

Our meeting on June 30, 2018 was held at [Close to Home](#), in Orange CT. We had approximately 27 members in attendance.

We jumped straight into our meeting with our guest speaker, new-ish SAQA member [Sheri Cifaldi-Morrill of Whole Circle Studio](#).

Drawing and craft have always been part of Sheri's life. She earned her degree in graphic design from UConn, worked at design studios, led the exhibits department at a children's museum - always doing things creatively and with her hands. For years, she collected quilt books that just sat a shelf, until one day she just decided to try quilting as a distraction (Sheri showed us that very first piece she made, a table runner from a [Denyse Schmidt](#) book). Finding connections between her graphic design experience and quilting, such as the inherent use of a grid system and how in both you decide "what are the messages you want and bringing the content in to support that," and later that the patterning process is simply the documentation of the work, she was hooked.

Sheri soon joined a local chapter of [the Modern Quilt Guild](#), and began on a journey of awards and accolades, including [one of three winners of a MQG national challenge quilt](#) (which became [the first pattern she wrote](#), then published in [Modern Patchwork](#)), quilts exhibited and a first place ribbon (which sold!) at [QuiltCon](#), a quilt [in Paducah](#) (which was then magazine-published), and [a first place quilt](#) in the [Quilt Alliance](#) annual themed auction. Quilt shows are very subjective, but these wins were the boost she needed to realize that this was actually a thing.

Quilters were begging her for patterns. Sheri started by designing a pattern for a friend for [Row By Row](#), then eventually converted that design into her first pattern, [Little Fishies](#). She then adapted her bee quilt (from the Quilt Alliance auction), [published it](#), and it's grown to be her most popular pattern. She also made some adjustments to her first award-winning quilt (once the rights of that first magazine-published pattern reverted to her) and [republished it herself](#). She is NOT one who is shy for trying things - she applied for the first annual [Craftsy Quilter Designers Fellowship](#) and [won!](#) The big prize was a booth at [Quilt Market](#). Yes, she sold patterns at the show, but more importantly, Sheri began to cultivating relationships.

If you're thinking about going from hobby to business, you need to know three things:
1-WHY/your mission: Why are you doing it? (Example: Sheri's mission is to enhance peoples' lives through beautiful and meaningful design, and to empower other people to enjoy the process of making.) Run everything through that question of "why" to keep from getting distracted.

2-Your business and marketing plan: these are the more specific details of why you're doing what.

3-Who are you serving/who is your audience? Be really specific.

In structuring her business plan, Sheri knew it was going to have to be more than just patterns. As such, she breaks her work into categories:

Quilts- commercial work, some commissions, collaborative work, galleries/art shows.
Patterns- self published (sometimes direct to consumers at quilt shows or talk; direct to shops; to distributors; pdf downloads on her website); also licensed out to magazines, collaboration/sew-alongs.
Education- in-person workshops, online tutorials (blog, videos), social media (documentation), quilt-alongs. Eventually books and pdfs will land in this category.
Self-produced/licensed products- Such as putting her bees pattern onto t-shirts (using a company she knew) and enamel pins (self-produced). It's diversifying in a way that makes sense.

Know your true cost!!!! This includes how much time you spent designing and testing/how many you think will sell/how much it costs to print/packaging costs/how much time it takes to stuff those packages. Keep in mind: you have your retail cost (what's listed on the product/what the customer pays) - wholesale price is typically half of that - distributor price is 70% of wholesale. Make sure you're getting enough money on that back end. Some helpful pricing guides and information available on the internet: [spreadsheets from Molli Sparkles](#) and [a blog series by Sam Hunter](#). You may also need to look competitively to the rest of the market.

Contracts! Make sure you have everything in writing, both for legal reasons, but also to define responsibilities and tasks. She recommends finding a friend or other professional assistance to ensure your legal aspects are covered.

