

## ABSTRACT

### TOWN ALONG THE ARIEȘ RIVER

Situated right in the centre of the Transylvanian Plateau, Turda can boast with a rich history. If we only think of the most important events of the Middle Ages: the agreement that ended the Transylvanian peasant revolt led by Budai Nagy Antal, as well as the *Unio Trium Nationum* were signed here, the principle of religious freedom was proclaimed here for the first time in Europe. This city had always risen from its ashes, greatly affected by the dramatic changes brought by historical events.

Today Turda is considered an industrial city where at times cultural initiatives seem exhausted. This is, however, not the image offered by Turda at the beginning of the embourgeoisement process. Before natural gas was introduced – being the first city that the Sărmașu gas pipe had reached in 1914 – there were only a few industrial facilities in Turda. Back then, those few decades through which the bourgeoisie had established its cultural facilities were very successful. It was then that the *Vigadó* (place of merriment), which was also functioning as a theatre, was built, the medieval churches were restored, the Prince's Palace dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the oldest medieval historical monument in the city was transformed into a multifunctional cultural centre. All these despite the most important means of transportation, i.e. the principal railway line did not cross the city and later it was only possible to connect to it through a branch-line.

The aim of this volume is to overview the initiatives that have taken place since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1894, the citizens of Turda considered it important to instal a plaque commemorating Jósika Miklós, a reputed native of the city. An inscription plaque was also installed on the house - the building of the Reformed parish – where Petőfi Sándor, the great Hungarian poet, bid farewell to his wife and son before the Battle of Sighișoara. For the call for proposals launched on the occasion of the millennial anniversary of Hungary's existence, the city commissioned from painter Körösfői-Kriesch Aladár a large painting immortalising the proclamation of religious freedom.

The restoration of the Prince's Palace, which was in an advanced state of decay, was extremely important. It is to the credit of intellectuals from Turda, among them Harnath Domokos, that this value saving movement was successful. The

building was restored with the aid of the Hungarian state, based on the renowned restaurateur Lux Kálmán's project. This building became host to the cultural values of the city, the paintings received in permanent custody from the Museum of Fine Arts from Budapest, the ceramics collection from Turda and its surroundings and a library. In the eve of the war the building hosted even a very successful exhibition, the first exhibition of Nagy István (painter).

After the regime change in 1989, the city received its first public statue erected by the renowned sculptor from Bucharest Cornel Medrea to the memory of Ion Rațiu, who was a member of the Transylvanian Memorandum movement.

Among the reputed natives of Turda, a separate chapter is dedicated to visual artists, such as Apáti Abt Sándor (who designed the commemorative plaque dedicated to Jósika Miklós), Gross Károly and Gross Arnoldo, Darkó László, Tőrös Gábor. The Jósika Miklós Circle is also mentioned in this volume, which beginning with the 1970s kept alive the interest of Hungarians –constantly decreasing in number – in the history and culture of the city.