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Summer 2010             University Center for International Studies - University of Pittsburgh

Peasants from the Danube in Paris

by Irina Livezeanu, Associate Professor

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In 1966, the surrealist artist Victor Brauner was selected to represent France at the Venice Biennale, which was to open in June, but on March 12, 1966, he died. Brauner was born in 1903 in Piatra-Neamț, in the north-eastern Romanian province of Moldavia. The Biennale’s data base lists Brauner’s “nazionalità di nascita” as Romanian, and his “nazione di morte” as France, just as it does for two other well-known Parisians, Constantin Brâncusi (1876-1957) and Eugène Ionesco (1909-1994). In the magazine Arts, Ionesco described the painter’s work as being “quite close to the sculpture of Brâncusi,” not in its system of expression but in its background. Using a metaphor that the French art world might have found surprising, he declared Brauner to be “‘a peasant from the Danube’ [just] like Brâncusi.” He continued, “It’s all one family, one race, [at once] clear-eyed and believing, crafty and innocent, tough and affectionate …. Brauner knew the limits of rationalism and of irrationalism.” The organic and indigenist connections that Ionesco conjured in his lovely homage to Victor Brauner, between the just deceased surrealist artist and Brâncusi and, in less precise terms, among a whole “family” or “race” of Romanian-born exiles that also included Ionesco himself, elided several major cleavages that had divided the artistic and literary intelligentsia in Romania since the interwar period, as well as the community of Romanian émigrés in Paris, Berlin, and other west European locales. Brâncusi was of an older generation and from a starkly different background than most of the Romanian artists and literati who came to Paris two or three decades later, and even from some of his own generation who had gone to the “West.” Unlike these others, including Brauner and Ionesco, Brâncusi truly had peasant roots. Yet he was drawn to the urban world from childhood, and his art became the very definition of modernism. Ionesco, however, turned Brâncusi into a symbol of unproblematic Romanian cultural kinship and minimized philosophical and ideological rifts that had separated mystical Orthodoxists from clear-eyed and often Jewish communists.

Armed with resourcefulness and resilience, Brâncuși left Bucharest in the fall of 1903 and made his way to Paris in less than a year. He traveled most of the distance on foot, eschewing trains because of poverty. This was before Ionesco had even been born and two decades before Brauner’s first trip to the city of lights. Brâncuși had grown up in a family of peasants in southern Romania. He herded sheep as a boy and received minimal schooling. He repeatedly ran away from his native village, Hobița, to urban settings. He apprenticed with a dyer and later, in the regional capital of Craiova he worked in a tavern. A prosperous client noticed his talent and provided a scholarship to the local trade school where Brâncuși majored in sculpture and carpentry. His formal education had been so delayed that he graduated from vocational school at the late age of twenty-two. He then sold the little plot of land he had inherited in order to finance art school tuition in Bucharest. He also had a scholarship from Craiova and supplemented his stipend by singing in church choirs, casting church bells, and washing dishes. When he decided to study art in Paris, he continued to receive aid from his sponsors in Craiova and to wash dishes in cafés and restaurants to survive.
FACULTY, STUDENT, AND ALUMNI NEWS

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Jade Ward – Anthropology
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Katherine Winder – Italian

Imanta Nigals – Political Science
Hethba Fatnassi – Political Science
Susan Kamerer – GSPIA
Danielle Samek – GSPIA
Madalina Veres – History
With the help of the financial assistance I received this summer from a Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship, I was able to spend ten weeks in Budapest to pursue intensive Hungarian language classes as a way to gain significant language skills to conduct research for my dissertation. I attended the Budapest branch of the Debrecen Language School, which was located in the heart of the city in a great turn of the century Vienna Secessionist-style building. The classes were small in size, allowing for close and frequent interactions among students and teacher. I was placed in an advanced level class with a group of students who came from different parts of the world, such as Spain, Germany, England, Mexico, and Poland. This created a wonderfully dynamic learning experience where simple as well as complex conversations often turned into exciting cultural exchanges as each student shared his or her particular views on a specific topic. Stepping outside the walls of the classroom filled with these multi-faceted cultural conversations, I encountered different aspects of the local context. Since the Language School was located very near the Hungarian Parliament, I had the opportunity to experience first-hand some of the social and political realities of Hungarian society by witnessing official and unofficial events taking place almost weekly in front of or near the parliament building, a structure built in Gothic Revival style on the banks of the Danube river.

