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L I T T L E I T A L Y

by

Antonio Toscano

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM

SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCE

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

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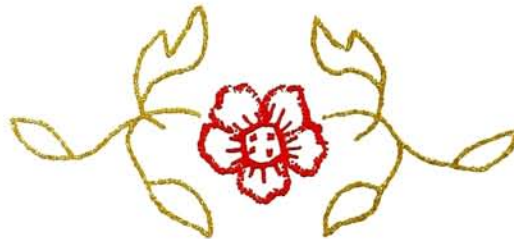
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"LITTLE ITALY"



A
CELEBRATION



a thesis presentation by: **Antonio Toscano**

M.F.A. gallery **june 1-7** Rochester Institute of Technology

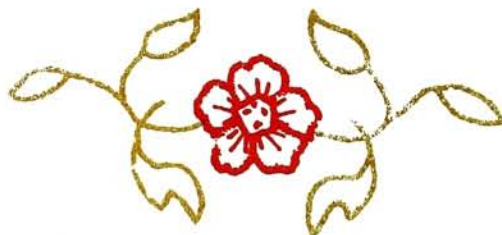


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INTRODUCTION

This report will be an analytic diary of the most important points in the thesis project completed for the MFA degree. It will include thoughts and facts from the time of the thesis conception to the completion of all its segments. It will begin by explaining my philosophy as an artist photographer and will place it in relation to the photographic trends of that period. It will analyze my personal concerns at the time the thesis idea was conceived and formulated into a thesis proposal, the selection of the thesis board and the presentation and approval by the M.F.A. Committee.

The report will analyze the literature (verbal and visual) on the subject and all that gave inspiration to the artist; it will provide the necessary comparisons on how other artists have treated the same or similar subjects.

It will enumerate and discuss the most important exchanges with the thesis board and all other factors which might have affected the development of the thesis, such as the approach I took when photographing, the decision to introduce entities other than photographic in the gallery space, etc.

My point of view on how one decides when the work is completed and why will be included, as well as the organization of the gallery space, the hanging and sequencing of the visuals, and the opening celebration. All technical aspects will be detailed and discussed.

Finally, conclusions will be drawn as to the value of such a project as an academic endeavor and its value to the arts and the community in general.

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S PHILOSOPHY:

Since the very beginning of my career as an artist photographer, I found myself reacting rather strongly against the various "ISMS" which scholars, critics, historians and photographers would, for their own profit, characterize and/or categorize photography.

I felt very strongly against the purists with their blind insistence that photographs should be true to the medium; that one should reject as unphotographic those pictures that are made by the aid of (God forbid) darkroom TRICKS. To them photography is both the means and the end. The same holds true for the pictorialists and their belief in making photographs using rules derived from painting of the late 19th century, never allowing those rules to grow into the new aesthetics of the 20th century. I am against the stronghold theories, all mutually exclusive of one another, that would pin photography to a particular point on an otherwise broad spectrum of the medium.

I believe that a critical redefinition of photography is long overdue, and through my work I set out to raise public awareness toward the medium with the understanding that photography is another picture-making medium; a medium in which an artist can express himself freely and effectively if he is able to free his mind to the creative process rather than concentrating on the peculiarities of the medium.

I believe that it is part of the artist's duty to educate the viewer to see a picture as a picture, the embodiment of an idea, an entity in itself; and to appreciate it for those qualities which are present in the work either explicitly or indirectly.

On the evaluation of photographs, I am against those who profess that pictures should come out of set molds (purist, pictorialist) in order to be properly evaluated. I believe that the same principles applied for centuries to evaluate handmade pictures should be applied to evaluate photographs.

My concern is dual and equally strong. As an artist, I am concerned with the expression of an idea; with the process of conception and the embodiment of that idea through a medium; with sharing the product of that endeavor with an audience. As a photographer, I am concerned with broadening the horizon of the medium into new aesthetics, rather than narrowing it into a small band, which I believe would lead to repetition and stagnation.

These are my philosophical beliefs and these are the coordinates within which I prepared to take on the thesis project.

THE CONCEPTION OF THE IDEA FOR THE THESIS:

As a recent Italian immigrant to the United States, I was pleasantly surprised with my first contacts with "Little Italy". I was amazed at the phenomenon of a culture of such strong traditions, such as the Italian one, co-existing with a culture of very different and sometimes opposing points of view.

I was intrigued at the anthropological aspects of this phenomenon, but more so, I was surprised at the discovery of the new aesthetics that had developed from the co-existence of these two cultures. The Italian culture by necessity had renounced and accommodated a great deal, which led to many kinds of abstractions of the various rituals and beliefs. This in turn created new generations of aesthetics. These new aesthetics impressed me to such a degree that, very soon, I felt almost compelled to do work on them. There were the tiny gardens full of growing life next to Cadillac "Coupe de Ville's"; the front yards decorated with painted rocks and statuettes; the festivals and processions of saints whose garments were covered with gold and dollars, a sign of the good, generous land the devotees were now living in; festivals that were being carried out in a strange landscape whose streets were as unfamiliar as the names they were called: Mott Street, Grand Street, Mulberry Street. There were the shops with their immeasurable abundance where the goods were neatly organized by color, shape and lastly content. There were the rituals, the churches, the family, the dinners, the backyards, the bars, the pizza joint, etc., etc., etc., and all had their own flavor, their own characteristic, and all were so interesting to me.

My first photographic experience with the subject was documentary in nature and in spirit. I intended to make a chronological visual diary of all the events that would take place in "Little Italy" during one year's time.

I soon realized, though, that just the idea of photodocumentation imposed serious limitations on me, most importantly the fact that I felt compelled to be objective about how I represented the subject. This was a hindrance to my creativity and to the freedom of expression of the subjective feelings I nourished about the subject. I wanted to interpret "Little Italy" more than represent it in an orthodox way.

