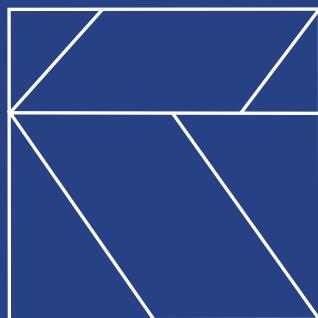
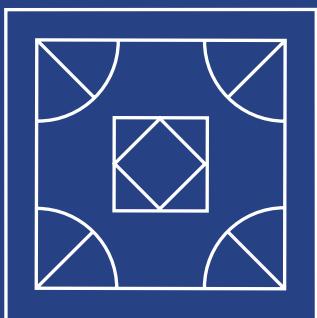
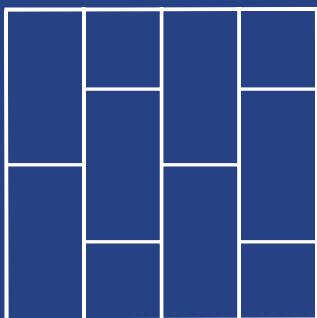
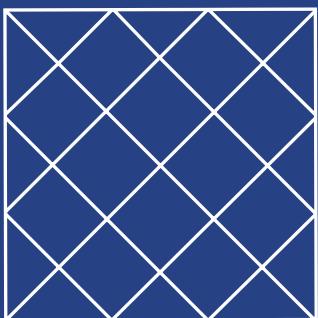
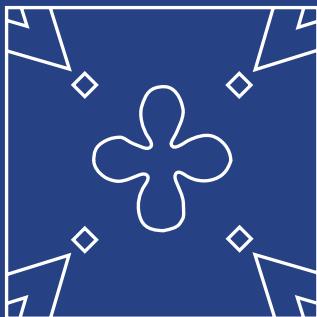
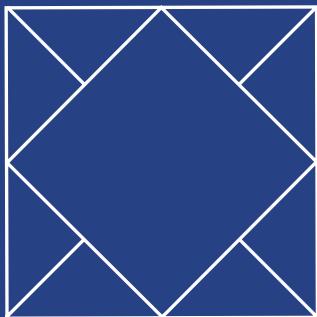
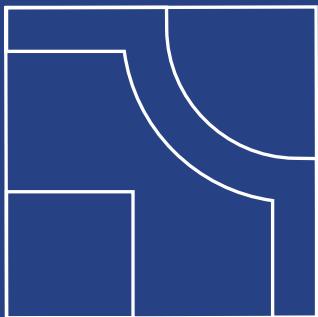
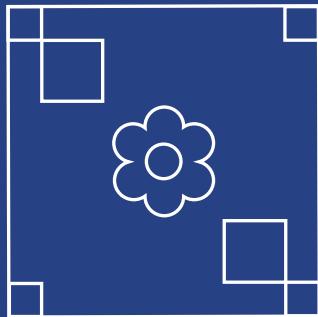


**UNDERNEATH/
OVERLOOKED**
Bonded & Resilient

— Penny Bovell & Gabby Howlett —

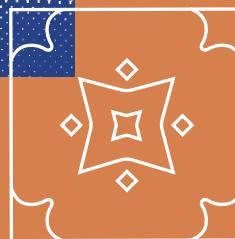
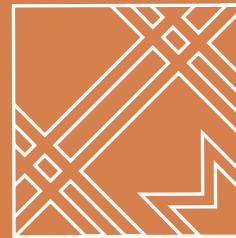


This project was born out of a love for terrazzo, design, colour and pattern and driven by a desire to find out more.

We are pleased to share with the wider community the incredible skill and craft of Giuseppe and Anna's work, created by hand here in Fremantle, and to celebrate the legacy they leave behind for us to cherish and enjoy.



North elevation of the Scolaro house from which the installation is modeled on.



Underneath/Overlooked

Fabrics of Society

The ornate terrazzo work of Giuseppe and Anna Scolaro has shifted my gaze from a fixation with the sky to a fascination with the floor.

