

Stefano D'Avino RESTORATION IN ROMANIA

*Stefano D'Avino*

# RESTORATION IN ROMANIA

Theory and practice



**CARSA**  
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Contributi  
18

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dell'Università degli studi  
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**RESTORATION IN ROMANIA**  
**Theory and practice**

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*Stefano D'Avino*

# RESTORATION IN ROMANIA

## Theory and practice

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*Interview with Șerban STURDZA*

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## FOREWORD

Giovanni CARBONARA



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Giovanni Carbonara and Stefano  
D'Avino

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Analysis of the recent restoration experiences in Romania, observed from the theoretical and practical standpoint, provides a certainly dynamic panorama, ever-evolving and difficult to frame in a concise vision. As Stefano D'Avino writes, there are many contributions in this area, but they are “not always coherent”. But there is no denying a series of steps forward taken over the past five years, thanks to the entry into the field of a new, “European” generation of experts.

In essence, Romania, albeit with reference to criteria that are broadly shared at least on a European level, is still seeking to define its way, necessarily influenced by factors of a political, legislative, and economic, and more broadly socio-cultural nature; all these elements bear on the conception and practice of the protection and restoration of the country's historic and artistic heritage.

One need merely consider the official orientations in the era of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu (1967-89) and his political use – as was at any rate done in Italy five decades earlier – of monuments and culture; or also the contemporary closure to the outside, then offset by a reassuring appeal to the academy of nineteenth-century memory; and attitudes, in restoration, that might be termed “stylistic”, attentive above all to the interventions' aesthetic returns.

An external closure, but also a gradually internal one: one may merely consider the suppression of the Directorate of Historical Monuments in 1977; or, in the urban area, the government's unscrupulous choice, made by taking advantage of the 1977 earthquake, in favour of coldly destroying a great many ancient remnants, equal in Bucharest alone to about 9,000 architectural works; or the forced transfers of monuments; or the regularization, with grievous damage to ancient fabrics, of the urban fronts. But the shadow of that season was extended,

*L'analisi delle recenti esperienze di restauro in Romania, osservate sotto il profilo teorico e pratico, restituisce un panorama sicuramente dinamico, in perenne evoluzione e difficile da inquadrare in una visione di sintesi. Come scrive Stefano D'Avino, molti sono gli apporti in materia, ma “non sempre coerenti”, pur se risulta innegabile una serie di progressi nell'ultimo quindicennio, merito dell'entrata in campo di una nuova generazione ‘europea’ di esperti.*

*In sostanza la Romania, pur in riferimento a criteri ampiamente condivisi, almeno a livello europeo, sta ancora cercando di definire una propria strada, necessariamente influenzata da fattori di natura politica, legislativa, economica e più ampiamente socio-culturale; tutti elementi che influiscono sulla concezione e sulla prassi della tutela e del restauro del patrimonio storico-artistico della Nazione.*

*Basti pensare agli orientamenti ufficiali nell'era del dittatore Nicolae Ceaușescu (1967-89) ed al suo uso politico - d'altronde come già in Italia un cinquantennio prima - dei monumenti e della cultura; ma anche alla contemporanea chiusura verso l'esterno, allora compensata da un rassicurante richiamo all'accademia di ottocentesca memoria e ad atteggiamenti, nel restauro, definibili come ‘stilistici’, attenti soprattutto alla resa estetica degli interventi.*

*Chiusura esterna ma progressivamente anche interna, quando solo si pensi alla soppressione nel 1977 della Direzione dei Monumenti Storici o, in campo urbano, alla spregiudicata scelta governativa, operata approfittando del terremoto del 1977, di fredda distruzione di numerosissime antiche testimonianze, pari nella sola Bucarest a circa 9000 architetture; alle forzate traslazioni dei monumenti; alla regolarizzazione, con gravi danni ai tessuti antichi, dei fronti urbani. Ma l'eco di quella stagione si è prolungata, come scriveva Sergiu Nistor nel 2015, nel corso*

as Sergiu Nistor wrote in 2015, for at least ten years after the fall of the authoritarian regime, then being replaced, as in many other countries of the formerly Communist Europe, by a market-oriented “globalization” that came to rapidly occupy the space left open by the old “ideologization.”

However, this political and ideological conditioning is not monolithic throughout Central and Eastern Europe, as shown by the case of Hungary, which, in the specific field of architectural restoration, was open as early as the 1960s to the new arrivals originating from the West, and especially from Italy, after the promulgation of the Venice Charter in 1964.

At any rate, in Romania too, since the late 1990s we may observe an approach closer to the positions of “critical restoration” and of the aforementioned Charter, and to the Italian ones, especially in the sector of fresco restoration; and in architecture, with experiences of various kinds, connected to an attitude of empiricism and of continuous research oscillating between good conservation and rash experimentation – above all in the capital – on the delicate relationship between the old and the new.

As D'Avino notes, even today, the situation offered by Romania ranges from a “reckless contemporary form-shaping to a strictly conservative restoration”.

These statements are supported by a series of examples, clearly presented and commented upon, starting – in the area of good results – from the restoration of the nineteenth-century Casa Mincu, done by prof. arch. Șerban Sturdza, who grants an interesting interview at the end of this volume. The intervention was guided by a prior reading and direct analysis of the work, which was then extended to the entire duration of the work site, in the intent to safeguard the well studied and understood architectural palimpsest. This was followed by experiences of careful and measured dialogue between the old and new, and of

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*di almeno altri dieci anni dopo la caduta del regime autoritario, per essere poi sostituita, come in tanti altri Paesi dell'Europa ex-comunista, da una ‘globalizzazione’ mercatista venuta rapidamente ad occupare il posto lasciato libero dalla vecchia ‘ideologizzazione’.*

*Condizionamento politico-ideologico tuttavia non monolitico in tutta l'Europa centro-orientale, come dimostra il caso dell'Ungheria, molto aperta, nel campo specifico del restauro architettonico, già negli scorsi anni sessanta alle novità che provenivano dall'Occidente, specie dall'Italia, dopo la promulgazione della Carta di Venezia nel 1964.*

*Comunque anche in Romania, dalla fine degli anni novanta si può osservare un avvicinamento alle posizioni del ‘restauro critico’ e della predetta Carta, ed a quelle italiane, soprattutto nel settore del restauro degli affreschi; in architettura, con esperienze di vario tipo, legate ad un atteggiamento empirico e di continua ricerca oscillante fra buona conservazione ed avventate sperimentazioni, soprattutto nella capitale, sul delicato rapporto fra antico e nuovo. Come nota D'Avino, anche oggi il quadro offerto dalla Romania si muove da “una spregiudicata formatività contemporanea ad un restauro strettamente conservativo”.*

*Tali affermazioni sono confortate da una serie di esempi, chiaramente presentati e commentati, a partire, sul fronte dei buoni risultati, dal restauro della ottocentesca Casa Mincu, condotto dal prof. arch. Șerban Sturdza, cui è riservata un'interessante intervista alla fine del presente volume. Intervento guidato da una preventiva lettura critica e analisi diretta dell'opera, estesa poi a tutta la durata del cantiere, nell'intento di salvaguardare il palinsesto architettonico, ben studiato e compreso. Seguono esperienze di attento e misurato dialogo fra antico e nuovo e di reimpiego del ‘frammento architettonico’, come nel caso di una cappella privata nella località di Cetate.*

reutilization of the “architectural fragment,” as in the case of a private chapel in the town of Cetate. Before going on to compare examples and cases of a different nature, both positive and negative, consideration is to be made of the specific nature of rural and ecclesiastical architecture, especially “minor” architecture, to this day linked to a typological and constructive living tradition, also in terms of materials and techniques, leading to forms of continuity not too easily identifiable as “reinstatement”, but more profoundly and solidly motivated; this is in accordance with that perpetuation of traditional modes that even a scholar who was a follower of Brandi, like Paul Philippot, appreciated, especially in the Asian world, recognizing in it not only the cold exhumation of ancient ways, but a spontaneous and natural continuity. In Stefano D’Avino’s acute analysis, cases not without a certain ambiguity of concept and method are also discussed, a sign of the empiricism alluded to earlier: cases in which historical respect is accompanied by the elusion of the issue of the “facilitation of the reading” of the monument, which is to say of that “revealing” datum cited, for example, by art. 9 of the Venice Charter and by art. 4 of the Italian Restoration Charter of 1972. There are other cases in which “philology” is misunderstood – as it also is by many people in Italy – as a cultural guarantee of reinstatement practices, at all times aimed at achieving completeness to the detriment of the subject and its documentary value; this is the case while one of the foundational roots of authentic philology is the use of an effective diacritical apparatus, aimed at expressing the uncertainties and the scientific doubt present in every act of interpretation – and therefore of reintegration. This doubt brings with it respect for authenticity, and therefore adhesion to the principle of the least intervention, of reversibility and compatibility, and to other guiding criteria of restoration as

*Prima di passare a confrontare esempi e casi di natura diversa, tanto positivi quanto negativi, va considerata la specificità dell’architettura rurale ed ecclesiastica, soprattutto ‘minore’, tuttora legata ad una tradizione costruttiva e tipologica viva, anche nei materiali e nelle tecniche, la quale induce a forme di continuità non troppo facilmente identificabili come ‘ripristino’ ma più profondamente e solidamente motivate; ciò secondo quella perpetuazione di modi tradizionali che anche uno studioso di osservanza brandiana come Paul Philippot apprezzava, soprattutto nel mondo asiatico, riconoscendovi non la riesumazione a freddo di modi antichi ma una spontanea e naturale continuità. Nell’acuta analisi di Stefano D’Avino sono discussi anche casi non privi d’una certa ambiguità concettuale e di metodo, segno dell’empiria cui prima s’è fatto cenno: casi in cui al rispetto storico si accompagna l’elusione del tema della ‘facilitazione della lettura’ del monumento, cioè di quel dato ‘rivelativo’ richiamato, per esempio, dall’art. 9 della Carta di Venezia ed anche dall’art. 4 della Carta italiana del restauro del 1972. Poi altri casi in cui la ‘filologia’ è intesa, come per altro anche da molti in Italia, erroneamente quale garanzia culturale delle pratiche di ripristino, sempre miranti al raggiungimento della compiutezza formale a scapito della materia e del suo valore documentario; ciò mentre una delle radici fondative dell’autentica filologia è l’uso di un efficace apparato diacritico, volto ad esprimere le incertezze e il dubbio scientifico presenti in ogni atto interpretativo, dunque anche reintegrativo, dubbio che porta con sé il rispetto dell’autenticità, quindi l’adesione al principio del minimo intervento, della reversibilità, della compatibilità ed agli altri criteri-guida del restauro modernamente inteso, assolutamente lontano dal ripristino. Tornando ai buoni esempi D’Avino illustra il restauro della*

understood in the modern era, entirely far from reinstatement. Returning to positive examples, D’Avino illustrates the restoration of the church of Carta, done in 2014 and founded upon a careful archival investigation, stratigraphic reading, and critical interpretation of the text: this gives rise to the search for minimum impact in contemporary interventions, and a proposal for a reading of the monument’s history that is neither partialized nor selective, but accepting of its entire development process over time. No different is the case of the Theresia Bastion in Timișoara, restored between 2008 and 2010 with a language of great quality, and without impacting the original matter, but only the image, “suggesting a proper reading” of it, almost in the form of a “re-composition of the passages of an interrupted discourse, as in a musical score”; or the “dialoguing co-presence of the ancient and the new” that may be appreciated in the restoration of the Ștefan Tower in the city of Baia Mare, completed between 2014 and 2016. With regard to the industrial heritage as well, there is no lack of good examples, as in the case of the water plant of Suceava which presents, among other things, the “conservation of the original plaster” understood as “technological frescoes,” and a meritorious respect for the old surfaces of reinforced concrete, an example from which Italy, too, might learn. Thus, in archaeology, one may merely consider the treatment of the towers in the fifteenth-century Drobeta citadel in the city of Cetatea, or the care in the elimination of the biological decay of the ruins of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa; or the cases of intense interdisciplinary exchange, monitoring, care in the documentation of the various phases of restoration, and respect for the genius loci displayed by numerous contemporary interventions aimed at building provisional roofs. But it is especially in the restoration of frescoes, perhaps

*chiesa di Carta, condotto nel 2014 e fondato su una accurata indagine archivistica, lettura stratigrafica, interpretazione critica del testo: da qui la ricerca del minimo impatto degli interventi contemporanei e una proposta di lettura non parzializzata né selettiva della storia del monumento ma l’accettazione del suo intero processo di sviluppo nel tempo. Non diverso il caso del Bastione Theresia a Timișoara, restaurato fra il 2008 e il 2010 con un linguaggio di grande qualità e senza incidere sulla materia originale ma solo sull’immagine, “suggerendone una corretta lettura” quasi nella forma d’una “ricomposizione dei brani di un discorso interrotto, come di uno spartito” musicale; o la “dialogante compresenza antico/nuovo” che si può apprezzare nel restauro della Torre Ștefan, nella città di Baia Mare, compiuto fra il 2014 e il 2016. Anche riguardo al patrimonio industriale i buoni esempi non mancano, come nel caso della centrale idrica di Suceava che presenta, fra l’altro, la “conservazione degli intonaci originali” intesi come “affreschi tecnologici” e un meritorio rispetto delle vecchie superfici di calcestruzzo armato, esempio da cui anche l’Italia potrebbe imparare. Così in archeologia, quando solo si pensi al trattamento delle torri della quattrocentesca Cittadella di Drobeta, nella città di Cetatea, o della cura nell’eliminazione del degrado biologico dai ruderi di Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana; o anche ai casi d’intenso scambio interdisciplinare, monitoraggio, cura nella documentazione delle diverse fasi di restauro, rispetto del genius loci attestati da numerosi interventi contemporanei volti alla realizzazione di coperture provvisorie. Ma è soprattutto nel restauro degli affreschi, forse impropriamente distinto dalla più generale teoria e pratica della conservazione, che si vedono gli esiti del fecondo confronto, risalente addirittura agli anni ‘60 e ‘70 del secolo scorso, con studiosi e qualificatissimi restauratori, come Paul Philippot e*

improperly distinguished from the more general theory and practice of conservation, that the results are seen of the fertile dialogue, dating back even to the 1960s and '70s, with scholars and highly qualified restorers, like Paul Philippot and Raymond Lemaire on the one hand, and Laura and Paolo Mora on the other, through ICCROM, which fostered the opening of a “privileged channel for the penetration of advanced theories in the field of restoration”. This channel yielded positive results, for example in the interventions on frescoes of various eras, in churches, and in the monasteries of northern Moldavia, but also in Bucharest itself (biserica Coltea and biserica Doamnei), where the ways of Brandi can be seen applied intelligently and with conviction, from the striped fabric to the veillings, to respect for the old plaster, patched and not demolished and redone, and the aforementioned guiding criteria of the restoration. But this is just one side of the coin; on the other, different and less appreciable cases are presented and discussed in the same way, ranging from ex novo reconstructions like the one done, since 2002, on the ancient foundations of the seventeenth-century church of the Virgin Mary in the presidential palace of Cotroceni in Bucharest, to others founded upon a relationship of conflict between old and new. In these cases, the pre-existing element is subjected to the logic of the modern intervention, with adherence to an “intentionally deviating and dissonant language.” The intervention becomes a “pretext” for a free overlapping onto the old, and to its detriment, in the anti-historical conviction of being able to continue the “evolutionary process of the architectural work,” its “synchronous editing”, while refusing, at the base, all the developments and acquisitions of thought in the matter, at least from the eighteenth century to date, and opening the way to drifts of tourism and consumerism. In this series, there is no lack of examples of out-of-scale

*Raymond Lemaire, da una parte, Laura e Paolo Mora dall'altra, tramite l'ICCROM, che favorì l'apertura di un “canale privilegiato di penetrazione delle più avanzate teorie nel campo del restauro”. Canale che ha prodotto positivi risultati, ad esempio negli interventi sugli affreschi, di varia epoca, nelle chiese e nei monasteri della Moldavia settentrionale ma anche nella stessa Bucarest (biserica Coltea e biserica Doamnei) dove si possono vedere applicati con sapienza e convinzione modi brandiani, dal rigatino alle velature, al rispetto dei vecchi intonaci, rappezzati e non demoliti e rifatti, ed i menzionati criteri-guida del restauro. Ma questo è solo un lato della medaglia; sull'altro sono presentati ed ugualmente discussi casi diversi e meno apprezzabili, che vanno dalle ricostruzioni ex novo, come quella condotta, dal 2002, sulle antiche fondazioni della chiesa seicentesca della Vergine Maria nel Palazzo presidenziale di Cotroceni a Bucarest ad altri fondati su un conflittuale rapporto fra antico e nuovo. In questi casi la preesistenza viene sottoposta alla logica del moderno intervento, con l'adesione ad un “linguaggio volutamente difforme e dissonante”. L'intervento diviene un “pretesto” per una libera sovrapposizione sull'antico ed a suo danno, nell'antistorica convinzione di poter continuare il “processo evolutivo dell'opera architettonica”, la sua “redazione sincronica”, rifiutando alla base tutti gli sviluppi e le acquisizioni di pensiero, almeno dal Settecento ad oggi, in materia ed aprendo la strada a derive turistico-consumistiche. Non mancano, in questa serie, esempi d'interventi fuori scala, violenti e in assoluto contrasto, miranti, se possibile, alla sostituzione invece che al restauro. Sono tutte tendenze presenti anche in Italia ma tenute a freno da una legislazione più attenta di quella odierna romena. Ma forse i danni maggiori e più estesivi sono quelli provocati dagli equivoci della ‘riqualificazione urbana’, cui prima s'è fatto cenno richiamando gli esiti infausti del*

interventions, violent and absolutely clashing, aiming, where possible, at replacement rather than restoration. These are all trends present in Italy, too, but reined in by a legislation more attentive than Romania's current laws. But perhaps the greatest and most extensive damage is that caused by the misunderstandings of “urban requalification,” mentioned earlier with reference to the unfortunate results of the 1977 earthquake – and, in fact, of the post-earthquake as risks taking place in Italy today. However, a note of appreciation and hope derives from the uncommon “technical/artisanal skills” and from the “ability to lead work site phases” typical of Romanian architects, giving rise to many interesting, quality solutions – details that have been well studied and executed. In his conclusions, D'Avino appeals to the essential will of the Romanian nation to join (after the decade of uncertainty in the late twentieth century) European developments, opening to dialogue but without neglecting – even while respecting the “current critical tools” – a cultivation of its specific features. He then observes how the legislation in this matter is still inadequate and that there is no “solid structure of national protection”; all this is in a context that, fortunately, still sees reduced tourism exploitation, which today generally constitutes one of the gravest threats to the integrity of a heritage extolled with words and abused in deeds. Lastly and in another way, the large bibliography at the end shows what has been possible to observe thus far, which is to say the decided opening to the most up-to-date developments of the theory and methodology of restoration starting from the most recent years – one might say from the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. On the whole, Romania's proud attitude in this field is yielding good results, albeit while following a line of autonomy/integration

*terremoto del 1977, anzi, del post-terremoto come peraltro, pur se in diversa misura, rischia di accadere oggi in Italia. Una nota di apprezzamento e di speranza deriva, tuttavia, dalle non comuni “competenze tecnico/artigianali” e dalla “capacità di condurre le fasi di cantiere” proprie degli architetti rumeni, da cui discendono soluzioni molto interessanti e di qualità, dettagli ben studiati ed eseguiti. Nelle sue conclusioni D'Avino richiama la sostanziale volontà della Nazione romena di affiancarsi (dopo il decennio d'incertezze di fine Novecento) agli sviluppi europei, aprendosi al dialogo ma senza rinunciare, pur nel rispetto degli “strumenti critici attuali”, a coltivare le proprie specificità. Osserva poi come la legislazione in materia sia ancora inadeguata e come manchi “una solida struttura di tutela nazionale”; tutto ciò in un contesto che, fortunatamente, vede ancora un ridotto sfruttamento turistico, il quale oggi costituisce, in genere, una delle più gravi minacce all'integrità del patrimonio, osannato a parole e maltrattato nei fatti. L'ampia bibliografia finale lascia emergere, in ultimo e per altra via, quanto s'è potuto fin qui osservare, vale a dire la decisa apertura ai più aggiornati sviluppi della teoria e metodologia del restauro a partire dagli anni più recenti, si potrebbe dire dall'inizio del secondo decennio del XXI secolo. Nel complesso l'atteggiamento orgoglioso della Romania in questo campo sta producendo buoni risultati, pur seguendo una linea di autonomia/integrazione che ricorda, per certi versi, quella dell'Inghilterra, anche per il suo carattere di forte ma sano empirismo. Tanti sono i danni che l'ideologia, il mercato e una lamentata mancanza di preparazione specifica, come afferma Șerban Sturdza nella sua intervista, hanno provocato e ancora provocano, ma questi sono contenuti da una certa povertà di mezzi che, in alcuni casi, è la migliore alleata della conservazione.*

that, in certain ways, brings to mind that in England, also for its characteristic of strong yet healthy empiricism. There is so much damage that ideology, the market, and a lamented lack of specific preparation – as Șerban Sturdza states in his interview – have caused and are still causing, but this damage is contained by a certain poverty of means that, in certain cases, is the best ally of conservation. There is, then, a positive “didactic” vocation, linked to that pride for the very heritage that was mentioned, shown for example by the restoration of the Reformed church of Ciumești. In the intent to make up for the delays that have accumulated for various unfortunate reasons, Romania’s entire story in this matter appears to fast-forward through the story of other countries: Great Britain above all, but Italy and Germany, too. Stefano D’Avino’s work takes scrupulous account of all this, without neglecting to assess – even with difficulty at times, but always with lively interest and personal, friendly participation – the events taking place in this noble nation and its monuments. He uses a lively prose rich in particularly effective expressions, some of which we have intentionally reported: never flat or merely descriptive. And in this way, he reviews – without ever burdening the reading with inessential, erudite disquisitions, and in an orderly fashion – all the disciplinary problems in question. It seems to me that the same might be said of the entire volume and of the contributions by several Romanian authors who discuss particular themes, starting from the first ones, like the one by Kazmer Kovács focusing on a reflection on the concept of “authenticity” – a concept for decades, at least since the years of the Nara conference of 1994, not sufficiently clarified with regard to the architecture sector; or, following him, Mihaela Criticos, on the risks of “requalification” in place of a true “urban restoration,” and on the risks exerted by the “pressure of real estate interests,” the excesses of local powers unable to, if not disinterested in,

*Esiste poi una positiva vocazione ‘didattica’, legata a quell’orgoglio per i propri beni di cui s’è detto, testimoniata per esempio dal restauro della chiesa riformata di Ciumești. L’intera vicenda romena in materia sembra ripercorrere velocemente, come in moviola, nell’intento di recuperare i ritardi accumulatisi per varie infelici ragioni, quella di altri paesi, l’Inghilterra soprattutto ma anche l’Italia e la Germania.*

*Di tutto ciò il lavoro di Stefano D’Avino dà scrupolosamente conto, senza esimersi dal valutare, anche duramente alcune volte ma sempre con vivo interesse e personale, amichevole partecipazione, la vicenda in atto di questa nobile Nazione e dei suoi monumenti. Egli usa una prosa vivace e ricca di espressioni di particolare efficacia, alcune delle quali abbiamo volutamente riportato, mai piatta né meramente descrittiva ed in tal modo passa in rassegna, senza mai appesantire la lettura con inessenziali disquisizioni erudite, ordinatamente tutti i problemi disciplinari in esame. Mi sembra che lo stesso si possa dire dell’intero volume e dei contributi dei diversi autori romeni che si soffermano su temi particolari, a partire dai primi, come quello di Kazmer Kovács incentrato su una riflessione sul concetto di ‘autenticità’, da decenni, almeno dagli anni del convegno di Nara nel 1994, non sufficientemente chiarito per quanto riguarda il settore dell’architettura; o, a seguire, di Mihaela Criticos sui rischi della ‘riqualificazione’ in luogo di un vero ‘restauro urbano’ e su quelli esercitati dalla “pressure of real estate interests”, sull’eccesso di poteri locali, incapaci se non disinteressati ad affrontare seriamente i problemi di tutela, sulle varie categorie d’intervento riconoscibili nella pratica operativa del suo Paese, lette con sereno distacco critico e senza pregiudizi; poi ancora di Catalina-Gabriela Bulborea sulle prospettive e la percezione del grande patrimonio culturale romeno. Oppure, in chiusura, sui temi del restauro del moderno, sul consolidamento strutturale e sul difficile equilibrio*

seriously facing the problems of protection, and the various categories of intervention that may be recognized in her country’s operative practice, read with serene critical detachment, and without prejudices; and then there is Catalina-Gabriela Bulborea on the prospects and the perception of Romania’s great cultural heritage. And, to close, there are the themes of restoration of the modern, structural consolidation, the difficult balance between conservation and safety, the history of restoration in Romania and, with Cristina Serendan, a reflection on artworks treated in accordance with the principle of minimum intervention and maximum prior knowledge. To conclude, I am glad to echo the sentiments implicitly expressed by Stefano D’Avino, of being close to this noble nation that, after so much suffering, is seeking to mark out – with intelligence, commitment, and awareness of its place in Europe – its own path in the field of conservation of the cultural heritage.

