
GU DRUN-LIANE ITTU
Scurtă istorie a Muzeului Brukenthal

(Short history of the Brukenthal Museum)

 Alba Iulia: Altip, 2008

NO DOUBT, the Brukenthal Museum is one of the institutions that influenced the cultural life of the city of Sibiu. On February 25th 1817, when it changed its status from private collection of Baron Samuel von Brukenthal in a public museum administrated by the Evangelical Church CA (Lutheran) in Sibiu, the institution was the only museum in south-eastern Europe.

In the year 2007, when Sibiu was 'European Capital of Culture,' the Brukenthal Museum contributed to the success of the program, being one of the main attractions of the city. This event was only a starting point, because the number of visitors even increased the next year.

The Brukenthal Museum is important and can be viewed in several ways, either by the public or by broad categories of specialists. Firstly the visitor is impressed by the architecture of the building, a pleasure shared especially by architects and art historians. If it is regarded as the residence of the governor of Transylvania, it becomes interesting for historians. Specialists from different areas of interest may be impressed by the fact that the palace housed the private collections of a special man of culture. Perhaps the most important aspect however is that the man who constructed/erected the building and created the collections has also determined the destiny of the museum.

For the city of Sibiu and those who visit it as tourists, the publication of the book *Scurtă istorie a Muzeului Brukenthal*

(Short history of the Brukenthal Museum) by Gudrun-Liane Ittu might be of interest. Printed in 2008 in the collection 'Bibliotheca Brukenthal,' the book represents the second revised and augmented edition of the work *Muzeul Brukenthal—de la constituirea colecțiilor până în zilele noastre* (Brukenthal Museum—from the foundation of the collections until nowadays), printed in Sibiu in 2000, by the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania.

The book starts—after a foreword signed by the general director of the museum—Sabin Adrian Luca—with the author's introduction which presents chronologically and succinctly, the important stages in the history of the Brukenthal Museum.

As the museum would not have existed without Baron Samuel von Brukenthal, the first chapter focuses on his biography, i. e. from his birth in Nocrich (Sibiu county) in 1721, his education and political career until he passed away in Sibiu, 82 years later. The author states that she does not want to emphasize in her book on the baron's achievements in various positions he has held, because there are many other works in which this has been done. Gudrun-Liane Ittu prefers to examine his cultural work that gave him pleasure, comfort and undoubtedly success. That is the reason why the most consistent chapter of the book is dedicated to Baron von Brukenthal's collections. The initial collections founded during 1759-74, when he mainly lived in Vienna, were the painting gallery (the best known and most valuable collection, which today bears the name of its founder, the part that brought international fame to the museum), the print cabinet, the library (the baron's favorite, because it was considered the storage of wisdom over centuries and also the brain of the institution) and the collection of numis-

matics (the oldest passion, acquired over a lifetime, Brukenthal collected an impressive number of coins, medals, catalogues and numismatic treaties). During the last quarter of the eighteenth century the collection of minerals and of archaeological pieces was added to the existent ones.

In the third chapter the Brukenthal Palace is presented as residence of the governor and place to house his collections. The palace, built between 1779-85 on the western side of The Large Square of Sibiu is one of the most important baroque buildings in Romania. The palace is composed of a representative body at the street side to which there were added three other wings, two lateral while the third transversal closing the first court. Behind the second court later there was built a stable. Gudrun-Liane Ittu states that like it was the case on other palaces of the time, the main focus was put on the first floor of the main body (on the frontage), where the representative rooms are located, three reception rooms and two cabinets. Two other rooms are also worth to be mentioned: the *salla terrena*, a room which was compulsory in 18th century palaces the time, located at the first floor of the transversal body and the library on the second floor. Housing an art collection in a building which itself was a work of art characterized the spirit and practice of the time, being an expression of the high social status of the owner—the author states.

