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# AUTHORSHIP, REPRESENTATION, AND STYLE IN THE FOLK ARTISANSHIP OF 2000s ROMANIA

## Introduction

Words and images are equally inherent to anthropology and their conjunction in different enterprises, such as participant observation or the anthropology of art, is presumably a more efficient approach than placing of emphasis only on textual or visual “descriptions” of social reality. It has been argued that while the visual constantly accompanies the observational science of anthropology, a distinction should be drawn between the “anthropological relevance” and the “esthetic composition” of an ethnographic document (Wright, 1988). Such a distinction is difficult to discern in artisanship, which occurs simultaneously both as a narrative and a display of folk culture.

Artisanship is primarily part of the “human tool behavior” with “constellations of conceptual units” (Dougherty & Keller, 1982) and “the capacity of reversibility” (Wynn, 1994) favoring “the choice of best technical solutions” (Lévi-Strauss, 1966). However, since “the tool behavior is not innate” and “a tool is rarely just a tool” (Wynn, 1994), symbolism is crucial in the making of artifacts based on the “materiality” of things and beyond the “technicality” of problem-solving. Insofar as artifacts are “social things” and “embodiments of cultural codes” (Miller, 1994), symbols are “representational artifacts” with “iconicity” (“the idea of motion or spatial relationship”) and “the exploitation of likeness” as the bases of human evolution (Le Cron Foster, 1994). Here craftwork becomes artwork. According to Ingold (2000, *apud* Henare 2003: 63), artifacts and craft knowledge “come into being through the gradual unfolding of that field of forces set up through the active and sensuous engagement of practitioner and material”. Materials, therefore, are *seen* in terms of their

*potentiality*, rather than simply adjusted to functional needs. As a result, artifacts can convey “non-material” attributes, such as religious and/or esthetic (Morphy, 1994), and, in comparison with words, they rely upon “wider perceptual functions” (Miller, 1994).

The symbolic qualities of artifacts make them intrinsic to social relationships, and not only as “objects”, whose physicality is more or less exploited as “instrumental”. It is the process of “objectivation” that leads to the “identification” of persons with things (through the traditional exchange of gifts, but also the mass consumption of commodities or industrial “artifacts”) (Miller, 1994). In Henare’s words (2003: 55, 61), “[...] an object cannot *be* its meaning”, but it can be seen as a “record” that is evocative of the “manual” and “intellectual skills” of craftsmen from the past, such as “the movements of a weaver’s hands”, as “embodied in the fabric” of his or her tissue. More than the manufacture and sale of folk art “goods”, artisanship comes to be associated with the production and exchange of artifacts as “culture bearing” objects. The products are thus “communicational” in time (artifacts as “icons of the past”, “incorporations” of contemporary people and processes, and ephemeral commodities in continuous transformation) (Miller, 1994) and also in space (ethnographic meaning and – through cultural contact, diffusion, and acculturation – cross-cultural interpretive variability) (Morphy, 1994). With their diverse cultural trajectories, artifacts become increasingly questionable in terms of “value”, “function”, “significance”, and so on, as in the case of the (non)intentional nature of “art” and “art creation” outside Europe (Morphy, 1994).

What role is played by the craftsmen in the artisanship process? Can they be seen as stereotypical handworkers within the cultural fabric and peasant craftwork and artwork scene? Or, on the contrary, are artisans a kind of self-made emissaries of the ancestral crafts, folklore, and traditions they evoke and represent through their artifacts? Thomas Wynn speaks of the artisans’ “idiosyncratic knowledge” and their “idiosyncratic ways of doing things”, which contrasts with the shared technical knowledge between traditions and the community standards that “constrain the range of possible forms, sizes, decoration, and so on”; he also points out that the artisan’s choice of these standards is an “index” of the social group concerned (cf. Wynn 1994: 154-5). To the extent that a craftsman’s identity may be “constructed without its being made subservient to social institutional structures”, the notion of “style” is pertinent to artisanship

(Miller 1994: 414). Understood variously as a “formal-similarity statement” [W. Davis, 1986], “part of a set of cultural distinctions and components in the process of their reproduction” [J.A.W. Forge, 1973], or a “technique of manufacture or mark of a group identity”, and thus a “mediator between form and function, between past practice and present production” [Miller, 1994: 671]), style may reflect not only the aforementioned “idiosyncratic” mark in the artisans’ work, but also interwoven sources of folk and popular “imprinting”.

As far as artisanship can be recorded in 2000s Romania, it reveals a “tridimensional” phenomenon relevant for what usually constitutes the rubrics of “society”, “economy”, and “culture” within various socio-humanistic disciplines. Artisans have their own forms of social organizations (private craftwork associations), institutions of production and commerce (workshops and folk fairs) as well as patterns of a craft culture (including traditions, folk arts, and ethnicities). In artisanship, peasant craftsmen meet urban clients, archaic manufacturing techniques coexist with modern devices, and craft specialization is consistent with market orientation – all of these being based on, and developed from, the handmade industry and the commercial distribution of artifacts (cf. Constantin, 2003; 2007). A further interrelationship – that of craftwork-and-artwork – is significant in terms of the folk art aspects of artisanship. As will be seen, the main phases of the artisanship process – the craftsmanship (the making of artifacts) and the artisanry (the market display of artifacts) – are experienced conceptually by artisans as an enactment of authorship, representation, and style. Several cultural themes, such as folk anonymity and paternity, craft representativeness and symbolism, and style-and-esthetics in relation to stylization-and-kitsch, are recurrent both in the current ethnography of peasant crafts and the ethnographic literature on developments in artisanship in postwar Romania.

Throughout the diverse types of craft specialization in Romania today, the auctorial, representational, and stylistic issues are also to be found in craftwork and artwork. Their factuality fluctuates in accordance with historical context (for instance, paternity and market-driven stylization are more prevalent in the post-socialist world than before 1989). Similarly, handicrafts and artifacts are not invariably appropriated, represented, and “personalized” throughout the different ethnographic areas of Romania (see the local, regional, and national “scale” of craft representativeness below). Beyond any intention of “synthesizing” the complexity and variety

of artisanship to a generalizing scheme in either social, economic, and cultural terms, my hypothesis is that authorship, representation, and style probably outline (if only irregularly) the craftsmen's widespread *praxis* of acknowledging, legitimizing, enlightening their *own* attachment, contribution, and property in relation to socially-defined frameworks, such as peasantry, tradition, folk art, ethnic grouping, and nation. As this praxis makes simultaneous use of artifacts and oral accounts, they are referred to and discussed accordingly as correlative evidence of what the artisans do and say about themselves and their crafts in contemporary Romania.

### **Authorship in crafts**

In 2002-2003 and 2005-2006 I carried out two field surveys in the craftsmen's home workshops in the ethnographic areas of Maramures, Mărginimea Sibiului, Tulcea, Vâlcea, and Vrancea as well as the market network of five traditional fairs held at the Bucharest Village Museum, the Bucharest Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the Astra Museum in Sibiu, the Timisoara Museum of Banat Villages, and the Suceava Museum Complex of Bucovina (see Constantin 2003, 2007). From both the artisans' craft manufacturing and traditional fair exhibits, two themes emerge in relation to authorship in craftwork, namely: anonymity and paternity. These need to be viewed in terms of their historical contextualization; however, this does not entail any evolutionist inferences, as, for example, with artisans who, from being communal and local in the past, have today become private and national.

### **Craft anonymity**

In defining the origin and substance of their crafts, many artisans and folk art specialists evoke the indistinct and collective authorship of the "folk", "village", and "ancestors". If artisanship were to be understood only as an intact cultural heritage and not also as a variable pattern of social and economic specialization, this would deny it a historical nature in favor of properties like constancy, duration, recurrence, etc. What artisans aim for and do, and what they are expected to do, is, after all, also an accurate and pious *reproduction* of the techniques, motifs, and ideas of traditional craftwork and artwork.

Craftsmen's recourse to the anonymous authority of their work is built equally according to social, economic, and cultural categories relevant to a holistic understanding of the worldview of the contemporary peasant. Accordingly, crafts are to be interpreted in relation to facts that pertain to peasant sociality, production systems, and reflexive or representational behavior – even where included in the amorphous model of anonymity.

In social terms, anonymity is described in terms of a patriarchal “village” and “ancestors”. Such generic and prototypical “communities” of villagers and forebears are immemorial: they date to the “most ancient times” (EM, GS, SF)\*, “one upon a time” (MAP), and “somewhere in the past” (MM). “Oldness” is an attribute of the “authenticity of tradition” (AG, MP) and the making of “craft patterns and motifs” (AT, DG, IG, ND). Illiteracy (GS, MPop, NM), hard work (FM, ND), and good taste (APC, VMold) are further characteristics of such non-historicized peasantry. Ancestors are the authors of folk traditions (AF, AR, CP, DM, ER, ES, IM, MAP, MPop, NM, TB, SA, VLin, VT) and folk art (AF, AR, DG, IA, TB, VT, VLin). They may be represented in artifacts such as the masks associated with commemorative rituals (IA, PL, ȘT). The “traditional village” is populated by figures that are at the same time legendary (the tricksters “Păcală” and “Tândală”) and “technical” (“Mayor”, “Priest”, “Fiddler”, “Blacksmith”) (IM, and also AG, IB). The Church as an institution is evoked with regard to the wearing of folk costumes (MAP, MN, VA) and as a decorative model (MN).

The theme of anonymity in the peasant economy is present both in villagers' productive patterns and their openness towards the market. Examples include the cooperative institutions of *claca* (EJ, IM, VA) and *sâmbra oilor* (VA). Labor exchange between villagers is still practiced among Transylvanian weavers (AD), and “ordinary pots” are offered by LP in exchange for maize. Pastoralism is seen in relation to folk art origin (APC, SA), and weaving is taken as a decorative pattern in “naïve” painting (IM). The economic structure of these communities is reflected in artifacts like the dowry chests for daughters of different statuses, their parents being the “Notary”, the “Mayor”, the “Priest”, and the “Poor-Man” (VMold). Pottery with no ornamentation is sold for domestic use in respect of a more or less standardized “traditional cuisine” in areas like Hunedoara (VT) and Suceava (MAP). The rural traditional fairs of the past are depicted

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\* The initials within brackets refer to my informants, listed at the end of this paper.

(VMold) through details of ox-driven carts full of agricultural and animal products, alongside pottery and wood-carved tools, with loud calls to customers, and traction animals set free to graze “on the fair’s fringes”... Similar accounts are provided of more recent fairs in the countryside that take place between “four or five villages” (VL), with opportunities to exchange artifacts for cereals (GC). Artisans like TBus and ZMB still engage in the bartering of goods at the traditional fairs in cities today. “Naturalness” is the property and framework for the peasant autarchy, as expressed by the “natural handwork” (ES, SF) and “environment” as a source of inspiration (GS, MJ, VLin).

