

## 'No.1 Common' at Material Matters

### Four designers uncover wood's natural beauty at 3daysofdesign 18–20 June 2025



The No.1 Common exhibition showcases four designers' response to wood's natural beauty. From left: Daniel Schofield, Kia Utzon-Frank, Anna Maria Øfstedal Eng and Andu Masebo. All photography by Dan Medhurst, courtesy of AHEC.

This June, the exhibition *No.1 Common* lands in Copenhagen to make the case for often-overlooked hardwood qualities in design. Four visionary designers will be unveiling unique works at the festival's Material Matters fair on 18–20 June 2025, each championing a sustainable approach to material selection: 'use what nature provides'.

Hardwood producers across the world label their lumber on the basis of a number of factors – in the U.S., these include the size of the cutting area, the number of knots or other natural characteristics in the surface, and any variations in colour and grain. In other words, the grade reflects the percentage of 'clear wood' in the board. Number 1 Common – aka No.1C – hardwood generally comprises the same clear

wood as upper grades but in smaller cuttings. Although this category of timber was originally created as the 'cabinet grade', specifically selected to be used in cabinetry, flooring or furniture parts, it is not commonly used in Europe, in favour of 'cleaner' grades of timber.

Launching at 3daysofdesign, AHEC's *No.1 Common* project is an argument for broadening the grade's usage categories, presenting visually and texturally unique designs to showcase the potential of No.1C hardwoods as aesthetically rich, high-performance design materials.

American hardwood forests contain more than twice the volume of standing timber today as 50 years ago. To maximise the potential of this natural resource, we need to rethink how we use timber – learning to appreciate and utilise not just the most 'pristine' cuts, which make up only up to 10% of the tree, but as much of the tree as possible.

The initial inspiration for the project came when AHEC (American Hardwood Export Council), commissioned the English furniture maker Benchmark to explore the potential of No.1C timber. Benchmark conducted hands-on research as the first stage of the project, assessing the technical, aesthetic and practical possibilities of using this grade of timber in furniture. The goal was not only to push technical boundaries but also to explore the benefits of using No.1C in terms of labour efficiency and yield.

Following this initial phase, the four designers are now working on developing pieces that highlight the beauty and potential of these sustainable timbers. Their focus is on showcasing both the aesthetic appeal and practical benefits of the material, creating designs that reflect the qualities of Number 1 Common while contributing to a more sustainable future.

The resulting exhibition, debuting at Material Matters, will question what quality means when it comes to natural materials and highlight how sustainable and thoughtful material selection can shape the future of our forests and our world. The exhibition aims to demonstrate the shared power and responsibility that designers, industry leaders, and consumers have in prioritising environmentally conscious decisions, rather than simply following trends that don't always respect the rhythms and needs of nature.

## The designers



### **Andu Masebo**

A London-based designer on the ascendant, Andu Masebo is interested in the things we make, the way we make them and the systems that they become a part of once they are made. He has turned his expertise in ceramics, metal fabrication and carpentry to a number of high-profile projects, retaining a focus on simplicity, accessibility and materiality.

[andumasebo.com](http://andumasebo.com)



### **Anna Maria Øfstedal Eng**

Furniture and homeware designer Anna Maria Øfstedal Eng embraces the hand of the maker in her creative process, celebrating imperfection as an emblem of honesty and transparency. From her studio in Fjellhamar, Norway, she creates unique sculptural objects in both ceramic, wood, stone and metal. In 2023, she participated in AHEC's 3daysofdesign exhibition, *Three*.

[ofstedaleng.no](http://ofstedaleng.no)



### **Daniel Schofield**

Originally from the UK and now based in Copenhagen, British designer Daniel Schofield brings a complementary set of skills from his background in graphic design and carpentry to his practice as a furniture designer. He looks for – and finds – beauty in simplicity, creating highly rational pieces with elegant and enduring charm.

[daniel-schofield.com](http://daniel-schofield.com)



### **Kia Utzon-Frank**

Danish product designer, jewellery maker, inventor, sculptor and baker Kia Utzon-Frank is the founder of KUFstudios, a multidisciplinary, experimentation-driven design studio that creates a diverse body of work, ranging from large-scale sculptural installations to modular jewellery, bespoke cakes and chocolate. Her work has been shown at the Sir John Soane Museum, the London Design Museum, the Saatchi Gallery, the V&A, and more.

[kufstudios.com](http://kufstudios.com)



The No.1 Common exhibition showcases the potential of 'cabinet grade' hardwood as a versatile and desirable design material. All photography by Dan Medhurst, courtesy of AHEC.

*For more information about AHEC and the No.1 Common project, contact [ahec@zetteler.co.uk](mailto:ahec@zetteler.co.uk).*

## Notes for editors

### **No.1 Common**

No.1 Common will be open to the public during 3daysofdesign (18–20 June), as part of Material Matters Copenhagen:

### **Location**

Ground floor, Gammel Dok, Strandgade 27B, 1401 København

### **About AHEC (American Hardwood Export Council)**

For more than three decades, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) has been the global face of the U.S. timber industry, championing the performance, sustainability and aesthetic potential of American hardwoods worldwide. As the leading international hardwood trade association for North America, AHEC operates a non-profit programme representing thousands of businesses engaged in the



production and export of timber – ranging from small family-run sawmills to major flooring manufacturers. Established to unite this wide-ranging spectrum of companies with a single global voice, AHEC has successfully built an internationally recognised brand, marketing more than 20 commercially available hardwood species and increasing demand around the world.

[americanhardwood.org](http://americanhardwood.org)

@ahec\_europe

### **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](http://benchmarkfurniture.com)

@madebybenchmark