

di:'Angewandte

/ecm  
educating  
curating  
managing

masterlehrgang für  
ausstellungstheorie & praxis  
an der universität für  
angewandte kunst wien

ecm – educating/curating/managing 2014–2016

MASTER'S THESIS

THE ROMANIAN POST-COMMUNIST CONDITION BETWEEN SELF-HISTORICIZATION AND  
POST-COLONIAL NARRATIVES

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VIENNA, JUNE 2016

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## Dissertation Abstract

In the context of recent Eastern European narratives, the post-communist condition plays an essential role not only in art history, but also in the way art history is produced by being curated.

Based on two case studies, Lia Perjovschi's "Contemporary Art Archive" and "Mapping Bucharest" exhibition in the framework of Vienna Biennale 2015, this master's thesis aims to reflect upon the question: how is the Romanian post-communist condition presented from within and from outside the Romanian contemporary art system?

When it comes to curating the Romanian post-communist condition, which is marked by the recovery of memory, the rehabilitation of Romanian identity by invoking Brâncuși and the orientation towards the future, one has by all means to consider thematising the Romanian Revolution of December 1989.

Die post-kommunistische Kondition in der osteuropäischen Narrative spielt eine grosse Rolle im Kontext der Kunstgeschichte, als auch in der Art und Weise wie Kunstgeschichte kuratorisch produziert wird.

Basiert auf zwei Fallstudien, Lia Perjovschi's "Contemporary Art Archive" und die Ausstellung "Mapping Bucharest" innerhalb Vienna Biennale 2015, geht die vorliegende Master Thesis der Frage nach, wie die rumänische post-kommunistische Kondition von innen und von außen des rumänischen zeitgenössischen Kunstsystems betrachtet wird.

Beim Kuratieren der rumänischen post-kommunistischen Kondition spielt die Revolution von Dezember 1989 eine wichtige Rolle. Wie meine Thesis bekräftigen möchte, wird diese Kondition durch das Wiedergewinnen von Erinnerungen, die Rehabilitierung der rumänischen Identität durch das Aufrufen von Brâncuși und die Orientierung nach Zukunft gekennzeichnet.

## Introduction

“Eastern Europe doesn't (doesn't yet? never did?) belong properly to "the West"; whereas the United States, which is not in Europe, definitely does. These days, technologically speaking, Japan is "western," though on our mental map it is about as far "East" as you can get.”<sup>1</sup>

Almost three decades after the Fall of the Iron Curtain, the interest in revealing, documenting, and curating the post-communist condition and the historical, political and cultural situation around it, is still a current subject matter.

The reason might be the fact that, as Marina Gržinić believes, “for the East, only one subject is topical: History- the re-appropriation of history”<sup>2</sup>.

The subject of this master thesis is the Romanian Post-communist condition in the context of Eastern European narratives of recent exhibitions or art projects. The terms “post-communist” and “post-socialist” are used in this paper alternatively, as I cite them from different sources, but both refer to the same period.

Inspired by the “Romanian New Wave”<sup>3</sup>, which is a genre of films, most of which are dealing with the communist and post-communist condition, my subjective approach towards the topic of this paper is based on the critical reading of project’s curatorial narratives and essays. Among the curators, theorists and writers I have canvassed in order to shape my statement are included: Zdenka Badovinac, Marina Griznić, Boris Groys, Rastko Močnik, David Chioni Moore, Bojana Pejić, Ana Peraica, Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, Miško Šuvaković, Peter Weibel and Bärbel Vischer, and Igor Zabel.

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart HALL, *The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power*, in: Stuart HALL, Bram GIEBEN, *Formations of modernity*, Cambridge 1995, p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> Marina GRŽINIĆ, *On the Re-Politicisation of Art through Contamination*, in: IRWIN, *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, London 2006, p. 484.

<sup>3</sup> See among others: Rohter, Larry: *Romania's overlooked New Wave* (2013), <http://carpetbagger.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/18/romania-overlooked-new-wave/> (accessed: 01.03.2016); Hoad, Phil: *Romania's new wave could dry up if it doesn't get home support* (2013), <http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2013/mar/12/romanian-new-wave-after-hollywood> (accessed: 01.03.2016); Scott, A.O.: *New Wave on the Black Sea* (2008), [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/magazine/20Romanian-t.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/magazine/20Romanian-t.html?_r=1) (accessed: 01.03.2016).

The curatorial narratives that I have analysed belong to the following projects: East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe [an art documentation initiative coordinated by the Slovenian collective IRWIN], the Post-Communist Condition [a project under the direction of Boris Groys at the Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe], the Glossary of Common Knowledge [a five-year research project by MG+MSUM in the frame of L'Internationale, curated by Zdenka Badovinac, Bojana Piškur and Jesús Carrillo], RO\_ARCHIVE [a cultural project initiated by architect and visual artist Iosif Kiraly and scientifically coordinated by professor Mihail Manescu under the aegis of the Bucharest National University of Arts], Mapping Bucharest. Art, Memory, and Revolution 1916-2016 (curated by Peter Weibel and Bärbel Vischer in the framework of MAK Vienna Biennale 2015) and the Contemporary Art Archive. Center for Art Analysis 1985-2007 (project of artist-archivist Lia Perjovschi).

Taking Igor Zabel's essay "The (former) east and its identity" as a starting point, the first chapter sets the context of this paper, which is the Eastern identity in the East-West division of Europe during the Cold War and its legacy in transition societies, the post-communism.

As Peter Osborne points out, "'1989' signifies the end of historical communism (or 'actually existing socialism'), the dissolution of independent Left political cultures, and the decisive victory of a neo-liberal globalization of capital – incorporating the current engine of the world economy, state-capitalism in China."<sup>4</sup>

Yet, the abolition of communism didn't follow the same path in all Eastern European countries; 1989 in Romania took place a Revolution, which violently overthrew the regime and culminated with the execution of the communist leader and his wife. It was "the first revolution in the world to take place in front of the camera and to be disseminated through the media"<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, the circumstances of the Romanian Revolution, which is by many considered a putsch, remain ambiguous until today and still highly debated every year in TV shows on the commemorative day of the Revolution or make the subject of various films and documentaries.

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<sup>4</sup> Osborne, Peter: Imaginary Radicalisms (2006), <http://pavilionmagazine.org/peter-osborne-imaginary-radicalisms/> (accessed: 01.03.2016).

<sup>5</sup> Peter WEIBEL, Bärbel VISCHER, Mapping Bucharest. Art, Memory, and Revolution 1916-2016, in: Christoph THUN-HOHENSTEIN, Martina KANDELER-FRITSCH, MAK, Vienna Biennale 2015: IDEAS FOR CHANGE GUIDE, Vienna 2015, p. 57.

The next three chapters are dedicated to the concept of the “post-communist condition”, which I believe plays an essential role, not only in recent art history, but also in the way art history is produced by being curated. Given the limited space of this paper, I will focus primarily on the Romanian post-communist condition and I will assert my position by drawing two case studies on the question: how is the Romanian post-communist condition presented from within and from outside the Romanian contemporary art system? The first perspective, “from within” is Romanian artist’s Lia Perjovschi self-historicization endeavour Contemporary Art Archive (CAA) and the second, “from outside” is the exhibition „Mapping Bucharest. Art, Memory, and Revolution 1916-2016” curated by Peter Weibel and Bärbel Vischer in the framework of MAK Vienna Biennale 2015.

The reason why I chosen this archive of self-historicization and this exhibition about the art scene in Romania to exemplify the post-communist condition is that they provide two opposite perspectives and by comparing them, I shall find a common ground of the concept. The first perspective is presented “not from some external, objective position” and serves “as vitally important sources of knowledge about unofficial art and the conditions of its production in countries under socialism”<sup>6</sup> and the second is an external position, materialized into an “exhibition about the art scene in Romania”, as “an example of Europe’s misfortune, which began with the Second World War and continued through the Cold War until 1989, with the “iron curtain of ideologies” slicing apart Eastern and Western Europe.”<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the two examples only implicitly refer to the post-communist condition in their narratives; the CAA emerged in the last years of communism, in 1985, and developed in post-communism<sup>8</sup>, while Mapping Bucharest includes in its subtitle, “Art, Memory, and Revolution 1916-2016” the communist and post-communist period and presents in some of the chosen artworks the post-communist condition.

The fifth chapter deals with the Romanian Revolution and leads to the conclusions of this paper, where I will suggest that, when it comes to curating the Romanian post-communist condition, one has by all means to consider thematising the Romanian Revolution from 1989.

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<sup>6</sup> Badovinac, Zdenka: Self-historicization (2014) <http://glossary.mg-lj.si/referential-fields/historicization/self-historicization> (accessed: 27.02.2016).

<sup>7</sup> WEIBEL, VISCHER, Mapping Bucharest, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> See: Marius BABIAS, Sabine HENTZSCH, Lia Perjovschi. Contemporary Art Archive. Center for art analysis, 1985-2007, Cluj, Cologne 2007.

