

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## The Babel Project - Jewish Museum of Australia tours multicultural arts media installation

This March, after one year of workshopping, creating and building, The Jewish Museum of Australia, in collaboration with The Substation, Hobsons Bay Council, Cardinia Shire, Hume City Council and City of Port Phillip will open its exciting new multimedia community arts installation, **The Babel Project**.

Conceived by the Jewish Museum of Australia and inspired by the famous story of the unfinished Tower of Babel, **The Babel Project** is a three-year venture, involving 36 participants from all over Melbourne.

Participants from 15 countries around the globe, 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 pictures 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 the last six months we have been working 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."

"For the Jewish Museum, as a community cultural and arts organisation, The Babel Project provides a wonderful opportunity to use art as a means of uniting disparate groups in Melbourne. 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 photography workshops, run by photographic artist 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 CEO Todd Harper 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 diversity."

### Project launch and exhibition opening: Sunday 6 March, 3.30pm at The Substation

#### Exhibition schedule:

3 March to 17 April 2011 – The Substation, Newport

15 May to 26 June 2011 - Hume Global Learning Centre, Broadmeadows

31 July to 11 September 2011 - Cardinia Cultural Centre, Pakenham

23 Oct 2011 to 18 Dec 2011 - Jewish Museum of Australia, St Kilda

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