ART AT EP
Works of Art from Romania
Construction / Communication
PREFACE

Antonio Tajani

President of the European Parliament
Romania only joined the European Union in 2007, but in just over a decade, it has demonstrated that it is an integral part of the European project. More than ten years on, Romania will lead Europe, taking over the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the first time.

Romania’s dynamism and strong commitment are needed more than ever - the presidency comes at a crucial time, just ahead of the European elections in May 2019. The European Union needs to take decisive action and deliver on crucial priorities such as an ambitious long-term EU budget that boosts growth and jobs, migration, asylum reform and better security. Together, we need to reinvigorate the European dream while safeguarding rule of law and common values. Strengthened cooperation between the EU Presidency and European Parliament will be essential in ensuring success.

However, let us not forget that politics alone will not be sufficient to ensure a bright future for Europe. Cherishing and nurturing our great and diverse cultural heritage will also be fundamental. The European Parliament is committed to contributing to this critical objective. At the start of the Romanian presidency, we will hold an exhibition that unveils contemporary art developments in Romania by combining Romanian artwork from the European Parliament’s collection and contributions selected in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Culture.

_Dragi români_, your rich cultural heritage, in fields like architecture, art and artisanship are a testament to the longstanding strong historical and cultural relations between Romania and the rest of Europe. I am fully convinced, dragi români, that if we keep working together your Presidency will succeed in delivering a more modern, more cohesive and divers Union.

This exhibition displays a broad variety of artists and techniques, including painting, photography and sculpture, taking us on a voyage through the particularly dynamic Romanian cultural scene of the last decades. I believe it is a perfect prelude to the launch of a Romanian Presidency that I am sure will live up to the high expectations of European citizens.

I wish you an enjoyable and stimulating visit.

**Antonio Tajani**
President of the European Parliament
PREFACE

Catherine Bearder

Quaestor responsible for the artworks in the European Parliament
Welcome to the temporary exhibition of Romanian artworks from the European Parliament’s Art Collection, marking the next rotation of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. As Romania takes over the mantel of the Presidency from Austria, we are delighted to showcase works of art from such an historic nation steeped in culture, made all the more noteworthy by the fact that this is the first time in which Romania takes the Presidency.

The art collection of the European Parliament started in 1980 under the initiative of its President of the first directly elected Parliament, Simone Veil, with the aim of supporting the European contemporary art scene and promoting cultural creativity and diversity within the union and today comprises over 600 paintings, sculptures and other artworks from all EU Member States.

Romania joined the European Union in 2007 and it has become clear that its own unique cultural traditions have brought another dimension to the culture of the Union. The legend of Dracula, for instance, is constantly revived in popular culture in countries all around the world to this day. During the post war period artists faced great restrictions, and although they were supported by the government their work faced great censorship. Today, Romania demonstrates creative freedom in superb fashion with rich traditions of dance and folk music coinciding with literature, contemporary and performance art. The essence of Romanian expression and culture is captured in the contemporary pieces on display in the temporary exhibition, including a wonderful variety of artistic techniques.

I hope you enjoy learning more about some of Romania’s artistic contribution to our shared collection.

Your Sincerely,

Catherine Bearder
Quaestor responsible for the artworks in the European Parliament
PREFACE
Valer Daniel Breaz
Minister of Culture and National Identity
It is an immense honour for Romanian art to be welcomed into the institutional heart of Europe, giving Romania the opportunity to present its most authentic European credentials. For generations, even before the country’s official accession to the Union, our adherence to its shared values has been affirmed and upheld by our cultural and artistic endeavours.

Although the 19th century was marked by many imitations and imports of dominant European cultural values, Romania rapidly forged a distinctive hallmark reflecting the currents of thought and feeling that shaped our identity. Romanians have for millennia been exploring the relationship with nature, perceived as an enchanted realm where energies evolve in harmony. The 20th century was, above all, a century of freedom asserted, with Romanian art establishing a firm foothold in the avant-garde. Dadaism, Surrealism and the Theatre of the Absurd, are just some of the bold artistic departures to which bore Romania’s unmistakeable signature from the outset. The leaden yoke of totalitarian censorship then forced Romanian artists to devise new ways of encoding of their message, resulting, on the one hand, in the blossoming of abstract art and, on the other, in a return to the more ancient traditions of Byzantine and Christian Orthodox spirituality.

