

MILITANT EPHEMERAL IN MOGOSOAIA ENSEMBLE

Violeta RADUCAN¹, Ioana STREZA²

¹ University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Department of Landscape Architecture, Biodiversity and Ornamental Horticulture, 59 Mărăști, District 1, 011464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40722.24.68.24, violetaraducan@gmail.com,

² RPR, Office of Contemporary Studies, 9 Justinian Street, 020101, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40741020826, ioana.streza@gmail.com

Corresponding author email: violetaraducan@gmail.com

Abstract

Landscape is ever-changing. The malleability of the landscape is closely related to the concept of transience. Mogosoaia assembly seems to evade the passage of time, lasting for over than three centuries, apparently unchanged. Its inclusion in the list of heritage monuments, ensure a comfortable status for the mapped elements, a guarantee of the preservation of its integrity. But what happens with its context, with the landscape of Mogosoaia? The loggia of the palace was designed to provide an outlook to the gardens and the lake. The terraced gardens offer a gradual transition to the water and landscape. Recent decades have altered radically the landscape and its physiognomy. On the lake's banks occurs a "colonization" with villas. How can be negotiated the vicinity between a residential area and a monument of such importance? There have been studied documents, text and images, from the archives, similar cases and references to Mogosoaia ensemble. The mapping of the lakeshore garden was elaborated. The perspectives from the palace's loggia and from the terraced gardens were analyzed. In order to elaborate a comparative analysis for the opposite bank to the ensemble, pictures from the archives and up-to-date images were confronted. In order to draw attention to this situation which, in fact, is far from being singular and it becomes increasingly worrisome because it affects valuable components of the national and universal heritage, the idea for the development of a project was born. The project addresses both regular visitors and officials with decisional power in the heritage conservation field and aims to attract their attention to this degradation process and to the need for the implementation of a highly severe legislation for the preservation of historical monuments. The project consists of a series of shocking events both in a visual and in a conceptual sense, achieved by means of landscape design. It is a powerful militant attitude achieved through ephemeral interventions in the landscape, attractive for young people especially.

Key words: cultural landscape, happening, historical monument

INTRODUCTION

With justified concern, we are looking at the aggression upon the monuments in our country and not only. The causes are various. In communist Romania, the churches were demolished, lift and moved and 'well' hidden behind some megalomaniac blocks.

In our days, the greatest danger is the housing pressure. New buildings invaded a lot of protected areas while historic monuments are allowed to decay for getting out off the List of historical monuments or to be demolished. This study is related to the violation of the protected area of Brancoveanu-Bibescu ensemble in Mogosoaia, one of the most flagship national, historical and cultural, Romanian ensembles. Mogosoaia ensemble was founded by the rich

and scholar Prince Brancoveanu for Stefan, one of his four sons. This ensemble had a very troubled and tumultuous history, with some brilliant periods and with periods of serious decline too. In 1702, the palace was inaugurated. In 1714, after the beheading of the Prince and of his four sons, the palace was devastated searching for 'hidden treasures'. In 1911, after a long period of decay, Mogosoaia Domain became the property of Martha and George Valentin Bibescu and has gained a new life. Princess Bibescu restored the Palace and the gardens over 17 years. In 1925, the palace was inaugurated after the 'restoration' made by the Italian architect Domenico Rupolo.

The great Romanian architect G. M. Cantacuzino is responsible for the interior decoration carried out between 1930 and 1935.

In 1940, legionaries confiscated a lot of Martha's documents, personal letters and manuscripts. In the communist era, the ensemble became museum and guest house for writers and artists. This ensemble, iconic for the Rumanian patrimony and history, is part of the List of the historical monuments in Romania, as an ensemble, including the palace, the church and other buildings, the English park, the Italian gardens and 'Mogosoia Lake', a fragment of the Colentina River. The most important feature of this palace is the *loggia*, opened onto the landscape of Colentina River. In 1945, due to the high importance of this ensemble, a large protection area was instituted, extended on the other side of the river, on its highest altitude (Royal Decree. 1222, 1945, Minutes of the Commission for Historical Monuments, 1945 and 1952). This was requested because of the importance of the view.

