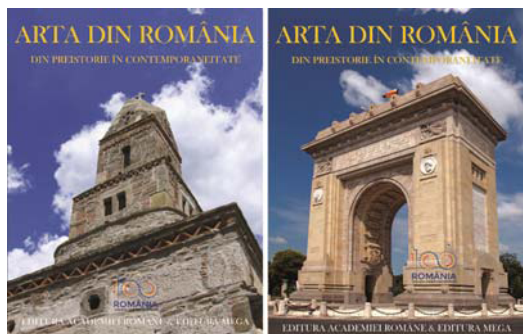


*Arta din România, din preistorie în contemporaneitate*  
(*Romanian Art, from Pre-History to the Present*),  
Răzvan Theodorescu, Marius Porumb (coord.),  
2 vol., București, Editura Academiei Române,  
Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2018, 2130 p., over  
2100 color images



### A Unique Academic Event

On July 9, 2019, the Romanian Academy launched the monumental treatise *Romanian Art, from Pre-History to the Present* [*Arta din România, din preistorie în contemporaneitate*]. The treatise, published in two volumes, is coordinated by Academician Răzvan Theodorescu, Vice-President of the Romanian Academy, and the President of the Art, Architecture and Audio-Visual Department, and by Academician Marius Porumb. It was printed by the Romanian Academy Publishing House, in collaboration with Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca. The event opened in the Auditorium of the Romanian Academy, at noon, and enjoyed the presence of a numerous and elite audience – academicians, researchers, art critics and historians, other academics.

After the National Anthem was played, the President of the Romanian Academy, Academician Ioan-Aurel Pop, opened the event, followed by the speeches of Professor Mihai Bărbulescu, a Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy, Professor Georgeta Stoica, an Honorary Member of the Romanian Academy, and the two coordinators of the treatise. They discussed the cardinal importance of this monumental monograph of Romanian art for the Romanian culture, and also imparted some of their experience on the conception and the effective writing process of this treatise.

A string quartet, of the National Music University, Bucharest, performed works by Mozart, Béla Bartók, George Enescu, and Ciprian Porumbescu, as an elegant acknowledgment of the festive and elevated atmosphere in the Auditorium.

The two exquisitely sophisticated quarto volumes, hardcover bound and presented in a dark red case,

## COMPTES RENDUS

contain an unprecedented number of high-quality, color images. As far as the content is concerned, this unique and ultimate synthesis on Romanian art comprises of the highly-professional contributions of over 40 authors, all of them art historians and art critics, who conducted their research in with the constant support of the most important museums, libraries and religious institutions in Romania. Here how Academician Răzvan Theodorescu presented the treatise and its authors: “The authors of this monumental synthesis – the first such major accomplishment, after 50 years since the previous synthesis<sup>1</sup> – present to their readers the outcome of

<sup>1</sup> The previous attempt was *Istoria artelor plastice în România* [*The History of Visual Arts in Romania*], Meridiane Publ. House, volume I, 1968, volume II, 1970. The synthesis covered the history of Romanian visual only until the first decades of the 1800s. The first volume was coordinated by Academician George Oprescu, who was the Director of the Institute of Art History of the Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania (today the “G. Oprescu” Institute). Contributors to volume I were: Virgil Vătășianu, a Corresponding Member of the Romanian Academy, Florentina Dumitrescu, Radu Florescu, Emil Lăzărescu, Maria-Ana Musicescu, Dumitru Năstase, Paul Petrescu, Răzvan Theodorescu, Sorin Ulea, Teodora Voinescu. The second volume was coordinated, in parallel with the first one, by G. Oprescu, but appeared after his death (that happened in 1969), „written by a research team of the Institute of Art History of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences of the Socialist Republic of Romania”, comprising of almost the same authors of the first volume, with the exception of Radu Florescu and Paul Petrescu, and welcoming a new contributor, Rada Teodoru. In his address, Academician Răzvan Theodorescu declared himself “the only survivor” of that research team. Later, the tightening ideological censorship in the 1970s made it impossible the continuation of that synthesis for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.



research conducted by two generations of professionals. They hope that their effort will make Romanian art history more robust, along literature, theater and music, and will contribute to the definition of *esthetic Romanian-ness* in the field.” Academician Marius Porumb supplied precise information on the treatise: “This monumental synthesis, written by a large number of authors, acknowledged as the elite of Romanian art history and art criticism, is a remarkable accomplishment, with (...) over 2,100 color photographs, drawings, architectural plans, etchings, and historical photos. This rich material illustrates the unique art treasure of Romania, and also the unique accomplishments of Romanian art and artists along the latest decades; it also showcases the identity of Romanian art, that is the synthesis of exquisite uniqueness and a permanent connection to the European tradition and trends.”

