



FEATURED ARTIST

DEBRA NIELSEN
AUGUST 2015



Debra Nielsen

Sculpting horses can be tricky, but this labor of love has become a life-long passion for Deb. Her authentically inspired designs require a sharp eye for detail that comes from a childhood of growing up around horses—and around the growing collection of models on her desk!

Deb always loved art—and her beautiful show horses. These were, after all, the inspiration and models for her first drawings and paintings. When it came time for college, she went to beauty school rather than an arts program. Deb knew she didn't want to teach, but she didn't know there were other options with an art degree! Ironically, Deb now uses her cosmetology experience to fashion the hair and makeup on Madame Alexander® ornaments.

In addition to her other talents, Deb used to sew wedding gowns, and she is able to use that fashion experience in the fabric attachments she creates for our ornaments. Deb loves the details of her job, from dreaming up new ornament concepts to the intricate sculpting detail involved in bringing her sculpts to life.

And more than a Keepsakes Artist, Deb is the proud mother of Mallory, who "expresses her art through words," has successfully achieved her Masters in Communication, and is now a proud wife and mom herself.

In Deb's spare time, she enjoys painting, interior design, exploring the great outdoors and spending time with her husband—fellow Hallmarker Steve Goslin.

Shoe-sational! - 2015

When Hallmark and Mattel reunited recently, Debra Nielsen was a natural choice to create the new Barbie™ shoe ornaments. Not only did she love playing with Barbie as a child, she had also been working on the Barbie line for more than 20 years. As a technical artist for Keepsake Ornaments, Debra became known as an expert at painting Barbie—especially her finely detailed eyes. "They're very small and they have between 6 and 10 eyelashes. Each one has a lot of detail."

She then began sculpting the ornaments herself and has become a regular at the annual Barbie® Convention (this year it's July 29 - August 1 in Washington, D.C.). This year for the convention, Debra and the team will be bringing a limited-edition repaint of the 2009 Shoe-Sational Barbie™ shoe ornament that will coordinate with the Event theme, "A Star Is Barbie™." Attendees will also get a sneak preview of the 2016 Barbie™ shoe!

Debra's appreciation for Barbie has grown even stronger in recent years. "She has branched out. She has career aspirations. She's not just floating through life looking for the right Ken. She has political interests, green interests. Barbie can do anything."

Watch our Facebook page for an early 2016 Barbie® sneak preview



2015 National Barbie® Doll Collectors Convention Exclusive

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Wendy Wishes You a Merry Christmas - 2015

20th in the Madame Alexander® series

Debra is also quite fond of another iconic doll: Madame Alexander, which has been around since 1923. Debra's first Madame Alexander ornament was *Yuletide Shopper* in 2011. Since then she has created the series each year plus three KOC exclusive Madame Alexander WIZARD OF OZ™ ornaments. Deb creates the ornaments and also helps select the dolls that are chosen to become ornaments.

Her time working on Barbie and her background made her a natural fit to add Madame Alexander to her portfolio. She credits her background in cosmetology for giving her a solid foundation for these projects—Debra was a hairstylist and makeup artist before joining Hallmark as a freelance artist in 1987.

“It’s very similar: painting on the makeup, styling the hair,” Debra says. “That’s where my interests lie. Cosmetology has morphed into my career here, as I’ve worked on quite a few very feminine ornaments.”



Mom and Daughter Memories - 2015

Debra and her daughter, Mallory, baked together a lot when Mallory was little. Their quality time in the kitchen inspired this mother-daughter apron. The inspiration for the design style and color palette came from classic blown-glass ornaments in retro colors, like hot pink and turquoise.

“This was a really fun ornament, but also a challenging one because it was made out of fabric,” Debra says. She also notes that Mallory’s generation seems to wear cute retro aprons like this much more than Debra’s generation.

Now that Mallory has moved back to Kansas City from St. Joseph, MO., she sees her even more—which means even more time to start new holiday traditions. Mallory’s 4-year-old son Henry also loves to bake and cook. “So that tradition continues,” Debra said. “All the messiness and the fun just keep on going.”



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JUNE 2013



Halloween Wicked Witch of the West™ - 2013

Madame Alexander® THE WIZARD OF OZ™

"This particular ornament combines a few things that are very special to me. I used to paint the ornaments for the original sculptor of the Madame Alexander Doll® Keepsake Ornaments at Hallmark. When he retired, I asked if I could give them a try, and that ornament became my very first hand-sculpted piece.

"When I was growing up, I would watch THE WIZARD OF OZ™ over and over again on TV. My father would say, 'Seriously, you're going to watch that again?'—and I did! I passed that love onto my daughter. Now that she's a mom, I'll be able to share it with my grandson a few years down the road when we can watch it together.

"My birthday happens to be on the day before Halloween—and this doll is just so colorful in her Halloween dress! There are just so many cool dolls in THE WIZARD OF OZ™ Madame Alexander® collection for fans to be excited about, I hope to be able to do more!"

