Contemporary Romanian Arts as a commentary and critique of the urban environment of the post communist city – a preliminary survey.

(Arte contemporane Roman caci un comentariu si o critica de mediu de orasul post- comunist - o cercetare preliminare

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FUTURE TENSE
A NEW ART FOR THE NINETIES

ROBERT HEWISON
Rodinsky’s Room, Ronan Point, Derek Jarman, NATO
CITY IN SOCIALISM
1974–1987,
series of 18 black/white photos

MIASTO W SOCJALIZMIE
1974–1987,
cykl 18 czarno-bialych fotografii

EUGENIA STĂNESCU
la plajă
ului pe carton, 1978
Stefan Bertlan – Apricot Tree, Malva neglecta and salvia officinalis (1977.1984)
Constantin Flondor - Sky and Earth 1980
Paul Neagu cu Marea masă tactilă.
Sigi Krauss Gallery, Londra, 1970, foto: A. Agor
Let me live my American dream
McDonalds, Michael, Notorious BIG
George Bush, Coca Cola si MTV
Hollywood, Mike Tyson, Iraq
11 septembrie, what a shame, what a disaster
FBI, CIA, Hamburger, Hot Dog
Bill Gates, Windows, Microsoft
Now, u dont go at "work", u go at "job"
A few time ago u says "adidas" at feet of pig
Chill man, janes english, no,
We dont have anymore neighborhoods ugly, now we have 'ghetto"
Raperii have flow, are underground yo
Everything is "cool", nothing is "misto" (romanian word-like cool in english)
The women are "glam", the men are more "farte',
They drink everytime "whisky" and they make like "superman"
You need to be 'trend', another way is not a joke,
'Is this the life" don't sound so good in romanian
I can be what i want to be
Losing my dignity
Cause i got a lot of life in me
Let me live my American dream
Nadia Comaneci, Tiriac, Ceausescu
Hagi, Dracula and thats'all know the rest
barb" (romanian sandwich) and then we go to make fitness
Is not a problem... anyway everything is backwards
Peter Pišt’anek was born in 1960; he enrolled in Bratislava’s Academy of Performing Arts, but did not graduate. He was also a drummer in a rock group. His breakthrough came in 1991 with this novel, the first part of a trilogy. Recently, Peter Pišt’anek has worked in advertising and edited an internet magazine Inzine. He is an expert on cognac and whisky.

Pišt’anek’s reputation is assured by the originality, craftsmanship and inventiveness of Rivers of Babylon and by its hero, the most mesmerizing character of Slovak literature, Rácz, an idiot of genius, a psychopathic gangster. Rácz appears in autumn 1989, when “Socialism” crumbles and “robber baron” capitalism is born.

Better than any historian, Rácz and Rivers of Babylon tell the story of a Central Europe, where criminals, intellectuals and ex-secret policemen have infiltrated a new “democracy.”

GARNETT PRESS
LONDON, 2007
In conversations over several years with the artist and curator Mircea Nicolae suggested a number of artists working in Romania (and some important Romanian artists working through choice rather than exile) who have (broadly and not necessarily in a polemical way) ‘something to say’ about the current Romanian ‘urban condition’. They can be grouped into three ‘generations’ and the development of this research will explore their work in more detail. Here there is just a brief summary of some key points and findings.

- **Generation C(eacescu) – Artists who worked through the 1980’s**
Ion Grigorescu – Still from Cross Axes
În Mercedes, Elena Ceauşescu, savanta analfabetă, după cutremur (Bd. Magheru, Bucureşti) 5 martie 1977

Elena Ceauşescu, the illiterate sci in a Mercedes after the earthquake (Bucharest) March 5, 1977

Cu bicicleta, spre blocurile fără drumuri de acces (Şos. Colentina, Bucureşti) Iunie 1984

Riding a bike towards apartment blocks with no access road (Şos. Colentina, Bucharest) June 1984

Andrei Pandele
October 2000, a lady in red on a balcony – the House completely dominates her view.
Generation 89 – Artists maturing in the 1990’s

• The artists of this generation cross the great divide – born and living as children in Communist Romania they were educated in the first years of freedom and several of them are now well represented- and travelled - in the modern art world with exhibitions and residencies across the world – and have (so it often seems) lost a sense of local relevance in their works.
The Church

One of the main goals of the Communist Party was to impose atheism by canceling religious holidays at the official level as well as via the destruction of churches and increasing pressure on religious freedom. In Bucharest alone, during the 1980s, around 25 churches and monasteries were demolished in order to make space for the new Civic Center and Palace of Peace construction projects.

