

BENCHMARK

Wood for the workplace

Benchmark debuts sustainable, adaptable, wellbeing-enhancing office furniture at Clerkenwell Design Week



Victoria modular workbench in American red oak. Photography by Petr Krejci.

At Clerkenwell Design Week, British furniture maker Benchmark is set to unveil a series of adaptable new additions to its Victoria family of solid-wood furniture for the workplace. From 24 to 26 May, the new pieces will be on show at the British Collection exhibition at St James' Crypt – accompanied by the official launch of the Migo Stool by Pascal Hien, which made its debut at Wallpaper* and AHEC's exhibition, Discovered, at the Design Museum last year.

The new Victoria Collection pieces are Benchmark's combined response to three key challenges facing the furniture industry: the changing nature of the workplace; the urgent need to prioritise sustainability and carbon-efficiency in furniture manufacture; and a critical breakdown in hardwood supply lines across Europe.

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Designed to adapt



Benchmark's Victoria modular workbench in American red oak. Photography by Petr Krejci.

The new additions to the collection include a modular workbench system and folding meeting table, as well as a sit-stand desk, credenza, planter and end-of-desk storage, all designed by Benchmark's internationally renowned team.

Each piece is crafted from solid timber (a rarity for modular furniture) and features softly chamfered edge profiles – a hallmark of the Victoria collection that gives every member of the family a sense of warmth, tactility and comfort.

The collection includes:

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Benchmark's Victoria modular workbench in American red oak. Photography by Petr Krejci.

Victoria modular workbench

Designed to adapt as workplaces grow or shrink, the collection's flagship design can be expanded from a basic desk for four people to become a collaborative space, simply by adding connecting worktops. Power and data modules, lighting, shelves and privacy screens can all be added or removed as requirements change.



Victoria Folding Table in British-grown ash. Photography by Petr Krejci.

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Victoria folding meeting table

Designed to allow workspaces to be easily reconfigured as needs change, the folding meeting table means that offices always have a place to gather and exchange ideas, even when there isn't space for a permanent meeting room.



Victoria Sit-Stand Desk in British-grown ash. Photography by Petr Krejci.

Victoria sit-stand desk

Beautiful, tactile and robust, this flexible new workstation makes the most of life-extending and productivity benefits of a more active work posture, while maintaining the possibility of seated work whenever necessary. The height of the tabletop can be adjusted at the touch of the button.



Benchmark's Victoria Storage Planter in American red oak. Photography by Petr Krejci.

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Victoria planter

Designed to be positioned at the end of the workbench or against a wall, or used to create distinct zones within an open-plan space, the planter combines storage with the ability to bring living nature into the workspace – a proven way to reduce stress and absence, increase productivity and creativity, absorb noise and improve indoor air quality.

The collection is designed to meet the needs of the dynamic contemporary workspace, fostering an atmosphere of community and collaboration, establishing a connection with the biosphere through the use of natural materials, and improving the mood and wellbeing of workspace users.



Image courtesy of Benchmark.

“Underpinning rational and flexible designs, the hallmark Benchmark craftsmanship and the beautiful solid American oak and British ash, is a story about carbon capture, about the quality of the air we breathe, about nature and biodiversity and about the health and wellbeing of those that use our furniture.”

– Sean Sutcliffe, co-founder, Benchmark

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A tale of two timbers

With many European timber varieties increasingly hard to source in the current geopolitical climate, Benchmark has risen to the challenge by choosing to manufacture these new designs in two lesser-used sustainable, practical, affordable and beautiful wood species.

Working with longstanding collaborator, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), Benchmark chose to construct the collection from American red oak (*Quercus rubra*). This sustainable, renewable timber makes up around 40% of North America's hardwood forests, but is hugely underused, meaning that opting for red oak in preference to more conventional hardwoods actively benefits forest biodiversity.

"The fact that an iconic workshop such as Benchmark decides to launch a new product line using American red oak is an indication of how the scenario is shifting and both manufacturers and consumers are paying attention to sustainable timbers that have too often been overlooked. Red oak is a readily available, beautiful and high-performing material which has so much to offer from both an aesthetic and sustainability point of view. It is very exciting to see it used by such a skilful company to create furniture that will last for generations, giving consumers a wider choice. Benchmark started exploring the potential of red oak as part of some of our joint creative ventures (including Discovered and Legacy) and it is great to witness how the use of this timber has shifted from being a creative experiment to becoming a commercial reality."

– David Venables, European Director, AHEC

Benchmark's other material choice is British-grown ash, carefully salvaged from trees stricken with ash dieback.

