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LUCE E OMBRE

LIGHT AND SHADOWS

by

ROBERT LEIDE FOAH

Under the Direction of Prof. Stan Anderson

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the oppositional and complimentary forces of light and shadows in the culture of Naples, Italy. Demonstrating, through photographs and the analysis of these photographs, how the light of Naples, a ‘northern’ light, and its resultant shadows echo (metaphorically and in reality) the light and shadows of the society, culture and history of Naples, Italy.

INDEX WORDS: Napoli, Naples, Light, Shadows, Music, Color, Vesuvio.

LUCE E OMBRE
LIGHT AND SHADOWS

by

ROBERT LEIDE FOAH

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Fine Arts

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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2011

LUCE E OMBRE

LIGHT AND SHADOWS

by

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Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2011

DEDICATION

“In Naples I caught a glimpse of the old Italian idea, which is also a Shakespearean idea, that life can be a kind of romance in which the errant brain, led by fancy alone, seeks out whatever scenery best mirrors its vision of joy.”
Dan Hofstadter, *Falling Palace* (p. 247)

This thesis is dedicated, with much gratitude, to four women. To Nonna Ida Foà and Zia Bianca Foà, for immersing me in the culture, the joy, the love, the light of Naples. And to my mother, Luciana Foah and my wife, Honora Foah. Both encouraged me to undertake this three-year voyage of renewal, discovery, joy, some fear, and much satisfaction. Honora and Luciana, each in their own unique way stimulated the acuity of my vision, my art and my perception of my work. Special gratitude to Honora, through whose eyes I discovered, uncovered and understood in a more profound way what was before me all my life.

Thank you!

Dahlan Robert Leide Foah

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In Italy Carlo Ippolito and his wonderful family spent many, many days before our arrival and during our stay, guiding me through *Spacanapoli*, the *Vomero*, small alleys, and other areas previously unknown to me. They also introduced me to friends, relatives, opera singers and were mentors to me regarding Naples.

Giuliana Menna and Arcangelo Corteccioni spent hours and hours helping me organize interviews, photographs and Neapolitan poetry. Thank you again to Honora Foah for editing my thesis and photos. Thanks to Sarah Boardman

and Zachariah Hill for much advice and hands-on help with the exhibition. Those I interviewed include Linda de Angelis, Prof. Giulia Villone Betocchi, Arcangelo Corteccioni, Pierre-Yves le Duc, Valeria Farina, Antonio Fiorentino, Bianca Foà, Dario (Jr) Foà, Giacomo and Matteo Foà, Tecla Foà, Tullio Foà, Mario Foah, Laura Levi, Giuliana Menna, Roberta d'Ottone, Rabbino Pier Paolo Puntarello, Lea Sciamma and the owners of Scarabattola. Each one gave me countless hours of their time and knowledge. And thank you, Laura Scigliano, for your patience and help in getting me started with Final Cut Pro.

Thanks to all my uncles, aunts and cousins who always made me feel at home in Naples. And a very special 'thank you' to my father, Mario Foah, who kept one foot firmly in Naples and one in America — thus sharing with me the best of both worlds.

A separate and specific 'thank you' to Dan Hofstadter, author of *Falling Palace: A Romance of Naples*. Reading his book brought to the surface the realization that my love for Naples, its idiosyncrasies, the contradictions, sometimes infuriating but more often than not fascinating, and the Neapolitans' truly profound and ingrained love of life was not something personal to be kept to myself. Thank you, Dan, for that and for the suggestions on what, where and when to shoot in Naples — your verbal acuity is matched by your visual acuity.

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Introduction

Si esce 'o sole esce pe' tutte quante!

[If the sun comes out, it comes out for everyone!] Italian Proverb



Figure 1 Opera in Naples¹

My great grandfather, my paternal grandmother's father, was the Rabbi of Naples, Italy. One evening I've been told, he brought my father, then younger than ten years of age, to the opera in San Carlo, the splendid 18th century theatre. They sat with other members of their family along with the Cardinal of Naples in the Royal Box, which rises several stories smack in the center of the balcony.

¹ All photos are Copyright © Robert Foah, 2010, 2011. No reproduction allowed.

All the dignitaries in the Royal Box knew that the baritone, who only appears in the last act, was a poor singer. This unsuspecting baritone in the role of a doctor, had to sing an aria giving the bad news to the tenor that the soprano, his love, was going to die.



Figure 2 Royal Box, Opera San Carlo, Naples, Italy

The last act begins. The music starts, the ‘doctor’ comes onstage, looks up, center, straight at the Royal Box and takes his breath.

The tenor asks, “*Dottore, come va?*” [Doctor, how is she?]³ But what the baritone sees is a well-dressed mob, the Cardinal in red, the Rabbi in black and

² "Teatro San Carlo." *Teatro San Carlo*. N.p., n.d. Web. 3 Jan 2011. <<http://www.teatrosancarlo.it/en/home.html>>.

all the relatives and friends standing, holding overripe tomatoes. Poised.

Ready for launch.

The baritone stops. The conductor, with his back to the audience, starts the orchestra again in the lead-in to the aria. And again the tenor queries about his love, and the baritone takes his breath . . . and stops. Angry and befuddled, the conductor starts the orchestra once again, gesturing at the baritone to sing.

The tenor, also befuddled, loudly asks after his love's fate "Dottore, come va?"

"Doctor, how is she?"

San Carlo's audience is poised, waiting for the climax. The baritone looks up, then looks at the doctor and puts his right hand out, palm down, flat, and with a slight movement of his hand wordlessly indicates that the soprano is 'so-so' then walks off-stage to a standing ovation of a knowing and appreciative audience.

³ All translations are the author's



Figure 3 Pubic Drama ⁴

Drama within drama, humor in difficult situations, music punctuating the ‘scene.’ Fresh tomatoes and audience participation. The darker shadow of humor, one opera within another opera.

Naples’ dichotomies carry into all arenas of life. The shadows are punctuated by light and the light and lightness of life create the shadows. Light and shadows are ephemeral, flickering, ever-changing, as is life in Naples. My thesis focuses on the visual manifestations of these dichotomies. The shadows, and the light of Naples which creates them, are a metaphor for the tension, the balance in both the nature of the Neapolitans and the culture of Naples.

⁴ Photos and collage by Andrew Daneman

The light is unique — it is a northern light in a Mediterranean climate. The shadows are blue, the light is orange — complimentary in color and in nature, echoing the heat and cold of Neapolitan society.

The summers of my youth were spent in Naples with uncles, aunts, cousins, but mostly with my grandmother. We would sit on her balcony with a view of the bay of Naples, talking, cleaning string beans, discussing everything. And from that moment on, the buildings, the people, the simultaneous conversations and the gestures of Naples have become an integral part of my life. I reflect the light of Naples and absorb it, simultaneously.



Figure 4 Nonna Ida and Zia Bianca

As I grew older I got to know my Aunt Bianca, a classic Neapolitan full of life and love, ebullient and grateful for everything and everyone, but also with a keen and discerning eye for the truth in people. Through my grandmother and aunt I learned the strength of family. I learned that the dining room was the control center of the family where most topics could be openly discussed without remorse or recrimination. In fact, most every topic was discussed simultaneously, the volume rising, the laughter increasing.

The warmth of the light is like the warmth of the heart that is the huge generosity of the people of Naples. And this *calore*, this warmth, this heat sheds a bright light back onto the family as a whole, on all the many individual relationships within my Italian family. The hearth is in the dining room where its warmth and accompanying affections often result in great drama. And if it occasionally overheats, this overheating is also a microcosm of a Neapolitan trait.

The shadow, created by the light is not a true darkness, not an entity unto itself, but rather a hint of something hidden, yet clearly visible. The strength of the family unit becomes in its shadow form, the Camorra; the community of the

Church becomes superstition,⁵ and the darkness of Naples' *Sotterranea* (underground) is but a shadow of what existed in the full sunlight.

Concurrently the lack of personal space, the chaos in public areas, ancient customs comingled with the highest *per capita* cell phone usage in Europe emphasize the strong concentric communities of city, neighborhood, religious groups, and family. Orderliness of thought bequeathed by the ancient Greeks contrasts with the driving pulse of chaos seen throughout Naples.

