

GHOST TOWN--BORGO FANTASMA

***NEW EXHIBIT OF COLOR PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROSARIA VIGORITO,
DOCUMENTING THE REMAINS OF THE TOWN OF VECCHIO ROMAGNANO
AL MONTE IN THE CAMPANIA REGION OF ITALY, POST THE REGION'S
MASSIVE EARTHQUAKE OF 1980 ON VIEW AT THE ITALIAN AMERICAN
MUSEUM***

January 16th through February 10th, 2006

Opening Reception, January 18th, 6-8 p.m.

New York, January 5, 2006 – The Italian American Museum will present *Borgo Fantasma (Ghost Town)*, an exhibition of colored photographs by artist Rosaria Vigorito, from January 16th through February 10th, 2006. The exhibition's opening reception will be held on January 18th, from 6-8 p.m.

Vigorito's poetic images explore the remnants of a town that was abandoned after the earthquake of 1980 in the Campania region of Italy. The town, Vecchio Romagnano al Monte located in southern Italy, close to Salerno, dates back to 700 A.D. It is known for its farming and originally was a military post. In 1980 an earthquake devastated the architecture but spared all its inhabitants. Following this event all the town's inhabitants choose relocation rather than to rebuild.

According to Vigorito, "Vecchio Romagnano al Monte has been a virtual ghost town since the earthquake - now, stealthy breezes whisper across the steeples of the town's two empty churches, le chiese del Rosario and del Carmine. Some of its buildings exist in skeleton only, while others are in ruin. However, as testaments to the spirit of the ancient town, most structures resisted the 1980 earthquake and merely stand empty – their neglect appearing as if waiting for their resurrection."

The artist's inspiration for this body of work offers the viewer many levels of interpretation. The town's visual remains inspired Vigorito as the subject matter for this body of work while unleashing its aesthetic power. Throughout the process of documenting the effects of this natural disaster Vigorito has hopes that the town will once again function and be occupied possibly as a site for a future artistic and spiritual community.

As part of the exhibition *Borgo Fantasma*, Rosaria Vigorito will present a public program on Wednesday, February 1st from 6 to 7 p.m. Vigorito will lead the visitor through the exhibition for a tour and follow this with excerpts of her

documentary film *Borgo Fantasma Vecchio Romagnano al Monte*. In her debut to the world of filmmaking, this work is filled with images of the abandoned town and the stories told by its people of past traditions, customs and lives. The film chronicles the enchantment of this abandoned “borgo” and its estranged people. Explored in the film are the universal issues of identity, tradition, transformation, reinvention, transcendence, resettlement and community.

In sum, Vigorito comments “once I discovered this place, I could not ignore it. Even in its simplicity, there was something in the air that forever transformed me. I had to discover more about its past, people and future. The story could not just end with the cataclysmic event of 1980. There was more to it. Its relocated people could not just walk away and rip themselves from the past Vecchio Romagnano represents and what the future may hold for its development.”

Rosaria Vigorito is a graduate of the New York Academy of Art and a faculty member of CUNY School of Law. Some of the photographs in this exhibition have been shown at the CUNY School of Law and the Garibaldi-Meucci Museum in Staten Island. She has also participated in exhibitions at the Gallery at Chelsea Eye and David Ryan Salon, and has been approached by Filitalia in Philadelphia to exhibit these works in April-May 2006. Vigorito has received support for the documentary film *Borgo Fantasma Vecchio Romagnano al Monte* from the local government of the new Romagnano al Monte. Her website is rosariavigorito.com.

Dr. Joseph V. Scelsa, President of the Italian American Museum said of the exhibition, “Rosaria Vigorito's beautiful and poignant photographic images are a window into at a town forever frozen in time. They are stirring yet settling and beckoning one to experience this land of our ancestors.”

The Italian American Museum is the first museum dedicated to preserving and presenting the cultural and social contributions of Italian Americans to the American way of life. The *Borgo Fantasma* exhibit will be open to the public from Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. –4 p.m. or by appointment (212-642-2020) at 28 West 44th Street, 17th floor between 5th and 6th Avenues.