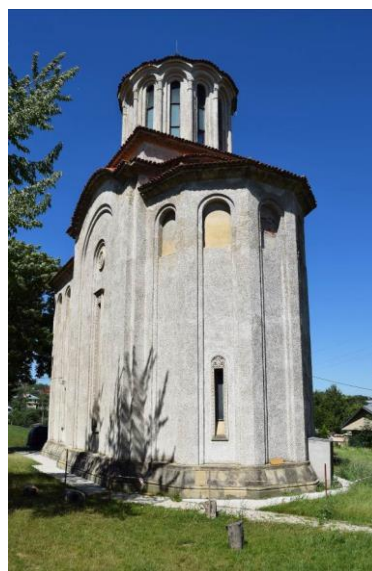


# A NOVEL PAINTED MONUMENT. BYZANTINE ART BETWEEN AESTHETIC REDEFINING AND DOGMATIC PERENNITY. THE CHURCH “SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST” OF BÂRNOVA

Mihail M. Gheață\*

**Abstract:** Being remarkable through the monumentality and elegance of proportions, the architecture of the Church “Saint John the Baptist” from Bârnova derives from the so-called old Wallachian style, skillfully reshaping a structure which combines elements which are specific to Byzantine Balkanic ecclesiastical buildings. The unseen pictorial work of Ștefan Constantinescu is characterized by the attempt to associate the results of experiencing freedom of interpretation and expression with the rules of the iconographic canon, inside the same ensemble. Its representations do not reproduce the traditional Byzantine manner, nor it is delivered as a form of quoting reality, but it is filtered and interpreted. From a theological point of view, the author respects the iconographic program, except for the topographic placement of some episodes, adapting the discourse according to the configuration and features of the liturgical space. We are in front of a case which places us in the position of managing the relationship between the value of artistic creation and the meticulousness of theological involvement. Neither Byzantine, nor realistic, the artistic solution of the mural painting from Bârnova is closer to the manner of iconic transfiguration than to the one of improvisation or artistic intermediation through which the daily tridimensional world is reflected.



The Church "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova

**Keywords:** church, painting, Byzantine, modern, canon, tradition

---

\* Hieromonk of the Monastery *Sfinții Trei Ierarhi* / *The Three Holy Hierarchs* of Iași

Without visiting the old Christian catacombs and walking the rooms of the great museums, the painting of the church “Saint John the Baptist” of Bârnova may suddenly be an invitation to rediscover the original cultic Christian image and, at the same time, a direct contact with the experiences of modern art of painting dating from the 20th century. From the outside, the lean silhouette of the monument with a single steeple does not do anything to betray the unusual contrast that the visitor will notice between the architecture of the church and its interior painting. Naturally, this is because we are used to associate Byzantine architectural edifices to a painting garment accomplished in the same style.

What stirred the interest and drew attention to the monument is the type of painting and the particular way in which it was accomplished; despite being slightly different from the homologated one in compliance with the demands of a respected literal explanation, it does not depreciate in any way the aesthetic quality or influences the message of the Gospel of the scenes usually painted on the church walls. It is important to mention that when the church of Bârnova was painted in the Romanian Orthodox space, the technique of fresco painting and the practice of embellishing churches based on the guidelines of the iconographic canon of the Byzantine tradition were almost forgotten. The preference for the Western realist-naturalistic painting broke the traditional lines of Byzantine painting for a while in our country. In the larger context of a transition period in which the renewing of tradition and remastering of the work technique was aimed at, the present example is unique and unrepeatable, in our opinion, by its kind, content, and artistic expression.



Fig. 1. Pisanije above the entry door

The church “Saint John the Baptist” was built between 1942-1947 by the brothers Ionel<sup>1</sup> and Georgel Inculeț to fulfil their parents’ desire, Ion C.

<sup>1</sup> One of the founders, the scholar Ionel Inculeț died in 2011 at 91, leaving behind an important inheritance (27 industrial patents) in the field of electrostatics. He was a consultant for the NASA missions on the Moon and Mars and *Doctor Honoris Causa* of Western Ontario University, Canada, where he founded the department of *Environmental Engineering and Applied Electrostatics*. Physician and worldwide reputed engineer, he was named member of honour of the Romanian Academy in 1992.

Inculeț and his wife Ruxandra's (princess Ruxandra Bașotă-Cantacuzino before marriage) who died before its accomplishment. Built not far from the city of Iași on a property where the summer residence of the family was located, the church was aimed at a necropolis of the founders; however, since the building of the church was not final when they died, their relics were brought from Bucharest and reburied in the nave on June 7, 1942. The church was dedicated in 1947, immediately after the painting was finished and after a year, as a result of the founders' will, the church and the land owned by Inculeț family were donated to the Metropolitanate of Moldova and Bukovina. During the period of the communist regime, the settlement was closed and service performed only on the feast day of the church; in 1992, the holy house became a parish church.

