



Nona Inescu, *Concretions (Geophilia VI)*

XXXII<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP OF THE  
FRAC DES PAYS DE LA LOIRE

## MANUFACTURING NATURE / NATURALIZING THE SYNTHETIC

### Artists:

Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan,  
Nona Inescu, Olivia Mihălțianu,  
Alex Mirutziu, Vlad Nancă

### Curator:

Diana Marincu

residence September – November 2018

exhibition November 17<sup>th</sup> 2018 au January 27<sup>th</sup> 2019

EXHIBITION ORGANIZED AS PART OF THE  
FRANCE-ROMANIA SEASON 2019



FRAC DES PAYS DE LA LOIRE  
La Fleuriaye, boulevard Ampère,  
44470 Carquefou / T. 02 28 01 50 00  
[www.fracdespaysdelaloire.com](http://www.fracdespaysdelaloire.com)  
[twitter@FRACpdL](https://twitter.com/FRACpdL) – [facebook.com/FRACpdL](https://facebook.com/FRACpdL)



The XXXII<sup>nd</sup> International Workshops of the Frac of the Pays de la Loire are taking place this year as part of the France-Romania 2019 year. Frac invited Diana Marincu to design this new two-month residence with six Romanian artists.

*Manufacturing nature / Naturalizing the synthetic* discusses new paradigms in understanding nature and culture, body and technology, politics and landscape. The exhibition and research residency tackles these issues through the works of the invited artists Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, Nona Inescu, Olivia Mihălțianu, Alex Mirutziu, and Vlad Nancă.

"You walk for days among trees and among stones. Rarely does the eye light on a thing, and then only when it has recognized that thing as the sign of another thing: a print in the sand indicates the tiger's passage; a marsh announces a vein of water; the hibiscus flower, the end of winter. All the rest is silent and interchangeable; trees and stones are only what they are." (Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*)

Italo Calvino's "poetic of erasure", as his understanding of Utopia has been called, functions as a perceptive mechanism – a construction of non-realities that can become accessible for the visitor only through projection, representation and erasure. This experience solidifies one's mental representation of the city – the invisible one – instead of the existing visible context – the real one. The interplay between a need for understanding and, at the same time, a tendency of refusing reality creates a greater absence of the actual reference, escaping more and

more. "The eye does not see things but images of things that mean other things", so that in the end the signs of reality become part of an active agency – the city itself – while its own discourse seems stronger than any "truth": "the city says everything you must think, makes you repeat her discourse". This excursion in the narrative strategies and method of representation employed by Italo Calvino opens up a larger territory, which reflects an ethical shift on how we perceive the strata of reality surrounding us – objects, beings, landscapes, etc. Do we listen to their voice? Are we ready to follow their codes and immerse into their stories? How do they perceive us? How do we affect them?

« No air is unmarked »  
(Nona Inescu)

The emergence of multispecies ethnography in the recent years has activated a new context for the relation between humans and other life forms. The knowledge production of this more-than-human approach is founded on a relational perspective shift that acknowledges the multilayered interactions of different agencies, beyond the human sphere. By deconstructing the binary pair human-nonhuman and overturning the anthropocentric view, this approach challenges a larger field of social science and humanities to rethink their mission, methodologies, investigations and perspectives from a posthumanist pluralistic view. Multispecies ethnography "centres on how a multitude of organisms' livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic, and cultural forces", encompassing the intersection of all these forces and reflecting on their capacity to create new forms of representation. Nona Inescu proposes a research topic revolving around identity geology and anthropomorphism, blurring the boundaries between the body and the environment. Concretions are growing stones that people believe to be encompassing hundreds or thousands of years of memory, that the artist associates with parts of human body in an attempt to find a tender, empathic, relation between the two.

"living architecture", "tree circus"  
"arborsculpture" and "grownup furniture"  
"living architecture", "tree circus"  
"arborsculpture" and "grownup furniture"

« Tissues of plants are joined to continue their growth together. »  
(Olivia Mihălțianu)

Many artists today reflect on their impact on life on a planetary scale, on the clashing binary of human and nature, as well as on the political implications of what is called today "the material fatigue". This growing awareness is not to be thought only in relation with the present urgencies, but also as a navigating instrument for the future image of the world. The grand narratives that position the human subject in the center of life are replaced by an "ecocentric ecology", a network of processes rather than definitions. The acknowledgement of the intrusion of humans in the natural growth of plants and trees – through plant grafting, deforestation,

genetically modified crops, etc – has brought in the centre of debates the margins of scientific research, the leftovers of anthropological narratives and the sometimes wild imagery of how humans can impact nature in a desire to possess it.