From the identification of these inner thoughts, self-analysis, criticism and exchange of views with colleagues and faculty, I began setting up a perspective from which I could comfortably tackle the project that soon started to be identified as my thesis project.

I continued to produce photographs just for the purpose of investigating and learning about the subject and clarifying my feelings about it. Soon, I began the process of writing the thesis proposal. I do not recall how many drafts I wrote nor how long it took to finalize it. I can only say that I used the process of writing as a means to evaluate and focus my thoughts as they related to the project's: 1. clarity of intent (objective); 2. realizability as for temporal, technical and environmental limitations; and 3. feasibility and validity to the community and the arts in general.

It is my recollection that a great deal of daydreaming and visualizing went on at the time I was writing. I felt as if the project

were being developed and completed right there and then as my thoughts were identified, clarified, and written down.

It was during this stage that the idea of correlating photographs, non-silver prints, music and space modulators into the unity of the opening celebration (performance) came about and was developed into realizable entities.

When the proposal was completed to my satisfaction, it was circulated among the thesis committee members and other interested people. Recommendations came in from all sides. It was my opinion that all recommendations for changes were concerned with logistic and/or technical points which I already resolved in my mind. No one had called for major revision of the core of the proposal. Confident with these facts and with these positive comments, I thus finalized and presented the proposal to the M.F.A. Committee on April 10, 1975.

The proposal discussion lasted 15 minutes during which time clarifying questions were asked by all the participants.

The proposal was then put to a vote and approved unanimously.

LITTLE ITALY

"Anthropology has taught us that the world is defined differently in different places. It is not only that people have different customs; it is not only that people have different gods and expect different, post mortem fates. It is, rather, that the worlds of different people have different shapes."

W. Goldschmidt

One of the facts of immigration is that it brings together people of various backgrounds who are firmly set in their aims and their conceptions.

Italians, who came to America in large numbers, tended to react to these circumstances by taking refuge in each other's company in densely populated areas called Little Italies. There they could cling more easily to old world habits and traditions as well as create, so to speak, an America after their own image. They borrowed what they could and retained what they would.

The functions of a Little Italy were twofold. Being an imitation of the old society, it was a comfortable place for the immigrant's continuing attachment to the old world and its familiar ways of doing things. In addition, it was a place of ongoing transformation and Americanization.

Italians who lived there had no particular attachment to the neighborhood as a physical entity. In fact, residence in it was relative to their adherence to certain cherished values which they had brought over with them. This was a heritage of rules and customs which were simple to understand and simple to follow, and which they have had for centuries.

The family has been traditionally the core institution of the Italian culture. Next to it is the Catholic religion, culinary art, festivals, music and other rituals. The existence of Little Italies depends on its inhabitants identifying with these values. But, as members of the old generation die, and American ways begin to influence

such matters as family roles and dietary habits, Little Italies are fast becoming Americanized.

Italian-Americans are rapidly moving toward a middle-class style of life which is more American-Catholic than American-Italian. In addition, even though we are witnessing a return to a certain pride displayed by third generation Italian-Americans toward their ethnic identity, they do not identify with the colorful, folkloristic aspects of Little Italy.

It is these aspects, which are slowly disappearing, that I intend to depict. I consider myself both Italian and American and as such, am in the best position to pursue this intent. I have an insight into the culture and at the same time the fresh outlook of an outsider.

This thesis will be a celebration of "LITTLE ITALY" as the Italian-American heritage which has been a part of the American culture for over a century.

Through it, I hope to: (1) interpret and translate into visual elements, personal experiences and feelings I have about my heritage; (2) share private moments as seen from within and directly related to family, relatives, neighborhood etc.; (3) discover and share old, yet, new understandings about life and human values. In turn, I hope that this thesis will become a personal documentation of Little Italy.

MEDIUM = PHOTOGRAPHY

Photographic processes will be used in a discriminating way according to my judgement as a means to give pictorial embodiment to my ideas.

Straight color photographs will be used both as an end product and as a starting point for more manipulative visual entities. The two types of images will be made in the spirit of experiences and not of experiments.

The color photographs will represent moments of visual detachment during periods of emotional contacts. The others will be plastic expressions of more universal concepts. Color, textures and other visual elements will be used to evoke emotions.

The final presentation of the work is scheduled in the MFA Gallery. The exhibition will consist of a substantial body of work. Visual and other sensory elements will be introduced in the gallery space, at least on opening night, so to create an atmosphere for the enjoyment of "LITTLE ITALY".

A final thesis report will be submitted in accordance with MFA Committee requirements.

THE THESIS PROPOSAL: An analysis

The synopsis of the proposal defines the project as an effort to produce a collection of pictures that is romantic in flavor. The key word is romantic and as defined by Webster, it means "Freedom of form and spirit". The above phrase, which was my motto throughout the thesis project, still affects my work and my life nowadays.

The proposal touches upon some historical and sociological aspects of immigration and acculturation in the United States. Some typical aspects of life in "Little Italy" are exposed and analyzed.

The thesis objectives are singled out and written as follows:

1. To interpret and translate into visual elements, personal experiences and feelings ... (about "Little Italy").
2. To share private moments as seen from within ... ("Little Italy").
3. To discover and share old, yet new understandings ... (about "Little Italy").
4. (to make) ... a personal documentation of "Little Italy".

The medium was described uncommittedly as photography. The choice of processes was left open to my judgement, in concordance with my strong feelings that the process should grow out of an idea of a picture and not vice versa.

The only prescribed limitation set for the project was a time limit. This, to me, was more than a necessity; it was a prerequisite. I wanted the thesis to be my sole concern during that period of time. To accomplish this, I arranged to have the last quarter free from academic and personal commitments so that I could fully concentrate my energies on that objective rather than watering it down with other chores.

An exhibit date was then set for the end of June, 1975, allowing me a period of three months for the development of the visual work.

