



ROMANI  
CULTURAL & ARTS COMPANY

# Gypsy Maker Report 2019

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## RCAC Gypsy Maker Project Report 2019

This report comprises an overview of The Romani Cultural and Arts Company's Gypsy Maker project to date. The document begins with a brief history of the Gypsy Maker initiative and the factors which have necessitated the need for such a programme. The rationale goes on to underpin the value of the project both for the artists involved, the communities that they represent and for wider society. The content of the Gypsy Maker programme is then summarised and its impact assessed as a whole before discussing the envisioned future of the project. The report ends with appendices relating to the promotional and reporting materials generated throughout the Gypsy Maker programme.

### Background

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company (RCAC) was formed by its Director, Isaac Blake, in September 2009 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (No. 07005660) and is a registered charity (No.1138150). Working through the arts the RCAC raises funds to take community development and arts and educational projects onto Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) sites and into wider non-GRT communities across Wales.

The RCAC began the Gypsy Maker project in 2014 having been formulated in response to the lack of any significant and sustainable programme of support for GRT artists throughout Wales and the UK. The main objective of Gypsy Maker continues to be to facilitate the development of innovative works by established and emerging GRT artists in order to stimulate dialogue across communities about GRT lives and the ways in which art continues to inform our all lives today. Through this work the project employs artistic excellence and experimentation to challenge racism and discrimination. The idea was developed after two very successful RCAC commissioned exhibitions that took place in 2012 and 2013 during Gypsy, Roma and Traveller history month by Delaine Le Bas and Daniel Baker. The high quality of the work of the RCAC is well documented and is continued in the ground-breaking Gypsy Maker programme<sup>1</sup>

Gypsy Maker, with the support of Arts Council Wales, has over the past five years created a platform for GRT artists to develop their artistic practice over a defined period of time culminating in a presentation of works in an appropriate form (exhibition, performance, publication etc.). The resulting presentations (exhibitions, artworks, performances) have then been made available to the wider public accompanied by open-access workshops and forums to allow the public to gain deeper understanding of the processes and themes of the artworks and the wider Gypsy Maker initiative.

Racism and discrimination are legislated against by national government (Race Relations Act and the Amended 2000 Act) and are now widely recognised as anti-social and detrimental to community cohesion. However, there remains much evidence in the everyday lives of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller

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<sup>1</sup> "This review has uncovered nothing but praise for Isaac Blake—his work is universally acknowledged by academics, Gypsies, Travellers, politicians, public bodies and international organisations. This is a unique Welsh-based company that should be supported in every possible way." (Beyond the Stereotypes: A review of Gypsies/Roma/Travellers and the Arts in Wales, p77, ACW, Yvonne Cheal August 2012, <http://romaniarts.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/Beyond-the-Stereotypes.pdf>)

people, as well as in academic reports, that racism against these communities is still perceived as socially acceptable. The Gypsy Maker project is designed to challenge and overcome widespread ignorance and prejudice relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people living in Wales by raising the profile of GRT artists and engaging the wider public in celebrating GRT artistic practice and the personalities behind it in order to present a counter narrative to that which is commonly perceived.

Arts Council of Wales (ACW) recognises that there remains a regrettable shortage of knowledge about this exciting but overlooked community. By commissioning new works by GRT artists the Gypsy Maker project generates new knowledge relating to Gypsy, Roma & Traveller arts and culture and the related communities in Wales and beyond. In commissioning GRT artists, Gypsy Maker also leads the way in the UK and beyond by adding to the bank of GRT artworks available to the public. This is reflected real terms in the building of the RCAC art collection, the focus of which is to reflect the climate of GRT arts in Wales today.

The RCAC remains convinced of the need for showcasing current GRT cultural and artistic innovation for the benefit both of members of GRT communities and the wider population. GRT artists state very firmly that there remains no support for the production of new artwork besides that which the RCAC has made available with its Gypsy Maker programme. The value of this unique and innovative project is that it creates a space of reflection for GRT artists to utilise their individual skills and expertise to produce artworks that draw upon the contemporary GRT experience in order to illuminate common societal concerns thereby constituting a valuable asset for both the international Roma community and wider society.

### Editions

Gypsy Maker has presented three editions since its inception in 2014 with a fourth edition in process for 2020. Gypsy Maker 1 commissioned exhibitions of new artwork from the Romani artist Daniel Baker and the Scottish Gypsy Traveller artist Shamus McPhee. Gypsy Maker 2 commissioned exhibitions of new artwork from the Roma artist Artur Conka and the Romani artist Billy Kerry. Gypsy Maker 3 acted as a retrospective in presenting a group show of selected works created by the four Gypsy Maker artists during their original commissions plus newly commissioned works to provide a glimpse of the professional and artistic development of these artists since their original commission thereby exhibiting the impact of Gypsy Maker upon their work and their lives. This group exhibition, titled *Shiftwork* was curated in collaboration with Anthony Shapland, Creative Director of g39.

The Gypsy Maker exhibitions comprised a variety of media and subject matter from the abstract to the highly figurative, including sculpture, painting, drawing, filmmaking, photography conceptual works and installation. With the financial support of the commission each artist had the opportunity to develop and expand their ideas in real terms through the provision of materials and time as well as the opportunity to exhibit to a wide public made available through the Gypsy Maker initiative. The subject matter chosen by the artists varied according to their individual practices with each building upon the current concerns within their work.

Daniel Baker's work focused upon questions of mobility, both physical and social, by invoking elements of the Roma aesthetic through his elaborate and highly finished sculptural installations.

Artur Conka continued his thought provoking exploration of Roma life through photography and film by focusing on the inclusive practices of food preparation in the Roma home. The intricate collage and sculptural works by Billy Kerry considered themes of identity, gender, ethnicity and sexuality and the ways in which these fluctuating positions are performed in our day to day lives. Shamus McPhee's paintings focused upon portraits of family and the lives they continue to lead on their encampment in Bobbin Mill, Scotland—his artworks operating as integral to his pursuit of cultural visibility and recognition for his community. Not only do the works of these artists draw our attention to the role of the artist both within the Gypsy community and wider society, they also exhibit the value of art as vehicle for cross-community dialog and social comment.

The venues partnered with the Gypsy Maker programme have ranged from community galleries to high profile contemporary art spaces. The variety of venue reflects the intention of the broader project to cover as wide a demographic as possible and to challenge hierarchies of practice and exhibiting within the contemporary art world as representative of wider societal discrimination. The geographic scope of the exhibitions throughout Wales has also reflected the project's aim to reach as wide a public gaze as possible. Venues include; Riverfront in Newport, Art Central in Barry, Taliesin in Swansea, g39 and Cardiff Story in Cardiff and Ty Pawb in Wrexham.

