

Edinburgh, 20 July 1969

Dear friend Horia,

I didn't reply to your letter straight away also because of my condition, but I do so now. Maybe you haven't left for Yugoslavia yet. I prefer not to talk about certain things and events that have taken place in the meantime.

Everything is as usual here, apart from the excitement and extraordinary adventure of the flight to the moon, which has gripped the public very strongly. Every day there are television programmes live from Apollo 11—which is something colossal.

I don't know whether you know, but television is in colour here. BBC2 in particular. On the other hand, there are virtually no programmes about the arts on television, and nobody can explain to me why exactly.

[...]

Journeying through this geography all this time I have understood a host of new things, not new things so much as clarificatory, perhaps sometimes justificatory things. Sometimes, in the enthusiasm of intuition and in the flow of urges to create I feel the need to classify my motives.

Why?!

For what and for whom?!

How far and how long?!

It was in this way that there developed within me the idea of the concrete, palpable, workable, tactile, portable object, perhaps a pleasant object, or else an awkwardly idiotic object, but one as vital as one's daily bread and as love for every moment's breath. To live in the midst of objects and not to touch them seems to me infinitely hypocritical.

To feel them only with your eyes and not to be able to "possess" them completely, from the standpoint of all organic and spiritual desires, is equally stupid. It was thus that I reached the bizarre conclusion that the eye has become, or is, deprived of its erstwhile roles, and in particular the culture and art produced for the eye are getting stuck in the rut of film, photography, television, and this is very painful for the great majority of traditionalist painters who are content to thrum in two dimensions, as all the other dimensions are subjective and wearily abstract.

The two dimensions are concrete, only the two.

Why shouldn't we make "ART" the way we cook three meals a day?

Why doesn't anybody prepare artistic products for all the other receptive organs? Why are smell and taste, skin and mucous tissues, gustatory and olfactory papillae any less important than the cornea and ocular complex?

And this concrete object that I see as an artistic product, obviously "transfigured" with talent and intelligence, can only be from four dimensions upward, apart from the movement of the other three (there are so many possibilities to be master of the present moment and the presence of the art object (in a concrete way)).

Do you think that the imprints of palms and soles, that the skin, the mouth, the nose, perhaps the larynx, the stomach have no capability to receive precious spiritual factors?

Please think of all the windows of cake shops, butcher's, baker's, etc., etc., etc., of all the everyday products of mass consumption—what do you think of transposing them all into the artistic life, concretely, directly?

But in as direct a way as possible, as adapted to the complex human organism as possible.

Think of all the newspapers consumed in the world and the short life of the news—as opposed to museums and galleries!

Think of the exhibition of flowers, fruits, and foodstuffs in the central market of any city!

Do you understand what I am saying?

Think seriously about Balzac, Proust, Joyce, Capote! Concretely, think of the unlimited series of immediate objects produced for immediate consumption, consumption that is efficient and artistic at the same time.

Much is said in the West about "multiples," broad series, copies identical with the original, which is losing its value in the old sense, being influenced by technology, science. You have to understand all these things...

In fact, to me such a transformation seems so obvious and so necessary that I am amazed when I come up against obstacles.

Film can say so much that painting can feel tired, it is no longer representative at all today. I think that M. Milcovici was not very objective when he returned from Paris for the first time, I remember that in the café in Piața Romană he declared that painting is sacred and still standing!?!?

That artistic technique is more or less dead! It's very normal—and a lucid man can immediately sense what crosses over into objectivity. [...]

Hippies and their entire culture—philosophy, lifestyle, clubs etc.—are an extremely true and clear expression.

Not to mention the problem of drugs and the broad need to live immediately without sentimentalisms and fits of romanticism.

I write this to you after a long crisis of lucidity in which everything was transparent.

"Life and "the plastic age" are painfully true and current.

("NEVER MIND")

With my wonted naïveté, I wrote a manifesto that encapsulates all these ideas and sent it to some 200 places around the world.

Maybe it will catch up with you in Yugoslavia. I await a letter from you with great impatience.

What are you up to there and how do you feel?

Sibylla has finally informed me of her arrival here (in the meantime). I'm looking forward to you telling me the same... You have to come with your canvases as quickly as possible. The exhibition is opening, and the whole press and all the television stations will be in the gallery, probably two or three days beforehand. A pity you won't be able to be here for those few days. But see what you can do—in any case, send a telegram in advance.

I'll translate the text from the catalogue of the Athenaeum exhibition into English for the leaflet you'll have for your exhibition here, including biographical information—please URGENTLY send me two photographs and a list of works, because there's no more time; to be exact—title, dimensions, medium, year.

Then try to remember and refresh all the words you know in English: again, this is important.

Come with your prints! As many as possible!!!!!! The ones from the catalogue!!!!

Kiss Marga from me, I very sorry, probably she'll be unhappy to leave you alone again for a time in other terrifying lands...

May God be with us...

Kisses, and get busy,
Paul

6 Aug. 1969, Bucharest

Dear Paul,

I'm rather late in replying too, but that's the way it goes! I wanted to know a few things more precisely so that I could write to you, but I see this is late in coming and I decided to write you something even so.

You're probably now in wonderful fellowship with your wife and aren't able to think of me very much, but soon you'll be able to think of me and then some. I hope to catch you in Edinburgh and that you won't leave when she does!

Probably you received my works; one of them is dismantled, it's a vertical work made up of three segments and represents a "graphic monster." You have the titles and dimensions of the other works, which is why I didn't rush to write to you when you asked me. In the box in which they were packed there was also a diagram for assembling the triple work—I hope you found it. Please "tidy them up" if anything deteriorated during transport.

As you can see, I haven't left for Yugoslavia yet because the people from the UAP [Union of Artists] are very late with the formalities. This is also why it hasn't been possible to have the passport for England issued. I've received the visa from the British embassy already, but I don't have a passport to stick it in. I hope I'll have time at least for England if it won't be possible to have time for Yugoslavia (because of a shortage of time!).

I'm glad when you say you haven't changed at all and you've become more lucid—lucidity is a good thing especially if you have "extra lucidity" in reserve—which can keep a check on the initial lucidity. Then, indeed, strength can play freely and if it also has "something to say," everything is good, is good once and for all, and nothing can ever hinder you. Over the course of your explanations, you keep asking me whether I "understand." I hope you don't think me mentally deficient.

