

La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte
Eventi Collaterali

FUTU ROMA

COLLATERAL EVENT OF THE 58TH INTERNATIONAL
ART EXHIBITION — LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA
CURATED BY DANIEL BAKER
COMMISSIONED BY ERIAC

FONDAMENTA ZATTERE ALLO SPIRITO SANTO 417
11 MAY – 24 NOVEMBER 2019

Curated by: Daniel Baker

Commissioned by: European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture e.V. (ERiac)

Exhibition Site: Zattere, Dorsoduro 417, 30123 Venezia

Public Dates: 11 May – 24 November 2019 (Tu-Su 10:15am–5pm)

Exhibiting Artists: Celia Baker | Ján Berky | Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson | Ödön Gyögyi | Billy Kerry | Klára Lakatos | Delaine Le Bas | Valérie Leray | Emília Rigová | Markéta Šestáková | Selma Selman | Dan Turner | Alfred Ullrich | László Varga

COMMISSIONED BY:

ERiac
EUROPEAN ROMA
INSTITUTE FOR ARTS
AND CULTURE

CURATORIAL CONCEPT

FUTUROMA draws upon aspects of Afrofuturism to explore Roma contemporary art's role in defining, reflecting and influencing Roma culture. The exhibition offers new and spontaneous re-interpretations of Roma past, present and futures via a fusion of the traditional and the futuristic in order to critique the current situation for Roma people and to re-examine historical events. Imagining Roma bodies in speculative futures offers a counter narrative to the reductive ways that Roma culture has been understood and constructed—thereby moving our cultural expression beyond the restrictive motifs of oppression toward a radical and progressive vision of Roma to come.

The confluence of traditional knowledge and contemporary art practice evident within FUTUROMA combines to highlight possibilities for different ways of being. Here artworks are rooted in the techniques and traditions of the Roma diaspora, but at the same time decisively forward-looking. The acts of remembering and imagining manifest within these artworks point toward ambitious visions of life affirming futures and at the same time allow reinterpretation our collective pasts.

In their unique manner each of the artworks on display in FUTUROMA variously employs and deconstructs different aspects of the primeval, the everyday and the futuristic. These objects move between the familiar and the unexpected taking us beyond the confines of time and place to a different kind of objectivity—to a place to see anew. New site-specific works emphasize the implications of materiality—physical stuff that takes up space in the world. After all, it is the Roma's physical presence that is continually contested, marked by questions of where and how we are permitted to exist.

As well as being a means to re-discover Roma history in an impactful and engaging way the project is a chance to envision a future where Roma truly belong. As Roma we are too often told that we have no future—that we remain relics of the past. FUTUROMA draws together visions of our future to present an alternative perspective informed by all that came before and the promise of all that can be, placing us firmly in the here and now.

The show is both international and intergenera-

tional in its approach with 14 artists from 8 countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Ages of the artists range from 28 to 95.

A time before history is brought face to face with the corporeal in Klára Lakatos' vibrant tangle of massed organisms which contrasts vividly with Valérie Leray's darkly primeval vision of verdant regeneration on a former Roma internment camp site. Billy Kerry's amorphous ceramic vessels again take us to the fundamentals of being by echoing the intricate life forms that predate human existence. Ancient potential is again signalled by Alfred Ulrich's dynamic spiral, its form echoing both the microscopic and the galactic as it propels us toward our destiny.

The ever present issues of territorial struggle and Roma legitimacy are tackled in Delaine le Bas' Romani Embassy which looks to a future where Roma bodies are no longer contested. The body also lies at the heart of Emília Rigová's shiny rendering of gender in flux, its seductive shapes compelling us to rethink intimacy and power relations amongst the strangely familiar. A future where living space is ecologically optimized positions healing at the heart of Dan Turner's vision of Roma life. Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson's alien blooms mark an adaptation to surroundings inherent in all our lives while the illusory space at the centre László Varga's sharply perspectival drawing points toward the infinite possibilities of limitless potential.

Ödön Gyögyi's oblique depiction of everyday objects encourages us to look again at the familiar as do the otherworldly flowers embroidered by Markéta Šestáková, their vibrant human seeds ready to be sown into our collective futures. Celia Baker's exuberant excess calls to mind the unstoppable nature of Roma innovation and productivity, a theme echoed in Selma Selman's depictions of Roma industry which look to the economic imperatives of survival capturing the visionary and creative adaptability in which Roma continue to excel. Ján Berky's collage is predicated upon a sense of collapsed time—our past and our future colliding in cycles to guide our choices today.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Daniel Baker is a Romani Gypsy artist, researcher, and curator. Originally from Kent, based in London, his work is exhibited internationally and can be found in collections across the globe. Baker earned a PhD in 2011 from the Royal College of Art, with his dissertation, "Gypsy Visuality: Gell's Art Nexus and its Potential for Artists," after previously earning a MA in Sociology/Gender and Ethnic Studies from Greenwich University, and a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Ravensbourne College of Art and Design.

