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**Addendum to the History of Action Art  
in Transylvania and Szekler Land**

**DLA Dissertation Theses**

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## **Subject: Sepsiszentgyörgy, the Transylvanian Action Art Center**

The purpose of the paper hereto is to provide an answer to the following two questions: How was it possible for a small Szekler town – Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) – to become the Center of Transylvanian Action Art? And what was the reason for which this region known for its traditionalism and conservatism decided to naturalize action art?

## **Purpose: Researching and Analyzing the Local Characteristics of This Genre**

Art history has not dealt sufficiently enough with the detailed history of the Romanian Action Art. The purpose of my PhD thesis is to make this kind of art more popular and to provide more information on the Transylvanian – and especially on the Hungarian - characteristics of this genre.

By means of this addendum I wish to add information left out in the notes, analyses and syntheses of Ileana Pintilie,<sup>1</sup> Magda Cârneci,<sup>2</sup> Adrian Guță,<sup>3</sup> Novotni Tihamér,<sup>4</sup> Szücs György<sup>5</sup> (to mention the most important art historians).

## **Content Structure**

After presenting the introduction and the topic chosen the author of the paper hereto details the definitions and subgenres of action art. This step is followed by the description of Transylvanian and Szekler Art Centers. Furthermore, detailed information are offered on the origins of action art and its significance in these regions, then the most frequent topics and the local characteristics of this genre are enumerated. The most important publications dealing with Transylvanian Action Art are also presented and attention is given also to postcolonial aspects of Romanian Art History.

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<sup>1</sup> Ileana Pintilie Teleaga, Romanian Art Historian and University Professor in Timisoara, Romania

<sup>2</sup> Magda Carneci (1955, Garleni, Bacău County) Romanian poet in Bucharest (Pseudonym: Magdalena Ghica), art critic and writer

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Guta, (1956, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) Romanian Art Historian and University Professor in Bucharest

<sup>4</sup> Novotny Tihamér, (1952, Tata) Hungarian Art Writer in Hungary

<sup>5</sup> Szücs György, (1960, Budapest) Hungarian Art Historian in Budapest

In the following chapter the author of the paper hereto analyses the official and unofficial art spreading in Eastern Europe, especially in Romania during the ‘thaw’. This is followed by the description of the Transylvanian Action Centers before the fall of communism: The 111 members in Temesvár (Timișoara), the Sigma Group, the MAMŰ from Marosvásárhely (Târgu-Mureș) and their Action Art and Land Art activities performed at Vizeshalmok are presented and described. This is followed by the short presentation of the MAMŰ activities in Hungary. This description series continues with Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) and with the enumeration of the tendencies in contemporary progressive art in Nagyvárad (Oradea). The cultural life of Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe) in the 80s and Medium ’81 epoch-making exhibition are analyzed in a separate chapter.

In the next chapter the description of a few characteristics applicable in case of the Transylvanian Action Art is followed by an analysis focusing on the connection between the transition and the action art.

The basic structure of the dissertation hereto is given by the 1990 – 1999 AnnART – International Living Art Festival, whereas the beginning focuses on illustrating the preceding events and the legacy of Baász Imre. The chapter to follow begins with the analysis of Szent Anna (Saint Anne – Sfânta Ana) Lake, as a place of ‘dating’ and as location, whereas the connection between these two characteristics is also debated. The detailed description that follows focuses on the last ten years of the AnnART Festival-Series, thereby containing information also on the main participants, and on the art and subject characteristics. The conclusions are synthesized in a subchapter.

The summary of the dissertation is included in the chapter ‘Akcióművészet ma’ (Action Art Today). The Image List is followed by the Appendix concentrating the subjective memories about AnnART of the following three artists: (Bartolomé Ferrando – Valencia, Seiji Shimoda – Nagano and Artur Tajber – Krakow), and of the two following art historians: (Adrian Guță – Bucharest and Szücs György – Budapest).