In line with the core aims of the project the intention has been to gain high profile exposure for the artworks in as many contexts as possible thereby expanding not only the reach of the artworks, artists and exhibitions but also furthering the main objective which underpins the whole project—to challenge racism and discrimination and raise the perceived value of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture through artistic experimentation and excellence. This is reflected in the ways in which the project has developed to impact upon local communities, both GRT and wider, as well as contemporary art audiences and international discourse, with feedback and opportunities regularly exceeding expectations.

The Gypsy Maker project also generated three Gypsy Roma and Traveller International Arts and Culture Symposia, the first taking place at g39 in Cardiff and the second and third at the Taliesin Arts Centre in Swansea. These events were staged to coincide with the exhibitions of newly commissioned artworks by the Gypsy Maker artists and drew renowned academics, artists and cultural actors from around the world with the aim of stimulating dialogue across communities about the ways in which art continues to inform the lives of individuals and communities today.

### Outcomes

The ongoing objective of Gypsy Maker has been to commission established and emerging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists to develop innovative works while engaging GRT communities and the wider public in dialogue about contemporary art and its impact upon cultural perspectives. The Gypsy Maker project has seen the creation of thought-provoking works that challenge pre-conceptions regarding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people, their past, their present and their future.

The programme has staged a total of nine exhibitions to date comprising 247 exhibition days with visitor numbers at 15,790. 27 workshops have taken place plus eight talks with a total of 550

persons in attendance. The venues cover the whole of Wales and include The Riverfront in Newport, Art Central in Barry, Taliesin in Swansea, g39 and Cardiff Story in Cardiff and Ty Pawb in Wrexham.

Press coverage has appeared in local, national and international media including print, radio and television. a-n The Artist Information Company listed the Gypsy Maker 3 exhibition 'Shiftwork' in their top five exhibitions to see in March 2018 alongside high profile contemporary art shows in London and Glasgow: <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/now-showing-235-weeks-top-exhibitions/>

Gypsy Maker has brought together artists who through their work tease out a number of aesthetic and political issues concerning Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lives through cultural representation. The role of the artist within the Gypsy community and as wider social commentator has also been explored throughout the project along with questions of how art might enable new ways of tackling long-standing questions.

Each of the artists commissioned by Gypsy Maker have taken a different approach – from the documentary style of Artur Conka, one of the few Roma to have recorded their own community on film, to the sculptural installations of Daniel Baker which examined the aesthetic mechanisms of migration and free movement. The idiosyncratic paintings of Shamus McPhee have a distinct 'outsider art' feel while complex issues of identity and gender have been explored in the eclectic work of Billy Kerry. These unique and complex renderings of contemporary Romani culture drew people together by highlighting the links between communities and at the same time recognising and celebrating difference.

The Gypsy Maker project has strengthened relationships between GRT artists and contemporary art spaces thereby increasing the reach of the work of these artists and that of the RCAC. As well as forging new dialog between GRT communities and the art world, this has led to greater exposure of the work of the RCAC and its core values of challenging prejudice and promoting equality and opportunity for all. The wide exposure of the Gypsy Maker exhibitions has also greatly enhanced the audience demographic of the venues involved and the awareness of the staff and boards of those venues. It has also greatly enhanced the professional development of the artists.

The Arts Council Wales Quality Appraisal carried out in 2017 by Mandy Fowler stated: '*... these artists' works present a compelling way to create an insight and understanding of these GRT communities through art and culture... it was clear that the experience of working with the RCAC through the Gypsy Maker programme and the subsequent opportunity to exhibit the outcomes has had an impact on their practice and has the potential to impact on their career trajectory.*' (P9)

As well as opening GRT culture to wider audiences through contemporary art the impact upon individual careers in terms of professional development has also been a key factor within the Gypsy Maker concept. Three of the artists from the Gypsy Maker programme are now appearing at The International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2019. Daniel Baker has curated FUTUROMA which exhibits the work of Billy Kerry and Dan Turner (one of the artists from the upcoming Gypsy Maker 4), as well as Delaine Le Bas, a pre-Gypsy Maker artist commissioned by the RCAC in 2012. This exhibition is due to transfer to the renowned contemporary art space Villa Romana in 2020 exhibiting the wide vision and reach of the Gypsy Maker programme and its impact upon international contemporary art and social discourse.

## What people have to say

Selected quotes from Gypsy Maker artists, partners and attendees

*"It's been fantastic having the opportunity to work with The Romani Cultural and Arts Company. The RCAC has supported and guided me at the same time as allowing me to be very free with my work. As an artist and educator I am overjoyed to be asked to hold workshops with schools as I see creative education as important in creating richer individuals from all walks of life."* Billy Kerry, GM artist

*"Working with the Romani Cultural and Arts Company has been a relationship to cherish. The RCAC gives a platform that so few do not, especially to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups. Its approach to tirelessly establishing ground breaking understanding about GRT communities has helped change people's lives."* Artur Conka, GM artist

*"The Gypsy Maker project represented an exciting opportunity to promote artistic exchange between participants from diverse geographical locations throughout the United Kingdom. Working with Isaac Blake, Director of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company is a rewarding experience, as he continues to push the boundaries and challenge entrenched attitudes toward Gypsy art."* Shamus McPhee, GM artist

*"The groundbreaking work of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists is unparalleled. The Gypsy Maker project is unique worldwide in commissioning new bodies of work by GRT artists thus enabling the production of significant new knowledge from an underrepresented group and making a valuable contribution to international contemporary art and cultural discourse."* Daniel Baker, GM artist

*"We are very excited indeed to be working with the Romani Cultural & Arts Company. The Gypsy Maker Project makes a significant contribution to contemporary art discourse and its practice in the context of GRT communities. It's an honour to be hosting such a high profile event at g39 and we are looking forward to a continuing partnership between the two organisations and their respective communities."* Chris Brown, co-director of the artist-led gallery g39

*"I'm delighted that Taliesin is hosting RCAC's Gypsy Maker and helping to break down the ignorance and prejudice that persists about GRT communities. Artists are again at the forefront of busting stereotypes and bringing light and understanding to what remains a serious problem in our society"*—Sybil Crouch, Head of Cultural Services, Taliesin Arts Centre

*"I am pleased to support the latest instalment of the ground-breaking Gypsy Maker project. The exhibition offers a much needed insight into the sometimes misunderstood GRT community and allows their distinct culture and heritage to be enjoyed by the wider population."* Julie James AM

*"It is good to see an exhibition of Gypsy/Traveller art planned for Newport in the prestigious Riverfront venue. As well as allowing the public to enjoy the works of art it will encourage greater understanding of Gypsy/Traveller culture and lifestyle – fostering better community relations for the benefit of all. I hope very many people take the opportunity to view this important exhibition."* John Griffiths AM

## The Future

There remain many negative pre-conceptions relating to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The Gypsy Maker programme has challenged these pre-conceptions and significantly increased knowledge and public awareness of the dynamic, long-standing (yet often hidden) heritage of artistic endeavour and creativity within Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities. As an organisation the RCAC remains excited about this project and its scope for adding value to the cultural and artistic landscape of Wales and beyond.

