

English



CALABRIA FOTOGRAFATA 1955-1960



Nicola Toscano Photographer



My father, Nicola Toscano, was born on February 25, 1922, in Roccella Jonica, a picturesque town nestled in the heart of Calabria, southern Italy. He passed away on January 28, 1962, leaving behind a legacy far greater than the years he lived. Though his life was relatively short, he was deeply respected as a professional and, in his later years, discovered a profound passion for photography—a passion that became his way of capturing the world around him. This collection of images, taken by Nicola Toscano between 1955 and 1960, is more than just a series of photographs: it is a window into a bygone era. Through family snapshots, intimate portraits of everyday people and well-known local figures, sweeping landscapes, and moments of community life, these images paint a vivid picture of Calabria during those years. They preserve the spirit of a time and place, offering an authentic, unfiltered glimpse into a world that has since evolved but remains deeply rooted in memory. AT

RC 12032 – A Journey Through the Dream of Time

I imagine him stepping out of the house — Nicola Toscano, always impeccably dressed, usually in a suit and tie— carrying something he considers essential for the nourishment of the soul: his camera.

Photography is a true passion for him, something he refuses to give up, and pressing that shutter button, even for the briefest of moments, is his preferred way of capturing the details and horizons of the world that unfolds before him each day as he carefully carries out his work as a surveyor.

The photographs presented in this exhibition can be interpreted, observed, and commented on in countless ways. Personally, I do not know the specific criteria that led Antonio Toscano, his son, to make this particular selection. But I do know with certainty that this is only a small part of a much larger collection— comprising over 1,200 images—whose negatives, with generosity and trust, Tony donated to the Academy of Fine Arts in Catanzaro to ensure their preservation and appreciation.

Most of the photos were taken between 1952 and 1956, with the most significant number dating to 1957. They depict a time

when, although the echoes of wartime aircraft were not yet a distant memory, life was marked by a sense of hope rather than sorrow or poverty. Instead, these images capture a delicate and joyful desire for life — a spirit of optimism and even lightheartedness.

The defining feature of these photographs is the ever-present smile. And then, there is that incredible light, which dominates every image as if time had paused in an eternal season of sunshine.

Nicola Toscano's gaze moves fluidly between interiors and exteriors with an intimate familiarity, as though he were an integral part of the families he encountered. It is evident that he established a relationship of trust and respect with his subjects, allowing him a freedom of action that resulted in portraits where even the most traditionally posed images radiate spontaneity and authenticity.

