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Active and Passive Resistance in the Artistic Life of Socialist Romania. The Art of Baász Imre

Summary

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Imre Baász, a multifaceted artist whose career spanned some of the most turbulent decades of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe, represents one of the most distinctive figures in the history of Hungarian visual culture in Romania. He was born on 22 February 1941 in Arad, a city located near the western border of the country, in a period that would soon be overshadowed by political repression and cultural isolation. His creative evolution is inseparable from the historical and societal changes that defined post-war Romania, and his art stands as both a witness to and a reflection on those transformations.

Baász pursued his artistic training in Cluj (Kolozsvár), at the *Ion Andreescu Institute of Fine Arts*, an institution that shaped several generations of Hungarian and Romanian artists during the socialist period. He graduated in 1972 from the Graphics Department, under the supervision of professor László Feszt, whose profound technical knowledge and rigorous discipline left a decisive imprint on his student's practice. Baász valued Feszt not only for his professional mastery but also for the intellectual integrity that he maintained under ideological pressure – a quality that would later become central to Baász's own personality as an artist and educator.

His diploma work consisted of an extensive series of illustrations inspired by the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*. This choice, somewhat unconventional for a young Romanian artist of that time, revealed early on Baász's openness toward non-Romanian, even Northern European cultural sources, as well as his sensitivity to mythic and archetypal narratives. The series, executed with exceptional graphic precision and symbolic subtlety, earned him the Second Prize at the *National Book Salon* in Bucharest in 1972. The recognition immediately established him as one of the most promising illustrators of his generation and laid the foundation for a long engagement with the book as a visual medium. Soon afterward he was invited by the prominent publishing houses *Európa* and *Helikon* to produce further *Kalevala* illustrations, completed in 1975.

The success of these works reached beyond national borders, generating interest from Finland itself. Yet, constrained by the bureaucratic restrictions of the communist regime, Baász had to wait more than a decade before being allowed to travel abroad. Only in 1988, after years of perseverance, did he obtain official permission to visit Helsinki with a creative fellowship – a journey that confirmed his long-standing dialogue with Finnish culture and that considerably enriched his artistic vocabulary.

After having completed his studies, Baász applied for the position of scenographer at the Hungarian State Theatre in Cluj, an institution known for its strong visual traditions; however, his application was rejected. The official authorities then attempted to assign him to an industrial workplace – a common practice meant to keep artists under control – but he refused.

Instead, he decided to pursue the uncertain path of a freelance artist, an unusual and even risky status in the controlled economy of the 1970s. This decision embodied his early resolve to prioritize creative freedom over security.

In 1972 he married Júlia Szűcs, a professional cellist, thus linking his life not only to visual art but also to music, whose rhythm and structural thinking would later influence his graphic compositions. Their twin daughters, Eszter and Anna, were born in 1974. During this decade, Baász lived primarily in Cluj, working independently, producing book illustrations, graphic portfolios, and prints that already showed a preference for reduced forms and strong contrasts.

In 1976 the family moved to Sfântu Gheorghe, a small Transylvanian town which at that time possessed a vibrant Hungarian intellectual community despite its peripheral situation. Here Baász became the artistic director of the Municipal Art Gallery, a position he held until 1982. The role allowed him to transform the gallery into one of the most active artistic spaces in the region, hosting exhibitions, symposiums, and experimental events that drew artists from across the country.

Alongside his institutional work, Baász continued to contract illustration projects with Kriterion Publishing House, the central editor of Hungarian-language books in Romania, and with Korunk, the main Hungarian cultural magazine of Cluj. These collaborations connected him to a wide network of writers and intellectuals, many of whom shared his concern for maintaining cultural identity under political censorship. After 1979 his personal life changed: he later married Pálma Szigeti, also an artist from Târgu Mureș, and their daughter Orsolya was born in 1980.

