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Arbiters of Value:

The Nationalization of Art and the Politics of Expertise in Early Socialist Romania

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In 1948, immediately after the Communist Party came to power in Romania, state officials commissioned a group of art experts to radically transform the existing public and private art collections into a national system of museums. These professionals became the new regime's arbiters of value: the ultimate authority in assessing the cultural and financial value of artwork, and thus deciding their fate and final location. Newly available archival evidence reveals the specific strategies that they employed, and the particular political needs of the state they were able to capitalize on in order to survive and even thrive under a regime that, in principle, should have disavowed them.

Even though many of them had professionally come of age during the interwar period, the art experts managed to make themselves indispensable to the new state. They functioned as a pivotal mediator between state officials and a broader public because they knew how to use the national network of museums to put the new state on display. Through the rearrangement of public and private collections across the country, and the centralization of art in museums, they produced a particular "order of things" meant not only to entice the public to view the socialist state as the pinnacle of progress and as a benefactor to the masses but also to validate their expertise and forge a new political trajectory for themselves. The strategic movement of art objects that they orchestrated reveals the material and spatial dimensions of state-making in early socialism.

Keywords: *nationalization; art; socialism; Romania; property*

It is not easy to find it, but if you do, you feel as if you have come across a hidden treasure—at least that's what the tourists say. The Spanish-style villa, built in the early twentieth century, lies relatively hidden on a quiet street in one of Bucharest's most expensive residential neighborhoods. Hosting a rich collection of modern art, especially focused on Romanian painters, the Zambaccian Museum has always carried the name of its founder, the well-known merchant and art collector of Armenian descent, Krikor Zambaccian. He assembled his collection during the first part of the twentieth century, using his wealth to commission and purchase paintings from Romanian artists. He sometimes paid them exorbitant prices, unheard of on the local

art market.[1] As one of the best-known patrons of young Romanian artists in the interwar period, he enjoyed the nickname his contemporaries gave him: "The Collector."[2] In 1943, Zambaccian opened his house to the public once per week, inviting Bucharestians to visit the mansion and admire his collection, free of charge. He thus transformed his residence into a "donor memorial": a house-museum not only meant to display the art collection, but especially the owner, his particular aesthetic tastes, and his wealth.[3]

When the communist party came to power in postwar Romania, launching the nationalization of private property, Zambaccian's situation initially seemed precarious. However, while other former members of Bucharest's upper class were being marginalized, or even thrown in prison, he managed to retain his privileges. He strategically used his collection as well as his extensive knowledge of art to become indispensable for the new political regime. In March 1947, Zambaccian made a donation deed, in which he stipulated that a part of his collection would become state property immediately, while the rest of the artwork and his villa would come under state ownership only upon his death.[4] However, he added some conditions to his bequest: he requested that he and his family be allowed to exclusively inhabit their villa for the remainder of their lives, and that all of the artwork remain at its original location, so the collection would never become fragmented. These stipulations blurred the property status of the collection, making it into an in-between entity, neither fully nationalized nor solely privately owned.

Zambaccian's story thus challenges an understanding of nationalization as a smooth, linear transition from a regime of private property to one grounded in collective property. This article focuses on the state's appropriation and reorganization of the art collections in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a way of revisiting questions of property-holding and value-making in early socialism. The transformation of art collections into state property was part of a larger process of nationalization. Formerly private assets became the property of the people, over which the communist state held exclusive administrative rights. In principle, nationalization meant a tabula rasa: All of the assets were to become part of the unitary, indivisible, and inalienable domain of property controlled by the new regime.[5] The histories of inheritance or exchange that added to the value of specific assets were to disappear as well. In some instances, however, former owners were able to retain some influence over their former possessions even after they had formally surrendered them to the regime.

I will argue that some of these former traces of ownership did not disappear, but continued to shadow and undermine the full absorption of some particular assets into the state property fund. To show how this happened, I draw on anthropologist Annette Weiner's concept of "inalienable possessions" to highlight the manner in which some owners continue to exert control over the trajectory of some of their former possessions.[6] Viewed from this angle, nationalization reveals itself as a non-linear process that entailed strategic movements, visions, and potentially multiple forms of what Weiner calls "keeping-while-giving" that more or less silently accompanied the

planned erasure of history preceding the formation of a socialist regime of collective property.

Zambaccian's trajectory also reveals the particular continuities between two political and social systems deemed to be worlds apart: interwar and postwar Romania. The communist authorities found themselves increasingly dependent on the expertise of professionals such Zambaccian, whose lifestyle and former political allegiances were at the antipode of everything socialism represented. In 1948, less than a year after the Communist Party abolished the Romanian monarchy and declared Romania a people's republic under single-party rule, the head of the newly established Ministry of Arts and Information announced the official end of capitalist aesthetics, declaring that "workers and creators in the fields of arts and literature must stop bowing to the decadent culture of the Western bourgeoisie."[7] In practice, however, state authorities ignored that perspective. Instead, they sought to amass and display the richest art collection that they could produce. Art, displayed either in the reorganized museums or the temporary exhibitions organized both in the Soviet bloc and Western Europe, enabled communist officials to show off their political propriety—that is, to signal their modernity, wealth, and culture to both their citizens at home and to other political actors abroad, and thus help to construct a sense of their legitimacy.[8] They did so by commissioning experts such as Zambaccian—art collectors and art historians who came of age during the interwar years—to reorganize the national network of museums and, most importantly, to create a new national gallery of art for the new socialist state.

The art experts charged with this task were professionals with a vast knowledge of art history and a keen awareness of the national and international art market. Some of them had already spent years traveling to European museums and art markets, starting their own collections, and participating in avant-garde movements in interwar Bucharest. Others were younger disciples of the former, and recent graduates of the Beaux Arts Institute in Bucharest. What they had in common was a genuine admiration for art and a keen interest in identifying and preserving art objects. And they exploited the new state's ambitions to pursue their own. Newly available archival evidence reveals the specific strategies that they employed, and the particular political needs of the state they were able to capitalize on in order to survive and even thrive under a regime that, in principle, should have disavowed them.

These art experts became the new regime's arbiters of value. By moving, evaluating, gifting, or purposely ignoring particular art objects, they created specific hierarchies of value and forged new material and social relations from which they derived their own legitimacy. I examine the strategies that these professionals employed to make themselves more visible and eventually indispensable to the new state: the multifold material maneuvers they orchestrated, taking paintings from provincial museums and bringing them to the new national gallery of art, fragmenting art collections whose owners were either dead or had fled the country, and sometimes bequeathing art objects that they used to own to the state. A focus on the strategic

movement of art objects, from old collections to new ones, from private residences to state institutions, and especially in and out of different clusters of value, reveals the material and spatial dimensions of state making in early Romanian socialism.

