



TUTTA LA FAMIGLIA

A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION OF COMMUNITY
LIFE IN GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Paul Cary Goldberg

TUTTA LA FAMIGLIA
A PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION OF COMMUNITY
LIFE IN GLOUCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

Paul Cary Goldberg

Catalog for an exhibition at the
John D. Calandra Italian American Institute

September 19, 2014–January 9, 2015

It was spring 2007 when I started photographing inside Caffé Sicilia. I had been a semi-regular patron for about eight years, so I was already familiar to many of the regulars—most of them men, most of them Sicilian: fishermen, stone masons, tile masons, businessmen, plasterers, house painters, and electricians. Still, we were all wary when I began showing up every morning with my camera. They were suspicious of my motivations, and I was timid, worrying about being intrusive. But as is often the case, sharing time together produced a mutual curiosity that wore these barriers down. I and my camera became as much a part of the morning routine as the clattering of espresso cups, the hissing of steamed milk, the clanging thuds of the braccio slamming against the metal drawer to empty out the spent grounds. And soaring above all else were those Sicilian voices speaking all at once, insistent, passionate, playful.

At first, I didn't understand how complex and rich this little, unassuming café was. I wasn't tuned in to the depth of culture, personality, and life that existed here. I didn't understand, to paraphrase Gloucester poet Charles Olson, that Caffé Sicilia was itself "polis." And I never anticipated that such a deep mutual respect and affection would develop.

Gloucester, founded in 1623 by men from Dorset, England, is the oldest fishing port in the United States. By the late nineteenth century it had become the leading producer of salt-cured fish in the United States, and the salt that gave the best, most reliable results in this process came on salt barks from the Sicilian city of Trapani.

During the great wave of Italian immigration to the United States, fishermen from Sicilian ports learned of Gloucester's thriving fishing industry via this salt trade. By 1930, Italians made up the second-largest group of immigrants in Gloucester. Many more Sicilian immigrants arrived in Gloucester after World War II, predominantly from the three port towns of Terrasini, Sciacca, and Porticello. Most of the men worked on fishing vessels and related services. The women took care of the home, raised families, found work in fish-processing facilities, and opened their own businesses. Today, Sicilian Americans make up about a quarter of the city's population.

Over the course of forty years the fishing fleet in Gloucester has fallen on hard times due to declining fisheries and federal regulations. As a result, the men have found work for themselves as cooks, masons, house-painters, plasterers, mechanics, and contractors. They, along with their wives, have become activists, forces to be reckoned with in matters of fishermen's rights, fishing regulations, and city governance.

Paolo Ciaramitaro was one of those who immigrated to Gloucester in the 1960s. He became a fisherman right after graduating from Gloucester High School. After living in the United States for nearly ten years and becoming a citizen, Paolo returned to Sicily to marry his childhood sweetheart, Anna Bonnano. The couple returned to Gloucester, and he continued working on local fishing boats for another eight years. Then, in 1985, Anna told Paolo that she was fed up with being a fisherman's wife. Together they returned to Sicily. This time they stayed for three years and studied pastry making. Anna and Paolo returned in 1989 and opened Caffé Sicilia at 40 Main Street on the corner of Short Street in the area known as the West End.

The interior of Caffé Sicilia measured approximately six-hundred square feet. The front door, which was located right on the corner of Main Street and Short Street, opened directly into the tiny café area, which held six tables and eighteen chairs. It was only ten feet wide and twenty-three feet long. When you went there you had to be willing to share your space with others.

By the time I began photographing inside their shop, Anna and Paolo had been doing all the baking, serving, purchasing, delivering, and cleaning by themselves for eighteen years. The café was open seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., except on Sundays, Christmas Day, and Easter. The Ciaramitaros did take a week off occasionally, and on very rare occasions they closed the café for an entire month.

Eventually they had worn themselves out. Anna's hands, wrists, and elbows were damaged from all the years of kneading and rolling dough. The café itself was looking sad and neglected. Some of the regular patrons were no longer coming or they were coming less frequently.

One day I taped one of my photographs of the café over a stain on one of the walls, with Paolo's permission. A few days later I taped another, then another, until over the course of a year nearly every wall was covered by a mosaic of the photographs. This unintended decorating scheme stimulated many animated discussions and brought a new spurt of life to the coffee shop. But it didn't obscure the reality that Paolo and Anna were selling the building and with it, Caffé Sicilia. Many of us began to talk in mournful terms about the impending loss of "our" café.

