



SOROPTIMISM ROMANIA

TRADITIONS & MEANINIGS

IA (The Traditional Blouse) sewn in various geographical areas of Romania and the Republic of Moldova

Storyline of the exhibition curated by PhD. ELENA IAGĂR,
organized on the occasion of the 30th anniversary
of the Soroptimist International Club,
in Braşov, on 04th of October 2025

THE EXHIBITION PURPOSE:

- to introduce the traditions through the theme of wedding,
- to offer the chance of knowing context and multiple perspectives and meanings of the sewn motifs, with the hope that the curiosity and transmissibility will be even more enhanced.





VIORICA OLIVOTTO

Living Human Treasure

Nucșoara, Argeș

LIGIA CĂLIN

The artisan who replicated elements of the central piece of the exhibition, the clothing ensemble for the bride and groom.



Wedding clothing ensemble
for the bride and groom,
dated to the first quarter
of the 20th century,
entirely hand made of linen
sewed and embroidered
with worm silk.

All materials are domestically
grown and processed.



The pieces were collected by Dr. Marian Iacob, former director for more than 30 years of the Psychiatric Hospital in Vedea, a small village in southern Romania, and are now part of the permanent collection of the local museum.





Metal crowns suggest the union of destinies before God, the bride and groom wearing them on their heads during the religious wedding.

The well known romanian sintagma "*he/she put himself/herself the crowns*" means a long life agreement.

SUPREME INTIMACY

Unlike the man's suit, the bride's outfit is incomplete. Women used to wear a skirt or aprons over the shirt. The lack of these covering pieces denotes the maximum privacy between husband and wife. Because traditionally speaking, the public appearance of a woman wearing only a shirt was considered an indecency, even impiety.

Both shirts are lavishly adorned with silk and gold and are entirely manufactured by the young bride for her future husband.

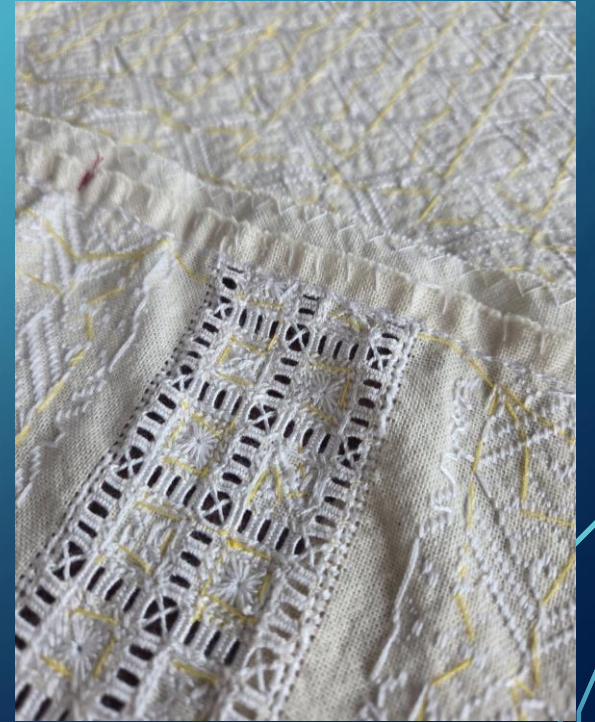


IDENTITY vs. BELIEFS



By sewing signs on these shirts, the future brides write their past and where they come from, as well as the story of their future family. The shirts sewn by Romanian women speak not only about identity, but also about their aspirations and beliefs. Latest, but not least, the wedding shirts were especially beautiful and rich because the wedding meant the peak of woman's power and femininity.

