

## MEET THE ARTISTS

### Odyssey Exhibition Quilts 1 – 3 and Odyssey Visual Diaries



**BACK ROW (L-R):** Inneke McIntosh Eichholtz, Jo Brinkhorst, Yvonne Chapman, Frances Widitz.

**FRONT ROW (L-R):** Gerarda Baremans, a visitor to the group, Anne Dijkman-Noot, Curator of the Casula Powerhouse Museum, Vera Rado, and Wilhelmina de Brey.

Other quilters, not in the photo above include: Frances Larder, Frances Wititz, Yvonne Chapman, Anne Dicker, and Vicki van der Ley.

**Exhibition time frame:** The exhibition was launched in 2002 at Casula Powerhouse Museum (NSW) and toured to Liverpool, Fairfield and Coffs Harbour (NSW) and Fremantle (WA) in the years 2003–2010. In 2011 it was handed over to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney as part of their permanent collection.

**Project overview, master quilter, Frances Larder:** My initial idea was to create a body of work about my own culture and background. Unfortunately a lot of my childhood memories I had blocked out over the years, so I came up with the idea to create a group project involving ten Dutch women that I had met through a local quilting group and within the Dutch community.

The concept of this project was to create and express in a visual way a quilt about our childhood memories in Holland or the (former) Netherlands East Indies. Our motivation was to leave a permanent legacy behind for our grandchildren. The women involved were encouraged to talk about their childhood memories and to bring photos and images that they held dear. The selected images were then applied to their square of fabric to embroider and appliqué.

The general consensus at the time was that we would only express our happy memories.



LEFT: Frances Larder, 2014

On completion of this quilt, the women were encouraged to write their stories, then expressed visually into their diaries. These diaries portrayed their favourite images and memories of an innocent era.

After completing the quilt I then encouraged the women to work on a second quilt based on their first impressions of Australia. After they were completed, the Casula Powerhouse Museum was interested to exhibit the works. There was an enormous interest shown, and the Director of Casula Powerhouse Museum suggested that it would be a good idea

if we could do another quilt based on the war years. So it was with trepidation that I approached the women once again, but unfortunately there were only a small group that was interested in doing that third quilt as they felt that the memories of the war, occupation, incarceration and multiple losses were too painful and emotional to return to.

Since working on the quilts, several of the women have sadly passed away: Inneke McIntosh Eichholtz, Vicki van der Ley, Wilhelmina de Brey and Anne Dicker.

Their biographies, as follows, focus on one part of their journey, each bringing into focus a special part of the story of war and migration from Holland, or the Netherlands East Indies, to Australia.

Each one is special, and for this reason, have been collated in alphabetical order.

### **Gerarda BAREMANS**



I was born in the Netherlands on 8 April 1937, the eldest of five girls. I was only two years old, when war broke out. My childhood was not free and easy as my mother had three girls between 1937 and 1940. She would constantly remind me that I was the eldest of the family and had to be an example for my siblings. Times were hard we didn't have many toys and I remember my mother making dolls for us out of material and using papier-mâché for their faces. She also made dolls houses from cardboard boxes with the furniture made from match boxes. Those were the days.

The war was a time I would rather forget. There was no food. It must have been extraordinarily difficult for my parents.

IMAGE LEFT: Gerarda Baremans (centre, front) with Vicki van der Ley (left) and Jo Brinkhorst (right).



Often, my father went out in the night to steal food for our family, and to try to get coal, wood or old shoes and, in fact, anything that he could get his hands on that he could burn to keep us warm. I recall my mother and us children feeling intense fear when he left on these missions. We were terribly scared that he might get picked up and detained by the German Occupation forces. They would allow no one out after dark.

Mine was a very resourceful mother. I particularly remember the clothes she made for me from the Parachute silk that my father also brought home. However, most memorable was a green army coat. She used every inch of that material to make a warm coat for one of my sisters.

Another strong memory is the excitement I felt when planes flew overhead and began dropping food parcels with all sorts of goodies in them. Oh, the joy of it. Among other things the parcels contained bread and chocolate. We thought the bread was cake and the chocolate was heavenly. One night my father came home late with the lining of his coat slashed and the bottom of it was filled with something. He just turned his coat upside down and to our surprise, large potatoes rolled out all over the floor. It was as if Christmas and New Year had come at once.

