



## she's all that

Agathe de Baillencourt has already given furniture, design, film, painting, advertising and graphic design a go. Now she is on the lookout for new pervasive mediums to serve her creativity.

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"I would say that I disturb Singaporeans because they don't know exactly what it is I do. They ask me if I'm a painter, a designer, a photographer, or if I am a director of short movies," says Agathe de Baillencourt. "And I don't like to be put into one box, I don't want to be reduced to a name just because I like to do many things."

Yes, this Parisian lady who calls Singapore home for the moment, is all that, and she's just turning 30.

Today de Baillencourt is trying to finish up the last of an advertising campaign for Ogilvy & Mather in her apartment, but in the mean time, she's taking us through her extensive portfolio. At the end of the room, a half-completed canvas stands in the makeshift art studio. As if it wasn't already obvious, she later reminds us that she doesn't work with a partner, and that it's just

her and her portfolio doing all the legwork.

De Baillencourt speculates that the reason why she confuses us locals so much is that a lot of us end up with the job that we studied for at school, and that we just do not have the tradition of trying our hands at different things. For her, she's not only travelled, but has grabbed whatever opportunities that came her way.

Although these days her creativity manifests itself on canvases (especially for an upcoming solo exhibition here in Singapore), de Baillencourt started out a decade ago toiling with 18th century French furniture tools as a student at the prestigious Ecole Boulle. "I like the idea of approaching design through having to make it, because you learn exactly the right way to begin conceiving the piece of furniture," she says. It was at the Ecole Boulle where she conceived and handcrafted the Ap-prouve seat for a café, which was inspired by and pays homage to 1930s cult designer, Jean Prouve.

Later, a six-month stint in 1999 with French businessman Francis Wacziarg in India gave her the opportunity to work with traditional craftsmanship of another kind. Tasked to develop products for both the Indian and European markets alongside the local craftsmen, her "Parisian experience mixed in with the Indian possibilities" resulted in a range of furniture, shoes, and rugs sold through Les Galeries Lafayette.

Back in Paris, de Baillencourt collaborated with the trend setting and thought-provoking *Inview* magazine. Given the freedom to experiment and unleash all creativity, she turned her focus once again to the art of chair making. This time though, her creations to signify the revival of 60s and 70s retro were utterly 'useless', for they were made out of brightly coloured pills. She jokingly says, "I had just come back from India, you can imagine the stock of medicine I had with me!" Another conceptual experiment for *Inview* turned the function of compact powder on its head by transforming it into a new age survival kit of sorts filled with necessities like teabags and royal jelly for tomorrow's woman. One has to wonder if this particular idea had anything to do with her own busied lifestyle!

It was also around that time that de Baillencourt discovered computers, and by her own admission, stopped designing objects. Instead, she channelled all that creativity into new media. She's created new identities for French television, designed prints for fashion house Comme Des Garçons, done slide projections for Zouk, designed bus-shelter advertisements, and even produced a couple of short films exploring sonic improvisations. Obviously never one to rest (and not once too did she even take a seat during this hour-long interview), she has the constant need to discover new things and explore new ideas, "otherwise I get bored easily."

All these add to the reason why she sometimes feels that people don't understand her need to cross boundaries. Behind it all, her art is one and the same, "there is one person, just feeling the creativity." In her eyes everything is interconnected, "varied mediums and experiences nurture each other and allow for a better flow of inspiration." Importantly, she gets to work with interesting people, and is having fun stepping out of the designed box. We totally get it. ●

To reach Agathe de Baillencourt or to find out more about her work, log onto [www.agathedeb.com](http://www.agathedeb.com).

