

# Jean-Alain Raffaili lives to paint

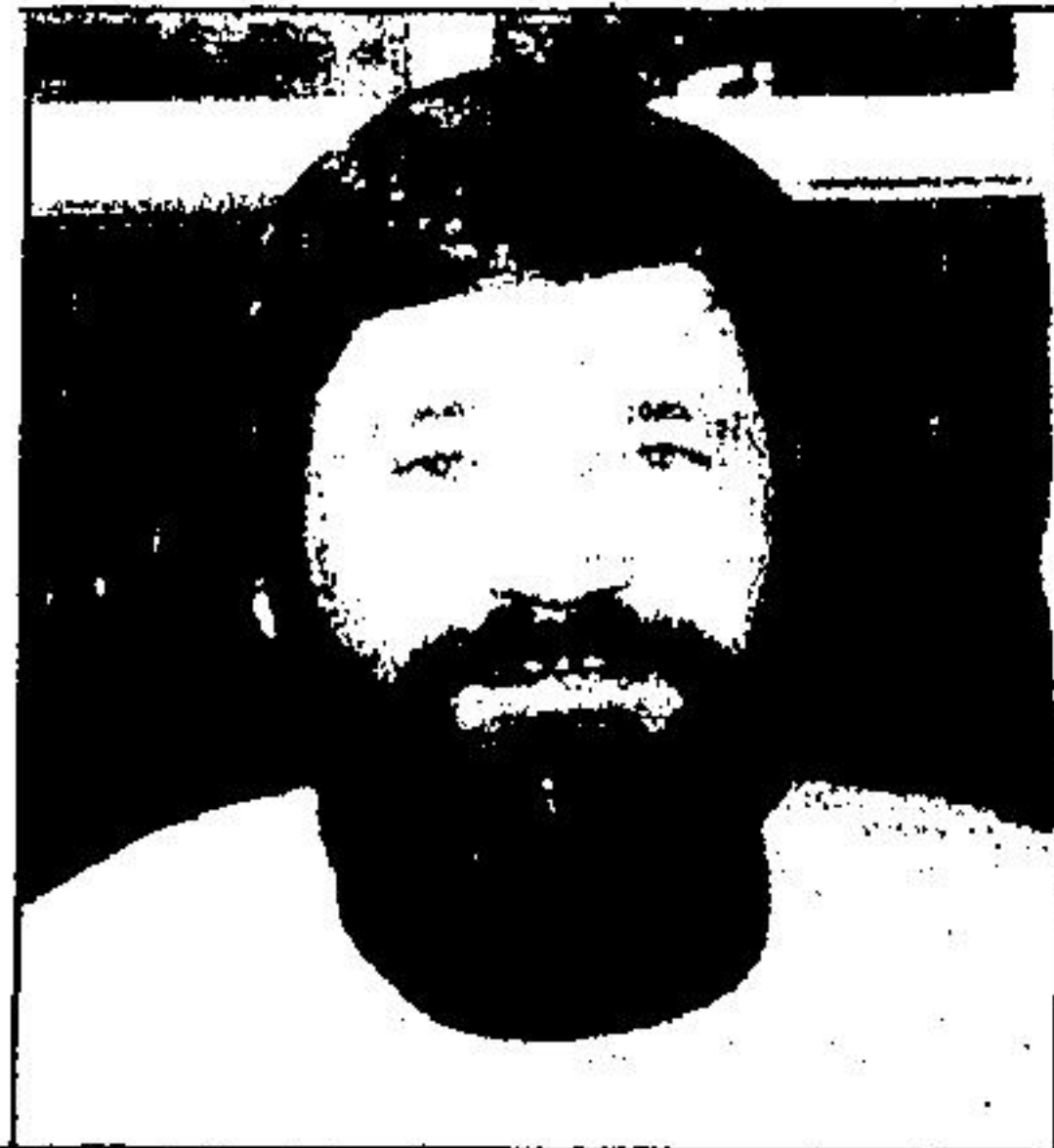
By Linda Kirby  
It's a peaceful setting—trees, rolling hills and a craggy face of the Niagara Escarpment decorated in a fresh blanket of snow.  
Tranquillity exudes from every corner of this luxurious farm setting off Highway 25, north of Milton.

