

CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI (B. FEB. 19, 1876, HOBÎȚA, PEȘTIȘANI, GORJ, D. MAR. 16, 1957, PARIS). THE ARTIST OF LIGHT

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ABSTRACT

There is an absolute fascination of Brancuși's works. There are some fine books on maestro's oeuvre, but a sociological approach is still missing. We are proposing a brief sociological look into the Brancusian cultural revolution.

Keywords: Brâncuși, revolution, light.

THE PEASANT WHO BECAME THE MAESTRO OF FORM

Brâncuși is the peasant from Gorj County who became the universal model of form.

It is said that his father gave Peștișani's village the light in the houses, replacing the thin hole in the wall plugged with paper with windows. His father brought light into homes. His son, Constantin Brâncuși, gave us what we thought could not be given. He caught the light in form and gave it to us, revolutionizing man once again, inaugurating the series of post-modern culture. The problem is that the post-modern man is not up to Brâncuși, falling into self-love.

Brâncuși is an unique moment. He went to school, but he is not the product of school, he himself declared that art is a mystery, a faith (in an interview given to Apriliana Medianu, 6, "Curentul", October 1930). It is an unannounced appearance, integral, without residue, which gives an account of the genius of humanity through a people – because Brâncuși never stopped considering himself a Gorjean peasant, in moments of balance – in our case when God was expelled from the world by post-modernism. Brâncuși reintroduced him through the light. Being the first and only one to capture the form of light as an uncreated energy.

Before awakening man through the new form, Brâncuși gave, Constantin Noica points out "the legend of all Romanian foundations"²³⁴, "the structure of every

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²³⁴ „legenda tuturor întemeierilor românești”, in Constantin Noica, *Cuvânt împreună despre rostirea românească* [A word together about Romanian pronunciation], Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1996, p. 80.

legend”²³⁵. Brâncuși took man out from under the crushing pressure of infinity, into which he was introduced by the rational, Gothic search, and restored him through art to the order of Creation by representing infinity:

“(…) the Egyptians sought to capture the infinity of death; the Gothic, with its towers, the infinity of Faustian aspiration. And they failed. Brâncuși also gave a version of infinity in stone – and he succeeded. Because it was not of infinity, but of infinity”²³⁶.

Contemporary with Einstein and with the difficult discoveries of the atomic world and the great temptations of cinematography, Brâncuși gives us “a good, sweet settlement in the absolute”²³⁷. Because Brâncuși freed man’s thought from matter, which, through his genius, he represented as light, as pure form, and introduced man into his essence, into himself. Einstein introduced man to atomic responsibility, Brâncuși freed him, seeking to see “what is within the self of infinity”²³⁸. Brâncuși, from this perspective, managed to unite the most lucid self, which is the self, with the “tamed infinity”²³⁹ – the infinity accessible to the one who seeks his self.

The Oltenians, among the smartest Romanians, gave us, together with the great minds of the thinking of the atomic age, the last human understanding of light. In this way, we once again touched God’s hand.

To the sculptor of light – Brâncuși – reinvented the form, returning it to the original in us, to the lost Paradise. Form is everything with what we operate. Without form, there is no life. The ancient Chinese told us that form allows everything. At Brâncuși, the form he rediscovered makes a new world possible. There is no need to wonder that wholeness cannot be achieved without form. Without all, we cannot have wholeness, and without wholeness, there is no being. And Brâncuși grasps this wholeness, which exists only through light, and shapes it in a primordial form: ovoid, then flight, and finally the light-flame itself.

THE STAGES

Brâncuși burns the stages: he goes from the light of antiquity, the functional light, to the light of the Catholic rationality of the stained glass to the uncreated one²⁴⁰. In this way, Brâncuși

²³⁵ „structura oricărei legende”, in *Ibidem*.

²³⁶ „(…) Egiptenii au căutat să prindă infinitatea morții; goticul, cu turnurile lui, infinitatea aspirației faustice. Și nu au reușit. Brâncuși a dat și el o versiune a infinității în piatră – și a reușit. Pentru că nu era a infinității, ci a înfinirii.”, in *Ibidem*.

²³⁷ „o bună, o dulce așezare în absolut”, in *Ibidem*, p. 89.

²³⁸ „ce este în sinea înfinirii”, in *Ibidem*, p. 22.

²³⁹ „infinitul îmblânzit”, in *Ibidem*, p. 78.

