

# TG

## *Our Days of Gold (Video)*

October 11th – November 23rd, 2024

The bedroom is very large, with high ceilings. Occupying the whole furthest side of the first floor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century farm, it has three openings on three different walls, in fact, two large, tall windows and a small balcony. Each with a view of a different side of the garden, one looking towards a sliver of sea in the distance, beyond the high pergolas draped with vines protecting the orange grove. One looking towards the pig sty, overshadowed by the large old palm and the medlar tree. The balcony faces the Circumvesuviana railway, which journeys vociferously from Naples to Sorrento on top of the stone wall 20 metres away every 20 minutes, its passengers able to see all the way inside the house when the blinds are open. In fact, I never saw those blinds open until zio Antonino and zia Vittoria passed away, and then I opened them, and never closed them again because of how the green outside reflected in the mirrors inside, and also the appeal of the Mimosa tree, with its yellow flowers blooming in February. That side of the garden, under the arches where zio used to boil the walnuts in a huge black cauldron, was also home to the highly poisonous Angel Trumpet's tree whose enormous flowers zia Vittoria was very fond of, tall enough to be seen from the balcony. There was also a jungle of Monsteras, until my father chopped everything off.

But the mirrors, the large dressing table mirror and multipaneled wardrobe mirror, multiply those openings so that the outside is reflected within in every direction. Even the two tv sets, one large, black and white, one small colour placed on top when the first one stopped working, reflect the outside and the light coming in. They got the furniture, double bed, high legged bedside cabinets, dresser, wardrobe, when they married, late in life, in 1971. That's probably when they also got the UPVC windows for the tall windows, whilst the balcony was never updated, just kept closed while the wood slowly rotted. The reflective surfaces reflect the many images in the room: a large framed oil painting of Saint Rita, the saint of 'impossible' miracles, probably 19th century, on the wall to the left of the bed. The small painting of Saint Anthony with Baby Jesus on a wood panel, next to the mirror. The print of the Madonna of Pompeii, also miraculous, on top of the bed head, a green and blue landscape of the Vesuvius and Lattari Mountains behind her. A framed photograph of my father, their nephew, dressed in a smart white blazer and shorts for his first communion sometime around 1958 hangs on the wall near the dresser mirror, while several commemorative pictures of the dead, of the kind that are given to mourners at funerals, and a couple of Popes are tucked into the

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gilded frame. Zia Vittoria's picture itself is there in a round tabletop photo frame, shy, looking away, with her housecoat on.

This exhibition attempts to map the bedroom, that doesn't exist anymore, onto another room, a former caretaker's living room, now a gallery, situated within Primary, a re-purposed Victorian school, via three too wide tv screens and a too small carpet borrowed from yet another room. Ill-fitting and awkward as inhabiting the past might be, me and my siblings attempted to occupy it for a few years in the early 2000s, before life split us apart. I recorded a hundred hours of video footage and hundreds of rolls of film at the time. I kept this material for 20 years, until it became an archive, and gave it to Tom to choose from at the beginning of last summer. This presentation is his selection and includes some of the clothes from different times that we donned in our afternoons of idleness and soul searching in zio Antonino and zia Vittoria's bedroom.

- Assunta Ruocco, Nottingham, 3 November 2024