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The Long April. Texte despre artă is a magazine dedicated to contemporary art, with an emphasis on the art scene from Romania. The magazine is realized through the collective effort of nine authors, each one of them responsible for her own permanent rubric. The magazine tries to offer an image upon contemporary visual arts (in their intersections with other fields, cultural and not only), through the perspective of particular and localized interests of the authors. Reviews of exhibitions, performances or events, interviews with artists or theorists, fragments of academic research, studies or investigations, all these are possible forms to be used, the subjectivity of selection being compensated by the seriousness of approach and the long-term preoccupation with a certain kind of artistic research or critical writing.

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The Long April is realized by: Anca Mihuleț, Andreiana Mihail, Corina L. Apostol, Daria Ghiu, Iulia Popovici, Laura Panait, Livia Pancu, Oana Tănase and Raluca Voinea.

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On the cover:

Ioana Nemeș: Birdman (Positive & Negative Ring), wood, white paint, wool and chalk on painted wall approx. 200cm x 150 cm, RELICS FOR THE AFTERFUTURE (BROWN), 2009, Jiri Svestka Gallery, Berlin

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Anca Mihuleț _ How old are you and what do you like to do best? or wondering if marginality is an inconvenient

Social behaviour, obsession with reality, the body can serve as coordinates in defining marginality, be it social, cultural or physical. There is a tension connected to marginal people and marginality, but also a desire to communicate sometimes in excess around it, using an incorrect terminology.

Methods, Sex and Madness, a book written by Julia O'Connell Davidson and Derek Layder tries to define the connection between the way in which people become aware of and use their own body, the correct methods of social investigation (scientific knowledge, interview, lab study, statistics) and the capacity to accept human nature as such. The results of evaluations led by the authors show that marginality can be influenced by power, consent and control. The two sociologists interviewed and analysed different peripheral typologies – the rapist, the prostitute, the suicidal-driven individual – emphasising the need for reflexivity and evaluation of the consequences that our relations with the others have, whether we talk about conditions of reciprocity, asymmetry or potential exploitation.

David Levy, in his thesis *Realism, an essay in interpretation and social reality* talks about several levels of reality – social, symbolical, lived, transcendental or political reality – which define the daily space and which recompose from our desire to go further from experience and sense, through finding some symbols and justifying theories. The author considers that rebellion exists in each one of us; this state overcomes the existential level in order to be suppressed at the level of consciousness through the propagation of a total ideology distorting the proof of reality.

Marginality is a social form which characteristics are differentiated according to the geographical area, political regime, personal or community expectations, culture level and expression means. Marginality can be determined by revolt, by the incapacity of integration but also by the comfort of a community when it comes to accepting difference. Dick Hebdige, in his study *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, published for the first time at the end of the 70s, analyses the effort of marginal groups in England (teds, skinheads, punks, Bowie-ites, hippies, dreads) to impose their own identity and autonomy. The author defines these trends through two elements – *circumstances* (the historic and cultural circumstances that generate the apparition of new structures of interests at a micro-social level) and *specificity* (finding the style that emphasizes the belonging to a certain community). Later, in 1988, Hebdige comes back to his work, and evaluates the role of an important factor in shaping these anti-hegemonic styles – the

appearance of consumption markets and the assault of commercial culture which started itself to produce alternative life-style values, capable of offering pleasure and power at the same time. In this formula, subculture becomes synonymous to resistance, and to avoiding the natural development in a given context, with positive effects on collective consciousness.

The marginal people in Romania can be split in several large groups, which in their turn develop subgroups and typologies: the youth community activating around the peripheral blocks of flats (the so-called „neighbourhood boys“; the Roma ethnic community, which are constituted as a minority recognized on a political level; the rural populations or peasants; the detainees and former detainees; the prostitutes. Lacking a real culture of consumption and due to the proliferation of a surrogate of market economy, Romania is confronted with the incapacity to manage and absorb the excess or the unexpected and consequently marginality is regarded as a disturbing phenomenon, which should be eliminated or at least veiled.

A. The working method

Tempted as I am by the direct exploration and individual experience in working with an artist, I choose to present cases I have closely watched, as a process of transition or development, or I choose to become part of the artistic act. Thus, the border between the visual and social reality becomes almost invisible.

There is a possibility to create a new referential frame, in which visual solutions are unexpected, sometimes unorthodox, and the quasi-domestic, tamed vision upon an art in which artist and curator feel the need to constantly explain themselves without fully exercising their prerogatives, is abandoned. Next I will present two artistic projects which explore two distinct marginal myths: the neighbourhood life and the contradictions of the rural world.

B. The temptation of the neighbourhood – Poli & Mano.

In the summer of 2009, in the frame of the project *only cowards die without having fun*, presented at the International Centre for Contemporary Art in Bucharest, I started to explore together with Delia Popa the connection between the music you listen and the expression of some feelings – from love to jealousy and separation. The result was the video work *Maan Menelu* in which Delia Popa scans a difficult love relationship by using the lyrics of several pretty well known manele*: *I am jealous and I*

don't think I would live if I lose you, I can't see my life in any other way, better I die than see you with someone else, with you I would want to eat ice-cream with strawberries, cream and a bit of chocolate.

(IMAGE 01)

In May 2010, Delia Popa came to Sibiu during the International Theatre Festival, which happened to be sponsored by Roşia Montană Gold Corporation. For us it was revolting the way in which this company took by assault the public space in the city, the tourist information points, or the theatre halls, using the space of representation created by the Theatre Festival. We didn't want to stay without a reaction, so we realized a series of stickers, clumsily designed, with texts anti- Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (*Art should be rewarded with GOLD. Did you take your CIANID portion for today?*).

Sticking them in the city was highly problematic – we had to find visible spots, in the central area. During the festival, the flux of people is continuous, night and day, and the community police triple in numbers. In the end, we decided to stick them during the night, disguised as neighbourhood boys with an attitude. So that around 4 am we went to the city's streets as the tough boys from the periphery – wearing Everlast jacket, large trousers, cap, beard, cigarettes, bumped back, loose walk, eating sunflower seeds, trying to look dangerous. The result was surprising – we managed to put the stickers on phone booths, on light poles, on some benches; all the groups avoided us and the community police preferred to ignore us, even if they noticed us. When the police car started to approach too close to us, we decided the action was over and we had to abandon it. The next day most of the stickers had disappeared. As a result of this small adventure two characters were born: Poligonu', in short Poli (represented by Delia Popa) and Manolache, in short Mano (represented by me).

Almost instantly, Poli and Mano started to build their own identities – they come from separated families from the infamous Bucharest neighbourhoods Pantelimon (Poli) and Ferentari (Mano), they address each other with 'brother', they are extremely loyal and dedicated to their friendship, they have their own ways of greeting each other, verbal codes, and visual interests, they listen to *manele* and to house music; along these characteristics, Poli and Mano are justice-makers, and as such they react when a brother is treated unfairly only because his language is not sophisticated enough or because he is listening to *manele*. (IMAGE 02)

C. Reason and feeling – identity and identification

Poli and Mano are two persons different from their creators. But at the same time, Poli and Mano represent the interface allowing the artist and the curator to access another reality. A reality which exists in parallel to their own and which they couldn't enter before. In this new social and artistic reality,

the visual was replaced with direct experience. It is not an artificial extension of the lived reality, but a social pocket, a space which does not pretend to be comfortable – in order for them to become Poli and Mano, the artist and the curator have studied men's behaviour, they have trained to act like two men and equally they have generated two distinct identities.

At this point of the project's development, the physical look of Poli and Mano is no longer central, but it is nevertheless an aspect which shouldn't be neglected on the way. The approach now is directed, on the one hand towards the evaluation of masculinity and the feminine, of the limits between the two sexes, and on the other hand towards the direct access to society's peripheral zones, to the study of language, movements and even of reactions in these areas.

Working in this direction, in April 2010 Poli and Mano researched the periphery of Brussels, where they plan to return in 2012 to realize a video-performance in which to use their identity in a physical way – Poli and Mano, the two friends from Bucharest show up as immigrants in Brussels. There they become friends with persons who normally wouldn't enter into contact in Romania – they visit Arab and African neighbourhoods, they frequent clubs and even participate at Eurocrate parties (parties attended by members of the administration of the European Union).

D. DIY Shelter for the Midnight Sun

Intuitively and in a process of creative expansion, Sebastian Moldovan uses the world of the organic to access and dismiss hierarchies, to interrogate status-quo situations. Capable to intervene spontaneously in processes developing in his surroundings, Sebastian Moldovan is interested in the moment when the natural interacts with the artificial, or with technology. Another direction of analysis is the relevance and the utility of art in the absence of the public.

Personal commitment is combined with social mystery and aesthetic informality in order to visually describe the value of resources control in everyday life but also in art.

Between the shy seeds collections, arranged in envelopes and numbered, constituted in 2006, the earth and light installations realized in 2007 and the beans spindles which were growing and colonising exhibition spaces later, Sebastian Moldovan managed to shape an ephemeral zone of the marginal imaginary. (IMAGE 03)

At the beginning of 2011, Sebastian Moldovan, who has an itinerant artist profile, decides to live for a year in a village in Northern Romania, in the house where his grandparents once lived. The artist respects a natural process through which he replaced the presence of his grandparents with his own

presence. In addition, he self-imposed a conceptual discipline, and he follows the seeding of diverse perennial plants and trees: locust tree, walnut, Russian olive tree, bamboo, lupine, strawberries and wild strawberries shrubs, wisteria. The long relation with the plants shifts the attention from the frail, flexible and vulnerable component of the vegetal world to the continuity of their existence irrespective of the context.

The video *Conversații în Training Mode (Conversations in Training Mode)* presents Sebastian Moldovan alone in front of the camera, in a natural environment, near an old wooden gate. Shortly, in the frame we can see a second Sebastian Moldovan, identically dressed, but dominating and sure of himself. Throughout the movie, locations change. Many times, Sebastian Moldovan 1 has a dialogue with the camera, interrupted by the brief and unexpected appearance of Sebastian Moldovan 2. Even if the presence of this latter one is not continuous, the tension of his apparition can be felt all through the shooting process. The work debates in a relaxed, even comical manner, the self-cloning of the artist in the absence of a society with which to interact, and the creation of a substitute for social relations. It is interesting that the video gives one the impression that the action continues outside of the frame as well; even more for this reason, the artist trained to play the two roles, trying to improvise and to adapt as little as possible, this being a totally new scenario for Moldovan's artistic practice. (IMAGE 04)

The study of marginality draws the attention invariably to the dominant culture and social traditions. The dominant culture, doubled by mass media is capable of identifying and labelling the alternative groups which function in a distinct milieu; at the same time, it delivers the ideology and their definition, alongside historic contextualization. These operations are followed by the finding of denominations and their use in the media; at the end, the groups' acceptance, appropriation and social reproduction.

