

# SOUTHBURY MAKERS SPOTLIGHT



## Janelle Chandler, J. Chandler Artistry

By Kelly Keenan, SEDC Arts & Culture Subcommittee

Photos courtesy J. Chandler Artistry

Janelle Chandler has been pulled in several life and career directions. But her decision to revisit an old hobby - drawing and painting - opened her world to a new and unusual career.

Chandler, who grew up in Southbury and returned as an adult, can bring plants, flowers and wildlife to life on paper or canvas. Her renderings are vibrantly realistic and her skills have launched her career as a botanical artist. I had an opportunity to ask Chandler a few questions about her art.

**Q: How did you come to be an artist?**

**A:** After many years, many life experiences, many classes and four beautiful daughters I returned to art. In that time I had pursued careers as an RN, Accountant, Nutritionist, Psychologist, and Early Childhood Educator, all of which did not make me feel fulfilled; it always felt like something was missing. I decided to take an art course, my intention was that I would use my old 'hobby' to refresh my mind, and help me decide my path. Fortunately for me, I had an amazing teacher who saw something in me I had lost long ago. Recognizing my potential, she encouraged me to take more art courses and when the college wanted to kick me out for too many credits, she encouraged me to move onto my BA in Illustration. I followed her suggestions and found my love for Botanical Art and graduated with my BA in Illustration, and a minor in Photography and then went on to receive my Masters in Fine Art.

**Q: What draws you to botanical illustration?**

**A:** For as long as I can remember I have loved flowers and the outdoors, always in awe of gardens and nature. The colors and shapes that mother nature provide us is absolutely breathtaking.

**Q: Do you have a favorite subject matter? Least favorite?**

**A:** My favorite subject matter is pretty much anything plant related, except trees, to me it's all interesting. Trees, while interesting, are very daunting to me. I would say my least favorite subject matter would be humans. I find it crucial to capture one's personality in a portrait to make it successful and that is an incredibly difficult task.

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## Janelle Chandler, J. Chandler Artistry- continued...

**Q: Do you draw on inspiration from Southbury's landscape? If so, do you have a favorite spot to go and 'take in' nature?**

**A:** As a child growing up in Southbury I spent a lot of time at Hidden Pond Park and Southford Falls enjoying the beauty of the trails. As an adult I now enjoy Bent of the River. We are very lucky to have such a space here in Southbury. I also have been lucky enough to help many people with their gardens, and have my own gardens as well.

**Q: I see you also do photography - anything you'd like to mention about that process?**

**A:** In my photography I enjoy taking photos of flowers and gardens, but I try to not just document them, but also take in to consideration angles or details that can easily be overlooked. From time to time I do photograph other things and I have noticed that my work revolves around light and the interesting things that can happen with light. Photography helps to inform and inspire my illustrations.

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

**A:** My advice for emerging artists trying to find their style and their way is to do the uncomfortable things. If you are used to working small, work really, really big on at least one project or if you have never used a medium, try it. Many emerging artists get comfortable in one area and fear venturing away from that comfort zone. Also, be prepared to fail (or not!) and be open to learning from the process about your work and about yourself. Last summer I did a Mural for the Danbury Fair Mall with Art In Common and the Cultural Alliance of Western CT, It was a 6 foot square canvas in acrylic, and I am used to working in colored pencil and water color on paper, typically sized 12" x 16". I learned a lot about myself and my preferences, how to better prioritize a painting and so much more, it was a truly scary but enlightening process that has made me a much better artist.

Janelle Chandler will have artwork on view at the Southbury Public Library for the month of August. Additionally, beginning in Fall 2023 she will be teaching at Western Connecticut University. 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](mailto:edcsouthburymakers@gmail.com) or visit <https://www.southbury-ct.org/arts>.



### WHERE TO FIND THEM



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