

TEARS OF GOLD / SOWNAKUNE JAPSA

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Kálmán Várady, Fleischerblock, 2009,
dzięki uprzejmości Gallery Kai Dikhas

Curated by Dr. Krzysztof Gil
and Dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka

July 31st 2019 – August 3rd 2019

Auditorium Maximum UJ
Ul. Krupnicza 33, Kraków

Exhibition Opening
with the presence of the artists
and a performance of "Alurican..."
by Bogumiła Delimata
and Cristo Osorio

31st of July 2019
At 21:00

"Ah, song, you are sombre, my song,
As sad as the Earth with no Sun.
How bad the world is when there's war,
On humans, the body trembles, shakes
and the heart cries tears of blood;
where their family is, no-one knows..."

Fragment of the poem "Tears of Blood: How we suffered
under the German soldiers in Volhynia from 1943 to 1944"
by Papusza [Bronisława Wajs]

In the poem “Bloody Tears,” Papisza (Bronislawa Wajs, 1908-1987) – one of the most famous Romani poets – encapsulates the horrors of World War II, vocalizing the individual and collective trauma of the wartime experiences of Roma in Europe. During the Roma Holocaust at least 500.000 Roma men, women, and children were massacred, with some countries annihilating as many as 90% of their entire Roma population. The experiences of the past were made even more painful, because for decades it was “the forgotten Holocaust” – unrecognized, invisibilized, unreconciled. The Roma Holocaust continues to shape the Roma transnational collective identity, and its consequences are still lived today.

But the memory of the Holocaust is also a powerful source of inspiration – and surprising beauty and strength - for generations of Roma Holocaust survivors and their children. Ceija Stojka, a Roma Holocaust survivor from Austria and a famous Roma painter, writer, and activist, used the language of art to create consciousness among the Roma about the importance of our own cultural persistence. She believed that “the blood of the victims will turn into gold in the hands of the new generation”. The memory of the Holocaust is an anchor in the painful past of Roma – but our survival is the binding force of the Roma communities today. The scars become part of our legacy which help us to celebrate the resilience, resistance, and power represented by our very existence.

Like in the ancient Japanese art of *Kintsugi*, in which pieces of broken ceramics are remolded together using gold, so the Roma identity is assembled back, giving testimony to our survival. The philosophy of *Kintsugi* affirms that breakage and repair are part of living history, rather than something that needs to be disguised. For Roma too, the memory of the Holocaust is the binding glue of contemporary Roma communities, reflecting the majestic beauty of surviving Roma culture.

The gold is a symbol of divinity, indestructibility, eternity, immortality, glory, perfection, spiritual enlightenment, vitality, blood, life. Over centuries, gold has been associated with the sun and the heavens; churches and icons were golden-plated to represent the divine sacrum. Likewise, many Romani myths and legends use the symbolism associated with gold.

The “Tears of Gold” exhibition present the works of artists who deal with the subject of Holocaust memory. Through art they evoke the trauma of World War II, thus giving a testimony to the memory of the Roma Holocaust as a premise to reclaim identity and existence. The traumatic heritage of the Holocaust is transformed into metaphorical gold, which brings the fragmented pieces of memory to put together the scarred yet beautiful Roma cultural whole.

Dr. Krzysztof Gil and Dr. Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka

For more information visit:

<https://eriac.org/tears-of-gold-sownakune-japsa/>