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special issue – 2012

on the occasion of the exhibition

giorgio mangiamele
carlton – photographs – films

co.as.it. museo italiano, 25 september – 26 october 2012

GIORGIO MANGIAMELE – CARLTON – PHOTOGRAPHS – FILMS
ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY JOURNAL, SPECIAL ISSUE – 2012

This issue of the *Italian Historical Society Journal* was edited by Dr Paolo Baracchi.

With special thanks to Rosemary Mangiamele, Claudia Mangiamele, Gino Moliterno, Federico Passi and Chris Luscri.

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Front cover: *Portrait of Giorgio Mangiamele with camera, c1955.*
Back cover: *Ettore Siracusa in EUR, Rome. This photograph was taken by Giorgio Mangiamele during his Italian trip en route to Cannes in 1965. Ettore was assistant director and close friend of Mangiamele.*

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Foto Studio Giorgio Mangiamele, 344 Rathdowne Street, Carlton, c1955.

foreword

by rosemary mangiamele

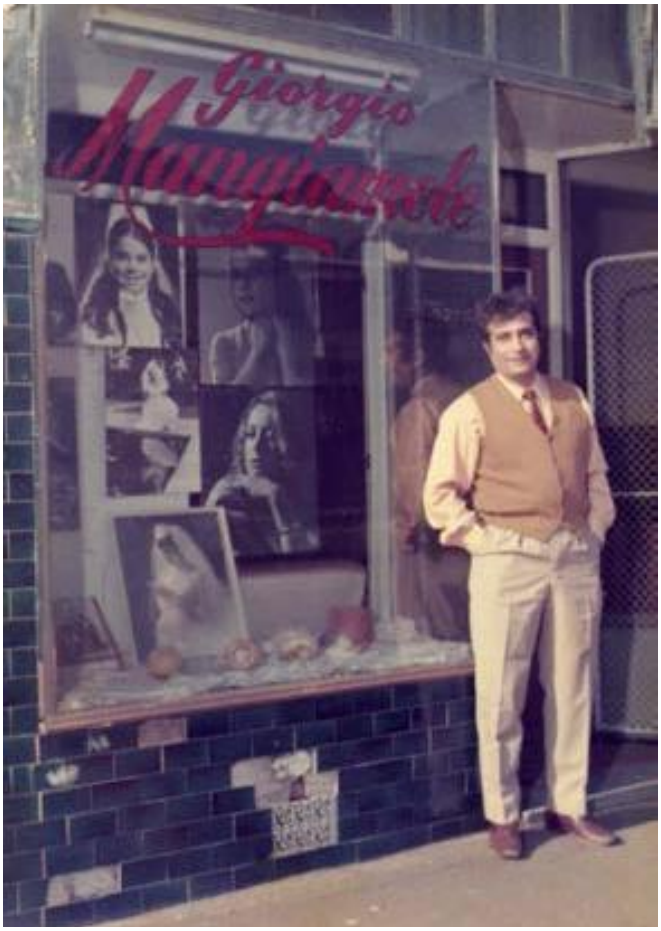
In recent times, with the restoration of his major films by the National Film and Sound Archives, the production of the DVD by Ronin Films, the publication of two scholarly books and a number of articles, Giorgio Mangiamele has been acknowledged as a film maker who contributed to the history of Australian cinema. Now, to complete the picture, this special edition of the *Italian Historical Society Journal* documents Giorgio's achievements as a photographer.

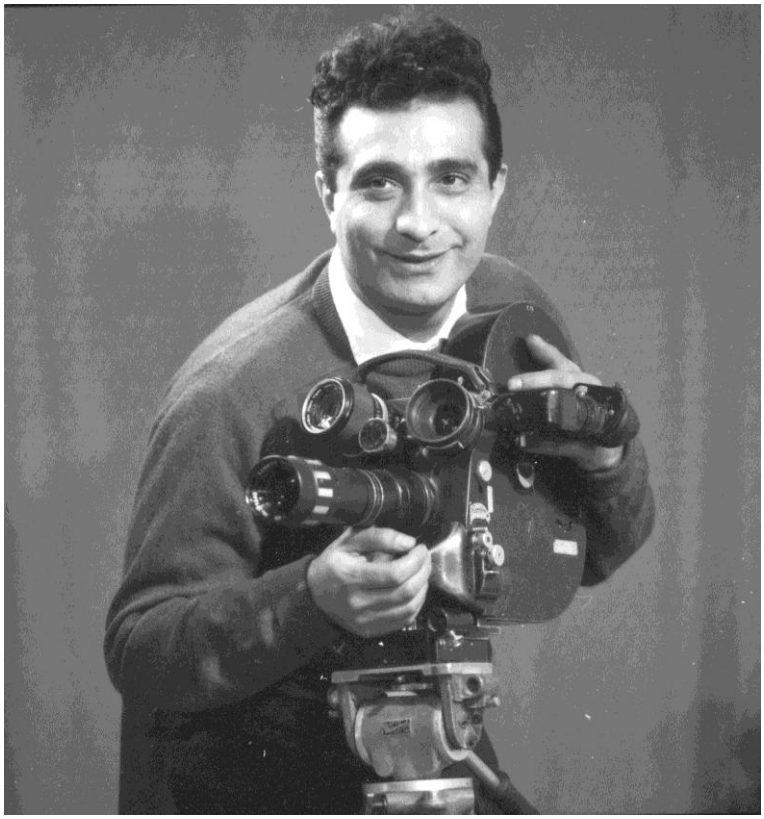
During my recent experience as curator of the exhibition of Giorgio's photographs at the Museo Italiano (Co.As.It.), "Giorgio Mangiamele – Carlton – Photographs – Films", I have again been overwhelmed by the dedication and genuine interest in Giorgio's work shown by so many, some of whom never actually met Giorgio.

The articles in this issue of the *Italian Historical Society Journal* capture and communicate the essence of Giorgio's work, and his contribution to recording aspects of Italians living in Carlton in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Through their research and enquiries, the authors have successfully synthesised and documented their investigations with clarity and acuity, closely linking Giorgio as a photographer to his achievements as a film maker. Overall, the exhibition and publication of this Journal are a significant tribute to Giorgio's work.

I am very grateful to Dr. Paolo Baracchi for his professional skills and attention to detail in bringing this publication to fruition. My sincere appreciation and grateful thanks to Dr. Gino Moliterno for his erudite article, along with the insightful contributions of Federico Passi and Chris Luscri; and to Claudia Mangiamele and Sue Hockey for their invaluable support.

Melbourne, September 2012


Giorgio



giorgio mangiamele: a life in photography

by gino moliterno

Dr Gino Moliterno BA (Hons), PhD (University of Sydney) is Senior Lecturer, Film Studies Program at the College of Arts and Social Science, Australian National University (Canberra). Gino, who has taught at the University of Auckland and the University of Wollongong, works in the areas of Multicultural, Intercultural and Cross Cultural Studies, Italian Language and Literature, Biography, Migration Studies, Cinema Studies, Cultural Studies. A widely published author, among his publications are the Encyclopedia of Contemporary Italian Culture *(Routledge, 2000) and the* Historical Dictionary of Italian Cinema *(Scarecrow Press, 2008). He has more recently co-authored, with Gaetano Rando,* Celluloid Immigrant: Italian Australian Filmmaker Giorgio Mangiamele *(ATOM, 2011).*

After suffering decades of neglect Giorgio Mangiamele's reputation and his pioneering contribution to the revival of Australian cinema in the early post-war period have finally come to receive due recognition. In the wake of his untimely

death in 2001 he has become the object of an increasing amount of scholarly attention and restored versions of his major films have now been made widely available on DVD.[1] As part of this timely re-evaluation of his place in Australian cinema, in 2011 arguably his two finest films, the short comedy *Ninety Nine Per Cent* (1963) and the full-feature *Clay* (1965), were both screened at the Melbourne International Film Festival. Much of this attention has focussed, quite appropriately, on Mangiamele the filmmaker but a more recent exhibition of his photographs sponsored by the Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society of Melbourne at the Museo Italiano suggests that the time is also ripe for a closer examination of Mangiamele the photographer.

By all accounts Mangiamele demonstrated a strong passion for literature, opera and the visual arts from a very early age. As a teenager he apparently often appeared as an extra in local opera productions and an intense love of literature led to his knowing the whole of Dante's *Divine Comedy* by heart by the time he was sixteen.[2] His first real encounter with photography, however, appears to have happened relatively late and rather fortuitously.

After having struggled to survive largely on his own in his native Catania during the dark days of World War II, Mangiamele moved to Rome in the immediate post-war period, where he was eventually recruited into the police force and for a period served in its scientific unit. By his own account it was here that he first became acquainted with the basics of photography.[3] In its efforts to exercise a

[1] As well as a substantial number of articles in academic journals there are now two book-length studies: Gaetano Rando and Gino Moliterno, *Celluloid Immigrant: Italian Australian Filmmaker Giorgio Mangiamele* (Melbourne: ATOM/The Moving Image, 2011) and Raffaele Lampugnani, *Giorgio Mangiamele: Cinematographer of the Italian Migrant Experience* (Victoria: Connor Cout Publishing, 2012). His filmmaking has also become the subject of a PhD thesis by Silvana Tuccio, "Who is Behind the Camera? The Cinema of Giorgio Mangiamele", School of Culture and Communication, University of Melbourne, 2009. Restored versions of his major films have been issued on DVD as part of *The Giorgio Mangiamele Collection* (Ronin Films and the National Film and Sound Archive, 2011).

