

Carmen Sylva, Dora Hitz and Women's Art Networks in Romania and Germany

Concert Hall, Peleş National Museum, 3 September 2024

Under the auspices of the Royal Family of Romania

This colloquium, organised to celebrate 100 years since the death of Dora Hitz, accompanies the opening of the exhibition *Carmen Sylva și Dora Hitz: cuvânt și imagine/ Carmen Sylva and Dora Hitz: Word and Image* (Old Music Room, Peleş, 3 September 2024 – 15 February 2025).

A second exhibition, *Dora Hitz – Aus Franken nach Rumänien in die Welt*, will be held in Kunstverein Coburg, Germany, from 24 January – 11 May 2025.

Organised by Dr Natalie Gutgesell and Dr Shona Kallestrup in partnership with Dr Narcis Dorin Ion, Director of Peleş National Museum, with the support of:

The National Museum of Art of Romania
Kunstverein Coburg
The University of St Andrews
The Goethe Institute, Bucharest
The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bucharest
The Embassy of Romania in Berlin
The Consulate General of Romania in Munich

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In 1876, the young artist Dora Hitz (1853–1924) exhibited a genre painting at the Munich Art and Industry Exhibition. Its purchase by Princess Elisabeth of Romania (1843–1916), later known to the literary world as Carmen Sylva, initiated a remarkable artistic friendship. Invited by Sylva to Bucharest in 1878–82, Hitz went on to have a successful international career within Impressionist, Symbolist and Expressionist circles. She also played an important role in the struggle for women's access to art education. Later in life, she attributed her professional success to Sylva's patronage.

Their close collaboration was most significantly manifested in the cycle of paintings depicting scenes from Sylva's early poems and stories that Hitz painted for Peleş Castle between 1883 and 1890. With Sylva's encouragement, Hitz also travelled to Brittany to create a series of works inspired by Pierre Loti's 1886 novel *Pêcheur d'Islande*, which Sylva had translated into German. Through her painting classes at the Elena Doamna School for Girls in Bucharest, Hitz promoted the early education of women artists in Romania and fostered important networks of artistic exchange with Munich. But while Sylva's multi-lingual works have gradually seen a revival of interest in the post-socialist period, Hitz's contribution to European art was, until recently, largely forgotten.

This colloquium, organised together with a two-part exhibition of Hitz's works in Peleş National Museum and Kunstverein Coburg, celebrates the centenary of the artist's death and seeks to address her structural and political erasure from art history. It takes her creative collaboration with Sylva as a starting point to re-evaluate the distinctive contribution of women to the development of Romania's cultural scene at the end of the nineteenth century. In particular, it addresses women's role as agents of transnational networks that linked Romania to talent, training and developments in Germany and made the Romanian court a receptive milieu for female artistic achievement. While Romanian art history often foregrounds links with France, this colloquium explores the rich artistic exchange fostered by women between Bucharest, Sinaia and centres such as Munich and Berlin. It addresses the challenges of women's exclusion from official art education, an issue highlighted by the campaign led by Hitz and her friend Käthe Kollwitz to persuade the Berlin Academy of Art to admit women. It also explores the work of Hitz's female contemporaries who participated in networks between Romania and Germany.

In her role as cultural ambassador for a young country that was little known in the West in the late nineteenth century, Hitz worked with Sylva to build links between the Romanian and European art scenes. Peleş National Museum, which holds one of the most important collections of Hitz's work in the world, is a fitting venue in which to explore the history of women in art and their role in Romanian-German cultural exchange.

PROGRAMME

11.00 Vernissage of the exhibition *Carmen Sylva și Dora Hitz: cuvânt și imagine/ Carmen Sylva and Dora Hitz: Word and Image*

12.00–13.45 Section 1: Dora Hitz and Carmen Sylva

NATALIE GUTGESELL

Dora Hitz – From Franconia to Romania into the World

On the occasion of the centenary of her death in 2024, the first Romanian court painter Dora Hitz should be remembered as one of the most renowned female painters within Impressionism, Symbolism and Expressionism. She participated in numerous international exhibitions, such as the Salon in Paris and the World Exhibition in Chicago. She was a member of several artists' associations, including the *Société des artistes français* and the Berlin Secession, and established a network of important people from the world of economics and politics, as well as writers, actors, and artists, such as Walther Rathenau, Gerhart Hauptmann, Tilla Durieux, Max Liebermann, and Käthe Kollwitz.

