

CHARACTERISTICS OF COLLECTIONISM IN WALLACHIA

Abstract: The paper presents the characteristics of private art collectionism in Wallachia during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century. Most collectors were intellectuals who came from wealthy families, being educated in Western European countries and becoming accustomed, during their studies, to the custom of visiting museums, art galleries and attending auctions, so much so that on their return home, they began to compile their own collections. They collected mostly ancient and contemporary European art, as well as Romanian art, in the late nineteenth century. Art collections coexisted with those of archaeological vestiges, numismatics, and decorative art, and the reasons for their formation included the desire to educate the public (hence, the possibility of viewing the works during the life of their owners), to support and protect modern Romanian art, and the desire to create an environment similar to that in Western Europe.

Keywords: Collectionism, collectors, collections, paintings, Wallachia, the second half of the nineteenth century - the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The second half of the nineteenth century brought about political, social and economic changes throughout Europe. The desire for emancipation, the national idea and the emphasis on national identity entailed geopolitical and mentality changes, which would steer the evolution of historical events during this period. The new mentality, embraced and brought over into the Romanian Principalities by the intellectuals who had studied in Western Europe, was reflected in all the aspects of society, at the ideological, economic, political, and social levels,² as well as in culture: in the visual arts, the theatre, music and even in the method of collecting artefacts.

This article aims to answer a series of questions regarding collectionism³ and private art collections in Wallachia during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century: who collected art; how it was collected; what kind of art was collected; why it was collected; these are questions to which we shall find an answer in the lines below.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Wallachia and Moldova became increasingly open to Western Europe, especially to France, in terms of both political orientation and ideological approach and lifestyle. The local rulers instituted here attempted to translate the aspirations of the 1848 Revolution into practice, and these were actually accomplished with Union of the Principalities in 1859 and Alexandru Ioan

¹ Museum curator at the National Art Museum of Romania, Bucharest and PhD student at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, email: cristinel.adam@gmail.com.

² Lucian Nastaşă, *Itinerarii spre lumea savantă. Tineri din spațiul românesc la studii în străinătate 1864 – 1944*, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Limes, 2006, p. 89.

³ A term understood in the manner of Krzysztof Pomian as a “set of natural or artificial objects, kept temporarily or permanently out of the economic circuit, afforded special protection in enclosed places adapted specifically for that purpose and put on display.” Krzysztof Pomian, *Collezionisti, amatori e curiosi (Parigi – Venezia XVI – XVIII secolo)*, Milano: Ed. Il Saggiatore, 2007, p. 18.

Cuza's policy of reforms during the period 1859-1866. In this context, more and more young Romanians studied at the major European universities and received scholarships from the state.⁴ In parallel with their opening to modernity and their assimilation of European ideologies, the young Romanians learning abroad took advantage of their stay abroad to complete their general culture through visits to museums, art galleries, and exhibitions.⁵ In addition to attending courses, students were interested in architecture, museums, theatres, concert halls, art galleries, historical monuments, the attendance at such institutions being a complementary manner of acceding to modernity and an essential component of their training.⁶ Most often coming from wealthy families, they had the financial ability and were interested in acquiring works of art; once they returned home, or during their very stay abroad for studies, they began to group these art works in collections.⁷ This explains why the majority of the collectors from Bucharest during the period under discussion came from among intellectuals trained in the major European universities. Most of the times, they were lawyers (Iancu Kalinderu, Anastase Simu), physicians (Ion Cantacuzino, Nicolae Kalinderu), writers (Alexandru Vlahuță, Cezar Bolliac, Al. Bogdan-Pitești) or diplomats (Eugeniu Carada, Constantin Esarcu, Mihail Kogălniceanu).⁸ To a lesser extent, there were also merchants or traders and, rarely, individuals without university studies. For example, Apostol Apostolide, a waiter at the *Continental* restaurant, had neither the education, nor the financial means to purchase valuable artefacts. However, coming into contact with well-known painters: Theodor Pallady, Nicolae Tonitza, Alexandru Ciucurencu, etc., and collectors, he was encouraged in his passion for art and music by them, so in time, he came to own an audio collection and a contemporary Romanian art collection that earned the praised of artists, collectors and the public at large, who could easily visit the collection displayed in the owner's house.⁹

