

THEY CALL ME

AGAN

[GYPSY] BUT THAT'S NOT MY NAME

ARTISTS

Tomasz Armada, Olaf Brzeski, Ewa Ciepielewska, Andrzej Onegin Dąbrowski, Wojciech Fangor, Jerzy Flisak, Krzysztof Gil, Zuza Golińska, Günter Grass, Władysław Hasior, Marcin Janusz, Kunegunda Jeżowska, Stanisław Kałuziak, Tadeusz Kantor, Leszek Knaflowski, Edgar Kovats, Ignacy Krieger, Dawid Mazur, Jan Młodożeniec, Joanna Piotrowska, Tadeusz Rolke, Stanisław Rychlicki, Adam Rzepecki, Walery Rzewuski, Feliks Sadowski Feliko, Slavs and Tatars, Janek Simon, Aleksander Sovtysik, Stanisław Witkiewicz, Paulina Włostowska, Stanisław Zamecznik and anonymous artists



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Ania Batko

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This exhibition is not about the Roma, Romani culture or history. They call me Gypsy but that's not my name is a story of a "Gypsy", an imaginary and make-believe figure that has never existed. A story of a construct with its peculiar iconography, of the mythical Orient, Bohemian appropriation and the dialectics of cultural colonialism derived from hybrid mythology and Polish Romani identity. Rather than building a narrative outside the affirmative and narrow imagery, we construct the story from within, disrupting its phantasms and dreamed up revolutions. Yet the meaning of a narrative is not to be found in its core: it surrounds the story like a fruit surrounding the stone. Therefore, in addition to old art, archival pieces, photographs, documentaries, books and recordings - a plethora of creations bordering on political pornography - we are going to show works of modern artists.

"It is evident that they have learned nothing from us and admired none of our exploits. Have they been blind and insensitive to our achievements for the last six hundred years or so? One can hardly believe that our world might be so uninteresting." (Andrzej Stasiuk) The poet and songwriter Agnieszka Osiecka wrote that the real Gypsies are gone. Perhaps they have never been here. Or perhaps they were here tomorrow, as the Polish word for "tomorrow" is jutro, and that means "yesterday" in Romani. Yesterday equals tomorrow.

Zagraj mi piękny Cyganie (Play for me, my handsome Gypsy) is the title of the compact cassette issued by the pop band Szarotka at the dawn of Poland's political transformation in the late 1980s. The cover showed a hauntological portrait of an elephant man. Earlier, writer Jerzy Ficowski wrote about Gypsies as he discovered the Romani poet Papusza (although rumour has it that he was the author of her poems while she, the embodiment of whimsical inspiration, was his muse). Wilhelm August Stryowski painted Gypsy men lounging on the beach among ruins of the ancient culture, while Henryk Siemiradzki asked his models to soot their pale faces and wear colourful dresses (not much different from dresses worn by average nineteen-century bourgeois) to pass for Gypsies. The flashy clothes of Gypsies adorned with glass beads and field flowers and evoking a futuristic vision were described by the 19th century novelist Józef Ignacy Kraszewski in Chata za wsią (The Cottage outside the Village), a novel tackling the problem of Gypsy community discrimination. Equally fanciful were the dresses worn by Duchess Izabela Czartoryska who inspired and played the part of Gypsy Javnuta in the comic opera Cyganie (Gypsies) written by Franciszek Dionizy Kniaźnin. A century later, Kniaźnin's libretto caught interest of the composer Stanisław Moniuszko. While Kniaźnin focused on assimilation of the defiant Gypsies, Moniuszko was attracted to the romantic idea of their unfettered spirit. "My dear Stach, why aren't you a Gypsy?", says Javnuta's foster daughter to her lover. Exclusion and affirmation are two sides of the same coin. Gypsies play the part of con men who can tell fortune from coffee grounds and wrung hands, demons casting their evil eye, or singers. Usually, they just sing cheesy disco polo. Herbalists, horse whisperers and bear charmers, they are the sheer embodiment of the Orient, the first true Bohemians, nomads and vagrants living in a suspiciously utopian union with nature. Gypsies are the prototypes of migrants and artists. Or tourists, as referred to by a Gdańsk politician who called for eviction of the Roma from the city's squats. Gypsies are the neighbours who light fires in their homes and play the accordion under other people's balconies. Their

skin is always too dark and they are always too dirty and too colourful, to quote the poet Adam Mickiewicz. Even the 2013 film Papusza was shot in black-and-white as if to avoid ethno-kitsch reconstruction.