Giovanni Carbonara

*fa conservazione e sicurezza, sulla storia del restauro in Romania e, con Cristina Serendan, su una riflessione circa le opere d’arte, trattate secondo il principio del minimo intervento e del massimo di conoscenza preventiva.*

*Concludendo, mi associo volentieri ai sentimenti implicitamente espressi da Stefano D’Avino di vicinanza a questa nobile Nazione che, dopo tante sofferenze, sta cercando di delineare con intelligenza e impegno, consapevole della propria collocazione europea, la sua strada nel campo della conservazione del patrimonio culturale.*

Giovanni Carbonara



1. The Văcărești monastery before its demolition in December 1984 (private archive).

### Introduction

The most recent experiences in Romania in the area of restoration (and, more generally, conservation), and the related theoretical research, help determine a highly dynamic picture that highlights contributions that are multiple in number, but not always actually consistent. This study proposes an overview that does not aspire to being comprehensive, but rather intends to provide a tool to facilitate understanding of a complex, articulated process that is to this day only marginally touched upon by specific studies. At any rate, given Romania's lack of an organic framework, of an expressive language that has consolidated into widespread practice, no comprehensive summary outline of restoration practice in our country can be drawn, except partially (and at any rate, making reference to cases insufficiently significant in number).

The past twenty years have witnessed growing critical agitation with regard to restoration, fed by the reflections of a new generation of experts educated in the European context; it comes as no surprise that between 2012 and 2018, no fewer than three issues of the prestigious periodical *Architectura 1906* have included articles by excellent specialists who have made a significant contribution towards repositioning Romania within the European setting in the discipline.

The reasons for this late path are briefly explained by Sergiu Nistor: "In the field of built heritage protection, Romania has been in a prolonged management crisis from three different points of view: this can be proven by a shortage of funding that tends to become chronic, by a lack of specialised personnel and by the lack of medium-term strategies (and long-term if it were possible). A specific phenomenon – the legislative instability, unfortunately completed by the institutional one and by the fragility of the body of civil servants assigned by the authorities to built heritage

protection – is added to these weaknesses or incoherences" (Nistor 2012, 246).

At any rate, there is awareness in Romania of the difficulties (and also of the absolute need) to implement all the measures necessary to protect and capitalize on historic and artistic heritage. "Heritage is subject to different threats. (...) Romania adopted all the important international conventions on heritage conservation. But even after becoming a member of the European Union, this takeover seems to be purely formal" (Pop 2010, 38). On the one hand the heritage has survived of a restoration "of recovery" (in some cases driven towards free formal re-proposition), too often sustained by a popular sentiment rather prone to continuity. However, on the other hand, observation of many of the interventions done over the past decade clearly shows the sense of a research capable of expressing itself with contemporary critical tools – and that likewise, various attempts are being seen to search for a virtuous interaction/co-presence between conserving the material testimony of the past and frank experimentation of a contemporary architectural language (in line with certain advanced Iberian experiences rather than with more meditated interventions in Italy).

Although the condition of restoration in Romania currently presents a multitude of themes and of operative events, it cannot be disregarded how, for a long time, the expression of an autonomous school of native-born thought has been impeded, with a preference rather for conforming to the practices adopted in other European countries of greater tradition, particularly France. Until the inter-War period, restoration in Romania was in fact guided into the current of the so-called "stylistic" restoration, due also to the inheritance received at the turn of the twentieth century from André Lecompte du Nouÿ, student of Viollet le Duc, who long operated in Romania (and who was responsible for the

restoration of many of the country's religious buildings).

### Restoration in the Nicolae Ceaușescu era

The long history of the Ceaușescu dictatorship (1967-1989) – which was attentive to any possible use of architecture as a propaganda tool rather than to conserving the country's historic and artistic heritage – certainly conditioned the approach towards this heritage, and in fact impeded dialogue with the experiences underway at the same time in Europe. This determined a temporary cultural breakage from other countries, thus placing the discipline in a marginal position, without the support of the necessary theoretical reflection subjugated to the need to celebrate national glories – and thereby in fact excluding almost an entire generation from the debate. Therefore, many of the restoration interventions carried out until the 1990s bore a clear stylistic direction, the heritage of the teaching imparted in the academies in the first decades of the twentieth century. Moreover, "the use of the reinforced concrete in restoration after WWII, as the consolidations required, as well as its maneuverability, especially by the largely available socialist less skilled personnel, led in the 1960's to an extensive use of this material in restoration. Casting the ancient historic vaults and domes very easy with reinforced concrete made reconstructions feasible, appealing and cheap. As the socialist regime was interested in displaying for the masses certain historic monuments in a didactic and ideologically interpreted way, which meant having the buildings in their entirety, reconstructions were encouraged" (Nistor 2012, 226).

The suppression in 1977 of *Directia Monumentelor Istorice* (reinstated only in 1989) in fact nullified the values that this Institution was tasked with protecting and, also due to the supervening economic crisis and the poor professional training

of restorers (who lacked a proper training school), produced the effect of a substantial suspension, during that historical phase, of all restoration or maintenance activity, and conversely ushered in a season of "systematic destructions of historic sites and monuments" (Mohanu 2006, 416); emblematic of this was the demolition of the Văcărești monastery (fig. 1) between 11 and 15 December 1984.

Nor, for the purpose of showing a different reality aimed at activating dialogue with foreign experts, did the different initiatives promoted by the regime have any value, as in the case of the tour of Romania organized by *Directia Monumentelor Istorice* in Bucharest. Held from 20 September through 04 October 1971, the tour attracted archaeologists and architects from several countries to discuss onsite the problems and methods related to restoration, to conserving urban historic centres, and to consolidating ruins and setting them up as museums, as Luc Devliegher testifies (Devliegher, 1973).

### Between the 20th and 21st centuries

Even after 1989, there was a clear prevalence of an approach to the work that was eminently (if not exclusively) aesthetic, a clear reference to a restoration practice patterned in the nineteenth century, favoured over a historical/critical-type analysis and interpretation. Consequently, the theme of the intervention on historic pre-existing elements is fully summarized with a compositional practice whose horizons lie in the successful aesthetics of the work, thereby sidestepping the issue of confrontation between historical heritage and contemporary architecture.

In that historic phase, a practice takes shape that is highly characterized by a prolonged French-patterned stylistic experience – an "adaptation" that conditioned the development

of a theorization process which, conversely, during the same period albeit with different outcomes, involved most European countries.

More recently, and at times with interesting operative results, these historicist positions of, we might say, an “academic” stamp, were countered by hypotheses of a more modern orientation, tending to experiment with the dialogue between ancient structures and modern insertions. In particular, starting from the last five years of the twentieth century, also on the strength of cultural exchanges resulting from a renewed confrontation with the international context, restoration in Romania took on traits that bring it considerably closer to what is called “critical” restoration (and to the recommendations contained in the Venice Charter) – indications that were actually adopted, especially in the context of restoring frescoes.

We are witnessing an attempt that, although it appears at times poorly coordinated, is aimed at overcoming theoretical directions considered non-current, in search of an operative line structured on a method rigorous but at the same time open to experimentation that has in fact resulted in a sort of “empiricism” – a practice that only marginally finds interest in a solid role under public law.

This is a phenomenon in some ways analogous to what led, in the 1990s, to formal experimentation efforts unthinkable until that time, supported by the novel (and all too free) use of steel, glass, and reinforced concrete, with the consequence of reducing the intervention on the pre-existing element to an occasion for formal exercise, as in the renovated headquarters of the National Council of Architects in Bucharest (fig. 2); indeed, the same concern for the distinctiveness of the intervention had already emerged twenty years earlier (Criticos 2012, 192).

In these instances, rather than the outlining of a firm theoretical



arrangement, different articulations emerge, at times quite interesting, but in most cases expressions of a direction in design, a free proposal of imagination, deemed pre-eminent over the restriction imposed by the need for conservation. At the same time, however, there is no dearth of examples of interventions that, while unconstrained by rigid dogmatism, are attentive to the historical/documentary values borne and conducted with absolute respect for original matter, with the chief objective of favouring the interpretation and reading of the work – while also emphasizing its stratigraphic reading.

As Sergiu Nistor observes, “the historic buildings conservation in Romania 50 years after adopting the Venice Charter is facing significant pressure caused by globalisation and by the action of the economic environment. Globalisation has replaced the ideologisation of culture that occurred before 1989. In the context of these challenges, one of the solutions consists in educating, training and further training specialists” (Nistor, 2015).

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the country saw an unresolved conflict between the traditional practice of conservation and reconstruction, founded upon historical research, and the not always controlled impetus towards renewal, towards (“prudently” retrospective) historical selection, or towards the desire to join together the antique and the new originating from the rest of Europe – a framework that appears highly conditioned by an objective dearth of the economic means that, in most cases, make it possible at the work site to meet the theoretical indications referred to in the design.

We are consequently witnessing illicit replacements of volumes, the systematic alteration of surfaces, the renovation of colouring, the replacement of ancient materials with others that are industrially produced and lower in quality. These interventions place, before the direct reading of the work (corroborated by

historical analysis), merely aesthetic considerations, aimed at conserving, through purely mimetic interventions, the overall unity, thereby determining an irreversible alteration of the original.

The season that opened with the new millennium has seen the birth of a broad dialogue with the stresses originating from other countries; significant in this sense is the contribution by the Romanian Șerban Cantacuzino to the drafting in 2000 of the *Charter of Krakow* on the “Principles for conservation and restoration of built heritage” (Relating to penetration in Romania, during the twenty years thereafter, of the concept of historical monument, and on the interventions undertaken in the country in favour of safeguards of the built environment in order to prolong the monument’s “physical” existence, cf. K. Kovacs, *After the restoration. Hypothetical evolutions of the concept of historical monuments*, ‘ARHITECTURA’, 6/2017-1/2018 (672-673), pp. 50-55).

This theoretical reflection, while upholding the demands induced by the inevitable strengthening the technological apparatus of service to restoration and by the supervening need for a more widespread use of the historic heritage (in that way giving substance to the eminently cultural and identity-based considerations of the attention to the work’s material continuity), has all the same underscored the prejudice towards the result of tradition as a limitation, versus an unacceptable cultural globalization. Without a doubt contributing to a conservative conscience in the country was the assumption, as a priority value, of the bond generated between heritage and memory: “The value and importance of historic buildings and protected areas in the urban space are the preservers of collective memory. The conservation of substance is the desirable approach regarding the preservation of heritage buildings, as it guarantees longterm

On the current page:  
3. Biertan, fortified church (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

4. Biertan, fortified church, the interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

On the next page:  
5. Bucharest, Sfântul Nicolae church (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2013).

6. Bucharest, Sfântul Nicolae church, the interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2013).



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durability and authenticity. The conservation of form improves the symptoms of 'ill' historic buildings, without eliminating the causes of degradation. A possible solution would be, on the one hand, a complex approach, of substance, to conservation projects and the prioritisation of interventions, aiming not only at solving problems of an aesthetic nature, but firstly the issues that affect the health and safety of the users and the structural stability" (Tămășan 2019, 23).

#### Restoration in Romania. The current situation

The picture that has been outlined has cast light on a multitude of approaches to conservation that, along with the albeit widespread tendency towards recovery and restoration by analogy, indicates a will at the same time to overcome the traditional, late nineteenth-century theoretical arrangement, so as to take on a practice descending from a careful, prior historical/critical reading that favours the conservation of the work's testimonial values. The current landscape of restoration in Romania is one, then, that has modes of conjugation that are quite different from one another, and that ranges from the exercise of a reckless contemporary form-shaping to a strictly conservative restoration. And it is this direction that emphasizes the exaltation of the monument's historical/testimonial value – sometimes with minimum functional-type integrations, connected to the conservation of the materials or of the structures.

In the absence of critical judgment aimed at assessing the works of the past, every sign of the time is attributed the same importance; where strictly necessary, there is only "added" intervention, with a declaredly contemporary language with no "linkage" to the pre-existing element.

Of the most significant interventions of "conservative" restoration, which is to say without contemporary grafts other



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than those elements functional to the structural conservation of the architectural construction, mention may be made of those in the fortified church in Biertan in the Region of Transylvania (fig.

3, 4), and in Sfântul Nicolae, the Russian Church of Bucharest (fig. 5, 6), which has recently undergone a long and careful maintenance work.

#### BIERTAN. FORTIFIED CHURCH

Rising in the centre of Biertan is one of Transylvania's most imposing fortresses. In the sixteenth century, when the city became one of the leading centres of the Episcopate of Saxony, it became clear that it was necessary to enlarge the fourteenth-century church and to surround it with an imposing defensive system, built by erecting three masonry walls endowed with six defence towers and three bastions; access was gained via a stairway wholly covered with wood. A typical example of late Gothic Saxon sacred architecture, the church was built between 1495 and 1516; the doorway opposite the stairway presents Renaissance elements, and is carved with floral motifs.

The three-nave interior conserves an imposing central altar, decorated with 38 paintings with scenes from the life of the Madonna, and a Gothic wooden pulpit carved by Ulrich of Braşov; the walls were frescoed in the early sixteenth century.

7. Drobeta - Turnu Severin, Turnul de apă (photo credit: Asociația pro-Mehedinți site).



8. Grușetu-Costești, Adormirea Maicii Domnului church (photo credit: BNA archive).



9. Bucharest, Filipescu-Cesianu house (photo credit: Primăria Capitalei Arhiva).

### BUCAREST, RUSSIAN CHURCH (SF. NICOLAE)

The Church of St. Nicholas, designed by the architect V. A. Preobrazhensky, was built between 1905-1909 (but some sources date the work site back to 1903), thanks to funds made available for this purpose to Bucharest's Russian community by Tsar Nicholas II. It was subject to the authority of the Church of the Patriarchate of Moscow until 1957; it later became a Romanian Orthodox parish church.

It is presumably among the latest specimens of church construction built in accordance with the dictates of the Russian Revival art movement, a trend that was manifested, especially in the field of architecture, between the second half of the nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth, and was expressed through a Romantic reference to the art of the origins. "Russian Revival" art includes the simultaneous presence of elements of Byzantine style (highly rooted in the Russian religious tradition) and echoes of styles present in European architecture of that time, such as neoclassicism, Roman Revival, and Art Nouveau; in particular, in Romania, the movement sustained the birth of the Romanian Revival style, characteristic, in the city of Bucharest, of many early-century architectures. The outer walls in fair-faced brick are decorated with polychrome ceramic friezes with motifs inspired by Russian folklore (with clear Art Nouveau influences) and mosaic frames around the windows.

Due to the particular design of the plot where the church stands, while the altar, in accordance with tradition, faces east, the entrance is uncharacteristically placed at the corner.

The layout is an inscribed Greek cross, with the insertion of chapels; the hall is covered by a dome, topped by a tower set on four arches. Four smaller towers, covered by the same number of onion domes, mark the corners of the nave.

The interior decoration was done by the Russian painter Vasiliev, and, in the figurative sequences, corresponds with the traditional Orthodox figurative canon. The carved and gilt iconostasis is the work of one of the most important representatives of the Russian Revival Movement, Viktor Mikhailovich Vaznețov (1848-1926).

Other quite interesting examples of this direction are the "Water Tower" of Drobeta and the small wooden church in Grusetu. The "Turnul de apă" (fig. 7) is doubtlessly the building most emblematic of the city of Drobeta – Turnu Severin. Twenty-seven metres tall, the tower was part of the city's water supply network, built in Medieval style between 1910 and 1913 by the engineers Elie Radu and Anghel Saligny; it served in that role until 1980, when the reinforced concrete tanks were emptied and the offices and laboratories of the city's public water distribution company were placed inside the tower.

In December 2010, the municipality of Drobeta Turnu Severin initiated a major programme to restore the Tower, aimed at developing a series of vertically arranged spaces designed to

accommodate a tourism information point, an exhibition gallery, a museum dedicated to the Tower's history, and a literary café. Biserica "Adormirea Maicii Domnului" (*Assumption of the Virgin Mary Basilica*) in Grusetu is a wooden church built in 1799-1801 by Anthony Bistrita in the village of Grușetu-Costești, near Pietreni (fig. 8). The stone campanile, on the other hand was built – as may be seen reading the inscription on the north wall – only several decades later, in 1840. In 1937, the church was closed for worship, which contributed significantly to its decay. The monument is included in a programme to safeguard the wooden churches present in Romania, financed by Ministerul Culturii și Patrimoniului Național prin Institutul Național de Patrimoniu (Ministry of Culture and of National Heritage). The first

consolidation works done on the building involved the campanile, and were performed between 2006 and 2008: the work consisted of strengthening the foundation structures and refurbishing the exterior plaster with lime mortar; major works to consolidate the foundation also became necessary, in addition to works to restore the deteriorated vertical connections. The church's restoration, carried out by the architects Aurel Botez and Iulian Cămui, was completed in October 2012.

However, the most significant examples of conservation practice in use in Romania are those involving two of the most interesting residences of the late-nineteenth-century upper bourgeoisie in Bucharest: Casa Filipescu-Cesianu and Casa Mincu.

Casa Filipescu-Cesianu (fig. 9) takes its name from the attorney Constantin Cesianu, who in 1889 had purchased from Ianku Philipescu two adjacent stately dwellings along Calea Victoriei, in an urban area marked by the presence of numerous stately summer residences; three years later, the new owner tasked the architect Leonida Negrescu with reconfiguring the two units by joining them into a single aristocratic residence, albeit without substantially modifying its original layout, as well as with setting up a private garden there: the result was one of the most interesting examples of architecture at the turn of the twentieth century in Bucharest.

The spatial configuration of the two original residences is not known; nor is their surface finishing. The albeit scant documentation of Negrescu's restoration, however, bears witness to a complete revamping of the roof, "updated" in accordance with the canons of the neoclassical repertoire very much in vogue at the time, and with unspecified "decorative interventions" on the exterior surfaces.

The ownership situation changed in 1939 when the building became owned by the Municipality of Bucharest (more precisely,

it was more of a land exchange than a sale) which, the following year, made it the home of the Civic Museum. However, the building's decrepit conditions led the new ownership to use it for offices and storage – a condition that remained unchanged until 2015.

Over the course of time, the building has on the whole undergone a series of interventions, at times inconsistent, due to the poor maintenance it received, as well as the bombings during the Second World War and the seismic events of 1977.

In consideration of this, the design, drawn up by the studio SC CREDO Design srl (arch. eng. Aurora Târșoagă), took on structural consolidation as a priority need; this was done by cladding the foundation beams and inserting reinforced concrete pillars into the original brick walls and the consolidation of the wooden floor (fig. 10).

On the façade, the best-conserved decorative elements were consolidated, while the others, after removing the prior interventions with cement mortar, were replaced with copies made by moulding them on the original forms, with a casting of lime mortar and stone dust; resistance is ensured by a metal profile inserted into the frame (restorer: Dragoș Căpițănescu). The intervention of recovering the original elements was then extended to the doors and windows and to the gates and railings in wrought iron, reproducing the existing elements.

The interventions carried out on the interior underwent lesser conditioning given the almost total loss of the original elements: the ceilings, like the floors, were done, rather, with the objective of meeting the rigid requirements of the planned museum function.

As to the roof, which has been totally lost, economic reasons led the designers to discard the possibility of using slate, as in the original, in favour of galvanized sheet, shaped to highlight the

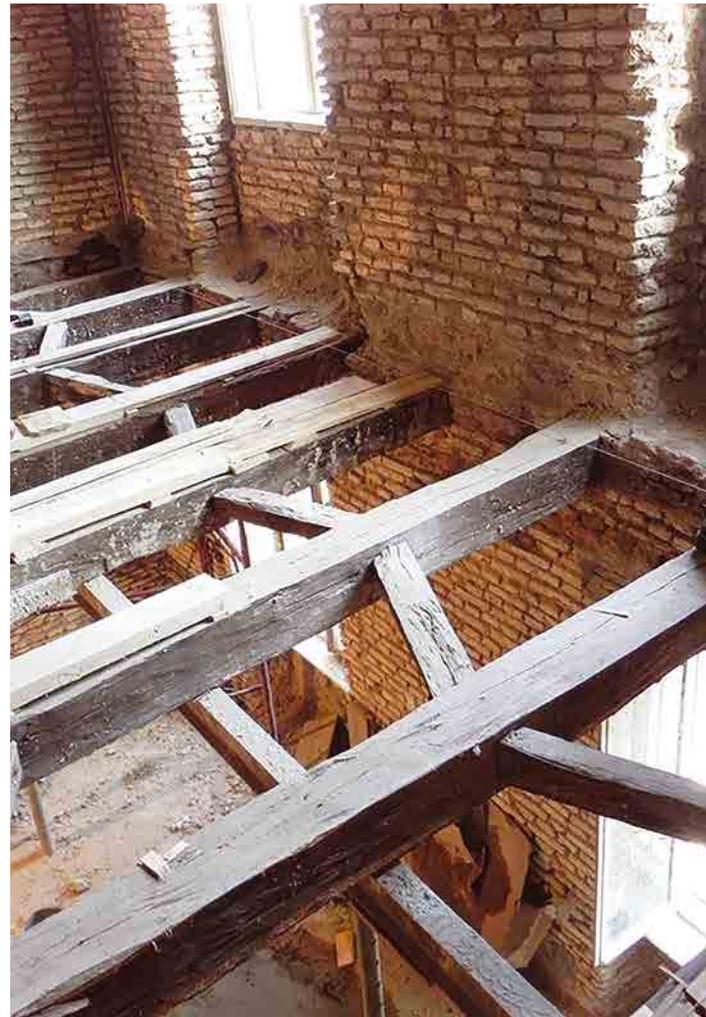
Down: 10. Bucharest, Filipescu-Cesianu house, consolidation of the wooden floor (photo credit: 'Arhitectura', 3, 2015).

Top left: 11. Bucharest, Ion Mincu house (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2018).

Top right: 12. Bucharest, Ion Mincu house, the interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2018).



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rchitectural division of the façades.

The restoration carried by Șerban Sturdza on Casa Mincu (fig. 11), a prized example of nineteenth-century residential architecture, is without a doubt one of the most interesting interventions in recent years.

Located in the central area of Bucharest, for more than twenty years the building was the dwelling of famed architect Ion Mincu (1852-1912), who had purchased it in the late nineteenth century from Antonio Gaetano Burelli (1820-1896), a Romanian architect of Italian origin, the presumed drafter of the original design, and the first owner.

