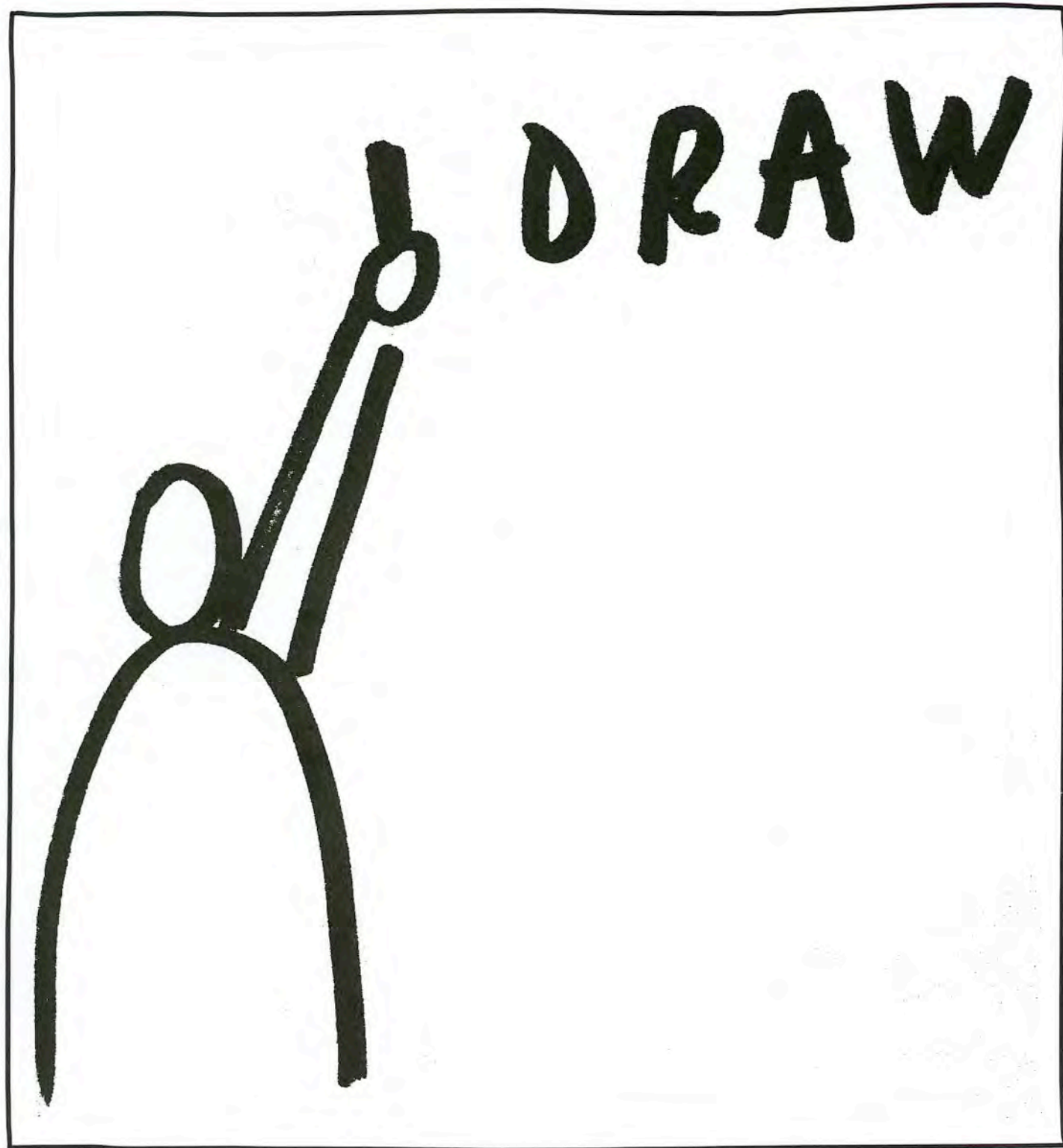


DOR

DAN PERJOVSCHI
WHAT WE LOST IN THE FIRE
THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT
A CRITIC'S LIFE
IN PRAISE OF RUNNING

A JOURNAL OF ROMANIAN NONFICTION
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ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITION OF DECĂTO REVISTĂ





I HAVE
TO DO



I LIKE
TO DO

BORDERS

Romania has always harbored interesting contrasts. Nobody – from the tourism ministry to ad agencies – can agree on a strategy for nation branding, but we all agree and embrace the idea of contrasts. A recent study concluded that 75 percent of Romanians believe they are worse off than they were 10 years ago. The same study though, said 73 percent believe in a brighter future. But at the same time, about 60 percent of responders think Romanians are fundamentally unlucky people.

