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**DAN PERJOVSCHI
THE HORIZONTAL NEWSPAPER**

A School of Text and Image

2010 – PRES.
SIBIU

Gloria Luca

CURTEA  VECHÉ

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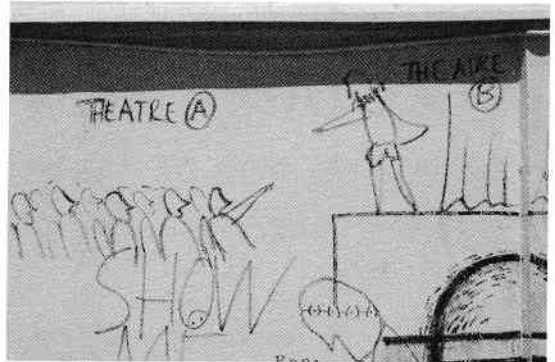
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The Human Body as a Social Performer

Perjovschi's ongoing project has always partnered with the Sibiu International Theatre Festival.²⁴ The theatre's interior yard becomes the festival's social club during the event, with tables, umbrellas, and drinks that the multi-cultural teams of actors, festival organizers, and volunteers sometimes share until the early morning hours. Perjovschi's first intervention took place on the inside of the wall, in the courtyard of the theatre, away from the eyes of passers-by. On this side, the wall's background is blinding white, like paper under bright lights.

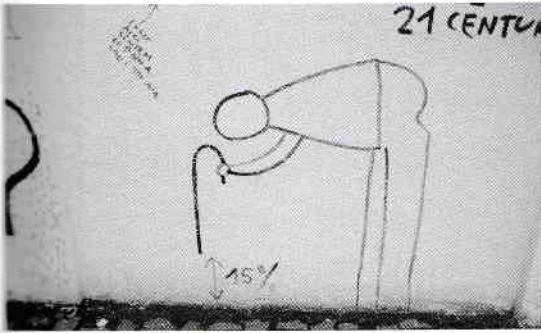
On the occasion of the 17th edition of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, Perjovschi works like a silent observer of both the wall's particularities and its socio-cultural context. Also, the artist tackles the concept of spectacle as it elaborated in Guy Debord's critical theory.

Perjovschi extends the use of drawing without referencing iconic images or reproducing subjects like a traditional artist. His practice is



Perjovschi's drawings in the Radu Stanca National Theatre yard, the Sibiu International Theatre Festival 17th edition, 2010. Photos: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.

²⁴ The Sibiu International Theatre Festival is organized by Constantin Chiriac, who is the Director of the Radu Stanca National Theatre that hosts the Horizontal Newspaper as a permanent guest since 2010.



One of Perjovschi's drawings in the yard of the Radu Stanca National Theatre during the 17th edition of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, 2010. The work comments on the Boc Cabinet's 15% cut into public pensions following the 2008 financial crisis. Photo: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.

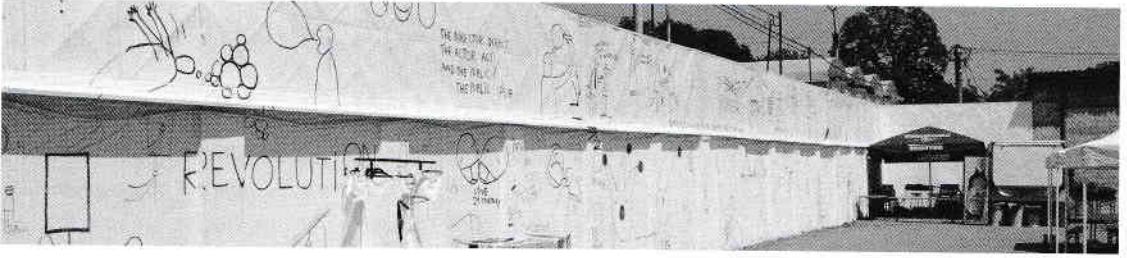
situated on the thin border between reality and fiction, which is "in constant flux" because the forms of representation used to produce news and entertainment are often the same.²⁵ In addition, nowadays, one could say that the digital camera records all social activity, which is why the screen can be understood as the stage on which we interact and "perform" representations of "real" life. Perjovschi approaches drawing as a tool that allows him to pause and reflect on the ideas that dominate the never-ending flux of events. To anchor his thinking in the ever-changing landscape of news, Perjovschi uses what I call "template drawing": iterative representations that adapted to various themes. The template drawings allow him to track down the social narratives behind the news. In addition, they also enable the artist to anticipate his position within an exhibition setting or at least establish the main subjects he plans to address.

