

Basic Detail Report

00039755

Title

Enemy / Alien

Date

2003

Primary Maker

Anne Zahalka

Medium

Linen, ink, thread

Dimensions

430 x 430 mm

Name

Photo media

History

In the aftermath of World War II, thousands of European migrants came to Australia as political refugees or displaced persons. Most arrived with few possessions and had to adjust to a new language, new customs and a new way of life. In the Displaced Persons series, artists Anne Zahalka and Sue Saxon chronicle their parents' post-war migration journeys to Australia. The artists use scraps of embroidery, travel documents, photographs and family heirlooms to evoke the sense of alienation and homesickness their parents experienced. Anne Zahalka's mother Hedy, a Jew, fled Austria in 1936 to escape the Nazis. In England she met and later married Vaclav Zahalka, a Czech fighting with the Allies. They returned to live in Prague after World War II, but escaped again following the Communist takeover in 1950. Sue Saxon's father, Bandy Szasz, used false papers to survive the wartime occupation of Hungary by the Germans. Many of his family members were interned or perished in the Nazi concentration camps. The Szasz family's vineyards were confiscated by the Germans and then by the Communists. Displaced from their homelands, the Zahalkas and Szaszs migrated to Australia on SURRIENTO in 1950. SURRIENTO was bought by the Flotto Lauro Line in 1948 and was the line's first passenger-only ship. Originally named SANTA MARIA, the ship was built in 1928 as a cargo vessel for the Grace Steamship Company of New York. SURRIENTO operated on the Italy-Australia passenger route until 1958. It then operated on the Central American emigrant route for two years before resuming passenger transport to Australia from 1953 until 1956.