REPLICAS OF OLD PIECES



REPLICAS OF OLD PIECES

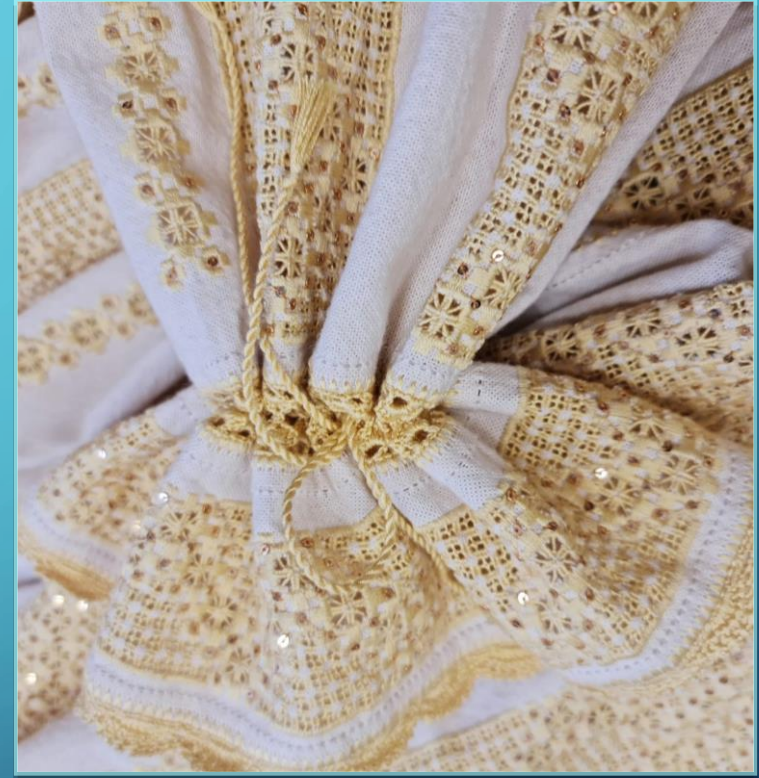
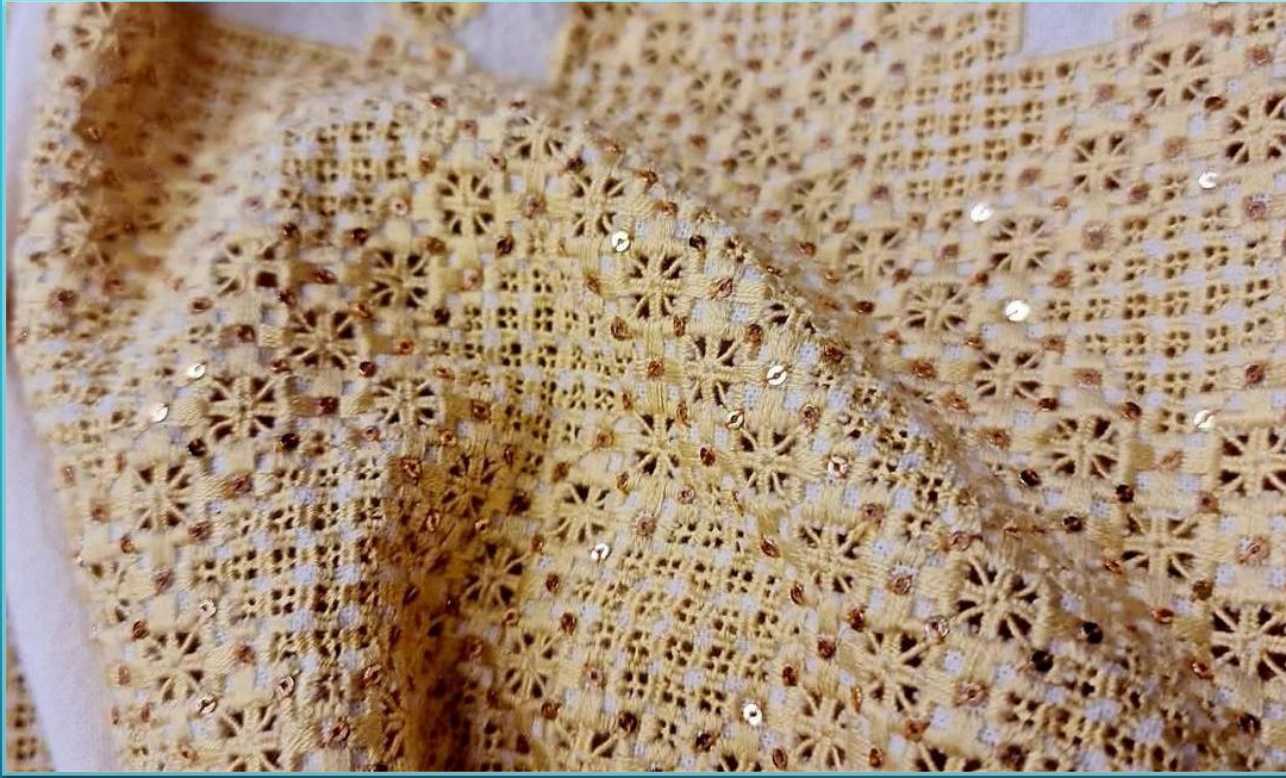
The new pieces are embroidered with natural silk on industrial canvas and decorated with gold sequins.

