

Embroidery with a Cause: Ten-year Anniversary of *Semne Cusute* [Sewn Signs]

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Corduneanu, Ioana. 2022. "Embroidery with a Cause: Ten-year Anniversary of *Semne Cusute* [Sewn Signs]." *Martor* 27: 179-191. [DOI: 10.57225/martor.2022.27.13]

ABSTRACT

The article is presenting the art project *Semne cusute* [Sewn Signs], focusing on traditional embroidery's patterns' revival, and launched in 2012. It has already reached a community of 44,000 members. It is an enterprise that brings together cultural and artistic actions, embedded as heritage project. During all these years *Semne cusute*'s activity has been presented to the public by means of exhibitions, and educational workshops. The members of the community embroider to emphasize the need to preserve and teach ancient symbols, but also to coin their country (Romania) on the international map of luxury embroidery, responsible fashion, and European heritage.

KEYWORDS

Embroidery; tradition; cultural heritage; Romania; cultural project.

We, the 44,000 members of the online community *Semne Cusute* [Sewn Signs], embroider because we have a goal, along with the strategy to achieve it. We do not embroider to pass the time, or to adorn ourselves. It is not a side hustle or a way to get some extra spending money. Nor is it simply to follow some old customs. Our work serves a different purpose. We are aware of the critical direction our world is spinning towards and we oppose its wasteful trends, researching and proposing alternatives. After all, our activity could be described as a balanced and sustainable form of activism, inspired by tradition.

We embroider together, forming a strong community. We are united by shared values and empowered by our differences. The internet helps us organize towards a common goal.

The *Sewn Signs* project was initially launched in 2012. I was responsible for vectorizing over 2,000 heritage symbols and embroidery patterns for traditional blouses. The decision to upload them on the archival

blog *Sewn Signs* came as a natural next step, as I wished to translate these patterns for a new, digital generation. Ten years have passed since I took this leap of faith, unaware of the impact it would soon have. I am grateful for all the people who have supported this project, helping me write the first chapter of our story.

The Romanian Peasant Museum truly witnessed the most important milestones of our story. It was a source of inspiration, as its permanent exhibit was always my refuge when I needed to explore another world. It was a place for research, not only through its library, but all the more through its events and antique fairs. Here in the Museum's courtyard, I was able to feel, photograph, and measure thousands of old blouses, so diverse and unique, often very different from those featured to impress the general public.

Walking among the Museum's flea-market stalls was like entering a time machine, traveling to dozens of villages at any point in time—any researcher's dream. The subject I needed to focus on was right there. At the old Peasant's Club Cafe, I

spent hundreds of hours discussing with extremely passionate and competent people, like Horațiu Silviu Ilea,¹ who taught me so many things. The Club was where I worked on my embroidery and nurtured close friendships with the first women who joined my embroidery community. It was there where I taught the first official workshop for beginners, “The *Ie*² School,” in 2017. Some of our highest achievements were displayed in numerous exhibitions in the Museum’s halls. For Sewn Signs, the Romanian Peasant Museum is a guardian, keeping safe the most beautiful and valuable treasures we have, heritage textiles. Especially the sample collection, which served as a constant guide for everything we have built.

In some ways, we owe the birth of the Sewn Signs project in all of its complexity to the values displayed by the Romanian Peasant Museum. I am an architect by profession, and I have specialized in a successful career of retail design, a niche which connects marketing, branding, merchandising, visual communication, and architecture. I was trained to be able to create a viable commercial space, using assets from all of these fields. That is why I recognize the same values spread throughout the museum. I have “bought” each object that they have displayed, understanding that this museum is a store that sells ideas. Contrary to what many may believe, these objects are not dead. They are frozen in time, waiting for someone to bring them back to life. Ideas live in the forms of objects. When you buy or embrace an idea, you start to understand it, carry it with you, and can materialize it any time, in its old form or as an entirely new concept.

The most important step in our exploratory journey as Sewn Signs is, in my opinion, the transformation of intangible cultural heritage into objects we can wear, wash, gift, sell, and exhibit. This is the stage where any project could fail or fast-track to success, as there is an abundance of ideas, but not all of them can evolve beyond that.

In itself, Sewn Signs has inspired others and may serve as a point of reference for

many creators in the future. We are happy to receive international recognition and acclaim. Knowing what may have helped me in the beginning, I will use this opportunity to document the experience I have gained in this project. Perhaps it will be needed a hundred years from now, in 2112, or 2122.