Remarkable by its leanness and the elegance of proportion, the architecture of the church "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova draws on the so-called old Wallachian style; it brilliantly reshapes a structure that combines specific elements of Byzantine-Balkan ecclesial buildings. The church is built in brick and stone, having the roof covers in clay tiles. The decoration of the façade parament is accomplished in large granular stone dust which gives an aspect of subtle plasticity. The uniformity of parietal surfaces emphasizes the contrast between the plastering of the masonry and the dynamics of the sculpture ornament in stone, the door and window frames and amplifies the effect obtained by the juxtaposition of the open cold grey of the walls with the brick-like warm shades of the roof tiles.

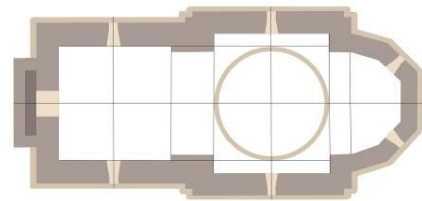
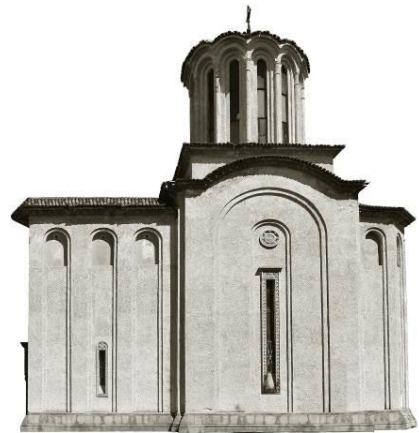


Fig. 2. Plane of the Church "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova.

From a planimetric viewpoint, the monument subscribes to a rectangular surface with one of the small legs in a curve, a form resulting from the suppression of the lateral apses of a trefoil plane. The building seems like a ship consisting of an altar, naos and pronaos.

The apse of the altar is semicircular on the inside and polygonal on the outside, having five facets and two windows. Over the naos, on a square base, a cylindrical dodecagonal tower rises, high, yet well proportionate, giving added value in monumentality to the building. The facets of the tower are

pierced by twelve narrow windows, framed by arcatures with profiles in successive withdrawals, guarded by twelve spacers. The tower is supported on the inside by four big arches which unload their weight on the pilasters engaged in the walls they are one and the same body with, thus leaving free the entire space of the naos.



Fig. 3. One of the funerary stones along the founder's tombs

The naos has two high and very narrow windows, framed on the outside by a rectangle in stone embellished with vegetal motives (Fig. 5). Over the windows there is a stone rosette with flower motives. In the naos, along the pseudoapses there are the founders' tombs paralleled by funerary stones with richly embellished borders. The floral and vegetable bas-reliefs are framed at the two ends of the plaque by two lions accompanied by the symbolic representations of the sun and moon (Fig. 3).

The passage from the naos to pronaos is made under an arch that is supported by two engaged parallelepipedic pillars. The pronaos, with an almost square base is enlightened by two small narrow windows. The ceiling is a circular archway in which the Holy Trinity icon is painted (Fig. 17). The entrance door and the lectern furniture are in excellent carved wood. On the outside, under the cornice, the pronaos is surrounded by a row of nine painted niches, three on each side. The same row of alcoves, five in number, continues on the upper side of the face of the wall under the roof of the altar apse. From the painting, due to heavy rain and snow, there is hardly any colour left, as well as some traces from the shape of the characters.

A massive faceted stone socle surrounds the church. The portal frame from the church entrance is sculpted in stone in a high relief, with baroque allusions and echoes of the neo-Romanian style, representing flower and vegetable motives linked between them by spiral stalks (Fig. 4). The two column capitals that support the gable are embellished with acanthus leaves twisted at the top. In the tympanum, the icon of "Saint John the Baptist" in his winged version is shown by means of the mosaic technique (Fig. 6).



If the first visual impact when entering the church seems to announce a boring atmosphere (perhaps because of the smoke imprinted in the painting stratum along time), after a short adjusting, the eye is rewarded with a novel painted show. Parietal surfaces covered in monumental art directions with long hagiographic narratives are playing against the background by the warm composed chromatics. The message of the Gospel, illustrated in parables that carry on horizontally and vertically in registers which seldom cross in serpentine structures visually engage both characters and architectural elements in a discursive continuity and an original stylistic unity (Fig. 8, 12).

The atypical painting structure unveils an author of an artistic formation and an extraordinary plastic culture of what is usually considered to make the ideal profile of the icon or church painter. Taking part, along with reputed figures of Romanian art such as Constantin Brâncuși, George Enescu or Maria Tănase in the Universal Exhibition of New York (1939), one of the major representatives of our culture to the Romanian Pavilions of Paris (1937) and Barcelona (1929), university professor at the Institute of Plastic Arts "Nicolae Grigorescu" of Bucharest, Ștefan Constantinescu is the painter asked to decorate the foundation-necropolis of the academy member Ion C. Inculeț, a great figure of Romanian politics<sup>2</sup>. Recommended by his rich work, confirmed within the university artistic association, the quality and value of the monumental art works signed by Ștefan Constantinescu is founded on the experience on site in painting churches in fresco.