Come and discover young artists of the post-1989 generation and the fruitful manner in which they have embraced the experience of contact with cultural freedom. You will see how Western trends and styles have been received and assimilated along Europe’s eastern borders and how uniquely Latin values and voices in all their resolute exuberance have been tempered by centuries of contact with the East and 50 years of totalitarianism. I cannot think of a more vibrant affirmation of the European ideal than the strength of our humanism in rising above its accumulated scars. For that very reason, Romanian artists should feel at home in Brussels.

Valer Daniel Breaz
Minister of Culture and National Identity
INTRODUCTION

Art and Culture in Romania

Yes, there is more than the legend of Count Dracula and Transylvania in Romania. Located in the southeast of Europe, Romania is a country that is rich in scenic beauty, and also in its dynamic history and culture. The name ‘Romania’ clearly indicates the country’s historical and cultural relations to ancient Rome. It was officially adopted when Moldavia and Walachia united in 1859. The country got today’s shape when the Union of Transylvania with Romania was declared in 1918.

The Romanian people share a common cultural heritage going back to the ancient period of the Dacians. Palaces and castles, churches, monasteries and synagogues all over the country, even dating back to the 12th century, are architectural witnesses of its eventful past. Folk art and crafts of Romanian peasants have a long tradition and are still very popular today. They include amongst others: painted eggs, ceramics and woodwork. The contemporary artist Ovidiu Maitec, represented in the art collection of the European Parliament, bases his œuvre on this tradition. Nevertheless, the most widespread traditional craft is in textile. Weaving and embroidery follow strict patterns and even create a kind of secret language only known by the people from a certain region. The production of glass dates back to Roman times and has recently had a renaissance on the contemporary art scene. Like Mihai Topescu, who is represented in the art collection of the European Parliament, they have gained international acclaim by combining craftmanship with artistic expression.

Due to political pressure during the Communist regime, it was difficult for many contemporary artists to develop their own style. Some, like the influential artist Horia Bernea, went to the countryside to follow their own authentic artistic style, far away from the official art supported by the regime.

In recent decades, the cultural scene in Romania has become very dynamic and full of surprises. The broad artistic variety includes painting, photography, film and a number of international festivals. Through its geographical location, Romania is keeping its cultural specificities and at the same time shares elements with neighbouring countries. It is therefore not surprising that contemporary and folk art are complementing each other in the choice of material, colours, techniques and motifs. In bigger cities galleries are emerging and a range of museums all over the country preserve its cultural heritage and facets and host international exhibitions.
The prominent Romanian artist Constantin Brâncuși was one of the most influential sculptors of the 20th century and an important representative of Modern Art. His style is defined by clear geometrical lines, a radically reduced representation of the motif, mainly human heads, and was inspired by non-European exotic cultures. Nevertheless, the influence of Romanian folk art is apparent in his oeuvre.

By the way, Dracula’s legend also has its roots in folk culture. In the 19th century, there was a strong belief in vampires in rural areas, which brought the custom of veiling a mirror when a person died. It was supposed to stop the dead soul from recognising itself, which would have made it impossible to leave.

This exhibition does the opposite – it unveils contemporary art developments by combining Romanian artworks from the European Parliament’s Art Collection and contributions selected in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Culture.

**DG Communication**

Events and Exhibitions Unit
‘Architecture is inhabited sculpture’, said Constantin Brâncuși. Taking this as our starting point, we began to develop the concept of living as habitation, inhabiting a space: how do we live in a private space, a public space, a city, a mental or emotional space, a Romanian space, or even a wider, European space? The act of dwelling embodies the interplay between construction and communication, two correlated human values: the first metaphorical and the second intrinsic to being. The concept of inhabitation is transversal: mentally, spiritually and even through objects, it can be communicated in any language, expanding the realm of representations to a common and universal European language.

The EU Member States share a common history, but one that has sparked individual traditions of artistic expression in each. Cultural relations among this group of countries have followed a common path for many years — something highlighted by the works in our exhibition.

