



ANA LUPAS

**INTIMATE SPACE –
OPEN GAZE**

**01.11.2024
– 16.03.2025**

**KUNSTMUSEUM
LIECHTENSTEIN**



Dear Visitors

Born in Cluj-Napoca in 1940, Ana Lupas has been creating a richly varied, experimental and radically humanist oeuvre since the 1960s. Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein and the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, are presenting the first comprehensive solo exhibitions of the artist along with a survey publication of her entire artistic output.

For most of her career, the artist worked under conditions of oppression and a lack of freedom. The totalitarian regime that came to power in Romania in the wake of the Second World War had a major impact on the life of young Ana Lupas and her family, who belonged to the political and intellectual elite of the pre-war period. Individual expression was not allowed in the cultural sector; censorship and surveillance were always present. Refusing to obey the rules of the communist ideology, Lupas sought ways to continue developing her work. Her personal, mostly nonfigurative visual idiom, unconventional use of materials and conceptual practice made it hard to pinpoint her work, allowing it to slip through the cracks of Romanian censorship. One way that she accomplished this was to work in remote places, far removed from the centres of power. Despite restrictions, Lupas took part in international exhibitions, gaining global recognition.

The exhibition at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein was created by Letizia Ragaglia in close collaboration with the artist.

A comprehensive publication with texts by Tanja Boon, Leontine Coelewij, Marina Lupas, Ramona Novicov, Letizia Ragaglia, Christian Rattemeyer and Mechtild Widrich accompanies the exhibition.

We hope you enjoy the exhibition and take away some lasting impressions!

Unless noted otherwise, all works are loaned by the artist.



Skylight Gallery I

The large series of *Eyes* that Lupas worked on between 1974 and 1991 is shown for the first time in Vaduz. Twenty-one sculptures in the form of eyeballs are installed so they are looking at a wall. Lupas selected the paintings hanging there from the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein's collection. As artistic research, she presents the various strands in an unconventional hanging. It was not the particularities of each work that were important to her, but rather an overview of more than four hundred years of art history, in which she includes a painting by her grandmother, Livia Pop, as a tribute. Pop painted this still life in 1905, as a young woman. Artistic talent and interest ran in her family. However, as the mother of six children, Pop's life took her in a different direction; she became involved in social organisations and received awards for her work.

Lupas's sculptures represent organs that enable sight. 'Observation . . . gives us the opportunity to see. People want to see. They learn to see. They know how to see.' In this statement, Lupas emphasises the importance of perception for artists. On closer inspection of the sculptures, the individuality of each eye becomes apparent. All the works from this series are made of glazed porcelain painted by the artist. Pupils, lids and blood vessels are clearly visible, hinted at or rendered in a simplified form. Sometimes paint can be seen running down like tears; some painted eyelids are held open or closed by clips. One eye is enclosed in a wire net, appearing to be fenced in, it is held together by the net. Once used to protect large wine containers, Lupas adopted this ancient technique for her own purposes.

The artist saw working with porcelain as an opportunity and a challenge. She began the series with small eye-like spheres of papier mâché, soon making larger versions and then painting them. The artist started working with porcelain while lecturing at the Academy of Visual Arts Ion Andreescu, Cluj, from where she had graduated with distinction in 1962. Lupas taught drawing, composition and painting in the ceramics department. The academy collaborated with the local Iris porcelain factory. During communist times, the factory had made luxury articles for members of the political elite and foreign delegates. Lupas quit her job for political reasons in 1979. Subsequently, it proved difficult to continue work on her project

of large-format porcelain sculptures as she no longer had official access to material and equipment.

'In a society that proscribed individuality and was ruled by uniformity, Lupas created a series of sculptures that consciously drew attention to the differences between people, their strengths and weaknesses, the power of perception, but also the fragility of this power.' (Letizia Ragaglia)

1

Ana Lupas

1940 in Cluj, Romania; lives and works in Cluj

Eyes, 1974–1991 (a series of works)

Porcelain

20 parts, each Ø 71 cm

2

Eye Behind Gratings, 27.9528 inches in Diameter, 1974–1991

Porcelain, handwoven wire net

Ø 71 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

3

Frans Hals (Workshop)

1582 in Antwerp, Belgium – 1666 in Haarlem, Netherlands

Flötespielender Jüngling, ca. 1645–1650

[Young Man Playing the Flute]

Oil on canvas

60.5 × 54.5 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz / Donation Graf Maurice Arnold von Bendern, 1968