In Sfântu Gheorghe, Baász soon emerged as a catalyst of artistic life, instilling a spirit of dialogue and experimentation in an environment often constrained by provincialism. Having received a permanent studio space in 1977, he organized numerous group exhibitions and interdisciplinary gatherings. One of his achievements was the conception of *Medium I* (1981), a national exhibition devoted to young avant-garde artists – the first of its kind in Romania. A decade later, the project expanded into an international edition, *Medium II* (1991), confirming his ability to sustain continuity even through radical political change. Another initiative, the *AnnArt Festival* held by Lake Saint Anne, launched the tradition of action art and performance in Transylvania, later achieving international visibility.

By these initiatives Baász not only contributed to the visibility of new artistic trends but also offered a platform for independent voices in a period when official art institutions promoted a single, ideologically controlled aesthetic. Through his networking capacity and visionary

energy, he helped establish links between Hungarian, Romanian, and foreign artists, subtly undermining the cultural isolation imposed by the regime.

The theoretical foundation that supports my interpretation of Imre Baász's artistic trajectory originates in the recognition that his practice cannot be isolated within the traditional disciplinary boundaries of art history. His works are embedded in a much broader network of intellectual, literary, and social references, reflecting a mindset that constantly sought intersections between image, text, and collective experience. As Baász himself often stated in conversations and letters, the artist's role extends beyond the personal realm of expression; it includes a responsibility toward the community, the reactivation of shared symbols, and the maintenance of cultural continuity in conditions of restriction.

It is within this conceptual frame that I refer to László Krasznahorkai's reflections on the figure of the prophet – a metaphor that perfectly encapsulates Baász's artistic ethics. Krasznahorkai, one of the most prominent contemporary Hungarian novelists, remarked repeatedly that "people do not need prophets, but false prophets," because true prophets tell what others do not wish to hear, whereas false ones offer comforting lies. Imre Baász belonged to the first category – an artist unwilling to compromise or flatter his audience. He questioned prevailing forms and constraints, exposing his viewers to discomfort rather than consolation. His artworks were, in this sense, mirrors of accountability, pointing toward the passivity of audiences and the latent complicity of a complacent artistic establishment.

My research has had to confront a paradox: while Baász's visual production is extraordinarily rich and diverse, the critical literature directly dedicated to him remains strikingly limited. The main comprehensive source remains Bálint Chikán's monographic album, published in 1994, which sought to survey his entire oeuvre without, however, constructing a sustained art-historical interpretation. Consequently, the analytical task of this study has been twofold: first, to map the archive – to gather dispersed materials including photographs, sketches, and drafts – and second, to situate these works within broader theoretical coordinates that could illuminate the artist's aims.

During the 1980s and 1990s – a period marked by censorship and the gradual disintegration of ideological control – Baász's work operated at the intersection of illustration, conceptualism, and action art. This hybridity explains why existing art-historical categories have only partially encompassed his practice. In order to capture its complexity, I have employed a model that crosses disciplinary boundaries, combining art history with anthropology, sociology, and literary theory. Such an approach allows for a reading that accommodates both the personal and the collective, both the symbolic and the political dimensions of the work.

Several theoretical pillars underlie this analysis. The first is Zygmunt Bauman's concept of *liquid modernity*, which designates the instability of modern social forms and the perpetual fluidity of identity. In the Romanian context of late socialism, this condition acquires a particular resonance: structures were simultaneously rigid and collapsing, and individuals navigated an everyday landscape defined by uncertainty. A second key concept is liminality, formulated by Victor Turner, to describe the threshold state occurring during rites of passage – a suspension between two stable conditions. In Baász's world, liminality becomes not an episode but a permanent state, an *anti-structure* that characterized artistic and civic life under authoritarianism.

To live and create under such permanent transition was to experience a contradiction: the absence of official structures could loosen certain controls, yet it also generated chaos and confusion, a vacuum of direction. Baász responded to this situation by assuming the role that Turner defined as the "master of ceremonies." He organized events, exhibitions, and collective rituals that temporarily restored structure through creative action. Rather than being the passive victim of disorder, he became the engineer of transient meaning within chaos.

At the same time, Baász embodied another archetype that Turner and other anthropologists have highlighted: the trickster – the ambiguous mediator who uses humor, irony, and subversion to challenge authority while simultaneously preserving communal memory. His performances, small gatherings, and subversive visual series all relied on this ambivalent position: serious yet playful, rebellious yet constructive.

