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The Primitive Intangible Heritage behind Brâncuși's Modernist Tangible Forms of Culture **

Abstract: This research explores the modernist trajectories of Constantin Brâncuși's masterpieces, raised in affinity with formal expressions of non-Western culture and art, such as Romanian peasant traditions or African rituals and artefacts. In a broader sense, these cultural nuances trace the transnational roots of Brâncuși's portfolio, which remain of peripheral concern for the aims of this paper. The main interest in this research is rather focused on deconstructing the nationalism behind Brâncuși's heritage, arguing that it can ultimately be reduced to a powerful mixture of *primitive, intangible* forms of culture, such as mystical beliefs, folkloric narratives, peasant traditions and values of Orthodox religion, reframed and translated into *modernist* symbols depicted by *tangible* forms of culture, such as individual sculptures and installations. In the first part of the article I will extensively explain Brâncuși's interest in particular forms of European primitive art, especially Romanian ones, closely observing the cultural contradiction between such a cultural engagement and the modernist trajectories of his artistic creations as a dominant of his artistic perspective. In the second part of my research I track the complementarity between Romanian *primitive intangible forms of cultural heritage* and *modernist tangible forms of culture* implemented in some of Brâncuși's oeuvres, in the light of a working hypothesis that I advance along my paper, according to which all forms of intangible heritage are ultimately reduced to tangible forms of cultural heritage. The article ends up with an applied analysis on the previous failures of including Brâncuși's ensemble "The Heroes' Way" in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, testing to what extent such argument on the mix of intangible and tangible forms of culture brought together by this monument might have increased the success of the national advocacy strategies addressed to *The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)* for a positive evaluation and acceptance. Final remarks of this research conclude on the urgency of redefining in a new philosophical and axiological frame core-values such as "the integrity" and "the authenticity" of this ensemble, as criteria under which the inscription was proposed and the ICOMOS report declared it as not being justified as a whole, by attentively balancing the role of tangible and intangible forms of culture embedded by the monument in fulfilling this double condition.

Keywords: Brâncuși, ICOMOS, integrity, authenticity, tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, primitivism, modernism.

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I. Introduction

Whenever Brâncuși's masterpieces are at stake for the integrity and promotion of the European tangible cultural heritage, his oeuvres are recommended as the expressions of a Romanian genius, fascinated by the peasant roots of his native country, but redefined by an avant-gardist art with powerful French nuances. Brâncuși's masterpieces are iconographic for modernist sculpture and yet, they loyally keep an eye to the Romanian or African folk structures and forms, transited in his sculptural works and installations.

One should notice that such genealogical insights on the visionary essence of the artistic spirit of a nation, that acquires, in Brâncuși's art, a particular visual identity and somehow, a modernist reconstruction of its origins and values by recourse to traditional means of expression, did not accidentally appear as a dominant trait of his portfolio. Brâncuși's artistic creations can be tracked, by all means, in the light of the early 20th century Euro-American fascination with primitive objects that engaged *primitivism* as an ethnocentric fashionable tendency along the production of modern and contemporary art. On the one hand, such "primitivism" should be understood as a visual narrative on the origin and sense of belonging that a nation depicts by recourse to cultural artefacts, symbols and traditional expressions of local principles, values and lifestyles. On the other hand, primitivism never remains configured in modern artistic expressions as a genuine, unaltered construction: its pieces are reconfigured in a modern puzzle, loaded in radical unexpected figures, enjoying a regenerated symbolic capital, for which the primitive becomes "a modern problem, a crisis in cultural identity" (Foster 1985, 204) that expects to be solved by recent forms of culture and, ultimately, to win a permanent, privileged place in shaping the cultural heritage. In what exclusively concerns the masterpieces of Brâncuși, we still face "a cultural contradiction" (Jameson 1991) that has been historically perpetuated along the artistic debates consecrated to his cultural heritage, mainly fuelled by the clash between his modernist reputation and the associations of his artistic perspectives with mysticism, folklore, peasant traditions, Orthodox religion.

The patterns of his modern artistic styles raised in affinity with formal expressions of non-Western culture and art reveal that his avant-gardist spirit should not be isolated from core-values of traditionalism. Implicitly, this structural correspondence creates a different context for understanding the roots of nationalism that has been extensively associated with Brâncuși's figure. My thesis is that whenever nationalism is invoked in what concerns the portfolio of Brâncuși, we confront his attachment and knowledge of *intangible forms of cultural heritage*, such as folkloric traditions, symbols, rituals and values, that are transited and reframed into *tangible forms of cultural heritage*, such as individual sculptures and installations, in which they gain

specific representations. If nationalism, as it was speculated in Brâncuși's artworks, is nothing else than a mixture of primitive intangible forms of culture resurrected or radically reinterpreted through tangible forms of culture, then we should question to what extent this interdependence, between primitivism and modernism as equivalent relationship to that lying between intangible and tangible forms of culture can be generalized and applied as a more conciliating manner of accommodating these two types of heritage.

