

A HIDDEN LAND

An introduction to the state and conditions of the art sector in Moldova



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Table of Contents

<u>Preface</u>		page 1
<u>Introduction</u>		page 3
<u>1 Rough sketch of Moldova</u>		page 7
1.1	History of the art since 1930	page 10
<u>2 The current art sector in Moldova</u>		
2.1	Three types of organizations	page 13
2.2	Non Governmental Organizations	page 13
2.3	Governmental Organizations	page 16
2.4	Galleries and Museums	page 17
2.5	Art education	page 19
<u>3 Aspects that influence the development of art</u>		
3.1	Financing art and a free (art) market	page 29
3.2	State policy on art	page 30
3.3	Moldova, a small art world	page 32
3.4	Different forms of art, mass culture, high culture, folk culture	page 33
3.5	Moldova; a bi-lingual country	page 36
3.6	Art criticism	page 38
3.7	Position of artists	page 40
3.8	Moldavian art international	page 41
<u>Conclusion</u>		
	Pessimistic and optimistic vision	page 45
	Recommendations	page 46
<u>Epilogue</u>		
	My essay as a wider investigation	page 49
	Thank word	page 49
<u>Sources</u>		page 51
<u>Appendix</u>		
	Appendix 1	Example of a questionnaire
	Appendix 2	Individuals I have spoken to
	Appendix 3	List of organizations
		page 53
		page 54
		page 55

Preface

Since a few years I have developed a great interest in Eastern Europe and Russia. After two stays in Russia, experiencing this amazing and intriguing country, I started to learn the Russian language and knew that this part of the world would keep me interested. Also the border regions of Russia that go through a transition from a former USSR province to an autonomous country make me curious and stimulate my imagination.

When I began to think about this as a subject for my research, I read a small article in the newspaper. It was an article about a Dutch artist living in Moldova. At that point I started to become interested in Moldova and began reading about this country.

In Moldova, as a post Soviet province, the characteristic transition from a communist province into an independent country is still going on and visible. Apart from that, Moldova recently has become a direct neighbor of Europe due to the fact that Romania has become a member of the European Union. Now it is no longer a country far away from Holland but instead a country that Europe has something to do with. Sometimes Moldova is oriented towards Europe and sometimes it is orientated towards Russia. This also makes it for me a country I would like to get to know.

Against this background it is interesting to look at the development of the Moldavian art sector today and to learn more about it. I decided to make this the subject of my final essay.

Introduction

Expert research

Before I went to Moldova I collected literature on the subject of my essay, the art sector in Moldova, and started reading¹. I found out that the Soviet period and the transition to an independent country have a significant influence on art. This aspect became important in my research questions.

My main question became:

-What is the state and condition of the art sector in Moldova, a country in transition and development on the borders of Europe?

Elaborating this main question I formulated several other questions, focused on the structure of the art sector, art education and the influence of the history.

1.-What is the existing infrastructure of art?

Which possibilities have civilians (teachers, artists, inhabitants) of Moldova to see, make and experience art?

2.-Is the development (financial development and mental development) of art education/art centers/art organizations analogous to the development of Moldova?

In order to give an answer to this question I formulated the following more concrete questions:

How is art education at this moment organized?

Is art education supported by the government?

What kind of art education is supported by the government?

What is the role of art education for the development/improvement of the position of the artists and the development of art?

What is the position of art teachers in Moldova?

3.-How have the main changes of the last 20 years influenced art, artists and art education?

What is the influence of the transition from communism to free market, being a part of the USSR, becoming an independent/autonomic country, the economical changes on art, artists and art education?

What aspects are of major importance for the development of art?

What is the position of artists in Moldova?

I tried to find and contact key figures in the art sector in Moldova and prepared my stay. I consider the people I spoke to as being experts, though they are not always regarded as such in the Moldavian art sector. Their experiences and inside look on the situation and conditions of art in Moldova makes them a valuable source of information for my research.

The research questions became the basis for my interviews² and meetings with the experts. However, in conversations with these experts they introduced several new and for me unexpected factors. These new aspects would be of great importance for my further research. That is why I adjusted my original research, thus this essay became a combination of answers to my questions and the information brought to me by experts. I tried to structure the information in a way that would give the experts the possibility to tell their story. After all, they know the situation, have knowledge of the problems, challenges and changes and give new and interesting insight on the subject.

¹ See sources on page 51

² See Appendix 1

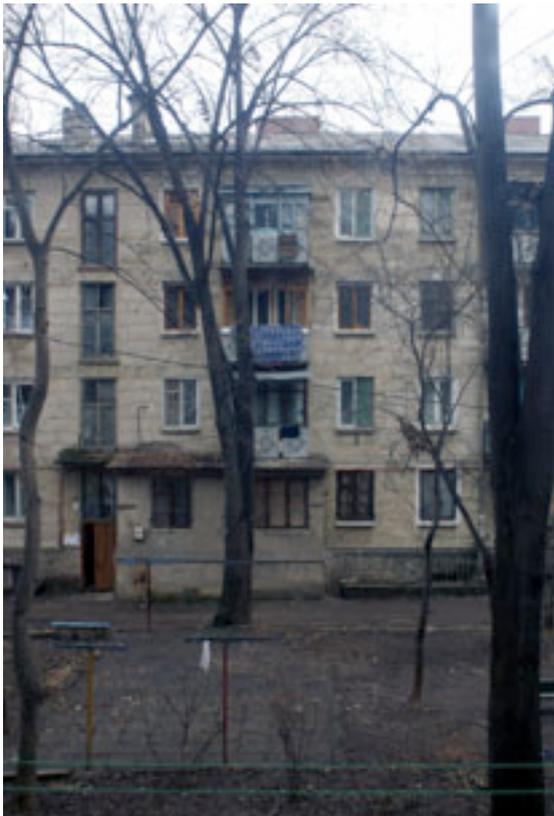
During my stay I spoke to a wide range of people in the art sector; artists, professors, students, founders of organizations and several people active in organizations. But there is one important actor missing, the government. Before I went to Moldova and also during my stay I tried to come into contact with them. But this was difficult and I did not succeed in getting into contact.

I find the opinion and ideas of the people I have spoken to very valuable and characteristic for the situation in Moldova. Over all they could tell me what is really happening in the art sector. Some facts and numbers I derive from conversations, therefore there is no source indication of these in my essay. Most information that the experts gave me cannot be found in books or other forms of literature.

Often opinions from experts are typical and useful but also controversial or confrontational for others. Therefore I decided to keep the text in my essay free of names to avoid certain difficulties for the experts. A list of people I have spoken to can be found in the appendix.³ The fact that I would give the people in Moldova the opportunity to read my essay made me decide to write it in English. This was a completely new experience to me.

Through my stay and living in Moldova I got the opportunity to get to know the country, society and people. Besides the information I collected and used in my essay I have also added some visual impressions that will be an addition to the stories of the experts.

I would like to note that the text in chapter 1, 2 and 3 is completely based on direct information from people and literature. The combination and interpretation of interviews, meetings, literature, conversations, as well as visual impressions are my responsibility.



(left) View from the window of my apartment in Chisinau

(right) An area in the district Buicani in Chisinau (the area where I lived)

³ See Appendix 2

Structure of this essay

In part 1 “Rough sketch of Moldova” I give an introduction of the country. I tell something about the history of art and the way to independence of Moldova. In this first part of my essay I give the reader the (historic) context of my subject. The (historical) context has a major influence on the current life and problems and challenges in Moldova and it is important to know this context. In this way many stories and information of experts will be understandable and more valuable.

In part 2 “The current art sector in Moldova”, I describe the structure of the art sector⁴. I explain the different types of organizations that form the basis of the art sector in Moldova. The structure of the art sector gives insight in the problems and possibilities of art in Moldova and shows the strong influence of the history on the art sector. I give a short description of the organizations and make the art sector understandable by anecdotes and stories of experts. In this part I also describe art education as a part of the art sector. I will give an overview of different kinds of art education and elaborate on some specialties.

In part 3 “Aspects that influence the development of art” I describe factors introduced by experts as being important for and of major influence on the art sector and the development of art. In the preparation of my research some of these factors were not important. But during my stay it became clear that these factors were essential for my research.

And lastly, in the commentary, I will explain my vision on the state of the art sector and I will give some recommendations.

⁴ I would like to give a short explanation of the use of the words art and culture because I use both words in this essay. I don't think that using only the word “art” is adequate to describe the situation in Moldova. The word culture is sometimes more sufficient than the word art because it covers not only the field of art but puts subjects in a wider context and connects it with society, economy and history. And especially in Moldova art can't be seen apart from these aspects. By using the word culture I specifically refer to the art related subjects in culture.

1 Rough sketch of Moldova

It is necessary to have an idea about the general facts and the history of Moldova because it will help to understand that all aspects of life changed when Moldova became independent. It gives the possibility to put the information of the experts into perspective and to understand the influence of the past on the situation and possibilities today.

Location, income and ethnicity

Moldova is situated between the rivers the Prut and the Dniester, on the border of Europe between Ukraine and Romania. Moldova's climate is moderately continental. Moldova's farm land is good and productive; most inhabitants have an income from the farm land or related goods. Besides that most of the national income comes from Moldavians who work abroad. On the one hand it is good that Moldavians abroad provide an income for families in Moldova, on the other hand these financial contributions are always used for daily costs and do not contribute to long term projects and building a future. Moldova has no mineral deposits like crude oil.

The country is almost as big as Holland but has only 4,3⁵ million inhabitants. Moldova has various ethnic groups within its borders 65% of the Moldavians are ethnic Romanians, the rest are Ukrainians, Russians, Gaguzars and others⁶. The spoken languages are Romanian, Russian and Gaguzic.⁷ The official state language of Moldova is the "Moldavian language", almost the same as the Romanian language. But due to the Russification and the different ethnicities a large group of Moldavians cannot speak the Moldavian language. Everybody can speak Russian.

Chisinau is not only the capital of Moldova, more than 25% of the Moldavians live in Chisinau, but also the capital of cultural life.



A small village on the countryside, one and a half hour outside Chisinau by bus

Moldova is a democratic country with a president, a prime minister and a parliament. The ministry of culture and tourism is responsible for the policy on culture. Since 2001 the communistic party is in charge. In the first years of the governance of the communist party the foreign policy was directed towards Russia. But since 2005 the communist party has directed its policy towards Europe. Moldova has the wish to become a member of the European Union.⁸ In 2009 there will be elections again and the central question will be whether the democratic or communist party will win the elections.

⁵ <http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/reizenlanden/landen,moldavie.html>

⁶ <http://www.minbuza.nl/nl/reizenlanden/landen,moldavie.html>

⁷ "The Moldovans, Romania, Russia and the politics of culture", Charles King, 2000

⁸ Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, "Culture and Change in Moldova", Yael Ohana

History of Moldova

In the history of Moldova, the borders have changed many times due to annexation, occupation and partition. Moldova has been ruled by different nations and rulers and it belonged to several countries. From 1538 until 1812 Moldova belonged to the Ottoman Empire and was also controlled by Greek nobles for a certain period. In 1812 the Russians annexed parts of it and transformed it into a province of Russia while other parts belonged to Romania or were under the control of the Habsburg principality. In 1918 Bessarabia united with Romania. But in 1940 the USSR occupied the territory of Bessarabia (Moldova). Transnistria was added to Bessarabia. Bessarabia and Transnistria became “The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic”. The borders of “The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic” have not changed since.⁹



Figure 1: Map of Moldova¹⁰

The Soviet authorities wanted to form a nation that was independent of Romania with an own ethnic Moldavian identity. Stalin decided that Moldavians and Romanians are different ethnic groups. To achieve this own Moldovan nation, independent from Romania, they tried to form a new language, the Moldavian language. No longer a Latin language but a language written in Cyrillic letters. They also deported a part of the local population to Siberia and forced Russians to settle in Moldova.¹¹ The Soviets had a policy of denationalization, and all their measures led to a “Russification” of Moldova. Most of the leaders and managers were Russians at that time. Romanian culture, Romanian speakers and artists were suppressed. It could be said that in some way the soviet time stopped the development of the “Romanian” culture in Moldova.

The period of “The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic” has been very important for the development of Moldova. For example Moldova went through an industrial revolution (factories were set up, roads were made) and the educational system was expanded and improved. During the USSR Moldova was the “most flourishing republic. A practically total literacy, a developed (according to Soviet measure and to the needs of the military-industrial complex) industry and agriculture”¹². After 1947, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic “industrialized rapidly, receiving substantial financial and technical support from the central authorities of the USSR. It developed into one of the important industrial centers of the USSR, and was an attractive location for specialists and technical experts to go to work,

⁹ Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, “Culture and Change in Moldova”, Yael Ohana

¹⁰ <http://student.britannica.com/eb/art/print?id=52669&articleTypeId=31>

¹¹ Page 2 “InSIGHT Moldova, What cultural policy for the Republic of Moldova? Building a political culture.”
Vitalie Ciobanu,

¹² Irina Grabovan, short history of Moldova, from the book “This is my house. The cruel paradise”, AoRTa 2003

having a relatively high standard of living in comparison to other parts of the USSR.”¹³ A lot of people told me that without the Soviet period the economical situation in Moldova would in fact be worse than it is right now.