It's good not to believe that the censorship I "impose" on myself might become extremist, because a good primordial sense spares me such things; I can have momentary deviations, but the apparatus functions well and the adjustments are made. . .

For a long time, I've been interested, for example—at the theoretical, the emotional level—in "real-time" problems—the true time—absolute time and all that stuff connected to it (or similar to it!). I have sufficient brains and intuition to realise that all these things are important in order to be aware of their existence not because they would solve whatever universally human problems. Scientific and technical research is real and genuinely achieves unsuspected levels if it goes "beyond," ceaselessly perfecting itself and arriving at the same prime verities that the great "initiates" also arrive at. We'll discuss these things (on which I've been seriously ruminating lately) because right now I can't explain them very well, I'm more confused than ever, and there are too many things that "pile together" in the point of my pen.

I'm interested in and delighted about your manifesto, because I see you justify the faith I placed in you! You're a good man and, more importantly, autonomous enough from the world around you to be able to "fructify" with the greatest output. Such vocabulary might annoy you but I hope you'll be able to take it as it's meant.

An initial observation! Why is it stupid to "feel them only with the eyes"?!?! If you want to make art "closer" to the senses, that doesn't force you to say that it's stupid to "feel with the eyes"—(there is beauty in the dogma and convention of painting, of filling a place surface, a rectangle, with conventional and simple signs, seemingly accessible to all, but terribly perfidious at bottom). I'm not making an apologia for traditional painting, I myself am very far from it, but I don't agree with the pursuit of means, means that aim to prove the vanity of the others. I want things that are very new, but I accept anything as being possible and I don't rebel and I don't manifest intolerance toward anything of value. I think you want things that are v. good, but I'm discussing here only the way you express yourself in your letter—which seems to me might give rise to misunderstandings. I likewise understand that this means of expressing yourself that you have is a love of certainty, a tendency toward equilibrium, toward "conviction." I want you to know that I understand what you are saying and I think very similarly, but I have a great love of "economy," of "law" (in the general sense), for "immediate convention"—etc. etc.

I've thought about imprints and shop windows, about this whole cohort of aspects that assails us from every side, and I experience a desire to see them being used rather than "transposed," I want this spirit to pervade all things, although I would like to be not "in them" but beyond them. Nevertheless, these are fascinating things, albeit transient, and all the more transient the more widespread the phenomenon becomes.

Yet again, I regard your complaint as justified but I don't know what you've got against museums—I hope you haven't been influenced by those enervated and feeble young westerners who have nothing left except to protest and to deny any previous achievement?! I'm sure you're not thinking of anything like that but rather you're merely talking about a certain old-fashioned spirit which, despite the sonorous names, we often encounter in museums. To be honest, I too was slightly saddened by the atmosphere of the museums, even the great ones, there is an air of weariness and I'm convinced that this air is the air of the people who created the museums, rather than of Paolo Uccello or Leonardo da Vinci (they were too alive).

Other than that, everything you wrote to me and everything I write to you are things we have discussed and ruminated on in various guises, so much so that to me they're of the past. Which is why, when I hear of people contesting such things, it makes me suddenly nauseous, and then I forget about it. I'm understood by such a small number of people that sometimes it fills me with great sadness; then I get a grip and tell myself that it's always been like this when there is talk of things that require great sincerity and great lucidity—"many see—few know"!

But we'll talk about all this at the appropriate time. Let me give you my sole conclusion: "real-time" → true time, time outside any processes and independent of all phenomena → non-existence = 0.

Dear sir Paulie, I am able to say that I can hardly wait to see you, for us to drink instant coffee and smoke English cigarettes while having a chat.

Greetings from Gherasim and Berindei—they're wonderful people. In the absence of Doru Bucur we've been seeing each other quite often. Apart from that, I'm completely alone, more and more alone, and I can't say I feel too bad because of it.

Greetings and all the best from Richard Demarco and his wife.

I was talking to Sanda Ag[alides] about you.

I've found out that Ovidiu Maitec is exhibiting in Edinburgh at the same and at the same gallery. That's great. . .

Greetings from Marga. We often think about how funny you are.

Love, Horia

Sideways in the margin: 8.8.69 I still don't have an answer. The UAP is negligent as always. Probably I won't be able to go to Yugoslavia because of a lack of time; I hope at least to make it to Edinburgh.

Paris, 10 February 1979

My dear friend, Mr Chalupecký,

There is a reason for my silence, or at least so I think; but it would take many words and pages to provide a precise, clear image of my life over the last two years.

I received your last letter a long time ago, during the terrible days after the earthquake; I felt your encouragement, as ever, and I felt heartened by your message conducive to hope and full of friendship.

Since then, I have experienced events that have forced me to take a decision, even if it might have unforeseeable consequences.

I experienced my isolation as a constraint, but at the same time I was constrained to isolate myself. Pressures of every kind came to make our lives hard to live. My friends have taken the path of compromise in order to survive or are caught up in routine activities, such as our friend Bitzan, trapped in the exhausting obligations of university teaching. For him, at least, I have found a plausible explanation: his studio and the majority of the works in it were destroyed in the earthquake. He was saved at the last moment, as if by miracle, leaving the building half an hour before the catastrophe.

As such, my wife and I decided to leave everything behind. After a few humiliating, unsuccessful attempts, we received a positive response. We left together. And here we are at last, in Paris, after so many attempts.

But my sudden departure, which looks like a forced exile, prevented me from bringing my works with me. A few photographic reproductions, hidden at the bottom of the suitcase, under shirts and trousers, are for the time being the only frail anchor point. I hope to be able to bring them here in the near future. How I might do so, I don't yet know. For the time being, I live in a state of expectancy, with a large number of precautions against "artistic life." I know my intrinsic tendency to isolate myself and I am ready to hide in a dark corner without seeing anybody or anything. On the other hand, I realise that such an attitude to life would be the height of danger right now.

Every day I wonder what I should do? Where should I begin? To whom should I be frank? I therefore make bold to ask your advice, since I have always felt you have faith in me.