The study-case occasioned by the analysis devoted to Brâncuși's portfolio in order to deconstruct his pretended nationalism, as a matrix of primitive and modernist Romanian nuances of tangible and intangible forms of culture, shares a larger theoretical context along which my research endeavours to argue in favour of accepting that all tangible forms of culture can be ultimately reduced to intangible forms of culture. I intend to explain that even if this theoretical argument appears in implicit forms in the UNESCO conventions of defining and safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage, strictly in what concerns Brâncuși's oeuvres proposed to be included on the list of UNESCO sites, this correspondence has never been recalled, nor applied in the advocacy strategies and reports addressed to the evaluations performed by ICOMOS. Connecting tangible forms of culture authored by Brâncuși with intangible forms of autochthon culture reflects not only an unconventional reconstruction of the so-called nationalism associated with the Romanian artist, but equally a new theoretical background for strengthening *the integrity* and *the authenticity* of his artworks. These are values considered by ICOMOS not entirely represented by the monumental ensemble from Târgu Jiu, which has been repeatedly rejected from his inclusion on the UNESCO list. Once these two layers of my research are fulfilled, I will draw some theoretical insights on the potential effects that the intertwining of tangible and intangible forms of Romanian cultural heritage might have on the contemporary reflections on the national identity and its adherent values to the UNESCO agenda. There through, before getting into the depths of this analysis, I will briefly sketch the theoretical acceptances on cultural heritage in its tangible and intangible forms, operated and applied in the current research, in order to get to their Romanian particularities through Brâncuși's creations.

II. Defining tangible and intangible cultural heritage: a critical assessment of their core-values and their effects on moderating safeguarding policies

The interdependence between tangible and intangible forms of culture lies rather on recent "semantic evolution of cultural heritage" (Vecco 2010, 321). The 20th century explored the cultural and axiological potential of

“patrimony” through multiple “expansions and semantic transfers” (Vecco 2010, 321) that enlarged the meanings of such notion from *material* properties with a higher role in preserving and exposing the past of a nation – in the sense of “monuments”, to diversified cultural practices that pass from one generation to another through an inheritance process, thus converging towards *immaterial* manifestations of culture. As “patrimony” became more attached to national, *material* forms of *possession* and *property*, “heritage” has been progressively devoted to *the living* forms of culture in their *immaterial* spectre, by this deepening the contrast between *tangible* and *intangible* cultural heritage. The most inclusive and operational definition of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is provided in the text of “the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”, from 2003, as it follows:

1. The intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (Art. 2)

This definition merely sets up the context in which the practices and oral knowledge specific to different national cultures relate to the production of material culture, an interdependence that appears in explicit forms in the second article of the Convention without arguing that ultimately all forms of intangible cultural heritage reduce to tangible cultural forms or evolve towards such constructions.

2. The *intangible cultural heritage*, as defined in paragraph 1 above, is manifested *inter alia* in the following domains:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.

For the purposes of my analysis, it is important to assume that folkloric knowledge, narratives, motives and practices, occasioned by “(a) oral traditions” are accepted as transferable sources of inspiration for “(e) traditional craftsmanship”, which can take material forms and be reframed, for newer symbolic insights, into artistic sculptural expression, such as Brâncuși’s ones. Some particular problems emerge, nonetheless, from this taxonomy. The artistic language understood as style can be understood as a vehicle for