Chapter V is of utmost importance concerning the understanding the history of the Brukenthal Museum. It deals with Baron Samuel von Brukenthal's will and its consequences. Dated 3 January 1802, the will foresaw that the assets have to be passed from generation to generation by a single universal heir, and in case the family will get extinct (through the death

of the last male bearer of the name) the property will be passed in the possession of the Evangelical (Lutheran) Gymnasium in Sibiu. The designated heir was a 12 year old child, Michael Joseph, the first-born of Samuel von Brukenthal's nephew Peter Baron Carl von Brukenthal. The collections were exempted from the above mentioned rule. According to the will after the collector's death they had to get into the possession of the Evangelical Gymnasium in Sibiu. Brukenthal endowed the collections with 36,000 florins in order to provide public access at the library and to the other collections and to enrich them. The carrying out of the will has encountered many difficulties, especially due to the trials instituted by those exempted from inheritance. The lawsuit ended only in 1878, when the church won the case. Only from this moment on (until the museum was nationalized in 1948 by the Romanian Communist State) the property of Samuel von Brukenthal was administered according to his will.

The next two chapters are dealing about the actions that have been undertaken to preserve, conserve and extend Samuel von Brukenthal's legacy. The painting gallery was enriched mainly by donations and rarely by purchasing, but there were published catalogues and inventories and studies and evaluations of collections had been carried out. In the meantime the library was enriched both by acquisitions and by the inclusion of some other important libraries (*Kapellenbibliothek* and the library of the Academy of Law). The other collections as the manuscripts, minerals, archaeological pieces and numismatics increased rapidly due to many donations but also through acquisitions.

At the beginning of the 20th century the museum's leadership considered that

the development of the institution in its universal dimension, as Baron Samuel von Brukenthal designed it in the 18th century, was no longer possible. In 1903, when the centenary commemoration of the death of the baron took place, the idea to transform the museum in a Saxons' (German minority from Transylvania) emerged. This new project/paradigm was supported by the Sebastian Hann Society for Boosting Local Art, then by the Association for the Purchase and Preservation of Saxons Patrimonial Artifacts and last but not least by the Society of Friends of the Museum, all of them interested in acquisitions for the museum.

The eighth chapter is dealing with the period from nationalization (1948) to the December 1989 Revolution, evoking the main events that the museum passed through and publishing documents regarding decisions which influenced the activity and evolution of the institution. During this period the destiny of the museum was interwoven with that of the Evangelical Church ^{CA} but also with that of the many other cultural institutions. Among the events of that period there are mentioned 'borrowings' (in fact thefts) by museums in Bucharest, transfers of a substantial part of the collection of manuscripts the County National Archives, the reorganization of the library and also an important theft that happened in May 1968 when eight of the most valuable paintings of the gallery disappeared.

The history of the Brukenthal Museum from December 1989 until this day is approached in two separate intervals: from 1990 to its return to the Evangelical Church ^{CA} and after the act restitution. In March 2006, the Ministry of Culture together with the owners, agreed to administrate the museum together, laying the

bases of an exceptionally project in Romania, which functions successfully.

The institution, now the National Museum Brukenthal went through waves of reorganization and transformation, being now very active not only from the point of view of exhibitions but also taking into consideration its publication (*Brukenthal Acta Musei* review, the "Bibliotheca Brukenthal" collection of author books and the collections of catalogues).

The 12 annexes of this book, containing manuscripts, letters and the transcript/translation of documents are of great documentary value. Among them there are the will of Baron Samuel von Brukenthal, legal acts concerning the nationalization in 1948 and also Governmental Decisions concerning restitution—documents which have sealed the fate of the Brukenthal Museum. The book contains a rich bibliography and is endowed with 31 reproductions, most of them in color.

I warmly recommend to citizens, visitors and researchers this well written and extensively documented book, which is of irreproachable graphic quality.

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HEIKE KARGE
Steinerne Erinnerung – versteinerte Erinnerung? Kriegsgedenken in Jugoslawien (1947-1970)

 Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (= Balkanologische Veröffentlichungen Osteuropa-Institut der Freien Universität Berlin, Bd. 49), 2010

KARGE SPIELT im Titel der Studie auf ihre Kritik an der bisherigen Forschung in Bezug auf Kriegserinnerung im ehemali-