The article begins with a brief review of how modern states have used museums to produce and reinforce political power. Many of these studies have treated the state as an abstract entity, rather than as a social network whose boundaries are constantly being negotiated. Such negotiations are simultaneously ideological and material—or rather, they defy this dichotomy. The art experts maneuvering objects in socialist Romania employed them not only to signal ideological allegiance to the new state but also, occasionally, to challenge the same ideology—as when Zambaccian asked for the entire collection to remain in his home, even though his bequest would make it the property of the state. These experts relied on a strategically orchestrated movement, circulation, or stasis of art objects with an eye to rewriting their own histories, and erasing others. By disassembling art collections that used to belong to prestigious families from the former social order, these experts actively participated in the fragmentation and eventual erasure of these families' social histories. Other genealogies, however, remained visible. Zambaccian's story and his smooth transition from one social order to another reveals how art objects and their strategic movement helped in maintaining that social visibility.

The second part of the article analyzes the particular agendas underlying such patterns of movement. It highlights the processes of value-making or the erasure of value that accompanied the political production of museums. I argue that such negotiations of value applied not only to objects but also to people. These art experts managed to twist their initial task of assigning value to art by turning it around and projecting that value onto themselves—thus making themselves invaluable to the state authorities. I examine the bequests made by two art experts (Krikor Zambaccian and George Oprescu) who donated a part of their art collections to the new regime. I focus especially on how they envisioned these donations, the particular objects they chose to give away, and the specific stipulations accompanying the donations—especially the locations where these objects would be put on display after they became part of the state patrimony.

Political Ways of Seeing: Museums as Sites of State-Making

The museums represent particularly poignant media for exploring the relationship between visuality, materiality, imagination, and politics. Since the French Revolution, modern states have heavily relied on museums to display political power—and thus to reabsorb it further to the center, in a circular mechanism in which particular aesthetic visions and taste reinforced and naturalized social hierarchies.[9] The transition from the disparate, individual (and individualized) collections of the Renaissance princes to a more homogenous network of museums organized

around similar aesthetic dispositions signaled the increasing centralization of political power as part and parcel of the emergence of modern states.[10] In industrializing nineteenth-century Western Europe, art museums increasingly produced and reinforced social distinction. They were social spaces that people visited not only to see, but also to be seen, to be acknowledged as belonging to the middle class.[11] At the same time, these museums functioned as loci for aesthetical and political experimentation, where collectors, curators, and their sponsors could engaged with what Tony Bennett has called "specific ideologies of the visible."[12] As Bennet puts it, objects displayed in a museum "derive significance from different 'invisibles' they construct and from the ways they mediate these to the spectators."[13] By the end of the nineteenth century, the particular "invisible" that museums' curators and collectors focused on was the imaginary of the nation-state.[14]

Through the strategic display of artifacts, often arranged in a chronological order, museums endorsed a progressive narrative that visually conveyed the nation-state as the pinnacle of historic and political development. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have highlighted the political function of what they called "universal survey museums." Noting that "art can be used to realize the transcendent values the state claims to embody," they described museums as key sites in which individuals encounter and evaluate the state, and thus come to perceive themselves as loyal citizens of that state.[15]

However, Duncan and Wallach treat the state as an abstract entity, instead of exploring how the museums enable that very perception. In fact, as mediators between the visible and the invisible, and then between what different groups or individuals can or cannot see—and between what they can, or want, to imagine—art museums reveal the multilayered paradoxes of the modern state. On one hand, art objects allegedly available to all citizens maintain the illusion of the state as a benevolent but abstract, beyond-human entity, a spectral presence whose anonymity and ambiguity reinforces its power. On the other hand, the same objects function as an extension of political power, signaling the particular trajectory of objects, especially when they are labeled as "bequests" of powerful individuals. In other words, these objects directly disclose the particular set of relations informing the state as a network of interests and individuals.

These paradoxes become more obvious in moments of radical political change. Writing about the radical transformation that art museums in the Soviet Union underwent following the October Revolution, Boris Groys notes that "the new socialist museum turned out to be significantly different from the traditional museum of the 19th century, which had been oriented toward the idea of historical representation."[16] Rather than reject the legacy of prerevolutionary culture, the Soviet administration aimed to "reintegrate the artistic heritage of the past."[17] Soviet art curators sought to highlight class struggle in various historical contexts, to capture "dreams of a better, socialist life," and thus to hold up Soviet socialist life as the realization of those dreams.[18] Groys argues that art museums enabled shifts in the way Soviet subjects

understood, imagined, and inhabited a new society. However, he does not analyze the making of museums as a political project in which multiple actors and forms of expertise were negotiated through movement of objects and alterations of value.

A critical focus on the material and symbolic rearrangements of the museums and their collections reveal how particular experts and groups produced, and thus became part of, the state. I examine this process in early socialist Romania, immediately after the communist party came to power. Transformed almost overnight into state property, the art objects that experts evaluated, moved around, hid, or displayed in various museums endowed the new regime with a much-needed materiality, bestowing value and historic heft to a political system still in the making.

Arbiters of Value: Making and Unmaking Value in Early Romanian Socialism

The installation of the socialist order in postwar Romania entailed a process of social, political, and aesthetic reordering that closely followed the Soviet blueprint. In December 1947, Romania ceased to be a monarchy and became a popular republic. The royal family immediately left the country, being allowed to take only a limited selection of their possessions with them. On June 19, 1948, the former royal estate officially became state property by decree, and was immediately put under strict surveillance. In order to chastise the monarchy for its wealth and stress the contrast between the royals' luxurious life and the population's overall poverty, the new regime published an exhaustive list of every single object that had been included in the royal estate.[19] The transformation of the royal wealth into state patrimony launched the broader nationalization process: the transfer of the means of production and the natural and economic resources of minerals, land, and forests, to industries and banks under the control of the government.[20] It was designed to be a gradual process, with all of the economic sectors being nationalized in succession over time.[21]

