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After varied career, Chesterfield artist rekindles clothing business



Ellen Metzger works on one of her hand-painted shirts for children at her home studio Monday in Chesterfield. JERREY ROBERTS [Purchase photo reprints »](#)

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CHESTERFIELD — From runway model to television producer, Ellen Metzger has worn many hats in her day. Now, this transplant from Los Angeles is embellishing hats, as well as infant clothes, and shirts, and pants for children, all with her original designs.

Working out of her home studio on South Street, Metzger is the owner of [Ellen Metzger by Hand](#), where she creates “whimsical hand painted clothing for babies and kids.”

“Everything is hand-painted and designed by me,” said Metzger during an interview in her home studio, a sun-filled living room with many windows looking out on a large open field. Her clothing line is 100 percent cotton, pre-washed and painted with non-toxic paints, she said.

Metzger says she created her designs to inspire fun and playfulness.

“I started with the dinosaurs and then I just picked things that I liked,” she said.

Perusing through a rack of her creations at her home, it is easy to see the whimsy of her art. Moons and shooting stars, dinosaurs, rabbits, butterflies, flowers and crayons are the designs that make up the bulk of her collection.

For Metzger, starting a business and selling her clothing was not always her plan.

“I started out just by painting on my daughter’s clothes when she was young. I never wanted it to be much more than that,” Metzger said. “Then all her friends parents wanted me to make some for their children and soon all the kids were wearing my stuff.”

Before she knew it, Metzger said stores in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica started carrying her items.

Still, her art decorated clothing remained a sideline to her regular job working as a producer of television game shows including “The Dating Game” and the “Newlywed Game.”

“I worked on the game shows created by Chuck Barris,” Metzger said. “That is how I met my husband in 1967,” she said referring to her spouse Michael Metzger, an accomplished collage artist.

Prior to her work in television, Metzger was a model for the Italian fashion designer Emilio Pucci. She was also a buyer for a large department store in California.

In 1989, during a writers strike, Metzger said she decided to take a break from the entertainment industry and moved to Spain, living on the island of Ibiza.

“When they hear Ibiza, people think we were jet setters, but that was far from the case,” Metzger said. “We lived in an old farm house that sometimes didn’t have electricity. I began painting and selling my stuff again to pay the rent.”

Metzger said that she and her husband eventually moved to western Massachusetts 10 years ago after visiting their daughter in college.

“She went to Williams and we would fly into Boston and drive across the state. We just feel in love with the area,” she said. “We also wanted to have horses and this is the perfect place for that.”

Now, surrounded by fields and woodlands on the outside, two horses in a barn and five beloved Maine Coons in the house, Metzger, 65, said she feels right at home.

“This is a very different way to work than it was living in L.A. Here, the beauty just comes in,” she said pointing towards the large windows that look out on to five acres of land. “I never feel neglected by beauty here.”

Metzger has been hard at work to build up her inventory and has recently struck an agreement to have her clothing sold at Artisan Gallery on Main Street in Northampton.

“This is like a dream come true being able to do something I love in such a beautiful place,” she said. “It is often hard for people to find something that they love to do and make money at the same time. So, I feel very fortunate.” Metzger said she wants to keep her new endeavor at a moderate pace for now.

“I feel pretty philosophical about most things these days,” she said. “So, I am very joyful about the fact that I have this.”

She said her daughter has encouraged her to start a Facebook page, but noted “I don’t know how soon that will happen.”