What this means is that we're never content with where we're at, but nevertheless think it'll get better. But we don't believe it will get better if we do something ourselves (go to page 30 to learn more about this). The good things, if they ever happen, will be serendipitous. Then, something bad will follow. And so on.

We've always been a borderland country, caught between East and West, and we've never found a way to reconcile our short-term pessimism with our long-term optimism, our need to blame others for our misfortunes with the skepticism that we can improve our fate. (For more on the Romanian ethos, read Lucian Boia's fantastic book, *Romania: Borderland of Europe*).

In DoR we publish stories of borders, and we do it so we can further our understanding of who we are as a people, and where we're headed.

That's why Dan Perjovschi is a natural choice for our cover story. Perjovschi has been an internationally acclaimed artist for years. His drawings have been exhibited and sold around the globe, including at the Tate Modern in London and MoMA in New York. But he's never gotten the same level of attention in Romania. Moreover, he's had plenty of run-ins with the established artistic community. But he won't leave, because in order to create his sparse visual statements that earn him foreign accolades, he needs the chaos and uncertainty of his homeland.

Inna, at the other end of the spectrum, is a pop-product shun in Romania for her lack of sophistication, but adored by dance music fans around the Balkans and farther away. The intelligentsia bemoans the fact that Romania exports



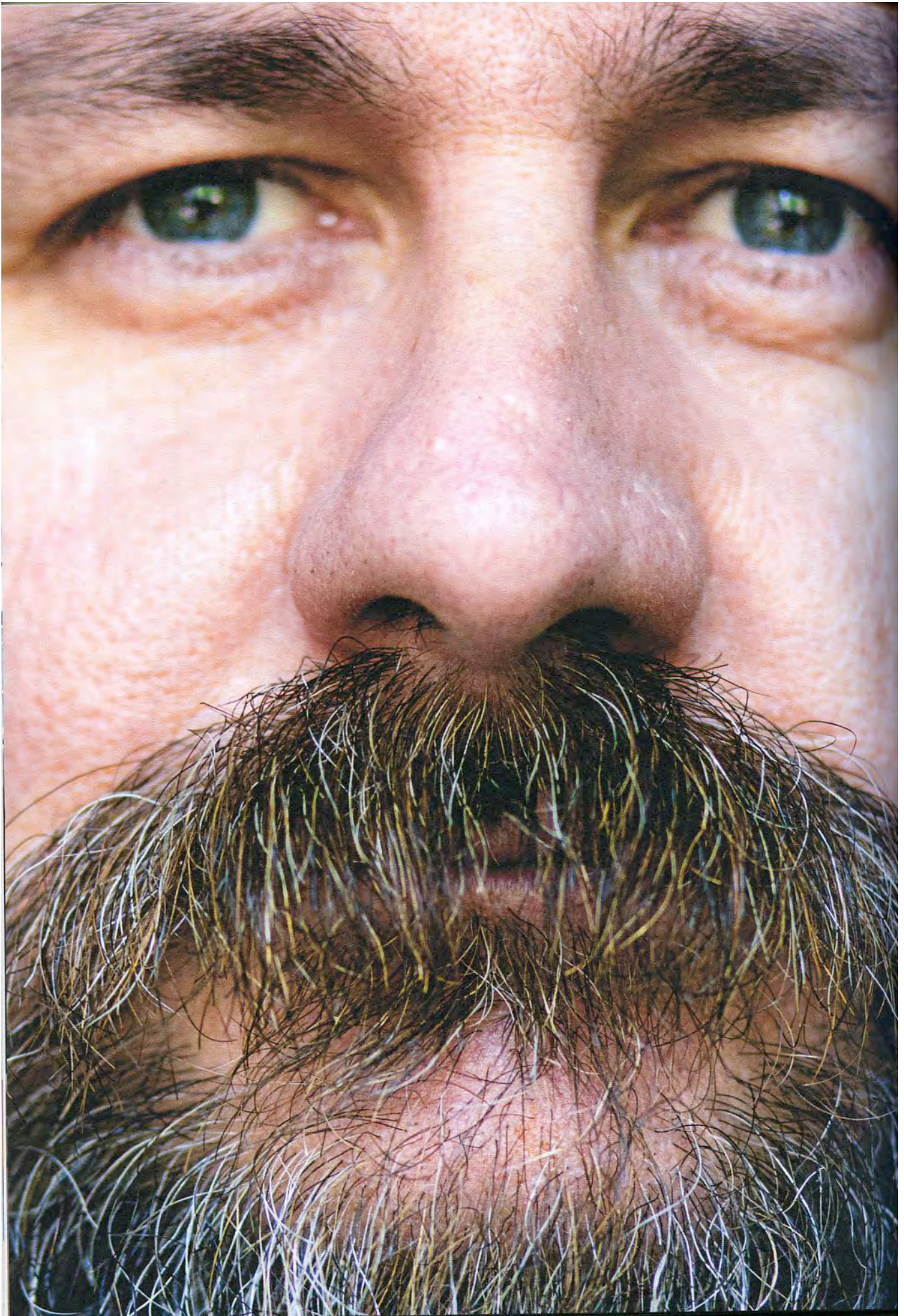
such a superficial product, ignoring the economic and PR argument the Inna brand makes: well-packaged exoticism sells.