The tension between charisma and rebellion runs throughout his artistic life. Charisma allowed him to attract followers, collaborators, and younger artists who would later continue his initiatives. Rebellion enabled him to resist conformity and to reject state-controlled commissions or decorative solutions. Without this dual energy – inspiration and defiance – the creative scene of Sfântu Gheorghe in the 1970s and 1980s would not have achieved such vitality. Indeed, Baász's personal energy transformed this small Transylvanian town into what can justifiably be understood as a cultural ignition point: an unlikely periphery that developed its own gravitational field.

The initiatives he led – among them the *Musical Images* festival of 1979 and the *Medium I* exhibition of 1981 – became spaces of experimentation, offering artists a protected sphere of freedom within an otherwise controlled public life. In my analysis, the curator and organizer in Baász embodies what Turner calls a "master of ceremonies," one who ensures the passage from chaos to momentary order through ritualized creativity. The function of these exhibitions

extended beyond aesthetic display – they served as performative assertions of autonomy, collective self-acknowledgment, and endurance.

It is this dimension of Baász's work that connects his oeuvre with the broader theoretical discourse on the politics of liminality. Romanian socialism, particularly during the late Ceaușescu decades, can be interpreted as a prolonged liminal period in which established hierarchies were simultaneously absolutized and hollowed out. In such conditions, individuals and communities oscillated between complicity and survival. Creators such as Baász transformed this perpetual threshold into a space of reflection and resistance. His art articulated not only the uncertainty of existence but also the possibility of meaning within instability.

By re-reading his actions, drawings, and visual notes through this theoretical lens, we understand that Baász did not merely react to repression; he translated liminality into an aesthetic principle – an ongoing creative crossing from restriction toward freedom. The *Medium* exhibitions, the *AnnArt* festival, and his numerous collaborative efforts were not isolated gestures; they constituted a network of temporary communities, each reiterating the same ritual of renewal.

To understand Imre Baász's position within the history of twentieth-century Eastern European art, it is essential to situate his practice within the broader institutional and socio-political geography of Romania between the 1960s and 1980s. This was a period in which cultural production operated under a paradoxical dynamic of repression and autonomy: while state policies imposed strict ideological supervision, artistic life simultaneously developed micro-spaces of negotiation and improvisation. Within these in-between zones, such as small galleries, museums, or artists' associations outside Bucharest, a degree of creative freedom could still be exercised, often beyond the awareness or comprehension of the authorities. It is precisely in this interstitial framework that Baász's activity became meaningful.

The conceptual model that best describes this situation is articulated by the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski, whose theory of *horizontal art history* has profoundly influenced the re-evaluation of Eastern European modernism. Piotrowski proposed that the relationship between artistic centers and peripheries should not be treated hierarchically—as a one-way flow of innovation from the West to the East or from capitals to provinces—but horizontally, as a set of simultaneous, dialogic interactions. In such a model, places like Sfântu Gheorghe cease to be seen merely as remote recipients of central dictates and become capable of producing their own modernities. Baász's case perfectly embodies this idea: the periphery, through his work, generates a centrifugal momentum that challenges the dominance of the center.

By the late 1970s, *Sfântu Gheorghe* had developed a distinctive artistic identity. The city's small size and ethnic composition—it maintained a Hungarian-speaking majority—allowed for a shared cultural language relatively insulated from state ideology. Baász's gallery programs and events nurtured a community of experimentation, in which young artists, writers, and performers could encounter the newest ideas circulating in foreign journals or reproduced illicitly through samizdat materials. Exhibitions such as *Medium I* (1981) and, later, *Medium II* (1991) exposed local audiences to conceptual and post-conceptual tendencies, including actions and installations that re-interpreted the very notion of authorship. Through these events, Baász demonstrated that Sfântu Gheorghe—far from being a provincial outpost—could become an artistic hub capable of radiating influence outward toward Bucharest, Cluj, and even abroad.

