

NEWS RELEASE 1 APRIL 2014

'Lotus Bench' to blossom in Aldgate

The City will be looking a bit brighter by the end of April when a new piece of street furniture is installed. The new 'Lotus Bench' will join the high-profile red street installations already popping up around Aldgate to signal a major rework of the area.

The striking Lotus Bench (images attached), which offers shelter from the elements, was designed by a student at London Metropolitan University's Sir John Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design (The Cass), based in Aldgate.

Charles Mugisha, who studies Furniture and Product Design at The Cass, said: "In the inner-city, trees can promote feelings of wellbeing and relaxation and I wanted somehow to include this in my project. My first idea was to capture the grace and elegance of trees to find a design which could offer shade and some degree of privacy to the user.

"Sitting in this busy place exposed to the noise and traffic and the constant flow of people passing by was unlikely to make me feel comfortable and relaxed. I knew my design would have to take on this challenge."

Charles became involved in the project when the City of London Corporation joined with the Faculty's Cass Projects unit to run a competition for students to design a piece of temporary street furniture.

Aldgate Project stakeholders the Whitechapel Gallery and Transport for London, together with the City of London Corporation departments responsible for developing the new designs, the Department of the Built Environment and Open Spaces, all voted for their favourite entries, with Charles's coming out the winner.

Victor Callister, Assistant Director (Environmental Enhancement), City of London, said: "The furniture designed by Charles offers welcoming and intimate spaces in an area which is changing and developing a strong new sense of identity. Design interventions like the Lotus Bench are an important part of marking this change, and defining what the area will be."

The scheduled improvements to Aldgate include the removal of the one-way system and roundabout, with a new urban park and pavilion & café in its place. The work is due for completion in 2016. The design competition is part of the strategy to mark the changes bringing a new sense of place and reflect the existing communities.

Third year degree student Charles' design was commended for its adaptability to the varied site locations and the convivial experiences the seating patterns

provide. The committee also enjoyed the chairs' elegant responses to the surrounding urban fabric.

Robert Mull, Dean of The Cass at London Metropolitan University, said: "Charles's giant domestic chairs perfectly capture the interplay between different scales of practice that is possible in The Cass. His proposal brings furniture and urban design together making a generous contribution to the city and its occupants."

Charles added: "I am very proud that my project was chosen by different representatives of this community and that they believe my design will bring benefits to the public. I am excited about seeing my design being made and I look forward to seeing people using the chair when having lunch or reading a paper. I hope they will be comfortable and relaxed."

-ENDS-

Images available.

Notes to Editors:

The shortlisting panel consisted of Robert Mull (Dean, The Cass), Aidan Walker (Curator and Writer), Victor Callister (Assistant Director, City of London) and Rob Oakley (Head of Access, City of London). The shortlisted entries were presented at a recent Aldgate Public Realm Working Group meeting, where Aldgate stakeholders including the Whitechapel Gallery, Sir John Cass's Foundation, Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School, Transport for London, City of London Corporation and the Department of the Built Environment all voted for the piece they would like to see installed in Aldgate.

London Metropolitan University

London Metropolitan University has a rich history with strong educational roots dating back to 1848. The University as it is today was created in 2002 with the merging of London Guildhall University and the University of North London, the first merger between two universities in the UK. Its roots however, lie firmly in the nineteenth century with the establishment of the Metropolitan Evening Classes for Young Men, in 1848.

At London Metropolitan University we believe that everyone has the right to an accessible quality education. Our students enjoy the highest levels of support and our courses recently received top marks from the UK's Quality Assurance Agency. We are proud of the diversity & achievements of our students, alumni and staff.

The Cass

The Cass is internationally recognised for its high quality teaching, excellent facilities and unique interdisciplinary opportunities. Learning through practice, playing with process and working with clients, students at The Cass gain real world experience in both individual and collaborative projects, engaging with professionals, communities and companies.

There is a strong emphasis in our studios on socially engaged Architecture, Art and Design applied to both local and global contexts, and many projects focus on London. Our central London location also gives you easy access to the creative and cultural hub which surrounds the Aldgate Campus.

For more information

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