

# **HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY ROMANIAN REGIONAL MUSEUMS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES**

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“The museum is a teaching house which  
must be usefully offered to the visitor”<sup>1</sup>

George Vâlsan

After 1989, the national and local museums in Romania have initiated a partial or total process of renewing the message sent via museums and exhibitions. Given the new status of our country trying to return to a democratic regime, this process contributed to the development of important temporary exhibitions reflecting significant moments in the Romanians history that played a relevant role towards their modernity.

The historical - archaeological manifestations organized by the present local communities museums in Romania after 1990 approached a great variety of subjects, highlighting the life and activity of several personalities, other political, economic, social, cultural and military aspects, customs and traditional rituals, and generating a significant reaction locally and nationally.

As for the temporary historical manifestations organized locally, after 1990, they have approached aspects regarding the life and activity of local and national personalities and events that have marked the historic evolution of local communities. These exhibitions are represented in the county, municipal and town museums by the existent cultural patrimony, which is also being held by a series of collectors with interests in the field.

In order to support and argue the previous statement, in 1991, Banat Museum in Timisoara organized a temporary exhibition dedicated to the commemoration of “Nicolae Iorga”, and a half of century since the great historic personality had passed away.

The exhibited patrimony was provided by mister Ion Iliescu, a university professor within Timisoara University. The exhibition consisted in documentary and bibliophile items displayed in “32 show cases, 32 panels and other 48 graphic arts, paintings, photographs, wooden icons, all related to Nicolae Iorga’s personality”<sup>2</sup>.

A well-defined sector of the manifestation has addressed the correspondence between the Valenii de Munte historian and other scholars living in Banat and Transylvania, resulted in several manuscripts.

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<sup>1</sup> Ioan Opris – *The History of Museums in Romania*, Bucharest, 1994., page 21.

<sup>2</sup> Tatiana Badescu, dr. Ion Iliescu - *The Nicolae Iorga Exhibition at the Banat Museum in Timisoara*, in *Museums Magazine*, nr. 1/ 1991, page 3.

Iorga's scientific activity regarding the history of the Romanian provinces, Banat included, was emphasized by the series of volumes entitled: "Transylvania", "Banat", "Basarabia" and "Bucovina".

During the exhibition, there were several scientific publications illustrating the great historian's personality, reflected in the post bellum period, in Banat. One worth mentioning was "Banat Annals. Studies and Research on Banat History and Arts", no. 1, January - March 1931.

By displaying this issue of the publication, the organizers intended to remind the local public how Nicolae Iorga used to be portrayed as a great Romanian personality of the years of 1930, in the Banat region. The content of the material shed light on several articles regarding the life and activity of this internationally acknowledged scholar.

The manifestation enabled the Banat culture lovers to commemorate a remarkable historic personality who through his activity, mainly scientifically, revealed aspects of urban and rural communities within Banat area.

In 1991, the Union Hall in Alba Iulia hosted another historical temporary exhibition occasioned by the national Session on "Bibliophile Values in the National Cultural Patrimony", the XI<sup>th</sup> edition. The event entitled "Alba Iulia and Blaj - Old Printing Centres" pointed out the role played by the urban communities in Romanians' ethno linguistic continuity and unity.

The article about the "*Alba Iulia and Blaj - Old Printing Centres*" exhibition, signed by Eva Marza and Doina Drega, and published in the "Museums Magazine", no. 2/ 1991, wrote the manifestation intended to capture the activity of these two important printing centres, mentioning that "the old Romanian printings in Belgrade and Blaj were the messengers of several European ideas, promoted by the Reform, Baroque and Lights"<sup>3</sup>.

The patrimony displayed in the two halls included "old Romanian books from Alba Iulia and Blaj, scattered in different libraries and collections in the county (the Unity Museum, the Bathyanem Documentary Library, the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in Alba Iulia, the National Archives – Alba Iulia branch, the Blaj History Museum and others)"<sup>4</sup>, such as the 1795 "Bible" published by Samuil Micu, the 1648 "New Testament", the 1651 "Psalter" and the 1687 "Deacons Ceremonial".

