

CROSSING THE BORDER IN THE MUSEOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE IDEOLOGY AND MARKETIZATION

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After the demise of the Communist regime, the painter Horia Bernea was appointed as head of the Romanian Peasant Museum. Bernea organized the museum's exhibitions striving to display the 'spirituality of the Romanian peasant' through the objects of the museum collections, but having at the heart the Orthodox Christian belief. The first exhibition, 'The Cross', was opened in 1994, being imprinted by his plastic imagination and the ideas about *rânduiala lucrurilor* (the organic order of the things). Thus, this first exhibition aimed to encapsulate the religious, intimate and organic traits of the way the objects are positioned in the world. After the beginning of the 2000s, steps towards an alternative usage of the museum's rooms and additional premises were made. It was then that various activities such as public conferences and debates, or fairs of 'traditional' material culture, were hosted in the museum. In addition, a subtle and new image of the 'Romanian peasant' is delivered to the public, an image that is quite different from that of the 1990s, but still much accurate with regard to the current everyday life in Romanian villages.

Keywords: peasant art, national identity, antidote museum, cultural market.

This chapter presents the reestablishment of the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest in the early 1990s, as well as its further evolution until the present time. The museum was originally founded as an art museum at the turn of the 20th century¹. In the first part of the paper I will tackle the ideas that framed the museum's foundation and development up to the Communist period. Furthermore, I will try to highlight the endeavours the museum's team as well as other people (more or less sympathetic with it) undertook to legitimate the museum's reestablishment, by recovering and recomposing its original 'ideology'. In the final part, I will discuss the new exhibition conception, the wider museographic discourse, and the institution's more pronounced opening to the public space.

EARLY TIMES

The foundation of an ethnographic museum in Romania was at its very beginning related to the national idea. Those who had been promoting it at the end

¹ The chapter is a slightly revised version of my article «Presichane na granitsata v muzeografskija diskurs: ideologija i marketizatsija», in Petko Hristov (sust.), *110 godini natsionalen etnografski muzei – minalo, nastojashte i perspektivi*, Sofija, 2018, p. 99–112.

of the 19th century were top personalities of the Romanian political and intellectual elites. In 1875, Titu Maiorescu, a conservative party leader, minister and prime minister several times, launched the idea of establishing a national museum based on ethnographic collections, i.e. on the “national dressing/port național”. A few decades earlier, in 1834, another representative of the elite, the boyar Mihalache Ghica came up with the idea of setting up a museum of antiquities and natural history. Ghica actually accomplished his idea a few years later with funding from his own pocket. Though without adding the word “national” to the formal name of the 1830s museum, the institution was still a “national museum” according to the title of its journal. In 1864, this museum became state property and it was divided into a Museum of Antiquities and a Museum of Natural History². In the former museum the intention was to gather the ethnographic collection of the country, a plan that became a reality much later, at the beginning of the 1900s³.

In the first years after the turn of the 20th century, Alexandru Tzigara Samurçaș (1872–1952), a landlord from a boyar family of Wallachian with Albanian origins, started putting together various private collections of popular/peasant art. He was encouraged by Spiru Haret, the liberal education minister who relaunched the idea of a national museum, however in a more precise and pragmatic manner, namely, through allocating special funds, even if modest, to collect exhibits for museums. The collections originally brought together by Samurçaș were enriched with state support. Furthermore, the owners of these collections were members of the rich bourgeoisie, having very little to do with the peasant society, but still sharing a sincere admiration for their material and spiritual culture.

Samurçaș himself was schooled in German universities, where he was strongly impressed by the ideas of *Volkskunde*, meaning popular culture and folklore⁴. After being employed as a curator with the abovementioned Museum for Antiquities in Bucharest, in 1893 he obtained a three-year scholarship at the University of Munich where he studied art history and archaeology. In parallel, Samurçaș attended courses at the Polytechnic Institute in Munich, the University of Berlin and the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. At the Munich University Samurçaș defended in 1896 his doctoral thesis in art history and obtained his *magna cum laude* doctoral degree. In 1897 Samurçaș returned to Romania⁵.

