

NEWS

Museum of Art Craiova
19 August - 9 October 2016

Opening:
Thu 18 August, 19:00 - 21:00

Artists: Paul Neagu
and Constantin Brancusi
Tony Cragg, Marianne Eigenheer
Neville Gabie, Anish Kapoor
Vlad Nancă and Nona Inescu
Nigel Rolfe

Live performance: Neville Gabie
Vlad Nancă and Nona Inescu
Nigel Rolfe

Curator: Simona Nastac

Organisers:



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Open Fusions



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Much has been written about the influence of Brancusi's ideas upon the art of Paul Neagu' (1938 - 2004), as well as the imprint of the creative sensibility of the latter upon Anish Kapoor, Antony Gormley and Tony Cragg, some of the most well-known figures of the new generation of British sculptors in the 1980s, who were his students in London. In the exhibition space, however, their works have rarely met. In an exploratory approach, this exhibition aims to offer a space of "open fusion" (the title of a series of works by Neagu from the late '70s), in which these interferences become possible, in which the creation of Neagu itself becomes the subject generator and the catalyst of new configurations and energies, the *hyphen* between sources which marked his investigations, practices he influenced, discourses he intersected with, both alive and posthumously.

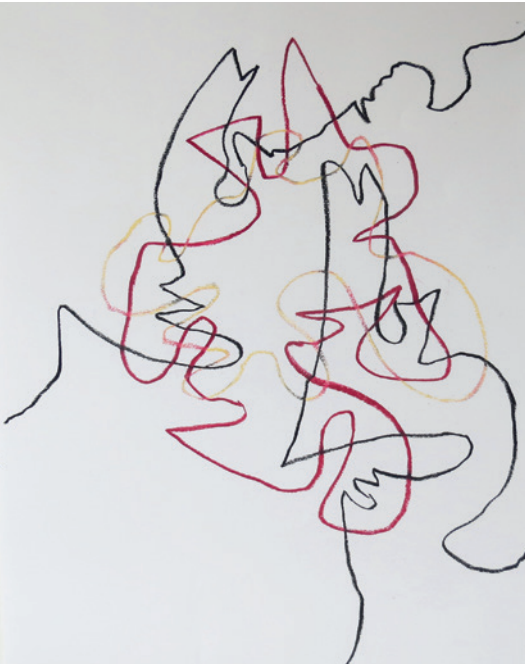
Including over 50 works by the artist from various private collections in Romania, alongside Brancusi's *Kiss* from the collection of the museum, as well as contributions by Tony Cragg, Marianne Eigenheer, Neville Gabie, Anish Kapoor, Vlad Nancă & Nona Inescu, and Nigel Rolfe, the exhibition will examine the existing, potential and emerging connections generated by these presences, with a focus on several concepts relevant for the practice of all participating artists: the essentialization and trans-figuration of the sculptural form; the nomadic nature of modern sculpture; interplay of intensities and temporalities of matter and space; mobility, processuality, transience and limit; virtualities that actualize themselves both in active matter, in the mutual constitution of subjectivities and in the construction of social and cultural history; the complicity between performance and repetition; the metamorphosis of matter into action and action into matter and text.

In 2015, the most recent and comprehensive exhibition dedicated to the artist, titled *Palpable Sculpture*, took place at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. In the catalogue of the exhibition, curator Lisa Lefevvre wrote: "To trace Neagu's thinking through linear time is near impossible, his narrative is constantly in motion – his drawings, for example, are simultaneously preparatory works, documentation, assimilation and autonomous entities. Neagu's was a continuous process of sculptural research. He understood artwork as being constantly in motion, always open to unpredictable encounters, never fixed – it was almost as if he was making one single expanding work throughout his life." Similarly, if we think of a philosopher who is relevant for both Neagu and Brancusi, Henri Bergson, whose concepts of duration and multiplicity have substantially permeated Derrida and Deleuze's postmodern deconstructions and becoming, we can indeed say that the entire creation of the artist is a philosophy of process, a single continuous phrase, interrupted by commas, but never by periods. A spiral of permanent filtration and recycling, a phrase articulated and performed by a differential presence, by a body that is permeable to the essences of the visible and the imperceptible forces which compel us to become until dematerialization and, in the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "the creation that repeats the difference of the world".

