The status of contemporary Romanian architects (and, by extension, of other East-European architects) is, as a historical irony, envied by Western colleagues: the opportunity they had to re-define the 'zero moment' of their profession, was at the same time the chance of post-communist cities to re-consider their heritage and their perspectives. Unlike other European capitals and beyond any theoretical issues, in the particular case of the city of Bucharest, the simple fact that there is physical space for almost any kind of interventions, from vast urban systematizations to small, but important objects of street furniture, represents an opportunity that we are not allowed to fail. The architects are responsible for the face of the city, for the good and for the bad, they answer for the more or less visible, well done things, discretely shy or ostentatiously exposed; but 'the others' remember their existence especially when they have to complain – and sometimes for good reasons! – of the excrescences unfairly called 'houses,' of failed urban implants, of all the failures, abuses, destructions that we pass by and that aggress us daily.

A guild that respects itself, also respects its hierarchies. It respects them not only within its limited boundaries, but also within the more critical public space. Knowing each other, but less known by the outsiders, easily gaining or losing the respect of the others, publicly expressing antagonisms or discreetly and efficiently gossiping, hardly recognizing their elites, Romanian architects have been rearranging, for the last thirteen years, their positions in the professional hierarchies and cultural background of today world.

In the first volume\(^1\) of the series "Prispa - arhitectura din România" (The Porch - Romanian Architecture) edited by Noi Media Print Publishing House, Augustin Ioan - PhD in architecture and philosophy - reminds to those who haven't found (yet) that excellent contemporary Romanian architecture EXISTS. "Zece arhitecți de zece / Top Romanian Architects" is the first book to bring to both specialized and unspecialized public some of the remarkable professionals of the moment who make the author notice smilingly: "There are still some exceptional architects who have not yet gone west" (p. 14). There are some bilin-
gual books that precede this elegant edition: some volumes illustrating the Romanian art and architecture of the first half of the 20th century and several monographs of Romanian architects who were active between the wars. In this particular case, I appreciate as very polite the option for an English version which is not always a rigorous translation of the original (quite the opposite sometimes) precisely because its target is a public different from the Romanian one, which is less familiar with our complaints and internal wars and has another cultural and social background.

The book is conceived for anyone interested not just in looking at, but actually seeing the world we are living in. And I state it for several reasons: first because it does not isolate itself in a specialized language, but it clearly and suggestively communicates with any curious interlocutor; second because, when read on a different level, it reveals that architecture is used as an excuse for the author to chat about Romanian world today, about the well-known ephemeral banks, about the good or the bad taste of the clients and about many other things that we read about à bout de souffle; and last, but definitely not least, because it makes room inside the public space to contemporary architects, even if only ten so far, whose works "are bound to shed light on whether we are dealing with an air of renewal that is sufficiently strong to engender a new architectural culture." (p. 15)

For the professional, the book is a useful tool because it settles the boundaries of a representative group: once a reference system is settled, it becomes a reference grid and future architectural works will position themselves - lower or higher - according to it.

The volume is structured in two main sections: the first part shows the general development of the last half-century of Romanian architecture, while the second part introduces to the reader the top-ten architects of the last decade. They are, alphabetically ordered, Ion Andreescu, Vladimir Arsene, Alexandru Beldiman, Florin Biciuşcă, Constantin Ciurea, Vlad Gaivoronschi, Radu Mihăilescu, Emil Barbu Popescu, Dorin Ştefan, Radu Teacă. In the introduction, the author confesses that he did not have the intention to establish a 'top ten' of Romanian architects, but the title itself has, whether we like it or not, the connotation of a classification. Both in Romanian and English the title seduces and invites, and it is known that word games are not stranger to architects – it already exists the fairly recent precedent of the 40 Architects Under 40 and that is why we expect a much wanted sequel.

The history of Romanian architecture of the 20th century closely follows the changes of political regimes. By the end of the 30s, when the country is in the middle of the liberalization of political life and is connected to the European