But the presence of the palace attracts like a magnet. In our days, Brancoveanu's residence is reduced to a background image. A 'colonisation' with villas occurs on the lake's banks: pergolas, decks, lounges. All the eyes watch the palace. But what happens on the other side of the bank? How can be negotiated the vicinity between an ordinary and illegal residential area and a monument of such importance?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Documentary material on the assembly and its context, historic and urban, is huge. It consists of: a lot of archives historical documents, written and imagistic documents, and *in situ* studies. The written documentary is extremely necessary to know the atmosphere of the Domain and of its surroundings. We are fortunate to have the testimonials of one of the most important architects and scholars of the 20th century, the architect G.M. Cantacuzino. The literary quality of his texts is well known and is very helpful for our work.

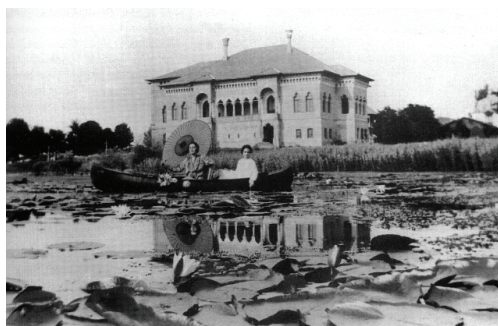


Figure 1. Martha Bibescu and her daughter Valentina in a boat on "Mogosoia lake", around 1925



Figure 2. The palace reflected in the "lake", around 1905



Figures 3 and 4. The banks of Colentina River around 1965

To compare the old images on the one side with the actual ones on the other side and to

emphasize the evolution of the buildings illegally raised in the protected area of the ensemble was the method we used.

The evaluation of the actual situation follows from the analyses of these transformations, arising from the violation of the protected area or *non aedificandi* area (Minutes of the Commission for Historical Monuments, 1945). This study began in 2000 and continues.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The parallels between images of the early 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century reveal that protecting the monument itself is not sufficient. In order to keep intact the charm and historic character, it is imperative to protect the surroundings of the monument too.

First of all, there were analysed the old images of the palace, from the 20th century, in its context, on the left side of the river and images of the opposite side of the river. Images 1 and 2 reveal a quasi natural landscape on the both banks of Colentina River, which is currently named 'Mogosoia Lake': water, water lilies, reeds, forest. This is a romantic landscape having a little palace as central point of view. This landscape is the reason for creating a specific element for the Romanian architectural stile, Brancovan style: the *loggia*. This feature is not an ordinary Venetian *loggia*, but a very large space opened onto the landscape. It was designed to provide an outlook to the gardens and the 'lake', to the landscape. The *loggia* is an element that mediates the transition between indoor and outdoor space. The location of the *loggia* is not accidental.

G.M. Cantacuzino gives us a suggestive description of the palace and the lake: "As much as the façade facing the entrance is austere and almost closed, so that towards west is smiling and bright. In front of it, Colentina runs its course which has there the exact width of the Grand Canal in Venice. And the façade facing the lake has, at first glance, something festive, like the palaces of Venice. A central *loggia* with light arcades and a rope molding carved colonnade, with a railing where dolphins play, in which the vegetal vigor of the park retrieves in the capitals, in the decorated grooves and in all this sculptural liveliness in which the verve of the detail never contradicts

the line. While the Venetian houses get out of the shining waters without any transition, Mogosoia Palace stands withdrawn from Colentina's mirror, putting a distance between the world of swans and its pinkish walls. [...] When the sun begins to drop, the royal palace receives full light and seems to emanate its own glow. [...] While the park closes its horizon onto Bucharest, the view stretches and fades slowly in the light, rarely interrupted by a forest or a group of trees. The entire length of the scenery takes part in the general harmony, as everything is in line with the central theme and is organized according to this theme: 'the palace'." (Cantacuzino, 1977).