² S. Bădică, «National Museums in Romania», in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius (eds), *Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28–30 April 2011. EuNaMus Report No 1.*, Linköping, 2013, p. 717, 721 (http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=064).

³ *Ibidem*, p. 718; A. Tzigara-Samurçaș, *Muzeografie românească*, București, 1936.

⁴ I. Pohrib, «Tradition and Ethnographic Display: Defining the National Specificity at the National Art Museum in Romania (1906–1937)», in Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein and José María Lanzarote Guiral (eds), *Great Narratives of the Past. Traditions and Revisions in National Museums Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Paris 29 June – 1 July & 25–26 November 2011. EuNaMus Report No 4*, Linköping, 2013 (http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=078), p. 318.

⁵ C.D. Zeletin, «Introducere», in A. Tzigara-Samurçaș, *Memorii III (1919–1930)*, București, 2003, p. 22.

From the very beginning the building of the future museum's collections was marked by puzzled and fragmented frames. There were emotional identifications with the peasant culture as well as an ideological admiration for the supposedly authentic peasant lifestyle. Samurcaș himself exalted the value of the Romanian peasant wooden architecture by comparing it with the Swiss and Tyrolean *blockhouses* and opposing it to the supposedly ugly urban architecture of the newly emerged Romanian towns and cities⁶. In fact Samurcaș's ideas were framed by a "a complex narrative that mixed antiquities with religious, folk and modern art in order to define a national specificity and support the idea of unity and continuity of the Romanian culture from prehistoric ages up to present"⁷. This perspective employed highly prevalent ideas and biases that spread then among the Romanian political and intellectual elites. At the end of a few decades of "westernization", the elites grew rather disappointed and took refuge in nationalist and peasantist ideologies⁸. The idea of national specificity was thus equated with the peasant culture, while indeed the majority of the Romanian population was rural and peasant. Furthermore, by canvassing the German theories of *Volkskunde*/folklore and *Volkerkunde*/anthropology, the elites of the time have succeeded to work out, not only in Romania but in many other Eastern and Southeastern European countries, ample programs for national ethnographic museums⁹. Through his endeavours to ideologically and materially build the first variant of a Romanian Peasant Museum, Samurcaș is only a case in this more general intellectual flow.

As I have stated above, the starting point of the museum was the private ethnographic collections that Samurcaș had succeeded to put together. At the very beginning, there were 607 items that Samurcaș had collected from 68 different individuals. On such base and helped by a government decree, the *Ethnographic Museum for National, Decorative and Industrial Arts* was founded on October 1st, 1906. Despite the small number of museum exhibits in the initial stage, after only two years, in 1908, the number of museum objects increased to 4,330¹⁰. In 1912, with the financial support of King Carol I, Samurcaș began to erect the museum building that has been hosting the museum's collections up to the present time. The building could not be completed until the late 1930s.

Before the First World War, the museum's name was changed to National Art Museum, but only in the interwar period this designation started being used more broadly¹¹. Sometimes the name of King Carol I was added to the museum's name. It is important to outline here that in the interwar period this was the only museum whose designation included the word 'national'. But, even though it was self evident that this particle of the museum's name referred to the Romanian

⁶ A. Tzigara-Samurcaș, *Arta în România. Studii critice*, București, 1909.

⁷ I. Pohrib, «Tradition and Ethnographic Display», p. 318.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 320.

⁹ C.N. Cotoi, «Closures and Museums. Is a Non-Alterity Anthropology Possible?», *Martor*, 11, 2006, p. 206.

¹⁰ A. Tzigara-Samurcaș, *Muzeografie românească*.

¹¹ S. Bădică, «National Museums in Romania», p. 722.

nation, the official designation of the museum had not been changed into something like, say, the Romanian National Art Museum.

