



A Modern Master

The first thing to know about Alain Douillard, stonecutter turned self-taught metalsmith, is that he has spent almost all of his 81 years in his hometown of Nantes, France. As a young man there, he found work repairing and restoring churches and government buildings damaged during World War II. There, too, he found his voice as a craftsman and an artist, moving in the same circles as Georges Braque and Alexander Calder and exhibiting locally.

Like his confreres, Douillard might have conquered the international art world—if ➤

A kinetic sculpture in steel and stainless steel was among 70 objects in Alain Douillard's recent "Le Forgeron du Fer."

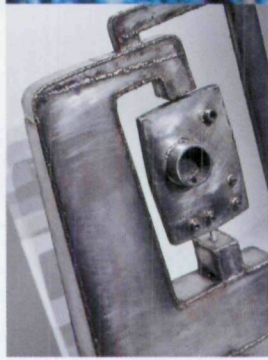
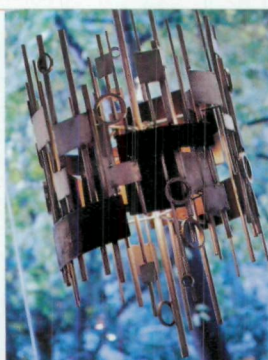
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edited by **Mark McMenamin**



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his abiding attachment to a quiet family life in Nantes hadn't prevented him from moving to Paris. But Paris's long-ago loss became New York's belated gain with his very first retrospective. Assembled by the **Magen H. Gallery**, "Le Forgeron du Fer" presented the evolution of a geometric abstraction at once idiosyncratic and familiar.

Ranging from miniature to massive, coarse to polished, and mid-century to recent, standouts included a stainless-steel necklace, a steel and stainless-steel, kinetic sculpture, and a freestanding fireplace. Even Douillard's largest pieces possess the tactile intimacy of his jewelry, and all his work is as accessible and unpretentious as the man who made it. American gallery visitors probably sensed common ground with the eccentric balance of Calder mobiles and the brutalism of Paul Evans furniture and as well as recognizing echoes of Constantin Brancusi and Alexandre Noll. So the experience of seeing the retrospective was less one of discovery than of reacquaintance—a "where have you been all this time?" —*Larry Weinberg*

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Clockwise from top: Dates spanned the late 1950's to the present. These two chairs were forged from brass. A steel pendant fixture hung by the gallery's front window. This brushed stainless-steel sculpture bears clear marks of the welding process. Steel panels were bolted onto the stem of a floor lamp. Douillard sat at a dining table topped in brass and glass. A side table has a painted metal base.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ERIC LAIGNEL, CHRISTOPHER GOSNEY, ERIC LAIGNEL (2), CHRISTOPHER GOSNEY