

Ricordando Vincenzo Ancona

Joey Skee (February 23, 2010)



Poet, visual artist, raconteur, singer, immigrant laborer, friend.

Today is the tenth anniversary of Vincenzo Ancona's death and I miss him tremendously. He was a man I met in 1979 as the "subject" of my nascent research on Italian-American folklore and folklife, but who became more than just an "ethnographic informant."

We collaborated in the documentation and presentation of his Sicilian-language poetry and his wire tableaux in a published article, a book, and several exhibitions. The links below lead to various representations of his work. (His self-professed masterpiece, "St. George and the Dragon" is now in the permanent collection of the [Fenimore Art Museum \[2\]](#), Cooperstown, New York.) He helped my fledgling career more than I impacted his life.

That he shared parts of his life and his artistry with me is a gift I will always treasure. I visited him



frequently in the basement kitchen of his Gravesend, Brooklyn home. I knew his late wife, Virginia, his children, his grandchildren, and even his great-grand children. My wife and I stayed with him in Castellammare del Golfo (Trapani province) during our 1985 trip and he showed us Scopello where he set off for the tonnara, or tuna fishing. I still have the olive branch basket he wove during our stay in Sicily.

On the tenth anniversary of his death, [Arba Sicula](#) [3] is republishing Vincenzo's bilingual collection, [Malidittu la lingua/Damned Language](#) [4] (1990), that Anna L. Chairetakakis (now Anna Lomax Wood) and I edited. The book will contain a CD of Vincenzo reciting his poetry. In addition, my article "Locating Memory: Longing, Place, and Autobiography in Vincenzo Ancona's Sicilian Poetry" will appear this year in the book [Italian Folk: Vernacular Culture in Italian-American Lives](#) [5] (Fordham University Press). Vincenzo Ancona lives on through the many gifts he left us.

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- [1] <http://newsite.iitaly.org/files/13366vincenzoancona1266960301.jpg>
- [2] <http://www.fenimoreartmuseum.org>
- [3] <http://www.arbasicula.org>
- [4] http://www.amazon.com/Malidittu-linga-Damned-Language-Cassettes/dp/0921252145/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1266989159&sr=1-1
- [5] <http://www.fordhampress.com/detail.html?id=9780823232666>
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- [13] <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/05/14/nyregion/neighborhood-report-bensonhurst-honors-for-poet-who-turns-life-into-verse.html>
- [14] <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/16/nyregion/bensonhurst-journal-poet-is-people-s-voice-even-in-a-foreign-tongue.html?pagewanted=1>



[15] <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/05/nyregion/vincenzo-ancona-a-poet-is-dead-at-84.html?pagewanted=1>