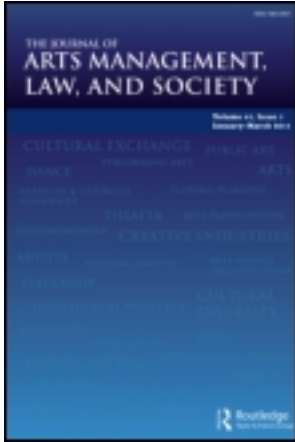


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Art and Politics in Postcommunist Romania: Changes and Continuities

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Artists are the first ones to react to their environment and to articulate a protest. Recent Romanian contemporary art questions the way communism is remembered or forgotten and the manner in which the postcommunist society was organized. This study uses the approach of politics and the arts to analyze both institutions and artistic discourses in Romania after 1989 in order to show how an artistic space is rebuilt after a dictatorial experience. The conclusions show that artists interrogate the “reconstruction” of democratic institutions and discourses on solid communist bases.

Keywords *art, politics, postcommunism, Romania*

INTRODUCTION

In Romania, art and politics have always had a strained relationship. Between 1948 and 1989, art was politicized and relegated to mirroring the official ideology, socialist realism. Unquestionably, not all art was committed to official dogma, and certain artists assumed a critical stance vis-à-vis the surrounding reality, offering a refuge from the omnipresent politics (Preda 2009).

The aim of this article is to explain how the artistic landscape is *reconstructed* once democracy returns and how this is done in relation to the past. Two questions are central: first, how are democratic institutions shaped in comparison with their predecessors? And second, how is the past remembered in art (art of memorialization), and how is the communist memory questioned by artistic endeavors?

The analysis begins at the institutional level and addresses the permanencies and transformations of specific institutions, as well as of laws and norms. The transition from a state-controlled model to freedom of expression and a free market is examined, analyzing what role the state still holds. Cultural policy analyses are used to this purpose (Nițulescu 2002; Rațiu 2006, 2007; Șuteu 2003, 2005; Toepler 2000; Zimmer and Toepler 1999). The article proceeds by evaluating artistic discourses produced in Romania after 1990. More specifically, it deals with the

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way Romanian contemporary artists extensively approached symbols in their works, reminders of the communist past. Often, these discourses interrogate the way communism is remembered or simply indicate problems still unresolved. My hypothesis is that there is a combination of changes and continuities between the communist and postcommunist periods, and a comparative approach of the two allows for the evaluation of the twofold series of elements. The dictatorial and postdictatorial periods are not completely separated but should be regarded as interacting, intertwined, and transforming each other's periods. The break with the past discursively proposed throughout "Romania's transition to democracy" made artists question the path taken, as well as the way the past is remembered or forgotten.

The problems presented here are only partially discussed within existing literature. Thus, this article brings new insight through an innovative perspective, integrating resources incompletely analyzed by political science. The analysis of cultural policies does not include the concept related to the institutional transformation of the state according to the dichotomies dictatorship/postdictatorship or communism/postcommunism. It is the aim of this article to add this component to existing studies (Șuteu 2003, 2005; Toepler 2000).

This article introduces the approach of a subfield of political science: politics and the arts. Studies of interdependencies between politics and the arts have dealt extensively with the relationship between art and politics in the Western world, especially from the perspective of political theory, also borrowing elements from the Frankfurt School or neo-Marxist scholars. This heterogeneous group of researchers and research themes is loosely institutionalized in the form of several meetings held inside the framework of the American Political Science Association ("Politics and Literature," "Politics, Literature, and Film" sections) and the European Consortium for Political Research conferences (Politics and the Arts standing group).

Another venue for the investigation of this relationship is found inside the Social Theory, Politics, and the Arts (STP&A) conferences organized since 1974. The latter has included several research topics closer to the approach adopted in this study, investigating "how the arts were influenced by politics and vice versa, as well as analyzing the "links between art and society" (Lee 2003, 215).

Several French authors have also dealt with this relationship between art and politics, but have mostly addressed it from a sociological point of view with such foci as the establishment of an autonomous artistic space (*champ* in the sense of Bourdieu) and of specific institutions (Pequignot 2009). It is only recently that "the political" has been included in studies about art, yet still approaching the subject from a sociological perspective. The francophone space (France and Belgium mainly) also comprises a collection of studies about art and politics that deal with artworks and artists and the way these are connected. These essays stem from a previous interest of the authors in Marxist theory and aesthetics, which they updated to accommodate current trends and artists (Jimenez 2007; Lachaud 2006; Van Essche 2001) However, no coherent theoretical framework has emerged from the latter. Politics and the arts scholars mainly discuss artistic works and, occasionally, artists. The STP&A analyses, as well as the French sociological school, focus on institutions and practices, as well as policies.

