

States of Mind: Dan and Lia Perjovschi
Submission for the PCF 2007-2008
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Common Fund Proposal:

States of Mind: Dan and Lia Perjovschi

Proposers:

Kristine Stiles, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies, and Professor and affiliated faculty/German Studies

Julie Tetel, Associate Professor of English, Cultural Anthropology and Slavic Languages and Literatures

Adrian Bejan, J.A. Jones Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Pratt School of Engineering

Kimerly Rorschach, Mary D.B.T. and James H. Semans Director, Nasher Museum of Art

Brief Description:

In conjunction with the fall 2007 exhibition, *States of Mind: Dan and Lia Perjovschi*, curated by Kristine Stiles and on view at the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University from August 23, 2007 – January 6, 2008, we propose a series of related programs, including a half-day public symposium, in addition to a scholarly catalogue documenting the exhibition. The series of related programs in conjunction with the catalogue will serve to introduce Duke and the surrounding community to these two influential artists, and also to the political and cultural climate shaping pre- and post-revolutionary Romania, and Romania's new role as a member of the European Union. We request Common Fund support for this undertaking, which will bring together faculty, students, and international scholars and artists of various disciplines to discuss contemporary Romanian society in the context of Dan and Lia Perjovschi's work, which resides at the nexus of art, society, and politics, and belongs to the first avant-garde movement following the 1989 Romanian Revolution.

The Perjovschi exhibition is the first major retrospective of both artists' work, and will include painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, video, installation and conceptual art from 1986 to the present, as well as newly commissioned works. The opening of this exhibition follows an installation of Dan Perjovschi's drawings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in May 2007.

Intellectual Rationale:

Dan & Lia Perjovschi grew up together as school children in Sibiu, married, and began working professionally in the mid-1980s. Their work is informed by maturation under the joint umbrella of Romanian socialism and Soviet communism. Both artists' work must be categorized as conceptual, although they have utilized a wide range of media; both came to prominence in Romania in the early 1990s; and both played a major role in the establishment of the first avant-garde in Romania after 1989.

Dan became well known in Romania when he was selected for a position in the first Ministry of Culture after the revolution in 1990. His reputation was secured throughout Romania during this period as a political cartoon satirist for the only opposition newspaper in Romania, 22 Magazine. Upon popular demand, 22 expanded his role in the late 1990s to writing cultural critique in a by-weekly column "Perjo." Dan has been internationally recognized for large-scale, site-specific drawing installations of hundreds of portraits, varying in scale and drawn on everything from the floor to the walls and ceiling, depending on the site. Dan's work has been widely exhibited, at such internationally recognized venues as Manifesta, the Tate Modern, and the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, among many others; he will be featured in the "Projects" venue at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in May 2007. Dan was the Romanian representative for the Venice Biennale in 1999.

Lia's international reputation began as a result of her unique and compelling performances (1988-2005); she has performed throughout Eastern and Western Europe and Israel. Lia now works primarily as a conceptual and socially engaged artist, creating newspapers, map-texts (not wholly unlike those by Fluxus artist George Maciunas in the 1970s, but with Lia's own particular imagination and style), and other kinds

of text and community-based work related to her “Contemporary Art Archive Center for Art Analysis (CAA/CAA).” Under the rubric of CAA/CAA, Lia has transformed her performance practice into a conceptual/pedagogical action in “workshops,” a mode of art making related to public education at the nexus of art practice, art institutions, and the construction and analysis of history. Lia has been exhibited widely in Eastern and Western Europe, mostly in alternative spaces and Biennales. She is also created set designs for the Romanian National Theater and has recently been working as a set designer in Manila, as well.

Dan Perjovschi has revolutionized drawing with his unique graphic work, making it both an object and a medium of performance and installation. He is one of the few artists whose work is genuinely accessible, humorous, and, at the same time, politically critical and insightful. Lia has created a unique conceptual approach to art education, art practice, and cultural analysis. Together the Perjovschis have used visual and social commentaries to produce social and cultural change, creating public dialogues on the importance and value of public art. Their work is seminal in Romania, widely admired throughout Eastern and Western Europe, but under-recognized in the United States, due to a lack of attention given to the art of Eastern Europe and to artists living and working in places and countries considered peripheral to centers of art such as New York, Berlin, Paris, London, etc. The Nasher Museum’s exhibition, *States of Mind*, would be the first in the world to survey their work and to review the individual and collective careers of these two influential artists, who are at an important juncture in their careers with their work gaining the recognition it deserves.