With students from the Budapest Language School, I visited art museums, galleries, and explored various cultural venues in the city, such as the Hungarian State Opera House, a neo-Renaissance style structure built in the late 19th century under the Austria-Hungary Empire. At the same time, my Hungarian friends working in the local contemporary art field introduced me to smaller, alternative gallery spaces with diverse exhibition programs and innovative artistic initiatives by both local and international artists. During the weekends, we went on day trips to nearby cities and sculpture parks. I was intrigued to discover Dunaújváros (absent from any tourist guide books), an entire city built sixty years ago under the communist regime’s directives on the banks of the Danube to house the workers employed in the then newly founded steel factory. Going on a walking tour of the city, I was fascinated by the multi-textured architectural juxtapositions. For instance, a few early modern style buildings dating to the early 1950s stood next to socialist classical style residential and public structures, like the large steel factory with colorful friezes depicting scenes of various workers’ activities. Most importantly, through the city tour I was introduced to Tamas Kaszás, whose critical art practice I intend to further examine. A contemporary Hungarian artist who grew up in the city and still lives there, Kaszás conceives and leads urban walking tours of Dunaújváros to tourists as part of his artistic work.

Furthermore, the FLAS Fellowship allowed me to conduct research for my dissertation at the Artpool Archive, Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art Archive, and Mucsarnok Archive. Artpool is one of the most comprehensive archives on alternative and non-official art practices of the 1960s and 1970s in Hungary. It also holds significant material on contemporary art in Hungary and other Eastern and Central European nations. In my dissertation, I will focus on contemporary art practices that engage particular communities and intervene with the urban fabric of the city of post-1989 Central and East Europe. As a result of my summer research in the various archives, I became aware of relevant local events and exhibitions of such artistic practices throughout the 1990s and early 2000s happening in both Hungary and neighboring countries, such as Romania. I look forward to closely exploring this material and articulating the complexities of this particular art discourse.

Most importantly, my nearly three-month stay in Budapest allowed me to meet for the first time the Hungarian contemporary artist Miklós Erhardt, whose work I will investigate in my dissertation. Our meetings helped me better understand his work and also familiarize myself with some of his newer projects. For instance, in one of his works, Erhardt proposes an alternative urban geography of the city of Turin as re-imagined through the views of recent immigrants to the city. In another project, he reveals one of Budapest’s occluded urban layers through the eyes of socially and politically marginalized homeless individuals. In multiple ways, contemporary artists such as Erhardt collaborate with particular communities to create projects that often take the form of interventions and fluid physical interactions. These projects activate particular spatial dimensions ultimately to give visibility to the socio-political and economic exclusions deeply etched beneath and within the everyday fabric of the city.

The FLAS summer fellowship has not only provided me with the opportunity to gain critical language skills in order to conduct my dissertation work, it also exposed me to artistic practices relevant for my research. Additionally, it enabled me to immerse myself within the local context and directly encounter some of the urban sites at the core of these artistic projects. ♦
EUROPEAN SUMMER INSTITUTE 2010

The Prague's Centre for Public Policy (Centrum pro verejnou politiku - CPVP) is pleased to announce the forthcoming European Summer Institute 2010 (ESI 2010) on the Future of Europe: Lobbying in Brussels. The institute will be held in Prague, Czech Republic on July 3-10, 2010. The ESI 2010 is a seven-day academic program designed to bring together 30 undergraduate and graduate students of various nationalities and academic backgrounds to enjoy their summer holidays in the unique academic and cultural environment. The ESI 2010 combines intensive academic courses with cultural, social, and recreational opportunities. For more information, please visit esi.cpv.cz/esi/. Please contact esi@cpvp.cz with any questions. The final deadline for applications is May 15, 2010.

