

# CATALOGUE OF OSTROV ART CAMP 2013

## Ostrov Art Camp 2013

The project *Danube Spirit in Port Communities*, implemented by Constanța Art Museum, Lower Danube Museum Călărași as Romanian partners and Ruse Municipality - Art Gallery as Bulgarian partner, through the Romania - Bulgaria Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007 - 2013 financed by the European Union continues the programme from 2008 and 2009. For the two consecutive projects, right from the (sub)title it is stated the synchronic inclusion and the type of approach: the river is a *generator of local and cross-border synergies* for the first project, and the *Danube Spirit in Port Communities* for the second one. These two projects don't exhaust the multiple sides of the theme (in fact this type of approach was never a goal) as the Danube, the most important European river, is on its own an opened and extensive subject that can be discussed in various scientific fields like history, geography, geostrategy, economy, marketing, ecology, mythology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, culturology, imagology, etc. The Danube River was, through time, boundary and obstacle, an exponent of progress and identity symbol, strategic couloir and cultural model. A lot was spoken and written about the Golden Fleece - mythical trophy for which the Argonauts crossed the river's waters, about Romans, Vandal warriors and the empire's margins, about the Danube limes and fortifications, about "a river of sounds, deep and secret language of the gods", about this dustless path, about the Danubian concept and strategy, about cross-border spaces and regional identity.

To define the *Danube Spirit* is a even more complicated process as it would require (even if only from a contemporary perspective) to give up to some strict, objective, many times quantifiable points of view, in favour of imagination and creativity, of subjectiveness and image, of sensitivity and inner experience. When the topic of the river is discussed only related to the banks of the two riverain countries partners in these projects, Romania and Bulgaria, the explanations must comprise, from different perspectives, the South - North, East - West bridges (finally created and accepted, although often brutally cut off and toilsomely re-done), as well as their junction in a specific and authentic central European ethos.

To analyze the *Danube Spirit in Port Communities* on the two banks (and in the sea port Constanța, also a fluvial port through Dunăre - Marea Neagră Canal) means in fact to choose a new forthcoming criterion for the already selected habitat. As a great Romanian

architect said in the interwar period about the sea ports, although his remarks can be extended to the fluvial ports as well: “the port-cities, just like capitals, have a symbolic and representative role. These are the places where a country is in direct contact with the world... A port is never isolated. *In a port there is seldom a regional feel. Here the goods lead the ideas... A town by the sea is closely related to the port.* So, Constanța can be considered a negative example... its connections to the city are remote. The port is placed to the outskirts of the city. The town doesn't embrace it, like in Geneva for example. In Constanța, the well equipped and modern harbour is juxtaposed to the city, it is not included into it...

The issue with our cities on the banks of the Danube is completely different. Most of them are ancient settlements, long time companions of the large river. Time tried to do what town planners didn't. With only a glimpse is clear that these cities are bound to the Danube like fruits of one branch. Almost all of them have one quay -that is the port and a more or less regular road network serving it. Many of them have a map like chessboards.” George Matei Cantacuzino's statements from 1933 about the port planning are not available anymore: Constanța is no longer near the city, but rather embraces it, while the most important settlements of the Danube are now spread into the land and not limited to just few streets towards the quay. The relation between city and the harbour is a tight one, although some disruptions, mental stereotypes (the most important one for Tomis/Constanța being that of exile, disseminated over centuries by the social status and lamentations of the poet Publius Ovidius Naso), dissociation, and mutual neglect perpetuated over the last decades. This is the niche for *Danube Spirit in Port Communities*, this is what it wants to shape, is the mixture of behaviours and mentalities whose structure is to be modified. Its actions, through the paintings and the sculptures done by the Romanian and Bulgarian artists in Ostrov camp, on the Danube, have particular qualities that only art can generate, release and communicate: the balanced distinction of the messages, the eloquence of the universal language, the aesthetic joy of the actors and of the target groups, the dissemination area and intercultural character.

The artists - five Romanians (three from Constanța, two from Călărași) and five Bulgarians , from Ruse and its surroundings - are deeply connected to the Danube, most of them being born in waterside cities: Florin Ferendino and Laura Nistorescu-Seniuc in Constanța, Lelia Rus-Pîrvan in Tulcea, Mugur Coman in Ciocănești - Călărași, Valentin Georgiev in Targovishte, Bulgaria, Vyara Georgieva Guneva, Krasimira

Kirilova, Irena Parashkevova in Ruse, while Victor Grigore and Rumen Mihailov were born near by - in Slobozia and Tutrakan.

In *Thoughts from the camp*, all artists confess they are influenced by the Danube area: Florin Ferendino was drawn to the “stillness of waters, the chromatic symphony of sunrises, the fabulous greenery of the ponds, the mysterious shadows of sunsets with their violescent aura, when the sky addresses the waters in colours. I was enthralled by the completely special light (...)” said the painter; and indeed the crystal-like clearance of the special light radiates its peace - through vast and clear perspectives, through the hardness that impregnates the shapes and underlines the forms - to the seen world. His paintings completed this summer in Ostrov serenely display graphic elements and profound contents under the equal intensity of Southern sun.