Situated at the antipodes, Prince Carol I of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen, who became King of Romania in 1881, held a valuable collection created in the second half of the nineteenth century. Today his collection has become the nucleus of the European Art Gallery housed by the National Art Museum of Romania (MNAR),¹⁰ being, in the period in which it was created, a model especially for the politicians of the era, who were driven by the ambition to have their own collections.

Having arrived in the country in 1866, Prince Carol I wanted to impose the protocol etiquette of the royal houses in Europe, which required certain pomp in the

⁴ Lucian Nastasă, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 87

⁷ The descriptions of the personalities of various collectors who donated their collections to the state, today exhibited in the Museum of Art Collections, Bucharest, often mention the purchases of paintings, drawings, or archaeological vestiges from the scholarship money of the collectors, who were students at the time. For more information, see *The Museum of Art Collections. Collection Guide*, the National Art Museum of Romania, Bucharest, 2003.

⁸ Vasile Petrovici, *Dicționarul colecționarilor de artă din România*, Bucharest, Ed. Coresi, 2011, *passim*.

⁹ Petre Oprea, "Colecția 'Apostol'," in *Revista Muzeelor*, no. 6, 1971, p. 520.

¹⁰ Moreover, MNAR is today housed in the former Royal Palace in Bucharest, and even though very little of the architectural structure from the reign of King Carol is preserved, the European art works are housed in the old part of the Palace, the Kretzulescu wing, where the living space of the royal residence used to be.

decorations of his residential premises. A member of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen family - originating from the Black Forest Mountains - Carol endeavoured to render the taste and the ambience in which he had grown up in his two residences from Bucharest and Sinaia. Thus began the establishment of a collection of paintings through the systematic acquisition of paintings, when the collection of Dr. Felix Bamberg, a well-known German collector, was auctioned in the years 1879, 1886 and 1889. Although primarily interested in architecture, two letters from the MNAR archive indicate the king's dedication in compiling his collection of paintings; the letters contain his own opinions about certain paintings and his personal suggestions as to what works, by what artists, should be purchased.¹¹

After the death of King Carol I, the collection was left by testament to the Romanian Crown and was largely kept in the patrimony of MNAR and at Peleş Castle in Sinaia; it represents the most important collection of old European painting (the fourteenth-eighteenth centuries) in Romania. Among the artists whose works were included in the patrimony of this collection, there are some of the most outstanding representatives of European painting and works of the highest quality, made by Domenico Veneziano, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Bronzino, Tintoretto, El Greco, Jacopo Bassano, etc.¹²

The mimetic ambition to be the owners of an art collection led some of the politicians of the era to follow the model of King Carol I. They were mainly oriented towards contemporary Romanian art, thus supporting the Romanian artists. For example, since the painter most dear to collectors was Nicolae Grigorescu in the late nineteenth century, the collector Eugeniu Carada (1836-1910) built his collection almost exclusively with the paintings of this artist.¹³ The Governor of the National Bank of Romania, and a great admirer of the painter, Carada was renowned for his passion for this painter's art, ever since the latter's first exhibitions. He never missed the artist's vernissages, to which he came from the very beginning so as to have priority in purchasing one or two works. Towards the end of his life he had more than 50 paintings by Grigorescu, as well as works by young artists, who he had supported,¹⁴ such as Ioan Andreescu, Alpar, Eugen Voinescu, Ștefan Popescu - or whom he valued - C. I. Stăncescu, G. D. Mirea and others. Two years after the collector's death, in November 1912, his collection was auctioned and the works landed in art museums around the country: the Art Museums from Craiova and Cluj, and the collection of I. N. Dona. Unfortunately, most of the works are impossible to locate today; as it often happened, the Romanian state did not buy the collection, nor did it acquire the most important works, so this unitary and representative collection of Grigorescu's works was dispersed, in only two days, to collectors that have, to this day, not been identified.¹⁵

¹¹ For more information, see the article of Anatolie Teodosiu – “Cataloage, manuscrise, semnate de dr F. Bamberg, descoperite în arhiva Galeriei universale a Muzeului de artă al R. S. România,” in *Revista muzeelor*, 3/1971.

