

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas

15 September–11 November 2023

Press Release

Frith Street Gallery is pleased to announce the first UK exhibition of artist, educator and activist Małgorzata Mirga-Tas.

Mirga-Tas's work addresses anti-Romani stereotypes and engages in building an affirmative iconography of Romani communities. She often depicts everyday life: relationships, alliances and shared activities. The artist's vibrant textile collages are created from materials and fabrics collected from family and friends, which imbues them with a life of their own and a corresponding immediacy. Patchworks made of curtains, jewellery, shirts, and sheets are sewn together to form so-called 'microcarriers' of history, just as resulting images revise macro perspectives.

The series of portraits in this exhibition is entitled *Siukar Manusia* (which can be translated from Romani as great, or wonderful people). The images are of first-generation Romani inhabitants of the Nowa Huta district in eastern Kraków and have evolved from two earlier projects. In 2019 the artist collaborated with a Kosovan Romani community to create *HERSTORIES*, a series of portraits of extraordinary Romani women, both local and international. This in turn led to Mirga-Tas's celebrated presentation *Re-enchanting the World* in The Polish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022. This large installation was inspired in part by the renaissance frescos in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara, which the art historian Aby Warburg used to illustrate the recurrence of certain artistic motifs across cultures and centuries.

The imagery employed in the works shown at Golden Square is drawn from personal photographs shared with the artist by friends and family and realised using found and donated textiles. A parallel inspiration was the book *O Romach w Nowej Hucie słów Kilka* (A handful of facts on the Nowa Huta Roma) by Monika Szewczyk as well as the life story of Krystyna Gil (1938–2021) the first Romani tram driver and a former resident of Nowa Huta whose portrait is also in the exhibition. These are people who are personally important to Mirga-Tas, ranging from concentration camp survivors and Roma activists to eminent musicians.

Małgorzata Mirga-Tas (b.1978 Zakopane, Poland) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, Faculty of Sculpture. Recent exhibitions include *I Have a Dream / Suno Mangie Dzialas*, Göteborgs Konsthall, Gothenburg, Sweden (2023); *Conjuring the World / Przeczarowujac Świat*, Zachęta, National Gallery of Art, Warsaw (2023); *Threads of Life*, Forum for Living History, The Living History Forum, Stockholm (2023); *Re-enchanting the World*, Polish Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale, Italy (2022); *Screen Test*, Kahán Art Space Vienna, Austria & Budapest, Hungary (2022); *Travelling Images*, International Cultural Centre, Kraków, Poland (2022); and *Re-enchanting the World: Homecoming*, Castello Estense, Ferrara, Italy.