

deSIGNPOSTS

Street sculptures

Introducing the 10 Designposts of LDF 2021

One of the most important additions for London Design Festival 2021, the Designposts project will introduce a series of wooden sculptures to the streets of London, each capturing the spirit of one of the festival's 10 dedicated design districts.

A collaboration between LDF, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), and three leading British furniture makers - Benchmark Furniture (West Berkshire), Sebastian Cox (South East London) and Jan Hendzel Studio (South East London), the initiative aims to pay tribute to the diverse history and creative culture of London's neighbourhoods; to give emerging designers a platform to showcase their talent; to give festival-goers a free open-air exhibition of thought-provoking art and design; and to present the potential of an underused and highly sustainable material – American red oak – to Europe's creative community.

From an homage to the landmark gasholders of King's Cross to a tribute to the barrel-making craft heritage of Park Royal, the Designposts provide illuminating responses to the multitude of stories that have shaped the city over the centuries.

The Designposts have been designed by a student or recent graduate of either London Metropolitan University or the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL. Each was assigned an individual LDF Design District, and invited to personally respond in the form of a large-scale sculptural structure. With guidance from AHEC and the expert furniture makers, they have spent the last few months finessing their designs, ready for opening on the 18th September.



The designers

Over the last 18 months, architecture and design students have had their education significantly disrupted by the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown. Access to workshops and making facilities has been limited by restrictions, and – with no fairs or end-of-year shows – opportunities to showcase their work have been all but eliminated.

Project mentors Peter Marigold, Professor of Design and Entrepreneurialism from London Metropolitan University, and Izaskun Chinchilla, Professor of Architectural Practice at Bartlett School of Architecture, have both collaborated with AHEC on creative projects in the past, and have a proven passion for timber as a material. They selected the 10 students and graduates, assigned them each an LDF district, and asked them to research and develop a concept that would capture its unique identity and idiosyncrasies.

Carrie Coningsby – Islington, Islington Design District

Made by Benchmark Furniture

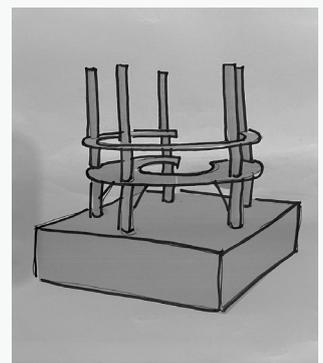
To honour Islington's history as a block-printing hub in the 18th and 19th centuries, and to acknowledge the abundance of blue heritage plaques that adorn so many of the district's buildings today, Carrie Coningsby has created a 'local landmark library'. The piece invites visitors to discover and reconnect with the key figures from Islington's past, as well as its rich creative history.



Alba Elezi – King's Cross, King's Cross Design District

Made by Benchmark Furniture

Combining sculptural beauty with practical function, Alba Elezi's design takes the iconic gasholders of King's Cross and reinterprets them as shared sculptural seating – in much the same way as the now-defunct gasholders themselves have been reinvented as a public park. In order to reflect the holders' dark iron finish, the oak was ebonised using an iron solution. The Designpost stands in Coal Drops



Yard, less than 100 metres from the structures that inspired it.

Daegyu Kim – Mayfair, Mayfair Design District

Made by Benchmark Furniture

The majestic sweeping curve of Regent's Street inspires Daegyu Kim's homage to Mayfair. Using long tubes and blocks of red oak to create abstracted versions of the arches and windows of the streetscape, Daegyu seeks to recreate the powerful sensory impression one feels when emerging from the darkness of the Underground station to be greeted by the scale and splendour of the street.



Darta Shokrzadeh – Southwark, Southwark South Design District

Made by Jan Hendzel Studio

Darta Shokrzadeh's Designpost is a personal response to the streets of Southwark, stemming from time spent exploring the district. Based on photographs taken by Darta, the design captures the round-the-clock busyness and multi-ethnic vibrancy of the area, expressing both the daytime bustle of the streets and markets and the energy of its bars and clubs by night.



