

The Future of Memory Project

OLGA ȘTEFAN¹

Abstract: Due to the specific theme of this issue of *Studia Dramatica* dedicated to new perspectives in the critical and historical approaches in theatre and film, we invited Olga Ștefan, the curator of one of the most interesting and complex projects of performing archives ever built in Eastern Europe, *The Future of Memory* (coordinated by Quantic Association), to write for our Journal a detailed descriptive presentation. The project had an impressive number of local partners in Romania and the Republic of Moldavia and was awarded a grant by the National Administration of Cultural Fund of Romania (AFCN). We thank Olga Ștefan for her consistent contribution.

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“The traces were still there. But time would slowly blur them and nothing would be left.”

Edgar Hilsenrath, *Night*, 1966–

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Edgar Hilsenrath was born in Halle, Germany, then migrated to Siret, Bukowina with his family in 1941 in order to escape Nazi persecution, only to be deported in 1942 by order of Marshall Ion Antonescu and interned in the ghetto of Mogilyov-Podolski until March 1944, when the Russian troops took over. He was then arrested by Russians and nearly deported to a coal-pit in Donbass; but after faking his identity documents, he was let go. He slowly made his way back to Siret, then to Palestine - as an idealist Zionist youth - where he stayed a few years before returning, disillusioned, to France, to reunite with his family who had emigrated illegally through post-war Europe. He wrote *Night*, one of the most harrowing novels about war-time captivity, mass death and unlikely survival in the cruellest of conditions and facing unimaginable deprivations, also because he felt "guilty for surviving" when most people around him didn't. He speaks of loss, remembering and forgetting, the traces that were left and that will disappear, and of course about human depravity. His biography and *Night*, not yet translated in neither Romanian nor Russian, were included in our Kishinev exhibition at the end of July 2017.

This story of migration, self-questioning, analysis of identity, disillusionment, and search for meaning in such overwhelming meaninglessness, is common to all the biographies included in the transnational multi-city platform for Holocaust and Porajmos (the Roma Holocaust) remembrance through art and media, *The Future of Memory*. The interdisciplinary platform, whose unique approach is to combine contemporary and modern visual art practices with historical research, literature, film and performance, tackles the themes from different angles.

Firstly, the biographies are organized in geographically specific groupings, growing out of the cities in which our team operated. The events in each city feature little known, and in many cases entirely unknown, personalities who were first introduced to the general public in the frame of *The Future of Memory*, or, if they are already known as personalities, we introduced new work of theirs. The events were symbolically scheduled to occur on the days commemorating pogroms or mass deportations.

Bucharest, January 20-27, 2017

In Bucharest, at Casa Filipescu-Cesianu (part of the Municipal Museum of Bucharest), we featured projections of paintings and photographs by artists Hedda Sterne (b. Bucharest, 1910, d. New York, 2011), Willy Pragher

(b. Berlin, 1902, d. Freiburg, 1992), Marcel Iancu (b. Bucharest, 1895, d. Tel Aviv, 1984), and some original watercolours and sculptures by Leon Misosniky (b. Bucharest 1921, d. Bucharest, 2007). The video *Fragments of a Life*, the documentary *My Illusions/Iluziile Mele*, which was produced especially for the platform, as well as *Daniel Spoerri: The Wild Child of Jassy*, the filmed interview with the internationally acclaimed artist, all works on which I personally contributed in collaboration with other colleagues, were shown on monitors, while a rich archive featuring books, articles, interviews, and other documents was also displayed, establishing an exhibition format that would be repeated in all five cities, but containing content drawn from local histories and biographies.



Fig. 1: Vernissage, The Future of Memory, Casa Filipescu-Cesianu, January 20, 2017. Ioana Florea, Olga Stefan, David Schwartz and Katia Pascariu present the concept of the project. Photo: Nina Mihaila.



