

Before a Warning (Then as Now)

**Sandor Bartha, Geta Brătescu, Florina Coulin,
Ion Grigorescu, Gavril Pop, Iulia Toma**

29.01 - 08.03.2026

Ivan Gallery is pleased to invite you on Thursday, January 29, between 6-9 pm, to visit the group exhibition *Before a Warning (Then as Now)*, which brings together the works of artists Sandor Bartha, Geta Brătescu, Florina Coulin, Ion Grigorescu, Gavril Pop, Iulia Toma.

The starting point of the exhibition is the video performance created by Ion Grigorescu in 1994, in Timișoara, for the *Orient, Occident* exhibition, curated by Ileana Pintilie. The work will be presented for the first time, as it was not part of the exhibition selection in 1994. In this video performance, Ion Grigorescu interviews his colleagues, raising the issue of conflict and violence. Then, as now, tensions were pushing the population into a tense state of waiting, marked by uncertainty. Thirty-two years after this video was made, we find ourselves in a similar situation: a war on the border, a divided society, and a succession of conflicts that have either already erupted or are about to do so in multiple parts of the globe. Ion Grigorescu's film thus becomes the starting point for the exhibition *Before a Warning (Then as Now)*, a space where, like in the video, discussions, reflections, and questions are encouraged. Against the backdrop of an increasingly suffocating and unpredictable global security crisis, the accelerated collapse of the old order makes the need to talk about the present instinctively open up.

The question of hierarchy is addressed by Sándor Bartha in the *VIP* animation series, which begins with the October 12, 1940 edition of the Székely Közélet newspaper. The festive edition, published after the second Vienna Dictate, features on its front pages the visit of Governor Miklós Horthy and his wife to Odorheiu Secuiesc. In contrast, on the last page, a few lines announce the opening of the workshop of Sándor Bartha (the artist's grandfather), a master engraver, in the same city. Based on this document, the artist creates characters inspired by both statesmen and craftsmen, critically questioning the VIP institution and the criteria that define "very important people."

For Geta Brătescu, the experience of war was a real one, recalled in the volume *Atelier Vagabond* published in 1985 (pp. 36-37, ed. Cartea Românească), where she recounts how the Despina Doamna girls' high school building became a hospital for the war wounded and the senior students were required to supervise the wards. The series *Pre-Medecic Forms*, 1975-1977, started from the image of a military convoy drawn by Geta Brătescu in a composition structured from a mass of conflicting forces, still retaining faint traces of a contemplative archaeology: canvas, wood, straw, iron. From this series, the Medecic form subsequently developed, detached from the mass of opposing tensions.

War appears in Florina Coulin's work as a presence of the era, filtered through the pressure of information and tension that permeates everyday life. The Vietnam War is one of the landmarks of this context, marking the way reality is perceived and represented. In her works, Florina Coulin explores this tension through gestures and visual structures that reflect the uncertainty and fragility of the world in which she lives. Her practice becomes a space for articulating her

own impressions and feelings, in which the limits and possibilities of thought are explored from the perspective of a "young person among young people."

Gavril Pop is attentive to the uncertainty and anticipation that define the moment we are currently experiencing. Falling into the abyss is preceded by stepping off the edge. The imminence of the fall and the observation of an extreme situation create a feeling of confusion, against which the artist raises the issue of violence and the way language supports conflict. Tension becomes a state of affairs that, over time, leads to self-destruction. In his artistic practice, recycling and reusing materials takes on a meaning that transcends the factual, becoming a method of regeneration and reconfiguration of the object.

Iulia Toma's *Perfect* video is constructed around a repetitive, hypnotic gesture. Polishing the buttons of a military uniform becomes a channel of communication and remembrance of the daily ritual practiced by the father of the artist. The relationship of presence-absence with the paternal figure is rendered through rigor and attention to detail, intended to construct the image of a perfect outfit, associated with respectability. Thus, an apparently rigid gesture is transformed into an intimate moment of reconnection with the past. The memory of the father reappears in the work *Buzunarul întors acasă (The Pocket Returned Home)*, where the memory of the ritual of waiting for him is reflected in the detail of the uniform.

Below you will find more details about the participating artists.

Special thanks to: Răzvan Șumila, Anton Soltan.

The exhibition can be visited at the Ivan Gallery space in Cotroceni, Profesor Doctor Dimitrie Grecescu 13 Street, until March 8, 2026, Wednesday through Saturday between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., and the rest of the time by appointment.

In his artistic practice, **Sándor Bartha** (b. 1962, Odorheiu-Secuiesc) conveys personal reflections with an ironic subtext in relation to the current state of the national or international socio-political context, through intelligent, ingenious, and, last but not least, playful means. His works combine different media, such as drawing, painting, installation, and photography, often incorporating recycled, insignificant, common materials, scraps, and objects. His projects have been shown at events such as the 2003 Prague Biennale, the Romanian Pavilion at the 2001 Venice Biennale, and exhibitions at the Ludwig Museum in Budapest in 2003, Kulturkontakt Vienna in 1997, etc. He lives and works in Budapest, Hungary.