[2] A fuller account of Mangiamele's early life is given in Rando and Moliterno, chapter 1.

[3] From an account of his life recounted to his second wife, Rosemary. My thanks to Rosemary Mangiamele for access to this and a great deal of other relevant material.

tight social control over the unruly forces of the Left, the ruling Centre-Right government that had come to power in Italy in 1948 had quickly embraced the age-old tradition of the police using photography to identify protesters at demonstrations as well as for more general forensic purposes. Given Mangiamele's well-attested libertarian leanings he is unlikely to have enjoyed the police surveillance work as such but, by his own admission, it provided him with basic technical knowledge of photography and the rudiments of filmmaking.[4] By 1952, however, he had decided to abandon his job with the police and join a number of friends who were migrating to Australia. A bilateral agreement between the Australian and Italian government which had come into force during this period provided for a restricted number of Italians to be allowed to enter Australia under a two year contract, during which time they would be obliged to undertake whatever work they were directed to do. Mangiamele applied under the scheme and was accepted.

Giorgio on board the Castel Felice *en route to Australia, 1952.*

[4] Ibid. See also the interview with Mangiamele conducted by Ilma O'Brien, 17/5/1989 (transcription held as part of the Mangiamele Collection of the Co.As.It. Melbourne Italian Historical Society, Melbourne).

According to his close childhood friend, Franco Ferlito, who was in Rome with him during this period, it was while waiting to embark for Australia that his interest in photography first came to the fore.[5] With whatever limited funds he had managed to save he bought his first camera and took to wandering around Rome offering to take photographs for the tourists. The venture must have been both financially successful and professionally encouraging since, when Mangiamele finally boarded the *Castel Felice* for Australia, he had with him not only his camera but enough funds and photographic supplies to allow him to effectively operate as the onboard photographer for the trip. Thus, in contrast to most of the other migrants on the ship, Mangiamele arrived in Australia with more finances than when he had left Italy, and with his vocation for photography strongly confirmed.[6]

In the meantime, however, economic conditions in Australia had deteriorated and the authorities proved unable to honour the contract which should have guaranteed the migrants work for two years.[7] Instead Mangiamele was sent with many others to a migrant camp at Rushworth, in Northern Victoria. He hated everything about the camp – the heat, the snakes, the dust, the food – but he was able to survive better than most by taking photographs for the other migrants to send home to their families, thus leading to both the need and the ability to afford a motorcycle with which to fetch photographic supplies from the nearest town of Shepparton.

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[5] Franco Ferlito, interviewed by Gaetano Rando, January 2006. My thanks to Gaetano Rando for access to a recording of this interview.

[6] He told Raffaele Lampugnani in an interview that "… whilst I was on the ship I used to take photographs, photos [for migrants] to send back home. I set myself up in a little room. I used to take photos and develop them. I made quite a lot of money immediately. I was the richest man on board after the captain". See "Giorgio Mangiamele: Poet of the Image", *Italian Historical Society Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Jan-June 2002), pp. 21-22.

[7] The situation became the subject for Mangiamele's first film, *Il Contratto* (1953), which he made very soon after his arrival. For a fuller discussion of the film and its representation of the contract and its conditions see Raffaele Lampugnani, "The Mise-en-scène of 'Minor' History in Mangiamele's *Il Contratto*", *Spunti e Ricerche*, vol. 23 (2008), pp. 35-56.

Giorgio leaving Rushworth migrant camp, 1953.

The motorcycle proved to be a real boon in also allowing him to venture further afield, indeed as far as Melbourne, in order to explore other possibilities for work. It was not long before he had been hired to do clerical work at the Italian Consulate in Melbourne. Disregarding the discredited conditions of his contract he thus moved to Melbourne and set up house with Dorotea Boehm, a German immigrant who had been teaching English to the other migrants at Rushworth. The couple took up residence first at Athol Street in Moonee Ponds and then at Barkly Street, Carlton, reputedly not far from where the famous gangster, Squizzy Taylor, had been fatally wounded in a gun-battle in the late 1920s. In both places Mangiamele immediately set up improvised dark rooms and began working as a photographer in his spare time, catering to what was already a sizable community of Italian immigrants and their need for photographs to send back to relatives in Italy. With two growing daughters, Claudia and Suzanne, in the family, Barkly Street became ever more impractical and, in the meantime, Mangiamele's conducting a semi-commercial activity from a private house had also been denounced to the authorities by a jealous rival photographer. Consequently in 1956 the family moved to 344 Rathdowne Street in North Carlton, to a building whose ground floor had some time in the past been used a butcher shop and was thus officially zoned as commercial. Enterprising as ever, Mangiamele had a large section beneath the house excavated to construct a secure and well-furnished photographic studio while the garage was outfitted as the dark room. It was here, then, in a corner of North Carlton, that Mangiamele was finally able to establish himself professionally as a photographer.

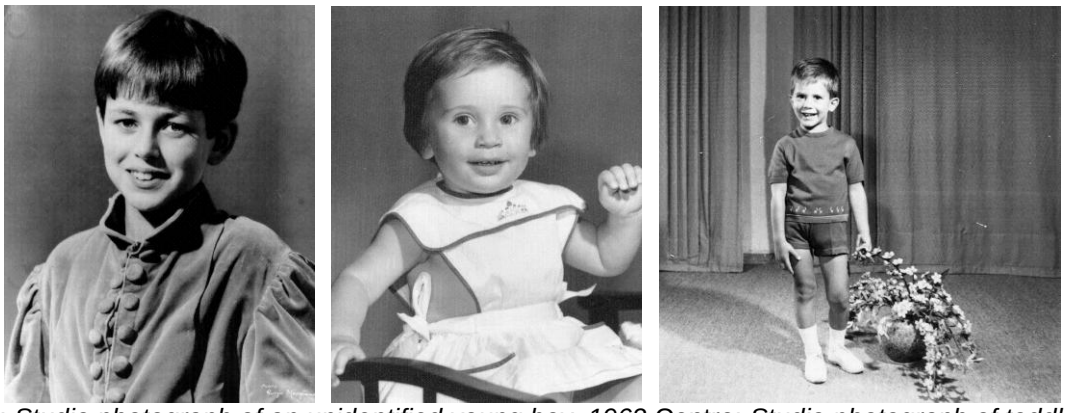
Top: Photographic studio and shop of Giorgio Mangiamele at 344 Rathdowne Street [corner O'Grady Street], North Carlton, c1975. In the bottom image (c1957) one can see the advertisement for the catering business.

The Rathdowne Street studio soon became the busy hub of frenetic activity as Mangiamele set out in earnest to service the photographic needs of the local community. He worked all week but, as his daughter, Claudia, remembers, the weekends were always the busiest time:

> "Church photos were around morning-midday [Saturday], studio photos early to late afternoon, reception photos in the evening. My dad did all three shifts. He had a group of up to four other photographers when there were multiple weddings – Mr. Pino, Mr. Gianfreda, Mr. Colangelo, Mr. Pantaleo and even at times Ettore [Siracusa] and Chris Tsalikis. They handled the out-of-studio work that my dad couldn't do."[8]

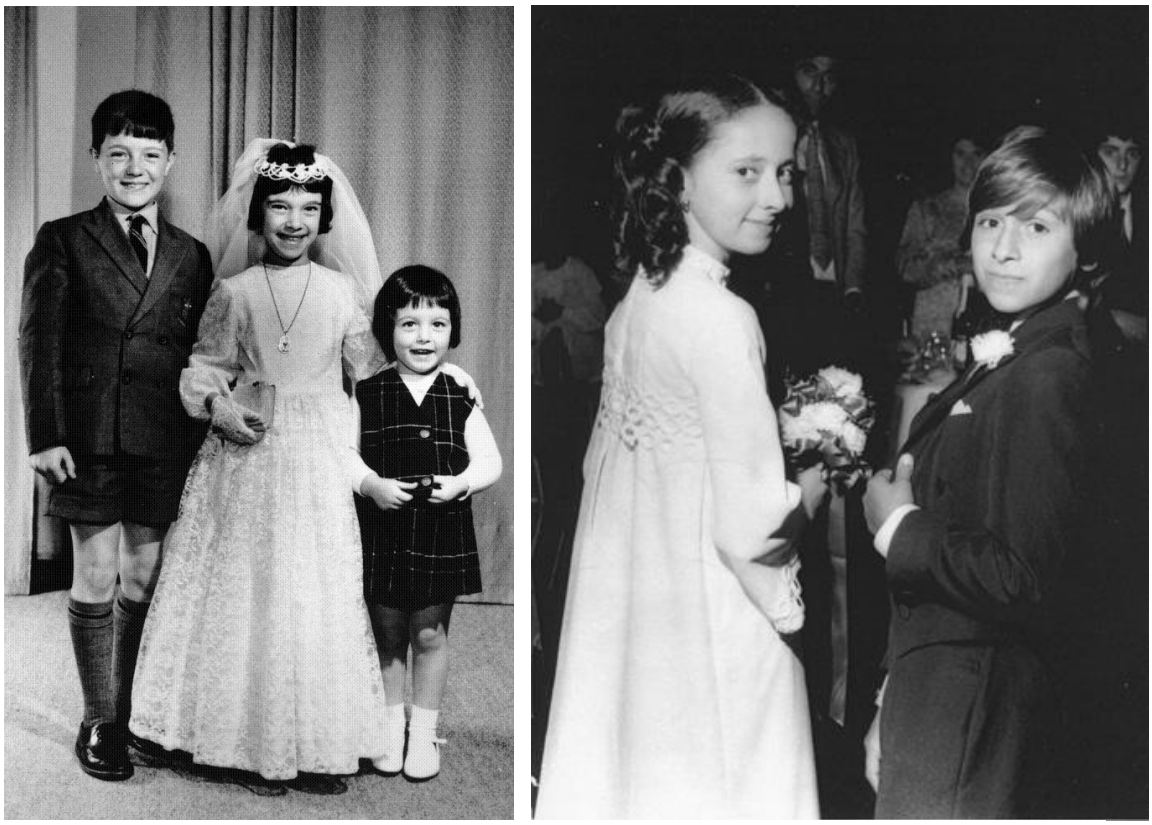
As if this weren't enough, it seems that the Mangiamele studio also, for a short period, offered a food catering service for the wedding receptions.