Each rebirth is, of course, in its own form adapted to our modern world, with all the realities and challenges it brings. We do not know what the main communication platform will be a hundred years from now, for all we know the internet will be a mere relic of the past. We cannot know if there will still be needles, or even hemp or cotton. But I learned that each crumb of wisdom from the past can be a great tool.

At first glance, it might seem impossible for a beginner to enter the universe of the detailed techniques we use to create our shirts. Specific cuts, fabric lengths, adjustable elements, *pave*,³ *clini*,⁴ *fodori*,⁵ binding and stitching and a whole new language to describe embroidery and hemming techniques—*șinătău*,⁶ *brezărău*,⁷ *butuci*,⁸ *gura păpușii*,⁹ *la fir*,¹⁰ and so on.

But all of this is only the beginning, and perhaps the easier part of our mission. The number of angles at which you can pierce the fabric with the needle are, after all, limited by the very structure of the fabric. One must repeat hundreds or even thousands of little stitches. In a more fortunate scenario, you can optimize the steps of your embroidering, to cover more ground in an organized way and use materials more efficiently.

For someone who already knows the way of the needle and understands its techniques, the structure of the fabric and how it dictates embroidery become obvious. To be even more precise, we can understand how a certain type of thread, with a specific texture and structure, requires its own technique.

The natural properties of the fiber along with the way it has been processed determine exactly how it will perform when embroidered, a process determined by many forces: friction, twisting, crossing, and bending. We admire the results. But the



process itself deserves just as much admiration, as the hands work to tame the fabric. The materials we choose to use can make a considerable difference. Throughout our efforts to save the intangible cultural heritage, the biggest challenge was, ironically, very much connected to everything that is tangible.

In the beginning, in 2013 and 2014, when we were still a small group, we put our faith in the old fabrics which were being sold at the Peasant Museum's fair. Auntie Dida, a wise and well-respected seller, would keep the best fabrics under her table, knowing what types of products I liked. On Fridays I would visit her stall and buy all of the carefully curated suggestions, so I could later share them with my embroidery colleagues. Sometimes I would also buy from women who came all the way from Bucovina. First, I would check to make sure it was not "baked," meaning easily tearable, nor too dense, so that we could embroider through its threads.

In these moments, none of us imagined that we may one day require an industrial quantity of fabric, produced on such a large scale. We never thought that we might become the target customer base for certain producers. Meanwhile, offers of hand-made fabric started popping up, but we could never rely on them, as they used the same generic cotton threads and waiting times were too discouraging, as it could take months. It became clear this was not the right solution for us, and the lack of good quality fabric held us back.

In 2015, all I managed to outsource from a few regular factories were fabric samples made out of gauze type cotton, not much different from already existing products. These were the same lower quality fabrics used for etno mass production. Nobody wanted to experiment and develop something new. None of them considered it a lucrative business since, "nobody embroiders for artistry and craftsmanship" as one factory director put it.



Meanwhile, I knew that we would need much higher quality products, with better fibers made out of linen and hemp, but I could not justify this choice to the public, nor to the producers. For them, the only relevant metric was money. The turning point came in December, 2016.

That was when, for the first time ever, a museum would house one of our exhibitions. It was the Peasant Museum indeed. *Ia Aidoma*,¹¹ our effort to replicate impressive antique blouses from all the large museums of the world, finally caught the eye of specialists. The results were displayed in an exhibition that traveled to be admired in many cities in Romania: Iași, Suceava, Botoșani, Târgu Mureș, Sibiu, Miercurea Ciuc, and abroad: Zaragoza, Geneva, Luxembourg. Shortly after, I was granted access into the Museum's archives, to study the Sample Collection: the oldest and most sought after textile fragments, which we had dreamed of.

Wearing gloves and proceeding with great care, I was able to touch, for the first time, fragments of old and extremely old

fabrics. I understood that we needed fabric that not only looked different, but one that would function differently as well. It needed to fall and fold a certain way, like the gentle stream of a river. It needed to vibrate and support some pretty heavy embroidery, rich and dense, crafted with chunky threads.

Still, I was not sure how I could convince members of our group to switch to such an alternative. How could I tell them to abandon the dainty fabric they nicknamed *borangic* [silk], though it was only a cheap substitute, to give up looking for *marchizet* [marquissette]?

