

Alexandra Croitoru

Do not forget you are an artist!

Opening: October 5, 19 h

October 5 – November 10, 2012

Tuesday – Friday, 16 – 19 h

The Paintbrush Factory

Str. Henri Barbusse 59–61, 400616 Cluj, Romania

Galeria Plan B Cluj is happy to invite you on Friday, October 5 to the opening of the solo exhibition of Romanian artist Alexandra Croitoru in the new gallery space in the ground floor of the Paintbrush Factory.

The screening of the film ***The Cabbage Process*** will be accompanied by an intervention on the façade of The Paintbrush Factory – one of Constantin Brancusi's famous aphorisms made by students of The University of Art and Design Cluj: *Do not forget you are an artist! Do not be discouraged, do not be afraid, you will make it! Create like a God, order like a king, work like a slave!*

The Cabbage Process

Thank god for the cabbage! Thank god for Mr. Aurica, a truly golden chap (even if we're talking some sort of diminutivized gold here*)!

How can Art and Cabbage be rendered compatible? Conversely, what is the connection between the University of Arts and learning (orthodox) mural art? Tradition. Tradition itself is laid out like a cabbage: leaf on top of other leaves, painting layer on top of other painting layers, every time a *fresco*, Canon. Nothing disparaging in this: if only we put the same amount of care into art as Mr. Aurica puts into the cabbage he pickles for others with rigor and craftiness, year after year, observing and maintaining age-old recipes and methods. A true craftsman, an artist perhaps, according to the old meaning of the term which is still in effect here, compared with the young apprentices.

Mural painting or painting, pickled art**? The process of cabbage pickling is the process of eternity itself, the model of tradition. No hint of the present permeates this isolated cult-like, mystical place where the recipes of Pickled Art are transmitted. The University of Arts is such an isolated place where the secretes of Cabbage and of *Sarmale****, embodying Tradition itself, are being passed down.

Mr. Aurica operates, which is to say that he transmits his Secretes under the gaze of western universal art models. And although occasionally our smiles almost break into laughter, Alexandra Croitoru's film is only indirectly criticizing: only to the extent to which the situation the Art School embodies, away from the world, is not an isolated occurrence but a generalized one which we all recognize in our strict already chronic present.

Don't we all live most of the time disconnected from life, history and our times, sheltered from ourselves by walls and screens populated with all kinds of icons? Don't we fill up our lives as if they were *sarmale*, struggling, at the expense of our very lives, to perpetuate and maintain alive symbols, representations, conventions, clichés in which we have long ceased to believe, have never believed or could not have ever believed? Don't we daily paint with our lives, on walls and screens, the Lives of Saints, which cannot be drawn just like that, God forbid, but in an ascetic, spiritual and "pneumatic" manner?

The final banquet from the refectory of the Art University represents our secret sect lives which we shape for living in society. The School-Society of daily training for sanctifying and honoring the Holy Canons in which we do not believe but in which we wrap out finely minced Flesh so as to resurrect the supreme Pickled Art of the eternal *Sarmale*.

Social art endlessly teaches us how to ritually bury the Cabbage of Tradition and how to get reborn adapted to the Winter of history, as eternal Pickles.

*The name Aurica can be traced down to the Latin Aurelius, meaning golden. However, Aurica is a diminutivized form of Aurelian.

** The original Romanian text is based on a pun between “arta murala” (mural art) and “arta murata” (literally, pickled art).

*** Traditional Romanian dish consisting of meatballs wrapped in pickled cabbage leaves.

Text by Bogdan Ghiu

Alexandra Croitoru (b. 1975) is a visual artist based in Bucharest (RO). Between 1993 and 1998 she studies at The National Academy of Arts, Bucharest; since 1999 she teaches at the Photo-Video department of the same institution; since 2010 she is researching on the cult of Brancusi in Romania in the frame of the PhD programme of The National University of Arts, Bucharest; since 2011 she is co-curator of Salonul de proiecte, Bucharest.

For more information please contact the gallery at contact@plan-b.ro and +40.740.658555.