Having to satisfy circumscribed needs, much of his photography during this period was necessarily conventional and relatively formulaic although he clearly often found ways of giving even his more conventional photographs an elegant and personal touch – which is one of the reasons why his services continued to be in such high demand.

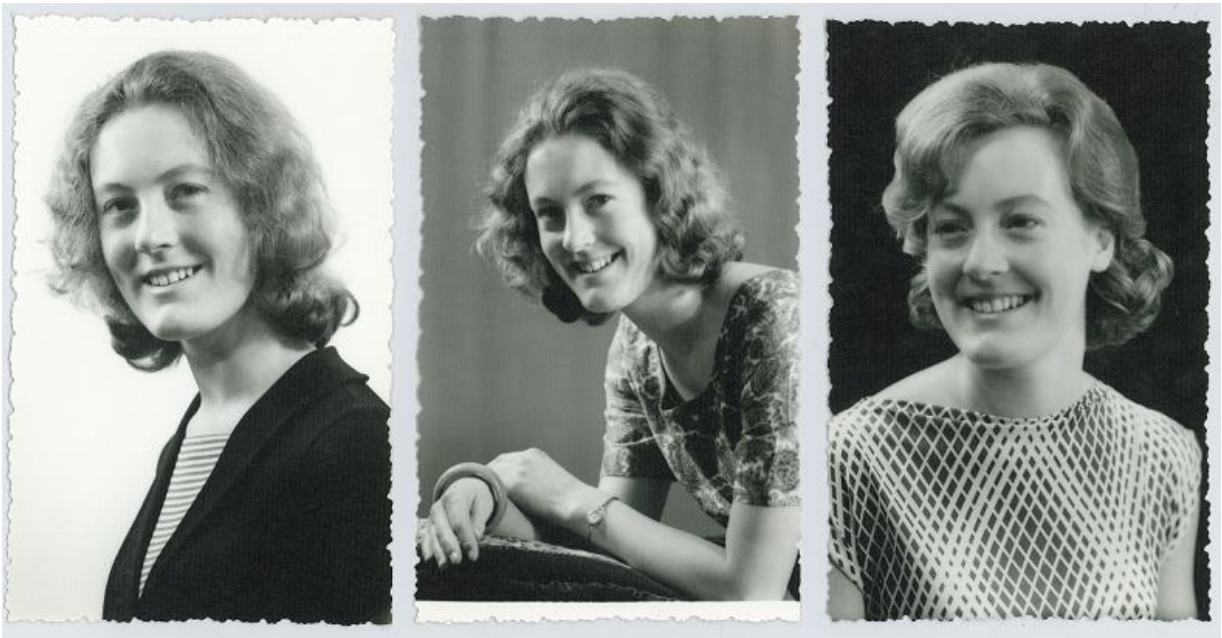


Left: *Studio photograph of an unidentified young boy, 1962* Centre: *Studio photograph of toddler Suzi Miotto, 1969.* Right: *Studio photograph of child Denis Miotto, c1960.*

[8] Email from Claudia Mangiamele to Gino Moliterno, 12/8/2012. My thanks to Claudia for all her valuable information.



Left: *Vittoria [Vicki] Morando on her First Communion Day with her brother Maurizio and sister Nadia, c1959.* Right: *Doriana Ferrante and Mario Maccarone, page boy and flower girl at the wedding of Renato Maccarone and Anna Tezzi, 28 December 1972.*



Three studio portraits of June Torcasio (née McAlpin), taken on the occasion of June's 21st birthday, September 1966. When these photos were taken, June was a library assistant at Carlton Library.

.At the same time, while the bulk of his photographic efforts during this period seems to have been directed to servicing the needs of the migrant community, he appears not to have shied away from also taking on some advertising work, most particularly providing images for the Julius Marlow shoe company.[9]

Publicity photographs for Julius Marlowe shoes, c1960. Left: *[from left] Unknown model and Robert Clarke.* Right: *[from left] Robert Clarke and Robert Ieraci. The photographs were probably taken at Giorgio's studio.*

Nevertheless, while commercial photography may have helped to pay the bills, he was obviously becoming ever more drawn into exploring the artistic possibilities of the medium. A number of extant photos show him attempting to document the changing face of the suburb but with his interest firmly drawn towards formal composition and experimentation.

[9] This early involvement with photographing shoes may help to throw some light on the insistent appearance of shoes in a number of places in the films, for example the hundreds of shoes in the shop window and the bright new pair of shoes that Tony is given in the second (released) version of *The Spag*, not to mention that extraordinary image of the dilapidated shoes on Nick's feet in *Clay*.

Tramway blocks dug up when the tram tracks were removed from the southern end of Lygon Street, Carlton, c1952. Top left: Lygon Street [west side] between Faraday and Elgin Streets. Visible are Varrenti grocers [No.303], Williams butcher shop and Armours butcher shop which later became Continental Meat Supply. Top right: Lygon Street west between Faraday Street and Elgin Street. King and Godfree Licensed Grocer [No.293] is visible at left. Bottom left: Lygon Street, Carlton, looking north from Faraday Street showing wooden tramway blocks being dug up when the tram tracks were removed from the southern section of Lygon Street. Bottom right: Machinery digging up the tramway blocks in the section of Lygon Street between Elgin Street and Victoria Street.

His most obsessive interest during this period, however, clearly became the study of the effects of light and shadow. This was something that he was able to explore extensively in family photos and yielded a number of exquisite studies of his wife and daughters which manifest a poetic quality reminiscent of what one critic identified as the balance between geometric composition and playful observation in some of the earlier photographs of André Kertész.[10]

[10] Ashley Siple, on the occasion of an exhibition of André Kertész's' "On Reading" series at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Photography, June – August, 2006; see http://www.mocp.org/exhibitions/2006/08/andre_kertesz_o.php. Mangiamele is unlikely to have been acquainted with Kertész' work but some of his photographs during this period show a remarkable similarity, both in terms of composition and artistic inspiration.

Giorgio's daughter Claudia Mangiamele, c1958.

Giorgio's daughters Claudia [at left] and Suzanne. One of several photograhs taken from the bedroom window of the family house on the corner of O'Grady Street and Rathdowne Street, North Carlton, c1960

Giorgio's daughters Suzanne and Claudia at St Kilda beach, c 1958. [Another image of this series is discussed in detail in Federico Passi's article in this issue of the Italian Historical Society Journal*, and reproduced there on p 40.]*

A number of the charming photos that Mangiamele took of his daughters during this period also came to function as the public face of the studio, being used to present its annual calendar.

Publicity photographs for Mangiamele Studio, c1960. Left: *Giorgio's daughters Claudia [at left] and Suzanne.* Right: *Suzanne.*

And indeed, while so much of the evidence will have now been scattered to the four winds, it would seem that even Mangiamele's commercial photography during this period often presented distinctively poetic traits. In 2010 Franco Ferlito could still recall how struck he had been by the unusual artistry of a number of Mangiamele's studio photos when he had eventually seen them in Italy.[11] An even more remarkable testimony is furnished by Carlo Pane, an old childhood friend who had remained in Catania and had lost touch with Mangiamele after he had left for Australia. In 1963, in a letter attempting to revive their old friendship, Pane explains how he has only now been able to discover his old friend's address thanks to the sense of amazement that his brother-in-law had experienced when, while doing his military service in another part of Italy, he had casually been shown the photograph of an uncle of a fellow conscript who had migrated to Australia. Pane recounts how the brother-in-law had been so struck by a certain special quality of the photo that he had begged to be able to look at it more closely and, turning it over, had discovered the familiar name of his brother-in-law's long lost childhood friend who now, it seemed, was operating a photographic studio in faraway Melbourne! The brother-in-law had subsequently passed the photograph to Pane who had thus been able to use the address given by the stamp of the Mangiamele studio to re-establish contact with his old friend.[12] As serendipitous as such a story sounds, it seems to bear undeniable witness to the distinctive quality of even Mangiamele's most functional photography.

