

HUNT KASTNER

CIPRIAN MUREȘAN

Un beau matin aux dents fermées

01|02 – 29|03|2025

Hunt Kastner is pleased to present the first solo exhibition of a Romanian artist Ciprian Mureșan in the Czech Republic. The show offers an overview of Mureșan's conceptual practice through a curated selection of video works, drawings, books and a newly developed sculptural form.

a typically peculiar TikTok trend in 2023 revealed that most men (not all men, as some like to say, eh) are giving daily deep thoughts to ancient Rome and its fall. i seem to have missed this big revelation, manifested in an endless stream of memes in its heyday. i learned about it only recently while listening to a podcast with Edward Watts—author of highly regarded studies on the fall of the OG western empire. I was walking through some residential neighborhoods of Bucharest, not far from Ceausescu's decorated cake of a palace. it was my first time in Bucharest, so i was learning one thing after another. many to my great surprise. having a casual chat with my slowly more fine-tuned chat GPT—that little monster is gradually gathering so many insights about me, like a proper evil mastermind in disguise, if it's really planning to overthrow the humxn empire one day, it'll surely be ready to make a museum about us. we spoke about many things, GPT and i, during those walks from one studio visit to another. for instance about Ceausescu's resistance to the main line of soviet politics, like his rejection of the occupation of Czechoslovakia in '68; about the bloody revolution of '89, which might have been a soviet coup (still supposedly a contested moment in history, i guess a parallel to when T. called the jan 6th insurrection a "day of love"?).

anyway. what i'm trying to say is not only how fragile the fabric of history is but also how easy it can be to forget stories that lie outside one's perspective. good thing GPT is here to retell them all, right? back to empires. it might be a stretch to try to place Ceausescu's Romania on the list of empires—even though the ambition was for sure there. why do we obsess about empires and their falls, though? Watts and others focused on Rome argue that it serves as a parallel to the current state of the American imperial project, or the British one before that. Rome supposedly fell because it became too big, too widespread, too far from the

noble columns of the Forum Romanum to sustain a unifying identity. perhaps a lesson learned, considering that the American empire now seems to be going through its self-obsessed period. but how useful is a parallel to a historical event we know so little about? not for lack of sources but because the centuries between then and now have distorted so much, and we're painfully aware of how biased history's writings can become.

Peter Turchin, a scientist and historian, developed a method called Cliodynamics, named after an ancient Greek muse, spiced with a sentiment that change is everything (as in Octavia Butler's *Parables*). Turchin claims that by translating large-scale historical events into quantifiable inputs, you can essentially compute the course of history. he takes into account factors like population pressure, elite overproduction, and the fiscal health of states to define cycles, phases, and feedback loops.

where might he have gotten such an idea? Isaac Asimov, a rightful member of the 20th-century sci-fi literature pantheon, devoted an entire series, *Foundation*—recently adapted into an opulent interstellar soap opera by Apple TV—to the concept. his protagonist, Hari Seldon, the father of a fictional discipline of psychohistory, predicts future events based on calculations of everything that has transpired in history of the whole known galaxy, in countless solar systems with all its inhabited planets. Turchin and Asimov are hardly alone in thinking about the cyclicity of time, about learning from past mistakes, and dreaming of corrective measures. August Comte's positivist science of society, Marx's historical materialism, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*—and others before and after—tried to construct crystal balls from shards of the past to outrun our futures. what is it with our western linear dreaming of cyclicity? our endless attempts to grasp it, control it, and use it for our future gains, all the while failing miserably?

Ciprian Mureșan's approach to history is much more nuanced, i must say. his method feels closer to that of a curator, or perhaps an archivist whose patience with history itself has run out and been redirected into durational meditative performances—or maybe, more accurately, performative meditations. Ciprian selects highly particular fragments from the endless layers of history, which he first has to—using the precision of a surgeon and the bravura of a stage magician—dissect from the larger narrative body of the canonical, collectively shared telling of Romania's recent past. his hand follows images as though they were text, and text as though it were rich imagery. replication. reconstruction. renarration. recontextualization. approximation. what once seemed like an authoritative, codified version of the past suddenly becomes fluid, melting the heavy chains that held it together.

the dramatic past of Ceausescu's oppressive rule in Romania, which shaped Ciprian's upbringing, and its founding principles of soft power applied through the fine arts of the era, stops being ideological and

instead becomes a canvas for projecting possible futures. if the examples above were about grasping history to understand or even predict the future, Ciprian's practice isn't so far removed from that, either. he reanimates the past, giving it new life—an old, wrinkled nosferatu awakened through endless labor: drawing, imprinting, and replicating. it's a labor matched by the careful curation of material and the attempt to align one's personal memory with the collective one.

there is no crystal ball to look into, though. but there are thoughtful ways of relating to and reliving the past, leaving open the possibility of taking a lesson from it. it's hard to imagine that this is what most people would choose to do, especially considering the current geopolitical state of things. yet, through works like Ciprian's, we are offered an option: to learn how to be more attentive to the intricate details of what has been and to utilize them for whatever lies ahead.

jen kratochvil

Ciprian Mureșan (b. Dej, 1977) lives and works in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Mureșan exhibited in the Romanian Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennale and took part in the 17th Biennale of Sydney. His work has also been shown recently at the Vienna Secession, the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in Berlin, the Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdansk, the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, the Renaissance Society in Chicago, the Centro Cultural Montehermoso in Vitoria, the Witte de With in Rotterdam and the New Museum in New York.

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