

Vrăjitoare – witches, fortune tellers, healers...

Many Romanian Roma women identify themselves with such descriptions. In the past fortune-telling had a strong tradition within many travelling Roma groups wandering across the European area. Fortune telling abilities were primarily attributed to, in the main, older women, undoubtedly for their lifelong experiences. Their potential clients were to be found anywhere in the streets of the villages and towns where their caravans happened to have stopped.

In my photographic collection I try to record the consequences of globalisation, which has inherently transformed this profession, which in itself balances on the thin divide between mysticism and showmanship for the client. Today these women no longer walk the streets in search of suitable palms from which to tell their owner's future, but the clients themselves seek them out on the basis of advertisement in the media or on social networks, subsequently visiting them in their splendid houses. Instead of palm reading or fortune telling from tea leaves, it is now sufficient to know your name, date of birth and an on-line chat on the social network. The profession has been transformed into a business, inherited across generations. Nine year old girls are already starting their promotional "vrăjitoare" profiles on the Facebook. Dolls are at one moment their toy, yet at any time they can transform themselves into a magical artefact with the ability to regain a client 's lost love.

Me, and an ethnologist, Ivana Šusterová, have decided to make a fusion between photographic work and an ethnological study. For over four years, they have been researching the world of Romanian Roma women who professionally practice fortune telling and witchcraft. In recent years, the popularity of their services is again on the upsurge and the topic is widely discussed, at home and in the media as well as being mentioned in police reports. We have combined our work in a book comprising sets of photos and essays to increase awareness of Roma culture in general public.