

# A SELECTIVE OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF TRANSYLVANIAN HISTORY IN CLUJ-NAPOCA 2004-2012

**Abstract:** This paper presents a selective overview of the activity of the History Department from the National Museum of Transylvanian History in the period 2004-2012, listing a series of exhibitions organised by the department specialists, their research and patrimony valorisation, their work in the deposits and the overall effort to modernise the museum.

**Keywords:** *exhibitions, patrimony, research, history, museum*

**Exhibitions.** The year 2004: *Mărțișor in the Folk Tradition - Mrs. Ingeborg Marta Bogdan's Collection*, in collaboration with Cluj County Council, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania in Cluj-Napoca; *The Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla. 150 Years*, in collaboration with the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla; *The Treasure-City. Cluj in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in collaboration with the Romanian Academy Library, the Cluj Branch, and with the Reformed, Lutheran and Unitarian Churches in Cluj-Napoca. The year 2005: *Prince Ștefan Bocskai and His Time; Fans of Yesterday and of Today. Aurelia Veronica Filimon's Collection*, in collaboration with the Mureș County Museum, the House of the Mureșeni Museum Brașov. The year 2006: *The Mirage of the Glass of Yesteryear. The Ernest Versansky Collection*, in collaboration with Ernest Gallery Cluj, *60 Years since the Parliamentary Elections of 1946; Romanian Aviation Pioneers from the Early Twentieth Century; The History of the Romanian Tricolour Flag*. The year 2007: *MachetIST 2007; Masonry in Transylvania. Signs, Symbols, Landmarks*, in collaboration with Brukenthal National Museum Sibiu, the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, the Grand Orient of Romania and the Romanian Academy Library, the Cluj Branch; The year 2008: *Matthias Corvinus: 1443 - 1458 - 2008*, international exhibition, in collaboration with the National Archives - Cluj County Branch, the Austrian National Library; *Remembering the Revolution. 1848-2008*, in collaboration with the Arad Museum Complex, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania Cluj-Napoca, Lucian Blaga Central University Library Cluj-Napoca; *From the Small to the Great Union of the Romanians - 150 Years since the Union of the Romanian Principalities*. The year 2009: *Moments Captured in Space. Episodes in the History of Stereo-Photography*, in collaboration with the Hungarian National Museum Budapest; *Pages from the Early History of the Puppet Theatre in Romania. The Puppet Theatre of the Șesan Family, Founding Member of UNIMA; In Memoriam Hadrian Daicoviciu 1932-1984; From the Small to the Great Union of the Romanians*. The year 2010: *160 Years since the Establishment of the Romanian Gendarmerie*, in