A significant testimony to this transformation is offered by the later discovery, in 2009, by Magda Predescu, who documented the vibrant contemporary art life of the city and drew attention anew to Baász's heritage. Her investigation confirmed that the groundwork for a local modern art tradition had been established decades earlier, largely due to Baász's initiatives and to the informal networks of collaboration he built. Predescu's research also highlighted an enduring problem: the delayed recognition of peripheral artistic centers within national historiography – a gap that Piotrowski's theory directly addresses.

Furthermore, contextual comparison shows that the local developments around Sfântu Gheorghe were neither isolated nor exceptional. Across Romania, several cultural "islands" functioned as laboratories of alternative thinking, including *Timișoara*, *Iași*, and *Cluj-Napoca*. Each city became known for specific artistic and academic approaches that subtly challenged the capital's cultural monopoly. In the 1990s, for example, after the fall of the communist regime, the legacy of these spaces gave rise to three major performance art festivals: *AnnArt* (Sfântu Gheorghe, organizing its first edition already in 1990), *Zóna* (Timișoara 1993–2004), and *Periferic* (Iași 1997–2001). Among them, *AnnArt* was chronologically the earliest and maintained the longest continuity, which confirms the pioneering character of Baász's earlier efforts.

The *AnnArt Festival*, held every year between 1990 and 1999 on the shores of *Lake Saint Anne*, became a symbolic space of post-communist cultural renewal. As one of the first international performance festivals in the country, it acted as a bridge between the suppressed experimentation of the 1980s and the newly regained freedom of exchange in the 1990s. Its spirit continues today: the contemporary *MAGMA Contemporary Art Space* in Sfântu Gheorghe — founded by younger artists who considered Baász's practice foundational —

explicitly traces its lineage to AnnArt. In 2025, a quarter of a century after the festival's last edition, the organizers re-erected the traditional AnnArt tent and launched the AnnArt Digital Archive Project. This initiative, developed by the *MAGMA Contemporary Context Association* together with the Székely National Museum and the ETNA Foundation, seeks to digitize the documentation of more than *150 artists* and *200 performances*, preserving them as part of the region's intangible cultural heritage. Such efforts ensure that the intellectual impulse once embodied by Baász will remain accessible to future generations of researchers.

Within this landscape, it becomes clear that *Sfântu Gheorghe* can no longer be described as a peripheral site passively awaiting influences from the center. On the contrary, its artistic institutions illustrate what Piotrowski called "a decentralized topography of modernism." By redefining the flow of ideas from vertical to horizontal, Baász and his collaborators effectively reversed the power relations that had separated capital and region. Their achievements invite a re-reading of Romanian art history as a constellation of centers of invention rather than a hierarchy of dependence.

Finally, to comprehend the intellectual stakes of these transformations, we must consider the role of the intelligentsia under Romania's socialist dictatorship. This social stratum, complex and ambiguous, has often been criticized for moral ambivalence in navigating the compromises required by the regime. My research revisits this issue through the example of Baász, whose practice exemplifies the difficult balance between ethical responsibility and pragmatic survival. In conditions of political uncertainty and shifting ideological norms, moral categories themselves became blurred. However, when the continuation of cultural life becomes the ultimate aim, transgression, experimentation, and confrontation with established limits can themselves be understood as moral acts. From this perspective, Baász's persistent exploration of both ethical and aesthetic boundaries signals not opportunism but courageous commitment: an insistence that the space of art could still harbor truth when other domains had surrendered it.

To fully assess the innovation and significance of Imre Baász's practice, one must read his oeuvre within the context of the experimental art tendencies that developed in Romania and throughout Eastern Europe in the decades of state socialism. Baász's art does not function as a derivative echo of Western avant-gardes; rather, it constitutes a local adaptation of their ideas, reshaped under the constraints and creative strategies of an authoritarian political system. His contribution lies precisely in how he transformed limitation into methodology, converting censorship into a generative condition for new aesthetic languages.