The anonymous cultural reference among many artisans is that of the “folk”, both as a traditional attribute of “artisanship”, “craftsmen”, “crafts”, “artifacts”, etc. and as an ethnic appropriation of such references. Folk costumes appear as an ethnic marker among Romanians (AR, EP, VLin) and Hungarians (AT, MDen, SF) alike. Worn at the fairs, the folk costumes represent the “identity” of ethnographic areas such as Bistrița, Gorj, and Suceva (VMold). Similarly, ethnicity is invoked when defining craft compositions or symbols, such as the “Universe of Romanian Village” (ND) and “Hungarian and Romanian rosettes” (SF). The “Hungarian shamanistic dress” is distinguished from the “Romanian *catrința*” (AT), while the weaver AN makes puppets dressed in Romanian, Hungarian, German, and Gypsy “national costumes”. Folk traditions are claimed to have been equally retained among Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans (VKR). Given the craftsmen’s “folk roots”, their artwork cannot be “original” (ZMB). Instead, “folk art is representative for us, as a nation” (AN), which therefore legitimizes the use of Romanian national flag attached to artifacts (FM, MM, VB).

The social, economic, and cultural contextualization of craft anonymity is particularly relevant to a certain “ethno-historical” understanding of how peasant traditions are made, reflected upon, and enacted. As can be seen from the above, the artisans’ discourse on a collectively-shared and generally-shaping source of their knowledge and work is coherent in that it forms from the “village”, “local economy”, and “folk” interrelated elements of a “traditional” pattern of civilization. However, such narrative artisanship is not only evocative or nostalgic: it is also exemplary and transformative among contemporary peasant communities, something that appears to be contradictory when considered in concert with the

claims of an unaltered “reproduction” of the craftsmen’s handwork (AF, AN, DM, EP, FC, IG, MD, MJ, ND, NM, SA, TB, VL...)

Indeed, many artisans would also argue in favor of their “creative” or “innovative” contribution to the crafts and artifacts they otherwise safeguard from outside influence (AT, IBen, FC, I & EM, LP, MPop, ND, TR, TE, SF, VKR, VL). According to APC, “I want to be a creator, and not only a craft worker!” Similarly, VLin believes that “you cannot be a [folk] creator unless you leave your imprint on...” Even in light of such statements, craftsmen like GV and IP maintain that tradition retains its entirety, even where changes occur *to* the crafts’ ancestral techniques or decoration. Thus, MM contends she only “combines” traditional motifs in weaving, as do DM in respect of woodcarving and VKR in respect of lace, with no divergent evolutions in the performance of their crafts. According to SA, what can be changed (in woodcarving) is only the ‘form’ of an artifact, whereas the ‘representation’, or content, remains the same. Similarly, FC is able ‘to create’ certain ceramic ‘forms’, which he ‘adapts’ to a ‘[traditional] system’. When the change to the artwork comes from outside, it is denounced as an “unauthorized copy” or “theft” of original models or artifacts (AN, NM, VLin), or simply denigrated as “kitsch” (FC, MPop, VMold).

The idea that one’s *traditional* motifs and skills can be unfairly alienated is important in that it suggests the existence and legitimacy of authorship *in anonymity*. In other words, the anonymous origin of a craft or artifact does not mean they are nobody’s, or that they could be appropriated and reclaimed under any conditions. As a result, ancestry, autarchy, and ethnicity are felt to be one’s vague but nonetheless effective endowment within one’s ascribed kin and ethnic identity and achieved economic status. Birth and native enculturation are processes that provide this localized and ‘communitarian’ sense of property, to the extent that outside or foreign affiliation cannot be referred to in terms of a common line of descent, working interdependence, and national membership.

Since ‘authoritative anonymity’ in craftwork is not only retrospective but also invoked as a kind of collective energy in action, artisans reiterate their rights within folk culture through the concept of authenticity (AN, EP, IG, IM, NM, VLin). According to MPop, authenticity as far as artifacts are concerned is a matter of the authenticity of the decorative motifs. Personal contribution to tradition should not affect the ‘authentic’ nucleus of one’s craft (IG, VL), which is to recognize ‘the power of authenticity’ when

facing competition (IA). Peasantry was 'more authentic' in the past than today (ND), and the affinity of the 'authentic' with the 'ancient tradition' is accompanied by the equation between 'authenticity, good taste, and the traditional' (MP).

It is through this legitimizing attitude that artisans develop local patriotism, another form of plural self-identification with a given ethnographic area or community. Examples thereof are given by the regions of Valea Someșului (VLin), Valea Cosăului (VB), Valea Hârțibaciului (VKR), and the villages of Vlădești-Vâlcea (EP), Slătioara-Suceava (EU), Corund-Harghita (AF, MDen); each of these is promoted as a center of weaving (VLin), hat making (VB), lace work (VKR), pottery (AF, EP, MDen), and egg painting (EU). According to I & ȘB, the craft of making wooden gates is "innate to the blood of [the people from the area of] Maramureș". Excellence is claimed for the native area, the place with "the most beautiful folk costumes in the country" (VLin) and "the most resistant clay in the country" (EP). According to the potter FC, "90%" of his pottery decoration is still in use in the Bukovina area.

There are two other relevant notions in the attempt to analyze anonymity in artisanship. The first of these stems from the production of artifacts, as a materiality of the craftsmen's work. Here artisans are often concerned with their "handwork" as a mark of local tradition or folk art (AG, AP, ES, EV, MD, MJ, MN, VA, VKR). Handwork also forms the basis of the "uniqueness" of the artisan's craft (DM, ZMB). "My [weaving] artifacts are unique: you will not find two the same!" (MM). Similarly, the potter FC says he makes small crosses of "the same type, though not identical". The bone carver SF is convinced that each of his artifacts expresses a different "idea", for each is "unique". According to ND, "only unique or limited edition artifacts are made in folk art, as an authentic tradition".

Another notion of an "anonymous" hue is the self-referential characterization among artisans in terms of the "guild" (DC, IM). Some of them describe their professional membership of the craftsmen's group using the kin-inspired term of "family" (SB, VKR). "We meet [at the fair] our 'kinsmen' and 'brothers' [i.e. other artisans]" (IA). According to other accounts (OD, ZMB), younger artisans are indebted to their elder counterparts for the learning of their craft. The most frequent image associated with the collective definition of artisans is that of "collegiality" and even "collaboration" at fairs (DG, ND, TE, VL). As MR makes clear,

"I am happy to exchange [with other craftsmen] ideas, craft models, and impressions".

Authenticity and local patriotism are core values in the artisanship process. They are referred to and played with not as abstract issues in the rhetoric of the craftwork market. In claiming that the making of their artifacts conforms to a certain ethnographic pattern, craftsmen implicitly rely upon a basic auctorial dimension – even though this is 'anonymous'. Equally, the gift of "uniqueness" and guild awareness are major qualities of the artisans' work and their professional membership in a manner which is not different but consubstantial with the traditional "ancestry", "autarchy", and "folk" authority in craftsmanship.

### **Craft paternity**

Paternity in craftwork is by definition opposed to the theme of "anonymity" in craftsmen's accounts of their traditions and folk art. We might then ask how the claim of anonymity can remain plausible, given that, in terms of labor legislation, artisans are required to authenticate their professional status, while also dealing with competition in the economic sphere, all within the same "traditional" society. Folk art's "primeval" ancestry becomes particularly problematic when the commoditized production of artisanry challenges the very "artistic" quality of the peasant artifacts.

Here we are interested in the manner in which today's craftsmen conceptualize the opposition of anonymity vs. paternity in artisanship. My assumption is that this divergence, while occurring in the artisans' narrative and ethnographic arguments and evidence, is not related to a given gap between the philosophy and practice of craftwork. In what follows, I make an assessment of the above references to anonymity by the craftsmen, in order to provide a background for the current manifestation of craftsmanship and artisanry.

As seen earlier, many artisans broadly relate their proficiency in craftwork and artwork to social authorities like the "village" and "ancestors". Authenticity in craftsmanship is ineluctably conditioned by the intergenerational transmission of traditional patterns existing since time immemorial. What such craftsmen have done was to respect devoutly, accurately reproduce, and humbly represent their original, pure, and specific "folk".

However, information also exists on the artisans' kin-based division of labor in craftsmanship and artisanry (APC, AT, CP, DM, FC, and GS). Examples of family associations and firms today include the "Art-Ceramic SRL" (EP, Vlădești-Vâlcea), the "Association of the [Child] Little Great Artisans" (EU, Slătioara-Suceava), the "Pascaniuc Family Association" (MAP, Marginea-Suceava), etc. As if artisans somehow distinguished themselves from amid the communal and bucolic picture of an ideal village and a legendary ancestry, they integrate their craft industry with private networks of knowledge and practice. It can be said that firms and the family involvement in the artisanship process are equally relevant for the craftsmen's detachment from the informal framework (if still in existence) of the village population.

Another leitmotif in the craft anonymity discourse is that of economic order. Artisans sometimes describe their work in terms associated with the peasant autarchy. Here, communitarian and cooperative patterns are evoked, such as the *claca*, as well as traditional accessories and tools found in households still self-contained in a subsistence economy. Where the market is still mentioned, it takes the localized and countrified form of traditional fairs that in fact represent a mixture of bartering, rites of passage, and folklore.

What the ethnography of contemporary craftwork and artwork in Romania makes clear is the market involvement of artisanship beyond village boundaries. Artisans sign their artifacts or apply their stamps as trademarks or monograms (AR, IB, VMold). Among potters like FC, MDen, and OD, trademarks include the artisan's name and place of origin. The violinmaker DC has the following trademark: "Folk Artisan DC, Bihor county, 2005"; he also uses the title "Master D". EU, SA, and VKR apply to their artifacts a label containing their personal information and trademarks. A majority of craftsmen use business cards (EU, FM, MDen, VMold, ZMB...).

In cultural terms, anonymity in artisanship is expressed through "folk" or "ethnos". Traditions, arts, crafts, and fairs are all placed under the legitimizing and ineffable title of the artisans' "ethnic" or "national" membership and identity. Production, representation, and distribution of artifacts originate equally from, belong to, and are based on a "folk" or native heritage and value system.

Some artisans today are convinced that their craftsmanship is a gift given to them by God as *individuals* (DG, EV, NM, TBUS). Craftwork also

involves individual technical innovations (ND, ȘC) or personalized brands such as “The Colibaba Ceramics” (FC). A number of craftsmen sign their work by hand (CP, DM, EM, FB, ND, and SF). In fact, craftsmen in these situations simply display their own identities and interests on behalf of “folk culture” – beyond their established ethnic membership. Artisanry is thus a kind of interplay with ethnicity and not a reclusive marker within it.

