

A self-described introvert, rising architect *Bernard Dubois* is like his work—not as serious as he first appears.

Architect Bernard Dubois has been on the fast track since graduating from Brussels' École de La Cambre in 2009. In less than 10 years, he has opened his own studio, curated the Belgian Pavilion at Venice Architecture Biennale 2014 and designed retail projects for brands such as Nicolas Andreas Taralis and Valextra. As Bernard travels and works abroad—in France, Italy, Switzerland and China—more and more frequently, his appreciation for his Belgian roots only seems to grow.

“My biggest strength is also my biggest weakness: I’m a very systematic person. I don’t believe in creative moments where you’re touched by the grace of God and then suddenly have a great design in hand. Usually, those moments don’t happen.

When I first visit a site or meet with a client, I try not to say too much. Instead, I listen and attempt to understand the environment. We start with many options and narrow them down. This creates a certain quality, in the end, because the project has really been thought through.

Sometimes a client expects me to think up something visionary immediately and might be disap-

pointed when I don’t come up with a concept on the spot. I need to process an environment and work through all of my ideas, and that can be very understated. I prefer to think about things. I’m a very quiet person on the outside, but I’m very loud on the inside. It’s important not to mistake my external quietness as real quietness. In Belgian humor, it’s normal to make fun of yourself. There’s a quiet sense of self-mockery that’s reflected in my work. The exterior might look serious, but it’s not really as serious as it appears.

I’m also a photographer, so I photograph a lot of my own projects. When a project is complete and I go to take pictures, I’m always disappointed. The angles that I thought were the most interesting aren’t, and I think, “This project is a failure.” But usually, when I look back at the photographs, I find that there are angles that are much more interesting than what I had originally imagined to be the best.

In the end, when a project is finally finished, it doesn’t belong to the architect anymore. It belongs to the user and its environment. Everyone has a right to rediscover a space in their own way and to find their own particular angles and views.”

AS TOLD TO MOLLY MANDELL

## Bernard Dubois

Right: Detail from Bernard’s interior for Valextra’s flagship store in Milan, Italy.



Photograph: Delfino Legnani