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In the last few years Romanian cinema has produced a few films that gained public attention and recognition in international film festivals for newly established directors. The road to the world mapping of Romanian stories in cinema was opened in 2005 by scriptwriter-director Cristi Puiu who won the prestigious *Un Certain Regard* award in Cannes among several others nominations and accolades for his film *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu*. His previous films *Stuff and Dough* was also received with interest in 2004 and *Cigarettes and Coffee* was the best short film in the 2004 Berlin International Film Festival, taking home a Golden Bear.

While internationally Cristi Puiu was gaining momentum as one of the most talented directors in Eastern Europe, which prompted a few critics to consider him the first who opened the so-called “new wave” in Romanian cinema, a brand that should encompass the whole new generation of young directors, in Romania the things were taking a rather Kafkaian venture. The National Center for Cinematography, the only institution able to offer financial support to filmmakers was finding itself in a rather peculiar situation given the fact that the same scripts that were turned in such a

groundbreaking success internationally were previously rejected below the minimum points as non-eligible in the national competition. Each year the two sessions that were supposed to be organized by the National Center for Cinematography ended up in huge scandals and claims of corruption; it was indeed questionable why the projects that won the most of the funds crashed lately, while the very valuable scripts of the mostly scriptwriters-directors from the young generation did not qualify, yet they managed with a small budget to win nonetheless but Palm D'Or. In 2006, the very talented Corneliu Porumboiu, a director with a very particular style, won Golden Camera in Cannes with *12:08 East of Bucharest* and in 2007, Cristi Mungiu won Palm D'Or with *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days*. Each of them dealt with Romanian realities, each of them showing a precise manner and independent vision.

A gigantic scandal was mounting inside the world of Romanian cinema in 2007 when Cristi Puiu strongly criticized the procedure of allocating enormous funds for the less valuable productions or never seen films. A few of his fellow directors, among which were Tudor Giurgiu, Radu Jude, Corneliu Porumboiu, Radu Muntean and many of the film critics showed their solidarity with Puiu when the director of the National Center for Cinematography, himself a playwright and a scriptwriter, who received a generous fund in 2006 from the institution that he leads, appeared to have his own favourites for each annual selection: veteran director Sergiu Nicolaescu, now in his '80s, and the production company of a former civil servant in the Ministry of Culture together with director Adrian Popovici, both involved in other corruptions scandals with public funds are among those who found themselves on the list of the lucky winners regardless of the poor quality of their previous productions, the lack of international impact, the lack of public audience or even the mere existence of the film.

In 2008, director Cristi Mungiu was among the members of the jury in the National Center for Cinematography selection committee and he formulated a few sharp considerations on the hindrances of the present regulation and procedure that allows for such obvious discrepancies (points of 2 to 8 given to the same project by different members) in applying the criteria of selection for a good script. In his opinion the fact that the members of the jury are not obliged to publicly justify the score given to a synopsis easily opens up for situations like the infamous case of Cristi Puiu and, on reverse, of Sergiu Nicolaescu who never managed to be selected in international festivals in decades of activity, while having the constant financial support of the National Center for Cinematography for his projects.

The second problem appears to be that, in the second stage of the application, when the evaluation of the film budget takes place, some files disappear, others appear, some information misses, other piece of information is found. Cristi Mungiu denounced this practice that should be arithmetically the most precise and called for a change of regulation so that the various obscure interpretations of the law and its procedure to be avoided.

Finally, the results of the selection of the scripts and the budgets requested by applicants are validated by a council of administration with members that were not in the previous stage, so they are not reading the scripts or evaluating budgets, while the members of the selection committee are not allowed in the final stage of validation. Consequently, somehow there is a wicked logic behind the drop out of mega-productions in reaching audience or in gaining any profit.

After last year's scandal of corruption, when the government-funded institution decided to have only one session by supplementing the funds to accommodate the much deprived documentary section of the national competition, the Romanian directors asked for the long-awaited resignation of Eugen Serbanescu, a former politically appointed diplomatic employee and for a radical change of the current situation, which looks bleak. Not only that, by the end of 2010, Mr. Eugen Serbanescu was not changed from his current position, but he received another four years of mandate and a council of administration totally subservient, the so-called "old wave" directors or people from the industry.

The public funds going to support the national cinema are reduced, which unwraps the debate whether there is or not a strong need of investment from the private financiers, considering that cinemas all over the country are closing down while the reputation of Romanian hackers is growing. In Romania, the television is still the main source of entertainment and without the prestigious awards of those very interesting, yet different visions about Romanian realities of the internationally recognized scriptwriters-directors, this art will lose the canonical followers of a certain director's style and approach to cinema. There is a lot of positive attention brought to Romania through the movies, so it certainly serves a good purpose to choose wisely who gets 368.000 EUR for a project. Rethinking the policy on State funding and having a jury made of the finest artists who have the ability and expertise to evaluate is also paramount in all the stages of the selection. Unfortunately, the European cinema and moreover, the Eastern European cinema is not wealthy enough and doesn't have an audience that will bring many private investors in this industry. However, the lack of an audit after so many corruption scandals in the last 10 years opens wide a question why people with no competence are still given the authority to juggle a big junk of money in a country that is considered so poor and lives on IMF supplies?!