In any case, by 1959 the overwhelming success of the Rathdowne Street studio allowed Mangiamele to take the family on a trip back to Europe to visit the respective sides of the family in both Italy and Germany. Temporarily liberated from the exigencies of having to take photographs for commercial purposes, he was thus free to experiment more expressively with the medium. There must have been mountains of perhaps more mundane shots of family and friends, but

[11] Ferlito interviewed by Gaetano Rando, 20 Jan 2010. My thanks to Gaetano for access to this interview.

[12] Letter from Carlo Pane to Giorgio Mangiamele, Catania 26/3/1963. My thanks to Rosemary Mangiamele for access to this letter.

a series of recently unearthed photographs taken in Leipzig during this time, show him obsessively continuing to study of the effect of light and shadows.

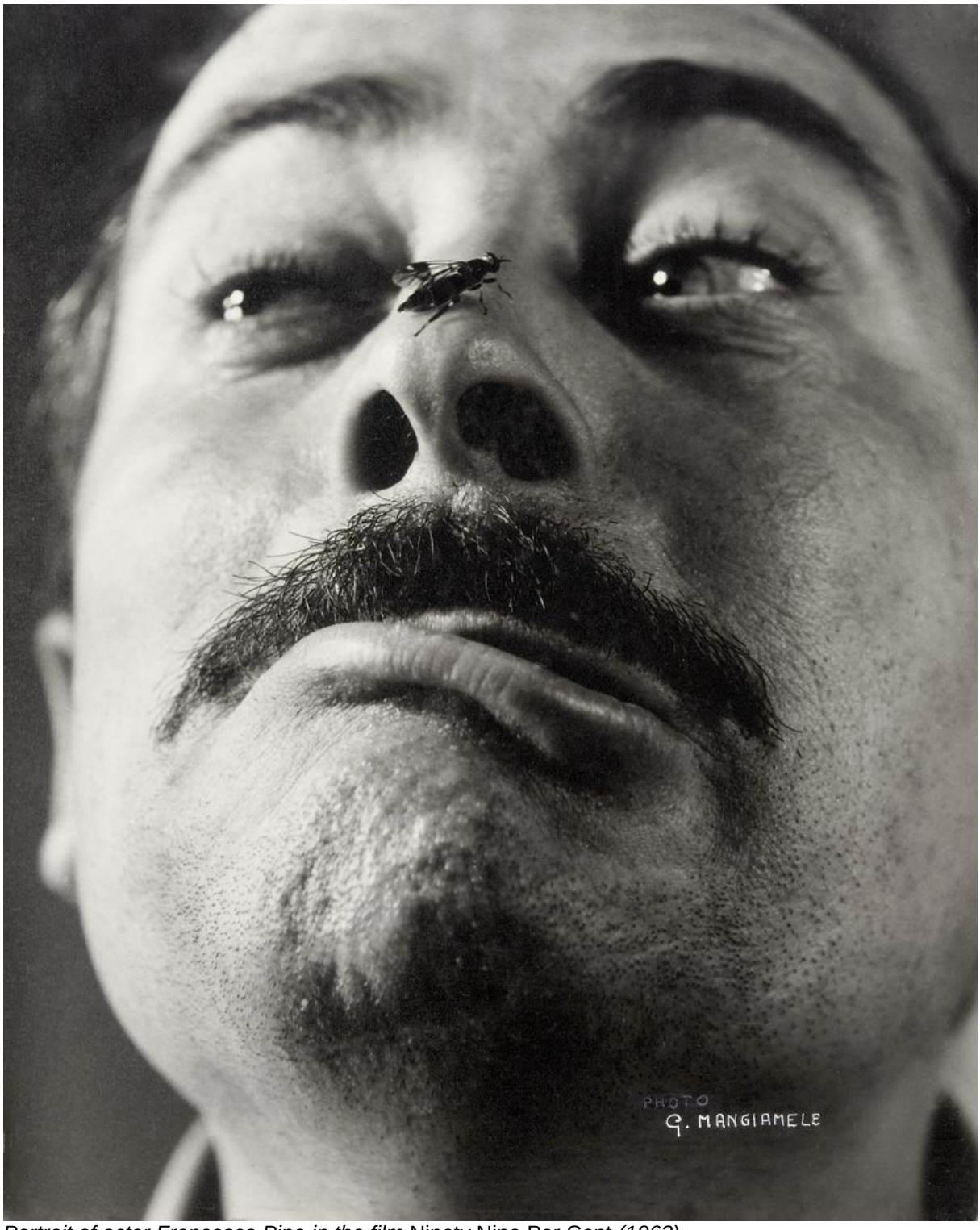
Photographs shot in Leipzig during a family trip to visit relatives in Italy and Germany, 1959.

He is unlikely to have been able to fully appreciate it at the time but it now appears clear that with these studies he was laying the basis for what would soon emerge as a very distinctive – and very photographic – cinematic style. And indeed even as he returned to Rathdowne Street at the end of 1959 to again confront all the demands of commercial photography, he was clearly being drawn ever more towards filmmaking. Within a year he had managed to produce the first version of *The Spag* although he would be dissatisfied with it and it would be left unreleased. At the same time he had been approached by fellow budding director, Tim Burstall, to work as cinematographer on the ABC television series for children, *Sebastian the Fox*, a task that would engage him on and off for the next two years. As he simultaneously attempted to juggle all these activities he also received an invitation from Ilford Films to mount a solo photographic exhibition in their showroom in central Melbourne. The only extant report of the exhibition suggests that he took the opportunity to showcase a number of the photographs that he had taken in Europe two years earlier.[13] However it is apparent from the one photograph that illustrates the report that he also included at least two more recent photographs taken locally, one being the evocative image of a number of men in the Don Camillo café in West Melbourne and the other, a comic portrait of Francesco Pino, who had been one of his assistant photographers and who would soon distinguish himself in the role of the father in *Ninety Nine Per Cent*.

Study of shadows, lighting and composition. Leipzig, 1959.

[13] The only extant notice is an unsigned article in *La Fiamma*, 9 January 1962. The article makes specific mention of panoramic views of Sicily, Florence and Berlin but portrayed, it states, “su un piano artisticamente superiore e originalissimo” [in a highly artistic and very original way] “ (p. 8).

Three men having coffee at Don Camillo café, 215 Victoria Street West Melbourne, c1955.



Portrait of actor Francesco Pino in the film Ninety Nine Per Cent *(1963).*

While Mangiamele continued, somehow, to run the commercial studio, there can be little doubt that his most creative experimentation with photography during this period begins to flow over into his filmmaking. And while it might be true to say that practically all his films of the 1960s are distinguished by their extraordinary attention to the image, there are particular places in the films where the direct influence of photography seems to bcome explicit. One thinks immediately, for example, of the image of the mother at the end of the second (released) version of *The Spag* (1962) which has all the signs of a lyrical and posed studio portrait. A similar allusion to the photographic portrait surfaces in the extraordinary shot through glass of the son, Peter, in *Ninety Nine Per Cent* as he, martyr-like, bears suffering witness to his father's humiliation at the hands of the heartless Miss Koska.[14]

A scene from The Spag *(1962).*

[14] Some aspects of this extraordinary shot are reminiscent of Josef Sudek's "From My Window" series although it's difficult to know whether Mangiamele could have been acquainted with Sudek's work.