In front of the central market in Chisinau

Moldova becomes independent

The way to independency started with Glasnost (openness) and Perestroika (recovery) under Gorbatsjov. Gorbatsjov wanted to protect the communist system from collapsing by giving some freedom to the objectors to the system in the different provinces of the USSR. This gave Moldavian nationalists the opportunity to make their wishes come true. A Moldavian national language (1989), no longer Cyrillic but Latin, was one of the important changes that were established. The Russian street names were turned into Romanian street names. And in 1990 the Parliament changed the name of the country from “The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic” into “Moldova” and adopted the colors of the flag of Romania. On August 27 1991, Moldova became an independent country.

Becoming independent was a shock and caused major changes in economy, life and culture. The stability and security in the lives of people changed; communist control, social protection and a steady income disappeared, the collective farms were ended and replaced by a market economy. An economical crisis occurred and caused the emigration of intellectuals and specialists to other countries. The gap between poor and rich became bigger and bigger. I saw, in the streets of Chisinau beggars beg and BMW’s driving both at the same time. In the transition period some achievements were made, like a certain freedom of speech. The ideological censorship disappeared and the “development of a legislation took place, which had been modified to correspond with the rest of Europe”¹⁴.

Becoming independent caused a democratic movement that quick changed into a “mass nationalistic movement; a period of nationalism began”¹⁵. In the first years the reunification of Moldova with Romania was a possibility. But later on, when Moldova grew into independency, the idea of a reunification declined.¹⁶ As a result of a rising fear for Romanian nationalism and the perspective of a reunification of Moldova with Romania two areas separated themselves from Moldova in 1991: Gagauzie¹⁷ and Transnistria. The population of

¹³ Page 5 Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, “Culture and Change in Moldova”, Yael Ohana

¹⁴ “Republic of Moldova”, by Valeria Grosu

¹⁵ Irina Grabovan, short history of Moldova, from the book “This is my house. The cruel paradise”, AoRTa 2003

¹⁶ Page 8 Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, “Culture and Change in Moldova”, Yael Ohana

¹⁷ For my research Gagauzie hasn’t been important, therefore I only mention it by name, also Transnistria hasn’t been a part of my research.

Transnistria, mostly ethnic Russians, claimed the independence from Moldova because they wanted to move towards Russia. In 1992 the war between Moldova and Transnistria started, this conflict has not yet finished. Transnistria declared itself independent in 1995, although this is not accepted by any country in the world. The war, which stayed unknown in most of the world, divided Moldova in two parts and is still a big obstacle for the development of the Moldavian economy and politics. For example: the second big city of Moldova, Tiraspol, and a major part of the industry of Moldova is situated in Transnistria. It also caused a decrease in the good relationship between Moldova and Russia. In comparison with Romania, Moldova has a difficult position. Moldova is not a member of the European Union and therefore does not have the advantages Romania has. It is a weak country which misses the positive influence of Europe as well as Russia but experiences the negative influences of both "empires". Like other countries that are situated between Russia and Europe there are double feelings: Are we part of Russia or Europe? On which direction do we want or have to focus, East or West? But Moldova is still under the influence of Russia, due to the conflict with Transnistria where Russian troops are still present, the dependence on Russian gas/oil supply and the dependency of the Moldavian economy on Russia.

The economical situation in Moldova is far from stable. Moldova is now one of the poorest countries in Europe; the exact number of inhabitants that live under poverty level is unclear. It is estimated to range from 29,5 to 80%, which makes it certain that a lot of people in Moldova have a hard time surviving.

1.1 History of the art since 1930

To understand art in Moldova today and the possibilities and challenges for the art sector it is necessary to understand the history of art in Moldova under the Soviet regime. This will clarify the major impact of the Soviet period.

From 1900 Russian artists were very experimental. They had great share in the development of the avant-garde and the engaged art. The revolution of 1917 was welcomed by the avant-garde artists in Russia. They decided to put effort in the new state and discussed what art should look like. Besides modern artists there also was a big stream of artists whose opinion was that art should be understandable for everyone, and therefore should be realistic. In 1934 Stalin edited rules for an official state art, the social realism. The art should represent the dream of a farmers and workers paradise. The artists who made art in social realistic style got strongly rewarded. The social realism was spread in all disciplines and forms of art; posters, paintings, statues, in stories, books, plays and in music. There was nothing else but social realistic art, apart from underground illegal art. Everything that deviated from the official state art could not be shown and was strongly criticized. There was no room for the experimental attitude of artists. An experimental movement could only exist illegal and exhibitions were destroyed.¹⁸

Moldova became under the authority of the USSR in 1940. The Moldavian art and culture became strongly affected by the developments in the USSR and "all the cultural activities (...) were subordinated to the direct supervision of the Communist Party".¹⁹ On the party's command a social realistic style was also introduced and indoctrinated upon the Moldavian artists. Artists who were educated and had a professional life before 1940 were forced to radically change their individual styles in to the one and only existing style, the Social realism. "The communist governments (...) were well aware of the importance of controlling cultural life, and communist ascendancy had a profound effect on the literary, artistic, and

¹⁸ Magazine Prospekt , 2001

¹⁹ Page. 9, Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, "Culture and Change in Moldova", Yael Ohana

musical output in the areas under communistic rules".²⁰ There was no way that artists could make free work, all artists, art disciplines and art educations were under heavy censorship. "The principles of Soviet Socialist Realism, including the glorification of the Party and Soviet world view and the clear use of culture for the purpose of ideological indoctrination, defined subject matter and even form."²¹ As in the Soviet Union, also in Moldova artists could be punished if they didn't follow the parties' commands on art.²²

The first 15 years of communism in Moldova were certainly the toughest, but in the nineteen fifties and sixties, after the dead of Stalin in 1953, artists were able to develop their own style and techniques, within the boundaries of the social realistic style. This was not in agreement with the ideas of the official artist Union which strictly held on to the policy of Social Realism. Besides artists who worked within the boundaries of the Soviet Realistic style, some artists decided to depose the ideas of the party by just not giving visible form to the ideas of the party. Instead of making paintings in which the ideological ideas of the party were visualized, they painted landscapes and still lifes. This was also a form of silent protest.

Real "underground artists" who openly revolted against the system were rare in Moldova only in the seventies and eighties there were some artists who deviated from Social realism. When I visited Moldova I met an artist who did rebel against the system in Soviet times by making large sculptures out of iron rubbish. In this work he made comments on the communistic regime. The reason for the absence of more and famous "under-ground" artists was the "hardness of the communistic government"²³, the absence of contacts with the west, a lack of interest and ignorance by the West and the impossibility for artists in Moldova to show themselves and their work abroad.

In 1986, under the policy of Gorbatsjov with the perestroika and glasnost, the art could follow the way to freedom. The reforms and policy of Gorbatsjov, the autonomous status of Moldova and the new market system were an important impulse for the national artists of Moldova to take the freedom to go back to their own style and ideas.²⁴ A big group of intellectuals wanted to reunite with Romania and used Romanian history and folk myths for inspiration.²⁵

²⁰ Page. 9, "Eastern Europe, politics, culture and society since 1939" Sabrina p. Ramet

²¹ Page 9, Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, "Culture and Change in Moldova", Yael Ohana

²² "InSIGHT Moldova, What cultural policy for the Republic of Moldova?", Vitalie Ciobanu

²³ <http://www.arta.neonet.md/intro/en/>

²⁴ "InSIGHT Moldova, What cultural policy for the Republic of Moldova?", Vitalie Ciobanu

²⁵ Page 9, Rapport of the East European Reflection Group, "Culture and Change in Moldova", Yael Ohana

2 The current art sector in Moldova

In this chapter I will explain how the art sector in Moldova is organized and structured. I will give a factual description of the different types of organizations active in the field of culture in Moldova. Through information and personal stories from experts, the problems and challenges inside the art sector will be described. Art education is part of the art sector but has also its typical characteristics. In part 2.5 “Art education” I will go into this subject.

The state system of art production, art education and art management in Moldova is completely created in the Soviet time. Moldova has an extensive cultural system that is not only covering Chisinau, but also the countryside with the small villages. In Soviet times many small villages had a “house of culture”, a library and a book shop. Besides that there existed many museums in Moldova. Also the art education was a priority and it was well organized and structured²⁶. Art was highly rewarded and appreciated by the party and therefore the art sector received high funds; the state provided its cultural system with financial resources. When Moldova became independent the infrastructure of art and culture, the old system, the network of cultural state organizations, remained almost the same. But society, the economy and therefore the financial support for the art and culture system went through major changes. The economical situation changed drastically to a free market economy. The old system is not capable to cope with this “new world”. For example, the cultural institutions in the local villages don’t have the same financial support from the state as they had during the Soviet period. At that time the state provided a complete budget for those institutions. Now they have a budget for the salary of the workers of the houses of culture, but no budget to organize events or to set up a program. A lot of cultural institutions are closed or transformed and their influence and activities decreased. This caused a decline of visual art available in small villages.

2.1 Three types of organizations

I have to distinguish three different types of organizations active in the field of art and culture in Moldova:

- The state organization
- The non-governmental organization
- The commercial organization

The first type of organization, the state organization or institution is paid out of state budget and belongs to the state. The second type of organization is the Non Governmental Organization (NGO). This is an organization that is non-governmental, non politic and non profit. Many initiatives that are executed within an NGO are not profitable, and therefore not commercial and not marketable. This type of organisation can’t exist out of earnings on the market. The state is simply not able or does not want to support these projects and organizations. The third type of organization, the commercial organization works for the market and tries to sell its products there. Although Moldova is a very poor country, there still is a small market for culture and art. A minority of the people do have money to spend on arts and culture. The focus in this essay will be on state organizations and NGO’s; these are the most extensive organizations and together form the major part of the art sector. They cover alternative art, traditional art and art education.

2.2 Non-governmental organizations in Moldova

It has to be understood that in the Soviet period only state institutions existed. Since 1991 Non Governmental Organizations are also active in Moldova. Some of these young organisations found their way to survive, others are still struggling. Due to absence of

²⁶ See the chapter “Art education” on page 19

dialogue between NGO's and the government and the lack of tradition and experience of collaborating with state structures, there is an atmosphere of permanent tension and conflict between the NGO's and the "decision making bodies". The NGO's are very important for the development of the art scene in Moldova but aren't yet seen as a serious partner by the government.²⁷

Since 1997 it is possible to map all the NGO's in Moldova due to an appeal from the government. This appeal prescribed that all the NGO's should re-register. This made it possible to take a more precise look at the number of NGO's. "In 1998 there were 585 NGO's in the country, of which around 22% were cultural NGO's. Most NGO's were located in Chisinau; regional NGO's represented only 14% of the total number. Currently (2005), there are over 3.400 NGO's registered in Moldova, but only 10-15% of these can really be said to be functioning organizations".²⁸ The situation described in the quote I experienced myself when I tried to contact organizations; internet sites often didn't work, emails I got back or organizations didn't even exist anymore and "contact" information just wasn't available. The term "dead NGO" can be used, these are NGO's that exist by name for a few years, even have a program and clear goals but haven't been active for a while or haven't been active at all.

It is very easy to become an NGO. As a person, or a group of persons, you only have to register and pay a little amount of money. There are no other rules or consequences once an NGO is set up. The advantage of being an NGO is that it is an official registered organization which makes it easier to apply for funds and grants, especially abroad.

The underdeveloped economical situation of Moldova makes it hard for NGO's to survive. Some NGO's can only exist out of the finances of their founders. It is certain that this puts some pressure on the shoulders of individuals who try to set up and keep their NGO active. "We live from project to project, after every project we hope we can find new financial resources".

Most NGO's in the cultural sector in Moldova depend on foreign funds for the financial support of their organizations, activities and development. The Soros foundation has been very important for the development of the cultural NGO's in Moldova.²⁹ Many founders of cultural NGO's I have spoken to indicate that especially in the first years after becoming independent the Soros foundation helped to set up their organisations by providing people the financial resources for their projects. During my visits I found out that the NGO's³⁰ that are active today, are mostly the organizations that are set up with the helping hand of the Soros foundation. This made it possible that big steps could be taken and a development could be made. But, as one of the interviewed people said: "There are also some organizations that haven't had this support. These are organizations that have been able to develop a strong material base on which they can rely, are well structured or organizations that never depended on financial support. At this moment they might not be as strong and visible as the supported organizations. But the steps that they have taken, on their own, could be big, or even bigger. These organisations will be able to develop themselves on their own in the future".

The dependency on foreign support has a major influence on the development of the NGO's. Most investors go for short term financial support instead of developing long term strategies of support. As a consequence the number of cultural NGO's has increased enormously. Due to the lack of a long term strategy for the activities and development of the NGO's and the absence of a stable financial support, it is not possible to create a basis for a long term existence of the NGO's. This causes an "atmosphere of insecurity, low confidence affecting not only those working in NGO's but also potential investors".³¹ Many NGO's depend on one

²⁷ Page 2, "Cultural NGO's in Moldova: a brief Introduction, Vyacheslav Reabcinsky

²⁸ Page 1, "Cultural NGO's in Moldova: a brief Introduction, Vyacheslav Reabcinsky,

²⁹ www.soros.md

³⁰ See appendix 3, list of organizations

³¹ Page 1, "Cultural NGO's in Moldova: a brief Introduction, Vyacheslav Reabcinsky,

sponsor for their financial income, this forms a risky situation. An example is the Soros foundation, in 2006 they decided to stop most of their financial support for cultural NGO's. This decision fits into the Soros strategy: to help to set up organizations, give them a financial base and after a few years the organizations have to be able to operate independent it themselves. In reaction some organizations immediately became inactive or "dead". Not one organization, but a lot of them stopped their activities. This instable and dependent attitude can cause the collapse of an important part of the NGO system when one big investor decides to stop invest.