Baker has contributed to numerous exhibitions, held various residencies and curated several commissions. He previously worked as an exhibitor and consultant for the first and second Roma events at the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale

di Venezia – "Paradise Lost" and "Call the Witness," which took place during the 52nd and 54th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, respectively. In 2018, after hosting an open call for curators, an international jury consisting of Professor Dr. Ethel Brooks, Tony Gatlif, Miguel Ángel Vargas, and ERIAC management selected him to curate the Roma Collateral Event.

Baker's work examines the role of art in the enactment of social agency through an eclectic practice that interrogates contemporary art discourse and its social implications via the reconfiguration of elements of the Roma aesthetic. For more information about Baker and his revolutionary work, visit www.danielbaker.net.

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Celia Baker was born in 1923 in Kent, the youngest of nine children born to the Coates family of English Romani Gypsies. She raised a large family and spent time in occupations including hawking and farm labour. Baker's wool works began in 2006. Her work has been exhibited in: 'No Gorgios', Novas, London, UK, 2007; 'Refusing Exclusion', Prague Biennale, Prague, Czech Republic, 2007; 'More love ours than can ever be repaid', FEINKOST, Berlin, Germany, 2009; 'The Glass Delusion', the National Glass Centre, Newcastle, UK, 2010 and 'Call the Witness', 54th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2011. Lives and works in London, UK.

Ján Berky was born in Studenec, Detva, Slovakia in 1951. Apprenticed as welder, Berky worked in the engineering works in Detva for 21 years. In 2002 after a period of unemployment, he discovered the plastic arts as a means of overcoming depression. Berky employs a number of different media within his work. Themes that appear in his work include the fate of the Roma, their history and current social situation, and Roma music. Berky is himself a musician. His paintings have won several awards. A documentary film about Berky was produced in 1998. Lives and works in Detva, Slovakia

Billy Kerry is an Artist and educator from Cambridge, UK. He trained at Chelsea College of Art in London and since graduating in 2009 has been inspiring others by teaching and supporting at Cambridge Regional College. Kerry's eclectic practice narrates the close interrelation between artist and material; between body and object. Through his work Kerry investigates and challenges preconceived views of ethnicity, gender roles and constructed conformity. He employs diverse conceptual elements and aesthetic motifs ranging from Victoriana to current Pop Culture in clashes which challenge established values to allow new insight into the way we live today. Lives and works in Cambridge, United Kingdom

Klára Lakatos was born in Csenger, Hungary, in 1968. She graduated from Ervin Szabó Grammar School in Budapest as a correspondent student, then gained her degree at the University of Pécs in cultural organisation. Her first exhibition was held at the Balázs János Gallery in the Roma Parliament in 2001. She has illustrated her own children's book as well as the Zsolt Csányi Szolnokig collection of poems titled 'Napló-Kísérlet' (Diary Experiment). Her drawings have frequently appeared in Roma Journals including; Amaro Drom, Kethano Drom and Lungo Drom. Lives and works in Budapest, Hungary

Delaine le Bas' works have been exhibited at Prague Biennale's 2005 & 2007. She was one of sixteen artists exhibiting at The First Roma Pavilion Paradise Lost at the 2007 Venice Biennale. Le Bas' installation Witch Hunt was exhibited at Gwangju Biennale South Korea 2012. She is artist and curator for Athens Biennale 2018 and is co-curator with Hamze Bytyci for Come Out Now! The First Roma Biennale 2018; an idea initiated by her late husband Damian which took place at Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin. Le Bas is also associate curator at 198 Contemporary Arts & Learning London. Lives and works in various locations throughout Europe. <https://delainelebas.com/>

Valérie Leray was born in Chartres, France in 1975. She graduated as Master of Photography and Multimedia at the Paris 8 University. As an independent photographer Leray's work deals with questions of the presence and absence of History in contemporary photography. In 2008, her project "Nomads" was awarded as part of "The European Year for Intercultural Dialog". In 2009, Leray received the support of the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs. Her work has been exhibited in various countries including: Europäischer Monat der Fotografie (Berlin), Fotoseptiembre (Mexico D.F), Pyngyao International Photography festival, Paris, Berlin, Orléans. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Orléans, France. <http://www.valerieleray.photography>