Fig. 4. Portal at the church entrance (left). Fig. 5. Frame of the pronaos window  
Fig. 6. Icon of Saint John the Baptist in the tympanus achieved in mosaic (right)

---

<sup>2</sup> Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Basarabiei de la începuturi până în anul 2003 (The History of Bessarabia from Its Beginnings to the Year 2003)*, ed. Tipo Moldova, Iași, 2010, p. 128. Ion Inculeț (1884-1940) was president of the Country Council of Bessarabia – in the period in which its union with Romania was decided – and that of vice-president of the Council of Ministers of Great Romania between 1936-1937. He was member of the Romanian Academy.



Fig. 7 a,b. The southern wall of the naos. Details. 7 a. Left: Under the abbreviated text of verse 10 in Psalm 45: “Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention: Forget your people and your father’s house.” Scenes of the life of Virgin Mary are depicted. From top to bottom: *The Entry of the Holy Mother of God into the Temple*, *Baby Mother of God in the Saint of Saints*, *Visit of Saint Elisabeth*, *Annunciation*. 7 b. Right: Scenes with Old Testament prophets praising the virginity of the Mother of God accompanied by the abbreviated text of verse 8, Psalm 131: “Arise, Lord (...), you and the ark of your might”.

Ștefan Constantinescu was born in the town of Târgu Ocna on March 14, 1898 and died on February 22, 1983. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest between 1913-1916 and at the Academy of Fine Arts "J. Pascin" in Paris. In the First World War he served in the army and in 1918 was wounded on the front and declared incapable of military service<sup>3</sup>. He travelled a lot and acquired great artistic experience. He mastered the canons of plastic art, as well as the creations of reputed masters. As a multifaceted personality, he approached monumental art and especially painted and drew portraits, landscapes and still nature<sup>4</sup>.

In the field of monumental art he achieved a series of compositions characterised by large narrative development such as: the ones from Casa Scânteii and the hall of the Great National Assembly in Bucharest, the one at the UNESCO Palace in Geneva and from the Culture House of Reșița, collaborating to numerous collective works. He exposed painting and graph in the country and in almost all European capitals, being awarded several prizes and awards: *Emerit artist* (1957), *Emerit art master* (1964), *State Prize* of 1957, etc<sup>5</sup>. He carried out book illustrations and since 1950 for more than two decades, taught painting at the monumental art department of the Institute of Fine Arts "Nicolae Grigorescu" of Bucharest.

Between 1937-1941 he painted the church "Holy Sovereigns Constantine and Helen" of Hunedoara<sup>6</sup>. He painted several churches (either by himself or with others): the one from "The Lady's Lime Tree" in Bucharest, the church of the Bogata commune, Brașov county, one from Amărăștii de Sus, near Caracal, and another one near Negrești-Oaș. He carried out a mosaic work

---

<sup>3</sup> Al. Bojin, *Scrisori inedite ale lui Vlahuță (Original Letters of Vlahuță)*, in *Viața Românească/ The Romanian Life*, 12, no. 11, November 1959, pp. 145-149. In a letter of 21 April 1918 addressed by Alexandru Vlahuță to Nichifor Crainic, he took an interest in Ștefan Constantinescu's health condition who was ill and offered to pay for the medical costs incurred.

<sup>4</sup> Barbu Brezianu, *Cuvânt la expoziția retrospectivă Ștefan Constantinescu (Speech at the retrospective exhibition of Ștefan Constantinescu)*, Art Museum of Romania, June-July 1986. In *La vie en rose with Clody Bertola*, by Ludmila Patlanjoglu, ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997, p. 59, note 1.

<sup>5</sup> Octavian Barbosa, *Dicționarul Artiștilor Români Contemporani (Dictionary of Contemporary Romanian Artists)*, ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 128-129.

<sup>6</sup> Ludmila Patlanjoglu, *La vie en rose with Clody Bertola*, ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 23, 69-72. In a book of memoirs some of his wife's testimonies are gathered; the actress Clody Bertola, that described him as a man truly devoted to his art, a modest and an introvert: "He was a great painter who did not know how to value himself accordingly. He did not like exhibitions, he did not sell his paintings, he preferred to make them gifts to his friends and acquaintances. He liked to spend time in the company of those he loved. The nights in his studio in Băneasa gathered Mihail Sadoveanu, Tudor Vianu, Boris Caragea, George Georgescu, Sviatoslav Richter, Maria Tănase etc." In 1941, Ștefan Constantinescu was in Hunedoara, where he painted the church of "Saint Constantine and Helen". In a letter of 31 March 1941, Clody asked whether he was satisfied with his work for the church, telling him: "I pray to God for no obstacles and to see your work done. It will be the most beautiful church in the world!". "You should be more aware of your value!".



for the Nautical Club of Snagov and the external mosaics of the church „Saint Spiridon” of Bucharest and Cernica monastery. Among his technical innovations in the field of mural painting, we signal the use of magnesium oxide binding agent of the plaster in the fresco (procedure that gives hardness and a dolomite visual effect)<sup>7</sup>.



