

This Part That Seemingly Needs to Get Out through a Place in My Body

This exhibition is a proposal that tests its own approach and methodology and accepts its own inevitably fragmentary nature, induced by instances of institutional conditioning, as well as by the intrinsic volatility of the subject. It is a reflection on a phenomenon examined all too little in the context of Romanian contemporary art: the migration of Romanian artists to the West during the communist period, and focuses more closely on the late 1960s and the 1970s. Restricting the scope of the examination even further, it is important to point out that the exhibition highlights the careers of artists active in Bucharest before emigrating to the West at various times. Some among them are figures well known internationally, albeit not yet fully assimilated into the canons of world art history. At the same time, it brings to attention artistic practices, episodes and contexts that are insufficiently known and may occasion re-evaluation. In some cases, the artists at whose trajectories we look decided to make a complete break with the Romanian art scene and their previous interests, while in others there are obvious continuities and connections with artistic circles and friends from Romania that lasted over decades. Sometimes, there are also circumstances where prolonged contact with the realities of the West prompted a reconsideration of the original decision to 'remain' there.

This multiplicity of positions reinforces yet again the complex dimension of this topic and the difficulty of setting it within a rigid framework. But however complicated such an initiative might prove to be, it is to be hoped that it will draw attention to a vast social and cultural phenomenon—emigration and exile during the Cold War—that is essential to an understanding of the way in which the artistic field was configured in Romania, with an undeniable impact on how it looks today. In times of global migration, when mobility and human interactions unfold according to completely different coordinates, it is important that we remember a period when the chance to travel abroad could completely and irrevocably change the course of a person's life. Reactivating the memory of those decades today becomes all the more necessary since a fast approaching anniversary might urge us to reflect anew on the change of the political regime thirty years ago. In revealing intersections between East-West viewpoints, this project brings together multiple positions that articulate a critical, lucid perception of the West, and touches upon the issue of the failure to adapt—sometimes compounded by a conscious refusal to do so—to the artistic mechanisms of the 'free' world.

This exhibition continues the path already taken in previous ones by Salonul de proiecte, of organizing historical exhibitions that rely on a diversity of materials in engaging in a curatorial approach that is

closely bound to recontextualisation and the production of historical narratives. This type of visual exploration is conceived as an open field of research, bringing to the fore documents, texts and accounts, but is also one which, at least in this instance, comes to reveal, even though indirectly, its own inconsistencies. The scarcity of sources, of material traces, the almost insurmountable difficulty of giving form to human experiences, the complex psychology of exile are integral elements in this fabric of voices and artistic positions, which articulates an arresting message about the present and about the need to conceive new historical constructs.

Cadere: Space and Politics

André Cadere found a strong network in Belgium to support him. Whereas elsewhere his hijacking strategy sited him at the margins of conceptual galleries and institutions, and 'official' validation of his practice came about only with difficulty, in Belgium support for his work appeared relatively early and, most importantly, it was a place where he could share and propagate his ideas. The first systematic presentation of his *barre de bois rond*, with its underlying model of permutation (which was always programmed to contain an error), took place at the Catholic University of Leuven in 1974, benefitting from the assistance of Bernard Marcelis, and MTL Brussels subsequently published this seminal lecture. Cadere's reception in Belgium deserves an analysis—

and perhaps an exhibition—of its own. But this is not, of course, the scope of the current endeavour. Our intention with this exhibition is to mark Cadere's position within a constellation of artists who emigrated from Romania during the Cold War and to highlight his connections with the Belgium conceptual art scene in the 1970s, bearing in mind that this kind of trajectory was unprecedented and quite singular.

It's important to note that institutional figures such as Flor Bex, who ran the ICC in Antwerp, gave Cadere a free hand, allowing him to insinuate himself in the institute's programme and put into practice one of his most unorthodox display solutions: placing a bar high on the institution's façade for a few weeks. (In parenthesis let it be noted that Bex's pioneering programme at the ICC featured the first exhibition of Central and Eastern European contemporary art ever to be held in Belgium.) At the same time, collectors such as Herman Daled and Anton Herbert acquired works by Cadere early on, with Herbert acting as the publisher of Cadere's *Histoire d'un travail*. In addition to the exhibition in Galerie MTL, the ones in Galerie Vega in Liège and Galerie Elsa von Honolulu Loringhoven in Ghent were also equally significant for occurring on the cusp of Cadere's international notoriety. And of course, there was also the famous walk through the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels in 1974, where Cadere posed in front of Marcel Broodthaers's *Mirror of the Regency Epoch*, his sculptural presence

with the wooden bar forcing a dialogue with the work mounted on the wall behind him.

Cadere was undoubtedly drawn to the vividness and eloquence of the critical debates questioning the art object and art institutions in the wake of 1968. Among other things, this shattering of the status quo brought to the fore issues of context, of social and political conditioning, which regulated the functioning of the white cube. He himself replaced the concept of artwork with that of the work, *le travail*. How did a Marxist-inspired concept enter the conceptual framework of an artist had crossed to the other side of the Iron Curtain to live in the free, capitalist world? Cadere's relationship with the proponents of institutional critique, and with Daniel Buren in particular, was at times contentious. Buren banned Cadere from taking part in the Congress of Conceptual Art in Brussels in 1973 and from the exhibition planned to follow the congress. As a result, the organisers became embroiled in a lengthy quarrel, which was reflected in explanatory letters, disavowals and cutting replies published in art reviews. Jacques Charlier's *Dessins humoristiques* precisely depict Cadere's mischievous treatment of Buren, and how the latter allegedly deserved this.

