



Photograph: Paul Celan and Gisèle Lestrangé in discussion.

Atemkristall (Breathcrystal)
Blyth Gallery, Imperial College, London
19 March – 1 May 2025

'Poetry: that can mean an Atemwende, a breathturn. Who knows perhaps poetry travels this route – also the route of art – for the sake of such a breathturn?' – Paul Celan, 1960

In 1965, the Goethe Institute in Paris hosted the exhibition Atemkristall (Breathcrystal), comprising a collection of 21 poems by the Romanian-born German-language poet Paul Celan, mirrored by eight etchings by his partner, the French graphic artist Gisèle Lestrangé. The poems were later published as the first of five cycles making up the volume Atemwende (Breathturn), about which Celan made the above statement. As a polyglot, he felt this Breathturn to be the precise moment at which language opens up to a multiplicity of meanings; the point at which it breaks down and is reformulated into new words. To write without citation, not referencing the grand narratives that have gone before, and to 'let only your own words speak' on their own merits. It is the play of one language to another, adjusted by a touch of equivalence, being transported from one idea to another through material exchange. This perpetuum mobile of language, the visual arts and word play is brought about by a systematic interaction between walking, memory, and current events, whereby the poem creates an equivalent experience, which can be revisited and explored multiple times.

In 2020, the Beyond Other Horizons exhibition at the Palace of Culture, Iasi, Romania, showcased 84 artists from Romania and the UK, responding to Celan's poetry, to celebrate 100 years since his birth. Curated by Peter Harrap, Anna McNay and Florin Ungureanu, in partnership with the Iasi Palace of Culture, Iasi 'George Enescu' National University of the Arts, and UCL SSEES, it focused on the themes of Walking, Language and Otherness.

Works on paper exploring Walking, Language and Otherness remain the touchstone of our Atemkristall exhibition, but with the added interplay of visual equivalence, as originally conceived by Celan and Lestrangé in their exhibition of the same name. In addition, there will be three vitrine displays: one featuring archival material relating to Celan and Lestrangé; one with specially selected small paintings by Peter Harrap, responding to poems by Katy Holbird; and one with a collaborative work by poet Harriet Tarlo and artist Judith Tucker, who tragically died in an accident in November 2023.

Paul Celan was born in Czernowitz, Romania, now Ukraine, in 1920.
Gisèle Lestrangé was born in Paris, France, in 1927.

Peter Harrap, artist and curator, PhD(c) Iasi, George Enescu University, Hon UCL, SSEES
Anna McNay, independent writer, editor and curator
Florin Ungureanu, artist and curator, Iasi Palace of Culture, Romania

This exhibition is supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute, the British Council Romania, the Warburg Institute, UCL London, and National University of the Arts 'George Enescu' Iasi, Romania. The exhibition will tour to the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York and Berlin.

Events on Thursday 20 March, starting at the Romanian Cultural Institute, 1 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PH and continuing at the Blyth Gallery, Level 5, Sherfield Building, Imperial College, London, SW7 2AZ:

Symposium: Romanian Cultural Institute, 1-3.30pm
Coffee/networking: Romanian Cultural Institute, 3.30-4pm
Concert: Romanian Cultural Institute, 4-5pm
Private view: Blyth Gallery, 6.30-8.30pm

The **symposium** is supported by the Warburg Institute, UCL London, and National University of the Arts 'George Enescu' Iasi, Romania. Following a welcome by by Aura Woodward, Head of ICR London, and Gabriela Mocan, Head of Visual Arts and Poetry, ICR London, there will be five short lectures, a Q&A session and a panel discussion on the intersection of poetry and art in the work of Celan and Lestrange, and in the work of contemporary artists. Speakers include Peter Harrap, Anna McNay, Harriet Tarlo, Cristian Ungureanu, Ana Maria Negara, Marius Brasch, Susie Hamilton, Alex McIntyre and more tbc.

The **concert** features music by the Romanian pianist Cristiana Achim and is organised in collaboration with the Romanian Cultural Institute, London.

Artists: Day Bowman Judith Burrows Simon Carter Louise Cattrell Susie Hamilton Peter Harrap Marguerite Horner Natasha Kissell Alex McIntyre Mandy Payne Narbi Price Simon Woolham Sean Williams Simon Burton Marcelle Hanselaar Barbara Howey Matthew Krishanu Katya Kvasova Liane Lang Enzo Marra Suzanne Moxhay Greg Smart Emma Biggs Marius von Brasch Julian Brown Deb Covell	Phil King David Mabb Sarah Needham Tom Palin Andrew Palmer Ruth Philo Freya Purdue Shereen Rahwangi Fiona Robinson Mike Stoakes Harriet Tarlo Judith Tucker Vicky Wright Matei Bejenaru Gheorghe Fikl Iulian Fron Virgil Parghel Sever Petrovici-Popescu Rodica Postolache Diana Serghiută Mihail Voicu Cristian Alexii Marius Barb Bianca Boros Radu Carnariu Valentina Drutu Robert Koteles	Manuell Mănăstireanu Sorin Purcaru Liviu Suhar Ile Steff Ondina Oana Turturica Cristian Ungureanu Florin Ungureanu Florentina Voichi Mihai Zgondoiu Felix Aftene Ana-Maria Barb Arina Bican Mateias Bogdan Sabina Drînceanu Sabin Drînceanu Gabriela Drînceanu Kristian Evju Liviu Epuras Daniela Grapa Ciprian Macovei Ana Petrovici-Popescu Laurian Popa Mircea Roman Cristian Sida Atena-Elena Simionescu Cosmin Paulescu Flavia Pitis
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For more information, see imperial.ac.uk/events/179280/breathcrystal/ or contact gallery@imperial.ac.uk (for information about the gallery and the exhibition) or beyondotherhorizons@gmail.com (for information for the artists)

