Leanne Venier and her oil-on-canvas piece titled "Into the Depths"

The Art of Healing

BY NANCY PREYOR-JOHNSON

ONE OF LEANNE VENIER'S LIFE PHILOSOPHIES IS: "If you over-think something, it messes it up." Venier, a painter and former acupuncturist, prefers to rely on her intuition. She believes in the healing property of her work. "Having color in our lives can literally heal our bodies and our souls," she reveals in her artist's statement.

The Austinite, who grew up in Canada, earned an engineering degree in Michigan. She moved to California to design submarines, lived in Italy for seven years and followed love to Austin. Next came a move to British Columbia to study acupuncture and start a healing practice to work with cancer patients. Venier is back in Austin, where today she is a popular artist whose abstract pieces go for up to $6,000.

There is more to her vibrant oil paintings than pleasing imagery. Self taught in her craft, Venier spent 20 years in the study and practice of alternative healing, including color therapy, Eastern medicine and Jungian psychology. She began to paint professionally in 2007 and says her art makes use of science-based healing qualities. Venier says that similar to the way music affects a person's emotions, the color in her paintings create a calmness that brings a body into a balance that can help prevent or fight disease.

When Venier begins an abstract painting, she uses a color that she is drawn to on that day and relies on a meditative state to take her through the creative process. Once the painting is complete (which can often take several months), she hopes it speaks a personal healing language to each viewer.

Venier won the grand prize of the Jury for Outstanding Artwork in Vico del Gargano, Italy, in 2008. In 2009 she was selected from thousands as a finalist for the prestigious Hunting Art Prize in Houston.

Venier's solo exhibit, *The Color Effect: The Art and Science of Color and Healing*, is on display through June 30 at the University of Texas Health Science Center Library. She will discuss her work from noon to 1 p.m., June 9 at the University of Texas Health Science Center–San Antonio (UTHSCSA) library and explore, among other topics, why we favor specific colors. "The body always knows what it needs," she says. "We have this innate ability to be drawn to colors that make us feel better."

Venier was recently asked to consult at the Austin State Hospital, where she's helping create a more peaceful environment. "It's amazing how the medical community is starting to take an interest in this," she says.

Venier's exhibit comes to San Antonio via request from Oscar Gonzalez, a research study coordinator at UTHSCSA, who found Venier's Facebook page and was intrigued by the color healing aspect of her work. He visited her gallery and purchased a few small pieces, then recommended a show to colleagues in San Antonio. Gonzalez's wife died of cancer when she was 45, and he says his new paintings lift his spirits. He wants the same for others, especially those who suffer from painful or stressful conditions. "Imagine this vivid, mesmerizing art in a chemotherapy clinic," he says. "Treatments are long and stressful, and people need to find a way to relax. My wife would have loved the paintings." ★