In preparing this exhibition, we met some of Cadere's acquaintances from Belgium, engaging in conversations about their contacts with him in the 1970s, but none of our interlocutors was familiar with his Romanian past. Cadere was perceived as a cosmopolitan figure, well-mannered—

despite his stratagems of intruding on events to which he was not invited—and was perfectly fluent in both French and English. He did not project the image of an Eastern European immigrant, nor did he ever mention his former life and identity. Jacques Charlier was an exception: as a close friend he had some knowledge of the fraught circumstances of Cadere's departure from Romania, mostly through his wife, Michèle Cadere. Cadere almost seems to embody a Cold War duality. There is undeniably a 'before' and an 'after', a clear-cut division between his life and activity in Romania and his 'strategy of displacement' wielding the wooden bar in Western Europe's conceptual milieus. In only one instance did he publicly address his Eastern European origins, contrasting his attitude of showing up uninvited to exhibitions and other events with the Western mentality fuelled by 'pride', 'intellectual contempt' and 'material comfort', which rendered such actions unconceivable. The comment appears in a footnote to his text *Présentation d'un travail, utilization d'un travail*, published by MTL.

Cadere's attitude towards the period he spent in Romania has also been largely overlooked by most of the writers who have dealt with his work. This exhibition will attempt to provide some evidence in support of the existence of a hidden continuity that might suggest a connection between Cadere's scathing criticism of the artistic system to which the artist was subjected in the West, and the 'experience of marginality'

he had to endure in his native country. An important element in support of the hypothesis of continuity is the concept of 'work/travail', to be understood as an ethical-behavioural knot that explains the function of art as a constant existential engagement, on the one hand, and as a generator of friction, resistance and dissent, on the other.

Magda Radu

Andre Cadere

Cadere, tant par sa famille que par son éducation, était imprégné de culture française, comme l'étaient, en général, les intellectuels et les artistes roumains de sa génération. Son père avait été ambassadeur et vivait à Paris, lorsque Cadere y a émigré. Mis à part son accent, il était parfaitement à l'aise dans la langue et dans les moeurs du Paris post 68.

Son passé roumain et l'influence de l'Europe de l'Est transparaissaient dans sa politesse et son respect « poétique » des valeurs culturelles. Sa sensibilité et son attention aux autres le démarquaient, sans doute, de l'attitude conquérante et du radicalisme à l'emporte-pièce qu'affichaient, comme une panoplie révolutionnaire, les « nouveaux » artistes de l'époque. Sa réserve le mettait en retrait et n'a pas facilité son affirmation sur la scène artistique. Cadere était un solitaire. Néanmoins, il était présent et sa haute

silhouette athlétique le distinguait dans tous les vernissages.

Il passait, on pourrait dire qu'il était un passant remarquable, c'est ainsi que je l'ai rencontré. Rien ne le désignait comme « nomade » ! J'ignorais tout de son travail. Nous avons fait connaissance par l'intermédiaire de ma femme, elle-même roumaine, ils fréquentaient le même milieu à Bucarest. Cadere nous a invités à dîner et c'est dans son studio, Passage Ricaut dans le 13e, au cours de cette soirée, que j'ai découvert son travail et que nous en avons longuement discuté.

Cadere réalisait des sculptures, faites d'un long tasseau à section rectangulaire, surmonté de deux lames de bois parallèles, inscrivant dans la longueur l'écart d'une visée et l'ouverture d'une ligne de mire, qui introduisaient dans la masse la hausse d'un signe et l'espacement d'une lecture en suspens, comme s'il restait à faire feu de l'exposition des artifices. C'était un instrument de mesure de l'espace et une rampe de lancement vers un temps d'exposition qui en serait l'impact sculptural. Des bandes de couleur vive striaient l'instrument, plus larges ou plus fines, comme un étalonnage de la vitesse symbolisant l'accélération de la projection vers le présent de l'exposition.

La question était : comment montrer ces pièces, dans quel type d'installation, au sol ou sur un plan surélevé ? Comment donner prise à la notion de manipulation et de visée,

à hauteur d'oeil et à portée de main? Sans en faire un objet décoratif, dans la lignée de l'Op-art, ni une réplique de l'Art minimal, étrangement polychrome...

Une autre série de pièces tentait de répondre à ces questions. Des bâtonnets de même longueur, aux bouts caoutchoutés, cerclés de bandes égales de différentes couleurs, semblables à des pièces de mikado, étaient aisément manipulables et transportables, pouvaient être posés sur n'importe quelle surface, laissés au hasard comme ils tombaient ou être arrangés en divers figures et constructions volumétriques. Un jeu aléatoire définissait, pour l'essentiel, des sculptures de salon.