The proposal states that visual and other sensory elements would be introduced in the gallery space at least during the opening night celebration. It was my intention to change the usually sterile environment of a photographic gallery into something more organic, similar to a theatrical stage. I wanted music, foods and drinks to subliminally affect the mood of the participants in such a way that they would feel comfortable, loose, and above all, participatory. For this purpose, I arranged the gallery into a livable space and atmosphere.

As a result of this, I hoped to de-emphasize the importance of the photographs as precious art objectives and enhance their viewing (reading) through the help of the other sensory elements.

THE THESIS BOARD:

I was fortunate to find in the Institute environment three individuals who, through their differences, interests and skills, would so perfectly complement myself and each other in offering help and suggestions in the completion of this project.

Professor Charles Arnold Jr. of the School of Graphics Arts and Photography and member of the M.F.A. Committee was chosen to be my chief advisor. I have studied with Charles and worked as his assistant for the academic year 1974-75. During these occasions I was particularly impressed with his limitless view of art, his romantic view of life, his sensitivity and taste.

Professor Salvatore Mondello from the College of General Studies was chosen as my second advisor. I chose Sal for his knowledge and sensitive views on the historical aspects of the thesis, his genuine interest in my photography and the incredible help he could offer me in understanding and appreciating the many aspects of this subject.

Last but not the least, I chose Assistant Professor John Phfal for his unmatched understanding and experience in color photography, both as an artist-photographer and as a teacher, for his expandable views on photography as an art form, and for his strong sense of professionalism.

I could not have done nearly as well nor grown nearly as much without their help and their understanding for my feelings and sensitivities about the subject and my frame of mind during the development of the project.

THE CONCEPT OF "LITTLE ITALY":

As it relates to this thesis "Little Italy" is not a specific place but rather a concept in my mind. The most important aspect of this concept is that it hinges on my personal experiences and understanding rather than on more global views.

"Little Italy" does not exist if I am not there to recognize it, interact with it and it with me. It does not exist if I am not there to interpret it in a mode that is satisfying to my inner views and sensitivities.

"Little Italy" does not exist, it is only evoked in my mind.

For this project, I planned to work within the familiar environment of parents, relatives, and the Brooklyn landscape and neighborhood in which they lived. I consciously planned not to go out of these known and comfortable boundaries. I was fearful that venturing out would provoke photographs centered around the shock effect of the "new" or "strange" or worse, the "weird" or "freaky". I was interested in photographing that which was known to me and appreciated by me for its inner qualities rather than for its flashy exterior.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THESIS AS AN IDEA:

After the Committee's acceptance of the proposal, I proceeded to organize my thesis into three basic elements.

1. A number (20 to 30) of color pictures.
2. A number (3 to 6) of handmade pictures.
3. Other sensory elements (props)

The development of these three elements within the limits prescribed by the proposal would assure the success or failure of the thesis.

After some consideration it became evident that all three elements had to be worked on simultaneously. As it turned out, so total was my involvement with the subject that I would be out photographing and think of a piece of music I would like to use at the opening night, or I would be listening to music and think of an image that I would like to make. I was very happy and charged by this positive development. The images and props were being born from each other either as simple ideas or as visual entities. This was a very welcome development.

In the diversity of processes that I would use I thought of this promiscuous in-breeding as beneficial. The oneness of inspiration and emotion would be a thread holding the show together. The possible problem of unity in my potpourri of ideas was often a choice topic for discussion during formal or informal meetings with the thesis board or other interested persons.

The sense of the problem, as I recall it, was that "all of that" could work against the "pictures". It could all backfire and instead of enhancing the photographs, it would be detrimental and disrupting

to the show. My feeling was that the pictures were not the show nor the total aim of the thesis. Had that been the case and had I taken some handmade pictures and props and threw them into the pot, then I would have had serious reasons to worry. From my very subjective viewpoint, I could envision no serious conflict of interest between the pictures, the prints and the props. I, as the artist maker, would develop all of them with equal interest and enthusiasm with a clear idea in mind, that of the ultimate goal: their coexistence. Furthermore, it was my hope that the show, because of its variety, would become very musical and polyhedral instead of the usual one foot apart showing throughout the gallery. I was hoping for various climaxes or accent marks throughout the gallery. It must be pointed out that I had an excellent understanding of the gallery since I helped build it. I knew inch by inch its layout, its lighting, its advantage points and its limitations.

Without this prior information, the task would have been much harder and my approach perhaps impossible. At that time of my life, I believed in putting together all my strengths in the hope that they would outweigh my weaknesses. I strongly believed that doing something different and trying seriously would be better than not doing it at all, even if faced with defeat.

In conclusion, I developed my "idea" in its gestalt, both from within and from without. I worked on putting together the parts of the puzzle and at the same time I kept an eye on the packaging that would eventually contain it.

THE LITERATURE

Under the tutelage of Professor Mondello, who pointed out various sources of necessary reading, I started to research and discuss the literature. Most of the writings on immigration and its various aspects tended to be very factual and technical, their source often being U.S. Government agencies.

The sole book that I found to offer a critical, balanced study of the subject is The Italian-Americans by Professors Iorizzo and Mondello. The book, which deals with historical facts, analyzes all their implications both on the immigrant and the American culture. The study of this book brought innumerable discussions with Professor Mondello, through which I gathered the necessary background information.

Some important facts to be pointed out here are the following:

- o Italians were in the U.S. prior to the Great Migration of the 1870's. Italian merchants, saloon keepers, restaurants were to be found throughout the country.
- o Italian artists, musicians, painters and sculptors made a significant contribution in the area of artistic activity in the United States prior to the Civil War.
- o Most eminent amongst the artists in the early years of American history was Constantine Brumidi. He arrived in America in 1852 and spent the next 25 years of his life decorating the Capitol. Giuseppe Franzoni came in 1906 to decorate the Capitol with sculptures. Louis Palma DiCesnola served as director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

It was the Great Immigration that patronized the institutions we call "Little Italies." Most of these immigrants left Italy to free themselves from poverty and chronic unemployment. The years between 1870-1900 were difficult times both economically and politically in Italy. An increase in population followed by a decrease in national produce brought a terrifying low per capita income which resulted in

undernourishment and turmoil. Many superstitions also entered the minds of the immigrants to be, and they saw all those misfortunes as signs from nature to leave for a better world.