Having worked and lived in Fremantle for decades these exquisite floors have followed me from studio to my current home, the 8 x 10 metre brick cottage that was once the Scolaro family home. This modest home originally consisted of six small rooms, each with a unique terrazzo pattern.

This project has allowed me to collaborate with my daughter Gabby, combining my experience as an artist familiar with working on large scale commissions and exhibitions with her skills and interest in social impact, sustainability and product development. It has been research and process driven, allowing us to reach out and connect; to hear the stories of the community as they have lived with and loved the unique version of the tiles in their homes. It has been a process of unearthing, documenting and interpreting these discoveries to make visible a relatively unknown aspect of Fremantle's post war history.

So far we have documented 16 tile patterns and 4 borders based on geometric and floral motifs. The tiles are informed by modernist styles and are particularly reflective of the Art Deco era. Variations in colour and laying options extend the design permutations of each tile. We searched early twentieth century Terrazzo tile pattern books from online libraries and found none of Scolaro's patterns, making these unique to Fremantle.

As *Underneath/Overlooked* is open to the public the noise walls and underpasses of the Main Roads WA High Street and Stirling Highway Upgrade are being painted. Here I have generated a work from one of the Scolaro tile patterns nicknamed "Sliding Squares" by Gabby.

The structural foundation required of patterns is contrary to the fluid and organic paintings I am more known for. These rely on random acts and accidents whereas making patterns requires calculation and accuracy and is akin to a rigorous mental workout. Even so, being drawn to what I don't understand often becomes the impetus to make new work.

Scolaro's bespoke tiles appeal to the senses, because they are overtly handmade and decorative. One can sense the spent labour of the production line. I am drawn as much to the bleeding of colour within individual tiles and the inevitable errors

the tilers have made in laying the complex patterns. For me "errors" provide character, they break the routine of repetition, and add humour. They activate both memory and imagination.

Repeat patterns, contrasting colours, textural aggregates and aged patinas become an intensely expressive language. Whilst mostly hidden within private realms, the Scolaro's floors contribute to the timeless contemporaneity of our city. They are a valuable reminder of the cultural and aesthetic influence of Mediterranean immigration in Fremantle and beyond.

The house made for *Underneath/Overlooked* is a 50% scaled model of the original Scolaro cottage. It is adorned by photographs of tiles digitally printed onto silk and a blue print drawing on interfacing fabric adorns the roof. You could say the installation refers to the fabric of (our) society.

Shifting these floor patterns to the walls and roof, flipping from inside flooring to outside elevation, the tiles are no longer underneath or overlooked.

PENNY BOVELL

Penny Bovell (MFA/UWA) works across numerous media for exhibition and site specific installations with a passionate interest in the creation of stories based on social history and the environment. Her artwork is held in the NGA and major Western Australian Collections. Her public artwork can be viewed across the state including integrated artwork for the Western Australian Museum Research and Collection Centre.

GABRIELLE HOWLETT

Gabby holds a Degree in Sustainable Development from Murdoch University and a Post Graduate Certificate in Social Impact: School of Business and Economics, University of Western Australia. To bring together her passions, education and extensive background in specialist retail and retail management she created her own small business, How Productive, where she works with artists, galleries, arts organisations and museums to produce artist merchandise. She also works part time for Juluwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation as their Product and Merchandise Developer.

Giuseppe & Anna Scolaro

A History of Universal Terrazzo Tiles

Giuseppe and Anna Scolaro and their three children came to Fremantle from Capo d'Orlando, Sicily, in 1948 in search of a better life for their young family. They had a fourth child in Australia.

Giuseppe, a true artisan, made a range of decorative terrazzo floor tiles that combined vibrant mixes of pigment and Italian Carrara marble, and were laid in different ways to produce individual complex designs.