## 1. Eastern European Identity

In his article from 2000 "The (former) East and its identity" Igor Zabel remarks the interdependence between the terms "former East" and "post-communism" and that "one is predetermined with Eastern identity":

Writers often speak about the "former East", intending to stress that they speak about a region which used to be a different world, while now this difference is abolished. They never, however, speak about the "former West"; in this discourse, the West remains a firm cultural and political entity, while the "former East" has somehow lost its difference from the West without becoming identical with it. The expression "former East" denies and reestablishes the difference at the same time. This relationship is roughly parallel to the use of the term "post-communism". Both terms, "post-communism" and "former East", are similar in that they designate a situation which is more complicated and more difficult to grasp than the neat symmetrical dualism of the Cold War times: a situation where the dualism is abolished, the economic, the political and cultural systems ("free market", "democracy" and "international style") equalised, but a radical difference is still preserved. [...] The starting point is, therefore, the recognition of the fact that, in the present system of art and culture, one is predetermined with Eastern identity.<sup>9</sup>

As a response over years, concerning the use of "former" only when it comes to the East, the "long-term, transnational research, education, publishing, and exhibition project in the field of contemporary art and theory" FORMER WEST "grapples with the repercussions of the political, cultural, and economic events of 1989 for the contemporary condition"<sup>10</sup>. As we find out from the platform accompanying the project, "at present the project is in its culminating phase (2014–2016), leading to the major publication FORMER WEST: Art and the Contemporary after 1989, edited by Boris Buden, Maria Hlavajova, and Simon Sheikh (forthcoming, 2016)"<sup>11</sup>.

Regarding the East-West division of Europe, Zabel points out to the "system of differences, which function essentially as a system of power and domination, have determined (and they

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<sup>9</sup> Igor ZABEL, The (former) East and its identity, in: Macel, Christine (ed.), Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou, ed. Christine Macel & Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, The promises of the past: a discontinuous history of art in former Eastern Europe. Centre Pompidou, Galerie Sud and Espace 315, 14 April - 14 July 2010, Zürich 2010, p. 210-211 (first published in Zdenka BADOVINAC (ed.), Art East 2000+ collection. The art of Eastern Europe in Dialogue with the West- From the 1960s to the Present, Ljubljana 2000).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.formerwest.org/About> (accessed: 03.05.2016).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

still do) the structure of the field of art, the production of works as well as their specific meaning and understanding”<sup>12</sup>.

This context appears also in many essays from the East Art Map, from which I will quote here only two:

Marina Griznić: “The whole socialist machine was aimed at neutralising the side effects of a relevant interpretation of its reality and of art production, at covering up history, effacing and renaming it. At a discursive level, this was a struggle for the formation and interpretation of the history of Eastern Europe, for a re-appropriation of the history of socialism by the East as well as by the West.”<sup>13</sup>

Ana Peraica: “In the scenario in which Western art history is the obvious author, and its institutions an implied reader, the writing of art history in Eastern Europe seems to have no purpose. But the scenario of invention has happened twice during the twentieth century. Since the West re-invented East European modernism after the World War II, it has now totally reinvented East European art.”<sup>14</sup>

Considering this bias, I would like to draw attention to a research, which deals with the categorisation of Eastern European narratives. In her article “Contemporary Art as Ars Memoriae: Curatorial Strategies for Challenging the Post-Communist Condition”, junior visiting fellow at the Viennese Institut for Human Sciences Svetla Kazalarska analyses “the specific curatorial narratives and artistic practices of facing the communist past, negotiating post-communist identities, and re-positioning of the former East in the new geographies of art”<sup>15</sup>.

Kazalarska proposes a set of five “ideal types” of curatorial narratives, which “are not necessarily excluding each other—on the contrary, they often times overlap and complement each other, in spite of placing the emphasis on different claims”<sup>16</sup>. These stereotypical narratives are: Heroic Narratives: Artists as “Freedom Fighters”, Post-colonialist Narratives: East versus West, Contextualizing Narratives: No Such Thing as East European Art,

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<sup>12</sup> ZABEL, The (former) East and its identity, op. cit., p. 210–211.

<sup>13</sup> GRŽINIĆ, On the Re-Politicisation of Art, op. cit., p. 484.

<sup>14</sup> Ana PERAICA, A Corruption of the 'Grand Narrative' of Art, in: IRWIN, East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe, London 2006, p. 473.

<sup>15</sup> Kazalarska, Svetla: Contemporary Art as Ars Memoriae: Curatorial Strategies for Challenging the Post-Communist Condition (2009), <http://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxv/contemporary-art-as-ars-memoriae/> (accessed: 01.03.2016).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

## Europeanization Narratives: Artists for Europe, and Strategies of Historicization and Institutionalization – Mind the Map! History is Not Given!

In the category of europeanization narratives, Kazalarska links a large number of exhibitions with the European integration process throughout the 1990s and the two waves of European enlargement in 2004 and 2007:

The first enlargement wave in particular was accompanied by an unprecedented number of projects and campaigns aiming at the presentation of the art and culture of the ten new European Union (EU) members to the old ones. The huge wave of exhibitions on the so-called “New Europe” made use of a specific narrative, very close to the clichéd “European talk”—that of art and culture bridging the differences between the two parts of Europe, culturally and politically divided during the Cold War. A prime example of the Europeanization curatorial narrative is the exhibition *Passage Europe: A Certain Look at Central and East European Art* (2004) at the Musée d’Art Moderne de Saint-Étienne, curated by Lorand Hegyi, who outspokenly highlighted this context: “Shortly before the inauguration of this exhibition, Europe celebrated the official accession of ten new members to the European Union. This rings in a new chapter in the history of the continent. Separation and mistrust, hostility and tension, will make way—or so we hope—to a new era of construction in a new European community [...] Similarly, a significantly smaller number of projects showcasing contemporary and modern art from Romania and Bulgaria followed in 2007, the most exemplary of which is the exhibition *Plus Two—Contemporary Art from Bulgaria and Romania* at the MKM Center for Modern and Contemporary Art in Duisburg, Germany, straightforwardly intended to mark the two countries’ recent accession to the EU. This in fact is the only common thread that hypothetically links the selected works by Romanian and Bulgarian artists.”<sup>17</sup>

Comparing the post-colonialist and the contextualizing narratives, Kazalarska observes:

Instead of underlining the similarities between artistic developments in the East and in the West, which is an approach common for the post-colonialist narratives, contextualizing narratives insist on the specificity of Eastern art in terms of its particular content and context of production, nevertheless acknowledging certain similarities, at least in the realm of artistic forms. Contextualizing curatorial narratives typically focus on the characteristics of artistic practices in culturally and historically distinctive regions such as Central Europe, the Balkans, the Baltics, and the countries of the former Yugoslav Federation<sup>18</sup>.

Nevertheless, for the strategies of historicization and institutionalization of East European art [which also concentrate on the characteristics of artistic practices in culturally and historically distinctive regions], she develops a separate category; she doesn’t subordinate them to the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



contextualizing narratives, emphasising the increasing number of “collections, archives, museums, art biennials, and research institutes dealing with the presentation, historicization and preservation of the late socialist and post-socialist art of Central and Eastern Europe”. The example she provides in this case is IRWIN’s East Art Map: A (Re)Construction of the History of Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe, “indisputably, the largest curatorial project of historicizing East European art”<sup>19</sup>.

As we find out from the General Introduction of the book, which is “the culmination of more than a decade of activities by the group IRWIN dedicated to the question of Eastern European art and its status”, the aims of the project were to organize the fundamental relationships between East European artists, to draw a map and create a table. Divided in two phases, 1999-2002 and 2002-2005, like the project itself, the book is mapping the art production that occurred in Eastern Europe from 1945 to the present and presenting a series of essays on relevant issues related to the Eastern European art system<sup>20</sup>.

The critique was that the map was “not particularly systematic”, and regarding the outcome of the East Art Map project, Zdenka Badovinac concludes in her “narration” of the term “self-historcization” from the Glossary of Common Knowledge that it is “(currently) impossible to forge a collective narrative of Eastern European art”:

They described their map of Eastern European art as an arbitrary work since other names might have appeared on it as well. They also found that for the most part the selectors had not provided information about the relations between local artists or comparisons between East and West. They also noticed that the different selectors had used very heterogeneously – that is, unsystematically – criteria in their selections.

Finally, they said they were not surprised by such results, which were, after all, the consequence of several decades of Eastern European isolation. Despite the fact that the selection of the represented artists was not made by Irwin themselves but by the curators and artists they had invited, one of the key results of the project is, surely, the group’s discovery that it is (currently) impossible to forge a collective narrative of Eastern European art<sup>21</sup>.

Regarding the post-colonialist narratives, there is currently a debate; some theorists encourage the post-colonialist approach, some on the contrary. Piotr Piotrowski for example

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> IRWIN, General Introduction, in: IRWIN, East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe, London 2006, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Badovinac, Self-historcization, op. cit.

reaches in his article “East European art peripheries facing post-colonial theory”, the conclusion that “the present practice of global art studies based on post-colonial theory faces several problems”:

One of them is its exclusivity, or priority of former colony-metropolis relation as the key to understand the world. For these theorists, and for their own projects, this is probably an effective approach, since a deconstruction of the colonial-decolonial-postcolonial complex relation is crucial, but this is not global. [...] If postcolonial relations, understood in terms of transcontinental relations might enjoy a privilege to be a universal key to global art history we will finally face another hegemony, and other exclusions, this time as a sort of reverse of the former ones. Global art history must be “horizontal,” deprived of any domination; must be open for both all peripheries and all centers, seen probably as peripheries as well, or at least on equal footing with the peripheries<sup>22</sup>.

According to Piotrowski, the main problem and critique of post-colonial studies is the question of Eurocentrism, because without such a critique, globalising Eastern Europe would not be possible, since the way to make East European art global goes via Europe, not against it. Another aspect he brings to light is that of the “other” or rather the “close other”, which lives and thinks in the same system of perception and understanding of the world, giving the example of artists from Prague or Zagreb, for whom West European art centers are not entirely external, as they are for artists from Shanghai or the example of bohemian Prague, which was more advanced in terms of industry and education than the Viennese capital at the beginning of the twentieth century, making hard to admit the cultural Austrian domination, in spite of the political domination.

