



ROMANIAN PAVILION

HotShoe Gallery is pleased to present its first exhibition dedicated to artist's film and video. This installation will be the first of two international artists 'pavilions' this year - for the second, in September, we will welcome a collective of artists from Caracas, Venezuela.

Coming to prominence in the 1960s, with artists such as Nam June Paik, Steina and Woody Vasulka or Steven Dwoskin (who had a retrospective at the BFI in 2009), video art does not rely on the structure or form of narrative film and instead subverts 'cinematic' principles. Video art quite commonly contains no discernible structure; it can be abstract and repetitive, often challenging the viewer's expectations of narrative or the appearance of characters and dialogue. This exhibition represents a range of moving image practices, although routed primarily in the context of personal documentary.

Romanian Pavilion brings together five Romanian video artists whose works address Ceausescu's failed utopian social experiments and subsequent dehumanizing conditions, with an emphasis on the reality of built environment and private life in Romania.

Any utopia is obsessed to rehabilitate man and condemn him to happiness, to make a *tabula rasa* of the past and to install the reign of the new self, the perfect polis of human beings. The totalitarian regime in Eastern and Central Europe did the same: for almost half a century, it built new cities for the 'new man' - displaced in flats that look like prison blocks. Drawing its inspiration from Corbusier' and Gropius' rational architecture, modernist social housing was applied widely in Eastern Europe in the 1960s, but its profoundly alienating consequences have become evident after the 1990s, alongside the emergence of capitalism.

In Romania, the tensions between past and present are everywhere: 'anything goes' architecture mushrooms next to Stalinist substantial buildings, lavish casinos and ridiculous kiosks are built one over another, fast food restaurants and supermarkets replace old shops throughout urban areas. Ideas of territory and identity are continuously shifting, altering perceptions of space, human relationships, social and individual life.

The works in the exhibition examine how video art reflects, extends and manipulates private and historic remembrance associated with the period of transition. The exhibition aims to illustrate not only how the medium is used to portray the post-communist Romanian reality, but also how this reality, in its varying states of political, economic and cultural development, portrays facets of the medium.

Dan Acostioaei's *Reconstructionscapes* (2005) is a collection of images with construction sites around Iasi area, exploring the unseen connections between power, economy and identity in present-day Romania. Recent developments have transformed the grey and oppressive urban landscape into a mixture of sharp and absurd contrasts, with existing architectures extending into post-modern structures and luxurious villas looming next to blocks of flats.

Bahlui by Night (2004) investigates ironically the journey of the only river passing through Iasi, from the moment it enters the city to the instant it gets out of the urban area. Acostioaei's hometown Iasi is Romania's former 'cradle' of traditional culture. However, the city is also lags behind in economic development, even after the European integration. The night frames create a metaphysical atmosphere, transforming the grey reality one perceives daytime into an almost unreal fairy world. The video is a splendid narrative of failure.

Sebastian Moldovan's *Paris Project* (2006) is a performance-based video, which the artist did in Bucharest carrying the signage *Paris* throughout the old part of the city. Once known as *Little Paris*, Bucharest was partly destroyed by Ceausescu's misguided architectural ambitions. Eighteenth and nineteenth century buildings were torn down in favour of supposedly functional housing. By evoking a missing reality, Moldovan creates a situation for people to engage in and to explore notions of history, nostalgia and transience. If *Little Paris* is no longer in place, it could be at least a reviving state of mind.

Moldovan's later work *Doors* (2009) invites the viewer in the privacy of his surroundings. As you enter and leave his flat, the video captures the memory of the space, playing with our perceptions and ways of seeing. The vortex incessantly revolving around the doors of various rooms holds a certain violence, suggesting an intimate yet unescapable reality.

Joanne Richardson's *In Transit* (2008) is a diary of the artist's journey through Romania in the year of its EU accession. The video reflects on the re-writing of history and the link between images and memory.

I left Romania when I was 9, long before the revolution. My parents were among those uncomfortable dissidents that were allowed to emigrate ... After moving to America, my grandmother sent us a package with family pictures, but it was mysteriously lost, in transit. A tacit declaration by the Romanian state: now that you have chosen exile, we will erase your identity ... Your past no longer exists. The sum of these erasures is what we call history. (J.R.)

