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# Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu (Romania) No 1473

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## 1 Basic information

### Official name as proposed by the State Party

Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu

### Location

City of Târgu Jiu  
Gorj County  
Romania

### Brief description

The nominated property comprises interrelated sculptural installations aligned on a 1.5-kilometre-long axis in central Târgu Jiu. Sombre, contemplative, yet accessible, the monumental ensemble was created in 1937-1938 by Constantin Brâncuși, an influential pioneer of abstract sculpture, to commemorate those who died defending the city during the First World War. The monumental ensemble is located in two parks that are connected by the narrow Avenue of Heroes. At the western end, adjacent to the river Jiu, is Constantin Brâncuși Park, which contains the *Table of Silence*, *Alley of Chairs*, and *Gate of the Kiss* sculptural works. At the eastern end is the Park of the Column, in which stands the *Endless Column*, a very tall, slender metal shaft. The pre-existing Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, located on the axis, has been integrated into the composition. The remarkable fusion of abstract sculpture, landscape architecture, engineering, and urban planning conceived by Constantin Brâncuși goes far beyond the local wartime episode to offer an original vision of the human condition.

### Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

### Included in the Tentative List

1 March 1991

### Background

A previous nomination was submitted in 2014 but was withdrawn before consideration by the World Heritage Committee.

The present revised nomination was submitted for evaluation in 2018, but due to a moratorium on nominations of properties that could possibly be regarded as “sites of memory associated with recent conflicts”, consideration of this and other nominations was

postponed pending further study of this subject by an Open-ended Working Group.

Following the adoption by the World Heritage Committee of the “*Guiding Principles for the preparation of nominations concerning sites of memory associated with recent conflicts*” (*Guiding Principles*) at its 18<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session (Decision 18 EXT.COM 4) held in January 2023, the moratorium was lifted and the consideration of such nominations could be resumed.

### Consultations and technical evaluation mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the nominated property from 19 to 22 July 2023.

### Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 17 October 2023 requesting further information about documentation and protection of the nominated property.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 10 November 2023.

An interim report was provided to the State Party on 20 December 2023, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel.

Further information was requested in the interim report on the documentation of the two parks, planning-based protection measures, rehabilitation projects, and involvement of local communities.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 28 February 2024.

All additional information received has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2024

## 2 Description of the nominated property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only briefly summarises the most relevant aspects.

### Description and history

The nominated property is in the city of Târgu Jiu, which is located along the river Jiu south of the Carpathian Mountains in the Oltenia region of western Romania. It comprises sculptural installations oriented along a west-east axis that incorporates the Avenue of Heroes, a straight, narrow boulevard opened in 1937. It has two monumental focuses that are situated in two city parks –

Constantin Brâncuși Park, and the Park of the Column – positioned at either end of the axis.

The *Endless Column* (or *Column of the Infinite*) is a 29.35-metre high, extremely slender metal structure, intended to evoke infinity. Its fifteen identical octahedral cast-iron modules and two half-modules (base and top), stacked on a hidden steel pillar, are plated with a gold-coloured brass coating. The *Endless Column* stands on a circular land plot of approximately forty-two metres in diameter. It is located at the highest point of the city and surrounded by a low-height skyline, reinforcing the sense of its verticality. The erection of the column, due to its pronounced slenderness and its material – steel – posed considerable technical challenges for the time. The structural conception and construction execution were to withstand horizontal stress from wind or earthquakes and avoid the weight of the steel elements exerting pressure on the pillar, in the absence of horizontal forces.

The triangular-shaped park where the *Endless Column* is located is on slightly elevated terrain, making the column more visible in the landscape and offering a visual connection with the Avenue of Heroes.

The other focus of the monumental ensemble is located on the west, in the park bordering the Jiu River, subsequently renamed after Brâncuși. Here stand, aligned, the *Gate of the Kiss*, the *Alley of Chairs* and the *Table of Silence*.

The *Gate of the Kiss* is a portal with classical proportions and inspiration, about 6.35 metres wide, 5.13 metres high, and 1.69 metres deep. Shaped out of travertine from Banpotoc (Romania), the artist carved the gate elements on-site to distil his concept of “The Kiss” to its essence and render it as a gateway. The kiss motif is sculpted in bas-relief on the lintel to form a frieze and on the four faces of the pillars. The portal has two stone benches flanking it. The location of the *Gate of the Kiss*, originally planned to stand at the entrance of the Public Garden, was repositioned farther into the park at the request of Constantin Brâncuși.

The *Alley of Chairs* comprises thirty limestone stools arranged in five groups of three on each side of a ten-metre-wide by seventy-metre-long stretch of the main pathway of the park, and links the *Table of Silence* with the *Gate of the Kiss*.

The *Table of Silence* is a sculptural installation formed by a low, circular limestone table about two metres in diameter surrounded by twelve hourglass-shaped limestone seats. It is intended to evoke the traditional place of family gathering, or The Last Supper, or an altar. The seats are placed at a distance from the table to convey the message that this is not a utilitarian object.

The Avenue of Heroes (Calea Eroilor) follows the axis that connects the two monumental commemorative focuses of the ensemble and acts as a processional route between them. The narrow, somewhat nondescript ten-metre-wide avenue had been envisaged in plans for the urban centre

of Târgu Jiu since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but its implementation was accelerated in 1937 due to the realisation of the monumental ensemble.

Once completed, this west-east axis connected the works of Constantin Brâncuși and integrated them into the urban structure of the city. The derelict 18<sup>th</sup>-century Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, located directly on the axis about one kilometre from Constantin Brâncuși Park, was rebuilt after the First World War in a neo-Byzantine style and completed in 1936-1937. Constantin Brâncuși integrated it into the processional route.

