

The background is a complex, abstract composition. It features a light beige or tan color with a subtle, textured appearance. Overlaid on this are several thick, white, irregular lines that form a network of interconnected shapes, resembling a stylized map or a series of overlapping planes. These lines are set against a background of faint, repeating 3D cubes or rectangular blocks that are arranged in a way that creates a strong sense of perspective and depth, as if they are receding into the distance. The overall effect is one of a dynamic, multi-dimensional space.

FUTUROMA

FUTUROMA

ERiac

EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

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 Romani 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.

FUTUROMA

Collateral Event of the 58th International Art Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia

Curated by Daniel Baker

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

Exhibition Site: Fondamenta Zattere Allo Spirito Santo, 417, Venezia, Italy

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

Exhibiting 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

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Dan Turner, *Seeds of Change*, 2019. Installation and related artefacts (detail).
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy and © Dan Turner

FUTUROMA

by Daniel Baker

FUTUROMA is commissioned by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAN) as an official Collateral Event of the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition proposes an alternative vision of the international Roma community by re-interpreting their traditions and their collective past to project into a future where Roma truly belong. While FUTUROMA marks the third incarnation of Romani artists' presence at Biennale Arte, it is the first time the initiative has been led by Roma themselves. The multinational, multilingual, multireligious and transnational Roma community of over 12 million across Europe does not fit easily into the narratives of national pavilions and as such has remained all but invisible to majority audiences. FUTUROMA thus sends a strong signal in striving for a permanent presence at the world's most prestigious contemporary art event. There follows an overview of the rationale for the FUTUROMA exhibition followed by an account of its concept and content. Finally the implications that arise from the project are outlined.

I would like to thank ERIAC for their courage and vision in commissioning FUTUROMA and the ERIAC team for their tireless dedication in making it happen.

Yesterday

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, as my attention turned toward the artistic output of my own Romani Gypsy community in the UK, I was struck by the lack of any formal analysis of our visual culture—a lack which seemed to me to echo our lack of visibility within society. This absence of attention highlighted for me a direct relationship between cultural visibility and social agency and prompted me to find out more about the role of visibility within Roma communities. This I have continued to pursue through my own studio and curatorial practices which draw upon my wider research into the functioning and implications of Roma aesthetics.

FUTUROMA expands upon these points by drawing together a number of strands that I have been interested in for a long time: The links between the traditional and the

contemporary, between domestic and professional artistic practices, and between individual archives and state collections. These hierarchies of *practice, collecting* and *dissemination* can otherwise be thought of as emblematic of the relationship between the marginal and the elite. By looking into the often discriminatory relationship between marginal artistic practices and those that form the centre ground we can find new ways of thinking about relationships between marginalised peoples and mainstream society.

We know that art performs a variety of functions including; reflection upon the human condition, as a therapeutic activity, as a way to critique society, and as tool of Identity politics and therefore instrumental within a variety of emancipatory projects. Strategies of activism toward the attainment of Roma equality have been varied in their approach. Artists expand this array of possibilities by drawing upon what are often highly personalised perspectives to develop objects and arguments that can operate in a variety of milieux be they social, cultural, economic or political. When successful, such objects and arguments allow expanded insight into complex social questions by facilitating reflection and debate in a way that directly political, scientific or academic arguments may not. One of the values of what we might call Roma contemporary art is its potential to act as critique to unfolding developments within wider society as they pertain to Romani groups. It can now be said that within this field there are a growing number of Roma artists of significant account who are moving us further toward a critical mass of voices which cannot be ignored.

The art object is where *artist, subject* and *audience* meet — and therefore where meaning is shaped and exchanged. Important works generate a variety of meanings, each meaning dependent upon the context in which they are presented. Within this understanding of the workings of art the potential outcomes are manifold as are the various roles that the art object can be seen to perform. At the heart of my interest is a preoccupation with the role of art in affecting change. One of the ways that art can effect change is by showing us the value in that which is overlooked. When we are

encouraged to look again at such objects and ideas we look again at the people that have generated them. In this way the artwork acts as an extension of the artist — as proxy if you will, which in turn acts as an extension of their community. Through re-evaluating such objects we are motivated to re-evaluate their makers and therefore the culture from which they emerge. This repositioning of artworks, people and communities encourages us build futures in our own image whilst at the same time allowing us to re-examine our collective past.

It is well documented that the avant-garde of the past cited Roma culture as a marker of progressive creativity and innovative ways of thinking. When these movements aped Roma 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. This array of symbolic aspirations on the part of the avant-garde reflects an understanding of the interdependence between life and art that has long been apparent within Roma culture and which continues to see artistic practice embedded within the broader social, cultural and political Roma landscape. Echoing this synergistic relationship, the concept of the 'Bohemian' continues to tie creativity and unconventional ways of living directly to the Roma people: Here we find art, lifestyle and ethnicity combined in a single idea.

As the original Bohemians, Roma have personified a creative approach to life that we know to have greatly influenced the forward thinkers of the past. A reminder of the concept of bohemianism is relevant today because it gives us a framework for articulating and quantifying the value of Romani culture and therefore the value of its people. This offer of a counter-narrative to the 'Roma problem' increases the possibilities for emancipation and equality and at the same time encourages us to construct images of futures in which we have renewed agency—and in which we belong.

Even today the Bohemian trope acts as a model for the popular image of the artist, and for good reason. The artist occupies a liminal position within society—as do the Roma. Society doesn't really know what to do with 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* has been obscured through the relative absence of formalised material legacy. Roma value has consequently remained largely unidentifiable to many even as the concept of Bohemianism continues to underpin the very notion of creativity so valued by society today. As the lodestar of creative achievement, La Biennale di Venezia continues to embody such notions—a fitting context therefore in which to speak of the perceived value of Roma cultural capital, and to rethink the mechanisms of formalised cultural legacy.

Today

The FUTUROMA exhibition draws upon aspects of Afrofuturism to explore Roma contemporary art's role in defining, reflecting and influencing Roma culture. The project set out to offer new and spontaneous re-interpretations of Roma past, present and future via a fusion of the traditional and the futuristic in order to critique the current moment for Roma people and to re-examine historical events. By imagining Roma bodies in speculative futures the exhibition offers a counter narrative to the reductive ways that Roma culture has been understood and constructed to date—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 the works displayed in 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 resulting narratives manifest ambitious visions of life affirming futures and at the same time allow reinterpretation of what has gone before. Here meaning unfolds along the dual paths of remembering and imagining, inherently intertwined in order to allow the political to be actioned within the artworks. In remembering we uncover that which might be obscured—whilst in imagining we invest into another future.

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. 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 emphasise 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 our history in an impactful and engaging way the exhibition is a chance to envision a future where we 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 whilst at the same time locating us firmly in the here and now.

Each artwork within the exhibition is chosen to perform its individual role in populating the narrative of the FUTUROMA concept. Each embodies elements of the preceding, the present and the beyond in a cycle of existence for which we all have a part to play. Klára Lakatos' organic abstract work brings us back to the beginning. Here pre-history is brought face to face with the corporeal. The timeless nature of the vibrant tangle of massed organisms takes us outside of time and beyond the mechanisms of oppression whilst at the same time reminding us of the bonds which we all share. Its riotous colour draws stark contrast with Valerie Leray's darkly congested landscape—a primeval vision of verdant growth amongst which the mark of human manufacture is glimpsed. Time has done its best to cover the traces of this former Roma internment camp site but remembrance takes us beyond. Billy Kerry's ambiguously honed vessels again bring us to the fundamentals of life. As the amorphous animations of the intertwined tubes echo the inner workings of the body, they tell too of the proliferation of intricate life forms that predate human existence. Alfred Ullrich's screen print gives an abstracted account of potential. Ambiguous in its depiction, the dynamism of the spring-like form echoes not only the limitlessness of the transcendental but also the intricacy of microscopic organisms.

Delaine le Bas' Romani Embassy tackles the ever present issue of territorial struggle and Roma legitimacy. Her makeshift embassy looks

to a future where geographic, psychological and physical belonging is no longer a matter of privilege—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 amongst the strangely familiar. Dan Turner's vision of a technological future where Roma space is optimised to ecological effect turns the roofs of Roma homes into herb gardens. Here healing is placed at the heart of Roma life as remedies once widespread among Roma communities are once again cultivated. Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson's intricately ambiguous forms coalesce into meanings just out of reach even as his detailed studies of alien blooms mark an adaptation to surroundings inherent in all our lives. László Varga's sharply perspectival drawing places the notion of space and freedom at its centre. The existential imperative of a place to be is taken forward here by offering the possibility of limitless space and infinite potential—a notion of freedom which is particularly poignant as this artwork represents one of the many examples of Roma cultural capital which currently lay in state museum storage closed to public view.

Ödön Gyügyi's oblique depiction of everyday objects encourages us to look again at the familiar through an altered lens. A still life becomes a constellation of jostling planets. Domestic space becomes an interplanetary array transporting us between the macro and the micro. Markéta Šestáková's otherworldly flowers contrast the familiar tableaux of traditional Roma life that each contain. Each bloom acts as a microcosm. The people depicted becoming seeds ready to be sown into our collective futures. Celia Baker's installation embodies an exuberant excess of spontaneous productivity. The seemingly limitless volume of material calls to mind the unstoppable nature of domestic art practice within Roma culture, repeating but ever changing. Unexpected juxtapositions of colour reflect the cyclical yet progressive nature of Roma life. Selma Selman's portrait of Roma industry looks to the economic imperatives which have shaped the Roma lives from the beginning—survival via the re-purposing of that which society has deemed abject. This depiction of scrap metal recycling, now a multibillion dollar industry, captures the

visionary adaptability in which Roma continue to excel. Jan Berky's collage is predicated on a sense of collapsed time. Here Roma histories and Roma futures come together—our past and our future meet as colliding cycles of influence to inform our choices today.

The show takes an international and intergenerational approach with 14 artists originating from eight countries including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Artists' ages range from 27 to 95. The variety of practice spans traditional domestic activities such as needlework and plant propagation to the digital disciplines of photography and filmmaking. Performance, installation, ceramics, painting, drawing and collage are also included. Each artwork has been chosen for its unique ability to convey meaning rather than the reputation of the artist. The resulting ensemble represents a broad cross section of activity from the domestic to the academic and from the professionally trained to the self-taught. This unification of domestic artistic practice and contemporary art modes of working allows us to uncover new connections across both fields whilst offering greater insight into the meanings and implications that they carry for broader ways of thinking.

The works on display highlight the role of the traditional within the contemporary. Key elements from the fields of domestic artistic practice and contemporary art have been brought together to help us think through the different ways that we encounter objects and how these ways can influence our understanding of artefacts and the meanings that they carry. Looking at objects in such ways highlights particular preoccupations within differing modes of making enabling us to more clearly engage with the experience and concerns of Roma communities and the ways in which these concerns underpin contemporary Roma art.

By engaging in creative acts these artists interrupt expectation to push toward new insight. FUTUROMA's main aim is to highlight the potential for Roma artistic practice and its consequent visibilities to interrupt prejudice and make way for new narratives. Within the exhibition disparate elements are brought together to offer a kind of unification amid

various networks of difference—joining together in greater or lesser harmonies to produce eloquent renderings of the paths that we as Roma continue to navigate. By re-contextualising our past these objects help create the foundations for re-imagining our futures, futures in which we are fully recognised for our participation as valued citizens.

Tomorrow

Art and life remain closely linked within Roma society as is apparent in the way that community and domestic artistic practice has formed the foundation of what is now the international Romani art phenomenon. Without these practices there would be little to distinguish the new wave of art production by Roma that has emerged over recent decades. Preoccupations with family, community, identity and the struggle for belonging are common themes within the work. The methods, media and outcomes may differ but they remain part of a continuum of innovative artistic practice which reaches back into our past and continues to inform our future. The innovation evident within Roma creativity reflects a pragmatism born of a history of marginalisation. Life at the edge of society has shaped Roma's understanding of the value of adaptability and transition—contingent qualities that have continued to inform Roma life to produce a set of values that are routinely played out through visual and sensory markers, many of which can be seen in the works on show in FUTUROMA.

Discussions regarding the intimacy between life and art are not new. If we were to consider some of the ways in which connections between contemporary art and the practices of living have been explored, we might take into account *performance art*, for example for (re)introducing the body as a site of convergence between the social and the artistic. *Relational aesthetics* widened the logistical possibilities of performance art by inviting a kind of public interaction that often results in the engagement of persons as all but an alternative medium available to the artist/curator. We could also include *socially engaged art* which challenges notions of authorship and the capitalist market infrastructure of the art world with projects that offer tangible social impact or public engagement.

The practices outlined above all have their part to play in the panoply of contemporary art movements. Yet it strikes me that much art practice by Roma, and many of the works in FUTUROMA, seek to be *social* rather than *socially engaged*—arising as they do from an aesthetic imperative born of the material and performative necessities of survival founded in the historic and ongoing existential urgencies of the Roma experience. This alternative perspective points to a rethinking of the role of artistic practice, one that conceives art as embedded within the social rather than demanding that the social be engaged with art. This way of thinking questions the widespread separation between everyday life and art thereby challenging established hegemonies of artistic practice to positions us all as artists—and equally none of us.