In conclusion, "the intrinsic value of these printed products have abundantly demonstrated the strength and good actions of the written or printed words and have played an undeniable role in Romanians union into a united state"<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Eva Marza, Doina Drega - *Alba Iulia and Blaj - Old Printing Centres Exhibition*, in the „Museums Magazine”, no. 2/ 1991, page 12.

<sup>4</sup> Eva Marza, Doina Drega - *Alba Iulia and Blaj - Old Printing Centres Exhibition*, in the „Museums Magazine”, no. 2/ 1991, pages 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, page 13.

While continuing the presentation of other several temporary exhibitions, significant due to their subjects relating to Romanian local community issues, we will take a closer look at a manifestation organized by the History and Art Museum of Bucharest in March 1991.

Called "Bucharest Interiors at the end of XIX century and the beginning of XX century", the exhibition displayed in three rooms showed domestic objects used by local people, dating from the second half of the XIX century and the beginning of the last century.

What was the purpose of this specific exhibition? The answer offered Constanta Colea in her article published in the "Museums Magazine", no.1/ 1992 stated: "we have tried to shift from a classical presentation of events and personalities, where the chronology often became tiring to the visiting public, to the representation of mentalities and habits, clothing, and good taste, essential elements for the civilisation of any nation"<sup>6</sup>.

The displayed patrimony tried to reflect people's every day lives, at home, at work, on the street, to the theatres or other entertainment places, while the time went by, thus explaining why several watches dating from that specific period were shown in the first showcase.

The ingenuity of the exhibits displaying methodology consisted in "that it goes from the simple arrangement of objects in the showcases in the first two rooms to a free display of objects in the third room, reconstructing real Bucharest interiors, rendering great charm and intimacy to the atmosphere of that specific period of time"<sup>7</sup>.

The exhibition, characterized by a special dynamics display tried to capture aspects of regular life in the end of XIX century - beginning of XX century Bucharest. A well-known fact is that those days, this capital country set on Dambovitza River was a model for the provincial local communities.

Another historical temporary exhibition, representative for the evolution of the printing houses and old Romanian books within Suceava region, was organized in the "Ion Irimescu" Art Galleries in Falticeni town, between June 4-18, 1993.

The event called "The Homiliary of Varlaam in the Suceava County" celebrated 350 years since this book's first edition.

This manifestation was a result of a collective work between the Cultural League, the Fălticeni District of Archpriest and the local "Ion Irimescu" Art Museum. Thus, one could say that public and cultural institutions and organizations representing the public, such as the local Cultural League, had mobilized in order to set up this event.

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<sup>6</sup> Constanta Colea - *Bucharest Interiors at the end of XIX century and the beginning of XX century*, in „Museums Magazine”, no. 1/ 1992, page 18.

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, pages 18-19

It is imperative to mention “it was the first time such an exhibition was organized in the Suceava county, and, therefore, it was the first time when the *Homiliaries* all round the county have met - 7 volumes in the two known editions”<sup>8</sup>.

The seven works brought to the public eye came from monasteries and religious centres all around Suceava County: Dragomirna, John the New of Suceava and the Assumption of the Virgin parishes in Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Corlata, Gramesti and Mazanaiesti.

Varlaam, a prestigious personality who significantly contributed to the development of printed creation within the Romanian territory, has built a bridge between different Romanian communities from the two sides of the Carpathians. His works were published in the big Transylvanian printing centre of Alba Iulia, as specified above, and have contributed to developing a national conscience for the Middle Ages Romanians.

A temporary memorial exhibition dedicated to Otto Alscher, a Banat writer of German expression, celebrating 50 since his death, has addressed aspects of his life and activity as a personality belonging to the German minority in Banat. Alscher has significantly contributed to enriching the cultural-literary patrimony, especially in the Banat area and the Romanian in general.

