

Villa Matilda

PAINTER STEFAN LUCHIAN CENTRE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Mathilde Rădoi

Set in central Bucharest, Matilda Radoi built the house for herself in 1896-97, a time when few women were property owners. She chose N.C. Michaescu as her architect, and her very close cousin – blooming painter Stefan Luchian - for the interior decoration. The villa was built in eclectic style, gathering neo-gothic influences and glimpses of what would later be defined as neo-Romanian. As political independence of the country from the Ottoman rule was still rather fresh, the cultural re-orientation towards occidental Europe was at its peak: artists and architects were trained in Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy, and a continuous flow of artistic motives, themes and techniques swept the larger cities. Villa Matilda benefited directly – Luchian was schooled in Munich and Paris, and brought along helping friends: architect Alexandre Clavel and painters N. Vermont, Constantin Artachino, Al. Bogdan.

By the end of the Villa's construction, Matilda exceeds her budget and also gets divorced; at 34 she has three daughters to look after. The house is put up for rent, and rich bankers and government members inhabit it until 1920, when General Arthur Vaitoianu buys it. Matilda has never lived a day in her dream house.

The General had several frescoes and walls covered up, also changing the heraldry to his own initials. In 1952 the house gets appropriated by the communist state which sets 10 families to inhabit its richly decorated halls and rooms, using each and every one as both kitchen, bathroom, storage and bedroom. By 1981, the house is severely damaged.

Maria Marcu, architect in charge of the restoration and conservation team that takes on the Villa, finds all original paintings and decorations hidden under extreme filth, dust, grease, and 7 layers of paint. Throughout 1983 to 1987 the Villa is carefully restored: Ms Marcu managed to convince the state to evict all lodgers and convert the villa for public functions – a library. However, the budget exceeds once more the possibilities of the public library network, and the Villa gets help from the Romanian Chess Federation. By 2000, the Villa is bought by our Romania de Maine Foundation, and used as office quarters.



Ștefan Luchian

For Romanian art, Luchian is the promoter of modernism in painting. Shaped by academic experiences in Munich and Paris, passionate about technology and novelty, Luchian explores light and rapidly feeds on impressionism, symbolism, art nouveau and modernism. On his return to Romania, he founds the Salon des Independants and the Artistic Society for developing Arts – Ileana (1896). His colouring techniques and vibrant transparencies set him as the young artistic hope of the country – his landscapes, portraits, natures mortes – especially the flowers. At age 32 he develops multiple sclerosis but continues to paint, even when paralyzed. Tainted by a late accusation of fraud, he finds comfort in the support of the highbrows of the artistic society.

Villa Matilda is Luchian's first major mural decoration project, and the only one to have survived in such large proportions. Reflective of his beginnings, it holds an immense value for a period that rather lacks other documentation. Luchian signed the work in three different zones – signatures that have been covered by the General's daughter prior to surrendering the house to the state in the 50s. Rediscovered by chance in 1973, the authenticity of his work is attested by historian Petre Oprea and, through his study, reintroduced to the art circuit.



Setting

— set in Protected District no. 40, in the very core of the city, the Villa is a testimonial of the urban personal residencies typical of the historical fabric of 19th century Bucharest. Its varied volumes respond to light, vegetation and shape the inner circulations that allow for each of the three levels to be accessed independently but to harmonize around a central staircase. Its garden has long been altered to fit parking lots and a large public for chess competitions.



Main entrance

– MR heraldry, signed carved glass panes and rich plaster decoration.



Info point and Romanian Hall – decorated ceilings –

Future uses:

Info Point (welcoming desk, wardrobe, ticket office, memorabilia shop)

Romanian Hall – Research Centre for Promoting Patrimonial Value , digital library



Meeting Point

– the main hallway was completely covered up at the General's request: silk tapestry and wood paneling made the recovery of original paintings impossible but for one central medallion.
Future uses: meeting point for visitors, foyer for the main halls, permanent exhibition of the house's restauration and history