DoR is a magazine of stories because we believe stories are the best tools humans have to understand their surrounding. Hopefully, this collection – made up of both content published in the Romanian edition, but also original pieces – will not only make you curious about this part of the world, but will also put your own worlds into perspective.

We eagerly await your feedback at dor@decatorevista.ro.

– CRISTIAN LUPȘA, editor

* All cover illustrations were done by Dan Perjovschi.



VAN

BY **IRINA CRIȘAN**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ROALD ARON**
ILLUSTRATIONS BY **DAN PERJOVSCHI**

ISHING

PPOINTS

DAN PERJOVSCHI DRAWS HIS TRADEMARK
FIGURES ON THE WALLS OF THE WORLD'S
MOST IMPORTANT ART INSTITUTIONS, BUT HE
COULDN'T DO THEM WITHOUT ROMANIA.



It's a cold October morning and Dan Perjovschi, the most internationally-renowned living Romanian artist, is getting ready to begin his second day of drawing on a wall in Craiova, one of the largest towns in Romania's impoverished south. The wall belongs to the contemporary art center Club Electroputere, which shares the building with a fitness club, a canine association, a dance school and a local law organization. Adrian Bojenoiu, one of the curators who invited him here, unlocks the door, makes him a cup of coffee and offers him cookies. Meanwhile, Perjovschi leans on a black vinyl bar built in the 90s and talks to a young local street artist. The powdered sugar coating the cookies gets all over the long moustache that droops over his lower lip and falls onto the glasses that hang around his neck, held together with scotch tape. He wears a cap over his shoulder-length hair, a scarf and black hoodie over a beige vest

with scores of pockets, and worn-out jeans over long johns. He is prepared for the cold in his own way, without looking like he went through too much trouble to dress up.

Bojenoiu and Alexandru Niculescu, the young curators who created a contemporary art center in the unlikeliest of places – an electronics factory's union club – brought Perjovschi here to draw on one side of the building's facade – a lumpy white and gray wall, with traces of rain and rust, adorned with architectural details that remind you of the work of the famous Romanian sculptor Brâncuși, who was born in the region. Since the opening of the club in May 2010, the artist has already been part of a group exhibition and held a lecture here, but this is the first time he is drawing on a wall (the works will be up at least until next spring). "I don't believe you have to have many reasons to invite Perjovschi to perform," Bojenoiu says. "His discourse is easy to put into place and to understand, by connoisseurs and people less interested in art alike. Any contemporary art center wants such an event, understood by a large audience, with low production costs and maximum artistic quality."

Perjovschi has drawn and exhibited at great museums all over the world – by any standard, he is an international art superstar. In Romania, the invitations come less frequently, but he almost never turns one down, no matter the context.

An hour later, he finishes his third cup of coffee, exits the building and climbs into the basket of a crane parked in front of the club for him. The engine starts and lifts him nearly ten meters off the ground, facing the wall. He opens a grey suede notebook and flicks through it. The "seeds" of the ideas that end up on the wall are in there. For every project, he makes "pre-drawings" and then lets himself be inspired by what he sees on the streets and what he reads in the local papers. Today's notebook has several empty pages and sketches in black and blue ink that he did in his hometown of Sibiu and elsewhere, but also some ideas about Craiova – football, Brâncuși references (a man bungee jumping from the top of Brâncuși's *Endless Column*). He draws with his finger in the air, skims through the notebook some more and signals to the crane driver: just a hair closer. He is used to working with cranes or scaffolds, he has already done it in New York, London, Paris, Berlin, Sydney and even Bucharest, last spring, when he covered a wall of the French Institute in drawings inspired by the Romanian

philosopher Cioran. ("To be is to be cornered" was Perjovschi's favorite quote because it spoke about Romanians who have always been caught in their own history.)