Paul Neagu graduated from the Academy of Arts in Bucharest in 1965, and in 1969 was invited by curator Richard Demarco to present his work in Edinburgh together with Peter Iacobi, Ritz Iacobi and Ion Bitzan. In 1970, after the Communist authorities cancelled an award he won for artistic research, Neagu settled in London, and in 1975, had his first personal exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, curated by Nicholas Serota. Neagu's creation includes performance, sculpture, drawings, paintings, graphics, body art and poetry, being centred upon the interest for matter, the sensorial, imprint and presence *in absentia* (palpable sculpture made of matchboxes, old newspapers, leather and various textiles; edible sculpture from waffles and gingerbread, created for the performative actions *Blind Bite* and *Cake-man* in the '70s); the notion of anthropocosmos (cellular representations of the human body and anatomic fragments, a reflection of the interdependence and symmetry of universes, micro/macro, molecular/universal, where the individual is an active cell in the unitary network and experience of the cosmos; the actions *Horizontal Rain*, *Going Tornado*, *Metronome* and *Hyphen-Ramp* – the anthropocosmos as performance, the movement of cells, "fusions between impulses and vectors",

1 Matei Stârcea – Crăciun, Paul Overy, Mel Gooding, John Wood

Marianne Eigenheer (Basel/London) studied the piano, art history, anthropology and psychology, and began to draw and paint in the '70s. She never met Neagu, but a few weeks after his death she visited his studio. In 2009 she curated a solo exhibition of his works at the Romanian Cultural Institute in London, and later started an ongoing research of his practice and life. The affinity between the two artists is found in their interest in motion and the dynamics of thought and imagination processes, as well as the spatial and temporal aspects that condition them. Eigenheer's drawings are gestural, spontaneous, composed of a few force lines, energetic and fluid at the same time, "traces of the female body and subjectivity across the world", as the artist describes them.



Marianne Eigenheer, *Three Ladies Dancing*, 2016
oil and pastel on paper, 70 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist

In 2011 she began experimenting with a type of contingent and continuous drawing, placing sheets of paper next to one another and allowing the tip of the pencil to migrate until exhaustion, as in a *Dance* by Matisse or a *Tornado* by Neagu. Here, the artist presents three works from the *Ladies Dancing* series, 2016.

Neville Gabie (London) studied sculpture at the Royal College of Art in London in 1986/88, and has been interested in Brancusi, the essentialization of the sculptural form and the exploitation of energies in the material since his youth. After visiting his studio in Paris and seeing *The Kiss* in the Montparnasse cemetery, he wrote to Neagu in 1982, wanting to find out more about the Târgu-Jiu ensemble. Neagu replied frankly: "if you really want to understand, go see it." Brancusi's works had a

decisive impact upon him, especially the manner in which Brancusi integrated the experience of the public in the space of the sculptures. In the following 25 years, Gabie's practice, including performance, video, photography, object, installations and books,



Neville Gabie, *Experiments in Black and White*, 2012/13, performance. Courtesy the artist

developed in close conjunction with the processes that shaped every place and situation, and most of the time in collaboration with the respective communities or other artists, writers and scientists. Here Gabie is present with the video documentation of a performance in the *Experiments in Black and White* series, an exploration of the materiality of primary substances in relation to the human body, an act of re-evaluating the essential in the Anthropocene and the digital era. The artist will also perform live in the space of the exhibition, in September.