On the one hand, in the interwar period the museum's decision-makers tried to be openminded and took some items to international fairs and exhibitions, such as those in Barcelona, Paris, Berlin, or participated in international conferences like that organized in 1928 by the *Internationaler Verband von Museen*, in which the Romanian museum had been a member as early as 1907. In the country too the museum's managers were cooperating with the ethnographic museums of national minorities/nationalities, such as the National Szeklers' Museum¹². In fact, according to Tzigara Samurçaș himself, national art museums should bring peoples closer by preserving and outlining their diversity and specificities, and, at the same time, alleviating conflicts through the universality of the aesthetic beauty¹³.

On the other hand, Tzigara Samurçaș as well as other representatives of the intellectual elite saw a distinction between the art in Romania in general, that is, the art production of all the populations that inhabited and still live on the territory of the Romanian state and the Romanian national art, meaning the art of the Romanian peasantry. The latter is genuine, native, expresses authenticity and has organic roots in the Romanian territory, thus deserving to be named *national*. This perspective took a clear shape around the year 1930 and holds a clear distance to the original mission of the museum, i.e. to encompass by the word 'national' all of the art production that the populations living in the Romanian state create¹⁴. Such vision was reinforced by the establishment in 1936 of the Village Museum in Bucharest, one of the first open air museums in Europe. The excellent echo of the Romanian participation at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition came thanks to the two institutions that structured the Romanian presence at this international exhibition, namely, The Village Museum and The National Art Museum. Both displayed through the peasant art and architecture an image of the Romanian nation based on rural traditions, its fusion with the religious element, organic life, and authenticity¹⁵.

FADING AWAY IN THE COMMUNIST TIMES

After the Second World War and the coming to power of the Communist regime, the National Art Museum re-opened in 1946 with Tzigara Samurçaș as honorary director. However in 1949 the new regime marginalized Samurçaș by suspending his pension¹⁶. In 1952, after the death of Samurçaș, the museum's collections were forcibly moved to other another location in Bucharest while the original building was used to host the museum of history of the Communist Party.

¹² A. Tzigara-Samurçaș, *Memorii III (1919–1930)*, București, 2003, p. 285, 332.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 355.

¹⁴ I. Pohrib, «Tradition and Ethnographic Display», p. 323.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 326.

¹⁶ C.D. Zeletin, «Introducere», in A. Tzigara-Samurçaș, *Memorii III (1919-1930)*, București, 2003, p. 23.

As the communist ideology claimed to dissolve the peasantry, the name of the museum was changed into *Museum of Popular Art*. In 1978 the museum merged with the Village Museum into a single though highly dismembered entity¹⁷.

In the entire Communist period a hard state policy to collect the items of peasant/popular culture was followed. According to the official ideology the peasantry was doomed to disappear, so the saving and collection of as much as it was possible of their culture was one of the Communist regime's requirements. Ironically, the advantage of this policy was, firstly, that significant funds had been put aside and used to collect items of everyday peasant and village life. Secondly, this policy had been carried out throughout several decades and without any ideological underpinning. Thus, with regard to the Peasant Museum, it had in its warehouses at the end of the Communist period more than 60,000 items of peasant culture.

REINVENTING TRADITION, PEASANT MUSEUM

THE INSIDER VIEW

Immediately after the demise of the Communist regime, painter Horia Bernea, a top artist, was appointed as head of the museum. He organized the museum's exhibition striving to display the 'Romanian peasant spirituality'. Curiously enough, the work for the first exhibition started without any museographic conception. Bernea and his team only debated some general ideas such as that of the 'absent museum' or 'antidote museum', but there was no clearer or more structured approach about a detailed programme. And most probably it was because of this very intuitive commitment that the museum's first exhibition enjoyed a great public success and, at the same time, stirred up a host of controversies. Apparently, after forty years of Communist totalitarianism, the Romanian society needed a healing cure. And in a way the Romanian Peasant Museum covered this need¹⁸. But they did this in a provocative way, starting with the rooms of the museum's building where Orthodox priests were invited to celebrate religious services¹⁹.