Mona Vatamanu and Florin Tudor's *The Trial* (2005), filmed from the national car Dacia 1300, shows the seemingly endless blocks of flats built by the communist regime. In the background, a flat, emotionless voice reads the transcript of Ceausescu's trial in December 1989. The video alludes to the TV news programmes of the period, presenting every night the new achievements of the regime, showing at the same time how less the housing situation has actually changed in the last 15 years. It also reflects on ideas of historic memory, shared identity and vehicles for collective reconciliation and rebuilding.

Romanian Pavilion

Interviews with the Artists - Questions

■ Any utopia is obsessed to rehabilitate man and condemn him to happiness, to make a *tabula rasa* of the past and to install the reign of the new self, the perfect polis of human beings. The totalitarian regime in Eastern and Central Europe did the same: for almost half a century, it built new cities for the 'new man' - displaced and alienated in flats that look like prison blocks. *Why and how does your work address this reality of the built environment and ghettoization in Romania?*

■■ The communist myth of a society without classes and individual property was perfectly reflected by life in flats. Workers, professors, engineers, miners and pensioners lived in the same block, in identical apartments, without any hierarchy. *What are, in your view, the consequences of this situation on the individual and the society before and after the overthrow of Ceausescu? How does it alter your perception of space and how does it shape your art practice?*

■■■ As all countries from the former Eastern bloc, Romania has experienced radical changes after the '90s and ideas of territory and identity are still shifting. The tensions between past and present are particularly present in the property development: 'anything goes' architecture mushrooms next to Soviet and North Korean substantial buildings, lavish casinos and ridiculous kiosks are built one over another, fast food restaurants and supermarkets replace old shops throughout urban Romania. *How does your work examine the effects of the changes on the different groups of society from the aspect of socio-psychology? What are the results of the changes on national identity and national stereotypes? How do individual lives carry on amidst all the rearrangements of society?*

■■■■ Recent political, social and economic changes in Romania have been excellently documented and analysed by the 'new wave' of cinema and by video art. However, more often than not, video artists focus on deserted or public spaces, whereas directors explore private narratives and human relationships. *Is this interest in failed utopian social experiments and subsequent dehumanizing conditions a convention of recent Romanian video production? How does video art extend and manipulate private and historic remembrance?*

Dan Acostioaei

(b.1974, Iasi) lives and works in Iasi, Romania.

Selected group exhibitions: Transitland, Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2010); Illuminations, Tate Modern London (2008); Irreducible, Bronx Museum, New York & CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2005). Selected solo exhibitions: Vanishing Points (2005) and Mythologies (2004), Iasi, Romania.

■ I have a rather personal approach. The city I come from (along with Bucharest) is probably one of the best examples of the socialist *tabula rasa* in Romania. I was very young in the '80s but old enough to remember how my city was systematically mutilated by bulldozers within just a few years. At that time I was too young to realise that those bulldozers operated with a surgical precision in eliminating almost every trace of the petit bourgeois architecture. I grew up with this terrible sense of loss. The feeling was even stronger because my father worked for the state-owned demolition company that performed the "urban cleansing". He had many painful stories about well-designed buildings that were declared unsafe only to evict the people who lived in them. My own family lived in a small house with a garden in the suburbia, a region that was also to be demolished. I knew from my father that on the exact spot of our house there should have been the pillar of a bridge meant to connect the centre of the city with the airport. The demolition and further construction were postponed for the '90s... I came to realise though that the regime did not particularly seek to offer new homes for the 'new man', but rather to erase the past and recreate it with the help of and according to Ceausescu's propaganda. Amazingly enough, the arbitrary urban reshaping process has not stopped after 1989. The utopia has been replaced by real estate interest and empty political discourse. I am fascinated by the continuous struggle to refill the gap of meaning and I do my best to reflect it.