We explore stories of Gypsies told from a non-Gypsy perspective, often unconsciously clichéd, as well as stories where a Gypsy plays the role of a non-Gypsy. We are fascinated by folk masks of traditional carol singers, where alongside the stock figures of the Devil, Stork and Goat comes a grotesque hominid with a straw bear on a rope - the same bear that appears in the communist era comedy Miś (Teddy Bear) responding to the urgent needs of the Polish society. We recollect the story of Prince Karol Radziwiłł "Panie Kochanku", a patriot and Sarmatian, who brought Gypsies to the multicultural town of Mir, had bears trained to pull carts and allowed the Gypsies to gather for rallies in the fields of the Horeszkowski Castle (the very castle that was immortalised in Mickiewicz's Pan Tadeusz). The exotic elections of the Gypsy King in Warsaw's sports stadium in 1937, as reported by the Tygodnik Dźwiękowy weekly. The painting by Antoni Królikiewicz showing a Gypsy woman with a watermelon, which was later printed in foreign newspapers as a portrait of an Indian girl. Writer Witold Gombrowicz, who wanted to be an artist and a Bohemian, and a nobleman among Bohemians. The Gypsy Bible dreamed up by Julian Tuwim, and the story of the 19th artistic group Warsaw Bohemia whose members used to pour soil onto the floors of bourgeois drawing rooms. The Gypsy man with a self-playing violin from Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz's Nadobnisie i koczkodany (Lovelies and Dowdies), who cried and sobbed while performing for the keenly listening Death. The year 1968, when the Roma, like the Jews, were expelled from Poland, except that the Roma had no Israel to go to and were leaving Poland without passports or identification.

"The gypsies are a theme. And nothing more. I could just as well be a poet of sewing needles or hydraulic landscapes. Besides, this gypsyism gives me the appearance of an uncultured, ignorant and primitive poet that you know very well I'm not", complained the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca in a letter to his friend.

We are drawn to this aura. We want to immerse ourselves in this sticky and tricky Bohemian atmosphere colonised by live cultures. The cultural construct and folk amalgam. Like there is no tomorrow. Perhaps in the times of resurgent nationalism and deepening migrant and environmental crises there really is no tomorrow. In the 1960s, Günter Grass wanted to bring Romani camps to Berlin: he believed that this would have solved the Berlin Wall question. Because where there are Gypsies, the borders become leaky.

Wołają na mnie Cygan choć tak się nie nazywam
Bo komu to przeszkaż, gdy imię się nie zgadza*
[They call me Gypsy but that's not my name,
The name doesn't match and no one's to blame.]

*Kayah & Bregovič, Caje Sukarije, 1999

ORGANISERS



PARTNERS



MEDIA PATRONS



1. Janek Simon
Untitled
Relief, 3D print
2015
ING Polish Art Foundation

2. Ignacy Krieger
Kalderash Gypsies in traditional clothes, from the Folk Types cycle
After 1865
Photography (digital print)
The Museum of Cracow

3. Still from the film Peasants,
dir. Jan Rybkowski
Photo: Jan Rybkowski
1973
Photography (digital print)
National Film Archive - Audio-visual Institute

4. Romani studies collection
I The railway station in Mendig, Rhineland, Germany, 1932, photography, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
II A Roma man with a bear, 1919, photography (digital print), National Digital Archives
III Bear trainers from Romania, ca. 1915, postcard by Stengel & Co., Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IV Travelling Kalderash people, Carpathian Ruthenia, ca. 1920, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
V A Roma woman with a tambourine and a trained monkey, Bucharest, 1918, postcard by F. Volckmar / Leipzig, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VI A bear trainer with his bear among holiday-makers, ca. 1975, photography, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VII Roma people dancing with a bear, Balkans, ca. 1920, photography, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VIII The railway station in Mendig, Rhineland, Germany, 1932, photography, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IX A family with the Scarlet Fever wine, ca. 1950, photography, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw

5. Stanisław Kałużiak
Straw and haulm objects
1970s
National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

6. Bottle of the Gypsy brand wine
1990s
Private collection of Paweł Lechowski

7. "Gypsy legends of Jerzy Ficowski"
Przekrój, issue no. 1023 (46/1964)
Digital print
Malopolska Digital Library

