

The Exhibition **Ada Muntean - Black Fire** will be hosted by The Art Museum of Braşov between 17.07-13.09.2015. The opening is scheduled on the 17th of July 2015 at 13:00 o'clock.

The project **Black Fire** represents a visual radiography of the individual's dehumanization in the contemporary society, based on inner conflicts caused by the huge contrast established between what humans desire, feel and perceive as true fulfillment and what the mass media catalogues, accepts and integrates as universally accepted success examples. Ada Muntean's works are very eloquent for the lack of unity between how one assimilates *prêt-à-porter* principles or ideals and the innermost contents of our existence. Nevertheless, it is the nature of these contrasts to cause immense suffering because of one's eternal desire to be integrated and accepted exactly as one is, but this repression of the self can only lead to the new depraved, frustrated and libertine individual. The dehumanized person cannot respect his/her own principles unless the benefit is a material gain. Subsequently, this person cannot reach self-approval and understanding.

Ada Muntean bravely performs her role regardless of consequences, and is fully committed to the creative act, confessing her very own abyssal experiences, moments of inner ruin, collapse or survival. She creates an analogy between one's gradual moral decay and the search for values in the contemporary society, emphasising how material comfort achieved as a consequence of the extraordinary technological development is relative to the road of perdition that man has embarked upon. The artist confronts us with the subtle and insidious brutality manifesting in today's world at all levels.

The artist captures aspects connected to shattered identity, alienation, haunted subconscious, helplessness, loss of innocence and purity of love, violation of privacy, sex, corruption, war and death. These essential coordinates are illustrated through a rough figurative approach in a series of charcoal on paper drawings, a technique masterfully handled by the artist, unveiling characters and objects that recreate everyday life in various stages of its decadence. As dramatic as the characters' emotions are, there is nevertheless an obvious softness perceivable in the curved lines and volumes shaping the nudity of the human body. This smoothness contrasts the vibrant backgrounds created by strikes of white acrylic paint, violently applied with a palette knife, creating atmospheric layers where the characters suddenly spring from their own mysterious origin. The carnal, almost visceral scene representing a woman biting a skull is actually the perfect allusion to the state of awareness concerning the human body's material nature, but at the same time, it alludes to the acceptance of this evanescent condition.

Most of the works are representative for death, the predominant theme which is portrayed in the key concept of *Vanitas vanitatum (All is meaningless)* through motifs such as: skulls, shriveled apples, flaming statues or a vandalized Venus of Milo, suggesting the destruction of classical values. The decay of moral values however, is illustrated by the idea of corruption and also through the blindfolded women's silhouettes suggesting the way they consciously allow their own manipulation. Meanwhile, they shatter their value system, in order to correspond at all costs with the aesthetically pleasing plastic feminine model promoted by the media, one whose beauty can always be manufactured on demand in Photoshop®.

The theme of sexuality is also strongly represented by exploring carnality in erotic scenes, depicting hypostases of hedonism and even sadism, evoking Freud's idea that sadism creates an osmosis between the impulses of death and those of sexuality. Nowadays, sexuality is pushed farther and farther from the very thing that should fundament it - love. The joy of love has been replaced with vanity fed by the countless sexual experiences, presented in a way that is both vulgar and commercial. The drawings suggest the loss of purity and innocence of love and the helplessness one may feel when confronted with obstacles that prevent this feeling from fulfilment.

The theme of war caused by the recrudescence of religious extremism is rendered in drawings through juxtaposing symbols of violence - either a weapon on a woman's crucified body or a brain and heart metamorphosed into grenades, machine guns that ravenously tear appart all flesh and hope. Another symbolic suggestion of violence appears to be an Afghan's woman silhouette with an nimbus shape around her head, basically a subtle allusion to the brutally murdered innocent people during a war they don't belong to.

