

# The Contemporary Collective

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# **We Are Here**

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An exploration of contemporary portraiture as a response to hatred and hope

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**Glen Eira Council Gallery**

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# **We Are Here**

An exploration of contemporary portraiture as a response to hatred and hope

Benjamin Armstrong  
Irene Barberis  
Godwin Bradbeer  
Bindi Cole Chocka  
Carmella Grynberg  
Linde Ivimey  
Shoshanna Jordan  
Jane Korman  
Victor Majzner  
Lillianne Milgrom  
Hedy Ritterman  
Avital Sheffer  
Lousje Skala  
Linda Wachtel  
Guan Wei

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Curated by Dr Helen Light AM

# Foreword

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Hedy Rittnerman, Linda Wachtel and Shoshanna Jordan  
The Contemporary Collective



It is with great pride that we present our inaugural project, *We Are Here*.

'We are here' are the final resonant words of the Partisan Song: *Do Not Ever Say – Mir Zehnen Do* by Herschel Glick. Those simple words acknowledge the resilience of human beings in the face of extreme brutality, as epitomised by The Holocaust.

What method of representation could provoke a conversation around a topic of such intensity?

In our desire to confront concepts around memorialisation and remembrance; the individual and the collective; and the "never again" principle in the context of today's geopolitical reality, contemporary portraiture was the vehicle we chose.

Dr Helen Light accepted our offer to curate the exhibition and brought together a diverse group of accomplished artists who have added their personal voices to a universal discussion around persecution and survival, hatred and hope. The participating artists were given the freedom to push the boundaries of conventional portraiture through their chosen medium.

This exhibition is the result of much hard work by many people. We appreciate their contribution in making our first TCC project a reality. Particular thanks go to Helen Light for her generosity, patience and scholarly advice. We sincerely thank all the artists for their enthusiastic engagement with the themes of the exhibition and their polished and thought-provoking artworks.

*We Are Here* highlights the extremes of human behaviour. We hope the exhibition encourages visitors to think about how individuals and society have changed 70 years after the liberation of Auschwitz.

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**Mir Zehnen Do - Do Not Ever Say**  
The Partisans' Song by Hershel Glick

Never say you are going on your final road,  
Although leadened skies block out blue days,  
Our longed-for hour will yet come  
Our step will beat out - we are here!

From a land of green palm trees to the white land of snow  
We arrive with our pain, with our woe,  
Wherever a spurt of our blood fell,  
On that spot shall spurt forth our courage and our spirit.

The morning sun will brighten our day  
And yesterday will disappear with our foe.  
But if the sun delays to rise at dawn,  
Then let this song be a password for generations to come.

This song is written with our blood, not with lead,  
It is not a song of a free bird flying overhead.  
Amid crumbling walls, a people sang this song,  
With grenades in their hands.

So, never say the road now ends for you,  
Although skies of lead block out days of blue.  
Our longed-for hour will yet come -  
Our step will beat out - we are here!



# Mir Zehnen Do – We Are Here

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by Dr Helen Light AM

Humans are capable of great evil and also of great goodness.

This exhibition acknowledges the particularities of the Holocaust as the epitome of human cruelty, discrimination and despair. It also prompted compassion and bravery among some people in reaction to the terrible crimes. It thus says a lot about the human condition from the perspective of its nadir. It is thus that we look at it today. We also look at those who survived such trauma and created new lives in a new world with hope and promise of a better world.

Of the 9.5 million Jews in Europe in 1939, only 3.5 million were alive in 1945. Of those, 27,000 came to Australia.

They came here because it was so far from Europe. They lived and could come here because of the perspicacity that prompted them to escape Nazism before the War or they were hidden by the Righteous among the nations of Europe during the War, escaped towards Russia, Shanghai or other far-flung countries, or indeed they survived the living hell of the concentration camps.

We celebrate their resilience which saw them re-establish their lives, start families, businesses, communities. We celebrate their ability to recreate a life of meaning after facing the most traumatic unimaginable horror.

We do so because their time is running out naturally, and so few are left.

We do so because we don't want the world to forget what dehumanisation and debasement they survived, what unimaginable cruelty they experienced, because of prejudice and hatred, racism and discrimination.

We do so because we need to remember, we need to remind everyone of what evil humankind is capable, even in a civilized and sophisticated world.

And we do this via contemporary art – through the language and imagination of 15 Australian artists.

Herein lies the first irony. To quote the philosopher Theodor Adorno's well known maxim "No poetry after

Auschwitz"<sup>1</sup>. However, there has been much art produced after the *Shoah* (hebrew. *Holocaust*) as artists struggle to come to terms with the senseless tragic genocide. These artists include survivors, their second and third generation descendants, Jews, Germans, all those in any way touched by this event.

The highly regarded war historian, Jay Winter, explores why much of the artistic depiction of the Holocaust eschews portraiture and figurative art arguing that it concentrates instead on the voice of the survivors. He sees artistic expression of the Shoah being more prevalent as aural rather than visual – the voice of survivors is the powerful new artistic tool.<sup>2</sup>

There has been a lot of angst and research into dealing with the Shoah in exhibitions and museum displays after the survivors have died. This anxiety arises from a recognition that the living words of the living witnesses speaks louder than any other means of communication. Reported recently there was a breakthrough in museum technology in the Holocaust Museum in Chicago, Illinois, whereby a life-size hologram of a survivor can respond to many hundreds of questions from a visitor.<sup>3</sup>

Daniel Mendelsohn in his book *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*, explains how hard it is to capture the memories of the people who did not survive. He writes:

"... just as the hair of a Jewish girl or boy or man or woman that someone once loved, and the teeth and the brows, the smiles and frustrations and laughter and terror of the six million Jews killed in the Holocaust are now lost, or will soon be lost, because no number of books, however great, could ever document them all, even if they were to be written, which they won't and can't be; all that will be lost, too, their pretty legs and their deafness and the vigorous way they strode off a train with a pile of schoolbooks once, the secret family rituals and the recipes for cakes and stews and *golački*, the goodness and the wickedness, the saviours and the betrayers, their saving and their betraying; most everything will be lost, eventually. As surely as most of what made up the lives of the

Egyptians and Incas and Hittites has been lost. But for a little while some of that can be rescued, if only, faced with the vastness of all that there is and all that there ever was, somebody makes the decision to look back, to have one last look, to search for a while in the debris of the past and to see not only what was lost and but what there is still to be found.”<sup>4</sup>

The artists in this exhibition however have chosen or have been chosen to celebrate the survivors’ resilience and acknowledge their unassuageable painful memories, through portraiture.