Without my works I feel lost. I ask you again: what is to be done? Might I make use of that so generous text you wrote about my drawings, a text which wasn't published in the Italian magazine in the end? If so, then could you send me a copy (let me repeat: I left without being able to take any papers with me)?

I wish you health and peace, and I remain yours, with friendship,
Julian

Leningradská 35 101 00 Praha 10
16 February 1979

Dear Julian,

What a surprise! I wrote to you—and to your friend Bitzan—two or three times without receiving a reply. And now you write to me from Paris. A difficult decision, but probably the only one remaining to you. The life of an emigrant is not at all to be envied. It only remains that you should go all the way, say to yourself: I'm no longer a Romanian, now I'm a Frenchman of Romanian birth. Demolish the bridges behind you. France is xenophobic, as you know. The arts situation in Paris is bad. Paris is no longer the centre of the world and doesn't want to get used to the situation. Don't be set on conforming artistically. Start to paint as soon as you can, but continue to do what you did before, even if it's very different from what is going on around you right now. Don't be set on making a living from your work as an artist. Be content with little. But even so, don't remain isolated as a person. Seek contacts with artists and critics. Bucharest no longer exists. It never existed. Paris is your new homeland. It's utter suicide to live feeling yourself to be an emigrant! A pity that you weren't able to take your works with you. Therefore, create new works in order to be able to show them. As soon as I have the opportunity, I'll send you the works you once gave me (not through the post). I attach a number of letters of recommendation to leading critics. Pierre is PIERRE RESTANY (13 RUE PAYENNE; TEL.278.5295). Jean = JEAN CLAIR, you'll find him at the Beaubourg, he works there. Jean Clarens = LAMBERT, 69 RUE DE SÉGUR, CATHÉRINE MILLET = editor-in-chief at L'ART PRESS, 3 RUE DE LA GRANDE TRUANDERIE. Finally, IVAN THEIMER—a Czech emigrant painter, now highly regarded. Go to see them all, with your photographs. Don't forget to write to me and tell me what comes of your visits.

Bitzan—I don't understand. Although he's a university teacher, he can't carry on working at home.

As for me—since I'm banned from publishing in my home country—I'm forced to publish abroad. In the next issue of *Flash Art* (a multilingual review published in Milan), a long essay of mine, "L'Art et la Transcendance," will appear. And I'm now working on quite a long book about Marcel Duchamp the man and his art.

So—the best of luck and my cordial compliments to your wife. I look forward to your reply.

Jindřich Chalupecký

Paris, 20 April [1979]

Dear friend,

I'm in the countryside, in an idyllic setting, on the shore of a lake where the fish leap on the surface and the tame swans ask you for food. I feel so well that for the first time since my arrival in France, I have the feeling that I am relaxing in peace, living at a gentle, carefree pace. Maybe it's just a weekend illusion, although it doesn't seem to be only that, since thanks to your letter, which denotes deep friendship, I'm beginning to get my head above water and to view the future head on (even if I still have to face plenty of obstacles). Now the moment has come to tell you about all the meetings you facilitated for me in so direct and frank a manner. I have gradually come to realise that here in Paris almost complete suspicion dominates human relations, and all the more so artistic circles. I met Ivan Theimer without any kind of difficulty. I visited him in his studio and he had only good words to say about you, since he admires you and regards you as a central figure of the Czech avant-garde (and I agreed with him). But even if things are going so well for him, he described the Parisian arts scene to me in pessimistic terms, talking, on the one hand, about the financial mess that threatens the less powerful galleries with the spectre of bankruptcy, and, on the other hand, about the decreasing interest in quality art that might go beyond immediate consumption. I'm going to see him again, since we got on together and we'll stay in touch.

My experience with Mme Millet was sooner discouraging; she gave me an appointment three weeks later, I turned up, she postponed because she didn't have the time, and the second time she completely forgot (?) to come. With Jean Clair things turned out differently. It's difficult to catch him because he's always away, but even so, he still found the time to set aside an afternoon for me so that we could talk and I could show him my portfolio. He liked what I do and recommended me to a leading gallery here (but as I was expecting, the people from the gallery have their own criteria, which escape me, at least for the time being). I'll meet with Jean Clair again as soon as I have concrete works and proposals.

As you very well know, Pierre Restany divides his time between Italy and France. This is why I didn't meet him until a few days ago. He proved to be extremely cordial toward me, and I was surprised by that, but then I realised that this was his way of showing his friendship toward you. The memory of you was constantly present during our conversation, and at the end, he asked me to tell you that the request for a tourist visa was turned down by the embassy. He is going to Australia for two months and we have arranged to meet at the beginning of June. [...]

As for me, I've started working, and even if for the moment I'm not happy, I hope to get past the hardest moments. Your advice coincides with my plans: I don't want to give up my projects, even if they will take a different turn. Will I have the strength to pursue them? This is not only a rhetorical question, since the current working conditions are fundamentally different, in terms of both mood and outcome.

I would like to read your essay "Art and Transcendence," since in an age in which so much confusion reigns in regard to the use of such terms you will maybe be able to supply a few reference points, which I need greatly. The same as you did with Duchamp. I'd very much like to see you again, but I know that for the moment it's impossible (only if one fine day you receive permission to leave the country at least briefly), although I think that isolation will give you the force and energy to write.

Goodbye for now, dear Friend, I wish you much health and send my most respectful greetings to your wife.

Yours, Julian

Praha 10 Leningradská 35
26 May 1979

Dear Julian,

I'm very happy that my letters were of assistance to you and that you're no longer such a stranger in Paris. As for Mme Millet, I don't know her personally and, perhaps, some of my critical observations regarding Duchamp's commentators aren't to her liking. But Pierre (Restany), Jean Clair and Ivan Theimer have not let me down; I hope that J.-C. Lambert will also give you a friendly reception.

Don't be in a hurry to exhibit. You and your art have to adapt to the new atmosphere—the atmosphere of the world. And you also have to find the right artistic ambience—in order to start exhibiting with them.

Paris is no longer the centre of the art world. Even the collectors avoid it. On the other hand, an original artist—such as yourself—will be well received there. They don't have many of them.

I can also give you letters to Italian critics (Argan, Trini, Politi) and a Swiss critic (Maurice Besset) with whom I'm on friendly terms. I have virtually no contacts in Germany.

