

THE ARTS

Picken has her finger on the pulse of art

Sidney's Wendy Picken offers classes and hopes to open her own show

Carlie Connolly
News staff

It's a busy time for Sidney finger painting artist Wendy Picken as she works on plans to open her own art show.

Born in Manitoba, her love of art began at just four years old in a doctor's office while her mother was pregnant.

"I was sitting in the office and I saw some early Picasso, those little harlequins, I just remember just feeling like I'd been struck by lightning," she told the *PNR* in her small home-based studio.

She said she has also always had a strong love for nature, particularly gardens, which is something that still inspires her artwork to this day.

"Most of the time I'm sitting here and I'm looking at my garden."

After moving to Sidney in 1983,



Finger painter Wendy Picken in her studio in Sidney. The painting shown is of her garden in February.

Carlie Connolly/News staff

Picken began taking evening courses at the University of Victoria. She registered full time in 1985, studying in the visual art department. She did not complete her studies and said she still thinks of going back to graduate some day.

While in university, she said she had often thought her work looked like mud.

"And so I just thought if it's going to look like mud, I may as well paint with mud," she said.

Being new to the coast at that time, her instructors told her to paint what she knows but what she knew was the prairies and farming. She had also always done watercolours.

"With watercolours, it's very fearless, you can't really play with it, you have to commit your line to the paper. It's more instant."

She would later start to paint with earth, ash and clay and began research into how First Nations used it, taking her back to the beginning with how painting evolved.

"I was working with my fingers and it was just such a beautiful experience for me."

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Hands-on approach unleashed Picken's artistic passion

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"I would have my buckets and I would just dip my fingers into it and I would just smash it on there. It was so much fun."

Picken was later introduced to stabilo tone crayons and began using them for her work — along with oil pastels, chalk, pencil crayons, china markers and wax

furniture polish.

"I had to get my fingers in there somehow because that was the part that really unleashed my passion here was working with my fingers."

Currently, Picken is working on a series of large pieces to show every month of her garden and how it changes.

She also plans to hold a show next year

where she will talk about how she got started. She calls her work finger painting without the paint — and stated she is not, technically, a painter.

Until November, Picken will be offering two classes a month. One class is for adults and the other is for both adults and children. For details, visit her website at mango4smilestudio.com.