The history of the nominated property begins with Arethia Tătărescu, president of the National Women's League of Gorj and wife of the prime minister. She approached the celebrated Paris-based Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși to design a First World War monument in memory of the Romanians who fell near a metal bridge on the river Jiu in 1916.

Constantin Brâncuși visited the site in June 1937 to decide the location of the monument. The sculptor initially envisioned a very tall metal “endless” column, a motif he had been exploring for about two decades. Enthusiasm expressed by his compatriots led him to broaden his initial vision to include a monumental ensemble of sculptures to more fully express homage to the fallen. For the riverside park, he visualised three stone installations – the *Gate of the Kiss*, the *Alley of Chairs*, and the *Table of Silence* – all standing along the same alignment as the column.

He decided to locate the *Endless Column* on a low hill about 1.5 kilometres from the riverside, in the former Public Garden, which is now known as Constantin Brâncuși Park.

A wooden prototype of a column module was prepared in September 1937. In the fall of 1937, landscape architect Friedrich Rebhuhn prepared a plan for the public park along the riverbank to place the stone elements of the monumental ensemble according to Constantin Brâncuși's concept. The Constantin Brâncuși Park otherwise retained much of its mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century design. In November, Rebhuhn landscaped the hill on which the *Endless Column* was being erected.

Constantin Brâncuși visited the building sites of the monumental ensemble again in October 1937 and took part in positioning the *Table of Silence*. He probably finalised the colour of the metal column modules at this time. The artist was back in Târgu Jiu in June-July 1938, working on the *Gate of the Kiss*, monitoring the metallisation process of the *Endless Column* and replacing the round stone of the *Table of Silence*. The monumental ensemble was inaugurated in October 1938.

As confirmed by the additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023, the artist and the site manager, engineer Ștefan Georgescu-Gorjan, maintained close contact and exchanges through personal meetings in Târgu Jiu and Paris and by correspondence to address

emerging issues and technical challenges throughout the conception and construction period.

A deviation in the column was detected during a technical assessment carried out in the 1980s. It might have resulted from a failed attempt by the communist regime to tear down the monument in the 1950s. Between 1977 and 1985, the city centre was the subject of a “systematisation” process, which led to the demolition of some traditional urban fabric and the opening of a pedestrian street that cut the Avenue of Heroes in the north-south direction.

The metal bridge that was defended during the battle of Târgu Jiu was dismantled and partially rebuilt in the vicinity. The watercourse of the river Jiu was adapted in the late 1990s for hydropower development and, as a result, a riverside berm was raised at the park where the stone installations are located.

The nominated property has an area of 26.58 ha, and a buffer zone of 78.05 ha.

The nominated property includes Constantin Brâncuși Park, with the *Table of Silence*, *Alley of Chairs* and the *Gate of the Kiss*, a section of the Jiu River, with the reconstructed metal bridge, the Avenue of Heroes, with the Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, the Park of the Column with the centrepiece of the monumental ensemble, the *Endless Column*.

The buffer zone includes what survives of the original urban fabric existing at the time of the monumental ensemble creation and surrounding the two parks and the Avenue of Heroes. It conforms to an Urban Protection Area and Zoning Plan.

#### State of conservation

The monumental ensemble has undergone recurrent restoration campaigns. The *Endless Column* and *Gate of the Kiss* were repaired in 1965-1966 when the metal modules of the column were sandblasted and their surfaces re-plated with zinc, copper, and silicone, and some of the damaged travertine elements of the stone portal were replaced and repaired. Lead sheeting and gutters were installed atop its lintel. The column was again re-plated ten years later.

The *Endless Column* was placed on the World Monuments Watch List of the 100 Most Endangered Sites in 1996 to draw attention to the poor state of conservation of the monumental ensemble and its parks. The column was disassembled to investigate the condition of its modules, supporting pillar, and foundation. After an intense debate amongst international experts over methodology, consensus was reached in 1996. Full restorations of the *Endless Column* and the stone sculptures were undertaken between 2000 and 2004 by the Government of Romania, World Monuments Fund, World Bank, UNESCO, and other institutions and experts working in partnership. The two parks were re-landscaped between 2002 and 2004.

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation of the nominated property is good.

#### Factors affecting the nominated property

Based on the information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the main factors affecting the nominated property are potential extreme weather events, fires, earthquakes, and lightning. The likelihood of negative outcomes from any of these is considered small. A Risk Analysis and Prevention Plan identifies potential risks and the measures, actions, and resources necessary for their management. Flood risk has been reduced with the construction of a dam in the river sector corresponding to Constantin Brâncuși Park. Urban development pressure seems low and is being addressed through the Zoning Plan included in the Plan for the Protection and Management of the Ensemble (2014), which awaits an update. Careful attention is needed in the design and implementation of urban rehabilitation projects to improve the setting of the nominated property.

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ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is good and that factors affecting the nominated property are under control.

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### 3 Proposed justification for inscription

#### Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The sole large-scale artistic work completed by Constantin Brâncuși, the Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu, culminating in the *Endless Column*, is a creative masterpiece of modernism, illustrating a turning point in the history of monumental and public art.
- The novelty and originality of the artistic language are deeply inspired by early and traditional arts, yet achieve a timeless expression through the abstraction of forms that are devoid of adornment, relying only on the expression of the materials.
- As a demonstration of public art it was revolutionary, merging sculpture, architecture, engineering, and environmental and urban planning, resulting in an exemplary expression of a synthesis of the arts and a prototype of installation and land art.
- As a memorial it upset the conventions of Western manifestations of this type of public art, and through its abstract, universal style it transcends Western religiosity and spirituality, addressing the whole of humanity.