He gets on his knees in the left corner of the basket and starts sketching with a stubbed marker. A speech bubble appears, that comes out of a TV and hits the viewer. Then he takes a can of spray paint and writes in large capital letters: "This wall does not advertise anything. If unpleasant consequences occur, consult art critics." Yesterday was his first time drawing on a wall with spray paint. His first try – two wobbly parallel lines – is visible on the asphalt below.

He moves the crane's arm to the right, maneuvers under the basket railing and draws a man talking and pushing buttons on several mobile phones at the same time: social movement. Then he stretches over to the right, climbs onto the railings, although his knee hurts, and draws three men sitting side by side at a table, their legs intertwining underneath it: political movement. His art is neither caricature, nor graffiti, nor cartoon, but analytical drawings that tell stories and speak equally to the museum-goers and to the custodians, who finally understand what they are guarding. Today, Perjovschi's stories talk about Romania, about Brâncuși, about grilled sausages, about things and ideas you can't find anywhere else.

In the middle of the wall, the artist draws an SUV driver who cannot see the road from the height of his car, although there are people on the street. Typical Perjovschi: simple, without many details, without unnecessary flourish. For instance, a man with one leg shorter than the other: credit. Technically, a 10-year-old could do it. But Perjovschi's art is not only a couple of lines drawn in marker but also the thought behind them, the visual translation of an idea or a situation. "Anyone can make a circle, arms and legs," he once explained to me. "But what do you do with that circle? How do you visually express a thought? I advise everybody to draw a relationship, say, me and my neighbor. Draw that. It's very hard to visually express an idea, a feeling, a relationship, and to make it perceivable to others."

The wall in Craiova, along with one of his wife Lia's exhibitions inside the club, and a workshop with young artists that they will both conduct, is Perjovschi's fourth project in Romania this year. (A fifth one will follow.) Five, as opposed to a couple in previous years. He has always been active and present, both at home and abroad. He has done exhibitions and lectures, but in Romania he has mainly been featured in unofficial spaces, independent galleries and places outside of Bucharest. At 50, his international career has finally shone a light on his national one and Perjovschi's art has started catching on in Romania as well.

Half an hour later, the crane descends and the artist takes a break. He still has to make a few drawings, he has to help Lia set up her exhibition in the club and he has to conduct a workshop in a room with no heat the next day. He will carry chairs, move display cases and plug in electrical radiators. He says this reminds him of his youth, when he used to do things in improper conditions. In his country, most of his projects are like this. "Everything I do in Romania is somehow strained because of the conditions here. I put up with it because I know it." He feels better in Western art institutions, where he is usually

spared such nuisances, where people understand him better and he is treated with more respect.

A handful of people have gathered around Club Electroputere to watch Perjovschi work. Some of them are artists, journalists or friends of the curators, but many are just bystanders: high school boys with backpacks, students from the university across the street, a mother who doesn't know how to explain the scene to her curious son, a man with missing teeth, in a teddy bear sweater, who marvels at the drawings. A blonde reads the joke about art critics and laughs, but the man she is with seems disinterested. An older woman with heavy bags is outraged: "What's with the doodles?"

People come and go, but there are never more than a dozen watching (hundreds have watched him draw at MoMA, in 2007). Every time somebody new appears Perjovschi looks away: "Oh, an audience!" When he can draw without one, he feels less exposed, because many people don't understand his kind of art in Romania. But he remains connected to his country, which gives him ideas and energy.

It's already turned cold by the time Perjovschi takes a last look at the wall, three hours later. He likes it. A couple of drawings are still missing from the foot of the wall; he will finish them the day after tomorrow. A dark-haired little girl, in a short-sleeved T-shirt, asks: "What do these drawings mean?" The artist points to a ham cut in half by a dotted line and explains: "the bone is for the poor, the meat for the rich. And that," he says pointing to a black egg-shaped form, "is a Romanian sausage that wants to grow up to be a Big Mac. And together they are a mirror of what you see on the other side: the world."

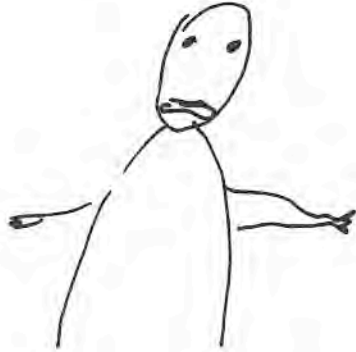
DAN PERJOVSCHI was born in Sibiu (central Romania) 50 years ago, at the height of the communist regime. At school, he had the power to get any classmate thrown out of class with drawings that could make anyone laugh loudly enough to irk a teacher. Beginning with fifth grade, his parents sent him to art school, where he first felt art can give you freedom. For the drawing or painting classes, they didn't have to wear uniforms, while for the rest the teachers weren't very strict. They didn't have to harvest corn or potatoes like other students because their colleagues in violin class were not supposed to injure their fingers. But the school's objective was "modest": teach students to draw or paint, not think about art. And that wasn't enough for Perjovschi.