Ștefan Constantinescu

The Golden Age for Children
pop-up book
2008

Courtesy of the artist
Imagine you wake up one day belonging to another country. This happened, to millions of people, at the end of the Cold War.

After living for almost 50 years behind the Iron Curtain, people who had little or no chance to share their views openly now have a new logic for the future through private initiatives.
19. The Traveler 2008
3.  Space, the Final Frontier  2006

Edge of empire 2008
13. Manastur Bridge 2  2007

Inner Life 2010
Mircea Cantor
Stills from
‘The Landscape is Changing‘ 2003
J: Please note that down.

N: No, I will only speak in front of the Grand National Assembly. Everything here is a lie and a gross fabrication.

Mona Votamanu and Florin Tudor
Generation 2000 – a new generation

I was talking to someone who was about to go University in 1989 to study history and philosophy when, of course, all the rules and the syllabuses changed – she chose instead to study English and French to bypass this confusion. For art students the world changed too – several of the radical artists of the earlier generations at the fringes became tutors and their work was seen again (though not widely – contemporary art practices are still marginal) and a new more radical generation for whom the communist year were at most part of their childhood memories.

The novels of Mircea Cartarescu (b. 1956) are often situated, partly, in this ‘epoca de aur’ and translate it into a surrealistic wonderland (Nostalgia, 1989) for instance.
Michele Bressan (b. 1980, graduated Bucharest 2010) presents apparently normal, but somehow surreal images of everyday life. I'm interested in documenting and re-contextualizing a certain period, known as recent history, namely the last 30 years. The period's aesthetics acts as a laboratory from which I extract my images. In this logic, I attained a firm documentation of a barefaced, yet unobserved local life and compiled a personal aesthetic of these passing Romanian scenes.
Out of the Ordinary
Elena Ciobanu (b 1980) uses photographic images to confront the starker reality of the city: In the beginning of January, I took with me the pre-cutted text from above and two large prints representing some close at hand tropical paradise islands. The images assumed the familiar vision of secluded rich territories, being typically both promising and enticing.
Hotel

Elena Ciobanu, 2007

Camerele de hotel sunt locuri prin care trecem, spații impersonale, in care patrundem pentru o noapte fără a lasa apoi nimic în urma. În această serie am încercat să las obiectele să vorbească în locul nostru, în spatele fiecărei poze este o poveste, dar care ar putea să fie practic despre orice pentru ca oamenii care au participat la ea n-au particularizat-o. Unele fotografii au mesaj mult mai bine conturat, iar altele sunt doar stilizare a unor emotii ale celor ce-au fost acolo, inainte ca totul să dispară, facând loc următorului personaj.
Bogdan Girbovan (b.1981) is another photography graduate of Bucharest Academy of Fine Arts
My entire existence feels like a permanent vacation. As alien as one can get to realism, reality is photogenic in itself to me. I never find myself in search of a subject, as subjects never cease to come my way. There are only not enough photo films, not enough time, not enough space and never enough funds to grasp it all.
Vlad Nanca (b 1979, lives and works in Bucuresti) and is active across a range of media from photoworks to documented events and street-works all of which question and cross examine the everyday urban world in some way.

From the early stages of his artistic production, Vlad Nancă has been taking photos of urban absurdities he was coming across on the streets of Bucharest. In these series, one may take notice of the ways the inhabitants of the city react to the lack or withdrawal of municipal infrastructure and regulations.
Mircea Nicolae (b 1980) lives and works on Bucuresti, is a key figure as organiser of the informal group ‘Young Romanian Artists’ for whom he secured ICR support for a residency as a curator at the 2009 Venice Biennale and over several months arranged exhibitions of many new Romanian artists with a strong social commentary. Like many of his generation, his work is situated in the relics and mysteries of contemporary Bucuresti.

After two years of urban exploration, I left behind the deserted industrial sites that often resemble a film set from a Science-Fiction movie, in order to concentrate my attention on the interior of deserted houses furnished with old and used objects. Moreover, I began to intervene on some of the places I discovered...
I bought a few tourist postcards from a post-office in Bucharest, Romania. Using a box cutter, I removed the buildings in the image. Only the sky above the city remains intact.
Mircea Nicolae
Romanian Kiosk Company
Gradina Suspandata

Într-un cartier de mai multe decenii, una dintre cele mai renașteri ale comunității a rămas în erori, văzute și înzestrate într-un complex de bucătărie.

