

## Superwomen

Exhibition in Gallery8, June 27-July 26 2013

Ladislava Gažiová, Zuzana Hruskova, Tamara Moyzes and Vera Duzdova are woman artists whose artistic carriers demonstrate the operation of structural oppression towards the Roma. They offer models for revolting against this oppression and for rejecting the majority's dominance in order to construct new Roma woman identities.

The exhibited works and the Daily Džessika Magazin focus on the question of visibility, and on the ways in which women artists can rewrite or modify the mainstream discourse once they arrive in the position of visibility.

The three exhibited videos by Duzdova declare what bell hooks describes as „We are more than our pain.”<sup>1</sup> This is why we are most moved by Duzdova's works that juxtapose the paradigme of humiliation and exclusion with that of eternal recovery and return.

Ladislava Gažiová combines the technique of templates spray-painted on a picture with primer paint turned into digital prints and stickers. Ladislava Gažiová likes to expand from the canvas to the wall whereby she achieves a greater “domestication” of her work in a given space and thus directly evokes her immediate presence. We find examples for the critic of the phallogocentric world in her art (Jan was a chauvinist again, or the gray cubeheads paint the white cubeheads' gray plates). Many of her works radiate fear, as Gažiová describes – a certain kind of fear from patriarchy. But bell hooks asks „what incredible women today – and especially those who are feminists – aren't talked about in many contexts as mad? We fall into periods of critical breakdown, because we often feel, there is no world, that will embrace us.”<sup>2</sup>

Tamara Moyzes, political activist, points out that Jana Buchlova, the winner of the 2006 Miss Roma contest in the Czech Republic has been denied entry to the Shop for knitting and

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<sup>1</sup> bell hooks: *Outlaw Culture*, Routledge, 2006. P.32

<sup>2</sup> bell hooks: *Outlaw Culture*, Routledge, 2006. P.55.

textile goods in Brno, Disco Alpha of Plzen, Diablo Dance Club, of Ostrava, Restaurant Sport in Nachod, Musicland Imperium, in Louny, and by a taxi driver in Prague. The film shows the burlesque-like makeover of Miss Roma into a sophisticated blond-hair Gadzi (non-Roma woman). Will she make it from victim to citizen undercover, and especially under this cover?

These works that operate with the power of humour – such as the Miss Roma video, Gažiová's polyp headed woman who has snakes climbing out of her head, or the teen girls in the Duzdova video who eat their fathers' friendly pet - are not simply games, or theatrical self-exhibitions, but ritual performances, which are formed by the artists under the pressure and influence of oppression, deploying the power of taboo, and fleeing from the horror of exclusion. They use the subversive power of parody, the way Judith Butler suggests: „They reject and change the laws, in order to use them against those, who created them.”<sup>3</sup>

Zuzana Hruskova institutionalizes this effort as the Director, Founder and Creative Editor of the DAILY DZESSIKA newspaper. Hruskova has a passion for Roma communities and often gets inspiration from the un-institutionalised Folklore Art as well as from subconscious actions of her communities' individuals. Hruskova participates regularly in national and international events and exhibitions. Her approach usually invites a discourse on ideas of vulnerability.

DAILY DZESSIKA (DD) is a socio-educational, artistic and Folklore inspired community initiative alongside an online newspaper. DD is helping to shape a positive multi-cultural landscape in Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) and beyond. Its mission statement reads: „We want to learn from Roma women and their children; we are here to directly / indirectly teach through formal or informal methods, using various individually tailored language, socio-cultural, artistic and/or community approaches to fit the migrant Roma community's needs. We like to use the Folk Art as our source and we often involve writing, film, video and photography.”

She makes us think about the crucial question: In what context within patriarchy do women create space where we can protect our genius? As an excellent educator she urges the

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<sup>3</sup> Butler, Judith: Jelentős testek. Új Mandátum, 2005. ( Fordította Barát Erzsébet és Sándor Bea. )

women and young girls she works with to grapple with feminist ideas and to read, interrogate and think critically.

Zuzana Hruskova's 'To Tell the Truth' drawing designed for the website of DD calls out one important dispute in both the women's and Roma movement. Opposing viewpoints should not be censored, silenced or punished in any way. In order to end domination feminist movement, the Roma civil struggle and all our progressive political movements must protect free speech. To maintain the space for constructive contestation and confrontation, we must oppose censorship. We shall remember the pain of silence and work to sustain our power to speak –freely, openly, and provocatively.

The Czech women exhibited here are deeply committed to a politics of solidarity wherein sisterhood is powerful because it emerges from a concrete practice of contestation, confrontation and struggle. They give us hope and inspiration that we can talk and work with each other with respect about the political, spiritual, and emotional self-determination of women and Roma women. They are our superheroes.

Opening speech: Tímea Junghaus, Viktória Nagy

June 27, 2013