

Reenacting the Past:

Romanian Art Since 1989

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Introduction

In July 2007, a few months after Romania joined the European Union, on January 1, 2007, the archives of communism housed by the National Archives of Romania opened to the public. The following year, as a result of an agreement between the National Archives of Romania and the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes in Romania, the online communism photo collection, containing photographs from 1945 to 1989 and from 1921 to 1944, became available on the Internet. Also in 2008, artists Ciprian Mureșan and Adrian Ghenie, in a conceptual response to this sudden presence of photographs documenting the communist history of Romania, started to paint Nicolae Ceaușescu as a mixture of personal and public snapshots of the communist leader's life (fig. 1). "It was Ciprian's idea," Adrian stated in an interview with curator Magda Radu. "We wanted to find out if, given the imposed iconography [on communist artists back then and on ourselves now], it was still possible to make an aesthetically passable work."¹ Their project brings up a daring question, which I argue still standardizes today's studies of art produced under dictatorships in Romania and elsewhere. Could these portraits function as inspirational art/propaganda and as visual signs open to varied interpretations? Or, in art critic Boris Groys's words, "Can you have a good portrait of a bad dictator?"² Ghenie explains, "My generation, we were all losers historically, economically. There was no culture of winning. Winning under a dictatorship is to make a deal with the power, which is a moral dead end. A black hole."³ Therefore, painting a successful portrait of a dictator must be a postmortem portrait realized outside the dictatorship, after 1989. The dictator's portrait, once an imposed subject under the nationally-implemented aesthetic of socialist realism in Romania, suddenly became a choice within the realm of artistic interest. This way, for Ghenie and Mureșan, such an

intentional return to the dictator's portrait becomes an aesthetic quest to discover how to paint a dictator's portrait in the wake of censorship.⁴ The portrait, as a propagandistic format once imposed and ubiquitous, is now open to the possibility to fail aesthetically or to be rejected or abandoned by the artist. To learn about the past, therefore, often means repainting Ceaușescu as a father figure and a national hero, shrinking the dictator's former palace to a small cardboard cake (Irina Botea Bucan, 2003), using documents and photographs and reconstructing images of monuments and cities (Calin Dan and Iosif Kiraly, 1995–1996), or replacing the old labels from socialist realist sculptures with new ones (Ileana Faur, 2012). Artists deconstruct historical artifacts and their symbolic meaning by dislocating historical facts from their inert official narrative and relocating them in the artist's current personal instance. By actualizing these symbols, artists also point to the former dictatorship's lingering ideological specter in today's society.

The second life of socialist realism in Romania (1970–1989)

The official art produced during oppressive regimes is often viewed as an unimportant exception to an otherwise fluid history of the twentieth century. We could argue that the aforementioned contemporary reenactments were rehearsed by artists prior to 1989, when neo-socialist realist artworks were produced. Following this sightline when analyzing Romanian artistic production between 1945 and 1989, scholars tend to split the artworks into two camps: those suffering under the Soviet socialist realism imposition and those subversive enough to state-commissioned demands to succeed in producing emancipatory objects resembling Western modernism. Viewed within this dyadic model, any artwork created during those decades of dictatorship appears either as badly done socialist realism—relative to Chinese and Russian sophistication—or as a timid imitation of Western modernism. Either way, such stereotypical receptions preemptively discount too much of Romanian art production as poorly conceived and amateurishly executed. In a post-communist aesthetic space, Eastern European countries once more exemplify one of the fundamental assumptions of the so-called universal history of modern art, namely, the hierarchically defined art geography. Piotr Piotrowski, in *Toward a Horizontal History of Modern Art*, affirms that the artistic production of Eastern European countries still evolves around the center-periphery relations between East and West.⁵ Therefore, it seems impossible to construct a history of Eastern European art without Western references.