In middle school, he was considered stubborn so the teachers sat him next to Lia, one of the "good kids". They liked each other and became sweethearts in the eighth grade. In the tenth, Lia dumped him, even though she found him to be "very intelligent, delicate, polite and tidy". By graduation they were dating again, and have now been married for 28 years.

After high school, Perjovschi left for Moldova, in north-east of Romania, where he got into the painting program of

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J AM NOT
EXOTIC
J AM
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the Iași Arts Conservatory. He soon discovered everything there was a "slow suicide by red wine". People got drunk like clockwork, the school didn't have painting supplies or heat and the program, speaking generally, was going to hell.

The good thing about going to a shitty school is that "you don't believe in the rules people plant in your head," Perjovschi says. He graduated top of his class in 1985, winning the right to choose his first employer from a state list. He opted to go across the country to the Oradea Museum (in the northwest), where he worked for five years. He was responsible for the ex libris collection, but he soon started doing everything: hanging pictures on the walls, covering paintings with glass, putting up art shows. Lifting heavy crates gave him an umbilical hernia and the doctors removed his navel in surgery.

The time he spent in Oradea was his true artistic education. He started exhibiting with the members of Atelier 55, a sort of youth subdivision of the Romanian Artists' Union. He would draw squares on long pieces of paper and sketch characters, signs and symbols on each one; he would do photography, field art, all sorts of things "that defied the rules."

Communist censorship was more tolerant in the west of Romania. "They had a problem with Hungary, you weren't supposed to put red, white and green in your paintings (the colors of the Hungarian flag), but otherwise you could jump on your head on the fields, they didn't care!" Although the work of Atelier 55 was avant-garde, it generally didn't criticize the system. "Perhaps it was the sand pit we all played in to eliminate tensions," Perjovschi says, regretting the "political nearsightedness" they all had back then. Their only form of dissidence was making art shows every ten days in a town where nothing happened.

The mid-eighties were good times for Lia as well. She had come with Perjovschi to Oradea because she hadn't been accepted to the Bucharest art school. She was working as a stage designer in the local theater. She couldn't exhibit alongside Atelier 55 because she didn't have a university diploma, so she made art in their flat. It was here that Perjovschi made *Red Apples*, a project that became a benchmark for his later work. In the summer of 1988, during Lia's first vacation as

a university student, he covered the walls and furniture in paper and filled them with drawings and declarations of love. It was a surprise for his wife, who was craving artistic experiment, but Perjovschi says he did it half for himself, to show off his artistic bravery. "We were in a friendly competition from the beginning. We always surprised and each other and stimulated each other's ambition."

Perjovschi was in his home town of Sibiu in December 1989, when the communist regime collapsed. He spent the first days of the revolution on the streets with Lia, dodging tear gas and bullets, and later sought refuge in a friend's house, where they drank water from pickle jars (tap water was supposedly poisoned), smoked and talked about freedom. By the time he got back to Oradea, in January 1990, he was the sole revolutionary in town so he was made chief of the National Salvation Front, the first post-communist political party, which soon disappointed him.

Later, in 1990, he got a job in the newly formed department of youth in the Romanian Ministry of Culture, and moved to Bucharest. He didn't have any office experience, but he learned on the go that he had to befriend the secretaries and chase after the minister in train stations to get papers signed, that more time was lost in the institution's corridors than in dealing with foreign partners, and that anything is possible within an administration. In his years at the ministry, he organized and curated the first ever Romanian contemporary art exhibition abroad (in 1990, in the Hungarian town of Szombathely) and financed the installation of the group subREAL in the first international biennial of Istanbul, in 1992 (the installation consisted of 100 scooters with ball bearings, the main Romanian smuggling commodity back then).

In May 1990, when students' anti-regime protests started in Bucharest's University Square, Perjovschi split his time between the government and the people rallying against it. Lia was head of the Student's League in the Arts School and was actively involved. On June 15th, policemen invaded the square and started beating the crowd. Perjovschi watched them from the top floor of the National Theater. He saw police forces all retreat at once and people reclaim the square. The next morning, miners from the Jiu Valley reached Bucharest by the bus loads, violently confronted students and professors and besieged universities and the headquarters of historical political parties. On June 15th, Romania's president Ion Iliescu thanked the miners for saving democracy. (To this day, it hasn't been officially established who summoned the miners to Bucharest, although many believe it was the governing regime.)

