

The State Artist during the Communist Regimes in Romania and Eastern Europe: a Theoretical Outline

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The study of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe has developed considerably in the almost three decades that have passed since the fall of the Berlin wall. Several aspects have been analyzed, such as the role of the communist parties, and of the secret police forces, the policies of the communist regimes including the collectivization of agriculture, the cold war logic, the different national models, and the varying influence of the Soviet Union.¹

However, the establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe signified an important transformation for other spheres of society, such as the arts, which witnessed the establishment of the “state artist”², and which have not benefitted from the same attention from social scientists. This lack of scientific attention contrasts with the importance of the transformation conveyed by the communist regimes. The communist regimes imagined a comprehensive visual representation of their understanding of the world, and artworks were commissioned by the state, which offered extensive rewards to artists, who were encouraged to comply with the political and ideological rigors of the new establishments.

¹ Some examples of the relevant literature include: Gale Stokes (ed.), *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Jean-François Soulet, *Istoria comparată a statelor comuniste* (Iași: Polirom, 1998); Anna M. Gryzmala-Busse, *Redeeming the Communist Past: The Regeneration of Communist Parties in East Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Constantin Iordachi and Arnd Bauerkamper (eds.), *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe: Comparison and Entanglements* (Budapest, New York: CEU Press, 2014).

² Miklós Haraszti, *The velvet prison: Artists under state socialism* (London: I.B Tauris Co, Ltd, 1988).

When the topic of the transformation of the arts was acknowledged by social sciences it mostly consisted in the issue of art as resistance, dissenting artworks, or the role of art as propaganda. In this volume we want to shift the focus to the artistic institutions that partook in the change imposed by the communist regimes. We consider, it is important to further analyze and discuss the role played by artists in the design of the new worlds, as well as their transformation by the ideology put into place by the new regimes: Marxism-Leninism and its national trajectories, such as national-communism in Romania.

As part of the research project “From the ‘state artist’ to the artist dependent on the state: the case of the Romanian Artists’ Union (1950-2010) – the Bucharest branch”³, this volume is the result of a selection of the presentations given at the international conference “The ‘state artist’ in Romania and Eastern Europe” organized at the Department of Political Science, University of Bucharest (5 November 2016). The articles in this volume explore the different transformations that the artists experienced in order to comply with the extensive role assumed by the totalitarian state in the arts. The question that lies at the ground of this investigation is: How did artists contribute to the maintenance of the communist regimes? A preliminary answer would be that they were effective in helping the propaganda, but the role of institutions is also paramount.

The conference discussed the state artist in the context of communist regimes from multiple points of views, which included such interrogations as: How was the new “state artist” shaped by the communist regimes? Were artists able to integrate Socialist Realism as a mandatory style, and if not, which were the limits of this mandatory style or the national specificities? Which were the types of resistance to the model of the state artist? How did Socialist Realism translate in different visual practices? What role did the Romanian Artists’ Union (Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici, UAP) of Romania play and how does it compare to other unions in the East? What were the transformations of the unions of artists after 1990?

The case of the UAP has not been studied extensively until now. There is a small volume by the art critic Radu Ionescu, which is the most comprehensive description of the Union.⁴ Additionally, the Union and its functioning have been mentioned in more general studies of the evolution of the fine arts, or of the cultural

³ In the framework of the research project PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-0243 “From the “state artist” to the artist dependent on the state: the Romanian Artists’ Union of Visual Artists (of Romania) (1950-2010) – the Bucharest branch” (Financed by UEFISCDI and hosted by the CPES, Department of Political Science, University of Bucharest 2015-2017).

