



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

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

PRESS RELEASE  
JUNE 2012

### A HANDMADE HIGHLIGHT - 'DEVIL AMONGST THE TAILORS'

Following on from the success of last year's Handmade exhibition, the international and influential style magazine Wallpaper\* returned to the Brioni Palazzo for this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan to showcase specially commissioned works and one-off collaborations between the world's best designers and craftsmen for their summer 'Handmade' issue.

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) was invited to collaborate with Wallpaper\*, aberrant architecture and Benchmark, bringing together the very best of materials, innovative design and craftsmanship. American ash and walnut and American maple and cherry are the principal materials of two pub tables named 'Devil Amongst The Tailors' designed by aberrant architecture and made by Benchmark.

AHEC has played an advisory role on timber suitability, aesthetics and sustainable design. There are over 20 commercial U.S. hardwoods species that offer a huge variety of colour, grain and character, and aberrant's tables 'Devil Amongst the Tailors' showcase this palette of colours and textures. Black walnut and ash combines to suit a darker environment, such as a private members club or public houses, and a combination of cherry and maple allows the second table to happily work in brighter spaces such as hotel lobbies or boutique cafes. "We are really pleased to be taking part in Handmade again this year" says AHEC European Director David Venables. "The concept and design of 'Devil Amongst the Tailors' is excellent, the tables are beautifully made and demonstrate the versatility of U.S. hardwoods."

aberrant has become known for insightful researched projects that challenge perception and introduce new and unexpected ways of experiencing the world. During their architecture residency at the Victoria and Albert museum they studied the original drawings of the now demolished 'Elephant & Castle' public house in Lambeth. The designs, by the architect Albert A. Webbe, reveal a mixed used building divided up into three main areas: a 'public' space for drinking; 'private' areas for the pub's regular patrons, who used the watering hole as an extension of their home and office, and a large space that was used for group meetings and community events.

Combining historical precedent with research into how contemporary 'work-styles' are evolving, Wallpaper\* magazine invited aberrant architecture to design a new pub table that in addition to supporting the typical pub activities of drinking and eating, is specially considered to provide the modern nomadic worker with enhanced productivity, a sense of belonging and opportunities to interact with their fellow workers.

The table represents the growing demand for temporary office space outside of the home. For many, office blocks are a thing of the past and an increasing number of nomadic workers roam London in search of welcoming workspaces. Named 'Devil Amongst the Tailors', after a traditional table-top skittles pub game, the table boasts a luxurious surface in ash or maple for entertaining, a brass foot rest for putting your feet up and combines a series of specific functions. Lifting up the lid reveals a private work surface, boasting skittle shaped office organisers for storing pens & paperclips and a task light that fixes to the table's numberplate. Want to stop for lunch, have a meeting with a client or simply go for a cigarette? Simply close and lock the lid. Work and its associated mess are banished, safely stored, out of site and out of mind. If it's time to relax, place the removable drawer onto the table surface, arrange the skittle shaped office organisers & hook the brass ball and chain onto the light. An impromptu game of 'Devil amongst the Tailors' can now be enjoyed. For Kevin Haley of aberrant architecture "This unique commission allowed us to further our research into contemporary lifestyles and flexible working conditions at the challenging scale of a table. Working closely with Wallpaper\*, Benchmark and AHEC during both the design development & production stages produced a creative collaboration, which we believe resulted in a far richer process and an unexpected & exciting end product."



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Using the very best of English craftsmanship and beautiful sustainable American hardwoods, the tables have been handmade by Benchmark using traditional cabinet making skills including dovetailing and mortice and tenon joints. Time and attention has been given to the sourcing of all materials which have been chosen for their origin and authenticity. The very best pieces of cherry, maple, walnut and ash were selected for their perfect grain and finish. The bespoke metalwork, made from silver patinated brass, including foot rails, handles, locks and brass drawer linings hand engraved to house the skittles has been sourced from Birmingham, home of traditional artisan metalworking skills.

Sean Sutcliffe, Director of Benchmark says “The pub tables we made for the Handmade show curated by Wallpaper\* were a delight to make. We were able to select some really outstanding examples of all four species of hardwood we used. The walnut gave the piece an intense richness which worked very beautifully with the brass foot rail. The maple was beautifully consistent and almost paper white. The cherry wood was a joy to use again. We used to make so much of our furniture in cherry wood and over recent years it seems to have been less fashionable so I hope that we will now see the start of a return to this fabulous mid-coloured fruit wood. The tables were made by Sam Foster-Smith who is an outstanding craftsman of 35 years’ experience. He has handcut all the mortice tenon joints and dovetails and the end result are outstanding examples of craftsmanship.”

