

THE TRIUMPH OF GALATEEA

At the turn of the year 2011, a gifted and eccentric ceramist is permitted to approach British Museum's world patrimony. Gigantic posters, bearing a yellow porcelain urn collated with magic talismans, are sprinkled on the banks of the Thames. After almost one decade since the receipt of the Turner Prize granted by British visual arts, the terrible travestied punkist Grayson Perry, through his ceramic vessels and gravity of the funeral theme, can pay homage to the perennality and anthropologic value of decorative arts. "The Tomb of the Unknown Artisan" is a solo exhibition interspersed with pieces of universal patrimony, which dispels the complex of the fire arts, once considered a minor genre. Just like the Polish "abacan" which, in the 70s, could render excellently the dramatism of the Iron Courtain through the huge felt silhouettes.

At the same turn of the year, but on a different scale, we feel like that a new Bucharest gallery with international project warms up from inside the kiln of Romanian ceramics. After two decades of frost, we haven't yet overcome the winter of the Fine Artists' Union and of the extinction, in our country, of the china-and-glass industry. A fire signal proved to be the panorama of Romanian ceramics (33 artists of 25–75 years old), housed, from autumn 2009 to spring 2010, in the Palace at Mogoșoaia. Half of the approx. 100 pieces crossed south the Carpathians, coming from Cluj. The initiative and the remarkable organizing effort were due first to Cristina Popescu Russu, an artist enjoying a notable international experience and, consequently, interested in keeping up Romanian creators' group consciousness. The excellent achievement of the trilingual catalog was followed, in September 2010, by the exhibition of the Romanian ceramics in Paris.

In Romania, ceramist's career has become a personal adventure, the material requirements depending on the fire law. Governmental commands, acquisitions from studios and energetic expenses had been – I'm quite sorry, even upset to state it – much more reliable until 1989. The institutional condition of this artistic vocation has suffered considerable losses in the last two decades. But... look! Out of the fourteen names showing their works at "Ceramic Rendez-vous" of 2011–2012, six quite recent graduates of the Bucharest University of Arts keep at an optimal level the baking temperature and personal style touch of this ancestral art: Monika Pădureț, through modular compositions and innocent rustic animal figuration; Georgiana Cozma, through accuracy and lettrist-graphic invention, articulates a ceramic-logo message; Romana Mateiaș experiments fragile concavities with sea depth-like glazed traces; Aniela Ovadiuc achieves, in alert poster tempo, a series of brownish ceramic squares; Bianca Boeroiu conceives aedicules with the theatricality of a protuberance register, and Adela Bonaț captures in her porcelain the transparencies of parchment pieces stamped with insignia.

A master of china strips scattered in layers, invoking the cultural memory of old tomes, is Cristina Popescu Russu. Ioana Șetran, her studio fellow, seems the magician of the grass populated with living chitins, an entomological metanaturalism baked in kaolin.

At the purist pole of nonfiguration, endorsed to the wall, are Vasile Cercel's squares, resembling the waves touching a Zen-garden sand, and the small mobile axial composition conceived by Simona Tănăsescu.

The 7th and 8th decades of the 20th century were years of emulation and genuine formal technological research for the Romanian ceramists. The generations who are now 45–65 had been trained by the elite of a professional guild gathered around two Romanian school centers: Bucharest and Cluj. Thus, the guests of the group (the administrative veterans present at gallery's inauguration), Arina Ailincăi from Canada And Márta Jakobovits from Oradea (Romania), represent the expressive maturity of two top names of our ceramics. Ailincăi masters the anatomical moulding following the expressionist message of the Buto theatre, while Jakobovits ranges unsophisticated ceramic cakes, saving up traces of memory in precious Raku textures. At cultural quotation level, on a textile print background, is placed the ingenious Central-Asiatic reference of the objective figurative made out of the carpet-like tiles invented by Cristina Bolborea, a professor at the National University of Arts in Bucharest.

Like a gush of coralline petrified sideral milk, in Galatea's most hidden corner stands Gherghina Costea's vegetal grouping. It is a happy token of the secret sap crossing the (institutional) waste towards the star-like triumph of the Romanian ceramic gallery.

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