¹² Léo Bachelin – *Tableaux anciens de la Galerie Charles Ier Roi de Roumanie*, Paris, 1898, passim.

¹³ Petre Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

¹⁴ *Idem*, p. 37.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 38.

Another collector who had the ambition to create a large collection of art that would be made available to the public¹⁶ was the politician Vasile G. Morțun. Passionate about art ever since his studies in France and Belgium, he began to build a collection of Romanian art in the late nineteenth century, the first news about it appearing in the press in 1892, when he acquired a work by Ștefan Popescu. In time his collection was enriched with valuable artists who created in a vast temporal and stylistic range: from G. Rosenthal, Theodor Aman and Gheorghe Tattarescu to Nicolae Grigorescu, Ioan Andreescu, Ștefan Luchian, Kimon Loghi, Cecilia Cușescu-Stork, etc. His desire, similar to that of Anastase Simu's, to build a house that would include a space for exhibiting the collection made available to the public did not materialise; the works were hastily sent to Russia, without a prior inventory, at the beginning of World War I, together with the Romanian treasury, and remained there.

The most commonly encountered manner of composing a collection was that of direct or indirect acquisition by the collector, at auctions or directly from the artist's studio, from antiques fairs, with the help of connoisseurs, or just taking into account their own taste and passions. Less common was compiling a collection with the gifts received from certain artists, a custom that was common, at the time, in the relationship between artists and art critics.¹⁷ William Ritter, a Swiss journalist, met Nicolae Grigorescu in 1887, when he was a teacher in the house of the politician Nicolae Blaremburg. During the next period, the two became friends and, to facilitate his documentation on his work, with a view to the publication of much-awaited articles about his work in the foreign press, the artist gave the Swiss works from various stages of his creation. In this way, Ritter became in time the owner of a significant collection of paintings by the artist.¹⁸ Thus, this collection was built not as a result of the owner's passion and selection but thanks to the painter's generosity. William Ritter eventually came to own a total of thirteen paintings by Nicolae Grigorescu. In 1927 the collection was sold to the National Bank of Romania, and in 1949 the works entered the MNAR heritage. It is to this habit of Grigorescu's that the existence of the writer Alexandru Vlahuță's collection is largely due, as the latter was bestowed with a series of valuable paintings as "only Grigorescu knew how to make."¹⁹ Unlike the previously described collection, Vlahuță's collection remained in the country and was accessible to the public, as the collector always lent works for various exhibitions but also constantly received visitors, known or unknown, in his home, where the works were exhibited. Comprising almost exclusively works by Grigorescu, they were of very good quality and had been offered to him by the painter on several occasions, as a sign of their close friendship. In addition to the over 70 works by Nicolae Grigorescu, the collection also included paintings by other Romanian artists like George Petrașcu, Ștefan Luchian, Ștefan Popescu, Artur Verona, Jean Al. Steriadi, etc. Unfortunately, in 1912 the poet decided to sell the collection, keeping only part of the paintings for himself, the ones

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 35.

