



# CLAUDIA DEMONTE

**Eleanor Heartney**

Foreword by Agnes Gund



# CLAUDIA DEMONTE

## EVERYWOMAN WITH A PONYTAIL

Artists never fully escape the imprint of the era in which they come of age. Claudia DeMonte had the paradoxical good fortune to attain maturity as an artist during the difficult years of the 1970s. Economically and politically this was a bleak decade. The Watergate scandal and the subsequent resignation of president Richard Nixon ushered in a deep skepticism about authority. Economically, the country struggled with recession, oil embargoes, and stagflation. The difficulties were particularly acute for New Yorkers, who saw their city flirt with bankruptcy and found their pleas for relief met with national indifference, giving rise to the immortal *Daily News* headline—“Ford to City: Drop Dead.”

However, hard times can also be good times. With the art market in the doldrums and the New York real estate market tanking, artists colonized the abandoned industrial lofts of downtown Manhattan and began to explore wildly experimental approaches to art. It was a time of remarkable freedom for creative people, and especially for creative women. Coinciding with the political and economic changes of the day was the rise of the women’s movement. After being confined during previous art booms to the roles of muse and helpmate to their more successful male partners, women artists starting coming into their own in the 1970s. Armed with a new confidence about the validity of their own experiences, they radically remade the art world, breaking down barriers between art and craft, the personal and the political, and the observer and the observed. The challenges they posed to the white male establishment of their time reshaped the entire landscape of art and laid the groundwork for the art world we know today.

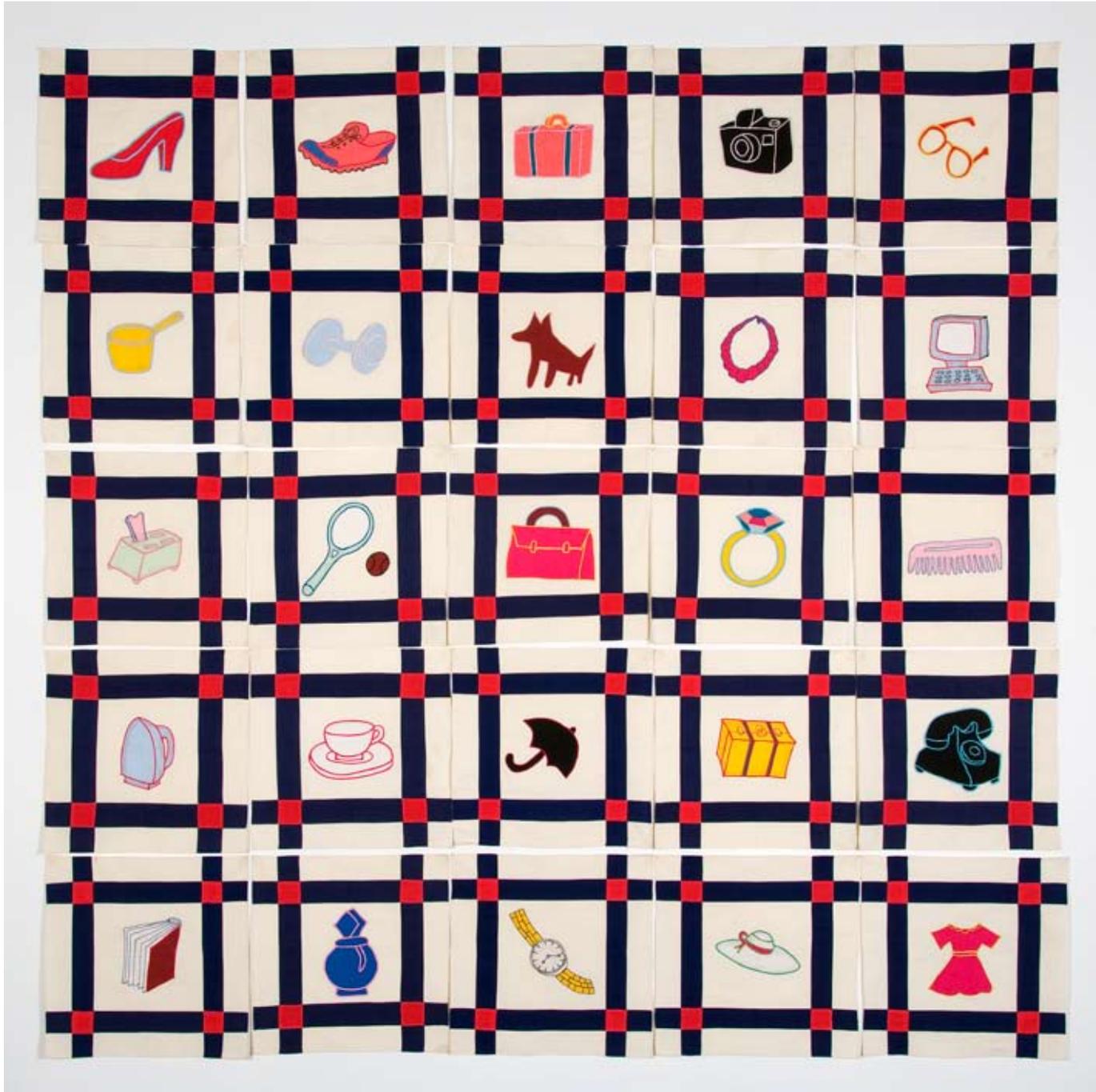
Claudia DeMonte’s arrival in New York in 1976 was perfectly timed to partake of these momentous changes. Yet DeMonte wasn’t exactly new to New York; she was born in Astoria,