Alexandra Croitoru

Artist Talk

October 4, 19h, Sala Mare, Casa Matei Corvin
Universitatea de Arta si Design Cluj

Galeria Plan B Cluj va invita **vineri, 5 octombrie, ora 19** la vernisajul expozitiei personale a artistei Alexandra Croitoru in noul spatiu al galeriei la parterul Fabricii de Pensule.

Proiectia filmului ***The Cabbage Process*** va fi insotita de o interventie pe fatada Fabricii de Pensule – un faimos aforism atribuit lui Constantin Brancusi realizat de studenti ai Universitatii de Arta si Design Cluj: *Nu uita ca esti artist! Nu-ti fie teama de nimic! Vei razbi! Sa crezi ca un zeu, sa poruncesti ca un rege, sa muncesti ca un sclav!*

The Cabbage Process

Noroc cu varza! Noroc cu Nea Aurica, un om cu adevarat de aur (chiar daca un aur diminutiv)! Cum pot fi impacate, ce au in comun Arta si Varza, Universitatea de Arta si invatarea artei murale (bisericesci)? Traditia. Traditia insasi este o varza: foaie peste foaie, strat de pictura peste strat de pictura, de fiecare data a *fresco*, Canon. Nimic peiorativ in asta: macar daca ne-am ingriji de arta asa cum se ingrijeste Nea Aurica de varza celorlalti, in mod strict, cu pricepere, an dupa an, respectand si mentinand vii retete si proceduri milenare. Un adevarat Mester, mai artist poate, conform vechii acceptiuni tocmai aici in vigoare, decat tinerii ucenici.

Pictura murala sau pictura, arta murata? „Procesul de murare a verzei” (*The Cabbage Process*) este insusi procesul eternitatii, modelul traditiei. Niciun zvon al actualitatii nu patrunde pana in acest loc izolat, aproape cultural, mistic, al transmiterii retetelor Artei Murate. Universitatea de Arta este un loc izolat in care se transmit secretele Verzei, ale Sarmalei care intruchipeaza insasi Traditia.

Nea Aurica opereaza, adica isi transmite Secretele, sub privirea modelelor artei occidental-universale. Si desi din cand in cand, mai mult zambind, ne vine sa radem, filmul Alexandrei Croitoru este doar indirect critic: doar in masura in care situatia pe care o intruchipeaza, departe de lume, Scoala de Arta nu este o situatie aparte, ci o situatie generala, a noastra a tuturor, in prezentul nostru strict deja cronic.

Nu traim noi oare, cu totii, de cele mai multe ori fara nicio legatura cu viata, cu istoria, cu epoca, feriti de noi insine de ziduri si de ecrane pline cu tot felul de iconuri si de icoane ? Nu ne umplem noi, ca pe niste sarmale, vietile trudind la perpetuarea, la tinerea in viata, in schimbul vietii noastre, a unor simboluri, a unor reprezentari, a unor conventii, a unor clisee in care de mult nu mai credem, in care nu am crezut, nu am fi avut cum sa credem? Nu pictam noi zilnic, cu vietile noastre, pe ziduri sau pe ecrane, Vietile Sfintilor, care nu pot fi zugravite oricum, Doamne fereste, ci doar ascetic, spiritual, „pneumatic”?

Banchetul final din trapeza Universitatii de Arta ne infatiseaza viata de secta, secreta, pe care ne formam s-o ducem cu totii in societate, Societatea-Scoala a dresajului zilnic intru sfintirea si onorarea unor Sfinte Canoane in care nu credem, dar in care ne infasuram Carnea marunt tocata pentru a face sa renasca suprema Arta Murata a eternei Sarmale.

Arta sociala ne invata la nesfarsit cum sa ingropam initiatic Varza Traditiei si cum sa renastem, adaptat la larna istoriei, ca vesnica Muratura.

Text de Bogdan Ghiu

Alexandra Croitoru (n. 1975) este artist vizual si lucreaza in Bucuresti (RO). Intre 1993 si 1998 studiaza la Universitatea Nationala de Arte, Bucuresti; din 1999 predă la departamentul de Foto-Video al aceleiasi institutii; din 2010 cerceteaza mitul lui Brancusi in Romania in cadrul programului doctoral al Universitatii Nationale de Arte Bucuresti; din 2011 este co-curator al Salonului de proiecte, Bucuresti.