

The Monumental Ensemble from Târgu Jiu. History and Symbolic Interpretations

PhD. Lecturer Laura Sînziana Cuciuc Romanescu
Ovidius University of Constanta, Romania

Abstract: *The universal innovator of sculpture, one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century, who demonstrated that modern art while maintaining the fundamental characteristics, namely rationality, harmony, balance, measure, finds sources long before the period in which Mediterranean civilization was defined by Celery classical statuary, is Constantin Brâncuși¹.*

The monumental complex of Târgu-Jiu, one of Brâncuși masterpieces, can be regarded as a manifestation of ancient Romanian traditions related to the cult of the dead and a dedication to heroism. The assembly begins on the shores of Jiu river, symbol of the journey of no return, as water never flows only in one direction. Roundtable stone reminiscent of the meals for the dead unsoumned or those who come to the great days. The seats, located far away from the table, are like silent shadows made for those that are not.

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Determining, by his style and work, a complete break from what had up to that point, Constantin Brâncuși set up a new language in modern sculpture² by addressing some forms of plastic, other than anthropomorphic, suggesting abstractions, and morphological changes new approach. Characterized by simplicity and perfect calm, its forms reflects the artist's creative attitude renounce feelings and message transmission through the human body and figurative reality.

His works of art have been seen in numerous exhibitions in Bucharest, Paris, New York, Chicago, and those of the complex from Târgu-Jiu were forged in space. Although there was a withdrawn personality, hasn't worked in secret, many people could visit the artist's studio in Paris, and now insists various interpretations of the meaning and symbolism of his works³, the inventiveness of their morphology.

Around genius of Constantin Brâncuși and his works has been created a legend, a myth that stretches from his native village to Bucharest, Craiova, Târgu-Jiu, Paris, crossing the ocean in New York, Philadelphia, virtually anywhere work is artist or their commentators.⁴

In complex sculptural in Târgu-Jiu, made "to glorify the memory of heroes from Gorj who sacrificed themselves in war"⁵ and inaugurated on October 27, 1938,⁶ the symbol is the carrier of meanings coming from the archaic folk invoice our spiritual space and mythological.⁷

¹ Ion Nandriș, *Echoes in the Artefacts. Memory, Form and Prehistory of Brâncuși*, în *Brâncuși la apogeu. Noi perspective*, volumul Colocviului internațional, Ed. Univers enciclopedic, București, 2001, p. 26.

² Dan Mihăilescu, *Limbajul culorilor și al formelor*, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, București, 1980, p. 180.

³ Petru Comărnescu, *Constantin Brâncuși*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1972, p. 17.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Arh. St. Tg. Jiu, fond Primăria orașului Tg. Jiu, dosar 141/1935, f. 1.

⁶ Ștefan Georgescu-Gorjan, *Amintiri despre Brâncuși*, Ed. Scrisul românesc, Craiova, 1988, p. 169.

⁷ Dan Mihăilescu, *op.cit.*, p. 177-178.

Erected as a tribute in memory of heroes who have sacrificed for freedom of Romanian soil⁸, the unit of the assembly from Târgu-Jiu and the structure of each individual piece, fully expresses this goal. *Table of Silence* is located near the place where the sacrifice for our country has been like a meditation altar with ancestral shades. In the eastern axle stands *The Gate*, like a triumphal arch dedicated victorious soldiers and finally stands as a pillar funeral but also as a symbol of glory and immortality, *The Endless Column*, the obelisk of the history of the Romanian people. Between the three objectives, uniting them opens the Heroes's Way considered a Via Sacra of Romanian heroism.⁹

When lifting memorial was commissioned which will constitute the complex in Târgu-Jiu, Constantin Brâncuși, eager for a long time to create something on the ground of his homeland, he composed all the various forms and monuments, some of them already in his creation,¹⁰ other novels. All of them will gain significances and correlations in the context of commemoration.

