

Glory Box | Hope Chest | Bottom Drawer

LOGAN ART GALLERY

# Glory Box | Hope Chest | Bottom Drawer

Diverse in age, gender and cultural backgrounds we have – through the support of the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) – discussed, researched and planned this joint exhibition being held at Logan Art Gallery, July 2015.

We have focused on a significant, historical family orientated tradition of the *Glory Box* | *Hope Chest* | *Bottom Drawer*.

We are seeking to discover an understanding of a dying tradition, which is seeing the loss of significant cultural craft and art forms as well as 'A sense of family tradition and heritage'.

We have developed personal views and thoughts on the project while being mentored and guided to collaborate as well as learn from each other. We have gained insight and understanding of this tradition within other cultures, drawing ideas for creating each individual exhibition piece.

During the project we were fortunate to be mentored by Associate Professor Deborah Porch from Griffith University's Queensland College of Art, who started us on our journey with inspiring and thought provoking discussions about tradition and memory.

Professional artists, Elizabeth Shaw, Patena Moesker, Carolyn Mckenzie-Craig and Simone Eisler each facilitated individually designed workshops to develop skills and techniques, while helping to collaborate, develop and share our ideas.

We have been privileged to be able to be part of this collaborative project and it would not have been possible without the support of Logan's Regional Arts Development Fund. Special thanks must go to the all the staff and volunteers at Logan Art Gallery, especially Chelsi Foskett and Sarah Harper.

## **Robyn Pell and Vikki Kindermann**

Curators and Project Coordinators

## **Exhibiting Artists:**

Jillian Beardsworth  
Judy Constable  
Therese Flynn-Clarke  
Vikki Kindermann  
Michael Nieddu  
Robyn Pell  
Chrys Zantis

**Front cover image:** Michael Nieddu, *Untitled* (detail), 2015, mixed medium palimpsest, 21cm x 29cm

**Back cover image:** Photograph by Robyn Pell, 2015

## *Glory Box, Hope Chest, Bottom Drawer*

Traditionally, a glory box, hope chest or bottom drawer, depending on where you originate, is 'a lady's storage box containing precious items... lovingly created or specially saved... in anticipation of or as preparation for married life'.

The idea appealed to us as an exhibition focus because it raised so many questions and possibilities.

Is it time/ culture/ gender specific? Why did the tradition first arise? Is it an outdated notion or does it still have a place? What has become of the practice of stashing items away in a bottom drawer? Is today's version a gift card from a homewares store? Do today's young people still collect or make unique personal objects for their hope chests? Or is everything mass-produced, and bought conveniently and cheaply off the shelf? What about other non-western societies – is there such a thing as a hope chest or bottom drawer in Asia or Africa? Would a man's glory box be his garden shed and tools? What is the meaning behind the receptacle itself: decorative, practical, symbolic, or something else? Which begs the question: what's more important, the box, or what's inside, 'the booty'?

We thought it would be interesting to see how a group of artists would each develop their own take on the concept of the glory box and thus, create individual artworks. By involving various mentors and different artists, the concept was workshopped to explore a range of perspectives, and to share new skills. Our exhibition is a culmination of the thoughts, emotions and values of all who took part in the project.





# Jillian Beardsworth



During my childhood the glory box, made by my father (as tradition of the day dictated) for my mother, was a significant presence in their room; a sturdy, well-crafted symbol of their future together. My mother often said that when I grew up I too would have a glory box, to gather the objects and textiles with which I would decorate my future. But I never did have a glory box, or indeed ever saw the need for one.

Exploring this theme more than anything for me recalled my mother, Elsie. Elsie was a talented and creative dressmaker, a wedding specialist, creating glamorous bridal gowns. I grew up surrounded by cascades of white lace, subtle whispers of shining beads and nacreous sequins, and the excited, nervous parades of prospective brides preparing for their 'big day.' But I also saw the many, many hours of hard work that took over Elsie's life to create these beautiful gowns and knew that her greatest motivation was financial, to create a better life for her family.

By the time I was a young woman my priorities were study, travel, love and yes possibly marriage, but the future was so much broader and freer, and the traditional had no allure for me. The glory box and the white lace were for past generations, when marriage was regarded as a woman's greatest glory and her wedding day as her moment in the sun. In that context it was desirable for a woman to gradually build up a stock of items while she was still in the workforce before marriage ended her independent income.

I grew up in a family where at one level these traditions were celebrated and used as a creative outlet but also flouted by the role model of a strong and independent woman whose own life was much bigger than conventions of the day.

These translucent and lace-like vessels explore the box: as an object of constraint and restriction; as a metaphor for the heart or mind wherein objects are placed (or excluded) to explore their significance; as a metaphor for the female body, garbed in seductively beautiful white lace, as the traditional symbol of the innocent bride; and for the house wife, surrounded by lace curtains and hand made doilies, whose world became contained within four walls. - **Jillian Beardsworth**

# Judy Constable

This body of work is inspired by my grandmother's experience as the owner and custodian of a "glory box" – a heavily carved cedar box which when opened released a heady scent of family history.