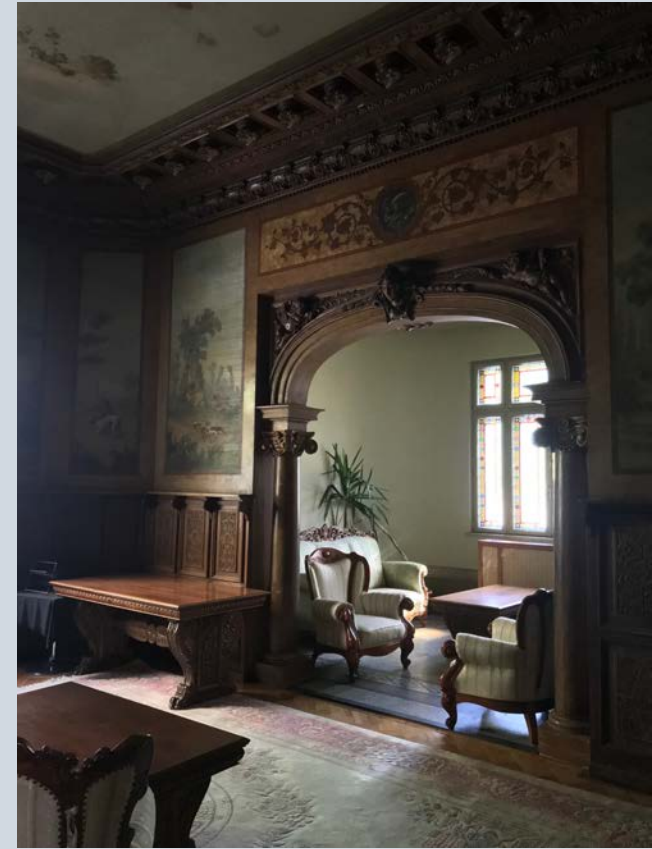
Matilda's Reception Hall

—exquisitely decorated with floral and natural motifs, bearing the signature of Luchian above one of the doors, as well as the year, 1987. The niche, with its muses, brings homage to the owner and a testimonial of the older house, that stood on the land before the Villa.
Future uses: cultural and artistic events (book launches, conferences, workshops, lectures)



Matilda's Living Room

– Luchian exhibits here his mastery: he painted over horizontally-combed plaster, resulting in a faux-tapestry effect that completely transforms in light. The ceiling is also his oeuvre – light pastels and transparencies of muses and angels. Glass stained windows from Poland, oak paneling and a niche responding symmetrically to the one in the adjoining hall, complete the room. **Future uses:** cultural and artistic events (book launches, conferences, workshops, lectures)



Turkish hall and adjacent room

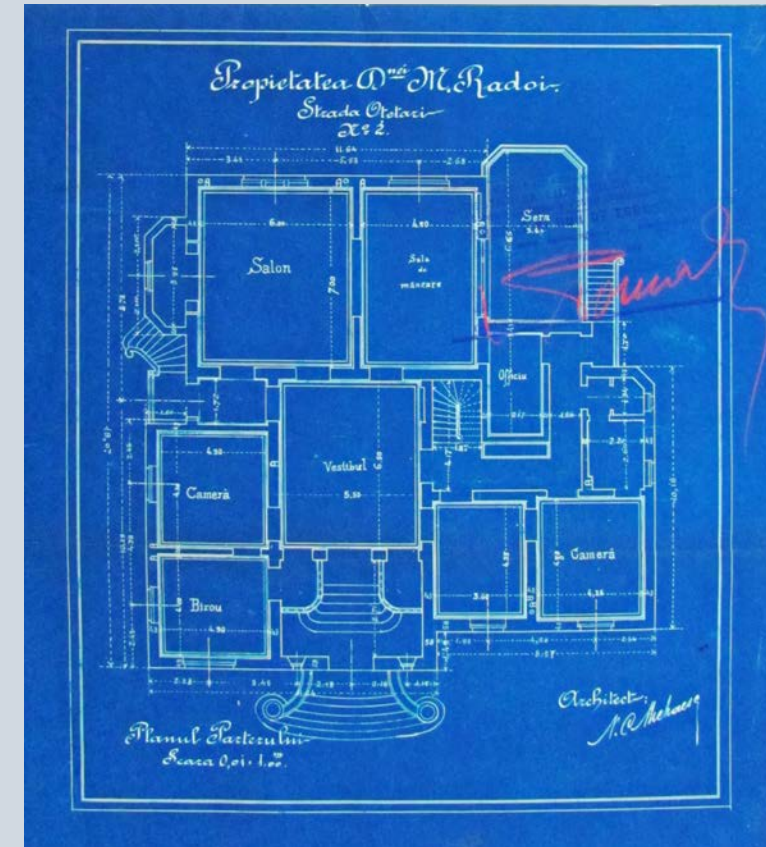
- the Turkish Hall is decorated with geometric patterns of Islamic inspiration, devoid of any figurative paintings, while the adjoining room, Matilda's former bedroom, has its ceiling painted by Luchian in his typical pastel and transparency technique – muses and angels. They both hold ceramic-clad heaters.

