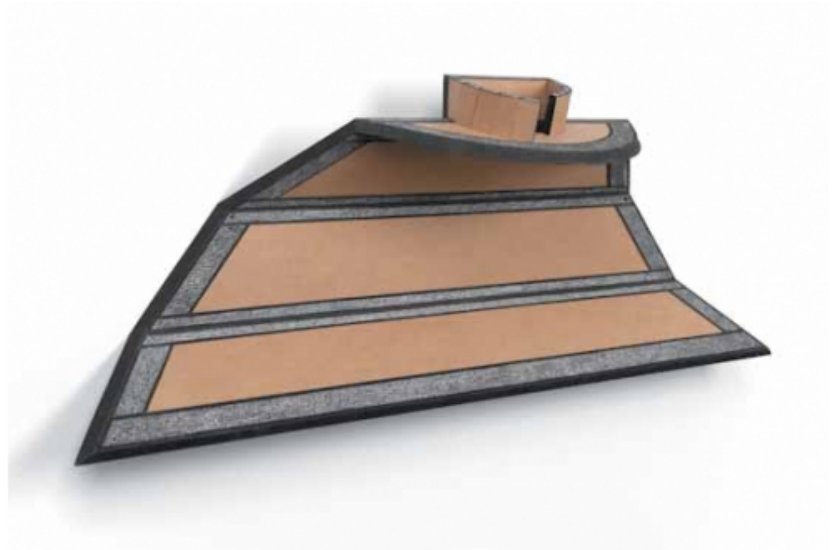


Art & Design

Diane Simpson at Corbett vs. Dempsey | Art review

Chicago artist Simpson shows new sculptures. *By Lauren Weinberg*

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Diane Simpson, *Cape (SL)*, 2011.

Diane Simpson's sculptures have the uncanny ability to exist in both two and three dimensions. Presented alongside the preparatory drawings that are crucial to her process, many of the longtime Chicago artist's compressed, torqued recent works look as though they slid out of paintings by her friends [Christina Ramberg](#) (who shared Simpson's interest in clothes and their effect on the body) or [Ray Yoshida](#) (who also used vaguely off-putting, institutional colors).

But Simpson, who completed all of the works on view after her 2010 retrospective at the Chicago Cultural Center, has a unique vision that distinguishes her from the Imagists. The artist's primary inspirations include historical garments: She derived *Cape (SL)* from a cape worn by China's 18th-century Qianlong Emperor, according to the exhibition catalog. The meticulous construction and deceptive rich surface texture (created using crayon) of *Cape (SL)* are typical strengths of Simpson's art. Seen close-up, the piece impresses viewers with its smooth seams and graceful stand-up collar made, surprisingly, out of unglamorous Gatorfoam board and spunbond polyester.

Despite their roots in fashion and their human scale, Simpson's sculptures don't evoke imaginary wearers. Her materials are too hard and industrial—they also include cardboard and MDF—and the spaces within her abstracted collars, capes, tunics and vests too narrow. Furniture and decorative art, which have influenced the artist before, take on unprecedented importance in this show. The plinths and pedestals integral to Simpson's sculptures are more prominent, as in the linoleum *Vest (scalloped)* (2010), which she drapes over a mint-green rack that enhances the tension between flatness and depth. During the past few years, the artist's work has grown even more complex.

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★★★★★

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