NGO's that do get a contribution for projects are sometimes limited in the freedom of expression by the demands from foreign investors. For example an NGO that worked with schoolchildren making short movies was forced to choose certain themes like alcohol and aids prevention. This NGO totally depends on this specific investor.

A problem that many fellow workers of NGO's quote is the fact that the art sector has limited involvement in international co-operation. Those who work in the cultural field of Moldova often don't know who their potential sponsors are. They have no idea what format their project should have to meet international standards, "The projects themselves do not relate to the missions of the international funds."³² When I visited organisations and schools I noticed the lack of computers. To have a computer at home isn't a normal situation. Many people don't have access to computers and internet; this causes a low level of Internet use and an unawareness of international projects, networks and funds where the possibility of financial support can be found. Some workers of NGO's indicate that although they have a computer they still have no access to international information. They explain: "there is a little knowledge of foreign languages, especial in areas outside Chisinau. Many people were educated in Soviet institutions. At that time there was less attention for the study of foreign languages. Mostly young professionals speak the foreign languages, but those are going to work in fields with better financial income than the cultural field or they leave Moldova looking for a job elsewhere". When you take a look at the monthly salary of those working in the field of culture their decision is understandable: "the average monthly salary in the field of culture, education (...) amounts to about MDL 992.4 (Euro 60.5). By comparison, the minimum wage in Moldova is MDL 766.1 (Euro 46.7), the average monthly salary in the country is MDL 1 318.7 (Euro 80.4) and the minimum consumption basket value is over MDL 1 700 (euro 103.7)."³³ Not only the knowledge of foreign languages is missing only a small number of cultural workers has a professional background in management. A lot of organizations disappear due to bad management.

NGO workers sometimes mention that they have to deal with doubtful and dishonest competition "Some NGO's appear in fields where money can be found and react in that way on financial trends and respond to money givers. It is out of the question that NGO's reacting on financial trends are more doubtful in their ideals and activities than NGO's who have survived many tough years and still trying to contribute to the cultural field in Moldova". And "Some NGO's are set up by individuals/groups to promote their own work and have financial advantages as an NGO; they don't contribute in any way to the development of art and culture in Moldova. It is hard to see that sometimes the wrong people, people with a talent in promoting themselves, get financial support they don't deserve."

³² Page 2, "Cultural NGO's in Moldova: a brief Introduction, Vyacheslav Reabcinsky

³³ www.culturalpolicies.net, Country profile Moldova, 4.2.7 Employment policies for the cultural sector , salaries in 2005

2.3 Governmental organizations and institutions

An important state institution in the field of art and culture in Moldova is the “House of culture”. The House of Culture is an institution that existed in the USSR (Union of Socialistic Soviet republics). It was an educational institute and had also the function of a community centre. In these institutions education of art and culture was important. Every small village had its own House of Culture. Today 1250 Houses of Culture still exist in Moldova, but less money is invested in the Houses of Culture, many of them are almost on the point of collapsing. When I asked some students from smaller villages whether their House of Culture is active they told me that it depends on the Houses of Culture how much is done. Some Houses of Culture are well organized and have cinema evenings, performances of well known and popular Moldavian artist, other houses of culture are very poor and only function as “wedding” places. It totally depends on “how the available money is spend, the knowledge and work attitude of the employees and president”.

Another state organization is the “Union”. In 1932 the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) decided to dissolve all art groups and formations. They were replaced by one organization, the “Union”. Every discipline of art was organized in its own Union. The party wanted to organize artists in one association to enlarge the party’s power and to gain control over the artists. In this way the party could easily have political control over creative activities. The members were only allowed to make work/assignments that expressed the ideas of the party. The freedom of artists was limited, but they got rewarded for their work. In the Soviet period, the Union gave, within these limitations, a lot of possibilities to the artists. In Moldova there still are several Unions: the Union of Plastic Artists, the Union of Film makers, the Union of Writers, the Union of Theatre and the Union of Musicians. For the visual art the Union of plastic artists is the most important one. There are five departments in the Union of Plastic Artists: the decorative arts, the graphic art, the painters, the religious art, and the art of sculpture.

The Union of Plastic Artists has changed in the nineties; it “was transformed from an organization promoting the Communist Party Program among the plastic artists which strictly “followed” all the demands of the social realism norms into a voluntary association of the plastic artists and decorators united more by the professional interests (with an economic character) than on the base of a doctrine with an aesthetic or enlightening character.”³⁴ The Union is now officially an NGO but still receives some basic governmental financial support. The entrance exams to become a member are relatively low. Once in two years artists who want to become a member can apply. Artists are selected by their portfolio and CV. The quality of the works of members of the Union is not always on a constant high level.

Although the Union is now a different organization with different goals than in communist time, many artists say that in fact the Union of Artists didn’t change that much. The organization is structured as in the Soviet time. Members first become member stagier and then member tutaire (full member). For all the decisions made in the Unions there has to be voted by its members. Every department has a president, and there is one president for the whole Union. Not only the structure within the Union remained the same, also the style of working stayed traditional. This is visible in the gallery of the Artist Union, Brancusi.³⁵ There, the majority of the exhibitions contains a presentation of traditional works; mostly paintings, graphic works, textile art and sculptures. An older generation of artists is deeply involved in the Union. The younger generation and also the new media, photography and film, are not fully represented. A young photographer told me that it is almost impossible for her, working with the media photography, to become a member.

The Union still has in some way the same philosophy; to control the visual art world in Moldova. Like an artist said: “Moldova is a democratic country but has with the Unions still a

³⁴ www.arta.neonet.md

³⁵ Brancusi is the last name of the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi (1876-1957)

system that controls art". All artists have to be a member to have some rights and unofficial and unconventional art is not allowed to be exhibited. The Union still is "the" institution and wants to hold this monopolist position. It doesn't want to lose its power, money and prestige it now has. It is not always the quality of the art that will give you possibilities in the Union. From conversations with artists I discovered that relations can bring you much further. One of the artists told me that although she had a solo exhibition abroad and won international prizes, in Moldova it still is impossible for her to have an exhibition in Brancusi. Another artist told me that she, as one of the important artists working in her field, had to share a prize from the Union with a student whose work was of a very bad quality. Some artists even mentioned: "I will never get an award because I was a student of a certain professor which isn't appreciated there today".



Most of the works presented in the galleries in Chisinau are paintings, sculptures or graphics. New media and photography are less presented. This is the Brancusi art gallery.

The function of the Unions today can be seen as a supporting system, although not in a financial way. It is necessary to realize that for artists in Moldova there is no "back up system"; nothing like a payment, funds or grants. To have a network, a strong organization behind you, may be crucial in surviving as an artist. Being a member gives artists some advantages. The Union will help members to get assignments and when, for example, an official public sculpture has to be made, the assignment most of the time will be given to a member of the Union. Also the Union has, from the history of being a state organization, many workplaces and workshops. For an artist who isn't a member of the Union it is hard to find a place to work or have an exhibition: the Union of Plastic Artists can make the decision which artist will get a workspace and which artists will be exposed in an exhibition in the official gallery of the artist Union, or get promoted. This may not seem important but is it necessary to realize that Brancusi is one of the two serious galleries in Chisinau. And when there is an official exhibition abroad, where artists represent Moldova, only members of the Union will have a place in the exhibition and catalogue. Being a member gives you a certain status; membership still makes you in the eye of the public a real artist. The status and advantages of being a member is the reason why the Union today still has many members (400) in Moldova. The Union plays a major role, is very powerful and has a strong position in the field of art.

2.4 Galleries and the National fine art museum

Besides the main gallery of the Union of Plastic Artists in Chisinau, Brancusi, there are three other galleries or art institutions which have exhibitions; AoRTa, KSAK and the College gallery. These institutions don't always have a continuous exhibition program. Due to the financial situation it is hard for an independent gallery (NGO) to exist and have consequent

exhibitions. Some problems that were mentioned: "it is almost impossible to rent a place due to the high rents, it is too expensive to hire an attendant who will sit in the gallery or pay in the winter for heating and electricity".



Brancusi the gallery of the Union of plastic artists, this is the main gallery in Chisinau.

Besides those galleries there are several more galleries. These are places with a commercial function; selling work. In these galleries, not only art is presented, also small souvenirs are sold. An artist said about these galleries: "When you ask an average citizen whether a visit to these galleries is valuable they will say it is, because "it is a gallery where art can be seen". But I strongly discourage you to go there".

The original part of the national fine art museum, the main art museum in Moldova, dates from 1900. During the Soviet period, until 1989, it was a museum about the history of communism and the communistic party. After becoming independent the museum has been closed for a period of time and now only two rooms are open for the public, the rest of the museum is still in renovation. This also means that there is no room for the collection to be shown. At this moment less than 1% of the collection is exhibited. The collection is around 40 000 works and includes Renoir, Monet's, Durer, a lot of works made during the Soviet time, Japanese woodcuts, icons and other artworks. The museum has a good collection because in the Soviet time it was normal that art that was collected, for example from Germany and Poland, was shared within the provinces. In this way, Moldova as a small country has collected an interesting collection. These national and international treasures and heritages are already for many years not accessible for inhabitants of Moldova. The plans for the future of the museum are finished. Even a financial picture is made. Approximately 3 million Euro is needed to get the museum in the conditions that it can be called, with "proud", the National fine art museum.³⁶ "But it probably will take a longer time before the situation of the fine art museum will be improved. It seems that the museum now has to fight for the property it has. The museum exists out of several locations on the main street, Stephan cell Mare in Chisinau. These locations are very attractive to sell. The government would like to sell these places and promise to give other places instead". It got explained to me that in more post-Soviet countries the museum director is not busy with solving museum problems, but is fighting not to lose its real estate.

The budget that is provided from the government is 90 000 euro. Extra income the museum gets by renting out their property and some sponsorship. The budget goes to paying salary (80 staff people), the renovation of the museum and electricity. Also to the protection of the works in the depots, the preservation and the restoration of works takes a big part of the available money. From 1985 there was no money to take care

³⁶ All information above comes from a conversation with the director of the fine art museum

of the works. The museum director showed me some pictures on which the horrible conditions of the depot could be seen. The roof was leaking, the work just stood or laid on the ground, walls were broken and dust could easily get to vulnerable pieces. The museum tries to improve the conditions of preservation. But there is not enough money to do it conform international standards. The director gave the following example: "Until this year there was no fire extinguish, now there is. But when a fire is discovered, it will be extinguished with water; the fire will be stopped, but of course the pieces of art will be damaged by the water. This can therefore not be called a good solution".

Visiting the fine art museum in Chisinau is a completely different experience than visiting a museum in Holland. When a visitor enters an exhibition room, the light first has to be turned on by the staff. And when the visitor has seen the works and leaves the room, the light will be turned down by the staff. This measure is executed to save on electricity costs. The first exhibition room in the fine art museum is a "selling" room. Visitors of the museum can buy paintings from a national artist. The attendant strongly encourages the visitors to do this. There is a museum brochure, but there are no postcards with reproductions or catalogues available to buy.

2.5 Art education

In Soviet times art was very important in the educational system. Every primary and secondary school on each level had a major art subject (3h a week).

The importance of good art education in the Soviet period can be read in the following anecdote an artist told me: "I first attended art lyceum for 7 years, then studied in St. Petersburg at the academy of fine arts for 6 years and went back to Moldova. In Soviet times it was not possible to work without a house registration. For artists there was a special agency that provided work visa and housing, specialist were welcomed. For two years I got a scholarship from the Union of artists, a monthly payment. In 1990 I got a scholarship to go to Moscow and work with international artists on a free project. It was the time of Gorbatsjov and I was allowed to work beyond the limitations of social realism. To earn extra money I did work in social realism for the state: Lenin and his wife in Siberia was a popular subject back then. Now I work as a professor in art education myself." It may be clear that in that time artists from Chisinau enjoyed higher status, had good positions and chances to develop themselves and had opportunities to become well educated.

Although society has gone through major changes and Moldova is a poor country with many difficulties, the structure of art education on secondary art schools and art academies is almost the same as in Soviet times. The quality and quantity of art education on regular primary and secondary schools depends on whether art is an important subject in the school program or not. During the Soviet period art institutions were "ideological" institutions where artists were forced to be educated in a way the communistic party wanted. Most academies were under strict supervision. Today the binding rules for art education are gone. The education on secondary art schools and art academies still has a traditional starting-point for many lessons: focus on a representation of the visible surroundings.

Education in Moldova today is free and obligated for children from 6 till 15 years old. After primary and secondary school (6–18 years) it is possible to attend higher education; college, academy or university. Colleges provide short courses in specialized subjects like "Agriculture, Teacher Training, Arts, Mechanics, Construction, Industrial Wood-processing, and Economics".³⁷ The colleges are comparable with the MBO in Holland. Academies and universities are comparable with the HBO and universities in Holland. Also students who may not have the level to enter the university are easily accepted. This causes an uncertainty and fluctuation in the quality of universities. A rumor, which is likely to be true, is that it is easy to

³⁷ <http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/moldovco.htm>

buy the entrance to an university or to buy a diploma. Since 2000 the institutes in Moldova started a major change conforming to the Bologna process³⁸; they now have the same credit system as other European institutes

State and private institutions

There are two separated institutions for art education; state financed and private institutions. Private institutions are more expensive for pupils/students and are able to pay their teachers/professors often more salary. State and private schools are, also in art classes, obliged to execute a prescribed program from the state. Out of conversations with teachers it became clear that it is possible for them to deviate from the state program, by just giving their own lessons and writing down the subjects that have to be done in the formal papers. But most teachers say that the program allows no space for a personal approach and extra assignments. The little salary for teachers doesn't help the development of art subjects on schools and doesn't support initiatives from teachers. The salary of an average teacher lays between 100 and 120³⁹ Euros a month. "With this salary I have to have a second job. I simply don't have the time to do extra things or go deeper into a subject".

