

Patricia Murphy McDonald

### **Artist Statement**

Over the past few years my focus has been primarily on two overlapping bodies of work called Notions and Curios.

Notions and Curios is an ongoing exploration of the intimate, the private and personal world. I'm interested in how common objects can conjure up strong emotional appeal. It's taking an instant in ones busy everyday life to pause to experience something in its fullness. The paintings draw attention to details like pattern, and shape, and how these design elements signify time and era. In the Notions work, the point that a particular color of thread, a pattern, a texture, can conjure up a whole cultural past fascinates me. Mixing up these cultural signifiers interests me. The question of taste also comes up with certain objects. Nick Nacks is an example of an object collected in one generation that could be seen as kitsch by another. I am interested in playing with this tension between good and bad taste. Scale plays a part in giving these objects a slight surreal, Alice in Wonderland feel.

The Notions suite of paintings are an ode to my mother who is at the end of her life and suffering from Alzheimer disease. She was a lifelong sewer, as were many women who lived in her generation. When cleaning out her house, I came across boxes of material, trim, zippers, thread, and buttons – what was left of a lifetime of domestic activity. These bits and pieces was what was left of her mind, her craft, her history, and our history as a family. Trim leftover from a dress she had sewn me forty years ago, buttons removed from a coat long discarded.

With the subject of sewing, or notions, one cannot but think of other artists like Joyce Weiland who created politically themed quilts in the 1960's and 70's, and Gathie Falk who created quilted paintings in the pop art tradition. Much work from this time had connection to the fundamental questions about woman's placement in society and within the art world. But that was another generation. These paintings are more a sense of remembering, hopefully not so nostalgically but rather a note taking of sorts to what once was, traces and remnants of a life lived and whats left behind.