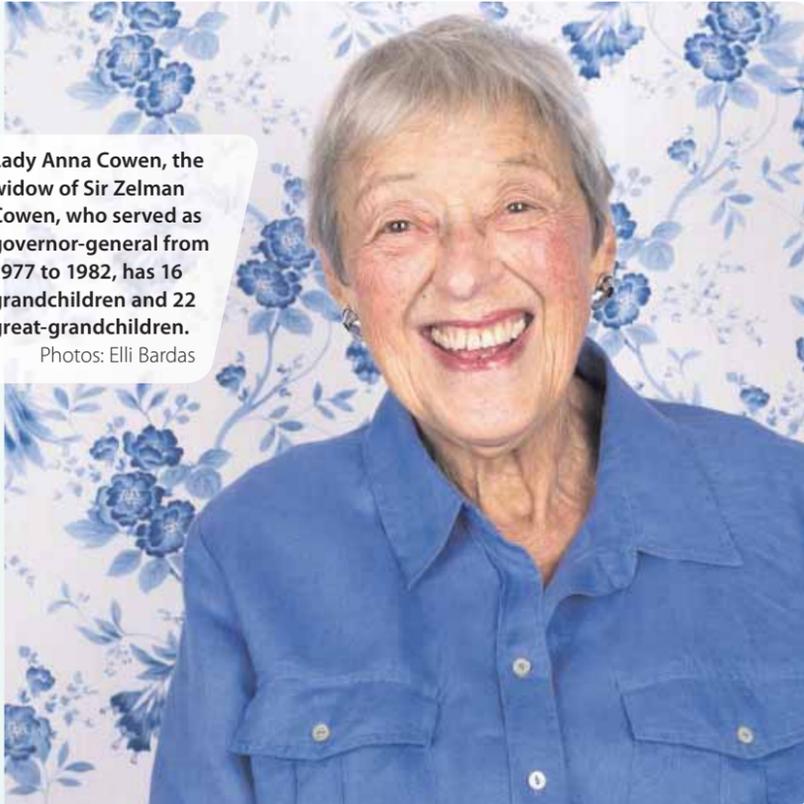


ARTS & LIFESTYLE

Arts Editor **Danny Gocs**
dgocs@jewishnews.net.au

Inside: Recently-released books

Lady Anna Cowen, the widow of Sir Zelman Cowen, who served as governor-general from 1977 to 1982, has 16 grandchildren and 22 great-grandchildren.
Photos: Elli Bardas



Former Bialik College principal Genia Janover has four grandchildren.



Leading business-woman Carol Schwartz has four grandchildren.



Honouring our bubbas

The role of Jewish grandmothers in contemporary society is explored in a new exhibition which opens at the Jewish Museum of Australia this weekend. **Danny Gocs** reports.

GRANDMOTHERS from Melbourne's Jewish community reflect on their lives in the exhibition *Love & Legacy* which opens on the weekend at the Jewish Museum of Australia (JMA).

The exhibition features portraits, filmed interviews and family heirlooms from the bubbas, who represent different portions of the community and include some high-profile names including Lady Anna Cowen, Genia Janover, Renata Singer and Carol Schwartz.

And in a first for Melbourne, JMA has joined four other ethnic museums – representing the Chinese, Italian, Greek and Muslim communities – in presenting simultaneous exhibitions on grandmothers under the umbrella of the new Multicultural Museums Victoria.

JMA special projects curator Juliette Hanson, who has been working on *Love & Legacy* for more than two years, said all the exhibitions will be launched on Sunday, May 6 with a free open day.

"It has been great working with the curators from the other exhibitions, although each of us has very different collections and exhibition spaces," said Hanson.

"We wanted to show the diversity of grandmothers in the community, not just between the different museums but especially within the Jewish community, ranging from Orthodox and secular to Ashkenazi, Sephardi and Holocaust survivors."

For *Love & Legacy*, the JMA commissioned photographer Elli Bardas to take the photos of the Jewish grandmothers.

Last year Bardas won the inaugural \$15,000 Martin Kantor Portrait Prize as part of the Ballarat International Foto Biennale with a portrait of her aunt Vicki Vidor.

"Elli is an amazing photographer," said Hanson. "In order to make the portraits for the exhibition, she met the grandmothers and discussed what they would like to wear for their photos. Then she found beautiful fabrics for each backdrop."

Hanson interviewed all the grandmothers and their responses were filmed by Daniel Bowden and edited into a 40-minute feature which is being screened as part of the exhibition.

"It has been a real privilege to meet the women whose experiences are at the heart of this exhibition. They all have amazing life stories and such varied perspectives on their role as grandmothers and on the role of women more broadly," she said.

"We wanted to look at the role and diversity of the grandmothers of today as well as their contributions in the past."

With many Holocaust survivors in Melbourne's Jewish community, the exhibition also tackles themes of absence, noting the grandmothers that families never knew because of the Nazi atrocities during World War II.

The exhibition features family heirlooms loaned by the grandmothers, including jewellery and presents, as well as objects from the JMA's own collection.

Sadly, one grandmother, Claire Aghion, died in February just weeks before her 102nd birthday. Instead her daughter, Claudine Berman – who is also a grandmother – had her portrait taken by Bardas holding a photo of her mother, and both are featured in the exhibition.

"It was great that Claire could sit and talk with us, and the film is dedicated to her memory," said Hanson.

They all have amazing life stories and such varied perspectives on their role as grandmothers.

Juliette Hanson, curator

For the curator, the *Love & Legacy* exhibition overlapped with her work on *Amy Winehouse: A Family Portrait*, which was held from October 2017 to March this year and attracted a record-breaking 12,000 visitors.

"We always expected it to be popular, but nobody expected it to be quite as successful as it turned out. We were delighted with the response."

Hanson said the *Love & Legacy* exhibition is expected to be popular with families, with many children's activities being held at the museum.

"We will have a storytelling corner with large armchairs for grandmothers to sit in and read to their grandchildren," said Hanson. "We want to encourage an intergenerational dialogue."

The other exhibitions taking part in the Multicultural Museums Victoria grandmothers project are *Waipo* at the Chinese Museum, *Nonne* at the Museo Italiano, *Yiayia* at the Hellenic Museum and *Our Grandmothers* at the Islamic Museum. These exhibitions run until August.

The *Love & Legacy* exhibition is at the Jewish Museum of Australia, 26 Alma Road, St Kilda from May 6 to October 28. Enquiries: www.jewishmuseum.com.au and mmv.org.au.