**LIVING TRACES**

Parragirls Artist Book and Print Exhibition  
Opening 4–6pm Saturday 24 Sept  
5pm *It’s time for transparency*

performance by Parragirl Jenny McNally with Zsuzsi Soboslay

**Living Traces**, an exhibition of handmade artists’ books and limited edition prints is the fruit of a year-long collaboration between artists’ book producers Gwen Harrison and Sue Anderson and 12 Parragirl artists, curated by artist Lily Hibberd. Based at the former Parramatta Girls Home, in this distinctive project the women retrieve remaining traces of their time as teenage residents of the Home, more than 50 years ago.

Over 16 workshops the women have produced unique collagraph prints that embody the marks the Home has left on them, both physically and mentally, and transformed these into a series of collective artist books and limited edition prints. Each print incorporates traces of scratchings left by young girls on surfaces in the institution and excerpts from state welfare records kept on them, files that until recently were largely inaccessible to former residents.

Today, graffiti at Parramatta Girls Home is only evident to former residents. Words or acronyms written in coded language, like ILWA/ I Love, Worship and Adore, were covertly scored while in solitary confinement as an act of solidarity and resistance to the cruelty they suffered at the hands of their keepers. **Living Traces** captures otherwise unrecorded memories of the institution, buried under trauma and shame, before they are lost forever.

**Living Traces** offers rare insight into the continuous history of a justice system that criminalises, incarcerates and punishes vulnerable Australian and refugee children to this day. For here lie the origins of punitive child welfare and the institutionalisation of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in Australia with the establishment of the Roman Catholic Orphan School in 1844 and the Native Institute in 1814.

Parramatta Girls Home is under investigation as part of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. After more than 50 years, Parragirls are now being asked to testify to abuse that occurred there at the hands of superintendents and other staff. Finally, these extraordinary works of art witness the resilience of the Parragirls to cross back over the threshold into a place of terror to pronounce, “Never again!”
“At the stroke of a pen, my life changed forever,” says Parragirl Jenny McNally. "As children what happened affected our lives in profound ways. Back then we never got the chance to read what was recorded, to correct or dispute it, or to add our own voice. We never knew what was said but we knew those words existed and they have haunted us all our lives. The only way we could express ourselves was to scratch words into the walls or onto our bodies. Now a lifetime later, we revisit those marks, we read what was written about us and we are responding in our own ways to set the record right.”

Bonney Djuric says, “The Memory Project is breaking new ground. It is experimental, having no other similar models to guide in the process, but it is making a difference and opening up new ways of understanding ourselves as a nation who never questioned the rule of authority when it came to the fate of those who were placed in institutional care. Our collective journey and the artwork we do through the Memory Project has enabled each one of us to challenge societal perceptions about ‘children placed in institutional care’.”

Visual artist and printmaker Gwen Harrison and bookmaker Sue Anderson have collaborated for more than 15 years. Together, they have produced limited edition books and exhibitions focused on colonial sites where Australia’s unwanted and marginalised have been incarcerated, including "Howl for a Black Cockatoo" on Cockatoo Island, 2015, and with “Quaranta Australis” at the former North Head Quarantine Station, 2008. Their handcrafted artist books are held in The British Library, The Codex Foundation USA, National Library Australia and the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Founded by Bonney Djuric and Christina Green in 2006, Parragirls is a collective and support group for former residents of the Parramatta Girls Home. As an independent group, Parragirls advocates for human rights and the public and state recognition of their institutional experiences, lobbying for the protection Parramatta Female Factory Precinct’s national heritage.

Parragirls Female Factory Precinct Memory Project is a social history and contemporary art project founded by Bonney Djuric and Lily Hibberd in 2012. Situated at the former Parramatta Girls Home, our work transforms this once inaccessible site into a place of shared memory and belonging for Parragirls. We facilitate artistic collaborations with Parragirls through on-site workshops that foster shared experiences and memory work in the context of past trauma and social disadvantage. Living Traces is the third curated PFFP Memory Project exhibition held on site since 2013.

PFFP Memory Project is the only first-hand historical record of Parramatta Girls Home. Parragirls’ creative work acknowledges Parramatta Female Factory Precinct as a place that holds significance not only for the estimated 500,000 people who were in institutional or out-of-home care as children but for all Australians. PFFP Memory Project is globally recognised as the first Australian member of the 200-strong International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.

More information, and high resolution images are available on request from Lily Hibberd parragirlsmemory@gmail.com

Exhibition opening hours 2–6pm Sun 25 Sept, & Fri 30 Sept through to Sun 2 Oct. Address Kambalba/former Parramatta Girls Home, 1 Fleet Street, Parramatta North, NSW, 2151.