Narcis Dorin Ion, in turn, describes the same *loggia*, without underlining the link with the landscape: "At the *piano nobile* (*bel étage* or noble level), is the most exquisite architectural element: the splendid *loggia* of the façade to the lake, inspired by Venetian models. [...] This *loggia*, with its six stone columns supporting five accolade arcades, is framed by two harbours easily unhooked, added during the renovation between 1860 and 1880 [...]. (Ion, 2002, p.26)

Here are Argentoianu's thoughts about the atmosphere in Mogosoia and especially the *loggia* of the palace, an open space linking architecture and nature: "This terrace, enclosed by a colonnade of carved stone, in the purest Venetian style, plays the role of a salon during the summer and autumn; there, the mistress of the house spends late nights, among flowers and books, lounging on exotic furs and wrapped in silks; there she receives guests who indulge themselves on the wings of dreams, in moonshine evenings, listening charmed the Mermaid's stories, the watchful birdsong, the frogs' anthem that rises from the reeds or the crickets' chink - as the sign of the days and of the soul [...]" (Argentoianu, 1997)

The wilderness of the landscape surrounding the ensemble was present until the end of 20th century (images 3 and 4).

In our days, from the level of the *loggia*, to be found at 4.00 m. above the highest terrace of the Italian garden, the landscape is overwhelming in magnitude but also by volumetric, stylistic, chromatic and compositional incoherence of the buildings erected on the opposite bank, since the last decade of the last century.

The protection area was instituted for preserving the image of the banks of the river, not to affect the atmosphere of the *loggia*, the main feature of the palace. It is undeniable that severely alteration of the outdoor landscape, affects the quality of the historical monument (images 5, 6 and 7).

There is not an absurd claim of some dusty old people. It is the respect for our own history, our ancestors and their creations.



Mogosoia Museum Archive 1965



Photo: Ioana Streza 2010

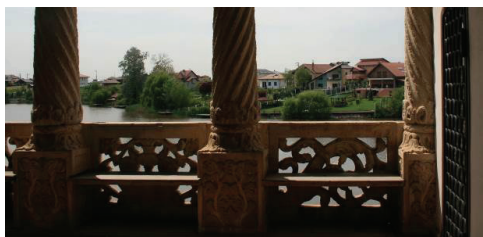
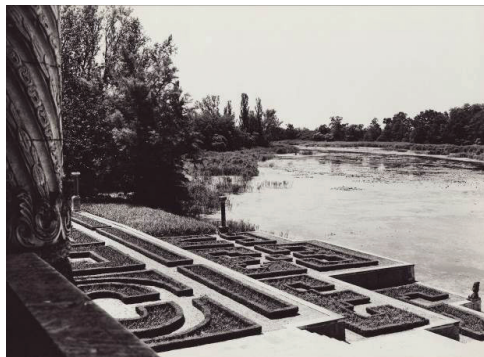


Photo: Ioana Streza 2010

Figures 5, 6 and 7. The landscape viewed from the *loggia*

The formal Italian gardens with a savant *buxus* design, underlines the axis of the west façade of the palace, that with the generous *loggia*, that place of leisure, delight and magnificence, linking indoor space with the outdoor landscape.

The terraced gardens offer a gradual transition to the water and landscape. The Italian gardens were well preserved and carefully restored but the opposite bank of the river, the protected area of the ensemble, was invaded by illegal constructions.



Source: The Romanian National Institute of Historical Monuments
Cliché 6429
around 1935



Photo: Oana Baloi

2010

Figures 8 and 9. Images from the *loggia* to South



around 1938

Source: The Romanian National Institute of Historical Monuments



Photo: Ioana Streza

2010

Figures 10 and 11. The Italian Gardens in 1938 and 2010

Images from the *loggia* to South (images 8 and 9), and images from the Italian garden to North (10 and 11) are the evidence.