Secondary art schools and art academies

A very positive and unique remnant of the Soviet period are the secondary art schools that still exist. Those art schools prepare their pupils for the art academy and for a life as a visual artist. Most art schools are boarding schools; pupils from the countryside live too far away to travel every day. From the age of 10 they live at the school. The education on special art schools takes 8 years.

Not only the system of the art schools remained the same as in Soviet times, also most of the teachers are from an older generation, used to a certain system and structure. Together with a young teacher I visited a secondary art school. He told me that he was the only young teacher (28) working at that school. He was planning to quit his job because of the low salary; he earned, for two days of teaching every week, a monthly salary of 30 Euro. The starting point of most lessons on art schools is traditional; "basis of all art schools is to understand what form is and how to represent that".



A student at the secondary art school is working on a model assignment. Students have for many years classes in model drawing.

³⁸ If you want to know more about the Bologna Process:
http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html

³⁹ Salaries in January 2008



The pupils at the secondary art school are working. The classes are small, in this class were only five pupils.

Subjects in the school are painting, drawing and composition. The painting and drawing classes are focused on realistic assignments. When I visited the art school the pupils from the last class told me that in the drawing and composition classes they have had model, portrait and still life for the last 8 years. In the composition class there is more freedom, themes of the assignments within this subject are: family with 3 till 5 figures, rural area, portrait and the suburb. The pupils learn to register and recreate the visible surroundings. The assignments are built around a lesson plan out of Soviet time. Pupils work for 4 hours a time on an assignment that takes 20 to 24 hours.



(left) Works in the exhibition room at the secondary art school in Chisinau. Assignments on model, portrait and group portrait. Almost all assignments are focused on developing skills and working in realistic style. In the exhibition room no abstract art could be seen.

(right) A drawing of a pupil of the secondary art school in Moldova. This student is 17 years old. The students work for many hours on one drawing.

It is very unique that in an poor country like Moldova there is such an extensive art system with even special secondary art schools. These art schools have a very high quality of education, small groups, most of the time 8 pupils in a class, and specialized teachers. The students are really focused on the development of their technique, skills and handcraft.

Also the National Pedagogical University and the Academy of theatre, music and visual art, the major higher art education institutes, originate from Soviet times. The National Pedagogical University has the large art faculty, twice as big as the Academy of theatre, music and visual art, 600 fulltime students and 200 part-time students and exists since 1979. Under USSR pupils could follow art education on the art colleges (the special art schools) and art lyceums. If they wanted to attend higher art education they were educated in other countries, especially on Russian art academies. There they also could learn how to become an art teacher. An artist told me that the education on the Russian academies was of a very high quality: "I had to do six exams to get in: painting, model, free work, obligated work, portrait and still life (a conversation with an artist who was educated in St. Petersburg)". Today over 50% of the Moldavian teachers is educated in Moldova.

The dean of the National Pedagogical University told me that in 1979 there was a possibility to change the system totally; Moldova would get its own higher art education. Professors from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Estonia combined the knowledge they had from other academies to start the art faculty at the National Pedagogical University, it became an "interesting mix". After becoming independent also the influence of Romania became part of the education on the art faculty. At this faculty students can specialize in 6 subjects: painting, decorative arts, fashion design, visual art (interior design) and technical education. There are two directions: the pedagogical direction and the fine art direction. Every student gets the education to become a teacher, but the pedagogical direction pays more attention to subjects in that direction. For example: every student has to do a pedagogical course, but for the pedagogical direction it is three months, and for the fine art direction one month. This faculty gives education to students who want to become art teachers, especially on secondary schools. Students graduate in two subjects and most graduates also teach two subjects; more work is more salary.



The professor of the photography class, Irina Grabovan, helps the students to make a selection of their work for the assessment later that day. This was one of the most interactive classes, where students had to show their work, tell something and get reactions.

The academy of fine arts, in its current form, is set up in 1984 and has three faculties; fine art, applied decorative art and design. Within the faculty fine art there is the department of painting, department of graphics and department of sculpture. In the faculty of applied decorative art there is the department applied decorative arts and department of tapestry. In these departments subjects like: “ceramics design in and manufacture of decorative art items” can be chosen. In the faculty design the departments of interior design, fashion design and theatre design exist. It is possible to graduate as mural painter and icon painter.⁴⁰ Graphic art and design is a popular specialization in the art education today. In Moldova there is a demand for graphic designers: especially for the promotion of agricultural products and the design of wine labels.



(left) Graduation work of a student of the academy of music, theatre and fine art. In Moldova it is possible to graduate in icon painting and mural painting.

(right) A mural painting in the academy of music, theatre and fine art in Chisinau. It is possible to graduate in mural painting.

⁴⁰ <http://old.ournet.md/~amtap/en/finearts/specialities.html>

All schools in common

I found out through my visits to educational institutes, art schools, academies and universities, and in conversations with teachers, students and pupils that often they told me about the same challenges and problems.

During my visits I recognized that there was no modern or contemporary art to be seen in the classrooms, except in the lessons of one teacher. Out of conversations with pupils and students it became clear that they didn't know any modern or contemporary artist. One of the experts and teacher herself told me: "In the subject art history, given on art schools, art academies and universities, contemporary art does not exist. Most teachers give the history of art till pop art or DADA, from there on it is none existing. This has of course something to do with the interest and attitude of the professors who themselves have no access to contemporary art or have no interest in contemporary art".

It has to be understood that it isn't easy for teachers, not only in the art history subject, to follow a course or develop themselves. When I talked to a teacher she told me that "at least in Soviet times a teacher got the opportunity to develop himself, there were courses and the salary would also be paid when you attended an extra class or got an extra degree. When I now want to attend a course to develop myself, it counts as a free day, and I will not be paid." For a teacher, with a low salary, every day of payment is indispensable.

The difficulty for teachers and students to develop themselves has increased by the fact that the majority of the students and professors only speak Russian and Romanian. Information about contemporary art is just not accessible in Moldova for them in a language they understand. Publications, in many subjects, are rare in Moldova. Someone told me that since becoming independent almost no new books have been published. And when there are publications available, students and teachers can't afford to buy them. Most teachers are used to work without any books. I have spoken to a German professor at the International University who had no books at all because they were not available. He bought and ordered some books from Germany, with the help of a German fund, and copied them for all of his students.



(left) One of the most impressive works I have seen is this book. It is hard to believe that no one else could see this book. Because it is too expensive less books are published. Nicolai Ischimji made his own publication and printed this, more than two hundred pages book, himself. This publication is not available and can only be seen by friends. (outside)

(right) In the book poems and illustrations can be found

All the rules and the way of traditional teaching, “the system”, is not stimulating teachers to contribute and put effort in the educational field. “I feel sorry that there isn’t enough freedom to go my own way. I am part of this system and everything I try works against me. Most of the time it seems better to go with the system than to resist the system”. I have met some teachers, but also artists, who try to resist the system by not becoming a part of the system; they don’t become member of the Union and they stop teaching at the academy. Some of these teachers are highly appreciated. They told me that students come to their homes, instead of going to the academy, to learn from them. Students like to learn from these teachers because they have different views and a wider vision.

Through conversations it became clear that some teachers/professors feel that an intellectual element in the art field is missing. One of the reasons, they pointed out, is that the higher education in some subjects misses. There is for example no academic education to become an art historian, this education doesn’t exist in Moldova. There is also no possibility to become an art critic or (art) philosopher. “These missing educations cause a lack of “thinking, intellectual” people in the art field.” But this is a phenomenon that can be seen as well in other areas in Moldova: “In Moldova money is mixed with prestige, having a BMW is more important than having a good education”. And “intellectuals aren’t appreciated. People don’t think it is important for a country to have them”. All the art historians are educated abroad, in Russia, and return to Moldova to become teachers. They, just like other teachers, are forced to find other ways of income. Due to the low salary highly educated people will always attend another job when they can. Because of this it is possible that one of the best educated art historians of Moldova works as a guard in personal security, just because he can earn a better income by doing that job. I met a teacher who has worked for over 35 years. Her husband had a good job as a police man and passed away last year. They were well to do and hard working middle class people. Now she has a pension of 400 lei (25 euro). Most of this goes to paying the wood (fuel/gas) that she uses to warm one room in the house. Just like many other Moldavians a lot of talented art historians, art professors search for their luck elsewhere. This caused an “intellectual emigration”. For many hard working individuals it is hard and not motivating to see those talented people leave the country. Not only teachers but wealthier students as well study abroad. Often students stay in countries where they studied, because there are more opportunities to make a living. For example, a fashion design student told me she was staying in the country she was studying because in Moldova there is no market to sell her own line of clothes and bags.

Students say that most of the education on art institutions doesn’t correspond with the current situation of art, culture, the art market and art management today. A student art and culture management explains that he dropped out of school because he didn’t felt prepared for the current situation and problems an art manager faces by only learning information out of books from the nineteen seventies (Soviet time). Those books are based on a different society, where art managers faced different problems, but are used as if they are up to date. The education on academies doesn’t prepare students for the “new” art system in society, a free art market. Stimulating and teach students how to use funds and how to raise money is rare on academies.

The system of art schools and academies is built around professors. The professor is in charge and gives all the marks. On secondary art schools this means that pupils will have the same teacher for every subject for more years: the pupils get drawing, painting and composition from the same teacher. Some professors and students feel that there is less space for an individual learning route where a student can develop his own interests and talents. For example a professor in painting on the academy learns his students in his studio how to paint. “I wanted to make an animation, but my professor told me that I should learn how to paint, because I will become a painter. He thought that when you were a real painter, you could only do it like Michelangelo”. Besides the main subject students attend other courses like: technologies of painting and color studies.



A workshop at the academy of music, theatre and fine art

Sometimes the gap between the student and the current art education is caused by the fact that most of the teachers on art institutions are from an older generation that is formed and educated in the Soviet time and are still a part of a system based on older principles. This can cause a traditional way of teaching and passing on knowledge. A student tells about his classes: “It often happens that a professor will sit in front of the class and is just reading from his book for one and a half hour, students are listening and writing”. A professor from abroad, working in Moldova, says “there is little interaction between teacher and student, no alternation in work forms or presentation. The education is focused on the teacher as a source of knowledge. When the teacher is educated 30 years ago, it can be possible that the knowledge he is passing on is also 30 years old and is not completed with new knowledge and ideas. There is less self activity, individual learning or responsibility for students themselves”.

A problem brought up by experts working with new media is the lack of experience in the field of education with new media, especially film, a medium that has gone through rapid transformations: “the older generation is used to work in old style and production, there is nobody who can learn the younger generation how to work today. The older generation was used to having money (provided by the party) to produce films and now they have to deal with another system”. “Now all graduates become wedding filmers and the really talented guys go to Romania.” There is not only a lack of experience with modern media and a lack of equipment and knowledge, but a lack of appreciation and acceptance of the new media as an art form. A professor in photography told me: “now it is only possible on the academy to get some credits for the subject photography, it is impossible to get education to become a photographer. It isn’t fully accepted as an art form”.

Every teacher or professor I have spoken to, old and young said that the education has definitely become worse than it was in Soviet times. In the Soviet period education was important: “they wanted to have high educated people in front of the class room, it was even possible to find a teacher in kindergarten that was a fully educated pedagogic from the university”.

NGO’s and education

Besides institutionalized education, NGO’s have a role in art education. Especially in the field where the existing framework of art education is not sufficient or in the subjects where less

attention is given to. NGO's organize activities that are related to education like giving/organizing workshops and readings. For example: an NGO that organizes master classes for filmmakers and students of the academy. In the master class and workshops filmmakers learn, amongst other things, how to apply for European funds. This opens the gate for Moldavian film makers. Many workers of NGO's have a job as a teacher. Students get the opportunity to work in the organization, come with ideas and be a part of the development of the organization. In some NGO's young people get the chance to learn for example culture management and can practice this immediately.

3 Factors that influence the development of art

During my research in Moldova I found out that there are some unexpected but important factors that influence the art sector and further developments of this sector. By adding new questions to my research I have tried to extract the factors that are influential for the development of the art sector. In this chapter I particularly use the information of the experts to describe those factors.⁴¹ Sometimes I have added my own experiences to make the descriptions more complete.

3.1 Financing art and a free (art) market

In many conversations the role of the state was pointed out. It is necessary to understand that the role of the state changed totally when Moldova became independent. This influenced the lives of the inhabitants of Moldova drastically.

In the Soviet period the state financed working places, material and ensured an income for specific artists who worked within the restrictions of the party's ideology. Some artists had in those days a steady income. The structure of the art world was centralized; art depended totally on the state for its existence.

Since Moldova's independence from the Soviet Union, the major financial support from the state disappeared, there is no financial stability or security for artists anymore.