"L'Art et la Transcendance" won't be published in France except in an abridged edition (in a magazine issue edited by Jean Clair). The complete text will be included in the forthcoming issues of *Flash Art* (Milan)—but only in English and Italian. The monograph I'm preparing and which will be quite extensive will be ready in autumn, I hope. But after that, translations and authorisations thereof. At the same time, I'm preparing quite an extensive literary study of Czech expressionism (1902–1920) for an American publisher. . . . After that, there'll be a book about contemporary Czech art [. . .]. So, I really don't regret not travelling. I'm too busy. . . .

How is your wife adapting to the new situation? How is she?

I'm very curious to see your works and I hope you won't forget to send me the photographs one day.

I haven't forgotten that I have to send you the drawings I have at home. Up till now I haven't had the chance.

Devotedly,
Jindřich Chalupecký

28 August, 2010

Dear Mrs Radu,

At the suggestion of Mr Brezianu, I am writing you this letter in which I shall try to recall the few memories I have of Andrei Cădere, my fellow pupil at lycée and, later on, my friend. I apologise if, as I think is the case, what I am able to offer is so little.

Andrei and I were of the same age, but he was a pupil in the second form of lycée, while I was in the fourth form. This is why I had little contact with him in 1946–48, when we both attended Bucharest's French School.

Andrei's brother Dan was in the year ahead of mine. Nor did I have contact with him in my lycée years. I know only that while Andrei was sooner indolent, Dan was industrious and ambitious. Despite the ban on him enrolling at university, he finally succeeded in becoming an engineer.

After the abolition of the French School in 1948, I attended the Civil Engineering and Public Works Technical Middle School, since father deemed the profession of civil engineer would be useful if we were reduced to penury. This radical change of educational direction was extremely difficult for me, but finally, with great effort, I managed to make the transition from Literature, with which I had a definite affinity, to technology, for which I had absolutely no proclivity. Andrei, for whom this choice was a form of resistance, took courses at the classical languages high-school next to St Joseph's Cathedral.

In middle school, I was disoriented and isolated from all my old schoolmates. Was I fated to throw overboard everything I had learned to appreciate in the foregoing years? An old schoolmate from the French School, Valdimir Rittenberg, a pupil at the electrotechnical middle school on the site of the old Gheorghe Șincai High School, who shared with me the same mood and who, unlike me, continued to live in more or less normal conditions (since our house had been divided up among four families), also had access and friends with access to collections of classical music records and with them he used to hold gatherings at which were played *The Matthew Passion*, Beethoven's symphonies, Mozart's concertos. One of his schoolmates from the electrotechnical college, Lucian Baltuch, had become a close friend of Dan Cădere, who at the time was impoverished and persecuted, after the arrest of his father, ambassador Victor Cădere, a professor of international law, former Romanian Minister to Warsaw (where Andrei was born) and Lisbon, a post his predecessor had been forced to leave, as he was married to a baptised Jewess from a family of Sephardi bankers. Dan's confidence in Lucian Baltuch was absolute, and in order to save the family's Grundig radio set (an ultra-modern set with a magic eye, a light that stabilised when it was tuned in to the exact wavelength of the station you were looking for), he entrusted it to his care.

Dan Cădere and Andrei quite frequently attended the musical gatherings held by Valdimir Rittenberg, by his friend from Bukovina Heini Sinnreich, and by Lucian Baltuch. The gatherings were a modest form of resistance against the stultifying assaults of the official propaganda. Without being close to him, I had cordial relations with Dan.

Relations with the Cădere brothers broke off during the period when, along with Lucian Baltuch, Andrei was conscripted into the General Department of the Labour Service (DGSM), where, instead of military service, persons of "unhealthy" social origin were made to do construction work in forced-labour battalions; a dark period, so I understood from Lucian.

In 1958, my sister went to live with her little boy for a few weeks in Costinești, where I went to spend the two weeks' holiday to which I was entitled as a young engineer at the Bucharest Design Institute. Adjacent to the yard of the peasant house where we stayed was also living Mihai Rădulescu, a man of culture, of great sensibility and refinement, a friend of Ion Negoițescu and Constantin Țoiu. On the porch, Mihai Rădulescu used to read recent books by Jean Anouilh and Eugène Ionesco, which were very hard to get hold of. With great kindness, he lent us them at my request.

Two frequent visitors to Mihai Rădulescu and Ion Negoițescu were Andrei Cădere and a friend of his whose name I have forgotten (Antonescu?), a nephew of Professor Parhon, the cardboard cut-out president of the People's Republic of Romania. Parhon got his nephew out of a fix in 1956, when he was arrested with other students who had taken part in a demonstration in support of the Hungarian Revolution. Unlike Andrei, his friend was a heavy drinker. He was a passionate reader of E.T.A. Hoffmann and the great Russian writers, Chekhov in particular, and, with the emphatic approval of Andrei, he bemoaned the obtuseness of those whose refusal to read Russian writers was an absurd protest against communism.

Aware of his belonging to a cultural and social elite, it was not without contempt that Andrei used to talk of the trade union holidaymakers at the Vasile Roaită resort, formerly named Carmen Sylva, whose bathing costumes looked like pathetic long johns, and he preferred to spend his fourteen hours a day in the sun far from the magnificent sandy beach of Costinești and its habitués, for example filmmaker Ion Bostan, whose wife would display her sculptural breasts—nudism and semi-nudism were freely practised on the beach—literary critic Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu (whom Andrei nicknamed "Crohu") and his girlfriend Nina Cassian. Andrei's main base in the holidays was the rocky shore which belonged only to him. Often, a group would form for swimming expeditions out to sea, which, with utter recklessness, I too used to join from time to time. His time in Lisbon, which Andrei recalled as a beautiful dream, and his contact with French culture gave him a feeling of superiority, and he liked to quote Raymond Poincaré's assessment of Romania, the motto to [Matei Caragiale's] *Kings of the Old Court*: "Que voulez-vous, nous sommes ici aux portes de l'Orient, où tout est pris à la légère." Matei Caragiale was his literary idol, and he despised Ion Luca Caragiale's "tawdry derision" almost as much as the son of the great playwright. I had the impression that perhaps as a throwback to Portugal he had a genuine or affected difficulty in pronouncing the vowel /i/, which he pronounced /ă/, the way Jews did if their linguistic assimilation was incomplete; justly or unjustly, in his case I attributed it to a desire to distance himself from the Balkans.

