

**Dartmoor Art Week Treehouse, Devon, United Kingdom
Wednesday 22 Aug 2012**

A spruced-up treehouse



All images courtesy of Jerry Tate Architects



Jerry Tate Architects join in with Dartmoor Arts Week and help students construct a treehouse using trees on a local farm

Jerry Tate Architects have worked with carpenter Henry Russell and the students of this summer's Dartmoor Arts Week to design and construct a temporary treehouse structure as part of the 'Spatial Structures' course. The treehouse was completed in only five days in Devon, UK measuring 10 sq m with a 1.8m diameter 'pod' which provides a circular seating arrangement and an accessible walkway. The project cost only £600, and will stay on the site for two years.

The treehouse is designed to be a play-space for the grandchildren of the owners of a local farm. It had to be safe for kids to use and required a survey of the farm to identify the most suitable tree in terms of setting and structural capacity. The chosen tree was a mature oak tree with building materials sourced from locally felled spruce, larch, and western red cedar trees.

The majority of the treehouse's structural stability came from the shape and positioning of the structure itself. Only two mechanical fixtures were needed to support this, as well as the spruce which was made into glue-laminated ribs and woven in to the structure. This, alongside providing further structural features ensured there was enclosure and privacy inside the house.

Easy access to the high-level structure is given by the slope which the oak tree is sat atop of, providing beautiful views of the farm and the other projects previously undertaken by the Dartmoor Arts Week students, such as last year's practice, which saw a freestanding raised storytelling platform in an adjacent field constructed by the students. The accessibility of the project is its USP; projects featured on WAN such as the PEL-constructed treehouse restaurant were chided for their lack of wheelchair access and instructed to install a method by which the disabled could access the restaurant.

This is the second year that Jerry Tate Architects has been commissioned by the Dartmoor Arts Project to work alongside the students, and said: "The form was inspired by a weaver bird's nest which looks dramatic but is safe and secure. Nature is a sublime designer. We have just got planning permission for a very special country house that takes its form from a sycamore seed."

Dartmoor Arts Project is an artist-led organisation founded in 2006. The project hosts a summer school week, Dartmoor Arts Week, where artists can come and learn new skills, further their ideas and join in lively critical debate. Dartmoor Arts Week runs every July for one week and offers a wide range of courses taught by leading professional artists from around the world.

Samantha Morley
Editorial