■ I don't think the lack of hierarchy was the problem, but the undermining of the sense of value and difference in all the areas of public life. After Ceausescu's return from his visits to China and North Korea in 1971, he had a new Maoist agenda that led to a total social and cultural disaster. When huge numbers of workers from the country side were brought to work on the industrial sites,

the rural areas fell into ruin and cities became non urban. Instead of urbanising rural areas, the cities were transformed into peculiar hybrids with blocks of flats inhabited by agricultural labourers. This led to devastating long term consequences. The social functions of the individual collapsed within. Rural traditions and social ties were compromised or became too frail to resist to what followed two decades later, during the '90s. We can see the results nowadays. The sense of community, of belonging, the responsibility and the respect for the other have been almost completely destroyed or distorted.

The present-day public space, be it urban or media, reflects all these layers of radical changes in terms of built environment and public behaviour. My work examines these symptoms and their origins. I try to associate images that suggest the cause-and-effect relationship going through as many strata as I can perceive.

■ Your question reminds me of Romanian vocalist Ada Milea's lyrics:
Ceausescu never died! / He closely guards us / .../ He is in me, he is in you / He is in factories and companies...

There is a tremendous never ending inertia in the Romanian society. After 20 years Romanians still discuss whether they should break or not the wall around the House of the People (meant to be Ceausescu's palace, currently the Parliament), a wall that keeps the traffic and the pedestrians hundreds of meters away. And yet one of the most controversial governmental urban projects of today is the construction of another mammoth building near the House of the People, The National Cathedral. The players have changed but the mind sets seem the same.

I think that at the end of Ceausescu's regime almost everyone hated communist ideology. No one really believed in it anymore. However, for 45 years it was the only ideology, and after its demise there was actually nothing to replace it with. Considering this, Ion Iliescu's policy from the beginning of the '90s, based on ideas such as "communism with a human face" and "socialist market economy", it doesn't seem so awkward today. It was a sort of compromise imported from the Soviet Glasnost that could have passed unnoticed in the shadow of Ceausescu's dictatorship.

In fact no clear political ideology has emerged in Romania after 1989, solid enough to offer an alternative. Every election people voted AGAINST and not FOR a particular candidate.

The only idea people could relate to and believe in was the Christian Orthodoxy.

There is some irony to this when you think about Ceausescu's cult of personality, which had something messianic in it. Most of the historical heroes used by the propaganda to identify the Great Leader with were defenders of Christianity, which over centuries was seen as a symbol of political independence. The Leader left an empty space in this 'icon', and the Church has done a good job replacing the atheist Messiah with the Son of God.

There is a lot of fuss nowadays around the decay of the Romanian culture. I think this is also a result of the destructive social changes in the '70s. The authority of culture and genuine traditions was discredited, leaving it vulnerable to the aggressive glamour of the Western model of media.

Political and institutional corruption at all levels promoted a fake model of success. Culture, education and work are no longer strong values in Romanian society because they constantly fail to produce results in the welfare of the individual.

My work does not only examine the effects of the changes in the society but it is also influenced by them. There is little room for contemporary art in a culture that is split between the Supermarket and the Church.

■■■■ Due to its recurrence it might look like a convention, but it is not. The 'new wave' of Romanian cinema and contemporary visual artists came to realise that there is no better tool to portray and analyse the situation than going to the end of the chain of causes. Little dramas say more about the status quo than the big picture. Take *Tiberiu Manescu* from Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest* for instance. He is probably the least heroic character in the entire Romanian cinema, but there is no other better way to point out the failure of a great moment than telling his story. Or take Ciprian Muresan's *Rhinoceros*, which is a question mark raised over the future of society. Apparently you see only a layered surreal scheme, but behind it there is a lesson of collective responsibility.

The heritage is huge and with every story I feel that there is even more to talk about. Cinema, literature and visual art have to deal with all the unsolved issues. Although this might sound a bit extreme, I think they have to complete or attempt to the *Entnazifizierung* that never really took place in Romania.

Sebastian Moldovan

(b. 1982, Baia Mare) lives and works in Sibiu, Romania.

Selected group exhibitions: The Haifa Mediterranean Biennale, Haifa (2010); Exploring the Return of Repression - Pavilion Unicredit, Bucharest (2009); Dada East? Romanian Context of Dadaism - National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2008). Solo shows: *Luxury is...* - Galerie Jan Dhaese, Gent, (2008).