*manea, pl. manele - is a music style from Romania, generally associated with the Romani (Gypsy) minority, though not exclusively. Similar music styles are also present in other Balkan areas, like Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia, Greece and Turkey and with expatriates and emigrants originally from these regions. Related genres are Bulgarian *chalga* (manele brought by Romanian visitors to Bulgaria is referred to as "Romanian chalga"), Greek modern *laiko* and, to a lesser extent, Serbian *turbo-folk*, all being a mixture of local folk, Turkish and Romani influences over a pop tune. (wikipedia)

Anca Mihuleț is a curator working at the Contemporary Art Gallery of the Brukenthal National Museum in Sibiu. She organizes exhibitions, artistic residencies and has created a theoretical platform for emerging artists and young curators; also deals with museum strategies, visual inquiry and analytic artistic approach. At the moment, together with Apparatus 22 (Maria Fărcaș, Ioana Nemeș, Erika Olea, Dragoș Olea) and Olivia Mihălțianu, she is preparing a research project entitled *Situated Knowledge. I follow rivers of thoughts* at The Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice. Contact: anca@brukenthalmuseum.ro

Delia Popa obtained her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2007; her interests are towards the study of communities and social transformations. Screenings and exhibitions: General Public, Berlin (2011); The 5th Video Art Biennial, Tel Aviv (2010); Traces: Contemporary Romanian Art, Ringling College of Art and Design, Florida (2008-09); Art 44/46, Chicago (2006); Offset, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest (2005). Contact: delianapopa@gmail.com

Sebastian Moldovan has graduated from the University of Art and Design in Cluj-Napoca in 2004. He has participated at The Haifa Mediterranean Biennale (2010); Prague Biennale 3 (2007); *Dada East? The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire*, Cabaret Voltaire, Zürich (2006); *Urban Contact Zone. Sharing areas - Using Places*, Westwerk, Hamburg; Bucharest Biennale 2 (2006). He is interested to work in a large variety of mediums from object to installation and video art. His projects approach the specificity of the place where they are developed, and the interaction with the symbolic structures. Contact: sebastianzisbastian@gmail.com

Andreiana Mihail _ Avant-propos

Everything that is public should have as a purpose the awakening of curiosity, if not the interest and intellectual preoccupation of more than the narrow circle of specialists in the respective field. Who is the public of contemporary art? In order not to fall in the irreversible auto-referential trap and circular definition, I want to know to what degree this publication about contemporary art in Romania can claim a pragmatic-educational approach or a purely informative one.

I have asked my friends and acquaintances, persons with graduate studies, with cultural interests, respectable readings and artistic hobbies, how much and what they know about contemporary art in Romania. I would like to continue this questionnaire in a future issue of the magazine, when, maybe, I will draw some conclusions as well.

The questions were:

What is your relationship with contemporary art?

Do you go to openings/ events that focus on visual arts? If yes, why?

What contemporary Romanian artists do you know?

Are you thinking to buy a contemporary art work in the next period?

Do you have friends who are artists, curators, gallerists? If yes, how would you characterize them?

Do you understand contemporary art? Do you like contemporary art?

Would a magazine for contemporary art be useful? Would you read it?

Which is in your opinion the role of contemporary artist? Militant, intellectual, aestheticizing? Is the artist one of the guardian dogs of society?

What irritates/ annoys you in contemporary art?

The answers to the questionnaires:

1. It's hard to say what my relationship with contemporary art is. I think it's an accidental relation occasioned by the existence of a few friends who are either artists or gallerists. Also accidentally I read articles from the magazine IDEA Arts + Society.
2. Yes I do, because I have a gallerist friend or when I travel abroad I might also go to exhibitions if I think those could be interesting.
3. Andrei Zavazal, Ion Grigorescu, Ciprian Mureșan, Mircea Cantor, Alexandra Croitoru.

4. Yes.

5. Sensitive people... easy-going, some look spaced-out in comparison to corporations' employees. Most of them are free-lancers, many times I wonder how they effectively earn their living.

6. I have no idea if I understand or not, most often I judge what I see after the aesthetic criterion and I have to admit from the little I have seen even less I liked.

7. I don't know if a contemporary art magazine would be useful; I don't know how many others do exist, apart from IDEA. I would probably read it if my friends recommended it – for example if you told me it's very good, I would probably buy it from curiosity but I don't think I could be a dedicated reader.

8. I don't believe there are guarding dogs of society anymore. I also don't think the artist should be a militant or intellectual, I think he should be a craftsman of beauty – I realize this sounds naïve and obsolete.

9. I think I dislike what is called conceptual art; I rather get frightened by how absurd and delirious are some installations, happenings, video projections or I don't know what crazy things I have seen, for example at the Venice Biennale.

(A.A., specialist Marketing and Communication)

1. I have a still relatively new and growing interest in contemporary art in general, however mostly limited to a few selective exhibitions and art fairs.

2. I rarely visit exhibitions and if so based on recommendation from people who understand the contemporary art space better.

3. Ion Grigorescu, Ciprian Mureșan, Răzvan Botiș.

4. Yes possibly, although I just bought my last piece some 3 months ago.

5. I do but find it impossible to trace common characteristics - the artists especially are all very different from one another. About the ones I know I can say that they are modest, friendly people with a great sense of humour. As for the gallerists I know, I respect them for the work they do in a highly competitive sector. That said this competitiveness sometimes gets exaggerated in relations between gallerists, who at times seem to work openly against each other. Finally, the curators - I must admit I'm not fully clear about their roles and responsibilities. From the little I do know about them it seems fair to say there are huge differences in quality and professionalism.

6. That very much depends. I like certain things and completely dislike others. Similarly I get some pieces, while others don't make sense to me.
7. I do think that would be useful - culture and art in general, and contemporary art in particular, don't have enough exposure and platforms for dialogue currently.
8. Personally I don't think artists play some sort of particular role in society as compared to other professions. They are artists.
9. The fact that there seems to be a lack of standards and sometimes even of ethics or plain morale, for example there are no clear rules governing the relationships between galleries, curators, and artists, leaving the door wide open for a variety of levels of interaction - from highly diligent and professional to the opposite.

(S.A. Specialist in Human Resources)

1. I would say it's a pretty tensioned relationship considering I don't feel ready to accept all forms of expression.
2. No.
3. Comănescu, Gorzo, Grigorescu, Croitoru, Șulea, Moldovan, Chira.
4. No.
5. Yes. In Romania these professions are pretty inappreciated, both from the reception of the public as in financial terms. Unfortunately many visual artists do not manage to communicate other than through their art the messages they are trying to transmit, thus remaining closed within their own ivory tower.
6. It depends what definition we give to understanding art. If a certain work awakens my interest from an aesthetic point of view, or from communicating a message, or creates an emotion (and this thing happens!), I can say that yes, I do understand contemporary art.
7. I believe yes.
8. My opinion is the role of artists hasn't suffered and cannot suffer any modifications. Art is just a means to communicate a message coming from a sphere intangible to most people and destined to the soul.

9. The multitude of expression forms, many of them existing only from the artists' wish to be original.

(H.M. musician)

1. I have an amateur relation with contemporary art, however one which is based on an appetite for knowledge constantly fuelled both by my circle of friends and by my passion for film and music, including the avant-garde and experimental forms of these arts (which separation lines with the other arts are many times volatile).

2. Yes. The motives are based on that appetite for knowledge I mentioned at point 1 and they also include the answer from point 6B of this survey.

3. Ion Grigorescu, Mircea Cantor, Adrian Ghenie, Victor Man, Alexandra Croitoru, Ciprian Mureșan, Răzvan Botiș, Ștefan Constantinescu, Cristi Pogăcean etc.

4. Yes.

5.

A. Yes.

B. Valuable in a world in which, unfortunately, value (be it artistic or ethical) is not a currency.

6.

A. I believe in "opera aperta", I don't believe therefore there exists a standard of understanding for contemporary art, despite its reputation for being esoteric. However I strive to understand more than it is assumed I understand now.

B. Yes, because it constantly provokes the opening/ re-positioning of the "doors" of cognitive and affective perception of the subject.

7. Yes (no matter how long-lasting it turns out to be), and again yes.

8. I don't believe "high"/ important contemporary art starts from taking upon their shoulders of a certain role by the artists, but from the quality of the idea sustaining the art and the way in which this idea gets to be communicated. I know, this is an ancient truism...

9. Mimetic attitude and conformism of a certain kind of non-conformism and snobbish "coolness" – which in fact is only a sterile and stale form. A special local trademark (but not only).

(S.R. lawyer)

1. I take part to the events organized by a friend's gallery. I also participate to some artistic events I am invited to by the same friend. At least to those I can reach. In the rest of the time, all sorts of artistic expressions flip in front of my eyes on the computer screens of the advertising agency where I'm working.

2. Yes. See the answer to question 1. One more remark on the side of the answer to question 2: my participation is not only generated by taken obligations, but it is also consumed on the background of a moderate appetite (and, I must admit, pretty rarely satisfied) for contemporary art as a form of cultural manifestation.

3. It is much easier for me to answer this question by using one the professional clichés of advertising: Top Of Mind Awareness. Therefore:

Ion Grigorescu

Dan Perjovschi

Ștefan Tiron

Mona Vătămanu și Florin Tudor

Nicolae Comănescu

Further I need to make an effort of memory.

4. Yes, but I would sooner buy a car. You can deduce the scale of my priorities. I must say, however, that I have acquired a contemporary art work in the past, which I gave as a wedding present. The happy artist is called Marc Borțun. I haven't included him in the answer to question 3 because he deserted contemporary art for advertising a long time ago.

5. One only friend, but a good one.

6. That's the main problem: in many cases I don't really understand it. It's a field I perceive as being badly fragmented and in which many artists get stuck in their own niche, taking the size of an universe they write the laws for, and from these laws of functioning I cannot understand anything. Of course, this could be a totally wrong perception, nevertheless it exists. In the (few) cases I do understand (or seem to understand) I get to like it. This probably comes as a self-gratification for the fact that I understood, which generates a euphoric effect and stimulates the sensation of pleasure.

7. Definitely. It is debatable if a magazine is the most adequate form. As I am an old-fashioned guy, I would prefer a magazine to a website at any time. However, no matter the form of manifestation/concretization, I would read it if it was an exercise of the kind contemporary art for dummies. This is the level where I see myself. And honestly, that could be also an art magazine full stop. But still one for dummies.

8. Coincidence (and, I repeat, coincidence) makes it that I read the other day about Ai Weiwei and his regime of detention, on the site of *The Guardian*. I find that Mr. Ai Weiwei plays well all the roles: he

manifested himself intellectually, as well as in an aestheticizing and militant way. This latest role also brought him the condition of jail bird, it's true. Still, taking into account that in many other places in the world this risk doesn't really exist, I don't see why other artists would take a less "multilaterally developed" role.

9. That, at least in my view, in many cases, [contemporary art] takes forms of manifestation which are very similar to those of fashions and trends. This really annoys me. This and the fact that many times I don't understand a thing.

(D.P. copywriter)

Andreiana Mihail is from Braşov. After she studied philosophy at Bucharest University and philosophy of art at Pantheon Sorbonne Paris, in 2006 she opened a contemporary art gallery in Bucharest. For more details about the gallery go to www.andreianamihail.com.

Corina L. Apostol _ The art of making community – Lia Perjovschi’s ~~CAA~~/CAA (*Contemporary Art Archive/Center for Art Analysis*) and *The Knowledge Museum*

For most Romanians, History after 1989 begins with the Archive. The archive that sought to control the lives of millions for decades has been at the center of public debates in the country in the last twenty years. Based on minute data gathering, privileged access and geared towards institutionalized oppression, the Securitate Archive marks the deep disjuncture between official histories and suppressed narratives that continue to plague the nascent democracy in this country. Partly destroyed after the Revolution by those who wanted the memory of their actions erased from History, this archive still remains to be critically opened. The information related to the heavily surveyed population of those times has been disseminated with much difficulty. For a decade after the fall of the regime, the powers of state refused to subject the Securitate Archive to the interpretation of the collective body. In this period, files were lost, discarded, while some were explicitly used as a form of political blackmail. It is only in more recent years, that the CNSAS (National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives) has begun to allow access to the archive on an individual basis, while publicizing lists of informers and collaborators. By keeping control over a negative chapter of recent history, the Securitate Archive is symptomatic of the suppression of memory in Romania- denying healing and reconstruction of civil society post-socialism.