Resistance remains a recurring element across Roma art practice and the Roma aesthetic producing artworks that operate as arbiters of visibility, recognition and equality. Many of the works in FUTUROMA combine visual and material signifiers to produce resistant objects which at once occupy the realms of the domestic, the communal and the political. This co-dependence between the social and the artistic is where the boundaries between life and art disappear to show a direct relationship between cultural visibility and social agency for Roma. By interrupting the expectation of the viewer, these and objects like them, resist preconception and challenge the prejudgment that often follows. They enact resistance not through overt political acts but through subtler and perhaps more compelling means.

The creative process facilitates the interrogation and re-interpretation of experience. The resulting outcomes (including artworks) can be pivotal in promoting dialog across diverse groups. The impact of these outcomes is dependent upon the differing frameworks in which they are experienced and this is why inclusion in such events as La Biennale di Venezia is so significant. Visibility remains a key obstacle in cultivating and disseminating the variety of Roma talent within the art world. In order to address this we need to see more works by Romani artists in national collections and international museums before we can say that we are truly taken seriously by the art world and its institutions—from which we remain all but absent.

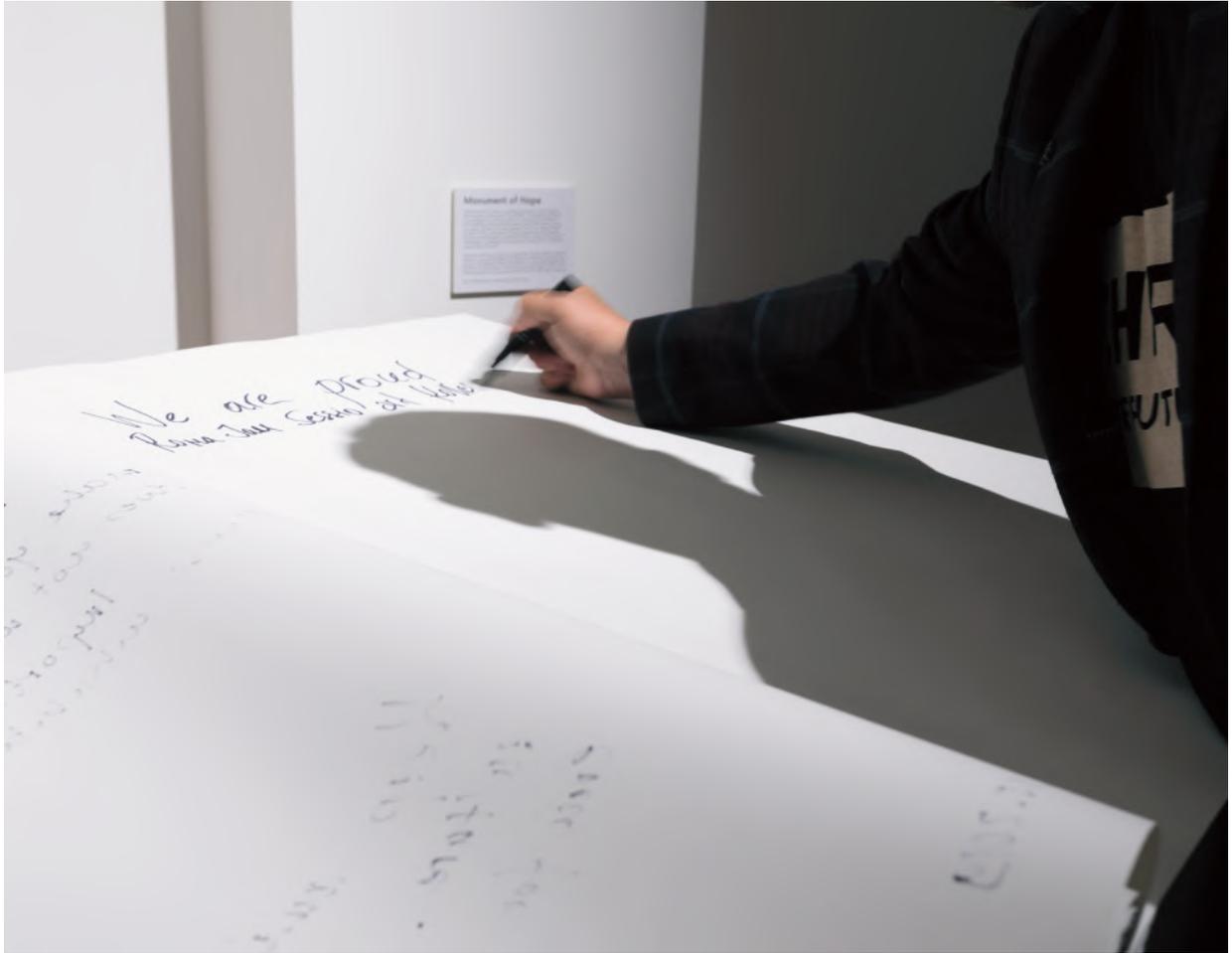
Museums now emulate elements of the Roma experience through initiatives such as community outreach and participation; both of which echo the kind of community involvement which has long been part of Romani art practice. Just as these institutions are now looking to minority communities for fresh approaches to collecting and dissemination, so we as Roma need to be part of these establishments in a meaningful and impactful way. By emphasising the universality of the Roma experience FUTUROMA seeks to highlight the inequality evidenced by the widespread excision of Roma histories from state narratives and in so doing enact the potential for such histories to be challenged and reset

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 Biennale Art, 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 at Biennale Arte 2019.

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.

www.danielbaker.net



Monument of Hope

Photo Benjamin Renter

THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF ROMA CONTRIBUTION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

by Timea Junghaus

The Biennale opened its doors in 1895. It is the most prestigious art event in the world. However, during its 125 year history there has been a Roma presence at the Biennale only three times, the first in 2007. Between 1894 and 2007 there was no mention of members of the Roma community in the Biennale's history or archives. While it is a gigantic effort and a somewhat 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, and this significant art event, to learn to think beyond nation-states. The first Roma exhibition in 2007 was called "Paradise Lost" and featured a selection of contemporary Roma artists from eight European countries with Open Society Foundations acting as commissioner and catalyst. The exhibition marked the arrival of contemporary Roma culture onto the international stage and sent an important message of inclusion. In 2011, the exhibition "Call the Witness" addressed the situation of Roma within European culture and society.

The current FUTUROMA exhibition is a Roma initiative with a Roma curator exhibiting artists of Roma origin. It embodies the notion of Roma contribution and Roma leadership as well as excellence and the highest standards in arts.

Roma presence at the Biennale is necessary because it unveils the pedagogy of how inspiring, fertile and transformative it is to think beyond national representations. I believe it is very important for the Biennale itself to recognize how Roma revolutionise and contribute with new vision to their institution. The Roma exhibition demonstrates how to create a space of transnational alliances and trans-border collaboration. It inspires a self-definition of transformative character to Europe through which our widely dispersed and fragmented belonging transcends national boundaries and invites universal participation.

The notion of Roma arts and culture was highly debated up to the early 21st Century. The intertextuality of Roma scholarship on

Roma arts and culture, and the excellence of artists of Roma origin have now stabilized this notion of Roma art. It is not an ethnic category. Roma art speaks very authentically and sensitively from within the Roma subjectivity. In the past five decades the notion of Roma art has been the most important vehicle through which to speak positively about the Roma experience, to gain visibility and momentum for the Roma political movement and to fight against anti-Gypsyism.

The Future of Roma in contemporary art is bright. The number of majority organizations that invite Roma contribution is growing, while the community presses for art institutions and professional museum spaces simultaneously in multiple locations.

ZELJKO JOVANOVIĆ: A Forward Looking Reflection

I am walking in the footsteps of the previous generations of Roma intellectuals, artists and cultural producers who have shaped our artistic and activist history. That history is a basis for FUTUROMA, a forward-looking reflection that is itself making history—at a time when Roma in European societies are increasingly threatened by populism and fascism, which exploit deeply ingrained prejudice against Roma. That prejudice is the wrong answer to the question of who the Roma are. This exhibition, on the other hand, is a first-person expression of who we are.

FUTUROMA was made possible by the immense artistic gravitas of our curator, Daniel Baker, the artists whose works are exhibited here, the visionary leadership of Timea Junghaus, who pioneered the Roma presence at the Venice Biennale a decade ago, and the incredible people who work with ERIAC. Their collective strength has been the key to putting this together and it only exemplifies what the Roma people are capable of doing when they come together from different parts of the globe, and when they have a few determined friends.

Exhibiting at the Venice Biennale is immensely important for us, as we can showcase our vi-

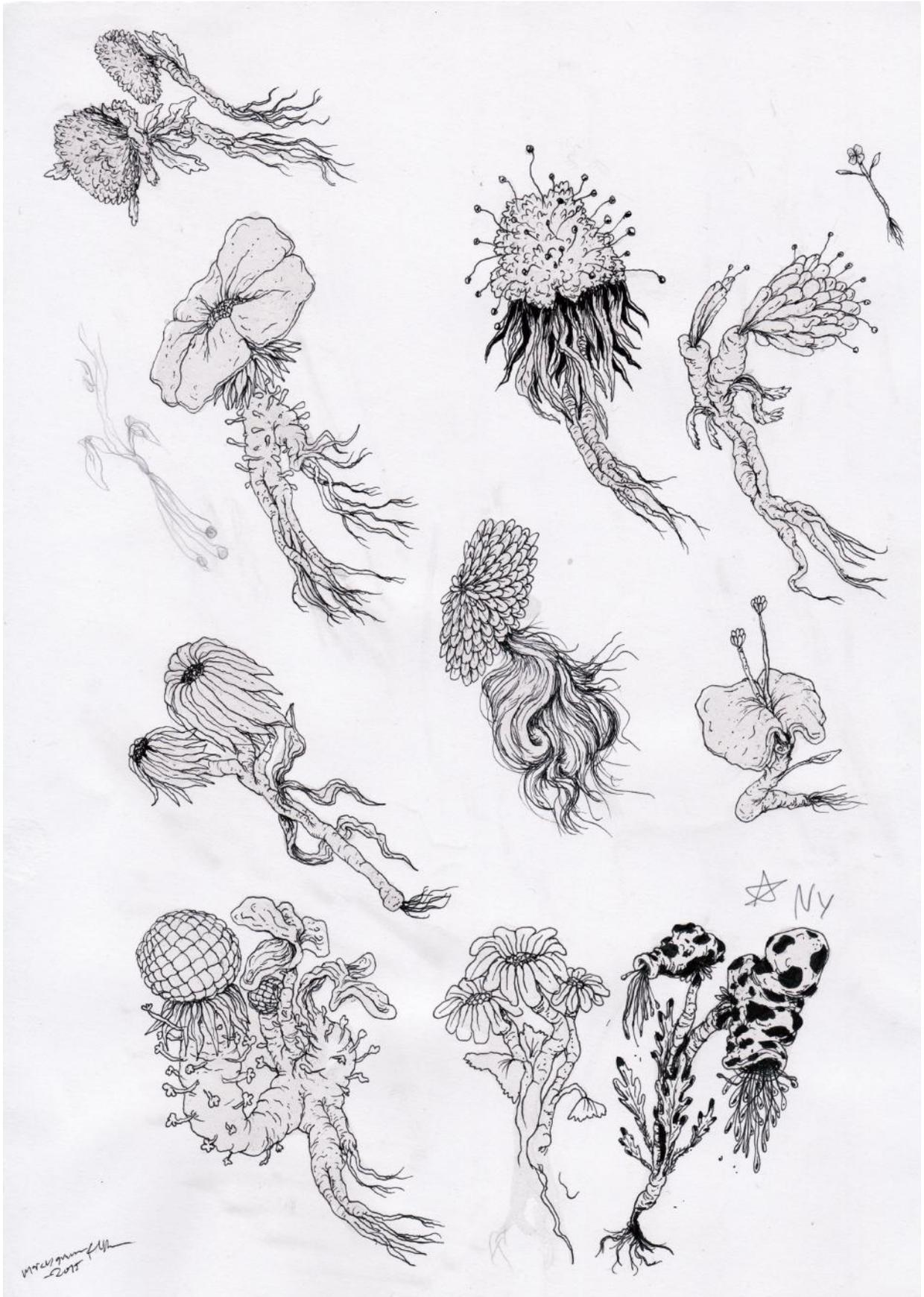
sion of ourselves and of the world in time and space alongside other nation-states. We can show, as many Roma do in sports, that when rules are clear and fair, and when we are not judged by the colour of our skin but by the richness of our talent, we can do just as well as any other group that has established 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 bars that have been put on us.

The world of arts, while always able to help build nation-states, was never limited to states. On the contrary, it has served as an expression of suffering caused by nation-states—for example, the case of oppressed minorities—as well as building

bridges among states – between France and Germany, for instance. Art has always been a divine touch upon the deeply situated humanity in each of us. As such, Roma arts and culture represent a unique opportunity for the Venice Biennale to fulfil the ambition of art and expand its promise for the future.

