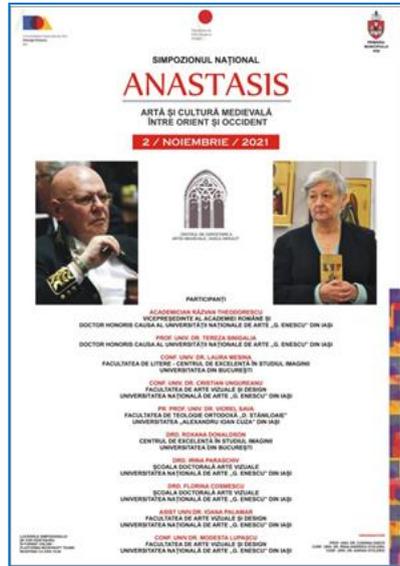


The National Symposium "Medieval Art and Culture between the Orient and the Occident"

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"Medieval Art and Culture between the
Orient and the Occident"
the 2nd of November 2021



The pandemic has not succeeded to detain the organization, this year also, of the National Symposium **Anastasis – Art and Medieval Culture between the Orient and the Occident**. Although shortly before the beginning of events, there was still a lot of uncertainty, many of the proposed activities being cancelled or postponed, the main event of the symposium, the scientific lectures held by the invited guests was done online, on the 2nd of November 2021. Having the nostalgia of the times when these types of impediments had not appeared yet in the projection of the cultural-artistic events of the Research Centre of Medieval Art "Vasile Drăguț", this year's edition of the symposium (organised by Professor Codrina Ioniță, Associate Professor Irina-Andreea Stoleriu and Associate Professor Adrian Stoleriu, PhD from the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from Iași) was held entirely online, through the means of online communication (the platform Microsoft Teams of "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași).

Continuing the tradition opened a few years ago, by organizing cultural-scientific events having as main focus the interest for the research of art and medieval culture between the Orient and the Occident, this year's edition of the symposium has reverted to the general theme of previous editions, which is inexhausted in form and content, regarding the diversity of approaches and studies which can be done in this large territory of knowledge. Medieval art between the Orient and the Occident has represented the thematic challenge addressed to well-known personalities of our contemporary culture, with a rich research experience in the historical and cultural autochthonous and universal space, having in the centre the Academician Răzvan Theodorescu

and the Profesoor Tereza Sinigalia, PhD, both of them holding the distinction of Doctor Honoris Causa offered by "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași.

The papers of the symposium were opened by Mr. Academician Răzvan Theodorescu, who presented the lecture having the topic "East-European Art and Spirituality from Iconoclasm to Kandinsky". The treated subject has envisaged political and spiritual peculiarities which, once the end of the Roman Empire started (*Imperium Romanorum*), towards the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th century, have defined that "pars orientis" (the oriental part of the Empire), the large space of Christianity, of constitutional hierarchies (the tetrarchy), of Caesarpapism, of the apophatism of the Greek parents of the Church. Having a bird's eyeview on the history of this space, Mr. Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu has revealed three moments in which monumental art, architecture and painting have expressed major specificities of theological thinking and of Byzantine philosophy, for more than one millennium. We are talking about the iconoclastic period of the 8th-9th centuries, of the isichastic one of the 14th-15th centuries, but also of the rediscovery of the Middle Ages around 1900. Evoking the significant role that the Byzantine icon has played in this context, as a materialization of the dogma of the two natures – divine and human - of the Saviour, it has also been noticed the major importance of the sign of the cross, in a new artistic climate, lacking sacred images, a sign which has become, in time, a fundamental ecclesiastical symbol of Christianity. There were underlined key aspects of artistic and spiritual evolution, reminding moments, personalities and significant monuments. From the current parietal ornament, to the ecclesiastical and spiritual symbol of redemption through the suffering of the Saviour, the cross appears in numerous representations, indicating over centuries the Christian origins of today's Europe, also as an obvious inheritance of iconoclasm. From the initial cross, as a parietal ornament, to the cruciform architecture of stavrocentric monuments, that replaced the Paleochristian basilica plan of the first Byzantine period.

