

Quaderni della Casa Romana di Venezia
VIII, 2011

**Romanian Participation – 54th International Art Exhibition
– La Biennale di Venezia
4.06–27.11 2011
Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary**

Curators: Adrian Bojenoiu, Alexandru Niculescu

Exhibition design: Timo Grimberg

Commissioner: Monica Morariu

Deputy Commissioner: Alexandru Damian

Organizers: Romanian Cultural Institute, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of Romania

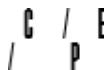


ROMANIA
Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Ministerul Culturii și Monumentelor Istorice
Ministry of Culture and National Heritage

Partners: Club Electro Putere



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Romanian Participation
54th International Art Exhibition -
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Romanian Cultural Resolution **– documentary**

Curators:

Adrian Bojenoiu
Alexandru Niculescu

4.06–27.11 2011

Location:

New Gallery
Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research
Palazzo Correr Cannaregio 2214 – 30121 Venice

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The 54th Venice Biennale opening the second decade of this millennium allows the world of visual arts a further opportunity to ponder its current status, its dynamics and actants, its relationship to its own history in particular and to the history of society in general. The controversial title chosen by curator Bice Curiger (*ILLUMInations*) succeeded in attracting a record number of 87 international participants with a further 37 collateral projects added to it – a proof, and not just statistically, of the still vivid interest in the Venice biennial regrouping of the widely different components making up contemporary visual arts.

The misleading suffix in the title ("nations") turned out to be instantly conducive to one of the most persistent debate topics in recent decades, mainly related to the concept of national identity and the way visual arts contributed – by radical means, at times – to redefining it.

The project submitted by young artists Adrian Bojenoiu and Alexandru Niculescu responds perfectly as well as innovatively to the topic of the current Venice Biennale, since it consists of a series of reflections on the new cultural language in post-1989 East Europe as well as on the visual arts metadiscourse behind the former Iron Curtain, particularly in Romania. Moreover, their project is conceived as a continuous and dynamic activity by starting next September the project "The Las Analog Revolution, a Memory Box" carried out by Ștefan Constantinescu and Xandra Popescu with guests from among internationally acclaimed artists.

Mention should be made of the fact that the participation of the project "Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary" in the Venice Biennale reflects a remarkable situation not least because it is the result of the two artists' activity in the course of only a few years. The two have been quick to impose in Romania a new voice expressed symbolically in converting a former workers' club and communist propaganda centre (the Electro Putere Club of Craiova) into an *agora* of the most varied opinions and expressions in today's Romania.

The Romanian Cultural Institute has promoted the Contemporary Art Centre Club Electro Putere from the onset by supporting the presence of the "Romanian Cultural Resolution" project and its artists in Berlin, Stockholm, Rome and Venice.

Furthermore, several artists and curators invited by Adrian Bojenoiu and Alexandru Niculescu to join the activities of the Electro Putere Club (you can hear their opinions in the video installation of the Biennale project) were supported in their projects and participated on a regular basis in the programmes of the foreign branches of the Romanian Cultural Institute.

Adding the New Gallery of the Romanian Cultural and Humanistic Research Institute in Venice to the map of last year's Architecture Biennale (with the "Superbia" project) and to this year's Art Biennale (with the project "Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary") does justice to a moral duty Romanians have to historian Nicolae Iorga, who was personally involved in acquiring the Institute headquarters as well as in building the Romanian pavilion in the "Giardini della Biennale".

I am confident that the current special issue of the Venice Institute publication, along with the impressive catalogue published by Hatje Cantz, will turn out to be excellent means for promoting the project as well as the activity of one of the most interesting movements in Romanian visual arts, which we warmly recommend to your attention.

I do hope the presence of the "Romanian Cultural Resolution" project at the Venice Art Biennale will put forth for all visitors and specialists a convincing panorama of the originality of Romania's cultural language during the past decades and, at the same time, provide an impulse for the participation of young artists and curators to the next national contest for the 2013 edition of the Biennale.

Horia-Roman Patapievi

President of the Romanian Cultural Institute

Romania has been an active presence at the Venice Biennale since 1907. That was a year of social and economic crisis in Romania, but the country nevertheless managed to find the resources to be present at one of the world's most important cultural events, with one of its preeminent artists of that time, Frederic Storck. We do not now live in the same epoch, though many of today's events may resemble those that occurred more than a century ago. In 2011, Romania is participating in the Venice Biennale, with some of today's most valued artists, because – despite the crisis – we consider that art has a crucial role to play in contemporary society.

This is not the first time that the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage has collaborated with the Romanian Cultural Institute in order to represent Romania at the Venice Biennale. But this occasion is different. It is not only a matter of the natural administrative cooperation that occurs between these two institutions. Rather, it is about the spirit of the Romanian presence at the Biennale.

One of the projects to represent Romania at the 54th International Art Exhibition, *Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary* is presented at the New Gallery of the Romanian Institute of Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice. Within the international context of the Biennale, the curators are putting forward a documentation and research platform for contemporary Romanian art.

This event, curated by Adrian Bojenoiu and Alexandru Niculescu, offers powerful evidence that Romanian art participates, interculturally, in the truly multicultural environment of Venice. This exhibition provides the momentum for a new era in Romanian culture. It begins here. Enjoy it!

Hunor Kelemen

Minister of Culture and National Heritage of Romania





The activity of **Club Electro Putere** is focused on inquiring into contemporary human practices concentrated on cultural activity. The purpose of the centre is to enable inter-human cultural exchanges by connecting different levels of reality and expression. The cultural activities of CEP question the status of contemporary culture with the aim of decoding existing forms of expression and communication in order to produce and promote alternative narrative structures.

Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary

Authors: Adrian Bojenoiu, Alexandru Niculescu

ADRIAN BOJENOIU (1976) lives and works in Craiova. He has studied philosophy at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj and has a PhD in philosophy from the Charles de Gaulle Lille 3 University (2004–2009) and now at the University of the West from Timișoara. His research domains are aesthetics, art theory and contemporary French philosophy. He has taken part in numerous conferences and debates: 2007 *Actualités du concept d'espace Géographie, Philosophie, Art*, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Lyon, 2006 *L'Europe à venir: Secularisation, Justice, Démocratie*, UBB Cluj. 2005 *Langues et langage*, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris. In 2009 became a founder of the Centre for Contemporary Culture Club Electro Putere. He curated *Fetish Factory*, Club Electro Putere Craiova (2010), *Romanian Cultural Resolution*, Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig (2010)

ALEXANDRU NICULESCU (1979) lives and works in Craiova. He graduated from the University of Arts in Bucharest and has won the research grants "Vasile Pârvan" at Accademia di Romania in Rome (2006–2008) and "Theodor Aman" at the Academy of Visual Art in Leipzig (2008–2010). In 2007 achieved public attention with the exhibition "Times New Român", a project which aims to question different practices of social territorialization in the extended European space, characterised by the representation of Romanian experience. Together with Adrian Bojenoiu he founded the Center for Contemporary Culture Club Electro Putere in 2009 and is editor of the Romanian Cultural Resolution catalogue published by Hatje Cantz.

Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary sets out to transfer the activity of the Centre for Contemporary Culture Club Electro Putere from Craiova, at the Venice Biennale. The intention is to situate the activity of an independent Romanian art center within the international art context. The project sets up a documentation and research platform for contemporary Romanian art.

Launching the project *Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary* represents the latest in a series of initiatives intended to respond to the ever-increasing interest in the art of Eastern Europe, and of Romania specifically. It was immediately after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 that a new cultural language emerged in Eastern Europe, one projected against a background involving history and identity – with the latter sometimes displaying nationalist features – and yet independent in its formal aspects from Western cultural discourse. *Romanian Cultural Resolution* displays the solutions and tendencies elaborated by Romanian visual art in recent decades.

The Romanian Cultural Resolution project speaks not only of a renaissance in contemporary artistic discourse but also engages with a set of problems that illustrate the precariousness of the artist's situation in his or her local context (as well as a glancing at the effects of the global setting, for example mercantilism and performativity). The project began as an initiative to establish a comprehensive overview of the various positions and interpretations that have defined the context for art in Romania during the past twenty years. One of the first outcomes of this project was the opening of Club Electro Putere, founded by Adrian Bojenoiu and Alexandru Niculescu, and meant to function as a Centre for Contemporary Culture in Craiova.

The history of Club Electro Putere begins in the seventies: it was founded to organize cultural activities for the employees of the "Electroputere" plant, which produced electric motors for locomotives and industry. At the same time, it functioned until 1989 as a center of control and propaganda for the Communist Party. After the fall of Communism, the cultural activities carried on there declined dramatically, and ceased in 1995. That year marked the beginning of a period when the public taste for new media and forms of entertainment coming from the West became even more apparent, and gradually led to the disappearance of a cultural context hitherto identified with the working class. Between 1995 and 2000 the space was used variously as a pub, a night club, and a fitness and health club, until it finally closed. In 2009 it resumed the title of Centre for Contemporary Culture, and the Romanian Cultural Resolution Project was launched.

This project gathers together Romanian artists of different generations, chosen on subjective grounds, with no pretense to an exhaustive choice, but with the intention of establishing a vision that can represent a past marked by the communist period, as well as by the new circumstances that have developed since 2000. The project is structured according to four curatorial themes – described by Adrian Bojenoiu, Mihnea Mircan, Mihai Pop and Magda Radu – that made up the Romanian Cultural Resolution exhibition organized by Club Electro Putere and the Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin, which opened on 1 May 2010 at the Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig, and on 18 June 2010 at the Club Electro Putere, Craiova.

The term "postcommunism" has left a significant imprint upon Romanian cultural discourse over the last two decades. It represents both an archive essential for documentation of the past, and an institution of collective memory, permanently required to negotiate among the truths of the past. This term has equally metamorphosed into an apparatus directly connected to the project of emancipation, of "following European standards," which is also known as "the transition to democracy," a project which seemingly requires twenty years to learn. Occurring at the completion of those twenty years spent acquiring the basics of democracy, the project entitled Romanian Cultural Resolution sets out to interrogate, through art, this cultural time and space.

The term “cultural resolution” describes an analysis of, or a report upon, a cultural event that has been completed. It refers also to an overview that makes possible a debate that occurs at the very moment of its resolution. The concept of “cultural resolution” does not rely upon any critical or avant-garde elements, nor does it aim to overcome any sort of crisis. Rather, it defines a state of being that attempts an introspective reading of contemporary art and culture, a disarticulation from cultural forms based on memory, and an attempt to represent the ways in which contemporary art has interpreted Romania's recent history.

The project *Romanian Cultural Resolution- documentary* recommends itself as a platform for documentation, information and communication about the artistic context of the past twenty years. It comprised the following steps:

Launch of the “Romanian Cultural Resolution” catalogue, by the German publishing house Hatje Cantz.

Presentation of the film *Portrait with hands* – documentary film by Alexandru Niculescu and Adrian Bojenoiu, based on interviews with artists, art critics and curators involved in the local and international artistic context.

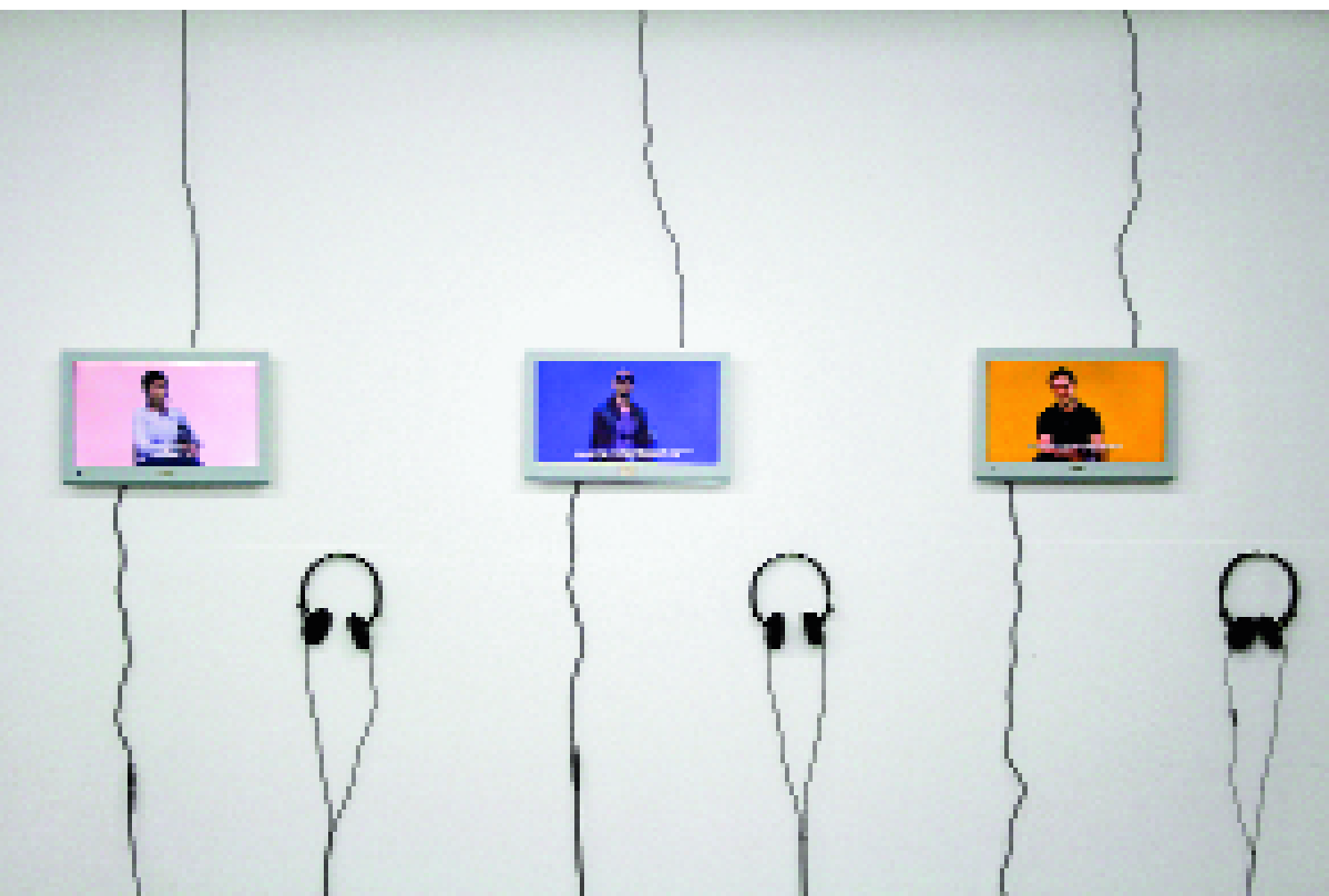
Presentation of a selection of Romanian art books, representing artistic activity during the past two decades.

Opening on September 1st of “The Last Analog Revolution, a Memory Box”. This was a project initiated by: Ștefan Constantinescu and Xandra Popescu – Romania, Deimantas Narkevičius – Lithuania, Péter Forgács – Hungary, Zuzanna Janin – Poland, Via Lewandowski – Germany, Liliana Moro – Italy, Karen Mirza and Brad Butler – United Kingdom, Yvez Netzamer – Switzerland.

