

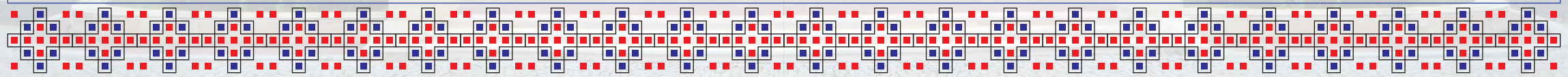


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THE ART MUSEUM OF CRAIOVA

The Art Museum of Craiova is housed in the impressive **Jean Mihail Palace**, a historic building constructed between 1898 and 1907.

Commissioned by Constantin Mihail, a prominent landowner, the palace was designed by the French architect Alfred Jules Paul Gottereau, assisted by Constantino Cichi, an Italian architect. The palace reflects the eclectic European style of the time, combining French academism with elements of late Baroque architecture.



Though the palace was completed in 1907, Constantin Mihail passed away the following year, leaving the palace to his sons, Nicolae and Jean. Nicolae lived most of his life in France, while Jean Mihail, one of Romania's wealthiest men, played a significant role in securing financial stability for the Romanian state during the Great Depression.

The palace hosted several notable figures, including King Carol I, in 1913, and King Ferdinand, in 1915. During World War I, it was occupied by the German army, and in World War II, it temporarily housed Polish officials and was the site where **The Craiova Peace Treaty** was signed, transferring the Quadrilateral to Bulgaria.

Upon his death in 1936, Jean Mihail left his fortune, including the palace, to the Romanian state, with the wish that it be used for public benefit. This act of generosity earned the edifice the name Jean Mihail Palace. After the war, the palace housed several governmental institutions before being converted into the Art Museum of Craiova, in 1954.

Initially, the museum included part of the collection from the Alexandru and Aristia Aman Gallery, Craiova's first museum, but its collection grew substantially through donations and acquisitions.

Today, the museum boasts **over 8,000 works of art**, including pieces from the Dutch, Flemish, Italian, and French schools, as well as notable works of Romanian art. The museum's collection includes works by important Romanian painters such as Theodor Aman, Nicolae Grigorescu, Nicolae Tonitza and Ion Țuculescu.

The museum's most valuable assets are its six sculptures by the world-renowned Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, including ***The Kiss, Made-moiselle Pogany, Vitellius, The Thigh, Head of a girl (Pride), and Head of a boy***. These works highlight the museum's unique contribution to modern art and witness its importance as a cultural institution in Romania.



In 2009, The Jean Mihail Palace underwent a comprehensive restoration to preserve its historical and architectural significance. Today, The Art Museum of Craiova is one of the most important art museums in Romania, offering visitors a rich collection of Romanian and European art, as well as an insight into the country's artistic and cultural heritage.

THE CONSTANTIN BRÂNCUȘI CENTRE

The Constantin Brâncuși Centre in Craiova was inaugurated on September 15th 2022, as a result of a very important investment carried out by Dolj County Council for promoting and sustaining the Romanian cultural values.

A more than welcome "extension" of the Art Museum of Craiova, this reference building was designed by the architect Dorin Stefan in accordance with the European Contemporary architecture, following the idea of reviving the aesthetic qualities of the industrial space and evoking the influence that Brâncuși's sculptures have today: ***"Architecture is inhabited sculpture"***.

The name of the new cultural space reaffirms the soul connection between the great sculptor and the town where he began developing his talent and artistic sense.



It's here that, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, due to private contributors or public institutions that understood the huge potential of the young pupil from the School of Arts and Crafts in Craiova, Brâncuși received financial aid to study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bucharest and then, with minimum support, he left for Paris.

Brâncuși himself confessed: ***"In Craiova I was born for the second time"***. This lasting connection would be reflected, his entire existence, in the lifelong friendships he kept with cultural figures from Craiova.

Also, the intense bond with this city becomes perennial through the valuable collection of his sculptures from the Art Museum of Craiova, one of the first museums in the world to permanently exhibit his works. While in the Jean Mihail Palace one can admire seven of them, in the new building there is displayed the last physical evidence of the workshop on the Impasse Ronsin Street in Paris.

Some of the wooden beams that were initially used in the structure of this almost sacred space were recovered and donated to the Art Museum of Craiova by his close friend and first biographer, V.G. Paleolog, finding their rightful place, 50 years later, inside the Constantin Brâncuși Centre.



The opening exhibition of this cultural space revealed to the public the life and work of the great sculptor, highlighting the key moments of his artistic destiny and the connections with Craiova, in a coherent concept developed by Doina Lemny, Ph.D., one of the most important researchers of Constantin Brâncuși's creation.

