

Tudor Octavian: *Oxcart. Painting in Romania 1800-2000.*

Review¹

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The volume was published in May of this year by the Monitorul Oficial (Official Gazette), Bucharest, and contains a detailed study on the collection of reproductions from 51 Romanian art catalogs, which have been published to date. Most books that meet our reasonable expectations are meant to fill a void. Many of them prove their usefulness by helping us to connect more deeply with our spiritual past.

Tudor Octavian’s book, *Oxcart. Painting in Romania 1800-2000*, depicts a segment of the Romanian culture, represented by the Romanian system of fine arts since the Principalities until now as well as prominent artists whose real notoriety remained in the spotlight unfortunately only between our borders, inconsistent with the European art. Some were artists of a certain art period and enjoyed fame only during their lifetime. Until 1944, no study on the indigenous fine art pieces addressed the fate of those painters, which were most often appreciated post-mortem. For that reason, Tudor Octavian becomes an “authority” who takes the task of validating the artists’ talent and acknowledging the dignity of our national values.

The title of the book is too concise to do justice to the fact that it encompasses two centuries of artistic endeavors highlighting the evolution of the Romanian artistic expression during this time. To facilitate our foray into art history, the author provides headings, as a set of questions and explanations, from “Why Grigorescu?” and ending with “A final statement of reasons”. In the book, we find reproductions of paintings, mostly of Romanian painters, exhibited until 1947. Thus the author insists on pointing out that this selection highlights both the originality and personality of each artist, as well as the influence of the cultural

¹ Tudor Octavian, *Carul cu boi. Pictura în România 1800-2000* (*Oxcart. Painting in Romania 1800-2000*) (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 2012).

environment on the artists' works of art.

Last but not least, the book is addressed to collectors of Romanian art, especially to the art investor, whose attention is drawn via this volume with the reminder that due to their local artistic confinement these fine art paintings may be undervalued on the international market. At the same time, the author invites the arts aficionados to a constant cultural enrichment journey. This artistic passion is an intrinsic feature to the ones engaged in aesthetic pursuits. Thus, the unbundled access to the European artistic trends alone does not suffice in reaching emotional growth. The volume, consisting mostly of questions and answers, is a result of an extensive research on Romanian fine arts and is backed up by previous studies in art history that are listed at the end of the book.