Her glory box – perhaps once used to collect functional and necessary objects for a new life in marriage, gained additional significance over her lifetime as a repository for her precious possessions. More than a simple piece of furniture, bought for a particular purpose at a particular point in her life, it became a sort of "Cabinet of Curiosities". Her desire to collect linens and domestic objects at one point in her life gave way to a broader collection – often including objects from previous generations, and her glory box as I recall, was an important part of this interest.

Over time, her glory box, and its contents not only became indelibly linked to her identity, but the significance of the box, and the individual items it contained have magnified in importance. The objects within, increasingly rare, and protected over decades in the cedar scented box bear the marks of previous owners, but now seem dated, fragile, and curiously unfamiliar. A perfume bottle, brush, fan, diary. Monuments to previous generations held in a glory box. - **Judy Constable**

**Image:** Judy Constable, *Monument I*, 2015, watercolour and watercolour pencil on Awagami Kozo paper, 96 X 200cm



# Therese Flynn-Clarke



THE PASSING OF TIME... What's valued and valuable to women today before marriage and 'moving out' or leaving home?

In the past women often prepared a glory box filled with items preparing 'the wife to be' for married life. Who decided what went into 'the box'? What was considered to be valuable? What did the 'perfect wife-to-be' need for her future life?

Items were often 'handmade' and showed the woman's skill and value as a seamstress or needleworker. Some things were passed down through generations. Consider the same scenario today. How do young women spend their time in 2015? Do they still 'prepare' for marriage and leaving home? What's valued or valuable today? Is the 'perfect wife to be' even thought about?! ... As one young woman I know said about glory box sewing and stitching "I wouldn't do that s\*\*\*, I'd buy it"!

The incremental passing of time has seen a huge shift in what's valued then and now...some skills are still of value, though what they are may differ from generations past. From my own mother, to me and to my daughters – what will I hand on?

This artwork references the passing of time and what is considered to be of value past and present, and in my own art practice. What skills and objects do you consider to be of value? - **Therese Flynn-Clarke**



# Vikki Kindermann

For me, art is both a relaxing and rewarding pastime. Art is a part of what defines me. I create intuitively, instinctively and impulsively according to my moods, feelings, values and thoughts. My artwork often deals with the small, day to day details of life as well as the bigger issues such as fate, purpose and meaning. My art is my way of understanding and coming to terms with what is happening around me, and to me.

For this exhibition, *Glory Box | Hope Chest | Bottom Drawer*, I was interested in examining confining 'labels' we place on each other and ourselves, as well as questioning outdated 'traditions' which we accept and/ or cling to.

The 'glory box' is a time and culture specific concept. It seems to be a tradition that is disappearing from today's modern world of convenience and disposability. Where yesterday's young ladies spent time and effort collecting and storing

precious hand-made objects in anticipation of their future married lives, today's young women choose to put their time and effort into planning lavish, expensive and over the top weddings while ignoring the reality of life after the big day. When our cheaply-made, mass-produced possessions become the least bit tired, mundane or boring, they are quickly replaced with newer, more sophisticated and exciting models crowding the market.

My assemblage and mixed media art works are a lighthearted attempt to play with the labels often given to women of particular ages. I am aiming to explore some of the stereotypes, clichés, puns and jokes we perpetuate about marriage and relationships. Alternatively, I wanted to make reference to some private and personal memories, sensations, dreams, and wishes. - **Vikki Kindermann**

**Image:** Vikki Kindermann, *Sentiments of Self* (detail), 2015, mixed media and found objects box assemblage, 25 x 25 x 25cm





# Michael Nieddu



I am a painter, printmaker and ceramicist; and work in different mediums. Presently, I enjoy working in assemblage and mixed media. I use found objects and everyday items such as discarded toys, boxes and packaging, as well as layering of images. Looking at my arrangements, I want the viewer to question traditional meanings of images and objects, to see unusual and unexpected connections and create their own new ways of seeing.

As a non-traditional male, I bring a different slant to the concept of glory box. I am a hoarder and like to assemble and pose my precious, collected objects in unique and odd juxtapositions. I am interested in examining the significance of the concept itself and how it has impacted on gender issues in the past as well

as exploring how it continues to do so in the present. Such a fascinating topic is very open to a wide range of comments, interpretations and expressions, which I hope to convey in my artwork. - **Michael Nieddu**



**Images:** Michael Nieddu, *Untitled*, 2015, mixed medium palimpsest, 21 x 29cm



# Robyn Pell

The Glory Box: a container or vessel that is to hold a dream; a grasp at a vision of what can be; a holder of memories and traditions; special and meaningful.