In fact, this challenging attitude could be seen as the most enduring trace in the new history of the Romanian Peasant Museum. On the one hand, as Bernea himself put it in 2000, not long before his death, from the very beginning they attempted to create an 'antinomy museum' where the very origin of the objects would be withered and their pure materiality would be recreated in a new

¹⁷ S. Bădică, *Curating Communism. A comparative history of museological practices in Post-war (1945–1989) and Post-Communist Romania*, PhD thesis, Central European University, Budapest, 2013, p. 231–232.

¹⁸ V. Mihăilescu, «The Romanian Peasant Museum and the Authentic Man», *Martor*, 11, 2006, p. 24ff.

¹⁹ S. Bădică, *Curating Communism. A comparative history*, p. 234.

articulation with the space and other exhibited items²⁰. Bernea rejected the display and ordering/*ordinea* of the objects in a museographic type of exhibition, in favour of which he called *rânduiala*, a quite difficult Romanian word to translate; it encapsulates the religious, intimate and organic traits of the way objects are positioned in the world²¹. In the same vein, Irina Nicolau, a close associate of Bernea's project, spoke about the 'absent museum', that is, a museum that imbricates in the social tissue by raising visitors' inquisitiveness about the local people and directing them to other local museums in order to find out as much as possible²². In short, this 'absent museum' is in fact only the way that direct visitors to the ramified map of the local history and social life. In this frame, Nicolau redefines the idea of healing through a more positive choice, that of 'antidote'. Thus the museums could be either full of information to educate visitors, as classical principles require, or with a 'revolutionary' potential, i.e. museums that convey to visitors through their museographic arrangements a feeling of social discomfort or even revolt²³.

On the other hand, this sort of childish play with ideas and social meanings diverted the public attention, notwithstanding that sometimes this could be felt as a mockery. This is apparent from the very beginning, when the name of the museum was chosen. Although the museum's collections contain thousands of objects of popular culture belonging to various ethnic groups living in Romania, these groups were simply ignored, and the name of the museum was The Romanian Peasant Museum²⁴. The story of choosing a name for the museum is instructive, but reminds of the history of the museum's foundation in the 1900s. The choosing of a name for the institution was fully entrusted to Bernea's team. His collaborators gathered during an entire day and made a brain storming session. A list with some twenty name options had emerged. Unfortunately, at the end of that day, the list was lost, and they were forced to resume the name debate. Eventually they proposed a name in tune with the mood of the times, i.e. The Romanian Peasant Museum. After a short while they tried to change the name or at least to add a subtitle to it, like 'a museum of crafts and traditions', but without much success²⁵.

²⁰ H. Bernea, I. Nicolau and C. Huluiță, *Dosar sentimental*, București, 2003, p. 15–16.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 17, 25–26.

²² I. Nicolau, « Moi et le musées du monde. L'histoire d'une expérience muséale dans un pays de l'est », in *New Europe College Yearbook 1994*, București, 1996, p. 25ff.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 38; S. Bădică, «Same exhibitions, different labels? Romanian national museums and the fall of communism», in S. Knell et alii (eds), *National Museums. New Studies from Around the World*, London, 2010, p. 274; S. Bădică, *Curating Communism. A comparative history*, p. 250.

²⁴ In the most commonplace situation the museum name became embarrassing. For instance, in 1996 when I was a curator in the museum, there was a field campaign intended to document ceramics craftsmen. In counties with a majority Hungarian population, after introducing us as the museum's curators, here and there people replied to us they were Hungarian peasants, not Romanian. And they asked us what we were doing there, in their Hungarian villages. This account reveals very simply the nationalist content of the project that framed then the museographic discourse of the museum.

²⁵ V. Mihăilescu, «The Romanian Peasant Museum», p. 15–16.

In the first decade after the year 1990, this kind of idea shifting, or string of inconclusive ideas, damaged to one's clearer perception of the museographic discourse, but also delineated the special place the museum occupied at least for the Romanian public. I will outline below some reasons for this positioning by reverting the angle of approach, from the external circumstances towards the internal ones.