For 36-year-old French-born painter Jean-Alain Raffaili, it is the perfect hide-a-way. His refuge from city chaos is an old chicken house on the farm converted to an outdoor studio.  
He is scarcely known locally.

The oil and watercolor artist who is recognized across Europe, with studios in France and Mexico, calls Milton home for several months every year.  
A student of the art academies of Sienna and Florence, he has also studied at Aix-en-Provence

and Strasbourg in France.  
More recently his works have won him grants from Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council.  
In September he presented his first public Canadian Exhibition at Loranger Gallery in Toronto of abstract canvases and a series of still-life watercolors.

private African airline. He has been a gardener and a dishwasher.  
Trained in hotel management, he ran a hotel business in France and has worked in Paris, Germany and England.  
He now frequently augments his artistic income with his cooking talents at the farm home of his Milton host.



Jean-Alain Raffaili

Although art has played an important role in his life, it has only been during the past seven years Jean-Alain Raffaili has attempted to make it his means of support.

It is not easy being an artist and he admits he must be prepared to do other work to support his first vocation.

That is not difficult for him.

A seasoned globe-trotter, he has crisscrossed the world as an airline steward for 13 years for both Air France and a

The French artist has always worked to paint or to learn more about painting.

Jean-Alain Raffaili's arrival in Canada came about quite unexpectedly seven years ago.

He was catering on a luxury yacht in Monte Carlo when he met up with the owner of the Milton estate.

Impressed with his work and obvious dedication, the man invited the artist to Canada to spend some time painting.  
He accepted—and ar-

ived for two weeks.

"The first time I came was in the fall. I had never seen such colors.

"There was a sense of openness, space. I walked the Bruce Trail every day.

"Here you can find peace."

Every year since that first occasion he has returned to the Milton farm from Europe, in time to catch spring.

Two years ago he became a landed Canadian immigrant.

During his stay in Canada he will spend three or four months painting in oils and watercolors.

His converted old chicken house studio style is nothing new.

He remembers renting a cheap studio in Italy—a 12th century castle chamber near Florence.

Cold and damp, it held few of the romantic connotations found in fairy tales.

He feels his extensive travelling has benefitted his art.

"It gave me an outlook. More than anything else, I am aware of colors.

"In many ways it was a training, a means of preparing myself as an artist."

He describes himself as an abstract expressionist.

His work has included nude studies, flowers and sports scenes such as horses and water polo.

Much of the art has been done in the Speyside area and reflects his love of color.

"Always the color is vivid. It is very important. Unless I am sad and the colors are then sad and grey," he said.

Like any other artist, his work is means of self expression.

"I always paint. It is my way to express myself. All your feelings come out."

A painting can take anywhere from 20 minutes to three or four months to complete.

He points out not every piece of artwork can come out as planned.

"Not everything can be good. You have to destroy a lot to get one that is really good."

Fascinated by other mediums, he has experimented with lithography in addition to oils and watercolors.

There are no financial guarantees as an artist, but that doesn't seem to bother Jean-Alain.

"I find it difficult to part with some of my work.

"It is like a diary, something very personal."

And while success is sweet, it is not necessary.

"I love painting so much that I don't feel I have to succeed.

"I would rather fail in something that I like, than in something I don't like," he explained.

Critical of "commercial" painters whose sole purpose is an income, he avoids painting "what sells".

"I hope I stay honest with my work. You must always be yourself and true to yourself."

He feels fortunate to be doing something that has few ties.

"I feel lucky to be able to do things I want, when I want," he said.

But an artist also leads a lonely existence by common standards.

"When you want to be an artist, nobody can interfere.

"Your work must be your first priority. That is why so many live alone like a monk."

A bachelor, he finds it hard sometimes to be alone, but he doesn't  
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