



Gallery Guide
Contemporary Art
Museum St. Louis

March 6–
April 11, 2015



Geta Brătescu: Drawings with the Eyes Closed

A critical figure in postwar Romanian art, Geta Brătescu works in a variety of media, including collage, textiles, engraving, photography, video, and performance. Over a career spanning more than six decades, the artist has developed a sophisticated practice that draws equally from literature, theater, and everyday life to explore notions of play, seriality, and the significance of the artist's studio.

At the core of the exhibition is *Capriccio (Whims)*, a collection of blindly drawn diptychs that are part of a larger ongoing series titled *Drawings with the Eyes Closed*. Transposing abstracted, childlike images of recognizable forms (primarily human and animal) against pastel color fields, *Capriccio's* suggestive shapes function like Rorschach blots, allowing the viewer to bring his or her own associations to the work. At first seemingly similar, the individual drawings take on subtle shifts in line and form upon closer examination. These dynamic compositions are anchored by Brătescu's use of both literal and nonsensical text, which underscores the relationship between drawing and writing in her practice. By removing hand-eye coordination from her process, Brătescu expands upon the Surrealist tradition of automatic drawing and the act of eliciting images from one's inner consciousness. Her commitment to experimentation is exemplified through this act of opening up drawing to chance and underscores her celebration of the studio as an autonomous and inspirational space.



Geta Brătescu, *Capriccio* (detail), 2008. Ink on paper on tempera-painted passepartout. 23 works, 19 1/4 x 13 inches each.
Courtesy the artist; Ivan Gallery, Bucharest; and Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.



Audio Tour

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In addition to *Capricio*, the exhibition presents never-before-exhibited artist's books on loan from the National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest. Bookmaking has long been a part of Brătescu's practice, and these works bring *Capricio*'s line of inquiry into three dimensions, lending a sculptural quality to the narrative form. They were also made in the wake of the 1989 Romanian Revolution in which the country's Communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu was ousted from power and are emblematic of the increased potential for artmaking and personal expression in a newly open society.

Brătescu's objects are complemented by a presentation of *Earthcake*, a video she produced with noted Romanian cinematographer Alexandru Solomon in 1992. Described by the artist as a "filmed ritual," the video depicts Brătescu in futuristic dress as she shapes a mound of soil into a disc and earnestly eats it. Recalling elements of feminist performance and minimalist earthwork traditions from the 1960s and 1970s, *Earthcake* also demonstrates Brătescu's ability to marry sincerity with fantasy and humor in her work as she beckons us to join her in an act both bold and ridiculous.

Geta Brătescu (b. 1926, Ploiești, Romania) lives and works in Bucharest. The artist's recent solo exhibitions include *MATRIX 254*, Berkeley Art Museum (2014); *Geta Brătescu: The Artist's Studios*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, Spain (2013); and *Geta Brătescu: Intense Proximity*, La Triennale Paris (2012). Her work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions such as *artevida*, Endora Arte Produções, Rio de Janeiro (2014); *A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); *Decorum: Carpets and Tapestries by Artists*, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2013); *5th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art* (2013); *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico*, La Biennale di Venezia, Italy (2013); and *A Bigger Splash: Painting After Performance Art*, Tate Modern, London (2012). In 2008, she was awarded the title Doctor Honoris Causa from the National University of Arts, Bucharest, for her contribution to the advancement of contemporary Romanian art.

Geta Brătescu: Drawings with the Eyes Closed is organized for the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis by Kelly Shindler, Associate Curator.

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