

# MEMORY KEEPERS AT THE BACKSPACE GALLERY

17 MARCH - 3 APRIL 2016



MULTICULTURAL  
ARTS VICTORIA



**backspace**  
Huyghue House 15 Camp Street  
Alfred Deakin Place **gallery**

CITY OF  
**BALLARAT**



Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) is thrilled to support the continued development and presentation of the intergenerational multicultural project entitled **2015-16 What Happened at the Pier #2 (whatp#2)**. The 2016 *Memory Keepers* exhibition in the *backspace gallery* is *but one iteration of (whatp#2)*. **What Happened at the Pier 1 (whatp1)** was first presented as part of MAV's 2015 Piers Festival at Princes Pier and also at the Emerald Hill Library & Heritage Centre. *whatp1* & *whatp#2* honor the memories of immigrants and refugees who travelled to Australia by ship through the historical entry points of Princes and Station pier in Port Melbourne. The 2016 *Memory Keepers* exhibition at the *backspace gallery* is in recognition that apart from "The First Australians" we all came from somewhere else, and that community connections are like Arteries that oxygenate pathways for peaceful, cohesive and inclusive societies. MAV is grateful for the contribution made by Deborah Klein | Arts and Culture Coordinator, City of Ballarat, towards the research, documentation and display of this site specific exhibition. MAV is very proud to be presenting this body of work of disparate objects, art-work and personal profiles which reflect the cultural heritage of six *Memory Keepers*. Combined it brings together the past and the present, points to where we came from, and celebrates who we are as Australians from different cultural and linguistic origins who now call Australia home. Now more than ever, these social history profiles on show at the *backspace gallery* are significant not least because of the ongoing tension between what is considered important and therefore is recorded in the annals of Australian History and what is considered trivial and gets left out. The tension between cultural values of some "old Australians" and the values of new as well as old established migrants, displaced people and the many refuge seekers whose sole aim is to work in peaceful coexistence, and to make a permanent home in Australia for themselves and for future generations.

Lella Cariddi, Curator, 2015-16 What Happened at the Pier #2  
March 2016

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The *Memory Keepers* component of the exhibition invites one to sail through history and explore the journeys of migrants who arrived to Australia via Princes Pier, Port Melbourne. The intergenerational, multicultural exhibition features six participants coming from Russia, Poland, Holland, Italy and the United States of America, all with stories to share through artworks, objects and social history profiles. Taking part in the state-wide Cultural Diversity Week in Victoria, *Memory Keepers* reflects on the rich and diverse cultures that defines the state today. The collection of works in the forms of heritage garments, visual art and textiles not only echoes a significant point in history but also on the possibility of multiple personal identities. Anne Cocks' *Steps in My Life* epitomises the idea of overlapping identities for every thread in her quilt represents the harmony of her Dutch and Australian background. Other themes explored in the exhibition include: family relationships as seen in the work by Anne Scariot of her mother's heritage Italian undergarments, and Rita Battaglin's mother's home-made linens. Deborah Klein & Maya Grinberg's collage of Sophie Maj's life illustrate the intergenerational theme of the project. The theme of longing and fear throughout her childhood's long and tumultuous journey from Russia through Europe and finally to Australia, are also shared by Tamara Bekier whose expressive brushstrokes in her painting *A Condensed Version of My Life Story* powerfully confronts the viewer. Ania Walwicz's thought-provoking works on paper *How Many*, forces us to think of the universal journey of the "refugee", and of the passage of time. Exploring the different perspectives, stories and identities of immigrants, the *Memory Keepers* project is a small attempt to give people of diverse cultures a place in history.

Bianca Winataputri,  
Art History student at the University of Melbourne  
Multicultural Arts Victoria Intern 2016

# MEMORY KEEPERS AT THE BACKSPACE GALLERY

Rita Battaglin, Italy

*ADELE'S FABRIC*

Tamara Bekier, Russia

*A CONDENSED VERSION OF MY  
LIFE'S STORY*

Anne Cocks, Holland

*STEPS IN MY LIFE*

Deborah Klein & Maya

*Sophie Maj – LIVING IN*

Grinberg, Poland

*INTERESTING TIMES*

Anne Scariot, Italy

*GENOVEFFA'S UNDERGARMENTS*

Ania Walwicz, Poland

*HOW MANY*

## TAMARA BEKIER

RUSSIA

### *A CONDENSED VERSION OF MY LIFE STORY*

I was born in Russia in 1931. My odyssey began during the Second World War, when I was taken to Germany and confronted with experiences no child should have to witness. During this time I was subjected to medical experiments, cold, hunger and unimaginable degradation. The humiliation I experienced has left its mark, which compels me to express deep emotions that go far beyond words. I paint instinctively about the displaced, the dispossessed and the plight of women. Often my inspiration is drawn from a memory of fear, human endurance and, above all, human kindness. This art series is part of a body of work that reflects the theme “Cocooned in the Web of Time” which is a dreamscape that is suspended in time and reflects two parallel worlds, my past and present. The figures are intertwined within multi-layers of washes, textures and colours symbolically representing a state of displacement. The brushstrokes are energetically applied, creating an expressive textural surface that allows the viewer to engage with and reflect on the narrative. My paintings are synonymous with life – the accidental nature of my painting technique and expressive brushstrokes allow the colour, line and shape to finally, reflect elements of my long and tumultuous journey.



