

„National art and industry in the interwar period. Three Romanian factories”

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Abstract: *This article aims to recover a less studied subject of great interest: the encounter between arts and industry in the first half of the 20th century, particularly in the interwar period, on Romanian territory. The case study of the paper is the activity of three industrial establishments: the DAC Luxury Ceramics factory in Satu Mare, the Ernest Ruffer faience stoves and ceramic factory in Bucharest, the Tompa Brothers Ceramics and Art Industry in Turda. The article intends to show details about the history and production of these factories to analyze how the small industrialists contributed to defining the national art discourse and production in the era. At the same time, the work tries to fill a gap regarding the knowledge of Romanian applied arts in the interwar period.*

Keywords: *Industrial Art; Decorative Arts; Modernization; National identity; Aurel Popp; Ernest Ruffer; The Tompa Brothers;*

Introduction

This paper represents the continuation of research that started with my doctoral thesis, *Identity, style and national specificity in Romanian Art: The Prof. Dr. Nicolae Minovici National Art Museum between tradition and modernity*, which aims at recovering a context of great interest, less studied by specialists: the encounter between arts and industry in the first half of the 20th century, particularly in the interwar period, on Romanian territory².

The case study of this paper is the activity of three Romanian industrial establishments: the DAC Luxury Ceramics factory in Satu Mare, the Ernest Ruffer faience stoves and ceramic factory in Bucharest, respectively the Tompa Brothers Ceramics and Art Industry in Turda. The three factories have been selected following the direct contact within the Prof. Dr. Nicolae Minovici Museum in Bucharest with the products of Ruffer and Tompa. The DAC factory illustrates the condition of a painter-potter character of great interest in Romanian modern art history, Aurel Popp.

The intention of the article is to bring to light details about the history and production of these factories in order to analyze how the small industrialists helped define national art in the era. At the same time, the work tries to fill a gap regarding the knowledge of Romanian applied arts in the interwar period.

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² Mădălina-Ioana Manolache. 2023. *Identitate, stil și specific național în arta și industria românească: Muzeul de Artă Națională Prof. Dr. Nicolae Minovici între tradiție și modernitate*, Teză de doctorat. București: Universitatea Națională de Arte din București.

1. Methodology

In my doctoral thesis, I have shown how Romanian artists, architects, and intellectuals from the end of the 19th and 20th century, especially in the interwar period, tried to lay the theoretical foundations of historically, socially, and culturally representative Romanian art, which would capture and highlight national features³. Such a national art encapsulated the legacy of the Romanian artistic past, full of numerous external influences - such as the Byzantine style - that were assimilated by its creators (from village potters to church builders, etc.)⁴. The new duty of the artist was to create modern national art by continuing and transforming the artistic tradition closest to the Romanian spirit, unequivocally identified by the majority as folk art⁵.

I use the terms modern, modernity, tradition, and traditional mainly in their aesthetic and cultural sense when I am talking about the artistic production. The two relatively opposite poles, but which collide, almost merging, characterize a facet of Romanian culture in the studied period. The term modernization has the meaning of technical evolution, in the sense of progress, especially when talking about the equipment used by the factories, much evolved compared to the archaic tools of traditional potters. The modernity is also deeply intertwined with the emergence of the national state.

If the programmatic writings of intellectuals and artists were numerous, there would have been fewer voices to follow the outcome of these achievements, especially in the field of the decorative arts. Some critics compared the modern applied arts to greenhouse flowers: rich in ornamental motifs slavishly copied from peasant artifacts, that produced no aesthetic effect and were not truly representative of the Romanian spirit⁶. Thus, today few details related to the national applied arts are known, partly because of the criticism they faced in the era, as well as the refusal of specialists to study them.

Knowledge in the field is so limited that we can rarely attribute modern national style furniture to a specific carpentry factory or ceramic objects to a particular workshop. A way to recover this history starts primarily from the material study of objects, in the privileged case of museums, as well as from written sources such as periodical articles or archival documents. This is another reason that substantiated the analyzing of the three interwar period establishments' history and activity.

In this paper, I have presented DAC, Ruffer and the Tompa Brothers as interwar factories, as they were founded in the era (with the exception of the Ruffer factory, as will be seen) and also functioned and reached their greatest achievements during this period of both great flourishing and many trials for the Romanian industry.

In chapter II, I have briefly presented the way artists, on one hand, tried to lay the foundations of a modern national Romanian art that would include both applied and industrial arts. On the other hand, I've mentioned two official endeavors tied to this desideratum: that of creating artisans and future industrialists through specialized schools and the creation of the law for national industry encouragement. The producers were thus formed and supported by the state. In turn, they had to create a new form of national art that would be both modern and traditional!

For each factory studied in the next three chapters (DAC, chapter III; Ruffer, chapter IV; Tompa Brothers, chapter V), I have consulted archival files, most of them unedited sources, from

³ M. Manolache, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-133, pp. 145-147.

⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 122-124.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 128-133, pp. 145-147.

⁶ George Oprescu & Henri Focillon. 1937. *L'art du paysan roumain*. Bucharest: Acad. Roumaine, p. 10.

the Ministry of Industry and Commerce funds found at the National Archives of Romania, which depict how the industrial establishments have received the benefits of the law for national industry encouragement. The files show us details about the history of the factories, the raw materials and equipment that were used, and they also inform us about their products. Each factory has a unique way of presentation, emphasizing its artistic pursuits and research in the field of old Romanian ornamentation, or its reputation and modern industrialized production techniques and equipment.

For the Tompa Brothers, as they were Romanian citizens of Hungarian ethnicity, I have also consulted the archival files of the House of Administration and Supervision of Enemy Assets, an organism which abusively interfered with the lives of Germans and Hungarians living in Romania from 1945. The study therefore extends beyond the interwar period, but only to briefly show details related to the end of the activity of the Ruffer and Tompa factories, while facing the communist regime's oppressions.

Considering the archival information and studying the periodical articles, we can partially reconstruct the history of some forgotten factories that contributed, at least tangentially, to the creation of national applied arts. For the Ruffers, the information the paper brings is rather new, as they haven't been studied by another author but myself. It is not the case for the DAC and Tompa Brothers companies, which have been recently very briefly studied by a few authors, as will be seen. Thus, information from periodical sources and the most recent studies is combined to give a more complete picture of the three artisan factories.

Nevertheless, the chapters IV and V end with a brief analysis of Ruffer and Tompa ceramics from the Nicolae Minovici Museum collections, as an attempt to offer a description of the kind of applied art that these factories produced. In this way, we can compare the discourse and the products, the text and the image, the project and the products. The visual analysis of a small selection from the heritage of the Minovici Museum also completes the picture of the production of these factories, that are less known today by specialists. None to few museums value such objects which are testimonies of the encounter between craft and industrialization, folk art and cult art, respectively, tradition and modernity.

The final chapter is dedicated to drawing conclusions based on a summarizing comparison between the three factories. Through the stylistic analysis of the objects and the consultation of the mentioned documents, we can understand how the discourse on national art was shaped by the small industrialists. This is a simple, easy-to-use methodology that combines research with the material study of museum heritage, which can serve as a model in the valorization of the applied/industrial arts.

2. Legislation, artistic program and national production

At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a large community of Romanian artists and intellectuals who tried to lay the foundations of a theoretical program for the applied arts that would contain formal coordinates of the local tradition: the painter Apcar Baltazar or the architect Nicolae Ghika-Budești⁷, to name just a few. The industrialization of art was to be integrated into the national identity representation program while raising the economy. At the same time, the creation of a national industry could also decrease the number of imports⁸.