4

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner

1880 in Aschaffenburg, Germany – 1938 in Frauenkirch, Switzerland

Bergbach mit Steg im Wald, 1921

[Mountain Stream with Footbridge in the Forest]

Oil on canvas

80 × 71 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz / Donation Gerda Techow, Vaduz



1 (selection)



2

5

Willem de Kooning

1904 in Rotterdam, Netherlands – 1997 in Springs, NY, USA

Untitled XVII, 1976

Oil on canvas

150.8 × 139.4 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz / Donation of Stiftung zur Errichtung eines Kunstmuseums

6

Herbert Zangs

1924 in Krefeld, Germany – 2003 in Krefeld

Reliefgemälde (Verweissung), 1953

[Relief Painting (Whitening)]

Dispersion paint and pebbles on board

98 × 48 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

7

Bernardo Licinio da Pordenone

1491 Poscante, Italy – after 1549 in Venice

Porträt eines jungen Mannes, 1st half 16th cent.

[Portrait of a Young Man]

Oil on canvas

42.5 × 33.5 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz / Schenkung der Karl Mayer Stiftung, Vaduz

8 (above)

Jan De Bray

ca. 1627 in Haarlem, Netherlands – 1697 in Amsterdam

Herr, after 1670

[Portrait of a Gentleman]

Oil on canvas

59 × 47 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

9

Livia Pop

1888–1966

Still Life, 1905

Oil on canvas

45.5 × 77.8 cm

10

Isidore Isou

1925 in Botoșani, Romania – 2007 in Paris

Untitled, 1952

Oil on canvas

65 × 54 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz / Donation of Robert Altmann, Viroflay, France

11

Alexej von Jawlensky

1864 in Torzhok, Russia – 1941 in Wiesbaden, Germany

Stilleben mit blauer Kanne, 1913

[Still Life with Blue Jug]

Oil on hardboard

73 × 54.2 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz / Donation of Gerda Techow gemeinnützige Stiftung, Vaduz

12

Giulio Paolini

1940 in Genoa, Italy

Copia dal vero, 1976

[Copy from Life]

Pencil on canvas, wood

Four parts, overall 60.2 × 120.5 cm

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

Documentation

My Grandmother Livia at the Easel 1903–1904, 2014

B/w photo on wood mount

79.6 × 32.4 × 3.4 cm

Pedestal: 40.3 × 41.6 × 23.5 cm



Skylight Gallery II

Self-Portrait (1 to 200), 2000

In 1998, the Hungarian city of Székesfehérvár mounted a comprehensive solo exhibition of Lupas's work. The show took place simultaneously at multiple venues and was advertised on posters across the city. The poster's main image is derived from a photograph – most likely a passport photo of the artist – to which Lupas added the Hungarian words for the organs of sense in her own handwriting – eye, nose, mouth: *szem, orr, szay*. After the exhibition, she took the leftover posters back to Cluj, working over one of these sheets almost every day in the year 2000. This gave rise to almost 200 very different, stand-alone self-portraits, a diverse body of work that goes under the title *Self-Portrait* and is displayed here for the first time. The line of female ancestors from the first room continues with the oversized portrait of Clara, the grandmother of Lupas's grandmother. Clara Maniu (1842–1929) was a committed feminist who, among other things, campaigned for women's suffrage.

Without the first intervention, the almost clumsy addition of handwritten words, the posters are reminiscent of pop art screenprints. Facial features are reduced to stark contrasts, the outline of the head filling the sheet. Lupas negates this poster-like effect by adding the letters. Generalising from a photo of a single individual, they denote universal elements of a face. At the same time, it is clear that the handwriting belongs to one person. The artist individualised each poster by means of subsequent manipulations. In an ongoing dialogue with herself, she expresses various facets and moments of her personality in a realm between introspection and role play. With the aid of coloured ink, acrylic and encaustic paint she altered the expression of her face. The range of interventions is diverse: eyes appear hypnotic, a beard is added to a chin, a mouth pokes out a tongue.

The writer Herta Müller (born in Nițhidorf, Romania, 1953), wrote several essays on the Romanian dictatorship in the 1990s, around the time Lupas was creating her self-portraits. That difference was not allowed, that details were prohibited and despised, runs like a thread through her writings. 'My details were not valid, they were not a part but an enemy of the whole', she wrote in *Hunger und Seide* [Hunger and Silk]. 'In her oeuvre,



Lupas never made overt reference to the repressions in her country; however, in many works she did emphasise identity-forming details, subtly restoring a balance between details and the whole.' (Letizia Ragaglia).