Constantin Juan-Petroi described Alscher's personality and creation in an article published in 1995 in the prestigious serial publication “The Museums Magazine” stating: “On December 29, 1994, 50 years have passed since Otto Alscher, a Banat writer of German expression, had passed away. He spent almost his entire life and wrote almost all his literary work in Orsova. Experienced observer of the highlands in Southern Banat, knowing their narrow paths surrounding his little town or going further it, and a hunter, more likely passionate about wild animal life and psychology and about human – animal relationship, catching – more often with his gun on the shoulder than ready to fire – the triggering moment of the instinctual reactions inside of the potential hunt, Otto Alscher would have written down in elevated literary phrases this entire experience and love for the primitive nature, unaltered by human intervention, which already started to be felt. Thus, story after story and book after book gathered, and for those who really knew his work, Otto Alscher meant more than a good local writer. This is why we also think that those who compared Alscher with Turgenev or Kipling, London or Garleanu, Sadoveanu or other great free animal lovers were right”<sup>9</sup>.

By setting up this temporary exhibition, the organizers' first wish was to draw attention upon the necessity of building a museum for the Orsova town.

The event, hosted by the reference room of the Orsova Town Library and organized in cooperation with the German Association for Culture and Education

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<sup>8</sup> Olimpia Mitric - *The Homiliary of Varlaam in the Suceava County*, in „Museums Magazine”, no. 1/ 1994, page 73.

<sup>9</sup> Constantin Juan-Petroi - *Memorial Exhibition of Otto Alscher – Banat Writer of German Language*, in „Museums Magazine”, no 3/ 1995, page 20.

of Adults in Resita, included books, newspapers, photographs, plastic works and documentaries gathered from private collections that were able to contribute to the gathering of a potential patrimony of the Orsova Museum.

In December 1994, another important urban historic centre hosting temporary exhibition was the town of Sibiu.

The show called "Sibiu and its surroundings in the documentary graphic arts of the end of XI century – the beginning of XX century" was housed by the Brukenthal Museum. The exhibition was the "result of studying the museum's rich collection of documentary graphic arts, numbering a patrimony of 333,000 items, mainly originated from the Emil Sigerus collection, and bearing a significant documentary value for several various fields, such as architecture, history, art, and photography history"<sup>10</sup>.

The 21 big showcases, 6 desk-like showcases and 5 panels that hosted the exhibits contained post cards, boards, documentary and artistic graphic arts, and three-dimensional objects - albums, a doll dressed in traditional folk clothes, the case of an album containing models of Romanian embroidery belonging to "ASTRA" Traditional Civilisation Museum, scarves of different guild associations, items from the "Hermania" Music Association and from the Fire Fighters Association, the mechanism of the Tower watch given by baron Samuel Brukenthal and two notebooks with crayon sketches of the churches in the Sibiu county, drawn in 1851

The exhibition presented the town of Sibiu in different periods of its existence: the XIII century, the XVI century, the year of 1699, and end of the XIX century.

A special space was dedicated to the surrounding of Sibiu consisting in pictures of Rasinari, Poiana, Saliste, Gura –Raului and Sadu, Medias, Agnita, and also photographs of the neighbouring German places: Seica Mare, Seica Mică, Miercurea, Talmaciu, Dobarca, Amnas.

When it came to religious centres and fortresses, the show highlighted the Cistercian monastery of Carța, the Evangelic churches from Cristian and Cisnădie, Biertan, Mosna, Atel, Dumbrăveni, Ighisul Nou, Slimnic and Cisnădie Fortresses.

The poet Octavian Goga, King Carol the II, professor Stefan Ludwig Roth, the bishop Teutsch, poet Andrei Mureșanu or Iulius Bielez, several local personalities who have stayed in Sibiu, were not forgotten either.

In conclusion, for those who have visited the exhibition, this was a journey into the history of Sibiu and its surroundings enabled by the photographic, documentary and three-dimensional patrimony displayed.

