

## Graduate Spotlight

Every year, the International School for Holocaust Studies holds hundreds of educational activities, in a dozen languages, for over 300,000 students and educators in Israel and around the world. Featured here is one of the School's graduates, and what she has achieved since:



■ Graduate Barbara Simoncelli

■ Barbara Simoncelli teaches art to 13-year-old students at the Dante Alighieri School in Venice. Upon her return to her school following an educational seminar at Yad Vashem in August 2013, Simoncelli shared the methods and pedagogic materials

she had acquired with her fellow teachers. In preparation for International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January this year, she set about developing a special project entitled, "Possa il tuo ricordo essere un filo d'amore" (*May Your Memory Be a Thread of Love*), involving two colleagues: Carlotta Ballarin, who teaches Italian language and history, and Giuseppa Bongiovanni, who also teaches art.

The program Simoncelli and her partners developed is interdisciplinary: The students studied the rise of the Nazi party in Germany; read selected texts written by Holocaust victims and survivors, such as Primo Levi, Inge Auerbacher and Etty Hillesum; conducted research on the Yad Vashem website; reflected on the concept of memory; and viewed Roman Polanski's film *The Pianist* and Yad Vashem's

filmed testimony of survivor Ovadia Baruch from Salonika, *May Your Memory Be Love*, with Italian subtitles. The film is part of "Witnesses in Education," a joint project of Yad Vashem and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, generously supported by the Adelson Family Foundation and the Claims Conference.

The students were asked to choose between quotations from existing texts and their personal reflections, with a view to creating a personal graphic composition on the concept of memory. They then received pieces of burlap and other recycled materials to create their artistic works, inspired by their studies.

"Through the embroidery, the students created a conceptual link between thread as a material and 'the thread of memory' between generations," explained Simoncelli. "They welcomed the project with enthusiasm, but their emotional involvement grew day by day. For most of them, this was the first time they were exposed to this subject matter. Historical events are often too distant in time for young people to feel their effect on their lives but the story of a Holocaust survivor made a strong impact on them. After viewing *May Your Memory Be Love*, they found the project more meaningful."

Yad Vashem regional representative Rita Chiappini saw the works of art and was deeply



# Barbara Simoncelli



## Italy

Richelle Budd Caplan and James Joseph McIntosh



■ Simoncelli's students work on their "Threads of Memory" project

impressed. "This project is hands-on, which requires concentration, attention and deep thought, and its outcome is most original. It clearly demonstrates the validity of Yad Vashem's pedagogical approach, and its suitability for the needs of students of various ages and cultural backgrounds."

Richelle Budd Caplan is Director of the European Department, International School for Holocaust Studies. James Joseph McIntosh works in the European Department.