13

Self-Portrait (1 to 200), 2000 (a series of works)
Coloured pencil, acrylic and wax crayon on paper
89 x 64.6 cm



14

Self-Portrait, poster for solo exhibition, Szent István Múzeum, Székesfehérvár, Hungary, 1998

Screenprint on paper
89 x 64.6 cm

15

Clara, My Grandmother's Grandmother, 1972

Acrylic on canvas, board, wood
398.5 x 289.5 cm





Skylight Gallery III

Lupas studied textile art with Maria Ciupe, working during her studies on monumental murals in the Roman-Orthodox cathedral of Cluj, supervised by the painter Anastase Demian. At the beginning of the 1960s, harking back to the craft of classical weaving, she began developing new forms of expression with textiles. Referring to farming practices and traditions, she structured her artistic processes as long-term undertakings. She realised several monumental projects, including *Humid Installation*, on show in this room, in collaboration with villagers.

Reprising and modifying existing works became a key concern for the artist. Lupas created variations on *Humid Installation* at different locations from 1966 onwards, revisiting this work several times until 2019. With each new context, she would alter the title and materials. Its interpretation and meaning also changed over time.

In 1970, Lupas installed a geometric grid of wooden posts, spanned by ropes, in a sloping field of about three-quarters of an acre in the village of Mărgău, near Cluj. She then hung lengths of fabric on these parallel lines so they formed open loops. Photographs depict the overall arrangement and structure of *Humid Installation* and the billowing lengths of fabrics; they document the event and are presented as artworks in their own right. After the action, some lengths were rolled up and had her name printed on them.

Some of the fabrics were handwoven by Lupas. The other fabrics used in Mărgău were from the women who assisted her. The artist asked them to bring fabrics that they had at home and had woven themselves from linen, hemp and cotton. Some were from the women's dowries.

In this rural setting, the artist created a carefully composed, monumental and simultaneously highly ephemeral work with her volunteers. The action lasted just one day. The context and materials are allusions to traditional work: the bleaching or whitening of fabrics, which involves repeatedly washing hemp or linen cloth and then drying it in the sun. In the 1960s, farming was collectivised in Romania and agricultural work changed. Traditional practices such as growing and processing linen and hemp, weaving, bleaching and seasonal work

feasts had become more of a memory than a part of the villagers' daily lives. 'The work, in other words, was not just incidentally women's work but a contemporary, sculptural, site-specific, and photographic meditation on such work, both its history and potentials for aesthetic preservation.' (Mechtild Widrich in <https://artmargins.com/from-rags-to-monuments-ana-lupass-humid-installation/>).

In this room you can see several versions of *Humid Installation*. With each variation, the materials become increasingly rigid: the lengths of linen in the artwork for the *8^e Biennale de Paris: manifestation internationale des jeunes artistes* in Paris (1973); the black draperies in University Square in Bucharest (1991); the 'bleeding' paper performance at the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn, Germany, (1994); and the monumental aluminium version in Dunkirk, France (2019).

Memorial of Cloth (large photo on the wall, 1991) marks a dramatic moment and place in the history of Romania. In June 1990, massive protests were staged for more democracy. The protesters called on all former communists to leave president Ion Iliescu's 'new' government. Iliescu called in miners from the provinces to put down the protests forcibly, resulting in numerous deaths. While the artist used light fabrics for *Humid Installation* in Mărgău, Lupas later decided to reinforce the fabric with bitumen, a tar-like substance. The heavy, rigid lengths of material create a monumental effect.

16

Monument of Cloth, detail, 2012

Resin, metal, bricks, wood clamps
195 × 638 cm

17

Monument of Cloth, study for metal casting, 1992

Resin, metal frames, wood clamps
215 × 320 × 100 cm

Atelier Cu Monument De Cârpă, 2005

[Monument of Cloth in the Artist's Studio]
7'40"

Video by Xantus Gábor

18

Humid Installation, 1970

B/w photos (vintage prints)

4 parts, each 70 × 100 cm

Courtesy the artist and P420, Bologna, Italy



Humid Installation, 1970



Humid Installation, 1970

Documentation on the coloured surfaces from the artist's archive

2006–2007

Four preparatory drawings for *Memorial of Cloth*

1994

Humid Installation, paper, metal and plastic receptacles, variable dimensions, installation view, *Europa, Europa: The Century of the Avant-Garde in Central and East Europe*, Bundeskunsthalle Bonn, Germany, 1994

Humid Installation, paper, metal and plastic receptacles, variable dimensions, made and installed in situ, Székesfehérvár, Hungary, 1994