Lia Perjovschi’s body of works fights against such folding of historical misery which has dominated the public sphere since the Revolution. Using her own Archive as a tool for inquiry, knowledge and openness, the artist has consistently engendered local and international exchanges between artists, scholars from all fields and students – seeking to restore socio-cultural connections that had been destroyed during the pre-1989 segregation. At the same time her archive includes original artworks, conceptualized as aesthetic models for civic engagement. These take the form of *newspapers* revealingly entitled “ZOOM- diaPOZITIV,” “sens,” “globe 1990-today,” “short guide- art in public space (ro) some independent positions,” “waiting room”; *timelines* – such as *Subjective Art History from Modernism to present day. Art and its context* (1997-2004) and *Mind Maps (Diagrams)* (1999-2006). Over the past 20 years, the value of her practice has been recognized around the world- a practice which subverts positions of Authority that control Knowledge, emancipating the individual to generate his or her own system of formulating questions, finding answers and acting in society.

This article began with the context from which Lia Perjovschi’s archival practices emerged, as a political statement against institutionalized repression grounded in the socialist system. Describing herself as a “Detective in Art, A Text Jockey, reading, copying, cutting and remixing texts and images,”¹ the artist has repeatedly stressed the desire to recuperate for her community what her generation was denied before 1989. In a 2007 interview with Kristine Stiles,² Perjovschi explained that the archive as she now conceives of it -as a repository of documents and space for critical thinking and exchange – was born in

1985. It was in that year that Lia and her partner in life and in art, Dan Perjovschi, opened their apartment in Oradea for informal gatherings with local writers, journalists, actors, artists and curators. This gesture stands as a bold affirmation of faith in the power of sharing and teaching to engender unofficial networks - that for many were the only breath of normality in historically trying situations. It continues to be a survival strategy that remains as valuable today, in the era of globalization and confusion, as it was in the heavily controlled local context from which it emerged.

In 1990 Lia and Dan Perjovschi were offered a Union of Artists studio in Bucharest, next to the Art Academy, which they began transforming into an archive for books, magazines and ephemera as well as a repository of their own works. Accumulated over 20 years, this archive dealt not only with contemporary Romanian and international art practices, but grew to be concerned more broadly with the production of knowledge in the humanities, social sciences and science and technology.

As they received increasing recognition from the global artistic community, the Perjovschis began to travel extensively throughout Europe, North America, Latin America and parts of Asia. They were not content with simply observing and reflecting upon those contexts in the local media and through their works. More, they hosted meetings in their studio between local and foreign artists, journalists, theorists and specialists from all fields. For Lia Perjovschi, what she would coin as *CAA (Contemporary Art Archive)* in 1997, became an aesthetic model in itself – for not only collecting but also the organization of information, its classification, and the development of criteria to engage it. Driven by an insatiable desire for knowledge, the artist approached these goals from her own experience. Further, she challenged audiences to establish their own parameters for discerning through the material that she collected. This emancipator gesture stands at the opposite end of the mentality of fear and repression dominating the context from which her practice emerged. Using the archive as a basis, as well as the experience of international experts, the activities at CAA became focused on analysing strategies in the Romanian art scene and beyond, supporting innovative programs, critical methodologies and offering a concrete basis for art-activism.

In 2003, the CAA began operating under the title *CAA/CAA (Contemporary Art Archive/ Center For Art Analysis)*. The change in the space's taxonomy marked a shift from the traditional understanding of the archive as a platform for collecting and presenting material to what its actual function became over time. That is, a space for communication, empowerment, reflection and activism around the social and political relevance of art in context. From one on one to group discussions, to lectures, presentations, workshops and exhibitions, Lia Perjovschi channelled educational impetus with socio-political engagement - a defining characteristic of leading a self-reflective existence. Visitors to the CAA/CAA also received Perjovschi's self-published documents, in themselves critical tools that commented on local and international initiatives in the art field.

Since becoming a self-professed nomad artist, Lia Perjovschi has streamlined the documentation and practices of CAA/CAA into *CAA Kit*. Traveling East, West, North and South with her own Duchampian *Boîte-en-valise*,³ she invited international audiences to become detectives in art themselves- that is to analyse, judge, learn and act for the future. Perjovschi's *Kit* usually comprises of *Detective Materials*,

Timelines and *Mind Maps*, material carefully selected from her archive around a certain theme or responding to particular historical events, depending on where it is exhibited. Also part of this Kit is a poster documenting the activities at CAA in Bucharest, grounding this model in a commitment to create a culturally engaged community.⁴ It is beyond the scope of my article to go through all the installations and material of CAA, however, I will focus on a selected few to emphasize their role in allowing the public to figure out their own models of analysis and organization of information that corresponds to one's actual needs and experiences.

For contemporary Romanian art, institutional networks based on transparency are definitely an urgent need, one which the powers of state have handled consulting neither the artistic community nor the public that benefits from its productions. Denouncing the problematic establishment of the first National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC) in Bucharest inside the House of the People in 2004, or in what we now refer to as the Palace of Parliament Lia produced *Detective Draft 2005*,⁵ together with Dan Perjovschi. This issue investigated the context in which the Museum was established, laying out for the general public the raging debates over the use of the space, the artists that were invited to exhibit and the despotic appointment of its leadership. Further, local and international scholars and artists were prompted to respond to the situation. Strongly condemning the subordination of art to the politics of the state, the publication decried the compromised democratic ideals this signalled, in a period in which things were supposed to go in the direction of decentralizing Power. Finally, in the artist's own statement, she called for witnesses – the general public – to react to this historical injustice, proving them with clues and evidence on how to act.

In order to act, one must be thoroughly informed, to know the terms of the debate in order to adopt a position. Lia Perjovschi recognized the need of young and mature artists to enter into dialogue with the international community, by understanding the construction of Art History in a global context. In another collection of texts and images culled together under the title *Subjective Art History from Modernism to present day. Art and its context (1997-2004)*,⁶ Perjovschi organized this information according to her own experience of art and its historiographies. Critically deconstructing the more traditional, academic art history confined to textbooks, the artist changed the focus of the discipline: from texts and images about art to thinking about their cultural construction in different contexts. This is also suggested by her inclusion of not only artists and their works, but also magazines, films, popular media, exhibition spaces, institutions – the entities that streamline the reception of art. Organized into : art historical terms, a timeline illustrating different important dates (ranging from 1826 to 2004), images framed by both identifying information and the artist's comments and ending with quotes about art and a bibliography – Perjovschi's *Subjective Art History* gives art historians a lesson of how to teach art. Through an open-structure narrative that defies both universalism and objectivity, the artist denounces these constructed tropes, revealing them to be mechanisms that deny art its radical potential.

In a related project to her *Timelines*, Perjovschi used diagrams or what she refers to as *Mind Maps*⁷(1999-2006) to explore and explode concepts constructed from information appearing in different milieus. As the artist herself explained: "These works helped me to understand the development of

history and then to see how my art also developed in different historical contexts.”⁸ *Mind Maps* are drawings consisting of handwritten concepts researched by the artist, presented as a network of interconnections and convergences. Each Map is organized around a core concept positioned at the centre of the composition. Building on the core that addresses diverse themes such as “Ideology,” “Communism,” “Artist,” “Subculture,” “Space and Time” or simply “?”, the artist charts relationships and comments culled from different media (books, newspapers, artworks, popular culture). She then constructs each diagram by writing down associations and comments that visually revolve like galaxies around the centre. Perjovschi’s *Mind Maps* are partly illegible, executed as shorthand mementoes. However frustrating this may prove for the viewer or the critic, they function as more than evidence of the artist’s extensive knowledge – but operate as idiosyncratic constructions of language that deny audiences the complete understanding of the works. Similar to her *Timelines*, the Maps activate the desire to know, to explore beyond mere contemplation by constructing one’s own knowledge models with an awareness of the semiotic heritage of concepts.

In the past 4 years, Lia Perjovschi has been working on and exhibiting *Plans for a Knowledge Museum*, a museum-like installation based on the *Research Files* accrued in CAA – as a suggestion for the museum which the artist hopes to build one day. Characterized by an interdisciplinary approach, this future artist-run museum is dedicated to moving away from the exhibition as spectacle or form of entertainment, and towards a learning process of working with an open-structured archival structure. Perjovschi envisions the museum to be structured into seven departments: The Body, Art, Culture, The Earth, Knowledge and Education, The Universe and Science – reflecting her own interdisciplinary approach to the organization of information.

The installation of *Plans for a Knowledge Museum* comprises of drawings, objects, charts, photos, and color prints. Perjovschi conceptualized her museum as a mental map, offering a lens into the processes of selection that inform the artist’s view of socio-political and cultural practices and their consequences – and invite audiences to a similar process of self-reflection. Revealing Perjovschi’s methods of associating objects and concepts, the building of her own understanding of the world - this material is there for viewers to investigate and make use of. Enacting notions of self-archiving and openness, *The Knowledge Museum* is a blueprint that announces the de-hierarchization of art institutions. This runs in a line of critique that connects the artist to experimental projects such as: Hungarian artist Tamás St. Auby’s “Portable Intelligence Increase Museum”(2001), Uzbek artist Vyacheslav Akhunov’s miniature reproductions of all his works in “1 m2” (1978-2007), Hungarian artist György Galántai’s “Artpool Research Center” in Budapest (1992- present) or the installations of the British collective Art & Language beginning with the late 1960s – to name just a few.

In a recent interview with Russian art historian Ekaterina Lazareva,⁹ Perjovschi has remarked that her archival practices, out of which *The Knowledge Museum*¹⁰ emerged, are focused on research instruments instead of being concerned with local art histories. Building on this observation, I argue that the Perjovschi’s projects are an implicit critique of the Academy and the Museum, at the same time that she adopts the language of institutional platforms and decentralizes them. In the Romanian context, it is

certainly a powerful statement against the afore-mentioned National Museum of Contemporary Art- by engendering openness, debate and exchange as opposed to authoritarian practices under which the MNAC was conceived and still conducts its affairs in society. To be sure, Perjovschi's *Knowledge Museum* is based on the artist's conceptual models, but it is the viewer that completes the project, by creating one's own algorithm of interpretation in one's search for meaning.

In her art, Lia Perjovschi grapples with forms of bringing together theory and practice, at the same time that she asks audiences to do the same. Her projects resist fast interpretation – they require investment of time, careful consideration and undivided attention. In a way, the interdisciplinary models that form *The Plans for a Knowledge Museum* demand a certain endurance, to not just look but to think and to act. Her practice is grounded in trust, at the same time that she remains sceptical and critical in a period of uncertainty and confusion, both in her native context and global culture. Lia Perjovschi puts her faith in the engaged viewer, showing him or her the way her mind organizes information, giving one the tools necessary to create and not just criticize.

Through her projects the artist showers her audience with a wealth of information, accumulated over 20 years, based on extensive experience and exchanges with artist and scholars around the world. Yet, she also leaves unanswered questions, engendering the desire to know more, to ask for more. Her publications are filled with question marks and exclamations, while her installations present everyday objects in plastic bags as evidence – these are for her audience to open, to go outside the model and into society. Perjovschi never tells us what it all means, but suggests what the questions might be, unpacking concepts and situations without giving them a self-sufficient meaning. It is precisely this moral and ethical dimension of her work joined with a rigorous and tireless approach to developing intellectual resources that makes Lia Perjovschi an anchor in the Romanian contemporary art scene.

Together with Dan Perjovschi, the artist has acted as a powerful advocate for substantial change in the post-socialist period. For two decades, the *Contemporary Art Archive* and the artists' studio in Bucharest provided a forum for debate and questioning for audiences from all over the world. And yet, a year ago this cultural heritage landmark of national and international significance has disappeared from the topography of the capital. In the summer of 2010 the Perjovschi - together with other 22 artists working in the studios of the Arts University - were sent a notice for evacuation from the aforementioned institution. The artists complied and moved the Archive to Sibiu, where it is now housed in a newly built studio. Before leaving the studio in Bucharest, they decried the lack of tact and solutions from the part of the University, inviting several artists and scholars – including the author of this text - to visit the empty studio and reflect on its rich history and its current precarious condition. As Lia Perjovschi then observed, while the *Contemporary Art Archive* would be temporarily closed for consulting, the *Centre for Art Analysis* will remain open, as it doesn't need a physical space to exist.