*Timea Junghaus,
executive director, European Roma Institute
for Arts and Culture, Commissioner for the
FUTUROMA Pavilion*

*Zeljko Jovanovic,
Chairman of the Board, European Roma In-
stitute for Arts and Culture, Commissioner for
the FUTUROMA Pavilion*



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

NATIONAL OFFICE AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

by Triantafillos Loukarelis, General Director of UNAR

FUTUROMA, by enhancing the contribution of Roma and Sinti to European culture and art, represents for Italy an experience of recognition of Romani communities in their creative and intercultural dimension.

The exhibition, retracing and reinterpreting Romani culture from the past, present and future, gives expression to the voices of many artists from different European countries in the prestigious and historical context of the Venice Biennale.

Re-examining through art, elements of history and current affairs, marked by dramatic pages but also by talent and high cultural expression, can foster a non-stereotyped understanding of a diversified reality that is often little known for its excellence.

UNAR is the Italian Office against Racial

Discrimination. Operating since November 2004 with the purpose of promoting equal treatment and removing all forms of racial and ethnic discrimination, UNAR monitors the impact of discrimination on men and women as well as explores the relationship with other forms of discrimination, such as those based on culture or religion. Since 2011 UNAR is the National Contact Point for the Italian Strategy for Inclusion of Roma, Sinti and Caminanti.

UNAR reaffirms the centrality of the fight against discrimination and antigypsism, and participates and shares this experience in respect of its principles and its Institutional mission.

Triantafillos Loukarelis, General Director of UNAR

WE MAKE HOME: A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

by Ethel Brooks

I was last in Venice nearly seven years ago, part of an artistic intervention I helped organize with Leah Whitman-Salkin, called Zuppa-Soup-Zup! We invited Romani women from Napoli, Rome and other parts of Italy, for a dinner party in Venice during the Architecture Biennale of 2012. Romani communities across Italy, across Europe, were facing evictions, destruction of their homes and communities, carried out by state and municipal governments—they were facing violence and the loss of home, even as they were working night and day to create home, belonging and a place for themselves and their families. Women came with their families, their kids, their husbands and other community members; there were non-Roma allies in the room, discussing with us and listening carefully. We cooked together, ate together, cleared the table and washed up together—and Leah had arranged for simultaneous translation between Romani, Italian and English. The program had been planned for four hours, with two dinner seatings—it lasted more than six hours, with everyone sitting around the table, eating and talking together. While eating, we discussed access to housing, the regularization and destruction of camps (*campinomadi*) across Italy, the recent fingerprinting campaign aimed at Roma and the threat of the Roma census; we talked about the evictions and displacement faced by the Romani community across Italy and beyond. Women discussed access to water, education, health and housing; many brought up the question of citizenship and the fact that they were three generations of families without papers—without access to healthcare, to schooling or to political rights.

We, Romani women, spoke amongst ourselves while washing up, in Romani and Italian, about gender roles in our families, our hopes for our daughters and our sons, and our practices of passing down our history, language and culture to our children and to the larger community. Over the course of those hours together, everyone

gave of themselves, worked to create community, to create understanding and to build a space of safety, comfort and home. At the end of the day, after we had cleaned up, I invited the women to come out into the city for dinner and drinks. They told me that they couldn't risk it—if the authorities were to spot them in Venice, in the middle of the Architecture Biennale, they would be arrested, those without papers perhaps deported, evicted, fined. They could not risk their safety, or that of their families, for the sake of continuing the discussion, the sharing of food and drink, in which we had been partaking within the space of the Venice School of Architecture; instead, they boarded vans and returned to their homes. I went out into the evening with the *gadzhe* who remained behind, to enjoy the receptions, the parties and the celebrations of the Biennale.

I want to stop here and have us consider the enormity of this: Participants in an artistic program, held during the Architectural Biennale at the Venice School of Architecture, could not, for fear of their safety, go out for drinks, have dinner or attend receptions that were part of the Biennale celebration. This, for me, is essential for understanding the place of Roma in Europe, in Italy, in the world. Even as we are celebrated for our knowledge, for our artistic production, for our rich culture, even as we work to build community and understanding, we continue in a state of precarity, subject to violence, segregation and eviction at any moment. Even in Venice, even during the Biennale. This should never have happened. It should never happen again. We deserve a home, here, in the Biennale, in Venice, in the World.

We make home. We make home in camps, in mahalas, in apartment complexes, in houses, in cities. Across the world, we make home and bring beauty to our homes, our families, our cities, our communities, our countries.

Even as we make home, beauty and love, we exist in a state of precarity. This is why we

need this exhibition, the dream of FUTUROMA. The exhibition charts our place in the world through the imaginary and future maps, the visions of home and sustainability, the hidden pieces of art, the portable embassies, and the fantastical embodiments of who we are. It is a celebration of our being, a reclaiming of our past, and a dream of a Romani future in which we thrive, in which we flourish, where we make family and community and diaspora through love. It is our present practice continued, but with the support of the world, of Roma and non-Roma together. It builds upon earlier exhibitions and earlier Biennales, on the artistic interventions we have made and the multiplicity of artistic practice that we have created.

The exhibition and its vision of the FUTUROMA is our vision. It is our hope for the future and our dream of liberation—fantastical, not-of-this-world and yet of-this-world, impossible possibilities. Our Monument of Hope is one that we can take with us and give to others, part of the circulation of our culture, our people, our community and our belonging. With this, I add my own hopes to the Monument of Hope, the beautiful book of our dreams, our aspirations, our future. It is our monument that is also an intervention, a disruption of monumentality—I have written about this elsewhere, drawing from Édouard Glissant's notion of *tout-monde*—for Roma, our monuments are living, they are everywhere and nowhere, and they are embodied, part of the relationality of our multiple diasporas. The Monument of Hope is portable, and inside it contains the wealth of our knowledge, the hope of our people, the beauty of our art and the precarity of our existence. It is clad in gold—the gold that is part of the portable wealth we have carried with us even as we live under the threat of violence, in the precarity of an everyday where the world so often tells us that we don't belong. And still we make our place, create our home, build sites of our belonging—as we have done with this exhibition, in this Biennale, through our art and our knowledge, our beauty and our portable wealth.

My hope is for a space of belonging, where we are able to make home without threat of eviction, precarity, or violence.

My hope is that our children will stand tall, proud of who they are and from whence they come. Proud of our history, our survival; they will know what we have given to the world and that they have a right to belong and to thrive and to fly, with the full support of everyone, Roma and non-Roma, worldwide.

My hope is that our future, and that of everyone, will live up to the visions of beauty, love, belonging, marked in this book, by this exhibition, by our ways of being in the world. OUR FUTURE is everyone's future, the future of the planet, of humans, non-humans, all living creatures and the living being that is the universe itself. It is beautiful in its diversity, difference, flowering: in its everything.

I place my hopes in our monument, our testimony, alongside the hopes, dreams, love and desires of the Romani people in Italy, in Europe, in the world. We belong to this Biennale. We belong to Venice. We belong to Italy. We belong to Europe. We belong to the world.

Ethel Brooks is Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and Sociology at Rutgers University and a Tate-TrAIN Transnational Fellow at the University of the Arts London, where she was the US-UK Fulbright Distinguished Chair (2011-2012). Brooks is a member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, Chair of the European Roma Rights Centre, and member of the Bavarlipe Academy of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. She has served on the US Delegation to the Human Dimension Implementation Meetings of the OSCE and spoken in the General Assembly for the United Nations Holocaust Remembrance Ceremony. Brooks co-directs the *Feminist Critical Analysis* course at the IUC Dubrovnik and the Summer University course on Romani Studies at CEU. Brooks is the author of the award-winning book; *Unraveling the Garment Industry: Transnational Organizing and Women's Work*.

ON SOLIDARITY

by Rashida Bumbray

I was extremely honoured and humbled to be present at the launch of FUTUROMA and to be asked to speak on the occasion of the opening of the exhibition at the Venice Biennale. I wear many hats in life. I am Director of Culture and Art for the Open Society Foundations' program. I am also a curator by training as well as a choreographer and performer. One of my roles at the Open Society Foundations is to oversee the Arts Exchange, our Arts for Social Justice Initiative which includes the Soros Arts Fellowship. This fellowship is structured to support the work of visionary and socially engaged artists to work on an ambitiously scaled project over 18 months. The FUTUROMA exhibition and the presence of Roma artists at the Venice Biennale underline this impetus and the Open Society Foundations is extremely proud to support the radical practices of Roma artists, curators and cultural producers.

As a point of entry I want to pick up on some of the parallels that have been lifted up between African American representation and cultural production as inspirational for the FUTUROMA exhibition. I was raised in a black dancing school in Washington DC and I have often described this experience as that of being the recipient of a chain of transmission; being given a psychic and spiritual technology reserved for those who had spent hours and hours in a process of repetition of training. The dancing school, which focused on tap dance specifically, shared our studio with a weekly Flamenco class. Here I saw parallels even as a child between these forms—their physical and sonic parallels. Of course these parallels are now more pronounced for me through knowledge of history. A parallel history also emerges of the development of cultural forms by Roma and Enslaved Africans. These histories were developed out of experiences of utter agony, displacement, erasure and social forgetting and have shown us how to live despite chaos. These are forms which my teacher—the poet Kamau Brathwaite describes as Magical Realism—forms that he

says we developed as an alternative to insanity.

The first time I came to Venice was in 2015 for All the Worlds Futures, the 56th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale curated by the late Okwui Enwezor. His work in life and his work on that exhibition insisted that the culture and knowledge production of the marginalized—specifically African artists and those of African descent be at the centre. And even today in the various pavilions at the Biennale we can see this influence through the inclusion of incredible works made by many diverse artists. Yet simultaneously in the art world we see the continuum of a long history of extraction, appropriation and exploitation of people in positions of marginality with regard to the centres of power.

This 58th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale includes an installation of a boat which carried migrants across waters, an artefact of the imperative which compels many to risk everything to transcend borders in order to preserve existence. The Roma journey embodies a radical stance of statelessness which has meant that as a people they continue to be both transnational, and pre and post borders. Even as ERIAC and Roma artists contend with building a permanent space in Venice, in Europe and globally through the radical condition of statelessness, they also echo a call for the hope of solidarity and permanence in this space and others not just for Roma but also for other marginalized and oppressed peoples from around the world.

The FUTUROMA exhibition underlines the importance of reimagining the future. A reimagination not locked into a Western concept of progression but one that, through creative intervention, can hold the teachings of our elders and ancestors within our vision of our futures. Afro Futurism / FUTUROMA insist that we can look forward and backwards simultaneously—and that artists continue, as they have throughout history, to show us what is possible. And so, it remains the most

important and radical posture for artists who are excluded from the mainstream to speak for themselves. In 2015 my friend the artist Simone Leigh wrote a piece in the Brooklyn Rail called *Everyone wants to be Subaltern*, a piece which looked to restate the idea that all art is about identity and that identity is vast. Afro futurists like Sun Ra give us improvisational compositions creating spaces to imagine our futures. FUTUROMA offers a like-minded space of productivity, a collapse of time where the past and the future exist in the same instant to illuminate our vision.

Rashida Bumbray is director of Culture and Art, the Open Society Foundation's program dedicated to advancing diverse artistic practices and strengthening locally led cultural spaces around the world. Since joining Open Society in 2015, Bumbray has organised the Arts Forum: Art, Public Space, and Closing Societies and launched the Soros Arts Fellowship.

Bumbray began her cultural career in 2001 at the Studio Museum in Harlem, where she

coordinated major exhibitions including, *Freestyle* and *Frequency*. As associate curator at The Kitchen, Bumbray organised critically acclaimed exhibitions and commissions featuring work by Leslie Hewitt, Simone Leigh, and Kyle Abraham among others. She was guest curator of Creative Time's exhibition *Funk, God, Jazz and Medicine: Black Radical Brooklyn* in 2014.

Bumbray is also an accomplished choreographer whose practice draws from traditional African American vernacular and folk forms. Her performances have been presented at Tate Modern, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harlem Stage, Project Row Houses and SummerStage.

A graduate of Oberlin College, Bumbray also received an MA in Africana studies from New York University. She has been nominated for the prestigious Bessie Award for Outstanding Emerging Choreographer and the Independent Curators International Curatorial Vision Award. In 2018 she was honoured among women in leadership by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

FRAGMENTS OF APPRECIATION

by Angelika Stepken

When I first visited the FUTUROMA exhibition in Venice, I was amazed. Unlike all the great gestures in many of the national pavilions, I entered a series of smaller rooms with a constellation of highly diverse works that at first glance radiated an unimagined experience of intimacy; an intimacy that did not turn away from the visitor or confront them with indiscretions, but with very physical material imaginings, projects and objects. Manifestations of tradition and community spirit as well as resistance and everyday life abound, manifestations of manual skills and intellectual projections as well as aesthetic joy and political criticism. My astonishment did not end when I turned to the individual artists' biographies and their works' specifications. The exhibition gathers works by internationally recognised artists and autodidacts, by the over-90s and the barely 30s, by artists living in Sweden, Great Britain, the USA or Slovakia, France or Hungary, works from the 1990s and much more recent dates, those that occupy considerable space and others that barely reach an A4 format. Their materialities ranged from knitted wool to digitally generated images, from glazed ceramics to photographs of performances, from seed packets to fine pencil drawings and watercolours.