This project is an attempt to restore and strengthen cultural contacts between European artistic communities that emerged at similar points in history, that have undergone a process of integration into the new European community, but also one of affirmation of their own contemporary art. The concept of living in space and time will mark the Romanian contribution to artistic production in the crucible of European culture, where influences from all major universal cultures melted into one. Strengthening artistic dialogue on this expansive subject, which has implications for contemporary art, will lead to a deeper understanding of the concerns and visions of Romanian artists in the wider, Union space.

What makes the Union strong are the individual national identities of each of the geographical spaces within it. But it is the cohesion of the countries of the Union over time, and with it the emergence of a common conception of communication, that has truly reinforced these foundations.

**Emilia Persu**
Curator on behalf of the Romanian Presidency of the EU Council
Art Collection of the European Parliament
Horia BERNEA
Geta BRĂTESCU
Ioana BĂTRÂNU
Daniela CHIRION
Florin Anton CIUBOTARU
Suzana DAN
Doru DRĂGUŞIN
Sorin DUMITRESCU
Daniela FAINIS
Stela LIE
Ovidiu MAITEC
Viorel MĂRGINEAN
Valeriu MLADIN
Gili MOCANU
Teodor MORARU
Mihai ȚOPESCU
Horia BERNEA (1938-2000)
Trees

Horia Bernea was one of the most influential artists in Romania. He is not only renowned for his artistic work, but also for his immense contribution in museology as director of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, winning the Museum of the Year Award in 1996. In both areas he established an original style, not afraid to challenge and incite at the same time. His artistic œuvre underwent phases and developments in a way that managed to blend tradition with modernity as well as abstraction with figuration. There is a spiritual and religious sentiment in many of his paintings. His style included abstract expressionist accents but also natural forms depicted through a filter of ‘realism’. Many of his characteristic motifs were often reproduced in various series of paintings including landscapes, country houses and self-portraits. The peculiar landscape around Poiana Mărului, the village where he grew up, inspired him: it became the place where he founded the intellectually diverse movement known as the Poiana Mărului School.

‘Above all, I strongly believe in the value and inherent worth of peasant art and am filled with respect for those who were unable to defend themselves.’
Geta BRĂTESCU (1926)
The Bird

‘I like to draw and to work freely, like any other game.’

1989
Lithograph
43.5 x 55 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament

Geta Brătescu’s dynamic practice is evident in her vibrant creations. She continuously and playfully experiments with different media such as drawing, painting, performance, textiles, collage, print-making, photography, film, installations and more. Her studio plays a central role – not only as her working place, but also thematically. It has always been the place of her creative freedom, especially during the years of political repression under Ceaușescu, and it fosters her rich creative output. She sees an artistic potential in everything, including everyday materials. Daily life and art seem to merge. Her œuvre goes beyond pre-existing borders with a vast variety of references and complex intellectual reflections. In Eastern Europe and beyond, she is considered one of today’s most significant conceptual artists.

The recurring motif of the bird is not only an example of her often playful production process: it is also a female subject and part of her self-exploration.

‘The character Bird, named even The Bird, was created in the 1980s, in drawings and later in lithography. It is a fantastic, even ironic character from the importance that I gave it.’
Ioana BĂTRÂNU (1960)

Utopian Garden

Ioana Bătrânu depicts recurring themes such as melancholy interiors, enclosed gardens and latrines in her own subjective ways, those in which she personally experiences reality. Both her subject-matter and her blurry style of painting express a sense of alienation from reality, creating spaces full of loneliness, and often too of melancholy. Under the heading of ‘Enclosed Gardens’ she has repeatedly painted the tomb of her mother, in a kind of personal mental healing process: simple landscapes are merely cemeteries without graves. She distances herself from any ‘official’ culture or art trends. Her works centre around reality at the periphery of the society she lives in, with autobiographical elements. Ioana Bătrânu remains a singular artist: she does not invent a new artistic formula, but her brushstrokes follow an almost postmodern code. Her style is defined by its sensitivity towards the depicted motif.
For more than a decade (1993-2005) Ioana Bătrânu was working on her series of ‘Utopian Gardens’. Basing herself on her studies of visions of gardens in ancient Greece and Rome up to the Italian Renaissance, she even features contemporary cranberry shrubs as found in present-day Bucharest gardens. Her investigations focused on the different aspects of gardens, such as the embodiment of the earthly paradise. These two paintings were part of an exhibition of the artist’s work held between December 2005 and January 2007 at the Museum of Modern Art in Bucharest.
Daniela CHIRION
White Shadows

‘I believe in poetry and dreams. I believe in the will which turns
dreams into reality. [...] My art is born from my poetic moods, from my
questions, from my doubts and from my abysses.’

