



TEXTILE ARTREPRENEUR

TERRY
WALDRON

TEXTILE ART BUSINESS INTERVIEWS

WITH CLARA NARTEY

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HOW TO BECOME A GREAT ART QUILT TEACHER - AN INTERVIEW WITH TERRY WALDRON

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Clara Nartey Interviews Terry Waldron

Terry Waldron's artworks are installed in places like the American Embassy in Laos, Durham University Hospital, and St. John's Hospital in Santa Monica.

Terry knew at the young age of 4 1/2 years that she wanted to be a teacher. She went on to earn two Master's degrees in teaching art and teaching English Literature. She received fellowships from National Endowment to the Humanities, to study here in the U.S.A and abroad in University of London, England and she was named the Teacher of the year for her school district.

After teaching high school for many years, Terry now teaches art quilting.



Terry Teaching

Terry Waldron's Creative Journey

CN: So, Terry, tell us the story of how you walked into a quilt shop because your tennis partner wasn't going to be available to play with you?

TW: My Mom made all my clothes from the time I was little to the time I graduated from uni-

versity. We'd go to the "garment district" in L.A. and find the fabric, and Mom would make it. She even made my senior prom dress, and it is still pretty! So I've always known about fabric, but what was a quilt?????



Terry checks in on every student in her classes

When my favorite tennis partner told me one day that she wouldn't be there for the next 6 weeks for "Ladies' Day" at our tennis club, I asked why, and Charlotte said, "I'm taking a class on quilting." I said, "What's a quilt?" She said, "It's a bed covering, Terry!" I said, "That should take one day, but why will you be gone for 6 weeks... ??"

She showed me the quilt shop (a little cottage that contained cotton cloth in every room). I went in, and I'd never seen so much beauty, all divided into separate color sections. I asked the lady at the desk if I could learn how to do it, and she said, "Yes! And you might want to sign up for this class with [Blanche Young](#), so I did. I bought the pattern, then I bought 1/8 yard pieces of 76 different cotton patterns, and I never looked back!

Eventually, Blanche and I became wonderful friends. In fact, she invited me to her house several times, and one year [Blanche](#) and I were both "Featured Artists" at the Orange County Quilt Guild's yearly quilt show!

CN: Who are some of your heroes /heroines in the textile art world?

TW: [Joe Cunningham](#) is my all-time quilt hero. He is an abstract artist who thinks big. Binding tape traipses around the finished composition, directing the viewer's eye all over the piece. Brilliant!

And, sometimes on Facebook, he posts the photos he takes of stuff that everyone else would just walk across, never noticing the patterns and textures that exist there. That's what big-time artists do!



Terry makes her students laugh

CN: I know you love Joe's work. That's how you and I connected on Facebook – through one of Joe's posts. Tell us about your techniques for creating textile art.

TW: The only thing I can say is that I have to see it first... in my head. That takes time, and I can't hurry that along. Then I begin to make decisions.

The first is what will I use for the background. That informs the next decision, and that informs the next one. It's like building a wall, I guess, but the wall is inside my mind and it's beautiful!

Terry's Journey to Teaching

CN: Terry, you taught high school English for more than 4 decades, right? And now you give talks and teach workshops about your art quilts. How different are the skills required to teach teenagers from those required to teach adults?

TW: All great teaching has nothing to do with the age of the students! It has to do with whether or not the “teacher” is really a teacher.

I remember the exact moment that I decided to be a teacher.

One day the teacher gave us each a piece of paper and a small package of crayons. (I was the youngest kid in my kindergarten class). And I drew a log cabin with a little roundish lake in front of it and a pine tree growing alongside that cabin.

In the back of the lake, I drew a log with a vine of flowers growing up behind that log. I finished my drawing with a bright orange and yellow sun shining up in the sky. It was then that I decided to be a school teacher! I never wavered after that drawing!

