



TEXTILE ARTREPRENEUR

SUE  
BLEIWEISS

TEXTILE ART BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

WITH CLARA NARTEY

CLARANARTEY.COM

## TEXTILE ART COACHING: AN INTERVIEW WITH SUE BLEWEISS

[Published on ClaraNartey.com/blog](https://ClaraNartey.com/blog)

[Read this interview online](#)



# Clara Nartey Interviews Sue Bleiweiss

In this episode of [Textile Art Business Interviews](#), we'll be discussing how to coach other artists. I've got Sue Bleiweiss here with me to help us with that. Sue is an artist, a teacher, and an author of multiple books.

I'm glad to welcome Sue to the blog, today.

CN: Hi Sue, welcome to the Clara Nartey Blog for this episode of Textile Arts Business Interview

SB: Hi Clara, I'm happy to be here, thanks for asking me to be a guest on your blog.

## Sue Bleiweiss' Journey into The Creative Arts

CN: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and your personal journey into textile art? What were your early influences? How did you make the decision?

SB: I began my career in art about 15 years ago. I had just decided to leave my corporate job for a slower less hectic lifestyle and signed up for a weaving class. I was hooked from the first moment I held the shuttle in my hand. I wove for a few years doing a lot of commission work until a shoulder injury forced me to hang up my shuttle.

At that point, I made an attempt at making traditional quilts, which didn't go well because I hate following directions.

Once I realized that I just didn't have the patience or skill for traditional quilt making I started exploring mixed surface design and mixed media techniques and that led to becoming obsessed for quite a few years making books and journals.

Something I still love to do. I started dabbling in art quilts as a way to explore creating art to hang on the walls and that led me to where I am today.

## Sue Bleiweiss' Love for Fabrics

CN: What is it about fabrics that you like working with them? Many textile artists talk about the tactile nature of fabrics. Is it the same reason for you or do you have others?

SB: Well there are a couple of reasons I like working with textiles - the tactile nature



is definitely one of them. The other big reason for me is that I really enjoy dyeing my own fabrics to work with. It's a very satisfying full circle process for me to start with plain white cloth, dye it and turn it into a vibrantly colored art quilt.

CN: Being a full-time artist means engaging in some income-generating activities to support your art career. For you, one of the things you do to achieve this is to coach artists. What is coaching about?

SB: My coaching program is about helping artists identify their goals and map out a strategy to achieve them.



Sew sewing in her studio



## What is Textile Art Coaching and Who Needs it?

CN: Sue, you teach workshops as well as coach artists. Why is there a need for art coaching when you're already teaching workshops? And who is coaching suitable for?

SB: My workshops and coaching programs are two very different things. In my workshops, I teach techniques specific to the way I work and create art quilts.

My coaching program is more like an independent study process and I offer my help and expertise in a wide variety of subjects such as artistic development (design, critique, personal style development), business and marketing, and writing for print publications.

I have and am currently coaching a lot of artists each at a different stage of their artistic journey from beginner to advanced. Some are working towards developing a cohesive body of work and are primarily interested in artwork critique and feedback and others are looking for guidance with business development topics such as marketing and publishing.

Coaching is for any artist at any stage of the journey that is seeking clarity, guidance or support with their studio practice or their artistic development.

CN: In your experience, what is the most common fear or need or concern your coaching students have when they start with you?

SB: Artistic development and the desire to create a cohesive body of work is by far the most popular request for help from my clients that I get.

## What Do You Need to Become A Textile Art Coach?

CN: Who can become an art coach? What do you need to know or what characteristics do you need to have to coach other artists? Or in other words, when do you know you're ready to become one?

SB: I think being an effective coach requires a few things: certainly you have to have a high level of expertise and confidence in the subjects you're offering coaching in but I think you need more than that. An effective coach knows how to listen, how to provide critique and feedback that is encouraging and motivating and knows how and when to ask the right questions that can allow the artist to draw their own conclusions and build self-confidence.



## Is Textile Art Coaching A Viable Business Option?



Sue Bleiweiss jumping for joy because she won an award

CN: There are many paths to building a successful art career. My mission is to help artists carve out their own paths in starting or building their businesses. So, this question is a purely business one. In your mind, is coaching a viable art business activity? Is it financially worth the effort?

SB: Well for me personally, the financial side of the coaching has very little to do with why I offer it. My primary motivation for coaching is because I really enjoy it. There is an incredible amount of personal satisfaction for me to be able to share my experiences and knowledge with a fellow artist to help make their artistic journey a little easier.

Coaching is just one aspect of my studio practice - I teach, I write and I make art and all of those things are important to me so I have to make sure that I manage my commitments so I have time for all of them.



Is coaching a viable business activity? Yes, but for me, it's a small part of my overall studio practice and my primary motivation for offering it is the personal satisfaction I get from doing it. I've set the pricing for my coaching to reflect that in order to make it accessible to as many artists as I can.

CN: What six (6) tips can you give about coaching textile artists, that you'd only share with a close friend?

## Sue's Bleiweiss' 6 Tips on Coaching Textile Artists



1. Be willing to share it all - by that I mean you have to be willing to share all your knowledge, you can't hold anything back.
2. Communication skills are absolutely critical: You must be comfortable being able to provide honest constructive guidance and feedback to your client. Each client's needs will be different and you need to be able to adjust your style of communication to suit those needs so that the client will be receptive to what you are saying to them.
3. Honesty is paramount for a successful coaching relationship. You have to be comfortable giving candid straightforward feedback and you need to be able to do with diplomacy and tact in a helpful non-confrontational way in order for the client to be receptive to it.
4. Be prepared! Keep notes and review them before each meeting with your client. I also like to do a follow-up email after a meeting to review and recap what was discussed.



5. Take it seriously - by that, I mean that you can't take the role of being a coach lightly. You have to be invested in the success of your client and it's your job to help them find and gain the confidence they need to develop and grow.
6. Listen, listen, listen!

CN: What are your 5 favorite tools or resources you can't do without as a textile artist?

### Sue's Bleiweiss' 5 Favorites



1. [Mistifuse](#): the only fusible that I use in my studio.
2. [KAI Scissors](#): I tossed out all my other scissors after I bought this brand. My favorites are the KAI 7205 8" professional shears and I also have a pair of the 7170 and 7100 ones.
3. [Superior Threads King Tut 40wt cotton](#): and [Superior Threads MonoPoly](#): I used to change out my bobbin thread to match the top thread but not anymore. Now I always use Superior monopoly in my bobbins.
4. 400 Bleached Desized Mercerized Cotton Print Cloth from [Testfabrics](#)
5. Procion Dye & Soda Ash: From [Dharma Trading](#): and [ProChemical and Dye](#)

And here are some more resources Sue generously agreed to share with all my readers. Thanks, Sue.

- The [studio practice questionnaire](#) that Sue has all her clients fill out prior to their first meeting.



- Get [Sue Bleiweiss's Resources](#): A document showing the tools and supplies Sue uses.

For even more from Sue, check out [her books](#) and learn more about [her art coaching](#).



Clara Nartey is an artist and a writer. She finds and interviews thriving entrepreneurs from all over the world about their mindsets and the systems they use to grow their businesses, in order to help artists learn how to start or grow their own creative businesses. To get more of her writings and access to her free resources for textile & quilt artists, makers, and creators, [sign up here](#).



GET your **FREE** copy of the ebook  
**WIN @ WORK & PLAY**  
Learn the winning mindsets and business systems, thriving textile artists use.

**DOWNLOAD NOW**

[Download your copy now!!!](#)

