

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
SCHREYER HONORS COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS

THE BICULTURAL IDENTITY: A CELEBRATION OF ITALIAN-AMERICANS  
IN STATE COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA

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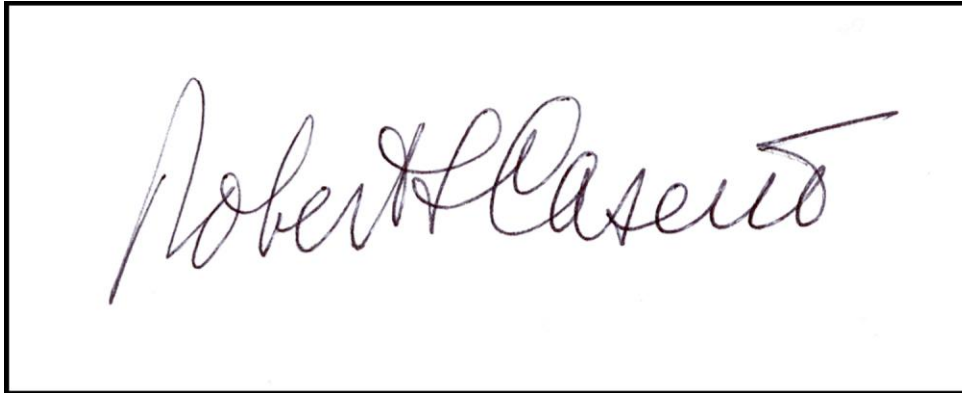
## **ABSTRACT**

“The Bicultural Identity” is a photographic work documenting twelve individuals who identify as Italian-Americans in the area of State College, Pennsylvania. Each individual participated in an in-depth interview, focused on subjects pertaining to Italian or Italian-American history, identity, tradition, culture. With thoughtful consideration, each interviewee was then photographed in an intentional manner in light of their unique identity as an Italian-American. Included below are photographs and signatures of each individual, interview quotes, and photographs of the gallery opening event, which took place on November 4th, 2016.

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## ROBERT CASERIO




“[My father’s] lifelong job was as a chef. So certainly one of the traditions that I carry on is cooking and an interest in cooking. A very demanding interest in cooking. It’s got to be good! And there is a right way to do things and there is a wrong way to do things. [Cooking] is an art. And I don’t know if that’s an Italian-American tradition or just what happened in my family.”

“I found that my affinities... were with Jewish-American kids, because they were outsiders too. So my most lasting friends from junior high school and high school were Jewish-American. They were closer to the experience of uprootedness and that was part of their tradition. They had intellectual and artistic traditions in a way that the suburban crowd didn’t have and didn’t respect. {In what way was it not respected?} Well, it wasn’t sports. Who the hell cared? Why read books? It was not masculine and just secondary. And that has, I think, intensified in American life. Athletics are the prevailing ethos and it’s big business.”

“I clung to the church for a very, very long time. Because Italian-American males are thought to be, just as Italian males are thought to be, the fathers of the future. And it’s their duty to reproduce and to keep the line alive. So that was very difficult for me because I didn’t know how I could possibly fulfill the duty that family tradition suggested and that Catholic tradition approved. So that was a long internal struggle. Very long... I was one of the first self-identified gay men to adopt a child. I have a son that is now thirty-seven. And whom I adopted when he was two, thirty-five years ago... maybe it’s one of the things about being Italian-American that sort of makes you feel like you have to be a family, you have to have a family, you have to be the head of a family, you have to have family responsibilities, and so on.”



CAROLE HOOVER

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Carole A. Hoover". The signature is enclosed within a black rectangular border. The ink is a dark purple or brown color. The "C" is large and loops around, and the "H" has a long, sweeping tail.

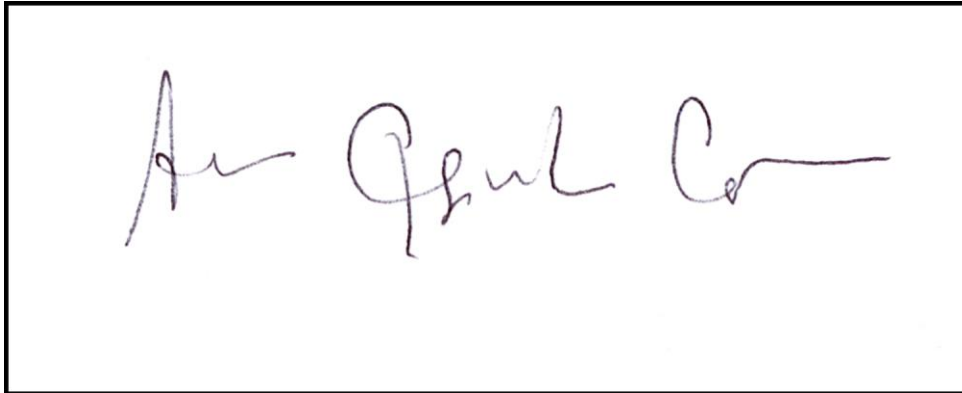
“My brother, he’d say to my mom, “Mom, why didn’t you teach us Italian?” And she said, “You know, because we thought that that was like being a second-class citizen.”

“Some people would automatically say, “you look Italian.” And I didn’t ever know how to take that. It was like, well, I am. But what does that mean? I didn’t know if it was good or bad.”

“I think it was 1972 when the first “Godfather” movie came out. Oh my gosh. My parents and my aunt and her husband, they couldn’t wait to go see this movie. They drove to two hours – because this was a small town so they didn’t get the big movies right away – to Scranton, somewhere up there, just to see the movie, “the Godfather.”



