

**Cristian Nae**

***Revisiting Iconoclasm Postsecularism, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Art from Romania***

The present text addresses the tactical, cynical or transgressive uses of Christian iconography in contemporary art from Romania in comparison with critical art from Poland. In these countries, religion is considered to have played an important emancipatory role during communism and may now be characterized, following Habermas, as post-secular societies. As Boris Buden noticed, the post-secular turn in post-socialist countries may be interpreted as a post-social phenomenon, a symptom of social disintegration, while others have argued that it signals the loss of a historical horizon. In any case, a strand of critical art that addresses the entanglements between politics and religion has made its way in contemporary art. Starting from the assumption that iconoclastic gestures are not only destructive, but also inherently productive, I suggest that contemporary art in post-socialist countries employs conflicting and contrasting symbols in order to produce a new discursive field which aims to release existing cultural tensions, to expose the imbrication between religion and politics, and thus, to play a critical social function. Borrowing a concept coined by Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, such a critical visual practice may be called „iconoclasm”. As I attempt to show, although it employs post-modernist strategies of quotation or appropriation, critical post-secular art should rather be analysed on the model of media critical tactics, targeting both contemporary society and visual culture. On the other hand, on a social level, they are rather reveal existing social tensions and defy new forms of authoritarianism in countries whose recent public spheres are divided by the confrontation between conservative Christian religiosity and secularized socialist ideals in an expanding capitalist economy of images. These artworks are rather contrasting secular emancipatory ideologies of social welfare and equity derived from a socialist mindset with the incongruencies they identify and expose in current Orthodox religious practices and institutions. But they also expose the troubling question of the legitimation of violence associated with social justice, which looms over much of the contemporary leftist critical

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## Preispitivanje „ikonokleša“: Postsekularizam, religija i politika u suvremenoj rumunjskoj umjetnosti

U radu se razmatra taktička, cinička i transgresivna uporaba kršćanske ikonografije u suvremenoj rumunjskoj umjetnosti, u odnosu na kritičku umjetnost Poljske. U tim se državama, čija se društva danas mogu okarakterizirati kao post-sekularna, smatra da je religija imala važnu emancipacijsku ulogu tijekom razdoblja komunizma. Polazeći od pretpostavke (**premise**) da ikonoklastički **pokreti** nisu isključivo destruktivni, već i inherentno produktivni, **autor ukazuje na to da** suvremena umjetnost u post-socijalističkim zemljama upotrebljava suptotstavljene i oprečne simbole kako bi stvorila novo diskurzivno polje čiji je cilj oslobađanje postojećih kulturnih tenzija (**napetosti**), ukazivanje na (**razotkrivanje**) **imbrication** između religije i politike, **zbog čega joj se može pripisati kritička društvena uloga**. Posudi li se (**primjeni li se**) koncept koji su osmislili Bruno Latour i Peter Weibel, takva se kritička vizualna praksa može nazvati „ikonokleš“. S jedne strane umjetnička djela ubrojiva u ovu kategoriju podsjećaju na postmodernističke strategije prisvajanja i pastiša, no autor objašnjava da su ona više odraz (**rezultat**) medijske ekologije. (**ili: ...da su ona zapravo determinirana medijskom ekologijom**). S druge strane, na društvenoj razini, ona otkrivaju postojeće socijalne tenzije, suprotstavljajući se autoritarizmu u zemljama čije su trenutne javne sfere podjeljene konfrontacijom (**između**) konzervativne kršćanske religioznosti i sekulariziranih socijalističkih ideala unutar rastuće kapitalističke ekonomije slika