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Director and editor-in chief of the MoCA publishing program: Mira Gakjina

Editor of the Large Glass: Tihomir Topuzovski
Assistant editor: Vladimir Jancevski
Editorial Board: Zoran Petrovski, Stephen Duncombe, Jovanka Popova, Melentie Pandilovski, Zdenka Badovinac, Slavco Dimitrov, Yane Calovski, Lauren Andres, Artan Sadiku, Hristina Ivanoska, Ljiljana Nedelkovska, Mark Bassin and Maja Ciric.

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# Special

# Issue:

# THE LARGE GLASS

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*Bird Looking Glass* #7, 2008.
Enamel and silver leaf on glass.
Courtesy: Daniel Baker.

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# ROMANI

This special issue of the Large Glass offers insights into diverse aspects of Romani-related themes and contributes to the contemporary debate and visual articulations regarding the social (in)visibility of Roma people. The (in)visibility of the Roma is positioned in diverse social contexts, including modes of agency, strategies of recognition, and forms of ar-

# (IN)VISIBILITY

tistic and cultural representations. In many cases the representations strengthen the otherness of a particular people, resulting in a situation whereby these groups become increasingly isolated, shrinking at the societal edges. This shrinking visibility is important in understanding how certain groups might be considered as being excluded from their surround-

ings, detained in the betweenness of (in)visibility, conditions that can be defined as organized and systematic violence. Thus, this special issue offers various aspects and approaches to Romani culture for scholars and artists in the field of Romani Studies and recognizes the urgent need to readdress the position of Roma people when most projects for their integration have failed and much remains to be done

in terms of the humanitarian response and ethical human commitments. The set of topics presented in this volume through texts and artistic projects relate to a wide range of important themes, such as the Romani history, different cultural contexts, traditions and customs rooted in the past, and crucially engaged artistic projects that reflecting on the complex connotations and contest the existing paradigm.

**Daniel Baker**

# The Performance of Paradox: Shaping Roma artistic practice

As an artist and a Romani Gypsy, the relationship between Roma life and Roma artistic practice remains an underlying inspiration for my work. Having been influenced from an early age by my own familial, community and environmental surroundings, I have continued to explore the relationships between Roma art and Roma life through ongoing encounters with Roma material culture—and the meanings embedded therein[1]. These engagements have not only increased my understanding of the wide-reaching implications of Roma artistic practice, but also act as fertile research for my own art making and curating; activities which seek to uncover new insight through the deconstruction of aspects of Roma aesthetics and Gypsy visuality[2].

It is through this lens that I continue to witness the wider significance of the Roma experience and its complex potentialities for wider society—not least as an example for rethinking the way we live today. Such a proposition seems more pressing now than ever as we experience the ravages of increasing global turmoil, recurrent health crises and an escalating climate emergency. To expand upon the ideas explored in this essay, and to reflect the various facets of my multi-sited practice, I will populate the text with examples of my artworks along with related comments in the footnotes to act as a parallel narrative and to offer alternative insights.

### Seeing and believing

My interest in the subject of visuality within Roma culture emerged during the completion of my post graduate dissertation 'the Queer Gypsy'[3] in 2001, which examined the experience of Gay Romani people across the United Kingdom. My research was the very first conducted on this subject worldwide, and as such no literature existed for me to draw upon other than that relating to other intersectional communities, such as gay Jewish people. Direct engagement with the subjects of my study was therefore the only way forward. Having trained as an artist from an early age my default mode is to think in images. As a consequence of this, and also perhaps as a way of making sense of the unknown quantity of the study that I was about to embark on, there formed in my mind an image which, for me, represented the sum of my research endeavours; namely, the examination and reconciliation of two experiential phenomena which had underpinned my life to date—the gay experience and the Gypsy experience.

My aim was to create a unifying image that could convey in an instant a complex set of ideas, and also represent two important aspects of my own life[4]. The final artwork achieved this aim in symbolising and at the same time embodying the intersectional possibilities of forging a Queer Roma subjectivity. The resulting artefact has subsequently been instrumental in many diverse arenas throughout Europe including art galleries, LGBTQ+ marches, academic publications and activist conferences. The material object, and the concept which it represents, simultaneously operates as an artwork and a tool of activism, as well as a symbol of cultural affiliation—and resistance. My subsequent research into Roma visuality found that the social agency that such simultaneity engenders would prove to be a founding tenet of the Roma aesthetic.

The Queer Gypsy was concerned with Roma invisibility; focusing on the possibility that the identities in question (queer and Romani) may not immediately be signalled by physical appearance (or bodies), and that this allows a heightened opportunity to manipulate or shape identity according to location and situation. It also examined the phenomenon of 'passing' – of being able to conceal or reveal particular aspects of one's identity (ethnicity and sexuality in this case), depending on the context and the potential benefits (safety from harm for example). In particular, it dealt with how the Romani individual's experience of 'passing' as non-Gypsy in the larger society might inform that same individual's experience of managing their gayness in Roma society. The study found that visibility could become a matter of choice—and that the manipulation of such visibilities was enabled as a direct result of the widespread lack of reasoned representations of Roma in the no-Roma world (including

gay communities), as well as the lack of representation of gayness with the Roma world. This instrumentalization of the performance of passing would become another key concept within my subsequent research into Roma visuality, and my own art practice.

Along with the opportunity to gain insight into an occluded community, one of the more unexpected outcomes my research into the Queer Roma experience was the emergence of an eclectic methodology of theory, fieldwork and artistic practice; a strategy which continues to underpin my working process today. The illusive questions of visibility, or lack of, which had impacted so very significantly upon the lives of those people that I interviewed during my earlier fieldwork, prompted in me a desire to examine wider questions of visibility for Roma, and the ways in which Roma visuality might continue to both reflect and inform the lives of Roma people.

*Patrinage* #7, 2021. Polypropylene. Photo and © Daniel Baker. Courtesy: Daniel Baker.

**The invisible avant-garde**

Life on the edge of society has continued to inform the lives of Roma communities, resulting in a worldview which has often placed Roma at odds with society and the nation-state, and, by definition, has facilitated an ideal of moving away from the routine political organisation of life to forge new ways of being and alternative models of existence. It is no surprise then that the avant-garde of the past held Roma culture as a marker of progressive creativity and innovative ways of thinking[5]. When these experimental movements copied Gypsy style in a stand against convention, it was not any singular artistic activity that they sought to invoke but a way of life suffused with creative action, energy and resistance. During the flowering of the nineteenth century intellectual elite, these aspirational qualities were signified primarily by the adoption of a 'look'—a sartorial style which spoke concisely of a rebellious non-conformity, and at the same time embodied ideas of life lived on the margins of society. This potent shorthand for cultural rebellion has continued to endure long after its roots in the Roma way of life were obscured. Nevertheless, it continues to provide a viewpoint from which the intellectual vanguard can routinely analyse and critique the status quo.

Even as its links have become eroded, by condensing art, lifestyle and ethnicity, the concept of the 'Bohemian' continues to tie ideas creative unconventionality directly to Roma[6]. Today the trope of the Bohemian still acts as a model for the popular image of the artist, and for good reason. Artists continue to occupy a liminal position within society—as do the Roma. Society is conflicted regarding the role of artists—likewise with Roma. Society tolerates artists because of their eventual worth, but resents their flouting of the rules. The Roma are similarly resented—but their worth remains obscured through the relative absence of any formalised material legacy. Consequently, Roma value has remained largely unidentifiable to many, even as the concept of Bohemianism continues to underpin the core notion of creativity that is so valued by intellectual and commercial enterprise today. As the role of the Roma in the development of such revolutionary concepts as Bohemianism and the avant-garde has become concealed through selective histories, it is worth looking more closely at the factors that initially prompted such admiration, for it is these phenomena that continue to inform today's Roma artistic practice.

Among these factors are the circumstances in which many Roma communities continue to live—a paradoxical state of existing outside of the very same societies that they are simultaneously surrounded by[7]. Assigned to the margins for centuries, yet remaining in the midst of the oppressor, a state of contingency continues to underpin the collective Roma experience resulting in strategies of survival that continue to carry with them the innovative potential to challenge and reshape the boundaries of convention. These characteristics of flexibility and spontaneity have persisted to position Roma life as a locus of re-


Mirrored Library (detail), 2008. Enamel and silver leaf on Plexiglass, size variable.
Photo and © Daniel Baker.

questioning
GYPSY
identity
Gypsies
of
Britain

*Bird Looking Glass #7*, 2008. Enamel and silver leaf on glass.
Courtesy: Daniel Baker.

sourceful innovation and creative resistance. Yet that same mutability also fuels a universal mistrust of Roma; a mistrust wedded to the notion of Roma as continual outsiders—unfixed, un-rooted, and, ultimately, unaccountable.

This trope of operating outside of accepted societal systems is compounded by the absence of a literary tradition[8] within Roma culture; a situation which has historically privileged visuality as the primary vehicle through which acculturation and social agency are distributed. Yet in spite of Roma's heightened facility for visual communication, visibility remains a complex issue. The recognition and validation that focused visibility allows, and which are fundamental to identity politics, have remained largely elusive to Roma until relatively recently. The reasons for this delay in invoking visibility as tool of emancipation are psychologically detailed but, at the same time, perhaps pragmatically simple; in order to avoid threat—avoid being seen.

**Moving image**

In reaction to a history of persecution, the Roma have continued to develop a keen facility for adaptation—a survival strategy invoked to counter regular pressure to fit in or be removed. This ability to adjust to the surrounding social, religious or economic environment is well documented[9], and any consequent adaptability has proved to be both a source of strength as well as a potential peril; an ambiguity that continues to be echoed throughout Roma visuality and the Roma aesthetic to produce a set of values primarily played out through visual, sensory and performative means[10] [11].

Roma aesthetics have been shaped by an extended state of emergency[12] [13] that continues to characterise the Roma experience. These circumstances have, by necessity, encouraged the integration of artistic practice into the functioning and rituals of everyday life. This integration of art and life becomes clearer when we consider that all objects carried by travelling communities were required to perform multiple roles. The blurring of boundaries between roles has resulted in a multivalency born of a need to combine and condense a variety of matter and concept into a functioning entity. Such integration across practices and approaches continues today to mark the intimate connections between functionality and artistry within the Roma home and workplace; environments which routinely exist in the same space. In line with this pragmatic perspective that décor has traditionally been employed as the primary vehicle of artistic and social agency for Roma; a convention which continues to privilege the role of the social within Roma artistic practices.

Having developed in response to life on the move, the Roma aesthetic can be seen as an expression of the historic nomadic Roma experience, a sensibility within which art has no place, unless as part of lived experience. Consequently, objects valued by Roma often stimulate a diversity of response from the viewer (or user). For example, a brightly ornamented catapult can be seen as both a toy and weapon. It can generate feelings that might include admiration, contemplation, revulsion or envy whilst at the same time encouraging acts of play or violence. Users are, therefore, presented with opportunities to perform multiple roles through their interaction with such objects—their evident multi-functionality inviting multiple performances in spontaneous response. Such ambiguity highlights a state of provisionality common to Roma visual culture and which is born of a sensibility rooted variously in historic, recent, and in some communities, current itinerancy. As such the conditional character of the Roma aesthetic can be seen as mirrored in the contingent nature of the Roma experience.

More explicit characteristics of the Roma aesthetic include preoccupations with seasonality, life cycles of flora and fauna, and the universal rhythms of existence, as well as the exhibition of qualities associated with exaggerated opulence and overt display. This might be achieved through the use of elaborate ornamentation as well as the use of materials which demonstrate shiny and flashy qualities. These intrinsic elements of Roma visuality draw attention of and, at the same time, divert the viewer; a device which acts both to preserve privacy and provide protect. This state of diversionary attraction is further enhanced through the juxtaposition of texture, pattern and bright colour; eye catching effects which captivate the attention of the viewer whilst, at the same time, act to distract from that which might lay beyond. These showy effects with their alluring, but illusive, tendencies are apparent within much Roma visual and material culture. The resulting concurrency of display and concealment acts to both enchant and confound the onlooker, and at the same time mark the division—and maintain the separation, between the public and the private Roma world.

**Life and art**

Historically, art and life have been closely linked within Roma culture—artistic practice being far too embedded within the broader social, cultural and political landscape to stand as a separate activity. I use the term art here to mean any outcome of artistic endeavour—not necessarily those practices that signal art object status in the Western canonical sense such as painting or sculpture. For example, the tradition of Roma painting that has continued to gain recognition since the late twentieth century is rightly considered important as cultural, artistic and political testimony, narrating, as it invariably does, the direct Roma experience. I would argue, however, that such a categorical definition of art, as conveyed through the idea of the art object, is relatively new to Roma. If we consider that Roma have historically given little attachment to the concept of art as a separate entity, in and of itself, this then helps to account for the lack of distinction between life and art for Roma. Accordingly, the relationship between Roma aesthetics and Roma daily life can be understood as a cycle whereby experience, interpretation and depiction intimately correspond to inform each other. It is within this cycle that the blurring of the boundaries between Roma artistic

Stack, 2022. Enamel and aluminium leaf on Perspex.
Photo and © Daniel Baker.


SINTI
JAHJIMAMOH
KAMTE

*Altered States: LGBTQ-R.* © Daniel Baker 2016.
Courtesy: Daniel Baker.

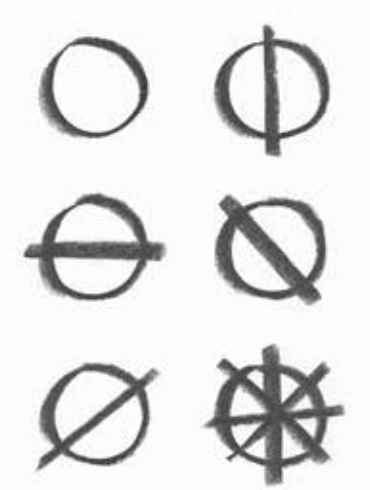
*Survival Blanket*, 2013. Crocheted metalized polyethylene survival blankets. Photo and © Daniel Baker. Courtesy: Daniel Baker.

practice and the everyday practice of living occurs, thus encouraging both life and art to influence each other directly.

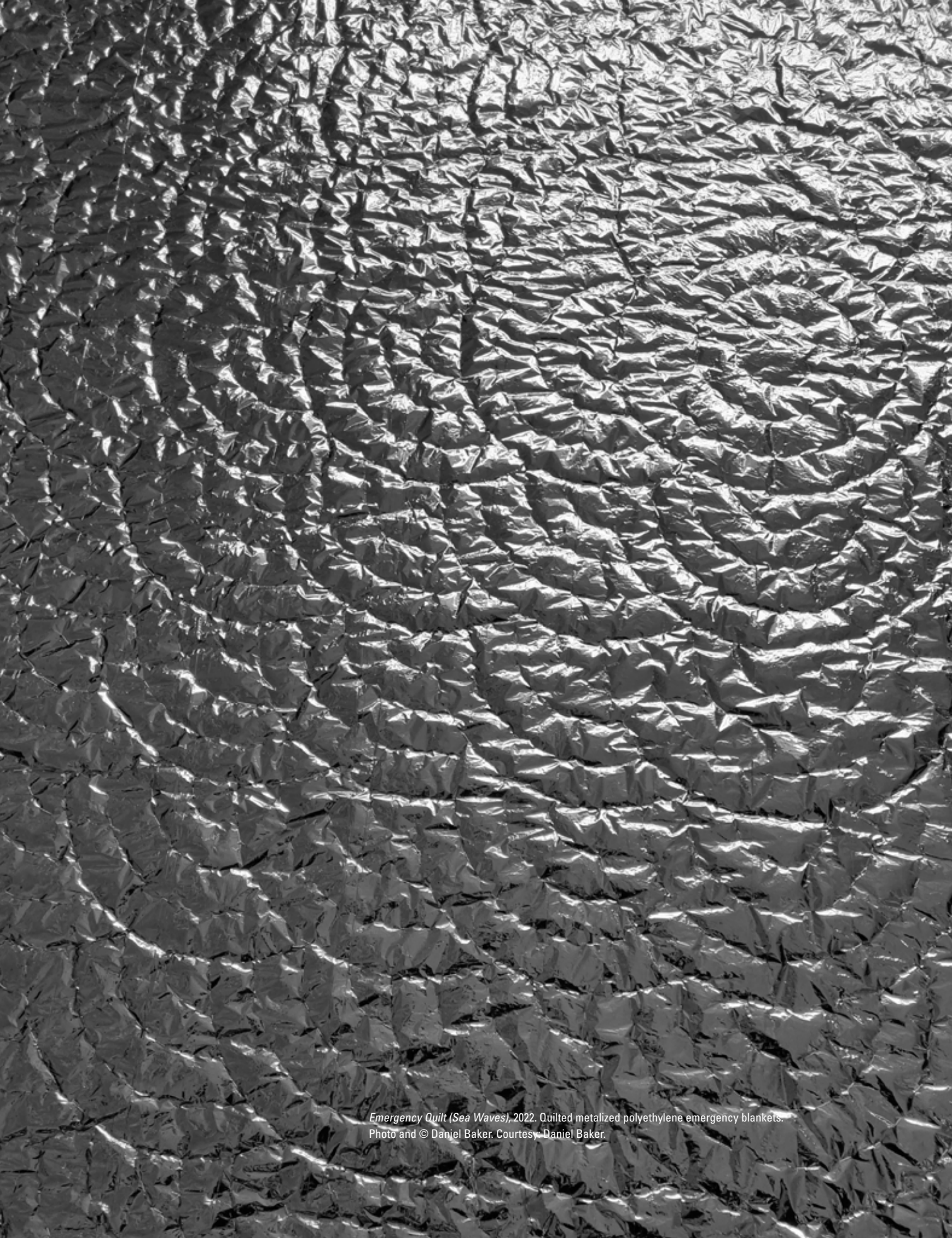
The approach outlined above signals a propositional alternative to widely accepted systems of art appreciation, whose methods have historically separated art from social relations, resulting in a culture which has, as the anthropologist Alfred Gell argues, diminished our understanding of art as an essential component of human action. In order to make an attempt at re-establishing that connection, let us consider that artefacts are the equivalent of persons, and vice versa, in their status and function as social agents[14]. This notion of the interchange-ability of persons and artefacts suggests an essentially biographical approach to all things—objects having biographies rather than provenances—our encounters with, and through, them forming part of a series of encounters across the life span of the artefacts. This suggests a genealogical account of objects akin to the life trajectory of a person; a biographical approach that can allow for a localised account of the art object and its influence upon the social relations that surround it.

If we pursue this line of thinking, it follows that Roma aesthetic practices can be considered the equivalent of Roma communities in terms of the social agency that they generate. With this in mind, it becomes apparent that the outcomes of both Roma artistic practice and Roma life are invested in the display and enactment of the shared qualities which bind them together—qualities exemplified by an eclectic resourcefulness and inventive versatility that enables and encourages the performance of multiple positionings simultaneously—and which elicit the same energetic dialog throughout their corresponding contexts, be they artistic or social. This concurrency of influence takes us further towards the idea, in terms of the social agency that they distribute, that art objects can stand in for persons as social agents—and accordingly that living persons can occupy the position of an art object within a social network; art and life becoming one and the same.[15]

In dismantling the hierarchies of social and artistic practice, the fundamentals of Roma existence bring more keenly into focus the potential value of the connectivity that unites art and daily life. This expansive approach to the material world and the diverse social agencies through which it is manifest perhaps points towards new possibilities for co-existence. By re-sensitizing us to the underlying inter-connectedness of human endeavour with the world around us we are encouraged to recognise opportunities for creative thinking and actions—resulting in imaginative gestures that interrupt the so-called stability promised by nation-states, and this may also better equip us to address current global urgencies. By recognising the power of unification in the midst of uncertainty, as experienced through a history of precarity on the outskirts of society, Roma communities emphasise the transient nature of existence to re-envision instability as a locus of creative potential.



Patrin signs for '*One Day We Shall Celebrate Again: RomaMoMA at documenta fifteen*', a collaborative project between OFF-Biennale and The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), 2022. Chalk on paper. Photo and © Daniel Baker.



*Emergency Quilt (Sea Waves)*, 2022. Quilted metalized polyethylene emergency blankets. Photo and © Daniel Baker. Courtesy: Daniel Baker.

References:

1 Image 1. *Bird Looking Glass #7*, 2008. Enamel and silver leaf on glass. 46 cm x 34.5 cm. Photo and © Daniel Baker

In this series, marks of destruction collide with ornamental motifs within a mirrored ground. The layered oppositional qualities of ornament and defacement used throughout the works can be seen as a reflection upon the historic roles that Roma continue to perform in the popular imagination—both the romantic and the demonised. Questions regarding the relationship between vandalism and embellishment raised by the works, along with their concurrent duality of function and ornament, add to the ambiguity of these objects.

Their mode of making draws upon the 'looking glass' strand that continues to be an ongoing presence within my work, and which is directly influenced by the interior décor that my family and the wider Roma community would surround themselves with. Here, glittering menageries would vie for space with gilded plates and decorated mirrors to satisfy the common appetite for the opulent and the exotic.

2 Image 2. *Stack*, 2022. Enamel and aluminium leaf on Perspex. 180 cm x 60 cm each. Photo and © Daniel Baker

The physical and optical qualities of my looking glass works embody a number of paradoxical dualities, such as the abject and the ornamental, the real and illusory, and presence and absence, to reflect the contingent and precarious nature of the Roma experience within society. The gilding technique that I have developed, results in a murky reflection which requires the viewer to work to find their likeness. The broken silver presents a misty, stuttered reflection that seems at once both familiar and alien. The sense of interruption is furthered by the looming imagery which floats at the threshold between here and there. Nevertheless, the viewer is implicated in the game with an invitation to perform in the imaginary narrative of these animated paintings, thereby, challenging and complicating ideas of rootedness and place in order to expand the possibility of meaningful interaction. In Stack (2022), the mirrored panels portray the names of a variety of Roma groups. Here, the nature of subjectivity is brought into play to examine the mutability of identities. Some of the descriptors are displayed in reverse to amplify involvement with the mirrored image and to further exploit the illusion of new space created by the optics of reflection. When encountering this work, the viewer experiences a sensation of moving in and out of subjectivity—backwords and forwards through a variety of selves.

3 Daniel Baker, "The Queer Gypsy", *ERRC-Journal*, Vol. 2 (2015), http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/roma-rights-2-2015-nothing-about-us-without-us.pdf.

4 Image 3. *Altered States: LGBTQ-R* © Daniel Baker 2016.

The Altered States series is a set of hybrid designs that resituate the red wheel of the Roma flag within existing flags of various geographic territories. The harmonious layout of these new flags presents an optimistic scenario of coexistence, but, at the same time, denotes the fact that Romani communities have existed within these territories for hundreds of years. As such, the new flags simultaneously act as both icons of integration and symbols of resistance.

The combined flag designs that form the hybrid image titled Altered States: LGBTQ-R, were both developed in the 1970s. The Romani flag in 1971, at the first World Romani Congress, held in Orpington (where I was born ten years earlier) and the rainbow flag in 1978 by the artist Gilbert Baker for the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. The Romani flag consists of a bi-colour background of blue, representing the sky, and green, representing the earth. It also contains a 16-spoke red chakra, or cartwheel, at its centre. The latter element stands for the itinerant tradition of the Romani people and also acts as an homage to the flag of India, where our diaspora is said to have begun. The rainbow flag, when used as a symbol of LGBTQ+ pride, has undergone several revisions since its original eight colour design with many variations intending to denote wider affiliations and inclusions. The traditional, and still most common variant, consists of six stripes: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet with the red stripe at the top, as it would be in a natural rainbow. It is this version that I went on to use in my hybrid LGBTQ / Roma design.

5 Mike Sell, *Avant-Garde/Roma: A CriticalHistory of Bohemianism and Cultural Politics*,eds. Daniel Baker and Maria Hlavajova(We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art, BAK, Utrecht, NL, Valiz, Amsterdam. 2013).

6 Oxford English Dictionary: A socially unconventional person, especially one who is involved in the arts.[ mid 19th century: from French bohémien ‹Gypsy› (because Gypsies were thought to come from Bohemia, or because they perhaps entered the West through Bohemia).

7 Image 4. *Threshold (Edgeland)*, 2021. Ink and white gold leaf on Perspex, 65.7cm x 100 cm. Photo and © Daniel Baker.

The mirrored landscapes that form the Threshold series embody a paradoxical state whereby gilded ornamental white gold finishes are juxtaposed with the abject imagery of blasted landscapes, and draw attention to the often-stark contrasts that routinely populate the lives of Roma. This sense of extremes, of continual contingency, echoes the centuries old experience of being at the same time both inside and outside of society—a paradoxical existential state within which Roma people both embody and signify a threshold positioning. The looking glass landscapes are made using images from an abandoned Gypsy site in the UK and were informed by my interest in the idea of the 'deviant landscape' whereby landscape is rendered 'other' by occupation and activity. This is evident, for example, in the conflation of work, living, and play space enacted within the Roma encampment, where, contrary to the view of many outsiders, the drawing together of diverse elements dissolves borders to facilitate closer connectivity—a process which can offer new ways of thinking about connections across communities, territories, and generations. The monochrome imagery of these artworks creates a marker between our world and the illusory world of the reflection—the mirrored surface acting as a portal through which to glimpse alternative spaces, like those that the Roma continue to occupy within the popular imagination; shifting back and forth between the realm of reason and that of myth and superstition.

8 Image 5. *Mirrored Library* (detail), 2008. Enamel and silver leaf on Plexiglass, size variable. Photo and © Daniel Baker

The development of my Mirrored Book series, collectively titled Mirrored Library, explores the historic absence of a literary tradition within Roma culture and the corresponding excision of Roma from Western histories. The works employ elements of a Roma aesthetic to articulate the complexities of elusive visibility. In a performative gesture towards the absence of Roma from formalised histories, the viewer of my Mirrored Books is invited to momentarily inhabit the ephemeral volumes that constitute a snapshot of the official records and the imaginary potentialities of Roma life. The books include historical, sociological, anthropological, fictional, legislative and statistical accounts; invariably written by non-Roma. These gilded books employ elements of a Roma aesthetic to consider the impact of invisible histories by marking the traditional dissemination of Roma knowledge through

performative and aesthetic means. At the same time, these works symbolise Roma's detachment from the wider literary histories which have long cast Roma people as the mute subjects of discourse.

9 Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

10 Image 6. *Patrinage #7*, 2021. Polypropylene, 27 cm Ø. Photo and © Daniel Baker.

The Patrinage series comprises sculpture, photography and site-specific intervention. Patrins are signposts that Romanies would leave in the landscape as they moved around in order to impart information to the community members that followed. They might indicate direction of travel or whether a particular landowner was hospitable or otherwise. Here, occluded communication, contingent language, and the invention of symbols can be seen as acts of resistance against the fixities of language and literacy which underpin wider society, and which form the foundations of the nation state and the supporting structures that have failed to recognise the value of Roma people and our contribution to society.

Patrins could take many forms including a bunch of twigs tied to a tree, a pile of grass or a trail of petals. I am interested in how the Patrin, intended as a quiet, easily overlooked intervention in the countryside, contrasts with the notion of the Gypsy as a malign and threatening presence within the landscape, a trope which continues to inform images of Roma in the popular imagination. By combining rural craft methods (corn dollies) with materials associated with littering and pollution (plastic drinking straws), this series of works brings together notions and materialities of ephemerality and desecration in order to examine questions relating to our experience of the deviant landscape and those that inhabit it. This series also draws wider associations with Display and Concealment, Attraction and Repulsion, the Ornamental and the Abject—key mechanisms of the Roma aesthetic as identified in my doctoral research and which I continue to explore in my art practice.

11 Image 7. Patrin signs for '*One Day We Shall Celebrate Again: RomaMoMA at documenta fifteen'*, a collaborative project between OFF-Biennale and The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), 2022. Chalk on paper, 29.7cm x 21cm. Photo and © Daniel Baker.

The Patrin is intended as a subtle yet significant intervention, its coded information easily overlooked by those not in the know. The innovative methodology of the Patrin exemplifies a mode of Roma knowledge distribution that is replicated throughout Roma culture. As a marker of such crucial yet playful communication, I designed a set of patrins for the exhibition titled *One Day We Shall Celebrate Again: RomaMoMA at documenta fifteen*; a collaborative OFF-Biennale Budapest / European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) project in the framework of documenta fifteen. The six signs are to be found throughout the Fridericianum to mark, and connect, the locations of dispersed artworks made by artists of Roma origin which together form the exhibition. This family of Patrin signs are intended to be spontaneous, gestural, coded and simple. The signs take the form of variety of configurations of circles and lines. Each individual Patrin forms a single component which, when combined, produce an icon that resembles a wheel, a ship's helm or the points of a compass; each line breaking through the circular orbit to signify expansion beyond limitations.

12 Image 8. *Survival Blanket,* 2013. Crocheted from metalized polyethylene emergency blankets, 183 cm Ø. Photo and © Daniel Baker.

Survival Blanket is part of my Emergency Artefact series which combines my fascination with domestic art practices with qualities from the Roma Aesthetic. By employing the materiality of the survival blanket (usually intended for use in extreme circumstances) in the seemingly banal realm of domestic hobby craft, my intention is to explore the precarious nature of safety and comfort that many of us take for granted. These works take a long time to produce as the material does not lend itself to intricate manipulation with needles. The slow process of making, embodied and clearly indexed within the object, juxtaposed with the optics of emergency paraphernalia combine here to highlight questions about the nature of duration and the implications for the ways in which we understand states of crisis–which are usually thought to be fast unfolding events rather than longstanding realities. Here, the disposability of the material is transformed into the routinely durational rather than the randomly fleeting. These works also bring to mind processes of recycling whereby the unwanted is transformed into something of value. This connection has further resonance for me as my father was a scrap metal dealer. As well as drawing upon the conservational practices that are present throughout Roma domestic and economic practice, these works also draw upon the showy qualities that underpin the Roma aesthetic to speak of the contingent nature of the Roma experience where safety and stability are continually at risk.