Early in his career, Baász established himself as one of the leading illustrators working in the Hungarian language in Romania. His drawings for *The Kalevala* already demonstrate a remarkable synthesis of fine-art sensibility and literary interpretation. The epic's mythological character resonated deeply with the artist's own interest in archetypes, symbols, and the cyclical structure of creation. Through calligraphic precision and rhythmical compositions, Baász created an imagery that transcended mere illustration, functioning instead as a *visual exegesis* of the text. These images simultaneously respected the integrity of the words and proposed autonomous visual narratives, revealing a mind constantly negotiating between constraint and expansion.

This training in disciplined composition became fundamental when Baász moved toward intermedia and action-based art in the late 1970s. His visual imagination had always been gestural; hence, the transition from graphic work to performance did not represent a rupture, but an extension of the drawing into space and time. Actions such as *The Birth of the Myth* (1979) or *The Burial of the Suitcase* (1981) turned the graphic line into physical gesture, translating symbolic motifs from the page into the raw material of reality. The suitcase, for example, recurs throughout his oeuvre as a universal metaphor of displacement, memory, and forbidden travel – a motif both ordinary and politically charged in the Romania of the early 1980s.

In analyzing Baász's actions, it is necessary to recall the specific conditions under which performance art, or action art, could exist in Romania. The state's official aesthetics were shaped by *socialist realism*, which privileged representations of heroic labor and political optimism. From the early 1960s onward, however, small groups of artists – in Bucharest, Cluj, Timișoara, and Târgu Jiu – began to experiment with abstract expression, conceptual art, and body-centered actions. Such gestures were primarily documented in private photographs or film fragments and rarely publicized. They formed what art historians now call an underground modernity: an informal network of events held in apartments, studios, or secluded landscapes.

Within this microcosm, Baász occupied a distinctive position. He was neither part of the Bucharest conceptual schools nor completely isolated – his access to Hungarian and Central European publications allowed him to build a mental bridge between the Romanian avant-garde and the broader Eastern European scene. Influences from Polish, Czech, or Yugoslav artists reached him indirectly, often through catalogues, exhibition texts, or photographs passed hand to hand among colleagues. This circulation of images shaped a new visual literacy: artists learned from documentation rather than direct contact, producing what might be called a documentary avant-garde, mediated and reflective.

It is within this context that Ileana Pintilie's critical terminology becomes crucial. In her seminal studies on Romanian performance and experimental art, Pintilie argued that the Western distinction between *performance* and *happening* does not fully fit the Romanian situation. Both of those forms presuppose an active audience, whereas in Romania the public dimension of experimental art had been severely curtailed by censorship and the climate of fear. Accordingly, Pintilie proposed the broader term *action* – or *actionism* – to describe the diverse body of practices, ranging from ritual gestures and land art to installations and traces of bodily engagement. This redefinition captures the key paradox of Baász's own art: it is both personal and social, both invisible and communal, functioning within the tension between exposure and concealment.

Baász's actions, as far as documentation permits us to know them, revolved around elementary gestures and archetypal materials – earth, water, fire, and object remnants of daily life. In *The Burial of the Suitcase* (1981), for instance, he staged a quiet ritual that conflated personal memory and collective repression. By burying an object associated with journey and exile, he symbolically enacted the burial of the self's mobility under a regime that forbade travel. Another piece, *The Birth of the Myth*, took place in front of a small, involuntary audience in an open landscape, relying on the spontaneity of chance encounter rather than theatrical preparation. Because many of these actions occurred in remote nature or semi-public contexts, the audience, when existent, consisted of casual witnesses rather than participants. The paradox is central: the artist designed performances whose completion depended not on audience interaction but on the act of documentation itself. The photograph or film fragment became the performative site, displacing the experience into archive form.

Here again, one can observe Baász's dual nature as draughtsman and performer: his camera functioned not as an external recorder but as an extension of drawing. Each action was carefully framed, preserving the composition, rhythm, and chiaroscuro typical of his graphic work. In this sense, his performances are best interpreted as expanded graphics, images that have migrated off the page to occupy real space and duration.