In January 2017, I founded the School of *Ie*,¹² here at the Museum, hosted by the welcoming Peasant's Club. Immediately after I made the announcement, in less than 24 hours all the tickets were sold. The course was fully booked, and we even had women who were willing to go on the waiting list for the next workshop. I began preparing the gauze-like cotton samples for their classes, knowing they would be more familiar, and everyone would be already used to them.



But during class, I noticed a contrast that shocked me. The cheap “melted” cotton looked completely out of place in their hands. These first students were women who paid high attention to details and had high standards. The cotton issue kept bothering me and I could not leave it alone, thinking it would be such a shame.

With some money that I had saved up, which was the ultimate decision-making tool for production as I had learned, I traveled to a new factory. Mr. Paul Vasile at PRODIN¹³ listened to my arguments, with a lot of patience but not without some doubt. The special moment, which made all the difference, was when I told him, from a 2.5-meter distance, that the sample being shown was too dense for embroidery at 20x20 threads per cm, and that we would need 18 threads per cm. He stopped and looked right at me, double checking the fabric density with a magnifying glass and succinctly concluded: “Miss, I will produce anything you want.” I kindly asked for linen, the best one. Should it be blended with cotton to make it cheaper? I said no, the best and purest linen. This was and continues to be the differentiator which sets *Sewn Signs* apart. Not the cheapest, but the best quality, even if it requires more effort.

We started with two types of fabric, a cotton one in a natural shade, 16x16 thread count, and a linen one, weaved with French threads, 18x18 density. These were the first products available in the newly opened *Sewn Signs* online store.

The novelty was received, in general, with trust and openness. In 2018 we developed the first 100% hemp fabric, specially crafted for shirts and inspired by a fragment found in Sibiu’s ASTRA Museum.¹⁴ A work shirt from the Gorj region, in Southern Romania. Many new variations followed, crafted specifically for historical accuracy or different areas and different types of shirts—for celebrations, work, or daily activities.

Already this idea in itself was like a small revolution among all embroidery communities. There were many people with

a certain preference and influence who could not go beyond the pattern of an *altiță*¹⁵ shirt, with *încreeț*¹⁶ and *râuri*.¹⁷ They were quite in denial, and against all evidence refused to believe that for regular working days women wore simpler shirts, with little to no embroidery. Minimalist shirts, as we would describe them today. We nicknamed them “urban,” as they are also easy to integrate into modern outfits, even office ones.

While traditional through their cut and materials, they did not scream etno and thus immediately gained appreciation from people living in larger cities. Hundreds of beginners built up the courage and determination to start embroidering their first shirts. Ones that could be worn without the fear of putting them in the washing machine or styling them with jeans, even if it was not for a special occasion.

More and more people started to understand and appreciate the idea of making their own shirts, in which they could invest more than time, but also natural, high-quality materials, with numerous benefits for themselves and the planet. Hemp fabric brought a wave of change in our wardrobes and mentalities.

In 2020, we stopped all production of 100% cotton fabric. We kept some threads for blends, such as the house blend of cotton and hemp called *Acasă* [Home], and the one blended with linen. The product names for our fabrics are uniquely chosen, setting them apart from the usual girl and flower names. Instead, they are named after certain emotions and impressions stirred by their textures. We have: Fine and Very fine linen, Infinite, Content, Little linen, Sunday, Vintage, Vintage plus, and Incredible. Hemp comes in three options: The first hemp, often used by beginners, Rustic, and Urban. Another new and perhaps a bit confusing product was the Nature fabric, which we purposely kept natural, unbleached.

A lot of people were instantly supportive, very interested in the natural aspect, raw fibers weaved without any chemical treatment. Especially since fabric naturally

lightens over time with each wash, and even with sun exposure. Other clients, mainly from Eastern Romania, Moldova and Republic of Moldova showed a definite preference for white, thinner fabrics, considering it esthetically superior.

We also enjoyed surprising our customers with fabric industrially produced from threads of varying diameters. These threads are included in the final product on purpose to create texture and a “dramatic” effect, especially when it comes to linen. It is a common procedure among those who want to enhance the raw and natural aspects of the fiber, anywhere across the world.