The methodological and conceptual novelties introduced by Sturdza are considerable: "This is not the usual restoration that now takes place in Romania – just change everything and then call it 'a restoration'. You should do things wherever they should be done, and not the other way round. We progress slowly". (Grosu 2012, 72).

It is a design, then, that privileged the direct, constant, and critical reading of the work for the entire duration of the work site, following an ontological path that, programmatically, placed the prioritized safeguarding of the architectural palimpsest above formal, overall completion. The interventions gradually involved the ceilings, freed of the coating of white paint applied by the previous renter, thus uncovering the original decoration (fig. 12). The structural recovery works were also done in line with the underlying methodological approach. "We assumed the idea that, if during the following interventions some cracks appeared, we would resume the work locally, because it was strategically vital to do so". (Grosu 2012, 71).

In reality, the restorers found no serious problems in the building's statics; rather, the decision was made to conserve the masonry stratification, not covering the traces of bush-hammering done on



13. Densus, Sfântul Nicolae church (photo credit: CrestinOrtodox.ro site).

14. Cisnădioara, Sfântul Mihail church (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

15. Cârța, fortified monastery, aerial view (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

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the original plaster on the occasion of the late-nineteenth-century intervention, in order to preserve the signs of the previous phase: "recalling a different manner of perceiving and the house interior, typical of Bucharest, and which Mincu cancelled brutally in order to impose a newer, somber, and more precise appearance, with colours that could be found elsewhere in the house."

Lastly, particular attention was reserved for plant, avoiding the introduction of modern radiators, but instead carefully recovering the existing fireplaces and increasing the system's efficiency by installing convectors with ventilators, positioned discretely above the doors' lintels.

The desire to bear (and, to a certain degree, the pride of bearing) witness to the rural past, which has never left Romanian culture, is also effectively expressed in the interventions to conserve material documents of social and economic history, carried out in the numerous museums of history and peasant tradition disseminated in the country, often by adapting repurposed structures; in this sense, there is broad play in the sought-after continuity, in the uninterrupted transfer from one generation to the next of technical skills and knowledge of pre-modern materials that constitutes a feature particular to Romania. This characteristic makes it possible to guarantee a certain continuity in the maintenance of historic architecture, and particularly the Church architecture quite widespread in the rural areas.

This rooting of a characterized operative practice in formal canons linked to the modes of local tradition, in terms of construction techniques and for the materials adopted, is clearly manifested in the interventions conforming to an evidently restorative direction carried out in certain regions of the country (Cluj, Potlogi) where the influence of contemporary trends appears to have intervened to a lesser degree than elsewhere.



### “Integral conservation”

Most likely to be traced to that deeply rooted attention is the occurrence, mainly in the country’s northern area, of numerous examples in which conservation appears articulated in

accordance with more integral modes, as in the cases of the church of Sfântul Nicolae in Densus (fig. 13), Sfântul Mihail in Cisnădioara (fig. 14), or the fortified monastery of Cârța (figg. 15, 16).

### DENSUS, SF. NICOLAE

The foundation date of the Sf. Nicolae church located in the vicinity of Densus in the county of Hunedoara, is uncertain: certain scholars believe it may be an Early Christian church erected in the fourth-fifth century upon the remains of a second-century monument; others go so far as to move the foundation date back about four centuries, when a pagan temple dedicated to Mars, later transformed into a Christian church, is said to have been erected.

Supporting this latter thesis is the placement of the altar, facing south and not to the east as commonly adopted in Christian “foundation” churches.

What is certain is that the building was constructed with great reliance on stone elements drawn from the nearby site of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, the ancient capital of the Roman province of Dacia, since Roman inscriptions, capitals, and funerary slabs originating from that site have clearly been inserted into the masonry.

The layout is characterized by a square nave concluded by a deep, semicircular apse; inside, four pillars, obtained by superimposing elements of ancient votive altars, support a tall bell tower. On the southern side of the altar, a semicylindrical diaconicon was subsequently added; the western pronaos and the southern corridor of the nave, both datable to the fourteenth-fifteenth century and now in ruins, were built at a later time. The roof of the whole building consists of superimposed stone slabs.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the church fell into an advanced state of disrepair, to the point that its demolition was planned; it was saved by the Austro-Hungarian authorities governing the Region at that time, who declared it a historic monument in 1870.

On the previous page:  
16. Cârța, fortified monastery, the apse of the church (photo credit: Stefano D’Avino, 2014).

### CISNADIOARA, SF. MIHAIL

The fortified church of St. Michael is located in the vicinity of the town of Cisnădioara, not far from Sibiu, in the ancient Praepositura Cibiniensis, the religious centre for all Saxons in Transylvania (“Ecclesia Theutonicorum Ultrasilvanorum”), as confirmed by a Bull issued by Pope Celestine II in 1191. Its construction was begun around 1180 (although the initial written sources date to 1223) and the works, carried out by the community of German origin that had settled in Transylvania in the twelfth century, continued for about twenty years.

The church is characterized by a semi-square, three-nave layout with a deep semicircular apse termination, covered by a groin vault with a slightly lowered profile; the side naves, set apart from the central one by two arches per side resting on solid, stone pillars, also present a similar solution. The door on the southern side of the choir conserves traces of the original wall painting.

The only significant restoration interventions (prior to the arrangement works conducted in the early 2000s) that there is evidence of date to 1778, when, after a long period of abandonment, the roof was renovated.

### CÂRȚA, MONASTERY

A few tens of kilometres from Sibiu are the ruins of the Cistercian monastery of Cârța, one of the most ancient and significant monuments in Gothic style in Transylvania.

Founded between 1205 and 1206 and built by King Andrew II of Hungary, the monastic complex played an important role in the political, economic, and cultural life of Medieval Transylvania. The first environments were quite likely built in wood, as was customary among the Cistercians; only at a later time was a stone oratory erected. Small in size and with massive walls, its foundations were unearthed during archaeological research in the spring of 1927.

The monastic complex was built in two moments, over a timeframe from 1209 to late 1320, interrupted by the great Mongol invasion in 1241; the main phase was most certainly the second one, marked by the entry into the work site (probably at the initiative of the General Chapter of the Cistercian order) of an architect trained in the late Gothic climate, and the presence of a stonemasons’ yard which contributed significantly to spreading Gothic art in the Carpathian region. This phase saw the dismantling of the ancient stone oratory, upon whose foundations the western wing of the transept and, in part, the chorus with the polygonal apse were set; the construction of the abbey’s southern wing was to continue for about two decades longer. In the early months of 1300, the monastery church had been completed; the construction of the bell tower had to wait until the mid-fifteenth century.

Starting from the second half of the fifteenth century, the Cârța monastery gradually lost importance, until its final suppression ordered in 1474 by King Matthias Corvinus; the reasons for this deterioration may be found in the changed political conditions in the area, and in the Order’s decline during that historical period.

In the current state of affairs, the monastery has lost much of its original structures, and is presented as an enormous ruin. The space already occupied by the church suffered the collapse of all the columns erected during the Romanesque age, with the exception of a surviving one placed to the south; a large portion of masonry on the exterior walls has similarly yielded.

17. Bonțida, Bánffy castle (photo credit: Transylvania Trust site).



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Also of considerable interest is the case of the Bánffy castle in Bonțida (fig. 17). In 1990, the imposing building was declared a historic monument. About a decade later, in 1999, due precisely to its status as a ruin, the castle, at the request of the Transylvania Trust, was included on the World Monuments Watch List. That same year, Romania and Hungary signed a bilateral agreement for the complex's restoration and recovery; the works began the following year when, with Romanian state funds, much of the main building's roof was rebuilt.

Since 2003, the castle has been under the protection of the Transylvania Trust.

Starting that year, numerous works were undertaken: first the main building was consolidated, and the completion of its roofing structures was brought to a conclusion.

During the 2006-2007 period, the works were initiated for the conservation of the stalls, as well as the restoration of the chapel placed inside the main building, which serves today as a cultural centre. During this same phase, two exhibition halls were set up near the castle's entrance doors, and the restoration of the interior environments, including the installation of the necessary plant, continued as well.

Subsequent years witnessed additional interventions to the structures of the roof of the main building, as well as the repair of the western bastion; the exterior restoration of the rear façade was also undertaken, in addition to consolidating the masonry of the buildings overlooking the courtyard.

The philosophy that guided restorations is condensed in the words of Dorottya Makay, co-author of the project: "The leading causes of decay were lack of maintenance, the absence of protective elements, and the use of the building as a quarry for materials. The objectives of the restoration of the Bánffy Castle consist of the recovery and the structural improvement of the entire complex, through the use of traditional materials and techniques, or ones that are modern yet compatible with them. [The restoration will be conducted through] detailed reconstructions (where there are sufficient historical indications), in such a way as to respect even the recent history of the whole; the decision was thus made not to reconstruct the vaulted roofs; (...) where these were reconstructed or completed, particular attention was devoted to defining identifiable and recreative geometries, but also to the precision of guaranteeing the continuity of the masonry" (Csilia Hegedüs, Zsuzsanna Eke, Dorottya Makay, *Restaurarea și revitalizarea Castelului Bánffy din Bonțida, jud. Cluj*, 'Revista Monumentelor Istorice,' 2017, 1, pp. 92-103, 99; translation from Romanian by the author). The works continued until 2018, when the most important intervention in the interior environments was concluded: the setting up of the *lapidarium*; these works were carried out in accordance with the rigid principle of minimum intervention: in particular, the very considerable attempt was made to simulate the completion of the collapsed vaults, through the setting up of a system of lighting devices (fig. 18).

18. Bonțida, Bánffy castle, the reintegration of the vaults (photo credit: Transylvania Trust site).



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## BONȚIDA, BÁNFFY CASTLE

The Bánffy castle is an architectural monument situated in Bonțida, in the vicinity of Cluj. In 1387, the Bonțida holding came into the possession of the Hungarian Bánffy family of Losonc, following a donation made by Sigismund of Luxembourg to Dénes Losonci. In the mid-seventeenth century, the holding was inherited by Dénes Bánffy II (1638-1674), governor of the county of Doboka and Kolozs, the brother-in-law and councillor of Prince Michel I. The latter, between 1668 and 1674, promoted major fortification interventions on the building, surrounding it with a rectangular enclosure strengthened at the corners with enormous circular towers; the castle was accessed via the eastern side of the fortification. The works were to involve a considerable economic effort, and were to persist for quite a long time, even being continued after his death by his successor György Bánffy.

After several decades of substantial abandonment, the holding was inherited in the eighteenth century by Dénes Bánffy IV, who, in 1747, initiated the castle's reconstruction in Baroque style, following the fashions learnt in the Court of Empress Maria Theresa, where he had sojourned until that time. Between 1747 and 1751, the U-shaped Cour d'honneur was built on the eastern side of the Renaissance-era building; the riding school, the stables, the carriage halls, and the servants' quarters were located here.

The rigorous geometry determined by the castle's park overlooking the Szamos river, complete with walkways, statues, and fountains designed by the architect Johann Christian Erras, took part in defining an organic setting with the building's Baroque forms. In the early nineteenth century, the whole was transformed in Romantic mode, following the drawings of Sámuel Hermann and, later, in 1831, János László: the radial lanes and topiaries were replaced by winding paths and copses, which created an overall effect of freely growing trees and plant life. Today, the park, due to lack of maintenance, is in a state of abandonment, and most of its age-old trees were arbitrarily cut down. During the same phase, the castle's western wing was also modified.

In 1944, the castle was transformed into a field hospital. The German troops looted and devastated the castle, destroying the furnishings and library, and vandalizing the precious portrait gallery that had been conserved there. Lastly, during the Communist regime, part of the building was used as a cooperative farm, while the castle was consigned to irreversible decay.

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19. Enisala (Tulcea county), fortress (photo credit: RomaniaJournal.ro site).



20. Enisala fortress, the reintegration of the defensive wall (photo credit: RomaniaJournal.ro site).



21. The remains of the fortified city of Giurgiu (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).



The fortress of Enisala (fig. 19) is situated in a different geographical location, in the county of Tulcea, a southeastern region of the country. Its modes of conservation place it, however, in the same vein of complete preservation, without any intervention of formal reconfiguration; the only exception is the partial consolidation intervention carried out after 1991 by reintegrating of the enclosing masonry work that had been damaged over time with ashlar recovered from the collapse and installed undercut (fig. 20). Absolutely worthy of interest is the recent restoration project, which calls for developing an integrated urban park/fortress system, as also done in Giurgiu, on another structure destined for military control built in the Danube delta (fig. 21).

#### ENISALA, FORTRESS

The Enisala fortress was built between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the area of a previous Geto-Dacian settlement, for the purpose of defence as well as control over river traffic towards the Black Sea (long the monopoly of Genoese merchants, who had operating bases in Hârşova, Chilia, and Likostomion, in the Danube delta).

Both the surrounding wall and the defence towers were built with small, limestone ashlar.

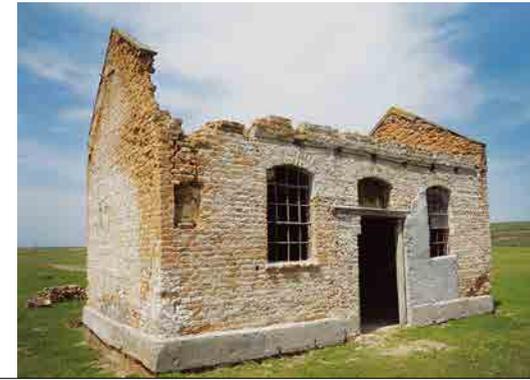
The entrance, set on the southern side, consisted of a very high opening with a double porch in front and a massive, pentagonal bastion for protection.

During the reign of Mircea cel Bătrân (Mircea the Elder, 1355-1418), the citadel was subjected to Wallachian control, and was an integral part of the Region's defence system. In 1417, the fortress was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, thus becoming, like Giurgiu, the site of a Turkish military garrison.

When, in the late fifteenth century, Enisala no longer responded to the Ottoman Empire's strategic and economic interests, the fort was abandoned; this, paradoxically, was what saved it, because due to its precarious state of conservation, it was not deemed necessary to destroy it during the Russo-Turkish Wars, as instead occurred for most of the fortifications of Northern Dobruja.

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22. Cetate, the church before restoration (photo credit: BNA archive).

23. Cetate, the church after restoration, 2013 (photo credit: BNA archive).

24. Mogoşoaia, Antiquarium (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).



#### Reuse of the fragment

The question being posed by (and that we ourselves pose) by Irina Popescu Criveanu ('Arhitectura' 4-5/2018) on the "utility [or not], in the long term, of carrying out a restoration of an item, given the impossibility of extending [beyond a certain term] its life when it is in use," merits attention, since it takes the question to the concept of value – and the act is to be conditioned to the attribution of value; the scholar, however, aims to overcome its "common" definition, explicitly suggesting a third "justification": "Although the item's artistic (or historical) value at times does not confirm its recovery, in fact [this intervention] re-inserts it into a world of sentiment (of living memory); it might therefore be read in a new form, similar to the old one, which in its turn will become old over time and might, after a short while, be once again transformed – while always maintaining, however, its original identity." (Popescu Criveanu 2018, 104-105; translation from Romanian by the author).

Although in a certain way this exercise lies outside the field of restoration – being configured, rather, as a creative contribution to the arrangement of the remains as a museum – undoubtedly interesting, in its unique nature, is the intervention led by Alexandra Afrasinei in a small, private chapel located near the city of Cetate, in the Transylvanian district of Bistrița-Năsăud, an area high in scenic value. Over the course of time, the small building, originally rising as a smith's workshop, suffered clear, structural decay which led to the disappearance of the roof, of which only some bearing beams are conserved, and to damage to part of the masonry (fig. 22).

The project hinged on a profound functional reconversion aimed at preserving more the "sense of place" than the architectural character of the small construction. Its volumetric and spatial redefinition was carried out highlighting the distinctive nature of the contemporary insertions, distinguished from what was preserved, underscored by the inclusion of a metal profile

Top left: 25. Mogoșoaia, Antiquarium, detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).

Down: 26. The interior of Văcărești church before its demolition (private archive).

Top right: 27. Mogoșoaia palace. The remains of the Văcărești's frescoes (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).



28. Bucharest, Cotroceni presidential palace, the interior of Adormirea Maicii Domnului church (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).

29. Bucharest, Cotroceni presidential palace, the interior of Adormirea Maicii Domnului church. The remains of frescoes (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).

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between the original masonry and the new reinforced concrete roof (fig. 23). Bearing witness to the new function of religious space is a cross-shaped crack made in the southern façade. A somewhat similar philosophy governed the intervention carried out in Mogoșoaia, working towards the turning the fragmented architectural element into a museum, which is to say accentuating its value as bearing witness; Lewis Munford counters this “utopia of escape” with the “utopia of reconstruction that projects onto the outside world a new vision of reality [because] avoiding transformations does not on its own guarantee conservation.” Between 2010 and 2014, in the vicinity of the palace, an *antiquarium* (fig. 24) was built with the purpose of collecting and conserving the architectural elements and the fragments of frescoed vaults and walls that had escaped the destruction of the Văcărești monastery (figg. 25, 26) by the orders of Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1984, part of which was already “temporarily” placed in the underground locations of the Mogoșoaia palace where they may be seen to this day (fig. 27). Beyond the laudable intention of bringing together the surviving remains of one of Bucharest’s most important religious buildings, the project shows a clear limit in the museum arrangement incapable of fostering a proper rereading of the original space, and not even partial one, as it may rather resemble a deposit of architectural finds; no better fate was reserved for the iconographic complex, for which, from several quarters, a re-composition plan was raised without result. In brief, it is stressed in this case that, in exchange for greater historical respect, any opportunity to “favour the reading of the monument” is avoided. Appearing to be somewhat similar is the objective that was sought in the restoration of the frescoes that decorated the church annexed to the Cotroceni Palace (*biserica Adormirea Maicii Domnului*) in Bucharest [see below, in this same volume].

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Here, in spite of the limits of the intervention’s size, due to the considerable fragmentation of what was conserved after the church was demolished in 1984 (although it did not collapse, the church had suffered clear damage in the 1977 earthquake), the relocation of the fragments that were conserved may certainly be appreciated; at the same time, it bears pointing out that the church’s restoration lacks unitariness, since the remains of the original plaster were inserted into a context lacking any sign or trace of reference to the scheme of arrangement of the depictions (figg. 28, 29).

#### Value as testimony

The restoration of the castle of Neamt (fig. 30) clearly shows that recognizing the principle of “testimony” has pre-eminence over the other values. Declared a “Historic Monument” in 1866, a century later (1968-1972) the fortress was subjected to a major restoration campaign carried out by Stefan Bals with the objective of conserving what existed rather than reconstructing the collapsed masonry – a decidedly innovative line of behaviour for the period. More recently, thanks to the European funds delivered in 2007, the fortress was the object of “restoration and renovation” works led by the architects Cornelius Constantin and Gheorghe Sion: completed in 2009, the project on that occasion privileged the site’s “practicability” (objective reached through the development of a protected path, partially elevated, and the installation of a dedicated lighting system); this, on the other hand, penalized its legibility with debatable interventions completing of the incomplete wall fixtures which do not come to suggest a formal interpretation and at the same time appear all too extensive (fig. 31); at the same time, the decision to give up completing the masonry crests is undoubtedly appreciated.

30. Neamt castle, aerial view (photo credit: WordPress.com site).

31. Neamt castle, reconstruction of the walls (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).



### NEAMT, CASTLE

The fortress of Neamt was built during the reign of Petru Musat (1374-1391) in the context of the project to define the boundaries of the Principality of Moldavia. The period of its maximum development corresponds to the reign of Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great), 1457-1504, who, seeing the fundamental role played by an efficient system of fortifications, in 1476 promoted, in Neamt, a series of interventions aimed at increasing its defensive capabilities: he thus built four bastions on the outer wall and constructed an arch-shaped access bridge supported by 11 stone piers. The fortress's role was considerably downsized only starting from the second half of the sixteenth century when the defensive needs no longer existed. After it was transformed into a monastery for a short period of time (Vasile Lupu, 1646), Prince Mihai Racovita ordered its destruction in 1717. The plundering of the ruins went on for a century, until 1834, when the prohibition against using its materials for new constructions was laid down.



32. Cârța, fortified church, the interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

33. Cârța, fortified church, the surrounding wall (photo credit: BNA archive).

The accentuation of the value induced by the stratification of historical signs, and the choice of implementing a diachronic interpretation of the monument's evolution over the determination – more often followed (particularly in this geographic area) – to privilege a specific historical phase, characterizes the restoration of the fortified church of Cârța (fig. 32).

The intervention (architects Miklós Köllő and Zolt Tövissi, 2014), was preceded by a careful study of the construction techniques, by a campaign of archaeological digs and masonry stratigraphies, and by in-depth archival research.

The design was dealt with as the critical interpretation of a text with the objective of preserving as much information as possible while reducing to a minimum the impact of contemporary

interventions, and of permitting a non-partial reading of the monument's history: appreciable in this sense is the choice of making legible the traces of frescoed plaster discovered in the apsidal conch. Likewise, attention of this kind does not appear to have been reserved for the items, albeit present, bearing witness to the nineteenth-century intervention that had profoundly changed the original layout, which it seems cannot be immediately read.

On the whole, the restoration project thus proves to be free of dogma and carried out, rather, along the path of constant attention to the material, continuously reviewing its modes of conservation; proof of this lies in the intervention on the perimeter wall, carefully patched rather than reconstructed (fig. 33).

### CÂRȚA, FORTIFIED CHURCH

Devoted to the Assumption of the Virgin ("Nagyboldogasszony"), the church belongs to a Cistercian monastic complex; rising at the top of a hill, it is surrounded by a tall, defensive wall in keeping with the model introduced by the Saxon populations that settled in Transylvania in the thirteenth century. Its construction may be dated to the fifteenth century, as attested by an inscription inserted into the church's wall, bearing the date 1444. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the church underwent a profound Baroque transformation of the hall, which was enlarged and marked by a new, flat ceiling decorated with simple geometric stucco compositions, in place of the original groin vault with a pointed profile; the pulpit is also quite simple, decorated with geometric and floral motifs in neoclassical style. On the other hand, the Baroque forms of the two altars refer clearly to the second half of the eighteenth century. Also belonging to this phase is the demolition of the sacristy on the northern side of the chorus, and of the chapel on the southern side, as well as the construction of the buttresses of the naves. On the other hand, the presbytery bears clear Gothic traits, underscored by the presence of the original ribs in the polygonal apsidal conch. The few available resources did not make it possible to intervene at the same time on the campanile, which was increased in height a first time in the late eighteenth century, and again in 1846. In 1863, a fire brought such damage to its structure as to require interventions that went on for several years. The high altar, from the early twentieth century, refers to the neo-Gothic models that were so widespread in the Saxon environment during that time.

34. Ciumești, reformist church before restoration (photo credit: BNA archive).



34

This same type of intervention (“didactic” restoration) might also be held to include the reconfiguration of the reformist church of Ciumești (fig. 34), for which action was taken in accordance with a rigidly philological hypothesis.

Between 2012 and 2013, a careful campaign of archaeological digs and direct studies on the building were performed, leading to the identification, beneath a layer of cement coating, of important elements (windows, doors, arches, fragments of wall paintings, tombs, etc.) from the Medieval and Gothic age that contributed significantly to outlining the monument’s main construction phases.

Research also made it possible to bring to light a considerable number of burials that may be dated to a timeframe from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries; unfortunately, the more ancient ones appeared partially or totally destroyed by the ones that came later, placed on top, or reused in more recent times (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries).