collaboration with the Romanian Gendarmerie; *The Hungarian Royal University of Sciences 1872-1919*, held at the Museum of Babeş-Bolyai University, in collaboration with the Transylvanian Museum Society; *Medieval and Modern Weapons*, organised in the Tailors' Tower; *Seals Exhibition*. The year 2011: *Badges from the Collections of the National Museum of Transylvanian History*, organised in the Tailors' Tower; *Fans and Women's Fashion Accessories in the Collections of the National Museum of Transylvanian History*, organised in the Tailors' Tower. The year 2012: *Graphic Itineraries of the Nineteenth Century*, organised in the Tailors' Tower; *The Principality and the Princes of Transylvania in the Collection of Watercolours from the National Museum of Transylvanian History* organised in the Tailors' Tower; *The Memory of Images*, held in the Octavian Goga County Library; *Cycling through the Cluj of Yesteryear*, organised in the Casino of Cluj; *Communist Propaganda. The Elections of 1946*, held in the Octavian Goga County Library. Participations in other temporary exhibitions: *Children and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Photography* (the National Military Museum Bucharest, 2004); *Centuries and Style* (Maramureş County Museum, 2005); *Everyday Life. The Late Nineteenth Century - The Early Twentieth Century* (Mureş County Museum, 2005); *The Biography of a Passion* (Maramureş County Museum, 2006); *The Brothers Alexandru and Ion Lapedatu in the History of Romania* (Braşov County Museum, 2006); *The Toys of Yesterday and of Today* (the Emil Racoviţă Speleology Museum Cluj, 2006); *Bells - The Universal Language* (the Prof. Eng. Dimitrie Leonida National Technical Museum, 2006); *The Holy Women. A Foray into Christian Iconography* (the Ethnographic Museum Cluj, 2006); *The Archival Treasures of Cluj* (Cluj State Archives, 2006); *The Empire on the Outskirts. Austrian Traces in Transylvania* (Brukenthal National Museum, 2007); *Love Missives - Past and Present* (the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania Cluj, 2007); *Medals and Masonic Insignia - History and Symbol* (National History Museum of Romania Bucharest, 2007); *Sigismund of Luxembourg and His Times* (Criş Land Museum of Oradea, 2007-2008); *Arms and Military Equipment* (the Museum of History Gherla, 2007); *Renaissance Architecture in Cluj-Napoca* (Cluj Association - *Kolozsvár Társaság*, National Art Museum of Cluj-Napoca, 2008); *Come, Thee, Romanians, Come to Alba Iulia in Transylvania!* (Alba Iulia, 2008-2009); *Masonic Collections in the Museums of Transylvania* (in collaboration with the National Museum of Romania Bucharest, 2008); *Baba Novac and Cluj in 1600s* (Tailors' Tower, 2009); *The Relics of 1848* (the *Tarisznyás Márton* Museum Gheorgheni, 2009); *Corvinus Manuscripts in the National Library of Austria* (in collaboration with the Centre for Transylvanian Studies and the Municipal House of Culture Cluj, 2009); *Constantin Daicoviciu and the University of Cluj* (in collaboration with the Museum of Babeş-Bolyai University, 2009); *10 Years since the Reestablishment of the Department of Art History* (in collaboration with the Museum of Babeş-Bolyai University, 2009); *The Tailors' Tower - Centuries of History* (the Tailors' Tower, in collaboration with the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, 2009); *Religion and Spirituality in Medieval and Modern Transylvania* (the Museum of History Gherla, 2009); *Medieval Cluj* (the Tailors' Tower, in collaboration with the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, 2009-2010); *Medieval Romania* (the Romanian Cultural Institute in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, 2009-2013);

*From the First Writings to Multimedia. A Brief History of Communication and More...* (the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation Deva, Brukenthal National Museum Sibiu, the Banat Museum Timișoara, the History Museum Sighișoara, the Romanian-Swiss Media Institute Deva, 2010-2011); *The Museum of Relics from the 1848 Revolution and Count Sándor Teleki* (Teleki Sándor Cultural Centre Baia Mare, 2010); *Games with Buttons. A New Approach to an Old Accessory* (the County Museum of History and Archaeology Baia Mare, 2010); *Cluj - Culture and Monuments* (the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, 2010); *De terre et de feu, l'aventure de la céramique européenne à Limoges* (Musée national de porcelaine Adrien Dubouché Limoges, in collaboration with the Municipality of Cluj-Napoca and the Municipality of Limoges, 2010); *Fadrusz János, the Creator of the Matthias Corvinus Statue* (in collaboration with Széchényi National Library Budapest, Lucian Blaga Central University Library Cluj, the Tailors' Bastion, 2011); *The Peace of Satu-Mare and Its History* (Satu Mare County Museum, 2011); *Message from the Past. Coats of Arms and Seals from the Szekler Land* (Haáz Rezső Museum Odorheiu Secuiesc, 2011); *The History of Tourism in Transylvania* (Mureș County Museum, Transylvanian Carpathian Society and Mountain Rescue Mureș, 2011); *140 Years of Hungarian Higher Education in Cluj-Napoca* (the Museum of Babeș-Bolyai University, 2012), etc.

