Ressort: Kultur

Dumitru Pop in the Maramures region of Romania

The man who paints crosses

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GDN - Dumitru Pop is the artist who continues the tradition of painting the crosses of Cimitirul Vesel, also known as the “Merry Cemetery”, located in the village of S?pân?a, Romania. This cemetery is famous for its colorful wooden crosses decorated with life scenes and humorous poems that tell the story of the deceased.

The tradition began with Stan Ioan Patras in 1935, who created the first crosses painted in blue and decorated with lively images and ironic texts. After his death in 1977, Dumitru Pop took over, continuing to carve and paint these unique crosses.

When someone in the village dies, the family turns to Dumitru to create a personalized cross. Dumitru hand-carves the oak crosses in his workshop, located near the village church. Each cross is decorated with images representing the life of the deceased and an epitaph that often contains witty or ironic verses.

The Vesel Cemetery has become one of Romania’s most popular tourist attractions, with around 700 decorated graves. Dumitru Pop creates 20 to 30 crosses a year, keeping alive a tradition that celebrates life and death with a touch of humor and color.

The images on the crosses at Cimitirul Vesel depict scenes from the deceased’s daily life. These illustrations are often very detailed and colorful, and may include:

Professions: If the deceased was a farmer, the cross may show a scene of him working in the fields. If he was a carpenter, he may be depicted with his work tools.
Hobbies and passions: Crosses may also depict the deceased’s passions and hobbies, such as fishing, music, or cooking.

Significant events: Some crosses show important events in the deceased’s life, such as marriage or time spent with family.
Personal characteristics: The images may also reflect distinctive personality traits of the deceased, such as a sense of humor or kindness.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:
UPA United Press Agency LTD
483 Green Lanes
UK, London N13NV 4BS
contact (at) unitedpressagency.com
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