The tensions between the artists and the Arts University are bound with the particularities of a situation that has not been fully fleshed out and risks trivializing the larger issues at stake.

Going back to Lia Perjovschi's aforementioned remark, the disappearance of the Contemporary Art Archive in Bucharest left an indelible scar in the social and urban fabric of Bucharest. This mark of absence emphasizes one of the most valuable legacies associated with this space. That is, sustaining a network of civic-oriented groups and individuals, through the theoretical basis of the Archive, and the support of the Perjovschis' themselves. Surely, the artists' new studio in Sibiu will engender a similar network of knowledge, exchange and support as it did for so many years in the capital. However, in a period of indiscriminate change, social amnesia and political confusion, the fate of the Archive constitutes as a warning signal of our collective responsibility against the destruction of cultural heritage in contemporary art.

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¹ Lia Perjovschi quoted by Dan Perjovschi in "Alone for the Others," in *Again for Tomorrow* (London: Royal College of Art, 2006), pg 119.

² Kristine Stiles, "Passages 1992-2007: Interview with Lia Perjovschi," in Kristine Stiles, ed., *States of Mind: Lia and Dan Perjovschi* (Durham, NC: Nasher Museum of Art Duke University, 2007), pg. 176.

³ Marcel Duchamp's *Boîte-en-valise*, is a portable miniature monograph including aprox. sixty-nine reproductions of the artist's work, created in different editions between 1935 and 1970.

⁴ Lia Perjovschi, *Research File. CAA Activities, 1990-2000*, b&w photocopy, ten pages.

⁵ Lia Perjovschi, *Detective Draft*, published in the context of "On Difference# 1 Local Contexts – Hybrid Spaces" 20 May to 31 July 2005, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Germany (Bucharest and Stuttgart: CAA/CAA and Württembergischer Kunstverein, 2005).

⁶ Lia Perjovschi, *Research File. My Subjective Art History, 1997-2004*, Computer print, thirty-five pages.

⁷ Lia Perjovschi, *Mind Maps (Diagrams)*, 1999-2006, Sixty ink drawings on paper.

⁸ Kristine Stiles, "Passages 1992-2007: Interview with Lia Perjovschi," in Kristine Stiles, id. footnote 2, pg. 178.

⁹ "Lia Perjovschi in Dialogue with Ekaterina Lazareva", published in CriticAtac, May 12, 2011, available online at:
<http://www.criticatac.ro/7112/%E2%80%9Eesunt-convinsa-ca-astazi-nu-mai-este-suficient-sa-fii-critic-este-important-sa-propui-ceva-in-schimb-altfel-nu-dai-dovada-decat-de-aroganta-%E2%80%9D/>

¹⁰ Lia Perjovschi, *Knowledge Museum*, 2007, drawings, objects, charts, photos and color prints.

Daria Ghiu _ Live Performing History

On the 1st of June, at the press conference of Romania's Pavilion at the 54th edition of Venice Biennale, the exhibition *Performing History*, curated by Maria Rus Bojan and Ami Barak, presenting artists Ion Grigorescu, Anetta Mona Chișa and Lucia Tkáčová was ready. The video works and photographs by Ion Grigorescu installed on the walls, the video *Leșirea în stradă* [Manifestation on the street] (2011) projected on the sofa and the video *Covorul* [The carpet] (2008) projected on the floor. To the right, the video work of Anetta and Lucia, *Try again. Fail again. Fail better* (2011) could be seen on a big screen. On the two entrance walls, outside on the Pavilion, written with white letters on a grey background was the second project of the artists, the intervention *80:20* ("80% of reasons to be in the Biennale, 20% of why not to be there").

What happened the following day, on the morning of June 2, before the opening at 14:15h gave a new meaning to the project and raised a series of debates, on the relationship between artist and curator, on the type of display, on the losing vs. winning of the artistic identity, the subversive artistic act, spectacle vs. missing the spectacle in Venice, biennialisation vs. de-biennialisation. In short, an instance happened, which the artists called "re-winning the exhibition", of re-appropriating a show in which the artists claimed not to see their identity anymore. Anetta and Lucia, together with Ion Grigorescu, reacted to their own exhibition through a performative act. At 10 am, they entered the Pavilion and with an orange spray they wrote on top of all the works in the exhibition, while Ion Grigorescu was filming the action. A text which encompasses the entire exhibition space became thus a conceptual work as a thread running through the entire project *Performing History*¹.

What the artists did in their own exhibition is their ultimate gesture, their way of performing history, each one employing their own artistic practice. From the side of the feminine duo, it is a performing through the "magic" power of the word, "able to transform", as they affirm it in the conversation realized with Raluca Voinea and published in the catalogue of the exhibition. The word gives birth to the oral history, it invalidates the official history and it becomes an annotation on the present (of the exhibition); for Ion it is the de-subjectivation, the objective look on the given reality and on his own person, an almost "autistic" act, of the "witness-participant".

For the curators, the artistic act is quickly recuperated, re-functionalized. One talks after this event about the possibilities an open project gives, about performing in present continuous, about a juxtaposition of three artistic identities which, through their works, could have either contradicted each other, or could have had a dialogue and a "working" together. One talks about honest artistic gesture, but also about the lack of loyalty from the part of the artists, who have performed in secrecy². One also talks about the late acknowledgement of dissatisfaction, frustration, improper background for the works, about the impossibility as an artist to identify with the final exhibition, but also about self-marketing at the Venice Biennale.

There were many voices that were sceptical about the trans-generational dialogue that can take place between Ion on the one side, and Anetta and Lucia on the other, through *Performing History*. The dialogue is realized beyond the exhibition as such, it takes place post-factum, and the project in the Romanian Pavilion gets a spectacular dimension. It thus takes its place among the other pavilions, even if, for one day, it tried to have another form, against the common one of „theme park”³.

The curators wanted an exhibition that "presents Ion Grigorescu as a major historical figure". An exhibition that can demonstrate the existence of another modernity, one which is "nuanced", "belated", attempting this demonstration through an eviscerated display. Eliminated were all the elements that could have re-created the much waited show expected by the West from the East, eliminated was the spectacle, the precarity, any Eastern weakness, and the proposal of just another showing off of the East. Left in place was a clean exhibition, close to a museum aesthetics, with works clearly hanged on the walls, without any place for doubt; images "performed under the magnifying glass", which could offer a clear vision on the East, using the West's instruments.

The fact that the artists reacted shows that Venice and the East are perhaps not ready for such a display. Or that such an exhibiting form for Ion Grigorescu is unconceivable for an art as his, which is characterized by tactility, fragility, materiality. "Instead of big canvases and carpets, they preferred straight and glossy photographs, big, perfect", the artist declared at the opening. At the same time, Performing History opens the discussion about the new ways of curating the East, about the creation of a different aesthetics of the East's image; not by continuing a „discourse of marginality”, but by debating modernity, creating a frame for thinking, „cleansing the national element, opening up towards modernity”, through an exhibition that I could call as being screened.

What happened in the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale is an open issue. What I find interesting is the fact that in this project every one of those involved performed until the end the thing in which they believed most. The Performing History catalogue is the perfect witness. Actually, all the short quotes from this text, which I preferred to leave as such, without too much reference, can be found in this catalogue.

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1 The text written on all the works in the exhibition is a collective work of the three artists. Here it is, from one end to the other, the message overlaying on the initial exhibition: *The curator bets on the artist, not the artist on the curator. Deal or feel. Risk or mercantilism. Reclaim or sustain. Money or more. Yell or whisper.*

2 Here I should make a note. The gesture is “in secrecy” as it was plotted without the approval or the knowledge of the curators. The plan was that the artists were supposed to perform by themselves in the pavilion (Ion Grigorescu was to realize the documentation, the video recording of the intervention). Circumstances made it that this gesture was performed – purely by accident, although there have been speculations about this – in front of Ami Barak and the jury commission for the Biennale, which at that moment was taking the tour of the National Pavilions.

3 The phrase “theme park”, used to characterize the Venice Biennale appears in the general catalogue of Venice Biennale, 54th edition, *ILLUMInazioni*, in the essay “The Bazaar of Venice”, written by art historians Beat Wyss and Jörg Scheller (pp.112-129).

Iulia Popovici _ Three lots

Theory in performing arts isn't of good reputation. At least not in Romania. Where – and here a role is played by its lack of visibility and credibility – reflection (other than journalistic mirroring) upon this artistic field is almost inexistent, unless it comes from artists themselves. The tendency, which on an international level is not fascinatingly recent is towards melting the borders and appropriating the specific practices of, as well as passing through a system of communication vessels of live presence and/or drama composition techniques towards, visual arts; at the same time, the reverse process also takes place, with image and structural conceptual thinking being incorporated by the performing arts. Those who appropriate are also claiming: definitions, notions, concepts, and most of all, intellectual property upon discourse, which eventually is a tool for encoding reality.

The deaf tension between the potential for external reflection and the certainties of self-reflection represents a form of battle between power and control – control over discourse and, extensively, upon rewriting of the past and writing of the present.

What you will read, in the coming months, in this corner of Long April are stop-overs in the no man's land of competitive discourses, of intersections and ideological manipulations and at the same time wanderings through another unclaimed territory, of other intersections: those that occur in the artistic performative practices, understood in the widest sense.

Here is a short inventory of recent facts, which are possible starting points:

- The *Russian Avant-garde* was published, an anthology with plays by seven artists and a selection of theoretical texts, generated by the futurists, the akhmeists, constructivists or other active groups before 1932. The editor, translator and preface-writer of this book is Leo Butnaru – who knows a great deal about Russian-Soviet experimentalism (but never at all mentions he the word “Soviet”). With the same amount of levelheadedness he manages to avoid any political association of these avant-gardes – of which some authors paid with their lives the affiliation to the militant leftist pre-Stalinist ideas (on the 4th cover of the book, the caption appears... *Meyerhold killed by the Bolsheviks*). Sovietologist Françoise Thom identifies this strategy of ignoring the details and embezzling indirect facts in constructing a coherent narrative as being part of the “wooden language”, i.e. the ideological discourse. Nothing is untrue in what Butnaru writes about the Russian avant-garde, except he re-contextualizes the artistic gestures of the artists he mentions by framing them from an exclusively formalist perspective (this being also the accusation brought to the same authors by Jdanov himself, in 1932): refuting the past from formalist positions, a way of writing preoccupied with form (structural but also linguistic), a kind of acting game which identification data are formal. “The continuous revolution” was the fundamental principle of the futurists – and the continuous revolution of rejecting the past recuperates now the aseptic Russian historic avant-garde, purified by the artists’ militant and proletarian attitude and position. “The continuous revolution” is a complex gambling, a mix of cards and dice, in which the white can become black and the past present.
- There is a show, called *Tîrgoviște de jucărie [Playful Tîrgoviște]**, conceived like an amusement park, in which the spectator can choose to see only 4 + 1 moments/scenes, in the four rounds, of a total which is several times more numerous. Some of these moments are destined to just one member of the public – but how is that one spectator chosen? In the pure and administrative choice of the selection mechanism

are hidden, factually, options which are not so much aesthetic as they are societal and connected to the theoretical question: to what degree is theatre, in general, a democratic art? How does the initial artistic option, of the amusement park pretext, fundamentally determine a certain, unique logic-ideological possibility? When, in the described situation, one opts for the presentation of general rules meant to encourage free competition (on a first-come first-served basis, no matter the collateral circumstances), the under-layer is in fact a neoliberal decision. If one places the situation in the context of the performative arbitrariness, of theatre convention (a member of the artistic team chooses the spectator based on subjective criteria he/she must not feel obliged to explain), this annuls the effect of large popular entertainment of the other convention, that of the amusement park, in favor of aestheticism. What remains – in the logic of accessibility and of the game, both presupposed by the condition of the funfair – is the ballot, a lottery to which can take part all those wishing to see a certain scene. This answer to the given problem can suffice to restart the whole mechanism of reflection, in which social equity is insured exclusively through a game of blind luck, through exclusion... Lotto-democracy.