The art collection of the former royal family was the first to be nationalized and officially inventoried. In early January 1948, a few weeks after the royal family left the country, ministry officials commissioned a team of experts and dispatched them to the formerly royal domains to carry out a thorough inventory of the art collections and any other valuable objects. George Oprescu was named head of this commission. At that time, he was the most well-known and, especially, the most well-connected art historian in Romania. Though not formally trained as an art historian—he studied literature and philosophy at the University of Bucharest—Oprescu had gained an extensive knowledge of art during the years he spent abroad.[22] This is also when he had begun collecting art—his connoisseur's eye was quick to recognize the hidden value of paintings and drawings sold at the flea markets north of Paris.[23] Oprescu returned to Romania in 1931, when he was appointed chair of the art history program

at the University of Bucharest as well as head of one of the largest museums in Bucharest.[24] Despite his cosmopolitan past and extensive links to Western European intellectuals, the communist regime turned to Oprescu because they needed him. As the chair of the art history department of Bucharest University, he was at the center of a network linking art collectors to art practitioners and researchers. He knew everyone and could assemble a team of the best experts in a matter of days—and this is what he did. He formed a team of fourteen specialists, including some of his mentees, sculptors, painters, art dealers, art collectors, and tapestry and ceramics curators. (Krikor Zambaccian was one of them.) They were immediately dispatched to Peleș castle, the former royal residence, located at two hours' distance from Bucharest.

Between mid-January and early April 1948, the Oprescu-led commission did a thorough inventory only of the art collections deposited in the two most significant royal residences (out of the five locations that they had initially planned to assess). They located, categorized, and evaluated around twenty thousand objects in the Peleș castle alone, and wrote more than seven thousand detailed individual descriptions of the art objects they deemed most valuable. They also took more than eight hundred photos of objects, and hoped to be allowed to expand the photograph collection and continue the inventory. In his first report, submitted in early March 1948, George Oprescu stressed the difficult circumstances encountered by the commission and requested more time to complete its work. He noted that the specialists worked very hard, "some of them even putting in all-nighters."[25] To highlight this extraordinary effort, Oprescu juxtaposed the diligence and hard work of the commission to the sense of overwhelming chaos that they encountered upon their arrival:

> We found some parts of the Peleș castle, and the entire Pelișor castle, mired in chaos: furniture deposited everywhere, a hodgepodge of vases and small objects thrown together in various warehouses. . . . Often, we could not notice objects that should have been included in our inventory because they were hidden in secret compartments—and the overall jumble of so many things squeezed-in together made it even harder for us to notice them.[26]

Even though they were not granted the requested extension of time—leading the commission to submit only a partial inventory of the royal collection—their hard work and expertise became obvious. Oprescu emphasized the contrast between the initial chaotic state of the Peleș collection and the final results of the commission's work—a clearly organized, though partial, inventory. By doing so, he pointed to the experts' unique skills and promoted them as genuine value-makers: they were the ones bringing order to chaos, by asserting the "real value" of some of the art objects, while revealing the lack of value of others. During the inventory, the commission found, for instance, that around 250 paintings in the royal collection were, in fact, merely well-executed copies of famous originals located in Western European museums.[27]

After their work at Peleș, many of these experts managed to land important jobs in state institutions. In October 1948, five of them became assigned to a state commission set in charge with the organization of a national network of art museums. One of their main pursuits was to open a new national art gallery in the former royal palace in downtown Bucharest. The team, coordinated by George Oprescu, began a systematic "treasure hunt" through other private and public collections in Bucharest, as well as some provincial museums, with a mission to identify the "most valuable paintings in other museums," and deliver them to the new national gallery.[28]

In one of the commission meetings, Oprescu outlined the plan for the new national gallery in the making:

> The most significant part of the collection [of the national gallery] will be made by the object brought from [Peleș castle]: paintings, sculptures, furniture, textiles, pottery, rugs, jades. There are around 160 paintings [in Peleș], many of which are very large. This collection will also be completed with the most valuable paintings from other public museums. . . . After all of the most valuable paintings from public collections will be brought to the new museum, there will be an open call to private collectors, to buy or receive paintings on loan, on the guarantee that the collectors would retain their property rights over the loans. [29]

His comment signaled his highly centralized vision of the museums' network, in which the national gallery was to function as its nucleus. Other members of the commission welcomed Oprescu's proposal, suggesting specific works from museums across the country that could be brought to Bucharest, to expand the collection of the national gallery. One of Oprescu's mentees, Radu Bogdan, a recent art history graduate, suggested that the commission travel to two major cities in Banat, the region bordering Hungary, from where they "could take three Italian primitives from Timișoara, and a Munkácsy from Arad."[30] Such comments not only displayed the extensive knowledge that some of experts had of the art museums across the country collections, but also the nonchalance with which they planned to break apart these provincial collections, and bring their most important pieces to Bucharest.

These experts were quickly becoming pivotal arbiters of value for the new state. I say "arbiters" to stress that they did, indeed, function as the ultimate authority in assessing the cultural and thus financial value of artwork, and thus deciding their fate and final location. The scarcity of expertise thus enabled this relatively small group of art historians and art collectors to become essential resources for the new state—notwithstanding their previous lifestyles and even political allegiances. They were the only professionals in the country with extensive knowledge of the private and public art collections and the national and international art market. The state wanted to nationalize these collections, but first needed to know how valuable they were. Art auctions were no longer allowed, which meant that these professionals became the ultimate decision makers about the value of the art objects.

By presenting themselves as endowed with a unique ability to distinguish originals from counterfeits, these experts gained political leverage. They also did so

by persuading state officials to endow them with a full mandate to redefine what a museum should be, what should it contain, and how it should display its content to a large audience. By putting together a new system of classification, in which they defined the criteria for assembling museum artifacts into distinct collections—often insisting on chronological links while dismissing other possible connections among works of art as a "chaotic hodgepodge"—this group of professionals became the ultimate producers of particular ways of seeing. They functioned as a pivotal mediator between state officials and a broader public because it was they who decided how to put the state's art possessions on display. Through the radical rearrangement of public and private collections across the country, and their display in museums, they produced a particular "order of things" meant not only to entice the public to view the socialist state as the pinnacle of progress and as a benefactor to the masses, but also to create a new political trajectory for themselves.[31]

To conduct the state-commissioned inventory of the art museums, they traveled quite extensively in the country to identify and evaluate artwork in museums whose staff did not have the necessary knowledge to make such an assessment. At the same time, in other contexts, the same experts pretended to not know the value of certain paintings from private collections, whose owners intended to take them abroad upon their emigration. (The state barred the exportation of any valuable objects, regardless of ownership status.) By "stretching" the value of art objects, by either minimizing or maximizing their economic and cultural worth according to particular contexts, these experts used their expertise, their connections in the art world, and sometimes their own collections to secure positions in the new political system—and also to challenge that system from within.

