



## MARGARETE “CEIJA“ HORVATH STOJKA

(Kraubath, Styria, Austria, May 23, 1933 – Vienna, Austria, January 28, 2013)



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Ceija Stojka was born in Kraubath in Austria on May 23, 1933, to Karl “Wackar” Horvath and Maria “Sidi” Rigo Stojka. She was the second youngest child of seven siblings. In 1938, after the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the family moved to Vienna.

In 1941, Stojka’s father, who was a Lovara-Rom, was deported to the Dachau concentration camp near Munich, and later to the concentration camps of Neuengamme near Hamburg and Sachsenhausen near Berlin.

Finally, the SS sent him back to Dachau. In November 1942, Wackar Horvath was sent as *Invalidentransport* to the Hartheim “Euthanasia” Centre, a Nazi killing facility based in Upper Austria, where he was murdered.

In 1943, the rest of the family was arrested and sent to the Rossauer Lände prison in Vienna. From there they were deported to the **Auschwitz-Birkenau** concentration and extermination camp, where Ossi Stojka, Stojka’s youngest brother, was killed. During the following two years, Stojka was detained in the concentration camps of Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen. In 1945, she was freed by British troops, along with the liberation of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Only five members of her family, of a total of two hundred people, survived. Among them, Stojka’s mother and three of her brothers and sisters. After the liberation, Stojka returned to Vienna. She had three children, and over the subsequent years, worked as a stallholder and carpet seller.

At the end of the 1980s, **she was one of the first members of the Sinti and Roma community to publish her memoirs**. During this period, Stojka began to paint and draw, entirely self-taught, and for the first time, shared her work with the public. Through her art, she assumed the **critical role of sharing her experiences** of the events that had occurred. Her work served to **commemorate victims of the Holocaust and raise awareness** for fact that Sinti and Roma were among these victims. In doing so, she fought against the prevailing ignorance about Nazi crimes against Sinti and Roma and the persistent Antigyptism that members of the minority were confronted with.

Stojka divided her artwork into “dark” and “light” paintings. The “dark” paintings are about the persecution and murder of Sinti and Roma by the Nazis. Her “light” paintings, brightly coloured, depict her life and the pre-war years.

Stojka was awarded for with the **Order of Merit for outstanding achievements in the context of Intercultural Dialogue** in 2008. A year later, she received the honorary title of professor from Austria's Federal Ministry for Education, Arts, and Culture.

Stojka passed away on January 28, 2013. In 2014, the church forecourt in Vienna was renamed "Ceija-Stojka-Platz".

Stojka on her motivation to make her memoirs and works public, and stand up for the rights of the minority: "When I show up in public as a Romni from Vienna, it's a venture, a big risk to me. It is certain that the Roma and Sinti have been oppressed among the people for hundreds of years. But we have to get out, we have to open ourselves, or it will happen that one day all Roma will fall into a pit."<sup>1</sup>

Stojka on starting her artwork: "**I reached for the pen because I had to open myself, to scream.**"<sup>2</sup>

#### Sources and further information:

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4. Ceija Stojka directed by Karin Berger. Austria, Navigatorfilm, 1999. (documentary)
5. <https://www.ceijastojka.org> (website of the foundation)
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This biography has been written by the Educational Forum against Antigypsism

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1. Stojka, Ceija: Wir leben im Verborgenen- Erinnerungen einer Rom-Zigeunerin, Wien 1995. S. 154.

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