elements belonging to intangible cultural heritage, and from this perspective, Brâncuși's style has raised several debates concerning his origin as tributary to Romanian and African traditions, beliefs or traditional craftsmanship. It is not the place here to discuss how the artistic style of an artist should be defined and to what extent style should be sooner considered as a formal language through which an artist expresses an artistic paradigm to which he has deliberately subscribed. However, this topic deserves a privileged and individual debate, since in what concerns Brâncuși's style, critics of art and aestheticians have been argued that primitivism and modernism cannot be mixed up into a specific artistic style, rather behaving as incommensurable paradigms. If this problem will be solved in the further pages of this article by addressing a plausible solution to such a suspected incompatibility inspired by the definition and appliance of transgressive attitudes in art, we should clarify how can (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and universe be translated from intangible to tangible forms of culture and vice versa. As an example, the *Endless Column* reflects values such as heroism and sacrifice, but it equally depicts a translated cultural human attitude of the human being in front of perishable life and imminent death. It can be interpreted as a form of art that conciliates intangible beliefs, inspired by Christian dogmas and values, on the division of being into infinite and finite. However, such metaphysical and cross-cultural speculations have not been used in consolidating the inscription of Brâncuși's masterpiece on the list of UNESCO sites, by highlighting its potential in experiencing and gathering both tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage. For the moment, we will keep in mind the manner in which intangible forms of cultural heritage are applied inter alia in the five domains previously listed according to the UNESCO Convention, in order to explain, in the following section of this research the primitivist and modernist traits of this interdependence.

III. Deconstructing Brâncuși's nationalism: primitivism and modernism from intangible to tangible cultural heritage

Questioning non-tangible forms of Romanian cultural heritage as main source for tangible forms of cultural heritage in Brâncuși's art opens up the possibility to legitimately speculate a spot of *primitivism*, which Geist recognized being reflected by the influences of folk art on the sculptor's main motives and themes (Geist 1969). Art historians such as Balas plea in favour of accepting Brâncuși's art as main exponent for Romanian folk art from which primitivism emerges (Balas 1978). One must notice, however, that the artistic discussions devoted to Brâncuși's supposed primitivism have been largely monopolized by a materialist perspective, that connected Brâncuși's affinity for wood sculpture with African forms of primitive art, followed by

Romanian further developments. Geist defended this idea, but the shift to primitivism understood as an integrative representational artistic paradigm inspired by folkloric traditions occurred later, expanding the materialist criteria towards non-tangible forms of cultural heritage. Both *The Kiss* and *The First Step* are considered works inspired by African influences in front of which Brâncuși ultimately raised aversions. The method used in creating these works was the *taille directe*, “a product of the primitivizing impulse of opening the twentieth-century” (Geist 1984, 246) which resumed to direct carving into the material “without the aid of a model” (Miholca 2014a, 15). Their formal depictions of incorrect anatomical representations, asymmetrical expressions and static appearance recalled the African art as source for enclosing abstractive thought into Brâncuși's art. As Miholca observes, Brâncuși distinguished along his artistic evolutions periods of loyalty towards the principles of primitive art, mainly covered by the 1920s-1930s (Miholca 2014a, 16), followed by a powerful denial of such convictions and a final regaining of primitivism, that Geist extensively explains starting from Brâncuși's declaration: “only the Africans and the Romanians know how to carve wood” (Geist 1984, 361).

Art historians fall into the trap of connecting the biographical stances of Brâncuși's becoming with his artistic choices, arguing that his deliberate destruction of presumed African inspired artworks, such as *The First Step* or the series to which *The Little French Girl* and *Madame L.* have been subscribed, was either due to his impression that they failed in provide enough African quality, or because the African primitivism was considered inappropriate in the context of his revolutionary, modernist artistic paradigm.

The inclusion of Brâncuși in the series of modern artists exhibited in 1984 under the name “Primitivism in the 20th Century Art” raised suspicions not only on the Romanian artist's etiquette of partisan of primitivism, but equally on the possible restrictions to legitimately associate avant-gardist objects to primitive ones. Rubin considers that avant-gardist objects rather raised their affinities for traditional objects, an unmediated influence barely being sustainable (Rubin 1984). Avant-gardists unlikely keep the genuine senses of traditional objects: they created artistic changes through which the results of their works made the initial, primitive objects unrecognizable. When Brâncuși takes the African depictions of the human body carved in wood, he forgets about the anthropological or initial symbolist power of such depictions: he brings the methods and the forms of traditional, pretended African artistic objects in new contexts that develop an authentic discourse. Balas considers that Brâncuși has rather been associated with African art because Romanian folk art was not as popular: anthropologically, they cannot compete, even though as she observes, similarities between these two artistic registers can be identified. Romanian folk art and African art share the high interest for wood textures, whereas the forms specific to each artistic register fulfil spiritual symbols and functions.