The following exhibitions were the result of the cooperation between the Art Museum of Craiova and the National University of Arts in Bucharest and were dedicated to promoting contemporary art and young artists.

These projects enhanced the aesthetic qualities of artistic expression through photos and films, thus highlighting Brâncuși's passion for photography, ever since 1914 - when he began to photograph his works, leaving behind an entire collection of images with powerful artistic meaning.



Starting with 1926, when he bought his first 16-millimeter camera, the artist developed a passion for motion images. Many of the films that present him or his workshop are, therefore, a true testimony to this fact. Brâncuși's passion for photography and film was a good excuse to follow a series of ideas and aesthetic principles that can be found in the Contemporary Romanian Art.

The same way as Brâncuși was one of the most important and fervent promoters of the modern art ideas, the new cultural space has as purpose to support the aesthetics and values of nowadays art and encourage artistic manifestations that may convert into heritage pieces for the museum.

The mission of the **Constantin Brâncuși Centre** is, thereby, to promote the most representative pieces of contemporary art, becoming a cultural landmark of the Romanian society.

THE OLTENIA MUSEUM

The Oltenia Museum in Craiova is a cultural gem that offers visitors a journey through history, ethnography and natural science in its three main departments.

- **The History and Archaeology Department:** showcasing ancient artefacts and historical exhibits that trace the rich heritage of Oltenia
- **The Natural Science Department:** highlighting the region's biodiversity with exhibits on minerals, fossils, and the Oltenia ecosystem
- **The Ethnography Department:** displaying traditional Oltenian customs, crafts, folk costumes and rural life representations in order to recreate some of the rich traditions of the region

The diverse collections turn the Oltenia Museum into a must-see attraction for history, ethnography and science enthusiasts.



The History and Archaeology Department

The building housing this department was constructed between 1905 and 1907, originally as a school, following architectural plans by František Bílek.

After World War II, as part of educational and cultural reforms, the Regional Museum of Oltenia was granted use of the former School of the Madona Dudu Church, where, until 1963, exhibitions in history, ethnography and natural sciences were organized.



The collections include archaeological exhibits, an impressive treasure, documents of great historical value, manuscripts, the Nicolae Titulescu collection (personal items of the diplomat), costumes, weapons etc. displayed in exhibitions that recreate important chapters of local and national history.

The department's exhibitions take visitors on a journey through Oltenia's past, from Prehistory to the 20th century, aligning with European museum standards. **Rediscovering History** showcases the Dacian Age, featuring reconstructions of houses and fortresses, and continues with the rich legacy of Roman civilization, highlighting the benefits it brought to its citizens.

The Gallery of the Lords of Wallachia displays votive portraits from the 14th to 16th centuries, while the Treasure Room presents medieval jewellery and coins from seven valuable hoards of the region.



The **Oltenia Rediviva** exhibit covers the region's history from the 16th century to the Romanian Revolution of 1989.

The Restoration and Conservation Laboratory is vital to preserving cultural heritage. It specializes in the restoration of glass, ceramics, metals, textiles, and books. The laboratory also contributes to scientific research and offers internships for young conservators.

The Natural Science Department

Between 2005 and 2012, the museum opened several exhibits, including **Oltenia – Terra Fossilis**, which highlights the region's paleo-biodiversity, by showcasing fossils of plants, invertebrates, and vertebrates that are unique to the region. Visitors can see reconstructions of the skeletons of a **cave bear** (*Ursus spelaeus*), aged approx. 30,000 years, and a **mammoth** (*Mammuthus meridionalis*), aged approx. 1.6 million years, discovered in Oltenia, along with representations of their natural habitats.



The Physical-Geographical Conditions of Oltenia and **The Ecosystems of Oltenia** exhibits offer insights into the region's bioecology, geology, and biodiversity, and a detailed look at the flora and fauna of Oltenia.

The Collection of Minerals and Rocks includes approximately 200 of the most valuable specimens from the Natural Science Department's heritage. These are presented in a specially dedicated area, housed in illuminated display cases, and classified by mineral categories and rock types. The majority of the exhibited specimens originate from Romania. The display culminates with a life-sized cave reconstruction.



The Universe and Our Solar System exhibition guides visitors through the formation of stars, galaxies, and planets, with a focus on Earth as the only planet where life exists.

The exhibit also explores tectonics, volcanism, and celestial bodies such as comets and meteorites, including fragments from a meteorite that fell in Sopot, Dolj County in 1927.