During this period, a series of major works were initiated with a view to modernising the National Museum of Transylvanian History. Works of restoring the façade of the building were undertaken, along with renovations of interior spaces, exhibition halls, warehouses and offices. For this purpose, the main exhibition was temporarily closed and dismantled; the items were labelled, packaged and transferred to storage by the museum's specialists. On this occasion, a systematic effort to verify the museum's patrimony was initiated concurrently with its digitisation program: the inventory records began to be checked, in parallel with the punctual identification of the items and a series of preventive conservation activities, of verifying the items in the warehouses of the history department. All the specialists from the history department participated in the activities from the museum warehouses: moving, cleaning the warehouses, arranging and relocating the items, reorganising the storage modules in the halls. The history department specialists also collaborated in drafting a project - the general design for a reorganisation of the main exhibition, suggesting themes and punctual arrangements for the exhibition spaces, providing a series of technical data to the Artex Company (dimensions, historical overviews, descriptions, photographs) concerning the heritage items proposed for the new permanent exhibition of the museum.

**The scientific research themes** were structured primarily around several major research areas: *Transylvanian Heritage - European Heritage*; *State and Society in Medieval Transylvania (The Twelfth-Sixteenth Centuries)*; *The History of Transylvania in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries (until the Union of 1918)*; *Romanian-Italian Cultural Relations (The Nineteenth-Twentieth Centuries)*; *The History of Art and of Decorative Arts*; *Numismatics, Phaleristics*; *Transylvania in the Context of Romania's Communisation*; *Conservation - Heritage Restoration*. The research yielded results that were made public through scientific papers, books, catalogues, specialised

studies and articles published and/ or presented at national and international conferences.

**Conferences, symposia, national and international seminars:** among the major scientific events attended by the specialists of the history department, mention should be made of: the session *Money, Labour, Politics, Culture*, Oradea University, April 2007; *The Fifth International Congress of Genealogy*, Iași, May 2007; the international symposium *NVMISMA*, Cluj-Napoca, May 2007; the scientific session *Family and the Concentration Camp Universe*, Institute of Oral History, Cluj-Napoca and CNSAS, Bucharest, April 2007; *Anti-Communist Resistance in Romania*, Lucian Blaga Central University Library, Cluj-Napoca, May 2007; the symposium *The Gulag and the Holocaust in the Romanian Consciousness*, Babeș-Bolyai University, the "Phantasma" Centre for Imagination Research, Cluj-Napoca, May 2007; *The Annual Scientific Session of the Doctoral School of History*, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, May 2007; the symposium *Anti-Communist Resistance in the Land of Făgăraș*, Negru Vodă Cultural Foundation Făgăraș, Sâmbăta de Sus, June 2007; *The Fifth International Congress of Romanian Studies*, Constanța, June 2007; *Diplomacy in the Countries of the Angevin Dynasty in the Thirteenth-Fourteenth Centuries*, Szeged-Visegrad-Budapest, September 2007; *The International Symposium of the Romanian-Ukrainian Historians*, September 2007, Satu-Mare; *The Annual Session of Scientific Communications of the Museum Complex in Bistrița-Năsăud*, November 2007; annual scientific session of the National Museum of the Union in Alba Iulia, *Unity, Continuity and Independence in the History of the Romanian People*, November 2007; the international conference *Academics and Universities in the European Context, 1800-1945, Peregrinatio academica*, Babeș-Bolyai University, the University Museum, the National Museum of Transylvanian History, Cluj-Napoca, December 2007; *Sigismund of Luxembourg and His Time*, Oradea, December 2007; the roundtable: *Matthias Corvinus - 565 Years since His Birth*, the George Bariț Institute of History, Cluj-Napoca, February 2008; the symposium organised by the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Negru Vodă Foundation Făgăraș, February 2008; *The Annual Symposium of the Department of Ancient and Medieval History, the Faculty of History and Patrimony*, Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, April 2008; *The Session of the Romanian Numismatic Society*, Alexandria, May 2008; the national symposium *Novel Aspects concerning the History of the Romanian Freemasonry*, the National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest, May 2008; the national conference *The Session of Communications of the Young Art Historians*, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, May 2008; the conference series entitled *The Visual as a Historical Source*, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, 2008; *Spaces of Otherness*, Lugoj, June 2008; the program *Encounters*, the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, June 2008; *The Annual Session of Communications of the Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilisation*, Deva, June 2008; the international conference *Matthias and his Legacy. Cultural and Political Encounters between East and West*, Debrecen, September 2008; the international conference *Between Worlds: Matthias Corvinus and His Time*, Cluj-Napoca, October 2008; the international symposium *Ethnicity and Religion in the Carpathian Basin*