⁷ Apcar Baltazar, pp. 152-161. 1974. „Note asupra industriei de artă”. In *Convorbiri artistice*, ed. by Radu Ionescu, 152-161. București: Ed. Meridiane. N. Ghika-Budești. 1906. „Încercări de artă decorativă românească”, *Arhitectura*, 1 (1): 38-41.

⁸ A. Baltazar, *op. cit.*, p. 154-155.

Therefore, the new interior design would preserve folk art formulas suited to modern urban living conditions. Thus, objects imitating peasant furniture, pottery, and traditional fabrics made in city factories adorned urban houses.

Arts and crafts and vocational schools trained masters who would teach artistic principles and techniques in schools throughout the country, as well as future industrialists or factory workers. In the field of ceramic industry, the small factories tried to fulfill the national aspiration by creating artistic objects inspired by the traditional folk art, such as stoves or ceramic objects. The small industry was encouraged by the national state through numerous laws.

At the end of the 19th century, the Romanian state pursued the country's industrialization, carrying out a policy of industrial support by adopting numerous laws, such as the law for the national industry encouragement (on April 21, 1887)⁹. The beneficiaries of the law were those industrial establishments with a minimum of 25 workers and a capital of at least 50,000 lei; instead, they enjoyed the exemption from taxes, free entry into the country of the necessary machines and raw materials, the reduction of tariffs on the Romanian Railways, etc.¹⁰. To meet the shortcomings of this law (which expired after 15 years and was dedicated only to the heavy industry), on April 1, 1912, the new law for the encouragement included the small scale industry while offering the same benefits, minus the customs exemptions for raw materials¹¹. In 1921, after the historical provinces of Romania reunited in the aftermath of the First World War, the law was extended to the entire country¹². Some of the beneficiaries of this law were the three factories studied in this paper. The archival documents preserve valuable information regarding the history and activity of these establishments.

3. DAC Luxury Ceramic Factory in Satu Mare

DAC Luxury Ceramic Factory (fig. 1), an anonymous Romanian company from Satu Mare, received the advantages of the law for the encouragement of the industry in 1923 provisionally¹³. The archival files offer one of the most valuable descriptions regarding the functioning of an industrial establishment in the field of ceramics, from raw materials and special equipment to products. The artistic director of DAC, Aurel Popp (or Papp) was best recognized by researchers and museum staff, thanks to his painting career, in contrast with the other industrialists studied in this paper¹⁴.

⁹ V. Manole. 1991. „Introducere”. In *Documente privind dezvoltarea industriei oraşului Bucureşti, 1856-1933*, ed. by V. Manole, 3-22. Bucureşti: Direcţia Generală a Arhivelor Statului din România, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹¹ The new beneficiaries were industrial enterprises that employed 20 workers or had a power of 5 H. P., with a minimum of 4 day laborers or permanent employees, craftsmen cooperative societies with at least 2,000 lei capital and a minimum of 10 workers or associates, as well as village cooperatives that employed at least 20 workers in the household industry. In turn, 75% of administrative staff and at least 25% of technical staff was obliged to have Romanian citizenship. The beneficiaries also had to respond to an annual industrial survey. *Ibidem*, pp. 8-9.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹³ *Arhivele Naţionale Istorice Centrale (A.N.I.C.), Fond Ministerul Industriei şi Comerţului (M.I.C.), Direcţia industriei – Ceramică şi materiale de construcţii/1922, d. 7/1922-1936, f. 2, 23.*

¹⁴ Imola Kiss. 1992-1993. „«Nu mai doresc să pictez bujori...» – Ars poetica lui Aurel Popp”. *Satu Mare – Studii şi Comunicări, Arheologie – Istorie – Etnografie – Artă – Ştiinţele Naturii – Conservare – Restaurare, Artă*, 9-10: 287-2911. Negoită Lăptoiu. 1969. „O viguroasă personalitate a vieţii artistice româneşti: sătmăreanul Aurel Popp”. *Satu Mare, Studii şi Comunicări, Arheologie – Istorie – Etnografie – Artă*, 1: 461-467. D. Păcuraru. 2019. *În atelierul lui Aurel Popp*, Bucureşti: Ed. Tracus Arte.



Fig. 1. Advertisement for DAC luxury ceramic factory (source: A.N.I.C., M.I.C., *Direcția industriei - Ceramică și materiale de construcții/1922, d. 7/1922-1936, f. 1.*)

Aurel Popp was an artist from Satu Mare, born on August 30, 1879, in Căuș commune (a territory of Hungarian occupation), who graduated from the Superior School of Drawing and Calligraphy in Budapest (1899-1903), undertaking study trips to Italy and following the courses of the Julian Academy in Paris from 1910¹⁵. As a young artist, he was interested in the decorative arts, and in 1908 published a pamphlet called *On the Present Artistic and Craftsmanship Situation of Our City*¹⁶. In 1921, the artist became one of the founders of the DAC factory.

According to the memorandum submitted to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce in 1922, the DAC Factory, located in Grădina Romei on Calea Traian Street in the city of Satu Mare, was established on October 1, 1921, assuming the role "of producing all kinds of ceramic objects that we have had to import from abroad, from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Belgium, etc. Apart from providing the domestic market with these products, we aim to popularize and introduce in this branch of the artistic industry the Daco-Roman character and decorative motifs; therefore, we want the nationalization of this industry not only of the capital but even of the art"¹⁷.

It is obvious that the factory lined up with the project of laying the foundations of a modern national art by taking inspiration from the Daco-Roman formal coordinates which were equivalent to an artistic tradition intensively promoted by historians such as Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș or N. Iorga¹⁸. Furthermore, the factory name alluded to the inhabitants of Dacia, a territory occupied by the ancestors of the Romanians in Antiquity, while the Romans, colonizers of Dacia in 106 AD, symbolized the historical connection of modern Romanians with the civilized Occident. At the same time, the industrial establishment aimed at reviving the pre-existing local ceramic industry ("legends and tools preserved from the elders prove that there used to be a flourishing ceramic industry") as well as to open shops and warehouses in the entire country¹⁹.

The products that the establishment promised to produce were numerous: artistic Majolica objects (pots, statuettes, and other artistic pieces, among which successful experiences were achieved with statuettes and models in plaster like "The Shepherd", "Mother with little girl", "Frog", "Stabbed lions", "The monk", "Marabu bird", "Căpățână", "Dead"). Other products

¹⁵ I. Kiss, *op. cit.*, p. 287; N. Lăptoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 222.

¹⁷ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 7/1922-1936, f. 4.

¹⁸ Al. Tzigara-Samurcaș. 1925. *L'art du peuple roumain: catalogue de l'exposition de Genève, Musée Rath*. Bucharest: Fondation de S. A. R. le Prince Carol, p. 24-28. N. Iorga. 1968. „Arta populară în România”. In *Scieri despre arta românească*, ed. by Barbu Theodorescu, 29–88. București: Ed. Meridiane, p. 34. See my analysis on the matter: Manolache, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

¹⁹ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d., 7/1922-1936, f. 6, f. 7.

were: table services, plates, cups, pots; hygienic objects (cuspidors, porcelain toilets, sinks); pharmacy jars (which had already been supplied to the Pharmacy of the Worker's House in Satu-Mare); artistic and simple flower vases²⁰.

