andrei Oisteanu, "From Visual Poetry to Object-Book," in <i>eARTE</i> (Amersfoort, The Netherlands: De Zonnehof Culutral Center, 1993): 15–21.
		76	Oisteanu cites St. John's Revelation (10, 10). See his "The Object-Book and The Bibliocide Crime," in <i>eARTE</i> : 27.
		77	See Eco's <i>The Name of the Rose</i> (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), which personifies Borges as a blind librarian devouring the mystery of books.
		78	<i>Babel</i> no longer exists; Dan cut it up for use in another project and, when dissatisfied with that one as well, destroyed it too.
		79	Andrei Plesu, "Image, Writing, Breathing," <i>eARTE</i> : 6.
		80	Lia produced additional <i>Map of Impressions</i> that have been sold to buyers with whom she has lost contact.
		81	Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 8 October 2006.
		82	Plesu: 13.
		83	Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, February 1992, Bucharest.
		84	One of the most significant archives of Mail Art is "Artpool," founded in Budapest in 1980 by György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay.
		85	Czech artist Milan Knizak was arrested over 300 times in Prague between 1959 and 1989 for his happenings, Fluxus art, eccentric fashion, and musical activities. See my "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions," in Paul Schimmel, ed., <i>Out of Actions: Between Performance and The Object 1949–1979</i> (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art): 226–328.
		86	See De Campos, "Questionnaire of the 'Yale Symposium on Experimental, Visual and Concrete Poetry Since the 1960's.'" http://www2.uol.com.br/augustodecampos/yaleeng.htm
		87	Alexandra Cornilescu, "Transitional Patterns: Symptoms of the Erosion of Fear in Romanian Political Discourse," talk at the Modern Language Association Annual Meeting, New York, 1992.
		88	Ibid.
		89	Stiles, "Shaved Heads."
		90	Cornilescu.
		91	Elaine Scarry, <i>The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 4.
		92	Ibid: 6.

93	Some other Romanian precursors of performance include Alexandru Antik, Rudolf Bone, Geta Bratescu, Andrei Cadere, Calin Dan, Ion Grigorescu, Iosif Kiraly, Ana Lupas, Wanda Mihuleac, Paul Neagu, and Mihai Olos.	<i>Science of the Arts as Seen by a Stalker of the Wild Mushroom</i> (New York: Something Else Press, 1969): 11–14.
94	Perjovschi, <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 6.	104 Ileana Pintilie, untitled text in <i>Pamintul: Intermedia</i> [Earth: Intermedia] (Timisoara: Museum of Art, 1992): 13.
95	On the similarities between Lia’s <i>Annulment</i> and Rudolf Schwarzkogler’s last work <i>Action, No. 6</i> , 1966, see my “Shadows in a Vertical Life,” in Lia Perjovschi’s <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 49, 56.	105 Ibid.: 17. 106 Perjovschi in <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 80–81. 107 Stiles, “Shadows in a Vertical Life,” in Lia Perjovschi, <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 5–6. 108 Lia changed the title from <i>I am me now</i> , which she used in 1993.
96	Perjovschi, <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 16.	109 Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author in 1994, Bucharest.
97	Participants included Sorin Vreme, Gina Hora, Rudolf Bone, Vioara Bara, and Dan Perjovschi.	110 Ibid.
98	Plato, <i>Republic</i> , translated by G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve. (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1992): 187.	111 Lia and Dan proposed to “make a baby” as their project for an artist residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin. Their proposal was rejected.
99	Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, February 1992, Bucharest.	112 Lia experienced temporary blindness as a child, indicative of post-traumatic stress.
100	Ibid.	113 Lia Perjovschi email to the author, 15 October 2006.
101	Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 4 May 2007, Durham, North Carolina.	114 Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 6 May 2007, Durham, North Carolina.
102	<i>Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching: A new translation based on the recently discovered Ma-Want-Tui Texts</i> (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989): 63.	115 Perjovschi, <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 53.
103	Fluxus artist Dick Higgins coined the term “Intermedia” in 1965 to identify new forms of art practice that fuse but become distinct from separate media and disciplines. See Higgins’s “Intermedia (1966),” in <i>foew&ombwhnw: A Grammar of the Mind and a Phenomenology of Love and a</i>	116 Calin Dan, “Media Arts Get Media Free,” in <i>Ex Orient Lux</i> (Bucharest: Soros Center for Contemporary Art, 1994): 7, 8. 117 Perjovschi, <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 58. See <i>Ex Orient Lux</i> pages 69–71 for Lia’s <i>Similar Situations</i> and pages 77–79 for Dan’s <i>Scan</i> .
118	Such drawings were the subject of Lia’s solo exhibition <i>Fünf Fenster</i> (1994) at the Kunst-halle, Vienna.	119 Esanu is a Moldovan artist historian and curator, and was the first director of the Soros Art Center for Contemporary Art from 1996–1999.
120	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 19 April 2007.	121 This is a sarcastic reference to Romanian hyper-exaggeration of tales related to its mythic origins.
