

FROM THE DISCIPLE TO THE FATHER OF MODERN SCULPTURE

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***ABSTRACT:** THE SCULPTOR CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI IS AN EXAMPLE OF TENACITY AND DETERMINATION IN FULFILLING HIS MISSION. HE OVERCAME THE OBSTACLES OF LIFE MORE EASILY BECAUSE THE PASSION AND DESIRE TO FULFILL THE MISSION OF HIS LIFE WERE STRONGER THAN THE RESISTANCE OF FATE. HE TRAINED WELL IN THE COUNTRY AND, WITH THIS KNOWLEDGE ACCUMULATED TOGETHER WITH HIS GENIUS, HE WENT TO CONQUER THE WORLD. ON THE INITIATORY JOURNEY HE TOOK ON FOOT TO PARIS, HE VISITED NUMEROUS MUSEUMS WHOSE WORKS INFLUENCED HIM AND GAVE HIM IDEAS FOR REVOLUTIONIZING ART. BRANCUȘI WAS ALSO A MODEL FOR GENERATIONS OF ARTISTS. THE INFLUENCE OF HIS ART IS STILL DOMINANT TODAY.*

***KEYWORDS:** SCULPTURE, ARTWORK, MUSEUMS, INFLUENCE, DISCIPLES, BRÂNCUȘI.*

INTRODUCTION

In the past centuries, an artist was the poor and dreamy man, too little understood by those around him. he was hungry, he suffered from thirst, he suffered from the indifference of his fellows, he died hundreds of times, but he always returned among the living more convinced of his destiny on Earth. Brâncuși managed through art to represent the quintessence of the Romanian soul. He is the genius artist who bore the name of Gorj and implicitly of Romania with himself and promoted them all over the world. But we turned our backs on him and ignored him. In the era of socialist realism, Brâncuși was challenged as one of the representatives of cosmopolitan bourgeois formalism. Only when he conquered the world of the arts did we discover him. And then he sculpted with his chisel of genius in the depths of his untidy tongue, drawing from the depths words of the spirit as for an entire philosophy: "when you found me, you sought me."¹ Brâncuși was the chosen one of the muses, who snatched him from the family to give him humanity and eternity. Brâncuși was born with the talent to easily create different shapes, which he then suppressed to give way to symbols. His work has profoundly influenced the modern concept in sculpture, painting and drawing. Constantin Brâncuși is one of the most famous Romanians in the world, if not the best known. His sculptures stand out for the elegance of their form, combining the simplicity of Romanian folk art with the refinement of the Parisian avant-garde. In contrast to other Parisians, Brâncuși had a sense of primitive art, he used the influence of Romanian folklore and ethnography. In Egyptian, the word sculptor means "creator." For the great master, this epithet

¹ Sorana, Gorgescu-Gorjan, Thus spoke Brancusi, Edirura Brâncuși, Târgu-Jiu, 2018.

fits best, being considered the demiurge of a unitary and harmonious artistic universe in all its floors.

He inherited the wood carving from his grandfather and father, who were good at wood carving. The pleasure of changing the shape of things with a common knife developed his creativity and skill until the material was finally submitted to him. Nature itself has been shaped by the hand of a creator of nature. He liked to cut wood with a knife. Little Costica never lacked the knife, tied to the trouser strap with a hemp twine.

The image of the village was sacredly preserved by the great artist, confessing that "I would have been nothing and I would not have carved anything without Hobita, without its gates and fountains that meant, for me, a real Academy of Belles Arts."² As a child he learned to carve wood, making various shapes from his rich imagination. He attended primary school in Peștișani and was punished for scratching the bench where he lives. He was forced to go to a school in another locality. In fact, it was the child's cry for freedom that was constant in rigid and boring things. A spirit born free and with much grace needs a selective and well thought out instruction. Otherwise, it becomes an ordeal that grinds the creativity and vocation of gifted young people.

He had several ups and downs in his life, a sign that his genius is destined to have a difficult and detour. The Latin saying *Per aspera ad astra*³ suits him, but everything is possible when the unwavering will protects all the vicissitudes of fate.

At the age of six, he fell from a cherry tree and broke his hand, threatening to remain stung. Baba Evdochia of Gureni put her hand in the goat-hair planks and healed him. His childhood was marked by frequent departures from home and long years of apprenticeship in boiangerie workshops, shops and pubs.

His whole childhood, with his antics, with his passion for wood carving, with his eager desire to discover the miracle of flight and nature itself became a legend.

The turning point in his destiny was the making in Craiova of a violin from the remains of an orange box.