during the *Fourth-Eleventh Centuries*, Alba Iulia, October 2008; the jubilee session dedicated to the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unification of Transylvania with Romania in Alba Iulia, *Unity, Continuity and Independence in the History of the Romanian People. 90 Years since the Great Union*, the National Museum of the Union, Alba Iulia, November 2008, the international colloquium *Romanian Identity in the Context of European Identity*, Cluj-Napoca, November 2008; roundtable: *Freemasonry in the History of Modern Romania*, the Municipal House of Culture, Cluj-Napoca, the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives, March 2009; the symposium *The Roman-Catholic Cathedral and the Episcopal Palace of Alba Iulia. Archaeology and History*, May 2009; *The National Session of Communications of Art Historians*, Cluj-Napoca, May 2009; the symposium *Gherla - History and Culture*, Gherla, June 2009; the symposium *Anti-Communist Resistance in the Land of Făgăraș*, Fourth Edition, Făgăraș- Sâmbăta de Sus, July 2009; the roundtable *Cluj: The Heritage of the Medieval Town*, Cluj-Napoca, July 2009; the conference *Spaces of Otherness*, Lugoj, July 2009; *The Communitisation of the Land of Făgăraș*, the History Museum in Făgăraș and Negru Vodă Foundation, August-September 2009; the national symposium *Romania's Monuments - A National and Universal Patrimony*, Făgăraș, September 2009; the national symposium *Transylvania and the German Minority*, Sibiu, October 2009; the national symposium *St. Ierotei, Bishop of Bălgrad*, Alba Iulia, October 2009; the conference *Personalities and Institutions of Religion and Culture in the Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries*, the House of the Mureșeni Museum Complex Brașov, May 2010; the conference *130 Years since the Establishment of the National Grand Lodge of Romania*, the Romanian Academy, September 2010; the national symposium *In memoriam Constantini Daicoviciu*, Caransebeș, September 2010; the international conference *Between Worlds: The Age of the Jagellonians*, Cluj-Napoca, October 2010; the international conference *Mediaevalia Militaria in Central and South Eastern Europe*, Sibiu, October 2010; the session of international communications on *Recent Studies on Past and Present: Archaeology, History, Religion and Culture in Comparative Perspective*, Cluj -Napoca, October 2010; the international conference *L'Italia e la frontiera orientale dell'Europa. 1204-1669/ Italy and Europe's Eastern Border. 1204-1669*, Rome, November 2010; the international conference *The Formation of National States in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Italy and Romania*, Bistrița, December 2010; *The Seventh Congress of Hungarian Studies*, Cluj-Napoca, August 2011; the international conference *Risorgimento italiano e movimenti nazionali in Europa. Dal modello italiano a realta dell'Europa Orientale*, Târgu Mureș, September 2011; the international conference on *Recent Studies on Past and Present. New Methods, New Sources or a New Public?* Bucharest, September 2011; the national conference *Urban and Rural Dimensions of Transylvania in the Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries*, the Museum Complex of Bistrița-Năsăud County, October 2011; *The Third Conference of the Young Art Historians*, Cluj-Napoca, October 2011; *The Annual Session of the History Museum of Bukovina*, Suceava, November 2011; the international conference *Methods, Means and Aims in Socio-Humanities*, Rome, November 2011; the international conference *Das 300-Jährige Jubiläum der Ansiedlung der Donauschwaben in Sathmar/ 300 Years since the Colonisation of the Swabians in Satu-Mare*, May 2012; etc.