El a început ca o fermoară, un porțal de metal, un tablou de acoperiș, o ușă, o balcoană, iar apoi s-a dezvoltat într-un centru artistic, cu o arhitectură modernă, o creație pe un cadru de ferma, un pătură de carcase, un oraș de buză meanacă plăci din hârtie și oameni cu mâini felice.

Caselor de acoperiș sunt închinate, iar vârfurile lor prezintă un poliromantic. Galeere și gradini sunt menținute pe un teren cultural cu oameni de dispoziție artistă. Mai, încolore și vibrante, sunt într-o atmosferă efervescentă.

Sursa: Direcția Urbană
Habitat de București

Caini

Descrisă schematică: Caini lipisită familiei
Câinii: Canidae; Caninae; Mammalia.
Lungimea corpului: 30-35 cm (populația transilvanică); 45-60 cm (în exterior; populace).
Câinii de rânduială și câinii de rânduială sunt o formă de vânat, la fel ca și câinii de rânduială. Oamenii de rânduială sunt o formă de vânat care utilizează câinii pentru a vâna mamalele și animalele de mână. Câinii de rânduială sunt o formă de vânat care utilizează câinii pentru a vâna mamalele și animalele de mână.

Cenuser

Habitat de București

...înălțimea pe masă de pe...
studioBASAR (Axel Axinte and Cristi Borcan, both b. 1979) is a small architectural practice who alongside their architectural work have pursued theoretical and research based projects and exhibited and published as artists. The most recent is ‘Evicting the Ghost- Architectures of Survival’ which examines a specific phenomenon of recent Romanian social history: nationalisation, retrocession, eviction.
ARTISTS DO NOT WORK ALONE OR IN ISOLATION – LOOKING WIDER

Though at the level of academic analysis it is quite feasible to focus on ‘works’ these are only socially important through their dissemination and circulation in debate and events. It is this discontinuity from the regulated years before 1989 that is perhaps most critical. In this sector some of the ‘channels’ through which contemporary art interacts with contemporary society albeit in the same limited ways and to limited audiences that is typical of the genre).

Maria Muhle - Aesthetic realism, fictional documents and subjectivation. Alexander Medvedkin. The Medvedkin Groups, Chris Marker

Ludger Schwarte - Performative Architecture: Setting a Stage for Political Action

Bruno Latour - From Relativität to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public

Chantal Mouffe - Agonistic Democracy and Radical Politics

Reinhold Martin - Financial Imaginaries: Toward a Philosophy of the City

Hito Steyerl - The language of things

Eugen Rădescu - What we produce is always way ahead of what we think

Wu Ming - Notes For A Declaration Of The Rights And Responsibilities Of Story-Tellers

Julia Brotea and Daniel Béland - “Better Dead than Communist”. Contentious Politics, Identity Formation, and the University Square Phenomenon in Romania

Andrei Crăciun - The Women from APACA

Antonio Negri - Metamorphoses

Doina Petrescu - Tactics of Faux Migration

Răzvan Ion - Exploring the Return of Repression

Peter Osborne - Imaginary Radicals: Notes on the Libertarianism of Contemporary Art
Being Romanian
by Andrei Crăciun

Romania, the complex of European Romanians and the pride of Romanian Europeans, continues to place itself in the East, incapable of escaping the East-West hierarchy, curse of the Balkans- a linguistic invention adopted much too easily. The way of relating to the local, national, European, global reference points suggests the way we relate to our own nationality, excited by an unconscious nationalism, flat and auto-destructive or tired of our own history and willing to deny it, paralyzed by the incapability of action.

Romanians assume the status of ideological victim of circumstances, reliving the traumas of communism, under the shelter of capitalism. It seems that democracy was too expensive for us to afford the luxury of doing into it; instead we afford the liberty of not getting involved, the liberty of not contributing, and the liberty of not choosing. We establish parties and we suppress the civil society. We dispose of responsibility and we invoke the right to suffer.

The shortcomings of the weary man seem to find their justification in our actions. We are Romanians, but not at any cost. We don’t sell ourselves for nothing; we accept the exchange of recognition, but we want much more than what we’re worth. The battle is fought between how we relate to others (Europeans- we actually refer to a certain part of the West) and how we see ourselves. We try to guard ourselves from the utopia of future that the communists had and the past-hidden utopia of the peasant tradition, in which the corruption of the city is nonexistent. We try to look for something, to have the security given by the democratic institutions, not to give in to elitism, not to despise the common man, prosaic and without great ideals, not to form an artificial society based on a fanaticell elite. Residues of the masonic attitude still infect social, political, even cultural environments. The current elites are the former armies of informers, participants and active supporters of communism. On the other hand, a society in which everybody works for themselves is condonnable. But not as condonnable as a society that has no-one to work or fight for. We give the impression that all heroes have died before reaching the battlefield. A grim, tedious and hidden scenario doesn’t allow us to see the future in a humorous and sympathetic way.