122	Dan Perjovschi, untitled statement, in Octavian Esanu, ed., <i>Gioconda’s Smile from Mythic to Techno-Ritual</i> (Chisinau, Moldova: Soros Center for Contemporary Art, 2001): 37.	123 Andrei Codrescu, <i>Comrade Past & Mister Present</i> (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1986): 45.
124	Stiles, “Shaved Heads”: 114.	125 Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 26 September 2004.
126	See Nicolas Bourriaud’s <i>Relational Aesthetics</i> (Dijon, France: Les Presses du Reel, 1998).	127 See my “Remembrance, Resistance, Reconstruction, The Social Value of Lia and Dan Perjovschi’s Art,” in Marius Babias, ed., <i>European Influenza</i> (Venice: Romanian Pavillon, La Biennale de Venezia, 51. Esposizione Internazionale D’Arte 2005): 574–612.
128	Robert Burns, “Military sets up outposts,” <i>The News & Observer</i> [Raleigh, North Carolina] Thursday, 23 September 2004: 3A.	129 Both artists regret selling a work of art in the early 1990s to a collection that found its way into MNAC. They will not permit these works to travel or to be exhibited.
130	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 25 August 2004.	131 Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 26 September 2004.
132	Ibid.	133 Raluca Voinea email to the author, 2 October 2004. On MindBomb see Dan Mercea’s article, “Exploding Iconography: The MindBomb Project.” http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:oqobAJ7eJ3YJ:www.personal.leeds.ac.uk/~icsfsp/papers_files/files/Dan_Mercea-paper_final.doc+MindBomb+collective+in+Cluj&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us .
134	Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 25 September 2004.	135 Dan Perjovschi email to the author, 11 October 2004.
136	Ibid.	137 Quoted from the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein’s press release: http://www.kunstmuseum.li/web2306e/index.html .
138	Perjovschi, <i>amaLIA Perjovschi</i> : 67.	139 One country where these terms are consistently used is Israel.
140	Codrescu, <i>Comrade Past and Mister Present</i> : 43.	141 See Susan E. Rice’s paper, “The Threat of Global Poverty,” <i>The National Interest</i> (Spring 2006): 76–82.
142	See museums by Marcel Duchamp and Marcel Broothaers to Robert Filliou and Ilya Kabakov, among many others.	143 Lia Perjovschi email to the author, 29 May 2007.
144	See Siemans Art Program press release for <i>Academy: Learning from Art / Learning from the Museum</i> : https://interhost.siemens.de/artsprogram/presse/bildende_kunst/archiv/2006/akademie_antwerpen_eindhoven/index.php?lang=en&PHPSESSID=fced6992fa4c222fda6d	145 See the language used in “Documenta X.”
146	Hatto Fischer, “Academy: Learning from Art / Learning from the Museum,” on Heritage Radio Network, 26/07/06: http://www.heritageradio.net/cms2/debates-networking-single-view/article/academy-learning-from-art-learning-from-the-museum .	147 Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson, “The Domain of the Great Bear,” in Nancy Holt, ed., <i>The Writings of Robert Smithson: Essays with Illustrations</i> (New York: New York University Press, 1979): 31.
148	Ibid.: 25.	149 Henri Lefebvre, <i>Critique of Everyday Life</i> (1945), vol. I (New York and London: Verso, 1991): 127.
150	Ibid.: 129.	151 Ibid.: 252.
152	Sigmund Freud, <i>The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud</i> . (New York: Modern Library, 1938): 633–806.	153 Jaak Panksepp quoted in Robert Roy Britt, “No Joke: Animals Laugh,” <i>Live Science</i> (31 March 2005): http://www.livescience.com/animals/050331_laughter_ancient.htm 154. Lia Perjovschi in conversation with the author, 9 October 2008, Bucharest.
155	From a press release for Dan Perjovschi’s exhibition, <i>On the Other Hand</i> , at Portikus: http://www.portikus.de/ArchiveAo141.html .	156 Dan Perjovschi in Roxana Marcoci, “Interview with Dan Perjovschi,” Museum of Modern Art on YouTube: http://youtube.com/watch?v=d9KWxuf5RSM .
157	Dan realized these performances at the “Sf Gheorghe and Anna Lake Performance Festival,” curated by Uto Gustinav and Konya Reka.	158 Dan performed <i>HISTORY/HISTORY</i> in 1997 during “Messages from the Countryside, Reflections in RE” (see n. 35).
159	Dan Perjovschi in Roxana Marcoci, “Interview with Dan Perjovschi.”	160 <i>White Chalk Dark Issues</i> was part of the exhibition “The Open City: Models of Application,” curated by Marius Babias and Florian Waldvogel at the Kokerei Zollverein, a coal plant opened in 1961 in Essen, Germany, and in operation until 1993. Babias and Waldvogel converted the site into an arena for art installations between 2001 and 2003, inviting artists to do projects and transforming the rusting buildings into a unique, vital cultural staging ground for artistic interventions on social issues. See Marius Babias, “Reconquering Subjectivity: Kokerei Zollverein/Contemporary Art and Criticism” (Translated by Aileen Derieg and available on Babias’ website: http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/babias01_en.htm .)