Future uses: cultural events organized by project partners.



Details and care

— original blueprints signed by arch. Michaescu. Of all three floors, the elevated ground floor is the most precious — its careful decoration shows it was dedicated to the public, social interactions of the owner. However, the same spatial generosity and attentive craft is given to the semi-basement and top floor. The semi-basement holds the summer living room, winecellars, kitchen, greenhouse and service rooms — a large iron stove, stained glass, brass doorknobs, an inner balcony and made-to-measure doors add a personal touch to an otherwise technical floor. The top floor held three bedrooms and bathrooms — the height and light are the impressive touches here. **Future use** — SB exhibition halls, debates, meetings, workshops, digital studios: TF rental offices/studios for creative freelancers.



Reaffirming the Villa Matilda in the city

Villa Matilda's **main asset** is the unique extensive mural oeuvre by Stefan Luchian, that has never been openly exhibited to the public. Its position of high walkability and accessibility in the city's centre, and being part of the protected area allow for it to be easily integrated in existing cultural and touristic routes.

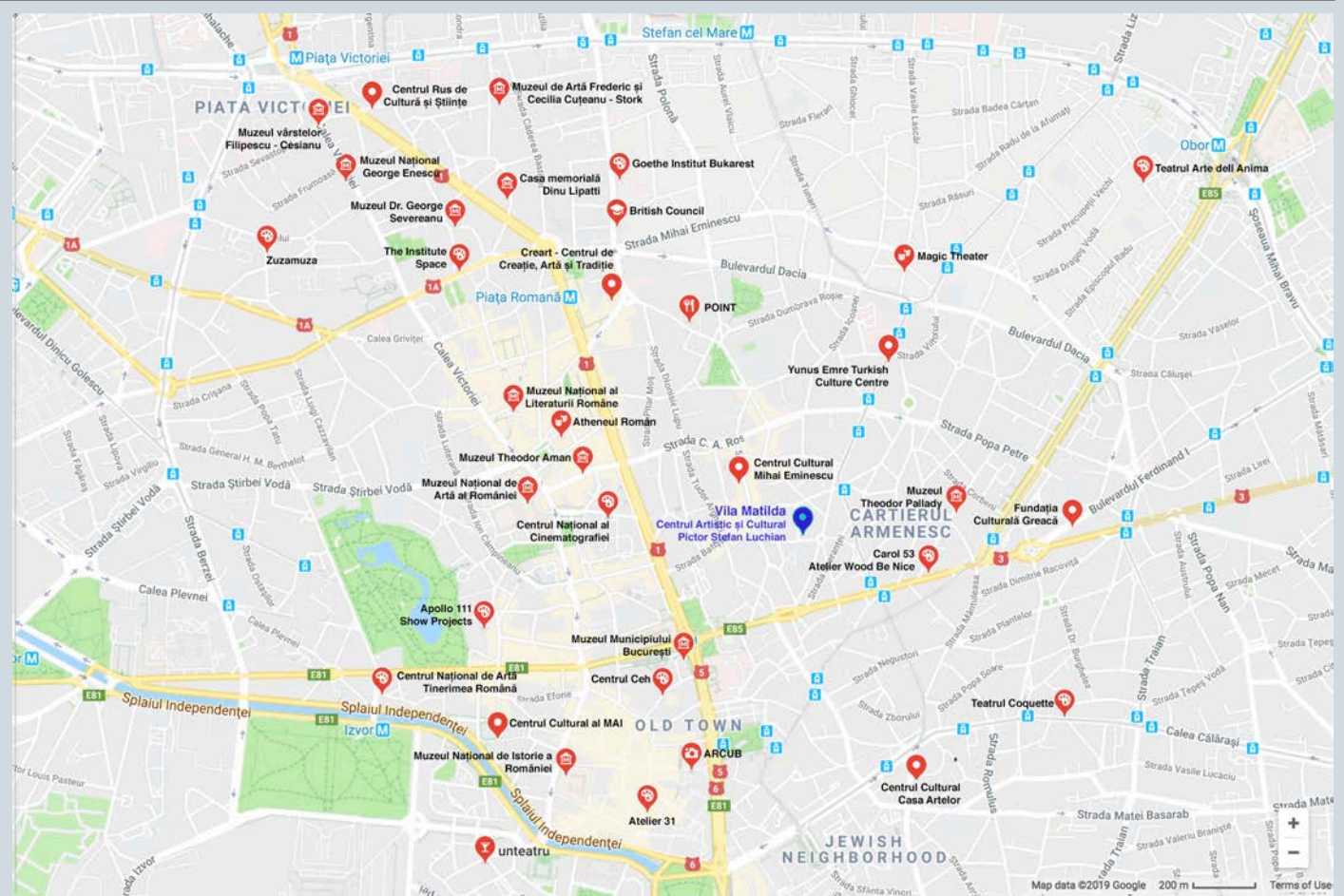
The personal history of the Villa is its **secondary asset** – it opens both social discussions regarding the women's role in Romanian society, the role of art in architectural endeavours, and also the political decrees that alter spatial uses and significances. The restoration process it went through in the 80s is well documented and can be a stand-alone educational exhibition in architectural, structural, technical, chemical and artistic conservation.