8. Kunegunda Jeżowska
Gypsy and Chassidim
1970s
Glazed earthenware
Museum of the History of Polish Jews

9. Zuza Golińska
Suns Totem from the Suns cycle
2019
Powder coated recycled steel

10. The Art of the Gypsies
1977
Film by Polish Film Chronicle
National Film Archive - Audio-visual Institute

11. Romani studies collection:
I Adam Bartosz, Don't be Afraid of a Gypsy, Wydawnictwo Pogranicze, Sejny, 1994, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
II Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, The Cottage Outside the Village, Wydawnictwo Władysława Bąka, Wrocław - Iódź, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
IV Irena Zarzycka, The Wagon Camp, Towarzystwo Wydawnicze "Rój", Warsaw 1931, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
V "Papusza's fellow countrymen", Panorama, unknown issue, 1957, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VI Illustrated Daily Courier, weekly insert, issue no. 28 (178), July 1928, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VII "A life always new", Literary and Scientific Courier, issue no. 27, 1939, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VII Aza the Gypsy from J. I. Kraszewski's The Cottage Outside the Village, drawing by E. Lévi, unidentified newspaper, late 19th century, private collection of Paweł Lechowski

12. I Collection of Gypsy-themed food: canned food, instant soup and sauces, Carmen chocolate, 1990s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski

II Chronicle of the Roma Cultural and Educational Association "Novo Drom" (New Life) in Tarnów, 1863 - 1982, courtesy of Novo Drom and Adam Bartosz
III Tango art magazine, Kultura Zrzeszty, cover: Moustached Mary by Adam Rzepecki, issue no. 1, 1983, private collection of Zofia Łuczko
IV A Roma boy reading the Sztandar Młodzieży newspaper, photography, ca. 1975, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
V First of May Parade - a stylised Roma wagon, photography, May 1, 1967, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VI Soldiers (mainly Wehrmacht) standing with Roma people, series of five photographs from various sources, ca. 1941, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VII Cadets standing with Roma people from Polska Roma, photography, ca. 1932, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VIII A Romani band posing with soldiers, photography, ca. 1930, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IX A Roma family posing with non-Romani people in front of a wagon, photography, ca. 1950, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
X Polish men standing in front of a Polska Roma wagon, photography, ca. 1957, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
XI Polish people posing with the Roma, photography, ca. 1930, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw

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The Gypsy Madonna
Photography (digital print)
1957
Tadeusz Rolke / Agencja Gazeta

14. Wojciech Fangor,
Poster for the film Carmen Jones,
dir. Otto Preminger
1959
Exhibition copy
Private collection of Piotr Dąbrowski / Polish Poster Gallery

Jan Młodożeniec
Poster for the Polish Folk Art Exhibition Cepeliada 78
1978
Private collection of Piotr Dąbrowski / Polish Poster Gallery

Stanisław Zamecznik
Poster for the film I Even Met Happy Gypsies, dir. Aleksandar Petrović
1968
Private collection of Piotr Dąbrowski / Polish Poster Gallery

Jerzy Flisak
Poster for the film The Virgin and the Gypsy, dir. Christopher Miles
1973
Private collection of Piotr Dąbrowski / Polish Poster Gallery

Andrzej Onegin Dąbrowski
Poster for the film Burdus,
dir. Mica Popovic
1971
Private collection

15. Wooden toys collection - a Gypsy doll
Manufactured by the GROMADA Toy Industry Cooperative, Kielce
1970s
Private collection of Paweł Lechowski

16. I Drawing by Sławomir Mrożek
Przekrój, issue no. 1160 (27/1967)
Digital print
Malopolska Digital Library
II "Nervo Drom. The new Gypsy way"
Przekrój, issue no. 302 (04/1951)
Digital print
Malopolska Digital Library
III "Mura the Gypsy from the Big Head family"
Przekrój, issue no. 2228 (08/1989)
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Malopolska Digital Library
IV Last wish by Valontilini, postcard, ca. 1920, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
V Jedlinie near Radom, photography, 1938, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VI A Roma band in Zakopane, photography, 1938, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VII A Roma violin player, postcard, ca. 1920, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
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17. Aleksander Sovtysik
Mask
2019
Carpet object

18. The Gypsy with a self-playing violin (Stanisław Rychlicki) performing for the Death in Lovelies and Dowdies directed by Tadeusz Kantor
1973
Photography, unknown author, reproduced by Tadeusz Kantor and Leszek Dziedzic
Cricoteka Archives - Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Cracow