The restoration design drafted by the architect Tamás Emődi (with the collaboration of the engineers Dorottya Makay, Boróka Sándor, and Boglárka Bordás) and carried out between 2012 and 2014, took full account of these documentary elements, translating them into the intervention’s “track”: the objective of the reconfiguration of the Medieval volumetry (taken as the original *facies*, and therefore of primary value) was pursued by eliminating from the exterior walls the layer of plaster that impeded the reading of the material text and the restoration of the crypts discovered during the archaeological reconnaissance; a decisive element in exalting the palimpsest was the relocation of the bell tower (erected in 1831) twelve metres forward, with the purpose of emphasizing the monumental Romanesque door on the western façade.

Lastly, the same phase saw the completion of an intervention to reconnect the masonry passages damaged by the seismic event of 1834 (fig. 35).

35. Ciumești, reformist church after restoration (photo credit: BNA archive).



35

#### CIUMEȘTI, REFORMIST CHURCH

The foundation of the reformed church of Ciumești, although mentioned for the first time in a 1298 document, dates to the period of transition from Romanesque to early Gothic – to be circumscribed within the time frame from the late thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries – which saw the simultaneous adoption of modern and archaic elements belonging to distinct types and styles.

Today, the church presents a rectangular nave concluded by a polygonal apse; the data emerging from the archaeological reconnaissance, on the other hand, lead to believe that the naves were originally two in number, or that there was a porch flanking the church. It has two accesses: the western door topped by a semicircular brick cornice, and the southern one, of which only the Gothic arrangement is conserved.

There are no certain data on the system of vaults that presumably covered the choir in its original state; it is likely that during the modern interventions aimed at building the current flat ceiling, even the trace of it was deleted. It is, however, certain that the triumphal arch, at least in its current, fully rounded form, may be dated to a modern-day construction phase.

For the entire perimeter, the upper portion of the masonry apparatus was affected by a large-scale reconstruction work.

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It bears emphasizing that this operative line, unrestrained by any respect for the spatial, formal, and material dimension of the original, and in fact consistent with a historical and critical reading of the pre-existing structure, has over time produced numerous interventions aimed at a reconfiguration of the architecture, perceived as an absolute necessity to “correct” interventions already made over history and deemed improper; thus, recently, in the palace of Mogoșoaia, the “Venetian” chimneys built around 1920 by the Italian architect Domenico Rupolo (fig. 36) were eliminated. Another illustrative case was the restoration of the biserică Colțea basilica in Bucharest (fig. 37). The recovery of the church began in 1998 when the first consolidation works were performed on the perimeter masonry and on the tower over the nave, where large portions of the original frescoes by the master Mutu were also discovered. The second major restoration campaign was carried out between 2001 and 2005, when the church was subject to restoration and consolidation interventions (architect Costanza Carp, with the collaboration of the engineer Laurentiu-Tudor Spoială) during which the drum above the pronaos was rebuilt in wood in place of masonry; On the same occasion, the frescoed walls were also restored (fig. 38).

### BUCHAREST, BIS. COLTEA

In the place where the “biserică Colțea” now, rises a previous holy building once stood, built in wood, presumably dating to the mid-seventeenth century. Its foundations emerged along the southern wall during the excavation campaign led by George Mănuțu - Adameșteanu between 2006 and 2008.

The church is the only material trace bearing witness to the presence in that area of the monastery/hospital founded by Mihail Cantacuzino between 1695 and 1698; in addition to biserică Colțea, the vast complex included a hospital, a pharmacy, the bishop’s residence, and other environments with different uses.

It also included a tall lookout tower, partially destroyed by an 1802 earthquake and definitively demolished in 1888 because it was deemed at risk of collapse (in spite of the restoration carried out in 1843).

The church presents stylistic elements that combine Byzantine architecture, Romanian popular art, and influences from the late Italian Renaissance.

The church layout is patterned after the models of the time: a set of three arches on twisting columns distinguishes the semi-square narthex from a three-lobed hall, topped by a dome on a drum.

The large portico in front has five arches on the front and two on the sides; the columns that held up the arches were carved with floral and zoomorphic motifs.

The considerable cycles of frescoes that decorate the hall and pronaos may be attributed to Părvu Mutu, considered the foremost representative of Brâncoveanu, except for the paintings present in the hall, the late-nineteenth-century work of Gheorghe Tătărescu.

The church’s current appearance is inevitably affected by the many interventions the building has seen over the past three centuries.

In February 1739, the church, like much of the entire monastic complex, suffered enormous damage caused by a fire that harmed the interior frescoes and completely destroyed the roof, which was immediately made the object of a reconstruction process.

In 1770 Necula Măinescu, the monastery’s rector, added the small porch in front of the hall, modelled after the church of the monastery in Hurezi.

The seismic events that struck Romania during the first half of the nineteenth century brought about the collapse of much of the monastery, which was rebuilt under the guidance of Dutch architect Joseph Schiffler between 1867 and 1888. But in 1841, a new phase in the works on the church was begun; these works considerably modified its appearance, since the design, entrusted to the architect Heinrich Feiser, did not include the reconstruction of the tower-campanile, originally placed on the narthex, which had collapsed following seismic events; this element was then to be carried out only between 1950 and 1955 when the church, already stricken by bombing in 1944 (and partially consolidated in 1949), was restored by Horia Teodoru.

Following the earthquake of 4 March 1977, the church was substantially abandoned, and later closed for good in 1986.

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Simona Patrascu, Teodora Poiata, *The conservation of the exterior mural paintings of Colțea church: a minimal intervention approach to aesthetic presentation, ‘e\_conservation’, 8, 2009, pp. 63-79.*

On the previous page:  
Top left: 36. *Mogoșoaia palace, the ‘venetian’ fireplaces (private archive).*

Top right: 37. *Bucharest, Colțea church (photo credit: Stefano D’Avino, 2018).*

Down: 38. *Bucharest, Colțea church, the interior (photo credit: Stefano D’Avino, 2018).*



### Philology and restorations

Since the operative line in keeping with the revision of the architectural text on a philological basis cannot be said to have been unanimously adopted in Romania, it bears pointing out that a similar practice has all the same, in some cases, found a purpose in the desire to recover an architectural practice free of the conditionings imposed by a “State art” manifested in the early 1980s, and in the consequent perceived need to reduce those architectures to their pristine state, such as, for example, the National Theatre Bucharest (fig. 39).

Built in 1964, in Ceaușescu’s time (1983) the Theatre had been subject to a “formal revision” and then brought back to the *facies* closest to the original after complex works that went on from 2010 to 2014.

Far more common were the restoration interventions performed in accordance with the most common directions of reconstruction by analogy; this practice, in favouring the modes and techniques of construction tradition, exalts the monument’s aesthetic value, often de-historicized, in a perspective of historical fabrication. An emblematic case was the restoration of the church dedicated to Saints Constantine and Helen (biserica Sfinții Constantin și Elena) in Targoviste (figg. 40, 41).

The conditions of disrepair that the church was in prior to



restoration are documented by Oliviu Boldura and Anca Dina in an article published in 2009: “Analyzing the current state of conservation, an advanced state of degradation of the masonry is observed. Instead of the nave towers there is a large opening covered only by wood boards through which rainfall had penetrated into the interior while the roof was damaged or missing.

Network of cracks are highly branched, crossing walls on vertical or oblique routes, marking in particular the openings of the walls. In some areas fissures meet displacements of up to several tens of centimeters in width. (...)

The displacement of the masonry has obviously contributed to the monument’s loss of stability. (...) Humidity associated with freezethaw cycles and development of vegetation and biological agents on the monument or in its immediate proximity were decisive factors for the monument condition. (...) The main factor that contributed to the current state of conservation is the abandonment of the monument for a long period. (...) An important degradation factor [of the mural paintings] is moisture that induced salts evolution and crystallization on the surface of the color layer, forming micro-gaps at the bottom of the walls” (Boldura, Dina 2009, 71-73).

In 2009, the restoration works led by the architect Sorin Minghiat

On the previous page:  
39. Bucharest, National Theater  
(photo credit: Stefano D’Avino, 2016).

40. Targoviste, Sfinții Constantin și Elena  
(photo credit: BNA archive).

On the current page:  
41. Targoviste, Sfinții Constantin și Elena, the interior before the restoration  
(photo credit: BNA archive).



(with the collaboration of Corina Lucecu, Dan Stamate, and Bogdan Udrescu and Eugen Sabo) began.

Completed in 2012, the intervention was guided by the traces of the documentary results taken from research and historical studies, and aimed at restoring the original image.

Consequently, upon discovering traces of the two lost seventeenth-century bell towers in the attic, the bell tower formerly placed upon the pronaos was reconstructed, albeit while not adopting the original materials, but building them in plastered wood, with the bearing structure in metal; the adopted solution also made it possible to insert an air conditioning system between the exterior and interior parts of the small bell towers. The tower topping the spherical conch of the naos had already been reconstructed in 2007.

The objective of the restoration of the original forms also guided the reconstruction of the porch in front (smaller than the original, dating to 1753), supported by two columns imitating the original ones discovered inserted into the façade masonry, as well as the renovation of the roof, done by replacing the damaged portions of the wooden carpentry with other, perfectly similar ones, and – in keeping with tradition – lining the roof cladding with copper sheets.

The solid wood door was replicated on the model provided by a photographic image from 1910.

The second aspect dealt with in the restoration is represented by the consolidation of the structures.

In this case as well, formal completeness prevailed over respect for the original material: the decayed wooden beams originally placed at the base of the structure were replaced with ring beams in reinforced concrete, thus showing, for the architectural elements not open to view, that the theoretical assumption of renovation by analogy was far less unconditional.

43. Oradea, Greek Catholic Episcopal Palace. The building after the 2018 fire (photo credit: Libertatea site).



42. Oradea, Greek Catholic Episcopal Palace (photo credit: Oradea Heritage site).



#### TARGOVISTE, BISERICA SFINȚII CONSTANTIN ȘI ELENA

The church was founded in 1650 by Matei Basarab, who dedicated it to St. Nicholas; the dedication to Saints Constantine and Helen was imposed only in 1698, under the reign of Costantin Brâncoveanu.

The typological scheme is that typical of the churches built in the eighteenth century in the region of Dâmbovița (other examples are the church of Săcuieni, 1655, and the church of Bărbulețu, 1662): it has a square pronaos covered by a dome, rendered distinct from the naos (also domed) by three round arches held up by octagonal-section pillars; the semicircular apse is accessed through a precious iconostasis.

The exterior is characterized by oblique buttresses at the sides of the façade; a bell tower tops the dome of the pronaos (some documents support the hypotheses that originally it was the only one) while a second rises on the naos.

Over the course of history, the church was affected by numerous events: set on fire by Turkish troops in 1737, it was repaired in 1753 by Jupan Vasalache Frumușica, who was also responsible for the construction of the small porch in front.

The building also suffered grave damage due to the seismic events that affected the territory of Târgoviște in 1802.

Transformed into a mosque in 1821, in 1845 it had to be abandoned due to the damage caused by a violent fire. The state of conservation was so precarious that numerous figures from that time, including Stefan Bals, Horia Teodoru, and George Enescu, signed an appeal for the church's restoration to be carried out. In the early twentieth century, after partial interventions, the church was again reopened for worship, although the bell tower, which collapsed in the 1845 fire, was not rebuilt.

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Not conceptually distant from this were the interventions of reintegration on a stylistic basis, based upon a precise formal mimesis, the heritage of those academic directions towards restoration by analogy that enjoyed great fortune in the country in the second half of the twentieth century, and that reinterpreted the spatial qualities of the pre-existing elements in order to translate them into a "new identity."

Before the intervention carried out in 2006 by the Italian architect Giorgio Domenici, the Episcopal palace of Oradea (fig. 42) was completely abandoned and presented a quite serious state of material decay; the roof structure, consisting of a complex

system of wooden trusses, partially thrusting against the perimeter walls, was in a particularly worrisome state of decay.

The project was outlined taking account of the need both for a philological reading of the original architectural, typological, and stylistic characteristics, and for adaptation to the planned functions; this is in addition to the primary requirement of improving the building's seismic performance.

On August 25, 2018 the building was almost completely destroyed by a fire that caused the collapse of the roofs and wooden floors and seriously damaged the perimeter walls (fig. 43).

#### ORADEA, EPISCOPAL PALACE

The Palace is a neoclassical work by the architect Coloman Rimonoczi di Oradea. Dating to the years 1909-1910, it is presented today virtually intact in its original typology – only partially compromised by certain modest construction accretions and distributive modifications. Until 1948, the building was home to the Greek Catholic Episcopate; after that date, it housed the Regional Library. During this period, the palace was subjected to no maintenance; moreover, all the lofts suffered from decidedly high overloading.

44. Potlogi, Brâncoveanu Palace, before the restoration (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).



45. Potlogi, Brâncoveanu Palace, after the restoration (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).



In 2011, the complex's restoration began, aimed at regenerating its original image: the works involved mainly the plastered interior and exterior surfaces, of which, unfortunately, all material documentation that might help interpret the historic events has been erased (fig. 45). On the other hand, furnishing the residence's environments with authentic items from the National Heritage Museum was a welcome choice. The works were concluded in November 2015.

#### POTLOGI, BRANCOVEANU PALACE

The palace was built by Constantin Brâncoveanu in 1698 in Potlogi, along the road linking Bucharest to Târgoviște and Craiova, and it belonged to an architectural complex that was to be inherited by his son; however, after his death in Istanbul on 15 August 1714, the Turks occupied and devastated the palace.

A partial recovery of the palace was carried out only a century later by the command of the Russian Army, which established its headquarters there in 1848.

46. Bucharest, Cotroceni presidential palace, Adormirea Maicii Domnului church (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).



The church dedicated to the Virgin Mary that rises in one of the courtyards of the presidential palace of Cotroceni, Bucharest (fig. 46) was also subject to a large-scale reconstruction intervention on an analogical basis.

In July of 2003, upon completing an archaeological excavation campaign that brought the ancient foundations back to light, works began to rebuild the church, of which no appreciable trace had remained; in the spring of 2004, after having erected exclusively a portion of it, limited to the narthex and the porch, the works were interrupted all the same, and were resumed only

in May 2008. The works were finally completed only a year later, in line with the planned "faithful reconstruction" restoration project.

Also significantly contributing to the sacred building's "revival" was the recovery of the liturgical furnishings, formerly housed (since 1977) in the National Museum of Art of Romania, as well as the putting back in place of the portions of frescoes that had been removed from the church's walls prior to its demolition, in 1984 – a solution that (as mentioned before), despite the clear intent, appears actually to have been rather "alienating."

#### BUCHAREST. BIS. PALATULUI COTROCENI

The construction of the monastic complex of Cotroceni was promoted between 1679 and 1682 by the prince Șerban Cantacuzino: inside the masonry enclosure wall was the church, the campanile, and the lord's dwelling, as well as some service buildings.

The church, in Brancoveanu style, like the one already founded by him near Curtea de Argeș, bore the double dedication "Adormirea Maicii Domnului" and "Sfinții Serghie și Vah." Over the centuries, the church was involved in numerous events (military occupations, earthquakes, and fires) that brought about considerable transformations. In particular, the earthquake of October 1802 brought disastrous consequences for all the monastery's buildings; in fact, in consideration of the damage that had been suffered, the church was subjected to thorough restoration, concluded in 1806, during which it received a renovated iconography. Some decades later, on the occasion of the revolutionary events of 1848, the monastic complex was occupied by Turkish troops who damaged the church.

In 1948, after the abdication of King Michael, the Cotroceni palace was included among the state properties, while the church was closed for worship. Gravely stricken by the earthquake of March 1977, the church was initially included in the project for the restoration of the entire complex; instead, in 1984, the authorities assessed the church as "incompatible" with the monumental setting, ordering its demolition.

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Andreia Cristina Iana, *Biserica fostei Mănăstiri Cotroceni. Reconstrucția, un puzzle*, București, 2014.

Dan Moanu, *The possibility and failure of reconstruction: two case studies of Văcărești and Cotroceni*, 'Caiete ARA arhitectura, restaurare, arheologie', 9, 2018, pp. 175-195.

It appears clear that these examples show a decided deviation from the more current historical and critical positions towards recovery, a drift sustained by the adoption of approved linguistic codes drawn for the most part from tradition. This is a theoretical position, that of the “revival” of architecture, towards which an appreciable consideration was moreover formulated that, although it does not fully justify the identified solution, doubtlessly bares witness to the extent to which an open debate on the discipline is in progress: “In spite of opposing opinions, rebuilding a cultural heritage item that has (almost) been completely lost is no longer as strongly condemned as one generation ago. One argument in favour of this change in attitude is (among others) the fact that all the types of interventions meant to implement the preservation of historical monuments are nothing else but (the only) construction gestures able to extend their life or even to breathe a new life into them. As a consequence, reconstruction would basically not be that different from conservation”. (Derer, 2016)

#### Old and new

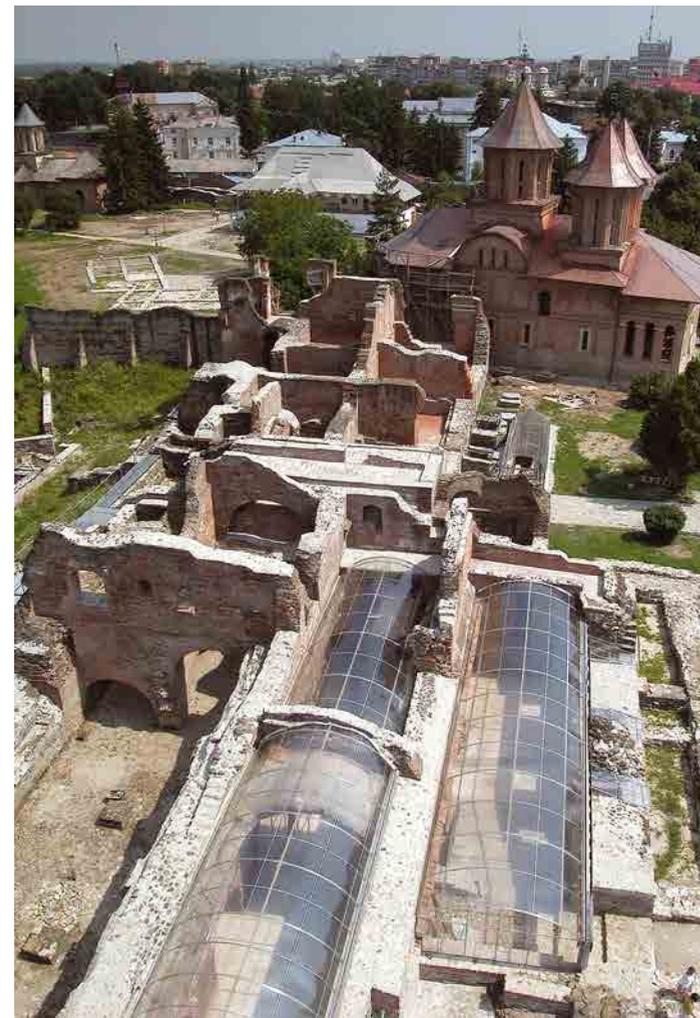
However, the complex Romanian framework also includes integrative interventions that appear to show lesser trust in the effectiveness of a reconstruction process legitimated exclusively by adhesion to a preventive process of typological and formal analysis of the monument. These restorations, while emphasizing the importance of the originality (material before formal) of the work, do not appear characterized by the will to instil an open dialogue with the pre-existing element, which is in fact considered fully subjected to the figurative and spatial logic of the new intervention. These are restorations marked by the adoption of a language that is intentionally different from and dissonant with the fragmented item which, in fact, impedes any integration

between new and old; intervention in these cases appears rather as a pretext, in which the signs of the contemporary overlap: extraneous to and in fact in conflict with the ancient language. The restoration intervention, maintain Ileana Crețu and Mihai Lupu (‘Caiete restaurării’, 2015), may arrive at “altering the functionality, the form, or the initial artistic composition, transforming the item into a set of precious fragments, understood to conserve the parts [now unbound to one another], exclusively for sentimental, functional, or economic reasons. The application of the principles *primum non nocere and minimum intervention* [appears to suggest] a purely “virtual” recovery of the image, without involving the original form, [and therefore] while renouncing additions or transformations (...); any integration or modification [would in fact appear] to structurally influence the part, destabilizing it, and risking the loss of information about the work, the working / repair techniques, and the materials. [However], the choice of the best solution depends on the state of conservation, on the available technology, and above all on the restorer’s sensitivity in adapting the principles to the specific features of the work” (Crețu, Lupu 2015, 87-88; translation from Romanian by the author). Moreover, in many cases, it is not a matter of architectural updating, but “continuation” of an evolutionary process of the architectural work, not understood as a stable entity (and therefore one subject to a process of contextual critical interpretation) but, rather, willing to receive continuous insertions and modifications [“synchronous editing”]. Of the first interventions carried out in Romania for distinctive integration of parts, mention must certainly be made of the one carried out on Curtea Domnească in Târgoviște (fig. 47) starting in 1961, where a programme was promoted to recover some of the city’s most significant monuments for tourism purposes. Subsequently, during the period between 2008 and 2011, a



47. Târgoviște, the Curtea Domnească before the restoration (photo credit: Stefano D’Avino, 2009).

48. Târgoviște, the Curtea Domnească after the restoration (photo credit: Stefano D’Avino, 2014).



European project was launched for the rehabilitation of Curtea; the conservation and restoration works particularly involved: the ruins of the Royal Chapel, the Chindia Tower, and the Sfânta Vineri (or Sf. Petca) and Biserica Mare Domnească churches. The most considerable intervention consisted of the construction, in plastic material, of the porch connecting the tower/campanile with the environments placed at the complex’s western end (fig. 48). Of the Royal Chapel, only the perimeter walls remain, conserved with a careful retipping work, whose only exceptionable aspect consists of the nonchalant use of cement mortar instead of a lime-based one (fig. 49). The tower is the result of a large-scale renovation, carried out in the mid-twentieth century, of a structure dating to the fifteenth century; 27 metres tall, it consists of a pyramid-shaped stone base topped by a cylindrical body in brick, with an external diameter of nine metres. It is arranged on three levels, accessed by a spiral staircase with wooden steps. Here, the intervention was aimed, rather, at the functional aspects, dealt with by replacing the decayed elements of the vertical connection system. The intervention that erased all traces of time from the surfaces was also doubtlessly improper. As for the Sfânta Vineri church, and for the remains of the Royal Chapel, in this case as well, since these are ruins, interest was more in conserving what had survived over time rather than in attempting a formal recovery process; the result is therefore more deficient from the aspect of the “reading” of the work than in the conservation of its material. Lastly, the interventions conducted at the biserica Mare Domnească church most likely constitute the paradigm of the direction maintained in the restoration of the Curtea architectural complex, marked by an acritical attitude aimed primarily, if not exclusively, at guaranteeing the monument’s material survival using “extraneous” insertions.

On the current page:  
49. Târgoviște, Curtea Domnească, detail of the masonry (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

On the next page:  
50. Bucharest, headquarters of the National Council of Architects (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).

51. Bucharest, headquarters of the National Council of Architects, detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2017).

52. Bucharest, headquarters of the National Council of Architects, detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2017).



## TÂRGOVIȘTE, CURTEA DOMNEASCĂ

The construction of the first nucleus of Curtea Domnească was begun around 1400 by Mircea cel Bătrân (Mircea the Elder) and completed four decades later by Vlad Țepeș. Of the original layout, only the lower-level environments are conserved today. Access to the building was on the northern side. Most likely, the ground floor housed the hall for ceremonies and the hall for the Council (both symbolically situated on the eastern side), but also some rooms used as private residence.

