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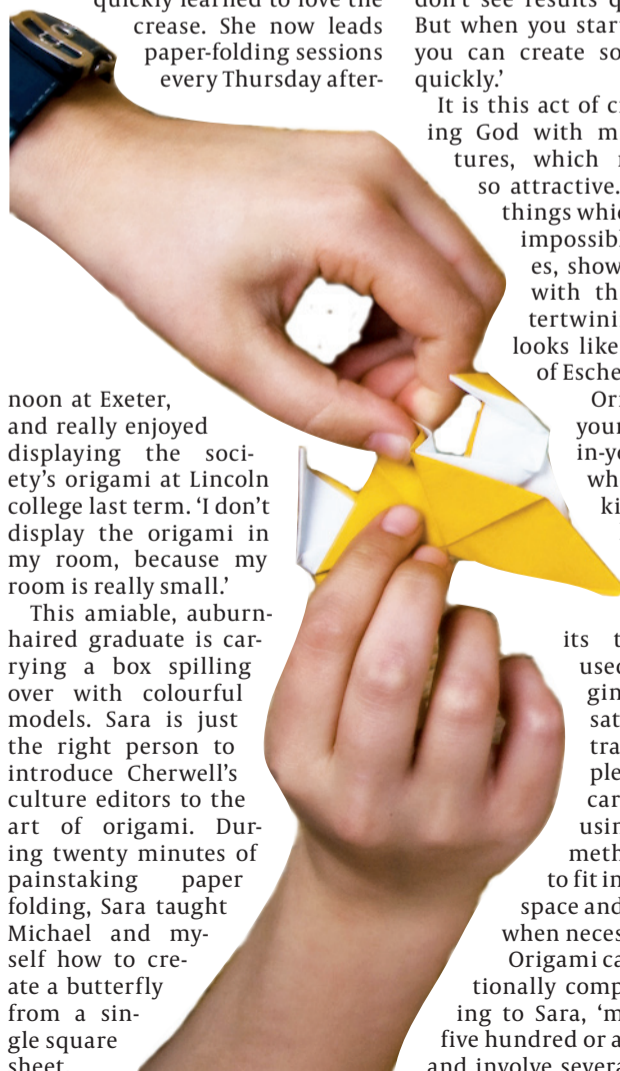
C2 REVIEWER RATINGS:

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Today I caught a butterfly with my bare hands. Searching for it among scraps of paper, I came across a veritable jungle of origami: lions, roses, dragons, elephants and scorpions tumbled out of Sara Adams' cardboard box, to crouch on the grass of Wadham gardens.

Sara is head of the Oxford Origami Society, and a student at Exeter College reading Computer Sciences. An origami virgin when she came to Oxford University, Sara quickly learned to love the crease. She now leads paper-folding sessions every Thursday after-



noon at Exeter, and really enjoyed displaying the society's origami at Lincoln college last term. 'I don't display the origami in my room, because my room is really small.'

This amiable, auburn-haired graduate is carrying a box spilling over with colourful models. Sara is just the right person to introduce Cherwell's culture editors to the art of origami. During twenty minutes of painstaking paper folding, Sara taught Michael and myself how to create a butterfly from a single square sheet.

'Origami helps me relax, it helps me energise,' she says. After our very relaxing afternoon, spent turning paper features into origami creatures, I would definitely agree. I found origami very soothing and rewarding: a great way to relieve exam stress. Let's face it, revision would be a lot more fun if my notes were in the form of paper dragons.

Sara Adams agrees that origami is a great way to relax, away from academic work: 'with research you don't see results quickly, do you? But when you start folding paper, you can create something really quickly.'

It is this act of creation, of playing God with mini paper creatures, which makes origami so attractive. 'You can make things which you think are impossible,' Sara enthuses, showing us a model with three weirdly intertwining rectangles. It looks like something out of Escher.

Origami is not your average, do-it-in-your-bedroom-when-you're-bored-kind of activity, however. It relies heavily on mathematics and its techniques are used in areas of engineering such as satellites and space travel. For example, the airbags in cars are designed using origami methods of folding to fit into a really small space and expand rapidly when necessary.