Immigration mushroomed in the first decade of the 1900's. Conditions improved in Italy, but the returnees coming back to visit or to take their families with them would be witnesses to the general welfare in America. People in the villages would see or hear about the letters coming to relatives in Italy from immigrants and even though they might not have believed the words, they believed the dollars and money orders they saw coming in the mail.

Among other books suggested by Professor Mondello were "The Godfather" and "The Fortunate Pilgrim" by Mario Puzo. I read both books with great interest. I related to "The Fortunate Pilgrim" better because of its more simplistic imagery. The characters are more humane and personal as compared to the starlike qualities of the characters of "The Godfather." In "The Fortunate Pilgrim," Maria Puzo seems to have romanticized personages and treated them more in an impressionistic way. In "The Godfather," he placed much concern on details, almost in the manner of super realism. I felt that in "The Godfather," a detail, if carefully examined, had detail itself.

In the field of visual literature, I studied works by Joseph Stella, an Italian immigrant himself, whose paintings and drawings dealt with immigration and related problems. Iorizzo-Mondello wrote of him in "The Italian-Americans,"

"As early as 1905 his sketches in American magazines of Europe's immigration caught the pathos of those discouraged by years

of frustrations" and "with his pencil and brushes he joined forces with the progressive reformers in the first decade of the century to alleviate the suffering of the working man...."

Much inspiration was drawn from the works of Robert Frank, especially from the book "The Americans," and from works by W. Eugene Smith. I studied the works of those photographers for the iconic quality of their pictures, their very personal and subjective point of view, and their strong social commentary.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL IMAGES

The very first important discussion that took place between myself and Prof. Mondello was about the idea of visualizing the Italian-American concepts and the notion of stereotyping. It was my perception that Professor Mondello felt stereotypes were not historically valid. I was in agreement with him from an intellectual point of view, but felt that the use of stereotyped ideas would be essential to completion of this project. I did not want to complicate my images with socio-political statements since that was not my intent. I welcomed stereotypes for a number of reasons: 1. They would be easily understood by the viewer. 2. They would be clear and concise. 3. They would be both symbolic in nature, in a visual sense and pregnant with content in the literal sense.

The Color Coupler Prints: In developing the picture making part of the thesis, I used both analytic and synthetic approaches.

I used the analytic approach for certain pictures of cityscapes, bocci events, parties, and so forth where my interruption as director was not possible, wanted or called for. I used this approach much in the manner of photojournalism. I would walk into a situation and identify the symbols as part of what I wanted to photograph. I would wait passively until the clues would juxtapose themselves in a way conforming with the picture I had in mind and I would make an exposure everytime I felt the subject in tune with my idea. I would look for the symbols first, thereafter I would analyze the lighting and the colors. I would then work my way around this stage to the point from

which I would observe, try to foresee and at the right moment make the photograph.

This process entailed shooting a great amount of film but offered the theatrical spontaneity that is so Italian. I would make contacts of the negatives and from these I would then make a selection. These negatives would be proof-printed and discussed with the Board. The selection process would be repeated again until one picture from a series of the same concept would be chosen and finalized.

The synthetic approach developed out of the analytic. I often would recognize parts from different pictures that if put together would make stronger statements. In this approach, I would deliberately alter realities for my own benefit. I would arrange symbols at will in a manner that would be consistent with an original idea I had in mind. A considerable numbers of set ups felt staged and only a few prints were chosen for the exhibit. This was due to a feeling of contrivance that I would sense about those pictures. Subjects seemed ill at ease and objects were in too obvious a position.

Nevertheless, the use of the two approaches offered an incredible amount of freedom. Every other day it seemed, I would switch from one to the other, and every experience taught me something that would open new doors for expression.

The Non-Silver Pictures: The third means of visualization came to me through non-silver processes. I had been experimenting during that year with gum bichromate and kwik-proof emulsions. By nature I never read the instruction book before using a gadget unknown to

me. This, as it related to the above processes, allowed me to re-invent them my own way. The first non-silver print I made was from a photograph of my grandfather doing what he does best, eat. This print was a mixed media print (see processes).

My grandfather was to me the Italian immigrant par excellence. He emigrated in 1919 right after the war. He made three trips back to Italy to conceive his three children and the fourth in 1948 to move his family to the States. He went through all the hardships that books and films about immigration talk about: discrimination, underpayment, humiliation, etc. He made it through with flying colors and is very proud to be an Italian-American. On holidays and other occasions both the Italian and the American flag would be displayed at his home, though the American would be the highest post. He kept most of the Italian customs and religiously every year, goes through the rituals of canning, winemaking, gardening, etc. It felt only right to give him the place of honor in my show.

The print developed in my mind out of the Sunday dinners I experienced when visiting his home. His patriarchal placement at the head of the table, his happiness at having children and grandchildren with him, and to some degree the grin that would sum it all up the moment the first dish hit the table or the wine uncorked, deserved the place of honor.

The second non-silver print was an ode to Italian-American culinary art. The idea and the visualization came from a poster of a show by Man Ray, in which a loaf of French bread is pictured on a diagonal in a royal blue field.

I intended to treat my subject "minestrone" with quite the same simplicity. The chosen vegetables were represented in their whole units proportionate to the amounts necessary to make a minestrone soup. The vegetables were floating in an aluminum-like circular field representing a pot of water.

The third non-silver and the last in the show developed from my impression of the Sunday dinner table. I am always impressed by the visual beauty, organization, and color coordination that exists at the Sunday dinner table. As that image grew into completion, I saw it more and more as the one that would be most appropriate as the invitation and poster to the opening night of the exhibit.

