

## **British artists Ackroyd & Harvey awarded the major London 2012 'Mapping the Park' commission as permanent reminder of Games**

A major public art commission consisting of ten semi-mature trees - each supporting a large bespoke metal ring within the canopy - are being planted to mark the ten entrances to the new 500-acre Olympic Park. The commission, entitled *History Trees*, by renowned British artists Ackroyd & Harvey has been funded by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and Arts Council England and will act as a permanent reminder of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The ten trees will reach full maturity over the next 25-30 years reaching up to 18 metres tall (see overleaf for list of species and locations). Three trees have been planted and will take root in time for the Games and the remaining seven will be planted post Games. Once planted, each tree will have a large ring, engineered from either bronze or stainless steel and weighing up to 500kg, securely suspended within the tree canopy with branches and ring slowly fusing together over time.

The rings will be six metres in diameter and engraved on the interior face with text capturing an archive of history from each location. The tenth tree – an English Oak – will hold a bronze ring inscribed with local residents' recollections of the area. The shadow cast by this ring will be permanently captured by a bronze inlay on the ground, and each year the shadow and ring will momentarily align to commemorate a significant date and time during the London 2012 Games.

The trees have been sourced through a British nursery and have been selected to reflect the diversity of the wider area and the international spirit of the Games. (see full list overleaf)

Sculpture, photography, architecture, and biology are some of the disciplines that intersect throughout the work of artists Ackroyd & Harvey. Since the 1990's, their art has been revealing an intrinsic fascination with process and event. Their work reflects environmental and scientific concerns making explicit connections with urban political ecologies by highlighting the temporal nature of growth and decay in sites of architectural interest as well as in contemporary art galleries and museums worldwide.

They are acclaimed for their large-scale architectural interventions on landmark buildings using seedling grass. In 2003 they grew the entire vertical interior space of a disused church in South London and in 2007 realised their largest temporary living public artwork on the exterior of London's National Theatre entitled 'Fly Tower'. In the same year they embarked on a long term project, growing trees germinated from acorns collected from Joseph Beuys's seminal artwork "7000 Oaks". Currently they have 250 surviving saplings and to date the trees have been exhibited at Manchester's Centre for the Urban Built Environment (CUBE) and in 2009/10 at London's Royal Academy.

Ackroyd & Harvey have received two Royal Society of Arts "Art for Architecture" awards as well as the NESTA Pioneer award, Wellcome Sci-Art award and the L'Oreal Grand Prize for Art + Science of Colour for their work utilizing the light-sensitivity of the pigment chlorophyll in making complex living photographs in grass. They have exhibited this work worldwide including the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston; Hangar Bicocca, Milan; SESC Mostra des Artes, Sao Paulo; Andalusian Centre for Contemporary Art, Seville; Big Chill, Herefordshire (UK); Chicago Public Art Program (USA); Agitate SF Camerawork, San Francisco (USA); V&A Museum, London.

Ackroyd & Harvey give many lectures and presentations including the 'Nobel Laureate Symposium' on Creativity, Leadership and Climate Change at London's Science Museum; Trinity College, Cambridge; Smith's School, Oxford; the Royal Academy of Arts, London; London School of Economics, UK; The Royal Society, London; Royal Institute of British Architects, London; Tate Britain, London; Royal National Theatre, London; Manchester International Festival, UK; Oxford University; Courtauld Institute, London; Harvard University, USA; San Francisco Institute of Arts, USA; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.

Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey live and work in Dorking.

<http://www.ackroydandharvey.com/>

### **Location of trees:**

The three Games-time sites will be:

- Southern Access Approach: *Tilia tomentosa* (Silver Lime) will be planted at the south of the site close to where the Greenway crosses the Waterworks River. Around 20 per cent of spectators will walk this route on entry to the Olympic Park.
- Eton Manor Approach: *Quercus rubra* (Red Oak) will be located between two bridges on the Eton Manor site.
- Western Access Approach (Greenway): *Fraxinus excelsior* (Common Ash) has been chosen to take root in the south-western corner of the Park – an area of protected wildlife habitat. During Games-time it will form the western entrance point, primarily for local residents and cyclists.