- Although they are temporal arts (an interesting subject in itself, how this field of the polarity temporal arts/ spatial arts is being reorganized today), unlike literature and even film, and more like visual arts, performing arts establish their discursive reception on description, not on narration. How does one trace, however, where is the border beyond which description turns into narration (in relation to the object called performance, and in its absence, and not necessarily as distinct rhetoric modes)? Description carries within the concept – or maybe not, it is rather a free mechanism of semi-lottery association, submitted to the ballot. It remains to be seen.

*Municipal Theatre Tîrgoviște

Playful Tîrgoviște by Peca Ștefan

Directed by Ana Mărgineanu

Set-design: Mihai Păcurar

Costume-design: Cristina Milea

Video: Cinty Ionescu

Music: Petru Mărgineanu

Choreography: Andreea Duță.

Cast: Virgil Aioanei, Laurențiu Bănescu, Radu Câmpean, Toma Dănilă, Ilie Ghergu, Delia Lazăr, Cosmina Lirca, Maria Nicola, Ana Maria Oglindă, Cristian Olaru, Katia Pascariu, Mircea Silaghi, Daniela Stîngă, Ștefan Ștefănescu and Miruna Văju

IULIA POPOVICI is theatre critic for the weekly *Observator cultural*, and a permanent collaborator of the portal *LiterNet*. She held conferences about Romanian theatre in New York, Poznan, Warsaw, Vienna, she coordinated drama workshops and was the editor of the dance supplements of *Observator cultural*. She edited the anthology of new Romanian drama, in Hungarian translation, *Kortárs román drámák* (Cluj, Editura Koinonia, 2008), an anthology of Romanian drama in Polish translation and another, of contemporary Polish

drama, in Romanian translation. Now she is working for a second Polish theatre anthology and for her PhD research.

Laura Panait _ Artistic intervention in public space, between paradox and necessity in post-communist society

Public space and the art in the space of post-communism appear as concepts highly difficult to shape, first of all by lack of interdisciplinary studies. Even these days, when we talk about this subject, we encounter the tendency (mostly from the side of the political field) to drive the discourse towards the *monuments* in public space. I henceforth decided not to approach this specific theme but instead to focus on the *artistic interventions* in the East-European public space, especially in the Romanian one.

Public art, mapped between its highly contested polarities, could be defined, on the one hand as a contemporary equivalent of classical monuments, a practice which accepts social and artistic conventions, caught in its contradictions hidden by the relocation of art to a space outside the galleries and the museums, and, on the other hand, as a practice assimilated to activism and engagement in art.

Recent debates on art in its relation to public space, through the fact that “public art no longer is a hero on a horse”, as art critic and feminist Arlene Raven was pointing, shows that “art in the public interest extends the possibilities of public art to include a critique of the relations of art to the public domain.”¹

As to the idea of “art in the street”, sociologist Sharon Zukin described two situations. “When contemporary art is situated on the street, two types of spaces collide: one is established by the ‘autonomous’ works as an extension of space-art and of the valueless spaces of modernist architecture, as there is more or less a relationship of art with the design of physical space. The other one is a more flexible type of public space, the space surrounding the bodies of cities inhabitants, called by Lefebvre ‘representational spaces’.”² The two types of spaces suggest different roles for ‘public art’: one would be to allow a broader access of the public to an aesthetic territory usually reserved for a privileged elite, requiring a high level of cultural education; the other role could be that which not only art, but also other forms of expression in the street, such as theatre, music or carnival fulfill as a way to define street life as well as values and uses of the city.

As Malcolm Miles elsewhere points in his book, “art as an intervention in public sphere is a form of continuous social critique which resists the institutionalization of conventional public sculpture (...), the strategy should be that of redefining art as a critical realism but which does not record urban experiences, looking to change them according to the ideas of social justice and community, for many artists this leading to their personal transformation and supporting the notion of artist as a hero, bohemian or victim.”³

I consider it crucial today to discuss the notions of “art” and “public”. The definition of “public art” is fully contradictory: while modern art has occupied a hermetic space of the white –cube gallery, the forms of art which were closer to everyday life, such as “community art” or “outdoor art” have been marginalized by their own professional milieus, as lacking an “aesthetic quality.”⁴

Due to the different types of historic contexts when we speak of public spheres, the East-European realities still manifest a different symptom, rendering them unique but also hybrid in relation to public space. Even if at the “surface”, the cities epidermis grew considerably and assimilated many “Western” values, we still encounter “trauma” in the individual and collective consciousness when certain public spaces are traversed or lived in. They are connected to the control mechanisms, which had different faces during the communist years, but which still persist, as traces of the past. The fear not to break “rules” is still present in people’s actions in public space. More than that, the criteria of the consumption society are those which most of the times decide the fate of common or public space.

Dealing with a reduced number of case-studies to analyse in Romanian public space, the concept of artistic intervention was illustrated in the study realized by The Centre for Research and Consultancy in the Field of Culture, on which occasion two levels of evaluation of these types of events have been shaped: the first from a time perspective, the second from a space perspective.

The former speaks about artistic intervention as another perspective on the artistic act in the city, characterized by a temporal reflexivity. However, “temporality is seen within the Western practices as a quality of space more than as a definition of the duration of an intervention in urban space.” At a second level of analysis, “despite the apparent conflict existing between the temporary uses of urban space and the interests represented by city-planners, the relation between official power and the artists involving themselves in urban space is, in most of the big cities in the West, one of tacit collaboration based on tolerance. This relation can be compared with that between strategies and tactics in wars”.⁵

Public art is no longer the equivalent of monuments, but becomes a measuring unit for the cultural and democratic state of society.

In 2007, the project “Spațiul Public București/ Public Art Bucharest”, on which I decided to focus my attention, brought together artists such as Mircea Cantor, Daniel Knorr and Dan Perjovschi. “The artists’ projects confronted the public with a series of contemporary themes relevant both from an international perspective and for a context in which the exercise of democracy had not yet been incorporated. The streets, squares and plazas of the city, public and private institutions, public transport and mass-media channels constituted the basis of artistic interventions.”⁶

A central work on the map of this project and which kept coming back as a reference point in the discussions I had with different cultural actors, a work “in which the images are a diagnosis of the irremediable wound produced on the social cortex, the cause of an altered self-perception, is History/Hysteria, realized by Dan Perjovschi in front of the Architecture Faculty in Bucharest. Dan Perjovschi offered us a mute work, presented us with silent images, living sculptures embodying two characters immersed already in the a-temporal of collective memory, a student and a miner, who froze during a week in the same spot, in the same positions, in the same code of remembering.

The word-play in the title of Perjovschi’s work hides in fact the dialectic censorship of an imaginary observer’s consciousness, for whom the textual recording should objectify a lucid look on the facts, the

fact which becomes text, the text which becomes history, but which is undermined by the image, with its power to induce insanity, false perception, false consciousness, hysteria and eventually, the inevitable.”⁷

On the other hand, the choice of the venue mirrored the actual state of this symbolic, central space, the area of the artesian fountain in University Square, a space “invaded” by a “savage” type of consumerism, of political monumentalisation on several layers, but also by a free manifestation of artists representative for their fields (Dan Perjovschi for visual arts, Mihai Mihalcea for performing arts), aiming at making evident the destiny of such a place, a strongly significant one in contemporary culture. From the use of this area as a point of encounter and socializing, passing through different stages of commercial advertising till the interventions of the artists, the space has been constantly injected along the years with different doses of increasing attention.

As Marius Babias assumed, “this project wished to be first of all a pilot-program”⁸, an engine that could stir other similar reactions in the urban space or at least other interventions in the public space from Bucharest and from the country. I can say that, after that moment, the cultural milieu came back approximately to its initial state, other appreciable projects-insertions taking place in the last years, however not equalling that project from a programmatic point of view. On the other hand, the lack of cultural actors’ coherent acting and the (de)fragmentation of community speak of a long journey, a process of inscribing initiatives on the map of the city, sometimes in a chaotic way but still evolving towards the future of such an approach in a city like Bucharest, very rarely treated by other connecting fields.⁹

The characterization given by Marius Babias is still a valid one, in seeing Bucharest as “one of the fastest developing cities in Europe, however one where post-communism and globalization created specific tensions and eccentric juxtapositions in the architecture, urbanism or social life. The ways in which people in the city perceive, experiment and respond to these tensions define an active public space. The challenges of a city such as Bucharest, where unresolved issues of the recent past are back-dropped by the speed of capitalist expansion are to be acknowledged by the cultural discourse and analysed in open public debates.”¹⁰

All these require a new debate upon the role of artistic interventions in the post-communist public space, a space with an impressive dynamic, in which the artistic community tries to bring more and more into discussion certain references, processes but also contemporary insertions.

Thus, we could say that public space is today a result of self-positioning and of the degree of democratization in a society which is still at the level of “transition”: towards what it transitions still remains to be discussed...

In the articles to follow on this subject I want to present also a series of projects realized in Cluj, which intentions and effects differ to a certain extent from the situation of Bucharest. As I was directly

involved in their “story”, in those cases I will be able to offer also an insider opinion, upon these interdisciplinary projects which are approaching the post-communist public space.

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Laura Panait. PhD student in Urban Anthropology, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj

Member of the Paintbrush Factory

I find myself at the confluence between academic research and cultural activism, with one foot in the researches of creative communities which are involved in the exploration of public space, and with the other in the practice of this field, being an active member of several organizations which have tried to activate public space through different interventions and analysis, such as Bauhaus Kolleg Dessau (Sibiu & Luxembourg), AltArt Foundation Cluj, ICR Pavilion at the Architecture Biennale in Venice, 2010, etc. Currently I follow a doctoral research at Stiftung Zukunft Berlin.

¹ Quoted by Malcom Miles, "Art, space and the city. Public art and urban futures", Routledge, London, 1997, p. 101.

² Ibidem, p.36.

³ Malcom Miles, Op.cit., p.122-123.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 52-53.

⁵ "Cultura în spațiul public. Analiza evenimentelor culturale desfășurate în București" [Culture in public space. The analysis of cultural events from Bucharest], published by CCCDC București, 2009, p.20.

(http://www.culturadata.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=124%3Acultura-in-spatiul-public-analiza-evenimentelor-culturale-desfasurate-in-bucuresti&catid=43%3Aorase-si-cultura&Itemid=146)

⁶ Marius Babias, "Gaining hegemony over the symbolic and the imaginary in the critical culture" in *Spațiul Public București/Public Art Bucharest 2007*, Idea Design & Print, Cluj, 2008, p. 5.

⁷ Vlad Morariu, "Intervention through opposition: Spațiul Public București / Public Art Bucharest 2007", in the magazine IDEA. Arts + Society #30-31, Cluj, 2008.

⁸ Excerpt from an interview I realized with Marius Babias at n.b.k. Berlin.

⁹ Here I refer to the positioning of urban planners, architects, artists but also of social sciences researchers, who can approach the city through complex projects, with more chances to succeed than the unilateral ones.

¹⁰ Marius Babias in *Spațiul Public București/Public Art Bucharest 2007*, Idea Design & Print, Cluj, 2008, p. 8.

Livia Pancu _ The vertical site

This text abridges in an informal expository way the problematic researched by the author, a research which started in 2009-2010, as part of her PhD in progress at the Arts University in Iasi, called *The Vertical Site: Socialist-Realist Decorations and the Process of Thermal Rehabilitation*.

