

Cultural Daily

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People of Montepagano, Italy

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, September 27th, 2017

I usually visit my hometown of Modena, Italy, during the summer, and only occasionally at Christmas time, when it's quite cold and it often snows. The advantage is that it's warm, as it is in Los Angeles where I have been living since 1973, and, when my parents were still alive, I could spend time with them wherever they were vacationing at different beach resorts.



In July 1976 my family was in Roseto degli Abruzzi, and after beach time in the morning, we would spend the afternoons driving around for sightseeing in this mountainous region. This is how I discovered the ancient village of Montepagano, that I found quite fascinating, and started taking photographs of the people with my Nikon camera and B&W film. The architecture of the houses had distinctive arched doorways and ceilings, and everyone was sitting in the streets hanging out, as if they were in their own living rooms. They were gracious and invited me inside their homes, they chatted with me about their daily lives.



Once back in L.A., I made some prints and sent them around to photography magazines with the hope they might to be published as a photo essay, but found not takers. My friend Yoram suggested I write an article and propose it to the travel magazine Westways. So I did and a color plus B&W photo layout with my text was published in May 1977. Later on in 1980 another magazine, Mankind, did publish just the Black and White photographs with a short caption as a photo essay.



See the B&W photo series and my article [at this link](#), some [color photos at this link](#), in the [Elisa Leonelli Photojournalist](#) Collection at the Claremont Colleges Digital Library.



The Abruzzo region in Central Italy has been in the news because of the severe [earthquake that destroyed the capital city of L'Aquila](#) in April 2009. In the same area of the Appennine mountains, the village of [Amatrice](#) in the Lazio region was devastated by an earthquake in 2016 killing 295 people. Only then did I realize that the pasta dish I had learnt to cook while living in Rome after college, was named after this town, so to honor the memory of the deceased I cooked [bucatini all'Amatriciana](#) for my family.



At this time, when a powerful [earthquake hit Mexico City](#) on September 20, our hearts go out to the victims. But I will not attempt cooking a Mexican dish in their memory.

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