The balance of light and its shadows, a co-dependency, a co-existence, is reflected in the society, the culture and the life of Naples. The *ombre*, the shadows, are where the 'darker' areas of the culture of Naples operate. The light is where the vitality and the love of life reside. And just as the colors of the shadows and the colors creating the shadows compliment each other, so do the light and dark areas of Neapolitan society compliment each other. The tension created by this relationship of light and dark is what creates the joy of Naples.

* * *

⁵ The term 'superstition' is used in a non-pejorative mode. It is used, in the sense of an emic perspective, as defined by Webster's Dictionary as "of, relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who participates in the culture being studied."

The layered and simultaneous conversations and sounds of Naples are present in both the auditory world and the visual. In most every element of life in the city – from the traffic to cemeteries, the forces of tension in Naples are unlike most other cities in Europe or any other part of Italy.

These tensions have been created through millennia by the layering of cultures – Greek, Roman, Spanish, French, British, Italian. The stunning panoramas of the Mediterranean are obscured by thousands upon thousands of television antennas, while Baroque churches sit atop layers of Roman streets and stores, which are, in turn, above portions of Greek cities, including ancient bakeries with their ovens still visible, and most likely, viable.

Add to that the overlapping of currents created by the Catholic church and the interweaving of cultural crosscurrents with religion. Dreams are interpreted by ‘professionals’, money placed on lotto numbers based on these interpretations. The dead are as involved in the quotidian life of the living as one’s neighbors. The living and the dead, the ancient and the modern coexist.

Social and economic classes are distinct and respected, but they intermingle and exchange dialogues in public. And most evenings when it’s decent weather, the *passeggiata* is in order – the evening digestive and social walk where one is

seen and sees, where one slips through the social strata and feels part of concentric communities.

Architecture, especially the Baroque buildings, reflect a tentative balance in this tension. “All the space [of Naples] was convoluted, like a coat turned inside out.”⁶ The city is precariously perched atop unstable tectonic plates, sitting between the active volcano Vesuvius and the *Solfatara* of Pozzuoli. It is the confluence of these solid buildings, centuries old on top of unstable *terra ‘non’ firma* that creates an undercurrent of excitement.

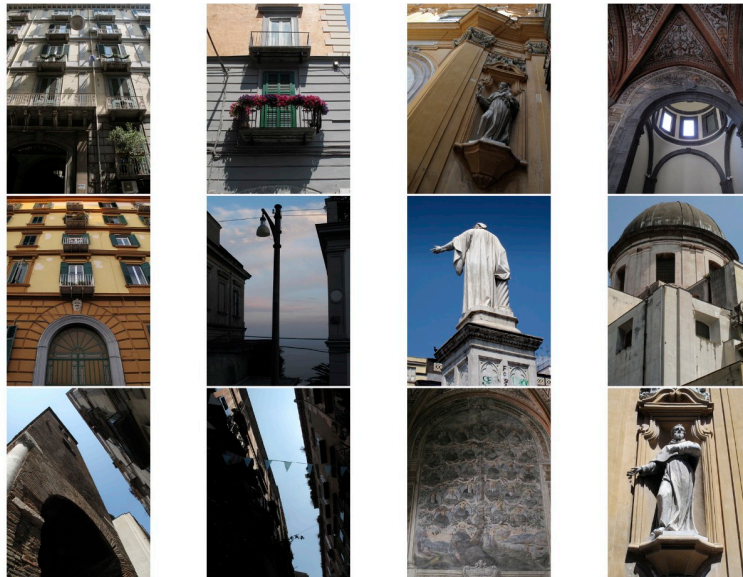


Figure 5 *Neapolitan Architecture and Sculpture*⁷

⁶ Hofstadter, Dan. *Falling Palace: A Romance of Naples*. Vintage, 2006. 226. Print.

⁷ Photos and collage by Andrew Daneman

The entire area in and around Naples is heated from below, and this heat rises, creating both irritation and comfort. Heat from the volcanoes and the light of Naples combine to confront their antithesis – the cool, blue/green of the Mediterranean. Cool breezes and warm temperatures.

Light-speckled archways and passageways lead into obscure, barely-lit foyers. But going upstairs into the high-ceilinged homes of Naples, windows are almost always open, light and sound streaming in.

The light falls between the cracks of the buildings, which in turn, form long, dark areas along the tight streets. The tension created by these disparate forces creates the excitement and the liveliness of Naples. The colors of the heated Naples and the ‘sister’ cool of the shadows echo the lava and the sea.



Figure 6 “Reflections, Transparency, Translucency”

The sunshine of Naples is the prescription that feeds the souls of the Neapolitans, that feeds my soul, and the compliment, always present, is the creation of shadows formed by the light. My point of view in this thesis is simply that of looking – looking out the window, looking at the reflections, looking at the light and shadows. My observations have been caught in a moment (as seen in the exhibition images), framed, subjective, impressionistic, they are, through me, a reflection of life in Naples.

* * *

Chapter I —History

*Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere, tenet nunc Parthenope.
Cecini pascua, rura, duces.*

Mantua gave birth to me, the Calabrians snatched me away,
now it holds me fast

The city where Parthenope is buried;
I sang of pastures, fields, and princes.

-Virgil

Epitaph on his tomb near Naples, supposedly dictated on his deathbed.



Figure 7 Tomba del Tuffatore, c. 450BC

The ancient Greeks believed that Parthenope, light, and Cimone, darkness, were children of the garden of Eden. According to legend, Cimone loved a

young, beautiful Greek girl, Parthenope, or Virgin.⁸ Contrary to her father's wishes Parthenope convinced Cimone to run away to an inhospitable, severe, ugly place, so as not to be discovered. As the two lovers arrived, the land on which they descended exclaimed with joy that Parthenope and Cimone brought love to the land.

Legend says that the land then flourished, became bountiful and beautiful and the air perfumed. The land which they created was named 'Parthenope'. One author, Ugo Canonici, goes so far as to say that it is Parthenope, or her spirit, which still radiates in Naples — "*Parthenope, la vergine, la donna, non muorì, non muore, non ha tomba, è immortale, è l'amore, Napoli è la città dell'amore*"⁹

[Parthenope, the Virgin, the woman, has not died, will not die, does not have a tomb, is immortal, is love, Naples is the city of love.]

⁸ Canoncini, Ugo. *Napoli per noi*. First. Milano: Deus Editore srl, 1997. P.10.

⁹ Ibid. p.15



Figure 8 Paestum, south of Naples

Later named Neapolis (New City), for a while it became part of the Roman Republic. It was conquered by the Byzantines, and then again by the Normans in the 11th Century. Naples was given to Charles of Anjou who made Naples the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily. Over the centuries Spain, Austria and the Bourbon line, as well as the French controlled Naples.

The illumination of Naples by a long line of scholars, artists, musicians and philosophers underscores the continuous change in the fortunes of the people of Naples. In the Roman period Virgil lived in Naples, while later with the influx of bankers from Genoa and the north, along with maritime-related wealth, came visits by Petrarca and Boccaccio. Around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Caravaggio, Bernini, Giordano Bruno, Giambattista Vico

and many foreign artists, such as Velàsquez, Gentileschi, and de Ribera all lived in Naples.

In the field of music, there were four conservatories in Naples, each controlled by the church – I Poveri di Gesù Cristo, Santa Maria di Loreto, Pietà dei Turchini and Sant’Onofrio a Capuana. Originally named “conservatories” because they sheltered (conserved) orphans, they later became music schools established by the Spanish in the mid-16th Century. In 1826, under the French, the four conservatories were closed and became one, which still exists at San Pietro a Maiella.

The rich musical culture generated use of a new chord, known to this day as the Neapolitan Sixth. It became the foundation of a ‘new’ transition to either the tonic or the dominant in the key of the piece. Seemingly of minor importance, the Neapolitan Sixth was used by many composers, including Beethoven (e.g. the third movement of his Sonata #14 in C-sharp minor) as a fresh and exciting means of moving from one key to another. Though used in both the major and minor modes, it is most often seen in the minor mode, a mode which by its nature already creates tension. The Neapolitan Sixth, then, creates an “unexpected” tension, which then resolves to the dominant. This heightening

of tension and resolution is typical of Neapolitan culture and is strongly played out in the theatre and on the streets.

