

**Multiculturalism and Identity: A Visual
Investigation through the Medium of
Printmaking**

by

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Submitted in fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

JTAS

Signed statement of originality

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ABSTRACT

The catalyst for this project has been my father's migration from Croatia to Australia in the 1950's and my experience of his European heritage within my Australian environment. My father and the material artefacts he brought from Croatia, such as photographs and textiles, created a small but strong presence of this heritage for me within my family and the domestic interior of my home. From the moment I recognised their 'difference', which had been disguised by their familiarity as objects that were part of my daily life, and saw them as representations of the exotic, their presence intensified. They have since been the object of my curiosity and desire - a curiosity with the familiar made strange; and a desire to know more about their original context: the past, the homeland, and the people depicted in the photographs. My connection to this heritage is via these artefacts and is enriched by my father and his stories, memories and descriptions that project an idealised version of his homeland.

This project investigates these artefacts as forms of representation from which knowledge and perception of the homeland are derived for the first-generation. An important aspect of the project is the migrant and his/her verbal testimony which is integral to the development of the first-generation's perspective since it is the migrant's idealised version of the homeland that is passed down to and explored by their children. The artefacts are a tangible connection to the past and the homeland. They are explored as the only means of access to that world for the first-generation, who have no first-hand experience of the actual place.

This project is autobiographical in that it stems from my own personal experience, although it is also representative of the dilemma faced by all first-generation children of migrants. It reveals an unbridgeable distance between the place that was left by the migrant and the concept of the homeland from the perspective of the first-generation.

The significance of this research is where my works have reinvented the artefacts and their specific cultural references, changing and distorting them, rather than simply illustrating them, incorporating them visually, as if to reclaim a repressed heritage or a lost history. It is the way in which the source material is manifest in the work, in their distorted form, which can be seen as a sign of this repression and the irretrievable past. The nature of the works submitted reveals an obsession that characterises the position of the first-generation – an obsession that is entirely dependent on the futile pursuit of the homeland. The outcomes of this investigation reveal the first-generation's perception of the homeland to be their own fetishised projection which is the result of the lack or absence of materials and knowledge from which they can build up and develop their own exploration of their cultural heritage.

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