The Memory Box takes personal experience as a starting point and will have the form of a collective diary of the period 1946–1989. Eastern and Western artists were invited to contribute to a collective work, inspired by the interpretation of historical events that have affected their own lives. In the light of recent efforts by curators and the academic world to reinvestigate the representations of former Eastern Europe, the Memory Box will play its part in this moment of historical inquiry.

RCR – documentary, exhibition view,
New Gallery of the Romanian Institute
for Culture and Humanistic Research,
design Timo Grimberg





RCR – documentary, exhibition view,
New Gallery of the Romanian Institute
for Culture and Humanistic Research,
design Timo Grimberg





RCR – documentary, exhibition view,
New Gallery of the Romanian Institute
for Culture and Humanistic Research,
design Timo Grimberg

Installation 2008

Installation room
Circulation national d'art et de
peinture de l'île de Mayotte, France
curatorship artist + Centre international d'art
et de paysage de l'île de Mayotte, France
→ 102

Competition with a Plaque d'Or 70th
Art des Biens en santé, France
oil, pencil, prose, score, objects
27 x 39 cm Installation room, installation
"Intended all colors"
Collection 2007, Museum
→ 103

Art Museum 2009

Graphic on canvas 100 x 100 cm
Editions Museum Collection,
Lyon, France
→ 104



Book 2004
acrylic on canvas, oil + ink oil
curatorship artist +
Editions l'Arche-Museum, fr
→ 105

Book 2005
acrylic on canvas, oil + ink oil
curatorship artist
→ 106

Monument L'architecture 2005
acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm
curatorship artist

Art Museum 2005
oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm
curatorship l'Arche-Museum, Lyon
→ 107

Here and Then

Alexandra Calvo + Stefan Lavi
Jon Langemann, Johan Mørup
Aurelie Mihai Ciprian Mureşan
Miklos, Christoph

curated by Margit Munk

book

Monika Bay
Artists all
Monika
in 2005



in collaboration with
Kunsthaus-Regensburg
and film festival
80 artists
curatorship artist +
Kunsthaus Regensburg
→ 108



→ 109 and 110 in next page

Jon Langemann 2009

Acrylic on canvas, ink
dipped paint, 100 x 100 cm
Curatorship artist
→ 110 111



City in Fiction 2001-2007
y series photographs, all mounted
vertical
curatorship artist
→ 112

City in Museum 2001-2007
a black and white photographs,
dimension variable
curatorship artist
→ 113

City of Museum
all colors
curatorship artist
→ 114-115



Curatorship
with German
Museum
curatorship artist
→ 116-117

Ciprian Mureşan
United States
in collaboration
with
curatorship artist
→ 118-119



curatorship
with German
y series and in
y series photos
curatorship artist
→ 120-121

Fetish Factory, exhibition view, Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig 2010, photo: Uwe Walter



The Romanian Cultural Resolution Project

Fetish Factory

Artists: Pavel Brăila, Ștefan Constantinescu, Daniel Knorr,
Alexandru Niculescu, Dan Perjovschi, Alexandru Solomon
Curator: Adrian Bojenoiu



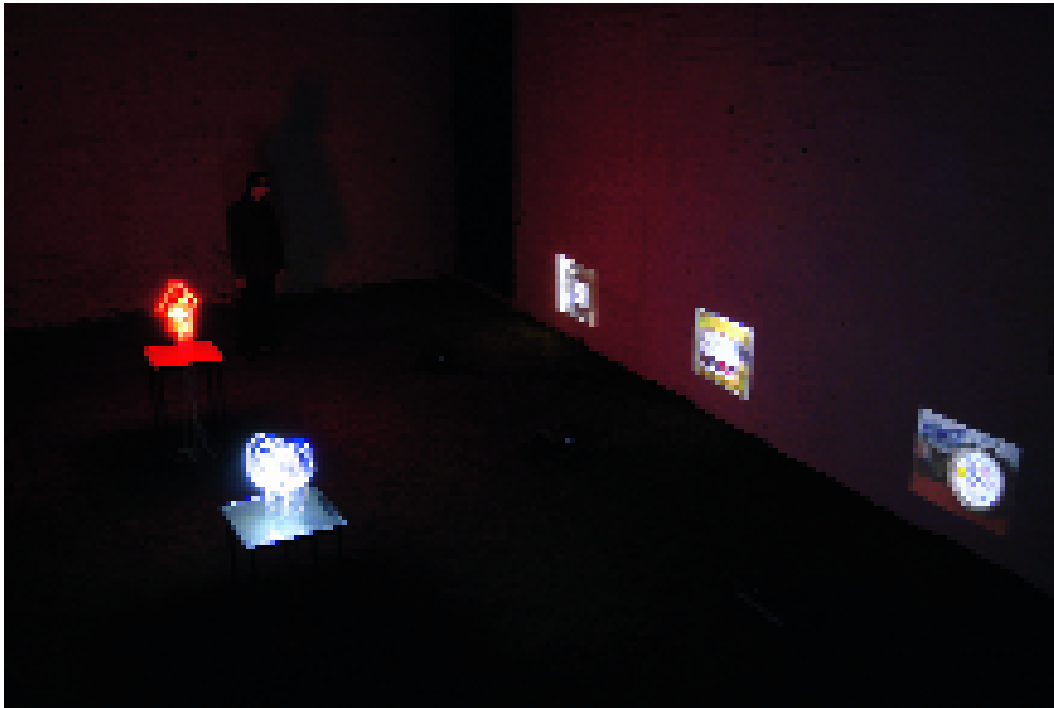
The project proposes a partial simulation of the cultural field of recent Romanian history. The title *Fetish Factory* is the expository name of this cultural field, allusively referencing the producing mechanisms of the post-communist allocation, and implicitly involving contemporary culture. With the fall of the Iron Curtain post-communism opens a cultural space of identification and rediscovery of the “democratic” subject divided by communism. Thus the cultural speech of recent history builds up its identity, and generates the cultural product at the limit point between denying past and the projecting a democratic future (which accepts the new order of the capitalist market), and generates a speech whose cultural product functions as a fetish. The traumatic past, lived throughout communism and transformed into speech, becomes a cultural product with a shaping effect, made up of an ambivalence based upon acknowledgement and repudiation.

The project brings together the work of six artists who together create a varied and reflexive commentary concerning culture — an external perspective upon recent cultural contradictions and the solutions found to resolve them. Encompassing the various nuances of the social and cultural history invoked by these works, and going beyond their immediate political reference, the project emphasizes the works' performative nature, the manner in which they succeed in building their own identity, one that is permanently connected to the social, political, economic and cultural conditions of the particular environment they come from.



Fetish Factory, exhibition view, Club Electro Putere Craiova 2010





Pavel Bräila

Source, 2009, natural soil, neon lights and video projection, courtesy: Jan Dhaese Gallery, Ghent, installation view Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig



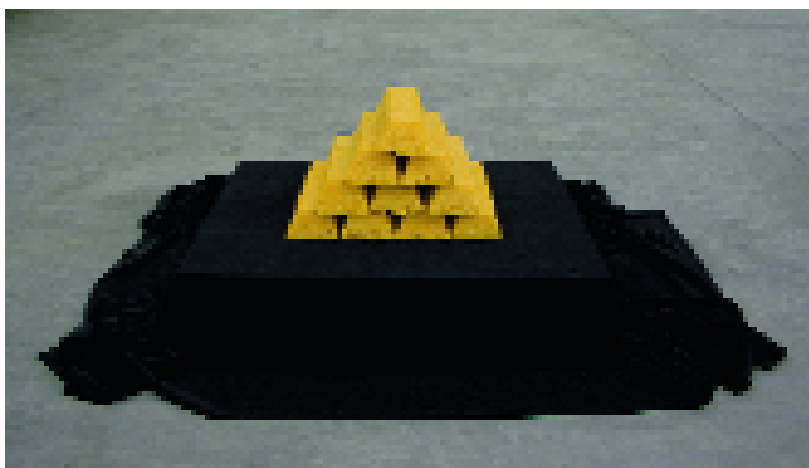
Dan Perjovschi

Less Chalk More Content, Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig 2010, photo: Uwe Walter



Alexandru Niculescu

One Hundred Years of Solitude 2010, junk mail, painting, oil on canvas, 150 × 200 cm, Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig 2010, photo: Nils Mollenhauer



Alexandru Niculescu
Temporary Myths, 2010, polenta bars, courtesy: the artist

Pavel Brăila
Soap for Europe, 2008, installation view Club Electro Putere Craiova 2010



An Image instead of a Title

Artists: Mircea Cantor, Anca Munteanu Rimnic, Ciprian Mureșan, Ioana Nemeș,
Miklos Onucsán, Cristian Rusu, Serge Spitzer

Curator: Mihnea Mircan

The “Gospel of St. John” is transcribed on copy-sheets, seemingly in preparation for a most difficult exam (Ciprian Mureșan); the Venetian street sign “Calle della morte” is zoomed in on and filmed until the cameraman’s hands start shaking and the shot loses focus (Cristian Rusu); in a variation on the Vanitas, the history of rust is methodically told “from its origins to the present” as a thin layer of decrepitude, in the absence of the rusting object (Miklos Onucsán); the colors of the Romanian flag, of the country just abandoned and the ideological brutality which led to the artist’s exile, become visual obstacles, and “materialize” the interdiction upon looking and speaking (Serge Spitzer). Alongside the fragments of cultural or social history they invoke or circulate, these and other works in the exhibition “An Image instead of a Title” have a complicated, obstinate relationship to the notions of the archive habitually employed by art history. The show seeks to articulate a mode of the archival where images, rather than the textual props that would anchor them to cultural or political narratives, constitute their own index. Between a model of homogenous correspondences of identities to objects and worlds, where each unit



Ioana Nemeș

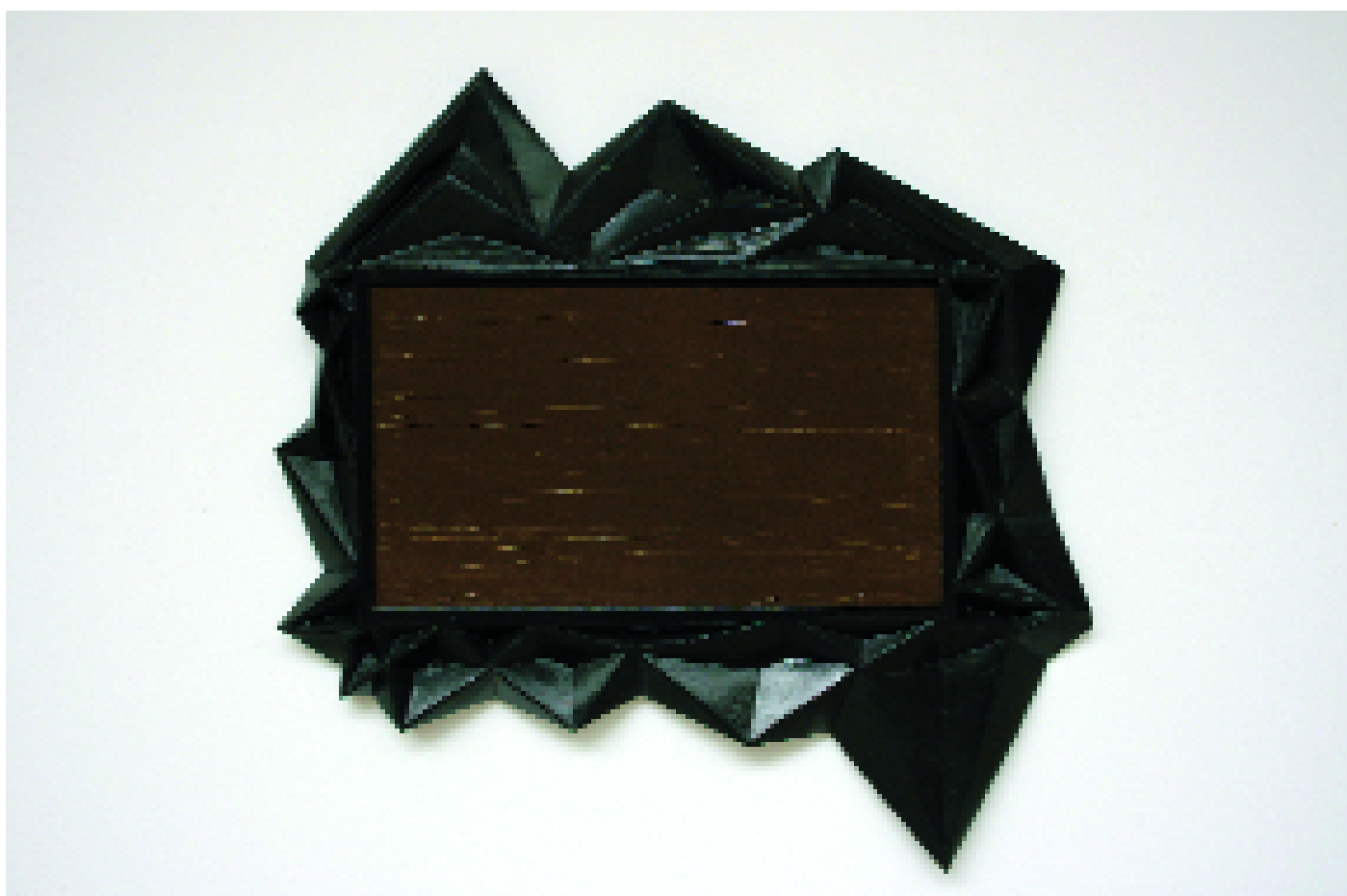
Ponytail, 2009, object, courtesy Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Ciprian Mureșan

The Gospel of St John, 2007, copy-sheets, courtesy the artist, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage

gestures towards the whole and interlocks with all others, and the converse – one typified by the Library of Alexandria and by much recent art – where conservation coincides with destruction, the works gathered here operate in, and delimit, a territory of oblique gazes, undone connections and archival numbness, broken indexes and selves.



Ioana Nemeș

Carpathian Mountains, 2009, acrylic and oil on canvas, wood frame, 115 × 114 cm, courtesy Jiri Svestka Gallery, Prague, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Cristian Rusu

Calle della Morte, 2007, video, installation view Werkschau Spinnerei Leipzig 2010, photo: Nils Mollenhauer

Serge Spitzer

The horizon as a limit of activity and interest, 1972, 4 photographs, silver gelatine prints, courtesy: the artist + Magazzino d'Arte Moderna, Roma





Mircea Cantor

The Leash of the Dog that Was Longer than His Life, HD video, 2009, installation view at Club Electro Putere, Craiova 2010

Miklos Onucsan

The Grateful Posterity, 1998, photographed action, courtesy the artist + Plan B Cluj/Berlin



Anca Munteanu Rimnic

Untitled, courtesy PSM Gallery, Berlin, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Figurative Painting in Romania, 1970–2010

Artists: Ioana Bătrânu, Corneliu Brudașcu, Sorin Câmpan, Constantin Flondor, Adrian Ghenie, Gheorghe Ilea, Victor Man, Gili Mocanu, Șerban Savu

Curator: Mihai Pop

The exhibition presents an overview of figurative painting in Romania over the past 40 years. It features artists with a particular commitment to the medium: works by Ioana Bătrânu, Corneliu Brudașcu, Sorin Câmpan, Constantin Flondor or Gheorghe Ilea maintain a pictorial intensity that contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the period before 1989. They make visible a double removal: created at a distance from the official painting of those times, they also do not partake in the mimetism of new models in international painting after 1989. In most cases, essential works by these artists have never left the studio, and have remained culturally and commercially undervalued. This exhibition proposes them as landmarks for an as yet unwritten history of the Romanian art scene.



