

CONSERVATION PRACTICES WITHIN THE HISTORICAL MONUMENTS DIRECTORATE (1952-1977) AND THEIR CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE/

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Abstract. The Romanian restoration movement reached its peak between 1952 and 1977. This period was characterized by the activity of the Directorate of Historical Monuments - DHM, a division under the relevant ministry. Following the nationalization of properties after World War II, the Romanian state became both the planner and beneficiary of restoration efforts. Archival materials from the National Institute of Heritage, along with dedicated publications, reflect a range of practices aligned to the on growing global awareness towards cultural heritage, concerns about authenticity and integrity, interdisciplinary and international cooperation, legislation development, technological innovations and other. During this time-frame, extensive historical research underpinning restoration projects was conducted, that included detailed studies of building techniques and the archaeological research became more pronounced. Innovations during this period included the implementation of anastylosis, protective structures, advancements in construction materials and techniques, the reinforcement of historical buildings with concrete, horizontal and vertical translations of buildings. A significant focus was placed on the rehabilitation of historical assemblies, city centers, and historic avenues, emphasizing an urban perspective on restoration. This included debates on contemporary interventions in historic places, extensive landscape reshaping, urban furnishings, signage and decorative lighting projects. Other notable areas of interest were vernacular architecture, interdisciplinary fresco restoration using new technologies, restitution of historical functions, interpretation museums within iconic monuments, inventory actions and the institution of buffer zones. These developments indicate that DHM's efforts in heritage conservation align well with leading global practices. The DHM was not only the sole institution responsible for coordinating the conservation of built heritage, but it also served as the exclusive national school for heritage architects, which was abruptly disbanded in 1977. Following the political regime change in 1989, national professionals and emerging institutions encountered a transformed political and economic landscape, while still aspiring to the professional standards of the past.

Introduction. After the Second World War, the demolitions of cultural heritage and the economic and social debates about reconstructions, emphasized the historical ongoing concerns about authenticity and integrity. The Venice Charter 1964 was followed by interdisciplinary and international cooperation and legislative developments. Technological innovations and the enlargement in time and space of the concept of historical monument followed as well.

The concept of critical restoration and what was developed in a programmatic document through the articles of the Venice Charter synthesize the generalization of practices considered successful by the best researchers in Western Europe. The Venice Charter was the maturation of the field of historical conservation by basing restoration interventions on thorough research. The research included archive projects, document images, facade research, archaeological research, visual analyses carried out to demarcate the successive stages in which interventions were made on the historical monument and to identify arguments for a restoration of lost elements. Historical research also becomes the basis of the volumetric and formal compositions of elements with a contemporary design that are to be inserted into a monument or historical site. Historical studies began to be carried out by specialists and historians with well-documented sources and not by architects, as had been proposed since the 19th century by some researchers from the German environment.

In parallel with the development of a global approach in restoration, different personal and historical styles in restorations coexisted and still do. The specific ISMs in architecture and art in the 20th century were present in the conservation field as well, before and after the second World War, and were represented by individuals, national and regional schools.

The early beginning of the conservation movement in the Romanian space in the second half of the 19th century had a very important role in the exceptional evolution that followed after the second World War. The evolution of the field coincided with the unification of the country and at the end of the 19th century and an economic growth that bloomed in between the wars. Also many of the founders of the heritage movement in Romania had graduated at Beaux-Arts in Paris, many restoration architects that worked in DHM afterwards had postgraduate scholarships in Rome, in the interwar period. After the second world war the Romanian state became both the planner and beneficiary of restoration efforts, and this had also contributed. The premises for the national restoration movement to reach its peak between 1952 and 1977 were formed. DHM was not only the sole institution responsible for coordinating the conservation of built heritage, but it also became an unofficial exclusive national school for heritage architects.

The evolution of the conservation field after the World War II in the developed countries included innovative activities such as: thorough historical studies, archaeological and architectural research, inventory actions, anastyloses, protection structures, innovative construction materials and techniques, consolidation of historical structures and relocation of historical monuments, urban restoration: rehabilitation of centers, assemblies and historical centers or cities, buffer zones, concerns for vernacular architecture, concerns about the interpretation, museification and the historical use of the building.