13 Image 9. *Emergency Quilt (Sea Waves),* 2022. Quilted metalized polyethylene emergency blankets, 200 cm x 153 cm. Photo and © Daniel Baker.

Emergency Quilt (sea waves) is another work from my Emergency Artefact series. Here the process of hand quilting has been employed to manipulate and shape the delicately volatile material of the foil emergency blanket, its intentionally transient lifespan interrupted in an attempt to uncover new kinds of meaning reclaim some kind of permanence. The quilt employs a pattern called 'sea waves', one traditionally used to fill the gaps between the more elaborate motifs which populate quilt designs (the resonance of the name all the more acute in the light of the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe and the treacherous boat crossings which have claimed so many lives). Here, the subordinate pattern is used on its own to cover the whole of the quilt's surface. This not only unlocks its aesthetic power but showcases the potential of this minor character. By employing elements of a Roma aesthetic in these artworks, my intention is for us to look again at objects and narratives that might be overlooked in order to find meanings that we might not expect. Here, an emergency blanket is transformed into an entity which sits at the threshold between use and obsolescence, its newly wrought delicacy, a result of repeated penetration by the quilting needle, placing it at the edge of possibility.

14 As suggested by Alfred Gell's theory of the Art Nexus; echoing the spirit of philosopher C. S. Peirce's doctrine of the man-sign, and more recently evident in the work of the artist Doug Ashford. (Doug Ashford, *An Artwork is a Person,* ed. Julie Ault, (Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material, London, Four Corners Books, 2010).

15 This way of thinking and doing chimes with the underlying ethos of documenta fifteen, the multi-sited exhibition where new models of collective practice are explored, and in which a number of artists of Roma origin, including myself, are taking part in the exhibition *'One Day We Shall Celebrate Again: RomaMoMA at documenta fifteen',* documenta fifteen, Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany. A collaborative project between OFF-Biennale Budapest and The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC).

Threshold (Edgeland) 2021. Ink and white gold leaf on Perspex.
Photo and © Daniel Baker.

**Kimmo Granqvist**

# Finnish Roma: cultural paradigms, artistic practices, and imaginaries

**Introduction**

Roma started arriving in Finland in small groups from the middle of the 16th century onwards. At the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, a stable number of Roma were documented living in Finland. Attempts to settle them were made during the 17th century. By end the 17th century, the Roma had spread out from the coastal regions into the entire region from Ingermanland to Ostrobothnia.[1] A larger-scale movement of the Roma to Karelia (Eastern Finland) took place at the end of the 18th century while a few Roma families are known to have arrived from Sweden at the turn of the 19th century.[2] However, the migration routes taken by the Roma to Finland are a matter of debate: Thesleff[3], for instance, argued that all Finnish Roma migrated to Finland via Sweden, while Miklosich[4] and Vehmas[5] suggested that they arrived from Russia. The possibility that several different migration routes were used has been put forward by Kopsa-Schön.[6] There is also evidence that some Roma families have their roots in, for example, Russia, Poland and Hungary.

Currently, the size of the Finnish Roma (or kaale) population living in Finland is approximately 10,000, with an estimated additional 3,000 Finnish Roma living in Sweden. While the Roma are scattered around the country, about half of the Finnish Roma live in Southern Finland. It is also estimated that up to 4,000 Roma live in the capital area. In addition to the Finnish Roma, in recent years varying numbers of EU-mobile Roma (mainly from Bulgarian and Romania) have been living in the capital area. There is also an unknown number of migrant Roma (from the former Yugoslavia). The Finnish Roma are not segregated from the main population, but they do encounter problems in housing, employment, education, and access to public services.

The perception of 'Romaniness ' among the Finnish Roma is determined by several factors.[7] Being a Rom/ 'Romni' is defined by different criteria; whether one knows the Romani culture with its concepts and customs and follows it; whether one is genetically a Romi , the clothing one wears and individual feelings. The cultural codes of the Roma partly concern the internal practices of the family, and the Romani community, but they also extend to other areas social life, such as schooling and housing in the case of rules of cleanliness related to eating and respect for parents.

Culture partly defines what kind of behaviour is acceptable among Roma. Romani culture and customs differ in many respects from the main population, and the etiquette is different. This can be seen in many everyday things and encounters, such as greeting each other. Romani people do not shake hands with each other and introduce themselves differently compared to the rest of the Finnish population.[8]

Obedience, politeness, self-discipline, and respect for parents and the elderly are still important values of the Roma, as well as "maintaining traditions" and "benevolentness", which emphasizes the well-being of people one knows well. Although there is general equality within age groups of the current Finnish Roma community, it is strikingly gerontocratic in nature between age groups. Gerontocracy and respect for the elderly is one of the basic values of Romani culture and it is most clearly manifested linguistically as the asymmetry of communication and restrictions related to taboo topics. Younger people are expected to address older Roma politely and respectfully; on the other hand, older Roma may reprimand the younger ones even in a harsh tone.[9]

Each person's behaviour – must conform to the codes of behaviour required by his/her position, otherwise, she/he brings shame to both himself/herself and her/his companions. Violations by younger people against community norms are more strongly sanctioned than by older ones and may lead to the loss of honour not only of the offender himself/herself but also of the entire family group. On the other hand, violations of these codes of behaviour by older Roma will result, at most, in the loss of personal honour and prestige.[10]

Romani culture includes specific customs related to cleanliness and modesty. Cleanliness is particularly important when living a nomadic life. On the other hand, the specific customs have helped to maintain internal order and unity within the Romani community. Habits related to cleanliness also serve as guidelines for life. Cleanliness is both physical and symbolic. The tradition of cleanliness arises from the need of nomadic people to take care of hygiene in order to avoid getting sick. This concept of cleanliness is still clearly manifested in the attitude towards food and cutlery. For example, dishes are not placed on the floor or in places where people sit or walk. Correspondingly, nothing is lifted from the floor to the table and kitchen dishtowels and tablecloths are not washed together with other laundry. In addition, dishcloths are not used to wipe the chair or the floor, but rather specific towels are used for this purpose.[11]

In the following chapter, I will discuss specific aspects of Romani culture: clothing, jewellery, music, theatre, and literature, and their role in the construction of the Romani identity.

**Clothing**

Many Roma in Finland wear a special costume of the ethnic group. The clothing embodies the distinctiveness and culture of the Roma population. The most visible external sign is the traditional dress of a Romani woman. When a girl grows up into a young woman, she usually wears a traditional Romani costume, which is a sign to others that she has grown up. The decision to wear a Gypsy costume is up to the woman herself, and its use is voluntary. However, if a Romani woman decides not to wear traditional clothing, she still dresses respectfully in the presence of older Romani people. A Romani woman's outfit is an everyday outfit. It is used when doing housework, spending time with the children in the sandbox and going to parties. Therefore, it does not prevent participation in education or working life.[12]

The Romani women's dress is based on the model of dress used by Finns in the past, including a long skirt, a frill, and an apron for women.[13] The reporter and writer Karl von Schoultz learned from his Romani informant that the fabric of the Romani woman's dress used to be wool, but the fabrics changed after the wars.[14] The overshirt of the Romani women called "röijy" in Finnish has developed during the 20th century into a fine lacy blouse and the Apron into a decorative look. In the 20th century, the skirt evolved into a heavy garment made of black velvet that covers the ankles. A young woman's skirt may be narrower and lighter, but still long and black . Covering, cleanliness, and sophistication are important in women's suits. Large gold earrings, brooches and bracelets, and rings are usually worn with the outfit. A Romani woman's costume is worn at the threshold of adulthood, in the 1950s this was at the age of 15, and nowadays a few years older.[15]

The men's outfit also resembles the suit previously worn by Finnish men with baggy pants, boots, and driver's caps. This kind of outfit can still be seen, especially on older Romani men. Nowadays, the more common outfit for men is walking shoes, dark straight pants and a collared shirt with a sweater or a dark short jacket over it. A Romani man's outfit is also always neat and very clean (for Romani clothing[16]). The wearing of Romani clothes is not a disappearing tradition, as many young Roma still wear them. Another part of the Romani costume is the hairstyle. Women's hair is long, neat and abundant, and combed up from the forehead and they use decorative hair clips while men's hair is short and neat. Finnish Roma's use of clothing and hairstyles makes them stand out more strongly as a specific cultural group than Roma from most other countries, for example, Sweden.

**Crafts and jewellery**

Romani women have often made a living from selling their handicrafts. In the past, the sale of handicrafts, especially lace, made up a large share of the income, and lace crocheting is the most characteristic handicraft of the Finnish Romani population and the patterns that have remained the same for decades are still in use. They originally come from pattern books and are passed from woman to woman by example and copying. Horse-themed laces are typical Roma designs. Moreover, the lace work was easy to transport for nomadic Roma due to its small size. Nowadays, lace is made by crocheting, but in the past, knitted lace was also made. Knitting lace is indeed considered an old Romani custom and was common in Karelia and Eastern Finland. Lace could also be used as a means of payment instead of money and this was the most common way to barter for food supplies from farms. The men also made crafts mainly for their own needs, most of which are related to horses, mainly horse's harnesses such as bridles, halters, bridles, and reins.[17]

Gold and silver jewellery has always had primarily economic significance for the Roma. Precious jewellery has been considered a form of savings; available when needed and as security in difficult times. Because of this, the Roma population has tried to make their gold jewellery from at least 18-carat gold. For this reason, great attention was not always paid to the aesthetic values of jewellery but rather to the amount of gold incorporated into the jewellery. The jewellery was traditionally large and, therefore, sometimes difficult to work with. It is worth noting here that the Roma population of Finland has traditionally not made their own jewellery.[18]

Jewellery has also served as a form of decoration. It is an essential part of Roma women's costumes. Daughters often receive earrings and rings from their mothers at the same time as their first Romani dress. Jewellery has often been passed down from generation to generation – from parents to children. Mothers' jewellery is passed on to daughters, and fathers' jewellery to their sons. It has a very high emotional value that cannot be measured in monetary terms. Jewellery is usually made by goldsmiths who specialize in Romani jewellery. Over time, the size of the jewellery has decreased. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Romani population did not have nearly as

much gold jewellery as it does now and the increase in the amount of jewellery can be explained by the general improvement of general living conditions, including for the Roma, and the concomitant increase in wealth.[19]

**Music**

The Roma have a strong musical culture, which represents people's deepest feelings, crying with those who cry and laughing with those who laugh. As a counterbalance to sadness, in Romani culture, joy and dance are also important. In Finland, Roma music is an essential and living part of Roma culture and Roma history. It is of ethnic origin and, in the music, influences from eastern singing styles to new popular music can be heard.[20] Singing is also an important part of Romani life, and it strengthens the construction and preservation of the Romani ethnic identity.

There are songs for many different uses, and they are sung, for example, when working, taking care of children, at joint meetings, or when alone. In traditional Romani songs, circling and traveling, which used to be a common way of life among Romani people, are also strong influences.[21] This theme appears strongly in Romani songs all over the world, including in Finland. Regardless of the musical style, the singing style of the Finnish Roma is united by its uniqueness and influences of other singing styles, and it has persisted amidst the dominant, non-Roma culture. The style can be characterized as romantic-oriental.[22]

The oldest Finnish Romani song compositions known today have their origins in the Southern Ostrobothnian sleigh songs, which had their heyday in the 19th century. The sleigh songs follow the Kaleva tradition, a modal, Scandinavian folk song. The sleigh songs have a linear structure, and a pair of verses is a repeating unit in them.

It is perhaps also not very surprising that love in its various forms is one of the most popular topics of songs in Finnish Romani music. The themes are usually raging and fading love, the memory of a loved one, the pain of loss, and longing for a long-distance love. Love songs are performed by both men and women. The beloved is usually nameless in songs and, instead of mentioning her/him by name, she/he is often called, for example, gold. Emotions are expressed in songs in a veiled way and often nature or plants symbolize love or the beloved.[23] In the past, young women were not allowed to perform love-themed songs in front of older Roma people because the topic was considered shameful. Especially in the past, a girl's purity increased the respect for the family, which was the reason for the shame in expressing romantic feelings.[24]

The horse often symbolizes wealth, and lyrics about the master's skills as a horseman and market man are common, and the horse also depicts freedom, non-commitment, strength, and defiance. Riding or driving a horse and cart is also often associated with getting drunk and letting go of sorrows: "Let's drink and ride, we can't get bored." The honour of the family and clan may also have been measured through the animal.[25] There are an innumerable number of songs about horses in Romani singing. Mainly horse- and market-related songs are performed by men.[26]

Prison-themed songs still fascinate Romani singers. Often, they deal with longing for home, parents, or a spouse, and how the narrator has ended up in prison. The songs often also describe prison life and the environment and its harshness. Prison songs are performed by both men and women.[27] The function of prison songs has traditionally been to comfort and entertain in a harsh environment and life situation. The songs have functioned as a means of psychological self-regulation in a situation where normal everyday life has not been possible. The prison songs are often the songs through which the Roma have most clearly reflected their relationship with the mainstream population and reflected on their own part in society. The song, therefore, keep in their memory the contradictions of previous social and cultural differences.[28]

**Theatre and literature**

The Romani culture is markedly an oral one, literacy is not as widespread as among the non-Roma population. Some older Roma cannot read or have poor reading skills. A Roma Wellbeing Study (2017-2018) conducted by the National Institute for Health and Welfare revealed serious deficiencies in reading skills. Only 61 percent of female respondents over the age of 55 estimate that they have good or excellent reading skills. In the corresponding group of male respondents, the proportion was even lower at 49 percent. In the youngest age group, 18–29-year-olds, the figure was 92 percent for women and 73 percent for men.

Not many Finnish Roma are currently known as writers of literature or theatre plays. The famous ones are no doubt Veijo Baltzar and Kiba Lundberg. In his novels, Veijo Baltzar has dealt with the tensions between Roma and mainstream culture, experiences of otherness, marginalization of Roma, and the possibilities of Roma culture developing in modern society. Baltzar's production is evidence of a conscious formation of a self-determined identity, in which the group or narrator is seen as a functioning and self-defining subject. The production of Romani writers reflects a typical retelling of the forgotten and marginalized past, which has become an important part of mapping and locating the experience of feminist resistance and anti-colonialism, and racism (Hall 1999, 232–233). The dismantling of the stereotypes created by the dominant culture is reflected by the somewhat consistent way of dealing with the itinerant lifestyle of Romani writers. Baltzar mentions many times in his production that most Roma wanted permanent housing, but they did not get it from the authorities and were not able to get it themselves.. The notion of the romantic life of the Roma and the wild blood that has forced them to wander is unambiguously used to justify structural discrimination. Baltzar's productions deal with the boundaries of Romani identity from the perspective of different generations. Baltzar's work *Polttava tie* (1968) can be seen as a story of development,

in which young Roma get an education and acquire a stable social and economic position themselves. However, at least a temporary separation from the Romani community and adaptation to the dress code and social customs of the majority society is seen as a necessary sacrifice for this development.

Kiba Lumberg (real name Kirsti Leila Annikki Lumberg) (2006: 229) is a Romani Finnish painter, writer, visual artist, performance artist, and video artist. In her works, she has questioned compulsory heterosexuality as a normative and pro-ethnic system in the Romani community, as well as the heteronormative and -sexual worldview of the Roma. She has studied, among other things, arts and crafts of the Romani, and singing. She wrote the TV series "Dark and glowing blood" (1997), which deals with internal tensions of Romani culture. The central topic of the series is the position of women and the violence perpetrated by men. The series quite openly presents the deviant ideas within the minority culture about how traditions and customs should be understood in modern times. The television series stirred emotions, as it broke the law of silence among the Roma. In the Romani community, there is a strong tradition of not telling outsiders about the community's problems. Lumberg's other literary works comprised three later novels.

Since as early as the beginning of the 20th century, Romani literature comprised a lot of religious books and journal articles authored in Finnish and Romani. Kalle Tähtelä, a journalist of Romani descent published in 1909 a three-act play in five short parts called *Mustalaisen kosto* (Gypsy Revenge).

Oskar Jalkio (1882–1952, initially Storbacka and Johnsson) was a Finnish Free Church lay preacher and writer, who was also known as a pacifist and supporter of vegetarianism. In 1906, he founded the Gypsy Mission in Tampere in 1906, i.e. the current Romano Mission. Jalkio's Roman songbook *Romanenge ğiilja* – Romani songs (1939) contained a total of twelve spiritual songs. In addition, Jalkio prepared a manuscript for a Finnish-Romani dictionary. At the beginning of the 20th century, between 1907 and 1941, Jalkio published a number of articles in the Romani language in the *Kiertolainen, Vaeltajakansa* and *Maailmankiertäjä* magazines he had founded. The articles included especially hymns and other spiritual songs, fragments of the Gospels, and other writings.

Viljo Koivisto's (1970) songbook *Deulikaane čambibi* was the first spiritual work published by the Roma themselves. It was followed by Koivisto's (1971) Romani translation of the Gospel of John, *Johannesesko Evangeliumos*. Koivisto also published numerous articles in the *Romano Boodos* magazine, many of which examined religious matters. Few works of fiction are included in Viljo Koivisto's (2002) Romani reading book, which contains writings about the author's education, seasons, the Romani language and culture, the present day of the Romani people, and religion. Most of the articles in the work have also been published in the *Romano Boodos* magazine. In addition, children's books have been published.

**To conclude**

For the Finnish Roma, cultural identity is built upon good manners. Respect for older people is the basis of Romani culture and almost all customs of Romani culture are based on respecting parents. Respect is shown in many ways and can be seen in all interactions; older people always eat first, and they are listened to and spoken to respectfully. The typical way of dressing is for the Roma a sign of respect for older people. This applies especially to Romani women, but also the men do not appear in the presence of the older Roma in a short-sleeved shirt or in just shirt and trousers. Either a vest, jacket, or blouse is worn over the collared shirt.

Romani women have made a living through their handicrafts. In the past, the sale of handicrafts, especially lace, made up a large share of the income, and lace crocheting is the most characteristic handicraft of the Finnish Romani population. Gold and silver jewellery has also primarily had economic significance for the Roma, but jewellery has also served as decoration, as an essential part of a Roma woman's costume.

The Roma have a strong musical culture, which has represented people's deepest feelings with their music. Singing strengthens the construction and preservation of the Romani ethnic identity in an everyday way. On the other hand, since the Romani culture is primarily oral, and literacy is not as widespread among the Roma as among the non-Roma population, it is not surprising that there are not many Romani writers. In the few works by Romani writers', key topics have been the tensions between Roma and the non-Roma population, experiences of otherness, marginalization of Roma, norms of the Romani culture, and the possibilities of Roma culture developing in modern society. However, religious texts have always constituted an important genre of Romani literature.

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**Joanna Warsza**

# New Starts of the Zodiac. Some of Małgorzata Mirga-Tas's herstories

*Re-enchanting the World*, the Polish pavilion at the 59 Venice Biennale by Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, is her manifesto on Roma identity and art, drawing inspiration from the astrological frescos of the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. The artist created a 'picture palace', an installation of twelve large-format textiles, corresponding to the twelve months of the year, which expands the history of art with representations of Roma culture.

Palazzo Schifanoia was the place where art historian Aby Warburg introduced his concept of Nachleben, a life after life of images. The zodiac signs, the decan system, allegories of months, cyclicity and the migration of symbols across time and continents – between India, Persia, Asia Minor, ancient Greece, Egypt and Europe – become visual and ideological points of reference for Mirga-Tas, who decolonises and inscribes them in a specific Polish-Roma vernacular historical experience.

In recent years, Mirga-Tas has created many works about the important women in her life, creating an affective archive of Roma herstories. The middle textile in the set is a narrow turquoise blue velvet stripe where the re-enchantment occurs through feminine power, astrology and the symbols of tarot cards. This female genealogy consists of portraits of Roma women who have inspired the artist in her life and work.

This text concentrates on this piece , which is an archive of Roma herstories combining images of real women with magic and astrology. This non-violent process in which Małgorzata pays tribute to her 'starts', the women who have guided her in life, reverses the current unfortunate fate of the world, shaking off its evil spell. This text is a walk through the middle band of the pavilion and an introduction to some of the herstories.

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Re-enchanting the World*, exhibition view, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2022. Photo: Daniel Rumiancew.

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Re-enchanting the World*, exhibition view,
Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2022. Photo: Daniel Rumiancew.

**MARCH, THE SIGN OF ARIES**
**Alfreda Noncia Markowska (1926-2021)**

*"Oh dear, what is the difference, Jewish or Roma, they are simply kids."*

Alfreda Noncia Markowska, born in 1926 was a Polish-Romani Holocaust survivor who saved approximately fifty Jewish and Roma children from death in the Porajmos genocide. The Nazis murdered all the members of her family, about 70 people, except for her. She married at the age of 16 and then was forced to move into Roma ghettos in Lublin, Łódź and Bełżec. During the WWII, Alfreda was hired to work in the railway system and managed to obtain a work permit, which gave her some protection against further arrests. She not only saved children from the transports to the camps, but she also travelled to sites of known massacres of Jewish and Roma populations to look for survivors. She then brought them home to safety and hid them while organizing various false documents. In this way, she managed to save around 50 children. Some years later, when asked why she was not afraid to help, Markowska replied that she was counting on living through the war herself anyway, so fear was not an issue.

**OCTOBER, THE SIGN OF SCORPIO**
**Halina Bednarz, Małgorzata Brońska and Stanisława Mirga**

"Shall I give this skirt to someone, or do you want it for a painting?"

Mirga-Tas's work for the Polish pavilion was accomplished in five months, with three other professional seamstresses, Halina Bednarz, Małgorzata Brońska and Stanisława Mirga. They come from neighbouring villages in the Tatra mountains. Together, in five months of intense work, they reintroduced the hand to contemporary conceptual practices. During the preparations, the team used Minerva sewing machines, named after the ancient goddess of wisdom, warfare, justice and arts. A couple of Minervas, assisted by several pairs of scissors, performed many surgical procedures in which the bedlinen and curtains from the Hotel Imperial that served as their studio received a C-section, to assist something that could not to be born. Handkerchiefs and tablecloths were torn apart, digested, and eventually reapplied, with sensitivity, into the textile frescos. In this astute decolonial kind of acupuncture, the fabrics had a choice to make. Either to go to the upper part of the installation, where the often derogatory historical representations of Roma culture made a voyage from cultural appropriation to cultural appreciation; or to become part of an affective archive of herstories in the middle strip; or perhaps to figure in the bottom frieze, in images of the everyday life in Czarna Góra, often based on the photos of an ethnographer from within the community, the artist's uncle, Andrzej Mirga.

Needlework is one of the basic techniques in this artist's work. The needle, with its magic power – as Louise Bourgeois had it – 'is used to repair the damage, it's a claim to forgiveness . . . it's also a restorative tool, used to repair guilt, hate, abandonment, hostility, destruction of one's own work, and self-inflicted damage, and it is never aggressive, it's not a pin'.[1] Mirga-Tas's thorough needlework literally rehabilitates and recovers these garments, and symbolically repairs the relationships between marginalised Roma people in the fabric of European society. Often they don't fit, and they don't have to. The stitches remain visible.

The seamstresses' sustainable and almost magical way of making something out of nothing is a form of art as recovery and re-enchantment of not only relations between humans, non-humans, the material culture and the resources of the planet, but also between what is considered professional high art and its vernacular sources. As Lucy Lippard wrote in her 1978 essay on crafts: 'On an emotional as well as on a practical level, rehabilitation has always been women's work. Patching, turning collars and cuffs, remaking old clothes, changing buttons, . . . to give the family public dignity.' Over forty years ago, Lippard concluded that only in feminist art was there a chance for 'fine" arts,

"minor" arts, "crafts", and hobby circuits . . . to see all the arts of making as equal products of a creative impulse which is as socially determined as it is personally necessary'.[2]

Mirga-Tas's patchwork is created from fragments of various fabrics by, as she calls it 'throwing the material into the painting'. Thus, the portraits of seamstresses are made from their own pieces of clothing. It is generally Mirga-Tas' method to create collages, which are taken directly from the wardrobes of those depicted, who are often close to her. They consist of bits of skirts, scarves or shirts sewn onto curtains, drapes, bedclothes or rags. This fabric is a literal carrier of history. Knowing who has worn a given piece and under what circumstances is of no small importance. Bearing traces of life and use, these appropriated materials are infused with energy and gain a new existence in art and are the visual basis for creating feminist narratives about bright people and their characters.

## NOVEMBER, THE SIGN OF SAGITTARIUS
**Ethel C. Brooks**

"Małgorzata Mirga-Tas has built us a palace. Made from what has been discarded, rejected, cast aside, her palace is a product of both her hands and our dreams. Old clothing becomes the material for rivers, lakes, mountains and forests, for visions of all people and communities (…) Małgorzata is who I call a Romani feminist of minority."

In Russia and Scandinavia, early women's organisations had their origins in weaving workshops or sewing clubs, which served as covers for women to engage in politics. By taking part in certain 'feminine activities', they cooked up 'emancipatory' practices. With Mirga-Tas, the impulse toward change, education and fighting stigmatisation is comparable, perhaps, yet different. Instead of achieving social advancement through self-denial, her work springs from the affirmation of the community and her Romani roots, something which gender studies scholar Ethel Brooks calls Romani feminism, from a firm desire to practice female-gendered art, to emphasise and even perform her own identity. This is not achieved by conforming to the expectations of an appraising voice from the outside, but rather by constructing new, positive models of a transnational community, referencing specific ornaments, colours and history. Małgorzata Mirga-Tas practises minority feminism, although, as she says, many women around me view this term with suspicion. According to Ethel Brooks, Romani feminism does not aim to cut women off from their backgrounds or cultural baggage, it works within a specific context in various ways. On the local and private levels, this often means changing the perspectives or behaviour of men at home. On a structural level, it means fighting against nationalism, confronting dysfunctional social behaviour, and combating racism, xenophobia

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Re-enchanting the World*, exhibition view,
Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2022.
Photo: Daniel Rumiancew.

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas, *Re-enchanting the World*, exhibition view,
Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2022. Photo: Daniel Rumiancew.

and preconceptions arising from a mixture of imaginings and disdain.[3] Ethel Brooks is the chair of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Associate Professor at Rutgers University. She is also a Chair of the Board of the European Roma Rights Center. Her current book project focuses on encampment, claim-staking and Romani futures tracing links between Occupy movement and the Romani cultures.

**JANUARY / THE SIGN OF AQUARIUS**
**Katarina Taikon (1932 –1995)**

"The day I am free"

Katarina and her sister Rosa Taikon were Swedish-Romani activists. Katarina was called the Martin Luther King of Sweden as a leader in the civil rights movement, writer and actor. Rosa Taikon was an actress and a very well-known silversmith. They were born in the camps, grew up in foster families, and, as all Romani people back then, had to go on the road every two weeks, which made it impossible for children to get any significant school education. In fact, the Taikons did not learn how to read and write until they were in their teens.

Katarina Taikon dedicated her life to improving conditions for Romani people in Sweden and throughout the world. Thanks to her tireless work, activism, debating, writing and discussions with Swedish authorities, the Roma people were eventually granted the same right to housing and education as all other Swedes. In the late 1960s, Taikon felt increasingly burnt out. Despite the great success she achieved for the civil rights of Roma, she felt the changes were too slow– and the racism was too strong. Therefore, she decided to engage in writing books for children. The first Katitzi book was published in 1969 and became a huge success. Katarina Taikon has been referred to as the Martin Luther King, while her children's book series about the little Roma girl Katitzi became nearly as popular as Pippi Longstocking.

Mirga-Tas shares with Katarina Taikon a special way of being a realist who responds to the mechanisms of exclusion and self-exclusion with sisterhood and internationalism. The language they both employ to overthrow antigypsy stereotypes reflects a determination to affirm and build positive paradigms through art, which is the inverse of the pornography of poverty proffered in the media. Their feminism and activism stems from a subjective, emancipatory story, wherein the autonomy, the recording of women's genealogies, the practice of sisterhood, and a conscious rooting in Roma identity and culture are embodied ideas first and foremost, and only later theoretical concepts.

**And a footnote**
**DECEMBER, THE SIGN OF CAPRICORN**
**The exceptional presence of Aby Warburg (1866-1929)**

"The adaptable tapestry stands between high art and printing, whose products, as a vehicle of images [Bilderfahrzeug], have usurped its position on the walls of the bourgeois home."

Somewhere among all the many herstories there hides, behind his large hat, art historian Aby Warburg. Warburg was a Jewish-German art historian who wrote extensively about Palazzo Schifanoia and the migration and Nachleben (life after life) of images across cultures and forms. His writing inspired us to take Palazzo Schifanoia as a starting point for the pavilion. Warburg sought to undo what he termed the *grenzpolizeiliche Befangenheit* (border-police-bias) of disciplinary practice. Yet, his own method, just like any other, had its blind spots as he overlooked Roma culture. Mirga-Tas takes his concept of the life after life of images, also to the material level. The fabrics, which have often traveled from India or Bangladesh, both in their symbolics and their tangibility aim at putting together elements that do not have to fit, but which can peacefully co-exist, extending each other's horizons.

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2 Lucy Lippard, 'Something from Nothing (Toward a Definition of Women's Hobby "Art")', in *Craft*, 32.