On the other hand I also recall having to hide my father under the floorboards because the Germans were invading every house to pick up young men to take them to Germany to work in factories. Two of my uncles were picked up. However, they were among the lucky ones that made it back home after war ended. Many others did not.

The sound of sirens so frightened all of us, even now I can hear the sound. I associate that sound with pieces of shrapnel flying everywhere from the bombs the sirens were warning us about. I always dove under the table or hid behind the toilet as soon as the sirens started.

My father had a radio behind his chair from the beginning of war and would listen to the English broadcasts. However, if the Germans found this out he would have been shot. Can you imagine how my mother felt? One evening I found the radio and joyfully told my father, He took an axe and smashed it to pieces. For us they were all very traumatic times that we are all very lucky to have survived. They made us appreciate life as it is now.

When I finished primary school at 13, I began working as a housemaid for a family of seven (7). I did all their housework. However, I had to give all my earnings to my mother to help keep the family finances buoyant. I stayed with my first employer family for some time finally working for another family and this entailed working even longer hours.

I met my future husband in 1953 when I was 16. We were married on 2 July 1958 after I had turned 21 years. Eight months later he suggested that we move and begin a new life in Australia. We arrived in Sydney on 10 September 1959. Shortly after arriving, we both found work at Amalgamated Wireless Australia, where my husband worked for the next 36 years. During this time we build our home in Birrong and had three beautiful children, a boy and two girls.

I am self-taught in crocheting, knitting, macramé, painting and embroidery. I began quilting after collecting scraps from the clothes I was making for my children. Initially by joining the scraps to make small blocks. When I had made 24 blocks I joined them to make the quilt. This quilt, with all the scraps from my children's clothes, brought back 26 years of memories. The Odyssey Quilt Project is my first involvement with a formal quilting group.

Life has not always been easy, but we have withstood the punches, and who knows what the future holds. I thank God for having given me this time in my life and I trust in Him for what the future holds for all of us.

### **Johanna (Jo) BRINKHORST**

I was born in 1918 to a Dutch father and German mother. I was educated in Germany, where I lived and enjoyed a comfortable family life until the depression began. Due to political unrest, my father decided to take the family to Holland, not an easy transition to make for a family with four children.

On 10 May, 1940, Germany declared war on The Netherlands. I had been married for three days and

what should have been beautiful and happy times ahead, became a time of sorrow and frustration. I was married in 1940, three days before World War Two broke out. My memories of five years of occupation are 8pm curfews, rations of essentials and boredom.

Food was rationed, as well as shoes and textiles. At night our windows had to be blocked off with black paper as the curfew started at 8pm.

In Groningen, where I lived, the food situation was not as bad as in other parts of the country. We could go to the farmers for milk and wheat. We milled the wheat in a coffee grinder and then took it to our baker who, for a small fee, would turn it into bread.

At night, English planes would fly over our city on their way to Germany. The sirens would sound. During these times we needed to be dressed and ready with our papers in case we had to flee, as sometimes bombs would fall into our area by mistake.

The war lasted for five long years, and I have seen and experienced much heartache, tragedy and sadness, which I would prefer to forget.

The winter of 1944/45 was the hardest, and was exceptionally cold winter. There was not much fuel to warm our houses, gas was only available for a few short hours a day and the food situation became critical.

During the occupation we were forced to surrender our wireless, meaning that we were then unable to listen to the English news. Our Queen was in England and messages of hope and strength would regularly be broadcast, sometimes in code. People who had defied the wireless ban would listen in secret and these messages would be relayed around the neighbourhood, giving much hope and strength.

We all tried very hard to help one another and to make the best of a very difficult situation. We had to make do with surrogate tea and coffee and clothes would be recycled, with a continuous effort to make new out of old. Nothing was wasted. Ingenuity and imagination were the flavour of the day. Pushbike tyres were made of rubber garden hose and worn shoes would be repaired with wooden soles.