The second irony is the belief and custom that Jews must not create images of human beings or animals, arising from the misinterpretation of the Second of the Ten Commandments :

*Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in the heaven above or that is in the water under the earth*<sup>5</sup>

The following verse of the Ten Commandments reads:

*Thou shalt not bow down to them and shalt not serve them.*

What this commandment prohibits is that no image must be made for the purpose of worship, either as representing or as substitute for the Divinity. For this reason, synagogues and Jewish texts are generally noticeably devoid of images and there has been a relative dearth of Jewish artists until the last 100 years .<sup>6</sup>

Both this misconception and the Adorno maxim have

been seen as reasons for the proliferation of abstract art after WW2 and the holocaust, rather than figurative art. Reference Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and Morris Louis for instance.<sup>7</sup>

Be that what it may, portraiture is the absolutely appropriate visual art form to commemorate the survivors. As Pointon says: “Portraiture is a slippery and seductive art; it encourages us to feel that then is now and now is then. It seems to offer factual data while simultaneously inviting a subjective response. It offers – in its finest manifestations – an illusion of timelessness, the impression that we can know people other than ourselves and, especially, those among the unnumbered and voiceless dead.”<sup>8</sup>

Portraiture is appropriate to remembering the survivors because it captures the essence of a person. It exists after the person depicted is no longer with us. Pointon says portraiture depends on “the capacity of images to generate an afterlife”.<sup>9</sup> Samuel Beckett wrote: “The human subject is born astride of a grave, and artworks generally outlive their makers, and in the case of portraits, their subjects.”<sup>10</sup> Hence the endurance of a portrait ensures that the memory of the survivor lives on.

The artists in this exhibition use contemporary portraiture as their artistic expression. Our interpretation of “contemporary portraiture” is very flexible and broad. There are many precedents however and we looked to work that stressed the individuality of the survivors. We did not consider the landscape or the general historical environment. We concentrated on the people who suffered.

Contemporary portraiture is much more than a portrait.



As Janet McKenzie explains: “To focus on the portrayal of the human form in the twenty-first century; specifically the portrait requires a traverse of multifarious philosophical shifts, and, of stylistic movements from the past 150 years.” She points out that: “ Technological advances in the nineteenth century, particularly the invention of photography, deemed naturalistic portraiture practically obsolete, in relation to progressive art. Following the Second World War and the loss of any faith in humanity in the late 1940s the human image in art became increasingly difficult to portray... . More fundamentally, the early twentieth century rejection of figurative imagery challenged the belief that visual resemblance to a living or once-living model is necessary or appropriate to the representation of identity”<sup>11</sup>

In this exhibition we have several kinds of Australian artists – working in all different media – photography, painting, installation, video, ceramics, fabric, glass etc – and also some who are Jewish, some whose parents are survivors, and some who are not Jewish at all. All have been invited to participate because they bring different perspectives to the themes.

Firstly, the Second Generation, those whose families suffered at the hands of the Nazis, are not surprisingly the ones who have concentrated on specific people and their histories and their memories. In this way they explore what inheritance personally they have received and also they have tried to capture the essence of the survivors. Among these works are the videos of **Jane Korman**. Coupled with these are the triumphant photographs of **Linda Wachtel's** homage to Jane's parents and the whole nuclear family of 14 that they have created. Lousje Skala has created a series of haunting jewellery objects honouring her mother-in-law. There is a poetic installation by **Hedy Ritterman** that includes a belt which belonged to her ‘Uncle’ Richard and which survived with him through three concentration camps.

Then there is the sense of absence of family evoked by **Shoshanna Jordan's** photographs of chairs and empty rooms.

**Linde Ivimey** has paid homage to twin victims of the dreaded Dr Mengele, one of whom survived but was always longing for his twin, and was incomplete without her.



A few works deal directly with the experience of the survivor. None as evidently as **Lilianne Migrom's** photo essay about her mother's arm with the tattoo of the number attributed to her in Auschwitz.

**Bindi Cole Chocka** references specifically the Australian part of the story. She calls on both her Aboriginal and Jewish backgrounds to create a work to honour William Cooper, who as an Aborigine did not yet have the vote in Australia, but he led the only protest by walk to the German Consulate to object to the German treatment of Jews after Krystallnacht in November 1938.

There is much recognition that the Nazis' extermination of European Jewry was the nadir of humanity, that there is a universality to the loss of humanity that brought about this event. Hence it is important to us to include people who are not Jewish in this exhibition, in order to reflect their thoughts and imaginings about the Shoah. In all cases the works of **Irene Barberis**, **Godwin Bradbeer**, **Benjamin Armstrong** and **Guan Wei**, are indeed meditations



on the human condition and on the depths to which humans can plummet in their treatment of each other and of the consequent suffering entailed by the victims.

Finally, there are other works that contextualise the Shoah in relation to Jewish History. There is a jokey saying among us Jews referring to our communal memories which are preserved in our rituals :

“They came to slaughter us. We survived. Let’s eat.” This refers to the traumatic history of persecution, discrimination and anti-Semitism that we as Jews have unexplainedly continually suffered. However, we have survived, as a people, as a religion, for generations, for thousands of years. And we have not only survived but we have flourished and contributed to world culture, technology and thought.

Israeli born ceramicist, **Avital Sheffer’s** lyrical works in this exhibition, two beautiful ceramic vessels, attest to this history. As she explains in her artist statement “*Sentinels* bear witness. The enclosed space within the male and female vessels looking at each other encapsulates profound silence, where words cannot capture such loss and pain. Etched on their skin are marks of an ancient culture. The scripts developed from Ketubas: one from Alexandria, Egypt, 1833, the other from Yemen 1679, an arabesque design developed from *The Lisbon Bible* 1482, relate the rich diversity within Judaism where the possibility of identity, belonging and solace exists.”

**Victor Majzner’s** suite of paintings of his body as a Jew, ultimately have a redemptive message. As he indeed explains in his statement: “I AM HERE is a spiritually optimistic work looking through the lens of Judaism at the human capacity to perceive the spark of Godliness in each of us”. His work is positive, forward-looking as he acknowledges the faith that has bound so many Jews together and seen them through so many traumas and such devastation.

**Carmella Grynberg’s** textile works remind one of the pile of clothes left behind by the concentration camp victims but she is concerned rather with the redemptive aspect of recycling these fragments of material into something new and beautiful.

The three artists, Hedy Ritterman, Shoshanna Jordan and Linda Wachtel, who form **The Contemporary Collective** and who have driven this exhibition have done so because they are aware that not many survivors are still alive. They wish to honour their resilience and believe it is timely for us to remember the terrible events of 1933-1945 and strive not to repeat them.

One cannot help but be pessimistic if one considers the genocides that have been carried out since the destruction of European Jewry during World War 2. However, we can only hope that people learn from others, and from artists who contemplate these issues, the cost of destroying a people.

We also hope that through the lives of the survivors of the Holocaust we can appreciate the value of life , of family and of a future for all individuals no matter who they are, and by extension, value for the world as we know it and as we wish to imagine it in the future.

Helen Light  
February 2016

Images:

Hedy Ritterman, (*Richard’s belt*), 2014

Linde Ivimey, *When a small man casts a big shadow*, study 2012

Jane Korman, photographed dancing with her father





1 "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric". Theodor W Adorno in 1949 essay, "Cultural Criticism and Society," reprinted as  
the first essay in *Prisms: essays in cultural criticism and society*.

