

From 1979 to 1982 Giorgio made five films for the Papua New Guinea government. One of them, *Sapos* (1982), the first Papua New Guinea film made entirely in Pidgin, was a story about the social destructiveness of alcoholism. Rosemary had worked in the alcoholism clinic at St Vincent's for four years so she assisted with the script. Experienced in bureaucracy and administrative processes, she also helped write submissions to the government. This made for a uniquely close and collaborative time for the newlyweds. Giorgio was especially happy as this was the first time he was actually employed to do something he loved. Rosemary, initially unable to work as she was not a national, was subsequently appointed advisor to mental health in occupational therapy for Papua New Guinea.

As an occupational therapist, Rosemary used art. 'Many of the Papua New Guineans I couldn't communicate with because of language ... it was a beginning I found very valuable.'

By the time Rosemary and Giorgio returned to Australia, most people had their own cameras, so Giorgio's photographic skills were no longer sought after. He concentrated on making films with other writers while Rosemary, the sole breadwinner, accepted a job with the Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service as senior advisor for occupational therapy.

Giorgio was increasingly unwell, but even up to his death he continually wrote scripts and submitted them for funding. 'I know he was so sad and bitter about each rebuttal he received. And then he was told he was too old, they liked younger ones!'

By 1996 Giorgio's health had deteriorated to the extent that Rosemary, now fifty-three, needed to spend more time with him. She wound down her demanding job and Giorgio encouraged her to take up painting full-time.

Giorgio died in 2001, aged seventy-four, from motor neurone disease. In the later stages Rosemary was devoted to his full-time care. Emotionally

devastated and physically exhausted, Rosemary was unable to paint for the next two years, explaining, 'I no longer wanted to sit outside and paint the scenery and the flowers. It was a turning point inwards.' Her subsequent exhibition in 1993, *Journey of Grief*, marked her shift into abstract painting.

For Rosemary, being an artist is about integrity:

*Giorgio was so passionate about wanting to make an artistic film and he knew what he wanted to do. That's what I've tried to do with my own painting, to remain true to myself, and not be influenced by people that my painting means nothing to. Then there's the occasional person that connects with what I have done and that's really wonderful.*

But as loving custodian and sole copyright holder of Giorgio's work, Rosemary's painting has again taken a back seat. She is kept busy responding to information requests for university theses, is in constant communication with the NFSA in Canberra, and today a documentary-maker requests permission to use a photograph that Giorgio took in the 1950s at Don Camillo's in North Melbourne. She tells me of the days spent at the Italian Historical Society going through boxes of Giorgio's photos, putting names to the faces, and filling in the credits for the films shot in Papua New Guinea. For a screening of *Clay* in Italy, Rosemary sat down and wrote the English dialogue for its translation into Italian subtitles.

Rosemary's dedication to the task becomes even more evident when she pulls out ten lever-arch files, the result of ten years work since Giorgio's death: 'He didn't keep anything, I retrieved all these things'. The files bulge with scripts, reviews and other documentation.

Rosemary realised the importance of having factual information about Giorgio when she found that even what was held at the NFSA was of poor quality.

*Somebody would have written about something like Clay that was extremely negative, and anyone wanting to look at the film would see that summary and*

*think, why even bother? So what I've been trying to do at the NFSA is to actually get the names of the actors, the crew who were in it, and a summary of the story, so there are just the facts, and people can judge from that.*

As we peruse the files, the voice of Maria Callas sings Bellini's *Norma* in the background. Giorgio was born in the same town as Bellini – Catania in Sicily – and was a passionate fan of opera. Rosemary tells me he knew all the parts and would sing along, never mind whether it was soprano, tenor or chorus. Bellini's beautiful, sad music overwhelms me with the tragedy of Giorgio's story: the release of *Clay* saw so much promise and hope, only to be followed by years of bitter disappointment.

I suggest that Rosemary is now the personal assistant Giorgio always needed, and that her previous career as an administrator has been invaluable in providing her with the skills to manage the mammoth task of archiving Giorgio's work. Agreeing, she adds:

*I work at the Women's Art Register and through that I've done a course at the National Library on the archiving and preservation of things ... it's been really helpful. And now I have to do everything again because these plastic folders are not archival quality.*

Far from resenting this, Rosemary feels grateful and humble to be part of the process of acknowledging Giorgio's work. She's sure he would be thrilled about what is happening now.

*An extraordinary thing happened. I was telling this art group ... how I'd been to Canberra and there were all these people standing around talking, and I only wished Giorgio was there to hear this discussion. And with that, the central light flickered.*

She laughs. 'I think he heard.'

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