



October 2024

Material Matters: a treasure trove of knowledge for architects and designers



Material Matters 2024

Image: Max Colson

The doors of Material Matters 2024 have closed. The four-day event, founded by William Knight and Grant Gibson, welcomed 6,000 registered visitors to Bargehouse, Oxo Tower Wharf. Once there, they discovered a huge variety of products, installations and ideas alongside a rich programme of talks.

‘It has been a wonderful week,’ says the fair’s co-founder Grant Gibson. ‘This was the third edition of the fair and it feels like it’s maturing nicely. What William and I enjoy about the event is the mixture of global brands with emerging talent, who are all united by an underlying sense of the potential of materials. We are genuinely proud to bring these brilliant people together.’

Features were numerous. In the entrance hall Studio TIP, a new creative practice founded by Katie-May Boyd and Charlotte Kidger, created *Tip Takes*. The installation investigated how creative value and reuse of materials could improve circularity within the construction industry. The duo took 2.5 tonnes of waste material, donated by John F Hunt from a central London site, intended for down-cycling and created a sculptural installation where visitors could select, reserve, and collect materials free of charge. The project was supported by B-Corp built environment engineering and sustainability consultancy, Elliott Wood.



Fibre Futures was an installation from BIOTEXFUTURE, an innovation space funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and led by adidas AG and RWTH Aachen University. It investigated material innovation in high-performance textiles, illustrating projects aiming to positively impact the textile value chain. Arguably, the highlight was a rain jacket inspired by the outermost tissue layer of a cow gut and made from a lab-grown biopolymer.



Each year, Material Matters throws the spotlight on a particular practice as Design Studio of the Year. For 2024, transport expert PriestmanGoode followed in the footsteps of LAYER and PearsonLloyd. Its installation, *Moving Responsibly: A Material Journey*, took visitors on a trip across each phase of the design process. It demonstrated how design has the ultimate influence in defining future transport systems that are safe, responsible and sustainable.

If that wasn't enough, *Locally Grown* was an interactive installation inviting visitors to explore their own hair as a potential new material. It came from the fertile mind of Studio Sanne Visser, a material design research practice and a leading voice in the development of human hair as a scalable regenerative material. Visitors could have a free haircut and then see the 'waste' hair spun and turned into rope. The exhibition was supported by The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and co-curated by Vickie Hayward of Company, Place.

In the Making was a collaboration between tp bennett and The Furniture Practice that investigated the ever-evolving relationship between raw materials, geography, people, and supply chains in product manufacturing, throwing the spotlight on 12 brands including: Arper, Spanish firm SURU, Australian company REDDIE, Humanscale, Atrium, and Normann Copenhagen, to name just a few.

ForEveryday.Life, a new design studio and consulting agency, presented its award-winning proposal for 3D printed housing, Housing Salinas, for the first time since it was shown at Austin's SXSW in March 2024. The project was designed in response to community displacement in Puerto Rico in response to Hurricane Maria.

- Smile Plastics at Material Matters
- IOOR by Hydro
Images: Max Colson



Rootfull
Image: Max Colson

Arper, part of In The Making
Image: Max Colson



And finally, the Wood Awards was back at gallery@oxo. The exhibition displayed all the furniture and objects from the 2024 shortlist, alongside presentations of the various buildings in contention for a prize. Together they told a powerful story of what can be achieved using timber in design and architecture.

Meanwhile, major exhibitors included Hydro, which presented the 100R project, which asked seven internationally renowned designers – Inga Sempe, Max Lamb, Andreas Engesvik, Shane Schneck, Rachel Griffin, John Tree and Philippe Malouin – to each create a product from Hydro CIRCAL 100R, the world's first aluminium made entirely from recycled post-consumer scrap on an industrial scale. And AHEC (the American Hardwood Export Council) shone a light on American maple – a valuable yet underused hardwood – through Pirouette, a collection of extraordinary, fluid furniture pieces, designed by Parti and made by Jan Hendzel Studio, that explore complex geometric forms. Irish maker Modet highlighted the value of craft in its beautiful furniture.

Elsewhere, visitors could find designers, makers, artists and smaller manufacturers working in materials such as bio-plastic, coconut bacteria, orange peel, plant roots, mud, seaweed, mycelium and hemp.

The fair's talks programme – covering a panoply of topics from biodesign to the housing crisis, via reuse in architecture – included speakers such as Mark Miodownik, designer John Tree, Kirsty Dias and Maria Kafel from PriestmanGoode, writer and author Anna Minton, and industrial designer Tej Chauhan, as well as the annual Negroni Talk courtesy of architect fourth_space.

'It has been an extraordinary four days,' concludes fair co-founder William Knight. 'We've hosted some brilliant, thoughtful exhibitors and there has been plenty of lively discussion. Material Matters has become an important place for designers and architects to learn about the potential of materials aligned with design thinking. Importantly too, it seems to us that we've built a community, which wants to make a difference to the way we all live our lives.'

Finally, the event couldn't take place without the help of our brilliant sponsors. We would love to thank Woven Image, The Woolmark Company, Smile Plastics, Bankside Hotel, Material Bank, Aqua Libra and TANQUERAY NO. TEN Gin.



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Image: Max Colson

Material Matters will return to London, 17-20 September 2025

Notes to Editors

For press enquiries and images:

David Gorrod at Seen PR info@seenpr.com | @seen_pr

Material Matters Fair

The official trade fair within the London Design Festival, the fair will return to London, 17–20 September 2025

Launched in 2022, Material Matters brings together over 50 world-leading brands, designers, makers and manufacturers to celebrate the importance of materials and their ability to shape our lives.

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Delizia Media

Owner and organiser of Material Matters, Delizia Media Ltd was established by Grant Gibson and William Knight in 2021, bringing together nearly fifty years of experience in design writing, broadcasting, promotion and event organisation.

Contact via hello@materialmatters.design

Oxo Tower Wharf

Oxo Tower Wharf is an award-winning mixed-use building, home to a creative community of designer-maker studios and showrooms, gallery and event spaces, shops, and cafes all at the heart of London's South Bank and Bankside. Right on the riverside, visitors can browse, buy and commission from independent small businesses ranging from fine jewellery, luxury ceramics to neon lighting, leather goods and much more, in addition to fine dining at the world-famous rooftop restaurant. The iconic building with its famous art deco tower is owned and managed by Coin Street, a local social enterprise creating a thriving, diverse, and welcoming place for people to live, work and play.

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