The scholarship on Romanian socialist realism reflects this view by the lack of art historical research on it, compared with the plentiful research on literature, history, and political science.⁶ It is as though socialist realism is worth studying not for its aesthetic relevance but for its tangential archival

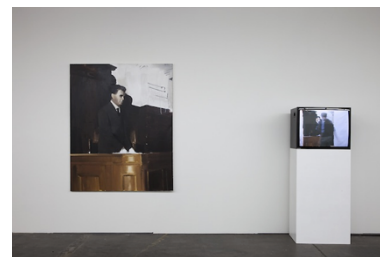


Fig. 1. Ciprian Mureșan and Adrian Ghenie, *Untitled (Ceaușescu)*, 2008. Courtesy of the artist.

value in terms of larger and more important historical social and political histories. However, in 2017 the National Museum of Art of Romania organized a major retrospective of socialist realism in Romania (together with state-commissioned art from 1948 to 1965), titled *Art for the People?*, and art historian Irina Cărbăș published her research titled *Realismul Socialist cu fața spre trecut. Instituții și artiști în România 1944–1953* (Socialist Realism Looking Toward the Past: Artists and Institutions in Romania, 1944–1953).⁷ After Ceaușescu came to power in 1965, although state-commissioned art continued to exist—and during which period I argue that tropes of earlier socialist realism are revived—the art historical view is restricted to art in agreement with Western modernism. Socialist realism is merely used as background/contrast for modernist art production.⁸

To echo Piotrowski's image of Eastern European art history suspended between the East and West, I would also mention that suspended within the walls of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest are most of the pre-1989 paintings to which this article refers. Haunted by the 20 percent of Bucharest torn down for its construction, the Ceaușescu Palace formally opened its doors as the first National Museum of Contemporary Art and the first democratic Parliament in 2004 and 2005, respectively. The National Museum of Contemporary Art also acts as the empirical repository for hundreds of socialist realist paintings, sculptures, and tapestries. In 2012 a large number of these paintings were moved into the empty space between the old concrete walls of the dictator's palace and the drywall of the art galleries newly constructed for the museum (fig. 2 and 3). How does one even begin to understand the existential condition of these paintings stuck between the walls? Perhaps metaphors such as "semantic gap" or "political lacuna" may offer some illumination. Perhaps theory can help. The paintings seem to be in transition, or to use French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept, they are "becoming" by losing and gaining territory under social and aesthetic pressures. Their gapped condition propels them to create alternative discourses by "becoming minor," understood as Deleuze and Guattari's continuum of exposing the process of exclusion inherent in the definition of the "majority."⁹ In other words, every time this body of artistic production is marginalized and fails to fit the mainstream discourses of totalitarian art, state art, socialist realist art, modernist art, and so on, it fails to be majority.

Therefore, perhaps the most productive line of sight in attempting to see these paintings—and their fraught architectural context—would be not to look at what they are, but at what they are not. Such a negative semantics echoes the physical circumstances of these works of art, since they are situated neither inside the museum's gallery nor inside the dictator's palace, but precisely where the gallery and palace are not: in between the walls. It is precisely their peripheral and unstable location that generates alternative (or minor) discourses in relation to the dominant ones



Fig. 2. Paintings and tapestries in between the walls of the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the Palace, 2013. © National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest.



Fig. 3. Paintings and tapestries in between the walls of the National Museum of Contemporary Art and the Palace, 2013. © National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest.

perpetuated by the functions of the parliament and the museum. Unlike other European socialist realisms, Romanian socialist realism was revived and reused in art commissioned by the state after 1965. This new form of socialist realism promised a new beginning for the role of art; an art liberated from its artificial role of serving Stalin's cult of personality could now fully represent socialism in Romania.¹⁰ Instead of reviving the canonical state-commissioned art of the earlier socialist realism in Romania (1948–1953), this second importation (1970) undermines the commissioner by trying to fit a readymade aesthetic to Ceaușescu's dynastic political system. Neo-socialist realism was then a variation of an ideology. It is this appropriation of the earlier iconographic forms of socialist realism that carries the potential to demystify Ceaușescu's symbols of power. By recycling the aesthetics of representing power, neo-socialist realism as readymade ideology exposes, without intending to be subversive, the readymade ideology of Ceaușescu's political power and his effort to originate communism in Romania. His National Communism, exaggerated and abusive, needed an aesthetic outlet to celebrate him, and neo-socialist realism seemed to fulfill this function.