Private associations, trademarks, and signed artwork are cognate elements of a general change in the productive, distributive, and representational patterns of craftsmanship and artisanry. Whereas, as seen earlier, there is place for some transformative processes *within* the folk traditions or arts (which artisans allow in terms of “innovation” and “creativity”), the current inconsistency between the value orientation of anonymity and that of paternity appears to reflect an auctorial ‘crisis’ within the peasant self-referential system. This leads to the question: “Why do artisans usually have such contrasting ideas in their discourse and praxis as to what their craft authority is or should be?” Sometimes, they argue, the signing of artifacts is not practiced in their given craft tradition or ancestry (MPop, SB, VT). There are, however, some artisans who complain of the lack of a legal framework in Romania in what regards the notion of “copyright” in artisanry (AN, VL).

Private authorship pursues and reflects the process of legitimization and symbolic endowment of artisanry itself, this time with a focus on the nuclear family. Artisans are thus interested not only in the production and distribution of their artifacts, but also in the public acknowledgement of who they are and what they make – as *individuals*. As such, paternity basically restores (after the socialist indistinctiveness of peasantry) the meaning of ownership and control among artisans. Given the disconnection of artisanry in terms of uniformity under socialism, the contrastive reference for the craftsmen’s auctorial ethos is probably no longer that of “traditional” or “immemorial” anonymity, but, in particular, that of the cooperatives, the state-owned folk art outlets, and the ideology-laden festivals of the pre-1989 “ancient regime”.

Craftsmen in 2000s Romania lay claim to individual originality in various crafts such as bone carving (SF), woodcarving (IMold, SA), and weaving (M). Originality appears as a quality that is somehow problematic for craft anonymity and its collectively-shared ‘folk’ values. When AG speaks of her “original ideas” (in Maize leaf weaving), she is setting “her” folk art characters apart from the ancestral collective heritage of her local

ethnographic area (Suceava). Similarly, the woodcarver IB claims he is “seeking to be original and avoid influences [in craft]”. As for the meaning of TBus’ “original commodity” (of wind instruments), this is no longer tradition-related, but rather trademarked.

With their “homemade” originality and the crafts they reclaim based on individual premises, artisans express themselves in terms of a national ethos. That is, peasant crafts are not only to be viewed from the level of the artisan’s traditional countryside, but the artisan will place and articulate his or her artwork from the perspective of a nationally-inspired attachment. Craftsmen like AN, FC, IP, MP, VMold no longer rely solely on their traditional patterns, but also on a kind of “comparative artisanship” based on the collections of the national ethnographic museums. Other artisans (IG, MP, PL, TBus, ZMB) have adapted themselves to the craft traditions of the new national areas in which they now live after marriage. Last but not least, some artisans become representatives of “Romanian folk art” at international festivals and exhibitions, such as those in Washington (IA, ND, PC, TBâr, VLin), Munich (FC), and Paris (MPop, TBus), etc.

The following two themes in artisanship today, namely craftsmen’s interest in the serial production of “art” goods and competition, are heuristic in the analysis of craft paternity. Many artisans argue that their craftwork is not compatible with the factory-made variety of one “commodity” or another (IB, MR, SF). ND correlates the mass production of artifacts with the socialist system of craft cooperatives. However, more frequent accounts (APC, AR, IMold, VM) are critical of the “mode” or “invasion” of plastics in the post-socialist markets. Above all, artisans are concerned with the fundamental opposition between what “[folk] art” is and what should not become “mass production artwork” (FC, IM, NM). Opposition to the wholesale of craftwork (EP, GI, ND, PC) can be seen as a reflection of this “traditional” reticence. On the other hand, wholesale is becoming increasingly common at traditional fairs (AF, CP, DM, ES, IA, MM, MP).

Competition is sometimes praised for being “stimulating” in craftwork (IP, MP); it is also seen as ineffective, given the “artistic” engagement of artisans (MPop). More frequently, it is considered to be “unfair” (AN, OD, VLin), owing to those who “steal” or copy the craftsmen’s working models or ideas. The potter EP complains that unfair competition leads to a renunciation of traditional approaches in favor of commercial interests. Moreover, competition appears to be driven by people who, in fact, “do not

produce quality work” (DG), but instead “set lower prices” (AT), or trade artifacts made by “real” artisans (VB). Some unfair practice also occurs when older artisans deny entry to the market to their younger counterparts (SM) or refuse to teach their crafts to apprentices (EU).

Originality and the national ethos can be seen as “added values” in artisanship. As described elsewhere (Constantin, 2007), they are associated with the phase of artisanship involving the market transformation of “artifacts” into folk-art “goods”. Mass production and competition – seen and experienced ambiguously by artisans – are phenomena that are hard to accept in the world of traditional and folk art, but which are the consequence of commercialization in the world of craftwork. When artisans claim they are original and nationally-referential, they place their work in the paternity register of post-socialist craftwork and artwork – just as they cope with the mass production and competitive requirements of the market.

### **Representation in the crafts**

Within and between craft production and distribution, representation plays a crucial role in artisanship. It mainly consists of two dimensions, namely representativeness and symbolism. The idea of representativeness is related to what artisans think and express about themselves in terms of traditional, ethnic, and national assignment, involvement, “mission” etc. Symbolism is here understood to mean the imagery, visual themes and compositions, worldviews – all of which bear implicit or explicit meanings of artisanship as a pattern of culture. As will be seen, representation in craftwork is as important as content in relation to form – irrespective of the “technical” (= workshop) or “commercial” (= traditional fair) forms that shape and frame the making and sale of artifacts.

#### **Craft representativeness**

Craftsmen are basically concerned with issues of private authorship and personal style, and they regularly present their work and products as being referential for a given ethnographic area, ethnic group, and a national set of values. In other words, artisans are not only individual creators, lost in unknown and unfamiliar socio-cultural contexts, just as

their crafts and artifacts are not imponderable or exotic habits and “effects”. Representativeness, then, seems to connote more than “a quest for identity” – since the claim to be “representative” cannot be limited to one’s name and address, nor can it be established after a fleeting introduction to the “folk art” of a given artisan. In order to establish whether or not an artisan or artifact is *representative* of someone or something, we must allow an equation to be drawn between the individual, as a professional craftsman, and a given (possible) craft specialization based on regional, folk, and national criteria.

In reconstructing an image of “the Romanian peasant of one hundred years ago”, the potter ND makes clay figures dressed in fur caps and laced moccasins that are “more authentic” than the today’s peasants with their “industrial boots and overalls”. However authentic, these artifacts are hard to contextualize: Are they “Romanian”, or also/only “Moldavian” (ND’s native village is Țibănești-Iași), and therefore irrelevant for a given ethnic minority in Romania? On the other hand, the weaver AN says she makes on demand costumes specific to “Hungarians”, “Germans”, and “Gypsies”, which, in the absence of any other information, raises questions as to the very ethnic “specificity” of such “folk” items. Similarly vague, the woodcarver APC’s statement that he and his artifacts are from “The Wooden Country” (in this case, Maramureș) calls for an assessment of APC’s wooden masks and holy bread patterns in terms of how “Maramureșan” they are and how little (if at all) APC differs from woodcarvers from other areas of Romania (for instance, Vrancea, another “wooden country”).

It follows that in respect of representativeness, a common claim in craftwork, there is a need for more evidence to support the hypothetical correlation between an artisan’s artwork and his or her tradition. In the case of some craftsmen (DM, FM, IP, MP, VMold...) openly committed to “research” in museums and in keeping with published albums, their tendency to generalize diverse craft production (woodcarving, pottery, weaving...) to the level of “national” insignia is equally effective. As a supplementary expression of authenticity and originality, representativeness is thought to provide new arguments in support of “authentic” artisanship.

According to the potter EP, he “represents the white ceramics of Vlădești”. And EP does indeed exhibit a variety of vessels made of white clay from his village, Vlădești-Vâlcea. To the extent that his white pottery

is only identifiable with the Vlădești area, we can agree with EP as to his craft representativeness. Likewise, when the weaver MJ describes the “rhombus shape with 36 embroidery points” as being defining of her craft as well as the embroidery of the Timiș area, she implicitly speaks of her representative folk art. Still, the woodcarver PL knows that the folk masks he makes are the same as the masks used in the past during the funeral ritual of “Chipăruș” in his village, Nerej-Vrancea; at the Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest and the Astra Museum in Sibiu, PL is in fact representing a craft that originated in his native countryside.

In other situations, representativeness emerges as an explicit marker of difference from the craftwork of other traditions. The weaver IG (of Moldavian origin) moved after marriage to the town of Breaza (Northern Wallachia); as a result, she uses embroidery models (such as the “cock’s comb” sewn on local embroidered blouses) specific to the Breaza area, as opposed to Moldavian weaving. IA says the masks he makes are only “woolen-and-sheepskin”, or made from “thick cloth”, since the wooden masks “are not of the Neamț tradition” (IA’s lives in the county of Neamț in Moldavia). Unlike the wooden scoops of Transylvania, the same type of artifact is first made in clay and then “molded” in wood and carved by TR (Nerej-Vrancea). According to VL, the *catruna* (in Dobrogea) and the *tâlb* (in Oltenia), namely the wind instruments made from pumpkins, are different in that the *tâlb* is painted, while the *catruna* (VL’s artifact) is “natural”.

Of all the folk artifacts, the ethnographic or “national” costumes are probably seen most often in terms of their representativeness or link to the craftsmen’s home areas. Thus the weaver AN wears a black peasant skirt, the *catrința*, which is sewn with “beads or a black wire”. AN’s *catrința* is typical of the Cluj area, just as the “hat with a peacock tail” is characteristic of the Bistrița area (VLin). The Hungarian bulrush weaver AT explains that her costume from Zănești (Mureș) is representative of the Szekler minority as well as the social status of an unmarried girl, which “can be read in the [costume’s] velvet ribbons”.

Artisans also wear folk costumes that do not belong to the regions they come from. Has representativeness been eradicated here? To deal with this risk, the craftsmen invoke their personal “affinity” for the traditions in which their costumes were made. At the Village Museum, the potter OD wears a costume from Botiza-Maramureș; her argument is that she, although she lives in Bucharest, “recognizes herself in the Maramureșan

people and their works"! Similar "attachments" are found with the wind instrument maker VL (who, although he comes from Tulcea, at the fair from Suceava wears a *sarica* [sheepskin coat] from Maramureş), and the weaver MP, resident in Bucharest, who at the Village Museum wears a costume from Câmpulung-Muscel.

We might ask whether national representativeness in craftwork is based on such traditional and ethnic grounds. The woodcarver VMold believes that "we should be aware that artifacts represent our national identity!" A number of artisans (AN, FM, VB) make use of the Romanian national colors to accompany artifacts such as belts, hats, and puppets that go with folk costumes. One of the weaver EV's artifacts made of maize leaves represents the "Map of the Republic of Moldova" (EV's home country). To TBus, the array of artisans wearing their regional folk costumes at the Village Museum in Bucharest provides "the true image of Romania". Nonetheless, such "visions" are (as will be shown) more rooted in historical craft representations of Romania's past than in "folk" developments, from ethno-regional cultures to national awareness.

