



Mining for answers

Elora exhibit explores immigration experience, family history

By JOANNE SHUTTLEWORTH
MERCURY STAFF

ELORA

As a daughter, Sara Angelucci became intensely interested in her family genealogy after both of her parents died.

As an artist, it was her search for answers to those personal family questions that led to her latest exhibit, "Mining the Family Archive," which opened last night at the Elora Centre for the Arts and runs until Feb. 23.

"Once I started asking questions, I wanted to ask more," said Angelucci, who will teach photography for a semester at York University this winter after stepping down as director of Toronto's Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography. "But you reach a dead end at some point. My work is really about the questions that cannot be answered."

Her parents Nina and Orfea Angelucci came to Canada from Italy separately, landing at Halifax's Pier 21 in the mid-1950s. Angelucci moved to Halifax in 1995 for graduate school, and it was on a tour of the historic facility when she suddenly felt a kinship with her parents.

"I realized we had all landed in Halifax — me from Ontario and them from Italy — and I really began to think about the immigration experience.

"I have a photo of my mother taken on the ship that brought her here. It's an enigmatic picture, of my mother suspended at sea. That image became a beacon for me and the inspiration for the rest of the series."

The black and white photo shows a young Nina alone on a ship surrounded by ocean. It got Angelucci wondering about everything, "from the simple to the profound," she said. "Like, what colour was your dress? How did you feel with only the sea around you? What were your

hopes and dreams?"

"The photograph is limited as to the information it can provide."

Her forte is photography and video, and in the piece called "Questions She'll Never Answer," Angelucci combines both.

The photo of her mother on the ship is lit by a light box, and on one side there's video that pans the ocean. On the other side is another video — the hem of a skirt moving in the wind. Along the hem of the skirt Angelucci has written some of those questions.

"It's important to ask the questions, even if you can't get the answers," she said.

The light box revealed some other interesting images as well. Words written on the back bleed through to the front when backlit and Angelucci rephotographed the new hybrid images and played around with them, zeroing in on some of the finer details and duplicating others.

The resulting images are ethereal, evocative, and beautiful, said Phil Irish, curator of the Elora Centre for the Arts.

"She uses old family photos as a way to talk about memory and history and our need to connect to the past," said Irish. It's the first time the Elora art centre has used video in an installation, and while it's not really high-tech in this exhibit, "it is very beautiful and poetic."

"She really knows how to draw that out."

In her artist's statement, Angelucci writes:

"Throughout this exhibition, there is an unspoken reverence for the small, precious black and white photographs of another era. The works in 'Mining the Family Archive' celebrate the beauty of their formal qualities — the sense of occasion



WHAT'S ON

What: Photographer Sara Angelucci's 'Mining the Family Archive'

Where: Elora Centre for the Arts

When: Jan. 10 to Feb. 23

Info: 519-846-9698, or visit www.eloracentreforthearts.ca or www.sara-angelucci.ca

that accompanied their making, the quality of printing, and the physical tangibility of the image. In our digital age, hard drives have replaced the photo album as the keepers of memory. While we may now store thousands of images, how many of them will ever be seen, and how long will a pixel last? Even with technological advancement, images seem to find a way to escape our grasp."

Angelucci said she wanted to be an artist since she was a child, but she pursued other interests before taking the art school plunge. She studied at the University of Guelph under Suzy Lake and has launched exhibits at the Macdonald Stewart Art Centre and at galleries in Cambridge, Hamilton and Toronto.

This is her first show in Elora. Although her own family history prompted the exhibit, it's not like looking at someone else's photo album.

"My work is very personal, but it comes from my interest in the document.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

'Al Rivero (Pompilia),' top, and 'Al Rivero (bicycle),' are part of Sara Angelucci's 'Mining the Family Archive,' which runs until at the Elora Centre for the Arts until Feb. 23.

"I don't want the viewer to see my story so much but to ask questions of their own histories.

"I get real delight in that," she said.

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Taking an academic approach to family time crunches

Last year was a year rife with discoveries about the modern time crunch. I've been combing through the academic literature and have come across a few tidbits that might interest you.

Did you know that the notion of quality family time is not a creation of the 20th and 21st centuries? According to researchers Tamar Kremer-Sadlik and Amy L. Paugh, articles appearing as early as 1838 describe parents who worried about "fathers become strangers in their own home."

In their paper, "Everyday Moments: Finding 'quality time' in American working families," which appears in the journal *Time & Society*, Kremer-Sadlik and Paugh take a swing at the notion of quality family time. Arguing that the societal pressure to set aside quality time leads to feelings of guilt among busy parents, they found that families regularly experience "quality moments in family life," which are spontaneous and un-



CHRISTIE ZIMMER

TIME CRUNCHED

structured. These moments occurred — unplanned and often unnoticed — during periods devoted to other goals, such as waiting in line at the car wash or while folding laundry and gave families the opportunity to connect in meaningful ways without the rigmarole of the planned family outing.

The next time you help your child with her homework or prepare a meal with your partner, give yourself a pat on the back; you've just engaged in quality time with your family.

And you could use a pat on the back because it's entirely possible that you are stressed out. In a study in the *Canadian Journal of Sociology* entitled "Time-Crunch: impact of time spent in paid and unpaid work, and its division in families," researchers Roderic Beaujot and Robert Anderson noted that "Canadians are increasingly likely to experience time-crunch and associated stresses."

As an aside, I find it necessary to mention that I experienced some stress as a result of reading the paper. Beaujot and Anderson chose to focus on the work habits of Canadians in what they termed as "mid-life." The age range they chose was 30-59. Good heavens, that's me — 36 years old and I have somehow ended up in mid-life. Now that is stressful.

With respect to stressed out Canadians as a whole, however, Beaujot and Anderson found that longer hours of paid work are contributing to our collective time crunch. The also found

that of married, working couples, "both men and women had the highest time crunch if the man did more paid work and the woman did more unpaid work." In other words, the family structure most reminiscent of the '50s-era ideal family created the highest time crunch for both spouses.

In other news, a study that appeared in *Human Resource Development Quarterly* in 2007 found that employees spend about an hour and 20 minutes each workday on nonwork-related pursuits such as paying personal bills, calling friends and playing computer games. The study's authors, Caroline D'Abate and Erik Eddy argued that this behaviour constituted a form of "presenteeism," a term that describes employees who are physically at work, yet are engaged in non-work-related activities. D'Abate and Eddy contended that this behaviour stemmed from the desire by employees to achieve satisfactory levels of work-life balance and suggested that

managers become more aware of the work-life issues of their employees and find a way to "flexibly negotiate the boundaries between life realms."

I think this last one is my favourite. When I lived in a student house with fellow university undergrads years ago, one of my roommates found it impossible to leave her bedroom on rainy days. A study by Marie Connolly published in the most recent issue of the *Journal of Labor Economics* offers the flip side of the coin.

Based upon American time use data and daily weather reports, Connolly found that men work an additional 30 minutes and spend 30 minutes less on leisure activities on rainy days.

And that concludes the news and weather for this episode of *Time Crunched*.

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