Unlike Piotrowski’s theory against a post-colonial approach of the East European art peripheries, the article of David Chioni Moore “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique” focuses on post-Soviet postcoloniality in the Baltic states, Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia.

In what follows, therefore, I turn to a postcolonial designation for another zone: the post-Soviet sphere—the Baltic states, Central and Eastern Europe (including both former Soviet republics and independent “Eastern Bloc” states), the Caucasus, and Central Asia. In my view, at least two features of this giant sphere are significant for

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<sup>22</sup> Piotrowski, Piotr: East European art peripheries facing post-colonial theory (2013/2014), <http://nonsite.org/article/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory> (accessed: 01.03.2016).

currently constituted postcolonial studies: first, how extraordinarily postcolonial the societies of the former Soviet regions are, and, second, how extraordinarily little attention is paid to this fact, at least in these terms<sup>23</sup>.

After detailing the example of sub-Saharan Africa, Moore concludes that the nations from Estonia to Kazakhstan were subject of Russian shorter or longer domination and rises the following question:

For does not the description of postcoloniality offered here reasonably as well apply to the giant crescent from Estonia to Kazakhstan, which also includes (it is worth mentioning all 27 nation-states) Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the former East Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the remaining Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan?<sup>24</sup>

Albeit Moore summarizes that “the post-Soviet world, like the postcolonial world, is enormously diverse”, he also sees similarities such as the desire of Eastern Europeans to return to Westernness “that once was theirs” and the competition to be at Europe’s “geographic center”<sup>25</sup>.

Geography, in the sense of Irit Rogoff, that is [among other definitions] “a site of collective national, cultural, linguistic and topographical histories”<sup>26</sup>, gives the political term Eastern European, which is a complex territory full of differences, a pluralistic dimension.

This pluralistic dimension makes itself felt also in art, as Miško Šuvaković’s observes in his article on deconstructive postsocialist political art „Art as a Political Machine: Fragments on the Late Socialist and Postsocialist Art of Mitteleuropa and the Balkans”. After differentiating in the beginning of his essay the terms Mitteleuropa, Central Europa, Eastern Europa, and the Balkans [he refers to “Mitteleuropa” as a cultural rather than a geographical space, which includes “countries and cultures that have built their cultural identity under the influence of the Austro- Hungarian Empire” and to the Balkans, as cultural space not carrying “much weight”], Šuvaković turns to the evolution and the spectre of post-modernism:

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<sup>23</sup> David Chioni MOORE, Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique, in PMLA, Vol. 116, No. 1, Special Topic - Globalizing Literary Studies, New York 2001, p. 114 (also online under <http://www.jstor.org/stable/463645>, accessed: 19.04.2016).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 115.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>26</sup> Irit ROGOFF, Terra infirma : geography's visual culture, London, New York 2000, p. 14.

Post-modern art is a plural art. It is an art consisting of the different and mutually irreducible worlds of art and culture, this being valid whether we observe it from a historical or a geographic and geopolitical perspective. Postmodern art, moreover is an art in which styles genres of art, culture, and politics become codes of the representation, expression, and production of social reality. [...] Postwar modernism thus was characterized by a crucial difference in understanding and realizing social, technical, and artistic progress. [...] While Western bloc culture was characterized by a clear institutional difference between high elite art and popular art and mass culture, the culture of the Eastern bloc promoted the idea of unitary new socialist and realist art conflating the needs of elite art and mass (folkloric, working class) culture. [...] Different and contradictory kinds of high art emerged in Mitteleuropa and the Balkans during the late 1970s and early 1980s, that is, during the period of late socialism, and during the late 1980s and 1990s, the era of post-socialism<sup>27</sup>.

To sum it up, the significant milestones in the recent discourse of Eastern European narratives are: 1989, which marked the end of communism, leading to the victory of a neo-liberal globalization of capital and the last three waves of the European Union enlargement from 2004, 2007, and 2013. While some theorists are pleading for a post-colonial approach of the Eastern European periphery, some theorists, mostly from Eastern Europe, are pleading against it. However, if there is a main feature of Eastern European post-communist art, this is given by the conditions of art production in communism and afterwards, aspect which I will develop further in the next chapter and deals with the re-appropriation of history.

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<sup>27</sup> Miško ŠUVAKOVIĆ, *Art as a Political Machine: Fragments on the Late Socialist and Postsocialist Art of Mitteleuropa and the Balkans*, in Aleš ERJAVEC (ed), *Postmodernism and the postsocialist condition*, California 2003, p. 90–94.

## 2. Post-communist Condition

The curatorial statement of this year's Bucharest Biennale begins with a political joke:

“– What is the difference between a fairytale in the West and a fairytale in the East?

– A fairytale in the West starts with the words “Once upon a time there was...” A fairytale in the East starts with the words “Once upon a time there will be...””<sup>28</sup>

Enclosing the curatorial team's radical departure of the seventh Bucharest Biennale in the recent approach of curators “who are abandoning standard exhibitions formats, staging a season of performances, for example, or a series of talks instead”, Kaelen Wilson- Goldie considers Niels Van Tomme's decision of placing the artworks exclusively in the public space, on advertising billboards “partly practical and mostly conceptual, a bold response to the strange, multifaceted phenomenon of postsocialist privatisation in Romania”<sup>29</sup>.

The East-West political joke and fact that the postsocialist privatisation in Romania is the subject of the Bucharest Biennale 2016 highlights the relationship between art and the social and political sphere and makes one wonder, when does actually postsocialism end? Or is it already over, but its heritage still subsists?

In a presentation held on September 24, 2004 at an East European Studies discussion at Columbia University in New York, sociologist and Minister of Culture of Hungary between 2005 and 2006, Andras Bozoki considers, regarding the EU enlargement wave from 2004, that “EU enlargement has brought the region to a new stage in its development, and one in which the former communists need to redefine their political roles. Indeed, this stage could be interpreted as the end of postcommunism”<sup>30</sup>.

Given the fact that Bozoki makes this assumption in 2004, he only refers to the seven countries from the former Eastern Bloc which joined the EU that year (Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia). What about Romania and Bulgaria, which joined three years later? Was post-communism for them over in 2007? Croatia joined in 2013, but are then Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.biennialfoundation.org/2015/11/7th-bucharest-biennale-curatorial-statement/> (accessed: 04.05.2016).

<sup>29</sup> Kaelen WILSON-GOLDIE, Bucharest Biennale 7: “What are we building down there?”, in: Artforum, Summer Preview, May 2016, p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> Bozoki, Andras: The End of Postcommunism (2004) <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/306-the-end-postcommunism> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

Serbia still under post-communism? Not to mention that Bosnia Herzegovina is a potential EU candidate and Kosovo a potential candidate, that have not applied for membership.

Nonetheless, there is a link between post-communism and the two milestones in recent history, the year 1989 and the 2007 EU enlargement wave, in the case of Romanian post-communism. In the show "1989. End of History or Beginning of the Future?", hosted at Kunsthalle Wien between October 2009 and February 2010 and dedicated to "the annus mirabilis 1989", which "investigates the metaphors connected with the collapse of the bipolar division of the world into East and West and the political upheaval, metaphors that are more than ever of relevance for a wide variety of different spheres of life"<sup>31</sup>, Romania was involved through Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică's "Videograms of a Revolution" and Christoph Büchel and Giovanni Carmine's "CEAU (Bootleg)". The first position is a documentary on the 1989 Romanian Revolution and the second is an installation, which was first presented in 2007 at the Romanian Pavilion at the 52<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale and consists of a bunch of "CEAU" books [containing a selection of portraits of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu], boxes with plastic bags branded by the Swiss concern Ringier and an iconic checkered plastic bag displayed over an EU flag<sup>32</sup>.

One of the most prominent features of the Eastern European post-communist condition in art is marked by social criticism through the deconstruction of the postsocialist culture, and was preceded by strong nationalist movements.

Similarly to East Art Map, "The Post-communist Condition", a project under the auspices of the German Federal Cultural Foundation, proposes "to describe the current situation in which art and culture activities operate in eastern Europe more than a decade after the end of the Cold War and to open a forum for a discussion that will promote the mutual exchange of ideas concerning the situation in post-communist societies" and points out to the "differing conditions in which the cultural discourse in the east and in the west has developed, conditions which have led to numerous misunderstandings on both sides"<sup>33</sup>. Moreover, in the context of the post-communistic nationalism, the project rises the question "how the culture

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<sup>31</sup> <http://kunsthallegewien.at/#/en/exhibitions/1989-end-history-or-beginning-future> (accessed: 07.05.2016).

<sup>32</sup> See: KUNSTHALLE Wien, Gerald Matt, Cathérine Hug, Thomas Mießgang, 1989. Ende der Geschichte oder Beginn der Zukunft?, Nürnberg 2009, p. 114.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.postcommunist.de/home/index.php?kat=projekt&subkat=beschreibung&lang=en> (accessed: 21.02.2016).

of the east-European countries have reacted to the new situation in which they find themselves – this means, how do they react to the reality of the marketplace and the nation-state, about which for decade they only had a vague and perhaps utopian conception?”<sup>34</sup>. Because, in respect to the “new definition of national cultural identity”, the situation in the post-communist countries differs from that in the post-colonial countries, cultural studies are facing the task of formulating a new theoretical discourse which is faithful to the post-communist situation. “The Post-communist Condition” “assumes this task by including intellectuals, writers and artists from eastern Europe in a dialogue”<sup>35</sup> about this transformation of east-European communist models into a western one and its consequences reflected in theory and art.