The *loggia* and the Italian gardens were places for delight and enjoyment of the landscape, especially the beautiful sunsets reflected in the river water. From the three terraces of the Italian gardens, we can see a shocking image because we can see the details: lack of coherence, a lot of elements and shapes.

In *non-aedificandi* area, the first buildings were erected in the last decade of the 20th century.



Photo: Sorin Ciorapciu

2002



Photo: Oana Baloi

2010



Photo: Ioana Streza

2010

Figures 12, 13 and 14. End of perspective from the Italian terraces – top
and from the *loggia* - bottom

Old documents are important testimony. G.M. Cantacuzino is perhaps the one who understood best the importance and the beauty of such ensembles. “Mogosoia is nothing but the free expression of dignity made of introspection and serenity. [...] Mogosoia lived its history not without drama, not seamless, but still on the line of refinement. Mogosoia is not only the appearance of the past, but just as well the expression of a lively present, testimony of a

becoming. That is why Mogosoia has a special place among the historical monuments of Romania.” (Cantacuzino, G. M., 1977, p. 411)

About the ‘testimony of a becoming’ we can say that characteristic of the landscape is its ever-changing. The malleability of the landscape is closely related to the concept of transience. Mogosoia assembly seems to evade the passage of time, lasting for over than three centuries, apparently unchanged. Its inclusion in the list of heritage monuments, ensure a comfortable status for the mapped elements, a guarantee of the preservation of its integrity. But what happens with its context, with the landscape of Mogosoia? Recent decades have altered the landscape and its physiognomy radically.

Image 15 is an eloquent testimony of the ‘evolution’ of the aggression onto the *non-aedificandi* or the protection area. The Brancoveanu-Bibescu ensemble in Mogosoia was ranked historical monument on 19th of April, 1945 by a royal decree. In this decree it is noted that this status was given to the palace and outbuildings together with “the park, terraces, gardens and orchards” (Royal Decree. 1222, 1945).

In a report of the Commission for Historical Monuments drawn on 7th of April, 1945 are listed in detail the buildings ranked as historical monuments and the limits of the protected area including the portion of lake adjacent to the domain and the portion of land located across the lake bank from the royal porch: “the royal palace, the chapel court, vaulted kitchen with its natural context that includes the park, terraces, gardens and orchards, bounded to the east by the outer enclosure wall, to the northeast by the robinia curtain, until the municipal road; Colentina’s water and the right bank, on the planted portion, from the existing dam, up to the north boundary of the property, as well as the non aedificandi area in front of the royal porch, west of the waterfront and up to Viei road, included in the general inventory of historical monuments of Romania.” (Minutes of the Comission for Historical Monuments 7th of April, 1945).



Figure 15. The evolution of the aggression onto the protection area of the Mogosoia ensemble
Source: Google Earth



Photo: Sorin Ciorapciu

2003



Photo: Tiberiu Adrian Galan

2009



Photo: Iulia Luca

2010

Figures 16, 17 and 18. The evolution of the aggression onto the protection area of the Mogosoaia ensemble

