

## Project Georgiana

One of the longer term projects is the help to study. Through an engaged Orthodox priest in Hârsova I met Georgiana in Advent 2014. She was leading a children's program to paint icons. Not professional, just simple forms with simple materials, paper, pencils and water colors. Georgiana painted the draft, the children colored it. Georgiana had finished school in the spring of 2014 with the high school exams (baccalaureate), which had only been possible because her brother had decided that she should be the one educated – the family could not provide for two children at the same time to go to school. The school doesn't cost, but the high school is not in Hârsova, but in Vaslui and the buses don't go often enough, so the children have to live in Vaslui – usually in rent somewhere in somebodies household as Georgiana did. And all the materials, books, school dresses etc. have to be paid as well.

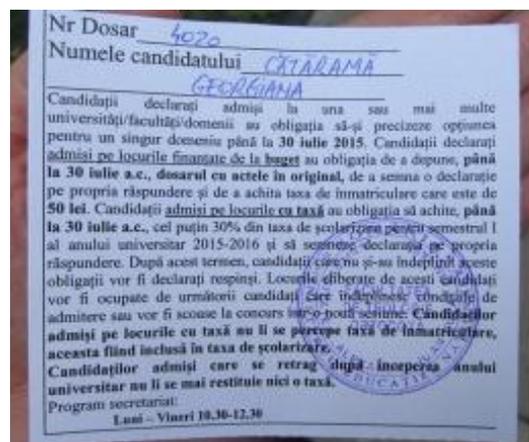
Georgiana had a good grade at her final exams but now there was no money available for her to study. Her dream was to study Religious Art, she wants to become an icon writer. In spring I met with her. The priest meanwhile had showed me some drawings she had made and I decided she had enough talent and the will to do everything to study well – if she would get the chance.



Georgiana had started to work in a dress company, to be able to support her family with the little income she got, but she was not happy there. She did it to make some money, but her heart was elsewhere.

So I committed to find the money for her studies, which will take three years. It takes 100 € per month to make this possible.

On July 16, 2015 we went to register her at the university. I don't think she really believed it would happen until she had the slip in her hands, which had her registration number on it. She was so happy! The picture above was taken after the registration.



Besides the 100 € per month it would have been another 600 € per year for the study fees, but the 30 best students who apply get a free place to study at the university in Iași, and fortunately Georgiana turned out to be one of them.

What remained uncertain was the housing. Student housing is available at very reasonable prices but the number of students who get it is limited. Georgiana again was blessed to get a place in one of the student homes for girls, sharing the room with three other girls who happen to be in the same class she is. She has to pay about 20 € per month. There is a common bathroom for the whole floor and a common kitchen where the girls can cook or at least warm something up. On October 12, 2015 I drove her to Iași to begin her new life as a student of Religious Arts.

On the way she gave me two presents, an icon she painted with water colors and a stone with an Orthodox church painted on it. A thank you for what seems to her I was doing for her. But without the many supporters I could not have done that.



She told me how happy also her family was that she got that opportunity. She had been waiting for this moment and now it became true. I knew that my initial feeling had been correct, Georgiana would do everything possible to be a good student.

I meet with Georgiana almost every month. She is able to come home to visit her family – and to get some food almost every weekend. Students get a special rate for the train, so she visits as often as possible and takes food with her. Since I teach German in Hârsova, we can meet in her home village and I can give her the monthly amount she needs.

