

Artist Spotlight Series



by Karen Fortson Lee



In the Spotlight....
Jorge Carabelli
of JCBodyCastMiami

There's a gift in being able to see your own naked body in a way that makes you feel good you're seeing it for the first time... in a way that might even move you to tears of joy. Jorge Carabelli is able to give that gift over and over again to his models, who get to experience their bodies in a whole new way thanks to his lens. His process, like the bodies of the naked form, have moved his audience since he started creating them.

Jorge always had a powerful understanding of how expressive a body could be when it was due to the fact that he spent his early years as a male dancer. Into his 30s he continued with other forms of dance, strengthening that connection with his body, understanding how movement can express emotions.

When his dance involvement ended, Jorge was interested in finding something to fill that creative urge. He discovered wood carving. The wood was good with my hands and helped me feel in doing that. I started that... was doing some abstract designs and sculptures. They were made on his being figures. I liked that but was a little frustrated with wood because you make one mistake and it's over.

Soon after, Jorge and his wife were at an art fair and saw one of these body casts. She liked it a lot and wanted to buy it — Jorge liked it too and thought "but I can do that!" he says with a laugh. So after doing a little research on how to do it, he started practicing on his wife. But he stuck to that she finally said "Okay that's enough, go get some models."

Jorge put the word out and a lot of their friends stepped up. It started with them, then word spread, other people heard about it, and then there is just a lot of people that he calls on for his models because "There's people everywhere — people who look at it, love it, and they get to become a work of art."

People who look at the pieces have a lot of a reaction, and that's nice to see. "I've had two weeks with wood," he says, "I'd work on a piece for three months and people would cry. Oh that's nice." But with this method, one piece will take two to three weeks and it's a lot of work and they love it and they're moved by it. The models will sometimes be moved to tears of how it came out. It's very fulfilling.

Some models are friends or friends but others have found the photography or artwork as one to work at a friend's home and they'll contribute a piece. He's done some of his work in art fairs, festivals and other events that way as well.

So how does Jorge work with a model in a way that the final emotional piece he's looking to create? "They dance and then we start taking. When someone's being a model and there's no riding behind anything, they're naked and become very beautiful. But they talk and he gets a sense of their personality, what they're going through at the time, what they want to achieve. Then Jorge will work on creating a pose that will reflect that part of them. Are they strong and confident? Going through a transition? Do they want more freedom in their life? Or something," says Jorge, "I get a sense that they're a strong personality, but you don't see the personality of them. So I get the personality, but... is he that much more confident, trying to get something out, not look backward. It's 'Can you get that person's personality? Can someone see the real creative person?' or 'I can see this girl is real confident.'"



The girl was just really in her own sense and she could have been talking about it," he said. The girl to find a way to capture this, I needed a good camera with her and her "junkies." As well as someone who was being asked her to pose, she walked and I noticed something about her and she was 20 years younger... Jorge managed to capture her in the piece and later when she saw it she started crying. She saw herself in a new light — all at a sudden she's beautiful. I didn't see a huge difference.

Sometimes if Jorge is doing a particular project with a particular theme, that he'll look for particular attributes. Other times people come to him and they want to capture something or they themselves want to model — or they want to model, and they work together to find something in their personality to make it special for them.

Sometimes the idea can be very specific, though. "I had once working on this idea that came from taking in a lot of my models, so do sculptures of women's bodies not in their hands, and have women from the ages of 18 to 75 so that people could look and compare. So that that and people would try to pick out who was what age. I immediately got them engaged with the artwork, but just some were not available to do it, so I had to find for the piece."

So what is that drives Jorge to keep working in this medium? He says making a piece that represents, to tell me, either the model themselves, or the people looking at it. One female model had had a couple of accidents and she wanted a piece done, but wanted to



know if he would wear her raised arms without the mastectomy scars. "Usually things are very realistic," says Jorge. "You see the person in the skin and the artist in the hands. I've never altered one before but I thought 'let me give it a try.' So I made a sculpture of her and went to an in-person event. I made a piece without any scars and she loved it. "That kind of thing is special to me."

Speaking of mastectomies, "I had a model who has since had a double mastectomy, but now has implants and would like to come back and do one with her 'new girl' as she calls them," Jorge tells me. "I always thought it would be nice to do a before and after, putting them together back to back. If that wasn't workable he would like to do it. I don't want to exploit people who've gone through a great traumatic event but rather give them a feeling of closure, or a better sense of confidence."

Contact with the Artist
<https://www.jorgecastaneda.com/>

In terms of self-love, Jorge tells me that the one thing that bothers him the most is when he gets to women about posing and their stance say "twenty years ago, maybe" or "I'll lose twenty pounds." "That really bothers me," he says, "the lack of confidence women have in their bodies. They're all self-critical and that's a result of the society that we live in and the feeling on platforms we see... the magazine covers... understand that. And it must have been that would be meaningful for me, that would be great. That would be my goal. I like to discover that other people how you are beautiful — every body is beautiful in a way and it's my job to put that out. I can't control what you can see it, and everyone else can see it too, so I feel that I'm contributing to the empowerment of women's confidence when they get there to pose for me and I can get involved in that reflects how beautiful they are and that they may not have realized before."

What an inspiring body-positive message! Love me makes with Jorge, I wish there were more of you in this world, spreading the love of self-love. Thank you so much for taking the time to share your work here with us today.