In 1737 the San Carlo Theater was built, and has become since its opening, one of the most prestigious and beautiful opera houses in the world. Mozart's visit to Naples in 1770, where he met the British Ambassador, William Hamilton, attended an opera at the San Carlo opera house and played at one of the conservatories, was an important influence. From the 16th through the 18th. centuries, the Neapolitan school became the term used to designate the operatic style originated by Alessandro Scarlatti and furthered by Niccolò Piccinni, Giovanni Paisiello, Domenico Cimarosa and Niccolò Porpora, among others.

Another change in musical drama was the *intermezzo*, or play during the scene changes of an opera. Historically this was a simple 'skit' but "... by the mid-eighteenth century *opera buffa* and the intermezzo shared a common musical language, dramatically and textually they represented two coexisting, but distinct forms."¹⁰

¹⁰ Lazerevich, Gordana. "The Neapolitan Intermezzo and Its Influence on the Symphonic Idiom". " *Oxford University press*. 57.2 (1971): 294. Print.

Gordana Lazerevich goes on to explain that “. . . many of the seventeenth-century operas contained from four to six separate comic units which create a series of subplots and diversions in the larger drama.”¹¹ The interweaving of plots within plots within the overall opera gave the audience not only a diversion, but often the *intermezzi* were recited in dialect and were rather pointed in their skewering of local politics and characters. “The southern Italian temperament pervaded the music that was a product of this period. The Neapolitans’ love for the dramatic, noisy and colorful aspects of life intermingled with the exuberance, verve and sentimentality of their character.”¹² The rigidity of a conservative style was coupled with a new use of drama and *opera buffa*. As usual, then and now, the Neapolitans laughed at others, as well as at themselves. This brutal humor was a way in which the lower classes could look at and make fun of the aristocracy without fear of reprisal. It is the dark side, or black humor, of an otherwise seemingly good-natured society.

Concurrent with the ‘Neapolitan School of Music’ during the late Baroque period was the ‘Neapolitan School of Art’. This School was represented by the works of Ribera, Caravaggio, Giovanni Battista Caracciolo, Mattia Preti, Salvator Rosa and Aniello Falcone and ended with Luca Giordano.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 295

¹² Ibid, p. 295



Figure 9 *Caravaggio's The Seven Works of Mercy*

In the early 17th Century, Caravaggio appeared in Naples. His works are illustrative, even iconic examples of *Tenebrismo* — studies and examples of light and shadow. In some of his works, as in *The Seven Works of Mercy*, the shadows, though cast by the light seem to take on substance, becoming an element in their own right.

In both these disciplines the *vita*, the ‘spirit’ of life is enlivened by contrasts in art through the use of chiaroscuro and in music through the use of such elements as *recitativo stromentato* (the recitative now accompanied by instruments) and the qualities of tension and resolution of the Neapolitan Sixth chord. A strict structure combined with lyricism result in heightened drama.



Figure 10 Street Scene

Strict form and melody work together in music to create a dramatic work. Today the narrow, confining structure of the streets of Naples are filled with arias in counterpoint; human voices, all speaking simultaneously, gesturing, singing, arguing. The dramas staged in San Carlo are commonplace not only on the stage, but just outside its doors. Ghirelli says, “*È invece il teatro, in tutte le sue possibili forme, a rappresentare fedelmente. . . quell’umanità napoletana così inconfondibilmente votata alla recitazione, alla finzione, . . . e — al tempo stesso — capace di conservare nella finazione tutta la verità tragica o comica dell’avventura umana.*”¹³ [It is theatre, in all its possible forms, which represents with fidelity

¹³ Ghirelli, Antonio. *Una certa idea di Napoli*. Milano: Mondadori, 2010. 45. Print.

that Neapolitan humanity, so utterly devoted to recitation, to pretense, and, simultaneously to be able to preserve in its dialogue all the true tragedy or comedy of the human adventure.]

All societies have their elements of friction, but few embrace, enjoy, rebel against and still sustain those same dichotomies with as much relish as the Neapolitans.

* * *

Chapter II Geography

Sitting outdoors, opening a jar of apricot preserves, placing a modest amount on some warm, fresh bread, the aroma awakens memories of my youth in Italy: balconies for breakfast; loving aunts and uncles; young cousins sitting politely, asking of the plans for the afternoon apricot preserves on fresh croissants.

As the croissant enters my mouth, I taste the thick consistency, the slightly-sweet-almost-bitter apricot taste melting on my tongue, the image forms vividly.

The taste of the apricot, in both cases, is the taste of sunlight. It is warm, freshly picked, not picked-two-weeks-ago-and-shipped-from-Argentina. The earth of Campagna, nourished by the mix of salt and fresh water and the sun blesses each individual apricot.

And coffee! What is it that makes the coffee in Naples so significantly better than the same roast, the same beans, the same grind, the same machine's coffee in New York City? Why is it that even an average coffee in Naples is noticeably better than the best coffee in Rome? Just 117 miles apart, both sit near the sea, yet something is unique about the coffee of Naples.¹⁴ "Every Italian will tell you

¹⁴ Malcolm Moore in Rome. Last Updated: 2:19AM BST 27 Sep 2007. The Telegraph.

that the perfect coffee is all about the shake of the hand or the way the *baristas* warm the glasses, but actually it is all about the water," said Andrew Wallace Hadrill, the director of the British School in Rome. "Naples has the best coffee in Italy because at the turn of the 20th century, when the city was rife with cholera, they went back and found the source of water that the Romans used. "Since then, there has been no cholera and marvelous coffee. Good coffee needs water that has run through limestone and is very, very hard."¹⁵ The underground, subterranean source of water, ancient in its delivery methods and harkening to Parthenope and Cimone casts its blessed shadow on everyday life.

And so with the tomatoes, the pasta, the pastries, the customs, the gestures, the voices — the voice of Naples and the voices of the Neapolitans. They all rise up from the earth, from under the earth and stretch towards the sun for nourishment.

¹⁵ Ibid. The Telegraph



Figure 11 Pomodori from Vesuvius

What is it about the sun, the sunlight, the taste of fruits grown and warmed by the sun of Naples that distinguishes it from other places?

The latitude of central Naples, Italy is 40.8401 degrees, 50.4 minutes North.

The latitude of Atlanta, GA is 33.7490 degrees, 449 minutes North. Although the temperatures across the year are similar between Atlanta and Naples, the latitude is quite different.

The city in the United States which is almost exactly at the same latitude as Naples is New York City, with a latitude of 40.73269 degrees 43.96 minutes North.

The altitude angle¹⁶ of the sun in Naples, on June 21, 2010 was 72.94 degrees, that of central New York City the same time and day is 72.64 degrees.