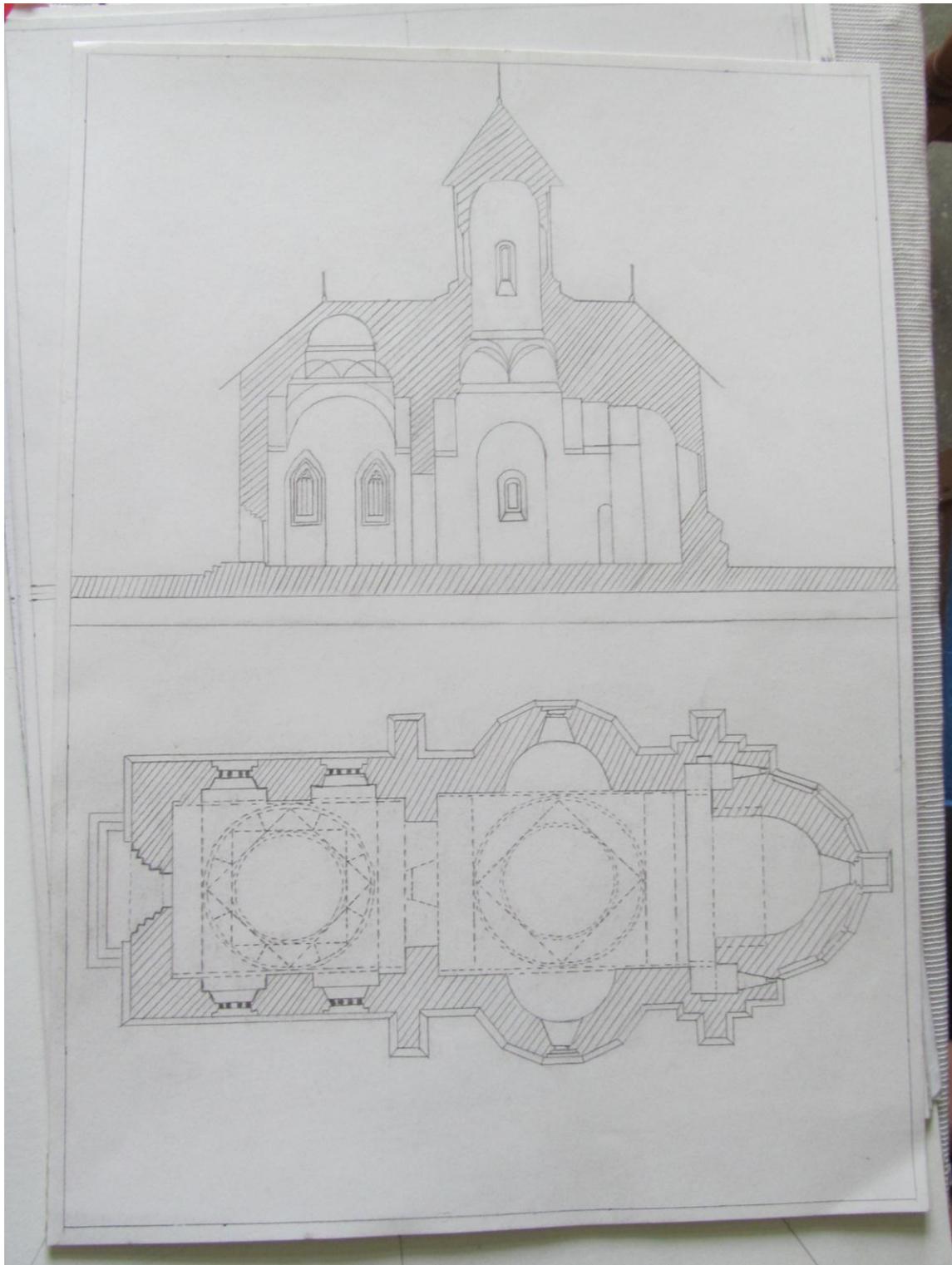
Last time we met during the Easter holidays. She had brought her works from this year home. These will be graded, but she wanted to show them to me and her family.

The works are covering a wide range. Studies with different materials, various alphabets and colors.