Anish Kapoor (London), a student of Neagu's at Hornsey College of Art in 1973/76 and one of his closest friends until his death, has always said that Neagu's mystical and esoteric approach had a crucial influence upon his thinking. One of the most influential and original artists of his generation, Kapoor received the Turner Prize in 1991 and is the author of monumental works such as *Cloud Gate* (Chicago), *Temenos* (Middlesbrough) and *Marysas* (Tate Modern). Most of his works privilege the immersive experience of spatial



Anish Kapoor, *Stick and apple performance work*, 1974.
Courtesy the artist

between the actions of the individual and the governing social structures, in which repetition ultimately leads to exhaustion, dissolution of the ego, and a shift in conscience); and the concept of generative art (simultaneously the subject and object of its own configuration – *Hyphen*; a constellation of forces and energies with a transformative, catalytic impact – *Epagoge*, *Nine Catalytic Stations*; multiplicity, dynamism, fluid identity – the works produced under the umbrella of the Generative Art Group imagined by Neagu in 1972, consisting of five organically and democratically complementary members, the artist himself and four fictional artists with names created through playful anagrams in the good Fluxus and Neo-Dada tradition).



Paul Neagu, *Gradually going tornado*, performance, 1976. Courtesy of Paul Neagu Estate Romania

In 1979, Rosalind Krauss wrote about the negative condition of modern sculpture, its lack of fixation in regard to space (architecture or landscape), and its self-referentiality in relation to the symbolic significance associated with its monumental function: "Through its fetishization of the base, the sculpture reaches downward to absorb the pedestal into itself and away from actual place; and through the representation of its own materials, or the process of its construction, the sculpture depicts its own autonomy. Brancusi's art is an extraordinary instance of the way this happens. The base becomes, in a work like the *Cock*, the morphological generator of the figurative part of the object; in the *Caryatids* and *Endless Column*, the sculpture is all base; while in *Adam and Eve*, the sculpture is in a reciprocal relation to its base. The base is thus defined as essentially transportable, the marker of the work's homelessness integrated into the very fiber of the sculpture."²

Similarly, Neagu tests the mobility of sculpture as early as 1968 (before the *Cake-man* at Sigi Krauss Gallery and *Blind Bite* at Compass Gallery, in 1971), which becomes portable in the performance *Neagu's Boxes*, documented on video by Comis Laurian, in which object-boxes, placed in the midst of the urban turmoil of Bucharest are the catalyst for tactile interactions with passers-by, in an experiment of spatial perception of the cellular human body inside the extended cell of the city and also of the energies that define it. Concurrently, Neagu's drawings and graphics often include references to Brancusi's aesthetic options, the micro and macro implications of the archetype (the *Hyphen* itself is an archetype of human becoming), with dynamic elements also integrated in the actions *Going Tornado* or *Horizontal Rain*, in which the motions of the artist fuse impulses and vectors derived from the continuously ascending form of the *Endless Column*, or the isotropy and circularity of interaction at the *Table of Silence*.

Tony Cragg (Wuppertal) studied with Paul Neagu at the Royal College of Art in London in 1973-76. In 1988, he won the prestigious Turner Award, and is one of the most acclaimed British sculptors who made a name for themselves in the '80s, with over 40 years of exhibition and teaching activity. The composition, properties and impact of industrial materials, the fabrication processes, both natural and artificial, molecular transactions and catalytic reactions in the constitution of the form, the informational content of matter and the interdependent relationship with the significance of the sculptural form are a few of the subjects that he is constantly investigating. His practice suggests a taxonomic understanding of the world and of form as an unfolding in time, derived from elementary particle and nuclear interaction physics, similar to Neagu's thinking. His sculptures, made of wood, stone, bronze, aluminium, glass, street refuse, found objects and consumer goods, are studies for a "poetic mythology of the material world we live in", as Cragg says. The works presented in the *Nexus* exhibition are studies from the series *Chromosomes*, *Microstructures* and *Personalities*.

