



**THE SENATE  
GARDENS**  
AN URANUS MEMORIAL



BUCHAREST - SEPTEMBER  
2020



BUCHAREST  
September 2020

The Bucharest of the Ceușescu years was characterised by major changes in architecture and urban housing, dictated by political factors that led to the modification of the entire socio-economic complex of the city. Entire neighbourhoods were demolished, communities of people displaced, and few real estate targets were preserved by relocation.

The project “Gardens of the Senate – the Uranus Memorial” is a tribute brought by the Romanian Senate to an entire urban community that continues to belong to Bucharest.

We wanted the story of the old streets, houses and churches to be recreated in the form of the Gardens, offering a visual representation of the housing features of yesteryear, through the connection with the past.

It is my pleasure to invite you to rediscover the beauty of the demolished houses and churches, integrated now in the form of garden rows, as a living symbol of the old Uranus neighbourhood that gave way to the Palace of Parliament.

**ROBERT MARIUS CAZANCIUC**  
President of the Romanian Senate, ad interim



Kingdom of the Netherlands



**URBAN  
LANDSCAPES  
ROMANIA**

DUTCH-ROMANIAN PARTNERSHIP FOR GREENER CITIES

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*Urban Landscapes is a promoter of the activation of the urban landscape in Romania and an enthusiastic supporter of the Senate Gardens as a landmark project for urban regeneration and memory recuperation in the city of Bucharest*