Tamara Bekier, *A Condensed Version of My Life Story*, stretched canvas: acrylic, ink and pen, 152.5cm x 76cm.

## ANNE COCKS

HOLLAND

### *STEPS IN MY LIFE*

My given name was Adriana Lambertha Huisman when I was born in 1949 in Hardinxveld in the South of Holland. The threat of a war with Russia was a fear held by many Europeans and so in 1950 my parents thought about emigration. The journey took 5 weeks going through the Suez Canal and men slept in one part of the ship and women in another, so families were separated but could mingle on board during the day. We arrived in Melbourne in October 1952. In 2000 I heard about a quilt exhibition based on migrant experiences which was to be held at the Immigration Museum. As I was both a quilter and a migrant, I began to design a quilt around my own immigration experience. The quilt seemed to come to life as I began to sort out photos and reminisce with my mother and sister about those early days. A family portrait taken at the time of migration is also featured with handmade lace on the corners. Childhood, adolescence and later marriage were the steps I took in my life and actual lace and netting used in my wedding dress are attached to the wedding photo. In 1971 I decided to become a naturalised Australian. It was a significant step for me to take and one I have never regretted.



Anne Cocks, *Steps in My Life*, Quilted Cotton Fabric, 120cm x 225cm.

## RITA BATAGGLIN

ITALY

### *ADELE'S FABRIC*

Adele Marasco was born on the 31st of October, 1930, in Soveria Mannelli, Italy. The Marasco family comprising Adele, her parents Francesca and Faustino, her grandmother Michelina and brothers Angelo and Ettore, came to Australia in 1951. As it was customary at the time, a twenty-one year old Italian woman would have brought with her a substantial trousseau<sup>1</sup> consisting of bedspreads, dozens of double bed sheets, pillowcases, bath towels, nightdresses, underwear, table clothes and napery. All home-made and decorated with distinctive embroidery including cherubs, monograms or floral bouquets. Adele's trousseau was different in that the purpose woven fabric used for her personalized items was crafted from home grown linen thread which was spun from the long fibers found behind the bark in the multi-layer stem of the flax plant. The Marasco family grew the flax from seed, harvested it and painstakingly de-husked and spun the fibers before weaving them into bolts of continuous fabric separated into sections like the piece displayed in the Memory Keepers exhibition. Each section can be cut as a new tea towel. A tradition still practiced today by Adele's daughter, Rita Battaglin.



Rita Battaglin, *Adele's Fabric*, Length of raw linen fabric cultivated from seed & loom woven, 60cm x 300 cm.

<sup>1</sup> (trousseau -noun), the clothes, linen, and other belongings collected by a bride for her

## DEBORAH KLEIN & MAYA GRINBERG

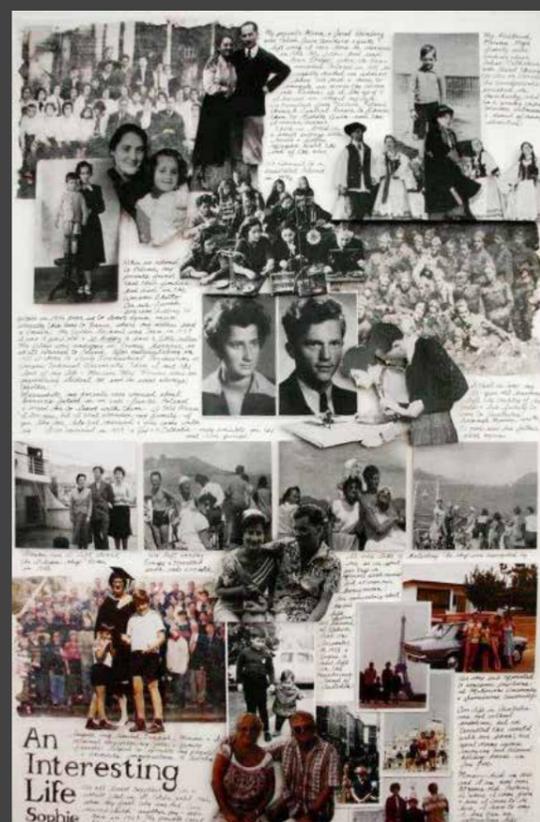
POLAND

### SOPHIE MAJ - LIVING IN INTERESTING TIMES

**Sophie Maj** was born in Poland in 1935. She and her parents survived WWII as Polish Jews by fleeing ever-eastward as the Nazis advanced into Russia. After graduating from Warsaw Technical University Sophie and her husband Marian emigrated to Australia, from where – with assistance of the Melbourne Jewish community - they later sponsored the emigration of Sophie's parents and her younger brother. Sophie went on to become the first female member of the Australian Association of Engineers and first female faculty member in the Melbourne University School of Engineering.