When finally the much longed for liberation came in May 1945, our red, white and blue flags appeared everywhere. People, who had gone underground returned from their hiding place and many street parties took place, celebrating our longed for freedom.

After the liberation, the rebuilding of our country began. However, extreme housing shortages and continuing rations made life difficult.

We wished for a better life and in 1950, were tempted by advertisements for people to come to sunny Australia. With the promise of a fresh start, we packed up and moved to Australia with our daughter that year, to begin a new life.

I have always had an interest in fabric and craft, and have taught knitting, and taken folk art classes. I joined the Epping Quilters in 1984 after reading an advertisement in the local paper. The group makes quilts that are donated to children staying at Westmead Children's Hospital. The group also produces quilts each year that are then raffled with proceeds being donated to a selected charity. These quilts have been exhibited at the Epping Art School. Originally the exhibition was held every year, however it is now held every three years. I was also a member of the quilting group that included Frances Larder, which designed and created two quilts for the Para-Olympics in 2000.

As I was writing this short story of my wartime experience, I reflect with much sadness upon current troubled times and I wonder, when will we ever learn.

## **Yvonne CHAPMAN**

I was born in The Netherlands in 1946. My parents settled in beautiful Aekferhoek, near the German border. As one of five children, my youth was carefree and creative. We often travelled abroad with our caravan, experiencing the delight in colours and traditions of the different countries.

After High School I travelled to Brussels and London to further my French and English languages.



In 1967, I entered the Art Academy of Amsterdam studying Graphic Design. During one of my backpacking trips I met Zbernard, an Australian. We married in Holland and I migrated to Australia in 1970.

During 1972 and 1973, I was employed by the Macleay Museum at the University of Sydney, designing and illustrating catalogues, pamphlets and booklets. I then worked as a freelance illustrator for "School Magazine", for ten years, during which time my three children were born. My love for the Australian bush deepened during the many bush walks we did with the children in the Blue Mountains, where we settled. In 1986, I began working in textile and fibre art and have continued producing and exhibiting these works.

IMAGE LEFT: Yvonne Chapman (right) with Wilhelmina de Brey (left):

### **Wilhelmina DE BREY**

These pieces are in memory of those I failed to help survive. I had hoped to save their lives. Through the betrayal of another person, to the secret police, the

Kempeitai, our house was invaded. I had received a visit from a woman three weeks before the raid, and from this we had a premonition of danger ahead.

Most people in the area that we lived in had already been interned in prisoner of war or civilian internment camps. I was fortunate to not be interned. My son had a heart condition and my doctor told me that if my children and I went into a camp he would die. I decided to stay out of the camps at any cost.

As I was still living in my house, it was only a short time until the underground found out and asked if I dared to take the risk of helping them. At the time, I was living with two other women and I could not make this decision alone. I had to consult the other women as the youngest of them had a small child too. We agreed to help by allowing people to stay in our home and we became a group of seven men, women and children.

It was soon apparent that we were all penniless, so we decided to start a craft group and I would go around and visit other Dutch people who were still working under the Japanese. But soon those people disappeared into the camps too. We had to rely on the help of Dutch-Indonesian people, and I received all the help that was possible.

This was until a Dutch woman came to visit us and turned out to be a very close friend of a Japanese officer. We had an invasion at the house and the men and women were arrested, myself included. Only my youngest friend was allowed to stay in the house with her little girl and my children.

When I said goodbye to my children, my eldest son was so upset he got a high fever from fright. I asked my girlfriend to look after him. Not knowing that one of the Japanese officers understood Dutch, he asked my friend how many of the children were hers and she answered that she had only one but that I had four. Thankfully, the officer decided that I should stay imprisoned in the house as well.

The hate and hopelessness that we felt during the invasion of our home by the Japanese officers is hard to imagine. Time has softened those feelings but they will never be forgotten.

In these pictures I created three images of this time.

My home with its blacked out windows. The Japanese planes would fly over at night and it was very frightening. Later, the Americans would drop supplies of peaches, chocolate and corned beef.

The leaf of the plant Cascare. The seeds were supplied to the Japanese who would then press them and use the oil.