The dissertation closes with articles and studies about the AnnART Festivals, followed by the bibliography, by the locations where versions of the text may be found and by my professional curriculum vitae.

## **Conclusion: Transylvanian Action Art is internationally recognized**

As active representative, artist, organizer, documenter and sometimes chronicler of Transylvanian Action Art I can undoubtedly state that this genre is very well entitled to the social respect it receives.

Action Art has played an important role in maintaining the cultural identity of the Hungarian minority from Transylvania and has significantly contributed to the internationalization of the Hungarian artists from Transylvania. The Transylvanian community benefitted of the possibility of meeting the most important international representatives in its own home, whereas Transylvanian artists presented subjects and events typical for this region when performing abroad.

## **Applied Research Methods and Techniques**

The ground stone of the research work carried out was given by the professional debates and conversations I had had with several persons. This aspect of the research was completed by the correspondence started in 2005 and by the filled in questionnaires, both referring to action art. Another crucial source used for the purpose of writing the dissertation hereto was the curriculum vitae of the Transylvanian Action Artists and the data sheets based on various descriptions and drafted on the request of the author. Hence the author of the dissertation hereto managed to obtain accurate and precise information, a great contribution to the research work carried out.

Another method for gathering the required information was of course the research carried out in libraries. During this process the author of the dissertation hereto focused on the publications which had appeared in the timeframe relevant for the dissertation, and on the information provided by various magazines, and by every day and art publications. It is to be mentioned that the most important textbooks on the topic were also considered. The author's passion for collecting current art publications proved also to be of utmost importance.

In 1995 the author of the dissertation hereto founded the ETNA Foundation. The archive of this foundation proved to be another valuable source of documentation, containing a continuously updated collection of publications on action art: Correspondence, photographic documentation, video and audio recordings, catalogues, albums, books, invitations, posters, leaflets, artistic stamps etc. – all these sources of information proved also to be very valuable and useful in the process of writing the dissertation hereto.

Last, but not least, the author also applied the very important method of debate. Consequently the final structure and content of the dissertation hereto was given by the very fruitful and detailed conversations with the consultants. The author of this dissertation hereby wishes to thank the consultants for their valuable contribution.

## **Transylvanian Action Art – The Rearguard<sup>6</sup>**

Contrary to the anarchist<sup>7</sup> characteristic of the avant-garde<sup>8</sup> art, the Transylvanian Action Art acts as *rearguard*<sup>9</sup> (to put it in military terms) thereby actively protecting values, ensuring conservation and saving heritage by testing new genres, and searching for, and implementing, respectively, new connections.

The results of the research carried out by the author clearly indicate that the Transylvanian artist focuses on local patriotism, and on protecting the city. The rearguard characteristic is given by the fact that the local elements are protected against the global ones. Other protected important

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<sup>6</sup> The task of the rearguard is to protect the retreating unit against turmoil and attacks, delaying the approaching enemy troops. In this case heavy artillery, technical troops and infantry are thrown into battle. <http://hu.metapedia.org/wiki/Ut%C3%B3v%C3%A9d> (05. April 2012.)

<sup>7</sup> Anarchism (comes from the Greek ἀναρχος) is a political philosophy including the theories and ideas supporting the elimination of any binding government ... Many famous persons were killed by anarchists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This terrorism like anarchism attempts to destroy the state and the government by means of sabotage and terrorism ... The connection between avant-garde culture and anarchism is also very strong, especially in case of surrealism and Dadaism: <http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anarchizmus> (05. April 2012)

<sup>8</sup> The expression ‘avant-garde’ (comes from the French „avant-garde”, i.e. ‘outpost’ in military terms) includes all the art and literature trends, which appeared at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and have significantly changed the perception of culture and culture itself. (<http://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avantg%C3%A1rd> (2012. ápr.5)

<sup>9</sup> The task of the rearguard is to protect the retreating unit against turmoil and attacks, delaying the approaching enemy troops. In this case heavy artillery, technical troops and infantry are thrown into battle. <http://hu.metapedia.org/wiki/Ut%C3%B3v%C3%A9d> (05. April 2012.)

aspects are: cultural heritage, national and Christian values, nature, fixed assets and intellectual property. These are not only protected but also preserved.