Gyügyi Ödön was born in 1966 in Mátészalka, Hungary. His graphic works combine Christian iconography with a kind of Gypsy genesis mythology and can be considered a personal rationale for the world order. Ödön debuted with a group exhibition at the István Pataky Cultural Centre in 1984. His work was included in the 2nd National Exhibition of Self-taught Gypsy Artists at the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest. Ödön has participated in several group shows including 'The Contemporary Gypsy and Religious Art' (2003), 'The Female Figure in Gypsy Art' (2005), as well as a series of thematic exhibitions organized by The Gypsy House. Lives and works in Budapest, Hungary

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, born in 1987 in Arvika, is a Swedish illustrator educated in graphic design and illustration at Konstfack. In 2014 he debuted as a picture book illustrator with the books Dansbus & Kaktrubbel, Badbomber & Simhopp and Camping & Kurragömma, part of the government's Roma strategy to integrate Roma into society. The stories are set in the present day and have Roma children as the main characters. In 2015, the picture book Bosses Rymdäventyr, Bonnier Carlsenm was released by Petrus Dahlin with illustrations by Pettersson. In 2015 he received the Albert Engström's youth prize. In 2018 Pettersson debuted with his own picture book Modig as a lion, spike like a roach; a humorous and detailed picture book with animal idioms written in verse. Lives and works in Arvika, Sweden. <http://www.marcusgunnar.se/>

Emília Rigová (born 1980, Trnava) is a visual artist and university teacher based in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. In her graphics, installations, performances and site-specific interventions she works with the topic of cultural and social stereotypes and politics of the body. Rigová's work focuses on minorities systematically eradicated from hegemonic historical discourses, collective memory and visions of common future. She works with the topic of constructions of Romani identity and cultural and political appropriation of the Romani body in Western culture. Rigová exhibits extensively and is also active as a writer and editor. She is laureate of the Oskár Čepan Award for young Slovak artists. Lives and works in Banská Bystrica (SK). <http://emiliarigova.com>

Selma Selman (born 1991 in Bihac, Bosnia and Herzegovina) is an artist of Romani origin. Her work is representative of her life struggles and those of her community. Selman participated in Tania Bruquera's International Summer Academy in Salzburg, "Arte Util" (Useful Arts) in 2013. She was a fellow of the Roma Graduate Preparation Program at Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. In 2017 Selma received the prestigious "Zvono Award", given to the best young artist in Bosnia and Herzegovina, winning her a residency in New York City. Selman holds an MFA from Syracuse University. Lives and works in the USA and Europe. <https://www.selmanselma.com/>

Markéta Šestáková was born in Rokycany, Pilson Region, CZ in 1952. After the death of her mother, Šestáková grew up in a children's home, later rediscovering the world of the Roma never to leave again. Since the mid 1990's she has devoted more time to the traditional artistic practice of embroidery. Šestáková's hand embroidered works depict Romani life as a pastoral idyll. The current problems that Roma face are not the subject of her work, but she is not oblivious to such concerns, and has discussed them regularly in the Romani newspaper, Romano Hangos, published in Brno. Lives and works in České Budějovice, Czech Republic

Dan Turner is an artist and educator from London, a Romani Gypsy born in 1956 in Kent, UK. Turner trained at St Martins School of Art, London, where he completed a BA Hons in Fine Art (Sculpture). Recently his art is concerned with changes in group identity and social cohesion. He uses traditional iconic objects to explore themes of transaction, scrutinising interactions between Romani and mainstream cultures. Dan has worked with the Wellcome Trust Reading Room and Chisenhale Art Place on collaborative projects which examine traditionally perceived ideas of Romani of luck and healing and how these experiences feed into collective memory. Lives and works in London, United Kingdom

Alfred Ullrich was born in 1948 in Schwabmünchen, Germany, to a Sinti family. He spent his childhood in Austria. Like many Austrian Roma, many of Ullrich's family became victims of Nazi racial persecution. Reflections upon war and the social situation of his childhood form the source of his artistic inspiration. He employs various graphic techniques as well as creating objects and assemblages. Ullrich's works are included in collections across Austria and Germany (Graphotek and Stadtbibliothek/Artothek in Berlin). He exhibits extensively, including the 2nd Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, Call the Witness in 2011. Ullrich is a member of the Artists Association Dachau and the BBK Munich and Upper Bavaria. Lives and works in Dachau, Germany

László Varga was born in 1963, in Csenger, Hungary, to a Roma-Jewish family. Although he initially wanted to become a car mechanic, Varga realized early on that drawing and painting were the most interesting parts of his study curriculum. In his free time, Varga began to attend art classes, where he learned to draw and paint. Varga later attended courses for autodidacts at the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in Budapest where he also learned the techniques of sculpture and printmaking. In 2006, Varga earned a degree in cultural management and film history at the Karolyi Gáspár University in Szombathely. He has since participated in several group exhibitions in Budapest, Hungary.