But *primitivism* is understood as an artistic paradigm that raises homage to the past, to a mystical discourse devoted to the genealogy of a historical identity, to “the primal innocence” linked with “sculptural simplicity” (Geist 1983, 41), to forms of pure art, “less corrupted by civilization” (Miholca 2014b, 25). There through, Balas considers that if Brâncuși would have been a primitive, he would have restrained his artistic interest to the past; nevertheless, his artistic concerns for the future of art and the progress of artistic discourses through abstract representation depict him as an avant-gardist that takes primitivism as a source of inspiration or a pretext for evolution. However, art historians confine us poor arguments, sometimes fallacious, regarding the reasons that should constrain our reason to accept Brâncuși as a *modernist* and not a *primitivist*, as if this exclusive disjunction is mandatory and must be accepted without even questioning it. Miholca insists on the fact that Geist and Balas refused to pursue Brâncuși as a primitive “because he is placed within the canon of modern artists as an innovator of modern, abstract sculpture. This conflicts with the idea of the primitive” (Miholca 2014b, 26). In my opinion, art historians who adopted such position committed a logical mistake – doubled by artistic vanities that history raised along different branches of artistic traditions and orientations – which lie in *concluding the one disjunct must be necessarily false since the other disjunct is true*¹.

I argue against considering primitivism to be excluded from an avant-gardist attitude. If Miholca’s opinion and, implicitly, the theoretical concerns raised by Geist and Balas would stand, then Dada should be excluded from the avant-gardist culture, since it claims the rejection of conceptual and scientist attitudes, of “laboratory” (Tzara 1981, 77) prescribed art forms and institutional recognition of artworks. Futurism was, indeed, obsessed by future, through the so-called “technical manifestos” (Boccioni *et al.* 1910), but Dada claimed the present, not the future; Surrealism called subconscious stances of the human mind as a fertile terrain for artistic inspiration based on the flux of past memories; Situationism inaugurated “the society of the spectacle” (Debord 1967) based on revisiting the historical past. Moreover, without any intention to rise an argument *ad auctoritatis*, the theory of modern art asserts “Dada primitivism” that “seeks to combine and keep a balance between contradictory psychic forces, to hold the demonic, bestial, unconscious, spiritual and intellectual faculties of human nature in a finely balances interplay around a hidden point of sublime” (Sheppard 2000, 187). Dadaist primitivism is even connected with the African anthropological journals, Tzara being known for the African insights of his *Nero Songs* from the *Dada Almanac* (Sheppard 2000, 187). In fact, primitivism is recommended as a “transgressive exploitation of the primitive energies of the psyche”, which reflects “the nostalgia for the presumed innocence of non-Western cultures” (Sheppard 2000, 184). If Brâncuși’s pedigree is

accepted, and Dada is associated with primitivism, as a transgressive attitude, then why should we deny Brâncuși's primitivism, by considering it incompatible with his modernist tendencies?

I rather defend arguments such as Glăveanu's ones, who accepts Brâncuși's primitivism and even exposes it as "refreshingly different from that of, say, William Morris in the humorous implications of its own nostalgia" (Glăveanu 2017, 715). Brâncuși's primitivism is gathered around his nostalgia for human fulfilment and paradoxes that emerge from such state of existence (his *Socrates* artwork from 1922, devoted to the Ancient Greek philosopher oddly represented – "His eyes are in his ears, his ears are in his eyes" said Brâncuși – reflects such appetite for traditions and paideic models of culture); primitivism emerges from the conviction that art has the duty to restore the real essence of objects, and that modern sculpture should defend ideatic contents of forms as realistic structures. Primitivism is merged with modernism: abstraction is not excluded, but sculptural forms are adherent to realistic ideals of representation.

What remains modern in this transgressive attitude and preference for "tribal" practices of representation, triggered both materially and ideationally, is simplicity, that still creates the shock of the "new". Innovation, which rapidly became linked with modernity as a primary historical and conceptual category, given the rise and cultural monopole that technology begin to hold on the individual's life, inspired, according to Geist, Brâncuși's appetite to restore the idea of "primal innocence" and "primitive origin" of our existence in his art. "Primitivism" became, in these terms, "the best choice for artistic breakthrough" (Miholca 2014b, 25). For an avant-gardist artist who took primitivism as a transgressive attitude – a hypothesis that I have not found in studies of Balas, Geist or other canonical historians of art and aestheticians who raised their scientific expertise in Brâncuși's art – the material and the ideational layers of each artwork had to be a reasonable compromise between primitivism and modernism, between the loyalty for the past and the passionate curiosity for the future. As his abstract concept of artwork evolves, Brâncuși becomes reckless – involving a direct and conscious intention in this regard – with the materiality of the objects that he creates. Each shape must be tributary to the "primary", "innocent", "untouched" condition of the material; each surface must evocate an infinite and perfect materiality from which it emerges. Miholca adds, following Goldwater, that primitivism can be tracked in Brâncuși's portfolio equally through his deliberative option to attach wood pedestals to his artworks. They highly contribute to the living forms of sculpture, to their kinetic allusions and to better highlight the geometrical rigors of each artwork. Nevertheless, this spectacular exposure of sculptures, through which the artist gains the dynamism for his presumed static forms, is argued by many art historians as a formal affinity for primitivism that Brâncuși constantly