CALL FOR PAPERS: ISA ANNUAL CONVENTION

The organizers of the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association (ISA) to be held in Montreal, Canada on March 16-19, 2011, invite paper proposals on the topic of “Global Governance: Political Authority in Transition.” We invite proposals for papers and panels that address issues related to the problems of global governance in the 21st century, including the following questions: Where is political authority moving? Why is authority moving? Is global governance good? How can global governance be improved and reformed? We especially welcome proposals that bridge different theoretical, epistemological and ontological divides within international studies to address common substantive problems. All proposals should be submitted online using the MyISA Conference Management System at isanet.ccit.arizona.edu/MyISA. Please contact isa2011@isanet.org with any questions. The deadline for submitting proposals is June 1, 2010.

CALL FOR PAPER PROPOSALS: ACES CASES ON EUROPEAN ECONOMIC ISSUES

The American Consortium on EU Studies (ACES), which is the European Union Center of Excellence in Washington, DC, invites proposals for manuscripts to be considered for inclusion in the 2010 round of its working paper series, “ACES Cases on European Economic Issues.” Proposals must address an issue related to economic aspects of European Integration or the performance of the European economy. The paper does not have to be a “case” narrowly defined but must include empirical research. Interested parties may submit either a manuscript under 10,000 words or a proposal accompanied by an outline. In either instance, a CV and an abstract not to exceed 200 words should be submitted. Preference will be given to submissions in the form of finished manuscripts. Any manuscript submitted must be previously unpublished. Authors retain the copyright and right to publish the paper elsewhere. Please send proposals and all supporting materials to ssilvia@american.edu. Please contact Stephen Silvia at ssilvia@american.edu with any questions. The deadline for proposal submissions is June 1, 2010.
Researching Visual and Written Memories of the Holocaust in Poland

by Erin Alpert

PhD Student, Department of Slavic Languages & Literatures


Erin Alpert was the recipient of a Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship for the 2009-2010 academic year.

When I visited Poland in May 2008, I only knew the few key phrases that everyone travelling to a foreign country should know: please (proszę), thank you (dziękuję), and I don’t understand (nie rozumiem)—I used the last phrase a great deal. With my knowledge of Russian and English, I could get by as a tourist but could not fully understand or appreciate everything around me. I was especially fascinated by the museums I visited there. One that particularly caught my attention was the Apteka Pod Orłem (Pharmacy Under the Eagle) museum in Krakow, which featured several documentary films about Jewish life during World War II and in the Krakow Ghetto—all only available in Polish. Upon my return, I studied intensive beginning Polish at the University of Pittsburgh’s Summer Language Institute but was unable to continue at the intermediate level the following year because of teaching obligations. A Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) fellowship for the 2009-2010 academic year, generously funded by the European Union Center of Excellence & European Studies Center, has allowed me to resume the study of Polish, as well as take classes related to my research interests in Poland.

I will soon begin preliminary research for my dissertation, which will examine documentary films in museums as a part of the greater context of Holocaust and Gulag education and commemoration in Russia and Poland. This context also includes other organizations specifically designed to promote public remembrance of the past and to facilitate research of topics related to the Holocaust and Gulag. I will address questions of how institutions in contemporary Russia and Poland commemorate both internal trauma, imposed by the Soviet regime on Soviet citizens, and external trauma. Including Poland in this study allows me to examine a wider variety of sites related to the Holocaust, as Holocaust education in Russia is still a fairly new phenomenon, with the registration of the Russian Research and Educational Holocaust Center in 1992 and the establishment of the Interregional Holocaust Foundation only in 1997. In order to study these films on the level required for dissertation work, an advanced knowledge of the Polish language and understanding of Polish culture, especially as it relates to issues of cinema and remembrance of World War II, is crucial.