As the memoir reveals, Transylvanian artist Aurel Popp, preoccupied with studying old Romanian decoration, respectively sculptor Alezander Sarkady were in charge of the artistic production²¹. Nicolae Tonitza, painter and vehement art critic, described his first meeting with Popp in the Satu Mare factory in the pages of the *Artele frumoase* (*The fine arts*) magazine. Apparently, the potter looked down upon the public lack of interest in major art. Therefore, questioning his status as an artist, he turned to the "honest work" of pottery: "I'm not a painter. I'm not an artist at all. I thought I was. (...) I returned, not humiliated, but reborn, where everyone must return: to humble and honest work. Art is a luxury, therefore a harmful uselessness, as long as it does not help, directly and immediately, to increase and crystallize consciousness in the human masses. (...) And here I am back to the simple work, the one without madness: to the work of the potter, for the immediate needs of life... In this way, I actually help my fellows. For all man's satisfaction rests on being useful to his neighbor..."²².

On January 12, 1921, Tonitza also sent Popp his own sketches for DAC pottery design, promising to find some photographs of the friezes of Trei Ierarhi Church in Iași²³. Next year, Tonitza wrote to Popp that he believed that he could find investors for the factory in Bucharest; at the same time, he advised his friend to send better samples of the products, as the ones he had sent were inferior and not as esthetic as the ones produced there²⁴.

The memorandum shows that the DAC factory experts researched local raw materials and identified good quality clay and kaolin in Satu Mare county, in Țara Oașului and Turț commune; the feldspar was imported from Germany, but the factory hoped to discover it in the country as well, as supported by the expertise of geologists. Various chemicals and paints were also imported from Germany, as well as machines worth 500,000 lei, with a mechanical force of 12 H. P.²⁵.

As the law required that a significant part of the employees had to be of Romanian nationality, in 1922 all the shareholders were Romanian (along with two Romanian companies, with the participation of the urban commune of Satu-Mare which had offered the premises). The workers were exclusively Romanian citizens, but it was necessary to bring 10 foreign workers with experience in the field from Germany and Czechoslovakia²⁶.

The map of the establishment (fig. 2) shows us the existence of a building for the workers' quarters, the mold shed, and the plaster workshop; another building consisting of an office, a packaging space, engobe and painting workshops, potter's wheels, mold and machine workshops and a dryer, respectively a building with ovens and a glazing workshop²⁷.

Officially starting its production on January 1, 1924, the factory used a higher motorized power than mentioned in 1922: 45 H. P. The administrative staff was now composed of 5 Romanian citizens, the technical staff of 2 foreign citizens, 59 specialist workers (of which, 8 were foreign and 51 Romanian), 10 Romanian day laborers along with another 20 day laborers at

²⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 4^v.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² N. Tonitza. March-April 1922. „Aurel Popp, Pictor olar”. In *Artele frumoase*, 1 (3-4): 1-2, pp. 1-2.

²³ *Idem*. 1978. *Corespondența*. București: Ed. Meridiane, pp. 48-49.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 56- 57.

²⁵ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d., 7/1922-1936, ff. 4-6.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 4^v, f. 6.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 19.

the two kaolin quarries owned by the company²⁸. The sources for raw materials have also changed, as the fabric now used 180 tons of kaolin from its own quarries in Baia Mare, 45 of tons feldspar from Orșova, 45 tons of quartz from its own quarries in Seini, Someș, and 200 kg paintings imported from Germany²⁹.

An article from the summer of 1924 shows that the factory was not yet working for the market and had only been experimenting with different materials and techniques; at the same time, the range of products had widened considerably since the ones mentioned in the memorandum. For example, Aurel Popp worked on porcelain table services consisting of 42 richly ornamented pieces in Rococo and Byzantine style³⁰; nothing is thus mentioned about the Daco-Roman motives that the factory promised to use in 1922. The interview also shows how the artist preferred the artistic activity to the commercial one. Another article from the fall of the same year further indicates that "services in Rococo, Byzantine, and purely Romanian Transylvanian styles with motifs from Țara Oașului" were made in porcelain³¹.

As it turns out, the only national coordinates the factory cultivated were the folk art motives, and in addition to those, its offer had widened to include Rococo and Byzantine styles. While the Byzantine tradition had been cultivated on the Romanian territory in the past (churches and decorative arts) it was not, in fact, a national art, but more of an assimilated influence of the old national art. At the same time, the Rococo style, an art that was not cultivated in Romania, was probably used because the factory wanted to produce more luxurious products.

In 1924, the factory asked the Ministry to transform the provisional nature of the benefits into a definitive one³². On May 1, 1925, Aurel Popp parted ways with the factory due to financial difficulties³³. The establishment continued to function until 1927 and was later transformed into a factory of prams and toys³⁴.

DAC was an enterprise that did not pass the test of time and financial difficulties, but it was also an example of the attempt to create a Romanian industrial art starting from the coordinates of the local tradition, responding to the call initiated by intellectuals, artists, and officials. If the original project of the factory was to produce, in addition to ordinary and hygienic pottery, artistic objects decorated with ornamental elements from Daco-Roman artifacts, it expanded to also include other historical styles, such as Byzantine or Rococo, while also cultivating the tradition of Țara Oașului and Transylvanian pottery. It was the case in many Romanian factories of the period, probably as an attempt to stay relevant and satisfy all kinds of tastes. Aurel Popp, artistic director for DAC for only four years, never returned to decorative arts but continued to pursue a career in the major arts, mainly in painting and graphics. The process of bringing together arts and the industry proved to be a far more complex one.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 29^v.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ Maria-Adriana Zaharia. 2019. „Ceramistul”. In *În atelierul lui Aurel Popp*, ed. By D. Păcuraru, 133-157. București: Ed. Tracus Arte, p. 149. See the images of DAC pottery in this book.

³¹ Kós Károly. 1924, August 27. „Aurel Popp – ceramistul”. *Keleti Újság*, p. 2 *Apud*. M.-A. Zaharia, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

³² *A.N.I.C.*, M.I.C., d. 7/1922-1936, f. 34.

³³ M.-A. Zaharia, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

³⁴ *A.N.I.C.*, M.I.C., d. 7/1922-1936, f. 36.