Based on the nomination dossier and the additional information, the key attributes of the nominated property

are: the abstract simplicity of the monuments; the integration of monumental art; the urban setting and landscape; the overlooking positioning of the *Endless Column*, its slenderness and proportion, as well as the different textures composing it; the gentle slope towards the river Jiu; the contrast between the verticality of the *Endless Column* and the “horizontal” of the surrounding park and the modest scale of the built fabric along the processional route of the Avenue of Heroes; the dynamic sequence of, and harmony and counterpoint among, the monumental installations forming the monumental ensemble – the *Endless Column*, the *Gate of the Kiss*, the *Alley of Chairs*, the *Table of Silence*. The essential and abstract language of the monumental sculptural works; the structural elements and the construction method; the stone sculptural works; and the high aesthetic qualities and the excellence of execution.

### Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis has been developed around typological and thematic analyses in a global context, based on the characteristics and attributes related to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property. It has examined works conceived by Constantin Brâncuși, monumental modern sculptures and ensembles of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and sculptural war memorials of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The comparators have been selected from within the country, within the geo-cultural region, and throughout the world inscribed on the World Heritage List, inserted in the Tentative Lists of States Parties and other properties.

Considered within the comparative analysis are monumental sculptures such as *Le Monument aux Bourgeois de Calais* by Auguste Rodin (Calais, France); funeral and memorial sites from the First World War in Romania, such as the Heroes Mausoleum of Mărășești by George Cristinel and Constantin Pomponiu; First World War memorial sites outside Romania; and other sculptural war memorials of the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as the Mandurah War Memorial by Hames Sharley (Mandurah, Australia). The State Party concludes that there is no other similar property, and that the nominated property is an exceptional example of architectural, artistic, and landscape achievement.

ICOMOS notes that some of the parameters for comparison were not included in the justification for inscription. ICOMOS further observes that some of the selected comparators are not fully relevant for the analysis, and some other comparators could have been included, such as the Vigelandsanlegget or Vigeland Installation Park in Oslo, Norway, and the sculpture *La Main Ouverte* in Chandigarh, India, one of the component parts of the World Heritage property The Architectural Works of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement (Argentina, Belgium, France, Germany, India, Japan, Switzerland 2016, criteria (i), (ii) and (vi)).

Despite the above-mentioned weaknesses, the comparative analysis has been carried out in a pertinent

and meaningful way, and its conclusions are valid. ICOMOS considers that there are no directly and fully comparable sites amongst monumental artworks that are contemporary with the nominated property. Those that may be compared are of a much later date.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

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### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi).

Criterion (i): *represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property conveys a universal humanistic message through the modernist aesthetic language reflected in its form, treatment of materials, technical innovation, and careful spatial design. Combining symbols and ideas drawn from different cultures and ancient civilisations, it transforms the tradition of classical, figurative memorials into abstract monuments commemorating the fallen through absence. The monumental ensemble also offers a highly symbolic commemorative experience and activates personal interpretations, according to the State Party. The axis from the *Table of Silence* along the *Alley of Chairs* and through the *Gate of the Kiss* continues up the Avenue of Heroes to the *Endless Column*, which is the culmination of the monumental ensemble. This totemic, extremely slender structure, a symbol of ascendance and transcendence connecting the earth with the sky, is an exceptional piece of art and engineering, in the view of the State Party. Its undulating form, steel core, and connection to the ground achieves a high level of stability and avoids violent transversal stresses.

ICOMOS considers the nominated property to be an exceptional composition, a fusion of abstract monumental sculpture, landscape design, engineering, and urban installation, conveying an artistic statement at the urban scale of great, manifold, symbolic, and spiritual artistic force and purity. The combination of the artistic concept and engineering realisation of the *Endless Column* in particular contribute to the achievement of one of the most notable monumental public sculptures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion is justified.

Criterion (ii): *exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property represents a turning point in modern monumental art and reveals influences from Cycladic, African, and Romanian cultures that have been fused with classical architectural elements and spatial compositional features from European monumental

works. In turn, it states, the innovative spatial composition of the monumental ensemble and the abstract language of its elements resulting from the fusion of those cultural influences greatly influenced modernist monumental art.

The pioneering construction technology of the *Endless Column* is also said by the State Party to have been highly influential in tall building construction. Its iconic form would reflect the combination of art form, conception, and engineering structural solutions and generated a highly efficient aerodynamic profile.

ICOMOS observes that skyscraper building technology is considered to predate the *Endless Column* by some fifty years. In addition, the last argument proposed by the State Party concerning the exemplarity of the *Endless Column* would better fit under criterion (i) rather than criterion (ii).

However, despite the weaknesses of the justification for criterion (ii), ICOMOS considers that the Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu played a key role in the dissemination of site-specific art, installation, landscape and public art.

ICOMOS therefore considers that the criterion (ii) has been justified.

Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated monumental sculptural ensemble, integrated into a designed commemorative urban space, illustrates the age of modernism, which is seen as a significant stage in human history. The nominated property, it contends, represents a rare example of modernism applied to monumental sculpture and war memorials.

ICOMOS considers that defining modernism as a stage in human history is not appropriate. Modernism can be defined more as an attitude, a “spirit of the times”, than a period of history. Indeed, the period between the two world wars can be considered a specific and important period of human history; however, the nominated property does not appear to reflect that period, rather anticipating artistic trends that developed later. ICOMOS furthermore considers it difficult to see a sculptural monumental ensemble as being a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape, as is specifically required under this criterion.

ICOMOS does not consider that this criterion is justified.

Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property is a monumental art ensemble associated with the extensive commemorative activities undertaken following the First World War, which was an event of major global significance, leading to worldwide construction of commemorative memorials and monuments to the fallen. The nominated property is an outstanding artistic response to this event, a monumental artistic masterpiece of modernism that demonstrated exceptional creativity beyond that of most commemorative memorials, according to the State Party.

ICOMOS observes that some of the justifications for this criterion would better fit under criterion (i). ICOMOS also notes that the specific event with which this monument is associated – the battle of the Jiu Bridge in 1916 – while of utmost local and national importance, speaks less influentially to the international scope of the First World War. Furthermore, the area of the battle and the sacrifice of Romanian heroes has been significantly altered: the river has been dammed, raising the water level; and the bridge was dismantled and three of its five arches reassembled a short distance away.

ICOMOS does not consider that this criterion is justified.

ICOMOS finally notes that the nominated property cannot be seen as a site of memory associated with recent conflicts within the scope and purpose of the World Heritage Convention, because its semantic, symbolic, and artistic dimensions transcend the commemoration of the event that initially triggered the creation of the monumental ensemble.

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ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets cultural criteria (i) and (ii), but that criteria (iv) and (vi) have not been demonstrated.

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## **Integrity and authenticity**

### **Integrity**

The nominated property includes all the attributes necessary to convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, including the two parks purposely altered or created to accommodate monumental sculptures designed by Constantin Brâncuși and the conceptual axis connecting all the sculptural works. The sculptures and the connecting avenue are in their original locations, and their functional interrelationships are intact.

The processional axis represented by the Avenue of Heroes has suffered from urban transformations that occurred during the communist period, some of which could be reversible. The nominated property does not suffer from development or neglect, and the physical fabric of the sculptural elements is in good condition.

ICOMOS observes that the damming of river Jiu has modified the riverbank, which is now higher than when the monumental ensemble was created. The water level has increased, and the bridge at which the commemorated

battle occurred was dismantled and relocated. While the western part of the nominated property has undergone changes, these do not detract from the appreciation of the sculptures and their symbolism.

ICOMOS further observes that the urban transformations of the built fabric along the Avenue of Heroes and its asphalt paving (except for the segment around the church, which retains its period cobblestone surface) do not contribute to the integrity of the nominated property and should be addressed through appropriate mitigation measures and urban design solutions. Some of these are currently being implemented: cobblestone paving is being reintroduced on the Avenue of Heroes, will be added to frame the avenue.

ICOMOS considers that the integrity of the nominated property has been demonstrated. However, ad hoc urban design measures to improve the conditions of the avenue and the built environment along it are recommended.

#### Authenticity

All the monumental sculptures of the nominated property stand in their original locations, and their forms, designs, materials, workmanship, and function have been preserved. Together, they reflect the unity of the artwork and convey its authenticity in World Heritage terms.

Conservation works have been carried out throughout the decades, initially with the involvement of the construction site manager, engineer Ștefan Georgescu-Gorjan. In 2000-2004, following an extensive analytical campaign, a comprehensive conservation programme was carefully implemented on site, based on the maximum retention of original artistic fabric and materials, as well as the specificities of the materials used, including their structural and visual characteristics.

ICOMOS observes that some changes have occurred in the western side of the nominated property along the river Jiu, where water management interventions have raised the water level, thereby modifying the backdrop to the nearby *Table of Silence*. Landscaping interventions have helped mitigate these changes and allow continued appreciation of the sculpture.

ICOMOS considers that the authenticity of the nominated property has been demonstrated.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the nominated property have been met.

#### Boundaries

The boundaries of the nominated property have been drawn to ensure that the entire area pertaining to concept and realisation of Constantin Brâncuși is included. Since the axis on which the sculptural works are aligned was conceptually supposed to continue indefinitely westward and eastward, the boundary on the western side continues beyond the limits of Constantin Brâncuși Park to include a

stretch of the river Jiu between the reassembled old metal bridge upstream of the park and a new bridge, downstream.

The buffer zone has been defined according to the boundaries of the nationally defined protection area corresponding to a Protected Built Area Zoning Plan, which was established in 1994 and revised in 2013 according to the principles set out in the ministerial guidelines for the zoning plans of historic areas. The boundaries resulting from this exercise largely enclose the built-up area of Târgu Jiu as it existed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in which the monumental ensemble was placed.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone have been defined appropriately. ICOMOS notes that the urban fabric of the buffer zone is not homogeneous. Public buildings and functions were concentrated on the western side; hence, the built fabric there is more densely urban in nature. It also witnessed transformations during the communist period. On the other hand, the eastern side of the city has remained largely residential in nature, reflected in the less densely built fabric of the buffer zone there. This part of the city has witnessed much less change and for the most part retains the character it had at the time the monumental ensemble was constructed.

Rehabilitation projects are planned to mitigate the impacts caused by urban transformations that occurred during the communist era.

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#### Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

In summary, ICOMOS considers that the thoroughly revised nomination has brought forward the exceptional artistic qualities of Constantin Brâncuși's ensemble as a monumental artwork of urban and landscape breadth. The comparative analysis has been meaningfully carried out and, despite some challenges, has demonstrated that the monumental ensemble deserves consideration for the World Heritage List. Out of four criteria proposed – (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi) – ICOMOS considers that criteria (i) and (ii) are justified and reflect the outstanding importance of the nominated property. Although the realisation of the monumental ensemble was triggered by an event that took place during World War I, ICOMOS does not consider that the nominated monumental artwork can be seen as a site of memory associated with recent conflicts, under the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention. Its manifold semantic, symbolic aspirations transcend the event this artwork was supposed to remember and achieve a spiritual universal breath that strengthens the justification of criterion (i). The additional work carried out by the State Party has also led to completely revised the boundaries, which now encompass the whole nominated property in one single element, supporting the integrity and authenticity of the nominated property despite some changes to its setting, particularly on the western side along the Jiu River and near the Avenue of Heroes. These changes, however, do not prevent integrity and authenticity from being demonstrated. Some landscaping was carried out to

improve the immediate setting of the *Table of Silence*, and careful urban rehabilitation has been carried out and is planned for the setting of the Avenue of Heroes.