When participating in international folk festivals, craftsmen like DG, IG, ZMB see themselves as "ambassadors" for Romania. Once again, albeit on a politicized level, artisanship has the cultural mission of "representing" groups and identities – as if it were resorted to not only as an ethnographic resource to be preserved, but also as a national means of exchange. While the Romanian artisan APC travels to countries like the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and Serbia in order "to contribute a little to the continuity of culture and tradition of Romanians living beyond our national borders", the Hungarian SF brings his artifacts to Budapest and is visited by Hungarian tourists from Slovakia.

CB (director of the Astra Museum) speaks of artisans and their crafts as a "living heritage", able "to revive" the folk culture museums and even the folklore of some villages in Transylvania, as in the case of the ethnographic houses rebuilt in the Astra Museum, with the participation of the peasant communities concerned. Another case of "living representativeness" is given by artisans who perform their crafts in museum workshops, such as woodcarving (APC, the Timișoara Museum), pottery (CP, the Brașov Museum, and FC, the Rădăuți Museum) and the making of wind instruments (TBus, the Râmnicu-Vâlcea Museum). Such instances of "cultural revitalization" and their degree of representativeness also have the benefit of public validation. The lacer VKR says that a Saxon woman

from Southern Transylvania who had since emigrated once received an order for a piece of Saxon clothing, which her client planned to wear in Germany. According to the potter CP, Romanians living in Austria began to cry when they saw the ceramic pieces being sold by CP's wife: the vessels, in their words, were made of "Romanian clay".

In respect of a given person's tradition, native group, and citizenship, representativeness in artisanship is a matter of the successive convertibility of that person's given condition (i.e. the ancestral transmission of a craft) into further "achievements" (i.e. the craft specialization via ethnic or national networks of production and distribution). However, such "convertibility" does not only imply the artisans' choice of profession, it is also the result of the cultural policy of the museums. According to CB, the Astra Museum in Sibiu invites annually a number of 100 peasants from each of Romania's historical provinces (Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia), as well as 100 peasants from the Romanians living in neighboring countries: in the museum, these people perform craft work, folk songs and dances, and attend church and go to the inn – just as they do as part of their daily village lives! Similarly, the Museum Complex of Suceava and Bucovina plays host on a weekly basis to folklore shows by ethnic minorities (on Saturday) and Romanians (on Sunday) (CEU). Nationality (in Sibiu) and ethnicity (in Suceava) are thus equally "exhibitive" – in that from case to case "tradition" takes on various "forms" and "scales" of representativeness. From this perspective, being representative of the craft tradition of a village is obviously the same thing as being representative of the artisanship within a given ethnic group and national membership. That is, artisans are expected to prove their belonging to the type of folk art they claim to have been initiated in, irrespective of the "cultural stage" on which they exhibit their artifacts. Some museums collect those artifacts that represent the craftsmen as individual authors (MPop, EV) or as a "family style" (I & EM). Craft representativeness can therefore be reduced to a person's *traceable* interrelationship with the source and the ambiance of his or her craftwork. Nonetheless, it is entirely possible that artisans do not always agree with *simultaneous* and *homogenous* connections to tradition, "folk", and nationhood. Some craftsmen (the violin-maker DC, the potter OD, the ceramist ȘC) claim to have "invented" or refined their crafts, which, while in keeping with their "national" openness, are clearly described as being different from local traditions of musical instrument making or pottery. Conversely, when the artisan TP says "the Maramureșans harder

working [in the crafts] than the people from Banat or Moldavia”, he perhaps becomes “representative” of excellence in his regional branch of woodcarving, but no longer of a national (if any) ethics of artisanship. Another particular case, that of VKR, reveals a bifurcation between this craftswoman’s national identity (Romanian) and the Saxon (German) tradition of her lace craft.

Given the cultural variability of artisanship as a whole, craft representativeness is experienced both “in accordance with” and “in contrast to”. In dealing with several socio-cultural references (in terms of origin and affiliation in the case of the artisans; partnership and destination in the case of their crafts), artisans cannot perceive and approach them from a unique and immutable standpoint. As a matter of fact, the craftsmen are representative or enjoy such recognition as a continual positioning of themselves and their work, which leads to a *negotiated interpretation* of handicrafts and artifacts within one’s native group, as well as in relation to museums and customers. To the extent that many such “interpreters” agree upon a representative attribute of one artisan or another, folk tradition, craft centers, ethnic influence on artifacts, and national significance in artisanship, each is worthy of a higher level of representativeness.

### **Craft symbolism**

As outlined above, symbolism in artisanship is accounted for by the themes or topics of the craft representations as such. The craftsmen’s expertise consists firstly in a laborious effort of procurement of the resources required, which also includes the storage and treatment of raw materials, over periods ranging from a few months (pottery) to several years (woodcarving), in order to make them suitable for further craftwork (see Constantin 2003: 81). Beginning with this very elementary phase, artisans must imagine or somehow prefigure their would-be artifacts. The woodcarver TR says he can “see” in advance the shape of artifacts, like wooden gates or items of traditional furniture. According to other craftsmen, “I keep in mind everything I make!” (violin maker DC), and “The drawings I make are like the ideas I have!” (bone carver SF). Beyond such *statu nascendi* in the making of artifacts, we are dealing here with the artisans’ visual productions, or the content of their decoration.

As the craft representations are generally seen as ornamental, they are also relevant for the discussion about the “utilitarian and/or decorative”

purposes of artifacts. The woodcarver MPop broadly acknowledges the “Romanian peasants’ blending of functionality and decoration”. According to another woodcarver, VMold, “What the Romanian peasants make is for practical use, with no claims to ‘art’; yet they do this with taste, meaning, and [a sense of] proportion...” However, ZMB believes that “in folk art, form and utility precede the decorative aspect, since the [woodcarving] cuts do not always convey significance...” In the words of the icon painter FB, “When a given [peasant-made] object is recognized as being of value, it enters the circuit of folk culture; [in time] it will be appreciated just for the person who made it...” Given these points of view, we note the artisans’ need to trace the process through which objects that were previously used to perform presumably non-artistic tasks in peasant households (e.g. wooden spoons or dowry chests) became “artifacts” in the eyes of strangers such as tourists. In doing so, and in relation to their own folk trade experience, the craftsmen conceptualize an evolution beginning with the indistinctness of art from other “functions” of peasant life, continuing with the peasants’ “taste” and “significance”, and ending with the “circuit” of peasant traditions as “ideas”. In this process, artisans play a creative and representational role. Taking into account the rich variety of craft symbolism, we can speak of “types” or “repertories” of representations, including historical, religious, mythic-ritual, social, and literary symbols. Another series of representations, which can be related to some of the mentioned repertories, consists of orders from the artisans’ clients. As will be seen, the different types of symbols in craftwork are not mutually exclusive, but can interrelate with each other in compositions that are more or less coherent with the rest of the artwork of a given artisan. Hence, it is accurate to present the symbolism that artisans apply to their crafts both as repertories and compositions of images.

*Historical symbols* are used in order to represent personalities and events from Romania’s past. When artisans like the potters EP, IP, and OD speak of the “Neolithic [Cucuteni culture]”, “Dacian”, and “Roman” ceramic forms that “precede” or “inspire” their own pottery, their knowledge becomes relevant to the manner in which national history can nourish craft symbolism in Romania. Representations such as the “[Maramureșan] outlaw Pinteia the Brave” (woodcarving, PG) and the “[Moldavian] prince Stephen the Great” (basketry, VM) are even more explicit in their glorification of various historical figures from Romania’s medieval past (despite a high degree of similarity with the portrait of [the

Wallachian] prince Vlad Țepeș, the woodcarver IB does not acknowledge that one of his “statues” bears this meaning). On the contrary, the ceramist ND relates his composition “Barefoot Peasants” to the more recent experience of Russian policy of denationalization in Bessarabia. To contextualize these symbols, it should be noted that the artisans VM and ND, as well as IB, are all Moldavians. The representations of these craftsmen, together with those of PG, deal openly with themes considered expressive of the historical destiny of their home provinces – Moldavia and Transylvania, respectively – before they became part of modern Romania. On the other hand, the historical perspective of EP and OD (both resident in Wallachia) is less indebted to the events that led to the creation of the modern Romanian state, for their focus is on a prestigious ancestry of their craft. And yet, both for the Moldavian and Wallachian artisans, history is selected precisely to provide “icons” that are significant in terms of a regional emphasis or craft legitimization, in *contemporary* artisanship.

*Religious symbols* stand for what the craftsmen regard as essential to Christianity; the themes approached are claimed to be in accordance with representational canons of Orthodoxy. In explaining his craft, the icon painter NM says that a prayer to the saint to be represented should be known, and that the artisan is also expected to say his own prayer. When he adds a floral décor to the “Last Supper” icon, NM argues this is related to “the Garden of Gethsemane”, which therefore implies a correct following of the original model. Such traditional kinship with evangelic sources (in the “peasant-naïve” tradition of the Nicula icon painting center in Transylvania) is probably one of the reasons for the dissemination of several copies of NM’s “Saint George” icon in France. The potter FC reproduces on his clay plates several holy figures from the Bible, including the “Saints Constantine and Helen”, “Saints Peter and Paul”, “Saint Elijah”, “Saint Nicholas”, as well as compositions such as the “Birth of Jesus” and the “Baptism of Jesus”. To FC, however, the ceramic representation of the “Last Supper” is intended for the “connoisseurs”; since the work this requires lasts a whole day, a long time in terms of his craft, FC cannot afford to make many such artifacts. “Empathy with the public” is an effect that the craftsmen consequently aim to achieve with their artwork. According to the icon painter EM, in the case of an icon like “Jesus’ Prayer”, “it is the image itself that calls for the reciting of a prayer and the contemplation of divinity”. Another icon painter, SB, speaks of the “clearness and noblesse of the icons made by [her] child apprentices,

something no longer possible with people aged over 25". Devotion to one's own canonic tradition is a common feature of the religious symbolism among all the aforementioned artisans, irrespective of their location (Alba, in Transylvania, NM; Rădăuți-Bucovina, FC; Bucharest, SB). Nonetheless, the icon and egg painter FB (Rădăuți-Bucovina) discusses the idea that "the [thematic] repeatability in Orthodox iconography does not impede the painter from developing his artistic personality"; as a result, FB (of Orthodox faith) feels free to paint ostrich eggs with the "Holy Virgin" in a Catholic manner; he has also exhibited Orthodox icons in a Catholic church in Paris.

