

Mini Biography by Janet Falk

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Grant studied method acting with Lee Strasberg 1970 in New York City. He joined the acting unions Screen Actors Guild, American Federation of Television and Radio, and Actors Equity Association and was represented by William Morris Agency. At the request of Italian director, Edoardo Amati, to portray the lead, 'Frank Falcone' in "Master Shot" in 1998, Grant returned to film acting.

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Grant continues to act in independent films and theater, while creating visual art.

1950-1970s: Born Carson Ferri and raised in a middle-class family in Rhode Island, Grant has created characters and stories in visual mediums as drawings, and paintings, in films and on stage. His first acting performances were in the Touisset Point Coggleshell Community Center in Warren, RI at 6 years old. An avid viewer of the television program, *The Mickey Mouse Club*, at age 10 he teamed up with a playmate to create children's theater shows in the family's garage attic, where he directed, art directed and acted in productions performed with and for the neighborhood children. During his grammar school years, he designed themed showcase displays and painted murals reflecting the seasons.

Recommended at age 12 by his art teacher, Grant attended Saturday classes in figure drawing and painting at Rhode Island School of Design. As a young artist, he was a recipient of *The Rhode Island Scholastic Gold Key Art Award*.

By 14, influenced by *The Doors*, *The Rolling Stones*, and *The Beatles*, Grant began his baritone singing career and formed *The Younger Breed* with four musicians, performing at college dances and events throughout New England, including *The Battle of the Bands* sponsored by RI-WPRO radio station.

1970s After graduation from Saint Raphael Academy taught by the Brother of the Christian School, and attending one semester in the Fine Arts Program at the University of Rhode Island, Grant moved to New York City in 1970 where he studied acting with Lee Strasberg and voice with Wally Harper. After cast in the famed commercial campaign for U.N.C.F. '*A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste*', he joined the acting

unions: SAG, AFTRA, AEA, and by 1972 was represented by William Morris Agency with the stage name *Carson Grant*. Grant launched his film career in small roles in classics as *Man on a Swing*, *The Front*, and *Death Wish*. Still in his twenties, he played Thomas Jefferson for the WNET 13 Bicentennial series *The Last Ballot*. Grant performed various stage roles for the New York City Opera Company. Grant received his Bachelors degree with honors in Psychology from Hunter College (CUNY), where he was *Psi Chi International Honors Society in Psychology* president in 1979.

Grant painted large oil canvases and constructed many art installations in alternative exhibition spaces as part of the East Village, Manhattan 1970s Art Movement, participating in *Colab*, *Charas PS64 - El Bohio*, *ABC No Rio*, *Fashion Moda*; and many group art shows in the East Village, the Westside, and the Bronx in alternative spaces. Leo Castelli recognized Carson's installation of living sand sculptures *Coney Island Bathing Beauties* shown in the "The Coney Island Art Show 1980," and his triptych *In Life Turmoil* in the *Time Square Show 1980* organized by Collaborative Project Inc. Colab. Carson had a cobalt blue 'graffiti tag' of a pine tree coastline with his initials CFG, and on a midnight graffiti session, he had painted ten foot high cobalt blue Iris flowers stretching the block-long 100 foot wall on the lower eastside Con Edison plant, Avenue C and 14th Street, titled *Open your Irises*, in protest of the pollution produced by the energy plant. Influenced by Robert Rauschenberg's use of art for social change, Carson's one-man exhibition was called *Nature-Nuclear* at the 1979 Jack Morris Gallery, NYC, where he constructed a large climb-up-into 'scarred Mother Earth Uterus' post nuclear with her next distorted generation traveling down her maimed fallopian tubes into her contaminated womb (30' x 40'), encouraged the viewer to consider alternative energy sources to protect our environment. (Times: 11-30-79)

The seventies brought an awareness of our environment, pollution and nuclear waste contamination (3 mile Island & Chernobyl). For two summers, Grant hitch-hiked and walked the entire USA photographing damaged natural reserves. Marching with the Sioux Indian in South Dakota, as part of *The No-Nukes* concert tour 1979 *MUSE*, Grant returned to NYC to establish an award-winning not-for-profit organization, *Environmental Artists United (EAU)*, sponsored by grants through *Avon Foundation* and *America the Beautiful Fund*, which promoted art educational exhibits focusing on our environment and conservation methods. One honored exhibition *Four Elements: Fire-Wind-Earth-Water* for *Earthday 1980* received special attention from American Express during the now famous event. Grant was one of the founders of *The Westside Arts Coalition*, NYC, helping to preserve the Upper Westside artistry, neighborhood, *The Symphony Space*, and actively 'worked-the-soil' to create *The Broadway Gardeners 1970* which dispersed into *The Broadway Mall Association*, *The Westside Community Garden* and *The Riverside Park Fund Community Gardens* along the park's promenade. As an adjunct faculty member of College of New Rochelle, Grant aided the efforts to bring Rosa Parks to Harlem for the renaming of the campus to *The Rosa Parks Campus of New Rochelle College*.