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## 4 Conservation measures and monitoring

### Documentation

The nominated property and its constituent attributes have been extensively studied and documented from artistic and technical perspectives. The surviving archival documentation (the Tătărescu fonds were destroyed during the communist period) is conserved in various public and private archives. Additional technical investigations and documentation of the *Endless Column* and the *Gate of the Kiss* are ongoing.

ICOMOS considers it extremely important that available archival documentation concerning the conception and construction of the nominated property be gathered together, at least in copy, and made available to the management body of the nominated property for research, conservation, and management purposes.

Equally important would be the creation of a precise survey (graphic, photographic, and/or photogrammetric) of the key attributes of the nominated property, most notably the sculptural works, as a basis for ongoing research and conservation, and in case of disasters.

### Conservation measures

Conservation interventions have been carried out periodically on the monumental ensemble. The *Endless Column* has been the object of repeated conservation campaigns. The latest comprehensive conservation and consolidation intervention was implemented in 2000-2004. This major programme was based on an extensive preliminary analytical campaign that provided much information about the workmanship, execution techniques, materials, and deterioration phenomena affecting the column, and informed the conservation strategy and choices. The State Party has provided a very detailed account of these conservation works.

The Park of the Column was the object of a landscaping intervention in conjunction with the conservation works carried out in 2000-2004.

In its interim report, ICOMOS requested the State Party to provide additional information on the two parks. The State Party provided additional information in February 2024 on the historical development of both parks, closely linked to the construction of the monuments designed by Constantin Brâncuși; the conservation and revision of the landscaping carried out in 2002-2004; maintenance works implemented in 2022 and the upcoming conservation works for the *Alley of Chairs* and the rest of the Constantin Brâncuși Park. Specific maintenance measures for the park will be detailed in the final phase of the project.

ICOMOS considers that monitoring and regular maintenance shall ensure that the good state of repair of the elements forming the monumental ensemble is

prolonged over time, postponing the need for further large-scale conservation interventions.

### Monitoring

Monitoring of the state of conservation of the nominated property is entrusted to the Municipality of Târgu Jiu, which carries out the task through the Constantin Brâncuși Research, Documentation and Promotion Centre. A comprehensive monitoring programme has been prepared and progressively implemented. It is based on the validated procedures and recommendations of professional bodies, standard-setting scientific institutes, and guidelines. It includes data-gathering and interpretation, which will form a corpus of documentation for conservation and research purposes. ICOMOS recommends that a more direct correlation be made between key monitoring indicators and the attributes that convey the potential Outstanding Universal Value.

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ICOMOS considers that documentation is adequate but should be made more easily accessible for management purposes, research and conservation. A rigorous survey (geometric and photographic) of key attributes is also recommended for research, conservation and preventive purposes.

ICOMOS also considers that it would be advisable that the monitoring system is further developed to encompass all the attributes that convey the proposed Outstanding Universal Value, and is adapted for easy integration of its outcomes into the Periodic Reporting questionnaire.

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## 5 Protection and management

### Legal protection

The Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu is largely public property and is legally protected at the national and municipal levels. Legal protection of the monumental ensemble was first granted in 1955 under the Decisions of the Council of Ministers of the People's Republic of Romania, no. 661/22.04.1955 and no. 1160/23.06.1955. The nominated property and its buffer zone (about forty percent of the latter is privately owned) are included in the List of Historical Monuments annexed to the Order of the Minister of Culture no. 2.828/2015.

As per Law no. 127/1992, the monumental ensemble was declared a public utility property of national interest, with its boundaries to be defined through an urban plan. In 1994 a Protected Built Area Zoning Plan was approved, and was integrated into the City Zoning Plan in 1995. Territorial and urban planning measures grant further protection to the monumental ensemble by means of Law no. 5/2000 for the approval of the National Spatial Development Plan. Additional protection is provided by Law no. 422/2001 for the protection of historical monuments and by Law no. 564/2001 for the approval of the Ordinance of the Government of Romania no. 47 regarding the protection measures of historical monuments inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Protective measures are included in the regulations of the Zoning Plan for the Protected Built Area of the Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble (ZUP), as approved in 2014. This plan regulates urban development, provides a framework for the conservation of the existing landscape, and encourages the improvement of compromised sections of the urban built fabric and the technical urban services infrastructure.

The City Zoning Plan is currently under revision to update the perimeter of the nominated property and the buffer zone and to further describe specific provisions for their conservation and enhancement. While waiting for the update of the Plan, the State Party has set out methodological principles for the assessment of the projects. Their implementation is assisted by the National Institute of Heritage through consultation and feedback.

Further regulations are set out in the ZUP (2014) based on the conclusions of the General Historical Study (2013). Additional information provided by the State Party in November 2023 informs that revision of the City Zoning Plan has been suspended due to contractual issues, and the validity of the current Zoning Plan has been extended to the end of 2026.

An Integrated Strategy for Urban Development of Târgu Jiu (SIDU) was updated in 2022: it represents the planning tool for devising the future of the city and sets out sustainable development objectives from 2021 to 2027. A few priority projects focus on the nominated property and its immediate setting at different stages of implementation. These include the Rehabilitation and Modernisation of the “Calea Eroilor” Monumental Ensemble protected area, which encompasses four functional sections, and the Rehabilitation of the Public Garden and the Development of the central alley of the Public Garden.

