

EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER:

Romanian Women Artists: Artistic Consecration and Recognition from Communism to Democracy

Cristina ZAHA*

ABSTRACT. *Romanian Women Artists: Artistic Consecration and Recognition from Communism to Democracy.* In the same way as in other countries, the Romanian state, regardless of its form of government, contributes to the art world. The Romanian state has influenced the artistic recognition and consecration of Romanian women artists in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, both in a beneficial and in a negative way. The Romanian state's involvement in the artistic process is evident in its establishment of certain conventions using legal means. The state's legislative and executive powers provide the legal framework for setting up regulations for participants in the art world. By comparing the most relevant aspects that define the socio-political framework of each period, this study aims to analyze how the state, as an actor in the network of cooperation of art world, influenced the artistic recognition and consecration of Romanian women artists in the Communist and post-December 1989 period.

Keywords: *Romanian women artists; artistic consecration and recognition; the cooperative network of the art world; Romanian state; twentieth century and twenty-firsts century.*

* *Studia UBB Historia Artium* promotes promising early-career researchers.

Cristina ZAHA (zahacristina99@gmail.com) is an MA student at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is interested in world art history; Romanian art history; the history of women artists; historiography of art history; cultural heritage; cultural institutions and policies; museum practices; museum education and learning.



Studying the conditions of artistic consecration and recognition of Romanian women artists in the second half of the twentieth century and the early decades of the twenty-first century can be considered another relevant point of view worth to be taken into account in the context of the tendency to recover, from a historical point of view, the presence and contribution of women artists to the Romanian art sphere, which is already an ongoing phenomenon.¹ Using as conceptual tools reference points from philosophy such as the *art world* outlined by Arthur Danto (1924–2013),² from the sociology of art such as *art as collective activity* and *the cooperative network of the art world* that produces the work of art as highlighted by Howard Becker (1928–2023),³ and also taking into account the specifics of the two political regimes, putting in comparison the most relevant aspects defining the socio-political framework for each one, in order to analyze how the state, as an actor in the network of cooperation of art world, influenced the artistic recognition and consecration of Romanian women artists during the Communist and post-December 1989 periods.

In 1982 the American sociologist Howard Becker outlined the concept of art worlds.⁴ His work reinforces and extends, from a sociological point of view, Arthur Danto's philosophical conception of the existence of an art world.⁵ Howard Becker affirms that art worlds involve a cooperative network made up of all the actors whose activity is necessary for the production of art. Thus, he defines the cooperative network as being made up of those members who oversee activities and actively participate in the art world, following certain conventions which may or may not make more efficient the realization, distribution and consecration of a work of art, an artistic creation, regardless of its form of expression. The sociologist also analyzes in the work referred to above when, where and in what way certain members, certain actors in society influence the final outcome of a work of art.⁶ In this regard, he refers to the state as an entity able to establish certain conventions and also able to intervene in the art creation process, exerting a certain degree of control that influences the way in which one of the most significant participants in the art world, the artist, acts.⁷

¹ Cosmin Năsui, *Artiste uitate din România: cercetări și studii despre contribuția femeilor la istoria artei românești* (PostModernism Museum, 2021).

² Arthur Danto, "The Artworld", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61, no. 19 (1964), 571–584.

³ Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (University of California Press, 1982).

⁴ Becker, *Art Worlds*.

⁵ Danto, "The Artworld".

⁶ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 34–36.

⁷ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 38.

Howard Becker is of the opinion that the state, through the government, participates in the production and distribution of art, especially within its borders. The state's participation in the production of art is explained by the fact that it has a legal monopoly over legislative and executive power. This aspect provides the legal framework for regulating the activities of the population, including the activities of the other participants in the art world: artists, dealers, members of the audience, etc. Furthermore, the state, like other participants in the art-making process, acts in its own interests, which may or may not coincide with the interests of the artists.⁸ In addition, political leaders can influence the realization, consecration and promotion of art, choosing to support that art which suits their political beliefs. Therefore, it is concluded that the state pursues certain interests by both supporting and discouraging art.⁹

It is essential and relevant to this approach the analysis undertaken by the sociologist on how the state intervenes in artistic production. As has been pointed out, state intervention can be in various forms, ranging from direct support to censorship or even suppression, state action being most often legitimized by the general public's well-being and social order. Thus, by providing or withholding financial support, by granting or limiting access to distribution, or by depriving freedom or even life, the state, depending on the political regime, exercises its power as an active participant in the art world.¹⁰

Support is considered to be provided by the state when the final work of art maintains the social order or mobilizes the population for only those social causes that are regarded as noble. Art that is supported by the state must therefore conform to certain pre-established conventions, mostly based on laws and political discourse specific to the form of government. Other ways in which the state might support the art world include the preservation of art in museums and the granting of financial or material support to art institutions or various exhibition venues. Financial or material support can be conditioned by the specific subject matter of the art produced. Thus, as Becker also notes, art that reflects national identity is more likely to be supported by the state, both in totalitarian and democratic regimes. Another aspect related to the support given to the art world worth mentioning here is that the state can change its mind at any time about how much it is helping, with what it is helping or with whom it is helping.¹¹

On the other hand, the state is also the actor in the art world that has the power to censor. Intervention in artistic production through censorship has

⁸ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 165.