"For my darling husband"

My wife and I were invited to a wedding party at a friend's house. We had never been to a lifestyle party before and I thought that one of my sculptures would fit in nicely. The hostess was very encouraging and for me being it is a woman's vision right near the dress table. The very next night to attend was a 50-year-old woman whom I had never met. After seeing the piece she ran up to me all excited and started asking questions. We talked a little bit and she confessed to me that she had had a double mastectomy and wanted to know if I could make a sculpture for her. I said, "If you've ever seen anyone with mastectomy scars you know they are large and unattractive, with her face towards her breasts

didn't look like what she was born with. She wanted the sculpture to be a surprise for her husband. So one was sitting with me, she was getting out to see with one hand. This was the first time someone had asked me to alter one of my sculptures but I would see that, would mean a lot to her, we would be making a memory of how she used to look when she was "whole." I was flattered. How could I say no? What greater joy is there than contributing to another person's feeling of self-worth? Can the artist's work as I was working on it? Now, thinking, "It's so far, you she was to be so beautiful again." How can I make that happen? For me those are the best moments, when I get to make something that moves people.



"Couple"

One of my first volunteers when I started body casting was a good friend of ours who we were becoming involved in a relationship. There she was standing in my studio naked and all the usual talk about me the new love of her life. It was clear she was truly in love. She even began to cry a little. I was very moved by this. Being in the presence of love is one of the most wonderful experiences in the world. We went on to make her sculpture but I didn't stay the day about what she had shared with me.

When she came away I could capture the love between them, so I asked the sculpture I wanted with his question for over a year, and I finally worked it. It turned out he was funny and playful and I had him immediately. I quickly saw this person in my mind and knew it was perfect for them. I asked them if they would make a couple pose for me and they agreed.

After the session he said that he didn't like it when she pulled her up in public, so he was afraid all the time to stand there and hold it in his hand for about 30 minutes. I love these guys. What a funny couple.



"Strength"

I take a figure drawing class every week, it's good practice that helps keep my eye for proportion. We always have a nude model in class and one of our better artists is the "strong" man. He is over 6'0" and in great physical shape, muscular and well-proportioned. Yes, there too. He has a good face for his body and holds himself like dancers do. When he poses he is graceful and has lots of great angles and shapes. At the same time, his everyday man has been interesting but one look into his eyes tells you this is a man you respect. I love Steve is probably one of the gentlest, kindest people I know. He is loving and happily married for many years. When I asked him to pose he accepted eagerly. I wondered if I could capture both parts of his personality. I wanted to see this strength at him and highlight his strength of character and also his vulnerability. To show both his confidence and his kindness. I think the final result does communicate this. This is probably my most popular sculpture and always gets lots of attention. He's a better man.



"Eternal Femininity"

It's a beautiful woman, same as my cousin's piece. My idea was to make a bust of her, but I didn't find her my idea. When she arrived she immediately dropped down and I was watching her for a while. She had a large cleft, and I thought I might want to cast it. I was intrigued and we began talking about vaginas. She commented that as women get older, their vaginas change very little, but their hands very easily showed their age. This made me think "Wouldn't it be interesting to make out of a woman's vagina and her hand both together. And if I could get women from 10 years to 75 and hang them together, it would be a great comparative piece. I am always very respectful with individuals people here to respond to that, however I struggled with how to ask people if they would model their vaginas for me. It was a little awkward to say the least. It took me weeks to pour out the details and work on my nerve, but finally I started

asking around. It was a lot easier than I expected with the younger models, I only got two "half-year-olds" out of the young women I asked. The big surprise was with some women over 40, they were not only willing, but I quickly had an eager list of more classes that I needed! That was amazing. So I got to work finding women of each age group. The final installation consists of nine sculptures in the shape of an inverted triangle ("V" shape) and males sculpted to use for the women's feet. They were like: "Just a woman's vagina doesn't age, but her hands do. What if you could do that people will think they're younger and old. To this the 75 year old" and "This must be the 11 year old." Some people would agree that our premise works true, some don't. Use to that that the sciences what it is that makes someone's uterus never changes, and what does change is basically superficial. Women are women all their lives, young, old. Age doesn't make a difference.

The Artist Spotlighting artist on other art shows wants to make the the artist's sculpture of a woman's vagina and her hands. But for the sake of privacy we do not show the artist's original work.



"Flying Angel"

My goal when making a body part isn't simply to replicate a human form. It's to convey a bit of the subject's personality. There's a natural intimacy with the model when involved in creating a body part. Once they are in my studio I like to get to know them a little and guide our conversation quickly from the superficial to the more meaningful, enabling me to better understand the nature of the model so I can try and capture their essence.

Many who choose to commission a sculpture are immortalizing a particular stage in their lives, often a transition or milestone such as a career milestone, entering the site of a new relationship, achieving a significant milestone or receiving a health challenge. Still others wish to immortalize changes in their physical form, a well-deserved reward for achieving their goals.

Whatever the reason for ordering, the consensus is that it's a fun, freeing experience that increases their confidence. People often don't realize how beautiful and perfect they are, just as they are. Seeing their bodies in sculpture invariably makes them smile. The lovely ladies I meet to show my strength as I transition from the expected roles of wife and mother to athletes inspire the freedom to experience & evolve, feeling confident, letting go and being present! "Wow, I'd love my work out, but for me. My head seems to have finally come open this one that I like to call my "Flying Angel!"

