



**Free to say  
what i think.  
Interview**



## **INTERVIEW WITH MR. LIVIU JICMAN, DIRECTOR OF THE COTROCENI NATIONAL MUSEUM**

***1. Dragoş Ciocăzan: George Bernard Shaw often quoted Hegel, saying he was right when he said that we learn from history that we can never learn anything from history. What is your opinion?***

**Liviu Jicman:** I think it is essential to be given this opportunity to us – to have the freedom of discovering the real and unmystified history, a freedom forbidden by the totalitarian regimes, as was the case of Romania until 1989. But what each of us chooses to do with this freedom depends on each individual. Some choose to ignore it, others – as George Bernard Shaw – prefer to use it selectively, to argue their own theories or doctrines. Unfortunately, nowadays, this type of behaviour is present in different forms, one can see it in the fake news phenomenon or in the dissemination of conspiracy theories. I believe there are things to learn from history, but the freedom to learn the real history, and not be subjected to indoctrination, must be doubled by real access means to it, at everyone's reach. It is important for each of us to learn their roots.

***2.D.C.: Great personalities of Romania have lived and accomplished important historical acts within the halls of the Cotroceni Museum. What do you feel when walking into those rooms? Can the tumult of those times still be felt?***

**L.J.:** I step in with some kind of shyness and a great feeling of responsibility. But I would say that, contrariwise to those times and events, one can sense the peace, there is a feeling of reconciliation with the decisions made by the involved parties. Although important directions of the Romanian nation started from here, these are not controversial, and the blending between the images of the personalities that marked the destiny of this space and the rooms that keep the authentic style is giving a feeling of balance.

**3.D.C.: Cotroceni National Museum is perceived as a more difficult objective to access, due to its position in the vicinity of the Presidential Administration. Regarding the promotion of the museum, what are the levers and channels through which you achieve this?**

**L.J.:** The traditional ones, at the reach of all public categories. We promote the events and collections on our website page, on the specific pages in social media channels, and also with the help of our media partners we have at the most important events. The constant partnerships we have with organizations and institutes also represent an important mean of advertise the museum's activity, as well as the itinerant exhibitions we have around the country. We highly appreciate and take count of the opinions of our visitors, which are also an important mean of promotion.

**4.D.C.: Such a museum also has the obligation to develop and maintain international relations. How do you see this side of the museum's activity?**

**L.J.:** There are many ways we see and take action in this regard. Starting with the visiting of the museum, it's main activity – a great part of the Cotroceni National Museum public consists in foreign visitors, tourists or official delegations –, continuing with the itinerant exhibitions – many of them being taken abroad –, or our cultural diplomacy projects – in collaboration with foreign partners, concerts to honour ambassadors in our country etc. An example: I pleasurably remember our partnership with the Polish Institute for "Polish and Romanian women who changed the world" exhibition we had at the museum in 2019, followed this year by the "The Hearts Alliance", an exhibition made with the help of the Diplomatic Archives within The Foreign Affairs Ministry, to celebrate 100 years since the signing of the Defensive Alliance Convention at Bucharest between the Romanian Kingdom and the Republic of Poland (March 3, 1921), in the context of the state visit of the President of the Republic of Poland to Romania. I gave this example being convinced that, in this area, we need continuity and consistency, and not singular initiatives. It is important to build brick by brick.

**5. D.C.: What projects do you intend to complete? Do you have plans to organize thematic exhibitions or some events in the near future?**

**L.J.:** We have recently inaugurated a new section of our permanent exhibition, hosted in the Main Cellar, representing the evolution of the Cotroceni ensemble throughout the years. In fact, this is a part of a great project organized this year, "Once upon a time at Cotroceni", marking the three decades of activity the Cotroceni National Museum is celebrating in 2021. I've only mentioned the most important project of the Cultural Programme of the Museum for the current year because, although there are certain restraints due to the pandemic, we have succeeded this year also to organize many temporary exhibitions, to publish important paper works from the Editorial Plan of the Museum and also to display online exhibitions and virtual tours etc. Regarding your question on the thematic exhibitions, I can tell you that we are preparing to present in September "The Earth Predictions" exhibition, dedicated to the climatic changes, as an alarm signal through artistic means. We intend to itinerate this project after being displayed at the Cotroceni National Museum, so that it can reach many places from our country and abroad for the next two years.

**6. D.C.: What do you say to those who preach the disappearance of the contemplative side of the human personality, of creativity and revelation as engines of knowledge, which will be replaced by exclusively technical skills? Is there a threat that, in the near future, museums will only be visited virtually?**

**L.J.:** I avoid seeing change as a danger, I prefer to see it as an opportunity. I believe the connection with the community is an important aspect for an institution such as a museum, and, from this perspective, I think museums will remain meeting places for people. Otherwise, I believe it is important to adapt to the changes and to understand that, virtually, we can reach a much larger audience. Here, at the Cotroceni National Museum, we are trying to adapt to this change, so we are offering in digital form some of our publications, we prepare an online version for each temporary exhibition, if not a virtual tour. For the future, we are hoping that some of the publications and objects at our Souvenirs Shop will be available to be purchased online.

**7.D.C.: Have you considered accessing European funds?**

**L.J.:** Yes. We are preparing this kind of projects. But we will announce them when we complete the necessary documentation and documents.

**8.D.C.: Can history be defined as an exact science?**

**L.J.:** In my opinion, defining history as an exact science very much depends on the sources of the presented information. We always discover something new, we research and complete the past and this helps us better understand the times we live in. Paul Halsall defined history as "a conversation about the past", and in a conversation the opinions and points of view are different and diverse.

**9.D.C.: Is the history of mankind the history of ideas or rather an endless series of events whose consequences are experienced by the future generations?**

**L.J.:** A history of ideas that the future generations can find, at a certain point, in the present, which they can use and improve through the experiences we have learned from the past.