reveals. I would add that pedestals highly contribute to restore the allusion to antiquity, to the classical forms of art exposure, but also to reinterpret the symbolic power that such objects used to have, inducing spiritual functions. It appears that *Brâncuși was rather a primitivist, than a primitive.*

As Balas observed, Brâncuși's artistic style reflects a cultural duality in which his occidental, avant-gardist affinities become intertwined with traditional, peasant expressions of Romanian folklore. In fact, at a first glimpse, the formal similarities, meaning exclusively the material correspondence, between his sculptures and the Romanian folk art objects, "such as zoomorphic pitchers, zoomorphic rugs, tombstones, porches, gates, chairs, oil presses, tables, chests, and masks" (Balas 1975, 94) appear as an unquestionable remark. Brâncuși remains a man of his native place, a loyalty that has been rather associated with nationalism. Artistic productions such as the first *Endless Column* of 1918 evolved from reminiscences of such Romanian vernacular architectural forms as gate post segments (Balas 1975, 94-5), that can also be encountered in the "grave posts from Loman" (Balas 1975, 95). Of course, these correspondences reflect a powerful interlink between Romanian specific forms of tangible culture, especially monuments, columns, "cemetery crosses and wooden Gothic churches from Transylvania" (Balas 1975, 95), and artistic productions of Brâncuși that ensure a sense of belonging, continuity and preservation of authentic local decorative symbols and architectural patterns. Balas figurative analysis shows up that even the African influences speculated at the bottom of Brâncuși's *King of Kings* should be rather recreated as an imaginative experience of reconnecting with Romanian folk objects such as "chair backs in the lower elements, a screw of a mill part such as the sculptor himself owned; or a porch pillar from Oltenia, followed by fluting from a porch pillar and surmounted by a head resting on a mug-like neck, carved in a fashion similar to an Oltenian mask crowned by the upper portion of a funerary pillar" (Balas 1975, 95-6). What lacks from this analysis is the proper connection with the oral traditions, beliefs and values of the local, Oltenian, intangible forms of cultural heritage that feed the symbolic expressions sculptured on the surface of all these objects or even the symbolic meaning of each individual object, by itself.

One of the many questions that arise from this eloquent exposure of Brâncuși's affinities for Romanian folkloric material symbols is if their insertion into his sculpture depends on preserving their cultural connotations or if they are translated into new forms of culture barely keeping their original significance? Two elements are to answer to such dilemma. First, there is a modernist technique of *collage* that Brâncuși extracts from avant-gardist artistic styles and implements in his artworks, allowing the co-participation of material symbols from different cultural zones and registers. Objects of ordinary life of peasants are combined with symbols of architectural

domestic constructions or of funerary monuments without respecting proper visual frontiers that such elements otherwise indulge in their original figurative regimes of artistic representation. Secondly, Brâncuși reframes the formal arrangements to which such symbols originally were meant to, a reason for which “there seems to be a parallel between the way in which Brâncuși used life-objects as part of his sculpture and the way he used the configuration of Rumanian folk art and handicraft in his art” (Balas 1975, 101). Balas considers that Brâncuși managed to reach a certain mysterious allure that transgress its artworks by shifting organic and inorganic significances for such implemented folk objects or by creating them where they weren't. Usually, formal significances of these reframed symbols are derived from their former usual empirical content, which make older and newer forms “associationally charged”, as Balas observes following Shapiro. But, in Brâncuși's case, assemblages are not constructed on this formal complementarity. The explanation offered by Balas concentrates on advocating for “artistic manipulations” of symbolic structures, in the name of which we can ultimately evaluate if nationalism still stands in a common acceptance as a dominant trait of Brâncuși's creations.

The audience's perception of these objects does not inspire symbolic allusions; the forms are not subjects of reverberations. This is due to a triple transmutation: (a) Rumanian folk objects were divorced from their function, alienated, and used as form elements in sculpture; (b) these elements were dislocated and transplanted into a different geographic and socio-cultural environment; (c) finally, these elements underwent certain artistic manipulations. (Balas 1975, 102)

However, if nationalism can be understood under the assumption of this culture framework that holds the authenticity of symbolic structures, expressions and meanings of Romanian culture, and if these artistic manipulations can provide a boarder sense for principles, values and beliefs that determine particular moments from the cultural history of our mankind, then due to what reasons we have repeatedly failed to inscribe Brâncuși's monuments on the UNESCO list of sites?

