

Best project I'm probably most proud of Moneypenny HQ in Wrexham, the largest commercial project that we have implemented on-site. The client was passionate about the value of landscape for his staff, and since Moneypenny moved in, staff retention is up and sick days are down.

Colleagues I have a brilliant team of freelancers, including senior landscape architects Lucy, Sally and Adam, graduate landscape architect Ale, and an amazing studio manager, Sophie.

Mentors So many people have helped me since starting out. Andrew Wilson was incredibly generous with his help and time when I called him one evening out of the blue, and many of the architects I work with have been helpful with my questions about how their companies work. I also worked with Lucy Lomas of Luma Marketing, who created a strategic marketing plan for me and opened my eyes to new ways of thinking about CW Studio, who we are, and what we aspire to.

Issues to address I need to give some thought to how we will deal with design competitions. I love design competitions, and as a team we all love ideas, stories, creating images and collaborating. However, days and days of work goes into competitions

– site visits, meetings, presentations, designing and model making, which, along with staff and travel expenses, adds up to a lot of outgoings with no

income. If you don't actually win, it can have quite an impact on the company bank account!

High and low points of your career Highs (all 2017): Being named as a finalist for the SGD Awards, featuring in the Architects' Journal for Croydon i Street, and speaking in front of 160 people at SoilsCon 2017 after deciding to put myself in situations where I felt out of my depth. Lows (again, all 2017): Losing a couple of big projects and feeling out of sorts for a while about how the (commercial) industry can behave. Luckily, I'm good at bouncing back.

Leadership style My aim is to be open, encourage excellent work, and inspire passion and fun adventures along the way.

I look outside the traditional models for landscape architect practices to embrace genuinely flexible working. The freelancers I work with are brilliant and experienced landscape architects, mostly mums who realised that working part time in an inflexible practice wasn't working out. This way, work can be carried out as and when, around childcare, and I can use as much or as little of this resource as I need month by month.

What you hope to achieve in your work during the next 12 months Continue to work on exciting projects with brilliant people, write more, teach more, and gently grow the company while achieving the perfect work/life balance. How hard can it be?

INSPIRATION

People and gardens So many people inspire me with their design work, and I try to see them speak where I can for extra invigoration. I've seen Piet Oudolf speak several times, and it's always a treat. I found Sarah Price very inspiring at an SGD Conference a couple of years ago. Martha Schwartz was wonderful speaking in Manchester last year, passionate and ballsy. I'd love to hear theatre designer Es Devlin speak, although I am currently making do with a wonderful, energising documentary about her (Abstract: The Art of Design on Netflix).

Trentham Gardens in Stoke-on-Trent has gorgeous planting by Piet Oudolf and Tom Stuart-Smith; I try to visit throughout the year so I can track the seasonal changes. I visited Crockmore House, a private garden in Oxford that was designed by Christopher Bradley-Hole, as part of an open house day in 2004 when I was a student, and it inspires me still; I have the well-thumbed plant list close by. Last year I visited Gresgarth Hall near Lancaster, home of Arabella Lennox-Boyd, and I am already looking forward to the open day this year. Beautiful.

LIFE/STYLE

Carolyn Willitts

We find out what makes the CW Studio founder tick

PERSONAL

Hobbies According to Instagram, wine and food! I used to have hobbies, such as theatre and hill walking, before I had a child and a company. Now it's mainly kids crafts, kite flying and phonics, although I still have time for my books and always make sure I see an exhibition when I escape to London with work. One of my many New Year's resolutions is to start urban sketching regularly.

Design tastes I love Agnes Martin, Rachel Whiteread, and Donald Judd, and anything by the stunning Lucienne and Robin Day.

Most treasured possession My sat nav. I'm hopeless with directions whilst driving and this gives me complete freedom and the ability to get to site on time.

Favoured dress style Aiming for Louise Brooks x the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. It's a long-term plan. Sadly, the longer it takes, the more impossible it gets.

Food Salt and pepper squid. With a view of the sea. And a glass of wine. Somewhere hot.

Drink A red from Ribero del Duero. On the sofa on a Friday evening. Under a blanket. With a scented candle.

Most fun you've ever had Gate-crashing Jarvis Cocker's dressing room in 1996, two days after he'd mooned Michael Jackson. Glastonbury '95 was a wondrous thing. Now I'm more of a family-festival-goer... still fun, but not quite as crazy.

TRAVEL

Places you've been; places you'd like to go Top three favourite places I've been in the last five years: Barcelona, Berlin and Gijon. Top three places I'd like to go:

Copenhagen, Madrid, Barcelona (again). I love cities, squares, waterfronts, public sculpture and seafood!

How you like to travel The fastest way. I'm more about the arrival than the journey.

Favourite continent Before child: Southeast Asia. After child: Europe. I've had some fantastic trips to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, and hope to visit again, but at the moment I am loving city breaks in wonderful, family-friendly cities where kids stay up late and no one scowls at you when you take them into a wine bar at 8pm (siestas are key).

How you like to stay when you're on holiday I have very fond memories of staying in an old shack on a beach in Malaysia, where the cheekiest monkeys would steal your wet towels as they hung up to dry. Now I am enjoying the ease of family stays in an apartment in the heart of Barcelona, in a converted Menorcan barn in the middle of nowhere, or in a farmhouse set in a field in Anglesey. Last year we glamped (dahling) in a dome, in a wood near Hay-on-Wye, with a hot tub in the trees. This I shall do again.