

Christina Henri is a conceptual artist based in Hobart, Tasmania. Whilst working towards her Master's Degree (MFA), she became increasingly involved in interpreting the amazing number of stories about convict women and their children through her Fine Arts practice. This has led to works such as – *900 Bonnets, Departures and Arrivals* and *Redeeming Memories*. These works have been displayed at historic sites relating to penal servitude in both Tasmania and New South Wales, in addition to prominent art galleries within Tasmania.

Christina's Masters' Thesis (2008), '*Redeeming Memories – An Investigation into the lives of Convict Women*', is part of a number of State Library collections, University Libraries and in private collections. Presently she is completing her PhD Research on convicts, especially convict women.

Since 2003 Christina Henri has been the Honorary Artist in Residence at the Cascades Female Factory, a site nominated for World Heritage by the Federal Government.

Early in 2008 the Australian serial nomination for convict heritage sites was presented to UNESCO for proposed World Heritage status. The sites were inspected in 2009 and a decision is expected in July 2010.

Christina Henri's innovative art was the only artist's work featured. (pps 152/153)

Christina's major work is *Roses From The Heart*™ a Memorial which pays tribute to all convict women, but most especially those transported to Australia. This work invites 25,566 participants, world wide, to create a cloth bonnet, based on a colonial pattern, in recognition of the social and economic contribution made by the convict women to the country that became their home. This number represents the total body of women transported to Australia. Already more than 15,000 bonnet tributes have been received from around the world, with many more in the making This global memorial honouring the convict women will tour internationally made possible by financial donations as they are contributed.

Bringing the Spirit of the Convict Women Home

On 28 August 2010 Christina, in response to an invitation by Elizabeth Kearns, Manager of the Cork City Jail, Heritage Centre, will 'take some of the girls (the bonnets symbolize the convict lasses) back home' to present their unique stories in words and music. This event will especially commemorate the 194 Irish convict women who, in 1828, were condemned to transportation in the prison ship *Elizabeth*, for often trifling crimes committed in their native land.

Irish convict woman Mary Walsh will also be remembered. Mary, a resident of Clonmel, was sentenced, to seven years in the harsh penal colony of Van Diemen's Land for allegedly stealing cloth from a local shop. She arrived at Hobart Town in April 1842, accompanied by her one year old daughter. In 1843 her husband James addressed one of the most moving love letters to his wife on the other side of the world. This letter, now in the keeping of the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, forms the basis of an intriguing mystery surrounding both Mary and her family back in Ireland.

Mary's tale has been encapsulated by the composer of the *Fields of Athenry*, Pete St John, in a new tribute song *The Bells of Ireland*. Cork musician, Dave McGilton, likewise moved by Mary's plight, has also written an especially poignant song, *Sky and Sea* which looks at the transportation story from the point of view of those left behind.

Dave McGilton and Pete St John will both perform in Cork, supported by the Irish Countrywomen's Association Choir, and be accompanied by Western Australian musician and songwriter Fred Rea, who is also owner/editor of *The Irish Scene* which he produces for the Irish community. The whole event will be narrated by Christina Henri.

It is hoped that Irish President, Mary McAleese, will be present at this inaugural performance.

On 4 September 'Bringing the Spirit of the Convict Women Back Home' will be staged in Dublin (venue to be advised) and a 'Blessing of the Bonnets' ceremony will be held at Inchicore.

The following weekend, 11/12 September, a 'Blessing of the Bonnets' ceremony and 'Bringing the Spirit Back Home' show will be presented in the picturesque fishing village of Kilkeel as a mark of respect to the many convict women transported from County Down. Additional performances and bonnet ceremonies may be staged.

To support these presentations a CD, featuring all the musicians and again narrated by Christina Henri, is being produced and will be available for sale at each event.

Christina has also been invited to have an exhibition of 13,000 bonnets at the Festival of Quilts at the NEC in Birmingham, England on the 19-22 August, 2010. This Festival sees over 40,000 people visit and *Roses from the Heart™* is a main draw card for the Festival as interest in connecting with the convict story and making a bonnet tribute is spreading rapidly throughout the Country.

See:

<http://www.twistedthread.com/pages/exhibitions/viewExhibition.aspx?id=25&view=features>

<http://www.twistedthread.com/uploads/pdf/FoQ%20Additional%20Features.pdf>

Following Christina Henri's Irish tour she has been invited to hold both a 'Blessing of the Bonnets' and an exhibition of bonnets in Jersey, the Channel Islands, England on September 19, 2010. You are invited to be involved in this Memorial.

To make a bonnet download a bonnet pattern from www.christinahenri.com.au

To support Roses from the Heart(tm) contact the artist Christina Henri cjhenri@gmail.com