



AHEC Europe  
Unit 20.1,  
20-22 Vestry St  
London, N1 7RE

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

PRESS RELEASE  
JULY 2016

## THE AMERICAN HARDWOOD EXPORT COUNCIL PRESENTS THE SMILE BY ARCHITECT ALISON BROOKS FOR THE LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL

The American Hardwood Export Council has collaborated with Alison Brooks Architects, ARUP and the London Design Festival to present a cross-laminated tulipwood structure in the Rootstein Hopkins Parade Ground of the Chelsea College of Arts from 17 September until 12 October.

Brooks has designed 'The Smile', an urban installation that showcases the structural and spatial potential of cross-laminated hardwood using American tulipwood. The Smile is one of the Festival's Landmark Projects; a timber structure that can be inhabited and explored by the public.

With expertise from top engineering firm ARUP, and using construction sized panels of hardwood CLT for the first time, Alison Brooks' concept is a spectacular 3.5m high, 4.5m wide and 34m long curved rectangular tube – the first ever hardwood 'mega-tube'.

Alison Brooks says, "The Smile is a huge curved hollow tube made of cross-laminated tulipwood. It touches the ground at one point, like a wheel. Entering The Smile through an opening where the curved form meets the ground, the visitor can walk from end to end of the 34-metre-long tube to discover a new kind of space that gradually rises toward light. All four sides of The Smile's interior will be made of same beautiful hardwood panels as the structure. It will offer a complete sensory experience of colour, texture, scent and sound. The Smile's two open ends will illuminate the funnel-like interior space and act as balconies to the city.

Along the walls, perforations will allow sunlight to draw changing patterns on the floor throughout the day. The perforations will also give the visitor an understanding of how the structure performs as they're located in positions where there are fewer structural stresses. At night the interior will be illuminated by linear light strips that trace its dynamic curving floor."

For AHEC, The Smile is one of the most important developments in a decade of research and development into structural timber innovation with ARUP, and one that could broaden the use of CLT in the construction industry. Andrew Lawrence, Associate Director, Arup says, "The Smile is the most challenging structure ever constructed in CLT. Every aspect is pushed to the absolute limit. It really shows the potential for hardwoods in construction."

This creation of a brand-new product and a new use of hardwood will transform the way architects and engineers approach timber construction.

"This structure proves that hardwoods have a role to play in the timber construction revolution," says David Venables, European Director of AHEC. "All our previous LDF projects – Timber Wave, Out of the Woods, Endless Stair and The Wish List – have been significant projects.

"But The Smile, designed by Alison Brooks Architects, is the most significant advance because it will create the first-ever use of industrial-sized panels of hardwood CLT. These panels will be produced by Züblin Timber in Germany, one of the pioneers of this manufacturing process. They believe in the potential of tulipwood CLT as bringing a revolutionary new element to wood construction."

ARUP's engineering team is working to derive the most efficient structural form, using only 60 cubic metres of wood to create a 150 square metre enclosed space. The forces of tension and compression working in the CLT walls will be expressed by perforations in its elevations. ABA has used these to generate patterns of light across The Smile's interior spaces during the day, it will become an urban lantern at night.



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“The Landmark Projects are a key part of the Festival’s commissioning programme. They are at a scale that gets noticed and are always in major public places reaching a very wide audience,” says Ben Evans, the Director of LDF. “The choice of architect is key and Alison Brooks Architects are known for their innovative use of materials. Alongside a strong commitment to ambitious ideas they made an ideal choice for this year’s Landmark project with AHEC.”

LOCATION: Chelsea College of Arts 16 John Islip Street London SW1P 4JU  
DATES: 16 September – 12 October

#### **ABOUT AHEC**

For over 20 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 The Wish List, Endless Stair, and now The Smile, for the London Design Festival demonstrate the performance potential of these sustainable materials and provide valuable inspiration.

