SUTD scholar Tan Guan Rong wants to use her skills to create meaningful products that fulfill needs rather than wants

“Every single tiny detail and area of a design should be there for a much greater reason than ‘I find it cool’. I want to be able to create a product from Step 1 — with a deep and fundamental understanding of the user’s unique situation, needs, social or cultural circumstances and many other aspects — so that it’s appropriate for them and their purposes. I want to have the skills to assess impacts and attend to those products that fulfill needs rather than wants, to help people who need them the most,” she explains.

“You need to be able to create a product that really helps to improve crucial aspects of people’s lives, and I believe that the skills I will acquire with the SUTD curriculum will help to improve crucial aspects of people’s lives,” she adds. “The SUTD curriculum revolves around developing versatility and a wider scope of understanding in what we learn, and I think such flexibility and open-mindedness is a very valuable skill these days, where change is the only constant.

Ms Tan’s passion for design has emerged from her own inspiration. Last summer, she went on a fully funded 15-week exchange programme to Zhejiang University in China, under SUTD’s partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

For example, affordable essential household products that have the most basic functions for financially strapped families; or walking, hearing or communication aides for the physically disadvantaged; or banana workers who need a better banana picker; or walking, hearing or communication aides for the physically disadvantaged; or banana workers who need a better banana picker; or self-help products that fulfill needs rather than wants; or even products that fulfill needs rather than wants; or even...