

Design Community

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Photo: Elaine Fredrick; Designer: Christina Patton

Community Q+A

with Patti Watson, Allied ASID

By Heather Bourgeois

Please explain how why you decided to do gallery night? How does it add to your business? Where is your passion for art and including that in your business derived from?

In 2015 we renovated an 1875 storefront building in Jamestown to create a new home for taste. The orientation of the building on the street, storefront windows on the front and large windows along the back side of the building has dramatically increased the natural light in our workspace. Additionally, the storefront space provided the opportunity to create a small gallery with furnishing vignettes where clients can view finished groupings, sit in proposed pieces from the various lines we represent and evaluate the quality of the furnishings we provide. It only made sense to finish these vignettes with accessories, lighting and artwork from local artists I've known and introduced to my clients over the years, so the gallery at taste was born.

Gallery nights started in August, 2015 as a way to celebrate our new space and welcome members of the community, clients and friends to learn more about what we do while promoting the local artists we've come to represent. Gallery nights are also a way to continue the traditions of Jamestown Designs — the beloved local gallery and shop that occupied our building for the past thirty years. The owners warmly

welcomed the community into their shop several times a year, so I'm proud to carry on their tradition of community and hospitality.

How has being an ASID member impacted your business? What does ASID mean to you?

ASID is an important credential to me and helps to further communicate my intent as the leader of a professional service firm. A high standard of professionalism has always been at the bedrock of my design business, and now it is part of the taste culture. Being an ASID member underscores that professional commitment to my design practice.

What was your education background? Years in business?

I formed taste in 2004, so we're starting our 13th year in business. I have a degree in management and began my career in corporate marketing, which took me all over the world managing large projects in the 90's. When I left the corporate field I was the marketing director for a branding company, which provided me with valuable experience in a professional service firm. The principal of the branding company had successfully combined his industrial design degree from RISD with marketing, which inspired me to enter the interior design program at RISD. I did so knowing I wanted to lead my own firm one day. After completing the program and then gaining practical experience working for a hospitality design firm, I founded taste.

What has been your favorite or most challenging project to work on? Most unique?

One of my most favorite projects was actually one of my very first major commissions. My clients lived in Minneapolis and were moving to Providence, so hired me to renovate their entire loft in time for their move a few months later. We worked remotely, with only one face to face meeting prior to the move. I knew they had an art collection, and designed the space with that in mind, but had no idea how vast or significant the collection was until the moving truck arrived. Upon finishing the unpacking and helping to install the artwork, I realized my clients regularly invested in emerging artists in support of the arts. I believe they invested in me, just as they do fine artists, as a way to support my emerging design career. I'm forever grateful.



What has been your most proud moment in business so far?

Restoring the building we're in, as well as moving into it—which was an enormous task to move a team of nine and all our samples and supplies—and improving the working environment for my team has created proud moments every day since the summer of 2015. It's a constant reminder to me that your interior environment has an enormous impact on your happiness, productivity and ability to connect with others.

What are your goals for the next few years?

I want to continue to provide exceptional designs, be a value to our clients and work with fellow design and build professionals who practice our caliber of excellence. We are working with some top notch architects and builders now, each of whom make us stand a little taller and produce even better work. I so appreciate the benefits of working with exceptional people, and enjoy watching the positive effects it has on my team, too.

What advice would you give your younger self?

Keep doing more work and accepting more projects that provide experience and learning opportunities. I've done several hundred projects since starting my business, and everyone has taught me more about design, working with clients and working with the people charged with building my designs. Doing more has always taught me more.

Favorite season of the year, and why?

It may sound sacrilege here in coastal Rhode Island, but I love the winter. We're especially busy right now, so I'm appreciative that we live and work in a coastal community that's a bit sleepy in the winter, when we're at our busiest. The quiet allows us to put our heads down and be highly productive. Then, we have the absolute pleasure of welcoming back clients when they return in the spring and get the chance to catch our breath while enjoying all that Rhode Island has to offer in the summertime.

If you could have lunch with any fictional/non fictional person dead or alive who would it be?

I think it would be Queen Elizabeth. We're watching *The Crown* right now as a family, and learning about her strength as a newly minted Queen surrounded by men threatened with breaking tradition is fascinating to me. She's an inspiration to strong women everywhere.

Why Rhode Island? (choose to live/work?)

I came to Rhode Island for college never expecting to stay, but then never left. Our proximity to Boston and New York, our seasons and our coastline is such a treasure and I have to admit that I'm glad it is still a bit of a well-kept secret.



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