



AHEC Europe
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americanhardwood.org

**PRESS RELEASE
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INFINITY BENCH BY MARTINO GAMPER

The London Design Festival has presented another exciting opportunity for the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) to demonstrate the potential of U.S. hardwoods in exterior use. AHEC has teamed up with designer Martino Gamper to create an imaginative but very functional 6 meter long hardwood bench featuring a sophisticated patchwork pattern for the LDF Bench year's project which is located in the John Madejski Gardens at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Infinity Bench is inspired by the Italian concept of *autoprogettazione* (translated as self-made). Brought to life by Italian designer Enzo Mari, it aims to produce superior quality, functional furniture with materials in one's own house. Gamper's interest in this concept led him to create the Infinity Bench, which celebrates colour, texture and shape through the use of different hardwood species.

The American red oak, soft maple, ash, yellow birch and tulipwood that make up Infinity Bench have been thermally modified. The thermal modification process uses a high temperature in a controlled environment permanently altering the wood's chemical and physical properties. This limits the ability of the wood to absorb moisture, so products are more dimensionally stable and less prone to cup, warp and twist with changes in humidity. The thermal modification process also removes the nutrients in wood that would otherwise provide a food source for insects and wood-destroying fungi. This increase in dimensional stability and decay resistance significantly extends the service life and reduces maintenance needs of the bench. The design of the bench is intentionally simple to allow the natural textures, patterns and finishes of the wood to showcase their natural beauty.

"I used the *autoprogettazione* concept as a starting point for my design and to keep the planks as simple as possible. In doing so, I wanted to highlight the liveliness and irregularity of using different types of wood," says Gamper.

Martino Gamper studied sculpture and product design at the Fine Arts Academy in Vienna after completing an apprenticeship in cabinet making. Gamper soon transferred to product design under the leadership of architect and designer Matteo Thun. In 1994, before his degree was complete, he was employed by Thun's studio in Milan where he went on to design products and furniture. By 1997 Gamper moved to London to study at the Royal College of Art and has made the UK his home. The exhibition 100 Chairs in 100 Days in 2007 saw Gamper make 100 chairs in as many days allowing his deep-rooted curiosity, knowledge and respect of design history to emanate through his designs. In 2011 he won the Moroso Award for Contemporary Art and the Wallpaper* Magazine Award for Best Use of Colour. He has recently been commissioned to design street furniture for the Park-to-Park connection from Victoria Park to the Olympic park, London in collaboration with LTGDC.

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) runs a worldwide campaign to promote the use of American hardwoods. AHEC's affiliation with projects such as Martino Gamper's Infinity Bench help to demonstrate the performance potential, versatility and aesthetic appeal of U.S. hardwood species, providing valuable inspiration, knowledge and confidence to designers, architects and engineers globally.

AHEC European Director David Venables says, "This project embraces the use of newer technologies of hardwood durability enhancement. There's a developing market for thermally modified hardwoods in the UK, led by the growth in demand in Europe and it's great to be able to showcase their potential at the London Design Festival this year. By processing wood produced from America's well-managed hardwood forests, thermally modified hardwood provides a quality, environmentally friendly and sustainable alternative to imported tropical hardwood species."



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LIFE CYCLE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

AHEC has recently announced the publication of the ISO-conformant report on the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) of rough-sawn kiln-dried hardwood lumber. The report, which has been prepared by sustainability experts PE International after an intensive process of data collection, analysis and review, is the first stage of AHEC's LCA project. The report covers the environmental life cycle of hardwood lumber from point of harvest in the U.S. through to delivery at the importers yard in major export markets. Using this data, and data collected during the manufacturing process, including time spent on each machine and quantities of material used, Gamper's Infinity Bench will be environmentally profiled using an 'i-report' system developed for AHEC by PE International. In producing detailed Life Cycle "cradle-to-grave" impact assessments, designers can develop genuine understanding of the real and very direct environmental impact of their decisions when using U.S. hardwoods. Infinity Bench can be seen at The V&A in the John Madejski Gardens, London until 23rd September.

ABOUT AHEC

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade association for the U.S. hardwood industry, representing the committed exporters among U.S. hardwood companies and all the major U.S. 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

Thanks to AHEC Member, Northland Forest Products for donating CAMBIA thermally modified lumber and Morgan Timber UK for contribution and logistics.

Infinity Bench was manufactured by Adam Kershaw in Laddingford, Kent.

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