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PAPER ARTIST CAROLINE JANE HARRIS CREATES CUT-OUT DREAMS

BY [LYNN ENRIGHT](#)

FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2013, 23:00



Google Caroline Jane Harris and you'll discover that she has a LinkedIn account. It's a social networking tool not immediately associated with the arts but when you meet Harris, a sunny and pretty strawberry-blonde 26-year-old from Dulwich in south London, it all makes sense. For Harris isn't one of those tortured-artist types who is too addled by talent and entitlement and illegal substances to sort out her internet output – rather she is a hardworking pragmatist determined to forge a successful career in a difficult industry.

'I don't get that whole tortured-artist thing,' she tells me when I visit her in her studio in Brixton. 'If you're lucky enough to be an artist, then you are doing what you love. What could be better? I'm just a very grateful person. I am grateful to have found something that I love, that I am good at.'

Of course her LinkedIn profile isn't completely run-of-the-mill. Alongside her education details – Sydenham High School for Girls followed by a foundation year at Camberwell College of Arts and a degree in fine art printmaking at the University of Brighton – is her job title: paper surgeon. A paper what-now?

'Oh, it's kind of a joke,' she laughs. 'But I am kind of dissecting it, I'm coming to understand about the paper by getting in there and cutting it up and taking it apart. And I use scalpels like a doctor.'

What Harris actually does is create intricate lattices of layered cut paper, using images of trees a starting point for pieces that eventually – after hours and hours and days and days of painstaking cutting (she has to change her blade every 40 minutes because she blunts them through the repetitive cutting) – resemble ornate lacework, all shadowy beauty and delicate darkness.

Since graduating from university, she has concentrated on this practice, combining her two loves – paper and nature ('My parents are really sweet and they've kept my work since I was a kid,' she tells me, 'and it's always been flora and fauna and animals. That's always been a really obvious theme with me') – to craft work that has garnered her prizes, bursaries and interest from collectors. Currently represented by London's Scream gallery (which is owned by Jamie Wood, son of Rolling Stone Ronnie Wood), she is comfortable in the art world and remains cheerily can-do about the hoopla surrounding the contemporary scene.

'When you come out of art school, you need to one, get your work up to scratch; two, it's who you know and who your friends are. Networking is part of the job but I don't think it's seedy; I think it's a nice thing. The more people you know who are interested in what you're doing, the more fulfilling it is. You can have interesting conversations with people; you can help each other.'

She is influenced by the East, especially by Japan, where paper-cutting is more prevalent than it is in Europe and where the idea of nature is more dominant – in the arts and in the everyday. 'They are respectful of nature, they're a lot more connected to nature and I'm drawn to that,' she says. 'I'm actually envious of the Japanese relationship with nature. From a young age there, you're taught to appreciate nature and understand nature and feel a connection with it.'

She thinks, too, that it is the individual's relationship with nature that makes her work appealing to people. 'Nature is such a universal language, anyone in any country can get it,' she says. 'There's nothing in my work that alienates anybody – other than taste – but there is no theme that leaves the viewer thinking what on earth was that about. My work is recognisable and familiar but also, I don't think it's so explanatory and obvious that you look at it and you think you've got it and you walk off.'

She's right: these are pieces that pique your interest with their attractive symmetry and perfect-seeming details but pull you in to deeper and more intriguing levels, much like Harris herself. She is all layers – sunny, smiling optimist; intelligent and clear-headed; determined and patient artist – and they combine to create something that promises to be quite brilliant.

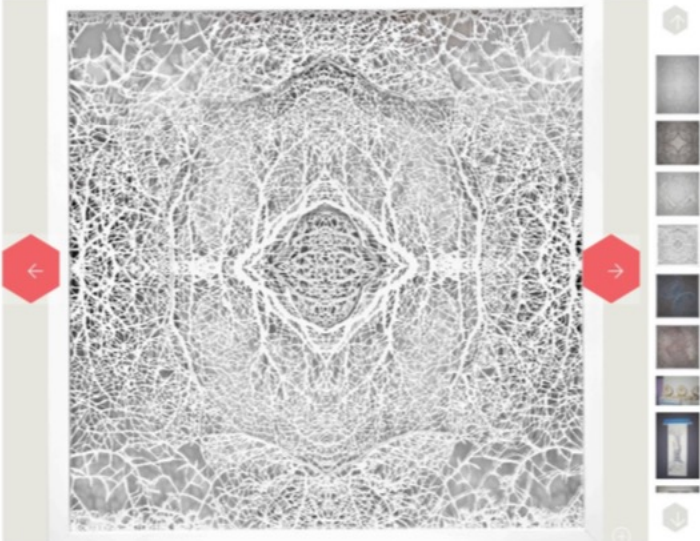
From 6 September, Caroline Jane Harris is showing alongside Shane McAdams in Hand to Earth, an exhibition presented by Scream and Matthew Williamson

MY WORK: OPEN NETWORK

BY LYNN ENRIGHT
FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2013, 23:00

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In Open Network, a centre cavity has been cut out of the first and second layers, creating a tunnel into the middle. The pattern came about as a result of taking a picture of a cut-out and re-photographing, thus organically mutating into something with looser references to the original form.



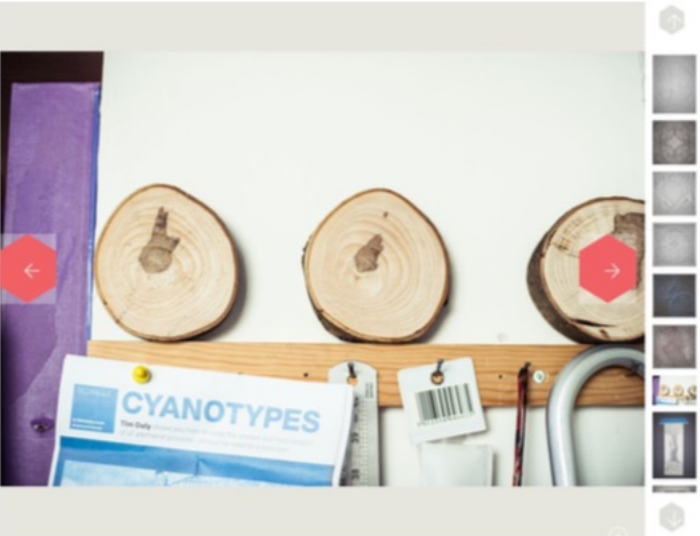
MY SPACE: CAROLINE JANE HARRIS

BY LYNN ENRIGHT
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A look around the artist's studio in Bristol

PHOTO: STEPHANIE SIAN SMITH



MY INSPIRATION MATISSE

BY LYNN ENRIGHT
FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2013, 23:00

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I really like Matisse. At the end of his life, he got into paper-cutting. He would use scissors and go freehand and make these beautiful collages. I love those. They're so free, unlike my work, which is quite predetermined.



MY PLACES SPIT JACKS, VICTORIA PARK

BY LYNN ENRIGHT
FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 2013, 23:00

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When I was younger we had annual family holidays to the north of Spain where I loved the climate and vegetation but the two things I looked forward to the most were the small enclosed beaches and the rotisserie chicken. I was so happy when I stumbled across Spit Jacks in east London serving half and whole mouthwatering spit-roasted chicken swimming in its own juices.

