

BOOK SERIES REVIEW

Colecția „*Arhitecți de neuitat*”, Editura Istoria Artei, București

Marinache, O., Gache, C., 2014, *Louis Pierre Blanc, o planșetă elvețiană în slujba României (1)*, Editura Istoria Artei, București

Marinache, O., Badea-Păun, G., 2015, *Edmond Van Saanen-Algi, de la baletetele rusești la Palatul Telefoanelor (2)*, Editura Istoria Artei, București

Marinache, O., 2015, *Carol Benisch, 50 de ani de arhitectură (3)*, Editura Istoria Artei, București

Marinache, O., 2015, *Ernest Doneaud, visul liniei (4)*, Editura Istoria Artei, București

Marinache, O., 2017, *Paul Gottereau, un regal de arhitectură (5)*, Editura Istoria Artei, București

Marinache, O., 2017, *Gaetan A. Burelly, arhitect restaurator (6)*, Editura Istoria Artei, București

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For the architectural historian, the *Unforgettable Architects (Arhitecți de neuitat)* book series is a treasure trove and an exceptionally useful tool for further scholar studies. Conceived as a publishing product that combines the features of a monograph and those of an architect portfolio, these richly illustrated books provide the most complete overview to date of the careers of six foreign bred architects who worked in Romania during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Gaetan A. Burelly (c. 1813/20-1896), Carol Benisch (1822-1896), Paul Gottereau (1843-1924), Louis Pierre Blanc (1860-1903), Ernest Doneaud (1879-1959) and Edmond Van Saanen-Algi (1882-1938). Faithful to the tenet that the work of the art historian must begin in the archives, Oana Marinache—to whom congratulations are in order—succeeds admirably in her objective of making the most of yet unexplored archival sources and revives the interest for these “forgotten” architects. The volumes provide easy access for the first time to primary resources germane to their personal and professional lives, such as official records, plans, drawings and photos, from both Romanian and foreign public and private archives, and newspaper collections.

Although remembered for some of the most representative buildings in modern Romania (such as Gottereau’s CEC Palace or Van Sannen-Algi’s Telephone Palace), the work of these architects has been largely ignored in recent art historical literature. Apart from being mentioned in wide-ranging studies of architectural history or in more focused articles—all dutifully and rigorously referenced,

demonstrating an exhaustive knowledge of the existing bibliography—none of them had been dedicated a monographic study before. In the forewords to Louis Pierre Blanc and Paul Gottereau studies, Oana Marinache indicates their association with the Romanian monarchy and aristocracy (as their main patrons) alongside their West European origin as possible reasons for being glossed over during the post-war period. The same reasons may explain the apparent “forgetfulness” that surrounded all six architects, despite the significance of their output. Thus, the author’s painstaking work in the archives fills an important research gap and reveals also the true extent of their lifetime achievements. The reader gets a fresh insight into the better known architectural creations and learns about other public and private buildings, some unknown until now, which suggest prolific and prominent professional activities.

The book titles are crafted to include a carefully chosen phrase associated with the name of the architect, which defines in a nutshell the most distinctive trait about his career or *oeuvre*, indicative of what the reader might discover browsing the book. The volumes share a similar structure. A foreword by the author (also translated in English and/or French or German) introduces briefly the architect, emphasizing the newly discovered documents and facts. In the last two volumes (dedicated to Paul Gottereau and Gaetan A. Burelly) the original research is discussed in more detail in a separate introductory brief essay entitled *Current State of Research (Stadiul cercetărilor)*. The first part in each book, called *Beginnings (Începuturi)*, is dedicated to the extended family, origins, upbringing, education and circumstances of their putting down roots in Romania, documented with official records and papers (except for Ernest Doneaud and Gaetan A. Burelly, where only the genealogy of the family is given). The bulk of each volume consists of a comprehensive chronology of the architect’s various buildings, illustrated with original architectural drawings (plans, section, elevation, façade) preserved in the archives, complete with photos and information about patronage and historical context. The reader learns also about positions held in state or private institutions, extensions or restoration of buildings and churches, about projects that have never been executed, or were erroneously attributed to them. Records about the death of the architect, his will, inheritance and descendants are included where available. The first four volumes end with good quality photo albums comprising family photos, old and/or contemporary photos of some buildings, and of their interiors.

Oana Marinache’s research brought to light new records and archival documents with noteworthy implications for the current state of research in the field. Newly disclosed information enriches or amends our knowledge about certain aspects of the architects’ personal lives and commissions. In the case of Ernest Doneaud, Carol Benisch and Gaetan A. Burelly (about whose careers and activity very little was known before) the research yielded results about many unknown commissions and projects. Other details rectify incorrect data, thus helping settle disputed historical

facts. One such example is Gaetan A. Burelly, whose official record of architectural studies in Paris between 1848 and 1850 places him in the French school before Dimitrie Berindei, considered until now the first Romanian architect to have studied in France (between 1853 and 1859). Another example is the year in which Paul Gottereau died. Based on documents retrieved during Oana Marinache's research we are now able to confirm that he died in 1924 and not in 1904, as previously thought. Yet another category of information, widely accepted as true based on oral testimonies only, was not confirmed by the research in the archives. For instance, statements of Burelly's daughter, which shaped much of what was known about his life, proved mostly inaccurate. Born abroad, or in foreign families settled in Romania, these architects studied at the *École nationale des Beaux-Arts* in Paris (however, there are no records of the studies of Carol Benisch), a feature that marked their creation and professional activity. Due to the richness of detail conveyed by the archival documents, the reader becomes a first-hand witness to a *tableau* of social life in modern Romania, where the interaction between the foreign-educated architects and their patrons fashioned the architectural tastes of the elite for the most part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Cristian Gache is co-author of the first book about Louis Pierre Blanc, while Gabriel Badea-Păun co-authored the second volume about Edmond Van Saanen-Algi. A special mention is due to the support team which made possible these publications. Rightfully acknowledged in each volume, Cristian Gache is the author of photos, cover design and graphic layout, architects Andrei Popescu and Raluca Zaharia prepared the 3D models, and several historians and researchers contributed with forewords, translations and photography. Prestigious sponsors and partners facilitated the publishing process and access to various archives and resources abroad. The volumes are printed in landscape format, thus enhancing the reader's handling and visual experience. Even if the specialized content targets a narrow audience, they can be read with much enjoyment by professionals and novices alike, owing to the gracious writing style and attractive graphic layout.