

We are standing here in a space, in a Roma contemporary art space in the heart of the 8th district, surrounded by the lively and loveable figure of Katitzi – the main character of Katarina Taikon's books, the books that meant the first steps for most Swedes in getting to know gipsy culture.

We see Katitzi in 13 books on the wall, in comic books and youngsters' magazines on the tables, as well as on the wonderful drawings of Björn Hedlund. She appears on the Swedish TV in 1980 just like she has appeared in the greatest Swedish theaters recently. An unquestionably positive character, a curious, sensitive, smart child, a young girl full of willpower, who has been in the focus of attention since 1969, until this very day. And she is gipsy.

From today on, with this exhibition, Katitzi's figure will fill our space. Katitzi will remind us of the aching lack of *positive and accepted* Roma characters in Hungary and the acute need for that – let them be literary or realistic characters accepted by the society. Why don't we have such a positive character as Katitzi? Why don't we have our own Katarina Taikon? Or what should we do in order to make our Katitzi(s) 'visible' and respected, or even, well-known?

In the Hungarian translation of the book, Bálint Magyar underlines, instead of focusing on Katitzi's Roma origin, that Katitzi is 'different'. He writes this so that children can understand and live through Katitzi's destiny. However, through this euphemism – saying 'you are different too' – he blurs the essential, deep character of racism, rooted in human beings. In my opinion, this book is about gipsies and racism towards them, which issue has been just as actual today as it was in the 1930s when Katarina Taikon was young and in the 1970s when the books were published.

Gallery8 was opened in order to represent positive Roma characters, to make the contemporary Roma art scene visible and strengthen Roma's self-consciousness and pride. Welcome, Katitzi, at Gallery8!