Are we willing to accumulate? We are learning to be good Europeans, good citizens; our country, we fight to make it the best of all possible ones. The English sociologist, Ralph Dahrendorf, said, in 1991, after the fall of the communist regime in Eastern Europe: “To become a democracy you need three things: a constitution, an economic system and a civil society. The constitution can be made in six months, a market can be built in six years, but a civil society requires two generations”. Are we skipping stages? The child doesn’t accept the parent’s mistakes, but he always finds an excuse for them. History broke in two. “Before”, “that time” and “after the ‘90s”, “after the revolution” shout some, justifying their forgetfulness, trying to divide the world through their experience. The world, as we all experience it, didn’t end in ’99 and it didn’t begin in 1990.
about

Centre for Visual Introspection is an independent platform generated by artists Anca Benera, Arnold Estefan, Catalin Rulea and art historian Alina Serban. Reacting critically to the restrictive institutional frameworks present within the Romanian cultural sphere, Centre for Visual Introspection was conceived as an independent centre for promoting the artistic production at the borders of cultural theory, research, architecture, design and sound experiment. The term “introspection” points CIV as an observing agency whose main focus is to develop specific models of interlinking the social space with the art space.

Centre for Visual Introspection is a processed-based collaborative project engaged in an ongoing survey upon the condition of individual within the sphere of arts and politics. Thus, CIV functions as a mobile and mediating structure connected to the community life, which assumes the task ofarticulating a new cultural pedagogy that would shape differently the discursive space shared by both cultural producers and their audiences. A particular attention is dedicated to the research and theoretization of local artistic practices and discourses, addressing their specificities and cultural subjectivities in the light of recent political and social shifts taken place in Central and Eastern Europe. In this direction, Centre for Visual Introspection seeks to develop collaborative projects with a variety of partners, attempting to engage itself in a dynamic exchange with different local and international cultural producers.
Bătaie și scandal la Consiliul general înainte de modificarea Legii urbanismului

Cine este Observatorul Urban?

Observatorul Urban reprezintă un proiect cultural de interes național, inițiat de Uniunea Arhitectilor din România în 2007.

Obiective pe termen mediu:
1. crearea unei platforme de dialog între personalii actori urbani (administrație, profesioniști, mediul de afaceri, ONG-uri, locuitori) pe tema gestionării spațiului public;
2. crearea unor instrumente și metode de evaluare a impactului și calității intervențiilor în spațiul public urban;
3. crearea unor instrumente și metode de monitorizare a calității vieții urbane și spațiului public;
4. impunerea unui nou tip de instituție civică în planificarea orașelor;

Bucureștiul de altădată, distrus
Se reabilitază cetatea din Alba Iulia

Turn de 70 de metri pe bd. Iancu de Hunedoara pg. 3

Obiective pe termen scurt:
1. cercetarea și cunoașterea efectelor și impactului intervențiilor recente în peisajul urban al Capitalei și a altor orașe din țară;
2. inițierea unor forme de dialog/comunicare cu media, alte asociatii interesate, publicul larg;
3. popularizarea/comunicare pe scară largă a problemelor spațiului urban sau a aspectelor pozitive.
Grădina Bisericii "BĂRĂȚIE"

Documente scrise

"Dacă acesta nefiind introdus în istorie ar fi putut fi o parte a acelei prăznuită Băițești, se spunea Ionceni Gion în istoria sau dedicată orașului București, că acesta se află pe aceeași loc unde se află și Băiițești de azi, ar fi în spatele fantei Palat Domenesc. Dar într-un anume acest lucru nu și este probable, cu toate că Gion nu a lăudat în continuare prin nimeni pecetea..." Citat al adăuga însă, spunând despre istorici că acești au fost într-un anume acest lucru nu și este probable, cu toate că Gion nu a lăudat în continuare prin nimeni pecetea cu București, după cum a spus studiul citatelor lui. Ar fi fost acest lucru probabil o curte, dar nici o grădini, nici mâine una după multă vreme.

