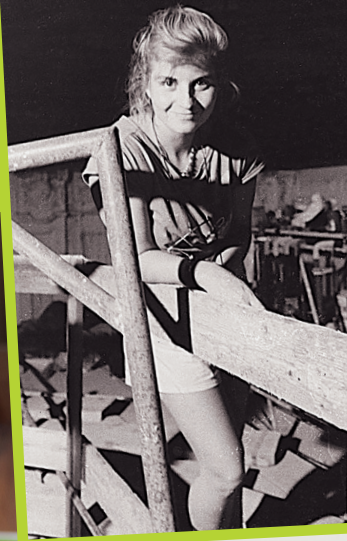


Right: Carolina, aged 26, working to restore the ceiling of a church in the town of Agerola on the Amalfi Coast.



How I live...

# For the LOVE OF ART

## Restoring our national

"I first became interested in art when I was in high school.

There was an archaeologist, she was amazing, and I fell in love with preservation. It had an impact on me. I thought the process of looking after things was actually quite neat, but I didn't want to do archaeology. I really wanted to look after decorative art and paintings, and mainly buildings.

I was born and bred in Rome, where there is an amazing conservation school, but at the time, it was only related to marble and fresco surfaces. I wanted to do paintings and furniture as well, so Florence seemed like the right place to go. The training took three years and then practising at the maestro lab for quite a while before becoming independent.

I had an unusual start to my career because in 1980, there was a big earthquake down in Irpinia, South Italy. It was huge and I

ended up living four and a half years inside the monks' cells at the Certosa di Padula monastery while I helped with the restoration. It was the biggest monastery in Italy and second biggest in Europe. It was also completely abandoned. Now it's a UNESCO heritage site, so this was one of the things I was very proud of.

Whatever I learned in that situation, I applied in Christchurch after the 2012 earthquake when I was the project manager and lead conservator for the repair of the Isaac Theatre Royal.

I don't know where they got my name from, but it was the quantity surveyor that gave me a call and asked if I would be interested. I had just moved my stuff from Wellington to Auckland and I was without a job. So I started flying down there and the

project began to take shape.

It took 18 months to restore, starting from the dome. What took place was lots of stratification and understanding of what was underneath.

It was big but it was a special opportunity for me and this is where my heart is, really saving buildings. I also received an Interior Award for Craftsmanship for my work restoring the dome. I've worked on many, many projects, but my favourite one in New Zealand has certainly been the theatre. That was an amazing experience.

The hardest part of my job is to find work here. I've got more than 35 years experience, but sometimes there is a frustration of the cultural barrier. My work is not making things new at all. We have to have a huge respect of the time life of an artwork.

I'm nervous every time I restore something. You must

not have fear but the concern that you are doing the right thing by the painting.

It was difficult for me to understand New Zealand art at first. What I like is the exploration and how artists paint landscape and nature. I love Ralph Hotere – he is my favourite artist – and I do love a Colin McCahon, but not when it comes to the lots of writing.

To me, art should be an enjoyable moment. If it brings me sadness, I don't want to be near it, but this is my personal opinion.

The best part of my job is making people understand the importance of their heritage, especially when people come in with an object they know nothing about, but after our restoration, they become aware about what they get back.

Maintenance is the key secret for every single heritage.



## Quick-fire:

If I could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, it would be...

Michelle Obama, Paul Coelho, Jacinda Ardern and Pavarotti (who gave the name to our son Riccardo).

I would describe my personal style as...

Classic and simple have changed my wardrobe since moving to New Zealand, but my love for fabrics such as linen, which reminds me of the Amalfi Coast, is still strong; bright colours together with great accessories such as pearls love the simplicity of Kiwi fashion too.

One thing I cannot live without is...

My husband Alistair.

CAROLINA IZZO  
(58) IS AN ART  
CONSERVATOR  
IN AUCKLAND

# treasures

I have my first maintenance project this year since opening my studio in 2008. It's the maintenance of a collection, which not only brings security for the company, but they will also save money because we are keeping an eye over the lifetime of an object.

I am a bit concerned about how quick we are here in New Zealand to throw things away. Sometimes, to convince people to keep and restore objects, I say I'm cheaper than a hairdresser! I believe instead of throwing items out, they just need to put them away for a moment in a safe place and you would be amazed how 20 years later you have completely changed your mind and you say, 'Thank goodness I saved that piece of art.' The object carries part of your heritage and you must acknowledge them."

*As told to Fleur Mealing*

**Don't throw art away!**  
Carolina believes in hanging on to family heirlooms as they might just grow on you – and be valuable!