

**LOCAL**

# House paint is Ventura artist's medium

By Nicole D'Amore  
Special to The Star

Cassandra Tondro shows her concern for the environment through her artwork: abstract paintings using repurposed house paint and, lately, ecoprints made from natural plant materials.

Since moving into her house in northeast Ventura in the spring of 2014, Tondro has built an 800-square-foot studio that she is opening to the public on Saturday.

Light and bright with a large open area in the center, the studio has a concrete floor that is covered with a carpet and a large plastic sheet, essentially Tondro's palette. Shelves along one wall contain about 200 1-gallon cans of latex house paint, arranged according to color. Paint comes from recycling centers and donations.



Tondro

Tondro pours, dips and squeegees the paint onto canvas using various techniques.

Although she has only been painting for about 20 years, art was her first love. Her mother is an artist, a painter and sculptor.

"I grew up with a lot of art materials around, encouraged in that direction — only not when it came to choosing a profession," Tondro said. "I had always wanted to be an artist; I didn't have any alternative plans."

When a counselor at Santa Monica College suggested computer programming as a promising profession, Tondro reluctantly followed through. She worked as a computer programmer for 18 years.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

"Passion" is an abstract paintings by local artist Cassandra Tondro made from repurposed house paint,

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**ARTISTIC TOUCH**

"But I was always trying to find a way out of it," she said. She earned degrees in sociology and psychology and was in a doctoral program at UCLA.

"Nothing was ever quite the right fit; I was always searching," she said.

Then the company she worked for relocated to Ohio and laid off everyone in Los Angeles.

"At first I was devastated," she said. "But they gave us a really good severance package, and I thought, 'Wait a minute, this is my opportunity to do something different.'"

Tondro opened a store in Santa Monica called Wild Fiber, selling fiber art supplies and hiring teachers for classes.

Eventually she started taking art classes.

"I had always wanted to paint, so I took classes at Otis and UCLA. I just decided this is it, no time like the present," she said.

Tondro discovered house paint about 10 years ago. An artist friend, John Robertson, was using what Home Depot calls "oops" paints — those mixed incorrectly or that people changed their minds about.

"I started playing around with house paint, and I really liked it better than acrylics and oil," she said.

Paint drips on the floor led to the discovery of her "organic" technique.

"I took a canvas and pushed it into the paint on the floor, and it was just amazing," she said. "I've always been intrigued with pressing into the paint rather than applying the paint to the canvas."

The way she lifts the canvas from the paint determines the design.

"Things happen while the paintings are drying," she said. "The paints are different thicknesses, different viscosities, so some colors rise and others sink." Bubbles sometimes form and break, revealing another color underneath.

"Then I started pouring the paint but manipulating it with my finger to get trails and patterns," she said.

Tondro's latest technique involves printing sheets of unprimed canvas with kitchen utensils she bought at a thrift store, dipped in paint.

"I'm having fun — it's like kitchen tool art," she said. "I've never been a realist, I don't like just taking a No. 1 brush and making little marks. I like spontaneity and experimental stuff, seeing what will happen."

Sometimes she texturizes the canvas with molding paste, then squeegees paint across in layers, creating landscape designs.

She has done corporate commissions of some of those paintings, working through art consultants. She sells paintings through her website, <http://www.tondro.com>, and also through galleries in Florida and Michigan.

In addition, she has been doing some ecoprints, transferring the pattern of leaves and plants by steaming them onto paper and fabric.

"I've always been interested in natural dyeing with plant-based materials," she said.

Tondro's open studio is from 4 to 6 p.m. Saturday at 10446 Hewitt St., Ventura. For more information visit her website or call 918-7140.

To recommend an artist to be profiled in this section, or for more information, contact Nicole D'Amore at [ArtProfiles1@gmail.com](mailto:ArtProfiles1@gmail.com).