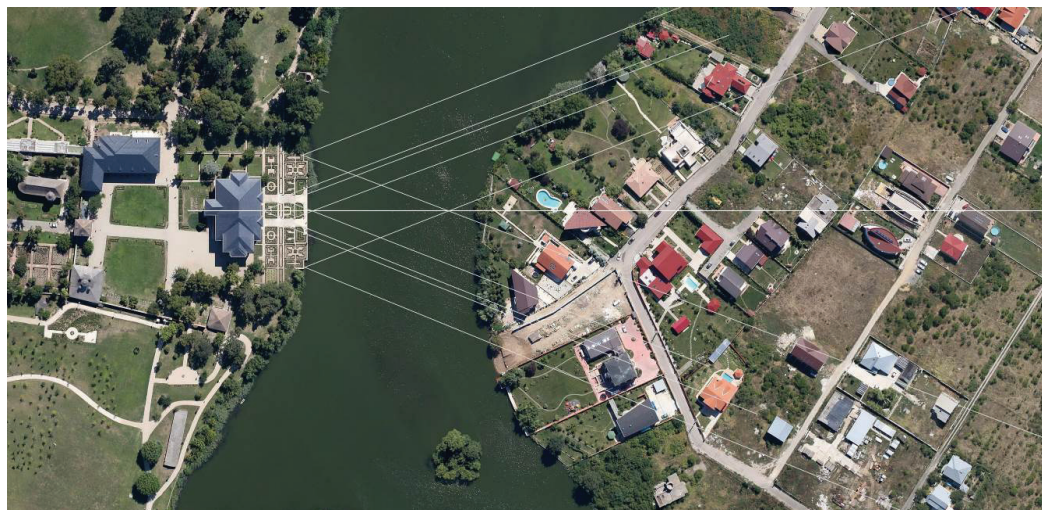


Figure 19. The axis of the loggia and the Italian gardens on the left side of the lake and the opposite bank of the lake in 2014

A few years later, in 1952, the protection area was reconfirmed. Mogosoaia ensemble, comprising the portion of lake adjacent to the domain, is mentioned as well in a decree from 31 of October, 1952: “Mogosoia Palace, buildings, [...] together with the park, the lake

and the other annexes of the Palace, has passed from the usage of the Ministry of Public Education and the Ministry of the People’s Council of Bucharest and the Armed Forces, to the usage of the Committee for the Arts, the Writers’ Union, the Artists’ Union.

