



## R'OMA LEPANTO

Luna De Rosa . Manolo Gómez . Dariya Kanti . Brunn Morais . Alfred Ullrich . Kálmán Várady

21. April bis 24. November 2024 .  
Opening: Saturday 21 April 2024


Venice is proud of its seemingly splendid history. The city of Venice celebrated in 2021 the 450th anniversary of its success in the naval battle of Lepanto. In that Battle the Republic of Venice together with Matla and Spain formed the Holy Alliance, and won against the Ottoman fleet. R'OMA LEPANTO is an artistic intervention to rewrite history: What is erased from historical narration is that several hundreds of the rowers of the Venetian and Spanish galleys were Roma and Gitanos which were traded as slaves and provided the manpower for the win of the Holy Alliance. On the side of the Ottoman fleet, were also rowers who were Roma. As in following European wars, Roma met in battle on different sides. As in other contexts, the voice of the oppressed is silenced. The success of Venice was also fueled by the energy of Roma. Treating Roma as slaves by the Venetians is one of the earliest examples of antigypsyism which the minority is continuously facing up until this day. Contributions of the Roma towards European history are continuously neglected and Venice partly owes its greatest victory to the force of Roma.

R'OMA LEPANTO is a site specific art installation as it takes place in Palazzo Bembo during the 60th Biennale de Arte in Venice. The Bembo family was amongst the most important noble families of Venice. Giovanni Bembo served as sopracomito di galera (commander) during the battle. The exhibition looks beyond the beauty of Venice. It takes the naval battle as a starting point for an acute debate about how Roma are part of European society and history. By confronting Europe with its invisible past we can step forward to a future of participation and honesty. The art installation does not simply reconstruct the naval battle, but sets it in context and invites the audience on an ambiguous and shiny journey between past and present. During the Biennial, on October 7th , the memorial day of the battle, there is In the basilica of Santi Giovanni and Paolo an annual memorial of Our Lady of the Rosary to remember the battle of Lepanto. The artists will join - as a performative intervention.

Following the successful 4th Pavillon of the Sinti and Roma, which has taken place as a collateral event of the 59th Biennial of Venice commissioned by ERIAC, this exhibition will again present art as a motor for change. It demands a home for the art of the Roma in the Venice Biennial, which is still denied. Roma artists from across Europe step out of invisibility which we can do by giving them a stage. The exhibition acknowledges the long history of slavery of the Roma and presents art as a means to tackle and defeat the feeling of inferiority, which is the result of silenced history. By sharing new perspectives on European events Roma are taking control of the imposed history and through their art they can show a self image which presents a people of talent and ideas, of positive and imaginative contributions towards society and our community.

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The Battle of Lepanto has been an early media event. At the time of the battle, Venice has been the European centre for printing and publication of books., In many of which the Turkish enemies have been portrayed as monstrous and evil. These early versions of mass media have been of hegemonic power. Racist representations are very common to the current antagonism against minorities which Roma are still facing today. R'OMA LEPANTO will confront European audience with its past. An artistic approach, an empathic and careful encounter of people in arts will open up a new vision of an inclusive Europe: Roma are a part of Venice, the Venice Biennial and of Europe and its history.

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*Moritz Pankok*

R'oma Lepanto is a project of Foundation Kai Dikhas in collaboration with ERIAC (European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture) , the Documentation Centre of German Sinti and Roma and ECC (European Cultural Centre Italy).

Curated by :  
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