Perhaps the most innovative and exciting aspect of this project is that with Benchmark’s help, AHEC has documented all elements of the manufacturing process and will be putting this together with life cycle data recently collected from the American hardwood industry to produce a full ‘cradle-to-grave’ life cycle impact report for the tables. Says David Venables, “This will be a first for our industry and we believe that this kind of transparent and scientifically based information is essential to enable manufacturers and designers to make an informed decision when it comes to the question of sustainable design.”

Tony Chambers, Editor-in-Chief of Wallpaper\*, says: “Handmade is a testimony to great design, talent and ideas, and the determination to achieve the extraordinary. We are once again celebrating beautiful new friendships and beautiful new things.”

‘Devil Amongst the Tailors’ is not only a cleverly researched and playful table, it is a demonstration of the very best teamwork, craftsmanship and sustainable design, and is a highlight of this year’s exhibition.

#### **Notes to Editor:**

High resolution images are available by emailing [pr@americanhardwood.org](mailto:pr@americanhardwood.org).

Photography credit: Angus Thomas, Wallpaper\* Handmade, AHEC

#### **1. More 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.

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

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## **2. More about the 'Devil amongst the Tailors'**

The most famous of table-top skittles games is indisputably the game known as Devil Amongst the Tailors or Bar Skittles or Table Skittles or Indoor Skittles. This distinctive game appeared in the 1700s and was cleverly miniaturised so that no throwing strip was required at all -the nine pins standing on a square table were knocked down by a ball which was swings from a pole, instead. In 1783, some theatre-goers and tailors rioted at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket over a play that the tailors thought insulting. The Dragoons were called in to stop the riot which they did in such an enthusiastic way that their method was compared to the ball ploughing through Table skittles by the local press. After this incident Bar Skittles was often referred to as 'Devil amongst the Tailors'.

## **3. More about aberrant architecture**

aberrant architecture is a multi-disciplinary studio and think-tank, founded by directors David Chambers and Kevin Haley, that operates internationally in the fields of architecture, design, contemporary art & cultural analysis. From their studio in London, they strive to capture the best of the past and the contemporary in order to shape the future of the designed world. The studio has established a reputation for playful, provocative and interactive projects that use architecture and design to introduce new and unexpected ways of experiencing the world. They regularly collaborate with local community groups, design professionals and place people at the heart of everything they do. Operating simultaneously as a think tank, aberrant identify, question and research relevant issues in contemporary society in order to look beyond 'building a building' and to establish themselves as problem solvers as well as designers. In 2010 they were architecture residents at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) and in the same year they co-founded The Gopher Hole, a gallery/venue in London, which through a public exhibition and talks programme provides a platform for critical debate on the arts and society.

[www.aberrantarchitecture.com](http://www.aberrantarchitecture.com)  
[www.the-gopher-hole.com](http://www.the-gopher-hole.com)

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[kevin@aberrantarchitecture.com](mailto:kevin@aberrantarchitecture.com) or +44 (0) 7732298770

## **4. More about Benchmark**

English furniture maker Benchmark has a passion for craftsmanship and design, producing handmade furniture in a sustainable way that will last several lifetimes. Established over 25 years ago by Terence Conran and Sean Sutcliffe, in a stable on the disused farm in the grounds of Terence's country home, Benchmark started making prototypes and small batches of furniture for leading retailers. It has expanded steadily over the years and Benchmark is now one of the most technologically advanced workshops in the UK. It has a full service design studio and employs a team of 40 craftsmen in its Berkshire and Dorset workshops. Benchmark works in the UK and internationally with architects, interior designers and private clients on bespoke commercial projects as well as making contemporary furniture for the home which is sold directly to customers from the workshop and showroom in Kintbury, West Berkshire.

[www.benchmarkfurniture.com](http://www.benchmarkfurniture.com)  
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## **5. More about Wallpaper\***

Truly international, consistently intelligent and hugely influential, Wallpaper\* is the world's most important design and style magazine. It attracts the most sophisticated global audience by constantly pushing into new creative territories and ensuring its coverage of everything from architecture to motoring, fashion to travel, and interiors to jewellery remains unrivalled. Wallpaper\* has readers in 93 countries and has enjoyed unparalleled success in reaching the design elite right across the globe. To Wallpaper\*, the world is one seamless marketplace, where consumers flit from one destination to the next, easily cross physical borders and cultural divides, and flirt with a variety of different brands, both established and undiscovered. With 12 themed issues a year, a limited-edition cover by a different artist or designer each month, over 600,000 Twitter followers and a monthly iPad edition, Wallpaper\* has evolved from style bible to internationally recognised brand.