Fig. 8. Scenes painted on the north wall of the pronaos

<sup>7</sup> Mircea Grozdea, Ștefan Constantinescu, ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978, pp. 9-10. It seems that on the outside this technique did not resist bad weather, hence the erosion of the painting stratum to its vanishing.



Neither Byzantine, nor realistic, the character of the painting of the church "Saint John the Baptist" in Bârnova would be hard to classify in any of the traditional stylistic columns. If the painting had been achieved in Byzantine or realistic style, the subject would not have been of too much interest. The naturalist-realism of Orthodox church painting has been no novelty for quite some time now, and traditional Byzantine painting passes unobserved, when the value of representation is not distinguished in any way. Curiosity comes from the fact that Constantinescu's novel plastic language, despite its incongruity with pure Byzantine tradition, does not perfectly identify with the realism practised by Tatarăscu or Grigorescu, seems much closer to plastic iconic transfiguration than some pretended contemporary neo-Byzantine representations. The superficial or bashful miming of Byzantine painting style cannot rescue traditional iconography, convince or transmit to the viewer the plenitude of the message in the Gospel. In addition, a too obvious distancing in artistic interpretation from the guidelines of explanations in Byzantine painting is under the peril of subjectivity with its undesirable consequences. Drawing on Byzantine features, the personal, unconventional style of Ștefan Constantinescu is characterised by the attempt to associate the same compositional framework to what resulted from the experience of the freedom in interpretation and expression with the rules of the iconographic canon. For him, there is no decisive disjunction between the iconic characteristics and the other means of plastic language, despite the fact that the icon itself is more than a language. With an eye it contemplates the synthetic constructions of iconically transfigured forms, analysing the revealed and revealing plastic conventions, and with the other it admires the lessons of great masters of universal painting.

The interpretative variant accomplished by Constantinescu, starting from the iconographic formulae deeply rooted in tradition, is a product made of several concepts and artistic visions. Expression of remembrance of the investigating approach to the origins of Christian art, his formal resolutions attain the simplicity of the primary "canon", at the same time valuing the experience acquired during centuries of profane painting.

Elongated silhouettes, draped according to ancient fashion, faces barely suggested, simple ornament and sobriety of the colours obviously relate to early Christian painting of the catacombs (Fig. 9, 10, 11). Similar to the first Christian images that were mainly anecdotal or symbolic, Constantinescu does not insist on the individuality of the figures or the study of portrait. The faces are treated in a lapidary manner, with large transparent touch lines, discrete tones; some surfaces are left at an underpainting stage with vaguely sketched shapes.



Fig. 9. “The Good Shepherd”, fresco from the Catacombs of Saint Callistus, Rome.

Fig. 10. Saint Luke, fresco from the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, Commodilla Catacomb of

Rome. Fig. 11. Abel and Cain offering to God their sacrifice, Catacomb on Via Latina, *cubiculum*-ul B, Rome, fresco, 4<sup>th</sup> cent.

The compositions, sometimes with a large number of characters, pertain to an atmosphere whose hidden source of light makes it distribute in equal intensities within all images painted, without shades or *chiaroscuro*. With a sensibility towards contrasting chromatic effects and lighting, the painter masters the harmony of colour masses and the balance between full and empty, hot and cold, rhythmically alternating the silhouettes painted in dark tonalities on bright backgrounds, with those in open values showing on dark surfaces (Fig. 12,15).

The chromatic dominant of the painting ensemble combines the harmonies of the complementary red-green colours out of which a range of coloured greys develops. Among these the following can be distinguished: ochre, red, chrome green and white, amplifying the tonal register by a large variety of shades. Here and there one can notice blue-greenish backgrounds interrupted by the silhouettes of richly dressed characters similar to bright archipelagos that remind of Giotto’s frescos in their composition and the echoes of his “primitive” predecessors (Fig. 7).

By superposition and unusual mixtures, by juxtaposition of broken hues, the painter accomplishes well-dosed monochrome structure that supports the formal and content unity of the ensemble, a reduction of chromatic intensity that induces a note of gravity and lyrical expressivity and sometimes a monotone ambient, as side effect.

The tempered chromatics, the modulation of colours in shades of a composed musicality, the passages that melt one another create a surrealist atmosphere, a vision that, despite its lack of formal and conceptual identification with the features of Byzantine painting, displays the exiguity of the iconographic canon in the prefiguration of another reality, with that of the new world to come, in this particular case.

