A REFLECTION: Jewish Diaspora in Carlisle Street, Balaclava 2006-2008

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Design and Social Context Portfolio
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Documentation of a project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
DECLARATION

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made the work is that of the artist alone. The work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award. The content of the ADR is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date and the approved research program.

Shoshanna Jordan
Many thanks go to:

My family, who stood by me throughout.

My Supervisors Shane Hulbert and Dr. Keely Macarow who gave so generously of their time, knowledge and enthusiasm for the project.

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The staff of Fine Art Photography John Billan, Kelliyan Guerts, Lyndal Walker and Dr. Les Walkling.
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SUMMARY

This research project will investigate the contemporary Jewish Diaspora with a focus on the cultural conditions of identity, lifestyle and ritual. A series of photographic images will explore the microcosm of a minority social group within one geographically contained Melbourne Jewish Community locale.

The locale selected is Carlisle Street, Balaclava, as for the past fifty years there has been a relatively high concentration of Jewish residents living in that area. However, both the street and the local neighbourhood are currently undergoing changes that reflect the more recent Jewish and non-Jewish migration patterns and a younger more affluent generation moving into the surrounding areas. My photography-based exploration will concentrate on the intersection between identity and place in contemporary multicultural society, and will articulate how one minority community is currently responding to global, national and internal pressures towards cultural, economic and socio-political homogeneity.
This research project will investigate the contemporary Jewish Diaspora with a focus on the cultural conditions of place, identity, lifestyle and ritual. The investigation will be restricted to Carlisle Street, Balaclava. For fifty years there has been a noticeably high concentration of Jewish residents in the surrounding suburbs of Balaclava. But both the street itself and the local neighbourhoods are currently undergoing changes that reflect the more recent Jewish and non-Jewish migration and residential patterns.

Within the investigation I will examine the connections between the Jewish identity of Carlisle Street, and the cultural changes that are taking place in the street such as: the changing nature of the shopping precinct, the type of people populating the street, the use of the street and the effect this has on the social conditions of identity, lifestyle and ritual.

The work will take the form of visual reports that will investigate the people, objects, signs and inscriptions in Carlisle Street as an example of how one small segment of the global Jewish Diaspora have constructed their version of ethnicity and community in an Australian context. The photographic overview of the contemporary streetscape will provide an illustrative case study of broader processes of immigrants building a community. Carlisle Street with its established institutions, services and shops, all
meeting the particular ethnic needs of a diverse range of migrant communities is an example of a streetscape where Jews have imprinted their unique, albeit multifaceted, identity. Here, the expressly particular group needs of both secular and orthodox Jewishness is expressed in the street through artefacts, symbols and signs.

The project aims to research the rituals of orthodox and secular Jews by researching objects that are reflected in the artefacts and food available in the shopfronts. I will do this through photographing twenty five Jewish people of different immigrant and cultural backgrounds, gender, age, sex and differing levels of engagement in the ritual and practice of being Jewish (but who regularly spend time shopping, strolling and socialising in the environs of Carlisle Street, Balaclava).

The current timing of the project is of great importance as the street is currently undergoing changes which are reflected in renovations and additions to the shopfronts and service outlets.
BACKGROUND

Contemporary Diaspora is central to discussions of issues around Jewish migration, settlement and identity. Diaspora refers to the “Displacement, movement and separation of people,” (Sheffer, 2003: p xii) who previously were geographically concentrated in one area or region but who now maintain a strong sense of their former identity in new and sometimes very different locations. The Jewish Diaspora, historically one of the oldest, describes the trans-national totality of people who continue to identify themselves as Jewish. Traditionally, maintaining this sense of personal and social identity has been anchored in subjective feelings of connectedness to a distinctive national-religious culture (Judaism/the Jewish people). More recently amplified by the emergence of the modern Zionist movement (since the end of the eighteen century), in Europe and many other parts of the world, these Jewish loci for personal and social identity have become intertwined with processes of emancipation and secularisation. As a consequence an overwhelming majority of world Jewry are now, to a large extent, “Rooted in secular national culture” (Sheffer, 2003: xi).

Currently, one of the most crucial issues for ethnically self-conscious members of the contemporary Jewish Diaspora is its continuity and survival.