Olivia Mihălțianu focuses on the analogy between grafting and splicing, drawing a parallel between plant manipulation and film editing, both based on physically joining two materials. Experimenting with different editing techniques, the artist works with found footage – an old 16mm film on biology – in connection with the history of grafting strategies. The surrounding gardens of FRAC des Pays de la Loire will be used as an inspiration for the research, which will also expand through the artist's interest in worldwide exchange and expansion of cultures determined by cultural, economic and political factors.

"In the natural landscape, the human is an intruder"  
(Vlad Nancă)

The built environment represents another perspective on how the human body constantly negotiates its relation with the surroundings. The body in relation with design and architecture impacts both the utopian projections of housing and other relocations one can find as alternatives. The best mirror of how a society approaches its responsibility for the daily life of people is probably the public space, with its contradictions, expulsions and hierarchies.

"The public sphere convenes the built environment into a living organism that transforms the lives it supports, just as it is transformed by the inhabitants that render it alive. A world has still to be built... Nothing must deter us from this truth. A worn-out world deserves our urgent attention. An unborn world deserves our creative intelligence." (Homi K. Bhabha, "From Public Space to Public Sphere").

Vlad Nancă reflects on the topics of utopia and retrofuturism by creating a connection between the grid as a mediation system for space, and wild nature growing nonchalantly and defying any imposed rules. The grid, borrowed from the Italian architects Superstudio, stands as a symbol for equality, horizontality and freedom – an anti-architectural form creating a "single continuous environment, the world rendered uniform by technology, culture, and all the other inevitable forms of imperialism" (Superstudio).

« The End of Panic (The Panic of the End) »  
(Alex Mirutziu)

Object oriented philosophy has already stated that objects have an autonomous existence outside human perception and have a capacity to "exceed every relation into which they might enter" (Graham Harman).

Objects and relations create a network of ideas that do not exhaust reality, but accept its irreducible and often hazy core. Nature and objects may be the silent witnesses, solitude being also a participatory state. A state outside the logic of determinism and instrumentalism.

While finding himself at the Coolbawn Castle

in Ireland, the artist Alex Mirutziu stated: "I didn't inhabit a place; I was being inhabited by that particular place." The awareness of the contradictions of the two sides of existence – the inner one and the exterior one – makes it even more difficult to discern the fear of the unknown, the anxiety caused by infinity. Alex Mirutziu continues his quest into post-language and performative gestures capable of rendering new semantic contexts for visual poetry.

« The post-natural is defined by policy, politics, or borders. »  
(Anca Benera et Arnold Estefan)

The posthuman multilayered subject generates a new set of principles contributing to decentering the human and integrating a new cartography of the living and non-living objects. This nature-culture continuum is being questioned in the present through the means of genetic, chemical and technological developments, while the empowerment of men is disrupted by new ways of addressing the nature and the natural. The complex landscape unfolding after the posthuman / post-natural turn has proved to be a subject of inquiry for artistic projects dealing with nomadic subjectivities, situated knowledge, or the politics of human agency in the "Anthropocene".

Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan turn to the subject of nature manufacturing that reshapes the landscape of the planet. Their ongoing research project is combining facts and fiction in the form of a post-natural atlas, looking to explain the recent history through social, economic or political events. "Starting from domestication and genetically modifying specimens to chemical weapons, to today's atomic gardening and extreme crossbreeding, the post-natural domain is vast". The posthuman condition is "a crucial aspect of our historicity", understood by feminist theoretician Rosi Braidotti in conjunction with questions such as: "what new forms of subjectivity are supported by the posthuman" and how can one define the human and non-human agents on a global scale.

Diana Marincu

professional art world as well as students from universities and art schools. The artworks made on site are then exhibited to the public in a group show accompanied by a catalogue.

