I Palatul Mihai Vodă

Before the earthquake it would have seemed inconceivable. But afterwards anything seemed possible. Gradually, unimaginable things started to happen. For example, the Mihai Vodă palace began to move. By some kind of arbitrary injunction, a group of architects and engineers came up with a way to move buildings. It consisted of firstly reinforcing the main structure, then excavating the entire perimeter to a depth of around 1.5 metres and building a concrete slab at the base. Once the slab was dry, hydraulic jacks were placed underneath and the whole thing was carefully raised a few centimetres, then placed back down on some especially designed rails. That was how they moved a 9,000 tonne mass barely 300 metres east. Some of the palace's inhabitants, sceptical, would not accept the facticity of such a move and refused to see it. They remained in their quarters or in some other room, trying to pretend they did not feel the slight vibrations caused by the move.

II Palatul Dealul Mitropoliei

It was all rather confusing. No one could see anything and only a few faint, unintelligible noises could be heard. The Dealul Mitropoliei palace had turned to debris. But it was as if gravity had ceased to operate, and all the particles—just any particles now—were suspended in the air, creating a dense fog that contained the space and at the same time made it porous. It was not easy to be resolute in this new scenario. Some people tried to shout but their voices were smothered by the fog. Suddenly, someone—anyone—whispered something to someone else, a secret message passed from ear to ear. An answer, another message, a joke. The ensuing conversation was fragmented, broken, and crazy, but it allowed a state of listening, of collective attention, of bodies gradually adapting to the new conditions. It was the same with touch, which slipped from one body to another, taking on different intensities. This state of being attuned to the miniscule, to the brushing of skin, to whispers, produced its own language. They could not strictly speaking be called new relationships, but the meaning of the expression "being in touch" was more literal than ever.

III Palatul Radu Vodă

Nobody knew the exact location of the Radu Vodă palace, but they had all received the invitation to the party, so they started knocking on the doors of the nearby houses. They were astonished to realise that the party at the palace could be reached through any door. For example, someone knocked on the door of a modest house on Strada Petru Cercel no. 5 and found themselves in a sumptuous room overlooking the Dâmboviţa, decked out in Christmas lights, with tables laden with a jumble of drinks, sofas, and live music. It was not that anything that happened at this party was different to any other party, simply that a person could behave in one way or another, momentarily suspending the rigid social norms that govern behaviour in other situations. This is also the case at other parties, but that makes it no less extraordinary, no less irreducible. Indeed, the party at the palace took place in any house, or rather it did not have a place as such, it simply unfolded, like a look, like a gesture.

IV Palatul Cotroceni

However, the vibration of matter did not bother the children at all. On the contrary, it amused them very much, so they called out to each other and in large groups they struck the solid walls of the Cotroceni palace with anything they could get their hands on, so the walls soon began to vibrate. The vibrations were transmitted to the floor, and from the floor to the feet of the children, who started to laugh and jump. The children's laughter occupied the same frequency as the vibrations of the palace, intensifying them. The vibrations of the floor grew stronger and the children jumped up and down and laughed, harder and harder. This movement maximised the strain on the structure of the building, which was pushed to its limits, as in an earthquake. And strange sounds came out of it, like a muffled guffaw (ha-ha-ha, ho-ho-ho). Then the children fell to the ground, laughing their heads off. Eventually the effect died down and the children ran off in different directions. After a while, one of them would shout, let's go and tickle the palace! Let's do it again!

V Palatul Spirei

No one could figure out the disappearance of the Spirei Palace. Hundreds of square metres of reinforced concrete in the neoclassical style, massive columns, large luxuriously appointed rooms, and long corridors with splendid lamps, were there one day and suddenly gone the next. No one had actually seen the inside of the palace, but they imagined it like that, with the luxuries of the ruling class, its convoluted fancies and exquisite elements handmade by craftsmen around the country. But no one had ever worked for the palace, no one took anything in or out of there. In fact, it was rumoured to have always been empty. No one was ever seen going in or out, looking out the window, appearing on the balconies. No one had really seen the outside of the palace either. An excess of etiquette or perhaps complete indifference meant that every time someone passed the palace they looked away, smoothed down their hair, turned to mutter something to their dog, or took the opportunity to check the sorry state of their shoes. The fact is that when the time came, it was no longer there. Perhaps the Spirei Palace never existed, it is difficult to ascertain.

VI Palatul Văcărești

The entrance to the Văcărești palace was down a steep concrete slope, but once inside there was no distinction between interior and exterior. You could move from room to room along dirt paths, and in the very heart of the palace there was a series of lakes where you could watch a multitude of different species of birds, depending on the season.