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**Eszter György**

# "Not just to go to the beach" - The history of the Gipsy camps in Balatonszemes (1987-2002)

What was it: a cradle, a revolution, the application of alternative pedagogy before the emergence of alternative pedagogy in Hungary, the first big dose of what it means to be Roma? For sure, something that still affects the life of most participants. My article deals with the history of the Balatonszemes Gypsy camps organised by the Metropolitan Council, later the Metropolitan Municipality, from the mid-1980s. These camps also incorporated a series of events and a milieu that lasted for almost two decades and were a branch of the Roma civil rights and cultural folklore movement that developed in the 1980s, in the space that opened up as a result of the regime change in 1989, and whose significance goes beyond the camp itself as a place and a summer programme. My argument is that the camps in Balatonszemes[1] were a crucial socialisation and identity-forming milieu for the Roma of Budapest growing up in the past decades. Indeed a large number of the people working in the Roma field today, who are connected to Roma culture and politics in a broad sense, camped at some point in Balatonszemes. The experiences and knowledge gained at the camp, as well as the methodology and pedagogy used there, have had a major influence on their current roles, and, in many cases, the legacy of the camp is clearly evident in their approach and the tools they use. The influence and legacy of the camps is thus widespread across diverse groups such as bands, civil-human rights associations, and schools; it's impact evident and undeniable for the generations of Roma intellectuals active today. In contrast, for the majority of society and for relevant disciplines such as the literature on camps and camping or alternative pedagogy, it is largely an unknown blind spot, similar to the Rom Som Gypsy Club and movement, which also started in Rákospalota and can be considered a kind of predecessor.[2]

For this paper, I was able to use the archival documents of the Budapest Municipal Council, which document in detail the founding and initial difficulties of the Roma institutions that were established in the capital during the late-stage of state socialism. I also had access to the camp videos, which are available on YouTube[3], and document numerous conversations and events and are invaluable in light of the otherwise scarce amount of publicly available audio-visual material from the period. I also conducted interviews with former camp leaders and campers themselves, and their personal, honest responses and reflections have greatly contributed to the writing of this paper.

### Camps and camping

Although there is a tradition in Hungarian pedagogical-psychological discourse, cultural heritage management and museology of considering with camps and camping, the Gypsy camps in Balatonszemes are not mentioned on any of these platforms, where knowledge is mostly produced by the majority, non-Roma society. Although educational researcher, László Trencsényi refers in a footnote of his article on the history of camping in Hungary to these camps, stating "those lifestyle camps are inescapable, in which children from a cumulatively disadvantaged background, mainly those disadvantaged by the segregating social behaviour of the Roma ethnic group, are organized in the spirit of integration", their examination went beyond the aims of his article.[4]

Although youth policy and youth research was an area of considerable interest to state socialist power, and institutionalized leisure spaces[5] played a dominant role through the pioneer camps, the organization and ideological background of camping seemed to be disintegrating from the 1970s onwards. According to János Jellinek, former man-

ager of a community centre in Budapest, even the 1971 Youth Act did not explicitly mention camping, but only vaguely discusses youth tourism, and in the early 1980s only 22-23% of primary school pupils went on some form of organized holiday every year.[6] Only a small proportion of the children attending these camps were disadvantaged (although for decades they had access to the SZOT camps system[7]), and by the time of the regime change, holiday camping, and the associated expenses, had increasingly been taken out of the hands of the state, and taken over by NGOs, social partnerships, children's and youth organizations, local communities and municipalities. In Jellinek's view, during the years of regime change, it was already noticeable that camping was changing in terms of both content and scope. Despite the wider repertoire of camps, their number, especially those linked to the pioneering movement, decreased, while life became more expensive and the system of subsidies collapsed.[8]

However, it was during this period of crisis that the camps in Balatonszemes began to develop and spread. For many years, the Municipality of Budapest led by Gábor Demszky[9] provided the financial and infrastructural support for the gypsy camps that took place throughout the summer; the institution that became the Romano Kher Gypsy House served as a connecting link, a kind of mentor for the newly established district Roma self-governments, NGOs and schools, all of which organized their summer camps in Balatonszemes. However, the 'heyday' of these camps in the 1990s was preceded by the attempts to institutionalize the Roma cultural self-organization movement in the last years of the state socialist period, which took place in various reading camps, the Roma club in Rákospalota and the short-lived Sztojka Fardi Nagyida Gypsy Methodological Cultural Base in the 18th district before the camp site in Balatonszemes was set up.

**Reading camps**

The idea of reading camps in state-socialist Hungary came from writers and librarians who thought that camps should be organized for disadvantaged, talented children, where young writers with good pedagogical skills would discuss their reading experiences with the students. Although the camps, which seemed to be strikingly democratic in the circumstances, and which conveyed a value system that favoured dialogue, were subject to considerable criticism, the Patriotic People's Front supported the movement throughout. It is also important to note that the reader camps were of particular interest to the specialist press of the time, psychologists and teachers, and numerous studies were carried out on them, lively debates and personal accounts can be found in the socio-cultural journals of the 1970s and 1980s.[10] The reading camps promoted critical thinking, focusing on the personalities of the participants; they created a platform where, in contrast to the more hierarchical and strict pedagogical principles of the time, participating teachers and students could work together in partnership, using the tools of debate and dialogue.[11] In many aspects, the main elements of the reading camp movement anticipated the methodology of the Balatonszemes camps, the camp as a "collective work, a common intellectual adventure".[12] This space for intensive thinking was based on small group discussions and a partnership between camp leaders and campers. Moreover, in the Gypsy reading camps, and, later, in other camps, these concepts were complemented by the emancipation needs of the Roma minority, and their efforts in identity- and community-building.

After some attempts on the part of socialist authorities to organize reading camps specifically for Gypsies, the first independent Gipsy reading camps were set up by the earliest independent Roma institution of late socialism, the Sztojka Fardi Nagyida Gypsy Methodological Cultural Base.[13] According to contemporary reports, the reading camps run by the base, but under the leadership of several district gypsy caretakers, were very successful, for example, when the 1985 camp was organized, "there were districts like the 15th, where parents of children who could not fit into the camp complained to the authorities, asking for their children to be taken to the camp."[14] The activities in the camps here went beyond the discussions generated by literary works, and included discussions on topics such as community, identity, attachment to the homeland, prejudice, and the problems and culture of the Roma. According to these reports, in addition to the general objectives of the reading camps, the practice of public participation, the development of debating skills and the rules and skills of democratization were a major focus here, too.

**Institutionalisation of Roma affairs: the Budapest Gypsy Social Cultural and Methodological Institution (CSZMMK) and Romano Kher**

In addition to the Sztojka Fardi base, another novel Roma-run institution was established in the capital, in Rákospalota (15th district) initially called the Roma Family Support Centre. In Rákospalota, the Rom Som Gypsy Club, which included a music group, the celebration of significant cultural events, and created perhaps the most vibrant Roma cultural community in the capital's districts and which also published the first Hungarian-Romani bilingual newspaper.[15] The Roma folk movement in Rákospalota, initiated by the poet József Daróczi Choli, painter Tamás Péli and public educator Ágnes Daróczi, was transformed by the 1980s and Jenő Zsigó[16], who had worked at the District Council of the 15th district since January 1980 as a rapporteur on Roma affairs, became the main proponent of Roma activism in the district (and soon after in the capital).

From the very beginning, the Roma Family Support Centre carried out a wide range of activities, which, in addition to social work in the strict sense, also included work with children and young people. The Centre organised summer camps and provided scholarships for Roma young people in secondary and higher education. This was a completely new and unique idea, and was, moreover, a rather large amount for the time (3-5000 HUF per month). The support of

Roma young people with monthly scholarships was a critical part of the Centre's work, and the scholarship holders formed a kind of community, for whom a gala was organized every year from the 1990s onwards. Usually held at the Thália Theater[17], the Romano Kher scholarship holders performed classical and popular music, poetry, and singing and engaged in visual arts.[18]

In the mid-1980s, however, the establishment of this system of support made it clear how small the number of Roma young people (who identified themselves as Roma) in secondary education was, and over the years, with the increase in the number of scholarships (but obviously not only because of it), the increase in their number was equally spectacular. The number of Roma pupils in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools (vocational schools and high schools) in Budapest was also recorded by the CIKOBIs[19], both by district and by year. The table of secondary school data for 1984 indeed reported shockingly low figures: a total of 31 pupils of Roma origin attended grammar schools and 74 pupils of Roma origin attended vocational schools, 0.13 % and 0.22 % respectively of the total number of pupils in the capital.[20] The first step in the scholarship process was to find Roma students in secondary schools, so that a handful of young people could be invited to the first summer camp and to the secondary school club in Rákospalota during the year. As one of my interviewees stated: "And then my class teacher approached me, you could see it in me, and by my name, and I don't know, we never talked about it, because it was an embarrassing topic, it was unpleasant for everyone, even for me at the time, to talk about being a gypsy. But my class teacher approached me and said, what would I say about it?' So, I didn't hesitate, we submitted an application and I won".

**Camps in Balatonszemes**

As became clear during the preparation of the camps and the scholarships, the newly formed CSZMMK put special emphasis on the issue of Roma identity for the young people who came into contact with them from the very beginning. The shock and cathartic nature of this realization is clear from the words of György Lakatos[21], which are worth quoting at length: "I had been to camp a lot before, I was a good kid in primary school, and every summer I was taken to sports camps, military camps, literary camps, and Russian language camps. But here, there were specifically gypsy camps, so for those who went, being a gypsy was suddenly a positive attribute. In my life up to that point, everything about being a Gypsy was negative. And those children, or anybody who came to the camps in Balatonszemes, could experience that it was not a shame to be a Gypsy there, as it was in other areas of life, for example in school. It was great to be a Gypsy and people were happy to speak, to sing in Gypsy to talk about their families. I was terribly impressed by that and it also changed almost my whole way of thinking about the world. I had been in hiding until then, despite being a gypsy, I didn't like to talk about it anywhere, I avoided these topics, but after the first year, it changed."

The way in which the situation of the Roma in Hungary was thematised in the Balatonszemes camps was strongly influenced by Zsigó's vision. In a 2005 interview with sociologists Mária Neményi and Júlia Szalai, he said: "We defied the old Roma wisdom that the fate of the Roma is conformity, that we are a small people, surrounded by a great deal of prejudice, and therefore must never make demands, must never consider ourselves equal to others, must never think in terms of universal human and constitutional rights."[22] Zsigó, together with his colleagues, worked all year round to ensure that during the summer camps the campers were properly "informed" and dared to confront their disadvantaged social situation.

The possibility to change the unequal and unjust status of the Roma was of course strongly influenced by the fact that the children were surrounded by camp leaders of Roma origin and famous Roma artists, creators and public figures who were invited as speakers. On the one hand, the knowledge passed on in the camps was a kind of hidden curriculum, often delivered indirectly, through games and quizzes, and on the other hand, it was a body of knowledge that was not available in formal education. As one of the interviewees said: "I realized later that the fact that they had children camped there was just a means of passing on an incredible amount of knowledge and experience, experientially, so that it could be integrated into the person much better. I myself acquired this knowledge, which to this day, cannot be learned at university level because it is not taught, or it is taught badly, or only a certain part of it is taught."

The explicit Roma identity-building process outlined above could only work in the camps for secondary school children, and a different set of tools was needed for primary school children (and sometimes even for children of kindergarten age). When I asked my interviewees about the methodology used in these camps, and how this new approach could be delivered to children who, in all likelihood, in other circumstances, did not talk about their Roma identity or other social issues for the rest of the year, I received surprisingly consistent answers. All of my interviewees, both former camp leaders and campers, emphasized both the very intensive programme organization and the strong focus on love for the children. As a result, the first meant that "the children had not a moment of free time", every minute was taken up, from morning exercise, through small group discussions in the morning, activities and afternoon visits to the beach, to evening programmes, which included large group literacy and sports competitions, games, music and dancing. Organically integrated into this very intense and exhausting programme was the cultural transfer of what Melinda Rézműves, ethnographer and former Romano Kher staff member, called "folk knowledge". The various Roma folk customs and (mainly) Vlach Gypsy traditions were typically discussed during small group gatherings, even in the half hour before bedtime in the late evening.

However, the most direct cultural

transfer in Romano Kher's own camps was certainly through the introduction and teaching of "authentic" Roma music. Of course, the fact that Jenő Zsigó and János Balogh were also founders of the Ando Drom band played a prominent role in the joint music-making and the transmission of folk music culture. As Melinda Rézműves pointed out, in the early days Balogh always took his guitar to the afternoon beach visits. Therefore, to a certain extent, the music sessions on the shores of Lake Balaton in this "heyday" replaced the thematic discussions organized for the secondary school age group. Music, of course, also played a prominent role in the high school camps, as István Szilvási mentioned in the interview: "all kinds of bands were invited to the evening programmes, music and dance performers. (...) We learned a lot of songs there, and we got to know a lot of songs from a lot of bands. It was then, in 1987, that Kalyi Jag released their first album[23], which had a huge impact on gypsy folklore culture and then on us."

Another important element of the camp's hidden curriculum was the outstanding (perhaps unprecedented elsewhere) attention, acceptance and love shown to the children. Basically, in the late 1980s, it was not at all common for Roma children living in the capital to go to a camp, as other interviewees confirmed. As Melinda Rézműves put it, "we took the children to camp who didn't need anybody". These children, who in the other socialization arenas of their lives (kindergarten, school, and other institutional environments) had often met with failure and rejection, discovered that they were interesting, lovable and talented.

The instructional methodology of the Balatonszemes camps was not written down but the different districts and other Roma organizations from Budapest applying to Romano Kher were aware of it and largely followed it. The fact that the methodology was largely uniform and known to all camping organizations was largely due to the discussions that took place either locally in Balatonszemes or at the Roma Parliament[24] in Budapest in preparation for and after the camps. On the one hand, these discussions were a very thorough self-examination and critical reflection, during which the camp leaders examined the camp experiences, difficulties and successes in detail and jointly reflected on the necessary changes and innovations. On the other hand, the preparatory phase, which included monthly meetings, could also be described as a kind of free meeting, where the organizers invited guests in the same way as they invited guests to the camp, and as a result, the discussions went beyond specific organizational issues to more general social and theoretical problems. As in the case of the camps, it can be said that a body of knowledge was accumulated which had not been disseminated in this form anywhere else, and that the knowledge transfer enabled the young people who attended the camp to acquire skills which they could use in their professional and civic lives outside the camp.

In 2001, the Balatonszemes resort was sold by the Municipality of Budapest, so Romano Kher organised the camps in the following years in various temporary locations (including the children's town in the Andrássy Castle in Tiszadob, which also houses Tamás Péli's Birth Panel[25]). However, the Municipality of Budapest kept cutting the budget of the Romano Kher, and, in 2010, the Romano Kher Roma House was closed, its successor was the FROKK (Budapest Roma Cultural and Educational Centre) and its management was replaced. With the cutbacks, of course, not only did the camps dwindle, but the very successful and unique scholarship programme was also reduced to a fraction.

### Success or failure? The heritage of the camps in Balatonszemes

Although the emblematic institution, which hosted approximately 30,000 campers and thousands of scholarship holders over more than two decades, has been inactive for more than ten years, its impact continues to be felt implicitly and explicitly. While some of my interviewees continue to camp year after year, with the help of various organizations and funding sources in the countryside and in Budapest, others are revisiting the methodology and approach of the former Balatonszemes camps in other areas of their professional life. Musician and media worker István Szilvási, for example, links the Athe Sam festivals[26] organized in the late 2000s and the way he operates on various Roma media platforms (Dikh TV and Radio) to what he learned in Szemes. While in the case of the festivals, he applied his knowledge of "how to entertain large crowds to a high standard with a series of events that can have an impact not only on the performers but on a very wide audience; that creates a sense of movement, that makes a normal ordinary person feel a sense of belonging to the community", in the case of presenting, this means that he can "do a report in such a way that the last gypsy in the countryside feels that this is my man, this is for the good and I'm going with him because what we're doing is good and it's mine, I'm not excluded, it speaks to me. "

The most striking legacy of the camps is the successful community building and positive identity building that has kept many of the old campers in touch (both professionally and personally) and, as I hypothesised at the beginning of this article, active in the 'Gypsy cause'. As Zsuzsa Mester, former vice-director of Romano Kher put it: "If there is intellectuals among the Roma today, it is thanks to us", and the fact that, thanks to financial and other support, more and more Roma young people have been gaining not only school-leaving qualifications but also higher degrees every year has played a major role in their becoming intellectuals. We could list members of orchestras, educational organizations, provincial and Budapest school programmes, cultural institutions, who once camped at Balatonszemes. As György Lakatos points out: "we were so infected with this virus there, that it still affects us to this day, and this virus refuses to leave us. I couldn't imagine myself working anywhere else, I don't know how to do anything else."

This rich heritage, however, seems to be visible only inwardly, in the informal networks of contacts in today's Hungarian Roma public life, in the approach of various intellectual and artistic

workshops. Although some school programmes and summer camps carry on the approach described above through personal connections, the methodology of the Balatonszemes camps is not formally described anywhere and most of the Hungarian teaching community has probably never heard of it. Despite the fact that this methodology is in line with various alternative, person- and child-centred pedagogies that could be applied in the capital and in many schools in the country facing segregation and exclusion of Roma children, this accumulated body of knowledge has not been channelled into mainstream education in Hungary.

Finally, there is one last aspect of the camps' prominent role in reinforcing Roma identity: the presence of pictures in the camp sites, most notably in the dining halls. In the dining room of the Balatonszemes camp, a large painting depicting a scene from the animated film The Little Snake with Seven Twin Horns by Gyöngyi Ráczné Kalányos was hung on the wall. The children, young people and adults at the camp had been eating, dancing and socializing in front of this painting for years. The self-taught artist made the cartoon as a child with film director Ágnes Pásztor at the Pannónia Film Studio in Pécs, and the work was shown at the 1986 Cannes Film Festival. Gyöngyi Ráczné Kalányos did not benefit from the success, she did not paint for years, and only in the 1990s did she start to work more actively again, from then on, she became a valued member of the art camps in Balatonszemes and of Romano Kher, who later organized several exhibitions for her and included her works in their publications. Moreover, in Tiszadob, where the Romano Kher organized only one summer camp, the aforementioned Birth panel was shown to children, after Tamás Péli had returned from the Royal Dutch Academy of Painting and created his work directly here, in the dining hall of the Tiszadob Children's Town. Although the Birth panel was exhibited for a few months in 2021 by the Budapest History Museum in collaboration with Off-Biennale Budapest[27], for decades Birth was known only to those who knew Péli, the children of Tiszadob and the campers of Romano Kher. It is certainly more difficult to measure the impact of art than the transmission of folk music and dance, and the transmission of songs across generations. Yet, if we look behind the conversations, debates, evening discos and music-making sessions described above, these large-scale paintings, which incorporate elements of Roma history and mythology, we can see that their colours, their motifs and the Roma women and men in them became an important cultural reference for the camp children. It is a sad fact that the relegation of these important paintings to the camp canteens is a sign of the lack of recognition of Roma cultural and artistic heritage, and also of the fact that Hungary has neither a Roma museum nor a collection of Roma art in the state museums, and has not had one in recent decades.

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4 László Trencsényi, "War trails and peace pipe – the history of camping from 1919 to today [Hadiösvények és békepipa – táborozástörténet 1919-től napjainkig]", *Beyond the comfort zone...The pedagogy, sociology and cultural anthropology of camping* [A Komfortzónán is túl…A táborozás pedagógiája, szociológiája és kulturális antropológiája], ed. Ádám Nagy (János Neumann University, Iuvenis Youth Workshop, Youth Society, 2018), 223.

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9 Gábor Demszky was the mayor of Budapest-between 1990 and 2010.

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11 Eszter Gergye, Lilla Laboda, Boglárka Pápai, "Continuation of the mid-year club life of the Amrita Orientation Circle of Friends in the framework of summer reading camps [Az Amrita Orientációs Baráti Kör évközi klubéletének folytatása nyári olvasótáborok keretén belül]", *Amrita before the millenium* [Amrita az ezredforduló előtt], ed. Aranka, Varga, University of Pécs, Department of Romology, Wlislocki Henrik Student College (2015), 177-201.

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14 Report on the work of the Base from 1985, Budapest City Archives, HU BFL XXIII. 102.e.4.

15 György, "An attempt to create minority heritage", 205-232

16 Jenő Zsigó was born in 1952 in Nyírbátor. Being on the of the main ideologists of the Roma civil rights movement in Hungary, he di-

rected the Roma Family Support Center of the 15th district of Budapest from 1986. Between 1987 and 2010, he was the director of the Budapest Gypsy Social Cultural and Methodological Institution (CSZMMK), later changing its name to Romano Kher. He founded a Roma folklore band called Ando Drom in 1984 and was its leader for thirty years. https://www.romarchive.eu/en/collection/p/jeno-zsigo/

17 Thalia Theater, founded in 1913 is located in the center of Budapest, in Nagymező street 22-24, very close to the Opera House.

18 Presentation of Roma scholarship holders [Roma ösztöndíjasok bemutatkozása]. *Köznevelés*, 56, no. 24 (2000), 21.

19 CIKOBI meant Gypsy Coordination Committee – These committees operated from 1970, as parts of the Interdepartmental Coordination Committee [Tárcaközi Koordinációs Bizottság] parallel to the Department of Cabinet Council [Minisztertanács Tanácsszervek Osztálya] in the counties or the districts of Budapest. János Bársony was the secretary general of the Metropolitan Gypsy Coordination Committee.

20 Annex n. 5, Budapest City Archives, HU BFL XXIII. 102.e.4.

21 György Lakatos, former scholarship holder and participant of the camps for years is now the leader of the Romano Glaszo Band (The 'Human Voice Art Group) and Educational Foundation, engaged in teaching Roma and non-Roma children about Roma music, dance and other cultural forms. (http://romanoglaszo.hu/rolunk/)

22 Jenő Zsigó, "Identifying and naming the direct system of repression [Feltárni és megnevezni az elnyomások direkt rendszerét]", *Minority of Minorities. The human and political rights of Gypsies in Hungary* [Kisebbségek kisebbsége. A magyarországi cigányok emberi és politikai jogai], in ed. Mária Neményi, Júlia Szalai, Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, Budapest (2005), 12.

23 Kalyi Jag („Black Fire" in English) was a popular Hungarian gypsy band formed in 1978. They became one of the best known representatives of Hungarian Romani folk in the world. Kalyi Jag released their debut album in 1987, selling 30,000 copies in a week and receiving a gold disc award. https://www.discogs.com/artist/1056288-Kalyi-Jag?type=Appearances&subtype=Albums&filter_anv=0

24 The Hungarian Roma Parliament was founded in 1990 as the first and largest Roma cultural-political umberalla organisation, comprehending several different self-representational bodies.

25 Eszter György, "From the Dining Hall to the Budapest History Museum. Contemporary Roma art and cultural heritage, trapped in community space?" *ERIAC RomaMomaBlog*, https://eriac.org/from-the-dining-hall-to-the-budapest-history-museum-contemporary-roma-art-and-cultural-heritage-trapped-in-community-space/

26 The Athe Sam (meaning We are here! in Romani language) festivals were organized between 2006 and 2011 in the Gödör club, located at the very heart of Budapest. The festivals endured one week and comprehended various kinds of cultural spectales, concerts, exhibitions, round-table dicussions.

27https://www.varmuzeum.hu/kozosen-kihordani.html

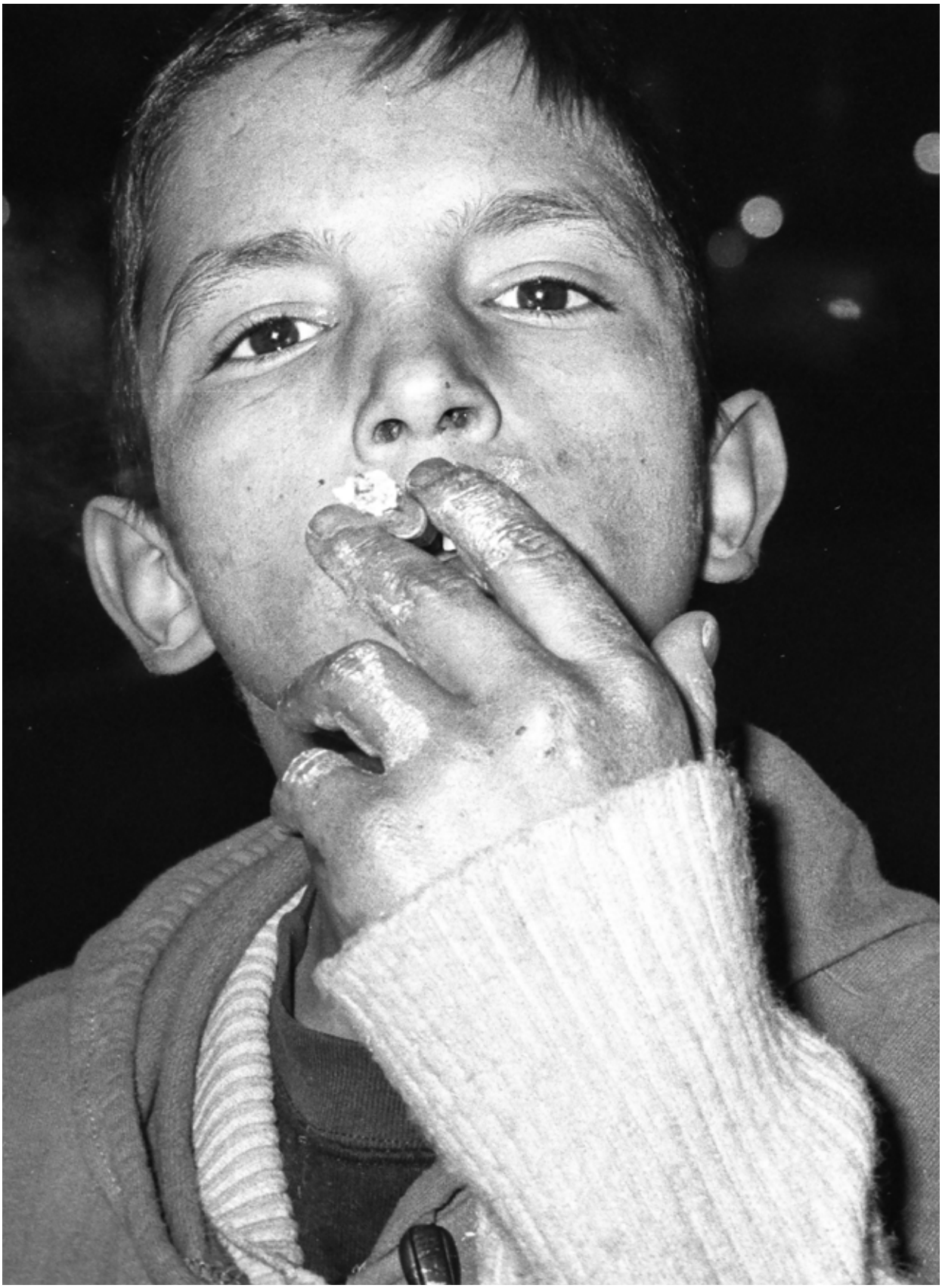
## Joost Vandebrug

# CINCI LEI

CINCI LEI is a startling look at a community of kids as they come of age while facing extraordinary challenges. – a parallel world literally under the feet of a modern Eurpean city.

Excerpt from 'The Lost Boys Found', an essay by Nico Kos:

(...) Many of these pictures are taken underground in the tunnels created during Ceausescu's era to carry hot water, which was centrally heated, out to the housing estates. It is an ironic re-appropriation of the infrastructure he put in place to exercise population control; now lifeline of warmth and protection for street children who have fallen through the system's cracks. From the outset an aim of this project has been to humanise the perception of this very marginalised group of children. Ninety percent of the people that live in the tunnels, and all the children depicted in this project, are of Roma origin. They face racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance by the general Romanian public. Cinci Lei is both narrated and created photographically, and Vandebrug's artistic process is synonymous with his connection to the subject. His tenacity to the story as it evolved is what makes this body of work so powerful. It resonates with the opening lines of Susan Sontag's book, On Photography, 'photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have a right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing.' Cinci Lei is a coming of age story, but it does not function like a photo journal in the traditional sense. The story began with a simple exchange: taking a picture of Costel, Vandebrug returned the next day with the developed image and gave it to him. From that moment Vandebrug was invited into their world. This action not only propelled the project forward, it contributed to how the boys began to perceive themselves. Rather than going down to their level beneath the streets, taking portraits and then getting out, Vandebrug stuck to the story. for more than 6 years, he returned over and over again to the tunnels, becoming an integral part of the story. (...)