Marketing is super important. If people don't know about it, they won't find it. Marketing is simply letting people know what you have and communicating with them. Remember that social media is community building. NEWSLETTERS are SO SO important. These are likely the most loyal followers and best customers. Instagram and FB can go away at any time - your email list is yours to keep.

Have good customer service: stay positive; be empathetic.

Sheri has been working two full time jobs for the last three years. As time goes on, less and less time is the straight-up creative work. The note here is: if you ONLY want to do the creative work, then maybe "business" might not be for you. While the creative work is certainly fulfilling and what drives her, much of Sheri's experience has been in the business side of things, as designers typically do work for others in mind (artists typically do work for themselves).

Go with your gut! There have been things that seem like good ideas, but just didn't feel right. Also - Sheri highly recommends teaming up with other people! Check out her friend Matthew Boudreaux ([Mister Domestic](#)). They're doing [a collaborative sew-along](#) ((everyone participating uses the same pattern and then shares tips and tricks and pictures of their process online)) for his recently-launched fabric line. It's been a great way to share followers.

Then we moved on to regional business:

Our first SAQA regional retreat will be at the [Incarnation Center](#) in Ivoryton, from Friday, November 2nd through lunch on Nov 4th. [Online registration is available HERE \(link\)](#) and the cost is \$250 (this includes all meals and lodging). The retreat will NOT feature a speaker; it is just about having the time we need together, whether that's walking around in the woods, hanging out with friends, or focusing intently on projects.

Our [Local Color](#) update came from [Clara Nartey](#). Local Color 3: Inspired by Science is currently at the [Windham Textile and History Museum](#) through July 9th. Then it will hang at the [Windsor Art Center](#) September 1 through October 13th, with an opening reception on September 1st, from 5-7pm. (You can even take [the new train line](#)!!! It stops RIGHT at Windsor Art Center). From there the exhibition travels to [Connecticut Hospice](#). (Note to artists with work in Local Color 3: Windsor Art Center needs a contract from every artist exhibiting, so keep an eye out for an email from Clara and sign and return it ASAP!!!!) Lastly, we are looking for three or four volunteers to formulate our local exhibition committee - we're aiming to mount a new show for 2020. It is not a large time commitment, especially if we are able to have a full committee, and the duties will spread themselves out over time. [Contact Clara](#) for questions or to volunteer.

Regarding the [Connecticut regional blog](#): If you have news or other things to submit, please write it up in the third person, so it is all ready to be copy-and-pasted. If it is an exhibition, don't forget to include links, a venue address and the hours. Email your post to [Christina](#) or [Jan](#) - they will forward it on to Mary Lachman. Please allow enough lead time for this process.

Fun fact about the [regional Facebook page](#): you can post your news to it yourself! It does not need to be sent to Christina/Jan.

If anyone is interested in leading the Working in a Series mini-group, or any other topic for that matter, email Jan or Christina.

Local connections: please announce your meetings on Facebook and also let Jan/Christina know so it can be emailed to membership. Also: which locales are meeting? PLEASE LET JAN OR CHRISTINA know if you have been meeting and when you are meeting.

Next regional meeting will be September 15 at [Cate's Sew Modern](#) in Guilford. Please bring your lunch and a chair, in case you need one. Our speaker will be [Clara Nartey](#).

We will be having another regional meeting in January (specific date and location still to be determined). The speaker will be Kathy Nutley. In conjunction with that meeting, there will be a workshop (limited to 12 people! Date/time TBD) on how to add a little color to your fabric using a specific homegrown method of using [Shiva paint sticks](#) and then adding depth with thread painting.

Regional financials will be covered at next meeting. One note is that we are brainstorming ways to generate income to defray some of our meeting costs. The members in attendance vetoed charging our guests to regional meetings. The idea with the most traction is to turn our raffle-turned-free-swap-table into an admission-required tag sale of donated goodies/cast-offs. Better explanation will be forthcoming as details are tested and determined.