It was a test of his innovative spirit. He agreed with the owner and local customers to carve a violin in two weeks. He sculpted the violin in record time, and the director of the School of Arts and Crafts from Craiova and the cultural advisor from the Dolj County Prefecture took part in testing it. "Gentlemen, it's better than mine," exclaimed the fiddler brought to test Brâncuși's violin, even though he had a violin brought from across the border. Those present realized that it was not a simple shop boy, but a very talented young man. This is a crucial stage in his life. It was the first recognition of his talent, which paved the way for sculpture as a profession and art.

Following this incident, the teenager Brâncuși receives a scholarship at the School of Arts and Crafts in Craiova, being enrolled as a student in the art carpentry class. Here he took sculpture lessons.

He graduated first in four years instead of five.

The apprenticeship period and the works that influenced his work

After graduating from the School of Arts and Crafts in Craiova (1894 - 1898) he attended the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest since 1902. During his studies, even in the first year, in 1898, his work Bust of Vitellius obtains "honorable mention", Laocoon's head in 1900 won the bronze medal, and Study in 1901 won the silver medal.

For two years, between 1900 and 1902, with the help of Dr. Dimitrie Gerota, he made Ecorçeu, a study for the representation of the human body, a work to which he is awarded a bronze

² Ibidem, p.76

³ On narrow roads to heights.

medal. The precision of the details of this work makes Ecorseul to be used in Romanian medical schools, after several children were born.

"Although the statement that Romanian sculpture is not much older than Constantin Brâncuși might seem just a simple rhetorical construction, a useful exaggeration and a rather provocative statement, in reality this is the case, in their most mundane sense."⁴

Brâncuși himself stated that "I still haven't had any kind of art until today... Art is just beginning!"⁵

He followed his creed with holiness: "Create as a God, command as a King, and work as a Slave."

Visits to museums during the trip to Paris marked him deeply. Thus, in Vienna, where he visited museums with works of art inaccessible in Romania, he became acquainted with the Egyptian sculptures that influenced his work later in life⁶. Some sculptures impressed him so much that he used them as models for his later works. Thus, the Scribe reading sculpture (Egyptian sculpture) can be considered a source of inspiration for the Goodness of the Earth (made in 1907). This sculpture is depicted nude, in a sitting position with her knees clenched and her arms kneeling under her breasts expressing a moment of meditation. The gaze seems lost in a space of silence, the woman at that time occupying a position of submission. "The goodness of the Earth" is therefore a creation that incorporates the anxiety of breaking the past and the prospects of an uncertain future. "The Goodness of the Earth" is one of Brâncuși's greatest and most important masterpieces. "It was my attempt to reach the bottom of the ocean with my index finger. For I was too frightened when they lifted her veil ... The woman must never be revealed ... "The goodness of the Earth" was for me, which is much deeper the woman - beyond your psychology! ". The "goodness of the earth", in which he used stylization, a process existing in ancient Egyptian art⁷, is a turning point in his training as an artist, it was a step in the direction of artistic independence.



The Goodness of the Earth (C. Brâncuși)



Scribe reading (Egyptian sculpture)

⁴ Pavel Șușară, *Brâncuși*, Editura Monitorul oficial, București, 2020, p.15

⁵ Ibidem

⁶ V.G. Paleologu, *Tinerețea lui Brâncuși*, Ed. Tineretului, București, 1967, p. 191

⁷ Made in 1907, "Cumințenia Pământului", together with "Sărutul" and "Rugăciunea", marks the most appreciated period of the artist's creation and also carries, along with them, the emblem of "the first modern sculptures in the world"; thus, Brâncuși was considered the founder of modern sculpture worldwide.

Also in Vienna, Brâncuși got to know the art of ancient Greece, which had a great impact on the sculptor. One of the most famous Hellenistic sculptures, Victoria from Samothrace (photo attached) influenced Brâncuși in the realization of his work The Witch (made in 1916).



Victory of
Samothrace



The Witch
CONSTANTIN
BRÂNCUȘI

But the influence of museum visits on the sculptor on the way to Paris was not limited to ancient art. Thus, at the Am Romerholz Museum in Switzerland, he saw a model of sculpture that remained deeply embedded in his memory (photo below).



The "Am Römerholz" Museum in Zurich

with over 200 works, where you can admire from Cranach, Bruegel, Delacroix and El Greco, to Manet, Cézanne, Cuno Amiet, Monet, Van Gogh etc. The "Reinhart" collection is a true "double" of the Impressionists at the Musée d'Orsay. Highlights: Caspar David Friedrich's Rügen chalk rocks, Goya's 80 Whims and the discreet Portrait of a Woman in Black by Paul Basilius Barth, probably the most beautiful sad woman ever painted.