Either it agglutinates the silhouettes of a crowd in a collective character, symbolically circumscribed to a volume in a single tonal voice or it gives up the finishing of details, the acuity and subtlety of notation; this is what the line of the drawing cuts and brings together volumes with, so that the suggestion or the allusion of a subject becomes more alive and full than the description of the same subject in minute detail.



Fig. 12. The south wall of the pronaos

With little means, synthesizing the form without attaining schematism, the author makes a relief from the apparently spontaneous features of sketches, buildings and characters similar to the facets of enormous crystals, and configures a performance of a plastic polyphony (Fig. 15).

Against the background of scenographic constructions especially conceived to plastically express the biblical narrative, the painter illustrates – via a “page” repositioning of themes – lives of saints and events less tackled in the Byzantine iconographic program such as: “Blinding of Elymas the sorcerer” (*Acts of the Apostles 13, 12*) (Fig. 26) or novel scenes of the life of Saint Anthony the Great. Hagiographic sequences or evangelical parables sometimes run vertically and are read similar to over dimensional Asian engravings.

The scenographic vision of lean compositions, developed on the narrow lateral pseudo-apses, populated by elongated characters somehow neighbours the plastic universe of El Greco, an artist whose baroque vision is partly rooted in Byzantine painting. Similar to El Greco, but without the same dramatic expression of the compositions’ dynamism, Constantinescu often prefers the vertical representation of movement to the perspectival deepness, thus getting closer to the bidimensional vision of space approach in Eastern iconography much easily (Fig. 13).

We note the artist’s preference for the theatrical setting, developing on parallel diagonals, we guess the paths of zig-zag stairs which intertwine in planes that melt in each other or contrastively superpose, oblique ramps on which vertical statues seem to float and whose gestures and movements are arrested in a solemn attitude. Adjusting to the topography of surfaces destined to painting, it projects an architectonics that gives the feeling of imponderability due to the frozenness of compositional structure.

Subscribing to El Greco’s conception that deformed nature for stylistic purposes<sup>8</sup>, Constantinescu simplifies form and undresses it from what is insignificant, thus revealing in a certain manner a hypostasis of El Greco that uses the opposite approach, departing from profane realism to the Byzantine traditional synthesis (Fig. 13, 29, 30).

The coloured thin strips (in dark red and white), usually borderlines of compositional areas, are replaced by long writings from names and titles. Most often developed on a single horizontal row, without pauses between words, these texts delimit registers from top to bottom and are mostly decorating, rather than informative in purpose (Fig. 12, 23). The vertical fasciae are substituted by architectural elements or by a character that frames the lateral sides of compositions, rhyming the spaces surrounding the scenes left larger on purpose so as to draw attention to the illustrated subject. Thus, the scenes

---

<sup>8</sup> Andrei Pleșu, *Ochiul și lucrurile (The Eye and Things)*, ed. Meridiane, Bucharest 1986, p. 222. El Greco stated, in a letter, that: “to be dwarfed is the worst that can happen to any kind of form”, a testimony as strong as an artistic credo proved by most of his works.



follow each other as in the development of a film; even without the traditional delimitation of the fasciae, each episode may be clearly distinguished and followed easily.



Fig. 13. The north wall of the naos. Scenes illustrating events after “The Resurrection of the Lord”. Fig. 14 a. On top: El Greco, “Adoration of the Shepherds”, oil on canvas. Painted approximately between 1596-1600; National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest. Fig. 14 b. Bottom: El Greco, “Visitation of Saint Elisabeth to Virgin Mary”, oil on canvas, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, USA. Painted between 1610-1613. Fig. 15. The south wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Saint Anthony the Great. Detail (right)

In the same “minimalist” note of mural paintings and their characteristics, the iconostasis reveals itself to the eye of the believers in an architecture comprising four rows of icons, all in golden carved wood (Fig. 19, 20). The entire visual information, with its aesthetic value and catechetical sense displays itself to the viewer with a minimum of signs and graphic and painting expressions; despite their abbreviated and synthetic character, they facilitate the integral reception of the Gospel’s message in its perfect legibility.

With a simplicity of notation and the rudimentary use of painting matter (often reduced to the pencil sketch of the subject), the painter proposes us, with the help of the sanctifying and sanctified chromatic interface, the possibility of contemplating the other world, in its immateriality and eternity, confirming that church is, similar to its cult, “the expression of infinite in the scarcity of its gestures and forms”<sup>9</sup>.

There is in the painting of Bârnova a paradoxical combination between Byzantinism and modern spirit, mirrored in robust and diaphanous forms, yet unregimented in the habits of iconography. The most rigorous ones could judge such abilities as a deviation from the purity of traditional canonical style, accusing the artist of too much originality. On the contrary, others would remind us that there are many churches painted in neo-Byzantine style, of a quality that does not reach the artistic value of the one in Bârnova. From the perspective of both opinions, the following question arises: shall we opt for the canonicity of the style for the sake of style only, heavily ignoring the awkwardness of drawing and the chromatic disagreement of several icons that sometimes attain the grotesque and caricature or shall we embrace (as heavily as above) a novel structure of a remarkable aesthetic bearing and artistic value, but without all the artistic ingredients of Byzantine painting?



