

Moyer's affordable line of plankton-inspired pieces includes bud vases and tea lights,



Maria Moyer, 46
SCULPTOR
NEW YORK CITY

women who make beautiful things

Water Works

Maria Moyer's elegant sculptures pay homage to the ocean's tiniest creatures.

Her inspiration

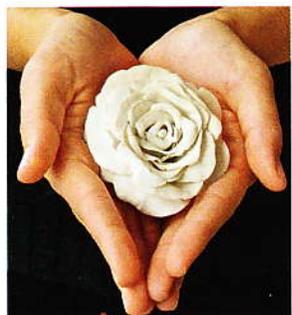
Maria Moyer's love of the ocean stems from a childhood spent on the beaches of Southern California, where she swam and surfed, collected sea glass and feathers, and dreamed of becoming a marine biologist. "I'll never forget the first time I held an octopus as a kid," she says. "It wanted to play with my hand the way a cat would!" When Moyer's parents gave her a book about ocean life—cramped with scientific illustrations—she realized that the sand and sun could fuel her

artistic side as well. "The book captured my head and my heart," she says. "I spent hours drawing the creatures I saw in those pages."

Her goods

Moyer's passion for nature eventually led her to help companies like Gap operate in a more eco-friendly way. But by 2001, she'd tired of corporate life,

quit her job, and enrolled in art school. Eventually, she discovered porcelain. "I liked the juxtaposition of its incredible strength with how fragile we perceive it to be," she says. From the start, nature infused Moyer's sculptures:



Raised surfaces echoed the armor of microscopic sea dwellers, and sinewy silhouettes evoked swaying seaweed. This

spring a new collection sold at West Elm includes decorative biomorphic orb vases and whimsical tea lights with sea-foam-like holes. Moyer also creates one-of-a-kind porcelain roses and jewelry, available at BDDW (in New York City) and March (in San Francisco).

Her process

"I'm obsessed with plankton—the teeny-tiny plants and animals in the ocean," says Moyer. "Phytoplankton turn carbon into oxygen, just like trees do in the forests. They're also fascinatingly beautiful." Though she can "geek out" for hours looking at pictures of microscopic ocean life, Moyer doesn't try to capture specific creatures in her work. Instead, they inspire textures and shapes, which she re-creates in porcelain and bakes in a kiln. She then sands the pieces and fires them again. Says Moyer, "When I sand a sculpture, it begins to feel like a perfect seashell—like something you'd pick up on the beach." —KATE ROCKWOOD