Geta Brătescu (b. 1926, Ploiești – d. 2018, Bucharest) was a central figure in Romanian contemporary art since the 1960s. An artist with a long and prolific career, Geta Brătescu developed a complex body of work that includes drawing, collage, engraving, tapestry, objects, photography, experimental film, video, and performance. She studied simultaneously at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest and worked as artistic director for the magazine *Secolul 20*, now called *Secolul 21*. Geta Brătescu has participated in the most important international contemporary art exhibitions, such as Documenta 14, Athens and Kassel (2017), La Biennale di Venezia (2013); La Triennale, Paris, Palais de Tokyo (2012); the 12th edition of the Istanbul Biennial (2011), etc. In 2017, Geta Brătescu represented Romania at the Venice Biennale with the project "Appearances" - the first solo exhibition by a female artist in the Romanian Pavilion. Her most recent retrospective was presented in 2020 at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen in Switzerland, traveling in a different version to Kunstforeningen GL Strand, Copenhagen, in 2021.

Florina Coulin (b. 1947, Roşiorii de Vede) studied between 1965 and 1971 at the painting department of the Nicolae Grigorescu Institute of Fine Arts in Bucharest (now the National University of Arts in Bucharest). After graduating, she participated in national and international group exhibitions (in Moscow, Barcelona, Sofia, Stockholm), and in 1975 she became a member of the Union of Plastic Artists in Romania. In 1977, she married Georg Coulin and moved permanently to Germany, where she continued her artistic career. In 1980, she became a member of the Augsburg Artists' Union and participated in solo and group exhibitions in Villefranche (France), Munich, Vienna, Istanbul, Iowa City (USA), among others. In Romania, Florina Coulin has had solo exhibitions at the Curtea Veche Gallery (2006 and 2007, Bucharest), at the Ivan Gallery in 2024 ("Drawing for Oneself" together with Ion Grigorescu) and 2019 ("Hours. Memory Images") and participated in the group exhibitions "Ion Grigorescu and Friends" (Mogoşoaia Palace, 2004), "This Part That Seems to Need to Come Out Through a Place in My Body" (Project Salon, Bucharest, 2019, traveled in an extended version to Cultuurcentrum Strombeek Grimbergen, Europalia Arts Festival Romania, 2019), "Real Body" (Ivan Gallery, 2021). She lives and works in Augsburg, Germany.

Considered one of the most significant representatives of experimental and conceptual art in Eastern and Central Europe, **Ion Grigorescu** (b. 1945, Bucharest) has a complex artistic career that cannot be easily categorized. His artistic practice engages various media—painting, drawing, performance, photography, film, object—in documenting aspects of reality in the sphere of family, his own body, and everyday existence, as well as in the social and political context. His works from the 1960s and 1970s present provocative and subversive strategies in exposing and criticizing the contradictions inherent in the Communist regime and the dictatorship before 1989. Ion Grigorescu has participated in exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum, MoMA New York, New Museum New York, the Vienna Biennale 2015, the Berlin Biennial 2010, the Venice Biennale 1997 and 2011, and Documenta 12, to name just a few examples.

Gavril Pop (b. 1998, Timișoara) studied Painting and Art History at the West University of Timișoara. Gavril Pop is active on the art scene in Timișoara, working as a project author, curator, cultural mediator, archivist, and writer of critical texts for publications. He frequently collaborates with independent art spaces, foundations, and associations, contributing to exhibitions and cultural mediation programs. Recent exhibitions he has participated in include: 2025 – Art Encounters Biennial (group exhibition); 2025 - Convulsie SRL: Picături pe Plita Încinsă, TRIUMF AMIRIA. Museum of Queer Culture, Bucharest (group exhibition); 2025 - Appearances from Common Ground, INDECIS.

Iulia Toma (b. 1974, Constanța) lives and works in Bucharest, where she teaches in the Department of Textile Arts and Design at the National University of Arts Bucharest, practicing a pedagogical approach that is harmonized with both her personal research background and the constant innovation required by teaching in the artistic discipline. Iulia Toma is an intermedia artist who works both in the aesthetic media surrounding textiles, as her primary field of study, and with photography, installation, text, and performance. Her artistic practice has recently focused on social themes that resonate with her own journey: feminism, human rights, interpersonal relationships in closed communities, the urban materiality of housing, social equity, etc., in her own discourse, organized in visual and activist directions. Recent exhibitions she has participated in include: "Variables as Absence of Uniformity" group exhibition, Watterling Gallery, Stockholm, "Remembering Peace," KYIV BIENNIAL 2023, "I Plant an Eye against the Mind's Grain," 2023, Ivan Gallery.

