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## About the Project

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*Repatriation and Deception: Post-World War II Soviet Armenia* is a multi-media project consisting of a lecture presentation program with image, music and video, and a collection of paintings and drawings based on years of historical and ethnographic research, including personal interviews with survivors of the Great Repatriation to Soviet Armenia and archival research in the United States and Armenia.

Antaramian-Hofman's body of art is in response to the stories and photographs that she collected during her visits with Armenian repatriates who left such Diasporan countries as France, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Greece, Palestine, and the United States, among other countries, to "return" to a Sovietized unknown Armenian homeland after World War II.

Her art speaks to the paradox of historical circumstance and re-occurring themes, where she constructs and deconstructs the cultural consequences of migration and the displacement of people over time. She is interested in depicting segmented aspects of the repatriate and immigrant "body," fragmented by trauma, politics, social dis-

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The Puffin Foundation

Armenian Museum of Fresno

University of California, Fresno Center

Zohrab Information Center

National Association for Armenian Studies & Research

Versus Studios (Yerevan, Armenia), and

Participating Repatriate Families

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## About the Artist

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Hazel Antaramian was born in Soviet Armenia during the height of the cold war. She is the daughter of two Armenian repatriates. Her father was born in the United States and her mother was born in France.

Both parents were in their youth when they "repatriated" in 1947 with their families to a Soviet Armenia under Stalin. In their early years, one lived in relative comfort and the other in extreme poverty. But all lived in fear.

The Hekimian-Antaramian family eventually left Armenia S.S.R. for the United States in 1965. Before moving to Fresno in 1973, the family lived in Wisconsin.

Antaramian Hofman is an artist, writer, and an independent scholar, who is currently working toward a 2015 culminating exhibition and a book of essays on the post-WWII repatriation to Soviet



Armenia to accompany the debut of a Richard Kalinoski play on the Great Repatriation at Fresno State University.

Antaramian-Hofman received her MA in Arts and Design (with distinction) from Fresno State University in 2011, and her MS in Environmental Policy and Planning from CSU Fullerton in 1994. She also holds degrees in clothing design and chemistry, from the Fashion Institute of Merchandise and Design in Los Angeles and CSU Los Angeles, respectively.

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### WEBSITE

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### ARTIST CONTACT INFORMATION

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*An Artist's View of the Great Repatriation*



Artist Speaker  
Hazel Antaramian Hofman



REPATRIATION AND DECEPTION:  
POST WWII SOVIET ARMENIA



**Excerpt from on-line article in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, "From James Dean to Stalin: the Tragedy of the Armenian Repatriation," 17 August 2012, by Hazel Antaramian Hofman**

The post-WWII repatriation movements uprooted many Armenians from all over the world: France, Lebanon, Egypt, Greece, Cyprus, Syria, Bulgaria, Romania, Palestine, the United States, even some from Sudan, Iran, Iraq, India, Uruguay, Argentina, and China. It was an orchestrated campaign to repopulate what fraction that remained of a vast land well-documented as the ancestral home of Armenians from the time of Darius the Great.

But the repatriates were headed not to the romanticized, vast ancient land of their forebears, but to a "sovietized" Armenia under Stalin. It was a migratory event complete with personal and spiritual dispossession, and cultural disparity.

The Republic of Armenia was in a state of extreme poverty after World War II. By November of 1945, Stalin authorized the return of Armenians to Soviet Armenia with the incentive of bringing in new life in the construction, vitalization, and economic development to a destitute Soviet Republic. Armenian nationalistic organizations, political parties, and religious leadership organized efforts of the repatriation. The Armenian Repatriation Committee stressed the need to nationally support the country of Armenia while downplaying the reality that Armenia was now a Soviet-dominated country.

The basic repatriation story is riddled with individual twists and turns, but in most cases, there was a common thread: more often, a nationalistic, or at times, a socialist-leaning decision was made by a patriarch or a matriarch, who uprooted their family in response to an emotional global appeal encouraged by Soviet propaganda. The call to Armenians worldwide was a maneuver to attract young people of child-bearing ages; to secure skilled workers and professionals from developed countries; and to obtain new technologies and products.

For the more affluent elder repatriates, strong nostalgic feelings influenced their decision to sell their businesses and homes and move to Soviet Armenia within sight of Mount Ararat. For those repatriates from impoverished host countries, such as Greece, the idea was that they were going "home" and would be living better, unlike the refugee status they were experiencing in host countries after having fled the Ottoman Empire.

Encouraged by promises of free housing, land to build upon, and job opportunities, those who left the Diaspora made their life-altering move with false hope. Upon their arrival, they witnessed unimaginable social and economic conditions, with no opportunity to leave the Soviet bloc Armenia or regain their confiscated citizenship papers. The collective social memory of many *hayrenadartsner* was one of betrayal and deceit under the guise of a patriotic call. Those who survived the times would later tell stories concerning backward social economics, disease, discrimination, psychological anxiety, and physical brutality encountered under the Soviet system.

**Interview of Artist, 15 March 2013, by Filmmaker Tigran Paskevichyan.**

***Being an artist, how will you combine fine art and documentary research?***

*The inspiration for my paintings and drawings comes from the photographs and stories of surviving repatriates. So one could say that the repatriation story is my "muse." My documentation process entails informal interviews with repatriates. When I began my website in December 2012, I realized that I needed to use the format to share the stories and images that I had been collecting, material which is an integral part of Armenia's modern social and ethnographic history. My website is a work in progress.*

*I consider my artwork to be an interpretive and visceral response to what happened during this time in Armenian history. Along with my passion to paint and draw, I enjoy writing. So my collection of photographs, stories, and archival material became the basis for my essays and presentations on the topic.*