Therefore, drawing allows him to understand the world, represent the essence of a piece of news, and provide sharp commentaries and subtle critiques on current events. I elaborate on this latter idea in another chapter, in which I discuss Perjovschi's drawing practice as a technology of social imaging.

The essentialized line, the expanded drawing used as a strategy to experiment with a wide range of physical or immaterial supports and cultural contexts, and the non-permanent and probably "a never final version" of each idea, are all at the core of Perjovschi's work. In addition, Perjovschi's drawing practice provides critical views on the spectacle generated and fueled by capitalism, raising awareness of social emergencies and often presenting empathy and protest as alternatives to the existing state of the consumer as a passive viewer. This was evident from the very beginning: during his first collaboration with the Sibiu International Theatre Festival and the Radu Stanca National Theatre, Perjovschi commented on the alienation of the worker, including the cultural workers roaming the independent art scene in Romania – which belong to an already precarious sector that registered significant budget cuts in the aftermaths of the 2008 economic crisis.

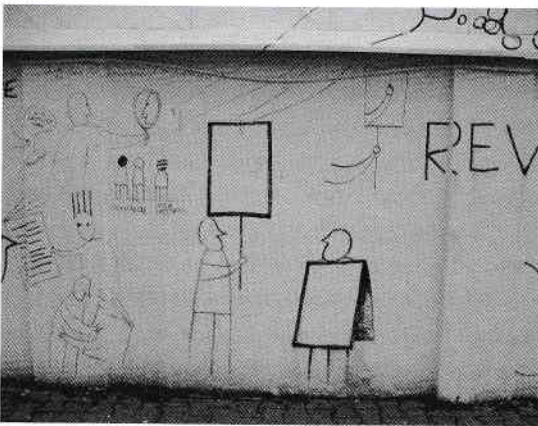
While actors have the freedom to move between roles and personas, role-playing has a deeper di-

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 134



Lateral view of Perjovschi's intervention in the Radu Stanca National Theatre courtyard, Sibiu International Theatre Festival 17th edition, 2010. In the picture: theatre props moved outside the building at the end of the festival.

Photo: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.



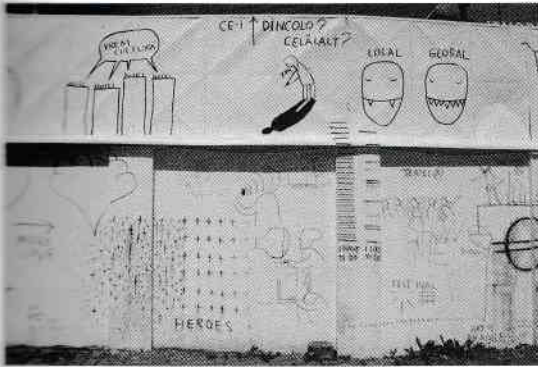
Detail of Dan Perjovschi's intervention in the Radu Stanca National Theatre's yard, Sibiu International Theatre Festival 17th edition, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.

mention in Perjovschi's first intervention on the institution's wall. To a certain degree (similar to the French photographer Claude Cahun, who understood the act of performing for the camera as a way to protest gender as a socially imposed role) Perjovschi sees the human body as a locus where the impact of politics on the day-to-day life is performed, which is one of the reasons why he often draws the artist as a citizen and

the citizen as a protester. Indeed, protest is among the artist's favorite topics. "In the last years, I was kind of a *drawing provider*, drawing stuff for all kinds of activist, resistance, or protest movements in Romania or elsewhere,"²⁶ Perjovschi said in a text published on the platform Art at a Time Like This, Inc. Campaigns like Save Roșia Montană and Iașul Iubește Teii (Iasi Loves Linden Trees), or the 2017–2019 Romanian protests sparked by the infamous emergency ordinance on justice system reform and corruption are just a few examples of movements that Perjovschi has been supplying with his drawings.