Ma réaction immédiate fut de demander à Cadere s'il ne voyait pas un moyen de combiner dans un même travail ce qui semblait essentiel : le double jeu d'une sculpture méthodique et d'une exposition aléatoire, d'une pièce portable et d'une oeuvre manipulable en situation. Nous avons longuement discuté des implications. Nous étions dans le débat critique auquel je participais activement. La question de l'indépendance de l'oeuvre d'art par rapport à l'institution, l'autonomie de son exposition, à partir de sa définition, dans et hors des cadres qui en prédéterminent l'existence, la question de l'oeuvre comme signe, en rupture du sens et des références que le discours de l'art, son histoire et son idéologie véhiculent et imposent au concept

de création, étaient mis sur la table et leur pertinence assumée in vino veritas.

Quelques temps après ces réflexions, Cadere me montrait ce qu'il avait conçu. Une barre de bois rond, à hauteur d'homme, facile à prendre en main comme un bâton de pèlerin, était faite de segments identiques, chevillés et collés les uns aux autres, dans une suite de couleurs dont les permutations définissaient un code visuel que la barre rendait visible, en singularisant son existence par une interversion aléatoire de deux couleurs. Chaque barre, quel que soit son format, serait visuellement identique et visiblement différente. Elle donnerait à voir d'un coup d'oeil, ce qu'en situation elle exposerait d'un coup de bâton.

C'était une proposition simple dans son évidence visuelle et efficace dans son existence visible. Quelle que soit la situation, artistique ou non, le bâton ferait signe, sans rien faire d'autre que d'être là. Toute la difficulté était là. J'encourageai Cadere à poursuivre ce travail qui rivalisait avec les positions prises par d'autres artistes, voire leur damait le pion. Le chemin serait semé d'embûches, mais la difficulté première était de faire vivre ce travail tel qu'il existait, dans sa fonction passagère et nomade de signe transitoire et transactionnel, témoin des manoeuvres du corps, des manipulations du discours, articulant ici et maintenant l'échange et la parole, autour d'un possible passage de

témoin qui ferait le relais, indifféremment de l'art, entre différents porteurs du bâton.

Manifestement, le nomadisme inhérent au bâton, appelait une performance, dans et hors de l'art, qui ne fût du porteur, ni un colporteur, ni le « marcheur de Kassel ». (J'étais, pour ma part, indigné qu'on puisse inviter Cadere à la d5 sur l'image d'Epinal d'un pèlerinage romantique. J'ai insisté pour emmener Cadere en voiture, avec les conséquences que l'on sait.)

Cadere a pris le parti de fixer des rendez-vous, d'inviter à des rencontres dans des lieux différents. C'était juste, mais le bâton devenait un signe redondant, au risque, me semble-t-il, d'être pris pour un totem. L'enjeu implicite était d'entrer dans l'art subrepticement. Cadere assistait aux vernissages, visitait les expositions, avec un bâton. Si ça attisait la curiosité, ça ne donnait pas lieu à l'exposition d'une oeuvre. Ce n'était ni de la peinture, ni de la sculpture, ce n'était pas une performance mise-en-scène, il manquait à la réception du travail un cadre conceptuel.

Cadere s'est employé à rencontrer les collectionneurs, les galeries, les musées, et à montrer son travail partout où il lui était possible de voyager, nourrissant de ces expériences de terrain des éléments de texte et de conférence. C'était là le véritable nomadisme de Cadere, un engagement physique, une méthode itinérante de découverte et d'exposition concrète des implications artistiques de son travail.

Alors qu'il cherchait un équivalent littéral et textuel de son travail, à faire passer dans la presse, comme un signal qui ferait signe sans commentaire, j'ai suggéré à Cadere de faire imprimer dans les petites annonces le mot ÉCRITURE. C'est ma seule participation écrite au travail de Cadere.

Les circonstances avaient fait que l'intérêt pour son travail se nouât à un échange oral entre Cadere et moi. Il m'a toujours semblé que son originalité à l'oeuvre était performative, comme on le dit des énoncés qui font ce qu'ils disent. Le bâton était à l'oeuvre, au moment et au lieu où son maniement requérait manoeuvre et main-d'oeuvre, commerce et échange, transaction et transport, dans une économie de moyens où s'improvisait ce que le passage du bâton situait et incarnait ici et maintenant. C'était un art élémentaire et éphémère, qui restait lettre morte dans une installation sédentaire. Ce point de vue n'engage que moi, mais je me gardai d'en fixer les termes dans la permanence d'un texte.

Le travail de Cadere, s'exposant sur le vif, ne pouvait devenir, sans fétichisme, un objet d'exposition. Quand Cadere abandonnait ou déposait un de ses bâtons dans une exposition à laquelle il ne participait pas, la seule justification de cette mise en dépôt était la mise à disposition du bâton à qui voulait le prendre. C'est ainsi que disparut le bâton, de la taille d'un pilier d'amarrage de gondole, qu'il avait laissé sur les lieux de l'exposition que Michel Claura et moi-même

organisations place Vendôme. Qu'on ait crié à la censure montre une totale incompréhension de l'intérêt de ce travail.

Cadere m'a offert un de ses premiers bâtons. Des années plus tard, Cadere l'a repris pour le réparer. Je n'ai jamais revu ce bâton. Un certificat existe, qui me l'attribue. J'imagine que le bâton est à l'oeuvre en d'autres lieux et en d'autres main, poursuivant une vie nomade selon sa destination.

