

# Air to the Throne

The deceptively delicate designs of burgeoning talent Julie Richoz pack an elegant punch.

PORTRAIT ESTELLE HANANIA

French-Swiss designer Julie Richoz makes weighty statements with products that have an incredible sense of lightness. Many of the 22-year-old designer's creations look so delicate that they appear almost to evaporate into thin air—a quality that has attracted the attention of major manufacturers even though she's only one year out of school. "I want to make objects that are easy to be with," Richoz says. Take Fierzo, Richoz's first production piece, which she completed as an educational exercise with Alessi while studying at ECAL in Lausanne before the company decided to manufacture it. Little more than a pair of curved wires sprouting up from a slender tray, it's a desk organizer that's almost unrecognizable until it's populated with pencils and paper notes. "I was interested in the parallels between the line of a drawing and the line of the wire," Richoz says. "In the end, the object is very close to my first sketches."

Earlier this year, Los Angeles-based manufacturer Artecnicca released Richoz's Thalie, a series of three vessels made of thin steel strips arranged in a sunburst pattern and shaped into bowls with the help of a single wire. By mixing industrial materials and handicraft, "I wanted to make the metal feel like a textile," Richoz says. "It's something very soft."

Such poetic creations helped her win the Design Parade Grand Prix last year—a competition organized by France's Villa Noailles that is known for identifying emerging talent. Getting the award presented Richoz with opportunities for three new projects: residencies with Sèvres porcelain and the CIRVA glass research center (at which she's developing a line of bath products and a vase, respectively) and a suspension lamp for Kreo Gallery. All will be exhibited this July as part of the Design Parade festival.

For now, she's living in Paris, where she also works part time in the studio of Pierre Charpin. Soon, though, she'll establish her own studio in Basel, and in the summer she'll partner with former classmates Carlo Clopath and Christophe Guberan to begin designing a house and almost all its contents—from furniture to finishes—in the Swiss mountaintop village of Lon.—TIM MCKEOUGH



(CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) Designer Julie Richoz in Paris. Her Fierzo desk organizer for Alessi, completed while she attended ECAL. Richoz's steel Thalie bowl for Artecnicca.