Megan Makinson – Shoreditch, Shoreditch Design Triangle

Made by Benchmark Furniture

Megan Makinson's Designpost celebrates the way that the historical narratives woven into the streets of Shoreditch intersect with the district's rich culture of street-artist subversion. Starting as a sculptural reflection of its setting in front of the SCP shopfront, the design weaves in other narratives, such as the story of 'The Theatre', one of London's first permanent venues, which was dismantled in 1598 and its timbers used to build the Globe. Aptly, when its time as a Designpost comes to an end, Megan's sculpture is destined for a second life as a puppet theatre.



Aude Saint Joanis – Park Royal, Park Royal Design District

Made by Sebastian Cox

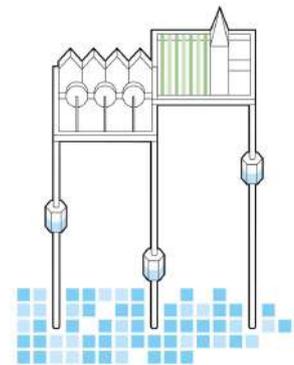
Aude Saint Joanis's highly sculptural design draws inspiration from Park Royal's industrial heritage, referencing its former Guinness brewery (once the largest in the world), its current whisky distillery, and the barrel-making craft tradition that both have kept alive. The form of the Designpost represents a barrel in the process of forming, a nod to the dramatic transformation that the district is currently undergoing, and to the evolving community of craftspeople and makers that has made its home here. Furthermore, because Aude's piece is made from oak – the principal material used by coopers to make barrels – there is a material connection, too.



Kate Woodcock-Fowles – Clerkenwell, Clerkenwell Design District

Made by Jan Hendzel Studio

To develop the concept for her Clerkenwell Designpost, Kate Woodcock looked back in time and deep underground. The form of her structure explores the etymology of the district and its historic relationship with water. Each plinth represents a different strand of this history, beginning with Clerkenwell's origins in the 1100s as the 'Clerk's Well', a source of water used by the various monastic houses of the area, beneath what is now Farringdon Road. By bringing these stories to the surface, Kate hopes to make visitors think about the hidden world beneath their feet and its role in shaping the ground above.

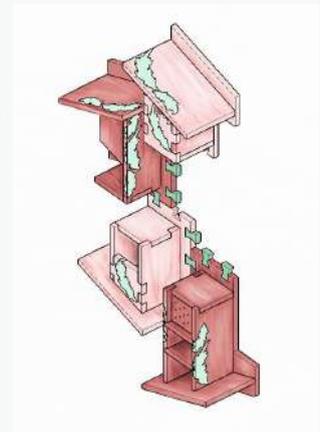


Faye Greenwood – Waltham Forest, William Morris Design Line

Made by Sebastian Cox

In her Designpost, Faye Greenwood fuses two key elements of the district – its historic relationship with William Morris and the wildlife habitats of the Walthamstow Wetlands. The design comprises a series

of animal-habitat building blocks, connected with crafted joints and adorned with repeating motifs that visually reference Morris's work in the Arts and Crafts movement. Combining nature, community and craftsmanship in this way, Faye emphasises the district's rich creative story, while also celebrating its natural environment.



Jason Brooker – Design District, Design District at Greenwich Peninsula

Made by Benchmark Furniture

Jason Brooker's Designpost is a meditation on making that pushes the possibilities of red oak as a material, while paying tribute to the past, present and future of Greenwich Peninsula. On close inspection, the curving, sail-like structure of the design references the diverse techniques and methods used by the new creative community of Design District, and by extension the myriad design cultures who have influenced the area's history.



Jonah Luswata – Brompton, Brompton Design District

Made by Made by Sebastian Cox

Inspired by the form of the obelisk – in particular, by the moonlight towers that were used to illuminate the city in the late Victorian era – Jonah Luswata's Designpost celebrates its Brompton location in several ways. The design is informed by the district's plethora of museums, and the socio-cultural history they represent, as well as the vibrant contemporary design culture and reverence for craft that has resulted from the numerous design firms that make Brompton their home today.



Sustainability and carbon storage

One of the key aims of the project is to communicate to both designers and the wider public that hardwoods such as red oak are viable material options from a sustainability perspective.

