

Neighbours of **West Galt**

December 2021

Meet
**Carina
Francioso**



Resident Feature



Blair Artist Never Stops

By Kevin Swayze Photos by Stan Switalski

Carina Francioso is used to being both the artist and the subject.

Since she was a child growing up in Blair, music, art and creativity shaped her life.

Today, she's a working oil painter and a professional model.

"I feel amazing in front of a camera as well as when I'm on the runway," Carina says.

"There is something about it that brings out my femininity, playfulness and sensuality. Also, I have an obsession with fashion, and you can see more of that fashion influence in my earlier paintings. As I grow older, I've come to appreciate beauty in all its forms."

Carina credits her parents, Judy and Aldo, for nurturing her talents from childhood. Along with her older brother, Roberto, they were encouraged to explore their gifts, explore the world, and challenge themselves.

"Our family motto is 'Do what you love,'" Carina says.

"Ever since I can remember, my brother and I have always been encouraged to do what we wanted in life. Schooling was a very important part of that process. It helped us develop the talents and discipline to go after our dreams.

"Since the day my brother came across a computer, he knew he wanted to develop software. And since I started painting, I knew I wanted to pursue an

artistic career. We were encouraged to think outside the box. I appreciate the love and support I have received from my family over the years. — it is partly the reason I have made it this far in my artistic career."

Both Carina and Roberto were encouraged to study music. She plays the piano, and he plays the accordion and keyboard.

Roberto now lives in Seattle, where he works as a senior software engineer at Microsoft.

When Carina was six, her parents enrolled her in summer art classes at Homer Watson Gallery in Kitchener.

"I remember it like it was yesterday. I literally remember smelling the paint and getting really, really excited to paint on those easels with the paper rolled over the top."

Carina graduated on the dean's honour list from the University of Waterloo in 2010. She earned a major in Studio Specialization (art) and a minor in the Italian language.

She started work as a self-employed artist after graduation. She also instructed in the Italian Language Labs at the University of Waterloo from 2008 to 2014.

All the while Carina was working towards becoming an artist, she was also working as a model. That career started in 1996, working on runways, along with modelling for print and video ads.

That work continues today as she heads down a new runway.

In January 2020, Carina trained as a flight attendant for Air Canada Rouge, a division of Air Canada. She worked on flights across Canada, and to the United States, Mexico and Cuba.

She's now on pandemic layoff, awaiting recall to work.

Don't suggest to Carina that flight attendants have an easy job, like she's heard described as a "waitress in the sky."

"It's like, literally, you're a firefighter. You're a medic. You're all these things on board a plane. I've had friends that have been on planes that have had to put out fires," she said.

"This job was always a dream of mine. I love to travel, and I wanted to balance my artistic, in-studio time with travel, adventure and being around people."

Indeed, that's what she was doing to build her skills and experience as an artist. When the pandemic halted her flights, she redoubled her creative efforts in the studio.

Carina's specialty is photorealism, creating images with oils on canvas with deep detail.



Most of her works involve water or waves. She believes that grew out of childhood family trips to Georgian Bay or visiting her dad's family in southern Italy.

"I really felt like an artist when my work reached, not just a local group of people, but globally. A dream of mine was to have my work enjoyed by people all over the world."

"I just sold a piece in Thailand. I sold a piece to a Princess of Dubai, which was pretty cool," she says.

With her work on display in galleries in Los Angeles and New York, Carina says her artistic career is gaining traction.

"One of the misconceptions that some people might have is that you're a starving artist for the rest of your life. That's something that I've had to break out of the box of.

"My paintings sell for thousands of dollars."

Carina says she receives messages daily on her social media accounts from young people wanting to become an artist, or asking for advice in techniques. That experience prompted her to create an online art course, oilpaintingpros.com, set to open in 2022.

If you want to build your creative skills, Carina offers these insights.

"I think all of my advice would be experiential. It would be take a course, find a class. It would be something experiential where people can actually get their hands dirty with it."

While she uses social media as a tool for fast communication and worldwide connections with people, she rejects transferring that tempo to her Blair studio.

"That's actually part of the reason why I like doing what I do because it's not quick. I refuse to be one of those artists that just throws paint and then calls it a day," she says.

"I really do believe that beauty is in the details. Something that our world is lacking today is realizing the time it takes to create something amazing and beautiful. It takes time, whether that be a career, a relationship, a piece of art. It doesn't matter what it is."

For Carina, creativity comes from spiritual and physical health.

"I wouldn't say I'm a fitness nut, but I like to live a healthy lifestyle. For me, if I don't move my body at least four or five times a week, I don't feel as good

mentally and physically."

Don't be surprised to see Carina running on her favourite trails around Blair village or along the Grand River. Or sitting beside the creek near her house, in daily meditation.

Or Latin dancing, which she started while attending university. Or tennis.

Or Italian cooking. Carina's signature dish is Melanzane Ripiene, Italian stuffed eggplant.

"My lifestyle is full of hobbies, and I feel that my life is a vacation because I love what I do. I am interested in daily routines such as fitness, weightlifting, cardio or yoga. Meditation plays a huge and vital role in my creativity and overall mental health," Carina says.

"Everything that once was created was first a thought. So I like to be aware of my thinking and create from a clear mind; often this is where my most creative ideas come from!"

Carina listens to podcasts related to personal growth and self-development while painting. Her playlist includes The Joe Rogan Experience, The Jordan B Peterson Podcast and The Life Coach School Podcast by Brooke Castillo.

Carina is also impressed with life and business strategist Tony Robbins. Since 2017, she's volunteered on his Event Safety Team at Florida, Toronto, and California gatherings.

"I love meeting people, and this experience has allowed me to make more friends all over the world," Carina says.

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