Petru II Cercel, voivode of Wallachia from 1583 to 1585, implemented a large-scale campaign for the restoration of the fifteenth-century palace, while introducing architectural and decorative elements influenced by the Western Renaissance. He also promoted the construction, on the southern side, of a new building, larger in size and adjacent to the first; linkage between the two buildings was guaranteed by enlarging some environments in the basement. The new building housed the Prince's Chancery and numerous service environments accessed via an exterior staircase placed on the western façade.

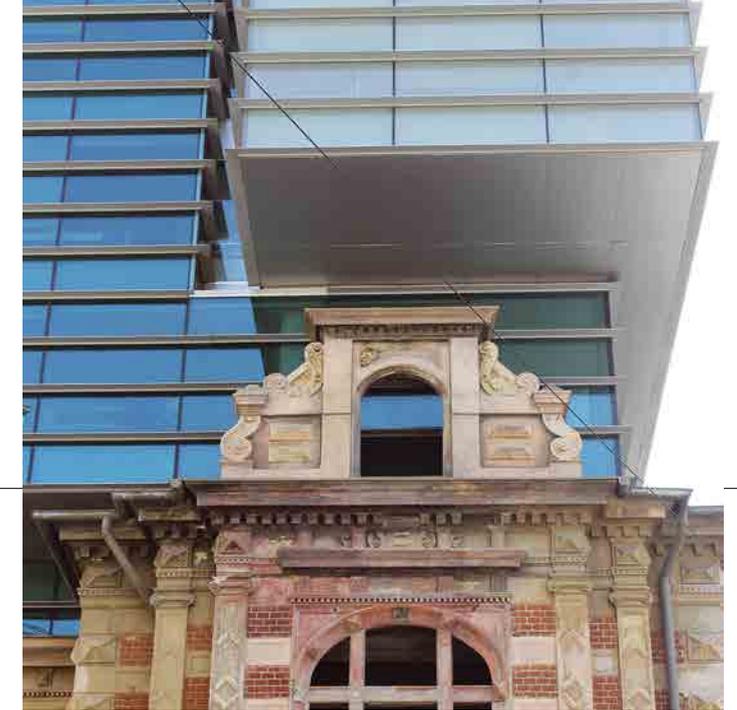
The final phase of development of the ancient residence of the Wallachian sovereigns corresponds to the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), who promoted the ambitious project of restoring the old royal residence demolished in 1659 by Gheorghe Ghica at the order of the Ottoman Empire: the palace was renovated; its rooms were decorated with paintings and stucco work (in accordance with a stylistic programme that, alongside the Renaissance models, reintroduced traditional motifs, and which was later to be defined as "Brâncoveanu"). A loggia was added on the eastern façade of the sixteenth-century palace to access the garden, and a new access to Biserica Mare Domnească was built on the western side. In addition to these works, the intervention involved the entrance tower, used as a bell tower, and the Royal Chapel.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Târgoviște palace was substantially abandoned, which accentuated its decay; the earthquake that struck the region in 1803 and the fire taking place that same year then brought it to its final destruction.

The complex also includes the Royal Chapel, built around 1415 and considered the city's most ancient religious monument; the Chindia Tower (Turnul Chindiei); the Sfânta Vineri church, whose construction may be dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, and which was destroyed after a fire in 1712; and Biserica Mare Domnească (or of the "Assumption"), a Greek-cross church covered by a dome with a triapsidal termination and diaconicon, built by Petru II Cercel in the second half of the sixteenth century.

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Another intervention that emblematically represents this direction is certainly the design for the headquarters of the Architects' Union of Romania (fig. 50), built by recovering the remains of a building at the centre of Bucharest (Păucescu house), not far from Crețulescu, designed in French Renaissance style in the late nineteenth century. In the period leading up to the First World War, the palace became home to the Austro-Hungarian Embassy. On 23 December 1989, during the agitated phases of the revolution against the Ceaușescu regime, the building was burnt and destroyed by the Romanian Army.

In 2003, after more than a decade of abandonment, a steel and glass tower was inserted, with no apparent continuity, into the ruins; the design by the architects Dan Marin and Zeno Bogdănescu laudably aimed at maintaining the ruin as such, in its primary value as testimony; however, the adopted solution ends up sidestepping the theme of the relationship between old and new, determining, rather than a confrontation, a counterposition, ascribable both to the formal relationships determined in a clear, out-of-scale way, and to the adopted materials. On the other hand, it bears observing that the design also shows a detailed conservation of the signs of history, manifested in the maintenance of the bricks damaged by the bullet shrapnel from the Second World War, and the fragments of plaster blackened by the fire that, during the events following the fall of the regime, enveloped the building (fig. 51, 52).



53. Bucharest, calea Victoriei, hotel Novotel (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2013)



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The lack of any linkage between the pre-existing element and the contemporary grafting is even clearer in the nearby Novotel building on calea Victoriei in Bucharest (fig. 53), a structure for hotel use that, in front of the building's imposing functional body, the result of a clear operation of urban replacement, places, on the main road front, the contemporary revival, in analogical style, of the prospect of the National Theatre already destroyed during the bombings that struck the city between 24 and 26 August 1944 (fig. 54).

Certainly worthy of note is the intervention carried out on Bastionul Theresia in Timișoara, which grasps the "generating" value of the (urban) fragment, understood as an element evoking the potential unit.

The first intervention to restore the bastion took place in the early 1960s, when the ethnographic collection of the Banat museum was transferred there.

The commitment of Studio Archaeus (Bogdan Raț, Claudiu Toma, Codruța Negulescu, Maja Bâldea, Marius Miclăuș, Zsolt Varday, Brindușa Havasi, Beatrice Lucaci, Nicolae Olteanu, Cristina Blidariu, Vasile Opreșan), which in 2004 was assigned the restoration of the Bastion, was aimed in the first place at the study of the potentials that could have been offered both by the interior spaces and by the large, upper Place d'Armes. The design aimed at the re-composition of the passages of an interrupted discourse, as in a musical score; the objective was to unite the recovery for cultural use of unused spaces, also by resorting to contemporary insertions (at any rate reversible and limited to the paths), with conservation and valorization, by carrying out minimal interventions on the original structures.

The works were begun in 2008, ending in 2010: first, the reintegrations in concrete done during the interventions of the 1970s were removed; the greenery that spontaneously developed

in certain areas of the upper plaza was not eliminated but merely "regulated" and reorganized in resting places. The materials chosen for constructing the buildings done *ex-novo*, selected so as not to be showy, underwent a prior aging process to attenuate the contrast with the original ones.

The underground plan now includes large rooms for exhibitions and conferences.

"Spatially, the courtyard works fine and is an enjoyable place; in a way another closed space within a former functional baroque ensemble, which was activated by the rehabilitation and insertions of new constructions" (Ghenciulescu 2012, 32). In this case as well, these were merely functional interventions, fully conserving the original structure and repurposing the old chimneys that extracted the cannon smoke as skylights, for a design whose aesthetics are just one of the generating components.

"Inconspicuous interventions (...) little visible or, when not hidden, are done with much simplicity and discretion, without even trying to imitate the existing baroque architecture. (...) Thus, a traditional construction element takes up the role of one of the modernism iconic devices" (*Ibidem*, 31) (fig. 55).

The design that was carried out denotes a clear quality in the language adopted, as well as the assumption, made explicit in the insertions, of the criterion of minimum intervention.

The contemporary intervention, in fact, did not impact the meaning of the original but exclusively (or nearly exclusively) its image, suggesting its proper reading.

Unfortunately, in spite of the significant economic effort required to complete the works, from a number of quarters the complaint is raised that today, due to neglect and lack of maintenance, the widespread decay does not allow the painstakingly recovered spaces to be used.



54. Bucharest, the old National Theater, before the bombing (1944) (private archive).

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55. Timișoara, Bastionul Theresia, aerial view (photo credit: 'Zeppelin', 2012).

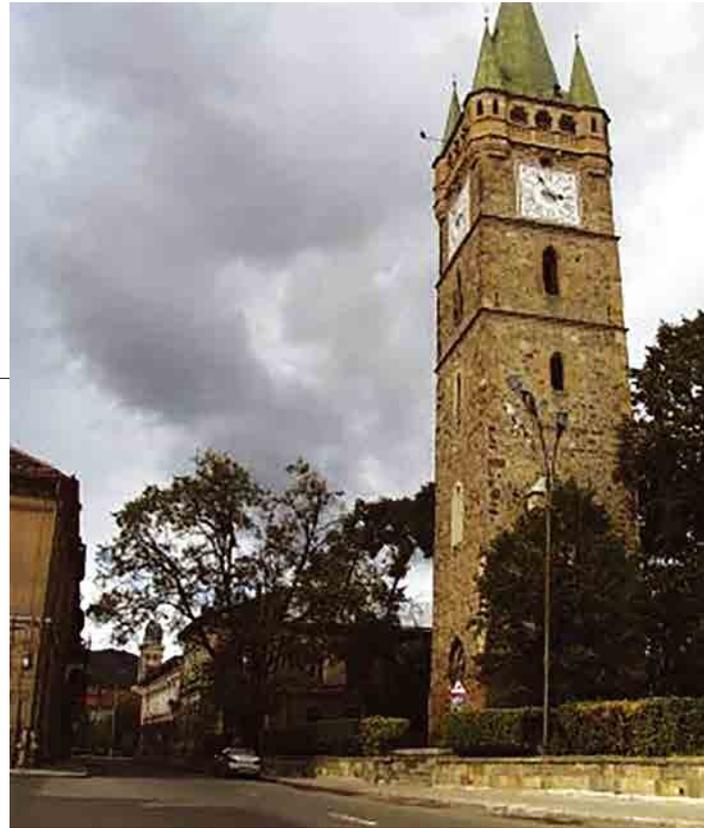


#### TIMIȘOARA, BASTIONUL THERESIA

After the conquest of Timișoara by the Habsburgs in 1716, the new rulers promoted a large-scale campaign to strengthen the city's defences, following the then-prevailing model introduced in the late eighteenth century by French military engineer Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban. Of the imposing original defensive complex built between 1730 and 1733, only the Theresia Bastion remains today.

##### References

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Cristian Blidariu, *Bastionul Theresia, un mall cultural?*, 'Arhitectura', 1/2013, pp. 52-68.



Some of the most interesting solutions are set out when the design is aimed at seeking a consistent linkage between old and new, or in the case in which the contemporary insertion functions as a “discreet” functional counterpoint to the interpretation of the antique; these examples underscore “the theme – typical of restoration – of exalting the pre-existing element in terms of figurative quality and methodological rigour in defining the new” (Giovanni Carbonara, *Palladio*, XVIII, 120).

This orientation is the (inevitable) outcome of a careful critical assessment and a profound understanding of the building that leads to a mode of approach that combines the experimentation of a frankly contemporary architectural language with respect for historical and documentary value and attention to the work’s aesthetic quality; without a doubt, this attitude owes a lot to reflections on the authenticity of the work, and on its value as testimony and identity, which, in recent years, have always had great resonance in Romania: “We may conclude that there are two distinct registers of architectural sacrality: one in which this character, derived from a building’s worship function, is made real and conditioned by the ritual gesture of consecration; the other, in which the physical substance of an old structure is identified by a community as bearer of these values. [In that case] the (essentially secular) veneration with which societies consider the historical monuments that they recognize as such, can confer to them a sort of ‘sacred’ character; [it is a matter, then] of deciphering, with immediate practical effects, and architectural meanings. The lack of an essential distinction between the proper and metaphorical meanings of sacred architecture can in both cases lead to errors in judgment, when raising the problem of preserving and restoring a historical monument; (...) whenever it is damaged or lost (through profanation or only through banal maintenance or restoration works), the sacrality of a religious

building can be wholly restored by carrying out the canonical ritual of consecration. To the contrary, no premeditated human gesture will ever be able to reconstruct the “sacrality” – or the authenticity – of a historic monument, imputed or destroyed following an inappropriate intervention on it. Perhaps this is precisely the key to the fascination exerted by historic monuments. Beyond its specific values, each construction belonging to this category emanates a sense of uniqueness, and raises the thought that its disappearance would mean an irreparable loss” (Kovacs, 2012, Italian translation from Romanian by the author).

The first of the examples taken into consideration among those in which this dialoguing co-presence of the ancient and the new is experimented with is the Ștefan Tower, symbol of the city of Baia Mare (fig. 56). The goal of the restoration intervention (9 Opțiune s.r.l., general architect Stefan Paskucz), begun in February 2014 and concluded in 2016, was to consolidate the tower’s masonry structure and its adaptation to a space destined to accommodate



tourism promotion activities.

The consolidation works mainly involved the masonry apparatus which, after the plaster was removed, showed major damage that required grouting in the masonry body.

However, the clearest intervention was the steel and glass reconstruction of the ribbed vault that originally covered the environment on the ground floor (fig. 57). Today, there is a lapidarium here that collects fragments of sepulchral inscriptions, Gothic architectural elements, and stone decorations discovered during excavations carried out in the early twentieth century – finds whose origin, however, is not specified.

By a staircase partially incorporated into the width of the

masonry, the upper storey is accessed, which houses a multimedia room where images related to the tower and the city are projected; the wooden structure that originally functioned as a vertical link was almost entirely replaced, because it was damaged. On the upper level, where an ancient clock (also the object of careful restoration) is placed, a space has been obtained that functions as a panoramic vantage point.

An additional aspect of the restoration intervention consists of arranging the finds discovered during the archaeological digs performed in the area surrounding the tower, where an elegant lighting design is destined to virtually redefine the masonry profile of the two lost church buildings.

#### BAIA MARE, TURNUL ȘTEFAN

Turnul Ștefan was originally the campanile of the Sf. Ștefan church, and is currently the only conserved architectural remain of a complex that, in addition to the Gothic Sf. Martin (1347) church, comprised the Jesuit monastery with the annexed Catholic church of Sfânta Treime (1717-1719) and the Degenfeld house (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries).

Sf. Ștefan was built in 1446 at the initiative of Prince Iancu of Hunedoara, but was inaugurated only in 1468, under the reign of Matthias Corvinus; it was finally demolished in 1847. It presented a bipartite space divided by a row of pillars and characterized, on the eastern side, by an elongated chorus with a polygonal termination.

The bell tower, on the other hand, was on the other side: it was accessed via an entrance framed by cornices (the result of the restoration completed in 1898) with phytomorphic decoration enriched by symbols of the Evangelists Matthew and John, an angel and an eagle’s head, a type quite popular in the first half of the fourteenth century and subsequently reused, for example in the Gothic door to the reformed church in Sighetu Marmăției. According to some sources, it originally had a cornice decorated with a series of pointed arches, probably dating to the time of Ioan de Hunedoara (fifteenth century). Rectangular in layout, the tower was covered, on the ground floor, by a cross vault with pointed profile. Originally used for its strategic view over the city, it was destroyed by fire on several occasions. In 1619, the top was put back together in a square-based pyramid shape with four turrets at the corners; seriously damaged at the end of that century, it was rebuilt yet again in 1763.

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On the current page:  
58. Braşov, Bastionul Postavarilor,  
view of the external wall (photo  
credit: 'Zeppelin', 2012).

On the next page:  
59. Braşov, Bastionul Postavarilor,  
the new corten structure (photo  
credit: 'Zeppelin', 2012).

60. Braşov, Bastionul Postavarilor,  
the new structure on the ground  
floor (photo credit: 'Zeppelin', 2012).



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Another noteworthy intervention was the one carried out between 2008 and 2011 by the Point 4 Architects & Zeppelin architecture firm (Radu Enescu, Constantin Goagea, Ada Demetriu, Vitalie Cataraga, Justin Baroncea) for the development of an interactive information centre inside Bastionul Postavarilor in Braşov (fig. 58). During the first decade of the 21st century, the local Council of Braşov initiated a gradual programme for the restoration and reconversion of the defensive bastions, the towers, and the city walls. Neglected for a long period of time, several elements of the sixteenth-century fortification, like staircases, defensive systems, or guard walks, had completely disappeared; only the city walls had remained intact. The structure of the bastion, which was also left in a state of utter abandonment, consisted of an extremely thick wall with a circular pattern; however, an archaeological campaign also unearthed the foundations of a second masonry portion that likely belonged to a smaller, prior fifteenth-century tower, in addition to traces of an old perimeter wall two metres thick. The theme implemented by the customer called for restoring and

valorizing the bastion and the archaeological remains, as well as setting up, within the architectural complex, an interactive information centre on Braşov's fortifications. The first design hypothesis, which called for inserting a reinforced concrete ring beam at the top of the masonry apparatus to support the loads imposed by a metal and polycarbonate roof, would inevitably have substantially altered the monument, introducing new and inconsistent elements into it. The design was therefore directed towards the development of a new, internal tower, ideally reversible, that in no way interfered with the bastion's structure and that at the same time recovered and interpreted the identity elements inherent in the conserved traces of the historical palimpsest. The ultimate objective was to create a structure as light as possible, as well as declaredly contemporary: towards this end, a steel bearing structure was adopted, with infill panels in Cor-Ten, a material that obeys the ineluctable need to clearly mark the intervention's contemporary nature; contributing to this objective is the roughened surface of the oxidized metal representing the tension originally expressed



by the place (fig. 59). The area of the new "functional tower," starting from the foundation structures placed at the basement level (fig. 60), gradually increases in diameter as the bastion rises in height; although in certain areas the "tension" between the two structures appears quite high, they in no case seem to enter into structural or formal conflict. The form of the new insertion, like the size of its voids that are independent, yet directly conditioned by the characteristics typical of the original building, arises from the objective established in the design of having a broad perception of the monument (thanks also to the large,



glass surfaces) and of allowing visitors to observe the city from a privileged vantage point and to use the cafeteria and the tourist information point inside. After the structure was consolidated, the decision was made to reconstruct the ancient guard walks, whose identification was permitted by the traces found on the masonry surface; these architectural elements were re-proposed in the same position and with the same geometry as the original ones, but they were made using a steel structure with a beech-wood pavement and metal handrail.

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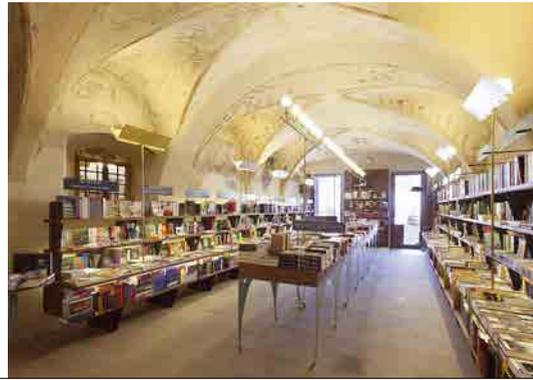
#### BRAŞOV, BASTIONUL POSTAVARILOR

Braşov is one of the cities built in the Middle Ages by German settlers, but most of its fortifications were demolished to respond to the need for free areas as a consequence of the considerable urban development seen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One of the principal elements of this defensive system was the sixteenth-century Bastionul Postăvarilor, built in the shape of an ellipse sixteen metres in diameter, with four levels of wooden galleries.

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61. Braşov, Humanitas bookstore (photo credit: BNA archive).



62. Bucharest, Carturesti Verona bookstore, external view (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).



63. Bucharest, Carturesti Verona bookstore, interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2016).



Romania's multiform restoration landscape also includes interventions inevitably involving a "leap of scale," which is to say aimed at the functional recovery of spaces limited in size, and that are therefore affected by a design pushing towards the particular, in certain cases revealing very interesting solutions; the reasons for these appreciable outcomes may be identified mainly in the baggage of technical/artisanal skills and in the ability to lead work site phases that are traditionally the boast of Romanian architects. One example is the recovery of two eighteenth-century residences combined into a single unit in the eighteenth century, located in the city of Braşov, aimed at the arrangement of a commercial space for the Humanitas bookshop chain. The design, overseen by the architects Johannes Bertleff, Dragoş Oprea, and Liviu Creosteanu, dates to 2004 and consisted of structural consolidation, the renovation of the roof covering and of the plaster of the façade, and lastly the recovery of the spaces on the ground floor of the main building.

The arrangement of the spaces for cultural purposes, which is to say the design's focus, did not neglect conserving the material traces bearing witness to the original dwelling spaces, elegantly consolidating and conserving the plaster and the historical linings, as well as the eighteenth-century flooring, and entrusting to complementary furnishings (furniture, decor, and lighting system) the task of making the places functional and welcoming (fig. 61); it is a design choice that appears aware of the testimonial value inherent to the materials and the traditional construction techniques.

The project carried out between 2000 and 2015 by the architect Şerban Sturdza for the restoration of two bourgeois residences located in the centre of Bucharest, destined to become the Carturesti Verona bookshop (fig. 62), appears particularly successful.



These spaces were originally the residence of Dimitrie Alexandru Sturdza-Miclăuşanu, a politician and academic, and Prime Minister of Romania between 1895 and 1909: the bourgeois family house was arranged on three levels, with a central salon upon which, on ground level, the master rooms faced symmetrically; the service environments were on the lower level, while the upper level housed other utility spaces. The building was transformed into a bookshop even before its nationalization by the Communist regime; the forced acquisition among the State's assets, with the purpose of conserving there the works that did not following the Party's political line, did not however result in erasing the spirit of the place, whose authenticity was maintained intact.

The bookshop's current arrangement is the outcome of a restoration carried out with extreme philological rigour and a singular attention to the details: the bricks of the vaults in the basement, the plastered walls of the residential space, and the wood of the carpentry supporting the roof were the object of a shrewd conservation intervention, and show – intact – their



64. Bucharest, Carturesti Verona bookstore, interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2016).

65. Bucharest, Carturesti Carousel bookstore, interior (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).

original material nature (fig. 63); the ceilings, some of which show the structure in wood and supporting iron, conserve the signs of history, without reintegrations, as do the moulded profiles that originally adorned the ceilings, only the impression of which is conserved today (fig. 64).

An equally interesting intervention is the one carried out at Carturesti Carousel, a cultural space on six levels obtained within one of Bucharest's most important historic palaces, Chrissoveloni Palace, built in 1860; it accommodates a bookshop, a cafeteria, a space for multimedia events, and an art gallery (fig. 65). Formerly owned by Romania's most powerful family of bankers, after the financial crisis of the 1930s the building was first transformed into a community market, then confiscated during the Communist regime, and lastly abandoned. Concluded in February 2015, the restoration restored an architecture that is both frankly contemporary and fully consistent with the programmatic conservation of the original characteristics; this direction may be seen, for example, in the rigorous conservative treatment of the façade as well as in

66. Bucharest, Carturesti Carousel bookstore, the basement (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).

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the maintenance of the structural system, entrusted to small, nineteenth-century wrought-iron columns, inserted in modern times into the fluid space of the exposition balconies; similarly positive is the choice of leaving in open view, in the basement, the structural elements in reinforced concrete, bearing witness to past consolidation interventions not erased by history (fig. 66).

#### Restoration and the city

The situation of restoration on an urban scale in Romania cannot be outlined without examining the measures taken in this sense a half-century ago, during the Communist regime.

In 1972, Ceaușescu in fact promoted a radical programme to transform the urban landscape on a national scale, presented as a necessary project to “modernize” Romanian cities, and based on a large-scale demolition/reconstruction work aimed, on the one hand, at replacing the Romanian cultural tradition with a “new Socialist identity,” and on the other at measuring the exercise of a power that was heading towards becoming an absolute regime. Starting in 1985, “large areas of Bucharest (...) were destroyed. In keeping with the government’s policy (the entire rural population, including Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Serbs, had to be resettled to eliminate the differences among urban and rural living conditions), thirty villages were simultaneously destroyed and thousands of other villages and cities were to have the same fate” (Giurescu, 1989)

This programme of urban renewal and, more generally, of redefinition of the cultural and identity references of the new Socialist state was then to see a significant acceleration after the seismic event that struck Romania in 1977 (an account of the loss of historical monuments and of their surrounding urban fabric in Bucharest following large-scale requalification projects after the 1977 earthquake may be found in Cantacuzino, 1987); this



67. Bucharest, Calea Moșilor, Hanul Solacolu, external view (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2016).



68. Bucharest, Calea Moșilor, Hanul Solacolu, degraded structures (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2016).