IV. Why Brâncuși's ensemble did fail the test of authenticity and integrity? A Philosophical Undertaking of the ICOMOS report on the Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu

The analysis devoted to the ICOMOS report on the rejection of *The Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu* on the World Heritage List can provide powerful insights on the general conceptual gaps between the theoretical and axiological understandings of “authenticity” and “integrity” that national cultures invest in their most representative forms of cultural heritage, and the universalized patterns of meanings that UNESCO consecrated for such

elements in order to be recognized as iconic for our mankind. A reconstruction of the most virulent arguments that ICOMOS raised against the inscription of Brâncuși's ensemble on the list of UNESCO will bring into the spotlight, beyond the fallacious arguments that the State Party committed in the application submitted for evaluation, a disproportion between the cultural national criteria engaged in the justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity, and the neutral and generalized criteria that UNESCO raised in order to accept the inclusion of the property in the World Heritage List. My point is that an equilibrated investigation of these gaps will provide the necessary premises to argue that the rejection was merely caused by the failure of the State Party in demonstrating that the intangible forms of culture behind the pieces of Brâncuși's ensemble authentically and integrally reflect spiritual and cultural core-values of our mankind.

Listed no. 1473 on the list of applications, the Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu conformed to the first article of the 1972 World Heritage Convention as "a serial nomination of two groupings of 5 monuments" (ICOMOS 2015, 254), which gathered "interrelated sculptural installations aligned on a virtual 1.5-km-long axis superimposed on the Avenue of Heroes" (ICOMOS 2015, 254). Brâncuși, recognized as "an influential pioneer of abstract sculpture", developed "a somber, contemplative, yet accessible architectural" (IOMOS 2015, 254) complex, an etiquette that reflects the hermeneutical precautions that ICOMOS invested in the analysis of his oeuvre. Despite the rigorous and commemorative character of what might take the constitution of an artistic *dispositif*, the state of exception that such complex of artworks should provide is suspiciously suggested as a lacking element. "Accessibility" will work in favour of inscribing the ensemble on the UNESCO list as long as it serves as main referential for the notoriety and touristic frequency that the installation can get; once it is assigned as a key factor for testing the operational capacity of preservation that authorities can develop, given the openness and exposure of the ensemble, accessibility will be further questioned and revisited by the ICOMOS evaluators. However, the basic data of the ICOMOS report reveal that on 12 September 2014 the commission asked to the State Party to provide information "about the nature of the conceptual axis that is superimposed on the Avenue of Heroes", along other references to policies for protecting, funding and increasing the visitors of the property. In less than one month the State Party replied, but on January, next year, ICOMOS informed the State Party that

the nominated property does not fulfil the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and therefore ICOMOS will recommend to the World Heritage Committee that the nominated property not be inscribed on the World Heritage List. (ICOMOS 2015, 256)

The report continues providing reference on the descriptions given to the ensemble, being recalled as a serial property that covers two urban parks of Târgu Jiu, namely Constantin Brâncuși Park and the Park of the Endless Column, which do not communicate as visible from each other. Generally, the cultural significance of the ensemble is to honour the Romanian soldiers from the First World War, albeit subsequent cultural significances developed by each piece of the ensemble are individually further listed. For the purposes of the present analysis, the technical details of the material structure of the composing elements of the ensemble will not be exposed; I choose to retain exclusively the cultural framework that gathers the symbolic, axiological insights of the pieces that translate tangible forms of culture into intangible ones. The first part of the ensemble, from the former Public Garden of the city, contains the *Table of Silence*, “intended to evoke the traditional place of family gathering (or *The Last Supper*)” (ICOMOS 2015, 254). *The Alley of Chairs* communicates with the *Gate of the Kiss* through a pathway of trees; the generosity of the broad pathway leads to “the travertine portal”, “carven on-site by the artist with the intent of distilling his concept of the Kiss to its essence and rendering it as a gateway” (ICOMOS 2015, 255). This telluric layer is doubled by the spiritual allusion to infinity, evoked through the *Endless Column* placed in the homonymous park. Here, it is important to notice the attention that ICOMOS gave to the material elements of the Column: the hidden steel pillar, embraced by cast-iron modules, gold coloured, suggest not only criteria to validate the resistance of such artwork, but equally the capacity of the artist to use indestructible materiality as mirror for infinite immateriality and eternity. The historical outlook on the development of the ensemble acknowledged the diplomatic efforts that have been invested late in the 1934 to design the monument, that initially was reduced to the endless column, but that has been immediately completed by the other pieces of the ensemble as Brâncuși envisioned “the enthusiasm of his compatriots”.