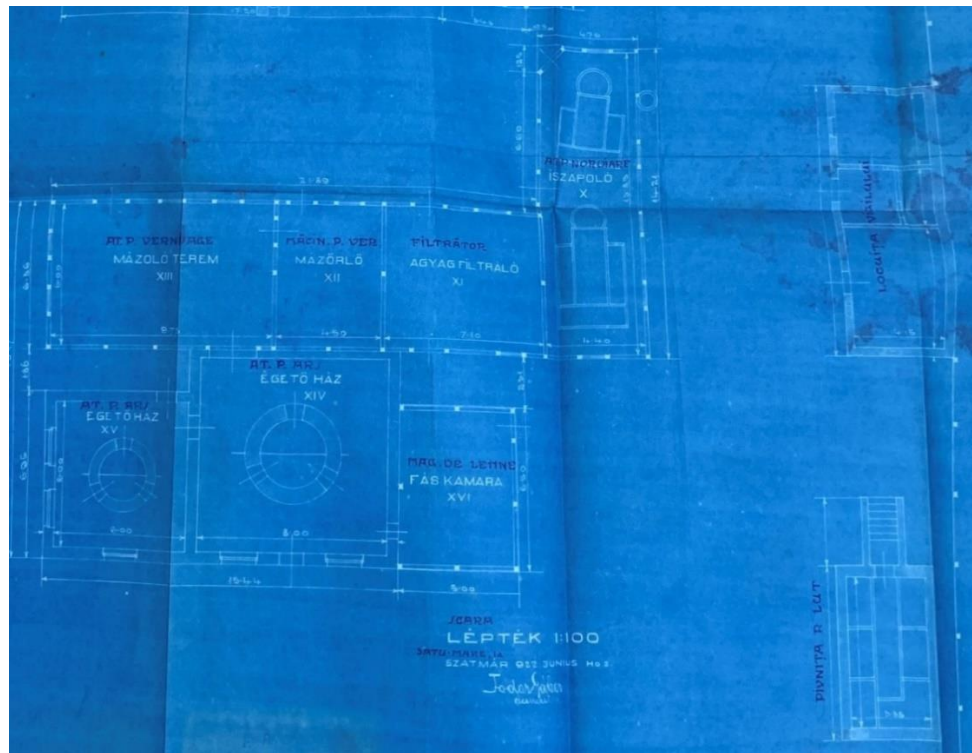
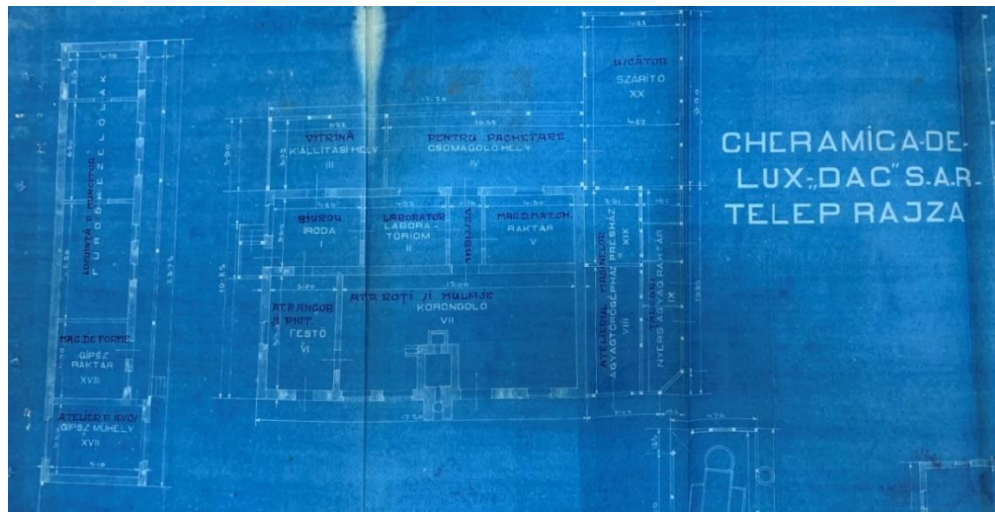


Fig. 2. DAC Factory Plan (A.N.I.C., M.I.C., Direcția industriei – Ceramică și materiale de construcții/1922, d. 7/1922-1936, f. 19)

4. The Ernest Rüffer Successors faience stoves and ceramics factory in Bucharest

In an article that will be published in *Urbanitas* magazine, I have traced a partial history of the Rüffer factories with the help of information from periodicals and archival documents³⁵. The research remains open and continues to reveal valuable information. The factories were located on the margins of Bucharest, the first one being established at the dawn of the 20th

³⁵ Mădălina Manolache. 2023. „Rüfferii. Destinul unei familii în Bucureștiul secolului 20”. *Urbanitas*, 4, pp. 184-195.

century (its first mention dates back to 1903), by a craftsman who specialized in stove making, Ernest Ruffer. In the interwar period, the business continued to prosper within the family of former German natives who had become Romanian citizens³⁶. At the same time, in addition to the joint enterprise, two of the sons, Ludovic and Ernest, simultaneously ran their own businesses with similar products³⁷.

The history of the Ernest Ruffer Successors factory is succinctly reproduced in the archive files requesting the advantages of the law for the encouragement of industry. We only learn that it was established by Ernest Ruffer (the father) and run by his four children: Ludovic, Ernest, Carol, and Olga³⁸. We also find out that the factory was "reputed and at the same time one of the oldest industries of stoves and ceramics" in the country³⁹. It is the establishment that produced the famous "Troita" pieces loved by Queen Marie of Romania herself: terracotta stoves and all kinds of pottery decorated with the traditional "Hora" dance motif⁴⁰.

Ludovic Ruffer (born on October 18, 1889) was not just an industrialist: he had a technical-artistic background as a graduate of the Royal Technical School of Ceramics in Bunzlau⁴¹ (former territory of the German Empire). This institution ensured a solid training, in an attempt to produce a national art capitalizing on local traditions⁴². No details are known yet about the formation of the other brothers. The Ernest and Ludovic Ruffer factories were a real success, participating in numerous exhibitions throughout the country and abroad⁴³. Furthermore, Ernest was awarded the First Class Commercial and Industrial Merit in 1933⁴⁴, while Carol received a patent for the baking process without an oven in 1943⁴⁵.

A factory advertisement dating from the 1930s shows us that it produced "all kinds of artistic works in terracotta and faience" and had a warehouse of "foreign and indigenous, white, gilded, Majolica stoves and chimneys from Meissen Factory" and a "special workshop for simple tiled kitchen machines. White and colored tiles for bathroom walls, etc." (fig. 3)⁴⁶. According to the investigation undertaken within the factory, it appears that "a special section" produced "Romanian-style furniture, ironwork for lamps and galleries for stoves"⁴⁷. The production offer was extensive, and the factory enjoyed a reputed tradition. The advertisement also illustrates, at the right, a model of a Saxon style stove produced by the factory, and most importantly, it also bears another symbol that the factory was known by: the folk wooden cross called „Troita”.

³⁶ Carol Ruffer, „born and raised in the country; he is the co-owner and manager of a factory of terracotta and faience stoves and various national dishes in which he employs a significant number of Romanian workers and gives practice in his workshops to more than 10 Romanian apprentices, some of them war orphans; through the activity it carries out and through the products of its industry, it is useful to the country so that it meets all the conditions prescribed by art. 7 and 8 of the law regarding the acquisition and loss of Romanian nationality, as well as that of the internship dispensation” was naturalized in 1924. „Jurnal al consiliului de miniştri nr. 2991”. (1924). *Monitorul Oficial*, 235 (1), p. 11787. For the other brothers` naturalization see Manolache, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

³⁷ M. Manolache, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-189.

³⁸ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., Ind. chimică - mat. constr. sticlă/1930, d. 36/1930, f. 3.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

⁴⁰ For more on Troita see M. Manolache, *Identitate, stil și specific*, p. 75, p. 193.

⁴¹ „Înscriere de firmă individuală nr. 1022”. (1931). *Monitorul Oficial*, 204 (2), p. 10942.

⁴² Mădălina Manolache. 2024, March 9. „Arte aplicate: Școala Regală de Ceramică din Bunzlau”. *Cotidianul*, Retrieved April 02, 2024, from <https://www.cotidianul.ro/arte-aplicate-scoala-regala-de-ceramica-din-bunzlau/>.

⁴³ M. Manolache. „Rufferii”, p. 189.

⁴⁴ „Decrete Regale”. (1933). *Monitorul Oficial*, 76 (1), pp. 47-48.

⁴⁵ „Decret Nr. 676”. (1943). *Monitorul Oficial*, 79 (1), p. 3010.

⁴⁶ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 36/1930, f. 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 1.