The first volume explores Romanian folk art, pre-historic art and the art of Antiquity (in the times of independent Dacia, and after the Roman conquest), then Byzantine art, the art of Early Middle Ages and the Romanesque art in Transylvania. It also offers a comprehensive image of the beginnings of stone built churches and other ecclesiastical buildings in Wallachia and Moldavia, of the mural painting and of liturgical art. An important section is devoted to the influence of European Renaissance in Romanian culture, and explores the ways in which the Renaissance set the ground for the modern age cultural paradigms. The second volume covers the

history of Romanian architecture, sculpture, painting, drawings and etchings and decorative arts starting with the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The pre-modern age, dominated by Baroque and by the debut of Classicism in Romanian culture, is followed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century rapid evolution and synchronization with European arts. The second volume ends with the synthesis on the exceptional accomplishments of Romanian art in the 20<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century, up to the very recent names, trends, and works.

*Romanian Art, from Pre-History to the Present* is part of the “Romanian Civilization” collection, an ample publishing project initiated by the Romanian Academy in 2018 and dedicated the Centennial of the Great Union, a project within which over 20 volumes on Romanian civilization and identity have been published until now. This treatise is the ultimate research in Romanian art history, of highly academic value, and it can be seen as a “fresco” of the evolution and excellence of Romanian art.

A number of current researchers of the “G. Oprescu” Institute of Art History of the Romanian Academy – Adrian-Silvan Ionescu, Constantin Ciobanu, Cristina Cojocaru, Dana Jenei, Corina Teacă – have contributed, along with former colleagues – Tereza Sinigalia, Ioana Vlasiu, Marina Sabados, Irina Cărăbaș, Cristian Robert Velescu – to this treatise.

The book is completed by a significant bibliographical list, as well as by an index (of places only).

Eduard Andrei

ERWIN KESSLER, *Zile. Florin Mitroi*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2018, 495 p. + ill.

In 1993 I had the privilege to watch Florin Mitroi's exhibition opened at *Catacomba* Gallery and, over the years, I still remember the strong impression, the contradictory thoughts emerged by the superb delicacy of colours and the harshness of content. That first major event was followed by two other significant displays: *Cel ce se pedepsește singur. Ștefan Bertalan, Florin Mitroi, Ion Grigorescu: arta și România în anii '80-'90*, Centrul Cultural Palatele Brâncovenești, Mogoșoaia, 5 April – 15 May 2009, and *Zile. Florin Mitroi*, ARCUB Bucharest, 19th April – 17th June 2018, Craiova, Palatul Jean Mihail, 12th October – 9th December 2018, both curated by E.K.

The book of E.K. is not a catalogue of 2018 exhibition even if it accompanies the exhibition. It is rather a complementary part of it, providing a luxuriant and, in some aspects, intriguing interpretation for Mitroi's work and its place within the context of Romanian and European art.

The text analyses mainly a corpus of drawings which form an extended visual chronicle of painter's most intimate feelings, obsessions, dramas and erotic

fantasies. E.K. explains the relations with other segments of artist's creation, and provides responses to several questions about the change occurred at the level of artistic language and concepts. One of the main topics of the book is the singularity of Mitroi's artistic approach. What does it make unique is its secret and profoundly personal content, which has been revealed only after painter's death. In his attempt of depicting this uniqueness, K. debates on the situation of Romanian art in the contemporary artistic context. Undoubtedly, there are valid observations and arguments to impulse eulogistic lecture of Mitroi's work. Nevertheless, the polemical tone of author's voice continues the line of his well-known critical discourse. There is always a BUT when he speaks on Romanian artists, precursors or colleagues of generation of Mitroi; K. brings to light a profusion of arguments, interesting and valid comparisons meant to decrease by purpose the contributions of the others.

In any case, despite its controversial point of view, the book remains an unavoidable bibliographical source for this artist and for the Romanian art in 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Corina Teacă