The seven legacy sites will be:

- Monier Road Approach: *Catalpa bignonioides* (Indian Bean) will be sited at an approach that will form a key entry route into the Park after the Games from the south-west, particularly for residents of Tower Hamlets.
- Olympic Village Approach: *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood) will mark the entrance for athletes arriving at the Olympic Park from the Village.
- Stratford City Approach: *Quercus robur* (English Oak) will be located to southeast of the Park, forming the main entrance/exit point. It is expected that around 68 per cent of spectators will arrive and depart through this route. This location will also see the physical shadow of the tenth (bronze) ring inlaid into the ground.
- Waterden Road Approach: *Liquidambar styraciflua* (Sweet Gum) has been selected for an area accessed off the Lea Interchange and Temple Mills Cut, along the western edge of the Olympic Park.
- Carpenters Road Underpass Approach: *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropunicea' (Copper Beech) will be planted at the south-eastern edge of the site. The area, which lies below the Great Eastern Main Line railway, will form an important entrance into Park in both Games and legacy.
- Temple Mills Approach: *Quercus palustris* (Pin Oak) has been chosen for the northeast of the Olympic Village, Temple Mill Lane and a bridge. This will form a main connection over the railway from Leyton into the site.
- Hackney Wick Approach: *Corylus colurna* (Turkish Hazel) will be planted at a plot close to which the ODA will be delivering a bridge link over the River Lea into the Park. (This tree is subject to a different planning application because of the location being outside of the Olympic Park).

- The trees have been prepared for transplantation over their entire growing life and hence have a dense and fibrous healthy root system. Attentive nurturing of the trees particularly in the first two years is instrumental to the trees surviving in the long-term.
- The attaching of metal rings to the trees causes no harm to the tree. Trees respond to impact damage by growing new tissue in a new place, covering over the point of contact. The tree chemically and anatomically forms new barriers and strengthens old barriers that protect its structural, transport and storage systems, and resist infection.
- Bronze and stainless steel were selected for the rings because of their qualities. Bronze has an enduring sculptural legacy, an organic quality and ages and weathers well. The bronze rings will be patinated, and the stainless steel rings will 'shot-peened', which gives it an enduring and robust finish.
- The artists were advised by Expedition Engineering on the engineering and support structures for the rings.
- The Museum of London has assisted the artists with the archaeological research and history of the site prior to the development, while the source of material for the tenth (bronze) ring has been informed through artist Lucy Harrison's recordings with local residents.

**Quotes:**

**Ackroyd and Harvey said:** *"Trees mark the passing of time through their yearly ring growth. The artwork will transform as the seasons change, reflecting the evolving nature of the Olympic Park. The trees embrace metal rings which have been engraved with a record of the site's history, held in branches for successive decades to come."*

**ODA Chairman John Armitt:** *"The Olympic Park has been built with sustainability at the heart of its design. These ten trees will become a strong symbol of the Games and reinforce a commitment to the creation of Britain's largest urban park for over a century. They will act as fantastic meeting points for both spectators next summer and visitors for generations to come."*

**Moira Sinclair, London Executive Director of Arts Council England, said:** *"The Olympic Park will be one of the largest urban parks created in Europe for many years. We believe that arts and culture play a really important role in helping to create a sense of place, and we are thrilled to be part of the team working hard to put the arts into the very fabric of the area. This art work in the trees is, in every sense, rooted in the locality and, we hope, will bring joy and delight during and after the Games, as well as for future generations to come."*

**Andrew Altman, Chief Executive of the Olympic Park Legacy Company, said:** *"This major public art commission will be enjoyed for generations to come as the trees and rings become one and grow in parallel with the development of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park"*.

For further information please contact the Olympic Delivery Authority Press Office on +44 (0)203 2012 700 or visit the website at [www.london2012.com](http://www.london2012.com).