From a feminist perspective, Bojana Pejić illustrates the post-communist condition as follows:

The post-communist economic “transition” of the 1990s caused mass employment, particularly of women, and produced social misery. Indeed, new democratic societies produced a rapid polarization of the social fabric, divided now between the nouveaux riches and the nouveau pauvres. Since 1990, artists working in Eastern Europe have been addressing these social processes in a rather critical manner. Today, twenty years after the Wall fell, one can even claim that visual artists in Eastern Europe have provided us with the most radical social criticism by deconstructing traditionalist values accepted by the new post-socialist societies, such as nationalism and patriarchy, for example; [...] The foundation of the post-communist states was preceded by strong nationalist movements which mushroomed around Eastern European regions by the end of the 1980s. Nationalist ideology, as the argument goes, was invented as the “best remedy” against the communist one.<sup>36</sup>

Correspondingly to Pejić, in the section “Art as a Political Machine” of the previously mentioned essay on the deconstructive postsocialist political art, Miško Šuvaković identifies among the different kinds of high art emerged in Mitteleuropa and the Balkans: the “National Realism”, a second wave of modernism, deconstructive postsocialist art, and the postmodernism resembling the western one. Another two interesting sections follow in the article, the first is named “Impossible Histories: Postmodern Art and the Avant-Garde in Romania” and the second “subREAL”, being dedicated to the group founded in Bucharest in

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Bojana PEJIĆ, *Gender Check: A Reader Art and Theory in Eastern Europe*, Cologne 2010, p. 250.

1990, whose permanent members are Călin Dan and Iosif Király and which “works under a postsocialist zero degree of existence.”

“National Realism” employs traditional means of expression and representation in order to respond to the past and to reactivate them as strategies of anti-Communist, antimodernist, and anti-Western art, which are oriented toward restoring religious and especially national identities [in a philosophical sense] and are connected with the “heterogeneous corpus of patriotic and nationalist forces, and therefore with the postsocialist political forces in Russia, Romania, and Serbia that came into being by the fusion of nationalistic and Rightist parties with the power machinery of socialist institutions that had lost their Leftist ideology” [in a political sense]. On the other hand, according to Šuvaković, the second wave of modernism

questioned and further developed modernist ideas (originality, the strong subject, flatness, abstraction, pure forms, sharp edges, literal meaning), thereby revealing the traumatic place of the socialist culture, in which abstract high modernism was censured, oppressed, and obstructed. [...] moreover, exhibited an ambition to reverse the socialist and late socialist entropy and restore to its grotesque, cynical, and projectless culture the ideas of utopia and its projects, be they contemporary or further oriented.<sup>37</sup>

The work of artists who create deconstructive postsocialist political art, conceptualize it, and thematize it, in contrast with the “National Realism” and the second wave of modernism, is depicted as “a map of political, cultural, and artistic traces produced by a combination of collage and montage”. The deconstructive character is argued by the fact that these practices “come into being as conceptual, visual, behavioural, or environmental investigations (representations, simulations) of meanings, values, metaphysical borders, and fetishizations of socialist culture”. Šuvaković develops further on the position of such artists who create deconstructive postsocialist political art:

The artist appropriates the procedure by which he or she was manipulated by institutions, ideologies, and culture. By manipulating the manipulatory procedures of the manipulators, these artists carry out a deconstruction of the artistic metaphysics of overdetermination. The position of such artists is a complex one, for they deconstruct not only postsocialist culture and history, but also the wish of the Western art system to

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<sup>37</sup> ŠUVAKOVIĆ, *Art as a Political Machine*, op. cit., p. 95.



see and identify the artist in such a culture as an asymmetrical and exotic Other. In this way, these artists take over the cynical wish of Western culture and its art institutions to see the postsocialist artist as a caricature or degeneration of Socialism Realism and socialist culture. The postsocialist artist multiplies, varies, deforms, empties, and makes nonsensical the representation of this wish of the West. [...] The deconstructive postsocialist artist behaves as a machine that quickly, obscenely, and ecstatically consumes the meanings, sense, and values of capitalism, as well as the remnants of the actually existing socialist politics. For such an artist, politics is his or her material and tool, and politics in its obscenity and exhaustion is his or her effect or trace<sup>38</sup>.

Regarding the “small, nonparadigmatic avant-gardes of the Balkans, the avant-gardes of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Croatia”, Šuvaković observes that “something existed, but it was not identified, classified, and represented as a part of the history of modern Europe” because of the geographic and political marginality of these countries and because of the development of Realsozialismus. As for modern and avant-garde Romanian art, “some of the Romanian artists who left the Balkans became leading European modernist and avant-garde artists and intellectuals”. The household names given as example here are: Constantin Brâncuși, Tristan Tzara, Eugene Ionesco, Emile M. Cioran, and Mircea Eliade. The first four are also mentioned in the narrative of “Mapping Bucharest”, aspect which I will address below in the study case. Before analysing the activity of the group subREAL, Šuvaković concludes on the recent culture and postsocialism in Romania:

Although after the Second World War Romania became a part of the Soviet bloc, in the 1960s, it started down a somewhat insular path toward Communism by combining socialist and nationalist ideas. It thus became isolated in relationship to the Eastern bloc, as well, a kind of cultural void in the Europe of the second part of the twentieth century, a country “in the middle of nowhere”. It’s recent culture consisted of “exotic” Balkan folklore, in the West allegorically represented by the tales of Transylvania and Dracula, and at the same time of the work of numerous intellectuals and artists who, like their predecessors, left Communist Romania and found their place in the intellectual capitals of Western Europe.<sup>39</sup>

Kipping in mind this “somewhat insular path toward Communism”, I would like to call attention to the exhibition “Before & After the Cultural Revolution in Romania: 1971”, curated by Cosmin Nasui, which took place between December 2015 and March 2016 in Bucharest and reflects a short but important political and ideological breach, known as the “unfrozen years”, when the country was opened to the Western European culture and values. It is part

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 126–127.

of DARE, a programme of Documenting, Archiving, Revaluing and Exhibiting the art produced in Romania in 1945-1990, initiated by the PostModernism Museum in 2015, whose initiative of research recovery counts as the first in Romania for this historic period of time<sup>40</sup>. This idea of the recuperation of the past is another feature of the Eastern European post-communist condition, which appears also in the Romanian one. A very meaningful example of cultural project dealing with the recovery of the memory is RO\_Archive, which “sets to approach the archive in Boris Groys fashion, as a machine that produces the future, a last criterion that can delimitate art from non-art”<sup>41</sup> and which is described as:

an on-going investigation into the recuperation and valorisation of recent memory, set underway in 2007 by a team of young artists and theorists (Raluca Oancea Nestor, Cristiana Radu, Bogdan Bordeianu, Michele Bressan, Bogdan Gîrbovan, Raluca Paraschiv Ionescu, Andrei Mateescu, Cosmin Moldovan, Simona Dumitriu, Larisa Sitar) [...] coordinated by Professor Iosif Király, within the Department of Photography and Time Based Media Art of the Bucharest National University of Arts (UNArte). As its primary aim, the artistic research set out to [de]construct the image of a Romania recently integrated into the European Union and to expose the indifference towards the proliferation in the media of representations of uncertain artistic and documentary value.<sup>42</sup>

In this sense, a very interesting bestiary of keywords of Romanian Post-Communism is proposed by anthropologist and writer Bogdan Iancu and includes: Thermopanés, Private Security Firms, Privatisation/De-industrialisation, Stately Homes/Houses in Progress, The Rustic, and The Pyramids of Bad Faith: Caritas and FNI. While the rustic seems to be the latest “declaration of taste and distinction” in the countryside, the thermopanés mark “social recognition” in the city and the transformation of property is described quoting former Polish prime-minister Janusz Lewandowski: “Privatization is when someone who doesn’t know who the real owner is and doesn’t know it’s really worth sells something to someone who doesn’t have any money”<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> See: Nasui, Cosmin: Before & After the Cultural Revolution in Romania: 1971- research, archive and exhibition project (2015) <http://postmodernism.ro/before-after-the-cultural-revolution-in-romania-1971/> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>41</sup> [http://roarchive.ro/index.php?option=com\\_content&id=47&lang=en](http://roarchive.ro/index.php?option=com_content&id=47&lang=en) (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>42</sup> Raluca OANCEA NESTOR, RO\_Archive, in: Iosif KIRÁLI, Raluca OANCEA NESTOR, Raluca PARASCHIV IONESCU, RO\_Archive. An Archive of Romania in Times of Transition, Bucharest 2015, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Bogdan IANCU, Keywords of Romanian Post-Communism, in Iosif KIRÁLI, Raluca OANCEA NESTOR, Raluca PARASCHIV IONESCU, RO\_Archive. An Archive of Romania in Times of Transition, Bucharest 2015, p. 9–15.

Yet, the most notable cultural endeavour of collective memory recovery is the the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance, whose co-initiator is the writer Ana Blandiana, to whom recently an European Poet of Freedom Prize was been awarded<sup>44</sup>. She insists that memory can be relearned:

The greatest victory of communism, a victory dramatically revealed only after 1989, was to create people without a memory – a brainwashed new man unable to remember what he was, what he had, or what he did before communism.

The creation of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance is a means of counteracting this victory, a means to resuscitate the collective memory.

Made up of the Sighet Museum and the International Centre for Studies into Communism, based in Bucharest, as well as being the organiser of the Summer School the Memorial is an institution of Memory, unique in that it is simultaneously an institute of research, museography and education.