Lelia Rus-Pîrvan remembers: “The winding terrain of the home town, placed on hills, with its wavy streets is still in my soul and, just like a matrix, made my mind go back to these water rounded shapes. Two shades are fresh from back then: the ochre of the steep behind the house and the silvery green of the willows.” Indeed, in front of the large and soothing sights of hills and holms, the deep rives of the clay, the young artist chose the warm colour as dominant, the colour that cherishes the lines, that sets the rhythm of the plains into whose green insinuates, curtsying to the river and its flow.

The multiethnic universe of ports - says Laura Nistorescu-Seniuc - everyone’s life story, “the specific trading, all these put together represent a small space opened to the world. In a port is the entire Earth.

My creation is influenced by these onsets (by childhood, our note), by the colours and the reflections of the watery universe, the constant flow, the Danube banks and seashores, from where I could never detach myself.” Laura Nistorescu-Seniuc always needed for her paintings and drawings vast spaces where chromatic lines with monumental vocation become rightful citadels. In the works done during this camp, the artist placed the hill to the far-reaching airy horizon line. Landscape’s elements break through the foreground into a harmonious crescendo, just like the wave that is translucent or opaque in his unfolding, full of colours and values.

Victor Grigore is sure that the “Danube landscape, very different from that in the North, has a two-type specific light: bluish and reddish”, just like the one that reflects even on its interior compositions; the artist tried to capture the Danube Spirit, filled in the past with myths and ceremonial practices, through a woman’s nude on whose face a huge interior struggle seems to be taken up by serenity.

When he says that “Danube flows unto everyone, healing us”, Mugur Coman knows that even the artists can benefit by her thaumaturgic powers, although they have trouble finding the elixir for “the yearning for beauty” (if they somehow would have such a wish). Not only that the artist is not free from his concern for the beauty of the form, but in fact can be considered a prisoner of it, and spectators to all these are the sculptures done in a steady rhythm in the camp from Ostrov. Concerned by the materials’ requirements - stone, plaster - in Mugur Coman’s compositions the characters try to break out of conventions and patterns through attitude and meaningful gesture.

Valentin Georgiev discovers, contemplating the impressive flow of the Danube River, “two souls in a dance of love. Almost like the two ends of the river, although in opposition they have indubitable similarities (...)

Night merges the day embracing this particular festive palette.” In an abstract topos the characters seemed to be connected to theatre, to the idea that the world is a stage, a scene, a popular ancient rite or just a personal code. Geometrical forms, individual or unitary dynamics, the colour with different degrees of saturation depending on an ascending or descending rhythm, all give expressive form to this mysterious and festive ensemble.

Although born in a city that seems “hanged over water”, dividing the banks, Vyara Georgieva Guneva had to travel from East to West to discover the powerful magic of the river that “doesn’t reside in the narrow limits of its universe, but in knowing it as a whole.

The river people are the most important source of inspiration...

I consider them as persons of deep contemplation. They know to wait patiently the tide, they ride with the wind that doesn’t disclose the mystery of its direction.” In Ostrov Summer Camp 2013, Vyara Georgieva Guneva solved the puzzle and stopped any zephyr in a moment of clarity and light. To avoid the narrow limits of the horizon, the artist abandons it completely and brings separate objects in our visual field, fills it up with water lilies, apples, leaves, pots, banks, hills, birds, churches, waters and clouds. The women nudes, tridimensional embodiments of the Danube, represent the ages of the river, always older, but always ageless.

Krasimira Kirilova confesses: “Here, in the Lower Danube area, I see a different side of the river. She is the same - vegetation, colours, riverbed and clams, but at the same time her beauty multiplied on many branches, floating reed islets and forests. I see her as an energy generator, a vehicle of time and life.” So the paintings done in the time spent in the camp are concentrated, centred, with an ebullient force and vigour. The scenery, seen from above, with its elements and

objects, occupies the entire visual field, juxtaposing ornamental and reiterative forms. The warm colours prevail but they are counterbalanced by the curves or the diagonal of “the dustless path” that imperiously and configurationally dominate the image.

Searching for the Danube Spirit, Rumen Mihailov found it in the strip of molten silver, in the waft of birds and dreams, in its myths and legends, in “the smell of reed” and the sound of waters, in the “stone citadels of eternity, in the grapes like beads of the vineyards, in the silence of the monasteries’ enclosures, in the songs of the fishermen.” He put all these in ample collages dominated and structured on both banks by the transversal line of the Danube. The artist’s visual effects are so powerful, that we can believe he is horrified by the void. He wants to put on canvas the mysterious cohabitation of the river with its birds, flowers and places, he wants to render the smell of the fields and the sounds of the ruffles, even the silent magic of the infinitude. For this he associates objects and sensations, he looks for affinities, finds the perfect measures and local colours.

Born in Ruse, Irena Parashkevova looked every morning from her balcony the indivertible course of the Danube to the sea. To the East, in Ostrov, she admired “during these ten days - the silence and the glow of the Danubian villages, the wish to step on the other side of the stoop, to identify with the people inside, with those on the hills, with the grapes from the vineyards, with the islets.” Right from the stoop, the artist knew how to look inside the house and into the persons living there, but also outside, towards the bright horizon, touched by wavy lines. This double view generated in the foreground relations of amiable vicinity, but also vast embracing perspectives, where vineyards, orchards and fields are displayed. The sharp lines, vivid and contrastive colours, the frame around the centre of the image alluring our eyes into the deep offer a radiant, persuasive stamina.