■ You know, I was just thinking these days that a block of flats seen in x-ray looks a lot like a bird cage...

I grew up in an industrial city in northern Romania, Baia Mare, in a block of flats neighbourhood. Having the streets and construction-sites as my playground, I started to convert reality and see beyond the imposed limits.

Back in 2004, I was interested in evaluating ways of living and I was working with series of superimposed images or objects. I used packs of cigarettes, on which I made invasive drawings of structures and modules. I also made interventions on all kinds of common cheap objects – lighter, paper cubes or earplugs – changing the way you would normally address these items. For example, the lighter was wrapped in coloured duct-tape, becoming a pop-object with new age aesthetics. The paper cube was burned (cut) diagonally by blow torch and then taken apart sheet by sheet and set on rows and columns on the wall, as a reaction to monotony and uniformity.

Then, at the end of 2004, I moved to Bucharest and immediately felt the need to say something about what I experienced – and that was the beginning of *The Paris Project* (before the WW II, Bucharest was nicknamed Little Paris). First a series of photographs, then the road sign that I used for the video. The Paris Project was a complex experience that lasted for two years. Meanwhile, I studied and documented spaces 'built' on regular activities: bus terminals, industrial areas or neighbourhoods of blocks of flats, alongside the area of old Bucharest which was planned for demolishing in the 80's but escaped and has now morphed into a ghetto.

After this project, my research went on a different track, more oriented on inner structures and on finding solutions. That also brought change in the way I was addressing and talking about issues – you can for example document something rather than showing it in a way that makes it ridiculous; you can better raise questions about its function or aesthetics etc. Or you can focus on simply



showing a different way to create, see and understand your environment (new and improved if possible). That is to create precedent, to add a new experience and to let them work by themselves if they do – this translates nicely into these words: ‘...if you build it, they will come...’

■ There WAS one good thing going on back then. The nurse on the 3rd floor would take care of us when we were ill, her husband would fix our TV, the plumber on 2nd floor fixed our pipes and my father would teach their children math. It had to be like that.

But this ‘solidarity’ has faded since then.

Living most of your life between those concrete walls in a sandwich of families cannot be much better now than it was then. It’s the same Faraday cage (sure, now they have hundreds of channels on TV to ‘get away from it all’). The generation of my parents simply got used to the situation. I do not know how much of the artists’ efforts reach them. I feel like they remain a case study, ‘raw material’ - as they’ve always been. But I have a lot of hope for their children – recently the Internet made its way into those buildings, and tricky as it can be, the kids know what to do with it!

How it alters my perception on space?

As I said, I grew up in those flats, but I would go to the countryside for most of the holidays...so I had an alternative from the very beginning. I remember that the game has always been ‘what *else* can I do in this square room’. And this is how I now interact with the museum or the gallery space. I am in a continuous offensive, changing and deconstructing spaces.

In my case, art has given me the possibility to understand how life in this type of community shapes one’s existence: how can one create a living space (a space that is alive and a space to live in) in a given environment? This entire process, from learning to creating, generates awareness and responsibility. It offers you alternatives views.

■ I was merely documenting these bizarre ‘landscapes’, trying to understand for myself where they come from. Was it the sudden freedom to do anything? Was it the sudden introduction to capitalism and to the spirit of competition? Was it people’s need to no longer be seen as ‘from the East’? It was all that and

a lot more. When everyone took initiative acting upon their personal understandings of how things work in this new extended world, the results could only be a seemingly logic-free evolution in all aspects of life – be it spiritual, be it fast food culture...

But this is not my generation. I was too young to feel too constrained. I could say that I grew up in the aftermath, with only a few young memories from the communist time. My generation sees the world differently.

National identity is broken into many pieces and has lost its relevance; and generational bonds are also fragmented but we’re struggling to hold up an image of ourselves as a nation, whereas people live actually further and further from each other.

■ I took on the city with its utopias and communist debris, because I was curious and this is usually my motivation in doing anything. *It was a lot of fun*, but I’m done with that for now. The city has lost its importance in the hierarchy of things. (I do not agree with deconstructing the city, like it was a machine, to its elements; but prefer starting from the individual, understand what’s going on there, than go up level by level, singing: ‘We’ve built this city’...)

