

10 May 2011

JEWISH MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA'S TOURING MULTICULTURAL ARTS PROJECT MOVES MUNICIPALITIES

This month the Jewish Museum of Australia continues its touring exhibition of dynamic multimedia exhibition **The Babel Project**, as it launches in Broadmeadows on Sunday 15 May at the Hume Global Learning Centre. Hume City Council Mayor Cr Helen Patsikatheodorou will open the event.

Conceived by the Jewish Museum of Australia in collaboration with Hume City Council, Cardinia Shire, City of Port Phillip, Hobsons Bay Council and The Substation, **The Babel Project** is a three-year venture inspired by the famous story of the unfinished Tower of Babel, involving 36 participants from all over Melbourne.

Participants from 15 countries around the globe (including Argentina, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Greece, Austria, China and Australia) speaking 14 different languages between them, had the opportunity to take part in **The Babel Project**, involving workshops and creative collaboration with Melbourne documentary photographer Georgia Metaxas.

Georgia asked participants to convey what they have in common through photographic images of essentially ordinary and domestic subject matter. Using disposable cameras, more than 1000 photos of shared domestic commodities and environments including fridges, breakfasts, living rooms, couches, gardens, families, friends, shoes, the street and sky were taken by the participants. Together the photos make up a contemporary Tower of Babel installation along with a dense sound scape incorporating all 14 languages.

Adriana Gomberg, Jewish Museum Project Officer, herself a Brazilian migrant, says "For six months we worked in an artistic medium with participants who aren't artists and who come from such extremely different cultures and backgrounds – it is really incredible to see how much these people actually have in common."

Jewish Museum's Director Rebecca Forgasz says: "For the Museum, as a community cultural and arts organisation, to use art as a way of uniting disparate groups in Melbourne is a really wonderful opportunity. But more than that, it allows our own Jewish community to forge real and lasting connections with other communities."

Set in Babylon, the story is about the building of an immense tower by the generations that followed the Great Flood. They spoke a single language. But the height and ambition of the construction displeased God who, as punishment, confused their languages and scattered the people over all the Earth.

It is this fable that inspired the workshops, run by Georgia Metaxas: "The grid reflects the repetitive nature of the images, embodying the power of language and illustrating the relationship between photographs and languages. The final piece - a composite person conveyed metaphorically through photographs." The participants, Georgia Metaxas,

The Pod, the Jewish Museum and project partners worked together to compile the suite of photographs, stories and languages to build the contemporary structure.

The project is part of Vic Health's Arts About Us Program and is supported by the Victorian Multicultural Commission. VicHealth Acting CEO Associate Professor John Fitzgerald says, "Our Arts About Us Program allows projects like The Babel Project to encourage dialogue about the harmful impacts of ethnic and race-based discrimination and the benefits of cultural diversity."

Opening at the Hume Global Learning Centre – Sunday 15 May at 3pm, 1093 Pascoe Vale Rd Broadmeadows

TOURING PROGRAM

The Substation – 3 March – 10 April

Hume Global Learning Centre - 15 May - 26 June 2011

Cardinia Cultural Centre - 31 July - 11 Sept 2011

Jewish Museum of Australia - 23 Oct - 18 Dec 2011

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