## FRAC DES PAYS DE LA LOIRE

Pays de la Loire regional contemporary art collection

The Frac des Pays de la Loire is in several respects a pioneering organization : since 1984 it has been offering periods of residence to artists as part of the Ateliers Internationaux ; International Workshops programme. The works produced during these residencies have helped to enrich the collection in original ways. This is also the first Frac in France to have been endowed with a building specifically designed for its various functions and tasks, i.e. producing artworks and exhibitions, creating and curating a collection, and getting this collection to circulate within the region, so as to familiarize the public with today's art. It's brief was—and is—to put together an international collection, organize exhibitions and shows in the region, and raise public awareness about today's art, thus getting people to take part in the development, circulation, distribution, and knowledge of contemporary art.

With more than 1,600 works, plus the important gina pane collection, the collection of the Frac des Pays de la Loire has been put together since 1982, in compliance with an acquisitions policy encouraging the purchase of works by young artists. The Frac has thus done its utmost to focus on the most innovative aspects of presentday art. In tandem with the follow-up given to the emerging generation of artists, the Frac also purchases historical works.

## RESIDENCY PROGRAMME

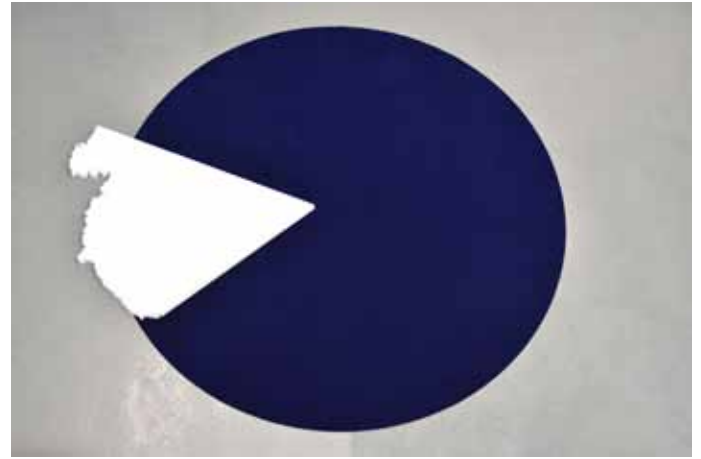
A pioneer in this area, the Frac des Pays de la Loire set up the International Art Studios programme in 1984. Through this exceptional experiment in France, the Frac is developing ways and means to support art, thus helping to enrich its collection in an original way (20% of the collection come from a selection of the artworks produced during this residency). As a place for research, exchanges and production, these art workshops form an active and reactive laboratory. Each year, for two months, they enable the guest artists to work and meet people involved in the

## THE CURATOR :

DIANA MARINCU

born in 1986 à Timișoara, lives in Timișoara.

Diana Marincu, Doctor of Theory and Art History and Art Critic, curated numerous exhibitions, including in 2018 with Szegedy-Maszak Zsuzsanna of *Double Head Matches* at the History Museum in Budapest and in 2017 with Ami Barak *Life A User's Manual* for the biennale of contemporary art in Timisoara and Arad.



Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, *The Last Land*, 2018

ANCA BENERA & ARNOLD ESTEFAN

born in 1977, lives in Bucarest.

born in 1978, lives in Bucarest.

Anca Benera and Arnold Estefan work in a range of media spanning installation, video, and performance. Working collaboratively since 2011, their practice investigates power relations in social, economic, cultural and political contexts to reflect on society as being a tissue of laws and conventions that must be permanently re-imagined. Their works have been shown in: *Natural Histories, Traces of the Political*, MUMOK Wien (2017), *Sights and Sounds*, The Jewish Museum, New York (2016), *Global Control and Censorship*, ZKM Karlsruhe (2015), *Der Brancusi-Effekt*, Kunsthalle Wien (2014), *Mom, am I barbarian?*, 13th Istanbul Biennial (2013), *Intense Proximity*, La Triennale, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012).



Anca Benera & Arnold Estefan, *Landscape as an extension of the military imagination*, 2017

NONA INESCU

born in 1991, lives in Bucarest.

