

NATURAL DYNAMIC

MEMORY AND FORM MEET ON CANVAS

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“Like many little girls, I spent a lot of time drawing,” artist Valerie Beller admits. But few young girls develop their childhood doodling into a thriving artistic career as Beller has, with work featured in more than 200 private and public collections all over the world.

The Texas native studied a variety of arts as a child, but was always drawn to painting. After college in New York she moved to Chicago, where she completed a Masters of Fine Art at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Inspired by personal narrative, memory and nature, Beller’s colorful work expresses a depth of emotion using a visual vocabulary of organic forms; circles and ovals are arranged in diagrammatic configurations, often described as having a mathematical or architectural quality, evoking the continuous relationship between nature and science.

Beller’s creative process is lengthy and painstaking, and it can take six months to create a single piece. Working from an attic studio in her Portage Park home, she begins by “toning” the canvas with broad sweeps of paint, over which she layers multiple fields of color. “I’m in constant dialogue with the work and I listen for it to ‘tell’ me what it needs,” she says. Working on multiple pieces simultaneously, the process requires a meditative patience and long stretches of singular focus, rewarded, she says, when viewers feel a personal connection with her art, drawn from their own experience.

With the guidance of her agent, Jean Albano, whom she credits with bringing her paintings to public attention, Beller hopes to exhibit her work in museums and to break into the New York and European art scenes. But she has no plans to leave Chicago, a city she appreciates as being “really livable, with plenty of wonderful cultural institutions.”

Beller acknowledges that achieving balance between her demanding roles as a working artist, mother and wife is challenging. “Painting requires incredible discipline and motivation,” she says. “But being able to do what I love and knowing that my art is being welcomed into someone’s personal space is truly satisfying.”