Fig. 16. Icon of the “Pantocrator” from the steeple. Fig. 17. Arcade of the pronaos, in which the icon of the Holy Trinity is shown at Mamvri’s Oak Tree (*The Hospitality of Abraham*).

<sup>9</sup> Christoph Schönborn, *Icoana lui Hristos (God’s Human Face: The Christ-Icon)*, translated and prefaced by rev. PhD. Vasile Răducă, ed. Anastasia, 1996, pp. 184-185. What they have in common is the fact that art and the cult result from the encounter between sky and earth. There is a strong connection between the artistic conception and theandric conception of Christ’s mystery. Even the artists’ activity was touched by the power of attraction in this mystery. The embodiment changed not only the means to know God, but also how man looked at the world.

We are witnessing a case that positions us so as to manage the relation between the value of artistic creation and the scrupulosity of theological engagement. In Constantinescu, the image neither calques the traditional Byzantine manner, nor offers itself under the shape of a quote of reality, - similar to Grigorescu's painting in Agapia, for instance -, on the contrary, it is filtered and interpreted. From a theological and dogmatic viewpoint, the author only wanders from the iconographic program by the topographic repositioning of certain episodes, adjusting his discourse to the configuration and specifics of the liturgical space.



Fig. 18. Iconostasis and the apse of the altar. Fig. 19. Doors to the Kingdom

For this reason, the plastic resolution of mural painting at Bârnova is, as already mentioned, much closer to the manner of iconic transfiguration as to improvisation or artistic intermediation through which the tridimensional mundane world is reflected. Out of all the churches painted by Ștefan Constantinescu, the interpretative variant of the wood church of "Saint John the Baptist" of Bârnova is the most unitary from a stylistic viewpoint and remains, by its uniqueness and artistic value, a novel pictorial monument.





Fig. 20. Iconostasis, detail. Golden carved wood



Fig. 21. Apse of the altar: Icons of the Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great and Saint John Chrysostom.



Fig. 22. Developed frieze of the scene "Wonder of the Multiplication of the Loaves".





Fig. 23. Detail



Fig. 24. North-West corner of pronaos



Fig. 25. Sequences of events from the lives of Apostles Peter and Paul.  
West wall of pronaos



Fig. 26. West wall of pronaos. Saint Paul, lying before the proconsul Sergius Paulus, punishes sorcerer Elmas by blinding him (*Acts of Apostles 13, 12*)



Fig. 27. West wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Apostles Peter and Paul. Detail. Fig. 28. Episode of Saint Peter's liberation from prison by God's Angel (*Acts of Apostles 12, 8*)





Fig. 29. South wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Saint Anthony the Great. Detail.



Fig. 30. El Greco, "The opening of the fifth seal", oil on canvas, (1608–1614), dimensions: 225 × 193 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum.

Fig. 31. El Greco, "Engagement of the Virgin", oil on canvas, (1614-1615).

National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest

## Appendix :



Fig. 32. Ion C. Incuț (father). Fig. 33. Ionel Incuț (son)



Fig. 34. Act of Union between Romania and Bessarabia in 1918. The document is signed by Ion C. Incuț as president of the State Council





Fig. 35. Ștefan Constantinescu, "selfportrait", oil  
Fig. 36. Wife of the artist, the actress Clody Bertola