A representation inside the theater courtyard displays two citizens looking at each other — one of them is promoting a commercial offer, a commodity, while the other protests, promoting both an idea and a social attitude at the same time. The tension behind this representation is subtle but strong: two individuals that use similar flat supports with different objectives are portrayed in a mirror moment.

²⁶ Perjovschi, Dan, "Contribution to Art at a Time Like This, Inc." <<https://artatatimelikethis.com/dan-perjovschi/>>



Detail of Dan Perjovschi's intervention, the Radu Stanca National Theatre courtyard, Sibiu International Theatre Festival 17th edition, 2010. Photo: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.

Since the beginning of Perjovschi's collaboration with the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, the artist has combined (mostly) English and Romanian, which he inserts and adapts to each drawing so that he manages both to avoid a process of "Americanization" and to fuel a nationalist sense of pride. Though English is widely associated with linguistic imperialism, Perjovschi uses it to enjoy meaningful communication (not only through drawings) with his multicultural peers and friends.

Perjovschi always mixes English-based puns with words borrowed from the local language to ensure his visual messages reach a wider audience. It is also the case with the Horizontal Newspaper. WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE? THE OTHER? is asked in Romanian on the upper side of the wall. This interrogation subtly announces his intention to start drawing on the other

side of the wall. Also, "the other" points to the artistic lens he applies to understand the city and the world, mirroring back the unknown, the invisible. A silhouette below the two questions points towards their own shadow, giving a lovely answer: YOU! Perjovschi's practice reflects the reality and broader context of Sibiu city as he reads it from various angles and dynamics through which locals do not see their city.

In the subsequent edition of the theatre festival, Perjovschi left the safe space of the theatre's yard and embraced vulnerability. IT'S BETTER ON THE OTHER SIDE, he wrote from the street-facing side, suggesting that an art project in the public space brings a whole new set of challenges, especially when the interventions are located in the birth town of the artist. Furthermore, direct exposure to the particularities of the local context renders the experience more complicated and more culturally significant.

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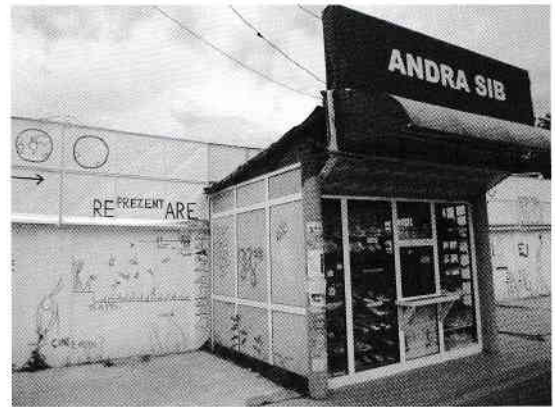
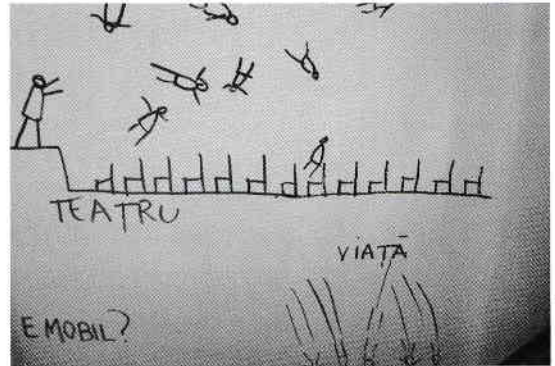
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Committed REpresentATION on the Corneliu Coposu Boulevard

In 2011, Perjovschi establishes his communication platform with the city. In the first intervention on the public-facing side of the wall on Corneliu Coposu Boulevard, the work articulates itself among old structures – press and wurst kiosks, bus stops, street billboards, and old shops. One of the images from the archive shows a column of shoes drawn on the side of a shoe shop.

