

Braşov Art Museum



The National Gallery

Braşov 2013



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The **National Gallery*** comprises a selection of artworks (paintings and sculpture) which are representative for Romanian modern art. The exhibition illustrates the evolution of Transylvanian painting between the 18th and the 19th centuries and Romanian art from the first half of the 19th century through to post-war years. Alongside the masterpieces of the Romanian art masters, the exhibition also includes the artworks of the artists active in Braşov, from the Saxon patriciate portraits to the contemporary artist's creations.

The *Portrait of Joseph von Drauth* (1709-1762), senator of the city of Braşov, painted by **Johann Ölhan the Elder** (?-1763), opens the exhibition. [ST] The painting is typical for Saxon patriciate portraiture, a provincial variant of *portrait d'apparat*. The artist insists on the details which indicate that the commissioner boasted a high social status (coat of arms, apparel, as well as on the objects which suggest the official duties he exercised. The City Hall and the buildings surrounding it, depicted in the background of the portrait, are also meant to illustrate his position. But the posture of the model is conventional and artificial. We find the same interest in underlining the social position of the model in the creation of an anonymous artist active in the late 1700s, who painted the *Portrait of Oprea Țârcă*, the head of the shepherds'guild of Săcele. [ST]

* Plan of the exhibition on page 20. Abbreviations indicate this plan.



Johann Ölhan senior
Portrait of Joseph von Drauth



Anonim
Portrait of Oprea Țârcă



Franz Neuhauser cel Tânăr
Panoramic view of Sibiu in 1817

One of the most impressive works included in the National Gallery is *Panoramic view of Sibiu in 1817*, a creation of **Franz Neuhauser the Younger** (1763-1836), the father of modern Transylvanian painting. [ST] Born in Vienna, but settled in Sibiu in 1783, Franz Neuhauser the Younger was a multivalent personality: painter, engraver, drawing teacher, restorer and art collector. *Panoramic view of Sibiu in 1817* is defining characteristic of his landscapes, genre which owes him the first autonomous creations of Transylvanian painting. Resuming a theme he had approached before, Franz Neuhauser the Younger unfolds an ample panorama of Sibiu. The elements of architecture and topography, depicted with great precision, as well as the animated scene of every day life in the foreground – a veritable fresco of life in Sibiu two hundred years ago, make this painting a true visual document.

Foreign artists who settled in the Romanian Principalities in the first half of the 19th century brought forth the model provided by the Western painting. Among them, **Anton Chladek** (1794-1882) who settled in Bucharest in 1835. He was commissioned numerous portraits by the aristocracy of the city. One of these, *Portrait of a Woman*, is exhibited in the Gallery. These foreign artists paved the ground on which the first representatives of modern Romanian painters built their careers and made their names. [ST]

The beginning of the 19th century Romanian painting can be placed under the sign of the Neoclassicism (in the variant of Academicism) and,

to a lesser extent, of Romanticism, as the two often coexisted. Famous representatives of Academicism are, alongside of Gheorghe Tattarescu (1820-1894), Constantin Lecca (1807-1887) and **Mișu Popp** (1827-1892), painters from Brașov. Strongly attached to his place of birth, Mișu Popp painted the portraits of the local notabilities of the time and of the shepherds from Săcele. He dedicated much of his artistry to creating a „pantheon” of personalities who made Romanian history, one such painting being the *Portrait of Mihai Viteazul*, inspired by Egidius Sadeler's 1601 engraving. [ST]

With **Theodor Aman** (1831-1891), Academicism reached its peak in Romanian painting, and even went beyond it. Born in a rich family of merchants, which had just been elevated to boyardom, Aman turned towards an academist artistic formation, the only option that could help him achieve the social prestige he was seeking. However, he was flexible in his approach, integrating touches of *plén-air* in his works. His creation, as well as the part he played in animating artistic life through art exhibitions and through the founding of arts education – he was the first director of the National School of Fine Arts and of the Bucharest Pinacoteca – contributed to setting the stage for the connection between Romanian painting and artistic modernism.