19. Paulina Włostowska
Curtain with the moon
2021
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20. Joanna Piotrowska
Untitled, from the Shelter series
Photography, gelatine silver print
2017
ING Polish Art Foundation

21. Aleksander Sovtysik
Scarabeus
2018
Carpet object

22. A Gypsy man with a bear
1970s
Polish nativity scene figurines
National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

23. Jews and a Gypsy
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National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

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II A Roma settlement, photography, ca. 1941, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
III An Albanian Roma in front of a mud hut, photography, ca. 1915, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IV Peasants (Gypsies) in front of mud huts, photography (digital print), collection of Józef Brandt, 1880s, National Museum in Warsaw
V A Roma settlement in Slovakia, photography, ca. 1943, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VI Gypsies, postcard, 1940s, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VII A Kalderash camp, photography, 1941, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
VIII A Romanian Roma, photography, 1918, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw

25. Edgar Kovats
Interior of the Galicia Province Pavilion
Architect, issue no. 1, 1900
Photography (digital copy)
Digital Library of the Warsaw University of Technology

26. Gypsy men and women, Gypsy bear trainers
1960s - 1970s
Nativity scene puppets
National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

27. I The Gypsy King. An Exotic Celebration
1937
Excerpt from a film by Polish Telegraphic Agency
National Film Archive - Audio-visual Institute

II The Gypsy King Matyas Kwiek Visits the Gypsy Baron in Poland
1935
Film by Polish Telegraphic Agency
National Film Archive - Audio-visual Institute

28. Romani studies collection
I "Polish citizen becomes the king of the Gypsies", Ilustracja polska, issue no. 28, July 11, 1937, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
II "Revolution in the Gypsy state", Ilustracja polska, issue no. 9, March 3, 1935, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
III Coronation of Janusz I, the Gypsy King, photography, 1937, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IV A Gypsy band performing during the election and coronation of the Gypsy king, photo: Tadeusz Łuniewski, photography (digital print), 1937, National Digital Archives

V "Death of the Gypsy king", Ilustracja polska, issue no. 16, April 18, 1937, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw

VI "Election of the Gypsy king in Warsaw", Świątowid, issue no. 28 (674), 10 VII 1937, Museum of Roma Culture in Warsaw
VII Insignia of the Gypsy king - the royal staff, photo: Tadeusz Łuniewski, photography (digital print), 1919 - 1939, National Digital Archives
VIII "Eternal wanderers", Na szerskim świecie, issue no. 26-511, June 26, 1938, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IX "A kingdom without land", Naokoło Świata, issue no. 158, August 1937, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
X The Gypsy king as drawn by Wojciech Gerson, unidentified newspaper, private collection of Paweł Lechowski

