

**Project Title:** Mountain Fables: The Villagers of Singeorz-Bai

**Investigator:** Colombik, Roge

**Department:** Art & Design

**Project summary:** Mountain Fables: The Villagers of Singeorz-Bai was a major public art exhibition that greatly assisted in fostering dialogue in the community about cultural identity, emigration and the future of the children in the village. I was a guest for a symposium at the Muzeu de Arta Comparata in Singeorz-Bai that brought together a diverse group of photographers to work in the village and collect stories and images. The first two weeks were spent recording oral histories and shooting film and still pictures. I then worked collaboratively with Sergui Octav Lupse, a noted young Romanian filmmaker and photographer to design a series of banners that would feature my photographs with text that addresses the difficult nature of emigration and flight from the village for both the children and the working age adults who are desperate to provide for their families. With the waves of departures, the intrinsic nature and traditions of the village is in peril. The textual information on the banners was in Romanian and stated, Towards the West?, Towards the East, Who Remains?, Here? The banners were quite large, 7' x 12', and shocked the community in that it threw this difficult issue out into the public space for the first time. The dialogue was outstanding and often quite sobering in regards to the choices that many villagers continue to make in order to sustain their family, and in the process, departing from the traditional life that their ancestors had throughout the past two hundred years in this mountainous terrain.