



DASHING DESIGN DREAMS

Linda is an accomplished weekend ceramicist and, more recently, an avid swimmer. Now that her kids are out of the house, and she has a window to add to income pre-retirement, she wants to bring her earnings from ceramics to the next level.

About a year ago, Linda designed a ceramic creamer, sugar bowl, and butter dish incorporating swimming figures into the design. The swimmer's half side view (above the water) with elbow bent arm served as the handle atop the butter dish. A swan diver and breaststroke pose graced the creamer and sugar bowls. At her city's large annual arts fair, these pieces generated great buzz and multiple sets were purchased, presumably by or for swimming enthusiasts. She has since placed a few sets in local craft stores, and they have sold well.

Linda recently heard that one can obtain a "design patent." She aspires to undertake larger scale production, perhaps herself or through a larger manufacturer of ceramic items. She has also been thinking about extending the design idea to other sports that might be presented on household items: two hands holding a basketball atop that butter dish? Football goal posts? Kickoffs? She hasn't yet produced any of these for sale; she's still fiddling with those designs in the community ceramics studio. They would make great wedding, birthday, or anniversary gifts for anyone who plays or follows the particular sport featured in the design.

First things first: she wants a design patent for her swimmer's butter dish, sugar, and creamer set. She would like a patent that could cover her other ideas too.

Give Linda the not-so-great news about the ceramic swimming and sports designs; advise her as to the options.