ALESSANDRA CORIGLIANO

A handwritten signature in dark ink, enclosed within a black rectangular border. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and reads "Alessandra Corigliano".

“I came here to the states when I was twenty-one years old... because I married an Italian-American... He spoke perfect Italian. He was actually trilingual because he also spoke Venetian dialect, which was appalling to me, that an American could speak dialect. He would speak English and Italian without an accent; he was perfectly bilingual... I didn’t know he was American. When he told me his name, I said, “what do you mean, ‘Billy?’”

“I hated it, Georgia in the ‘80’s. It was very racist. It was very backwards. I always had a fascination for this country and when I went to Georgia, I was really disappointed by the narrow mentality, by the pettiness, by the racism. I was really appalled. And I’m not talking racism toward blacks, but also foreigners... clearly, by my look, I could pass for an American. But they were appalled that I was ‘I-talian.’ I was not Italian, I was ‘I-talian.’ That already bothered me, how they pronounced it... The moment that I opened my mouth, I have a strong accent and so they asked me where I was from. I would say, “I’m Italian.” And they would say, “oh, you’re I-talian. But you don’t look like an I-talian.” What does an ‘I-talian’ look like?”

“My maternal grandmother, she didn’t work, she was a housewife, she married young. She said that when Mussolini and Claretta Petacci, his mistress, were killed near Lake Como, but their bodies were brought to Piazzale Loreto, which is a central area in Milan, and they were hung upside-down... And people were spitting on them. And my grandmother... was passing by and she saw all this and she said, you know, ‘okay, I don’t like Mussolini... but it’s not necessary to do all that. It’s very barbarian.’ She was a little bit appalled.”



MAGGIE NOSTRAND

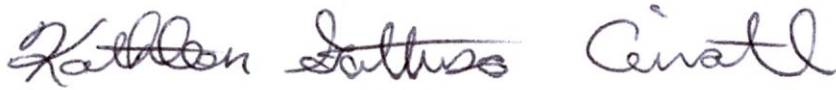


“My dad, even though the family life is big, he always puts a bigger emphasis on work for me... He was really big into sports and my, oh my gosh, my grandma and my grandpa were so against it... [My grandparents, both born in Italy,] are very centered around their family... They were so not into me playing softball. They were like, you should be, like you know, spending time with us, not like going out every single weekend and going to play softball. So I ended up quitting because a lot of the family issues...”

“No matter how much homework I have, I need to have that good meal... Taste is a big part of my life. If it doesn’t taste good, I will not eat it. Some people are like: I don’t care, it’s food. But if it does not taste good, I will look and put my nose to it... [Cooking] gives me a reason to call my mom and tell her what I made or ask my grandma, like, what did I forget.”



KATHY GATTUSO CINATL

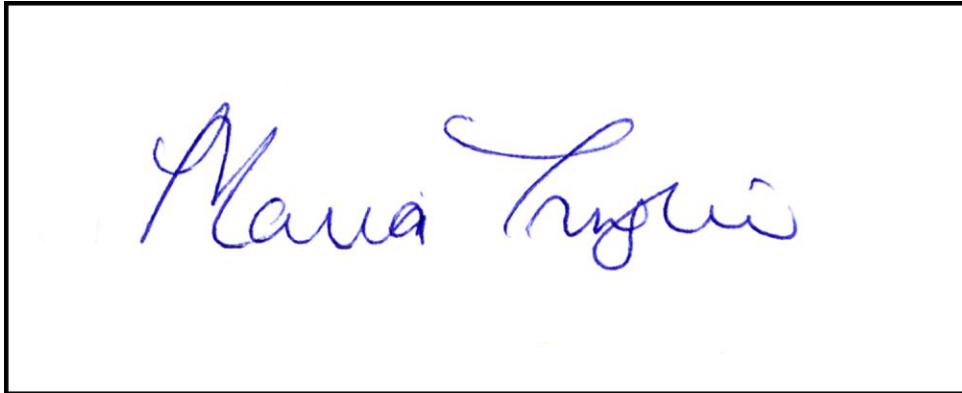
A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kathy Gattuso Cinatl", enclosed within a black rectangular border.

“The funniest story that involved my grandparents is that my father’s father came over here during World War I, sent back to Italy for a wife. They sent my grandmother’s older sister. He didn’t like her, so he sent her back. And then they sent my grandmother, who was actually only 15 and a half at the time. So they sort-of dealt with her birth certificate because she was supposed to be 16. And so she married a 33-year-old man that she had never met. And had 6 kids. My father was the first. My father was born before my grandmother turned 17.”

“My mom told a story about, I mean there were nine kids in the family, two parents. They didn’t have a lot of money. They always ate well because they had a farm, so they always had stuff around. But as far as clothing, they would have clothing made out of flour bags... like the flour came in a fabric thing. And a lot of times they would have some, not all, of their clothing made out of this stuff. And I think my mother was a little embarrassed because not every kid had this. Well, the Goodwill people came around, I don’t know if it was from the city or whatever else, and they were collecting. And when they saw my mom’s family, they were like: oh, well, maybe you could use some of these clothes. And my mom’s mom said: “No, no, no, no. We’re fine! Give them to people who need them.”