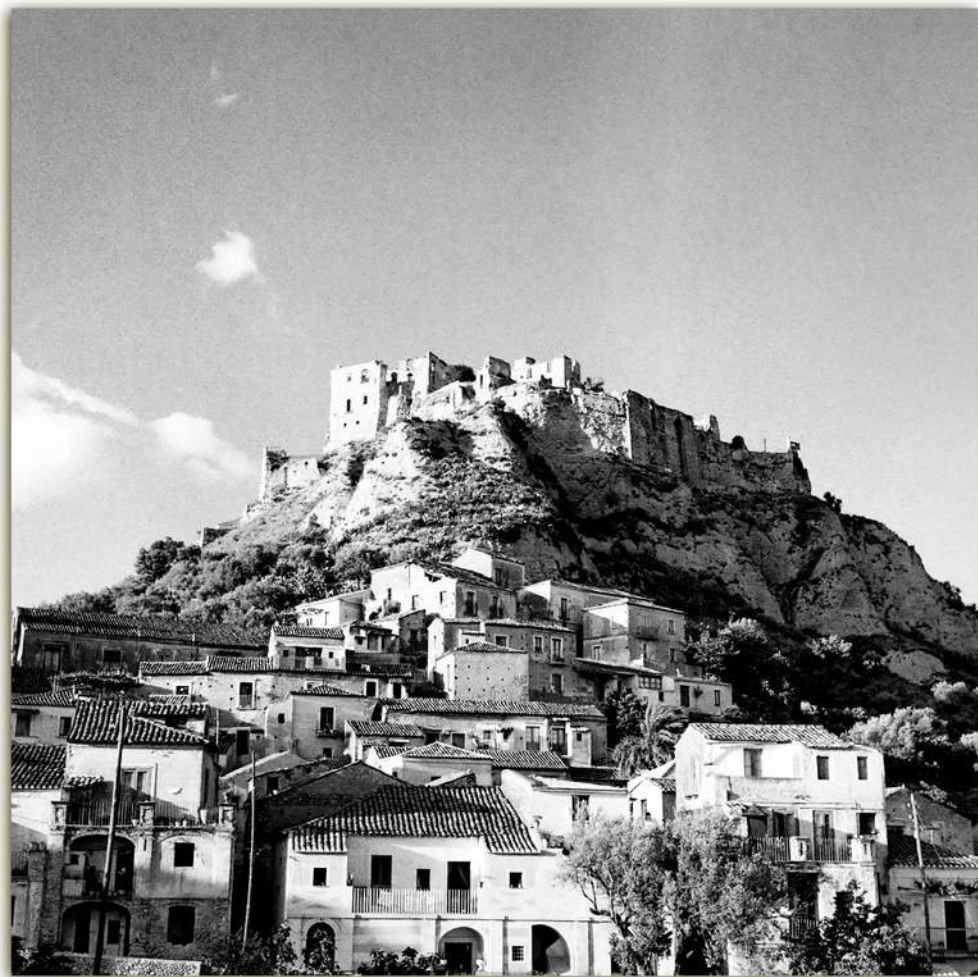
In this land scented with clay and hay, childhood is steeped in a sense of care and elegance. It is a world of shared games with nuns, of smiles in the arms of grandmothers and mothers — often farmers — who, at times, can be seen skipping rope outdoors, delighting in simple pleasures. Meanwhile, the young boys are lifted high in celebration, as if they were gifts or trophies — symbols of

life moving forward. Decorative terrazzo floors, white-lacquered furniture, and softly colored doors speak of a desire for modernity, blending with the remnants of an older, more traditional world. Alongside donkeys and wooden carts, one can see automobiles keeping pace with the times, their license plates displaying numbers barely exceeding ten thousand after the provincial initials: RC 12032; RC 12235... And in this changing landscape — where power lines and new buildings begin to take shape while ancient villages watch the sea from their hilltops—one photograph stands out to me. It captures a small group of men inspecting an enormous masonry structure along a riverbed. This powerful image highlights the delicate balance between humanity and nature, serving as a reminder of the need to preserve harmony between the two. The structure, though seemingly built by giants, does not impose itself harshly but rather integrates into the environment, lending a sense of solemnity. These photographs — depicting rural life, churches, landscapes, homes, and children — document a pivotal moment in history, the transition from the 1950s to the 1960s. Through their profound beauty, they remind us of how often we have been careless and disrespectful toward the

world around us, failing to recognize the importance of preserving things in their most authentic state. Instead, we have chosen to alter, and continue to abandon, places and landscapes. Perhaps, at the time, the desire for something new, for a fresh start after years of hardship and deprivation, was simply too overwhelming. People were eager to move forward, to turn the page.

Regardless, this sun-drenched corner of Calabria is fortunate to possess such an extensive photographic record. Fortunate to have been the subject of the curiosity and attention of a man who, though primarily traveling for work, never forgot to carry his camera — to capture and share the life unfolding around him. And perhaps many of us, today, long to step back into those frames, into that dreamlike time, to experience once more the authenticity of values and relationships that now often feel prepackaged and devoid of genuine meaning—almost anonymous, faded.