A section dedicated to the Moon explores its features and relationship with Earth, while a papier-mâché lunar surface and a model of the Apollo 11 spacecraft add visual appeal.

The experience concludes with the ***Planetarium***, where visitors can view digital projections of stars, constellations, and planets, providing an immersive cosmic journey.

The Ethnography Department

Located in **the House of Bănie**, a medieval monument built in the late 15th century, this department explores traditional life in Oltenia.

Oltenian folk art is well represented through beautifully crafted rugs, carpets, head cloths, and embroidered items, all made by local women. These textiles, admired for their vibrant colours and intricate patterns, reflect both artistic skill and deep cultural values, symbolizing the enduring traditions of Oltenia's peasant civilization.



The Making of Bread exhibit highlights the role of bread in daily life and rituals like weddings and funerals. ***The Rhythms of Life*** showcases traditional crafts, such as pottery and rug weaving, illustrating Oltenia's rich cultural heritage.

The department also delves into wedding traditions, presenting ceremonial elements like the wedding tree, the costumes and the bride's dowry, as well as the roles of key participants such as the groom, bride, and godparents.

THE IZVORANU-GBLESCU FORTIFIED HOUSE THE IZVORANU-GBLESCU KULA

Brabova is a village located approximately 30 km from Craiova, documented since 1606. It sits on land once covered by a large oak forest, replaced over time by the village itself.

The settlement grew along the Brabova stream and its development is attributed to Constantin Braboveanu, the former ruler of Oltenia. Initially, people lived in scattered houses, but Braboveanu reorganized the area, building homes along the valley and attracting more residents. The village was named Brabova, reflecting his influence.



A notable feature of Brabova is the **Izvoranu-Gblescu Kula (Fortified House)**, originally built by Barbu Izvoranu in the late 18th century. Constantin Braboveanu added another floor in 1802, in response to marauding attacks that plagued the area. The estate passed to Radu Gblescu in 1841, and later to his son, Constantin, who gave it as a dowry to his daughter Elvira, upon her marriage to Prince Filip Bibescu.

Restored and arranged as a museum site through an initiative of the Dolj County Council and local authorities, the Izvoranu-Geblescu Kula in Brabova currently houses exhibitions dedicated to traditional life in the region.

The main exhibition, titled ***Traditional Rites and Occupations in Southern Oltenia***, explores dominant rural occupations like agriculture, viticulture, fishing, beekeeping, and animal husbandry.

One prominent display, ***The Oltenian Wedding Procession***, chronicles the traditional wedding process in the region. It includes mannequins dressed in festive attire, symbolic items like a dowry chest, and a detailed representation of the wedding party, featuring key figures such as the godmother, who carries the bride's sweet bread. The bride and groom are adorned with symbolic items like wreaths, flowers, and money, representing purity, financial strength, and readiness for marriage.



Another exhibition, ***The Traditional Sitting Place***, showcases a common masonry technique (plastered twigs) and displays a stove where mannequins dressed in folk costumes demonstrate weaving.

Women's daily activities like spinning wool are depicted, with tools such as a hackle and reel used in the process. Traditional women's shirts from Oltenia are also displayed on a dowry chest.

The Peasant Kitchen Interior exhibition displays traditional cooking tools like ceramic bowls, wooden spoons, and a round table with mugs and churns used to make butter. The scene illustrates a typical Oltenian household setup, offering a glimpse into the daily life and craftsmanship of the region's peasants.

THE CERNĂTEȘTILOR FORTIFIED HOUSE THE CERNĂTEȘTILOR KULA

Cernătești is a village located almost 40 km from Craiova, in Dolj County. The exact construction date of the **Cernăteștilor Kula (Fortified House)** is unknown, but it is believed to have been built during the reign of Michael the Brave, possibly by Cernat, a military officer in his army. A more plausible theory places its construction in the 18th century, by the Cernătești boyar family.



The rise of fortified houses, known as *kulas*, in Oltenia, was a response to the frequent Ottoman raids from Vidin and Ada-Kaleh. These buildings were designed as defensive structures to protect the boyars' wealth and families, as well as serving as observation points.

The Cernăteștilor Fortified House was part of a larger estate that included a manor, stables, warehouses, and barns, but most of these structures no longer exist. In 1967, the property passed into State ownership and was restored by local authorities. In 1972, it was repurposed as a museum to showcase the historical and ethnographic heritage of the area.

After more than 50 years and following a major new restoration by the Dolj County Council and local authorities, the Cernăteștilor Kula has reopened with updated exhibitions highlighting the region's rich past.