⁹ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 166.

¹⁰ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 180–181.

¹¹ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 181–183.

several dimensions: destruction of the result, imprisonment of the artist, interference in distribution, attacking the art or the artist, prohibiting the sale, exhibition or staging, and accepting exhibitions only in restricted groups or select clubs.¹²

Howard Becker's exploration of the role and involvement of the state in artistic production concludes the following: the state is a member of the cooperative network of the art world that regulates the working environment at a given moment in time, the state creates the framework for property rights, the state sets conditions for the support of the artists and art, the state limits what artists can accomplish when their art disturbs other citizens, the state especially supports art that contributes to the national image, the state puts limits on support when art can mobilize citizens in a way that is not desired. Therefore, all artists are to some extent dependent on the state regardless of the form of the regime, and it is their art that reflects this dependence.¹³

It is also relevant to mention here that the sociologist's ultimate concern, in the context of analyzing and outlining the art worlds in the paper mentioned earlier, highlights the way in which an artist's reputation is determined by the participants in the art worlds, by extension, determined by the participation of the state. According to Howard Becker, art worlds shape reputations repeatedly, deciding whether a work of art, an artist, an artistic school, a particular style or a particular form of expression is indeed worthy of being emphasized over other similar entities.¹⁴ Also, all participants in the art world are considered to be responsible for producing the circumstances, and the conventions in which art develops, thus contributing to the creation of a good or bad reputation.¹⁵ At the same time, the actors who create the reputation are also the ones who decide whom they take into consideration for it, and it is possible that, depending on certain particular interests such as the state supporting art that reflects national identity, certain artists may be deliberately overlooked.¹⁶ Therefore, it can be affirmed that the artistic reputation of an artist is closely linked to the conditions of artistic recognition and consecration, this being another aspect taken into account in the analysis carried out in this study.

Considering the framework outlined above and starting from Howard Becker's statement that the art world is a mirror of society, in the following I will outline some relevant aspects of the socio-political context of the two periods under analysis. More specifically, I will focus on the conditions of artistic

¹² Becker, *Art Worlds*, 185–190.

¹³ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 190.

¹⁴ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 351–352.

¹⁵ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 361.

¹⁶ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 367.

recognition and consecration of Romanian women in the second half of the twentieth century and in the first decades of the twenty-first century, especially through the way in which the state, as an actor in the cooperative network, contributed to and influenced these aspects. I will refer here to artistic recognition as the way in which the artist is identified as relevant in the artistic field, as seen as worthy and valuable. On the other hand, I will refer to artistic consecration as a way of acknowledging one's ability, and one's special merits in the sphere of art through various means.

The first half of the twentieth century was marked by tumultuous events that took place mainly on the European continent, producing rapid and major changes, especially in the context of the two world conflagrations. These changes were felt more strongly at the end of the Second World War, following the victory of the Allies over Germany on 9 May 1945.¹⁷ For Romania, the end of the war meant the gradual rise of the Communist Party to the leadership of the country, resulting in the forced abdication of King Mihai on 30 December 1947.¹⁸ In this political climate, the idea of recognizing the contribution of women to the effort of defending the homeland during the war years gained momentum, which determined the Romanian Communist Party to adopt a strategy in favor of the political and economic emancipation of women.¹⁹

In 1948, Romania adopted its first communist constitution, which stated in Article 21 that: "Women have equal rights with men in all spheres of state, economic, social, cultural, political and private life. For equal work, women have equal pay rights with men."²⁰ The post-war Communist regime creates equal educational and professional opportunities, giving women greater economic independence and full citizenship.²¹ Therefore, "the state ensured women's access to education on equal terms with men. The state guaranteed the right of women to exercise control over their personal property (e.g. savings accounts, apartment or car) and income, thus protecting their economic power."²²

Women were encouraged and promoted to participate in Romanian art education, which did not happen in the previous period. For example, in the

¹⁷ Alexandru Duțu, *România în istoria secolului XX* (Editura Fundației România de Măine, 2007), 157.

¹⁸ Virgiliu Țărău, "Instaurarea comunismului în România," in *Panorama comunismului în România*, ed. Liliana Corobca (Polirom, 2020), 62.