A Strategy for Culture and National Heritage 2016-2022 established a programme for ensuring protection, maintenance, conservation, and socio-economic opportunities of Romanian World Heritage properties and of sites on its Tentative List.

ICOMOS requested further information on the existence of interim protection measures while waiting for the finalisation of the City Zoning Plan. The State Party replied that the National Institute of Heritage has been providing technical assistance and guidance to the Department of Urban Planning and Permits of Târgu Jiu Municipality and to the Regional Historic Monument Commission through a cooperation agreement to ensure the retention of integrity and authenticity of the nominated property.

ICOMOS also asked whether and how the briefs for the projects to enhance the setting of the nominated property have been conceived to respect its integrity and authenticity. It also asked for additional information on planned large-scale projects.

The State Party replied that all large-scale projects on the nominated property and its buffer zone have been

conceived with an integrated, unitary and phased approach. The State Party also noted that when investment projects are proposed for protected heritage, various documents must be prepared and submitted to obtain the necessary approval. In particular, the “substantiation study” is one of them, and provides a framework for implementing an assessment impact approach, even if a formal Heritage Impact Assessment report is not produced.

### **Management system**

The framework and principles for the management system of World Heritage properties in Romania are set out in Law no. 564/2001. Under this law, the immediate creation of a dedicated Institutional Organizing Committees (COU) is mandatory in the event of an inscription on the World Heritage List.

According to the State Party, the management of the nominated property has been conducted by the Deputy Mayor supported by representatives of the Constantin Brâncuși Research, Documentation and Promotion Centre, the Urban Planning Services, infrastructure services, and park services of the city, as well as the local police.

The Protection and Management Plan (2019) clarifies that the Municipality of Târgu Jiu assumes responsibility for managing the nominated property through the Constantin Brâncuși Research, Documentation and Promotion Centre, which is a public cultural institution with legal personality and a manager appointed by public selection, as per the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 189/2008. The manager will be supported by administrative and scientific councils.

A Cooperation Agreement amongst the Municipality of Târgu Jiu, the Constantin Brâncuși Research, Documentation and Promotion Centre, the National Institute of Heritage, and the National Institute of Research and Development in Optoelectronics (INOE 2000) was signed in 2017. It envisages collaboration in monitoring, research, documentation, and promotion.

Law no. 564/2001 stipulates that the COU shall include amongst its members representatives of institutions with management and protection responsibilities, institutions with scientific mandates, and representatives of local communities.

The Protection and Management Plan prepared for the previous nomination was revised in 2019 and approved in 2020. Its primary aim is to support coordination between the provisions and measures that exist in different plans and policies, and to favour local, national, and international cooperation. It outlines the envisaged management system. It also summarises the key provisions for the protection and management of the nominated property and its buffer zone in ways that are compatible with safeguarding the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value. The plan also discusses priority projects, amongst which is the improvement of the landscaping of the whole monumental ensemble. The Constantin Brâncuși Research,

Documentation and Promotion Centre is responsible for implementing cultural programmes and a marketing plan for 2020-2027.

The plan defines two key strategic objectives and the specific objectives for each; overall, five specific objectives have been defined. Issues and objectives are tied to operational programmes, each comprising a set of projects, briefly indicating the actions, the partners, and the performance indicators. The operational management articulation is clearly set out and appears pertinent and feasible.

### **Visitor management**

Studies of the tourism potential in Gorj County form the basis for contextualising the tourism opportunities for Târgu Jiu. These are set out in the Integrated Strategy for Urban Development. There is a reasonable volume of external visitors who come to the city for many reasons, and there is adequate infrastructure catering to their needs. According to the Protection and Management Plan, though, the tourism infrastructure is not sufficiently developed, nor is the tourism potential of the city sufficiently harnessed.

When the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission took place in July 2023, a historic building owned by the Constantin Brâncuși Centre was being rehabilitated to serve as the “Brâncuși Orientation Centre”. A visitor interpretation unit at the Centre had been set up in 2022, with three full-time staff members supported by volunteers.

### **Community involvement**

The nomination dossier (submitted in 2018) predates the requirement for a specific section on the involvement of local communities; hence, questions on this matter were raised in the interim report. In response, the State Party further explained that the nomination process provided an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of the nominated property, to gather consensus, and to involve the inhabitants of Târgu Jiu in this process. The Protection and Management Plan includes consultation mechanisms with local communities, including for projects as per national legislation. Representatives of local communities selected through a participatory process will be sitting in the Management Committee for the nominated property.

ICOMOS considers that the strategies and actions put in place to involve local communities are important and need to be continued and sustained over time.

### **Effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property**

In summary, ICOMOS considers that protection and management requirements appear adequate overall to ensure the sustenance of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property and regulate activities in the immediate setting. The national protection mechanisms and procedures are designed to assess the impacts of projects on protected heritage. ICOMOS considers that these mechanisms can be strengthened by integrating the Heritage Impact Assessment methodology suggested by the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact*

*Assessments in World a Heritage Context* and by making an explicit reference to the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value in all planning instruments and in the technical documents required for evaluating projects that may have an impact on the nominated property, irrespective of their location. ICOMOS further recommends that a proper Heritage Impact Assessment process following the methodology of the above-mentioned Guidance be carried out for planned projects with potential impact on the nominated property, including the upcoming project for passage and underground parking on Gheorghe Magheru Street. With regard to the other above-mentioned rehabilitation projects about to be implemented, ICOMOS recommends that careful consideration be given to the choice of materials and design for repaving, urban furniture or lighting solutions, as nominated the monumental ensemble, by its nature, demands sensitive and moderate interventions in its immediate setting. At this stage, ICOMOS notes that some of the visualisations in the project documentation provided in the additional information indicate otherwise. Even though the railway existed already at the time of the realisation of the nominated monumental ensemble, in the long term, consideration may be given to either burying or redirecting the railway line that crosses the Avenue of Heroes to improve visitor experience. Finally, the steps undertaken to involve local communities are welcome and should be sustained over time.