Remaining on Transylvanian territory, a temporary exhibition addressing historic aspects of local communities, and relevant enough to worth be mentioned in the present work, was the event entitled: "Urban Interior Ambient in the XVI – XIX century Transylvania", varnished in 1995, within the National Museum of

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<sup>10</sup> Aurelia Cozma - *Sibiu and its surroundings in the documentary graphic arts, the end of the XIX century - the beginning of the XX century*, in „Museums Magazine”, no 3/ 1995, page 20.

Transylvanian History in Cluj - Napoca. The exhibition was the result of the collective work between prestigious museums from Transylvania: the National History Museum of Transylvania, the National Art Museum in Cluj, The Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, the County Museum of Targu Mures, the "Octavian Goga" Memorial Museum from Ciucea, and the Gherla Museum.

The organizers of this exhibition tried "to create or to represent, as complex as possible, several interiors representative for the Transylvanian urban life from that specific period of time"<sup>11</sup>.

The furniture, rugs, tapestry, silverware, faience and porcelains exposed to the public tried to reproduce the interiors of Transylvanian city folks living in the XVI - XIX centuries, all these representing a turning point in the evolution of the Transylvanian urban environment, in a certain period in the existence of human communities.

Another exhibition worth mentioning is the project called "The House of God, The House of Man - Multicultural Patrimonial Values", organized in January 2003, by the Satu Mare County Museum – History Section. This event tried to capitalize the fixed cultural patrimony from the Northwestern part of Romania and the specific ecclesiastic architecture of all Christian cults.

Religious architectural monuments from the Northwestern part of the country and representative monuments for all Christian ethnics living together in that area were promoted.

The September of 2003 offered the public a temporary exhibition called "Material and Spiritual Culture in the Tisa Upper Basin. The German Population's Influence upon Other Ethnics". The event was hosted by the Satu Mare County Museum – History Section, and it was intended to scientifically capitalize the cultural patrimony specific to the German minority and other ethnics from the Tisa upper Basin. The exhibition was included in a project that envisaged the organization of an international homonymous scientific session, while, the same time, the "Material and Spiritual Culture in the Tisa Upper Basin. German population's influence on the other ethnics" volume was published. Integrating more scientific activities into such a program, like in the similar events mentioned earlier in this work, is relevant for the dynamics of the organizing museums and the manifestations involving exhibitions.

In August 2003, the Botosani County Museum organized the "Migration Millennium" exhibition. The specialists' effort in organizing the event consisted in: providing a vast and objective presentation of role and effect of the migrations within the Romanian space; optimally capitalizing the local and national patrimony; promoting the museum and its activities within the local communities; encouraging the protection of patrimony; countering the cultural crime and supporting the Botosani county Museum candidacy to the "National Cultural Patrimony Awards" contest.

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<sup>11</sup> Viorica Gabriela Pop - *Interior urban ambient in XVI - XIX century Transylvania*, Exhibition, in „Museums Magazine”, no. 4/ 1995, page 15.

Along with the exhibition that had an itinerary character, the project also enclosed the publishing of a bilingual catalogue, the recording of a “The Migration Millennium” CD and of a homonymous brochure, as well as modernizing and optimizing the space and displaying possibilities according to the new European and international progress in the field.

The second category of temporary exhibition addressed in this work regards the archaeological exhibitions organized by the local communities, which succeeded in reflecting aspects of these entities evolution.

Thus, at the end of September 1990, during the XIII<sup>th</sup> Thracology Symposium held in Satu Mare and Carei, the Town Museum of Carei, in cooperation with the Bucharest Thracology Institute, have organized an the exhibition called “Bronze Age Archaeological Discoveries in Carei Area”.

The event had a chronological display starting with the transition period towards the Bronze Age and encompassing archaeological items representing the cultures of Baden and Cotofeni, discovered in Piscolt, Sanislau, Moftinu Mic and Carei.

Cups, mugs, amphorae and bowls decorated according to the specific period, with incisions or painted with white and red, as well as vestiges of polished stone, silex microliths and obsidian, were placed on display.