This idea was visualized as a white table-cloth with embroidered red and green flowers. The place setting included a dish, a fork, a knife, a glass and a flask of wine.

SPACE MODULATORS

The visualization of these space modulators had come about from having been physically or spiritually, at one time or the other, involved in one of these settings.

The first modulator consisted of a movable partition which was wallpapered on one side and placed in the center of the gallery. The wallpaper chosen was typical of a Little Italy home, a large golden motif repeated in vertical patterns on an egg-shell background. At the visual center of this wall, the non-silver print of my grandfather was hung. The print was matted and glass framed into a gold and white "Two Guys" special frame. A chair, placed on one side next to the wall, was balanced by a gallery plant on the other side. The chair was lacquered white with golden motifs; its seat was cushioned and duly covered with clear plastic.

The second space modulator was developed out of pure necessity and the logistics of the opening night ceremony. A large 4'x 8' table was placed in a corner at the left of the entrance to the gallery. The table was decorated with characteristic fringes called for at festive events in "Little Italy." A small barrel of wine was on the left of the table. The spectators were to pour their own right from the spigot. The rest of the table was filled with foods and drinks.

THE POEMS

It was through Professor Mondello's love for literature and poetry that I came to be introduced to the poems of Rose Basile Green. Soon after reading a few of the poems, I felt she had experienced what I had experienced and she had shared that experience through her poems in the way I was about to do through pictures. I felt there was a strong and clear connection of both visual and intellectual relationships between her poems and the pictures I was developing for the thesis.

In addition, her sonnets were a celebration of the Italian-American culture which was an important aspect of my thesis. Her visuals were so close to mine that it was as if someone had written my photographs:

The bocce courts, the pastry shops, the stalls,
all interlaced with statuettes and vines.

We live with love of pasta...

Italians here are like the flow of wine,
the Primo Vïno that ferments the grape;
like pristine truths the oracles define
they tape the source that gives the vision shape.

Four poems, at times nostalgic, at times haunting in mood but romantic in flavor, found their place interlaced between the statuettes and vines of my photographs.

THE GALLERY

The Gallery was ready to my satisfaction at 7:30 p.m. on the day of opening night. The pictures were hung and their sequence was pleasing. On the first wall to the right, the non-silver print and the poster of the show were hung together with a poem. The gallery opened into three walls all occupied with cityscapes and neighborhoods, exterior pictures such as those of Bocce Players to the left, and those of shop windows to the right and in front. To the extreme left, the table with the wine could be seen together with the minestrone print right above it. Moving into the core of the gallery and passing through the movable partition, the wall-papered set up could be seen as well as the non-silver print of my grandfather. To the right, five portraits hung next to each other in a cameo with the second poem. To the left, four more portraits and the third poem were hung. The long wall was arranged with ten more pictures moving slowly from left to right from exterior homescapes to the warmth of the interior and the family. At the end of the long wall was the most secure and enclosed part of the gallery. There I placed the more private pictures of the family.

The laying out and sequencing of the photographs was difficult because I had to deal with problems of juxtaposition relative to content, color and visual continuity of the show. After trying various combinations, I settled for what I felt was the best solution.

THE OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION

The music and the smell of foods permeated the gallery to such a degree that if one closed one's eyes for a moment and transcended the actual event, it really seemed like a Sunday morning in one of the many Little Italies.

People trickled in slowly but constantly. There were a variety of reactions. Some headed for the photographs right away, others looked around the gallery surprised and perhaps looking for more surprises. Some took the food around, savoring it and experiencing the show. Still others took the food in, leaving the rest for later or perhaps for never. All in all it happened the way I thought it would happen. People grouped themselves according to their beliefs and/or their freedom or lack of, to understand what was happening.

My impressions of the event began getting foggier and foggier as the glasses of wine I drank could no longer be counted on one hand. It seemed that the party went on for a long time, but it certainly continued for a lot longer for a special group of friends.

After analyzing a series of photographs taken at the event and my impression at that time, I will try to draw some conclusions. In a general way the spectators were forced to take action to what was happening. They either associated or dissassociated with it. None of the intellectual games played at art openings seem to have taken place. The photographs played an important role but stopped being precious little objects. The following photographs of the event will certainly summarize it in a more documentary way. To these I will add only one more statement.

If the duty of the artist is, as I believe it is, to force the spectator to see a reality which is the reality that the artist sees, then, I believe the celebration was a success.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

In order to minimize the variables in developing the pictures for the thesis, I made a conscious effort to use tested and proven processes, films and chemicals.

COLOR COUPLER PRINTS

The silver images were produced on negative film: KODAK KODACOLOR II. This film was exposed with a LEICA M 5 camera fitted with one of the following lenses: 28 mm Summicron, 35 mm Summicron, 50 mm Dual-Range, 90 mm Summaron.

The recommended speed for the film, 80 ASA proved to be a little higher than desired with my equipment and for that reason all of the film was exposed at an ASA of 64. This was an un-scientific conclusion on my part but returned richer negatives, good contrast and shadow detail without blocking up the highlights.

The exposed film was processed in the RIT Photofinishing Laboratory in C-41 chemicals. No special arrangements were made with the lab with the exception of having the film returned un-cut. The negatives were cut and stored in Print-file negatives preservers.

The negatives were printed onto EKTACOLOR 37 RC paper "F" surface processed in a Model 11K drum processor at Kodak's suggested times and temperature.

When necessary, the final prints were spotted with MARSHALL'S Watercolors and a "0" Windsor & Newton spotting brush.

The prints were evaluated for exposure and color balance under a tungsten bulb similar to the bulbs in use in the MFA Gallery.

The prints were color corrected by viewing them through filters of a KODAK COLOR PRINTING FILTER KIT and ultimately by the process of comparison with other prints.