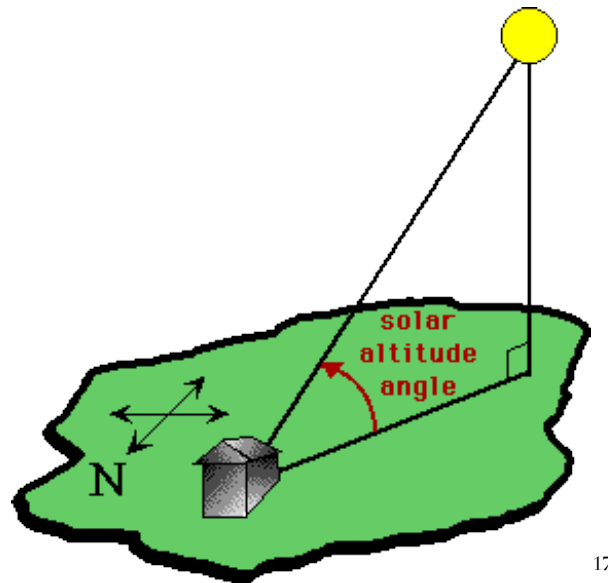


Figure 12 Solar Altitude Angle

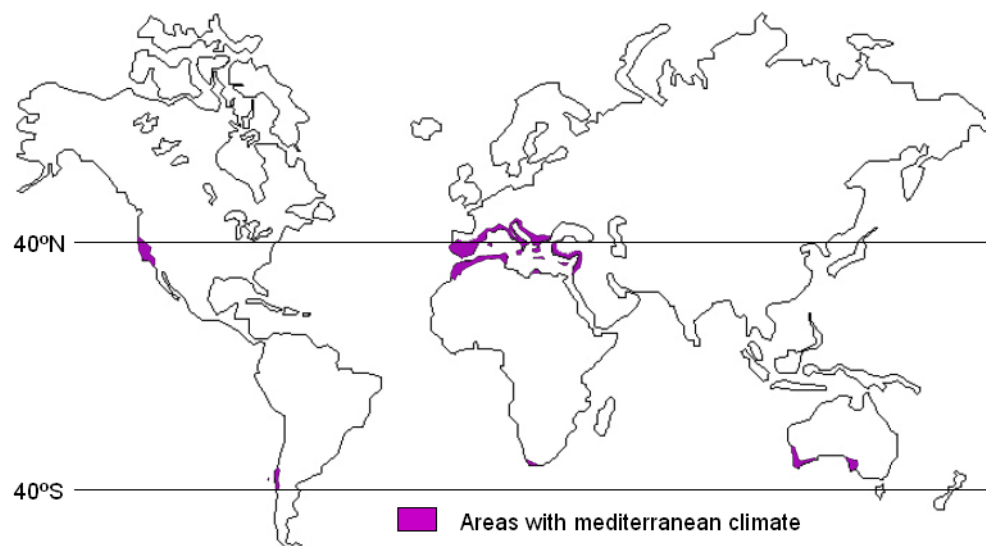
The declination¹⁸ of the sun in Naples on the same day was 23.44, as was the declination in New York City. In local times, the sun rose eight minutes later in Naples than in New York City, but set seven minutes later. In other words,

¹⁶ Altitude angle “describes how high the sun appears in the sky . . . [and] is measured between an imaginary line between the observer and the sun and the horizontal plane the observer is standing on. “Sustainable by Design”, accessed 1 January, 2011, <http://www.susdesign.com/>

¹⁷ Sustainable by Design”, accessed 1 January, 2011, <http://www.susdesign.com/>

¹⁸ The declination “is the angular distance of the sun north or south of the earth’s equator.” “Sustainable by Design”, accessed 1 January, 2011, <http://www.susdesign.com/>

both cities have, within 60 seconds, the same amount of sunlight at the same angle.¹⁹



*Figure 13 Mediterranean Climate*²⁰

The light of Naples is almost exactly the same light as that of New York City. This light is a ‘northern’ light, not a southern one, and certainly not what one expects from a city only 300 miles north of Tunis, Tunisia. The light is cooler, not necessarily in temperature, but in color. Further ‘cooling’ of the light around Naples is due to the reflective qualities of the Mediterranean Sea, which is a greenish-blue.

* * *

¹⁹ “Sustainable by Design”, accessed 1 January, 2011, <http://www.susdesign.com/>

²⁰ Image in Public Domain

Another essential element affecting the light and temperament of Naples is the collection of volcanoes. Mount Vesuvius is 15 miles south of Naples. And just northwest of Naples is the town of Pozzuoli, which surrounds the crater called the Solfatara (from my youth, I remember the trips there and the smell of sulphur – a smell reminiscent of rotten eggs). And west of Naples is the island of Ischia, sitting on another volcanic area.

In the days of Virgil, the fear of Vesuvio erupting was obvious. Leonardo di Mauro and Giovanni Vitolo write, “*Virgilio pensò anche a difendere Napoli dalla minaccia del Vesuvio, costruendo una statua di bronzo, che rappresentava un uomo con l’arco teso e la freccia pronta a scoccare in direzione del monte, per tenerlo sotto controllo. Un giorno però un contadino, incuriosito da quell’arco sempre teso, fece scoccare la freccia, che colpì l’orlo del vulcano, rimettendolo così in attività.*”²¹ [Virgil also thought to defend Naples from the threat of Vesuvius, erecting a bronze statue of a man with a drawn bow and the arrow ready to fly in the direction of the mountain in order to keep it in control. One day, however, a farmer, curious about the bow, which was always taut, let the arrow go. It hit the rim of the volcano, thus making it active once again].

²¹ di Mauro, Leonardo, and Giovanni Vitolo. *Breve storia di Napoli*. Pisa: Piccola Biblioteca Pacini, 2006. 61. Print.

Recent studies show that there was an eruption much earlier than the famous 79 AD eruption which destroyed Pompeii and Herculaneum. Approximately 3780 years ago the “Avellino plinian eruption produced an early violent pumice fallout and a late pyroclastic surge sequence that covered the volcano’s surroundings as far as 25 km away, burying land and villages.”²²

The Avellino plinian eruption caused “a social-demographic collapse and the abandonment of the entire area for centuries.”²³ The greater metropolitan area and most surrounding areas would be decimated if this should occur again. In fact, north of Naples, the Campi Flegrei, part of the same seismic area, pose an even greater danger. “At present, at least 3 million people live within the area destroyed by the Avellino plinian eruption . . . The catastrophic effects of a plinian eruption analogous to the Avellino event, with its long-term environmental and socio-economical implications for metropolitan, industrial and rural areas of Campania, should be taken into account as an extreme scenario in the hazard assessment and planning for the Neapolitan area.”²⁴

²² Mastrolorenzo, Giuseppe, Pierpaolo Petrone, Lucia Pappalardo, and Michael Sheridan. "The Avellino 3780-yr-B.P. catastrophe as a worst-case scenario for a future eruption at Vesuvius." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*. 103.12 (2006): 4366-4370. Print

²³ Ibid, summary

²⁴ Ibid, p. 4370

“The last time the skies over Naples were lit by eruptions from Veusvius, the Campi Flegrei and Ischia were in 1944, 1538 and 1301, respectively.”²⁵ Today that area is home to over six million inhabitants.

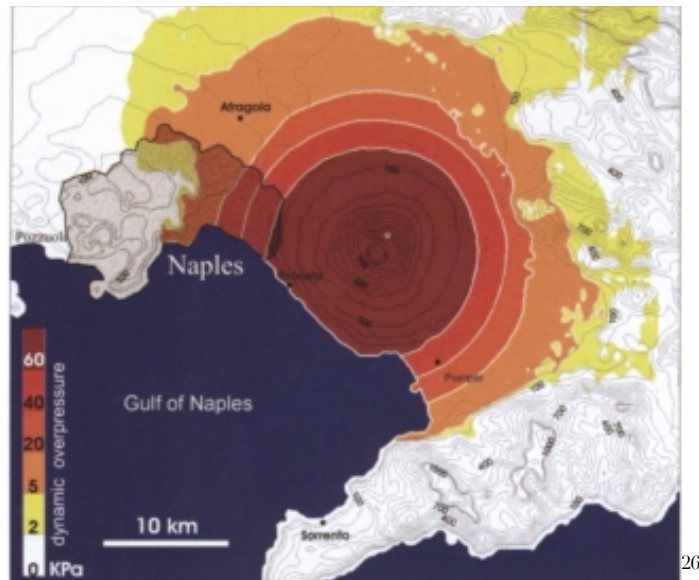


Figure 14 Naples

Taking into account the heat, ash, and smoke from the volcanic activities surrounding Naples and combining that with the cool light of the northern latitude and the reflections of the blue-green of the Mediterranean, we see the yellow-orange and the blue-green colors pulling at opposite ends of the visual spectrum of the city of Naples.

²⁵ Bohannon, John. "Living in the Shadow of Vesuvius." *Science, New Series*. 299.5615 (2003): p. 2022. Print.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 4369

Living on top of this fomenting cauldron of molten heat, it is evident that danger and death are coming upward from the ‘underworld.’ Under modern Naples are several civilizations, civilizations that lived and died, were ‘buried’ and reborn. These ‘shadow’ worlds, worlds where the shades reside are respected by contemporary Neapolitan society as still present because Naples is a culture of both maturity and a determined inclination toward joy, which can encompass opposites without the adolescent need to choose.