Fig. 3. Rüffer Advertisement, 1930s (A.N.I.C., M.I.C., *Ind. chimică - mat. constr. sticlă*/1930, d. 36/1930, f. 10)

As seen in the submitted plan (fig. 4), the factory was located on Popa Savu Street No. 42 of the property, between a vacant lot at No. 40 and a neighbor at No. 44. It was composed of housing, the actual factory and an exhibition gallery, an office, a stable, the workshops and furnaces placed next to the engine room towards Ianzii Street (today I. Cantacuzino); behind them there was an inner courtyard, bordered towards Jianu Road (the current Aviatorilor Boulevard) with sheds and warehouses⁴⁸. The factory premises are lost today.

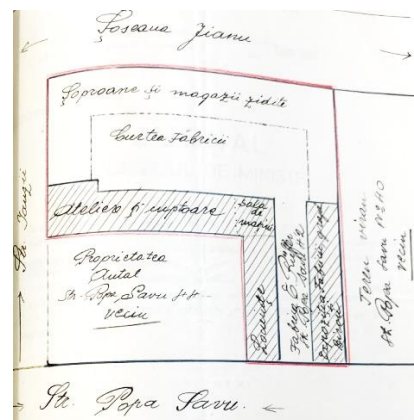


Fig. 4. Rüffer Factory Plan, 1930 (A.N.I.C., M.I.C., *Ind. chimică - mat. constr. sticlă*/1930, d. 36/1930, f. 5)

According to the memorandum, about 80% of the raw materials that the factory used were of local origins: 20 wagons of raw soil from Brașov, the Cristiana sites, 12 wag. sand and 5 wag. of soil from Cerna-Vodă, 4000 kg of enamel from the State Factories in Baia Mare; the rest of 3 to 4 wag. of sand and kaolin were imported from Germany and Czechoslovakia⁴⁹. The invested capital was approximately 8,000,000 lei, and the staff consisted of 60 people (3 people for the administrative staff, 3 people for the technical staff, 30 skilled and 20 unskilled workers), of which only 2 foreign subjects. The products were sold throughout the country and the annual production amounted to about 1,000-1,200 stoves of chamotte faience and decorative pottery. The memorandum also insisted on the modern installations that the factory used: 1 Schlutter engine of 12 H. P. used for workshops, machine room, etc., 1 mixer for kneading the raw

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 3.

material, 5 grinding drums for enamel, 2 large drums, 3 firebrick furnaces for firing stoves and 1 furnace for pottery⁵⁰.

Although details related to its disappearance are not yet known, the Ruffer Successors Factory operated until the early years of the communist regime in Romania, probably closing its activity in the late 1940s⁵¹. As former German natives, the family almost fell under the surveillance of H.A.S.E.A. during this times (see Tompa chapter)⁵². Of the three brothers, only Ludovic tried to pursue an artistic career in the decorative arts in the 1950s, but information related to this matter is limited⁵³.

The Ruffer factories were some of the most important industrial factories in Bucharest, producing numerous ceramic objects and stoves in the Saxon tradition, gaining the respect of officials and clients throughout the country. They also processed wood and metal to create furniture, ironwork, and other decorative objects while cultivating a so-called national style. In the collections of the Nicolae Minovici Museum, there are preserved four Ruffer stoves and a few stoves tiles of different decoration, as well as artistic pottery in the national Romanian style, such as candlesticks, jugs, flowerpots, plates, some of them designed by artists such as Nora Steriadi or Camil Ressu, most of them under the „Troita” mark.

One of the museum`s stoves has tiles decorated with a colorful bouquet of tulips and daisies in green, blue, violet and yellow on a cream background, a typical Saxon style of folk stove tiles. The hearth`s iron door is decorated with a branch of 5 daisies with pointed petals on a coffered network background, thus recreating a tile decoration in metal. In the upper area of the door, the constituent elements of an arch are suggested, while the door of the ashtray represents a Hellenistic vessel framed by 2 columns (fig. 5-6).

Unfortunately, the collection of tiles has been preserved in improper conservation conditions over the time, so that few of them are complete today. Despite this, the existence of the pieces shows us the wide range of ornamental formulas and color schemes that the factory workers, molders and painters, achieved. For example, two tiles take up an old ornamental motif from folk art: the potted flower, a variation on the theme of the Tree of Life, an ancient motif that was assimilated into Romanian folk art. The motif is interpreted in two different ways: one tile (fig. 7) is decorated in bas-relief, with blue paint on a white background, having a slightly crude design, while another tile (fig. 8) has a more plastic appearance, being painted in relief, in the factory`s typical colors schemes: brown, brown, yellow on a cream background.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, ff. 3-4.

⁵¹ Manolache, „Rufferii”, pp. 90-91.

⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 90.

⁵³ Tancred Bănăţeanu. 1956. „Rolul artei populare în dezvoltarea artelor decorative”. *Arta Plastică*, 3 (5): 55-61, p. 59.



Fig. 5-6. Rüffer stove in Nicolae Minovici Museum and ironwork stove door in the shape of a flower bouquet (Author`s photographs)



Fig. 7-8. Rüffer stove tiles models from The Nicolae Minovici Folk Art Museum (museum archive photographs)

The Rüffer pottery from Nicolae Minovici collection bears a different name on the underdecorated sides of the objects. Thus, the artistic pottery is marked with the symbol of the wooden cross (fig. 9) called „troiță” in Romanian language, that is also the name of the workshop that was found at the same address as Rüffer factory, on 42 Popa Savu Street, Bucharest. As I was showing in another article, the „Troita” workshop, founded by entrepreneur

Armand Naumescu in 1921, who gathered an equipe of artists such as Nora Steriadi, Camil Ressu, Ștefan Dumitrescu, Ionescu Doru and so on, continued to function under the Ruffers⁵⁴.



Fig. 9. *Troița pottery marks: „Troița Popa Savu 42 București”*. The Nicolae Minovici Folk Art Museum (museum archive photographs)

Figure 10 shows a Nora Steriadi design, a pitcher with bilobed mouth, robust amphoroidal body and one handle, a morphology typical of Romanian folk art. However, the decoration departs from the traditional schemes, as the motives are arranged in this case as isolated figures and not in clearly delimited fields. Phytomorphic and zoomorphic motifs are represented on its body: a naively drawn deer, star and flower motifs. The pitcher's neck is decorated in relief with a row of circles with star motifs and two straight bands.

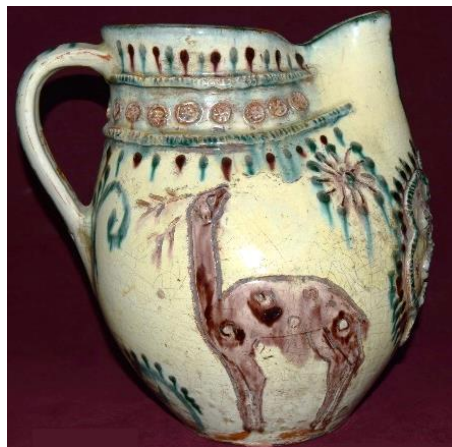


Fig. 10. *Pitcher with bilobed mouth – a Nora Steriadi design from the Nicolae Minovici Folk Art Museum (museum archive photographs)*

⁵⁴ Manolache, Mădălina-Ioana. 2023. *Identitate, stil și specific național în arta și industria românească: Muzeul de Artă Națională Prof. Dr. Nicolae Minovici între tradiție și modernitate*, Teză de doctorat. București: Universitatea Națională de Arte din București, pp. 192-197.