Gheorghe Ilea

The Story of Little Things, 1991, mixed technique on canvas, 165 × 115 cm, private collection, Vienna, photo: Szabolcs Feleki



Adrian Ghenie
Pie Fight Study 4, 2008, oil on canvas, 70 × 60 cm, Rodica Seward Collection, Paris, photo: Adrian Ghenie

The end of the '90s saw the emergence of artists such as Adrian Ghenie, Victor Man, Gili Mocanu and Șerban Savu, who recharted the "neofigurative" both across art history and in relation to the data and values of the space they live and work in; their work is often concerned with social and cultural transition, homing in on the ambiguities of recent history – as in the case of Victor Man, and his overriding preoccupation with "The place I'm coming from", in all its polysemy.



Ioana Bătrănu
Melancholic Interior (Latrines), 1998, oil on canvas, 215 × 433 cm, MNAC (The National Museum of Contemporary Art) Collection, Bucharest, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Corneliu Brudașcu

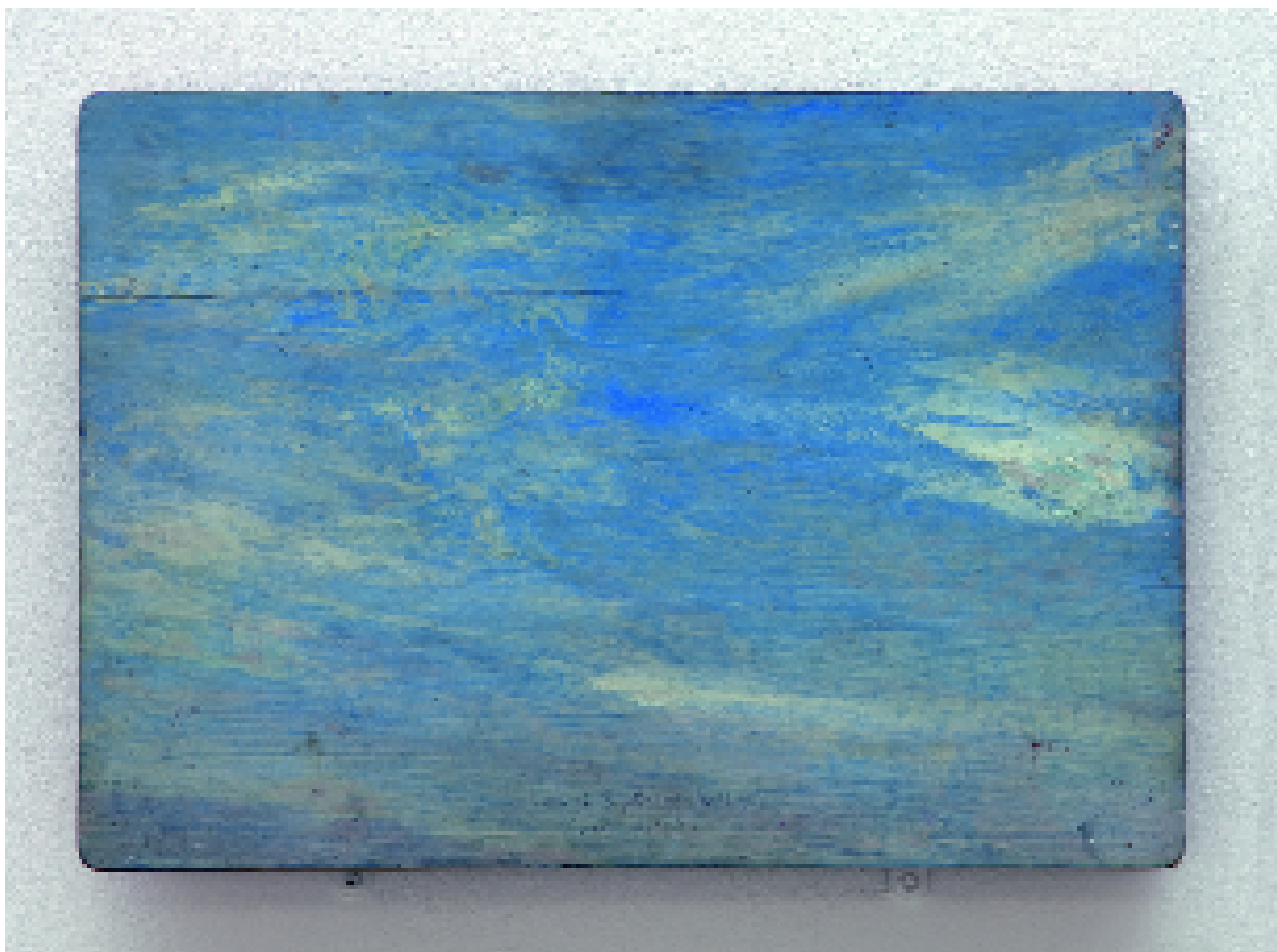
Composition, 1972, oil on canvas, 161 × 180 cm, courtesy the artist
and Plan B Cluj/Berlin, photo: Szabolcs Feleki





Șerban Savu

Procession, 2011, oil on canvas, 35 x 50 cm, courtesy: Plan B Cluj/Berlin, photo: Șerban Savu



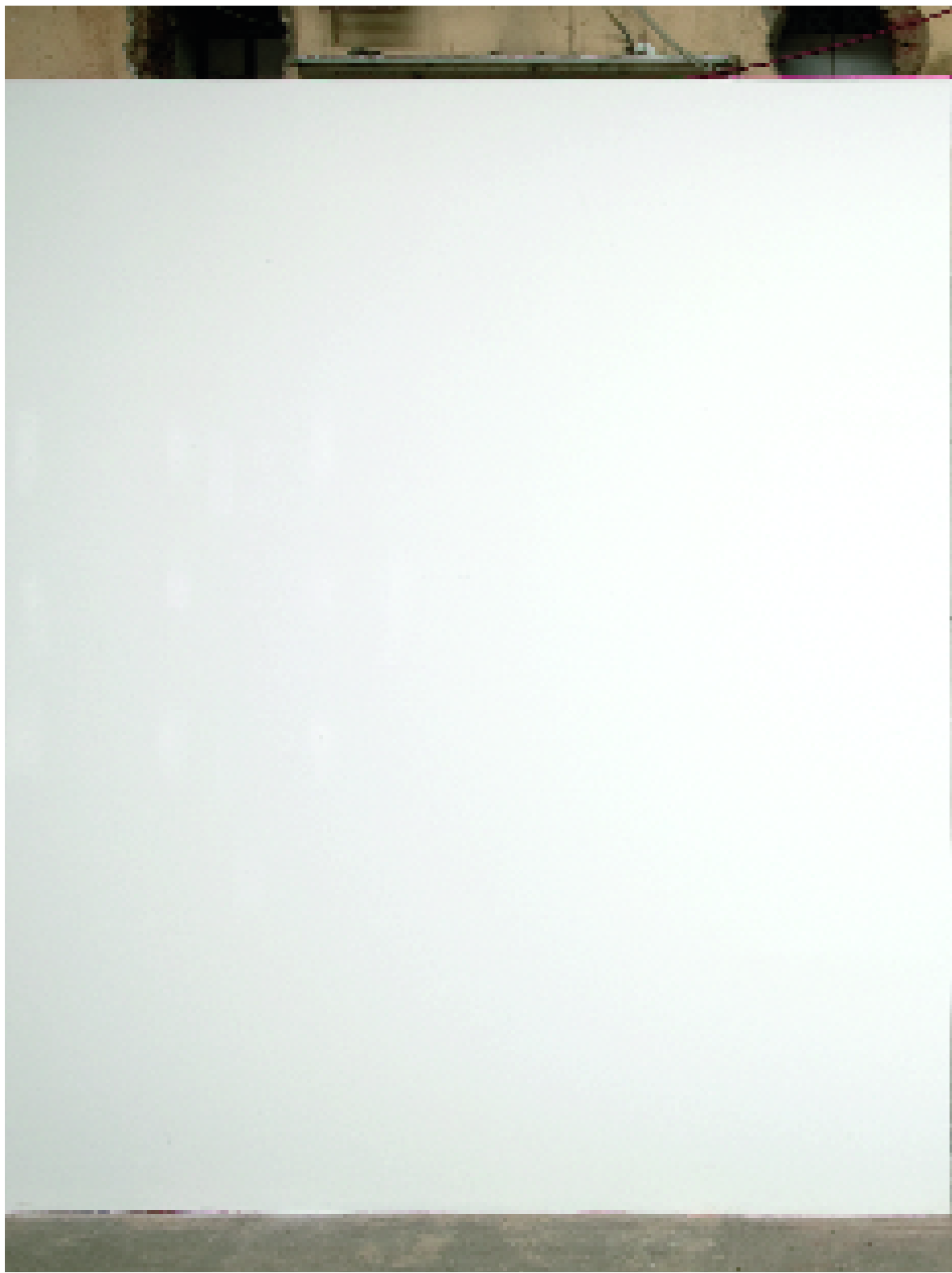
Constantin Flondor

Sky – September, 1986, oil on wood panel, 26 × 36.5 cm, courtesy: the artist, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage

Here and Then

Artists: Alexandra Croitoru & Ștefan Tiron in collaboration with Vasile Pop-Negreșteanu, Ion Grigorescu with Matei Lăzărescu, Adrian Ghenie, Julian Mereuță, Aurelia Mihai, Ciprian Mureșan & Adrian Ghenie, Miklos Onucsan
Curator: Magda Radu

Here and Then is a transgenerational exhibition that explores the topic of “the artist at work”, bringing forward such issues as the relation of past and present, the question of national identity and the entanglement between artistic agency and political context. Most of the works featured in this selection assume an autobiographical stance, and they reveal – through self-representation and performativity – the condition of the artist in a problematic environment. The never-before-seen photographs made by Julian Mereuță in 1970 are emblematic of the marginality of certain artistic practices during communism, and the consequent impossibility of working within a restrictive system. By contrast, Ciprian Mureșan brings into the discussion another facet of artistic production, namely the proliferation of official art that inflated Ceaușescu's personality cult. Croitoru and Tiron's project – *A Fresco for Romania* – investigates the possibility of representing the troubled history of Romania's recent past by modulating the subject matter through the working methods of an artist who used to receive public commissions before 1989. Showing continuity with earlier preoccupations, a recent series of photographs by Ion Grigorescu depict the artist



3. Julian Mereuță

Captured, 1970, 8 hour performance, Bucharest, photographs, dimensions variable, courtesy: the artist, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



involved in everyday activities, which are invested by him with a ritualistic dimension. Miklos Onucsan's discrete performances turned into self-portraits are charged with a political undertone, providing a subtle commentary on the artist's place in society "along the way".



Ion Grigorescu with Matei Lăzărescu, installation view

Ion Grigorescu

Artist at work, 2010, 5 digital prints, 100 × 75 cm, courtesy: the artist

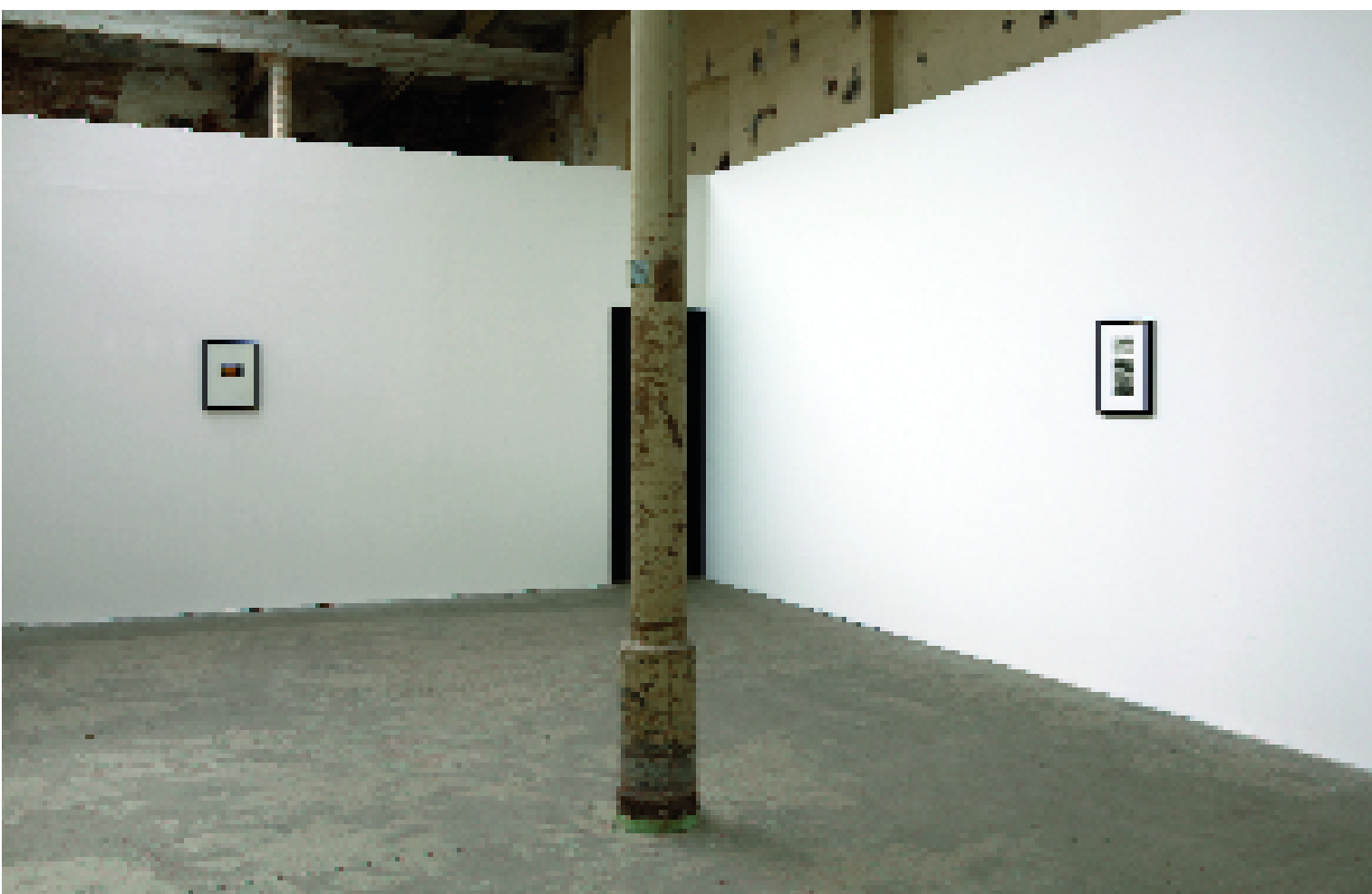
Matei Lăzărescu

Piața Unirii, 1970, oil on canvas, courtesy: the artist, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Ion Grigorescu