“THE CROSS”: THE FIRST EXHIBITION

THE EXTERNAL VIEW

The first exhibition was called ‘The Cross’ and it was opened in 1994. In the wider concept of the exhibition, classical object arrangement criteria were not followed. According to the ideas mentioned above, the organizers attempted to display the items in such a way that the exhibition space be re-created and the visitors integrate more easily in the new space. The imprint of Bernea's plastic imagination was being felt in all corners of the pioneering exhibition. Bernea had divided the seven rooms of the exhibition according to the seven dimensions through which the Romanian peasants had supposedly understood and imagined the Christian Cross. In each room objects belonging to various categories, from dressing and household items to icons and liturgical tools, were scattered in order to suggest a distinct quality of the Cross (see photo 1)²⁶. For instance, in the room called *Remembrance/Reculegere*, they placed along the walls chairs from an old wooden church, while in the centre stood a pillar from the porch of a common wooden house (see photo 2). The visitors were invited to sit in the chairs so as to rest by looking at the wooden pillar and at the same time to meditate about their relation with God, about their redemption or fate. In the room called *Relics/Moaște* one could see an entire wooden church whose basic structure intertwined with the pillars of the museum's building (see photo 3). The church displayed in the museum had been found abandoned by villagers in 1990 in Transylvania. The museum team recovered what had remained from the church and put together the pieces in this *Relics/Moaște* room²⁷.

Still, beyond these speculative ideas, a quite rigid and exclusive ideology stood out. The thinking frame of all these museographic innovations is grounded in the idea of reviving the so-called authentic, that is, untouched by modernity, way of

²⁶ The Cross exhibition photos were provided by courtesy of the management of the Romanian Peasant Museum.

²⁷ It needs to be mentioned that there was no plan for guiding the visitors. In those days, as curator in the museum, I encountered many difficulties in guiding the visitors in the exhibition rooms, just for this reason. In fact, the idea was not to guide, on the contrary, to let free the visitors to imagine the possible meaning of the exhibited objects via intuitive identification.

the Romanian peasant life. Through this idea they got connected to the original time of the museum's founder, Tzigara-Samurcaș, but also retrieved his inheritance thus legitimizing the museographic project. Furthermore, the post-1990 founders of the museum claimed that the Romanian peasant preserved a sort of theological thought that, instead of being gathered in written forms, it was expressed in the objects of their art²⁸.

Strangely enough, this nationalistic ideology was not a hindrance for the museum to receive in 1996 the Best European Museum Award. Furthermore, in Romania at least, the museum's exhibitions became fashionable among the intellectuals and larger public as well. Several factors catalyzed, if not directly influenced, this success. First, it was the unconventional style of arranging the exhibited objects, and here the imprint of Bernea's personality was undeniable. Although being a painter, and accustomed thus with two-dimension images, he attempted to create a third dimension in the exhibiting space, by mixing various objects, by varying the exhibiting frames in height and in depth (see photo 4). The visitor is invited to stroll in this space letting back the previously viewed objects while his/her eyes meet new and surprising objects. This style of exhibiting museum objects was recovered until today in further museum exhibitions, being a sort of vivid inheritance²⁹. In this vein, and according to the ideas mentioned in the above section of this paper, it could be fully stated that Romanian Peasant Museum is an 'antidote museum'.

Still there were also other factors that contributed to the museum's success in the 1990s. Although someone could see these factors as more circumstantial, they are very important in making a museum. In Romania, immediately after the collapse of the communist power, a strong emotional search of the past had been widespread. The interwar period was thus identified as a Golden Age in Romania's history³⁰. The works of interwar influential intellectuals such as Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran or Constantin Noica were published for the first time or reprinted. Curiously enough, just a few of them, for instance Mircea Eliade or Constantin Noica, were rehabilitated before the demise of Communism, in the 1980s. All of these authors and thinkers were active between the world wars, and were politically very close to the extreme right Legionary Movement that promoted one national image based on the Romanian Christian peasantry with its supposedly pure and authentic lifestyle.