¹⁹ Virgiliu Țărău, "De la diversitate la integrare. Problema femeii și instaurarea comunismului în Europa Centrală și de Est. Cazul României," in *Condiția femeii în România în secolul al XX. Studii de caz*, ed. Ghizela Cosma and Virgiliu Țărău (Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002), 143.

²⁰ Ioan Muraru and Gheorghe Iancu, *Constituțiile române. Texte, note, prezentare comparativă* (Regia Autonomă Monitorul Oficial, 1995), 115.

²¹ Mihaela Miroiu and Maria Bucur, *Nașterea cetățeniei democratice. Femeile și puterea în România modernă* (Humanitas, 2019), 66.

²² Miroiu and Bucur, *Nașterea cetățeniei democratice*, 66.

study *Women Artists under Communism*, the art historian and critic Cosmin Năsui, after analyzing the degree of participation of female art teachers in the *Republican exhibition of painting, sculpture and graphics of the teachers of fine arts* in 1973 in Bucharest, concludes that art education in the Communist period shows a balanced percentage of women, 92 of them being included in this exhibition out of a total of 224 artists.²³

The state influenced the recognition and artistic consecration of women during the Communist period in Romania, especially through the establishment in 1950 of the Union of Fine Artists,²⁴ an organization that increased the Communist Party's control over artistic life, imposing creative themes and ideological debates in the branches.²⁵ However, it is worth noting the access of women artists to awards such as the UAP Prize, the State Prize or the Artist Emeritus Award: Zoe Băicoianu was Master Emeritus of Art in 1951 and in 1953 she received the State Prize Class I; Geta Brătescu receives the UAP Prize for Decorative Arts in 1965; the artist Eveline-Linica Călinel is awarded the Romanian Ministry of Arts Prize in 1950, while the artist Ligia Macovei is awarded the State Prize Class III in 1951, etc.²⁶ Thus, it can be noted that the Romanian state during the Communist period participated as an active actor in the cooperative network of the art world through the steps taken to recognize the merits and the contribution made to Romanian art by women artists in the form of national prizes. The state also contributes to the artistic consecration of women by facilitating a gender-balanced representation in the sectors of the Romanian artistic world, the gender equality policy of the Communist period being reflected as "an official direction taken into consideration in all fields, including the cultural and artistic ones."²⁷

Another way the Romanian communist state participated in the artistic recognition and consecration of women was by increasing requests for official commissions in various artistic industries, such as book illustration, magazine and publication design, graphic design, monumental sculpture, decorative art, and light industry elements, such as ceramics and textiles.²⁸ One recalls in this regard the work *Young Athletes* by Zoe Băicoianu (1910-1987) which was placed

²³ Cosmin Năsui, "Femei artiste în comunism," in *Centenarul femeilor din arta românească*, vol. I, ed. Adrian Buga and Cosmin Năsui, (PostModernism Museum, 2017), 104–105.

²⁴ Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă, 1948-1953* (Humanitas, 2010), 154–155.

²⁵ Vasile, *Literatura și artele*, 154–155.

²⁶ Năsui, "Femei artiste în comunism," 105–107.

²⁷ Cosmin Năsui, "Câteva considerații despre activismul artistelor în arta românească din perioada comunistă," in *Centenarul femeilor din arta românească*, vol. II, ed. Luiza Barcan and Cosmin Năsui (PostModernism Museum, 2018), 100.

²⁸ Năsui, "Femei artiste în comunism," 100.

at the Sports Hall in Constanța.²⁹ Other women artists who realized monumental sculptures were Ana Severineanu, Iulia Oniță, Ada Geo Medrea, and Lie Doina.³⁰

State involvement in the artistic sphere, in the art world, was also through the granting of certain social rights to women, such as the right to housing, workshops, pensions and social insurance.³¹ At the same time, the Romanian communist state “allowed an unprecedented mobility of women, an encouragement of their participation in the visual arts, so that—according to some estimates—about 850 women were working in one way or another in the visual arts and related fields”³² in the second half of the twentieth century.

The mobility of women, facilitated by state support, is also worth mentioning. This is reflected by the relatively high number of female participants in international exhibitions to which Romania was invited and at which it was most often present: Venice Biennale, Paris Youth Biennale or Sao Paulo Biennale.³³

Thus, artistic recognition and consecration were positively influenced by state participation and intervention, especially when the reflected national identity, being conditioned by the specificity of the artistic content, both in totalitarian and democratic states, and with state support being withdrawn at any time.³⁴ Therefore, the participation of women artists in international exhibitions during the Communist period was carefully supervised and controlled. Women artists who were able to exhibit were supported by the Romanian Communist Party, the nominations being made by the relevant institutions such as the Union of Fine Artists or the Council of Culture and Socialist Education.³⁵ It can therefore be stated in this context that the application of conventions established by the state were namely conventions relating to the form of production, the medium or the agreed theme.³⁶ The conventions imposed by the Romanian communist state were reflected in particular in the themes of the works presented at international exhibitions. For example, when Gheorghiu Dej was in power, the works exhibited abroad had the same theme as the works exhibited in the country and they followed the program of socialist realism, the only one approved by the state at that time.³⁷ A comprehensive analysis of the Romanian

²⁹ Năsui, “Câteva considerații,” 100.