My study combines these two approaches so as to render a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation of the Romanian artistic model. In the first part, an analysis of the cultural policy change and cultural institutional transformation after 1989 opens up the discussion on the continuities and changes between the two periods. The article then focuses on thirteen artistic examples that are analyzed by following two main topics: (1) questioning the recent past, as well

as the discourse dominated by the “national values” forged during communism; and (2) critically discussing the way Ceaușescu’s memory has been constructed. The two come together through a different understanding of the past: in terms of a domination of the state at the institutional level and in terms of other difficult legacies as understood by contemporary artists, which include references to the December revolution, the controversial figure of Ceaușescu, and the “true nature of being Romanian.”

THE TRANSFORMATION: THE (POST)COMMUNIST STATE-CENTERED MODEL

One of the most important issues in postdictatorial settings is that of continuity versus change. These two processes can be investigated on at least two different levels: (1) on the institutional level addressing state structures, laws, and norms; and (2) on the level of perceptions, ideas, and discourses. While there are artists who still produce art according to communist-forged principles, others question this very set of ideas. Institutionally new approaches mix with old ones to forge the postcommunist panorama.

A break with the past is marked by the establishment of new institutions, but at the same time these new institutions include inherited personnel from the former regime and symbolic heritage in the form of behaviors, attitudes, etc. Resilience is registered in the partial safeguarding of predemocratic models of articulation of the arts, such as the state-centered model.

Historical predetermination is not specific to postcommunist states. As Zimmer and Toepler (1999) argue, the way cultural policies look in the present can be explained by means of tradition and path dependency. That is, the tradition of “government support” is “deeply rooted in the history of the nations” and explains the support granted today (35). Similarly, the institutional history of cultural affairs influences the postdictatorial settings. Moreover, the situation is not specific to Romania, as evidenced by other Eastern and Central European examples (Toepler 2000).

Before 1989, the soviet-inspired model of articulation of cultural activities was ideologically and institutionally predetermined by a hyper-centralized structure dominated by party-state bodies. The state monopoly was secured through several mechanisms: nationalization of all means of creation and distribution of artistic works largely completed by 1948 and the establishment of new norms and institutions largely achieved by 1950, with all these elements placed under the demands of the new and mandatory ideology—Socialist Realism. The compulsory organization of artists into creative unions dominated by the state was carried out during the same period,¹ and artistic education was transformed by the founding of institutions controlled uniquely by the state.

After 1971, the Romanian dictatorial architecture of cultural institutions, based on extreme centralization,² revolved around the Council of Culture and Socialist Education (CSCE), a continuation of previous communist administrative forms. CSCE was an institution established after Nicolae Ceaușescu enunciated the so called “July Theses” in 1971—a series of measures meant to reinstate art activism strongly influenced by nationalism. In December 1989, one of the first decisions taken by the new government was to turn the CSCE, “a double nature organ directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to the Council of Ministers, responsible with the coordination of the cultural and educative activity,” into the Ministry of

Culture, “whose mission was to lay the national culture on new basis.” This decision was part of a broader array of measures taken by the new authorities that transformed the structures of the party state through “fusion, division or a change of name” into new institutional instruments (Ionescu 2006, 111). This renaming of a communist structure and its conversion into a democratic one is among the most interesting modifications seen in the process of rearticulation of institutions in postcommunist Romania. Apparently no negation of the previous framework is identifiable when the same institution is taken over by the new democratic government and only slightly rearranged.

Discontinuities and Communist Permanencies

One of the main concerns addressed by cultural policies is “What should the state do in cultural affairs?” During Romania’s communist regime, state artistic policies were determined by three mechanisms: control, direct (dictate principles), and sanction (censorship), thus de facto preventing alternative views to the officially prescribed ones.

These negative mechanisms had to be voided by the democratic regime established in 1990. New norms had to be created. As such, the most important limitations eliminated with the regime change were the dismantlement of censorship and the end of party dictated cultural policy. The 1991 Constitution and its subsequent 2003 reform both include the guarantee of the freedom of expression (Art. 30) and the right of access to culture (Art. 33). Further organic laws have been adopted to ensure the artists’ right to associate, author’s rights, the protection of monuments, cultural heritage, etc. (Nițulescu 2002).