¹⁷ Oprea, *op. cit.*, p.52

¹⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁹ Alexandru Vlahuță, *Pictorul N.I. Grigorescu. Vieța și opera lui*, Bucharest: Ed. Socec, 1910, p. 206.

dearest to him; the fate of most of the other works is not known, only a small part being found in the state's patrimony.²⁰

Another collection, contemporary with that of Vlahuță, yet distinct from the point of view of the collection's design, of the artefacts included in it and the general interest in art was the collection of Alexandru Bogdan-Pitești (1870-1922), the Maecenas collector, whose tumultuous life and extensive collection become ever more famous in the late nineteenth century. The son of a landowner from Olt, he lingered,²¹ in his youth, in the European capitals, became familiar with the literary and artistic circles from Paris, and when he returned to Bucharest, he compiled one of the most representative collections of Romanian and European, ancient and contemporary art in Romania.

On his return from France, in 1894, the collector gathered, at first eclectically, then with an ever more confident taste, the works of contemporary artists, purchasing also some of the works of foreign artists (André Derain, Alphonse Mucha, Jules Pascin, etc.) especially from among those who would later exhibit in Bucharest, in the 1898 exhibition of the Ileana Society. In 1910 his home opened its gates to writers and artists, including novices, who were received in an interior space decorated with works of art, rugs, folk art objects and libraries full of books.²² His collection included, in addition to contemporary art, icons and old objects of worship, items of folk art (rugs, woven fabrics, costumes, ceramics) chosen for their aesthetic value, contemporary Romanian painting; his unwavering taste had discovered, ever since their debut, the best artists of the period 1896-1920: Nicolae Tonitza, Ștefan Dimitrescu, Ștefan Luchian, Tudor Arghezi, etc.²³ Moreover, after 1908 his friend painters were invited to his mansion from the Vlaici commune in the summer, where he established a veritable colony of artists. The collector made available to them everything they needed to create and eventually acquired most of the works accomplished here.²⁴ Thus, Alexandru Bogdan-Pitești came into the possession of valuable works made by Camil Ressu, Nicolae Dărăscu or Max Hermann Maxy, etc. The same collector was interested in French contemporary art and the folk art produced in the Romanian territory. The complexity of this collection was unique, as Al. Bogdan-Pitești was among the few collectors here with so large and varied a collection. Another feature of his collection was his penchant for contemporary art in comparison with collectors like Anastase Simu or Iancu Kalinderu, who collected and exhibited largely academic art on educational topics in the museums that were opened while they were still alive.

²⁰ Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²¹ Although he had gone abroad to study, he seems not to have graduated from any faculty, even though he successively studied medicine, at the University of Montpellier, then law and philosophy in Paris: he did not complete his studies in any of these areas. According to Theodor Enescu, who dedicated to him an ample article in *Scrieri despre artă*, vol. 2, Bucharest: Meridiane, 2003, Alexandru Bogdan-Pitești had two predominant passions: collecting art and partying.

²² Theodor Enescu, "Primul muzeu de artă românească modernă: colecția Alexandru Bogdan – Pitești," in *Scrieri despre artă*, vol 2, Bucharest: Meridiane, 2003, p. 56.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 57.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 60.

Unfortunately, after his death, the Ministry of Arts did not participate in the auction of 1924, so the state owns none of these works, the artefacts entering the possession of other collectors, such as K. A. Zambaccian, Iosif Dona, Lazăr Munteanu, Grünberg-Ruleta, etc.

From the point of view of the art objects they collect, their owners may be interested in a particular artist, a certain period/trend/technique, by as yet undiscovered artists or representative works.²⁵ Eugeniu Carada and Alexandru Vlahuță collected almost exclusively works by Nicolae Grigorescu; Alexandru Bogdan-Pitești, as a patron with an exquisite and expert taste, owned some of the most representative works by Ștefan Luchian, an artist whom he supported throughout his career.

Foreign European art was the favourite of many collectors. It was symptomatic of the collectors from this period to pay less interest to autochthonous art,²⁶ even though they did not say no to the purchase of quality works or, especially, of some copy after a famous work, made by Romanian artists during their studies. This explains the precarious situation of the Romanian artists from the second half of the nineteenth century who, albeit admired and recognised for their talent, rarely had their works purchased, except for some of the famous painters like Theodor Aman or Gheorghe Tattarescu. This situation changed towards the end of the century and in the next, through the organisation of the Official Salons, where the State was invited to purchase as many works as possible.