³⁰ Năsui, “Câteva considerații,” 100.

³¹ Cristian Vasile, “Femeia – artist (de stat) în România comunistă. Câteva considerații,” in *Centenarul femeilor din arta românească*, vol. I, ed. Adrian Buga and Cosmin Năsui (PostModernism Museum, 2017), 132.

³² Vasile, “Femeia – artist (de stat),” 133.

³³ Năsui, “Câteva considerații,” 104.

³⁴ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 182–183.

³⁵ Năsui, “Câteva considerații,” 104.

³⁶ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 41–42.

³⁷ Năsui, “Câteva considerații,” 104.

official art from this period is outlined by Monica Oana Enache in her most recent thesis. The research outlines the context of the ideological dimension and the functioning of the communist art industry in Romania between 1944 and 1965, by exposing the institutional mechanisms through which the control and conditioning of artistic production was achieved.³⁸

In contrast, under Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime, the distinction between art exhibited in the country and art exhibited abroad can be observed, the latter being "privileged in several ways (along with the artists): on the one hand, it had to resemble as closely as possible the art practiced in the West, to show the image of a prosperous Romania in tune with the times, on the other hand, after 1982, it was part of Ceaușescu's program to pay off his foreign debt, to which all industrial, cultural and artistic fields had to contribute."³⁹

The Romanian Communist Party not only provided benefits but also eliminated them, limiting the expression of artists. This fact is also noted by the historian Cosmin Năsui, who states the following:

"The Communist regime, like any totalitarian regime, on the one hand privileged a number of artists who put their talent at the service of the Party's orders and ideology, and at the same time purged and physically or symbolically destroyed creators who refused to do so and who had the misfortune of being put on the index by their more eager colleagues or the misfortune of being ideologically assimilated and served other political regimes".⁴⁰

For example, the artist Milița Petrașcu (1892–1976)⁴¹ who was quite appreciated in the early years of Communism, was sued in 1959 for her portrait of the collector Constantin Doncea, which was not approved by the Communist Party. As a result, the artist was forced to leave her home and was marginalized and under-appreciated for many years.⁴² In this context, it is once again highlighted the assertion that an artist's reputation is determined by the participants in the art world, by extension also determined by the state involvement, since all participants in the art world are considered to be responsible for producing the circumstances and conventions in which art develops, thus contributing to the creation of a good or detestable reputation.⁴³

³⁸ Monica Oana Enache, *Arta și metamorfozele politicului. Tematica istorică în arta oficială românească între 1944-1965 (pictură, sculptură, grafică)* (Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2018).

³⁹ Năsui, "Câteva considerații," 104.

⁴⁰ Năsui, "Câteva considerații," 96.

⁴¹ Magda Cârneci, *Artele plastice în România: 1945-1989. Cu o addenda 1990-2010* (Polirom, 2013), 30.

⁴² Vasile, "Femeia – artist (de stat)," 130–131.

⁴³ Becker, *Art Worlds*, 351.

Another important aspect to mention is that the Romanian communist state favored the recognition and consecration of female artists on the leitmotiv of motherhood, especially after the passing of the pro-natalist policy through the decree 770/1966 which was promulgated on 2 October 1966 which prohibited abortion, together with the amendment of the Labor Code in 1972 which introduced new forms of gender inequality, leaving women with the full responsibility for raising and educating children. In this way, the state was reintroducing traditional gender roles, which was not in accordance with Marxist notions of gender equality.⁴⁴

The leitmotiv of motherhood is especially visible in the themes of the exhibitions, because “the role of artists, once recognized as important by the communist regime, was to reflect and transmit the ideology of the party, through the institutions in which they worked and through their work, which became state property.”⁴⁵ A relevant example is the artwork *Spring of Life and Peace* made by the artist Lelia Zuaf in 1952, which was depicted on badges, diplomas, posters, and propaganda materials. The National Council of Women also considers the artwork to be representative of the image of their organization.⁴⁶ Hence, it can be said that Lelia Zuaf’s recognition and consecration are closely related to the intervention and to the participation of the state in a limiting, intrusive way, imposing its political ideology on the artistic theme at the expense of shaping a respectable artistic reputation.