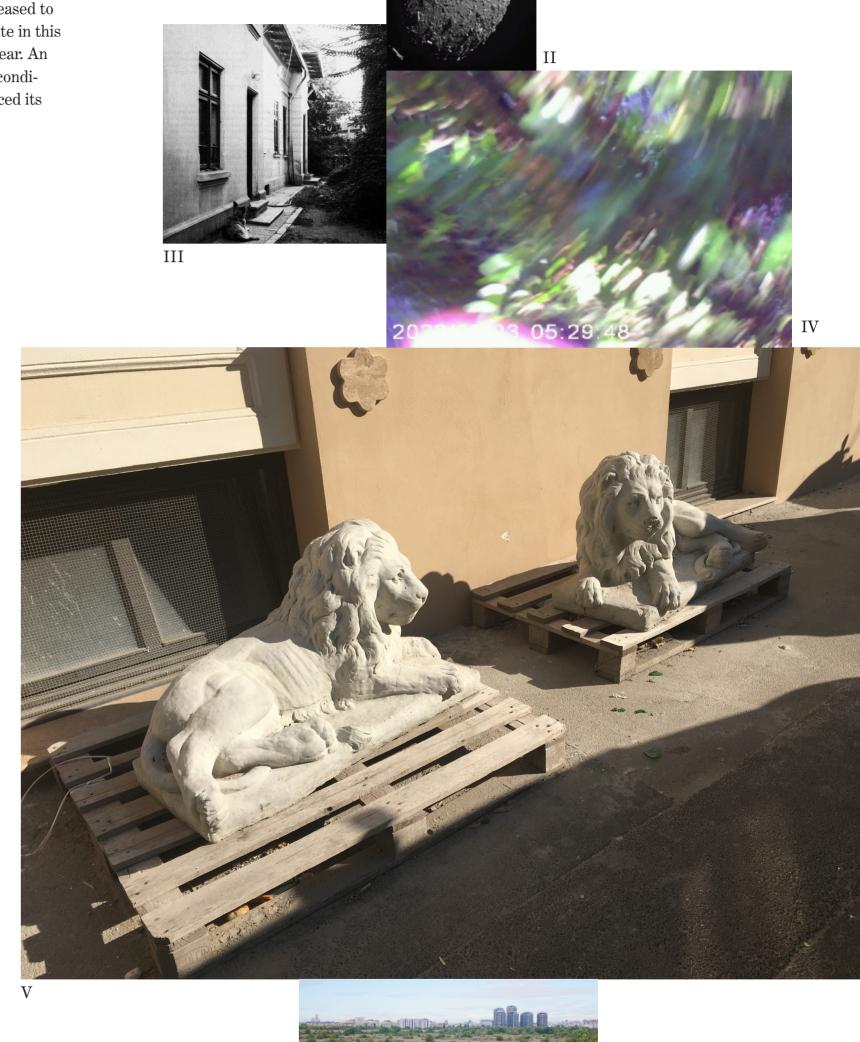
Scientists and scholars from around the world came to study this curious phenomenon. They sat on the grass with their laptops and focused on collecting and collating data. The oneness with nature, the silence, and the concentration in the Văcărești palace were reminiscent of a medieval monastery. And while there were no monastic rules per se, there was a certain synchronisation of movements, of ways of life. As the guests surrendered to the rhythm of the palace, their wills softened and their actions became more natural, they became wilder. A second nature emerged through their bodies. Some began to make animal sounds at certain times of the day. Small branches grew from the fingertips of others.

VII Palatul Sf. Gheorghe Nou

The authorities strictly prohibited the existence of palaces in the city. So the inhabitants of the Sf. Gheorghe Nou palace, accustomed to the fluctuating whims of power, came up with a marvellous idea. They would *pretend* that the palace was not a palace. They would build a giant marquee to cover everything, so that the palace would not be visible from the outside. They would turn it into a circus!

They soon got down to work. They used up all the fabrics at their disposal: sheets, blankets, curtains, rags, suits. All woven items were sewn together to make a huge membrane that would make the solid palace look fragile and temporary.

And so, a short time later, they announced the arrival of the Sf. Gheorghe Nou circus all over the city. The main attraction of the circus, as advertised on the posters, was the walk through a forbidden palace. When audiences arrived, they were led through the different rooms in a tour embellished with fabulous stories and quick and unexpected comical effects. The show was a success. To this day it is repeated on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and the first Sunday of every month.



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