Gypsy Maker has stimulated many questions and seen audiences engage with the vibrancy and depth of artistic practice within GRT communities. This benefit has increased with each incarnation of the Gypsy Maker project as exhibition durations have extended along with the number and variety of host venues. This expansion of the programme has allowed greater access to new knowledge and objects created by the Gypsy Maker artists and their work—some of which have entered the RCAC’s own art collection to establish a tangible and permanent representation of work by GRT artists that continues to be built upon to create a legacy for future generations.

In her 2017 Quality Appraisal for ACW, Mandy fowler stated: *‘This innovative project also has the potential to be developed into a further and bigger project and to introduce the work and voices of marginalised GRT artists into mainstream venues and the visual arts sector and has the potential to present curatorial dialogues between artist’s works. This would also enable RCAC to build further upon their object to promote knowledge and understanding of the GRT communities and guide and impart knowledge to other mainstream organisations.’* (P10).

The RCAC is continuing the work of the project with the upcoming Gypsy Maker 4 which will present the work of the Romani artists Cas Holmes and Dan Turner in new venues across Wales during 2020. By building upon the enormous success already achieved by this initiative the RCAC aims to expand the Gypsy Maker project through further and enhanced collaboration with new and existing partners in order to continue and increase its significant benefit for both for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities and the wider population in the future.

Attached appendices include selected press coverage, press releases, images from the Gypsy Maker 3 *Shiftwork* exhibition and biographies.



# CCQ

a creative conversation



Chim↑Pom | Ivor Davies | Eddie Ladd | Sue Williams  
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# Makeshifting

Daniel Baker's objects and installations create connections between Romani aesthetics and tradition, and wider issues around mobility and social justice. He talks to **Emma Geliot** about Roma visual culture, education and his recent shows in South Wales and Budapest.

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Daniel Baker grew up in St Mary Cray in Kent, the youngest child in a family of Romani Gypsies. The site on which his parents settled was sold for development in the 1950s; a number of the residents were offered housing in a street overlooking the land, so the community has remained relatively intact, despite the disappearance of the main encampment. In 2007, Baker exhibited and advised on the first Roma Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. He completed his PhD on Gypsy aesthetics at the Royal College of Art, in London in 2011, combining art practice and academic research. Daniel uses the word 'Roma' as a collective term to mean 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities'.

**Emma Geliot:** Can you tell me a bit about how you became interested in art? Was there anything that first sparked your imagination, or someone who encouraged you?

**Daniel Baker:** There is a history of artistic activity in my family, mostly traditional Romani activities; my family encouraged my painting and drawing from an early age. Visual culture is taken very seriously amongst Romanies, perhaps because visual communication is so important in Romani and Traveller groups, given our historical lack of attachment to the written word. We had no books at home when I was a child. Our histories didn't seem to be contained within books, so they were not seen as important.

The way our home was decorated was a big influence on me as a child. My most vivid memories are of the glass cabinets filled with collections of painted crockery and ornaments. These had sliding glass doors decorated with flowers and mirrored panels at the back, so that the objects were reflected and could be seen from all sides at once. The rich visual culture of my community is a strong influence on the work that I make. The ways in which Gypsy aesthetics so eloquently employ both artistic and functional elements to convey the spiritual and the everyday concerns of Romani life, continues to be a source of fascination for me.

I went to Ravensbourne College of Art at the age of 17, and concentrated on contemporary art practice. It wasn't until my late 30s after studying for a Masters degree in Romani studies at Greenwich University that I began to concentrate on Romani identity and its artistic traditions – looking at the relationship between marginal artistic practices and those that form the elite centre ground, and supposed mainstream society.

**EG:** What do you think are the barriers to the Roma community accessing art – either as audience or as a career?

**DB:** Artistic practice is bound within everyday life for Roma. There is an absence of any tradition of 'art object-hood', particularly within

the UK Romani communities, where the practice and experience of nomadism are more recent than in more settled Roma groups in Eastern and Central Europe. Within the nomadic worldview, a painting for example, would have been just one more thing to move around, with no immediate functional merit; whereas, the daily use of a favoured quilt or knife would ensure its place among essential items, allowing the home and the ephemera of everyday life to perform the role of art. By operating outside of literary tradition, the Roma's facility for aesthetic communication, accounts for the development of keen visual and sensory vocabulary. It makes sense that Roma are less inclined to look beyond their immediate surroundings in search of art.

Access to education continues to be problematic for Roma. Again mobility, historic and current, is a significant issue. Certainly, in Western Europe, the mechanisms of nomadism, historic and current, have meant that regular schooling has often been overlooked. The basic skills of reading and writing are difficult to pass on through teaching at home, if few adults in the community have acquired these skills themselves.

Romani cultural values determine the skills that are prized, and therefore taught to children and, often, these are skills more relevant to the economic imperatives of the family and the wider Roma community. Prejudice is another key issue: those children that do find themselves in school, are often bullied and have commonly been targeted for special treatment by staff and officials, resulting in relegation to lower achieving classes simply for being Romani – or in exclusion from school completely.

**EG:** There are several motifs running through your work, including impermanence, interdependence, shelter etc. Could you describe them and how they developed?

**DB:** During my PhD at the RCA, I examined the Roma aesthetic, informed by the urgencies of the Roma experience and shaped by the practices of historic and, in some cases, current nomadism. It is not the actuality of nomadism that I refer to here, but a legacy that is the 'nomadic sensibility'; an awareness through which Roma maintain an inherent understanding of the contingencies of life on the move. The collective experience of life at the edge of state control has resulted in the development of the Roma's innate understanding of the makeshift and its associated qualities of contingency, simultaneity and adaptability.

My recent *Makeshifting* project is concerned with themes of mobility and the structures that enhance and/or inhibit movement, whether physical, social, economic or aesthetic. The works use objects such as ladders, wheels, ropes and flags – signifiers of both movement and fixity – which play with contradictory qualities, such as attraction and diversion, display and concealment, functionality and obsolescence.

