



NICE AND SEMPÉ
Above left, the 'Lampe Plate' series. Above, her clock is both traditional and progressive. Top, Sempé's lightweight chair for VIA. Right, her 'Grande Lampe Plissée' for Cappellini. Below, the 'Lampe Extensible' becomes whatever size you want



Material world

With her chest of drawers made from brushes, lamps of pleated fabric and chairs with neoprene seats, Inga Sempé is proving she's a real designer of substance

Writer Emma O'Kelly

It's hard to miss French designer Inga Sempé's work at the moment: at Edra, there's her chest of drawers made from brushes; at Cappellini, you can pick up her pleated lamp that looks more like a work of art than a light fixture; and for French design body VIA, she's produced everything from chairs, to lamps, to clocks.

If things carry on like this, Sempé might even be able to realise her dream to move from a down-at-heel studio in the 18th arrondissement, 'the worst part of Paris - just one big drug party', to somewhere more salubrious. She spends most days in her studio, often with her five-year-old son. 'He draws pirates and castles, I draw radiators and lights.'

For the past three years, VIA has financed many of her projects - a feather-light metal chair with a neoprene seat covered in leather, an extendable lamp and a wooden clock which tells the time with both a digital display and the position of the hands, which VIA patented. Her pleated light series and her 'Lampe Plate', both available at Cappellini, and a candelabra

she designed for Baccarat keep her in funds, which she hopes will swell with next year's still-secret pieces for Edra and Cappellini.

A project starts with a drawing and then Sempé sources the material in which to make it. A visit to a brush maker, for instance, resulted in the delicate, soft brushes of her 'Brosse' chest of drawers. So far her portfolio consists of furniture and lighting, but she is a self-confessed techie and wants to make products like radiators, wheels and mobile phones, applying methods she learned while working in Marc Newson's studio ten years ago. 'Marc knows so much about the technical side of design and that was great for me as I really want to learn how things are made.'

The idea of expanding into other areas of design fills her with dread. 'I'm a product designer,' she insists, 'and if I wasn't I don't know what I'd do.' ★ Inga Sempé's work is on show until 14 September at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Rue de Rivoli, Paris, tel: 33.1 44 55 57 50