Although he invested much effort in historical painting, superior by Academicist standards and in tune with the national aspirations of the time, he did not neglect portraiture or still life. Renowned portraitist, he painted the *Portrait of Carol Davila*, doctor, founder of the Romanian sanitation system, the *Portrait of Ana Davila*, wife of the famous doctor, as well as the portraits of many other personalities of his time. Neither in these portraits, nor in the *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*, does he shift from the precepts of Academicism. The figures are depicted against a neutral background, in a rigorously objective manner, underlined by the temperate chromatic but not void of a certain interest in investigating the psychology of the model. Aman was the first Romanian painter to consistently approach still life. *Flowers*, as well as other works of the same genre, display



Theodor Aman
Flowers

the artist's prepossession to capture the materialness of each object and the effects of light. [ST]

In the second half of the 19th century, Romanian sculpture evolved under the influence of Academicism which was in some cases evident even after 1900. Two female bust statues, creations of **Carol Storck** (1854-1926), *Woman in National Dress* and *Woman in Fashionable Dress* and also the creations of **Frederic Storck** (1872-1942), *Gypsy Woman Head* and *Worker Head (Moș Florea)*, are examples of this trend. [ST][CH I-II] The two artists belong to a family which excelled in the field of sculpture, their father, Karl Storck (1826-1887), being the first modern Romanian sculptor.

The creations of painters active in Brasov in the last decades of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century are represented in the Gallery by works belonging to **Wilhelm Kamner** (1832-1901), *Portrait of a Man*, **Friedrich Miess** (1854-1935), *Portrait of a Girl (Dutch Girl)*, **Hans Bulhardt** (1858-1937), *Self-portrait* and **Emerich Tamás** (1876-1901), *Self-portrait*, all reflecting the influence of the Central-European artistic spirit, characterized by the blend between Academicism, Neo-Romanticism, Symbolism and Art 1900. [ST]

All those who studied the creation of **Nicolae Grigorescu** (1838-1907) acknowledge the fact that he played an unquestionable part in the modernization of Romanian painting in the second half of the 19th



Hans Bulhardt
Selfportrait



Emerich Tamás
Selfportrait



Nicolae Grigorescu
French Peasant Woman

century. His unique talent and his receptiveness to everything that was new in European art allowed him to pass through all the stages covered by Romanian painting before him. His evolution took him from Neoclassicism, through Romanticism to an art based on the direct study of nature. He unequivocally rejected Academicism. Stimulated by his close contact with the landscapists of the „Barbizon School” (François Daubigny, Théodore Rousseau, Camille Corot, François Millet etc.), his option for painting *en plein-air* distinguished his work. The remarkable success of his 1873 and 1881 exhibitions and the quasi-unanimous appreciation coming from the public as well as from his fellow artists, established his un-rivaled notoriety. Many painters followed in his footsteps. An emblematic figure of Romanian painting, he is considered to be the artist who best embodied the characteristics of national art.

The Nicolae Grigorescu collection belonging to the Museum of Art of Braşov (36 paintings) reflects the artist’s evolution from his formative years in Paris (1861-1869) to the end of his life. The Gallery exhibits works which are representative for all the genres and themes he approached (portraiture, still life, rural scenes and landscapes, war scenes and interior scenes) all illustrating the diversity of a remarkably ample creation.

French Peasant Woman dates from his formative years when, at Barbizon, he worked alongside of Millet and reflects his interest in the model provided by the French artist. [CH I] Grigorescu soon found his own artistic language, clearly outlined in his landscapes. The spontaneity



Nicolae Grigorescu
Peasant Woman



Nicolae Grigorescu
Beach at the Ocean

in execution, the fragmented touches and the luminous chromatic only remind of the Impressionists, but do not result in the desintegration of shapes under the effect of light, which is what happens in their creations. The grounds are clearly differentiated suggesting the depth of the compositional space, but the details fade turning into mere chromatic notations. An original synthesis, Grigorescu's technique sets him apart both from the painters of the Barbizon school, and from the impressionists.

Nicolae Grigorescu's contribution is especially important for Romanian landscape painting. His landscapes rarely lack human presence since the life of peasants unfolds in nature. His vocation of „painter of the peasantry” is indicated by the motifs he favoured and which helped him reconstruct an idyllic rural universe with shepherd boys and their flocks, oxen carts and country fairs etc. (*On the Glade, Children Coming from the Well, Peasant Woman Spinning, Oxen Carts, Crossroad Tavern, Oxen in the Sunset, Peasant Woman Drying the Laundry* etc.). [CH I-II] In his manner of depicting the peasants, living serenely and in harmony with nature, Grigorescu broke with his mentors, Millet and Gustave Courbet. His bias for such themes grew stronger in the final years of his creation, evidently influenced by their huge public success. He employed the same formulas evolving towards a personal mannerism (*Lost in Thoughts, Shepherd Boy*). [CH I] This was his „white period”, when he stumps the chromatic contrasts and shades of white prevail.