5. The Tompa Brothers Ceramics and Art Industry in Turda

There were two different enterprises that successively bore the name Tompa in Turda county and that had benefited from the industrial law: the Tompa and Farkas Ceramic Industry in 1924, respectively the Tompa Brothers Ceramics and Art Industry in 1932⁵⁵. The two factories shared a common history.

Here is what archival data tells us about the two factories. Tompa and Farkas Ceramic Industry was established in 1921 by Stefan Farkas (owner and commercial director) and Anton Tompa (director), Romanian citizens of Hungarian nationality, with around 70 workers and a capital of 3,425,000 lei⁵⁶. The industrial establishment operated with 5 electric motors powered by electrical current, with a driving force of 24 H. P.; a clay mixer, and 11 motorized and manual potters' lathes, while the products were burnt in seven kilns heated by methane gas. The fabric used 900 m³ of kaolin, 150 m³ of quartz sand, 900 m³ of ordinary clay, approx. 30 kg of different oxides, 6 plaster wagons, 300 kg of shellac, and denatured alcohol annually⁵⁷.

In 1923, the establishment was producing simple pots for everyday use at low prices, dedicated exclusively to the "great mass of the peasantry"⁵⁸; the factory produced daily 3,000 cooking pots and 400 heat-resistant pots, 500 ornaments for edifices and statuettes for gardens and 20,000 washers and hygiene items per year⁵⁹. We notice that the company emphasized the fact that it did not manufacture artistic objects and was limited to serving the villagers. From 1924, the factory advertising (fig. 11) shows that it produced and sold "Bohemian type crockery, fireproof cooking vessels, terracotta stoves, building and garden ornaments"⁶⁰.



Fig. 11. *Tompa and Farkas Advertising (A.N.I.C., M.I.C., Materiale construcții/1923, d. 25/1923-1926 f. 12)*

Over time, the number of associates of the company increased, but due to misunderstandings arising between them, the company ceased its activity after 8 years. In 1929, a part of the factory owners, brothers Ludovic, Alexandru, and Mihail⁶¹ Tompa opened another smaller factory, in a new premises located in str. Stefan cel Mare Street No. 44, producing and

⁵⁵ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., Ind. ceramică/1932, d. 41/1932-1944, f. 1, 3, 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, Materiale construcții/1923, d. 25/1923-1926, f. 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 1, f. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 11.

⁶¹ I used the names corresponding to the Romanian ones, which I have also encountered in the archive data and not their Hungarian versions: Sandor, Lajos, Mihaly, which were used in other articles.

selling pottery in a warehouse on Buzesti Street No. 22 in Bucharest⁶². In 1934, a second warehouse was opened in Carol Street No. 33⁶³. Their father, Anton Tompa, the former founder of Tompa and Farkas Factory, was otherwise associated with the new project; he soon died in 1932, aged 56, following an operation⁶⁴.

The factory was founded on August 1, 1929, with only 16 workers (in 1932 their number increased to 60), all Romanian citizens, of which around 30% were of Hungarian nationality; its total capital was 1,405,000 lei⁶⁵. Among the specialists of the factory were the three brothers, Alexandru, Mihail, and Ludovic, graduates of the Superior School of Ceramic Art in Odorheiu and the Superior School in Budapest⁶⁶.

The Tompa factory has received more attention from researchers than the Rűffers. An important contribution was made by László Suba in the chapter dedicated to the factory in *Ceramics from Turda and its surroundings*, in which we find the origin of the family, coming from Oroshaza (Hungary), settled firstly in Kűkűllűdombűbű (Dűmbűu, Mureű county), respectively Turda⁶⁷.

From archival files we learn that the industrial establishment was equipped with a metallic cylindrical mill for grinding raw material and four mills for grinding paints; four potter's wheels with a simple centrifugal mechanism, operated by hand, similar to the traditional ones, respectively two motorized potter's wheels with a driving force of 18 H. P., and three spherical ovens, with an inner diameter of 1.80 m and a height of 1.60 m, that were used for the firing of products with methane gas at 800-900 degrees Celsius⁶⁸.

The raw materials used annually were: 120 tons of refractory clay from Vűleni, Turda county, 15 tons of kaolin from Sűnduleűti, Turda, 15 tons of quartz sand from Popeűti, Cojocna county, 50 tons of blue slate from Mihaiu Viteazu, Turda, 5 tons of red ocher (clay) from Iara, Turda county; 10 tons of painting material from Baia Mare and other artificial mineral paints: chromium oxide, ferric oxide, cobalt oxide and aluminum oxide imported from Germany and Czechoslovakia⁶⁹. The annual production amounted to 180 tons of pottery⁷⁰.

According to the memorandum submitted to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the factory produced "*kitchenware, national style decorative vases and all kinds of national ceramics*"⁷¹. Lászlű Suba shows that production was very diverse: traditional and decorative objects for townspeople, such as decorative jugs and plates, coffee and tea sets, vases, flower and hanging pots, candlesticks, ashtrays, etc.⁷². The decoration was created by painters who often imitated Romanian folk art ornaments from albums, as well as ancient decoration and forms and ornaments of historical styles⁷³. Moreover, the factory was distinguished by its own manufacturing recipes, such as that of porcelain⁷⁴.

⁶² A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 41/1932-1944, f. 12, 3.

⁶³ No author. 1934, May 19. „Fraűii Tompa”. *Patria*, p. 19.

⁶⁴ *Idem*. 1932, September 28. „Turda”. *Dimineaűa Ardealului*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 41/1932-1944, ff. 5-6.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 5.

⁶⁷ Lászlű Suba, 2005. „A tordai Tompa-keramia”. Lászlű Suba, *Torda es Kornyeke fazekassaga*, 36-50. Kolozsvűr: Kriza Jűnos Nűprajzi Tűrsasűg, p. 36.

⁶⁸ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 41/1932-1944, f. 4.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 2.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*.

⁷² L. Suba, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 37-38.

In the Minovici collection, there are preserved traditional styles as well as decorative reinterpretations of folk art products from Tompa Brothers factory. Of great interest are two plates (fig. 12-13) decorated with composite geometric motifs on the edges and a cross placed centrally with four black "ram's horns" around it. This is a clear example of the readaptation of old ornamental motifs in new compositions and chromatic ranges, typical of the period. Other models from the same collection include an Oltenian style decoration called "jirăvire" displayed in an astral form, or other purely decorative formulas.



Fig. 12-13. Two Tompa plates from *The Nicolae Minovici Folk Art Museum* (museum archive photographs)

Two pieces (fig. 14-15) are also listed in the National Heritage, legal category Fund: a flattened plate with vegetal decoration in a *horror vacui* style, drawn in cobalt blue on a cream background, depicting two birds facing each other on the branches of the "Tree of Life", respectively Treasury: a simpler plate, in traditional folk style, with blue vegetal motifs on a white background⁷⁵.



Fig. 14-15. Two models of Tompa plates from *The Nicolae Minovici Folk Art Museum* (museum archive photographs)

Regarding the pottery's marks, we find three types of notations on the back of the pieces in the Minovici collection (fig. 16-18): the four letters "TTTT" in a descending order, meaning "Tordai Tompa Testvérek Transilvania" (Tompa Turda Transilvania Brothers)⁷⁶; the text "TOMPA TURDA BROTHERS" printed in clay in a squared shape; and a round label with

⁷⁵ Ordin de clasare Nr. 2579 din 25.02.2020.

