A rigorous, yet playful, sense of experimentation pervades the work of the Bucharest-based artist Geta Brătescu (b. 1926), a pivotal figure in the artistic landscape of postwar Romania. For over fifty years, Brătescu has continually reinvented her methods, subjects, and formal strategies. While the artist frequently alternates among film, textile, collage, performance, installation, photography, printmaking, and more recently sculpture, it is drawing, and her variable conceptions of it, that orients her practice.

Following her studies at the Bucharest Academy of Fine Art, Brătescu worked as an illustrator. She produced pictures for many publications, including Bertolt Brecht’s Mother Courage and Her Children and an edition of Aesop’s Fables, and was the artistic director of the magazine Secoliu (Twentieth Century), founded by the Writers’ Union of Romania. Over the years, literature and the theater have remained central influences: characters such as Medea, Faust, Aesop, and Dido populate her work, forming a kind of repertoire for her own personal mythology.

Brătescu deploys drawing more as a conceptual strategy than a literal device of two-dimensional representation. Drawing assumes infinite forms and directs a range of ideas and artistic expression throughout her oeuvre; it is an all-encompassing tool through which she envisions film, collage, embroidery, and performance. Moreover, she aligns drawing with the act of writing to the extent that, in her view, one cannot be separated from the other: “When I draw I have the feeling that I write; I write an image; I write a way of seeing.”

As an artist frequently alternates among film, textile, collage, performance, installation, photography, printmaking, and later sculpture, it is drawing, and her variable conceptions of it, that orients her practice. A rigorous, yet playful, sense of experimentation pervades the work of the Bucharest-based artist Geta Brătescu (b. 1926), a pivotal figure in the artistic landscape of postwar Romania. For over fifty years, Brătescu has continually reinvented her methods, subjects, and formal strategies. While the artist frequently alternates among film, textile, collage, performance, installation, photography, printmaking, and more recently sculpture, it is drawing, and her variable conceptions of it, that orients her practice.

Geta Brătescu MATRIX 254 JULY 25–SEPTEMBER 28, 2014 UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY ART MUSEUM & PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

3. Nicolae Ceaușescu was leader of Romania’s Communist Party from 1965 to 1989, becoming president in 1974. He and his wife Elena were ousted from power, convicted of genocide, and executed on December 25, 1989, during the Romanian Revolution.
Geta Brătescu was born in Ploieşti, Romania, in 1926; she lives and works in Bucharest. She studied at the School of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Bucharest and at the Bucharest School of Fine Art. She worked primarily as a graphic designer in the 1950s and 1960s as she developed her conceptual studio practice, which began to flourish in the 1970s. She first exhibited a series of drawings in the Venice Biennale in 1960 and exhibited frequently in Romania from the 1970s through the 1990s. Since then she has been included in numerous international exhibitions. Most recently she has had solo exhibitions at Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin (2014); Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (MUSAC), Lyon (2013); Galeria Ivan, Bucharest (2011); Galerie Mezzanin, Vienna (2010); Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck (2008); and the National Museum of Contemporary Art (MNAC), Bucharest (2007). Recent group exhibitions include: A World of Its Own: Photographic Practices in the Studio, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); the 55th Venice Biennale (2013); A Bigger Splash: Painting after Performance, Tate Modern, London (2012–13); Intense Proximity, La Triennale, Paris (2012); the 12th Istanbul Biennale (2011); Museum of Desire, MUMOK, Vienna (2011); and Ostalgia, New Museum, New York (2011).

**Works in the exhibition**

**Mânea (The Hand)**
- 1976–76
- Ink on paper
- 21¼ × 17½ in.

**Mâini. Mâna trupului meu îmi reconstituie portretul (Hands. The hand of my body reconstitutes my portrait)**
- 1977
- 8mm film transferred to DVD; black-and-white, silent; 7:30 mins

**Atelierul (The Studio)**
- 1978
- 8mm film transferred to DVD; black-and-white, sound; 17:45 mins

**Doamna Oliver în costum de călătorie (Mrs. Oliver in her traveling costume)**
- 1985/2012
- Gelatin silver print
- 15¾ × 15½ in.

**Memorie (Memory)**
- 1990
- Forty collages with tempera on paper
- 44¼ × 14½ in.

**Fals Joc de-a Fapta (The False Game of Deed)**
- 1985
- Gesso, stones, glass
- Dimensions variable

**Didona (Dido)**
- 2000
- Felt, wooden objects with aluminum foil, wooden laundry pegs with tempera
- Dimensions variable

All works courtesy of Galeria Ivan, Bucharest; and Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.