

# MATERIAL GIRL

At just 23 years old, Paris-based designer **Julie Richoz** already has the design world buzzing about her porcelain and glass creations.

BY JANELLE ZARA PORTRAIT BY ESTELLE HANANIA



*Coques and Oreilles vases by Julie Richoz, pictured below in her Paris apartment.*

**“I’m not afraid of emptiness,”** says designer Julie Richoz, shortly before her dual exhibitions—one in the shop windows of Lafayette Maison Haussmann and another under the high ceilings of BHV’s spacious Observatory gallery—as the featured artist of May’s Designer’s Days Paris. Although her wares are small, their quiet yet commanding presence is better shown against a blank canvas. “I always design displays very simply,” Richoz continues. “I want to put the attention on the objects.”

Only two years since graduating from Switzerland’s École cantonale d’art de Lausanne, Richoz, who works primarily out of her Paris apartment and part-time as the assistant to designer Pierre Charpin, already has much to show. The meteoric trajectory of her career spans breadth, too, both in high-profile collaborators and materials. Many of her pieces feature graphic qualities that give them a surreal air of having been drawn in space. There are, for instance, her *Vase Coques* and *Vases Oreilles*, vibrantly color-blocked glass vessels made during her experimental residency at Cirva, Marseille’s Centre International de

Recherche sur le Verre et les Arts Plastiques. There’s also the mercurial *Dyade*, a hanging lamp made for Paris’s Galerie Kreo; its centerpiece, a long pendant of white Corian, hangs freely inside a black plastic frame embedded with LEDs to reflect and refract the light as it turns. There are also her flat ceramic scent diffusers, spun during her 2013 residency at Sèvres, the place where porcelain craftsmen trace their roots to Versailles.

Richoz owes all three of these prestigious collaborations to her 2010 *Bouleau*, a molded birch plywood-and-aluminum tray that won her the Grand Prize at Villa Noailles’ 2012 Design Parade. The title led her to these major collaborations, as well as to the Designer’s Days show she exhibited in at the end of May. There she also launched her first textile work, a raffia rug made with near-century-old hand-weaving specialists Cogolin, and, for London’s Gallery Libby Sellers, showed “Armand,” a 2012 sculpture of interwoven, overlapping upright tubes of paper. The diaphanous, blurred effect of fine stripes laser-cut from its surfaces create what Richoz calls, “a color vibration in space.”



“The object always has a limit,” she says of the usual constraints that come with definitive outlines, “but I wanted to have something more.”

And more is sure to come. The limitlessness of design is what drew Richoz to it in the first place. “When I was young, I knew I wanted to do something creative, but I didn’t want to be an artist,” she says. “I wanted to create things in real life. I chose to make objects because there’s so much you can achieve; there’s room to experiment with their forms and images—how they look, how they’re fabricated, how we live with them.”