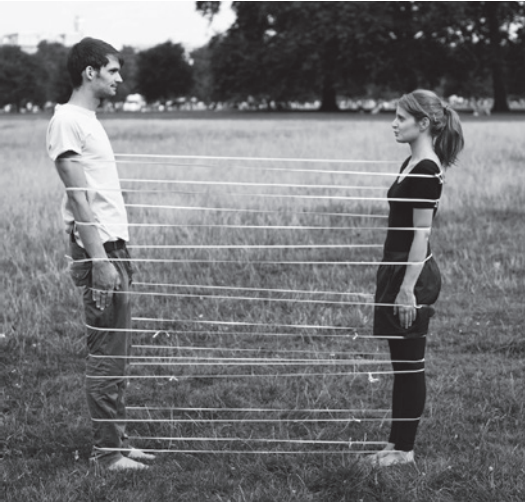


Tony Cragg, *Untitled*, 2016
pencil on paper, 36 x 50 cm. Courtesy the artist

2 Rosalind Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, October, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), p. 38.

dislocation, of the void as potentiality and a field of invisible forces in which matter becomes immaterial, the finite opens towards the infinite, and the beholder is directly engaged in the cognition processes through which the intellect constructs reality. The symmetry between the human body and the cosmos, as well as the total experience of the artistic object or action are also key concepts for Neagu, ever since the *Manifest of Palpable Art* and his first exhibition in Edinburgh in 1969, with tactile objects presented in complete darkness. This exhibition includes a series of 11 photographs taken by Kapoor in 1974, which documented a performance of Neagu's students at Hornsey College of Art, an exercise centred upon the productive tensions between the natural and the artificial, the discursive and the ineffable, the sensorial and the extrasensorial, body and space, presence and participation.

Vlad Nancă and Nona Inescu (Bucharest) work as individual artists in photography, installation, sculpture, books and digital art. In 2009 Nancă worked on a research project on Neagu's art and, together with Inescu, created a performance inspired from the poetics and aesthetic of his iconic



Vlad Nancă, *Hyphen*, 2009
performance with Nona Inescu. Courtesy the artist

Hyphen. Hyphen, from the Greek *hyph'hén*, means 'together', and Neagu's sculpture skilfully exploits the term's dialectics, by reconciling contradictory geometries into a seemingly unstable form, at the same time capable of generating new energies precisely through its precarious balance and compositional tension. Similarly, in Nancă and Inescu's performance also named *Hyphen*, the bodies of the artists are brought together through an elastic band borrowed from their childhood games, multiplied and tensioned to generate a vulnerable sculptural volume, an uncertain construction reflecting simultaneously the dynamics of integration and disintegration, the Freudian anti-

harmony of the biological and the death drive that turns our bodies back into cosmic matter. Their performance reminds us of Abramovic and Ulay, as well as of Franz Erhard Walther's performative sculptures, but also of Brancusi's *Kiss*, which contains the same dialectics.

Nigel Rolfe (Dublin) has been an iconic figure of performance art since 1974, with significant contributions to the history of the genre, both as artist, curator, activist and theoretician. His practice is, in fact, a political, vital commitment of probing social injustices with his own body, which simultaneously becomes an instrument and place of resistance.



Nigel Rolfe, *Paradise Lost*, 2014, performance. Courtesy the artist

The artist also works with photography, video and sound, mediums capable of disseminating the political message and engaging a wider audience beyond the specific time and place of live action. Rolfe studied sculpture in the '70s, and before the term performance became usual, he called his actions "sculptures in motion". To him, the moment of action is the moment in which "art takes place", and the work he leaves behind, whether video, photography or installation is nothing but evidence of this occurrence. He met Neagu between 1975/76 in his studio in London and participated in exhibitions together, until their friendship culminated in 1980 with a personal exhibition of Neagu, *Constellations*, in the space of Project Arts Centre Gallery in Dublin, run by Rolfe. For this exhibition, Rolfe will create a context-responsive performance, a test of resonance with Neagu, Brancusi, the idea of limitation and its transgressions.

Simona Nastac is a London-based curator and critic. She studied Art History and Theory in Bucharest and holds an MA in Creative Curating from Goldsmiths College, London. She has curated high-level exhibitions and live events for biennials, festivals, museums and galleries in London, New York, Saint Petersburg, Prague, Shanghai, Cluj and Bucharest. From 2006 to 2013, she was Head of Arts at the Romanian Cultural Institute in London.