## **6 Conclusion**

The Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu, is considered a unique large-scale artistic work by Constantin Brâncuși. It has been nominated for its innovative character and the originality of the artistic language and abstract forms, deeply inspired by early and traditional arts, and as a revolutionary demonstration of public art that achieves a synthesis of the arts by merging sculpture, architecture, engineering, and environmental and urban planning. It has also been nominated as a deeply unconventional war memorial that transcends Western canons, religiosity and spirituality, addressing the humanity as a whole.

The thoroughly revised nomination has brought forward the exceptional artistic qualities of the nominated ensemble as a monumental artwork of urban and landscape breadth. The comparative analysis has demonstrated that the nominated property justifies consideration for the World Heritage List under criteria (i) and (ii), which are the most appropriate to reflect its outstanding importance. However, criteria (iv) and (vi) have not been demonstrated. After careful consideration, ICOMOS does not consider that the nominated property can be seen as a site of memory associated with recent conflicts, under the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention. The semantic and symbolic diversity of this artistic work transcends the event it commemorates which gives it a spiritual universal significance that add to criterion (i). The boundaries now encompass the whole nominated property in one single element, supporting its integrity and authenticity, despite

some changes to its setting which have been and are being mitigated through careful urban rehabilitation projects.

Protection and management requirements regulate activities in the immediate setting of the nominated property and appear adequate to sustain its proposed Outstanding Universal Value. Protective mechanisms exist to assess impacts of development on the nominated property and they can be strengthened by integrating the methodology suggested by the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* and by referring to the attributes of the proposed Outstanding Universal Value in all planning instruments and documents required to approve the projects.

The steps undertaken to involve local communities are welcome and should be sustained over time.

## 7 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu, Romania, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (i) and (ii)**.

### Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

#### Brief synthesis

Located in the city of Târgu Jiu on the banks of the river Jiu in the southern sub-Carpathians of Romania, the Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu is aligned in a 1,500-metre-long conceptual axis tangibly represented by the Avenue of Heroes punctuated in its median sector by the pre-existing Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. The monumental ensemble comprises the *Endless Column* in the Park of the Column, as well as the *Table of Silence*, the *Gate of the Kiss*, and the benches and the cubed hourglass seats of the *Alley of Chairs* – all located in the Constantin Brâncuși Park. The monumental complex, erected between the years 1937 and 1938, to commemorate the supreme sacrifice of Romanian soldiers, police and ordinary citizens who died defending the city of Târgu Jiu during the First World War, represents a turning point in the history of monumental sculpture and public art. It is the seminal creation and the sole largescale public work by Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși who, instead of placing the monument in the city, “placed the city as a functional element in the centre of the monument”. The abstract simplicity of the monuments, the integration of monumental art, urban setting and landscape, the contrast between the verticality of the *Endless Column* and the horizontality of the surrounding park and the modest scale of the built fabric along the processional route of the Avenue of Heroes, the dynamic sequence and harmony of the monumental installations, the different textures of the sculptural works and their high aesthetic qualities demonstrate that the Brâncuși Monumental

Ensemble of Târgu Jiu is a creative masterpiece of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century monumental art which played a key role in the dissemination of site-specific art, installation, landscape and public art.

**Criterion (i):** The Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu is an exceptional composition, a fusion of abstract monumental sculpture, landscape design, engineering, and urban installation, offering a highly symbolic sequential commemorative experience and conveying an artistic statement at the urban scale of great, manifold, symbolic, and spiritual artistic force and purity. The combination of the artistic concept, excellence of execution, and engineering realisation of the *Endless Column*, in particular, contribute to the achievement of one of the most notable monumental public sculptures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Criterion (ii):** The Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu represents a turning point in the evolution of the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of monumental art and commemorative architecture. The innovative spatial composition and the abstract language of its elements inspired by Cycladic, African, and Romanian cultures fused with classical architectural elements and spatial compositional features, played a key role in the dissemination of site-specific art, installation, landscape and public art.

#### Integrity

The boundaries of the property include all the attributes necessary to convey the Outstanding Universal Value; each element is preserved in its entirety and original locations, and all are included as part of the property. The physical fabric of the property and all its significant attributes are in good condition, and the impact of any potential deterioration processes is under control. The integrity of the conceptual axis of the monumental ensemble, manifested by a physical axis, is preserved through the entirety of designed commemorative urban open space. The property has suffered from some adverse development and neglect. Whilst the *Endless Column* in its park and the sculptures in the Constantin Brâncuși Park retain high visual integrity, the visual aesthetics of the Avenue of Heroes have been negatively affected by past urban development. This is to be assessed in the light of the urban breadth of this monumental artwork and how elements of the existing urban fabric and of the landscape were integrated into the composition. Some undesirable characteristics are reversible to a certain extent, whilst in other cases mitigation measures have been implemented and planned.

#### Authenticity

The property, with its attributes, bears witness to a revolutionary approach to sculpture. For Constantin Brâncuși, sculpture is the language of content rather than the language of forms, and the Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble of Târgu Jiu is the synthesis of his entire oeuvre. The attributes of the monumental ensemble

remain in their original location and, through their form and design, materials, craftsmanship – including techniques of implementation and installation, convey credibly and powerfully how the property represents the synthesis of the entire oeuvre of Constantin Brâncuși. The commemorative function of the monumental ensemble gained new strength with the involvement of local administration over the past years. The artistic and recreational function of the monumental ensemble were firmly a part of its original concept and one often uppermost in the minds of the general visitor.