In Sicily Giuseppe had a small mechanical business, among other things maintaining machinery for the olive oil industry. In Fremantle he took a variety of jobs including one in Shanahan and Thompson's bag cleaning business where he devised and built a machine for the easy cleaning of wool bales. But he wanted to start his own business.

With the postwar boom in the building industry he started out making cement bricks. But with the brick industry rigidly controlled by government boards and the market dominated by the big manufacturers he turned to making terrazzo floor tiles. He called the business *Universal Terrazzo Tiles*.

Giuseppe had no previous experience in tile making and no training in art or design. Many of the tile designs were from his own and Anna's imagination. He designed and built all the equipment for it. In 1952 they built a factory on lots 9 and 10 Blinco Street. They employed people in the factory to make the tiles as well as laying and polishing them on the finished floor.

At that time terrazzo was a plain utilitarian flooring for the wet areas of the home. It was laid down as a thin layer of marble chips, sand and coloured cement, then the surface ground to expose the coloured stone. The Scolaro tiles of decorative terrazzo revolutionized it and brought it into the living spaces as an ornate, colourful and pristinely polished product. It was embraced by the Italian community and progressively others for its customized designs and hard wearing surface that was easy to clean and cool to walk on in summer. The tiles were made to order, and customers came to the factory to create their designs with Giuseppe, distinctive blends of patterns and colours that made them their own. To our knowledge there was no one else making a similar product.

The tiles were individually made upside down. The different terrazzo mixes of coloured cement, coloured marble chips and white marble dust were ladled into a frame using a mould to form the desired pattern, and vibrated to consolidate it. After the mould was withdrawn a slightly damp layer of grey cement was

added to form a strong backing. The whole was then compressed at high pressure, squeezing water from the terrazzo into the backing cement to produce a tile that was relatively dry and sufficiently firm to be handled. The consistency of the terrazzo and backing cement was critical to ensure that the pattern and colours remained well defined and the tiles were firm enough to be carefully lifted on edge from the tilted baseplate and stacked for curing. They were then machine ground to expose the marble. The tiles were laid on the floor with very fine joints which were grouted with a matching mix of marble dust and coloured cement. They were then honed with very fine abrasive to give a smooth, highly polished floor in which the joints between the tiles were all but invisible so as not to detract from the design.

The marble chips for the tiles were imported from Italy in the size and colours required for the various designs, together with the fine marble dust that was used instead of sand in the terrazzo mix to impart the soft texture that was a beguiling feature of the Scolaro floors. Giuseppe searched extensively for local stone to use instead of the imported marble chips but could find nothing to match the look and feel of the Italian marble.

Giuseppe died in 1965, a week short of his 52nd birthday. After his death Anna carried on the business for nearly ten years before leasing it in 1973, but regrettably it did not prosper under new management.

Although relatively short lived, the impact on Fremantle of this decorative tiling industry has been very significant. Giuseppe and Anna's tiles have become highly prized for their vivid colour and range of complex designs. In the 1950's they brought a flash of cosmopolitan modernism into Fremantle and Western Australia.

The children did not work in the business and did not continue it. They were encouraged to get a good education and all three sons became engineers, one an academic, and the daughter a successful business woman. Typical of the times the family have no tangible record of our parents' working life and I have strived to convey the legacy of their work to the grandchildren and the community.