The wheels of my bike. This is how I would travel to the different houses to sell our craft works. Later I would ride to the prison camps to take food to the people who had been taken prisoner from our house. I only definitely know that one of these people died at the hands of the Japanese, but I'm sure some of the others were killed as well. I never found out what happened to them, but I know that one of them listened to news, which was forbidden. I would deliver the news on my bike to all our friends. The news was written on paper, which was folded up and hidden inside a beautiful Chinese ring, which I still have. It has a large red stone and the top opens, hiding a small compartment.

The invasion happened only six months before the end of the Japanese rule, but despite how hard I tried I had failed to save the lives of those people. The war was almost behind us.

### **Anna DIJKMAN-TETTEROO**

A few things I remember of the last year of the war. There was a great shortage of footwear and of fuel. My eldest brother had large feet and my father had to cut off the topfront of the shoe so that my brother could still wear them. I had very old ladies boots and later only wooden soles with straps on the top. It was very uncomfortable.

With my girlfriend Willy, I went twice a week to the Scheveningen Forest to cut wood. We were only 13 years old but we managed to get thin trees down. We had a small cart to transport the wood.

At the edge of the forest were the launching ramps of the V2's, the Flying Bombs, which were fired by the Germans to bombard Britain and later the harbourcity of Antwerp. It was very scary when we could not hear the noise fading away in the distance. We then knew that the shot had failed and the V2 was coming back to the place where it was let off. We had to dive for cover. But we both found it a big adventure and we continued to gather wood until the end of the war.

In September 1944, Operation Market garden took place with the landing of three airborne divisions of British and American troops in the vicinity of Arnhem. We thought it would be the end of the war. However, it proved to be a failure, and in the month of November 1944, many razzias took place and many men were rounded up and sent to work in Nazi Nammunitions factories.

The winter of 1944 was very cold with a big shortage of food in the big cities. We received coupons for sugar, butter and many other household items, and we had to cue for hours to get it from the stores. The food kitchens supplied soups. We called it *Goudvissensoep* (Goldfish soup), as it was more or less water with a few slivers of carrots in it. My mother made pancakes from the pulp of sugarbeet and tulipbulbs. Many elderly people and children died of malnutrition.

Just before the end of the war we were all in the streets with Dutch flags to welcome the drop of food. I'll never forget that I received a small loaf of Swedish white bread and was allowed to eat the whole loaf at once.

### **Frances LARDER**

I was born in the late 1930s in Bandung, Java of Dutch parents. My family lived in Java during the war.

War broke out in the Dutch East Indies when I was about four years old so my memories about that times are very fragmented. Some unanswered queries and events finally became clear to me with the assistance of my mother who was able to fill in some of the missing links. My quilt pieces only represent some of my childhood and wartime memories and experiences.



The most traumatic experience for me was the departure of my father to join the Dutch army in Java.

I cannot remember saying goodbye to him. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese, transported to Changi prison in Saigon, and from there, onto the infamous Thai-Burma Railway.

My mother was left with three children, and another on the way, and had to cope on her own. Life was not easy, we were under house arrest, and a sentry patrolled outside ensuring we did not break this rule. With one exception, all the rooms were sealed off and clothes, bedding and furniture were not accessible. Fortunately, our mother was resourceful and was able to break the seal at night and obtain the items necessary to sustain us. Our *baboe*, nursemaid and friend, was allowed to stay with us. Also, and as she was able to go home to the kampung, she tried to get food for us. This was not always possible.

Looking back and remembering these experiences, I feel we were very fortunate to be alive and had come through this ordeal. Even though we had lost our belongings and endured hunger, we had survived and come through as a family. I am very grateful for the sacrifices and strength my mother endured to get us through those black years.

We owned a small Maltese puppy called Mickey, who was both a pet and guard dog. One of the Japanese officers took a liking to him and therefore took him away to his house. To our surprise, the officer returned a few days later and handed Mickey back to us. He was most displeased that Mickey did not like him and had bitten him viciously causing him to have stitches and a tetanus injection.

