

Debra Lynn Carroll





# Pathway to The Heart

written by Valerie Kent

*"Tread the path that makes your soul sing."*  
Michelle O'Brien

Debra Lynn Carroll is a daughter of the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, the eldest of 7 siblings. As a young person, she was called by the natural world to explore glorious sanctuaries along paths leading her to glens and brooks filled with sunlight, towards the heady scent and the glory of lilacs in the springtime, apple blossom orchards, autumn fire, and winter paths cloaked in pearl.

Strong influences in her life and artwork link directly to her family. Her mother has always greatly inspired her by continuing to live her life to the fullest and it was also her mother who arranged art classes for Debra when she was just eleven years old. The classes along with the wonderful gift of a John

Gnagy's "Learn to Draw" and a "Paint by Numbers" kit and easel really started her on the journey to become an artist.

Her pervasive shyness no longer hinders her as it once did. Debra cherishes her strong sense of community and she welcomes people to her life and makes them feel at ease. She meets and talks with people in diverse social settings. This has become significant as she is now a persona in the public eye.

## **Finding The Way**

Sometimes a circuitous route points back to the beginning, and this happened with Debra's fascination with nature and making her imprinted memories be part of the impressions left on her canvases.

Debra graduated from Dalhousie University in 1979 with a Master of Business Administration. She











*Previous Page, Summer's Glow, oil on canvas, 60" x 108"  
This Page, left, Autumn Serenade, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"  
above right, Thornbury Trail, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"*

worked in the fishing industry in Nova Scotia and contributed to the Chamber of Commerce, and the Business and Professional Women's Organization.

Wanderlust took her to India, Europe and North Africa in her 30's. Biking, a passion, moved her from France to Corsica, Italy and Switzerland. Then Greece became a stop for eight months before Toronto and five years later, the Ontario College of Art and Design.

As she was finishing OCAD, she participated in the Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition. She graduated with honours and began her career by engaging in art shows every couple of months creating a new body of work for every one.

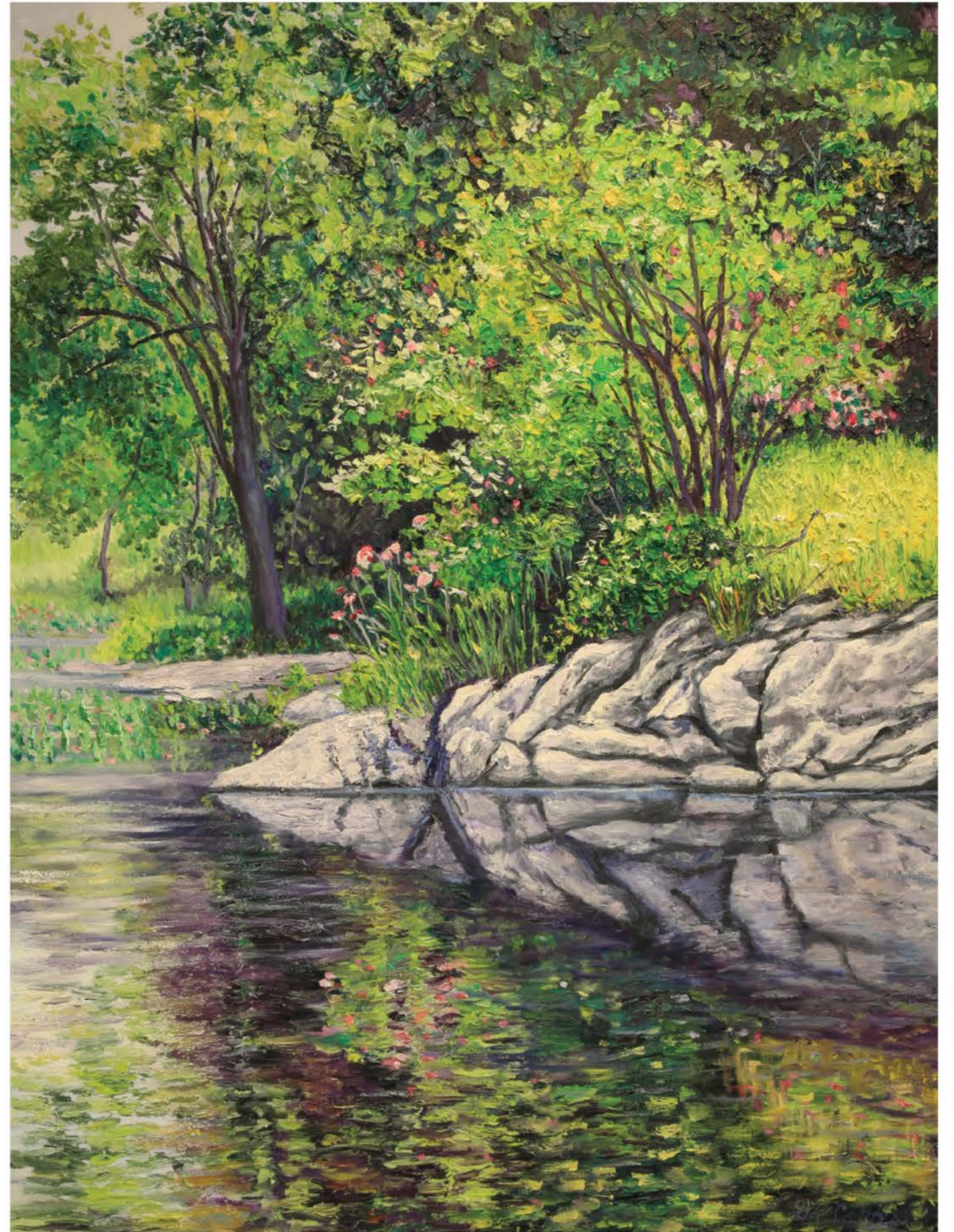
Later she was part of the Inaugural Toronto Inside Art Exhibition. Galleries were impressed with her work and offered representation. Debra has been a working artist since her graduation.