The period after 1957 was one of relative political thaw, and holidays at the seaside, in the special ambiance of Costinești at that time, were an opportunity for holidaymakers to manifest their need for autonomy, the outdoors—freedom. [...]

I met Andrei again in Bucharest. He lived on Calea Victoriei, a few buildings away from the Hôtel Athénée Palace, near the Romanian Academy, at the bottom of a passageway, in a tiny room with a bare-earth floor. In another room off the same passageway lived his mother, whom I never met, however. There was talk of a harshening of the regime's attitude toward intellectuals. Andrei thought it impossible: "It won't wash, it can't go on." Unfortunately, Andrei was wrong.

Andrei had become close to Sanda Agalides, who lived in my district and who in turn was friends with one of Vișan's daughters, the lawyer who lived in a few rooms of our house. From time to time, in the evening, he would knock on the window of my room that gave onto Strada Alba, I would invite him inside and prepare a meal, usually consisting of boiled potatoes. I would return his visits. Through connections he had got a job as a sgraffito worker and the terrible poverty in which he had lived had given way to a relative and modest prosperity: he had bought a fountain pen, whose modern look filled him with enthusiasm, and a radio, on which we listened to music with friends of his and, from time to time, with Dan. I remember listening with Dan to the broadcast from the Athenaeum of Bach's concerto for two violins, the soloists being Yehudi Menuhin and David Oistrakh, a memorable Bucharest event, also described in *Tattooed Soul* by Raluca Sterian-Nathan. We were gripped with extraordinary enthusiasm listening to the exalting finale of the concerto.

Victor Cădere spent years of harsh imprisonment. Andrei told me that his father survived solitary confinement psychologically by imposing on himself a daily schedule: he would walk a hundred or two hundred paces. He was released from prison with his morale largely intact. Petru Groza, who was probably friendly with him in the 1920s and 30s, managed to obtain a pension for him, cause for gratitude on the part of the family. Both sons loved and respected their father. Dan used to read French translations of the poems of Walt Whitman from a volume he proudly said his father had bought when he was a student in Paris.

In my isolation, it was through reading that I maintained contact with the French culture I had learned to love and respect: Montaigne, Rabelais, Le Sage, Flaubert, Anatole France, Proust, Céline. But Andrei broadened my literary horizons, drawing my attention to the publication in Romanian translation of Bertolt Brecht's *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, a striking description of life under a totalitarian regime, which fit like a glove the situation under communism. Andrei used to read to us aloud the poem "Liberté" by Paul Éluard, a useful idiot like Picasso, true, but after Rimbaud and Apollinaire, one of the greatest modern poets. Today the poem is one of the set texts for French primary school pupils.

Not long after my return from Costinești, the dreadful Noica trial took place, which led to the suicide of Mihai Rădulescu in prison, described by Stelian Tanase in *Anatomy of a Mystification*. But life went on. Andrei became more and more interested in the plastic arts, and he started to paint, cultivating primary colours in abstract paintings.

After Andrei moved to Boulevard Dacia, into a dingy apartment without a window, if I remember rightly, I invited Andrei and Sanda to my house for a small party, to which I had also invited my good friend Puiu Sonnenfeld, who was an architect colleague from Bucharest Design, and his wife Butzi (Sarina). It was the first time I had invited so many people—four! Puiu and Butzi arrived at the appointed time, but without letting me know, Andrei and Sanda, who at the time liked to proclaim their aloofness from bourgeois prejudices and habits, didn't come. This upset me enough to make me decide to have nothing more to do with them. Once, however, I saw him at the canteen next to the Russian Church. He came up to me, asked me how I was, I asked him how he was and, without making a big show, I said goodbye to him and walked away. It was the last time I saw him. A few months later, in August 1962, I left Romania.

I later heard via mutual acquaintances that Andrei and Dan had managed to leave Romania too. I think I was told that Andrei had left by marrying a French woman he met at the seaside. (If it is true, the episode is similar to that of Raluca Sterian-Nathan's departure from Romania.) I didn't know until a few years ago that in Paris, with the energy of desperation, Andrei had managed to make a name for himself in the art world with his works of conceptual art, which are now in the collections of some of the world's biggest museums of modern art. But for Andrei success came too late. Illness cut him down in the flower of youth. He had a tumultuous life. But never, not even in the most difficult of circumstances, did he abandon his deep sentiment of personal dignity.

May God rest his soul.

With esteem,

Yours,

Emil Simiu

10 August

Dear Radu,

I'm very sorry you "missed" my letter in Rome. I wrote to you there post-restante, but probably the letter got there too late. Anyway, it's not important. . .

I wrote you various stuff, but there's one thing I want to repeat here (to do with Apostu): I regard my friends from Romania as still my friends, and I would be delighted to have them visit me here in Paris anytime. But there's no point in my making friends now with the people I wasn't friends with. There is a category of persons who in my own country held me in contempt, treated me as a kind of servant ("the model"). Now they're sucking up to me, they would like—from self-interest—to appear to be my "friends." But this category of people should count themselves lucky if, rather than kicking their arses, I merely refuse to talk to them. But, let me say it again, my friends are welcome to visit me anytime.

As for the UAP [Union of Artists], they did something completely illegal against me: they expelled me from the union after I left, without any grounds whatever. I'm a Romanian citizen, in the summer I can come to Romania as a Romanian citizen, their attitude toward me is contemptible; particularly since in just a few months here I've achieved what others would have taken years to achieve (a studio from the French State, works sold, orders, networking etc.). The UAP could have boasted about me. But they preferred to repudiate me. Well, in that case, don't let them expect sweet words from me. But my exhibiting in Romania has nothing to do with all this. I would be very happy to exhibit in Bucharest, where I have a lot of friends who would be glad to come to my exhibition.

Dear Radu, please pass on all these things to those concerned and to those who might take an interest in me. This is my attitude, I consider it justified, I'd like the UAP lot to know about it.

Dear Radu and Dolores, I hope you had a pleasant journey. I look forward to news from you, Bibi and myself kiss you both. So long!

