

design for FREEDOM<sup>by</sup> grace farms

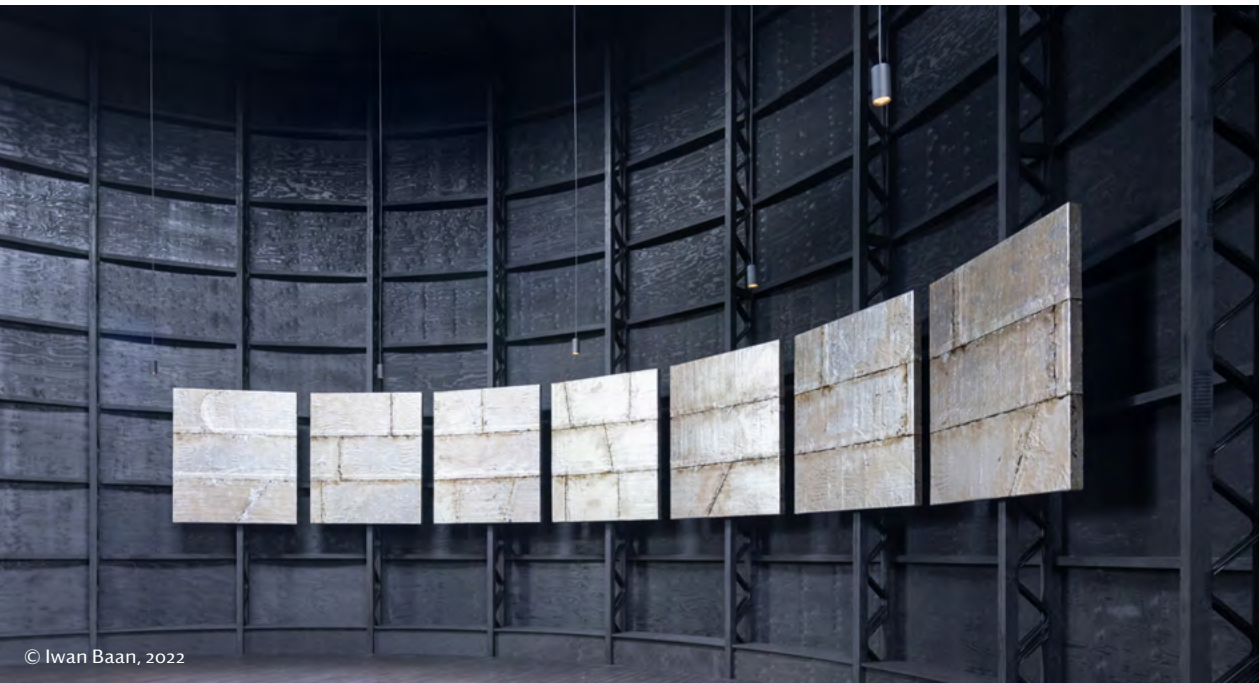


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Design for Freedom Pilot Projects model more transparent and ethical supply chains in built works.

# pilot project case study

21st Serpentine Pavilion  
*Black Chapel* by Theaster Gates  
London, U.K.  
June - October 2022



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*Seven Songs for  
Black Chapel,  
tar paintings by  
Theaster Gates*

## The 21st Serpentine Pavilion, *Black Chapel*, is the first international Design for Freedom Pilot Project.

### Pilot Project Program

Grace Farms developed the Design for Freedom Pilot Project Program to model more transparent and ethical supply chains. These projects engage project teams, yield new research and partnerships, and uncover challenges and opportunities of how to build more humanely.

### 21st Serpentine Pavilion *Black Chapel*

Each year, Serpentine commissions an artist or architect to design and build a temporary Pavilion. *Black Chapel* is the 21st Serpentine Pavilion, designed by Chicago-based artist Theaster Gates. Grace Farms was the Responsible Materials Advisor on the Pavilion, marking the first international Design for Freedom Pilot Project.