Concurrently the Neapolitans feel the coolness of the breeze of the Mediterranean tempering the heat of the volcanic activities. These tensions between intense heat and refreshing coolness are transposed to the inhabitants of Naples in their everyday attitudes, customs and temperaments. The Neapolitan is hot yet sanguine, dramatic and fiery, yet steeped in ancient classic cultures. The Neapolitan culture has been formed by a multiplicity of foreign civilizations controlling the city and its surrounding environmental forces. By acknowledging the light, Neapolitans recognize the shadows. By acknowledging the dangers, the Neapolitans know life. And this *atteggiamento*, this accepting attitude, is one more form of dark humor, one more way to balance the dark with the light.

* * *

Chapter III Colors

Figure 15 Looking towards Capri at Sunset

The ‘northern’ latitude of Naples, and the angle of the sun, combining with the penumbral temperatures of the Mediterranean Sea and the light reflecting from it, results in specific colors. Whether the blue-green reflections of the sea combine with the residual ash from Mount Vesuvius, or whether the light created by the sun’s specific angle produces this effect, the result seems to be a predominance of blue-gray in the shadows and an abundance of yellow-orange in the highlights.

These colors consistently recur throughout the year. The only time they disappear, however, is when it is strongly overcast, and that is the time that the Neapolitans also disappear, for they have a loathing of rainy, cloudy days²⁷.



Figure 16 Ship returning from Capri

The Neapolitans, with their keen, artistic eyes, have filled the city with echoes of these colors. From exteriors, as seen below, to tiles, mosaics, frescoes and interiors. In a later chapter we will see interiors of churches, which embrace the luminosity of the sun and bring that glow inside. These two spectra blue/gray and yellow/orange are nearly complimentary. Once again there is a creation of tension between opposites.

²⁷ But there is an upside, so the proverb says, *Quanno chiove cu 'o sole tutte 'e vecchie fann' ammore*. That is to say, “When it rains with the sun (out), the elders make love.”

My photographs are an experience of this tension and compliment. My photographic work for this thesis is always in relation to the light whether it is direct, diffused, reflected light or the created shadows.



Figure 17 Doorway (detail)

My photos are all un-retouched. For instance, in the photos of the church in Capri, (fig. 18 and fig. 19) it is clear that the shadows become almost blue. This phenomenon, of a bluish shadow on white walls is evident throughout Naples.



Figure 18 Church interior



Figure 19 Church Interior - un-retouched details



Figure 20 Detail of tiles in the church in Figure 17



Figure 21 Even the Funicolare is painted in these colors

The co-existence of the orange-yellow and the blue-gray exists both in natural situations as well as in reproduced, man-made artifacts. It is an expression,

conscious and unconscious, of the effect of the sun at a specific latitude, at a specific angle, creating these colors. The orange-yellow is balanced by the blue-gray, the shadow sister of the sun, the complimentary, the balance-in-tension.

* * *

Chapter IV — Passageways — Into and out of the Shadows

Balance-in-tension is what the city of Naples creates. It is what the Neapolitans create, and is what I have endeavored to create in my collection of photographs for this thesis and accompanying exhibition. The result of the balance-in-tension is joy, it is the acknowledgement of the forces that push and pull on Naples. This duality, the existence of the shadow because of the light and the light's revelation in contrast to the shadow, creates a resolution that is like a taut tightrope. It exemplifies the culture because of its tautness. Should either element overtake the other, the result would be a calamity. The Neapolitans thrive on this tightrope.

There is the “seen” and “unseen” in every culture and every geographical location. In most of the following portfolio images the intention is for the “unseen” to be recognized, acknowledged and brought forward. The commonplace, the forgotten, the taken-for-granted is seen and, indeed, framed. It is seen, however, only because of the compositional strains between various elements within my photographs. The tension *creates* visibility.



Figure 22 Plate #1 —Passageway

As one enters a home in Naples, the passage is akin to a holding cell. From the bright light of the street, the foyer is often dark, mysterious, lit only by a single bulb hanging from a wire. The passageway is cool and gives shelter from the sun, and often, barely visible just beyond the entrance is the *cortile*, or courtyard. Several buildings may share one area.

In Plate #1, Fig. 22, the illuminated portion of the image is itself framed-in with an archway and dark vertical walls. The ‘bars’ on the window through which the viewer looks are ambiguous — are we looking inside from outside, or outside from inside?

The Baroque statue and the dripping colors of the back yellow portion of the wall remind us of the weathering by time and the elements. The Baroque statue entices us to enter — or is she warning us to stay away? She is veiled by the darkness. The shadows, those of the awning on the right, the balcony, and the unseen awning, which must be above and to the left, add to the mystery of the *cortile*.

The contrast between the pink of the television antenna and the chiaroscuro, almost colorless rest of the image parallels a similar contrast between that same antenna and the baroque statue — time and place coexisting in a humorous dialogue.

The vertical lines of the window and the balcony are counterbalanced by the strong diagonals of the shadows, sweeping down from upper left to lower right, echoed by a shadow of the balcony (or possibly a chair somewhere unseen?) All this movement is embellished by the decorative shadows of the telephone wires and white awning.



Figure 23 Plate #2 — Vicolo [Alley]

The *vicoli*, or small, tight alleyways of Naples are the arteries of the city. The blood pulses through them. These alleys are alive, constantly filled with people, carts, and even automobiles. Patience is the keyword when negotiating one's way. The flow of traffic, however, is fluid. People calmly move aside for the cars and the cars snake through the tight areas — often stopping for a few minutes to chat through either window with friends or family.

There is an amazing quality of light in these streets. The sun only illuminates the *vicoli* for a brief period of time, since the buildings on either side otherwise

block the light. There is a splash of sunlight, sometimes simply a glow, for barely a moment.



Figure 24 A typical Vicolo

The glow creates an explosion of light in Figure 23, especially on the laundry hanging between both sides of the street, itself a sign of the community, the communal utilization of tight quarters. And in turn, these brightly lit elements create shadows – both on themselves, in the folds of the material, and on the objects behind or nearby.

The drain pipe seems to both move upward, towards the orange sheet, and downwards, from the sheet. Balanced in turn, by the strong horizontals of the white and gray strips of the wall in the background, the eye fixes on the sheets,

but the surrounding objects create tension. The smaller towels, both the red on the left and the white on the right, seem to be a comic relief to the central ‘characters’ — much like the constant dialogues between characters on the street below.

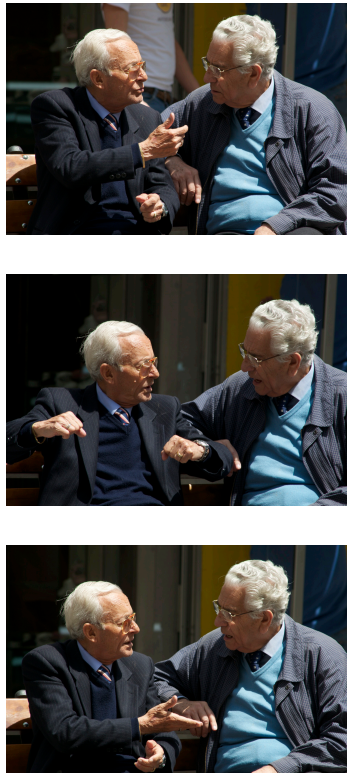


Figure 25 Street Conversations

These conversations, the conviviality and sociable qualities of Naples are at the heart of the family, and the family is almost always centered around the hearth — or at least the dining room table. The first time my wife came to Naples she was amazed that at lunch everyone spoke about what was going to be served at

dinner; at dinner they spoke about breakfast the next day and at breakfast they always spoke about when they were going to get together for lunch, what was going to be served and who was going to join in.



Figure 26 Third Generation Family

Food and drink, then, become the epicenter of the family. It is very rare to eat alone. It is said that *chi magna sulo s'affoga* [Whoever eats alone chokes!]. One doesn't go to "eat" a pizza, but rather one "makes" a pizza, "*il che esprime golosamente un istintivo, quanto teorico senso di partecipazione all'iniziativa.*"²⁸ [which expresses, greedily, an instinct, albeit theoretical, of participating in the initiative]. The gathering is not just for eating but for conversation. If someone (usually the mother) is in the kitchen, the voices rise to a level where

²⁸ Ghirelli, *op cit*, p. 45

the mother can hear and participate in the discussions. The volume gets louder and louder and the conversations get more and more heated.