The development over long periods of other similar historical and modern ethno-national Diasporas that are also experiencing the impact of globalisation, regionalisation, and internal
challenges in their new host countries, suggests that many survive, and some may even experience revival (Sheffer, 2003: x).

Sheffer (2003, 239) concludes that, the Jewish Diaspora is similar to many other ethno-national diasporas and it is unlikely to disappear in the near future. However, the influence of secularisation in Israel as well as in the Diaspora has meant that religiously observant or orthodox Jews now constitute a minority within all contemporary communities throughout the world. In Looking Jewish, Simon Schama noted that, "It is the impurity of Jewish life, the ragged edge that frays into the surrounding culture". Schama’s observations could apply to what is visible in Carlisle Street. In his discussion of Frederic Brenner’s photographic work, Schama refers to a “soft focus definition of Jewishness,” (Schama 1996, iv) whereby it is necessary, in visualising the Jewish Diaspora, to move beyond the orthodox Jews. This is important, because a great deal of the photography of Jews has been of the orthodox Jew, which is assumed to represent all Jewish people.

The Jewish Diaspora located in Carlisle Street is made up of the orthodox and secular groups integrated into the social context in which they live. The orthodox focuses on maintaining their traditional religious culture, whilst the secular treads between the host country, community and the Jewish religious traditions of food, education, ritual and synagogues (with varying degrees of religiosity).

Brenner’s work is particularly relevant to my research project as he observes (through photography), the interconnections between Israel and the Diaspora by commenting on Jewish immigrants who have transplanted Diasporic centres into Israel itself. Brenner’s works have also dealt with the nature of
Diasporic Jewish (particularly Orthodox) communities who aim to be ‘next year in Jerusalem’ but have at the same time established very permanent settlements within host countries. These settlements are not static or singular but include multiple communities within a community. Fredric Brenner’s representation of the Diaspora Jew reflects “a portable identity” (Kaplan 2005, 150) that has been transported, transplanted and established in countries outside of Israel.

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1 In Orthodox Judaism, the longing to be ‘next year in Jerusalem’ is a prayer that is recited by practicing Jew’s to express the longing to be in Israel.
RESEARCH

Formal bibliographic research will begin with a survey of photographers, artists and writers who have examined issues of community and more specifically notions of the Jewish Diaspora in Australia and overseas. Ongoing relationships with the Jewish Museum in Melbourne will enable me to conduct a focussed investigation of their collections and archives, and consider how other photographers have photographed the Jewish identity of Melbourne.

Technical and visual research will determine the most suitable way to photograph the subjects. Consideration of the conventions of documentary photography in relation to this project. Issues such as framing, composition, location, scale, perspective, staging and other formal qualities inherent in contemporary documentary photography will be considered.
LOCATION

The project will be based in Melbourne, and will draw on the resources and facilities of the School of Art at RMIT University. The photography will be done on location in Carlisle Street, in shops, studios and homes. Post production work will be completed in my studio and utilising the facilities of the Fine Art Photography Studio area on the city campus.
RATIONALE

There has been considerable photographic work produced on the Jewish Diaspora, dealing with a diverse range of Jewish communities in different parts of the world. ²

Fredric Brenner’s work is particularly relevant to my research as he not only looks at the Diaspora outside of Israel but also documents how communities have transplanted Diasporic centres into Israel itself. Chiefly, his work reflects the nature of communities who aim to be ‘next year in Jerusalem’ but at the same time have established very permanent settlements within host countries. These are not static or singular, but reveal multiple communities within a community. In relation to the Diaspora, Frederic Brenner reveals a transported, transplanted and established “portable identity” of Diasporic Jews in his photographic work (Brenner, 1996 xiii).

The issue of community is central to this project. Through photography, this project aims to create a mirror and window effect, whereby the image can expose the community to itself. Louis Kaplan’s book *American Exposures, Photography and Community in the Twentieth Century* (2005), investigated the role of photography as a medium that is able to represent communities to mirror their life as a community and simultaneously revealing this to the outside world.