The paintings in between the walls are suspended between the official iconography of the Communist Party before 1965 and the reuse of this iconography during Ceaușescu's dictatorship (1965–1989). These artworks cannot officially be considered socialist realist, because the movement ended before 1965 in Romania, and they are not outside enough or subversive enough of the official political discourse to join other examples of contemporary art from the 1970s and '80s. The neo-socialist realist paintings commissioned and accepted by the regime served the state as didactic art, but also counteracted state power by functioning as ambiguously coded sites of resistance.

For example, conventional socialist realist portraiture depicts the leader interacting with grateful workers, educators, and soldiers, or surrounded by happy workers or crowds of pioneers offering flowers. In 1945 Romania adopted the Soviet model of the Pioneers Organization, which continued uninterrupted in Romania until 1989.¹¹ Following the Soviet model, all Romanian children between ages of seven and fifteen became members of the "Pioneers of Romania." The pioneer wore a uniform and received a red tricolor cravat after taking an oath to serve the country. This initiation ceremony marked the transition from being a child to being a responsible citizen of the Socialist Republic. A pioneer's education also included knowledge about the communist party and ways to contribute to the communist society, and therefore they often feature prominently in socialist realist portraiture.

Moreover, the background of these paintings is sometimes occupied by the richness of socialist production: industry, agriculture, and urbanized sites. By surrounding Ceaușescu with five ARO cars (the ARO factory manufactured a national automobile) and placing him between a bouquet of

flowers and a blue background, Augustin Lucaci seems to follow this early aesthetic requirement (fig. 4). His painting was commissioned to celebrate Ceaușescu's visit to the car factory in the city of Cimpulung. The dictator is encircled by the abundant socialist production and the gratitude of the people, manifested in the bouquet of carnations. However, there is no visual clue to justify the dictator's presence and his hand gestures. Who is he addressing? And what would be the prescribed, immediate message that the audience should access? The uncertainty of the message undermines the didactic role of the painting. Moreover, no obvious subversive elements are present in the work. This lack of immediately available emblems of power (podium, scepter, cheering crowds, parades, banners, and pageantry) or subversive elements allows the neo-socialist realist painting to function both as celebratory rhetoric and as alternative rhetoric to the celebration. This way, neo-socialist realism appears in Lucaci's painting as a constructed snapshot of the dictator's visit to the car factory, in which the spontaneity of his hand gestures clashes with the canonically rehearsed visual ideology of a powerful dictator.



Fig. 4. Augustin Lucaci, *Vizită de lucru la fabrica Aro din Cimpulung* (Working Visit to Aro Cimpulung Factory), 1989. © National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest.

Another official painting open to interpretation is Alexandru Ciucurencu's *N.C. Președinte* (fig. 5). A well-known Romanian painter, Ciucurencu painted Ceaușescu after his 1974 election as the first president of the Socialist Republic of Romania.¹² Intended as a congratulatory painting, it places Ceaușescu in the foreground as he watches over the country while holding the presidential scepter. A common practice in socialist realist paintings is to depict leaders towering over a landscape of the country's future. However, the signs of power seem to dwarf the dictator, and the industrial site in the background seems to better describe a postindustrial apocalypse rather than a multilateral developed industry. To add to the ambiguity of the painting, the artist places a group of six young children at play on Ceaușescu's left side, disconnected from the uninhabited industrial landscape and unaware of the presence of their leader. Such paintings, among other examples such as Valeriu Mladin's *Ceaușescu-Romania*, Dan Hatmanu's *Anniversary*, or Ion Bitzan's *Homage to Nicolae Ceaușescu*, functioned as effective didactic art by remaining open to interpretation.¹³ Isolation and ambiguity seem to better describe the neo-socialist realist painting rather than clarity of message and homage.



