

[SPOTLIGHT]

FULL SPEED TO THE TOP

The *Journal* sits down with craftswoman Harriet Poppy Speed to talk about her experience at the Linley Summer School, her blog and what's next for the rising star

VICTORIA SVIGGUM



HARRIET AT LINLEY SUMMER SCHOOL © MARK REEVES

“I want people to smile when they look at my work. It’s from the heart and I hope people see that it has integrity and reflects my values,” Harriet Poppy Speed tells me.

Although still a student of furniture design, Harriet is already making her mark in the field. Not only does she head a successful initiative ‘This Girl Makes’, empowering women in craft and design, but she was one of only eight students across the UK to be selected for the Linley Summer School last year, which she counts as one of her biggest achievements. “It was an amazing experience,” she says. “The learning never ended and being with other young students and having that little network was great.”

Harriet tells me that she is still in contact with her co-students now and greatly values the relationships she formed at the summer school, as well as the knowledge she gained from the full schedule of workshops

and masterclasses in various disciplines such as marquetry, jointing, forestry and leather.

In her blog, ‘This Girl Makes’, she writes about her own experiences, interviews other craftswomen and shares her general thoughts on the industry. All posts are also accompanied by her own illustrations. “It’s kind of been an organic thing – I’ve done it because I’ve always wanted to do it and luckily, people have responded well.”

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Through this initiative, Harriet has run a number of voluntary workshops, teaching groups of children, teens and adults basic skills in craft. “I find it so rewarding,” she says, and commenting particularly on her younger groups, adds: “In such a digital age, I think

it’s important to give children an opportunity to just use their hands and learn about making things, because then they can use those skills in so many ways in the future.”

Graduating from Rycotewood College in Oxford this summer, Harriet must have exciting plans for her future. I ask her what they are. She hesitates, but then says: “I’m going to be bold and say I’m going to go freelance straightaway. I’d also like the opportunity to have a residency in a workshop so I can keep doing all the prep for ‘This Girl Makes’ and also work on private commissions.”

Harriet is also excited to tell me that she has just received funding to turn ‘This Girl Makes’ into a book by the end of the year, which she hopes will lead to a curated exhibition to accompany the launch. With such enthusiasm and dedication to her craft, I’m sure we can expect great things from her. **11**

this-girl-makes.com