The Romanian version of the word REpresentATION appears under two different perspectives of our planet. In another drawing, the theatre is depicted as a much safer place than the everyday theatre of contemporary life, where people appear to be thrown randomly in the air. The drawings captured in the photo are a good example of Perjovschi's commitment to social issues and current affairs. Indeed, on the street-facing side of the wall, Perjovschi resumes his reflections on the tensions, paradoxes, and complex spectacle generated by poor politics.



The Andra Sib shoe shop near the Horizontal Newspaper, Sibiu, 2011. Photos: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.



The Radu Stanca National Theatre wall, hosting Perjovschi's first intervention on the street-facing side, 2011.

Photos: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.

The Horizontal Newspaper, the classroom with a single wall, neither discriminates nor closes its eyes to discrimination. Furthermore, as an artistic experiment, it refutes double standards. What Perjovschi delivers to his international audience through the Western art scenes, he also provides to the eyes of anyone who walks along the Coposu Boulevard in Sibiu city.

"I do ephemeral works with permanent markers,"²⁷ the artist told MoMA curator Roxana Marcoci in the early days of the pandemic. Despite producing temporary drawings that are erased once the exhibition ends, Perjovschi's representations often circulate beyond the conceptual framework or photographic documentation of each show.

The same happens with the markers he uses to prepare for an opening. The marker brand's name, Molotow, has a galvanizing note. One Molotow marker costs about 7 EUR. An astronomical budget would be needed to cover the wall with drawings even once, but Perjovschi found a solution of his own for the Horizontal Newspaper. His schedule abroad allows him to collect the remaining markers from various exhibitions and take them back to Sibiu — in a way, a kind of feeding of the East by the Western art institutions, both public and private. An extensive list of Molotow markers providers that contributed indirectly to the Horizontal Newspaper is available in **Appendix A**.

²⁷ Marcoci, Roxana, "Dan Perjovschi's The Time of the Virus."

<https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/269>



The artist shows one of his Molotow markers during an interview for the Ruhr Nachrichten daily, Dortmund, 2018.

Photo: Tilman Abegg.

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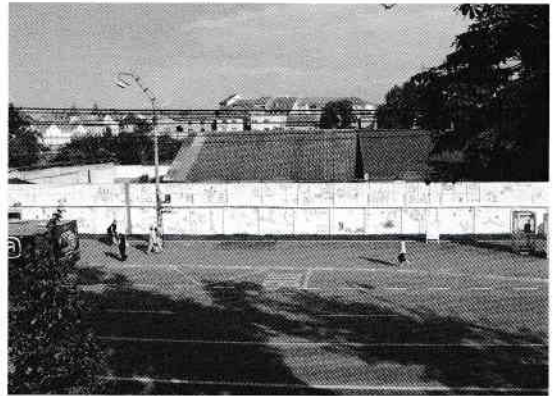


The Horizontal Newspaper I: The Activist Edition

By 2013, the Sibiu city council had planted a large strip of grass along the wall, and some of the small constructions nearby started disappearing. The formerly abandoned space starts having an identity on its own and engages passers-by as viewers regardless of how distant they are or their moving direction. From a head-on perspective, the intervention beats many public art projects done with colossal budgets in Romania and abroad.

For the 20th edition of the Sibiu International Theatre Festival, Perjovschi presents the project under the title of “Horizontal Newspaper” for the first time. From this moment forward, a new version of work is launched with a bi-annual frequency, and the artist enters into a deliberate editing process.