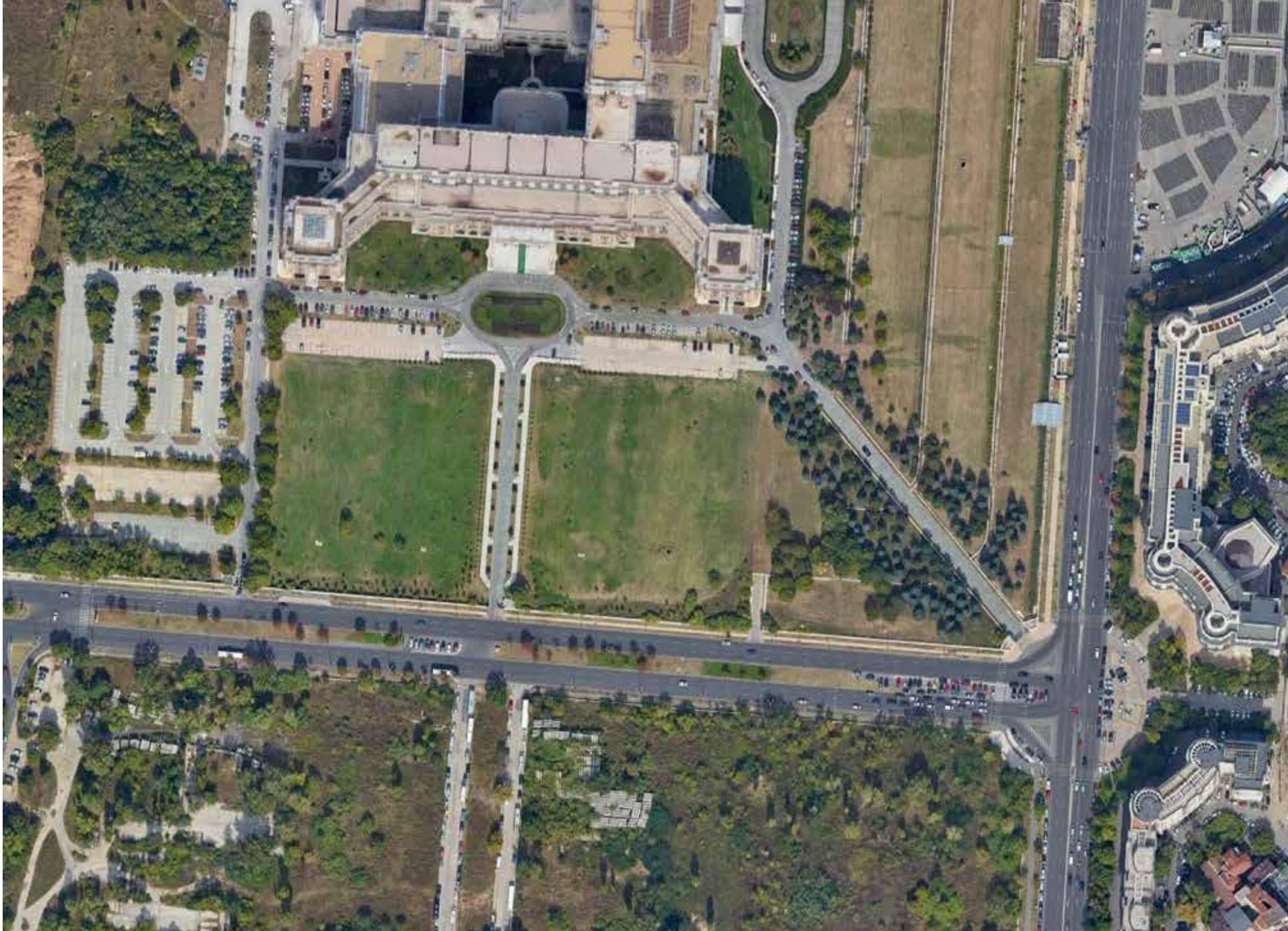


# 1. HISTORICAL URBAN REFERENCES

The vines hill “of Dr. Spirea” (or Spirea’s) signified both Bacchus traditional rites, as well as Christian ones, this oscillation between Dionysian and Apollonian being the very meaning of our existence.

The “Tabula rasa” practiced by the so-called “specialists” of the communist regime during the dictator Ceausescu destroyed both the natural landform as well as hundreds of years of history. Churches, cemeteries, monk cells, monastery kitchens, parish houses, schools and thousands of buildings.

The remains of the Burnt Court and of the Arsenal - the former military prison - factories, shops, thousands of other buildings, as well as almost the entire vegetation, were destroyed with the speed of fire! But, apart from demolishing the buildings, the communist regime managed to also violate and rampage the souls of thousands of Bucharest residents of the area. The main historical landmarks - the Cross of Metropolitan Neophyte, the churches Old Spirea, St. Nicholas Alba in Postăvari (located in front of the entrance to the Public Ministry), the Sisters’ Convent (together with the Patriarchate workshops) - relocated, the Burnt Court with its underground, the memorial houses (Nesor the Logothete, Aristide Demetriade, Catul Bogdan, Ciortan Station, etc.) are also benchmarks in the lives of so many people.



## LOCATION

The current Senate Gardens are located in the City of Bucharest, Sector 4, on Calea 13 Septembrie, alongside the south part of the Palace of Parliament of Romania.

They are surrounded as follows:

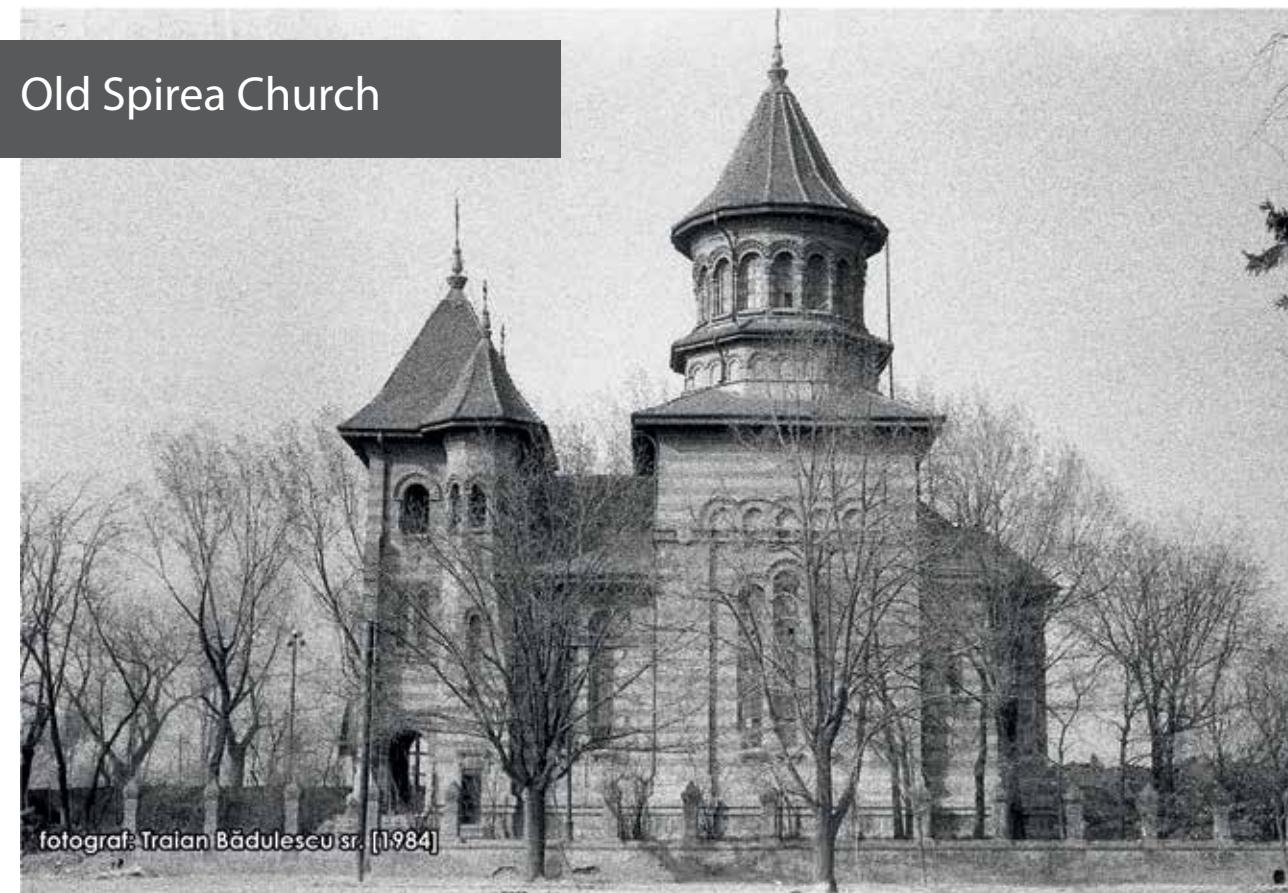
- to the South, by the avenue Calea 13 Septembrie;
- to the West, by the access alley to the Chamber of Deputies and to the National Museum of Contemporary Art of Romania;
- to the North, by the building of the Palace of Parliament of Romania;
- to the East, by the access lane from Calea 13 Septembrie corner with Bd. Libertății.

