

# A COASTAL CALLING

Dramatic Ocean Scenery Inspires Carol Cronin's Seascapes

BY RENEE BRINCKS



**Irish artist Carol Cronin, at Carmel Beach, creates seascapes based on pencil drawings she makes at the shore before painting in oils.**

*Photo: Kelli Uldall*



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hen Carol Cronin traveled to Carmel from her native Ireland last November, she expected scenic coastal vistas. But, she didn't expect to be so taken that she would rent a Big Sur studio and return to paint for five weeks over the winter. "When I got here, I thought, 'Oh, hold on a second. This is incredible...'" The only thing I wanted to do was get an easel, get a studio and start working," she says by phone, back in Ireland. "I was only supposed to be in Carmel for a 10-day holiday, but I left with full sketchbooks and I was buzzing about getting back."

The California coast proved an inspiring spot for Cronin, whose richly layered seascapes capture the ocean's wild, churning complexities. Her work has an engaging sense of drama that Alik Elzafof of Carmel's American Art Gallery calls "breathtaking."

"The bottom line in art is the quality. I can't really put a finger on it, except that in front of her paintings, your jaw just drops," says Elzafof, who displays select Cronin paintings in his Dolores Street gallery. "You can stand there and see the depth of the waves."

Cronin's bold oil-on-canvas creations start as pencil drawings. She'll sit along the shore for hours, sketching waves and clouds and sparkles of sunlight on the water. Cronin keeps those sketches in mind when she sits down to paint. She likens the process to a chess game, where one thoughtfully makes a few moves, and then gets lost in the process.

"I'm not somebody who knows what I'll be painting before I paint it," she says. "When I paint the sea, I'm painting from a memory, from what my perception of the sea is. I'm not tied down to anything. The colors come from my imagination, as does the movement...It's about the vastness of it, and the weight of it, and what's under the sea."

Cronin studied abstract art in college, and later refined her sketching and painting technique while working on the lush, mountainous Great Blasket Island. Cronin was based in the Netherlands when she visited this rugged stretch of County Kerry, along Ireland's southwestern coast; she felt such a connection to the landscape that she moved there a few weeks later. Today, she lives, works and maintains a gallery in nearby Dingle.

Renate Quigley, a Carmel homeowner who also has a home in Dingle, first encouraged Cronin to visit Carmel. Quigley came across the artist's work in an Irish magazine, and she has since become a collector of Cronin's work.

"When you look at Carol's paintings, you're not just looking at a seascape.



(Clockwise from top) “Big Blue,” “Clogher” and “Sun Burst” are some of the evocative ocean paintings full of movement that Cronin makes based partly on memory and partly on imagination.



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You feel the swell, the water, the ocean...it's like you're in the water," says Quigley. "She got a really tremendous reaction in Carmel. I think people were blown away."

Cronin, who feels drawn to Carmel much in the same way she was first drawn to County Kerry and Great Blasket Island, returned to California in April and continues outlining future

visits. She plans to spend several months here in early 2017, when she will secure a studio and further expand her portfolio.

"The world is really tiny and there are direct flights to San Francisco from here, so I think I'll be back to Carmel quite a lot," she says. "It's one of the most beautiful places, and the size of the town and the people...it's very strange, but it

almost feels half like my home."

For more info about Carol Cronin's seascape paintings, call 831/241-4098 or visit online at [www.facebook.com/TheCarolCroninGallery](http://www.facebook.com/TheCarolCroninGallery), or [www.carolcronin.com](http://www.carolcronin.com). Select works are also displayed at Carmel's American Art Gallery ([www.americanartgalleries.com](http://www.americanartgalleries.com)) on Dolores Street between 7th Avenue and Ocean Avenue. ■



**"Oceans Surge" is an example of the art Cronin exhibits locally at the American Art Gallery in Carmel. The artist from Ireland, who studied abstract art in college, has discovered an affinity for Carmel and plans to return often.**