René Denizot

Displacement and Togetherness

Artists: Silvia Amancei & Bogdan Armanu, Filip Berte, Tudor Bratu, Jacques Charlier, Mekhitar Garabedian, Emilio López-Menchero, Vincent Meessen, Christine Meisner, Jimmy Robert, Iulia Toma

The historical section of the exhibition features contributions by: Horia Bernea, Andrei Cădere, Jacques Charlier, Florina Coulin, Jindřich Chalupecký, Andrei Gheorghiu, Ion Grigorescu, Octav Grigorescu, Pavel Ilie, Matei Lăzărescu, Julian Mereuță, Paul Neagu, Simona Runcan, Decebal Scriba, Emil Simiu

This exhibition aims to bring together several historical and present-day perspectives on migration. Within the framework of Europalia and the Belgian

context, where so many types of migratory flows converge, it is important to graft lesser-known local phenomena onto the global consciousness of migration. Since Romania has entered the European Union, the flow of people fleeing the country 'to the West' in search of a better life has risen to an unprecedented scale—millions of people have left Romania in the past decade. The fact that this migration is voluntary, doesn't imply that its effects are less devastating in the long term. Migration causes depression, family dramas, depopulation of small towns or rural areas and traumatic identity crises. This fleeing workforce is composed of individuals who in their host countries often face ruthless media manipulation that paints a 'barbaric' portrait of the Eastern European migrant, fuelling the xenophobic thrust of the right-wing rhetoric that engulfs ever larger portions of the political spectrum in many Western countries.

While these realities are reflected in some of the works presented in this context—many of which are new productions—this exhibition is not just about one territory or one nation state, but rather about encounters and transfers, about mobility as a defining trait of our age, which can be both brutally imposed and liberating, about unearthing histories and challenging deeply entrenched dichotomies. Even though this reflection moves along coordinates stemming from a certain place, it resonates with the waves and struggles of decolonization, in pointing to, for example,

the perpetual 'othering' of those who are not Westerners. The multiplicity of perspectives draws a complicated image of our times, highlighting the globalization of displacement itself and hinting at possible ways of being-in-common.

In times of global migration, when mobility and human interactions unfold according to completely different parameters, it is important that we remember a time when the chance to travel abroad could completely and irrevocably change the course of a person's life. Reactivating the memory of those decades today becomes all the more pressing since a fast approaching anniversary might urge us to reflect anew on the change of the political regime thirty years ago. It is with such thoughts in mind that we included in the exhibition a section which looks in retrospect at the migration of Romanian artists to the West during the communist period, focusing more closely on the late 1960s and the 1970s. In revealing intersections between East-West viewpoints, this display brings together multiple positions that articulate a critical, lucid perception of the West, and touches upon the issue of the failure to adapt—sometimes compounded by a conscious refusal to do so—to the artistic mechanisms of the 'free' world.

Silvia Amancei and Bogdan Armanu

(How to) Migrate Towards the Future?, 2019

Installation (12 collages, 21 x 30 cm each; single-channel HDV, 16'55")

Moroşanu vs. the World, 2019

Video clip, HDV, 1'23"

Produced especially for Displacement and Togetherness, these two works by Silvia Amancei and Bogdan Armanu explore various aspects related to the issue of economic migration, which is one of the most prominent social phenomena that mark the post-socialist period in Romania. Romania exports cheap labour to Western Europe and imports cheap labour from its Eastern neighbours and Asia, taking advantage of the lack of legal protection in the case of the latter. In the long run, this strategy doesn't offer any social and economic stability, while the gap between the rich and the poor widens. The exploitation and subjugation of migrant workers must be seen as a global problem and a direct result of capitalism and its post-colonial tactics.

Taking into account the economic and social turmoil of post-socialist Romania, the mass migration that continues to date and the emergence of the neoliberal turbo-capitalist discourse that tends to become dominant, this installation uses marketing tools to inject alternative progressive viewpoints into the mainstream flow of information. The collaboration with Cătălin Moroşanu—who is at once a famous kickboxer, a showbiz personality and a political figure—is

intended to help research the issue of economic migration in Romania (with a focus on the Moldova region), while seeking to stimulate progressive critical thinking through the symbiotic relationship between art and pop culture, in an effort to fight against the rise of neoliberal nationalism.

Silvia Amancei and Bogdan Armanu work in Iași, Romania. They graduated from the George Enescu National University of Arts in Iași (Faculty of Visual Arts and Design). Their artistic practice is situated on the interface of social studies and contemporary art; they explore how art can be turned into a tool to stimulate the ability to look beyond capitalism and create a (common) future. Selected exhibitions: *If Then What After*, Kunstverein Baden, AT (2019), *What Past? What Future*, Katholische Privatuniversität Linz, AT (2017), *When Atoms Collide and Disturb Entropy*, Electro-Putere, Craiova, RO (2017), *Return to Spaceship Earth*, Salonul de proiecte, Bucharest (2017, solo alongside Ralo Mayer), *Depression, Uncertainty and Other Symptoms of Mortality*, Galeria OFF, Lodz, PL (2016), *In Search for Causes and Realities and Constellations of Desires*, Galeria apARTE, Iași (2016), *Appearance and Essence*, 1st Art Encounters Biennale, Timișoara, RO (2015).

