

## Nature gets artist through Thick and Thin



**By Brock Weir**

Nature stirs emotion in everyone, whether it is the calm and quiet of a red leaf fluttering to the ground in a light fall breeze, or the thunder of an ocean wave crashing against the rocks.

Translating these emotions into something tangible is often a difficult task, but one that is tackled head-on by Simcoe County artist Janine Wheeler in her new exhibition (Through) Thick & Thin, an ongoing exhibition at the Aurora Cultural Centre.

Although Ms. Wheeler's abstract paintings have been on the walls of the Church Street School since August 11, the exhibition formally opened Wednesday night with the artist on hand to share her work with art lovers from York, Simcoe and beyond.

(Through) Thick & Thin is billed as a collection of abstracts collecting "glazes of paint and dry media to manipulate the eye and mind; a reflection on the creation process relating to physical and imagined spaces."

"Creating bushy forms of paint emerge from and recede into the surface, nodding to a surreal world of imagined foliage-like masses," reads the Artist's Statement. "Smooth and painterly, yet leafy and textured, organic and yet conjured. Fluid glazes of paint are layered to achieve a meditative space, for both the eyes and mind to wander, rest, and contemplate. Truthful to both the creative process and the imagery it hints to, mirroring one's own slippery and sublime connection with nature."

Added Curator Stephanie Nicolo at Wednesday's opening: "Those are beautiful words and the best way to describe what we are surrounded by. Jeanine, it has been a pleasure to work with you, responding to your practice, to the nature of your exploration and your goals. The artwork here are timeless paintings, alas more like drawings of the movement of time, captured forever for us to ponder, meditate, and many times lose ourselves into their sublime nature.

"This body of work can be seen as one piece on two floors, each piece being a stroke in your overall imagery. You constantly strive for this. May you recognize this exhibition as a stepping stone to many more explorations and achievements as you push yourself through thick and thin for this presentation of mesmerizing pieces. Congratulations and good luck for your future."

Ms. Wheeler, who hails from Utopia, a small community between New Tecumseth and Barrie, said she finds her inspiration in the world around her.

"This body of work is nature, so trees, water and the feeling I get when I am surrounded by nature," she said. "I am trying to capture that and let the painting process pull that out naturally rather than trying to copy someone. When they look at my work, I want people to feel something and somehow connect them back to the experiences they have had."

The artist says that right now she is finding herself in an "experimental phase," working with new paints and media, and "trusting in the process."

"The palate has changed a little bit with the new works," said Ms. Wheeler when asked to give a bit of a teaser into things to come. (Through) Thick & Thin runs at the Aurora Cultural Centre, 22 Church Street, through November 24.