#### Protection and management requirements

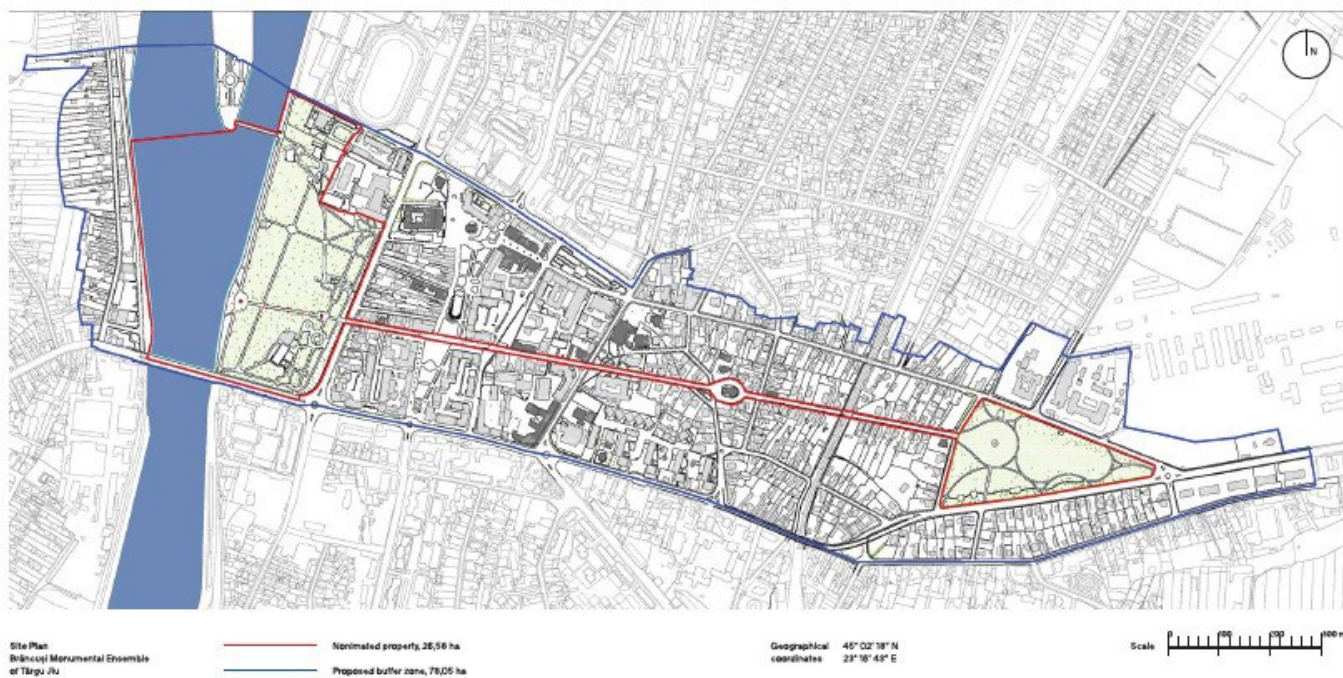
The property and its buffer zone enjoy the highest level of regional and national protection, provided by the List of Historical Monuments, annexed to the Order of the Minister of Culture no. 2.828/2015 for the updating of annex 1 of the Order of the Minister of Culture and Cults no. 2.314/2004 regarding the approval of the List of Historical Monuments, updated, and of the List of Lost Historical Monuments, with further updates, from 24.12.2015, published in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, no. 113 bis, 15.02.2016. Legal protection is ensured by Law 422/2001 for the protection of historical monuments and by Law 564/2001 for the approval of the Ordinance of the Government of Romania no. 47 regarding the protection measures of historical monuments inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Zoning Plan for the Protected Built Area of the Brâncuși Monumental Ensemble and its by-law approved by the City Council of Târgu Jiu in 2014 provide measures for protection and conservation of the property and its setting, and regulates urban development.

The Municipality of Târgu Jiu is responsible for the management of the property through the Constantin Brâncuși Research, Documentation and Promotion Centre, with a publicly appointed manager. The Protection and Management Plan of the property, developed by the Municipality of Târgu Jiu and approved by the Local Council in 2014, was updated in 2019. Long-term challenges for the protection and management of the property relate principally to its buffer zone and to its setting, where new development in the immediate urban context will be controlled by values-based planning policies.

#### Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Developing and implementing a Heritage Impact Assessment for development proposals that may have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity, and integrity of the property, including the upcoming project for passage and underground parking on Gheorghe Magheru Street, and integrate the approach and methodology of the *Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context* into national mechanisms,
- b) Giving careful consideration to the choice of materials and design for repaving, urban furniture or lighting solutions in all ongoing and upcoming projects for the rehabilitation of the property and its setting,
- c) Collecting, in a hard or digitised form, the available archival documentation concerning the conception and construction of the property and making it easily available to the management body for research, conservation, and management purposes,
- d) Carrying a precise survey of the key attributes of the property, in particular the sculptural works, as a basis for ongoing research and conservation, as well as in the event of disasters,
- e) Making a more direct correlation between key monitoring indicators and the attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value,
- f) Including scheduled reviews and updates in the planning documents to ensure effective ongoing protection of the property, buffer zone, and setting,
- g) Considering burying or redirecting the railway line that crosses the Avenue of Heroes to improve the visitor' experience of the monumental ensemble.



Map showing the boundaries of the nominated property