One of the collections formed during this period is that of the politician Mihail Kogălniceanu, who, especially after 1870, dedicated himself almost entirely to the acquisition of artefacts, which led Carol I to write he “seemed to have thrown himself entirely into the arms of the fine arts.”²⁷ He was particularly interested in European painting, but collected, with the same passion, sculpture and decorative art. For purchases from abroad, he resorted either to intermediaries who had to buy works from the official salons or he bought works directly from artists’ studios.

The Kogălniceanu collection, exhibited, during his life, in one of the wings of his home on Kisseleff Ave., so as to be accessible to the public, was unfortunately sold abroad by auction in 1887 and, after Kogălniceanu’s death, in 1896 and 1897. The sales led to the dispersal of the entire collection, all the works entering private funds, while the Romanian state did not purchase any of them, as it unfortunately happened too many times.²⁸ However, from the catalogue of the 1887 auction that took place in Cologne, we may identify some of the artists present in the collection: Albrecht Altdorfer, Giovanni Bellini, Lucas Cranach, Tiziano Vecellio, Jacopo Amigoni, Francois Boucher, Frans Hals, Jacob Jordaens, Nicolas Poussin, Rembrandt, Pieter Paul Rubens and many other illustrious names.²⁹

²⁵ See <http://alegearta.ro/bazele-unei-colecții>, accessed 25.11.2013.

²⁶ Petre Oprea, *op.cit.*, p.13.

²⁷ *Apud* Petre Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

²⁸ Although the Romanian state was invited to participate in the major auctions of the great art collections and was even offered a preferential price sometimes, it rarely happened that the Ministry of Culture answered these invitations without prevaricating or imposing conditions on these acquisitions. For this reason, very many valuable collections landed either abroad or in private collections.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

While this collection and that of the royal family included old European art, other collections comprised works by contemporary European artists. Living in Paris since the age of 10 with his uncle, the collector George Bellio, Alexandru Ștefan Bellu (1850-1921) was surrounded by works of art ever since his childhood and acquired a taste for beauty from his uncle. On his return to the country in 1880, after graduating, he became a collector of antiques, coins and Tanagra statues; he was also interested in contemporary painting, the pride collection being represented by a few paintings of the French Impressionists Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.³⁰ Other examples were the collections of Krikor Zambaccian and Iosif N. Dona, comprising works by foreign artists: Auguste Renoir, Pablo Picasso, Paul Cezanne, etc. (the Zambaccian collection), Camille Pissarro (the Dona collection).

Although this article refers to private art collections, we must make reference to the existence of a considerable number of numismatic and antique collections, of old maps and even some collections of copies. The aforementioned artefacts were often part of collections that included art works, such as, for instance, the collections of coins belonging to Alexandru Bellu and Mihail Kogălniceanu, as the collectors' interest covered several domains.

Also, we cannot ignore - for a better contextualisation - the museums that began to appear in this period, even though art museums were not the first to be established. In 1834, at the initiative of Mihalache Ghica, the Interior Minister at the time, there was created - within the St. Sava National School - the National Museum of Natural History and Antiques. Initially composed of donations from collectors (the Nicolae Mavros collection of antiques, the Carol Ferreati collection of ores, the Cezar Bolliac collection, etc.),³¹ the museum had a mixed and eclectic character in terms of the exhibits and their quality. It originally comprised collections of archaeology, minerals, zoology, and in 1850 a gallery of paintings by the young - at that time - artists Theodor Aman, Gheorghe Tattarescu and Constantin Lecca was founded within it. This was the starting point of the future Art Gallery, established in 1864, at the same time as the School of Fine Arts.³² In time, to the Art Gallery was added the exhibition from the Romanian Athenaeum, which presented the Esarcu collection (as of 1894), and private museums, of which the most important ones have already been mentioned: the Anastase Simu Museum in 1910, the Iancu Kalinderu Museum in 1914, and the Toma Stelian Museum in 1925.

