

Spotlight: Carol Retsch-Bogart, Mixed Media Artist



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With a long career as a psychotherapist helping others dig through the layers of their lives, it should come as no surprise that the art created by Carol Retsch-Bogart is in layers. Building those visual layers with paint, papers, fibers, found objects and encaustic wax, Carol shares thoughts and dreams from her own experience.



How did you find yourself on an artist's path? Always there? Lightbulb moment? Dragged kicking and screaming? Evolving?

I was a psychotherapist for over 40 years which in many ways is the opposite of being an artist. Assisting clients in understanding THEIR lives is very different than exploring my own inner drives which I do in my art.

Therapy is about finding words to express – and art is about the visual and tangible expression. Both utilize understanding the many layers and textures of life – and collage allows me this process. My artistic life started by making valentines from potato stamps with my then-small children. This gave way to more complex collaged valentines over the years. I would see them framed on friends' walls – and I think that was my “lightbulb moment.” Valentines gave way to paintings, and now life comes full circle with hopes of making valentines with my new granddaughter someday.



Musical Dresses, encaustic wax and oil with collaged painted papers and ribbon embedded in the wax

What inspires your work?

More than inspired – I am just plain curious. I am fascinated with pattern, color, materials and a desire to explore. I ask myself “what would happen if?” and before I know it something serendipitous is happening. I love juxtaposing different patterns, colors, materials, to see how they might converse with each other.



Peaches, encaustic wax and oil with collaged painted papers and dyed organza embedded in the wax

What different media do you create with? How do you decide which medium will best express what you want to say?

That is a great and crucial question for me. Unfortunately, I think there is not a medium that does not interest me. I have become a bit of a hoarder because I just don't know when that found object, like that little rusted washer I found on the street, might not come in handy? I think my comfort zone is collage – regardless of the medium used.

Encaustic wax is my go-to most of the time because of its magic, flexibility, transparency, and wonderful “glue” ability to incorporate papers, fabrics, and all manner of “stuff.” That I can continually add and subtract by painting or layering, and then removing and scraping away is endlessly fascinating.



Low Tide, encaustic wax and oil with imbedded razor clam shells and shibori silk

When it comes to creating, are you more of a planner or an improviser?

I start with an idea (like encaustic vessels), but invariably what is in my head does not translate to my hand – and then it evolves into something different.



Making Her Nest, encaustic wax and oil and graphite

What do you do differently? What is your signature that makes your work stand out as yours?

I think my signature is my fascination with taking found or created bits and creating something very different with them. For example, I collected razor clam shells at the beach one year and created a vertebrae of sorts and incorporated them and shibori silk into encaustic paintings. Or, a kimono was created out of every technique I ever learned stitched together – eco-dyed silk, and papers painted, printed, dipped in indigo and rusted.



Reconstructed Kimono, stitched bits of indigo/rusted/printed/eco-dyed papers

Do you focus on one piece exclusively from start to finish or work actively on more than one project at a time?

I prefer to work on several pieces in a series at a time. If I work on only one I become too obsessive and scared I'll mess it up, so I become tight and less adventurous. Working on at least 3 at a time allows me breathing space, freedom to physically and visually roam, and to experiment.



Vases on Polka Dot Cloth, encaustic wax and oil with collaged painted papers with ticket stubs embedded in the wax

Describe your creative space. How does your studio organization contribute to your work process?

Working with encaustic wax requires good ventilation, so my studio (which we built in a disgusting attic) now has windows, fans, stainless steel table for wax-melting pots, and lots of shelving for all my collected papers. However, the organization lasts only so long and chaos frequently ensues.



Carol's Studio

What are the indispensable tools and materials in your studio? How do they improve your work?

Since I move between media – I have a lot of materials. My husband jokes I have a satellite Jerry's Artarama store in my studio. The usual paints and gel medium, good glues, encaustic wax and pigment sticks, and pottery tools for scraping and incising. The 3- in-1 woodies (by Stabilo) are great because they write on wax and are also water soluble. And then, of course, my collected materials of weathered ticket stubs, vintage papers, napkins, dyed organza,....you name it!



Plums & Oranges, encaustic wax and oil with collaged painted papers and dyed organza embedded in the wax

What plays in the background while you work? Silence? Music, audiobooks, podcasts, movies? If so, what kind?

It really varies.....frequently NPR but when the news gets to be too much – music. Late at night James Brown or Leon Bridges definitely helps rev me up!



She Lays Blue Eggs, encaustic wax and oil with collaged painted papers embedded in the wax

Do you have gallery representation? How did that come about?

Yes, [FRANK Gallery](#) in Chapel Hill, NC juried me in 10 years ago. It was a turning point for me. I was beginning to scale down my therapy practice – and decided I was not getting younger so it was time to do what I really wanted. Though many of the artists have MFA's – I am largely self taught, but have been fortunate to have taken numerous classes and workshops from many wonderful and talented artists around the country.

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CAROL RETSCH-BOGART

CREATE *Whimsy*

Tell us about your website. What do you hope people will gain by visiting?

My website will give viewers a look at the different mixed media in which I work as well as my diverse but frequently whimsical style.

Browse through [Carol's website](#), and follow her on Instagram.

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