1980s: Grant earned his Master of Arts summa cum laude in Socio-Drama at University of Connecticut. He performed postgraduate work at Columbia University and presented his research at Georgetown's Drama Therapy Association Convention 1985. Grant's research was cited in *Drama Therapy: Concepts and Practices*, Robert J. Landy, C.C. Thomas 1986.

Wanting to paint in the new electronic technology of the 1980s, Grant attended and taught at Pratt University, New York City to enhance his knowledge of computer graphics and digital editing. He worked with innovative companies, as a computer graphic artist-animator and a video editor contributing to form the late 1980-90s advancements in computer graphic applications using AT&T- NASA software, creating formats for the premier of CD-Rom, digital video, and Internet technology, which applied many color principles Grant developed with a team of programmers for NYC companies as: Fusion, Advanced Graphics, Exhibit Technologies, Carabineer, Ayer Advertising, and Ogilvy-Mathers Advertising.

As one of the artists group *Collaborative Projects* (Colab), for *The Coney Island Show* 1980, Grant created a three character sand-sculpture installation, titled *Coney Island Bathing Beauties*. He approached Leo Castelli with the idea of recreating a performance installation piece on opening night for the Leo Castelli Gallery. Although impressed with the themed character-study installation, Leo asked Carson, "But what can I sell? The idea?"

Painting on the computer tablet, in 1991 Grant created animations for the Sony's Time Square Video Board. The Ayer Advertising campaign *Breakthrough With the Unexpected* animation of an egg cracking to release a butterfly, captured Ad Week's reviewer Cathy Taylor (2-25-91), and Madison Avenue advertisers' imagination that computer graphic images were a profitable advertising tool. IBM, Intel, Phillips, Kodak, DeBeers, Shell and American Express followed suit by asking Grant to create animations for their multi-media identities and exhibitions. National Geographic's 1989 *Global Access Interactive Gallery* included many of Grant's images and animations.

1990s: For the 1990 ACM SIGGRAPH Convention in Texas, to honor President John F. Kennedy's memory, Grant constructed inside the old Dallas Union Train Station, a walk-under suspended cellophane and plastic 3-D hologram mountain installation *Harmony Mountain* (100' x 100') with the purpose to harness and direct peaceful thoughts from the viewers under the mountain toward a twenty foot, five point *Texas Star Vortex* which hung between the massive exterior columns of the Dallas Union Train Station building frontage which overlooked the historically tarnished Dallas Dealy Plaza and book depository. Based in New York City, Grant traveled the USA designing multi-media exhibitions, video wall and exhibit installations for Fortune 500 companies.

Grant continued his visual arts career working in the fields of computer graphics and video editing until in 1998 Italian director Edoardo Amati asked him to portray the lead character 'Frank Falcone' in *Master Shot* rekindling Grant's acting career.

2000s: One of Grant's most challenging roles was portraying a living person honestly as Howard Hughes at ages 40 and 60 while suffering from paranoia and in drug-induced states in the film *HH* (unreleased). Selected film roles include Robert Munoz's feature film *Dear J* where Grant played dual-lead protagonist roles. Carson Grant's performed a preacher in *The House is Burning* film which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival 2006 with Wim Wender's *Chambre 666*. In the musical film *Summer Dayz* written and directed by the Passero brothers, Grant sang the role of 'Tom Albright'.

The film *The House is Burning* won for 'Best Film' in the Woodstock Film Festival 2006 and Hoboken Film Festival 2006 where Grant portrayed 'The Preacher'.

Grant for his role as 'Mr. O'Brien' won for 'Best Actor - The Italian American Heritage Award', noting Grant's contribution to the positive portrayal of the Italian American culture, Guild of Italian America Actors Film Festival 2007 in the short film *God Bless America*, director Rodrigo Diaz McVeigh.

Grant directed in 2007 a mini '*Romeo and Juliet*' for the Instant Shakespeare Company, in association with Drama Tune for the '*Shakespeare in the Gardens*' series in the Westside Community Garden.

Grant for his role as 'Joaquin', the cast, the crew and the directors won 'Best Web Drama' in the 1st Webby awards 2007 for *The West Side*, directors Ryan Bilsborrow-Koo and Zachary Liebman.

Grant serves as the elected vice president of Guild of Italian American Actors 2008-2016, and serves as the GIAA delegate to the Associated Actors and Artistes of America.

Carson Ferri-Grant was included in *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in American Art*, and *Who's Who in the World* editions beginning 2009.

Grant for his role as 'Abramo Mangene' and cast won 'Best Ensemble', New York Television Competition 2010, for the feature film and web series pilot *Gelber and Manning in Pictures*, director James Lester.