**Publications:** Between 2004 and 2012, five issues of the periodical published by the history department of the museum, ACTA MVSEI NAPOCENSIS, *Historica Series*, have come out, as follows: *Acta Mvsei Napocensis*, 41-44-II, 2004-2007, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2007; *Acta Mvsei Napocensis*, 45-46/ II, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2008-2009; *Acta Mvsei Napocensis*, 47/ II, Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2010; *Acta Mvsei Napocensis*, 48/ II Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2011; *Acta Mvsei Napocensis*, 49/ II, Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2012. The following works have been published in *Biblioteca Mvsei Napocensis*: Ovidiu Muntean, *Imaginea românilor în Franța la mijlocul sec. al XIX-lea* [*The Romanians' Image in Mid-Nineteenth Century France*], Cluj-Napoca, 2005; Ioan Ciupea, Virgiliu Țărău, *Liberali clujeni. Destine în marea istorie* [*Liberals from Cluj. Destinies amid the Great History*], Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, Vol. I, II, 2007-2009; Tudor Sălăgean, Melinda Mihaly, *Cluj, "orașul comoară" al Transilvaniei* [*Cluj, Transylvania's "Treasure-City"*], Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2007; Melinda Mitu, Ovidiu Muntean, *Rememorând Revoluția. 1848-2008* [*Remembering the Revolution. 1848-2008*], exhibition catalogue, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2008; Daniela Comșa, *Constantin și Hadrian Daicoviciu – Memoria imaginilor* [*Constantin and Hadrian Daicoviciu - The Memory of Images*], catalogue, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2010; Claudia M. Bonța, *Baroque Influences in Central-European Medal Work. The Seventeenth-Eighteenth Centuries*, Editura Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2012. Special mention should be made of the catalogue compiled through the joint efforts of all the museum's employees, *Un secol și jumătate de activitate muzeală la Cluj (1859-2009). Catalog aniversar* [*A Century and a Half of Museum Activity in Cluj (1859-2009). Anniversary Catalogue*], Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis, XXXIII, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2009 (edited by Carmen Ciongradi, Ovidiu Muntean). In addition, the specialists of the history department collaborated on studies like *Imperiul la Periferie* [*The Empire on the Outskirts*], Impressum Publishers, Vienna, 2007; *Masoneria în Transilvania. Repere istorice* [*Freemasonry in Transylvania. Historical Landmarks*], Cluj-Napoca, International Book Access, 2007; *Restaurarea – știință și artă* [*Restoration - A Science and an Art*], Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2009; *De la primele scrieri la multimedia* [*From the first Writings to Multimedia*] Editura Altip, Alba Iulia, 2010, etc.

**Enriching the patrimony of the history department.** The museum's patrimony was enriched during this period, through donations and purchases of documents (letters, photographs, illustrated postcards), decorative art objects (porcelain, glass, fabrics), items of clothing, weapons, technical equipment, etc.

**Other activities.** In addition to researching and valorising the patrimony, the history department staff have participated in inventory activities: the general inventory, the inventory of assets, the library inventory and sectorial inventories. The specialists of the history department have served as guides in exhibitions, have performed expert appraisals of cultural goods, have granted specialised consultancy and assistance to students from the faculties of history, archaeology, art history, architecture, as well as to specialists in history and art history at home and abroad. Documentation work has been conducted in archives, libraries, museums; archival funds and specialised bibliography

have been studied. A series of individual or collective research projects have been carried out. The department staff has been actively involved in organising the European Festival *Night of the Museums*, the editions of 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. Permanent preventive conservation actions have been undertaken, in collaboration with the museum's Restoration Laboratory. The popularisation of the museum's collections and activities has been ensured through the informative material issued on the exhibitions and the collections of the museum, and through the interviews granted by the specialists of the history department in newspapers, on television and on the radio.