The acknowledgment of the artistic prestige and consecration of Romanian women artists during the Communist period through various awards and their admission in international exhibitions, as well as the granting of a significant number of official commissions, for book illustrations, magazines, publications, monumental public sculpture or decorative arts, for different fields of the industries responsible with art, are clear elements through which the state contributed to the gender equality in the Romanian society, which until that time did not regard the presence of women artists as relevant. Therefore, it can be affirmed that the state in post-war Romania, even if expressed through a restrictive communist regime that conditioned artistic production by political-ideological interests, in the 1980s overlaid with a nationalist discourse, has contributed significantly to the promotion of women’s art and the presence of Romanian women in the art world.

In order to analyze the state’s contribution to the artistic recognition and consecration of women artists in Romania in the post-communist period, it is relevant to outline the socio-political framework as a first step in this incursion.

⁴⁴ Miroiu and Bucur, *Nașterea cetățeniei democratice*, 151.

⁴⁵ Nășui, “Câteva considerații,” 97.

⁴⁶ Nășui, “Femei artiste în comunism,” 111.

At the end of the twentieth century, radical changes on the international scene influenced the course of events in Romania, leading to a democratic reorganization in the social, political and economic spheres. This context is given by the accession to the lead of the Soviet Union of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985, when the political discourse changed with the aim of revitalizing Communism by implementing new practices which had more democratic tendencies.⁴⁷ These new practices, however, paved the way for the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe from 1989 onwards, their implementation influencing the subsequent fall of the Berlin Wall, German reunification and, ultimately, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.⁴⁸

In Romania, the impact of the collapse of Communism in other Eastern European countries was reflected in the switch from a totalitarian to a democratic regime when the anti-Communist revolution ignited in December 1989. This was the climax of a paradigm shift in Romania, which led to the removal of the leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the establishment of a democratic regime.⁴⁹

The international and national historical context required Romania to adopt a new constitution, this time a democratic one. Adopted by referendum on December 8, 1991, the new constitution is still in force today, having undergone only one revision in 30 years due to Romania's accession to NATO and the EU.⁵⁰ Romania began the process of democratization and alignment with the West by signing the Association Agreement with the European Union in 1993. The country also conformed to European standards by adhering to the United Nations Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, by starting the process of adherence to the European Union, which was successfully completed and materialized on 1 January 2007, and by joining NATO.⁵¹

From a social point of view, the post-communist experience represents a re-learning of the way of existing, a so-called "exit from state patriarchy", as the authors of the study *The Birth of Democratic Citizenship. Women and Power in Modern Romania* argue.⁵² Also, as Dan Eugen Rațiu points out in his study *The Arts Support System in a Society in Transition: Romania 1990-2006*, the artistic community after 1990 was strongly influenced by the previous communist model, identifying itself as a subject of public assistance and having a paternalistic-statist attitude that emanated a certain nostalgia for the previous period, especially

⁴⁷ Serge Berstein and Pierre Milza, *Istoria secolului XX. Vol. 3: În căutarea unei noi lumi (1973 până în zilele noastre)* (All, 1998), 154.

⁴⁸ Berstein and Milza, *Istoria secolului XX. Vol. 3*, 154.

⁴⁹ Keith Hitchins, *Scurtă istorie a României* (Polirom, 2015), 320–321.

⁵⁰ Daniel-Mihail Șandru, "Legislația din România după 1989," in *Panorama postcomunismului în România*, ed. Liliana Corobca (Polirom, 2022), 221.

⁵¹ Hitchins, *Scurtă istorie a României*, 331.

⁵² Miroiu and Bucur, *Nașterea cetățeniei democratice*, 252–253.

due to the condition of the state artist which ensured a social status and a decent life. While for some, the December 1989 Revolution and reluctance to change.⁵³

Therefore, the social status of artists is often uncertain in the post-December period. Their socio-cultural position is no longer as important as it was under the communist regime for ideological reasons. Many of these artists have reoriented themselves towards more secure professions. In this context, financial insecurity increases, and many artists, including women, decide to emigrate, some managing to continue their profession, others abandoning it.⁵⁴ In this way, a radical transformation can be observed in the way the state acts as a participant in the art world's network of cooperation. For example, after 1989, the Romanian state no longer orchestrated economic development and job creation as much as it did in previous periods. Instead, it mostly just collected taxes.⁵⁵

The economic difficulties of the transitional period and the incoherence of cultural policies after 1989 are two of the most relevant aspects that define the situation of artists. Insufficient financial resources, inadequate administration, and poor maintenance of public cultural infrastructure under the control of the Ministry of Culture and its subordinate institutions led to precarious conditions for artists during the first post-communist decade.⁵⁶

The diminishing role of the state in the art world after December 1989 is particularly noticeable in the context of the institutional development of the visual arts. State institutional actors, such as the Ministry of Culture and the Union of Visual Artists, were the most important landmarks in artistic recognition and consecration during the communist regime. However, they lost their influence and capacity to intervene in the art world at the expense of private institutions, which became increasingly prominent in the post-December period.⁵⁷