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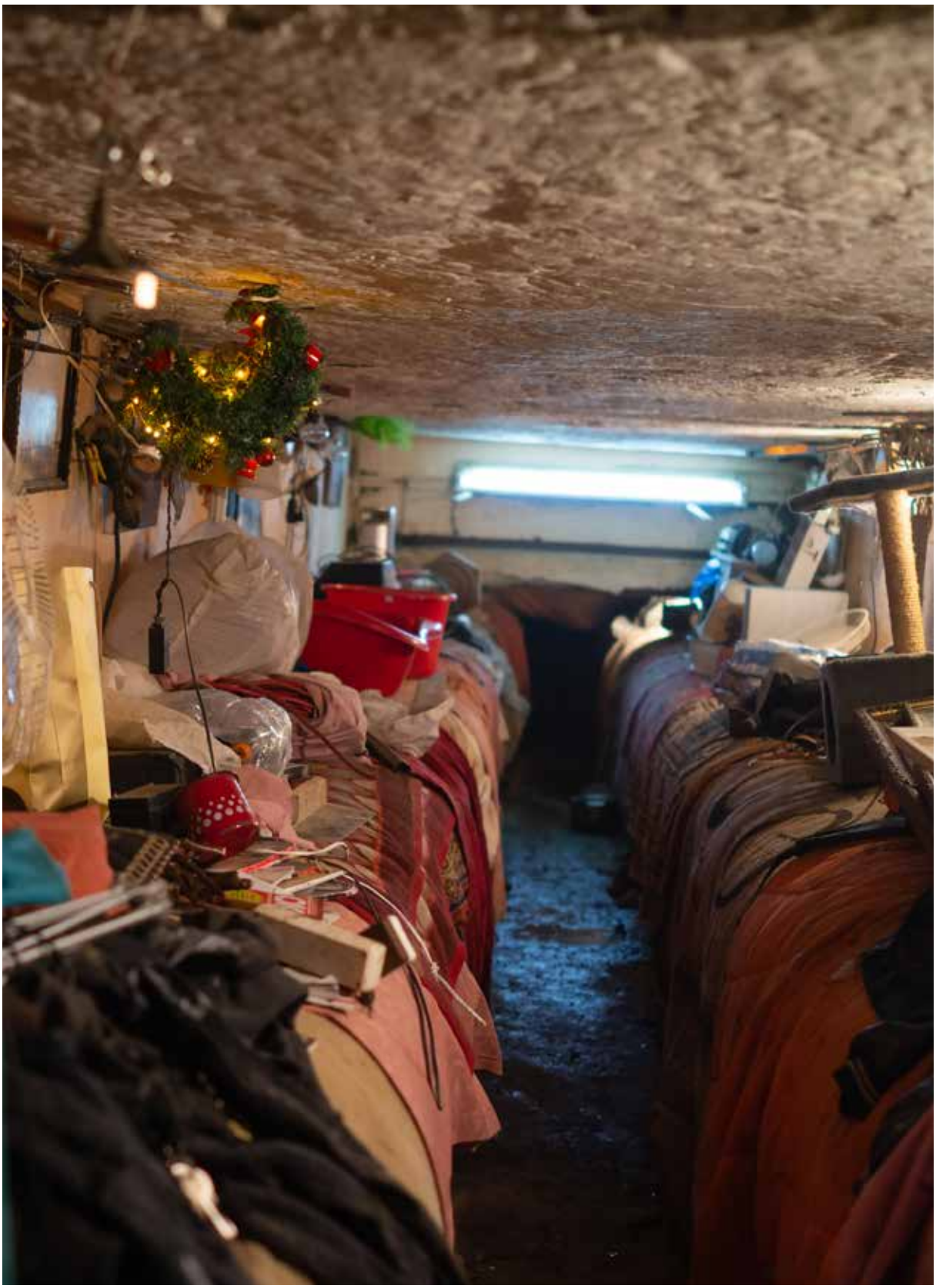

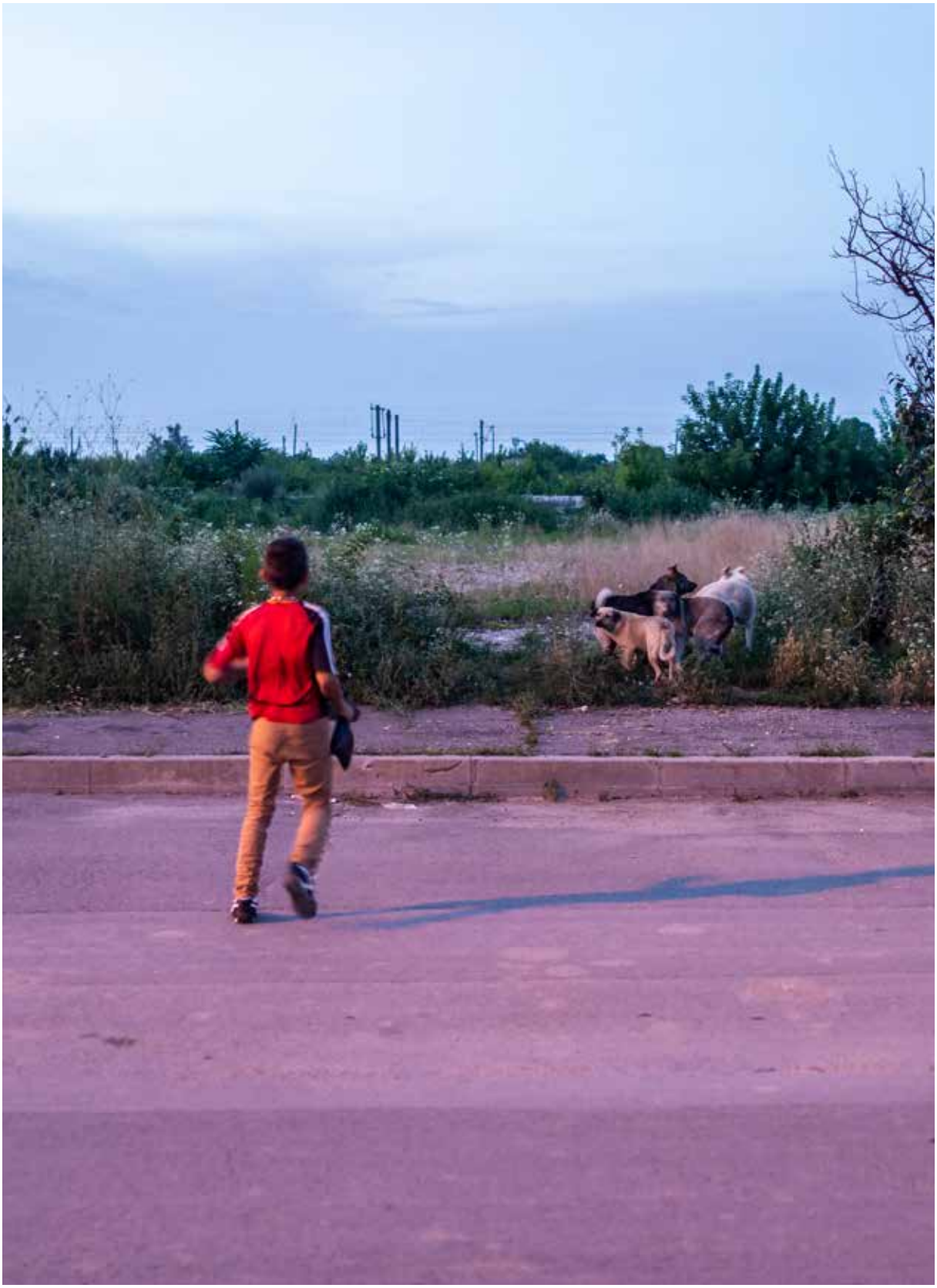

**Suzana Milevska**

# Rewriting the Protocols: Naming, Renaming and Profiling

**SIntroduction / Curatorial concept**

The concept of the project *Rewriting the Protocols: Naming, Renaming and Profiling* is based on the urgent need for a critique of and change to the long history of racial profiling and stereotyping of Romani people through various legal and cultural protocols, rules and documents. With these political and social phenomena unfortunately still present, such issues continue to proliferate new protocols which are in return used to label and discriminate different Romani individuals and communities based on stereotypical racialised representations, derogative denominations and forced similarities. There are still a great many individuals (citizens and non-citizens alike) who are rendered invisible, silenced by isolation and the violation of their basic human rights. Even if someone is incapable of transcending racism and thus cannot justify the concept of a post-racial society, or might be incapable of unravelling all the inherited contours and inflexions of representation, they should take on board the responsibility of speaking up against injustice and discrimination.

The arbitrariness behind the term Roma was actually one of the first widely-agreed political decisions and actions in the history of Roma activism; it could be interpreted as a proof of the emergence of a transversal Roma agency aimed at rewriting the established protocols. Although ever since the 1971 international meeting of Romany people in Orpington, Kent (not far from London) the usage of the word 'Roma' (rather than variants of 'Gypsy') was agreed by the majority of the attendees and observers as a conscious political decision to denominate various groups, communities and cultural phenomena of Romani origin, the term 'Gypsy' is still widely used as a derogative exclamation and racial slur.

Rather than passively accepting the current situation, the project Rewriting the *Protocols: Naming, Renaming, and Profiling* therefore aims to unravel the hidden patterns of colonisation and subjugation, while also stressing the counter-movement against these patterns and the pursuit of new Roma subjectivities which resist and promote agonistic agency, as well as solidarity based on difference and the urgency for decolonisation.

In addition to severe inequalities and injustices in political, social and economic terms, many restaurants still serve food under the 'Gypsy' label to stress the spicy and hot flavour of certain dishes, while Western musicians use it as a term to emphasise the supposedly exotic provenience of the rhythm and pace of their music style, and fashion designers employ it whenever adding more frills and patches to their new collections.

Moreover the images of caravans, wheels and other symbols dominate in many programmes related to Roma culture and art as exotic visual symbols for the assumed stereotypical 'Gypsy' lifestyle full of wanderlust, and even the Roma flag has a sixteen-spoked chakra stressing the alleged preference among Roma for a nomadic life, despite an ongoing trend for Roma to opt for a sedentary lifestyle.

Although the usage of the term 'Gypsy' is clearly not always motivated by racism and/or intentionally racist, the perpetuation of the term and the proliferation and distribution of stereotypical images certainly give way to and justify the subconscious and conscious patterns of racist behaviour.

The artists selected for this exhibition (Mo Diener, Sead Kazanxiu, Nihad Nino Pušija, RJKaS, Selma Selman, Alfred Ullrich) challenge these issues and social phenomena with their artistic practice in various art media and forms (photography, video, live art, digital art, public performance, or activist interventions). With their art projects, the artists are fighting the established social 'order' and calling for changes to the perception, self-perception, and representation of Romani people by proposing certain counter-strategies such as rewriting art history and revising identitarian politics through renaming, over-identification, irony, as well as other artistic approaches from the position of contemporary art practitioners.

**Rewriting the Protocols: Naming, Renaming and Profiling**

**What is like to be... Roma?**

What is like to be... Roma? Here we could ask the question 'what is like to be

Romani', which resonates with the similar question posed long ago by Thomas Nagel.[1] The work *You Have No Idea* comes as Selma Selman's answer. She is one of the artists included in this exhibition, which ponders the urgency of trying to understand the complex historic, socio-political, and cultural background that designates Roma as a more general and common denominator for different traditions, communities and languages (e.g. Sinti, Kale, Manushes, Gitans, Gitanos and other Roma-related denominations). The artist exhausts herself and her voice by shouting the statement You Have No Idea as loudly as she can throughout the whole performance.

Thomas Nagel originally asked the philosophical question 'What is it like to be a bat?' in his renowned eponymous text, and this question is still a powerful and viable metaphor for the impossibility of any attempt to understand others.[2] But in my text and project I propose to paraphrase the question and ask instead: is it really so difficult, and why would understanding another human being be an issue at all?

Selma Selman, *You Have No Idea*, 2016, photograph of a performance.
Courtesy and copyrights: Selma Selman.


Nihad Nino Pušija, *Duldung Deluxe Passport, On the "toleration" and deportation of Roma youth and young adults in Germany*, 2012, various dimensions.

Nihad Nino Pušija, *Duldung Deluxe Passport, On the "toleration" and deportation of Roma youth and young adults in Germany*, 2012, various dimensions.


Nihad Nino Pušija, *Duldung Deluxe Passport, On the "toleration" and deportation of Roma youth and young adults in Germany*, 2012, various dimensions. Copyrights: © Nihad Nino Pušija | Courtesy: Nihad Nino Pušija.

Are Roma really so different? Isn't this question an invitation to yet another essentialisation? And if it is true, what made this communication and mutual understanding so difficult in historic and cultural terms?

However, the question is really not addressing any radical difference or impossibility of communication. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's answer from the end of her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' – or more precisely, her answer to the similar cultural question – was that it's all about listening to the specific voice while aiming towards a rapprochement with the other human being, although complete mutual understanding, even within the same ethnic group, culture, gender, sexual orientation or class, is doomed to failure from the outset. Every human mind is culturally redesigned so that only our ability and desire to be engaged in 'presenting ourselves to others, and ourselves'[3] and representing ourselves 'in language and gesture, external and internal'[4] make us different from the others. Nagel warns us that all relevant physical facts are not enough to provide us with proficient answers to the question 'what is it like to be' different, but this does not mean that we should not listen, empathise, and co-exist.[5]

In the light of recent disputes about cultural appropriation, using 'we' becomes an extremely sensitive and questionable matter precisely because of the gap between uttering the pronoun and acting out in accordance with its promise, particularly when hijacking the 'we' from the privileged position of the *gadji* (non-Roma) and disregarding Thomas Nagel's warning about the cognitive impossibility of fully understanding what it is like to be someone else (even when discounting cultural similarities or differences).[6] However, proximity and empathy may still be the necessary aporic relations to strive for in order to work through 'we', even when conscious of the approximate impossibility.

What does it mean to belong to the Roma community and to be called by this name, and what really belongs to Roma and to the mere name of the Roma people in historic, cultural and socio-political terms? These are the entangled and reciprocally related issues at the heart of this project. The artists, activists and theorists contributing to the project address the urgency of openly challenging the misunderstandings, stereotypes and controversies surrounding the names used for addressing Roma people, as well as the relevance of the meaning of the term 'Roma' and the reasons for the reluctance to use it among both non-Roma and some of the Roma communities. The project also ponders the power of naming and its potentiality for empowerment with a seminar and workshop that will discuss various aspects of Roma inclusion by 'inscribing' Romani names in public space.

The project is invested in the right to determine and decide the position towards the name Roma, from which Roma could utter their statements of belonging or non-Roma could act as agents of empowerment and solidarity with Roma.

Not only is this challenged by pushing for some concrete critique of derogative and pejorative terms such as 'Gypsy', 'Cigani', 'Zingar', 'Tsigane', or 'Zigeuner', which mostly function as a sign of stigma rather than as proper ethnic names, and which are often overburdened with anti-Roma sentiments due to the strengthening of racist right-wing politics across Europe (such was the recent case with the official initiative in Romania to revert from the established name Roma to 'Tigan'),[7] but it also involves proposals on how to ensure a Roma presence in public space given that many Roma have arrived in Western countries under very different circumstances: some of them as immigrants, some of them as refugees after the war in ex-Yugoslavia, and some of them born as second- or third-generation descendants.

Nihad Nino Pušija's project titled *Duldung Deluxe* (Toleration Deluxe) reflects on the official German document – a *Duldung* – which claims 'toleration' in its name, but is actually directly related to the deportation of Roma teenagers and young adults from Germany to their countries of origin such as Bosnia, Serbia or Kosovo.[8] The series of passport photographs *Duldung Deluxe* is actually a series of portraits which unravels and documents the questionable restrictive EU policy towards Roma as Europe's largest minority. While there is no legal proof of discrimination, half of the deported Roma after 2009 were children who had mostly been born and raised in Germany. Therefore the legal term 'repatriation' does not reflect the fact that Germany was their home country. Roma children were thus deprived of their homes and forced back to their predecessors' nomadic lives although this was neither through their own volition nor their preference, thereby perpetuating the long lived myth and common stereotypical image.

The arbitrariness behind the term Roma was actually one of the first widely-agreed political decisions and actions in the history of Roma activism, precisely because Roma differ among themselves, too.[9] The reference to the absence of Roma names and images of Roma personalities in public places and to defamatory images of Roma and the use of derogatory names and inscriptions correspond to the arguments in visual culture about the profound impact of the proliferation and general distribution of images with problematic content in public spaces (e.g. in the works by Alfred Ullrich). However, this reference is also used as a platform for calls that a greater visible social presence be claimed for and allocated to relevant references to important Roma personalities.

Nihad Nino Pušija, Duldung Deluxe Passport, *On the "toleration" and deportation of Roma youth and young adults in Germany*, 2012, various dimensions. Copyrights: © Nihad Nino Pušija | Courtesy: Nihad Nino Pušija.

**Who has control over the naming and renaming...?**

One of the most obvious questions to be asked here is: Who has control over the naming and renaming, and how can this power be used to reproduce and distribute certain dominant cultural and moral principles?

The internalisation of derogatory names as bearers of the regimes of representation, identification, self-essentialisation and self-racialisation creates a threatening vicious circle from which a way out must be urgently sought. In the view of Gilles Deleuze, the first moment of giving/receiving a name is in itself 'the highest point of depersonalization' because it is here that we acquire 'the most intense discernibility in the instantaneous apprehension of the multiplicities' belonging to us.[10] Therefore this project puts pressure on the hegemonic regimes of representation which are present and enduring on account of both arbitrarily chosen names and internalised strategies of self-representation that are imposed upon individuals through nominal structures. The project's curatorial concept attempts to rupture this kind of closed circle of only critiquing the perpetuation of stereotypical representations and continuing with ambivalent practices pertaining to the marginalisation of Roma presence in public space. Some aspects of the project were instigated by the urgency of addressing recent cases of individual and collective displacements, evictions and deportations of Roma citizens from their homes in many European countries, and so these events are addressed in the artworks though metaphorical expressions or concrete actions.[11]

For example, Alfred Ullrich's works were based on the artist's initiative concerning the signs 'Landfahrerplatz kein Gewerbe' [Site for Travellers: No Trading], which led to a correspondence between the chairwoman of Künstlervereinigung Dachau (KVD) and the mayor of Grosse Kreisstadt Dachau.

The artist's persistent initiatives


Alfred Ullrich, *Landfahrerplatz kein Gewerbe*, 2006-2011, series of photographs. Courtesy: Alfred Ullrich.


Alfred Ullrich, *Crazy Waterwheel*, 2009-2011, video still
Video and photography: Klaus Auderer.
Courtesy: Alfred Ullrich.


Sead Kazanxhiu, *8 per 8 Prillin*, 2013, Installation in public space.
Courtesy: Sead Kazanxhiu – Private Archive.


Sead Kazanxhiu, *A Choice to Be Made, A Price to Be Paid (Vendim per tu marr cmim per tu paguar)*, 2015, photograph. Courtesy: Sead Kazanxhiu – Private Archive.

pressing for action eventually persuaded the local authorities to remove the derogatory signs from public sight. The result of the process was Ullrich's work *Crazy Water Wheel* (2009–2011), which consists of two videos, The first video is a loop showing only the turning wheel of a watermill near the Nazi concentration camp of Dachau, referring to the eternal recurrence of racism. Side by side with the watermill wheel there is a documentary showing an informal private performance of the artist commenting on the traffic signs 'Landfahrerplatz kein Gewerbe' – a warning that itinerants are not allowed to trade or peddle in the area. In the work the inscription is crossed out, although at the time these signs were still in use in Bavaria. This simple action highlights how seemingly neutral regulations in fact enforce the segregation of Roma travellers from others.

The artist is recorded as he questions and crosses out the inscription on the traffic sign by holding three signs, one after another: a question mark, a cross and a sign suggesting a new term to replace the old one: a simple 'Rastplatz' [Stopping Place]. He is thereby pointing to the relevance of each term and name perpetuating the same old stereotypes, just like the wheel itself. The artist had previously exhibited a series of photographs of the existing signs (2009) as well as the outcome of this long-term process, the work *On the Move* (2009–2013), in which he also exhibited the official correspondence.

Clearly, discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is preserved through language and visual public memory, something that gives way to reinforcing the existing stereotype of Roma people as 'exotic' creatures, full of wanderlust, who are always 'on the move'; while this might be true to some extent, Ullrich's work (as well as the work by Pušija) points to the fact that it has not always been their own choice to live this way.

In light of the current neoliberal capitalist advance and its thirst for cheap or even free land, political manoeuvres are reversed by the proposal to push for a more obvious presence of Roma in public

Monica Diener/RJSaK, *Basic Roma*, 2015, photograph of the performace.
Production Credits: Monica Diener (Artist), RR Marki (Artist), Milena Petrovic (Choreographer), Merckling (DJ), Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv – RJSaK.
Rights held by: Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv.
Courtesy: Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv – RJSaK (Zurich/Switzerland).

space. Therefore the presence of Roma (and not 'Gypsy' or 'Zigeuner') names in public spaces may serve as a reminder to that unique moment when a small number of leading progressive Romani activists of the time made a self-aware decision: this actually paved the way for the first political initiative and attempt to achieve social change and rupture in the long-existing practice of undermining and humiliating Roma in public, or simply moving to counter the fact that the presence of Roma and Romani lives was being perpetually ignored.

The greatest challenge that Roma activists face in contemporary society, which is full of contradictions affecting Roma with regard to inclusion, emigration laws, labour and housing policy, is to balance the need to create greater communal political cohesion and to enhance the credibility of those who claim to speak in the Roma name, whilst also attracting support from society as a whole.[12] Therefore the role of the contemporary Roma artists in the exhibition is not limited to uttering anti-racist testimonials and highlighting injustice; the project's strategy also suggests new paths and expressions that would act as a kind of agency, playing a role (just as the term 'Roma' used to play a role) in inflicting social change within the artists' own communities, in the wider context of artistic and political institutions and in the general public space.

However, speaking out about controversial issues has a price, as Sead

Monica Diener/RJSaK, *Detox Dance*, 2016, photograph of the performance.
Rights held by: Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv.
Courtesy: Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv – RJSaK (Zurich/Switzerland)
Production Credits: Monica Diener (Artist), RR Marki (Artist), Milena Petrovic (Choreographer), Merckling (DJ), Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv – RJSaK.

Kazanxhiu, an Albanian artist of Roma background, has so eloquently suggested. In his video performance *A Choice to Be Made, A Price to Be Paid* (2015), Kazanxhiu refers to the issue of the right to territory and land – a right which is usually denied to Roma in many different contexts. The title, and the statement that when you make a choice 'there's something you have to agree to', was based on a quotation by Romanian sociologist Nicolae Gheorghe, relating to the contradictions stemming from what in Western terms is the 'vaguely defined' concept of ownership among Roma with respect to land, property and certain kinds of territory.[13] In his work Kazanxhiu actually metaphorically addresses the complexity of Gheorghe's claim about the issue of *Romani phuv* [Romani land]: that it's taken for granted that due to their traditions of moving they don't need and have the right to own land. For example, the fact that Roma people usually do not hold warranty deeds was used as a justification for the controversial displacement and expulsion of Roma from France in August 2010, and as an excuse for divesting them of their right to land which their families had inhabited for many generations.[14] Even the French artist Tania Magy was affected by this change of 'protocols' regarding Romani rights to free movement, something which is also often mistaken for nomadism.[15]

In Kazanxhiu's video performance, the de-territorialisation of Roma for political, economic or social reasons is metaphorically presented as a cooking show. During the first part of the video the artist plays a role of a chef who prepares a meal out of mud (called shishik in Romani) which in Roma tradition is a special soil used for hygienic rituals (in contrast to the usual understanding of mud as a material for defilement).[16] In the second part he plays the role of an educated Roma person (dressed as a bureaucrat) who stages the process of conducting persistent negotiations, lively discussions and making decisions in order to fulfil the dream of living longer at a particular spot and hence preventing the constant moving. According to the artist, the wishful concept of 'Romani land' (he inscribes the phrase on the wall at the end of the performance) is still a dream for many Roma, despite the bigotry and existing preconception about the nomadic character of their culture which ignores the empirical fact that many Roma had a sedentary lifestyle, even in the distant past.

In the struggle to right the racial bias, social inequalities, and (mis)representations that characterise our world today, the artists' role is seen as unravelling these mechanisms (often by making them ironic or over-identifying with them) and simultaneously counteracting them with positive actions. Further aims of the project are recognising and pointing to the urgent need to decipher and unsettle new instances of racism, in all its guises, as well as denouncing them loudly, while also using any opportunity to call for radical action that affirms solidarity in difference and cohabitation in communal public space.

The Zurich based collective RJSaK was established out of the similar necessity to bring invisible racial biases to light which even exist in one of the most democratic European societal contexts: Switzerland.

The collective brings together Roma, Sinti and Yenish artists and activists who are originally from Switzerland or from Balkan countries such as Macedonia and Serbia. Their public performances, exhibitions, panel discussions, publications and other activities are produced collectively or by individual members of

the collective; examples include the first RJSaK performance in 2013, *Tableaux (très) vivants*, and the series of participatory performances in public spaces and institutions, such are *What Is the Color of Your Car?* (2014), *Estetika Walk* (2016) and *Detox Dance* (2016–2017).[17] Some of their projects are also organised and presented in a range of professional art and cultural institutions in various Swiss cities.

RJSaK's art projects are clearly aimed at rewriting the 'inherited' protocols from the distant and recent past regarding not only Roma art and culture but also cultural identity issues, as well as the political and societal conditions of Roma in Switzerland and elsewhere.

Some of their posters and slogans (e.g. *Morphing the Roma Label, Nothing about us without us*) clearly point to the collective's activist agenda. For example, until recently (September 2016) the status of Roma in Switzerland was not fully recognised and they were still referred to as 'travellers', effectively meaning that Roma, Sinti and Yenish did not have full access to the rights which were accessible to other recognised minorities, as governed by existing laws.[18] Therefore, apart from their public art performances, the RJSaK collective is fully engaged in political activism with various NGOs and in a working group at BAK, the Swiss federal office of culture, which facilitated the process of shaping the rights of Roma, Sinti and Yenish communities as minorities in Switzerland.

***...one cannot be thought without the other because art history cannot be rewritten without systemic societal changes.***

Nevertheless, it is important to state that with its series of performances and other projects and posters (e.g. *1 Roma Dada Manifesto* and *Art History Hacking*, both in 2016), RJSaK has also claimed a place for Roma and for their artworks in art history. Some of these self-historicising projects were part of the events marking the hundredth anniversary of Dada in Zurich, *Dada Manifesto* (1916) and the other anarchic activities of Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara and further Dadaists (which originally took place in the historic Zurich club Cabaret Voltaire). These and other RJSaK activities (some even included as parallel events to Manifesta 11) pointed to the long-term absence of artists of Roma origin from art history. Despite the received knowledge about existing artworks by Roma artists in many different media, these works are not carefully collected, systematised and published and therefore the mainstream discipline of art history fails to recognise the existence of the influence and relevance of Roma artists. This is a particularly relevant point because of the long tradition of stereotypical representations of Roma in avant-garde and modernist art.

Rewriting art history protocols is therefore as relevant as the legal and political protocols, but of course one cannot be thought without the other because art history cannot be rewritten without systemic societal changes.

This project in the Visual Art section of RomArchive addresses the intertwining of different protocols and the reciprocal systemic relations between different theoretical disciplines, artistic practices and media, and the political, societal and cultural rules which regulate and construct them.

This text is first published as online by RomArchive portal that was launched in 2018: Suzana Milevska, "Rewriting the Protocols: Naming, Renaming, and Profiling", RomArchive, 2018, https://www.romarchive.eu/en/visual-arts/subsection-rewriting-protocols/rewriting-protocols-naming-renaming-and-profiling/


References:

1 Thomas Nagel's text 'What is it like to be a bat?' was first published and reproduced in 1974, then reprinted in *Mortal Questions*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 165–180

2 These arguments were first presented in Milevska, Suzana: 'The Difference between Saying and Doing in the Use of "We"' in Gallery8 Team (ed.): *Gallery8 Contemporary Art Space* 2013–2015, Budapest: Gallery8 & European Roma Cultural Foundation, 2016, pp. 18–30, and in the lecture 'Contingency and Clusivity of the "We"', RJSaK, Shedhalle, Zurich, 2016

3 Daniel C. Dennett, 'The Origins of Selves', *Cogito*, no. 3, (Autumn 1989): 169.

4 Ibid.

5 Nagel: 1979, 165, see note 1.

6 Nagel: 1979, 165–180, see note 1.

7 'Romania's government has caused outrage among Romany – or Gypsy – [sic] communities and organizations after it asked Parliament in Bucharest to accept a proposal to change the official name of the Romany from Roma, which means 'man' in the Romany language, to Tigan, which comes from the Greek term for 'untouchable'. See: Wolfe Murray, Rupert: 'Romania's Government Moves to Rename the Roma', *Time*, Bucharest, 8 December 2010, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2035862,00.html

8 This refers to the partial permit which was introduced in 2009 when the German government signed a repatriation agreement to deport up to 14,000 refugees to the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. According to Lith Bahlmann's 2012 text about the *Duldung Deluxe* project, this number included around 10,000 Roma.

9 According to some linguists the term 'Roma' should be replaced by the more appropriate transliteration of the sound in the Romani language, 'Rroma', but this has not been accepted by the entire community of Roma linguists.

10 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 40.

11 The controversial expulsions of nearly a thousand Roma from France to Romania and Bulgaria provoked significant international criticism and were seen by many as a severe breach of international human-rights laws on discrimination. See Willsher, Kim: 'Orders to police on Roma expulsions from France leaked', *guardian.co.uk*, 13 September 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/13/sarkozy-roma-expulsion-human-rights

12 Cala, Andres: 'Spain's Tolerance of Gypsies: A Model for Europe?' *Time*, Madrid, 16 September 2010, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2019316,00.html

13 For more information about this and other works by Sead Kazanxhiu check his web blog: http://seadkazanxhiu.wixsite.com/visualart/video

14 The destruction of Roma camps and the overnight deportations that were undertaken following the French government's orders was based on a secret personal memo from the French president Nicolas Sarkozy (which was leaked to the press). This led to the expulsions of nearly a thousand Roma as detailed in note 11.

