

Ceija Stojka

We Lived in Secrecy (A Roma Memory)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPENING RECEPTION: January 26, 2024, 6- 8 pm

EXHIBITION DATES: January 27 - April 27, 2024

NEW YORK, NY. Marianne Le Métayer, Nathalie Vallois, and Georges-Philippe Vallois announce an exhibition of paintings by Ceija Stojka (1933-2013) titled *We Lived in Secrecy (A Roma Memory)*. Stojka was an Austrian Romani artist, writer, singer, and activist who, along with her family, was captured when she was ten years old and interned in the National Socialist concentration camps of Auschwitz, Ravensbrück, and Bergen-Belsen. It was not until 1982 that West Germany formally recognized that genocide had been committed against the Romani people, and when Stojka was in her mid-fifties in the year 1988, she decided to bring her memories to life, creating a first-hand testimony of what her people endured.

Completely self-taught, Stojka devoted herself to painting and drawing scenes from her memories starting from before the war. She worked every day until shortly before her death in 2013. In two decades, Stojka created a body of work consisting of over a thousand drawings and paintings. Very little of Stojka's output has been seen outside of Europe and our exhibition is the first solo gallery presentation of the artist's work in the United States.

Stojka rendered highly detailed and emotionally charged images, applying paint using her hands and fingers, toothpicks, and brushes on paper, cardboard, and sometimes canvas. Her body of work can be roughly divided into two categories: the first are the "light pictures," brightly colored, idyllic landscapes representing memories of times preceding the war. Stojka depicts her family's life in the wagons, at the market, and surrounded by the lushness of summertime in the Austrian countryside. The second series consists of the "dark pictures," showing the oppression inflicted upon the Romani under the Nazi regime. These works are colorless, graphic representations of the atrocities of the Romani Holocaust. To this day, despite there being an estimated 10 to 12 million Romani people in Europe, they are still subject to forced assimilation or segregation, cultural repression, eviction and other forms of discrimination.

The first exhibition of Stojka's work curated by Christa Stippinge, *Pictures from the Life of the Romni Ceija Stojka*, was mounted at the Amerlinghaus, Vienne in 1991. Since then, solo presentations of Stojka's work have been seen at Stadtgalerie Kiel (2001), the Jewish Museum of Vienna (2005), and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid (2020). In 2017, Stojka was presented in France for the first time in a large survey show organized by Xavier Marchand and Antoine de Galbert at La Friche de la Belle de Mai in Marseilles, then in 2018 at La Maison Rouge in Paris, where Marianne Le Métayer discovered this amazing body of work.

Stojka's paintings and works on paper can be found in the collections of the Wien Museum, Vienna (Austria), MUCEM, Marseilles (France), FRAC Auvergne (France), Pinault Collection, Paris (France), Warsaw Ghetto Museum, Warsaw (Poland).

Gratitude to the Stojka Family and Galerie Christophe Gaillard for making this exhibition possible.

