

Élodie Famel

She is the youngest prizewinner of the Young Creator 2005 competition. At the age of 23, Elodie Famel, from Brest, specialised in lacquer work after studying cabinet-making at Boule school in Paris. It was on an open-day visit to the Olivier de Serres school that she fell in love with this age-old technique from Asia. While attending classes at Olivier de Serres in 2003, this City of Paris scholarship student did her apprenticeship at the Midavaine workshop in rue des Acacias where, for five months, she had a magnificent early 18th-century Chinese screen to restore. "It was a real hermit's life," she recalls, "devoting 50 to 60 hours a week to lacquer!". Patient yet passionate, nothing held her back - not even the vile smells given off by synthetic lacquer, nor the indispensable, long sessions of rubbing down before applying each new coat. Making use of her double training, Élodie Famel intends to rehabilitate the decoration of objects by using lacquer, from jewellery to wardrobes. "There is a niche to be found between imported lacquer furniture and plain contemporary lacquers," she says. "I am continuously experimenting and am convinced that there is a lot that can be done with lacquer, without imitating the 1920s and 1930s". This can be seen in the elegant jewellery box made for her diploma, where the opening is reminiscent of a flower's petals. Objects that promise even finer work in the future from this young artist, who has only recently set up on her own. ■

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Marielle Mathieu

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For 33-years old Marielle Mathieu, "The object and its disappearance" is almost an obsession. Nearly all her experimentation focuses on this delicate question. It was even the title of her applied arts thesis, awarded with distinction by the Sorbonne in May 2003. It all began two years previously, with her stay in Rome where, as Villa Medici design laureate, she developed a passionate interest in the archaeology and history of those buried objects, disappearing for a time before reappearing years later, obsolete. In her examination of this relationship with time, she was quickly drawn into the question of wear and fragility. From there, Marielle Mathieu started to explore materials simple to use, with the idea of making objects that can be recycled. In particular, she worked with sand recovered from beaches near Rome to make crenellated shapes like castles. "These pieces seem like something out of an archaeological dig; they appear to be made of dust. I was able to "glaze" the sand by adding candle-wax," she explains. "Everything can be broken and melted down to be moulded into another shape." Another material she explores is soap, with a mural panel designed to decorate a shower. Over time, this architectural element will gradually reveal its decorative image, hitherto covered by a layer of soap several centimetres thick. Marielle Mathieu has also designed large containers made of translucent soap, which can be shaped by caressing them; turning the user into a modeller. She also makes goblets which can then be re-used as soap. This is a way of dealing with the overdose of objects imposed on us by modern living. Why make things to last when we can transform them? ■

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