A couple of days later, Perjovschi went on an official visit to Germany with colleagues from the ministry in order to sign contracts for cultural projects. There he discovered the true consequences of the *mineriadă*, as the violent interventions of miners in Bucharest would come to be called: "We didn't see the mayor, but the deputy from the parks' administration. We couldn't understand why, but they were right. We were the government." Because of the *mineriadă*, Perjovschi says, many Romanian artists didn't get the chance to exhibit in Germany or receive grants.

He never escaped the memory of those public clashes, so most of the times when he was invited to work in the Romanian public space, he chose University Square. In September



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2007 he did a project in the square with two living statues, the miner and the student, who sat face to face, back to back or side by side a few hours each day for a week. Perjovschi himself portrayed the student on the first day. The purpose of the project was to remind people in Bucharest about what had happened in that particular place.

At the beginning of the 90s, Perjovschi's administrative duties would leave him some time for art. He published drawings in the literary magazine *Contrapunct*; he made illustrations and posters for Humanitas publishing house (one of them, a man who reads while walking, survives to this day on the publisher's plastic bags); he drew logos, including that of the National Theater. But his most profound association was and still is with 22 magazine, which is still his official employer.

He started illustrating the magazine at the end of 1991, when he reinterpreted its logo for the 100th issue. The weekly 22 was one of the main voices of the 1990s Opposition and Perjovschi got involved in its political and cultural debates. His art became critical and attitude-driven. Gabriela Adameşteanu, writer and editor-in-chief of the magazine until 2005, didn't ask to see his drawings before publication and gave him a lot of freedom. To this day, he doesn't have to present his illustrations to the editor-in-chief. The managing editor, Răzvan Brăileanu, explains the texts to him in a few words and Perjovschi makes several sketches, drawing a rectangle around the one he prefers. It's a good sign if Brăileanu laughs. If not, together they choose another drawing.



IN 1993, Perjovschi got a tattoo of the word "Romania" on his left arm. It was done in public, in the yard of Timișoara Museum's art department, by a friend of a friend using four pins tied together with string and dipped in ink. The tattoo was interpreted by Westerners as a nationalist declaration, but Perjovschi wanted to state the exact opposite: that he was marked, like cattle, that he came from the country where the ashes of dead revolutionaries had been thrown

into the sewers, the country where the president brought in miners to smother protests.

Perjovschi hadn't had the freedom to travel in communist years, so after 1990 he went wherever he was called. ("I wanted to eat up as many kilometers as I could.") In 1994, he received a two month grant from the American embassy in Bucharest: he crossed America from North to South and from one coast to another. He went to small, medium and large towns; he visited important museums and alternative art spaces; he met with artists and curators and he grew to understand that one must work in order to make it on the real artistic scene.

Upon return to Romania, he quit the Culture Ministry, keeping only his job at 22. Then he transformed the studio he had received from the Artists' Union into a sort of meeting place. Together with Lia, he collected catalogues, books, slides, newspapers, photocopies, brochures and posters that reconstructed the past 50 years in international art history and offered this "missing information" to anyone who was interested. It was the birth of the *Contemporary Art Archive*, later renamed *Center for Art Analysis*, a half-institution-half-art-project that became one of Lia's main projects.

It was also in the U.S. that Perjovschi first made his drawings directly on the wall, in 1995. He spent a month at Franklin Furnace, a New York space dedicated to ephemeral forms of art, and he covered the walls in pencil drawings. At the opening, he gave visitors erasers. It was the first time he did a "project," not an exhibition, and that gave him the courage to take on the world.

Four years later, he found himself in one of the most visible artistic events of the world: the Venice Biennale. Alongside subREAL, he represented Romania in a project curated by Judit Angel. It was hell to organize: the wall sockets weren't working, it was sweltering, and the money for materials didn't arrive on time. Perjovschi had to give up on his original project (notebooks mounted on flexible rods stuck into the floor) and draw directly on the floor with markers. He split the surface into about 2,000 squares and made a drawing in each one: everything he had in his notebooks, all the drawings from 22, all the illustrations from the two books he had done with a Romanian writer called Horia-Roman Patapievică – every image repeated at least two times, plus drawings he made up on the spot. The authorities who didn't get the money to him on time helped him be "much cooler," Perjovschi says. Instead of being a classic art show, his project made the visitors responsible: they would step on the drawings and erase them. "I let myself be erased and that impressed everybody."

Everyone that mattered saw Perjovschi's project in 1999 in Venice. The effects were visible a few years later. In 2001 he was invited in a biennale in Göteborg; in 2005 he was given a huge space in a mine in Essen, Germany; in 2005 he did a show in Köln's Ludwig Museum and was nominated for several important art prizes.

