

## **AHEC to collaborate with seven UAE-based designers for ‘Seed to Seat’ project at Downtown Design 2016**

***Furniture design and Life Cycle Assessment project aims to throw the spotlight on versatile, yet less well-known American hardwood species and identify the true environmental impact of design***

**June 20, 2016** - The American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC), the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry, has announced the launch of ‘Seed to Seat’, a collaboration with seven of the most prominent and exciting designers in the UAE, who have been given an open brief and asked to design ‘something to sit on’. The pieces, which will be made from a selection of four American hardwood species, will be unveiled at Downtown Design 2016, which will run from October 25 - 28, at Dubai Design District. With Seed to Seat, AHEC aims to identify the true environmental impact of design and build on its extensive work with Life Cycle Assessment (LCA).

This is the second collaboration between AHEC and Downtown Design and builds on prior initiatives in the Middle East and internationally, which have aimed at creatively promoting American hardwoods, and have involved the likes of Zaha Hadid, David Adjaye, Matteo Thun, Sou Fujimoto, Norman Foster and Paul Smith amongst others. According to Roderick Wiles, AHEC Regional Director, the word sustainable has almost become design rhetoric. Whilst many well-intentioned designers claim sustainability in their approach to their work, there is often little solid evidence to support them in making those claims. Fadi Saredine (Fadi Saredine Design Studio), Anna Szonyi (Studio Anna Szonyi), Tarik Al Zaharna (T.ZED Architects), Bruce Paget (Herriot-Watt University - Dubai Campus), George Kahler (Kahler Design), and Monica Twarowski (DWP) are collaborating with AHEC to demonstrate that sustainability can have substance.

In response to an open brief for ‘something to sit on’ made from American hardwood lumber, each designer has been asked to create a piece made from American cherry, tulipwood, soft maple or red oak. During the manufacturing process and incorporating data from AHEC’s LCA research for 19

American hardwood species, all materials, energy usage, transport and wastage will be recorded to assess the full environmental impact for each design. Life Cycle Assessment is a scientific tool that helps industry to establish environmental frameworks that have real meaning and assess true sustainability. The result will present the cradle-to-grave impact of creating each product across six categories. The most topical impact category is global warming potential (GWP), or carbon footprint.

“We’re very excited, not only by the caliber of the designers involved in this project, but also by the fabulous pieces that we look forward to seeing in these versatile, yet less well-known American hardwood species. We’ve seen for a long time that the Middle East has a real commitment to sustainable design in principle and through this project we can demonstrate what that means in reality - an opportunity for us to show, and learn, what works and what design elements make a difference to the environment,” said Roderick Wiles. “In addition, we have also developed a microsite for the project, which is now live at [www.seedtoseat.info](http://www.seedtoseat.info). This will be the hub for all information regarding the project and currently includes details regarding the designers.”

The project in the Middle East is the second phase of ‘Seed to Seat’, which was initially launched in Australia and New Zealand earlier this year. AHEC worked with six designers, who were given the same open brief, and their designs were on display at DENFAIR, which took place in Melbourne from June 2 - 4, 2016. In line with its ‘Grown in Seconds’ campaign, AHEC also calculated how many seconds it would take for the wood used to make the individual pieces to regrow naturally in the U.S. hardwood forest. For the six designs in Australia and New Zealand, AHEC calculated that it would take a mere 2.2 seconds for all the wood used to grow in the U.S. hardwood forest. Looking ahead, the plan is to calculate the same for the seven designs in the Middle East.

“We’re extremely happy to be working with AHEC again this year, to be able to support such a worthy initiative and promote sustainable design and development not just in concept, but in practice. Allowing local designers to engage with the material in a very conscious way, is providing exactly the kind of mentorship and guidance that our emerging designers need, and can only help to strengthen our collective commitment to the future environment of the city we live in,” concluded Rue Kothari, Fair Director, Downtown Design.

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#### **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 runs a worldwide programme to promote American hardwoods in over 50 export markets, concentrating on providing architects, specifiers, 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. For more information, please visit: [www.americanhardwood.org](http://www.americanhardwood.org).

#### **About Downtown Design**

Downtown Design is the only platform in the Middle East for the region's trade professionals to discover original, high quality design from all over the world. In its fourth edition, the Fair returns to the Dubai Design District and presents a carefully edited roster of established and emerging brands across a variety of product categories; including furniture, lighting, bathrooms, kitchens, textiles and accessories. Fostering greater interaction, connectivity and commercial opportunity, Downtown Design is dedicated to providing a dynamic environment for buyers and brands to do business easily and efficiently. The fair runs from October 25 - 28, 2016 as part of Dubai Design Week and will be held at Dubai Design District (d3). For more information, please visit: [www.downtowndesign.com](http://www.downtowndesign.com).