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Other Spaces: migration, objects and archives

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Other Spaces is a collaborative creative arts exhibition project that explores visual and material expressions of cultural identity with a particular focus on museum collections. This project aims to provide a rich examination – visual, emotional and intellectual – of the multiple cultural narratives that contribute to the social fabric of Australia through a unique marriage of contemporary photomedia and creative writing practice. This project explores the ways that migrants and refugees have found to express their cultural identity through the material objects they have brought with them to Australia. Many of these objects are not only of great personal value but often of cultural, historical and religious significance. Some are very ordinary everyday objects but they can be highly evocative and symbolic of the relationship between culture and identity, and between the places of origin and an individual's present home in Australia. This article, through a combination of photography, creative text and scholarly discussion, will focus specifically on Italo-Australian migrants and on some of the material objects that they have donated to museum collections, and use these objects to explore notions of cultural belonging and identity.

Keywords: creative arts; material culture; museums; Italian migration

Other Spaces is a collaborative project, a marriage of creative photomedia and writing (large-scale colour photographs and textual narratives in the form of vignettes, examples of which are found in this article[1]) that are intended for exhibition at the Immigration Museum, in Melbourne.

As photomedia artist (Duggan) and creative writer (Gandolfo) we have come together through a mutual interest in creative arts and practice-led research, and a desire to explore visual and material expressions of cultural identity with a particular focus on museum collections. While the broader project investigates a range of objects originating from various refugee and migrant cultures, this article focuses specifically on Italian migrants and the objects they have donated to two collecting institutions in Australia: Museum Victoria, which includes a vast collection of objects relating to the migration history in Victoria, and the Italian Historical Society, both based in Melbourne.

In this article, we explore the theoretical and philosophical ideas generated by and linked to the research, which we have fed back into the production of these creative works. This approach forces us to rethink and re-imagine our engagement with material culture and history and to respond to the complex inter-connections and relationships between the

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objects, their history, their location, their symbolic, metaphorical and cultural meanings, as well as their imagined and documented narratives. This kind of work by its very nature is multidisciplinary and the research is necessarily interwoven with studies of material culture, museology, culture and identity. The photomedia works and vignettes are a poetic rather than a literal response (Eisner 2008), and they are included here as an example of the works created for an exhibition.

For this project, which involves both the making and the exhibiting of original creative works, we have considered the objects in situ – in the archives and stores of the museums – both to serve as a reminder of the authority charged to the museum, and to consider the strange juxtapositions of these 'things'. This work draws a critical link between the enormity of the 'behind the scenes' machinery and organisation that is employed to bring objects to the public, and the objects themselves.

Most migrants and refugees arrive in their new countries with some material possessions (depending, of course, on the circumstances of their departure from the homeland). These include not only objects that they think they may need for their survival, but also those that are 'reminders of who they are and where they come from (Parkin 1999, 313). These objects, inscribed with memories, emotions, connections and stories, convey and express aspects of both personal and cultural identity (Rappoport 1981; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988; Pulvirenti 1997; Serrano 2004).

Arriving in Australia as migrants, many Italians brought with them material objects of personal value. These often very ordinary, everyday 'things' can be highly evocative and symbolic of the relationship between the notion of 'home' and identity. Since settling in Australia, Italians like other migrants, have visually expressed their cultural and ethnic identity through the material objects they have chosen to keep and display. Until recently, this expression has been mostly private and intimate, contained within



Figure 1. Other Spaces #2, chromogenic photograph. © Jo-Anne Duggan.
HT 21557 lives on a shelf, in a storeroom, in the back of the museum; it waits alongside barber's tools, house keys from Turkey, a schoolbook and a bible, designer shoes and antique sewing machines. The young curator puts on white gloves to lift the lid. 'The dress was commissioned by her mother', she tells us. 'It has been cleaned, frozen and archived.' We stand back. As she reveals the wedding dress – white lace, pearl buttons, a tiny waist – my memories unfold . . . [2].