Artist at work, 2010, digital print,
100 × 75 cm, courtesy: the artist



Miklos Onucsan, installation view

Miklos Onucsan

Self Portrait Along the Way 1982–1992, 3 black and white photographs, 9 × 11.5 cm, 1 color photograph, 9 × 12.5 cm, courtesy: the artist + Plan B Cluj/Berlin,
photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Alexandra Croitoru & Ștefan Tiron in collaboration with Vasile Pop-Negreșteanu

A Fresco for Romania, 2010, acrylic on canvas, 90 × 950 cm, courtesy: the artists + Plan B Cluj/Berlin, photo: Cathleen Schuster and Marcel Dickhage



Aurelia Mihai

City of Bucur, 2009–2010, HD color video, stereo, 21 min. 48 sec., courtesy: the artist

Between Post-Communism and Postmodernism: On the Aesthetics of Post-History in Romanian Art after 1989

Cristian Nae

Post-Communism, Off-Modernism and the Rhetoric of Post-History

The expression “aesthetics of post-history”, originally used by Irit Rogoff to refer to the discourse of historical remembrance and reconciliation in postwar German art, could also suggest vague similarities to the post-communist situation, encompassing the artists “living and working” in Eastern Europe after 1989. After all, the atrocities of the two totalitarian ideologies were seldom compared, while the description of communism and post-communism in (post)traumatic terms has often been suggested. But in Irit Rogoff’s particular use of the term, the “post-historical” attribute does not define a permanent condition, but a moment of interruption, and a reconsideration of the course of history. It refers to the shifting points and crossroads of history when “a rapid succession of events serves to undo totalizing historic-political movements and identities”.¹ Thus, the essential aspect of Rogoff’s particular use of the “post-historical” terminology lies in the tension it inscribes between the rapidly shifting historical events and the cohesive narratives which tend to encompass them in terms of new totalizing pictures. Therefore, the post-historical condition of post-communism is essentially a situation of crisis (in the etymological sense of the term, referring to the act of judging) in the historical articulation of particular geo-political identities. Accordingly, we may also be tempted to rethink the image of the post-communist condition as a distinct version of post-modernity, in which an unrealized project of modernity (communism) is thrown off the historical track, leaving room for “a clash of eccentric modernities, that are out of sync and out of phase with each other both temporally and spatially”.² The expression may thus relate to an “off-modern” condition, regarded as “a detour into the unexplored potential of the modern project”.³ Nevertheless, post-historical times are also occasions when the invocation of a spectacular history may as well “serve as a device for establishing cohesion, a myth of nation and a unifying narrative in terms of which everything is interpreted”.⁴ Therefore, instead of becoming the turning point in a demystifying critical cultural operation, making room for a critical, progressive order, a post-historical narrative of identity formation may also serve as a new ideological tool, proposing a totalizing and cohesive, but at the same time reductive and essentializing framework of historical interpretation.

This seems to have become the case with the “post-communist condition” understood as a interpretive framework in the “global” cultural field today, more than twenty years after the fall of the Berlin wall. Such a framework is able to encompass today any socio-political, economic or cultural phenomena occurring in the former Eastern European region in terms of an undifferentiated “communist past”. It also tends to reduce the communist memory to cultural phenomenon. The inherent process of reification of the communist memory inscribed in the post-communist discourse of identity formation is described by Boris Buden when he proposes that post-communism may also be understood as a reified culture of remembrance: “if there is something like post-communism, then our experience of it is based on the articulation of the experience (the post-communist discourse) which is structured according to the logic of the museum. And it basically means that the entire space of the historical, political, moral and theoretical experience is exclusively a cultural space”.⁵ According to Buden, this cultural space is formed first and foremost in the space of memory as a discursive space. “In fact, post-communism itself is a utopia, that of a cultural memory, in which a culture has become a place for forgetting.”⁶ The final outcome of this discourse of remembrance would be that “a universal emancipator project like communism is translated into a particulate cultural identity”.⁷

Depoliticizing Art and the New Exhibitionary Order

Now, the essential element of this particulate cultural identity in the present-day capitalist system of cultural production and reception, in which the act of reception itself has become a specific mode of production – of affects, subjectivities, desires and identities – is its essentially marketable character. Inserted in the artistic field, this reductionist interpretive operation of cultural identification by recourse to an undifferentiated communist history is also capable of proposing a seemingly homogeneous artistic identity for the art produced in the for-

1. Irit Rogoff, “The Aesthetics of Post-History. A German Perspective”, in *Vision and Textuality*, ed. by Stephen Melville and Bill Readings, Duke University Press, Durham, 1995, p. 116.

2. Svetlana Boym, “Off-Modern”, in *The Atlas of Transformation*, ed. by Zbynek Baladran and Vit Havranek, JRP/ Ringier, Zurich, 2010, p. 408.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 409.

4. Irit Rogoff, art. cit., p. 116.

5. Boris Buden, “In Communism’s Shoes. On the Critique of Post-Communist Discourse”, in Adrian T. Sărbu and Alexandru Polgár, eds., *Genealogies of Postcommunism*, Idea Design and Print, Cluj, 2009, pp. 72–73.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

mer Eastern Europe after 1989. In this sense, I claim that the post-historic elements of the post-communist condition as a discourse of remembrance may also be used as a particular aesthetics, in order to turn the art produced in the region after 1989 into a profitable aesthetic phenomenon on the global cultural and art market. For, once absorbed into culture, the post-communist discourse can be easily commodified.

In order to explain some of the mechanisms contributing to the eventual aestheticization of the post-communist discourse in Eastern European art after 1989, I propose to take a hasty look at the institutional apparatus that conditioned and influenced its interpretation, distribution and reception, defining the very regime of its visibility. To use Tony Bennett's terminology, I claim that, towards the end of the nineties, we assist at the articulation of a new "exhibitionary complex" in post-1989 Eastern European art. The term "exhibitionary complex" is used by Bennett to describe the institutional *dispositive* of a new visual regime that occurred in modernity, especially in the nineteenth century, parallel to the imposition of the new carceral order, satisfying the constant need for a spectacular dramatization of power in public space.

Bennett's description of the exhibitionary complex echoes much of the situation described as existing before 1989 in terms of a harsh isolation, in which unofficial art produced during communism was more or less unknown in the West, relegated to a "private", and limited, circle of the artworld: "the institutions comprising the exhibitionary complex [...] were involved in the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into progressively more open and public arenas, where, through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the message of power (but of a different type) to society".⁸

The gradual instauration of such a new, globalized "exhibitionary complex" for former Eastern European art after 1989 by means of big thematic exhibitions, museum exhibitions, art collections and art biennials may thus be considered as promoting former Eastern European artists (and mainly the communist dissidents) as new exotic objects for the western gaze, ensuring the reproduction of the dominant neo-liberal ideology in the guise of an emancipating post-colonial discourse of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, instead of positing a simple, unidirectional relation of power between the central West and the peripheral East, it would rather be more appropriate to define the relationship between the artists and the institutional discursive apparatuses after 1989 as intended to organize "a voluntarily self-regulating citizenry".⁹ Therefore, it would be more appropriate to state that the wider institutional apparatus actually worked to recreate the legitimate desire of Eastern European artists to belong to the "global" canon, described as an overcoming of their peripheral or marginal condition and former cultural confinement, in brief, to become "visible". Thus, the institutional apparatus performs an integrationist function for Eastern European artists in the capitalist circulation of art commodities, gaining their complicity and adhesion. By acquiring international visibility, artists complied with the rules of the game, which are today nothing else but the rules of the market. Their works were presented into a completely new spectacular regime, in which geo-political content acquires cash value.

The insertion of Eastern European art in the new exhibitionary order after 1989 (which unsurprisingly coincides with the global spectacular politics of biennialisation started in the nineties) integrates the various critical discourses articulated in the artworks into the larger neo-liberal economic order by means of a threefold operation. It does so, first of all, by proposing a generic and undifferentiated post-communist identity for a body of different and particular artworks in their style and content. Thus, it ultimately promotes a particular post-historical *aesthetics*, a stylistic configuration of artworks concerned with the remains and the transformations of the communist past, by cutting off their critical discourse from immediate political effects in their own context of production, presenting them as mere cultural representations. Secondly, the discourse of recollection functions by the constant repetition of the former communist identity into the new cultural order. Thus, communism is not denied or forgotten, but is culturally absorbed and expropriated of its former meanings.

The most important result of the new context for the reception and production of "post-communist" art is that it also dissolves any historical efficacy of the past upon the present while history is reduced to a retrospective representation of the past from an allegedly stable (and static) present-day perspective – which is nothing else but the expansive projection of capitalism into an eternal stasis. Thus, the neoliberal present is presented *sub specie aeternitatis*, advocating the understanding of the "post-historical" condition – in Fukuyama's terms – of a *real* closure of history, due to the loss of its inner dialectical drive after the fall of the Soviet bloc.¹⁰

8. Tony Bennett, "The Exhibitionary Complex", in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, ed. by Reesa Greenberg, Sandy Nairne and Bruce Ferguson, Routledge, New York, 1996, p. 59.

9. *Ibidem*.

10. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 2006.

The Rhetoric of Trauma and the Performative Accounts of History

Let me exemplify the above-mentioned thesis by briefly analyzing the transformations of the discourse of remembrance in Romanian art after 1989.

Although the rise of performance art as a post-traumatic therapeutic expression on the Romanian public scene in the nineties may seem to appear as another mythical version of Eastern European political engagement, it is undeniable that performance art only addressed small, local or at best regional artistic communities at that time. The existential condition and the direct addressability of performance in the public sphere also explain its success to the large, uncultivated public, resonating with the living experiences of performers and their shared collective memory. The therapeutic function of performance art may partially explain its institutionalized revival as a leading genre in the nineties. Most of the actions performed in the Romanian art of the nineties revolved around lack of communication, historical isolation and material hardship – in a word, precariousness. A concrete example may better clarify this claim. When Teodor Graur performs *Speaking to Europe from Europe* during the Zona Performance festival in Timisoara in 1994, he reconstructs a personal situation in the public sphere, a simple scenography which metonymically enacts, first of all, the isolation of the Eastern European artist behind the Iron Curtain. At the same time, his repeatedly failed attempts to communicate with an imaginary West are painfully proved to remain a mere phantasm, connected to an imaginary Other. His action also expresses the isolation and existential disorientation experienced by Romanians after 1989. But from our perspective, it is also noteworthy that his gesture therapeutically exorcizes the traumatic lack of communication with the West inherited from the Romanian communist past, a void that created a collective phantasmatic space for the presence of an absent Other.

In this context, it may be noted that not only communism, but post-communism itself becomes a traumatic experience when former phantasms of liberation by occidentalization and integration to Europe are being progressively shattered and cynically revealed as nothing but the mere fantasies of a naïve utopian dream after the progressive neo-liberal re-colonization of public sphere. Perhaps the iconic representation of the double traumatic nature of post-communist experience caused *both* by communism's failure as an emancipator ideology and by the dissolution of collective dreams of post-communist emancipation shattered after the nineties remains Ciprian Mureșan's *Leap into the Void – after 3 seconds* (2004). The well-known restaged photograph, showing an indistinct man (the artist, but also the ordinary citizen or the allegory of history itself) lying on the ground on a narrow street in Cluj-Napoca in a setting vaguely reminiscent of Yves Klein's original one, elaborates an ironical and fatalist recontextualization of Klein's early performative gesture, full of (then) modern optimistic aspirations. Although the work presents itself as an allegoric staging of a longer historical process, it locates in an indexical manner both the failure of communism and the shattering of neo-liberal promises in a geo-historical "void" which can be itself another name for the post-communist condition.

Beginning with the 2000s, while the institutional context of artistic reception started to articulate more consistently, the image of post-communist Romanian society as an essentially derelict, interstitial space of communist ruins and chaotic and never-accomplished reconstructions compellingly occurs in works of various important artists, transforming reflective nostalgia¹¹ into a particular method of artistic research which investigates details and articulations of past and present and displays a post-historical temporality as a prevalent artistic motive. For instance, unfinished and chaotic reconstructions occurred in the urban tissue are recorded by Dan Acostioaei's *Reconstructions* (2005), the interstitial temporality to be found in Șerban Savu's post-industrial landscapes from *The Edge of the Empire* (2009), painted in a socialist realist style which serves to blur the temporal relationship between the present and the past, or Nicu Ilfoveanu's post-industrial landscape photography from the *Steampunk autochrone* project (2007).

The urgency of a proper recollection of the past and of the collective disclosure of communist traumas concealed under the denial mechanisms of repressive and massive urban privatizations and chaotic reconstructions also engendered particular strategies of remembrance of the communist past. An exemplary strategy of investigation, directed against the monumentalization of the past in the guise of reified symbolic representations, is developed through the consistent body of works produced since 2005 by Mona Vătămanu and Florin Tudor. The inner tension contained in their works, often concerned with intricate and superposed layers according to which history is simultaneously narrated, performed, mystified and erased, usually stems from the minimal means they use in order to materialize invisible historical processes. The two often approach post-communism as a process of the gradual erasure of the memory of communism in its complete atroci-

11. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books, New York, 2001, pp. 49–56.

ty, focusing on the architectural traces and the material remains of its unrealized utopias, and disclosing the forgotten memory of the city concealed behind layers of successive buildings and architectural styles. Their performative practices actually render visible the elementary operations of power in history by revealing its force towards material erasure and historical oblivion. For instance, they symbolically reconstruct the lost body¹² of Văcărești Monastery, whose discrete, quasi-ghostly physical contours that Florin Tudor (*Văcărești*, 2006) attempted to draw *in situ*. The former location of the monastery is testimony to several erasures: demolished during communism (and erased again after 1989), the site has been left derelict for years because imagined as the site for the construction of a mall. Thus, by drawing the contours of the former building in the now derelict space, Florin Tudor materializes the burial place of different bodies whose mourning was never properly accomplished. The same process of recollection is symbolically performed in *Dust* (2006), an action in which Florin Tudor is marking the former site of Schitu Maicilor church with dust brought from the actual site of the church, making visible the repressed trauma of its dislocation.

Allegorical Impulses: Countermemory and Communism's Free-Floating Signifiers

The above-mentioned examples suggest that the performative (re)enactment of history may provide an efficient critical tool operating against historical reification and the discursive concealment of communist memory behind its traces and signs. For the essential operation of the dominant power regime is to conceal or to erase the memory the past, as Vatamanu and Tudor's works compellingly show. But, unlike reflexive nostalgia, promoting a postmodern sense of post-historicity as an "off-modern" inquiry into the living past, the operation of the erasure of may also take place at the level of public discourse, not by plain concealment, but in a subtler way, by absorbing communism into a mere postmodern representation, while pretending to preserve its memory through visual signs and icons evacuated of any actual power of recollection and eventually transformed into mere cultural commodities.