At the SAQA International Conference, Christina picked up the idea about having studio tours. Maybe doing a studio hop in a different Connecticut county each good weather month or each quarter or two a year? Generally, people thought this was a good idea and should be explored.

After a brief break for lunch, we headed into Show and Tell (AKA Bring and Brag!).

[Dawn Allen](#) showed us *Porsche at the Beach*, and *Beetle at the Beach* — then one in-process to show how she works: she create patterns from photographs she's taken, draws out the images digitally with a stylus and collages them together, prints that resulting image at [Spoonflower](#), then thread paints over the top.

Clara Nartey - spent a month [doing a drawing challenge](#) - [then decided to create her drawings on fabric](#). The challenge was to use thread in a way to look like pencil. - Also, she started an Instagram account to promote textile art and exhibitions all around the world. Follow [@TextileArtExhibition](#). If you have a show coming up, post a picture of your promo postcard or images of the exhibition and tag it with #textileartexhibition and she will re-gram it. If you find fiber art anywhere in your travels, feel free to do the same.

[Kathy Bagioni](#) showed us photos of a white-on-white liturgical stole she was commissioned for, which included utilizing small bits from a bridal veil of the Mother-of-the-Bride's.

Cher Hurney showed us a large table runner that she created just because she needed to make something for herself. She also showed us a floral image she painted w [Inktense pencils](#), then stitched over.

Lynne Allen has moved from a person who had to just do it to working through small, multiple samples. She showed some of these samples she had done in classes and continued playing with afterward. One she started with big stitching and then continued to fill in the space. Some pieces were white-on-white that she then dyed on one side (so still show as white-on-white on the back).

Margaret Phillips (and Mayann) are active members of the [Greenwich Art Society](#) which will be having their annual members' exhibition, [Parallel Visions. Realism & Abstraction](#), at the Flinn Gallery. You can [download the prospectus](#) for details. Margaret then briefly showed us a small figural 12x12 she had worked up recently.

Mayann Weinberg showed us an amazing piece she is almost done with for [the Prince Challenge by Cherrywood Fabrics](#), then a beautiful flower piece - for which it should be noted that she did NOT like using Steam-a-Seam-2.

[Christina Blais](#) showed us a piece that she created to document her new hobby of [curling](#). She used organza with [Mistifyfuse](#) to create the shadows. She also invited us [to see her games](#) when the season resumes!

Jan Doyle's first note was that she made fabric bags with a name and title label on it for each of her quilts that she shows or ships out and recommends that everyone do the same. Then she showed us *Butterfly and Blooms*. Jan prints her photos at [Spoonflower on high quality Kona](#), then thread paints them.

Barbara McKie is the featured artist in the [Brigham City Museum's international quilt exhibition](#). She will have pieces in a gallery in Walla Walla, WA that is having a "Nature of the Stitch" show. She showed us two pieces that were juried into the [Whistler House Museum of Art's](#) exhibition, Interplay: Fiber and Art Quilts 2018: *Eye to Eye* (a lion from her Africa trip) and *Crested Barbet* (also from the Africa trip). She also showed us lilies that showed at both IQF and AQS Paducah.

Alice Chittenden usually works in clay, sometime in quilting, so showed us a piece that combines the two.

Diane Wright is a part of [Viewpoints 9](#) (an international group with a new challenge every other month). She first showed us her piece for the prompt "Living Planet" and her responses to "Energy" and "Weather". She also gave us a sneak preview at her piece for "Wonder". All these pieces will be exhibiting in Houston! Diane will also have a solo show at the [Willoughby Wallace Memorial Library](#) in August.

Meredith Brooks showed us a small piece she made in homage to [the Southport beach](#) and a larger piece inspired by the architecture of a Catholic church (which was inspired by the [Pantheon](#)), formed by what she calls "messy collage". It was quilted on felt, then backed with another piece of felt (which was adhered w [Mistifyfuse](#)).

Lois Caron showed her piece that was based on antique Chinese wood lattice window.