MARIA TRUGLIO



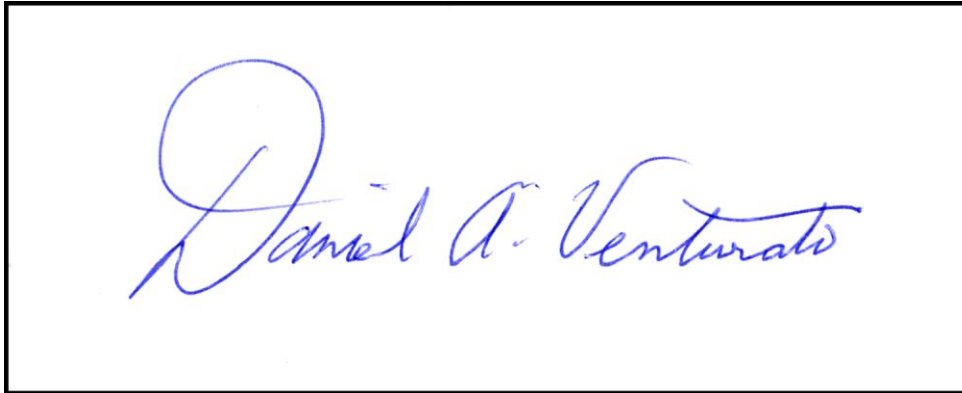
“From what I remember growing up, in spite of the fact that we were already several generations in as Americans, we identified as Italian. Not even Italian-American. Italian.”

“When I’m in Italy, I feel really American. You know, I want dinner at 6:00 and the restaurants don’t open until 8. Or I want a proper breakfast and not just a pastry and a cappuccino. Or I need my space, stop crowding me. All of these things. Or why is the shower so small? And when I’m in the States, I feel so frustrated, like everything’s so plastic here. And so hyper-packaged and pre-processed. And you know, there’s no sense of like community or family values, it’s so individualistic... but I think there’s a way in which you can also come to see that as a positive things too. Like you can be in both of those spaces and appreciate the value of those different cultures but also have a critical distance from both. I feel like what it has allowed me to do, partly my heritage and partly just my academic training, is to realize that neither of those ways of being in the world are your only open, or natural, or perfect or necessary... when I’m in Italy, it’s like, okay yes, there’s no room in this shower to move but here’s this other great stuff that we get to enjoy while we’re here. And vice versa.”

“To be honest, growing up, the Godfather was sort of like a bible. My parents knew every word of the dialogue by heart and it was sort of like this weird point of pride. Like, ‘we’re Italians, don’t mess with us.’”



DANIEL VENTURATO

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Daniel A. Venturato", is centered within a black rectangular border. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

“My Italian is very limited. And the reason for that is that my dad wanted to speak English. And he said, ‘you’re an American, you speak English. But my mother would teach us how to count and say little things. She said, ‘don’t pay attention to him.’”

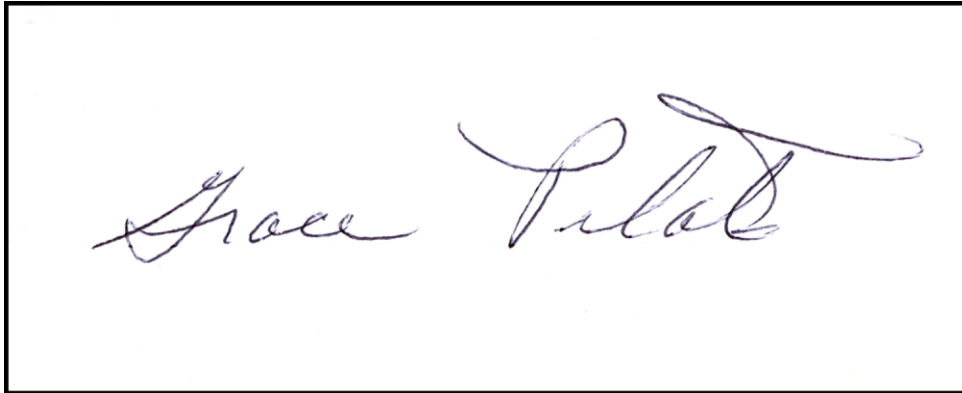
“I got a letter, my sister did. And it said: ‘I’m your dad’s sister. We never met.’ And she says, ‘I’m the only one living. I have no family except my immediate family. I have no cousins, no one.’ And I saw this and I had a town to go to. And she didn’t live in the hometown, she was down on the coast, which is 15 miles from where my dad was born. So we went over and we found her. What a beautiful, what a reunion. Tears. It was absolutely beautiful. She was such a beautiful person.”

“First time I got [to Italy], I listened to some of the words and it made just me feel like I was at home.”

“My dad, when he came to America, he had a guitar on his back, two pair of pants, two pair of underwear and the clothes he had on. And he had \$25.”