The motif of the figure seen from behind has been used throughout art history for different purposes. In this work, the depicted figure is completely covered in a white sheet, leaving only an unclear idea of its real appearance. It is a figurative painting, a soft human shape executed in pastel using a monochrome palette. The presentation is an interplay of presence and distance. The viewer can guess from the shape and its gesture that the portrayed person is female, but it hardly unveils any more personality traits.

The œuvre of Daniela Chirion comprises painting, graphics, self-designed books, video art, objects, poetry and photography. Her main focus is on the human figure, striving with all kinds of expression in portrait painting.
Daniela CHIRION
Contre-jour III - triptych
(I Know Nothing Except the Fact of My Ignorance)

‘Even though most of my paintings start from my photographic studies, some of my photographs are stills from my videos: the installations deal with poetry and memory – just like some of my paintings.’

This work is part of a series of contre-jour portraits. Today this technique is better known from photography, but when applied to painting it can have even more intense effects. It consists of a triple portrait of the same human figure merging with its own shadow. Portraying three different positions that seem to happen simultaneously, it creates a mysterious and powerful atmosphere.

Like the painting ‘White Shadows’, it plays with presence and distance – you see and you do not see. Quoting Socrates in the title, the work implies a deeper symbolic and psychological meaning. It emphasises the limits of knowledge and self-knowledge and underlines the artist’s exploration of the ‘deepest Self’, in order to find ‘the ultimate layers of the unconscious.’
Florin Anton CIUBOTARU (1939)

Telephone

‘I refute the desperate gesture and heroic striving where sentiment and humanity are lacking. No conceit encroaches upon the values that inspire the plastic arts, artistic knowledge being untainted by vain presumptions of omniscience.’

2009
Acrylic on canvas
90 x 90 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament

Florin Anton Ciubotaru is a painter, illustrator and university professor. He is one of the creators of a gigantic tapestry which is displayed in the National Theatre in Bucharest. His works are timeless, often playful and always unpretentious. His motifs are not based on observation, but are mental models, visual signs with both concise and abstract meanings. They are visual adventures, often plunging from real details into chain-like metamorphoses. With real elements he creates a parallel reality, an emerging illusion.
For Suzana Dan it is creativity that differentiates us from robots and it is not merely a matter of genius, but is an enriched exercise of the mind, a mental dialogue. In her view, it is not the end product, but the pleasure of creating it, that is important. Her approach is often characterised by irony, even self-irony, as her work is closely related to her life. She prefers the simple things in life as she considers them as essential - everybody has to face them. Before starting a new work she already has a clear picture in her mind.

‘The End of The Fairy Tale’ is THE END: the place where stories no longer have a happy ending. The garden dwarf, an honourable character often presented in her works, suffers a dramatic transformation from the hilarious fairy tale personage into a mourner drowning in rivers of tears. The story ends here, and the house where the happy dance was supposed to take place is surrounded by fire. The pessimistic script is inspired by the fabulous ‘telenovelas’, where the good ones suffer along their 10 000 episodes so much that any happy ending to the story fails to compensate their pain.

2011
Oil on canvas
70 x 70 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament

‘My work has a connection and coherence with everything that happens to me in life.’

Suzana DAN (1976)
The End of The Fairy Tale I
Suzana DAN (1976)
The Grandmother’s Garden III

‘Grandmother’s Garden’ is a series of paintings that shows fragments of childhood memories about granny’s flowers, whose magnified universe acquires the dimensions of a dream landscape. The ordinary plants from the flower pots hide in their leaves and thorns the secret of the never-ending stories.

