From Italy to America: Photographs of Anthony Riccio Press Release

Jill J. Deupi  
*Fairfield University, jdeupi@fairfield.edu*

Mike Horyczun  
*Fairfield University, mhoryczun@fairfield.edu*

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FAIRFIELD, Conn. (January 13, 2012). For Anthony Riccio (b. 1952), a picture truly is worth a thousand words. For the past four decades, the New Haven, Connecticut, native has documented, in word and image, the experiences of Italians and Italian-Americans not only in Southern Italy – from Campania to Sicily – but also in two culturally rich immigrant communities in America, Boston’s North End and New Haven’s “Little Italy.” Fairfield University’s Bellarmine Museum of Art presents a selection of these works in its newest exhibition “From Italy to America – Photographs of Anthony Riccio” from February 1, 2012, through March 30, 2012. The exhibition features twenty-six black and white photographs by Mr. Riccio in addition to audio clips he recorded of his subjects reminiscing about the changes they experienced and witnessed in their lives. The audio clips will be available in the gallery using smart phone technology, and also posted at www.fairfield.edu/museum. A summary of exhibition programs follows below.

Anthony Riccio’s stunning photographs of his subjects as they move through their daily lives resulted in two widely-acclaimed books: Boston’s North End: Images and Recollections of an Italian-American Neighborhood (Globe Pequot Press, 1996 and 2006) and The Italian American Experience in New Haven: Images and Oral Histories (State University of New York Press, 2006). He also co-authored the hugely successful Cooking with Chef Silvio: Stories and Authentic Recipes from Campania in collaboration with Silvio Suppa, chef at Café Allegre in Madison, CT, and Woodwinds Restaurant in Branford, CT.
Through the often poignant, always engaging photographs and interviews of his subjects, Mr. Riccio delves deeply into the lives of those whom he documents. In Boston’s North End, for example, he immortalizes the *zampognari* (singers with pastoral wind instruments) as they perform during the Christmas season. His New Haven images show people at work and play and also capture individuals engaged in moments of quiet reflection who share memories that define them both as individuals and as part of the larger Italian-American community. U.S. Congresswoman Rosa Delauro, whose district includes New Haven, CT, observes: “Anthony Riccio produces such a rich and emotional narrative of the Italian American Experience - both through his interviews and photographs that are timeless. I am sure this work will advance his lifetime project and give us insights that will not be lost.” Dr. Jill Deupi, Director of the Bellarmine Museum of Art and Assistant Professor of Art History at Fairfield University, notes “Anthony Riccio’s evocative photographs are not only visually rewarding they are also intellectually compelling. Through his works we are able to step into the shoes of Italian immigrants who left behind all that was familiar and comfortable to become citizens in an unknown new world.”

Mr. Riccio’s images of rural Southern Italy – an area that saw many of its inhabitants leave in search of the American dream – equally transport the viewer to another world, where captivating vistas and lively images of children are counterbalanced by the hardscrabble realities of an agrarian existence. His evocative view of an olive grove, with the cloud-shrouded hills of Faggiano looming in the distance, for example, is a bucolic counterpoint to his image of Naples, the abject buildings of which suggest a clear lack of financial prosperity. Italian American artist, educator and writer B. Amore notes: “These are rare photographs of a people at one with village life on the point of change. The intimacy and directness of gaze could only be captured by a photographer like Anthony Riccio, who works with great respect for his subject matter and an authentic interest in his own heritage.”

The exhibition was originally conceived by Dr. Mary Ann Carolan (Chair, Department of Modern Languages and Literatures/Director, Italian Studies Program), who proposed integrating Mr. Riccio’s photographs into her course on the Italian American Experience. Her students were thoroughly engaged with Riccio’s work, both the oral histories, which
they read, and the photographs, which they researched and wrote about for the exhibition.

“Anthony Riccio’s photographs invite us along the journey from old world to new world,” said Prof. Carolan. “Through these images we see the translation of traditions, customs, and attitudes from the stark beauty and authenticity of southern Italy to the Italian American neighborhoods of Boston and New Haven. These captivating images reveal an appreciation for those simple elements of our everyday existence or quotidianità.”

“From Italy to America – Photographs of Anthony Riccio” has been made possible through the generous support of Nestlé Waters North America, and its S. Pellegrino® Sparkling Natural Mineral Water, which is sourced in the Italian Alps, and the National Endowment for the Humanities: because democracy demands wisdom.

Exhibition programming includes a screening of “The Golden Door,” the 2007 film written and directed by Emanuele Crialese and presented by Martin Scorsese, at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 29, 2012, at the University’s Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts. The film, which documents one family’s emigration from Italy to New York in the early 20th century, will be introduced by its star, Italian actor Vincenzo Amato. Also scheduled for the Quick Center is an evening with humorist Regina Barreca, Ph.D. (University of Connecticut), at 6 p.m. on Sunday, March 4, 2012. For ticketing information for these two events, visit http://www.quickcenter.com/. Free events include a gallery talk by Anthony Riccio at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8, 2012, with a repeat talk scheduled for 5 p.m., Monday, March 19, 2012; a book talk and signing co-hosted by Chef Silvio Suppa and Anthony Riccio at the University’s new bookstore in downtown Fairfield, CT, at 1499 Post Road at 7 p.m., on Monday, February 27, 2012; a lecture, panel discussion and reception featuring the Italian-American visual artist B. Amore at Fairfield University’s Bellarmine Hall at 6 p.m., on Thursday, March 8, 2012; and a lecture by Cav. Anthony Julian Tamburri, Ph.D. (Professor and Dean, John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, Queens College/CUNY), “Italian [American]s in/and the Media: How They See Us, How We See Us,” at 5 p.m. on Monday, February 13, 2012, in Fairfield University’s DiMenna-Nyselius Library’s Multi-Media Room. The museum will also have special weekend hours on Saturday, February 11, 2012, noon -5 p.m., with family activities planned for children.
(recommended ages: 4-10) from 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. on that day.

The Bellarmine Museum of Art is located in Bellarmine Hall on the campus of Fairfield University at 1073 N. Benson Road in Fairfield, Connecticut. Admission is free. The museum is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit call (203) 254-4000, ext. 4046, or visit www.fairfield.edu/museum

Fairfield University offers its students and the regional community a wide array of opportunities to enjoy the arts and enrich their lives through study, performance, appreciation, and thought. The annual Arts & Minds season of events at Fairfield provides an outstanding array of cultural and intellectual events that include the Regina A. Quick Center for the Arts season, the popular Open VISIONS Forum lecture series, professional and student performances, art exhibits, special lectures, and a myriad of other lifelong learning opportunities. For further information, visit www.fairfield.edu/arts.

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