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very particular family, commercial (small businesses such as restaurants) and community settings:

> Monuments and statues are popular furnishings in Italo-Australian households . . . it is common to find twin white lions guarding the entrances to Italian homes . . . clear markers of ethnicity in the Australian suburban landscape. (Baldassar 2006, 47)

However, increasingly Italian migrants, and their children born in Australia, are donating some of these objects to museums. The selection and donation of these possessions to public collections is a significant and active means of constructing, producing and reproducing cultural identity; a way of reinforcing, challenging and shaping cultural narratives and cultural memories. Caitlin DeSilvey, commenting on the relationship between artefacts, museums and cultural memory, writes:

> . . . in order for the object to function as a bearer of cultural memory it must be held in perpetuity in a state of protected stasis. Acts of counting, sorting, stacking, storing and inventory convert things from the category of 'stuff' to the status of museum object . . . . Conservation technologies slow or halt physical decay, while interpretive strategies present the objects as elements of a static, unchanging past. (2006, 326)

In the museum's collection these personal objects, rescued from dusty attics and sheds, from spare rooms and the back of cupboards, from kitchen benches and bedroom walls are cleaned, decontaminated, treated for mould and microbes and placed in climate-controlled, rodent-proofed storage areas (DeSilvey 2006, 326). They are transformed from personal objects to public ones, from 'personal possessions into modern relics [that have] broader social and cultural significance' (Albano 2007, 18). They are reconstituted and reconceptualised sometimes several times over in different contexts as part of various exhibits. So a wedding dress might become an evocative centrepiece in an Italian migrant narrative and then part of another exhibit on lace-making, and later resurface again in an exhibit on traditions and rituals. These private possessions may be of little intrinsic value and some might not even be visually interesting, but in the museum they become artefacts and a new cultural value is ascribed to them. As part of a collection, housed in an authenticating space, the object is allocated a function and status in accordance with its privileged surroundings. Forever conserved, displayed and/or archived these objects take on a greater presence and resonance.

The creative text and artworks that we have produced, and the public collections and exhibitions, such as those at the museums, are not merely a 'mirror held up to reflect what already exists but [are a] form of representation' (Hall 1990, 402) that allows for the ongoing production and reproduction of cultural identity, not just as a reflection of the past but as a projection into the future. Cultural identity, as Stuart Hall argues, is fluid and multiple:

> . . . belong[ing] to a future as much as a past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But like everything which is historical they undergo constant transformation . . . they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (1990, 393)

This notion of identity is based on diversity and on hybridity; it is constructed within representation and within language, rather than outside it. *Other Spaces* acknowledges and interacts with the constant making and remaking, construction and reconstruction of identity – individual and cultural.

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In *Other Spaces* we not only assert that identity – individual and cultural – is in a constant process of being made and remade, constructed and reconstructed but we actively interact with and intervene in this process. For us the narratives and histories associated with and brought to mind by these objects are always in part fictional. By presenting, as in the vignette that follows, multiple narratives and voices, we reflect the way that, for museum viewers, objects inevitably bring to mind known personal and cultural stories as well as imagined ones and in that way they elicit various interpretations that may respond to and/or react against the dominant narratives and cultural identities; that may respond to and/or react against the narratives presented by the exhibitions themselves:

> mi ricordo – di vestiti e merletto[3]
> My grandfather takes his 18 year old daughter – the most beautiful, the fairest, the most delicate, the daughter that makes him laugh, that cannot cook, that is not too keen on sewing – all the way to the ship. They talk only of the weather, the passing landscape; neither of them mentions the ocean that will separate them, the mock wedding, or the husband in Australia. They kiss good-bye. He only starts crying after they have separated and he is back on the train. She goes to bed and does not get up for three days. My favourite aunt was a proxy bride. She refused to talk about her marriage and a man who was not patiently waiting.
> *
> My mother's wedding dress, hired for the day, exists only in the pink hues of sepia photographs.
> *
> I am a miniature. Almost a replica, bite size, of my aunt, the bride. My dress is gathered at the waist and when I turn, it spins. The lace is a swirl of flowers, of patterns. But in this dress I get caught on things too easily. I'm not allowed to play, not allowed to spin. I am three years old and it is my job, in my white lace dress, to lead my aunt to the altar. (Section from Enza Gandolfo's vignettes)

From the late 1800s, Italians have migrated to countries such as Australia, America, Germany and Canada in search of work and the possibility of a better more affluent life. Italian migrants began arriving in Australia in significant numbers after the First World War, 'pushed out of Italy by severe economic difficulties and rising political disquiet' (Baldassar 2005, 852) and no longer able to go as easily to the United States because of the 1920s migration restrictions. There was a larger wave of Italian migration to Australia following the Second World War and, like those who had come earlier, most 'migrated primarily in search of a better income . . . [though] ultimately intended (initially at least) to establish themselves back in the homeland' (Baldassar 2005, 854). While many did return, most stayed in Australia and now Australians of Italian descent make up 4.5% of the Australian population (ABS 2006).