Sursă: CAROL AUNER - ISTORIA BĂRĂȚIEI DIN BUCUREȘTI, conferința ținută de autor în plen de comunități din București, la data de 1 mai 1964.
The man without stories. Each Group of 3-5 kids draws the outline of one trainer. The next step is to fill the outline of the body with their Personal stories, or wishes, or invented stories. The group gives a name to this man who has now a Personality. Given by the amount of stories he has inside. The men are exhibit in labOMBAsudios.

draw the outline of one trainer

next step is to fill the outline of the body with your Personal Story

FLOWERS or the ladies empower labOMBAs

FASHION RAHOVA-URANUS
In this project, the architect Șerban Sturdza and the artist Virgil Scripcariu invited the public on the outskirts of Bucharest to contemplate the results of the disappearance of green space, and to discuss ways of countering this process. The site for this project is the courtyard of a furniture retail store and workshop, where around 400 cherry tree logs were presented for several months. The trees came from an orchard that was felled to make place for the construction of a hypermarket. Șerban Sturdza bought what was left of these trees and assembled them for later use, turning the dead trees into symbols of the city’s development at any cost. The project *Hut Art 6: H.C.L.M.B, 10/25/01/2001* is named after a municipal regulation in Bucharest that took effect in 2001; this regulation compels anyone who cuts down a tree within city limits to plant four new ones. Architects and lawyers explain to the public what the consequences of this law would be, if applied to the case of the cherry-tree orchard: at least 1600 newly planted trees would represent a new park for Bucharest.

On one hand, the project is a manifestation about art’s efficacy as an instrument of public persuasion, and on the other hand it is a call for action: demanding the genuine application of laws and norms, making them more than just words on paper that are systematically ignored to privilege economic interests. It is a call to prioritize environmental protection.
OMISSIONS, CONCLUSIONS.
This paper is a first sketch, some first responses after five months part time work on an 18 month project and though there are many omissions and even the sources and artists quoted have only been briefly covered here.

This paper has, for convenience, focussed on the visual arts and the next round of investigations need to extend the coverage especially to literature (both the better known and translated novelists and poets and new and less familiar writers who are starting to address contemporary and ‘urban’ themes and issues) film and popular culture.
Vila Prințul Nicolae / Vila of Prince Nicolae

Vitale Butescu
Oana Lohan – Fresh Bucharest
- De unde ati venit?
- Din Alexandria, unde regele vostru, Cezar, a dat foc bibliotecii!
- Bine va face cioroi ani că va trимite în lagără de muncă în Egipt...

Parcă-i și văd: cocoșați de muncă...
peripheral monster

ambiguous_transitional_marginal_misty
vague barriers once powerful
dissolved in endless limits areas
spectral bodies seen in the distance
overlapping fragments
boundary dislocations
aura_filters_mirrors
di:hamonies and hesitation
memories_scrap_ply_holes_thresholds
traces of transition
through successive agonist stages

still alive the city - animal
forming before our eyes its bodies
attraction and rejection
pain mutilation scarring
ugly and beautiful as a birth could be
happy as possible at a certain age
(as fates says...)

still alive the city - animal
daily abandoning one skin
I see remnants of his skin at the edges
dry and crumbly skin
glossy and smooth as the road
skin with holes through that the wild grass grows
gray_green_black
cement_steel_concrete_reinforced_concrete
cutting blades of glass
aggressive chipped mirror
where the city regards itself

still alive the city - animal
with metal flakes stuck in the back
with train rails penetrating her hydrocephalic head
increased as an endemic goiter
with metastatic cell
in its crimson flesh tissue
bulimic_obese_insatiable_hungry
poor and rich
swallowing and spitting
bread and stone
smoke and meat
me and you together
dead and alive
cemetery and offices
luxury houses and huts of blocks
But my interests in this topic are not only as a researcher, I am also (in Romanian terms) an ‘urbanist’ – a town planner and urban designer and interested (and soon I hope through joint projects, also engaged with) the realities of urban planning in Romania and concerned to see how urban change and reality connects with this. My own previous research has led me to realise that the ‘languages’, the words, the images, the vocabulary that professions use can be very stultifying and limited\(^{59}\). But the worlds of the artist – though open and creative rarely engages with the professional business of shaping a changing world. Though it might. Brian Goodey, doyen of the fringes of British urbanism, a long while ago wrote a paper *The Role of communication and the mass media in British planning* \(^{60}\) which included an original diagram which showed the role of the media – a model that could easily be extended to include artists and the arts as social communications. Fast forward to a seminar at Ion Mincu Urbanism department\(^{61}\) where the possibility of ‘a creative urbanism of dialogue’\(^{62}\) was being discussed around plans for the historic centre Bucuresti …..imagine how that creative urbanism of dialogue might be extended and enriched with a fraction of the ideas uncovered in this research.