In 1972, four years after Paolo's arrival in the United States, a twelve-year-old girl named Antonina (Nina) Purpura arrived in Gloucester with the rest of her family from Terrasini. A few months after her arrival, Dominic D'Amico, a seventeen-year-old from Porticello, arrived with his mother. In 1977, Nina and Dominic married. Dominic worked as a fisherman for thirty years but sold his boat in a government buy-back in 1996. Nina worked as a hairdresser, opened her own electrolysis business, and raised the couple's three children. In 1996 their oldest daughter, Maria, went to Sicily to study fashion design in Palermo. While living in her grandmother's house in Terrasini, she met an electrician named Giuseppe Cracchiolo. In 2003, Giuseppe immigrated to Gloucester. He and Maria got married. Six years later, following a great deal of brainstorming, business planning, and passionate family discussions, the D'Amicos and Cracchiolos put in a bid to buy the café. On August 15, 2009, Maria Cracchiolo and her mother Nina D'Amico became the new owners of Caffé Sicilia.

Our little slice of "*polis*" was saved. It had escaped the grasp of things relegated to the past by being handed over from one Sicilian Gloucester family to another, from one generation to the next.

The photographs in this exhibition were taken during the time between Caffé Sicilia's near demise and its resurrection. A few of the images were taken on the sidewalk in front of the café, but everything else was photographed inside the small, narrow coffee shop. They are indeed intimate images; candid portraits of my Sicilian-American neighbors and their everyday lives. But they are also about our city of Gloucester and the American experience in the early twenty-first century. And they are about the power of photography to illuminate the struggles and joys that are universal in human experience.

Paul Cary Goldberg

SELECTED IMAGES



Caffé Sicilia #2



Antonio



Carlo



Espresso



Steel Toe



Eliana and Martina



Ellen, Anna, and Kathleen



Frank



Giuseppe and Isidoro



Maria



John, Carlo, Rosario, Ignazio, Joe, and Nino



Semolina Bread



Riccardo



Salvatore, Salvatore, Peter, and Baldassare



Sefatia

EXHIBITED WORKS

Antonino and Sal, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Antonio, 2009, 7 x 10.5 inches
Caffé Sicilia #1, 2009, 7 x 10.5 inches
Caffé Sicilia #2, 2009, 7 x 10.5 inches
Caffé Sicilia Hours, 2011, 10.5 x 7 inches
Cappuccino, 2013, 7 x 10.5 inches
Carlo, 2010, 7 x 10.5 inches
Dominic and Eliana, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Eliana and Martina, 2012, 7 x 10.5 inches
Ellen, Anna, and Kathleen, 2007, 7 x 10.5 inches
Espresso, 2009, 7 x 10.5 inches
Frank, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Giacomo, 2013, 7 x 10.5 inches
Giancarlo, Nikolas, Cesare, Jaclyn, Frank, and Bill, 2012, 7 x 10.5 inches
Giuseppe and Isidoro, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
John, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
John, Carlo, Rosario, Ignazio, Joe, and Nino, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Katherine, 2010, 7 x 10.5 inches
Maria, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Nino, 2010, 7 x 10.5 inches
Padre Pio, 2010, 7 x 10.5 inches
Paolo and Ralph, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Paolo and Vincenzo, 2009, 10.5 x 7 inches
Riccardo, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Salvatore, Vincenzo, and Salvatore, 2014, 7 x 10.5 inches
Salvatore, Salvatore, Peter, and Baldassare, 2008, 7 x 10.5 inches
Sarah, 2013, 7 x 10.5 inches
Sebastiano, 2012, 7 x 10.5 inches
Sefatia, 2011, 7 x 10.5 inches
Semolina Bread, 2009, 7 x 10.5 inches
Steel Toe, 2010, 7 x 10.5 inches
Twenty-Six-Year-Old Tattoo, 2014, 10.5 x 7 inches

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE BOOK PROJECT *CAFFÉ SICILIA*



The photographs in this exhibition are from an upcoming book titled *Tutta La Famiglia: Portrait of a Sicilian Café in America*. The completed book will consist of approximately seventy-five photographs and an essay by journalist Frank Viviano.

Funding for this book comes from supporters like you.

Caffé Sicilia is a sponsored project of Fractured Atlas, a nonprofit arts service organization. Contributions may be made payable to Fractured Atlas and are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. Please visit www.fracturedatlas.org/donate/3398 to make a tax deductible contribution.

You may also mail your contribution to Paul Cary Goldberg, 3 Woodward Avenue, Gloucester, MA 01930. Checks should be made payable to Fractured Atlas, with *Caffé Sicilia* in the memo line.



John D. Calandra Italian American Institute
Queens College/CUNY
25 West 43rd Street, 17th Floor
New York, NY 10036
212-642-2094
www.qc.edu/calandra