Therefore, in post-communist Romania, the state no longer plays a defined role in the process of artistic recognition and establishment. As the country has turned toward the West, the state's role has been replaced by international institutions, such as private galleries and auction houses: "The valorization of contemporary works and artists is based today more on the association between the international network of private galleries and the international network of cultural institutions, with art dealers and auctioneers, curators, critics, and art agents, collectors, investors, and spectators as the main actors."⁵⁸

⁵³ Dan Eugen Rațiu, "Sistemul de sprijinire a artelor într-o societate în tranziție: România 1990-2006," in *Politica culturală și artele: local, național, global*, ed. Dan Eugen Rațiu (Casa Cărții de Știință, 2012), 117.

⁵⁴ Cârneli, *Artele plastice în România*, 173-174.

⁵⁵ Miroiu and Bucur, *Nașterea cetățeniei democratice*, 256-257.

⁵⁶ Rațiu, "Sistemul de sprijinire a artelor," 126-127.

⁵⁷ Cârneli, *Artele plastice în România*, 171.

⁵⁸ Rațiu, "Sistemul de sprijinire a artelor," 132.

The exhibition sphere of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century no longer reflects the spotlight on women artists either. Their dispersion and assimilation in the various exhibitions organized at the initiative of independent groups can be seen in comparison with the famous state exhibitions organized during the communist regime. The groups *kinema ikon*, *Prolog*, and *9+1*, which were formed before 1989 and are still active, are worth mentioning here.⁵⁹ After 1989, the group *2 META* was also formed, where artist Maria Manolescu was active,⁶⁰ while the *Crinul* group, which was active between 1995 and 2000, included other women artists.⁶¹ The *Rostopasca Group* is also worth mentioning. Active from 1997 to 2001, the group was formed with the contribution of the artists Angela Bontaș and Alina Pențac, who were later joined by Alina Buga and Mona Vătămanu.⁶² One last relevant group is *Apparatus 22*, a multidisciplinary art collective founded in 2011 by several women artists, including Erika Olea, Maria Farcaș, and Ioana Nemeș.⁶³ Therefore, the recognition and artistic consecration of women through exhibitions in the post-December period is becoming increasingly independent from the state's contribution, especially due to the specific nature of their organization as private initiatives.

Several very recent initiatives demonstrate attempts to promote and honor women artists in the post-communist period, in which the state participates to some extent. One example is the organization of the exhibition *Seduction and Triumph in Art. Women Artists in Romania* which was held during the 8th edition of Art Safari Bucharest from 16 September to 3 October 2021 at the Dacia-Romania Palace.⁶⁴ The exhibition was curated by Elena Olariu, Angelica Iacob, Ana Maria Măciucă-Pufu, Cristina Ioniță-Măciucă, and Liana Ivan-Ghilia, and was an exhibition project realized in collaboration with the Bucharest Municipal Museum.⁶⁵

The Art Safari Bucharest initiative to promote women artists continued the following year when at the 9th edition the exhibition *Red, Yellow, and Blue* was organized, an exhibition dedicated exclusively to the work of a single woman artist, Irina Dragomir (b. 1983).⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Cosmin Năsui, "O privire retrospectivă asupra celor 30 de ani de artă românească de după 1989", in *Panorama postcomunismului în România*, ed. Liliana Corobca (Polirom, 2022), 772.

⁶⁰ Năsui, "O privire retrospectivă," 774.

⁶¹ Năsui, "O privire retrospectivă," 774.

⁶² Năsui, "O privire retrospectivă," 774.

⁶³ Năsui, "O privire retrospectivă," 775.

⁶⁴ "About the 8th edition of Art Safari Bucharest," Art Safari Bucharest Archive, accessed September 5, 2024, <https://www.artsafari.ro/arhiva/>.

⁶⁵ "About the 8th edition of Art Safari Bucharest".

⁶⁶ "About the 9th edition of Art Safari Bucharest", Art Safari Bucharest Archive, accessed September 5, 2024, <https://www.artsafari.ro/arhiva/>.

Another unique approach to promoting women artists in Romania has been initiated by the PostModernism Museum, which combines exhibition and research projects. For example, the *Centenary of Women in Romanian Art* project, which opened in November 2017 to celebrate the Centenary of the Great Union, featured an exhibition and an editorial publication realized by PostModernism Museum in collaboration with the Brukenthal National Museum, the Bucharest Municipal Museum and the Braşov Art Museum, in order to emphasize the art made by Romanian women.⁶⁷ Once again, state institutions are collaborating with the private sector, an increasingly accentuated aspect in Romania recently. As a result, support and contributions from non-profit organizations and private foundations have increased the diversity of Romanian cultural life in the post-December 1989 period.⁶⁸