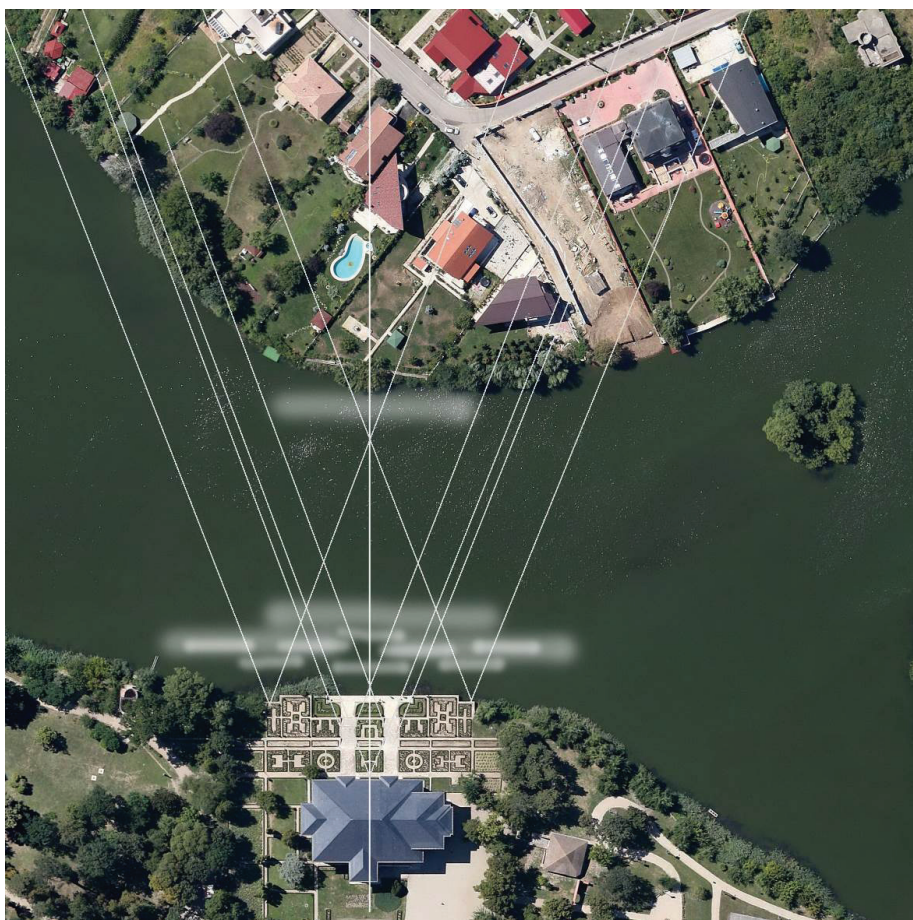


Figure 20. The proposal

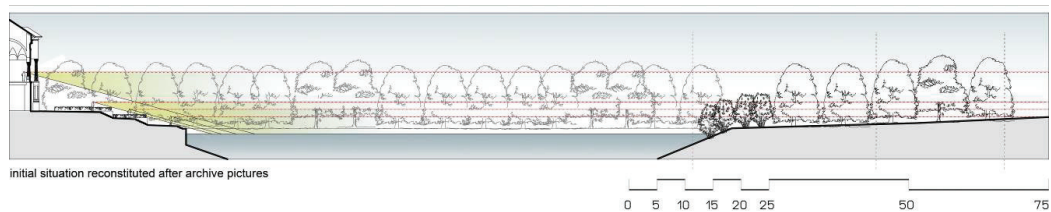


Figure 21. Section - initial state

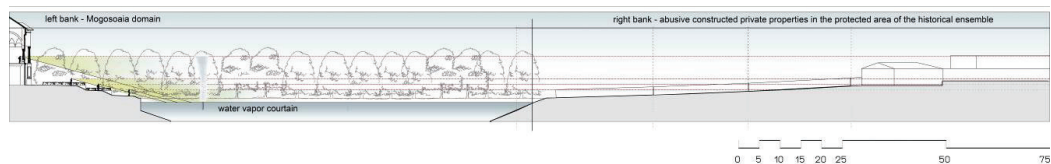


Figure 22. Section - the state after the edification of numerous villas in the protection area of Mogosoia ensemble on the opposite bank of the lake in 2014

A first approach would be denial, shielding by (re) planting the banks of the river with woody species. Testimony of a wild shore is a series of

photos, the last of them made in the 60s, revealing reed and weeping willow. Returning to this picture, however, is unlikely; there is no

physical space for these plantations, private properties stretch to the water surface. Moreover such an initiative, which aims to return in time, tends to contradict the spirit of ensemble - oriented to reinterpretation, filtering and adaptation to the present (for example if we think at the creative process of restoration).

Although not a defining element of Italian gardens, water is an essential tool, generating movement and sound. Water appears in various forms giving life to the garden. The vertical presence of water makes it entertaining and able to create diversions, in so-called *Giochi d'aqua*. Focusing on the water surface and on water as a tool can be an interesting exercise.

We propose a succession of curtains of artificial mist, which will rise from the lake. It is about a composition of linear submerged structures giving birth to the mist.

Unlike a screen, these mist curtains will be in constant motion, responding to the stimuli given by the wind, rain and light. The sun, reflected in the water particles, may create rainbows.

Besides the sensory effects created by this veils of mist, it can also serve as a means of expressing direct messages. Its surface can become support for projections of image-manifestos that suggest the former landscape of Mogosoia.

CONCLUSIONS

The lakeside space and the Italian gardens could become playful and at the same time a cultural catalyst, generating events and social occasions. At the end of the 'show', the wind will fall apart this wonderful mirage and the harsh reality will appear again.

We do not want to hide the reality. We want to show it to the people. We want to arouse debate and a current of opinion against breaching the legislation in the field of preserving the historical monuments.

Our concept, *Militant Ephemeral* or *l'Ephémère Militant*, is suppose to show the reason for respecting the laws concerning historical monuments, to attract the interest of the common people but also of those responsible for the national heritage, on local and central level.

This is a proposal which can be realised. Such an installation was realised in France, in Bordeaux. It is about *La place de la Bource* and the project 'Water Mirror' or 'Quai miroir'.