Among the first issues that the democratic government had to address was the pressure to make the state withdraw from the realm of culture; this demand to “do away with the state” took two forms: the delegation of decision making to regional entities and the dismantlement of state systems by privatization (Șuteu 2005, 27). This process was not easy, as Rațiu (2006) remarks. Decentralization was hesitant: the first measures were taken in 1990, followed by recentralization in the period from 1994 to 1996, and a serious process has been pursued since 2001. One cause of this evolution could be seen in the high degree of political discontinuity, with twelve different ministers of culture within twenty years (nine in ten years); often each new government distanced itself from the acts of the previous one. The unquestioned preservation of previous institutional structures in the new democratic context caused problems: “The legacy of mammoth like cultural equipment (theater, opera houses, and museums) continued to be state administered but had to follow a liberal market logic and become cost effective” (Șuteu 2003).

Nowadays the state still exerts influence in several spheres: the artistic education system, the professional artists’ unions, and several cultural institutions such as museums. The problematic relation with the state, the communist heritage, and “the assisted mentality” persisted throughout the 1990s (Rațiu 2007, 210), as the great majority of artists were educated in the state-centered framework. In spite of different reforms, changes in the state institutions and in the ministry of Culture, the latter has remained the main administrator and cultural operator (Rațiu 2007). Besides the control of education and professional organization, the state was also the only patron. Artists were submitted to ideological constraints, and in order to be granted resources they had to conform to the official principles of the Party, which had the monopoly on the definition of art. While no explicit constraints subsisted, the first period of Romanian democracy was thus dominated by a policy of continuity with the past rather than the logic of change. Thus,

artists still dependent on the state stayed away from politically relevant discourses accentuating experimentalist approaches and wishing “to reconnect with Europe,” rather than question the immediate past/reality.

Currently, the access to resources still seems to be the main issue; state subsidies are still deemed important, as the creative unions largely failed to adapt to the market economy. As an attempt to reduce the dependence of artists on state subsidies, several legislative acts have been adopted “through a redefinition of sponsorship and by introducing a new juridical category, the *maecenas*³ (the OU 36/1998, complementing the law 32/1994), or through the organization of the National Cultural Fund (OG 79/1998) which, since 2004, has had the power to select and finance cultural projects.” In spite of this, the main instruments for supporting culture have remained budgetary allowances and public subsidies. In 2005, new mechanisms were added through the contribution of the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR), which offers scholarships and grants for artistic residencies in its foreign headquarters (Rațiu 2006, 11, 13).

Moreover, there are several symptoms of the lack of debate on the role the state should play in financing artistic projects. I will mention only two here, one having to do with cinematography and the other, with the ICR scandals. First of all, cinematography was privileged during the communist regime, but has seen the greatest decline during postcommunism. It is only recently that Romanian film found a new lease on life with the very productive cinematographic year of 2006/2007, which saw four nationally and internationally acclaimed movies premiering, all with direct references to the communist past.⁴ Among the main problems of postcommunist cinematography has been that of infrastructure and funding dedicated to the production of motion pictures. The most significant declines were seen in cinema production and distribution. From an average of around thirty movies per year produced before 1989, cinema in the 1990s saw years with no Romanian movie premiering. Moreover, the number of cinema halls has fallen dramatically from around 7,000 during communism to 68 in 2010.⁵

In regard to film production, the National Center of Cinematography (CNC), itself the result of the reorganization of the communist institution *Româniafilm Central* (Law-decree no. 80 of 1990), is subordinated to the Ministry of Culture and deals with the financing of film projects. The projects sponsored by this institution have been criticized by Romanian civil society for promoting mainly cinema productions that are neither popular, in terms of attendance, nor artistically “competitive”—they do not participate in international film festivals. According to the Romanian film director Cristian Mungiu, 70 percent of the funds granted by the CNC do not favor quality film projects but, on the contrary, are still given to people that produce unsold and largely unseen productions.⁶ Moreover, movie production remains partly under state control, as the Studio of Cinematographic creation of Bucharest is still supervised by the Ministry of Culture, although since 2006 it is largely self-financed. Thus, film financing and film production remain partly dominated by the state model.