Francesco Cuteri – Academy of Fine Arts, Catanzaro





















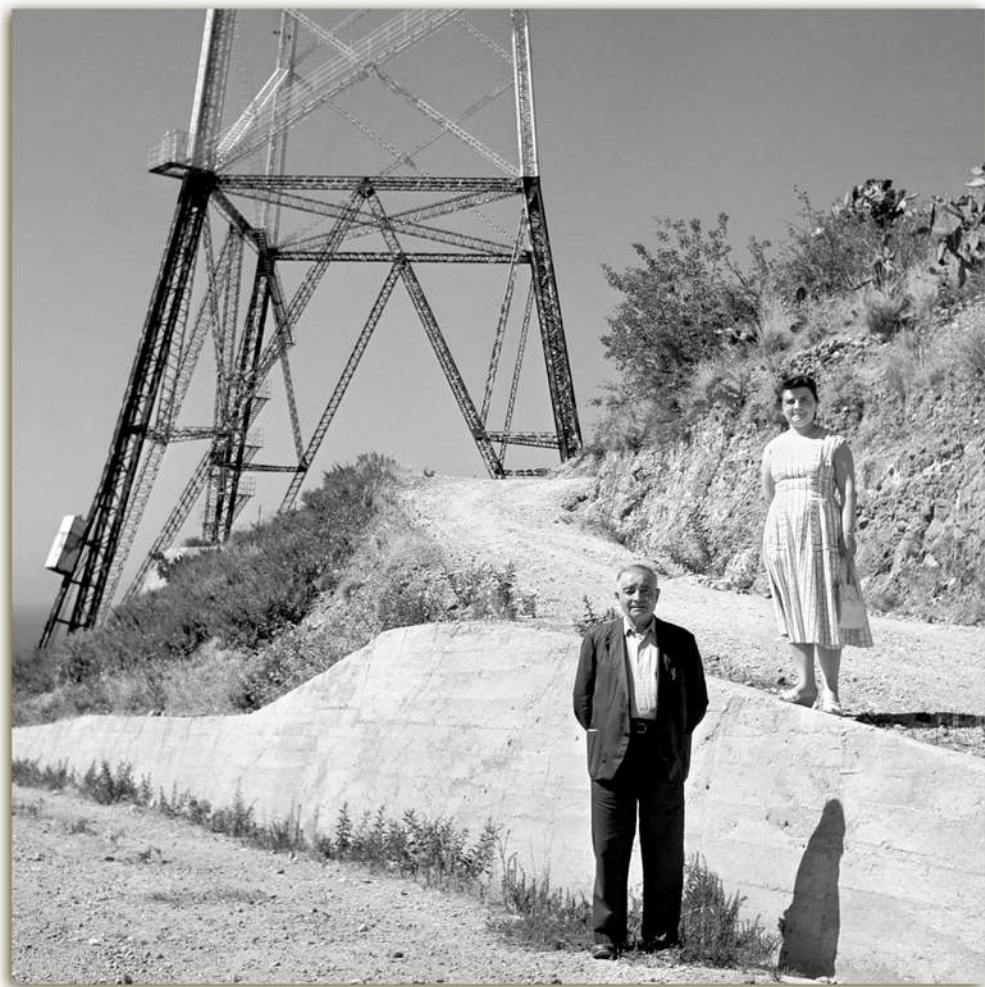


