

Trudie Wolking

Trudie's Design for Retirement

Summer 2023 Featured Artist



With 10,000 Baby Boomers reaching retirement age every day, the internet is brimming with tips to help them transition from kinetic careers to a more static existence in retirement. The good news is that it doesn't have to be boring. For many, like Trudie Wolking, retirement was a clarion call to create something new and uplifting.

If you take a peek at her Facebook and Instagram pages, it's clear that Trudie has a kind of grit that belies the Southern belle charm she exudes. For example, when faced with a medical condition that mandated early retirement, Trudie chose to focus on expanding her creative life rather than shrink from the challenges of that diagnosis. Early retirement, she thought, would be an opportunity to further enrich her life by delving deeper into her art practice. This would be her new purpose - to create art.

Above: Surrender, encaustic mixed media by Trudie Wolking

Hers is a studio that many of us yearn for. High ceilings, great light, beaucoup storage, and access to other creative folks who work in her building. Located in the heart of the arts district of downtown Lafayette, Louisiana, the studio's only drawback is that it's housed in a 100 year old wood building. On occasion, this has given some neighbors pause - you know...ancient wood structure...open flames from the oversized Card Map torch she prefers! Eeek!



Trudie Wolking in her beautifully organized studio in the arts district of downtown Lafayette, Louisiana

Successful retirees understand that it's important to establish routines that loosely resemble the work-life that has been left behind. Trudie jumped on that concept right away! During the latter part of her 23 year career as a special education teacher, she could only work in her studio on the weekends. "Now, the plan is to be in my studio Monday through

Friday from 8am to 3pm", Trudie details. "I'll go in right after hitting the gym. I always feel so great after - I think the endorphin rush stimulates my creative juices," she chuckles.



Left: Crossing Thresholds, encaustic mixed media by Trudie Wolking

Experts recommend finding new pursuits during our later years—hobbies that capture our interest and curiosity. Even before considering retirement, Trudie, as many of us do, started browsing the internet just for fun. What she found changed the trajectory of her eventual retirement, especially when she came across master teacher Nancy Crawford,

who had posted an online series called 'The Wonderful World of Wax'.



Above Left: Brouhaha, encaustic mixed media by Trudie Wolking
Above Right: Masks We Wear, encaustic mixed media by Trudie Wolking

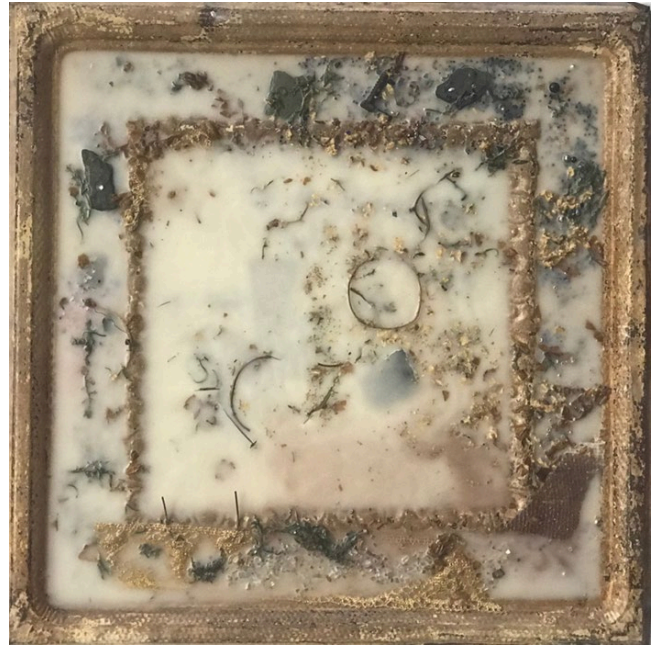


Nancy's videos ignited a spark that would draw Trudie to many encaustic teachers such as Daniella Woolf, Bonny Leibowitz, Dietlind Vander Schaaf, Lorraine Glessner, to name just a few. Trudie eagerly participated in their workshops and retreats even eventually signing up for a two-week residency in Brooklyn, NY with Michael David. Known for his sense of immediacy and feverish approach to painting, David recognized Trudie's perfectionist streak and goaded her into embracing chaos. "I learned so much in such a short amount of time that it took months for me to process it all," Trudie reports. "It was a challenge but I credit him and my other teachers with inspiring me to become a committed and more creative practitioner of encaustic art."

Being connected is important to Trudie who is active with her church, spends time with her family (which includes 12 grandchildren) and enjoys chatting with the other artists who work nearby. She also volunteers with affiliations like IEA (International Encaustic Artists) by posting content and comments on social media sites.

Of course, all this activity needs a counterbalance. "I do love my quiet time and my studio is the best place for it," she says. "When I'm working, I mostly listen to classical music and the occasional chug chug of the passing trains...which I love," she adds quickly.

Right: Displaced, encaustic mixed media by Trudie Wolking



Trudie is a purist. "I've tried other mediums but nothing thrills me more than working with melted wax and then setting my stuff on fire," she states with an impish grin. "My process includes taking photos of old structures to use as reference then building each piece in layers on substrates like cradled panels, slate or tin. I'm a big recycler, so adding ephemera like old photos and vintage maps, or glass beads, sand, plant materials just feel like my art is contributing to sustainability in a small way."



"Recently, I've been experimenting with three dimensions. On an impulse, I entered an encaustic piece that was accepted as part of a local gallery exhibit. I was thrilled. In fact, that show inspired me to try to create something else - this time I'm incorporating used tea bags just for the challenge of it." It turns out that Trudie's got plenty of available material, since sweet tea is a staple in her home, as it is all over the south.

Left: Displaced, 3-D encaustic mixed media by Trudie Wolking

What's next for Trudie? "I love learning from other artists, so I'm always on the lookout for interesting workshops being taught by encaustic masters that are held in exciting locations." After thinking for a moment Trudie adds, "Come to think about it, Greece and Italy are on my short list. It would be a thrill to study and show my work there. If you hear of anything, please let me know!"

It's clear that Trudie's version of retirement closely resembles what the experts recommend; let go of the past and embrace your future, push boundaries, continue to learn new things, keep your body and your mind active, engage with others and most of all, Trudie says, "don't rush, take the time you need to adjust, and be kind to yourself."



Trudie Wolking lives in Lafayette, Louisiana and is currently showing her artwork as part of the Cur Non exhibit that runs through August at the Acadiana Center for the Arts in Lafayette.

For more information, you can visit her on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#),

or her website: <https://trudiewolking.com>