The relationship between this political manifestation and the conception the museum was due in part to the fact that Horia Bernea's father, Ernest Bernea, was in the interwar period a member of the Legionary Movement. An excellent sociologist, Ernest Bernea survived the Communist period (he died in 1990), thus being a witness of the museum's reestablishment. Horia Bernea has borrowed from

²⁸ V. Mihăilescu, «The Romanian Peasant Museum», p. 18.

²⁹ See museum tour on <http://www.360.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro>

³⁰ D. Barbu, *Republica absentă*, București, 2004.

his father some core ideas and metaphors as, for instance, the idea of *rânduială*, that I have mentioned above³¹. In fact, in Bernea's museographic discourse there could be found many other ideas and concepts, such as 'real Christianity', 'authentic man', 'redemption'³², that are common to the Legionary ideology. A special place occupied the topic of 'death of the (authentic) peasant/man', in this case the creed of the Peasant Museum being to testify and keep alive his memory³³.

The paradox of the influence of the legionary ideology upon a museographic perspective that was seen rather experimental or even post-modern³⁴ is only apparent. In more recent approaches of extreme right movements in interwar Europe, scholars delineate an 'aesthetic' dimension or modernizing commitment rooted in creativity, spontaneity and revolt³⁵. In this vein, the idea of 'revolution' conveys the quest for authenticity and community against 'common' modernizing political programs importing the mimicry of 'advanced democracies'. This frame illuminates the connection of the external view the Romanian Peasant Museum's museographic discourse with its 'inner' perspective and fully gives sense to some apparent paradoxes.

FROM IDEOLOGY TO 'MARKETIZATION'

After the beginning of the 2000s, steps towards an alternative usage of the museum's rooms and additional premises were made. It was then that various activities such as public conferences and debates, or fairs of 'traditional' material culture (food, clothes) or classes with primary school pupils started being organized. In the museum's building, however in an unconventional space, something between a pub and a restaurant, named The Club of the Peasant, was opened. Here conferences are delivered, books are launched and debates on ethnology and anthropology topics are held. Much appreciated was the fact that skilled craftsmen from various parts of the country came to these fairs to display and sell their objects. The former image of the 'authentic' and pure peasant grew strongly eroded in the eyes of at least Bucharesters because of the semi-manufactured production of this new peasant 'art'.

A new direction in the museum's practice of organizing exhibitions is the use of the outcomes from field research projects. One such project was aimed to revive local museums and connect them in a nationwide cooperation network. As the reputed anthropologist Vintilă Mihăilescu who became the director of the museum

³¹ S. Bădică, *Curating Communism. A comparative history*, pp. 240–241.

³² V. Mihăilescu, «The Romanian Peasant Museum».

³³ M. Gheorghiu, *Viaticum: un ghid intelectual al Muzeului Țăranului Român*, București, 2014, p. 240ff.

³⁴ V. Mihăilescu, «The Romanian Peasant Museum», p. 20.

³⁵ R. Griffin, «The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (Or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies», *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37, 1, 2002, pp. 21–43.

in 2005 put it, these museums are original by the fact that they add to the regional and national museums various forms of intimate identity. The objects collected and the different forms of museography present in these museums express certain ways of ‘collecting ourselves’³⁶. Furthermore, as the people who take charge of these museums are private persons, not state experts and/or bureaucrats, they have more freedom in choosing a more original and accurate museographic discourse rooted in their own local culture, and even in developing an articulate response to the globalization processes³⁷. Thus there are not state ideological demands that shape the museum, but local, intimate, informal and vivid cultural networks. In this way these museums become a way ‘to quest for the present time/à la recherche du temps présent’ as was the witty comment of Maria Mateoni, one of the members of the museum project’s research team³⁸. Various aspects of local peasant art are captured and conserved. One is the local market of peasant art objects as is the case of the well known Horezu region, one of the most important Romanian centers of ceramic arts. Here, the objects collected in the local museum rather exemplify styles of ceramic items that are sold in village art shops, than of ceramic collections like those of large ethnographic museums³⁹. This looks more like a sort of market strategy, of course, but at the same time reflects the gap between the official ideology regarding peasant/popular art and what really happens with this art.