The state assignments for art decreased and at the same time the prices for workshops and materials increased. Museums were no longer state property and had to survive with a small budget and important artists moved abroad.⁴²

Instead of a central authority for art, the artists now have to deal with a free market. A lot of artists that grew up and got educated in Soviet times now struggle to make a living. They were used to work for the state and the party and to have a steady income, they don't know how to deal with the free market economy. "Who said we wanted this?". But not only older artists have a hard time to earn money. Also the younger generation can't find ways to finance their projects. There is an absence of an "art market" in Moldova and a lack of knowledge about the mechanisms of the free market.

Also the economical situation is one of the major keys in the development of an art market in Moldova. Not only artists have to struggle for a living, the majority of Moldavians are just too poor to spend any money on art or culture. The life standard first has to become "average" then money can be spent on art and art development. Only on the international market is a chance for artists to sell some work. I visited an artist who had in his whole life sold two works to a Moldovan, the rest of the works he sold to foreigners.

⁴¹ All the text, also the facts, comes out of conversations with the experts.

⁴² www.arta.neonet.md



I visited the artists, Simion Zamsa and Elena Karacentev. They are the designers of many stamps of Moldova. Some artists have an income from their work because they get assignments from the state.

Another problem for the financing of art seems to be the emigration of 1/3 of the Moldavians. A student at the ULIM University told me that her parents both live in Italy. Once in nine months she sees them, because they have to come back to Moldova to extend their contract. Each one of two students has a parent abroad. This means that a lot of Moldavians live in foreign countries, in Russia, Ukraine, but also in Europe. Most emigrants are between 25 and 50. The group of people who has just finished education, who are going to earn money, leave the country. The public that spent money on culture has become smaller. This not only influences the available financial resources for art, but also influences the contact between art and public. The parents who left Moldova are not in the position to raise their children and help them develop an interest in art and culture. They don't know how their money is spent and they can't keep an eye on the quality of the education their child is receiving. The public that normally criticizes art has left the country. One of the people I spoke to said: "we lost the main base of the society".

Some people say that a new form of support, apart from the financial support from abroad, the free market or state support, could be developed. These finances could consist of support from industries or business. To make it attractive for business to invest in art and culture they think it should be stimulated by the government within their laws.

3.2 State policy on art

Every decision in the field of art and culture is officially made by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Some people say that bringing Culture and Tourism together in one ministry is just done because in this way less attention and money has to be spend on culture. "Art doesn't get a big part of the attention inside this Ministry, most of the attention goes to the tourist side of the Ministry of "Culture and Tourism"."

The government wants to invest in culture by investing in tourism. The funds and other finances that are provided by the government are mostly used for protection, renovation and preservation of specific national cultural heritage. Many people active in the cultural field think that the investments of the government should be different: "For tourists a visible and accessible cultural sector is interesting. Therefore the government should invest in a good

climate for initiatives and active NGO's. If the government of Moldova wants to make some changes, in the position of art, the accessibility of art and the preservation of the cultural heritage, it should have the courage to invest in the plans of the fine art museum. Moldova as an independent country should at least have one art museum that counts. The fine art museum could be a place where art is easily visible for all inhabitants, a place which could be an alternative for the existing exhibition places like Brancusi and a major tourist highlight. This would be fitting into the policy of the government; investing in the museum means investing in tourism. Art and culture can in this way play a very important role in the development and enlargement of the tourist sector."

Although officially the ministry is responsible for cultural policy, unofficially it hasn't got the power. Through conversations it became clear that the power in decision making in the field of art and culture is still very centralized and in the hands of the president. He decides who gets money and when: "The president calls and then says 1 million for them and 1 million for them".

Almost all institutions in the field of art and culture, like academies, belong to the government. State budget on culture is 58 million lei (3,5 million euro). 58% of this budget goes to the salaries and another part to maintenance (electricity, water). 5 million lei is left for cultural activities and events. The remaining money that the government has to spend goes to state cultural workers (including artists and professors) that work for state institutions. It is understandable that it isn't much that an artist receives on his paycheck. For example a player in the orchestra gets 100 lei (6 euro) for a performance.⁴³

Many workers in the art sector feel that the state doesn't invest enough in the field of art and culture: "From the government there is no special finance (like funds or payments) for the development of (contemporary) art, the support of artists, or the development of a (contemporary) art museum/gallery." But they also find it understandable that the government doesn't invest that much in art. "The government just hasn't got enough money. And when you see other problems appear in Moldova, like the aged people who haven't got a pension because the government doesn't have the money to pay them, you can understand their decision". "Though the investments of the government have to be looked at. Because the distribution of money should not only contribute to the preservation but also to the development of art and culture".

Most people I have spoken to don't seem to find the lack of financial support from the government the biggest problem. They want support in another way. They want a supporting system. Now many artists and workers in art and culture feel that the government isn't interested and caring at all. And doesn't see the development of (contemporary) art and culture as an important element that could contribute to the development of Moldova. A photographer made an exhibition about Transnistria, one of the most actual subjects in Moldova, he hasn't seen anyone from the government on the exhibition, nor heard from them. In New York, the exhibition had great success.

Many artists and workers in culture and art complain about the non transparency of the system and in the distribution of money. For people who apply it is totally unclear who gets the money and why. There is, for example, a film fund for production houses. Someone I have spoken said about this official governmental fund: "This fund is supposed to give money to independent filmmakers, but they support only "their own" projects. They are officially open for outsiders, but their bureaucracy is so tough that nobody works with them, "only once in a lifetime". And even when an individual or organization gets some money, there are so many rules and regulations that the project has to be changed in such a drastic way that it isn't even attractive to apply. "When you get there you have to rewrite your project, use their old equipment and old fashioned workers, they decide who you work with. The biggest problem

⁴³ The information used for this part of the text comes from a conversation with a member of the municipality

with these official institutions is the copyright; they finance your project and they get the copyright. When you want to send it to a film festival, you are not allowed without their permission, and their permission is hard to get. The films that they produce are not interesting and also of a low quality”.

The distribution of grants by the government is still very centralized and controlled. “The power over the distribution of money is in the hands of few people and they control not only the distribution of money, but also the creative process”. Someone said that therefore the decision making on money should be decentralized and independent.

Out of the government budget for culture, the salaries of the cultural workers in the regions got paid. This takes most of the budget, while the government doesn't even know what happens with the money.

Some people mentioned another problem: many leading figures in the government do have a lack of knowledge. The administrators, cultural workers and leading figures in the cultural field didn't change since Soviet time. In Soviet times there was money, a budget, and they were in the position to give money. Today's society requires another type of management. No longer following orders from Moscow, but thinking and acting independent and they don't know what to do with that.

When I talked to a specialist in cultural policy in the regions she told me: In the decentralization process the regions got more responsibility and influence on the regional developments of economic and culture. An advantage is that the regions are able to settle for their own cultural characteristics. But this also caused some problems. The knowledge in the decentralized regions is missing, for example the knowledge about managing culture and its finances. Despite of the decentralization the regions and districts are obligated to practice the rules from the government and report everything they do to the ministry of culture. The communistic party is now in charge and they have even sharpened the control on the cultural life in the regions.

Corruption is still a major problem in Moldova. It is not clear to me in what amount corruption has a role in the development of art and culture. But many people I have spoken to consider corruption as an important issue in today's society in Moldova, in their life and work.

“Moldova is corrupted from the bottom, from the dentist till the police officer, from the street worker till the president. Most people don't have the choice, it is just the system. Poor people are easy to bribe. The government owns a lot of property and put the money in their own pockets. Corruption is bureaucratic and legally organized”. This influences the possibilities for organizations active in the field of art and culture and discourage hard working individuals. Often it is not clear why someone get a certain position, job, money or exhibition without even having any education, affinity or experience in the field of art and culture. The art system that still exists can be ruined by the corruption. The state has the role to take care of people and help people, but in Moldova people feel that the state doesn't have this approach, they are “Corrupted and careless; the government is rich and the people are poor”. Sometimes politic is connected to art; art is used to promote certain political values.

3.3 Moldova, a small art world

When you have never been in Moldova and you look on the Internet for organizations active in the cultural field, you will be impressed by the number you will find. Quite a lot actually for such a small country. But having experienced the cultural life for a while and having had the possibility to talk with experts about art and culture in Moldova. It becomes clear that this world, this “world of art”, is in reality very small. It is a world where almost everybody knows each other, where for every fine art discipline is just one active organization or individual; one organization for contemporary art, one main gallery and one (fine) art museum.

A small world can be good, but a small art world can also cause some difficulties. Many of the individuals I have spoken to experience it as a shortcoming in culture and arts. For the development of art, comparing is one of the most important things; where do I stand, what is the quality of the work I make, the exhibitions that are shown and the education I give and receive. As an artist, educator, culture manager, you need to see what others do to improve your own skills. Workers in the field of art and culture feel that in this small world there is little space for comparison, for reflection, for critic, for concurrence and competition. They say it is just too small for that, and the outside world sometimes seems unreachable.

Also reflection is something that is very important for the development of art. Many great ideas appear and are executed, but without a reflection those actions might lack a connection with the rest of the world, like a small breeze. It happens, and then, nothing. Reflection can ensure the improvement of quality; what went all right? What are the results? What can I do better next time? Did we manage to accomplish our goals?

Of course, the people active in the field of art and culture have to deal with competition in this small world, especially competition for the little amount of money. But they miss the competition in a constructive way; when an artist are ignored or rejected at one gallery because of this confronting art, he can go to “the concurrent”, another gallery, and try again. But what to do when there is just one gallery?

In this little world there is few co-operation; organizations work together, but really sharing knowledge isn't happening. Many people consider this as a bad thing. It seems that every pioneer stands on his own in the battle field of contributing to cultural life and arts. There are clear borders between groups and people don't really want to work together. The lack of cooperation can be seen in the field of film production: “All film makers and film studios work separately, they try to keep everything secret, this is mainly for the sake of money not for the sake of art. No cooperation means no big productions because one filmmaker or studio can't cover the costs.”

Not only the art world, also the country is very small. But the difference between the larger cities and the (underdeveloped) countryside is enormous. The possibilities and availability of art and culture in Chisinau may not be enormous, but there are different forms of art. Sometimes in the provinces there is nothing but one TV channel.

3.4 Different forms of art, mass culture, high culture and folk culture

When I visited the University a teacher told me that the applied art education is much more popular than the fine art education. Because there is no financial support system, a lot of artists turned their back to the self expression form of art. They began working in the applied art sector, as a designer or decorative artist, to earn a living. This also has to do with the historical background; in Soviet times it wasn't possible for artists to express themselves and their ideas, they weren't allowed and there was no market, no living, for art in which the artists expressed themselves. In opposite, a designer , architect, fashion designer, could work for the party and earn an income. As a consequence a lot of (older) artists today are decorative artists or designers. In Moldova it is still easier to earn money as an applied artist. “The autonomous form of art becomes a hobby.”

Some artists try to make free work besides their design assignments. Only artists who are financial supported by family or other individuals are able to fully contribute to their free work. They ask a lot from their family: I have met an artist whose wife has in income as a saleswoman. Because one salary is not enough, and he as an artist can't earn enough money, they live with their daughter, grandparents and brother in a tree room apartment. Most artists have other jobs to make a living, like teaching on secondary schools or at universities, working in shops, research projects, repairing buildings (like churches), and working on the streets as street artist.



A visit to the workshop of Victor Gutsu

During the transition the economy changed into a free market economy. Some forms of art, marketable art connected with the economy, started to flourish and became accessible for more citizens. Now there is a cinema with popular movies, there are several Russian TV stations with popular series and there is popular music. These forms of art can be seen as part of the “popular mass culture”.

During Soviet time something like “popular mass culture” didn’t exist, but high culture, painting and sculpture, was highly appreciated, developed and open to the public. An artist told me that “In Soviet times there was an art magazine for children from 5 years old, and it was normal to visit the museum with your father. Now people don’t read art magazines (there are just no good art magazines in Moldova) and visiting the museum is no longer part of raising children”

The critique I heard is that with the rise of a popular mass culture, the high culture disappeared and became less accessible and appreciated. The art accessible for inhabitants only contains products of the popular culture; on TV, for many people the single accessible place where they can come in contact with “art”, are popular programs broadcasted. Many people don’t have access to art that show a different view, attitude and is authentic.

“Everything in Moldova is cheap and crap, it looks like here, only fake things exist” and “The wild capitalism made sure that everything authentic disappeared”. Most NGO’s focus on the alternative, high culture. A small group of people is attracted to these activities. It seems that the big audience isn’t interested or does not know where to find the activities and places.

In some conversations with people it became clear that they are sad and think that the “mass” isn’t interested in high culture at all. But I experienced it in an opposite way. For example: The students at the university were very interested to hear about Rembrandt and see the reproductions of Rembrandt. Also the German movie⁴⁴ nights have a high percentage of visitors. This means that a group of people is interested in art when it is available and they have the opportunity to experience it. A key factor in this is the availability of information for the public about events⁴⁵.

When I walked with a young group of artists on the streets of Chisinau looking for Graffiti⁴⁶, I realized that this hardly could be found. The absence of youth sub cultures in Moldova, and their artistic products, is striking. In Moldavian society it seems that it is better to blend in than to stand out. A culture manager explained: for sub cultures there need to be an open society where people have a minimum of income and feel safe. This also influences the

⁴⁴ The German movie nights are organized by a teacher from Germany. Every movie night has a theme, for example: “immigration and emigration”. German (art house) movies that cover the theme are shown.