**Works painted by Ștefan Constantinescu :**

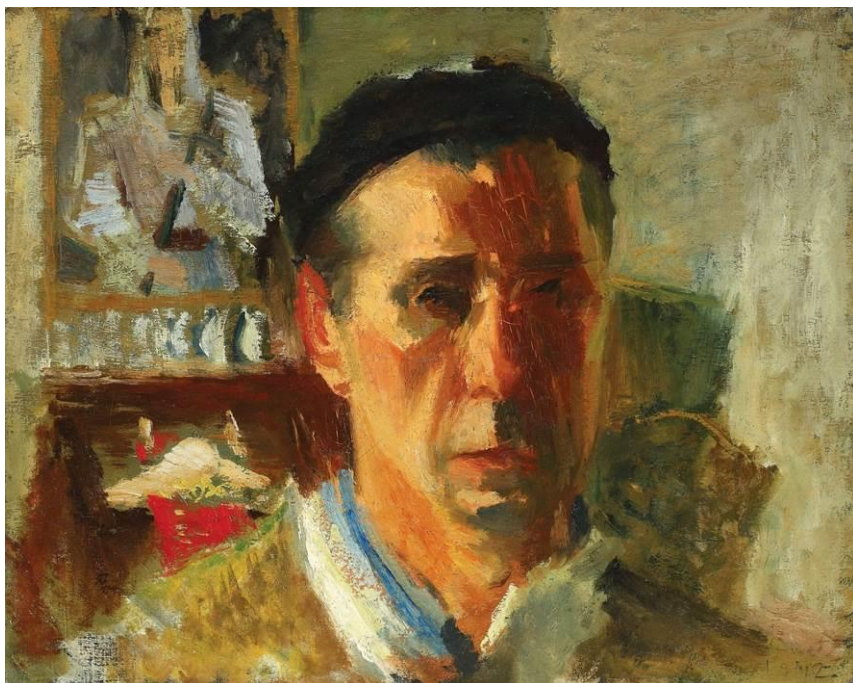


Fig. 37. Ștefan Constantinescu, "Selfportrait in studio", oil on canvas



Fig. 38. *Peasants of Oaș*, oil on canvas, 100x85cm, National Museum of Art, Romania. Fig. 39. *Young Man of Oaș*, oil on canvas taped on cardboard, 1926, dimensions 63,5x53cm.



Fig. 40. "Work", composition sketch, tempera on cardboard. Artist's collection



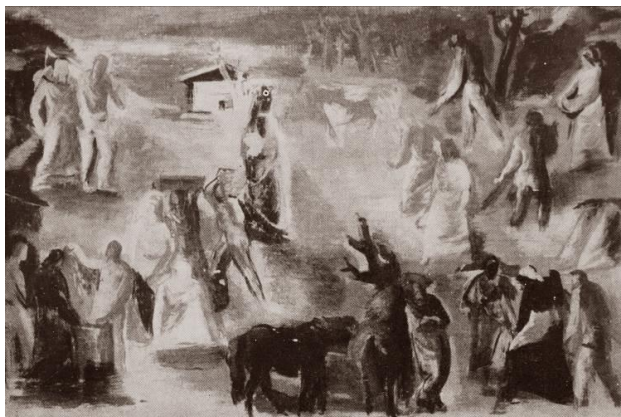


Fig. 41. "Working the Field", project for fresco, tempera on cardboard. Private collection



Fig. 42. Composition, project for fresco



Fig. 43. "The Judgement of Paris", tempera, private collection

### Liste of illustratins:

From Fig. 1 to Fig. 8: photographs taken and processed by Mihail Gheatău

Fig. 1. Pisanije above the entry door

Fig. 2. Plane of the church “Saint John the Baptist” of Bârnova.

Fig. 3. One of the funerary stones along the founder’s tombs

Fig. 4. Portal at the church entrance

Fig. 5. Frame of the pronaos window

Fig. 6. Icon of Saint John the Baptist in the tympanus achieved in mosaic

Fig. 7. The southern wall of the naos. Details. 7. Left: Under the abbreviated text of verse 10 in Psalm 45: “Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention: Forget your people and your father’s house.” Scenes of the life of Virgin Mary are depicted. From top to bottom: *The Entry of the Holy Mother of God into the Temple, Baby Mother of God in the Saint of Saints, Visit of Saint Elisabeth, Annunciation*. 7. Right: Scenes with Old Testament prophets praising the virginity of the Mother of God accompanied by the abbreviated text of verse 8, Psalm 131: “Arise, Lord (...), you and the ark of your might”.

Fig. 8. Scenes painted on the north wall of the pronaos

Fig. 9. Fresque représentant le Bon Pasteur dans la crypte de Lucina. Catacombes de St. Calixte, Roma. In *Les Catacombes romaines et les origines du christianisme*, Fabrizio Mancinelli, Scala, Firenze, 2004, p. 24.

Fig. 10. Saint Luc l’ évangéliste, fresque (668-685), Catacombes de Commodille. Roma. In *Les Catacombes romaines et les origines du christianisme*, Fabrizio Mancinelli, Scala, Firenze, 2004, p. 30.

Fig. 11. Caïn et Abel portant leurs offrandes, fresque, Catacombes de la Via Latina. Cubiculum B, Roma. In *Les Catacombes romaines et les origines du christianisme*, Fabrizio Mancinelli, Scala, Firenze, 2004, p. 33.

Fig. 12. The south wall of the pronaos. Photographs taken and processed by Mihail Gheatău

Fig. 13. The north wall of the naos. Scenes illustrating events after “The Resurrection of the Lord”. Photographs taken and processed by Mihail Gheatău

Fig. 14. On top: El Greco, “Adoration of the Shepherds”, oil on canvas. Painted approximately between 1596-1600; National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest.

14. Bottom: El Greco, “Visitation of Saint Elisabeth to Virgin Mary”, oil on canvas, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, USA. Painted between 1610-1613.

From Fig. 15 to Fig. 29: photographs taken and processed by Mihail Gheatău

Fig. 15. The south wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Saint Anthony the Great. Detail.

Fig. 16. Icon of the “Pantocrator” from the steeple

Fig.17. Arcade of the pronaos, in which the icon of the Holy Trinity is shown at Mamvri’s Oak Tree (*The Hospitality of Abraham*).

