



Visual Arts

Marseille Museum Seeks to Depict Roma Beyond Stereotypes in 'Barvalo' Exhibition

An exhibition titled “Barvalo: Roma Culture at the Crossroads of History” at the Museum of Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean (MuCEM) in Marseille, France, aims to provide an in-depth look at Roma culture and history beyond the stereotypes <https://www.mucem.org/en/barvalo>

Curated by Julia Ferloni, Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, and Jonah Steinberg, “Barvalo” features over 200 works of art, artifacts, photographs, and films that provide insight into the rich yet often misunderstood culture of the Roma people in Europe. Roma, also known as Gypsies, are an ethnic minority that originated in northern India and migrated to Europe starting around the 14th century. Numbering 10-12 million in Europe, the Roma have long suffered discrimination and persecution.

The exhibition title “Barvalo” comes from the Romani word for rich and proud. In curating the show, Ferloni, Kruszelnicka, and Steinberg worked closely with a group of co-curators, among which is French photographer Jean-Pierre Liégeois, who has documented Roma communities across Europe [for over 40 years](#). His intimate portraits of Roma families, on display in the exhibition, provide a sense of dignity and humanity often missing from sensationalized depictions of this marginalized group.

“Too often, the Roma have been presented as not having something to display despite a very rich culture,” Steinberg, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Vermont, said in an interview with the [New York Times](#). “Today, there’s a kind of global recognition that their voices have been

silenced and must be heard.”

The exhibition also delves into the systematic persecution faced by Roma during World War II, when hundreds of thousands were imprisoned in concentration camps.

“Romani people want to participate in the way their history is written. For example, in the case of the Second World War, it is not enough for them to appear only as victims of the Holocaust. They too fought, they resisted, they protected people hunted by the Nazis” said Julia Ferloni in an interview published on the museum's website. “They want to hold their heads high. Hence the title of the exhibition, which speaks of pride. The ambition of this project lies in the fact that the Romani people, or rather the representatives of these people, can finally speak on their behalf”

- “Barvalo: Roma Culture at the Crossroads of History” is showing at Mucem, J4— Niveau 2 | From Wednesday 10 May 2023 to Monday 4 September 2023
- Read the full transcript of the curator's interview at the website of the Mucem: [Here](#)

Delaine Le Bas, 'Gypsy' The Elephant In The Room
, 2018, plastic and textiles, 70.05 x 6.40 x 0.40 cm, inv. 2022.22.1, Mucem © Marianne Kuhn / Mucem via Mucem