Back on the street, I googled the word "intimacy": according to the Oxford Dictionary, it means "furthest from the edge, furthest inside", a "state of deepest familiarity." I had just left an exhibition dedicated to the contemporary artistic production of Roma artists as part of the supporting program of the Venice Biennale. The many millions of people who speak Romanes have lived for 700 years in different parts of Europe and all over the world and are continuously deemed "minorities" in their national contexts. As such, they continue to be brutally marginalized and deprived of rights like hardly any other minority. The happiness that the exhibition conveys, however, is the opposite: the furthest from the edge...

If I were really familiar with the 14 artists involved, I would now be writing on their respective works and artistic practices. Most of them are represented in the exhibition by only one or two works, which, like an archipelago,

brings together outstanding phenomena from many years of everyday practice. Instead I wrote to the artists and also to the curator.

First contacts. Excerpts of voices:

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson (Arvika, Sweden): *"I just love to draw. And it is such a tangled interest in me that I don't really think I can ever quit doing it. But one important happening I had, was some years ago when I couldn't draw 'cause I hated whatever I did! So I had a block!! BUT, one day I spilled some coffee on my papers and drew what I saw from the stain. Since then, EVERY drawing I make begins with a stain. And without the stain I don't like my drawings. Haha!! I think I need a touch of chance in my work. To just explore what a drawing could be."*

Selma Selman (New York, USA): *"For the past 10 years, I have been developing an art-based toolbox to heal internal, inter-personal and collective traumas. The aim of this toolbox is to protect oppressed people and therefore create a space for mutual understanding of both privileged and unprivileged. These tools that I have developed are simple, effective and transferrable. (...) In my artworks, my ultimate aim is to protect and enable female bodies and to enact a cross-scalar approach to collective self-emancipation of oppressed women. My search for functional, contemporary political resistance stems from my personal experience with oppression from various directions and scales, but as an artist, I do not want to flatten myself to an identity that would cohere simply to the image of Roma origins. (...) I prefer to think of myself in layers. My core is an artist, I am a human second, Selma Selman third, Roma fourth, Bosnian fifth, and then finally a part of the wider reality."*

Marketa Sestáková (Ceské Budějovice, Czech Republic): *"I started embroidering in 1993. I always liked painting and I wanted to be a painter, but I had no choice. At that time I got a lot of cotton and I thought that I would paint with cotton, i.e. embroider. And why the Roma theme? In my heart is freedom and independence, as Roma have. I have lived among the Roma for several years and have come to know their freedom, their mentality and customs. I don't*

know where it comes from, maybe it was my destiny. I enjoy working very much."

Alfred Ulrich (Dachau, Germany): *"My origins with all their traumatic aspects determine more and more the content of my artistic work: with a feeling of being on the run. But the craftsmanship of the prints bind me to one place for the duration of their realization."*

Resistance and healing have always been motives for art. Art brings beauty into life, creativity, subjectivity, something not yet seen, but it can also pronounce criticism of hierarchical practices, of inclusion and exclusion. The title of the exhibition FUTUROMA alludes to the current challenge of global hegemonies: Africa, a continent whose human and material resources have been exploited for centuries to nourish the profit dynamics of the European capitalist system, today imagines the future, its own futures, present and past - negotiated in the cultural field as "Afrofuturism". Daniel Baker takes up this speculative thread and transfers it to the reality of life of the Roma with the claim to articulate it in a variety of ways, to re-evaluate it, to retell it, to paint it a future instead of fixing it in alleged anachronisms vis-à-vis "majority society". If this majority society does not want to ruin planet Earth once and for all, it must learn a great deal very quickly: from the so-called "others" who have been marginalized or who are now drowning in their thousands in the Mediterranean. *I am because you are*, was—in practice also controversial—a motto in the reconciliation processes in post-apartheid South Africa. The future does not belong to the winners.

Part of my current learning process was questioning Daniel Baker on his curatorial strategy for FUTUROMA.

Excerpts from his answers:

"The main focus of my interest has become the community artistic practices which populate Gypsy, Roma and Traveller daily life and which are seen as very much integrated into the act of living rather than as separate 'art' activities. (...) Looking to community and domestic artistic practice through the lens of contemporary art discourse allows us to unpack the meanings, connections and implications within both fields of practice. This also chimes with the arguments within my ongoing work regarding hierarchies of

artistic practice as emblematic of the workings of social marginalization. (...) I would say that the idea of art as a tool of daily life is less about art and design as a way of improving life and more about a way of living in which creative practice is integral—a bottom up process rather than top down. (...) Living in Florence you must be reminded daily of the birth of the autonomy of art and all the meanings, pleasures and questions that those artworks instil. At their core these objects remain instruments of the power of the state and the church. Here the public are persuaded of the transcendental nature of art, its beauty and skill used to promote ideas and narratives that point away from daily life toward the profoundly spiritual and the intellectual. This model of separation is how the modern museum is still understood and from my perspective there seems to be little appetite for approaching things in different ways. (...) I suppose that the desire for equality is at the heart of my work and my ideas, and the hope that there might be room for different approaches within the art world certainly fits with this notion. Nevertheless such an equal playing field does not yet exist in my experience."

We are very grateful that FUTUROMA - the works of all participating artists - can also become visible in at the Villa Romana, an institute initiated by artists in Florence 114 years ago and still very much alive today as a place to share what art can give to the people. FUTUROMA is an exhibition that proposes a different, an open approach to art and life.

Angelika Stepken is a curator and writer. She is the director of Villa Romana in Florence, an artists' residency and centre for international artistic exchange in Florence. From 1998 – 2006 she was director of Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe. She has organized numerous international exhibitions, most recently the ifa (Institute for Foreign Relations) exhibition Future Perfect, which has toured internationally since 2013. She has written numerous articles in catalogues and edited the 2012 BDI Jahresring, entitled On One Side of the Same Water. Artistic practices between Tirana and Tanger. She is editor of the extensive monograph Ketty La Rocca - You. Works & Writings 1964 – 1976, published in 2018 and is currently editing – together with Alessandra Acocella – a book with Lara-Vinca Masini's writing from 1961 – 2019.

SPACE AND PLACE

by Zsófia Bihari

Since the second half of the twentieth century, space as a category of analysis has moved strongly into the foreground of cultural studies. *"The representation of production relations, which include power relations, also take place in space [...]"* (Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 1974) The artists of the FUTUROMA exhibition offer unique ways of integrating the spatial turn into their work while underlining the correlation of space and power.

On May 10th 2019, Delaine Le Bas opened the FUTUROMA exhibition at the Venice Biennale with her performance of the *Romani Embassy*. A highly political statement, since minorities without a nation state have to pay a large amount of money to the Biennale headquarters for participation and yet are only allowed to appear outside the main venues, on the fringes of the Biennale. Le Bas has, however, succeeded in providing an artistic response to the discriminatory structure of the Biennale in pointing out the challenge of legitimizing and recognizing Romani art and culture without the existence of a Roma country - often referred to as "Romanistan"- in a nation-states-based world order. On the one hand, the case of Venice shows how contemporary art, while making room for minorities, at the same time assigns them the place of the "other", it also demonstrates the immense power of resistance within the field of Romani contemporary art, which curator Daniel Baker highlights genuinely throughout his exhibition.

Delaine Le Bas' *Romani Embassy* has been an ongoing work of art since 2012. In this series of performances, the artist points to the lack of political representation of her minority. She describes her project as a *"living archive, an embodiment of reclaiming the stolen artefact that we have become."* During her performance in Venice, Le Bas wears a golden dress with a cardboard sign around her neck, hand-written with the words *Romani Embassy*. It can be assumed that she consciously chose a composition reminiscent of the images from the Nazi era, where men and women who allegedly had sexual relations with a Jew could be publicly humiliated in the streets

immediately after the introduction of the Nuremberg Laws (1935).

Together with the sign, which recalls stigmatization, humiliation and punishment, the shiny golden dress, a symbol of wealth, forms the central dissonance of the work. The dress may remind us of the forgotten homeland in India, where the color gold stands for the traditional crafts of the past (e.g. goldsmiths), which before the industrialization of Europe secured economic opportunities for many Romani families. Furthermore, gold can be a symbol for the cultural diversity of the Romani diaspora as well as for the re-appropriation of the color from clichéd images of Romani women with gold jewels.

By using the sign to present herself as an ambassador of Roma, Le Bas shows that the *Romani embassy* is flexible. It is not tied to a particular place, is constantly moving and difficult to pin down. Since the artist recognizes and represents Roma as a non-territorial community, she wants both to give power to the people and to prevent them from being assimilated into conventional institutionalized power structures. Like her—covered with gold and cardboard—her embodiment of the message moves between honor and sarcasm.

Another artwork at the FUTUROMA exhibition can also be linked to the absence of a Romani nation state. Selma Selman presented her new AR video work entitled *No Space* in the Roma Pavilion. This artwork was presented on a simple white sheet of paper with a QR code and a short description provided by the artist.

Only after successfully scanning of the code did the artwork appear on the visitors' personal devices. Selman focuses on her body and stands in the center of the image on a three-dimensional map of the world, over Europe, right next to Italy. She is wearing a simple black dress with a large black and fluorescent yellow jacket. The jacket is reminiscent of French yellow vests and security forces' uniforms. With the help of

augmented reality, the video looks like a computer game in which Selman connects levels of space with the earth.

The first scene begins with the artist bending down completely and covering her face with her bent upper body. With a quick movement, she straightens her body, opens her arms and begins to walk and talk simultaneously. She often runs out of the camera's range and then reappears. We hear her voice throughout. She speaks English with an exaggerated accent and addresses her audience with the following sentence: *"You are not welcome in my space, so turn yourself around and you will see that every part of this here, what you see, is mine."*

In the five-minute video, Selman explains that her body is so huge that there is no room for others. She seems to embody the antithesis of objective argumentation. She is impulsive, imitates animal sounds and constantly repeats the statement that her body is so large that she needs all the space available completely for herself. Her movements appear hysterical and ridiculous at the same time. With the help of the mouse pointer, the viewer can rotate the picture 360 degrees and thus see the globe below and the shining moon above in the black sky.

One option is to interpret this work of art from the background of Romani history. For over six hundred years Roma communities have been struggling for legal settlement in various regions of Europe; especially in the Western Balkans, where many have no citizenship and live as stateless. In this setting, Selman could be seen as the ruler who conquers the whole world in the name of her community.

A more universal level of interpretation, however, is not exclusively based on the fate of the minority. *No Space* is an artistic examination of current political debates about borders, citizenship, flight, migration and belonging. Selman belongs to Europe's Muslim minority. She studied in Hungary during 2014-15, where the government was running a large-scale anti-Muslim propaganda campaign in 2015. Afterwards she studied in the USA under the Trump administration, where the public discourse painted a xenophobic image of Muslim citizens as violent and terroristic. In this political climate, the artist creates an absurd scenario with *No*

Space, in which she, the subaltern, stages herself as the world's watchdog.

The constructed AR staging, the overlaid accent and Selman's theatrical gestures contribute to the absurdity of the video. It feels as if you are part of a computer game with the goal of reaching Europe. Consequently, the artwork can be understood as a critique of today's immigration policy. With this work, Selman could criticize the immigration policy by simply claiming all the earth's resources for herself and not allowing anyone to enter.

The artist herself offers an even more universal level of interpretation of her work by writing: *"The main idea of the work is to bring the world back to thinking about the physical realities of Earth by visualizing how space and belonging are conceptualized today. While using a virtual planet and making my body both bigger than the Earth and as small as your phone screen I am questioning our conceptions of physical space and personal belonging"*.

Although we typically consider time, space and power as separate entities, and tend to speak about time and space as dichotomous concepts, both Selman's and Le Bas' works enrich the discourse by pointing out how these termini are necessarily intertwined.

*This essay is a shortened and re-edited version of the third chapter of Zsófia Bihari's dissertation entitled „Das hegemoniale Bild herausfordern: Zeitgenössische Videoarbeit von Romani Künstlerinnen aus Osteuropa“ from the East European Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin (March 2020).

Zsófia Bihari (1993, Budapest) moved to Berlin in 2013 and earned a Bachelor Degree at Humboldt University in Cultural History and Theory. During her studies she worked in the field of non-formal historical education and was a research assistant at Humboldt University focusing on Diaspora Studies. She is currently completing her studies at Freie University's East European Studies Masters Program. In the last two years she has been working as project coordinator and assistant curator at the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. Beside other responsibilities she coordinated the FUTUROMA exhibition at the 58th La Biennale di Venezia.

