

Professor Ken Gemes in conversation with Krzysztof Gil

Tuesday 8 January, 2019, 7 pm



Krzysztof Gil, *Tajsa*, 2018 (view of the inside frieze), l'étrangère, London, Photo Andy Keate

We have the pleasure of inviting you for a conversation between Krzysztof Gil and Ken Gemes, a Professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London.

This event takes place on the last day of Krzysztof Gil's exhibition, *Welcome to the Country Where the Gypsy Has Been Hunted*.

The exhibition addresses the legal and social marginalisation of Roma peoples throughout history, that began in fifteenth century Europe when the Roma people were dissuaded from following their traditional lifestyles for fear of severe punishment or enslavement. The sixteenth century was marked by anti-Roma legislation passed by the-then Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, which meant that any Roma individual captured throughout the imperial territory could be subjected to torture and extermination. In 1530, Roma were legally banished from England, and in 1540, from Scotland. In the seventeenth century, a law was in force throughout Germany and the Netherlands according to which anyone could kill Roma without liability, thereby establishing the custom of Roma hunting, or 'Heidenjachten'. The hunts were official, co-organised by the army and police, and became a form of public entertainment, often with cash prizes awarded for a hunter's success.

Further details can be found [here](#)

Krzysztof Gil's family originates from the Burgetka Roma community who settled in the Polish mountain region of Podhale in the fifteenth century. A diverse yet stateless population of approximately 9 to 12 million people, Roma people speak many languages, practice different religions and have varied customs.

Krzysztof Gil (b. 1987, Kraków) grew up in Nowy Targ, Poland. Between 2008-2013, he studied Graphic Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. He is the recipient of the Jolanta Kwaśniewska Foundation scholarship 'Understanding without Barriers', and a three-time recipient of the Polish Minister of Interior and Administration scholarship.

In 2008, he co-founded the artistic group Romani Art, and is also involved in social activities that oppose discrimination and social exclusion. He is a member of the ternYpe International Roma Youth Network, which helps young Roma people become active citizens. As he says: "From the beginning of my artistic education at high school in Krakow, the topic of Roma has been extremely important to me. Now, years later, I realised that I had to look at my culture from different perspectives and take more distance. It helped me to get involved in projects against intolerance and stereotypes."

In 2013, Gil began his PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. His topic is the correlation between the past, present and future of the Roma people, as represented by the Roma word 'tajsja', which translates as both 'today' and 'tomorrow'.

Professor Ken Gemes is a philosopher with a primary interest in Nietzsche. He received his PhD from the University of Pittsburgh in 1990. Prior to joining Birkbeck, Gemes taught at Yale University in the US. Gemes's work has covered a wide range of philosophical issues, from technical concerns of logical content to Nietzsche's account of philosophy as the "last manifestation of the ascetic ideal". Since his time at Yale Gemes has taught a course called the Biology of Evil which investigates the move from a conceptual notion of evil (having the wrong kind of thoughts) to a more bodily notion of evil (having the wrong blood or the wrong genes).

The exhibition has been organised in collaboration with Henryk Galery in Kraków and is supported by the Municipality of Kraków, Poland and the Polish Cultural Institute, London, UK. The exhibition has been curated by Wojtek Szymański.

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