



Replaying and Reworking Nineteenth-Century Interiors in Contemporary Art Installations

Dora Precup M.A., University of Neuchâtel

Supervisor: Prof. Pascal Griener

My Ph.D. dissertation deals with the interior decoration of the royal residences of the Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen dynasty in Romania, and it focuses mainly on the study of Peleş Castle, an eclectic private home whose construction began in 1873 as a direct commission from King Carol of Romania (1839–1914). Within the context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this residence is representative of important cultural exchanges between national as well as international artists and craftsmen who designed architectural structures and furnished interiors. Most of these creations were assimilated copies of western European styles. My research explores these interiors as forms of ‘home-staging’ but puts more focus on the function of the residence as an exhibition space; that the castle was conceived as such is evident from in the early phases of planning. My study simultaneously investigates ways of re-contextualizing and re-framing these ancient decors, and it takes both the museum context and contemporary perspectives into account.

A major theme of my analysis is the special relationship between Peleş Castle and a contemporary art project named *Peles Empire*. Initiated in 2005 by two artists, Barbara Wolff and Katharina Stöver, this project is based upon the extensive use of large reproductions from parts of the Romanian castle’s interiors. These reproductions – in the form of large printed wallpapers – serve the purpose of redecorating modern private dwellings, art galleries and other exhibition spaces where contemporary art works are put on display. Thus, it performs a role as a ‘mirror installation’ which reveals, in a kind of *mise en abîme*, both the functional and symbolic dimensions of the old castle. Focusing on the relationship between the modern project and the historical residence, my research explores strategies and issues of ‘reworking’ and ‘replaying’ past interiors in contemporary art installations. My project aims to understand how the current practice of installation could bring new interpretative perspectives on the very phenomenon of displaying and perceiving the nineteenth-century domestic interior. Although they belong to distinct epochs and cultures, both the castle and the art project share similar methods of producing representations of an ideal space and time. Both effectively immerse the spectator into a transposed reality (in term of *simulacrum*), and to address this point I shall discuss the use of ‘reproduced’ and ‘mental imagery’ within both the contemporary display and the historical rooms.