Since linguistic repetition becomes a key procedure in the production of post-communist identity as the cultural representation of a particular geo-political condition, it should be noted that, in post-colonial terms, post-communist identity is essentially "hybrid".¹³ In our case, this is marked by the co-existence and alteration of the former communist and recent, post-, or simply neo-capitalist identity indicators. Both its fixation and dislocation in and from collective memory is based on the constant repetition and articulation of different identity marks in different historical contexts in which they are uttered. Therefore, we may conclude that the very articulation and the preservation of historical memory is nothing but a *cultural process*, realized by a series of speech acts, whose performativity is based simultaneously on the iterability of signs and on the very transformation of their meanings in each of its new contexts of utterance and its occurrences. Consequently, no trace or historical sign may remain unaltered in its *original* significance: it is each time already altered by the present context of iteration.

What happens, then, when cultural icons and popular images, appropriated from the communist cultural imaginary, are repeated in an artistic work at a distance of at least twenty years, and in a different cultural context? And what happens when images produced more than twenty years ago are reproduced today? When a cultural mark associated with communism is inserted into a new act of enunciation in a different socio-political context at a different historical time, a mechanism of repetition with critical difference is set at the core of this linguistic process of identity formation. This produces a dislocation of fixed identities due to the inherently differential structure of the reading of the sign, given the temporal and spatial dimension of its inscriptions in writing.¹⁴

We might use the term "countermemory" to describe the politically provocative function of such ironical associations between past and present, meant to "perform memory work and socio-political critiques simultaneously",¹⁵ that is, to expose the contiguities between past and present. For instance, when cunningly used by Ciprian Mureșan in order to describe the perverse effects of consumerist ideology and educational precariousness after 1989, the images of "pioneers" fighting for "Milka" chocolate (*Milka*, 2006) or ambiguously suggesting "pioneers" drugged with "aurolac" (a cheap hallucinogen substance used by the homeless) as in *Pioneers* (2006; 2010), such icons of communism serve as powerful connotative emblems for the present-day reader. They allow him to reconstruct the historical background against which two conflicting but equally devastating ideologies may overlap. The artistic discourse is superposing two quotes, two stereotypical images, that of the homeless and of the pioneer, "mixing ideal and failure at the same time".¹⁶ The repetition of a com-

12. It would be tempting to see their actions as symbolically substituting "disappeared" architectural and social or collective bodies in acts of public grievance that remind us of the demands made in Argentina by the activist group of mothers who gather in the Plaza Mayo in Buenos Aires to demand the return of the bodies of their "disappeared" sons and daughters.

13. Homi K. Bhabha, "Culture's In-Between" in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay, Sage Publication, London, 1996, pp. 53–61.

14. Homi K. Bhabha, "Race, Time and the Revision of Modernity", in *The Atlas of Transformation*, ed. Zbynek Baladran and Vit Havranek, JRP/Ringier, Zurich, 2010, pp. 540–541.

15. Diana Georgescu, "Irony as Countermemory in Post-Socialist Romania", in *Postcommunist Nostalgia*, ed. Maria Todorova and Zsuzsa Gille, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2010.

16. "The Paradoxical Image of Ideal and of Failure. Raluca Voinea in conversation with Ciprian Mureșan", in *Ciprian Mureșan*, exh. cat., ed. by Marius Babias, Walther König, Köln, 2010, p. 143.

17. Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism. Part I", in *Beyond Recognition. Representation, Power and Culture*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994, pp. 52–54.

18. Miško Suvaković, "Art as a Political Machine: Fragments on the Late Socialist and Post-Socialist Art of Mitteleuropa and the Balkans" in *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition*, ed. Aleš Erjavec, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2003, p. 96.

19. See Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art. Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996.

munist icon in a new act of enunciation serves here as an essentially allegorical procedure, similar to the uses of allegory in western postmodern art: it proposes a double layered message and it simultaneously offers the code of its own reading.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the perverse effect of such reiteration is that, while dislocated and re-contextualized for being re-uttered in a different cultural context, the sign is simultaneously evacuated of its former meanings and the former collective and personal historical associations are removed. The present-day danger of using such post-modern critical strategies by appropriating visual quotations from the communist imaginary against the consumerist ideology is that, while they may certainly create a liberating tension between the past and the present that is able to disclose its inherent contradictions, they may nevertheless provoke a further fetishization of communist memory while re-uttered (and read) within the (global) capitalist context of artistic reception. If, during communism, post-modernist strategies acquired a subversive political function, oppositional strategies directed towards "manipulating the manipulatory procedures of the manipulators",¹⁸ after the fall of the regime they turn into instruments for the critique of neoliberal ideology which are easy to absorb into its opposite, given the position of the reader and the exhibitionary context in which such reading is performed. Instead of using the communist quotation against dominant neo-liberal ideology as a comparative framework for interpreting historical *transformations* (as is actually intended by the artist) the latter power regime may as well transform the quotation mark into another type of visual commodity, provided an essentially *static* representational regime of post-communist historicity, in which the sense of a convulsive continuity between past and present meant to be conveyed by the artist is replaced by the illusory and comforting perspective of an accomplished break with a fictionalized past, reduced to a repertory of emblematic signs.

Therefore, if we take into account the capitalist context in which the signs of communism also appear as cultural icons in artistic discourses produced after 1989, then we may concede that the repetition of communist memory as articulated in many of the artistic projects created after 1989 may serve today no longer to remember, to reconcile with the past or to commemorate it, but rather the opposite. It may actually function to tame it by the simple recontextualization of their reception within a capitalist system that mediates and presents Eastern European art as a particular style or aesthetics.

Post-Communism as Stylistic Postmodernism?

The rhetoric of historical recollection accompanied by the free use of symbols and icons of communist identity in new, post-historical discursive configurations may signal today the transformation of communism into a large cultural and visual archive. Inserted in the circuit of artistic commodities, images of communism detached of their ideological context are now functioning as cultural codes and exchange values in the global capitalist economy of representation.

Unsurprisingly, the reification of art history into a mere collection of artistic mannerisms inserted into an endless cultural circuit of recycling and remixing is what defines stylistic postmodernism according to Arthur Danto's bald thesis of "an end of art".¹⁹ A similar cultural reification of the communist memory allows today for the use of free-floating communist signifiers in order to produce historically articulate, but essentially reductionist representations of the past. It is difficult not to interpret the ironical use of such floating signifiers of the communist experience in recent contemporary Romanian visual art not only as a political critique of stable neo-capitalist redefinitions of the self in an off-modern, post-historical reevaluation of the past, but also as its very opposite, as the last stage of the absorption into a post-communist aesthetics of post-history, another version of the global postmodern style, itself absorbed into postmodernism or the cultural logic of commodity culture.

Once history itself has become a mere cultural repository of empty signifiers and artistic mannerisms to pick up and recycle at will, it also signals the separation of our present-day consciousness from any reverberation of communism except as a representation, a "cool" cultural product. It marks the fact that the lived and living history of communism has actually come to an end within the all-encompassing exhibitionary regime, while its cultural consumption can happily go on into an indefinite future.

Portrait with Hands

(Interviews)

Portrait with Hands is an ongoing video archive based on interviews with Romanian artists, curators and gallerists.

Participants:

Matei Bejenaru, Ștefan Constantinescu, Alexandra Croitoru, Adrian Ghenie, Ion Grigorescu, Eugen Rădescu & Răzvan Ion, Gili Mocanu, Ciprian Mureșan, Cristian Nae, Ioana Nemeș, Dan Perjovschi, Mihai Pop, Magda Radu, Giorgiana Zachia

Curators:

Adrian Bojenoiu, Alexandru Niculescu

Scenography:

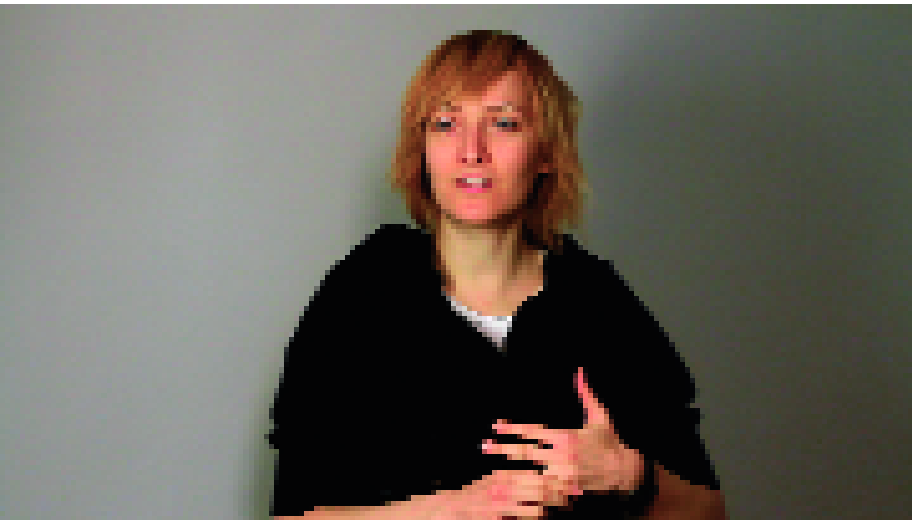
Ioana Nemeș

Partners:

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Portrait with Hands: Ioana Nemeş

Club Electro Putere: Over the last ten years Eastern European art has become much more visible begun to make powerful artistic statements. Increasing numbers of Romanian artists have achieved international recognition, and much of their work is inspired by the places in which they live, as in your case. It is well known that the cultural discourse of Eastern Europe has to be recognised in the West in order to be fully acknowledged. How important is it for you, as an artist, to be appreciated in the West?



I.N.: Romania is a peripheral country, with a small, peripheral culture. It is interesting to find that if you want to be peripheral you have to move towards the centre. Most artists have left Romania: they live in Paris, they live in London, in Berlin, because these are the places where they can still be peripheral. If you stay in Romania you are not peripheral; if you stay here, you're invisible. Nobody is interested in the fact that there are very good artists who do not reside in the centre – that is the whole point. It is so frustrating that if you come from a peripheral culture such as the Romanian one you depend on Western legitimization because you lack your own arena at home, your own cultural scene. That refers to institutions, to newspapers, magazines, to an entire range of specialist media, an educated public. It also means broadcasts, galleries; it may also mean programmes, galleries, it may even refer to art collectors – an entire uni-

verse that does not exist here. You feel like a gladiator without an arena; in order to become a gladiator you have to fight in the arena and the arenas can only be found in those cities.

I find this a very difficult and, in fact, unavoidable situation: unless you come to have your own arena and demonstrate that you are able to fight and to foster ideas at home and create a kind of cultural scene there – since this is what we're talking about, about having a space where you could actually fight, where other artists could join you and negotiate ideas or exchange points of view. But if you don't have this arena, you are not a real gladiator; you're a mere civilian. In order to counteract this state of things, you have to move to Rome, to be part of the mainstream. Unfortunately, that's it, nothing nothing can be done to change the situation. How many curators end up living in Bucharest – Bucharest is the last metro station – how many of them end up living in Romania? The more I travel and the more curators I meet abroad, the more I realise how important this live encounter with a curator really is, let alone the visits he makes to artists' studios. If you live in a city in the centre, in the mainstream, like Berlin, Paris, London, New York, you receive the visits of ten curators a month and you are aware of how important this live contact really is, because you get to see somebody's universe, you do not simply see his or her works in a photograph, on the internet. No, you see everything for real, you can talk to this person. How many foreign curators actually come to Romania? I can count them on my fingers and most of the time their coming is only a rumor – only idle gossip: "X has come!" and you realise what a small village Bucharest actually is. It's all about access and visibility, it's all about the fact that what you achieve should become visible, that is the first condition.

I.N.: Then we realise why Eastern European art has been successful recently – because this is the place that has undergone the greatest socio-political changes. In the next few years the new wave will be the art of Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon is. As a consequence of political changes, the most important topics should logically be the ones related to politics, to social life. And already we feel that the surge of interest in this has decreased. The artists who have acted in this direction – except for Perjovschi, and those who have developed an artis-

tic discourse based upon this conception, they remain credible and honorable. But those for whom this was not an important aspect of their work, and represented only a momentary movement, or trend, or wave, they are already reorienting their work towards other topics, since this one ceased to be interesting. This interest has dwindled over the last ten years and now it has almost completely died out. This kind of socio-political interest is about to be devolved upon other areas. Who are we, without this sort of interest, what do we want to achieve, what is there that really interests us?

CEP: *Do you think we'll have a final countdown soon?*

I.N.: I think that those artists who actually displayed this real interest in their work will be the only ones to stay here: Perjovschi, for instance – the kind of people who will always act in this way because it is a credible thing to do that that will work out well in any kind of context, in any kind of trend, any kind of wave. But let's take a look around us and see how many artists have taken advantage of this interest, of this huge demand coming from the East to build a discourse that could meet this demand and now they find themselves short of subjects. It is something fascinating, now we can see who was really credible and who was just a mere opportunist. There will come an interesting moment, let's say in five years' time, when we can say, we can discover who we really are and what we really want. And these in fact will be our subjects.

CEP: *What are the drawbacks of the Romanian situation? Do you think that they can sometimes work for the benefit of the artist? Do you think that these drawbacks can sometimes work for the benefit of the artist?*

I.N.: You can also ask this question in the West: what are the advantages and disadvantages of the Western artistic system? Within both systems there are positive and negative aspects. In the case of our system, more than in the case of the other, we can say that we lack that particular arena I was talking about, we don't really have a cultural stage, a platform. Look at the number of exhibition spaces that have been shut down lately, at all the things that have been lost. Including exhibitional spaces, studios, everything pertaining to a particular artistic system, critics, journals, mass media, public, art collectors, galleries – everything: we don't have anything of the kind or we do have so little that it's not even worth mentioning.

The only advantage would be that you don't find yourself under this commercial pressure, but this is a false idea, since Romanian artists have lately been exported abroad. They didn't use to address their local context anyway; they have been addressing the West all along. This non-commercial interest is a false idea. You cannot even claim that life is cheaper in Romania; it is actually cheaper to live in Berlin as an artist. Everything is so expensive here and you don't even have the space, the luxury of space so that you can work in peace. One advantage could be the fact that this situation always keeps you alert. The last time I went to Stockholm I was shocked to see that the artists there were somehow quite well-off as they enjoyed this enormous support from various institutions, even private institutions: everybody offered them help. The only requirement for them was to have a discourse, a desire, and after that they could fight, they could obtain financial support from everywhere. Here instead, there's no help from anywhere. I think that this tension keeps the artist alert, keeps him or her awake – this is an advantage. Probably if we were living in Stockholm, who knows how we would react, whether we would have had the same alertness, or simply relaxed. This cruel reality keeps us awake, does not allow us to relax.

CEP: *Do you think that the Romanian artist has already picked up the habit of exporting or exploiting dramas?*

I.N.: Of course he has, this a luxury, it is something that the artist in Stockholm lacks, he does not have these dramas to exploit. Imagine how poor he really is, what little he can actually choose in terms of subjects. In Romania we do have subjects. Romania is very rich in subjects. It is a very stressful and tense situation, but at least we have a broad range of choices, maybe even too broad.