Fig. 2: Installation shot of The Future of Memory Bucharest exhibition. Left on monitor: Fragments of a Life, video. Center projection on wall: Memories of Romania, Hedda Sterne. Right projection on wall: Bucharest Pogrom, Marcel Iancu. Center table: Head, Leon Misosniky. Photo: Olga Ștefan.

Some of the texts included were *Diary 1935-1944* by Mihail Sebastian, *The Seamstress* by Sara Tuvel Bernstein, *The Long Balkan Night* by Leigh White, *Orasul Macelului* by Filip Brunea Fox, *Noapte de Pogrom* by Scarlat Callimachi, *Despre pogromul de la Bucuresti* by Marcel Iancu, with an introduction by Vlad Solomon, *The Balkan Trilogy* by Olivia Manning, *Baroane* by Tudor Arghezi, *Journal de Guerre* by Rene de Weck, *The Black Book* by Matatias Carp, *Of Fortunes and War: Clare Hollingworth*, by Patrick Garrett, *Leon Misosniky Paintings*, and *Marcel Janco Paintings and Sketches*. Documentation about the Roma Holocaust was also presented.

The individuals and the work included were all either from Bucharest - and recounted their experienced events from the pogrom and the Iron Guard (Garda de fier) rebellion -, or their biographies were affected somehow by the atrocities.



Fig. 3: The archive of The Future of Memory in Bucharest.
Photo: Nina Mihaila.

Our film program, composed of eight films carefully selected to represent the diversity of stories and experiences resulting from the various anti-Semitic policies in the different regions of current day Romania (which now includes Northern Transylvania, under Hungarian authority from 1940-1944) and former Bessarabia and Bukovina (under Romanian occupation starting in July 1941 until March 1944). This film program, featuring many national premieres, was shown in all of the five cities where we were present, thus introducing the local public to the histories of other regions of the two countries, to new biographies and witness accounts, and to the variety in which the racist laws were implemented. In Bucharest, the films were screened at the Romanian Cinematheque and at Macaz Bar and Theater.

Oradea, May 24-28, 2017

The Future of Memory partnered with local organizations, including Tikvah Association, the University of Oradea Art Department, and Ars Nobilis Association to implement its exhibitions and events at places of memory, such as synagogues, in former Jewish neighbourhoods, and the ghetto, long abandoned after the Jewish population's annihilation at Auschwitz. These took place on the dates when the Hungarian regime, under Nazi occupation, commenced the deportations of the Jews in 1944.

We collaborated with Ars Nobilis Association to exhibit original work by Oradea modernist artists of national and even international repute, most of whom were killed in Nazi death camps: Alex Leon, Paul Fux, Tibor Ernő, József Biró, József Klein, Ernő Grünbaum and Barát Móric. Besides these paintings, some of which allude pictorially and even thematically to the persecutions that would lie ahead, the show at the Sion Synagogue also included an archive similar to that in Bucharest, but featuring material from local figures: Bela Szolt, Magdalena Klein, Eva Heyman, Salamon Juliska. Several others' personal experiences, who did not necessarily leave artistic material behind, were noted and documented through *The Future of Memory* platform. To reactivate the memory of these perished and forgotten individuals, poems by Magdalena Klein, fragments of Eva Heyman's journal, and letters by Juliska Salamon from the Oradea ghetto to her children in Bucharest, were recited and performed publicly by Katia Pascariu and David Schwartz at Viznitz Synagogue and Ars Nobilis Gallery in the former ghetto. We also worked with local contemporary artists, Miklos Onucsan and Laszlo Ujvarossy, who developed their projects especially for *The Future of Memory* platform, addressing the specific theme of the deportations, but also undertook more abstract and poetic treatments of memory, traces, and disappearance: for example, in Onucsan's action, "The Persistence of Memory", a block of ice with this title carved on its surface, was left to melt in the sun.



Fig. 5: Miklos Onucsan, *To the Persistence of Memory*, Sinagoga Viznitz garden.
Photos: Stefan Gaie.