Actor Carmelo Pino in a scene from Ninety Nine Per Cent *(1963).*

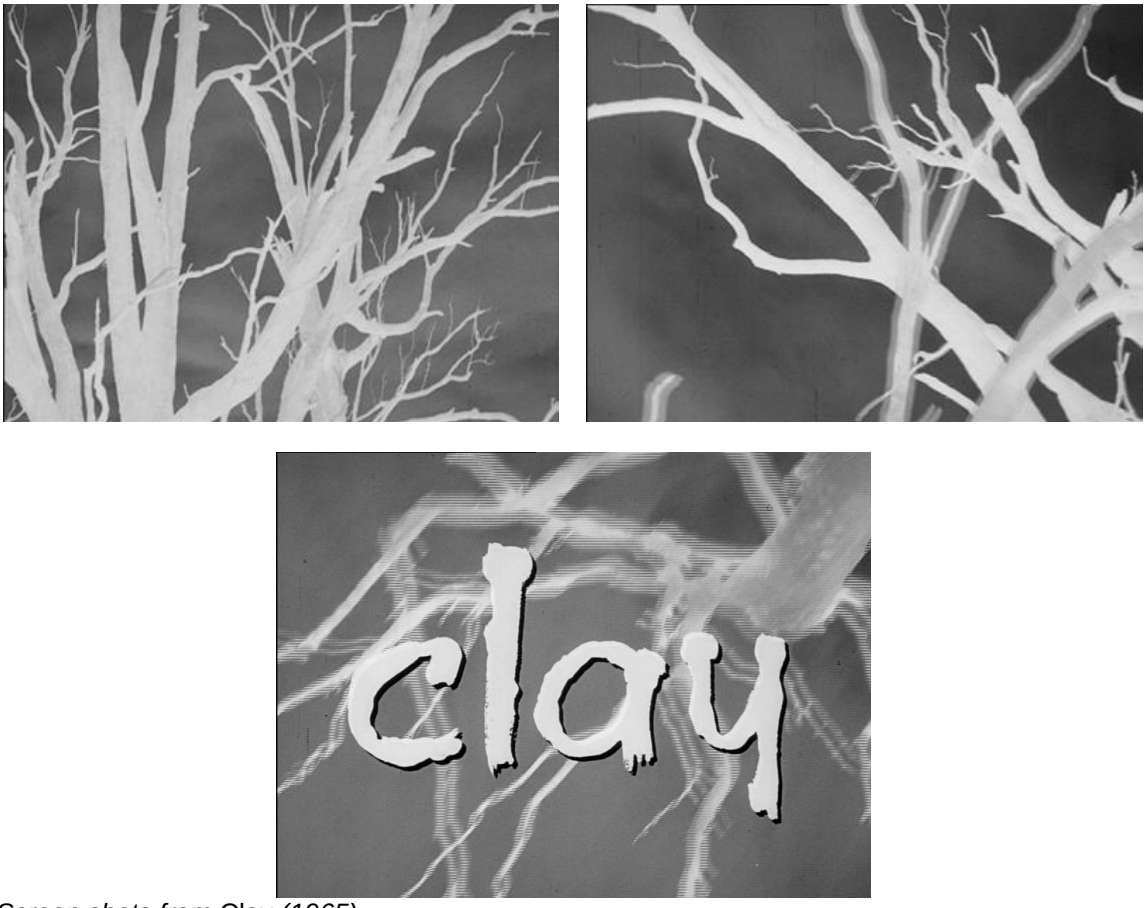
Another of the most poetic images of *Ninety Nine Per Cent*, that of the son tracing the circle in the soil that will serve as a hopeful emblem to reunite him with the father also seems to have been clearly inspired, and rather appropriately, by a previous series of photographs of Mangiamele's daughters drawing similar figures in the ground.

Left: *Giorgio's daughters Claudia and Suzanne playing in the street, c1960.* Right: *a scene from* Ninety Nine Per Cent *(1963).*

Nevertheless, it seems undoubtable that the strongest influence on the distinctive visual style of *Ninety Nine Per Cent* comes from those earlier experimentations with light and shadow and most particularly, perhaps, those high angle studies of figures and their shadows taken in Leipzig.

Screen shots from Ninety Nine Per Cent *(1963).*

But perhaps the most striking example of the influence of photography on Mangiamele's filmmaking during this period would have to be *Clay*, and not only in terms of the meticulous attention to the composition of the black and white image throughout the film (indeed no review of the film, favourable or not, failed to praise its extraordinary "photographic beauty") but more particularly in that remarkable stratagem of the tonal inversion in that long first sequence to suggest that what follows is a dream, a creative stratagem that clearly conserves the memory of long hours in the darkroom peering at negative film.



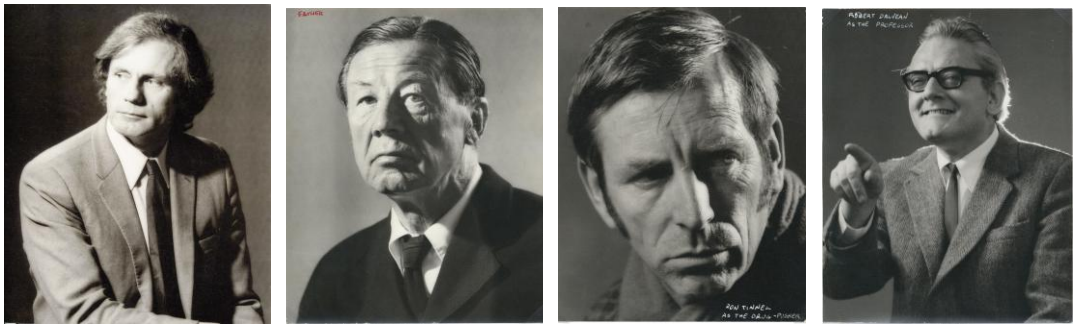
Screen shots from Clay *(1965).*

But by the time *Clay* premiered at the St Kilda Palais in December 1964 Mangiamele was obviously devoting a diminishing amount of time to commercial photography at the Rathdowne Street studio and ever more to filmmaking. Taking the film to Cannes must itself have meant being absent from the studio for most of the first part of 1965.

By 1966, with *Clay* still undistributed but with another film already on the horizon, Mangiamele must clearly have felt the need for some help in running the studio and so hired the services of Silvana Feltrin, a young photographer who had recently emigrated from Italy. Having already served a long apprenticeship in all aspects of photography as she grew up in her father's studio in Brescia, Feltrin was able to provide the support Mangiamele sorely needed to continue to successfully operate the studio in order to finance his filmmaking. As well as developing a strong personal rapport with her employer, Feltrin also came to professionally admire what she saw as the artistic touch in Mangiamele's commercial photography although she well recalls that the subjects themselves

were often much less appreciative.[15] Nevertheless, under Feltrin's sure hand and with her better public relations ability the studio continued to function successfully despite what must have been a diminishing input from Mangiamele himself, especially as he embarked on his first colour feature, *Beyond Reason*. Substantially finished by the end 1968, the film required two more years of post-production and a sustained effort on Mangiamele's part to find a distributor. It was finally released by Columbia in 1970 during which time Mangiamele must have often been away.

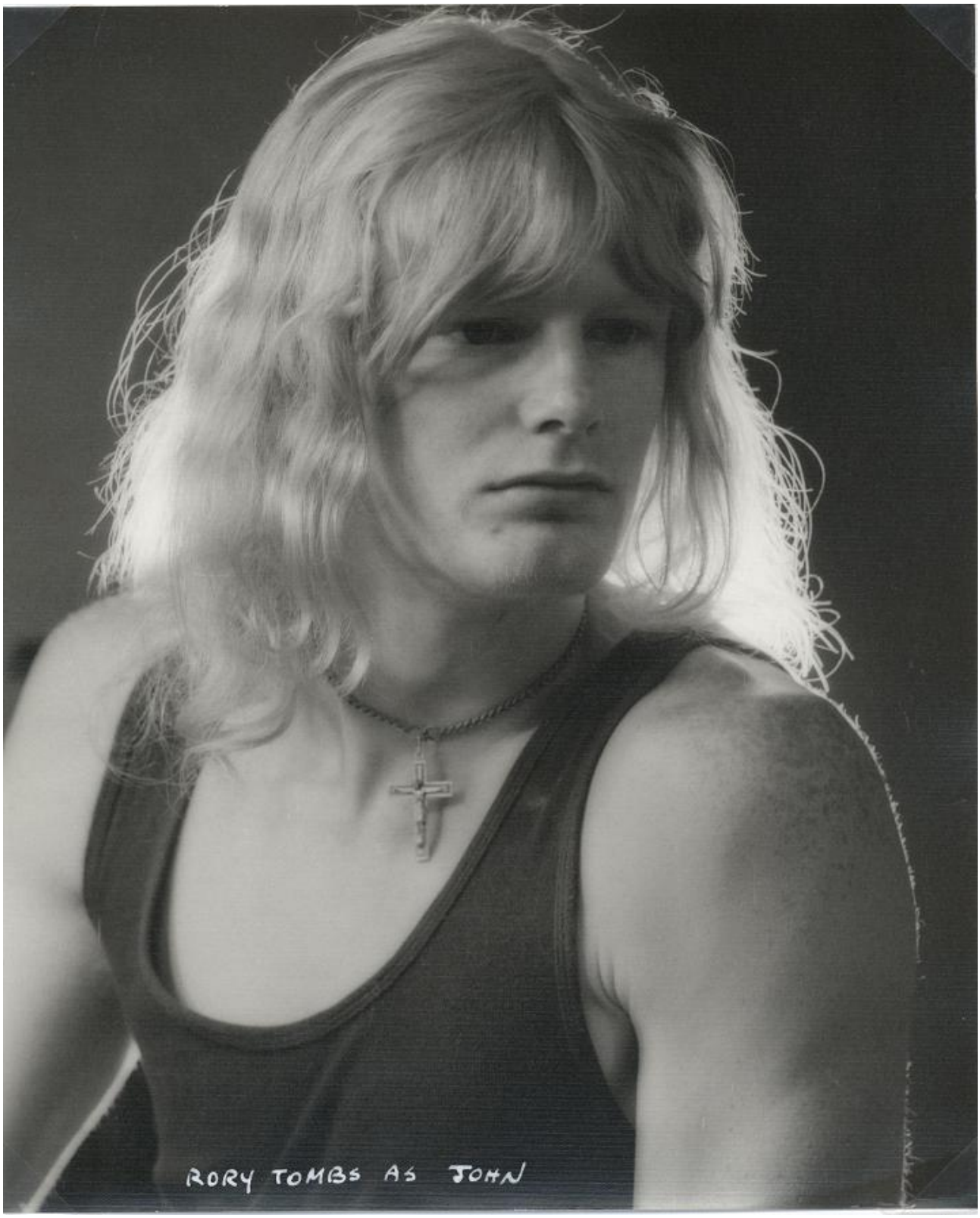
But when Feltrin herself left the studio in 1971 in order to start up a family, things were already beginning to change. Having had to work at commercial photography for so long in order to self-finance his films Mangiamele had also long been lobbying for government support for what was still an almost non-existent film industry. He was thus strongly heartened by the government's institution of the Australian Film Development Corporation in 1970 and was now spending a great deal of time attempting to gain funding for a new film project titled "The Lonely Side of the Road". Despite all his efforts to develop a workable script and his incessant lobbying of all the relevant authorities over a number of years, he was never able to obtain finance and by 1975 the project was abandoned.[16] It has always been difficult to know just how far the project had progressed, even on paper, but a number of portraits of the prospective actors, some included in the recent exhibition, suggest that it was indeed conceptually quite well advanced.



