

Tímea Junghaus: Opening Speech

In the recent years we saw an increasing number of publications analyzing the way Roma people to their past. One of the most often quoted publication in this topic is a study of the Holocaust memory and is referring to Roma as a paradigmatic case of people who forget rather than remember their history. This is not the only position which states that Romany communities, who were persecuted by the Nazis and their allies during the Second World War, do not commemorate the past.¹ This kind of “pathologization”² of the situation – the critic of the lack of commemoration rituals, establishments, places, spaces and actions – seems completely unjust when we examine the 2efforts made by the European Roma community and its leaders for the erection of Roma Holocaust Memorials. Only the complete lack of the infrastructure and institution system for social, political and economic equality and the ongoing structural oppression forces Roma into the present day situation of Roma (mis)representation, (lack of) remembrance and commemoration.

As Roma nationhood is largely a “project” the rituals – such as the exhibition opening today dedicated to the holocaust victim and contemporary artist, Ceija Stojka play a fundamental role in the construction of the Roma national identity. This process of constructing through “a set of actions performed mainly for the symbolic value” is well analyzed by David McCrone who describes how they initiate “a sense of trans-generational continuity, shared memories, and a sense of common destiny”³. Another one of these rituals, here at Gallery8, on August 2, is that

¹ REMEMBERING WITHOUT COMMEMORATION: THE MNEMONICS AND POLITICS OF HOLOCAUST MEMORIES AMONG EUROPEAN ROMA, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Volume 10, Issue 3, pages 561–582, September 2004

² Quote from Szász, Anna Lujza: Nincs itt semmi látnivaló Gondolatok a berlini, befejezetlen Nemzetiszocialista rezsim alatt meggyilkolt romák és szintik emlékművéről. *Élet és Irodalom*. LVI. évfolyam, 20. szám, 2012. május 18.

³ McCrone, David. 1998. *The Sociology of Nationalism. Tomorrow’s Ancestors*. London: Routledge.

we wear the gold cockade on our collar. Furthermore, at 5 PM we take the memorial walk from Horvath Mihaly Squeare to Nehru Park.