If in Romania he painted mostly the flat mountainous region of Muntenia situated between Rucăr and Câmpina (*On the Path, Autumn*), in France he was partial to the scenic views of Brittany. The holidays he spent on the coast inspired him to paint a series of seascapes which make up an important and valuable part of his landscapes. The composition of extreme simplicity of *Beach at the Ocean*, structured as a succession of horizontal strips, suggestively evokes the vastness of the ocean, while discrete human figures - vague touches of brush strokes, hint to its depth. [CH II]

Although not numerous in the whole of his creation, the portraits, still lifes and interiors did inspire remarkable creations. While on voyage to Italy in 1873-1874 his attention was drawn to picturesque local typologies which resulted in *Woman from Naples* and *The Scamp*. Similar motivations caused him to dwell on Jewish figures (*Old Jew*). [CH I] Grigorescu's portraits reveal a spontaneous, very expressive manner, with a tendency towards building the shapes from quick touches of colour, but without denying himself the help of the chiaroscuro. The freedom of his brushstrokes is moderate in



Nicolae Grigorescu
Convoy of Turkish Prisoners

comparison with his landscapes and his rural scenes; they are directed towards depicting costumes and backgrounds and seldom towards depicting faces, which are more carefully finished (*Peasant Woman*). The interior scenes evoking a serene atmosphere (*Needlework*), can also be considered portraits of small dimensions. He also approached still life (*Still Life with Game, Cherry Blossom*) and he adapted his vivacious artistic technique to the challenges posed by the genre. [CH II]

War paintings are also a significant part of Nicolae Grigorescu's creation. He was the designated artist correspondent of the Romanian army during the War of Independence (1877-1878) and he immortalized his impressions in hundreds of sketches made on the front. Direct observation will turn into realism and authenticity in the war scenes he later painted. The spontaneity in execution and the unfinished touches of the *Convoy of Turkish Prisoners* evoke the sketches he made during the war. [CH II]

The works of **Ion Andreescu** (1850-1882) are proof that the example set by Grigorescu bore fruit. Andreescu's destiny was a tragic one, marked by poverty and by premature death, but subdued by the irresistible call of art. Grigorescu's paintings exhibited in Bucharest in 1873 helped confirmed his vocation, but he took a different road than his senior brother of the brush; he shared in his bias for *plein-air* painting, but differed in chromatic, themes and emotions. Andreescu did not share Grigorescu's optimism and his vision of nature and of the rural universe was marked by a meditative and grave lyricism that did not leave room for picturesque and idyllic elements.

During the years he spent in Buzău (1872-1879) as a drawing teacher, years of probing and searching, he painted *A Youth* and *Countryside Houses*. He didn't yet master the means of expression, which is visible in his early works, but an overwhelming and sincere emotion stirred by the motifs compensates his ungainliness. In *Countryside Houses* he lingers over one of his favourite motifs, the „boundaries of a village”. The lowly, desolate landscape, characteristic of the villages near Buzău, is approached in a limited variety of colours, dominated by shades of grey and brown. In 1879 he acquired a scholarship and went to Paris to further his education. Like Grigorescu, he too settled in Barbizon and painted the surroundings, especially the forest of Fontainebleu. Under the influence of the French landscapes and of the Impressionists, his chromatic brightened and his brush strokes gained spontaneity. *Edge of the Forest in Winter* and *Forest Scape* illustrate this last phase of his creation.

With the works of Grigorescu and Andreescu, Romanian painting assimilated elements of the *plen-air* and of the Impressionism, but **Ștefan Luchian** (1868-1916) is the painter who passed on to Post-Impressionism. Luchian's painting was the ideal model to which, more or less consciously, many of the painters of the first half of the 20th century related. His Bohemian and rebel nature rejected any compromise with the official art of the time, still tributary to Academicism, and he spurred the renewal of the Romanian art at the turn of the century when he initiated the Exhibition of the Independent Artists (1896) and when he founded the two societies, „Ileana” (1897) and „The Artistic Youth” (1902). His entire creation reflects exigency in the artistic endeavor, rejection of the conventional formulas and also a remarkable capacity to absorb various influences. Stimulated in his formative years by Grigorescu's painting („everything I know I have learnt from Grigorescu”, confessed the artist), assimilating and then leaving behind the „lesson” of the Impressionism (Manet, Degas), learning from Cézanne and Van Gogh, dwelling on Art 1900, Luchian blended these creative impulses in a



Ion Andreescu
Winter

personal artistic language which reflects a closeness to the aesthetics of Symbolism.

