

designboom

I'm not a shrimp: Friedman Benda exhibits Carmen D'Apollonio's playful lamps and vessels in LA

By Sofia Lekka Angelopoulou
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From January 6 to February 4, 2023, Carmen D'Apollonio transforms **Friedman Benda's** Los Angeles gallery into a surrealist landscape of playful characters in clay and bronze. Titled 'I'm Not a Shrimp', D'Apollonio's first solo gallery show in LA brings together contoured, sculptural lamps and floral vessels, each personified with its own stand-alone narrative through familiar organic forms. The works in the exhibition fuse craftsmanship with functionality, while highlighting the artist's tongue-in-cheek sensibility and her recent experiments with gesture and materiality.

Self-taught in the **ceramics** discipline, Carmen D'Apollonio (Switzerland, 1973) worked as an art director for short films and commercials in the mid-nineties. In 1996, she began working with the artist Urs Fischer, and assisting him for over a decade. In 2006, she founded the fashion brand Ikou Tschuss (ikou means 'let's go' in Japanese and tschüss is 'bye-bye' in Swiss German), which combined modern textiles with traditional artistry. She established her own studio in Los Angeles in 2014. designboom

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spoke with Carmen D'Apollonio to find out more about her upcoming exhibition at Friedman Benda. Read our **interview** in full below.



Carmen D'Apollonio, 'Cup of tea, a sandwich and you', 2022. All images Courtesy of Friedman Benda and Carmen D'Apollonio | Photography by Marten Elder, unless stated otherwise.

INTERVIEW WITH CARMEN D'APOLLONIO

designboom (DB): What first drew your interest to ceramics?

Carmen D'Apollonio (CDA): I started doing Raku ceramics in Switzerland. The dirt in my hands felt so good I couldn't stop.

DB: How do you start working on a new piece?

CDA: I do some drawings and then try to somehow copy those in clay. Then I just see what happens from there.

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California, here I come, 2022

DB: Your exhibition at Friedman Benda includes sculptures in both clay and bronze. What is it about each of these materials that appealed to you? What are some of the qualities you appreciate most in each of them?

CDA: Well, the bronze pieces also start with clay so the idea and formation is the same for both, but the finish quality is the difference for me. With the bronze patina and surface quality it's almost more like painting and with glazing the ceramics it all happens in the kiln and it's more mysterious.

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DB: Many of your pieces have organic, almost anthropomorphic forms. How do you develop their shapes? What are some of your visual references?

CDA: It's really hard to narrow it down. With visual references, there are all sorts of things that come into my ideas and drawings. Of course there are many artists that influence me, but also nature, architectural spaces and the body.



Into the wild, 2022

DB: The title of the exhibition, 'I'm Not a Shrimp', as well as those of many of your works reflect the playful, tongue-in-cheek character of your designs. How do you come up with the titles?

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CDA: I keep a list of words and lines I like in a book such as song titles and different stuff. I'll pick and choose things, sometimes I free associate from those.

DB: Your works in 'I'm Not a Shrimp' have a function, either as lamps or as flower vessels. Do you start working on each piece with a predetermined function in mind? How does the making process evolve?

CDA: Usually, yes. I know if it's going to be a vase or lamp before I start building. But things can change as I move along. Each piece has it's own journey.

DB: What else are you working on at the moment?

CDA: Currently trying to figure out what the BTU's of my kiln are.

project info:

exhibition name: I'm Not a Shrimp

artist: Carmen D'Apollonio

gallery: Friedman Benda Los Angeles

duration: January 6 – February 4, 2023