Significant was the specific ceramics decorated with excises, striations and plastic ornaments. Several other items like polished stones, obsidian arrow spears, clay weights, and a rich illustrative material of maps, photographs and boards with ceramics typology have completed the image of the Early Bronze Age in Carei area.

The Middle Bronze Age was represented by items of archaeological cultural patrimony of the Otomani culture, specific for the Bronze Age in the Northwestern part of the country.

The exhibition continued with the presentation of archaeological discoveries from the Late Bronze Age, and ended with drawing the public and specialists’ attention towards the Bronze metallurgy, extremely developed in that area. Thus, the event also presented bronze deposits discovered not long ago in Cauas, Carei and Sarvazel, that have proved that many vestiges regarding the evolution of those specific region inhabitants were still to be found.

The museums are generally obligated to consider the necessity of periodically organizing exhibitions and manifestations meant to inform the interested public about other activities performed by specialists from these cultural centres in order to enrich the patrimony with cultural items, archaeological vestiges included, discovered within the museums’ historical-geographical range, and which come to shed light upon local history aspects since oldest times.

Such an exhibition was set up at the beginning of March 1991, hosted by the History County Museum in Bacau, being “the first such exhibition to be organized in the 34 years of this institution”<sup>12</sup>.

The most valuable vestiges discovered during the 1990 archaeological campaign in the present settlements around Bacau County: Fulgeris - Pancesti, Leontinesti - Ardeoani, Gioseni - Tamas, Racatau -Horgesti, Oncesti, Stefan cel Mare, Bacau and Targul Trotus, were presented.

The most representative were the objects belonging to Criș and Cucuteni civilisations dating from V - III millenniums b.C., which were discovered in Leontinesti and Fulgeris consisting in glasses, bowls, amphorae, amphorettes, large vessels and bell bowls.

A segment of the exhibition was dedicated to the Bronze Age and was represented by a series of vessels and stone and bronze objects specific to the Monteoru culture, discovered in Racatau. The exhibition tried to reproduce the Geto-Dacian age by highlighting several vestiges (tools, grinding stones, jewelry, Dacian ceramics) from the Racatau Dava.

The Feudal Age was represented by house holdings, ceramics burning ovens, guild shops and several garbage holes, all of them being discovered during diggings in Bacau and Targu Trotus. The archaeological inventory also included guild and agricultural tools, jewellery, equipment and harness items, domestic and ornamental ceramics and coins.

The archaeological vestiges were accompanied by photographs, graphic boards and texts enabling visitors to complete the picture of the present archaeological sites from Bacau County, thus promoting information about the evolution of the local inhabitants since very distant times.

The National History Museum of Transylvania has organized the exhibition entitled “Gothic and Renaissance in Vantu de Jos” in Cluj-Napoca, and then, it toured it in the country, including in the National History Museum of Romania (between September 15 and November 15, 1999). The archaeological manifestation was intended to offer the interested public the results of the archaeological diggings around the ruins of the “Martinuzzi castle”, near Vințu de Jos, Alba County, this building being representative for the laic renaissance architecture within the Transylvanian area.

The patrimony displayed was very diver and consisted in lithic material integrating also gothic items and fragments and pieces of architectonic framings; construction ceramics and decorated ceramics with religious themes, coat of arms of noblemen and towns in Transylvania, hunting and mythological scenes, all dating from XV-XVIII centuries, and domestic ceramics from the XIV-XVII centuries, bronze and silver items revealing the craftsmanship of processing these metals, glassware, Christian religious pieces and a significant thesaurus of coins and jewellery dating from the end of the XVII century.

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<sup>12</sup> Viorel Căpitanu - *Archaeological Discoveries form 1990*, in „Museums Magazine”, no. 1/ 1992, page 70.



The archaeological fund exposed to the public has revealed the importance of the monumental complex discovered in Vantu de Jos and has contributed to the reconstruction of the XIV-XVII centuries, a period in which relationships between the Catholic and Orthodox circles emerge. The material culture from Transylvania knows powerful influences from the Reform civilisation and Renaissance art.