*Mythic-ritual symbols* are primarily part of a cultural heritage that the craftsmen take from their ethnographic traditions. Representations like the "Dance of the Old Men" (with the use of masks made by IA) and "Carnival Masks" (AT) are – according to their authors – rooted in the folk traditions held around the winter solstice and the spring equinox in the areas of Neamț and Mureș, respectively. Likewise, the woodcarver DG places the "Fantastic Bird" (which he, "the sole of the country", still makes) within the mythology of his native area of Argeș. In ȘT's pottery ornamentation, the "Bear" motif is associated with the "youngsters' [physical] strength", while the "Snake" is defined as an indication of a young family's "long marriage". Alongside such more or less "indigenous" themes, artisans also give shape to personal fantasies, which of course may equally be associated with creativity in artisanship. One of IA's masks – the "Man with Four Faces" aka the "Evil Man" – is no longer linked to peasant folklore or ritual, but, like other examples of IA's artifacts, expresses his "vision". Similarly, although he usually depicts "village people", including "The Priest", "The Bell Ringer", and "The Fiddler", the painter IM provides an astronomic image of the "rites of passage" through his "Baptism on the Moon" and "Wedding on the Moon". "Oak Tree Branch with Bananas" is an "invented" motif in VBâr's wooden gate carving. Artisans also display their "non-traditional" or hybrid compositions at folk festivals abroad. The woodcarver MPop recalls how, in France, she arranged – to the "delight" of her visitors – a number of 12 wooden spoons in the shape of a sun on an oak table! At the Smithsonian Festival in Washington (1999), the ceramist ND made a clay figure of an African American man dressed in a traditional Romanian costume! It should be noted that the mythic-ritual and fantasy symbols do not necessarily contradict each other. As seen above, the craftsmen often approach the two symbolic registers as a kind of right

to innovate. They appear to “distill” elements taken from other crafts, in order to reflect and assimilate ideas, techniques, knowledge, and fashions that are or become part of their contemporary popular culture.

*Social symbols* form part of the representational dimension of artisanship as an intentionally “realistic” mode of identification with an individualized or generic peasantry. According to the ceramist ND, who generally depicts “Romanian peasants from the hearth of their villages”, his clay figures have their hands “lengthened because of work” and faces “furrowed by sun and transpiration”; “in the past as well as today”, as he points out, “peasants were/are weighed down by work”. The social scenes depicted in craftwork still evoke the traditional rural way of life, such as in “The Villagers’ Folkloric Working Group” (*Claca* by IM), “The Round Dance” (*Hora* by FC), and “Dowry Chests for the Notary’s Daughter, the Mayor’s Daughter, the Priest’s Daughter, and the Poor Man’s Daughter” (VMold). Nevertheless, contemporary topics are also treated. With explicit regard to her compatriots who leave their country to work abroad so as to support their families back home, EV (who comes from the Republic of Moldova) entitles one of her maize leaf compositions “My Family”. Among the wooden statues by IB, “The Beggar” is presented as “specific to city life, not the villages”. Craftsmen’s artifacts are not meant to be a social critique (albeit they are sometimes effective in this respect), nor simply to illustrate the “deep”, “hidden”, or “grassroots” life in the countryside. Instead, they prove useful in extending the “ethnographic” perspective from the euphoria of folk music, dance, and “customs” to the realities of routine, crises, and inequality among peasants.

*Literary symbols* reach artisanship from the writings of modern Romanian literature considered evocative of the peasants and their traditions. Among these texts, the tales and autobiography of the Moldavian writer Ion Creangă (1839-1889) are some of the craftsmen’s most frequently used “sources of inspiration”. “Creangă’s Hovel” is a maize leaf depiction by AG. Likewise, the ceramist ND includes the “Hoopoe in the Linden Tree” (which is taken from Creangă’s ‘Childhood Memories’) in his “universe” of clay peasants. “The Goat and Her Three Kids”, a well known tale by Ion Creangă, is the theme of a “naïve painting” by IM. Another Romanian writer, Ion Agârbiceanu (1882-1963), also features, with his “Fefelega” character in ND’s ceramic representations of “traditional” peasants. “Moromete”, a popular literary hero created by the writer Marin Preda (1922-1980), is similarly depicted in clay by ND.

The reproduction of literature in craftwork is, to a greater extent than other symbolic repertoires in artisanship, a kind of “artwork within artwork”, or “artwork with artwork”. Are literary representations (e.g. historical and ritual symbolism) particularly suggestive of a given ethnographic belonging? All the aforementioned artisans live or originated in Moldavia. From another viewpoint, “symbols” such as *Fefelega* and *Moromete* are associated with Transylvania and Wallachia, respectively. Artisanship thus ceases to be strictly provincial in favor of a national set of values.

A number of craftwork representations can clearly be understood in terms of the orders placed by the artisans’ clients. EM and her daughter also paint icons featuring “saints” selected by customers who “come with a picture or a [saint’s] name”; EM claims that her daughter is still able to paint Jesus or the Holy Virgin “without following a pattern”. One of MPop’s woodcarving models is called “The Month of February”; in keeping with her clients’ requests, depending on the month in which they were born, MPop can make “28 or 29” cuts to such a pattern! IBen carves his wooden gates to match the pictures of the Maramureşan gates provided by his clients. “Traditional Hats with the Romanian National Flag” are in demand among foreign tourists (VB). The shoemaker FM was even asked by a “doctor” to make “white moccasins” for him! Some restaurants ask CP to make pottery bearing their names. The icon painter NM has customers who “want icons for the entire wall of a house”; these clients also expect NM “to organize [the arrangement of] four or five icons” upon the wall! In situations of this kind, it is not the craftsmen’s ancestral heritage, nor their creative choices that can be made responsible for a certain (more or less intelligible) use of symbolism. In fact, the “figurative” requests of customers can be understood in terms of a crossbred addition to the general representational praxis in artisanship.

Symbolism in artisanship is also open to abstraction. The woodcarver SA believes that “[as an artisan] one can only change the form of [an artifact like] a ‘sun’, or a ‘bird’, while, in terms of representation, a ‘sun’ is the sun, and a ‘bird’ is the bird: they symbolize the same thing, but in a different form”. Describing his artifacts (wooden masks) as “concealing a relatively aggressive psychology, one not obligatorily made from their external expression”, TE believes that “art [including folk art] does not mean reproduction, but a grasping of the essential”. Always conscious of the “core” and “forms” of different artifacts, craftsmen seek to view them as key principles of their artwork. The potter IP estimates a number of

“15-20” symbols which, in Horezu pottery, arranged in different patterns, would “create an infinity...” According to the woodcarver DM, “All the old Romanian traditions and symbols stem from the circle, rhombus, square, and line, which can be combined with each other in a thousand different ways!” Other “basic elements” – the colors green, yellow, brown, and white – are used successively in FC’s pottery. While DM is interested in the structural geometry of “all the Romanian traditions”, FC identifies the structural chromatics of another “whole”: the year with its four seasons! In brief, artisans carve, paint, weave, shape, knit... They also imagine and compose. Symbolism in craftwork, however, implies a supplementary effort of identifying what is beyond the apparent materiality of artifacts. Some artisans also seem to embrace this effort.

### **Style in the crafts**

In conceptualizing folk art, craftsmen make use of a series of viewpoints, ideas, and values that generally constitute two sets of arguments. One of these comprises the interrelated notions of “style” and “esthetics”. The other – including “stylization” and “kitsch” – is seen here as being derived from, or even contrastive to, style and esthetics, respectively. In both cases, argumentation and debate explicitly bring together craftsmen and tourists, craftsmanship and artisanry, and the “folk” and “popular” cultures of rural and urban environments. In other words, the issue of style in craftwork is of great public relevance, although theoretically it in fact belongs to the artisans and their crafts.

### **Style and esthetics**

What is the mark of personal mastery in performing craftwork? How can we explain technically variability in the making, shape, and meaning of artifacts within the same handicraft or ethnographic area? Why do craftwork and artwork, while sometimes drawing on ancient collective traditions, sometimes opposed to each other in terms of “[practical] utility vs. [artificial] decoration”, remain convergent despite the commercial development of artisanship? With respect to these questions, craftsmen’s “styles” and esthetic commitment are treated here as being simultaneously native and transformative qualities in artisanship.

According to most artisans, *style* is defined as one's own manner of working. In the words of IM, "I have kept my own style as I cannot change it to suit everyone's taste". Where style is still subject to change, the change occurs in technique, as with PC's replacement of handwork with the lathe in the making of his wooden flutes. MAP knows very well that "Each [potter] has his own style of applying a pitcher's ear". In MR's opinion, whatever the craft, including her own, "[...] two persons making the same thing will have different styles: each of them does his or her own handwork". Likewise, VLin is certain that "normally, artifacts such as mine can be made [by different craftsmen], but they will not be in my style". Regarding competition in the field of craftwork, NM claims that "Many people have copied my icons, seeking to make them in their own style, even if they cannot be reproduced exactly." For her part, AT believes that "[...] there are ideas and forms that cannot be copied"; she speaks here about "every [artisan's] technique and working line, which can be seen and felt"; "I have", AT adds, "my own loyal clients who recognize my working style..." As a result, style in artisanship means what an artisan (even when fully incorporating and featuring elements of folk tradition) carries out in his or her specific, i.e. inimitable, approach to craftwork. In this sense, style is consubstantial with other perceptions by artisans of their work's distinctiveness in terms of personal "mark" (VLin, ZMB), "vocation" (EM, VL), "talent" (IM), and "dexterity" (APC).

Notwithstanding the aforementioned views of individuality in craftwork, some artisans also speak of a number of different social contexts in which a craftsman's style develops and evolves. VLin says that her "style" – in terms of "gift" and "handwork" – is different from that of her brothers: "We are four siblings, each with his or her own style; we work in a different way to our mother, although it was she who taught all of us [to weave]." On the other hand, however, "Colibaba pottery" is made in the "style of pottery" that FC's "grandfather, Constantin Colibaba, revived in 1961"; FC explains that "some of the pottery pieces" he creates can be "adapted" to the same "system", or "style", with its "specific ornamentation". Unlike VLin and the basic differences in style within her family, FC speaks of what might be called a family *timbre* in the making or "revitalization" of a craft style; his way of working is in keeping with the style of his family, which he does not appropriate as his own. Working styles within a family (in the case of the Miutoiu family and its division of labor in terms of pottery) differ equally when it comes to handwork, as it is "very difficult"

to produce “identical” artifacts (I & EM). From one ethnographic area to the next, each village is said to retain “its own style”, as, for example, with weaving from Mărginimea Sibiului (AD) and pottery from Horezu and Oboga (GC). Similarly, craftsmen such as DM and MPop openly place their styles in identifiable ethnographic milieus. DM’s miniature wooden artifacts reproduce the churches and gates made “in the Maramureșan style”; while travelling around the country, DM took photos of “different regional styles”. Convinced that “Each [artisan] works in his or her characteristic style and in keeping with that of the region to which he or she belongs or where he or she learned [their craft]”, MPop (who lives in Bucharest) describes her wooden spoons as coming “from Vâlcea”, i.e. the area where she was taught “most of her patterns”.