Portrait with Hands: Ion Grigorescu

Club Electro Putere: *How did your interest for art started?*



I.G.: Well it's much too far away in time....

In childhood I had a brother who was an artist, when we were really small he was at the Institute. And then he was assistant and lecturer, Octavian Grigorescu. He had books....

But also our parents had books, albums, not much but....

This on the one hand, on the other hand I find sources. You ask an artist... you immerse in his sources. For example, I was with some friends at a medicine factory. In the back yard they had thrown away the labels from the medicines, and it seemed to me something so rich. Those things with letters, colorful, apparently useless – we didn't know what was written on them, as we weren't yet at school when we played with them.

Another source from what I remember, was packages with writing on them. People took the objects from the boxes and threw them away, and we found them. There

was a picture on top and it was magical, somehow, to look into the box with the hope that something would come true, that you would find inside what was represented in the image on top. The image supported this amazing wish, and so probably even now the image has this capacity to promise me something.

CEP: *How did this evolve? So you had your brother as a sort of model to which you could relate to.*

I.G.: Yes, although he didn't come into his work room very much, but this made my desire even stronger.

CEP: *Yeah, this was also just like a sort of box....*

I.G.: Then I didn't want to be an artist. I wanted to hide.

This dilemma was about what to become, about which subject I should take up.... So I thought I would hide in the Arts faculty, thinking that they didn't have any politics in Arts. Yeah, I thought you would draw some flowers, some people, but there would be no politics. This thinking proved to be very wrong. The other things that interested me were Psychology, or Physics, but I thought that all this came from the USSR. Cybernetics was forbidden – anyhow, everything politicized in my head.

CEP: *And I believe things are still being politicized.*

I.G.: What things?

CEP: *Cultural discourse in general.*

I.G.: Well, in a way this is a source that we can exploit, this is what pays.

Money is given so that people may have a political attitude, to come out in the street. Art in the street.

CEP: *What do you think of that idea?*

I.G.: For Romania, as the maestro said: fake.

I thought that only scandalous people make noise in the streets.

And artists, if they take part in this street world, they are behaving scandalously, and people will look out of their homes and see them as some kind of brawler. There is a need for a certain discretion. You can go into the street, all right, but not like this, at any time and anyhow, particularly when money is coming in.

CEP: *So you don't see yourself as a totally political artist, or interested in this crucial area, although many have labeled you like this.*

I.G.: There are moments when I'd prefer others to come and deal with politics.

I think any anyone will get bored doing the same thing all the time. I also think initially I was not even so keen on giving political lessons [in my art]. It's somehow improper. There are some political qualities in art in general.

But if the artist invests too much [in politics] he gives the impression of having become a guru; and if he thinks he has influence, he is being very stupid, because he will have been condemned [publicly] and at the same time tricked into doing this. There is really no effect because the public that goes to galleries and museums is quiet and less than rebellious. The ones who rebel don't go to museums. In Cairo nobody goes into museums either. Here in Romania art was hit by a bullet for reasons that we still don't understand; bullets, shells, whatever it was that got into the museums.

CEP: *How did your career evolve after the '90s? You kept painting churches but you have also developed as an artist. How were you perceived after the '90s? Were people expecting something from you?*

I.G.: Yeah, I remember there were some young people then, now they are much older, who put forward theories according to which I was revealed as a sort of hero, a model, an artist who has become a model. First because I was a Christian, I had the church in my background, and secondly they had heard some things from the past, that I have been criticized, and so on. It's this which provoked me, more than anything, because I didn't go into the post-revolutionary period with any desire to start again, or to take advantage of freedom in order to exhibit.

CEP: *Where was your first exhibition after the '90s?*

I.G.: I think in Glasgow; it was called Pointing East as it spoke about the East. Yeah, this was at the end of the '90s.

CEP: *So at the end of the '90s you reentered the art circuit?*

I.G.: Yes.

CEP: *And from the beginning of the '90s when you had this Glasgow exhibition, did you have any other exhibitions in Bucharest?*

I.G.: Yes, there were some, and I tried to put things right regarding the heroism and the "model" Grigorescu thing. The first exhibition was like a trumpet call, and it said, maybe a bit too loud: The Anatomy of Opposition, Exposure and Submission. I was trying to exhibit also things in which I made compromises and things in which I had managed to oppose.

I had to explain how it was that I showed up, what it was that motivated my appearance in public, the exposure I'd had, because I thought that maybe it was the duty of all those who had lived through that period to come forward openly, and put their cards on the table.

CEP: *How important was it for you that you have been welcomed and appreciated in the West?*

I.G.: Do you believe this?

I'm afraid that it will end at some point, and that it may all turn out to be a trick. At certain moments it seems that I'm promoted because I do things which have a certain political correctness, but then if at some point I no longer conformed to that kind of correctness, I could be punished and sent back to the camp. It's a sort of conditional freedom.

CEP: *So do you believe that your art is appreciated only for this interest in what you're doing, or that it simply stands for itself?*

I.G.: How can I explain it to myself otherwise?

The same things [works] have been seen in Bucharest. In the '90s people came to Bucharest, saw my work, knew about it, but without any effect. It was only after ten years that the engine started working.

CEP: *What do you think about your participation in the 54th Biennale?*

I.G.: Regarding my part I can appreciate that it will not be something so breathtaking.

CEP: *But can any artist still do something like this?*

I.G.: Yeah, of course.

Actually that is what the Biennial is made for, in my opinion, opinion. You don't go there to be yourself, because this kind of participation is unique, and I was invited as a maestro, like Fontana used to be, or someone like Daniel Buren. Participation as an individual turns into a desperate attempt, even, to go beyond yourself, to raise your game immensely.

Otherwise if all you do is repeat yourself, it looks lame to me. What I promise is something at the half-way mark, and this will be too little. Even the normal half of me seems too little.

Portrait with Hands: Gili Mocanu

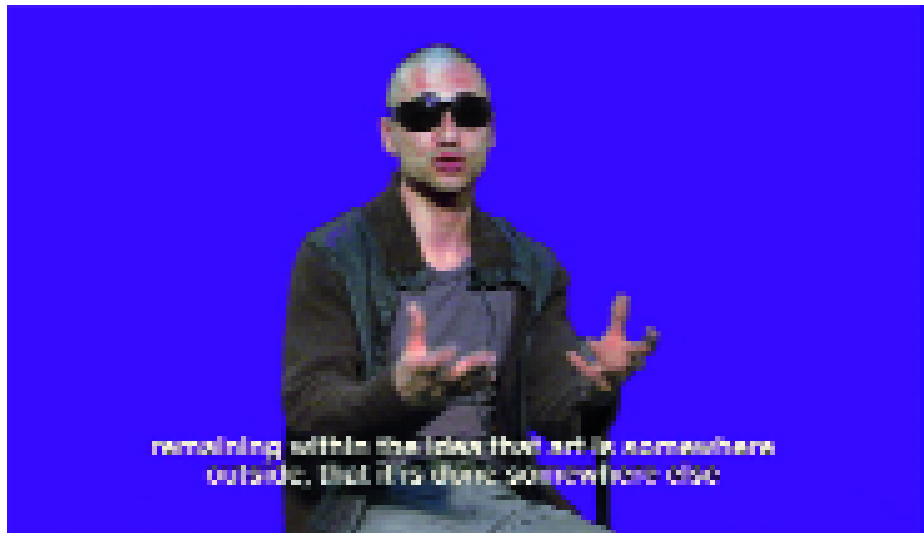
Club Electro Putere: In the last 10 years, visual arts in Romania politicized their discourse by transforming into themes subjects connected to the communist heritage, about local nationalism, about Ceausescu and many more from this area. What do you think about these subjects? How would you characterize this period, which was, in fact, a very dynamic one, internationally present and productive?

G.M.: All kind of cheap things, coats with the (Romanian) flag, the country which doesn't fit in the pattern.... I'm even ashamed of what we may find in other countries, what kept piling up in all these years. Ceaușescu made like hell. In all these political years I stayed quiet... anyway I was doing something totally different, all the rest seeming just too little.

At a certain point I jumped up as I found out that the blocks, the so-called blocks, the constructions I have been painting, actually just one single block, basically just one construction with a block, anyway, my blocks alluded to something communist.... I felt miserable. What poverty, what poverty! At least there they should have seen that there was a different stake, it was pure geometry, just a geometric game, that's what it was.

I was eluding my ass! I was painting and thinking about communism and pain like hell!

No way man, for me it was Sunday, I was at the seaside.



CEP: How did you avoid all these clichés?

G.M.: Not carrying, despising them. They were some manele (poor quality music), some daily songs changing every day. But time proves it all very clear. I say it again, everyone is ultimately interested in feeding himself, just like at the requiem dinner. When brandy is put on the table and everyone tries to fetch some... and you see them after half an hour... our parents, our aunts, shameless. They have eaten and drank and started speaking and amazing things come out of their mouths.

That's how I think regarding art.

Who is interested in working until he's in his '40s or '50s without having any kind of joy out of it? Art is the most tormented domain. Out of other domains you still can get some satisfaction but from here you are really turning out to be just frustrated. It's painful to torture yourself just for the love of it. Your amazing job, you're happy! To go to the studio just to torment yourself! Many artists will give up at a certain moment, it's normal, it's sincere. They will say: The hell with art, let me live my life!

So this is my message for the artists who tantalize with art: art is the easiest and fast way to become happy if you understand how it works. Things failed, they were lost, artist's conscience didn't work to show this is the way to salvation from all personal problems that worry us all, they didn't realize this thing, remaining within the idea that art is somewhere outside, that it is done somewhere else and that you have to do it in a certain way. They didn't get this essential thing which is that working with art is what you also do directly to nourish yourself.

So in all these years the discussions between me and the artistic world have been more and more delicate and poor.... I would end up speaking about something else or realizing that the discussions about art didn't interest me at all. I had the impression that they were not about art, but more about galleries, trips, relations, exhibitions, but not art, the thing yhaured me in the studio, and what the process of art brings into life as

solution. I could not see the confirmation in the other artists they kept being mundane in their behavior. And then the difference... that's how I saw myself.

Now, to speak about painting or about the Vowel and the Consonant and what I tried to comprise in that work is a bit delicate... we have to regain our trust.

It started to be a bit painful, I had the sensation of talking about something else, instead of talking about the system, about curators, all this being a kind of crap for me.... I ended up in the middle of some embarrassing subjects essential for art and I still believe this thing has never disappeared.

People employing art, the art practitioner searches for the way through which he can be in contact with those means by which he can find out the truth, out of which he can find out what troubled him in order to make him reach to be an artist, what made him end up in the studio, to stir up. He is looking for something, he has to find something and he can't find it by exhibiting in some spaces or by doing some kind of projects. That thing is direct, it doesn't have much to say, he can feed the artist on the spot, he starts to learn out of this, to expose this in a certain way for the people. There's no more talking about that thing which is still searched in art, not even the artists discuss it because that artist is lead by life itself to speak about that thing. If life doesn't lead you anymore to speak then you speak about what you have succeeded to do.

CEP: *Maybe things are nuanced in a different way and they don't speak as you expected them to speak, through this language.*

G.M.: I don't want things to be spoken this language but at least to mention it a bit.

CEP: *That's what you have to do!*

G.M.: Well, I kept doing it, I still do it, that's what I'm doing basically. Through painting.

Painting used to maintain art, it kept maintaining art and will continue to do it and that's how it is. It feeds the need of the art viewer, not just of the artists. Even I feed on painting as if I would feed from the pictoriality of the installations. In the end you feed from something that takes place there, with the cream from the form that you put in form. All this eternal game happens permanently in painting and this is what people need in general, not only artists.

All people need this when entering museums, modern or not, they need something painted.

You can instinctively figure out that it is there where the big adventure of the artistic production takes place, there you can confront yourself, you can see how stupid you are, how much you're worth, there you can find all your courage, all the zero in you, the entire plus from you; you can tell.

Because painting is the relation, painting, drawing, whatever you want, all that goes from the hand with a piece of something black on something white, the trace you leave, the indication, the writing, the specific thing which leaves the mark, and which makes you see the time you have imprinted there, that the true lesson, anyone doing painting knows it.

CEP: *What is the frame in which you work, what is the geography of your ideas?*

G.M.: I don't care about that. I'm very clear in what I do, my art is very clear.

The results of my practice, which is basically a spiritual one, you cannot talk about very visible elements, what elements... there's just some rags with paint on them, actually that's what they're reduced to, that's what they are since hundreds of years.

I didn't even want to cling to new means, trying not to confuse anyone.

I have some ideas which are put in a diagram and those ideas censor or put in a certain tension the substances, those substances are just oil on canvas... it's a simple language. There is a lot of history, many ideas on this, a lot to read, I don't bother about explaining my meanings out of this.

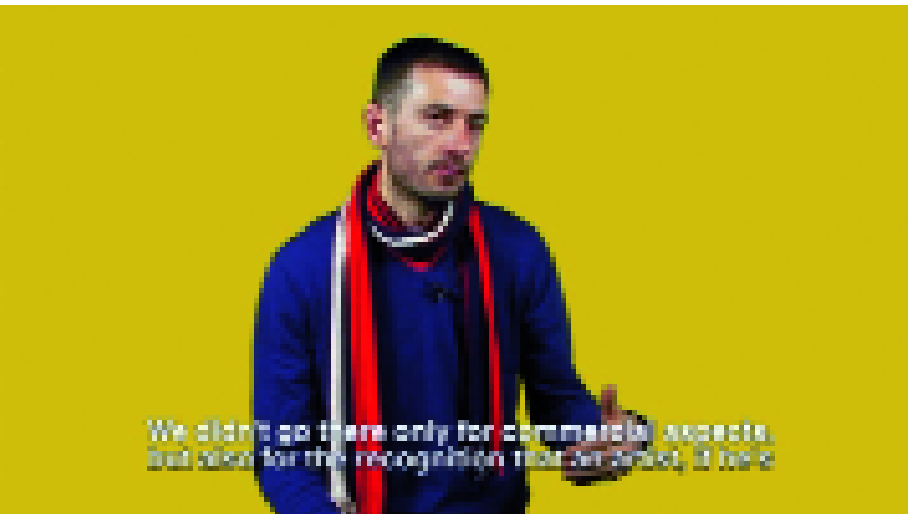
CEP: *But what do you paint?*

G.M.: I don't watch what I paint.

It is the result of a spiritual process. Spiritual processes relate to certain personal matters. You know your own issue. It's as thinking what people from monasteries do at night. They have a lot of interior work to do. Everyone knows what it means to stay at night or when you have time and work with yourself. There are some steps where you know the warfare with yourself, a fight, a thing. This thing, if it is coherent or if it has a certain interior discourse testimonies in what is called art. This is art, this process is art. The results are the proofs. If they are correct they can bear witness of a correct process. If they solve by themselves, if they find their justification in themselves, the art object finds its justification from an idol, art shows as an idol, the art object has the power of an idol.

Portrait with Hands: Mihai Pop

Club Electro Putere: For you, as a gallery owner and, why not, as an artist, how important is the appreciation coming from the Western culture?



M.P.: Well, here, I think what you say is very general. What is this about? I think there are more waves for conquering the West.