Dora Hitz was born on 30 March 1853 in the small Franconian town of Altdorf near Nuremberg, the daughter of a drawing teacher. She started her studies at the Art School for Girls in Munich in 1869. Her most influential teachers were the genre painter Heinrich Stelzner and history painter Wilhelm von Lindenschmit the Younger. In 1876 Dora Hitz exhibited one of her genre paintings at Glaspalast in Munich. Princess Elisabeth zu Wied, the future Queen of Romania, Carmen Sylva, bought the painting and invited Dora Hitz to live and work at the Romanian court. Dora Hitz painted many scenes from Carmen Sylva's works, which are presented today as the largest collection of the artist's paintings worldwide at Peleş Castle.

In the 1880s and 1890s Dora Hitz lived and worked in Paris at Montmartre among the Impressionists, later in Brittany, London, Dresden, Weimar, and finally in Berlin. Strongly committed to women's rights, Dora Hitz, together with Käthe Kollwitz, petitioned the Berlin Academy of Arts several times to allow female students to enter. In 1893 Dora Hitz founded her own Art School for Women in Berlin.

Her stylistically diverse oeuvre, ranging from genre paintings with rural Bavarian scenes to portraits, still lifes, landscapes and symbolist female figures in nature, is spread across private collections all over the world. Dora Hitz had been completely forgotten after her death until she was rediscovered in a monograph in 2019.

PD Dr Natalie Gutgesell received her doctorate in 2014 after publishing her dissertation on the German Romantic poet Joseph Victor von Scheffel as a fine artist. In 2022 she completed her post-doctoral studies with a thesis on the parks of Weimar and their networks during the eighteenth century. She is currently president of *Kunstverein Coburg* and lectures at the University of Passau. Her fields of research range from eighteenth- to twentieth-century art,

in particular forgotten female painters. Among her publications is the first monograph on Dora Hitz (2019).

SHONA KALLESTRUP

Pictură fără valoare: Recovering the Artistic Collaboration of Dora Hitz and Carmen Sylva in Peleş Castle.

In the socialist inventory of the royal collections made after the exile of King Mihai, Dora Hitz's cycle of works in Peleş's Old Music Room was classified as "painting of no value". Thus began the epistemic erasure of an artist whom, only a few years previously, Romania's leading art historian George Oprescu had praised for the quality of her drawing. Also lost was an understanding of the relationship between the Music Room paintings and the early writings of Carmen Sylva, Romania's poet-Queen, as well as recognition of the important role that these two German-born women played in establishing artistic education and transnational networks of support for Romanian female artists.

This talk examines Hitz's work for Peleş from three main angles. Firstly, her paintings were bound up with King Carol's programme to bring Western culture to Romania, most powerfully embodied in the Germanic style and symbolism of Peleş, the "cradle" of the dynasty and the young nation. When Hitz first arrived in Romania in 1878, work was just resuming on the palace after the War of Independence. Her Music Room paintings, executed in Paris between 1883–90, demonstrate her growing awareness of Naturalist, Impressionist, Symbolist and Orientalist directions in French art and, as such, offer one of the earliest modern notes in Peleş's decoration.

Secondly, the paintings offer a powerful visualisation of Carmen Sylva's literary oeuvre at the start of her career as a writer. Sylva began to publish under her pen name in 1880, right in the middle of Hitz's first stay in Romania (1878–82). Hitz's thirteen Peleş paintings illustrate scenes from eight published, and one unpublished, books and poems by the Queen.

Thirdly, like Sylva's written works, the paintings subtly foreground the experiences and voices of women. Sylva explored through literature what she could not say openly as Queen, adopting narrative strategies that allowed her to critique the patriarchal institutions of her day and provide a literary space for women's voices to be heard. As their wider collaboration demonstrates, both Sylva and Hitz believed passionately in women's right to professional recognition in an age that often dismissed or trivialised female talent in the arts.

Dr Shona Kallestrup is Lecturer in the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews. She has also worked at the Universities of Copenhagen, Edinburgh and Aberdeen and was an ERC-funded Senior Research Fellow at New Europe College in Bucharest (2018–21). Her publications include *Art and Design in Romania 1866–1927* (2006) and the co-edited volumes *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe* (2022) and *Nordic Design in Translation* (2023).