First Part

No law of composition can become dominant and legislating¹

What can be considered as the infrastructure of cities in Romania – the urban configuration of the socialist type – is, since some time already, the subject of a constant and severe change. As I cannot speak from the position of an urban planner, an architect or a sociologist, I will try to offer a glimpse into what I understand as taking place in this direction, a perspective which I take with the curiosity of a *potential artist*, a status which I albeit use only to analyse this issue. This is not a position against a phenomenon, it is rather an effort towards keeping the pace with a certain type of visual modifications which we, as individuals, do not notice enough at first, when they are still present, to get to remember them later only vaguely, in their absence and by virtue of nostalgia.

As a consequence I will discuss the phenomenon that concerns mainly the buildings (usually blocks of flats) erected in the period between 1950-1990, a phenomenon that is characterized by the sudden disappearance, under 10 cm of polystyrene (depending on the façades, this process can last between one and three weeks), of the initial decorations from the facades of these buildings.

The problematic of the urban form determined by the socialist type of blocks, their current state, as well as the social space created by them in the context of neighbourhoods have been discussed several times in projects which approached public space from a socio-cultural perspective, the most recent of which was “Magic Blocks”². The present attempt requires a detachment from the position mentioned above and instead the proposal of another one, upon a situation which is both superficial and specific: the moment of creation of an archaeological site, which main attribute is the preservation of contemporaneity – the covering of the initial decorations on the façades through the process of thermal rehabilitation, a process eventually finalised through the so-called visual-aesthetic rehabilitation. The term of archaeological site is used in order to underline the fact that this type of action aims at covering a level of inhabiting which can be uncovered and studied in the future. The fact that there will be precise information about the research perimeters, as well as the patrimonial potential of the stratum allows us to use this terminology specific to archaeology and to adapt it in a different context.

The almost obsessive desire to take into the derisory any possible visual quality of the so-called *match-boxes*, combined with an almost chronic nostalgia for the architecture before 1950, partially disappeared in a brutal way, inoculated to many of us a certain insensitivity towards any aesthetic value that could be attributed to these decorations.

Consequently, we encounter very seldom reactions that contest the process which facilitates this disappearance, such reaction requiring the commitment and responsibility towards the socialist decorative style. Instead, we are confronted with reactions which contest the doubtful aesthetic resulted through the visual juxtaposition of several flat owners’ chromatic options.

The way in which most of the people chose to realise the decoration of the façades (the final stage of the rehabilitation process) was to paint the surfaces corresponding to their property, by ignoring or interpreting in free compositions the architectural ensemble.

Another modality through which the private owners decide to remake the initial decorations (often realized by the composition of different textures, materials, colour tones) is that of painting in colour the initial decorative shape.

The last methods I have identified are either self-organizing and realizing this process together with the other neighbours in the block of flats, or to make use (as an association of inhabitants) of the *National Governmental Program for thermo-isolation of blocks of flats built in the period 1950-1990*³. Here we should mention the phenomena of continuous adjustment and adaptation of the blocks' balconies, as well as the other process, which seems to be turning, on an informal level, into a habit: adding one additional floor to the initial blocks.⁴

We can say that what has been conceived and developed systematically on a national and regional level, by architects, urban planners and visual artists, according to characteristic stylistic rigours became lately (in the period 1990-2009) the object of organic, uncontrolled interventions of the rightful owner of the flat, these interventions affecting a certain per cent from the block's façade. In other words, a stylistic deconstruction took place, which was only possible through the exercise of individual taste.

After 2009, the *National Governmental Program for thermo-isolation of blocks of flats built in the period 1950-1990* can be considered as the first attempt to facilitate a process of re-uniformization of the urban landscape in Romania. At the same time, this allows for the implementation and development of a process of covering all the visible traces that still exist after 40 years of research and experiment in the field of decorative arts in the urban space, and after 20 more years of expression of individual will through architectural and decorative means.

Livia Pancu is a member of Vector Association, Iasi, since 2005. She recently graduated from the Curating Contemporary Art course at the Royal College of Art, London. Since October 2010 she has been involved (both at organizational and curatorial level) in **Vector's year on the road** project, including: the participation in Frieze Projects in the frame of Frieze Art Fair with the project *Critical Point* and the publication *Vector – critical research in context*, co-edited with Cătălin Gheorghe, the exhibition *Vector Association at the Western Front*, Vancouver BC, Canada, Vector's participation in Vienna Art Fair – non-commercial section. The exhibition *I am working. I am producing. I am controlling* at Zona Gallery, Fabryka Stucki, was also organized in collaboration with Vector. Currently Livia Pancu is coordinating Vector's participation in the *Initiative to Create a European Network for Public Art Producers - ENPAP*, alongside its institutional partners: BAC - Baltic Art Center, Visby, Sweden, Consonni, Bilbao, Spain, Mossutställningar, Stockholm, Sweden, Situations from UK and SKOR from The Netherlands.

Livia Pancu is interested in understanding the different internal mechanics of contemporary art organisations ("ALMOST INSTITUTIONS") situated in non-capital cities in the former east.

www.periferic.org

www.enpapinitiative.org

¹ Henri Lefebvre, “International Competition for the New Belgrade Urban Structure Improvement” in “Henri Lefebvre and the Question of *Autogestion*”, translated by Helen Ferguson, in *Autogestion, or Henri Lefebvre in New Belgrade*, Bitter Sabine & Weber Helmut (Editori), Ed. Fillip Editions and Sternberg Press, 2009

² A good example can be the project Magic Blocks, which however only had as a case-study the city of Bucharest and a few blocks neighbourhoods there.

<http://www.e-zeppelin.ro/magic-blocks/magic-blocks>.

³ <http://www.mdrl.ro/index.php?p=1034>

⁴ This phenomenon is largely spread in the countries of former Yugoslavia, and it was brought to my knowledge by the artist Nebojsa Milikic, to whom I express my gratitude.

Oana Tănase _ Matter and history

București - Materie și istorie. Monumentul public și distopiile lui [Bucharest – Matter and history. The public monument and its dystopias]

Editorial concept: Anca Benera and Alina Șerban

Design: Arnold Estefán

Texts by Ioana Beldiman, Ellen Blumenstein, Reuben Fowkes, Duncan Light, Ciprian Mihali, Deborah Schultz, Alina Șerban, Ioana Vlasiu

Translations: Samuel W. Onn

Materie și istorie [Matter and history] – Audio-guide, 2010

Author: Anca Benera

Texts by Anca Benera, Angelica Iacob, Cristopher Wood

Sound editor: Cătălin Rulea

Institutul Cultural Român, Centrul de Introspecție Vizuală/Asociația pepluspatru, București, 2011

“Most of the times, the changing of a political system generates a renegotiation and a reconsideration of history’s values. Starting from this process, I am interested to follow the way in which the political changes or adversities affect public monuments. My approach starts from the ambiguity which surrounds Lenin’s statue, characterized on the one hand by the symbolical transfer of it being – supposedly – made from the melted bronze of King Carol equestrian statue, and on the other hand by the hypothesis of remaking the new equestrian [of Carol] from Lenin’s melted metal”. This short declaration Anca Benera gave in 2007 was trying to clarify a new centre of interest for the artist, starting with the work *The Red Rider* (film, object), initially presented in New York, in a group exhibition organized by Florence Lynch Gallery, then in Bucharest, at Galeria Nouă and then in MNAC [the National Museum of Contemporary Art]. Neither the Lenin nor the equestrian of King Carol I from Bucharest could miss from the volume *Matter and History* – the two monuments can be found in the list of case-studies, together with other nine “objects of history” erected between 1848 – 1948 and 1948 – 1990.

Each monument is rigorously documented, alongside its author/ authors and location, its index card with details regarding the object and the commission’s circumstances, the intermediary stages of the work, the dimensions and materials used. An interesting paragraph describes the atmosphere of the inauguration ceremony, recording also the conditions which determined the monument’s relocation or destruction. The entire story’s thread is followed, looking at documents from the National Archives, press articles contemporary with the monuments or from our days, official correspondences, files and typescripts of the sessions and juries of the Artists’ Union or the Public Art Monuments’ Commissions, monographic catalogues of artists-authors, studies and researches of art history. This rich material is each time accompanied by an impressive series of images, from archival

photographs (documenting the works), to the most recent ones, witnessing the new taking into possession of the spaces, or sometimes their current emptiness.

However, the authors of the book do not stop at the level of documentation – which is not an easy one, most of the times – but they decide to include also a selection of theoretical texts, meant to clarify the “symbolical dimension of the process of erection and destruction of Bucharest’s monuments”. Ellen Blumenstein in particular looks at the narrative dimension of the audio-guide inserted in the book, *Matter and History*, a project realized by Anca Benera in 2010 and premiered within the project in public space The KNOT

http://www.knotland.net/index.php?id=56&L=3&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=794&chash=0a88ba6b59add9fa4c1aba193dceb211: her essay looks at the relation between narration, history and memory. Also in the introductory chapter, Ioana Beldiman discusses the destiny of public sculptures in Romania. In the section *Critical Texts*, Reuben Fowkes analyses the golden epoch of public sculpture, focusing also on the socialist-realist interval, in order to better analyse their role during the Stalinist transformation of public space, and during the de-Stalinisation period. Instauration, glorification, revolt, violence, evacuation, abandonment – all these matters come back in the approaches of the authors, many times they invoke other examples of such remains of the urban space in Eastern Europe. Deborah Schultz looks more closely to the aspects of a commission such as the one for the Stalin monument in 1950, and Alina Șerban chooses as a case-study the Monument of the Soviet Soldier from Bucharest, inaugurated on the 9th of May 1946, a work of the sculptor Constantin Baraschi. Duncan Light traces the entire history of the Mausoleum of Communist Heroes/ The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, to conclude on the vulnerability of public space, appropriated and abused by all political systems. Any radical intervention in the sphere of the political determines the creation of a new face for public space. Relics of the socialist landscape can often be still encountered. On identity and collective memory, death and violence, monument and monumentality writes Ciprian Mihali, who sketches the idea of identity-event. In his opinion, “...the festive and the monumental still have an excessive hold on daily life. Spaces and times not intended to serve roles other than those of routine and functionality have been ceremonially transformed under the decisive impacts of advertising and consumption.” A state of exception accompanies each decision in favour of the monuments of power, and the event always has consequences, it leaves traces.

The investigative nature of this project is not singular in the landscape of contemporary art. I tend to identify, together with other commentators, an urgency (felt by an entire generation of artists) to explore, systematize, unveil and interpret the data of a fragmentary, if not amorphous history. A social engagement determines the re-visitation and, fortunately, the correction of the official and authoritarian version. Moreover: we are witnessing the reactivation of some discussions that are looking at “research as a method”: a series of voices are questioning the manner in which contemporary art and, implicitly, curatorial strategies can engage or initiate alternative formulas of research. One invokes, for

example, more and more often, the phrase *theory-practice* (and not only in the academic space), which does not necessarily presuppose the ascription of an equal status both to the theoretical approach and to the artistic practice, but rather indicates a register of *discursive agency*, according to which we temporarily abandon the schism between theory and practice, in favour of a theoretical thinking directly connected to action. In this respect, we can read *Matter and History* as a research project embodied in a volume recommending itself through a happy balance between the filtered information, the interpretation and the image.

Oana Tănase is an art critic and curator at the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest, where she has recently organized solo exhibitions by Romanian artists, such as Gili Mocanu, Ștefan Constantinescu, Roman Tolici, and Aurelia Mihai. As a freelancer, she has been involved in projects that approach the contemporary photography and video art, such as Bucharest – a paradox city (The City Museum, Madrid, 2011), Ne tourne pas la tete (ICR Paris, 2010), Ateliers des images (French Cultural Institute, Bucharest, 2009 - 2010), Temps d' ecoles d' images (UNAgaleria, Bucharest, 2008; Turnul Croitorilor, Cluj, 2009 and 2010) and the 2008 edition of SurExposition Timișoara (Museum of Art, Timișoara). She has been contributing editor for various cultural publications in Romania. She is currently enrolled in a PhD program at the University of Arts in Bucharest with a thesis concerning the documentary practices in contemporary art.

