



VLAD NANCĂ

Construction Time Again

Gaep presents *Construction Time Again*, Vlad Nancă's first solo exhibition with the gallery and his first solo project in Bucharest since his participation in the 2025 Venice Architecture Biennale. The exhibition imagines the relocation of modernism onto another planet through a new body of work encompassing sculpture, installation, mosaics, works on paper, and video. Looking to the past not with nostalgia, but through the lens of the future we seek to inhabit, the artist gives modernist forms a second chance and reconsiders them as ethical propositions rooted in aspirations for better urban living.

The exhibition borrows its title from Depeche Mode's *Construction Time Again* (1983). Informed by what the band described as the day-to-day reality of the Thatcher era, the album reflected concerns such as economic inequality, social solidarity, and environmentalism. In Nancă's exhibition, the phrase shifts from the factory floor to a speculative planetary horizon. Amid current extractivism, climate crisis, and the erosion of welfare structures, the artist envisions a world in which humanity begins anew, from the ground up. Detached from the economic and ideological systems that once shaped—and distorted—them, modernist forms are afforded a clean slate.

Nancă echoes modernism's futuristic ethos in mosaic works depicting celestial bodies and artificial satellites. He isolates details of large-scale mosaics from across Eastern Europe, featuring astronauts and scientists, and re-contextualizes them as watercolor interventions within a modernist grid integrated into the outline of a building side façade. Elsewhere, he reinterprets the image of a miner from Valea Jiului as a contemporary "weeping icon", with an exaggerated, emoji-like tear. Throughout the exhibition, he repeatedly revisits the architectural language of collective housing in Bucharest during the 1950s and 1960s, marked by type-design and prefabrication. The welded mesh panel, a proxy for a prefabricated wall; the iron silhouettes that enlarge two scale figures extracted from a 1957 cover of *Arhitectura*; the sand sculptures modeling two buildings from Floreasca: the low-rise that houses Gaep and one of the six apartment towers erected near the lake; and the montage of five Romanian films from the 1960s, which sutures together scenes of leisure and work in and around new buildings—all point to the architects' attempt to work out a model for design and construction that integrated functional clarity, technical innovation, low costs, modes of life, and the imperative of collective living.

Long considered peripheral to the Western historical master narrative due to the Cold War, this model nevertheless "shared its ideals, metaphors, and attitudes towards tradition with Western modernist ideas about the city." As Juliana Maxim observes, "in the critique that the elites of the time leveled against Bucharest's 'anarchic development' and in the eradication of what the regime saw as blighted peripheries, one finds, recycled and amplified, key



principles of modernist architecture and planning.”¹ Nancă’s work reactivates fragments of this past while proposing their careful recalibration. As technology frog-marches us into the future, he adopts a retrospective gaze not to indulge nostalgia, but to critically examine unrealized projects of the past—or cancelled futures—and to engage with futures-thinking. Within his speculative scenario of a new beginning on another planet, architecture becomes a process of calibration, and construction an act of care rather than expansion.

At its core, modernism was an architectural reset button driven by a strong—if at times hubristic—sense of hope. Nancă’s work is itself animated by a form of hope—an awareness of complexities and uncertainties, coupled with the will to act. Because “hope just means another world might be possible, not promised, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope,” as Rebecca Solnit writes.² Nancă’s gesture of construction (again) is about identifying the wasted potential of the past and latent possibilities of the present, and working toward a more habitable future.

¹ Juliana Maxim, *The Socialist Life of Modern Architecture: Bucharest 1949-1964*, Taylor & Francis, 2018, p. 58

² Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, Canongate, 2016, p. 4