The work of a director eventually reaches the public, while the work of a video artist is bound to be seen mostly by those interested, specialists and other artists. So what we do, I guess, is a network of ideas, a platform of communication. Video art opens the discussion and tries to set a track for it. We mean to further deepen and refine our research as opposed to making it more available or even more public friendly – but still believing that if you do build it, they will come.

Joanne Richardson

(b. in Bucharest), is currently based in Berlin.

Selected group exhibitions: Moscow Biennale (2009); Transmediale 09, Berlin, (2009); Re-building the Commons, MACBA Barcelona (2009); Hack.fem.East, Kunstraum Bethanien, Berlin (2008); Istanbul Biennale (2007). Author of essays on leftist political theory, social movements, video activism and experimental film.

■ *In Transit* explores both the differences and the similarities between several utopian visions of Romanian history that tried to create a new man: the fascist, communist and post-communist. Each of these models attempted an erasure of the past, but its traces still persist in the cultural landscape and the built environment, giving rise to a mix of conflicting ideologies and architectural styles.

I don't see the blocks of standardized flats as a communist invention - one can find similar ghettos in Paris or Chicago. Socialist housing drew its inspiration from modernist architects like Corbusier and Gropius, who thought rationalization, functionality and technological progress would create a more egalitarian society. Corbusier believed that everyone had the same needs and that architecture should become "a machine for living." His *Immeubles Villas* in 1922 called for large blocks of cell-like flats stacked one on top of the other. The dehumanizing effects of this utopia became obvious in the West by the 1960s. Critics of modernist architecture argued that technological standardization led to alienation and that rationalism and functionalism excluded subjectivity, spontaneity, and the organic bonds necessary for communities. In Eastern Europe there was a time lag: modernist social housing was applied widely in the 1960s, and its critiques emerged publicly only after 1989.

■ In my video, Leizer Finchelstein, a survivor of the Jewish pogrom during the second world war, when Romania was an ally of Nazi Germany, recalls his memories of communism. For him, communism was linked to the struggle against fascism. And to a better living standard - he speaks enthusiastically about the first time he moved into a block of flats in Iasi, which had running water and a bathroom. Before, his parents and his 8 brothers and sisters lived in a small shack with an outhouse, and he had to walk every day to get water from a well.

Marx said somewhere that the bourgeois revolution in France was both progress and catastrophe. The destruction of aristocratic privilege and education for all, alongside the terror, the mass executions, the demolition of old neighbourhoods, the erasure of regional dialects and cultures. Perhaps the same can be said of the communist revolution. It eliminated class privilege and brought about literacy and cheap housing, but it also destroyed individuality and spawned anomie. And in contrast to the capitalist speculation of the last two decades, which inflated real estate prices beyond affordable limits, the guaranteed housing during communism is still remembered by many as a safe comfort. This situation seems to have created a social divide between generations: the old are often nostalgic for the past, while the young and middle aged equate communism with absolute horror.

My perception of space is predominantly influenced by the gap between my childhood in Romania and growing up in New York, a city with an excess of individualism. Returning to live in Romania after a 20-year absence, I have a constant feeling of being inside and outside, a native and a foreigner. I think it is this sense of in-between-ness, rather than the experience of living in blocks of flats, that shapes my art practice. The distance allows me to think dialectically about the beauty and tragedy of my surroundings. As a result, my videos are often made up of multiple layers and conflicting narratives. I prefer to let the contradictions surface and let the audience piece them together instead of offering simple conclusions.

■ *In Transit* highlights the chaotic nature of urban development and the conflicting mix of ideologies associated with the period of transition. The video hints at the link indirectly; in a recent essay, I have made these connections clearer. Romania's "anything goes" architecture corresponds to a postmodern neo-eclecticism. Parallel to it, a new type of postmodern consciousness has also emerged. In a recent public debate, one of Romania's leading intellectuals described himself as a "postmodern dandy" who has surpassed the "passe ideologies" of right and left and is "anti-religious, anti-red, anti-anti-globalism, pro-consumerism, hedonistic and cynical." Against the monolithic, totalitarian ideologies of the past, he praised a fusion cuisine of ideas, comparing culture to a smorgasbord buffet that mixes different foods on the same plate. Such celebrations of eclecti-

cism, difference and ideological neutrality are in line with the global current of neoliberalism, which sees the market as the ultimate goal of life. Market society is all about the multiplicity of choices, and the right of the individual to be “different” is its perfect advertising strategy.