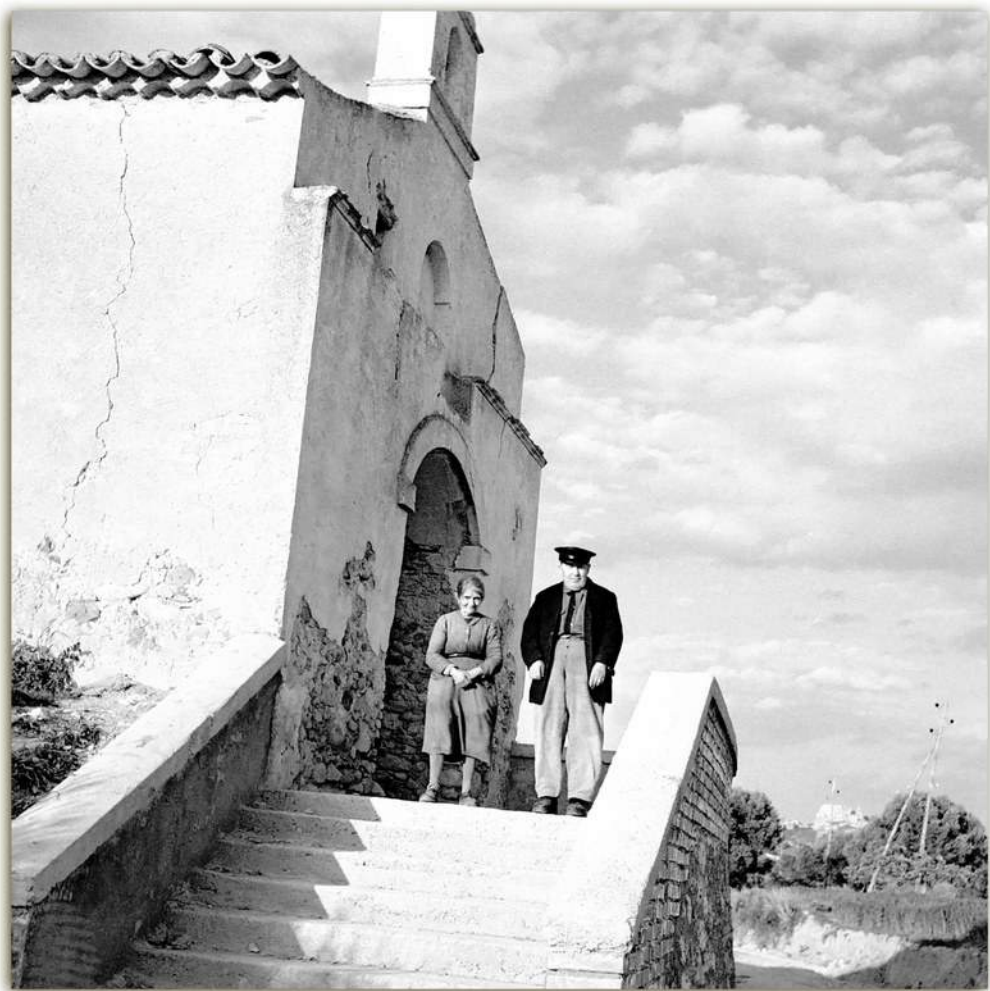






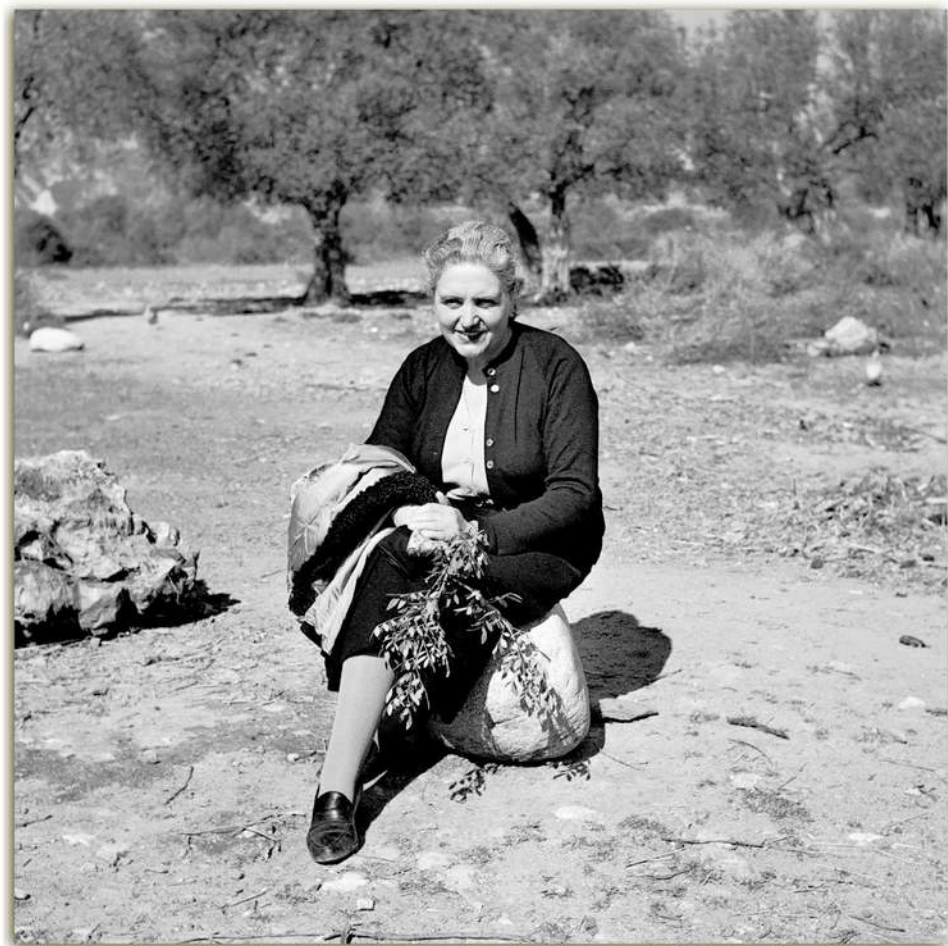
