1999

Humid Installation, installation view, *Rondo. Farewell to the 20th Century (Central and East-European Artists)*, Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest, 1999

2008

Ana Lupas, *Humid Installation*, installation view, *Ana Lupas*, Taxispalais, Innsbruck, Austria, 2008

1966

Studio U.A.P – outdoor installation, Grigorescu district, Cluj, 1966

1973

Flying Carpet, Symbol of Peace, 1973, handwoven fabric, cotton, hemp, wool, variable dimensions. Outdoor installation, *8^e Biennale de Paris: manifestation internationale des jeunes artistes*, Paris, 1973

1990

The artist's studio, courtyard

1991

Memorial of Cloth, installation, variable dimensions. Outdoor installation, installation view, Piața Universității [University Square], in front of the National Theatre, Bucharest, 1991

1995

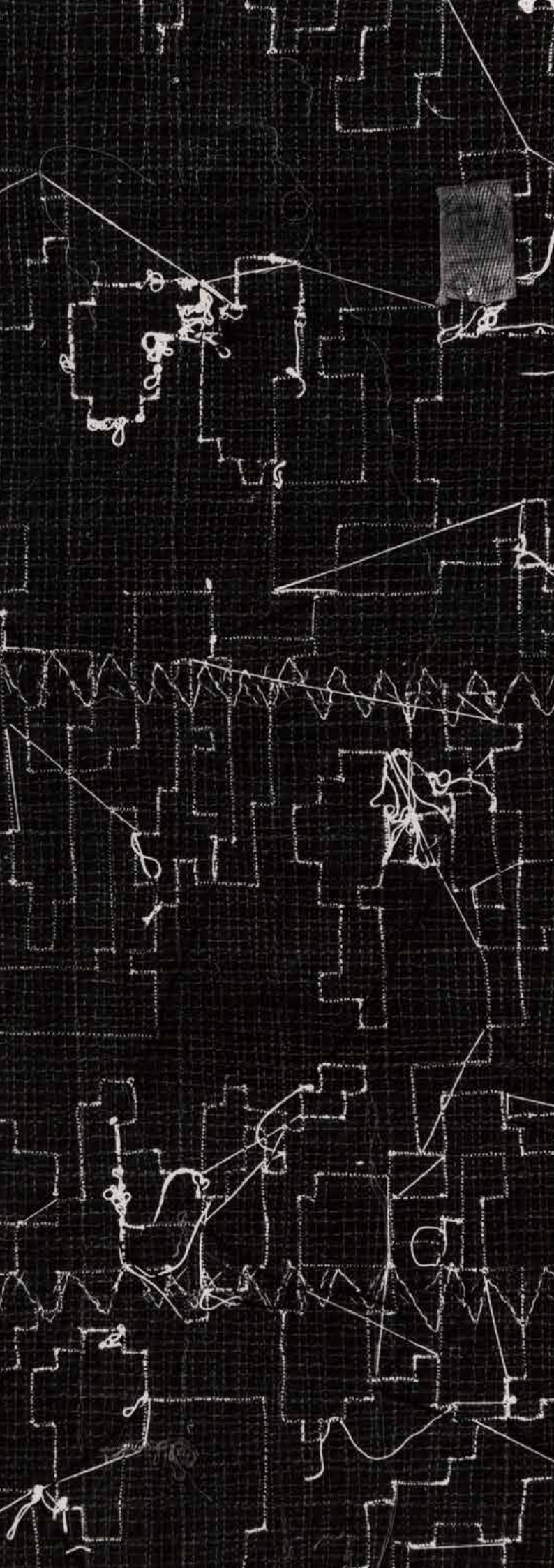
Memorial of Cloth, Szent István Múzeum, Székesfehérvár, Hungary, 1995

2012

Aluminium modules for *Monument of Cloth* (in preparation)

2019

Monument of Cloth, 2005, aluminium modules, stainless steel stakes, 189 × 2450 cm. Installation view, *Gigantisme: Art and Industry*, Dunkerque Triennale, FRAC Grand Large – Hauts-de-France, Dunkerque, 2019



Skylight Gallery IV

Identity Shirts

Lupas began making the *Identity Shirts* series towards the end of the 1960s. The series comprises several 'generations', as the artist calls them, and two unique objects named after types of angels. For the first generation of *Identity Shirts*, Lupas worked with a sewing machine and light-coloured threads on rectangular pieces of dark fabric. The lines have the appearance of abstract drawings, graphics or diagrams.

