

OnFeature

OnFeature, 4 septembre 2014

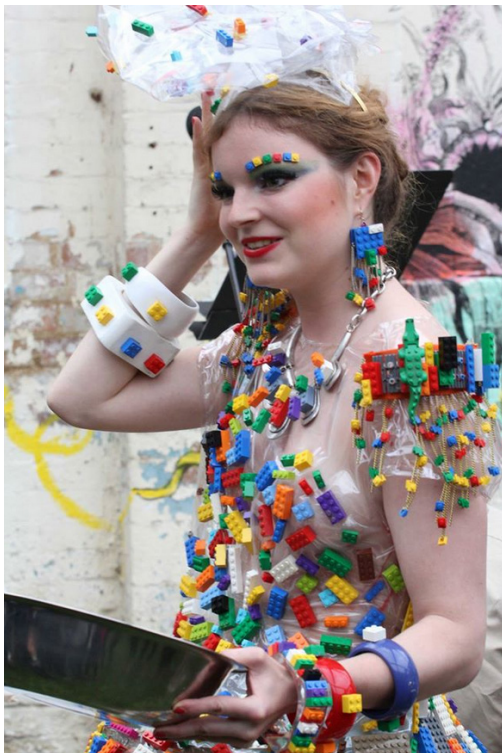
Bringing Her Magic: OnFeature In Conversation With Anne-Sophie Cochevelou

Elvira Hoby

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🕒 04 Sep 2014 👤 Elvira Hoby 💬 0 📍 Design, exclusive interview, Fashion, jewellery, London

She is the young French fashion designer that made a splash on the London fashion scene with her Lego dress, featured at the premiere of the Lego film in February and she is continuing to turn heads with spectacular designs, created from a performative concept. Cochevelou's use of toys as the central theme of her designs enable her not only to produce unique and vibrant garments, but also fulfils her desire to recycle objects, giving them a new life. The recognisability of the toys that she uses – Lego, Barbie and dolls – is a reminder of the collective memory our generation has, producing a reaction that brings up nostalgia and a wish to eternalise childhood.



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The interview takes place in Cochevelou's flat, situated out in the hipster east, near the beautiful Regents Canal. Her room is an amazing jungle of dismembered barbies, boxes of Lego, mannequins, hats and more. She apologises for the mess but explains that she cannot have it any other way, the logic of a tidy room does not work for her. Firstly, Cochevelou tells me about her childhood and how she came to be a designer in London. She mainly grew up in France and studied Literature and Drama at the Sorbonne, but because she had always enjoyed being creative and making her own stuff: making puppets, drawing, painting and so on, she decided after her BA that she wanted to do something artistic and so she applied to Central Saint Martins. She spent 2 years doing her MA in Performance Practice & Designs and now she works as a freelance design and costume and jewellery designer.

OF: How did you find your MA at Central Saint Martins?

ASC: It was great, I met a lot of great people and did lots of fun projects. It was very different from what I had done before so I was a little lost at the beginning. I think I was a bit young...if I were doing it now I would do it differently, I would focus more on designing.

OF: What was the most important thing you learnt from Central Saint Martins?

ASC: To be proactive, not to wait for opportunities to come to you, but to start my own projects, as well as not being afraid of experimenting or of things going wrong.

OF: What was the first thing you can remember making?

ASC: At pre-school I made a sculpture with my hand print, I gave it to my mum and she said it was nice but I think she was lying! she still has it and now I like seeing it and how small my hand was.

OF: Who are your biggest design influences?

ASC: I'm influenced by a lot of designers. I really like the French designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac he's really pop and colourful. Recently I went to the Jean Paul Gaultier exhibition at the Barbican and that was a real inspiration as I didn't realise how big his influence on fashion was. I also love [Alexander McQueen](#), everything that is a bit performative and extravagant.

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OF: Do you want to create pieces that are more performance art, or more wearable fashion, or a mix of the two?

ASC: I prefer pieces that I call 'wearable art', which are actually not really comfortable. I say to myself that if you feel good in your clothes you might not actually look good. I like to wear things that are heavy and full of stuff. It's not the kind of thing you wear to go to Tesco, but I'm more interested in big costumes. I'm not really into ready-to-wear.

OF: Do you think the designs reflect something about you? Do you put a bit of your personality into the things that you make?

ASC: Yes I think we all do, I think my creations especially refer to childhood and I guess we all carry a bit of our child in us and express the child we used to be. It's also about my love of colour and putting lots of things together to create a kind of mishmash so it reflects my personality because you won't see me in anything black or with clean lines.



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OF: Is it difficult to make your costumes and put all the toys onto garments?

ASC: You have to create your own techniques, like drilling holes and melting the objects to attach them. I use a lot of stitching usually, which is not the quickest technique. I'm getting quicker at cutting and assembling the jewellery but for the clothes I don't use a **sewing machine**, everything is hand-made so it's not really commercial.

OF: What's your favourite thing that you have made?

ASC: My Lego dress for fashion week last year. It is the design I've spent the most time on ever, it was a really big project and I was proud of the result, which is rare because I'm often not completely satisfied; things often don't turn out exactly as they were in my mind.



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OF: What do you say to people who don't like the things you make, are you ever offended?

ASC: I know it's not everyone's cup of tea. I'm not offended because everyone has the right to have their own taste. Sometimes I would like to be more elegant, I know my things are not elegant; they are crazy. But that's why I like London. In paris it's harder because people are more judgemental. I think they should understand that other people might like my designs. The thing I like to do is to make people talk. When I'm selling my things I'm never bored because people are always talking, commenting, telling stories about themselves and their childhood, telling me that it reminds them of the Island of Dolls in Mexico, or personal stories about themselves. As a designer this kind of feedback is really important in being able to create a kind of social link.

OF: Can anyone wear your creations?

ASC: I think so, because some extravagant people are going to go for a big piece, while people who work in the city might just want an earring with a small hand as a little personal rebellion. I have every kind of customer, young people but also older women who don't care about other peoples judgements anymore so they are really happy to wear something original and colourful; they don't want to blend in.

OF: Can people come to you for customised pieces?

ASC: Yes, I'm often asked to customise something, to bring my magic to garments to create unique pieces, for events like gigs and openings.

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OF: What are your plans for the future?

ASC: I'm trying to expand, I want to invest in more tools and a studio. I have a few costume designs for shows coming up and I'm also trying to do more projects together with Lego.

I will be in an exhibition in September with outsider artists, organised by Sue Kreitzman. I will make some colourful dresses for an 'anti-fashion' catwalk at the St Pancras Hospital Gallery.

I will also be returning the Barbican, they asked me to come back for the Christmas market thanks to the success of the previous one.