*Analog* is formed of a pair of golden ladders propped against a wall, the allure of the shiny rungs thwarted by their inability to be →



p86: *Mobile Surveillance Device*, Daniel Baker, 2015, mirrored glass, steel and mixed media, 60 x 60 x 90cm. Photo: Anthony David Vaughan

p88, top: *Canopy*, (detail), Daniel Baker, 2015, camouflage netting gilded with silver and gold coloured metal leaf, 600 x 600cm. Photo: Anthony David Vaughan

p88, bottom: *Paper Ladder*, Daniel Baker, 2015, A4 paper and metal, 28 x 27 x 27cm. Photo: James Cochrane



climbed. In *Mobile Surveillance Device*, mirrored wheels and an axle form an amalgam of low-tech surveillance technology – an improvised apparatus whose function is to keep track of us wherever we are. The structure of the work invites the viewer to pedal the vehicle into motion, but with little prospect of movement. The hybrid flags in *Altered States* look at the possibilities for adaptability and inclusion within the more abstracted structures of nationhood.

The aim of the *Makeshifting* project was to generate discussion and participation amongst the Roma and wider communities. The parallels between migrations of peoples and migrations of knowledge are interesting. The project was timely as the issue of physical migration remains increasingly pressing. Despite its position as a founding tenet of the EU, mobility continues to be perceived as a threat to society. The works in the show aimed to reposition the inherent elements of mobility as qualities to value rather than outlaw with particular emphasis on relationships between the marginal and the mainstream in society.

**EG:** Do you think that there are certain expectations about the kind of work you make and/or the themes you address through it?

**DB:** Although the works have a certain feel they rarely make direct reference to Roma within their materiality. My hope is that audiences can experience meaning within my work regardless of knowledge of particular histories.

**EG:** Do you think that being categorised in particular ways can be useful, or does it get in the way of how you might like your work to be received?

**DB:** I think that artistic practice attached to an identity position can be limited in ambition if it only works within a specific context. I have discussed this with a number of Roma artists and the conversation often follows the same trajectory; artists want their work to be seen and experienced by as many people

as possible, and any ethnic or gender label might be seen to negate this. That said, I believe that good art can operate in multiple contexts and continue to convey meaning and insight, transcending their labels whilst at the same time embracing them.

**EG:** What kind of responses have you had to your work when it is prefaced with the word Roma?

**DB:** Nothing really surprises me when it comes to questions of ethnicity, even in relation to art. There remains a great deal of misunderstanding when it comes to Roma, so there is a lot of work to be done both within the various Roma communities across Europe, and across the wider community. In terms of the art world, I think that, in the same way that other minority groups have formed movements as a way of shifting from a position of specificity towards a place of wider influence, so the notion of Roma art can be used a stepping stone towards greater understanding and equality.

**EG:** What are you working on now?

**DB:** I have just finished installing a work for a new solo show titled *100 thousand blows*, at Gallery 8 in Budapest. I was invited to make an installation in response to the increasingly frequent series of violent raids carried out under Code-Action 100. This is a term for police action involving supposedly tracking down individuals thought to be escaping justice, or tracing items believed to have been obtained by criminal means (or used for carrying out criminal acts). The use of the code is the latest in a long tradition of violence against Europe's largest minority, and continues a culture of state sanctioned racism that often remains unchallenged. The work explores the historic and current experience of Roma expulsion from territories throughout Europe.

My installation is made of a carpet that carries the image of a map of Europe surrounded by a number of carpet beaters. The beaters are given individual national markers, and positioned to dislodge most

efficiently the undesirable elements from the carpet's pile. They are made of traditional wicker and gilded metal; the carpet's pattern is bright and cheerful. It's a mix of the domestic and political, the decorative and the brutal.

**EG:** Do you have any ambitions for art and the Roma community – creating more routes through to the mainstream, for example, or a shift in perception around specific cultural activity?

**DB:** In the UK I have been working with the Romani Cultural and Arts Company and g39 in Cardiff, with the assistance of the Arts Council of Wales, to promote the work of artists of Roma origin. The *Gypsy Maker* project commissions exhibitions of new work from artists, in order to publicise Roma arts and raise awareness. It also helps create a physical collection of artworks by Roma for the nation.

I am aware that within the UK we have yet to identify a critical mass of artists from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds. This has, as I said earlier, something to do with artistic practice being integrated more into everyday life, so not seen as a separate activity. It is also down to the prohibitive expense of art school training. There are many more artists of Roma origin practising in other parts of Europe, so this is encouraging in terms of a wider movement. I regularly work with a number of artists, theorists and curators of Roma origin on international projects that are influencing wider contemporary art discourse, and within this, the possibilities of art as a tool of emancipation remains a central concern—**CCQ**

*Daniel Baker's exhibition. Makeshifting: Structures of Mobility was at Art Central in Barry earlier this year. The show coincided with the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Arts & Culture National Symposium at g39, Cardiff 7 July 2015*

*danielbaker.net*

**a-n** The Artist Information Company

<https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/now-showing-235-weeks-top-exhibitions/>

### **NOW SHOWING #235: The week's top exhibitions**

This week's selection of recommended shows includes: An exploration of folklore and the occult at Newlyn Art Gallery, Penzance, Faith Ringgold's painting and quilts at Pippy Houldsworth, London, and a group show exploring Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lives at g39, Cardiff.

- **Penzance**

#### **Faith Ringgold, Pippy Houldsworth, London**

The first solo exhibition in Europe of African-American artist Faith Ringgold features a small selection of paintings from her [American People Series](#) dating from the 1960s, plus a number of her 'story quilts', ranging from the 1980s to the present. This superb show follows hot on the heels of Ringgold's inclusion in Tate's ['Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power'](#) show last year.

*Until 28 April 2018. [www.houldsworth.co.uk](http://www.houldsworth.co.uk)*



#### **Hummadrz, Newlyn Art Gallery, Penzance**

This group show explores nature, folklore and the occult in relation to both artists and communities. It includes various artefacts loaned by [The Museum of Witchcraft and Magic](#), plus artwork spanning the last century. Featuring work by: Ithell Colquhoun, Mary Beth Edelson, Byzantia Harlow, Amy Lawrence, Susan MacWilliam, Niamh O'Malley, Silke Otto-Knapp, Beth Emily Richards, Monica Sjöo, Jill Smith, Lucy Stein, Linda Stupart, Gitte Villesen and Anne-Marie Watson.

*Until 2 June 2018. [www.newlynartgallery.co.uk](http://www.newlynartgallery.co.uk)*



#### **Matthew Day Jackson, Hauser and Wirth, London**

The latest exhibition from Brooklyn-based artist Matthew Day Jackson features a new series of still life paintings and bronze sculptures. Made from artificial materials such as formica, plywood and epoxy, the works raise questions relating to authorship, with Jackson directly referencing Jan Brueghel the Elder's and Younger's series of flower paintings from the 16th and 17th centuries.