This warmth and this tight family structure – often spanning as many as four still-living generations – can become too intense and hot, but it stays *within* the confines of the home. To bring it out into the public would trespass the rules of *la bella figura*. Since it cannot remain bottled up, when it does emerge into society, it is in an icy cold form. Both the cortile in Plate #1 and the Vicolo in Plate #2 are transitional spaces. They seem cold and ‘unfriendly’ at first, but are illuminated intermittently. This illumination opens the door, visually, to the warmth of the family who dwells within. The shadows signify the existence of light; the light signifies the existence of warmth.

Just as there is love and support and warmth from the ‘heat’ and passion of the family, there is also cruelty from this boiling-over heat. Italian drama, and especially opera, consistently depicts such scenes. Tosca kills Scarpia; Scarpia orders the execution of Mario Cavaradossi; Aida and Radames are buried alive; Leonora and Manrico die in each others’ arms; Adriana Lecouvreur is poisoned by a bouquet of violets; and in the opera *Pagliacci*, Canio stabs Nedda, and then stabs Silvio. The final line is, “*La Commedia è finita!*”

From drama to melodrama the heat is turned up. Cruelty from heat is obvious, but when it shows up outside the family, it is cold, calculating. The Camorra is born. The 'Family' ties are strong as strong, or stronger even than blood-family ties.

The cruelty towards those that get in the Camorra's way is icy cold. You are bound inside the family, enclosed in its warmth unless you are against it, in which case you are in danger. Warm, bright yellow-orange or cold blue-gray. They are complimentary. They are not, according to Neapolitan society, conflicting.



Figure 27 Two “Families” at a wedding in Chiaia, Naples



Figure 28 Plate #3 — Reflections, Chiaia

The interweaving of layers of sounds, movement, traffic and light is constant in Naples. There is almost no moment when there is true silence or stillness in the city. This photograph, Fig. 28, shows a superimposition of layers though it is only a single exposure. Each layer is reflected onto and into another layer. Not only is the church reflected onto a glass window pane, but its colors are repeated in the edges of the building in the lower right-hand corner and in the reflection in the upper right-hand corner.

The strong, black grid gives the photograph a stability, but the church overtakes the grid and appears, along with the top of someone's head, in front

of the grid. The diagonals from upper left to lower right and their complimentary lines from upper right to lower left contrast and compliment in dark (the former) and light (the latter). In the middle is the reflection of a newspaper, the reader invisible but for his head above the church. The buildings revolve around the person, who is reading current events, surrounded by the history of Naples. Walter Benjamin says, "Buildings are used as a popular stage. They are all divided into innumerable, simultaneously animated theaters."²⁹ He goes on to say, "In everything they [the Neapolitans] preserve the scope to become a theater of new, unforeseen constellations. The stamp of the definitive is avoided."³⁰

The earth beneath and around Naples has trembled for thousands of years and continues to do so. Danger is ever-present. Why should the Neapolitans etch anything in stone? Naples is filled with cross-currents: the cool breezes of the Mediterranean, those of the warmth from the *Solfatara*, and the crisscrossing of everything from the traffic to intersecting conversations.

The everyday life of the Neapolitan is filled with the theatrical. Interior life and communal life, religion and secular intermingle with ease. When asked what

²⁹ Benjamin, Walter. *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986. 167. Print.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 166

she found interesting in Naples, my wife, Honora, replied that she was astounded that the streets, with six lanes along the Bay of Naples, could hold traffic going in any direction — changing at the whim of any driver at any time. More frightening was the fact that no one stopped at red lights. “This is because,” answered a dear friend, an elderly pediatrician, with all the love and patience he could muster, “the red lights . . . they are but a suggestion.” And how could one not understand that? In fact, the Neapolitan saying about beggars is, “*Il napoletano non chiede l’elemosina, ve la suggerisce*” [The beggar does not *ask* for alms, but rather *suggests* them.] Walking along *Via* Scarlatti recently, a young man approached us asking us if we wanted to buy some socks. Five times we refused until we spoke rather brusquely to him, asking him to leave us alone. Stunned, he asked us if he could offer us a cup of coffee. Life in Naples is a discourse, a dialogue between human beings.

This element of obliqueness is balanced by strong types of directness. One hides from direct light through the use of humor. And even the humor in the Neapolitans is two-fold. As in opera, there is a cynicism within the humor. But the cynicism is directed both at others and at one’s self. The sun warms, but the coolness of the shadow gives safe harbor and refreshes.

Crossing at the intersection, as a pedestrian, is another daunting task for visitors, but as Honora discovered, the trick is to either look right into the eyes of the oncoming drivers, in which case they will almost certainly yield as it is a person-to-person, a human, request or wait for a nun to cross the street and follow behind her.

The chaos is only seen as such by outsiders. The Neapolitans don't quite understand what the problem may be. The traffic, although horns are blaring and brakes screeching, actually moves in a much more fluid manner than most traffic in major American cities. More importantly Neapolitans will create any excuse, including traffic, to create personal interactions and personal intersections, because that is what gives pleasure and so, life.

The *Galleria Umberto I*, an indoor mall in the center of Naples was inaugurated in November of 1890. It is a mixture of steel and glass, solidity and transparency. There are several Stars of David intermingled with the main 'cross' of two intersecting internal streets. The Galleria is a safe and dry passageway between four streets. It is also a luminous, airy 'house' for pedestrians, shoppers and tourists.



Figure 29 Plate #4 — Transitions

The four entrances/exits lead to four areas of Naples. Neighborhoods are distinct in Naples. Going through the Galleria is an experience of transition

³¹ Photo by Andrew Daneman

from light to dark and back to light, from one section of town to another, from one element of weather to another.

Fig. 29 is a short time-lapse photograph. It captures the movement, the constant movement of Neapolitans. They have become shadows, restless figures entering and exiting. Each of the figures is casting its own shadow as sunlight streams in through one of the high-ceilinged arches.

Although the strong verticality of the people and the gates lead the eye upwards, the stronger movement of the eye is with the people in and out of the sunlit area. Shirley Hazzard says that “Neapolitans move among their extraordinary architecture as in a natural element: Even the grandest edifices are not ‘monuments’ but expressions of temperament in their nobility, their strangeness or sweetness, their theatricality . . . the very buildings draw vitality from the populace, who in turn seem nourished on color, form and line.”³² The light and shadows of the Galleria draw the Neapolitans in; and the Neapolitans create the shadows, fleeting and amorphous, part of a larger whole.

* * *

³² Hazzard, Shirley. *Ancient Shore*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. 54. Print.

The *cortili* and *vicoli* are the passages from light to dark and back to light. The *cortili* are entrances to the home, the hearth, and the Neapolitan sun as represented by the family in its warmth, while the shadows and respite from the sun are the balance, the cold aspects. The *vicoli* are where the communities share space. The *vicoli* are also dark, sparsely and intermittently illuminated areas — areas of gathering and of transition and sometimes danger.

Both the *vicoli* and the *cortili* are passageways — derived from the vulgar Latin, *passare*, or to pass through or by. But *passare* is in turn derived from *pati*, to suffer or undergo. It is by these transitions, constantly recurring in Naples, that quotidian life is enlarged, amplified, dramatized, endured and lived to its fullest.

* * *

Chapter V — Religion & Its Shadows

“Some years ago a priest was drawn on a cart through the streets of Naples for indecent offenses. He was followed by a crowd hurling maledictions. At a corner a wedding procession appeared. The priest stands up and makes the sign of a blessing and the cart’s pursuers fall on their knees. So absolutely, in this city, does Catholicism strive to reassert itself in every situation. Should it disappear from the face of the earth, its last foothold would perhaps be not Rome, but Naples.”³³

Although the meaning of “Catholic” can well be “one who belongs to the Catholic Church”, or it can mean “universal”, it also can mean “free from provincial prejudices”. There is a bit of humor in noting that most Neapolitans are Catholic. It is exactly here that the Catholic Neapolitans are all but free from prejudices — provincial or otherwise. The balance, the shadow to the light of Catholic spirituality is seen in the enormous respect given to superstition. Superstition operates in the umbra of the ‘religion’ of Naples. It is the folk practice, the ‘para-religious practice.’ It is prevalent through to the very core of Neapolitan society.

