



Living — Home &amp; Design

# Meet your Maker: Ceramicist Nancy Salamon launches her designs on textiles

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by MARK C PSORAS

Artist Nancy Salamon at her Clay Born studio in West Chester with some of her hand-painted ceramics and the new line of coordinating textiles digitally printed with her designs.



by **Samantha Melamed**, Staff Writer [@samanthamelamed](#)

## Maker



**Meet your Maker: Ceramicist Nancy Salamon launches her designs on textiles**

Nancy Salamon, 66, of West Chester's Clay Born pottery. She has been making hand-painted ceramics in whimsical, nature-inspired themes for 40 years, and this summer, she launched a new line of coordinating textiles digitally printed with her designs.

## Her start

Salamon says she wandered into a clay studio while attending Antioch College and was instantly enamored. But she didn't start out intending to be a painter, too. "When I had to take painting classes, all I wanted to do was paint pictures of pots," she said. "Clay really kidnapped my imagination."

About 30 years ago, when her large stoneware pieces kept cracking, she decided she had to work smaller.

"I thought, 'If I can only make small things, I better make small things that were special in some way,'" she said. "That's what propelled me into painting. And now I've painted myself into a corner because it turned out those were things people wanted to buy."

## Her process

Salamon usually ships about 75 pieces per week to boutiques and customers around the country. To produce at that scale, she creates a catalog of six patterns and about 35 different items. She delegates much of the clay production to an assistant, who uses a mold as a guide to hand-build pieces to set specifications. Then, Salamon paints each piece freehand. After so many years at work, she doesn't need to sketch in pencil anymore.

She adjusts her line each year, adding new pieces based on her own ideas and customer suggestions. The scale of her operation guides many decisions.

"It's exciting to make something completely new and fabulous, but with production, you have to think: How easy is it to replicate? Is it going to work when you have to make multiples? How will I feel if this goes into production - and am I going to want to paint thousands of them?"

## New direction

Salamon said the idea for transferring her designs to fabric came from a friend who suggested it in a postoperative anesthesia haze. But it stuck: It could be a way to share her art on a mass-produced scale.

"The designs have been really popular for years," she said, "so it was a huge motivator to see if I could make this other sideline work."

There were challenges, though: first, making the watercolor paintings after so many years working with glazes on clay, and then, finding a way to produce the pieces at a cost she thought feasible. The process took about six months.

## In her home

Salamon doesn't use the dishes she makes at home, she said. But she thinks handmade pieces can be a source of daily inspiration.

"I drink a giant cup of coffee every day out of a mug made by a Philadelphia potter named Liz Kinder, who is supertalented," she said. "I think it's nice to have things in your daily life that are made by actual people, not machines, and that connect you to other people. I have tons of stuff that's been made by people I admire and I'm friends with, and it's really special to be able to use that."

## Find it

Order at [claybornpottery.com](http://claybornpottery.com) or find it at Kaly in West Chester, Maureen's Gallery in Lionville, or the Michener Museum store in Doylestown.

[smelamed@phillynews.com](mailto:smelamed@phillynews.com)

215-854-5053

[@samanthamelamed](#)