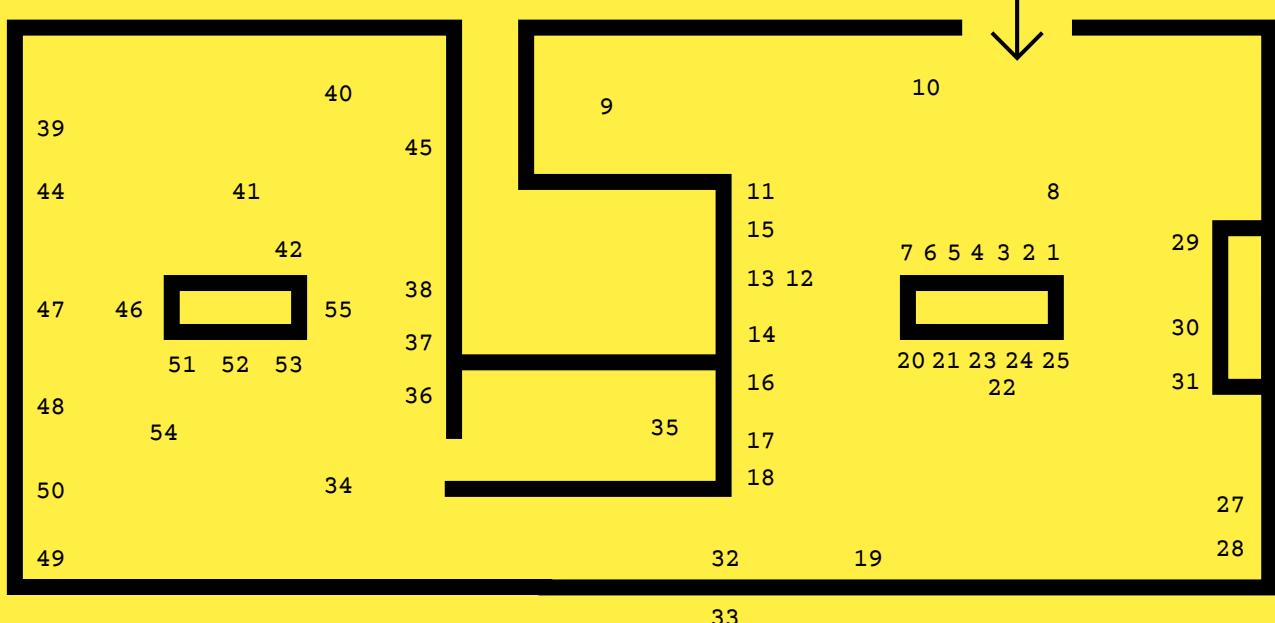
29. Romani studies collection:
I "Bara Than, the homeland of the Gypsies", Przekrój, issue no. 2023 (12/1984), digital print, Malopolska Digital Library
II "I spent my holidays in a Gypsy camp", Przekrój, issue no. 961 (36/1963), digital print, Malopolska Digital Library
III "The second meeting with Gypsies", Przekrój, issue no. 1016 (39/1964), digital print, Malopolska Digital Library
IV Papusza (Bronisława Wajs), My Father the Forest, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1990, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
V "Papusza, the Gypsy poet", Przekrój, issue no. 383 (32/1952), digital print, Malopolska Digital Library
VI Jerzy Ficowski, Gypsies in Poland. History and Customs, Wydawnictwo Interpress, Warsaw 1989, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
VII Jerzy Ficowski, Gypsies in the Polish Roads, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Cracow 1965, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
VIII Jerzy Ficowski, Under the Rule of the King of Spades. The Secrets of Gypsy Divination, Iskry, Warsaw 1990, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
IX Jerzy Ficowski, Demons of Other People's Fears. Gypsy Memories, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warsaw 1986, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
X Lech Mróz, The Gypsies: Otherness and Intolerance, Wydawnictwo Książka i Wiedza, Warsaw 1971, private collection

30. Romani studies collection:
I A corn doll handmade by the Balkan Roma, 1990s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
II Photographs from the exhibition Arts and crafts of the Roma people, Białystok 1990, private collection of Paweł Lechowski
III Roma people in a corn field, postcard, MRP. & c.m. series, ca. 1918, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
IV The travelling Kalderash, series of postcards, before 1905, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw

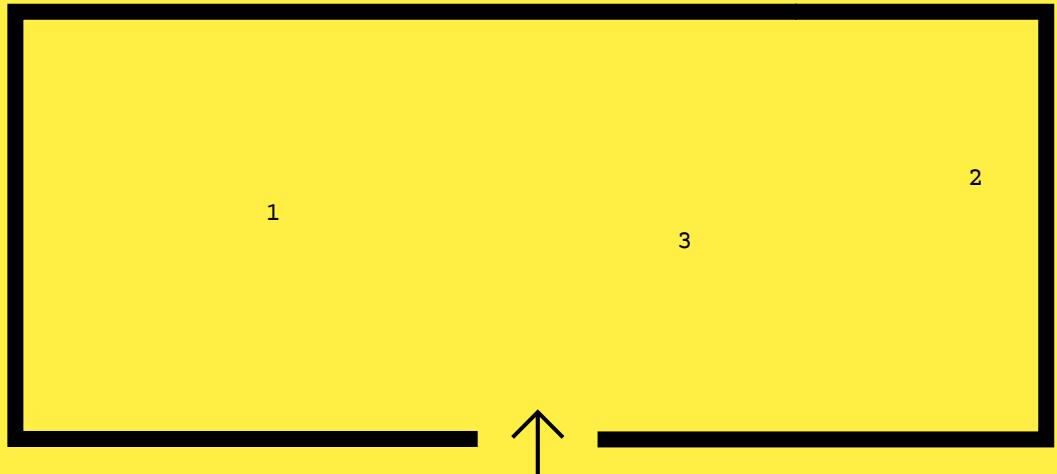
31. Feliks Sadowski Feliko
A Gypsy camp under a tree
1986
Oil on canvas