Twenty-eight prints of 9 3/8 x 13 7/8, and 8 of 4 3/8 x 6 3/8 were window matted with an off-white, 2 ply conservation board and were so exhibited.

NON-SILVER PRINTS

The non-silver pictures were created from various originals, including B&W and Color 35 mm negatives, 4 x 5 regular and Autoscreen KODALITH FILM. From the originals, color and/or tonal separations were made onto 4 x 5 Kodalith Film; these were enlarged to size and negatives made again onto Kodalith Film.

When the use of screens was not desired, a tonal image was obtained through exposure, and/or development of the film in various dilutions of DEKTOL (D-72) paper developer. These dilutions varied from 1:4 for obtaining a plus contrast negative, to 1:20 for obtaining a minus contrast negative.

To achieve the desired effect, the method of trial-and-error was employed; visual evaluations and corrections were made.

The non-silver prints were made by burning KWIK-PROOF emulsions through the negatives and by the use of a SUNLAMP.

Kwik-Proof emulsions, Clear, Red, Green, and Blue, (Photographic Magenta, Yellow and Cyan) were layed on Kwik-Proof Base to achieve the desired effects.

The Kwik-Proof Clear emulsion was used as a carrier for a silver powder, specifically for the "Minestrone" print. The emulsion was mixed with the powder in advance and spread onto the base in the usual way.

For all the prints made, the manufacturer's recommendations were followed for spreading the emulsions, exposures and development.

A mixture of Household ammonia in the ratio of 1:10 was used as an after the developer bath to clear the highlights from dye that might not have been properly washed out.

Three final prints 16 x 20 were made and exhibited in the show.

The Family

The family is a jury and a court,
The prosecutor and defender, each
A limbing from the judge that is a sort
Of tyrant, loving whom he must impeach.
Before the patriarch they hush and bow
As he a fury wields to bend each one;
And, yet, behind that dark and scowling brow
Are lights that warm them like the autumn sun.
The brothers check the sisters' levity
And guard the mother's holy-ghosted home,
The spirit of the table's trinity
To help as one the father's kingdom come.

Protecting unity, the generations wait,
Respecting loyalty, their shrine and syndicate.

Nonna

La Nonna plies away on her crochet
As others litigate in voices shrill;
She smiles, for she still has her say
When Poppa's anger ebbs before her will.
She says, "Sta' zit ! Here comes ma friend next door,
Zi' Solomon'—he brings the besta thread
To make the spread my Cumma' Bridget' saw,
For Milton and Leonora's marriage bed.
And Gumpa' Fritz he comma to see you here
And talk about old time on Union Hill;
He likes your wine, so better than his beer.
He izza 'u nòn to Rosie's littla Bill.

Zi' Solomon', whatta y' mean, the birds they fly witha one feather?
Gesù, Giuseppe, Maria! We carry da crossa in America together!"

Primo Vino

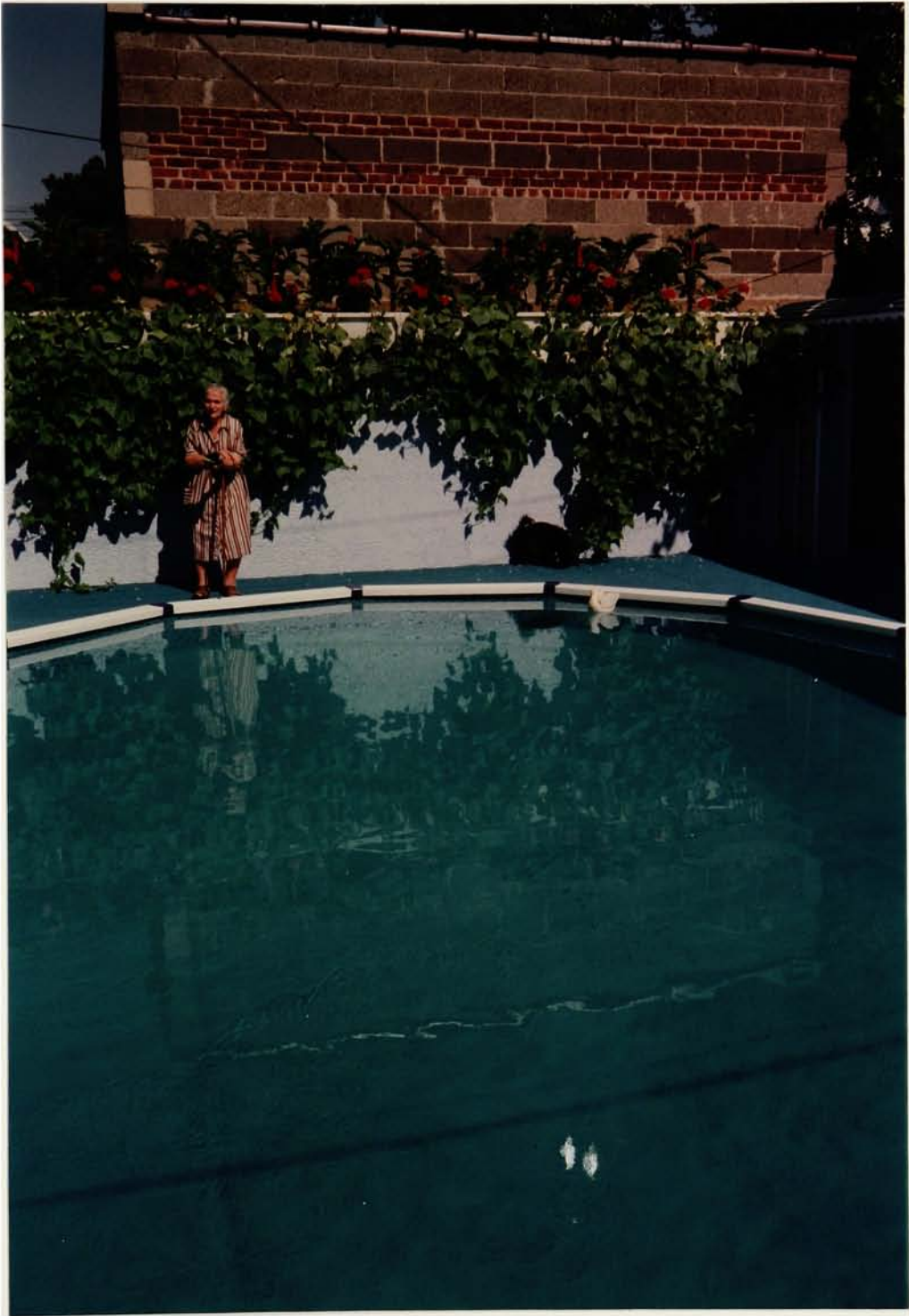
Italians here are like the flow of wine,
The **Primo Vino** that ferments the grape;
Like pristine truths the oracles define,
They tap the source that gives the vision shape.
From grapes they press three grades of wine are drawn.
The first, the elixir of virgin birth;
The second, juiced until the skins are gone;
The third, a watery sludge of little worth.
In company, they celebrate the best,
For each the other values by his cup;
At home, the lesser is enough to rest;
While for the crowd the dredge is measured up.