2 See Jay Winter, "Faces, Voices, and the Shadow of War" in *Gesher: The Official Journal of the Council of Christians and Jews*  
(Victoria) Inc., Vol. 4, No.3, November 2010 pp. 74–77

3 *The Saturday Paper*, December 5 – 11, 2015, Melbourne, Australia p.28

4 Mendelsohn, D., *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million* 2013, London, 4<sup>th</sup> edition pp.620–621)

5 Exodus 20:1-17

6 However, it has shown that the prohibition was sometimes observed for political rather than religious reasons, such as  
under Roman rule as a reaction against the prevalent worship of the statues of the Roman Gods. It has been noted that  
Imperial Rome made portraiture a central tool of government and it has been associated with wealth and power ever since, as  
the boardroom portrait attests". (Pointon, M., *Portrayal and the search of identity*, London 2013, p.9)

7 These three artists were in the forefront of the Abstract Expressionist movement in America. See for example the comments  
about Mark Rothko: "During the 1940s Rothko's imagery became increasingly symbolic. In the social climate of anxiety that  
dominated the late 1930s and the years of World War II, images from everyday life – however unnaturalistic – began to appear  
somewhat outmoded. If art were to express the tragedy of the human condition, Rothko felt, new subjects and a new idiom  
had to be found. He said, "It was with the utmost reluctance that I found the figure could not serve my purposes... But a time  
came when none of us could use the figure without mutilating it."

Quoted on the NGA Website: <https://www.nga.gov/feature/rothko/myths1.shtml> viewed 7/2/16

8 Pointon, M., *Portrayal and the search of identity*, London 2013, p.28

9 Pointon, M., *op cit* p.74

10 Quoted Pointon, *ob cit*, p.20

11 McKenzie, J., *Portraiture in Focus*, pp. 23-34 in Errey, S.; Taylor, A.; Barberis, I.; Sturgess, H.; & McKenzie, J., "Portraiture" in  
*Focus & Drawing on Two Worlds*, Metasensa Publications, Hong Kong, 2013



*Dust to Gold*

*Dust* 2010  
binder, blown glass and dust  
96 x 27.5 x 27.5 cm

*Gold* 2010  
blown glass, pigment and  
sculpy  
99.5 x 29.5 x 29.5 cm

courtesy the artist and  
Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Reflecting on the selection of *Dust to Gold* for Mir Zehnen Do, my mind turns to the extraordinary Jewish renaissance across so many cultural and philosophical fields after the horrors and cultural expression of the Holocaust. There are the few that are with us that bore witness to the two points of this profound transformation.

While *Dust to Gold* bears no literal parallel to the gravity of that discussed above, it runs its own sense of material transformation, while the forms play for a gesture towards body or head. Matter moves down, but unlike an ordinary hourglass, which can be inverted to restart time, the present only descends into history here.

Benjamin Armstrong

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# Benjamin Armstrong

Born 1975, Melbourne, Victoria; lives and works in Melbourne. Benjamin Armstrong completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Victorian College of the Arts in 1996. Notable recent projects have included Primavera, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2006; NEW09, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2009; Walking Backwards to the Place I Come From, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, 2010; A First Life Residency Project in Landscape, Xin Dong Cheng Space for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China, 2011; Conjurers, Tolarno Galleries, 2012; and Roundtable: The 9th Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea, 2012. Armstrong's work was the subject of a major monograph, Benjamin Armstrong: Holding a Thread, published in 2010. He was awarded an Anne & Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship in 2011.

*architectonics: portrait of a time* takes the lens of two ideas; an 'architecture of time': 'regeneration', symbolized through an encasing of the artist's breath, and the portrait as a response to historical data of the Holocaust.

The transparent work takes my breath, which has passed through my body, and inflates a crumpled form into a breath filled, radiant-architectonic. The form balances in front of a set of self-portraits taken by me in the process of reading, drawing and responding to holocaust material found on the internet – I was unable to work beyond the first recording and felt the self-portraits were better documentation of this unfathomable evil.

The Holocaust memories are transformed by the inherent light qualities of the material to reveal a glowing presence: a 'portraiture in focus'.

Irene Barberis

# Irene Barberis

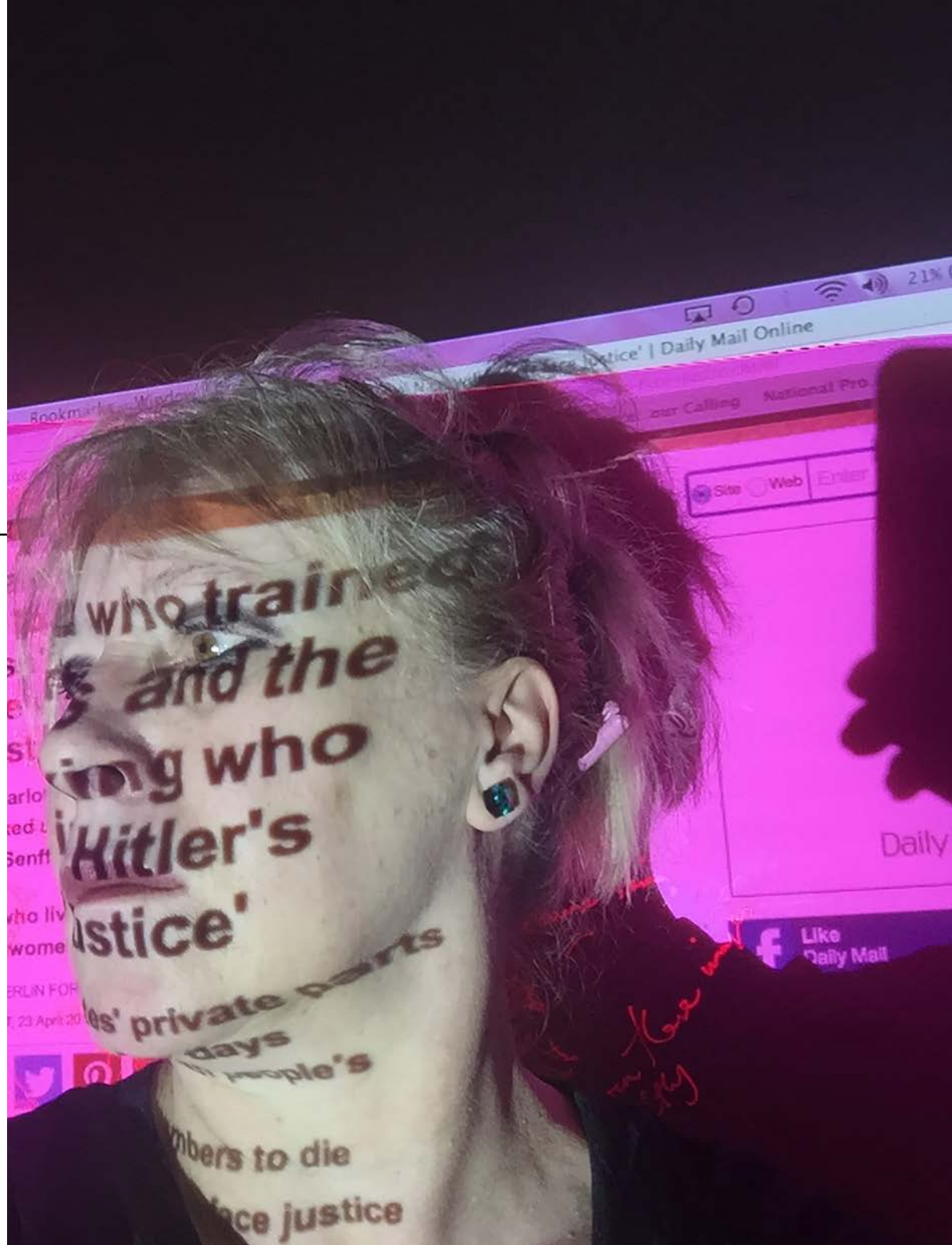
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Irene Barberis is an Australian based artist, born in London, whose arts practice spans 40 years. She is a painter, installation and new media artist, working also with performative drawing and spatial kineasthetics. She has held over fifty solo exhibitions in Australia and abroad and participated in more than ninety group exhibitions. Irene is known also for her international initiatives, exhibitions and curatorial work with drawing.

