

**Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences
Research Seminar Program 2021**

Tuesday 4th May (12-1pm)

To be held via Teams Meeting

Dr. Mary Tomsic

Mary Tomsic is Research Fellow at the Research Centre for Refugees, Migration and Humanitarian Studies in the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences. Her current research focuses on visual representations of child refugees in the public realm; refugee stories in children's literature; and children's voices and cultural expression. Her scholarly research has been published in academic journals and edited collections. *Beyond the Silver Screen: A History of Women, Filmmaking and Film Culture in Australia 1920-1990* (Melbourne University Press, 2017) was her first monograph. Mary's research and scholarship is strongly connected to community-based activities through collaborating with community arts publisher, Kids' Own Publishing which have included researching books published by children, developing teaching materials to support the use of children's stories to teach refugee and migration history, and working with young people with a refugee background to create digital stories. She has worked with school based history projects and collaboratively hosted Wikipedia edit-a-thons which focused on improving the representations of women's history in this well used encyclopedia.



Historical evidence and children drawing life in immigration detention in Australia

Publicly sharing drawings by children in immigration detention was a feature of activism and pressure to remove children from Australian led facilities in recent times. The largest collection of drawings by children in immigration detention are the 327 gathered by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 2014 as part of their inquiry into children in immigration detention. The drawings have been circulated online through the photo sharing site Flickr. From a historical perspective, drawings like these are significant because they are primary sources in which children's experiences and understandings are documented, they have been persevered and are readily available for scholarly research. While the images themselves are often circulated to bolster humanitarian interventions, analysis of them reveals children's political understandings of the operation of power and influence in the regulation of forced migration. The drawings also show how children present themselves as human beings in an immigration system which works to dehumanise the people within it. In this paper I want to argue that the symbolic role that children play in Australian immigration narratives is powerful and significant to interrogate, but alongside this, through a close examination of children's cultural expression children's political opinions and demands can be seen, and from this a better understanding of children as human subjects can be revealed.

For any enquiry please contact Kathryn.Perez@acu.edu.au