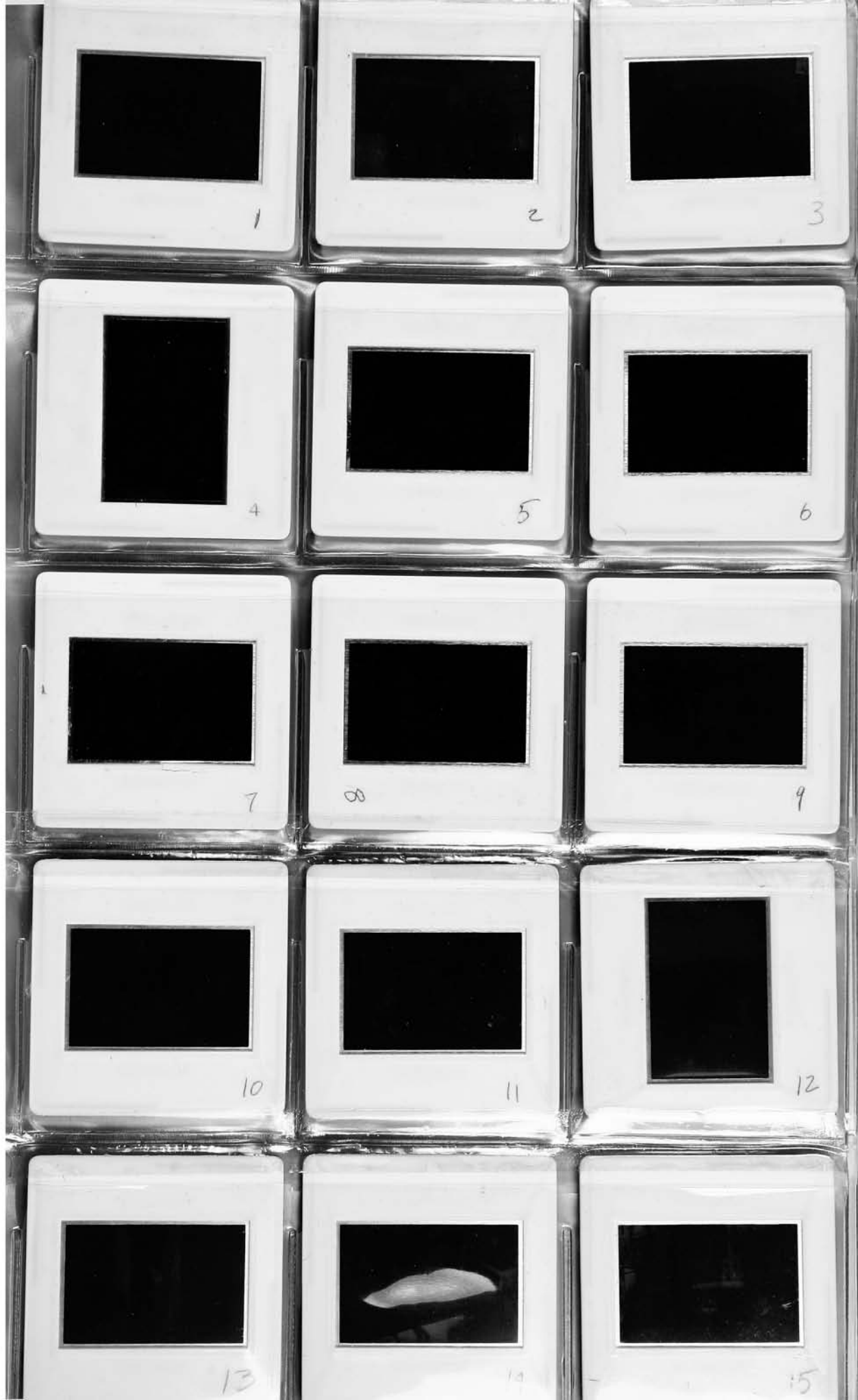
They brought the cup to toast the new land's vine;
They broke the maidenhead, made first the wine.