*Black Chapel* was designed to be fully demountable, minimize its carbon footprint and environmental impact, and focus on sustainably and ethically sourced materials and the reusability of the structure.

### Serpentine Pavilion Program

Conceived as a space for gathering, meditation and participation, with an emphasis on sacred music, *Black Chapel* became a platform for Serpentine's live program throughout the summer and beyond.

Hanging from the walls within the tall circular Pavilion were a series of seven paintings made from tar specifically for the space by Theaster Gates. A cafe provided refreshments to visitors including ethically and sustainably sourced Grace Farms Tea, which gives back 100% of profits to support Design for Freedom.

### The Materials Examined

As Responsible Materials Advisor, Grace Farms worked with AECOM and the Pavilion project team to trace plywood and timber, steel, concrete, and the weatherproofing membrane. There were more than 16 suppliers and manufacturers in the supply chain of the traced products.



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Ethical Action Meeting  
held at the Serpentine  
South Gallery on  
September 29, 2022

## Pilot Project Process

The Pilot Project team, including Grace Farms and AECOM, engaged with suppliers and manufacturers to trace the identified materials as far upstream in the supply chain as possible.

The project was on a tight timeline of only six months for material selection, construction, installation, and completion. The team worked at an expedited pace to meet the needs of the ethical sourcing requirements and respond to Europe's rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape. The project team was able to determine material sourcing as far back as Tier 4 suppliers, thereby creating transparency and sourcing products that reduced the risk of forced and child labor in the construction of the Pavilion.

Central to the building's design and sustainability goals, the predominantly timber structure was light-weight, low carbon, and fully demountable. The procurement of timber became a motivating priority for the Design for Freedom team and a lesson in understanding material sourcing as it relates to conflict zones.

With the invasion of Ukraine only four months prior to the June 2022 opening of *Black Chapel*, the team made a decision not to finance Russia's invasion of Ukraine through material procurement. Russia is one of the world's largest timber exporters, containing more than 20% of the world's forested

areas and the European Union's fifth largest trading partner in 2021.<sup>1</sup> Although global sanctions were not officially in effect until July 2022, the procurement team was eager to illuminate existing research to align with the evolving geopolitical landscape.

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Many architecture and construction organizations boycotted or withdrew from active projects in Russia, but few were aware of the implication of the material supply chain on projects outside of the conflict zone. Russia had already been identified as a high-risk timber location by the Design for Freedom team through their research for the *Design for Freedom Report*.

In response to the invasion of Ukraine, The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) produced a statement on March 4, 2022 that the FSC International Board of Directors suspended all trading certificates in Russia and Belarus and blocked all controlled wood from the two countries, in addition to all timber originating from occupied Ukrainian territory. The identified timber from Belarus, Russia and occupied Ukraine was not used in any PEFC or FSC-certified products because it was considered conflict timber.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acosta, Carmen. (2023 June 30.) "[How Russia's timber trade is sidestepping the EU's Ukraine war sanctions.](#)" International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

<sup>2</sup> [FSC's position on Russia's war on Ukraine.](#) Last Updated August 2023.



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Timber is a leading natural resource that is exchanged in conflict zones around the world

### Understanding Conflict Timber

The United Nations Environment Programme defines ‘conflict timber’ as, “timber that has been traded at some point in the chain of custody by armed groups, be they rebel factions or regular soldiers, or by a civilian administration involved in armed conflict or its representatives, either to perpetuate conflict or take advantage of conflict situations for personal gain. Conflict timber is not necessarily illegal.”

Environmental factors are not usually the cause of violent conflict; yet, the exploitation of natural resources and related environmental stresses can become significant drivers of violence. Conflict materials are often described as precious minerals or metals such as tin, tantalum, tungsten, diamonds or gold; however, timber is another leading natural resource exchanged in conflict zones around the world.

Widespread certifications such as FSC that require both ethical and sustainable compliance elevate industry standards for suppliers in compliance. Having released a new set of Core Labor Requirements on September 1, 2021, FSC is a leader in certifying ethical and sustainable harvesting and forest practices, clearing the path towards ethical decarbonization. The Design for Freedom Pilot Project process ultimately led to the procurement of FSC certified timber from Sweden and plywood from Finland.