They were sewn by Ligia Călin, 49, from Mozăceni, Argeș, using photographs as inspiration, not the original pieces.

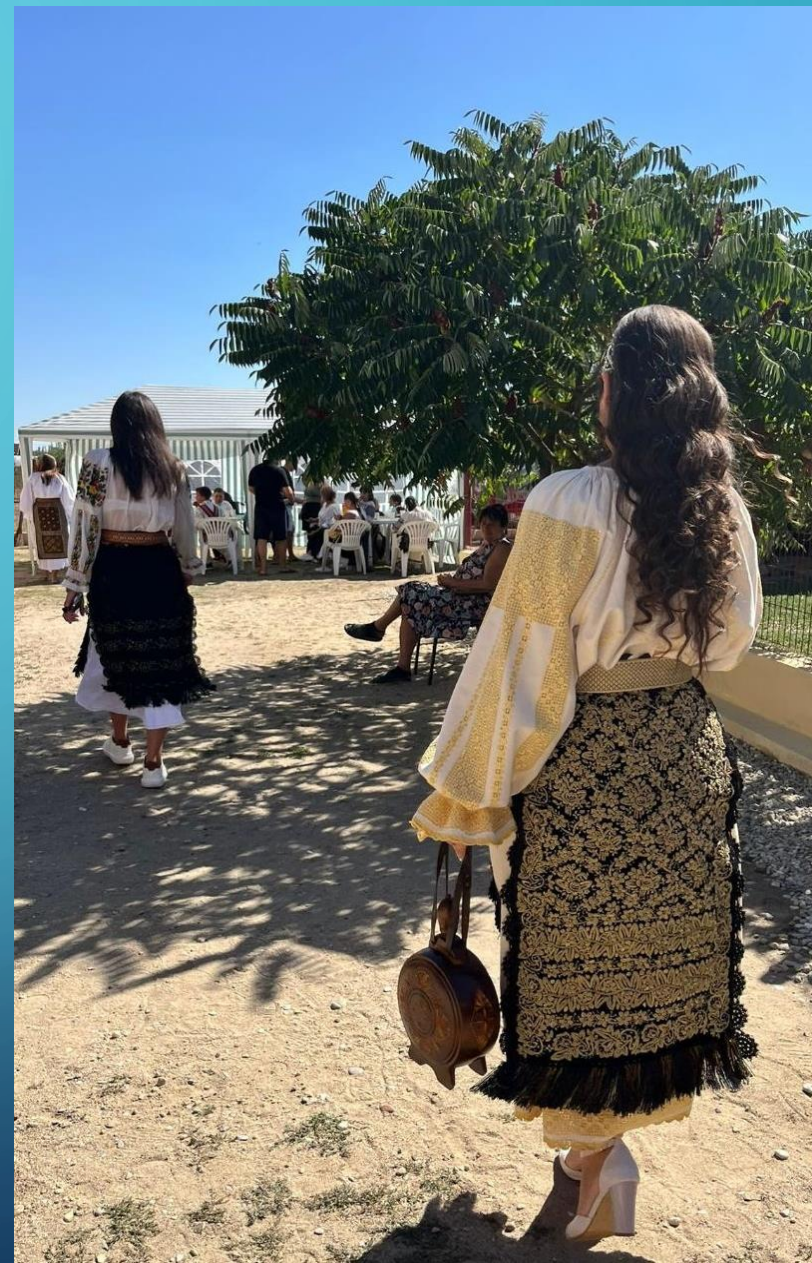
The new pieces are completed, they are not assembled precisely to reflect the components and phases of work.



EXTREMELY VALUABLE WEDDING GIFT FOR BRIDE



There was also another fabulous shirt in the collection presented in Braşov, it was recently made in order to be offered as a wedding gift by the godmother to the bride. It is a shirt embroidered with yellow genuine silk and ennobled with gold sequins, by Gheorghiţa Roibu from Hârseşti, Argeş.





The exhibits presented so far come from a particularly valuable ethnographic area of Romania – the Cotmena Valley – known especially for preserving the Căluș Ritual.