Filip Berte

Tracing Lines of Demarcation, 2019

Installation (pencil on paper, 218 x 66 cm each, display, dried plants, stones, soil, 60 x 60 cm)

While Romania is far more known as a country from which people emigrate, visual artist Filip Berte focuses on the lesser known phenomenon of (irregular) immigration into the country. In *Tracing Lines of Demarcation*, he explores three places in Romania that are typically marked by 'liminality': the Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedures for Asylum Seekers in Bucharest (C.R.C.P.S.A.); the village of Beba Veche on the westernmost point of Romania, in the trilateral border area with Hungary and Serbia; the city of Calafat, on the river Danube, linked with Bulgaria by the New Europe Bridge.

What these three places have in common, is that they are all guarded and controlled by the Romanian Border Police, which is particularly distrustful of any stranger in the 'border zone' they are supposed to control.

One of the main causes for this increased vigilance at the border is probably linked to Hungary's decision (in 2015) to seal its border with Serbia with an electrified fence. This prompted fear in Romania (stimulated by the media) that the 'Western Balkan Route' would shift to the east and that now the country would be overrun by migrants.

In the meanwhile, however, Romania had decided to increase their border protection efforts along the border with both Serbia and Bulgaria. But instead of building an anti-migrant fence, Romania fully invested in high-tech surveillance technology (assisted by the European border agency Frontex), as well as in the deployment of an ever increasing manpower.

Anyone trespassing or infringing on the rules as laid down by the authority of this state institution (which comes under the Ministry of Internal Affairs) will be repelled or pushed back.

Pushback policies are multiplying every day on all the external borders of Europe. Sometimes openly, like in Hungary, sometimes more hidden and concealed like in Romania. They are difficult to monitor by external observers, because they are implemented in the grey zones of green borderlands.

With *Tracing Lines of Demarcation* Berte seeks to question and pierce the solid opacity of these liminal places. Because he had obtained an official permission from the Romanian Border Police to visit Beba Veche and Calafat, Berte succeeded in gaining better insight in the activities of the Border Police and how they view their task of protecting the border. They were open and transparent, i.e. to a certain extent: as long as his questions remained within certain

limits—limits that are set out more covertly by (higher officials of) the state institutions.

However, in Bucharest, the artist bumped into a wall that was clearly more solid than the wild nature of the Green Border in Beba Veche and around the Danube. Here in Bucharest, he went through the experience of being pushed back himself from a liminal site that obviously wanted no prying eyes around and remained solidly closed off from the outside world. After failing to obtain a permission to organize a drawing workshop inside the Regional Centre for Accommodation and Procedure for Asylum Seekers, Berte decided to start drawing outside the centre, in the street. Though he carefully avoided selecting the refugee centre itself as the subject of his drawings, and focused on the paving stones that marked the entry to the centre, it became clear after just a few days that his presence wasn't appreciated.

Observational drawing, considered by Berte as his main tool to open up to people, proved successful only the first few days. But the more time he spent with the residents, sitting, talking and drawing with them, the tenser the relation with the guards at the centre became. In order not to make the situation worse for the residents, after five days Berte decided to stop working at the site. He made one last graphite frottage of a crack in the wall at the back of the centre.

Tudor Bratu

A Factless Biography, 2019

Installation (4-channel video, 39'40"; 3 photographs, 100 x 70 cm each)

In the Summer of 2015, at the height of what mainstream media called the 'migrant crisis engulfing Europe', Tudor Bratu arrived at the Keleti Station in Budapest, which at that time was one of the sites where refugee families arrived, living in miserable conditions on the square in front of the railway station. After spending a week in Budapest, he decided to accompany some of the refugees on their trail into Austria and Germany. Their stories of hardships resonated with those of the artist's family: his grandmother escaped Moldova when the Soviets invaded the country in 1940, his father was forced to leave Romania in 1986, being a persecuted anti-communist activist, and he himself moved to the Netherlands in 1987, where he encountered a deep-seated xenophobia, realizing that equality existed on paper only.

Soon after, he started working on projects that interwove documented stories of contemporary migration with the artist's own family history and archival footage. The installation conceived for this exhibition continues to expand on the idea of ethical responsibility, which, according to the artist, stands at the heart of the global emergencies of today. The failure to recognize that the human subject is part of a larger scheme leads to alienation, othering,

and the abuse of the environment and other human beings. The work introduces quotes by several authors, such as Simone Weil, James Baldwin, W. G. Sebald or Mina Loy, which are activated through connections with photographs made by the artist or images taken from his family archive.

Tudor Bratu lives and works between the Netherlands and Romania. He graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (2003) and the Rijksakademie voor Beeldende Kunsten (2009) in Amsterdam. Selected exhibitions: *For Cigarettes, A Note Would Say, With All My Love*, Akademie Graz, AT (2015), *The Dissidents' Travel Guide*, Joey Ramone Gallery, Rotterdam (2014), *A Disquieting Suggestion*, the 15th International Architecture Biennale, Venice, the Greek Pavilion, *The Measure of our Travelling Feet*, Marres, Maastricht (2016). His works are included in various collections, such as the Allard Jakobs Collection (Amsterdam) and the collection of the Kandinsky Library of the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Since 2010 he manages the artist-in-residency platform www.bucharestair.com and he is also involved in teaching and curatorial projects. For further information please visit www.tudorbratu.com.