FUTUROMA

Artworks



Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, *Abstract 1*, 2015. Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 21 cm x 19 cm.
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy of the artist. © Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson

Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson's intricately ambiguous forms coalesce into meanings just out of reach to mark the adaptation to surroundings inherent in all our lives. Through their diverse forms, these exercises in possibility speak of the varieties of difference that proliferate throughout human existence—each to be valued in their own way. Upon closer inspection the seemingly

disparate elements within the drawings come together to create new propositions, generating a kind of harmony from the random chaos of things—a synchronization of coexistence.

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



Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson, *Abstract 2, 2015*. Pencil, pen and watercolour on paper, 22 cm x 20 cm.
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy of the artist. © Marcus-Gunnar Pettersson

illustrator with the books *Dansbus & Kaktrubbel*, *Badbomber & Simhopp* and *Camping & Kurragömma*; part of the government's Roma strategy intended 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 Carlsen 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 som ett lejon, pigg som en mört*; a humorous and detailed picture book with animal idioms written in verse. Lives and works in Arvika, Sweden.

www.marcusgunnar.se



Delaine Le Bas, *Romani Embassy*, Venice, 2019. Performance and related artefacts, dimensions variable.
Photo Daniel Baker. Wall photos Damian Le Bas. Courtesy and © Delaine Le Bas

Delaine Le Bas, *Romani Embassy*, Venice, 2019. Performance, dimensions variable.
Photo Daniel Baker. Polaroid Peter Prekopp. Courtesy and © Delaine Le Bas

Delaine Le Bas

Delaine Le Bas' *Romani Embassy* tackles the ever present issue of territorial struggle and Roma legitimacy. The makeshift embassy, able to be invoked anywhere and at any time, looks to a future where geographic, psychological and physical belonging is no longer a matter of privilege—a future where Roma bodies are no longer contested. The makeshift nature of the mobile embassy highlights the transformative and adaptive qualities which lay at the heart of the Roma experience and which inform the contingencies of Roma life and creativity—qualities which continue as instrumental in the push towards emancipation.

Delaine LeBas' 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 was 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.

www.delainelebas.com





FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
Photo Benjamin Renter

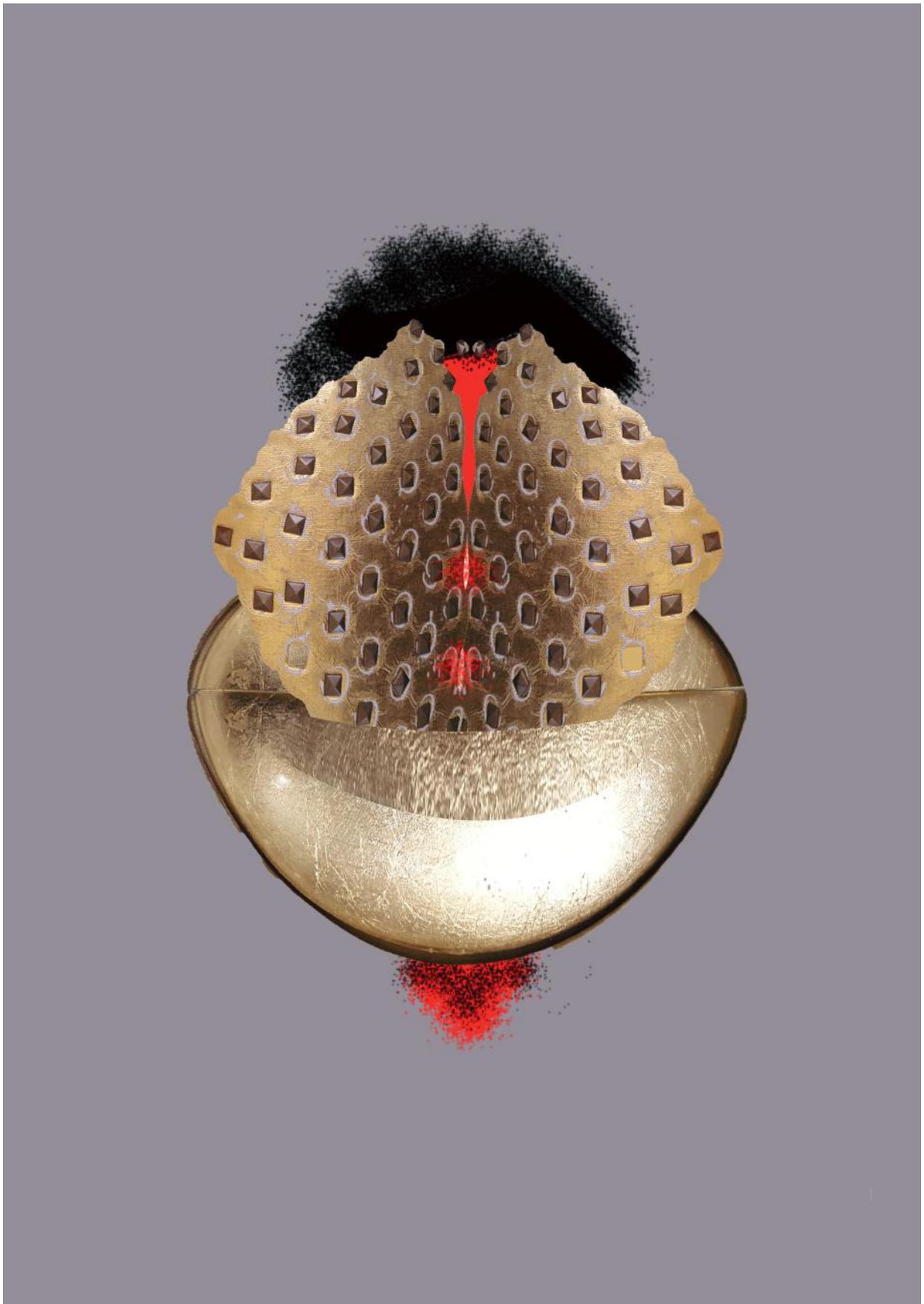
Emília Rigová

The body lies at the heart of Emília Rigová's shiny rendering of gender in flux. Its seductive forms compel us to rethink intimacy amongst the strangely familiar. The metallic sheen of the cyborg entity with its organically mechanical structure draws the bodily and the spiritual together to address questions of gender, power and equality. By employing elements of the Roma aesthetic to explore what can often be seen as taboo subject matter within traditional Roma communities, this series of works moves us forward to a place where the intensely intimate—and its implications for public life, can be openly debated.

Emília Rigová (born 1980, Trnava) is a visual artist and university lecturer 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 that have been systematically eradicated from hegemonic historical discourses, collective memory and visions of common futures. 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).

www.emiliarigova.com



Emília Rigová, *Raw Gender*, 2016. Digital image, 100 cm x 70 cm.
Photo, Courtesy and © Emília Rigová



Billy Kerry, *Miniature*, 2018. Ceramic, white clay and glaze, 14.5 cm x 10 cm x 10 cm.
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy and © Billy Kerry

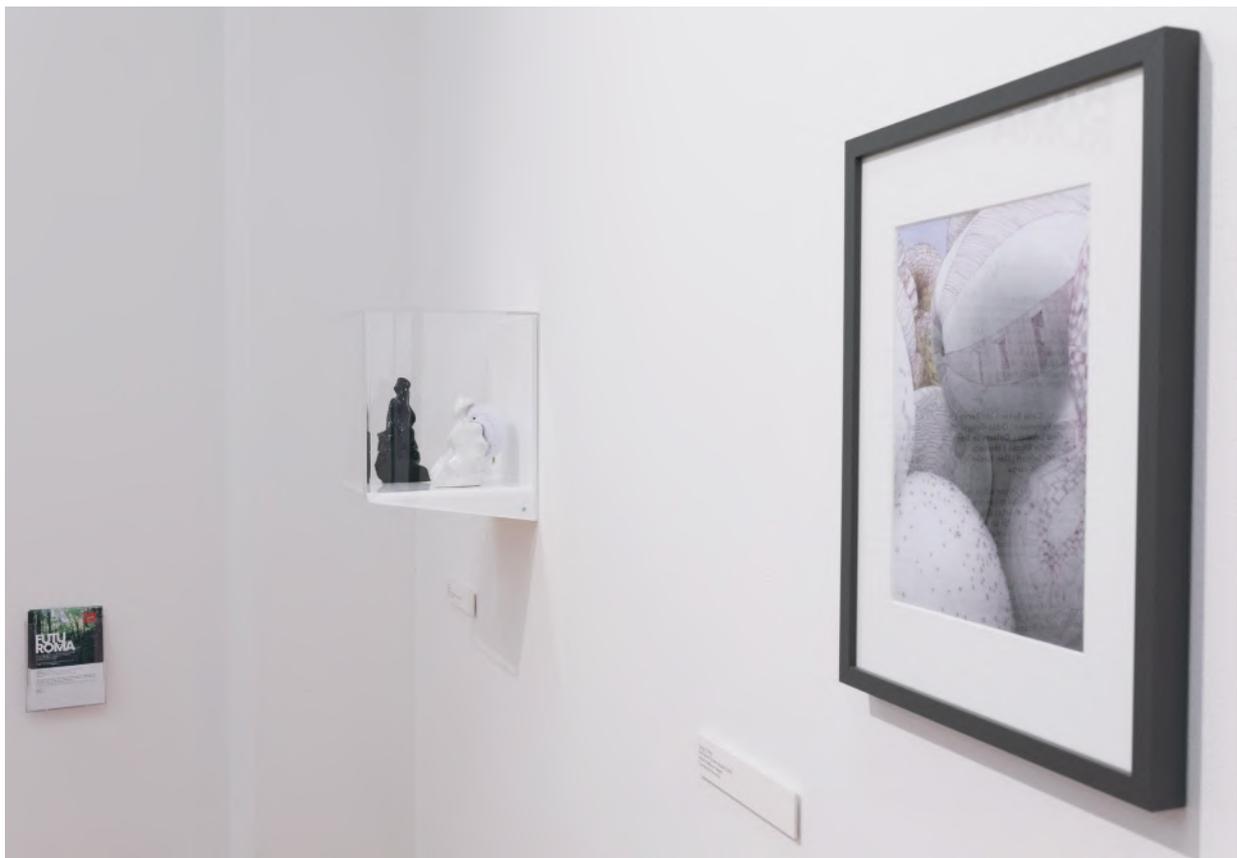
Billy Kerry

Billy Kerry's ambiguous ceramics take us to the fundamentals of life. While the amorphous animations of the intertwined vessels echo the inner workings of the body they tell too of the proliferation of intricate life forms that predate human existence. The internal is brought out into the light by these domestic scale sculptures which offer a distant echo of the kind of highly prized ornaments held in Romani homes. Kerry turns the idea of the ornament inside out into something visceral and thought provoking. The compelling nature of these hard-to-pin-down objects speak to us of growth, possibility and the vulnerability of humanity.

Billy Kerry is an Artist and educator from Cambridge, UK. He trained at Chelsea College of Art in London. Kerry's eclectic practice narrates the close interrelation between artist and material, and 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 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.



Billy Kerry, *Dark Origin*, 2008. Ceramic, white clay and glaze, 20 cm x 12 cm x 16 cm.
Photo, Courtesy and © Billy Kerry