*Black Fire* exhibition depicts a dramatic spectacle, clearly illustrating how in this world, one experiences both heaven and hell, being painfully born, feeling fulfillment and pain, loving passionately, loosing love, yearning, dying on the inside, crying, insanely laughing and finally being reborn from one's ashes. The chosen title emphasizes once more this dramatic inner torment. Fire destroys, crumbles, hurts, turns everything into nothingness, yet nevertheless the *black fire* is burdened with a more dramatic connotation of these qualities. Metaphorically speaking, only through a total burnout can one eventually obtain purification and, ultimately, any descent into the hell of our own being may bring a change of vision. Each time we live these experiences with such intensity, that we forget our inherent ephemeral condition. However, until physical death, we are reborn time and time again inside ourselves.

Although Ada Muntean reveals an interest solely for the dark side, she does not leave the viewers in complete despair when watching the cynical show played on the stage of everyday life. Her belief is that *Black Fire is a confession about grief, love, destruction, and simultaneously an attempt to find hope when completely imprisoned by darkness*. She does not necessarily intend to provide a moral lesson or to condemn the depicted aspects. Instead, she illustrates the resonance between the abyss in the world and that inside the human being. In this respect, each of us may choose the amount of time to spend in the heavens and hells of our own existence.

## SHORT BIOGRAPHY

**Ada Muntean (b. 1987)**, PhD student at the *University of Art and Design* in Cluj-Napoca, curator at *Visual Kontakt Gallery*, editor in chief and publisher at *Samizdat Art and Culture Magazine* and collaborator at *Arta Magazine*, has developed an intense artistic activity. She is an internationally appreciated young artist whose work has been successfully exhibited in Europe, in the USA (*Inter-Art Exhibition: Nations-Water-Cultures* at the Headquarters of the UN in New York, 2013) and in Latin America (*The International Biennial for small format*

*artworks*, Guarulhos, Sao Paolo, 2012). She participated in important group exhibitions such as: *Intercultural Links (Palais de Nations, Geneva, 2015)*, *Imago Mundi - The Art of Humanity (Casa dei Carraresi, Treviso, 2014)*, poster biennials in Germany and Prague, *L'art qui unit 45 artistes roumains* (organized by the *Inter-Art* Foundation and hosted by the Embassy of Romania in Brussels, 2013) and *Freedom and Art without border* at the European Parliament in Brussels. She has also participated in renowned photography contests including: the *Superbia Suburbia* project at Venice Architecture Biennial, hosted by the Romanian Pavilion in Palazzo Correr, and also the *Young Creative Chevrolet Art Contest* in 2011 where the artist won the first prize in Romania and, subsequently, represented her country in London. Nationally, she has participated in various collective exhibitions such as graphics and photography: *Local Municipalities (Visual Kontakt Gallery, Oradea, 2015)*, *Romanian Graphics (Căminul Artei Gallery, Bucharest, 2013 and 2014)*, *Inner Fire (Foișorul de Foc, Bucharest, 2014)*, *(De) Generation (Visual Kontakt Gallery, Oradea 2013)* and *Art for Children (National Bank of Romania, Bucharest, 2014)*, a charity auction where the artist was invited by Princess Marina Sturdza.

Since 2010, she has been expressing her creativity through challenging conceptual topics and approaches, all centered around the exploration of the human body during dreams or emotions, as well as of the human condition. These concepts have materialized into four personal exhibitions: ***Open Heart Surgery*** (*Casa Matei Gallery* in Cluj-Napoca and *The Institute of Art and Design* in Birmingham, 2010), ***Coordinates for you to Dream*** (*Art Yourself Gallery, Bucharest, 2012*), ***Interfaces*** (*Visual Kontakt Gallery, Ulm, 2013*) and ***Dream Traces*** (*Visual Kontakt Gallery, Oradea, 2013*). Ada Muntean's national appreciation is increasing as some of her works such as *Octavian Paler's Decalogue* were successfully sold by the famous Romanian auction house *Artmark*.

**Translated into English by curator Andreea Pocol**