⁴ Radu Ionescu, *Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici din România. 1921 © 1950 © 2002* (București: Editura Uniunii Artiștilor Plastici din România, 2003).

sphere during communism.⁵ Few studies have analyzed in detail specific aspects related to the functioning of the Union, or its relationships with other institutions.⁶

Because of this lack of scientific literature dealing with the specific case of the UAP, and of the artists that helped consolidate the communist regime through their artworks, and as part of the research project on the UAP, we have explored several archival funds: the UAP Fund at the Central Historical National Archives of Romania in Bucharest (ANIC, for the period 1950s to 1970s), the Archive of the Union at the *Combinatul Fondului Plastic* (AFCP for the period 1950-2010), and the personal files for artists and art critics, as well as the Fund Art and Culture of the National Council for the Study of the Archives of the Securitate (ACNSAS). Other interesting files concerning the relationships of the Union with other countries were examined in the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This introduction addresses several issues, among which the analyses of art during communism in Eastern Europe, the model of totalitarian art, and its version in the East, Socialist Realism. At the same time, I argue we should study more in depth artistic institutions, and specifically the creative unions in the line of political science studies, and especially of the studies of the “new institutionalism of

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- ⁵ Magda Cârnelci, *Artele plastice în România 1945-1989 (Fine Arts in Romania 1945-1989)*. (București: Editura Meridiane, 2001); Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă. 1948-1953 (Literature and the arts in communist Romania 1948-1953)* (București: Humanitas, 2010); Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej (Communist cultural policies during the Gheorghiu Dej regime)* (București: Humanitas, 2011), Cristian Vasile, *Viața intelectuală și artistică în primul deceniu al regimului Ceaușescu. 1965-1974 (Intellectual and artistic life during the first decade of the Ceaușescu regime 1965-1974)* (București: Humanitas, 2014).
- ⁶ Carmen Rădulescu, “Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici. Între control politic și arta neangajată” (The Romanian Artists’ Union. Between political control and independent art), în *Forme de represiune în regimurile comuniste (Forms of repression in communist regimes)*, ed. by Cosmina Budeancă și Florentin Olteanu (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 248-255; Monica Enache, “Coborâri în subteran. Câteva cazuri de critici de artă și artiști plastici în Arhivele Securității” (Going underground. A few cases of art critics and visual artists in the archives of the Securitate), *Caietele CNSAS*, 1:15 (2015): 301-334; Mădălina Brașoveanu, “Gânduri pentru o expoziție documentară: urme ale rețelei artistice Oradea – Târgu Mureș – Sfântu Gheorghe în Arhiva fostei Securități” (Thoughts for a documentary exhibition: traces of the artistic network Oradea- Târgu Mureș – Sfântu Gheorghe in the archive of the former Securitate), *Caietele CNSAS*, 2:14 (2014): 85-166; Alice Mocănescu, “Artists and Political Power: The Functioning of the Romanian Artists’ Union during the Ceaușescu Era, 1965-1975”, *History of Communism in Europe* vol. 2 (2011), *Avatars of Intellectuals under Communism* (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2011), 95-122.

autocracies” that have analyzed formal institutions, but not cultural institutions.⁷ This volume examines in the first place, explicitly and for the first time from so many points of view, the specific case of Romania and of the Romanian Artists’ Union (*Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici*, UAP), through the conceptual lens of “the state artist”. The articles included in this volume also show the limits of this unifying concept, and the authors advanced other possible typologies. At the end of this brief study, we shall recall the landmarks of the articles included in this collective volume, as well as the common threads that connect them.

Art during the communist regimes in Eastern Europe

The study of art during the communist regimes was dominated by Western analyses that largely preferred the lens of totalitarian art put forward by authors such as Igor Golomstock.⁸ Cécile Pichon-Bonin observed how, this totalitarian perspective was followed in the 1970s by a revisionist perspective, which focused on society instead of the grand political framework, but had a limited impact due to its failure to take into account terror and violence, and its tendency to generalize.⁹ After the end of the USSR, the opening of the archives has allowed for a better understanding of the functioning of the socialist cultural model. We follow in this volume the perspective of Pichon-Bonin for the USSR and focus on the large corpus of archives that exist on the UAP and other cultural institutions, and that have not been used extensively until now.