She is an academic, keynote speaker and international curator. She is also Founding Director of Metasenta® Projects, a global arts research 'satellite' which functions between universities, arts organizations and artists. She has initiated multiple international arts projects in collaboration with artists and institutions in the UK, USA, the Middle East and the Far East and is the International Chair for the *Crossing the Line: Drawing in the Middle East*, and *Global Drawing* series of conferences.

Irene holds an MA from Melbourne University VCA, and a PhD from Victoria University, Melbourne. She is a Senior Lecturer/Researcher at RMIT School of Art, working off shore in Hong Kong, and is a faculty member of the New York based Rome Art Program. She is currently Co-Director of Langford120, Melbourne. Her work is held in museums, galleries, public and private collections around the world.

*Atrocities across my face: in solidarity* 2016  
giclee print on museo portfolio rag  
36.5 x 46.5cm  
courtesy the artist







*Abstract man* 2008  
chinagraph and pastel dust on paper  
140cm x 174cm  
courtesy the artist and James Makin Gallery, Melbourne

# Godwin Bradbeer

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My drawings seek the credible portrayal of the miracle of existence over pictorial descriptions of character, narrative or ideology. The constant object of the work is to find within the human subject a universal aspect that suggests a residual capacity – increasingly remote as that seems – for transcendence. In this pursuit my figurative art draws upon the primitive, the classical and the contemporary aesthetics of many cultures and disciplines.

The holocaust of the Second World War, together with the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has been the measurement of humanity at its nadir. An abiding aspect of my work, however beautiful, ordinary or unlovely is this awfulness about ourselves.

In my youth I wanted stark objectivity in my work, in these later years I wish that my work be charged with a compassion that by-passes cliché and bathos and a humanitarian empathy that has no borders.

Godwin Bradbeer

Godwin Bradbeer is a Melbourne-based artist with a reputation for intense and large scale figurative drawing. He has taught at the University of Melbourne, the Victorian College of the Arts, Monash University and other art schools in Australia and in Asia. From 2005 until 2010 he was the Head of Drawing in the School of Art at RMIT University in Melbourne.

Bradbeer's work is included within the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, the National Gallery of Victoria, The Art Gallery of N.S.W., the Art Gallery of South Australia, Parliament House, Canberra, the Archive of Humanist Art, Commonwealth Art Bank, Lim Lip Museum, Korea, Korean Art Institute, the University of Western Carolina, U.S.A. and other institutional collections nationally and internationally.

His work has also been shown frequently at the Art Gallery of N.S.W. in the Dobell Drawing Award, the national award for drawing in Australia (1992 – 2012), a prize that he won in 1998.

Bradbeer has held over forty solo exhibitions and in 2006 – 2007 the survey exhibition; *Godwin Bradbeer - The Metaphysical Body* toured eight regional galleries in Australia. He is included in many publications on Australian art, including *Critical Moments* by Jeff Makin (MacMillan, Australia 2011), *Contemporary Australian Drawing #2* by Janet McKenzie (Palgrave-Macmillan 2012), *Twenty Years – The Dobell Drawing Prize* (AGNSW 2012). In 2014 a collection of his poetry was published by Metasenta under the title *Half Truths*.

The artist is represented by James Makin Gallery, Melbourne, Annandale Galleries, Sydney and BMGArt, Adelaide.

# Bindi Cole Chocka

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The process of arriving at this particular work was fraught. As a woman born of mixed heritage that is predominately Jewish and Wadawurrung, I felt an immediate connection to the theme of the exhibition. There is common ground between the Holocaust and the ongoing colonisation of the Australian Aboriginal community. Having spent many years exploring my Aboriginal heritage and little time on my Jewish side, I felt this was the perfect opportunity to do so. As it happens, my family was fortunate enough to not have been directly touched by Hitler's racism. Talking through this with Dr Helen Light, she suggested I look at the legacy of Yorta Yorta man, Uncle William Cooper.

Uncle William Cooper is the only individual in the world to have staged a private protest condemning the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government of Germany. On the 6<sup>th</sup> December 1938, armed with a signed petition and driven by his faith in Christ and belief in equality, Cooper led a delegation of Aboriginal community members on a march from Footscray to the German Consulate in Melbourne. The petition was rejected but the protest highlights how Cooper had a heart for people who were treated unequally.

This is a man whom I can hold up as someone to aspire to, a true leader and role model. He loved Jesus and the Church, derived his activist beliefs in equality from the Bible and was a proud Aboriginal man. This work, Morning Star, attempts to pay homage to and create a contemporary portrait of Uncle William Cooper. The video streetscape traces his protest steps from Footscray to Melbourne and is overlaid with an original gospel song created by Jen Mega with Wadawurrung lyrics and vocals by myself.

*Marnul guli nyaal* (Dust man open your eyes)  
*Yirram turt-barram* (Morning star)  
*Gurrau Bi-djarrang-nyatak murrum* (Father God alive)

Bindi Cole Chocka

*Morning Star* 2016  
video still, HD video  
courtesy the artist and Nellie Castan Projects, Melbourne





Bindi Cole Chocka is an award winning, resilient and ingenious Melbourne-born photographer, curator, new media artist and writer who speaks compellingly through her photographs, videos, installations and writing. Chocka's work often references her life story and experiences, such as her Wadawurrung heritage, the importance of Christianity in her life, and the impact of politics, the law and other power structures on her lived experience and that of her family and community. Her deeply personal and powerful artistic practice questions the way people circumscribe and misconstrue contemporary identity and experience.