Life for the Italian migrants and both their Italian-born and Australian-born children was often difficult. They not only struggled with language, as most of them spoke no English when they came to Australia, but also with the prejudice against them:

> [The] view of Italians as racially inferior, where, in Anglo Saxon countries, Italian labourers were not regarded as 'white men', ensured that Italian migrants encountered overt prejudice in Australia until very recent times.[4] The presumed inferiority of Italians was reinforced by their position as unskilled labourers in agriculture and construction . . . Clustered at the unskilled end of the labour chain, they were regarded as an economic threat by Australian workers and their organisations, as willing to work for low wages and live on 'the smell of an oily rag' . . .
>
> Feared for their difference, misunderstood and despised as 'Dagos' . . . Italians had an uneasy entry into Australian nationhood . . . [there were] the largely pejorative set of connotations

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Figure 2. Other Spaces #8, chromogenic photograph, © Jo-Anne Duggan.

> associated with 'being Italian' in the past – dirty, dangerous, darkskinned, uncultured and untrustworthy . . . (Baldassar 2004, 1)

The 'assimilationist doctrines and practices' (Baldassar and Pesman 2005, 104) of 1950s, '60s and '70s Australia have virtually disappeared. The introduction of, and increased amounts of funding for, cultural projects and research over the last 40 years has not only begun to reflect the diversity among all migrant groups including the Italian community but demonstrates an ongoing commitment to redressing gaps and silences in the cultural and historical records.

The establishment of immigration museums such as the one in Melbourne, which opened in 1998, reflects this desire to recognise and acknowledge at a public level the contribution made by migrants and that the migration experience is integral to Australia's national history and identity. This shift, as Loretta Baldassar suggests, has finally made it possible for 'the younger members of the ''second [and third], generation[s]'', who came of age with multicultural social policies, [to] experience pride in their ethnic backgrounds' (Baldassar and Pesman 2005, 161) and to begin to take an interest in their history, a shift that also reflects in the recent practice of donating the family's memorabilia.[5]

Over a period of several months, we visited the Italian Historical Society and Museum Victoria. At the Italian Historical Society in Carlton we looked through displays and catalogues and at Museum Victoria, with the assistance of their Senior Curator Migration History & Technology, we trawled through the collection database. Some objects came with stories, with life histories attached; some stories had been transcribed, for example, in elaborate albums by younger generations or surviving family members, others by curators in museum databases. More often, however, there was only a short descriptor: 'cooking pot', 'jewellery box' and the surname of the donating family. We chose items that had a resonance for us at a creative level – either of us – noting down their item number and location and then, armed with this list, and with the assistance of the curator, we visited the museum stores in Carlton and Brunswick to look at the actual object in situ.

In creating works for the exhibition our response to these objects has been mostly intuitive, based on our imaginative and sensory responses, on the series of memories,

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images and emotions they generated for each of us, and by the processes of making the work itself – by taking the photographs and writing the vignettes:

> Arts-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expression . . . as a primary way of understanding and examining experience . . . (McNiff 2008, 32)

Originally this study sought to examine only those objects donated by Italians that had actually been brought to Australia from Italy. Those that were considered 'transitional objects' to borrow David Parkin's phrase, that 'take the place of interpersonal relations . . . [and act as] a depository of sentiment and cultural knowledge' (1999, 317). However, the research undertaken at Museum Victoria and the Italian Historical Society revealed that the collections encompassed not only objects brought from Italy or accumulated on the journey, but also those of significance that were acquired or created after arriving in Australia. And that these 'Australian' objects, like a cane cutter's machete for example, which is reminiscent of Italian involvement in the sugar industry in North Queensland, contribute an important part to the story of migration and resettlement, a story that the Italo-Australian community wants told and acknowledged.

There is an extensive and diverse range of objects donated to these collections including tools, diaries, toys, crockery, glory boxes, furniture, coffee pots, a pasta maker, a pail for polenta, some thimbles, a sewing machine, knitting needles, a typewriter, barber's scissors, a flag, jewellery, cook books, a tailor's manual, pipes, needlecraft, postcards and a book of poems by Garibaldi. These objects, as Susan Pearce explains, have 'the power in some sense to carry the past into the present by virtue of their "real" relationship to past events' (1992, 24). They allow us to ephemerally inhabit a world that is not our own and provide intimate connections between individuals and another's cultural heritage. As Stephen Greenblatt expansively describes, objects have the power, 'to reach out beyond [their] formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged' (1991, 42).