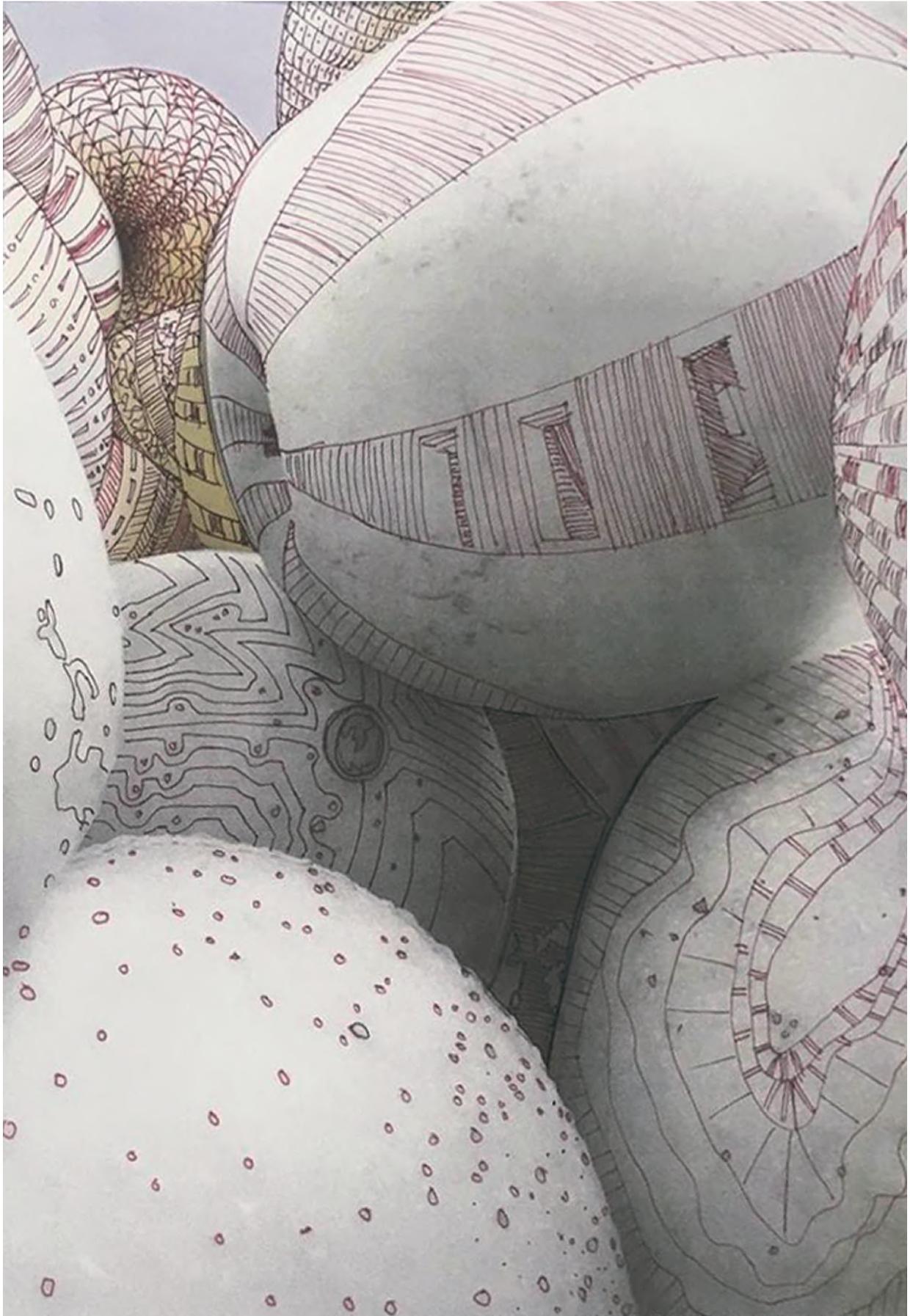
FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
Photo Benjamin Renter

Gyügyi Ödön

Gyügyi Ödön's oblique depictions of the everyday encourage us to look again at the familiar. Moving between the macro and the micro—here still lives become constellations of planets jostling to retrieve some kind of order from the chaos of creation. Shifting between the domestic and the inter-planetary these playful meditations on scale embody important ideas in terms of the exhibition and its ambitions for moving perceptions beyond that which we have come to expect into more expansive futures.

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.



Gyügyi Ödön, *Zöld Alma (Green Apples)*, 2000. Mixed media on paper, 30 cm x 21 cm.
Photo, Courtesy and © Gyügyi Ödön

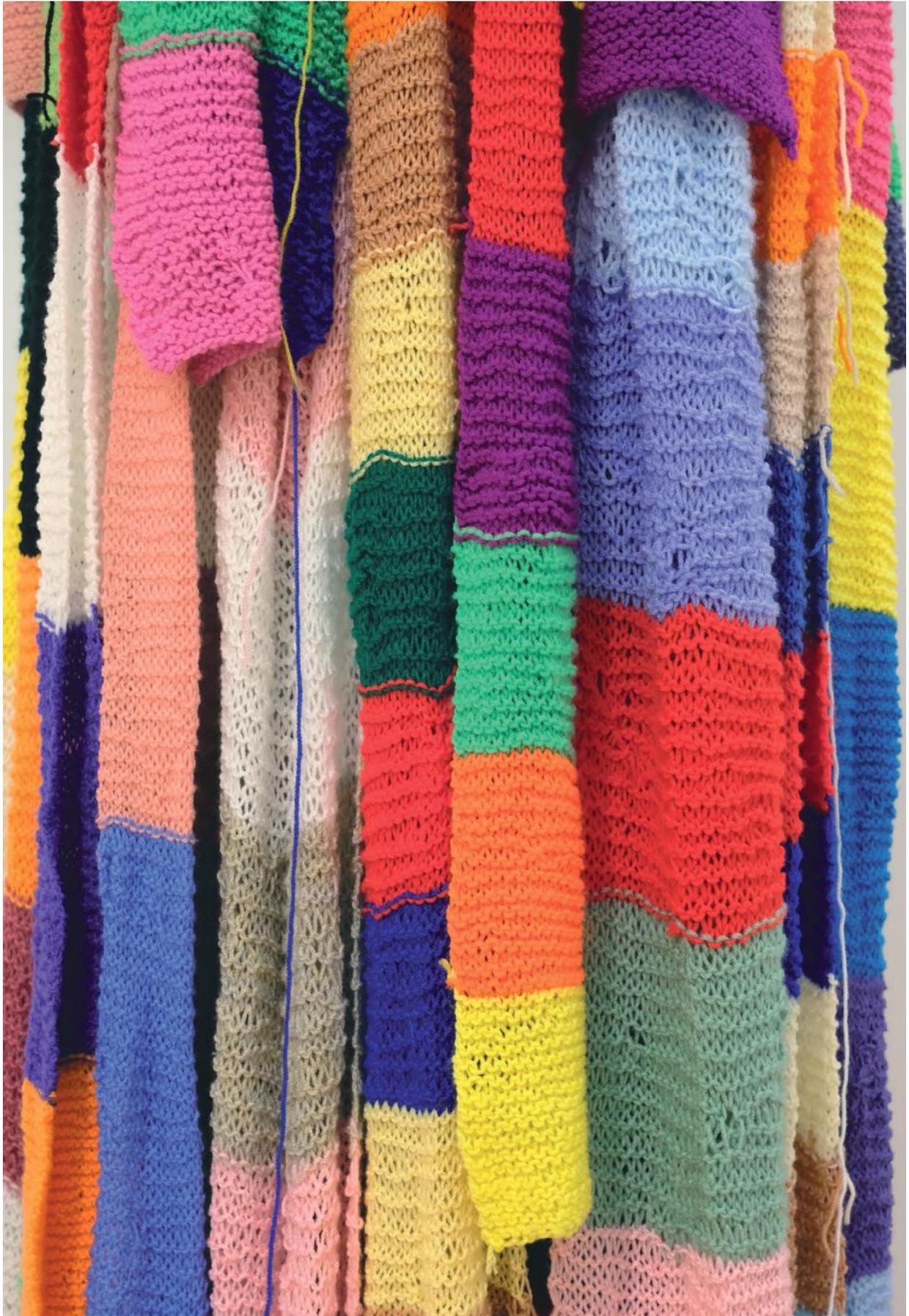


FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
Photo Benjamin Renter

Celia Baker

Celia Baker's installation displays an exuberant excess of creative productivity. The seemingly limitless volume of material calls to mind the unstoppable nature of domestic art practice within Romani culture and results in a compelling physicality. Here the repetitive but ever changing juxtaposition of colour combines to reflect the cyclically progressive nature of existence and at the same time reflects the reality of family and community artistic practice as integral to Romani daily life. This intriguing work eloquently highlights questions regarding hierarchies of artistic practice and the relations between art and the social; themes which are explored throughout the exhibition.

Celia Baker (1923 – 2019) was born 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 Gallery, 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.



Celia Baker, *Wool Work*, 2006. Knitted textile installation, size variable.
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy and © Celia Baker



Selma Selman, *NO SPACE* 2019. *Superpositional Performance Mediated through Augmented Reality*. Video, Editing and AR by Chongha Peter Lee. Courtesy and © Selma Selman. nospaceproject.com

Selma Selman

Selma Selman's portraits of Roma industry look to the economic imperatives which have shaped the Roma way of life from the beginning—survival via the re-purposing of that which society has deemed abject. The painting of Selman with her family breaking up a car for scrap recycling—now a multibillion dollar industry, captures the visionary adaptability in which Roma continue to excel. This focus on the implications which underpin insatiable consumerist appetites is highlighted again in her self-portrait of the dramatic dismantling of a washing machine. Ecology is explored again in Selman's Superpositional performance *No Space* in which questions of territoriality take centre stage.

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 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 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.

www.selmanselma.com



Selma Selman, *Self-portrait (washing machine)*, 2016.
Photo Tanja Kanazir. Courtesy and © Selma Selman



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



Markéta Šestáková, *Slunecnice (Romksy Život), Sunflowers (Roma life), (detail), 2005. Wool embroidery, 68 x 58 cm. Photo MRC - Adam Holubovský. Courtesy of the artist; the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno © Markéta Šestáková*

Markéta Šestáková

Markéta Šestáková's otherworldly blooms contrast the tableaux of traditional Roma life contained within the centre of each flower. Each plant acts as a microcosm reflecting the reality of regeneration and the symbolism of procreation through which our next steps are imagined and constructed. The intricately embroidered persons depicted within are seeds ready to be sown into our collective futures. Šestáková's work again highlights questions regarding modes of artistic production and their implications for rethinking relations between art the social.

Markéta Šestáková was born in Rokycany, Pilsen 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.



Markéta Šestáková, *Slunecnice (Romksy Život)*, *Sunflowers (Roma life)*, 2005. Wool embroidery, 68 x 58 cm.
Photo MRC - Adam Holubovský. Courtesy of the artist; the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno © Markéta Šestáková



Klára Lakatos, *Mandala (detail)* 1997. Acrylic / Lacquer on board, 70 x 50 cm.
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy and © Klára Lakatos

Klára Lakatos

Klára Lakatos' organic abstract work brings us back to the start of things. Here pre-history is brought face to face with the corporeal. The timeless nature of the vibrant tangle of massed organisms takes us outside of time and beyond the mechanisms of oppression whilst at the same time reminding us of the bonds which we all share. The primeval force emanating from within the centre of the painting spews forth all the elements required to populate a planet. Fragments of creatures, plant life and emergent human forms all vie for a place in this brave new world.

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.



Klára Lakatos, *Mandala 1997*. Acrylic / Lacquer on board, 70 x 50 cm.
Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy and © Klára Lakatos



FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
Photo Benjamin Renter

Valérie Leray

Valérie Leray's darkly congested landscape shows a primeval vision of verdant growth amongst which the mark of human manufacture is glimpsed. Time has done its best to cover the traces of this former Roma internment camp site but remembrance takes us beyond. Something terrible happened here which can never be forgotten even as the irrepressible forces of nature move to heal / conceal the damage done. Leray's exploration of histories encourages us to pause while we consider how remembrance can take us forward to a place where all that has gone before can be carried with us to inform the choices that we now make.

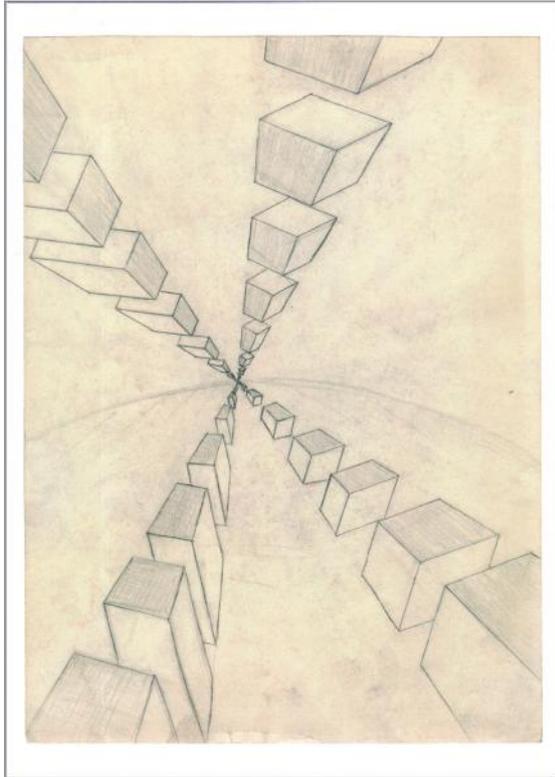
Valérie Leray was born in Chartres, France in 1975. She graduated as Master of Photography

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.

www.valerieleray.com



Valérie Leray, *Castel "de la Pierre" Coudrecieux 2006/Internment Camp for Gypsies 1940-1946, France 2006.*
Photograph. Photo, Courtesy and © Valérie Leray.