Before Luchian, the urban universe was almost absent in Romanian painting. An out and out city dweller, he found his models in the slums of Bucharest, where he lived for a long time. Landscapes, scenes of every day life, the characters he portrayed, all come from this peripheral world (*Laundering at Dusk, A Gypsy Woman*). [CH III] Flowers are an important part of his work. In his final years of creation, immobilized by illness, the artist was often forced to resort to such modest themes. A born colourist, he turned his flower paintings into veritable „chromatic symphonies”. Meticulously arranging the flowers in small clay pots, despite the scanty means he could resort to, he was able to create new compositions. His flowers are set against neutral backgrounds which enhance the chromatic harmonies, the luminosity of the corollas - suggested by intense, saturated tones of colour applied by spontaneous, vigorous brush strokes. In *Anemone* (1910), one of the masterpieces of this phase of creation, Luchian reaches a perfect concentration of the artistic expression which reflects the intensity of the emotions stirred by the motif.

Together with Constantin Brâncuși, **Dimitrie Paciurea** (1873-1932) is an outstanding representative of Romanian sculpture, sharing in his denial of Academicism, which was prevalent at the beginning of the 20th century, and in his option for a modern artistic language. Paciurea did not abandon the figurative, but attenuated it evolving towards a symbolistic expression manifest in a vigorous and expressive fashion. Strange and



Ștefan Luchian
Laundering at Dusk



Dimitrie Paciurea
Water Chimera

fantastical shapes imagined by the artist convinced the exegetes to place his creation in the world of Expressionism or Surrealism.

Accomplished portraitist, Dimitrie Paciurea is the author of a series of portrait busts representing famous figures of the national and universal culture. His portraits show an acute capacity of psychologic investigation and capture essential traits. The bust of Ștefan Luchian is a peak of his creation in which the tormented, but accurate modelling suggestively expresses both the struggle of the model and the empathy of the sculptor.

[CH III] Other works which define his creation are those which portray grotesque, imaginary creatures. Mythological representations (*Head of a Faun*) and the *Chimera* series show an aching desire to escape reality by entering an imaginary world born of his anguish and torment. Now, the artistic expression simplifies, it gains clarity and aims at the purity of the essential shape (*Water Chimera*). [CH III]

Romanian painting in the first half of the 20th century, with a profile, clearly outlined in the interwar years, followed in the footsteps of Grigorescu, Andreescu and Luchian and developed an artistic language which blends Impressionism, Post-impressionism and elements picked up from Byzantine painting and traditional Romanian art. The alternatives to this prevailing spirit, the Avantgarde and the „New Realism”, remained marginal. Romanian artists were permanently connected to the evolution of the artistic centres of Europe, to the contemporary stylistic models, assimilating influences not mimetically, but through a spirited dialogue. Adhesion to circles structured around a coherent aesthetic programme was rather an exception. The artists preferred to work independently,

contouring compelling individualized artistic expressions where certain influences yielded to their own vision. Landscape painting, influenced by the discovery of Dobrudja and of the Orient holds sway and adds a constant preoccupation towards defining a national feature in art, which was sought in the idealized image of the traditional Romanian village.

A powerful individualism characterizes the creation of **Theodor Pallady** (1871-1956). Descendant of an old family of boyars from Moldavia, his strong connections with the refined Parisian environment which polished him and his proud and eccentric nature, made him a distinguished figure in the world of Romanian art. His painting reflects an over-particular rationality and a striving for classical strictness. Pallady did not copy nature, he wanted to go beyond it. His credo was: „What does not go beyond reality is not art”. The echos of Symbolism and of Art 1900, the fresco and the Medieval embroidery, to mention but a few of the sources of his creation, blend in an artistic language where „modernism” and elitism are appropriated with naturalness. A loner by nature, he gradually reduced his thematic repertoire from cityscapes (*Houses*) to interior scenes and still lifes (*Woman on the Couch*, *Nude on the Divan*, *Still Life with Roses*, *Still Life with Pipe*) in which his systematic spirit could manifest itself. From his artistic conception derive the distinctive characteristics of his technique: the superiority of drawing over colour, the



Theodor Pallady
Nude on the divan



Gheorghe Petrașcu
Still Life

diluted, almost transparent paint, the moderate chromatic, the flattening of volumes, the inclination towards decorativeness and the stylizing of shapes.