For achieving the monumental ensemble, Constantin Brâncuși at the beginning thought only to a column, and along the way included in the project and a port that had "made a short distance inside the garden (public) ... that can be seen as an object itself ... with a proportionate hammer around and a stone bench to the right and left"¹¹. The Table was included last.

The column made from iron and steel ends the monumental series of wooden columns, began in 1918.¹² Gate is the culmination basis of the Kiss, appeared as early as 1907, in the form of sculptures, continued through the columns of kiss maximum styling or ideograms.¹³ The Gate structure is prefigured in limestone home built in 1932.

The Way of the Heroes, drawn by the Brâncuși's triad is not visible to visitors because of the distance between the Table of Silence Park, Alley of Chairs, Gate of the Kiss and The Endless Column, but mainly because of the gradual development together since 1938, shaft Way of the Heroes becoming mostly mental.

The Heroism, the basic theme of the Târgu-Jiu Ensemble, impressed the audience of the time, works glorifying "endless gratitude to those who sacrificed themselves in war."¹⁴

The sculptor thought the monumental complex in mind memorabilia day October 14, 1916, when German troops broke the Romanian army in the mountains Gorjului resistance. This is the day, the policeman Ion Popilian,¹⁵ one of the few remaining in Târgu-Jiu evacuated managed by an act of great courage, to defend the city from the enemy army.

Therefore, Constantin Brâncuși conceived The Table as a table weight of forests outlawry ancestors, a table of 12 captains advice outlaws. The table was intended to call the advice fighters and defenders of freedom and justice. According to Dan Smîntînescu, it seems that the original title of the *Table*, gave by the author was *Table of the captains*.¹⁶

⁸ Ion Itu, *Trup și destin uman în geometria ansamblului de la Târgu-Jiu*, în *Brâncuși. Omagiu 100*, Tipografia Târgu-Jiu, 1976, p. 60.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ Petru Comărnescu, *op.cit.*, p. 168.

¹¹ Doina Lemny, Cristian Robert Velescu, *Corespondență din septembrie 1937*, în *Brâncuși inedit. Însemnări și corespondență românească*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 2004, p. 413-414.

¹² Ștefan Georgescu-Gorjan, *op.cit.*, p. 60.

¹³ Nina Stănculescu, *Brâncuși*, Ed. Albatros, București, 1981, p.96.

¹⁴ Ion Mocioi, *De la ideea unui monument al eroilor la o operă filozofică*, în *Brâncuși. Omagiu 100*, Tipografia Târgu-Jiu, 1976, p. 73.

¹⁵ Dan Smîntînescu, *Semnificația complexului monumental de la Tg.-Jiu*, în *Brâncuși. Omagiu 100*, Tipografia Târgu-Jiu, 1976, p. 127

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 128.

From the center of the Table, Brâncuși drew a line perpendicular to the highest point of the city, where he sat the monumental column of the infinite, meant to recall the heroic struggle of the Jiu.

Originally called *Immortality Column*, the Column is forged by styling posts from prispele Gorj, a suite of rhomboid-hourglass, which means endless flow of time, keeping in memory heroism Romanians. Like Trajan's Column in Rome or Nelson's Column in London, Column immortality keep alive the historical fact of Târgu-Jiu, glorifying old ladies and children who stopped the German army entered the city, like Stephen the Great's Plaies from Neamt Fortress.¹⁷

Regarding the Gate of the Kiss, originally called the author *the Gate of brotherhood heroes*, it also represented a triumph arc, symbolizing the link between human duality of love and peace¹⁸, included in eternal embrace.

Brâncuși gave no explanation for Târgu-Jiu complex but the genius sculptor has left everyone to their own interpretation, symbolism assembly being revealed by researchers in many ways.

The Round Table, consisting of two thick slabs of stone¹⁹, uneven, overlapping, not a regular table, her legs having no place for potential users, and seats are located far from the table. Table of Silence defines a space loaded with meaning²⁰. Circle, without beginning or end, a symbol of continuity, sign geometric configuration of the universe, is the ideal expression of love and harmony supreme. In the round table to predict the influence Sarmisegetuza Regia, with the solar disk of andesite and its circular sanctuaries, ancient calendars that marked the time.

