

SOUTHBURY MAKERS SPOTLIGHT



Nancy Monson, mixed-media artist

By Kelly Keenan, SEDC Arts & Culture Subcommittee

Photos courtesy of the artist

Q: How long have you been in Southbury, and what brought you here?

A: I have lived here for four years. I followed my sister here, actually. I was living in Shelton and ready to move and she moved further inland. Ironically, we had gotten stuck here when we were in college at Boston University. Our rental car died in Southbury off of exit 14 as we were driving from Boston home to Westchester. There was only really a gas station in town at the time, so I never imagined I'd live here. I like that it's quieter than coastal Connecticut and that there are so many nature trails and charming, quintessential New England towns around. But I also enjoy the convenience of all the great shops in town—and one of my favorite places, the Riverview Movie Theater! I'm a life-long movie fan and go regularly, so that was a big enticement (and a big coup, now that so many surrounding cinemas have closed since the pandemic). I also love the public library—it's one of the best and prettiest that I've seen in Connecticut.

Q: Tell us about how you got into making art.

A: I've been making art since I was a kid—my mother was very creative and encouraged me and my sister to be creative, too. I think of myself as a mixed-media artist: I quilt, I sew, I paint on silk, I paint on paper, fabric and rocks with acrylics, I felt, and I am a Certified Zentangle Teacher (Zentangle is a structured drawing technique that is both fun and relaxing). I'm drawn to many different types of art and I've finally comfortable calling myself an artist since I got into art school at UMass Dartmouth a few years ago. If they think I'm an artist, I must be one! Actually, though, I like to say I'm a maker, since it doesn't sound quite as lofty.

Q: Do you have a favorite subject matter and/or source of inspiration?

A: I love flowers, bright colors (one of my artist friends refers to me as “a colorist,” which thrills me to no end!), and dots and other patterns. My goal with my art is to enjoy making it and for viewers to feel good when they view it.

Q: Is there a special place in Southbury you go to for inspiration?

A: I live near the Bridle Trail and I like to walk there in every season. It's fantastic that the trail is so accessible and I constantly find beautiful scenes to photograph and videotape for my [Instagram channel](#). I love that it is so quiet and I can walk or snowshoe on it, and I can take my dog on it. I find walking in solitude really helps me solidify new design ideas. Since I'm a big planner, I appreciate that the Bridle Trail gives me time and space to do that.

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Q: What is your favorite part of the process? Least favorite?

A: Again, since I'm a planner, I love thinking about a design and gathering my supplies. When I make a quilt, I enjoy the piecing process, too. The actual quilting is my least favorite part because I struggle to pull the quilt through my machine and do good work!

Q: Are there any particular artists you admire ?

A: I am constantly inspired by Georgia O'Keefe—I love her flowers, of course, but I discovered that early in her career she did abstracts and those have inspired many of my little silk paintings.

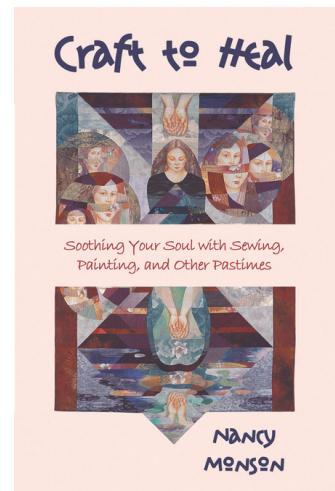
Q: Are there any other special talents you'd like to share with the community?





A: I have been a freelance writer for many years (that's how I've made a living), writing about creativity, wellness, spas, travel, nutrition and dogs for national magazines and websites. I'm also the author of *Craft to Heal: Soothing Your Soul with Sewing, Painting, and Other Pastimes*, which is about the therapeutic benefits of having a hobby you love. It's available as a Kindle download on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).

Q: Do you have any advice for emerging artists who are trying to find their voice?

A: I encourage emerging artists not to judge their work too harshly and not compare themselves and their art to others too much. It's best to try and accept wherever you are on your creative journey—and most of all, to enjoy making art.

For more information about this month's maker, or if you are interested in being featured in an upcoming issue of the Southbury Makers Spotlight, contact us at edcsouthburymakers@gmail.com or visit www.southbury-ct.org/arts.



-  nancy.monson@att.net
-  nancymonsonart.com
-  [nancymonson1](https://www.linkedin.com/in/nancymonson1)
-  [@nancymonson](https://www.instagram.com/nancymonson)

