

EXHIBITION REVIEW:

MNAC – Exhibition Session, 08.2022–03.2023



I'm glad that I managed to visit the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest after a long time during which I haven't been able to see the simultaneous exhibitions. I'm curious to explore the work of the artists in the line-up so I quickly get into the story. On the ground floor, there was a large photography exhibition under the title *Continuous Flow – Discontinuous Images*: Author Dani Ghercă, curator Sam Steverlynck. What do we see? A few visual obstacles in the ample space of the first hall, i.e. photographs mounted on a few lonely monoliths describing geometric compositions seen from above. The planimetry of the buildings looks like a section

in the structure of a voluminous honeycomb. The compositions are monumental but not as imposing as one would expect after the first steps into the exhibition. In this case, the minimalism of the display excessively rarefies the exhibition. Next door, in the marble hall, we have a slightly more mystical room. Artist Dorina Horățău's installation relies on correspondence. The bright diagonals are what support the whole ensemble, they are the key to the room. Slits of light mystify the dry leaves layered inside some vertical labyrinth objects. The penumbra leaves a slight feeling of depth, of something more. We advance to the next level. This exhibition is called *Leviathan* and was inaugurated on 26.05.2022, allowing the visitor to step "Into the bowels of the collection" of MNAC, concept: Călin Dan, curator: Irina Radu and architecture: Raluca Vișinescu & Ioana Marin.

The MNAC archive hosting big names in modern, post-modern and contemporary Romanian art is and is not on display. This exposure separates in some parts the gaze from the object, leaving a feeling of seclusion. Basically, it's

simply unfortunate that we don't have the opportunity to understand our art, past or present, in more standardized visiting conditions, here or anywhere. The need for the archive to be exposed but at the same time protected didn't allow too many display options. One would certainly like to see those sculptures that sit heavy on the shelves, to look at their corners, asperities, shapes. We can only hope that in the future such desires will be fulfilled in a permanent collection.

By contrast, we reach the floor of the Ștefan Câlția retrospective. A beloved, celebrated artist, well-staged by the exhibition design. The entire scenography of this extensive exhibition manages to transport the viewer somewhere else; I don't know if near the artist's work, but definitely in a special world. The very dynamic background in shape and color is capable, in several route sequences, of distracting you from the works, themselves becoming just bits of laborious scenography. A lot of displays, a lot of architecture, too much *mise-en-place* when what one actually wants to understand about the artist is strictly in his works. And the works are many. No variant of the Câlția artist is overlooked: painting, drawing, prints, graphics, objects. The work of this artist is loaded with literature and dreamlike, insidious representations. There is no need to double this with a special exhibition design. But let's be clear, on this floor, in this MNAC artistic segment, one sees, observes, understands and explores art. The clear curatorial intentions (curators: Cătălin Davidescu, Alexandra Manole) ultimately succeed in emphasizing an artist's personality.

The success of this series of exhibitions is ensured by the top floor, literally the icing on the cake. Here one enters the sane territory of contemporary art, with the exhibition *Left hand towards distant view* signed by Ana Maria Micu and curated by Simona Vilău, an artist herself. Here the architecture serves the exhibitor, it serves the works, and the whole concept. Ana's works have silent poetry. It is the type of poetry that plants have in their invisible and endless movement. I will not talk about philosophical complexities, nor will I psychoanalyze artistic intentions, I wish I could be competent at that, but I leave this temptation to psychologists passionate about contemporary art. I simply note that I was in this exhibition in front of a profound artist who does not throw herself into the flow of chances but chooses the one that best intertwines with the rhythm of her creation. Ana grows plants. She created a micro garden in her home. In the same living space, two systems are developing, growing side by side in an autonomous but controlled manner, observed in a mind laboratory. Plants with or without fruits, images in colors or colorless grow organically, fully and concretely under the same roof. Two totally different growth systems, yet very close in structure. They develop daily, in silence, in perpetual subtly motion, all living or dying in impossible but functional contexts and all guided by the same hand, that of the artist. It is no coincidence that two worlds grow in the same cabin: the boreal creation of Micu

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– the *Lapp* and that of *Crypto* – the chlorophyll, which exists by its sole intention to prosper. Yes, these things can be felt and seen when you step into the exhibition, otherwise quite small but condensed in the strong gesture of the artist. The force of this gesture will throw you unprepared into the other exhibition on the same floor, the Polaroid pieces by Charif Benhelima – *Morning Light*. Curated by Sandra Demetrescu, the exhibition is sensitive, gentle, exhibited silently, as in a herbarium that carries with it different stages of the artist's growth.

So, this series of MNAC exhibitions was worth visiting from bottom to top in order to experience a qualitative crescendo in terms of contemporary art.

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