

Alan G. Artner | *In the Galleries*

Artist shows the steel side of familiar domestic pieces

By Alan G. Artner
TRIBUNE CRITIC

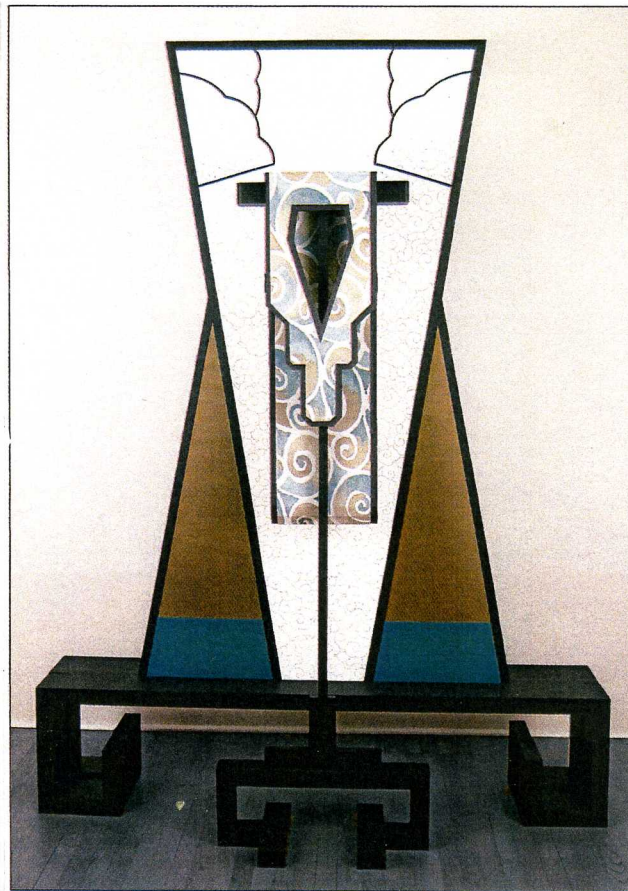
Diane Simpson's new sculptures and drawings at the Alfedena Gallery go some distance toward convincing you domesticity is a generator as strong as any.

The forms of her hanging, free-standing and shelf-mounted pieces are derived from aprons, bibs, work belts, tunics and vests. But here what was personal and wearable becomes something public and architectural. Through both clean lines and crisp patterns the pieces also evoke decorative styles of bygone eras, though the evocation is free of the emotional stickiness associated with nostalgia.

Some of Simpson's materials—perforated aluminum and steel, brass mesh, corrugated plastic, linoleum—are, in fact, tough. And her use preserves their hard Industrial character even as it makes forms that might be expected to feminize and soften. The references to clothing of course suggest “woman's work.” But the overall impact of the pieces tells us again and again that this woman's work can be armor-like, strong.

At the same time, the art distills childhood memories. The kitchen is never far off. And in some of the larger pieces, department store displays from the 1940s are felt as well. These pieces, bordering on installation, impressively extend the range of Simpson's singular art.

At the Alfedena Gallery, 434 W. Ontario St., through Oct. 11. 312-944-4340; www.alfedenagallery.com.



Diane Simpson's "Bib." Her work focusing on domesticity can be seen at the Alfedena Gallery.