The mid-2000s saw an important political change in Romania that can be traced back to the cultural world: the ICR changed its administration,⁷ art of memorialization began to be produced, and critical stances on the communist, as well as on the recent past, were adopted. The important change of policy was introduced in 2004, and this is easiest seen in the case of the ICR, as types of projects other than the folkloric, nationalist kinds were promoted.

Thus, another symptom of problematic public funding was signaled by the so called 2008 “ICR scandals.” The Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR), subordinated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has seventeen international branches constructed as Romanian cultural embassies abroad.

The controversy regarding the Institute's activity was essentially sparked by two exhibitions that triggered a debate between the communist defined concept of "national art" and contemporary artistic discourses.⁸ The most important controversy was set off by the New York exhibition, which inspired the organization of an investigatory parliamentary commission meant to verify the activities of the ICR.⁹ Paradoxically enough, it was headed by one of the main supporters of the Ceaușescu regime's myth, the poet Adrian Păunescu. "The Nazi pony" became the symbol of the controversial New York show;¹⁰ part of the work exhibited by the artist Nuclear Fairy (Linda Barkasz), this item represented a small pony toy with the swastika stamped on its rump. The debate was triggered by what was considered to be a type of artistic expression that was not representative of the Romanian people, and it continued with a discussion of the state financing projects that include swastikas, etc. In fact, the topics and reasons of the subsequent debates testified to the persistence of the same rhetoric permeating the last decade of the Ceaușescu regime. What remains of the period, when the state validated what artworks were represented and verified if their content was appropriate, can be discerned when analyzing this specific case. The media frenzy around these two art exhibitions, but especially the New York one, while very unusual in the Romanian public space, turned into a conflict between conceptions about what art should do and express, and who should represent national art, etc.

If institutionally the main problem regarding the articulation of the new model and its relation to the past concerned the problematic dependence on the state, as we shall see in the next section, for artists, the main problem seems to concern ideology and its personification by the dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu. Ideology and its effects, such as a certain understanding of the nation, are central to artistic discourses of the twenty-first century. Equally so, artists question the way the past determines the misconstruction of the democratic regime after 1990.

THE ARTISTIC DISCOURSES: ROMANIA ON FAST FORWARD AND THE PERMANENT LOOK BACK

The same ambivalence regarding discontinuity versus permanency described for institutions can be seen in politically relevant artistic discourses. A vacillation between the evocation of the communist past and the desire to move forward and closer to the "democratic world," "the West," to overcome communism, is registered. Right after 1990, "getting closer to the West, reunit[ing] with the European family" was paramount for Romanian artists, and art was dominated by experimentation as a *posteriori* revenge for the lost time when it was forbidden, along with dark imageries.

It is only recently, in the mid-2000s, that what I call "art of memorialization" began crystalizing. It is only at that moment that a new perspective on the past could be articulated, as sufficient time passed since the end of the communist regime, and artists could critically engage with this past, as well as with the first democratic regimes. These artworks use and reinterpret symbols of the past and evoke the previous period as a healing aid for still existing wounds. They take different forms, use different artistic mediums, and hover between legacy and nostalgia. Certain artistic discourses of the last twenty years have been marked by the obsession to question everything as a means of recuperating the lost past, given that Romania is usually considered as having no public manifestation of dissent during communism. The twentieth anniversary of the demise

of communism brought about many interesting projects ready to reflect on, or at least address, problems that are related to the still present past. Several topics are worth mentioning. Artists promote a rewriting of (recent) history; they question communist ideas concerning nationalism, the national idea, national symbols, and national art, and interrogate the symbols of the past. Meanwhile, the image of Ceaușescu is still central to many of these artistic projects.

The artists producing this new discourse are not dominant in Romanian artistic space, and they often have an international status (they have exhibited in foreign galleries, participate to international art fairs or biennials) as opposed to their fellow artists of the artists' unions that are dependent on state subsidies, were formed in the state education system, and usually don't question the status-quo. Even when they receive funds from the ICR, I don't consider the artists discussed in this article as "state-artists" because they are not dependent on public funding for their artistic projects.

Artistically Rewriting Recent History and Questioning "National Symbols"

There are several artistic projects by Romanian artists that promote a rewriting of recent history or point to the need to discuss the past in terms other than those officially recognized. *Archive of Pain* (2000) is a collective project that documents the first decades of communism in Romania, especially the repressive character of the regime. The art project consists of a video installation, a website, a book that includes documents and photos never shown before with chapters written by Romanian historians, and a CD.¹¹ The video installation presents four projections in four modules displaying the testimonies of twelve former political prisoners in communist Romania. At a time when discussing the past in terms of repression was not the main discourse present in Romanian society, this artistic project signaled exactly this lack of attention by documenting a period less acknowledged at the time—the beginnings of the communist regime—and not the Ceaușescu regime on which most discourses focused.

