

April, 2023  
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## The Eastern European vanguard is out in force at Art Basel

Discover groundbreaking 20th-century feminist, conceptual, and Neo-Dada positions from the former Yugoslavia and beyond

As the Western narrative of art history is reassessed and becomes more inclusive, influential figures of the avant-gardes in Eastern Europe are being rediscovered or gaining international recognition for the first time. While heretofore little-known or overlooked, many of these artists are now not only considered defining figures of 20th-century Eastern European movements, but also significant actors within the international art scene and its networks.

Although **Octav Grigorescu** (1933-87) wrote throughout his life, the Romanian painter and engraver didn't publish any of his writing during his lifetime. (A single volume of poems was edited posthumously by his younger brother, the conceptual artist Ion Grigorescu.) Instead, he channeled his intellectual nature into book illustration, informed by his love of literature, particularly that of Rilke. He may have passed away at the early age of 53, but his illustrations and paintings earned him a reputation as a central figure of 20th-century Romanian art: he represented his country at the Venice Biennale in both 1968 and 1980.



Left: A15, 1970. Right: Composition, c.1980. Both artworks by Octav Grigorescu. Courtesy the artist and Plan B, Cluj, Berlin.

After visiting for the Biennale in 1968, Grigorescu became enchanted with Italy. He spent a large part of his life there, working on prints and paintings in dreamy pastels and earthy ochres. He drew inspiration from the archaeological, the mythological, as well as the art historical, including the work of Leonardo da Vinci, which he studied in Rome. Grigorescu's ink drawing *Animal nocturn* [Nocturnal Animal] (1966), for instance, renders an airy, dreamlike scene in needlepoint precision. Come June, **Galeria Plan B** (Cluj, Berlin) will set this delicate work against contemporary pieces by younger Romanian artists including **Adrian Ghenie** and **Iulia Nistor**, highlighting Grigorescu's lasting impact.





Octav Grigorescu, Animal nocturn [Nocturnal Animal], 1966. Courtesy the artist and Plan B, Cluj, Berlin.