To further elucidate the Romanian experience as evidenced in the exhibition of the Perjovschis’ art, a series of public programs, including a half-day symposium, will expound on issues raised in the context of the artists’ work. Beginning with the artists’ own participation on-site, Dan will create a new drawing installation, inspired by international news sources as gathered from a range of daily local, national, and international papers, and Lia will conduct a public workshop, open to all disciplines, based on theories developed at the Contemporary Art Archive/Center for Art Analysis, a virtual museum founded by Lia and focused on visual and cultural studies and critical theory. Faculty members working across disciplines will come together to participate in informal, gallery-based “Teach-Ins” with possible topics ranging from Romanian history and social changes pre- and post-revolution to a review of Romanian culture, including art, literature and linguistics, and Thursday evening programs at the Nasher: Art for All and First Thursdays. A half-day symposium will feature short presentations by various authorities on Romanian art, history, literature, society and culture, and the global impact of Romania joining the European Union (as of January 2007). Symposium participants may include: Kristine Stiles, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies, Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies, and Professor and affiliated faculty/German Studies; Julie Tetel, Associate Professor of English, Cultural Anthropology and Slavic Languages and Literatures; Adrian Bejan, J.A. Jones Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Pratt School of Engineering; Miriam Cooke, Professor of Asian, African Languages and Literature; Christina Bejan, Rhodes Scholar and Ph.D. candidate at Oxford University, England, writing a dissertation on Romanian cultural politics; Trevor Schoonmaker, Curator of Contemporary Art, Nasher Museum; Edna Andrews, Chair, Eurasian and Slavic Studies; Octavian Esanu, a Romanian-speaking graduate student from Moldova specializing in contemporary Eastern European Art and Theory, in the Department of Art, Art History and Visual Studies; Corina Apostol, undergraduate student, who as Kristine Stiles’ research assistant, worked with the Perjovschis in Romania; as well as other scholars from Business, Law, and UNC faculty members associated with the joint UNC-Duke Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and Eastern European Studies. We are also planning to invite former Duke President Keith Brodie to participate as it was he who established the funds for the exchange between Duke University and Bucharest University that funded some of Kristine Stiles’ research in Romania in the early 1990s.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a full-color, 150-page catalogue, featuring 100 images of the artists’ works. The publication will include a preface by Nasher Director Kimerly Rorschach; an essay

surveying the Perjovschis' work and influence, and an interview with Lia Perjovschi by Kristine Stiles; a poetic response from the position of a Romanian national to the Perjovschis' art by Andrei Codrescu, MacCurdy Distinguished Professor of English at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge (and internationally renowned poet, novelist, essayist, screenwriter, and National Public Radio columnist); an essay addressing the transformation of socialist politics in Romania after 1989 by Marius Babias, a political scientist, award winning critic and art theorist, and Romanian who lives and works in Berlin; and an interview with Dan Perjovschi by Roxana Marcoci, curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and Romanian national. The catalogue will conclude with a comprehensive chronology of the Perjovschis' careers. Duke University Press will distribute the publication.

The historic event of Romania's admission to the European Union has altered nearly two thousand years of the status of Romania as belonging, but peripheral, to Europe, although speaking a language based in part in Latin. The unification of Romania with Western Europe closes that gap, with the content and practice of Dan and Lia Perjovschi's art as representing both that fissure and its closure. Furthermore, when considered with regard to the anxieties created for the existing EU member states, Romania's admission to the EU resonates much more broadly. Immigration, driven by workers moving from poorer new Member States to richer old ones is a significant and very concrete concern over the next decade, as it has been with the addition of each new member state. These anxieties are founded in recent European history, most notably the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which created an illegal immigration situation of great proportions, including the racist debate over where Romania's Romani (gypsy) population might live. Moreover, since the EU was founded in the late 1950s, it has grown from 6 member states to 27, raising questions about how Europe as a whole should be defined, what it means to be European today, and whether all EU countries should be treated as equals. The work of the Perjovschis raises such questions and brings to light issues such as these for public consideration and debate, whether related to Romania directly or to the larger global arena.

Unique Nature of Project

The Duke-Romania connection is one that has been growing since the early nineties, beginning with an exchange program initiated in 1992 by Engineering Professor Adrian Bejan under the aegis of then President Keith Brodie. After Stiles' first trip to Romania in 1991 where she met and began interviewing many artists, among them the Perjovschis, the exchange program that Dr. Adrian Bejan established enabled her to return to Romania to lecture at the University of Bucharest and the Bucharest Art Academy in 1992 (and several trips thereafter). Since then, the University's connection to Romania has further developed to include the establishment of an America Studies program within the Bucharest University English Department, through a grant written by Associate Professor of English Julie Tetel and Stiles. In 1997, Professor Stiles first brought the Perjovschis to teach as Visiting Artists at Duke; this exhibition and its related components would celebrate their return to Duke ten years later, a decade after both artists have achieved international notoriety; and Professor Tetel spent a Fulbright year in Romania from 2005-2006.

