

AHEC PRESENTS FOREST TALES AT TRIENNALE MILANO

STUDIO SWINE UNPACKS AN EPIC ANTHOLOGY OF AMERICAN HARDWOOD FURNITURE DESIGN

Curated and designed by Studio Swine, *Forest Tales* brings together 22 specially selected designs from the American Hardwood Export Council's (AHEC) recent projects, in a truly spectacular showcase of both global design talent and the beauty and versatility of American hardwood as a design material.

3–12 June 2022
Milan Design Week

"Forest Tales brings together a celebration of exceptional design from AHEC's latest projects, a love for timber and a much needed call for balance. Balance in the way we use natural materials with particular emphasis on renewable ones, such as wood. The same balance on which today's designers, as well as the entire sector, are called upon to reflect in order to address the greatest social and economic issue of our time: climate change; and the need to put an end to the current throwaway culture. Covid has shown that the world can react very quickly to a major global crisis, hopefully this experience will enable us to quickly make the necessary changes in the way we consume, build and live." – David Venables, Director, AHEC Europe

Showing at Triennale Milano from 3 to 12 June, *Forest Tales* is the culmination of AHEC's creative work over the past two years. Studio Swine have curated pieces from four projects, which despite the diversity of their output, are united through material – each piece is made from one (or more) of three underused American hardwood varieties: maple, cherry and red oak.



THE PROJECTS

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Connected

which challenged nine world-renowned international designers to create tables and seating responding to the isolation imposed by the pandemic;

Discovered: Designers for Tomorrow

which gave a platform to 20 emerging design talents from around the world;

Slow Design for Fast Change

which brought together nine young designers from the DACH countries to create furniture and objects characterised by sustainability, longevity and craftsmanship;

A Seat at the Table

a new collaboration with Italian furniture maker Riva 1920 that sees four emerging Italian designers selected to create innovative, sustainable designs for solid-wood tables.

For *Forest Tales*, Studio Swine takes a selection of pieces from each project, and incorporates them into a labyrinthine 'mountain' of wooden crates – a monumental and immersive exhibition design that invites visitors to enter, explore and discover a fresh perspective on furniture.

“We were delighted to be invited by AHEC to propose a display. It's a great honour for us to be invited to design an exhibition space and only the second time we have done so. The opportunity to be honest was quite daunting, to create something in a venue with the history of Triennale, during Salone, we felt the looming shadow of the great stand designs by Castiglioni, Ray and Charles Eames, OMA etc. and so it was crucial to do something bold and impactful which can do justice to the extraordinary works by all they established and emerging designers, whilst at the same time creating no waste.” – Studio Swine

Featuring 22 designers from 14 countries, the exhibition line-up is a veritable who's who of contemporary design. Featured designs include work by both established and emerging designers, ranging from **Heatherwick Studio's** biophilic Stem table in maple and **Studio Swine's** own steam-bent red oak tribute to Ming Dynasty design, to **Taiho Shin's** inventive, expanding, glue-less shelving systems, **Maria Bruun's** quintessentially Nordic stackable stools, and **Simon Gehring's** three-wood chair that fuses computational design processes and leftover timber scraps to unique effect. *See notes to editors below for the full list of designers.*

BOXING CLEVER

Studio Swine's concept for the installation is inspired by the opening frames of *Citizen Kane*, in which Kane's belongings are shown amid a vast jumble of wooden crates, to be assessed and packed away.

Visitors stepping into the gallery will be confronted with an interesting topography of wooden packing crates – the same ones used to transport the furniture – with the various pieces displayed at different levels atop, under, and beside them. Screens, showing video content about the pieces, the initiatives behind them and the woods from which they were made, will be woven into the 'cratescape'.

The surfaces of the crates themselves serve as blank canvases for images depicting the forest landscape from which the hardwoods originate.



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Following the idea of anamorphic perspective, whereby an image only becomes clear when seen from a specific viewpoint (famously exemplified by the skull in Hans Holbein's painting *The Ambassadors*), each crate will be painted to depict a single element of a larger scene, so that, when viewed for a certain angle, the images on the crates come together to form a complete picture. The viewer's perspective of the exhibition will therefore shift depending on where they are standing – from one angle, they will see the complete image of a forest; at another, the image fragments and the furniture becomes the focus. Different stories are told as you interact with the space.

HIGH PROFILE, LOW IMPACT

The notion of shifting perspectives is integral to both form and content of the installation. *Forest Tales* is not only a showcase of creativity, but an argument against waste in design, a plea for a more thoughtful choice of materials, and a challenge to the status quo.

Conscious that many Milan exhibitions generate substantial amounts of waste, AHEC and Studio Swine were determined that *Forest Tales* should be as material-efficient and close to carbon-zero as possible, while also ensuring that its sustainability message reaches as many of the key industry decision makers in Milan as possible. That meant it

had to be epic in scale.