Totalitarian art that is the conceptualization of art as ideology, art as propaganda has been the dominant interpretation of the artistic development of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. The model of totalitarian art was introduced for the study of totalitarian regimes in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union by authors such as Igor Golomstock, who, in his book *Totalitarian Art: in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and The People’s Republic of China* discussed the similarities between these regimes’ approach of the arts. According to Golomstock, inspired by Hannah Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism, a tripartite framework characterized totalitarian art: ideology, organization and terror. In fact, “in a totalitarian regime, art accomplishes the function of transforming the material of ideology into images, and myths built for general

⁷ Andreas Schedler, “The New Institutionalism in the Study of Authoritarian Regimes”, *Totalitarismus und Demokratie*, 6 (2009), 323–340.

⁸ Igor Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art in the Soviet Union, the Third Reich, Fascist Italy and the People’s Republic of China* (London: Collins Harvill, 1990).

⁹ Cécile Pichon-Bonin, *Peinture et politique en URSS L’itinéraire des membres de la Société des artistes de chevalet (1917-1941)* (Paris: Les presses du reel, 2013), 17.

consumption”, “totalitarian art has its own ideology, aesthetics, organization and style”.¹⁰ In these regimes, the state became the unique patron, with the role to protect and direct art, and the party-state announced its historical right to control art. In fact, some authors, as Cécile Pichon-Bonin challenge the establishment of totalitarian art in the form described by Golomstock, observing how in the 1920s and 1930s an art market subsisted in the Soviet Union.¹¹ The use of archival sources helps amend the grand framework put forward by such analyses.

The ideal language of total realism was the poster, colored photography, in which myth and invention were the fundamental meaning of reality, and social optimism dominated. The exceptional was put forward as the normal, and the typical. “Propaganda claimed, and art demonstrated through images, that the new man with its exceptional qualities had been born.”¹² Art was no longer autonomous during totalitarianism.

“Whatever sources one turns to in studying totalitarian culture – the speeches of leaders, the texts of Party documents, or the statutes of artists’ unions – one always finds precise formulations stating that art is not simply an autonomous sphere of activity of the human spirit, but an object that is created according to predetermined (not necessarily benevolent) aims. The concept of pure art, of art for art’s sake, of laws of artistic development independent of the human will is alien to totalitarian consciousness.”¹³

Art was assigned an ideological function, which transformed any artistic gesture in a political action. By transforming art into ideology, totalitarian regimes completely altered the conceptualization of art’s role in society.

Socialist Realism

After 1948, the communist regimes in Eastern Europe supported by the Soviet Union introduced a new mandatory artistic style, that of Socialist Realism, and accompanied this ideological position with an institutional apparatus able to support it. Socialist

¹⁰ Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art*, xii, xv.

¹¹ Cécile Pichon-Bonin, “Peindre et vivre en URSS dans les années 1920 1930. Commandes, engagements sous contrat et missions de création”, *Cahiers du monde russe*, 49:1 (2008): 47-74.

¹² Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art*, 215.

¹³ *Ibid.* 168.

Realism was in place between 1932 and 1956, but in some cases it remained the only officially recognized artistic style until the end of the communist regimes in 1989, or 1991.¹⁴

The term of Socialist Realism was used for the first time in 1932 in the magazine *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and its principles were sketched out at a secret meeting between Stalin and Soviet writers on October 26, 1932.¹⁵ It became the official style in 1934 when it was “defined by three ideas: the link with the people, “people-ness” (*narodnost*), “party-mindedness”, the identification with the Communist Party (*partinost*) and its capacity to present socialist ideas, to be biased (*ideinost*).”¹⁶ Socialist Realism was a specific form of realism that had a national form and a socialist content. Michel Aucouturier reminds us that the aesthetical content was secondary, as the essence of Socialist Realism did not reside in its prescriptions, but in its statute as orthodoxy in placing art under the control of the totalitarian party-state.¹⁷

The new official style/method had a didactic, educative role: “‘Educating the workers in the spirit of Communism’ means using art to develop and stimulate the best qualities in Soviet man”, and “socialist realist art must portray reality objectively and assist the masses to understand historical processes and their own role in them. It is thus one of the means of developing the social awareness of the people.”¹⁸

