

Design/life



Tricia Harris:
Furniture
designer

INTERVIEW
BY
AILEEN LEE

Simplicity and an eye for detail

■ **What's your background?**
>> I studied for four years at GMT Letterfrack in Galway doing a degree in furniture design and manufacture. After some short-term roles in the furniture industry and a year of travel, I took up a role in Griffith College Dublin where I lectured for eight years and during this time I completed a masters in technology and learning at Trinity. In the summer of 2012, I began the initial steps of setting up my own furniture business, something which I think I always knew I would do one day.

■ **What is a typical work day like for you?**
>> I cycle the short distance from Stoneybatter to the Chocolate Factory, a creative hub in the old Williams & Woods building in Dublin city centre. I have been based here since 2013 and love the atmosphere in this old industrial building. I enjoy working in a large bright studio and love the energy you get from working in an interesting place like this. I don't really have a typical work day as it depends on what projects I am working on — I may be at the computer for the day, doing something at the workbench; out visiting a manufacturer, or working onsite.

■ **Tell us about a recent design/project you have worked on?**
>> I made 'The Planter's Dresser' for the Irish Design Works exhibition in Galway this summer. I wanted a pared-back design that shows off the natural beauty of the solid olive ash planks.

The construction is kept simple, with no fittings used. The sliding doors are painted with a natural finish. The idea was to create a space within the home for plants or even a place to sit and take a few minutes to yourself.

The open shelves can display a selection of cherished pieces or the ordinary objects of everyday life. The little terracotta pots I used were picked up at the Store Yard in Portlaoise. They came with the geraniums already potted, by Billy, aged 83, grandfather of one of the owners. The original snippet was taken from a plant in 1969. The idea of slowing down, of taking care of things and ensuring they last, inspired the name of the piece.

■ **What's your design style?**
>> I don't think I have a particular design style as such, as my pieces are quite varied, but they are all based on the same ethos and design principles of simplicity, longevity, attention to detail, considered proportion and balance. I love integrating character and soul into ordinary everyday furniture pieces.

■ **What/who inspires your work?**

>> Eileen Grey has always been an inspiration, not only as a successful Irish female designer but as a pioneer who pushed boundaries with her modern designs. I like the production-led development of her work in later years. I also love that she was still designing in her late 90s — that continued desire to create, more than being



Swirl Drinks Cabinet
by Tricia Harris,
€4,800.
Picture: Philip Sloney

about work and making money; design was a lifelong passion and just part of who she was.

■ **What's your favourite trend at the moment (if you have any)?**
>> I've never really been a fan. For me, trends signify something transient and I prefer to aim for more long-

lasting work. A good design won't go out of fashion.

■ **What's your most treasured possession?**
>> I don't buy a lot of things so when I do they are carefully considered. I love things that remind me of certain moments, like a little red Thonet chair that caught my eye outside

Harold's Bazaar close to where I lived when I moved to Dublin first, or a Panama hat from a little hat shop in Paris, or a small ceramic piece from a trip to Copenhagen with my mother.

■ **Who would be your favourite designer, or style inspiration?**
>> I love the simplicity and

purity of Scandinavian design and Japanese craft. I also find traditional Irish country furniture inspiring.

■ **What would be a dream project/design for you to work on?**
>> I am currently working on a range of smaller wooden objects, something that I have wanted to do for

so long. I am collaborating with another maker and really looking forward to launching these soon.

■ **Any design tips for us?**
>> Buy less and buy better. We have to move away from continuously consuming and our throwaway culture.

■ www.triciaharris.ie
■ [@triciaharrisdesigns](https://www.instagram.com/triciaharrisdesigns)



Oak sideboard at Breac House by Tricia Harris.

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Swirl Record Player Cabinet by Tricia Harris.

Picture: Brendan Ryan