

«Thoughts are free» Anxiety is Reality for Roma in EU-rope

My work as an artist is primarily concerned with the history of the persecution of Roma, with a particular emphasis on the relations between "then and now."

The Second World War caused the systematic killing of 70-80% of Roma, including the ethnic Roma population in Germany and Austria, as well as my own family. Taking into consideration that a recent study this year has shown that one in five young adults do not know what "Auschwitz" means, and that as a result 21% of 18 to 30 year-olds do not know that the name stands for the concentration and extermination camps of the Nazis, there is an acute and urgent need for a thorough and critical discussion of this topic. In addition, the rising racism and pogroms against Roma throughout Europe - augmented by the EU extension towards Eastern Europe - have caused a significant increase in hatred and mistrust towards Roma, resulting in a social and political situation that was already widespread in the era of National Socialism. The spectacle of the media is constantly on the rise. Although more information is present about the current persecution of Roma, particularly on the Internet, little to nothing has changed with respect to the language of hate speech and the prevailing silence or indifference of the major public.

My works attempts to break this silence and expose the visual culture of racism – and its many languages - and simultaneously counteract the continuing discrimination.

Today's racism is especially prevalent in media communication fields visible and accessible on the Internet and in widespread social Internet platforms such as FACEBOOK and TWITTER. Racism within these communication fields is expressed in many forms, relying on various degrees of in/visibility and connotative meanings derived from merged verbal and visual forms. Racist and anti-Semitic symbols and phrases (such as swastikas, flags, expressions like "Gypsies to the gas chambers" and "being gyped," etc) are widely used to convey opinions and information and are commonly ignored; they remain without consequences. With this project, I seek to explore these different views and expressions, laying bare their symbolic and historical content, especially in conjunction with a pointed comparison to the visual and verbal rhetoric of the Nazi period. Through this confrontation of the alleged "past" racism with the existing - but mostly obscured - racism today, my work seeks to create a space for discussion, dialogue and critical awareness. I believe that my artistic interventions as a woman and Roma may bear long-term effects that - in part - can contribute to the prevention of a dangerous repetition of history in our times (and the future).

Outcomes: Graphic Representation - Digital collages that function like artistic interventions, or Confrontages.

Artists Statement:

As Amnesty International continually reports, the Roma people are located in-between borders, in bureaucratic, social, and political no-man's lands, where they are persecuted, often homeless and without education or political protection.

My project aims to expose the racist undercurrents that perpetuate this situation, and continue to create divisions between non-Roma and Roma. Because most Roma have no access to any platforms of representation, my work as an artist offers an important and largely unheard voice regarding the question of what it means to live in the EU today.

By mirroring these widespread but generally unacknowledged forms of racism, and also highlighting the marginalized history of the persecution of Roma, I want to create possibilities for constructive dialogues about improving the situation for Roma in Europe today.

"We have art so that we may not perish by the truth."

Friedrich Nietzsche