15 Tania Magy temporarily lost her licence to run and move around with her own ongoing project *La Caravane-Musée* [The Museum Caravan] (2004 – present). This is a structure in which she not only lived and travelled, but also presented temporary exhibitions. Her caravan is a kind of alternative institution whose art collection consists of Magy's own artworks as well as paintings, sculptures, photographs, videos and films by other Roma artists (including Gabi Jimenez, Gérard Gartner, Bruno Morelli, Tony Gatlif and Laura Halilovic)

16 Isto, Raino: 'Choices to be Made, An Interview with Sead Kazanxhiu', *Afterart – blog about art and society*, 25 July 2016, https://afterart.org/2016/07/25/choices-to-be-made-an-interview-with-sead-kazanxhiu/

17 According to the RJSaK website: 'Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv (RJSaK) is the first art collective in Switzerland which is dedicated to making the Roma minority more visible in public sphere. Based in Zurich, the group works transdisciplinary with members from the arts, acting, and design, and collaborations with guests from different fields. Since its first intervention in 2013 at a local art space, RJSaK has performed in Zurich at the Shedhalle, Corner College, Maxim Theater and Toni Areal, as well as in other cities.' The main members of the collective are Mo Diener, RR Marki and Milena Petrović, but many more and less frequent participants and guests also join in with their activities. http://romajamsession.org/

18 Yenish and Sinti communities in Europe have been officially recognised and protected ever since 1998, with the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In 2001 the Swiss cabinet insisted that all Yenish and Sintis communities should be officially recognised by the Swiss authorities as a national minority, whether they pursued nomadic lifestyles or not. However, until 2016 the Swiss authorities often referred to Yenish and Sinti as 'travellers' although only 10 per cent of the 35,000-strong community actually move around.

**Ivana Hadjievska**

# The epistemic position of the Roma Holocaust in Macedonian historiography: artistic practices of commemoration as a possible reparation

## Introduction

The history of the Roma in general, and the history of the Roma Holocaust specifically,[1] is a marginalized and under-researched topic in academic research on Holocaust and genocide studies.[2] In the Macedonian context, the first public scholarly conference on the Roma Holocaust was held in 2019.[3] This event was organized in Bitola, by representatives of Roma civil society from the field of science and education. The aim of the conference was to facilitate the "Exchange of experiences, memory and social representation of those present at the Holocaust as well as the Roma people, as the most marginalized ethnic community living in the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia". To add a subjective side note, I consider that the conference was a turning point for the local culture of remembrance, an attempt to publicly archive the experiences of the Macedonian Roma during the Second World War. For me personally, a non-Roma participant, the conference had an emancipatory effect, specifically in terms of questioning the dominant narratives.[4] Examining the position of the Roma Holocaust in Macedonian historiography also includes re-visiting the places of academic knowledge production - particularly significant symbolic spaces, connected with the creation and distribution of historical knowledge.

I frame my research in the Macedonian national context because I consider the discussion about the position and treatment of *Others* in the study of the collective past to be particularly productive in terms of the progress of humanistic thought, as well as facilitating a critical approach towards the national historical *canon*. In this text, I analyze the ways the topic of this paper has been represented in the historical scholarly research, through associations and comparisons with European and national scientific activity. However, the primary purpose of this text is to open up space for theoretical reflection on the topic, not to give a flawless *historicist* bibliographic review.

An initial driver for developing my thesis was the position of the Roma Holocaust as subject in public history. Namely, Roma are an invisible ethnic group in archival collections, museum thematic exhibitions and especially in the *sanitized* methodology of collections about national history. Moreover, geographical locations associated with their lives and deaths, and ultimately associated with Roma genocide, represent *non-places* in the symbolic public space[5] and, thus, in the culture of remembrance. Jasna Koteska explains the connection between the *sanitary stigmatization* of culture and the racism towards Roma as follows:

> The most common sanitary stigmatization of an ethnic group in our country, in Macedonia, is that of the Roma

– a proof of the connection between modern racism and sanitation. (...) Here, apart from being symbolic, it is also about real exploitation of the Roma in the Balkans, and it refers to the point where ethnic identity, gender and profession intersect. It is about a specific "bourgeois" concession tolerated in the late Yugoslavia. Although, a country with a socialist labor policy, and with application of the strictly respected rule that the State is the only employer and no one may work for a private person (that is "exploitation"), there was the fact that Roma women worked in homes and building entrances as domestic helpers and cleaners, without paid state subsidies and outside of state supervision. Even today, the cleanliness of the apartments and the entrances in this part of the Balkans are carried out by Roma women, and lately also Roma men. In the new Balkan market conditions, they [the dominant ethnic group and elites. IH] "use" public memory for money making in the "remembered" sphere, "delegated" as "theirs" - the sphere of ritual purity. Slapshak [theorist Svetlana Slapshak. IH] points out that Emir's [filmmaker Emir Kosturica. IH] films about the Balkan Roma profited most successfully from this not-so-new racism. A similar complicated manipulation was made by the unsuccessful plagiarism "Gypsy Magic" by Stole Popov, who almost competed with Kusturica in choosing questionable locations for the Roma, placing them around garbage dumps and landfills.[6]

While reviewing the indicators of the subject's position in the system of memory politics, I came to the conclusion that the presence of Roma in public history is strictly controlled by entrenched racism, practices of discrimination and feelings of shame. The historical experiences and memories of the Roma victims of the Holocaust exist and are kept in "communities of memory", in the private sphere of Roma communities.[7] "Communities of memory" represent local or transnational networks where the culture of remembrance, centered on oral history, is fostered by the survivors or representatives of crucial events for the community. In the case of Roma Holocaust, the only mediators of this knowledge about the collective past of the community are individual citizens or social organizations, which through the language of public history and commemorative practices front information, oral history, family life-stories, and material or documentary artifacts. Nevertheless, their public expression must often be legitimized by the dominant community and its culture. Alternative spaces and forms, where the freedom of the community to write and publicly archive its traumatic past without legitimized mediation, are not the institutions or academic productions, but artistic performances or statements.

The thesis I have formulated is based on research methods such as desk research, fieldwork in commemorative events, and experience from working in the field of national historical scholarship and conferences. According to my working thesis, historiographical narratives are rigid and inflexible in opening up spaces for writing a history of the *Roma as subjects of history*; when mentioned, Roma are mostly nameless victims, and seldom are they portrayed as political participants, agents of resistance and finally "writers" of history. In this text, I propose that this condition can be overcome through a phenomenological approach. By centering on the Roma lived experience, preserved not in archives and historical canons, but through forms of local commemoration.

I believe that further articulation of the topic and the examination of my thesis is not possible without raising the question of "epistemic injustice". The humanist Miranda Fricker has coined the term 'epistemic injustice', a concept according to which, from a position of power, one could do injustice to someone else, 'specifically in their capacity as a knower'. She has identified two forms of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice, whereby the speaker is treated unfairly with regards to their credibility by the listener, owing to prejudices; and hermeneutical injustice, when the understanding of one's experiential field is significantly obstructed by prejudices and by the manner in which the resources for society's interpretation are distributed in general.[8] Another concept that I consider necessary when re-visiting the academic canon is "epistemic positioning". Jana Bečević coined this term to describe how "knowledge claims associated with certain kinds of knowers – for instance, women and ethnic minorities – get read in intellectual contexts in ways that contribute to their devaluation and, sometimes, outright erasure".[9] Rather than attributing this erasure to identity-based prejudice, Bečević shows how the processes of creation, circulation, and reproduction of value in knowledge production both build on and generate inequalities:

> I develop the concept of epistemic positioning to describe how relational judgements frame certain kinds of knowers as differently capable of possessing or contributing certain kinds of knowledge. (...) Fricker's argument is situated at the intersection between epistemology and ethics: who and what is recognized as a proper or equal creator of knowledge – epistemic subject – is not separate from who can be recognized as an equal participant in the public realm. In the context of academic knowledge production, however, the crucial question is how judgements of this sort situate different kinds of 'knowers' relative to other knowers and, further, how this impacts their professional standing. This brings us to evaluation as a practice of positioning.[10]

For me, another term used by researchers of the Roma Holocaust was a very important discovery, especially when put in context with the above-mentioned terms, that is the term "historical justice". According to Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva, the editors of a recent study, focusing on Roma participation in resistance during the Second World War, in Central and

Eastern Europe, the term "historical justice" means a historiographical narrative in which the Roma subjects of resistance and political and cultural participation become visible:

> [Thanks to] Romani activists and scholars and their non-Roma allies' tireless work, general knowledge of the Roma Holocaust has gradually increased and became a widely accepted historical fact. New research and expanded commemoration practices continue to play a relevant role in positioning Roma as inseparable from the mainstream history of Europe. More importantly, one can observe a shift in the master-frame of Roma history, particularly regarding the Holocaust. With a growing number of scholars of Romani origin inquiring about the fate of their ancestors, the concomitant emergence of Critical Romani Studies and the parallel development of institutions safeguarding Roma historical memory, the approach towards how Romani history should be told has changed. Over the last decade, more voices have emerged articulating the Roma's need to revisit their history and craft their own narratives of a collectively shared past. Firstly, this novel approach challenges the common anonymity in historical accounts – instead of speaking of the history of Roma as a collective whole which denies the individuality of its members, greater attention is being placed on personalised narratives, which convey subjective experiences and stories. The role of oral histories, and cultural products such as poems or songs treated as artefacts and encapsulating intimate memories of past events, is very relevant in this context. Secondly, n**ew Romani historiography** [bold letters by IH] demands a shift from treating Roma as objects of history towards perceiving them as its protagonists. (...) Indeed, in the case of Roma, centuries-long discrimination has led to a "distorted" view of history, as Adrian-Nicolae Furtună calls it, and hence recognising, remembering and commemorating the stories of Roma becomes imperative for historical justice. Nicolás Jiménez's plea for justice revolves around this same view, which he calls a "history where the protagonists are the powerful Gadje"[11]

I see commemorative practices as a possible way forward in scholarly endeavors aimed at "historical justice", due to their central position between established official narratives of the national past and proximity to "communities of memory" that commemorate a particular event. Also, they offer the possibility of open and immediate communication with other groups in the community.

Memory is a dynamic entity, which is built and dismantled through dialogue with the political, social and cultural imperatives of the present; therefore, awareness of the politics of memory is another key part of articulating this topic. The simplest definition of "politics of memory" is that they are the institutional organization of collective memory by political actors. These actors raise questions concerning who should be sanctioned for voicing certain memories, and the questions of which memories can be included or excluded from the "imagined community", the nation, for example.[12] However the politics of memory, despite the dominance of actors who maintain power relations, are not stripped of the interactive aspect of memory. In the politics of remembrance, there are also processes that take place "from the bottom - up". These usually generate *grass roots* collective memory that can (re)create everyday relationships. In that sense, the need for balancing the parallel systems of memory is born, and civil alliances and associations can contribute to them most directly.[13]

In terms of my methodology, I use comparative tools in this text. Here, I recognize and confront two thematically close, but conceptually different positions on the commemoration and historiography of the Roma in the Holocaust. The first position covers the explicit examples from the official historiography, where the history of the Roma victims of the Holocaust is usually not represented through the methodological forms of confronting the past and deconstructing the causes of racism towards the Roma, but mostly through the dominant forms and terminology *of the center of power* and from a position of privilege in "owning" and articulating "historical truth". The second position, whose representatives are mostly of Roma origin (as "community of memory"), is located in the contemporary art of an alternative representation of the Roma experience and testimony from the history of the Holocaust through postmodern art and artistic performance as a form of resistance to the official narratives in which the Roma are generally invisible. I see that the "confrontation" between these positions implies a social process that includes mutual recognition and acknowledgment of past suffering and changing destructive forms and behaviors into constructive relationships towards reconciliation.

In the text, I use local and regional examples, which, although not recent or unknown, and previously analyzed by art historians and cultural theorists,[14] represent relevant arguments for my thesis. The text is divided into two parts: in the first, I provide a comparative overview of the position of the topic in academic historiography at the local and European level; in the second part, I present examples of how cultural practices and artistic expression in the commemoration of the Roma victims of the Holocaust can contribute to a historiographical intervention in the official historical narratives. The research consists of a review of older and recent relevant literature on the topic, a review of bibliographies from Macedonian and other European historiographies *vis-à-vis* Roma history. Data from the reviewed literature are analyzed through the theoretical concepts established in this introduction.

The historical context is an important methodological premise in my argument, therefore, in this section I will briefly point out the most important information and terms on which the historiographical and factual background of the analysis rests:

Roma were among the groups that the Nazi regime (1933–1945) and its partner regimes singled out for persecution and murder before and during World War II. Roma are pejoratively referred to as Zigeuner in German and as "Gypsies" in English. German authorities murdered tens of thousands of Roma in the German-occupied territories of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and thousands more in the killing centers at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. It is still not known precisely how many Roma were killed in the Holocaust. This reflects the fact that we cannot know for certain how many Roma lived in Europe before World War II; one estimate puts the prewar Romani population at between 1 and 1.5 million. Another reason why the number of victims is uncertain is the late recognition and recording of the genocide; survivor testimony and forensic evidence are still emerging to testify to local events. On the basis of the evidence available to date, historians estimate that the Germans and their allies killed between 250,000 and 500,000 European Roma during World War II. The courts in the Federal Republic of Germany determined that all measures taken against Roma before 1943 were legitimate official measures against persons committing criminal acts, not the result of policy driven by racial prejudice. This decision effectively closed the door to restitution for thousands of Roma victims, who had been incarcerated, forcibly sterilized, and deported out of Germany for no specific crime.[15]

In this text, I use the term Roma, as I focus on the experiences of groups self-identified as Roma in North Macedonia and in Europe. I also use the term Sinti, when reviewing European literature relevant to the research that mentions groups of Roma and Sinti. In quotations, I always use the original terminology, spelling and capitalization.

When writing this text, I represent a non-Roma voice. As a matter of fact, as an ethnic Macedonian, I belong to the dominant group and culture in my county. However, I would like to state an additional characterization of my work, by taking a firm position as a non-Roma ally. I admit that this way of personal (political) positioning through the research process was for me a necessary form of writing this paper, in which my approach itself mirrors and aligns with many of the main arguments. This meta-commentary on the "aesthetics of a paper" is in fact relevant for me as a non-Roma and a non-artist, to position myself in such a way as to be able to talk on issues regarding Roma and art, at least as a demonstration of intellectual coherence with the topic of cultural and artistic practices on multiple fronts.

### The position in academic historiography: comparison of local and European narratives

In the beginning of the academic research on the Roma Holocaust and during the creation of the first bibliographies dedicated to the history of the Roma genocide, at first it seemed that there were no more than about 20 references, and all of which were scientific articles. The first book that mentions the genocide of the Roma and Sinti is by Raul Hilberg, titled *The Destruction of the European Jews*, from 1961.[16] The first book specifically dedicated to the persecution of the Roma and Sinti was published in 1964, in German, in the compilation of the Criminology Series, published by the German Society for Criminology, edited by Hans-Joachim Döring, in 1964.[17] During the 1980s, the first edited volumes were published by academic publishers, making the generally neglected topic more visible. Michael Zimmermann's book, published in 1996 in German, represented a major achievement in research devoted to understanding Nazi policies against Roma and Sinti.[18] Between 1999 and 2006, a joint program of the Center de Recherches Tsiganes and the University of Hertfordshire compiled a collection of essays, edited in three volumes,[19] covering the subject from various aspects of the Roma persecution in European history.[20]

In the Macedonian academic canon, the history of the Roma is found in a book published in Romani, in 2014,[21] called *Istorija e romengiki Makedonija thaj ano Balkani* (The history of the Roma people in Macedonia and in the Balkans) by Milan Boshkoski, Dragi Gjorgiev and Trajko Petrovski.[22] The topic is also found in several articles in the national journals of history.[23]

Until recently, the Roma experience in the Second World War was simply integrated into the history of "other victims" or the "mosaic of victims", terms coined in Holocaust studies built on a circular model with a center and peripheries. Examples that deviate from this pattern are the Ctibor Nečas monographs from the 1970s,[24] translated from Czech to English only in 1999; Erika Thurner's research on the Austrian Roma during National Socialism in 1983, translated in 1998.[25] On a regional level, the book edited by Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva, and published by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) in 2020,[26] represents a big leap forward in research on the topic of Roma Resistance throughout History.

The first book that specifically addresses the history of the persecution of the Roma during World War II, a narrative that theorists call "independent Roma Holocaust historiography", is *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* by Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, in 1972.[27] Here, for the first time, a methodological procedure suitable for the context of the researched topic, and a critique of memory policies, is found.[28]

According to researchers of bibliographies on the history of the Roma Holocaust,[29] there are two basic and very different types of document collections on Roma: those that have a public, almost folk origin, and those produced by scholars who have "researched the Roma" (in a racial and ethnic sense). Here, we must also mention the situation with the extraordinary archival collection on the persecution of Roma and Sinti, collected by Grattan Puxon, located in the Vienna Library. The collection was collected and assembled in the 1960s, and has 611 references, probably the richest collec-

tion of its kind. However, according to the Library's data, the collection lacks a detailed inventory, which is evidence of a lack of interest by researchers and curators.[30]

In the last two decades of the 20th century, there has been a shift in the politics of remembrance of the persecution and genocide against the Roma and Sinti. One can follow that process from February 1982, when the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma was founded in Heidelberg (Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma), as a federal association, which since then has represented the interests of the Sinti and the Roma, who live in Germany In March 1982, the then Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt received the delegation of the Central Council, and he was the first German statesman to express a political recognition that genocide was committed against the Sinti and Roma because of racial ideology. In 1990, the Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma (Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma, Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma) was founded: on a European scale, this is a unique institution, which has since been supported by the German Federal government. In March 1997, in an area of 700 square meters, the first permanent exhibition on the Sinti and Roma Holocaust was established, which was handed over to the public by the then President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Roman Herzog. The documentation center cooperates closely with national and international memorial museums and with other national Roma and Sinti organizations. A significant result of this cooperation is the permanent exhibition in the Auschwitz State Museum realized by the Heidelberg Center: since August 2001, in "Block 13" of the former "main camp", the European dimension of the genocide against the Roma and Sinti has been documented.[31]

Since the 1990s, an interpellation in the terminology has also been observed: scholars begin to use Romani terms to describe the suffering of Roma and Sinti: Porjamos (meaning: swallowing, rape, annihilation), Samudaripen and Kali Trash (meaning: black death, association of black SS uniforms). One of the first references to the use of a specific term for Roma suffering in Nazi persecution is Henry R. Huttenbach's 1991 article,[32] which introduces the term Porjamos into scholarly discourse , although, it should be pointed out that there is no consensus on the terminological determination of Roma suffering.

In regional terms , the last in-depth study on the Roma Holocaust in Southeast European countries was published in 2022, by The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities and the Roma Program at the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University. It represents a *state of the art* study with contributions by a transdisciplinary team of authors, on the topics of methodology, national statistics, commemoration and denial.[33]

Attempts for creating, or including the narratives of Roma Holocaust in the course of national historical cumulative knowledge, encounter a double challenge – to recognize the roles of minorities in the historical corpus of national historiography and to recognize the specific and mostly suppressed history of the Roma population. Various labels, such as "forgotten", "under-studied", "hidden", or "neglected" victims, have been used to indicate the need for such in-depth knowledge. Nevertheless, in order to deepen the studies, the Roma must be recognized as historical and political subjects. For decades, attempts have been hindered by historiographical narratives that traditionally give secondary importance to the fate of minorities in the national corpus. Only in the last decade have expert studies been produced that use appropriate theoretical and methodological tools to approach the topic.

### Cultural practices and artistic expression in the creation of historical narratives

National institutions that institutionalize historiographical narratives and manage top-down forms of memory politics, often see minorities as subjects that do not belong to the national historical corpus. In the realm of contemporary art, where discursive questioning and social critique are frequent tools of expression, one can find the antithesis of the former: the resistance to the established politics of memory is clearly expressed, usually in a subversive way, whereby the victims (in humanitarian disasters, wars, genocide) become visible and socially and politically tangible. This *artistic-cum-commemorative* practices demand that the unrecognized pain and trauma, anonymous, individual or collective, become part of the discourse of the public sphere. At the same time, they propose a redefinition of memory politics, with a legitimate claim for their own place in the historiographical and commemorative canon.

I have found considerable evidence for the effectiveness of artistic intervention as a form of resistance in the politics of memory in the contemporary performative art in Europe, which even manages to redefine academic writing and publishing through cultural interventions.[34] Here, two examples of resistance to the politics of memory will be cited through the association of artistic expression with commemorative practices. These examples derive from the work of Alfred Urlich and the work of Ceija Stojka.

In 2000, contemporary artist Alfred Urllich performed and documented *Perlen vor die Säue* (Casting Pearls Before Swine), in the Czech Republic, in front of the site of the Lety, Romani concentration camp on the outskirts of Prague ("Lety u Písku") , run entirely by Czechs during the Second World War.[35] The title of the performance derives from the decision of the state institutions in 1970, to use the place as a pig farm, completely omitting the history of the place as a site of a mass crime. Another 'forgotten' aspect concerns the question of responsibility, because the camp was run by the Czechs, not by the occupiers. The performance consists of an open *mise-en-scène* where the author throws pearls from the necklace of his sister-victim in front of the doors of the former camp. It is fascinating how the performance unveils the state's stake in the politics of

memory, motivated by the national desire to avoid facing the past. The "dirt" of crime committed by social leaders and institutions in the past, has turned it into another form of "dirt" in the present (farm for animals, pigs).[36] However, this performance prompted other organizations and activists to lobby for the farm's removal. In 2018, the state bought the pig farm, and the Museum of Romani Culture in the Czech Republic announced that a dignified memorial would be built on the site by 2023.[37]

Ceija Stojka (1933-1933), an Austrian Roma, was an artist and activist, dedicated to the commemoration of the genocide against the Roma. In her work, she especially treats the aspects of shame, denial and reconciliation with the past and Roma history. Particularly important and pioneering were her exhibitions entitled: *Sogar der Tod hat Angst vor Auschwitz* (Even Death is Afraid of Auschwitz).[38] Particularly important are her three autobiographies, which gave voice to the surviving Roma victims of the concentration camps.[39] Timea Junghaus, a Roma art historian and activist in the field of culture, also a commentator and curator of the works by Cheija Stojka, comments on the interesting phenomenon of commemoration and visibility of Roma victims outside the institutionalized academic narratives. In her text, *Auschwitz only sleeps*, a syntagm expressed by Cheija Stojka, she highlights the appearance of themes like shame, hatred, facing the past, guilt and reconciliation. Junghaus uses a term that perfectly summarizes the situation of the Roma in modern states, namely "conflict trap". The term indicates the collapse of socio-cultural, economic, political and legal processes in society (relevant to the Roma), as they are always instigated and directed outside of the specific context of the group that they affect.[40]

According to a recent study, the trend of redefining the academic canon primarily through writing oral history and family documentation through artistic expression continues:

> "Some contributors chose a personal writing style, to either reflect on their family's experiences of persecution during World War II or as a way to speak for their community collectively. For instance, Vera Lacková writes about her great-grandfather in her chapter "How I became a partisan. Filmmaking as a resistance strategy against oblivion". In an engaging and personal essay, Lacková shares her journey of becoming "one of the few female Roma filmmakers".[41]

After reviewing the examples in this section, I conclude that there is a clear interaction between artistically engaged commemorative practices and the academic/research publications/production by independent and institutional researchers. The impact of these practices is seen in the production, reception and use of discursive institution-based (museum or other) exhibitions related to the Nazi repression of the Roma. In this context, in April 2016, the exhibition *The Holocaust against Roma and Sinti and today's racism in Europe* was held in Skopje.[42] The exhibition aimed to document the National Socialist genocide against the Roma. This exhibition was the largest of its kind, owned by the Sinti and Roma Documentation and Culture Center in Heidelberg, Germany. The arrival of the exhibition in North Macedonia and its location in a key public and educational institution such as the National and University Library in Skopje, provided a space to discuss the connection between the discursive tools of museums and other relevant institutions, as part of the system of memory politics and the historiographical methodology used to address the issues of the genocide of the Roma in Macedonia during the Second World War in national memory politics. Another example, which helps to support and conclude my previous statement, is the commemorative event held on the occasion of the Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day, on August 26, 2022. Representatives of the Roma community from the Institute for Research and Policy Analysis - "Romaliitiko" and the Association of Roma Folk Art Society - "Romano Ilo" organized a commemorative event, employing the kind of artistic approach outlined above, which involved the performance of dramatic monologues entitled "Nacisticki ostatoci" (What remained after Nazism).[43] This commemorative event was held in the Museum of the Macedonian Struggle in Skopje – which was until recently a "stronghold" of the dominant official Macedonian narrative about the past.

**Conclusion**

The epistemic position of the historical experiences of the Roma in the Holocaust and their persecution during the Second World War, in general, and in the Macedonian context specifically, is a position that can be defined through the concept of epistemological injustice. This means that discrimination spreads from the field of social relations, to the places of production and distribution of knowledge. The policies of memory towards the Roma experience in the Holocaust are developed around the concepts of corporeality and race, and very rarely through the concepts of agency, resistance, and political organization. Regarding research methods, there is a great need to set up appropriate paradigms through which a language can be enabled to articulate Roma narratives about the past in the set of the official (national) narratives.

In this text, the main comparison referred to two different standpoints: the position of the subject of the Roma Holocaust in the official historiography of Europe and the commemorative practices produced by independent actors from the Roma "communities of memory". Between these two points, I conclude that there is also a "third position", consisting of stakeholders from independent civil society. Its rise can be followed from the end of the 1990s, with the development of contemporary forms of civil society in Europe and specifically related to social organizations addressing the social challenges of the Roma. In regard to this "third position", it is important to mention other actors - the "non-Roma allies". These actors are taking a politically or activist-engaged position and manage to participate in the promotion of aware-

ness of the epistemic injustice in the distribution of knowledge, as part of the strategies for building equality policies in the present.

Finally, one of the main, perhaps the most important, epistemic potential of historical research on the Roma Holocaust is precisely the interaction of Roma "communities of memory" with other subjects in the system of memory politics. Commemorative practices that foster discursive, visual, photographic and performative language, and associated methods can connect the groups in public communication and discussion. The "new Roma historiography", created in this cultural intervention, proves that the historicization of human disasters does not have to have an archival basis, or a canon-like preposition in national symbolic capital. This is especially true when it comes to groups in a *subaltern*[44] position. The lesson is that sources of primary importance can be generated from the very cultural practices through which the remembrance is built and this brings to the front a universal dimension to the history of humanity. In the Macedonian context, commemorative events connected to the Roma Holocaust combine artistic elements in an academic-didactic frame, in spaces that hold national symbolic capital, such as educational institutions, museums, libraries, etc.

References:

1 There is no consensus regarding the term that should be used to describe the mass atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi regime and their allies against the Roma and Sinti people in Europe. In fact, this is one of the most sensitive, normatively loaded, and controversial topics in political, institutional, and intergovernmental spaces. See: Margareta Matache, Gabriela Ghindea and Matei Demetrescu (eds), *The Roma Holocaust/ Roma Genocide in Southeastern Europe. Between oblivion, acknowledgment, and distortion* (New York; Boston: The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities, The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University, 2022), 4-8. In my text, I use the term Roma Holocaust because of the historiographical connotations of the topic, i.e. the Roma Holocaust as a topic in the system of politics and memory.

2 Another term used is the "forgotten Holocaust". In a recent study the editors point out that: „Romani history remains largely unknown, invisible and marginalised in national and European canons of history For years, the 20th-century genocide of the Roma was referred to as the "forgotten Holocaust". Indeed, for decades it was." See: Mirga-Kruszelnicka, Anna and Jekatyerina Dunajeva. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva, *"Introduction",* In *Re-thinking Roma Resistance: Recounting Stories of Strength and Bravery,* ed. by Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka and Jekatyerina Dunajeva (Berlin; Bucharest: European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), 2020), 13-27. (not standard Chicago style for chapter or part of an edited book - https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html)

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**Monika Weychert**

# Performative Politics and Art

In 1934, the Sinto boxer Johann Wilhelm 'Rukeli' Trollmann entered the ring with his hair dyed blonde and his skin whitened with flour. He appeared at the final fight in his professional boxing career not only transformed into a 'white' person, but he also followed a strictly defined scenario. A caricature of a 'model Aryan', Trollmann hardly moved and simply absorbed the blows of his opponent Gustav Eder. As long as Trollmann fought as a Sinto, he was the real winner, but when he transformed himself into a 'real German' he intentionally performed an act of capitulation. Johann Wilhelm 'Rukeli' Trollmann – a German Sinto, an award-winning boxer – carried out a political performance at a boxing championship. His act in the boxing ring displayed a striking dichotomy between the recognition and indication of 'inferiority' (appearing as a light-skinned and blonde 'Nordic') and the concurring sense of 'equality' (as a human, sportsman, German citizen) that drew attention to the 'inferiority' imposed by the majority society. Trollmann wished to demonstrate that his 'Romaniness' could be viewed, in more favourable circumstances, as a strong point, enriching German sports. As a Roma citizen of the German state, he contributed to the sporting achievements of his fatherland, or the land he was born in. The case of the Roma boxer highlights the problem of the changing nature of visibility of minority groups. Before the war, Trollmann was immensely popular among Germans, as were many other Roma people providing entertainment to the majority society (including musicians, actors, fortune-tellers, and sportsmen). However, as soon as he surpassed those considered autochthones, his 'Romaniness' became hypervisible, separating him from other sportsmen and other mechanisms concerning outsiders or pariahs'(those 'not-being-at-home') took over : their citizenship turned out to be conditional, not equal to that of the autochthones 'at home'. In those days, strangers in Germany were beginning to be seen as an 'ulcer' – a foreign body in the collective organism of the nation. Not yet the accused or the scapegoat, the pariah was now the suspect. Trollmann brought the mechanism of racial persecution to light before the murderous system of the Third Reich gathered steam.