Artists were assigned the task of creating the ideals put forward by the Soviet Union and to create the new socialist society, fulfilling the desire of the avant-garde – to transform art from a representation of life, to that of a total aesthetic-political plan.¹⁹ Artists were attracted to the power circle so as to see from the inside the formation of reality and, as state bureaucrats they could be involved in “the establishment of the new reality”, “the object of mimetic representation in art is not visible exterior reality, but the interior reality of the artist, his capacity to identify with the will of the party and Stalin, to become one with it.”²⁰ As Sergei Tretiakov wrote in the constructivist journal LEF (Left Front of the Arts), it was “not the production of new paintings, of verses or stories, but the formation of the new man, using art as a means of production” which was the goal of futurism.²¹

¹⁴ In Romania it was denounced in 1965.

¹⁵ Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art*, 84.

¹⁶ C. Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism Origins and Theory* (London and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1973), 2; Jéroôme Bazin, *Réalisme et égalité Une histoire sociale de l'art en République Démocratique Allemande* (Paris: les presses du reel, 2015), 5.

¹⁷ Michel Aucouturier, *Realismul socialist* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Dacia, 2001).

¹⁸ Vaughan James, *Soviet Socialist Realism*, 93-94

¹⁹ Boris Groys, *Stalin-Opera de artă totală* (Cluj: Idea Design and Print, 2007), 13.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 43, 44.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

At the same time, Socialist Realism was not uniform in the Soviet Union, and did not “constitute a single unvarying doctrine”, “it never constituted an exceptionless or monolithic style.”²² What is more, according to Piotr Piotrowski the national trajectories were the most important in Eastern Europe especially after 1956. Certain countries allowed “a certain amount of freedom of artistic expression, but only within the sphere of formal experimentation”, for example in Poland the regime “required modern but uncritical art that did not question the status quo and respected the post-totalitarian social order, an order that was both totalitarian and consumerist, or more precisely, post-totalitarian and pre-consumerist.”²³ While in other countries, like Romania, there was a new strengthening of a new form of Socialist Realism in the 1970s and 1980s, a reflection of what Trond Gilberg has called “Ceaușescuism”.²⁴

An institutional approach to the study of art: the creative unions

How did these regimes achieve control? Through institutional centralization, the establishment of official prizes, ideological education, and cultural repression. The party state gradually acquired a monopoly on artistic life through a quick process of nationalization of all means of creation, and diffusion of artistic works, as well as through the reform of the education system, and the establishment of unique state controlled institutions. Art was given an important status, but only ideological art. An ideological guide to artists was enforced.

Artists were organized in mandatory party state dominated unions of creation for each artistic expression: literature, visual arts (*arte plastice*), music, architecture, cinema, and theater. Amateur artists were given special attention too. The role of these unions was to exert ideological control, and new state aids were granted to artists who conformed. The benefits given to artists helped consolidate the new preferred method of creation, of Socialist Realism. At the same time, repression and censorship made sure artists respected the new canon.

In the USSR, the Union of Soviet Artists was created in two phases, the first one, in 1932 witnessed the establishment of the Union of Soviet Artists, and the

²² Matthew Cullerne Brown, Brandon Taylor (eds.), *Art of the Soviets: Painting, Sculpture and Architecture in a One-Party State 1917-1992* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 10.

²³ Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and Avant-garde in Eastern Europe 1945-1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 288.

²⁴ Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania. The rise and fall of Ceaușescu's Personal Dictatorship* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990).

second phase only in 1957 saw the first Federal Congress of Soviet artists.²⁵ In East Germany the Union of artists (VBK) established in 1950 was meant to “organize artists inside the new socialist economy”.²⁶ Other unions were established after the Second World War, as the Union of Bulgarian Artists (1944/53), or the Association of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists (MKISZ, 1949).