Even more so, in India, known for its cotton production, this method was introduced to somewhat deceive buyers and clients to whom they export about the exact contents of the fabric. This fabric called “linen-cotton” only imitates the natural texture of linen, but in reality, it is made out of 100% cotton. Even the concept of natural fabric is very sought after right now. But how was this new product received by our community?

The same people who appreciated natural, unbleached colors immediately appreciated the uneven texture. They understood that these intentional imperfections created in the industrial process bring a good vibration to their project, and they started embroidering, not minding or even celebrating the unevenness. Thus, we started having shirts that appeared to be made on 100% handcrafted fabric.

But even so, there are still people who label these threads as “defective,” without knowing anything about them or bothering to ask. For them, there is only one vision: the perfection of these shirts depends on their steady and even embroidery, which could only be achieved through a uniform thread, on a perfectly uniform fabric.

The danger of having perfection as our single and utmost goal can be observed in people who cannot manage to detach themselves from only seeing what is right in front of their needle. The idea of harmonious

coloring, a balanced composition adapted to match the embroidery pattern, the geographical region, and one’s own body shape seemed like a foreign principle, in a foreign language. It did not matter if we tried to explain. Sometimes the lack of education or openness makes people less likely to understand that beauty and the perfection of your craft are not one and the same thing. Our best argument was to explain that embroidering machines are the only ones who can produce perfect work, better than any human hand, while also eliminating any type of real emotion.

However, the most active members in our community were more interested in the adventure, the opportunity to experiment as much as possible: with cutting patterns, techniques, new embroidery patterns, and exquisite materials. They savored it and found joy in discovery and learning new things. Their interest, their enthusiasm and their results were our driving force. Their mindset was different, oriented towards progress, without the fear of making mistakes, knowing they will find a solution to fix problems that might arise, willing to learn and be enriched by new experiences. Each new product, each new texture was met with trust (as they knew I had tested it beforehand) and curiosity.

These women quickly understood that what makes the Romanian blouse a visual delight is its diversity. They learned to mix and match, to add surprising details, suspense, a dash of contrast, combining techniques and textures to impress any viewer, but also to enjoy the whole creative process. Indeed, monotony brings a certain calmness, but breaking away from it in a masterful way comes as a breath of fresh air, as these contrasts can power your craft and guide your artistry. And so, we finally managed to leave behind the bland cotton threads marketed as moulinet or cotton perlée, which we now solely use in places where the embroidery is more vulnerable to daily wear: the collar, the binding and sometimes the extra lace-like decoration.



Nowadays we work with wool threads that come in special blends for extra durability: wool and silk, wool and hemp, wool with silk and modal. We also use a very fine type of wool, well spun and combined with acrylics, for small colorful details. There are also linen threads for embroidery. But the most impressive visual effect is brought on by silk, which we use in different forms.

Initially, in Romania you could only buy small five-meter packets of silk, individually wrapped. But a celebration shirt from the south of our country requires more than a kilometer of thread. That would amount to 200 small silk packets, which meant paying more for the packaging than for the silk itself. These logistics were discouraging, and we weren't willing to pay for something so ineffective. What everyone mistakenly called "silk" was a viscose thread produced at Bicaz or over in neighboring Bulgaria.

At last, in February 2018 I found the perfect thread. I was in Luxemburg, for the *Ia Aidoma* exhibit hosted by the Court of

Justice of the European Union. I walked into a sewing supply shop unlike any I had ever seen in Romania. Luckily, I had seen such threads on our older shirts, from 200 years ago, the ones kept in the Sample Collection of the Romanian Peasant Museum Archives. Without them, I would not have been able to recognize the thread and be aware of its value. We are talking spools of silk with combed thread, not spun, 800 meters in length, weighing 100 gr, the perfect amount for a beautiful celebration shirt.

Surely, this texture surprised our community, and the reactions were split as per usual. Some members considered it to be faulty, but it turned out that they just could not master how to use it. Others, on the other hand, trusted the new product as the authentic thing and had the strength to try it out, to find methods to adapt using already known techniques. It was only thanks to them, and with their help, that we managed to go forward. The most admirable value of this community is without a doubt the

ambition to never give up, especially not at the first obstacle. There are always women who believe and trust, quickly coming in to show others how they overcame their challenges.