In 2010, Chocka was listed as one of the Top 100 Most Influential People in Melbourne. Since her first solo show in 2007, Chocka's work has been widely exhibited in solo and group exhibitions including the National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of NSW, Museum of Contemporary Art, Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, National Portrait Gallery, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art (Brooklyn, USA), Museum of Contemporary Art (Taiwan). Her work is held in various collections across the world. Chocka lives and works in Melton, Victoria, Australia.



*Remnant* 2016  
3 x muslin and cotton cloths, hand-dyed and buried  
76.2 x 66cm; 76.2 x 58.4cm; 38 x 40.6cm  
courtesy the artist



In creating the work for this exhibition I found myself drawn to the intimate quiet aspects of the ideas embedded in the title *Mir Zehnen Do – We Are Here*.

I came to think about clothing which we wear as a second skin, which indeed often carries our DNA long after we remove them from our bodies. Indeed the importance of clothing and fabric is reflected in language through expressions which highlight their centrality in our collective unconscious. Sayings such as “hanging on by a thread” or “the fibre of our being” seemed to me to be metaphors that were in some way connected to the work that I was developing.

Through dying fabrics in brews made of organic matter and then burying them in the earth for weeks at a time, I attempted to connect my art to the inextricable links between fabric and existence. I also became interested in the role of thread, and stitching, which I saw as forming a counterpoint to the fragility of the fabrics I was working with which became torn and frayed.

Through the use of thread, these damaged remnants could be reinvented into something new, in which what had been weakened or destroyed was also never erased.

Carmella Grynberg

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# Carmella Grynberg

Carmella Grynberg was awarded a PhD in Education from RMIT University in 2012. She is an artist, creative art therapist and Co-Director of Holocaust and Trauma Support Services. Born in Israel, Grynberg's own experiences as a child migrant combined with her professional experience and interest in the psychological effect of trauma on people from diverse cultures gives her own art practice a particular poignancy.

Grynberg's work as a printmaker with the Australian Print Workshop is acknowledged through the acquisition of etchings by the City of Glen Eira and also the National Gallery of Australia.

# Linde Ivimey

Making the work for this exhibition set me on a path that lasted only a few months but spanned from Kristallnacht in 1938 – to liberation in 1945 and to here, today. On that journey I made 30 completed sculptures in crystal, glass and water because I could not work with bone and tooth and rag, my familiar materials were too brutal to make a portrait of my dear survivor, Josef Kleinmann.

Only after these water sculptures were made and my study ended could I make the woven bone portrait of Josef and his twin Marta. Of those sculptures I have chosen *Heirloom* in silver, brass and crystal. I include *Heirloom* as a gift to Marta and Josef, to commemorate every thing they have missed sharing together in life and to acknowledge the fragility and the strength that forms the substance of any thing or any tradition or any one that survives from that time to this.

Linde Ivimey



*Heirloom* 2012  
antique and vintage crystal, glass, silver, brass,  
water, electricity  
28 x 33 x 33cm  
courtesy the artist and Gould Galleries, Melbourne

Linde Ivimey was born in Sydney but it was in Perth that she obtained a Diploma in Fine Art, Sculpture and Print Making in 1992 and began to exhibit in group shows and prizes in both Western Australia and New South Wales. After completing a Certificate of Teaching and Learning, Ivimey went on to lecture in art and design at several institutions in Perth before moving to Melbourne in 1999. Ivimey's first solo exhibition, *Close to the Bone*, was held at Heide Museum of Modern Art, Melbourne in 2003. This groundbreaking survey of Ivimey's work marked a turning point in her career as she came to the attention of high profile collectors and galleries after more than a decade of studio practice. Ivimey has mounted a further 11 solo exhibitions including *If Pain Persists*, a major touring exhibition for the University of Queensland Art Museum and book and film of the same name.

Many of Ivimey's very personal and visceral sculptures are based on biblical characters and assume a sense of effigy or reliquary. Her works have been included in many group exhibitions, art fairs and prizes and are widely collected by major institutions and significant private collectors throughout Australia, Asia and Europe. Ivimey lives and works in Sydney and is represented by Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney; Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane; Michael Reid, Berlin and Gould Galleries, Melbourne.

Marta and Josef Kleinmann, fraternal twins, were born in 1940 in Prague. In 1941 Josef and Marta were taken to Theresienstadt with their older sister and mother, their father had been murdered. From Theresienstadt Josef and Marta were transported to Auschwitz where they were given the numbers A-2459 and A-9431 and as twins became the charges of Dr Mengele. Kristallnacht.

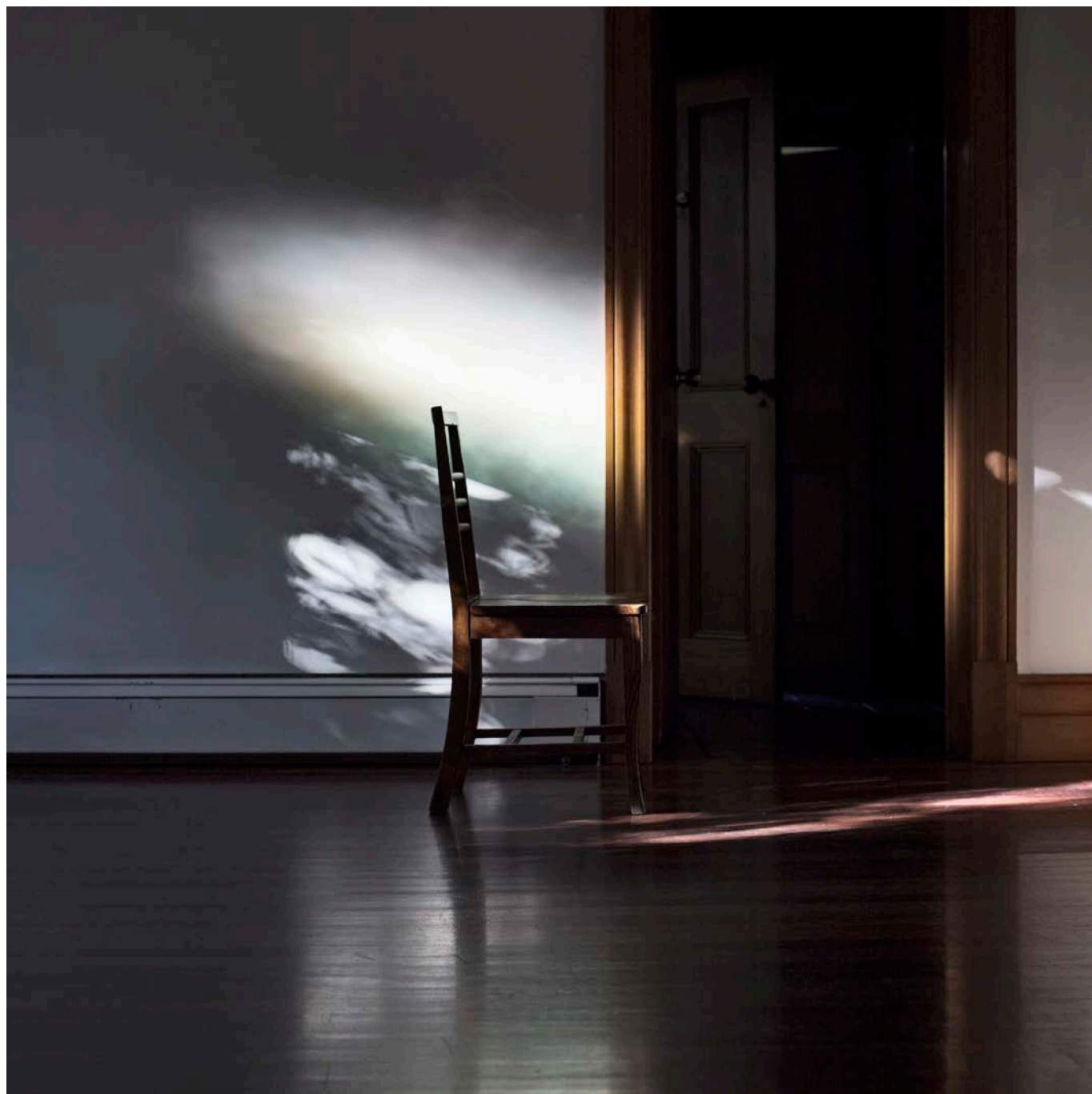
In a *CANDLES* interview, 2010, Josef writes: 'I feel that she is still alive somewhere in this world. I am asking you, the reader, somebody, please help me somehow find my twin sister. I have been searching for her since 1945. If you have a heart, help me find my twin sister. Her number, tattooed on her arm, is A-4931; her name was Marta Kleinmann. I don't know what her name is today.'

