ARTISTS:

CElia BAKER  JÁN BERKY
MARcus-Gunnar Pettersson  ÖDÖN Gyügyi  BILly KERRY  KLáRA LAKATOS
DElaine le bas  VAlÉrIE lERAY  EMíLIA RIGovÁ
MARKÉTA šestákovÁ  SELMA SELMAN
DAN TURNER  ALFRED ullrich  LÁSZLÓ VARGA

EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE
FOR ARTS AND CULTURE
INTERVIEW WITH THE COMMISSIONERS OF FUTUROMA

TIMEA JUNGHÄUS

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENCE OF ROMA ART AT THE BIENNALE DI VENEZIA?

The Biennale opened its doors in 1895, and it is the most prestigious art event in the world. However, during the 124 years, there has been Roma presence only 5 times, with the first time being in 2007. In between 1894 and 2017, there was no mention of any members of the Roma community in the Biennale History or archives. While it is a gigantic effort and somewhat of a heroic undertaking to make the Roma exhibition possible at the Biennale — it is of utmost importance for the Roma community to be included and for the art world to learn from the Roma community.


IS THERE STILL ANYONE IN EUROPE NOT ACCEPTING THE TERM “ROMA ART”?-

It is very important to be included in the Biennale to recognize how Roma revolutionized and contribute with a new vision to their nation. The Roma exhibition demonstrates how to create a space of transnational alliances, transformative collaboration. It inspires a self-definition of a transformative character through which our widely dispersed and fragmented belongings can transcend national boundaries, and invite universal participation.


It is an immense honour to be part of an opening where ERICAN, as a Roma foundation, is presenting an exhibition 12 years after the first Roma exhibition opened here in Venice. I am walking in the footsteps of the previous generations of Roma intellectuals, artists and cultural producers who have shaped our artistic and archival identity. This history is a basis for FUTUROMA, a forward-looking reflection that is itself making history already. At a time when Roma are being forced to fight against anti-Gypsyism, we are doing so not just as any other group that has established a nation. Despite the fact that we do not formally have the same status at the Biennale, our artistic expression breaks through any social, economic or political barriers that have been put on us.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE FUTURE OF ROMA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE “ART STORY”?-

The Future of Roma in contemporary art is bright. The number of Roma organizations, who invite the Roma community to participate in the exhibition, is growing. The exhibition is for art institutions and professional spaces to be simultaneously available in multiple locations.

WHAT MADE IT POSSIBLE TO BUILD SUCH AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT?

FUTUROMA was made possible by the immense artistic contributions of our curator, Daniel Baker. Daniel Baker, a Romani Gypsy artist, researcher, and curator. Originally from Kent, now 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: Shell’s Art Neuca and Its Potential for Artists,” after previously earning a MA in Sociology/Diedner and Ethnic Studies from Greenwich University, and a BA (Hons) in Fine Art from Ravenshawe College of Art and Design.

Daniel Baker has contributed to numerous exhibitions, held various residencies, and curated several commissions. He previously worked as an exhibitor and curator 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 Exhibitions of La Biennale di Venezia, respectively. In 2018, after hosting four Roma exhibitions through an international jury consisting of Professor Dr. Ethel Brooks, Paolo Baratta, and Zeljko Jovanovic, ERICAN management selected him to curate the Roma Collateral Event. Baker’s work examines the role of art in the advancement of social change through an eclectic practice that interrogates contemporary art discourse and its social implications via the reconfiguration of elements of Roma aesthetic. For more information about Baker and his revolutionary work, visit www.danielbaker.net


EXHIBITION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE IS IMMENSELY IMPORTANT FOR THE ROMA COMMUNITY TO BEING ACCEPTING THE ROMA EXHIBITION TOGETHER AT THE BIENNALE DI VENEZIA – ESPECIALLY IN CONNECTION TO CELEBRATING ROMA ARTS AND CULTURE.

There is a Roma presence at the Biennale since 2007, under the visionary leadership of Timea Junghaus, Executive Director of ERIAC. Their collective strength has been the key to putting this Roma exhibition into the Biennale a decade ago, and the Roma presence at the Venice Biennale has served as an opportunity for the Roma community to be a first-person expression of who we are, and how we are. In between 1894 and 2007, in 2007. In between 1894 and 2007, in the Biennale history or archives. While it is a gigantic effort and somewhat of a heroic undertaking to make the Roma exhibition possible at the Biennale — it is of utmost importance for the Roma community to be included and for the art world to learn from the Roma nation.

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Through these collaborations, combining performance, acting, writing texts, theatre, stage design, costuming, art, visual and audio media and technology we will continue to challenge what is presumed about us, who we are, what we are, what our potential is.

THE FUTURE IS ROMA - FUTUROMA, COME OUT NOW!