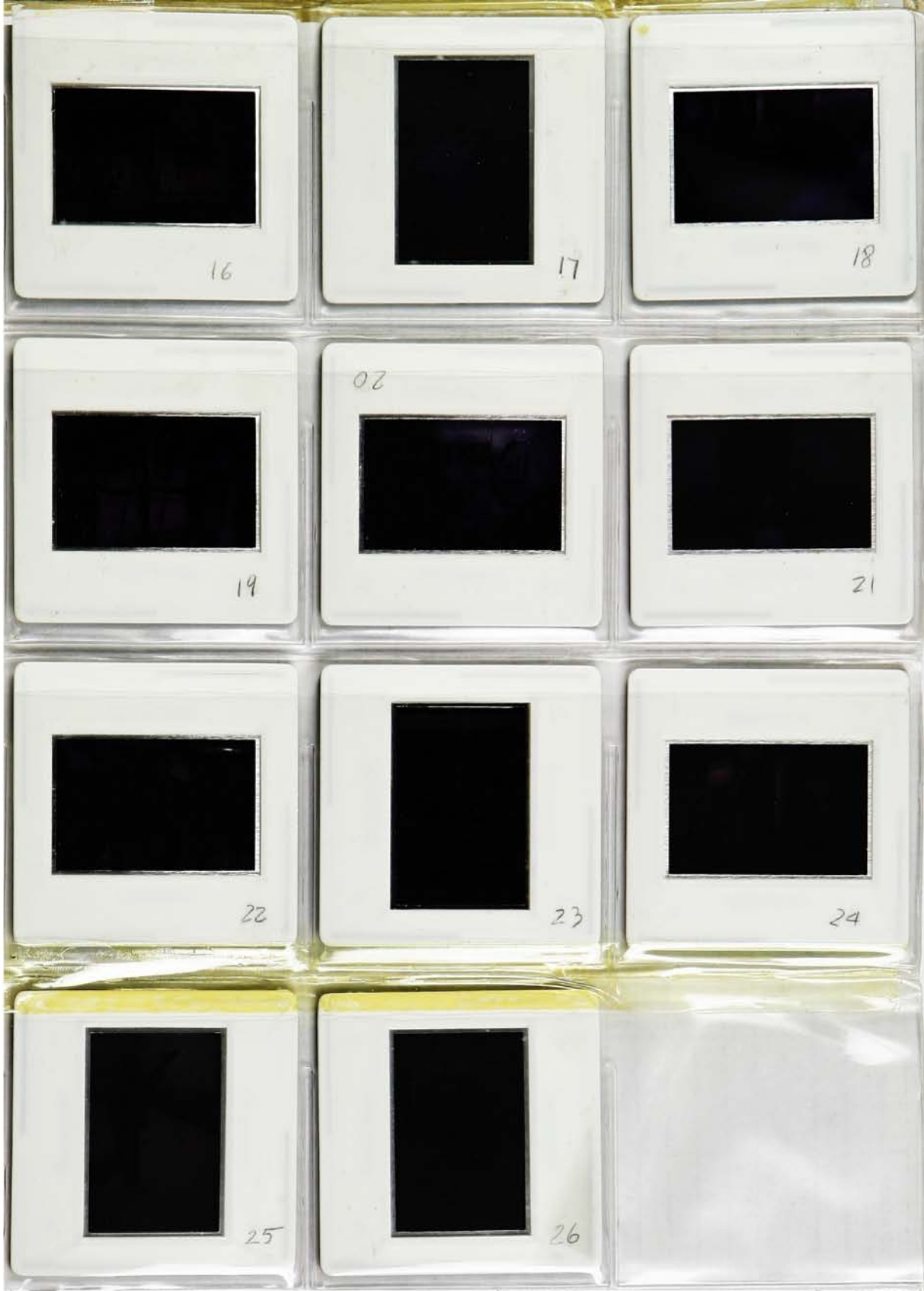
Love and Wine

We live with love and pasta, bread and wine,
With texture firm, al dento, underdone;
For though the lavish hand bids you to dine,
The quantity by sapient taste is run.
And when you pour, fill not too much the glass
That you may not be able then to drink;
For, as the sips the brutish gulps surpass,
The half-filled glass leaves time to edge the brink.
Just as suggestion is the soul of verse,
The fraction that excites the metaphor,
So love is cupped in winy language, terse,
The whispered breath that scents the lover's door.

Italians have the stoic's careful, metered taste;
Their discipline—no love, no bread will fritter into waste.









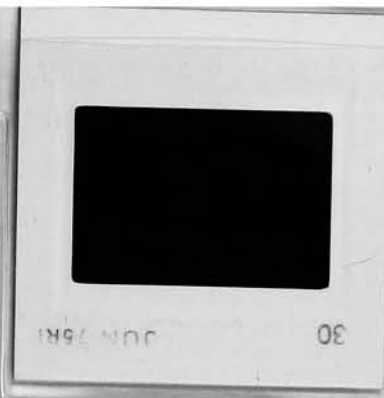
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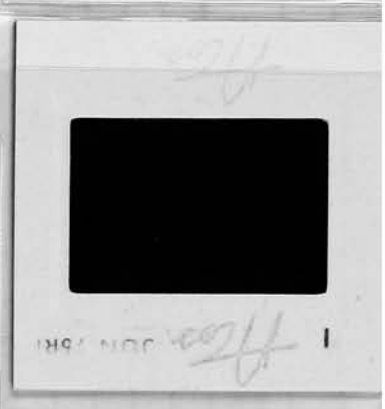
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Handwritten scribbles



JUN 1981 +2



JUN 1981 +5



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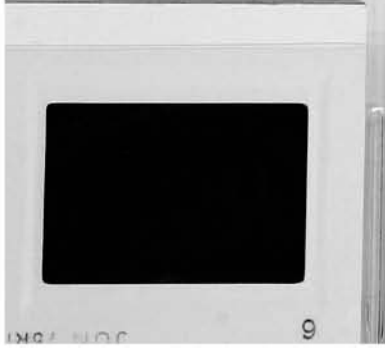
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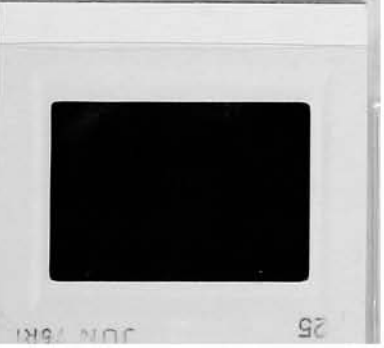
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