There is more than one phase when the West looked at us, you know? I don't know if this is very correct, starting with the year 2000 or.... I wouldn't locate it then.

CEP: No, at the beginning of 2000's is the moment when Romania was more open to the Occident.

M.P.: No, I would see this in the middle of the 2000's, this is how I see it when I look back, rather a very fast development and an emancipation of the Romanian art scene.

CEP: What do you mean by emancipation?

M.P.: Of course, there were some people who were pioneers, yes. They stepped forward.

Mircea Cantor, in 2000, was already known. Dan Perjovschi was well-known.

Yes, but.... But only with them, we can't talk about a scene that shows real signs of functioning and emancipation.

Of course, they always exist, how can I call them, the pioneers, the ones who... the adventurous.

I mean, they were the first to break out. And Victor Man, he got out in the West quite fast. And of course they brought... like in the old times, they told us how it was out there. And, in a way, the rest of us felt the advantages of the western art scene and what kind of relation we can have with it, what we can gain getting out there.

In 2005, when we opened Plan B gallery for us, or at least for this gallery nucleus, which was resumed at some point at Adrian Ghenie and me.... Just the two of us who.... Initiated.

Yes, who created this gallery, it was obvious for us that we have to go quick towards West.

Even though we came... we were both artists who became gallery owners at that moment. We played the game of being a gallery owner. It was clear for us that we have to find out if what we make has a meaning and has its place in the art market, not only on the art scene. You know?

Then the decision was a quick one, to go to the first forthcoming art fair, which then was VIENNAFAIR, the art fair in Vienna. And it was very good, it was a wise step, I would say when I look back. It was very good.

In fact, when we got out there we had behind some years of work. The artists that the gallery worked with or chose to work with.... I don't know, it was an improvised thing.

Are we continuing? Ok, to answer your question.

For us it was very clear: yes, ok, the West can bring you a validation, in a way, if this is what we are talking about. Because it was senseless to lose time and try to create here a scene, a market.

We would have lost time, because these things don't happen overnight and in this case our decision was to go to a good source for what we make. I think this is a correct decision.

Because you can't emancipate the home art scene, not till you have there, I don't know how to call it, visibility or a certain dignity, you know?

The movement is similar to the hit at the billiards, in a way, you know? You have to hit that to have an effect here, you know? This isn't big deal, everybody knows it. But what is interesting is that: even though everybody knows it, I think that many persons lose their time.

I think it's not nice to say that they lose their time, but in my opinion they lose time with this utopia that they can create a scene or a market, especially. I talk about certain galleries, particularly from Bucharest, which live with this utopia that they can create art collectors, to exist in their closed medium. I consider it closed. Self-sufficient. There is a tradition of self-sufficiency in Bucharest, in a certain way. And the illusion that, if it's a big city with rich people these people will also buy. Now, after 5 years, it shows. They don't come to art fairs. They don't relate with the real, international art scene. And, after all, those Romanian rich collectors didn't appear. Or if they exist, they buy for ridiculously amounts of money. You probably have to call them one hundred times, to offer them huge discounts, to court them.

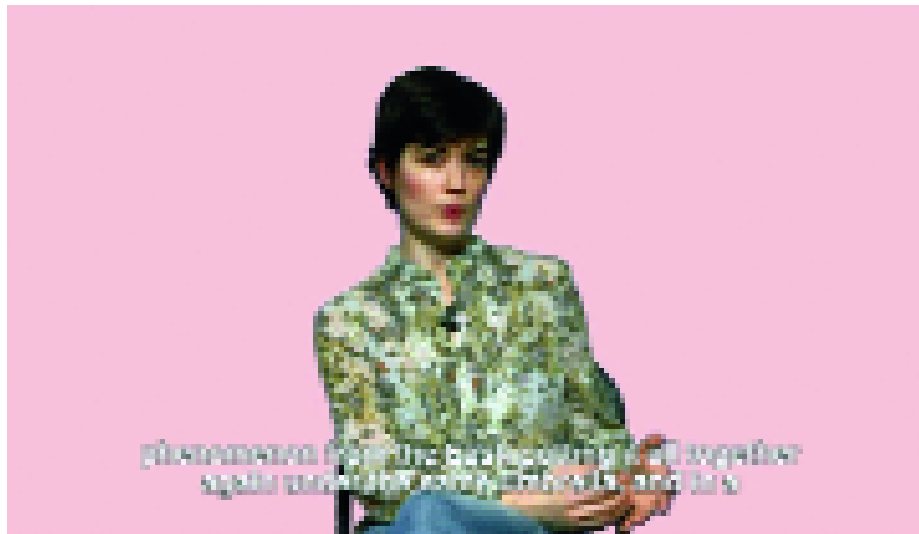
But if you know exactly what you have as merchandise, yes? If you believe in the artists you worked with, this is not the best way to humiliate yourself, to constrain someone to buy a work in order to keep your gallery. I mean, of course, being a commercial gallery, we went in the West, there is an art market, and it was a clear decision. We didn't go there only for commercial aspects, but also for the recognition that an artist, if he's talented, can get in due time.

I talked about this with Adrian Ghenie and the others: a career in due time.

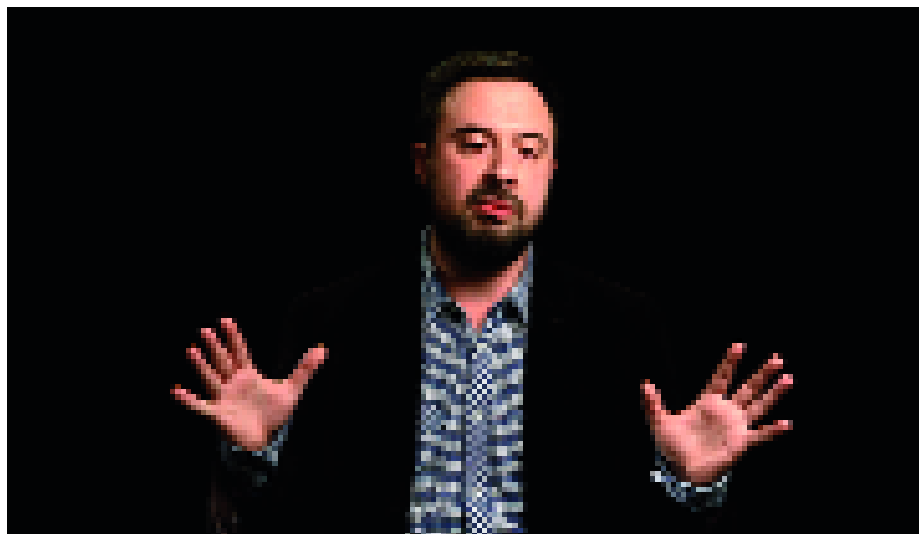
To eliminate all these utopias that circulated here for all these years: "maybe we can make it here", "let's try this at home". I realised that you can make it here with one condition: to have success out there.

And that is what all did. Dan Perjovschi, Mircea Cantor, Victor Man and all who were a step forward. They did this.

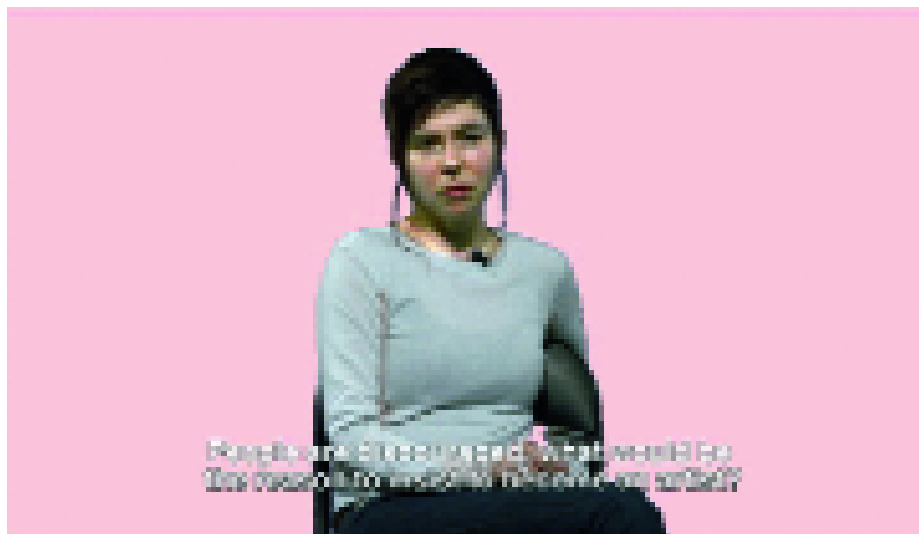
Magda Radu (curator), video still, 2011

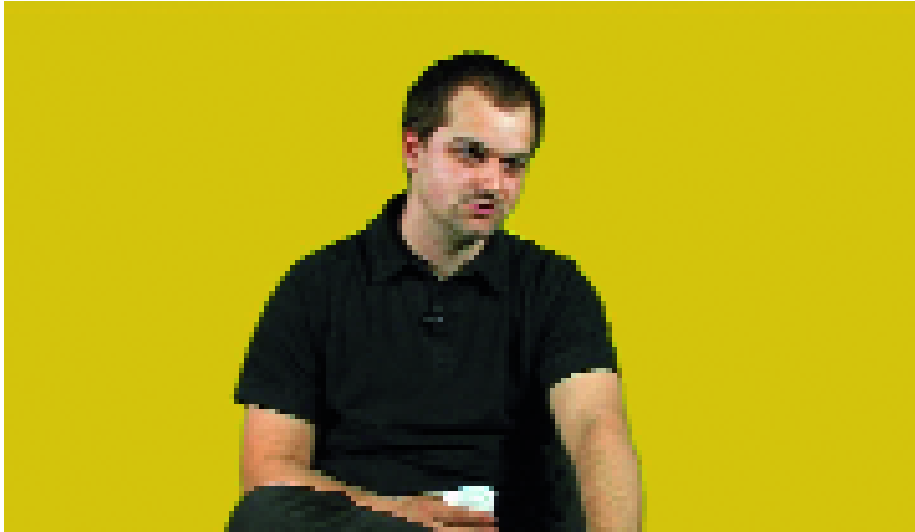


Ștefan Constantinescu (artist), video still, 2011

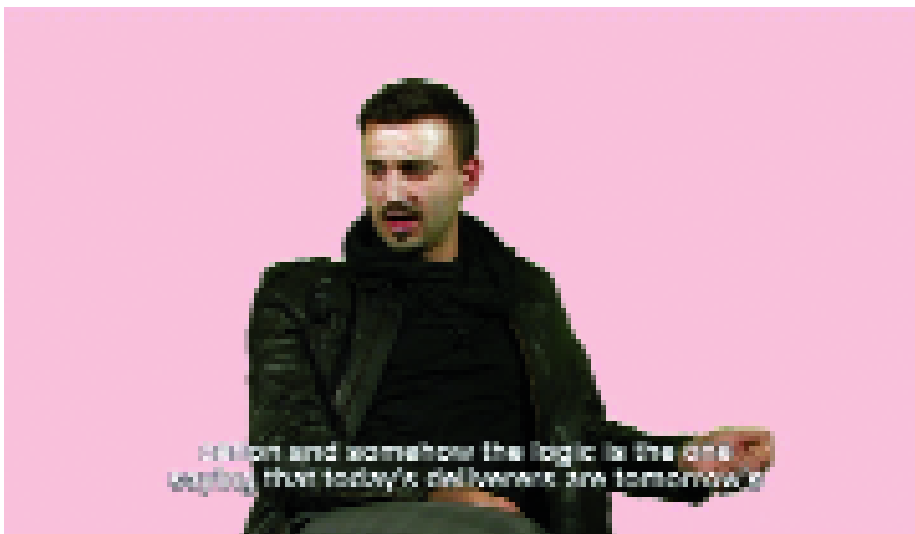


Alexandra Croitoru (artist), video still, 2011

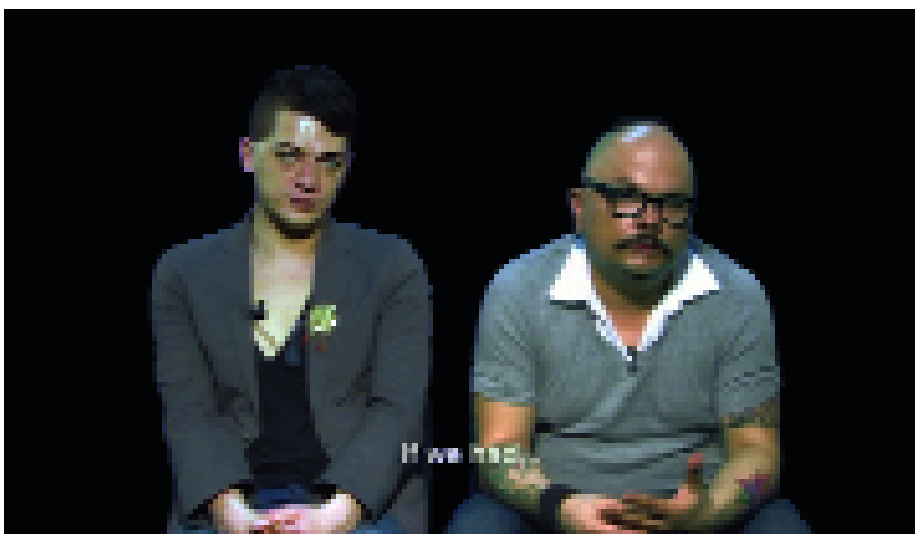




Ciprian Mureșan (artist), video still, 2011



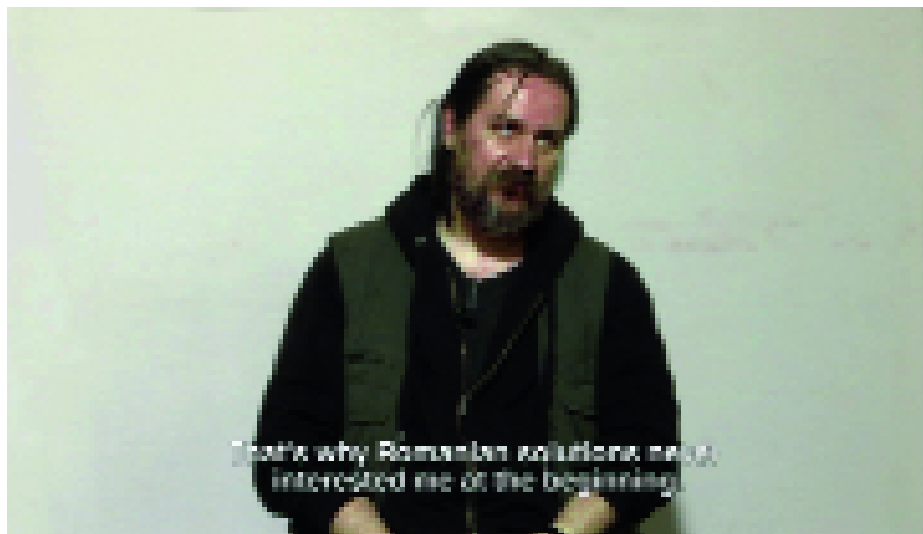
Adrian Ghenie (artist), video still, 2011



