

**Stefan Constantinescu** lives and works in Stockholm and Bucharest

#### Studies

1998 Master of Fine Arts, Royal Academy of Arts, Stockholm, Sweden  
1996 Bachelor of Art, Romanian Art Academy, Bucharest, Romania

#### Three latest solo exhibitions

2008 *The Golden Age for Children*, Botkyrka Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden; Curators Joanna Sandell and Miriam Andersson-Blecher  
*Archive of Pain*, The Romanian Cultural Institute of Stockholm, Sweden; Producer Giorgia Zachia  
2007 *Thanks For A Wonderful, Ordinary Day*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Romania; Curator Oana Tănase

#### Three latest group exhibitions

2009 *The Social Critique 1993-2005*, Kalmar Konstmuseum, Kalmar, Sweden; Curator Martin Schibli  
*The Seductiveness of the Interval*, Romanian Pavilion, 53rd International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy; Curator Alina Serban  
*Dada East? Contextes roumains du Dadaïsme*, Tourcoing, France; Curators Zofia Machinicka and Adrian Notz

#### Three latest film festivals

2009 *My Beautiful Dacia*, Astra Film Festival, Sibiu, Romania  
*My Beautiful Dacia*, Montreal World Film Festival, Montreal, Canada  
2007 *The Passage*, Tempo Documentary Festival, Stockholm, Sweden

#### Filmography

2009 *My Beautiful Dacia*, co-director Julio Soto, Producers The ThinkLab Media, Madrid, Spain and Hifilm Productions, Bucharest, Romania  
*Troleibuzul 92*, Producers Comitetul Central, Bucharest, Romania  
2005 *The Passage*, 62 min.  
2003 *Dacia 1300 My Generation*, 62 min.  
2002 *The Baron*, 22.02.2002 (based on a concept by Cristi Puiu), 45 min.

#### Public collections

Fondation Louis Vuitton pour la création, Paris, France  
Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Romania  
Malmö Museum of Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden

**The Golden Age**  
**Stefan Constantinescu**  
**Gal-On Art Place**  
**3 - 27 October 2009**



#### *The Golden Age for Children*

In the artist's book *The Golden Age for Children* Stefan Constantinescu depicts his childhood. The photograph of Stefan at the age of thirteen as a communist pioneer is a central image. He is surrounded by two class mates. All three wear the characteristic red scarf of the young communists.

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**The Golden Age for Children** is a pop-up book for children and adults alike. It describes the social and political context that shaped Stefan Constantinescu's childhood and adolescence. At the start of the book there is a text describing the special circumstances that applied to childbirth from the year when Stefan was conceived: “In 1968 the birth rate was three times what it was in 1966. This was a direct consequence of the 770 Decree of 1966 which had banned abortion and other contraceptive methods for women less than 40 years of age or with fewer than four children. In concert with the decree, a long-term plan was developed to increase the birth rate by introducing a tax on divorce and unmarried individuals. In 1968, only 28 divorces were approved in the entire country.”



Popping up on the same spread is Stefan, 6 months old. He holds his head high and steady. On page after page we get to know the boy and his family; he goes to school and on holiday to the Black Sea. He proudly tries on his big brother's military uniform, and while his father secretly listens to Radio Free Europe, Stefan and his brother prefer the music programme “Metronome”. Family photographs alternate with pictures of Bucharest and Romania, building up a portrait of food queues, earthquake, and forced movements of people. Stefan Constantinescu has added small balloons with the words “Did you know that...?” just as in school books.



**An Infinite Blue**

Stefan Constantinescu was born in Bucharest in 1968. When he was young, painting was the medium he used. After he moved to Sweden he started working with video art and film. His grounding and his aesthetic schooling in painting, however, were acquired at the Academy of Arts in Bucharest. In summer 2009, for the exhibition *The Golden Age*, he painted seven new paintings in seven different sizes. *An Infinite Blue*, as the series is called, is planned to consist of 24 paintings. As a prototype for the paintings Stefan Constantinescu has used propaganda pictures from the 1960s, produced by the communist power apparatus in Romania. This was a time when there was housing and education for everyone, high-quality research, state-owned restaurants, and healthy habits for the working people.



The propaganda pictures from the 1960s were supposed to promote a good working morale and strengthen people's faith in the communist social structure. In Stefan Constantinescu's work the ideals are there, but with an addition lacking in the propaganda pictures. The artist's tender and meticulous painting has brought out the individuals' fragility and existential vulnerability. Amidst the social concern displayed by the originals, the ideals collapse slowly but surely. The small children seem like pawns in a game, and the adult workers seem to have been ordered to assemble there to serve a political purpose.

**Good Night Children** (2008) is a video installation consisting of toys, a television set and a DVD player. The screen shows a three-minute loop in which we hear a communist battle song. Propaganda films in Ceausescu's Romania reached all the way into people's most intimate life situations.

**Gadget 3:Hammer** (2008) is a toy hammer hanging from a red metal hanger. The discrepancy between the hammer as a toy, the communist symbol of labour, and the real tool is resolved in the hammer's head, which is a miniature of the people's car, the Dacia. Manufacture of this car began in 1968, the year when the baby boy Stefan was born. The Dacia has been a recurrent subject of Stefan Constantinescu's art.

**Behind the Curtain** (2008) is an installation with a lace curtain. All the different objects are meaning-bearing items from a time in the history of Romania that affected the growing boy, but reworked into art objects, in which the artist's political consciousness and insights are stored in everyday articles and toys that were a part of his childhood.

**Catrin Lundqvist** is a freelance curator with her own company, Domestic Art, and is curator of Art & Learning, Moderna Museet. Based in Stockholm, Sweden.

**The year 2009 is a jubilee year for both Romania and Europe. Twenty years have passed since the dictator Ceausescu was deposed, and 1989 was also the year when the Berlin Wall began to be demolished. The exhibition *The Golden Age* can be viewed in the light of these two important political events. *The Golden Age* was a name given to Ceausescu's time in power. He ruled the country between 1965 and 1989.**