CN: So, as a high school teacher, what's the most important thing you learned that has helped you in teaching quilt workshops?

The Real Art of Teaching

TW: The important thing about any sort of teaching is, “*You MUST LOVE to teach* if you want to be a true teacher”. **Real teaching is GIVING!** Real teaching is understanding that every single one of the students in a class is completely different from every other student.

A true teacher must know when to help, and when to leave the student alone. The only way that can be done is for the teacher to watch each student from afar to see when help is needed, and when the student is finding his/her own way successfully and doesn't need help. It's not as easy a thing as it sounds, either.



Terry Waldron Speaking

Most importantly, a true teacher must be quick to applaud the individual innovations and variations of each student's work. There is no difference at all between teaching in any venue if you are a REAL teacher. But, it ain't easy!

CN: How can a good artist become a good art teacher?

TW: The two are not usually in the same "wheel-house". It's very rare to see a fine artist be a fine teacher. But sometimes, a fine teacher might not be a fine artist.



Terry talks to early comers before the class starts

There are principles of design that are left out most times in the teaching of quilting, but they are absolutely necessary for creating a true piece of Art!

Repetition, variation, transition, and continuity are the principles. One of the most important elements is “implied line.”

I always teach it because it's something that the viewer doesn't need to know at all, but if the artist doesn't know it... then there is no art... just craft. But that's another question, I guess...

How Terry Makes Her Students Feel Comfortable in Class

CN: What types of quilt workshops do you prefer teaching and why? Multi-day workshops or short workshops?

TW: I like teaching a one-day class. My one-day classes are design classes, and *each student learns design techniques that she can use forever* after on all new pieces of work.



Terry pulling her students in

I ALWAYS give all my students my business cards.

That's important to me! *In my experience, the most important questions come when a student is back at home, continuing the work on the piece begun in my class.*

I want all students to be able to ask me questions as they arise in the course of their creating.

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In every class I teach, I stop the class one hour before it's officially over so I can explain the sewing of the piece when the students are at home. The most important part of all is the designing of an original piece, after all. **Without an amazing design, even the best quilting in the world won't make it a piece of ART!** It will just be another "quilt."

The Life of An Art Quilter

CN: Terry, what are the challenges of being a traveling quilt teacher – traveling from quilt guilds to quilt retreats. And what do you do to overcome those challenges?

TW: The challenge is the traveling! All my expenses are paid by the guild or the large national venues that have asked me to teach for them.

Since I have lived in California, Nebraska, Connecticut, Texas, Georgia, and Montana in my life, I'm used to traveling.



Terry shows students how to choose fabric

I always ask the guilds what they pay for the teacher's hotel, though, and that's what I put on my invoice. Then I book a much nicer hotel, and I pay the overage, myself. It works for the guilds, and it works for me.

Real teaching is tiring, and I need my rest at the end of the day. The large venues that have asked me to teach already provide very nice quarters for their teachers, so that's taken care of.

CN: What do you look for when you receive a request to teach a workshop? Do you have specific things which, if missing, will make you turn down a teaching request?

TW: I'm not a diva, and I can't remember turning down a venue. I do love teaching. I've taught gangsters, AP Lit students who are smarter than I am, students who wanted to be teachers, and people who hated school with all their hearts.

I tell you honestly, I loved them all! It's what I was born to do!

Now, I've decided that I don't want to travel anymore, though. I've flown since 1962! It used to be a fun thing to fly somewhere and be picked up at the airport by the folks who were hiring me. It's not fun, now.

I will take a gig if it's within driving distance of where we live, only because I have a wonderful husband who doesn't mind driving me there and back.



One-on-One with Students

CN: What gives you the most joy – teaching or creating art?

TW: Teaching and creating are completely woven into one another, and, like the old song said, 'You can't have one without the other...'

CN: What's the biggest mistake you ever made while teaching a workshop?

TW: This sounds arrogant, but I don't know that I've made mistakes. That comes from having taught high school since 1966.