#### **A Dream Come True**

Debra had a dream to open a studio and gallery in The Blue Mountains. It was the opportunity to showcase her art and to contribute to the success of other artists. There were approximately 25 artists represented by the gallery.

In 2015 Debra closed Loft Gallery to concentrate more on her painting and her sister Heather immediately started Loft Gallery Inc. Debra is still









Previous Page, left, *The Far Side*, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"  
right, *Summer Day Dream*, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"  
This Page, left, *Golden Dreams*, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"

involved, exhibiting exclusively there and painting with other artists on site.

In her studio, while she paints she listens to rock, pop, and country music, recorded and live, to uplift her and get her positive energy soaring. She treasures an abstract encaustic and oil painting that is in the studio, full of blue sunlight on water, completed while at the Ontario College of Art and Design.

#### **"Stop the Car" Moments**

Scouting for magnificent, exciting places to paint is always an adventure. Debra searches for inspiration with a beginning in mind: strong foregrounds, contrast, depth, a sense of solitude or excitement of colour, a wild, wet swamp or layered vista. She walks the woods and also spends time on or near water features always on the lookout for the "Oh Wow" factor.

When she is not working, she is often driving to her favourite places. She photographs the Ontario light and the seasons in southern Georgian Bay, Lake Huron and Muskoka.

#### **What is Unique?**

"I paint in oil, and I am differentiated from other artists by the way that I use my brushes to draw on my canvasses. Light springs into three-dimensional facets, crystals of colour and symmetry.

I may start with a sky and a horizon line and then work forward unless there are foreground grasses that soar into the sky. When I am painting a pathway, which has become a signature for me, I sometimes start at the end and grow it forward. I under-paint the canvas, where necessary, with an abstract before starting my painting so that I can use a drawing technique of wet on wet.

My foregrounds, of freestyle layered grasses, are coaxed into being, using 3 or 4 colours of paint mixed into every single brushstroke. I do not use solvents or thinners.