Mekhitar Garabedian

Birthday Cakes, (Gentbrugge), 2006–2017, 2019

Silent video, 2'

Birthday Songs, (Gentbrugge), 2006–2017,
2019

Audio installation, 35'

Birthday Cakes (Gentbrugge), 2006–2017
(2019) is based on footage of birthday celebrations of the different members of the artist's family, collected over a period of ten years. The home movies disclose a familiar personal ritual to the viewer based on a popular tradition: candles are blown out all at once and a silent wish is made. The short silent video consists of a chronological montage of these transient and intimate moments.

During these anniversary celebrations the family members traditionally sing 'Happy Birthday' in Armenian, Arabic, Dutch, French and English. The five different languages that are spoken embody the displacement of the family's history. The audio-installation *Birthday Songs (Gentbrugge), 2006–2017* (2019) is comprised of different sequences of birthday songs. Although the same songs are annually repeated, each performance has its own rhythm, tone and atmosphere, as well as a different order of languages.

'My education, the schools I attended, my friends... in short, my entire public life is Belgian. When I am home—my parental home—however, I lapse into an entirely different world, where Armenian is the language of communication. The atmosphere, the body language and the

general conduct have a much more Middle Eastern tone. And most of all, the frame of reference is completely different. Politics, dance, culture, food... all have another context and are seen differently.

I have been photographing my parental home in Gentbrugge, Belgium, for the last twenty years. This ongoing collection of images centres around fundamental notions of the experience of diasporic subjectivity as home and family. Heritage lived as a question every day.

Diasporic subjectivity is constituted by the tradition of family. At the same time, all sense of belonging is shattered. The illusion of completely belonging dissipates; you don't fully belong to either of those realities, to either of those different cultures (which are multi-cultures themselves), opening up spaces of "in-betweenness".

Bilingual or multilingual consciousness is not the sum of two languages, but a different state of mind altogether—defined by the mode of translation. As a foreigner, you are constantly translating, in both directions. You find yourself in a position in which you can no longer speak of a mother tongue—always in-between (two, or more) languages, always speaking the words of others.'

Vincent Meessen

Sons of Caïn, 2015

Installation

Images of the Sons of Caïn (After Henri Storck)

(archive boxes, photographs displayed in plexiglass)

Words from the Sons of Caïn (After Alice Becker-Ho)

(archive boxes, book pages, belgika font)

Courtesy Fonds Henri Storck & Musée de la Photographie, Charleroi

Sons of Caïn consists of two parts: Images of the Sons of Caïn (After Henri Storck) and Words from the Sons of Caïn (After Alice Becker-Ho). Both are the result of an ongoing research project. Two boxes contain photographs of Romani that have never been on view or published before. They were made in Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece and Turkey in 1961 by the famous Belgian filmmaker and producer Henri Storck during an exploratory trip with anthropologist and filmmaker Luc de Heusch and Belgian artist Jan Yoors. The trip was intended to scout for locations for *A la découverte des Tsiganes*, a particularly ambitious film project in which Jan Yoors—a gadjo who was exceptionally close to the circles of Roma transiting Belgium in his youth—intended to introduce his two companions to the closed Roma groups (kumpanias). Up till now we had only

Luc de Heusch's account of the trip, which he set out in a book published some time afterwards. In the book we recognize the same marginalization of the Romani we see today all over Europe. That is true also of Romania, a country that has yet to come to terms with its history of enslaving the Romani, a practice that continued up till the mid-19th century. Today, discrimination of Romani is still widespread in Europe.

Next to the boxes, we notice the work *Words from the Sons of Caïn (After Alice Becker-Ho)*, which consists of reframed pages of a book by Alice Becker-Ho that traces the Romani origin of a set of slang words, some of which have become part of everyday language in French. The words chosen point to an Indo-European 'creolisation' that has been going on since the 16th century; these words were spread throughout Europe by gypsies, tramps and beggars.

The etymological reconstructions of the words by Becker-Ho are in a certain sense reproduced by the negative shapes carved in the plexiglas frames. What we see are the elementary shapes (bar, curve, line) that literally make up the letters of the font Belgika. The latter is a collective, open source, shared typeface that is conceived as a nomadic anti-standard. It has been developed by Meessen in collaboration with the typographer Pierre Huyghebaert and continues to evolve by the involvement of all present and future users of this unfixed font.

The work was originally conceived for the show Atopolis in the context of Mons, European Cultural Capital 2015. Mons is a Belgian city with an important migrant population, where Meessen has lived for some time.

Vincent Meessen lives and works in Brussels. With ten guest artists, Meessen represented Belgium at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015. Selected solo exhibitions: Blues Kair, The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto (2019) and Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, University of Concordia, Montreal (2018), Ultramarine, Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse (2018), Omar en mai, Centre Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris (2016), Sire, je suis de l'ôtre pays, WIELS, Brussels (2016), Mi última vida, MUAC, Mexico (2014), and the duo exhibition Patterns for (Re)cognition at BOZAR Brussels (2017), Kunsthalle Basel (2015) and KIOSK Ghent (2013). Selected group exhibitions: Future Genealogies, Tales from the Equatorial Line, Lubumbashi Biennale (2019), ...and other such stories, the Chicago Architecture Biennial (2019), Proregress, Shanghai Biennale (2018), Gestures and Archives of the Present, Genealogies of the Future, Taipei Biennale (2016). Vincent Meessen is a founding member of Jubilee, a platform for artistic research and production.