Learning to master the thread meant learning how to make it truly shine. The old principle will always remain true: the material dictates the technique. It tells us how to work with it. Interestingly, even after 150 years, we can obtain similar embroidery results by using the same type of thread they had back then. Thus, we started understanding the work, not content to merely recreate it, but finally understanding the rhythm and angles of embroidery, niche details we were not ready to fully master previously.

What was the first innovation that silk brought us? Color! Color as a spectacle, as color never stands on its own. As usual, within the production chain, profit is the most important aspect, and if you want to obtain something that is exclusive, you have to be able to convince those in charge of its selling potential. Put the money on the table, as we say. For luxury producers who care about their image, knowing the true value of their brand, profit is not always the first priority.

Mr. Klemens Zitron, the owner and leader of the Atelier Zitron¹⁸ factory, a well-known silk producer, accepted to work with us. Exclusively for us, he decided to create a product with a unique color, the one I sent to him as a homemade hand-dyed sample. We named it *Dor*, a more or less untranslatable Romanian word which means longing—a completely unique shade of indigo. Four shades of red followed right away: *Drag* [dear] (a rosy red), *Ardoare* [ardor] (blood red), *Pasiune* [passion] (the red of sour cherries), and *Mândrie* [pride] (a deep purple). They sold off like fresh bread internationally, and thus we next collaborated on a wheat field yellow and a silvery cloudy blue called *Nor* [cloud]. Six complex gradients followed.

For those who do not know silk, how it works and behaves on fabric, this might

not seem impressive. Only those who have experimented, dyeing and testing many samples and different types of silk will know what a challenge it can be. Silk thread is more resistant to dyeing than wool is, it absorbs color differently, in a paler shade. In order to obtain deeper and more intense hues a lot more pigment is needed, sometimes in excess. It is then no wonder that such threads bleed out when washed, even in cold water. Deep reds, dark blues and emerald greens are especially problematic. They need a special chemical treatment to stabilize the color, and thus our beautiful silk has a lot of chemistry behind its “new” traditional dyeing process.

In the past, Romanian embroidery was created with shades of silk that were to some extent borrowed from other cultures, people passing through our country or occupying it. But we have now reached another important milestone. We work with unique colors that we created and asked for and will, in the future, raise many questions: Where did they even find such silk? Who produced it? How did they manage to get this done?

The last products added to the Sewn Signs shop inventory were the precious accents: metallic threads. Not just a metallic aspect, but actual fine gold leaf, ingeniously spun around a cotton thread core. Then there are the metallic sequins and *tel* that I chose directly from India, from the vast bazaar of Jaipur, in January 2020 right before the pandemic. This is the true home of these materials, it is where they were invented and where they are still produced using the right technique, at the best possible quality. Those that made it to Turkey had been already adapted and modified compared to their initial form.

The change introduced by these new materials occurred too slowly for us to process it properly. But we all knew for sure that we could not go back to inferior quality or substitutes. We started to want to wear these fabrics daily, and not just for celebrations or special occasion shirts, and so production increased. This also made us more interested in understanding cutting



patterns and the ancient solutions used for daily clothes and work clothes.

This subject has not been approached by older studies, as researchers did not believe it to be of great interest. It is also why museums do not have such pieces. It might be that the criteria for how pieces were chosen for preservation was a mainly aesthetic one. This can teach us an important lesson, as it is clear that we cannot afford to only preserve pretty objects for our future. We cannot know what needs the future generations will have, and how they will judge us for what we decided to keep.

From celebration shirts, which are meant to impress with their heavy and full embroidery, we slowly expanded into also considering personal taste, thermic comfort, and movement practicality. We have also worked towards common good, sharing and teaching our discoveries and taking action against fast fashion and Insta-fashion.

We have understood the layered beauty of these shirts, a foundation we have slowly built: at the base sits a high quality durable fabric, then comes the cutting pattern, pragmatic and functional, and then at last, only on the surface, the colorful patterns

which are pleasing to the eye. And even the latter play an important role, far beyond adorning our bodies with splashes of color. Only while embroidering them, we can truly meditate on the meanings of these symbols.

Today we can acknowledge and list all the negative outcomes of large-scale cotton crops, which require so much water and so many pesticides. In fact, we know that the so-called organic cotton which is sold to us as a pricier but eco-friendly alternative actually uses even more water, and thus it is not an environmental win at all.