From left to right, actors George Dixon, Copelan Campbell, Ron Pinnell and Robert Dalvean. Studio shots taken for the film The Lonely Side of the Road*, which was never realised, c1970.*

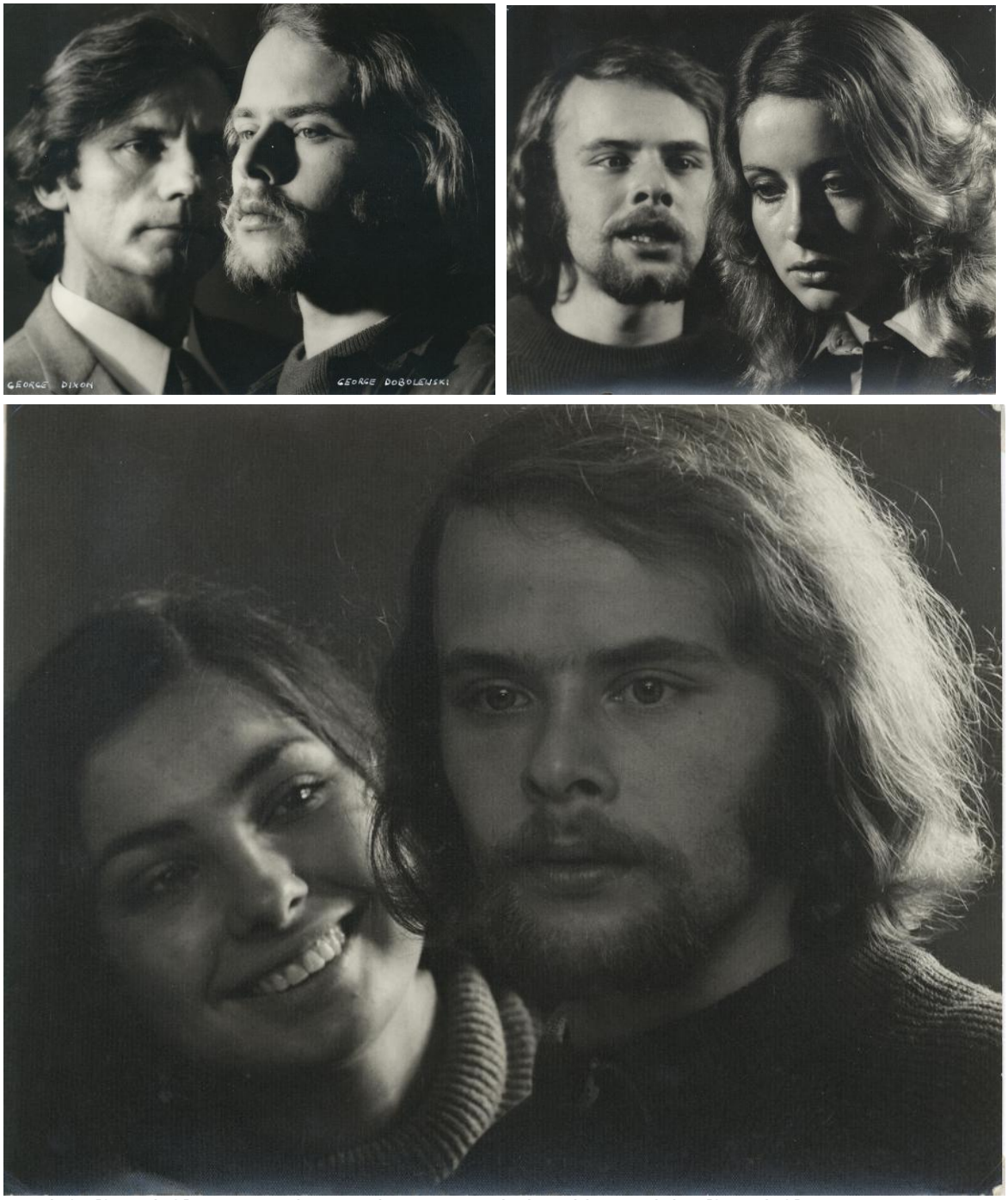
[15] Silvana Feltrin, in phone interview with Gino Moliterno, 10/8/2012.

[16] For a history of "Lonely Side of the Road" see Rando and Moliterno, pp. 103-105.



Actor Rory Tombs photographed for the film The Lonely Side of the Road*, c1970*

From a set of 22 portrait photographs of actor Claire Strang for the film The Lonely Side of the Road, *c1970. Each photograph shows a different pose and focuses the attention on a particular detail, which suggests that the photographs were taken as screen tests.*



Top left: *[from left] George Dixon and George Dobolewski.* Top right: *[from left] George Dobolewski and Claire Strang.* Bottom: *[from left] George Dobolewski and Margaret Moore. Studio shots taken for the film* The Lonely Side of the Road*, c1970.*

As the 1970s progressed Mangiamele felt ever more disheartened by his inability to gain public finance for any of his film projects and was spending less and less time actually running the studio. Compact and very efficient cameras had also by now become widely available and their widespread use was leading to a decreasing demand for studio photography. In 1977, having already separated

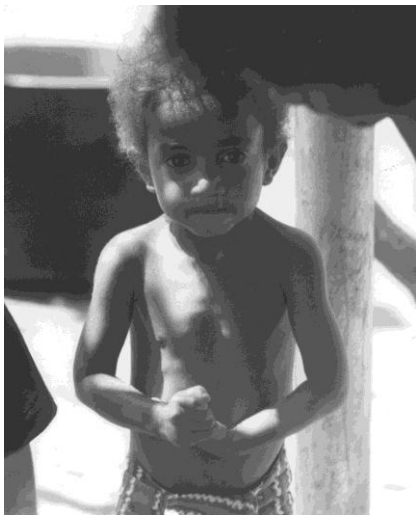
from his wife Tea, Mangiamele sold the Rathdowne Street property and the studio with it.

Having worked as a photographer for so long, Giorgio must have felt rather lost. In an interview in 1978 he expressed a deep pessimism about his future.[17] Fortunately a positive ray of light emerged in the form of the offer of a job heading the film unit in Papua New Guinea's government Office of Information. In 1979 he took up the position and during the next two years he produced five documentaries with the unit, effectively helping to initiate the PNG film industry. In December 1979, in the middle of a shoot, he was joined by Rosemary Cuming, an occupational therapist whom he had come to know in Melbourne, and they were married.

Papua New Guinea proved to be a new lease of life for him, with the filmmaking also sparking a renewed interest in photography. It is an interest recently confirmed by the rediscovery of a large collection of colourful photographs documenting the richness and variety of Pacific cultures taken by Mangiamele during the South Pacific Festival of the Arts, which he also helped to film and edit into a full-length documentary. While vibrant colours must undoubtedly have been part of the attraction, the best of these photos are also marked by a strong sense of empathy towards their subjects and an ability to fully capture the moment.

Above and following page: *photographs taken during the filming of the South Pacific Festival of the Arts. Papua New Guinea, 1980.*

[17] Interview with Mary Mantzaris, 20 October 1978 (recording in NFSA, title no: 769756)