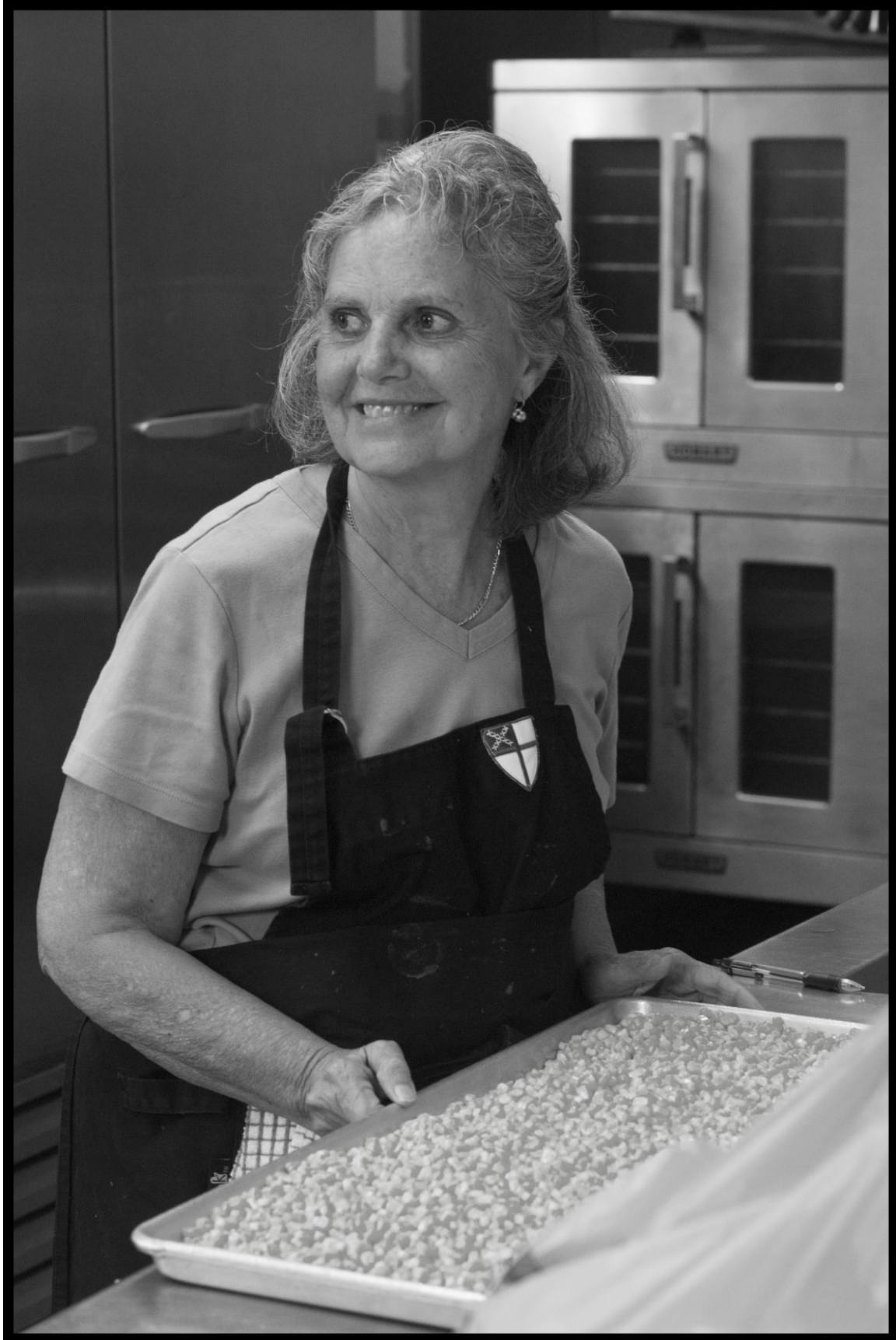
## GRACE PILATO



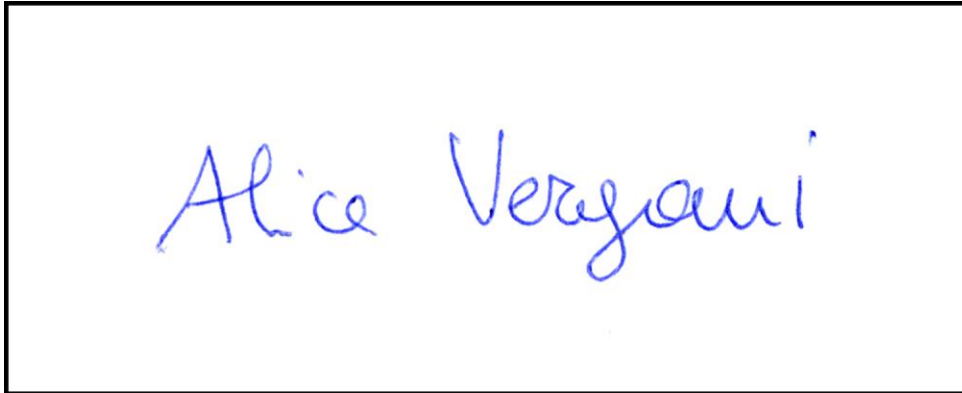
“I didn’t [have strong memories] for a while, but when I first went back to Sicily, everything seemed to come back. And it was really wonderful. You know, when I saw the little stream and I saw the rocks. My first scene of the wheat field in the wind, the beautiful golden color and the undulation. I mean, it just all came back.”

“[Immigrating] was a beautiful experience for me. We were on this big boat, you know I had never even seen a boat before. We lived in the central part of Sicily where there was nothing. We were still having little donkeys in little tiny streets and stuff like that. So, to me, that was like this wonderful, beautiful experience. You know when you’re young, when you’re 6, you’re not thinking about getting seasick, you’re not worried about what you’re going to find on the other side. So you know, it was really, really a beautiful experience. I had butter for the first time and I loved it. There was dancing on the boat. It was very close quarters... there were hammock-like beds. Maybe 12 people to a room. I just remember it being such a beautiful, wonderful experience. People were sick all over. I mean people were vomiting and people couldn’t eat. Just didn’t leave their rooms. Some people got lice and were pruning their hair because they were worried that once you got to the port, if you had lice in your hair, you couldn’t come in, they quarantined you. And pink eye, they quarantined you. You know, at that age, I wasn’t really worried about that stuff... The boat ride was like, I think 10 days. We had big storms. It was really quite an experience... We ported in NYC. And when we got there, we had to go through inspection. And so they inspected your hair, you had to open your mouth and they inspected your ears... that was a little bit scary. We brought very little with us. We had things sewn in our slippers. My sisters had little pieces of jewelry that they wanted to take with them... It was February 22. It was George Washington’s birthday. And so we got there, but we couldn’t debark... So we had to stay another night on the ship.”