In response to Josef's plea, a murmur seeded within me: 'Yes, somehow Josef, in my own way, I can help you find your sister. She is here, she is with me.'

Linde Ivimey

*Marta & Josef* 2012  
steel armature, acrylic resin, woven bird vertebrae  
65 x 33 x 85cm  
courtesy the artist and Gould Galleries, Melbourne





# Shoshanna Jordan

---

6 million  
6 chairs  
6 images  
And the light...  
And the light and the light and the light...  
This is how we begin again...  
Feel  
Acknowledge the past  
See  
Be honest  
And then we choose to grow again  
And the light is how we grow

The Holocaust has always been a looming shadow in my life. There are no photographs of my lost family, no faces to put names to. I started using empty chairs to portray them. I have used the chairs and doorways as a conceptual resonance, a way of reaching out and having a conversation about absence and presence, loss and future, shadow and light. The reflective light, for me, is the mirror of hope and resilience.

My identity has been shaped by ever-present memory of the Holocaust and my adolescent migratory experience, coming to Australia from Israel. In my photographic practice, my experiences form the basis to inspire and create.

Shoshanna Jordan

Shoshanna Jordan is a humanistic photographic artist. With an eye for the real and attention to the way we live. Jordan's academic training in social work and fine art photography merge in a passionate artistic discourse of identity, home the migrant experience, cultural Diaspora and the inner life undergoing dementia.

Jordan completed an MA in Fine Art Photography from RMIT University, School of Art, in 2008 with the widely acclaimed work *A Reflection: Jewish Diaspora in Carlisle Street*.

Based in Melbourne, her work has been shown locally and internationally in the group shows *My Australia*, at the Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei (2011), and in 2008 in Israel at the Rechoyot Municipal Gallery, documenting members of Tzeva Bateva artists.

Shoshanna Jordan is a founding member of the art collective, The Contemporary Collective (TCC). One of the goals of TCC is to provide a platform for artists to critically engage and actively converse with contemporary cultural and socio-political issues through art.

*Mir Zehnen Do* 2016  
a series of 6 photographs  
pigment print on acid free cotton paper  
courtesy the artist



# Jane Korman

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I am a performance and video artist. My work is informed by my family history, being the child of Holocaust survivors, and the impact of my parents' repeated stories of their war-time experiences. I dress up and perform a variety of personas that comment on family memoirs, the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, and my concern with the continuing presence of anti-Semitism.

The videos included in this exhibition perform a number of functions. They acknowledge my parents who are survivors of Auschwitz and at the same time honour the memory of all those that perished. And finally, they serve as a visual caution on the dangers of prejudice.

Two videos, *Just an Ordinary Peasant* and *Whistle While You Work*, are based on specific events my uncle and mother experienced during their time in the camps. The third video, *Dance of Hope* represents my parents' courage and good fortune that enabled them to create a fulfilling life for themselves in Australia.

Jane Korman

Jane Korman was born in Melbourne, Australia, the daughter of Holocaust survivors. After completing a Bachelor of Graphic Design at RMIT, she and her young family moved to Israel in the 1980s where they lived on a Yemenite village outside Jerusalem and ran a studio producing specialised illuminated manuscripts.

They returned to Australia after 18 years, where Jane branched into performance and video art. Jane has exhibited both locally (NGV, West Space Gallery, Kings Ari Gallery, Adelaide Fringe Festival) and internationally. In 2010 she received the Victorian Council Award. That same year her video piece, *Dancing Auschwitz*, won the People's Choice award at the DokumentART Film Festival in Germany and Poland.

She recently exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow, and is currently exhibiting at the Centre for Persecuted Arts in Solingen, Germany. In 2015 Jane completed a Masters of Fine Art at Monash University, Melbourne.

*Just an ordinary peasant* 2015  
video still  
courtesy the artist







# Victor Majzner

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A Jew is in constant dialogue (sometimes argument) with the divine. The Talmud<sup>1</sup> defines man in spiritual terms for God to have conversation with. It defines man as being made up of 248 limbs in a human body.

In my paintings each component group of limbs is 'tattooed symbolically' with the Hebrew letter defining the numerology<sup>2</sup> of the number of limbs contained within.

My symbolic tattooing of the Hebrew letters onto the body parts is in direct and most obvious reference and contradiction to the dehumanising tattooing by the Nazis of the inmates in concentration camps.

I AM HERE is a spiritually optimistic work looking through the lens of Judaism at the human capacity to perceive the spark of Godliness in each of us.

1. Mishnah Ohelos, Chapter 1, Mishnah 8.

2. Gematria: numerical value related to each letter of the Hebrew alphabet

Victor Majzner 2015 ©

For almost fifty years, Victor Majzner has been exhibiting in numerous major group and solo exhibitions throughout Australia, Italy, USA, England and New Zealand. Significant early exhibitions include *Colour and Transparency* at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1986; *Towards Identity*, a solo exhibition at Monash University Gallery in 1993 and *Illuminations*, a survey of watercolours at Albury Regional Art Centre in 1997.

For many years, a major pre-occupation in Majzner's work has been with the Jewish faith and Majzner has spoken extensively on this topic. *Earth to Sky, The Art of Victor Majzner*, a major publication written by Leigh Astbury, was published by MacMillan in 2002 and included an essay by Dr. Rabbi Shimon Cowen about Majzner's religious works to date.