The two main sources of style in craftwork – personal and social/traditional – are different but not necessarily opposed to each other. There are cases (e.g. the violin maker DC, the potter OD etc.) where artisans claim to have “innovated” some of the techniques associated with their crafts, or that they (e.g. TE, IM, VKR) were somehow “self-taught”. However, even when it comes to these novel contributions to artisanship, the craftsmen do not try to distance themselves from the traditional sources of their work. One can suppose that the affirmation of a person’s [individual] “style” denotes his or her suitability within a given tradition (i.e. what the ideas of “gift” and “vocation” suggest). More precisely, when artisans speak of their particular skills (e.g. VLin’s and MR’s “handwork”, APC’s “dexterity”, etc.) they regularly relate this to a certain context (e.g. FC’s “system”, MPop’s “conformity”) in which this skill first receives public recognition. On the other hand, the “traditional styles” can only exist through patterns of execution (e.g. AT’s “working line”) enacted, perhaps refined and enriched, by the “[folk] art personality” (FB) of individual artisans. Another artisan (SF) is the author of around “120” bone-carved objects executed in “all kinds of styles”; he is able to describe the “ancient tradition” of his craft and to relate his artifacts to “national [Hungarian and Romanian] patterns”. In other words, style resides both in MAP’s act of applying an ear to her pitcher and her following of the local tradition of Marginea pottery.

If style can only be accounted for in terms of a synthesis between traditional and private contributions in artisanship, why, then, are craftsmen like VLin, OD, etc. so concerned about the unauthorized copying of their “ideas” or “patterns”? As seen earlier, NM and AT maintain that artifacts

such as theirs cannot be copied. Does style therefore also become a means of validation when two or more artifacts happen to be attributed divergent manners of craftwork? This dilemma, however, arises less through the localized relationship of an artisan with his or her tradition, and more within the broader public arena of artisanship, including that of urban customers, museums, foreign tourists, etc. More generally, SA concludes in relation to the purchasers of folk art that "Nowadays many people accept the traditional or rustic style..." SA also speaks of the "private holiday homes" that are "embellished with folk art objects" in keeping with their owners' "style". In the words of SB, foreign visitors may understand her artifacts (Orthodox icons), but only "from their own point of view", since they "have another life-style". From another perspective, the policy of the ethnographic museums in Romania is to retain certain "standards" (PP) in order that folk art (regional or national) remain distinguishable from the "products" (PP) or "individual features"(CEU) of certain artisans.

Relevance of style in or vis-à-vis craftwork is becoming increasingly problematic given the enlargement of non-local folk art trade and the increase in the number of "connoisseurs" of folk art. Artisans are now also expected to exert their individual "styles" in accordance with criteria which in theory are presumed traditional, but which, to a large extent, may be a matter of either museographic expertise or customer preference. While in theory craft styles correspond to the "standards" set by the ethnographic museums, market preferences (as already seen) address the issue of esthetic propriety in artisanship.

Some artisans do in fact consider esthetics when it comes to traditional objects seen as having a "[practical] functionality", including VT's and MAP's undecorated pottery, as well as ES's wooden utensils and IMold's and PV's copper hogsheds. There are also some craftsmen who, instead of beauty, seek to achieve other virtues – "spiritual" and "authentic" – in their artwork. According to SB, the icons she paints cannot be "embroidered" or "embellished" because they belong to the "sacred realm"; here SB does not want "to violate" the "Orthodox [representational] rules", although she recognizes that icons are in fact used to "embellish" a house. APC candidly admits that his wooden artifacts – such as the masks and sacred bread patterns – are probably "the ugliest at the fair, yet they are sincere and true".

Beside these arguments, craftsmen usually share the strong belief that the artifacts they make and exhibit are – as a premise and consequence

of their very nature as folk art – “beautiful”. First, an esthetics is aspired to even with regard to objects normally devoid of this quality, namely “utilitarian” and “sacred” artifacts. OD says she may “embellish a little” a “practical” object, such as when “adding a string to a pot’s handle”: the string “has a decorative role”. A museum director (PP) remarks that a supposedly “religious object”, such as a (peasant-made) icon, will become a “[folk] art object” in an ethnographic museum. In some instances, beauty in craftwork is equated with a person’s commitment to practicing and transmitting tradition (SA) through his or her craftwork (GC), while still containing the intrinsic “expression” of tradition and folk art (MG, VKR). To MPop, folk art is “that beauty anybody can achieve with no formal education”. Several artisans (EV, MP, VLin) claim that “it is beautiful to wear your folk costume [at the traditional fairs]”, while VB describes “the beautiful [current] use” of his artifacts – *clopuri*, traditional hats – in the villages in his region. Artifacts are all the more beautiful (according to VB) as “each parent sees his or her child as beautiful, which is just how I see my hats!” According to EU’s description of the artifacts she makes together with her child apprentices, “We believe our icons are the most beautiful at this fair!” Last but not least, the market provides another reference for beauty in folk art. In this sense, ceramics is significant both for Romanian and Hungarian artisans. EP demonstrates how his decorated pottery “is a delight for the [museum visitors’] eyes”, while AF’s artifacts are only presented at traditional fairs under the condition that they “look good”.

Chromatics (together with the figurative symbols) plays a major role in craft esthetics. In general, colors are used as a decorative accessory in artwork. They are, however, able to convey various meanings that complement (and perhaps reinforce) the artisans’ concerns for their traditional and personal styles. Some craftsmen use colors they regard as being “specific” to a given ethnographic area. AN describes the black woman’s blouse (*catrința*), together with the white peasant skirt (*fota*) as being a costume typical of her own region of Cluj; a florally decorated black head kerchief for young girls and a black hat for young boys are also part of this set of clothing, which, AN adds, differs from that of the Bistrița area, with its “waistcoat and red, blue, and green costumes...” MD, who is also from Transylvania, from the Huedin area, says her table cloths are mostly “sewn in red”, as they are used on public holidays; in addition, “some people’s preference” is for “blue”. In the Suceava area, VA uses the colors black, white, and red to adorn the collars of the shirts

she sews for young boys and girls; brown is another color used in local clothing. In Mărginimea Sibiului, the *ie* with white or black adorned patterns (peasant woman's blouse), such as those made by AD, are worn at funerals, depending on the age of the female deceased. The color white is described as being predominant in the Horezu pottery "style", as opposed to the characteristic green of the "Oboga [pottery] style" (ŞT). As a local chromatic "resource", the environment is depicted – e.g. "the autumnal colors of the forests in the Dorna area" (GS) and "the multitude of colors of the fields in the Bistrița area" (VLin) – in the crafts of egg painting and weaving, respectively.

The craftsmen's individual choice of color is a reflection of specific factors such as individual heritage or a particular manner of working. While the village of Marginea (in the Suceava area) is well known for its "black pottery" (the result of the local firing technique), MAP, who lives in Marginea, explains how the "red-to-brown" pottery she makes together with her husband is something only practiced in her family. ŞC says he "invented" (together with his brother) a new ceramic technique in which wooden and clay items (such as the black or red pottery from Marginea) are covered in a colored paste; he explains how he utilizes "warm sunlight colors" in alternation with "cold twilight colors". In turn, NM praises the "quiet and tempered chromatics" (including blue) of his icons, which are "calmly inviting"! An individual strategy in craftwork chromatics is given by I & EM: they "add" to their family style pottery (in Horezu) the colors of blue, green, and yellow, in order to "attract the eye of the client" attending the fair.

Esthetics with its chromatic (as well as representational) decoration is at one and the same time "substance" and "instrument" in the making of a personal and/or regional style. Artisans make constant use of beauty and color as additional symbols of "who they are and where they come from". They also resort to beauty and color as supplementary proof of what they are able to do and how they turn peasant "objects" into folk "artifacts". "Style", as a result, is not only an "innate" or "given" asset, nor is it a matter of mere "performance" in any given craft. In light of the information discussed above, style in artisanship seems to reflect that cultural whole formed of a person's creative handwork, his or her ethnographic rootedness, and market orientation. Decoration in craftwork, on the other hand, consists of the shapes, images, and colors used for traditional and/or commercial purposes. Through all its subsequent

facets of “beauty”, “sacredness”, “functionality”, and “ugliness”, esthetics creates a possible bridge between the “stylistic” and “ornamental” claims of artisans. In other words, it is the esthetic dimension of artisanship that gives craftsmen the prestige of being “[folk] art” thinkers and makers and their craftwork the high station of “artwork”.

As seen earlier, within one’s own family (VLin), tradition (MAP), ethnic group (SF), style can take and follow different paths. Similarly, despite their being related with local traditions, the artisans’ styles are increasingly adapting to accommodate external influences in terms of customer tastes, a museum’s high standards, or church principles. Is style, after all, really of any use to artisanship, or should it instead be viewed as the pure rhetoric employed by craftsmen for self-promotional purposes? It is likely that a “network study” would shed light on the assumed link between what an artisan says about himself, his creativity and esthetics, cultural origins, and market demands etc. For instance, VLin’s weaving “style” could be correlated with her “beautiful” folk costume and the “environmental” colors of the Bistrița area. Similarly, APC’s craft “dexterity” could be evaluated in the broader context of his “ugly but sincere” artifacts and the Maramureșan woodcarving tradition. MAP and the “red-to-brown” chromatics of her “non-ornamental” pottery are part of her “family style” but also the “traditional standards” the Suceava Museum imposes on local craft production. More information as to customer preferences in their interaction with artisans would perhaps clarify the degree to which the “ethnographic reality” of style is (in)dependent of how it is perceived from the outside.

### **Stylization and kitsch**

While thinking about artwork in the crafts, we are obliged to consider whether “style” and “esthetics” can be seen as an expression of an artisan’s expertise and sensibility, something inherited or assimilated once and for all. Some of the craftsmen mentioned above seem to allude to the possibility of an evolution and intervention in their styles or esthetic choices, as, for example, when they speak of “style revival” (FC) and the “embellishment of an artifact” (OD). Of greatest relevance here are the artisans’ encounters with the phenomena of *stylization* and *kitsch* in the course of their work.

Stylization is commonly described as an artisan’s involvement in or contribution to a given traditional decorative theme or motif. The

woodcarver MPop recognizes that “sometimes” she “overlaps some traditional models or stylizes flowers in a geometric manner”. In relation to her artifacts, the bulrush weaver AT speaks of “small innovations [in respect of tradition] or decorative items, such as stylized angels”. “Flowers” and “geometric forms”, as well as “filigree stars” are found in VKR’s “stylized patterns” in her lace work. In his craftwork decoration, another woodcarver, APC, uses “different stylized plants”. On his wind instruments, VL engraves “stylized butterflies”, while (in woodcarving) AR’s “incisions” are used, among other reasons, to reproduce the motif of a “Stylized Sun”. A particularly “stylized” theme is that of “The Golden Hen with Chickens” (ceramic, IC), which is related to the well known archeological discovery of the fifth century AD “Treasure of Pietroasa”.