Unlike the Western performance tradition, where provocation and body exposure often aimed at confronting the viewer, Baász's art remained introverted, meditative, and ritualistic. The socialist context necessitated discretion: excess or scandal would have provoked censorship or worse. Instead, his actions cultivated a poetics of suggestion and metaphor, relying on silence, slowness, and ordinary gestures to generate symbolic density. This mode of operation situates him closer to artists like Paul Neagu, Ana Lupaș, and Mihai Olos – figures who also developed introspective forms of *actionism* combining ritual, spirituality, and ecological awareness.

The limited accessibility of audiences during communism profoundly shaped the nature of reception. In Western contexts, the audience is a constitutive part of the performance, legitimizing it through presence; in Baász's practice, the absence of the viewer became itself an aesthetic condition. These closed events enacted a paradoxical kind of visibility – seen by none yet preserved in image, enacted for a utopian audience located somewhere in the future. In this sense, Baász anticipated the later archival turn in performance studies, which recognizes the document not as a secondary residue but as an active continuation of the work.

Despite the small number of documented actions – only eight – their conceptual consistency invites comparison with broader theoretical frameworks. Each work builds on a self-contained universe of recurring symbols such as the circle, rope, or boundary line, all signifying limits and continuity. Through these reductive elements, temporal constraints are transcended; the local acquires universality. His 1988 action *Thank You… You Are Free!*, performed in Stockholm, epitomizes this capacity for translation: a Western audience was confronted with an experience of restriction originating from Eastern Europe. By allowing the public to sense, momentarily, what it means to be unfree, Baász transformed the space of exhibition into an ethical field.

Analytically, Baász's trajectory demonstrates that action art in Romania was not an imported fashion but a response to specific social mechanisms. Its key features – ephemerality, minimalism, and documentation – were not merely stylistic but tactical, enabling artists to operate under censorship while preserving artistic integrity. What in the West had been conceived as opposition to commodification here became opposition to political surveillance. Performance thus turned into a tool of survival; a coded language of dissent articulated through gestures rather than manifestos.

At a historical distance, one can appreciate the double achievement of Baász's work: on the one hand, it localized global avant-garde strategies; on the other, it universalized local experience. His oeuvre stands as a record of resilience, a reminder that creativity can persist even when isolated from the institutional apparatus of art. By integrating performance, ritual, and documentation, Baász forged an original model that anticipated the post-1989 renaissance of performance festivals and remains a crucial reference for the study of Eastern European modernity.

The analysis of Imre Baász's life and work offers more than the reconstruction of an individual career; it opens a window onto the broader mechanisms of cultural survival, renewal, and transformation in a politically constrained environment. At the heart of his creative practice lies the conviction that art can maintain its ethical and cognitive relevance even within systems

designed to neutralize freedom. By positioning himself between graphic art, performance, and community activism, Baász achieved what might best be described as a *total artistic practice* – a synthesis of visual, intellectual, and social dimensions that together define one of the most compelling chapters in the history of Hungarian visual culture in Romania.

From the 1970s onward, Baász cultivated the habit of thinking through practice: each new technique was, for him, an inquiry into the limits of perception and communication. His career thus reflects the permanent negotiation between mastery and experimentation, tradition and rupture. The *Kalevala* illustrations, re-examined from the distance of subsequent decades, appear today as more than decorative renderings of a literary text. They already prefigure key aspects of his later aesthetics: the reduction of form to essential signs; the dialogue between narrative and structure; and the constant oscillation between lightness and density, clarity and mystery. These constructive tensions would later govern his entire oeuvre – in drawing, printmaking, or action.

Baász's insistence on formal rigor should not be mistaken for conservatism. Rather, it stemmed from a belief that meaningful experimentation requires discipline. In a cultural milieu where chaos and uncertainty often replaced freedom, the artist consciously built inner order. Even his most spontaneous actions possess a structural equilibrium that betrays his graphic training. In this way, Baász moved beyond mere protest or improvisation: his art sought *measure* in a world of disproportion.