Red oak is the most abundant species in American hardwood forests yet is often overlooked in European design. Over-reliance on a small selection of woods can have a damaging effect on forest ecosystems, so AHEC believes that designers and architects have a responsibility to use whatever nature provides. Growing wild rather than planted, red oak represents both a highly sustainable and renewable material option, and one with significant aesthetic appeal for designers and architects.

Furthermore, as a timber, red oak serves as a carbon store, locking away the CO₂ absorbed from the atmosphere during the tree's lifetime, and reducing the Designposts' carbon footprint as a result.

The Designposts will be erected on plinths manufactured from cross-laminated panels of tulipwood, repurposed from LDF and AHEC's 2019 Landmark project MultiPly, which will in turn be used again in future editions of the festival. After the festival, the Designposts themselves will likely be donated to London institutions, either to live permanently or be repurposed for new student projects.

Beacons across the city of London

Installed by 18 September, the completed Designposts will act as beacons, signalling to festival goers that they have arrived at an LDF design district, and serving as a natural starting point from which to explore the other projects and installations within it.

About red oak, the material

American red oak is the dominant species in US hardwood forests, representing 17.9% of the overall resource. The distinctively grained wood is not always red; its name comes from the colour of its leaves in the fall. Red oak trees grow naturally almost exclusively in North America, although the species is planted elsewhere. They are widely distributed throughout most of the eastern United States in mixed hardwood forests. The trees are very tall and there are many subspecies, growing from north to south; some high in the mountains and others on lowland, giving rise to different characteristics. Red oaks are regarded as highly sustainable for both domestic and export consumption and are more abundant than white oaks.



Learn more about red oak

Notes to editors

For more information about Designposts at LDF, and AHEC's other creative projects, please contact emily@zetteler.co.uk.

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

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

London Design Festival

Established in 2003 by Sir John Sorrell CBE and Ben Evans CBE, London Design Festival celebrates and promotes London as the design capital of the world.

London Design Festival has since earned the reputation as a key calendar moment of London's autumn creative season, alongside London Fashion Week, Frieze Art Fair and the London Film Festival, attracting the greatest thinkers, practitioners, retailers and educators to the capital, in a citywide celebration.

londondesignfestival.com
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Benchmark

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, it is positioned as a leader in sustainable enterprise, having pioneered and invested in the use of metrics to provide clear, unambiguous and independently verified information about the impact of its products.

Benchmark's approach marries forward-thinking design with exemplary levels of craftsmanship and creativity, producing furniture that exudes natural warmth and soul.

benchmarkfurniture.com
@madebybenchmark

Jan Hendzel Studio

South London-based furniture brand Jan Hendzel Studio was founded by self-taught furniture maker Jan Hendzel in 2015. The studio's diverse portfolio of work celebrates British craftsmanship and natural homegrown materials. Merging traditional joinery techniques with digital manufacturing practices allows the studio to experiment with texture and function to unique furniture pieces that lay between sculpture and furniture. Sustainability is at the heart of the practice, and their focus on quality materials, longevity and a circular approach to design, contributes to the integrity of the projects they are involved with.

Since its inception, the studio has realised ambitious projects for leading architectural practices and design studios and in 2020 launched Bowater, the studio's first collection of furniture which is made exclusively from British Timbers and demonstrates the untapped range and variety of timbers present in the UK's woodland. The collection comprises of nine pieces, from a chest of drawers and sideboard to a series of desk trays and decorative sculptural objects.

janhendzel.com
@janhendzelstudio



Sebastian Cox

Sebastian Cox is a furniture designer, maker and environmentalist based in south London. Sebastian founded his carbon-counting, forward-thinking, zero-waste workshop and design studio in 2010 on the principle that the past can be used to design and make the future.. He produces heirloom furniture, lighting and home accessories and collaborates with other material experts who share his vision for a regenerative material future. His work has received a Design Guild Mark alongside other accolades from design publications including Elle Decoration, Homes & Gardens, EKKB, The London Evening Standard and Forbes.

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The students and graduates outside Benchmark's workshops. Photography by Thom Atkinson, courtesy AHEC.