SCULPTURE MODEL THAT INFLUENCED C. BRÂNCUȘI
Sammlung Oskar Reinhart «Am Römerholz»
Oskar Reinhart Collection „Am Römerholz”

As a result of what he saw on his way to Paris, Brâncuși will remain for 20 years subject to those who moved him, rethinking to unite light and sculpture, light and matter, in his works.

Brâncuși freed sculpture from the preponderance of mechanical imitation of nature, refused the figurative representation of reality, expected the expression of the essence of things, the vitality of form, created the unity between the sensible and the spiritual. In his work he mirrored the way of thinking of the world of the Romanian peasant. Through his peasant origins he found the deep roots of his work in the traditions, myths and magical function of Romanian folk art. Brâncuși revealed to the Western world the sacred dimension of reality.

His sculptures are distinguished by the elegance of form and the sensitive use of materials, combining the simplicity of Romanian folk art with the refinement of the Parisian avant-garde. Verticality, horizontality, weight, density and the importance given to light and space are the characteristic features of Brâncuși's creation. His work profoundly influenced the modern concept of form in sculpture, painting and drawing.

The influence of C. Brâncuși on art and artists

Rodin and Brâncuși were the artists who exerted the greatest influence on the evolution of modern sculpture in the twentieth century.

Brâncuși gave our century the consciousness of pure form, ensured the transition from the figurative representation of reality, to the expression of the essence of things and revolutionized the plastic language in a revolutionary way, enriching it with a spiritual dimension⁸.

Brâncuși's influence on his contemporaries and successors was exercised in three main ways⁹:

- through the consciousness of the pure form, obtained by simplification, stripping, decantation and synthesis
- by passing from the figurative representation of reality to the expression of the essence of things, that is, by passing from appearance to essence
- by a new emphasis on the creative function of light and the developing form.

It is impossible to trace this influence to all artists of the twentieth century and later. She created a new mood, a new way of thinking about sculpture.

Brâncuși had no direct students or disciples. Those who worked in his workshop for a while learned to watch him sculpt, listen to his advice and aphorisms, and especially to see him live in that workshop-specific atmosphere of Impasse Ronsin¹⁰.

The first to enjoy this life lesson was Amedeo Modigliani (1884 -1920). Andre Salmon described their meeting as follows: “Modigliani came to Brâncuși's workshop with his hands clogged in the pockets of his velvet suit from which he could no longer part, squeezing under his arm, the cardboard with drawings that he never left ... Brâncuși he did not give her any advice, he did not teach her any lessons, but from that day Modigliani understood what geometry in space means, completely different from what is usually taught in schools and workshops. The sculpture tempted him and he tried to do it under the influence of the impressions gathered in Brâncuși's workshop, from which he took over the elongation of the figures that can be recognized in his paintings as well.

Another influence through direct contact is that which Brâncuși exerted on the German sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881 - 1919). According to Paul Westheim¹¹ since 1922, Lehmbruck saw Brâncuși's "Prayer" at the Salon of Independent Artists in 1910 and under her influence he sculpted his famous work "The Kneeling Woman", lengthening her legs and suppressing her anatomical details. Lehmbruck received a very important impulse after the meeting with Brâncuși in Paris. The prayer had the value of a revelation for Lehmbruck. This meeting decided the direction of his future path as an artist.

His actual influence can be seen more clearly in artists who were part of the same spiritual family as, for example, Jean Arp, Etienne Hajdu, Emil Gilioli, Maurice Lipsi, Antoine Poncet, to name just a few examples of French sculpture. .

Between the work of Jean Arp (1887 - 1966) and that of Brâncuși there are some obvious confluences¹²: the consciousness of pure form, the rejection of the conventional art of the past and the figurative representation of reality, the transition from appearance to essence, organic vitality of form, preference for closed volume and curved lines, the search for balance and harmony, serenity and joy of life.

⁸ Barbu Brezianu *Brâncuși*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1974

⁹ Ion Mocioi, *Însemnări despre Brâncuși*, Ed. Drim Edit and Spicon, Târgu-Jiu, 2004

¹⁰ Petre Pandrea, *Brâncuși. Amintiri și exegeze*, Editura Vremea, București, 2009

¹¹ <http://brancusi.1dez.com/brancusi-arta-influenta.html>

¹² <http://brancusi.1dez.com/index.html>

Etienne Hajdu explained very well the relationship between Brâncuși and Arp: I met Brâncuși, I met Arp and I have the feeling that they are both part of the same spiritual family ... Brâncuși created the purest form to signify unity between sensitive and spiritual. Brâncuși's egg means the appearance of the first cellular unit of modern sculptures. But we couldn't stop here. Arp was the first who dared to stick his finger in the shell of Brâncuși's egg to dislodge its perfect volume.

