

The Porcelain Maker by Sarah Freethy is a mesmerizing love story that is inspired by the Allach Porcelain factory, and the exquisite statuettes that were created there. Allach was acquired by Heinrich Himmler in 1936 and was located near the Dachau concentration camp.

Freethy expertly weaves two time periods together. Clara Vogel is 52 and is searching for her father's identity. It is 1993 and she has traveled from London to a small auction house in Cincinnati to purchase several Allach figurines she believes could connect her to her father. Clara's mother, Bettina Vogel, passed away without revealing her father's identity. Clara discovers a photograph in Cincinnati that's dated 1941. Bettina is featured with three men in the studio at Allach. Two of the men appear to be wearing concentration camp uniforms under their loose white work coats. This photograph is the fuel Clara needs to continue her search. Max Ehrlich and Bettina Vogel meet in Germany in 1925 and are drawn together by an intense mutual attraction and their love of art. Max is a skilled architect. He is Jewish and has left behind his wealthy family in Vienna. Bettina is an avant-garde painter from a German farming family. Her family disapproves of Max, and they are not proud of Bettina's paintings, even though her popularity as an artist is soaring. Max understands the risk of living in Germany and from 1932 on begs Bettina to leave with him. She repeatedly declines and in 1937 the couple must separate. Max is lucky to get a false identity and a menial job at the Allach Porcelain factory. Bettina will live with her family near Allach and continue seeing Max secretly.

Freethy's characters are fascinating, and the dual plots move quickly. Max and Bettina's plight remind the reader that life, like fine porcelain, is both beautiful and fragile.