

Claudia McDonough: Artist Statement

Words are a window dressing to memory and experience. These dimensions of life resist explicit analysis. Anyone who has suffered trauma or experienced the memory loss of a loved one is well-acquainted with the peculiar, vanishing folds of human self-reflection and knowledge. Memories are part fact and part fiction—does that make them less honest? Or more?

Claudia McDonough's multi-media abstractions invite viewers into the unspoken depths of life. Formally trained as an abstract painter, the canvas gave way to the textures of memory and experience expressed by multi-media sculpture and textiles. By indwelling the hands haunting every stitch and fold, audiences merge their own sensations with each piece, creating something shared, secret, and surreal. Since her MFA in 1988, she has received recognitions, residencies, grants, and exhibitions from nationally recognized venues, spanning Texas to her current home in Baltimore and beyond.

Claudia's textural fluency translates sensually familiar materials into compositions of the soft underbelly of unwritten life. In the series *Magic Number 7*, pieces reveal the hidden figures of memory without explicit form but instead through an intimate textural disclosure (*Double Ghost* (2022), *Dark Chapter* (2022), *Hand in Hand* (2021), *Sugar Figurine* (2022), and *Clock and Book* (2022)). The found fabrics and garments in *Sock* (2019), *Pink Ghost* (2019), and *Blankets* (2019) depict domesticity without minimizing it. Instead, each piece captures these experiences through deeply felt knowledge that is complex, expansive, and heroic. Likewise, *The Tipping Point*, a current series in response to the turbulence of our time, is not about politics but the experience of the political in mixed media. Explicit political discourse is often insufficient for unpacking the tacit social contracts between us all.

An honest experience of Claudia's work is not to see the installations themselves but experience the surreal woven around and between them. Viewers are urged to explore the gossamer of their own memories and experiences through articulate, yet silent, media—quiet but busy, busy but quiet; *quiet but not still*, *busy but not loud*. As she translates her textural language into wearable artifacts (*Dress* (2019-ongoing), *Cape* (2023-ongoing)), this field takes on a more human form but is no more concrete, changing with each wearer, viewer, and experience of the piece.

And yet, despite the sensual allure of her work, to touch a piece would be *explicit*. It cannot be truly known by hands any more than human memories can be truly written on hard drives. Each piece cries out to be touched but only by delicate minds. Those minds, reaching out with the gentle caress of deep knowledge, will feel the folds and textured folds of memory and experience—shared and secret.