32. Dragons from a Roma wagon
1980s
Painted wood
Private collection of Paweł Lechowski

33. Weeping violin. The Gypsy man with a self-playing violin (Stanisław Rychlicki) in Lovelies and Dowdies directed by Tadeusz Kantor
1973
Audio recording
Cricoteka Archives - Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor in Cracow



34. <u>Slavs and Tatars</u> When in Rome 2010 Travertine, stained glass, coins	with the Gypsy woman motif, Mignon, 1920s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski	44. <u>Paparuda</u> , the rain enchantment ritual Photography Ca. 1910 Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw	50. <u>Krzysztof Gil</u> Watermelon Oil on canvas 2020
35. <u>Władysław Hasior</u> Photographic notebooks (selection) Ca. 1965 - 1999 Slide show Tytuś Chałubiński Tatra Museum in Zakopane	III <i>Marche de l'Opéra Manru par I. J. Paderewski</i> , Wydawnictwo Leona Idzikowskiego, print (exhibition copy), ca. 1910, National Museum in Warsaw IV Children in Gypsy costumes performing on stage, photo: Piotr Niedziela, photography (digital print), 1935, National Digital Archives	45. <u>Adam Rzepecki</u> A Gypsy woman Photography 1983	51. <u>Marcin Janusz</u> , Morkosz, Oil, soil, resin and sugar on canvas 2021
36. I On the set of an unknown period film, photography, ca. 1970, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw II Still from <i>Aza the Gypsy</i> , dir. Artur Twardyjewicz, photo: Artur Twardyjewicz, photography (digital print), 1926, National Film Archive - Audio-visual Institute III Advertising folder for the film <i>The Bohemian Girl</i> , dir. Hal Roach, James W. Horne, Charley Rogers, ca. 1936, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw IV Advertising folder for the USSR film <i>Gypsies</i> , ca. 1930, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw V Actors dressed as Gypsies, still from an unknown film, ca. 1970, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw VI Walery Rzewski and Antonina Hoffmann as Gulta in the play <i>Gypsies</i> by Józef Korzeniowski, photography (digital print), 1868, The Museum of Cracow VII <i>Au pays des Gitanes</i> , pocztówka, 1920s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski VIII Preview of the opera <i>Manru</i> by Ignacy Jan Paderewski in Semperoper, Dresden, photography (digital print), May 29, 1901, National Museum in Warsaw IX Aleksander Bandrowski as Manru the Gypsy in the opera <i>Manru</i> by Ignacy Jan Paderewski, photo: Dawid Mazur, photography (digital print), 1901, National Museum in Warsaw X Portrait of Countess Tamara de Swirski, photography (digital print), ca. 1910, National Museum in Warsaw XI Actress Dora Kalinówka dressed as a Gypsy, photo: Stanisław Brzozowski, photography (digital print), 1925 - 1939, National Digital Archives XII Collection of Gypsy song albums and Gypsy songs and romances in a cheap mini edition, 1920s - 1930s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski	V Cast members of <i>The Gypsy Divination or Bastia's Wedding</i> after the performance on stage, photo: Adam Jankowski, photography (digital print), 1937, National Digital Archives VI The wife of Director Grabowski during a ball in her award-winning Gypsy costume, photo: Tadeusz Łuniewski, photography (digital print), 1920 - 1939, National Digital Archives VII "Summer in the Gypsy style", <i>Przekrój</i> , issue no. 1209 (23/1968), digital print, Małopolska Digital Library VIII "The Gypsy style in fashion", <i>Przekrój</i> , issue no. 1295 (05/1970), digital print, Małopolska Digital Library	46. Stills from the short film <i>The Tale of Bachtał the Gypsy</i> , dir. Kryśtyna Dobrowolska Photo: Bolesław Ciupiński 1966 Photography (digital print) National Film Archive - Audio-visual Institute	52. Romani studies collection I "Konstanty Ildefons' Gypsy adventure", <i>Przekrój Magazine</i> , Issue no. 979 (02/1964), digital print, Małopolska Digital Library II Telling fortune to army officers, photography, ca. 1935, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw III A Roma woman with a hen and a jug during fortune-telling, two photographs, ca. 1950, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw IV Two young Roma women, Romania, photography, ca. 1941, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw V <i>What your life line says</i> , advertisement for the Polish State Lottery, 1935, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw
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	41. <u>Olaf Brzeski</u> Shine 2013 Steel sculpture Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw	49. Romani studies collection I <i>Gypsies in a forest</i> , 1970s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski II <i>Aisha - Indian Intermezzo</i> by John Lindsay (lithography based on a painting by Antoni Kozakiewicz), music publishing, ca. 1920, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw III A tambourin from the Roma culture collection, postcard, 1980s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski IV Two oil paintings with Gypsy motifs, second half of the 20th century, private collection of Paweł Lechowski V A porcelain figurine of a Gypsy woman with cards, Polonne Manufacture, 1970s, private collection of Paweł Lechowski	55. <u>Gunter Grass</u> Among fertile mushrooms Bronze sculpture 1982 Gdańsk City Gallery
	42. <u>Leszek Knaflkowski</u> Untitled (hammer) 1989 Mixed technique Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw		Singers Bronze sculpture 2003 Gdańsk City Gallery
	43. I Group scenes in the play <i>The Warsaw Bohemia</i> by Adolf Nowaczyński, Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Cracow, photo: Edward Pierzchalski, photography (digital print), 1911, The Museum of Cracow II Stanisław Wyspiański with Gypsies in Paris, photography (digital print), 1893, Polish Academy of Learning - PAUart		
	III "The Warsaw bohemians", <i>Przekrój</i> , issue no. 326 (28/1951), digital print, Małopolska Digital Library IV Collection of prints with Gypsy motifs, unidentified newspaper, late 19th/early 20th century, Museum of Roma Culture, Warsaw		