Suzana Dan’s works often confront the viewer with dreamlike, surrealistic scenery, timeless settings withering away into a fantastic, mystical universe of their own.

2011
Oil on canvas
90 x 90 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament

‘My creation is my own therapy: if it somehow becomes a panacea for others, hallelujah!’
Doru DRĂGUŞIN (1954)
Bronze Bust of Nicolae Titulescu

‘I am from the country that gave birth to Brâncuşi and Titulescu, two geniuses that have opened up new horizons for their contemporaries and successors. Their minds and actions have always fascinated me as an artist, and I have immortalised them in sculptures...’

Doru Drăguşin is a sculptor who mainly uses material such as marble, granite, stainless steel, wood and bronze. He was born in the same village as Nicolae Titulescu, the first distinguished diplomat in Romania’s modern history. Titulescu was twice elected President of the General Assembly of the League of Nations, and fought for the preservation of peace through cooperation and respect. In 2002, Doru Drăguşin sculptured a massive statue of this famous politician, which was placed on the esplanade of the Palace of Nations in Geneva to commemorate the 120th anniversary of his birth. As the artist says of this renowned diplomat, ‘He brought Romania into Europe and Europe into Romania.’
Sorin DUMITRESCU (1946)
Angel hand (2)

‘The meeting with Father Galeriu changed my life.’

This hand is part of a series of five hands - each of them having the same title. The 5 Hands represent architectural forms illustrating the paradoxical Byzantine procedure ‘ascension by descent’, specific to Europe’s art and architecture in the first millennium. Sorin Dumitrescu is a painter, graphic artist, writer and member of the Romanian Academy. He is inspired by Byzantine art and his works are closely related to Christian aesthetics and art.

His imagery is figurative but at the same time it shows surrealistic deformations and even abstract elements.

1992
Pencil and watercolour on paper
197 x 85 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament
‘Catholicism has given us teachings and sects, nothing more. The teachings emerged when the icon was set aside, the teachings of the Holy Spirit.’

It generates a spiritual mentality from which he creates his own cultural structures. His style is described as Neo-Orthodoxism, himself being a practitioner of Orthodoxy. Beside his artistic work, Sorin Dumitrescu is also a Professor at the National University of Arts, with a rich publishing activity, especially relating to the meaning of the icon in art.
Daniela FAINIS (1961)
White Rainbows

Daniela Fainis combines painting, sculpture, graphics and tapestry to create complex ceramic objects and installations. She experiments with porcelain and its creative potential, using her imagination to come up with what we may call spatial drawings. She divides the object into fragments, which are then reconstructed with other supporting material as in this artwork. The porcelain is manually modelled and incised, and assembled on a wooden base. All her works are mainly white, the original colour of the material, thus emphasising its fragile character. For her portraits she often uses a grey-black colour palette on a white background.

'I took this material and sought to decipher it, master it, tame it and discover all its secrets.'

2001
Porcelain, metal and wood
350 x 100 x 100 cm (height of work can be adjusted from 150 to 350 cm)
Art collection of the European Parliament
Stela LIE (1959)
Woertergarten

‘I painted more and more objects and interiors because dwelling is my interest (home sweet home...).’

Stela LIE works in drawing, painting and book illustration, and is also a lecturer at the National University of Arts in Bucharest. In the early 1990s she discovered acrylic colours and was fascinated by the joy their brightness brought to her.

She manages to bring out the originality of the banal and to create a special world full of stories and secrets. In this work she combines painting and a poetic text, as expressed in its title. The text is in English whereas the title of the painting is in German, which might relate to her city of birth - Timișoara, the main social, economic and cultural centre in western Romania, which belonged to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire for a long time.
Stela LIE (1959)
Handbag 1

‘Objects that came to me with a story, like this old green bag.’

Stela Lie depicts household items like mugs or glasses, or as in this painting, a handbag. She is not interested in the ‘great themes’ of art, but moves art to the domestic world. She likes objects, even old or handmade, that are a kind of ‘soft kitsch’, which she considers to be honest and modest. She is an artist from her heart and it is the objects, the atmosphere, the smell, the light, the living in a house that inspires her.