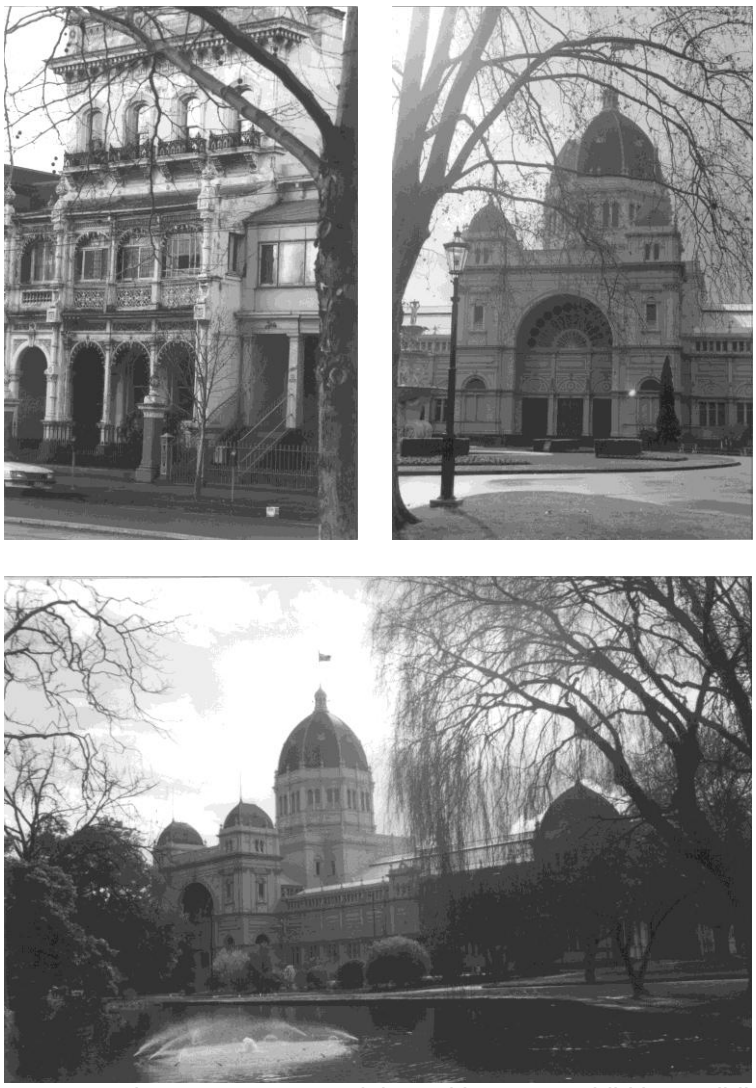

Giorgio Mangiamele with film crew and actors of the film Sapos, *which was shot in Papua New Guinea, 1981.*

Mangiamele and his wife returned to Melbourne in 1982 and, with the Rathdowne Street property having long gone, settled down in Fitzroy. The Australian film industry was now flourishing and Mangiamele nursed high hopes of finally being able to make films on a better than shoestring budget. With a number of projects already on paper he began to explore the possibilities of government seed funding. A great deal of lobbying for one project finally yielded some script development money from Film Victoria but lack of other funding eventually forced him to abandon it, choosing instead to work as stills photographer on Scott Murray's *The Devil in the Flesh*.[18] By the time the film was released in 1986 his options had been further narrowed by the need to undergo a major heart by-pass operation. Undaunted, as he recovered, he sought funding for a coming-of-age script which he had written called "Jane". However, despite getting as far as in-principle distribution of the film in Europe by Silvio Berlusconi's Medusa company, that project was eventually also abandoned due to the lack of adequate funding.

[18] For a fuller account of Mangiamele's unrealised film projects during this period see Rando and Moliterno, pp. 113 ff.

As the 1980s became the 1990s the list of unrealised film projects grew and indeed, although he would never stop trying, Mangiamele would never be able to actually make another film.

This was undoubtedly a disconsolate time for him. Having for so long directed all his efforts to filmmaking, the possibility of opening up another photographic studio seems to have never appeared as a viable option. Nevertheless, whether it was the flames of an old passion or merely a strategy of compensation, his wife Rosemary remembers that he now seldom went out without a camera. While difficult to date accurately, a number of architectural photos of buildings in Fitzroy and Carlton show him still with a feeling for place and a fine eye for detail.



Top left: *Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, 1980s.* Top right and bottom: *Exhibition Buildings, Carlton, 1980s.*

Exhibition Buildings, Carlton, 1980s.

And, although again difficult to date with any certainly, a series of splendid photographs of the waterwall at the National Gallery of Victoria show him still experimenting with form and colour and not least with those two intertwined motifs that had become such a staple in the films, leaves and water.


From a series of photographs of the fountain in fron of the National Gallery of Victoria, 1980s.

It is difficult to know which were the very last photographs that he took but among the last must have been a series of striking photos to be used for the poster of “Sogeri Road”, his final film project, which, ironically, appeared to be almost on the point of being substantially funded when Mangiamele was diagnosed with motor neurone disease.

In such a short space we can have done little more than carry out the most generic survey of Mangiamele's photography while a comprehensive and in-depth study no doubt still awaits to be done.

Nevertheless, we began by saying that Mangiamele came to photography late and almost fortuitously. At the end of even such a brief examination of his photographic achievement we might be tempted to correct this and say of him what Andrè Kertèsz could rightly say about himself: he was indeed "born with the photographic feeling".[19]

Image from the "Sogeri Road" publicity, 1999.

[19] Quoted in *1000 photo icons*, edited Therese Mulligan and David Wooters (Köln; London: Taschen, 2002), p. 539.

Dorotea, Giorgio's first wife, walking in O'Grady Street, North Carlton, 1963.

giorgio mangiamele in controluce
by federico passi

Federico Passi graduated in Rome in Philosophy of Language. He holds an MA in Cinema at the University of Melbourne. His research fields include transcultural studies, photography and film, body, light, architecture in the urban context. Federico is currently a PhD candidate in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University, where he is completing a dissertation on cinema, body and urban space in Melbourne.

Giorgio Mangiamele's photographic world was mainly confined to Carlton, the suburb ("il quartiere") where he lived and worked as a professional photographer for the Italian community between 1954 and the end of the 1970s[1]. The commercial photography of personal and family portraits, as well as weddings and other family rituals left little space for visual creativity. The function of photography in the social context of the Italian community in Melbourne was largely that of bearing witness to an evolving, successful family history. The goal of many family images was, and in part still is, to communicate the happening of an event, to produce a record of an achievement, to register status and the desire for it. Images were sent overseas as messages to distant relatives and friends. To achieve the maximum amount of visual information, to be a convincing proof, the family photograph had to present itself as a document. Its aesthetic is not far from that of a photograph for an identity card, but it has to communicate much more beyond identity. The main subject has to look 'good', has to make an impression. As in the portrait of the Casauria family[2] the focus of attention is primarily the expression on the face of the subject showing emotional happiness and existential well being. An equal focus is on the body wearing the clothes that directly prove to the viewer that the expression on the face emerges from a tangible reality. The family photograph does not just certify the identity of the subject but mainly their psychological and material prosperity. As Bordieu suggested, photography "came to fulfil functions that existed before its

[1] For more information about Mangiamele's commercial business as a photographer see "Foto Studio Mangiamele" in Rando-Moliterno *Celluloid Immigrant*, Atom, Melbourne, 2011 pp. 39-48.

[2] Ibidem p. 41

appearance, namely the solemnization and immortalization of an important part of collective life"[3].

Studio wedding photograph of Donato and Michelina Casauria [nee Basile],1964.

In line with a tradition of professional photographers, Mangiamele lived two parallel lives, the commercial and the artistic. The two reacted against another. His commercial photography was controlled, conforming to a fully lit dominant form that traded mystery for evidence, while his artistic endeavours, particularly in cinematography, were visually darker, rich in shadows and chiaroscuro in style. While his professional photography was studio and interior based, mostly artificially lit, his films and personal photographs were taken outdoors, often in natural direct sunlight, more rarely at night. The more his family portraits tried to communicate an objective external reality, the more his artistic photography tried to express an internal, subjective point of view.

The frequent use of "controluce" (literally, "against the light") in Mangiamele's photography must be considered within the dual framework of his professional and artistic photography. Moreover, it must be connected to Australia's

[3] Bordieu, *Photography. A Middle-brow Art*, Cambridge, 1990

photographic tradition of urban images. In 1916 the creation of the Sydney Camera Circle, promoting a "sunlight school" came as a concrete answer to a demand for a local style in artistic photography, connecting the pictorialist movement with the peculiar light of the Australian sun.[4] Pictorialism had the declared intention of promoting photography as an art by seeking explicitly a closeness with painting through using both softened effects and the manual intervention of the artist.[5] In Australia Harold Cazneaux (1878-1953) embraced sun backlighting to produce pictorial portraits that connected people and the urban setting.

Mangiamele's creative photography, rich with artistic touches, developed when pictorialism had been made unfashionable by modernist photography. Mangiamele's choice is to position the human figure at the centre of the composition. His figures both in film and on paper, are the focus of the story. They are more often than not darkened by "controluce" within the Carlton urban context. The "quartiere" becomes a microcosm of the city-village. The specificity of the area contrasts with the anonymity of the buildings and of the greater city. The images reflect Carlton but also produce a place of the mind. Mangiamele does not photograph the city as a determinate location, with a name, a geographical position, a history. He constructs, through Carlton, a place of the mind. He stages an emotional drama which expresses his dual nature as a migrant. Carlton becomes the world, the world within himself. The style of his photography is not realistic, as it distracts the viewer from the reality which is photographed. The dramatic effects are rarely directed towards an understanding of the social context. What is expressed is the condition of the image maker. Mangiamele's images – both his family photographs and the cinematography of his 1960s films – speak mostly about himself. The light experience of his

[4] Bullock, Natasha "Into the light: the origins of the Sydney Camera Circle" in *Harold Cazneaux*, (Bullock ed.) AGNSW, Sydney, 2008, p. 33.

[5] Ebury, Francis "Harold Cazneaux: an international pictorialist" in Ibid., pp. 9-17.
Newton, Gael "Cazneaux's new beauty of the camera" in *Harold Cazneaux*, (Bullock ed.) AGNSW, Sydney, 2008, pp. 61-66.

“controluce” is that of a suspended reality, a sense of being there but not entirely there.