### Modern Slavery Act of 2015

As the first Responsible Materials Advisor in the history of the Serpentine Pavilion, Design for Freedom was able to illuminate ethical building material supply chains to the program’s distinguished global stage.

In 2015, the U.K. Parliament enacted The Transparency in Supply Chain Provision to combat modern slavery and consolidate previous offenses relating to trafficking and modern slavery. The Modern Slavery Act requires businesses with a yearly profit of £36 million to publish an annual statement to acknowledge steps have been taken to ensure that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place in their business or supply chain.

*Black Chapel* was the first Design for Freedom Pilot Project in a country with such comprehensive legislation in place to address modern slavery. The level of awareness helped facilitate conversations when reaching out to suppliers, particularly those headquartered in Europe. In the U.K., the Modern Slavery Act set the precedent for similar European legislation including the Duty of Vigilance Law in France (2017), Transparency Act of Norway (2021), Germany Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (2021), and The European Union’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (2022).



© Harry Richards

The London Philharmonic Orchestra performing on the United Nations World Day Against Child Labor on June 12, 2022

## Galvanizing Change

### Pilot Project Outcomes

#### Activation of Space

The annual Serpentine Pavilion attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors every year to celebrate and experience the work of world-renowned architects. The opportunity for Design for Freedom to serve as Responsible Materials Advisor for *Black Chapel* brought visibility to this humanitarian crisis by educating the public through signage onsite about the role of modern slavery in the building materials supply chain.

#### Industry Engagement

*Black Chapel* provided opportunities to engage new stakeholders in the United Kingdom and expand the work of the Design for Freedom Working Group with several events throughout London. Two global engineering firms, Arup and Buro Happold, led pivotal meetings with Design for Freedom partners in their London offices with 100 and 60 attendees respectively.

The Design for Freedom Ethical Action Meeting was held at the Serpentine South Gallery on September 29, 2022 and brought together leaders to take the next step toward ethical materials procurement in building projects. Discussions focused on the process of tracking materials in the 21st Serpentine Pavilion, and sharing innovative strategies that reduce the risk of forced and child labor in the built environment.

#### World Day Against Child Labor

On June 12, 2022, in observation of the United Nations World Day Against Child Labor, Grace Farms hosted audiences to witness the power of the arts to surface the issue of forced labor and child labor and inspire action at *Black Chapel*. The day included a special performance by **The London Philharmonic Orchestra** and a discussion led by Grace Farms CEO and Founder Sharon Prince who addressed 125 leaders of the industry including **Dame Sara Thornton** DBE QPM, the United Kingdom’s former Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.



## Raising Awareness Internationally

*Black Chapel*, as the first international Design for Freedom Pilot Project, received major press coverage in publications and platforms around the world, including *Fast Company*, *Forbes.com*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, and *Architectural Record*. This coverage was instrumental in expanding the reach of the Pilot Project, beyond its physical location in London.

### Making The Commitment

"The name *Black Chapel* is important because it reflects the invisible parts of my artistic practice. It acknowledges the role that sacred music and the sacred arts have had on my practice, and the collective quality of these emotional and communal initiatives. *Black Chapel* also suggests that in these times there could be a space where one could rest from the pressures of the day and spend time in quietude. I have always wanted to build spaces that consider the power of sound and music as a healing mechanism and emotive force that allows people to enter a space of deep reflection and deep participation."

- Theaster Gates, artist, *Black Chapel*

### Serpentine

"As a built form and conceptual proposition, *Black Chapel* synthesises Theaster's long standing commitment to fusing the secular with the sacred. Guided by the artist's design and intentions, the program of live events brings together a remarkably eclectic array of vocalists and musicians. It steadfastly invites the public to take respite in the Pavilion's hallowed chamber and lose themselves in the reverberations of voice and instrumentals. In these challenging times, the offer of a moment of contemplation or awakening to be experienced individually or collectively is needed more than ever."

