

Marius Porumb, *Pictura românească din Transilvania. Secolele XIII-XVIII. Dicționar* [Romanian Painting in Transylvania. The 13th-18th Centuries. Dictionary], București, Editura Academiei Române, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2023, 768 p., ISBN 978-973-27-3797-2

Exactly a quarter of a century after Marius Porumb published the volume *Dictionary of Ancient Romanian Painting from Transylvania, 13th-18th Centuries* (Bucharest, 1998, in Romanian), a new version of the work was republished, having the above presented title. The purpose of this recently reedited volume is, as the author emphasizes in the beginning of the work, to enrich and develop the text of the old dictionary and to offer a new vision of the artistic phenomenon. At the same time, the year of the publication of the work, 2023, marks the venerable 80th birthday of academician Marius Porumb, the author having been a full member of the Romanian Academy since 2009.

The volume geographically covers Romanian painting from the intra-Carpathian space, and includes minute infos regarding mural and icon painters, artistic centers, monasteries, settlements – most of which have stone and wooden churches decorated with murals or icons, iconostases, painted objects, inscriptions, *pisanii* – museums, private collections, terms specific to iconography and fine arts technical terms.

The volume's radiography offers a vast overview, presenting 813 settlements and monasteries, 366 painters (only the main voices, with secondary variants also recorded), 34 specialized terms, 433 color images, 32 black-and-white images, 71 sketches, drawings, legends and blueprints. The volume's high editorial quality is remarkable both through the quality of the images, some framed in the text, others grouped on a color background, and through the special graphic design. It opens with *Acknowledgements*, addressed to a number of 41 people. Then the text is followed by a brief presentation of the *Six Centuries of Romanian Painting in Transylvania. The 13th-18th Centuries*, emphasizing the permanent artistic ties between Transylvania and the two other Romanian countries, as well as the artistic phenomenon that was amplified in the 18th century in Transylvania by the attestation of over 350 painters. The work preserves the initial configuration of the volume edited by the author in 1998, being structured alphabetically. Letters begin with a decorated initial, each entry is in bold, the text is written under the title and arranged in two columns, and the volume ends with *Abbreviations* and *Bibliography*.

The author's working method is resumed, in the case of localities, by indicating the administrative-territorial affiliation, in some cases by a very brief, general presentation, which is attached either to a specific craft or related to specific areas of influence. The actual dictionary corpus opens with the locality of Abrud (town

in the Alba county), and after a very brief presentation of the settlement two of the painters attached to this locality are mentioned: Tobiăș Gheorghe from Abrud, active in the mid-18th century, who added his name to inscriptions and paintings of this locality, and Simion Silaghi-Sălăjanu, an artist who settled here in the last decades of the 18th century, laying the foundations of a painting school. The author refers in the text to the main voice of each painter, and the settlement presentation continues with the three walled churches, identified by their patron saint and inventoried by the movable heritage they own. In what the painters are concerned, their main name was included in the title and followed by the variants with which they signed or was documented, being placed in the text after the family name, when known. In the absence of a family name, or when the painter indicated his area of origin in his signatures (e.g. Vasilia Moldoveanul, attested with the signature *Popa Vasilia Moldoveanul* and *Zugraf*), it was placed after the letter V, after the baptismal name. Also, some of the painters who signed their paintings with their baptismal name, were accompanied by certain qualifications, the most common being those of *popa*, *erai*, *hieromonah*, *hierodeacon*, *deacon*, *diac*, and in some cases their names were accompanied by the original settlement or the one in which they settled (e.g. Ivan from Rășinari, David from Curtea de Argeș, Nistor from Feleac).

In the exposition of each painter, the technique in which he worked is also indicated, whether he was an icon painter or a muralist, or an iconographer and a muralist, or only a muralist, being placed in the era based on signed and dated works or on a documentary basis. Each artist is juxtaposed to the artistic and historical context in which he worked and was attached, in most cases, to a painting mentor or a painting center, and discussed from the perspective of the manner, evolution and stylistic influences captured in his works. The work of each painter is exhibited chronologically, with some of the inscriptions read from the paintings being mentioned, in very rare cases the iconographic program of the mural paintings is also recorded (e.g. Iacov from Rășinari, who painted the fresco in the dome of the Greek-Catholic cathedral in Blaj). The moving paths of the painters within the intra-Carpathian arch is also indicated, as well as that of itinerant painters arriving from other Romanian lands, or of painters from outside the Romanian space who either settled in the area or worked here for a while.

As already mentioned, this republished volume “represents the current stage our research has reached”, and the aim of its updating is to enrich and develop the 1998 *Dictionary* with unpublished data as well as with a new vision on the specific artistic phenomenon (p. 12). As soon as from the first entry, Abrud, it is noticeable that the text and the initial bibliography have been supplemented with some data published in the specialized literature, but then, the immediately following entry, Agârbiciu (Cluj County), retains the initial text from 1998, without mentioning the recently published bibliography (Firea C., Pop S., *Pictorii Transilvaniei medievale, cca 1300-1600. Un dicționar*, Cluj-Napoca, 2021, p. 229-231). Certain bibliographical titles that appeared in the two and a half decades since the publication of the first edition are taken into account, while other bibliographical titles are omitted. In certain cases, although some bibliographical titles are recorded, the information provided is not

taken into account, although that was nor analysis either interpretation. One of these examples is the location of an inscription from the wooden church in Someșu Rece (Cluj County), mentioned by the author on the northern wall of the nave, although it is located on the northern wall of the altar (Pop S., *Pictura bisericii de lemn din Someșu Rece, Cluj County*, in “Ars Transsilvaniae” XXIX, 2019, p. 122).

In the case of some painters such as Petru from Topârcea, in the recently reissued volume having the text and variants identical to the original printing, Petru from Topârcea and Petru the Painter appear as identifying two separate persons, in the first variant being exposed his activity as an icon painter and muralist, in the second as a painter of icons on glass. Although Ioana Cristache-Panait dedicated a small monograph to this artist (*Zugravul Petru de la Topârcea, județul Sibiu*, in the group volume *Artă, istorie, cultură. Studii în onoarea lui Marius Porumb*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 287-301) in which the one and only identity of Petru from Topârcea was clarified (the painter also painted on glass), the study was only mentioned in the bibliographic list at the end of the volume.

Whether the volume printed in 1998 or the newly reissued volume on Romanian painting from Transylvania launched in 2023 is under discussion, the author’s undeniable pertinent analysis of ancient Romanian art must be emphasized, either of the two volumes constituting the indispensable tool from which one starts any research on Romanian painters or monuments from the intra-Carpathian space.