



## ART. LOVE. HOME.

Carl D'Alvia remembers his wife, artist Jackie Saccoccio, in the home they built together.

Words Laurie Simmons

Photography Chris Mottalini

I met Carl D'Alvia and his wife Jackie Saccoccio at the American Academy, in Rome, in 2005, when I arrived for my residency in March, with my 13-year-old child Cyrus Dunham. Carl and Jackie were Academy fellows who'd arrived the previous August with their six-year-old daughter Maddalena. We really needed friends to adopt us and show us the ropes. Carl and Jackie were those friends and I quickly realized we were going to be "friends for life." Two years later, my family settled in rural NW Connecticut where, coincidentally, Carl and Jackie had a home and studios. Carl is a brilliant sculptor and Jackie was a renowned and beloved painter who passed away in December 2020, after a five-year battle with cancer. I met with Carl, in early May, at his and Jackie's re-

cently completed house in Connecticut, to talk about Jackie, her work, their house, and friendship.

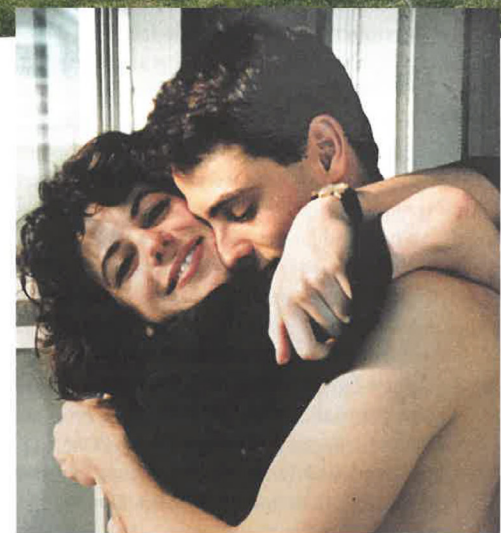
**Laurie Simmons** *This is one of the most perfect, exquisitely beautiful spots on earth. How did you find it?*

**Carl D'Alvia** We had a little house in town, here in Cornwall. It was the ex-general store.

**LS** *YES! It was truly the general store, the only place that sold milk and English muffins and butter.*

**CD** Right, and we worked at our studios there for ten years. And then we grew out of it, so we started looking around for land and we found this parcel that seemed to have everything. It had grand views all the way to the west side of the Hudson. It had two big fields. It had 40 acres of woods and more views to the north. It had some kind of mystery to it. We both really loved it.

**LS** *I've always felt building a house from the ground up is the most impossible*





**Previous page:** Standard chairs by Jean Prouvé by Vitra. Table by Ian Ingersoll Furniture. The home designed by Nader Tehrani. Saccoccio with D'Alvia: falling in love at RISD, 1983. **This page:** *Untitled*, 2020, by Saccoccio. Triangles, a signature design theme of the home. **Opposite page:** A D'Alvia snap of Saccoccio in NYC. *Time (Splatter)*, 2016, by Saccoccio.



*project. Where did you and Jackie start with this?*

**CD** It's a pretty daunting project, and please don't ask me to do it again (laughs). We started with the studio which was relatively easy. When it came to the house, we had a choice between house and architecture. And in the end, architecture won. An old friend of ours, Nader Tehrani, was the Dean of Cooper Union and he has a private practice, and he came up with some interesting, simple designs for the house that we loved.

**LS** Well, it's a triangular shaped house and absolutely breathtaking. It's painted black. Do you think you live in a comfortable house?

**CD** It is comfortable. There are parts that are a little bit impractical, with all the triangular elements, but overall, I think it works. We ended up building a box, and Nader had this idea to bisect the box at the diagonal with a wall, creating a false perspective. And that set the tone for the triangle play. Then he lowered one corner of the box, and all the rafters descend in a slightly parabolic fashion down to that corner. So, it's a kind of simple, yet dynamic interior. And not very big, which was nice. That was one of the few fights I won with Jackie over the last few years (laughs). I really wanted a small, simple, efficient house.

**LS** So ultimately, did you and Jackie agree about the design of the house?

**CD** We did, and, luckily, we were very much of one mind throughout the whole process. Both design and construction.

**LS** That's unusual and great.

**CD** Yeah, because I learned, afterwards, the saying, "Build a house, lose a spouse." (Laughs)

**LS** Yeah — have almost been there.

**CD** Yeah, I lost a spouse — but in a different way.

**LS** That's ... (Laughs)

**CD** Oh my God. (Laughs)

**LS** It's okay. Jokes are acceptable. So, starting with the studio, which is also a very simple black shed — you guys had studios adjacent, very close to each other. And as long as I've known you, you've had studios next to each other. Has that ever been a problem in terms of the way either of you work? Or is it optimal for two artists in the same family, do you think?

**CD** It was optimal. It was nice to work together and to have impromptu studio visits at the end of the day. We worked well together, and it was really a pleasure. We never annoyed each other, but occasionally the dust from my work would get in her paint and the fumes from her paint would come over to my area. But, psychically and energetically, it always worked.

**LS** That's pretty incredible for a two-artist family. Considering that Jackie left us in December and the house was

done last May; you guys were both so productive during an intense period that many people would find disruptive. Do you think Jackie was working at her usual clip, or do you think there was a sense of urgency — that work needed to be completed?

**CD** She wanted to work, and she didn't ever want to talk about anything posthumous or anything that wasn't concrete. I'm the more metaphysical one. She always wanted to focus on the here and now, finishing this house, working on the next series of paintings, and the next show. She was constantly making lists of new ideas for paintings and working in the studio as much as her health allowed. And that was just the kind of person that she was. We were together since we were students at RISD. So, I saw everything, and I knew everything she had ever made.

