

The Art of the Romanian Traditional Blouse - Ia

The interview with Ecaterina Hulea was conducted by Roxana Băcanu



Ecaterina Hulea is a craftswoman, collector, living human treasure, a woman possessed only by the thrill of work and respect for authentic values. She was born in the village of Odaia Manolache, Vânători commune, Galați county in Romania

The preservation and conservation of the local port occupies an important place in the national culture. How did you manage to set up the ethnographic museum?

The idea came to me in 2005, when I participated in a project to preserve the folk costume, a project of the Cultural Center "Dunărea de Jos"/"Lower Danube" in Galați. I was part of the research team of this project to preserve the folk costume specific to our area. I knocked on a lot of doors for a year and collected almost 100-year-old traditional objects. Most of the invaluable items were donated to the future museum. Now this museum is the pride of our village

When did you start the "great adventure"? When did you start creating traditional patterns?

The "great adventure" began as a child when I learned to sew in stitches, to embroider, to get acquainted with the traditional elements. From 2016 I started sewing the Romanian traditional blouses – "ii", which have always fascinated me. There is no house in my village where I have not left my mark. I sewed "ii" and different parts of the Romanian traditional costume, I created different patterns or something to decorate the house for the pupils I had as teacher. I sewed over 200 "ii" with different patterns.

You have won several awards for your contribution to preserving and transmitting the values of folk culture and safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of Vânători commune, Galați county. Do you think that what you are doing is important?

I am very proud to be Romanian, I am very proud to work these traditional blouses with embroidery and to contribute at maintaining our folk traditions. The traditional blouse with embroidery defines us as a people, reminding us of our past and carrying on the history of our nation. In 2021, the UNESCO file “The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on Shoulder (Alita) - an Element of Cultural Identity in Romania and the Republic of Moldova” was finished and advocates the inclusion in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

What work techniques do you use to create an “ia”?

From the research I did, I found out that every woman wanted to wear something unique. “Ia” was cut in the shape of a cross, made of linen, hemp, borangic, homemade cloth, melted cloth, Ia was created for many generations. For a single “ia”, 10 working techniques were used, such as: cross stitch, chain stitch, fir tree etc, and a different color depending on the area. .

Depending on the model and the material chosen, I can work on one “ia” for a period of time, from two weeks to three months. I use melted cloth and cotton.

To create an “ia” in a human life is a wonderful thing. I wear that one now, my child will wear it, my niece will wear it, many generations will wear it. History will talk about that. It will be an object of honor for any generation.

Romanians are proud of their folk costume. Famous fashion houses were inspired by it. Famous painters immortalized woman in “ia”. Where did the inspiration come from to create the specific patterns on the traditional blouse with embroidery?

Romanian women had a very rich imagination. Women have always been inspired by social life, nature, the cosmos. They used floral, geometric, zoomorphic elements.

To recognize an authentic “ia” it can be seen that it is not finished. It is considered that nothing made by man is perfect, perfection belongs to God.