Art as a joyous form of knowledge. A conversation between Raluca Voinea and Vlad Morariu

R.V. Let us start by continuing a discussion we had the other day about the Artists Union (UAP), this anachronistic structure that, at the same time, offers models of organization and functioning alternative to the global system of art. When one talks about the scene in Romania, one mentions the Cluj School of painting and the Museum for Contemporary Art, Dan Perjovschi, Mircea Cantor and Ciprian Mureșan, Ion Grigorescu, etc. maybe the Periferic Biennial as well, but always in these parameters, given by references to the international art system. One talks, however, less and less about UAP.

V.M. If we want to talk both about the artists with an international profile and about the parallel structures of UAP, I think it is necessary to understand the context in which the two cases coexist. Some years ago Marius Babias wrote a text in which he talked about René Block's impression when he visited Bucharest, who had placed this city somewhere between Tirana and Washington. In the last years a series of artists managed to construct themselves a certain international profile, and the local scene is clearly perceived differently than it was 10-15 years ago, some institutions disappeared whereas others emerged, but, in any case, something of Block's observation remains valid.

R.V. If an international curator visits Romania, the UAP galleries are only given as a negative example. I am asking myself how does our system benefit from this type of approach and its perpetuation?

V.M. I think that the criticism against UAP is constructed culturally-historically and finds its origins at the beginning of the '90s when the discourse of art's lack of infrastructure in Romania dominated. There was, of course, the UAP machine, with its hierarchies, galleries and spaces offered to its members: the lack of satisfaction referred to the lack of adaptation within the global contemporary art context. UAP became a sort of a scapegoat, a negative example in opposition to which alternative initiatives had begun to be articulated. In 2004, when I started to work with Vector, this type of discourse existed still, and the Periferic Biennial wanted nothing else but to short-circuit the communication channels between the local and provincial context and the artistic international scene. If I remember well, the space of Vector gallery was rented from UAP, but our meetings were reduced rather to our rent payments and an exchange of polite words. From both sides there functioned a series of prejudices about what art is today – or about the role it could take in contemporary society – so that the communication between these institutions was, in a way, fractured. But, again, I think there is another problem linked with UAP, that of the people which are part of this structure: it is evident that for a series of artists, the 90s came unexpectedly, so that it was very difficult for them to adapt to the exigencies of a globalized art scene and market. There is a series of artists who studied in a serious school before 1990 and maybe they could have had something to say artistically, but all of a sudden they found themselves marginalized. Or they self-marginalized. I am talking about those who did not speak English, or those who realized too late that they needed to learn how to write applications and project proposals, that they needed to circulate into residencies, to meet curators and artists from other countries. In any case, if we regard UAP with a fresh look we might discover a new stake here: because today a new discourse becomes more and more important - the discourse about rewriting eastern art by the easterners themselves.

From this point of view, a re-evaluation of UAP's role could become an important and instructive exercise.

R.V. Yes, but I ask myself if we are not talking about a myth: what if we won't discover, for example, a generation of underground conceptualists, more than those we already know (the way it is, in a way, secretly hoped for, always with a glimpse to our Czech or Slovenian neighbours)? What if, in reality, we will only have the confirmation of the domination of unengaged, simulated social realism and impressionist painting?

V.M. This is not a real problem, I think. The existence of a certain type of domination of social realism or impressionist painting can become an occasion in which we could ask why the things were the way they were and not otherwise. We know for sure that there were artists that in the private space of their studio or even in semi-public spaces experimented with alternative artistic expressions. Again, we know that Romania was not completely isolated from what happened in the West, we know that information circulated, in a more or less ideological manner, more or less samizdat. I would be interested in what we could find out by looking at the balance of forces between artists and art forms, at the sometimes antagonistic manners of articulation of local or regional artistic discourses, at this field of relations and its divisions, its rupture points, its potential conflicts which, in Mouffle and Laclau's words, would transform the artistic space of the last 60 years in an agonistic space, a space in which contradictory and conflicting energies would co-exist and recognize each other. Of course, what I am describing here is a hypothesis, which could be confirmed or infirmed. In any case, I think we should not start with prejudices linked to style and technique, and comparisons like "while they (those living at the West of Romania) were doing conceptual art we were doing social realism" are not helping us too much.

R.V. Yes, but this urgency of rewriting your own history, so that somebody from the West doesn't do it before you, came as an impulse from outside, and it became really trendy to rediscover forgotten artists; in the end, this process is directed towards the market as well. You rediscover artists in order to include them in the circuits of the art market, you construct an aura for them in order to sell them better. And the rediscovery in a contextualising way, or even just the re-evaluation of things which are well known takes time and necessitates an ideological repositioning of the whole society.

V.M. Indeed there exists this problem of those who rediscover forgotten artists or art. But such a process raises again a fundamental question, which is always valid: what do we, actually, want from art? Art has a lot to do with the libidinal economy, with the regimes for the production, distribution and consumption of desire. The question is linked to the places where art inserts itself, if, for example, it follows the desire to deconstruct obstacles and walls, to deterritorialize ourselves, to use a Deleuzian concept, keeping in sight the ideals of contestation, the desire for liberty, equity and dissensual democracy, etc. – and then art becomes critical-militant-insurrectional, one of the many nomadic war machines – or if, on the contrary, it becomes an agent of closure, of paranoiac territorialisation of the ego, in which case art remains a private object for contemplation, decoration, ornament. In reality, there is no deterritorialisation without reterritorialisation, in the art world or elsewhere. The question of discovering forgotten art and artists for a former socialist space such as Romania becomes interesting

from this point of view: the truth is that we haven't understood the past properly, and we often judge it using the dominant ideological framework of our contemporary society through the lens of which we look back in anger. Thus, for me, to rediscover forgotten art or artists represents, first of all, a way of understanding the past, but also the promise of an understanding of the critical-deterritorializing mission of art within a repressive system such as that of Romania's of the past decades. And if we manage to identify such instances, I think they need to become common knowledge, democratic, because they can, again, tell us something about how to cope with our contemporary society. The aim of the art market is to extract surplus-value from this whole production of knowledge: and when you exoticize the past in order to sell it better you cannot avoid suspicions regarding this recuperation. Let us think at the example of Ion Bârlădeanu, who became a tabloid theme, and who was commodified overnight by his gallerist, turned into the pop artist that missed in the recent history of Romanian art. I regard with suspicion, thus, the manners in which a series of historical-aesthetic and sometimes even political discursive practices are instrumentalized by the business of a commercial gallery. On the other hand – and here we are returning to the concrete case of Romania – we have to ask ourselves who could have the resources to conduct such a process of honest research and recuperation? There should exist serious programmes for research in the universities that have art history departments, or this role should be taken by a research section of the Museum for Contemporary Art. But let's not forget the scandals linked to how MNAC acquired works for their own collection. And this when MNAC has any funds at all.

R.V. There will always be suspicions, it doesn't matter the type of institution we are talking about. An art historian, a curator, has always his own agenda and interests.

V.M. I agree, because history doesn't exist but as a socio-cultural construct. But what I want to say is that I would prefer that this important process of rewriting history takes place in a public space where all these interests, sometimes even opposed, conflicting, co-exist and co-participate in a mechanism for negotiation, even in extended work groups. Here we come back to the problem of experts. I think that such a process of rewriting history should be legitimized by a group of specialists and experts. And here I am not talking only about art historians or curators: I think of a group of specialists in different but interconnected fields, from art history and social theory and critique to history, economy and, why not, even representatives of commercial galleries. And I think that such a group could exist if those that compose it are taking a distance, at least temporarily, from the Romanian context and especially, if they manage to study abroad.

R.V. Why abroad?

V.M. Because the school in Romania, at least the way I experimented it for 6-7 years, functions in a faulty manner. I don't want to be uncritically apologetic when talking about western schools, because in many of them – and this I experimented as well – things can happen similarly: they may function based on the undisputed authority of a „magister” or of a more or less extended „family”, which in the end transforms the academy or university in a sort of private business, and where the problem of knowledge is approached with timidity, sometimes becoming a masquerade. The department in which I work now

functions following a different model, it boosts critical discussions and researchers are encouraged to articulate their positions coherently, to publish their research and to submit them to public criticism in an international context. Coming back again to the problem of experts, I think that there are very few cases of Romanian researchers that have the courage to take their conclusions in an international context and to test them there. We can talk here about a certain convenience – as long as the system puts no pressure – but at the same time there is also a certain guilty admittance of their impotence. In Romania one does research, but the culture of the critical test is very feeble.

R.V. I think that in Romania we are not talking about a lack of knowledge. I think that the problems of the Romanian art history school are: (1) it is too much self-referential (2) the research is not transmitted in a language that would permit the circulation of concepts.

V.M. There is a need for dialogue between research conducted locally and an enlarged international context. The same is true about art criticism, many art critics, especially those from older generations, referring mainly to the local context. There are exceptions, of course, such as *IDEA. Arts + Society* magazine from Cluj, which functions exactly in this logic of identifying a common language between the local and international art scene.

R.V. Aren't we talking about a sort of autism, as well, because one can master the discourse from abroad, but when one comes back, she/he realizes that it is very difficult to adapt that discourse to local conditions; and then it might become necessary to use two types of discourse, practically functioning in two different worlds?

V.M. Clearly we are talking about self-closure, autism, even neurosis, because self-isolation can lead only to these things. But walls need to be deconstructed, this is the lesson that we learn from some Romanian artists, I am thinking of Grigorescu and Perjovschi. I am asking if, for example, we have somebody like Piotr Piotrowski in Romania...

R.V. Piotrowski is someone who is a specialist on the art of the last 50 years and who works with a clearly defined methodology.

V.M. By the way, the question of methodology is, again, very important. In my first year of PhD the provocation was to construct a research methodology. In Romania, talking to former colleagues, although doctoral schools have been introduced, where theoretically they discuss about research methodologies, many times the supervisors are letting students alone to manage their research, and thus, in a way, you can wander blindly for three years and not find your way, not even at the end.

R.V. This leads to the lack of a certain rigour even in what regards the writing of art criticism.

V.M. There is something one doesn't understand very well: that a research methodology is not a collection of methods, it represents the conceptual background, the set of assumptions with which you start a research. It is about a position you articulate, which guides you and which provides the critical distance from the object of study. On its grounds one constructs the hypothesis to be tested. And I think

that this thing is necessary both for an extended research and for critical overviews of exhibitions and contemporary art events. The concept of critique, as we have inherited it from Modernity, presupposes exactly this possibility of finding a certain position (then it was the bourgeoisie's opposition against the absolutist state), of situating yourself at a crossroad; it is the capacity to separate things, to take decisions. Of course, this should be achieved with full awareness, and here maybe we can talk about how well our art critics are mastering the concepts they are using. I think it is really important for an art critic to know from which positions she or he writes a review. At the same time, it becomes really important that their beliefs are transparent and that they are self-consistent along different interventions. Well, what we read in some weekly cultural magazines as art criticism represents, actually, in many cases, the avoidance of a position and the strive to remain at the level of a narration: art criticism becomes thus a sort of story, written in a more or less gleeful manner.

R.V. Sometimes not even that, because if it were like this we would at least have a written documentation of a certain exhibition. But sometimes if you read a review it is very difficult to understand how an exhibition really looked like. The review should include at least a minimum of description, how the works look like, how much the exhibition lasts, what sort of spatial relation exists between works, etc. And then, of course, one should analyse the grounds of the exhibition and if it is more than the sum of the presented works.

