

6 March - 2 July 1995

a free exhibition

la Dolce Vita?



explores the twentieth-century Italian presence in New South Wales. The exhibition traces the bittersweet experiences of ordinary and extraordinary Italian-Australians from all walks of life during war and peacetime.

The influx of Italian migrants in the 1920s and the postwar years contributed to the development of our multicultural society. Catholics, canecutters and *cappuccino* symbolise only part of that story.

The story also includes Italian-Australians who were part of the Allied war effort during the First World War. However, Italy's entry into the Second World War resulted in thousands of civilians being interned. Over 18,000 Italian prisoners of war from the North African campaign joined them. Following their repatriation, many returned to settle in NSW.



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The State Library of New South Wales is committed to documenting cultural diversity in NSW. *La Dolce Vita?* showcases the rich Italian-Australian documentary heritage of this State, preserved through the Italians in New South Wales Project, a joint venture of The State Library and the Italian Historical Society (NSW), launched in 1989. The success of this partnership has led to other efforts with the Greek, Chinese and Ukrainian communities, facilitated by funding from the Australian Bicentennial Multicultural Foundation and the Ukrainian Studies Foundation.

The following selection of stories from *La Dolce Vita?* represents a mosaic of private and public lives documented through diaries, letters, photographs, memorabilia, sketches, oral history and video.

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due, sentendo la pal
sono ed alcuni sol*



Macinante cousins in Italian national costume fundraising for the war effort, 1917

Answering the Call

During the First World War some of the bloodiest campaigns were fought on the Italian Front in northern Italy. Hundreds of Italian-born Australians answered the call for reinforcements in the Italian Army. Four drafts of reservists under the charge of AIF officers left Sydney in 1918. Among those repatriated were Luigi Gariglio, later a founder of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Australia in 1922, and Antonino Macinante, a shopkeeper from Narrandera. On the homefront, the NSW Government declared Italy's Day on 28 June 1918 to raise funds for the Italian Red Cross. Over £30,000 was collected to assist the war relief.

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Behind Barbed Wire

On 11 June 1940 the bucolic lifestyle of Federico Bonisoli, a 58-year-old poultry farmer from Sydney, was shattered. Italy's entry into the war the previous day ensured that. Bonisoli was seized by two policemen and within weeks joined his three younger brothers and hundreds of fellow migrants in internment camps around Australia. Two years later the numbers reached the thousands. However, the much vaunted Fifth Column, the rationale for the mass confinements, never eventuated. Bonisoli captured camp life in his diaries, rare first-hand accounts of the internment experience. The banal daily occurrences are recorded alongside the brooding and violent coexistence of Fascist and anti-Fascist internees.



La Volpe - 'The Fox'

Edgardo Simoni was the most notorious Italian POW in Australia. A lieutenant in the Royal Italian Army, he gained the grudging respect of his captors while an escapee from the POW camps at Myrtleford and Murchison in Victoria and Hay in NSW. On one occasion Simoni was on the run for ten months.

La Fiamma

Father Giuseppe La Rosa spent only a decade on Australian soil, but left a rich legacy for Italian-Australians. He arrived newly ordained from Rome in 1939. In the early Cold War years he founded the newspaper *La Fiamma* (The Flame) to counter rising fears of the Communist influence. Originally to be titled *L'Apostolo* (The Apostle), *La Fiamma* began publication in 1947. Father La Rosa edited early issues of the newspaper before editorial responsibilities were assumed by the Capuchin Franciscan Friars at Leichhardt, NSW.





La Veneziana

During the 1950s many migrants arriving in Sydney received their first Italian meal at La Veneziana in Stanley Street, subsidised by the Italian Consulate. The restaurant became a popular meeting place of Italians. New arrivals in nearby boarding houses were regular customers. Angiolina and Carlo Lorenzi were the much-loved owners of La Veneziana. Angiolina was adopted as a 'mother' by hundreds of young migrants including the Italian boxers who fought at the Sydney Stadium. Luigi Caluzzi, one of these boxers, is now the owner of Bar Caluzzi at Kings Cross.