In 2004 Majzner staged *Wounded – Land, Memory, Destiny* a major exhibition dealing with the 1938 proposal to establish a Jewish Settlement in Western Australia at Glen Eira City Art Gallery.

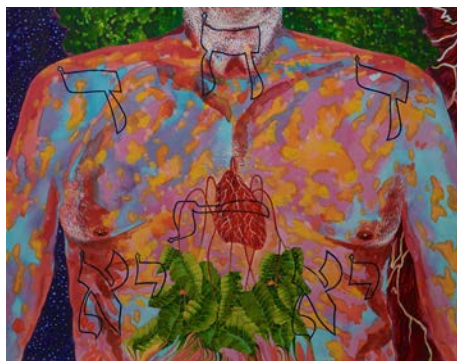
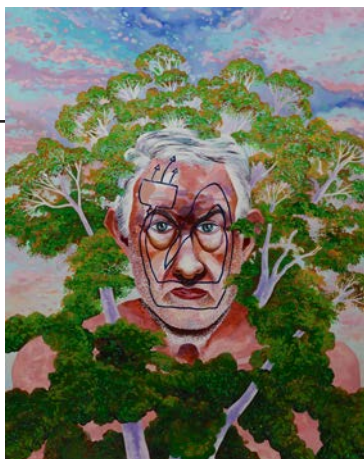
His long-awaited exhibition and book, *Painting the Torah* was launched in July 2008. Historically this was the first time that the Torah had been painted so comprehensively and from a Jewish perspective. Also in 2008, Majzner produced *Galil/Golan*, a series of works inspired by a painting trip to northern Israel, which complemented the *Negev* series first exhibited in 1999.

In May 2012 Majzner launched a collaborative exhibition and publication with the renown poet Deborah Masei *Painting the Song*, a journey through the Song of Songs. In 2015 Majzner launched his most recent publication *Beyond the Trees* with an accompanying exhibition at Langford 120 Gallery in Melbourne.

Majzner's work is represented in most national, state, regional, university and corporate collections in Australia and significant private collections in Australia, New Zealand, USA, England, France, Italy and Israel.

*I AM HERE*  
7 watercolour/gouaches on paper  
each approx 90 x 70cm  
courtesy the artist







# Lillianne Milgrom

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From the *Shadows* series  
Set of 4 framed photographs  
30.5 x 38cm each  
courtesy the artist

I don't remember when I became consciously aware of my mother's Holocaust experience; it was more like a forbidding presence – often unspoken yet very much a part of my formative psyche. Even before I could truly grasp the horrors which she endured, a sensory transference of sorts had already been transmitted through my DNA, and deep into my core.

It was only much later in life that I came across the term 'Second Generation Holocaust Survivor', and that is when I fully understood the intractable shadow that the Holocaust has cast over future generations.

In this photographic series, my mother's concentration camp number is etched on my soul as surely as if it were tattooed onto my own skin and will continue to cast an ominous shadow on her progeny.

Never again.

*Dedicated to my mother Miriam Unreich née Blumenstock, who lives in Melbourne, Australia.*

Lilliane Milgrom

Lillianne Milgrom can well be described as a "global artist at large." Born in Paris, growing up in Australia and living for extended periods in Israel and the United States, she now resides in the greater Washington DC area.

Milgrom's diverse cultural background has been influential in shaping a multi-disciplinary approach to her art, combining painting, sculpture, video and installation. "I resist self-imposed or external limitations. I have found that combining different art forms allows for the creation of a more complex visual language - as my work has evolved so has my palette." Though the artist's subject matter is eclectic, her body of work is defined by a conscious balance between the conceptual and the aesthetic.

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*Richard* 2014  
pigment ink on acid free cotton paper  
120 x 80cm  
courtesy the artist



Richard was a survivor of three concentration camps.  
He never married nor fathered a child.  
At the age of 94 he was finally ready to tell his story  
He gifted his words and most valuable possessions to me  
with the proviso – that I pass it on for future generations “to know”.  
I collaborated with him for the photographic shoot  
he understood my language and embraced the symbolic.  
Resigned to his mortality,  
he recognized the plinth as a stand-in for museum display  
with his most valued possession, his belt, exhibited upon it as hero.  
He loved the image we made, Richard.  
6 weeks later he died.  
I have his words,  
I have his belt – the only possession he retained from his beloved Poland,  
I have the ‘shroud’ used ceremoniously in the shoot.  
True to my promise  
I present *Richard*,  
a portrait;  
a representation, a memorial, a monument  
a testament, a legacy and an honour.

Hedy Ritterman

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# Hedy Ritterman

Ritterman has academic achievements in psychology, design, photography and fine arts and has integrated these with her life experiences to create meaningful artworks that address the human condition in today's world. Most recently she won the prestigious Human Justice Award in the *63rd Blake Prize* with the work shown in this exhibition. Her photographic works have been shortlisted in numerous prizes, such as *Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Prize* (Qld), *Olive Cotton Award* (NSW), *National Photographic Purchase Award* (NSW) and she won the 2003 *Linden Postcard Award* (Vic) and 2005 *Still Life Award* at the Kodak Photographic Salon (Vic).

In 2014 she was invited to show internationally with The Global Centre for Drawing in the exhibition *Location: Crossing the Line #2* exhibition in Dubai and in 2015 she exhibited in *Facsimilie: Crossing the Line #3* in Florence, where she presented a talk and participated in world renowned workshops, all of which was reviewed in Studio International.

Ritterman is a founding member of The Contemporary Collective -TCC- that provides a platform for artists to critically engage in a broad spectrum of contemporary issues.

The announcements of survivors searching for lost relatives on Kol Israel, the national radio station was the soundtrack of my childhood, obligatory listening in every home, as if by narrating the endless list of names, the unfathomable depth of the tragedy was being unfolded.

Some of my classmates had old parents, their homes were dark and silent, friends were rarely invited. The parents didn't talk much. Later we knew, these were their second families, the first having perished.

Sentinels bear witness. The enclosed space within the male and female vessels looking at each other encapsulates profound silence, where words cannot capture such loss and pain. Etched On their skin are marks of an ancient culture.

The scripts developed from Ketubas: one from Alexandria, Egypt, 1833, the other from Yemen 1679, and the arabesque design developed from The Lisbon Bible 1482, relate the rich diversity within Judaism where the possibility of identity, belonging and solace exists.

Avital Sheffer

# Avital Sheffer

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Sheffer has developed a unique aesthetic language – at once intimate and universal. While speaking of ancient civilizations, the idiosyncratic forms and intricate surfaces of the vessels ground her work firmly in the contemporary. Sheffer employs hand-forming techniques along with a unique printing practice to which she brings her life experience in working with other mediums. Her forms are contained and voluptuous, architectural and anthropomorphic, layered with details and meaning.