After studying at the Chelsea College of Art & Design in London (2009–2010) and at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp (2010–2011), Nona Inescu has completed her studies in 2016 at the National University of Arts in Bucharest (Photography and Video Department). Her art practice encompasses photographs, objects, installations and video works. Recent solo exhibitions include: *An animal that was once thought to be a plant, that transformed into stone*, SpazioA, Pistoia (2018), *Lithosomes, Exile*, Berlin (2017). Her work has also been included in group exhibitions: *Survival Kit 9*, Riga (2017), *Life – A Users Manual*, Art Encounters Biennale, Timisoara (2017), *Gestures of Tomorrow*, Kunstverein Nuremberg (2016).



Nona Inescu, *Concretions (Geophilii) I*, 2017



Nona Inescu, *Preparatory video still, work in progress*, 2018



Olivia Mihălțianu, *Film métrage, Spaghetti Loop*, 2016 (video still)

## VLAD NANCĂ

born in 1979, lives in Bucarest.

Vlad Nancă studied Photography and Video at the Art University in Bucharest, Romania. His early works employ political and cultural symbols, often using word-play to evoke nostalgia, referencing Romania and Eastern Europe's recent history and challenging the social and political climate of their time, but his current interests revolve around space (from architecture and public space to outer space) materialising in sculptures, objects and installations. Recent exhibition include: CUT / REZ, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia, Orient, Bunkier Sztuki, Krakow, Poland, DOUBLE HEADS MATCHES, New Budapest Gallery, Budapest, Hungary (group) and In the natural landscape the human is an intruder, Sabot Gallery, Cluj, Romania (solo)

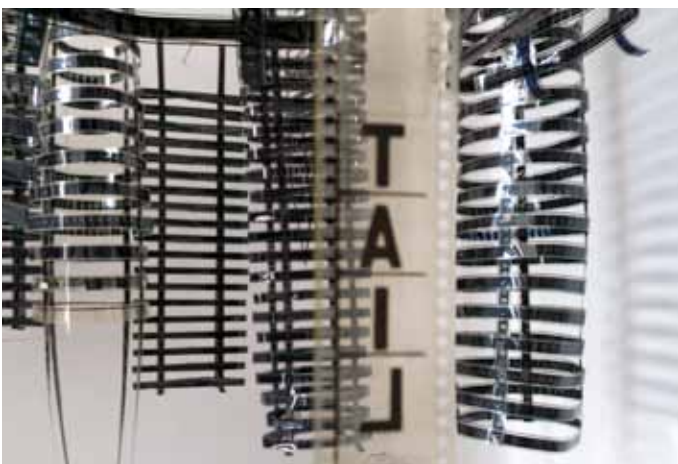
## OLIVIA MIHĂLȚIANU

born in 1981, lives in Bucarest.

For the past decade, Olivia Mihălțianu has developed long-term conceptual projects referring to themes such as nowadays image consumption, self-expression or power-shifts in various social political contexts. Her artistic approach is related to cross-media and process-oriented projects involving video, film, photography, object-making, installation and performance. Her work has been presented among others at: Loop Barcelona (2017); 55th Venice Biennale (2013); Secession, Vienna (2010)



Vlad Nancă, *Nebula*, 2015



Olivia Mihălțianu, *Tailler la robe selon le drap* Cutting The Coat According To The Cloth, 2018 (detail, installation view)

## ALEX MIRUTZIU

born in 1981, lives in Cluj.

Alex Mirutziu (b. 1981) lives and works in Cluj. Mirutziu's practice interrogates the process of how we create meaning to interpret the world around us. Inspired by philosophy, literature and design, he explores the inadequate use of objects, language and the body as tools of communication. Recent selected solo exhibitions and performances: Around the Truth is the Truth, Kunstverein Ost, Berlin (2018), Between Too Soon and Too Late, Delfina Foundation, London (2018), This, like..., MLF | Marie-Laure Fleisch, Brussels (2017), the performance Dignity to the Unsaid, The National Museum of Contemporary Art, București (2017), the performance Doing Sub Thinking at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, 2018.



Alex Mirutziu, *Prepared Poem #3* (detail from exhibitio view at Delfina Foundation), 2018



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PLATFORM

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Commissaire général : Jean-Jacques Garnier.

Avec la sympathique contribution du comité de jumelage Carquefou-Racovita.

<sup>1</sup> is a term related to the chronology of geology proposed to characterize the time of Earth's history that began when human activities had a significant global impact on the terrestrial ecosystem.