ROSIE SIMON

Reflections on the Witch as Human Woman: Dora Hitz, Carmen Sylva, and Teresa Feodorowna Ries

This talk provides a reading of Carmen Sylva's poem "Die Hexe" and the two paintings she commissioned from Dora Hitz: *The Witch* and *The Prostrate Witch*, both of which depict the central character, Dämona, at pivotal moments in her story. This discussion is informed by an understanding of turn-of-the-century women's responses to the tropes of the witch and the temptress, which posits that for many turn-of-the-century women the witch and its associated symbols had a kind of emancipatory potential. It frames Karl Cauer's inspiratory sculpture of a witch as emblematic of the dominant misogynistic treatment of the trope to firmly establish the popular symbolism and iconography used. This reading of the witch trope, focusing on the most primary layer of understanding, is employed to propose that Hitz's *The Witch* uses this same, male-dominated visual language to paint Dämona as the huntsman sees her, in all of her terrible, sexualised power.

To cement an understanding of a more complex and empowering conception of the witch, the works of two explicitly transgressive women artists, Sarah Bernhardt and Teresa Feodorowna Ries, which subvert the iconography established in male depictions of the witch, are briefly discussed. Their work is placed in conversation with turn-of-the-century accessorizing and self-styling practices which suggest that the witch held a broad appeal among female consumers, before returning, finally, to Hitz's *The Prostrate Witch*. This painting, in its lack of traditional satanic symbols, can be read as a humanistic portrait of a woman who has lost what little power she held. Ultimately, Hitz's and Sylva's depictions of Dämona suggest that they saw her, and perhaps even related to her, as a woman like themselves, rather than as the conniving serpent of evil which male depictions of the trope have long centred.

Rosie Simon is a historian of art and design from California. She studied art history at the University of St Andrews and is due to graduate with her MA in history of design from the Victoria & Albert Museum and Royal College of Art in September 2024. Her research examines intersections between power, identity, and modernity, and folktales and fantasy at the turn-of-the-century.

13.45–14.30 BREAK

14.30–16.00 Section 2. German-Romanian Cultural Exchange

RAMONA MIHAILA

Transnational Feminine Literary Networks of Carmen Sylva's Translated Works in European Contexts: A Focus on Germany

Pauline Elisabeth Ottilie Louise (1843–1916), born in Neuwied, Germany, became Queen Elisabeth of Romania in 1869 through her marriage to Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. Embracing her new homeland, she introduced Romania to the world through her literary works, drawing inspiration from Romanian legends, ballads, folksongs, and stories. Known by her pen name Carmen Sylva, she was a woman of immense culture, multilingual proficiency, and prolific writing.

Queen Elisabeth's ability to switch effortlessly between languages allowed her to translate her own works, meeting the eager demand of her audience. This linguistic dexterity and the immediate translation of her works contributed to her numerous published pieces across the Romanian Principalities, German Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire, France, USA, and the Tsarist Empire, ensuring her literary presence was felt worldwide almost simultaneously.

This study examines the translations and critical reviews undertaken by national and international female writers and translators of the nineteenth century, with a special focus on the reception of the Queen's literary works in the German space. The translation of Carmen Sylva's works from and into German played a crucial role in her international acclaim. German translators and publishers were keen to disseminate her writings, recognizing the universal themes and cultural significance embedded in her stories.

Carmen Sylva's works were not only popular among general readers but also garnered critical acclaim. German literary critics praised her for the lyrical quality of her prose and the vivid portrayal of Romanian landscapes and characters. Her works were frequently reviewed in literary journals, and she became a celebrated figure in German literary circles.

The influence of Carmen Sylva's works extended beyond mere readership; they contributed to a greater understanding and appreciation of Romanian culture within the German Empire. Her stories provided a bridge between the two cultures, fostering a transnational literary dialogue. This exchange enriched both German and Romanian literary traditions, highlighting the interconnectedness of European cultural spaces.

Ramona Mihaila is the Head of the Secretary of State's Office at the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, Romanian Government. She is also Professor Ph.D. at Dimitrie Cantemir Christian University, Bucharest, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on women's writing, gender studies, literature, and urban cultures. She is the author and (co)-editor of 30 books concerning women's writing, gender studies, and narrative strategies. She has been visiting professor and research fellow for international institutions. Ramona Mihaila has been coordinator and member of European projects on her research expertise. She serves as the executive publishing editor of *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, Addleton Academic Publishers, New York.

OANA-MARIA CIONTU

Women Artists and Romanian-German Cultural Exchange

In 1866, a German Prince was elected to rule over the Romanian United Principalities, namely Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1839-1914), and his consort, Elisabeth of Wied

(1843-1916). They would later be proclaimed King and Queen of the Kingdom of Romania. Their arrival prompted the intensification of the relationship between Romania and Germany, impacting the cultural sector to a certain extent.

