

Urban Signatures

The Architectural Identity of Bucharest

"A city is made of more than buildings, streets and squares. It is also shaped by the ideas of those who designed it. Urban Signatures searches for these authors and for the discreet traces they left on the façades of Bucharest."

(Signature of Arh. Marcel Locar, 1933)



Who designed Bucharest?

Many buildings in Bucharest still bear the names of the people who designed or built them: architects, engineers and contractors whose signatures were carved in stone, cast in metal or inscribed in plaster. Although they remain in plain sight, these small marks often go unnoticed.

Urban Signatures is a research, cultural interpretation and digital exploration project developed by Youth Vision for Society. We document authors' signatures visible from public space and use them to reconstruct the stories of the professionals who helped shape the city. The project shifts attention from the building as urban scenery to the people, ideas and decisions that gave it form.

Why this project matters

Bucharest brings together many architectural layers, from eclectic and Neo-Romanian architecture to Art Deco and interwar modernism. For most people, however, these styles are difficult to recognise and are rarely explained in accessible language. The information exists, but it is scattered across archives, specialist publications and databases designed primarily for professionals.

A signature on a façade becomes our entry point into this history. It connects a specific building to its author, the period in which it was created and a particular vision of housing and urban development. From there, the project helps people notice, compare and better understand the built environment they pass through every day.



What we document

Our research combines field exploration with archival work and the study of architectural yearbooks and publications. The selection reflects a diversity of authors, styles and areas of the city, while the information is checked with support from specialists.

- 01 the signature or inscription visible on the façade;
 - 02 the building's author and their role — architect, engineer or contractor;
 - 03 the history of the building and the urban context in which it appeared;
 - 04 its architectural style and significant façade elements;
 - 05 photographs of the building, its details and its signature;
 - 06 documentary sources and the validation status of the information.
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Each landmark becomes an easy-to-navigate record: rigorous enough to be trustworthy, yet clear enough to use without specialist knowledge.

A platform for reading the city

The research will be brought together on an interactive digital platform. Rather than creating only an inventory of buildings, we are developing a tool that allows Bucharest to be explored from several perspectives:

- | an interactive map featuring documented landmarks, thematic filters and curated routes;
- | a visual dictionary explaining architectural styles, façade elements and key terminology;
- | short narrative features exploring the ideas of the architects and engineers who shaped the city;
- | a digital assistant that helps users recognise and understand architectural details;
- | a participatory mechanism through which the public can suggest new signatures for subsequent research and validation.



How to explore the project

Urban Signatures can be used at home as a research resource, but it is designed above all for the street. Its map and thematic routes turn a walk into an exercise in observation: where does the author's name appear, which details recur, how does architectural language change from one period to another, and what does a building reveal about the way the city was imagined?

The platform will support exploration by author, style, period and area, while its participatory component invites users to help extend the research. Curiosity thus becomes a form of engagement: a city is harder to ignore once you begin to read its signs.

The project at a glance

50+

documented
buildings

1

interactive digital
map

1

visual
architecture
dictionary

1

exhibition and
launch event

These outputs are complemented by thematic routes, stories about the authors, exploration tools and a body of content designed to continue growing beyond the current stage of the project.

Who Urban Signatures is for

The project is intended for Bucharest residents and visitors, school and university students, urban history enthusiasts, architects, urban planners and researchers. Each person can enter the project from a different point: a familiar building, a name discovered on a façade, an architectural style or a route through a neighbourhood.

The shared goal is to foster urban visual literacy: the ability to look closely at the city, understand its transformations and recognise the built heritage as part of our everyday identity.

Team and partners

Urban Signatures is developed by Youth Vision for Society together with an interdisciplinary team of researchers, architects, historians and digital professionals.

Partners: Arhitectura Magazine and the Union of Architects of Romania; the Bucharest Territorial Branch of the Romanian Order of Architects.

Look up. The city is already signed.

Sometimes, the history of Bucharest fits into a name carved at eye level. At other times, we need to look up and search more carefully. Urban Signatures brings these traces together into a shared story about the professionals who imagined the city and about how we can learn to see it anew.

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ORDINUL
ARHITECȚILOR
DIN ROMÂNIA



Timbrul de
arhitectură



ARHITECTURA
REVISTA UNIUNII ARHITECȚILOR DIN ROMÂNIA FONDATĂ ÎN 1906



UNIUNEA
ARHITECȚILOR DIN
ROMANIA