Fig. 6: Sion Synagogue exhibition. Work by: Paul Fux, Tibor Ernő, Grünbaum Ernő, Klein Jozsef, Leon Alex, Barat Moric, Biro Jozsef and the video "Fragments of a Life". Photo: Stefan Gaie

Cluj, May 27-June 2, 2017

Our events in Cluj also unfolded on the dates of the deportations from the ghetto, where more than a third of the city's entire population had been interned before transports began to Auschwitz. Here we hosted all the events at Casa Tranzit, a former synagogue fallen into disuse and independently transformed into one of the first contemporary art spaces in the country. We collaborated with contemporary local artists Miklos Szilard and Razvan Anton to develop research-based projects on forgotten aspects of regional history: a presentation of films by documentary film-maker Istvan Fisher, and an installation focusing on forced labour policies to which the Jews of Medias were subjected. Andrea and Matei Bellu, artists based in Germany with Romanian origins, also produced art work especially for the show referring to the flow of the river Somes - a metaphor for time and space; while Belu-Simion Fainaru, born in Romania and living in Israel, showed a video alluding to the victims of the Holocaust. We also included the long-term research project on the disappeared Cluj Jews initiated by Casa Tranzit, *Missing Since 1944*, and of course exhibited our archive alongside the videos *Fragments of a Life, My Illusions/Iluziile Mele* and *Daniel Spoerri: The Wild Child of Jassy*.

Much of our research and attention in Cluj focused on the Kasztner Case: this led us to invite Ladislaus Lob for the first time in an official capacity in Romania to join the panel about this chapter of Holocaust historiography. Lob was a passenger on the Kasztner train at the age of eleven. Many books, articles and documentaries in our archive point to this episode, including Ladislaus Lob's own *Rezso Kasztner: The Daring Rescue of Hungarian Jews: A Survivor's Account*, which combines personal testimonies of other survivors, including Professor Lob's own memories, with historical documents. Lob's original research focuses on the financial transactions and negotiations Kasztner carried out with the Nazis to save more than 1600 Hungarian Jews from the gas chambers, bringing them to neutral Switzerland, while hundreds of thousands of others were left behind, marking this as one of the most controversial chapters of the Holocaust and reshaping Israeli politics since the late 1950s until today.

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Figs. 7, 8, 9: Three images above: installation shots from The Future of Memory Cluj. First image: Fabric work by Andrea and Matei Bellu, in the back is “Missing Since 1944” and in the front plane is Razvan Anton’s project on forced labor conditions for Jews in Medias. Below: the archive with books and documents but also personal journals and photos. Photos: Casa Tranzit

The situation of the Jews in Northern Transylvania under the Horthy regime is represented in our film program by the documentary *Jeno Janovics: A Hungarian Pathe* by Zagoni Balint and by the drama movie *Son of Saul* by László Nemes.

Iasi, June 27-June 30, 2017

On the days commemorating the 1941 Iasi pogrom, *The Future of Memory* launched its events at the Institut Francais with a piano recital of a Sonata by Iasi-born and internationally acclaimed modernist composer Anatol Vieru (b. 1926, d. 1998, Bucharest), whose music had not been played in Iasi before. A friend of Sorana Ursu and a member of the Iasi “colony”, a group of friends that met regularly at the house of Lidia Iliesu, as described in *Fragments of a Life*, Anatol Vieru experienced the pogrom personally and composed several symphonies about the Holocaust. We also featured an exhibition of drawings by Samy Briss (b. 1930, Iasi, lives in Paris) a series started in 1948, during the trials of the Romanian Popular Tribunals against war criminals, and continued until 1956. The drawings feature scenes from the Iasi pogrom. Books and texts by descendants of victims or survivors, like Theophil Spoerri (the youngest brother of Daniel Spoerri), Jil Silberstein and others, retracing their own biographies to the city, as well as interviews and historical analyses of the events before and during the pogrom were part of the archive. At Teatru Fix, besides a special section of the film program, we hosted an associative game, developed for the platform by Katia Pascariu and Ioana Florea, that used photographs and images from the platform’s exhibitions: the aim of the game was to prompt players to consider their positions on different social and historical issues.