With much friendship,

Andrei

28 February 1982

I do photography at the weekend. I'll send you one of each of the (few) photographs I like. I have the opportunity to work in the lab of a culture club. Photographic paper is very expensive and rare, most work is done on a kind of plastic that is convenient and cheap, but inferior to paper after my first experiments. A week ago, I went to the hothouses of the botanical garden (an idée fixe) and I wasn't at all disappointed. On the contrary. I found there a tranquil, hot life that filled me with joy. I shot a film (slides) of plants, the sunlit glass roofs, and sometimes people looking at the plants. I stayed there more than two hours, and then I went into the garden, where I was greeted by gnomes of painted glass (I think), a small greenhouse (the size of a man lying down) that looked like a coffin from which you could admire the sky. Then I left the garden and I remembered where I was: on the street with the endless stream of cars. Please don't take these short and incomplete impressions as a depressive reaction to reality. The hothouse seems to me like our tranquil core, the garden as an unconscious vaguely connected to our fate in the world, unlike the street, the agitated, hurried city, the violent, impersonal immediate reality. I think of our walks, I remember them sometimes in the evening and now I think that it is abnormal, I repeat, abnormal, for us not to be able to do that any more.

**LETTERS FROM ANDREI GHEORGHIU TO
ION GRIGORESCU—EXCERPT**

24 December 1982

In the bathroom this morning (and not only this morning), I thought of our photographic walks, on Thursday (I think), now I think of beautiful Iași when we met in front of the main hotel. To tell the truth, I felt like weeping for joy. I often feel like weeping for joy, almost always at moments and places we saw together.

I shall now reproduce for you a few lines from an exercise book of sporadic notes which came to me one after the other, a few images from it: the expensive (dental) plate you stroke with the tip of your tongue, the batteries from the wristwatch that will tell the right time again. The bus that takes me from hospital, which arrives on the dot. The speed of the metro train, the docile escalators, the smile of the vendors (sometimes quite [indecipherable]), which abruptly fades once you've paid, then the time-constricted coronary arteries that I dissect. Then a girl who has fallen asleep forever, I feel like lying down beside her and telling the funeral director that it's a shame for her to lie all alone under the grass. (I knew such a girl.)

Then the smell of the clean air, the rain that lasts and lasts, tranquil, atemporal, the rainy days at the vineyard (the drops were so audible on the tin roof), then the days at Feneriș waiting for the photographer troubadour.

Essen, 1 March 1987

Months ago, sitting by the window at night, I saw in the sky a star that shone unusually brightly [and which] reminded me of summer nights in childhood, when I watched for falling stars. Then the excursion to Vălani de Pomezzeu in bright sunlight (man the centre of the universe, gnats swarming the air), then the crossroads, the buffaloes and the distant villages. Once more the star twinkling far away. I think that I flew up [to] the stars and I saw you coming home from work to a room in Craiova, then once more in the night beneath the twinkling of the stars I see my sister in another part of the world. I thought of a photomontage of this sort.

[sketch]

**LETTERS FROM ANDREI GHEORGHIU TO
ION GRIGORESCU—EXCERPTS**

22 Dec. 1987

When I write your address on parcels, I often think of what your house might really look like, the street along which you walk home in the evening, what Dimitrie and Ruxandra look like. Likewise, imagining what it is like, I sometimes have dreams that repeat themselves, especially of my father, my mother. I sometimes wake up in the night and I feel like talking to them. This part that belongs to thought, to dreams, to the reality reflected in us has been acquiring an ever-greater weight. I feel an increasing need to be able to make photographs, to express this part that seemingly needs to be extruded through a place in my body.

Undated

Autumn feels a little [illegible] gently floats in the air. Anne often shows me a meadow, a garden or a house, exclaiming: it could almost be (for example) Săliște (where she grew up) or shows me the man coming down the road: he could almost be Dad. I've thought of a photo/painting: to the left in thin frames these observations of hers, to the right the photographic reply. I've thought of an exhibition about emigration with spreading roots, an inner attempt to rebuild contacts with the aid and through the space of the stars, then the brief return to reality and rocking on the wire to find your balance.

I've explored the length and breadth of the town [Innsbruck]. Next to the house (at the edge of town), a modest hotel and the main road with a petrol station open day and night. People generally friendly. Further up houses/villas and then the mountains. Those who live in the villas seem less friendly. Some of them look at you suspiciously as if you've come to steal their cars from the driveway.

[...]

If you come to Austria you can get a visa for Germany and visit us. I hope by then to buy myself a video on hire purchase which I'll place at your disposal.

10 July 1990, Düsseldorf

I was living in a room, it was morning and I was getting ready to go to work. I was shaving, the water from the sink was pouring onto the floor, I was thinking about an inundation, about the neighbours below while I tried to shave my moustache. I was a children's doctor, in the lift of the hospital with the doctor who had to do emergency room duty. He briefly told me that he was getting ready to go to Israel permanently. I told him that I came back to Romania permanently after living for many years in Germany, even after specialising there, a thought that made me feel slightly proud. Then I went to my shabby room and in my bag, I found a coloured envelope, with green plants drawn on it (ecological models, let's call them); in the envelope were a few silver coins unfamiliar to me, the new Romanian coins, I said to myself, they were for the doctor in the lift, money for the emergency shift. Then I thought of the Germany I'd left behind, I thought of regrets. I pictured the city of Munich with churches and spires in the light, then the mountain air of the Black Forest in West Germany, which (in the dream) I'd only ever encountered in Maramureş.

Then, in brief, I arrived in the Lăzărescu family's neighbourhood, I arrived at the Institute of Pathological Anatomy, where I'd worked years before, I was looking for a colleague who I knew for sure was still there. I was walking down the corridors of the institute, I was thinking of a video camera, but what will come of it, I thought of walls in the fugue of the lens and I immediately said to myself: in fact, what's needed are photographs (only a few) in the fugue of thoughts that might stop them and come to rest. I woke up, everybody in the house was asleep (including Alexandru, who was visiting), it was seven-thirty in the morning, a Sunday, and I was really in Germany and it was spring, I felt like a displaced bird flying ceaselessly in the upper air. On the terrace we have a wild dove that is sitting on two eggs, one chick has hatched, the second is to come, the parents take turns sitting on the eggs.

