

Local artist Deb Menken hosting solo show at Alton Mill Arts Centre

'Seasons' is the first solo show Menken has ever exhibited in a gallery

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For Deb Menken, painting is just as much, if not more, about the journey as the destination.

Right now, and until January 28, Menken is exhibiting her solo show 'Seasons' in Gallery 104 at the Alton Mill Arts Centre.

It's the first time Menken has ever exhibited a solo show at a gallery. In the past, she's exhibited her work at the Millcroft Inn, which is also in Alton.

Menken called her show 'Seasons' for two reasons: the first was paintings inspired by the changing of seasons, and the second was the fact she's showcasing paintings from different 'seasons' of her artistic journey.

Menken began painting in 2015 and was immediately drawn to the abstract style. As she continued her journey as an artist, she explored other muses like florals and Northern Ontario landscapes. She always maintained her love for abstract art, and most recently has been dedicating her time to paintings of that style.

'Now I'm back to my first love? I've always wanted to be an abstract artist, that was my goal,' said Menken. 'I've been finding my way and learning. No matter what you paint, you're learning.'

There are two paintings specifically that led to Menken naming her show Seasons: Fall Cleanup 1 & 2. Menken was playing around with different ideas in her studio last November when she saw her husband raking leaves from their maple trees. The cool colours of Fall and the swirling of the leaves inspired Menken's brushstrokes as she worked on two canvases simultaneously. The paintings can now be enjoyed by themselves or as a diptych - two pieces that together create a single art piece.

Menken said she loves abstract art so much because of the unpredictability in it.

'What I love is the painting process,' she said. 'Making little discoveries? it's that intuitive 'what happens if I do this?'... it's the joy of discovery, it's so fun.'

These days, some of Menken's favourite colours are turquoise, blue and orange. Many of her recent abstract works feature these colours, and it has led to a cohesive look for her Seasons show. Also lending itself to cohesion is the fact Menken works on multiple paintings at once.

'While one is drying, you move on to the next one,' she said. 'What you've done in one painting (might) inspire you.'

Menken is never afraid to take a painting in a new direction. There's even one painting in her exhibition that was once something different entirely.

'When you get stuck in a painting? make a bold move. It can reignite your creativity,' said Menken. 'The old path is gone, you've got a new beginning.'

Menken had an opening reception for her show on January 13. It was after a bad snowstorm and she debated cancelling it, but the weather turned out to be nice on the morning of the reception and she decided to host it anyways. It was a good decision, as many

people stopped in.

?I met lots of nice people; I love talking to people when they come in,? said Menken. ?Seeing all your work in one room, seeing the cohesiveness of it and hearing the feedback from people that they love it, makes it all worthwhile.?