The **Cernătești – History and Tradition** exhibition is housed in the old cellar of the kula and features a range of archaeological and historical artefacts. Exhibits include Neolithic flint tools, Roman ceramic fragments, and medieval weapons like maces and battle knives. A writing kit and a 19th century fire-place clock are also displayed, along with church books and a nobleman's diploma from 1845.

The museum includes a collection of military weapons and uniforms from the modern era, with notable pieces such as bayonets from the early 20th century. Visitors can also explore an impressive collection of coins, tokens, medals, and banknotes from the 18th to 20th centuries.



On the first floor, the exhibition **Traditional Oltenian Occupations** showcases tools and items related to carpentry, animal husbandry, and traditional clothing production. There are irons, bells for animals and a weaving display, showing the importance of textile production in Oltenia. The dowry, displayed on dowry chests, highlights the significance of handcrafted fabrics in traditional weddings.

A unique feature is the section dedicated to raw silk production, which was historically important in Oltenia. The display includes silk clothing items, veils, and wedding towels, illustrating the craft's role in the local economy.

On the second floor, two exhibitions – **Traditional Oltenian Home Interior** and **Traditional Oltenian Kitchen Interior** – depict the everyday life of an Oltenian household. The home interior exhibition includes a stove, a bed, a table, and a loom, representing key elements of rural life. The kitchen exhibit showcases ceramic cookware, a three-legged table, and a wooden cabinet displaying kitchen utensils used in peasant homes.

THE AMZA PELLEA MEMORIAL HOUSE

Located in the city of Băilești, **The Amza Pellea Memorial House** opened its doors to the public on April 7th, 2024. The building, originally constructed in 1908, in neo-baroque style, was restored with the support of the Dolj County Council. This museum is dedicated to honouring the memory of the legendary actor Amza Pellea, born in Dolj County, featuring a collection of personal items generously donated by his daughter, actress Oana Pellea.



One of the exhibition halls is dedicated to **Amza Pellea - the man**, showcasing family photos, his baptism certificate, and personal belongings, including a gold diamond ring, a silver pocket watch, sunglasses, and his signature pipes.

Visitors can also admire a display of prop weapons used in iconic films such as ***The Dacians*** and ***Michael the Brave***.

Among the notable items on display are the award Amza Pellea received at the Moscow International Film Festival for his performance in ***Condemnation***, the Golden Jubilee Medal for the Promotion of Romanian Theatre (1956-2006), and the Gold Clapper Award, posthumously awarded by the Union of Film Authors and Producers of Romania in 1998.



The other hall celebrates **Amza Pellea - the actor**, featuring movie posters from some of his most famous films, including ***Nea Mărin Billionaire***, ***Then I Sentenced Them All to Death***, ***Michael the Brave***, and ***Power and Truth***.

Visitors can also see Nea Mărin's first hat, alongside with photographs and documents illustrating Amza Pellea's extraordinary artistic career.

THE MUSEUM OF THE BOOK AND ROMANIAN EXILE

The Museum of the Book and Romanian Exile in Craiova is a unique, large-scale project that encompasses dozens of highly valuable collections, distinguished by the richness and significance of their content.

Efforts have endeavoured towards reintegrating Romanian culture with the cultural heritage produced outside the country during the years of post-war **Romanian exile**, extending from the communist era to the present day. The project emerged from the need to provide a comprehensive vision of Romanian spiritual creations developed beyond national borders during the communist regime.



The museum's unique collections are distinguished by their remarkable diversity, showcased in the wide range of represented fields, from humanities and social sciences to theology, music, performing arts, and visual arts, as well as in the various types of documents that constitute each collection. In addition, the museum features furniture pieces, personal items, rare photographs, and **unique** works of visual art, including paintings, sculptures, drawings, and engravings.

The institutional mission is to promote the works of prominent figures of the Romanian exile, whose creations have circulated almost exclusively abroad for nearly half a century, with only a few of them having been published or translated into Romanian.

The museum invites visitors to embark on a journey through the works of key figures in Romanian literature, art, history, and culture. Among them one can find **Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Ileana and Romulus Vulpesu, Andrei Șerban, Vintilă Horia, George Banu, Octav Calleya, Aurora Cornu**, and renowned members of the Romanian Academy such as **Basarab Nicolescu, Dan Berindei, Dinu C. Giurescu**, to name just a few. Every corner of the museum has been thoughtfully designed to tell a story.