To the question, “Can memory be relearned?” the answer of the Memorial to the Victims of Communism and to the Resistance in Romania is a resounding “Yes” (Ana Blandiana)<sup>45</sup>.

In communism, besides the intention to create people without memory, there was also the intention to turn them into “automata, machines supposed to function according to a programme”, as Boris Groys asserts. Furthermore, he emphasizes that “this perception of communism an an empire of cold rationality where humans are transformed into machines” was shaped by the great literary tradition such as Huxley and Orwell, “for in the Cold War period the West was denied an immediate experience of Soviet communism”<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> See: Adamowicz, Pawel: Perils of Not Reading Poetry (2016) [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pawel-adamowicz/perils-of-not-reading-poe\\_b\\_9540054.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/pawel-adamowicz/perils-of-not-reading-poe_b_9540054.html) (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.memorialsighet.ro/memorial-en/> (accessed: 10.05.2016).

<sup>46</sup> Boris GROYS, *The Communist Postscript*, New York 2009, p. 76.

### 3. Lia Perjovschi's CAA

In a recent article in which art is described as a medium of truth, “the only recognized field of personal responsibility” or “a field in which attempts to change the world are regularly undertaken by artists” and internet as an art medium, which replaced traditional art institutions, Boris Groys declares that art documentation is not art: “Art documentation refers to art but it is not art. That is why art documentation can be reformatted, rewritten, extended, shortened, and so forth.”<sup>47</sup> Additionally, Groys sees the internet as an archive, whose most interesting aspect is “precisely the possibilities for decontextualization and recontextualization through the operations of cut and paste that the internet offers its users.” In the end of his essay he reaches the conclusion that: “Today we are more interested in the desire for nonidentity that leads artists out of their historical contexts than in these contexts themselves.”<sup>48</sup>

Even if art documentation isn't art, it still plays a relevant role in recent art history and its discursive aspects or forms of presentation can constitute “innovative forms of archives”. Such projects, according to Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, “do not only represent the strategy of self-historicization—one of the main correctives performed within an Eastern European institutional critique—but also contribute to the development of methods of artistic research and to theoretical endeavors imagining what, if anything, a shared history of European contemporary art might be.”<sup>49</sup>

Probably the most specific definition of the term self-historicization is given by Zdenka Badovinac in the Glossary of Common Knowledge:

Self-historicization refers to any informal system of historicization that is practised by artists who because of the lack of a suitable collective history have had to search for their own historical or interpretive context. In many parts of the non-Western world, such as Eastern Europe during the socialist period and even later, the local institutions that should have systematized neo-avant-garde art either did not exist or took a dismissive attitude

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<sup>47</sup> Groys, Boris: The Truth of Art (2016), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-truth-of-art/> (05.05.2016).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Nataša PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ, Innovative Forms of Archives, Part One: Exhibitions, Events, Books, Museums, and Lia Perjovschi's Contemporary Art Archive, in: e-flux journal, 13, 2010 (also online under <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/innovative-forms-of-archives-part-one-exhibitions-events-books-museums-and-lia-perjovschi's-contemporary-art-archive/>, accessed: 03.05.2016).

towards such art. Consequently, the artists themselves were often forced to archive documents relating to their own art, the art of others, or broader art movements, as well as the conditions of production. [...]Nevertheless, given the existing interests of the globalizing art system, we need to draw special attention to the differences within a world that seems increasingly homogeneous – especially, the differences between regions that are less standardized and regulated and those that are more so. It is in this context that I view the significance of self-historicization, which in some places still represents one of the most important, if not the only, form of historicization. Among other things, self-historicization reminds us that the dominant systems of art history are unable to present the state of affairs in a global world of differences<sup>50</sup>.

Enumerating Lia Perjovschi's Contemporary Art Archive / Center for Art Analysis, IRWIN's East Art Map, Tamás St. Auby's Portable Intelligence Increase Museum, Vyacheslav Akhunov's miniature reproductions of all his works in his installation, 1 m2, Walid Raad's A History of Modern and Contemporary Arab Art, "and various authorless projects originating in Southeastern Europe" among the cases that can help us understand the objectives and mechanisms of archiving, which "typically employ the notion of the archive as a form, and find in this undertaking an argument for declaring the museum and the archive to be synonymous"<sup>51</sup>, Petrešin-Bachelez observes as a common feature of these projects their artist's designation as "archival artists", which is an adaptation of the profession of an archivist or art historian. Their practices "create a visual typology, offering material for further art historical research, while at the same time experimenting with the registers involved in the presentation and interrogation of documents and other archival material" and "contribute to prominent discourses in contemporary art today on archeological procedures and the archeological imaginary"<sup>52</sup>.

About these artists, Zdenka Badovinac completes that their own personal involvement in local marginalized art traditions is viewed as essential and that they are "not merely interested in correcting existing histories; they want to bring attention to the fundamental principle underlying the creation of these histories, the involvement of the individual, which always means excluding something"<sup>53</sup>. In this sense, art archives created in self-historicization processes are not about the authenticity of present or past; "Rather, the artistic traditions

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<sup>50</sup> Badovinac, Self-historicization, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ, Innovative Forms of Archives, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Badovinac, Self-historicization, op. cit.

they represent are here collected together with the traumas of the region, with everything that was repressed by the collective consciousness and repeated in the unconscious.”<sup>54</sup>

Like Petrešin-Bachelez, Badovinac underlines the importance of the work of these artists as a source of knowledge:

A number of important Eastern European artists – Artpool (György Galántai, Júlia Klaniczay), Zofija Kulik, Július Koller, and Lia Perjovschi and the CAA, among others – have devoted a large part of their work to creating archives that today serve as vitally important sources of knowledge about unofficial art and the conditions of its production in countries under socialism. We can trace the Eastern European tradition of art archives developed by artists out of the need to contextualize their own art practices all the way to the present day.<sup>55</sup>

Regarding the archival drive or impulse in recent Romanian art, artist and Ph.D. Associate Professor at the George Enescu University of Arts in Iași, Cristian Nae explains that “we could interpret this persistent interest in the conservation and production of memory in Romanian contemporary art as a response to a general need to overcome the (dual) traumatic constituency of Romanian identity after 1989” and underscores that “the recovery on the one hand and the critical re-evaluation of the communist past and its effects on the other turn the archive into a working theme as an obsessive question”<sup>56</sup>. Nae links the palpable change in critical awareness towards the ways of constituting the archive in Romanian artistic practices with the different approach of the post-communist condition and the archive “within this geopolitical and cultural space to a larger questioning of identity and to the uncertain memory of the past”:

After the nineties, when the processes of elaborating Romania’s European identity became more and more important, working on the concept of archive acts, first of all, as a strategy of self-recognition, as a necessary remembrance of our present being, trapped within a now identifiable “in-between”. Therefore, the archive is linked within this geopolitical and cultural space to a larger questioning of identity and to the uncertain memory of the past. Secondly, the anxiety caused by rapid and sometimes unintelligible changes in socio-economical field due to its neo-capitalist redefinition causes contemporary artists to make special use of strategies of

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Cristian NAE, *Archival Practices in Romanian Photography of the 2000’s: Attitudes, Strategies and Motivations*, in Iosif KIRÁLI, Raluca OANCEA NESTOR, Raluca PARASCHIV IONESCU, *RO\_Archive. An Archive of Romania in Times of Transition*, Bucharest 2015, p. 16–17.

documenting a present which becomes more and more an illusory point of reference. Thus, they work to preserve the common existence of a social body. An archive gives coherence to the individual's fragmentary existence in understanding the economic and political decisions that shape the "transition" period. It turns into a steady object of reference and representation. [...] In this respect, they try to supply the historical necessity for documentation, but they also inherit from the past a suspicion towards official records as an obsessive social surveillance strategy<sup>57</sup>.

Using the term "archive" to refer more generally to the "preservation of memory and the process of memorising", Nae comes up with a set of four approaches to the archive in contemporary Romanian art:

Firstly, there are practices approaching the archive as an object of analysis and, consequently, performing a discursive intervention upon it, often in institutional terms (such as *subREAL*'s work with the *Arta* archives under the name of AHA (Art History Archive) or Lia and Dan Perjovschi's CAA (Centre for Art Analysis/ Contemporary Art Archive)). Secondly, there are practices that take the archive to be a *corpus of chaotic materiality*, performing a documentation and critique of the neo-capitalist consumerist superabundance of objects and signs, especially in art installations and video art. Thirdly, one may identify artistic practices that regard the archive as a visual diary, employed as a *strategy of subjectivation* and resistance, recording and recoding private life. While Ion Grigorescu's body of photographic works from the seventies remain an exemplary reference, more recently, Ioana Nemeş's *Monthly Evaluations* project may be a case in point. Last, but not least, one may note practices that *photographically* record urban landscape and the public space as depositaries of collective memory<sup>58</sup>.

Nae analyses further the last category of photographic projects and sees the archive not as a principle of objectivity and memory or a distorted reality fictionalised past, but rather as a "principle of doubt". Moreover, he reaches the conclusion that the "uncertainty of the post-communist reality and identity construct is affirmed, while artists become increasingly aware of the distorting potential of their own artistic means"<sup>59</sup>.