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took place even though a regulation approved in 1974 expressly prohibited the destruction of historic and artistic monuments, in fact requiring their conservation and protection: the outcome of this operation was that in the centre of Bucharest alone, about nine thousand examples of historic architecture, between residences and church buildings, were destroyed. [On the subject, cf. Stefano D'Avino, *Bucharest burns? Namely restoration of monuments and urban policy in Romania during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu*, in this volume].

As a consequence of this, in Romania urban restoration coincided for many years with the practice of reconstruction; this phenomenon also includes the many transfers of religious buildings carried out by the engineer Eugeniu Iordăchescu between 1982 and 1989, with the objective of recharacterizing – while retaining some of its main references – the urban settings thoroughly revised in the name of ‘modernization’.

“Of course the official propaganda of the period presented the re-placement of the churches as a proof of respect of the regime for the past and simultaneously a subject of pride for the civil engineering skills of socialism” (Nistor 2012, 228).

After 1989, the urban landscape was marked by the presence of numerous historic aristocratic residences, only some of which subjected to restoration interventions, showing a certain “antiquarian taste”; these are counterbalanced by the many buildings expropriated during the Communist regime, now abandoned to ruin and widespread decay, like Hanul Solacolu in Calea Moșilor, in Bucharest (fig. 67, 68), due to the economic impossibility for the owners – to whom they were only recently restored – to provide for their recovery; this situation is also outlined in an article published in *Transsylvania Nostra* in 2011 by Călin Hoinărescu (cf. references).

The theme of the vastness of the ruined heritage is promptly

addressed in an article published by Dorottya Makay, Tamás Emődi and Carmen Florescu in 2017: “The issue of ruins and interventions regarding them is, in our country, more complex than in Western Europe. Firstly, the number of historic buildings belonging to different heritage categories that are in a state of ruin is extremely large.

Besides the archaeological ruins (ancient or mediaeval), those of castles and churches or mansions that have been abandoned or devastated hundreds of years ago, or ruins resulted following natural disasters, there is a large category consisting of buildings that have been relatively recently abandoned or destroyed, in the last decades. This category includes industrial buildings, small railways, vernacular houses, cultural and administrative buildings that had lost their use in the post-revolutionary period, hundreds of aristocratic residences, manor houses, and mansions in an advanced state of degradation or pre-collapse” (Makay, Emődi, Florescu 2017, 12).

Today, given the recovery of that economic value of the properties that the regime had stubbornly denied, many of those ruined architectures have been fated to become the object of speculation (a fate that also involved considerable extra-urban architectures, like the Cantacuzino palace in Florești) (fig. 69, 70, 71).

It is wholly clear that the loosening of the theoretical tension consequent to the prevailing interests representing, when not actually celebrating, the regime (which actually continued for at least a decade after Ceaușescu was removed from power) that led to widespread demolitions and as many large-scale reconstruction/replacement campaigns, and the need for renewal strongly felt in the 1980s and 1990s, came together in major interventions of modern reconfiguration of the city, with the consequent risk of impairing appreciation of the historic

69. Florești, Cantacuzino Palace, external view (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2013).



70. Florești, Cantacuzino Palace, degraded structures inside (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2013).



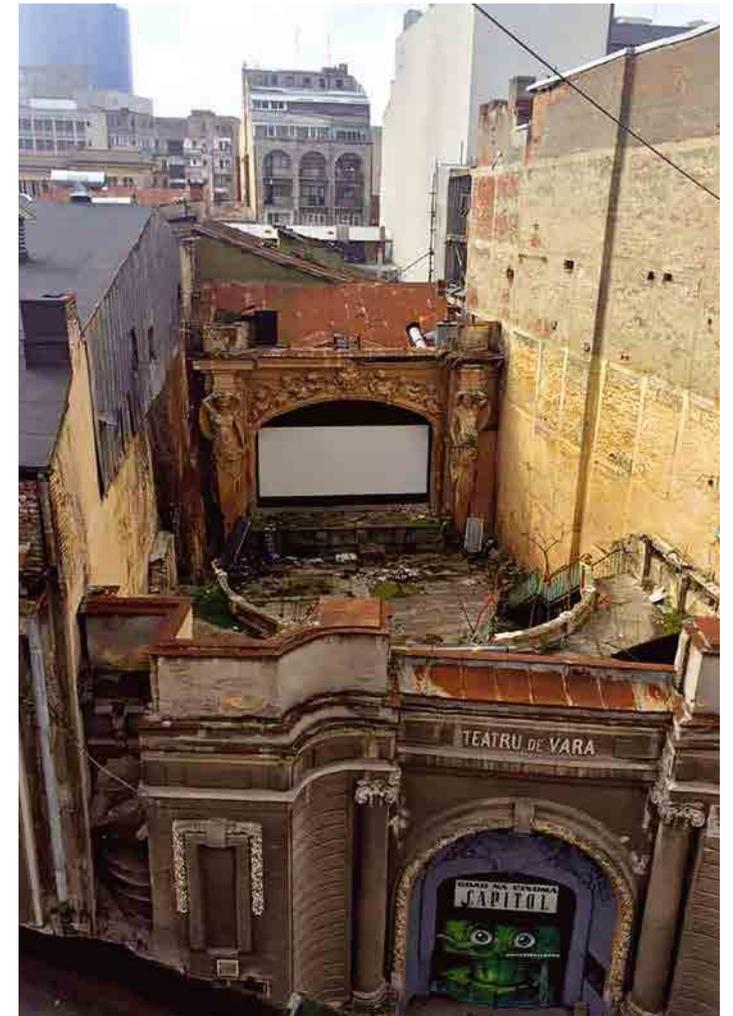
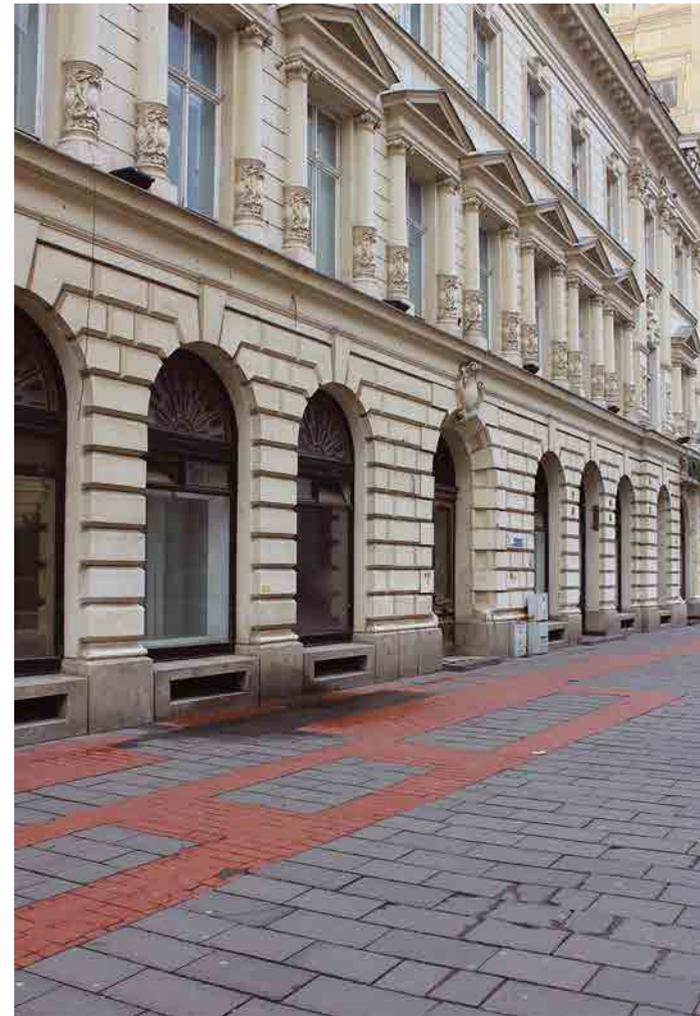
71. Florești, Cantacuzino Palace, degraded structures inside (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2013).



palimpsest. Testimony of the work of “regularization” of the urban fronts carried out during those years may be seen in the traces, appreciably evidenced with signage on the ground, of the buildings demolished on str. Lipscani (fig. 72). The negation of the economic value of property pursued by the regime had at any rate made it more convenient to demolish and then replace historic architectures; this practice, albeit in considerably reduced form, is pursued to this day (as shown by the recent demolition of the historic Capitol Theatre in Bucharest) (fig. 73), in spite of the efforts of the National Institute of Heritage (and, more generally, the Ministry of Culture) to impose restrictions on these unscrupulous interventions. It comes as no surprise that to this day, some Romanian scholars harbour “concerns over the protection of the built heritage, as well as over sustainable development, in which culture plays an important role. By comparing the international situation with Romania’s, the practice in the country appears to be far from the general principles, highly desirable in theory and expressed through different documents adopted for the integrated conservation of cities and the traditional urban fabric” (Crisan 2018). “Although Romania ratified the Convention of Granada, in the local practice we witness entirely different processes in too many cases. The Washington Charter (ICOMOS 1987) extended the sphere of interest in heritage preservation towards historic towns and urban areas, [but] in present day many Romanian towns are being threatened, physically degraded, damaged or even destroyed, by the impact of the urban development. In our country we witness massive demolitions, carried out not in order to eliminate buildings detrimental to their environment, or in order to accomplish large-scale operations of public interest,

72. Bucharest, str. Lipscani, traces of demolished buildings (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).

73. Bucharest, str. Mille, Teatrul Capitol (photo credit: Vlad Massaci, 2018).



74. Bucharest, bulevardul Dacia, hotel Duke (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).



75. Bucharest, building in bulevardul Bratianu (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).



76. Bucharest, historic houses in str. Franceza (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).

but in order to maximise the profit of the lot, for private benefits. (...) The question is why we are demolishing? With what and how are the demolished houses being replaced? (...) We cannot avoid to wonder: what is in fact the expression of the local cultural identity? Will we still be able to find there our history, traditions and our own identity? Newly built entities in historic quarters are natural, and can mark the contribution of the respective period to the evolution of that area over time. It depends, however, how these insertions are implemented. The value of built heritage is not limited to historic buildings protected by specific laws. Built heritage is in its entirety a depository of material values representing 'renewable resources', which need to be managed reasonably; but, within the built heritage, the historic monuments are 'non-renewable resources'" (R. Crisan 2018, 35-38). These critics' attention is towards rather unscrupulous interventions carried out without taking account of the quality of the context – in a climate of formal counterposition experimented with through openly contemporary yet extraneous insertions in which the constant work of replacing urban fronts and their improper chromatic renovation are systematically pursued, uncaring of the consequent loss of value. Bearing witness to this unscrupulous practice are, for example, the building that houses the Hotel Duke in Bucharest (fig. 74) and the recently built building at the intersection of Bulevardul Ion Bratianu and str. Colței (fig. 75). However, over the past twenty years, attention has, in parallel, been seen towards critical speculation aimed at urban restoration – a trend that is without a doubt affected, in theoretical premises and operative acts alike – by the dialogue that has been initiated with the European culture of the discipline, which instead resulted in interesting experiences of careful conservation of



existing elements, not impacted by reconstruction compromises; this is the case with the restorations of the houses overlooking str. Franceză, in the centre of Romania's capital (fig. 76).

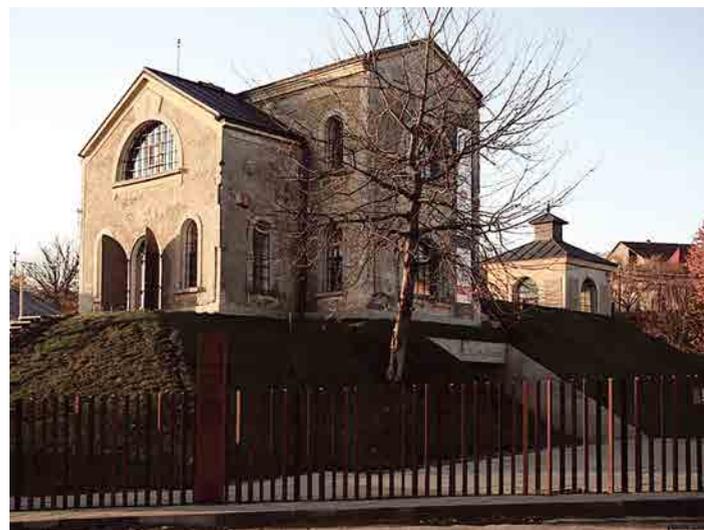
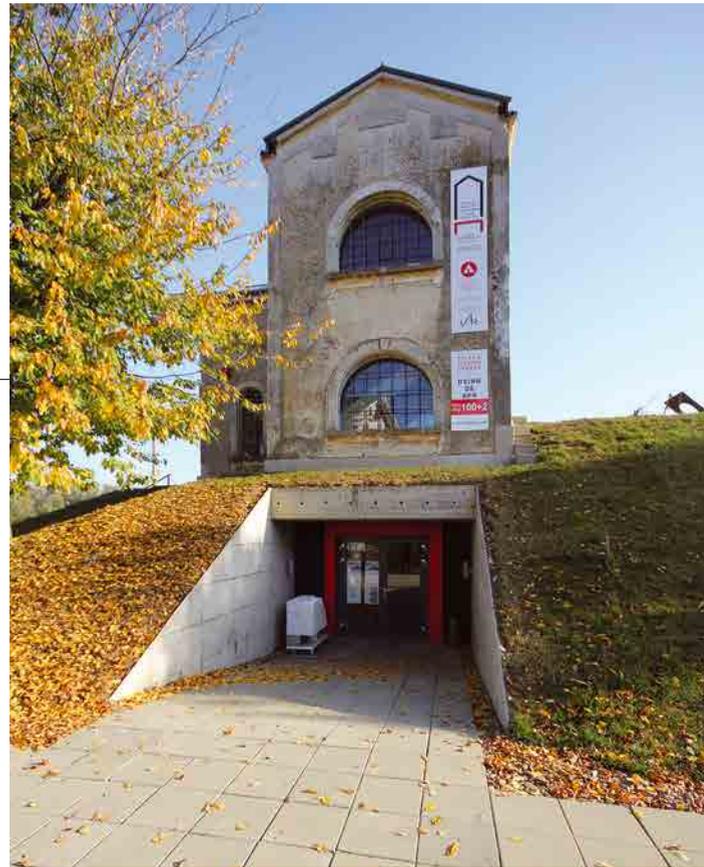
### The historic industrial heritage

The attention devoted to recovering the historic industrial heritage in Romania is a relatively recent subject of interest; until the late twentieth century, the conversion of buildings formerly destined for production, or their demolition and replacement – also in the case of architectures that were remnants of a considerable share of the country's identity – was the most widely practised solution, as Șerban Cantacuzino witnessed as early as 1991 (Cantacuzino, 1991). After twenty years, also by virtue of the debate set off in Europe at the same time, the importance of these documents of material history is considerably augmented, and the recovery of industrial heritage has taken on the trait of being an intervention of full-blown operative criticism. "The results of an unprecedented 'production', especially in the 20th century, but also in the previous ones, prominently present in the landscape, be it urban or rural, industrial sites are often perceived by the public (sometimes even by the specialist) as remains of a hated era, with no other value than the exclusively functional one. In the first half of the last century, the objectives that were assumed by heritage protection – the 'traditional' historic buildings: antique ruins, religious buildings, castles, etc. – had their source in a 'more distant era and in a different aesthetic' and were radically different from the industrial values brought into discussion as necessary to protect. The cult of heritage was already subject to a 'quantitative metamorphosis' and the considerable contribution of new heritage categories was due to 'the crossing of the industrialization wall', through which 'factories, warehouses, hangars, remains of technical progress or

of structural changes in the economy, large empty shells that the industrial tide has abandoned on the out-skirts of cities and even in their centres' were added to the preservation practice. (...) The concern for a systematic inventory of these values was present in the postwar years of the 20th century, starting with the 1953-1955 campaign that has led to the publication of the List of cultural heritage throughout the People's Republic of Romania (PRR) in 1955. (...) The plight of the Romanian industrial heritage is 'owed' largely to the lack of such a national policy for the specialised inventory of industrial historic buildings in the last 20 years. Thus, industrial sites can be evaluated only in relation with their immediate context and not within a broader one, which could provide an overview – thematic, regional and national – of this type of heritage. A significant number of valuable heritage sites have been lost and are still being lost without prior documentation and without the possibility to determine the extent of these losses at national level" (Iamandescu 2014, 20-22). Particularly significant on the landscape of the restoration of the abandoned industrial heritage, both for the contained formal style adopted, and for the educational conservation of the albeit minimum signs of the original structure, is the project that, in 2006, after a period of oblivion that continued for more than half a century, was initiated for the reconversion of the abandoned old water distribution plant of the city Suceava into a cultural centre (*Center for Architecture, Urban Culture and Landscape*) (figg. 77, 78). Conducted by the "Arhitectură, Grafică, Design" working group coordinated by Constantin Gorcea, the intervention constitutes a solution – as an alternative to destruction – to the widespread problem of the recovery of the abandoned industrial architectural heritage, a theme particularly felt in the areas more subject to quick urban transformations. The reconversion of an early twentieth-century water

77. Suceava, Water Plant, Center for Architecture and Landscape, external view (photo credit: BNA archive).

78. Suceava, Water Plant, Center for Architecture and Landscape, entrance (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).



62 treatment plant is a quite complex subject, given the difficulty of reinserting, into the circuit of public spaces, an architecture that was originally a technical volume; this problematic nature is accentuated by the setting's lower willingness to welcome the appropriate modifications. Thus, the choice, in restoration, of conserving the material traces of the original function, may be better appreciated. The project was conceived with the intent of reducing to a minimum the invasiveness of the contemporary intervention, understood, rather, as an artisanal exercise of "reweaving": "The new interventions have considered only the necessary work to carry on a cultural function according to today's standards; the architects have proved their respect towards the well-done work of the past and the story of the place" (Goacea 2012, 17). The clearest works on the structure consisted mainly of the consolidation with carbon fibres of the damaged masonry apparatus, and above all the development of a new access through the ancient tanks, obtained by making a deep crack into the earthwork with the purpose of offering an element of connection with the space in front of the structure. The reconversion of the technical environments to spaces for conferences, concerts, and exhibitions (concluding in 2012) did not impact its character; the careful maintenance of the original material remnants, exalted by the conservation of the original plaster (understood as "technological frescoes") (fig. 79, 80) and the careful treatment of the masonry surfaces, both internal and internal (consolidated and reintegrated, and where necessary dehumidified rather than rebuilt) instead constituted the solution for connecting the lost function to the contemporary age. Lastly, the insertion of contemporary signs like glass walls on the intermediate level appears quite balanced, and the decision to leave "open-face" the reinforced concrete structures on the earthwork level at the entrance, appear praiseworthy.



79. Suceava, Water Plant, Center for Architecture and Landscape, exhibition hall (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

80. Suceava, Water Plant, Center for Architecture and Landscape, interior detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).



#### SUCEAVA, WATER PLANT, CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE

Built in 1912 by German and Austrian engineers in the multicultural region of Bucovina, the "Water Plant" symbolizes, in a certain way, the "birth" of the modern city of Suceava, especially for having introduced a new, "ethical" dimension of the drinking water distribution service. The complex was in use for about fifty years, until 1960; later converted into a warehouse, it was abandoned for good in 1989.

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81. Bucharest, The Ark Center for Contemporary Art (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).



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One of the most recent (and certainly among the most interesting) interventions is the reconversion of a nineteenth-century industrial building situated in a Bucharest neighbourhood highly affected by large-scale demolition interventions during the Ceaușescu era, in a space for cultural production called “The Ark” (fig. 81).

In 2006, the building was purchased by private investors who entrusted the recovery design to the Re-Act Now Studio firm (Mario Kuibus and Teodor Frolu; with Roxana Dumitriu, Irina Plesnila, Cristina Chivu, Elena Toader, Ioan Marcean, Adela Antoniu, and Valentin Varlan), with the dual aim of creating a space to accommodate design studies and activating, together, a virtuous process of the neighbourhood’s economic, social, and identity recovery; the intervention was completed two years later, in 2008.

The building’s three levels accommodate, on the ground floor, a Centre for contemporary art; the upper storey has spaces for offices and meeting rooms, while the lower floor houses multimedia rooms and spaces for conferences.

The choice of designers, aimed at valorizing the original building, has combined the conservation of what was rescued from fire and from neglect (the structures were subject only to a consolidation intervention) with a frankly contemporary insertion made in translucent polycarbonate with the function of providing vertical connection (fig. 82); the roofing destroyed in the 1990 fire was rebuilt, maintaining its original design, but raised to emphasize its objective temporal distance from the nineteenth-century building and at the same time to enlarge the building’s functional spaces (fig. 83).

#### BUCHAREST. THE ARK

The Ark is an event space obtained within an industrial building situated in the central area of Bucharest, near the incomplete Palace of the Parliament, in an area profoundly altered during the Communist era.

The design for the building, known as “Vama Antrepozite,” was carried out in 1898 to accommodate the commodities exchange, and belonged to an industrial complex planned as part of a large-scale modernization programme for the city, promoted by the Municipality of Bucharest in 1894. The design’s authors were the Italian Giulio Magni and the Romanian engineer Anghel Saligny. Giulio Magni (1859-1930) was one of the leading architects in Europe between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, playing a major role in Romanian architecture; from 1894 to 1987 he led the Studies Service at the Department of Technical Works of the Municipality of Bucharest, and in that position carried out many important works, including the Comanesti Station, the Palace of the Apostolic Nunciature, and the Union Hall (demolished in the 1980s).

The building was used as a Customs post office from 1945 until the early 1980s; it also survived the massive demolitions ordered by Nicolae Ceaușescu that during those years erased the entire Urano neighbourhood and, after suffering improper utilizations (it was also the site of storage for the materials used for the construction of the nearby “People’s House”), in 1990 the structure was grievously damaged by a fire that resulted in its final abandonment.

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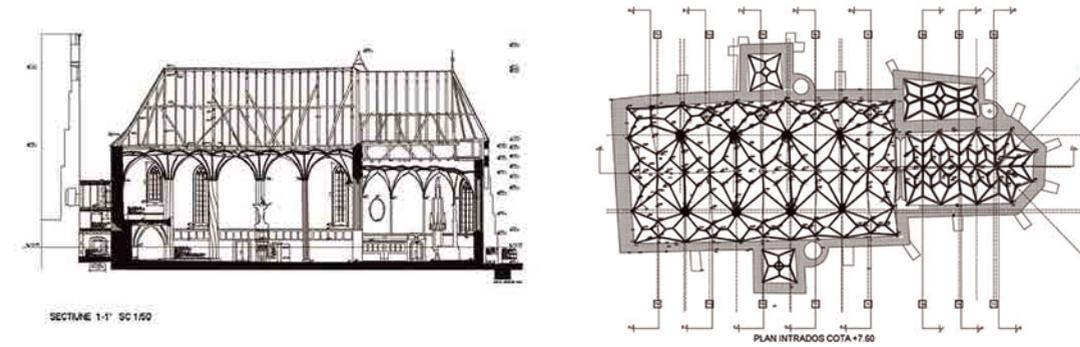
82. Bucharest, The Ark Center for Contemporary Art, the vertical connecting element (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).

83. Bucharest, The Ark Center for Contemporary Art, the attic (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).

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84. Moșna, Lutheran Evangelical Church, aerial view (photo credit: BNA archive).



Top: 85. Moșna, Lutheran Evangelical Church, plan and section (photo credit: BNA archive).