Equally significant is Baász's contribution as a community organizer and catalyst. The exhibitions and festivals he initiated – from *Medium I* (1981) to *AnnArt* (1990–1999) – constitute more than isolated events. They formed an interconnected network of artistic exchange across linguistic and ideological borders. In these gatherings, artists could test new methods, share unfinished ideas, and rediscover the value of collaboration. Baász's leadership, described contemporaneously by colleagues as both charismatic and self-demanding, was never authoritarian. He preferred to act as a facilitator who mobilized collective energy rather than impose direction. This form of leadership – charismatic yet horizontal – precisely matches the role of the *master of ceremonies* that Turner defined: the one who mediates the passage between dissolution and reconstruction.

Seen from the perspective of post-1989 artistic developments, Baász's legacy acquires renewed relevance. In contexts where institutions continuously expand and contract, his model of decentralized creativity anticipates the later concept of *open-source culture*: knowledge and innovation circulated not top-down but laterally, within collaborative constellations. His vision that a small Transylvanian town could act as a cultural center has been vindicated by the

persistence of spaces such as the MAGMA Contemporary Art Space, which explicitly considers him one of its intellectual ancestors. The re-emergence of the *AnnArt* name in the recent Digital Archive Project testifies to a collective need to recover and preserve the genealogies of independence he helped to establish.

From an interpretive point of view, Baász's career also challenges the dichotomy between Western and Eastern modernities. Rather than striving to imitate the Western avant-garde, he extracted from it certain working principles – experimentation, process-orientation, interdisciplinarity – and redirected them toward local social realities. This process of translation acted both ways: through artists like him, global modernism found its reflection in the microcosm of Eastern Europe, while the experiences of the region enriched the general discourse on art's adaptability. For this reason, his oeuvre must be read not as marginal but as indicative of an *alternative modernity*, articulated from a peripheral yet insightful vantage point.

The scope of this study has been primarily analytical, seeking to connect biographical data, theoretical frameworks, and the epistemic value of artistic practice. Yet the research also revealed abundant unexplored materials. The most urgent future task is the systematic cataloguing of Baász's entire estate, comprising sketches, prints, correspondence, photographs, and video documents dispersed among private collections and public institutions. Equally crucial is the analysis of his surveillance file (maintained by the former Romanian secret police), whose fragments promise to clarify the ambiguous nexuses between art and state monitoring. Only by cross-referencing artistic documentation with administrative evidence can we fully reconstruct the pressures and survival strategies that shaped his work.

Another promising direction concerns interviews and oral histories with those who knew Baász personally – family members, colleagues, and younger artists. Their testimonies can illuminate not only factual details but also the atmosphere of collaboration, tension, and exhilaration that characterized the artistic scene of Sfântu Gheorghe during the 1970s and 1980s. Such materials would help refine our understanding of how local communities of practice were structured and how they interfaced with the broader cultural policies of the state.

Methodologically, the future of Baász research also hinges on interdisciplinary dialogue. Art historians alone cannot capture the multi-layered significance of his oeuvre; literary scholars, anthropologists, and sociologists each provide tools for decoding its social and symbolic mechanisms. Indeed, the richness of his work lies precisely in its resistance to disciplinary closure: it oscillates between narrative and gesture, between intimate confession and public

ritual. Any comprehensive interpretation must therefore preserve this oscillation instead of freezing it into a static category.

In conclusion, Imre Baász stands as a case study in how artistic authenticity can prevail under systemic constraint. His career demonstrates that peripheral positions often yield greater innovation than central ones, precisely because they demand constant reinvention. His synthesis of graphic precision, performative awareness, and communal vision embodies a microcosm of resistance that remains instructive for artists and scholars alike. The perseverance with which he transformed adversity into resource, and isolation into connection, places him among those creators who redefine the ethical dimension of art.

As this appendix has aimed to demonstrate, Baász Imre's life and legacy encapsulate the dynamic of a broader cultural history: the transition from silence to voice, from confinement to dialogue. His name belongs not only to the local canon of Transylvanian art but to the wider cartography of European modernism, in which creativity persisted despite censorship, and imagination language survived ideology. To return to Krasznahorkai's metaphor: perhaps Baász was neither a prophet nor a false prophet—but the living proof that art itself can become a form of prophecy, speaking the truth softly enough to survive.

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