

ccanw

## wood culture

"A culture is no better than its woods." W.H. Auden (1907-73)



The Centre for Contemporary Art and the Natural World is an innovative educational charity which uses the Arts to explore new understandings of our place within Nature.

CCANW opened a Project Space in 2006 in Haldon Forest Park near Exeter, the first phase of an exciting, long-term partnership with the Forestry Commission. The Project Space is the base for an integrated artistic and educational programme which covers all art forms and takes place there, in the forest and other locations and includes exhibitions, residencies, projects, workshops, live events and talks. CCANW welcomed 30,000 visitors/participants to its Project Space in its first year with many others engaging with other events in the forest.

# CCANW

Centre for Contemporary Art  
and the Natural World

In May 2007, with the benefit of a special grant from South West Woodland Renaissance, it launched **Wood Culture**, an ambitious year-long festival celebrating the beauty, usefulness and sustainability of wood in contemporary architecture and design. The programme comprises of a series of exhibitions, events and activities designed to be engaging to everyone, from those with a professional interest to the youngest visitor.

Right: *Geodesic Dome Construction.* One of a series of family workshops using timber organised by CCANW during August in Haldon Forest Park. Image © Clive Adams.



Left: *CCANW's Project Space in Haldon Forest Park,* adapted by Harris McMillan Architects, Exeter from an existing 40 year-old building. Image © Chris Lewis.

The first exhibition in the series, **Wood Wisdom**, researched by White Design, Bristol, focussed on the rich history of timber construction, from Neolithic trackways, medieval buildings to ship and aeroplane building. It also showed how timber growing, new technologies – such as glulam and computer-aided design – and the use of wood in construction and as fuel, can provide considerable environmental benefits, particularly in helping to reduce global warming.

The second, **Inspiring Futures**, researched by Juliet Bidgood of NEAT, was CCANW's selection of twelve of the most inspiring examples of contemporary European timber architecture. These projects were selected by a panel of architecture, engineering and forestry experts from a survey of recent European timber architecture. After a showing at this conference, the exhibition goes on to the Architecture Centre, Bristol 16 October – 11 November and then tours.



Above: *Wood Wisdom exhibition at CCANW's Project Space.* Image © Chris Lewis.



Above: Inspiring Futures exhibition at CCANW's Project Space. Image © Chris Lewis.

Projects were chosen that made enlightening and inspiring use of timber and demonstrated the beauty and usefulness of this material



Left: 'Wave' for Bern, Westgate Main Station, Switzerland, 2005. Architect: Smarch. Image © Beat Mathys. One of three major civic projects in the group *Unexpected Departures* which demonstrated how timber can match steel in strength and durability.



Above: 'Kärsämäki Church', Finland, 2004. Architects: Anssi Lassila, Lassila Hirvilammi Architects. Image © Jussi Tiainen. One of three public buildings in the group which showed how a client can influence the technical and creative scope of a building.

Projects were chosen that made enlightening and inspiring use of timber and demonstrated the beauty and usefulness of this material. The projects came from Austria, Germany, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, Russia and the UK and showed how the challenge of building sustainably is being met across Europe.

The selection was intentionally diverse and included buildings of different scales and with very different uses. In assembling these examples it was not CCANW's aim to identify a single style or approach to architecture but rather to capture examples of design teams taking timber to its limits in different ways. We also wished to highlight the ambition needed on the part of all those who initiate

building projects. Often it was both the client and the design team who had seized the opportunity to make these inspiring buildings.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, many of these projects came from the most densely forested areas of Europe where building in wood and the local sourcing of timber was integral to design practice. They provided a useful benchmark for UK practice where this is yet to become commonplace.

The twelve projects were organised in four groups of three to highlight common themes and to exemplify the different ways that they might stretch our understanding of the potential of timber. By exposing how creative, intellectual, political and regional communities develop new ideas and techniques we hope to inspire others to take up the challenge of working with this most ancient and modern material.

A fully illustrated, 48 page catalogue of the **Inspiring Futures** exhibition has been produced, price £5. It includes an essay by Oliver Lowenstein who has written on contemporary timber architecture for many years and runs Fourth Door Review [www.fourthdoor.co.uk](http://www.fourthdoor.co.uk).

The final two exhibitions in the **Wood Culture** series will focus on the use of timber in other forms of design and on the contribution its use can make in creating new sustainable architecture – including affordable housing – in the South West of England.

Right: 'Ötzbündl Mixed Use Housing', Dornbirn, Vorarlberg, Austria, 1997. Architect: Hermann Kaufmann. Image © Ignacio Martinez. One of three projects in the group *Material to Hand* which showed an engagement with timber as a local resource but brought to it an experimental energy.



Above: 'Downland Gridshell', Weald and Downland Museum, Sussex, United Kingdom, 2002. Architect: Edward Cullinan Architects. Image © Richard Learoyd. One of three projects in the group *Evolving Ideas* which showed how central the collaboration of architect, engineer and maker is to the process of designing innovative buildings.



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