ARMANDO SCOLARO

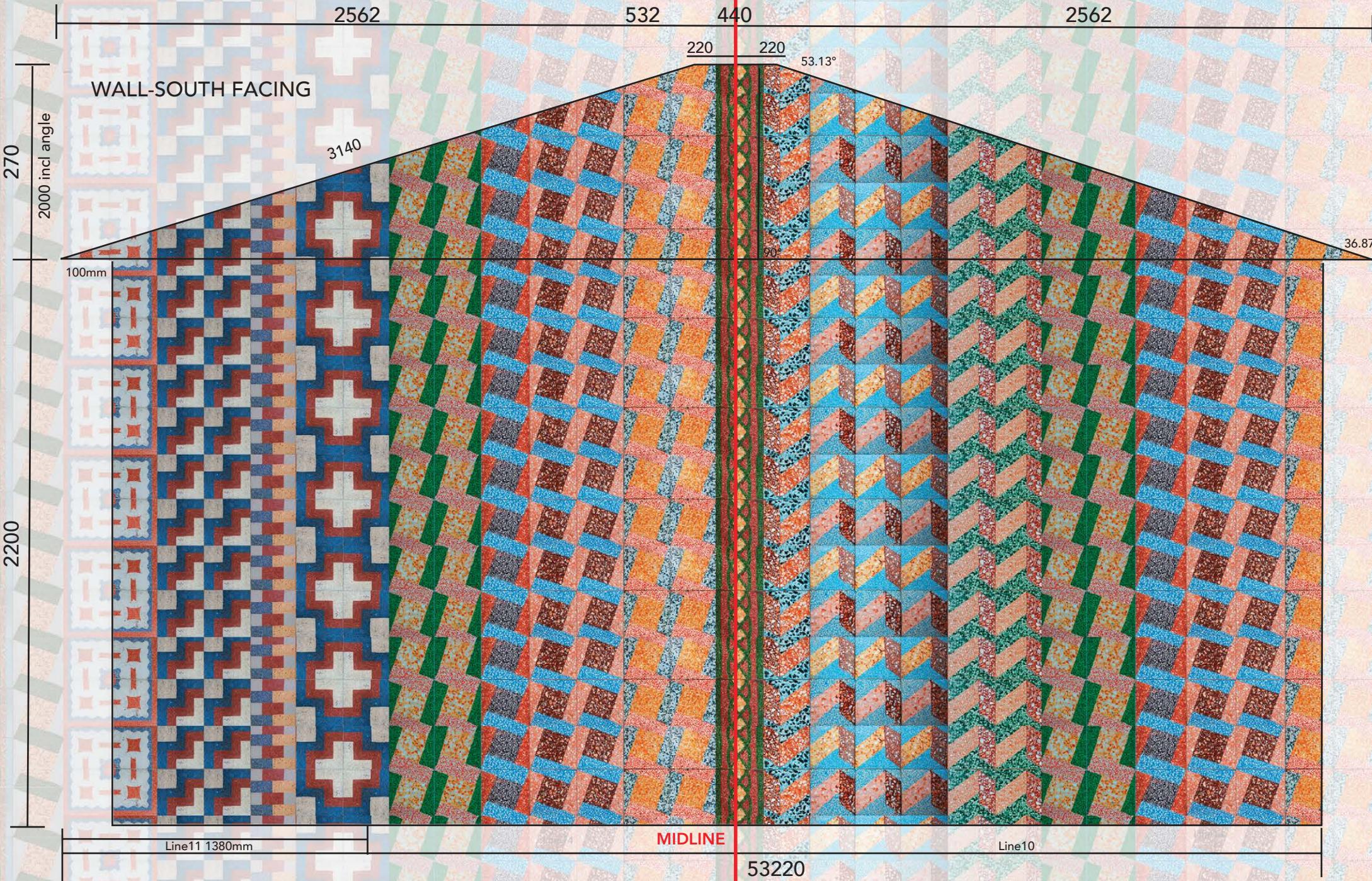
Armando was just 12 when his parents opened Universal Terrazzo Tiles and has vivid memories of their hard work and the labour-intensive process of making the tiles. Armando is a trained engineer and an academic, now retired and living with his wife Tricia in a house with tiles his mum, Anna made. Armando has been an integral part of this project.



Giuseppe and Anna Scolaro with son Robert and grandson Mark at Fremantle port, c. 1962

A SPECIAL THANKS FROM ARMANDO

Penny and daughter Gabrielle are to be congratulated for bringing light to our parent's work and for their dedication in developing this wonderful display and exhibition in celebration of Giuseppe and Anna Scolaro's contribution to the design heritage of Fremantle. They have so far discovered and catalogued more than 100 amazing floors. There has been a remarkable passion to seek out and share a little known chapter of the Fremantle story.