The creation of **Gheorghe Petrașcu** (1872-1949) is the antithesis of Pallady's art. The study of the old masters (Tizian, Rembrandt, Velasquez), the absorption, through a personal filter, of the modern artistic tendencies led him to a unique artistic manner. Petrașcu does not want to move beyond the sensitive reality, beyond the visual sensation and he refuses conceptualization. The painter „thinks with his eye”. His interest turned towards expressing the concrete, the materiality, towards the mineral, anorganic world. Both his favourite themes (old buildings, still lifes, interiors void of human presence) and the paint, thick, succulent, richly laid in successive coats, giving birth to worked, well contoured and well-marked materiality, confirm this option. In his landscapes he vacillated between modest motifs, peasants' houses and suburbs (*Wine Cellar at Nicorești, Houses in Siliștra*) and places marked by a prestigious past (Toledo, Venice). The cycle of paintings dedicated to Venice (*Landscape*) have a temperate vision which denies the picturesque and a precious chromatic which evokes the colours of the Venetian school of painting. When he painted seascapes (*Rocks by the Sea, Seashore*), Petrașcu created motionless images where the sea seems oddly solidified. The *Still Life* on exhibit defines the manner in which Gheorghe Petrașcu

approached the genre, building monumental compositions where the objects are invested with a grave materiality.

Iosif Iser (1881-1959) is one of the first Romanian painters to discover Dobrudja. Attracted by the rugged beauty of the landscape, but especially by the exotic human typologies, Iser adopted them as favourite subjects for his creation. The paintings on exhibit, *Composition*, *Woman with Banjo*, *Odalisque* and *Seascape*, illustrate this choice and his pictorial style, characterized by a combination between a vigorous drawing and an intense, expressive chromatic.



Iosif Iser
Seascape

With his paintings, **Nicolae Tonitza** (1886-1940), continues Luchian's creation. This continuity is rendered evident both by thematic and by stylistic similitudes. Tonitza spreads the colours on ample, whole surfaces obtaining impressive decorative effects enhanced by flat rendering, expressive drawing and enhanced contours, elements that extend and deepen certain aspects of Luchian's last creations.

His tendency to simplify, to distill the essence is apparent in the way he portrays children: reduced but to a few sketches, merely suggested (*Portrait of a Child*, *Portrait of a Little Girl*), as well as in the pictures he painted in Dobrudja (*Tartar Women*, *House*). [CH IV]



Nicolae Tonitza
House

The works of a pleiad of artists, **Ipolit Strâmbulescu**, (1871-1934), **Ștefan Popescu** (1872-1948), **Aurel Băeșu** (1896-1928), **Octav Băncilă** (1871-1944), **Camil Ressu** (1880-1962), **Nicolae Dărăscu** (1883-1959), **Francisc Șirato** (1877-1953), **Jean Alexandru Steriadi** (1880-1956), **Ion Theodorescu-Sion** (1882-1939), **Leon Biju** (1880-1970), **Sabin Popp** (1896-1928) exhibited in the National Gallery complete the complex image of

Romanian painting in the first half of the 20th century. Responsiveness to Impressionism (Ipolit Strâmbulescu, Aurel Băeșu, Jean Alexandru Steriadi, Nicolae Dărăscu), various artistic formulas of Postimpressionistic extraction (Francisc Șirato, Ion Theodorescu-Sion, Leon Biju) and approximation to Realism (Octav Băncilă, Camil Ressu) are some of the options manifested in these works. [CH III-V]

Among the painters from Brașov, **Hans Mattis-Teutsch** (1884-1960), **Hans Eder** (1883-1955) și **Elena Popea** (1879-1941), asserted themselves as personalities of Romanian art in the first half of the 20th century. Active both in the European and in the Romanian Avantgarde, Hans Mattis-Teutsch was one of the few inter-war artists who embraced the principles of Abstractionism, as seen in *Soul Flowers*. [CH VI]. Resorting to grotesque and to caricatural in *Fish Market in Bruges* (1911), Hans Eder anticipates his adhesion to Expressionism, option which influenced his entire artistic evolution. [CH VI] Born in Brasov, Elena Popea was a travelling artist, continuously exploring geographies (Brittany, Holland, Italy, Spain, The Middle East, Egypt etc.) and transferring her experiences to an original creation (*Procession in France, Bridge in Toledo*). [CH III]

