

Tribute to Bronya, a brave advocate for artistic freedom

Sydney – 15 January 2016

It was a sad day last week when we were notified that Bronya Milechman died a horrible death.

Bronya lived next door to our ModroGorje Gallery in Katoomba in the Blue Mountains and we shared many happy moments with this knowledgeable and fearless activist for social justice.

She will be remembered for many reasons, most of all for her courage over the last seven years, when she was standing up against art censorship, campaigning against Aboriginal violence, and criticising the corrupt Aboriginal industry.

Bronya was a true activist, with a life-long commitment to the betterment of society. She came to Australia as a 6-year old child. Her father left Warsaw the day before the Nazis invaded Poland, and eventually resettled in Australia. Her relative, Harvey Milechman, escaped to San Francisco, where he changed his surname to Milk, and became a well known gay identity and activist for civil liberties. Sean Penn played him in the movie “Milk” about Harvey’s life.

With this family background, Bronya was aware, from an early age, of the harm that any ideological dictatorship causes to society. She advocated for freedom of thought and expression, and the human rights of individuals. She used to joke that her urge to speak up and confront injustice was something that runs in her family, was in her DNA, and as natural as breathing.

Her social work started when back in the 1980s she worked as the Health Department drugs and alcohol counsellor, helping mostly Aboriginal people in the Sydney suburb of Redfern. Throughout the 1980s Bronya was an advocate for Aboriginal rights. In the mid 1990s she moved from Sydney to the Blue Mountains, where she continued her community work.

She often said that by 2009 everything had changed so dramatically, and in such a negative way, that she felt she had to completely change her approach. She could no longer watch Aborigines terrorising non-Aboriginal Australians. So she turned into a passionate advocate for the rights of non-Aboriginal artists, protecting and defending freedom of expression. Even though criticising Aborigines was – and still is – quite unpopular, politically incorrect, and very dangerous.

She gave evidence at the Land Court hearing in Katoomba in 2011, expressing her disgust that the local Blue Mountains council and the Land court bureaucrats wanted to enforce the unlawful decision to censor privately owned “Wanjina Watchers in the Whispering Stone” artwork. She instantly became a target of harassment by the same violent group that terrorised us and our artists.

When her article was published in the book “Forbidden Art, Politicised Archaeology and Orwellian Politics in Australia” in 2012 [[read Bronya’s article here](#)], harassment escalated and Bronya also started receiving death threats. When offered an option for her future work to be published anonymously, Bronya declined. She was adamant that every individual has a duty to speak out against violence in all its forms, especially violence against artists, whom she called the “litmus paper of society”.

We returned to our Sydney home in 2011, but kept in touch with Bronya. She gave several interviews since then, the last one in 2015, when again she said that she feared for her life, as the bullying was still going on. She wrote more articles for our publications, in which she discussed subjects concerned with local issues, Aboriginal violence, Government policy which gave rise to the corrupt Aboriginal industry, intellectual cowardice and the spiritual degradation of our society.

Bronya's body was taken to the Coroner's Court in Sydney. The coronial inquiry into the cause of her death is still ongoing.

It is hard to say goodbye to Bronya, the passionate supporter of artistic freedom. As a tribute to her selfless work throughout her life, the DreamRaiser project is dedicating its next artwork to this noble soul.

Godspeed on your new journey, you'll stay forever in our hearts.



Bronya speaking out against art censorship and at the Wanjina Watchers flower-planting event

A room-scale installation – *“The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”* – featuring portraits of Australian advocates for freedom of expression, as well as portraits of those who abused Bronya and harassed us and our artists, is touring Europe this year.

[Forbidden Art, Politicised Archaeology and Orwellian Politics in Australia – about Aboriginal violence, art censorship, and legally-sanctioned scientific fraud in Australia](#)

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