

## **Abstract of the habilitation thesis**

### ***Art and Politics in Eastern Europe after 1960: pedagogy, theory, history***

#### **Candidate:**

Ph. D. Associate Professor Cristian-Emil Nae

Faculty of Visual Arts and Design

”George Enescu” National University of Arts, Iași

The thesis summarizes the main didactic and scientific achievements of the author after the completion of his Ph. D. thesis and outlines future directions for the development of the academic activities and research, in line with the international research directions in which the author is already involved.

During this period, I developed a didactic career in which, as a lecturer and then as an associate professor, I was aiming at transmitting the most up-to-date information in the fields of art history and art theory, especially on the subjects of critical art theory, aesthetics of visual arts and the methods of art history, materialized through the publication of three courses and an introduction to the contemporary art theory for the general public. If in teaching aesthetics I focused on analytical aesthetics, the course of historiography of art history aims to familiarize students with new research methods borrowed from philosophy and humanities such as discourse analysis, post-structuralism and semiotics analysis of art, feminism, social history of art, geo-history and the post-colonial theory of art. I also consider it notable that I promoted the interdisciplinary direction of exhibition studies in Romania, and I have completed the courses of the history of contemporary art, especially focused on the Western artistic canon, with a special course focused on the connection between art and politics in Eastern Europe after 1960. This course is an extension of a course funded by the ERSTE Foundation through an international competition for the implementation of new courses in Central and Eastern European universities analyzing contemporary art and regional culture. The two master courses naturally continue my research concerns that will be briefly presented below. I also coordinated or participated to several extracurricular workshops on the topics of contemporary critical practices, critical writing and reading and exhibition design, workshops that did not fit into the academic offer within the History and Art Theory section, but whose necessity is proven empirically in current practice art criticism and curatorial activity.

Regarding the research activity, one can notice a constant interest in the exploration of the history of contemporary art (since 1960) in Eastern and Central Europe (and especially in the Romanian space), applying methodological principles derived from critical theory, especially from post-structuralism, social and material art history and critical geography of art. In this respect, I consider it notable that I am the author of the first survey on the theory of contemporary art published in Romania (Polirom, 2015). Studies conducted so far have focused on the connection between conceptual art and performance during late socialism, as well as on critical art after 1989 and the analysis of "transition" and post-socialist identity constructed through art. A methodological particularity of these analyzes concerns the investigation of the social field and of the institutional configuration which materially supported and discursive the production and reception of art. My studies, published in peer-reviewed international journals or academic publishing houses, often address the relationship between artistic practices, language forms and visual representation strategies used by artists, and the social and ideological conditionality that accompanies the production and reception of the contemporary art forms asserted in this region, materialized at the level of discursive practices and art institutions who manages them. Another peculiarity of these researches is the examination of the critical effects of contemporary art in conjunction with the political sphere and the social field, while emphasizing the aesthetic and artistic autonomy of the creative act. Last but not least, they highlighted the dynamic aspect of the artistic production in the Central and Eastern European region by focusing on the circulation of ideas and artworks and other cultural transfers, as well as on exhibition practices in the studied periods.

These researches have benefited from numerous grants and research scholarships funded by ERSTE Stiftung, Getty Foundation and New Europe College in Bucharest or UEFISCDI. I had the opportunity to develop a postdoctoral research project and to coordinate two research projects aimed at stimulating the formation of young independent teams in which the guidance of research activities at the BA and MA levels was extended to the coordination of young doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers. The recognition of the impact of these researches can be proven through the international dimension of articles published in journals indexed in international databases or published at prestigious international publishers such as Routledge, through the number of citations obtained so far (26 citations in works indexed in Google Scholar), through the admission to prestigious international professional associations (CAA, EUROSA, EAM, AICA), as guest professor at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts or in panels at prestigious international conferences (such as the "Global Conversations" series, CAA New York, 2017 moderated by David Roxburgh of Harvard University). I have also been

invited to many editorial boards and prestigious national juries (such as the Commission of the Ministry of Culture to select the project that represented Romania at the Venice Biennale or as evaluator in AFCN).

Last but not least, in addition to my publications, I have also highlighted the curatorial practice in which I have promoted young contemporary artists from Romania (especially from Iasi), as well as established artists from the East and Central Europe in more ambitious curatorial projects. In conclusion, one can notice a homogeneity of my scientific research concerns, situated in between art history and theory, connected to the international dynamics of ideas and in a natural continuity with my didactic and larger professional activity.