

New England HOME

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Fresh Looks for 2020

Sculpting Beauty

Artist Frances Palmer celebrates the art of everyday living at her Weston studio.

BY CLINTON SMITH



Frances Palmer surrounded by her creations in her Weston studio.



LEFT: Palmer's Cirrus collection of creamware. **BELOW:** Beautiful still-life photography taken by Palmer features flowers grown in her garden. Not only inspiring, the assemblages give context to the scale and shape of her vessels and how they can be used at home.

A visit to artist Frances Palmer's private studio and garden in Weston is like traveling to another world, one that transcends time and place. In the summer months, Palmer has a veritable Eden where she grows row upon row of flowers—dahlias, in particular—specifically for cutting and arranging, while the exquisite pottery she designs, sculpts, and fires on site is meant to be used regularly, not just for special occasions. In this world, everyday acts are elevated and presented with grace and purpose. Nothing is hand's off, nothing too precious. This artful melding of form and function is viewed regularly by Palmer's some 60,000-plus Instagram fans (@francespalmer), who have come to rely on her understated elegance for inspiration.

"I love the fleetingness of the flowers with the permanence of the ceramics," says





CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Stacks of plates from the Cirrus collection await placement. Palmer designed the terracotta and brown stoneware and porcelain bisque pots to hold an assortment of bulbs and orchids; it's her indoor garden during winter months. One of Palmer's handmade pitchers is featured in the foreground of an assortment of bowls, vases, and tulipieres.

Palmer of the still-life compositions she creates and then photographs. The photos have a charm that recalls a masterful Dutch still-life painting.

Beyond the ceramic and porcelain pieces she creates by hand, Palmer has collaborated with a fourth- and fifth-generation manufacturer in Stoke-

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on-Trent, England, to create Cirrus, an everyday collection of creamware that was named after its finish, which she describes as light and airy as a cloud. Since Palmer threw the originals for the Cirrus collection, the maker's hand is still evident in each piece, despite the larger scale production.

"All the shapes have a provenance that has interested me," the artist says. Each piece coordinates, but none match: the dinner plate is evocative of a Korean celadon plate at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the salad plate references the Song dynasty; Japanese stoneware inspired the dessert plate; and soup and salad bowls are reminiscent of her favorites at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London.

What's next for Palmer? Back at home, she has just added a new wood kiln to her property. Different types of woods and ash will yield surprising glazes, and there's no doubt that Palmer will welcome the unexpected results into her oeuvre.

francespalmerpottery.com