The **third asset** of the Villa is its setting in time: at the moment Luchian painted it, he was at the height of his social artistic activity. Ileana, the Society for developing Arts in Romania, that he co-founded a year prior, had already organized a series of conferences at the Romanian Atheneum (first public cultural building of the State, funded with public donations, built in 1888), and would host an exhibition and publish the Ileana Art Magazine. Luchian's belief in educating the public and aligning the country's culture to Europe's is a legacy we wish to continue within the Villa Matilda.

1.Cultural and artistic centres of Bucharest -

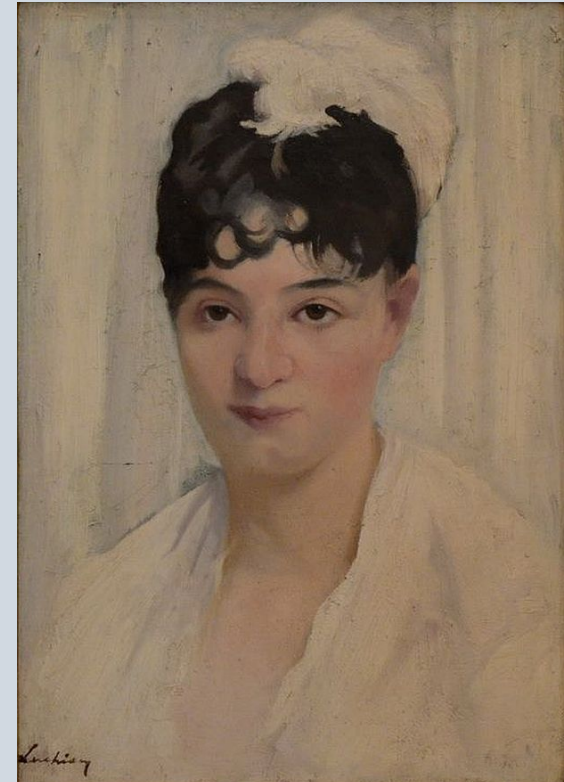
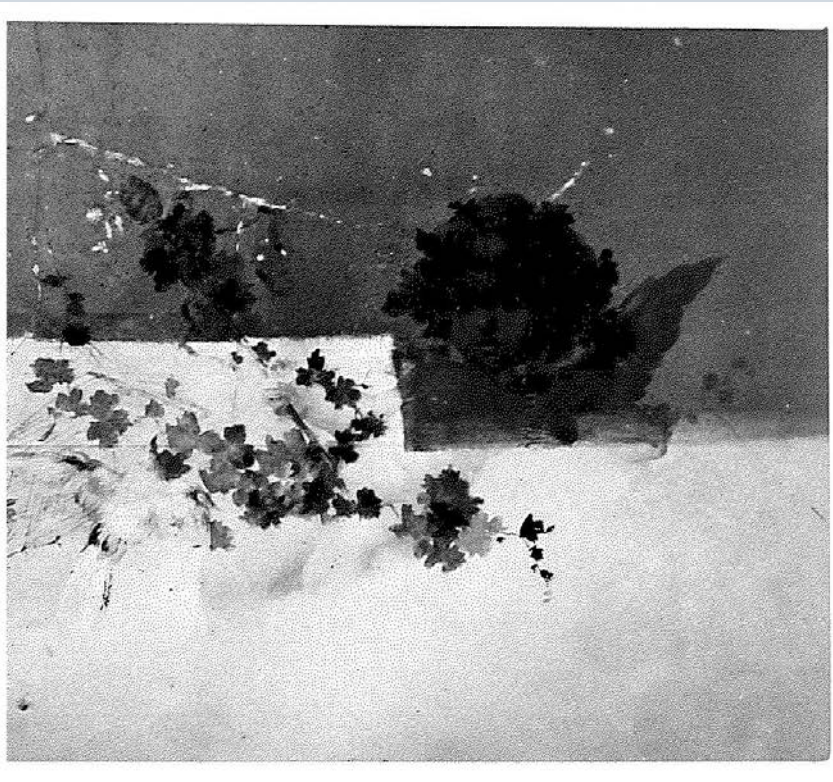
Villa Matilda (in blue) lies east of Bucharest Km 0, within a 500m radius of parking grounds, University subway station, tramway, bus, trolleybus stations. In its direct proximity there are a series of attractors: two parks, a large number of small scale young entrepreneurship coffee places, pubs and bistros, street festivals, libraries, independent and state theatres, the historical city centre, a large number of schols, highschoools and faculties. Highly important is the Bucharest Museum's network of memorial houses, art museums, art galleries, as well as a host of private and international cultural centres (Armenian, Turkish, German, Italian, British to name but a few). The urban fabric of the area allows for pleasant walks.