She founded the Romanian Illustrators’ Club in order to give former students an opportunity to ensure a decent living in the creative sector.
‘The static quality, the firm and expressive equilibrium of the material in space (its self-possession) seems to me to be one of the main features - and, for the one who is working on it - one of the main difficulties of sculpture. For a sculptor it means more than the law of gravitation itself ... I think [it] evolves from the attention I pay to this physical virtue - based on the principle of balance: a large mass, mobile, balanced on a minimum point of support.’

Working mainly in walnut, Maitec is internationally recognised for his smaller woodcarvings. Applying traditional, native folk woodcarving techniques to create roughly symmetrical constructions, his work is often linked to that of Brâncuși. Maitec plays with the visual effects of the ‘negative space’ or the ‘positive void’. With great refinement he perforates his works, giving space to an interplay of light and shadow as well as an airy and lighter appearance of the material. Without reflecting on any pre-existing sources he describes his works as ‘simple objects’ and, simultaneously, as ‘bearers of symbols’. His semi-abstract forms present recurring motifs such as birds, gates or thrones, but they are never reproductions of the actual entity. He invents imaginary architectural shapes bearing a magic and spiritual presence, and at the same time with a drive towards proportion and balance. They are invented constructions, as the title of this work implies.
Viorel MĂRGINEAN (1933)
The Panoramic

‘... all the time I’ve seen things from above, wide and comprehensive.’

2002
Acrylic on canvas
200 x 350.5 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament

Viorel Marginean carefully observes nature and its changes, weaving its fragments into large-scale compositions. He transfers landscapes into stylised and dynamic arrangements, creating his own imaginary visions. His work is rooted in his childhood home region of Transylvania.
Since the early 1990s Valeriu Mladin has a constant presence in the Romanian art scene. His artistic expression includes painting, drawing, photography, video, sculpture, objects, installations and performance. He often tackles current political topics in his works, with a fundamental irony pervading his visual language. The viewer acquires a central role, observing as if looking through transparent glass.

The artist typically approaches complex subjects through varied series of paintings. *Pas de Deux* is part of a series which was exhibited in 2016 at the Allianz Tiriac Gallery in Bucharest, being accompanied by a repetitive recording of Igor Stravinsky’s composition *Pas de Deux* as musical background, conducted by the composer himself and with the intervention of his voice. The paintings focus on choreography: the figures are like contour drawings dancing in the background of the image. The layers of colour put an opaque filter on them, creating a distance and at the same time intensifying the view by grasping them. This series of paintings creates a narrative full of continuous figurative dynamics and rhythms.
With every work I had something to say. The work is part of a larger project, “The Temptation”, a visual complement to the artist’s doctoral thesis of 2010, “Aspects of the Representation of Eden in the Arts”. Created in 2009, the two canvases entitled Adam are a symbolic representation of the moment immediately after the Fall. Adam is looking through his toes at the sky shattered following the commission of the original sin. A blinding light coming from behind projects on to the upper part of the feet the toes’ shadow, envisioning the stigmata, in other words the marks left by the crucifixion, by the spikes which will be used to attach the New Adam to the cross.
Gili MOCANU (1971)

Grave

‘The music (and art) that I make is a natural compromise between the desire to obtain something and the inherent result.’

Gili Mocanu is a poet, artist and composer. In all genres his work is radical and autonomous, going beyond the expectations of audience and critics, yet winning their acclaim for his courageous approach. This seems to make him one of the most promising and influential contemporary artists in Romania. He also exhibits internationally. His art is built on personal experience, often based on a pessimistic, even dark philosophy. One of the recurrent themes in Gili Mocanu’s paintings is death. In his view the final outcome of the effort of an artist — the painting itself — is also a sort of mummy — a mummy made out of oils, to be hung on a wall in the hope that it will live forever. As in this painting, he often reduces shapes to their most iconic representation.
Moraru’s early work was influenced by the Poiana Mărului School, the intellectually diverse movement founded by Horia Bernea, who is also represented in the Art Collection of the EP. Poiana Mărului, as a remote and traditional village, was an artistic refuge where artists could develop their creative expression freely in an authentic way, in clear opposition to the official art of the communist regime. Teodor Moraru was often described as a modest and shy artist, but with the courage and creative drive to tell the truth on vast canvases with an enormous spiritual dynamism. He often used the technique of collage, thus bringing the presence of original materials as well as three-dimensional, plastic elements to his artworks.