Arp's sculpture differs from Brâncuși's by its subtlety and suppleness, by its role given to chance, by its playful spirit, by the voluptuous undulations of the Torsos, by the vital fluid of the Growth cycle that coils and winds in a vegetal, white dance. , soft, ringed.

The fantastic is combined with poetry, fun with chance, fairy tales with dreams to give us in the simple story of Arp the key to his art.

In Etienne Hajdu (born in 1907), who recognized his Brâncușian affiliation, we find the aspiration towards the purity of form, the art of reproducing the organic life of matter and transfiguring it, tactile intelligence, the zeal of the heart and the preference for curved lines, for wavy planes. for the slow rhythms and the light that reveals the form and transforms, through subtle transitions, into the shadow.

Emil Gilioli (1911-1979) took from Brâncuși the respect for matter, the preference for the closed volume and the rigor of geometry and especially the use of the active function of light by polishing the bronze until reaching an radiant glow. Like Brâncuși, Gilioli considered art to be a path to spiritual elevation and to humanity. He wanted to create a serene sculpture like the sky, balanced, full of light, mystery and beauty.

Maurice Lipsi (born in 1898) reached a simplicity of form, a force of closed volumes, a transposition of the vegetal rhythm and an almost architectural structure of the composition that found its starting point in the example of Brâncuși.

Antoine Poncet (born in 1928), although a Swiss citizen, belongs to French art because, nephew of the painter Maurice Denis, he settled in Paris since 1947 and was the practitioner of Jean Arp.

Three characteristic features define the work of Antoine Poncet: the passion for marble, the creative function of light and the active dynamics of a rich fantasy. Jean Arp wrote: The sculptures I saw in Poncet's studio are dream stones. They sprang from the joy of spring. These dreams have the grace of infinite nature. They are a grace of what is behind the appearances of nature.

Antoine Poncet's sculpture is located on the border between abstract and figurative, in a dreamlike space that is also present and memory. It is a sculpture without shadows, without wrinkles, with playful curves and swirls, a sculpture in which one feels the joy of being and the love of life.

George Apostu (b. 1934) is an artist, a master carver, who knows the secrets of stone and wood and knows how to express them with the simplicity and accent of authenticity of the conquests of yesteryear. His sculptures seem to be, through the verticality and integrity of the volume, like the pillars of peasant cemeteries. But the apostle gives them a spiral significance in the cycle Father and son, where the archaic, rigorous, concentrated and emotional form acquires a symbolic value. Using the repetition and assembly of several forms in the Brâncușian spirit in his compositions, George Apostu appears as one of the most gifted descendants of Brâncuși in Romanian sculpture.

The Brancusi spirit still dominates the sculpture camps in Măgura and Târgu-Jiu, as a continuation of the Brancusi permanence.

Following, after many years, following in the footsteps of Brâncuși, who carried the experience of Romanian popular culture in the world, but retracing its path in the opposite direction, ie from Western Europe to the island of Eastern Romanity, represented by Romania, an illustrious traveler, Giulio Carlo Argan, He thus confessed his admiration for the genius of the popular creator:

"... What interests us is to find out what the fertility of a popular ethos can be. From this point of view, Romania, which as far as we could see, has the most important folk art in the world, is a country which can play a key role in the evolution of tomorrow 's art ".

Leaving his native Hobbbit in 1903, Brâncuși managed to create monumental works, unequaled and went on, forever, in the eternity of the art of the universe.

His works brought immense popularity to the artist, who is known and highly appreciated especially in France, Romania and the United States, collectors struggling to procure the creations of the Romanian artist, and magazines and critics publishing countless studies and articles. praiseworthy.

But the legacy that Brâncuși left to the Romanian sculptors is much more important. His work shows them how to use the meeting between the national specific and the vocation of universality, how to reach a Romanian utterance of art.

The Romanian sculptor has found a way to express the idea, of the essence that transcends biological forms and unites us beyond the multiple particularities that differentiate us. Constantin Brâncuși sculpted the flight and made the stone fly to infinity.

The mission of art is to create joy, and it can only be created artistically in balance and peace of mind. And peace is obtained by giving up ... ”.

Phidias sculpted GODS, Michelangelo sculpted ANGELS and SAINTS, Brâncuși sculpted FLIGHT, UNLIMITED, THOUGHT. "Three milestones in Europe measure the history of sculpture: Phidias-Michelangelo-Brâncuși.

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