“I’ve always felt Italian. I always feel Italian. I feel like I’m different and it’s wonderful. I love the feeling of being Italian.”



ALICE VERGANI



“I am studying biomedical engineering here. And that’s what I came to U.S. for because in Italy there’s not really opportunities for that kind of major. Because there’s no funds, no research funds. That’s kind of what I want to do and I don’t want to waste my time doing it in a country where I know I won’t find a job... I would love to go back to Italy. And just the fact that I am studying here, gives me so many more opportunities than studying in Italy just because every research is done in English... even if I’m going back to Italy, I’ll have much more opportunities to find a job than Italians that study there.”

“There is one pattern that I’ve seen every single person that I met and told them that I was Italian. So we start, “what’s your name?” And I’m like, “Alice.” And they’re like, “what?” “Alice.” “Oh, Alicia?” “No, Alice.” “Okay. Where are you from?” “Italy.” “Ooooooh!” And that’s how conversation starts every single time. “Oh, that’s cool.” That’s what they say.”

“What I miss most about Italy is maybe my parents. Like I don’t miss them, but I think maybe they will need me later on, right? The reason I want to go back is because as they are taking care of my grandparents, I will want to take care of them. You know, when they get older. That’s one of the main reasons that I want to go back.”



CAROLYN LUCARELLI



“I consider it still life-changing because I went thinking: oh great, you know, I’m going to Italy and I’ve always wanted to go to Italy. But what I really didn’t expect when I got there was this connection to my roots. I mean, I tell people and it sounds so corny when I say it. But it was just so deep that it just kind of struck me without my even realizing that it would happen... being there, everything was so familiar. I mean, the way people spoke, the foods that they ate were the things that I had grown up with. And I just was like: oh my goodness, I’m just so at home here.”

“I have a wonderful picture of [my father] in San Marco square. It looks a little bit like gangsters because his father and his uncle are all wearing these hats and suits. My father was eight years old and he was in the square and there were these pigeons around. My grandmother in this long dress. It’s just a great photo... They visited Bovino, where my grandfather had been born. And I also have a picture of them standing in front of the crypt area where the family were buried... I guess there are still Lucarelli’s in Bovino.”