Another temporary archaeological exhibition addressing the local communities issue was organized in January 2003 by the Neamt County Museum Complex. The purpose of the exhibition called "The Neolithic Tell from the Poduri village" was to stress how the tell was formed, as a confirmation of uninterrupted living on the Ghindaru Hill, for three millennia, and also to highlight the political organization, the economic and spiritual life of prehistoric communities, to signal the presence of archaeological unique items bearing a great scientific and artistic value, and to demonstrate the relationships between the Neolithic and Bronze Age communities, from both sides of the Oriental Carpathians.

Presenting and analyzing the dynamics of the historical and archaeological temporary exhibitions, organized in county, municipal and town museums, between 1990 and 2003, one would note a freedom of expression as regards the topics addressed, freedom otherwise normal in a democratic regime, while various aspects about the historic evolution of local communities were also presented.

One proof of the dynamics regarding the historical and archaeological temporary exhibitions organized by the local communities, while complying with their issues, also on a national level, is given or needs to be given by transferring on multimedia support everything that was presented during these events, in order to preserve over the years all that was displayed, and to develop a potential history of these exhibitional programs.

It is of most importance to point out the purpose of these temporary exhibitions. They all intended to preserve and to remind the public of several aspects regarding the life and activity of local personalities, who distinguished themselves nationally; to present historical events essential for the historic development on many level of the local inhabitants, regardless of the ethnicity, locally and nationally, and to display representative customs, traditions and folk clothing dating from different periods of time in the rural communities, significantly relevant for the Romanian majority population and national minorities, thus, bringing an important contribution to the enrichment of Romania's cultural patrimony.

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- Abstract -

After 1989, the national and local museums in Romania have initiated a partial or total process of renewing the message sent via museums and exhibitions. Given the new status of our country trying to return to a democratic regime, this process contributed to the development of important temporary exhibitions reflecting significant moments in the Romanians history that played a relevant role towards their modernity.

The historical - archaeological manifestations organized by the present local communities museums in Romania after 1990 approached a great variety of subjects, highlighting the life and activity of several personalities, other political, economic, social, cultural and military aspects, customs and traditional rituals, and generating a significant reaction locally and nationally.

As for the temporary historical manifestations organized locally, after 1990, they have approached aspects regarding the life and activity of local and national personalities and events that have marked the historic evolution of local communities. These exhibitions are represented in the county, municipal and town museums by the existent cultural patrimony, which is also being held by a series of collectors with interests in the field.

The second category of temporary exhibition addressed in this work regards the archaeological exhibitions organized by the local communities, which succeeded in reflecting aspects of these entities evolution.

The museums are generally obligated to consider the necessity of periodically organizing exhibitions and manifestations meant to inform the interested public about other activities performed by specialists from these cultural centres in order to enrich the patrimony with cultural items, archaeological vestiges included, discovered within the museums' historical-geographical range, and which come to shed light upon local history aspects since oldest times.

Presenting and analyzing the dynamics of the historical and archaeological temporary exhibitions, organized in county, municipal and town museums, between 1990 and 2003, one would note a freedom of expression as regards the topics addressed, freedom otherwise normal in a democratic regime, while various aspects about the historic evolution of local communities were also presented.

One proof of the dynamics regarding the historical and archaeological temporary exhibitions organized by the local communities, while complying with their issues, also on a national level, is given or needs to be given by transferring on multimedia support everything that was presented during these events, in order to preserve over the years all that was displayed, and to develop a potential history of these exhibitional programs.

It is of most importance to point out the purpose of these temporary exhibitions. They all intended to preserve and to remind the public of several aspects regarding the life and activity of local personalities, who distinguished themselves nationally; to present historical events essential for the historic development on many level of the local inhabitants, regardless of the ethnicity, locally and nationally, and to display representative customs, traditions and folk clothing dating from different periods of time in the rural communities, significantly relevant for the Romanian majority population and national minorities, thus, bringing an important contribution to the enrichment of Romania's cultural patrimony.