This exhibition, with its related programs and catalogue, presents a timely opportunity to bring Stiles' groundbreaking scholarship on these artists, in conjunction with other Duke faculty members with specialized knowledgeable of Romania, to a broader audience at a time when there is a growing interest in their work, and in Romania, with its recent induction into the European Union. Professor Stiles was the first scholar to write about the Perjovschis. The Nasher Museum is well positioned to disseminate her research, ensuring that her expertise, and that of those who are contributing to this project, receives local, national and international attention. This opportunity comes at a time when there is burgeoning interest in Dan Perjovschi's work as evidenced by exhibitions at the Tate Modern, London, and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The Perjovschis' work, which revolves around issues of international politics, free speech, and censorship, seems particularly pertinent at this time when viewed in context with countries like Iraq and

Afghanistan that are also undergoing significant social and political upheaval, much like that experienced by pre- and post-revolutionary Romania. Present-day Romania has slowly undertaken the process of examining the history and legacy of its secret service and the large percentage of the general population (1 in 6 persons) that reported to the agency. With its entrance into the EU, this examination of the culture of secrecy, censorship, and surveillance has intensified and there is a growing debate and new laws being set in place regarding informers. Dan and Lia Perjovschis' work provides an artistic window into such topics.

Anticipated Intellectual Legacies for Duke University/How the Project Supports the Priorities of Duke University's Strategic Plan, "Making a Difference"

The presentation of this ambitious project complements Duke's plan "Making a Difference" in its commitment to transform the arts through enhanced support for visiting artist, support of faculty in the arts and presentation of work of the highest caliber. This project will bring two established and internationally recognized artists to campus to interact with faculty, students, and the public.

The work of these two artists lends significant cultural and historical insight into Romania both pre- and post-revolution, providing a window into a nation about which many know very little. The Perjovschis' direct involvement in this project, through Dan's site-specific drawing installation, Lia's workshops, and their joint commitment to discuss their work at the exhibition's opening, provides an exceptional opportunity for Duke and the broader community to directly engage with the artists, the artistic process, and a dialogue about Romania and its future. More specifically, this interaction is in direct support of the University's Visual Studies Initiative, as evidenced by the collaborative, interdisciplinary nature of this proposal and by the work of the Perjovschis, which provides an ideal occasion for the exploration of visual literacy as it relates to Romanian culture and history.

The exhibition's related programs provide additional opportunities for the museum's audience to engage in a dialogue about the issues the Perjovschis explore through their work. Furthermore, these programs build on synergies with Duke and UNC's joint Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies, by sparking new dialogue in the context of the arts and growing public awareness of this partnership through the highlighting of joint faculty in these programs.

The exhibition catalogue, to be distributed by Duke University Press, will serve as the most comprehensive source to date on the Perjovschis' work and will live on as an important scholarly record of the exhibition long after it has ended. This work, published by the Nasher Museum, will demonstrate the critical role Duke University's faculty has and will continue to play in the international dialogue on contemporary art.

Anticipated reach of the exhibition and related programming is 30,000 visitors. In its first twelve months of operation the Nasher Museum hosted almost 100,000 visitors from all 50 states, 24 countries, and 78 of NC's 100 counties. As a result of the Nasher Museum's ability to reach a broad audience, the exhibition and its related programs will reach a diverse group of constituents, many of whom will not only be unfamiliar with the artists, but also unfamiliar with Romanian culture and history, allowing Duke to take a leading role in educating the public on this subject.

Support Level Rationale

We request a grant of \$50,000 from the Provost's Common Fund in support of this exhibition and its related programs and catalogue. Each component of this project comes with significant expense, given its international nature, i.e. shipping work from Romania, international contributors to the publication, and the artists' on-site participation. Our ability to capitalize on the interdisciplinary nature of the project and to fully publicize the work to the broadest audience requires resources beyond our typical exhibition budget allocation. This project is the first of many to build on Duke's commitment to enhancing the

visibility of the arts on its campus by bringing distinguished artists to campus to interact, create and discuss their work and through the presentation and dissemination of faculty scholarship. We are aware of the new Visiting Artist grant program administered through the Council for the Arts, but because of Nasher Director Kim Rorschach's involvement as chair of the council who must vet the grant applications, we cannot apply for that grant in the first round.

Start-Up Support Rationale

The Nasher, like most museums, plans for exhibitions years in advance of their presentation. We have the infrastructure and funding in place to cover the operational base that generates and sustains our exhibitions. However, for each individual project, we must raise funds from a variety of sources to cover program and publication costs. We are also seeking support from the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation for this project, and will utilize funds raised through the museum's Annual Fund and Membership drives, as well as endowment income. Support from the Provost's Common Fund would provide funding for honorariums, catalogue production, and public programs and events.