Yet, the most critical aspect of archives of self-historicization in Romanian contemporary art and of other endeavours dealing with collective memory recovery is that they created a space of resistance. Of particular interest in this regard are, besides Ana Blandiana, who I previously mentioned, Irina Margareta Nistor, the lead character of recent documentary "Chuck Norris

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 17–18.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 20–21.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

vs Communism”, who dubbed more than 3000 illegally screened Hollywood films in Ceaușescu’s Romania marked by strong political censorship in the 1980s and later on<sup>60</sup> and Ion Grigorescu, who under “Ceaușescu’s climate of fear, which didn’t even allow people to use cameras, let alone criticise the system” succeeded in doing both “while restricting his practice to a small circle of friends, and lending it a humorous touch”<sup>61</sup>.

In this sense Petrešin-Bachelez mentions that in communist regimes information and documentation circulated among groups of like-minded critics, writers, and artists and that the liberating atmosphere from the 1970s and 1980s of what could be called “the early attempts of civil society in a socialist state” went hand in hand with underground creativity. She describes Lia Perjovschi’s CAA as follows:

Starting with her performances in her Bucharest apartment in the 1980s, under one of the most repressive regimes in Europe, Lia Perjovschi’s activities created a space of resistance. From body art she switched to researching the body of international art, said husband Dan Perjovschi about the change in her practice. Her curiosity and desire to understand, recuperate, discuss, share, and coach found its way to a general audience. Her installations took the form of open spaces, discussion areas, reading rooms, waiting rooms, meeting rooms. Books, slides, photocopies, files, postcards, printed matter about international as well as Romanian contemporary art began to be organized and assembled in logical order. Lia also produced exhaustive drawings and texts aimed at compiling all possible information about the Western history of contemporary art, calling her products Subjective Art History. [...]

Lia emphasizes the most important activity an archive can foster: sharing and teaching. While it was practically forbidden to share books, ideas, and information during the communist regime, she understood that a shared idea brings about another idea and that sharing is an essential survival strategy<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>60</sup> See among others: Hoffman, Jordan: Sundance 2015 review: Chuck Norris vs Communism – the real battle is against boredom (2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/jan/24/sundance-2015-review-chuck-norris-vs-communism-the-real-battle-is-against-boredom> (accessed: 01.03.2016), Nicolov, Alice: Chuck Norris vs Communism (2016), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourbeeb/alice-nicolov/chuck-norris-versus-communism> (accessed: 01.03.2016), Rada ŠEŠIĆ: Chuck Norris vs Communism, in: LET’S CEE Film Festival (ed.), LET’S CEE Film Festival catalogue, Vienna 2015, p. 80–81.

<sup>61</sup> Sinziana RAVINI, Ion Grigorescu, in: Macel, Christine (ed.), Centre national d’art et de culture Georges Pompidou, ed. Christine Macel & Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, The promises of the past: a discontinuous history of art in former Eastern Europe. Centre Pompidou, Galerie Sud and Espace 315, 14 April - 14 July 2010, Zürich 2010, p. 88.

<sup>62</sup> PETREŠIN-BACHELEZ, Innovative Forms of Archives, op. cit.



Curated by Marius Babias and Sabine Hentzsch and initiated by the partner institutions Goethe Institut Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Institut, and Allianz Kulturstiftung, the pilot project "Spațiul Public București | Public Art Bucharest 2007" represents a trans-disciplinary discourse on art, architecture, urban development, education and youth culture, in society and the public sphere, as we find out from the website of the project. It "includes a series of artistic projects, public debates, and media interventions, and it aims at confronting the public with social developments, initiating discussions, and emphasizing the cultural contribution to the development of democracy"<sup>63</sup>. In the description of the project the "public space" and the "project space" alternate in order to define the context in which it has emerged:

Influenced in Romania by both globalization and post-communism, public space is an indicator of the state of society and democracy, as well as of the social relations between the inhabitants of a city or country. The nucleus of the project is represented by a new project space, which covers heterogeneous cultural practices and a large spectrum of urban scenes in a single setting with multifunctional purposes. The project space is a meeting and information point, an archive, a place for presentations and debates, thus representing both a platform for the overall project and an "artistic project" in itself.

The way in which a city is structured, and the ways in which "living", "work", "commerce" and "leisure" are combined reveal aspects of social parameters from the past, and allow a conclusion on the conditions of life under post-communism. Public space reflects the general situation of the city and of society. The public space of a city is defined, first of all, through the social interaction of its inhabitants as well as through the way in which people living in the city perceive, experience and inhabit their city. The public space is an active mode for the real experience of the city by its inhabitants<sup>64</sup>.

The artists invited to take part in the first stage of the project in 2007, whose outcome is a series of artists' books are: Mircea Cantor, Anetta Mona Chișa / Lucia Tkáčová, Nicoleta Esinencu, H.arta, Daniel Knorr, Dan Perjovschi, and Lia Perjovschi.

Including only the date, place of birth and the fact that "lives and works in Bucharest" as biographical information about the artist, the book "Lia Perjovschi. Contemporary Art Archive. Center for art analysis, 1985-2007" is designed as a timeline between 1985 [four years before the Revolution] and 2007 [coincidentally? the year Romania joined the European Union]. It begins like many of the open discussions or lectures held by the Perjovschis with

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<sup>63</sup> [http://www.spatiu-public.ro/eng/project\\_d/project\\_description.html](http://www.spatiu-public.ro/eng/project_d/project_description.html) (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

the vicissitudes of the communist regime in Romania: daily queues for food and basic goods, heating only for a few hours, a very well controlled society and then develops on the evolution of the CAA inside and outside the country.

Yet, the first year recorded in the timeline is 1984, when the Palace of the Parliament [“Ceaușescu’s Palace” or “People’s House”], the second largest administrative building in the world after the Pentagon [which today hosts the National Museum of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Communist Totalitarianism, and the Museum of the Palace] starts to be built.

When it comes to the year 2001, Lia Perjovschi criticizes the location of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in the Palace of the Parliament: “Established and inaugurated by the running party (neo-communist) for the local elections”<sup>65</sup>.

Under different names, the CAA has been active since 1985 and began as an experimental studio in the Art Academy Bucharest, where informal meetings took place.

The milestone 1989 is recorded through pictures of the Revolution and followed by the Transition period [when “the neo-communists took the power”] and by the moment “University Square- fights for a democratic society” [“for political, social, and cultural changes. Asked by the president, the miners, the police and the secret service/Securitate crushed the manifestation”]<sup>66</sup>.

The year 1999 marks a failed attempt to institutionalize the CAA: “Due to corruption in the justice system, the dossier reaches the Supreme Court. Disgusted by the process, we keep CAA a private institution” [the book contains various personal remarks like this] and the change of the name from “Contemporary Art Archive” to “Center for art Analysis”<sup>67</sup>.

In addition to various pictures from exhibitions, meetings, and lectures, the well-known mind maps and diagrams are integrated in the timeline [though in a small format, given the setup of the book] and influential names of actors from the local and international artistic and cultural scene pop up constantly like Zdenka Badovinac, Matei Bejenaru, Claire Bishop, René Block, Mircea Cantor, Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, Liviana Dan, Ion Grigorescu, Iosif Király, Anders Kreuger, Ioana and H.R. Patapievici, Ileana Pintilie, Piotr Piotrowski, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Georg Schöllhammer, Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică to name a few.

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<sup>65</sup> BABIAS, HENTZSCH, Lia Perjovschi, op. cit.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Meticulously documented, the book is basically the archive of the CAA, presenting chronologically each step of its development, from small local lectures, open discussions, and workshops to various participations in international projects.

Yet, because the CAA is for Lia Perjovschi her “life project with Dan’s huge support”<sup>68</sup>, the timeline includes besides information about the project itself, all sorts of notifications about her artistic practice, work as a “detective in art” and contribution to the development of local criticism.

The last entry in the timeline is 2007, which marks the history of 20 years of CAA and highlights two projects: “My Subjective Art History from Modernism- today (insert in the catalogue) and Knowledge Museum project”<sup>69</sup>. Regarding the last project, Petrešin-Bachelez remarks that:

In the past few years, Lia has been working on and exhibiting Plans for a Knowledge Museum, an imaginary museum based on files accumulated over her years at the CAA. Characterized by an interdisciplinary approach, this future artist-run museum is dedicated to moving away from the logic of the exhibition-as-spectacle, and towards a learning process of working with an open-structured archive. Installation of these Plans for a Knowledge Museum comprises drawings, objects, charts, photos, and colour prints<sup>70</sup>.

Hence, the book's ending is open: “CAA is changing again... direction, shape, location... keeping its interest to preserve critical attitude – now, in the context of consumerism and general intellectual stagnation”<sup>71</sup>.

Following its evolution from communism, through transition, and to the future the CAA is clearly a product of Romanian post-communism [even the description of “Spațiul Public București | Public Art Bucharest 2007” states it], although Lia never uses the term “post-communism”; she uses “neo-communism” instead.

Still, with its roots in self-historicization, the CAA makes up a valuable example for the controversial Romanian post-communist condition viewed from someone from inside the Romanian contemporary art system and reveals a dynamic scene in constant change.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> PETREȘIN-BACHELEZ, *Innovative Forms of Archives*, op.cit.

<sup>71</sup> BABIAS, HENTZSCH, Lia Perjovschi, op. cit.