He was in the ring to symbolically to defend his German cruiserweight title won on 9 June 1933 in a fight against the German boxer Adolf Witt. At the 1933 boxing championship, Trollmann had initially been disqualified at the request of Georg Radamm, a Nazi and chairman of the German Pugilism Association because Radamm could not let the German championship be won by a Sinto. The decision sparked a protest among the audience which had had no doubt as to Trollmann's superiority and the hugely popular sportsman was announced as the winner. Within a week, he was stripped of the title he had legitimately won. Bearing all that in mind, Trollmann knew better than to expect fair judgement when he stepped into the ring to fight Gustav Eder in 1934, in the era of emerging Naziism and so he staged a parody of a boxing match. His transgressive act predated similar performances in sports such as Jessie Owens criticising Franklin Delano Roosevelt after the Berlin Olympics (1936); Kathrine Switzer running the men-only Boston Marathon (1967); Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their gloved fists in the Black Panther salute at the Olympics in Mexico City (1968); Władysław Kozakiewicz making the bras *d'honneur* gesture at the Moscow Olympics (1980); Kseniya Ryzhova and Tatyana Firova kissing in protest against the law discriminating against LGBT+ people in Russia (2013), and so on. With extensive media coverage, sporting events offer a brilliant opportunity for reconfiguration of visibility.[1]

This kind of rebellion – performative politics – was to become characteristic of the struggle for Roma rights, which have been highlighted by events such as the hunger strike at Dachau (1980), the occupation of the Tübingen University archive (1981) or the protests in Lety that went on for years. According to Elżbieta Matynia,[2] a mass of bodies acting together for a common cause in a public space brings about an event akin to the Bakhtinian carnival. For a moment, the world can be seen 'upside down'. It transpires that the world can be changed. The biggest transformation occurs in the individual participants now capable of giving expression to their suffering and receiving support and hope. Ewa Majewska, contrarily, highlights the idea of agency: the resistance of the weak, the resistance of simple activities, simple people and everyday life that turns in an avalanche-like fashion into mass resistance strictly because it is founded on ordinary and familiar situations everyone can relate to, rather than on heroic gestures.[3] Famous people as well as anonymous activists – folk minority counterpublics – were instrumental in achieving the goals of Romani people: in 1982, their status as victims of the genocide because of their race was acknowledged, while a memorial to the victims of the Roma Genocide is going to be built at the site of the former pig farm in Lety.

It should be stressed that Johann Trollmann's act can be seen not only as political performance, but also bordered on socially engaged art seen as a civil activity that leads to a revision of the distribution of visibilities while giving voice to the subaltern. This is distinctly discernible in the performances of Delaine Le Bas, Tamara Moyzes, Emília Rigová,

Selma Selman, Mihaela Drăgan, Franciska Farkas, Kristóf Horváth, Candis Nergaard, Sandra Selimović and Simonida Selimovi. At the same time, such artistic practices can be likened to actions taken up by activists employing performative artistic means. This is no longer "art for art's sake," not even "art for people's sake," but simply "people's art." For Jan Cohen-Cruz, this is a confrontational form of art meant to mobilise the audience emotionally and ideologically to take specific action in response to an urgent social issue.[4] It is clear to us nowadays that an artist can be "non-professional"[5] and as such uncover some shocking truths about society. Like 'Rukeli' Trollmann entering the ring with his hair dyed blonde and his skin powdered white with flour.

As the Nazi repression against the Roma intensified, Trollmann took action to protect his family: his wife Olga Frieda Bilda (who was German) and their daughter Rita. In an attempt to ensure their safety, he divorced Olga and, in 1938, underwent sterilisation. He tried to hide; the German boxing champion fought in market squares to earn money. Nevertheless, he was soon tracked down and forced to join the army: he was sent to fight in Poland, Belgium, France, and at the Eastern Front. In 1941, he suffered an arm injury. Imprisoned in the Neuengamme concentration camp, he was made to train kapos and to fight for the entertainment of the camp staff. In February 1943, Trollmann disappeared from the camp at Neuengamme. The official camp files state that he died of heart attack and for this reason February 1943 was for a long time believed to be the date of Rukeli's death. In 2008, however, Roger Repplinger[6] found evidence that the Roma boxing champion died a year later at a totally different location as Trollmann had been transferred under a different name to the Wittenberge concentration camp in Mecklenburg. It was possibly an attempt to save his life, made by the resistance movement at the camp. Unfortunately, a boxing fan recognised him there. He was forced to confront in the ring Emil Cornelius, a prominent kapo supervising the penal commando. Despite his emaciation, Rukeli won the fight, thus sealing his own fate. He was assigned to perform the hardest labour and when he failed, he was beaten by Cornelius. The Roma boxer was tortured to death, his body was dumped into a mass grave and burnt. For several decades, he was only remembered by his family. This changed in 2003, when the German Boxing Association decided to return to Johann Trollmann the championship he had won on 9 June 1933, and to include him into the pantheon of German boxers from which he had been absent for so many years. The Association passed his championship belt to his relatives. Trollmann's name was given to a street in Hannover, while his life and attitude became the subject matter of books and plays: Rike Reiniger's monodrama *Zigeuner-Boxer;* Stephanie Bart's *Deutscher Meister* in 2014; Dario Fo's *Razza di zingaro* in 2016; Jud Nirenberg's *Johann Trollmann and Romani Resistance* to the Nazis in 2016. Feature and para-documentary films were made about him, and recently his character has also been present in a popular series titled *Babilon-Berlin. Bewegung Nurr*, an art group based in Berlin and Dresden, dedicated a long-running project titled 9841 (his prisoner number at the Neuengamme concentration camp) to Trollmann. They sent an art installation that took the form of a mobile monument to Johann 'Rukeli' Trollmann on a tour across Germany, which visited Berlin, Hannover and Dresden.

It is not surprising that his figure makes such an impact on the imagination of many artists. Trollmann was a pariah in Germany society. The key to understanding the pariah status, the status of a social outcast, is the lack of belonging, separation or 'not-being-at-home'. The figure of the pariah is always constructed from the outside: it is those who feel at home somewhere that decide who is considered to be an outcast. It is a status of suspension: between inclusion and exclusion – always in the liminal phase. On the one hand, the pariah can never stop endeavouring to become part of society; on the other, their status never changes no matter how exceptional their talent and achievements. It should be stressed that in none of the periods (in Nazi Germany before the war, during the war, and after the war until 2003) was he treated simply as a successful sportsman, a fine soldier, or a good citizen. His visibility was never neutral, or equal. Trollmann was either hypervisible or invisible. When his body was burnt, the memory of him also faded away. The lack of memory of Trollmann was part of the lack of memory of the Roma Genocide. He remained invisible for a long time. It was only at the turn of the centuries that the forgotten hero was rescued from oblivion as a result of the long political struggle of the Roma to restore the memory of the Roma Genocide. Interestingly, when he was brought back, the reflection on his fate led to different conclusions in majority societies and in Roma communities. In the first case, Trollmann is viewed as an exception (he was a Sinto, but despite his 'suspicious' descent, he behaved decently and bravely in a time of trial); in the second case, he represents the war-time experiences of thousands of Roma people who fought against the Nazis using all possible, and frequently, untypical, means – he is a hero of the Roma resistance.

For this reason, his figure often features in artworks created by Roma artists, e.g. Katarzyna Pollak's *Holocaust Series*. However, it is the feminist approach to his story adopted by Candis Nergaard (COME OUT NOW! 1st Roma Biennale, April 7th 2018, Maxim Gorki Theater - Studio Я) that seems the most intriguing to me. Nergaard presented a performance entitled *Love Letter To Rukeli*. Here is a short excerpt from the performance:

**SPOKEN TEXT:**

As a child,
I was always unstable, unsteady on my feet,
Small for my age.
Single parent family, I wanted to feel safe.
I'd walk about pretending I was wearing a boxing robe, like a magic cloak.
I'd imagine I was wearing 'Ruke-

li's boxing robe.
Johann Trollman: 'Rukeli' - Look him up.
Nicknamed from 'Ruk', meaning Tree in Sinti Romanes & also my dialect of English Romany.
No one could touch me.

I'd be alright if you don't touch me,
but you if you touch me I'll go, (go: indicating provocation)
so don't touch me.

I wanted to be like 'Rukeli'. Strong.
Rooted to the ground.
Strong in my roots.
The Gypsy boxer. Dancing rings around you.
Cloaked by Rukeli. Like Rukeli.
I imagined him. I imagine….. I am him.
(…)

**SPOKEN TEXT POEM:**

To the god of pain,
What makes a man still stand with nothing to gain,
A fight,
Lost to family, in vain?
Tell me why you reign,
And rain. Pour,
On the poor
No, the Proud. On looks the crowd.
'Rukeli'
No protection
No shroud
A clown?
No. A painted face of white, on brown.
Skin and hair. Proud.
If I could, I'd send a cloak or shroud,
they say for every cloud…..
He speaks silently. Loud.
No shovel will ever beat this strong 'Ruk'. Even down.
Fibrous roots, so bound.
Stretch through time,
to me.
My mind rewinds, my heart unbinds.

*(The girl puts on a lace white skirt and removes boxing shortswhile saying the next verse)*

**SPOKEN TEXT:**

Now people say:
You are not very lady like!.
No.
I'd rather fight. Or be ready to….
Ready.
Ready in the *light*.
Spar through time. To fight[7].

Candis Nergaard's work clearly addresses the racist anti-Roma narratives – pre-war articles and caricatures depicting Trollmann. As a member of a minority, he was supposed to possess female traits. His boxing style was contemptuously nicknamed "Gypsy dancer". However, Nergaard stages a reversed situation. She is a woman drawing inspiration from the power and fighting style of the Roma hero. She cuts across the stereotypes about the Roma people, across what is female and what is stereotypically male. Angela Davis stated that the division of tasks among slaves was not hierarchical, and it can, thus, be safely assumed that the principle of equality governed the life in their communities. As a result, women were able to develop certain personality traits that were absent from their white, female contemporaries.[8] In addition, Amelia Jones points out that when a performance features a female body, the body of a queer, non-white woman highlighting hyper-masculinity, acting against a normative subject (an honest white middle-class male subject related to the category of artist in Western culture), the hidden logic of exclusion emphasising the modernist art history is exposed.[9] Nergaard's performance makes use of both these mechanisms, revealing the process of development and growing up of a young Roma girl. A subaltern girl takes advantage of the opportunity to speak as a counter-public. Wearing a ballet dress or a boxer's costume, she accepts the legacy left by Johann 'Rukeli' Trollmann.

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**Mihail Stojanoski**

# School segregation, otherness and the Roma community in Europe

## Introduction

A trope which has been repeated many times over is that the Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe. According to a report by Amnesty International, their number is estimated to be between 10 to 12 million, two thirds of whom are estimated to live in Central and Eastern Europe.[1]

Europe's history is marred with conflict based on perceived "otherness" and the Roma have, unfortunately, been on the receiving end of it on many occasions. This is still the key reason behind the differential treatment of Roma which, throughout history, has included enslavement, persecution, expulsion and culminated in the mass extermination of Roma during World War II, where hundreds of thousands saw their end alongside European Jews and other persecuted communities.

However, Europe has been trying to address these events. To this end, there have been endless declarations and undertakings to eliminate (Roma) discrimination. In addition, various inclusion programs have been put in place and some of them have had (some) success in achieving real equality. However, in spite of this, the "otherness" persists, and results in different forms of discrimination in ways often more subversive than open. Evidence to this end is plentiful. For example, while making up around 0.1% of the general population in the United Kingdom, Roma account for 6% of the prison population.[2] Another example is the extensive amount of hate speech and fake news about Roma, online and offline, which has sometimes even ended in violence.[3]

In this article, a specific manifestation of Europe's prejudices and antigypsyism will be examined, namely the educational segregation of Roma children. This is not a problem which is frequently seen in news headlines and does not generate broad interest as it does nor concern the lives of the vast majority of Europeans. In this article, the current situation regarding the school segregation of Roma children in Europe will be presented, with a particular focus on Central and Eastern Europe, in order to give a broad overview of the (legal) measures undertaken and try to find a way forward, while at the same time assessing how these experiences shape the shared experiences of Roma living in Europe today.

## School segregation and fighting back

As mentioned above, discrimination of Roma is present in all corners of Europe and school segregation is but one of its many aspects. However, it seems like it is more prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe, an observation which finds support in the case-law of the ECtHR.[4] What makes it particularly poignant is that it affects school children who are taught that *"they should be with their own"* because *"they are not deserving of being in the same class with the other children."* What is more, segregated schools and classes almost always receive a lower quality education than the rest of the children. This blatant racism is best described in the words of Matache and Barbu:

> "[t]he quality of education in segregated schools and classes is far lower than that in mainstream schools […] Romani children are prevented from accessing opportunities to build reliable networks and acquire social capital. Moreover, the rights and dignity of Romani children are harmed, as whatever the various justifications used for segregating Romani children, the crux of the matter is a deeply embedded notion of Roma inferiority and non-Romani superiority […]."[5]

These power relations in Europe are nothing new and there is evidence to indicate that Romani children have been segregated in European schools for at least a century.[6] What is stupefying is that in spite of the large number of negative historical examples, school segregation

of Roma children is something that is still being tolerated on European soil in the twenty-first century. A report commissioned by the European Union discusses the issue of school segregation at length, outlining the complex problems faced by Roma in the field of education, among other things, finding that there was evidence of extreme levels of segregation of Roma children in both the old and new member-States of the Union.[7] The official reasons for placement of Roma children in (segregated) classes intended for children suffering from a disability were either insufficient knowledge of the local language or low performance on psychological tests, both of which were based on dubious or culturally-biased testing methods. Furthermore, there is also the practice of segregation of Roma children in separate schools, the justification often being the higher concentration of Roma living in a certain neighbourhood. The report finally established that this was the first steppingstone in a vicious circle where fewer Roma children continue to secondary and higher education, and, as they subsequently have poorer chances in the labour market, the cycle of generational depravity becomes complete.[8]

A related problem for the Roma is low school attendance. In the Western Balkans, 60% of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali young people do not attend upper secondary school while only 3% of the Roma complete high school in Montenegro.[9] The numbers and experiences are similar around the region. In Romania, 32 % of Roma between three and six years of age are enrolled in preschool education, as compared to 77 percent of their non-Roma neighbours. Similarly, only 10 percent of Roma complete secondary education while 58 percent of non-Roma complete the same level of education.[10]

As outlined above, these numbers are the result of systemic racism in the educational systems going back generations. Although empowering young Roma could benefit society, it seems that deep seated feelings held by the *gadjo* majority have not permitted this to happen.

Having said the above, the following question can be asked: are we doing anything about this?

Political declarations have been plentiful. Although one can argue that they have had a general impact on raising awareness about antigypsyism, they cannot compensate for the lack of concrete actions. The 8th of April, which is international Roma day, is the perfect occasion to make such promises and take photos with impoverished Roma communities. These types of events have become so void of meaning that some Roma communities have begun to mistake Roma NGO activists for politicians and refuse to talk to them, as they do not wish to participate in tokenism during political campaigns and otherwise remain forgotten.[11]

Grassroots organisations, lawyers and activists have started slowly but gradually to challenge the status quo through litigation, advocacy and research. For example, D.H. v. the Czech Republic was a milestone victory against school segregation, one brought before the European Court of Human Rights by the European Roma Rights Centre, and adjudicated by the Court in 2007. This case is important in many ways – it clarified that school segregation of children amounted to discrimination, even when this is the result of policies which do not specifically target one community but end up affecting that community disproportionately ("indirect" discrimination). It further shed light on the general situation of Roma in Europe, stating that they *"have become a specific type of disadvantaged and vulnerable minority who require special protection."*[12]

Similar cases followed. In 2010, the European Court of Human Rights in its Grand Chamber case Oršuš v. Croatia found that Croatian school authorities had placed Romani children in "special" classes for years and justified their actions by alleging that the children had language difficulties. It found that several elementary schools had applied the unlawful practice of placement of Roma children in separate classes, which. although not intentional, was linked with non-Roma parents' protests a few years earlier, which sought to deny entry to Roma children[13] and resulted in overall lower quality education for Roma children.[14] The Croatian government has since taken measures which were considered sufficient to close the execution of this judgment entirely - a feat that should not go unmentioned.

Preliminary research done as part of an ongoing mass complaints project at the European Roma Rights Centre, currently running in three Western Balkans countries, indicates that the trend of school segregation is much more widespread. However, this is not a topic that interests audiences, and given that it does not make for an attractive or "clickable" headline, few journalists take interest.

A Roma rights activist based in Serbia stated that the phenomenon of school segregation is much more prevalent than publicly known or discussed. He further said that in his view, segregation has happened slowly and stealthily, over a period of years, and it has resulted in the segregation of previously mixed elementary schools. In his view, this was the result of deep-rooted racism present among the general population, which is not publicly expressed anymore, but surfaces through the actions of parents, school directors and similar, which taken together, result in segregation.[15]

Interviews and materials indicate that over time the local population in mixed areas begins to recognize certain schools as "Roma schools," which is then followed by a steady decrease of influx of non-Roma children. This is often accompanied by school administration officials in "non-Roma schools" unofficially "guiding" parents of Roma children to enrol their child elsewhere, which, accompanied by some parents' lack of knowledge of their rights, manages to accomplish the racists' goal.[16]

What is encouraging is that the trend of legal victories against segregation seems to be gaining traction. A decision of April 2022 made by the Anti-Discrimination Commission of North Macedonia, following a petition lodged by the European Roma Rights Centre, attests to similar occurrences in two large municipalities in the country. Following the pattern established in D.H., the Commission held

that in the circumstances of the case, the mere fact of having an ethnically-segregated school, regardless of the reasons behind it, amounted to discrimination and ordered that measures be taken to undo it.[17] So far, it has been the only such finding in the country, but such a decision would have been unimaginable 10 years ago.

The above examples are far from being a complete list. The legal challenges to school segregation are promising, but it seems that too little has been done, and too late.

**Segregation as a gateway to otherness**

School segregation is only one element in the tapestry of "otherness" and inferiority that Roma face throughout their entire lives. In a manner of speaking, it prepares them for what is to come. This feeling is sometimes so deeply engrained in individuals, that being denied entry to bars and restaurants is accepted as commonplace, and refusals to lease Roma apartments sometimes go unprotested.[18] Treatment as second-class is so common that people started to believe in it. In the words of Elena Kriglerova, a sociologist based in Bratislava, *"The worst part is the normalisation, this deep conviction that this is basically right."*[19]

Teachers play a critical role in the education process and should be trained to detect differential treatment among students and take steps to ensure that all children feel as equals. Currently, only one in three secondary school teachers in the region feel they are able to work in culturally diverse classrooms.[20] This is a damning statistic but asking teachers to address the problem of segregation alone is unfair and insufficient, as the problem goes much deeper than just teachers.

Sometimes, though, the problems stem from the teachers themselves. As recounted by a Hungarian Roma who suffered segregation during his youth, the non-Roma children's negative attitude was supported and even amplified by the teachers:

> "When we went to eat lunch, they would holler, 'Here come the Gs!', and the teachers would pull aside the non-Gypsy children to tell them they shouldn't sit at the table with us." The same report paints a complete picture of the extent of the segregation: "[T]he Roma children were separated from their non-Roma peers, and not taught according to their abilities. Several children were reported to have attended school before 2002 in the dilapidated old Communist party building and not in the building used for the school. When those children came over into the main building, they were placed into a segregated class there as well. […] It was also brought to light that for a while, Roma children had to attend school only three days per week, but not in the morning period, but in the afternoon between 1 and 3 o'clock. The Roma children were not only segregated from their non-Roma peers during class periods, but also during breaks, at lunch, and during school events."[21]

Experiences are similar in all countries in the region. An Amnesty International report from 2015 brings the following testimony of a Roma girl attending elementary school in Ostrava, the Czech Republic:

> "One day we were listening to a Roma singer in a music class and the teacher asked us if we knew who Roma were and if any of us was Roma. I raised my hand. After that many things have changed. The boy who used to sit next to me pulled away his chair, and said he did not want to sit next to a Gypsy. When we were about to go on a school trip, nobody wanted to share a room with me, so I did not go. None of the girls wanted to be friends with me, but eventually I made one friend and it's alright now. Still, every week I am reminded that I am Roma, that I am dirty and that I am different."[22]

The experiences above offer only a taste of the "otherness" that Roma children are introduced to at a very young age. Early-years education is part of a pivotal character-forming experience for all children, and, because of this, segregation has a profound impact on later life experiences by Roma. This eventually leads to the perpetuation of a discourse (still present in North Macedonia, but not only there) which revolves around "yours" and "ours" in the inter-cultural perception of public goods. There are still "their" shops, "their" neighbourhoods, and although society is far from being divided in the absolute sense, "ours" is still preferred to "theirs," by many at least when it comes to schools.[23]

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that education systems in Central and Eastern Europe are becoming more inclusive than they were twenty years ago. Progress is evident - most countries now offer counselling and mentoring at schools, updated examination methods as well as learning assistance. However, this support does not always extend to the most marginalized students, which it should.

Initially, segregated schools appear in Roma dominated or mixed neighbourhoods. As such they are an important building block in the creation of complete racial confinement in these settlements, which is not unlike the one seen during the racial segregation in the United States dating back to the 1950's.[24] These neighbourhoods are often characterized by poor employment opportunities, bad infrastructure and overall decrepitude – all the elements necessary to create and perpetuate the cycle of generational poverty, discussed above.

There is no simple solution to systemic racism, but a good starting point for is for a society to accept that the problem of segregation exists. Then concrete steps can be taken to address segregation at the level of individual schools or municipalities. Elected representatives could take a keener interest in school segregation happening in their constituencies, but without underpinning legislation, which would require regular data collection and monitoring, this is

almost impossible. Another problem with this approach is that collecting data on race also provides the requisite tools to enhance segregation through the imposition of mandatory school catchment areas, and having witnessed the rise of the populist right around Europe, it is a risk that should be taken seriously.

As mentioned above, school segregation is more prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe. This may be accounted for by the size of the Roma community there, but some authors account for this by making reference to politics of industrialization and (forced) sedentarisation of Roma in the Eastern bloc and Yugoslavia. In turn, the end of state socialism resulted in mass unemployment among the already low-skilled Roma and ghettoization of the areas where they were previously encouraged (or rather forced) to settle.[25] This process laid the ground for the emergence of segregated schools today.

**The road ahead**

It is difficult to imagine a simple solution to such a complex problem such as school segregation. Any possible solution would first require recognition of the problem and the will to tackle it, which is something that is rarely present.

One approach that has showed promise is creating a welcoming, non-discriminatory school environment. These types of projects, sometimes referred to as "holistic approaches," often come at the initiative of the schools themselves and involve the parents and children of both Roma and non-Roma backgrounds. They can involve various initiatives to encourage the children to interact and play together, but also teachers making the point to demonstrate tolerance and to punish and discourage bullying and hate speech. Such projects have, in some cases, eventually led to the prevention of segregation.[26] This type of work shows promise but appears insufficient in situations where segregation is already embedded and there is an absence of will or recognition to deal with the problem.

As mentioned above, another approach is to commence data collection on the ethnic composition of schools and its evolution over time. This data should evidence the ethnic composition of students in every class in a given school (also among schools in a given area) at the beginning of the school year, and if the data indicates a tendency of segregation, the students could be reassigned accordingly. As outlined above, this approach carries the risk of backfiring, especially in the hands of the alt-right. On the other hand, without accurate data, identifying the extent of the problem and implementing effective solutions is difficult.

Positive (or affirmative) action should also be part of the solution. Positive measures to ensure an even playing field for Roma children are essential if placing these children in special classes for dubious reasons is to be avoided. In addition, community outreach programs and officers at a municipal level can be introduced in order to ensure that parents of Roma children are not 'discouraged' through unofficial channels from enrolling their children in a particular school. These programs can also offer additional placement and educational advice to disenfranchised families by specifically targeting neighbourhoods that show signs of segregation.

Improving overall school infrastructure should also be considered. Schools in Roma neighbourhoods tend to have poorer quality of education, employ less qualified teachers and have an overall worse infrastructure than other schools. To tackle this problem, the infrastructure should be improved, and measures should be taken to prevent and reduce the turnover of teachers from these schools. This is one way to make schools in Roma-dominated or mixed neighbourhoods attractive for all students. Rotation of teachers in schools within the same geographical area in order to achieve this is also a measure to be considered.

Lastly, as much as they are undesirable, sanctions are the ultimate solution if nothing else works. School directors can be subjected to sanctions where segregation is shown to exist. These can take the form of subsidy deprivations or direct monetary fines. This should be applied delicately, though, in order to avoid the measures having an adverse effect on the quality of education.

All the measures above can work, and have worked, to various degrees. Success stories can be found, but increased evidence of downward trends in some countries often cancel out any progress. Overall, the question remains as to whether there is sufficient will to do what is necessary.

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6 Ibid.

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8 Ibid., 6.

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12 D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic, no. 57325/00 (ECtHR [GC] 13 November 2007). For more details see the ERRC's summary of the case available on http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2945

13 Oršuš and Others v. Croatia, no. 15766/03 (ECtHR [GC] 16 March 2010) paragraphs 154 and 155.

14 Oršuš and Others v. Croatia paragraph 184.

15 Interview with Al., Roma human rights activist based in Serbia.

16 This finds support in the conclusion drawn by Matache and Barbu, (cited above): *"[Segregation] results when education ministries and administrations, school managers, special educators, teachers, and non-Roma parents and peers, reject Romani children attending the same schools and classes as other children."*

17 The decision in question has not been published on the website of the Commission on the date of writing, but the ERRC was notified as the plaintiff.

18 See first-hand testimonies cited in Barbora Černušáková, 'Stigma and Segregation: Containing the Roma of Údol, Czech Republic', *Race & Class* 62, no. 1 (1 July 2020): 46–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396820926916.

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23 This discourse is applicable irrespective of which communities are concerned – Macedonians, Albanians Roma and others have "their" schools. The division is not as profound or geographically delimited as that seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Kosovo, though.

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25 The whole process is undoubtedly marred with racism and the familiar patronization of Roma, which, seen as inferior, had to be forcefully integrated in the "new, modern world." See Giovanni Picker and Krisztian Simon, 'Stuck in Ambivalence - The Segregation of Roma in European Cities', Green European Journal, accessed 1 September 2022, https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/stuck-in-ambivalence-the-segregation-of-roma-in-european-cities/. Further from this source: *"as [Roma] were seen as less deserving as the majority population, they were mainly doing menial tasks, such as cleaning the stairs, guarding the factory, and so on. Moreover, they were very often living segregated from the rest of the population. […] [T]hey wanted them to become more sedentary, but on the other hand, they also didn't want them to lose the typical lifestyle of the "colourful gypsy". This, in turn, has led to the ambivalent effort of incorporating them by keeping them outside […]"*

26 'Strategies and Tactics to Combat Segregation of Roma Children in Schools, Case Studies from Romania, Croatia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Greece' (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights Harvard University, 2015), 18, https://cdn1.sph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2464/2020/01/Roma-Segregation-full-final.pdf.

**The MoCA's Exhibition**

# ALL THAT WE HAVE IN COMMON | SA SO SI AMENGE JEKHETHANE

## 9 November 2022 – 20 February 2023

## Curated by Marki Romanista, Mo Diener, Mira Gakjina, Jovanka Popova

I say no to Identity theft. I say no to who you think I am. I say no to what you think I should look like. The gaze that is put upon us is disrupted.

Delaine Le Bas[1]

Representation fails to capture the affirmed world of difference. Representation has only a single center, a unique and receding perspective, and in consequence a false depth. It mediates everything, but mobilizes and moves nothing.

Gillez Deleuze[2]

'All that We Have in Common' is an exhibition of contemporary international artists, which focuses on the possibilities for sharing different voices and common concerns in the local and global capitalist context.

The project is curated by Mustafa Asan, Mo Diener, Mira Gakjina and Jovanka Popova, and is organised by the Museum of Contemporary Art – Skopje as part of 14th European Nomadic Biennial of contemporary art – Manifesta.

The exhibition includes works from the artists Delaine Le Bas (UK), Ahmet Kadri (North Macedonia), Sead Kazanxhiu (Albania), Durmiš Kjazim (North Macedonia), Robert Gabris and Luboš Kotlár (Slovakia), Roma Jam Session Art Kollective – Mustafa Asan, Mo Diener, Milena Petrovic (North Macedonia / Switzerland / Serbia), Nihad Nino Pusija (Bosnia Herzegovina / Germany), André Jenö Raatzsch (Germany), Emilia Rigova (Slovakia), Ceija Stojka (Austria), Dan Turner (UK).

The exhibition addresses the politics of representation through works of art and practices, and, at the same time, opens up a space to ask ourselves: - What is the world like when it is experienced, developed and lived from the perspective of differences? How do we represent ourselves, which voices do we prefer over others, what can we learn about ourselves through knowing the other?; Can the concept of care through different artistic strategies redefine the boundaries between the bodies, the collective structures, the environment and the different political struggles of the marginalized? At the same time, it considers care as an intimate connection between art and social practices and the possibility for art to discover and nurture new forms of care and recognition, at the intersection between social and political, subjectivity and solidarity within the community.