The first version of the Horizontal Newspaper dates back to 2013–2014 and is included in the Cities on stage project funded by the Culture Programme of the European Union. Cities on stage is an international collaboration be-



The Horizontal Newspaper I, Sibiu, 2013.
Photo: Anca Benera+Arnold Estefan.

tween several theaters and festivals in Europe that co-produced five plays in which different perspectives on the (European) city were analyzed with sharp, critical eyes. Each staged play partnered up with a visual project, which is why Perjovschi’s mural-newspaper is invited to join the tour of Gianina Cărbunariu’s play titled *Solitaritate* (a play on the Romanian words for “solidarity” and “solitude”). Cărbunariu’s play

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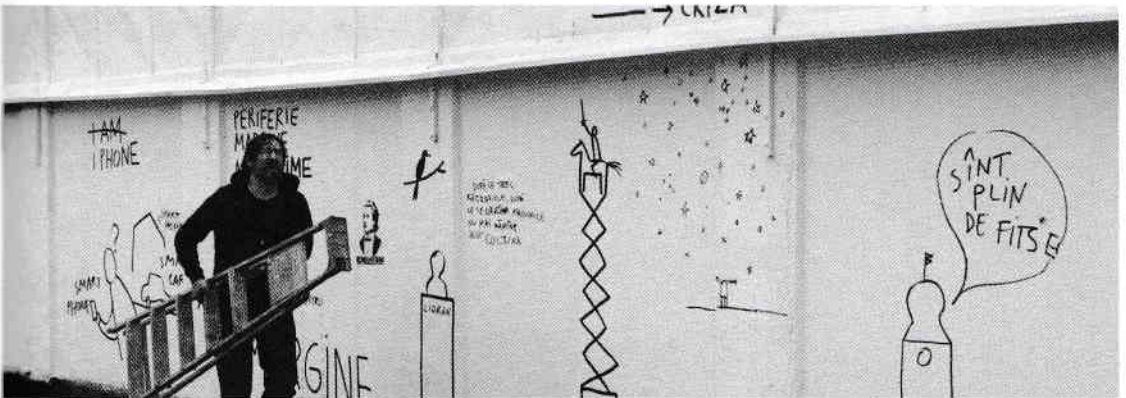
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offers a challenging contemporary portrait of Romania's urban middle class obsessed with a European ideal of success while simultaneously ignorant of its own history. Perjovschi's busy schedule allows him to adapt the Horizontal Newspaper in only two of the five locations where Cărbunariu's work premiered: Avignon in 2014 and Brussels in 2015.

The activist wall addresses the theme of the Cities on stage project straightforwardly. Yet a peculiar detail strikes the eye of anyone familiar with Perjovschi's drawing practice: what seems like a bunch of stencils invading the wall is actually Perjovschi's initiative to add a collaborative layer to his artistic experiment. Perjovschi co-opted Stefan Tiron (Megatron) as the Horizontal Newspaper's first edition curator. Together with Tiron, who is highly experienced in urban art and knows many people in the area, they both started inviting not only artists but also poets and activists. The urban artist

Coate-Goale showed Perjovschi how stencils are done, a craft that Perjovschi wanted to learn to add most of the contributions to the activist wall himself. Throughout 2013, Perjovschi asks, negotiates, and receives the stencils via email and then sprays them on every time he arrives in Sibiu.

Perjovschi envisioned the first wall newspaper as a container for the crises of 2013 — such as the Save Roșia Montană campaign — along the almost a quarter of the 50 meters-long wall. Special sections were also dedicated to Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, and other hot spots around the globe. The Isola Art Center and its resistance against gentrification is also included, as well as stencils from Vienna, Budapest, Kishinev, Cluj, Berlin, Los Angeles, Timișoara, and Bucharest, which are sent to Sibiu, then inserted in the first edition of the Horizontal Newspaper.



Dan Perjovschi while working on the Horizontal Newspaper I, 2013. Photo: Courtesy of Dan Perjovschi.