The democratization of the artistic sphere also meant an impediment for women artists, not just flexibility, especially due to the privatization of art institutions and the liberalization of markets, as well as changes in art funding paradigms. Accordingly, the post-December state adopts a fluctuating policy as a participant in the art world's network of cooperation, which destabilizes and confuses the artistic sphere, mainly due to the traditional, individualistic cultural practices encouraged between 1990 and 1996 and 2001 and 2004, as well as the contemporary, universalist cultural practices sustained between 1997 and 2000.⁶⁹ In this climate, "contemporary art sector portraits of Central and Eastern Europe continued to ignore Romania, which remained a blank spot on the map of contemporary art in the first part of the second post-communist decade (2001–2005)."⁷⁰ Consequently, neither the art market nor prestigious international art institutions have become more accessible to Romanian women artists. The exceptions that stand out are mainly male artists such as Dan Perjovschi or members of the "Cluj school of painting" (Adrian Ghenie, Victor Man, Marius Bercea, Mircea Suciu, Şerban Savu, Radu Comşa, Ciprian Mureşan, Mircea Cantor, Florin Ştefan) promoted in particular by Galeria Plan B through personal effort or with the support of private and foreign institutions, in detriment of the support from the Romanian state.⁷¹

To provide a clearer overview of the issues discussed in this paper, it is relevant to briefly mention some aspects of the artistic career development of Geta Brătescu (1926-2018), one of the most famous Romanian women artists,

⁶⁷ Adrian Buga and Cosmin Năsui, *Centenarul femeilor din arta românească*, vol. I (PostModernism Museum, 2017), 7.

⁶⁸ Raţiu, "Sistemul de sprijinire a artelor," 131.

⁶⁹ Dan Eugen Raţiu, "Statul şi cultura: Concepte, valori şi justificări ale politicii culturale în România postcomunistă," in *Politica culturală şi artele: local, naţional, global*, ed. Dan Eugen Raţiu (Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2012), 88.

⁷⁰ Raţiu, "Sistemul de sprijinire a artelor," 126.

⁷¹ Raţiu, "Sistemul de sprijinire a artelor," 126.

who distinguished herself both during the communist regime and after its fall with support from the Romanian state. The communist state supported her through awards such as the 1965 Union of Visual Artists Award for Decorative Arts⁷² or through the support received in both group and solo exhibitions (Căminul Artei Gallery, Bucharest, 1947; Galateea Gallery, Bucharest, 1976, etc.). At the same time, Geta Brătescu was chosen to represent Romania at various international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennale in 1960 or the Tapestry Biennale in Lausanne in 1965.⁷³ The artist is also featured in the specialized art history literature produced during the Communist period. Her artistic consecration is legitimized by her inclusion in Volume II of the synthesis work *Romanian Art*, published in 1982 by Vasile Drăguț and Vasile Florea, where Geta Brătescu is referred to as one of the “most often heard names when talking about graphic art.”⁷⁴

The state’s intervention as an actor in the post-communist art world’s network of cooperation is particularly noticeable in its support, recognition, and consecration of Geta Brătescu’s artistic career towards the end of her life. More specifically, the Romanian post-communist state contributes to the consecration and the shaping of a respectable reputation of Geta Brătescu by choosing her as the Romanian delegate at the Venice Biennale in 2017.⁷⁵ Other initiatives to recognize and promote Geta Brătescu’s art have included exhibitions organized by private entities in collaboration with the state, such as the Art Safari Bucharest exhibitions mentioned above. Therefore, through perseverance and talent supported by the Romanian state and private entities, Geta Brătescu succeeded in establishing herself internationally during the post-communist period. This aspect is particularly highlighted by the presence of her works in prestigious museums around the world, such as MoMA in New York, the Tate Modern in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the MUMOK in Vienna, and museums in San Francisco, Warsaw, and Bucharest.⁷⁶

Therefore, the state’s contribution to the artistic recognition and consecration of women in Romania in the post-communist period is visibly diminished compared to the Communist period. The emergence of a new democratic political climate in Romania after 1989 has led to an opening towards the West, towards an internationalized art world in which the Romanian state

⁷² Năsui, “Femei artiste în comunism,” 105–107.

⁷³ Constantin Prut, *Dicționar de artă modernă și contemporană* (Polirom, 2016), 79.

⁷⁴ Vasile Drăguț and Vasile Florea, *Artă românească*, vol. II (Meridiane, 1982), 375.

⁷⁵ Răzvan Theodorescu and Marius Porumb, *Artă din România: din preistorie în contemporaneitate*, vol. II (Editura Academiei Române, Editura Mega, 2018), 585.