Join us! We are Radically Diverse and we will celebrate who we are and what we have to offer!
The Monument of Hope

The Monument of Hope is a participatory and accumulative monument to be handed to the leadership of the Venice Biennale to testify the immense need for urgent inclusion of Europe’s largest minority into the permanent program of the La Biennale di Venezia. Testimonies are collected throughout the Biennale from the FUTUROMA audience. The Monument is on display in the exhibition space at the FUTUROMA exhibition. The Book of Testimonies is available for the audience’s viewing.

“This is how Roma change (the art) world.”

—Salman Rushdie, 2011

“The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture will use the power of culture to combat enduring prejudices with our own positive identity.”

—Romani Rose, 8 June 2017

“The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture will transform the negative discourse about Roma into a discourse of cultural recognition and respect.”

—Delaine Le Bas, 8 June 2017

“We are all Gypsies”, Opening of the Call the Witness – Exhibition

—Salman Rushdie, 2011

“Through Futurom, ERIAC is changing the history of Venice Biennale for all minorities, non-territorial nations and those sectors of population who do not fit the rigid frontiers of national cultural narratives.”

—Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 25 April 2019

“ERIAC is great news for all Europeans determined to counter the negative prejudice that poisons people’s minds and souls.”

—Nicoleta Blu, 8 June 2017

“ERIAC will help stimulate and encourage Roma cultural production. It will serve as a tool for restoring Roma culture, Roma history, and Roma dignity.”

—Sead Kazanxhiu, 8 June 2017

“The federal government continues its engagement for the protection of national minorities at the European and international level. Subsequently, at the invitation of the federal government the “European Roma Institute for Art and Culture” was established in Berlin in June 2017. The project, initiated by the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundations, is designed to reduce prejudice against the Roma minority in Europe and support their successful integration by systematically recording and publicly presenting the arts and culture of the Roma in Europe.”

—Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, February 13th 2019

“We Roma are a people; we have an identity and a culture. We are not a “social problem”. With the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, our children will be proud of their heritage. They will meet the future heads on.”

—Dijana Pratovic, 8 June 2017

“Roma art exists – this is an act of affirmation and not one of defense!”

—Thomas Acton, 2007

“Never again, a Venice Biennale without a Roma exhibition!”

—Timea Junghaus, June 8 2007

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—Dr Bernd Fabrizius, April 3 2019

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JÁN BERKY

was born in 1951 in Studenec, Detva, Slovakia. Apprenticed as a welder, Berky worked in engineering 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 in his work. Themes which appear in his work include: the fate of the Roma, their history and current social situation, and Roma music. Berky is also a talented musician, and his paintings have won several awards. A documentary film about Berky was produced in 1998. He lives and works in Detva, Slovakia.

ÖDÖN GYÜGYI

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. He 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. He has participated in several group shows, including “The Contemporary Gypsy Religious Art” (2003), “The Female Figure in Gypsy Art” (2005), as well as a series of thematic exhibitions organized by The Gypsy House. He lives and works in Budapest, Hungary.

“AT THE BIENNALE, WE ROMA CAN SHOW OUR BOND TO THE TYPICALLY ROMANI - AND TO THE UNIVERSAL HUMAN CULTURE ON AN INTERNATIONAL FLOOR.”

KHATTA AVIJAM THE KAJ DZAVAS?

(Where we came from and where we are going?) 1997

Collage on paper

Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

CELIA BAKER


Wool Work 2006

Knitted textile installation

Courtesy of the artist

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Wool Work 2006

Knitted textile installation

Courtesy of the artist

MARCUS-GUNNAR PETTERSSON

was 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, as a 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 Bossas Fyldsmästare, Bonnier Carlsen was released by Petrus Dahlin with illustrations by Pettersson; that year, he also received the Albert Engström’s youth prize. In 2018, Pettersson debuted his own picture book Modig som ett lejon, a humorous and detailed picture book with animal idioms written in verse. He lives and works in Arvika, Sweden. For more information, visit: www.marcusgunnar.se

Wool Work 2006

Knitted textile installation

Courtesy of the artist

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Zöld Alma (Green Apples) 2000

Mixed media on paper

Courtesy of the artist

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was born in Csenger, Hungary, in 1968. She graduated from Ervin Szabó Grammer School in Budapest as a correspondent student and later earned a 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 collection of children's books, as well as the Zsolt Csánya Szolnokig collection of poems, “Napló-Kísérlet” (English: Diary Experiment). Her drawings have frequently appeared in Roma journals, including Amaro Drom, Kethano Drom, and Lungo Drom. She lives and works in Budapest, Hungary.

*KLÁRA LAKATOS*

**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 Dialogue”. In 2009, Leray received the support of the Regional Directorate of Cultural Affairs. Her works have been exhibited in various countries including: Europäischer Monat der Fotografie (Berlin), Fotoseptiembre (Mexico D.F), Pyngyao International Photography Festival, Paris, Berlin, Orleans. Lives and works in Berlin, Germany and Orleans, France.