Since 2004 Avital had been exhibiting extensively in Australia and the US. She was a finalist in numerous competitions and won several awards including the Josephine Ulrich prize for excellence at the *Gold Coast International Ceramic Award* in 2005 and *The Border Art Prize* in 2008 as well as two Australia Council Grants for New Work.

Her work is represented in public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, the Sydney Powerhouse, Manly Art Gallery & Museum and the Gold Coast City Art gallery, as well as corporate and private collections. Avital Sheffer is a member of the International Academy of Ceramics.

## *Sentinels*

2 ceramic sculptural vessels

56x21x15cm, 52x31x16cm

courtesy the artist and Mossgreen, Melbourne





# Lousje Skala

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*Liberation*, 2016  
necklace, carved ABS, copper,  
chrome, epoxy, haematite  
courtesy the artist

Prisoner 20671 Alsbeta/Elizabeth Weisz/Weiss, an Auschwitz survivor, was my late mother-in-law. She is the protagonist of this project called *Prisoner 20671* which traces her life symbolically through metaphors associated with her Shabbat candlesticks, the only objects surviving from her family home in Czechoslovakia.

In 1950 she arrived in Australia, the trauma of war still weighing heavily upon her shoulders. Hence I use the necklace as the designated art jewellery object to express this.

In 1955, Alsbeta gave birth to my husband. She always referred to him as her gift from G-d, the child born in her new world filled with light and hope.

Lousje Skala



Lousje Skala is a contemporary jewellery artist. She holds a Masters Degree in Visual Art and a Masters Degree in Fine Art, both from Monash University. She completed undergraduate studies in Art and Design at RMIT University.

She is a first generation Australian whose Dutch parents came to Australia in 1950. During WWII her father, a Dutch resistance fighter, was incarcerated by the Nazis. Unlike his best friend, Lousje's late uncle, he managed to escape. She has always been inspired by his extraordinary inner strength and powerful, survival instincts. Little wonder that she valued and appreciated the remarkable journey of Alsbeta Weisz, her mother-in-law.

In 1994, Lousje converted to Judaism.

Lousje's arts practice is predominantly concerned with interpersonal engagement, social connection and disconnection.

In 2013, she was included in the National Gallery of Victoria's major exhibition, Melbourne Now. She exhibits both nationally and internationally. Her works have been acquired by The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Sydney), the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (Paris) and important private collectors.

Seventy-one years ago, Adolek Kohn and Marysia Wojdyslawska were liberated from Auschwitz. They were 24 and 21 respectively. Four years later they sailed to Sydney from Marseilles with their baby daughter in tow, to start a new life on the other side of the world.

The seeds of this project, eponymously titled *We Are Here*, were sown after meeting Adolek and Marysia through their daughter, Jane Korman. The Kohns gifted their time and their story, and helped humanize the incomprehensible physical and emotional trauma of the Holocaust for me. I felt compelled to document and commemorate the legacy of their survival, a family of 14 Australian direct descendants.

This work is a visual representation of the Kohn's post-holocaust journey to Australia as European refugees, where they were given the freedom to reclaim their cultural heritage and build a new family. The portraits are presented chronologically on a single roll of paper, a reference to The Torah, a scroll of parchment that broadly outlines Jewish history, laws and culture.

Linda Wachtel

# Linda Wachtel

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Linda Wachtel is an Australian photographic artist based in Melbourne. Her practice extends across photographic genres, with a particular interest in both portraiture and the psychological space of constructed environments. In 2014 she completed her Master of Fine Art (Photo Media) at Monash University.

Linda has exhibited throughout Australia and overseas in solo shows and group exhibitions, most recently in New York at Photoville, and *The Indian Photo Festival* in Hyderabad. Her work has been shortlisted for numerous award exhibitions including the *Blake Prize*, *The National Photographic Portrait Prize*, the *Moran Contemporary Photographic Prize*, *The Head On Portrait Prize* and *The Olive Cotton Award*. Her solo exhibition, *Found InForm*, was shown at The Perth Centre for Photography in 2015 and Fehily Contemporary in 2014. Her photographic work has been also been included in group shows at The Glen Eira Council Gallery and Monash University.

*We are here*, 2015  
pigment print on archival  
cotton rag paper scroll  
100 x 1400cm  
courtesy the artist





Guan Wei fled to Australia after the Tiananmen Square events of 1989. Here he found himself balanced between two cultures so that he drew on his Chinese heritage and married it with Australian subject matter. Today he lives and works both in China and Australia. According to critic, John McDonald, Guan Wei is “a socially committed thinker who believes that art comes with certain responsibilities. As a consequence, he has made pictures that present Australian history as a story of invasion and indigenous dispossession. He has produced work dealing with the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, and the incipient xenophobia that lurks at the fringes of Australian Society.” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13/02/15)

This sculpture is one of five *Clouds*. Guan Wei likes to play with the notion of the cloud and its light and freedom, but in this sculpture it appears to be weighing down the man underneath, as if he is weighed down by a shadow. As such it seems to be an eloquent symbol of the Holocaust survivor or, more universally, of any man who carries his suffering with him.

Helen Light

# Guan Wei

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Guan Wei was born 1957, Beijing, China. In 1989, three years after graduating from the Department of Fine Arts at Beijing Capital University, Guan Wei came to Australia to take up an artist-in-residence at the Tasmanian School of Art. In 2008 he set up a studio in Beijing. He now lives and works in both Beijing and Sydney.

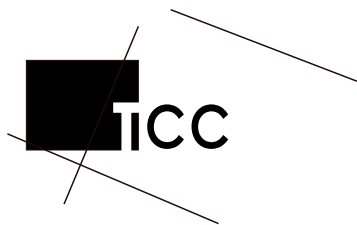
Guan Wei has held 50 solo exhibitions, including: *The Enchantment*, Arc One Gallery, 2012; *Spellbound: Guan Wei 2011* at He Xiang Ning OCT Contemporary Art Centre Shenzhen; *Cloud in the Sky*, *Water in the Bottle*, Shumu Art Space, Beijing 2010; *Other Histories: Guan Wei's Fable for a Contemporary World* at Powerhouse Museum, Sydney 2006-2007.

Guan Wei has also been included in numerous important contemporary exhibitions internationally, such as *Shanghai Biennial* 2010; *10th Havana Biennial*, Cuba in 2009; *Handle with Care Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art* at Art Gallery of South Australia in 2008; *Face Up: Contemporary Art from Australia*, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum, Berlin 2003; *Osaka Triennial* Contemporary Art Space, Osaka Japan 2001; *Man and Space*, Kwangju Biennale 2000; and *Third Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, Queensland Art Gallery Australia 1999.

His work is held in major public collections and numerous university, corporate and private collections throughout Australia and internationally. He is represented by ARC ONE Gallery, Melbourne.



*Up in the clouds, No.5* 2012  
bronze sculpture  
52 x 32 x 24cm  
courtesy the artist and ARC ONE Gallery



## **We Are Here**

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The Contemporary Collective  
Glen Eira City Council Gallery  
6 - 29 May 2016

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