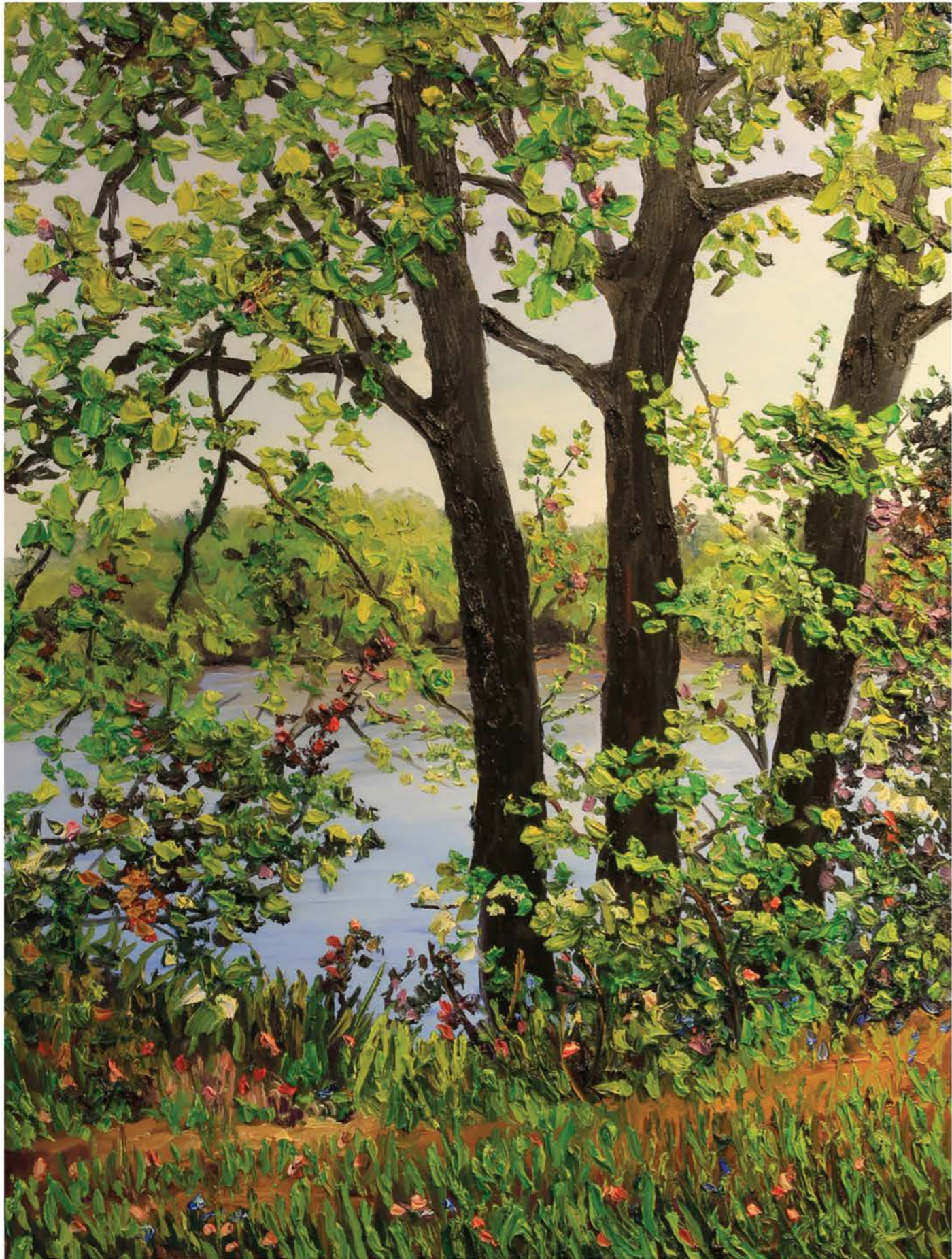
I always sign my work when the bottom right-hand corner is wet. That way I can camouflage my signature into the painting, even if it is not finished.

I use my extensive photo collection that brings memories or experiences to my studio. It is my computerized images created from these photographs that ensure that my work is never limited by what the camera eye captures."

#### **The Shape of a Life**

Close friends are valuable to Debra. She recalls Kent Sweeney and how his influence on her life remains. He valued art, music, education, reading, travelling and looking after his family and his family business. Kent also taught Debra that shyness makes it very difficult for people to engage with you. When people









Previous Page, left, *The Four Season's*, oil on Canvas, 40" x 30"  
right, *Ode to a Tree*, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"  
This Page, left, *Reflections of Winter*, oil on canvas, 72" x 48"

want to get to know you shyness can make them feel you are not interested in them and stops a great conversation. This was an extremely valuable life lesson for Debra.

Some teachers had a strong influence on her in art school, among them: Maria Gabankova, Greg Damery, Michelle White and Richard Robinson.

Then there are the artists that Debra paints with regularly. They have their distinctive styles, enjoy painting together for the public and provide inspiration to each other: Pat Ransom, Janet Liesemer, Jennifer Woodburn, Brian Buckrell, Doris Pontieri and Lorne McDermott.

#### **Inspiration**

"I was inspired by the vast wasteland paintings of Anselm Kieffer when I was in art school. I lived in the Beaches when the area west of Woodbine Avenue at Queen Street in Toronto was an open field. I remember the perfect day when the sky, the Toronto skyline and the fields extending toward the city centre made me feel I would love to capture the scene with the same sense of scale and intensity as the huge Kieffer paintings I admired."

While visiting a gallery in Toronto in the late 1990's she saw a huge painting of a single wave that was spellbinding. Firstly she stood at a distance, then she

moved closer to the canvas surface to see the artist's brushstrokes and the clarity of the definition of it.

The surface image disintegrated into an abstraction of subtle colour and undefinable imagery. This learning continues to be significant for her work.

In 1999 she did solo shows at the Women's Art Association located in an historical building on Prince Arthur Street in Toronto. She received a 15-foot commission, and had to get a larger studio. She continues to enjoy painting commissions and appreciates how that first one moved her along her path.

"Many of the works I do are large as life and give the viewer a sense of entering a magical realistic lushness. I strive to make each textured piece vibrant and as dynamic as music, with key, tempo and structure. Today I have a spacious studio at the back of the Loft Gallery. I am happy painting more and thriving in the lovely environment of Thornbury."

*To see more of Debra Carroll's lovely work please visit:*

#### **Loft Gallery**

Thornbury, ON  
www.loftgalleryart.com  
519.599.5912