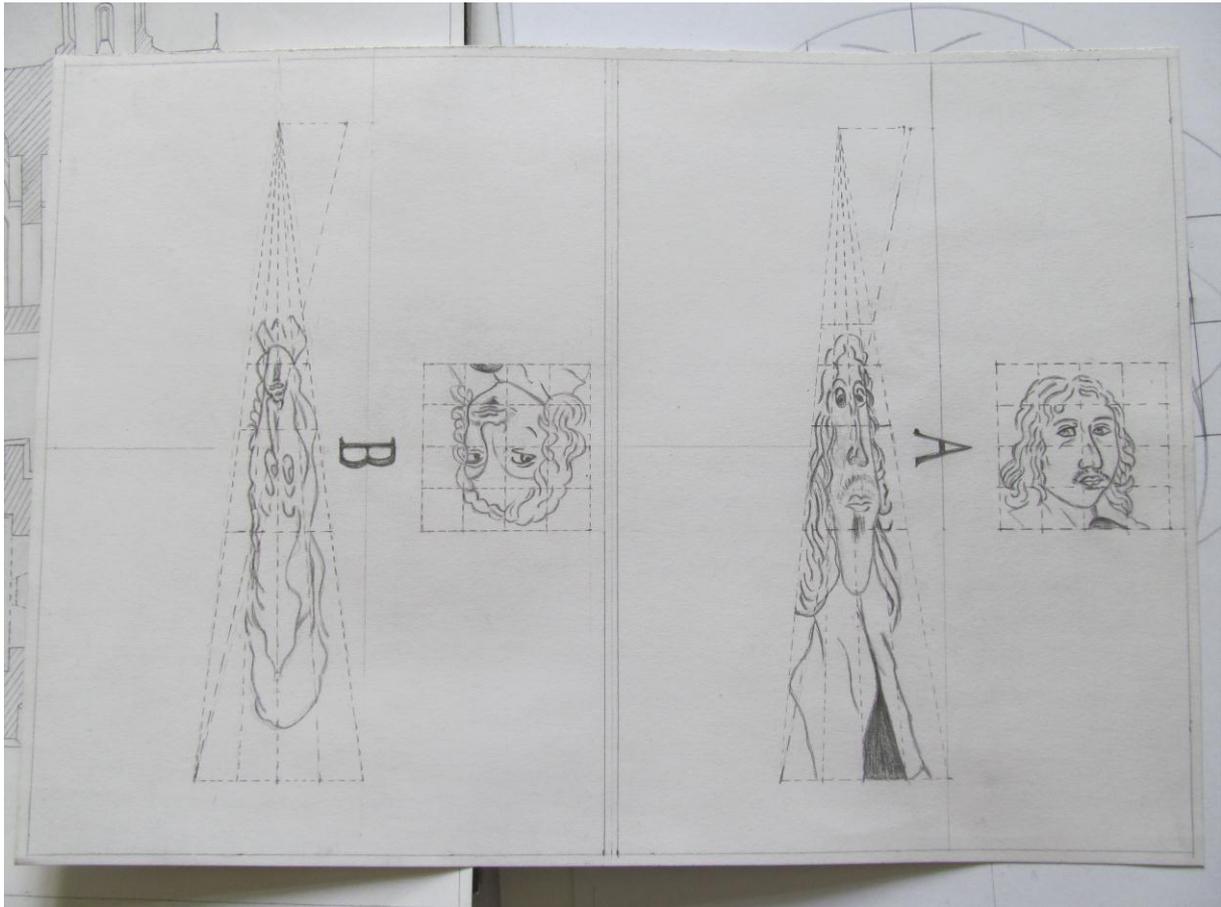
Theme in five variations



Theme: Church architecture



Theme: Perspective



Theme: Various Script Types



Theme: Color studies



Theme: Rainbow freestyle



Secular heme with medieval clothes



Religious theme: Jesus carrying the cross - in western tradition



Religious Theme: Jesus Christ Pantokrator – in Byzantine style



This picture is already a study about how to paint icons the Pantokrator being one of the most well known themes.

And last not least: Gergiana's first icon with St. Parascheva of Iasi, the local saint whose body relic is kept in the metropolitan cathedral of Iasi.



Whenever I talk to Georgiana it is clear that between church history, theology and other religious themes she has to study to have also the theological basis for her future work, her favorite by far is the painting and anything related to it. And she is good, as I expected in all she studies, putting all of her work and energy into it

Georgiana was proud to be able to show me her works the last time we met and I think she is on a good way. At the beginning of her career Georgiana will only copy icons from other artists, mostly the ancient artists. I know this from a young icon writer who is about to finish his education on Mount Athos in Greece. Over time she will develop her own style of icon writing.

In an Orthodox country like Romania iconwriters have a future. Icons are presents or donations for churches, both old and new. Georgiana is on a good way and she is eager to continue.



Georgiana with her first icon after the first year of studies – she is happy, as she is now able to do what she most loves.