Last but not least, in terms of the objects collected, noteworthy were the decorative art objects present in numerous collections, even though few consisted exclusively of this kind of artefacts. The interest in the decorative art of Europe, the Middle East and the Far East was captured in various newspapers of the time: "real Chinese tables, not imitations" were on sale at the C. A. Rosetti bookstore in 1850, next to English goods;³³ at the exhibition organised by the *Friends of the Fine Arts Society* in

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

³¹ Ioana Cristache-Panait and Panait Ion Panait, "Începuturile muzeografiei la București," in *Revista Muzeelor*, 1/1966, p. 37.

³² *Idem*, p. 38.

³³ Apud Petre Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

1873, which was intended as a panorama of the country's artistic wealth,³⁴ there were presented crockery and furniture from China and Japan, some belonging to the royal collection of Carol I. Moreover, as George Stroe mentioned:

“(...) Later, our knowledge of Japan increased. At the summer festivals, we began to see multicolour lanterns, made of foil, spreading light “a giorno,” while the ladies of high society sold us fans and umbrellas, also multicolour and also made of foil, from Japan. Here and there a collector, driven by taste, decorated his house with vases of flowers and Japanese prints...”³⁵

The motivations underlying collectionism are as numerous as they are fascinating. In general, objects are collected so as to remove them from life and time, to defy thus the passage of time (which explains the desire of some artist collectors to integrate their final resting place in their own museum, as was the case of the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova³⁶); people also collect out of the desire to revive the past by collecting pieces thereof, reconstructing the puzzle of a past under study; each object is a way to reminisce.³⁷

Bernard Aikema³⁸ lists the following reasons: reputation, investment, religion, pleasure and curiosity. They are considered universal characteristics by Aikema, but Peter Burke believes that only the need to distinguish oneself is true reason conducive to collectionism, the need for “self-fashioning,” for promoting oneself, a reason to which is added the political dimension of collectionism: in the modern era, he says, collecting is a political act for a prince.³⁹ We should add to these motivations the one identified by Kenneth Hudson in his study presented at the Council of Europe, the Session on School and Extra-School Education, Strasbourg, 1992: *Musées: trésors ou utiles?*, according to which collectors began to collect historical and archaeological material, works of art and rare items for their own pleasure and information.⁴⁰

Equally important is the educational purpose of some collections. In Wallachia, as desired by the owner, Dr. Constantin Esarcu's collection was on permanent display at the Athenaeum to “contribute to the people's aesthetic education.”⁴¹ An outstanding personality of the political-cultural life in the nineteenth-century Bucharest, Dr. Esarcu (1836-1898) was the founder of several influential cultural societies of the period, including the *Friends of the Fine Arts Society* and the *Romanian Athenaeum Society*, which targeted the “instruction and national education the people.”⁴² Coming from an

³⁴ Idem, p. 166.

³⁵ George Stroe, “Revanșa doamnei Butterfly,” in *Revista Fundațiilor Regale*, no. 4/1934, p. 213.

³⁶ Cf. Alessandra Mottola Molino, *Il Libro dei Musei*, Torino: Umberto Allemandi & co., 1992.

³⁷ Krzysztof Pomian, *Collezionisti, amatori e curiosi (Parigi – Venezia XVI – XVIII secolo)*, Milano: Il Saggiatore, 2007, p. 18.

³⁸ Bernard Aikema, “Collezionismi a Venezia e nel Veneto. Risultati e prospettivi di ricerca,” in *Il collezionismo a Venezia e nel Veneto ai tempi della Serenissima*.

³⁹ Peter Burke, “Qualche riflessione sull'antropologia storica del collezionismo,” in *Il collezionismo a Venezia e nel Veneto ai tempi della Serenissima*.