In this new institutional architecture, the state gradually assumed the most important position. As Golomstock observed, the state commissions became “the main, and eventually only, source of the artist’s material livelihood, the only inspiration behind his work”.²⁷ And so, the “artists’ union can then be seen as a mediator between the artist and the State”, which had as a “main routine task” “the organization of the annual ‘theme’ and ‘All-Union’ exhibitions which defined the country’s artistic life”; the state had “a monopoly on buying works of art for all the country’s museums as well as for its own reserves.”²⁸

Irene Semenov-Tian-Chansky observed how the political power legislates, institutional collaboration exists between the union and the state institutions, and the political power infiltrates the artists’ organizations; artists’ allegiance to the Party is inscribed in the statutes of the unions.²⁹

In fact, as Galina Yankovskaya and Rebecca Mitchell wrote,

“In a more global context, the Stalinist transformation of art into planned artistic production was part of the universal process of modernization, in which creative activities became professions (providing a basic source of income) and the artist became an independent figure, free from the obligations of craft responsibilities. Mass-produced art penetrated all spheres of life and became an industry. Finally, a mass audience for art appeared, mastering new social practices: visiting artistic exhibitions, lectures, museum; collecting objects of art; and so on.”³⁰

²⁵ Irène Semenov-Tian-Chansky, *Le pinceau, la faucille et le marteau Les peintres et le pouvoir en Union Soviétique de 1953 à 1989* (Paris : IMSECO et Institut d’études slaves, 1993), 65.

²⁶ Bazin, *Réalisme et égalité*, 24.

²⁷ Golomstock, *Totalitarian Art*, 100.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Semenov-Tian-Chansky, *Le pinceau, la faucille*, 65.

³⁰ Galina Yankovskaya and Rebecca Mitchell, “The Economic Dimensions of Art in the Stalinist Era: Artists’ Cooperatives in the Grip of Ideology and the Plan”, *Slavic Review*, 65: 4 (Winter, 2006): 769-791, 770.

Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici in Romania (1950)

In Romania *Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici* (the Romanian Artists' Union, UAP) was established in 1950, but it was based on a previous institution, that of the Syndicate of Fine Arts (1921), and the Mixed Syndicates of the other cities, and included the *Fondul Plastic* (Artistic Fund, FP) founded in 1949.

In its first statute, of 1950, the UAP stated, that "artists were ready to make of their art a powerful weapon of the working people in their fight to build socialism", they assumed Socialist Realism through different means. Later on, in a statute of 1973, the Union promoted "socialist humanism" and artists participated to the "building of the new socialist society multilaterally developed". The Union exerted ideological control through propaganda, the ideological commissions, visits to the USSR in the 1950s etc.

In 1949, the *Fondul Plastic* (FP) was already established as an institution designed to grant loans to artists, to help them with their health problems, and also give pensions in case of their death to their families, it was supposed to ensure the establishment of resting houses, kindergartens, and cooperatives to sell art, and also give studios to artists. In 1952 the UAP established the *Combinatul Fondului Plastic*³¹ (CFP) and the factory itself was built between 1967 and 1972 to produce goods for the artists and the state. Placed under the authority of the FP, the UAP and the Ministry of Education and Culture, it dealt with the production of materials needed to create public art and to reproduce works of art.

Besides the plural institution that was the UAP, encompassing several other entities, among other the FP, and the CFP, it had relations with the party and state institutions, such as different ministries that participated to the public orders the Union realized, and with the *Securitate* (secret police) giving information about its members and being surveyed by its officers. According to a document of the *Securitate*, in 1987-8 the institution had thirty-three informers, of which twenty were artists, and thirteen were administrative personnel.³²

The post-communist leadership of the Union has argued the patrimony it acquired during communism granted it certain autonomy. The union owned several buildings, which it received as a result of the forced nationalization of property, and then others were built for it such as the galleries, and the studios for artists.

³¹ This would roughly translate as the Factory of Art supplies of the Artists' Fund.

³² "Informers' network", File D 0001200 Volume 3, Fund Art and Culture, ACNSAS, Bucharest, 46.