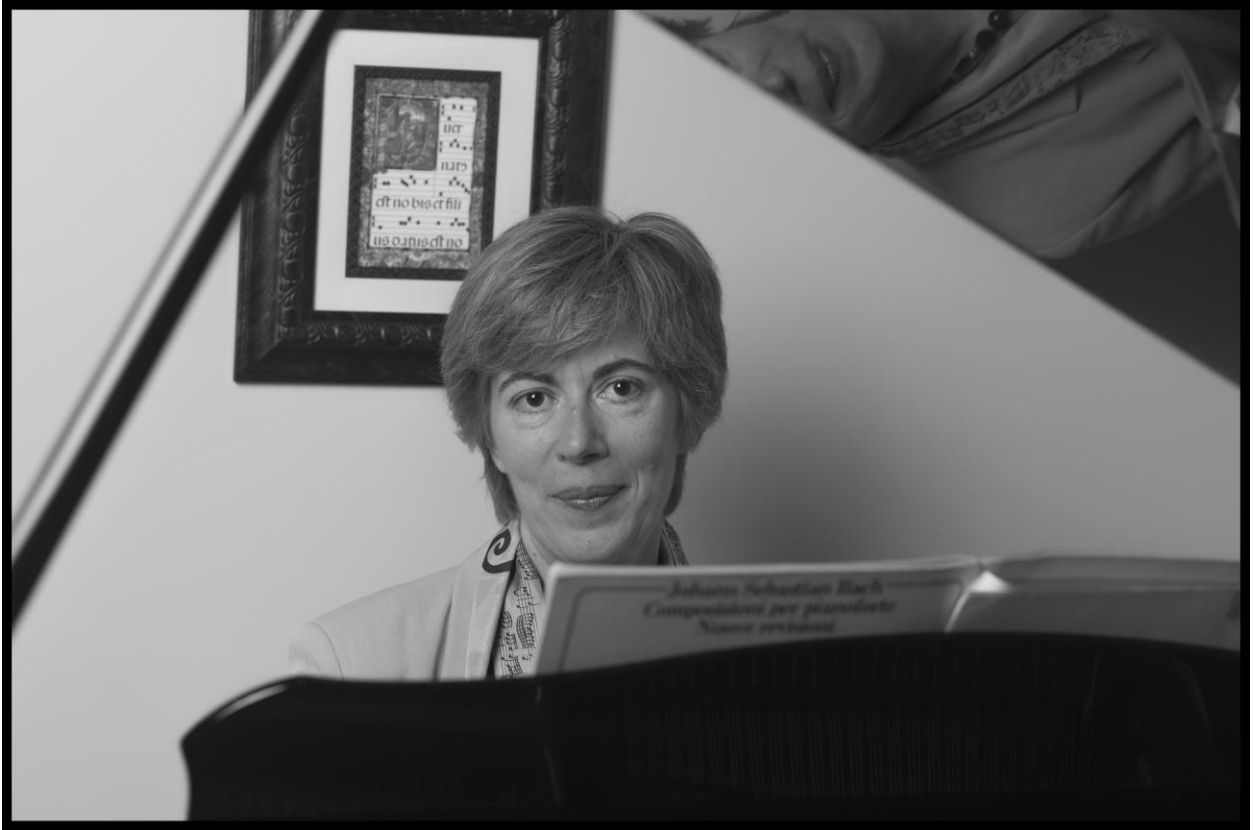
MARICA TACCONI



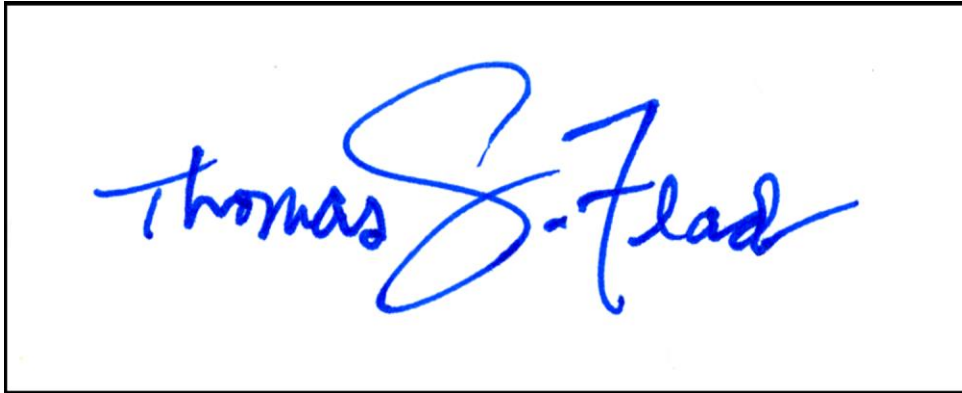
“My mother is American. My father is Italian. I was born with both. So I really feel like I’m the product of both worlds equally.”

“[My father] did not tell his family he was getting married until 10 days before he left for California to get married. So I think that tells you a lot about the reaction that he was expecting from [his family]. So it was, I think, quite the shock, for them at first. They certainly came around and very much accepted my mother. She was very much a part of the family. But there was always a little bit of distance, a little bit of formality that stayed. Still to this day. You know, where she is kind of ‘the other.’ She is not fully ‘one of us,’ kind of attitude. You know, she is loved and she is obviously part of family gatherings and all of that.”

“In college, I still remember this one time that I was talking to a friend. Well, not really a friend, a college-mate, not a close friend. And she was asking about my background. And I said, oh I grew up in Italy and my mother is American, but I grew up there. My father is from there. And she looked at me, very puzzled, and she said, with this typical kind of hand gesture, but you don’t-ah speak-ah like-ah this-ah? What’s wrong-ah with you-ah? And she was kind of serious; it wasn’t like a ‘ha-ha.’ She truly was expecting this strong Italian accent with a lot of hand gesturing that is just not me. And I remember still that moment, very clearly, because I kind of took offense to that.”



TOM FLAD

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Thomas S. Flad". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "S" in the middle. The entire signature is enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

“My grandmother’s maiden name was Sanguedolce (SAN-GWUH-DOL-CHAY), which means, ‘sweet blood...’ What must have happened when they came through Elis Island, and I probably could illustrate it if I wrote it out: if you write, ‘Sanguedolce’ and you get the ‘l’ and the ‘c’ very close together, it looks like an ‘h.’ And on Elis Island, the name had to have been changed to ‘Sanguedohe’ (SAN-GWUH-DO-HE). On the tombstones, that’s the way it reads.”

“That’s my grandmother and her son, Antonio, or Tony. This is around 1942 in an army-training base somewhere in South Carolina. It wasn’t long after she had become a citizen... This is me right here (pointing to his grandmother in the photograph). This is the sum total of a lot of my feelings, sensibilities, and... Maybe traditions and attitudes and beliefs.”

“Well, I did have a blush with fascism... [My Uncle Tony] got shipped off to North Africa in World War II... I think he was 17, 18 years old... he was in the mess hall, he was going to be an infantryman and as he was going through the mess hall, there was a gentleman there that was one of the cooks and he was from the same hometown. And he said, ‘hey, Tony! What are you doing?’ ... It was known that that was going to be a really difficult mission and we were going to lose a lot of boys, which we did. And he said, ‘you’re not going to do that’ he said, ‘you’re coming with me. You’re gonna be a cook’ he said ‘I know you can cook, I know your mother. So I know you can cook.’ I mean my grandmother could go into the backyard and grab a handful of weeds and turn it into a gourmet meal.... So my uncle, in the course of you know putting food out, he saw that there were three Italians, actual Italians, you know, native Italians, that were there. And they were supposedly helping the Allies. And my uncle overheard them talking in Italian and found out that they were Nazi sympathizers and that they were spying. He went to his commanding officer and told them what he had heard and that commanding officer took my uncle from being a cook and he was [the officer] for the entire campaign and was an interpreter. So whenever they captured Italians or whatever, he would interrogate them.”



## GALLERY OPENING

With over 130 people in attendance, the gallery opening event was a huge success. Among the 130 were 6 of the interviewees. Photos taken by Julie Murphy.







## ARTIST STATEMENT

As a senior at Penn State and a native to State College, I have spent much of my life in central Pennsylvania. Eager to experience something different, I traveled abroad to Siena, Italy for a semester. My world exploded. All of a sudden, things that existed one way for my entire life turned upside down. I fell in love with Italian culture. But even more than that, I fell in love with experiencing alternate ways to live. I grew increasingly interested in learning about what makes people and cultures different.

This interest did not wane upon my return to the United States; it grew. I began seeking ways to interact with people different from me. I found that I possessed an insatiable desire to understand and learn about experiences different from my own.