Hou Hanru, a Chinese curator and critic who discovered Perjovschi's work in Venice and later included him in his *Global Figures* program at the San Francisco Art Institute in 2010, says he gives "personal and pungent" answers to the



issues of globalization and geopolitical conflicts, “with all the sense of humor and political sensibility of someone coming from the background of social-political transition of Eastern Europe.” Also, in a time when everything becomes commercial, his “spontaneity, temporality and deep research” are “defying the logic of consumerism.”

Perjovschi's best year was 2007, when, amongst other things, he had a show in New York's Museum of Modern Arts (MoMA), the most influential museum in the world. Here, he was given the Marron atrium – “an abyss where any big sculpture seemed like a piece of candy and enormous paintings looked like napkins.” “I knew that Dan's work will look impressive in the Atrium, which is the center, or the crux, of the Museum,” says Roxana Marcoci, curator of Perjovschi's show *What happened to US?*. “I was interested in seeing how he will handle space on that scale and invited him to do a site-specific project at MoMA. His work was well-suited for the international audience of the museum because it addresses with biting and discriminating aplomb questions about the identity of Eastern Europe in a post-Cold War context, the Israeli-Palestine conflict, the power dynamic between the United States and the European Union, the rise of China to economic power, issues of censorship, and the artist's position in the world. What better place to handle such global issues than in New York?” He worked for two weeks, in view of the public, and covered the walls with dozens of drawings. The videos of him drawing on the walls of MoMA have been viewed 50,000 times on YouTube.

Drawing on the walls started as a necessity for Perjovschi (in the 1990s it was difficult to get artwork out of Romania), but became part of the artist's personal brand. He comes, gets up on a scaffold, draws and leaves; subsequently the walls are painted and the drawings disappear. Perjovschi often plays with the making and destruction of his work. In 2006, at Tate Modern in London, he drew in chalk and then gave chalk to the visitors, who destroyed his drawings by incorporating them. That same year, in Budapest, he started drawing at the opening of his exhibition. In 2009, in the Michel Rein Gallery in Paris, he erased a couple of drawings every day. He doesn't

like to see his work get erased, but says he creates idea-drawings: the lines are erased but the ideas remain. His art is also a sort of performance: in the first day, the spotlight is on the show, but then it stays on the drawings. The destruction of his drawings gives him the freedom to make mistakes, allows him to do “all sorts of pranks”. “If I knew my drawing will live on forever, it would be harder to draw.” Usually, his art goes away faster than the reality it portrays, but for his one project that was not painted over, at the Prague Technical Library, he struggled to find timeless drawings. “Who knows what a laptop will look like 30 years from now?”, he says.

Perjovschi is a hard artist to sell because most of his work is erased at the end of his shows. In 2008, he drew with markers on the linoleum of a gallery in Berlin and cut out the pieces that the visitors wanted to buy. A while ago he also made artwork on paper. But his most marketable pieces are his notebooks. Some of them have been bought by big museums, others are being sold by the four galleries he works with (Michel Rein in Paris, Gregor Podnar in Berlin, Helga de Alvear in Madrid, and Lombard Freid Projects in New York) and earn him a couple of thousand euros each. He also gets a modest salary at 22 and fees from the institutions where he has his shows. When he works with non-profit entities (or in Romania), the organizers only pay for his transport and lodging. In over 15 years on the international art scene, Perjovschi hasn't gotten rich. His life is OK, but only because Lia and him don't have any children and have slept for years on mattresses laid directly on the floor. (They realized years ago they couldn't have a standard family.) He doesn't complain because artists are “independent socioeconomic entities” that are not paid by the state, but thinks the authorities should at least support art with grants and the creation of galleries.

TODAY, Perjovschi lives in Romania sponsored by the West. He didn't want to leave and use the country only for inspiration. He always wanted to be in his country and abroad at the same time. In the West, people have noticed him. In Romania, not so much. (At one point, he had a show on the national television station with Lia; it was cancelled after three months.) In 20 years of activity he hasn't received a single national art prize. Instead, he has gotten into feuds with the few contemporary art institutions. (He was against the National Museum of Contemporary Art being set up in the House of the People, the largest building in Europe, designed and nearly completed by the Ceaușescu regime as the seat of political and administrative power, because he thought it showed that the arts were not autonomous from politics.) He was accused of profiting from the influence of the Social Dialogue Group, a civic society organization that acts as the editor of 22 magazine. He has experienced arrogance and envy surrounding him, as in 2007, when the only negative review of his show at MoMA was written by a Romanian. He has seen people make faces when he shows up with a beard, in worn-out jeans and a vest with many pockets, although that's just comfortable for him and he doesn't bother with looks. He has gotten into trouble drawing on walls. He was evicted from his studio on account



of it being “vulnerable to earthquakes” only to see the National Arts School, who owned the space, put up an art show there shortly after. (Although he worked on the same street as the school for years, he has never been invited to teach or even speak to the students.)