# THE CULTURAL & HISTORICAL HERITAGE

From the cultural heritage perspective, the current ground of the Gardens of the Romanian Senate stretches over part of the land where used to be located:

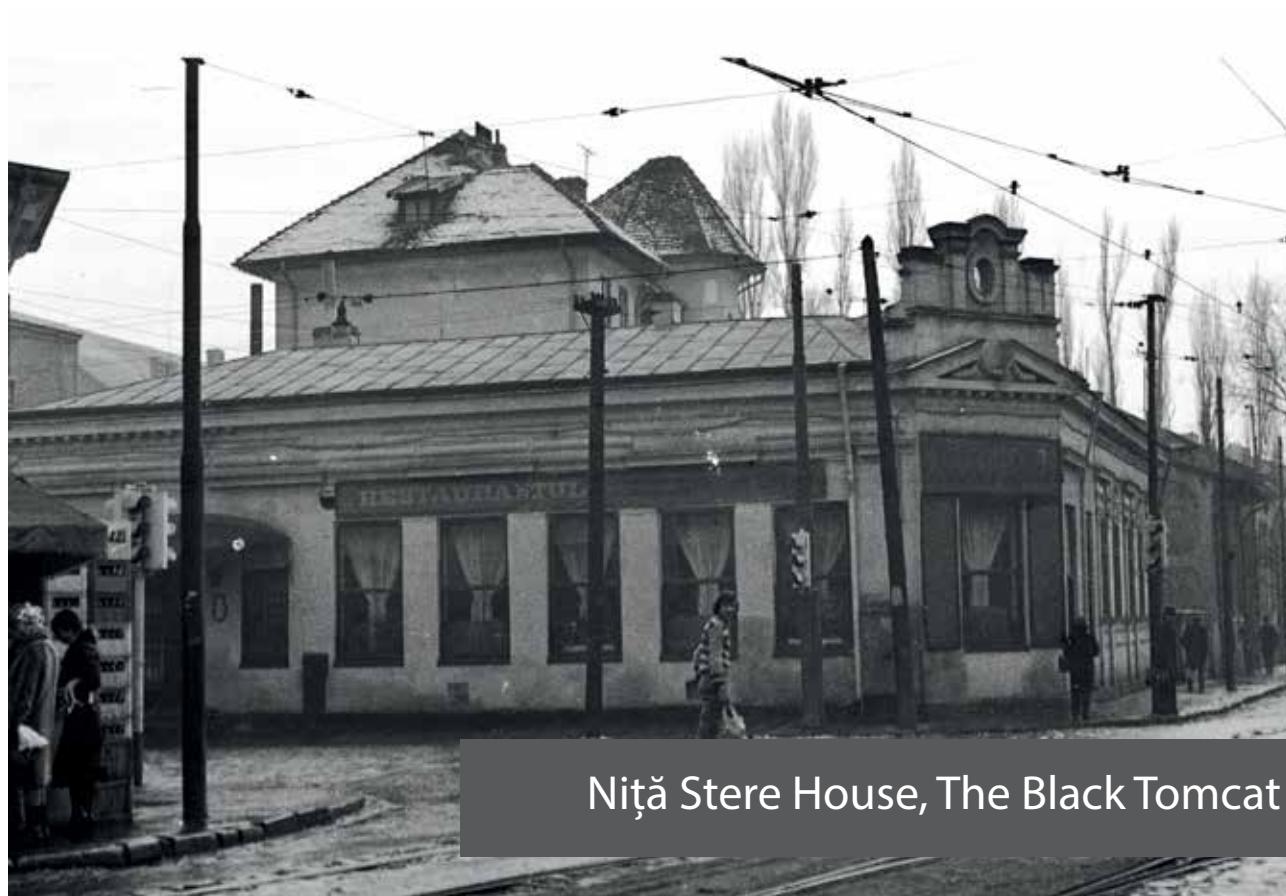
- the Beggars' Bridge (Caliței Bridge), with Gura Văii;
- the Cross and Well of Metropolitan Neophyte, of Hungary and Wallachia;
- the remains of the New Princely Court, known as the " Burnt Court";
- part of the Army's Arsenal;
- the Old Spirea Church;
- the Sisters' Convent, with the Romanian Patriarchate workshops;
- part of the former streets: Uranus, Militari (*Soldiers street*), Miracolelor (*Miracles street*), Fenix, Bagdad entrance, Cazărmii (*Caserne street*), Cazărmii entrance, Vitănești entrance, Seneca street, Banul Mihalcea, Schitu Maicilor (*Sisters' Convent street*), Maior (*Major*) Constantin Moroiu. In this area we should notice the housing plots: „The Communal Society for Cheap Housing” from Vitănești entrance (*arh. D. Mohor, cca. 1913-15*) and the Sisters' Convent (*Palas-Mitr. Antim*).