I took the opportunity to combine my majors – photography and Italian – to create a body of work that focuses on the multifaceted and complicated nature of bicultural individuals. Over the past nine months, I interviewed twelve individuals in the State College area with combined Italian and American backgrounds.

Through these interviews, I aimed to delve beneath the surface and discuss controversial and complex topics. Interviewee Maria Truglio said it well: “Is Italian-American both Italian and American or is it neither Italian nor American or some third thing?” This question synthesizes my desired direction for the project: *What does it mean to be Italian-American?*

I began asking these individuals which traits they associate with which cultures. Interviewee Marica Tacconi describes herself as “the product of both cultures equally.” When asked about the characteristics that make her that way, she replied: “It’s hard to really define what those are.”

I did not attempt to determine which qualities Italian-Americans share, simply because my research confirms that the identifying traits of this group are as diverse as the people in it. Conversely, I focused on building relationships with the individuals by listening to their stories.

Following the interview, I intentionally conversed with each individual about how they would like to be portrayed in light of their bicultural background. Together, we determined the best way to capture their unique story. The resulting photographs – on display – are the focal points of the project. Interview quotes, signatures, and audio-recorded introductions are also incorporated in an effort to exhibit as many aspects of each person as possible.

Above all else, this project is a celebration! With a keen awareness of my own uni-cultural background, I hope to provide a platform that encourages self-reflection, conversation and acknowledgement of these truly inspiring people and their compelling stories.

## ADDITIONAL ANONYMOUS QUOTES

### **Identity**

“[I identified primarily as an] Italian. Because I grew up with all Italians and they would say, ‘oh, you’re Italian.’ ... but I knew I was an American born. And then Americanization came after WWII; I went in the service at 18. A whole group of us were called in. When we came home, everything changed.”

“I remember my mother saying: ‘I am an American of Italian descent.’ I remember her actually saying that once. And I always thought: that’s the term to use! Because we weren’t born there, but that’s what it is... And that was important to her.”

“To this day, the slang they use for Italians, American words they use to call Italians and stuff like that, even some Italian-Americans use those words, and that’s offensive to me.”

“I’m proud, in a sense, for some things and then it makes me cringe on some other things.”

“I feel 100% American. I have been since birth, after all. But at the same time, there are things that are still very European, if not Italian, about me. And it’s hard to really define what those are. But I think I do value tradition maybe a bit more than your typical American, whatever that means. I enjoy a slower pace of life, even though that’s very hard to do sometimes. Especially at work.”

“[My parents] didn’t [grow up speaking Italian]. And I think it’s only because their parents really tried to assimilate. It’s strange because there’s this line where they were so proud of their Italian heritage and I remember my grandfather on my mother’s side always telling us about famous Italians and famous Italian-Americans... and so very strong ties to their Italian heritage. But at the same time, they kind of Americanized their names. My grandmother was Giovanna and she was always Grandma Jean to us.”

“Do I identify as Italian? Yes. Am I American? Of course.”

## **Traditions**

“Our family was very matriafocal... papa’s up there too, but he’s not mama. I used to hear things like, ‘you could have 100 fathers, but you can only ever have one mother...’ the biggest original sin you attain when you are born Sicilian... is you can never repay the debt to your mother for having carried you for 9 months. There’s nothing ever that can come close to that. And you want to talk about guilt trip. I mean, the guilt! I think that’s part of the tradition, to put the guilt on.”

“We lived our life very much like what’s important in Italy. And so, family has also been the primary importance... we always ate together... we have Sunday dinners together. Food played a very, very important role in our bonding. It was the glue that held us all together.”

“In a way, maybe that’s part of what is Italian-American about me at this point in my life: that I believe so much in the importance of peoples getting up and moving when their environment is no longer a good one. Good politically, good economically, good for the best parts of life.”

“I think that idea of sitting down to a nice meal and just really lingering and spending time. There’s a saying that’s: *a tavola non s’invecchia*. And it’s a very typical Italian saying. The idea that you do not grow old at the table. So take your time, it’s fine to have a nice, relaxed meal. That’s something else that I really value.”

“I noticed, here in U.S., you guys don’t sit around a table at night. And it’s something that I can’t conceive. Like with my roommates now, I prepare food and they eat with me. Even if they want to eat something different, they make their own food but we sit all together and we talk, no T.V. on, nothing... Eating by myself is so boring.”

## **Italian Fascism**

“Both grandfathers came to the United States to escape poverty and military service. My father’s father was a devout atheist and ridiculed priests and the church. And my mother’s father was very much inclined to fascism. He used to listen, there was a Moore radio, there was a very notorious, very popular priest, an American priest, his name was Father Coughlin, who would

broadcast proto-fascist sympathies in the 1930's. And apparently, my mother's father was very fond of him. My father's father took his family back to Italy in the 1920's because they were thinking of moving back and they decided against it. And I'm not sure why, but I think it would have to do with Mussolini."

"Italians were fascist. Maybe not all of them, but the majority were. And when Mussolini got caught and was executed, the next day everybody was antifascist. And that's really ridiculous because they didn't have a little space ship coming down and taking all the fascists out suddenly. It just doesn't happen like that; in Germany, it's the same. So the seeds of fascism in Italy and the seeds of Nazism in Austria and Germany, they are still there. Even nowadays, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, that's for sure. It's something that stuck in people's mentality."

"Well, [my grandfather] passed away this year at 90. He had little black-and-white, Kodak films of Mussolini strung up. He was in Milan when they, you know, finally pretty much liberated Italy from the Nazis. And the public just tore Mussolini and his girlfriend apart. He has pictures of that."