But rejection has made him ever more present.

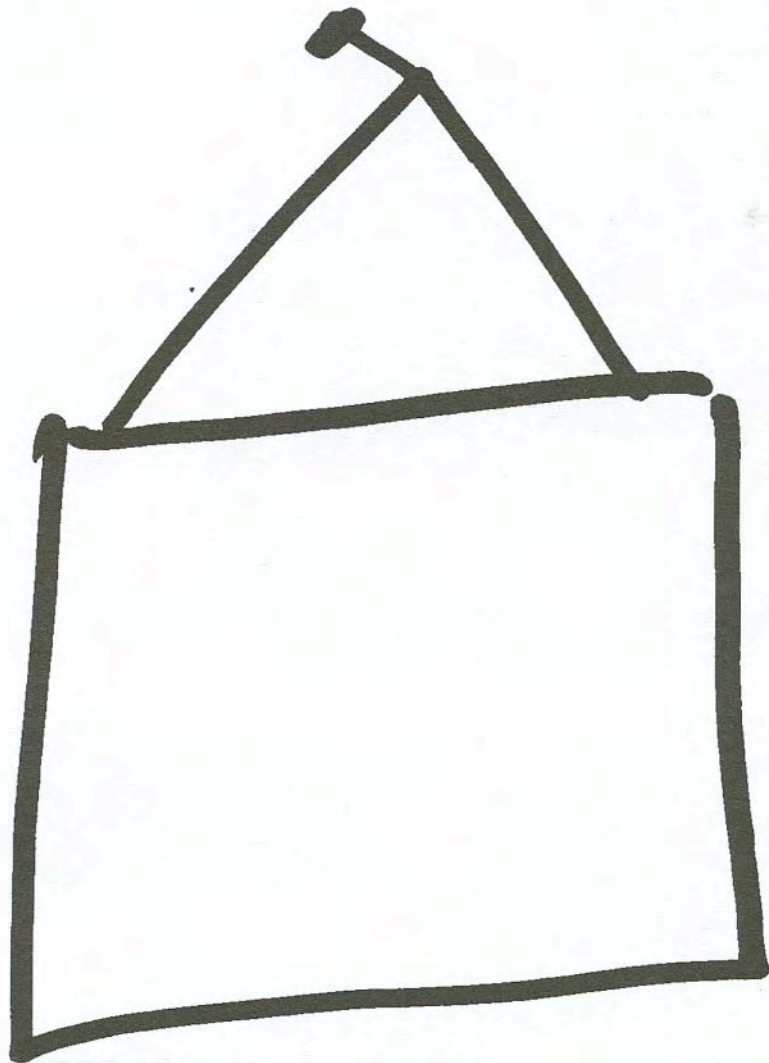
Over the last few years, he has built a center – half studio, half archive – in Sibiu and moved all of his documents there from Bucharest. In the past year, he has done four projects in Romania – a group exhibition in Satu Mare (in the north), a graphic rendering of twenty quotes by the Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran, posted in several public places in Bucharest, a wall in Sibiu and the one in Craiova. A show at Magma Sfântu Gheorghe (Transylvania) was on track for December.

He has at least two shows, conferences and projects every month all over the world (he jokingly says he needs a higher “dose” every time). For 2012, he has already scheduled six solo shows in Europe and the US, five group shows and two catalogues. He also schedules breaks in Romania so he can have time to think. He spends them either in Sibiu, where his moth-

er lives, or in a flat in an ill-famed Bucharest neighborhood. He pays his bills, watches TV, drinks coffee in the 22 office, talks to young artists and rests in this chaos he calls home, where he knows “the nonsense, the jokes, the mentality,” where he lived through “the big earthquake, the floods, the revolution, the *mineriade* and the total solar eclipse,” where he loved, where he got married and where he built a career.

Perjovschi is in his country and abroad at the same time. But in order to make his art, he needs Romania. “In the West, my position as an artist is respected and that gives me comfort,” he says. “In Romania, I fight for it every time and that gives me ideas.”

In 2003, when he had the tattoo with the country’s name removed by laser, Perjovschi was the same artist, with the same attitude he had in 1993. But Romania had changed: it had broken loose of the *mineriade*, it was growing and it was about to be accepted into the European Union. By then, Perjovschi was ready to accept it. The country took a little more time, but today seems relieved to have discovered the artist has never left it. ©



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