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Figs. 10, 11, 12: Above: The Future of Memory Iasi. First image: the archive with recordings and testimonies. Second image: "Iluziile mele/My Illusions". Third Image: Drawings and artist book by Samy Briss.



Fig. 13: Above: Associative Game by Ioana Florea and Katia Pascariu at Teatru Fix.
Photos: Mihai Apostol

One of the films in our film program that refers to Iasi history and the Holocaust is the biographical documentary, *Natan* by David Caines and Paul Duane. It tells the story of the forgotten Iasi-born Jew, Natan Tannenzaft, or otherwise known as Bernard Natan, who became the French Pathe. *Scarred Hearts* by Radu Jude draws from the writings of Max Blecher, the Jewish Romanian avant-gardist who died in 1938 in Roman, a town close to Iasi (and one of the stops of the 1941 death train where Viorica Agarici, a nurse with the International Red Cross, helped the dying Jews with water). This was also the year when the Iron Guard was gaining major popular support and antisemitism was becoming ever more normalised societally, illustrated by the laws passed by the Goga-Cuza government dispossessing almost half of Romania's Jews of their citizenship, thus starting the racial laws that ultimately led to the Romanian Holocaust.

Kishinev, July 26-30, 2017

The Romanian army reoccupied Bessarabia in July 1941, and immediately started massacring the local Jewish population. After about 10,000 were killed on site, the rest were ghettoized: then, after a few months, the survivors were

deported to deserted areas in Transnistria, a region so-called by the Germans which is disputed nowadays by the Republic of Moldavia and Russia. There they were shot, left to die of hunger and disease, or worked to death. More than 50% of the 350,000 deportees from Bessarabia and Bukovina died in the first two months. A similar fate awaited the 25,000 Roma that were deported from various areas of Romania and other occupied territories.

At Zpatiu, the contemporary art space of Oberliht Association, our local partner, we exhibited a series of drawings by Benno Friedel (b. 1930, Chernowitz, lives in Hadera, Israel), a survivor of the camps of Transnistria. We also screened two documentaries about the Transnistrian deportations: *The Bessarabian Persecution* by Sergiu Ene and *Transnistria: The Hell* by Zoltan Ternier. The former movie addressed the Roma Holocaust, while the second featured Jewish survivors who turned to art, among whom was also Benno Friedel. Also at Zpatiu we hosted two discussions, one with Benno Friedel and Dr. Eugen Brik about the Jewish Holocaust in Transnistria, and the second with Dr. Ion Duminica and Nicolae Radita, the director of the National Roma Center in Chisinau about the Porajmos. In other cities, we showed *The Valley of Sighs* by Mihai Andrei Leaha, an anthropologic documentary addressing the Porajmos through the personal testimonies of survivors.



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Figs. 14, 15, 16, 17: Above: The Future of Memory Kishinev at Zpatiu. First image: Benno Friedel discussing his series, "Childhood Memories". Second Image: Nicolae Radita, Director of the National Roma Center in the Republic of Moldova, and Dr. Ion Duminica, The Center of Ethnology, The Institute of Cultural Patrimony of the Academy of Sciences in Moldova. **Third image: the archive of The Future of Memory Kishinev. Fourth image: Vernissage, discussion with Benno Friedel and Dr. Eugen Brik, Judaic Institute of the Republic of Moldova.**

Two additional screened documentaries that refer to this geographical region are *Das Kind* by Yonathan Levy, and *Mamaliga Blues* by Cassio Tolpolar. *Das Kind* is the story of Irma Miko, born in Chernowitz, Ukraine (former Bukovina) who reaches Paris and becomes a Communist French resistance agent. Her mission is to convert German soldiers occupying Paris to become active anti-fascists. *Mamaliga Blues* is the story of a Brazilian Jew who takes his father on a trip to Moldova in search of the grave of his great-grandfather.