The basic shape of the second generation works resembles folded shirts. Lupas laid several layers of fabric and grey padding on top of each other, with zigzag and straight seams holding the layers together. Tracing the shape of bodies, they form abstract patterns and sometimes resemble scars. Various patches, processes of wear and ageing testify to the long life of clothing in former times. In addition, the artist deliberately stained the pieces with sweat and blood, intimate bodily traces, to underline the concept of the *Identity Shirts*, which express a sense of individuality despite their common features. At the same time, she recalls the fragility of life, the duration and passage of time. The desire to care for and safeguard something that can be lost is a driving force in Lupas's work.

For the five *Identity Shirts* of the third generation, Lupas added a small candle and holder to the front of each shirt to emphasise the serious, solemn appearance of the artworks, as if they were religious artefacts. No two objects are alike, with Lupas underlining the uniqueness of the individual.

The *Cherub Shirt* and *Seraph Shirt* refer to beings from the oldest parts of the Bible. Christian artists traditionally depicted cherubim as sphinx-like creatures with both human and animal features. Seraphim were six-winged angels and stood nearest to God in the heavenly order. Lupas made quilted and upholstered jackets of various materials for these figures.

The Jewish-Christian references in these series were not without danger for Lupas, as any form of religion or religious ideas was then banned in Romania.



20

19

Identity Shirt, First Generation, 1969

(a series of works)

Various textiles, thread

Sewing-machine stitched drawing

Various dimensions

20

Identity Shirt, Second Generation, 1969

(a series of works)

Various textiles, thread, pencil

Various dimensions

21

Cherub Shirt, 1970

Various textiles, thread, ink

77.4 × 57 cm

22

Seraph Shirt, 1970

Various textiles, thread, ink

72 × 54.2 cm

23

Identity Shirt, Third Generation, 1971

(a series of works)

Paper, sweat, needles, thread, iron wire, candle, smoke

Various dimensions

24

Tiny Identity Shirt, 1972–1973

(a series of works)

Metal, plaster, gauze, plastic tube, canvas

Various dimensions

25

Identity Shirt, Last But One Generation, 1989–2023

(a series of works)

Various textiles, thread

Various dimensions



24

The *Tiny Identity Shirts*, created in the early 1970s, are small sculptures of plaster and metal. Lupas designed these objects to rock back and forth. They resemble cribs or coffins, both of which encase the body – be it at the start or end of life.

Roughly rectangular, the dark pieces of the *Last But One Generation* recall the first generation. Assembled from separate parts, they contain round shapes and triangular, patch-like pieces of fabric. With the artist's signature stamped in various places, the works in this series once again become pictorial. The title hints at the possibility of a next generation.



26

Coats to Borrow, 1989

Handmade coats, painted iron, mixed media

Variable dimensions

Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Acquired with the generous support of the Vriendenloterij, the Mondriaan Fund, the Tijn Aankoopfonds and the benefactors of the Stedelijk Museum Fonds, 2023 and courtesy of the artist and P420, Bologna, Italy

Lupas created *Coats to Borrow* in 1989, a time of oppression and extreme shortages in Romania. She developed subversive and resistant actions with the aid of textile materials, dyeing remnants of military uniforms with a specially developed technique and sewing the pieces together to make lined coats. Inside, she attached labels with her name. The intention was that each of these coats would be handed on to another person who would wear it and then attach a label inside with their own name on it before passing it on to the next person. The garment was to stay in circulation for as long as the Nicolae Ceaușescu regime was in power. Lupas could not foresee that it would collapse by December 1989. By this time, one coat had already been circulated by about thirty people. The others bear only the name 'Ana Lupas'. She was the only person to wear all the garments she made. The work also includes the orange objects made by Lupas to hang the coats on, reminiscent of racks in a changing room.

Coats to Borrow is intimately linked to Lupas's role in Atelier 35, an organisation for artists under thirty-five. The network spans several Romanian cities. For years, Lupas was its driving force, ensuring that a young generation of artists had the chance to exhibit its work, despite censorship and isolation. She organised symposia and other semi-legal activities, also drawing on the network for *Coats to Borrow*, with members passing the coats on to each other in pursuit of a common goal: artistic underground resistance against the dictatorship.

26 (detail)

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Tiny Identity Shirt, 1973; Photo: Carlo Favero | © Ana Lupas; Courtesy the artist (p. 20)

Coats to Borrow, 1989 (detail); Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Photo: Carlo Favero | © Ana Lupas (p. 22)

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Seraph Shirt, 1970 (detail)

Courtesy the artist and P420, Bologna

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