Old Spirea Church



The church on 27, Uranus street, located at the *Niță Stere* crossroad, was demolished with difficulty on April 27, 1984. The church was dedicated to Old St. Spyridon, and had been built was from 1921-1922, according to the plans of the architect Ioan D. Trajanescu, in place of a small church of the 17th century.

Its demolition was completed after several attempts to blow it up, since it could not be demolished by excavators... Only a few painted glass windows, the pews and the icon of St. Spyridon could be saved, and were brought to the Lucaci Church in the capital.



Niță Stere House, The Black Tomcat

One of the most famous intersections in the neighbourhood was this one, the meeting place of Uranus street (in front, the one with the tram line), Cazărmii (*Caserne*) street (to the left), Calea 13 Septembrie (to the right, with tram lines forking from Uranus). In the building in the centre was located the restaurant "The Black Tomcat", also known by the inhabitants as "Niță Stere Pub", named after its former owner.

This is a restaurant bringing back a lot of memories for the former inhabitants: it being located near the Old Spirea Church, where marriage and baptism services were performed, many parties were being held here.

The Uranus street led in front to the Customs Warehouses, the place of the flowers market at the intersection with Rahovei avenue.

Strada Cazărmii (*Caserne Street*)



Strada Cazărmii (*Caserne Street*) was one of the most defining roads in the neighbourhood: it ran the area from east to west, from the low, flat landform, to a hilly, irregular one; its route was sometimes straight and simple, sometimes winding.

Along its trajectory, one would see the architecture history of the neighbourhood: from archaic houses of the 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century, to modern buildings from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An important role in this architectural mix was played by the real estate development in the interwar period, when the fabric of the traditional city experienced an increase in the density of the building.

See in the image above an example of a neoclassical building, located on the street, part of the old kingdom's city. Downstairs, we see a more modern construction, yet still maintaining the traditional lines of the facade, built in the neo-Romanian style. The last building was built in the same yard as the first, in the back. The need to expand the living space was already felt in the 1920's.

## Vitănești Street



Access to Vitănești Street was from Cazărmii (*Caserne street*), on an ascending ramp. Relatively opposite to it is the Bagdad entrance.

Vitănești street was special from many points of view: due to its urban configuration, it had a rectangular shape, connecting on one end to Cazărmii (*Caserne*) Street; because of the landform configuration, the street had an upward sloping part, and the plot it served was arranged on the plateau of a small hill, so that some houses there had a panoramic view of the neighbourhood; this street was a favourite spot of many film directors, with many films scenes being shot here.