⁴⁵ See Art critic on page 38

⁴⁶ An organized tour for Young people organized by one of the NGO’s

diversity of art forms, political art or public art is something that is unknown. A simple explanation for this absence of subcultures could be that sub cultures and their artistic products were destroyed in Soviet times. But it would be too simple as a complete explanation. Because other former Soviet countries do have this variety in sub cultures and artistic products. This could say something about the position of Moldova in the transition process, just at the beginning of a long journey. But it could also tell something about Moldova's background; an agricultural country where almost everyone lived from agriculture, which ensured a uniform community.

Besides the two main cultures, Russian and Romanian, there are several other ethnicities living in Moldova. The diversity of ethnicity does influence the diversity of the techniques in Moldavian art. The origin and background can be seen in the many folk influences, like woodcut techniques, in the contemporary art in Moldova. But in the museums, galleries and shops is an absence of folk culture and traditional hand crafts. Even when you are specifically looking for it, it is hard to find. In a small village, an hour from Chisinau, I met a woman and her house was filled with beautiful hand craft; woven carpets, pillows and embroidery. All the hand craft was of an extremely high quality. She told me that like many other man and woman, she made everything herself. This example could tell that there is an active folk culture. This folk culture is not easily visible or accessible for tourists or people interested in it. I discussed with some artists this phenomenon and they said: "sometimes it feels like the Moldavians want to forget their own culture, they don't know how to deal with it, and ignore it. Although the policy of the government is to save and invest in cultural heritage, the folk culture easily seems to be forgotten."

Not only folk culture is missing in the museum also the Social realism is hard, impossible, to find. In one museum the room about the Soviet time just disappeared. In the other museum only the "banning of the people during soviet time" was visible. Out of conversations it became clear that a lot of art work made in the Soviet time still exists in Moldova. But "we don't know how to deal with the (products of) Soviet time and the Soviet history. It produces so many double feelings and is a heavy subject". And: "We are just fed up with social realism". The history of working in Social realism, figurative realistic style, can be seen in the art education and in the way the artists work today. After their education artists keep working in figurative style. There is little history of working abstract, the abstract art that can be seen is mainly decorative art.



I visited the country side and a woman showed me her home full of handcrafts

3.5 Moldova; a bi-lingual country

Moldova is a bilingual country; Romanian and Russian are the major spoken languages. Due to the occupations and changes in the borders of Moldova a lot of other languages are spoken. After becoming independent “The Moldavian” language was set as the state language. This language is in name different, but in form almost the same as the Romanian language. The Russian language is not accepted as state language, although a majority of the population in Moldova can speak Russian.



The bilingualism is visible in the streets of Chisinau. For example on headings of buildings

During my stay I found out that both speaking groups are well living together, no big conflicts appear in daily life. I think that few other countries in the world have such a comparable peaceful “two language society”. An example of the tolerance between those two speaking groups can be seen in the educational field. On universities most classes are given in Romanian as well as in Russian. When the professor answers questions in Romanian and a question is placed in Russian, easily the questionnaire will be changed from Romanian to Russian. My own experiences in the educational field with the bilingualism were very good. At a presentation of art works of students most students presented their work in Russian because the professor was Russian. When two students found it hard to express themselves in Russian, without any hesitation another student started translating their Romanian into Russian.

Though there sometimes seems to be a division between Russian and Romanian speaking groups. When I say that the bilingual situation influence the art scene in Moldova some individuals will strongly disagree, others will strongly agree with me. I have spoken with organizations and individuals from both language groups and they have different visions on the bilingual situation. Even because of the discord about whether it is an issue or not it could be seen as something that is very important mentioning.

The Russian citizens seem to see it as a bigger problem; this can be explained from the historical context. Under the Soviet regime, everybody was speaking (forced or not) the Russian language, in that way everybody was (some sort of) equal. Today the state language is not longer Russian but Moldavian, a language not everyone manages to speak.

This causes feelings of inequality. The Moldavian speaking inhabitants often blame the Russian speaking inhabitants for the fact that they “still can’t speak the Moldavian language and they even don’t try to learn it”.

This bilingual situation influences the art scene. The two different language groups work together, for example on art academies, but at the same time there seems to be a separation between those groups. For example when I visited an exhibition of a Russian artist, almost all the visitors were Russians. Language, that shouldn’t give troubles in a visual discipline, separates in some ways artists from each other.

Most of the publications and appeals (for competitions, grants), by state or by founders, are now written in or translated into “Moldavian”, the official state language. This means that some artists, mainly the Russian speaking artists and other minority groups, don’t have access to these documents. In this way language excludes an important part of the cultural scene. When investors from abroad make their appeals for grants in Romanian, the Russian speaking artists won’t have the access and possibility to go for these grants. During the Soviet times the highly educated artists and intellectuals were mostly Russian speaking, because they were educated in Russia on the best Universities and academies and have therefore received a high quality education. By excluding these people from being active and giving them no access to available money and documents, a lot of knowledge, talent and good plans will be lost. With the introduction of Moldavian as the state language a lot of Russian speakers, artists, art managers and art professors, left the country.

Now Romania offers scholarships every year for students who want to come and study in Romania. These scholarships are only for Romanian speaking inhabitants of Moldova. Some artists I have spoken to strongly feel that speaking only the Russian language influences their possibilities to grow and make a living as an artist. They wonder why so few Russian speaking artists are member of the Union, and why it takes a Russian artist so long to get an exhibition in the Union’s gallery, Brancusi. They feel somehow that they are treated unequally because they are Russian.

When I was in Moldova I had the feeling that language stands for something bigger. With several people I discussed this issue. A foreign expert on cultural policy explained: In history the country always has been divided in language, ethnicity and in territory. This is the first time that they are independent as a country for a longer time. And now they are looking for their own identity and especially nationality. They haven’t had the time yet to develop the nation, so they are still in an unsafe, uncomfortable and unstable situation: they didn’t overcome the process of not being a part of Romania and at the same time they want to say “we have our own nationality, we are not longer part of Russia”. It is understandable, for a country that is always overruled by others, that the “own Moldavian nationality” has become a major issue. The tension between “Romanian or Russian identity” is blocking the vision to see this multi identity as an enrichment and opportunity.

I have spoken Moldavian speaking people who truly believe that Moldova still should be a part of Romania, while the Russian speaking inhabitants (like the Transnistrians) are thinking the opposite way. It is hard for a country to have in its borders these different visions and combine them into something that will help to country to head forward to a steady future.

Some people feel that in the future there will rise a problem: the Moldavians were, after Moldova became independent, not longer obligated to learn Russian. A lot of the Russian speaking (and other groups of) citizens don’t speak Moldavian because they never had to learn. This can cause in the coming years a problem; citizens will no longer speak a common language and the division between Russian and Moldavian speaking inhabitants will be bigger. Apart from the two languages and how it influences art and culture, some people mentioned that a bigger problem is that almost none of the, both Russian and Romanian speaking, artists speak foreign languages like English.

In some way the fact that now everybody can speak Russian and the love for Europe, forms a contradiction. The Romanian speakers speak also the Russian language and seem to have

no problem with the Russian influences on art. Most of them see the advantages of speaking the Russian as well as the Moldavian language, having Russian influence on (past) art and culture and have also access to the Russian culture and art products. Some Romanian speakers even don't mind that reachable television is almost totally made up out of Russian programs "they are just better". Besides this "interest" for Russian language and culture, all Moldavians want Moldova to head to Europe and in no way to Russia. They want a decrease of the Russian influence in Moldova, and finally no Russian influence at all. Almost all Moldavians I have spoken consider themselves Europeans. Language doesn't matter in this way, Romanian as well as Russian speakers consider themselves European (some in more ways than others; at least in cultural and political view).

3.6 Art criticism

Before my visit to Moldova I didn't thought of the influence and role of art critic for the development of the art sector. In conversations I found out that workers in the field of art and culture, as well as artists, find art critic very important. Conversations with experts gave me the following information and thoughts.

In Moldova art critic as a profession exists. Instead of criticizing art the profession of art critic is more a job for promoting and reporting art events and exhibitions. An independent and developed way of art criticizing is missing. Due to a low salary and a not specialized education, critics are often reporters, unknown of the developments inside art in Moldova and abroad. Journalists get 20 lei (Euro 1,30) for their story, and for this little money it is hard to put extra effort in researching background information, contacting artists and writing a critical article. It happens that artists pay the journalists for writing a good critic. And it is understandable that journalists with a low salary may see that as an advantage. Of course there are journalists who try to do a more independent job and put effort in researching. But for them it is more difficult to survive financially and keep their job.

All people I interviewed feel that art critic could play an important role in the development of the art sector in Moldova. "Critic can enlarge the awareness of people, sharpens the attitude of the audience as well as the organizer." Especially in a small art world where the same people who have to promote their activities also criticize their activities. And where every individual has to execute all roles; subscribing for funds, being a curator, inviting artists, make the exhibition, write the report or critic and make sure the event got promoted. When critics write about art in the media people would have the opportunity to learn about art, to understand art, to get a different opinion about art. They also would know what happens, where and on what time. Art would be in that way more accessible for people. The people I have spoken to feel that it is not only the journalists' job to have a critical attitude toward art. Artists should also understand that art critic is very important. It could help them to improve their work, to have reflection and to get a bigger audience.

A completely different point is that the journalists who write about art are taken serious by the audience. The media are still seen as the right ones to believe; the audience believes that what is written is the truth. But there is no critic, no "both sides", or "more views". In addition in Moldova freedom of speech is allowed, but having critic in public isn't suitable. So having a natural critic attitude is something that is uncommon.

Above the fact that there is a lack of art critic, there is an absence in publications. Workers in the cultural field point out that there is a need for publications in two forms. One publication in the form of an independent art magazine, where critic can have a place, but also the publication of happenings, exhibitions and movie nights. To announce to the public what happens where. The current art magazines are very expansive and glossy, but in no way useful for the development of art and culture. There are no reproductions, books and

postcards of art and artists, simply because it is too expensive. In this way it is hard for audience, but also artist, students and teachers to have access to different art forms. When I held a lecture at the university I brought postcards of van Gogh and Rembrandt with me for the students. After the lecture those cards disappeared within a few minutes. One teacher came to me and said that it was great, because she could use these postcards for her lessons. But also the students were amazed by the reproductions; they don't exist in Moldova.

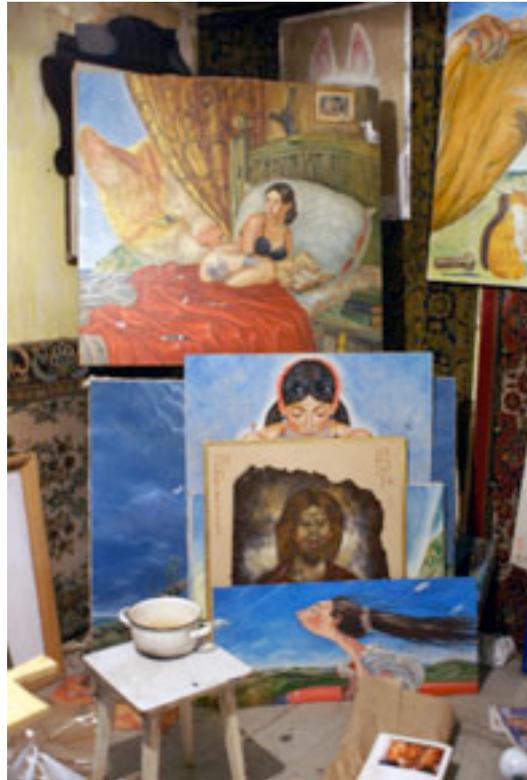
Another form of publication, the publication of knowledge and experiences by people working in the field of art and culture, is wanted. In Romanian, Russian and English so the publications will be available for everyone. In this way important experiences can be shared but also a comparison can be made. Now only a few individual have the knowledge and experiences. When the knowledge could be shared there would be a stronger base to build on.



A hand painted billboard on the street of Chisinau. Most posters and announcements are made by hand. Printing is expensive in Moldova.

3.7 Position of artists

In Soviet times artists were highly appreciated and rewarded. Not only by the party, but artists had also good positions in society. When I asked people about the position of artists in Moldova today, they all said: “today, artists in Moldova aren’t appreciated”. An artist said about this: “In Russia artists are appreciated, their salary is higher. In Moldova artists have no recognition, we are seen as people you don’t want to deal with, but you have to deal with. Artists aren’t seen as people who can help Moldova in its development”.



(left) Visiting an artist, Mark Verlan, in his workshop. He is one of the most innovative and experimental artists in Moldova. There are few places where he can show his work.

(right) Works of the artist Mark Verlan

The financial situation of artists and art teachers and the financial rewards they get, could say something about their position in society. When I visited one of the famous illustrators of Moldova she told me it is possible to buy one of her original illustrations for 10 Euro. Artists can't ask more because they just don't get more. And a pension for an artist is between 400 and 800 lei (Euro 20 and Euro 50 a month) and even less if you haven't worked in education. Being an artist doesn't give you any financial or social status. This is visible in the prices you get when you win an award as an artist. The first prize of a big competition is Euro 50 and the second price is Euro 25.