Let us view “in controluce” three of the most intense images in the exhibition at the Co.As.It. Museo Italiano, and pay attention to the “transparency” of their light and shadows effects. Two of the images portray Dorotea, his first wife, photographed against the sun and shaded under two different types of umbrellas *[see below and p. 36]*.

Giorgio’s first wife Dorotea and their daughters Suzanne and Claudia at St. Kilda beach, c1958.

The two photographs were created in opposite weather conditions but achieve the similarly eerie effect of unreality. Why? What are we actually seeing? In both cases the main character appears to be a woman: all that is visible is the outline of her figure. Her body is flattened by the backlight to a dark, negative black space in the frame: a silhouette. The perception of femininity is probably in the posture, in the gentleness of the shade, in the slenderness of the figure. There is not much we can actually see: the negative figures (the children are also two

small black shapes) force us to think subtractively. We are driven to a conclusion by a series of exclusions. By hiding the person's features, the images force the viewer to look at how the person's body occupies space. In the rainy photograph the posture of the woman standing in the rain is rigid, unnatural: she is clearly posing for the photographer. From the position of the backlit umbrella behind her head we realise she is facing the photographer who is composing the scene. He, like us, seems unable to see her. What he is seeing, what he is recording, is the particular beauty of the context. The street surface is almost white due to the sunlight reflected by the wet asphalt. The sheen of the ground is matched by the whiteness of the clouds in the dark sky. The patchy source of light has the capacity to levitate the woman to the dreamy condition of immateriality. This type of lighting, and the shadows it produces, were also popular with surrealist photographers trying to visualise a different, unconscious, reality. It was also common in the Italian metaphysical painting of De Chirico.[6]

The second photograph appears to freeze time, as it registers a moment during a family outing at the beach in St. Kilda. The uncanny feeling is that visual beauty conceals a complex family image, in contrast to a commercial portrait. The reading of a photograph can reveal as much about the photographer as about the reader, as images are rarely innocent. Here Mangiamele, the father, is visually absent but he is implied by the photograph itself. He is the condition of its existence. This photograph creates three spaces: the space of the photographer in foreground, the veiled space of the wife with another woman protected under the large sun umbrella and, finally, the space of the two daughters in the open, holding hands, beyond the veil. Is this a beautiful image of family love or is it communicating a difficulty – the presence of barriers? Is it a conscious recording of a pleasant memory, or is an unconscious problem surfacing through the composition?

Another image of "controluce" is the darkened silhouette of a man wearing a hat, walking in a deserted Carlton street, in the evening. It appears at the beginning of

[6] Gombrich, E.H. *Shadows: the depiction of cast shadows in Western art* (London, National Gallery Publications, 1995).

his short film *Ninety Nine Per Cent* (1963) but is evocative of much of Mangiamele's work. The "controluce" accentuates the anonymity of the man, an everyman on an ordinary day. He is on his own, as are most of Mangiamele's fictional characters. The light of a long day is closing in on him, and the shadows of the city houses are about to engulph his shadow, making him disappear into the night. Mangiamele's figures, like the man in the photo, live on the border between light and dark, in a dimension that is suspended by this contrast, a brief moment that these photographs seem to extend in time. The "controluce" produces an effect which is here, as elsewhere, anti-realistic. The sunlight here subtracts information about social identity, and projects the character into a scene which is closer to a state of mind than to day to day reality. There is a melancholy in this scene that goes beyond the defensive beauty of the composition. There is the empathy of the photographer for a fellow man about town, a bit Charlie Chaplin, a bit Jacques Tati, caught in a surreal, yet sometimes all too real, reality.

Scene from the film Ninety Nine Per Cent *(1963).*

secret heart. some personal thoughts on giorgio mangiamele's photography

by chris luscri

Chris is an independent film-maker and writer currently working on a documentary about Giorgio Mangiamele. He hopes to include in his project a thorough consideration of Giorgio's time in Papua New Guinea, a particularly fertile period in Giorgio's personal and professional life.

Dear Friends – I envy those of you encountering Giorgio for the first time! Unlike you, I have never been able to see these jewels of photographic art with totally fresh eyes. Even at the beginning. Giorgio's influence could always be felt, unconsciously, through his contact with my mother's family, as photographer, friend and as makeshift chronicler. For them, he was a kind of mystic or shaman who would, with the flick of a handkerchief and the eruption of a spontaneous, joyous energy, conjure up an indelible reaction, a precious moment to be frozen in amber through the tools of the photographer's craft.

For the Ieracis of Rathdowne Street, Giorgio Mangiamele became a kind of myth, a legend of childhood that seemed somehow slightly too vivid, too larger-than-life, too engaged in the craft of mysterious, magical rituals, to be completely of our world, a sprite or daemon with one foot in our land, and the other in a vague world of darkened rooms, alchemy, chemicals and bursts of brilliant light. Visits to Giorgio's studio were highly formal affairs: stiff Sunday finery, careful grooming, a sequence of choreographed poses – nevertheless these sessions would be imbued with an irresistible sense of play. Giorgio's father was a toy-maker, and it's easy to imagine the Rathdowne Street studio as a kind of Old Curiosity Shop-type bric-à-brac of fascinations and mysteries, complete with sprightly, eccentric paterfamilias.

Which isn't to say that Giorgio couldn't be frustrating as well, that visits to his studio were always free of tears and tantrums. Giorgio was fully the director of images – even on commission, he laboured to get the gestures right, to find the

correct posture, to imbue some life and depth of feeling to the rigid strictures of the studio portrait. It was hard, laborious work, but work that yielded concrete results. It was a mix of professional pride and obsession, or stubbornness, or a special sensitivity, that created the conditions for his work. As many a friend or collaborator will attest, the conditions for Giorgio's work arose through a not always predictable blend of both wilfulness and chance, one giving way to the other in a beautiful, perpetual shadow-play, impossible to pin down with any certainty.

There are those who swear that every unexpected smile or flicker of light across a face was part of some grand design on Giorgio's part, that he had everything envisaged and planned to the letter, often down to the smallest details; others claim his work was marked (some say "marred") by a generous waywardness, a sense of the haphazard or the accidental, attesting to the importance of change and openness in an artist's work. The fact Giorgio used his photographic work "merely" as a means to fund his more ambitious film-making endeavours, as the common story goes, complicates matters even further. The inevitable question arises: why chose to focus on Giorgio's photographs at all?

I think it is important not to make hard and fast distinctions between the different kinds of work one does during the day; between, say, a beloved project and commissioned labour. It is best to view both as part of the same continuity, as part of life, as Cézanne often did (he once said, famously: "When I judge art, I take my painting and put it next to a God made object like a tree or flower. If it clashes, it is not art"). It seems clear that Giorgio found this mode of work deeply productive, and often sought to fold these two seemingly separate parts of his life into a single, self-sustaining unit (Giorgio as a perpetual-motion machine!), and pull it tight to his chest, never yielding. In this light, Giorgio's photographic work is absolutely crucial to understanding how a certain kind of sensibility can take root and flourish, one that is in equal parts off-handed and rigorous, deeply specific to each context, yet eerily familiar.

Giorgio's presence (and absence) hangs over so much of Carlton that is difficult to measure with any accuracy the scope of his contributions. His photographic

work alone contains several rich and varied seams of work: commissioned portraits, weddings and christenings, family photos, location and pre-production stills for film projects, personal doodlings, passionate discoveries, happy accidents or experiments. In some cases, as in the extensive series of casting head-shots for the un-made *The Lonely Side of the Road*, Giorgio was working out the first, tentative gestures of a much larger vision, one that begins to work retroactively like an invisible key, opening up a creative window to possibilities unexplored, and paths not taken. In other cases, the work stands alone, singular, without precedent, unaccounted for and unaccountable to the whole. I could draw your attention to a dozen such moments in the exhibition of Giorgio Mangiamele's photographs at the Museo Italiano, Co.As.It., but I think it's much more fun to discover them for yourself, to let them call out to you each in their own special way.

I'm certain some of Giorgio's work speaks to me in a way not truly communicable to others. Photos were my window into my family's past (and by extension, my past), which was not so much a true past (in the sense that the photos were not taken off-the-cuff , but worked out, "directed"), but a kind-of imaginary, "half-life" past somewhere between reality and a waking dream, one that has stirred and fed my imagination in ways that are difficult to articulate.

There's a gesture behind Giorgio's work that I find very beautiful, that speaks to the heart of what I think this exhibition is all about. Giorgio's studio was, of course, also his home. He raised a family there, and his family raised him. In Dorotea, Claudia and Suzanne, he had an instant barometer of taste and authenticity, a perfect storm founded on love, which is perhaps why he enjoyed photographing them so much. For what could test the mettle of an artist more than to somehow craft an image that would do justice to your beloved, to your mother, your kids? Later, with Rosemary, he entered into a uniquely collaborative process with another person, one bound by love, mutual trust and a sense of discovery. A close-held, deeply private collaboration, but one that was nevertheless full and open and giving to the world, and still is. Giving in unexpected ways, like a secret heart. I want to leave you with this beautiful image as you begin your own path.

Wedding of Giorgio and Rosemary. Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 1979.

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