The construction of the standard buildings in this plot started in 1914, belonging to the Communal Society for Cheap Housing.

The development project of the area is done under the leadership of architect D. Mohor, who adapts the standard house to the special situations of steep landform. These houses are more compact, and completed by a small backyard.

## The Sisters' Convent



At the beginning of the '80s, with the start of the construction site for the Republic House, the director of the Bucharest Project Institute, engineer Eugeniu Iordăchescu, suggested saving the Sisters' Convent church from demolition, by relocating it.

The walls of the monastery have been broken on the eastern side, following the direction in which the church was to be moved to its place today, behind the buildings in Francophonie Square, at the lower end of Calea 13 Septembrie.



# THE LAYOUT OF THE GARDENS OF THE SENATE





## 2. THE PROJECT

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOLUTION,  
START OF THE CONSTRUCTION SITE



## ABSTRACT

From Stonehenge to the Geometric Gardens of Carl Theodor Sørensen, the geometric structures are models of conceptual organization. The history in circles - concentric, tangent, or isolated - rises and falls simultaneously in the mental topography. History is not always clear, but a retrospective look can shed some light on it.

### Motto:

*There are many kinds of silence.  
Interpreting them generates a language.  
The new language re-generates a culture.  
**The silence as plant silence!***



## A MODERN INTEGRATION CONCEPT IN THE URBAN EVOLUTION

Integrating in the concept of rearrangement of the Gardens of the Senate some elements from the conception of the winning project of the "BUCHAREST 2000" competition, by architect Meinhard von Gerkan (1995).

## LANDMARKS IN THE HISTORY OF THE ART OF GARDENING

The gardens tradition at the European palaces, the BOSQUET gardens, the art of perspective!  
The Bosquet of the **Branicki Palace** garden, in **Białystok, Poland**, 1750



### The Schonbrunn Gardens

The chosen planting formula starts from the hornbeam plant structures, *Carpinus betulus* – the bosquet type - a method established in the Versailles and Schonbrunn Gardens, the most prestigious examples in Europe.



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Located in a conflicting historical centre, the **SENATE Garden** opens the circles in relation to the topography. The closed, silent historical surfaces now have apertures/openings, and the long-covered secrets become debate and enter into a public plan. The demolished houses are opposed by the Palace of Parliament - between the Palace and its fractured history there is now a row of gardens-intermediaries, more than opponents: a series of mediation spaces between individual and group, between personal psychology and national history, between former systematic oppression and current freedom, still not fully known.

The perspectives of the **SENATE Garden** are extremely broad and, by analogy with the narrative perspective, they can be called selectively omniscient. The eye no longer perceives the vertical as higher - metaphorically speaking, the authority is no longer tyrannical, domineering and cognitively impenetrable. Every person entering the garden finds their own interpretation, but there is a clear narrative thread, an intersection of plans and a personal refuge. There is also a wide territory of exploration, of search.

The geometry of the garden passes from Euclid to Escher - the inside-outside, up-down, here-there, mine-yours folds, merge however into a discreet, calm and well-mastered mental current.

There is no vertigo, the garden is not a maze and not an oppressive intellectual discourse - it remains open and it invites to endless reflections and refractions.

The vegetal structures are designed in such a way to grow in height, in response to the gigantic scale of the building they surround, to temper it, to calm it.



#### NOCTURNAL - BEAM

Robert Irwin, the author of the Getty Central Garden, has a retrospective entitled **All Rules Will Change**, in which he exhibits works from the '50s, the '60s, and the '70s. This is when all the rules change in the Romanian space. The space is literally changing. Irwin reconsiders all materials and surfaces of expression.

The sculptor is part of the **Light and Space** movement: the direct experience does not depend on the object/subject, nor on the space in which it is installed. It has to do with the intrinsic quality of light. The light that restructures consciousness is one of the themes of the **SENATE Garden**.

The lighting system maintains the idea of a unique experience and personal contact - of floating plant structures; light is a continuous performance. Lit simultaneously or alternately (at a predetermined pace - for a digest perception, with nothing stroboscopic), the lights create each interval other contours, other impressions.

**The furniture takes over the lines of the garden:** it is geometric, in simple volumes, lit from the bottom up, it floats.

#### DIURNAL

The garden has spaces for physical refuge: areas of sun and penumbra, adjusted so as not to turn into a challenge - the garden is not an obstacle course.



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