³³ Benjamin, Walter. *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986. 164. Print.



Figure 30 Plate #5 — Madonna and Child

In Plate #5 the Madonna and Child painting was shot inside a private home, with the reflection of the light from outside seen on the painting. What caught

³⁴ Photo by Andrew Daneman

my eye was the quality of the light, and how it gave some hope to the seemingly distraught Madonna and Child. The curtains are drawn and control whether light enters or does not enter a room.

The draping of the Madonna's fabric is echoed in the reflection of the drapery in the bedroom. The darker color of the Madonna's cloth is contrasted by the illumination of the incoming light. The soft C-curve of the Madonna is balanced, in part, by the strong vertical reflection. Yet the reflection somehow also ends, toward the bottom, with a C-curve of its own, echoing the painting. And this lovely shaft of sunlight in reflection echoes the great shafts of sunlight found in the *vicoli* throughout Naples.

If one turns the city upside-down, underneath Naples there are layers upon layers of civilizations. *Napoli Sotterranea*, or "Underground Naples" has only recently been rediscovered. The volcanic fury deep below the area of Campania is a molten hell, and the civilizations which grew on top of this heat were knowingly built on danger.

The *Sotterranea* is "the endless lateral ramification of the subterranean, begun by the Greeks and continued until modern times, that allowed the city to drink and so to survive: the netherworld functioned as the vascular system of the

urban body.”³⁵ The life-giving source of water cooled and balanced those living above an infernal abyss.

If Vesuvius is the entrance to hell, and all of Naples is set squarely above this molten inferno, then protection needs to be everyday, everywhere. In fact, every aspect of life in Naples is protected by superstition. Catholic restrictions and protections became ingrained in Neapolitan society. The rituals were then molded into habits, based on common beliefs. Where the Catholic rites and the rites of superstition differ is a fine line.

Years ago about a dozen of my family were going to Positano for the day. We were driving in three cars – I was driving one car, my uncle another and in the third car was my Zia Bianca, her two daughters (in their early twenties both) with the boyfriend of one of the daughters. The boyfriend was asked to drive the third car.

We had agreed that we would meet at the exit of the highway where there was not only a gas station with reasonable prices but also a bar with excellent coffee and pastries. I arrived first, followed about ten minutes later by my uncle. We

³⁵ Hofstadter, *op. cit.*, p. 131

waited for a while for my aunt's car, but decided, after another quarter-of-an-hour that we might as well gas up.

As they still had not arrived we parked and went into the bar and ordered pastries and coffee. Only after another thirty minutes did the third car arrive, everyone 'discussing' in rather loud voices what had happened, and laughing quite raucously. My aunt kept saying, "I told you to scratch your . . . I told you to scratch your . . ."

The situation was simple at the onset of their journey, with the young suitor driving they had passed a car being driven by nuns. This, according to popular belief, was very bad luck indeed. But, thankfully, there is the *scongiuro*, or the charm which would counter the bad luck. Often this is simply the pointing of the index and little fingers downward.³⁶ Sadly for the driver, the *scongiuro* in this case was to scratch his private parts three times. The young man was too embarrassed to do so . . . and about two minutes later they had had a flat tire! No better proof of the veracity of the superstition for even the least superstitious Neapolitan!

³⁶ But one must be careful, because if you point the 'horns' upward, it means one's spouse is being unfaithful!



Figure 31 Character produced by Scarabattola – Monk and Corne

Superstition is also grounded in community, in the feeling and carrying of certain fears and the ‘antidotes’ to these fears. Neapolitans have plenty to fear and little earthly protection, so superstitious rites are used as an antidote to the assumed dangers. If you remember your dream, especially if it is unusual, you are to go immediately to the interpreter of dreams. He or she has a book, *La Smorfia*, which when knowledgeably used, yield corresponding numbers. If you dream, for example, of paying someone money, then the corresponding number is ‘3’. However, if you are paid money, the number is ‘17’. If you dream of a castle, the number is ‘18’, but if you dream of entering a castle, the

number is '7'. It is important to know these numbers because they are good for placing bets on the Lottery.

Religion is often described as an illumination. Superstition can be considered the shadow of religion, and it is exactly this juxtaposition of spirituality and superstition, this loftiness with earthiness that is so colorful. There is, much as in Figure 32, a veil, a translucency to these 'folk' beliefs. Perhaps it is more like a sieve – a method of looking from the dark into the light and from the light into the dark.

The Neapolitans, through their customs and beliefs, feel they can offset the dangers of the heat below by looking upward through the veil of life to spirituality and religion, and by living firmly in the daily routines, which include superstitions.

Figure 32 was photographed in a church under renovation. The screen is placed above the main area in order to protect it from falling debris. The view upward, toward the windows, gives the impression that the illuminated portion of the church cannot be reached directly. There is a distance between the 'light' and the viewer, not only a vertical distance, but the view is obscured by a translucent material.



Figure 32 Plate #6 — Church Interior

The black smudges from above (or below?) look like figures, perhaps dancing figures. They are alive and celebrating the light. They remind me of the work of the artist Pierre-Yves le Duc, in reverse! I had just interviewed Pierre-Yves for the exhibition portion of my thesis, and his figures echoed those of the church scrim. Both embrace a balance between negative and positive space, using simply black-and-white.

The oval shape of the opening is reminiscent of the human eye. Through this ocular opening we see the ‘new’ church, the renovated church. Because of the

veil between the old and the new we witness the transformation, the history and the future of the building, both as a work of art and as a spiritual haven.

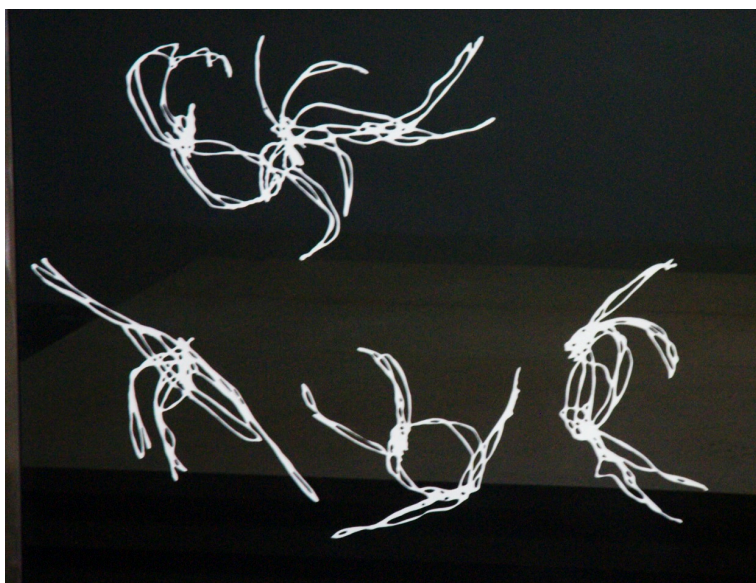


Figure 33 *Painting by Pierre-Yves le Duc*

There are now over nine hundred churches in greater Naples. Not only each neighborhood, but each section of each neighborhood has a church, and almost every corner of every street in Naples has a shrine to a favorite saint or the Madonna. Most of these shrines are lit by candles and electric light bulbs. Antonio Ghirelli writes, *“Il ruolo dominante del sentimento religioso nella psicologia popolare è confermato anche dalla frequenza delle edicole sacre agli angoli delle strade e dei vicoli della città, dedicate per la maggior parte alla Madonna, a Gesù, ai santi Vincenzo, Antonio e Anna, o alle ‘anime del Purgatorio’. Poichè la città conta su sette santi patroni principali e otto ausiliari mobilitati . . . quali antidote alle non*

infrequenti calamità che hanno afflitto e affliggono Napoli: in tutto, 41 eruzioni del Vesuvio fino al 1984, 20 terremoti, 10 epidemie, 6 carestie, nonchè nubifragi, . . . e altri inconvenienti, che del resto spiegano l'abbondanza delle edicole sacre anche come espressione di gratitudine degli scampati."³⁷ [The reigning role of religious sentiment in the popular psychology is also confirmed by the frequency of the sacred shrines on the corners of the streets and alleys of the city, dedicated for the most part to the Madonna, Jesus, the saints Vincent, Anthony and Ann, or the souls of Purgatory. Naples counts on seven principal patron (Saints) and eight auxiliary ones . . . who are antidotes to the not infrequent calamities which have and continue to afflict Naples: in all, forty-one eruptions of Vesuvius up to 1984, twenty earthquakes, ten epidemics, six famines, not counting floods, and other inconveniences which explain the abundance of the shrines also as expressions of gratitude of those saved.]