*Until 28 April 2018. [www.hauserwirth.com](http://www.hauserwirth.com)*



### **Artists who make music Musicians who make art, Queens Park Railway Club, Glasgow**

This exhibition is curated by artist [Ross Sinclair](#) and features 100 participants who share a passion for both art and music. Each contributor was invited to submit an artwork, irrespective of which form they are best known for. They were also asked to contribute an example of their music for a digital mix-tape that will be played in the space. Also on show are various films featuring pop videos, performance and film work. Featured artists include: Martin Boyce, Edwyn Collins, Douglas Gordon, Susan Philipsz, David Shrigley and Hanna Tuulikki.

Until 25 March 2018. [www.queensparkrailwayclub.co.uk](http://www.queensparkrailwayclub.co.uk)



### **Shiftwork, g39, Cardiff**

The four artists featured in this show each explore Gypsy, Roma and Traveller lives through cultural representation. There is a wide variety of work featured, including Artur Conka's films, Daniel Baker's sculpture, Shamus McPhee's paintings and Billy Kerry's mixed-media pieces. Some of the work was previously shown as part of the Gypsy Maker project, which was developed by the Romani Cultural and Arts Company, while a number of new works were developed with g39.

Until 14 April 2018. [www.g39.org](http://www.g39.org)

#### **Images:**

1. Faith Ringgold, *Jazz Stories: Mama Can Sing, Papa Can Blow #8: Don't Wanna Love You*, 2004, acrylic on canvas with pieced border, 205.7 x 162.6 cm, 81 x 64 in, H8935. Courtesy: the artist, Pippy Houldsworth Gallery and ACA Galleries
2. Jill Smith, *Fire Ritual at Uffington White Horse*. Photo: Bruce Lacey
3. Matthew Day Jackson, *Bouquet of Flowers in a Blue Vase*, 2018, formica, silkscreen, acrylic paint on epoxy resin on panel, stainless steel frame 186.7 x 147.3 x 5.1 cm / 73 1/2 x 58 x 2in. Photo: Genevieve Hanson
4. 'Artists who make music Musicians who make art', installation shot. Courtesy: Queens Park Railway Club
5. Shamus McPhee, Geddie, Gouris and Ganis (Boy, Girls and Hens), 2015

# The Leader

<https://www.leaderlive.co.uk/news/16687012.wrexham-ty-pawb-exhibit-on-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-culture/>

- **News**

4th September 2018

Wrexham Ty Pawb exhibit on Gypsy, Roma and Traveller culture

*By Jessica Farrington*



## **TY PAWB is to host an educational art exhibition featuring Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) culture in Wrexham.**

The exhibition, Shiftwork, brings together four artists who address a number of aesthetic and political issues concerning GRT cultural representation.

Some of the works on display were shown as part of the Gypsy Maker project; an initiative launched in 2014 by the Romani Cultural & Arts Company to profile the work of GRT artists in venues across Wales.

Their ongoing aim is to commission established and emerging GRT artists while engaging GRT communities and the wider public. Daniel Baker, 56, Kent, is one of the artists. He said: "This is a multi-medium exhibition from photography to paintings and sculptures." "It's about Gypsy aesthetics and visual culture."

Mr Baker's work includes mirrors which he says is influenced by the visual culture apparent in the metallic and mirrored surfaces of objects like trailers. He said: "The work says, 'you are here' and in the mirror you can see yourself." "It turns an encounter into a physical encounter."

Mr Baker also explained the other artists' work in the exhibition. He said: "Shamus McPhee's paintings are about his family and extended family, a method of activism." "Artur Conka photographs explore family, dislocation and location." "Billy Kerry explores gender identity and challenging gender politics."

The Romani Cultural and Arts Company was formed in September 2009 as a not-for-profit company and is a registered charity. They raise funds to take educational projects onto Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites and into Gorger or 'gadjó' and 'country-folk' communities across Wales.

Isaac Blake is the charity director at Romani Cultural and Arts Company. He said: "We have Gypsies on our board and they are our artists - we are run by the community." "We are the only commissioning charity and we incorporate the visual arts and the performing arts." "We're about advancing the education about our community because we are the same as any other community." "People are surprised that even in Shakespeare there are references to Roma culture." "It's way of saying that this information about Roma is available and we should feel proud of that."

The exhibition is on from Saturday, September 1 at 9am until Sunday,



The Cardiff Story Museum – The Old Library, The Hayes, Cardiff, CF10 1BH  
& Art Central, Town Hall, King Square, Barry, CF63 4RW  
Open Monday to Saturday 10am – 4pm  
FREE ADMISSION

**Daniel Baker's 'Makeshifting: structures of mobility' opens at  
The Old Library 1<sup>st</sup> June to 13<sup>th</sup> June & Art Central 29<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2015**

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company is proud to announce an exciting new venture that will enable the development of innovative artworks by established and emerging Gypsy and Traveller artists. The Gypsy Maker project will engage the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities with the wider public in ongoing dialogue about the ways in which art continues to inform our lives. *'An exciting, unique and inclusive project'* says Jane Hutt Minister of Finance, Welsh Government.

Daniel Baker will be our established artist for the pilot year 2014-15. Baker is a Romani Gypsy. An artist, curator and theorist, he holds a PhD on the subject of Gypsy aesthetics from the Royal College of Art, London. Recent publications include *We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, 2013. Baker's work is exhibited internationally and can be found in collections across Europe, America, and Asia.



The *Makeshifting* exhibition project has wide reaching implications, highlighting as it does the timely issue of physical migration. Free movement without prohibition or prosecution remains a pressing issue for GRT groups in the UK and the rest of Europe. Despite being a founding tenet of the European Union, mobility, whether through forced eviction or economic nomadism, continues to be seen as a threat to the very foundations of society. *Makeshifting* offers an alternative view by repositioning the inherent qualities of mobility as valuable rather than threatening. The structures of mobility examined in *Makeshifting* are considered in relation to physical, social, economic and aesthetic terrains with particular emphasis on relationships between the marginal and the mainstream in society.

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company invites you to see the works and meet the artist at the opening of this new exhibition by Daniel Baker.

Image: Paper Ladder © Daniel Baker 2015

The Riverfront,  
Bristol Packet Wharf, Newport NP20 1HG - FREE ADMISSION

An Arts Council of Wales funded project gets the green light

Shamus McPhee's 'Aspects of Gypsy Traveller life' opens 4th July 2015 to 28th July 2015

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company is proud to announce an exciting new venture that will enable the development of innovative artworks by established and emerging Gypsy and Traveller artists. The Gypsy Maker project will engage the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities with the wider public in ongoing dialogue about the ways in which art continues to inform our lives. 'An exciting, unique and inclusive project' says Jane Hutt Minister of Finance, Welsh Government.