There are many ways in which objects signify, both in their original locations and in the museum. Daniel Miller (2008), for example, suggests that cooking utensils can be infused with ancestry, or jewellery may have attached memories. The very materiality of objects, the worn patina or threadbare textures can be a metaphor for attachment, absence and loss. In discussing the nature and relationship of these 'biographical objects', Caterina Albano writes:

> Clothes and other personal items are conventionally fetishized, because of their close association with a person. Garments and clothes fathom the presence of their owner and bear the signs of use . . . Clothes, in fact, literalize the notion of embodiment by showing the traces left by the body. They tell us, through their physicality – shape, condition, texture, colour, and smell – about another absent physicality, that of the person who wore them. Displaying lives: the narrative of objects in biographical exhibitions. (2007, 20)

At the same time, the characteristics of objects also denote other less embodied bonds, as Margaret Anderson explains: 'bridal clothing or christening gowns can speak powerfully of family ceremonies, of life-cycle rituals, or even women's skill with a needle' (1997, 7).

Certainly some of the objects that the Italo-Australian community has donated, or which have been collected by the museum, are predictable ones; mostly these tend to be personal, domestic or work-related, reflecting aspects of the migrants' daily life, of shared and 'remembered traditional rituals' (Baldassar and Pesman 2005, 121). Others, however,

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Figure 3. Other Spaces #9, chromogenic photograph, © Jo-Anne Duggan.

are inscribed with different and often conflicting stories. A small tin containing a collection of sporting medals belonging to an Italian woman who migrated to Melbourne in the 1960s, for example, challenged the stereotype of the peasant woman interested only in cooking and craft. In contrast, a wedding dress belonging to a Calabrian proxy bride tells the story of a particular journey of migration that had previously been largely absent from public discourse. Together with these, the other objects that were especially evocative were a set of religious medals, a schoolbook, several trunks and a pair of shoes.

These stories – retold in the *Other Spaces* project through both text and images: 'highlight the difference and particularity of context, eschewing the generalizing and homogenizing tendencies of identity politics . . . the individual story, whether told through . . . fiction [or photographs] serves as a challenge and a countermemory to official hegemonic history. (Hirsch and Smith 2002, 7)

Other Spaces uses the 'local, the immediate and the personal' (Lipsitz 1990, 213) to challenge not only the official hegemonic history but the idea that one history or one narrative exists. As George Lipsitz writes:

> Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that totality, *counter-memory* starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story. *Counter-memory* looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives. But unlike myths that seek to detach events and actions from the fabric of any larger history, *counter-memory* forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past. *Counter-memory* embodies aspects of myth and aspects of history, but it retains an enduring suspicion of both categories. *Counter-memory* focuses on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience. (1990, 213)

By taking objects and representing and re-presenting them visually and through fictional texts, the aim is to bring into question the dominant narratives and to challenge notions of the universal experience of migration and the universal experience of being Italian in Australia.

After gaining access to the collections, it was soon obvious that because of their ubiquity, some of these objects (suitcases and tools, for example) did not always speak

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Figure 4. Other Spaces #4, chromogenic photograph, © Jo-Anne Duggan.
All the women in my family have glory boxes. Wooden trunks or suitcases filled with lace trimmed nighties and petticoats, with crochet doilies and table runners, with embroidered linen and towels. On wet Melbourne afternoons, my grandmother would wash my little girl's hands, open her glory box and let the stories pour out. (Section from Enza Gandolfo's vignettes.)

directly of italianità (Italianess). While they do communicate aspects of identity and memory they are not essentially culturally specific and more likely to be reflective of the complexity and challenges facing migrants and their children as they explored their individual and cultural identity in their new homeland. This supports Miller's assertion that things 'often have little to do with any . . . formal distinctions of [cultural] identity' (2008, 180) and that there are real limitations to and assumptions about identity based on country of origin or migration. He contends, 'Identity and culture increasingly look vestigial rather than determinant of the order of things' (2008, 289). However, these objects do give us some insight into the point of connection between the personal and the collective or cultural, and it is this association that enables museums to use personal objects as interpretive devices to represent both the broader contexts of culture, migration and history, as well as intimate aspects of the human condition.