As visitors explore the exhibits, they have the opportunity to admire the personal handwriting of well-known authors in their dedications inside rare books, original manuscripts, and documents from the libraries of significant personalities represented in the museum, viewing the actual pages of correspondence carried out by prominent exiled writers, showcased for the first time to the Romanian audience.



The museum's collections and patrimony, ranging from written documents to audio-visual content, bear witness to both the creative achievements and the personal lives of prominent representatives of the Romanian culture.

Thus, **the Museum of the Book and Romanian Exile** is an invitation to rediscovering an important aspect of the national cultural heritage, through both the exhibitions hosted and the interactive spaces designed to complete the narrative tableau of exile.

THE ELENA FARAGO MEMORIAL HOUSE

Nestled in the heart of Craiova, the **"Elena Farago" Memorial House** is a late 19th century historic monument located in the courtyard of the "Alexandru and Aristia Aman" County Library. It has recently been extensively restored and modernised through an EU-funded project by Dolj County Council, seamlessly transforming the building into a modern digital hub that preserves the writer's rich cultural legacy.



The interior strikes a perfect balance between the atmosphere of a bygone era and the dynamism of modern technology. Alongside rooms filled with archival pieces and biographical milestones of **Elena Farago (1878-1954)**, the space features adaptable settings designed for temporary exhibitions, research, and educational programmes, functioning as an active hub for the community.

The first salon, set within the very study where the poetess used to write, charts her long tenure as director of **the "Alexandru and Aristia Aman" Foundation** (1921-1954). The room highlights her professional career through original furniture and physical testaments to her work – including children's books, adult poetry, and translations. Her family life is beautifully captured nearby through authentic photographs with her husband and their two children, Mihnea and Ana-Virginia (Coca).

Dedicated to the professional recognition granted to Elena Farago, the second salon displays **unique holographic manuscripts** and **high honours** celebrating her literary output.

In addition to laureate editions and articles from the gazettes of the day, the space charts her widespread editorial influence. The literary reviews she patronised or co-founded functioned as essential springboards for debut authors.

Furthermore, the residence functioned as a true cultural hub of its day, drawing prominent thinkers and literary luminaries of the time, including **Nicolae Iorga, Eugen Lovinescu, Liviu Rebreanu, and Geo Bogza**. This creative dynamism is masterfully reflected in the vast archival correspondence held in the “Elena Farago” Collection, which offers a vivid record of her close ties to the country’s intellectual elite.



Curated as an homage to the writer’s daughter, **Ana-Virginia (Coca) Farago**, the third salon celebrates a versatile artist whose creative output demonstrates that art was a fundamental way of life here. Through original manuscripts, fine prints, and genuine photographs, the exhibition captures her multi-layered identity, highlighting her accomplishments as a poet, novelist, dramatist, translator, actress, and fine artist.

Moving beyond traditional preservation, this institution stands as an interactive, ever-evolving cultural ecosystem. The tour bridges the interwar era and the 21st century by incorporating state-of-the-art digital technology. This new chapter as a digital learning centre for the local community reflects Elena Farago’s own dedication to teaching, beautifully linking historical heritage with contemporary demands.

THE CĂLUȘ DANCE: RITUAL, FAITH, IDENTITY

The "Maria Tănase" Folk Dance Ensemble, part of the **Dolj County Centre for Culture and Art**, promotes and showcases the **Căluș** dance - one of the most representative expressions of traditional Romanian culture, inscribed by UNESCO on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity nearly two decades ago.



More than just a dance, the **Căluș** is an ancient ritual that combines music, movement, and ceremony into a cultural manifestation of remarkable symbolic and spiritual value. In Romanian folk tradition, it is associated with purification, protection, and healing, performed by groups of **călușari** who abide by a ritual code passed down uninterrupted from generation to generation.

Led by a **Vătaf** (group leader), the **călușari** troupe assumes the symbolic role of community protector, confronting - in traditional lore - the evil forces represented by the **iele** (mythological female spirits). Faith, discipline, and respect for tradition form the foundation of this unique ritual, kept alive over the centuries.

The sacred dimension of the **Căluș** ritual is ancestrally linked to the period of Whitsuntide (50 days after Easter), when the full ritual takes place. Although its dance steps are also performed at other events - where they hold purely choreographic value - the authentic ceremony reveals its secrets in the villages and towns of Dolj precisely during these holy days.



Through its artistic work, the "**Maria Tănase**" Folk Dance Ensemble contributes to preserving and promoting the **Căluș** dance, offering audiences at home and abroad the opportunity to discover one of the most precious expressions of Romanian cultural identity.