These experts gained political leverage not only when they identified valuable art objects and moved them to the center, to the national art gallery. They also gained power by subtly defying the regime and its priorities, such as when they strategically ignored the value of other objects in private collections, thus allowing their owners to take them abroad upon their emigration (despite the state's strict policies forbidding the export of valuable art).[32] Romanian state officials were highly concerned not only about the art already assembled in museums but also about value that was still invisible to them: paintings kept in private residences, or pieces that were already packed in the suitcases of those who were planning their imminent emigration. The officials' anxiety about the precarious status of these "floating" objects comes across in internal correspondence between central state institutions. In February 1950, the Office of Visual Arts in the Ministry of Arts and Information sent a long memorandum to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, urging the latter to pay closer attention to the private collections of foreign (Western) diplomats.[33] The letter noted that "a major task" that the state had been pursuing was "the revaluation and promotion of our visual arts patrimony" (in Romanian, *tezaur*).[34] However, the letter continued, "foreign hands" had come into possession of many Romanian works of art. Some had already been "clandestinely" taken out of the

country, and others were still in Romania but "were at risk of disappearing very soon."[35] The letter noted that a well-known painting by Ion Andreescu (considered at the time the most important—and most expensive—Romanian painter) was allegedly held in a private residence in Bucharest rented by a Dutch official.[36] Arts Ministry officials used such examples to put pressure on Foreign Affairs to closely monitor foreign diplomats as well as the minority of Romanian citizens who were still allowed to emigrate (notably, Romanian Jews who left for Israel) and to make sure that they did not leave the country with high-value art.

In order to locate such "floating" art objects, the state commissioned another team (formed of some of the art experts who had taken part in the Peleș inventory). These experts had the power to decide whether some objects were valuable enough to be included in the "national patrimony," and therefore forbidden to leave the country, or, on the contrary, represented works that had "no artistic value" and could thus be taken abroad.[37] This official commission was established within the Ministry of Arts, and included several members, though only one art historian was among them: Radu Bogdan, George Oprescu's young protégé. The other three were political cadres, key party members who had shown long-term loyalty to the communist cause before and during the war but who had no expertise in art.[38] This meant, very likely, that it was left to the art historian to decide what was valuable or not, and when and for whom. And his decisions appeared to be rather arbitrary, and unexpectedly flexible.

Despite the pressures that the same officials put on their colleagues in Foreign Affairs to closely monitor the diplomats' art possessions and transactions, it turned out that the commission's members ignored highly valuable paintings and drawings that were soon to leave the country. Archival sources include several notes signed by each of the commission's members that showed that drawings by Michelangelo, Botticelli, Barbieri, and Piranesi, or paintings by well-known Romanian painters, such as Ștefan Luchian, Camil Ressu, Țuculescu, and Ciucurencu, were deemed to "lack artistic value" and their owners were allowed to take them when they emigrated.[39] The individuals petitioning the state authorities to take these artworks—claiming they were only of "sentimental value"—were quite diverse. Some of them were diplomats leaving the country following the regime change.[40] Others were Romanian Jews taking advantage of the temporary willingness of the communist authorities to allow emigration to Israel in the early 1950s.[41] Although I do not have written evidence to determine their motives, it is hard to believe that Radu Bogdan, an art historian who had already taken part in the inventory of the Peleș collection, did not know what he was signing off as "lacking value." It is possible that Bogdan knew what he was doing, and purposely chose to allow the export of such artworks with an eye to forging useful connections in the West in the future.

Such instances of value erasure may be viewed as inconsequential deviations from the rule; as petty favors done to specific individuals. These could be minor gestures that would not have interfered with the more ambitious plans that the art

experts had about the reconfiguration of the heterogenous art collections across the country into a coherent and indivisible socialist patrimony. But this would mean dismissing the acts of value erasure as implicitly less political, and less intentional, than those of value making. I would argue that such forms of erasure were as important as those of value formation. Both situations revealed how the art experts became key mediators between the state that wanted to control and appropriate as much as it could, and the middle class that tried to hold onto their possessions in the wake of the imminent nationalization. Such mediations signal the broader negotiations of value that informed state-making in early socialism. Despite plans and promises, the communists who wanted to create a new state were not so certain about how exactly they would go about it. To put things in order—symbolically and literally—they had to rely more and more on professionals who had come of age in a different political era but who wanted to find a way to survive in the new political and social landscape. The art experts that I discuss in this article formed a particular category among the professional elites that the state authorities began to seek out. Possessing unique knowledge about a field that the authorities knew little about but deemed crucially important for the promotion of the new state, this relatively small group managed to turn themselves into pivotal nodes in the new political system. They did so by maneuvering art objects, their value, their location, and their visibility or invisibility, according to specific contexts and agendas. This section showed how they engaged in negotiation over the value of art objects that they did not own. The second part of the article discusses how two of these experts used art objects in their own collections to gain political privileges, and, in that very process, to upend the socialist system's mechanisms of value making.

Inalienable Donations under Nationalization

This communist state's patrimony had to be both historical and new. The value of the art objects derived from their history: who created them and when, and how much value that particular sculptor or painter carried, according to the standards of the Western market (though proper auctions on the international market were forbidden under the communist law). The distinct trajectory of these objects—that is, their specific histories of ownership, their "cultural biographies," encompassing the symbolic value and meaning that they had carried for their former owners—was less important.[42] These objects' previous "social lives" and histories of ownership were only valuable as far as they could function as a source of validation of the objects' potential value. But soon afterwards, that particular history was meant to disappear. Separated from other objects in their original collections, put into different hierarchies of value, moved around and redistributed to the museums or to the offices and residences of the new political leaders, the paintings, sculptures, tapestries, or precious gems had to shed their own social histories. They had to become relatively ahistorical so they

could be detached from the history and names of their former owners and be imbued with a different political meaning, while also retaining enough historical substance to remain valuable as artworks.