Inside the art world there also seems to be some discord and inequality like I described above in the Unions⁴⁷. Those who have the power are able to rule the art world and decide which position someone has. Some artists, who receive awards abroad, never get chances or awards in Moldova.

In Moldova there is in the legislation nothing written down about the position of artists, about their rights and duties (for example about tax reductions or payments). I have been told that there is a lobby group, an expert committee, which is actively lobbying for the development of this. The Union of artists initiated this process to push the parliament to have a legislation for

⁴⁷ On page 17

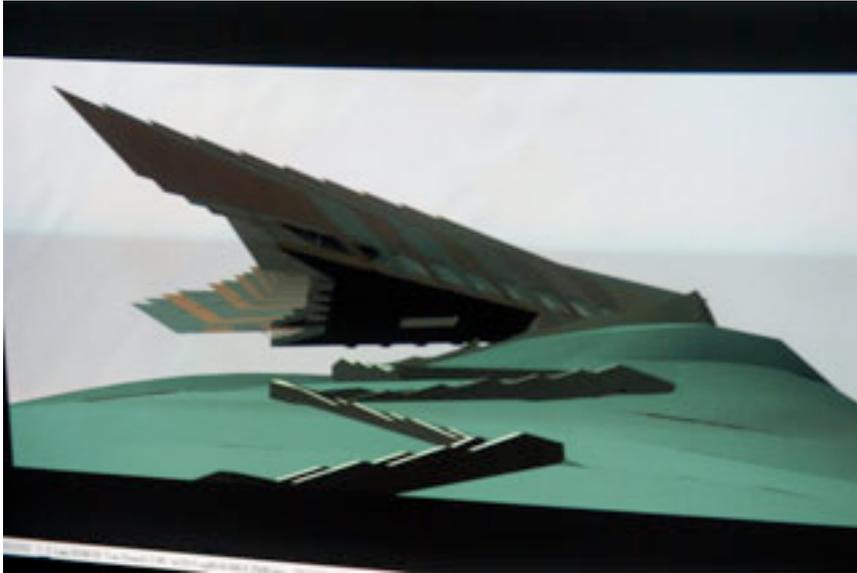
artists. The lobby group tried to implement a model from Lithuania, of course in the conditions of Moldova. For more than two years the plans and proposals go from committee to ministry of culture and back (circulating) without anything happening. The conditions for artists are still somehow based on the Soviet system, without most of the positive elements of the Soviet system. Some artists mention that they are afraid to have a legislation. Afraid that the government would control them and the cultural process again, like in Soviet times.

Because of the weak position of artists and the absence of legislation for artists, they are often used by people. They do their work, but don't get paid for it and have no ground to fight for it. Also the copyright isn't clear for many artists. For example when a painting is used for the cover of a book, the artists lose copyright when the book is published and get no money when the book is reprinted. I have met an artist, who received a book by mail from one of his regular buyers from abroad. Then he saw that one of his paintings was used for the book cover without even asking him. He said: "what can I do about it, when I complain the man will no longer buy my paintings, and that is my living". Artists are so vulnerable; because they lose their living if they stand up for themselves.

3.8 Moldavian art international

The Moldavians are people who are used to live in several countries in their life. Everyone I have spoken to has family abroad, has lived on several places or was born in another country. Because of different reasons there is a history/tradition of moving; looking for a better (economical) situation, finding a place to work or study abroad. Most artists who grew up in Soviet times have studied in Russia on art academies, conservatories or theatre schools. The young generation has their eye on other countries in connection with, not only art, studies. I was amazed by the wish and interests of students to go abroad for studying and learning foreign languages. Every art education institute I visited, students wanted to know how the art education in Holland is organized. I have given three lectures and every time I got many question; about the didactics, the way teachers coach, the freedom in subject and form etc.

Moldavian art is, just like the country almost unknown and invisible in the west. But when I asked whether artists work abroad, the answer was: they do. They work in Ukraine, Russia, Romania and Kazakhstan. It seems that it is possible for artists to work in countries the former USSR. On the other hand, Europe and the rest of the world are not accessible for most artists from Moldova. This is caused by practical problems. One of the biggest issues is the existing visa duty. For example: an artist wanted to go to a seminar in Italy for two days. First the Italians have to invite her and send her an invitation letter. Then she has to go to the Italian embassy with the invitation letter. The Italian embassy has no establishment in Moldova, but in Bucharest. Before she was able to go to Bucharest she needed a Visa for Bucharest. So with this visa she had to travel to Bucharest to get a visa for Italy. The time and money she spends on getting the Visa's was much more than the time and money she spends on getting to Italy. Sometimes, due to disabilities in the mail orders, the required invitations for visa arrive too late or don't arrive at all. It then takes long hours, and a lot of extra money to get the visa on time. With the consequence; artists don't get their visa in time to go for their residence abroad. The procedure to get a visa for Holland is also very long, difficult and expensive, you even have to go from Chisinau to Kiev (Ukraine) by bus.



A beautiful design of Nicolai Ischimji, a professor and architect. It is hard for him to exhibit his work in Moldova. But also outside Moldova. For example the entering fee for the design competitions are too high for him to pay

It happens more often that artists from abroad have expositions in Moldova than Moldavian artists have expositions abroad. This has also to do with the difficulties that exhibiting abroad has; to get the works over the border, to get a visa, to find financial resources to cover the expenses etc. The last event where Moldavian artists exhibited was in Babel in Utrecht in 2006. "Contemporary" artists, artists from 1920 till now, were shown there on the exhibition called "Eastern Neighbours."⁴⁸

It is positive that artists from abroad show their work in Moldova; in this way Moldavian artists and public get the chance to see different art forms where they are maybe not familiar with. But some artists pointed out: "the own Moldavian art shouldn't be forgotten. The artists from Moldova must have the chances to compare their work with artists abroad, see work of artists and their own work in another context. Moldavian artists should at least have the "practical" opportunity to show their work abroad".

When I held a lecture on the pedagogical University it felt unfair that I am able to visit Moldova and see the cultural heritage, but for the students to see a Van Gogh they have to turn to reproductions. And reproductions are hardly available. At the university I met a Spanish professor. She was teaching Spanish at the University but had never been in Spain, had never tasted a Spanish dish and had never even talked to someone whose native language is Spanish.

Sometimes it not only seemed that there are no possibilities for artists to go and have expositions abroad, but also the wish to do this is missing. I tried to understand the reason for this and in a conversation someone explained: the world has changed in all forms, especially for an older generation of artists, who was used to this world (the Soviet Union) and does not know how to deal with a bigger world than it was, they don't want it. There are artists who are more aware of the world outside Moldova and have through the Internet more access to this world. For them the "outside" world becomes visible. They can find places where they can apply for grants and find information about other artists and developments in other countries. Language can be a difficulty, lot of appeals and scholarship are written in English. But also this "language problem" will only take time to be solved. A lot of (young) artists welcome the idea of Moldova being a part of the European Union fully. It would give artists the possibility to "see other ways of making art, see different cultures, and develop myself". Artists who try to work international sometimes have a very vulnerable position. An artist told me that he had given a Dutch gallery 11 works for an exhibition. But

⁴⁸ www.culturalaid.com

after the exhibition he didn't get his works back, nor money from the works that he had sold. After a lot of letters and telephone calls he decided to send a letter to the major and he solved the issue; the artist got his works back but hadn't earned any money.

There are some established older artists from Moldova who have a successful career abroad. For example: Pavel Braila who participated in Documenta 11 in Kassel. I have seen in Moldova that there is more potential, mostly non visible and often not appreciated. Some artists who could, also abroad, present Moldova with high quality and very authentic work.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters I described the current situation of the art sector in Moldova and some important influential factors. I found out that answers to my questions are not unambiguous and could be a starting point for further research. I give a summary of the answer to my main question by describing risks and chances of the current art sector. To answer this question I have elaborated the sub questions in the previous chapters.

With this conclusion I come back to the question:

“What is the state and condition of the art sector in Moldova, a country in transition and development on the borders of Europe?”

Risks

- The art sector isn't regarded as an important sector for the development of Moldova. This has consequences for art education, the position of artists and art organizations. The government is not interested in art and it is an item low on the political agenda.
- The quality of the art education will decrease due to the fact that there are almost no young teachers, new materials and didactics. Moldova is leaning on the older generation and their background, but when they quite or go with pension, the knowledge in the education system disappears. The art education system is already unaffordable for the government. There could be decided to break down the state structures for art education; a long tradition with knowledge and quality in handcrafts then will be lost.
- There is little accessibility of state treasures. For example the fine art museum where most of the collection is hidden. Its existence is even threatened.
- The economy of Moldova is hardly growing with consequences like a low and unsteady income for most of the Moldavians and therefore the absence of an art market.
- Artist are in a bad position: in selling their work, in legislation and in appreciation. Their chances to go or sell abroad are low due to Visa and travel expenses.
- The chance that Moldova will become a member of the European Union is very small and Russia is trying to keep a major influence in Moldova.
- Not only the middle class, also the “intellectual” class will be missing due to emigration and a lack of appreciation. The basis for the financial and mental possibilities for art will be absent.
- The absence of a common language and a growing difference in financial situation and chances will become a problem. This will influence the art world where almost all developments and conflicts in society seem to be enlarged.
- Without long term investors there isn't a strong basis for further development of the NGO's. The NGO sector can hardly grow, has less influence in Moldova and can hardly contribute to the development of art in Moldova.

Chances

- It is exceptional for a poor country like Moldova to have such an extensive art sector and art education; the houses of culture, the secondary art schools and the art academies. These art education institutions have highly educated and talented teachers and a long tradition in teaching skills and handcrafts. There is a lot of knowledge inside these institutions which is of great value for Moldova and it also could be valuable for art institutions in foreign countries.
- The tradition of handcrafts and skills could in combination with modern media and didactics become an interesting mix between traditional and contemporary art. The existing houses of culture give the possibility to easily bring art and culture to the villages.
- When some cuts in the state art sector are made, a smaller state sector could get more attention. The education system would be less expensive, more money could be saved for the payment of teachers. The available governmental money could be distributed in a more effective way.
- The NGO sector has continued to exist in a surrounding in which it was hard to survive. This sector is a very young sector and needs time to develop itself. It has the potential to grow and could become more accessible and visible for the public. Some NGO's on their

own, others with a little help, might achieve new goals and have the opportunity to develop their organization.

- The cultural sector can contribute to the building of an identity and bind different population groups. Art as a vital contrast for materialism. The art sector in Moldova has the ability to fulfill this need.

- The Moldavian art sector has a lot of potential; talented artists, teachers, cultural workers and enthusiastic youngsters. Moldova is a hidden country with many unseen treasures and undiscovered talents. There is an optimistic view towards the future. Many people are hard working, they want to change the situation and realize the difficulties they have to face.

- The bilingualism gives inhabitants not only the possibility to focus on Russia, but also on Europe (as an art market). Moldova can become a transition region between Europe and Russia in a positive way.

Recommendations

I have focused on recommendations that I feel suit the position I have as an art student in Holland.

1 -The cooperation between Europe and Moldova can be improved and enlarged. Artists, teachers and students in both countries can learn from each other. It would be an informative experience to explore each other's qualities and specialties and have the possibility to share knowledge. Therefore the accessibility of European Visas for Moldavians should be improved. This would give the artists, teachers, students and other professionals the possibility to expose themselves abroad and take new insights and information back to Moldova. I see it as a duty for Europe to give hard working, talented individuals the chance to acquire knowledge abroad and contribute to the development of Moldova.

2 - Foreign investors interested in giving financial support to organizations/individuals in the field of art in Moldova, should invest in organizations/individuals that know Moldova from the insight and have experience with the difficulties and opportunities that the art sector in Moldova faces. The NGO sector is worth investing; they take care of the availability, development and possibilities of alternative and new forms of art.

- Long term support by foreign investors is important. Not only financial support but also "capacity building" is needed; finding financial resources (self financing and fund raising), write project descriptions, market mechanisms and management skills.

- As a foreign investor it is important to understand the tensions that can be caused by the bilingualism. Both languages should have an equal place in programs and workshops.

- An interesting and valuable area to invest in is the preservation of (traditional) handcrafts, knowledge and techniques

- Foreign professionals who want to contribute should respect existing knowledge and talents present in the art sector and use these as a starting point for cooperation.

3 - Events and projects should be announced to the public in a clear and visible way. In this way more people will have access to these activities.

- A printed publication of knowledge and notions (from projects and processes) should be published in Moldavian, English and Russian. So it will be accessible for all professionals and interested people.

- The publication of an independent art magazine and up to date schoolbooks would fulfill the enormous need.

4 - To enlarge the accessibility of the art sector for the public it is necessary that more "physical" spaces are set up, while existing "physical" places (art galleries) should be supported. Also the fine art museum can be seen as an institution it's worth investing. It could be an easy accessible place for all Moldavians and attractive for tourists.

Epilogue

My essay as a wider investigation

For me, this essay is not only a research in art and art education in Moldova. Before I even thought of art in Moldova as my subject, I knew I would write about something that would fasten my heart beat, something that would never feel as an assignment but something I really needed to do. A subject that had my highest personal interest. In Moldova I found a place and subject to do that.

It became more than just an essay. It became also a research of the possibilities and opportunities I have, as an art student in my final year, to make connections abroad. I am amazed by the opportunities and possibilities I had to find and meet the right people. By searching for literature and background information about cultural policy, art and art education in Moldova I discovered several organizations, like the Boekmanstichting and SICA, and other places where publications can be found, like the European Cultural Foundation and Lab For Culture which also in the future can provide me with information that will be useful in my work territory and for my development as an artist. At first it felt like a chaos of organizations but it soon became an adventure to discover and unravel the order of these organizations.