The use of crates allows Studio Swine and AHEC to achieve maximum attention with minimal impact. The crates are multipurpose, used to display, ship, and store the exhibits, so there is no set to dispose of when the festival is over – it simply returns to its original purpose. With this in mind, all printing methods and inks used to create the artworks on the crates, by London-based graphic studio SPIN, have been chosen to ensure that they do not impact the crates' primary function of storage and transport.

THE CASE FOR TIMBER

With *Forest Tales*, AHEC aims to provide a global platform to designers, pieces and projects that have not yet been widely seen due to the pandemic, but also to demonstrate the extraordinary potential of a selection of underused American hardwoods as sustainable design materials. This is especially important at a time when stocks of more widely used European hardwoods have been depleted by overuse, and supply lines heavily disrupted by the current geopolitical situation. The pandemic has made the need to address the environmental challenge even more relevant, and while architects and designers are now more inclined to explore a wider variety of timbers for their designs, consumers are increasingly attentive to the impact of what they consume and surround themselves with.

Maple, cherry and red oak are all versatile woods that grow at a faster rate than they are harvested. Strong, practical, tactile, beautiful and rapidly renewable, they are nevertheless significantly underutilised by the furniture industry – in some cases because they have fallen out of favour as trends change, in others because they are simply not well understood. With this exhibition, AHEC seeks to turn the industry's heads towards a selection of three American hardwoods as the perfect combination of aesthetics, durability and practicality – ideal materials for our current and coming generations of designers and innovators to create beautiful, long-lasting furniture that is either carbon-neutral or carbon-negative.

“Forest Tales reflects on how the use of a wider range of sustainable materials, such as the three U.S. hardwoods featured in the exhibition, and all wood species in general, proportionate to what grows in the forest, makes the use of the resource and the way we consume more thoughtful and responsible” concludes David Venables. “And for the first time, the entire industry ecosystem, including designers, specifiers and consumers, seems aligned in wanting to do the right thing in the face of the environmental imperative.”

For more details and images of the pieces showing at *Forest Tales*, and more information about AHEC, please contact ahec@zetteler.co.uk.

ENDS

Forest Tales

Four ambitious projects, three sustainable hardwoods, 22 extraordinary designs

Triennale Milano

Viale Emilio Alemagna 6
20121 Milano

Opening times

3–12 June
11.00–21.00 (last entrance at 20.00)

www.forest-tales.com
#ForestTales

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.

American maple

(*Acer saccharum*, *Acer nigrum*, *Acer rubrum*)

Light, fine, hard and incandescent.

A close cousin of European maple and sycamore, American maple can reach heights of 23–27m, with a trunk diameter of 75cm. This project uses two botanical subspecies, hard and soft maple, which share similar characteristics and are both relatively abundant. Hard maple is a cold-climate species favouring the northern states, whereas soft maples grow more widely across the mixed hardwood forests of the eastern United States. Both hard and soft maple produce syrup.

American cherry

(*Prunus serotina*)

Rich, smooth, vibrant and flexible.

A medium-size tree, reaching a height of around 20m, cherry has a relatively short rotation, taking less time to mature than other hardwoods. The narrow sapwood is a light pinkish colour, while the heartwood varies from rich red to reddish brown, and darkens on exposure to light. American cherry had a long period of popularity in furniture making; it became less popular but is on the verge of a revival.



ABOUT

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

americanhardwood.org

[@ahec_europe](#)

Studio Swine

Studio Swine is a London/Tokyo based design studio founded by Japanese Architect Azusa Murakami and British Artist Alexander Groves. Their work straddles between the spheres of sculpture, installations and cinema, blending poetry and research into immersive experiences.

studioswine.com

[@studioswine](#)

Key collaborators

A project by the American
Hardwood Export Council (AHEC)

Curation & exhibition design
Studio Swine

Art direction
Petr Krejčí

Photography & video
Petr Krejčí

Graphic design
Spin Studio

Production
Altofragile

Project management
AHEC/DAG
MATERIALS

Full exhibitor list

Alessandro Gazzardi, Italy
Anna Koppmann, Germany
Clémence Buytaert, France
Federico Degioanni, Italy
Heatherwick Studio, UK
Ini Archibong, Switzerland
Ivana Taylor, Australia
Jaime Hayon, Spain
Ilenia Viscardi, Italy
Mac Collins, UK
Maria Bruun, Denmark
Maria Jeglinska-Adamczewska, Poland
Matteo Benedetti, Italy
Maximilian Rohregger, Austria
Nong Chotipatoomwan, Thailand
Pascal Hien, Germany
Simon Gehring, Germany
Siyanda Mazibuko, South Africa
Studio Swine, Japan/UK
Taiho Shin, Republic of Korea
Trang Nguyen, Vietnam
Yunhan Wang, China

With thanks to

Triennale Milano, the Design Museum
London, Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin,
Wallpaper*, Benchmark Furniture,
Holzfreude, Wewood, Fowseng,
Evostyle, Riva 1920, Arteria, Imola
Legno, Set Up Allestimenti



AMERICAN
HARDWOOD
COUNCIL
Querschnitte, mainly Quercus



**Triennale
Milano**