⁷⁶ L. Suba, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

wavy edges with the text "Tompa Turda Brothers ceramic factory. Warehouse: Buzești Street Bucharest II". A seated woman, shown in profile, holding a large bowl in her lap is depicted centrally on the label.



Fig. 16-18. *Tompa pottery marks and labels: "Tordai Tompa Testvérek Transilvania" - "TTTT"; "Frații Tompa Turda" ("Tompa Brothers Turda"); Tompa Factory Label. The Nicolae Minovici Folk Art Museum (museum archive photographs)*

Nevertheless, the owners' memorandum discourse is of great interest. We learn that the factory promised high-quality quality carefully selected products, as it used superior materials and manufacturing processes. The described work ethic was the basis of the factory's industrial success in the country and abroad, as well as its official recognition: „First-quality products both in terms of the raw material and in terms of technical, industrial and decorative execution. Each piece is examined and controlled from all points of view before being stored, thus only the absolutely exceptional items are put up for sale. Thanks to this superior procedure, we reached the point where our factory is also admired by foreign countries, a fact that led the Government, through the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, to invite our industrial enterprise to participate in the sample fairs arranged by Romania abroad”⁷⁷. Indeed, as L. Suba has pointed out, the Tompa Brothers had received 23 gold medals at the various exhibitions they attended and were also named Suppliers of the Romanian Royal House⁷⁸. The Tompa Brothers even exhibited in Canada and New York⁷⁹. Some of the decorations they have received included the Class II Commercial and Industrial Merit and the Industrial Cross⁸⁰.

The best propaganda of the three factories presented in this article clearly belongs to the Tompa Brothers enterprise. It assumed the role of contributing "to the national propaganda and raising the renown of our country (...) making a commendable proof of progress and the development of the national ceramic art"⁸¹. At the same time, the author of the memorandum does not forget to specify that the factory carries out a systematic program for the industrial and technical modernization of local ceramics with already visible results: "We rely on ceramic art to keep up with its evolution from all points of view, thus we use the most modern machines and furnaces as well as installations, and in terms of progress, we believe that on this field we have achieved the highest result in the entire country, being the most modern enterprise of this kind"⁸².

⁷⁷ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 41/1932-1944, f. 4^v.

⁷⁸ L. Suba, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁷⁹ No author, „Frații Tompa”, p. 19.

⁸⁰ „Conferiri de medalii”. 1933. *Monitorul Oficial*. 99 (1), p. 3125.

⁸¹ A.N.I.C., M.I.C., d. 41/1932-1944, f. 6^v.

⁸² *Ibidem*, f. 6.

Last but not least, this fervent discourse helps us to understand the broad spectrum of the definition of national art in the era. Unfortunately, the glorious days of the factory were soon reaching their end.

5. 1. World War II: The end of the factory and the deportation to forced labor of the Tompa brothers

Starting with May 1, 1942, the company Ceramica C. Demian & Co leased the Tompa factory from its owners for a year, along with its facilities, machinery, and tools (a dwelling consisting of two rooms, kitchen, unfitted bathroom, two sheds and an office, two manufacturing rooms, a stable and a shed for raw materials, the land and the yards)⁸³. Housewares, flower vases, and ceramic ornaments continued to be produced⁸⁴.

After only two years, another company, Ceramica S. Dumitru leased the factory owned by the Tompa brothers (which now had 100 workers) and requested the advantages of the previously mentioned law⁸⁵. Archival data shows that it was a period with "difficulties in product placement"⁸⁶. The new company operated at this headquarters for only a few months, as the factory was bombed by enemy troops in the fall of 1944. The buildings, installations, and machines were destroyed and the raw materials and manufactured goods were stolen. The damages caused amounted to 14,340,000 lei, of which only 3 wagons of manufactured goods were worth 6,000,000 lei⁸⁷.

The archival files of the House of Administration and Supervision of Enemy Assets (H.A.S.E.A.) illustrate the desolate situation that the family was brought in starting with the fall of 1944. The three brothers were sent to forced labor camps in U.S.S.R.: Mihail Tompa, who had opened a separate business, was arrested first, on October 7, and the other two brothers were arrested two days later by Soviet troops, transferred to a camp in Brasov and later to a labor camp in the U.S.S.R.⁸⁸. Alexandru died on December 24, 1944, Ludovic in the spring of 1945, while the only survivor was Mihail Tompa⁸⁹.

Their wives faced the shortcomings of the war, the inexplicable loss of their husbands, as well as the investigations conducted by the House of Administration and Supervision of Enemy Assets. According to H.A.S.E.A. administrator Titus Babelș, at the Mihail Tompa's ceramics factory, *"since the withdrawal of the enemy troops, absolutely no steps have been taken to repair the damaged buildings. The tools and installations lie untended, the manufactures and other materials are scattered, presenting a picture of complete desolation. From the little information that the co-owner was willing to give, it shows that she did not take any of the measures required in such circumstances, she does not possess the necessary capital to [re]start the factory [activity], the manufactured goods that I found in the premises would have been sold (without knowing to whom and when,) and that she is sick and will not and cannot do anything without her husband, held in some labor camp"*⁹⁰.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, f. 15.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 14.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 17-19.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 17.

⁸⁷ A.N.I.C., Fond Casa de Administrare și Supraveghere a Bunurilor Inamice (C.A.S.B.I.), Vol. I, d. 209, f. 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 16, 18.

⁸⁹ L. Suba, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁹⁰ A.N.I.C., C.A.S.B.I., Vol. I, d. 209, f. 16.

The administrator's tone is unsympathetic towards the condition of a helpless woman separated from her husband against her will, without whom she does not dare to take any measures to reopen the factory: "*she does not want to compromise the good reputation of the factory, in case it would produce inferior products*"⁹¹. The wives of Alexandru and Ludovic, Sarlota and Susana did not know anything about their husbands' location and were also unable to run the ceramics factory in their absence⁹². In 1948, the Tompa Brothers factory was nationalized and was soon closed⁹³.

6. Conclusions

The history of the applied arts has been a little-studied event, with almost no echo for researchers. In this paper, I have studied three quite successful industrial enterprises, especially the Ruffers and Tompa Brothers, that were specialized in producing artistic pottery in the interwar years.

As can be seen in Table 1, the three industrial establishments have been active for about a decade (DAC), respectively, for about a half a century (Ruffer and Tompa). They purchased and used raw materials from throughout the country (Satu Mare, Baia Mare, Orșova, Cernavodă, Brasov, Turda, etc.) to a large extent, and only imported a very small proportion of materials from abroad, especially sand, kaolin, and painting pigments from Germany and Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the factories operated with modern machinery, motorized potters' wheels and mixers, and multiple kilns for firing, with a mechanical force between 12 H.P. and 45 H.P.

The DAC factory mainly produced porcelains, and the Ruffers produced ceramics, earthenware, and terracotta. The Tompa Brothers aimed at producing artistic pottery and even had their own porcelain recipes. Nevertheless, the products of the three factories included reinterpretations of popular ornamental elements and the adaptation of foreign historical styles. Thus, the production was not always aligned with the original plan of artists and intellectuals to cultivate an exclusively national style while employing the ancient Daco-Roman or Romanian folk art decorative motives and morphologies. Oscillating between reproducing objects in traditional styles and completely adapting and transforming folk ornamental schemes and morphologies, the factories gave tradition a backseat in favor of artistic experimentation and freedom.