Returning to Hall's argument and the production of identity, the more specific questions might be: in what ways do the objects people choose to donate to the museum reflect the production and reproduction of cultural identity for members of the Italian community? What have they chosen to remember and forget? What do they want to have recorded and acknowledged? What are they prepared to discard? And what do they consider of cultural value? What is the nature of the cultural identity they are aiming to create? As Pulvirenti (1997) argues in her examination of Italian migrant experiences of housing:

> . . . it is not a culture that emerges from some innate 'Italian-ness' transported from Italy through international migration. Rather, it is a culture which was and is continually created and recreated . . . . (1997, 33)

It is important to acknowledge that there may be a number of motivations prompting the decision to donate a relative's personal objects to a museum. As Anat Hecht explains, it 'can also act as a means of symbolic self-completion, especially at times

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Figure 5. Other Spaces #10, chromogenic photograph, © Jo-Anne Duggan.
My grandmother had a blue crepe dress made-to-order by a local dressmaker. The woman came to the house, and circled my grandmother with the tape measure, she wrote figures in a notebook, flung fabrics across the kitchen table. There were two fittings. The dress had a sweetheart neckline and a row of tiny blue buttons. My grandmother, who only ever wore black, wrapped the dress in tissue and packed it into the drawer under the couch in the lounge-room. This was the same room where every morning my grandmother lit candles in front of the photographs of her dead son, brother and husband; where relatives were seated on Saturday and Sunday when they came to visit, to show their respects; where my brother and I were too scared to go on our own. Some nights when I was sleeping over, my grandmother would urge me into this room then she would open the drawer and show me the dress she wanted to be buried in. (Section from Enza Gandolfo's vignettes.)

of bereavement', as well as enabling the donor to maintain and share his/her family's history (2001, 137). It is a means of preserving and presenting the narratives and materials of their past. Whatever the motivation, once these personal possessions are part of a public collection they resonate with cultural connections, and become a significant way to construct public cultural identities. The act of donating these personal objects to public institutions seems, at least on the surface, to demonstrate a sense of belonging – finally – a feeling of being able to trust institutions such as the museum with personal and cultural stories.

In the museum, these mementos that speak of torn relationships with homelands and uncertain times during relocation become the centrepiece for a series of different relationships and interpretations between the donor and that of the collecting institution, and ultimately those of the museum viewer. Employed by the museum these objects can facilitate various forms of learning and engagement regarding migration, history and cultural diversity. They may also portray aspects of the country's ethnic, economic, social or moral developments and are progressively used as a means to promote harmony and tolerance. Museums like the Immigration Museum are sites for shaping ideas about social conduct, and are not only relegated to issues concerning the distant past but also those of more recent times. However, in contemporary culture the museum remains a politicised and commercialised entity. Its mission is manifold: while providing a sanctuary for the collections that it houses and taking an educative role, it must also cater for the needs of its

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audiences, and increasingly be responsible for its own financial longevity, and responsive to government policy:

> ... museums are able to manipulate ... objects on their own terms in ways that make new realities perceptible and available for mobilization in the shaping and reshaping of social relationships. (Bennett 2005, 257)

The conceptual umbrella under which the objects appear to the public, the didactics and juxtapositions, the lighting, the physical contexts, the building structure and interior design all affect the viewers' reading, understanding and experience. Museums shape the viewers' engagement through a series of 'calculative practices' (Bennett 2009, 102): information they provide, their policies and mechanisms of display, text panels, catalogues, audio commentaries and laconic labels. They continually develop strategies to enrich their audience's intellectual, visual and cultural experiences. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill writes that museums provide information that enables 'the construction of personal relevance' (1999, x). However, while the museum is influential and instrumental in the interpretation of each object any understanding is complicated by the viewers themselves as they bring their own varying interpretive propensities, determined by their own ethnicity, agendas and subjectivities.

Beyond their actual presence and materiality, these objects express, communicate and conjure meaning not only about an individual, a past and a culture in which they are produced, but also about the culture that chooses to collect and represent them. And it cannot be forgotten that museums, especially museums such as the Melbourne Immigration Museum that have as part of their mandate the responsibility of giving voice and presence to otherwise untold and invisible stories, are institutions governed by their own politics as well as those of the government of the day (Hutchison 2009; Witcomb 2009). Their exhibits narrate particular stories in particular ways and leave out other stories and other histories.