⁴⁰ Iulia Mesea, “Premise ale dezvoltării vieții artistice la Sibiu în secolul al XIX-lea,” in *Sub zodia Vătășianu. Studii de Istoria Artei*, Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Neremias, 2002, p. 159.

⁴¹ Petre Oprea, “Constantin Esarcu colecționar,” in *Revista Muzeelor*, 3/1970, p. 213.

⁴² Petre Oprea, *Colecționari de artă bucureșteni*, Bucharest, 2007, p. 20.

old boyar family, Esarcu inherited a small collection of foreign paintings that continuously enriched with numerous artefacts, starting from the period of his medical studies in Paris and, then, as a diplomat in Athens and Rome, acquiring both European and foreign paintings and sculptures, as well as decorative art, ceramics, copies after paintings and casts after famous sculptures.⁴³ Thanks to this collection, a few masterpieces of European art that entered the patrimony of the museum in 1948 can be seen today at MNAR: Jacopo Tintoretto - *The Annunciation*, David Teniers the Younger - *Flemish Interior*, Ludolf Backhuysen - *Marine*, etc.⁴⁴

With a similar fate, the Anastase Simu collection was exhibited to the public in a building/museum specifically created to accommodate it. Bestowed to the Romanian nation in 1927, the collection is valuable because it has works of art that are representative of European, especially French academic art, to which are added the most important works of the Romanian fine arts.⁴⁵ According to Petre Oprea, the collector's desire was "to shine on the firmament of the country, where cultural life was lagging, propelling it through a Maecenas' munificence"; after failing to get the attention of the official circles and the scientists as the member of cultural and scientific societies (the *Romanian Numismatic Society*, the *Romanian Geographical Society*, etc.), he decided to found a museum on his own. The works included in the collection were acquired, in a first phase, during his studies and leisure voyages, while after 1900, he began to programmatically make massive acquisitions of paintings and sculptures, from the official French Salons, from the studios of artists, art galleries or auctions: 24 in 1900, 13 in 1902, 10 in 1903 and so on; at the inauguration of the museum in 1910, the collection comprised a patrimony of 624 works, sculpture being very well represented. Among the names included in the collection, noteworthy are the Romanian artists Ioan Andreescu, Nicolae Grigorescu, Ștefan Luchian, Dimitrie Paciurea and the foreign artists A. L. Barye, C. M. Clodion, Pierre Gourdault, Laroche, Antoine Bourdelle, Eugene Delacroix, Theodore Rousseau, Paul Signac, etc.

In fact, the collectors' willingness to contribute to educating the public is highlighted by the display of collections, during the life of the owners, in specially designed buildings or even in their homes. We should mention here the Iancu Kalinderu collection, the Kogălniceanu collection and even the Toma Stelian Museum.⁴⁶ At the same time, we consider it important to note that many private art collections have this public nature, as they are created by private individuals for the benefit of the public.

⁴³ During the period under discussion, the purchase of copies did not have the pejorative meaning that it has today. Fashionable in the second half of the nineteenth century, copies were invested with artistic qualities and were considered almost as important as the original. In addition, given their educational purpose, they were often made by young artists by way of practice, while copies of classical sculptures were also used as models for them. For more on this, see the article of Al. Gh. Sonoc, Dorina Țiplic, Minodora Ban, "Unele observații cu privire la colecția de lucrări în ghips a Muzeului Național Brukenthal din Sibiu," in *Brukenthal. Acta Musei*, V.4/2010, p. 915.

⁴⁴ Maria Matache, *Maestrii picturii europene, secolele XV – XVIII. Muzeul Național de Artă al României*, Milano: Electa, 1998, *passim*.

⁴⁵ Petre Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ The works for the construction of the Toma Stelian Museum building started while the politician was alive but did not end by the time of his death in 1925.