A working sketch for the exhibition
Underneath/Overlooked



Bonded & Resilient

Living with the Tiles

Ten years ago, my family and I moved into a typical 1970s, un-renovated, brick and tile Italian house in White Gum Valley. We had no idea of the treasures that lay hidden underneath a neutral surface of large cream tiles and old carpet.

I can't remember exactly what led us to lift up a corner of the carpet in the living room, but I remember clearly that we felt like we had won the lottery. We discovered an array of peach, turquoise and green terrazzo tiles. Like Archaeologists embarking on a quest for lost treasures, we excitedly chipped away at the beige tiles in the kitchen and hallway to find more vibrant, wildly patterned tiles.

We soon discovered how amazingly hard wearing our new colourful patterned tiles were. They have withstood the rigours of children, pets, the removal of the kitchen roof, builder's tools and remain in pristine condition. They hide the dirt and give a colourful and lively backdrop to our everyday life. They also provide us with a tangible link to a particular era of Fremantle heritage and the rich history of Italian migration to the city.

Although terrazzo tiles were extremely popular between 1950–1970 world-wide, the advent of cheap ceramic tile imports and changing interior design trends and aesthetics led to many of Fremantle's Scolaro terrazzo floors being covered over or dug up in the 1980's.

Perhaps as the second generation of the migrants grew up and families became more assimilated into a multi-cultural Australia, there was no longer a need or desire to retain the terrazzo tiles as a representation of a link with 'home'. In discussions with my neighbours, whom are older Italians, I have heard many different stories as to why the terrazzo tiles were covered up or destroyed – from embarrassment at their vibrancy, to wanting a cleaner,

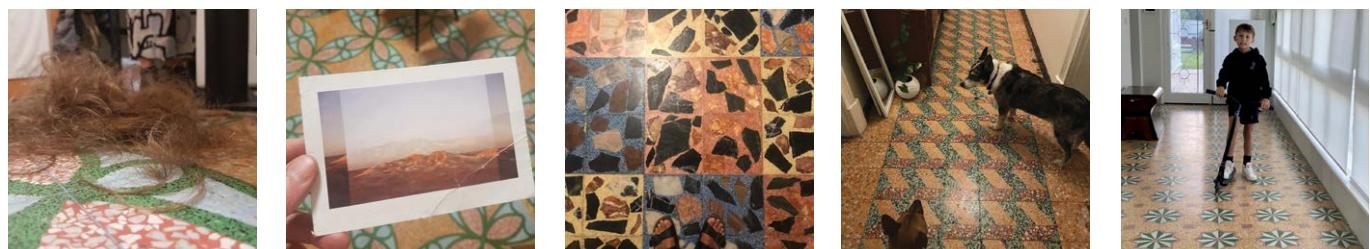
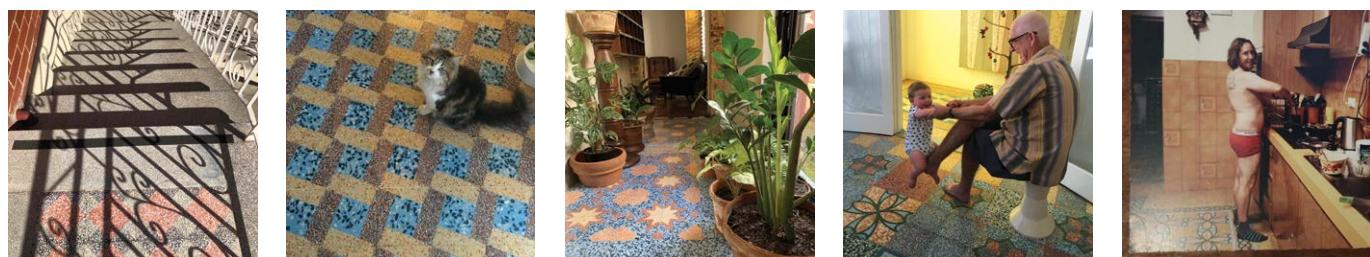
shinier surface to just plain old 'fashions change'. A common theme is wanting a clean, orderly, uncluttered environment.

