

## ARTIST PROFILE



### Stefan Bertalan

Stefan Bertalan was born in 1930 in Răcăștie, Romania and passed away in 2014 in Timișoara, Romania.

Stefan Bertalan studied at the Institute of Fine Arts "Ion Andreescu" in Klausenburg. Beginning in 1962 he was Professor at the School of Fine Arts in Timișoara. From 1970 to 1981 he was lecturing at the Faculty of Engineering in Timișoara (Department of Architecture).

In 1966 Bertalan co-founded Group 111, the first artist collective for experimental art in Romania. Followed by his membership in the famous experimental art group Sigma starting in 1970. From 1964 to 2014 he was also a member of Timișoara's Department of the Union of Artists.

On occasion of the 46th Venice Biennale in 1995, Bertalan's work was included in the exhibition **Brancusi's Heritage in Romania**, taking place both in the Romanian Pavilion (Giardini) and in the Romanian Institute for Culture and Research in Humanities (Palazzo Correr). In 2013 his work was included in the exhibition **The Encyclopedic Palace** at La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Massimiliano Gioni in Venice.

Initially a driving force of the Romanian neo-constructivist avant-garde, Ștefan Bertalan's research into cybernetics and system theory informed his search for overarching patterns and systems in natural forms. Close observation of organic processes and systematic studies of shapes found in organic, vegetal, and mineral forms eventually led to the artist's development of an interconnected cosmology of all things.

The artist's 1981 move from Timișoara where he had originally developed his art, engaged with other

*Esther Schipper*

artists and taught at university to the much smaller town of Sibiu initiated what Erwin Kessler has called an “inner emigration” that began long before the actual departure from Romania to Germany in 1986.

The loss of his artistic context and the isolation of the new environment intensified the artist’s retreat to observation of the natural world and even to an identification with nature. Initiated by a series of intense dreams, to which the artist referred as apparitions, Bertalan began a series of emotionally charged drawings that insert the artist’s body into those of plants, creating hybrid formations.

Bertalan’s solo exhibitions include: **In Tune with the World**, The Museum of Recent Art, Bucharest (2026) and Art Encounters Foundation, Timisoara (2025); **I have lived 130 days with a sunflower**, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2025); **Ștefan Bertalan**, Muzeul de Artă, Timișoara (2012), and **The Self-Punishing One**, Mogosoia Palace, traveling to Muzeul de Artă, Timișoara/ The Bánffy Palace, Cluj and Neuklosterburg (2009).

Selected group exhibitions include: **The Picasso Effect**, The Museum of Recent Art, Bucharest (2023); **Lost in the Moment that Follows: The Ovidiu Sandor Collection**, Kunsthalle Praha, Prague (2023); **Things we sense about each other**, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2021); **Parlament der Pflanzen**, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein (2020); **Ex-East. Past and recent stories of the Romanian avant-garde**, Espace Niemeyer – Siège du Parti communiste Français, Paris (2019); **La Brique, The Brick, Cărămidă**, La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Mulhouse (2019); **Dissolve into a red dwarf**, Islands, Brussels (2017); **Derjenige, der sich selber bestraft**, București//Timișoara/Klausenburg (2009); **Speech**, Performance Festival Zona 4, Timișoara (2002), and **Selbstbildnis in der zeitgenössischen rumänischen Kunst**, Kunstmuseum Timișoara (2001).

Comprehensive monographic publications include **Ștefan Bertalan: inner emigration** by Erwin Kessler and **Ștefan Bertalan: Überlagerungen/Suprapuneri/Overlappings** by Ileana Pintilie.

His works are held in the following public collections: Centre Pompidou, Paris; mumok - Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, and MARE/Muzeul de Artă Recentă, Bucharest.

*Esther Schipper*