Shamus McPhee is a Scottish Traveller, artist and activist. He holds a M.A. in Celtic Hispanic Studies from Aberdeen University, Aberdeen. The exhibition, 'Aspects of Gypsy Traveller Life', will consist of new work which examines attitudes witnessed in the social response to Gypsy Traveller culture in Scotland.



The Wrecking Ball 2015 by Shamus McPhee

*"It is good to see an exhibition of gypsy/traveller art planned for Newport in the prestigious Riverfront venue. As well as allowing the public to enjoy the works of art it will encourage greater understanding of Gypsy/Traveller culture and lifestyle – fostering better community relations for the benefit of all. I hope very many people take the opportunity to view this important exhibition."*  
John Griffiths, Assembly Member.

Shamus will donate a piece a piece of his new work to the Romani Cultural & Arts Company collection. This newly founded venture aims to establish a much needed national collection of Gypsy, Roma & Traveller art that everyone will benefit from.



Art Central

Town Hall, King Square, Barry, CF63 4RW FREE ADMISSION Monday to Saturday 10am – 4pm

## Artur Conka's 'Rarebit please!' opens 3<sup>rd</sup> Aril to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company is proud to announce a new exhibition of works by the artist Artur Conka. This exciting installation of specially commissioned work is the latest in our groundbreaking Gypsy Maker project—an initiative that supports the development of innovative works by established and emerging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists. The Gypsy Maker project expands the work of the RCAC by continuing to engage GRT communities with the wider public in ongoing dialogue about the ways in which art continues to inform the lives of individuals and communities today.



"Haluski Kapusta" cabbage dumplings © Artur Conka 2011

Artur Conka is a photography graduate from the University of Derby. One of the few Roma to have documented his community from behind the lens Conka's photography and film making focus on the plight of the Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in Europe. Originally from one of the poorest Roma communities in Slovakia, Conka returned years later to record how life had changed for its inhabitants during its decline. The result was his first documentary film 'Lunik IX'. Conka's work has appeared in various international publications including Huffington Post, The Independent and Vice Magazine and we look forward to presenting his original and innovative approach to filmmaking and photography in this new exhibition.

*'Working with the Romani Cultural and Arts Company has been a relationship to cherish. The RCAC gives a platform that so few do not, especially to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller groups. Its approach to tirelessly establishing ground breaking understanding about GRT communities has helped change people's lives.'*  
Artur Conka

*"The groundbreaking work of the Romani Cultural and Arts Company in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists is unparalleled. The Gypsy Maker project is unique worldwide in commissioning new bodies of work by GRT artists thus enabling the production of significant new knowledge from an underrepresented group and making a valuable contribution to international contemporary art and cultural discourse."* Dr Daniel Baker

*"We are delighted to be working with the Romani Culture and Arts Company again at Art Central Gallery and are looking forward to hosting work by Artur Conka as part of the organisation's continuing 'Gypsy Maker Project'.* Tracey Harding Arts Development and Arts Central Gallery Manager

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company invites you to see the works and meet the artist at the opening of this new exhibition by Artur Conka.



## Art Central

Town Hall, King Square, Barry, CF63 4RW - FREE ADMISSION - Monday to Saturday 10am – 4pm

### Billy Kerry's 'All Fur-Coat' opens 3<sup>rd</sup> Aril to 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017

The Romani Cultural & Arts Company is proud to announce a new exhibition of works by the artist Billy Kerry. This exciting installation of specially commissioned artworks is the latest in our groundbreaking Gypsy Maker project—an initiative that supports the development of innovative works by established and emerging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists. The Gypsy Maker project expands the work of the RCAC by continuing to engage GRT communities with the wider public in ongoing dialogue about the ways in which art continues to inform the lives of individuals and communities today.

Billy Kerry was trained at Chelsea College of Art and Design in London, where he achieved a First class Honours Degree in Fine Art. Since graduating in 2009 he has been inspiring others by teaching and supporting at Cambridge Regional College. Kerry's eclectic practice narrates the close interrelation between artist and material—between body and object. His new exhibition of sculptural and collaged artworks investigates and challenges preconceived views of ethnicity, gender roles and constructed conformity. These works employ diverse conceptual elements and aesthetic motifs ranging from Victoriana to current Pop Culture in clashes which challenge established values to allow new insight into the way we live today.



Fur-Coat © Billy Kerry 2016

*'It's been fantastic having the opportunity to work with The Romani Cultural and Arts Company. The RCAC has supported and guided me at the same time as allowing me to be very free with my work. As an artist and educator I am overjoyed to be asked to hold workshops with schools as I see creative education as important in creating richer individuals from all walks of life.'* Billy Kerry

*"The groundbreaking work of the RCAC in supporting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists is unparalleled. The Gypsy Maker project is unique worldwide in commissioning new bodies of work by GRT artists thus enabling the production of significant new knowledge from an underrepresented group and making a valuable contribution to international contemporary art and cultural discourse."* Dr Daniel Baker

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The Romani Cultural & Arts Company invites you to see the works and meet the artist at the opening of this new exhibition by Billy Kerry.



# Shiftwork

**Daniel Baker**  
**Shamus McPhee**  
**Artur Conka**  
**Billy Kerry**

**g39 Oxford St, Cardiff CF24 3DT**  
**Preview Friday 2 March, 6-9pm**  
**Open 3 March – 14 April, 11am – 5pm, Wed to Sat**

The figure of the “Gypsy” continues to endure in the minds of Europeans, from the nineteenth-century romantics to the Bohemians of the early twentieth century. The increasingly anachronistic myth of the nomadic “vagabond Gypsy” also gives rise to misunderstanding, to xenophobia, prejudice and casual racism. A tendency to conflate the lives and traditions of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) communities with asylum seekers and refugees—as political subjects and as fantasised 'other'—has created one of the most misunderstood and marginalised sections of society.

*Shiftwork* brings together four artists whose works tease out a number of aesthetic and political issues concerning Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people through cultural representation. Some of the works were shown as solo presentations as part of the Gypsy Maker project; an initiative launched in 2014 by the Romani Cultural & Arts Company to profile the work of GRT artists in venues across Wales. Their ambition was to commission established and emerging Gypsy, Roma and Traveller artists to develop innovative works while engaging GRT communities and the wider public in dialogue about contemporary art and cultural perspectives.