However, as the population demographic in Fremantle has changed and the first generation of Italian migrants become older and move on, younger families have moved into the area drawn to the potential of large, family friendly, solidly built houses on big blocks. The cycle of life begins again. Fremantle is a sought after locale, in part because of its character, history and distinct identity. The post war Italian migrant brick houses provide an excellent canvas for renovation projects and the remaining and rediscovered Scolaro terrazzo tiles are becoming design features that are valued and venerated.

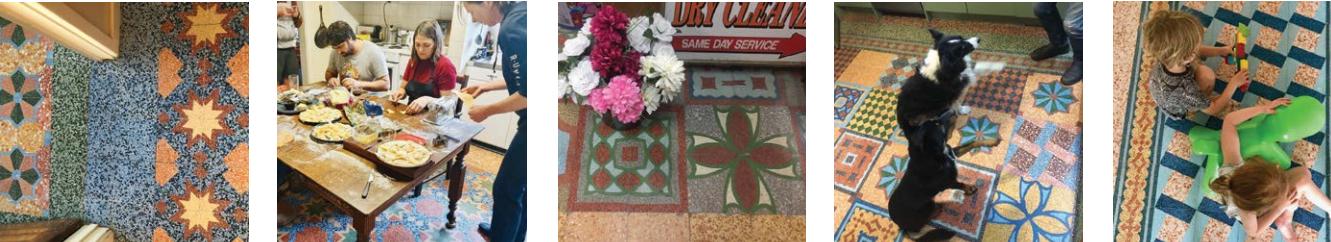
They represent a particular moment in history and are a precious resource linking different generations and populations. They help to define us as a community: who we are and where we have come from. They create a particular sense of place and represent embodied values of craftsmanship, innovation, new beginnings, social and cultural enterprise which remain just as relevant today.

STEPHANIE HAMMILL

Steph is a well known Fremantle ceramic artist and repairer of broken pots. She teaches at Fremantle Arts Centre and her work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally. Steph originally trained as an Anthropologist and is a keen collector of stories that link personal histories, objects and snapshots of moments in time. She is also extremely happy to live with a Scolaro terrazzo floor!



Images: Some of the photos that residents living with Scolaro floors have submitted for the exhibition *Bonded and Resilient*



We wish to acknowledge the custodians of this land, the Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation and their Elders past and present. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

UNDERNEATH/OVERLOOKED: BONDED & RESILIENT

Penny Bovell & Gabby Howlett
16–25 July 2021
The Moores Building, Henry Street, Fremantle

THANKS FROM GABBY

This project and exhibition have been commissioned by the City of Fremantle Festivals team for the 10 Nights in Port Festival, 2021 and we would like to thank them for this opportunity. This project is also proudly sponsored by the State Heritage Council and the Department of Culture and the Arts.

We need to give a special thank you to Armando Scolaro and the rest of the Scolaro family for giving us their blessings to explore the work of their parents and giving us the background details.

Another big thank you needs to go to the community members who reached out to us, shared their homes and tiles and contributed to the Bonded and Resilient exhibition with special thanks to Stephanie Hammill who shared her story with us for the catalogue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Catalogue Design: Betty Joy Richards

Photography: Clarie Martin, Rebecca Mansell, Isabel Kruger, Penny Bovell, Gabby Howlett and many home owners and residents living with the tiles.

©The copyright of Giuseppe and Anna Scolaro's terrazzo tiles and designs lies with their children.



Image (above): Mary Burns, Gabby Howlett, Armando Scolaro and Penny Bovell in the Scolaro family home now owned by Mary Burns and Trevor Richards | Credit: Rebecca Mansell

Image (right): A Scolaro terrazzo tile mould | Credit: Rebecca Mansell

