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SENDER

Richard Demarco

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Richard Demarco

Athenee Palace Hotel

Bucharest

Mentioned people:

Horia Bernea

Ion Bitzan

Radu Dragomirescu

Serban Epure

Paul Gherasim

Pavel Ilie

Ovidiu Maitec

Paul Neagu

Ion Pacea

Diet Sayler

Vladimir Setran

Badu Stoica

Aurel Stroe

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TRANSCRIPTION

LETTER FROM ROMANIA - 3RD MAY 1971.

Athenee Palace Hotel,

Bucharest.

My six day visit to Romania is coming to an end. This letter will have to be finished on the plane back- to London. For the third time I am indebted to the Union of Romanian Artists for inviting me, and for their unforgettable hospitality and kindness which has enabled me to do so much.

I managed to meet all the artists I wish to present as part of the exhibition of Contemporary Romanian Art at the 1971 Edinburgh Festival. Visits to their studios took up most of my time, and I was much involved with meetings with the Committee of the Union of Artists and with interviews for Romanian Television and Radio to such an extent that it was simply not possible to realise my long cherished ambition to see the exquisite medieval monasteries of Moldavia. These must be unique and they are certainly a visual arts experience comparable to the Romanesque Cathedrals of France and Italy. I was not able, either, to go to the far North to Maramures where practically everyone still dresses in national costume while going about their daily work. This is an extraordinary part of Europe. I must see it before the 20th century gets at it! I must see 'The Happy Graveyard' at Sapinta - the work of an old man, certainly a special artist who has used his gifts as a sculptor and poet to make the graves of the villagers into a vibrant, colourful celebration of their lives. This is environmental art of a rare kind. It is the artist living and working and needed by his society, creating something timeless and enduring for the right reasons.

I have chosen eleven artists, some of which are now well enough known in Edinburgh, but certainly not as well known as they deserve to be in Britain generally. The International spotlight of the Festival should put that right. All of the artists were very much 'on form' and their studios were filled with delightful surprises. There was ION BITZAN's studio floor littered with little 'warm' bag-shaped sculptures just asking to be picked up and hugged. I like the title they have - 'Once upon a time in my Childhood, in a sunny place, a man was selling a lot of little bags like these ones' There were the monochromatic flags of ION PACEA reminiscent of the marry peasant carpets and rugs which he collects with enthusiasm. HORIA BERNEA's philosophy of '5 Domains of Visual Reality' have now produced 3 dimensional art objects filled with magic and a sense of humour. (He has just been awarded a prize by the Union). OVIDIU MAITEC's wooden sculptures possess a spiritual character which can be felt as powerfully as

any human presence. It is good to see a sculptor understanding wood to the extent he does. The engravings of DEITER SAYLER are even more intellectually stimulating. He too has moved into 3 dimensional environmental kinetic works. There is the cybernetic 2 and 3 dimensional paper works of SERBAN EPURE which will form themselves into a little room for the exhibition – a complete environment with original electronic music by Aurel Stroie. Epure is that rare bird, the mathematician and the poet in one. PAVEL ILIE is making a film which will comment on the three main constructivist pieces which he will present. I admire him for wanting to 'launch a painting on a hill like a kite'. VLADIMIR SETRAN has extended and re-defined his own pre-occupation with metal paintings, coloured by the processes normally associated with the motor car body. He and the two young artists BADU STOICA and RADU DRAGOMIRESCU will present their works as complete wall environments. Of course PAUL NEAGU is working very successfully in London and he will be represented, I hope, by his Cake Man Banquet which is at present being prepared at the Sigi Krauss Gallery in London; and by other outdoor Edinburgh environments involving, Lord Melville's Statue and Greyfriars Churchyard. So I have, I think, a very good First Eleven! I have added the work of the GROUP SIGMA ONE from Timisoara. This Group of six (five artists and one mathematician) will be represented by photographs. They represent the latest manifestation of the strong tradition of constructivist art in Eastern Europe.

I was fortunate to see the work of Paul Gherasim. This 47 year old painter lives at the top of a very high block of flats in a new part of Bucharest which reminded me very much of the new Glasgow. In this unlikely environment he has worked slowly and quietly to produce some of the most powerful and moving abstract paintings I am ever liable to see. I cannot include them in the exhibition but I hope, one day, to present his work in Britain.

This exhibition of Contemporary Romanian Art will not represent the full spectrum of visual art activity in Romania. I am concentrating on a particular group of artists whose ages range from 'late Twenties' to 'mid Forties'. Their work relates to vital art movements in Britain and other parts of Europe and certainly to the United States. They also prove that 20th century artists can derive great strength from a long tradition embedded in an agrarian society.

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