We acknowledge how Europe became “clean,” while simply exporting the damaging and polluting coloring industry to Asia, creating dependency on another continent. Europe has yet to solve the issue of responsible fashion, instead of passing it down to be somebody else’s problem. Too many species are now endangered or extinct because of greed, a chase for clean image and profits.

As we embroider each little symbol, one by one, on the chest and on the sleeves, we can see that they are not lions, bears, wolves or peacocks, not scary animals, strong and intimidating. Our women chose to embroider the smallest and most modest animals,





which might even go unnoticed by those who do not pay attention to nature. These are the little beings that were so important for those who worked out in the fields and gardens, guiding them with nature's intuitive timing. We are talking of course about insects that keep the soil alive, the trees blooming, the garden bountiful, and the birds well fed. They are the pollinators, for whom the latest studies only predict a catastrophic future: the bees, the butterflies, caterpillars, small flies, ladybugs, and ants. We have dedicated a whole exhibition to them, on June 23, 2022, hosted as usual by the Romanian Peasant Museum.

This is how, step by step, year after year, we have always embroidered for a good cause, and when we accomplished our goal, we moved on to the next, ever more important. We accomplished this because we do not create for selfish reasons or for personal gain, but because we wish to help others with our projects.

We embroider to recover heritage techniques, to master the art of the needle and see it as an extension of ourselves.

We embroider to bring our heritage shirts

home and into the present, from historical exhibits of textile museums from all over the world into the *Ia Aidoma* exhibition.

We embroider to complete the big tableau of Romanian shirts, so that the public at large may recognize their complexity and stay away from the mass produced copies, made by machines and sold cheaply. The *Ia Aievea* exhibition remains a flagship phenomenon which generated creations that are still used for inspiration. The Romanian word *aievea* translates roughly to "embodied," as in a dream coming true. The exhibition was on display in Sibiu, in two locations of the ASTRA Museum, from June to December 2018. In March 2019, the *Ia Aievea* shirts could be admired in Tokyo; unfortunately, further plans were put on hold because of the COVID pandemic.

We embroider to bring hemp and *altiță* shirts into our concrete cities, in every large Romanian and European city, to prove that our heritage is alive and will live on beyond a dowry chest.

We embroider to enrich the UNESCO chapter dedicated to the *altiță* shirts.

We embroider to spread the word and

encourage beginners to make their own shirts.

We embroider to prove that our generation is playing its part.

We embroider to dress our daughters for their graduation festivities at famous international universities. We embroidered to impress the crowds of Paris, in front of the famous *La Blouse Roumaine* painting,¹⁹ visiting Brâncuși²⁰ in his own atelier.

We embroider to raise the alarm, to preserve and teach ancient symbols, the way

we inherited them from our grandmothers. We embroider to put Romania on the map of luxury embroidery, on the international map of responsible fashion, on the map of European heritage, as an example in education.

And we will continue to embroider because what we wear is what defines us, influences others and initiates discussions, favoring exchanges of information and creating change.



Photo credits Sewn Signs Association.

NOTES

1. Horațiu Silviu Ilea is a museum specialist on traditional clothing at the Romanian Peasant Museum.
2. Traditional Romanian blouse.
3. The gusset is a patch of cloth used to widen the sleeves of a shirt.
4. Triangular or rectangular piece of fabric, used to enlarge garments.
5. Cuff of cloth, or lace, applied to the sleeves of a blouse.
6. Angled stitch used in embroidery.
7. Decoration sewn on cloth in order to adorn and protect the neck of a blouse.
8. Angled stitch used in embroidery, a local version of the cross-stitch technique.
9. Decoration obtained using the chain stitch technique, with a common center.
10. Technique of embroidery derived from weaving.
11. In Romanian, *ia aidoma* translates as “look-alike shirts”/ replicas of shirts.
12. School of Traditional Romanian Blouse.
13. <http://www.tesaturisanatoase.ro/>.
14. <https://muzeulastra.ro/en/>.
15. Traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder.
16. Ornament on the sleeve of the women’s traditional blouse.
17. Decoration in meandering lines, which adorns the sleeves of a traditional blouse.
18. For details, see: <https://atelierzitron.de/startseite/>.
19. *La Blouse Roumaine* is Henri Matisse’s painting (1940) displayed at Pompidou Centre (Paris)
20. Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957) was a Romanian sculptor who made his career in France. His studio is part of the Pompidou Centre (Paris).