*Female Fetish: Toaster*, 2006. Pewter and brass on wood, 8 x 4 x 5 in.



*Female Fetish: Gumbo Pot*, 2002. Pewter and brass on wood, 12 x 10 x 10 in.



*Women's World*, 1996. Created in collaboration with women working in a Tibetan tent factory, Lhasa.

Twenty-five appliqué squares, each 20 x 20 in.



*Artifact: Aka, 2005. Bronze, 4 x 10 x 11 in.*

**CLAUDIA DEMONTE** is an artist, a teacher, a curator, and a collector. She has given each of these simultaneous careers her unfailing attention throughout her adult life. To say she is accomplished in each field is an understatement; in fact, she has excelled in all and has managed to break new ground in each. She's a pioneer, a feminist, an acute observer, and an advocate for the overlooked.

This monograph begins with her self-image works of the 1970s—photo-essays, installations, T-shirts—followed by her painted pulp paper sculptures, works in clay, and paintings and her *Female Fetish* series (pewter *milagros* nailed onto wooden objects), fabric pieces and installations, drawings, and bronzes. The array of media she uses is not only eclectic; it's highly unusual. But DeMonte has never hesitated to jump in and use whatever feels right.

In each stage of her career, with each medium, she has combined sobering commentary on the status of women in the world with lighthearted humor. A paper sculpture might seem both hilarious and heartbreaking at the same time. An exquisitely beautiful bronze bowl exudes the power of a sacred object, with women poised at its edges not in the form of traditional goddesses but instead as ponytailed "everywomen." Her installations examining questions such as "What is real beauty?" are joyful in their inclusion of images from all over the world, while they force us to confront our own misconceptions of global culture.

This book contains approximately 120 reproductions, with a foreword by Agnes Gund, president emerita of the Museum of Modern Art, and an essay by Eleanor Heartney, contributing editor to *Art in America*. It is the first retrospective of Claudia DeMonte's work, a long overdue review of one of America's most intriguing contemporary artists.

Front cover: *Female Fetish: Mule*, 2002. Pewter and brass on wood, 4 x 10 x 5 in. / *Full Closet* (detail), 2002. Buckram, 35 x 40 in.

Back cover: *Female Implement #8*, 1995. Bronze, 16 ½ x 3 x 1 ¾ in. Edition of 8.

112 pages, 9 x 9 1/2 inches  
Smyth-sewn casebound, with jacket  
More than 115 full-color images  
Includes Selected Exhibition History

\$29.95 US (\$37.95 Canada)

ISBN 978-0-7649-5097-1

Catalog No. A168

Available September 2009

Printed in China

© 2009 Claudia DeMonte

Claudia DeMonte is represented by  
the June Kelly Gallery, New York City.

*Pomegranate*

Pomegranate Communications, Inc.  
Box 808022, Petaluma, CA 94975  
800 227 1428 / 707 782 9000  
www.pomegranate.com

Pomegranate Europe Ltd.  
Unit 1, Heathcote Business Centre  
Hurlbutt Road  
Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6TD, UK  
[+44] 0 1926 430111  
sales@pomeurope.co.uk