A second approach in each exhibition, besides the geographical organization, is the treatment of the themes mentioned earlier, namely migration, identity, and disillusionment, but also memory, one of the most dominant themes, as can be presumed. Owing to the fact that today we see

yet another fascist turn in democratic societies - one that we need to be keenly aware of and actively engaged in countering - we paid special attention to also include biographies of antifascist combatants: "Illegalisti" (members of the illegal Communist Party of Romania, 1921-1944), or members of the "Resistance", focusing on Socialists and Communists whose ideals of a more equitable future society led them to taking extraordinary personal risks in already extreme war-time conditions, many being caught by the Nazis or their allies, and deported, tortured or killed. Of those who survived the war and entered the new society led by the Communist regime, numerous were themselves either purged by this regime, or became disillusioned over time with what their dream ultimately became: yet another criminal dictatorship that advanced the interest of a privileged elite at the expense of the masses.

Disillusionment

Following this theme, we selected and presented the film, *Das Kind*, about Irma Miko, but also *My Illusions/Iluziile Mele*, whose title comes from the song "Unde e Iluziile Mele? / Where is my Illusions": featuring residents of the Moses Rosen Retirement Home who discuss the Bucharest pogrom, forced labor and other aspects of Jewish persecution during the war, but also about life under Communism and their Jewish identity during that regime and post-89.

We added to this thematic framework the video piece *Fragments of a Life*, featuring a discussion with my grandmother, Sorana Ursu, telling of her idealistic activist days in the first post-war years, and her disillusionment starting in the late fifties, the 1985 murder by the Communist regime of her husband, Gheorghe Ursu, a political dissident and former "Illegalist" himself; or the autobiography of the former resident of Cluj Egon Balas, *Will to Freedom: A Perilous Journey Through Fascism and Communism*, describing the author's life as a member of the underground Hungarian Communist Party during the war, his anti-fascist wartime engagement and torture by fascists, then after the war by the Communist regime; also the films of Isztvan Fischer, the documentary filmmaker from Cluj.

However, through their accounts of struggle, we are reminded that we too need to continue fighting for new, more just societal forms, beyond the ones based on neoliberal capitalism and the illusion of democracy that we

are fed. The individuals we present through our platform did not risk and sacrifice their lives for these ideals in vain - it is due to the influence of Socialist ideology, including their efforts, that the Western world was for many decades more democratic and equitable than it would have been had capitalism been let to run unchecked. In the last thirty years, however, we have experienced the deterioration of the social protections that were gained through struggle. As a result of this neoliberal ideology taking control, millions of people have been disenfranchised through the elimination of jobs and manufacturing, and the placement of value exclusively on profit at the cost of people's well-being. It is this systematic economic disenfranchisement that has contributed to anti-globalist neo-nationalism and fascist tendencies throughout the world. To counter this wave of hatred, we must pursue the emancipatory visions of the individuals we present in our platform and correct the deficiencies in, and failures of, our current society.

Jewish Identity

The question of an uncertain Jewish identity in the aftermath of the Holocaust is very eloquently expressed by Iosip Cotnareanu, one of the residents at the Moses Rosen Retirement Home in Bucharest, who appears in the documentary, *My Illusions/Iluziile Mele*, when he asks, paraphrasing Einstein, "What is left of a Jew without his own language, without his own nation, and without a religion (referring to secular, unreligious Jews)? Oh, so very much still..." After the formation of Israel in 1948, this question of identity and belonging was meant to be resolved, with most of the Jews that decided to make Aliyah finally feeling like they had a home, becoming Israeli. Although the transition to this new world was not an easy one, Israel made European Jews feel safe and protected, no longer victims of anti-Semitic persecution. And yet, as we have seen in Edgar Hilsenrath's case, as well as others', not all European Jews managed to adapt to the culture of this new nation, one based on forgetting the past and looking only toward the future, shaping a new ideal human, strong and determined, in charge of its destiny. Israel was another Utopia that became yet another illusion for so many. The idea of a Jewish identity is also addressed by Sorana Ursu in *Fragments of a life*, where she claims to have been a "great Romanian patriot" once upon a time, despite the persecutions that she suffered as a Jew.