Emilio Lopez-Menchero

Trying to be Cadere, de face (avec barre index 04 code B12003000, d'après « André Cadere 1974 », de B.Bourgeaud), 2013
B&w photography mounted on aluminium,
130 x 110 cm

Trying to be Cadere, de dos (avec barre index 04 code B12003000, d'après « André Cadere 1974 », de B.Bourgeaud), 2013
B&w photography mounted on aluminium,
82 x 130 cm

Trying to be Cadere, rue de la Brasserie, Ixelles, (index B57, code14003002, dit le bâton de New York), 2013
Colour photography mounted on aluminium,
60 x 72,5 cm

Trying to be Cadere, rue du Serpentin, Ixelles. (index B57, code14003002, dit le bâton de New York), 2013
Colour photography mounted on aluminium,
60 x 73,5 cm

Courtesy Galerie Nadja Vilenne, Liège

The Brussels-based Emilio López-Menchero (b. 1960) is a particularly versatile artist. Apart from his usual visual work, he started to perform in 2001 in live actions that question the identity of the artist and the 'clichés that surround them'. He thus transformed himself in artists such as Pablo Picasso, Cindy Sherman, James Ensor,

Frida Kahlo—and in 2011 in André Cadere. The series of performances *Trying to be...* are usually presented at openings and are documented with photographs and film.

As the work of the important Romanian artist André Cadere (1934-1978)—whose work is very popular in Belgium—doesn't feature prominently at the festival Europalia Romania, we decided to bring *Trying to be Cadere* back to life at the royal VIP opening of the festival.

The performance challenged in a lively way the absence of a historically important artist at the numerous 'official' exhibitions with which a country in the heart of Europe draws the limelight.

Emilio López-Menchero actually carried an authentic work of art around the rooms of Bozar *and* at the (copious) reception. Thus the artist became at once literally the carrier of a work of art of extreme significance, known as 'the New York bar' from 1975!

A short video was recorded to document this action, which was also a performance, a 'walking' exhibition *and* a critical note referring to the lack of (recent) art historical awareness.

Christine Meisner

The Freedom of, 2015–2017

Transmission Map, drawing

Pencil on paper, 95 x 63 cm

400 two-layered drawings

Pencil on paper, 19 x 27 cm each

HD Video, colour, music, 30' including 9' pause

Video, text, musical concept: Christine Meisner; composition and realization: William Tatge; drums: Marc Ferber; trumpet: Josh Lawrence; trombone: Jacob Garchik; alto saxophone: Caleb Curtis; tenor saxophone: Adam Kolker

The drawing and video installation *The Freedom of* is the final part of Christine Meisner's trilogy *Landscape, Music and Liberty*. *The Freedom of* examines the role and impact of jazz during the Cold War by entering the invisible, intangible landscape of the ether, traversed by streams of music and conflicting ideas of freedom. Explored as a carrier of light and radio waves, the ether finally became a technopolitical territory for imperialistic ambitions, a war zone of ideologies. From the national radio station Voice of America in Washington D.C., radio broadcaster Willis Conover aired hundreds of thousands of jazz tracks through the ether. His show *The Jazz Hour* started in 1955 and became part of the extensive governmental radio broadcast, which aimed to promote the US-American way of life and its politics. First addressed to the communist regimes of USSR and the Eastern Bloc, Voice of America soon also broadcast to Apartheid countries such as South Africa. While the American

government promoted jazz as an expression of culture from 'the land of the free', it denied African American musicians equal rights—the US remained a nation of violent segregation.

Meisner's installation starts out with a drawn map of the transmissions, accompanied by 200 two-layered pencil drawings that developed from her research on the playlists of Conover's daily radio show, which are translated into an abstract battlefield of transmission streams. The video features an elaborate music composition, which was commissioned by the artist from jazz musician William Tatge, who composed the score and realized the music recording. The Freedom of creates a synaesthetic interplay between image and music, evoking persistent afterimages in the viewer's mind. Questions of freedom and political instrumentalization linger on.

Christine Meisner currently lives and works in Brussels and Berlin. Her works are part of several public and private collections. Selected exhibitions: The New Parthenon, Stevenson Gallery Cape Town (2017), A New Region of the World, Bunkier Sztuki, Krakow (2017), Gestures and Archives of the Present, Genealogies of the Future, the 10th Taipei Biennial, Taiwan (2016), Ghosts of the Civil Dead, Tranzit, Bratislava (2016), Disquieting Nature, the Walther Collection, New York and Ulm (2014), Sense and Sensibility, Salzburger Kunstverein (2011), Drawing Documents, Extra City Kunsthall,

Antwerp (2011). Her video Disquieting Nature premiered with a live music performance at the Berlin Documentary Forum and was screened at Festival International de Cinéma Marseille and the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Meisner's project Rivers and Rights, commissioned by the Barenboim-Said Akademie, was inaugurated in Berlin in 2016. The artist has taught from 2003 to 2010 at the Technical University of Vienna, Austria, and since 2014 she holds a professorship at ERG École Supérieure des Arts in Brussels, Belgium.