The description of the ensemble includes the recreation of the entire urban morphology of the city following Brâncuși's plan of maintaining a straight axe which imposed, in order to perform the installation, architectural efforts to redesign the streets and to create complementary streets to those inserted in the ensemble, as it was the destiny of the Avenue of Heroes. The historical reality depicted in this part of the report presents the efforts of the public authorities and the enthusiastic consent of the population to redesign an entire city following the artistic plan of Brâncuși; a powerful details of the cultural and moral memory of this place is that “the derelict 18th-century Saint Apostles Peter and Paul Church, located on the same axis, was reconstructed with Brâncuși's full acceptance” (ICOMOS 2015, 255). Despite the entire set of elements that suggests the conceptual and

material uniqueness of this ensemble, the justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity has been considered peculiar and inconclusive. For the purposes of the present research, I will take each objection raised by ICOMOS in order to explain how it might have been avoided or rejected if these core-values would have been argued in the light of the correspondence between tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

(O1). According to ICOMOS, “the State Party has inferred rather than demonstrated that there is scope in the World Heritage List for the inclusion of the nominated property (...) and has implied that there are no other similar properties that could be nominated” (ICOMOS 2015, 255). There is no manner of saving or justifying the fallacious argumentative structure intended by the authorities that have written the proposal. The main difference between inference – in the sense of induction, and demonstration – in the sense of deduction, has less been explored and it has been a peripheral concern for the representatives of the State Party in elaborating the inscription. It appears that they have rather listed a series of properties that the ensemble gathers, as a particular architectural piece, similar to other properties “illustrating the Modern Movement in architecture that are currently on the World Heritage List” (ICOMOS 2015, 255). One of these listed examples is the Sydney Opera House (Australia, accepted on the UNESCO list in 2007), albeit they are subjected to different cultural scopes, provide divergent cultural functions, adopt distinct symbolical structures and, implicitly, generate quite isolated cultural symbolic capitals. Instead of speculating the core-values that the two ensembles address as dominant values for our mankind, the authors of the inscription choose to restrict their arguments to an expositive evaluation of the modern traits of such entities. The main problem is that even this descriptive engagement embraces a lacunar formula: authors take for granted that each example provided as being similar to Brâncuși’s ensemble respects the modern traits of a modern piece of architecture, even though they never name or explain them. Therefore, the “iconic properties to the ensemble of sculptures at Târgu Jiu is at best superficial”, concludes the ICOMOS report, since there is no criterion for “a relevant typological comparison” (ICOMOS 2015, 256) between the already included properties in the UNESCO list and the nominated property.

(O2). The inscription includes comparisons made to “14 inscribed properties that the State Party believes potentially exhibit the symbolism and spirituality of the ensemble in Târgu Jiu”, listing megalithic sanctuaries, monumental tombs, ancient sanctuaries and sites of memory. Examples provide reference to the sanctuaries from Stonehenge or to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial from Japan. However, these categories are arbitrary listed

and gathered and there is no correspondence between their symbolic capital and the multiple senses emerging from the ensemble from Târgu Jiu. The conflict that ICOMOS identifies in this part of the inscription, between “the basis for the symbolism and spirituality of these properties” and the “symbolic/spiritual basis that underpins the Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu” can be translated as a genuine tension between the intangible elements of cultural heritage representative for our mankind, already acknowledged and accepted by UNESCO, and the intangible cultural heritage occasioned by the Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu, developed in the sense of core-values for our mankind. There is also a fracture between the tangible and intangible expressions of cultural heritage listed as examples of UNESCO sites to which the Monumental Ensemble seems to be similar: the State Party recalled the Statue of Liberty and the Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc but ICOMOS considered that neither of them are wholly comparable with Brâncuși's iconic artworks. Such associations reveal that the authors of the inscription made no effort in speculating the axiological convergence between the symbols and spiritual values that these artworks or sites might share. Moreover, they have mixed examples proper to Christian traditions and values with those specific to war monuments without providing a bridge between them in terms of core-values for humanity as a whole. By this, I insist on the fact that cultural policies devoted to the inscription of certain monuments of the list of UNESCO sites should be reformed in order to strengthen the relationship between tangible and intangible expressions of cultural heritage.