With precise regard as to how an artisan “approaches folk art”, other craftsmen indicate how, although concerned with stylization, they nonetheless know how to remain traditional. MJ says her weaving is “not yet stylized”; however, when she makes a “stylized *ie* [embroidered women’s blouse]”, MJ “keeps the *croi* [traditional cut in weaving]”. Similarly, the weaver VLin claims she “maintains [traditional] lines” in terms of the use materials like cotton and velvet, even where “stylizing and simplifying”, albeit with “no damaging modifications”; VLin thus also makes “traditional and stylized artifacts”.

In these examples, stylization appears to reflect the aforementioned interdependence of artisans and tradition as regards their personal and/or ethnographic “styles”. Here, however, this relationship is focused more on the influence a given folk culture comes to exercise – in terms of “patterns”, “[traditional] cut”, and “line” – over *its* craftsmen. Given the “materials” of this “ready-made” background, artisans are able to “overlap”, “innovate”, “simplify” – in a word, “stylize”. Moreover, stylization appears to be a process of cultural change over time. The weaver AN has faced situations in which her clients refused to buy the folk costumes she makes that are in keeping with “150-year-old costumes”, because, they say, they “are not traditional”; AN believes that over the years “the costumes were stylized”, i.e. “changed”, something these clients do not acknowledge. It is the “patina of time”, in any case, that makes stylization possible, as opposed to the conservation of “family style” (which, in pottery, is equated with an ancestry of three [MAP] or five generations [FC]). Stylization, in other words, only occurs within a temporal interval in respect of

traditionally-defined “styles” and with the agency of artisans, such as those professional artisans who eventually promote their own “styles”.

Depending on the available data, stylization may partially support the regression analysis sketched out above with the aim of confirming or denying a particular craftsman’s claim as to the ethnographic origin of his handwork and artifacts. MJ’s *croi*, VLin’s “[weaving] line”, as well as AN’s “conformity” with a half-century-long “stylistic” change in folk costume patterns, can also be seen as “clues” in this quest for authenticity in artisanship. In another sense, however, stylization is also responsible for the artisans’ discretionary use of their crafts to produce “forms” and themes that become controversial for a vernacular feeling in folk art. Some of this “new artwork” is “geometrical” (MPop, VKR); it can still be kept in touch with a given tradition, and theoretically it also participates in the artisanal “abstraction” within craft symbolism. Other “stylized” themes, including the “naturalistic”, “historical”, or “spiritual” motifs mentioned above, are harder to categorize within traditional contexts; instead, they are susceptible to another “transformative” process in artisanship, that of “kitsch”.

In terms of the particular cases in which it appears, kitsch forms part of a number of issues that describe the large array of phenomena associated with artisanship. One of the main connotations of kitsch relates to ideas like “falsity”, “stealing”, “[illegal] copying”, and “[premeditated] namelessness”. To EP, *kitsch* is simply “fake art”; he knows that, unfortunately, “few [clients] people are trained to be able to distinguish ‘tradition’ from ‘kitsch’.” CP is aware that to adapt tradition is “to enter the domain of kitsch” and that doing so entails the risk of no longer being allowed to participate in the traditional fairs held at museums. MPop thinks it is “kitsch only to copy [someone else’s] patterns”. A similar analogy between kitsch and copying in the crafts is given by SA, who believes that kitsch, although based on copies, consists of many a “misinterpretation” of tradition. According to VMold, “With the increase in the number of traditional fairs, honest people willing to eke out a living, or having learned something from their family tradition or a fair or a museum, feel... a calling [towards craftwork], but, receiving no advice from the museums, end up making kitsch”; opposed to the “painted plaster” items, VMold claims to “have restored” the traditional votive light; he applies his “monogram” to artifacts like votive icons and dowry chests, “unlike the kitsch-makers, who usually don’t sign their objects, but only want to sell”. Since current

legislation does not extend to craft copyright, VLin blames “the theft of [weaving] patterns” and “the kitsch that is invading the market”.

Another semantic category of kitsch includes “dishonest competition”, “cheapness”, and “low quality”. As emphasized by EP, kitsch has “nothing to do with tradition and folk art”, and generally reflects the “unfair competition” [in artisanship]. In APC’s opinion, traditional fairs were better under socialism than today, as “there is now the freedom to come with all kinds of kitsch”, for example “plastic instead of wooden buckets”. Unlike the “young artisans of today” (who “cultivate a lot of kitsch”), MJ says she was not allowed, during the [socialist] past, to commercialize artifacts without “the museum’s approval”; all the same, the Astra Museum in Sibiu today still expects the craftsmen it invites to display their particular artifacts in front of houses from the corresponding ethnographic areas, with “kitsch not allowed to penetrate the museum”! NM complains about the low purchasing power of people today, who would “rather buy a loaf of bread” than artwork and who “are also tempted to buy [cheap] kitsch”. According to FC, his “five-generations-old” family tradition in pottery was not in keeping with the craft cooperatives, with their “mass production of kitsch and low-quality products”; since “making commercial, kitsch pottery” is not the same as “doing precise craftwork, with respect for your tradition”, FC believes that “instead of the cheap kitsch pottery, which many confuse for ‘beauty’, although it is really made of plaster, a [folk art] connoisseur will always pay more for a genuine [folk] art object.” OD is confident the museums in fact establish “a certain set of values [in artisanship]”, which is meant to support “the participation of those craftsmen who respect their traditions by not offering the [museum] public a low-quality commodity, or kitsch”. With “people preferring to buy machine-made, instead of hand-crafted objects”, VLin remarks skeptically about how “plenty of commodities and fine looking but worthless kitsch can be found at the markets, while our products are no longer in demand!”

As seen earlier, artisans like EP, FC, SA, and VMold are also concerned with the theme of “connoisseur vs. ignorant” in the context of the purchasing of folk art as opposed to kitsch. Incompatibility between the traditional “handwork” and the “machine-made” or “mass production” in craftwork is seen (by FC and VLin) as a “technical” basis for the artisanship vs. kitsch antithesis. The effectiveness of a kind of “museum empowerment” in distinguishing between artwork and kitsch (CP, MJ,

OD) is another issue here, as well as the contrast with socialism, either as means of censorship against kitsch (APC, MJ) or as a framework that favored (through craft cooperatives) kitsch (FC).

Kitsch is also perceived and thought of in esthetic terms. Expressions like “fake art” (EP) and “misinterpretations [in artwork]” (SA) are equally suggestive of the “degeneration” that kitsch causes when compared to folk art. “Flowers” (APC) and “good looking” (VLin) objects are ironic terms used by artisans as a means of characterizing the “bad taste” of the kitsch-makers and probably also (EP, FC) of the customers as well. In particular, kitsch is controversial in terms of the very materials it is made from, as described by FC as “plaster pottery”, and VMold as “plaster woodcarving”.

History, politics, manufacture, the market, clients, mimesis and/or esthetics are all relevant here to how kitsch emerges, develops, and competes with artisanship once the craftsmen become involved in the folk art trade. All the above perspectives upon kitsch are ethical; they essentially raise the issue of a “deviation” from (but on behalf of) the “real” artisanship. In terms of its legitimacy, kitsch seems to have developed from an indefinite state under socialism to what artisans condemn as corruption, fraud, and pollution in their crafts after 1989. If these labels are accurate, kitsch as an example of informality and piracy in artisanship can be correlated with other examples of the “secondary” economy in post-socialist Romania.

Museums are viewed by artisans as a necessary arbiter between what they, as embodiments of traditions, do, and what kitsch, as a “parasitical” epiphenomenon, as counterfeits. As already discussed, the ethnographic and folk art museums, by virtue of their specialization in collecting material vestiges of traditions and in holding traditional fairs, impose important criteria of craft representativeness and promote critical “standards” of artisanship. From case to case, these criteria and standards can be strict but also indulgent of kitsch. CB (director of the Astra Museum in Sibiu) argues in favor of his “high” standards in accepting only invited artisans, who, at the fairs, are expected to wear folk costumes specific to their areas; according to CB, this distinguishes real value in artisanship from the “mass of kitsch”. At the Suceava Museum, a similar level of “protection” (cf. director CEU) is offered to the craftsmen faced with the “kitsch” offered by wholesalers, since “few people particularly want ‘Margeia ceramics’ or ‘Rădăuți ceramics’ [pottery traditions from Northern Moldavia]”, but

instead “seek the functionality” of artifacts. In the case of the Timișoara Museum, the director IVP understands how “among the traditional artisans, you find not only [folk] art producers, but also traders”; although traders “have nothing in common with folk art”, and instead “should be grouped together with kitsch and their participation in the museum fair refused”, IVP says “they too must be allowed to exist!” To PP (director of the Village Museum), on the condition that the “transformation of tradition” does not “attract kitsch”, it can be accepted by the museums; at the same, however, PP rhetorically questions whether originally the “educated people” also saw the peasant naïve painting icons as “kitsch”...

## Conclusion

In so far as the legendary narratives of customary-law villages, with their self-contained economies and ethnic cohesion, are consistent with contemporary analyses of authenticity, local patriotism, uniqueness, and guild-relatedness among artisans, anonymity in crafts is not only a metaphor or device of dating of the kind “once upon a time”. It belongs, with all its legitimizing aura and “proof”, to an ongoing process of (collective) identification, integration, and validation in a “modern” and changing world.

Likewise, present-day family associations, trademarks, and handmade signatures in artisanship may account for the issues of originality, national ethos, mass production, and competition, thus revealing the emerging emphasis on craft paternity in post-socialism. It sheds light on the private basis of either the craftwork or the artwork, as well as within the workshops and traditional fairs.

In contemporary Romania, the anonymous and private values of artisans do not exist in a state of mutual exclusion, but rather in alternation. They make up variable sets of arguments, claims, imagery, knowledge, “rights”, wisdom, etc. in accordance with ethnographic variability itself. From another perspective, the authoritative artisanship echoes the craftsmen’s extended involvement in the market network that ethnographic museums and municipalities establish in cities. To a certain extent, the governmental management of “folk culture” in Romania by means of ethnography and public administration reifies and promotes what the artisans call their

“anonymous” empowerment, mission, or vocation. (Anonymity is here generally congruent with “public” policies).

Private authorship, however, would have probably remained unknown, or underdeveloped, at the level of a local subsistence economy and under a totalitarian and centralist system of government. With the open commerce of today, artisanship has received important resources of “revitalization” – within a rural and urban pattern of exchange that also bears organizational and auctorial relevance.

