

MARTOR



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Nourishment

Vintilă Mihăilescu

Inaugurated these days by a double opening at the National Peasant Museum, the exhibition on nourishment completes and rounds off Horia Bernea's vision. It is not by chance that it is taking place now, for „nourishment“ speaks about everything and can be found in everything. This is why this exhibition, held in the last room left of the „permanent exposition“, must have been hard to stage; and this is also why it took such a long time to mount it.

Nourishment, is not only food, nourishment is not only alimentation. Nourishment does not confine itself to food, it binds people together and unites them with God. Nourishment is not (only) a matter of biology, it brings society, culture, economy and, last but not least, the sacred together in its deeds and words. Together with sexuality, nourishment is probably the most „total“ social fact human sciences talk about. (This must be the very reason why nourishment and sexuality have always and everywhere been viewed in terms of norms, taboos and celebrations, fasts and holidays...)

I firmly believe that it is nourishment which made man (for I cannot help imagining and wondering what a lion or a wolf would look like when they called their companions by saying peacefully „you're invited to dinner!“...). Therefore, nourishment binds people together

horizontally, that is to say, by the unwritten yet universal laws of *hospitality* – but it also unbinds them by the equally strict and complementary laws of hostility. There is also a kind of nourishment which vertically binds all mortals through their ancestors and through the sacred – but it also divides the waters between the sacred and the profane by the ways in which it is used. We should not forget „our daily bread“, which becomes an everyday celebration by the Christian identification of bread and wine with Christ's body.

Nourishment that binds, nourishment on Earth and nourishment in Heaven... The two concurrent exhibitions hosted by the Romanian Peasant Museum stage all this richness of facts and significations. Both refer to Romanian folk culture, but they transcend it via the unchanging universal values they resort to. They do it differently, from organically and stylistically different perspectives and according to broad visions which bear a strong subjective mark. The former, the permanent exhibition, stages a rather „vertical“, *anthropological* vision, materialised by an ascending spiral which enlivens the entire exposition. The rather minimalist scenery confers transparency to the objects that become a kind of second language that alludes to the

many significations and deep meanings of the objects. The latter, the temporary exhibition, unfolds „horizontally“ in an opulent manner, displaying an extraordinary *ethnographic* richness in which every object and ensemble speaks for itself and allows itself to be admired.

In this double opening, the Romanian Peasant Museum also tried to respond to a challenge: turning „a conflict of interpretations“ (prevailing not only within the museum, but also in the ge-

neral opinions about our culture and traditions), into a „dialogue of visions“. In other words, the museum tried to break the patterns that present media – and cultural - practices have become used to establishing by means of talk-shows and other polemic formats in which the „toughest“ wins. We would rather believe in a kind of ecumenical peace that enables – and urges – everyone to be free and to recognise themselves by their nature and preferences.