The Circle, one of the fundamental symbols with cross and square, signifying eternity²¹, has the power of defense. In the past, when a city was besieged, form followed by all the faithful clergy procession, carrying with them the sacred relics and miracle-working icon and surrounded by three or seven times lifting the city entered a prayer invoking space and drew divine power protector.

Surrounded by twelve chairs, the hourglass, symbol of time passing²², the Table of Silence becomes a symbolic place of silence, meditation and recunoaștință to those who sacrificed in the war²³. Perfect shape, simple while the stone table is actually an interpretation of peasant wooden tables, low paneled round.

The traditions strongly related to Romanian people of folklore and its beliefs, its significance Table Brâncuși gave the ancient meeting, that of the family gadering.²⁴ In the context of all of Târgu-Jiu, stone table gets its meaning peak, becoming a symbol of the society of our land.

At Constantin Brâncuși, the beautiful and the nice idea is an act of human communication. For public seats at the table is a time for meditation and prayer. Refers to past stone and eternity. Table of Silence, meditation and thanksgiving table²⁵, invites you to sit down and regain consciousness and time that went that far.

Following the Path of Heroes, switching from the Table of Silence, the Gate of the Kiss column to reach infinity. The table is close to the Porte, and between them a little time

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 129.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ Ștefan Georgescu-Gorjan, *op.cit.*, p. 166.

²⁰ Mircea Țoca, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

²¹ Jean Chevalier, Alain Gheerbrant, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 294.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 336.

²³ Petru Comărnescu, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 233.

²⁵ Dan Mihăilescu, *op.cit.*, p. 179.

for meditation, Alley of Chairs²⁶. Constantin Brâncuși placed from place to place, grouped by three, 30 chairs and between banks. If your bank invites conversation, the seat allows only a brief pause for thought. These chairs perfectly symmetrical hourglass pave the way to column.

The Gate of the Kiss, important work both in terms of sculptural and architectural monument is symbolic.²⁷ Such a triumphal arch, the Gate symbolizes the triumph of life over death and suffering.

The upper side of the Gate consists of a parallelepiped huge block of stone, which are dug sixteen areas that kissing is carved stylized symbol.²⁸ The two pillars are designed in two portions stones dug inside glued to their cross.

At the top of the columns on each of the four sides appear dug deeper reason schematic of kissing, recorded in a circular form, where it seems that bodies and souls are united, where the living dead are tied in the name of life.

Regarding the theme for Gate and its meanings, it comes from folklore and Romanian folk style.²⁹ Based on the popular legend hug trees, symbolizing love living, this idea gained thereafter sculptor interpretation, the meaning of marriage the dead³⁰, for the first time in the tomb of Tania Rașevskaia from Montparnasse.³¹

The Gate assembly in Târgu-Jiu is actually shape the theme kiss, first addressed the aforementioned tomb. If Kiss Gate, forms and purposes has a major difference from previous versions of the theme. Being a monument to the heroes emmoria for home, pillars, people are no longer in this case the love between man and woman, but love the community, descendants gratitude to those who sacrificed for them.³²

As we approach the Column, it seems to run everything above the sky. Far seems static building, but if you change the angle from which it is viewed, it appears that spins like a drill into the sky. Rhomboid's halves are at both ends suggests that it is not limited in one direction or the other.

Regarding the symbolism of the Column, it can be interpreted as a giant pillar of the dead, a ladder to heaven, a foreshadowing of interplanetary flight,³³ a symbol of the infinite cosmos eternal life, travel, that man dreamed of.³⁴

Since the first trial, when he appeared modest, wood, three diamonds stacked,³⁵ the Column was loaded with the attributes you will receive later: the tree of life, the column of air, heavenly tree. The multiplication of diamond, which combines vertical elongation men with feminine roundness,³⁶ symbolizes, first of all, just as stylish on the frieze scrijelirea kissing gate, the humanity.

