

Sitting pretty: Olivia Scott-Taylor

From school chairs to iconic furniture, one young Buckinghamshire actress has discovered a new talent for design, Jan Raycroft discovers

Actress Olivia Scott-Taylor has not been resting on her laurels since appearing in major TV dramas, although if she did sit down we could hardly blame her because her latest 'starring role' involves some very special chairs.

Olivia, 23, who hails from Bledlow Ridge in Buckinghamshire, has doubled up her acting assignments with the launch of her own successful furniture business, Olivia Scott-Taylor Designs.

What's more she's turned out to be one of the youngest discoveries of the Liberty 'Best of British' Open Call 2014, and now her neat retro-style chairs are on sale at the iconic London department store at £195 each beside the other top, cutting edge designs there.

So the production line is ticking alongside learning lines for Olivia's latest screen assignments. Readers will probably know her best for ITV's excellent *Wild at Heart* series, where she played Liv, step-daughter of vet Danny Trevanion (Stephen Tompkinson) who had moved his family to South Africa to rehabilitate a game reserve for wild animals and establish a veterinary surgery and animal hospital. Other roles have included the part of Bethan Fischer in BBC's *Holby City*.

She says: "It's really exciting for this to happen. We are absolutely thrilled to be accepted by Liberty and the fantastic response since the range was launched."

The 'We' she mentions here refers to her mother, Lesley Scott, whose background is in design and styling. Olivia has been greatly supported by her family, and this mother-daughter collaboration began when Lesley refurbished a set of original mid-century British school chairs for her own kitchen. It was clear other people wanted their own ones, but finding originals in a condition where they might be refurbished turned out to be a hard task. They were often too small or damaged, dried out and prone to producing splinters.

So Olivia decided to take it all a step further, designing and making her own chairs. The idea was to retain the classic retro-look and functional style, but make them suitable for modern dining, with custom-designed signature stripes and a lacquer finish.

Olivia says: "The company is mainly funded by myself from my previous acting jobs with a little bit of extra help from my mum and brother, so it really is an investment of love!

"I had to scour the country sourcing materials and the expertise to create a 100%



Olivia Scott-Taylor has 'taken a front row seat' at Liberty

British made, high quality product. The tubular steel frames and laminated beech backs and seats are manufactured in British companies using the same traditional methods and craftsmanship as they were back in the days before plastic alternatives hit the market."

With their distinctive hand-painted stripes applied before lacquering, the finished chairs certainly catch the eye, with the graining pattern of the beech, our favourite local tree, very much apparent in each individual piece.

This combines very nicely with the utilitarian/industrial concept to produce chairs which will last a very long time indeed.

Getting the chairs into Liberty was a real coup as Olivia had to queue with 900 other design hopefuls for her chance to pitch to the store's discerning experts. The buyers were impressed with the authenticity of the chairs she showed them and now six designs are on sale there, amongst just a handful of work that 'made the cut' that day.

Now she's working on expanding the line with coloured frames, and a matching retro stool is in the pipeline. All of this has to be combined with her filming work but for Olivia investing the money she's made from acting into her own business has turned out to be the perfect choice.



Olivia's chairs display a beautiful beech grain