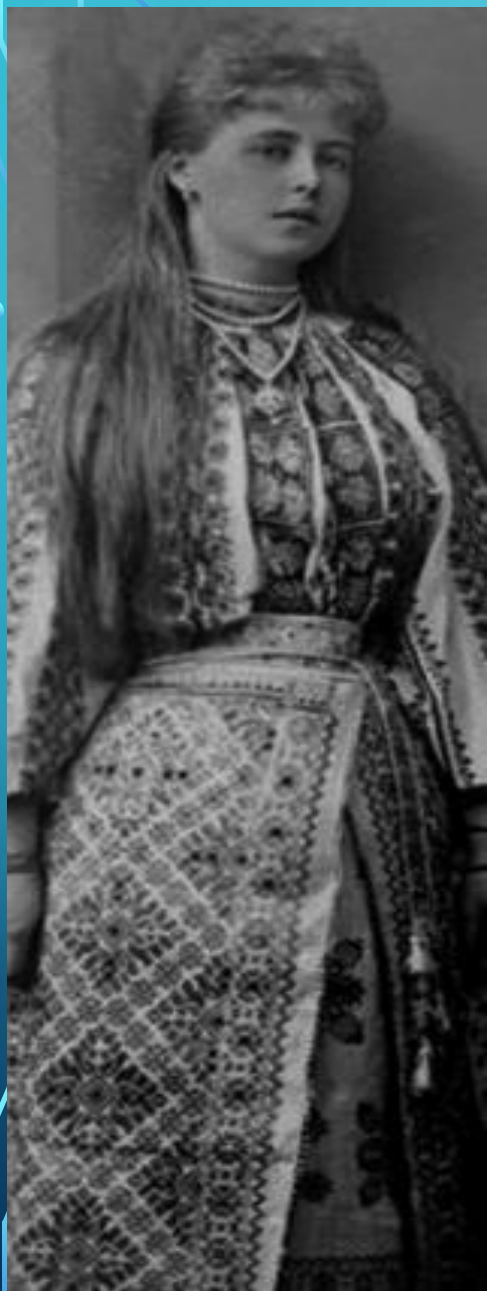
90 years ago, a group of Căluș people from Pădureți and Mârghia – two villages in this Valley – took the Căluș to London, a moment that, in the opinion of ethnologists, equates to the launch of this element of Romanian intangible heritage into the universal cultural circuit.

They competed in the Traditional Music and Dance Festival - London, 1935, when, out of 42 participating countries, Romania obtained the First Prize.



ROYAL PEASANT ART

The exhibition also contained several remarkable costumes due to the precious materials and sophisticated techniques used in their creation, which come from Muscel, an ethnographic area strongly marked by the influence of the Royal House of Romania.



The Muscel costume became emblematic for Romania at the end of the 19th century, when Queen Maria chose it as the high ceremonial attire of the Royal House. Thus, at the Royal Court, only the Queen and her daughters were allowed to wear the Muscel costume, the other ladies wearing traditional autumn clothes from other ethnographic areas of the country.



TURQUOISE WAS EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE QUEEN



The turquoise color was worn exclusively by the queen. Naturally, every woman wanted to have a royal suit, and some even made efforts to make one. It's just that they weren't allowed to go out in public with it. This is why today we are happy to have it in very good condition, even though it is very old.



The research I conducted proves that the Queen herself drew models, which she gave to the women of Muscel, to whom she also provided the materials, extremely fine and very expensive: gold and silver thread, silk, genuine silk or glass beads.

The background is a solid teal color with a subtle gradient. In the four corners, there are decorative line art elements resembling electronic circuit boards. These elements consist of thin, light blue lines that form various geometric shapes, including rectangles and zig-zags, and are terminated by small circles of varying sizes. The lines and circles are more prominent in the corners and fade slightly towards the center.

The sophistication of these pieces is explained by the fact that the Queen's preference for this costume strongly stimulated the development of workshops in the area.



The tradition of making royal costumes is still alive in Muscel, being preserved not only by the women of this area, but also taken over by women who work in urban settlements in Romania and the diaspora.

Thank you!

PhD. ELENA IAGĂR
Counsellor,
Academy of Romanian Scientists

[E-mail: elena_iagar@yahoo.com](mailto:elena_iagar@yahoo.com)

Telephone: +40744969002