

Lia & Dan Perjovschi's "DRAFT for a Joint Retrospective"

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View of Lia & Dan Perjovschi's "DRAFT for a Joint Retrospective" at ARCUB, Bucharest, 2026. Image courtesy of ARCUB.

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Where do I start? Signs in the central courtyard of the labyrinthine ARCUB point towards Dan
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Perjovschi in one direction, Lia Perjovschi in another, and the art center's gift shop in a third. I settle on a shared basement showing the early works of these married Romanian collaborators: mostly black-and-white videos from the 1980s which seem to anticipate the displays above ground. They evoke a twentieth-century Eastern Europe of surveillance images, X-rays, and low-resolution broadcasts. In Lia's *Magic of Gesture/Lace* (1989) participants sit in a circle, bound together by string. As they move, the strings tighten, cross, and tangle, forming a knot that resembles one of her later diagrams.

The artists' practice started out with correspondence. When the Perjovschis began making mail art, they didn't know it was already an established form in the west. In those parts of Eastern Europe in which Soviet-aligned governments restricted the official practice of traditional art forms to state propaganda, artists turned to conceptual gestures: portable, cheap, and relatively hard to prosecute. Emerging from Ceaușescu's twenty-four-year totalitarian regime into neoliberal Europe of the '90s, the artists were already caught up in their own autonomous art world. But isn't making worlds just what lovers do?

Since meeting when both were ten years old and marrying at twenty-two, the Perjovschis have catalyzed the conceptual art scene in Romania for four decades through their influential studio, the Contemporary Art Archive / Centre for Art Analysis, images of which are presented in a shared archival space on the second floor. A space for documentation and consultation, it has been a site for regular communal conversations on art both before and after the dissolution of the Socialist Republic of Romania. In a period when outside information was restricted, these meetings provided the means by which artists could share ideas.

Lia gathers the world into diagrams, archives, timelines, and sprawling, obsessively annotated constellations that connect world histories and art events to scientific discoveries and news headlines. Take for example *The Museum of Knowledge* (1999–ongoing), in which diagrams bloom across the wall like lichen, dotted with newspaper clippings and slogans (both handwritten and clipped from other sources). This extensively annotated timeline, scribbled in marker across the entire wall, runs in parallel with objects bought in museum shops that, in their own way, illustrate the progress of time and the move between eras.

Dan's drawings work in the opposite direction. A critique of wider society is achieved through the meditative and repetitive practice of drawing faces and figures, and his work belongs to the same lineage as David Shrigley or Mazen Kerbaj: In a poster from his 2006 exhibition at the Van AbbeMuseum, a cartoonishly bloated tank proclaims: "Relax, I protect you!" For all their differences, their practices are metabolic: where Lia accumulates information that she builds out into diagrammatic, interconnected galaxies, Dan synthesizes large fields of knowledge into a single, often funny image.

But why is it funny? Perhaps because the world is an absurd place. In capitalist society, art's edges are often softened by markets and institutions but the Perjovschis' work remains provocative, intimate, and complex. Dan's tender grid of photographs of hotel art (*Hotel Art*, 2009–26) serves as a reminder that art is more than what is shown in museums or traded in galleries. That is a theme of this exhibition: walls are lined with posters and exhibition pamphlets, or covered in blown-up printouts of the artists' resumé's (*CV*, 1961–present). Other ephemera documents the couple's participation in various protests, unsettling the line between art and activism. It seems the Perjovschis experience their life as registers, interpreting what is around them through practice.

"DRAFT" presents two artists making sense of the world over a lifetime, together and apart, with what's

available to them: paper, walls, bodies, images, jokes, archives, problems, and the unfinished reality they continue to co-create. Read through their works and biographies, the collaboration is also shaped by fate: two people drawn together to make their own destiny and, in the process, shape countless others.



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