

## 2016 WOOD DESIGN AWARDS - WINNER

### Interior Beauty Design

Noel Best, Stantec Architecture Ltd., Vancouver, BC

Canada House, London, England



*“A superb job of showcasing various wood species throughout the design.”*

*- jury comments*

High resolution images available. Please e-mail [mmclaughlin@wood-works.ca](mailto:mmclaughlin@wood-works.ca)

Canada House, located on Trafalgar Square in central London, has been Canada’s diplomatic home in the United Kingdom since 1925. Expanding embassy functions and evolving technology over time resulted in an underperforming building that didn’t celebrate the best of Canada and could not accommodate all the required staff. It was time for a change.

The project vision was to renew the 200-year-old building and connect it to an adjacent building at 2-4 Cockspur St. Designing a bespoke, modern, evocative Canadian space while preserving and restoring a historic British building was a significant challenge. While Canada House had many historic features worth saving, the newly acquired 2-4 Cockspur St. building was essentially a blank slate. The challenge was to integrate the period interiors with new contemporary elements in a complementary manner that honours both styles.

Showcasing the versatility, beauty and sustainability of wood, one of Canada’s most significant resources, was an important element of the project. Wood is a natural unifying element featured in panelling, flooring and furniture. The public lobby at the 2-4 Cockspur St. entrance and the staff amenity spaces showcase Canadian hemlock and maple. Meeting and gathering spaces feature a variety of handcrafted wood

furniture made from pine beetle, birch, reclaimed solid white oak and walnut, and wood is used throughout for flooring and door materials.

The new cascading stair at 2-4 Cockspur St. is a defining feature. The project budget did not allow for a complete refinishing of the atrium space so the design team suggested cladding just the eastern wall, where the daylight falls, in hemlock siding with strong horizontal wood fins superimposed on the existing window wall. Simply repainting the three other façades allows them to fade as recessive elements within the space. The flights of the new stair inserted into the atrium, rather than stacking vertically, step horizontally as they rise through the atrium space so the daylight from above falls equally onto each flight below. The treads are finished in Canadian oak, while the soffits match the hemlock on the adjacent wall.

The restoration of Canada House represents one of the most significant building refurbishments on Trafalgar Square in the past decade. It is not only an investment in the city of London and in the larger idea of city building but, most importantly, it truly celebrates Canada and Canadians.