The main focus of my research is on documentary films shown in museums such as the one in Krakow, including both those specifically made for the museum and those made elsewhere and selected as part of an exhibit. I will look at films both in smaller sites, which attract fewer foreigners, as well as in the larger, more tourist-oriented sites. Museums are an important area of research, as they are not only memorials to the victims but also serve as witnesses. They affect how people remember these events and help prevent similar atrocities from occurring again. Additionally, documentary films serve as strong eyewitness evidence that can deeply affect viewers. Although significant research has been done on both the Holocaust and the Gulag, there is still little scholarship comparing the two, especially in terms of cinematic portrayal. I will look at how and why these films were made or selected, what purpose these films have as a part of the museum, what message they attempt to convey, and how they fit in with other educational materials either on display, available from the organization (such as those prepared for distribution to teachers) or housed in their archives.

In addition, my studies in Polish language and culture have enabled me to complete other related research this year. After taking a class this fall on Modern Jewry and focusing on the World War II experience of Polish Jews, I attended the 2009 annual conference of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) held in Philadelphia, where I presented my paper “Survival and Community in Memoirs of the Holocaust in Poland.” My paper examines four memoirs and one diary—three from the Warsaw Ghetto and two from the Auschwitz concentration camp. I argue that viewing oneself as a part of an alternative community—one that was unofficial and unsanctioned by the Nazi regime—was not only crucial to survival at that time but also affected how one dealt with the fact that he or she survived when millions of others did not. At the conference, I was able to get valuable feedback for future research on this topic, which I would like to continue studying.

With the help of the FLAS fellowship, I have been able to improve my knowledge of Polish and also gain practical experience in my field by presenting my research on Polish studies at the AATSEEL conference. I am grateful for the support that has allowed me to continue to improve my Polish language skills and to take classes that are beneficial to my research. I especially look forward to further research opportunities in Poland that knowledge of the language gives me. Dziękuję!
Unlike Brâncuși, most Romanian-born artists and literati, such as Brauner, Ionesco, Arthur Segal, and Tristan Tzara, who settled in Paris and other western cities before and after the Great War, came from urban, Jewish middle class families of some means. Arthur Segal was closest to Brâncuși in age. He was born Aron Sigalu in the Moldavian town of Botoșani—“a small town with a big Jewish community”—in 1875. His father and uncle were both bankers. Although the Sigalus and their circle admired the lives of people they knew who lived in Vienna, Berlin, or Paris, they had little use or regard for the arts; thus their son was a constant disappointment to them. They had him apprenticed in a bank, so that he might later join the family business. Aron managed to found a socialist club, nonetheless, and he didn’t tire of asking to be allowed to study fine art. Embarrassed by their son’s activism, which threatened the family’s position with scandal and almost resulted in their permanent expulsion from Botoșani, they finally allowed the seventeen-year-old Aron to move to Berlin in 1892 to study painting.

Tristan Tzara was born Samuel Rosenstock in 1896 in the Moldavian town of Moinești, also to a Jewish family. His grandfather had managed a forestry business, and his father became an early capitalist in the local oil industry. When he was eleven, Tzara moved to Bucharest to attend a French language boarding school, and then a state lycée. He left for Zurich by train in 1915, and together with his old high school friend Marcel Janco (Janco) who was already there studying architecture, became one of the founders of the Dada movement. In 1920 Tzara moved to Paris, where his fame and influence in the world of the avant-garde continued to grow.

Several years younger than Tzara and a generation junior to Segal and Brâncuși, Victor Brauner was also born in Romania’s north-east, to a bourgeois Jewish family from a small town, not far from Tzara’s birth-place, Moinești, in 1896. His Italian mother in a village in the Mayenne region of France until 1903, when he returned to live with his father in Bucharest. His mother’s side, Ionesco had Jewish grandparents, but he had been baptized in the Orthodox Church and raised Catholic. He never practiced Judaism, and his Jewish ancestry was mostly a secret. Still Ionesco, who leaned left politically before the war, became terrified of being discovered a Jew once anti-Semitic regimes came to power in Romania just before the war. In the summer of 1942, he managed to secure an appointment as the press attaché in Romania’s embassy to Vichy. “I am like a man who escapes [from prison] by wearing the guard’s uniform,” he wrote about his diplomatic appointment by and to governments allied with the Axis.