The Ion Iliescu regimes (1990–1996 and 2000–2004) were rather keen on continuity with the communist regime, and the relation to the communist past was based on policies of forgetting rather than remembering. The Iliescu regime also privileged the memory of the revolution of December 1989 as its source of legitimacy. Repression during communism and the shades of gray of the dramatic end of the communist regime were obscured by a discourse based on the need to move forward.

Another interesting project attempted to construct a visual fresco of the last twenty years: "ofrescapentruromania" (A fresco for Romania). A group of three artists (Ștefan Tiron, Alexandra Croitoru with the help of the painter Virgil Pop-Negreșteanu) invited the public to participate in the collective creation of this fresco through a website designed for the occasion, by having the public send ideas concerning the most important events of the last twenty years and by engaging in a discussion in the open forum.¹² Interestingly enough, the visual artist of the trio that painted the fresco is one of the so called "Ceaușescu painters," i.e., one of those artists that made the largest number of official portraits (Pop-Negreșteanu). Using the tools of the communist regime (the type of painting technique, as well as the artist), this project problematizes what is remembered from the years since the "founding moment" of the new regime in December 1989. The democratic regime has been built on a foundation that is now being questioned by artists

through this reflection on the recent past. As this project proves, what Romanians remember from the last twenty years of democracy is also determined by how they remember the communist past.

The project of Romanian born artist Ștefan Constantinescu, “An Infinite Blue” series (2009–2010), is a reflection on the socialist past. In this series of paintings in traditional Socialist realist style, Constantinescu reenacts images of the propaganda of the 1960s, “a time when there was housing and education for everyone, high-quality research, state-owned restaurants, and healthy habits for the working people.”¹³ His intention is to stimulate a discussion about the “projection of false utopias” through a reference to the “positive illusions of Ceausescu-era propaganda.”¹⁴ Also interesting in Constantinescu’s approach are the alterations he applies to his canvases, alterations he imagines would have been demanded by the censors.

Art not only calls into question the communist past and its still potent symbols, but interrogates authority as shown by the ironic treatment of national symbols (Gorzo and Nancă) or of the institutions that are still respected by the vast majority of Romanians (Knorr). Beside the controversy brought about by the 2008 exhibition organized by ICR-NY, another exhibition that raises the issue of the way public funds are spent and “national memory” is constructed is “F.A.Q. about Steve the Great” (H’Art Gallery December 2004). This time, the exhibition was organized in a private gallery and involved no public spending, yet it triggered a huge scandal because it dared to portray in mocking terms one of Romania’s most revered historical figures. Five artists participated (Dumitru Gorzo, Alina Buga, Suzana Dan, Sabina Spătariu, and Sorin Tara) in this anticelibration of 500 years since the death of Steven the Great—one of the most famous Romanian princes—and his sanctification by the Orthodox Church. Their intention was to show “the human side” of Steven the Great and to “demystify” him, as well as to criticize the public spending of three million euros for what they considered was a “nationalistic display.”¹⁵ Dumitru Gorzo’s piece was among the most criticized as it presented Steven the Great as a black woman with blonde hair, observing all imaginable principles of political correctness.¹⁶ The scandal arose from this ironic treatment of the “untouchable national symbols,” considered such by most Romanians. Similarly, Nancă questioned the intangible symbol of the “national poet” consecrated during communism: Mihai Eminescu. The artist transformed the poet in a stencil displaying his famous photographed image with the tag Eminem, calling into question how much is still known of his poetry by students who would rather listen to the American singer than recite the famous verses of the Romanian poet.

The unbearable weight of Romania and of its difficult past is the topic of an artistic intervention by one of the most famous contemporary artists, Dan Perjovschi. This artistic dual intervention showed how everything the artist did was determined by Romania and its fate. In the art action “Romania” (1993), Perjovschi tattooed Romania on his shoulder, whereas “Erased Romania” (2003) saw the removal of the word as he became a global artist (Stiles 2007, 78). Perjovschi’s action “was one of the most sincerely desperate forms of manifesting a post-December trauma, a form of protest against a ‘collective amnesia’ manifested by the general indifference to the great problems which remained unresolved during the transition from communism to another stage” (Pintilie 2007).