Innovative conservation practices. During the second half of the 20th century, as in the Western European countries, important inventories were made in Romania [1], as the second version of the list of historical monuments was published in 1955. The first had been issued in 1904. The field of archaeology in the Popular/Socialist Republic of Romania – PRR/ SRR

was advanced as information about underwater archaeological prospects in 1952 was published [2] and about archaeological photo-interpretation studies [3] in 1973. In the same time, in Dobrogea, at Adamclisi, an important roman monument was reconstituted with scattered fragments and inaugurated in 1977, the Tropheum Traiani. The works were the results of a political views emphasizing the daco-roman origins of the Romanians, in order for the state to gain individuality from the Soviet Union.

Few anastyloses made by DHM were presented by the delegation in Paris in 1957 as the Hunchiar Mosque [4] in Constanța, project by architect Rodica Mănciulescu, building of massive stone blocks walls built in the Turkish construction system. Probably the most famous one that contains elements of creativity and is a good example of collaboration between architects, archaeologists and engineers carried out between 1960-1964 is the anastylosis of the caves carved in fragile calcar at Basarabi [5]. The materials used for the anastylosis at Basarabi are reinforced concrete and cement mortar, which restored, reconstituted and consolidated the rock from chalk fragments. The action was completed by 1983.

We have identified two protection structures by DHM. A concrete protective structure was partially constructed for less than half of the Basarabi cave site. Since the construction was not finalized, it was later covered temporarily with a structure of wood and asphalt cardboard between 1957 and 1962 [6] for protection, later replaced with polycarbonate [7]. In Constanța, an ancient mosaic [8] that occupied one of the ancient terraces towards the sea was accidentally discovered during excavations for the foundation of a block of flats, which was later covered by a protection construction. The monument found had great universal value as a site from early Christianity with very few correspondents known in the universal history and the project concept implied unique theoretical and technical approaches in a series of articles were later published [9].

The most important restauration projects out of the hundreds of projects developed by the DHM are the ones selected by the same structure [10] for the participation at the international congress held in Paris in 1957 – although some of the projects were developed prior to the second World War, the ones selected almost two decades afterwards in 1972 by Ioana Grigorescu [11], one of the most creative restorers and Vigil Polizu's selection [12] in 2018. All three sources mentioned the restorations at Moldovița, Neamț and Sucevița monasteries and Dragomirna was mentioned by two of them, and almost all had a dedicated article in the periodical *Arhitectura PRR*, amongst many other [13]. All this restoration project had fierce decisions, at Moldovița a ruin was reconstructed, based on historical research, at Neamț the second church built inside the historical courtyard was dismantled and moved, at Sucevița the historic volumes of the assembly were recomposed and at Dragomirna, the abbot's residences were boldly rebuilt in concrete, in the absence of documentary images and information. Another important reconstruction was the Potlogi palace in order to preserve the stucco decorations. Other two bold approaches were the restauration of Manuc's Inn, one of the few historical inns in the region, that was restored to the historic appearance and the works at Mărcuța Monastery, where the volumetric integrity at the bell tower was not considered compulsory.

Mihaela Slomnescu [14] presents her rehabilitation project of a building from 1928 by famous Grigore Matei Cantacuzino at the Mogosoia Palace and in her article we found detailed information about the materials and construction techniques. The previous details were exquisite in wood, metal, mosaic and were executed by the Fondul Plastic, an artistic specialized institution.

The consolidation of historical structures was a domain in which there were exceptional results due to the seismicity of the area and the experience accumulated historically. The good engineering superior education of Romanian specialists who consolidated the historical structures, collaborated on complex anastylosis projects and relocated monuments was a contributing factor. Vertical relocations or translations of important monuments protected from the major water systematization works – the socialist dams were a well-known practice: the Ostrov Hermitage Church, the Rebegești Church – Crevedia or the relocations of fragments from from Ada Kaleh to Șimian by architect Mihaela Adrian, in order to avoid submersions. In 1957 [4] the vertical lifting of the church from Rebegești by 3.5 m in the middle of Lake Buftea by the engineers Spoială and Moraru was presented at the International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historical Monuments in Paris at Chaillot Palace and was appreciated regarding technical and scientific aspects of restoration. The earthquakes areas consolidations presented within the same context were also praised.

