



The American Hardwood Export Council teams up with the Royal College of Art to merge design with sustainability

The American Hardwood Export Council will collaborate with product design students at the Royal College of Art in London to produce and exhibit chairs during the London Design Festival.

Under the leadership of tutors Sebastian Wrong and Harry Richardson, the use of wood as a material and its Life Cycle impacts have been added to the Design Products curriculum and the students have been set the challenge of designing a functional chair or seat in an American hardwood of their choice. The designs will be developed into working prototypes with the help of Benchmark, internationally renowned for its craftsmanship in wood and long-standing relationship with designer Terence Conran.

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is well known in the international design community for its creative promotion of hardwood, having worked with the likes of David Adjaye, Matteo Thun, Sou Fujimoto, Arup and Amanda Levete. But now its attention has turned to the potential stars of the future with a unique and ground-breaking project for students.

Education and research provides a unique element to the project because AHEC is using, for the first time, its ground-breaking Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) research to help the students produce detailed Life Cycle impacts for their designs.

Each chosen prototype will be environmentally profiled using an LCA modelling system developed for AHEC by sustainability experts, PE International. AHEC is in the process of

producing the first-ever Environmental Product Declaration for American hardwood lumber and veneer; it is this data that will be used by the students to build a full “cradle-to-grave” impact for their designs.

According to Sebastian Wrong, the project “offers a pioneering opportunity for students to create designs within the context of a stark reality.” His co-tutor Harry Richardson added, “it is not only a case of designing a chair that will survive physically far in to the future, it is also to produce a chair whose design will remain relevant far in to the future.”

David Venables, AHEC’s European Director who developed the idea for the project with Sebastian Wrong, says: “We are so excited to be working with students from the RCA. We can’t wait to see new talent emerge and have an opportunity to show them what a great design material hardwood is. The fact they can also see and understand the full environmental impact of their design gives this collaboration extra relevance to today’s world and sets it apart from other student design projects.”



Royal College of Art: Pioneering Design and Art 1837 - 2012

Celebrating its 175th anniversary this year, the Royal College of Art is the world’s most influential postgraduate university of art and design. The RCA specialises in teaching and research, and offers the degrees of MA, MPhil and PhD across the disciplines of fine art, applied art, design, communications and humanities. There are over 1,100 masters and doctoral students and more than a hundred professionals interacting with them, including scholars, leading art and design practitioners, along with specialists, advisors and distinguished visitors.

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The Design Products Master's programme, led by Professor Tord Boontje, has a strong culture of experimentation. The two-year course is arranged in small study groups known as 'platforms', each run by two tutors who define the content and focus for project-based design work. Out of the Woods also includes collaboration with the RCA's Visual Communication programme.

www.designproducts.rca.ac.uk



ABOUT AHEC

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade association for the US hardwood industry, representing the committed exporters among US hardwood companies and all the major US hardwood production trade associations. AHEC concentrates its efforts on providing architects, designers and end-users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply.

www.americanhardwood.org

Out of the Woods will be exhibited at the V&A during the London Design Festival, 14-23 September 2012.