**LETTERS FROM ANDREI GHEORGHIU TO
ION GRIGORESCU—EXCERPT**

Undated

I'm glad about your exhibitions in Venice. Are you exhibiting in a gallery? Are you there on a grant? Vienna is the first major European city I saw, arriving with Sanda and Alexandru on the Orient Express after a sleepless night, with lengthy border inspections at Curtici at two to three at night. Twelve years ago. On crossing the "iron curtain" I ~~admired~~ looked at the systems of barbed wire at the border, then the strip of no man's land where you got shot if you stepped on it. Then the geometric order of the fields, plantations, surface areas of land. It was the first signal from this part of the world into which we were venturing. We both drank a slug of plum brandy (which we had been concealing, I don't know why) and we looked tipsily out of the window. That signal proved to be important. It is a rule of the game of living here (order, thoroughness etc.), and if you don't obey it, you're set aside, marginalised. I sought compromises but didn't find them.

What's happening now in Romania interests us greatly, but the affective, emotional charge of being part of sufferings etc. has decreased a lot. Joking remains vigorous, the "Caragiale-esque" side that you find in the *Expres Magazin* newspaper, which is brought to Düsseldorf station every week and which, says Anne, is an atavistic "release valve" that is reflected at a distance. The reality of over there no longer belongs to us.

[...]

In an outlying district of Budapest, up in the room/graphics studio of some friends, the same impression. Back then (1 May 1988), I kept a brief diary that I combined with photographs:

The eighth floor of a housing block near the main road out of Budapest close to the border. A lift took us up late in the evening, then a deep, dreamless sleep, early in the morning before sunrise the burning lights of the nearby factory, the worker ants, then suddenly the red sun. The long-beaked bronze bird on the radio. Later we get a signal for Radio Bucharest: the May Day workers' parade (in the rain). How far are we from the border? I thought it was 60 to 100km. You could even walk it in a few days. Then what? The space here, in this place suspended above the city, was closer to the border (the space of hope?), we (both) will remain shut up inside this room, and we will wait for the first bus in the morning, for the first pedestrians to pass and then...

Easter Sunday, '92
(Augsburg, Germany)

Dear Ruxandra and Ionică,

I've sat down to write to you now, in the morning, while the thoughts stirred up by my encounters with you, whether over the telephone or in the flesh, are still going around in my head.

First of all, Ruxandra, I would like somewhat to clarify the things I was trying to say on the telephone, which might have appeared to be "feminist" exhortations.

Certainly, I set out from my experience as a woman who also wants to create art. To me, for a very long time, with greater or lesser awareness, the question of the meaning of art has arisen insofar as it affects life, I merge the two. This is why I was doubtful as to the production of paintings and the system of exhibitions as it is practised.

Up until three years ago, let's say, there was censorship in Romania, political pressure, probably now the "arts market" has taken hold, which will maybe be even more oppressive and there will be others, or the same people in part, who play the game.

I was also trying to say that what the history of art shows us is a parallel image or to say that it runs in the same direction as the development of civilisation, with a constantly increasing emphasis of technical creativity, progress, etc.

Women's names must be sought long and hard. That's what I meant to say, that the world has evolved in, let's say, a masculine way, based on self-consciousness, intellect, producing ever more, ever more perfect (technically), ever more rapidly etc.

Whence perhaps today's aim to return to integral thinking, a search to reintegrate into nature, or to work with it, but not in the sense of exploitation, methods of medicine alternative to scientific medicine, without denying the boundaries of the latter, but toward a complementary image.

In this respect I was thinking of you, as a young woman with children and with so obvious a talent and ability (I saw your works in Philokalia and in the other exhibition at the National Theatre), that you're weighed down precisely with the big responsibility of reconciling and nurturing this alongside your life. And the system in the world, in Romania and in the West still consists of the old patterns (exhibitions, so-called artistic life, performances).

I therefore hope you have the strength to take your life in its entirety as an artistic act, also to derive stimuli from the exhibitions system (encounters with peers, even the "negative" ones, and exhibitions can be creative stimuli).

And above all, don't lose sight of what you bring and develop through your being as a woman, a mother, a painter, an artist—a human being.

I hope what I want to say is intelligible, it's quite hard to express it in just a few lines.

Dear Ionică, putting together all the things you talked about: discussions as to the price of the work (with your attitude to it!) bought by the sponsor, discussions as to the money to be given to you for your stay in Vienna, the offer of the Paris artists' prize which you turned down (or are about to), the business with Scriba proposing a trip (the refusal on your part) etc.

I feel the need to add, quite apart from our reaction during our meeting, that you ought to be aware of your exemplary value as a representative, a symbol: of the artists of the resistance from the East, of the Romanian spirit, of the culture that has nonetheless subsisted and so on.

If the cultural changes, the paths abroad opened up to Romanian artists, weigh on your soul, as can be felt all the time when talking to you, your defensive, sincere and modest attitude is perhaps not always the best means to act when it comes to such openness.

It's also a question of how it is "read" by people from here (the West). Perhaps too this is why they can be termed difficulties of understanding. I sought to express your opinion, and here in this letter I wanted to add that it's not only a question of our wish that you be (re)paid appropriately, but also [the fact that] if you ask a low price, such a price will also be experienced by other newcomers from the East. Obviously, you can act only in accordance with your own honesty, I am seeking only to reveal other sides of it to you.

More than ever, people need positive experiences to cling to. For you, it seems to me rather late and a pity that you should abandon being active in such a rôle. From this position perhaps you will also be able to suggest paths to open up to younger artists.

It is the first day of Easter,
Christ is risen!

The memory of your works pursues us. I have numerous reactions, thoughts that it's hard for me to express.

We embrace you both,

Florina and Jorj

Dear Florina,

Dear Jorj,

I've completely lost my appetite to write, to communicate. No matter how much I would have liked us to continue our correspondence.