Fig. 5. Alexandru Ciucurencu, *N.C. Președinte* (N. C. President), undated. © National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest.

Reenacting a readymade ideology after 1989

This demystification of Ceaușescu's symbols of power continues after 1989, when contemporary Romanian artists once more appropriate the iconography of the communist regime. For example, Ileana Faur's *Open for Inventory* replaces the old labels from socialist realist sculptures with new ones (fig. 6).¹⁴ Faur's meticulous process of transferring the information as accurately as possible from the old labels onto new ones by hand functions as institutional critique. Yet it also works as a phenomenological intervention in the space of the viewer. The viewer must pass through a drape

of old labels, strategically placed at the entrance of the gallery and throughout the exhibition space, making it impossible to avoid direct contact with them and therefore also with the past. Furthermore, *Open for Inventory* does exactly that: it opens the otherwise closed to the public depository to a new range of public interpretation and misinterpretation.

By dislocating historical facts from their official—and therefore inert—narrative and relocating them in the artist's current personal circumstances, artists deconstruct historical artifacts and their symbolic meaning and create what Alexander Etkind describes as “memory events as a rediscovery of the past that creates a rupture with its accepted cultural meaning.”¹⁵ Faur creates such a rupture between past and present meanings by hanging the generic names of these state-commissioned artworks on individual nooses for our consideration and encumbrance. Strategically and poetically, these labels block our view of the walls with the wooden language of the official communist propaganda program, pointing a sharp and lyrical finger at the force of the past to influence what we see today.

By portraying these symbols of power from more than two decades ago, artists also point to the former dictatorship's lingering ideological specter over today's society. More specifically, in a demonstration against the government's austerity cuts in 2010, virulent protesters used banners with Ceaușescu's portrait, side by side with the likeness of Traian Băsescu, the country's president at the time. Also in 2010, the same year Băsescu continued to implement his austerity plan in hopes of balancing the national budget on the backs of workers, Ceaușescu and his wife were exhumed to verify their identities with DNA testing. This event only somewhat tempered the nostalgic rumors claiming that the infamous couple was either alive in Cuba or buried in a secret crypt. Such nostalgic trends for an undead Ceaușescu in the national consciousness have even appeared on street corners and garage doors as graffiti, such as “Lost” or “I will be back in 5 minutes” stenciled alongside the dictator's portrait.¹⁶ Although the graffiti might be labeled as “reflective nostalgia,” which in Svetlana Boym's analyses questions the longing for a past or imaginary home, the DNA testing of Ceaușescu's remains describes the “restorative nostalgia” that understands the past as a monument of remembrance for the present.¹⁷

In his painting *Ceaușescu Dead* (1992), contemporary artist Ion Grigorescu attempts to certify through his aesthetic witnessing once and for all the fact that Ceaușescu—and all that he represented—is dead. Grigorescu is trying to convince himself that Ceaușescu will not come back, and although present on the Bucharest streets (as graffiti) as a figurehead with angel wings or as a lost person (and therefore, the terrifying logic goes, as a person who could potentially be found at some point in the future), he is in fact dead and gone. Although the position of Ceaușescu's hands on his chest and the pale gray skin signify the death of the



Fig. 6. Ileana Faur, *Open for Inventory*, 2012, Anexa: National Museum of Contemporary Art. Courtesy of the artist.