What do we have today? A marriage that's lucky if it lasts a year? A box of fabulous things that might just last longer than the marriage, if you are lucky?

What is kept inside? Something disposable or cheap - certainly not hand made?

What was the tradition and what is it now? Is it being revived? What would we put in there today? Memories, hopes, dreams, wishes? - **Robyn Pell**



# Chrys Zantis

Material objects with close connections to the past or to former homes possess potential to be emotional triggers. Marianne Hirsh refers to objects as triggers and our tendency to endow them with our own projections. The object may “release latent, repressed, or dissociated memories – memories that, metaphorically speaking, remain behind, concealed within the object. Objects and places, therefore, Aleida Assmann argues, can function as triggers of remembrance that connects us, bodily and thus also emotionally, with the object world we inhabit.” - Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, pp211-212.

In many European societies, the production of dowry linen often fell to girls and young women who for years would toil diligently to accumulate this household ‘store’ of items for their trousseau, which would, upon marriage, furnish a future home. These dowry linens traditionally displayed “the bride’s worth and was a vehicle through which the reputation and the prestige of the bride’s family was displayed”. The quality of, and dedication to and the production of dowry linen were linked to a woman’s standing amid her community and amongst other Greek women and to the calibre of suitors she could potentially attract. I learnt these dowry crafts from my mother and aunty.

I have used these dowry crafts to encase the memory already embedded in the objects with new meaning. In the case of the worn spoon I revere the repetitive meditative probably arduous action of stirring by embellishing it with fine needlework. By crocheting around the stamps I capture the action of ripping them from the envelope and protecting their memory and importance to someone so far from family and homeland. The cookbook held promise in the anticipation of recreating delicious meals from home like her mother’s but it also witnessed how those dreams become mediocre and repetitive. The repaired hook speaks of a time when a poor young woman made dowry items for the wealthy and had none of her own. When her crochet hook broke she repaired it because she could not afford a new one. I broke my hook and repaired it in the same fashion and made pieces to connect with her. - **Chrys Zantis**

**Image top:** Chrys Zantis, *Finery and drudgery* (detail), 2015, wooden box, vintage spoon and crochet cotton, 75 x 400cm  
**Image bottom:** Chrys Zantis, *Behind the blind*, 2015, wooden box, family cookbook and crochet cotton, 75 x 400cm



# Project workshops

1.



2.



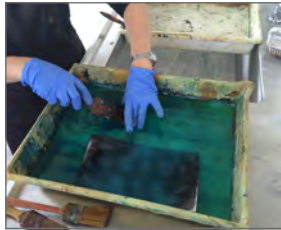
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8.



## **Glory Box Project workshop images:**

1. Left to Right: Judy Constable, Therese Flynn-Clarke, Vikki Kindermann, Jillian Beardsworth, Patena Moesker, Chrys Zantis (behind)
2. Left to Right: Jillian Beardsworth, Simone Eisler, Judy Constable, Vikki Kindermann
3. Back (Left to Right): Judy Constable, Jillian Beardsworth, Michael Nieddu Front (Left to Right): Chrys Zantis, Vikki Kindermann, Robyn Pell, Carolyn Mackenzie-Craig
4. Left to Right: Elizabeth Shaw, Robyn Pell, Michael Nieddu, Jillian Beardsworth, Judy Constable, Vikki Kindermann Front: Chrys Zantis
5. *Glory Box Project workshop activity*
6. Carolyn Mackenzie-Craig
7. Left to Right: Vikki Kindermann, Michael Nieddu, Jillian Beardsworth, Therese Flynn-Clarke (behind), Elizabeth Shaw
8. Example of a Glory Box



*"The Glory Box project was a delight to be involved in and I was so impressed with the concept of artist run and process driven workshops towards a final exhibition. It proved to be a successful model that benefited the participating artists by developing their skill base and refining of their works. I introduced current techniques I am investigating, and my professional development was enhanced as I received feedback in return for sharing my skills." - Simone Eisler*

*"The role objects of material culture play in conveying cultural and societal values is of particular interest to me. It was lovely to work with the The Glory Box members to introduce them to techniques and processes in the studio and to participate in their developed practice of group critiques and feedback teasing through their ideas for the project." - Elizabeth Shaw*

*"The Glory Box Project presented a unique collaborative working model to instigate new creative processes within a challenging conceptual brief." - Carolyn Mckenzie-Craig*

logan art  
gallery

**Glory Box | Hope Chest | Bottom Drawer**  
31 July – 12 September 2015

**Logan Art Gallery**

Cnr Wembley Rd and Jacaranda Ave,  
Logan Central QLD 4114  
Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm  
[www.logan.qld.gov.au/artgallery](http://www.logan.qld.gov.au/artgallery)

*This exhibition is supported by the Regional Arts Development Fund, a Queensland Government through Arts Queensland and Logan City Council partnership to support local arts and culture.*



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