All Roads Lead to Rome

Vic Facchini arrived in Sydney as a teenager between the wars. In the 1950s he made the first of his pilgrimages to Italy. On the crest of Italian migration to our shores, Vic and his sister Lidia set sail with their FJ Holden on board. The Holden's robust chassis and performance caused a stir from the

Alps to the Appian Way, along the *autostrade*, and the ancient streets and causeways. 'Australia's Own Car', the pride of postwar manufacturing, challenged the Italians' pastoral image of Australia.



The Voice of a Community

Lena Gustin, radio broadcaster, journalist and welfare worker, is best remembered for her popular evening radio programs on 2SM, 2CH, 2KY and 2SER-FM from the 1950s to the 1980s. She became known as Mamma Lena, a mark of the affectionate regard in which she was held by her listeners.

Mamma Lena's advice and social columns in *La Fiamma* from 1957 to 1964 attracted a wide readership. A tireless fund-raiser, she helped galvanise support for the victims of a series of natural disasters in Italy. In the late 1960s she assisted with the resettlement of Sicilian earthquake victims in Australia. In 1968 Mamma Lena was appointed MBE for services to the community.



La Donna Moderna

Maria Teresa (Terry) Paliani, an Italian mannequin and former beauty queen, turned down a career in Hollywood to model high fashion in Australia. In 1955 Terry was one of four mannequins brought out by David Jones and the *Australian Women's Weekly* for the first parades of Italian women's fashion in Australia. This formed part of a spectacular winter promotion of Italian design and merchandise at David Jones stores. After a whirlwind romance with an Australian businessman during her hectic tour, Terry migrated and married a year later.



Help us preserve the Italian-Australian documentary heritage

One of the roles of the State Library is to collect information documenting all aspects of life in NSW. The contribution made by Italians must be preserved if the historical record is to be a faithful one. For this reason the State Library is co-operating with organisations and individuals in the Italian community to collect material for the benefit of future researchers.

The types of material we are seeking include:

- 1 Photographs of community activities, work, home life, sport, business, etc.
- 2 Diaries, notebooks or letters describing the trip to Australia from Italy (or overseas Italian areas) and life in NSW
- 3 Letters describing life in NSW
- 4 Records of Italian businesses in NSW, such as correspondence, advertisements, stock records, ledgers, etc.
- 5 Records of community organisations, clubs and societies, such as minute books, constitutions, correspondence, photographs and posters
- 6 Books, newspapers, newsletters and magazines published in NSW and written by Italians or aimed at the Italian community
- 7 Tapes and transcripts of interviews

Enquiries about depositing material in the Library or about the Project generally may be directed to James Andrighetti, Co-ordinator, The Italians in New South Wales Project, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000. Telephone: (02) 230 1506, Fax (02) 223 4086.

Aiutate la Biblioteca Statale a documentare la vostra storia

Uno degli obiettivi della Biblioteca Statale è di raccogliere tutte quelle informazioni che possano documentare i vari aspetti della vita nel NSW. Perché la documentazione storica sia fedele e completa è necessario preservare documenti e testimonianze sul contributo dato al NSW dagli italiani. È questa la ragione per cui la Biblioteca Statale collabora con enti e individui nella comunità italiana, per raccogliere materiale che sarà necessario in futuro ai ricercatori.

Il materiale che cerchiamo comprende:

- 1 Fotografie che illustrano attività sociali, sportive, commerciali, di lavoro, di vita in casa, ecc.
- 2 Diari e appunti che descrivano il viaggio di emigrati dall'Italia (o da altre comunità italiane all'estero) e la loro vita nel NSW
- 3 Lettere che descrivano la vita nel NSW
- 4 Documenti di aziende italiane nel NSW come lettere, pubblicità, inventari, registri, ecc.
- 5 Documenti di enti comunitari, clubs e associazioni, come verbali di riunioni, atti di costituzione, lettere, fotografie e manifesti
- 6 Libri, giornali, riviste e articoli pubblicati nel NSW da italiani qui residenti o diretti alla comunità italiana
- 7 RegISTRAZIONI orali su nastro e trascrizioni di interviste fatte a italiani

Se avete documenti potete donarli alla Biblioteca Statale o lasciarne copia. Se desiderate informazioni sul progetto, telefonate a James Andrighetti, coordinatore del progetto, al numero (02) 230 1506 o fax (02) 223 4086, Biblioteca Statale del New South Wales, Macquarie Street, Sydney NSW 2000.