



Ask yourself when you last treated your favourite furniture, and waterproofing or killing woodworm probably springs to mind. To Chrysanthe Staikopoulou, however, the phrase has more romantic connotations: precious things, like the people they belong to, deserve a little luxury now and then. For her degree show at the Royal College of Art this month, Chrysanthe will present her jewellery for furniture: beautifully executed designs to be 'worn' by chairs, tables, shelves and mirrors.

A sort of furniture-whisperer, able to draw out the character of even the most unpromising pieces, she immerses herself in the qualities of an object before deciding on the shapes and materials that it seems to demand. Her first work of this kind, a modest gold brooch of a Charles Rennie Mackintosh-like design, was made to patch the frayed wicker seat of an oak-framed chair she found on the street. Gold was essential, she insists, to complement the warmth of the wood and to restore a sense of worth to the abandoned chair. 'I try to find the essence of each piece of furniture by asking: what does it want?' she explains. However much you love your heirlooms, crediting them with human desires might seem a little silly; but Chrysanthe thinks it's natural that we give human qualities to the things we live with. 'And anyway, we already have the idea of the haunted house and the talking mirror; this is nothing new.'

Among this year's invariably talented RCA design graduates, however, Chrysanthe stands out for doing something entirely novel. Born on Corfu in 1977, she trained at UCL's Bartlett School of Architecture and took a job in an architect's office, only discovering jewellery design at an evening class. With no relevant work to show at her interview for a place in the Royal College's goldsmithing, silversmithing, metalwork and jewellery department, she produced her portfolio of architectural drawings and explained that she would like to make jewellery on the same site-specific principles.

Having taken her on, department head Professor David Watkins suggested a collaboration with Wim Vandekerckhove, who stages contemporary jewellery exhibitions at his Art Deco home in Ghent, Belgium. 'I went to Villa de Bondt and did a detailed site survey,' Chrysanthe recalls. 'The first thing I made was a ring for a drawer handle: an object to mediate between the furniture and the user. You are invited to put your finger in the ring, even to use it as a pull to open the drawer. It emphasises that the handle is a place for the hand.'

Inspired by the 1920s décor, the Villa de Bondt series also includes an elegant necklace that clings to the corner of a table, a bracelet that attaches to a dado rail and a brooch that clips on to a fireplace. By the clever use of tiny screws and hinges, they also transform into jewellery for the house's inhabitants, enabling them to take the memory of their furniture with them wherever they go. 'It's interesting to bring together the personality of the owners and the character of the architecture they inhabit,' says Chrysanthe, who hopes that her work at Villa de Bondt will be the first of many bespoke commissions for both private and public spaces. 'But my work is also about creating delightful objects that you don't want to put away in a box. The house itself becomes the jewel-case' ■  
*To contact Chrysanthe Staikopoulou, ring 07941 550632, or visit [chrysanthe.co.uk](http://chrysanthe.co.uk). Her work will be featured in 'The Show: One' from 26 May to 4 June at the Royal College of Art, Kensington Gore, London SW7, Mon-Sun 12-9 (020 7590 4498; [rca.ac.uk](http://rca.ac.uk)) and from 23 Sept to 12 Nov at Villa de Bondt, Krijgslaan 124, B-9000 Ghent (00 32 9 221 76 09; [villadebondt.be](http://villadebondt.be)) by appointment only*

Top: a close-up view of *Brooch for a Chair*. Middle: the *Ornaments for Villa de Bondt* (2006) were made for an Art Deco house in Ghent, and include a bracelet for a dado rail, a necklace for a table, a ring for a drawer handle, earrings for a glass cabinet and a brooch for a fireplace. Bottom: the *Friction/Fiction* bracelets were either made from or inspired by cheese graters