"My father was born in 1938. He remembers the war, he remembers those years. He remembers the years when Italy was allied with the Nazis. And the Nazi invasion of his town... it was one of the major centers of control by the Nazis. He remembers my grandfather, his father, being brutally slapped in the face by a Nazi. So, you know, he has war stories that he still remembers as a child that are very much present. He's the first to say the war years had some good, but there was also a lot of really terrible things that were going on. So I think, just because my father was so close to that reality, it's something that I feel indirectly as well."

### **The Mafia**

"My grandfather once was roughed up by the mob. They wanted him to pay protection, they wanted him to pay money for his little fruit and vegetable vending. And he refused. So you didn't ever joke about it, not even jest or anything. There was a heightened sensitivity and a negativity toward that."

“[My home town] was a place where the mobsters would come and hang out and kind of get away from the city... In fact, there was an incident that occurred. There was a person who’s, um maybe I shouldn’t say any names, but he had an Italian name and then he Americanized it. And he was a known boss in the area. And his wife was, uh, having an affair with another man. And this person, the boss, found out about it. And one morning, my uncle got up and went into the garage to get his car to go to work and, um, this guy was in there. And he lived, but there was a certain part of his anatomy that was stuck in his mouth.”

### **The Catholic Church**

“There was, a sort of, fierceness of devotion to Catholicism growing up.... Anything else was sort of unthinkable and, like, crazy.”

“Having grown up in Italy, there really was no choice... My family, like 99.8% of the rest of the country, is Catholic and was raised Catholic. And so growing up there really was no other choice. If you wanted to have a religious upbringing, which is traditional and standard for most families, then the Catholic Church was the way to go. And my mother initially resisted that a little bit. But you know, she was okay with that in the end. And one thing that I remember is that I went to catechism and all of that kind of training that children go to. And at one point, I think I was maybe 6 or 7, I was always a very inquisitive person with lots of questions always. And I remember once, the priest talking about all kinds of religious and theological issues. And I raised my hand and I basically challenged him. I just said, ‘why should I believe this and this and that?’ And he said, ‘well, because it’s the truth.’ And I said, ‘why is it the truth?’ So I was kind of challenging him. Well the priest called my mother that evening and said, ‘you must tell your daughter to stop asking questions, this is part of our faith and it’s something she needs to accept and I don’t want her to ask any questions.’ Well my mother very quickly pulled me out of that particular catechism because that went so against her values as a mother: that her children should ask questions, should have an inquisitive mind and so forth. And I think that was fairly typical, in those years, of the Catholic church, at least in my area. Again, closed world. This is the way it is, don’t ask questions, don’t challenge it. And I resented that. And to this day, I think I resent that a little bit. I don’t want to be told what to think and what not to think.”

“As soon as I was done with all of my Catholic stuff, like after Catechism, I was done with it. I’ve never been to church since then. But it’s kind of like a ritual that you have to go through because marriage, lots of people do it in church. So you have to be Catholic for that.”

“[The Catholic Church] is so ritualistic... if you weren’t steeped in it from when you were little to just kind of accept what they were doing. And half the time, you don’t even know what they’re doing when you were little. But it’s just because everybody says that: this is what you do... and you don’t question it. Don’t ask any questions. Just do it.”

“Catholicism and our tradition is pulling us back. But at the same time it’s preserving our culture. So it’s kind of like, what do you want to give up and what do you want to keep?”

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## ACADEMIC VITA

### **Jana Bontrager**

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#### EDUCATION

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**Schreyer Honors College, The Pennsylvania State University** 2012-2016  
Bachelor of Arts in Photography  
Bachelor of Arts in Italian Studies  
Intended Graduation date: December 2016

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#### EXPERIENCE

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**Jana Bontrager Photography, owner** 2012-present  
Established commercial photography business, taking senior, publicity, event, fine art and wedding photos  
Balance company finances through accurate bookkeeping  
Effectively market company's services through personal website

**Hitch & Sparrow; Anthony Barlich Creative L.L.C., photographic assistant** Summer 2016  
Improved company's organizational framework through implementing updated and effective management tools  
Assisted in photographic duties in wedding, portrait and studio settings  
Collaborated in creative and business decision-making

**The Pennsylvania State University Photography Department, teaching assistant** 2014-2016  
Supported photography faculty by facilitating student-teaching communication  
Instructed, encouraged and established rapport with students  
Maintained studio photography equipment in an orderly and tidy fashion

**Summer's Best Two Weeks, Director of Women's Scheduling** Summer 2015  
Scheduled and organized staff's day-to-day activities and obligations  
Mentored and lead women's counseling staff

**Andrea Sampoli Fotografo (Siena, Italia), assistant** Spring 2015  
Translated for and communicated with English-speaking clientele  
Provided post-production and photographic editing expertise  
Contributed photographically in destination event settings

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#### LEADERSHIP, HONORS & AWARDS

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Penn State College of Arts & Architecture Alumni Scholarship Award 2016  
International Justice Mission, Penn State chapter president 2014-2016  
Paterno Fellow 2014-present  
Gamma Kappa Alpha National Honors Society 2014-present  
Dean's List 2012-2016  
Travel & Research Grant Recipient 2014  
Tom & Karen Flad Scholarship Award 2014  
International Justice Mission, Penn State chapter secretary 2013-2014

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#### SKILLS & INTERESTS

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Fluent in Italian. Extensive experience with Adobe Suite Creative Cloud and Portrait Professional, professional studio lighting and equipment, film processing and printing in the dark room. Five-year member Penn State Concert Choir. Dante, Harry Potter and Myers-Briggs enthusiast.