

## *Fuck you, Eu.ro.Pa!* Performing Borderland/ Borderline Identities

Perhaps nobody, not even Nicoleta Esinencu herself, imagined, ten years ago, that her debut play, *Fuck you, Eu.ro.Pa!*, dissecting the shifting identity dilemmas in the Republic of Moldova, seen through the eyes of a young girl caught between the „old“ Soviet self and the „new“ European aspirations, would turn into a long-term project of challenging ethnic, linguistic, artistic and personal identities through theatre and performance. Apart from Esinencu’s own work as a playwright and performance artist, the venue she’s running in Chisinau, Teatrul Spălătorie (“the Laundry Theatre”), has developed its own conceptual program with a quite clear social agenda: tackling the sensitive issue of being a Moldovan in the post-USSR-not-so-Romanian-not-yet-European era, turning the „classical“ tool of artistic representation into a device for what Serge Moscovici called “social representation” – in a manner that clearly mirrors and is sometimes inspired by similar artistic approaches in Romania, such as the program of the National Center for Dance in Bucharest or the work of a handful of socially engaged artists (Gianina Cărbunariu, Bogdan Georgescu), some of them actively collaborating with Teatrul Spălătorie.

But how can performing arts deal with the negotiation of borderland/ borderline identities in a changing society through the mere act of artistic representation? What are the challenges in EU member state (Romania) and where does the Republic of Moldova stand?

How does a performing arts approach map the conflicting social self-images in a transitional society (including by rejecting the local artistic tradition)? How do these artistic representations relate to the engineering of the new Moldovan man (Romanian-speaking, with Western values) and the new Romanian man, both part of the larger social project of the new European man, and what is their *political* meaning? In the end, what *is* – if there is such thing – the political identity project behind the performative endeavor of the Laundry Theatre in Chisinau or the National Center for Dance in Bucharest and how does it operate from an artistic point of view?

Iulia Popovici is a performing arts critic and curator, with an MFA in Playwriting (National University of Theatre and Cinematography, Bucharest) and a B.A. in Literature (University of Bucharest). She works as an editor at the *Observator cultural* weekly cultural magazine (Bucharest).

A member of EEPAP – Eastern European Performing Arts Platform, initiated by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute in Warsaw in 2011, she is the author of the EEPAP report on the independent/alternative performing arts scene in Romania, and has written a number of texts on alternative performing arts, collectives and artists, published in Romania (*ManInFest*, *IDEA*, *Scena.ro*, *Observator cultural* etc.) and abroad (*UBU*, France; *Színház*, Hungary; *Dialog* and *Teatr*, Poland).

Since 2011, she co-curates the Independent Performing Arts Platform, part of the Temps d’Images festival in Cluj. She is the author of *Un teatru la marginea drumului* (*A Theatre by the Side of the Road*) (2008), a book about the Romanian alternative theatre collective dramAcum.