Another project that concluded with an exhibition unfolded few years ago and focused on the multiple ways of hay cultivation in rural areas. In this project worked Romanian museum researchers along with scholars from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences’s Biodiversity Centre. Parallels between hay cultivation in Sweden and Romania were made. The project showed the commonalities and differences of the craft; a public policy report on the protection of biodiversity in areas of intensive hay cultivation was drawn up⁴⁰. Some academic papers as well as a special issue of the Romanian Peasant Museum’s journal of social anthropology entitled *The Witness/Martor*⁴¹ have also been published.

An important aim of the project was the opening of an exhibition simply called *The Hay*, with photos taken during the fieldwork. Objects that relate to hay

³⁶ V. Mihăilescu, «Local Museums? Village Collections in Recent Romania», *Martor*, 14, 2009, p. 12.

³⁷ A.M. Pănoiu, «Pentru o muzeologie naivă: Maricica și muzeul de peste apă», *Revista Muzeelor*, 2, 2015, p. 26–42; M. Mateoni and Rodica Marinescu, «Doctor Kéri’s Museum of Galoșpetreu, Bihor County (Romania). An Attempt to Edify Proximity Heritage», *Martor*, 14, 2009, p. 153.

³⁸ M. Mateoni, «Les artisans de la campagne et les musées d’ethnographie de Roumanie», *Martor*, 13, 2008, p. 105.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 105–107.

⁴⁰ A. Dahlström, A.M. Iuga, T. Lennartsson, «Managing biodiversity rich hay meadows in the EU: a comparison of Swedish and Romanian grasslands», *Environmental Conservation*, 40, 2, 2013, p. 194–205.

⁴¹ *Martor. A Place for Hay. Flexibility and Continuity in Hay-Meadow Management*, 21, 2016.

cultivation were taken from the museum's deposits and placed between the photos on display (see photo 5). As in other cases of new exhibitions⁴², an attempt was made to follow the same presentation ideas as in the earliest exhibitions. The conception behind The Hay exhibition has been sustainable development. This traditional occupation that in Romania as well as in many other Eastern and Southeastern European countries is still alive, was seen as a model for reviving hay cultivation in Sweden, from where it disappeared a long time ago.

At present, the museum's researchers and curators are closely connected through their ideas and projects to the museum's existence. In addition, a subtle and new image of the 'Romanian peasant' is delivered to the public, an image that is quite different from that of the 1990s, but still much accurate with regard to the current everyday life in Romanian villages. A multitude of challenging questions are being raised, such as: Is there still an authentic peasantry with an intense social life and strong collective identity? Or how are rural areas connected to and reflecting the wider global and national society, meaning a society globalized and national at the same time? The answers that the museum's exhibitions propose to the public are not as categorical as they were in the 1990s. The emphasis is now placed not on answers intended to inform and eventually educate the public, but on the questions themselves.⁴³ And it is my conviction that one of the reasons why the museum enjoys even today a great success is this provocative and, at the same time, dubitative way in which it presents the Romanian rural life.

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⁴² S. Bădică and A. Iuga, «Making of an Exhibition: On the Clothesline. Romanian Dowry (Romanian Peasant Museum & Romanian Cultural Institute, London, September 2009)», *Martor*, 15, 2010, p. 205–208.

⁴³ See for instance, the 2018 volume of the museum journal. The volume focuses on the museography of social change (*Martor. Curating Change in the Museum*, 23, 2018).



Photo 1. The “Tree of Life” room.



Photo 2. The “Rememoration” room.



Photo 3. The “Relics” room.



Photo 4. The “Splendor” room.



Photo 5. The room in the hay exhibition.