

Delaine Le Bas is an English Romani Gypsy artist, whose works deal with issues of exclusion, identity, stereotypes, untold histories, mis-representation, gender, of being the 'other'. As a Romani Gypsy she works with ideas of the body as a stolen artefact and a contested space itself. Clothing and textiles, especially their cultural, symbolic and identifying qualities are strands that she contests especially in terms of the stereotypical and political ideas that they continue to endorse. Delaine LeBas exhibited at the First Roma Pavilion of the 52nd Venice Contemporary Art Biennale, she also contributed to the Call the Witness Pavilion in 2011. Her recent Projects include *To Gypsyland* co-curated by Barby Asante and working with the artist RonkeOsinowo and photographer Tara Darby which has lead to the new collaborative project Bound By No Nation. Delaine's solo exhibition *Witch Hunt*, commissioned in 2009 By ASPEX continues to tour internationally. The *Safe European Home?* the large scale installation created with her husband since 2011 has been placed in Vienna, Berlin, Copenhagen and Dublin will be in Dresden later this year. It is an honor and great privilege to have her exhibition at Gallery8.

It is no secret –even if we did not articulate it, before this moment– that, we consider this exhibition the climax of our research, education and exhibition process on the depiction, representation and politics of the Roma Body. Not only in the sense that this exhibition is created by one of the leading Romani artists of our time, but also because we feel that Delaine LeBas' s oeuvre offers a model for the courageous and persistent deployment of the body into her research for the question of our identities.

Her works demonstrate Stuart Hall cultural theorist's assumption, who is one of the inspirations for the artist's extensive research and creative practice, which practice is built on the principle that “our identities are fluid, rather than fixed, and the notion of race gain meaning in difference, redefinition, and appropriation”. Her collages, extended site specific installations, or space occupying and inhabiting actions –such as for example the one here at Gallery8 - are constructed from her personal, family archive, completed with creative sketches, glitters, texts and handwritten notes, which lead us to the assumption that “our identities are formed at the unstable point where personal lives meet the narrative of history”.

Delaine Le Bas also performs her radical Roma identity through extraordinary practices, such as for example returning the demonizing myth surrounding the Roma people (on the Vampire bites back print), or inhabiting the famous Carmen-figure in a specifically Le Bas disobedient manner, or by inviting a “proper business man” to serve as the performing agency for her artefact First Class Traveller, calling attention to the awkward phenomena of recent differentiation between white and Roma air travelers in Europe. I shall not continue praising the present installation, as the artist herself offered to guide us through the project.

I have to confess that the main reason for our enthusiasm for the art of Delaine Le Bas is, because she manages to make visible the questions, which have engaged so many of us, and which have troubled all of our work here at Gallery8. This is a question best posed by the African-American novelist, Toni Morrison: How to be both free and situated; how to convert a

racist place into a race-specific yet nonracist home. How to enunciate race (in the Roma context) while depriving it of its lethal cling?

Our exhibition being a site specific installation with a lot of English texts, Gallery8 colleagues will help translate them.

Funding for the exhibition has come from the Norway Grants and the Visegrad Fund.

For us living a life independent from national funding mechanisms and political expectations and it is our natural environment to create events as the result of networking and working with other artists, ngos, art spaces and temporary structures so we can only applause the initiative for the OFF Biennial which we consider the most valuable and productive cultural initiative in Hungary's past five years.

And last but not least come to our party with Delaine tomorrow at Kugler Art Salon.