My visit to Moldova was not only helpful for the research for this essay, but it also was more than inspiring for my visual work. Due to the fact that I knew a lot about Moldova, I speak a little bit Russian and the connections I made, I could really experience Moldavian life. This influenced in a positive way my visual work. I was able to collect material I couldn't have collected without this research. After my stay I worked with the material and made the works "Another small world" and "Momentary". Besides these two, Moldova inspired me to make more works.

The "art sector" in Moldova is a very interesting but also a very comprehensive subject. I have written an introduction and I hope that I will have the possibility to do more research in the future. It would be interesting to take a deeper look at the possibilities of Art education in Moldova. Art education can play an important role in the development of art in Moldova. I think artists and teachers from Holland as well as from Moldova could learn from each other and contribute to the improvement of art education in both countries. It would be interesting to develop an exchange program. I found out that there is much potential in Moldova. And it would be nice if that potential could find a way outside Moldova. I would like to contribute to improvement of the connections between Moldova and Holland (Europe) and I see this essay as a first step in that direction.

Thank word

Some moments during my stay in Moldova it felt impossible for an outsider to investigate this subject; I did not know the exact key figures in the art world in Moldova, the (unofficial) history and most important the small but major nuances in opinions on, history and happenings in art and cultural life. But thanks to the welcoming people of Moldova and their willingness to help me it became possible for an "outsider" to be connected with the people working in the field of art and culture, to be connected with the country but also take the necessary distance at the same time.

I have met many talented people and experienced a very special country where it was a joy for me to stay thanks to the kindness and hospitality of the people. I feel ashamed that Moldova is well known in countries abroad for their woman traffic, corruption and crimes. Now it is time that another side of Moldova should be seen; a country that has possibilities, especially in art and culture, to grow and show its hidden talents! I would like to thank all the people in Moldova and at home who helped me in any way, intellectually, financially and technically, by doing this research. I thank you for all the inspiring conversations, the hospitality of your invitations in your homes and the time you have taken to help me. Special thanks to Irina Grabovan, who introduced me to the life in Chisinau and made me feel at home.

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Appendix 1

The questions below originated from my research questions based on literature. I made these before I went to Moldova. With the help of these questions I wanted to collect the information I needed for my research. And also bring a focus into the conversation. The first questions focus on the person I interviewed and on the organization. It is necessary to know the background of a person or organization to have the opportunity to understand its position in the art sector. Other questions focus on important aspects I wanted to talk about with the experts.

Before every meeting I specified the questions for organizations and individuals. For example the questions: How is the education at the national pedagogical university organized? What subjects/lectures do students attend? In which directions is it possible to graduate? (in a conversation with Dean Ion Vatavu of the National Pedagogical University)

Some questions originated later on in my research process, for example question 21. When I found out, through conversations, that the media is important for the developments in the art sector I wanted to know what the experts thought about this.

I used the questions as a starting point for a conversation. Many times the interview moved over from an interview to a conversation. Often people started to tell me more personal information or things they thought could be useful for my research. They also provided me with visual material to support their stories. Interviews turned out to become visits; people showed me their homes, workshops, artworks and asked me to stay for lunch or dinner. In a less formal way I became much wiser about my subject.

Example of a questionnaire

- 1 Could you tell me something about yourself, about your background? What is your education, are you an artist yourself, what kind of work do you make?
- 2 How long does the organization exist?
- 3 Why was the organization set up?
- 4 How many employees does the organization have? Are there volunteers working for the organization?
- 5 What are the goals of the organization? Does the organization have specific target groups?
- 6 What kind of events does the organization organize?
- 7 Is there a financial support for the organization (from the government, from individuals, from other countries etc.)? What is the main income of the organization?
- 8 Is the organization working through the whole country or mainly in Chisinau?
- 9 Does the organization cooperate with other organizations?
- 10 What are the major problems and difficulties the organization faces?
- 11 Do you feel the organization makes a difference?
- 12 Does the organization provide any form of education?
- 13 Does the organization work with students/artists who are educated at the academy of music theatre and fine arts or at the National Pedagogical University?
- 14 What do you think is the role of art education in the development of art and culture in Moldova?
- 16 How do you think the past influences today's situation? Do you see a difference between an older generation of artists and a younger generation?
- 17 What is the position of artists today in Moldova?
- 18 Is there a role for the European Union in the development of art and culture in Moldova?
- 19 Do you think the bilingual situation causes some difficulties for artists?
- 20 Do you have critic on the cultural policy of the government?
- 21 Could you say something about the role of the media in the development of art and culture?
- 22 Is there a progression visible for art and culture in Moldova?
- 23 Who do you think I need to talk to get some sort of full image of the cultural field in Moldova?

Appendix 2

Individuals I have spoken to

- Claudia Cracium Expert specialist in the program of the Soros foundation in co-operation with the European Cultural Foundation
- Lucia Culev Director of culture for the municipality
- Alina Didilica ARTIStudio NGO
- Philipp Dietachmair European Cultural Foundation
- Violetta Diordieva Illustrator, Visual artist
- Lilia Dragneva President of KSAK
- Irina Grabovan AoRTa, professor at the National Pedagogic University, specialist in the program of the Soros foundation in co-operation with the European Cultural Foundation

- Larisa Glinca ARTIStudio NGO
- Vitalie Glinca ARTIStudio NGO
- Julian Groger Teacher of German language on university
- Robert de Groof Consul on the Embassy of the Netherlands
- Victor Gutsu Visual artist
- Daniela Gutu Cultura Fara Frontiera NGO
- Nicolai Ischimji Visual artist, Architect, Professor in Architecture, Globeline NGO

- Elena Karacentev Visual artist
- Dumitru Marian OWH TV Studios NGO
- Victoria Miron Soros Foundation, Victoria Miron is program director of mass-media and cultural policy for the Soros Foundation Moldova.

- Mark Nozeman Dutch Photographer
- Nicolae Pojoga ARTIStudio NGO, AVI studio NGO, professor of Photography academy of Fine art

- Vyacheslav Reabcinsky Director centre for cultural policies
- Vanja Savic Cultur manager for the Union
- Ron Sluik Dutch Artist
- Victoria Tercenco Professor at the conservatorium, specialist in the program of the Soros foundation in co-operation with the European Cultural Foundation

- Vadim Tiganis President of Oberliht, student and visual artist
- Vladimir Us Curator of Oberliht NGO, teacher at art school
- Dean Ion Vatavu Dean of the Art department of the National Pedagogical University

- Mark Verlan Visual Artist
- Simion Zamsa Papyrus Studio NGO, professor at National Pedagogical university, Visual artist

- Tudor Zbarnea Director Fine arts museum, Director department painting Union of plastic artists

Besides the people above I have spoken to several students and pupils during my visits to art schools. Often people introduced me to others or I met new people at parties, openings or exhibitions. Those cannot be found in the list above but have given me interesting information. Also some artists and students who wanted to stay anonymous cannot be found in the list. I have spoken to much more people than I could have expected, but there are still so many interesting people left.

Appendix 3

List of organizations

AoRTa

AoRTa is an independent art centre, not registered by the government (not an NGO). Irina Grabovan is the founder and director of the organization and wants to stay “independent from international funding or commercial sponsors”. With AoRTa Irina Grabovan tries to make things happen that have no other place in Moldova, she supports local artists and introduces contemporary artists from all over the world to Moldova. They work in Moldova and have an exhibition in the AoRTa art gallery. To finance AoRTa several books have been published.

Oberliht

Oberliht started on the academy of fine arts and is registered as an NGO in 2007. The founders couldn't find a place where work from young people could be exhibit. Therefore they started a non physical place, a “mobile gallery”, on Internet; can be found on <http://www.oberliht.org.md>. There is an open call for young artists who can send pictures of their work to the Oberliht association. Besides a mobile gallery Oberliht has the aim to be an “information gateway used by organizations, institutions and individuals active in the cultural field in Moldova”. Besides the website, “Oberliht” organizes projects, conferences, round tables, symposiums and workshops.⁴⁹

Papyrus Studio

The Papyrus studio is founded in 1990 by Simion Zamsa. “The "Papyrus-Studio" helps in the professional development of young painters and familiarizes high-school students with painting techniques. It has organized student workshops, summer schools and experimental master-classes with a focus on manual work with paper and new techniques, hand-made books, author graphic techniques, land art and art-object. It has arranged for Moldovan art school students to attend creative summer schools in Romania.”⁵⁰ In these workshops international artists work together with students.

ARTIStudio NGO

Larisa Glinca is director of ARTIStudio NGO. ARTIStudio is founded five years ago and focuses on photography, video and animation. The founders want to encourage the youth to make visual work. “The Association seeks to develop activities in education, art, culture, cinema, information technologies. It organizes cultural-educational workshops for young people, with an emphasis on social issues. Practical goals are to create cartoon films studios for young people, to produce non-commercial films, to develop teaching and learning supports (manuals, films, CDs, etc) and to organize exhibitions, conferences, symposia and round-tables. The association has 3 arts studios with cartoon, photo and multimedia technologies.” ARTIStudio focuses on visual arts, in particular, documentaries, animation, photography, and exhibitions. The organization has a working group comprising several members and several volunteers.⁵¹

Soros Foundation

The Soros Foundation Moldova is part of the worldwide Soros foundation network. This is a non-governmental, non- profit and non-political organization which was established in 1992 by the financier and the philanthropist George Soros to promote the development of an open society in Moldova by developing and implementing a range of programs and activities that address specific areas of needs including cultural policy, education at all levels, microfinance

⁴⁹ <http://www.oberliht.org.md>

⁵⁰ www.labforculture.org

⁵¹ www.labforculture.org

of rural enterprises, legal reform and public administration, media and information, civil society, public health and European integration. The Foundation works in its priority areas through grant and operational programs. Programs are run over several years or a period necessary for improvement of the problematic situation.

All the programs run by the Soros Foundation - Moldova are publicly advertised.⁵²

KSA:K

KSA:K is a center for contemporary art in Chisinau. Its focus is on supporting a new generation of artists. The mission of the centre is: "to contribute to the accreditation of the contemporary art practices in the republic of Moldova by the encouragement of the new forms of artistic and cultural expression that would reflect the dynamics of social, political, and economical transformations of the country." They have produced a TV project *AlteArte* which was a television program that informed the public about contemporary art and promoted contemporary artists. They organize workshops, lectures and exhibitions and published an art magazine.

OWH TV studio

OWH TV studio is an NGO, founded in 1995, that promotes the values of a democratic society by using audio and video. "The OWH TV Studio team takes part in the mass media and cinema life of Moldova offering a new and original perspective of the social events." "At first, the studio was launched as a laboratory where the young TV producers had the possibility to develop their skills in the field of audio and video technologies. In time, the activities of the studio ceased to be limited to instructive projects for young producers. Thus, a new professional environment was created, which had as an imperative to create TV production of the highest quality. The OWH team intended to offer the public an alternative to the existing TV production in Republic of Moldova. The need to continue this effort became the basis on which the permanent OWH TV Studio team was created.(...) Our developing strategy includes three main directions: concept creation, production and education." Since 2000 the OWH TV studio is the organizer of the international documentary film festival "Chronograf" in Chisinau.⁵³

Boekman foundation

"The Boekman Foundation collects and disseminates knowledge and information about the arts and culture in both policy and practice. It stimulates research and the development of opinion on the production, distribution and take-up of the arts and on national and international policy on the arts and culture"⁵⁴

One of the activities of the Boekman Foundation is the extensive library in Amsterdam.

Cultura Fara Frontiera

Cultura fara Frontiera is a young organization that has been active since 2004. It has organized two concerts with Romanian artists. The main goal is to bring art/culture to the mass public and make it accessible for everyone. For example by setting up a culture café and celebrating European days on the streets of Chisinau. The organization focuses on European values: "It is time to change from USSR to Europe".

Lab for culture

"Lab for Culture is an autonomous project initiated in 2004 and hosted by the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam. Evidence showed that information on cultural cooperation across borders was difficult to access. (...) An online platform was needed to promote online participation and debate. LabforCulture.org was developed in partnership with key European cultural networks and organizations to fill this gap."⁵⁵

⁵² www.soros.md

⁵³ www.owh.md

⁵⁴ <http://www.boekman.nl/>

⁵⁵ www.labforculture.org

This website gives information on international organizations and networks. It also provides relevant documents.

European Cultural Foundation

The European cultural foundation, established in 1954, is an independent organization “which helps the arts contribute to a strong, united and diverse Europe built on shared cultural values.” The European Cultural Foundation supports “high-quality artistic activities and cultural cooperation across different countries, borders and boundaries. We advocate for culture, helping to create better conditions for the arts and campaigning to change political attitudes to culture at EU level. And we also help provide better access to cultural information.”⁵⁶

The organization focuses on Europe and neighboring regions. The European Cultural foundation is one of the few foreign organizations that is active in Moldova. In 2007 they have launched a project to better understand the role of culture and cultural actors of change in Moldova. The results of the project are written down in the rapport “Culture and change in Moldova”.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ <http://www.eurocult.org/about-us/>

⁵⁷ Rapport by the ECF, “Culture and Change in Moldova”, Yael Ohana