Eugen Rădescu & Răzvan Ion (curators), video still, 2011



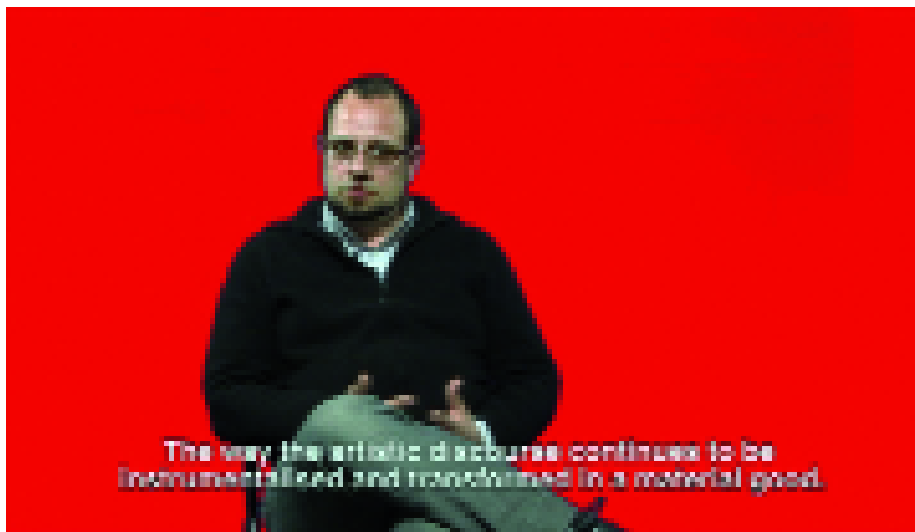
Matei Bejenaru (artist), video still, 2011



Dan Perjovschi (artist), video still, 2011



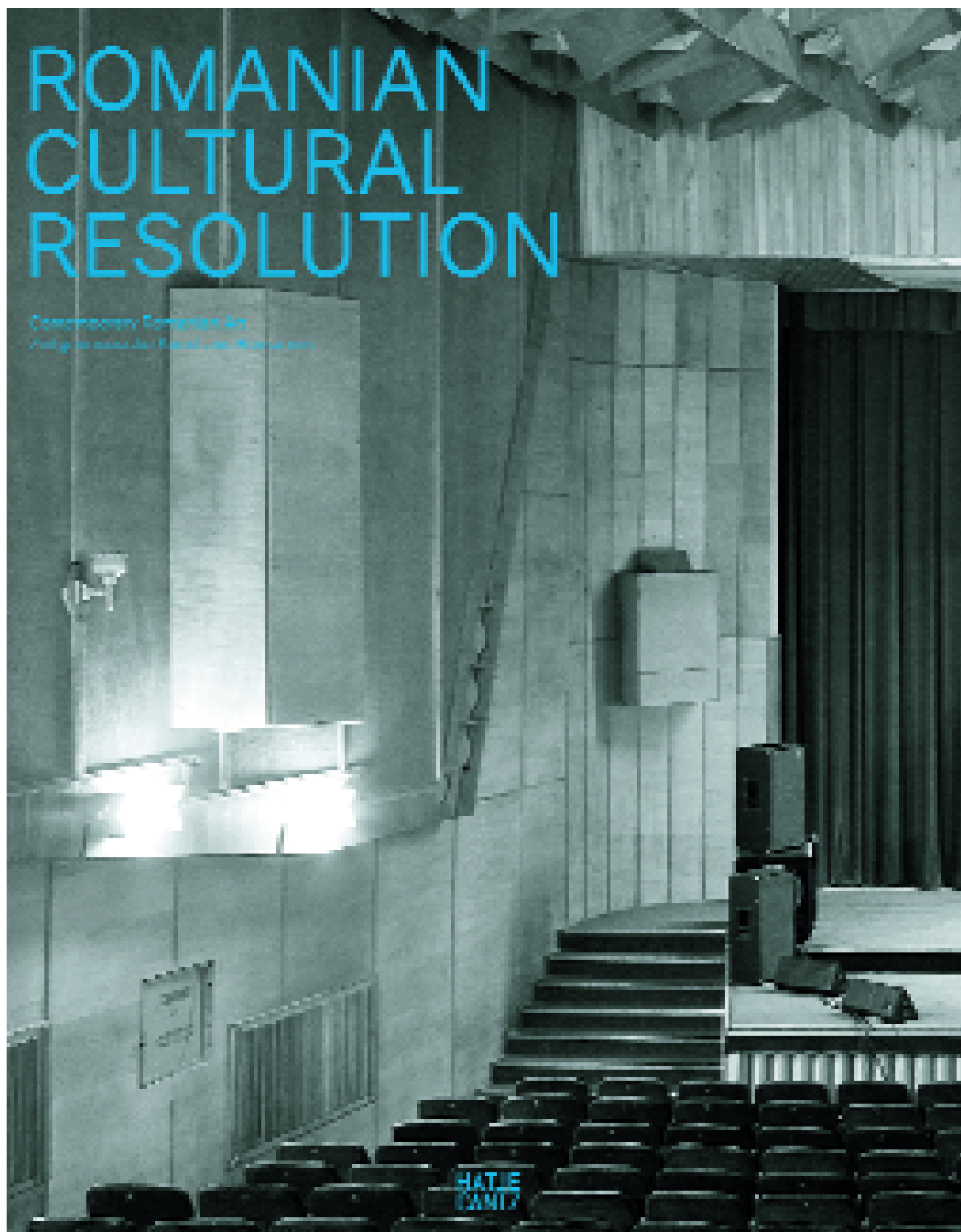
Giorgiana Zachia (curator), video still, 2011



Cristian Nae (curator), video still, 2011

ROMANIAN CULTURAL RESOLUTION

Contemporary Romanian Art
Pridige la noua artă românească în lume



Romanian Cultural Resolution Catalogue

published by Hatje Cantz

The catalogue is structured according to the four curatorial themes devoted to twenty-seven artists. The project focuses on the political and social transition triggered by the end of communism following the fall of the Iron Curtain and perpetuated within the context of the eastward expansion of the European Union. Developed by young curators, the concept combines approaches of both artists and critics. The catalogue has been conceived in the form of a cultural resolution and analyzes the contemporary discourse and the period of "post-communism" through art. It was the elementary experience of radical change in Romania that brought about such a cultural discourse.

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The Last Analog Revolution, a Memory Box

Artists: Ștefan Constantinescu, Péter Forgács, Zuzanna Janin, Via Lewandowski, Karen Mirza and Brad Butler, Liliana Moro, Deimantas Narkevičius, Yves Netzhammer

Curators: Ștefan Constantinescu and Xandra Popescu

The Last Analog Revolution, a Memory Box is a project initiated by artist Ștefan Constantinescu and writer Xandra Popescu. The project consists of an installation which brings together artists from the former Eastern and Western Europe, and reflects on the ideas of revolution and geo-political division.

If the wave of changes sweeping North Africa and the Middle East have been referred to as the Digital Revolution, the events of 1989 can be grouped under the generic title of the Analog Revolution. For nowadays revolutions, in the free flow of information and media technology function as catalysts of social uprising. In the case of the 1989 revolutions, it was television which played the key role, enabling that first contact between two divided worlds. The project reflects on the relationship between technological change and revolution, and on a deeper level on the idea of the political divide – through walls and barriers.

The idea of the project is rooted in our mistrust of history's grand narratives. In school we were taught national history as a succession of great events performed by great men, leading to the emergence of the nation state. However the workings of ideology are not limited to the so called Eastern Bloc. The *Memory Box* seeks to complicate the binary opposition of "West" versus "East", claiming that there is no neutral territory but that the personal is always political.

The pre-89 period was marked by collective images of an intangible "other side". Against the backdrop of propaganda and isolation, these representations combined elements such as fear, fiction and seduction. In the East, blue jeans and rock 'n' roll music constructed the mirage of the West. At the same time, KGB espionage or the performances of the Eastern gymnasts would capture the imagination of the Western World. The Wall was perceived as a filter of human representation separating two spaces which could only be represented one in relationship to the other. It is the very condition of representation, the distance between two subjects which require mediation, it is the Godardian "and" (see his *Ici et ailleurs*, 1976).

By reconsidering the past, the initiators of the project open the door to consider the politics of walls and borders in a wider sense. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, other walls and barriers are still standing or emerging around the world.

The artists involved in the project are: Ștefan Constantinescu, who lives and works in Sweden and Romania, Péter Forgács from Hungary, Zuzanna Janin from Poland, Via Lewandowski from Germany, Deimantas Narkevičius from Lithuania, Yves Netzhammer from the Switzerland, Karen Mirza and Brad Butler from the United Kingdom.

Ștefan Constantinescu

My Beautiful Dacia, documentary film, 75 min., 2009, courtesy: Ștefan Constantinescu, Julio Soto, The ThinkLab Media, Madrid/Hifilm, Bucharest





Liliana Moro
...senza fine, 2010, loudspeaker system, CD player
with song Bella Ciao, courtesy: the artist



Zuzanna Janin
Majka from the Movie, video, 2009,
courtesy of: LOKAL_30 Gallery, Warsaw



Karen Mirza and Brad Butler

Exception and the Rule, video, 28.03 min., 2009, courtesy: Karen Mirza and Brad Butler



Deimantas Narkevičius

Disappearance of a Tribe, video, 10 min. , 2005,
courtesy: gb agency, Paris; Jan Mot, Brussels and Barbara Weiss, Berlin



Péter Forgács

Either – Or – Private Hungary 3, video and object installation, 43 min., 1989, courtesy: Péter Forgács

Via Lewandowski

Halved Joy is Twice the Fun, object,
halved budgerigar in a cage, 2002,
courtesy: Ivo Wessel, photo: Thomas Bruns



ȘTEFAN CONSTANTINESCU (1968) is a visual artist and a filmmaker. In 2010 he participated in the Bucharest Biennale with the painting and photography installation entitled "An Infinite Blue". In 2009, he represented Romania at The Venice Biennale, with the films "Passagen" and "Troleibuzul 92". In 2009 he co-directed with Julio Sotto the film "My Beautiful Dacia", a portrayal of Romania's transition from Communism to Capitalism through the story of the Dacia automobile, an emblem of Communist Romania. In 2008 he conceived "The Golden Age for Children", a pop-up book about Romania's recent history.

XANDRA POPESCU (1980) is an author of text, film, video and exhibition projects. Through her work she addresses themes such as anonymous creativity, authorship and privacy in the knowledge economy. She studied Political Science and Dramatic Writing. Her work includes play writing, script writing and curatorial work. Her curatorial work "Even if Nobody Wants You, I will Always Love You" is currently exhibited in the Small Gallery of The Romanian Cultural Institute in Venice.

PÉTER FORGÁCS is a media artist and independent filmmaker, based in Budapest. He is known for his "Private Hungary" series of award winning films and installations often based on home movies from the 1920s–1980s, which document ordinary lives that were soon to be ruptured by an extraordinary historical trauma that occurs off screen. His international debut came with The Bartos Family in 1988. Between 2000–2002 Forgács was artist in residence at The Getty Museum/Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, where he created The Danube Exodus: Rippling Currents of the River installation. His works can be found in several museums and public collections. In 2009 Forgács represented Hungary at the Venice Biennale, exhibiting the Col Tempo – The W. Project installation.

LILIANA MORO (1961 in Milan) lives and works in Milan. She graduated from the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera with Luciano Fabro. In 1989, along with other artists, she founded Via Lazzaro Palazzi in Milan, which closed in 1993. In 1992 she was invited by Jan Hoet to participate in Documenta IX, Kassel, and participated in the Open Section at the 1993 XLV Venice Biennale. During the nineties, she had many solo exhibitions in Italy and abroad such as: 1992 – Galleria Locus Solus, Genoa, 1993 – Migrateurs, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, ARC Paris Galleria Emi Fontana Milan. She has participated in important group exhibitions including Italics, curated by Francesco Bonami, Palazzo Grassi as well as Save Venice, Magazzini del Sale, Venice Biennale exhibition supplementary to 53rd Venice Biennale, amongst others.



Yves Netzhammer

Furniture of Proportions, video and object installation, 28.03 min., 2009, soundtrack: Bernd Schurer, courtesy: Yves Netzhammer and Galerie Anita Beckers, Frankfurt

ZUZANNA JANIN is a maker of sculptures, installations, videos, a photographer and a performance artist. The central themes of her work are: the idea of space made of silk –memory time and transition. In 2009–2010 she worked on the first series of video installations Majka from the Movie composed of non-narrative episodes built on the 70's Polish television series "Madness of Majka Skowron". The main character of this television series was played by Zuzanna Janin herself as a child actor. Majka Skowron, a teenage girl, escapes the mise en scène of the original film and journeys through a kaleidoscope of cinema and television frames from the '70s to the present.

VIA LEWANDOWSKY was born in Dresden in 1963. In 1992 he participated in Documenta IX. In 1995 his often critical and provocative works earned him the Art Prize of the Leipziger Volkszeitung. In 2005 he won the Critics' Prize for Visual Art. Via lives and works in Berlin. He is currently a resident at the Villa Massimo in Rome.

KAREN MIRZA and BRAD BUTLER's artistic practice is based on collaboration and dialogue. This manifests itself in a multi-layered practice of filmmaking, installation, photography, performance, publishing and curating. Their work is engaged with challenging and interrogating terms such as "participation", "collaboration", "the social turn" and the traditional roles of the artist as producer and the audience as recipient. Karen Mirza and Brad Butler's current body of work, The Museum of Non Participation, commissioned by Artangel, proposes a museum as a conceptual (geo) political construct of gesture, image and thresholds of language. Their first film made in this context "The Exception and the Rule" was screened in over 20 major international festivals.

DEIMANTAS NARKEVIČIUS (1964) is an artist and filmmaker, currently based in Vilnius. His works deal with the weight of subjective memories and personal revisions of the History. As the artist has himself stated a number of times, his films in a certain way are extended sculptures, not only closely adjusted to the physical sites of their installation, but also thematically departing from very specific personal circumstances or experiences. Working in different film formats, often inserting fragments of other media – drawing, found photographs and film footage into his films, Deimantas Narkevičius expands the temporal and spatial boundaries of his narratives. He has gained wide recognition within the international art scene and represented Lithuania at the 49th Venice Biennial in 2003.

YVES NETZHAMMER (1970) is a Swiss artist who lives and works in Zurich. He has been working with video installations, slide projections, drawings and objects since 1997. In 2007 he represented Switzerland in the Venice Biennial of 2007 together with Christine Streuli. In 2003 and 2005 he participated in the Moving Image Biennial in Geneva. His works are part of collections such as: FRAC – Nord-Pas de Calais, Dunkerque, FRAC – Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Marseille, Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum • Center of International Sculpture, Duisburg, Seedamm Kulturzentrum, Pfäffikon, The West Collection, Oaks, Pennsylvania.

On the cover:

Romanian Cultural Resolution – documentary in the New Gallery of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research, Venice,
photo: Alexandru Dan & Bogdan Grădinaru