Each of the artists takes a different approach – from the documentary style of Artur Conka, one of the few Roma to have filmed their own community, to the sculptural installations of Daniel Baker which examine migration and free movement. The idiosyncratic paintings of Shamus McPhee have a distinct 'outsider art' feel while complex issues of sexuality and gender are explored in the eclectic work of Billy Kerry. These unique approaches to contemporary Romani culture draw people together by highlighting the links between communities whilst at the same time recognising and celebrating difference. For this show at g39 a number of the works produced during the Gypsy Maker project will be shown, alongside new collaborative works developed in dialogue with g39.

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

**The Romani Cultural and Arts Company** was formed in September 2009 as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (No. 07005660) and is a registered charity (No.1138150). Working through the arts the Company raises funds to take community development and educational projects onto Gypsy, Roma and Traveller sites and into Gorgor or 'gadjó' and 'country-folk' communities across Wales.

**G39** is artist run contemporary art space founded in 1998. We are based in Cardiff and have occupied a large warehouse space for the past 5 years. We endeavour to provide exhibiting opportunities for early and mid career artists, often alongside the work of more established artists. Our programme is made up of local, Wales based, national and international artists. In the past we have created early career exhibiting opportunities for artists such as Bedwyr Williams and Megan Broadmeadow.

“**The Gypsy Maker Project**”, conceived and implemented by the RCAC, is the first of its kind combining as it does mentoring, the fostering of a GRT artistic community and the creation of a permanent collection of GRT art with an eye to creating a museum. The concerns of this project, and the attention it devotes to examining visual culture and representation in relation cultural identity, resonates with cutting-edge work being done by GRT communities across Europe, will help foster new artistic forms and practices in Wales and across Europe.” Dr. Ethel Brooks – 2011-2012 Fulbright Distinguished Chair, University of the Arts London.

# Shiftwork



Daniel Baker, Mobile Surveillance Device mirrored glass, steel and mixed media, 60 x 60 x 95 cm, 2015, photo by Anthony David Vaughan



Shamus McPhee, Geddie, Gouries and Ganis (boy, girls and hens), oil on board, 420 x 594 cm, 2015



Billy Kerry, Painted Lady Landscape, Mixed Media, 40 x 20 x 10 cm, 2016



Artur Conka, Recipe series No. 8 (Chicken Mayonnaise spread with Olives), digital print, 2016

Gypsy Maker 3 – Shiftwork 2018

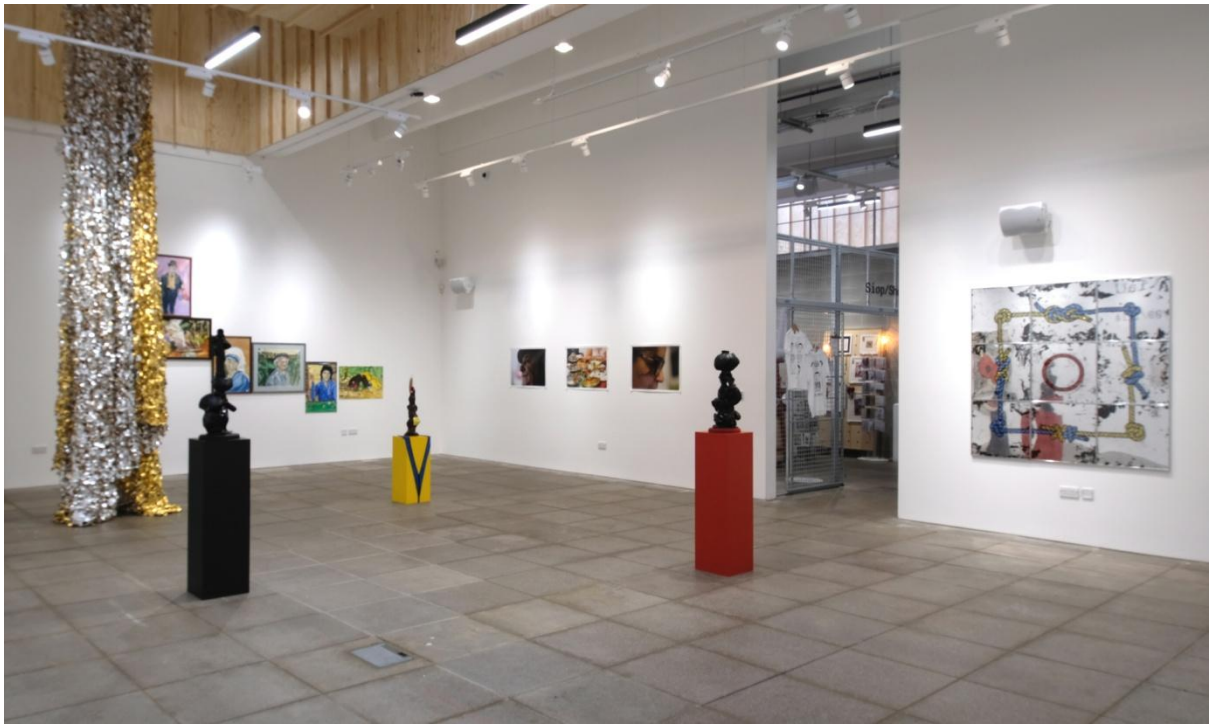


Shiftwork at Ty Pawb, Wrexham, featuring the work of Daniel Baker, Artur Conka, Billy Kerry and Shamus McPhee 2018



Shiftwork at Ty Pawb, Wrexham, featuring the work of Daniel Baker, Artur Conka, Billy Kerry and Shamus McPhee 2018

Gypsy Maker 3 – Shiftwork 2018



Shiftwork at Ty Pawb, Wrexham, featuring the work of Daniel Baker, Artur Conka, Billy Kerry and Shamus McPhee 2018



Shiftwork at Ty Pawb, Wrexham, featuring the work of Daniel Baker, Artur Conka, Billy Kerry and Shamus McPhee 2018



## **Gypsy Maker Biographies**

### **Daniel Baker**

Daniel Baker is a Romani Gypsy born in Kent, United Kingdom in 1961. An artist, curator and theorist, he holds a PhD on the subject of Gypsy aesthetics from the Royal College of Art, London. Baker is curator of FUTUROMA at the 58th International Art Exhibition at the Venice Biennale 2019. He acted as exhibitor and advisor to the first and second Roma Pavilions: Paradise Lost and Call the Witness at the 52nd and 54th Venice Biennales respectively. Baker's work examines the role of art in the enactment of social agency through an eclectic practice that interrogates contemporary art discourse and its social implications via the reconfiguration of elements of the Roma aesthetic. Baker acted as Visual Advisor to the RomArchive: international digital archive of Roma arts. His interest in Gypsy visuality was sparked by his research into the experience of Gay Romani men in the UK carried out for his MA dissertation titled 'The Queer Gypsy' which was subsequently published by the ERRC. Publications include *We Roma: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (2013) and *Ex Libris* (2009). Baker's work is exhibited internationally and can be found in collections worldwide. Former Chair of the Gypsy Council (2006–2009). He lives and works in London: [www.danielbaker.net](http://www.danielbaker.net)

