

The Romanian Participation
at the 57th International Art Exhibition –
La Biennale di Venezia



la Biennale di Venezia

57. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Geta Brătescu

Apparitions



Geta Brătescu in her studio (2012), photo: Ștefan Sava

Romanian Pavilion, Giardini della Biennale
Sestiere Castello, 30122 Venezia

New Gallery of the Romanian Institute for Culture and
Humanistic Research
Campo Santa Fosca, Palazzo Correr,
Cannaregio 2214, 30121 Venezia

Preview: 10–12 May, 2017

Opening: 11 May, 5:15 p.m., Romanian Pavilion,
Giardini della Biennale
12 May, 7:00 p.m., New Gallery of the
Romanian Institute for Culture and
Humanistic Research

Exhibition: 13 May – 26 November, 2017

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Geta Brătescu (b. 1926, Ploiești) has been a central figure of Romanian contemporary art since the 1960s. An artist with a rich and long career, Brătescu developed a complex body of work that comprises drawing, collage, engraving, tapestry, object, photography, experimental film, video, and performance. It is the first time in the history of the Romanian participation at the Venice Biennale that this role has been entrusted to a woman artist.

Geta Brătescu's participation in Biennale Arte 2017 brings together works representative of all the stages of her artistic trajectory – many of them shown for the first time –, demonstrating the ease with which she employs a multitude of artistic media. She draws on a series of procedures from the visual and conceptual arsenal of modernism, but also modulates and transforms this legacy, while at the same time advancing toward contemporary modes of expressing and conceptualizing the artistic act, with an emphasis on performance, process, self-representation, and the serial.

The exhibition *Apparitions* is conceived through the lens of thematic clusters, including the most recent phase in her artistic practice, in an attempt to provide a mirror of her studio space, understood both as a physical space and a meta-artistic entity. The physical and mental spaces of the studio blend together in a complex assemblage, and so do the literary texts with their visual conceptualizations, the feminine mythologies with the process of self-investigation, personal memory with cultural memory and imagination. “Memory is apparition; an epiphany, like art”, states the artist.

In the current context, Geta Brătescu's presence at Biennale Arte 2017 is aimed at communicating art's capacity to invent narratives that transcend

the gloomy climate of the contemporary world, by means of an artistic reflection that highlights the transformative strength of femininity as the consummate embodiment of a “nomadic subject”. Geta Brătescu's art finds itself in full consonance with the return to materiality, to the power of the artistic imagination, to art's power to give shape. Her artistic practice resonates with the current debates about the role of art as a space that points to reality's sore spots, but also as a means of instituting a specific language capable of generating new forms of subjectivity.

The exhibition will take place both in the Romanian Pavilion in Giardini della Biennale and the New Gallery of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice.

The exhibition in the Romanian Pavilion is conceived around two major themes: **the studio**, which is central to Brătescu's career as an artist, and **reflection on female subjectivity** through various modes of conceptualizing the feminine. Two coordinates define the identity of the second exhibition space – the New Gallery of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice –, which is both **a place for study**, providing conditions for readers to immerse themselves in the exhibition catalogue and other materials relevant to Brătescu's artistic and intellectual career, and a concentrated exhibition, whose theme is **the artist's creative process**.

The consistency, integrity, and aesthetic and intellectual quality of Geta Brătescu's art, as well as the artist's incredible presence – revealed in both the works in which she represents herself and in the female characters she invokes – transforms the Romanian Pavilion and the New Gallery into a “continuous studio” for every visitor.

On the occasion of the exhibition, the book 'Geta Brătescu – Apparitions' is published by Koenig Books, London. The publication is edited by Magda Radu and Diana Ursan together with Marius Babias and it features a broad selection of texts written by Geta Brătescu over the course of time – fragments in which the artist comments on facets of the creative process and the sources of her work. The artist's notations are interspersed with numerous illustrations of the works she mentions in her writings, thus making the book an indispensable companion to the exhibition.

A series of events and talks will also be organized throughout the exhibition period, both in Romania and in Venice. The talks will be given by international curators and theorists and they will explore and present new directions for understanding the work of Geta Brătescu.

Geta Brătescu (b. 1926, Ploiești) has been a central figure of Romanian contemporary art since the 1960s. An artist with a rich and long career, Brătescu developed a complex body of work that comprises drawing, collage, engraving, tapestry, object, photography, experimental film, video, and performance. She studied at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and concurrently at the Fine Arts Academy in Bucharest and worked as an artistic director for the magazine *Secolul 20* [20th Century], renamed *Secolul 21* at the turn of the millennium. In 2016, Hamburger Kunsthalle mounted an extensive retrospective exhibition on Brătescu's work.

The artist's recent exhibitions include a solo show at Tate Liverpool in 2015; *MATRIX 254 / Geta Brătescu*, a solo show at Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive in 2014; as well as participations in *The Encyclopedic Palace*, Biennale Arte 2013; La Triennale, Paris, Palais de Tokyo, in 2012; and the 12th Istanbul Biennial in 2011. Brătescu's works are in important collections such as MoMA, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Tate Modern, London; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw; The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest; MUMOK, Vienna; Kontakt Collection, Vienna; Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana; and FRAC Lorraine, Metz. In 2017, Brătescu takes part in Documenta 14, Athens and Kassel, and has a solo exhibition at the Camden Arts Centre, curated by Jenni Lomax.

Magda Radu is a curator and art historian based in Bucharest. She is one of the founders and co-curator of the program Salonul de proiecte, which functioned between 2011 and 2015 at MNAC Anexa and is now an independent initiative located in the Universul Palace in Bucharest. She edited (or co-edited) several exhibitions catalogues and books, among which: *Art in Romania Between 1945-2000. An Analysis from Today's Perspective* (2016), *subREAL* (2015), *Dear Money* (2014) and *André Cadere / Andrei Cădere* (2011). In the last few years she also curated exhibitions at institutions including MUSAC, Léon; Spinnerei, Leipzig; and Photo España, Madrid. At the National University of Arts in Bucharest, she taught a course about the history and theory of conceptual art in Eastern Europe, as well as a Curatorial Studies course.

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On the occasion of the exhibition, the book 'Geta Brătescu – Apparitions' is published by Koenig Books, London. The book is published in collaboration with Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (n.b.k.) and is cofinanced by The Administration of the National Cultural Fund. The project does not necessarily represent the position of the Administration of the National Cultural Fund. The Administration of the National Cultural Fund is not responsible for the content of the project or the manner in which the results of the project may be used. These are entirely the responsibility of the funding recipient.

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