

Final ruling of the High Court of Cassation and Justice secured by Țuca Zbârcea & Asociații: The Comparative Art Collection



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Țuca Zbârcea & Asociații represented the heirs of art collectors Alexandra and Barbu Slatineanu across multiple complex legal proceedings regarding the claim and restitution of the Comparative Art Collection "Alexandra and Barbu Slatineanu", ultimately securing a favourable final ruling before the High Court of Cassation and Justice (ICCJ).

By Decision No. 542 of 12 March 2026, the High Court of Cassation and Justice dismissed as unfounded the final appeal filed by the National Museum of Art of Romania against Civil Decision No. 865/2024, rendered by the Bucharest Court of Appeal, 4th Civil Division. Such Civil Decision had upheld the plaintiffs' appeal and ordered the defendants to restore full ownership and peaceful possession of all art objects comprising the Comparative Art Collection "Alexandra and Barbu Slatineanu" to the heirs.

The ruling of the High Court of Cassation and Justice is final.

Throughout the dispute, the heirs of Alexandra and Barbu Slatineanu were represented by a large team of lawyers from Țuca Zbârcea & Asociații, who contributed to the resolution of the case across various stages over the past 16 years. The team was led by **Robert Roșu** (Partner), **Alina Ungureanu** (Partner), and **Catalina Ionescu** (Managing Associate).

The litigation team at Țuca Zbârcea & Asociații has extensive experience in handling complex disputes concerning property rights and cultural heritage, having been involved in numerous landmark cases in Romanian jurisprudence.

The decisions rendered by the Romanian courts in this case confirm the heirs' ownership rights over the entire collection and represent an important benchmark in case law concerning the restitution of cultural assets and the interpretation of legal instruments through which art collections entered state patrimony during the post-war period.

The litigation concerned one of the most valuable art collections assembled in Romania in the first half of the 20th century. The collection was established by Alexandru Slatineanu (1873–1939), a renowned bacteriologist and hygienist who held prominent positions within the Ministry of Public Health and contributed, alongside Ion Cantacuzino, to the study and combat of tuberculosis. While studying microbiology at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, Slatineanu developed a passion for art—particularly graphics and engravings—and gradually built an outstanding collection of artworks and decorative objects.

The collection includes works by major artists such as Nicolae Grigorescu, Ștefan Luchian, Theodor Pallady, Dimitrie Ghiața, Adam Balțatu, and Rodica Maniu, as well as works by European artists such as Armand Guillaumin and Constantin Guys.

It also comprises icons from Russia, the Romanian Principalities, and Transylvania, period furniture, painted faience pharmacy jars crafted in Italy, and various decorative and utilitarian objects.

Among the pieces is the charcoal drawing "The Carrot Puller (Arracheuse de carottes – Hiver)", created in 1885 by Vincent van Gogh. This is the only work by the artist held in a museum collection in Romania. It was acquired by Alexandru Slatineanu in 1900 from the renowned art dealer Ambroise Vollard while Slatineanu was preparing his doctoral thesis in Paris.