Assimilation became the *modus operandi* for most of the Jews that remained in Romania, erasing their Jewish identity and trying to become entirely Romanian. This behaviour is echoed among the Hungarian Jews, who proudly viewed themselves as Hungarians, and were convinced that nothing bad would happen to them as Hungarian citizens, despite the horrifying news out of Poland and Czechoslovakia starting as early as 1941. Bela Szolt, the Hungarian writer, journalist and politician who escaped from the Oradea ghetto with his wife Agnes Szolt, and who were also saved from the gas chambers of Auschwitz on the Kastzner train along with Ladislaus Lob, and more than 1600 privileged others, writes about this illusion of belonging and profound identification with the Hungarian culture in his autobiographical book included in our Cluj and Oradea exhibitions, *Nine Suitcases*, one of the first publications to treat the Holocaust through a personal account (issued as serial articles between 1946-1947) and to try to answer the question of why the Hungarian Jews allowed themselves to be deported.

Migration

Migration is, clearly, a common life experience in all the biographies we present. It is mostly the result of the violent historical events, persecutions and upheavals of the war and thereafter, with the changing national borders and new regimes - but for some, also the result of economic necessity. The war saw millions of refugees, not only Jews or Roma, but despite knowing that the Jews particularly would face certain death if returned, Western democracies, including the United States, i.e. the "Allies", refused safe haven to the overwhelming majority, leaving them to their fate. Even those that made it to the shores of the United States were turned away, and most of these indeed died in the camps. Illegal emigration was organized to Palestine, but the journey was perilous, the passengers were generally captured by the British and interned in detention camps or even deported, and only very few made it. Ships were blown up at sea, or otherwise sabotaged. One of the most famous examples is the *Struma*, a ship that sailed from Constanta and was bombed, killing all but one of the more than 700 passengers. This lone survivor, David Stoliar, eventually made his way to the United States where he died in 2016.

Artist Hedda Sterne's peripatetic migration through war-torn Europe after the Bucharest pogrom in 1941, to join her husband in New York, reveals her privileged position. At a time when hardly anyone was able to

escape, and those that managed to get out did so in terrible conditions, Hedda was able to even take a plane at one point to reach her destination. Once in New York, she produced the series of paintings *Memories of Romania* which were shown as projections in Bucharest, and thereafter distanced herself from her past, preferring to no longer speak about it or treat it artistically.

In the book *The Road to Auschwitz: Fragments of a Life* by Hedi Fried, included in the exhibition in Cluj, we are shown another possible migration trajectory: after the liberation of the camps, the author was a refugee in Sweden, then moved to the United States.

The condition of the migrant is treated artistically in our project - we highlight its connection to identity, longing and belonging, displacement, and memory. Irma Miko, who takes a journey from Paris back to Chernowitz with her son, stops in Bucharest, where she was active in the "underground" Communist Party, and ponders how her life in Romania would have been had she returned when the new Communist government invited her. She doesn't feel French, but doesn't feel Romanian anymore either. For her, Chernowitz remained home, although she revisited only once, during filming the documentary. For Sorana Ursu, in *Fragments of a Life*, migration is a complex phenomenon that is at once liberating and destructive.

Memory

The disappearance of memories is addressed by Benno Friedel, among many others, in his series of works on paper called *Childhood Memories*. Here we see only disconnected images from his experiences in the camps of Transnistria, with no linear narrative. They are but mere fragments - a mother carrying a child, people on a forced march in which Benno's uncle is carrying him in a knapsack, or a play performed in a barn. The artist describes the images as "flashes of memory" that crossed his mind before putting them to paper. Aharon Apelfeld's autobiographical novel *Story of a Life* also describes his memories of Transnistria as impressions, pieces, feelings, sensations, even smells - incapable of presenting linear history. "For kids", he writes, "memory is a reservoir that never empties. It renews itself and brightens over the years. It's not a chronological memory, but an abundant and ever-changing one."

