



## A painting with more than the usual personal touch

*Breslau artist to present local MP with a piece of her art as a thank-you for his help settling in Canada*

By **Whitney Neilson** - June 9, 2016

Local MP Harold Albrecht will soon have a little taste of home in his office, as Breslau artist Jacqueline Gori will present him with a painting of the West Montrose covered bridge next weekend as way of thanks for his help in walking her and her husband through the citizenship process.

The couple was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and lived there for 23 years. They moved to England and stayed there for 13 years before her husband, Giorgio, was offered a job in Canada.

She didn't know what to expect when she came to this country.

"We came over and I soon really realized why people fall in love with this country because the people are so warm and friendly and they have this pioneering spirit of let's help our neighbour. And that is what really made me feel at home is within about a month I was integrated into a community of people and it's just so different from what I experienced everywhere else," Gori said.

When the Cambridge company Giorgio was working for went under they weren't sure what would happen. They knew they wanted to stay in Canada, so a friend told them to contact their local member of parliament.

Gori credits Albrecht, the MP for Kitchener-Conestoga, with ensuring they were able to stay in Canada.

"Harold's office really walked us through step by step applying for a new Visa. Giorgio managed to find another position and because Harold's office was so helpful we managed to apply for another Visa with that company and in turn we've stayed, we started two successful businesses," Gori said.

They own some properties that they rent out and she also fulfilled a lifelong dream to start her own art school, which came to fruition last year as the Ontario Art School. They became Canadian citizens in 2013.

When they came to Canada she says she was inspired by the Group of Seven – previously, she created only highly photographic realistic paintings. But after seeing the Canadian landscapes and the Group of Seven, her style was completely changed; now she's committed to painting Canadian landscapes and nothing else. She sees this as a way to celebrate her citizenship.

And the painting of the covered bridge – or Kissing Bridge as it's often called – is special to her because it's where they now call home, often taking their dog on walks there.

"I know that it's a special place for Harold Albrecht, so I'm hoping that when he's off his doing his work in Ottawa he will be able to look at that painting and remember all the people that support him back here," Gori said.

She created the painting last year and it took her about three weeks to complete, basing the artwork off of photos of the bridge.

Gori previously worked as an IT consultant, travelling all over the world for her work. But when she was struck with a rare form of TB while in England that went undiagnosed, she ended up in a wheelchair. Unable to continue working as an IT consultant, she returned to her dreams of being a full-time artist. She says her mother told her she was born with paintbrushes instead of fingers .

"I was able to get into a gallery in England and basically how I got better was they chopped out half my lung, sent it away for tests and then I sprang back to health," Gori said.

She carried on with her fine art and never went back to the IT world. While she was sick she discovered her second passion, service dogs. She had a service dog while she was in a wheelchair and he came with them to Canada when he retired.

"We used to go around and speak at suicide prevention campaigns because unfortunately when I was very ill and I wasn't diagnosed I nearly attempted suicide, but then came along my fantastic service dog and we worked through the next five years together," Gori explains.

The art school raised enough money this year to sponsor a national service dog who'll be called Monet.

Her art school offers a variety of classes including watercolor, drawing, and acrylics, with very small class sizes.

"It's still fairly new but it's thoroughly booked up," Gori said.

One of her students competed in The Brush Off in Kitchener this year and another student has exhibited in a local gallery twice.

"I'm very interested in tailoring the class for each student. There are some students that come who just want to relax and they just want to paint a step by step project because they want some therapy and to get away from their busy day. But there are some students they want a goal at the end. Those students need more of an exhibition to work towards," Gori said.

She believes art is a basic skill that everyone should learn, like riding a bike.

The art show where she'll present Albrecht with the painting will be a body of her work mainly from 2015, all of Canadian scenes such as a pumpkin patch in Elora, the Laurentians, and the Caledonian Badlands.

"It's really local work because we do live in a beautiful part of Ontario," Gori said.

She'll be presenting the painting to Albrecht on June 18 at the Launch Art Show and Sale at Companion Dog Training in Cambridge. She'll have other artwork on display and for sale, along with art from metal artist Carol Nasvytis.

More information about the Ontario Art School is available at [www.ontarioartschool.com](http://www.ontarioartschool.com).

**Whitney Neilson**

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Whitney Neilson is a photo journalist for The Observer.