The Roma community, as an organic part of the space in which the Museum of Contemporary Art is located, is often the subject of political and social upheaval, misinterpretations, speculations, prejudices and stereotypes. The aim of the exhibition is to expand the political imagination beyond the heteronormative policies of representation and through the sharing of knowledge by artists from, and about ,the Roma community, to articulate different ways of self-presentation, to centralize and make visible the marginalized narratives of the Roma, which has been widely ignored and/or been unreachable.

Through the various concerns regarding the identity policies pursued by Roma artists, the exhibition offers the opportunity to equalize and synchronize different socio-political voices and ways of acting in the public sphere, giving visibility to topics that are excluded from the dominant political discourse or are considered ineligible in relation to ethno-narcissism and national fetishes.

Hence, "All That We Have in Common" brings together works that introduce equivalence between different knowledge and association in joint action and provides a common search for a solution by linking different types of crisis - systemic violence, exclusion, and stereotypes of Roma (as in the works of Delaine Le Bas, Roma Jam Session Art Kollective), identity issues, struggles of the marginalized and personal transformations (Durmiš Kjazim and Ahmet Kadri), untold stories and underrepresentation (André Jenö Raatzsch), women and gender issues, LGBT community issues (Robert Gabris and Luboš Kotlár), the Holocaust and its relationship to today's worldwide ultranationalist political ideologies (Ceija Stojka), the war, the migrant crisis (Nihad Nino Pusija), housing issues (Sead Kazanxhiu), and the need for different politics of care (Dan Turner and Emilia Rigova) etc.

The exhibition includes works that show the potential of art as a community and possible viable and positive alternatives for acting on the playing field between the political and the intimate.

The exhibition is part of the Project Manifesta 14 Pristina – Western Balkans and is co-funded by the European Union, and is financially supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia.

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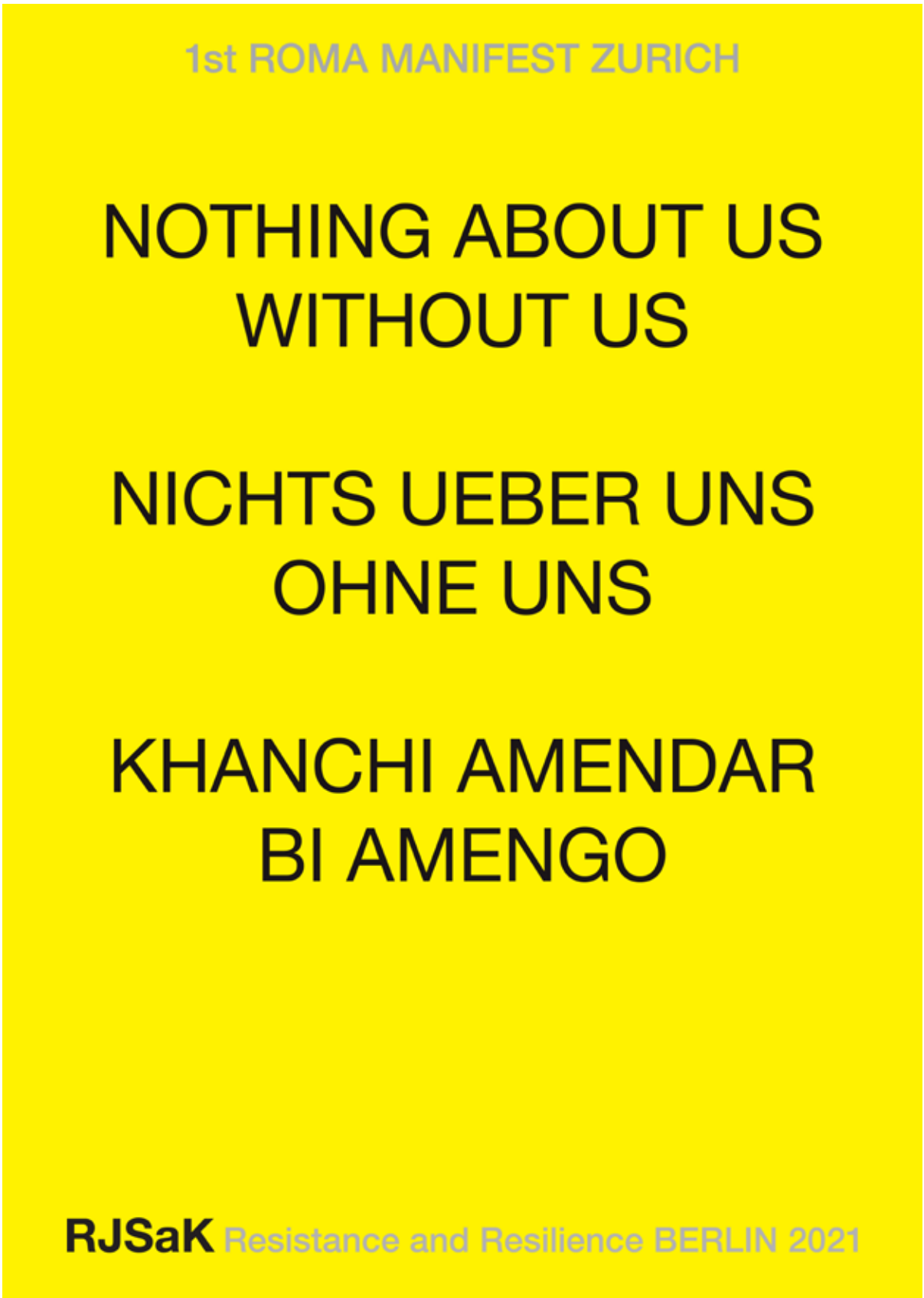
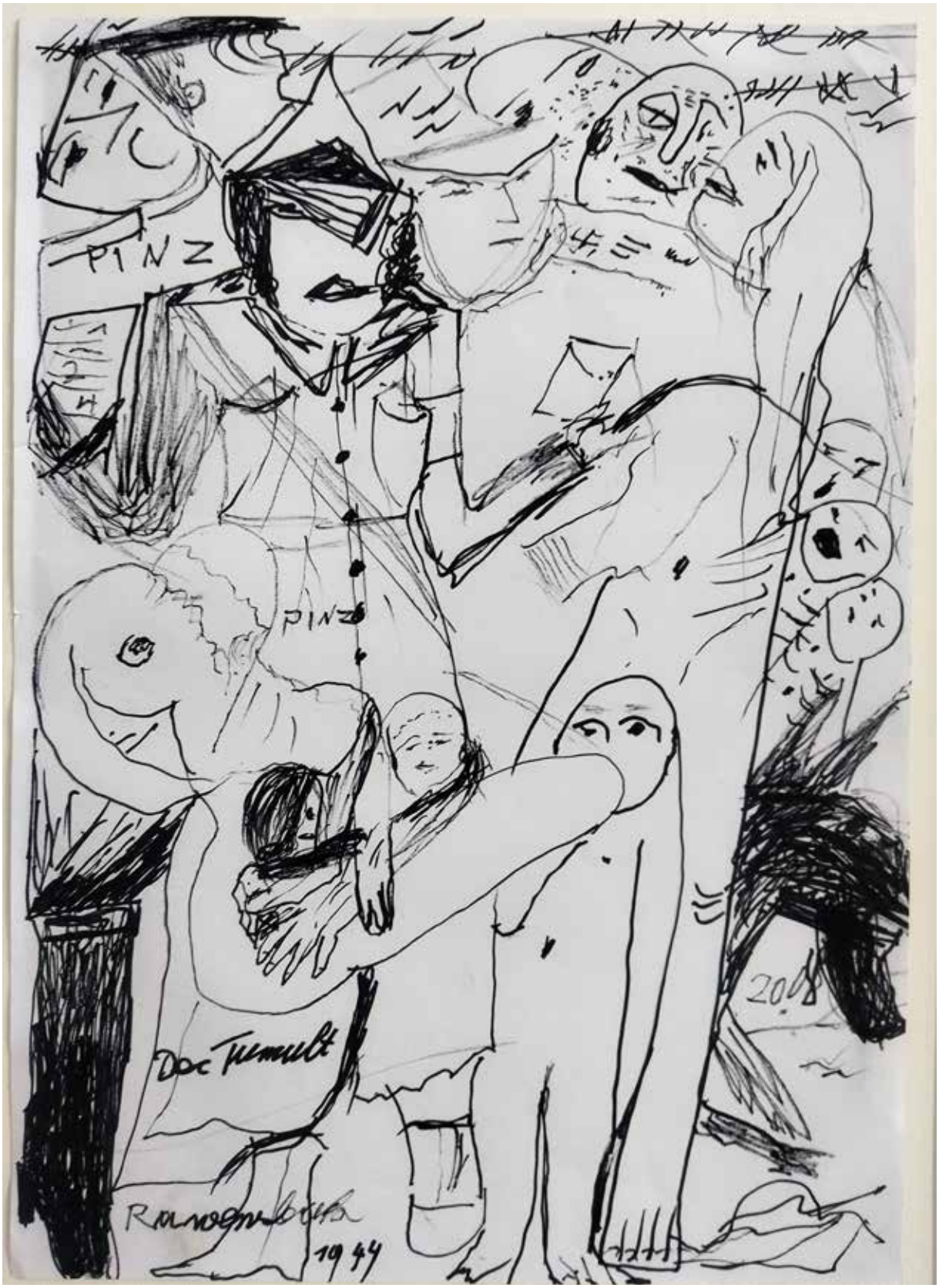



Jam Session Art Collective (Mustafa Asan, Mo Diener, Milena Petrovič), *Open Roma Culture*, 2021, Graphic Art Work.




Ceija Stojka, The tumult, 1944 (Ravensbruck), 2008
Drawing, Ink on paper.
Courtesy: Ceija Stojka International Fund.

Ceija Stojka, Untitled, ref.875
Drawing, mixed technique on paper.
Courtesy: Ceija Stojka International Fund.

Dan Turner, Seeds of Change, 2019
Site-specific installation.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

André Jenö Raatzsch, Rewritable Pictures, 2010, Video.

1 ROMA MANIFEST ZURICH

# ART HISTORY HACKING

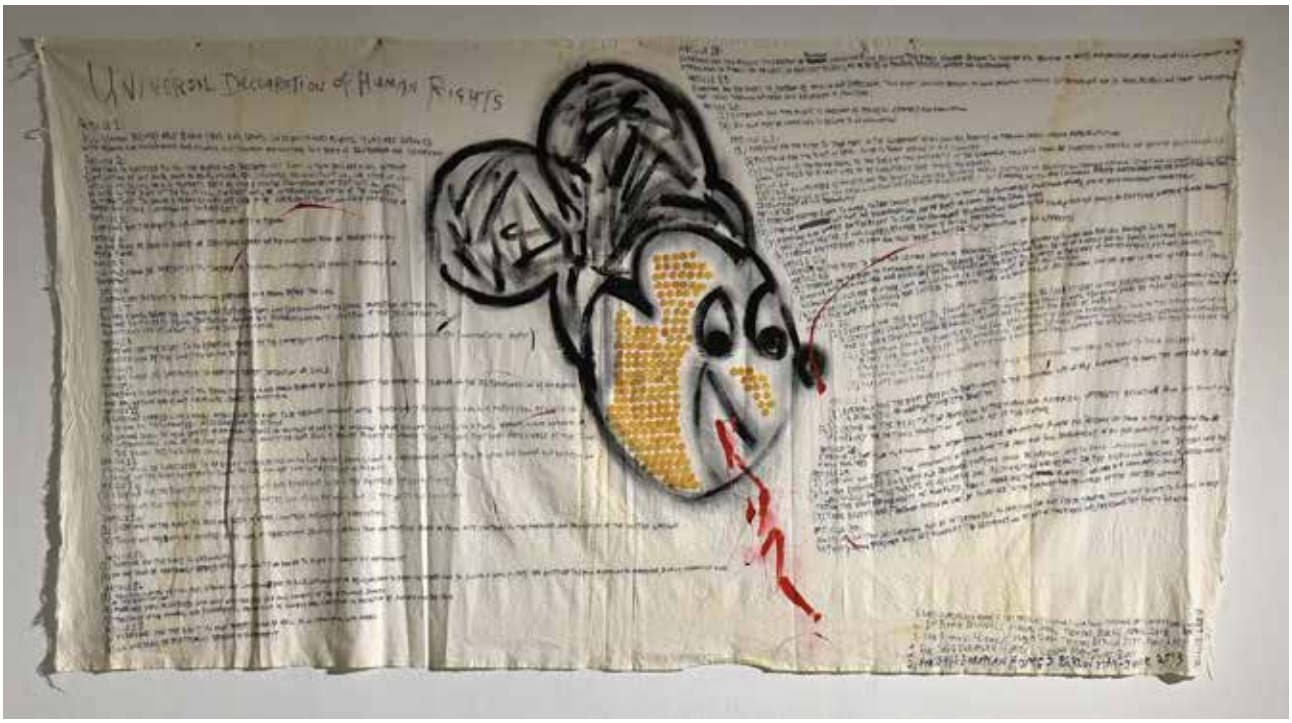
MARCEL CHARLIE CHAPLIN DUCHAMPS
JUL GEORGE BRECHT BRYNER
CEIJA YOKO STOJKA ONO
GUY DJANGO DEBORD REINHARD
YVONNE ESMA REINER REDZEPOVA
PACO GEORGE MACUNIAS DE LUCIA
RONNA ADRIAN HARTFIELD PIPER
AVA RENÉE GARDNER GREEN
PABLO MARINA PICASSO ABRAMOVIC
RJSAK GUERILLA GIRLS & BOYS

**RJSaK** La Biennale di Venezia 2019

Jam Session Art Collective (Mustafa Asan, Mo Diener, Milena Petrovič), *Open Roma Culture*, 2021, Graphic Art Work.

Emília Rigová, *(out of) the deadlock*, 2016, Video installation.

Nihad Nino Pušija, *Down There Where the Spirit Meets the Bone*, 1995- ongoing, series of photographs.




Delaine Le Bas, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 2013
Mixed media, paint, pen, hand embellishment on fabric.
Courtesy: The Artist and Yamamoto Keiko Rochaix Gallery.

Sead Kazanxhiu, Small house, Home sweet home, 2014
Installation, 350 plaster houses.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

**The MoCA interdisciplinary program**

**Amanda Boetzkes**

# Realism in a Media Ecology — Contemporary Art After In the Excessiveness of Truth

This is a revised and updated version of the paper presented at MoCA on 29 August, 2022.

Contemporary art's recuperation of realism carries a specific approach to its own media ecology that distinguishes it from a scientistic or technological world picture. It is this consciousness of its own aesthetic efficacy that warrants an account of realism's contemporaneity and new historicity in, and as, belonging to art. This argument clearly derives from Heidegger's distinction between art as world-forming and modern technology's production of a world-picture, where the former sets-up the world and the latter challenges it forth. But contemporary art's realisms are also attenuated to forms of deliberation over truth that are integral to media ecologies. Deliberation as a form of, and mediation of, art's realism, then, distinguishes the multiperspectivalism that characterises so much contemporary art.

## Realism in a Media Ecology

In an interview with *Der Spiegel* in 1966, Martin Heidegger describes his experience of seeing a set of satellite images of the earth from outer space, as follows:

Everything functions. That is exactly what is uncanny. Everything functions and the functioning drives us further and further to more functioning, and technology tears people away and uproots them from the earth more and more. I don't know if you are scared; I was certainly scared when I recently saw the photographs of the earth taken from the moon. We don't need an atom bomb at all; the uprooting of human beings is already taking place.[1]

With this statement, Heidegger reiterates his argument that Being disappears into equipment, and, in this instance, into a new totality of technological control.

But the mediated sounds and images that were being circulated after the launch of Sputnik struck Marshall McLuhan somewhat differently. In a fascinating essay written in 1974, he observes, "Ecological thinking became inevitable as soon as the planet moved up into the status of a work of art."[2] McLuhan's comment reflected his famous dictum that "the medium is the message". However, it also had many further implications for how to understand the intersection of art and the ecological perspective. For him, the satellite created an orbit of mediation around the planet that was best understood as a form of artistic production in its own right. McLuhan's more profound statement is, thus, that *the mediations of the satellite interpret the planet as a work of art*. Where for Heidegger the planet had been absorbed in a new horizon of technological Enframement (*Gestell*), a world picture par excellence, for McLuhan, satellite mediations (both sounds and images) render the earth as art, and, thus, a prime site of the revealing of ontological being, though not exclusively human. Accordingly, I would suggest that the origin of ecological thinking falls at the axis and contradiction of such media systems: although the technological shell of the satellite is human-made, its rendering of the planet as art suggests a

deprivileging of the human as the exclusive site of ontological being. More importantly, it suggests that the rise of ecology has destined art to the challenge of mediating realism after the "truth" of the human perspective. It, thus, requires the deliberation of multiperspectivalism across the lines of human-non-human that we usually associate with ecology, but that also spans the domain of living beings and artificial technologies.

To position earth-imaging as the origin of ecological thinking in and as art is also to infer implications about a shift in the understanding of realist aesthetics in the post-truth era. For not only was earth-imaging steeped in the politics of the Cold War and the feints of political spectacle and spy craft, it inaugurated a grass-roots scepticism regarding the legitimacy of space exploration and other kinds of technological development such as big agriculture, toxic chemicals like DDT, and, of course, nuclear power. While it is as ridiculous to dismiss the moon-landing as conspiracy as to dispute the reality of an ethnic genocide, such contestations of historical facts were nevertheless also born of the same Cold War era. It is, thus, with an insistence that ecology be accompanied by an extended form of democratic deliberation (the negotiation of concerns and actions across beings and epistemes) that Bruno Latour developed the imperatives of political ecology in tandem with his A-N-T.

It is with this in mind that I want to consider the role of art in navigating the ecology of experience in the post-truth era. McLuhan's triangulation of media, ecology and art is not just a matter of the recursiveness between the medium and its "message", but more precisely of the disjoining of subject matter and object matter, and the active perception of this a rupture as integral to collective interpretation. His media ecology is an implicit site of politics per se, precisely because of art (and not in spite of it).

Above: Omer Fast, *5000 Feet Is the Best*, 2011. © Omer Fast.

Below: Forensic Architecture, *77sqm_9:26min.*, 2017. © Forensic Architecture.


### The Mediatized Appearance of Concealed Truth

The work of the artist collective Forensic Architecture could be considered exemplary of this emergence of post-truth realism. Formed in 2010, under the leadership of architect Eyal Weizman, Forensic Architecture is notable for its incisive mediatic approach to the analysis of a contested political situation as well as its social role in staging 'deliberations' over 'factual evidence' by which it reconstructs events. The collective is hired by human rights organizations to expose forms of systemic negligence and violence (one might even say negligence as a form of violence). The collective, therefore, does not merely "stay with the trouble" of reality, as in Donna Haraway's formulation of response-ability, but gives that troubled reality an appearance of due process, a quasi-justice in the absence of real justice. But, it is precisely because it assumes that reality can be simulated and visualized from primary evidence that it enables such responsibility.

Forensic Architecture's work gained international recognition when it presented its work *77sqm_9:26min* at Documenta 14 in Kassel, Germany in 2017 (Fig. 1). The 'case' was a video installation in its own right, and part of a broader public program entitled *The Parliament of Bodies*. The program included a series of public discussions about the content of the artwork: the racially motivated murder of a young Muslim man named Halit Yozgat when he was working at his family-run internet café in Kassel in 2006. The fatal shooting was the ninth in a series of murders of immigrants in Germany by a Neo-Nazi organization called the National Socialist Underground. Indeed, it was determined by the police investigation that the gun that killed Halit Yozgat was the same as the one used in the eight previous murders. Yet, nobody was charged with the crime. A group called the Society of the Friends of Halit was formed under the auspices of Documenta to conduct their own investigation, 11 years after the murder. The Society investigated and presented their findings to the public in a series of lectures called "Unravelling the NSU Complex". They also enlisted Forensic Architecture to analyse the evidence and testimony presented in the murder case.

Of particular significance in Forensic Architecture's post-trial art-investigation was the fact that a state intelligence officer named Andreas Temme, who worked for the State Office for Constitutional Protection in Kassel, was at the internet café at the time of the murder. He was the only one of the three witnesses who claimed not to have seen, heard or smelled the three gunshots. In its investigation, the court accepted his testimony, which included a re-enactment of his movement through the café at the time of the murder. Subsequently, in 2015, this evidence was leaked to the public from a website called NSU leaks and Forensic Architecture used the leaked testimonial video to conduct its own investigation.

Keeping in mind that while Forensic Architecture assembles experts, the most precise technological tools, and facts established through scientific methods to produce its artwork, it was Temme's testimony that was the object of investigation. Forensic Architecture analyzed the testimonial video by its re-enactment: in other words, their video was a re-enactment of a re-enactment from which they also generated a report that concludes, "These results establish that Temme's testimony was untruthful". The video *77sqm_9:26min*, thus, reveals Temme's incoherence and conspicuous lack of detail regarding what he sensed as he moved through the limited space and timeframe of his testimony. In this respect, Forensic Architecture's realism is a post-truth art form. It does not evaluate the witnessing, description or other articulations of truth to generate proof of guilt or innocence. The group's task was to locate a key site of concealment with the factual evidence, and make this occlusion stand out against the abundant data of its analysis. The obstruction of truth becomes apparent against the fullness of its media ecology.

**Multiperspectivism as Post-Truth Realism**

Forensic Architecture's paradigmatic challenge that the terms of reality demonstrate how art has a new relevance in the post-truth era, precisely because it navigates the lapses between reality and its appearance. Through its capacity to span multiple perspectives, it positions itself at an axis of subjectivity and objectivity that is neither singular nor a consensus but rather a rendering of a plurality of sensation. Further, the hermeneutics of interpretation are crucial to its mediations. We might consider, for example, Omer Fast's video *5000 Feet Is The Best* (Fig. 2; 2011), a work based on an interview Fast conducted with a U.S. Military Predator drone pilot. The interview took place in two sessions held in a hotel room in Las Vegas. Importantly, while the pilot explained the technical aspects of his job on camera, he described more troubling experiences while off-camera, such as the bombing of an Afghan family when they were out on a daytrip. The pilot explained that such attacks take place from the optimal range of 5000 feet, hence the title of the video. Fast dramatized the sessions, using the real interview as a script that he had actors perform. Likewise, he reenacted the bombing of the family, but with the important

difference that he had a white American family play the parts of the Afghani family. He interspersed these dramas with real footage from the interview (with the pilot's face and identity concealed), as well as footage of war zones taken from drones and stunning footage of the Las Vegas cityscape from five thousand feet. The video incorporates multiple mediations of the interview as well as levels of dissociation from reality in the reassembly of its appearances so that it can bring the media ecology of war to bear on an American environment. The convergence of multiple perspectives – those of the re-enactment of the family's day trip, the testimony of the pilot, the re-enactment of the interview, the drone footage – are all seemingly nested within the pilot's the traumatic experiences, which accompany the video's cuts across media. Reality appears across the splits and fissures of a plurality of visualities and visibilities. The video's multiperspectivalism is hinged on its intermediatic mode.

**Ghost Medium: Reconciliation with the Excessiveness of Truth**

Above: Amanda Boetzkes. Photo: Maja Janevska-Ilieva.

Below: Terrance Houle, *Ghost Days, If These Bricks Could Talk*, 2017. © Terrance Houle.

These works by Forensic Architecture and Omer Fast suggest that contemporary art's realism supplements forms of denial and insensibility that are part and parcel of a media apparatus that serves a corrupt aesthetico-political regime; one that purposefully conceals its transgressions against peoples, places, bodies and systems of imagination, and which also benefits from the traumatic effects of its own corruption. Art turns the supremacy of mediation on itself to relay the occlusion of truth in and through its excessive mediation of it. But, further, I would link this realism to other events of unconcealment that are specific to time-based practices such as performance and body art, insofar as these are likewise concerned with matters of mediating reality through art—*indeed, reconciling with reality after truth*—rather than merely approximating a truthful reality through its mediations. This is a crucial difference that comes to rest on the emergence of political deliberation as integral to the very subject matter of art's realism.

In bringing the notion of reconciliation into my formulation of art's realism, I am referring to an important process of inquiry and documentation in Canada, known as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was formed in 2008 in a legal settlement between the federal government of Canada, the Catholic Church and the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit representatives, and survivors of the residential school system. Res-

idential schools were introduced as early as the 17th century and operated until the late 1990s. They have been designated by the TRC as a form of cultural genocide, through which children were starved, tortured, sexually assaulted and thousands of children died. The TRC concluded in 2015 and produced a report estimating that more than 4,100 children had died in residential schools.

Reconciliation with this truth required and, in fact, continues to require, a social interpretation of reality above and beyond the historical facts. A realism was in demand; one that would mediate in order to expose the generalized denial of the truth and also to produce a common sense of the history of this genocide. The TRC inquest was, therefore, committed to hearing testimonies and stories and making recommendations on this basis. It is this imperative for a medium of deliberation that registers in Kainai artist, *Terrance Houle's Ghost Days, If These Bricks Could Talk* (Fig. 3; 2014). Houle is a Canadian intermedia artist of Kainai and Salteaux First Nations ancestry. He works in photography, painting, textiles, film and video but also body art, sound and performance, often to bring his own body to bear on histories of colonization, identity and representation, but also mythology, memory and testimony in his home and other reserve communities.

*Ghost Days* is a serial practice begun in 2014, which has had several iterations, including one at the IXL Brick Factory in Medicine Hat, in southern Alberta. The factory made the bricks that were used to build residential schools in the entire area from Alberta to Saskatchewan, including the residential schools that Houle's own parents survived, as well as his own public junior high. The brick factory was forced to close after a flood, and the performance was part of an initiative to engage artists in decommissioning and historicizing the factory. In the performance, Houle set up a theramin and then smashed bricks made in the factory with a sledgehammer. The theramin is an electronic instrument that is played by the performer without contact but rather through sensors and control oscillators that determine frequency and amplitude of electronic signals from the performers' hands. It is known for its eerie sound effects—indeed, it is *the* sound associated with campy 1960s horror and science fiction movies. As Houle describes, "I play the theramin with my Indigenous body"; in so doing he makes the instrument sonorize his action and also capture the pulverized bricks as a soundscape as they dissolve into the air. The performance, thereby, effects the release of the ghosts that were imprisoned in the bricks.

The realism of Houle's practice lies not only in his mediation of ghosts, as in the manner of a spiritual medium. It lies in its conjuring of a buried material history that makes its appearance as an overcoming of the denial of the residential schools as a genocidal institution. The sounds of the theramin function as an articulation of an inarticulable reality; it expresses scenes of horror and terror that are otherwise locked into the mute objecthood of the bricks, edifying the walls of the schools with the violent underpinning of colonial infrastructure. But, it is from the very perspective of the bricks, the question "if they could talk" and the simulation of their perspective as issuing the haunting sounds of ghosts that the performance parlays a buried history, one that is over and done with; colonialism as a *fait accompli* into a reality that can be witnessed and reconsidered as the genocide it was, a truth to be reconciled with today, in a post-truth era. Such a reconciliation does not require an acceptance of the facts but rather a perspective of co-implication, collective viewership and artistic meaning-making.

Houle's gesture is one of symbolic destructuration of the school. But, more than this, it is the destructuration as a mediation of a denied material reality that enables the registering of a truth without the authority of science, the fact, the economy, the government, the church, or the law. It reveals a truth to be reconciled with, and one which requires art's mediation in order to do so. Such a formulation of realism suggests that the hermeneutic movement of art is taking new revolutions around the truth per se, revolutions born not only of pure politics nor pure science, but indeed the negatives of such purities: their denials, refusals, insensibilities and myopias. Indeed, it is only in their overcoming, precisely through art, that realism as such can be renewed after truth.

References:

1 "Interview with Martin Heidegger," with Rudolf Augstein and Georgg Wolff on September 23, 1966. Published as "Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten," Der Spiegel, 31 May, 1976, 193-219.

2 McLuhan, Marshall "At the moment of Sputnik the planet became a global theatre in which there are no spectators only actors," Journal of Communication 24, no.1 (1974): 48-58.

**The MoCA's Exhibition**

# Simon Uzunovski (1949-2019)

The curators of the project are five art historians: Ljiljana Nedelkovska, Lazo Plavevski, Marika Bochvarova Plavevska, Zoran Petrovski, Valentino Dimitrovski who were close friends of Uzunovski and direct witnesses of his artistic activity since the 1970s.