Figure 23. 'Water Mirror', *La place de la Bource*, Bordeaux, France

Source : <http://www.bordeaux.fr/110812>

The 'Water Mirror' runs daily from 10.00 to 22.00, according to the following cycle: 3 minutes filling 15 minutes of mirror, 5 minutes drain and 3 minutes of fog. This is a great success. The inhabitants and the tourists too are grateful to participate. It is one of the busiest places in Bordeaux. The fountain-maker Jean-Max Llorca and the landscape architect Michel Corajoud are the creators of this unique public open space. Creativity has to support the patrimony, appealing to young people and making them part of the event.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research work was carried out with the support of Doina Mândru, cultural manager of the 'Brancoveanu Palaces Cultural Centre', the director of the archives of the National Institute of Patrimony and some enthusiastic young people: Oana Baloi, Iulia Luca and Christian Voinescu, now graduates of Landscape Architecture Department in the University of Agronomical Sciences and Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest and with the support of ACCR - The European Network of Cultural Centres - Historic Monuments (L'Association des Centres Culturels de Rencontre). We are grateful to Richard Edwards, Director de l'Association Atlante and the initiator of the workshop 'Vers un atelier européen d'Architecture n°2' with the theme 'The invention of landscape, ruptures and

continuities’ or *‘L’invention du paysage, ruptures et continuités’* for choosing such an interesting theme on landscape and to involve our students in this European program.

REFERENCES

- Argentoianu C., 1997. Memorii. Pentru cei de mâine. Amintiri din vremea celor de ieri, vol. X, part VIII (1932-1934), Machiavelli Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Bibesco P., 1960. La vie d’une amitie: ma correspondance avec l’abbe Mugnier, 1911-1944. III, Plon Publishing House, Paris.
- Bibescu M., 2000. Izvor. Țara sălciilor, Compania, București.
- Bibescu M., 1979. Jurnal politic. Ianuarie 1939 - ianuarie 1947, Editura Politică, București.
- Brăescu M., 1983. Interferențe românești în opera Marthei Bibescu, Minerva Publishing House, f. I.
- Cantacuzino G. M., 1977. Izvoare și popasuri, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Cauquelin A., 2007. L’invention Du Paysage, Quadrige Publishing House, Paris.
- Diesbach G., 1998. Prințesa Bibescu, 1886-1973. Ultima orhidee, vol. I-II, Vivaldi Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Ion N.D., 2001. Castele, palate și conace din România, vol. I, Romanian Cultural Foundation Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Ion N.D., 2002. Mogoșoaia. Trei secole de istorie (1702-2002), Tritonic, Bucharest.
- Ionescu G., 1937. Istoria arhitecturii românești din cele mai vechi timpuri până la 1900, București.
- Marcus R., 1958. Parcuri și grădini în România, Technical Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Popa R., 1962. Mogoșoaia. Palatul și muzeul de artă brâncovenească, Meridiane Publishing House, Bucharest.
- Tudor V., Mihai A., Chiliman Al., 2001. George Valentin Bibescu (1880-1947) - pionier al automobilismului și aviației românești, Bucharest.
- Vărtosu E., Vărtosu I., 1938. Așezămintele brâncovenești. O sută de ani de la înființare. 1838-1938, Bucharest.
- Archive of the Commission for Historical Monuments: File 2368/1939-1948, f. 51 și 52. (Palaces in Mogoșoaia and Baneasa).
- Minutes of the Commission for Historical Monuments / 7th of April 1945.
- Royal Decree. 1222, 1945. Official Gazette Publishing House, 19th of April, 1945.
- Minutes of the Commission for Historical Monuments / 7th of March 1945.
- HCM nr. 2331 din 31 of October 1952
- Ordin Nr. 275 din 19th of March 1955
- Law 422 / 2006 on preserving the historical monuments
- The Charter of Historical Gardens, 1981-82. Florence.