

Celebrating Roma Life: The Vivid Textile Art of Malgorzata Mirga-Tas

Description



Warmth and humanity are embedded into every textile artwork made by Polish artist Malgorzata Mirga-Tas, whose practice celebrates the colourful and spirited heritage of her Roma family. Mirga-Tas upcycles second-hand fabrics donated to her by friends or family, or salvaged from thrift stores and vintage shops, meaning every textile fragment embedded into her cut-and-paste artworks has holds the history and memory of Roma culture within its threads. With these fabrics she makes collages that tell vivid, evocative stories about the people from her culture who have inspired her, from historical figures to relatives and friends.



Three Graces 2021

Mirga-Tas was born and grew up in Czarna GÃ³ra, a small Roma village to the south of Poland. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in KrakÃ³w, before returning to her home village, where she now lives and works. She says, â??I wouldnâ??t really want to live anywhere else. Close to the Tatra Mountainsâ?¦ thereâ??s a river, nature. I also have friends, family, so this place is very important to me.â?• As a student, Mirge-Tas specialised in sculpture, making assemblage-style constructions using layered cardboard, which foreshadow her mature work with fabric and collage.



On the Journey, 2024

Mirga-Tas began working with fabric while pregnant, since it was easier to work with, and entirely non-toxic. Making the shift to working with fabric felt entirely natural to her, as a way of returning to family roots, and has allowed her to work on a huge range of sizes, from colossal, wall-sized works to more intimate pieces, which can easily be rolled up and transported. She says, â??My mother would sew clothes, my grandma would sew clothes. So the fabric was a part of my life.â• She adds, â??Iâ??m a person who gets attached to certain things so it was just hard for me to part with beautiful clothes and colours and so on.â•



Installation by Ma?gorzata Mirga-Tas

She initially incorporated pieces of fabric into paintings, making what she called â??part painting and part fabric,â?• but over the years she has increasingly focussed on the fabric itself, finding inventive ways to incorporate a huge variety of patterns and textures into her work to convey colourful, illustrative stories about the many different people and places associated with Roma culture. She often plays with how fabric can be folded or creased into relief-like constructions to suggest real items of clothing, making pleated skirts or puff sleeves that project outwards from the flat picture surface, or incorporating elements of found material including feathers, which are stitched into the surface of her work. She also plays with the mystical, symbolic properties of shimmering fabric or sequins, which form planetary circles hovering in dark, atmospheric skies.



The imagery for her fabric collages is diverse, and she carries out thorough research, delving into old family albums, photos from her friends, or museum archives which have documented Roma life over the centuries. â??I usually start my research by exploring museum collections and everything they have in the archives concerning the Roma community,â?• she says, adding, â??Often all it takes is one picture or one photo that just gives me a new idea or a new thought about what I could do.â?• Sometimes her collages beam with optimism, showing family groups holding hands or sharing quiet moments of solitude together, set against atmospheric landscapes made with bands, stripes and fragments of clashing pattern.



Other times, her work reflects on the dark history of persecution and stereotyping that the Roma people have so often struggled against. Some works show Auschwitz victims and survivors, while others recreate documentary photographs that were once taken with a negative slant. Her aim is to give each and every person she represents a voice, a chance to be heard, and understood. She says, â??I reanimate these characters â?¦ [to] give them the dignity and respect that they deserve.â?•

CATEGORY

1. WOMEN IN ART

Category

1. WOMEN IN ART

Date Created
May 13, 2026
Author
rosie-lesso