### **Artur Conka**

Artur Conka is a photography graduate from the University of Derby. One of the few Roma to have documented his community from behind the lens Artur's photography and film making has focused on the plight of the Roma Gypsies and Travellers in Europe. He feels that it is important to give the Roma, so long without influence or consideration by those in power, a voice. Artur came to Britain in 1998 as an 8-year-old migrant. Originally from one of the poorest Roma communities in Slovakia, Artur returned years later to record how life had changed for its inhabitants during its decline. The result was his first documentary film 'Lunik IX'. Artur's work has appeared in various international publications including Huffington Post, The Independent, Vice Magazine, Foto8 Magazine, Vas.Cas.Sk, Creative Boom, Lab Kultur TV Magazine and Derby Evening Telegraph. Artur will produce a new body of work for GM2 continuing his original and innovative approach to filmmaking and photography.

### **Billy Kerry**

Billy Kerry is an Artist and educator from Cambridge. Billy was trained at Chelsea College of Art and Design London, where he achieved a First class Degree (BA Hons) in Fine Art. Since graduating in 2009 Billy has been inspiring others by teaching and supporting at Cambridge Regional College. Kerry's eclectic practice narrates the close interrelation between artist and material; between body and object. Through his work Kerry investigates and challenges preconceived views of ethnicity, gender roles and constructed conformity. He employs diverse conceptual elements and aesthetic motifs ranging from Victoriana to current Pop Culture in clashes which challenge established values to allow new insight into the way we live today. Kerry's new work will consist of a new installation of three floor based sculptures using mixed media including wood, metal, paint, gloss, fabric/stitch and found images. The sculptural works will be accompanied by a number of new wall based mixed media collages using found images, gloss, resin, drawing, painting and text to expand upon the themes of the wider installation.

## **Gypsy Maker Biographies**

### **Shamus McPhee**

Shamus McPhee is a Scottish Traveller, artist and activist. He holds a M.A. in Celtic Hispanic Studies from Aberdeen University. Shamus was born at Bobbin Mill, a Gypsy Traveller site in Perthshire, Scotland where he lives until today. The site was part of an assimilationist experiment carried out by the Scottish authorities from the mid-1950s, which sought to quash the Scottish Gypsy Traveller community through a process of cultural denial. The encampment continues to act as site of resistance for Gypsy Travellers, and can be seen as symbolic of wider European Roma questions regarding social exclusion and the negotiation of cultural difference. McPhee's art practice draws upon his experience of growing up in the midst of the social injustice represented by the Bobbin Mill experiment. Shamus combines art and activism in his pursuit of cultural visibility and recognition. The role of the artist within the Gypsy community and as wider social commentator is explored through his work along with notions of how art might enable new ways of tackling long-standing questions. Shamus exhibited at the second Roma Pavilion "Call the Witness" at the 54<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 2011.

Forthcoming artists for 2020

### **Cas Holmes**

I trained in fine art and currently work in textiles and mixed media using the same approaches as a means to interpret ideas. After graduation from University College of Creative Arts, I undertook research into papermaking and textiles in Japan supported by a Winston Churchill Memorial Fellowship and Japan Foundation Fellowship. As part of my practice I work on community collaborations developing a range of projects based on environmental themes from the natural and observed world. I am the author of three books for Batsford, including the 'The Found Object in Textile Art' which is used as a primary reference source in education. My fourth book for Batsford 'Textile Landscape: Painting with Cloth in Mixed Media' focuses on the interrelationship between, textiles, painting and landscape. I travel, teach and exhibit internationally and have received a 'Pride of Britain Award' by the NRI Institute (India/UK 2010) for excellence in my field. I recently worked on a collaboration 'Garden of Remembrance' with the Garden Museum, Lambeth and Age UK Bromley and Greenwich'. I am a visiting tutor at West Dean College where I was also a resident artist. My work is held in collections including the Museum of Art and Design New York, the Embroiderer's Guild UK and the Garden Museum, London. Supported by Arts Council England my one person show Urban Nature, was exhibited at the Beane in Canterbury and the 20th Anniversary of the European Patchwork Meeting (2014) and the Lace Museum in the Netherlands (2015)

### **Daniel Turner**

Dan Turner is an artist and educator from London, a Romani Gypsy born in Kent. Dan trained at St Martins School of Art where he completed a BA Hons in Fine Art (Sculpture). With increasing numbers of the Romani community now static, Dan's work explores the end of traveling as a way of life. His art is concerned with changes in group identity and social cohesion. It uses traditional iconic objects to explore themes of transaction, scrutinising interactions between Romani and

## **Gypsy Maker Biographies**

mainstream cultures. He reflects on how these objects affect Traveller cultural experience within mainstream society, and how these experiences feed into collective memory. Recently Dan has worked with the Wellcome Trust Reading Room and Chisenhale Art Place on collaborative projects which examine traditionally perceived ideas Romani of luck and healing. In these projects, Dan worked with small diverse groups to explore the use of good luck objects and their use in modern society. In future work Dan will continue to explore the importance of caravans and wagons. He is interested in how they embody attitudes concerning Traveller life and their continued meaning as the legacy of Romani iconography and symbolism.

### **Isaac Blake - Director - Romani Cultural & Arts Company, Cardiff**

Isaac Blake is a proud Romani Gypsy and has worked as a professional dancer and choreographer. He is currently Executive Director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company in Cardiff, UK, which is funded by a variety of major funders and government departments. As Executive Director of the Romani Cultural & Arts Company (RCAC), Isaac has developed arts and performance programmes on Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites with young children and adults, worked in schools and colleges, and promoted arts as a medium for empowerment and advocacy throughout Wales with Gypsy, Roma and Travellers. He has engaged widely with non-Gypsy communities to promote dialogue and improve social cohesion. His leadership and management of the RCAC has seen the organisation grow from a small voluntary group to a major third sector (NGO) agency that leads the Romani and Traveller field in Wales and is one of the major players in Romani and Traveller advocacy and empowerment in the UK. RCAC is now celebrating its 10th anniversary. Isaac has also been a Dance Curator, leading a team of academics and researchers in collating appropriate items and artefacts for the RomArchive. The RomArchive was devised as an international digital archive for art of the Roma, and remains a constantly growing collection of art of all types, complemented by historical documents and scholarly texts.