If in 1953, the Union had only 576 members, they were 1.318 in 1989 (of which 967 full members and 351 trainees).³³ Despite this increase in its membership, the union became gradually a very exclusive institution, with very few candidates becoming definitive members in the 1980s. Members were given various benefits, which also changed through the decades, from the 1950s to 1990. The types of benefits granted included the access to public orders, prizes, and awards, enjoying access to the holiday and creative houses, the right to participate to exhibitions, and to send their artworks to international competitions, or the right to travel abroad through the protocols established by the Union. The letters the members of the UAP wrote, and which are included in the archival fund of the National Archives of Romania, or the archive of the UAP refer to a large panoply of demands from the right to have a studio, to the request to have a Trabant car, or to have installed a stove.

The state artist

Besides an institutional focus, in this volume we propose to look at the case of the “state artist”. We ask how were artists affected by the dictatorial power? How did the party state achieve the control of artists? Which artists can be given this label? How were they selected? What did they create? Did their colleagues support them? Were they marginal?

Miklós Haraszti in his book about the Hungarian case, *The Velvet Prison Artists Under State Socialism* (1988) discussed the instance of the “state artist”, which was “an organized professional”. Haraszti wrote that as workers, artists were a “thoroughly organized and rationally subdivided group of state employees”, to which the state guaranteed a public, and through regulation offered them protection.³⁴ Artists were educated “to be unable to create anything unpublishable. They [were] trained to be creative executors.”³⁵ State artists were at the center of the transformation of the artistic panoramas and benefitted of the new norms, and of the public orders organized together with the party, and state institutions. According to Magda Cârneli, in Romania a totalitarian triangle was formed between the party, the union, and artists. The institutions of the Communist Party of Romania (PCR), which included the Propaganda and Culture section of the Central Committee of the PCR,

³³ File 3/1953, UAP Fund, Bucharest: ANIC; “Documentary regarding the evolution of the members of the UAP”, File 1989, Archive of the Combinatul Fondului Plastic, Bucharest.

³⁴ Haraszti, *The velvet prison*, 129, 43, 46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

the different forms taken by the Ministry of Culture (State Committee for Culture and Art, Council of Socialist Culture and Education), and then the unions. For Cârnci, artists were divided into party artists, committed artists, such as Max H. Maxy, or Jules Perahim, opportunists, and artists who mimicked commitment.³⁶ Later, mediocre artists and amateur artists became important during the 1970s and 1980s.

Referring to the case of the Soviet Union, Boris Groys answers the question “Why [Soviet] artists did not practice something like an institutional critique directed against power structures... why they were not politically engaged...?” by saying that opposing the state would have meant opposing the Union of Soviet Artists that was a bureaucratic organization that dominated the artistic space governed by other artists.³⁷

At the same time, not all artists followed the official guidelines, and asked for artistic autonomy. Because the role of Socialist Realism, and of the creative unions in the transformation of the artistic spheres, and of the relations between the new institutions of the communist regimes remain an understudied topic, this introduction has presented an overview of theoretical issues related to the case of the visual “state artists” based on the extensive archival research of the Romanian Artists’ Union (UAP).

The structure of the volume

The volume offers a diversity of points of view on the Romanian Artists’ Union, and the state artist, but also on other unions (cinema), and artists in additional countries (Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia). The studies advance different typologies of artists (Dan Drăghia, Ina Belcheva), offer parallels in the functioning of the creative unions (Alina Popescu, Cécile Vaissié), or of their specific youth organizations (Vera Otdelnova, Cristina Stoenescu). New amendments to the concept of totalitarian art are put forward, as Mirela Tanta discusses the case of the “New Socialist Realism”, and Vladana Putnik considers “socialist aestheticism” in the architecture of Yugoslavia.

The first part of the volume “The Romanian Artists’ Union (Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici) and state artists in Romania” focuses on the case of the UAP and introduces the comparison with other unions, as well as the importance of the amateur artists through the *Cântarea României Festival* (Song to Romania Festival).

³⁶ Cârnci, *Artele plastice în România*.

³⁷ Groys, *Stalin-Opera de artă totală*, 52.

