

Roma Futurism Manifesto: Techno-witchcraft is the Future by Mihaela Drăgan

(a spell said out loud during all phases of the moon and any day favorable to art)

Roma Futurismⁱ is an artistic current that creates interactions of Roma culture with technology and witchcraft. It combines elements of science fiction, Roma history, fantasy, Roma subjectivityⁱⁱ, magical realism, creative technologies with magical practices and rituals of healing.

Roma Futurism aims to re-examine the history of the Roma from a perspective that incorporates the healing of transgenerational pain and suffering genetically transmitted to the Roma by their ancestors, victims of slavery and the Holocaust.

Roma Futurism creates performance rituals of healing that seek to move us to the next level, in which we are capable of imagining a future in which we stop the historical cycle of oppression.

Roma Futurism questions the uncertainty of the future for Roma in a racist Europe—insecurity that pressures us to constantly remember the unknown and unrecognized history of the Roma.

The oppressive past and the present, which perpetuates racism, defines a large part of our Roma identity, yet the time has come to talk about the ultra-technologic future and the place of the Roma in this future.

As an artist I feel limited by the pain of the past and by the unfavorable present that pressures me to produce art about discrimination against Roma.

Over time I have learned that very few Gadjeiⁱⁱⁱ are ready to understand the messages of art that encourages anti-racism. Art is not activism, whoever thinks art can save us from racism is naive or an impostor.

In Roma Futurism, the history of oppression reaches an apocalypse and a new era settles in, defined by techno-witchcraft^{iv}: Romacen.^v

Roma Futurism announces the age of Romacen in which Roma witches control technology and hold control over the future of mankind.

Roma Futurism is an artistic approach that critiques the perspective that society must "integrate the Roma" and "align them with the present."

To those who say that we are "blocked in the last century," "traditional" or "primitive," we want to let them know that the future belongs to the Roma witches, who have already started the war against racism and capitalism.

To those who perceive of us as people who don't know how to use new technologies think that we are cut off from science, we inform them that we have always been the ones who invented the crafts that made the lives of people easier. We were blacksmiths, kettle makers and cobblers; we knew how to process gold and we called ourselves goldsmiths. We trained bears and we were bear leaders. We made spoons and pots that lasted for generations and no one quite knew how to make them like we did. But then IKEA and other big corporations came to make them, offering low quality imitations of our craft, leaving our people jobless. This is the reason why witches will always despise capitalism.

We would have made a new Roma craft out of technology if the Gadjes hadn't blocked our access, leaving us in precarity.

As was true in the past, when we were the only ones who owned the secret to all crafts in the world, in Roma Futurism only we know how to use techno-witchcraft — the science through which we create advanced technology using the same rules of witchcraft.

Any advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, said Sir Arthur C. Clarke, scientist and science fiction writer, and I want to cite him because if a Roma woman were to say the same thing, she wouldn't be taken seriously. I have friends who are Roma witches, whose magical practices are ridiculed and demonized and their knowledge and work denigrated. But when white feminists identify themselves as witches, or privileged artists make art about witchcraft, they do it without the voice of the real practitioners, putting them in a position of marginality.

Roma Futurism will forget neither the history of witch hunters nor how the Church burned the witches alive. In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici shows us how capitalism was born from the oppression of the working class and the subjugation of women. The burnings of witches were intended to terrify women and oblige them to accept a new patriarchal order in which their bodies, work, sexual and reproductive rights were now owned and controlled by the state and were therefore transformed into economic resources.

In Roma futurism, we are the witches born from the ashes of our burnt sisters.

We are a new movement made up of witches and feminists. Witchcraft is our political response to social inequalities and the injustices of the world in which we live.

We call on supernatural forces because this world has left us without any other protection. We are not afraid to use black magic, because it is the only shield we have in a society that encourages hatred against us. To those who criticize our "radical-ness", which is nothing more than a common-sense response to the violence we live, we say you do not have the right to give us advice until you experience the same aggression we are subjected to!

The Roma witch represents a current figure in Romania — a place where, even though there haven't been witch hunters, their demonization always existed.

The Roma witch is seen in a stereotypical manner as a woman without an education, stuck in a past incompatible with the present that is dominated by science, someone who doesn't know how to use technology and does not wish to understand technology.

The label "witch" is one of the main stereotypes about Roma women, and it is Roma Futurism's mission to destigmatize Roma witches and rehabilitate their image.

In contrast to the stereotypical vision of them, Roma Futurism vindicates the figure of the witch and proposes a new perspective in which witches are the symbol of a progressive, ultra-technological future.

We have examples of visionary witches such as Mihaela Mincă and her daughters Casandra, Anda and Ana, who use the speed of the Internet to send spells and digitally undo curses for their clients overseas, at the same time, they are not afraid to take control of Europe's political problems through the use of magic. They perform, rituals and incantations through live streaming against politicians that threaten our future, becoming the protectors of our future.