Curinschi [15] dedicates a consistent chapter to new theoretical and practical concerns regarding urban restoration in the post-war evolution and the preservation of historical cities and centers and discusses the identity character imprinted on cities by historical ensembles, like in the cases of: Brașov, Târgu Mureș, Sibiu, Sebeș, Ploiești. In Bucharest, the notable projects were the Competition for the systematization of Nicolae Bălcescu Square in Bucharest, now University Square. The proposed arrangements targeted the area where the Bucharest National Theater was later built [16] but also other major projects for the systematization of other central areas were done: Union's Square, Victory Avenue, and the Old Center. For the protection of historical centers, important duplications of historic centers were made during that period: the new center of Sighișoara, the new ensembles of Băile-Herculane, Băile Govora and Călimănești and other such resorts oriented towards national and international tourism.

Contemporary constructions in historical areas and in protection areas were consistently debated within the Historical Monuments Commission. In the Unirii Square in Timișoara a historic house with a baroque stylistic was built to complete the historical ensemble, another example in the vicinity of the Voaleta store in Bucharest, and another intervention in an important historical ensemble among the most successful ones is the Aurora Hotel [17] situated in Satu Mare. The rehabilitation of centers, assemblies and historical centers or cities and large-scale contemporary architecture interventions in historical and protected urban areas was a field that was considered highly developed in Romania and <<can be envied at the international level and especially a particularly sensitive urban conservation that can be considered a leader in the field of urban planning>> [1]. Due to the rapid assimilation of critical restoration concepts that were well-known by professionals trained in Paris and Rome and rigorously applied within

DHM and the urgent modernization of cities in the socialist era, the urban rehabilitation domain flourished.

Oliver Velescu [18] published in 1972 the article entitled “Protection zones of historical monuments. Their role and functions”, as the discussions about protection zones and the surroundings of the monument began to be possible together with the idea of more thorough research within the DHM since the 1950s.

Concerns for rural heritage, increased as a modernist trend as it appears from multiple articles published in the 1950s, often entangled with politic propaganda by Curinschi [19], G. Ionescu [20] Adrian Gheorghiu [21] and others. Other articles contain rural urban planning research as base for concepts in systematization projects: Măgura Branului [22], southern slope of Piatra Craiului conducted by the Ministry of Construction, Upper Argeș Basin [23] and a very meticulous research, Northern Dobrogea [24], Mangalia [25], Suceava region [26]. The rural industrial housing projects and individual housing among the new projects were inspired by folk architecture [27].

Large-scale landscape consolidations were also carried out at the Suceava Citadel, where a team of engineers remodeled the land and probably in other fortresses that were consolidated by DHM. Associate architect Laurian [28] writes about the open spaces planted in the socialist city along with many concerns for parks, gardens in cities and landscape arrangements as specific state concerns for the citizens well-being. The restoration of historical parks was another activity during DHM’s existence [29].

Urban arrangements and furniture, signage and details were considered important within the DHM. Special attention was often paid to carpentry, ironwork, decorative or nighttime electric lighting [30] at Potlogi and Brașov Council Square and other finishes exposed to faster degradation due to use – as in the case of Manuc’s Inn, or in the details of the Hurezi Monastic Assembly and especially in Ioana Grigorescu’s projects. There was a specific care and concern for the neat appearance and visual harmony with the monument of all the new elements necessary for the use of the monuments, as many of the professionals that founded the discipline were educated at Beaux-Arts, Paris.

The restoration works of mural paintings included in the articles in the magazine *Arhitectura* are very few, but are thoroughly described in the Bulletin of Historical Monuments – BHM: the works about the international pilot construction site in Humor from the 70s and an article reviewing a work entitled *Disease and degradation of old fresco painting and restoration methods* published in the singular number of the periodical in 1958 [31]. The international cooperation was adopted in the communist state, as The Center in Rome had one of his first missions in Romania. The legislation and specific national and international institutions followed.