Production amounted in the 1920s for DAC to 240,000 kg of porcelain and 230,000 kg of plates, cups, and vases annually. The Ruffers created in the early 1930s about 1,000-1,2000 stoves made of chamotte faience and decorative ceramics per year. The Tompa brothers had a production of 180 tons annually. The largest capital belonged to the Ruffers, at the beginning of the 1930s, amounting to 8,000,000 lei, followed by the Tompa Brothers with 1,405,000 lei, and DAC with 500,000 lei in the 1920s. The number of workers exceeded the number of 60 people in each factory.

	DAC Luxury Ceramics	Ernest Ruffer Factory	The Tompa Brothers
Years of activity	- 1921-1927;	- 1903-1940s;	- 1929-1940s;
Raw materials	- clay and kaolin from Satu	- 20 wagons of raw soil	- 120 tons of refractory

⁹¹ *Ibidem*.

⁹² *Ibidem*, f. 18.

⁹³ L. Suba, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

	<p>Mare (Țara Oaşului) and Turț commune;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - feldspar, chemicals and paints were also imported from Germany; - 180 tons kaolin, Baia Mare; - 45 tons feldspar Orșova; - 45 tons kuartz Seini, Someș; - 200 kg paintings from Germany; 	<p>from Brașov, Cristiana sites;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 wagons of soil from Cerna-Vodă, - 12 wagons of sand from Cerna-Vodă; - 4000 kg of enamel from the State Factories in Baia Mare; - 3-4 wagons of sand and kaolin were imported from Germany and Czechoslovakia; 	<p>clay, Văleni, Turda;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 15 tons of kaolin from Săndulești, Turda; - 15 tons of quartz sand from Popești, Cojocna, - 50 tons of blue slate from Turda; - 5 tons of red ocher from Iara, Turda; - 10 tons of painting material from Baia Mare; - artificial mineral paints from Germany and Czechoslovakia;
Technical equipment and other facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mold shed; - plaster workshop; - packaging space; - engobe and painting workshops, otter's wheels, - mold and machine workshops; - a dryer; - ovens; - glazing workshop; - mechanical force 45 H. P.; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - modern installations that the factory used: 1 Schlutter engine 12 H. P. (for workshops and machine room); - 1 mixer for kneading the raw material; - 5 grinding drums for enamel; - 2 large drums; - 3 firebrick furnaces for firing stoves; - 1 furnace for pottery; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 metallic cylindrical mill for grinding raw material; - 4 mills for grinding paints; - 4 centrifugal potter's, hand-operated; - 2 motorized potter's wheels with a driving force of 18 H. P.; - 3 spherical ovens for firing of products with methane gas at 800-900 degrees Celsius;
Annual production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 240,000 kg of porcelain and 230,000 kg of plates, cups, and vases (1920s); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cca. 1,000-1,2000 stoves made of chamotte faience and decorative pottery (1930s); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 180 tons of pottery (1930s);
Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - porcelains; majolica; - reinterpretations of ancient Daco-Roman and Transylvanian folk art motives; - adaptation of historical styles (Rococo, Byzantine); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ceramics, earthenware, faience, and terracotta of Transylvanian (mostly Saxon) folk art influence; - Romanian-style furniture and ironwork; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - porcelains, decorative pottery of Romanian folk art influence (Oltenian, Transylvanian) and other historical styles;
Capital in lei	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 500,000 (1920s); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8,000,000 (early 1930s); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1,405,000 (early 1930s)
Stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - administrative staff: 5 Romanian citizens; - technical staff: 2 foreign citizens; - 59 specialist workers (8 foreign and 51 Romanian); - 10 Romanian day laborers along with another 20 day laborers (1924); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - administrative staff: 3 Romanian citizens, - technical staff 3 Romanian citizens; - 30 skilled and 20 unskilled workers, of which only 2 foreign subjects; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 workers in 1929; - 60 workers in 1932 all Romanian citizens, of which around 30% of Hungarian nationality;

Official recognition	- less known, participated in exhibitions in the country.	- participated in numerous exhibitions and won noteworthy decorations.	- participated in numerous exhibitions and won 23 gold medals and decorations.
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Table 1. *A comparison of three factories` activity.*

The Rűffers and Tompa Bothers had participated in industry fairs organized both in the country and abroad, and had won numerous awards and medals as an official recognition of their commercial and industrial merits.

Furthermore, studying the archival files, we have been able to observe how the national discourse was shaped by these entrepreneurs, both through the memorandums they had sent to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce in the 1920s and 1930s in order to obtain the national industry encouragements law`s benefits, as well as through their production activity.

The DAC factory memorandum talked about the need to revive and elevate the ancient art of ceramics through industrialization, aiming at the same time at the nationalization of both the Romanian capital and pottery. This process would lower the number of imports, favoring the consumption of local products, and would also increase the national economy. As seen, the contribution to defining modern national art was mainly based on citing ancient decorative elements belonging to the oldest artefacts created by inhabitants of the Romanian territory, defined as direct ancestors of the Romanians.

Nevertheless, the tradition cultivated by the peasants, whose folk art still preserved the decorative coordinates of the old ornamental and morphological formulas was a primary source of inspiration. The cult artist embraced folk tradition and became a small industrialist using modern motor-based mass production techniques. As a result, the three factories found inspiration in traditional folk pottery and mostly from the multi-ethnic communities of Transylvania.

In this regard, the multi-ethnic origin of the producers is not to be overlooked, especially from the perspective of the harsh policies of oppression dating from the 1940s during the communist regime. Both the Rűffer and Tompa families (almost) fell under the surveillance of the House of Administration and Surveillance of Enemy Assets. Unfortunately, Romanian citizens of Hungarian ethnicity, the Tompa brothers were taken by the Soviet units to the U.S.S.R. to forced labor camps. Mihail was the only survivor.

The shareholders of the factories had an artistic and especially technical background. The family association and their double training seem to have brought an advantage to the Rűffers and the Tompa Brothers, unlike Aurel Popp, who spent years experimenting and was marked by financial pressure, resulting in giving up DAC factory after only 4 years.

We have also learned that the Rűffers presented themselves as the oldest stove and ceramic industry in the country, as their factory was established since the beginning of the 20th century. The Tompa brothers distinguished themselves through the careful process of selecting the best products while using superior materials. At the same time, they emphasized the fact that they were contributing to the country's national propaganda and reputation, as well as to the progress and development of Romanian pottery, having obtained the highest results in the entire country.

Contrary to their official success, the achievements of the factories were not always accepted by critics and were perceived as lifeless and not truly representative for Romanian national art. We have seen that the pottery ornamentation was also influenced by foreign styles

such as Byzantine or Rococo, thus contradicting the original project of creating a national art that would cultivate on the local traditions. Nevertheless, the factory's economic success was not guaranteed either. Art and industry had a tough test to pass during this period, often facing not only a lack of capital but also technical and business experience. However, the beginnings of Romanian modern craftsmanship deserve more attention from researchers.

With a short or longer life, ranging from less than a decade to almost half a century, the studied factories are testimonies of the production of art with national intentions, and more importantly, of the industrialists' mobilization to create an industrial art cultivating local traditions, in the revitalizing and virulent spirit of the modern state of Romania. I hope this paper has contributed to the knowledge of the activity of the DAC, Ruffer, and Tompa Brothers factories from the perspective of the national atmosphere felt in young modern Romania in the first half of the last century. The research was part of a limited action to recover the history of Romanian decorative arts starting from the contact with the decorative art collection in the Nicolae Minovici Museum. Perhaps the paper will be a call for museums and specialists to capitalize on these collections with the aim of reintegrating and thus rewriting the history of Romanian modern arts.

7. References

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