The first generation of modern artists opted, in more than half of cases, to further their education in Germany or Vienna. Following the same path, women artists would emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century, in a predominantly patriarchal society which discouraged them to aspire to a higher education. Nevertheless, a small group of brave women artists arose, determined and focused enough to follow the path of art and break through the constraints of their environment.

These artists were firstly trained in their homelands, then abroad, and through their exemplary work paved the way for next generation of women to practise art. Artists who travelled to Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century included: Betty Schuller (1860-1904), Lotte Goldschmidt (1872-1925), Mathilde Berner Roth (1873-1934), Hermine Hufnagel (1864-1897), Elena Mureşianu (1862-1924), Anna Dorschlag (1869-1947), Elena Popea (1879-1941), Cecilia Cuţescu Storck (1879-1969), and Eugenia Malesevschi (1868-1941). By addressing their lives and work, this paper will create a comprehensive synopsis of a woman's education, travels, and networks, in direct connection to Germany's cultural environment. It will peruse their contributions not only to the development of art, but most importantly to the promotion and fostering of equal rights in artistic education.

Last but not least, the relationship of some of these women artists to the Royal family of Romania will be highlighted, as a crucial step in artistic patronage and inclusion of women in the artistic circles of the time.

Oana-Maria Ciontu is an art historian, specialized in early modern European art, with a main focus on cultural exchanges and travelling artists. She studied in Bucharest, Saarbrücken, Leiden, Florence and Copenhagen. She was recently a research associate in the Gerson Digital Project at the Netherlands Institute for Art History, and has collaborated with the Ateneum Museum in Helsinki, Leiden University Library, Bucharest Municipality Museum and the European Gallery of the National Museum of Art of Romania.

OLIVIA NIŢIŞ

Reclaiming Visibility. Sonja Nădejde in the Bavarian Art Environment 1895–1904

The erasure of women artists from art history is a deep systemic issue. There is still much to uncover about nineteenth-century women artists and their educational and professional connections with Western centres (Munich, Vienna, Paris). One artist who was highly visible while studying and working in Munich, but who became invisible after the Second World War, was Sonja Nădejde (born Sofia Nădejde, 1876–1947). The process of restoring her identity is one step in overcoming the silencing of many other women artists excluded from grand narratives. My current research seeks to reclaim invisible women artists through study of multiple resources, including newspaper and journal archives, museum collections, genealogies and family descendants.

Nădejde was the eldest daughter of the socialist-feminist Sofia Nădejde and publicist Ioan Nădejde. Born in Iași, she studied with Anton Ažbe in Munich. Trained as a portrait painter and making her living as a copyist painter, Nădejde entered the circle of Franz von Lenbach, who made her portrait several times; she was deeply involved in the effervescent art scene around the Künstlerhaus in the 1900s. Her connection to the Bavarian art scene has important historical, cultural and political aspects. Women's emancipation and questions of ethnicity, class and privilege in an epoch marked by transformation and conservatism, together with mechanisms of erasure and exclusion within art history, are a few issues addressed by this paper. Sonja Nadejde's skills as a woman artist confronted the beauty-muse paradigm in a society that privileged women's beauty over their careers. Three of her painted copies of Old Masters from the Munich Pinakothek, purchased by King Carol I in 1901 and 1903, have recently been identified in the collections of Peleş National Museum and the Romanian Național Museum of Art. New research into her biography and practice offers testimony to the gender disparities and deliberate omissions that have fuelled traditional ways of writing art history.

Dr. Olivia Nițiș is a researcher at the "G. Oprescu" Institute of Art History of the Romanian Academy, an independent curator and an art historian. She is Vice-President of the Experimental Project Association, member of The Feminist Art Project, New Jersey, and member of the International Association of Art Critics since 2009. She is the author of the volume *Istorii marginale ale artei feministe (Marginal Histories of Feminist Art)*, Vellant, Bucharest, 2014. She has curated several international exhibitions and she is currently the curator of the Romanian-Czech conceptual art project *A Spring of Hope a Winter of Despair* (Faber, Timisoara and Pragovka, Prague, 2024).

