

ION BÂRLĂDEANU

PHOTO LONDON 2024

16.05.24 > 19.05.24

The Gallery of Everything presents the renowned photo-montage of Ion Bârlădeanu (1946 – 2021) at Photo London 2024.

This one-person show celebrates the history of the radical Romanian image maker: from his origins on the streets of Bucharest, to acclaim in Paris and worldwide.

The installation includes early satirical sketches, hybrid collage/caricatures and classic film-stills, featuring a cast of corrupt politicians, movie stars and everyday folk.

Bârlădeanu has been profiled in *Le Monde* and *The Guardian*, and in multiple publications including *Vice*, *Wideworlds* and *Accent*. He was the subject of an Emmy award-winning documentary, *The World According to Ion B*, produced by HBO.

Bârlădeanu is found in notable museum and private collections: Muzeul de Artă Recenta (Bucharest), Fondation Antoine de Galbert (Paris) and The Museum of Everything (London).

The artist has exhibited at the Rumänisches Kulturinstitut Berlin (2010), Vienna Biennale (2015), Kunsthal Rotterdam (2016), Museum of Old and New Art (Tasmania) (2017/18) and Halle St Pierre (Paris) (2018).

This is the first time Bârlădeanu has been presented at Photo London.

The makeshift open-air studio of Ion Bârlădeanu was discovered in a back-alley in Bucharest, Romania. Yet its proprietor, a modest and clandestine collagist, was unprepared for the acclaim which swiftly descended upon his once-secret art practice.

As social commentary, Bârlădeanu's anti-communist and anti-capitalist assemblages reveal a wry sense of humour and sharp political savvy. The brilliance lies in their maker's visual flair, where impossible eye-lines and one-point perspectives coincide effortlessly with the high-gloss, the pornographic and the surreal.

Born in 1946 near the Moldavian border, Bârlădeanu spent much of his adulthood drifting. He worked as a farmer, a docker, a security guard and a grave-digger. Yet it was the violent reign of Nicolae Ceaușescu, and its subsequent collapse in 1989, which indirectly inspired Bârlădeanu to create such a subversive and satirical body of work.

What emerged was an oeuvre of incisive visual commentary: on money, power and Romanian *realpolitik*, played for laughs against a dystopian folkloric landscape.

Yet Bârlădeanu saw himself not as an artist, but as a maverick film director. In these, his CinemaScope movies, he both commands and controls. World-class actors and Romanian big-wigs collide, sexy ingenues divert the male gaze, Nazis lurk everywhere, cigarettes are currency, and disputes are settled with a sausage, a bottle or a gun.

In his lifetime, Bârlădeanu would go on to meet several of his cast members; yet he was invariably disappointed. When an encounter with Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie in Paris did not yield a sale, the sardonic image-maker vowed never to work with them again.

I feel as if I have been born again, he said at the time, I feel like a prince. A pauper can become a prince; but he can go back to being a pauper too.