The Column's meanings regarded as heavenly tree or tree of life, rooted in mythology Romanian people, this tree is really the tree, a tree considered sacred throughout Southeastern Europe, since the time of the Thracians.³⁷

²⁶ Nina Stănculescu, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

²⁷ Barbu Brezianu, *Brâncuși în România*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 1976, p.165.

²⁸ Nina Stănculescu, *op.cit.*

²⁹ Petru Comărnescu, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

³⁰ Tancred Bănățeanu, *Le mariage des morts et ses reflets dans le folklore indo-europeen*, în *Revue des Etudes Indo-europeenes*, IV, Ed. Librăria Academică, București, 1947, p. 182.

³¹ Nina Stănculescu, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

³² Petru Comărnescu, *op.cit.*, p. 194.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 171.

³⁴ Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Constantin Brâncuși*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1981, p. 100.

³⁵ Nina Stănculescu, *op.cit.*, p. 97.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ Romulus Vulcănescu, *Coloana cerului*, Editura Academiei, București, 1972, p. 25.

The Tree, the most representative Romanian mountain totem of civilization³⁸, was considered sacred tree, celestial, cosmic, life and death, represented very often in folk songs, the objects of worship, popular sculptures, ceramics, emblems. In mythology, fir-tree was considered a man. In front of him, primitives worshiped as a god and worship god Thracians tree consecrated life Dionysus. Symbol of vitality and fertility of the earth, tree, tree-man, is present in all the ceremonies and ancient traditions of the Romanian people, he with youth without old age and life without death.³⁹

Linking heaven and earth, with roots deep in the earth and the sky tends crown, tree served as altar ancient rituals and traditions.

As a result of these meanings of the tree, Romanian archaic totem, we can say that Brâncuși's endless column is more than one column of the sky is an abstract representation of the tree-man⁴⁰ in all its beauty and grandeur.

The Brâncuși's Column in the world has a unique, different from all other columns. The originality of it is due to the very fact that it comes from trees represent life and death, overlapping vertical axis straight, to heaven. Abstract representation of these trees, as repeated diamonds, is common in Romanian folk art. These diamonds are found in column lined Brâncuși himself confessed that his work started by nature: "I started always from an idea from nature."⁴¹

The monumental complex can be regarded as a manifestation of ancient Romanian traditions related to the cult of the dead. The assembly begins on the shores of Jiu river, symbol of the journey of no return, as water never flows only in one direction. Roundtable stone reminiscent of the meals for the dead unsoumoned or those who come to the great days. The seats, located far away from the table, are like silent shadows made for those that are not.

This true epopee from bronze and stone⁴², the complex honors the heroes yet the heroic death brings life everlasting praise. The Table, The Gate, The Column, learn us how to travel there over the centuries and universality of a people⁴³. These three signs huge real milestones between heaven and earth, between the ideal and existence were placed in the memory of a specific time, crucial in our history, managed to stand witness today its uninterrupted flow.

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³⁸ Constantin Zărnescu, *Aforisme și textele lui Brâncuși*, Ed. Cartimpex, Cluj, 1998, p. 158.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 159.

⁴⁰ Romulus Vulcănescu, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

⁴¹ Petru Comărnescu, *Brâncuși. Mit și metamorfoză în sculptura contemporană*, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1972, p. 277.

⁴² Constantin Zărnescu, *op.cit.*, p. 164.

⁴³ Col. Radu Constantinescu, *O meditație românească în piatră*, în *Almanahul oștirii*, București, 1989, p. 141.

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Laura Sînziana Cuciuc Romanescu, born in 20.07.1982 works at Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania, Faculty of Arts, Fine Arts Speciality. Main specialities: Painting and Graphic Techniques, Antropology of Arts. PhD Degree in History, with thesis *Military Symbols in Romanian Interwar Art*.