

FRIEDMAN BENDA
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Inside a Studio Artists Captivating Ceramic Practice

Imbuing figurative forms with everyday function, Carmen D'Apollonio breathes new life into clay and metal

By Hannah Martin
Photography by Noah Webb
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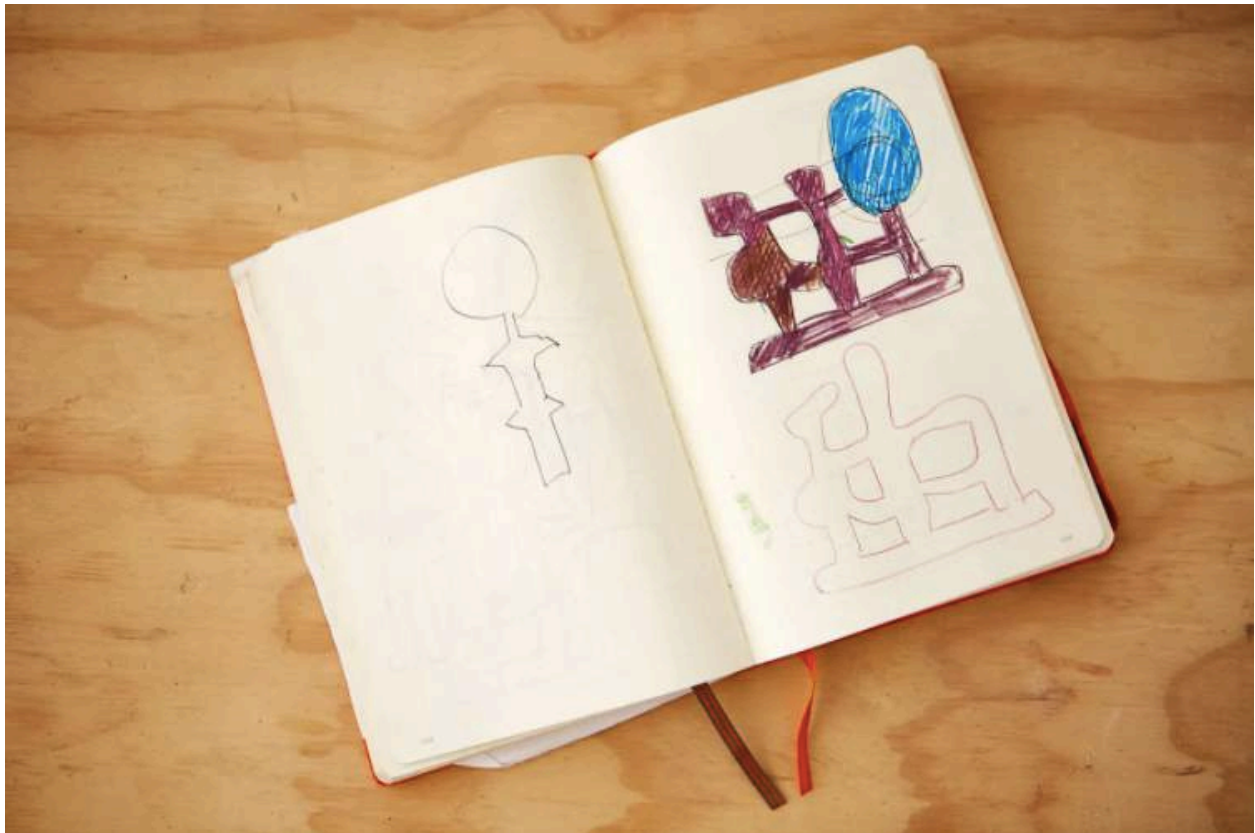
Carmen D'Apollonio in her L.A. studio with work for her July solo show at Friedman Benda
(friedmanbenda.com)

Carmen D'Apollonio often works solo, but she never gets lonely in her Los Angeles studio, where she's surrounded by ceramic lamps and vessels in progress, many of them people-size. "They become a bit human," she says of her inanimate companions—some of them anthropomorphic, others vaguely figurative. "They're like a little family." Soon she'll bid the gang farewell as pieces big and small get boxed up and shipped out to New York City,

Hannah Martin, "Carmen D'Apollonio: Inside a Studio Artists Captivating Ceramic Practice," *Architectural Digest*, May 24, 2021.

where they'll star in her first U.S. solo exhibition, "Don't Wake the Snake," opening July 15 at Friedman Benda gallery.

D'Apollonio's ceramics practice began eight years ago, when she signed up for an introductory course in traditional Japanese raku pottery in her native Switzerland. After relocating to L.A. in 2014, she landed a high-profile commission: The French fashion brand Céline requested three ceramic displays for an advertising campaign. She was still new to clay, but the polymath artist, who had designed film sets, cofounded the fashion brand Ikou Tschüss, and worked for the artist Urs Fischer, took the commission in stride. After all, she says, "I've always been very hand-crafty."



One of her sketchbooks, where much of her work begins.

The work evolved naturally from there—a continuation of a process that, she insists, "is actually very simple." First she draws her ideas; then she coils the clay into the desired form. "I don't have any structure," she notes of her entirely hand-built technique. "Whatever I want to do, I do." She does stick to one idea: Everything has a function. "I love that the sculpture does something," she says. "Everything you do, you can always put a shade on it. That's the beauty of a lamp."

Her latest body of work elaborates on those core ideas—a nearly five-foot-tall piece enlarges her most-requested table lamp to human scale—while planters and lights in the shape of heads and dancers have been cast in bronze, a new medium for the artist. Their

forms come to life through clever, conversational names like Just got a new haircut or Sorry I missed your call. “They’re my friends,” D’Apollonio says. “And they speak through their titles.” carmendapollonio.com



D’Apollonio posing with two of her ceramic “pot heads” playfully worn as boots.

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D'Apollonio hand-building a new ceramic work.



Carmen D'Apollonio in her L.A. studio with work for her July solo show at Friedman Benda (friedmanbenda.com)



Just Got a New Haircut ceramic lamp.

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Sorry I Missed Your Call is a recent light sculpture made from ceramic, rice paper, and wood.