Roma Futurism salutes and admires the capacity of the witches to incorporate in their magical practices a radical anti-capitalist and feminist perspective, as they demonstrated at the „Roma Futurism: The Age of the Witch” conference, that I co-organized in Bucharest at CINETic - International Center for Research and Education in Innovative Creative Technologies.

In the same way that the Super robot is the symbol of Afrofuturism and the A.I is the symbol of Sinofuturism, in Roma Futurism, the Techno-Witch or Cyber-Witch is the central figure.

Roma Futurism creates characters like the Cyber-Witches, who fight against Roma oppression and also have the super-power to transcend time and to intervene in the oppressive past of their own Roma community. They are placed in specific moments in the past with the purpose of creating alternative histories. They will offer a performative answer to the question: If this oppressive past had never existed how would Roma communities have evolved?

Roma Futurism begins in the village of Macondo, the setting of Garcia Marquez's magical realism novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* where we find the Roma character, Melquiades with his caravan, who brings new inventions and progress in the village.

Roma Futurism creates a sequel to the production of scientific knowledge held by Melquiades and the thousands of other nomadic caravans, envisioning a utopic future in which a group of Roma women who are alchemists and witches control technology and have the power to go back in time to change certain historical events, like slavery and the Holocaust.

In Roma Futurism, the Roma caravan functions like a time machine which transports the future inventions and “sells” progress to society. It accelerates globally but it is alert to the dangers of politics of speed: ecological destruction or the economic exploitation of large corporations, whose use of communication, transport and information processing technologies has hastened the climate crisis on the planet.

In Roma Futurism, technology blends with magic and is used by Cyber-Witches in order to create an egalitarian and democratic world.

Techno-witchcraft is witchcraft of the future that applies the use of technology

Techno-witchcraft focuses on the magical side of technology, considering that ultra-advanced technology can be invented and developed using witchcraft and alchemy. It may include the belief that technological items are inhabited by spirits.

One of the beliefs is that even the internet itself is a strong and independent spirit.

Techno-witchcraft is reflected in the use of modern devices in magical rituals or in the replacement of technology with traditional magical instruments — the use of a phone camera to purify someone of evil or destroy one's wealth and health by sending computer viruses.

Techno-witchcraft is reflected in the replacement of traditional magical instruments with modern technological devices and gadgets. In magical rituals, a phone video camera can be used to cleanse the evil spirits of a person or the wealth and health of the oppressive enemy can be destroyed by sending computer viruses.

Techno-witchcraft also refers to live transmissions of rituals and spells through the internet, virtual tarot and to healing through technological tools.

Roma futurism also includes shamanism rituals (rituals which make the use of *manele* to create a gypsiritual experience through music and dance) and digital psychedelic feelings (the fusion between biologic and technologic with the purpose of self- knowledge and personal development).

Roma Futurism embraces the human-machine interface for an ethical relationship with technology and hyper realistic robots equipped with complex human programs, such as empathy or political principles based on social justice.

In Roma futurism, computers develop human consciousness. The new robots will be called witchbots and they will practice magic and therefore try to release us from the grip of an unjust world.

Positioned against right wing political systems and dictatorship all over the world, Roma Futurism proposes techno-curses like this one:

May you [say here the name of the person, for example: Trump, Salvini, Orban, etc.] become poor for your rest of your life!

*Our virus "Bank Eater" guarantees that we will devour all your money!
The Spirit of the Internet helps us break your neck, your arms,*

*your legs, your dirty mouth so that I may never again hear your hate speech against us!
Our Cyber-Sisterhood guarantees that those like you will disappear
That you'll spend the money you stole from us on funeral coffins
So that we finally get peace for ourselves and for all tortured by you!
May your flesh melt piece by piece, may your bones fall one by one
May you suffocate in your "civilized" blood, that you prize so very much!
May you be infected by thousands of viruses from the Romance computer.
May your mind remain forever in a non-technological darkness, in the black hole our cyber-
attack!
We will stop your malefic plans against us, and gain access to your data.
We will delete your racist intentions and we will block your fascist actions!
May you [name] be abandoned in deserts where the electrified dust of cybernetic chaos
envelopes you in devastating electromagnetic storms that swallow you!
May you be annihilated by our post-human future where there will be no place for oppressors
like you!
Our techno-magical knowledge will make us the leaders of this world!
We are the Roma from the future.
We will be many.
We will multiply not only through birth.
We will multiply through our sisterhood, our techno-witchcraft and our resistance!
The future belongs to us.
The future belongs to us.
The future belongs to us.*

Translation by Ioanida Costache

ⁱ Concept developed by the author in 2018, during her residence at Para Site art center in Hong Kong.

ⁱⁱ Roma responses and reactions to the global attitudes against Roma people. It is the Roma perspective on Gadge culture and history and one of its purposes is to correct prejudices and racist ideas perpetuated by Gadge intellectuals about Roma culture.

ⁱⁱⁱ Non-Roma

^{iv} Fusion between magic and technology.

^v Geological era dominated by the actions of the Roma techno-witches that, among other things, fight against the climate crisis produced by the Anthropocene.