

I chose to take excerpts from my exhibition invitation as the structure of this curator's essay, to explain my layered interest in the given object and why it has been suggested for its possible creative narrative. In 1995, I chanced upon an exhibition of two collections of commercially produced aprons at a regional museum in New York State. That show imparted a souvenir shop-like experience, of repetitive wearables, printed with catchy words and images of tasks and settings, tediously repeating places and issues of domestic labor, the worker as the wearer and her identity and recognition.

This plethora of mass-produced objects echoed as a possible baseline...I asked myself what could/would artists do with this functional article as subject matter. As I have observed many craftspeople whose ongoing vocabularies consider domestic themes and references, I was captivated with unrealized possibilities, certain they held a wealth of individual seductive challenges for some measure- perhaps 50%- of the craft community. And seeing what has followed, supported by juxtaposed interest, flights of fancy and imagination and the narratives by the chosen wish-list of artists, we were right.

'Aprons as a visual mnemonic in 1950-1960's American popular culture highlighting TV sitcoms may have conjured romanticized images of apple pie and June Cleaver moms. This ubiquitous wearable can have the potential to become a 'charged icon'- a social/political object, of individually focused reference, provocation and unlimited imagination. It may become the beginning of a new, personal narrative.'

'**Domestic Matters: *The Uncommon Apron***, a proposal for a group invitational exhibition, is intended to supercede the familiar and inspire the unanticipated in one-of-a-kind works in craft media which comment and challenge changing social roles and mores, topics about work, familial life and identity, while also potentially suggesting historic references to functionality, occupation, community and altered household roles. I am seeking exceptional, memorable objects and sculptural forms which make visual and tactile reference to domesticity and labor, gender and hospitality, function and fashion. And others, with subtexts about protection and ceremony, the class system and nostalgia, body adornment, handwork and souvenirs. I anticipate this new iconic form as potent, thoughtful, contemporary, yet familiar and unexpected, in its open ended possibilities.'

'This is not intended to be a wearable show, but that could also be present within the unlimited, self-defined forms and unrestricted scale of the scenario. I will invite artists/craftswomen whose chosen forms, media and vocabularies include recurrent domestic themes and focused personal narratives which could offer significant clues into new work. I seek a diversity of intentions and media- clay, fibers, glass, jewelry and metals, mixed media, wood and recycled palettes- to offer a breadth of two and three dimensional forms, scale and design of their new objects.'

'They will alter, anneal, anodize, assemble, bead, build, carve, cast, collect, combine, construct, craft, design, enamel, fashion, fold, forge, form, fuse, gilt, glaze, inlay, knit, mold, oxidize, pot, print, raise, sculpt, set, snip, solder, stitch, throw, weave. They work, invent, narrate and dream, too.'

Participating artists will be asked to provide a paragraph of context- backstory to engage viewers with ideas and experiences. I believe that these artists whose personal studio inclinations often offer commentary on the familial and domestic world, will devise and invent meaningful, new articles- expectedly wise and witty, sentimental or strident, positive or critical - to observe, mark, comment and celebrate domestic life, afford entry to the past, to the new as well as to the status quo. I eagerly welcome all means and measures.'

I seek/sought the charisma of repurposed objects and new references as vehicles to this potentially arresting social topic. My interest is/was consumed by cultural relevance and conversational fodder, the seeking of an iconic interpretation of a possibly political object, appropriate to engender commentary, particularly when the exhibition is *in situ*, as a juxtaposed group statement, all the while referencing and celebrating individuality, fine craft and *the maker's hand*.

Post Script: In my viewing, the invitees each make inventive mention of domestic context or diary-like specifics by their own stories and recognizable craft vocabularies. Most have not previously used the apron as such a visual mnemonic. Therefore the arena of visual specifics broadened as these inspired works were planned and the narratives came to be. The audience familiar with these makers' visual vocabularies will appreciate the additions of other domestic forms- utilitarian vessels, objects of protection and tools, quirky wearables, iconic sculptural figures, recognizable or abstracted forms, along with the singular aprons- wearable or not- rife with personal reminiscences in diverse media and design. The spirit intended by the reference to the title, **Domestic Matters: *The Uncommon Apron***, serves to introduce the context- the implicit wearer and the myriad of domestic tasks, the suggested settings and the essence of each particular story. Thank you to each maker for her marvelous unique apron, her generous personal statement and all that led to this- our shared, domestic experience.

Gail M. Brown, Curator