The first four articles are part of the research project on the UAP and discuss very diverse viewpoints on the Union and its evolution throughout the period 1950-2010. Alina Popescu's article, "Des Unions pour les forces professionnelles et créatives dans la Roumanie communiste: une comparaison institutionnelle entre l'Association des Cinéastes et l'Union des Artistes Plasticiens" (Unions for professional and creative forces in communist Romania: an institutional comparison of the Association of Cinematographers and the Romanian Artists' Union) compares two creative unions, that of visual artists, and that of cinematographers underlining several important differences between the two, but also interesting parallels. Dan Drăghia's article "'Tovarășul artist!' Conformism și beneficii în organizarea profesională a artiștilor plastici din România comunistă" (Comrade Artist! Conformism and benefits in the professional organization of visual artists in communist Romania) analyzes the case of the UAP from the perspective of trade-union studies and finds that the union offered a soft form of syndicalism through a series of benefits it introduced. Dumitru Lăcătușu's study, "Evoluția relației dintre artiștii plastici și Securitatea în perioada 1950-1990" (The evolution of the relationship between artists and the Securitate in the period 1950-1990) discusses at length the type of surveillance the secret police organized in different periods of the communist regime, comparing the 1950s and 1960s to the 1970s and 1980s. Through the analysis of seven files of artists and the examination of the file the Securitate had for the visual artists, Lăcătușu put forward a framework of analysis of the dynamics of this relationship during communism. Cristina Stoenescu's article, "The transformation of the Romanian Artists' Union (UAP) after 1990: the case of Atelier 35" analyzes for the first time the case of Atelier 35 or Studio 35, the specific entry entity the UAP imagined in the 1970s and 1980s for the young artists that could no longer join the Union. Stoenescu examines the transformation of A35 after 1990, and its evolution until the end of the years 2000.

The article by Magda Predescu, "Rolul Uniunii Artiștilor Plastici în formarea artistului de stat" (The role of the UAP in the formation of the state artist) examines the first period after the establishment of the Union, and the different mechanisms, such as the ideological commissions used to impose the state artist. Dealing with the same period of the beginning of the UAP, the article of Monica Enache, "Mechanisms of coercion and control over the artistic act: the relationship between the Romanian Artists' Union, the Artists' Fund, and artists during the Gheorghiu-Dej regime (1948-1965)" discusses the modalities used by the Union to control artists.

The following three articles discuss the 1970s and 1980s. Alice Mocănescu's study, "The July Theses as a Game Changer: The Reception of the "July Theses" within the Romanian Artists' Union" analyzes the precise impact Ceausescu's 1971

ideological speeches had inside the Union. Mirela Tanta examines in her study "Neo-Socialist Realism: The second life of Socialist Realism in Romania" and brings forward the specific evolution of Socialist Realism in Ceausescu's Romania. Finally, Claudiu Oancea investigates the case of amateur artists in his study "Claiming Art for Themselves: State Artists versus Amateur Artists in Art Exhibitions before and during the 'Song of Romania' Festival (1970s-1980s)"

The Second Part of the volume, "The state artist in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe" includes four studies that analyze other countries than Romania so as to offer a comparative perspective. The study of Cécile Vaissié, "L'Union du cinéma d'URSS, moteur, reflet et victime de la perestroïka (1986-1991)" discusses the impact of the Perestroïka inside the Union of cinematographers in the Soviet Union. Vera Otdelnova's article, "The Moscow Young Artists' Exhibitions of the 1960s and 1970s: Prudent Progress against Omnipotent Censorship" analyzes the specific case of youth exhibitions and the limits of the totalizing perspective on the period, offered by the concept of totalitarian art, as well as by the concept we put forward of the state artist. Ina Belcheva's article "State commissions and artistic limits in 1950s Bulgaria: the case of Lyubomir Dalchev" examines in detail the case of one state artist using the notion of "the counter-adaptive artist" and thus amending the totalizing perspective of Haraszti's concept. Finally, the article of Vladana Putnik, "From Socialist Realism to Socialist Aestheticism: Three Contrasting Examples of State Architects in Yugoslavia" compares three architects during Titoism and amends our conceptualization by showing the nuances of the role played by state artists.

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