Of course, the tribute to saints has now been extended to the great Maradonna, the soccer player who played for Naples for many years.

³⁷ Ghirelli, *op cit*, p. 52



Figure 34 Shrine to Diego Maradonna

The following two plates, figures 35 and 36, are from different churches on different days. Superstition operates in the *umbra*, the shadow of the light of spirituality. It was startling to see that in the case of the light of Naples the shadow was the complimentary color of the object(s) creating the shadow. The walls of the two churches are a light yellow-orange. And in both cases the shadow was blue-gray.



Figure 35 Plate #7 — Church Interior

The juxtaposition of color and shadow, of complimentary colors created and extracted one from the other, creates a rhythm. The warmth of the yellow-orange creates its own balance that of the cool shadows. Colors are reflected variations of one become the opposite, complimentary, in the shadow. In a church, the arches repeat, one behind the other, creating a three-dimensional movement.

One of the most famous characters in Neapolitan folklore is Pulcinella. His attributes include being both stupid and sly; master and servant; he is a walking contradiction. In fact, his clothes are always white with a black mask,

symbolizing both life and death. This *atteggiamento*, this cultural attitude, is part of the *arte di arrangiarsi*, or an ability to improvise and ‘make do,’ often needed by impoverished Neapolitans to patch together a living or to confront the daily anxiety of a volcanic foundation to their city.



Figure 36 Plate #8 — Church Interior

In Plate #9, Figure 37, not only are the complimentary colors present, but this “still life” shows the confluence of the ordinary — the dust mop with the beautiful fresco. The respect is there, the mop is not leaning against the fresco, but rather is used to create a clean space for reverence. “The modern

Neapolitans . . . are limited to their own poverty, to the beauty of their city; it is a personal love, not universal. Naples is forever disappearing, eternally vanishing. Its myth thus eternally remains. That is why it is at all times the city of sunshine regardless of the weather.”³⁸



Figure 37 Plate #9 — Church Interior

There is humor, but respectful humor in this photograph. The church is empty, and the Christ and Madonna are waiting for the parishioners, but the church must be cleaned first.

³⁸ Maurino, F. D. "Neapolitan Poetry." *University of Oklahoma*. 29.4 (1955): 404-405. Print.

There is almost always a certain elegance in Naples. *La bella figura* is not just one of manners, but also of outward appearances, which signals respect towards others. Even the less well off are well dressed, most men wear a coat and tie, or sweater and tie throughout the year.

Inside the churches, the buildings imagined, created, revered and utilized in Naples, it was a challenge for me to capture the subtlety of the colors, the light, the shadows. The photographs had to be taken during one visit. Consequently the time of day for visiting each church had to be well considered. In the case of San Giovanni a Carbonara, not terribly far from the Cathedral, we happened to arrive about thirty minutes before closing. It was May, and so the sun was setting. As we entered, it was as if there was an explosion of light.

As is evident in the photos below, Plates #10 and 11, figures 38 and 39, the chiaroscuro, the deeper than normal shadows, create silhouettes. The crucifixion seemed to be actually situated in Rome, as the background became, with a short depth-of-field, out-of-focus, as the eye might truly see it.



Figure 38 Plate #10 — Church Interior



Figure 39 Plate #11 — Church Interior

But the revelation that occurred after I was editing the photographs, was the color of the cloth on the Christ. The shadows created by the yellow walls were a deep, deep blue. It was a lovely gift on the last full day of shooting.



Figure 40 Plate #12 — Sunset, looking towards Capodimonte

Then, that evening, having packed my bags and waiting to go out for the last wonderful meal in Naples, sitting on the balcony, I realized that this was the first evening with clouds. The sun began to set and there it was again, “my” yellow. As the clouds parted, the pedestrians came out. The streets began to come to life and the noise of life in Naples became louder once again.

Figure 40 is a view looking east from the *Vomero*, the highest area of Naples. I shot with the horizontal line of the horizon low in order to create a more

overpowering feeling of the sun and clouds. The church is off-center while the ‘burning bush’ is more central.

The church is illuminated by the radiance of the sun. The sun is setting, creating deep, dark shadows, almost silhouettes. The clouds are menacing, yet the confluence of clouds and setting sun is exhilarating. This last photograph of Naples was almost a cosmic joke, a gift of an all-too-obvious metaphor for my entire thesis.

* * *

Chapter VI — Conclusion

In Naples light is synonymous with life. “Neapolitans refuse to acknowledge poverty; as a consequence they must find refuge in their imagination. They are so poor in so much beauty and so rich in daydreams! It is easy then to understand why this dualism should produce a poetry of a poetical nostalgia, sad and satisfying in their boasting of Naples’ sea, sky, moon, and songs,”³⁹ states Maurino. There is beauty within chaos within a supremely beautiful natural environment.

In some art, in some societies, there is a balance through stasis. In Naples there is a balance through tension, the tension created between well-matched oppositional forces: the reflection and the absorption of light, the living and the dead, the constantly brewing undercurrents of live volcanic activity and the cool repose and breezes of the Mediterranean, and between the seen and the unseen.

Not only is there tension between opposites, but there is an acknowledgement of the existence and the co-existence of these opposites. Therein lies the beauty of an old and wise civilization. Spirituality and human kindness

³⁹ Maurino, *op. cit.* p. 404

intermingle with superstition. This tension creates the energy, the tremendous vitality of life in Naples.

In Naples song is everywhere. Poetry, drama, opera, music, lyrics all combine to explain to those who don't understand, and to attempt to explain to ourselves, Neapolitans, what our lives are about. Daniele Pino, singer and songwriter wrote *Napule e*, which simply and poetically describes Naples.

*Napule è mille culture
 Napule è mille
 Paure
 Napule è a voce de' creature
 Che
 Saglie chianu chianu
 E tu sai ca nun
 Si sulo.*

*Napule è nu sole amaro
 Napule
 è adore 'e mare
 Napule è 'na carta
 Sporca
 E nisciuno se ne importa
 E ognuno
 Aspetta a' ciorta.*

*Napule è 'na cammenata
 Inte
 Viche miezo all'ato
 Nauple è tutto
 'nu suonno
 e 'a sape tutt 'o munno
 ma
 nun sanno a verità*

*Napule è mille
 Culure
 Napule è mille paure
 Napule è a voce de' creature
 Che saglie chianu
 Chianu
 E tu sai ca nun si sulo*

Naples is a thousand colors
 Naples is a thousand
 Fears
 Naples is a voice of children
 Who
 awaken slowly, slowly
 And you know that you are not
 Alone.

Naples is a bitter sun
 Naples is
 the smell of the sea
 Naples is a dirty playing card
 And no one cares
 And everyone expects good luck.

Naples is an evening stroll
 In the alleys in the midst of others
 Naples is a dream
 Which everyone in the world realizes
 But they do not know the truth.

Naples is a thousand colors
 Naples is a thousand
 Fears
 Naples is a voice of children
 Who
 awaken slowly, slowly
 And you know that you are not
 Alone.

The work of putting together this thesis, taking these photographs, producing the exhibition has been my “madeleine”. It has been an awakening, an acknowledgement and deepening of my love for my childhood in Naples and a more profound understanding of the forces that I love. Truly, as Camillo Boito, architect, engineer and writer said, “*I napoletani cavano l’arte dal sole.*” Indeed, “the Neapolitans create art from the sun.”

* * *

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