In the case of the restorations at Manuc’s Inn, there were debates about restoring the historical use and identifying the appropriate function that the new ensemble was to receive, one of the proposals discussed was the creation of a museum of trade, but it was considered that the inn, the original one or a modern hotel closer to the original one is more appropriate. Most likely, these debates were also held in the historical monuments commission regarding many monument buildings.

The educational role of historical monuments [32], and on the other hand, in the international environment, with the development of ideas for research and valorization of historical monuments, the side of cultural tourism and education through monuments begins to develop. Many of the most important museums nationally were created during that period, including the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanta.

The role of the architect who sometimes was not part of DHM’s team was less important. The decision makers were the professionals working for DHM and the Commission of Historical Monuments. There were rejected projects, debates, and professional arguments. For example, at the Putna grand monastic assembly, architect Curinschi, once a deputy director inside the DHM proposed a contemporary intervention for the new museum that was rejected by the commission. We have identified a similar case at the Mihai Vodă Church when a pastiche frieze was rejected in the 1950 with the recommendation to work with a contemporary artist, as it was the case in France.

Conclusions. DHM was the descendent of the Commission for Historical Monuments – CHM and was in tune with the newest practices at European, Italian and French level through the scholars at Academia di Romania Horia Teodoru, Ștefan Balș and other. It is difficult to place the activity of DHM in an international or European context, without relatively detailed research of the specificities of each case, but we have the appreciations of Jukka Jokilehto and Miles Glendinning and, in addition and the SRR’s presence through DHM at the International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historical Monuments in Paris, organized at the Chaillot Palace in 1957, where the works of engineers Spoială and Moraru, regarding technical and scientific aspects of restoration, were highly appreciated, particularly in addressing the issue of consolidations in regions where earthquakes are more severe.

Teodoru noticed that in Paris, the principle of unity of style was abandoned, yet the issues of authenticity and the question of whether or not to intervene especially in antique sites when knowledge is missing or the changes of destination – problems that were opened by the Second World War and the destructions of that time, were insufficiently debated. It is understood that national thinking was aligned with the directions of the Rome Center and the Athens Charter, which had not yet deeply penetrated the French milieu.

All the practices established by the Venice Charter were applied at a national level and continued to be applied until 1977, and the state institutions and legislation were highly functional and efficient and were accompanied by construction materials deposits and construction professionals that knew how to work in stone, metal, wood and other in traditional techniques.

The restorations seem to have lost the preoccupation for authenticity after 1977, and many of the practitioners seem to be unaware of the basic restoration principles. In Romania, especially because there was an interruption of the natural evolution for 12 years, there is an urgent need to return to the Venice Charter principles, revisited.

References.