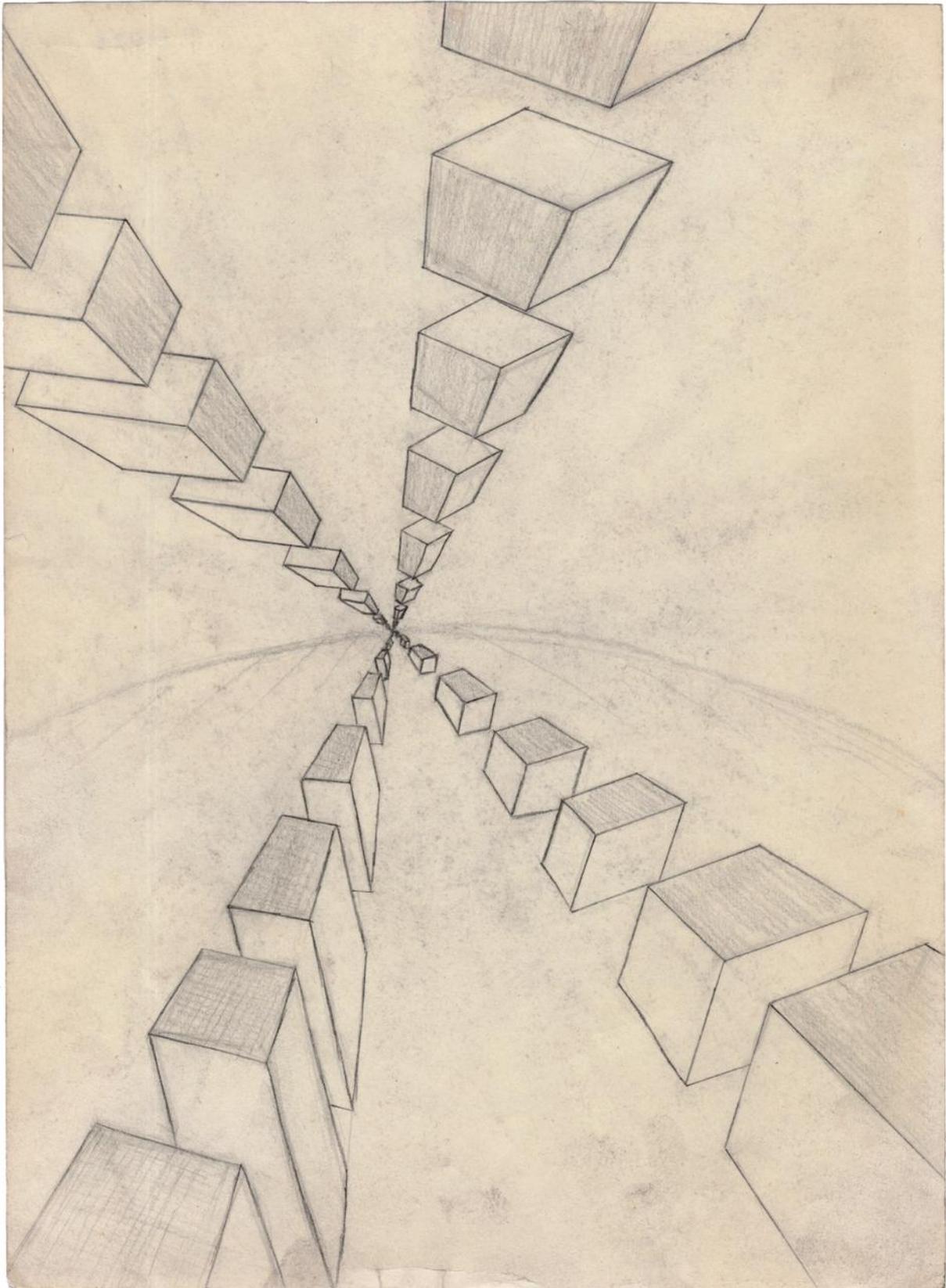
FUTUROMA postcard design



László Varga

László Varga's sharply perspectival drawing places the notion of space and freedom at its centre. The existential imperative of liberty is taken forward here by offering the possibility of limitless space and infinite potential. Notions of liberation, of freedom of movement, and conversely the lack of it, are explored through the presentation of this artwork whose actual presence was unable to be secured for exhibition. In its place 1000 postcards bearing its image were produced for display to highlight questions regarding the liberation of cultural capital and to act as symbolic of wider Roma emancipatory issues.

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.



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



FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
 Photo Benjamin Renter

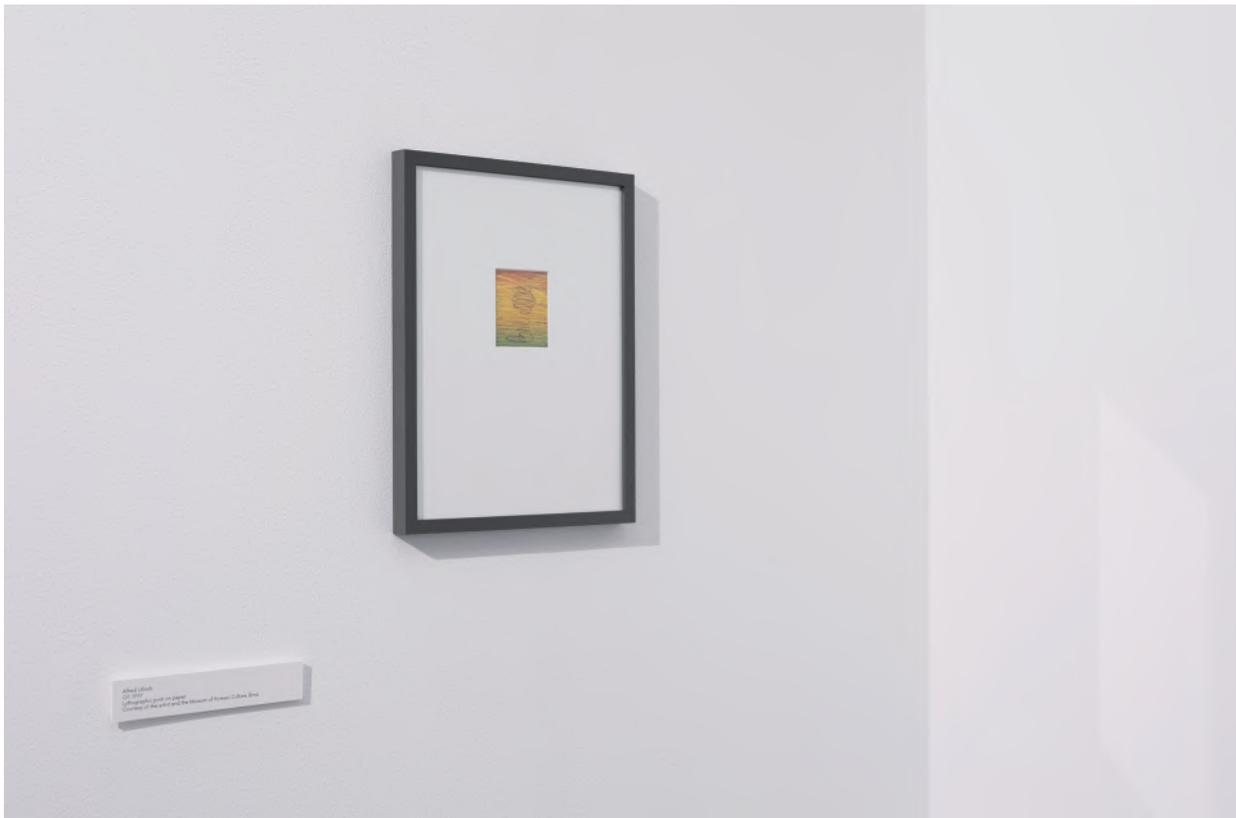
Dan Turner, *Seeds of Change*, 2019. Installation and related artefacts.
 Photo Daniel Baker. Courtesy and © Dan Turner

Dan Turner

Dan Turner's vision of a technological future where Roma space is optimised to ecological effect transforms the roofs of Romani homes into herb gardens to produce the remedies that were once widespread among Roma communities. Here healing is at the heart of Roma life. Turner's living first aid kits point to a time when Roma were valued within rural communities for their skill and expertise, and the unique insights that they had to offer. The green roofs depicted in the fine voile hangings that accompany the glass nurseries indicate the kind of recycling and regeneration initiatives that have underpinned Roma economies of existence since the beginning, situating them as central to Roma experience and to Roma knowledge.

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.





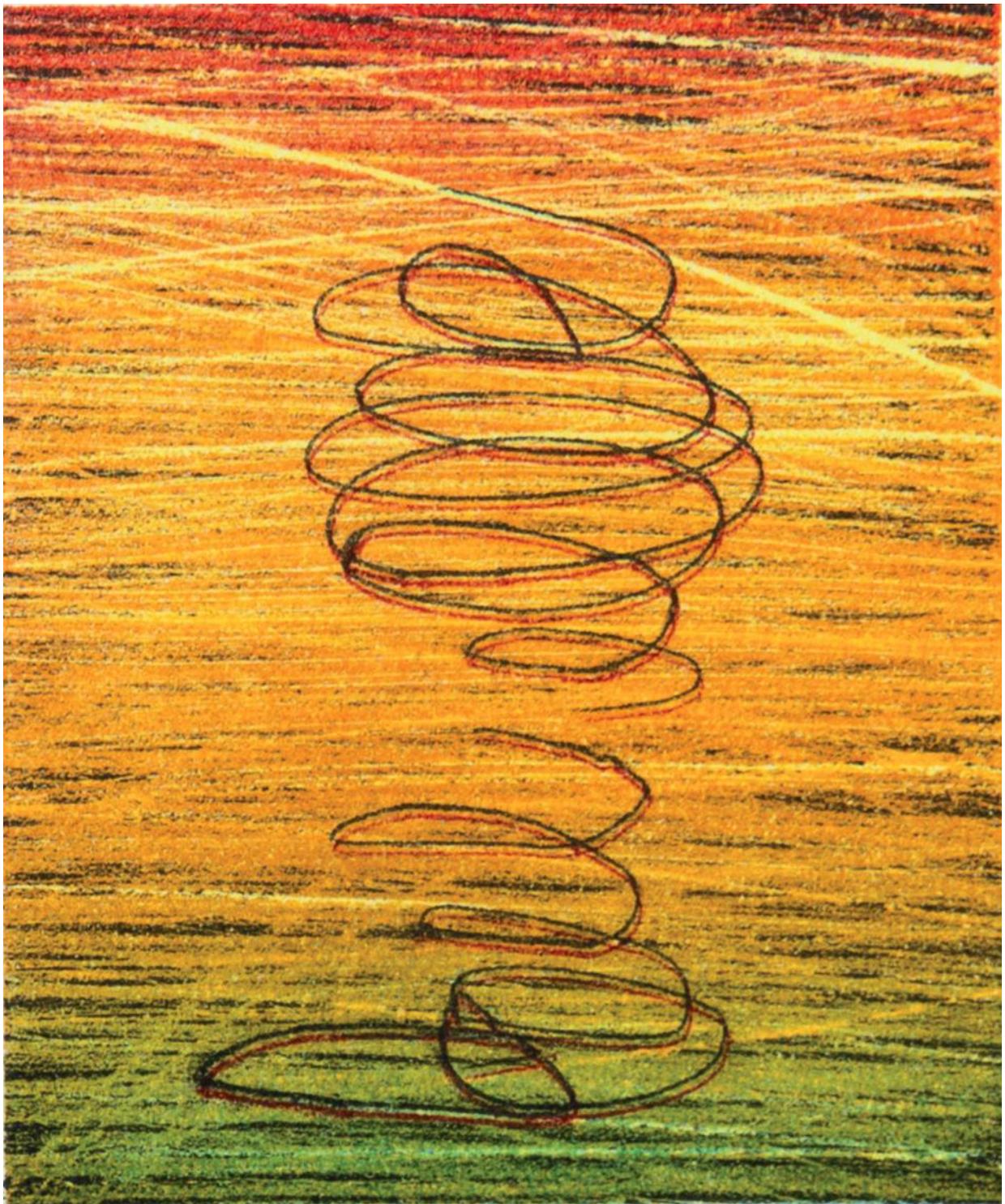
FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
Photo Benjamin Renter

Alfred Ullrich

Alfred Ullrich's screen print gives an abstracted account of potential. Ambiguous in its depiction, the dynamism of the spring-like form echoes not only the nebulous nature of meteorological phenomena—a tornado of potential, but also the delicacy and balance of microscopic biological organisms. The forward and upward aspect of the image is suggestive of growth and possibility reminding us of the scale of the journey which we have yet to complete. The modest dimensions of the print belie the subtle power of this artwork and its ability to draw us into its orbit. This compelling talisman moves us toward the meditative while symbolising the limitlessness of the transcendental.

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.