Origami can also be exceptionally complicated; according to Sara, 'models can have five hundred or a thousand steps and involve several hours of fold-

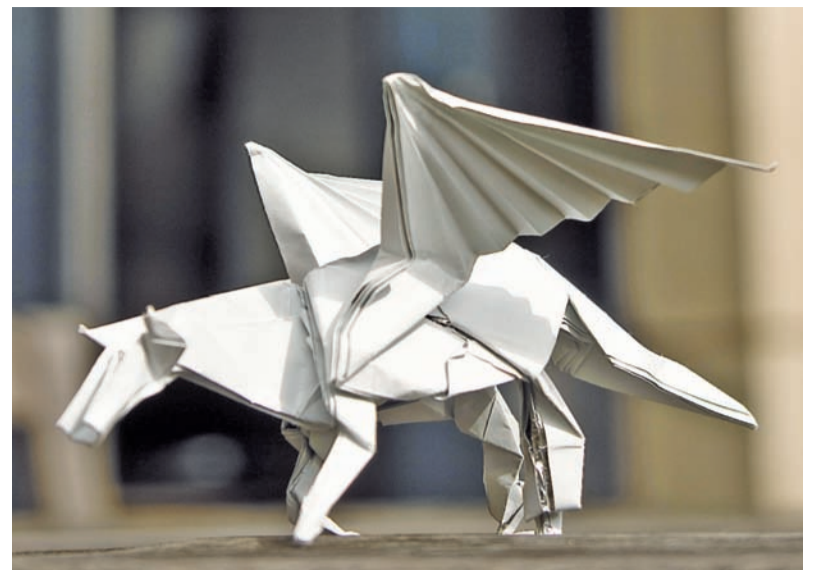
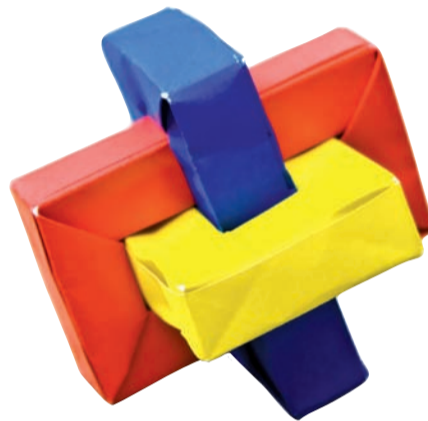
Living on of a pa

Bored of revision
but



the edge per model

? Turn your textbooks into
terflies, says **Elen Griffiths**



ing.' Physicist and origami theorist Robert J. Lang has written a computer program, dubbed TreeProgram, which will design an origami model and its crease pattern to fit a personal specification.

It is this fusion of mathemati-

An origami virgin, Sara quickly learnt to love the crease

cal foundation and creative spirit which makes origami so unique. Bridging the gap between art and science, and easy to engage in anywhere, origami is one of the most democratic, inoffensive hobbies around. The word origami originally comes from Japanese: ori meaning paper and gami meaning folding. The art is practised around the world, although it was particularly popularised by Japan. As Sara tells me: 'in Japan they take it really seriously. They have televised competitions of who's the best at origami.'

Origami is a seriously versatile hobby, and more popular than you might think. Folding paper is a natural instinct in people; think of children making paper boats and hats and students rolling cigarettes and sweet papers.

Origami works with a lot of different materials: wrapping paper, newspaper, special origami paper and even aluminium foil. It can also be tailored to fit individual interests: for example, smokers might enjoy the movable model of a packet with individual cigarettes made from a single sheet of paper.

And let's face it, everybody has their favourites. I was particularly enthused by a model of a Welsh dragon, whilst Michael liked a piece of origami which rotates, 'because you can play with it.' Sara's favourite model was one of a scorpion, and she prefers to fold complicated models

from single sheets of paper.

After admiring the convolute of colourful creations which lay in a heap at Sara's feet, it was time to get started on our own origami experience. Michael and I try to carefully fold and crease, performing every instruction with a zen-like state of concentration. Even so, I still manage to mess up my model, so that Sara has to adapt her instructions to fit my hybrid creation.

'Do people swear when they're doing origami?' I ask, frustrated. Michael smirks when I lose my way, and I am reduced to biting my tongue as I make mistake after ugly mistake.

It's not looking pretty. Soon my paper has become a heap of quivering shapes. It does not, by any stretch of the imagination, look like a butterfly. Even the photographer, Hector Durham, smirks: 'You should stop bossing everyone about and focus on the origami, the true art.' I pull a face, which he unfortunately catches on camera. I think I'll stick to writing; folding paper is too much like hard work.



Top left Michael and Elen show off their paper butterflies
Centre the lovers embrace
Above the impossible rectangle, a piece of modular origami and origami folded by Sara Adams

ALL PHOTOS HECTOR DURHAM