

# DIANE SIMPSON: FORM OVER FORM

**Paul Krainak**

Diane Simpson's compressed sculpture, drawings, and installations are intelligent, meticulous, and charismatic. Content is suspended seamlessly between abstraction and allegory, object and image, clothing and architecture. It is simultaneously indebted to a theorist's critique of ceremony, a tradesman's respect for materials, and a designer's observance of ornamentation. However, her project is more about improvisation and morphological prediction rather than it is a resolution of divergent sources. Such concerns are not uncommon to Simpson's generation that proceeded from the Chicago Imagists. They apprehended a more comprehensive visual history — one that asserted independence from the dead ends and misconceptions of regional vs. national art discourses. Despite numerous historical references Simpson never strayed too far from a signature hybridization of forms. What she amassed are forms that merge a standard graphic convention with another zone of perspectival destinations. Her project releases cultural objects from occupying typical dimensions and ordinary materials.

**Diane Simpson**  
*Cape*  
1990  
oil stain, acrylic paint, MDF  
37 x 45 x 13½ inches

Much of the artist's work is prefigured by elaborate drawings on graph paper. The renderings are easily as significant as her sculpture and present unique insights into the artist's thinking as pre-modern designs and spaces are reconfigured. Graphite marks and erasures document all the energy and pleasure of production, establishing the artist's particular devotion to detail, process and tools. Similarly, her complicated three-dimensional works reveal equal dexterity and patience, merging the various disciplines of both fine furniture and industrial construction. The adoption of the flattened perspective of Persian miniatures and Japanese scroll painting then further invigorate the physical characteristics of her sculpture.