V.M. I agree. Then, there are critics that are supplementing their role: they are trying to inflict to the reader a certain type of emotion that they themselves are experiencing in an exhibition. I can understand this type of approach for a context like that of Romania, which has few contemporary art events. The critic is then trying to give the reader the possibility of reconstructing imaginatively and affectively an object or an exhibition. When I started to write about art, this was how I proceeded as well. The problem of this type of approach is that it manages to confirm and withstand, and even strengthen the hegemony of certain emotivist and populist discursive patterns, which we find, for example, in the spectacle of TV politics. For example, between the hateful criticism of Erwin Kessler regarding Daniel Knorr and the parliamentary interpellations of the Great Romania Party regarding Nicoleta Esinencu's text in the catalogue of the Romanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennial in 2005 there exists a subtle relation of complicity. I believe that art and art criticism are among the few instruments we have at hand for undermining this faulty type of making politics. Art, like politics, is not only emotion: quite the opposite, I believe that emotions should be kept under control by rational arguments. Art is no longer only emotion, just like it is not only form or only expression. It is a bit of all these and something more. As Arthur Danto explains, art does not exist today without its own theory, without the consciousness of its own contextualization, without its theoretic supplement, without its discussion and explanation. It is, in a way, an endless work. And the art critic has the mission of completing the art work, contesting it, raising question marks, looking at its socio-cultural context of production. Thus, I think that art should constitute an occasion for the art critics for putting into circulation broader meanings. They should know philosophy, social theory, aesthetics, etc.

R.V. Not only: I think that, first of all, a critic must know the language very well or should try to learn it while writing, meaning that she/he should know the concepts that they are using in a review. I noticed that in most of contemporary criticism (so not only in Romania) there is this common practice of throwing with words, with undigested concepts. It's a fake knowledge claim, precisely because there is this expectation from the critic that she/he has a wider intellectual horizon. However, I think it would be an honest attitude if you are at least able to place the work described within the context of art history, and then to believe in the statements you make. Then, at least, there are some conditions fulfilled for the production of a document which is uncompromising, both for you and for the artist.

V.M. Yes... I agree. In a way a work of art, a book, a sociology paper, a text of art criticism, they all function in the same way, as instruments which can open a certain perspective upon the world. We were speaking the other day about the role of art, about how radical it should be, about the fact that art has succeeded several times to uncover a series of less familiar things, as was the case with the avant-garde and institutional critique. I ask myself if art has a singular status from this point of view or if we can find the same impulse in other cultural fields.

R.V. The historic avant-garde was a general one, so we are talking not only about art here: it existed in art, in science, in music or literature, and all these fields contaminated each other. I think we live in similar times now, when the artists understand that if they want to say something about the world, if they want to be contemporary to the world they live in, they have to be aware that they are not alone in the art world. In fact, the art world doesn't exist as such, it takes shape in a wider context. Throughout the 20th century, or maybe always, the artists communicated with people who had other preoccupations, either they collaborated with them or were influenced by them, and they managed to create innovative artistic languages. The issue of the Gesamtkunstwerke is one of positioning in the world as a human being and not simply as a professional category.

V.M. I would like to re-emphasize the fact that for me, the avant-garde or institutional critique are cases of deterritorialisation, of flight, of escape, of inventing new alliances between forms of knowledge which are apparently not connected between them. That's why, with this heritage of the recent art history, there are a series of expectations and even a certain burden which the artist has to live with, which are all connected to the emancipatory potential of art. In any case, I was formed by the projects of Vector Association¹ and by the discourse of the Periferic biennial² so I can say that for me (having studied philosophy) the interest for art was born around this emancipatory discourse: I haven't ceased to believe that art means disruption of consensus, disagreement, escape and regrouping, including towards the money-making machine of the market. Not that the artists shouldn't sell her/his work, the question is how they do it, how they let themselves caught by the system and escape it at the same time. But allow me to ask you a question: as a curiosity, why do you think that there exists, let's say, more indignation towards an art fair than to a book fair? Your practice has something to do with both cases...

R.V. I could think of a very simple reason: books are only instruments or means through which content is transmitted. I am not talking here about the books-objects, which are in a separate category. The book fairs exist to sell these means to a mass of people. Even here there are discussions, if content is

contaminated by the economy of consumerism. For example, if a critical author demands 30 euro for a book in which the theme is the *copy-left*. Some of them decide to upload freely their books on the internet, which doesn't prevent the selling of the physical object of the book. Others don't do even this, as they (rightfully I would say) consider it a work which needs to be paid for. In any case, the fact that the object of the book is sold does not generally harm the content it carries in it. In the case of art works, the content coincides with its expression in a material form, from which it cannot be separated. It is very hard to accept that a work of art gets to be a decorative object which belongs to only one person. Still, at the art fairs there are not only collectors who are buying, there are also institutions which at least are scanning the market in view of a future acquisition. This is a good thing, as public institutions buy for the public good.

V.M. I keep on insisting on the importance of these ideas of emancipation, freedom and sociality which art can produce. These are ideas which were born, naturally, in specific historic contexts, but which are again and again circulated when artists enter into alliances with insurreccional or revolutionary movements. I could see this thing even this year, in the context of the students' strikes in England. Consequently, I can say there exists this melancholy, we could call it anti-capitalist, which aims at the art market.

R.V. Clearly there are more things involved here, it also depends on the artist. I would say, however, that we shouldn't demand more from the part of the artist than we do from a politician, for example.

V.M. I think that artists are, in a way, people with a profoundly split consciousness, because they have to find a balance between this set of prejudices which I still consider as being positive, regarding the role of art in society, and the way in which, eventually, they must negotiate with the rules of the market. I have worked with many artists, some of them are very good friends of mine, and for many of them the relationship with a commercial gallery is often a problematic one. I find it interesting the way in which, many times, artists negotiate their own repression, their own territorialisation as there is, eventually, an endless conflict of desires.

R.V. Yes, these are clearly prejudices, on the basis of which the artist can ask for a privileged status. This raises another question: should the artist have a privileged status or not? Should we give up the conception that art is not a human activity like any other? Or, if it has a special status, why not granting it, in the same manner, to sweeping? That's why there are artists who transform sweeping into a work of art. Then we can see the artist as any other worker of this society, who also needs a social and health insurance. This brings with it a responsibility which the artist should have towards society.

V.M. The question remains: why do we need art when there are other, much more urgent and important, problems?

R.V. In a way, art and culture are always supplementary, they come after satisfying the basic needs, and that's why sometimes they are even conceived as responses to these needs: you can find artists who feed people, who create shelters for the homeless, who work with architects and designers for this kind

of purpose. This happens because you cannot talk about art in conditions of extreme poverty. But let us go back to the Romanian case. You are now living away from the country.

V.M. In a way yes, but I keep myself updated with everything that happens in Romania, and I've never abandoned the idea of making something here. I read not so much The Guardian as I read online the Romanian newspapers, which, of course, I judge with a certain distance because I am aware of their ideological orientation. CriticAtac³ is the best thing that happened lately in Romania in this field. Talking, however, about the distance to the Romanian scene, I think that this relates to what we were discussing above, that at a certain point a self-provocation becomes necessary, just like I find it important that people manage to study in a good school in the West and eventually come back and try to build something locally.

R.V. Let me ask you some simple questions. For example, what artists do you like from Romania?

V.M. I'll mention some names, but the reasons why I like them are different: Ciprian Mureșan for the way in which he negotiates the thresholds between politics and poetics in his works, Eduard Constantin for the manner in which he insists in his works on the local forms of the society of control, Cristina David for the ludic manner of bringing closer art and science, Dan Perjovschi because he is a very interesting case of flight and repositioning, Matei Bejenaru for the honesty with which he (re)approaches the subjects of labour and affective memory. The painting school from Cluj I know less, because I only saw the works of Adrian Ghenie. And when it comes to painting, things are more complicated.

R.V. What is the problem with painting?

V.M. There is not necessarily a problem with painting. However, I think painting is, even historically, the ideal medium for private experiences of art works, whereas I prefer mediums which favour the collective reception of art. Then there are characters such as Damien Hirst, who became from a good artist a very intelligent business man. His series of paintings with butterflies prove how easy an artwork – painting – is turned into an ornament, how thin the borders are between art and business. To me this raises a lot of questions. Also, painting can raise issues related to its interpretation, as there is a burden laid by canons of interpretation which have been established during centuries, and it is very hard to overcome these. I remember the exhibition Ghenie had at MNAC received positive reviews also from the critics who are not from our generation, and sometimes the critical discourse praised the techniques of execution. I think the stake should be higher.

R.V. You mean for works in other mediums there is the challenge to invent your own language, lacking constraints dictated by tradition.

V.M. Yes, that's why I am very attracted by installations and performances because every time you have to reinvent your approach.

R.V. At the meeting from subRahova⁴, Matei Bejenaru talked about the ideal institution in Romania, what he expects as an artist and cultural operator from such an institution. The ideal institution should

be, according to him, “neither cool nor trendy nor chic, it should be characterized by austerity, coherence, discourse, information, knowledge, an institution where also nerds could come, an institution based on work and research, which could generate debate, artistic production, art exhibitions and moreover to have an elegance of display.” How would you see it?

V.M. My research is on institutional critique and I would immediately answer that for me the ideal institution should be able to constantly reinvent itself. It should be a progressive institution, as it is defined by the team from e.i.p.c.p.⁵. But this is still a too abstract answer. Concretely, I think it is important, first of all, that such an institution should be financed from public money and should have a public profile. Then, the spectacle of the TV politics that we know as being connected to the private real estate businesses, or even to the interest of art collectors, should be kept as far as possible. It should make place to a real politics, one which contests consensus: consensus seems to rule our society since, to give an example, the traumatic experience of economic austerity in the last three years raised a feeble opposition and contestation. This institution should work dissensually, offering the rights of expression to the different groups in our society. The access should be free and I think something from the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein’s strategy, which gives its visitors the possibility to borrow art works at home, could be adopted. Then, I think that the board of such institution should be changed maybe every 5-7 years in a democratic and transparent way, following a process which involves independent cultural operators. The hierarchies within the institution themselves should be changed periodically, and, why not, one could experiment with them. But most importantly, I see such an institution not as a museum or a gallery, not even as an art institution, but rather as an institute for knowledge production, which works trans-disciplinary, transversally, traversing the fields of art, economy and the social. Guattari once said that the challenge is to transform the process of teaching and learning in a school’s classroom into a work of art. I am thinking that in such an institution an economist could curate an art exhibition, and an artist-activist could bring a significant input in a serious sociological research. The aim is, in any case, to produce discourse, and the discourse produced should be able to constantly reinvent itself, in joyous, ludic forms of knowledge.

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Vlad Morariu is a philosopher and art critic. Currently he is pursuing his PhD research at Loughborough University School of the Arts where he is member of the Politicized Practice Research Group. His thesis explores the present conditions and possibilities of critical practices within art institutions, with a focus on institutional critique. In different contexts, he activated as artist, curator, and cultural organizer, and contributed to the development of the Vector / Periferic Biennial platforms in Iași, Romania. He published texts in collective publications (Romanian Cultural Resolution, Atlas of Transformation) and in

magazines such as Vector. Art and culture in context, Idea. Art + society, and Framework. The Finnish Art Review.

¹ http://periferic.org/vector_profile.html

² <http://periferic.org/about.html>

³ CriticAtac is a critical platform that gathers writers, journalists, sociologists, cultural theorists, who are publishing texts on subjects relevant for the current state of things in the public sphere of Romania and its context, such as the rights of workers, the dismantling of the social state, etc. <http://www.criticatac.ro/>

⁴ subRahova is a new space in Bucharest, dedicated to contemporary arts and coordinated by Farid Fairuz, together with Eduard Gabia.

<http://subrahova.blogspot.com/2011/06/ce-este-subrahova.html>

In June 2011 the project Caminul Cultural was launched at subRahova, an event which reunited for two days of debates a series of participants (artists, curators, cultural managers) of the independent scene in Romania and Moldova.

<http://www.caminulcultural.ro/>

⁵ European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies. <http://eipcp.net/>