I was very concerned that she got a chance to see this house come to fruition and have a chance to live in it and enjoy it. So, I'm thankful that we were able to finish it and we were able to move in.

**LS** We always joke about the fact that artists are like farmers. We get up early, we gather the eggs, we milk the cows,

we go in the studio. Well, we don't have cows and eggs, but...

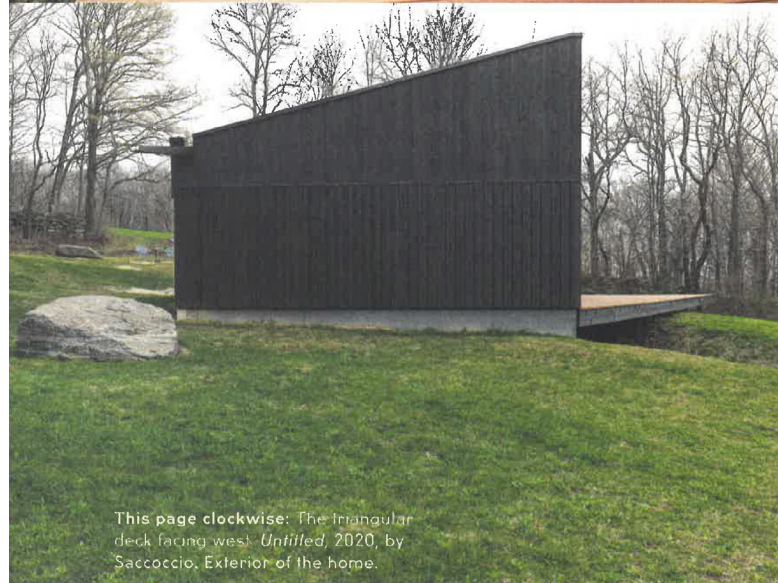
**CD** Metaphorical cows.

**LS** Metaphorical cows. And again, it's incredible the amount of work that Jackie produced in the new studio.

**CD** It's true. And I guess when something happens like this, there's a distillation of your life. A lot of the ancillary things get shoved off to the side, and you get to concentrate on things that matter, like your work and your relationship and your family. So, there was a lot of that the last few years. Of course, it was interrupted by medical realities and her treatments. But we always wanted to make sure that as soon as we could, we got back in the studio and kept producing.

**LS** There was such an amazing and poignant outpouring of grief and heartfelt tributes when Jackie passed away. And I think that we were all surprised to see just how many young women artists were very focused on her, and her work. Did you have any idea about the breadth her influence on younger artists? Do you think Jackie did?

**CD** I don't think she could've imagined an outpouring like that. You hope to inspire other artists and you hope that people are picking up what you're putting down. But it's hard to know the degree to which that's happening in the moment. But I heard from a lot of younger female artists about how important Jackie was to them. She was kind of a role model. I think being an artist couple is also an inspiration for a lot of people.



This page clockwise: The triangular deck facing west. *Untitled*, 2020, by Saccoccio. Exterior of the home.

**Opposite Page, clockwise:** The couple's wedding day, 1993. Saccoccio and the couple's daughter, Maddalena. South and western exposure fills the living space with natural light.



LS *It is. It defies gravity a little bit.*

CD *It does. I mean you and Carroll have the same thing. Two ambitious artists and a family and supporting each other. I guess to a lot of younger artists particularly, it doesn't seem possible. So, it's nice for them to have someone who's pushing the boundaries of their work and still maintaining a relationship and a family. I think in that way she was a role model for a lot of younger women artists.*

LS *Do you think that this new environment, the new studios, these breathtaking views, do you think that it changed Jackie's work?*

CD *I think it did, for sure. The scale of the studio was a big factor for both of us as well. Jackie really liked to work big and was able to do some very large canvases. And my scale shifted up and I began a series of monumental works almost immediately.*

LS *It's interesting how many of us, after this year of isolation, are not that anxious to have our lives scheduled the way they were pre-pandemic. We all miss each other, but I don't think anybody is interested in living their life at the previous pace. And so many people like you are emerging stronger and sadder and kind of searching for some sort of answer and ...*

CD *Transformed.*

LS *Yes, transformed by it. And you, in particular, having lost a loved one, living in a completely new place, in a house that's just finished, that's a lot to digest.*

CD *Yes. I think we're all going through it to some degree. How much*

of our old lives do we want to go back to? I think everybody's kind of dipping their toe in a little bit and trying to figure this out.

LS *Figuring out which activities and friends they can deep-six (laughs), which ones they want to keep.*

CD *Yes. (Laughs)*

LS *Well, I'm going to keep you. (Laughs)*

CD *I'll keep you, Laurie. (Laughs)*

LS *I have a really important question for you.*

CD *Okay.*

LS *Are you still speaking to your architect?*

CD *(Laughs) I'm still friends with our architect, yes, we made it to the other side. I'll keep him too. ■*

*Jackie Saccoccio's estate is represented by vandorenwaxter.com. Architect Nader Tehrani: nadaaa.com.*

*Carl D'Alvia's work can be seen at Daliva.com Laurie Simmons is an artist, photographer and film maker.*

*She is represented by Salon94.com. Photographer Chris Mottalini contributes to T Magazine, and Casa Vogue. mottalini.com. Artwork courtesy of Jackie Saccoccio Estate and Van Doren Waxter.*