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8. Technical data about the mosaic building that was discovered in 1959 are scarce, and to the displeasure of Adrian Rădulescu, until the 1970s, it was not yet assigned a monographic study. Adrian Rădulescu, „Care este părerea dumneavoastră? (Discuție asupra restaurării edificiului roman cu mozaic din Constanța)” in *BMI*, 4/1970, pp. 33-38.
9. M. Sâmpetru, “Date tehnice despre edificiul cu mozaic din Constanța, Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice” in *BMI*, 3/1970, pp. 52-56. Olga Mărculescu, Margareta Șipoș, “Precizări cronologice în legătură cu edificiul roman cu mozaic de la Constanța” in *BMI*, 4/1973, pp. 59-60.
10. The use of reinforced concrete at the Church of Saint Michael in Cluj, works led by architect Ion Dumitrescu and engineer Nicolae Laslo, the anastylosis of the Hunchiar Mosque in Constanța, a project carried out by architect Rodica Mănculescu, the restoration of the roofs of the Sucevița Monastery church to their original forms, a project by architect Dan Corneliu, and of the Neamț Monastery church, a project by Ștefan Balș, the restoration of important monuments of civil and monastic architecture, namely the Palace from Potlogi by Radu Udriou and Rodica Mănculescu, the Moldovița Monastery baptistry, a project by architect Dan Corneliu, the completion of an architectural ensemble through the vaulted gallery of the Aninoasa Monastery, works at Tismana by architects Radu Udriou and Maria Lozano, the restoration of the Gura Motrului Monastery to its original form and reconstruction by Eugenia Greceanu, the project by architect Dinu Teodorescu for the church in Rădeana, the restoration of the vaults at Huniade Castle, the works at Dealu Monastery by architect Nicolae Diaconu. H. Teodoru, *Op. Cit., Passim*.
11. Ioana Grigorescu makes a selection of the most important works carried out between 1959 and 1972 by women architects: the relocation of a fragment of the fortified stellate fortress from Ada Kaleh island to Șimian island, by Mihaela Adrian, the cave ensemble from Basarabi by Liliana Bilciurescu, the restorations of several wooden churches in Maramureș, the Evangelical Church in Sebeș, the Peasant Fortress in Prejmer, the Church of Saint Nicholas in Schei Brașov and others by architect Mariana Angelescu, the restorations of the Cozia, Strehaiia monasteries, the Royal Fortress Complex in Târgoviște, Aninoasa and Mărcuța in Bucharest by architect Rodica Mănculescu, the restoration of the Călnic, Cricov and Târgu Mureș Fortresses by architect Sanda Negoescu, the research and clearances at the Radu Vodă Church in Bucharest by Sanda Voiculescu, the Stone House from Herăști by Olga Băzu, the restorations of in Sucevița and Dragomirna, the old ensemble from Voroneț and the Humor, Putna, Secu, Slatina Monasteries by architect Ioana Grigorescu. Alexandru Panaiteșcu, *Ioana Grigorescu - calea sincerității, București*, Imprimeria Arta Grafică, 2018, pp. 60-61.
12. The works considered valuable by Polizu from the DHM period are: the Arbore church through the beauty of the roof made by Virgil Antonescu, the Royal Inn in Suceava, the Monastery Ensembles of Moldovița and Neamț made by the architect Ștefan Balș and his team, the unfinished Râșca Monastery church also by Ștefan Balș
- under what Polizu calls Ștefan Balș's doctrine still valid today, the monastery ensembles of Dragomirna and Sucevița by Ioana Grigorescu. Virgil Polizu in Al. Panaiteșcu, *Op. Cit., Passim*.
13. The restoration projects of the DHM period 1952-1977 described in the *Arhitectura RPR* magazine (probably also with a recommendation from the management – that is, probably considered among the best) are: Neamț Monastery, Precista Church in Galați, Restoration of the Brâncovenesc Palace from Potlogi, restoration works of the walls of the Sibiu citadel, restoration works at the church of St. Mihail in Cluj, the “Vasile Alecsandri” National Theater in Iași, Hirscher House, Brașov, wooden church, Plopiș, restoration of the Călnic fortress, the Siegfried tower, the Brașov - Prejmer region, Mediaș, the Royal Court in Târgoviște, the Neamț Monastery, the Church of Stephen the Great, Brebu, Horezu, Călnic, Moldovița, Cozia, Crețulescu, the Melic House, the Tei Inn, the Strehaiia Monastery, the Basarabi cave complex, the Galata Church in Iași, the Doina Restaurant or the “Bufetul”. *Arhitectura RPR*, București, Uniunea Arhitecților din România – UAR, 1952 – 1965. *Arhitectura RSR*, București, UAR, 1965 – 1989.
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Figures.

FIGURE 1 - Gheorghe Marin, Manuc's Inn, Bucharest, 1966-1967, Biblioraft 94 – Hanul lui Manuc, Fototeca INP, Fond DMI, Arhiva INP.

FIGURE 2 - Unknown author, Entrance tower elevation, Mărcuța Monastery, Bucharest, Arhiva Institutului Național al Patrimoniului, Fond DMI.

FIGURE 3 - S. Costiuc, Mărcuța Monastery, Bucharest, September 2023.

FIGURE 4 - S. Costiuc, The museum of the roman edifice with mosaic – interior, Constanța, October 2024.

FIGURE 5 - S. Costiuc, The museum of the roman edifice with mosaic – exterior, Constanța, October 2024.

FIGURE 6 - Curinschi Vorona, Museum project for Putna Monastery rejected by the CHM, 1967. Arhiva Institutului Național al Patrimoniului, Fond DMI, Dosar 7419/1967.