dictator, Grigorescu paints him with eyes wide open. Still here, stiff and powerless but still here, just as any memory of him is at our disposal, powerless if we wish it to be, but unavoidably present. Grigorescu is reenacting a practice. In 1980, for instance, he was commissioned to paint Ceaușescu's portrait. Although he followed the socialist realist convention by showing the dictator in a position of power, as "The Architect of Socialism" overseeing a scale model of Bucharest, the painting was rejected because Ceaușescu had three faces. This is not possible in a literal utopia, in a utopia of reality as it is. He was required to repaint Ceaușescu and, when he presented the new version, it was again rejected. This time the representation depicted Ceaușescu too accurately. He looked old, tired, and pale, with swollen veins in his gesticulating hand. To recall here Ghenie's aforementioned thoughts on what it meant to fail under dictatorship, would this portrait, precisely by failing to follow official visual dogma, then succeed? Alternately, does it succeed now? Ciprian Mureșan's series of Pioneers, for example, also fails to embody the ideal Communist Youth and, although they do not directly involve the portrait of Ceaușescu, this series hails the dictator's presence through allusion. Ceaușescu's visual presence is activated in the national collective memory by symbols of socialist realist tropes such as the pioneer (fig. 7). Therefore—to fall in line with communist party dogma—the pioneer offering homage to the Ceaușescu couple should symbolize an abstraction rather than portray an actual child.



Fig. 7. Unknown artist, *Homage to Nicolae Ceaușescu and Elena Ceaușescu in People's Assembly, 1989*, permanent collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art. © National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest.



Fig. 8. Ciprian Mureșan, *Milka*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

But when the symbol is stripped of its function, what remains is a child, a self-destructive child, not saluting the "father of the nation" but inhaling substances such as turpentine and model airplane glue, effectively destroying the possibility of a socialist future. Mureșan's paintings blur the boundary between the former national policies of child-rearing—pro-population expansion laws before 1989—and the present consequences of these policies. In 1990 Romania had the highest per capita number of institutionalized minors among European countries, and many others living on the streets and in the sewers, abusing substances and engaging in high-risk behavior.¹⁸ Demythologized, the pioneer steps out of line, under no one's supervision at the periphery of the city. With no collective identity, the pioneers turn against each other, and any sign of camaraderie, when one pioneer tries to reach for and help a friend who is being beaten, becomes impossible. The Father of the Nation is replaced now with a Milka chocolate bar (fig. 8).

With *Miners Planting Flowers*, Mureșan continues to demystify the past, this time by reimagining the miner not as the "Worker Hero," as privileged by Ceaușescu's ideology, but as a peaceful builder of communities. The artist hints here at the Mineriad, the violent series of events that took place when Ion Iliescu called upon miners to come to Bucharest in June 1990 to "restore and protect democracy." Miners came not with flowers but with bats, and violently repressed the anticomunist protesters, who were mostly students and intellectuals. In this context, Mureșan's painting overlaps symbols of former and current politics,

creating a kind of historically engaged irony, a landscape peppered by monuments, with henchmen as gardeners offering the viewer a “forget-me-not” flower.

Artist Irina Botea Bucan rebuilt Ceaușescu’s palace as a mock-up, expressing individual agency over a collective past identity.¹⁹ By shrinking the second-largest administrative building in the world to an object that can be held in one hand, the artist deflates the symbolic presence of the palace to something manageable on a human scale. Seven hundred architects and about twenty thousand workers worked day and night (three shifts, twenty-four hours a day) so that most of the building could be erected by 1989. In all, 20 percent of Bucharest was torn down to make way for this palace. An empty plaza in the front—now a parking lot for tourist buses—allowed tens of thousands of people to worship Ceaușescu during grandiose spectacles, which became increasingly extravagant in the 1970s and ’80s. If what makes architecture oppressive is not inherent to the building per se, but something belonging to the building’s function, as Michel Foucault writes in “Is Space Political?” then Botea’s palace intervenes to establish a new function: to entertain curious bovines in Cow Session and to delight fictional characters at a birthday party in The Dance of Oprica (Batuta lui Oprica).²⁰