Maybe there is not much to wonder why some of these talented directors turned towards private financing, sometimes making alliances with yet another alleged corrupt business entrepreneurs in order to cut loose the sophisticated, complicated and often absurd ways of an old system.

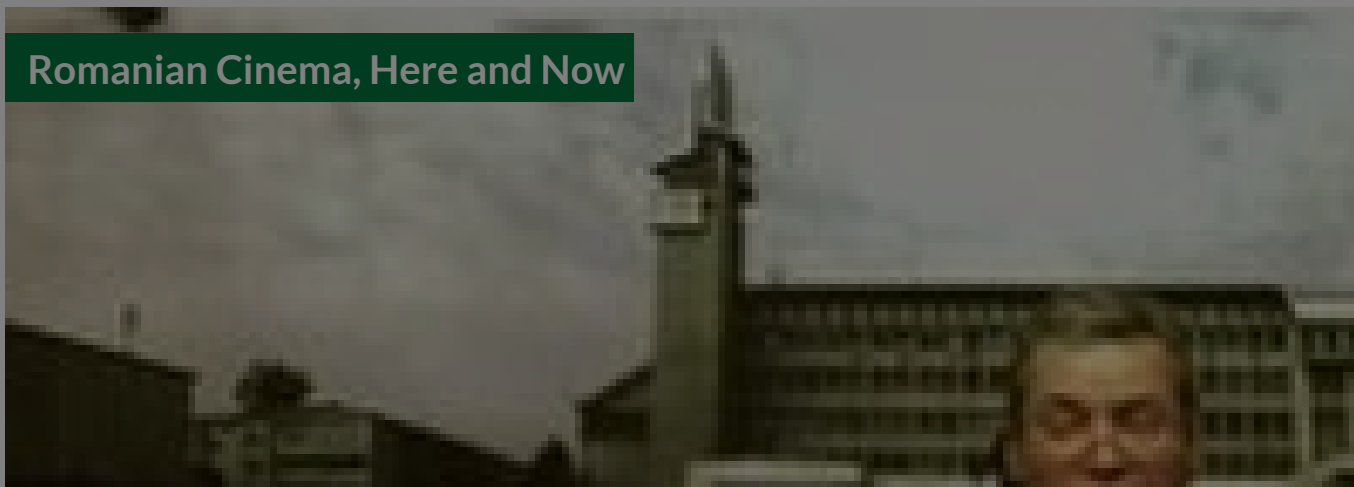
by Claudia Darian