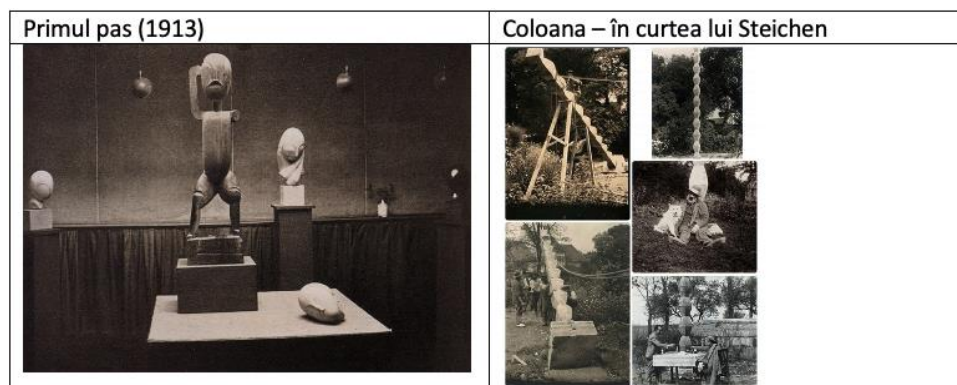
²⁴⁰ Pavel Șușară, *Brâncuși. Un sculptor de la Răsărit [Brâncuși. A sculptor from the East]*, Bucharest, Official Monitor Publishing House, 2020.

“opens the access of the sculpture, of the three-dimensional form, to the inner and uncreated light through an extensive process of transfiguration of matter, through a genuine change in the face, through a major act of transubstantiation”²⁴¹.

In this way, through faith, Brâncuși opens the doors of modern art, passing through the suspension of gravity (“Sleep”), the dematerialization of matter that becomes pure energy through the ovoid („Măiastra”). Brâncuși, therefore, discovers the true light and sculpts it!, surpassing the too human lights up to him!

A few words about the maturation stages of Brancusian creation:

First, the dynamics of wood. For Brâncuși, wood had from the beginning not only a functional dimension but also a mythical-symbolic dimension as the founder of the world. From the beginning, Brâncuși connects with wood through the fundamental dynamics of life, to which he also invites the public, leaving archetypal forms to the wood that can be found in the collective memory of each of us: from the ovoid “Child’s Head” to the infinity of the Endless Column from 1920, in wood. Here we have a real foray into what we can call the “mystique of wood”. The archetypal forms used by Brâncuși, which are also receptors in the Romanian collective mind and not only are the pillar (axis mundi), the spiral (the snake, the rope, the feminine principle), the circle (the sun, perfection -the rosette, the wheel), the rhombus (two triangles –masculine/feminine), the ring (symbolism of the circle, the universe), the zig-zag (aquatic symbolism, endless movement), and the square (stability, durability, terrestrial). All this can be found in many Brâncuși’s works, culminating in the Rooster, the Endless Column, and the Târgu Jiu ensemble²⁴².



²⁴¹ „deschide accesul sculpturii, al formei tridimensionale, către lumina interioară și increată printr-un amplu proces de transfigurare a materiei, printr-o veritabilă schimbare la față, printr-un act major de transsubstanțiere”, in *Ibidem*, p. 66.

²⁴² Olimpia Bratu (coord.), *Stâlpii. Arhetipuri în arta brâncușiană [Pillars. Archetypes in Brancuși's art]*, “Christian Tell” County Library, Gorj, 2023.



The human body – The Écorché (University of Medicine, Bucharest, 1900). The musculature and “man’s inner way of being”, in his attitude at the beginning of civilization, of Adonis, the god of male beauty, Michelangelo’s David, without whom the world would be nothing more than a possibility.

Student of Rodin. Brâncuși becomes in 1907, for a few months the student of the great French sculptor, Rodin – whose genius embodies the “bimillennial philosophy of the three-dimensional”²⁴³. To integrate it into this orbit of the great synthesis of the perfect form, “the triple recommendation of Queen Elisabeta (Carmen Sylva), Maria Bengesu, and Otilia Cosmuță was needed”²⁴⁴. Penetrated by the strong gravitational force of Rodin’s art, Brâncuși prepares his own orbit, his own escape. We see the tension between the synthesis of the

old world and its own destiny in the works of this period:

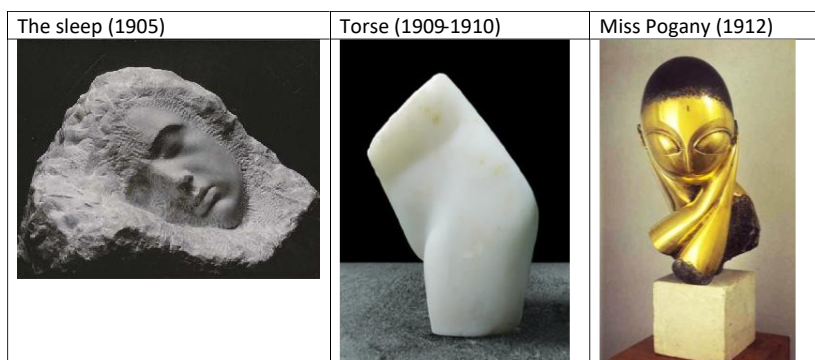


Detachment from matter. First by gravity, then by matter itself (dematerialization). His workshop in Impasse Ronsin street no. 11 becomes the center of a new universe, which revolves toward the primordial, toward the inherited peasantry from Gorj²⁴⁵. He does it by rediscovering the essence: he goes from the severe line (“Head of a man” 1902) to the flowing, feminine line of “Miss Pogany” (1912), of the ovoid type (announced by “Sleep” in 1905, “Torse” in 1909–1910).

²⁴³ „bimilenara filosofie a tridimensionalului”, in Pavel Șușară, *quoted work*, p. 41.

²⁴⁴ „tripla recomandare a Reginei Elisabeta (Carmen Sylva), a Mariei Bengesu și a Otiliei Cosmuță”, in *Ibidem*.

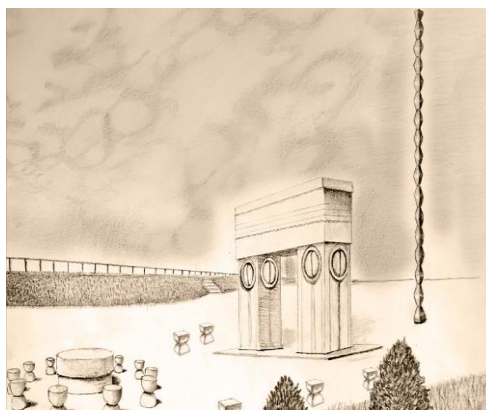
²⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 178.



We go from suspension of gravity through the ovoid, to dematerialization, through the Bird in Space („Pasărea măiastră”). Bird in Space (1923) represents the replacement of matter with energy, it suspends gravity, and form is indeed freed from matter. It is embodied light, not simply light reflected by a material.

The “Perfect Synthesis” – the ensemble from Târgu Jiu (1937–1938), at the invitation of Aretia Tătărescu, the wife of Prime Minister Gheorghe Tătărescu.

If until now we have mainly focused on the representation of the primordial order with the help of the viewer, now it is about the integration into the Universe “surprised in its own dynamics”²⁴⁶ of its axial components. The occasion is the *Christian confession* of the cult of heroes, of those who sacrificed themselves in the First World War, thus integrating themselves into the primordial order through your own people. The Path, the Path of Heroes, has as its seed the Table of Silence – “the great order of nature”, “placental virtuality itself”²⁴⁷ – formerly illustrated by



Monumental ensemble “Heroes’ Path” Târgu Jiu (Gorj county) (foto available at: <https://mnlr.ro/ansamblul-monumental-calea->

²⁴⁶ „surprins în propria dinamică”, in *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁷ „ordinea mare a firii”, „virtualitatea placentară însăși”, in *Ibidem*.

the Earth's Wisdom (1907), from which the Kissing Gate axially springs, which connects the primordial and self-awareness – the “equivalent of Bird in Space”²⁴⁸ (1910), to reach, after its filtering through the Church (St. Peter and Paul) in the Endless Column that includes everything – the world of the city, the world of here and now and the world beyond, the infinity, as Noica would say, “in its uncreated light”²⁴⁹ – Șușară, and renders it to the viewer, recovering the centrality and balance of the soul through the humility of the conscience of his heroes.

SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Brâncuși captures everything in its essential moments and shows it to us. It is the world of light through sculpture (paradoxical, right?!). How can you shape something that cannot be shaped? – it is a matter to which we have access beyond logic (the coincidence of opposites), beyond the low pragmatism of our everyday life. How successfully we can enter this gate is another discussion. It is an invitation not only to reading but also to a journey that reshapes us and society.

Today, Oltenia, like the rest of the country, must be helped to overcome decades of stylistic disfigurement, to restore the beautiful connection between housing and Heaven. Not only are great works inaccurate, incomplete, or even badly valued, but also our life is increasingly deprived of the compass of the natural order, that is, of beauty. To get out of this impasse, we need a thread that not only directs us but also enlightens and organizes us at the same time, that gathers us around a flag, through what is best in us. Culturally, it means a major cultural figure, and politically, a true leader.

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²⁴⁸ „echivalentul Măiestrei”, in *Ibidem*.

²⁴⁹ „în lumina ei necreată”, in *Ibidem*.