Reenacting the past

For Slovenian philosopher and political activist Rastko Močnik, the East is the key to understanding the transformation from communism to post-communism.²¹ Ciprian Mureșan and Irina Botea Bucan point to and challenge common Western approaches to the Eastern European communist past, such as amnesia and nostalgia (fig. 9 and 10). The past is neither monumentalized, as in the case of “restorative nostalgia,” nor idealized. In *Splendor in the Grass*, the giant, defaced bust of Lenin does not crush the individual. The statue on the ground is not removed, restored, or posed to perform a new function, but rather a reenactment of care. Instead of reenacting a nostalgic love affair with the past, Botea Bucan reenacts care for the past. Mureșan’s Lenin collapses on small bodies, crushing them underneath, which implies that the individuals were taken by surprise and did not have time to save themselves. Suddenly, the iconoclasm following the events of 1989 is not intentional, but rather an unforeseen natural disaster. Statues of Mao and Lenin collapsed the same way the Berlin Wall collapsed, or the way communism in Europe fell. The language of amnesia minimizes individual agency during the transition to post-communism.²² Crushed under the statues, the individual is a victim of communism rather than a participant in the 1989 events of ending communism. Mureșan’s *Untitled* satirizes this language of amnesia.



Fig. 9. Ciprian Mureșan, *Untitled*, 2009. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 10. Irina Botea Bucan, *Splendor in the Grass*, 2010, collaboration with Razvan Botea. Courtesy of the artist.



Fig. 11. Irina Botea Bucan, *Out of the Bear* (still), 2006. Courtesy of the artist.

Out of the Bear by Botea Bucan is both a memory event, as defined by Alexander Etkind, and a sociopolitical intervention (fig. 11). As Inke Arns states in her book, *History Will Repeat Itself*, “Reenactments transform the representation of history through embodiment.”²³ By inhabiting Ceaușescu’s hunting house and his trophies, Botea Bucan embodies individual agency and thereby claims authorship over past events, precisely by creating an alternative narrative to the official discourse of “Ceaușescu, the Great Hunter.”²⁴ This way, the trophy bear undercuts the appearance of the dictator’s symbolic authority over nature by asserting the artist’s agency through the reenactment (overuse) of its original function as a symbol of power.

A contemporary reenactment such as Botea’s *Out of the Bear* allows the viewer the space to dare to consider her- or himself a part of history, a maker of history. By actualizing visual tropes of neo-socialist realism, contemporary Romanian artists reactivate history using an aesthetic object to open a dialogue with the viewer of contemporary art about the recent communist past. Today, as mentioned above, there is an increased interest in studying socialist realism in Romania (prior to the 1960s), seen in recent publications in the field of art history and in exhibitions of state-commissioned artwork. The even more recent communist aesthetic past, however—the art commissioned by the state during the last two decades of Ceaușescu’s reign—remains neglected by art historians. The only investigators of this recent artistic past are contemporary artists working in a post-communist space.

By repainting Ceaușescu’s portrait or relabeling state-commissioned art, contemporary artists create an event where the past and present clash and interfere with a coherent, utopian cultural border that separates contemporary art into art “before” and “after” 1989. Political systems have a way of leaking beyond their categorical namesakes, and contemporary artists working with the former aesthetic ideology seem to question what exactly ended with the execution of the Ceaușescus. How much democratic transformation did the 1989 revolution bring about? By reenacting past artistic practice, contemporary Romanian artists research the communist ideology and its political impact and aesthetic value in Romania’s contemporary sociopolitical space. When researching Ceaușescu’s hunting houses, cultural houses, and archives of Radio Free Europe in Budapest, or when interviewing art historians to discuss museums’ collections of art and documents, Irina Botea Bucan initiates a “decolonized analysis” of the past.²⁵ She is challenging some of the tenets underpinning currently accepted colonization discourse that suggest postwar Romania is the strict outcome and result of Soviet colonization. Therefore, as the mainstream Western art historical narrative goes, Romanian communism after World War II should not be analyzed, but rather condemned and disregarded.²⁶ By reaching into this rejected past of abandoned sculptures of Lenin, portraits of Ceaușescu, and labels of socialist realist artworks, contemporary artists

undertake the vital creative task of producing alternative views of the present.