#### 4. Mapping Bucharest

2015 has proved to be busy year for Romanian contemporary art, both inside and outside the country. In Timișoara took place the first edition of "Art Encounters", a platform for a multifaceted dialogue, which as we find out from the event's press release, "integrates Romanian contemporary art into the international context" and "builds a dialogue between artists, who were active during the communist area at home in isolation (Sigma, Geta Brătescu, Ion Grigorescu) or abroad in exile (Paul Neagu, Andre Cadere, Mihai Olos). It reaches to the 1990s transition period (Dan Perjovschi, Sub:real) and the 2000s democracy (Ioana Nemeș, Ciprian Mureșan, Mircea Cantor)"<sup>72</sup>. Curated by Nathalie Hoyos and Rainald Schumacher, the event focuses "on artists, who belong in some way to Romanian culture and are having some of their roots in these spheres by reason of birth, language or artistic references. Artists, who are living and working in Romania and abroad", the context being "the new and global perspective on parallel cultural narratives", where "also the Eastern part of Europe is getting re-discovered and re-evaluated in its own speed of development, logical relations, cultural references and differences, especially since the fall of the Iron Curtain"<sup>73</sup>. Outside the country, besides the very acclaimed presence of Adrian Ghenie at the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale representing Romania, Vienna Biennale, the first event of its kind to combine art, design, and architecture, an initiative of MAK, in cooperation with other reputed Austrian institutions, focuses in one of its projects on Bucharest "as a fascinating example of a city behind the former Iron Curtain"<sup>74</sup>.

Yet, the chosen title for the exhibition „Mapping Bucharest” turns out to be synecdochic, as we are actually dealing with „the Romanian art scene, which is not centrally organized as in large parts of Europe, but dispersed across Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, Sibiu, and the diaspora”<sup>75</sup>. Curated by Peter Weibel and Bärbel Vischer, „Mapping Bucharest : Art, Memory,

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<sup>72</sup> <http://www.artencounters.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Art-Encounters-Press-Release-9-Sept-2015.pdf> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.artencounters.ro/conceptul> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.viennabiennale.org/en/mission/> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>75</sup> WEIBEL, VISCHER, Mapping Bucharest, op. cit., p. 43.

and Revolution 1916–2016” presents household names, as well as the ten award-winning entries in the “Create Your Bucharest” competition of ideas<sup>76</sup>.

Both “Art Encounters” and „Mapping Bucharest” make use of a post-colonial approach and a somewhat proclivity towards a rehabilitation of Romanian identity by invoking Brâncuși. “Art Encounters” uses the following quote by Brâncuși from the New York Brummer Gallery catalogue, from 1926: „What is real is not the external form, but the essence of things. Starting from this truth it is impossible for anyone to express anything essentially real by imitating its exterior surface.”<sup>77</sup>, while the narrative of „Mapping Bucharest” includes the statement: “The great-grandfather of modern sculpture is a Romanian: Constantin Brâncuși.”<sup>78</sup> The praise in „Mapping Bucharest” goes further: “Romanian artists number among either the founding members or central protagonists of almost all important artistic movements in Europe. The same goes for literature and film.”<sup>79</sup>, “Of the Dadaists in Zurich in 1916, three were from Romania: Tristan Tzara (Samuel Rosenstock), Arthur Segal (Aron Sigalu), and Marcel Janco (Marcel Iancu)”<sup>80</sup> or:

Victor Brauner, Benjamin Fondane, and Gellu Naum belong to the notable representatives of surrealism. Together with her husband, Romanian princess Anna de Noailles, a lyricist and a friend of Marcel Proust’s, financed the surrealist films of Bunuel and Dalí. Romanian Isidore Isou was the founder of Lettrism, from which Guy Debord’s Situationist International movement split off. Eugène Ionesco, the main founder of the Theatre of the Absurd, was a Romanian, as was Emil Cioran, the nihilistic author of *Amurgul gândurilor* [The Twilight of Thinking] and *A Short History of Decay*. Romania’s great literary tradition was carried on by Paul Celan, Oskar Pastior, novelist Mircea Cărtărescu, and Nobel laureate Herta Müller. Romanian Daniel Spoerri co-founded many artistic movements, among them *Nouveau Réalisme*. Romanian André Cadere is an important representative of conceptual painting. Photographer and filmmaker Eli Lotar is the impetus behind the new Romanian film movement. Romania’s current film generation, which includes Cristi Puiu, Christian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Marian Crișan, Radu Muntean, and Andrei Ujica, is considered one of the best in the world<sup>81</sup>.

The post-colonial approach in „Mapping Bucharest” is most obvious in the following section:

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<sup>76</sup> This part of the analysis I used also in a statement in the framework of the talk “Mapping Bucharest - Post View” hosted and organized by the artist run space Schleifmühlgasse 12-14, Vienna in 2015.

<sup>77</sup> <http://www.artencounters.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Art-Encounters-Press-Release-9-Sept-2015.pdf> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>78</sup> WEIBEL, VISCHER, *Mapping Bucharest*, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

The selected artists, whose ranks could be augmented by hundreds of other Eastern European artists, all made significant contributions to the development of western modernism; one need only think of constructivism. Even Hollywood has Eastern European migrants such as Billy Wilder to thank for some of its best films. The East-West divide, which inscribed itself into history through political power relations, not only damaged Eastern Europe, but also Western Europe. This divide also limited and blocked the development of art in Western Europe. It was tantamount to an “auto-amputation of Europe,” one that was tolerated for far too long<sup>82</sup>.

As I previously mentioned at the beginning of this paper, neither the CAA nor „Mapping Bucharest” is directly referring to the Romanian post-communist condition. Still, giving the relevance of memory recovery in post-communism, I have already analysed, of particular interest in this regard is the following remark in „Mapping Bucharest”: “Viewed through the prism or magnifying glass of art, Bucharest’s cultural landscape reveals a country that was in the grip of a long revolution [...], recovered its memories, and experienced moments of freedom after the shock of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s dictatorship.”<sup>83</sup>

The subject of the Romanian Revolution is embodied in the exhibition through three powerful positions: Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică’s “Videograms of a Revolution”, Dan Mihaltianu’s [one of the founders of the group subREAL] “Plaques tournantes”, and Dan Perjovschi’s drawing “Revolution on and off”. The “Videograms of a Revolution” weren’t new to the Viennese public; the documentary was also part of the major show “1989. End of History or Beginning of the Future?”, as I antecedently stated. Nor was the work of Dan Perjovschi, Mircea Cantor, Ion Grigorescu or Ciprian Mureșan new to the European public; they were also participants in the exhibition “The promises of the past: a discontinuous history of art in former Eastern Europe”, which took place in Paris at Centre Pompidou in 2010, an exhibition which “highlights the works of some of the most emblematic artists of the former Eastern Europe countries and underlines their influence on the international art scene today”<sup>84</sup>. Not to mention the presence in „Mapping Bucharest” of Adrian Ghenie, who the same year represented Romania at the 56<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. These household names, the impeccable

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.erstestiftung.org/blog/the-promises-of-the-past/> (accessed: 07.05.2016).

display of the entire exhibition, and the reputation of Peter Weibel assured its success, but the critique, at least from a Romanian point of view, was harsh<sup>85</sup>.

The Romanian post-communist condition is represented in „Mapping Bucharest” on two levels: on an implicit level by exhibiting works of artists who experienced the communist condition and who succeeded internationally in post-communism and on an explicit level through the three positions dealing with post-communism: Ana Ciceala and Mircea Nicolae’s video “One Hundred Places”, Ciprian Mureșan’s emblematic statement “communism never happened”, and Iulia Toma’s “From the blue coat to the flowery housecoat, with a stop in corporate- augmented reality”.

The first position deals with the public spaces in post-communism, which “are still fraught with ambivalent portents of history and occupy a certain “null position” in the social structure of the cities”<sup>86</sup>, the second explores “the topography of art, culture, and society before and after the political transformation in 1989”<sup>87</sup> and the last one documents diverse work apparel portraying “work, body, and culture of the working class, as well as its contradictory position towards communism and post-communism”<sup>88</sup>.

Besides the proclivity towards a rehabilitation of Romanian identity, the exhibition “Mapping Bucharest” manifest a proclivity towards drawing the attention to the future: “This exhibition grants an episodic look back at the past, insight into Romania’s current, decentralized contemporary art scene (in Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, Sibiu, or in the diaspora), and opens a window into the future”<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup> See: Bogdan, Cristina: “Mapping” Romanian contemporary art (2015) <http://revistaarta.ro/en/column/mapping-romanian-contemporary-art/> (accessed: 05.05.2016).

<sup>86</sup> WEIBEL, VISCHER, Mapping Bucharest, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

## 5. Romanian Revolution

During the repressive communist regime Romania wasn't isolated only from the West, but also from the other Eastern European countries. Albeit the Romanian communist society was marked by persecution, deportations, censorship, surveillance, food, heating and energy shortages, there is today a surprising nostalgia on the one hand and a lack of interest in the subject on the other hand.

However, even with its ambiguous circumstances, it looks as if the Revolution of December 1989 had swept away communism creating a tabula rasa for Romanian cultural, political, and economic identity.

Despite the absurd, Kafkaesque situation, or because of it, a space of resistance emerged, like anti-communist resistance groups, alternative economies and structures, the black market, illegally listening to Radio Free Europe or illegally Hollywood films screenings.

In this sense, the documentary "Chuck Norris vs Communism" Ilinca Călugăreanu (2015), which is set in the 1980s, when the VHS black market was in high demand and illegally Hollywood films screenings were organised all over the country by a huge network, which even included agents of the Department of State Security, reveals the power of films and gives one the impression that the Revolution was possible because of that.

At the beginning of the 3rd Millennium, a new generation of Romanian film directors known as the Romanian New Wave came forth. Cristi Puiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Cristian Mungiu, Cristian Nemescu, Radu Muntean, Cătălin Mitulescu, to name the most important, are dealing in their internationally appreciated movies, with themes such as the Romanian identity, the communist and post-communist condition, the transition period and the Romanian Revolution.