1. Bottle of the Gypsy brand wine
1990s
Private collection of Paweł Lechowski

2. Sophie Ehrhardt making a cast
mask for the Research Institute of
Racial Hygiene, Germany
1938
photograph
courtesy of Bundesarchiv

3. Packaging of the French
cigarettes Gitane
1980s
Private collection of Paweł Lechowski

**THE MORE YOU
TRIM, THE BIGGER
IT GETS.**

KRZYSZTOF GIL

When the 19th century painter Antoni Kozakiewicz painted *Artysta w plenerze* (The Artist in the Open Air), he actually painted the portrait of himself. In the picture, he is dressed like a dandy straight from Munich, busy with a painting. In front of him there is a wooden cabin, against which a dark-haired woman is posing with a child in her arms. Behind him, a group of Gypsies are curiously looking at the scene. Many years later, the *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* weekly will caption the photo of the painting with a short comment: A brave artist. In Władysław Reymont's *Chłopi* (The Peasants) the Gypsies come to the village in summer. The villagers rush to hide everything they can. The Gypsies, the Gypsies are coming! At night, the village women quietly sneak out of their houses to meet the fortune teller. Then they tell stories how Gypsies turned a peasant into a pig and how Gypsy women bathe stolen children in an alder-tree cauldron to turn them into devils. For them, Gypsies are a magical tribe endowed with supernatural powers. Mythical creatures like unicorns or elephants.

During the 1878 international exhibition in Paris the Gypsies, their tents and tools are to be exhibited to the public for the first time. The author of the idea, one Paul Bataillard, is an expert in Gypsies fascinated with the life of the Kalderash and the Ukrainian Roma, who has been popularising the idea of a museum devoted to Romani culture for some time. Just before the big opening, it turns out that the artefacts are scarce and the Gypsies themselves have disappeared in unknown circumstances.

Poet and writer Jerzy Ficowski issued his first book on Gypsies in early 1950s. He wrote among other things about Gypsy magic rituals - the single-eyed devils, hairy crosses, magic dice and the fantastic *bengoro* dolls. To make a doll, a Gypsy woman must sew together a pair of hen's eyes and use its claws to make the crooked legs. Sometimes she would make the doll from paraffin wax, add a tail made of her own hair and put the doll into an

empty egg shell. She would make the eyes from red beads and covers the doll with a generous amount of soot. The doll, the demon of the human fear, is a little corpse worth the amount of fear it induces. Usually hatched during fortune-telling, it emerges from a chicken egg or an inverted glass tumbler.

In the same book Ficowski quotes the Romani poetess Papusza. In his letter to Julian Tuwim, Ficowski mentions the ostracism suffered by Papusza for the alleged betrayal of the Romani people's secrets, painting a romanticised picture of a doomed artist. This is what Papusza says in a 1970s recording:

When I read cards, I make a serious face and use serious words. Like a poet, I think. There is this spirit, this inspiration, and you know everything in an instant. The inspiration depends on many things, but most of all on money. When I see money, something moves inside me and then I learn that all I told is the truth.