George Oprescu said about Bucharest in the early twentieth century that “proportionally with the number of inhabitants, I do not believe there is an important capital with a higher of public art collections...”⁴⁷ Although the collection of Baron Samuel von Brukenthal was created at Sibiu in the late eighteenth century, we cannot overlook its value as a model and its educational valences as an exhibition, especially as regards its gallery of paintings. “Conceived so as to enter into the cultural-scientific circuit, the collections of books, paintings, engravings, coins, ores and so on, have, from the outset, a cultural-educational vocation.”⁴⁸ Since 1790, the press had publicised the opportunity given to any interested person to visit the art gallery located on the second floor of the Palace - the Baron’s residence in Sibiu; at the inauguration of the museum in 1817, after the transformation of the Palace into a public institution by bequest, its visitation “should represent a happy occasion for people of genuine moral and spiritual value to know and respect each other.”⁴⁹

Another answer to the question “Why did people collect?” is that the intention was to protect and support the Romanian artists. Again, the collection of Al. Bogdan-Pitești is an example in this respect. I mentioned earlier that on his estate in the village of Vlaici painters could find everything they needed to create and express themselves. Moreover, in his house from Bucharest, young artists: writers, poets, musicians, painters, sculptors, were always welcome and encouraged, if the collector believed that the young men had talent. The most well-known example is that of the painter Ștefan Luchian, in whose genius Bogdan-Pitești believed and whom he supported through the purchase of works, in a period when the artist was quasi-unknown. Similarly, he encouraged the poet Tudor Arghezi and the painters Nicolae Tonitza and Ștefan Dimitrescu, so much so that his collection became a real museum of modern Romanian art,⁵⁰ at a time when the Anastase Simu Museum was erected in Bucharest - especially dedicated to academic art - and the Art Gallery of the was poor and modest.⁵¹ The latter, despite his passion for classicist art, advocated the cause of young artists before the officials on many occasions and supported them by buying their works. For instance, he acquired the work *At Maize Share* by Ștefan Luchian in 1906, when the officials refused to buy it and he also bought Constantin Brâncuși’s *Sleep*, in a period in which the works of the sculptor were criticised.⁵² Other collectors who programmatically protected young artists were E. Carada, Ioan D. Nicolau - the main supporter of Ștefan Luchian - etc.

Another reason underlying the formation of an art collection was the need to decorate one’s home in line with the European trends of the time. Although he was not particularly fond of the fine arts, Prince Carol I, who had a military background, began to form his own gallery of old art so as to decorate his palace in grandiose manner.⁵³ The works of art were housed both in the Royal Palace in Bucharest and in Peleș Castle

⁴⁷ George Oprescu, “Muzeul Toma Stelian,” in *Boabe de grâu*, 1931, p. 387.

⁴⁸ Iulia Mesea, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

⁵⁰ Theodor Enescu, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁵¹ Petre Oprea, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 61.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

from Sinaia, built by the royal family. Having an additional educational purpose, the works displayed at Peleş could be viewed by art lovers and young artists, who could use them in their studies.⁵⁴

Moreover, Nicolae Moret of Blaremburg, the nephew of Alexander Ghica, built a house “exclusively for his pleasure and for satisfying his fantasy as an artist”; his house was furnished with “art objects and paintings, almost all special orders for its embellishment.”⁵⁵ Also, Apostol Apostolide’s collection of paintings was originally formed to create a pleasant atmosphere during the musical auditions.⁵⁶ When speaking about the reasons underlying the forming of a collection, we should not neglect the collectors’ sheer pleasure of surrounding themselves with beautiful things. Dr. Nicolae Kalinderu, the collector, for instance, acquired work for his own pleasure, enjoying his purchases in secret; only rarely did his close friends have the opportunity to see some canvases in his collection.⁵⁷

The phenomenon of collectionism is fascinating and was adhered to by many Romanian intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. The characteristics of collectionism, with its peculiarities - the inevitable passion for local contemporary art - are consistent with those of European collectionism during that same period, as further evidence of the assimilation of European cultural values.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 154.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 27.