My project will examine Jewish settlement and immigration and as a representation of broader immigration processes in contemporary nation states in general and Australia in particular. In doing so I will explore and represent Jews living in the Australian segment of the Jewish Diaspora, and how they have constructed ethnicity and community. Carlisle Street, Balaclava is explored as an illustrative example and case study of the broader process of immigrant adaptation and community building with Jews setting up their own local environment constituted by institutions, services and shops to meet their particular group needs. The project will consider the ways that Australian Jews are adapting to the current changes to services in the street. My research will culminate in photographs exploring the people, objects, signs, and inscriptions reflecting Jewish life in Carlisle Street. An examination of how secular and orthodox Judaism is expressed in the street, through artefacts, symbols and signs will also be explored in my work.
RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. In what ways can documentary photography reveal and expose Jewishness in the Diasporic conditions of Carlisle Street, Balaclava?

2. What is the impact of urbanisation on Jewish communities as identified by this project in terms of the three cultural conditions: identity, lifestyle and ritual?
METHODS:

Stage 1: March to December 2006 (10 months)

- Formal bibliographical research
- Historical research of artists that have been engaged in conversation about and the visualisation of migration and its reflection on the streetscape - an examination of the theatre of the street
- Historical research of place including: research around Jewish settlement in the environs of St Kilda; Jewish waves of migration into the area; globalisation as a manifestation of migration and its effects on the local communities connected with Carlisle Street, Balaclava
- Examination of key texts related to migration and sense of place, notions of Diaspora and attitudes towards integration
- Contextualisation of art and contemporary imaging of socio-political issues relating to identity, locality and community
- Ethics application and clearance

(A request for Leave Of Absence was obtained for February to June, 2007)
Stage 2: July - September 2007 (7 months)

- Locate and recruit the participants for this project through friends and acquaintances
- Discuss idea of the project at first meeting with each of the participants to make sure of their levels of comfort with project and idea of their portraits being included in my Masters exhibition
- Call the participants to arrange to email or post the plain language statement that outlines details of the project and explain what they are required to do
- Give consent forms to each of the participants to sign to gain their consent for inclusion in the project. Give participants a timeline so that they are aware of the time required for their participation in the project
- Follow this up with an informal meeting with each of the participants where I will briefly photograph them, so that I can decipher whether or not they are appropriate for the project and they can decide whether they want to continue their involvement
- Decide on the final participants and commence the project once they have agreed to participate and signed the consent form
- Research physical layout of Carlisle Street, visual and depictions of the surrounding area
Stage 3: September - October 2007

- Send out plain language statement and consent forms to discuss, read and sign
- Do a practice shoot of the participants, and their surroundings in the street
- Analyse the photographs making sure they are all appropriate for the project
- Send out project descriptions and timelines of when the subjects will be required
- Organise interview-photographing dates
- Photograph participants
- Capture all footage
- Work with audio and images of interviews
- Process film and scan negatives
- Organise exhibition space for final exhibition
- Ongoing research into Jewish iconography, signs and symbols in food and artefacts

Stage 4: October 2007 – February 2008

- Continue work on photographs with emphasis on the lateral expressions of Jewish rituals in the face of globalisation and food as a symbol of the acceptance of migration
- Commence work on ADR
- Commence printing
- Work on feedback from participants
Stage 5: March - June 2008

- Design invitations for both email and card dissemination
- Write press release
- Do mail-out for the show
- Collate all information and work to produce a catalogue
- Get photographs printed
- Hire necessary equipment for the exhibition
- ADR ready for examiners
- Exhibition date to be confirmed
- Have work professionally documented

Submission of Masters project: end of June 2008.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

All photographs printed on Ilford Smooth Pearl, 290 gsm.

*BATCH* Crossings and Intersections (series of 7 photographs) 35 - 36
Yossi, Yaacov and Michal Klein
2006 - 2008
Photographs
Dimensions variable

**SIMSON EXTERIORS - optometrists** (series of 5 photographs) 37 - 38
Brinah and Sean Simson
2006 - 2007
Photographs
Dimensions variable

**SIMSON INTERIORS - optometrists** (series of 5 photographs) 39 - 40
Brinah and Sean Simson
2008
Photographs
Dimensions variable
JOSIES Opportunity Shop - past lives (series of 8 photographs)
Josies Charitable Trust run by volunteers
2007-2008
Photographs
Dimensions variable