When freedom and peace was declared on 15 August 1945, I remember the thrill of being able to go for a walk in our street, admiring the trees along the road. We saw a lot of American and Ghurka soldiers. We received food parcels consisting of chocolates, sweets, powdered milk, not to forget butter and jam on real bread. We were also invited to a party given by the Americans where we played games and sang. It was exciting when I was able to go to school and be part of a classroom with other children.

My father survived his imprisonment, only to die of blood-poisoning several months after liberation before we could be reunited. After this, my mother and her four children moved to the Netherlands. A few years later we returned to Java and in the early 1950s from Java to Australia.

### **Inneke MCINTOSH-EICHHOLTZ**

The first ten years of my life were spent in the Dutch East-Indies living in Batavia (Jakarta) and Buitenzorg (Bogor). There was a short period of internment in Malang, East Java, when I was very young. Thus my early memories mainly go back to my primary school years.

To escape Batavia's oppressive heat, we would spend the school holidays in little mountain villages. The names Tjipajung and Tjimbuluwit immediately come to mind. Here, we would play in rivers with their big boulders. Swimming holes became the highlight of our holidays. Those carefree years are still accompanied by memories of gentle people, the unforgettable landscape and its exotic plants, as well as the ever-present air of spicy aromas.

After Indonesia gained independence, my family settled in The Hague, where we lived for three years. From here we set out on another ocean journey: to Australia. Our new home was in one of the northern beaches in Sydney, by the sea. Although it was difficult adjusting to an entirely different school regime and learning a new language, I was greatly helped by some very wonderful teachers, whose names and personalities I will always remember.

That was more than fifty years ago, and in that time I have revisited both Holland and Indonesia – but Australia will always be my home.

I had previously worked with embroidery, however, the Odyssey Quilt Project was the first time I had worked with quilting.

## Vera RADO

Vera Rado was born at Purwokerto, Java, on 29 July 1926.

IMAGE RIGHT: Vera Rado (left) and Yvonne Chapman (right)

It was a black day, on 8 March 1942, in more than one sense. The oil tanks on the south-western edge of the city were blown up by the Dutch to prevent the precious fuel from falling into the hands of the enemy. From early morning there was a huge pall of black smoke hanging over the city, and against this ominous backdrop we watched the occupying army's progress through our streets. First the tanks with their red and white flags then armoured carrier, trucks, then masses of soldiers on foot, and on bicycles. They looked triumphant, but we were trembling with apprehension peering through the louvres of our front door and windows. What would happen to us? We were totally at their mercy – no laws no constitution, no army or police to protect us. Immediately after the occupation we had to register at the Town Hall and obtain an identity card, which we had to carry on us at all times. Cars were confiscated, radios had to be handed in to be sealed so that only local stations could be received, and very soon all public servants from the Governor General down to the most junior clerk were rounded up and imprisoned. This included all male teachers, so school ceased altogether.



Some school buildings were used as internment camps, and some continued with native teachers teaching native children. Whenever I passed my old school I could hear the kids singing 'Asia Raya', the song of Free Asia, and there were posters everywhere proclaiming Asia for the Asians. The Japanese were out to extinguish all European influence in Asia and establish their own 'Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere' with Japan as supreme leader. It was part of their ideal to establish Japan as dominant power in our part of the world and to eradicate all white colonialism – to be replaced by Japanese colonialism.



## Vicky VAN DER LEY

I was born in 1926 in the small village of Sliedrecht, near Dordrecht in the South of Holland. My fondest childhood memories are of the Merwede River that ran near our house. My brothers and sisters and I would swim, row our boat, or skate on its frozen surface in winter.

I travelled to Australia in November 1951 on the French cargo boat 'The Chung Kung', with my husband and three children. My husband's mother lived in Australia, so our family was able to stay at an Uncle's house in Bellevue Hill for some time while he was overseas. Three months later we moved to a block of land we had bought in Hay Street, Ryde. It took eight years to build our house, during which time we lived in a caravan. These were long and difficult years and I had to do the cooking in the backyard over a gas primus. Our wonderful friends and neighbors were always very helpful and made this time much more enjoyable.

ABOVE: Vicki van der Ley