**Deborah Klein** migrated to Australia from the United States in 1979 with her son Skye and her then-partner Bernard Grinberg – Sophie Maj's younger brother. With qualifications in Graphic Design and Marketing from RMIT, Deborah has subsequently worked in arts management and as a practicing artist in both Australia and the U.S. She currently lives in Ballarat & works as the Arts & Culture Coordinator with the City of Ballarat. Sophie Maj is one of her oldest & best friends.

**Maya Grinberg** was the first girl born in the Grinberg family since WWII, and her Aunt Sophie Maj is one of her most vocal advocates. A textile designer & weaver, Maya graduated from RMIT as recipient of the Warwick Fabrics DreamWeaver National Design Award. She subsequently worked as the Warwick Senior Designer for a number of years before moving to Geelong to work as Creative Manager with The Basford Group.



Deborah Klein & Maya Grinberg, *Sophie Maj - Living in Interesting Times*, stretched canvas: ink, paper, photographs, 64cm x 94 cm.

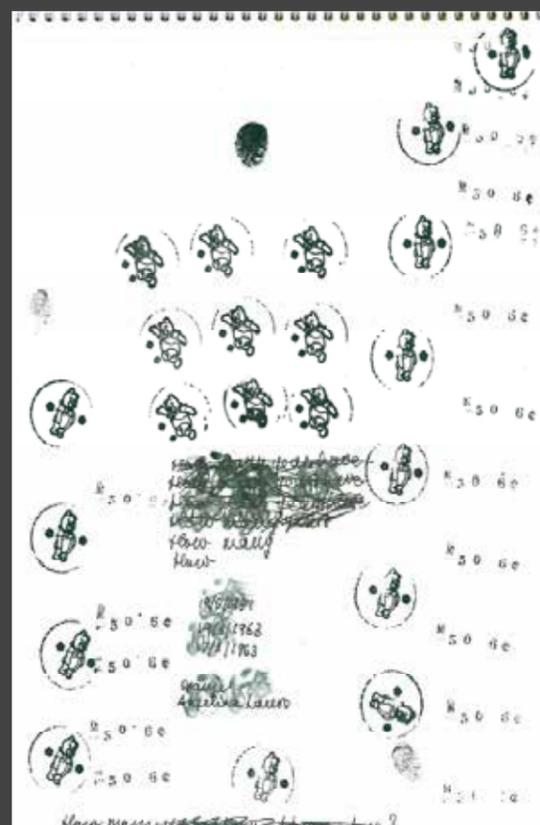
## ANIA WALWICZ

POLAND

### HOW MANY

Ania Walwicz was born in Swidnica, Poland in 1951. She arrived in Australia on the ship Oranje in March 1963 at Station Pier, Port Melbourne. Her work *HOW MANY* – stamp and ink on paper, relating to action painting-gesture and calligraphy. The images represent the eternal, universal themes of migration, diaspora, holocaust, dispersal, the journey of the refugee. Ania Walwicz has taught creative writing at the Ballarat School of Mines in 1983 and currently teaching at RMIT University. Ania Walwicz - published 5 books of experimental poetics and held 10 one woman shows of visual art.

Ania Walwicz, *How Many*, Cartridge paper 110 gram, 28.5cm x 21cm.



## ANNE SCARIOT

ITALY

### GENOVEFFA'S UNDERGARMENTS

My mother Genoveffa Cioni was the second youngest in a family of eight children. She was born on the 14th of January 1896, in Portoferraio on the Isola D'Elba, Province of Livorno, Toscana Italy. When her first husband caught the Spanish flu and died leaving her a widow with their one year old daughter Ilse, the enterprising Genoveffa then aged 22, demonstrated strength and resolve by starting her own business. She'd set up market stalls on the Island of Elba where she traded and hawked kitchen ware. The island however, may not have provided the excitement and creativity that the outgoing Genoveffa would have wished for and in 1924, she took 7 year old Ilse , and together with another family from Capoliveri, they left the island and came to Australia. In 1925, Genoveffa met and married her second husband (my father) Giuseppe Donchi. In the late 20s, my entrepreneurial mother opened up a grocery shop at 141 Cardigan St., Carlton and named it: Drogheria Dalla Toscana. Mum was proud of her heritage and by naming the shop Dalla Toscana, she was paying homage to her birthplace. Mum believed that everything Italian was always best, and when she decided to sell pasta and other Italian goods, the business really took off. Even during WWII when Italy and Australia were at war with each other, business was good. From simple beginnings, by introducing Italian products, my parents turned the shop into a thriving business that supplied Italian restaurants and major city hotels. I am uncertain as to the crafting of Genoveffa's embroidered bloomers and petticoat, but the most likely scenario would be that they had been made by young women skilled in the art of embroidery.



Anne Scariot, *Genoveffa's Undergarments*, embroidered fine cotton fabric, 63cm x 80cm.