

**The art of making choices and the choice to work with the arts**  
*The Romanian Cultural Institute in New York , between cultural connection  
and institutional development*

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Policy choices when heading an already existing art organization are difficult to make and even more difficult to keep. And they have to be made quickly and clearly because in arts and culture, like in business, the quicker one gets the lot!

Question is : how does one compose a programming visible and attractive enough to successfully address New York's saturated audiences and selective and demanding spectators?

First action one has to take (although the most difficult to translate into facts) is the capacity to establish and respect a clear and rigorous conduct line in the programming policy. This kind of radical views takes everyone by surprise and might disappoint some of your potential 'clients' and already accustomed audiences. On the other hand, it has the merit to bring in a sense of new start as well as a sense of redesigned identity to the organization.

Why don't you do it the old way-many would ask? What is it so wrong about having all sorts of artists of all generations, all styles and all content presented by the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York, as long as they are related in a way or another to Romania?!

There recurrent questions can only be answered by perseverance and faith that the choices made are valuable and strategic. Also, by the capacity to build around your programming a team that adheres to these choices and also to attract new audiences, that enjoy and appreciate them.

A second action in pursuing a newly designed institutional strategy is to shatter old habits in term of location and get out to the city . RCINY started very aggressively since 2006 to provoke their audience to move out of the headquarters and see events that RCI co-organized in collaboration with galleries, museums, libraries and concert and cinema theaters in New York city or Washington DC. We reenacted Green Hours at The Telephone Bar and organized The Romanian Film Festival at Tribeca Cinemas , initiated a debate on Cultural Policies at Columbia university and presented at NYU University chair of music the American-Romanian Jazz suite. We collaborated closely with the New York Public Library for the seminar on Modern Architecture in Eastern Europe provided films and content for the Washington National Art Gallery' Romanian cinema Season. RCINY successfully restaged itself inside the very bosom of the city's prestigious and alternative art spaces and embedded itself there in almost no time.

Last , but not least, the critical action of patiently building confidence with people and institutions, making meaningful connections and responding to immediate opportunities were a third component of institutional profiling. In example, when the festival of European cultural Institutes in New York needed Romanian input, RCINY offered knowledgeable insight into the new cultural diplomacy practices and curated , together with Italy, Hungary, Germany and Slovenia a roundtable presented at CUNY and Columbia University in 2006.

When Artslink fellowship program (the most important grant giving organization for Russian and eastern European arts )decided to organize they annual farewell meeting at one of the Cultural Institutes, we were first on the list of possible hosts and of course, took the opportunity of accepting this very important networking event in November 2007.

Also, when the film Society of Lincoln Center decided to organize in April 2008 a Romanian retrospective season ( 25 Romanian older and new wave feature films to be presented ), RCINY was considered to be the ideal partner.

But the real answer confirmation of the relevance of this newly designed strategic thinking in RCINY came from artists themselves: their invaluable , unique and inspiring input. In 2006, arriving in the middle of the over competitive and over dynamic New York and taking over the complex task, as freshly appointed director of the Romanian Cultural Institute, to reconfigure the organization's profile, my mind was already clear:

First: RCINY will invest a lot of my energy to bring over the emergent generation of Romanian arts.

Second: RCINY will try to show how Romanians can work as accomplished professionals of international cultural cooperation

The fact is, I was on a lucky track. Emerging arts are at their best in today's Romania.

Be it under the artistic personae of playwrights like Gianina Carbuariu and Stefan Peca, both staged in Germany, Austria, France and Great Britain and largely covered by cultural reviewers , or of visual artists that are presented by MoMa in New York (Perjovschi) or represented by Yvon Lambert Gallery in Paris and New York(Cantor), or like those sky rocketing talents like Victor Man, Adrian Ghenie and Ciprian Muresan (so astutely promoted in the last years by Galeria Plan B director Mihai Pop) and last but not least like piano interpreters Matei Varga ,Bogdan Untea and Andrei Licaret ( very talented and multiawarded ) , Romanian young arts are 'under the radar' nowadays.

The peak of these two years seasons was, however, support in favor of Romanian cinema. And if Puiu, Porumboiu, Mungiu , Nemescu, Muntean , Mitulescu are at the beginning of a much longer list and brought Romania more than anyone in the limelight of international press, RCINY can only observe it was one of their most active supporters. Maybe also because these film makers , too, have made their radical and meaningful choices. And, eventually, success followed!