A past that is un(re)movable is the topic of an ephemeral artistic intervention. In 2007, Daniel Gontz tinted the water of the famous fountains along the former Victory of Socialism Boulevard in the civic center of Bucharest as a symbol of the unchanged environment. His intervention wanted to draw attention to this socialist scenery and to its loss of visibility.

“Comme une image”: Ceaușescu

Ceaușescu is omnipresent in contemporary art of the last years, the mid-2000s. His image seems to be obsessive and is displayed in all sorts of artistic forms, from stencil to film. Ceaușescu is presented by artists in a new light; their goal is to discuss the past in terms different from those accepted after December 1989, when most of the blame was laid on Ceaușescu himself. Several artists have tried to humanize the dictator, to cast a new light on this essential character of Romania’s recent history.

Ion Grigorescu’s artwork “Dialogue with Comrade Ceaușescu” (1978) consists of a fictitious interview in which he asked the Romanian leader questions that were forbidden at the time. Almost thirty years later, in 2007, Grigorescu attempted a continuation of this first interview in his “Posthumous dialogue with Nicolae Ceaușescu,” which presents Ceaușescu and his wife Elena as huge masks worn by Grigorescu and a friend, with the House of the People in Bucharest as a background. The symbol of this paradigmatic building helps the artist present Ceaușescu’s reflections on the topic of Romania’s evolution since his death in 1989. Grigorescu declared his purpose was to encourage a discussion about the true nature of the communist regime. The artist considered that by demonizing Ceaușescu, who was accused of all the wrongdoings of the regime, the true problems left behind by communism were concealed.

In recent years, coinciding with a new approach by the government of the communist past, newly available archive material from the Ceaușescu regime has proven productive for artists. The docu-film by Andrei Ujică, “The Autobiography of Ceaușescu” (2010), was devised as a document of how Ceaușescu saw himself, his ascent, and then descent, from glory. To this purpose, the director used video material from the Romanian Television’s archive presenting the dictator in both public and private occasions. The film that has no voice-over except for the original sound, if any, forces the spectator to relive the period as if through Ceaușescu’s eyes—the propagandist of the party.

Burlacu’s paintings from the “Understanding History” (2009) series, portraying Ceaușescu in different hypostasis, also use archival material. The photographic archive of the communist regime, a project launched in 2007 by the Romanian National Archives, has proven an interesting resource ever since. When it first opened, it even triggered a small scandal because it included photographs with the president of Romania Ion Iliescu (1990–1996 and 2000–2004) playing games with the Ceaușescu couple. Iliescu tried to present himself as at least a dissident of the Ceaușescu regime in the context of the December revolution and the subsequent democratic regimes. This photograph, reused as such in one of the paintings of the series, deconstructed this image of Iliescu. Burlacu also portrays Ceaușescu as a clown on a gray background. This is very interesting, as the double image of Ceaușescu after the 1989 revolution was that of a clown ridiculed by the citizens of Romania, as well as that of a tyrant feared by everybody. By drawing attention to this clownish image of Ceaușescu, Burlacu hopes to stimulate a discussion on the true nature of the regime.

Ceaușescu was also present as a stencil on the walls of Bucharest in the mid-2000s, a new form of anonymous urban intervention that was easily recognizable. The tag of these stencils was “I’ll be back,” “Back in five minutes,” or “Lost.” Given the omnipresence of Ceaușescu in the public space, even in 2011, the stencils should have perhaps had the tag “I never left.”

CONCLUSIONS

This analysis of the relation between art and politics during the democratic reconstruction took into account several tensions between nostalgia and legacies, residues of this still present past. The questions referred to two actors: the state and the artists in the context of democratization and in relation to the dictatorial past.

In Romania, the state continued to play the central role in the artistic sphere. Rather than a tension between a complete “break with the past” versus “continuity,” the cultural institutional model was transformed following the change of the regime of 1990, an adaptation that was subsequently questioned by contemporary art discourses. This transformation preserved a number of enclaves from the communist regime. Artistic creation continues to be marked by the state dominated model, at least where funding is concerned. The rush to move on quickly, to part with a painful past, and the absence of a societal project other than integration into the European and North-Atlantic organizations, still affect the present configuration, as the ICR case shows. The “assisted mentality” (Rațiu 2006) of the former “state artists” is still very common throughout the post-1990 period. The state is still expected to deliver support and infrastructure, but not to continue to interfere with the conceptualization of art. However, as the ICR scandals showed, the principles of “national art” promoted by the communist regime are still interiorized by many.