Jimmy Robert

Cruising, 2019

Single-channel video, 11'

For a few years Jimmy Robert resided in Bucharest and became interested in a very emblematic area of the city, one that encapsulates both the urban transformations brought about by the terminal years of the socialist regime and the regressive 'developments' of the post-socialist decades, which prompted, among other things, the resurgence of religion in the public sphere. He stages a performance that features six performers, including the artist, enacting various choreographic vignettes, along the route between The House of People—one of the largest edifices ever built, Nicolae Ceaușescu's megalomaniac master project, erected in the 1980s, which nowadays houses the Romanian

Parliament—and the Cathedral of National Redemption, the biggest orthodox church in the country, which was officially inaugurated last year, but has yet to be finished. The Cathedral was built in the immediate vicinity of the House of People, and the two poles are facing each other in a disquieting proximity, projecting their intimidating presence onto the public realm. The subtitles add yet another layer to the complex temporality of the House of People, featuring excerpts from an interview given by its architect, Anca Petrescu, to PIN-UP magazine in 2006.

The eclectic group of performers seems oblivious to the highly charged surroundings and the interactions between its members range from games of seduction to playful and intimate gestures—instances in which their queer subjectivities and bodies are pitted against the physical and metaphorical authority of the two imposing structures of power, undermining their normative position towards the social body and the private life of citizens. In the final section of the video, Jimmy Robert performs a set of movements not far away from the first location of the performance, on the site of an abandoned artificial lake delimited by a concrete embankment, designed during the communist times, which has been taken over by nature, forming one of the biggest urban nature parks in Europe.

Jimmy Robert was born in Guadeloupe and currently lives and works in Berlin. His

multidisciplinary practice encompasses performance, photography, film, video and drawing, frequently collapsing distinctions between these mediums. Using photography as a starting point for his works on paper, Robert blurs the divisions between two and three dimensions, as well as image and object, frequently employing printed images of paper, tape and collage rather than the real thing. Robert often uses found photographs and images from art history that he subjects to tearing, collaging, and other physical manipulations before digitally scanning them and exhibiting printed versions. These photographs often extend into the gallery space and interact with Robert's sculptures, which similarly give the illusion of paper or wooden forms and play with notions of value and durability. His wooden constructions occasionally sport a skin of veneered wood, an elegant and fragile disguise. This interest in the body personified through materials and the reverse, as well as the breakdown between image and object, integrates Robert's longtime work with performance with his larger practice. Performance remains a central part of Robert's work. He has choreographed performances within the context of the exhibition space or in relation to existing architectural structures, as well as restaging, reframing or sampling historical performances from Yoko Ono, Yvonne Rainer, James Lee Byars and others.

Iulia Toma

Migration of Memory / Memory of Migration,
2019

Textile collage (cut-out carpets, embroidery,
dyed fabric), 500 x 100 cm

A Thousand People inside Omar, 2019

Single-channel video, 18'34"

Iulia Toma uses embroidery as a medium for drawing on fabric. Her sewing-machine stitched portraits depict women, men and children who have recently been forced to flee their homeland due to civil war, political unrest and economic struggles. The monumental work *Migration of Memory / Memory of Migration* was produced for this exhibition and is part of #orientalswelcome, a long-term project through which the artist explores the increasingly fearful and hostile attitude towards immigration. The Romanian National Council for Refugees in Bucharest assisted the artist in contacting several refugees, the majority from Syria, Afghanistan and Iran who accepted to share their stories about their background and current situation in Romania. The textile fresco departs from a series of talks and interviews, but abstracts the narratives and highlights various motifs and topics, which are inserted following a mutual agreement between the artist and her interlocutors. One of the protagonists who triggered the making of this work is Omar, a Syrian refugee in his twenties, who tells about his life and his studies in Damascus to become an actor—a

mediator who is able 'to tell the truth' and experiment with multiple identities. The subjects are caught between on the one hand the traumatic memory of military conflict and displacement, and on the other the experience of longing for their former lives, contemplating their unfulfilled possibilities.

Iulia Toma lives and works in Bucharest. She uses textile fabrics, combined with photography, installation and text, as her preferred media. Social themes such as feminism, human rights, interpersonal relations in closed communities, the material reality of living in an urban environment, and social justice are the objects of her pursuits. She teaches at the Arts & Textile Design Department of the National University of Arts in Bucharest. Selected exhibitions: 3rd Art Encounters Biennale, Timișoara (2019); *The Web of Fabric*, Ivan Gallery, Bucharest (2019); *Objects in the Mirror Are Closer Than They Appear*, Eastwards Prospectus Gallery, Bucharest (2018); *Mapping Bucharest: Art, Memory and Revolution 1916–2016*, Vienna Biennale (2015); *Buongiorno Varvara Stepanova*, Galleriapiu, Bologna (2016, solo exhibition with Claudiu Cobilanschi); *Dura Europos*, Ivan Gallery, Bucharest (2016); *Twilled Connections*, Tranzit.ro/Bucharest (2015); *Salonul de proiecte*, Bucharest (2012, 2014).