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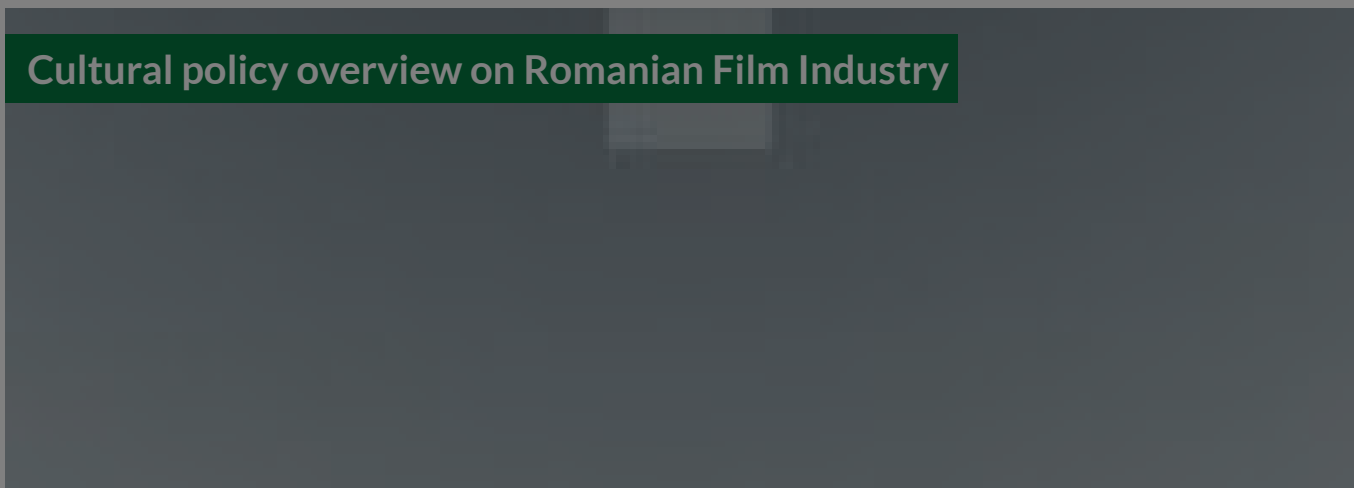
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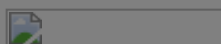
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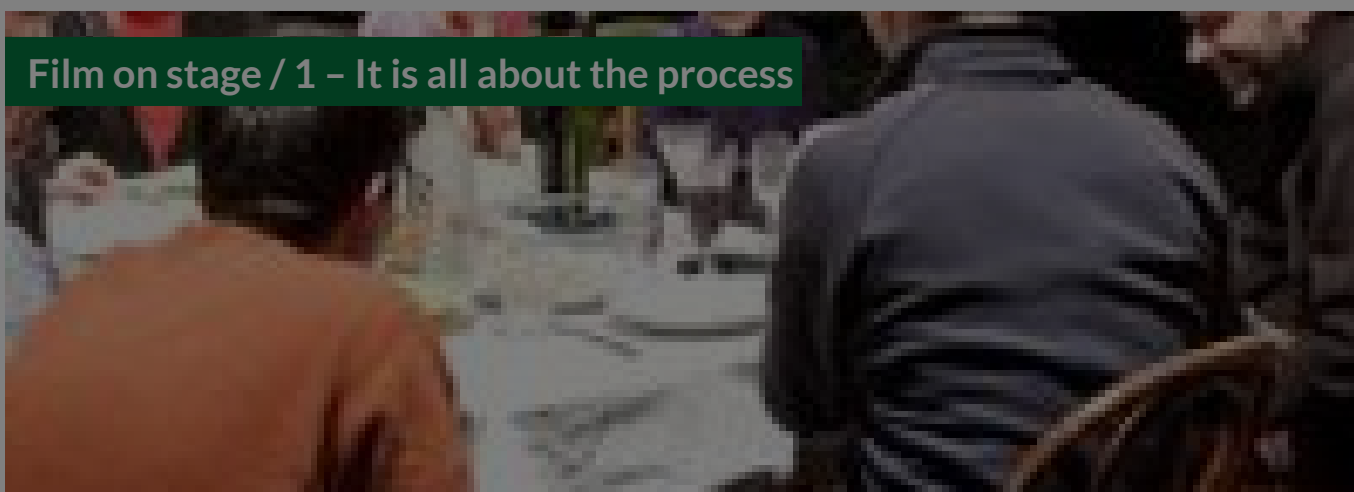
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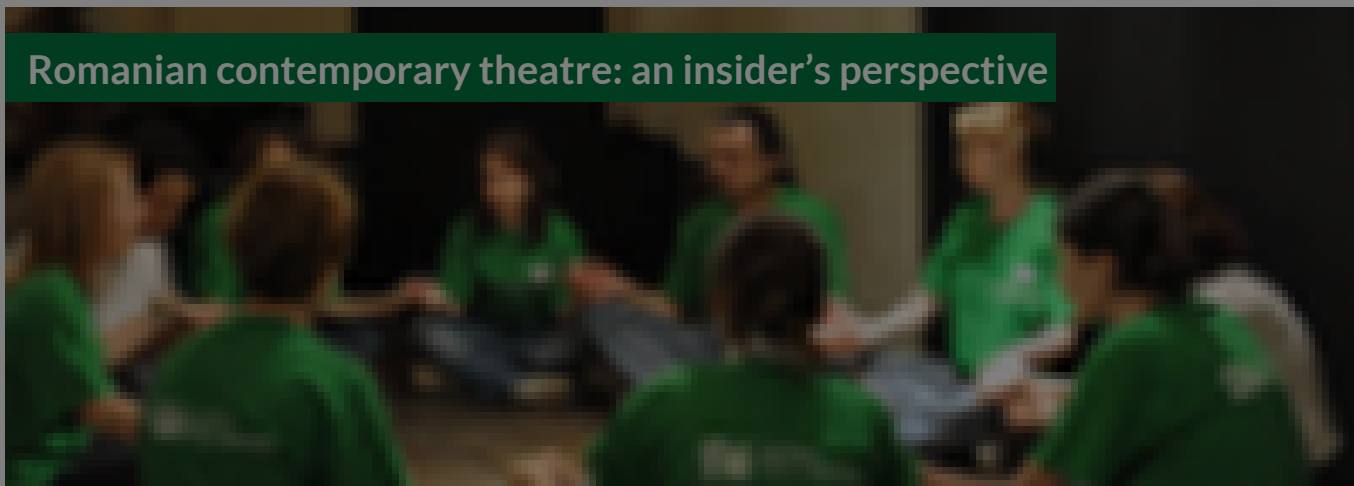
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