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Old Buildings for Modern Times: The Rise of Architectural Monuments as Symbols of the State in Late Nineteenth-Century Romania

My PhD thesis investigates the European-wide networks of architects and intellectuals involved in creating, restoring and promoting historical monuments, heritage sites and a sense of national cultural identity in late nineteenth-century Romania. By describing the involvement of Austrian, French, Italian and Romanian artists and intellectuals, I argue that state symbols are only partially the product of 'the nation' and rather emerging from multiple and entangled transnational relations, even if less recognised as such in the literature.

The first to write about an architectural monument in Romania was a German from Transylvania, Ludwig Reissenberger (1819-1895), whose study was contextualised and contradicted by the Romanian architect Dimitrie Berindei (1831-1884). Romanian, together with French artists, also organised the display of Romanian historical monuments at nineteenth century Universal Exhibitions. Moreover, a collaboration between the French architects Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc (1814-1879), André Lecomte du Nouÿ (1844-1914) and the Romanian authorities led to the restoration of the most important historical monuments in the country. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, several local architects, Ion Mincu (1852-1912) being the most visible, reinterpreted contemporary European ideas about modern architecture and created new designs inspired by the architectural monuments of Romania. Therefore, the national architectural heritage of the new nation-state was defined and promoted by way of complex transnational networks of artists, intellectuals and ideas, across national borders and in ways that contradict traditional separations between centres and peripheries, 'Eastern' and 'Western' art and culture.

I currently work as a postdoctoral researcher in the ERC project 'Art Historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe' (arthist.ro) on three separate articles: One in which I revisit the main assumptions about Romania's 'national' architect, Ion Mincu, and place his works in relation to European-wide theories and ideas about modern architecture, regional and national identities, centres and peripheries. Another which is a comparative analysis of the Habsburg art historical studies about the South-Eastern region of Bukovina (written by the architects Josev Hlávka and Karl Romstorfer) and their relations with architects and historians active in neighbouring Romania. I demonstrate the competing but fluid ideas about regional, national and imperial cultural identities at the periphery of the Habsburg Empire in the late nineteenth century. The last article is an analysis of the first attempts to periodize and place in a chronological narrative the

architectural heritage of Romania, a process that reveals the anxieties, political stakes and significance of the first histories of art in Central and Eastern Europe.