Simon Uzunovski, *No title (1)*, between 1977-1979, sellotape on paper.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

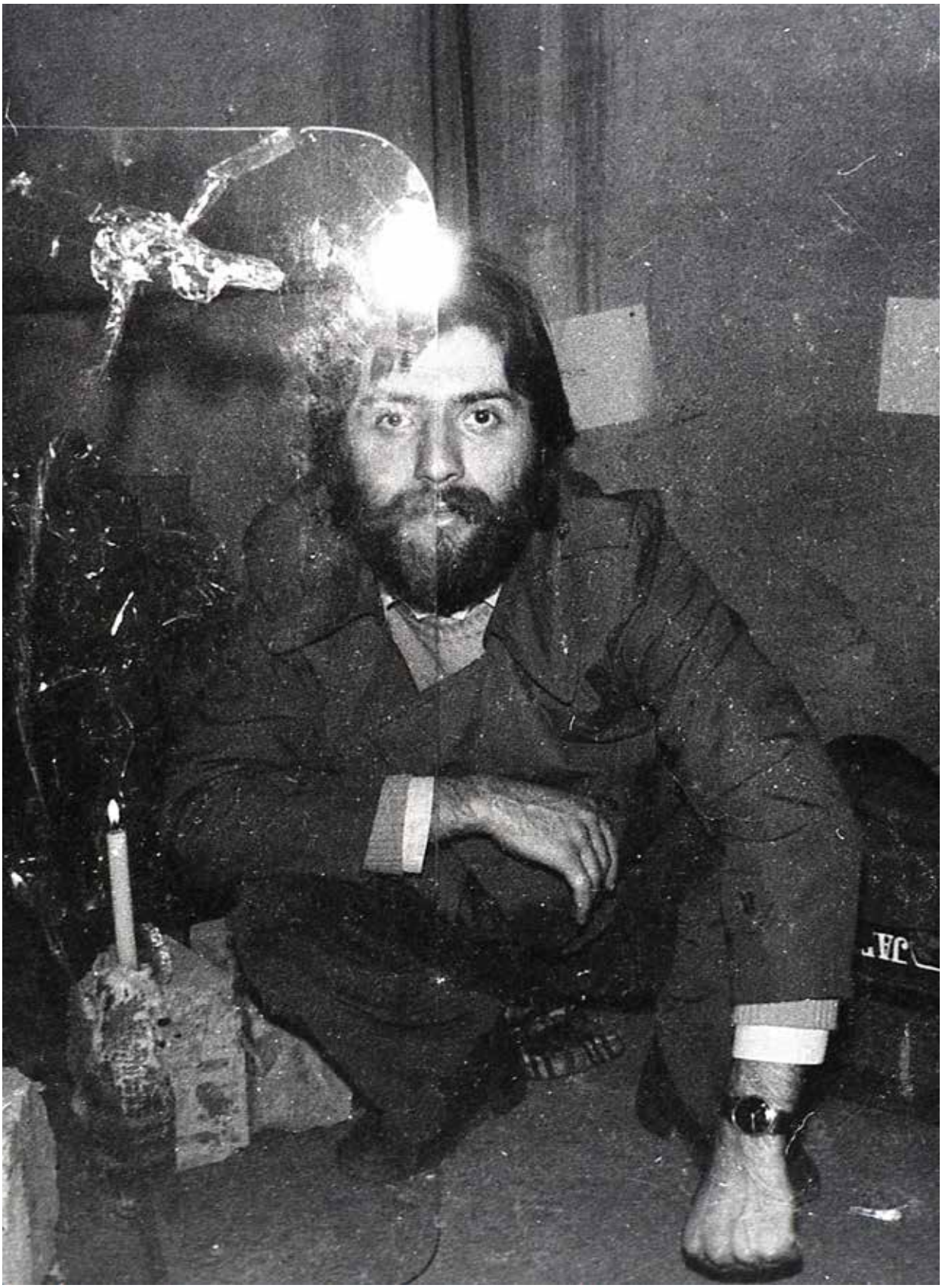
Simon Uzunovski was a key figure in conceptual art in Macedonia in the 1970s. In his projects, he abandons the artistic means of traditional art disciplines and uses solely fabricated everyday objects and materials. Until 1984, his art projects took place in spaces and environments outside of professional galleries or institutions. These projects were profiled as spatial and ambient associative installations or developed as processes of works in progress, for example, duct tape rolls that were gradually shaped over time to the level of "completion" decided by the artist. Perhaps the most significant modus operandi in Uzunovski's conceptual approach was the social dimension in the performance of his projects through the active involvement of the audience, his colleagues and friends, in the development and the creation of the "works". The audience's active participation was the dominant credo of his permanent performative activism in the realization of the concept of open work as a social event or happening, including aspects of artistic action, both topical and provocative and situated within the culture in which the projects were performed.

According to the curators, "The retrospective exhibition of Uzunovski aims not only to present his work retrospectively but also to theoretically shed light on his exceptional appearance. The focus of the exhibition is, however, on the 1970s which was the most significant period for his creative work, a period when alternative artistic practices penetrated the local scene, as part of the Yugoslav cultural space. Simon Uzunovski is the key figure in these new artistic practices in Macedonia. With his activity, Uzunovski applied a completely different approach to the understanding of art, which called into question the established conventional linguistic and aesthetic norms of traditional art disciplines".

The exhibition features more than 100 objects, figurines, collages, drawings, assemblages, and applications made with Scotch tape, the material by which Simon Uzunovski's work is most often recognizable. The unique, ephemeral installations, performances, and actions with which Uzunovski involves a wide circle of friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and the public in the creation of several major works will be presented with extensive photo documentation, which will simultaneously show the time of the 1970s and the enthusiasm and the energy with which Uzunovski managed to contagiously spread the idea of the democratization of art and its approach to the manifestations of everyday life.

Simon Uzunovski (1949-2019) was active on the stage for almost 50 years, and for several years he worked and lived on the Italian island of Capri. The most radical artistic breakthroughs were achieved by Simon Uzunovski in the second half of the 1970s with the realization of a number of exhibitions, actions, and participatory spatial installations, such as those in the Hall of the Faculty of Philosophy (1977 and 1978) within the framework of the activity of the Aesthetic Laboratory, then at Kora Gallery (1977), Street Action (1977) and the legendary exhibition/installation in the basement space of Maxim Gorky Street (1978 or 1979). In 1984, he participated in the exhibition "New Tendencies in Macedonian Art in the Last Decade", held in the Youth Center, Skopje. In the same year, he realized his solo exhibition/ambient installation in the Youth Center. In 1994, his twenty years of work were shown in the Museum of the City of Skopje, and in 1995, 1996, and 1997, he participated in the exhibitions Two Baths. Since 2003, his presence in the Museum of Contemporary Art became more frequent when he was part of the project "Ideateque" (A selection of documents from the conceptual discourse in Macedonia), "Invisible landscape" 2013, "Solidarity-unfinished project" (The permanent exhibition), 2014 and "The main points of Macedonian fine art in the 1970s and 1980s", 2020. With his tireless energy, readiness for action, and openness to involvement in contemporary art trends, Uzunovski was also present in recent years in the alternative breakthroughs of some of the younger generations of artists, gathered around informal collective action, the initiative "Cooperation" and their activism criticizing institutional and ideologically and politically determined cultural policy.

Uzunovski was one of the first collaborators of the scenographer Krste Djidrov-Djibi, from the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s. They worked together on about 15 scenographies, and the tenth edition of Young Open Theater - MOT was opened precisely with their joint exhibition.



View from the solo exhibition at the Rancho's basement, 1978 or 1979, Skopje.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

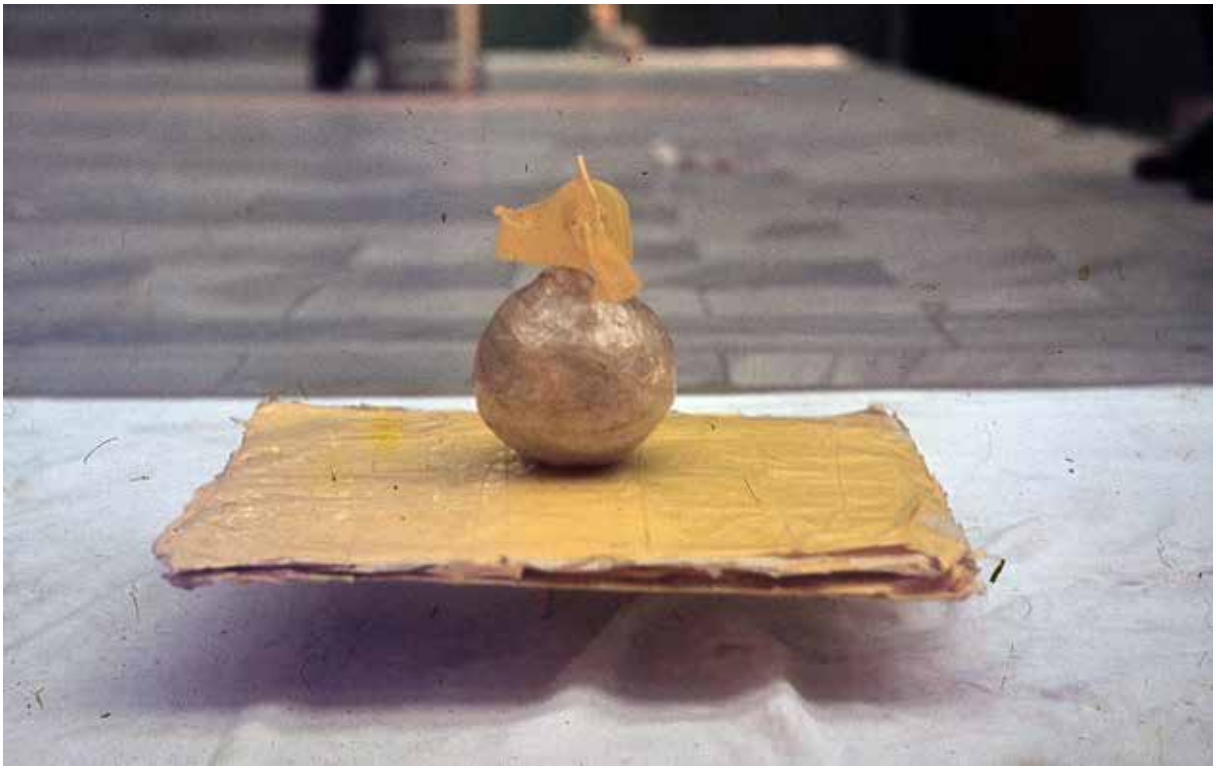
*Galichica*, 1978, installation at the Faculty of Philosophy and Philology, Skopje.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

*Pat za Volkoderi*, 1984, installation at the Youth Cultural Centre.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

*No title (2),* between 1977-1979.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

Street performance, 1977, Skopje.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

Simon Uzunovski, Prespa Lake, 1977, plywood, plastic bags, water.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.



Object (Man and bird), 1976.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

Road To Volkoderi-Retrospective, Installation view, In the foreground *Pirgon*, 1976, plywood, rubber hose.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

Road To Volkoderi-Retrospective, Installation view, In the foreground and background, *No Title*, 1976, sellotape on paper.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

Road To Volkoderi-Retrospective, Installation view.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

Road To Volkoderi-Retrospective, Installation view, In the foreground, No Title, 1976, sellotape on paper.
Courtesy of MoCA Skopje.

# Ahmet Öğüt - Collection and Collective, Action and the Active Spectator

**Mira Gakjina**

Next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the tragic earthquake in Skopje, which inspired prominent artists from all around the world to donate their works to the city and, thus, facilitate the establishment of one of the oldest museums of contemporary art in Eastern Europe, the MoCA-Skopje. This arts initiative continues, and Skopje, at the moment, is home to the exhibition of Turkish artist Ahmet Öğüt, who commented on the museum's collection and put in context a large number of his works. The exhibition is called "Jump Up!" At the same time, he donated one of his works entitled *Living Beings Squatting* Institutions, to the museum.

Nothing can be called a universal novelty in the 21st century more than the escalating feeling of powerlessness, an inability to understand the changes and an inability to exceed one's own limitations, imaginary or real. The conditions that result in poverty and destitution are masked by the crises created by the new conservatism, which brings differences in identity to the fore, and the new global issues, such as the energy crisis and the pandemic, are used to bolster the social status of the privileged. The effect that everybody had expected of globalization, a heightened sense of unity, seems to have united only an impotent bunch of excited spectators.

We witness, at the same time, the fact that human activity can influence natural processes on the planet, which is confirmed by the scientific analyses of global warming. So, we have the power to make a change but can we channel that power? Do we have a way to rectify the course of development?

Natural disasters are a particular challenge for the art world. They hide the secret of the cycle of birth and decomposition, the 'good' and the 'evil' star (Disaster).

Art, in its very name, inscribes the desire for recreation and remodeling. It is motivated by fears related to the urge to survive, it creates illusions but also opens up possibilities.

Unmitigated destruction, as the most extreme type of tragedy, is one of the most frequently incarnated motifs, it has been included in art as a dominant topic from the very beginning until today, it awakens intense emotions, for the inevitability of a certain ending, which are being expressed, shaped, incarnated. The awareness of the need for collective action, as a result of the collective threat, lifts art beyond the role of a comforting agent and turns it into a social, political agent. It has a quality for immediate action and an anticipatory power, as Badiou would remark. As a special gift of thought, it has the capacity to penetrate 'the other side of the essential'.

What, then, is the sphere of action of art criticism? By recognizing the fragility of the social order, by recognizing its own responsibility for exerting moral pressure, it, thus, defends the social role of the "poem", as a public service. If we recognize ourselves as an institution, what kind of public service is expected of us? Care! The role of Curator was established as early as during the rule of Justinian, who was the patron of the fragile and the weak. It is expected to exert resolute ethical pressure. Is the curator, as an institution, facing a crisis today? At his most recent exhibition in Skopje, Ahmet Öğüt addresses exactly this question.

His work *Appointed Curators* is a collage of photographs taken from the Internet by looking up the keywords 'appointed' and 'curator'. This work examines the relations between power and hierarchy in the art world by showing curators from all over the world who have the same, arrogant posture with crossed arms.

Turbulent changes have driven us away from our assumed routines and have made us question our own curatorial role today. Our colleague, Hans Ulrich Obrist, has, through his own example, with his 'don't stop' lifestyle and with the dictum 'Its urgent!', tried to stress that this is not a time when he can use various excuses to postpone our confrontation with the challenges of our epoch. We have to prove ourselves to be qualified curators of the wealth we have inherited, our natural and cultural environment, in conditions when it seems that public opinion is far from rational.

Ahmet Öğüt, *Appointed Curators*, 2022, Print. Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje.

In his most recent exhibition, the author establishes a dialogue with the collection in the museum, by using his previous works as well, but in a novel context, and raises some questions about our relationship with the ritual space of the museum and its visitors, by means of narrating about the lack of security and brave choices.

Öğüt draws his inspiration from the history of the museum in Skopje, created with the support of donations of artists from all continents, who realized that the most pressing need of the earthquake-torn city was to have a temple, a home for art. The fact that they circumvented the seemingly vital needs of a city and focused on human dignity and the feeling of belonging to a community that shows solidarity motivated Öğüt to dedicate his work *Living Beings Squatting* Institutions to the museum, thus reiterating the gesture of solidarity.

His comment on a selection of works from the collection he personally identifies as a demonstration of a practice that fosters collective trust between artists from different generations, and his 'jump' is temporal.

The exhibit eponymous with the exhibition, *Jump Up!*, invites visitors to use a trampoline to be able to see the three exhibits in the collection, that illustrate contemporary artistic directions - Abstract expressionism (Anna-Eva Bergman), Pop art (David Hockney), and Op art (Vasarely). Simultaneously, the author thus expresses his view of gender issues.

The exhibit *Wall* relates to a topic frequently used by Bergman, since it secures, but also separates. Öğüt is also exceptionally interested in the modern obsession with security and the parallel sense of isolation. The California landscape by Hockney, the artist in self-imposed exile, as well as Vasarely's studies of color and geometry, are a testament to the breadth of interest of the thing that, in Öğüt's eyes, represents collective trust between generations.

Ahmet Öğüt, *Jump Up!*, 2022, installation, trampolines, paintings (Works from MoCA-Skopje Collection: Anna Eva Bergman, *Wall*, 1963, Lithography; David Hockney, *Landscape*, 1966, Offset print; Victor Vasarely, *Untitled*, 1968, Serigraphy), Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje.

By means of his video entitled 'Anti-tank', produced this year, the relation has been established by contextualizing another exhibit in the museum's collection, 'Conditional Freedom' by Brazilian artist Maria Bonomi. Öğüt's video-animation shows a multi-axis rotation of a cross-like object, which is used as an anti-tank barricade, and is commonly known as a hedgehog or a 'Czech hedgehog'. The artist uses this work as a commentary on the current war between Russia and Ukraine, which has resulted in several absurdities; for example, these artifacts, these barricades, used against the Nazi invasion, have been removed from the WW2 museums in Kiev and are now being used against the new aggressor. The civic resistance by using barricades is one of Öğüt's trademarks, also used in his Bakunin's Barricade, exhibited a few years ago in Van Abbemuseum, where the works from the collection of this museum were used as an imaginary barricade. The woodcut by Bonomi, an artist whose graphics were described as violent, almost savage rhythms by the critics of the day, was created in 1965, in the beginning of the military dictatorship in Brazil, and its cross-like shape is a reference to the anti-tank barricade.

The idea of the museum as a social product, as an institution, but also as a protected space, a haven, is presented through the series of five sculptures, entitled *Living Beings Squatting* Institutions, that talk about situations in different parts of the world in which some animals become part of the museum ambiance. These new visitors and residents of the protected space, each in their own way, become caring guardians and creators of new museum content, which have now become artefacts of the collection of Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje. The object is a cauldron of two million bats who have been living for a few decades under the rafters of a museum in Cambodia; two hawks who have chosen to live on top of Tate Modern in London; a dog-conservationist from the Boston museum of art which can smell the pests which are harmful fto the valuable artefacts in the museum; white bears that, on the island of Svalbard, between Norway and the North Pole, outnumber the participants of an artists' residence and some curious cats from the yard of the Hiroshima museum.

The series of reportage photographs by Reuters from the summer of 1995, entitled *Rec Date: July 1995*, are collages that reflect the parallelism between real life and the news in the media, which stuns with tension and strong emotions. These coincide with the end of the war in ex-Yugoslavia. This phenomenon of our days, the permanently available visual information filled with somebody else's intimate moments and misfortune yields a special kind of viewer, as Sontag remarks, who is bedazzled by the fascinating images, but remains undisturbed by the content of the news item. And again, if we refer to the past, the Skopje earthquake was precisely that kind of news in the early days of mass TV, but these images resulted in a strong feeling of solidarity, including among leading intellectuals. This memory contextualizes this work as part of the *Jump Up!* exhibition.

The series of vignettes that exude humor, entitled *Fantasized Fantastic Corporeal World*, encapsulate some absurd situations in the relationship between the individual and the state, where the required documentation becomes the main purpose in life. As a consequence of the circumstances we live in, i.e. the fact that the world (the globe) is chopped up in plots that are already taken, those who are excluded may reach them only by being crafty or by means of a brave jump over the city's citadel. To be a citizen has become the main challenge of the citizens of North Macedonia as well. The episodes from our daily lives are starting to look like the episodes from 'Believe it or not' that Öğüt illustrates , from the collective trauma that resulted from the changes in the national symbols and the individual humiliation suffered in order to certify that we belong to Europe.

The desire to taste luxury, to be part of that community, brings forth bizarre imitations, such as the repurposed Luftwaffe hangar in the impressive video *Worker's Ordinary Day*. The popularity of this 'resort' shows the extent to which most of the population accepts living in a distorted world, isolated from reality, in a hurry to find their place. The protagonist of the video, the Worker, makes us think twice about the futility of our own work, under the 'dome' we all live in.

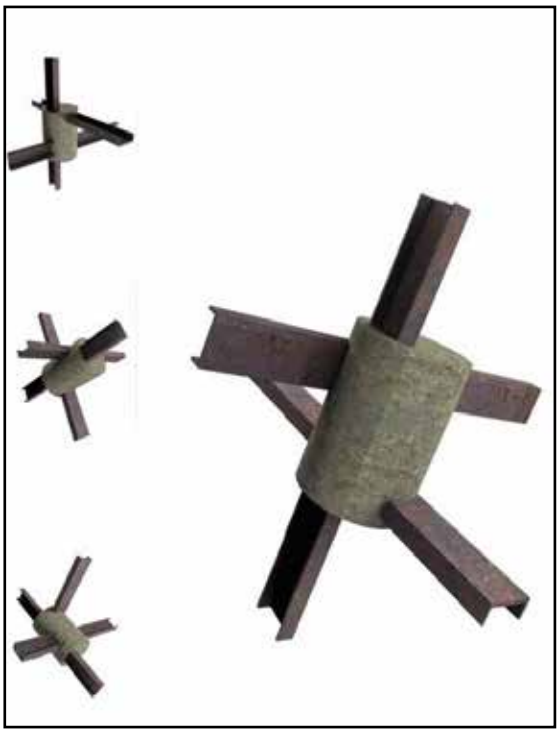
The sense of being isolated from the rest of the world on the small island state of Malta is the starting point of the work entitled *Possibly Self-Made Mail Art Archive*. The discovery of a collection of suitable envelopes designed by the Malta post service, aimed at promoting the island as a destination and at trying to prove that it is linked to the rest of the world, inspired Öğüt to use it as a reminder of the times when letters were used to maintain a close relationship at a distance. By making an intervention on the philatelic edition that he appropriated, he creates his own archive of written communication of well-known artists, such as LeWitt, On Kawara and others, demonstrating once again the level of importance he attaches to meetings with artists from the previous generations.

Öğüt does not find the expectation that artists should be limited to creating paintings, to making people happy and sad with their skill, to reproducing some shapes offensive, - on the contrary, he believes it to be an opportunity to make people consider the role of the artist and the creative individual in general, through his installation *He used to paint, in fact he was good at it....*

How to change the passive attitude of accepting the social roles that have been assigned to us, reduced to banality and regurgitation? Jump up! is what Öğüt tells us - change your attitude, get involved! Take Immediate action!

Above: Ahmet Öğüt, *Anti-tank*, 2022, video installation.

Below: Maria Bonomi, *Conditional Freedom*, 1965, Color woodcut, (from the collection of MoCA Skopje).



Ahmet Öğüt's approach, his commentary on everyday living, supported by poems from the past, seems akin to what Badiou recognizes as the power of the artistic truth, to anticipate – "It can force an inference about what the universe would be if the total effects of a truth still underway were limitlessly allowed to unfold within it ". [1]

References:
1 Badiou, A. (2005). *Handbook of Inaesthetics.* Stanford: Stanford University Press. 22

JUMP UP! Exhibition by Ahmet Ogut, Museum of Contemporary Art – Skopje, curated by Jovanka Popova and Mira Gakjina.

# CONTRIBUTORS:

**Daniel Baker** is an artist, curator and art theorist. A Romani Gypsy born in Kent, he holds a PhD in Roma aesthetics from the Royal College of Art in London (Gypsy Visuality: Alfred Gell's Art Nexus and its potential for artists, 2011) and was awarded his MA by the University of Greenwich (2002). Baker was an exhibitor and adviser to the first and second Roma Pavilions – Paradise Lost and Call the Witness – at the 52nd and 54th editions of the Venice Biennale, as well as to one of the most important British art shows (featuring Romani artists Delaine Le Bas, Damian Le Bas and Ferdinand Koci), Second Site (2006) curated by Thomas A. Acton. Baker's work examines the role of art in the enactment of social agency, and an early published statement of this position was part of the Meet Your Neighbours: Contemporary Roma Art from Europe (2006, pp. 32–39) collection and the Paradise Lost catalogue (2007, p. 40); his work is held in public and private collections around the world. He was the UK chairperson of the Gypsy Council (2006–09) and currently lives and works in London.

**Kimmo Granqvist** is an academic (University Lecturer in Romani Language and Culture at the University of Helsinki, Finland) with twenty years of experience in theoretical and participatory research with Roma communities in the Nordic and Baltic Countries, as well as in East Central Europe. He is a member of the Gypsy Lore Society since 2016. He has been involved with the organization of the Gypsy Lore Society Conferences in Helsinki (2009) and Stockholm (2016). Kimmo Granqvist has a long track-record in Romani Linguistics, but he is also interested in issues of education, employment and social inclusion of the Roma, on which he has coordinated a number of research projects. He was one of the founding members of the "Network of Academic Institutions in Romani Studies" (NAIRS). He is a member of the Reference Group of the collaborative Nordic research network "Romers och resandes historia i Norden" (Roma and Resande's history in the Nordic countries; RORHIN). He is a member of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. He cooperates, for instance, with the Slovak and Czech Academies of Sciences, and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

**Joanna Warsza** is an independent curator, editor, and Program Director of CuratorLab at Konstfack University of Arts in Stockholm. Recently she co-curated, together with Övül Ö. Durmusoglu, Die Balkone in Berlin, the 3rd Autostrada Biennale in Kosovo, and the 12th Survival Kit in Riga. She was also the Artistic Director of Public Art Munich 2018, curator of the Georgian Pavilion at the Biennale Arte 2013, head of the public program of Manifesta 10 and associate curator of the 7th Berlin Biennale at the invitation of Artur Żmijewski. Her recent publications include Red Love. A Reader on Alexandra Kollontai (with Maria Lind and Michele Masucci, 2020), and And Warren Niesłuchowski Was There: Guest, Host, Ghost (with Sina Najafi; published by Cabinet Books and Museum of Modern Art Warsaw, 2020). Originally from Warsaw, she lives in Berlin.

**Eszter György** received her M.A. at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris and her PhD in History, at ELTE, in 2013. Her dissertation, written about the Roma cultural practices and identity-building processes of the eighth district in Budapest, was published as a book in 2021. Since 2012, she has been involved in several EU (Erasmus Mundus and Horizon 2020) projects, focusing on cultural heritage, cultural participation, and minority heritage. She is a senior lecturer at the Atelier Department for Interdisciplinary History. Her fields of research/publications cover Roma cultural history, Roma heritage in Hungary, and urban inequalities. In 2021, she participated in the realization of the exhibition Collectively Carried Out. Tamás Péli: The Birth, in the Budapest History Museum, in the frame of the Off-Biennale Budapest.

**Joost Vandebrug** is a Dutch artist who works across photography, mixed-media and film. He studied at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. His photo-based works include both conventional and unconventional printing techniques such as pigment transfers and silver-gelatin prints, both on the hand-made and hand-coated Washi as well as copper plates and traditional Barite paper. The susceptibility and fragility of historic photographic techniques, which often parallels his subject matters, led to Vandebrug's embrace of imperfection and accidents that go againstthe photographic tradition of producing and preserving unblemished prints. Before dedicating his career solely to his art, Vandebrug worked as a commercial photographer and filmmaker.

**Suzana Milevska** is a curator and theorist of visual art and culture. Her theoretical and curatorial interests include postcolonial and feminist critique of representational regimes of hegemonic power in arts and visual culture, and collaborative and participatory art practices in marginalized communities. Between 2016 and 2019 Milevska was Principal Investigator on the project Transmitting of Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts (TRACES – EU Programme Horizon 2020), Polytechnic University Milan. In 2013, Milevska was appointed the first Endowed Professor of Central and South Eastern European Art Histories (2013-2015, Academy of Fine Art Vienna). She holds a PhD in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths College London. Milevska curated the exhibitions Roma Protocol (the Austrian Parliament, Wiener Festwochen), and Call the Witness, BAK Utrecht (2011). She was the initiator of the project Call the Witness – Roma Pavilion, Venice Biennale (2011). She published the book Gender Difference in the Balkans (2010) and edited The Renaming Machine: The Book (2010), and On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency (Sternberg Press, 2016). Milevska is the recipient of the ALICE Award for political curating, and she won the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory (2012).

**Ivana Hadjievsk**a currently works as a younger associate at The Sate Archives of North Macedonia - Section in Bitola. She gained her BA (2018) and MA (2021), both in the field of history, from the Faculty of Philosophy, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. Her current research focuses on the social history, philosophy of history and remembrance culture. She currently works as a researcher on international projects concerning the accessibility of historical sources for women's history and development of epistemic potentials of local archival collections. She is the coauthor of the book Invisible archives: Women in the periodicals from Vardar Macedonia between the two world wars (Center for the Study of the Nationalisms and Cultures, 2021).

**Monika Weychert** is an Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Journalism and Social Communication SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences). Since 2016, she has been cooperating with the Institute of Public Space Research at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. In Torun, she launched the independent flying gallery and she is also associated with the Warsaw Foksal Gallery and the Xawery Dunikowski Museum of Sculpture in Królikarnia - a branch of the National Museum in Warsaw. She has also curated several dozen exhibitions and is a long-time collaborator of TVP Kultura and a member of AICA. She has been exploring Roma art for 25 years. She gained her PhD on the topic 'Invisible Genocide. Contemporary Roma Art as a Rebellion of the Subaltern.'

**Mihail Stojanoski** holds an MA in International Law from Ss Kiril i Metodij University in Skopje. After working at the same University as an instructor in European Union Law for two years, he became a practicing attorney-at-law and a member of the Macedonian Bar, during which time he specialized in civil and human rights litigation. In 2016 he started working as a lawyer at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, specializing in issues of fair trial, discrimination and freedom of expression. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Strasbourg. He joined the European Roma Rights Centre in 2020

**Amanda Boetzkes** is a theorist of contemporary art and aesthetics. She is the author of Plastic Capitalism: Contemporary Art and the Drive to Waste (MIT Press, 2019), The Ethics of Earth Art (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), and a forthcoming book titled Ecologicity: Vision and the Planetarity of Art. Edited books include Artworks for Jellyfish (Noxious Sector, 2022), Heidegger and the Work of Art History (Routledge, 2014), and a forthcoming volume on Art's Realism in the Post-Truth Era (2024). Her research focuses on the relationship between perception and representation, theories of consciousness, and ecology. She has analyzed complex human relationships with the environment through the lens of aesthetics, patterns of human waste, and the global energy economy. Her current project, At The Moraine, considers modes of visualizing environments with a special focus on Indigenous territories of the circumpolar North. She is Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the University of Guelph.

**Mira Gakjina** is an art historian, art critic and senior curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje. She received her PhD in Art Management from Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. She has curated a number of exhibitions in the country and abroad and published in art books and magazines such as the "Large Glass", "Art Republic", "Brooklyn Rail", "From Consideration to Commitment: Art in Critical Confrontation to Society" among others. She was the commissioner of the North Macedonian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2019 and she is a coordinator and curator of the parallel program for the MANIFESTA 14 Pristina Biennale in MoCA Skopje. Gakjina is currently a director of the MoCA Skopje.

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