Alfred Ullrich, *O.T.* 1997. *Lithographic print on paper, 28.7 x 21 cm.*
Photo MRC - Adam Holubovský. Courtesy of the artist; the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno © Alfred Ullrich

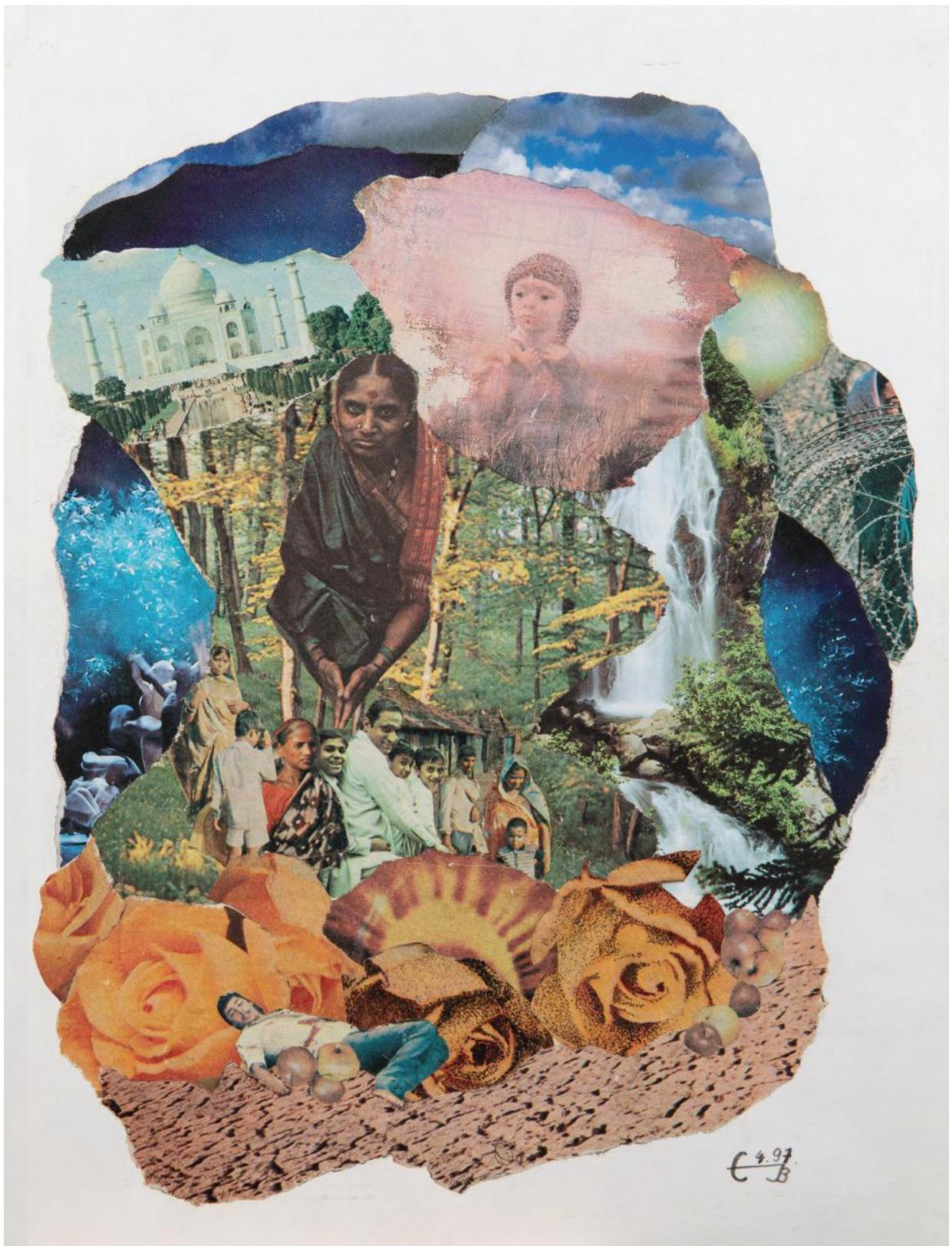


FUTUROMA installation view. Venice, 2019.
Photo Benjamin Renter

Ján Berky

Jan Berky's panoramic collage is predicated on a sense of collapsed time. Here Roma histories and Roma futures come together to situate the culture and its people in the here and now—our destiny informed by all that came before and the promise of all that can be. By looking to the connectedness between our past and the path to come, this artwork challenges the received western understanding of time as linear and ever forward thrusting and replaces it with the experiential reality of the cyclical nature of seasonality. This indication of a life lived lightly on the earth, in tune with the movement and rhythms of the planet, has resonance throughout many of the works on display in FUTUROMA.

Ján Berky was born in Studenec, Detva, Slovakia in 1951. Apprenticed as welder, Berky worked at 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



Ján Berky, *Khatar avlam the kaj dzavas? (Where we came from and where we are going?)*, 1997. Collage on paper, 66 x 48.9 cm.

Photo MRC - Adam Holubovský. Courtesy of the artist; the Museum of Romani Culture, Brno © Ján Berky

CHROMA – THE FUTURE IS ROMA

We Pass The Mic To Europe: Interview with Mo Diener, Artistic Director of the Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv

As commissioner of the FUTUROMA exhibition, an official collateral event of the 58th La Biennale di Venezia, on October 30, 2019, ERIAC presented the new work of the Roma Jam Session art Kollektiv *CHROMA – THE FUTURE IS ROMA – We Pass The Mic To Europe*. The performance featured the voices of Roma activists and artists, recorded narratives and sound patterns as well as live voices on stage and live instruments played by the musicians. The historiography of the Roma in Switzerland and Europe is meant to be seen, heard, felt and learned by the performers as well as by the public. Beside the general Biennale audience, the performance hosted by ERIAC at the FUTUROMA exhibition brought together 90 Roma community members, activists and artists from different Italian cities, in cooperation with the Italian organization Movimento Kethane Rom e Sinti, highlighting the importance of Roma audiences discussing and interpreting Roma contemporary art, rooted in Roma knowledge, heritage and creativity. After the performance, the visitors took part in an interactive guided tour of the FUTUROMA exhibition.

Performing Artists: Mo Diener, RR Marki, Milena Petrovic, Maricruz Peñaloza, Pavel Aguilar, Tome Iliev. Sound by Nehrun Aliev

Roma Futurism: “Chroma is like a butterfly”

Interview by Michael Felix Grieder

MFG: Your performance was intense: tears of joy and a sense of new beginnings, there were very beautiful and moving reactions. Situated in the Roma Pavilion, which in 2019 was part of the official 58th Venice Biennial, Daniel Baker curated a theme that also describes your work well: “FutuRoma”, an allusion to Roma Futurism, which describes an avant-garde of contemporary Roma artists. What does this framework mean to you?

MD: *The Romafuturistic moment is not least the fact that this pavilion exists. This year it was also called “FutuRoma”: as in the collective, it is also about changing the image of the Roma in such a way that there is a possibility to be a part of society that is respected within an already polyphonic society. This demand also exists on the part of migrants. We want to have a say, we want to be a part of society, we are building this society and helping to structure it, and that is why we want these rights. Also in the art Kollektiv, these are certainly very personal demands.*

When we speak of Roma Futurism, we are referring to Afro-Futurism. Since the 1990s, Afrofuturism has been a term used to describe artistic practices in the context of coming to terms with the history of the diaspora in terms of aesthetics and dealing with the emotional and political part of this experience. It is about the projection of this into the future in order to better understand the present and to move it through the vibrations of the imagination. A method that works artistically with the matter of the past, not to historicize it, but to turn it to an extreme or vision, so that the present can be better perceived in its distortions. This, of course, not from the position of the majority society but from a minority point of view. Against the background of the legacy of slavery, of disenfranchisement, the situation of total uprootedness also manifests itself in a kind of indication of direction or in the words of Sun Ra: “space is the place”.

Translated into the Roma context, these questions have a very interesting impact. I think Roma futuristic artistic manifestations want to break the stereotypes. That doesn't mean simply stating socio-politically: “all this is not true, we have money and we are well educated, we can read and write” and denying all the things one still thinks one can accuse the travelling Roma for. The Romafuturist image does away with these stereotypes radically, shedding light on multiple realities

and transforming them into artistic works that also make use of contemporary technologies for expression. Nowadays almost every person has a smartphone and uses digital networks anyway.

MFG: Your performances are interventions that confront without acting head-on. How do you proceed?

MO: Performance is a very direct medium, not only towards the audience, but also towards ourselves. This work challenges you on a very real level, one of body and temporality, of mental concentration: you are challenged to deal with something holistically. This is not a purely intellectual occupation. It is a spatial, temporal and very affective occupation with a concept. From this arises the possibility of a transformation in the process of a group or group formation. I find that very important. There are three of us in the core group, but there are six of us, ten of us, and the number can vary. It is essentially a matter of creating this space, of expanding the space. That means enlarging the space from the collective, so that a discourse can take place in it that has to do with encounters, with the body, with closeness and distance, with boundaries that begin to become fluid. In this way, there are experiences that perhaps also make it possible to dissolve the, under the circumstances, very lonely position of ethnicity or other attributions such as "queer" or "migrant" and much more. It is like a laboratory. Practicing something to dissolve borders in a safe space.

We each try to find a concept in which this can happen playfully, in which simple movements are possible, which are aesthetically interesting. In the current performance we have used many movements from meditation, but also from martial arts or from training, i.e. training a specific muscle group of the body. I have been doing this for several years. These kinds of movements are close to me because I practice them myself and I observe that they have an effect on the whole structure of the body. This also concerns reflection and learning, which both necessarily have to do with the perception of the body. The performances are about learning and experience, but also about having fun, not so

much to dance, but this kind of joy and concentration, focusing on a posture to get into action. My interest lies in this.

The medium of performance is important for the group as a shared experience, within the group, but also as a manifestation against the outside. This kind of performance has no great threshold to the audience. The threshold is low because these movements of the body are not unknown, but at the same time they are placed in a new aesthetic context. This gives a possibility of access in which one can invite people to participate relatively easily. It can become a public performance, but it doesn't have to be. The invitation is actually anyway: take part! It is a joint work, we cannot do it alone. In this sense every project is a kind of community-building. Our performances are temporary communities, in which we create space for a small moment, where discussion can happen.

That we came up with the term "Chroma" is a great stroke of luck. It has opened up a lot for us and made many different shades visible. There are clichés of the Roma or even of the allegedly non-existent Roma in Switzerland. Images of all facets of life as Roma in general. Of breaking out of the framework of Switzerland, which for centuries has not really allowed us to show our colors. In this context Chroma has become a game, a playful concept. In a way, it has created a sense of identity; it has really opened up something. Chroma is not a lockable demographic set. That always annoyed me so much! People talk about the number of 80,000. But where are they? You can't see them. So we turned that into Chroma and it opened up. A transformation began, even of our own perception. We suddenly realized that it had all sorts of facets. Which are allowed to be there and can be there. Sometimes they can show themselves, come to the light or go back into the shadow. It has become a game that is really beautiful and began to inspire us. We did it for the first time in Berlin at the Roma Biennale 2018 and have kept it because the concept is alive. Chroma is like a butterfly. For us, it is a concept of art that means a lot to us, a performative concept in itself. The figure of the butterfly is central, a transformation that broadens the horizon, "see the bigger picture".

We liked that a lot, we're very attached to it. That's Chroma. What we seek, what we desire, what we are, what we become.

After the performance we distributed these manifesto-like posters, from which we had previously proclaimed these concepts of contemporary Roma together with the audience: "Superroma", "Cyberroma", "The Future is ours Roma", etc. This means in all clarity that the Roma label is being morphed. Everything returns: Roma, morphing, the butterfly that comes from a caterpillar to fly, can leave the ground. These are concepts of

liberation and self-empowerment that inevitably go into Roma Futurism. The morphing of concepts and imaginary images into concept and action, the spatial visualization of this process. Romafuturism is the visualization of what the past has buried, what historiography has buried in the present, and the projection of this into the future in order to open up new perspectives. A position that moves, that is fluid, that builds fluid sculptures, that builds fluid social events, that goes with the flow, that can emerge from it or immerse itself in it.



Performance of Roma Jam Session Art Kollektiv, Oct 2020, courtesy of ERIAC

VIEWS

This occasion is a physical and ideal meeting point for a dialog between past present and future supporting unity, sharing and encounter.

Ermelinda Damiano, President Venice Town Hall Council

As visitors to the Biennale go from one pavilion to the next they are recognising and endorsing, and giving validation to statehood, to nations, to people, and yet the Roma exhibit, because of a lack of geographic anchoring, is on the margins. I want us not to lose perspective on the advocacy of ERIAC not to be on the periphery but to be centred in the Biennale and to be centred in cultural institutions.

Patrick Gaspard, President Open Society Foundations

FUTUROMA was made possible by the artistic gravitas of our curator Daniel Baker together with the artists whose work is exhibited here. It is also possible because of the visionary leadership of Timea Junghaus who pioneered the presence of Roma at the Venice Biennale twelve years ago.

Zeljko Jovanovic, Director of Open Society Roma Initiatives Office, Chair of Board European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture

FUTUROMA unveils the Roma knowledge about the universe, about space, movement and our connectedness. In FUTUROMA space is invented and reproduced in the act of mobility and circulation without demarcation of the border or the distinction that western museums have made between nature and culture. For these achievements I take FUTUROMA as the axiomatic paradigm for rethinking the Roma museum.

Timea Junghaus, Executive Director European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture

Roma art and culture gives me hope for the Europe of the future. Their culture is part of our European DNA. For centuries they created links between the countries of Europe. Roma have never been tied by national borders and at a time when nationalism is on the rise this is more precious than ever.

Heiko Maas, German Foreign Minister

I hope that your presence here today is the first step for the future. Investing in art and culture is certainly fundamental to increase the self esteem of Roma.

Gherardo Ortalli, President Istituto Veneto

Art and culture have an important part to play in European identity and European society. ERIAC aims at combating stereotypes through art and to offer a place for Romani artistic production. You may discover these efforts with the exhibition FUTUROMA that offers new and spontaneous reinterpretations of Roma past, present and future and that is why ERIAC is needed.

Snežana Samardžić-Marković, Director General of Democracy Council of Europe

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