The effects of transition seem to be a simultaneous erosion of national identity and a revival of nationalism and archaic traditions. On one side, it is possible to see a strong process of self-colonization: out of a feeling of inferiority and shame about Romania’s past, many people have internalized the ideals of the West as the only source of value, and are proud to affirm that they are European or global. On the other side of the spectrum, as a backlash against globalization (interpreted as a degradation of culture and morality), there has been a revival of religious values and folklore customs. Seeking to turn back the wheel of time, the extreme right longs for a return to the inter-war golden age, when god was in everyone’s hearts and the Romanian soul still possessed a sense of nobility. Although the extreme right exists in Western Europe, as a minority, in Romania and other East European countries it appears to be equally dominant, competing with its opposite. While the two often clash, sometimes they come together in strange combinations. *In Transit* documents one such coincidence: a religious holiday in Iasi, which brings tens of thousands of pilgrims to the city. In recent years, the holiday has become a great bazaar, where miracles and icons are sold alongside ceramics, hats and coats.

.... Perhaps the differences can be explained, at least in part, by the conventions of the different disciplines. Cinema is part of an industry that caters toward entertainment, allowing the audience to identify with a dynamic story or strong characters, so it frequently focuses on relationships or powerful emotions. Individual films may challenge these conventions, but still need to be pleasurable enough to sell to large audiences. And to a certain extent, they need to affirm the values of specific producers and financial backers, and of the industry as a whole. I think this is one reason why the period of communism represented in new wave cinema is frequently reduced to a one-dimensional image of horror, without real nuances. Video art differs in terms of its conventions, production process and audiences. It draws on a historical genre for which narrative is unimportant and the pleasure of an easy identification is often deliberately avoided. It can explore the complexity of moods, sounds, visual spaces, its own structural

elements, or the limitations of its medium. And since video can be made cheaply and quickly by a single individual and is shown in exhibitions to a different kind of audience, who expects a more critical approach, it can afford to take risks.

It’s difficult to say how video art in general deals with historical memory, since there are so many different approaches. My own work explores how images are used to construct both social and private memory. *In Transit* contains an indirect citation of Peter Forgacs’ work, which contrasts the degraded memory expressed in Hungary’s official history with the authentic private memories of home movies. The use of private archives to construct an alternative history can sometimes be as manipulative as the official version. *In Transit* makes use of childhood memories and family photographs, all of which have the potential to evoke strong emotions. But it frustrates the possibility of sentimental identification by using estrangement devices to create a sense of distance. The aim of the work is not to denounce all images as degraded, but to ask the audience to step back and reflect on their own relationship to images. It is only from this critical distance that it becomes possible to dig through pile of ruins left behind by “official history” and uncover the traces of things that have been lost.

Mona Vatamanu and Florin Tudor

(b.1968, Constanta) (b.1974, Geneva) are based in Bucharest.

Selected solo shows: Surplus Value, BAK, Utrecht (2009); Appointment with History, Lombard Freid Projects, New York (2008).

Selected group shows: 2010 / Architect ure and its Discontents, Kaleidoscope Project Space, Milan; ATOPIA, Art and the City in the 21st Century, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona; 2009 / Liquid Times, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Munster; Invisible Body, Conspicuous Mind, Luckman Gallery, Los Angeles.

■ There are important differences between the layers of architecture built during communism: Stalinist architecture in the '50s, local versions of socialist realist architecture, peoples' palaces; then there are '50s to '70s serialism and brutalism coinciding with the post-Stalinist situation in the Soviet Union and with second modernism in Romania (Ricci brothers and Cezar Lazarescu to name just a few architects). All these are connected with the historical modernism from the '20s-30s and with the international style, and then you have collective housing after the second half of the seventies, when Romania experienced a second Stalinism, this time self- imposed.

