



MAKE GOOD

RETHINKING MATERIAL FUTURES

11 March 2026

**Lydia and Manfred Gorvy Lecture Theatre, V&A
14:00–18:45 (followed by a drinks reception)**

The 2026 *Make Good* symposium brings together leading scientists, designers, manufacturers, architects, lawyers and developers to discuss how we can grow better forests in the UK, harvest the material responsibly and build with it locally. As such, it takes its cue from dRMM's pioneering research into local hardwood, currently on display at the V&A in ***Building from Forests***.

The symposium forms part of the fifth iteration of the ***Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures*** programme, supported by John Makepeace OBE. The ten-year project launched in 2022 and encompasses an annual display in the Dr Susan Weber Gallery of Furniture, an annual symposium and a programme of acquisitions dedicated to exploring the use of natural, renewable materials in design and architecture at a time of climate emergency.

Please use the #makegood tag when posting about the symposium. To find out about future events and sign up to our newsletter, please visit: **vam.ac.uk/info/make-good**

Symposium Schedule

14:00–14:15 Introductions by Anna Bates, V&A and Jonas Lencer, dRMM

14:15–15:35 **Materials and Making**
Marlene Cramer, Edinburgh Napier University
Nick Gant, Designer and Researcher
Je Ahn, Studio Weave
Followed by Q&A chaired by Anna Bates, V&A

15:35–16:20 **BREAK**

16:20–17:25 **Construction**
Louise Rogers, BE-ST
Jonathan Smales, Human Nature
*Followed by Q&A (joined by Jonas Lencer, dRMM)
chaired by Mark Morris, V&A*

17:25–18:30 **Civic Infrastructure**
Paul Powlesland, Lawyers for Nature
Imandeep Kaur, Civic Square
Followed by Q&A chaired by Corinna Gardner, V&A

18:30–18:35 Concluding remarks by Christopher Wilk, V&A

18:45–20:00 **DRINKS RECEPTION**

Speaker Biographies

Je Ahn (he/him) is Founding Director of the London-based architecture practice Studio Weave. Combining social purpose and technical precision, his work spans large-scale housing and civic infrastructure, as well as schools, heritage and cultural projects, and public realm and placemaking strategies. Ahn has also led research projects, translating practice into guidance for clients including RIBA and TfL. His work has received multiple RIBA Awards, two gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, and *Wallpaper* Architect of the Year 2026.

Marlene Cramer (she/her) is a wood scientist at Forest Research and Edinburgh Napier University. She studied Wood and Fibre Materials Technology at the Technical University of Dresden, Germany and is currently completing her PhD on new strength grading options for hardwoods. Cramer is also researching the properties of emerging UK tree species, underused timbers and recovered wood. Based in Edinburgh, her work informs the development of British and European Standards; she is a member of Committee B/518 - Structural timber.

Nick Gant (he/him) is an award-winning designer, academic and Co-director of the Centre for Arts and Wellbeing at the University of Brighton. He leads the Community21 Social and Sustainable Design Research Group and has worked with over fifty global companies, NGOs and public bodies to advance design-led social and sustainability agendas. Based in Brighton, his recent research has been funded by DEFRA, the Forestry Commission, the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. His PhD contributed to the development of circular economy methods.

Imandeep Kaur (she/her) is Co-founder and Director of Civic Square Birmingham, an organisation demonstrating neighbourhood-scale civic infrastructure for social and ecological transition. Together with people and partners in Ladywood, Birmingham, Civic Square is reimagining land stewardship, finance and governance with a particular focus on ecological building design and bio-based material retrofit. Kaur is an active member of Project OO, a collaborative studio based in London that specialises in sustainable design and regeneration; part of the Doughnut Economics Action Lab Advisory Team and on the Common Wealth Advisory Board.

Paul Powlesland (he/him) is the founder of Lawyers for Nature, a community interest company that empowers individuals to use the law to protect nature. Based in London, he specialises in upholding the rights of environmental activists to protest, and uses environmental law and regulations to defend trees, rivers and wildlife. Powlesland regularly gives talks and workshops on the rights of nature, the relationship between the law and the natural world and what barristers and other lawyers should do in a time of climate and ecological emergency.

Louise Rogers (she/her) is Impact Manager at BE-ST, with expertise in natural, renewable building materials, prototyping, and low-carbon manufacturing. Based in South Lanarkshire, she leads R&D and focusses on bringing research projects to the market. Rogers has a strong track record in lifecycle analysis, material suitability, and materials innovation. She has authored key sector reports and delivered demonstrator projects that bridge the gap between research and application, enabling the integration of sustainable materials into scalable construction.

Jonathan Smales (he/him) is Founder and Executive Chairman of developer Human Nature. Based in Lewes, he has worked in sustainable development for over 30 years and is a recognised leader in sustainable design and urbanism. While Managing Director of Greenpeace, in 1989 he bought and oversaw the refurbishment of an old animal testing laboratory in Islington into Greenpeace UK's new HQ – London's first green commercial building. In 1990 he created, and became Chief Executive Officer of, the Earth Centre national millennium project; in 2001, he co-founded the Beyond Green group, which he chaired until 2015.

Chair Biographies

Anna Bates (she/her) is Curator of Furniture and Product Design, 1900 – Now at the V&A and the lead curator of Make Good: Rethinking Material Futures.

Corinna Gardner (she/her) is Senior Curator of Design and Digital at the V&A. She leads the museum's Rapid Response Collecting programme, developed the museum's digital design collecting strategy and curated the exhibition *Plastics: Remaking our World*. Gardner is co-editor of *Digital Art: 1960s to Now*.

Jonas Lencer (he/him) is a director of dRMM. Based in London, his role within dRMM has consistently been tied to the studio's material research and development, with a particular focus on material innovation via the process of making. He is particularly interested in the potential of prefabricated materials, materials with a propensity for modularity, and materials that promote circularity.

Mark Morris (he/him) is Senior Curator of Architecture and Design at the V&A. Prior to this, he was Head of Teaching at the Architectural Association where he lectured on history and theory. A recipient of the RIBA Research Trust Award, a Graham Foundation grant, and the American Institute of Architects Henry Adams Medal, he is author of *Models: Architecture and the Miniature* and *Automatic Architecture*.

Christopher Wilk (he/him) is Keeper of the Performance, Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A. He was curator of the V&A's exhibitions *Modernism 1914–1939* (2006) and *Plywood: Material of the Modern World* (2017).