

Basic Detail Report

V00026662

Title

Miniature green dress

Date

2010

Primary Maker

Gina Sinozich

Medium

Fabric

Dimensions

420 x 390 x 25 laid flat

Name

Dress

History

In 1956 Gina Sinozich and her family fled their home in Istria, Croatia to start a new life in Australia. After World War II, Croatia was absorbed into the communist republic of Yugoslavia, governed by Marshall Josip Tito. Life for the Sinozich family was difficult and food was scarce. Gina wanted a more secure future for her children, Michael and Jenny. In April 1956 Gina and her children slipped across the Italian border on the pretence of visiting her mother in Trieste. Her husband Eugen followed several months later. Gina could not risk telling anyone, even close family, that they were leaving. She applied for political asylum in Italy and was sent to a migrant hostel in Udine sheltering 3,000 other refugees. Via Prodramano No 21 was 'not a happy place', Gina recalls. Food was monotonous: 'every day was macaroni and tomatoes and powdered milk'. Several families were bundled into the same room, and refugees lived in limbo waiting months, sometimes years, for their papers to be processed. After 18 months Gina finally found her family's name - 'Sinozich departing Genoa' - on the hostel notice board. Asked to choose between Australia and Canada, Gina and Eugen chose Australia, 'a new country' that they believed offered greater opportunities for their children. On 19 July 1957 the Sinozich family departed Genoa, Italy, on the Lloyd Triestino liner SS NEPTUNIA. The ship travelled the Suez route and, after a month at sea, NEPTUNIA finally docked in Melbourne. The family was taken by train to Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre near Wodonga, Victoria, where they spent several weeks before moving to Sydney to start their new lives. Their journey mirrored the passage taken by hundreds of thousands of post-World War II European migrants, one which changed not only their lives but also had a profound effect on Australian society. Gina finally returned to Croatia in 2004, reuniting with family members and mending rifts caused by her secret departure almost 50 years earlier.