The group of experts that coordinated this multifold process of redistribution of art objects justified it as a prerequisite for the organization of the museums based on "a scientific system"—but there was something more at stake.[43] The commission of experts played a key role in the creation of this patrimony. Its members visited locations in Bucharest and other cities to search for valuable art, they decided which objects were to be relocated to which museums, and which would stay put. Their positions allowed them to insert themselves into the system through a strategic production of particular social trajectories of specific objects—especially those that came from their bequests—while erasing the social lives of objects from other private collections. By dismantling museum collections that had originally been assembled by one person or family, picking and choosing specific objects based solely on their individual value, the members of the museum commission came to decide how much of the social history of the pre-communist period would be remembered and kept within the communist network of museums – especially the history of the former art collectors, many of them aristocratic families. The collections of two of the major museums established by private collectors during the interwar years, for instance, became fragmented, with the most valuable pieces going to the future national gallery.[44]

But some collections were spared of this fate. This was the case of one of the larger collections of Romanian modern art, amassed by and located in Krikor Zambaccian's home. As I have mentioned in the introduction, in 1947 Zambaccian had bequeathed a part of his art collection to the Romanian state. However, the agreement stipulated that all of the donated artwork must remain part of the collection, and be physically located in the house, which he and his family continued to inhabit.[45] He also promised that, upon his death, the house and the rest of the collection would become state property. It is likely that his bequest was also motivated by a more pragmatic agenda: He knew that if he did not give it to the state, the state would anyway confiscate it.[46]

By choosing to donate his collection rather than wait for it to be nationalized, Zambaccian forged a relationship with the new regime. His gesture signaled his willingness to collaborate, and he began to do so right away. He was included in the initial team of experts dispatched to Peleș castle to do the inventory of the royal collection. He then became a member of the Museums Commission, led by Oprescu, and consequently took part in all of the discussions regarding the reorganization of the national museum network. Though he could not directly oppose state officials' decisions, he tried to save his collection from being fragmented or relocated to a different museum.

In the first meeting of the Commission, Zambaccian noted that his museum was not included in the list of museums, "even though the museum was no less

valuable than the others." He stressed that the initial bequest deed had clearly outlined the conditions under which his collection became part of the state patrimony, and that relocation of the artwork was specifically forbidden. Obviously annoyed, the head of the visual arts department within the Ministry, Lucian Grigorescu, who chaired the meetings of the commission, pointed out the need for a scientific reorganization of the museums, commenting that Zambaccian "should prove himself not only a man of good taste, but also a cultivated person, and not allow his personal feelings to jeopardize . . . the museums' reorganization."[47] Another official, M. T. Vlad, used that comment to directly attack Zambaccian. At the time, Vlad was the subhead of the visual arts department and the key decision maker in the Ministry. His long-term involvement with the Communist Party during the 1930s propelled him to a plum position in the new government. Vlad first pointed out that "more than 80% of the means of production had already been nationalized and transformed into the property of the people," and that, in the same vein, the artwork that was still privately owned should be become 'public property,' to be taken out of small collections that the public cannot visit, and made available to the people."[48] With that proviso, he turned to Zambaccian's case. Noting that art objects should stop being kept in "little houses"—an allusion to Zambaccian's villa—Vlad pushed for the relocation of the latter's collection to a more visible location. In response, Zambaccian insisted that he wanted "to protect his honest work," and asked the commission that the collection remain in its current location.

The issue of small museums kept coming up in other meetings of the Commission, as the two state officials mentioned above brought it up again and again. They kept mentioning the "little house" in which Zambaccian's collection was displayed as an improper site for the museum, and kept pressing for the most valuable artwork to be moved elsewhere. Zambaccian, in turn, continued to insist on the intrinsic link between the collection, its location—his own house, and his own name (he specifically asked for the museum to carry his name, even when it became a state institution).

A year or so after this series of tense exchanges between Zambaccian and the heads of the Visual Arts Division, an unsigned report in the internal correspondence of the Ministry of Arts noted that the Office for Museums (part of the Division of Visual Arts) "fought to take five paintings from the Zambaccian collection, which had been nationalized and is supported by the Ministry of Arts. But they did not succeed, probably due to political reasons."[49]

The implication of this report was that Zambaccian enjoyed powerful backing that allowed him to maintain a form of indirect control over his collection—despite the fact that it had legally become part of the state patrimony. In fact, the political support that he seemed to benefit from ultimately derived from his wide expertise. For instance, it was Zambaccian whom the communist leadership commissioned to assess the value of the paintings decorating the Palace of the Great National

Assembly, at that moment, the de jure governing institution of the Romanian socialist state.[50]

Zambaccian's museum remained opened to the public, and—as far as I could gather from the archived discussions—the entire collection was kept in situ at his home. When he made a second bequest, in 1957, the original mansion was enlarged, the additional space allowing for more light and a better arrangement of the artwork.[51] Upon Zambaccian's death in 1962, the entire collection and the house became state property, and the museum remained open until 1977.

Zambaccian's case sheds light on the ambiguities of nationalization, revealing the way former owners occasionally retained some rights to the use of their former possessions, making them "inalienable." The Zambaccian case shows how particular individuals could still function as lynchpins between two distinct political and cultural periods, benefiting from the knowledge and wealth they had accumulated in their former lives to make a new life for themselves under the new regime.

Zambaccian's case was not singular. George Oprescu also made strategic bequests for the purpose of consolidating his position. In one of the commission's meetings, a party official and vice president of the commission, M. T. Vlad, asked Oprescu what he intended to do with his private collection. Vlad hinted that Oprescu would eventually want to donate his art collection to the state, following Zambaccian's example. At that moment, in October 1948, Oprescu seemed to hesitate, answering that he would be willing "to loan" the state a part of his collection.[52] Almost a year later, however, in September 1949, he decided to make a bequest to the state.[53] Though the bequest agreement mentioned that "all of the donated objects could be used by the Minister of Arts as it sees fit, with no condition imposed by the donors," it also stipulated that all of the paintings and artifacts were designated solely for the new national gallery whose collection at that moment was still being formed (the opening was postponed several times, and the gallery did not open until 1953).[54]

Historian Cristian Vasile has noted that Oprescu very skillfully managed to "negotiate his own status with the authorities," by drawing both on his expertise and the art objects that he had owned or administered. Oprescu's own personal file with the Romanian secret police (Securitate) shows that the state authorities were aware of his strategy, as a document from that file mentions that "[George Oprescu] employs his art collection with an eye to pursuing his personal ambitions and to building his popularity. Whenever he senses that his position might be endangered by his mistakes, he donates some art objects from his collection to the Academy or different museums."[55] Oprescu donated artwork from his private collection, but specifically designated that the objects be displayed in the national gallery in Bucharest. Thus, his generous gift became also a material deed through which he extended further control over this museum. (He was appointed head of the Western art collection in the national gallery at the time of its opening in 1953.)