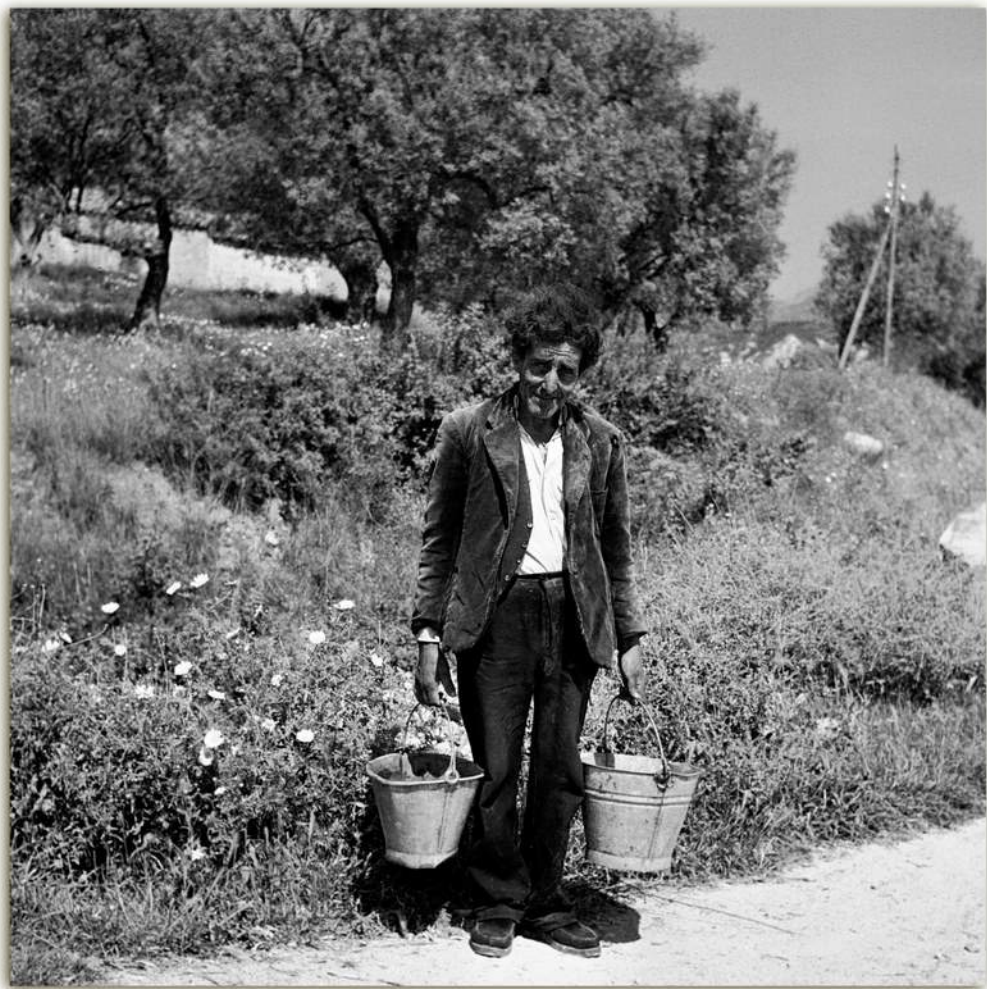






































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