Up until May, I expected new management committee to be established for the restoration [section of the Union of Artists]. Not a lot has been decided (but don't think I took part!). It's July now and a few days ago I started working again on the restoration site, in poor human relations, despised and viewed with hatred. In spring, I met two or so of the numerous agents of art galleries from the West, a kind of "art critic" from Holland, a gallery owner from America, assailed by the petty "boot polishers" and "those who want to carry your luggage" abroad. A Loiter (Leute—German) of young/old artists were tugging their sleeves. Somebody was offering a twenty-year contract. A kind of filth that burgeons and crawls up on me, obviously I can refuse, in any case it would be a good thing for the others, if it weren't for the feeling of a passage from Submarine Dox or the Vagabond of Bombay in 1950. And it's justified, it's the hour of truth, here are the ruins of my faith! And the ruins become a latrine and a place for selling stolen goods (Otto Dix 1950)

You have your own part too, somewhat more European, true, the ruins of Dresden and the socialist-realist comrades. Germans still live in Romania too, Romanians still live in... But where is Romania, the homeland, the friends among whom you feel good, without feeling uprooted, without any guilt that you have done something bad?

Ionică 11.07.90

Dear Florina and Georges,

On the 18th or 19th of January I'll be able to open a solo exhibition at "Căminul Artei" (next to the architecture faculty). Maybe Andrei has now conveyed to you my wish to have you in the exhibition—with works, for a few days. In the attic I have from Florina all the ones that were in the attic in V.A. Ureche, plus the ones exhibited at the Writers' House in 1976 (was it?) (apart from the "stolen" self-portrait). I hope to obtain new works although I don't know what they look like, via what means I don't know (likewise).

Don't let the idea of my "having" you in the attic bother you. It's a question of the fact that your works are there since the demolition and are waiting for better days, I've forgotten so many times to tell you that they're there in quite good conditions (paintings, lithographs, drawings, watercolours etc.). And only if you want me to will I exhibit them. With Andrei and Ana I was thinking of the fact that we exhibited together and that we might do so again. To what end? There's no point in our talking about it—obviously not in practical terms, not for money. I restrict my letter to just this, I also want to write to Matei and Iulian Mereuță, with whom I've more or less kept in touch.

In general, my exhibition, my works are brought together autobiographically in two senses, one religious, beginning with the trip to Maramureș, in 1971, I think, with Marica, Matei and Florina), the other political (a kind of self-trial—private and public attitudes toward the regime—with the idea that we must analyse ourselves, we must self-analyse). I've already started in a group exhibition, Andrei has seen it.

I wish you a Happy Christmas and see you soon!

Ionică
21 Dec.

Dear Decebal,

I've been here a year, during which time a lot of things have happened, particularly as concerns our everyday life; from the other point of view, art-wise, I mean, as usual, it has been a hard and arduous road. Some people from over there think that here as soon as I arrived everything was ready for me, I climbed onto the trampoline, I took a deep breath and . . . I jumped! No!! It's been very hard and I for one knew that. Decebal, please know that I'm not complaining, but quite the opposite, I say the opposite because I feel fine, generally speaking, I have everything I need, my family and I, I work and I do what I ought to do and this makes me think that I'm doing my duty as a person. As I said, it's not easy for me and this is because of habits or rather deficiencies on my part that I hope to beat over the course of time. The people I've dealt with and who I'll deal with were and are nice, they've granted me their trust and even their respect, they appreciate me and I have the impression that they believe in what I've done—my interests as an artist, I mean. For my work, they provided me with a teaching position, to teach what I believe in. This seems simple at first sight, but ultimately, it's quite hard to communicate to others what you believe and at the same time you doubt yourself; I'll try at first to keep my distance from what is profound about my interests, I'll limit myself to teach about structure and about a certain communication with nature from the standpoint with which you're well familiar. In the free time I have, which is plenty, I think of my own work and I've started to pursue the directions you know about. For this, I need to work with you and with Ionică [Grigorescu]; I'm talking about pictures and photographs of landscapes from Romania, the wide-open, solitary spaces of Bărăgan, with people and animals. I'll try to send you from here paper or whatever you need connected to photography, tell Ionică about this, too. Please send me whatever you find connected with old Romanian (peasant) architecture. If you also find any text that is worth sending, please do so. Dear Decebal, thank you for helping Dragoș. Please give to Paul or Dan. H. the drawings that you have (in the chest) and all my notes and designs, get in touch with them, they're things it would be a shame to lose. As Dragoș has told me, my brothers-in-law have the other things and the rest of the drawings (the large drawings). Paul and Dan will deal with them the way I want. Another thing, in my old studio, in the corridor, that sculpture made of earth and straw was left behind, which it would be a shame to destroy. Decebal, together with Ionică, Dan and Paul, please take care of my things, maybe later they'll be of interest. Here, my latest work raises attention, but for this I need money and connections. The fact of not having this money does not discourage me, I'm not vain, I've long since abandoned a certain kind of ambition, I'm going to work the way that anyway makes me feel good, without bothering myself, without demanding more of life than I deserve and I feel I'm capable of. Someone from over there passed on to me that I don't graze my cows here and I should . . . I don't know what he thinks. Such flicks of the whip annoy me and they can go to hell, all those who think that whipping somebody else is somehow meritorious. Dear Decebal, I have a need to communicate, this is what I'm doing and what I expect from my friends who know how to be patient and to wait and to endure. Everything turns out the way it has to turn out—should we believe in fate? I, for one, do. Decebal, I don't know if I'll achieve very much, for the time being I'm trying to lick into shape the class I'm working with and on the other hand I'd like to make a name for the work I began long ago, both here and wherever I'm able. At the Venice Biennale, it was precisely my interests that were exhibited—don't think me naïve or conceited, I know where I am. Like I told you, I'm not vain, I talk about my own work the same as I talk about another's. I'm not dead set on this life, I want only to do my duty.

I haven't asked how you are—please forgive me. How do you feel and what are you working on? If you can write to me about it, maybe you also have photographs. I know it's hard, you don't have a studio or, obviously, money for materials. I don't think that the important thing is to make a lot of noise, but rather to have the certainty that you're doing something necessary, as for the rest—I suppose—time will tell?! Dear Decebal, let's do what we can and with the purest mind—too much philosophy merely leads us astray.

I often think of you all, of you, of Ionică, Paul Gherasim and another two or three. Will we ever see each other again?! . . . Pass on my warmest embraces to those you know and those who still think well of me.

I embrace you, with love,

Pavel Ilie

Geneva, 28.9.1978

[...]