Since 2014, the Teodor Moraru Painting Scholarship has been awarded annually to support young emerging artists.
Mihai ȚOPESCU (1956)

Fabulous Fish

2010
Carved wood with hammered elements of copper plate and hot glass elements, fixed on a wooden structure, cast bronze element
41 cm high; 107 cm long; 12.5 cm wide; stand 50 cm
Art collection of the European Parliament

Mihai Țopescu is internationally recognised for his masterly combination of the techniques of glass design with artistic expression. His works echo the vital colours of traditional folk art, and the pedestals of his sculptures are considered as part of the artwork itself. He often adds other materials such as wood, metal, stone and plaster, in order to accentuate the expressiveness of his primary material - glass - as well as emphasising the sculptural qualities of the work. He uses simplified, primitive forms that even go back to archetypal patterns. His works have a tendency to be humorous and playful. His inspiration interlaces secular and sacred sources. ‘Fabulous Fish’ is part of a larger series: the aquatic allusion is very clearly expressed, since this is a fish, but this fish could be our ancestor who decided to be more adventurous and evolve into something more complex, and develop, it may be, a critical mind, being not quite happy in the sea. In his turn, Mihai Țopescu says: ‘I have seen the light of day in the same realm as and under the sign of the great Constantin Brâncuși, 80 years later. ... I can only be grateful that Brâncuși did not discover glass as a means of expression’. (Mihaela Cristea, art critic)
Art Collection of Romania
Darie DUP
Iosif KIRÁLY
Petru LUCACI
Marilena PREDA SÂNC
Florica PREVENDA
Constantin RUSU
Mircea STĂNESCU
Darie DUP (1959)

Axis Mundi II

‘These works are the hallmarks of an object which conveys an environmental message and possesses a significance denoting the tree and a period of growth; the Tree as the axis of the world – Axis Mundi.’

Darie Dup is primarily a sculptor who works with site-specific installation and photography, and uses the medium of large drawings to express his ideas.

Using different sizes, textures and materials such as wood, bronze, polychrome resins, and mixed and new media, the materials are then adapted to fit a discernible sense of humour and context.

In all phases of his artistic development and visual research, his interest coalesces around two main themes, both of which must be received both directly and in a more subtle or sophisticated way: the human body and, more recently, its fragments: the ears, the eyes; and the tree, as axis mundi and the support for life – a bringer of good often threatened by the absurd and destructive behaviour of mankind.
Iosif KIRÁLY (1957)
Reconstruction – Targu Jiu Gate

‘The series of photos entitled “Synapses” alludes to the connections and synchronisations that can sometimes emerge between people, objects and events. It is based on the “Reconstructions” project and aims to reconstruct and connect certain contexts and personal experiences that have played out in the past in order to create puzzles, which can sometimes break the windows of time that point to other horizons.’

Iosif Király is a Romanian visual artist, architect and educator. He works both independently and as part of the group subREAL. His preferred media are photography, installation, performance and drawing, and his work sets out to investigate the relationship between perception, time and memory. In 1995, he was one of the founders of the Department of Photography and Media Arts at the National University of Arts (UNArte) in Bucharest, where he still works as a professor.
Iosif KIRÁLY (1957)
Synapses – Mogosoaia_Lenin and Groza_4

Boasting an extensive international exhibition record, his works can be found in numerous private and public collections. He has initiated, coordinated and – together with architects, visual artists and anthropologists – taken part in research projects addressing the changes that have occurred in post-communist Romania, including D-Platform, RO-Archive, Triaj, Tinseltown and others.
Petru LUCACI (1956)
Deposit 3

‘The “Deposit” project stores a series of images taken by accumulating everyday objects and revealing certain accidental structures, which have emerged from the perspective of the materials of everyday life.’