Mirela Tanta is an Assistant Professor of Art History at Millikin University. In 2015 she earned her doctorate degree from the University of Illinois at Chicago for her dissertation titled: *Propaganda or Resistance: Socialist Realism in Romania 1972-1989*. Mirela specializes in Modern and Contemporary Art and Criticism. Originally from Romania, she was first exposed to the United States as an *Arts Link* fellow in poetry through the *International Writing Program* at the University of Iowa in 1999. Her interest in the ways in which underrepresented, ephemeral, and personal art objects can empower the individual to become a maker of knowledge informs her poetry as well as her research and teaching. The recipient of numerous grants and fellowships, Mirela Tanta has continued to present her scholarly work internationally on the subjects of memory, visual culture, and artistic agency under dictatorships.

1. Adrian Ghenie, interview by Magda Radu, "Rise & Fall," *Flash Art*, no. 269 (November/December 2009), accessed March 1, 2014, <https://www.flashartonline.com/article/adrian-ghenie>.
2. Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*, trans. Charles Rougle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 24.
3. Adrian Ghenie, interview by Rachel Wolff, "Romanian Painter Adrian Ghenie's Sinister Mythology," *Blouin Art Info* (March 5, 2013), accessed February 10, 2017, <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/874084/in-the-studio-romanian-painter-adrian-ghenies-sinister>.
4. Ciprian Mureșan and Adrian Ghenie were both born in 1977 in communist Romania. Mureșan currently lives and works in Cluj, while Ghenie lives and works in Cluj and Berlin.
5. Piotrowski considers Eastern European art history to be suspended in between the East and West. Piotr Piotrowski, "Toward a Horizontal History of Modern Art in Writing Central European Art History," *PATTERNS Travelling Lecture Set 2008/2009*, Writing Central European Art History 4 or online https://monoskop.org/images/9/93/Piotrowski_Piotr_2009_Toward_a_Horizontal_History_of_the_European_Avant-Garde.pdf.
6. Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și Artele Plastice în România Comunistă 1948–1953* (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2010). Caterina Preda, ed., *The State Artist in Romania and Eastern Europe: The Role of the Creative Unions* (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2017). Alice Popescu, *O Socio-psihanaliza a realismului socialist* (Bucharest: Editura Trei, 2009). Dorin-Liviu Biftoi, *Asa s-a nascut omul nou în România anilor '50* (Bucharest: Editura Compani, 2012). Dan Drăghia, Dumitru Lăcătușu, Alina Popescu, Caterina Preda, and Cristina Stoenescu, *Uniunea Artiștilor Plastici din România în documente de arhivă* (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2016).
7. Irina Cărăbaș, *Realismul socialist cu fața spre trecut. Instituții și artiști în România 1944–1953* (Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design & Print, 2017). See also *Arta pentru popor? Art for the people?*, a retrospective of the official Romanian fine arts between 1948 and 1965, organized by the National Museum of Art of Romania and curated by Monica Enache (Bucharest, December 2016 to March 2017).