"Ash is a fantastic furniture making wood that has historically been undervalued. Now, we are faced with its loss from our countryside, we are determined to use those trees that are dying but being felled whilst the wood is still usable. This means we can lock up the carbon contribution of those trees rather than seeing them used for firewood or simply left to rot. Soon we shall have no more ash, so let's celebrate it while we still have it to make furniture from."

– Sean Sutcliffe, co-founder, Benchmark

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Good for the workplace, good for the world

Benchmark has always put sustainability and wellbeing at the heart of its making, focusing on the production of furniture that has a positive effect on both the environment and the wellbeing of its users. All products are created to meet the WELL Building Standard, which recognises environments that put human health and wellbeing at their core, and accredited Red List Free by the International Living Future Institute, which confirms no toxic chemicals are used or emitted in production.

Having invested in Life Cycle Assessments (LCA), Benchmark is able to provide the full carbon footprint for each piece in the collection, all of which are designed and made with longevity and circularity in mind. In addition, the brand offers a lifetime repair service and a take-back scheme on all solid timber furniture.

Introducing the Migo Stool



Migo Stool by Pascal Hien. Image courtesy of Benchmark.

Another product crafted from red oak and designed for versatility, is the Migo Stool by Pascal Hien. Making its debut alongside the Victoria collection, the stool was introduced to the world at the Discovered showcase at the Design Museum in September last year. Hosted in association with Wallpaper* and AHEC and supported by Benchmark, the exhibition set out to celebrate both emerging design

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talent and American hardwoods as sustainable design materials. Not only was the German designer's inventive stool design chosen for exhibition, and inducted into the Design Museum's permanent collection, it was also selected by Benchmark to be put into commercial production. Clerkenwell Design Week marks its official launch.

Conceived during the pandemic, a time of change, uncertainty, and rapid adaptation, Migo is designed to be used in multiple, non-prescriptive ways, as a chair or a stool, with no definitive front or back, or right or wrong approach to using it.

"Just occasionally we get a new design that is fresh, challenging and very appropriate to our time. Migo is all these things. It challenges our perception of chairs and stools, and the way we use them. It offers a really useful solution to sitting and using our digital devices, it has humour and is dynamic in form. It also shows a maturity of design beyond Pascal's years, utilising wood in an extremely efficient way. The whole chair comes from a single modestly sized plank of red oak, which makes it a model of sustainable design both in material choice and in its rationalised design."

– Sean Sutcliffe, co-founder, Benchmark

For more information about Benchmark's new collection or AHEC, or to request high-res images, please contact benchmark@zetteler.co.uk .



Image courtesy of Benchmark.

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Notes for editors

View the Victoria Collection and the Migo Stool at:

The British Collection
St James' Crypt
Clerkenwell Green
London EC1R 0EA

Opening times

24 and 26 May: 10am – 6pm

25 May: 10am – 9pm

Benchmark

A powerhouse of craft, Benchmark is one of the UK's leading furniture-makers. Founded by Terence Conran and Sean Sutcliffe in 1984, the company has a mission to create furniture that contributes to human health and wellbeing, using natural, sustainable and non-toxic materials. With workshops in Berkshire and Dorset, Benchmark works with many of the world's leading architects and designers on commercial and residential projects. From forest to finished piece, Benchmark is positioned as a leader in sustainable enterprise. Its approach marries forward-thinking design with exemplary levels of craftsmanship and creativity, producing furniture that exudes natural warmth and soul.

benchmarkfurniture.com

[@madebybenchmark](https://www.instagram.com/madebybenchmark)

American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC)

For over 30 years the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) has been at the forefront of wood promotion in Europe, successfully building a distinctive and creative brand for US hardwoods. AHEC's support for creative design projects such as Connected, Legacy and MultiPly for the London Design Festival demonstrate the performance potential of these sustainable materials and provide valuable inspiration.

AHEC has pioneered the modelling of environmental Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) for hardwoods, an approach that has since been adopted by other industries. LCA measures a number of impacts: primary energy demand (from renewable and non-

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renewable resources); global warming potential; acidification potential; eutrophication potential; and photochemical ozone creation potential.

americanhardwood.org

[@ahec_europe](https://twitter.com/ahec_europe)

American red oak (Quercus species, mainly Quercus rubra)

Warm, grainy, tough and bendy.

Reaching a height of 21m, with a trunk diameter of 1m, red oak is the most abundant species in America's hardwood forests. Named for the colour of its leaves in the fall, this classic oak wood has a light brown sapwood, and a heartwood characterised by attractive warm reddish-pink tones. Red oak is strong, straight grained, coarse-textured and distinctive. Its porosity makes it a premium wood for bending and staining.

For more information about this species, including its life-cycle, [visit the AHEC site](#).