2016
Oil on canvas
120 x 160 cm
Artist’s collection

Petru Lucaci is the creator of 42 solo exhibitions and more than 250 group exhibitions in Romania and abroad. Photographs taken on visits to the creative workshops of the National Art University and juxtaposed with a series of details captured in the urban landscape are, in this context, deconstructed and recomposed as a puzzle. Repeated geometric images lose their shape, arranged along the individual elements of the gallery in an ensemble that references the inexhaustible stock of ideas in an artist’s warehouse.

Like light and shadow games on bodies found in previous projects, the recent focus on overlapping objects provides the context for shaping a visual enigma.

The visual discourse of this project is resized and reconfigured through truncated sequences in which objects emerge from the dimensionality of the web and continue their story in real space.
Marilena PREDA SÂNC (1955)

Deconstruction in dark sky

‘The paintings from the “Constructions” cycle visualise and investigate urban space as a metaphysical and representational space of living.’

Marilena Preda Sânc is an interdisciplinary artist who creates drawings, painted objects, photography, artist books, media installations, video, performance arts and mural art.

Since 1980, her work has been exhibited worldwide at museums, conferences, symposia, broadcast venues and galleries.

2017
Oil on canvas
146 x 114 cm
Artist’s collection
Integrating art in its more traditional forms and in new media, her works visualise and investigate the body/mind/soul/behaviour in relation to nature and social/political and representational space. Her art explores the problematics of feminism through the themes of gender/ageism and woman as leader in an eco-feminist perspective.

She is the author of art writings focused on feminism, electronic art and public art.
Florica PREVENDA (1959)

Facebook Obsession

‘Perhaps there is, somewhere, a retinal residue of the graphic tension of scalar fields perceived at a subliminal level, while browsing the internet, during this creative period devoted to the addictive Facebook. I create, or, more accurately, deposit visually tactile matter, like ashes of my own emotions, over-digitised effigies of the presence of The Other.’

For a decade and a half, the painter Florica Prevenda has shown commendable tenacity in her artistic endeavours to research a subject matter which is gaining a depth of process and conceptual range with every exhibition. From the fundamental theme of the Faceless Face (The National Museum of Art, 1999), to the diagram of the metropolitan crowd (Shadows of the Present, Simeza, 2004) and the multiplied Self (Time Regained, Mogoșoaia Palace, 2008), the painter draws inspiration, along a minimally figural series, from the magma of emotions and anxieties which haunts the human condition of the current era.
When stood before a new painting, the painter makes an artistic gesture to form an “opening” in the white surface. The first trace is significant, after which, by subsequent gestures, the opening grows and finds meaning through a pictorial approach. It makes the transition to a field of communication and an experience of the mind and the soul. It is at this level that the “key”, with which one can access the network of connections behind the image, is found. The “key” that opens one’s mind is the experience of the soul.

It is the artist who, through his personal experience, his form, and exposure to the viewer, initiates the discovery of a painting. The notes and annotations of the painter, which are transferred to the canvas in the form of gestures, provide the answers for the viewer and — for those who hold the “key” — an understanding.

In order to garner a profound insight, the viewer resonates with the tone of the painting or modulates the tone of his soul in the very soul of the painting itself. Modulations between very distant tones are impossible, while it is the filter that either permits or denies a connection that constitutes the experience of the soul.

Constantin RUSU (1984)
Water. Storm / Apa. Furtuna

2017
China ink on cotton paper mounted on wood
variable dimension
Artist’s collection
The abstract within photography is not real, but mediated, dissolved within concrete. It is not as detached from the objects as it is claimed, but neither is it imperceptible. Nevertheless, it will not remain at the level of mere speculation, lost among the shadows, in their immutable passing towards darkness.

The abstract – the reality which we can access – does not encourage, but will instinctively oppose, by seeking to cover up its communion and complicity with the protective contrast of photography. Pliable, evasive and deeply duplicitous, the abstract evinces its own imagistic whims to frame the greys, one after the other, until they vanish altogether.

A link which should not be underestimated is that between the abstract and alienation, between attitude and ambiguity, in which the chosen reality remains nothing but a conditioned reflex of a guileful consciousness.

‘I present a perspective like a part of an uncensored journey of the mind on its way to the rationale for the abstract, mapping out a certain part of an inflated reality.’

2014
Photo print, edition 1/3
110 x 160 cm
Artist’s collection