Both Oprescu and Zambaccian used their expertise and their art collections to secure their positions under the new regime. The gifts might have preceded the

regime's official installation as in Zambaccian's case, or may have been prompted by the pressure of the new authorities, as it was for Oprescu. But these objects functioned as material extensions of their institutional presence, and reinforced it. The two collectors found ways to exert some control over their former possessions, even though these objects, in principle, became state property. In other words, they made themselves even more indispensable by keeping these art objects partially "inalienable." Anthropologist Annette Weiner coined the term "inalienable possessions" to highlight the paradox of "keeping-while-giving" that accompanies some transactions and that challenges the expectations and dynamics of a simply mutual exchange.[56] Weiner distinguished between "inalienable" and "alienable" possessions to point out the maps of social relations that accompanied and were made via specific patterns in the circulation of objects. In doing so, she shifted the focus from "mobility" to "identity" by revealing how the objects' trajectory in processes of exchange could be confined within social boundaries (such as objects moving exclusively within a kinship group). In that case, objects that initially appeared as mobile revealed themselves to be "inalienably" tied to particular individuals. As Weiner put it, "what makes a possession inalienable is its exclusive and cumulative identity with a particular series of owners through time."[57] Weiner's original approach emphasizes that objects set on a particular trajectory should not necessarily be seen in "either/or" terms, as gifts or commodities. They could also become enablers of new social networks, materially binding various individuals and institutions, endowing the latter with the capacity to further control, exchange, or withhold these objects even though they are no longer the de facto owners. These objects thus come to be "kept-while-given," as they continue to confer power and social strength to their former owners even while no longer being in their immediate "possession."

With this theoretical framework in mind, I return to Zambaccian and Oprescu and their strategic donations. I argue that we could gain a new understanding of the formation of property regimes in early socialism if we considered the particular spaces through which these art donations circulated (and also to which they were confined)—specifically, if we pay attention to the maneuvers through which the former owners made them partially inalienable by symbolically retaining control over them. In contrast to other art collections that became fragmented during the national reorganization of the public art collections, both Oprescu and Zambaccian kept indirect ties to their former possessions. The artwork donated by them retained a symbolic aura of their former ownership—in Weiner's words, the identity of these art objects remained "exclusive and cumulative."

Approaching socialist property as "a cultural system, a set of social relations, and an organization of power," Katherine Verdery has argued that the fields of property under socialism were organized less under hard rules of ownership and more as a hierarchy of use-rights.[58] Within this hierarchy, the domain of state property remained "inalienable and indivisible," with the party-state maintaining exclusive and permanent administrative rights over it, while allocating temporary use-rights to different parties down the hierarchical ladder. Some parties were able to delegate some of these rights to actors

under their control. In sum, while particular individuals of the state apparatus could use state property, they were always users, never owners—and their use-rights depended on the institutional (and therefore political) clout they held at a given moment.

The cases that I discuss here make the state property domain appear fuzzier than it was portrayed in legal terms; they challenge a view of socialist property as a homogenous, indivisible and inalienable domain, de jure the property of the people, but de facto the property of the party-state. Other temporalities and histories concurred in the making of the property regime of early socialism. For a while, at least, during the incipient phase of the formation of a socialist regime of property, individuals could sometimes still hold influence and even administrative rights over objects that had legally become part of the state property fund. Oprescu and Zambaccian represent two examples. They managed to forge new social networks via a strategically controlled movement—or stasis—of some of these objects. In the case of Zambaccian's bequest, the condition for his artwork to become state property was that it would remain in its original location. While the legal status of these paintings had changed, their history continued to be visible because they remained part of the original collection—thus preserving that history, the prestige and economic power that enabled him to assemble the collection, as well as his own name and genealogy (he openly declared that he made the bequest in memory of his father, who had "raised him to love Romanian language and culture").[59]

If Zambaccian aimed to enhance his own political worth by keeping his collection in his home, Oprescu's choice to donate some artwork to the National Gallery was meant to both strengthen his institutional position and add value to those art pieces. The objects that he selected for donation were not among the most valuable pieces in his collection.[60] But he strategically enhanced the value of the objects by including them in the gallery's collection, which he himself characterized as the "most valuable" in the country. Moreover, as the head of the gallery's Western art section, he continued to have some administrative rights over these objects, even though they were now state property. These two examples show how objects became part of the indivisible state property domain while remaining partially inalienable from their former owners, who continued to control their movement and thus value.

Conclusion

The ongoing negotiations of value, power, and institutional visibility between state authorities and a small group of art experts reveals that state-making in early socialism, far from smoothly following a plan dictated by the Soviets and implemented by the local communists, was a process fraught with tension and uncertainty. The story of Zambaccian's hybrid art collection, which merged objects already donated to the state with artwork still under his ownership, to be included into the state property fund only upon his death, illustrates the continuous compromises and transgressions that accompanied the making of socialist property via

nationalization. Zambaccian's strategic bequest warped time and history by allowing him and his family to continue a life of relative wealth and privilege, precisely because he knew how to use his art and knowledge to make himself indispensable to a regime that, in theory, should have fully disavowed him and his past. Without that past, he would not have been able to survive in the present.

Though initially commissioned to assess the value of art objects in public museum collections and selected private collections, the art professionals discussed in this article exploited their unique expertise to become full-fledged arbiters of value for the new state. They not only evaluated art objects but also made or unmade their value by controlling the spaces of circulation within which these objects moved, or, on the contrary, were kept stagnant.[61] These professionals controlled how visible or invisible the objects would be, and thus how much the state authorities could use them to project and promote their political power. Sometimes, the experts sought to identify valuable artwork from provincial museums and bring it to the center, to become part of the much-promoted national gallery. Yet the same experts also found ways to keep other valuable objects away from the center. This happened in multiple degrees of separation and visibility, situations that distinctly subverted or even upended the production of a new property regime in early socialism through the planned nationalization.

No matter how watchful state authorities wanted to be about valuable patrimony leaving the country, they fully depended on the art professionals, and not only on their expertise, but especially their loyalty. But sometimes these experts exploited their role as ultimate decision makers, who made or unmade value according to so many other factors: personal agendas, conflicts of interests, and plans for the future. By controlling how much state authorities knew about these objects (whether they had any value, and sometimes even whether they existed or not), these experts forced the authorities to acknowledge their value, and grant them comfortable positions in the new political system.[62]

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Notes

1. Krikor H. Zambaccian, *Însemnările unui amator de artă* (București, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1957).