Outstanding personality, **Ion Țuculescu** (1910-1962) was radically original in shifting from the direction followed by the Romanian artists before him. A microbiologist and a doctor by profession, he was a self-taught painter. Țuculescu moved off from the figurative tradition of Romanian painting integrating decorative motifs of the traditional Romanian art. In the last phase of his creation, known as the totemic phase, when he painted (*Descending Totem, Tree Trunks, In Nature*), his artistic language purified. He limited the figurative suggestions to the minimum outlining a quasi-abstract artistic space dominated by three symbolic motifs: the eye, the trinity and the totem. [CH V]



Nicolae Dărăscu
Venetian Scape



Elena Popea
Bridge in Toledo



Hans Matis-Teutsch
Soul Flowers



Ion Țuculescu
Descending Totem

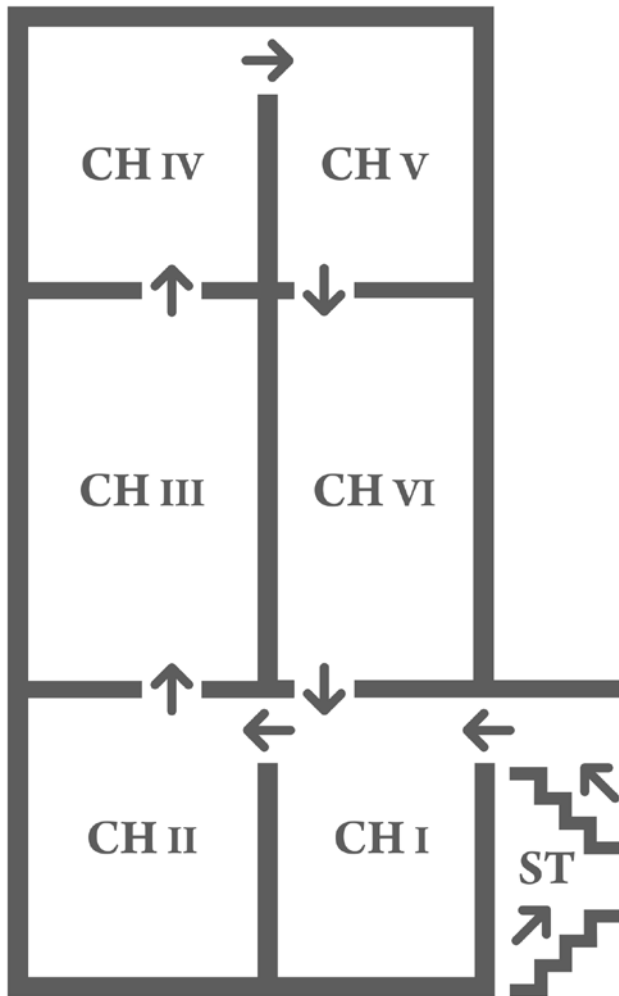


Ion Pacea
Composition II

The diversity of tendencies present in post-war Romanian painting, from Abstractionism to Naive Art, is illustrated in the last two chambers of the National Gallery. The works of **Corneliu Baba** (1906-1997), **Alexandru Ciucurencu** (1903-1977), **M. H. Maxy** (1895-1971), **Aurel Ciupe** (1900-1988), **Petre Abrudan** (1907-1979), **Ion Musculeanu** (1903-1997), **Alexandru Țipoia** (1914-1993), **Vasile Baboie** (1914-2001), **Sever Frențiu** (1931-1997), **Ion Pacea** (1924-1999), **Horia Bernea** (1938–2000), **Ion Gheorghiu** (1929-2001), **Virgil Almășanu** (1926-2009), **Traian Brădean** (b. 1927), **Ștefan Câlția** (b. 1942) indicate an openness towards the formal language of the Avantgarde (Cubism, Expressionism, Surrealism etc.) but also a continuation of inter-war painting. [CH V-VI] The creations of **Ion Irimescu** (1903-2005), **Ovidiu Maitec** (1925-2007) and **Florin Codre** (n. 1943), sculptors active in the post-war decades, are also exhibited. [CH IV-VI] More representatives of the artistic life of Brașov, **Artur Leiter** (1904-1987), **Zina Blănuță** (1913-1998), **Friedrich von Bömches** (1916-2010), **Eftimie Modâlcă** (1936-1991) and **Teodor Rusu** (1935-2005), are present in the exhibition. [CH VI]



Ovidiu Maitec
Sweep



ST Stairs **CH** Chamber