Fascism, the war, and post-war communism marked all these artists and writers living in Western Europe in different ways. After the war, Ionesco did his best never to discuss his brief diplomatic career in the service of the Antonescu government. Although he continued to deplore the 1930s fascisation of the Romanian intelligentsia, most famously in his 1959 play “Rhinocéros,” he made peace with his compatriots Mircea Eliade and Emile Cioran, who were also living in exile and who had effectively been among the rhinoceroses (they had believed in fascism and, as intellectuals, had counted among its militants). In the post-war context, however, giving up intellectual autonomy to join an aggressive political movement could easily apply to communism as well.

Working in hiding on a farm in an Alpine village during the war, Victor Brauner forged magic objects to protect himself from the very real Gestapo and similar terrors. He also changed media out of necessity, since paints were hard to come by, and began using engraved candle wax. During the Nazi occupation of France, his surrealism became more esoteric and mysterious. While Brauner had been a communist before the war, he never wanted to return to communist Romania, and there is evidence of his disenchantment with the ideology. Tristan Tzara, by contrast,
FELLOWSHIPS Continued from page 4

MASTERS IN ADVANCED EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The Institut européen des hautes études (IEHEI), an international teaching and research institute in Nice, invites graduate students to apply for its Master in Advanced European and International Studies (MAEIS) program for the 2010-11 academic year. The MAEIS offers a multi-faceted view on Europe and gives students the opportunity to discuss achievements and problems of Europe and to develop ways to handle them. Students may choose to specialize in the following subject areas: International Relations, European Integration, Economy and Globalization, and Federalism and Governance. The program is subdivided into two branches. The trilingual branch (teaching languages are English, French, and German) includes trimesters in Nice and Berlin, as well as a one week stay in Rostock and a two week seminar in Rome; the anglophone branch includes trimesters in Istanbul, Nice and Berlin. Both branches organize a study trip to Geneva, Strasbourg, and Brussels with visits to the European and international organizations, as well as meetings with high-ranking civil servants, diplomats and other decision-makers of the European political environment. For further information, please visit www.iehei.org or email dheei@cif-eu. The deadline for applications is June 30, 2010.

HANNES ANDROSCH PRIZE 2011

Submissions are welcome for the 2011 Hannes Androsch Prize, which will be awarded for a scientifically sound contribution to the following issue: “A Global Challenge to our Social Future: The Design of a Social Security System which can Cope with the Dual Threat of Demographic Developments and Financial Market Risk.” The award amounts to € 100,000. Entries should include a thorough analysis of the social welfare system. They should also provide proposals for an alternative design, which would optimize the magnitude and stability of pensions over time and confront the double challenge of demographic developments and financial market risk. Additional information on the Hannes Androsch Prize, sponsored by the Hannes Androsch Foundation at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, is available on the website of the Austrian Academy of Sciences at www.oead.at/hannesandroschprize. The deadline for entries is January 31, 2011.

LIVEZEANU Continued from page 6

EUGÈNE’S IONESCO’S 1966 article about Brauner emphasizes the painter’s kinship to Constantin Brâncuși, and by extension to the prototypical Romanian peasant and to a specific location on the Danube. The comparison to Brâncuși was an indisputable compliment. Yet the “assimilation” of the two artists is also strange in its repression of other more obvious connections—for example, between Brauner and Romanian-born Jewish avant-gardists like Tristan Tzara and Arthur Segal among others. These three all traced their roots to Moldavia, the north-eastern province of Romania farthest from the Danube which traces the country’s southern border. Jewish settlement here was densest, and most merchants, bankers, and entrepreneurs were Jewish, although most Jews were poor petty traders and proletarians. Brâncuși was himself an exceptional peasant who sought education and urban experience at all cost. He was probably the least political of the Romanian émigrés in Paris. By invoking the similarity between Brauner and Brâncuși and the “racial” community of Romanians regardless of religion and politics, Ionesco effectively suppressed several major fissures that had divided Romanian émigrés both before and after the war. He thereby continued to elude, as well, painful aspects of his own identity and career.

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Thank you, and have a great summer!