"12:08 East of Bucharest" [original title: A fost sau n-a fost?] by Corneliu Porumboiu (2006), "The Way I Spent the End of the World" [original title: Cum mi-am petrecut sfârșitul lumii] by Cătălin Mitulescu (2006) and "The Paper Will Be Blue" [original title: Hârtia va fi albastră] by Radu Muntean (2006) illustrate, mostly through black humour, different perspectives on the Revolution without pointing to a specific responsible.

In "12:08 East of Bucharest", a TV show dedicated to the 22nd of December, the commemorative day of the Revolution questions whether the population in their town went onto the street before or after 12:08 [the time when Ceaușescu was shown on the national



television fleeing Bucharest by helicopter] in order to find out if the Revolution was really led by the people. The debate is carried out by the TV producer, an alcoholic history teacher, and a retired Santa Claus at a provincial TV station.

In "The Way I Spent the End of the World", during the final months of communism, in Bucharest, 17-year-old Eva is expelled from her high school for accidentally breaking a bust of Ceaușescu and transferred to a technical school where she meets Andrei, with whom she plans to escape Romania by swimming across the Danube into Yugoslavia. Therefore, her little brother Lalililu volunteers together with his friends for a children's choir scheduled to sing for Ceaușescu on the 22nd of December, hoping this will give them a chance to assassinate the dictator.

Finally, in "The Paper Will Be Blue", on the night between 22 and 23 December 1989, one young soldier abandons his Militia [official name of the civilian police] unit to take part in the Revolution, and the other members have to search for him. Both the participation in the Revolution and the searching mission are marked by miscommunications, absurdity, chaos and confusion, but also by funny scenes.

The three examples above have no intentions to resolve the mysteries of the Revolution, as there is no didacticism or point-making in the Romanian New Wave movement itself:

There is almost no didacticism or point-making in these films, none of whose characters are easily sorted into good guys and bad guys. Instead, there is an almost palpable impulse to tell the truth, to present choices, conflicts and accidents without exaggeration or omission. This is a form of realism, of course, but its motivation seems to be as much ethical as aesthetic, less a matter of verisimilitude than of honesty. There is an unmistakable political dimension to this kind of storytelling, even when the stories themselves seem to have no overt political content. During the Ceausescu era, which ended abruptly, violently and somewhat ambiguously in December 1989 - in the last and least velvety of the revolutions of that year - Romanian public life was dominated by fantasies, delusions and lies. And the filmmakers who were able to work in such conditions resorted, like artists in other communist countries, to various forms of allegory and indirection<sup>90</sup>.

Yet, the most established film about the Revolution remains the documentary "Videograms of a Revolution" by Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică (1992):

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<sup>90</sup> Scott, A.O.: In film, the Romanian new wave has arrived (2008), <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/19/arts/19iht-fromanian.1.9340722.html? r=0> (accessed: 07.05.2016).

1989 was a year of political transformation in Europe. The Romanian revolution- demonstrations in Timișoara and Bucharest, the overthrow of the power structure, and the trial and execution of the dictator couple Ceaușescu- occurred in a time span of just a few days. This revolutionary scenario was shown on Romanian television; the TV-station was taken over by demonstrators and broadcast live for around 120 hours. The events between Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech on 21 December 1989 and the television recap of his trial on 26 December 1989 were taped almost in their entirety. In their documentary film *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992), Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujică wove together the chronology of those days into a temporal loop of the first revolution in the world to take place in front of the camera and to be disseminated through the media.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> WEIBEL, VISCHER, Mapping Bucharest, op. cit., p. 57.

## Conclusions

Just like the films from the Romanian New Wave have no intentions to resolve the mysteries of the Revolution, archival artists are “not merely interested in correcting existing histories; they want to bring attention to the fundamental principle underlying the creation of these histories, the involvement of the individual, which always means excluding something”<sup>92</sup>.

Viewed from within the Romanian contemporary art system, the Romanian post-communist condition is controversial and marked by social criticism through the deconstruction of the postsocialist culture. In this sense keywords like: thermopanels, private security firms, privatisation, de-industrialisation, stately homes, houses in progress, the rustic, the pyramids of bad faith: Caritas and FNI [according to Bogdan Iancu] and corruption in the justice system, neo-communism, political, social, and cultural changes [according to Lia Perjovschi] are relevant.

Another two important aspects are the recovery of memory, which “we could interpret [...] as a response to a general need to overcome the (dual) traumatic constituency of Romanian identity after 1989”<sup>93</sup> and the rehabilitation of Romanian identity by invoking Brâncuși.

A last feature of the Romanian post-communist condition viewed from within the Romanian contemporary art system I have identified is the orientation towards the future, given the East-West political joke in the beginning of the statement of Bucharest Biennale, which is taking place as I write this paper.

The Romanian post-communist condition viewed from outside the Romanian contemporary art system is represented in the study case „Mapping Bucharest” on two levels: on an implicit level by exhibiting works of artists who experienced the communist condition and who succeeded internationally in post-communism and on an explicit level through the three positions dealing with post-communism: Ana Ciceala and Mircea Nicolae’s video “One Hundred Places”, Ciprian Mureșan’s emblematic statement “communism never happened”, and Iulia Toma’s “From the blue coat to the flowery housecoat, with a stop in corporate-augmented reality”.

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<sup>92</sup> Badovinac, *Self-historicization*, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> NAE, *Archival Practices*, op. cit., p. 16.

Furthermore, the recovery of memory is also present as a characteristic feature of the Romanian post-communist condition in the narrative of „Mapping Bucharest”, as are the orientation towards the future and the rehabilitation of Romanian identity by invoking Brâncuși.

To sum it up, the recovery of memory, the rehabilitation of Romanian identity by invoking Brâncuși and the orientation towards the future are features of the Romanian post-communist condition viewed both from within and from outside the Romanian contemporary art system.

With or without a post-colonial approach to Eastern Europe, curating the post-communist condition implies contextualising the country specific post-communist condition, and when it comes to curating the Romanian post-communist condition, given the impact and the meaning of the Romanian Revolution, one has by all means to consider thematising it.

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<http://www.viennabiennale.org/en/mission/> (accessed: 05.05.2016).



## Curriculum Vitae



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Place and date of birth:

Bucharest, Romania 17.07.1984

## CURATORIAL EXPERIENCE

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- 12 / 2015 –  
01 / 2016      Angewandte Innovation Laboratory (AIL) Vienna, FÜR GARDEROBE  
WIRD NICHT GEHAFTET. Widerständiges in Mode und Produktion (NO  
LIABILITY IS TAKEN FOR WARDROBE. Forms of Resistance in Fashion  
and Production)  
final group project as part of the post-graduate master programme  
/ecm- educating/ curating/ managing at the University of Applied Arts  
Vienna
- 04 / 2015 –  
05 / 2015      Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna, Opus 5- Soleil de l'Est -  
Einblicke in die rumänische zeitgenössische Malerei (Opus 5- Soleil de  
l'Est - Insights into the Romanian contemporary art)  
group exhibition with works of artists Robert Köteles, Corneliu  
Vasilescu, Cristian Sida, Dan Cioca and Mariana Cinteanu, co- curated  
with Ana-Maria Altmann
- 02 / 2015 –  
03 / 2015      Romanian Cultural Institute in Vienna, Spektrum (Spectre)  
artist's Ana Necolau solo show
- 07 / 2014      MODELIER Bucharest, Exil (Exile) a film by Elena Nazare  
documentary film projection on the life of painter Paul Hitter, co-  
founder of the Balkan Expressionism Manifesto, screened in the  
presence of the artist
- 05 / 2014      MODELIER Bucharest, European Literature Night in Bucharest  
host of the cultural program of Balassi Institut and Delegation of  
Wallonia-Brussels, two members of the EUNIC Bucharest Cluster and  
participants in the third edition of the event

- 02 / 2014            MODELiER Bucharest, Experiment  
artist's Cosmin Marinescu solo show
- 02 / 2014            MODELiER Bucharest, Se joaca mima! (Mime playing)  
with Miriana Ionita and Dragos Mazo
- 12 / 2013 –  
02 / 2014            MODELiER Bucharest, Rulografie (Rulografie)  
artist's Constantin Sultana solo show

## EDUCATION

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- 2014 –            Master of Advanced Studies, /ecm - educating/curating/managing  
2016            Postgraduate Programme, University of Applied Arts Vienna
- 2008 –            Master in Management and Business Communication, David Ogilvy Faculty of  
2010            Communication and Public Relations, National University of Political Studies  
and Public Administration (SNSPA) Bucharest
- 2004 –            BA in Philology, German and Portuguese Languages and Literatures, Faculty  
2008            of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest
- 2003 –            BA in Communication and Public Relations, David Ogilvy Faculty of  
2008            Communication and Public Relations, National University of Political Studies  
and Public Administration (SNSPA) Bucharest
- 1999 –            Ion Luca Caragiale  
2003            National College Bucharest

## LANGUAGES

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- Romanian (Mother tongue)
- German C2 (Deutsches Sprachdiplom)
- English C2
- Portuguese B2

## AFFILIATIONS

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- Co-Founder of [ 'fæbrɪk ] transdisciplinary Non-Profit Organization for curators in Vienna <http://bit.ly/'faebrik>
- Co-Founder of MODELiER bar/ terrace/ cultural event venue/ meeting point in Bucharest <https://www.facebook.com/MODELiERBAR>
- Co-Founder of Micii Campioni (Little Champions) Organization for children in Bucharest <http://miciicampioni.ro>