Through documenting and working with architecture, we aim to understand the idea of collectivity in the past and today. *In Procesul / The Trial* we filmed the serial blocks of flats to question the feeling of common guilt for the events that took place in December 1989 and for the confusion we have been experiencing since then: no answers regarding the victims of those days, the so-called terrorists who have never been found, and the main political actors of the new government who constantly escape prosecution.

■ One cannot agree with the official discourse on these issues in the previous regime, when daily propaganda taught us about the benefits of collective housing, about people of distinct backgrounds living together, of course without their consent. However, one can also not agree with the new official politics blaming socialism and blindly promoting capitalism, forgetting that the same socialist flats are sold now for huge amounts of money and speculated by the market economy to produce surplus value for the financial system. From the socialist aims of solving housing problems and of destroying past architecture and history, we have

seemingly switched to building new ghettos for the super-rich oligarchs (the old ones were for the communist nomenklatura), whereas the rest barely afford to pay mortgages or rents. It is important to mention that historical architecture is still demolished in Romania: for instance, in 2010 we witness the demolishing of Cella Delavrancea's house and of Horia Creanga's swimming pool complex in north Bucharest, both great examples of early modernist architecture, which are to be replaced by the present-day speculative planning.

■ ■ ■ This is a big question for us as well: *How individual lives carry on amidst all the rearrangements of society?* We try to understand this with our own means. Some national stereotypes can be clearly recognised as unaffected by the political changes, whereas other things have simply adapted to the new developments. The former regime controlled people by forcing them to be cells in the big organism of the failed revolution; the new system is doing the same through refined financial mechanisms.

■ ■ ■ ■ We don't know if one can draw a line between artistic practices; for us, at least, it doesn't exist. Film and video are fictional territories where we can critically extend the discussion about our daily experiences and encounters; we have equally worked with architecture, public space, video and film. We took film as a reference to Romania's recent history, imagining a continuation of *The Impossible Love* film from the '80s and reconnecting the original story to present time and subsequent notions of passion and solidarity.

The interviews were conducted by Simona Nastac via e-mail.

HotShoe Gallery is both a commercial and public gallery dedicated to photographic art and artist's film and video. It is a commercial space inasmuch that it displays and sells the work of a number of artists; and a public space in the sense that it is committed to the discourse that surrounds contemporary photographic art and moving image, both in terms of practice and theory, and seeks to interpret and communicate these subjects to the public.

We would like to function as an accessible space for both established and emerging artists and therefore welcome portfolio submissions, exhibition proposals and enquiries of interest. We also support activities and events surrounding other, non-photographic art forms; this might include a seminar, a conference, a film screening or a performance.

Marcin Dudek is an artist and curator based in London who works with moving image and installation. He has curated several international video artists' screenings whilst also exhibiting his own work regularly. Recent shows include *SI Salon* – SI Artspace Sheffield; *Vision in the Nunnery* – Bow Arts Trust; *Ghost of Presents* – Art Gallery of York University, Toronto. He is the 2009 winner of the *IPJ prize for digital art*, Portugal. He is also a regular collaborator of the *T1+2 Hive Project* and *Réaltympanica*.

Simona Nastac is a London based curator and critic. Her curatorial projects include *How to Build a Universe That Does Not Fall Apart Two Days Later* (Regensburg, 2007); *If You Think This World Is Bad You Should See Some of the Others* (Prague Biennial 3, 2007), *The Sublime Overcoming of the Ultimate Frontier of Art* (the 2nd International Young Artists Biennial, Bucharest 2006); *Through Popular Expression* (Plan B, Cluj and MNAC Bucharest, 2006). She contributes as a critic for *Flash Art International*, *Eikon* (Vienna), *Hart* (Brussels) and writes on various cultural issues for publications and websites. Currently she is a project co-ordinator at the Romanian Cultural Institute in London.

Romanian Pavilion, curated by Marcin Dudek & Simona Nastac
Exhibition design: Ioana Iliesiu & Marcin Dudek
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Cover Illustration: *Reconstructionscapes, Dan Acostioaei (2005)* courtesy of the artist.
Middle page: from the series *Katowice, Marcin Dudek (2004)*