2. Ibid.

3. For a discussion of "donor memorials"—former aristocratic residences transformed into private museums—see C. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London: Routledge, 1995), 72-101.

4. K. Zambaccian, "Act de donație," *LiterNet.ro*, 4 March 1947, http://destinatii.liternet.ro/articol/111/Krikor-H-Zambaccian/Act-de-Donatie.html.

5. K. Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*. Culture & Society after Socialism (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 51.

6. Annette Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

7. File 141/1948, 158. Most of the archival sources used in this paper are part of one fond: ANIC (National Archives, Bucharest), Fond Ministerul Artelor și Informațiilor 1948-1950 (Ministry of Arts and Information). To avoid unnecessary repetition, I will henceforth note only the specific files and the page number(s). If I cite references from a different archival fond, I specify that in that footnote.

8. For information about artwork by Romanian painters being sent to Moscow for a temporary exhibit in August 1950, see File 150/1950, 9-13. For Romanian artwork sent to an exhibit in Paris, April 1949, see File 212/1949, 7,16, 32.

9. The literature on the pivotal role museums play in forging political and social identities is extensive. Major books include T. Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1995); P. Bourdieu and A. Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and Their Public* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*; I. Karp and S. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); S. Macdonald and G. Fyfe, eds., *Theorizing Museums: Respecting Identity and Diversity in a Changing World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); D. Preziosi and C. Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004); D. Sherman, *Worthy Monuments: Art Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

10. Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals*, 22–47.

11. D. Sherman, *Worthy Monuments: Art Museums and the Politics of Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 14.

12. Bennett, *Birth of the Museum*, 166.

13. Ibid.

14. For the political role of public art museums in modern France, see Sherman, *Worthy Monuments*.

15. C. Duncan and A. Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," in *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, ed. B. M. Carbonell (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 52.

16. B. Groys, "The Struggle against the Museum; or, The Display of Art in Totalitarian Space," in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed. D. Sherman and I. Rogoff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 146.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 156.

19. "Deciziune a Consiliului de Miniștri," *Monitorul Oficial*, June 19, 1948, 5219–5226.

20. "Lege nr.119 din 11 iunie 1948 pentru naționalizarea întreprinderilor industriale, bancare, de asigurări, miniere şi de transporturi," *Monitorul Oficial*, 133/bis, June 11, 1948. In this article, I do not discuss nationalization (in Romanian, naționalizare or, sometimes, *etatizare*) as a social and cultural process of national identity-building, but rather as a legalistic shift in the property regime and an economic process by which the communist government amassed distinct resources formerly owned by distinct parties into a single homogenous domain of state property.

21. I argue that the nationalization of art in communist Romania should be treated as part of the establishment of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, and of a particular regime of property that was juridically and institutionally distinct from what happened in Western Europe after 1945. In the post-war Soviet bloc, nationalization of art was part and parcel of the broader process of constructing a particular regime of socialist property as a collective domain administered by the state and allegedly owned by the people. As such, it was different in scale and scope from the significantly more limited nationalization emerging in Western Europe, where only a few selected fields came to be controlled and administered by the government as part of the rise of welfare state (which represented the implicit promise that the postwar governments would better protect and care for their population, their health, their education, and their economic prospects).

22. Oprescu worked during the 1920s as a secretary of the League of Nation's International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Paris.

23. He was also generous enough to share some of his findings with others. During his visit to Albert Einstein's home, Oprescu recalled that "Einstein, in his modest quarters in Berlin, also did not have any art, but I remember the appreciative look he gave me when I offered him some lithographs by Daumier, which one could buy in Paris for a few francs." Hubert Goenner, *Einstein in Berlin, 1914–1933* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005), 272, in J. Canales, *The Physicist and the Philosopher: Einstein, Bergson, and the Debate That Changed Our Understanding of Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 24.

24. The "Toma Stelian" Museum had been established through the donation of one of the largest private art collections in Bucharest, to be curated and displayed in the former mansion of the deceased benefactor, a Romanian jurist, politician, and art collector (1860–1925). As the museum director between 1932 and 1942, Oprescu invested his energy and vision into expanding the museum's endowment by commissioning work from contemporary Romanian artists as well as lending a part of his own collection.

25. George Oprescu, Report, April 1, 1948. Excerpt included in the interview with art historian Radu Bogdan, who also participated in the Peleș inventory. Bogdan in D. Uricariu, *Scara Leilor* (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 540.

26. Ibid.

27. File 142/1948, 15.

28. File 192/1948, 7.

29. Ibid., 7.

30. Ibid., 28. Munkacsy was a nineteenth-century Hungarian painter.

31. For an analysis of classification as a political and social act, see Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

32. "Proiect de lege referitoare la protecția și conservarea operelor de artă și monumentelor istorice" (Draft Law for the protection and preservation of artworks and historic monuments), article 4, July 23, 1948. File 521/1948, 29.

33. File 214/1949, 5.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. In 1948, the commission of experts in charge of the evaluation of art objects in museums and private collections deemed Ion Andreescu the most expensive Romanian painter. His pieces were evaluated at between 10,000 and 200,000 lei (at that time the equivalent of between $67 and $1333). File 429/1948, 81. In his memoirs, Krikor Zambaccian noted that he played a key role in boosting Andreescu's market value when he had bought one of Andreescu's paintings for 150,000 lei, at that time the equivalent of the value of a middle-class house. Zambaccian, *Însemnările unui amator de artă*.

37. Decision sent by the Assessment Commission (*Comisia de Verificare*, in Romanian) to Inghilberg Sloim Haim from Bucharest, April 21, 1950. File 214/1949, 23.

38. The head of the Assessment Commission (*Comisia de Verificare*) was M. T. Vlad, a former carpenter and member of the Communist Party before the war, who became a highly influential official in the Ministry of Arts. C. Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă, 1948-1953* (București: Humanitas, 2016), note 299.

39. File 214/1949, 18, 23, 24, 85, 86.

40. One of the petitioners was Donald Dunham, who was then a public relations officer at the American embassy in Bucharest. He had done his PhD thesis in art history at Bucharest University, under George Oprescu's guidance. It is then very likely that Radu Bogdan, also one of Oprescu's mentees, had met or known (of) him. File 214/1949, 18.