Down: 86. Moșna, Lutheran Evangelical Church, restoration of the external wall (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

**Structural and functional recovery interventions**

An additional aspect of restoration in Romania is that of the interventions aimed at the structures' consolidation or, to put it better, at the material conservation of the historic architecture. This field shows an unexpected distinction among the disciplinary contributions that, in certain cases, ended up nearly determining two distinct design directions. "The contemporary practice of structural rehabilitation is governed in Romania by two substantially different tendencies: on the one hand, the consolidation achieved by adjusting the structures to the requirements of contemporary technical prescriptions, thereby often determining the need for consolidation with modern materials, or less modern ones like reinforced concrete (an approach justified, first of all, in geographic areas with significant seismicity); and on the other hand, an approach founded upon the idea of rehabilitation and structural improvement, with the use of traditional materials and techniques" (Csilia Hegedüs, Zsuzsanna Eke, Dorottya Makay, *Restaurarea și revitalizarea Castelului Bánffy din Bonțida, jud. Cluj*, 'Revista Monumentelor Istorice', 2017, 1, pp. 92-103, 95; translation from Romanian by

the author). This clearly gives rise to a quite diversified operative outcome: in certain restorations, such as the one carried out in 2014 by Mihai Opreanu (with the contribution of Hanna Dérer and Dan Ionescu) on the Evangelical church of Moșna (fig. 84), where a certain satisfaction over the technical solution appears to prevail. In the design, aimed at the consolidation of the foundation structures and of the Gothic vaults (where the work intervened with reinforced concrete ring beams on the extrados) (fig. 85), after an appreciable historical and document analysis and a careful survey, the same tendency towards the theme of the of the relationship between architectural interpretation and restoration intervention— largely neglected or reduced to a mere question, detached from the critical process, of masonry balance – is not felt; for example, the widespread use of absorbent plasters (adopted as the sacrifice layer) has resulted in the unacceptable loss of a material sign. The design therefore seems to lack a global, unitary vision. Regarding attention to the material document, an appreciable intervention was carried out in the protection of the masonry ridges of the fortified enclosure of the Evangelical church of Moșna (2014) (fig. 86).



**MOȘNA, EVANGELICAL CHURCH**

The fortified Evangelical Lutheran church of Moșna (1485) is a late-Gothic work by the master Andreas di Sibiu (the only other architectural work by the same artist is in Keresztényfalva, in the district of Brașov); the campanile, separated from the church, is earlier, and can be dated between 1300 and 1400. It was built on the site of a fourteenth-century Roman basilica, whose western door is conserved in the current building; most likely, many of the stone ashlars used to build the masonry walls have a similar origin.

The church is laid out with three naves divided by four pairs of considerably inclined twisted columns; two hypotheses have been posited in this regard: the first supposes that the church was built in two distinct phases and that the roofing of the central nave was done only after erecting the two structurally autonomous side ones; the second is based on an underlying defect of the original basilica.

Over the centuries, on a number of occasions, restoration interventions were performed on the monument: documents bear witness to works from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. The church lastly saw a major renovation during the twentieth century.

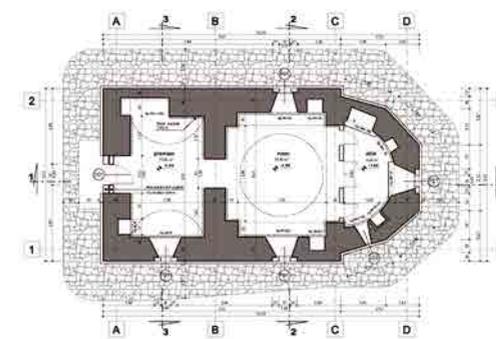
88. Costesti, Nașterea Maicii Domnului church external view during the restoration (photo credit: BNA archive).



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A considerable discontinuity between the conservation need of the material document and the construction of supports aimed at consolidating the damaged structures is seen in biserica Nașterea Maicii Domnului in Costesti, which belongs to a small convent complex dating to 1689 (fig. 87). Prior to the restoration intervention, the church was in a precarious state of conservation: the walls, the vaults, and the arches showed a widespread cracking situation ascribable to the heterogeneous foundation terrain, to the seismic events that had periodically affected the region, and to the vibrations produced on a daily basis by the nearby lime quarry; the precious frescoes decorating the interior, painted by Nicolae Popa in 1755-1756, had also suffered enormous damage, to the point that, over time, the structure had been secured by the installation of four steel belts and the insertion of metal frames in the doors and windows. Carried out by the architects Aurel Ioan Botez and Mihnea Bucovici from 2011 to 2014, the intervention was therefore mainly aimed at ensuring the complex's structural stability and, secondarily, at the restoration of the exterior façades and of the interior frescoed walls. The structural consolidation operations consisted of making a perimeter strip in reinforced concrete inserted on the level of the foundations, and connected transversally by beams, and of using reinforced ring beams to

consolidate the brick vaults; these operations are in fact quite invasive. The works to make the ring beams at the base unearthed the stone slabs of the Medieval pavement, relocated into its original position upon making a perimeter ventilation channel. After removing the steel supports put in place earlier to avoid preventable collapses, perforations were made in to the masonry mass, with subsequent grouting and spot sealing. The surfaces of the exterior walls, already deteriorated due to improper cement patching, had erosion problems caused by rising dampness; moreover, the windows' stone cornices were quite damaged: replastering was not done, opting for an "archaeological" presentation that permitted direct reading of the stone surface, clearly (and in a "dissociative" way) distinguishing between the conservative option for the surviving parts and the more freely invasive one for the supports put in place for consolidation (fig. 88). The restoration then also involved the roof structure which was wholly restored, slightly augmenting its projection and replacing its lining. Lastly, it is to be borne in mind that a fertile, yet still not sufficiently investigated, prospect for research in the area of structural consolidation originates from the significant contribution made to the discipline by Mircea Crisan; these



87. Costesti, Nașterea Maicii Domnului church, plan (photo credit: BNA archive).

89. Bucharest, building in bulevardul Magheru (photo credit: BNA archive).

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design solutions are not impacted by prejudicial subordination to scientific and technological subjects, but, rather, are done through detailed mediation by these apparatus with the knowledge taken on by continuous, uninterrupted work site practice on pre-modern structures and materials. One must absolutely agree with his detailed appeal to the need to conserve the material value of historic architecture: "When confronted to various situations every day, we often wonder what happens with the historic buildings in Romania. (...) Considering the cultural consequences and the extremely delicate nature of the area concerned, the structural interventions on the historic built heritage cannot be given over to improvisations by operators who do not have the necessary experience and to extrapolations of the seismic rules for new buildings. Even if the protection of human lives is an essential criterion within the intervention, this does not mean that the objective of cultural heritage protection should be overlooked, either in terms of image, or of materiality, whose nature ensures its authenticity and thus the preservation of its real value. (...) Structural interventions on historic buildings should not elude the obligation to pass on this heritage to future generations, including the demystified message residing in its authentic physical consistency, i.e. materials, labour, conception, location, which all represent the essence of the value to be preserved" (M. Crisan 2013, 3-4).

A parallel field of operation, not at all distant from that of restoration, relates to the interventions for the functional recovery of buildings, referring mainly to the modern age: these measures, carried out on twentieth-century architectures, are aimed at translating them to the future, without betraying their identity as bearing witness to material history. Of many examples, significant is the one carried out in a building in Bucharest, on Boulevard Magheru (fig. 89), Bucharest's main north-south axis, whose construction was carried out during the grand Haussmann-style urban restructuring promoted by the Municipality in the late nineteenth century, with the aim of bringing order to the urban fabric of the city's central area. Like all those made in reinforced concrete in Romania during the inter-War period, the building required a thorough intervention of consolidation of the resisting composition due to the advanced state of decay of the foundation structures as well as the bearing structures (pillars and beams): these elements, given that thickening them would have distorted the overall design, were replaced where possible. The importance of the intervention lies essentially in the desire to reassess the architecture of the Modern Movement in Romania, whose stylistic authenticity too often goes unacknowledged, through spot interventions calibrated to technical specifications, like those adopted in the construction phase.

#### BUCHAREST, BUILDING ON BOULEVARD MAGHERU

The majority of the buildings overlooking the Boulevard were designed by architects who, on various grounds, may be considered as representatives of the Modern Movement in Romania (Horia Creangă, Duiliu Marcu Arghir Culina, etc.). The building was erected during 1936-37 to house residences and offices; although the design may be referred to Rudolf Fraenkel, an architect who had begun his career in Germany before relocating to Romania, it officially bears the name of Eugen Shimsy.

Built in 1975, the Elvire Popesco cinema is adjacent to the headquarters of the French Institute of Bucharest (IFB); to a certain degree, this required the architect Attila Kim, the creator of the restoration design, to intervene first of all on the atrium of the cinema, considerably enlarged to establish a new relationship of proportion with the main building and to redefine the exterior space, towards the courtyard, as well. The new volume, like the cinema's façade, taller and brought forward to align it with the Institute, took on a finishing in Cor-Ten steel, while maintaining the building's original, nearly minimalist architectural nature (fig. 90).

Carried out in 2014, the restoration intervention also involved the cinema's interior, where the wooden panels that originally lined the environment, considered outdated from the standpoint of acoustical performance, were transformed into a sort of three-dimensional wooden structure that responds to the more modern technical requirements and at the same time incorporates the heating, electrical, and ventilation systems.

An intervention that bears several analogies is the one done on the Victoria Bela Lugosi cinema in Lugoj. Dating to 1956, the theatre originally occupied a large hall in the Hotel Dacia (built in 1912), enlarged to take up part of the appurtenant courtyard with a semi-prefabricated reinforced concrete structure. In 1992, the cinema was divided into two, and the environments were partially modified to obtain commercial spaces. The programme to recover the historic cinema began in 2008, when the municipality of Lugoj purchased it from the owner; the following year, it was subjected to a tender that in 2011 resulted in the drafting of a restoration design by the architect Dan Idiceanu-Mathe; the works were completed in May 2014.

Lastly, worthy of note is the restoration (albeit partially impacted by a certain tendency towards recovery) which, from 2010 to



2012, involved the building housing the Marton e Segito school in Miercurea Ciuc (fig. 91). Constructed between 1909 and 1911 and designed by the architect Sándor Pápai, the building boasts high quality, both in original conception and in the construction phase; however, in recent decades, no maintenance work was done to the building, and this has severely impaired its state of conservation.

The recovery design was drawn up by the architect Zoltán Máthé with the collaboration of the architects Csongor György and Klára Máthé; the main objective consisted of the recovery of the interior and exterior plaster surfaces, the functional restoration of the interior environments, the installation of modern technological plant, the replacement of window fixtures with others done in accordance with the original drawings, and the reconstruction of the roof, whose details (clay shingles and zinc slabs) were also reproduced in keeping with those that had been conserved.

#### Archaeology and restoration

In terms of consistency between theoretical reflection and the design act, a fundamental distinction is to be made between the interventions done on architectures whose function is recognized (or otherwise reattributed), and the restorations done in the areas of archaeological research.

"In Romania," Mihaela Criticos states, "systematic concern over the conservation of ruins and over the connected interventions is relatively recent, which is to say it was manifested only during the second post-War period. (...) The development of the restoration activity introduces the programmatic concern over these monuments, alongside the concept of innovative restoration, applicable in the cases of inclusion of new components in historical complexes, and the use of modern

92. Ruins of the fortified city of Capidava. Aerial view (photo credit: Filmarecudrona.ro site).



93. Capidava, reconstruction of the external wall (photo credit: Filmarecudrona.ro site).



94a - 94b. Capidava, reconstruction of the external wall, details (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2015).



materials and techniques for the integration of elements known from documents, but that have disappeared. Several positions or attitudes in the interventions on the ruins may thus be identified, from integral or partial reconstruction to the preservation of the ruin in its current state, and mixed solutions” (Criticos 2012, 188-189).

The impetus given to excavation activities – which were not lacking even in the years of the Ceaușescu regime (official propaganda encourages both archaeological research and the restoration of ruins, both ancient and Medieval), particularly given the need typical of totalitarian regimes to seek their own cultural references in the past – did not find correspondence in an equally careful operative practice; the practice was often aimed at assisting the recovery of a (presumed) original uniformity of the monument, rather than appreciating the changes imposed upon it by historical evolution. “The fall of communism in 1989 had an ambiguous consequence on the development of urban archaeology in Romania” (Szabó 2016,35).

As to what is termed “archaeological” restoration, certain age-old, deeply-rooted trends persist, towards formal, philologically patterned restoration – when not in fact “free constructions”; the reasons seem to be settled in that marked sense of formal continuity continuously sought in the country, and widely exercised, which in the case of archaeological ruins seems dangerously anti-historic. These principles and modes of approach clearly owe a great deal to the cultural reflection developed (and, consequently, the stylistic orientations adopted) in France. “Unfortunately, the system that we developed during the past decades paid not attention to the international evolutions in matters of cultural heritage (...). There is a lack of debate on the principles and the actual cases between all those involved in the research, enhancement, administration and management of cultural heritage.” (Cătănciu 2011, 205).

Another primary question is the “purpose” of restoration interventions in an archaeological setting; the concept is effectively (albeit probably with excessive rigour) discussed by

Sergiu Nistor: “As today European funding is available to Romania for improving its touristic infrastructure, recently many historic sites were subject of reconstructions. This is not for the benefit of the authenticity and integrity of the built heritage [but] to increase touristic’s flux; their common feature is their highly ‘popular’ interpretation of the historic remains, an exaggerated accessibility or the extensive reconstruction of the ruins” (Nistor 2012, 228). In carrying out the restoration (by no means whatsoever assisted by an ineffective legislation directed at the protection of historic settings), the value of the fragment, and the considerations of the palimpsest, appear to be underestimated, even though, in some cases, documentary research and archaeological prospecting have pointed in a precise direction; this favours a “reliable” reconfiguration, when not a full-blown, typological reconstruction, as in the case of the fortified citadel of Capidava (fig. 92).

The imposing ruins still visible today bear witness to the original

importance taken on over the centuries by this imposing defensive structure situated in the region of Dobrogea, on the banks of the Danube.

A long excavation campaign anticipated the restoration interventions begun in 2013. However, this considerable documentary research did not lead to interventions respectful of the historic palimpsest, privileging, rather, a reconstructive direction (fig. 93) founded upon philological suppositions: the widespread works to reintegrate the masonry curtains, carried out by adapting the original ashlar to accommodate the restoration ones (figg. 94a, 94b), rather than through a shrewd reconstitution work respectful of the positioning planes as well as of the signs of the ancient process, no longer allow the fortification’s original structures – or the transformations that, over the centuries, “marked” the various phases – to be appreciated; even the stone identified for filling the gaps, and the laying and finishing procedures, betray absolute indifference to values.

#### CAPIDAVA, CITADEL

Capidava was a fortified city founded by the Dacians around the first century AD in the region known as Dobrogea, between Cernavoda (the old Axiopolis) and Harsova (lat.: Carsium). During Roman domination, its favourable placement on the bank of the Danube raised Capidava to the role of strategic fortress for the Empire’s defence.

Conquered and destroyed by the Goths in the third century, the fortification was already restored during the following century; it then became an Episcopal see. Sources from the fourth through sixth centuries relate that a cavalry unit – Cuneus equitum Solensium – was stationed in Capidava, bearing witness to the function it still had at that time. The fortification was abandoned after the invasion of the Cutrigori in 559, and was then rebuilt by the Byzantines in the tenth century. Lastly, in 1036, the fire set off during the siege by the Pechenegs led to its final abandonment. The citadel-fortress was laid out in a rectangle, 105 by 127 metres, its walls more than two metres in thickness, and five-six metres tall; the perimeter was defended by seven towers, nearly eleven metres tall (the ones at the vertices of the defensive perimeter were round, and the intermediate ones were quadrilateral); access was guaranteed by a large, arched door set on the southeastern side. On the side facing the Danube, a port was obtained. In the northern corner of the fortress, traces were found of a single-nave house of worship with a semicircular apse. Given the features of its layout, the building may presumably be dated to the sixth century.

95. Alba Iulia, Porta Principalis (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2011).



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What negatively characterizes certain interventions is the articulation in the sense of “pure reconstruction” that fails to respect the values inherent to the original material: the restoration intervention done on the *Porta Principalis* gate of the Roman citadel of Alba Iulia consisted only in the slightest degree of repositioning the stone ashlars brought to light during the excavation campaign, relying rather on new elements that may be distinguished by their mechanical cut (fig. 95). “We can only deplore that the research on the evolution of the camp gate from the earth phase to the late medieval fortress was but superficial. (...) The ‘enhancement’ works and the reconstruction of the gate caused the burial of certain information which will remain

irrecoverable by any supposed new research scheme, directed to a complete investigation into the archaeology of the monument. (...) The appearance of the reconstructed gate is affected not only by the deficient design, but by the ‘accessories’ too, meant to offer tourists a more pleasant access: the new shiny-slabs pavement of the ‘alley’, the wooden railings” (Cătănciu 2011, 204-205). The choice of privileging a “facilitated” reading of the site is explained frankly by Csaba Szabó: “In the last decade, urban archaeology in Alba Iulia developed extremely fast; (...) in recent conditions, the local and national authorities seem to be aware of the great touristic and economic impact of archaeological heritage on modern urban development” (Szabó 2016,38).

#### ALBA IULIA

Alba Iulia rises on the site of the ancient city of Apulum (from the prior Dacian toponym Apoulon), a quadrangular castrum founded by the Romans in the second century for the quartering of Legio XIII Gemina, and later destroyed by the Tatars in 1241.

The clearest testimony of the ancient settlement consisted of the southern gate, called *Porta principalis dextra*, situated in the southeastern area of the eighteenth-century fortress; this is the only one of the four main accesses of which there is a trace, although the few remaining vestiges do not permit a precise reconstruction of its original appearance. It was most likely a double-arched gate, framed by two massive towers seven cannae (about eight metres) tall; the walls, from both sides, were six metres tall, and measured one canna (2.23 metres) in width.

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96. Bucharest, Curtea Veche, external view (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2004).

97. Bucharest, Curtea Veche, underground spaces (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2012).

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A similar disinterest in the original material (the “material document”) appears to be shown by the project being carried out to recover and valorize the remains of Curtea Veche, in Bucharest (SC Polarh Design, București), project started in April 2018 (figg. 96, 97).

In this case, which is also identified as one of the city’s main and most significant testimonies of identity (already in 1967 the subject of an appreciable intervention of reorganization “as a ruin” by Nicolae Pruncu), it appears clear that the surviving masonry fragments, the original structures that were conserved, more than a “scheme” to be critically interpreted, are, rather, taken as a pretext for a design exercise without conditioning, guided exclusively by the desire to assert a contemporary sign. On the other hand, what emerges from a visit to the Citadel of Suceava (fig. 98) leads to different considerations. For more than two centuries, the structure was uninhabited, and prolonged abandonment increased its decay. Only in the early twentieth century did the Austrian architect Karl A. Romstorfer conduct an excavation campaign (1895-1904), followed by the first recovery works focusing on the consolidation of the masonry portions that risked collapse.

More incisive interventions took place between 1961 and 1970, when works of consolidation and partial reintegration of the fortress were undertaken: to prevent the collapse of the masonry walls, the decision was made to complete them in part, raising them several metres, and distinguishing the ancient ruins from



the reintegration portions through the insertion of a profile in light-coloured stone.

The conditions of unstable terrain, which had caused the collapse of part of the northern front of the defensive perimeter, required large-scale integrations in the masonry on this side.

The works also involved the underground environments, covered with a slab of reinforced concrete, and the access bridge, which was consolidated.

Moreover, during the same phase, the chapel built by Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great), and part of the masonry perimeter of Petru Mușat were restored.

The final restoration campaign of the fortress (included in 2004 on the list of historic monuments of Romania), made possible by EU funds, was undertaken by Gheorghe Sion in 2010 and completed in 2014: the outcome outlines a highly “didactic” restoration, in which the need to introduce elements that facilitated the visitor’s itinerary, as well as the presence of redundant distinction elements placed between masonry apparatus belonging to different construction phases, lead to the monument’s “museumification” and its re-insertion into the city’s historical circuit (fig. 99).



On the previous page:  
98. Suceava fortress, external view  
(photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

99. Suceava fortress, detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2014).

### SUCEAVA, CITADEL

The Citadel was built in the late fourteenth century by Prince Petru I Mușat (ca. 1375-1391) after he transferred the capital of the Principality of Moldavia from Siret to Suceava in 1388. The fortress is in fact cited for the first time in a document bearing that date; it is also mentioned in other Moldavian documents in 1393 and 1395.

The castle was laid out in the shape of a regular quadrilateral, with opposite sides of equal length (the east and west sides measured 40 metres, and the south and north sides 36); at the corners and on each side, square defence towers were placed. The walls, approximately 2 metres thick, were of rubble masonry, and inside, wooden beams were placed to contain horizontal stresses. The entrance was placed on the southern side; from here, the central courtyard and the environments placed along the perimeter were accessed. The sovereign’s apartments were placed on three levels, on the eastern side; on the ground floor, there was a large hall where the Council of Princes met, covered by a cross vault.

Archaeological research done in the second half of the twentieth century showed that, in addition to the foundation phase, several other construction phases may be identified; the first may be dated to the fifteenth century, when the fortress was subjected to major improvement interventions (of the fortified system and of the offensive apparatus) by Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) who, noting the need to defend the Principality of Modavia from attacks by Turks, Tatars, and Hungarians, strengthened Moldavia’s defence system: the Citadel was girded by a thick defensive wall, reinforced with three square towers; moreover, to thwart the collapse of the wall of the defensive moat dug on the eastern side, a stone counterscarp was built.

In the summer of 1476, the Suceava fortress was besieged by Turkish armies led by the Sultan Mehmed II: the garrison of soldiers placed in defence of the city, led by Hetman Șendrea, defended itself heroically and the Ottoman armies were forced to withdraw, but the great loss of life and the damage caused by the enemies demonstrated the vulnerability of the perimeter walls and of the square towers against the latest artillery. Consequently, in 1477, the second phase of the fortress’s reinforcement was initiated: the sovereign ordered the construction of a perimeter wall, thicker than the previous one (at least 3.5 metres), defended by seven semicircular towers; moreover, the three square bastions of the first stage were maintained but lined with curved walls, and the defensive moat was enormously enlarged. The entrance to the fortress was moved to the northeast. The reinforcements promoted by Ștefan cel Mare were put to the test when the fortress was attacked again, first by the Ottomans (1485) and then by the Polish armies (1497): in both cases, the defences remained unbreached, demonstrating the effectiveness of the works that were undertaken. However, a different outcome resulted from the siege conducted in 1538 by the Ottoman army led by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, which ended with the capitulation of the gravely damaged fortress.

In the late sixteenth century, it became the residence of the Princes Aron Vodă (1592-1595), Ștefan Răzvan (1595), and Ieremia Movilă (1595-1606). In 1596, the last of the three also implemented a programme to fortify the ancient city walls; the works were then continued by Vasile Lupu (1634-1653) and also extended to the residential environments. However, this was a transitional phase, because the fortress, which in the meantime had also suffered several seismic events, was definitively destroyed in the second half of the seventeenth century (1675) by Dumitrascu Cantacuzino.

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100. Bucharest, str. Lipsacani, rehabilitation of archaeological ruins of Șerban Vodă Inn (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2019).