Turning the Villa into a point in the cultural and touristic circuits of central Bucharest is not only highly possible, but necessary.



2. Villa as its own museum

– Matilda's portraits, her property papers, the testimonials of Maria Marcu, Petre Oprea, Theodor Enescu, Viorel Grimalschi, the photographic and written documentation of the restoration process – all make for a great educational permanent exhibition and also a basis for a guiding app for the visitors.



3. Ileana Society for Developing Arts

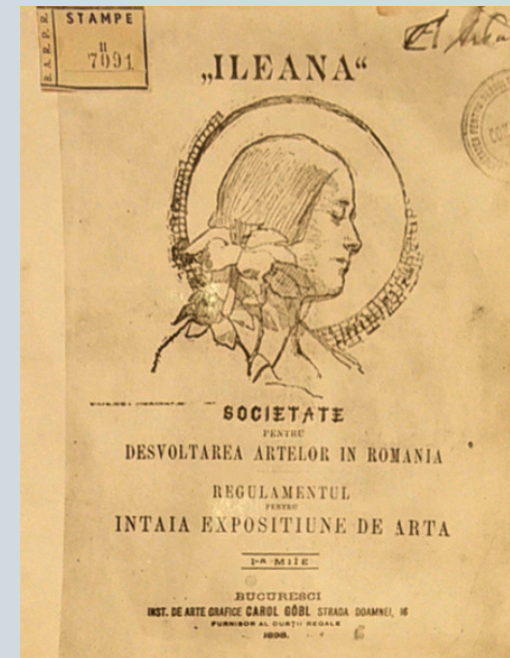
The original goals of Luchian's Society were:

- pushing the artistic movements of all kinds throughout the whole country
- contributing to the conservation of and promoting monuments and art works in Romania
- opening sculpture and painting studios.

Ileana Society for Developing Arts had four committees in charge of its actions: the committee for exhibitions, the committee for advertising handling communication and conferences, the committee for historical monuments overseeing the conservation of historical monuments and art works, the committee of festivals, handling the organization of art festivals,

(Petre Oprea, *Ileana – societatea pentru raspândirea gustului artistic din România (1897 – 1899)*, în *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei*, nr 2/1960)


We aim at continuing the Society's legacy through our planned activities: debates, conferences, recorded talks, lectures, ateliers, studios for rent, workshops, exhibitions, book launches, digital library.