At the same time, certain contemporary artists that were evoked here question this type of state-defined concept of what art is and what it should represent (Gorzo). More than twenty years after the fall of communism, Romania is still witnessing a growing interest in the communist past and a recurrence of communist-related images, showing that this past is not very well accepted, absorbed by society at large. In fact, artists also continue to respond to the omnipresence of communist remains in Romanian society.

NOTES

1. Union of Romanian Writers (USR; 1949), Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania (UCRM; 1949), Union of Visual Artists (UAP; 1950), Union of Architects of RPR/RSR (UARPR/UARSR; 1948–1952). At a later date, musicians, filmmakers and theater artists were organized inside the Association of Theater and Music People and The Association of Filmmakers of Romania (1963).
2. I can't agree with Stefan Toepler's observation (2000, 14) concerning Central and Eastern Europe that “cultural life under Communism was all but restricted to the state-run industries and institutions” for the Romanian case. The party-state structures were fundamental in the articulation of the artistic world. Rațiu (2007) also acknowledges the hyper-centralized administration of culture.
3. “Maecenasus” refers to the encouragement of patronage or art sponsorship through tax incentives. See Rațiu 2006, 11.
4. Three movies were released in 2006: *12:08 East of Bucharest*, directed by Corneliu Porumboiu; *How I Spent the End of the World*, directed by Cătălin Mitulescu; and *The Paper Will be Blue*, directed by Radu Muntean. In 2007, another Romanian production, *Four Months, Three Weeks and Two Days* (directed by Cristi Mungiu), which evoked the difficulties encountered by women following the Decree/Law no 770/1966 that forbade abortions, won the *Palme d'Or* in the Cannes 2007 Film Festival. *Tales from the Golden Age*, a collective work coordinated by Mungiu released in 2009, deals with this same communist past.
5. Statistical Annual Reference book by the National Center of Cinematography (2010).

6. "Cristian Mungiu: Interview." See <http://www.berlinale-talentcampus.de/story/61/1561.html>.
7. After 1990, the Romanian Cultural Foundation, closely following the nationalist approach typical of the communist conceptualization of culture, functioned as a cultural embassy. Then, in 2003, it was reorganized as the ICR under the auspices of the Romanian president, with its own revenues and budget. Since 2005, it has been under the direction of Horia Roman Patapievici, who replaced Augustin Buzura, the president since 1990. The presidency of Patapievici has seen a diversification of the ICR programs and a highly evaluated Romanian presence in different international cultural events.
8. The two exhibitions are the Nuclear Fairy (Linda Barkasz), IRLO (Laurențiu Alexandrescu), and Omar (Marwan Anbaki) "Freedom for Lazy People" exhibition (June 18–August 15, 2008, ICR New York); and the Alexandru Radavan and Tara von Neudarf "The Last Temptation" exhibition organized by ICR at "Days of Romanian Culture in the Ruhr Basin" (September 21–26, 2008, Bochum).
9. A denunciation to the city police for the anti-Semitic character of the show by a minor newspaper of the exiled Romanian community in New York brought about a visit by police officers to the exhibition. This nonexistent problem was hyperbolized in Romania, especially through the talk shows of one of the TV channels (Antena 3) owned by a leader of the political opposition in Romania. The attack especially concerned the leader of the ICR, Horia Roman Patapievici, a supporter of the current president, Traian Băsescu.
10. See "Freedom for Lazy People," *ICRNY*, http://www.icrny.org/110-Freedom_for_Lazy_People..html.
11. See the website of the project, www.formal2.com/archiveofpain/pag_events.htm.
12. See website of the project, <http://www.frescapentruromania.ro/>
13. See Catrin Lundqvist writing on Stefan Constantinescu's blog, <http://www.stefan-constantinescu.com/index.php?/works/an-infinite-blue/>.
14. See "Romanian Art Infiltrates London," *fluxmagazine*, September 28, 2011, <http://www.fluxmagazine.com/index.php/arts/romanian-art/>.
15. See Dan Popescu, "Indicator de sănătate culturală," *Dilema Veche*, no. 119, May 5, 2006.
16. See interview with Dumitru Gorzo, *Metropotam*, November 7, 2006.

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