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**FUTUROMA ARTISTS**

Billy Kerry

is an artist and educator from Cambridge, UK. Billy trained at Chelsea College of Art in London. Since graduating in 2009 Billy has been inspiring others by teaching and supporting at Cambridge Regional College. Kerry’s eclectic practice narrates the close interrelation between artist and materials, 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 Victorian to current Pop Culture in clothes which challenge established values to allow new insight into the way we live today. Lives and works in Cambridge, United Kingdom

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*BILLY KERRY*

**DELAINIE LE BAS**

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 Oswego Biennale South Korea 2012. She is artist and curator for Athens Biennale 2018 and is co curator with Hanze 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 191 Contemporary Arts & Learning London. Lives and works in various locations throughout Europe. For more information, visit www.delainelebas.com

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*FUTUROMA ARTISTS*
Markéta Šestáková

was born in Rokycany, Pílsen Region, Czech Republic, 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 time to the traditional 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. She lives and works in České Budějovice, Czech Republic.

“EVERY COUNTRY, NATION OR ETHNICITY HAS ITS OWN CULTURE AND HISTORY – IN MY EMBROIDERED PICTURES, I SHOW THE ROMA CULTURE.”

Markéta Šestáková
Slunce (Roma Sun) 2009
Wool embroidery
Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno

Emília Rigová

was born in Trnava, Trnava Region, Slovakia, in 1980. Rigová 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 Roma body in Western culture. Rigová exhibits extensively and is also active as a writer and editor. She is laureate of the Český Cagan Award for young Slovak artists. Lives and works in Banská Bystrica (SK)

www.emiliarigova.com/

“FUTUROMA IS A WAY FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO RECOGNIZE OUR ROMA CULTURE THROUGH MICRO STORIES OF INDIVIDUALS, BECAUSE IT IS A WAY TO BREAK FREE FROM STEREOTYPING OR DELUSIONS THAT ARE CONSTANTLY CIRCULATING ABOUT US.”

Emília Rigová
Raw Gender 2016
Digital image
Courtesy of the artist

Selma Selman

(born 1991 in Bihać, 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 Bruguera’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 2015 Selman 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

www.selmanaselma.com

Selma Selman
Self-portrait (washing machine) 2016
Photograph by Tanja Kanazir
Courtesy of the artist

“I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE LIVING IN A WORLD THAT IS INDEFINITE (...) I BELIEVE NEW DREAMS ARE COMING TO ALL OF US, AND I BELIEVE NOW IS THE TIME TO OPEN THIS WORLD TO THE BEST POSSIBLE DREAMS.”

Emília Rigová
Raw Gender 2016
Digital image
Courtesy of the artist

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 luck and healing and how these experiences feed into collective memory. Lives and works in London, United Kingdom.

“WORKING WITH ARTISTS OF ALL AGES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BUILD A ROMA ART MOVEMENT IN OUR OWN IMAGE.”

Dan Turner
Seeds of Change 2019
Installation and related artefacts
Courtesy of the artist
ALFRED ULLRICH

was born in 1948 in Schwabmünchen, Germany, to a Sinti family. Although he initially wanted to become a car mechanic, Ullrich realized early on that drawing and painting were the most interesting parts of his study curriculum. In his free time, Ullrich began to attend art classes, where he learned to draw and paint. Ullrich 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, Ullrich earned a degree in cultural management and film history at the Károlyi Gáspár University in Szombathely. He has since participated in several group exhibitions in Budapest, Hungary.

ABOUT ERIAC

ERIAC has a unique and single mandate as the first transnational, European-level organization for the recognition of Roma arts and culture. The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture e.V. (ERIAC) is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe, the Open Society Foundations, and the Roma Leaders’ Initiative – the Alliance for the European Roma Institute. ERIAC is an association registered under German law on 07 June 2017, in Berlin, Germany.

ERIAC exists to increase the self-esteem of Roma and to decrease negative prejudice of the majority population towards the Roma by means of arts, culture, history, and media. ERIAC acts as an international creative hub to support the exchange of creative ideas across borders, cultural domains and Romani identities. ERIAC aims to be the promoter of Romani contributions to European culture and talent, success and achievement, as well as to document the historical experiences of Roma people in Europe. ERIAC exists to be a communicator and public educator, to disseminate a positive image and knowledge about Romani people for dialogue and building mutual respect and understanding.

LÁSZLÓ VARGA

was born in 1963, inCsenger, 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 Károlyi Gáspár University in Szombathely. He has since participated in several group exhibitions in Budapest, Hungary.

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FUTUROMA — THE PROMISE OF ALL THAT CAN BE, PLACING ROMA FIRMLY IN THE HERE AND NOW!