

## Alice Warder Seely as Urban Fetishes

A new line of "Menopause Pins", designed by Hondo, New Mexico, artist Alice Warder Seely, is now available at more than 350 retail stores and galleries across the US. The pins, displayed in small "matchbook" packages, depict themes--ranging from light-hearted to serious--relevant to the physical and emotional changes experienced by more than 40 million women across the country. The idea, according to Seely, is to bring the "M-word" out of the closet, to help normalize the natural maturing process all women experience, and to contribute to an atmosphere where women can openly discuss their life change concerns with humor and acceptance.

The names of the pins, along with the writing included on the back of each package, touch on issues common to many women in their 40's and 50's. Titles like, "Flight to Freedom" (twenty eight thousand meals served...Menopause), "Life's Rider" (I found my dreams along the way), "Mid-Life Celebrations" (Among the things best forgotten...the agonies of youth), and "Four Faces" (like a fine piece of jewelry. . .finally a work of art), are aimed at celebrating a new kind of freedom, beauty and wisdom that comes with the prime of life. Other pins have themes about independence ("Female Dead Frog"), the promise of continuing self-discovery ("Female Rain"), and the annoyance of increasing forgetfulness ("Lost Keys"). There are also pins in the line that deal with the "empty nest" syndrome, and the increasing importance of friendship.

Perhaps the most humorous pin is a small "Fashion Police" badge for "those with discriminating taste and shopping expertise."

According to Seely, the idea was to develop a line of jewelry appropriate to mid-life issues: "We all worry about estrogen, osteoporosis, hot flashes, erratic behavior, our changing appearance, and stress. Yet, according to a recent CBS poll, only 13% of all women in their 40's and

beyond, ever discuss menopause with their friends. (Only 40% have discussed menopause issues with their physicians.) Across the country, the "M-word" is still taboo as a topic of conversation. Perhaps, if people see retailers openly displaying a line of jewelry clearly labeled with the word "menopause", and the jewelry is attractive and humorous, some headway will be made in overcoming the atmosphere of denial and isolation."

Seely hopes other manufacturers will follow suit. "There is already a widely distributed retail catalog that focuses on menopause issues and there are rumors that one of the major home shopping networks is planning to feature a special "menopause" segment." Thus far, Seely's pins have met with mixed reactions. At a recent retail art show, Seely's booth was so crowded, women stood in line to see the pins and stood in line again to make a purchase. According to Seely, "One woman bought the entire line of twelve pins. We have dozens of stores that can't keep the pins in stock. Other store buyers call us every day for information--they have either seen a pin or heard about

the line."

According to Seely, enthusiasm for the pins cuts across socioeconomic and educational lines. "The menopause jewelry sells well in large and small cities and in areas where the women are conversant with women's issues. Generally speaking, customers love the jewelry; a few retailers are afraid of the subject, but they will catch up as more of their customers reach that age."

Seely says the menopause line is her best seller, and that store owners are catching on to an important merchandising opportunity (Seely also produces a line of petroglyph,

Egyptian, fossil, and angel pins). Seely says the idea is spreading by word of mouth--once women purchase one pin, they return for more and tell their friends.

Seely only sells her jewelry through stores and galleries, never directly to the public.