Grant for his role as 'Murray' was nominated as 'Best Supporting Actor' in the feature film *Sneakers and Soul*, director Jonathan Zelenak at the Clearwater Film Festival in 2010.

In 2015 Grant, Vice President of GIAA (Guild of Italian American Actors), was elected as the Vice President of the International Board of the Associated Actors and Artistes of America-The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO

In 2015 Grant was honored to portray 'Jesus, being taken down from the cross,' in Bernardo Siciliano's painting exhibited in Aicon Gallery, NYC.

To date Grant has created more than 300 film characters. Grant's films have screened in national and international film festivals throughout the world.

Personal family notes:

Grant's maternal Welsh family name Sweet genealogy dates from Wales migrating to England, lineage recorded from John Swete (1450) Modbury, England to John Sweet, son of Robert Sweet (1552-1578), who emigrated on the Winthrop Fleet, departing from Plymouth, England to arriving 1630 in Salem, Massachusetts. In 1636 John Sweet was granted RI land by Roger Williams, as part of the 38 families who traveled with Williams from Massachusetts to establish the colony of Rhode Island based upon principles of complete religious toleration, separation of church and state, and political democracy, which were incorporated into the United States constitutional amendments. Roger Williams insisted that land must be purchased from the native Indian tribe, rather than taken from them forcefully, in order to claim title. Williams purchased land from the Narragansett Indian Tribe and established the settlement of Providence, Rhode Island. (Founders and Patriots, p. 234)

Several pieces of ornately carved art objects and furniture created by Grant's great grandfather, William Russell Sweet (1860-1946) are on display at the Pettaquamscutt Historical Society in Kingston, RI. Grant's grandfather was Colonel Russell Herndon Sweet, RI National Guard since 1915, and former chief of public relations for the First Service Command, honored in 1946 with the *Legion of Merit Medal* for his brave work in the Military Intelligence Service of the War Department, C.I.A. during both WWI and WWII, who married Lucy Humphrey Young in Rhode Island 1919. In 2007, the Guild of Italian American Actors honored Grant for Best Actor with *The Italian American Heritage Award* who dedicated the award to his nephew Chief Warrant Officer 3, Shawn Benjamin who served 12 years in the *U.S. Army: Special Forces* and lost his life in 2006. As the ninth generation who assisted in establishing American Independence, Grant as the ninth generation descendant of the *Sweet* family who assisted in establishing American Independence, was honored in 2008 with a membership into *The National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution* through the Rhode Island Chapter

Carson Ferri Grant's paternal Italian family surname is *Ferri*. Grant's family lineage in music and stage history includes his great grandfather, Niccolò Luigi Francesco Paolo Agostino Ferri, an Italian opera composer of '*Luigi Rolla*' and '*Lara*' for *La Scala opera house, Teatro alla Scala* in Milan, Italy 1850. In Paris 1860 known for his chamber music, Niccolò Ferri was honored as a member of *The Society of Authors and Composers, La Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs*, then settled in London 1876 teaching at the Guildhall School of Music. Grant's great uncle, Giovanni Ferri, an Italian opera tenor under the pseudonym of anagrammatic *Ettore Irfre*, trod the boards of the major theaters of Italy, France, Spain, Russia and America among other countries, received acclaim and honors. The Iberian people gave him the title of superb *Nino de Espana*. During a scene of *Piccinini* at the Bari opera house Teatro Petruzzi, Italy, Ettore brought the ultimate triumph in death 1879 to himself at age 56. Son of Niccolò Ferri, Anchise Agostino Ferri from Bari and Mary Massari Ferri from Massa Carrarra, Italy married and emigrated from Bientina, Italy to Rhode Island in 1909, giving birth to three children. One son, Joseph Anchise Agostino Ferri married Leila Natalie Sweet in Rhode Island 1945 and Grant was one of three children.

Trivia

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For the film *Dead Serious* Grant sat for hours while makeup artist, Anthony Pepe created a plaster casts of Grant's facial, head, neck, and teeth areas to develop the mask for the Master Vampire when the character Reverend Bob Rivington makes his transformation at the end of the film. Anthony Pepe designed the *Dead Serious* film poster using Grant's portrait to shape the blood-dripping vampire image.

The semi-circular scar over Grant's left eye brow and nose was inflicted by the lens of an Arri BL 16mm camera director in the hands Emad Beshay while filming *The Lost Face*.

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Personal Quotes

"The Arts, especially film, transcend all cultural barriers, hopefully offering an avenue where all people can find a common place to meet, understand each other, and nurture a safe world for all our children to grow strong within." Carson Grant (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carson_Grant).

Where Are They Now

(2016) Living in New York City and creating acting characters in a variety of independent film and stage projects.

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