41. The mass emigration of Romanian Jews began immediately after the end of the war in 1945, but only in 1949 did the communist government allow the official emigration of Romanian Jews to Israel. The emigration stopped for a few years, between 1953 and 1958, and resumed with the full support of the government after 1958. The early 1960s represented the peak of Jewish emigration from Romania. L. Rotman, *Evreii din România în perioada comunistă, 1944-1954* (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 89–106.

42. I. Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things," in *The Social Life of Things*, ed. A. Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64–91.

43. Minutes, October 4, 1948, File 135/1948, 38.

44. Report, October 20, 1948, File 135/1948, 46–49.

45. I would like to emphasize that Zambaccian's housing situation was rather exceptional. At the time when the state authorities passed a decree in 1950 that limited the maximal residential space to eight square meters per person, Zambaccian succeeded in maintaining exclusive habitation of his home only for him and his immediate family (his wife and his mother). This was a privilege that the state authorities did not grant other well-known families in Bucharest who had donated (or were forced to "donate") their houses and art collections to the state. For instance, in the museum of the painter and sculptor Cecilia Storck, the artist and her extended family were also allowed to continue living as tenants upon the nationalization of their villa-museum. However, they had to limit their space, and give away some rooms to the local authorities, which redistributed them and transformed them into workshops for other painters and artists. For a report of the situation of the Storck family, see an informative note sent by Petru Comarnescu in 1962 to the Secret Police (*Dosarele secrete ale lui Anton: Petru Comarnescu în arhivele securității* [The secret files of agent Anton: Petru Comarnescu in the secret police's archives], ed. L. Boia [București: Humanitas, 2014], 134–37). For information about the 1950 housing decree and an extensive analysis of the nationalization of housing in postwar Bucharest, see L. Chelcea, "State, Kinship and Urban Transformations during and after Housing Nationalization" (Anthropology thesis, University of Michigan, 2004).

46. In a recent interview, Marcel Zambaccian, Krikor Zambaccian's nephew, mentioned his uncle receiving advice from Mihail Sadoveanu, a well-known Romanian writer who became, after the war, a protégé of the communist government and one of the official promoters of socialist realism. The nephew declared that Sadoveanu had warned Zambaccian in 1947 about "what would happen if he did not donate his collection to the state" (the implication was that it would be confiscated). M. Manega, "Ultimul Zambaccian și istoria unei familii cu nume de stradă," December 5, 2011, http://reteaualiterara.ning.com/profiles/blogs/ultimul-zambaccian-i-istoria-unei-familii-cu-nume-de-strad (accessed 20 December 2017).

47. Minutes, October 4, 1948, File 135/1948, 39.

48. Ibid.

49. File 217/1949, 27.

50. See letter from Zambaccian to Iosif Chișinevschi, then the head of *Agitprop*, the institution charged with political propaganda. The letter has no date, but a response to it was dated in 1950. ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Propagandă și Agitație, File 93/1950, 13–14.

51. Simina Stan, "Farmecul discret al muzeului Zambaccian," February 18, 2009, *Jurnalul Național.*

52. Minutes, October 4, 1948, File 135/1948, 39.

53. Donation agreement, signed by George Oprescu and other two professionals, notarized on September 10, 1949. File 32/1949, 21 and verso.

54. Ibid.

55. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for their suggestion to search from more information about Oprescu's personal file kept by the Securitate (CNSAS archives, file no. 3608). Even though I did not have the chance to consult these files, I draw on invaluable information about Oprescu that appears

in C. Vasile, "Petru Comarnescu, „Anton" şi grupul George Oprescu," *Revista Apostrof,* XXVIII, 2017, nr. 9 (328), and M. Enache, "Coborâri în infern. Câteva cazuri de critici de artă și artiști plastici în arhivele Securității," Caietele CNSAS, VIII, 2015 (1): 301–44. Both Vasile and Enache argue that it was ultimately Oprescu's unique expertise and international prestige that enabled him to constantly negotiate his relation with the communist leadership—to the point that he adamantly refused to become a collaborator for the Secret Police, and despite the information that they had about his private life and his affective choices. Enache found in Oprescu's personal file the explanation and justification for why the Securitate decided to eventually give up on their efforts to recruit him:

[E]ven though we tried to take measures against Oprescu [no explanation of such measures was given] we have come to a halt. Such a pursuit would lead to no changes in [his] attitude. He is extremely stubborn in his concepts, and his unmasking would be ill-chosen, given the high praise that his work has received. [. . .] He will be allowed to continue his work as the director of the Institute [of the History of Art] due to his professional competence and his popularity." (File no. 3608, 191, in Enache, "Coborâri în infern," 323)

56. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions*.

57. Ibid., 33.

58. K. Verdery, "The Property Regime of Socialism," *Conservation and Society* 2, no. 1 (2004): 189–98, 191.

59. K. Zambaccian, "Act de donație," March 4, 1947. *LiterNet.ro*, http://destinatii.liternet.ro/articol/111/Krikor-H-Zambaccian/Act-de-Donatie.html

60. The two most valuable items in the bequest included a painting by Simon Vouet, a Baroque French painter, and one by Alonso Cano, a Spanish Baroque painter. The other four paintings, however, were less important (three were not named, only identified as belonging to a particular school of painting, and a fourth belonged to Charles Watelet, a minor eighteenth-century French etcher). The rest of the bequest included a seventeenth-century mirror, five Japanese drawings, and two kimonos. File 32/1949, 21. This was Oprescu's first donation. In 1957, and then 1962, he made two other bequests, this time to the Romanian Academy, comprising 1,400 drawings and 6,000 etchings to the Romanian Academy, a selection of which were included in a special exhibition organized by Oprescu himself in 1962. *Desenul italian în secolele XVI-XVIII. Donația Acad. Prof. G. Oprescu* (Bucharest: Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Populare Romîne, 1962).

61. For a discussion about value being made through and within systems of circulation that are politically grounded and culturally defined, see P. K. Eiss and D. Pedersen, "Introduction: Values of Value," *Cultural Anthropology* 17, no. 3 (2002): 283–90.

62. George Oprescu was also one of the two art experts who joined the official delegation of the Romanian communist party in 1956 that went to Moscow to repatriate Romania's national treasury. In 1956, Khrushchev unofficially contacted the head of the Romanian government, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, letting him know that USSR wanted to return the treasury, which the Romanian government had previously sent to Moscow in 1916, as a form of protection during the war, and which the Soviets had kept after the 1917 Revolution. G. Oprescu, *Jurnal de Călătorie* (Bucureşti: Cartea Rusă, 1957), 55–77.

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