- Yesomi Umolu, Director of Curatorial Affairs and Public Practice, Serpentine Gallery



Hans Ulrich Obrist, Theaster Gates, Sharon Prince, and Bettina Korek

"We are so grateful for Theaster Gates' *Black Chapel*. The architecture, the remarkable paintings he specially created for the space as well as the polyphonic program of events it will catalyze, are astonishing. *Black Chapel* will bring spirituality around Gates' extraordinary vision. We are thrilled to present this stunning Pavilion with our loyal partners and supporters, for all of London's people and visitors to come together and enjoy."

- Bettina Korek, Chief Executive, and Hans Ulrich Obrist Artistic Director, Serpentine Gallery

"Today, we are able to expand our design team with forward thinking organizations such as Grace Farms who have enabled a higher level of understanding around sustainability and the impact of materials that we use, this can only benefit the design."

- Julie Burnell, Director of Construction, Serpentine Gallery

### Grace Farms Foundation

"It is an honor that Design for Freedom by Grace Farms is collaborating with Serpentine to assess ethical sourcing of the building materials for the 21st Serpentine Pavilion. This first completed international Design for Freedom Pilot Project is accelerating the growing movement to eliminate forced labor from the building materials supply chain. Grace Farms looks forward to enhancing this partnership through shared programming this year in the U.S. at Grace Farms and at Serpentine."

- Sharon Prince, CEO and Founder, Grace Farms Foundation



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Evening view of the 21st Serpentine Pavilion, *Black Chapel*

## Project Data

### Pilot Project Team

AECOM, Serpentine Galleries, and Grace Farms Foundation

**Project Size** 2163 SF / 201 SM

**Materials Examined** Plywood - benches, exterior cladding skin. Timber - truss columns, roof beams, internal walls, flooring, external cladding. Steel - roof and column joists, webs. Concrete - foundation. Waterproofing membrane.

**16+ Suppliers/Manufacturers** in the product supply chain

**Materials Sources** from (countries) United Kingdom, Finland, Sweden, United States, Ireland, and France

**Certification and Transparency** FSC, PEFC, EPDs, BM Trada, BES 6001 & 6002, ISO

### Suppliers provided the following documentation to meet Design for Freedom Principles

Responsible Sourcing & Timber Purchasing Policies, U.K. Modern Slavery Act Compliance, Slavery & Human Trafficking Statements, CSR & ESG Policies, Codes of Conduct, Human Rights Policies, Codes of Ethics



© Cristian Salazar

Grace Farms brings together people across sectors at the SANAA-designed River building and Barns, situated on 80 acres of publicly accessible, preserved natural landscapes

### Design for Freedom Pilot Projects

Design for Freedom by Grace Farms reimagines architecture by raising awareness and inspiring responses to disrupt forced labor in the building materials supply chain. Grace Farms developed the Design for Freedom Pilot Project Program to model more transparent and ethical supply chains. These projects engage project teams, yield new research and partnerships, and uncover challenges and opportunities of how to build more humanely. This process challenges each team to examine their supply chain for fair labor and galvanize change to create new outcomes for the industry.

### Learn More about Design for Freedom

Read the [Design for Freedom Report](#) to understand the scope of the problem and challenges facing the eradication of forced and child labor from the built environment. For material specific information, explore the [Design for Freedom Toolkit](#) to learn more about the 12 high-risk materials within the built environment and utilize tools to start tracing materials.

### About Grace Farms Foundation

Grace Farms is a center for collaboration and culture in New Canaan, Connecticut. Grace Farms bring together people across sectors to explore nature, arts, justice, community, and faith at the SANAA-designed River building and Barns, on 80 acres of publicly accessible natural landscapes. Grace Farms' humanitarian work to end modern slavery and foster more grace and peace in local and global communities includes leading the Design for Freedom movement to eliminate forced labor in the building materials supply chain.

For more information visit [gracefarms.org](https://gracefarms.org)