(O3). There is a genuine conflict between the exigency of the UNESCO criterion to explain and demonstrate the uniqueness and authenticity of a monument and the exigency of the same fore to list similar monuments already accepted on the World Cultural Heritage list of sites. The challenge, in fact, is to argue the state of exceptionality of a monument and its credits to be listed among other sites, already accepted by UNESCO, in terms of a *genus-differentia definition*. In my opinion, the authors of the inscription for the ensemble of Târgu Jiu succeeded in providing an *extensional* outlook of the sphere of the *definiendum*, but failed in exploring the *intensional* aspects.

The *genus proximum* has been covered by monumental memorials erected during the interwar period, but the *differentia specifica* has not been exposed. Moreover, it seems that the State Party choose to treat the *genus proximum* exclusively on material grounds, hence by prioritizing formal similarities between Brâncuși's ensemble and other monuments in terms of tangible cultural heritage, whereas the symbolic capital and the similarities between the axiological expressions of such monuments, in terms of intangible cultural heritage, has been overlooked.

ICOMOS considers that the values of the nominated serial property reside both in its sculptural forms and in the symbolism of the ensemble. The comparatives selected by the State Party do not fully address the attributes that express these values, such as their sculptural qualities, their interrelationships with their sites, their evocation of sacrifice and other moments fundamental to human existence, and their symbolic expression of basic values of humanity. (ICOMOS 2015, 256)

(O4). ICOMOS equally observed that there was a problem regarding the incompleteness character of the inscription, since the nominated properties excluded “the physical manifestation of the Avenue of Heroes and the Saint Apostles Peter and Paul Church, both of which are important components of that scheme” (ICOMOS 2015, 256). However, the inscription is biased: the State Party discretionary choose to broadly expose the *Endless Column*, neglecting the other parts of the monument.

(O5). In terms of integrity, the State Party “has not assessed the nominated property’s integrity as a memorial” (ICOMOS 2015, 257). As ICOMOS observes, materially, all criteria of integrity are respected and there is no threat regarding the deterioration of the monuments. Nevertheless, integrity should have been equally conceived as *an immaterial / a conceptual* resource of the ensemble, which has not been accomplished by the State Party. ICOMOS considered that “The State Party has also expressed the importance of preserving the integrity of the monumental ensemble’s conceptual axis – though it has not assessed the current (or future) integrity of this intangible component” (ICOMOS 2015, 257), but this happened merely due to the fact that the material structure of the axis has been privileged in spite of the immaterial / axiological determinations of the axis.

(O6). In terms of authenticity, the State Party chooses to explore the material particularities of the installations and the works of art, neglecting the symbolical aspects in the name of which such an ensemble gains its memorial function. The most important part of the report is that in which ICOMOS argues that all the arguments that the State Party invoked to explain to what extent the ensemble exhibits (ii) “an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design” (ICOMOS 2015, 257-58) are rather elements that fall under the first criteria of the inscription, that lists the reasons for which the ensemble (i) represents a masterpiece of human creative genius. Implicitly, I consider that the error of the State Party has been that of taking tangible elements of cultural heritage as self-sufficient for arguing the intangible elements behind them, without explaining how tangible forms of cultural heritage ultimately reduce to intangible ones.

V. Instead of conclusions

Whoever revisits the ICOMOS report on the rejection of Brâncuși's nominated ensemble can observe the urgency to redefine the values of integrity and authenticity that a UNESCO inscription must fulfil. On the one hand, integrity must be defined as a balanced expression of tangible and intangible forms of cultural heritage, by this overcoming the prejudgment that integrity must be defined exclusively on material grounds. On the other hand, authenticity must be recovered as a transgressive attitude that combines unique manners of exploring universal values with particular experiences through which such axiological constructs are internalised by different communities, developing their identity and memory. In this case, Brâncuși's ensemble failed the test of authenticity and integrity because its cultural capital has been fragmentary explored, by pronouncing its material particularities and overlooking its intangible force of expression. If tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage would have been tracked equally as modernist and primitivist elements within a transgressive artistic paradigm the inscription would have increased its chances of acceptance.

Notes

¹ This formal fallacy, known as false exclusionary disjunct, can be formalized as it follows:

$p \vee q$	Brâncuși is an avant-gardist or a primitivist
p	Brâncuși is an avant-gardist
$\neg q$	Brâncuși is not a primitivist.

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