Other Spaces conjures the multiple layers of interpretation and experience evoked by objects. Even though any understanding of objects in museums is based not only on the individual embedded within her/his own personal knowledge, past experience, various interests, tastes and cultural beliefs, but also and relatedly on the wider societal and institutional practices of their time, this work reminds us that how things are seen, received, questioned, interpreted, intuited and remembered is relative to one's own self. And that meanings of objects remain 'contingent, fluid' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000, 10) and mutable attributes that we have both responded to and reflected on in this creative project. The creative works – photographs and text – invite recognition 'that individuals and groups can have several identities simultaneously' (Farago and Preziosi 2009, 8). And therefore multiple stories:

> Italian wedding. Five hundred guests at Sanremo Ballroom. The bride is the sister of my aunt's brother-in-law, I've only met her once. My hair is set and I am wearing a long velvet dress with giant flowers – they remind me of The Day of the Triffids. My mother made the dress and my father says I am not grateful enough. I am fifteen and fat and I stand out too much.
>
> *
>
> We made the decision to marry one morning at Victoria Market as we walked from the vegetable section towards the cheeses. We had bought the house. We were planning a life together but my family were still ignoring him. We are going to marry in a registry office, I told my mother. Just immediate family. Then lunch. No church. No party. No fancy 'meringue' wedding dress. No walking down the aisle. His mother asked, Is it a real wedding?

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Figure 6. Other Spaces #6, chromogenic photograph, © Jo-Anne Duggan.

> Will it count? My mother was caught between relief and outrage, but before I knew it she had bought fabric and made me wedding dress – short not long, ivory not white, no hoops or wires – all lace. (Section from Enza Gandolfo's vignettes)

Our interest in objects, especially in the museum context, is how complex and multifaceted they are and can be. *Other Spaces* creates a multilayered reflection not only on the physical substance of the objects of our research, but also on what lies implicit in these objects in the context of the archive, which is itself a multicultural, multilayered, 'other' space. The text and images are an imaginative exploration of the symbolic, metaphoric and material nature of the objects, their journey to the museum and the way they can be, and have been, used to construct and produce cultural identities and cultural narratives. *Other Spaces* draws attention to these multiple narratives that are central to the migrant experience, which cannot be easily categorised or theorised, and as an embodied experience is diverse and often difficult to articulate. The exhibition project provides the viewer and reader with a visual, emotional and sensorial experience, and another way of thinking through issues of culture, history and representation. As philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guttari argue: 'Art, like science and philosophy, is one of the ways we think through the issues, questions and concerns that confront us both as individuals and as communities' (1991, 198).

What can a proxy bride's wedding dress, a tin containing a collection of sports medals, a set of religious medals, a schoolbook, several trunks and a pair of shoes tell us about the nature of Italo-Australian identity? Italian-ness in the Australian context is often reduced to stereotypes related to food or customs (Harney 2006). By taking these everyday objects, which have been donated by Italo-Australians to the museum, and accepted by the museum as worthy of collection and then exploring their personal meanings we create a space in which the 'objects in all their singularity might operate dynamically to create dialogue across different ways of seeing . . .' (Hutchison 2009, 86).

The sense of humanity that is represented by these objects, the individuals that donated them, their families, the towns they hail from, their ancestral homes, all those people whom they have shared meals, conversations and companionship with, who have left to forge new lives under challenging circumstances, can only be imagined. For the museum

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viewer these objects become part of endless narratives that are more likely to be based in fiction and imagination than historical evidence.

Notes

1. At the time of writing this article, the creative works are 'works in progress'.
2. Notes from Museum curator: 'This **wedding dress** was worn by Carmela as a proxy bride in Calabria Italy before migrating to Australia in 1957. It was commissioned by Carmela's mother, based on a style Carmela found in a magazine she had sent to her by her Italian fiancé in Australia. Carmela did not have a second wedding once arriving in Melbourne but did wear it again for her wedding portraits here.'
3. The title references the works of Joe Brainard (*I remember*) and Georges Perec (*Je suis né*). This is one of the vignettes by Enza Gandolfo, playing with the multivocal nature of memory and stories evoked by the proxy bride's wedding dress.
4. Baldassar's footnote refers to L. Lo Bianco in J. Jupp, *The Australian people*, 510.
5. There has certainly been an increase in migration-related object donations to the museum over the last 10 years. This is particularly due to the opening of the Immigration Museum, to the ongoing collaborations and consultation that have been undertaken through the festivals and community gallery programmes, education services and the ripple effect from curatorial work as we work with one family or community which then leads to more contacts and interest. Moya McFadzean, Senior Curator Migration History & Technology Department, Museum Victoria via email 6 November 2009.

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