I'll leave it at that. I was department chair during those years, and I learned how to set up the classes for 220 students every day.

*Teaching quilting takes lots less thought and lots less time than setting up a room for 220 students in 6 – 7 classes a day! But **all that high school teaching taught me to be organized, I'm pretty sure.***

I ask every artist I interview for their five favorite tools. Except that Terry doesn't have five. She's got only one. And here it is.



The **MOST IMPORTANT TOOL** that artists have is their two eyes! We live in Anaheim Hills, and every day I see trees of every sort. (I think of them as people who can't walk away or talk, but have a long life like most of us do.) I pet the trees... yes, I do!

I also love to stretch out on the grass and look at the little things that grow there. For instance, there is a "weed" that grows down the hill from us... It's sooo small that most people never see it, but if you look very, very closely, it has a beautiful bouquet of peach-colored flowers.



Terry takes Students on a Field Trip to see a Tree

Each flower is so small that I have nothing that I can measure it with! But it is amazing.

In fact, don't ever create a tree in your composition without having petted a real, live tree! You must stand under tree, too, to understand how tall they are.

When I am judging a quilt show, and someone creates a landscape with trees that are contained within the format, then I know that the person has never really studied a real, live tree!

The bottom line is: Use your eyes! Look at everything, every day, always!

Terry Waldron's

6 Six TIPS

Tips to help you grow your Textile Art Business

- 1 Don't hand out a pattern, and then sit at the front desk the entire time of the class. That's OK for a sales lady to do, but if you call yourself a "teacher," then you have to be one!
- 2 Students are paying me, so I work for THEM! I will give a suggestion where it's needed, and I will FOR SURE explain WHY I'm saying what I'm saying. If the student has another idea instead, terrific. I did my job, and they did theirs. We were both thinking and working together. But I owe those students as much as I can give them. I'll rest when I get home!
- 3 When we begin class, I always ask students to pull their chairs up to the front and make a circle. I sit in the circle, too. When the whole group sits together, it breaks down the walls. Students feel more comfortable about asking questions. That's important because some students are shy, and they are afraid to ask questions. A circle of folks seems friendlier, and that makes it easier for everyone to learn and for the teacher to teach. Try it. It works!
- 4 I choose the prettiest illustrated paper for my "Materials Lists." On the top goes the title of the class and my name.



Terry explains to her students the whys behind the creative decisions she makes

Under that, I write a little note to the class about choosing the fabrics for the class and explaining that it is a design class, but I will be available by email for any help, forever after.

Then I list the materials needed.

(I always remember how nervous I was when I took my first quilts classes. It always seemed to me that everyone knew lots more than I did.

Because of that, I decided to put a reassuring note on the top of all my materials lists. I just know that there are more students who are like I used to be, and I want them to feel welcomed, even before class begins.)

One Final Tip from Terry

5 I decided that instead of having “a business card,” I’d use 6 different pieces of my work for my cards. When someone wants my business card, I give them all 6 so they can pick the one with the quilt that they like the best. My picture is on the back, along with my contact information.

6 Lastly, love what you do, or don’t do it!



Terry showing the back of her work to her class

Interview Quotes & Takeaways

- Don't hand out a pattern, and then sit at the front desk the entire time of the class.
- Use your eyes! Look at everything, every day, always!
- Real teaching is GIVING!
- Without an amazing design, even the best quilting in the world won't make it a piece of ART

CN: Thanks Terry, it's been wonderful having you on TABI (Textile Art Business Interviews). I'm sure my readers will be extremely pleased to learn about you and how you run your business.

Visit Terry at her website TerryWaldron.com

TW: It is my pleasure.

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Clara Nartey is an artist and a writer. She interviews thriving entrepreneurs to help artists learn how to start or grow their creative businesses. To get more of her writings and access to her free resources for textile artists, makers, and creators, [sign up here](#).



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