8. Ileana Pintilie, *Acțiunismul în România în timpul comunismului* (Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design & Print, 2000); Adrian Guță, *Generația '80 în artele vizuale* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2008); Magda Cârnci, *Artele Plastice în România 1945–1989*, 2nd ed. (*Visual Arts in Romania 1945–1989*) (Iași: Polirom, 2013).
9. The concept of "becoming-minor" was developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their books *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975) and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 234.
10. "February 25, 1956, three years after Stalin's death, at the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the First Party Secretary of the Soviet Union, Nikita S. Khrushchev, delivered his famous speech in which he denounced Stalin's crimes and his cult of personality. The criticism was then carried in all fields including aesthetics." Mirela Tanta, "Neo-Socialist Realism: The Second Life of Socialist Realism in Romania (1970–1989)," in *The state artist in Romania and Eastern Europe*, ed. Caterina Preda, (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2017), 232–240.
11. *Statutul unităților și detașamentelor de pionieri din Republica Socialistă România (The Status of Pioneers' Units and Divisions in the Republic of Socialist Romania)* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1967).
12. Augustin Lucaci and Alexandru Ciucurencu are Romanian painters active before 1989. The paintings used in this article were commissioned by the state in communist Romania and belong to the permeant collection of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest.
13. A more detailed analysis of such examples can be found in Tanta, "Neo-Socialist Realism: The Second Life of Socialist Realism in Romania (1970-1989)."
14. Ileana Faur holds an MFA in Photography and Moving Image from the National University of Arts in Bucharest. In her artwork she investigates the construction of the individual in society by using archives and notions of the collective and individual subjectivity.
15. Alexander Etkind, "Memory Events in the Transnational Space," *Memory at War* (June 2010), accessed January 18, 2014, <http://www.memoryatwar.org/pdf/Etkind%20memory%20events%20paper%20June%202010.pdf>.
16. Stencil found on the walls of Bucharest, attributed to Dumitru Gorzo. For more information see Caterina Preda, "Looking at the Past Through an Artistic Lens: Art of Memorialization," accessed March 2, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/540601/Looking_at_the_past_through_an_artistic_lens_art_of_memorialization.
17. Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001), or "Nostalgia and its Discontents," <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/cfcb/eba8cb80315ffebcf16fe4d17fa6f31286e.pdf>.
18. For a better understanding of how the communist state handled the abandoned children between the decree of 1966 and 1989, read Chapter 1 by Luciana M. Jinga and Chapter 12 by Corina Dobos in *The Pronatalist Politics of Ceaușescu's Regime, Institutions and Practices* vol. 2 (*Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România*), eds. Lucian M. Jinga and Florin S. (Iasi: Soare Editura Polirom, 2010), 195–245.
19. Irina Botea Bucan is a multimedia artist and educator who was born in communist Romania. Through her artistic methodology of combining reenactment strategies, simulated auditions, elements of direct cinema and cinema vérité she is consistently questioning dominant sociopolitical ideas and centralizing human agency as a vehicle for meaning.
20. Please view *Cow Session* and *The Dance of Oprica*: http://www.irinabotea.com/pages/cow_session.html
21. Rostko Mocnik, *How Much Fascism?*, a collection of texts published in 1995. For excerpts translated by Novica Petrović, see <http://www.red-thread.org/en/article.asp?a=19>.

22. Boris Buden. *Zona de tranzitie. Despre sfirsitul comunismului (Zone of Transition)*, trans. Maria Magdalena Anghelescu (Cluj-Napoca: TACT, 2012) 23–105. In the *Zone of Transition*, Buden criticizes the language of amnesia and infantilization as Western tropes representative of Eastern Europeans' helplessness in relation to the 1989 events and what followed.
23. Inke Arns and Gabriele Horn, eds., *History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance*, exh. cat. (Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art, 2007).
24. A more detailed analysis of paintings showing Ceaușescu as a hunter can be found in Tanta, "Neo-Socialist Realism: The Second Life of Socialist Realism in Romania (1970–1989)," in *The state artist in Romania and Eastern Europe*, ed. Caterina Preda, (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2017), 245–247.
25. Restoring the cultural house and rethinking the stadium..." A conversation between video artist Irina Botea Bucan and art curator Anca Mihuleț. Catalogue accompanying Irina Botea Bucan's solo exhibition: "In the zone of transition, the building will have a future, she said..." Phillips Museum of Art, page 3, 2017.
26. Political scientist Vladimir Tismăneanu lead the Presidential Committee for the Analysis of Communist Dictatorship, initiated in 2006 by Romanian president Traian Băsescu. The report supports the Western discourse of condemnation of communism and disregard for the communist past of Eastern Europe. A complete final report of the analyses can be find here: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/the-tismaneanu-commission-presents-the-final-report-romanian-communism>