Is there any relationship between the craftsmen’s traditional, innovative, and client-made representations? One might infer that all the aforementioned symbolic repertoires in practice form part of the cultural system within which artisanship takes place; in so doing, they become hard to classify in terms of “ethnographic” vs. “non-ethnographic”, “pure” vs. “contaminated”, “elaborate” vs. “naïve”, etc. These dichotomies, while plausible in individual cases, appear to lose their consistency in light of the artisans’ negotiation between their local traditions and external criteria or “tastes” as to what “folk culture” is. One artisan (NM) calls himself an “interpreter of folk art”, who, “like a folk music singer that collects old melodies from the village in order to pass them on”, “interprets the ‘melodies’ of icons...”, namely “icons enjoyed by peasants in the past and by gentlemen today”. The woodcarver ZMB believes that “folk art is traditional: we all [artisans] have the same roots...”; she also attempts “to use the rules of folk art by following its line”; at the same time, ZMB says she “developed” her own fine arts “side”, which “does not represent folk art”; above all, ZMB retains her “freedom to create”, while her clients have “the freedom to choose”. The “interpretation of [icon] ‘melodies’” (by NM) and the “[free] use of rules” (by ZMB) generally express the synthesis of the *customary*, the *personal*, and the *public* in the realm of folk art.

From the perspective of the museums, which generally remain dedicated to their folk heritage policies, protecting artisans is their professional duty; ethnographic traditions, artisanship, and folk art museums appear to be building and defending a kind of “cultural niche” with selective interrelationships, ethics, and boundaries. Nevertheless, these same museums are also interested in “greater revenues from the increased visitor numbers to more folk fairs”. With its cortege of sins, kitsch cannot be left *ante portas*, for it is the hybrid demands of folk art consumption that also lead to the consumption of kitsch.

The “folk” niche of traditions, artisans, and museums needs, as a result, to coexist with extraneous tastes, practices, and “objects” that make up the hidden and yet flourishing world of kitsch. Kitsch may also be seen as a “transformation” from within folk art, since it is promoted (through various aspects of “stylization”) by craftsmen more focused on their clients than their local “customs”. To a large degree, however, the artisans’ symbolic and stylistic creativity helps them establish maps and locations to serve their sense of traditional distinctness, harmony, permanence, etc. The kitsch-makers (more precisely, “those people whose work bears the stigma of kitsch”) lack a comparable feeling of ethnographic integration and that “instrumentarium of belonging” made up of authorship, representativeness, and style in the crafts.

## LIST OF ARTISANS CITED

- AD: Ana Domnariu (Weaving, Tilișca, Sibiu County, born 1947, Romanian, Orthodox)
- AF: Arpad Fabian (Pottery, Corund, Harghita County, Transylvania, born 1960, Hungarian, Catholic)
- AG: Ana Grunzu (Maize leaf weaving, Tomești, Iași County, Moldavia, born 1955, Romanian, Orthodox)
- AN: Adriana Nemeș (Weaving, Cluj, Transylvania, born 1960, Romanian, Orthodox)
- APC: Alexandru Perța Cuza (Woodcarving, Târgu Lăpuș, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1945, Romanian, Orthodox)
- AR: Avram Roșca (Woodcarving, Bălăceana, Suceava County, Moldavia, born 1959, Romanian, Orthodox).
- AT: Alice Torella (Bulrush weaving, Târgu-Mureș, Transylvania, born 1980, Hungarian, Reformat)
- CP: Costel Popa (Pottery, Horezu, Vâlcea County, Oltenia, born 1961, Romanian, Orthodox)
- DC: Dorel Codoban (Violin making, Roșia Lazuri, Bihor County, Transylvania, born 1946, Romanian, Orthodox)
- DG: Dan Gherasimescu (Woodcarving, Curtea de Argeș, Muntenia, born 1958, Romanian, Orthodox)
- DM: Daniel Martalogu (Wooden miniature carving, Bucharest, born 1948, Romanian, Orthodox)
- EM: Elena Milieș (Icon painting, Pitești, Argeș County, Muntenia, born 1950, Romanian, Orthodox)
- EP: Eugen Petru (Pottery, Vlădești, Vâlcea County, Oltenia, born 1962, Romanian, Orthodox)
- ES: Elisabeta Stângaciu (Wood carving, Băbeni, Vâlcea County, Moldavia, born 1956, Romanian, Orthodox)
- EU: Elena Ursache (Icon and Egg painting, Slătioara, Suceava County, born 1968, Romanian, Orthodox)
- EV: Eleonora Voloșciuc (Maize leaf weaving, Chiperceni-Orhei, Republic of Moldova, born 1965, Moldavian, Orthodox)
- FB: Florin Bejinari (Icon and Egg-painting, Rădăuți, Moldavia, born 1961, Romanian, Orthodox)
- FC: Florin Colibaba (Pottery, Rădăuți, born 1956, Romanian, Orthodox)
- FM: Floare Moldovan (Shoemaking, Runcu Salvei, Bistrița County, Transylvania, born 1935, Romanian, Orthodox)
- GC: Grigore Ciungulescu (Pottery, Oboga, Olt County, born 1926, Romanian, Orthodox)
- GS: Genoveva Sauciu (Egg painting, Gemenea, Suceava County, Moldavia, born 1949, Romanian, Orthodox)

- GV: Gheorghe Vingărzan (Sheepskin coat making, Jina, Sibiu County, born 1954, Romanian, Orthodox)
- IA: Ioan Albu (Mask making, Timișești, Neamț County, Moldavia, born 1948, Romanian, Orthodox)
- IB: Ion Bălan (Woodcarving, Rotaria, Iași County, Moldavia, born 1966, Romanian, Orthodox)
- IBen: Ilie Bența (Woodcarving, Bârsana, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1950, Romanian, Orthodox)
- I & EM: Ion and Elena Miuțoiu (Pottery, Horezu, Vâlcea County, Oltenia, born 1971 and 1973 respectively, Romanian, Orthodox)
- IG: Iulia Goran (Embroidery, Breaza, Muntenia, born 1950, Romanian, Orthodox)
- IM: Ioan Maric (Naïve art painting, Bacău, Moldavia, born 1953, Romanian, Orthodox)
- IMold: Iosef Moldovan (Copperwork, Pleșa, Suceava County, born 1938, Romanian and Polish ethnic identity, Catholic)
- IP: Ioan Paloș (Pottery, Horezu, Vâlcea County, Oltenia, born 1957, Romanian, Orthodox)
- I & ȘBor: Ioan and Ștefan Borodi (Woodcarving, Budești, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1972 and 1969 respectively, Romanian, Orthodox)
- LP: Laurențiu Pietraru (Pottery, Horezu, Vâlcea County, Oltenia, born 1969, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MAP: Marioara-Angelica Pascaniuc (Pottery, Marginea, Suceava County, Moldavia, born 1971, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MD: Maria Dinea (Weaving, Păniceni, Cluj County, Transylvania, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MDen: Máthe Dénes (Pottery, Corund, Harghita County, Transylvania, born 1952, Hungarian, Catholic)
- MG: Maria Ghișe (Weaving, Poiana, Sibiu County, Transylvania, born 1934, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MJ: Maria Jebelean (Weaving, Timișoara, Transylvania, born 1935, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MM: Mariana Marcovici (Weaving, Timișoara, Transylvania, born 1957, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MN: Marioara Negură (Egg painting, Vatra Moldoviței, Suceava County, born 1968, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MP: Margareta Petrescu (Weaving, Bucharest, born 1948, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MPop : Monica Popescu (Woodcarving, Bucharest, born 1963, Romanian, Orthodox)
- MR: Mariana Răileanu (Hemp weaving, Buftea, Muntenia, born 1959, Romanian, Orthodox)

- ND: Nicolae Diaconu (Ceramics, Țibănești, Iași County, Moldavia, born 1955, Romanian, Orthodox)
- NM: Nicu Muntean (Icon painting, Vinerea, Alba County, Transylvania, born 1949, Romanian, Orthodox)
- OD: Olimpia Dimitriu (Pottery, Bucharest, born 1960, Romanian, Orthodox)
- PC: Pavel Caba (Woodcarving, Nerej, Vrancea County, Moldavia, born 1937, Romanian, Orthodox)
- PG: Petru Godja (Woodcarving, Valea Stejarului, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1935, Romanian, Orthodox)
- PS: Pavel Stăruială (Copper work, Nerej, Vrancea County, Moldavia, born 1929, Romanian, Orthodox)
- SA: Sonica Apalaghiei (Woodcarving, Săveni, Botoșani County, Moldavia, born 1962, Romanian, Orthodox)
- SB: Sânziana Baci (Icon painting, Bucharest, born 1959, Romanian, Orthodox)
- SF: Sandor Fazekas (Horn and bone carving, Lunca Ozum, Covasna County, born 1953, Transylvania, Hungarian, Reformat)
- ȘC: Ștefan Csukat (Ceramics, Suceava, born 1964, Hungarian and Romanian ethnic identity, Orthodox)
- ȘT: Ștefan Trușcă (Pottery, Româna, Olt County, Oltenia, born 1955, Romanian, Orthodox)
- TB: Traian Brândușa (Weaving and leather processing, Salba, Bistrița County, Transylvania, born 1933, Romanian, Orthodox)
- TBâr: Toader Bârsan (Woodcarving, Bârsana, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1944, Romanian, Orthodox)
- TBus: Teodor Busnea (Wind instrument making, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Muntenia, born 1950, Romanian, Orthodox)
- TE: Toader Egnătescu (Woodcarving, Suceava, Moldavia, born 1957, Romanian, Orthodox)
- TP: Toader Pop (Woodcarving, Bârsana, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1936, Romanian, Orthodox)
- TR: Toma Rapa (Woodcarving, Nerej, Vrancea County, Moldavia, born 1920, Orthodox)
- VA: Vera Andronic (Weaving, Mănăstirea Humorului, Moldavia, born 1959, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VB: Vasile Borodi (Hat making, Sârbi, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1954, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VBâr: Vasile Bârsan (Woodcarving, Bârsana, Maramureș County, Transylvania, born 1940, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VKR: Violeta Karmen Roman (Lace work Feldioara, Brașov County, Transylvania, born 1955, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VL: Valeriu Leonov (Wind instrument making, Tulcea, Dobrojdja, born 1964, Romanian, Orthodox)

- VLin: Virginia Linu (Weaving, Salba, Bistrița County, Transylvania, born 1970, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VM: Valentin Matraș (Basketry, Vorona, Botoșani County, Moldavia, born 1958, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VMold: Vasile Moldoveanu (Woodcarving, Moreni, Muntenia, born 1952, Romanian, Orthodox)
- VT: Vasile Tericean (Pottery, Obârșia, Hunedoara County, Transylvania, born 1935, Romanian, Orthodox)
- ZMB: Zina Manesa-Burloiu (Woodcarving, Brașov, Transylvania, born 1970, Romanian, Orthodox)

### **LIST OF MUSEUM DIRECTORS CITED**

- CB: Corneliu Bucur (Director of the Astra Museum, Sibiu)
- CEU: Constantin Emil Ursu (Director of the Suceava Museum)
- IVP: Ioan Viorel Popescu (Director of the Timișoara Museum)
- PP: Paulina Popoiu (Director of the Village Museum, Bucharest)

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