Another important phase of the East-European spirituality, extraordinarily presented by Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu was that of Palamit Hesychasm between the 14th-15th centuries, in which the accent fell on mystic meditation, silence, prayer, and the revelation of the light from Tabor, that marked the history of the paleolog Byzantium and of the spaces influenced by it, among which the Romanian Countries, numerous monumental examples from this era are a proof in the East-European space.

Finally, the third analysed East-European register was the one of Russian modernity, in which the Middle Ages has represented a common denominator of cultural unity. Based on the crisis from Russia from the beginning of the 20th century, the appeal to the local medieval elements, enriched by the Russian religious philosophy of Vladimir Soloviov and the

one of Nicolae Berdiaev, proposes a new change of vision by analysing the destinies of Russia, through the accent on the medieval period. The Christian sociological anthropology defined by Serghei Bulgakov, Pavel Florenski, the studies of the Byzantine period of the school represented by Vasilevski, Kondakov and Uspenski, enriched the cultural revolutionary area of that period.

Modern artists use the medieval imaginary, as a source of medieval inspiration, announcing a true creative avanguardism, having W. Kandinsky as the main representative, as a link between the Russian and the Western culture. In this cultural environment, the icon is rediscovered, becoming a symbol of Russian spirituality, signalling the obvious signs of a new modernity, based on the tradition of medieval and modern Orthodoxy.

The next lecture belonged to another important representative of the research in the field of art and medieval culture which is autochthonous and universal. Mrs. Professor Tereza Sinigalia, PhD, presented the research having the title "Iconographic Themes from the 13th-16th Centuries and their Balcanic road towards Moldavia", stirring the interest of the participants through the richness and relevance of the presented information. It was also underlined the relevance of the presented information. It was presented an image of the Balcans from the 14th century, having direct connections with secular history, politics, religion, art and culture in Romanian Countries. It was signalled the importance of travelling of people and ideas in the field of arts, and also of the travelling of painters with their luggage of iconographic models, which facilitated the transfer of some compositional themes fully agreeing with the Liturgical message of the Church, defining an iconography which will become, in time, almost canonical. There were also numerous exceptions, drifts and innovations of this specific iconography, in order to support certain ideas and dogmatic concepts. Regarding Moldavia, it has searched for models and painters capable of expressing his political and religious ambitions, magisterially reflected through mural paintings, without copying the models of Balcanic painting, but adapting them to autochthonous specificity. Mrs. Professor continued to present some of the multiple iconographic themes which could have been approached in this cultural space, among which a special place is held by the scene called *Deisis*, meaning prayer (Greek), which has known a large spreading in the entire Balcanic space. Explaining the iconographic, theological and artistic meanings of this scene, the presentation was enriched with numerous examples and case studies which stir interest for interdisciplinary research, by the stylistic connections with the Byzantine cultural and imagistic inheritance. Moreover, there have been evoked other iconographic representations having specific meanings, among which the images of the Virgin Mary, of the Saviour Christ represented as an emperor and bishop, underlining the peculiarities, the differences regarding the artistic manner and

the interpretative meanings of such themes from an area to another (Macedonia, Serbia, Epirus, The Romanian Countries). The analysis of the chosen images did not limit itself only to the above-mentioned aspects, but it also underlined numerous compositional, portrait or chromatic features, opening new ways of analysis over the evolution of iconography in the Balkans, placed at the conjunction of oriental culture with the one of the Occident.

Furthermore, the next lecture having the title "Art as History, History as Art. The Prince Neagoe Basarab approached in a new manner" belonged to Associate Professor Laura Mesina, PhD, from the Doctoral School "Space, Image, Text, Territory" (SD SITT) – The Centre of Excellence in the Study of Image (CESI) of the University of Bucharest. Mrs. Mesina described a long trajectory in the analysis of new approaches of visual European cultures and of the historical and cultural references of Neagoe Basarab. The research was developed in an interdisciplinary manner, outside the history of art, from a field of interflow of visual cultural studies, cultural histories and the history of ideas, around the concepts of imaginary, representation, power or collective memory.

