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Street sculptures

London Design Festival Commission

The 10 Designposts of LDF 2021

One of the most important additions for London Design Festival 2021, the Designposts project introduces 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 pays tribute to the diverse history and creative culture of London's neighbourhoods; giving emerging designers a platform to showcase their talent; 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, and on display 18-26 September 2021, the duration of the London Design Festival.

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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.

Carrie's design presents a rational vaulted timber structure with decorative hanging disks and block-printed detailing. The frame is made from solid red oak timber of a similar stock thickness, bolted together with a turned red oak capping. Cross joists at the top of the piece create divisions from which Carrie's decorative disks are suspended. These disks are CNC-cut from 4mm plywood, veneered on both sides with red oak – a material decision to minimise weight, allowing this decorative timber canopy to drape well and move in the wind. The disks are connected via bookbinding

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rings and block-printed by Carrie. Narrative illustrations on each pillar are laser-cut and then printed, before being fitted to each upright.



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

Made by Benchmark Furniture

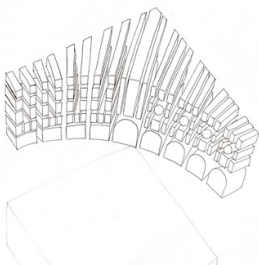
Combining sculptural beauty with practical function, Alba Elezi’s design takes the iconic gasholders of King’s Cross and reinterprets them as shared sculptural seating – in much the same way as the now-defunct gasholders themselves have been reinvented as a public park. The Designpost stands in Coal Drops Yard, less than 100 metres from the structures that inspired it.

Five structural columns are stack laminated and turned on the lathe. The profile of the seat supports draw directly from Victorian architecture, and these connect into the supporting columns via a traditional wide mortice and tenon joint. The bench seat slats and armrests are CNC-cut and hand finished, with the latter housed in grooves in the columns and jointed into position. The bench has been turned black by a process known as ‘ebonising’ – a chemical reaction whereby the tannins in the wood react with a mixture of household vinegar and iron filings, a nod to the use of iron in the original gasholders.

Daegyu Kim – Mayfair, Mayfair Design District

Made by Benchmark Furniture

Install date tbc



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.

Daegyu’s design celebrates the grain of American red oak, with onlookers encouraged to peer through the elongated and abstracted timber windows. Drawing influence from the Korean sculptor Do Ho Suh, the

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windows are made up as a series of box sections and archways, with the former drawing on the barrel-making technique known as coopering. Since Daegyu's piece is to become a bug hotel after the festival, the timber has been left in its raw state.



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.

Interpreting the sculpture as a tree-like structure, Jan Hendzel Studio created a central 12-sided column from 12 machined staves, with precise hand-cut slots arranged around the top edge. Crown-cut boards were selected for the staves, with their flame-like grain offering a beautiful natural pattern reminiscent of a tree trunk. Once glued, the trunk supports cantilever arms holding 24 CNC-cut and hand-finished characters of Peckham. Simple in form but grand in scale, the technicality of this piece is hidden to the viewer within the construction of the trunk and a bespoke timber bracket used to secure the characters in place.



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.

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The structure comprises a series of flat panels that are screwed and jointed together. Hand-turned red oak dowels create the illusion of a theatre curtain at the base and reference the history of woodturning that was once a mainstay industry of the Shoreditch area. Megan created illustrations for the main flat panels inspired by historical narratives relating to the district. These are applied to the panels through use of pyrography.



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.

The structure, made from American red oak encloses a sheltered space for a small bench. Exploring the technology of cooperage, where liquid is used to swell wood to create tight forms, the staves were set in a slot in the plinth and soaked. The resultant swelling ensures the structural integrity of this glue-less sculpture.



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

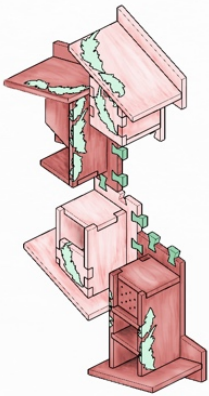
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to make visitors think about the hidden world beneath their feet and its role in shaping the ground above.

Kate's design is a large and beautiful 3D jigsaw, made up of various components both hand-crafted and CNC-machined. The upper section holds four square frames containing hand-turned and digitally machined depictions of industries and events related to water in Clerkenwell. Lower down the sculpture the key focal point is the water table, produced from 98 painted wooden tiles in five differing shades, and the geometric timber 'river' that extends to create seating nooks and coffee tables.

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. Combining nature, community and craftsmanship in this way, Faye emphasises the district's rich creative story, while also celebrating its natural environment.

A cluster of four habitat homes (two bird boxes, a bat box and a bug box) are designed with interlocking dovetail joints and keys in a series of repeating configurations, that are fixed around four main structural posts. The final tree-like structure encompasses a total of 48 boxes, which are ready to be dismantled from the Designpost at the end of LDF and go out into the community of Walthamstow as fully functional pieces. Pieces have been cut on the CNC and then finished and assembled by hand. Taking inspiration from the ideals and works of the Arts and Crafts movement and Morris himself, joinery details and CNC-making processes are exposed as expressive parts of the design and construction. Decorative leaf motifs abstracted from a Morris wallpaper design are repeated throughout the habitat homes, either carved into pieces while being cut on the CNC machine or block-printed on with garden-furniture paint. Other than the paint, the wood has been left in raw state to allow the pieces to weather into their natural environments after LDF.

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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 that have influenced the area's history.

The 'sails' of each structure are formed from laminated strips of red oak, shaped over a variety of formers, to give a billowing effect. The two 'masts' are made from solid red oak, spindle-moulded to give a cylindrical profile, but with faceted detailing for each sail component to connect into the mast via a series of hand-turned wooden pegs. The 16mm hemp rope has been made by a traditional ropemaker and holds the piece under tension.



Jonah Luswata – Brompton, Brompton Design District

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.

Twin piers rise to create a structural frame of solid red oak that is connected by traditional mortise and tenon joints. The piers create light-effusing chimneys that crest in flourishing finials. A contrasting charred finish has been applied and playfully routed holes allow for a dappling light. An inner frame of rectilinear ribs supports a 'skin' of worked panels that tessellate and give form. Some are textured by CNC grooves and

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others individually hand gouged. They cascade off the piers at the front and back mediating any possible inhabitation. The entire piece permeates and diffuses interstitial light when not illuminated.

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

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.

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About red oak, the material

American red oak is the dominant species in U.S. 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