[www.americanhardwood.org](http://www.americanhardwood.org)  
@ahec\_europe

#### **ABOUT ALISON BROOKS ARCHITECTS**

Founded in 1996, Alison Brooks Architects has developed an international reputation for design excellence in projects ranging from urban regeneration and public buildings for the arts, to higher education and housing. ABA’s architecture is informed by their intensive research into the cultural, social and environmental contexts of each project. This approach enables the practice to develop authentic, responsive solutions for their buildings and urban schemes, each with a distinct identity. Known for their sculptural approach to form and extraordinary attention to detail, Alison Brooks Architects is the only UK practice to have won the RIBA’s three most prestigious awards for architecture - the Stirling Prize, Manser Medal and Stephen Lawrence Prize. ABA numerous national and international awards include the 2012 Architect of the Year and Housing Architect of the Year. ABA is designing major projects across the UK including the new Cohen Quadrangle at Oxford University, due to open in October 2016. ABA has recently received an RIBA Award for their work in the South Kilburn Estate, Ely Court. The practice will be exhibiting their research examining 20th century social housing and contemporary urban stewardship at the 2016 Venice Biennale.

[www.alisonbrooksarchitects.com](http://www.alisonbrooksarchitects.com)  
@AlisonBrooksArc

#### **ABOUT ARUP**

Arup is the creative force at the heart of many of the world’s most prominent projects in the built environment and across industry. From more than 90 offices worldwide some 12,000 Arup planners, designers, engineers and consultants deliver innovative projects across the globe. The company has a multi-disciplinary team that has a proven track record in working with wood; this includes structural, fire, vibration, acoustic, building physics and façade engineers as well as material scientists that are leading experts in their respective fields. Arup has developed many award-winning innovative timber structures, helping to push the boundaries of the material. Having a full understanding of both timber as a material, as well as the fabrication and connection techniques, is key to developing both durable and cost-effective timber solutions.

[www.arup.com](http://www.arup.com)  
@ArupGroup

#### **ABOUT ZÜBLIN TIMBER**

ZÜBLIN Timber stands for ambitious and pioneered solutions in the field of timber construction. We are your single-source provider for the development, production, delivery, and execution of high-quality construction systems, from timber construction projects to timber engineering to turnkey project execution. We, the timber construction team of Züblin, MERK and Stephan, work hand in hand with our clients to develop efficient solutions and a sustainable quality of life.

[www.zueblin-timber.com](http://www.zueblin-timber.com)

#### **ABOUT THE LONDON DESIGN FESTIVAL**



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The London Design Festival is a key constituent of London's autumn creative season, alongside London Fashion Week, Frieze Art Fair and the London Film Festival. Established in 2003 its role is to celebrate and promote London as the world's design capital and gateway to the international design community and it has now established a reputation as one of the largest and most exciting design events in the world. This year the Festival will run from 17-25 September and over 400 events and installations will be on offer across the capital, from an exciting programme at the V&A to a major installation in Trafalgar Square plus over 300 partners who will participate in the nine-day Festival.

[www.londondesignfestival.com](http://www.londondesignfestival.com)

@L\_D\_F

#### **ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON**

University of the Arts London (UAL) is Europe's largest university for art, design, fashion, communication and the performing arts. It is a federation of six internationally renowned colleges: Camberwell College of Arts, Central Saint Martins, Chelsea College of Arts, London College of Communication, London College of Fashion and Wimbledon College of Arts. UAL was recently ranked one of the world's top 5 universities for art and design 2016/17 in QS World University Rankings. Please visit the About UAL webpage and follow us on social media for more information: Instagram Facebook Twitter Pinterest G+ Vine Tumblr

Chelsea College of Arts, UAL, is one of the world's leading art and design institutions specialising in Fine Art, Graphic Design and Interior and Textile Design. Alumni include Turner Prize winning artists Anish Kapoor and Chris Ofili, Oscar winner Steve McQueen and actor Alan Rickman. Chelsea is one of the six Colleges of University of the Arts London (UAL).

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