### **List of Subject Related Resources**

- Despre Festivalul Zona Europa de Est, fesztivál katalógus, 1993, Temesvár (Timișoara), 68.
- Médium 4 - Az Etna Alapítvány szervezésében, *Háromszék*, napilap, 1997. június 7., Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), 4.
- AnnART la varsta de 10 ani, *Artelier*, havilap, Bukarest (București), 1999. 3–4.sz. 38.
- AnnART X – puncte de vedere, *Arta* (új sor.), havilap, 1/2000, Bukarest (București), 36.
- Akcióművészet 1978 és 1998 között Erdélyben (I. rész), *Erdélyi Művészet*, folyóirat, Litera Könyvkiadó, 3/2000, Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), 21–27.
- Akcióművészet 1978 és 1998 között Erdélyben (II. rész), *Erdélyi Művészet*, folyóirat, Litera Könyvkiadó, 1/2001, Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), 16–22.
- Akcióművészet 1978 és 1998 között Erdélyben, Tulsó P'Art, 8. Art Camp, Tihany 2000, a kiállítás katalógusa, 2001, Budapest (Budapesta), 44–51.
- Action Art in Transylvania between 1978-1998 / L'Art Action entre 1978 et 1998 en Transylvanie, in: *Art Action 1958-98*, antológia, kiadó: Inter, szerk: Richard Martel, 2001, Québec (Kanada - Canada), 441–452.
- Akcióművészet 1978 és 1998 között Erdélyben, Tulsó P'Art 1992–2002, 10 éves tevékenységet bemutató kiadvány, Tulsó P'art Kiadó, 2002, Budapest (Budapesta), 3–5.
- Tendenciák az Erdélyi akcióművészetben, *Erdélyi Művészet*, folyóirat, Litera Könyvkiadó, 1/2004, Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), 21–29.
- El Arte Acción en Transilvania entre 1978 y 1998, in: *Arte Acción 1958–1978*, 2. kötet, antológia, IVAM Documentos 10, kiadó: IVAM, Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, szerk: Richard Martel, 2004, Valencia (Spanyolország - Spania), 360–380.
- Eruptio 4 en Roumanie (Eruptio 4 Romániában Eruptio 4 în România), *Inter, Art Actuel*, kortárs művészeti folyóirat, kiadó: Les Éditions Intervention, szerk: Richard Martel, 2007. tavasz, Québec, Kanada (Canada), 56–57.
- Az ETNA Alternatív Művészeti Csoport rövid története, *Erdélyi Művészet*, folyóirat, Litera Könyvkiadó (Editura Litera), 1/2008, Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), 7–17.

- Coopération ou individualisme. La brève histoire du groupe d'art alternatif Etna, Transylvanie, *Inter, Art Actuel*, kortárs művészeti folyóirat, kiadó: Les Éditions Intervention, szerk: Richard Martel, 2008. tavasz, Québec, Kanada (Canada), 38–40.
- Erdély találkozott Mexikóval, *Háromszék*, napilap, 2008. november 22., Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfântu Gheorghe), 1–5.
- Transylvanie – Mexique (Erdély találkozott Mexikóval), *Inter, Art Actuel*, kortárs művészeti folyóirat, kiadó: Les Éditions Intervention, szerk: Richard Martel, 2010 tavasz, Québec, Kanada (Canada), 34–35.
- Festivalul de Arta Vie AnnART 1990-1999, *Arta*, 4-5, 2012, UAP kiadó, szerk: Magda Carneci, ISSN: 0004-3354, Bukarest (București), 36-41.
- Introduction á une étude sur l'art action en Transylvanie, *Inter, Art Actuel*, kortárs művészeti folyóirat, kiadó: Les Edition Intervention, szerk: Richard Martel, 2012 ősz, Québec, Kanada (Canada), 94-95.