Furthermore, the collective imaginary is the one which has the ability of representing or underlining the meaning of the power rendered through image. The presented ideas smoothly connected to the next lecture of Mr. Associate Professor Cristian Ungureanu, PhD, from "George Enescu" National University of Arts from Iași, having the topic "Meanings of Geometric and Symbolic Anatomy in Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholy*". The idea of collective memory found its correspondent in the area of visibility artistically transposed, the feeling of melancholy rendered in the painting of the German Renaissance artist being described in extremely eulogistic terms in the writings and commentaries of the exegetes from the periods that followed. The analysis of this important work of art has led to its presentation in complex formulas, being regarded as an allegory of deep thinking, as an expression of iconography and painting tradition, a true unprecedented lyrical confession of Northern art, or even an allegory of virtue, opening numerous ways of reading and analysis of this work filled with metaphoric, symbolic, geometrical or alchemical meanings.

The multitude of meanings which shape the interdisciplinary analysis of such an artistic creation with deep overtones also in the spiritual plan has opened the way for the next invited guest of the National Symposium "Anastasis" Art and Medieval Culture between the Orient and the Occident, that is Professor Viorel Sava, PhD from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology "Dimitru Stăniloae" from "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University from Iași, having the topic: "Church Architecture and the Adornment of a Cult Sanctuary – Mundane Clothes for Divine Worship". The research has underlined the theological meanings of the sacred (Liturgical) space, and its

dual connotations: the one of physical, earthly space, respectively those of divine or celestial space, having sacred meanings, sending to the sacrament of God. According to the Christian vision, the Liturgical space is vowed to God, being taken out of the current usage of the secular world and introduced in the sphere of divine worship. All these ideas have been supported by relevant case studies, offering examples and punctual iconographic analysis from the interior Liturgical space of the church "The beheading of St. John the Baptist" from Iași. The priest Professor has underlined the fact that the understanding of these aspects has an extremely important role in saving the mobile and immovable heritage from our country, by the culturalization and spiritualization of traditional communities which will assure the non-dissolving of our national identity.

To continue, the next presentation was the one of Miss Assistant Ioana Palamar, PhD from the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from the National University of Arts "George Enescu" from Iași, having as topic: "Selfportrait between Normality and Psychosis". The author has underlined the fact that the idea of portraying reflects a series of psychic latent needs of self-expression, stored in the artist's subconscious, selfportraying being understood from this perspective as a form of visual therapy or of visual representation of the most hidden human feelings. Selfportrait marks existential crisis and the healing of some self-conflictual situations at a psychic level, the present research searching for bridges between the level of psychic expression and the one of artistic expression. In the context of an event dedicated to art and medieval culture, in which portraiture has played a significant role in transmitting the deepest or the most relevant ideas through iconography, the research of Miss Assistant Ioana Palamar, PhD is the expression of interdisciplinarity in this field of research, finding numerous connections with other branches of knowledge, such as the one of fractals and the theories associated with them, evoked in the research of Miss Associate Professor Modesta Lupașcu, PhD from the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design from Iași, having the title: "A Study about 3D Graphics in Culture". By introducing and developing a series of notions and specific fundamentals, such as the connections between the inferences of semiotics and digital artefacts 2D and 3D, her research has underlined the appearance of some digital surrogates or of some digital environments, based on epistemic premises having a special role in different fields of study. It is particularly interesting the connection that the author of the study makes with these concepts which are specific to the digital culture of the contemporary period, with a series of decorative motifs, such as entrelac motifs, taken out of the miniature manuscripts of the Middle Ages.

Thus having taken place, this year's edition of the National Symposium "Anastasis" Art and Medieval Culture between the Orient and the Occident has been a real success both for professors, students and the researchers who

love this field of art and medieval spirituality, thus opening the way for interesting discussions and debates on the contemporary artistic phenomena, connected to the artistic creations, events and monuments of the medieval period.