SEMI BASEMENT



LEGENDA :

- Învelișare din tablă zincată
 Zidărie cărămidă plină de epocă

INTERVENTII PARAZITARE:

- ↑ Cos metallic C.T

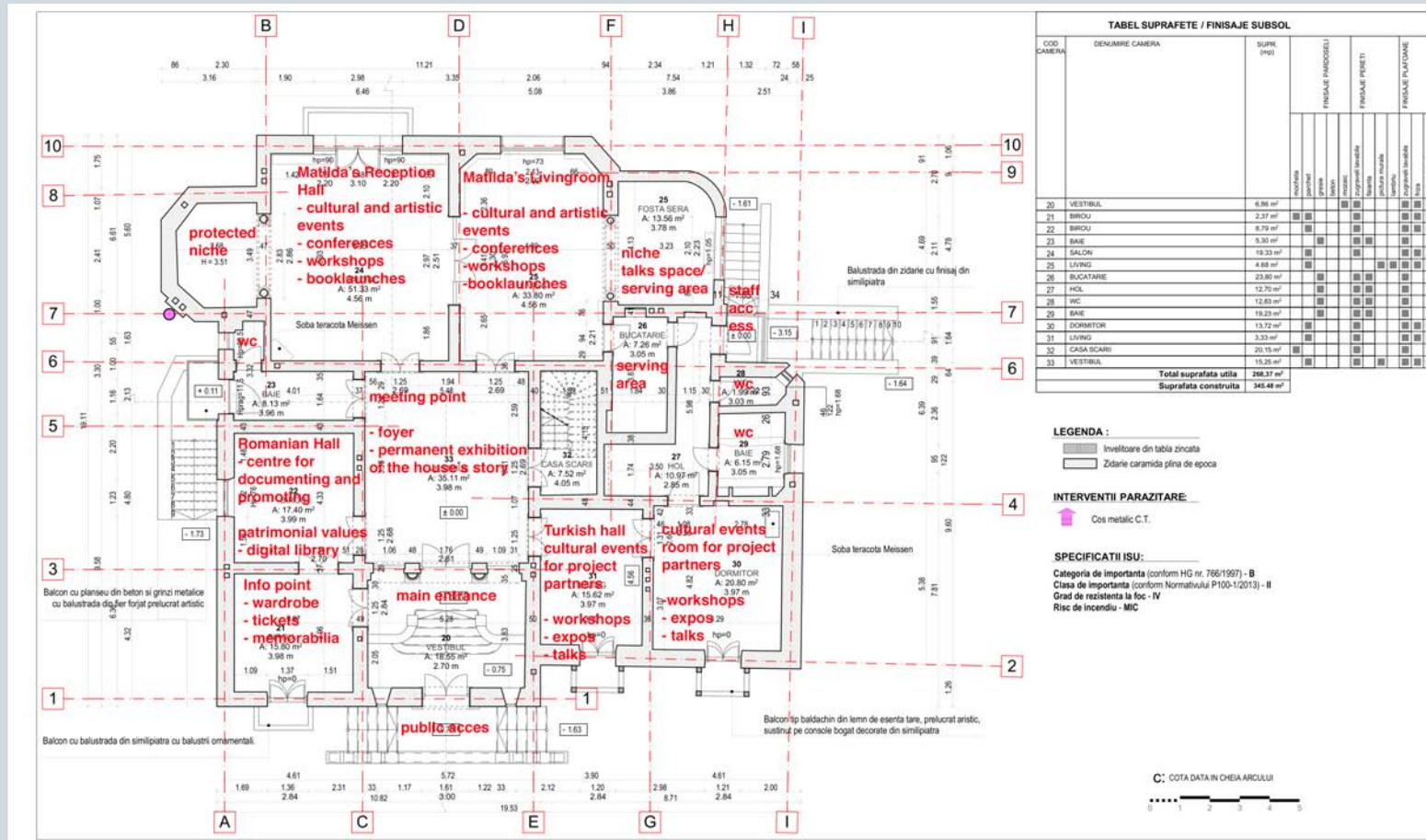
SPECIFICATII ISU:

Categoria de importanta (conform HG nr. 766/1997) - B
Clasa de importanta (conform Normativului P100-1/2013) - I
Grad de rezistenta la foc - IV
Risc de incendiu - MIC

C: COTA DATA IN CHEIA ARCULU



Plans and future uses of spaces. GROUND FLOOR



Plans and future uses of spaces. TOP FLOOR/ ATTIC