ARTWORKS:

Celia Baker, Wool work, 2006/2009. Knitted textile installation, size variable. Courtesy of the artist

Ján Berký, Khatar avlam the kaj dzavas? (Where we came from and where we are going?), 1997. Collage on paper, 45.4 x 32.8 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, Flower Studies A, 2015. Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, Flower Studies B, 2015. Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, Abstract 1, 2015, pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 17 x 19 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, Abstract 2, 2015. Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 17 x 19 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Billy Kerry, Dark Origin, 2008. Ceramic, 21 x 16 x 12 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Billy Kerry, Miniature 1, 2018. Ceramic, 16 x 10 x 8 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Billy Kerry, Meeples, 2019. Ceramic and mixed media, 16 x 10 x 8 cm each. Courtesy of the artist

Klára Lakatos, Mandala, 1997. Acrylic / lacquer on board, 70 x 50 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Delaine Le Bas, Romani Embassy, 2019. Performance and related artefacts, size variable. Courtesy of the artist

Delaine Le Bas, Romani Embassy, 2017. Photographer Damian Le Bas, 80 x 58.67 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Valérie Leray, Castel "de la Pierre" Coudrecieux 2006 / Internment Camp for Gypsies 1940-1946, France, 2006. Photograph, 100 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Gyűgyi Ödön, Zöld Alma (Green Apples), 2000. Mixed media on paper, 29.7 x 21 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Emília Rigová, Raw Gender, 2016. Digital image, 100 x 70 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Selma Selman, Untitled, 2014. Acrylic paint on metal, 27.5 x 39.5 cm. Courtesy the Artist; the agnès b. collection. Photo and © Selma Selman

Selma Selman, Self-portrait (washing machine), 2016. Photographer Tanja Kanazir, 53.32 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Markéta Šestáková, Slunecnice (Romsky Zivot), Sunflowers (Roma life), 2005. Wool embroidery, 74 x 64 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

Dan Turner, Seeds of Change, 2019. Installation, size variable. Courtesy of the artist

Alfred Ulrich, O.T., 1997. Lythographic print on paper, 28.7 x 21 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

László Varga, Tanulmány a Végtelenről (Study of the infinite), 1991. Drawing on paper, 33 x 24 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the Ethnographic Museum, Budapest

ABOUT THE COMMISSIONER

FUTUROMA is commissioned by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, e.V. (ERIANC).

ERIANC was officially established on 07 June 2017, in Berlin, Germany. The Institute is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe (CoE), the Open Society Foundations (OSF), and the Roma Leaders' initiative - the Alliance for the European Roma Institute. ERIAC has a unique mandate as the first transnational organization for the recognition of Roma arts and culture. The Institute functions as a transnational creative hub, supporting the exchange of creative ideas across borders, cultural domains, and Romani identities. ERIAC highlights the numerous and multifaceted contributions of Romani contributions to European culture, talent, success, and achievement, as well as documents the historical experiences of Romani people across Europe.

ERIANC also works to raise awareness amongst European policy makers, institutions, and other stakeholders about the plethora of roles which Roma arts and culture play within society(ies), as well as to grow a comprehensive partnership across the continent and beyond for the support of Roma arts, culture, and communities. ERIAC strives to educate the non-Roma population about Roma arts and culture and to assist in the creation of understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect between Roma and non-Roma communities.

The vision of ERIAC is firmly grounded in six founding principles, which define the Institute's establishment, core functions, governance, structure, and membership:

- Respect of the dignity of Romani people and Romani identity;
- Diversity and plurality of Romani identities and cultures;
- Romani leadership with the support and cooperation of non-Roma;
- Engagement and contribution of Romani organizations and individuals in the establishment and ongoing activities of the Institute;
- Political autonomy and non-partisanship, openness for collaboration with public authorities and political institutions as partners;
- Highest quality standards in the domains of arts and culture, as well in as its own operational performance.

The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, e.V. (ERIANC) is headquartered in Berlin, Germany. The front office space of the Institute functions as a contemporary art gallery and a space for education and collaboration. It is open to the public and welcomes individual visitors and groups.

For more information, please visit www.eriarc.org

or find ERIAC on social media at

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—
Berlin – 10117 Mitte
Reinhardtstrasse 41-43.

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