



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

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

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**APRIL 2016**

## **ALONG THE LINES OF HAPPINESS**

MILAN, OPEN CORDERS, 11<sup>TH</sup> – 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL 2016

Along the Lines of Happiness is a unique experiment between artist Laura Ellen Bacon and furniture maker Sebastian Cox to challenge the versatility and properties of some exceptional but underutilised U.S. hardwoods: American soft maple, American cherry and American red oak.

In an evolution of The Invisible Store of Happiness, a project created for Clerkenwell Design Week 2015 and initiated by the American Hardwood Export Council, Along the Lines of Happiness will be presented in Italy for the first time and will evolve on site into a very expressive form.

Bacon and Cox will adapt the installation in a live performance that will take place during Salone del Mobile, at the Porticato Largo Richini at the University of Milan during Interni Open Borders (11th to 23rd April 2016).

Designer Sebastian Cox and sculptor Laura Ellen Bacon, in a return to the dialogue between their two different creative worlds, will bend, fold and intertwine thin strips of wood to create the installation, which will be 3 metres high and 9 metres long.

In addition to the adaptation of the structure an “integral part of the installation and of the creative moment will be the workbench that we have studied and designed specifically to show, during the performance, how the wood is processed,” says Bacon. “This workbench is a fundamental element of the process, as well as a magnificent piece that blends the materials of the whole structure. Inside the bench, we’ve got a tools bag that should be hidden, a steam box, an area to soak the wood, and a space where we can draw both technical drawings and pencil sketches. It is a wonderful world where we give life to our creations.”

## **ALONG THE LINES OF HAPPINESS, WORLDS IN COMPARISON & NEW EXPLORATIONS**

Along the Lines of Happiness is a handmade installation and consists of a solid, steam bent, semi-elliptical structure which houses swathes of timber woven by hand. The form continues in a straight line, where thinner wooden strips give rise to large, expressive arcs developing into elegant and sinuous shapes.

The project was initiated by the American Hardwood Export Council in order to explore the potential of American soft maple, cherry and red oak and to push the limits of these three species. AHEC will also track the environmental impact of Along the Lines of Happiness and the materials used through a process of environmental Life Cycle Assessment.

“In line with the theme chosen by Interni, Open Borders, Along the Lines of Happiness pushes the boundaries of design, exploring an unconventional manufacturing process using steam to manipulate the sophisticated texture of American cherry, red oak and soft maple hardwoods,” says David Venables, European Director of AHEC. “It sets up a multi-disciplinary approach based on collaboration, in which two cornerstones of human endeavor, functionality and aesthetic, respectively represented by design and sculpture, interact and merge. It is breaking the barrier between the creative process and the public with a live performance in which the pleasure and the joy of creating is shared.”

## **THE DESIGNERS**

Laura Ellen Bacon is a British sculptor known for her abstract works made of willow. Sebastian Cox is a designer and maker, renowned for manufacturing furniture using wood from sustainably managed English forests. Laura sketches in 6B pencil, while Sebastian uses a 2H,



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

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

or a computer. For Laura, the creative process starts with the space she's designing for, mostly in the countryside, while Sebastian rarely knows where his work will end up, producing mainly indoors in his studio. Laura works with her hands, Sebastian uses machines, and even when he's making by hand there's a tool between his hands and the wood. What these two very different designers do have in common is a love for wood, and a love for creating.

"I'd never done anything sculptural until the Invisible Store of Happiness," confirms Sebastian Cox. "My furniture favours functionality." Conversely, Laura is used to working in a more conceptual way, in the silence of the outdoors: being in a workshop in London was a tough test for her. "Matching our ways of working and inspiring each other, and yet keeping intact our personal creative flow, has been a beautiful opportunity for confrontation and growth experience," she says.

### WOOD SPECIES

#### About American cherry

American cherry is a premium wood with a creamy white sapwood and rich reddish brown heartwood, which will darken as it ages. The wood has a fine uniform straight grain and smooth texture and is popular for its subtle grain patterns and warm colours. American cherry is used for many high-end applications including architectural joinery, furniture, cabinets, flooring and musical instruments. The wood is of medium density with good bending properties and medium strength and shock resistance.

Although cherry accounts for less than 2% of the growing hardwood resource, it is widely available in a full range of specifications and grades as both lumber and veneer.

#### About American soft maple

Soft maple is about 25% less hard than hard maple, has medium bending and crushing strength, and is low in stiffness and shock resistance, but due to its widespread growth it may be more susceptible to regional colour variations. Generally the sapwood is greyish white, sometimes with darker coloured pith flecks, and the heartwood varies from light to dark reddish brown. The wood is usually straight grained, uses include furniture, paneling and interior joinery. The lumber is generally sold unselected for colour. It has good steam bending properties.

#### American red oak

It's an attractive oak with distinct reddish-pink tones. The wood is similar in general appearance to white oak, but with a slightly less pronounced figure due to the smaller rays and a more porous end grain structure. The wood is mostly straight grained with a coarse texture. American red oak is the most abundant species in America's hardwood forests and is used for flooring and a wide variety of furniture and building applications. The wood is hard and heavy, with medium bending strength and stiffness and high crushing strength. It is very good for steam bending.

\*\*\*\*\*

### American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC)

The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) is the leading international trade organisation for the American Hardwood Industry, representing the committed exporters amongst American hardwood companies. AHEC runs a worldwide programme to promote American hardwoods in over 50 export markets, concentrating on providing architects, designers and end users with technical information on the range of species, products and sources of supply. In addition, AHEC also produces a full range of technical publications that are available by visiting [americanhardwood.org](http://americanhardwood.org) Follow AHEC on Twitter and Instagram @ahec\_europe [www.americanhardwood.org](http://www.americanhardwood.org)