Fig. 18. Iconostasis and the apse of the altar

Fig. 19. Doors to the Kingdom

Fig. 20. Iconostasis, detail. Golden carved wood

Fig. 21. Icons of the Holy Hierarchs Basil the Great and Saint John Chrysostom

Fig. 22. Developed frieze of the scene “Wonder of the Multiplication of the Loaves”

Fig. 23. Apsé of the altar: Detail

Fig. 24. North-West corner of pronaos



Fig. 25. Sequences of events from the lives of Apostles Peter and Paul. West wall of pronaos

Fig. 26. West wall of pronaos. Saint Paul, lying before the proconsul Sergius Paulus punishes sorcerer Elmas by blinding him (*Acts of Apostles 13,12*).

Fig. 27. West wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Apostles Peter and Paul.

Fig. 28. Episode of Saint Peter's liberation from prison by God's Angel (*Acts of Apostles 12, 8*)

Fig. 29. South wall of pronaos. Scenes from the life and wonders of Saint Anthony the Great. Detail.

Fig. 30. El Greco, "The opening of the fifth seal", oil on canvas, (1608–1614), dimensions: 225 × 193 cm, New York, Metropolitan Museum  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:El\\_Greco,\\_The\\_Vision\\_of\\_Saint\\_John\\_\(1608-1614\).](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:El_Greco,_The_Vision_of_Saint_John_(1608-1614).)  
Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 31. El Greco, "Engagement of the Virgin", oil on canvas, (1614-1615). National Museum of Art Romania, Bucharest,  
[https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/El\\_Greco#/media/File:El\\_GRECO\\_-\\_The\\_Marriage\\_of\\_the\\_Virgin](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Greco#/media/File:El_GRECO_-_The_Marriage_of_the_Virgin), Retrieved September 2016;

## Appendix

Fig. 32. Ion C. Inculeț (father)  
<https://www.google.ro/search?sa=G&hl=ro&q=ion+i+incule%C8%9B&tbm>,  
Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 33. Ionel Inculeț (son).  
<http://www.yourlifemoments.ca/sitepages/obituary.asp?oid=549560>, Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 34. *Act of Union* between Romania and Bessarabia in 1918. The document is signed by Ion C. Inculeț as president of the State Council.  
<https://www.google.ro/search?sa=G&hl=ro&q=actul+unirii+basarabiei+cu+romania&tbm>. Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 35 Ștefan Constantinescu, "selfportrait", oil  
43f98-GRIMBERG-CATALOG- PDF-LICITATIE-14-MAI-2014.Bmp

Fig. 36. Wife of the artist, the actress Clody Bertola, In *La vie en rose cu Clody Bertola*, Ludmila Patlanjoglu, ed. Humanitas, București, 1997.

## Works painted by Ștefan Constantinescu:

Fig. 37. Ștefan Constantinescu, "Selfportrait in studio", oil on canvas  
<http://www.artmark.ro/catalogsearch/result/index/?q=constantinescu&limit>,  
Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 38 Țărani din Oaș / Peasants of Oaș, oil on canvas, 100x85cm, National Museum of Art, Romania

În *Dicționarul Artiștilor Români Contemporani*, Octavian Barbosa, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1976, p. 129.

Fig. 39. *Flăcău din Oaș / Young Man of Oaș*, oil on canvas taped on cardboard, 1926, dimensions 63,5x53cm.  
<http://www.artmark.ro/catalogsearch/result/index/q=constantinescu&limit> Retrieved September 2016;

Fig. 40 *Munca / Work*, composition sketch, tempera on cardboard. Artist's collection. In: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

Fig. 41. *La munca câmpului / Working the Field*, project for fresco, tempera on cardboard. Private collection. In: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

Fig. 42. Composition, project for fresco. In albumul: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

Fig. 43. "The Judgement of Paris", tempera, private collection. In: Ștefan Constantinescu, Mircea Grozdea, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978.

### **Bibliography:**

**Barbosa, Octavian**, *Dicționarul Artiștilor Români Contemporani*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1976;

**Bojin, Al.**, *Scrisori inedite ale lui Vlahuță*, în *Viața Românească*, 12, nr. 11, noiembrie 1959;

**Grozdea, Mircea**, *Ștefan Constantinescu*, Ed. Meridiane, Sibiu, 1978;

**Mancinelli, Fabrizio**, *Les Catacombes romaines et les origines du christianisme*, Scala, Firenze, 2004;

**Patlanjoglu, Ludmila**, *La vie en rose cu Clody Bertola*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1997;

**Pleșu, Andrei**, *Ochiul și lucrurile*, Ed. Meridiane, București 1986;

**Schönborn, Christoph**, *Icoana lui Hristos*, Ed. Anastasia, 1996;

**Scurtu, Ioan**, *Istoria Basarabiei de la începuturi până în anul 2003*, Ed. Tipo Moldova, Iași, 2010.