⁷⁶ Elena Olariu and Angelica Iacob, *Seducție și triumf în artă. Femei-artist în România, catalog de expoziție* (Editura Muzeului Municipiului București, 2021), 9.

is giving up its previous role as exclusive advocate and director of Romanian art, in the detriment of new Romanian or foreign private actors, becoming, most of the time, only a co-sponsor of artistic production.

In conclusion, it can be pointed out that the Romanian state has influenced the artistic recognition and consecration of Romanian women artists in the two analyzed periods, both positively and negatively, as an actor in the art world's network of cooperation. The various forms of state intervention in the artistic recognition and consecration of Romanian women during the Communist and post-December periods closely align with Howard Becker's observations from 1982. As in other countries, regardless of its form of government, the Romanian state contributes to the art world. The state's involvement in the artistic process is evident in the establishment of certain conventions, mostly by the use of legal means. Through its legislative and executive power, the state provides the legal framework for setting up regulations for participants in the art world. Consequently, the state has the power to both help and jeopardize the realization, distribution and consecration of a work of art, of an artistic creation and, therefore, of an artist, regardless of the artistic medium of expression. Also, as this analysis reflects, the Romanian state intervened in the artistic recognition and consecration of women artists during the two scrutinized periods in the form of direct support, censorship, and suppression. The state's actions were most often legitimized by general welfare and social order, which often masked the particular vision of some political leaders. Thus, it can also be affirmed that the Romanian state pursues certain interests both by supporting and discouraging women's art. At the same time, it can be said that the Romanian state regulates the work environment of women artists, primarily within its borders. Therefore, all artists, including women artists, are to some extent dependent on the state, both during the Communist period and after 1989, their art reflects this dependence, the state being one of the actors responsible for producing the circumstances and conventions within which they express themselves.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Art Safari Bucharest Archive. "About the 8th edition of Art Safari Bucharest." Accessed September 5, 2024. <https://www.artsafari.ro/arhiva/>.
- Art Safari Bucharest Archive. "About the 9th edition of Art Safari Bucharest." Accessed September 5, 2024. <https://www.artsafari.ro/arhiva/>.
- Barcan, Luiza, and Cosmin Năsu. *Centenarul femeilor din arta românească*. Vol. II. PostModernism Museum, 2018.
- Becker, Howard. *Art Worlds*. University of California Press, 1982.

- Berstein, Serge, and Pierre Milza. *Istoria secolului XX*. Vol. 3: *În căutarea unei noi lumi (1973 până în zilele noastre)*. All, 1998.
- Buga, Adrian, and Cosmin Năsui. *Centenarul femeilor din arta românească*. Vol. I. PostModernism Museum, 2017.
- Cârnci, Magda. *Artele plastice în România: 1945-1989. Cu o addenda 1990-2010*. Polirom, 2013.
- Corobca, Liliana (ed.). *Panorama comunismului în România*. Polirom, 2020.
- Corobca, Liliana (ed.). *Panorama postcomunismului în România*. Polirom, 2022.
- Cosma, Ghizela, and Virgiliu Țărău. *Condiția femeii în România în secolul al XX. Studii de caz*. Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002.
- Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld." *The Journal of Philosophy*, 61, no. 19, (1964): 571–584.
- Drăguț, Vasile, and Vasile Florea. *Arta românească*. Vol. II. Meridiane, 1982.
- Duțu, Alexandru. *România în istoria secolului XX*. Editura Fundației România de Măine, 2007.
- Enache, Monica Oana. *Arta și metamorfozele politicului. Tematica istorică în arta oficială românească între 1944-1965 (pictură, sculptură, grafică)*. Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2018.
- Hitchins, Keith. *Scurtă istorie a României*. Polirom, 2015.
- Miroiu, Mihaela, and Maria Bucur. *Nașterea cetățeniei democratice. Femeile și puterea în România modernă*. Humanitas, 2019.
- Muraru, Ioan, and Gheorghe Iancu. *Constituțiile române. Texte, note, prezentare comparativă*. Regia Autonomă Monitorul Oficial, 1995.
- Năsui, Cosmin (coord.). *Artiste uitate din România: cercetări și studii despre contribuția femeilor la istoria artei românești*. PostModernism Museum, 2021.
- Olariu, Elena, and Angelica Iacob. *Seduție și triumf în artă. Femei-artist în România, catalog de expoziție*. Editura Muzeului Municipiului București, 2021.
- Prut, Constantin. *Dicționar de artă modernă și contemporană*. Polirom, 2016.
- Rațiu, Dan Eugen (ed.). *Politica culturală și artele: local, național, global*. Casa Cărții de Știință, 2012.
- Theodorescu, Răzvan, and Marius Porumb. *Arta din România: din preistorie în contemporaneitate*. Vol. II. Editura Academiei Române, Editura Mega, 2018.
- Vasile, Cristian. *Literatura și artele în România comunistă, 1948-1953*. Humanitas, 2010.