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Over the last decade, the relationship between archaeological reconnaissance and the conservation process has also changed: “Always having a part of their history underground, ruins can only be restituted in their integrity through archaeological excavations. Taking into account the extreme fragility of these vestiges, we need to emphasize that ruins must not be dealt with only in the interest of science, instead they must be included as

soon as possible in a preservation and conservation process (...). Archaeological research of ruins is not a mere removal of soil to make them visible, but requires thorough digging, through which the entire context of the ruin is observed and recorded carefully. Besides the normal requirements of an archaeological excavation, the archaeologist must pay attention to the characteristics of built structures and their relationships, as well as be receptive to



101. Drobeta, ruins of the fortified city. Aerial view (photo credit: portal.primariadrobeta.ro site).

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the demands of the other participants in the ruins rehabilitation process.” (Marcu, 2010)  
In particular, the restoration of the archaeological remains at times takes on the role of an ontological process during which the needs of conservation and the impetus for knowledge are joined in the same critical act, as in the case of the Șerban Vodă Inn site (that is, the underground environments of a building, now completely demolished, in the centre of Bucharest). Here the architect Marius Marcus Lapadat has provided a very simple and potentially reversible solution: metal beams act as a support for the ancient masonry and also bear the load of a transparent structural glass roof (fig. 100).

During the same years, also by virtue of a broad opening to the research in progress in the rest of Europe, a clear implementation of the debate over the issues of conservation, anastylosis,

and valorization of the monuments of ancient and Medieval archaeology has matured, and this has consequently led to the assimilation of some contemporary trends. In parallel, although suffering from inadequate legislation in support of the practice of protection (Criveanu, 2018), a lively critical dialogue, wholly new in a discipline at times reluctant to adopt critical and interpretative tools outside of “tradition,” has developed. Part of this diversified framework is the interesting intervention of recovery and conservation of the ruins of one of the towers of the fifteenth-century Citadel of Drobeta (fig. 101), carried out as part of the 2007-2013 regional operative programme and concluded in September of 2015. Here, the need to conserve the material document, through minimum masonry integrations carried out for the sole purpose of conserving the building’s structural integrity, prevailed over the desire to impose large-scale integrations based on topology, as otherwise done elsewhere.

#### DROBETA, CETATEA

The fortress was built during the early Middle Ages, probably between 1040 and 1095 (reign of King Ladislaus I); this is shown by the analysis of the materials discovered during the archaeological excavations conducted between 2011 and 2012. The same excavation campaign also brought to light finds (ceramics, coins, glass containers, etc.) with full analogies in the cultural environment of the thirteenth century, demonstrating how the citadel underwent major transformations starting from the mid-twelfth century, by the Knights Hospitaller who made their headquarters there until 1259. Placed on the border – more cultural than geographic – between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, Drobeta was long the ground of military and religious dispute between the Hungarian Crown, the Bulgarians, and the Wallachian voivodes.

After an initial domination by the Romanian princes of Wallachia, who had made it a defensive stronghold against the attempts at a Tatar invasion of Danubian territories, in 1419 Drobeta came under the rule of the Kingdom of Hungary. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the attacks on the fortresses on the Danube grew more insistent: in 1524, the citadel was conquered and destroyed by the Turks.

The original fortress extended over a rectangular area; archaeological excavations carried out in 1936 by A. Barchila also bear witness to six defensive tower, square in layout, and most likely from the fourteenth century. The first fortified enclosure was built in the early fifteenth century; the second, larger perimeter was built about a century later. The same phase also saw the construction of two artillery bastions. In the Gothic age, inside the fortification’s “Place d’Armes,” a church was built, using materials drawn from the Roman *castrum*.



Also worth noting is the careful conservation intervention, aimed at eliminating the biological decay that, in 2016, affected the complex of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, an extraordinary

archaeological site rich with Roman remains, including an aqueduct (built during the time of Hadrian), an amphitheatre, numerous temples, and a theatre (fig. 102).

#### ULPIA TRAIANA SARMIZEGETUSA

Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa was founded on the site of a previous military castrum built by Trajan in around 106 BC, immediately after the conquest of Dacia. It was an administrative and financial centre, and seat of the governor of the province with the complete name Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa; under Antoninus Pius, it was also the seat of *concilium Daciarum trium*, a sort of religious directive body. *Ius italicum*, according to which its citizens were exempted from payment of the land tax, guaranteed to Ulpia Traiana by Septimius Severus in the second century, bears witness to its political standing.

Although threatened by Germanic and Sarmatian barbarian tribes originating from eastern Europe (166-180), it maintained its role as the most important urban centre (metropolis) of the entire province of Dacia; a position maintained even after the Romans abandoned the Region in 271. The city in fact began its decline only in the mid-fourth century.

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Dorin Alicu, *Restaurarea si conservarea monumentelor romane de la Ulpia Traiana*, 'Revista muzeelor si monumentelor', 18, 1987, pp. 63-66.



On the previous page:  
102. Ruins of Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana (photo credit: edițiadedimineța.ro site).

On the current page:  
103. Ruins of Sarmizegetusa Regia (photo credit: RomaniaJournal.ro site).

Also certainly appreciable is the intervention to arrange and valorize the remains of Sarmizegetusa Regia (fig. 103), for which emphasis is to be placed on the rigorous limit that the design, mainly centred upon conserving the material remains, placed upon the contemporary inserts, restricted to the necessary works of protection against improper access to the area.

As to the practice of restoration in archaeological settings, two other interventions, dissimilar in type but sharing the same intent, are certainly worth mentioning. That is, developing a protection system (one temporary, the other semi-permanent) to guarantee the conservation of fragile architectural testimony: the roof of the wooden church in the Crivina cemetery; and the small archaeological pavilions of Calugareni.

The restoration of the cemetery in Crivina de Sus, a small village in the county of Timiș, while not among the interventions in this disciplinary setting in the strict sense, can be connected with it due to the primary objective of conservation, as in archaeology, of the testimonial value of the matter of the architecture. The theme that is posed is also highly interesting because it revolves around certain questions central to the discipline of restoration: the inheritance of technical tradition, and the conservation of common identity.

The interdisciplinary team was composed of Vladimir Obradovici, Raluca Rusu, Alexandru Ciobotă, Nicoleta Mușat, Diana Belci, and Andrei Condoros; in 2013 the project *The Cemetery - Element in Creating a Cultural Landscape* was started. This project, more

than focusing on the “intervention” objective, was aimed at defining a wholly new proposal of research, theoretical reflection, and assumption of values, shared between specialists and the community. To make it possible to carry out the programmed activity (the earliest studies included: performing a 3D scan and carrying out an inventory of the wooden components and of their state of conservation), the temporary placement of a tensile structure in plastic membrane was planned (fig. 104); this experiment made it possible to constitute, in parallel with the start of the restoration work site, a space dedicated to setting up a small, documentary exhibition of the work phases, as well as the exposition of what was found during the research *in situ*. It is also interesting to observe how this virtuous example of collaboration among experts from different disciplines had already been experimented with the year before, as recalled by Dan Mohanu (Mohanu 2013), in the restoration of the wooden church of Ursi, a small village in the county of Valcea.

Built between 2013 and 2016, the pavilions of Călugăreni were built as a temporary exhibition space for the archaeological site of the Mures County Museum, in Transylvania (figg. 105, 106); the architectural design was done by Gergely Sági, and the construction saw the whole community take part.

The pavilions' construction certainly constituted a major challenge: the underlying theme was in fact centred upon the ability of contemporary architecture to make a mark in a reality radically anchored to tradition, in a village where architectural interventions have always been limited to those imposed by

104. Wooden church in Crivina de Sus (photo credit: BNA archive).



rdinary maintenance, and the idea of “form” remains the archetypical one of the house. Supposing that, in that reality, the main value lies by priority in the relationship with the context (the true *genius loci*) while that of “permanence” is summarized in tradition, the response provided by the project arose from the assumption of the intervention’s value of temporariness, mediated by forms as exemplified as possible.

#### Restoration of frescoes

The restoration of the painted plaster in Romania occupies in a certain way a more generally “distinct” disciplinary segment of conservation because of two factors: the significant influence exercised by the orthodox clergy which was rather inclined to favour the maintenance of a “continuity” in sacred depictions; and the attempt to revise a practice consolidated following the open confrontation of the 1960s and ‘70s due to the relationship established between the then-head of the Directorate of Historic Monuments, Vasile Dragut, and Raymond Lemaire, Paul Philippot, and Laura and Paolo Mora, experts from the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of

Cultural Property (ICCROM). In particular, this second aspect was a contribution that was certainly not detailed, but rather a privileged channel for the penetration of advanced theories in the field of restoration, decisive for guiding operations towards conserving the palimpsest, attention to prior analyses, the study of techniques, analysis of the relationship with historiography, and comparison with the founding principles (reversibility and material authenticity above all), removing it at least in part from the commonly pursued goal of formal, mimetic completion. This shows a split in the theoretical approach from conservation of architectural assets, which peaked only twenty years later, when these programmatic assertions were extended to this area as well. A turning point came in 1989 when the fall of the Communist regime also ended the legislation on the protection of the historic and artistic heritage that had “governed” restoration until that time in accordance with the principles expressed in the Venice charter, and that had seen the “achievement of a certain balance between restrictions of historic restoration and a certain creative dimension of restoration interventions, which made it possible to fill in the missing parts, [provided that they were] in the style of



105. Temporary archaeological pavilions in Călugăreni (photo credit: BNA archive).

106. Temporary archaeological pavilions in Călugăreni (photo credit: BNA archive).



107. Bucharest, Coltea church, pronao (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2018).



our age (the “manner of our days,” according to Grigoire Ionescu’s definition)” (Mohanu 2006, 413).

In essence, until the end of the last century, operative practice appeared split between the direction of “reconstruction/renovation” done in the vein of the traditional, French-patterned stylistic line, and the rigorously conservative one (a choice doubtlessly more congenial to the world of orthodoxy), that doubtlessly prevailed: the theme of “gaps in the iconic space, (...) [was an] aspect dealt with in an authoritative fashion by orthodoxy” (Mohanu 2006, 417).

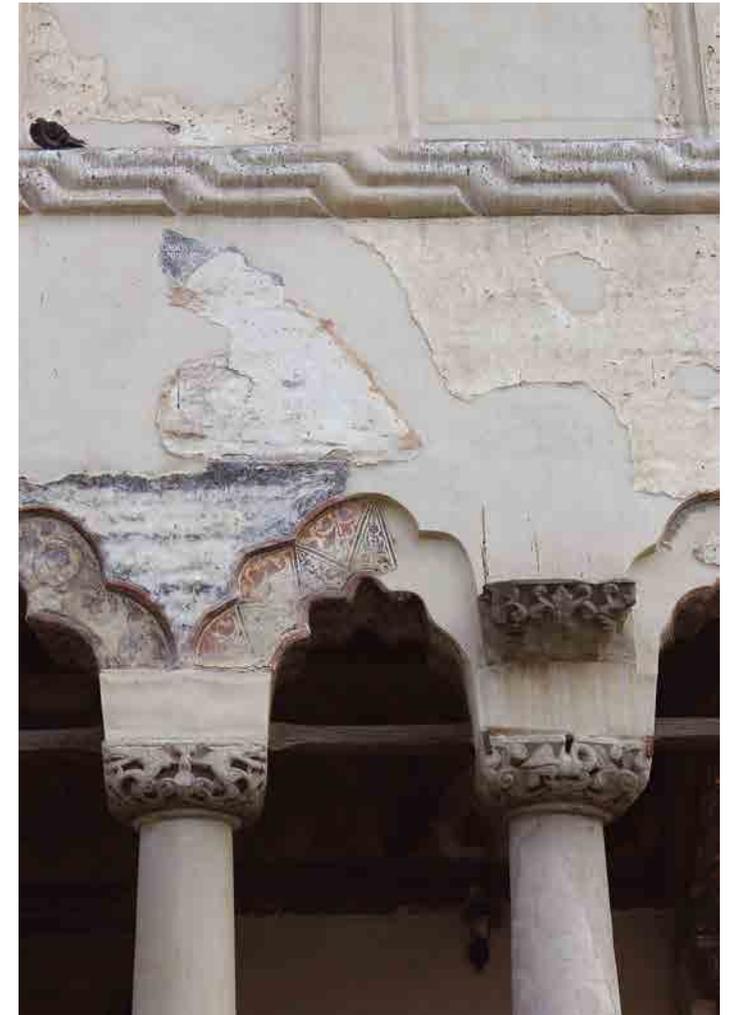
A sufficiently comprehensive picture, albeit circumscribed to analysis of the restoration interventions conducted on the Medieval frescoes in the churches of northern Moldavia, relating to the problem of aesthetic interpretation and to the consequent operativity on wall paintings, is outlined by Oliviu Boldura and Anca Dina in the volume *Pictura murala din nordul Moldovei: modificari estetice si restaurare*, published in 2007, which details the works done, among others, to the church of St. George in Suceava, to the Arbore and Balinesti churches, and to the monasteries of Sucevita, Moldovita, Voronet, and Probota. The outcomes adhering most to the directions of restoration

as critically understood may certainly include that conducted on the plastered surfaces of biserică Coltea (fig. 107), a small, seventeenth-century building in the centre of Bucharest where, rather than yielding to a renovation by analogy of the lost decorative part, the restorers opted for a “patchwork” exercise. It is an intervention capable of favouring the reading of the work as a whole and, together, exalting the value – aesthetic as well as of material testimony – of the fragments of original plaster that have been conserved (figg. 108, 109).

Another example of an operative direction in line with the considerations of a restoration that (in keeping with the constructive comparison with Brandi’s line) tends to negate the reasons of an acritical restoration of the presumed original formal arrangement, in favour of a restoration that takes on the characteristics typical of a critical-operative exercise, is the one led by Dan Mohanu on biserică Doamnei in Bucharest (fig. 110). The church was damaged on numerous occasions by earthquakes that struck the country in 1738, in 1802, and again in 1829; these events were followed by as many repair interventions, that, however, did not always take account of the original formal

108. Bucharest, Coltea church, the restoration of external frescoes (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2018).

109. Bucharest, Coltea church, detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2018).



110. Bucharest, Doamnei church  
(photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2017).

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appearance: in particular, the restoration works done between 1850 and 1860 led to the destruction of the seventeenth-century frescoes present both within the sacred space and in the porch, by the Greek painter Constantinos, which were bushhammered to be adapted to the support substratum for a new painting cycle in contemporary style, the result of the need to “satisfy” the taste typical of the time; a cornice in “fake marble” was also inserted among the various paintings.

In 1868, in place of the original campanile, a wooden structure was built which, damaged over time, required additional interventions in 1906.

The church was declared a historic and architectural monument by the royal decree of 1915; this raised greater interest in the sacred building, an interest that, in 1921-1923, was translated into interventions (done by the painter I. Mihail) aimed at recovering the precious original paintings; these, however, were freed from the nineteenth-century painting stratum only in the early 1930s, when the gaps were treated in “neutral tone” in keeping with the indications dictated by the Athens Charter (1931).

An additional campaign to restore Constantinos’s cycle of frescoes engaged the Directorate of Cultural Heritage, in collaboration with the “Nicolae Grigorescu” National Institute of Fine Arts of Bucharest during the 1972-1976 period. Two years later, works became necessary to repair the damage caused by the 1977 earthquake; these were, however, exclusively urgent interventions: during the 1998-2004 period, the church was in fact again subject to a restoration campaign led by the architect N. Auner and by the engineer C. Pavelescu, involving both the interior and exterior plastered surfaces of the church.

The complex restoration works which were concluded several years ago regarded the church’s entire figurative apparatus. The choice of removing all the repainting and the homologative



111. Bucharest, Doamnei church, the restoration of the frescoes (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2017).

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retouching done over the course of the previous restorations, as well as the intervention of filling in the gaps (figg. 111, 112), done with techniques of veiling and hatching in order to privilege the figurative palimpsest (similarly to what had already been done by Mohanu himself to the diaconicon of the Pitesti Buna-Vestire church several years earlier), mark what may today be reasonably considered one of the most successful examples on the Romanian

landscape.

Still latent today in the church is the problem of the rising capillary dampness that may be ascribed at least in part to the decayed plaster; nor has the closure of the pronaos, which was done recently, significantly increased the possibility of countering this phenomenon, thereby resulting, instead, in a diminished perception of space.

#### BUCHAREST, BIS. DOAMNEI

Biserica Doamnei, now hidden from view by an anonymous block of dwellings constructed during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, was built in 1683 on the site where a wooden church earlier rose, erected in memory of the Christians’ victory in the Turkish siege of Vienna, when Polish King John III Sobieski defeated Kara Mustafa. It was an episode that marked the start of the fall of Turkish domination in Europe. The place takes its name from the second wife of Serban Voda Cantacuzino (1678-1688).

The original type corresponded to a single-environment model, commonly adopted in that historic phase. The base and capital are carved with decorative motifs of oriental origin. At the entrance to the narthex is a rich door carved with floral motifs, topped by an inscription bearing the date of construction and an eagle bearing a cross, the coat of arms of the Danubian Principality of Wallachia.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, Constantin Brancoveanu completed the construction, adding the porch in front, marked on the façade by five arches held up by octagonal columns (the capitals and bases of which are carved with decorative motifs of oriental influence), while laterally, the arches are two per side.

The interior is characterized by a pronaos, topped by a lowered cloister vault set on four arches; a wall upon which three arches resting on polylobate columns are opened divides this space from the hall covered by a cupola in accordance with an innovative concept of organization of space and volumetric composition that, in this Region, characterizes late-eighteenth-century religious buildings, outlining what was defined as “Brancoveanu style.” A painted iconostasis leads into the semicircular apse space.

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112. Bucharest, Doamnei church, detail (photo credit: Stefano D'Avino, 2017)..



Another aspect, among the most important, of the theoretical legacy originating from comparison with the European school alluded to earlier, that emerges by analyzing the current “state of the art” of the restoration of figurative artworks in Romania, is the appeal to interdisciplinarity; to collaboration aimed at the preventive activity of the monument’s case history; to iconographic and stylistic study; to technological analysis on the nature and the state of conservation of the materials employed in the paintings; to monitoring the microclimate; and to identifying the factors of decay. (cf. Mohanu, 2013)

These activities of research and preventive analysis are entrusted to specialists in scientific disciplines who are more and more frequently called upon to corroborate the design hypothesis even when the restoration regards works of architecture – to be sure, well aware of the central importance of the architect’s critical exercise: “There is a major difference between applying certain prescriptions as guiding or open to interpretation, and applying them on a literal basis. Scientific studies are of great help in identifying the limits to the possible uses of various sets of standards when evaluating, designing, and implementing interventions on historic buildings” (Makay, Sándor, 2015).

#### Conclusions

In brief, Romania has been witnessing a restoration practice that is doubtlessly not always coherent, and in which respect for the historic and documentary value, and attention to the aesthetic attribute of the work, the outcome of careful critical assessment and a profound understanding of the structure, sometimes alternate with clear alterations of the historical and formal context.

The framework that has been outlined has cast light on a multitude of approaches to conservation that, along with the albeit widespread trend towards recovery and restoration by analogy - partly justified by “spiritual factor: the quest for the religious continuity and the need for the completion of liturgical space” (Nistor 2012, 230) - reveals a contextual will to overcome the traditional theoretical arrangement of the late nineteenth century, to take on a practice that descends from a careful, preventive historical and critical reading that favours the conservation of the work’s testimonial values.

After a phase lasting about twenty years after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime, during which the restoration interventions, and even more, the debate around the discipline, continued to be affected by the cultural climate that had characterized the country until 1989, the recovery of attention towards architectural

historiography and the influence of the most widespread theories of restoration that were manifested towards the end of the twentieth century, produced a profound change in disciplinary practice.

“In spite of the economic difficulties and numerous other obstacles, it may be stated that in the post-1990 period, the activity of conserving and restoring monuments as historic sites has been resumed, and in fact strengthened, albeit rarely with satisfactory results. Investment, for the most part originating from private parties, has, out of preference, been guided towards urban sites [given their greater visibility] (...) rather than towards rural ones (...) and have regarded both vestiges brought to light on the occasion of works for the construction or modernization of some infrastructure, and architectural complexes that have been preserved as ruins in historic centres” (Criticos 2012, 209). At the same time, “Romanian cities, and Bucharest first and foremost, (...) have undergone a continuous and progressive process of “ruinization.” The proliferation and subsequent demolition of these “premeditated” ruins has constituted (and still results in) the ruin of collective conscience itself, [which is crushed] beneath the artificial and ephemeral crust of a totally new and depersonalized environment, deprived of the noble presence of the past.” This condition has brought about “a legitimate reaction in the collective conscience, and has contributed towards the outlining of a coherent recovery programme, carried out with professionalism, sensitivity, and responsibility, with respect for the memory of the place, but also with regard to the community’s present and future” (*Ibidem*, 212).

During the same period, Romania initiated in fact a large-scale programme aimed at recovering and safeguarding its cultural heritage (Opris, 2003); in spite of this, it appears wholly clear that the country is still suffering from a partially incomplete regulatory framework, as well as from the lack of a solid structure of national protection, endowed with the indispensable legal and regulatory instruments and capable of imposing constraints, programming, and guiding the necessary interventions for a proper restoration policy.

A positively characterizing factor was the relative protection of Romanian historic and architectural heritage from the intrusion of demands normally outside of conservation, largely introduced in other European countries, such as the intensive exploitation of historic and architectural heritage for tourism purposes; (except for isolated cases) this has fortunately made it possible thus far to conserve these remnants more than elsewhere.

A principle characteristic of conservative practice in Romania is

attention to the protection of the vernacular heritage. It is an interest “inspired by the philosophy of the ICOMOS Declaration signed in Quebec in 2008, which led to the definition of a didactic model of integrated research for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of minor settlements; [a study protocol] that was trialed in the village of Bucium, county of Alba, [with the objective] of studying, inventorying, and drafting an index of vernacular architecture. The recovery of rural heritage in situ, understood as an identity value of the community, is thus taken on as a sound alternative for sustainable local development” (Härmănescu 2018, 137; translation from Romanian by the author).

In this setting we have been more and more frequently witnessing the affirmation of formal models drawn from tradition but outlined through the adoption of modern technologies and materials: a substantial re-proposition of the archetypes of the past, articulated in accordance with contemporary modes. The supervening permeability to critical stimuli originating from the European world has inevitably led to openings, being expressed in points, to the planning dialogue between the pre-existing element and the modern grafting, the outcome of wholly new theoretical reflections on restoration, understood as a prevalent cultural problem. This leads the intervention into a setting that is the one typical (albeit with results that are at times contradictory, when the aspiration for an unconditional creativity prevails, thus penalizing the considerations of the pre-existing element) of the recognition and conservation of the work’s authenticity, of the figurative and material compatibility of the new with the old. Lastly, Kazmer Kovacs’s lucid analysis takes into consideration the attention to the work’s indissoluble relationship with the context: “The integrated conservation of the built heritage, beyond its technical implications, involves maintaining historical monuments as inhabited buildings, preserving their precious characteristics that qualify them to be classified as cultural heritage, and to be consequently protected. If we are unable to maintain this fragile balance, all that can be achieved is the conservation of the beautiful, empty shell of an architecture left by the inhabitants, or the risk of those modern values – aesthetic, historic, or commemorative – that the classification has proposed for preserving them from the beginning.

The question is obviously current. With its conceptual, technical, or economic difficulties far from being resolved, cultural heritage is grappling with new dilemmas, due to the social and anthropological components, but also the more acute one of its hypertrophy during the last decades of the twentieth century. (...) A global and complex approach to the field, by corroborating

various territories of knowledge and practice, would suffice for transferring the concerns for our heritage to the more generous and profitable terrain of environmental contextualization. Here, the reconstruction and conservation of monuments might be brought together with a reformulated competence to be built” (Kovacs, 2018, Italian translation from Romanian by the author). The project outcomes and the lively and fruitful debate going on in the Country therefore imply that a constructive and dynamic path of elaboration is in progress in Romania, around the theme of restoration, not necessarily faithfully circumscribable within a not better identified “European vein,” but, rather, autonomously developed, and with current critical tools, but still anchored to the foundations of a tradition of solid design exercise.

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