16.00–16.15 BREAK

16.15–17.15 Section 3: Pioneering German Women

MACRINA OPROIU

Tini Rupprecht and her Romanian Royal Art Commissions

In Munich in the late nineteenth century, alongside more famous male artists, a number of women artists began to emerge, among whom Albertine Rupprecht occupies a special place. Born in 1867, Tini Rupprecht – as she called herself professionally – was a painter and draftswoman, specialized in pastel and oil portraits of female sitters. A talented photographer, she worked with great precision, making no less than forty autochromes in two sessions, after which she completed the final work. A discreet presence in Bavarian artistic circles, Tini Rupprecht joined the Jugendstil movement from the beginning of her career. The success of her first official appearance at the Glaspalast Exposition in 1900 brought her many art commissions.

Rupprecht created distinctive portraits of women and children, which combined attention to detail with a precise technique. Princess Marie discovered her relatively early in her career and facilitated her participation in the Salons of the “Artistic Youth” Society, alongside famous Romanian and foreign artists. In 1901, at a defining moment of her artistic career, Tini Rupprecht executed her first princely commission. Princess Marie invited her to Cotroceni Palace, where several meetings took place in the presence of the three eldest royal children. In her specific way of working, Tini Rupprecht photographed each character individually, then made separate pencil sketches and finally, the group portrait, metamorphosed into a vast work of oil on canvas. In 1903 Rupprecht returned to Romania as guest of honour of the “Artistic Youth” Society. In 1904, she was decorated by King Carol I with a first-class medal for arts and sciences and, in 1906, she was commissioned to produce a second portrait of Princess Marie.

Dr Macrina-Emilia Oproiu is a historian and chief curator at Peleş National Museum. She is a specialist in both fine art (Romanian painting and sculpture) and decorative art (particularly ceramics, lighting fixtures and clocks). Her recent publications include: *A Monograph of Pelişor Castle* (forthcoming 2024); *Treasures of Peleş* (2023); *Royal Portraiture* (2020) and *The Arts of Fire: the Ceramic and Glass Collections of Peleş National Museum* (2017).

ROGER EMERY

Vally Wygodzinski : Im Kampf um die Kunst

... Ich habe keine Zeit mehr zu verlieren. Was ich zu tun habe, ist so unendlich, die Zeit so kurz, die Kräfte so schwach....

... I have no time to lose. What I have to do is so endless, the time so short, the strength so weak....

Ahrweiler, 9th October 1901

Valeska Clara Wygodzinski (née Cohn) was born into an affluent and academic German family in 1873. Her literary and artistic pursuits started in adolescence: By the age of 20 she had written two fairytales and completed a novella. Her formal training as a painter commenced in Berlin with Dora Hitz. Her husband, the economist Wily Wygodzinski writes that Hitz “taught her as artist and as a human being, she was placed equally high, even if they later parted ways”. Her relationship with Hitz in Berlin is considered in a letter written in maturity, dated 16th November 1900. Her complex personality and imaginative but self-critical nature feature strongly in her development as an artist, even during the successful sojourn to Paris from autumn 1896 to summer 1897. She was profoundly influenced by artists working in Paris, notably by the painter Édouard Brandon, the draughtsman Léon Lhermitte and the sculptor Oscar Roty.

Her ambitions are detailed from her writings, but the absence of a significant oeuvre makes it very difficult to assess her skill as a painter or sculptor. In addition, the seemingly total loss of paintings and studies prevent appraisal of her declared philosophy of art. Her writings demonstrate a profound interest in the poverty of the working class and those of agricultural regions. Her exposure to the development of socialist ideas in Germany was under the influence of her brother, Jonas Cohn, and his friends including Gustav Meyer. The nature of the relationship with Meyer is uncertain with 80 letters dating from 1895 to 1898 left in the archive of his estate

The tragedy of her mental and physical ill health spanning many years and the contraction of typhus led to her premature death at the age of 31. Her legacy was carried by her husband Willy Wygodzinski with his decision to publish the intimate correspondence she generated over a 16-year period. This publication has similarities to those of Marie Bashkirtseff (1858-1884) and Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907), together with Vally's own translation and introduction to Diderot's letters to Sophie Volland written between 1902 and 1904 during a period of poor health.

In keeping with the title of the 1910 edition, Vally's short life highlights the challenge faced by many female artists at the turn of the 20th century.

Prof Roger Emery has served as a Trustee of the Samuel Courtauld Trust since 2012 and is an enthusiastic collector of early European modernist art. Retired from his position as an orthopaedic surgeon at St Mary's Hospital, London, he continues as an Honorary Professor at Imperial College, London, where he works in the field of robotic surgery and joint replacement.

17.30 Vin d'honneur