Fortune telling resembles a visit at the analyst's office. The one who is told his fortune must be sensed. The one who tells the fortune must be paid.

This exhibition shows an inside of a tent, a studio of a Gypsy woman travelling with a circus who uses her own Otherness as a theatrical prop. She takes advantage of the myth poisoned by Romanticism. She shows what you want to see: the craving, the pain and the pleasure. The meanings are chosen at random, like cards. A little bit of the unsophisticated Orient, the dirt powdered with gold and a ghostly hole leading to places outside the map. It is an omen stretched between the past and the future. A cabinet of curiosities, a tight hollow of Julian Tuwim, the grotesque sorcerer and collector of exalted myths and souvenirs from imaginary journeys, who had never been in a Romani camp himself but, inspired and tired of his own euphoria, created the Gypsy Bible from dreams and old book pages. A small grain of truth drowned in a bloated halo, to quote Ficowski. Or a drawing room of a bohemian poet from Warsaw, who like

Cyprian Kamil Norwid idles about in his tailcoat and a leaky hat, wooden stick in his hand. The dirty and worn things. He loves to flaunt poverty and laugh at the bourgeoisie. He is drawn to the forest. He spills out soil in the drawing room and plants trees. He drinks wine, talks about serfdom oppression, sleeps on a couch and feels free as a gypsy. This is a cage with colourful birds flying and sneaky snakes writhing. The enchanted souls of defiant Gypsies, drawn to the flame like moths. It could be an illustration to a Romani fairy tale: the Dirt and the Carelessness come to the country where the sun always shines. They eat leeches and mushrooms and drink dirty water from a puddle. Instead of dancing, they rub their backs against tree trunks, and instead of signing, they yawn happily. She is covered with old dirt while he resembles a rash of smoked bacon. If people chase them away with wooden sticks, they will walk away into the world. Everything is bathed with the choking scent of *Datura stramonium*, the devil's snare secreting a sweet and mousey smell that irritates the nose. The smell is seductive and suffocating. It is tempting and nauseating. Eluding. Lying like a gypsy. In Polish, the plant is also known as the devil's flower or the gypsy flower. In Romani the word "to charm" means "to give herb". A poisonous remedy for all conditions, a hallucinogenic drug that allows you to grasp the future. To immerse in a non-heterogenous conglomerate of bones, fat, broken shells and hair. A hairy doll suddenly jumps into the boiling water. It drowns and melts, and reappears as a *bengoro*. It dances like a bear on a chain walked by a gypsy through the village. It dances as they play. Play for us, our handsome Gypsy! *Play us the love song because it may be our last one.*

The Gypsy women are shaking their ringed hands. They are whispering, laughing, dancing. *Morkosh!* The word meaning love is put in their mouth by the poet Gałczyński. This is not what it really means but it will do as a spell. Several months earlier Gałczyński asks a Gypsy woman met in the Bielański Forest how to say love "in gypsy speak". Her son Miłosz is playing nearby. Miłosz sounds like *miłość*, the word for love in Polish. The Gypsy woman tells the truth. She will not tell you your fortune. She will create it.

The Gypsy men and women, the relentless bohemians are being watched from a distance by a masked man*. Two women are putting a sticky substance on his face. He cannot talk. He is watching. *Well I realize that I've been hypnotized I love your gypsy eyes.* The Gypsies play to survive. They sign, dance and tell fortune. Gypsydom is a performance, a theatre played on here and there. A looped ritual. Appropriation and expropriation. Mimicry. Each thing pretending to the another thing. Ideas are not followed, they are used.

We cut and trim. But the hole gets bigger. This one is not black. Quantum physicists say that the black hole is always surrounded by another hole like a halo, and that the other hole is white. While one shrinks, the other one expands, as if they were taking turns. The Universe abhors a vacuum. There is a legend of a Gypsy man sent to the moon as a punishment. He eats the moon's cheese layer, for when the moon disappears, the cunning

Gypsy will be able to come back to the Earth. But every time when he almost finishes eating, the yellow matter grows back. Can you be a Gypsy and a moon at the same time? The rising moon is the best. It's pink and juicy and sweet like a watermelon.

* Sophie Ehrhardt making a cast mask for the Research Institute of Racial Hygiene, Germany, 1938, photograph, courtesy of Bundesarchiv

Curator: Ania Batko