This sense of the disintegration of memory, and with it the loss of the past, is also conveyed in the video *Fragments of a Life* and in the book by Hedi Fried. Sorana Ursu states at one point: "I told myself over and over

that I would never forget, and look! Now I forgot!" Samy Briss also relied on memory, although his family's and not his own, to paint the scenes from the Iasi pogrom, where the horror on the streets is expressed in dark colors and in an abstracted figurative style.

How we choose to remember and what, an approach that spans from the individual to the national, shaping identity and historical narrative, is illustrated in a tense moment of conversation between my uncle and my grandmother, in the video piece *Fragments of a Life*, where she claims that it was "the Germans" who carried out the pogrom in Iasi, while my uncle urges that it was the Romanians. My grandmother identified as Romanian her whole life, and was unable to bring herself to believe that her neighbours and co-citizens were capable of such barbarity, her memory-making being an emotional response to an inconvenient truth; while my uncle cites history to clarify that it was mostly Romanians who carried out the murders and Antonescu's orders to implement the pogrom. This is an essential moment, because this narration's conflict is reflected in historiography as well. Since the late 1950s until recently with the 2004 Report produced by the Elie Wiesel Institute, the official narrative absolved Romania of implication in the Holocaust, placing the guilt entirely on German Nazis, the ultimate foreign enemy. Education of the Holocaust, if any, spoke exclusively of the Nazis, eliminating mention of Romania's autonomy of decision and initiative in carrying out the mass murder of more than 400,000 Jews and Roma during the Holocaust. Under Ceausescu and in the 1990s, Marshall Ion Antonescu was even rehabilitated. It is now known and accepted that Marshall Antonescu ordered the pogrom, and local Romanian authorities carried it out along with the civil population, supported in a logistics capacity by the Germans stationed in Iasi.

The Future of Memory is a very complex and multi-faceted project, functioning on multiple levels, containing many personal stories, bringing new life to those individuals who have been long forgotten, trying to capture the transient and record what is left of fading memories of the last witnesses. The platform commemorates not through the building of monuments and commemorative plaques, an activity more appropriate for the local and national authorities, but rather by reactivating the public's memory through the performance of artistic works, re-enacting past events, researching and

exhibiting forgotten figures, thus integrating marginalized spaces and people into the official narrative, and creating place for the excluded. We conduct our activity through artistic means because we believe that art can convey emotion and provoke affective responses, something that historical facts and cold statistics cannot. It is art and the personal narratives we present that evoke empathy in the public, and brings us together. Art has the power to help people transcend their particular condition and connect to more universal issues. Art helps us identify with others.

We intentionally worked with local partners to implement the exhibitions and events, and thus instil a sense of assumed responsibility towards their city's history, and also to connect people and institutions preoccupied by the same subjects. Inherently educational in its sheer breath and in the new content it discovered and presented, *The Future of Memory* intends to function on yet another level too: to connect the past to the present.

We want the stories and exhibitions in the project, which reveal the systems of oppression that were implemented not only by the "enemies", but also by those people seen as "good guys", namely the "Allies", to serve as lessons for how we can combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry today. As we write these lines, we are in the midst of a struggle against neo-Nazi and white supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, some of whom violently attacked counter protesters, killing three and injuring tens of others. We cannot permit the normalisation of this hatred, neo-Nazi terrorism, and continued violence against, and oppression of, minorities and society's vulnerable, as is happening more and more.

What economic and foreign policies we support, how we treat minorities and immigrants, today's refugees and migration in general, will be the deciding factors in the course we choose for a democratic, tolerant, and inclusive Europe and United States, so we ensure that the horrors of the past are not repeated, nowhere, and for no one.

The Future of Memory website: www.thefutureofmemory.ro