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Ion Grigorescu

The poor people are fending for themselves

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Opening: Tuesday, September 22nd, 20h.

Àngels Barcelona presents the first exhibition in Spain of Ion Grigorescu (Bucharest, Romania, 1945), one of the most significant Romanian visual artists. Since 1967, using formats such as photography, collage, video or performance, Grigorescu's pieces show unorthodox points of view that weaken the inflexibility of the collective imaginary and the discourses that construct memory and identity. He has developed an artistic practice that reacts to a tumultuous socio-political context, emphasizing the consequences it has on an individual, psychological level. While always including a reflection on the position of the artist, other constant characteristics in his work are: the body, self-criticism and the question of the social relevance of art and private life, what one could describe as an anti-art, where life and art practice unite.

The poor people are fending for themselves is a project produced specifically for the gallery. It uses both photographs and videos to raise questions about the relationship between reality and art, nature and its use, or the scrutiny of social realities.

In the first part, titled *come brothers, we have food!*, the artist shows us how nature supplies us with food, which we tend to ignore. Where many people see a tree broken in half, others see the opportunity to collect fruit that was once out of reach. It is food without packaging, which requires the effort and patience of bending down and harvesting.

The exhibition continues with the series *The poor people are fending for themselves*, an installation of small photographs taken from the internet, that presents different ways of achieving one's basic daily needs in places where the comforts we are accustomed to don't exist. Grigorescu writes, "I learn what and how must be done, the example, from these people. They teach me what is first needed when all seems to be lost. / They have not asphalted street or under shelter table, however their clothes are white and proper. To eat or to sit there is no chair, they stay on crossed legs..."

The third part of the project is composed of a series of photographs, *Emptying villages: history stops there because of not being civilized?* Here we see rural spaces, panoramic views of small towns, stone structures in ruins—"archaeological" photographs of a not so ancient culture (1800)—depicting day-to-day life in an environment that has been displaced by the city, where everything happens at a different pace. The overwhelming, permanent advance of the urban is in contrast to the detained time of the rural. As Grigorescu writes in the text from the exhibition catalogue: "The concept of civilization has two meanings, one of past and intelligent, another for future and irreversible modifying. We cannot say we didn't know, we didn't see."

The last part of the exhibition, *When the poor has a carpet he imagines to be rich*, consists of a canvas with a composition of decorative elements inspired by Portuguese carpets, converted into an art object. For Grigorescu, a carpet is an element that defines the differences between the poor and the rich. The poor appreciate them more and use them daily (for praying, for sitting, etc...). For this project, Grigorescu makes his own carpet, replete with "ornaments from (his) imaginary garden". It is hung vertically, eliminating its usual function: "My "carpet" could be taken as a cheap one because it is not from thick threads, or as a poor one, because it's made from photographs [...] Me, belonging to no such category, nor poor, neither rich, I am manufacturing the carpet from my materials. I don't breed sheep, technically it is too expensive, but I will not be able to lay my feet nor sit on it, only imaginary."

A series of video works will complement the exhibition: "Dialog with Ceausescu" (1978); "Vitan" (1994); "Pătroia" (2003); "Post-mortem dialog with Ceausescu" (2007) and the audiovisual presentation "Berzunti" (1978) (a journey through the personal memory of the artist). These works will be shown in the Minicinema room, please consult the program at www.angelsbarcelona.com.

In spite of having received wide recognition only later in his career, due to political tensions, presently a number of exhibitions have recovered Grigorescu's role as a figure of resistance and artistic singularity. He has had individual exhibitions in The Museum of Modern Art of Warsaw, Poland (2009), the Kunstverein Salzburg, Austria (2006), or the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Romania (1998). He has also participated in the Documenta 12, Kassel, Germany (2007), in the Prague Biennale 3, Czech Republic (2007), in the IC Baltic Triennial, Vilnius, Lithuania (2005). In addition, he represented Romania in the 47th Venice Biennial (1997). His work has been presented in group exhibitions in institutions in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Hungary, Slovenia or the United States, among others.