FLOWERS FROM GAN EDEN (series of 6 photographs)
Leah Benzur
2007 - 2008
Photographs
Dimensions variable

THE MAZELTOV BOOK & GIFT SHOP (Series of 13 photographs)
Jacob Legarda
2007 - 2008
Photographs
Variable dimensions
HUDSON (series of 5 photographs)  
Nikki Hall  
2007 - 2008  
Photographs  
Variable dimensions  

SHOE REPAIRS, 290 Carlisle Street (series of 4 photographs)  
Serge  
2007 - 2008  
Photographs  
Variable dimensions  

Photographs that have been made in the process of research  
Various locations on Carlisle Street (series of 21 photographs)  
2007 - 2008  
Photographs  
Variable dimensions  

Support documentation of project by Cathy Henenberg (2008)
CURRICULUM VITAE

EDUCATION

2006 - 2008  MASTER OF ARTS
SCHOOL OF ART
DESIGN AND SOCIAL CONTEXT
RMIT UNIVERSITY

2005  HONOURS DEGREE (MEDIA ARTS)
SCHOOL OF ART & CULTURE
RMIT UNIVERSITY
2003 - 2004  
**BACHELOR OF ARTS (MEDIA ARTS)**  
SCHOOL OF ART & CULTURE  
RMIT UNIVERSITY

1999 - 2002  
**DIPLOMA OF ILLUSTRATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY**  
PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIES COLLEGE  
AWARDED BOND IMAGING PRIZE FOR EXCELLENCE

1964 - 1968  
**DIPLOMA OF SOCIAL STUDIES**  
(SOCIAL WORK)  
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2006  
THE FABRIC OF MEMORY  
Volunteers, Survivors, and Descendants  
JEWISH HOLOCAUST MUSEUM and RESEARCH, MELBOURNE  
(February 26 - May 5)

2005  
CARLISLE STREET/a diversity of belonging  
JEWISH MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, MELBOURNE  
(September 4 – October 2)
2004  CROWDS AND CLOUDS
A collaborative exhibition with Chrissy Gant
Contemplation-Rhythm-Formation-Introspection
FIRST SITE, RMIT UNION GALLERY, MELBOURNE
(June 2 – 12)
2004

THE ECHO OF SHRINKING SPACES
A journey with my father experiencing dementia.
JEWISH MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA, MELBOURNE
(April 25 – May 16)

2004

EVANESCENCE
A meditation on a moment fading.
GOLD STREET STUDIOS, MELBOURNE
(March 31 – May 2)
GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2006

UN URBAN
Group Exhibition of Honours Students of 2006
Fine Art Photography, RMIT School of Art
McCULLOCH GALLERY, MELBOURNE
(March 27 - April 16)

2005

INKED
Works on Paper by the artists of
The Baldessin Press & Pharos Editions
THE LONG GALLERY, MONTSALVAT, MELBOURNE
(August 2 – September 12)

2004

BETWEEN HERE AND NOW
Graduate Media Arts Photo-Media Exhibition
SMYRNIO GALLERY, MELBOURNE
(October 26 – November 6)
2004

FORGET ME NOT
RMIT School of Art students
Alzheimer’s’ Association of Australia (VIC), for Dementia Week

DOMAIN HOUSE, MELBOURNE
(September 18 – 28)

2003

PULSE 2003
FIRST YEAR MEDIA ARTS Fine Arts Imaging Group Exhibition

THE ARTERY, MELBOURNE
(November 7 – 14)

2003

CONFLICT
LACUNA, MELBOURNE
artist run space
Patrick Nicolaci, Brett Cappello & Shoshanna Jordan
Concurrently exhibited as part of TRAM STOP
Sydney Road, Brunswick
(October 2 – 9)
2003

STUDENT of the YEAR
Travelling Exhibition
ROYAL ARCADE, MELBOURNE
(January 2003)

2002

PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIES COLLEGE, MELBOURNE
Graduate Exhibition
(December 2002)
PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACEPT), Melbourne
Two images, Birds & Skies series

Aurora Spa, Melbourne
Three images, Birds & Skies series

Israel – Private Collections

USA - Private Collections
PUBLICATIONS

Allen & Unwin, Sydney

Venus Bay Books, Melbourne