

ALEX SKARSHELG

Author Portfolio — timber architecture, craft and cultural practice
independent timber architecture practitioner



AUTHOR PROFILE

Alex is an independent timber architecture practitioner with more than fifteen years of experience in Norwegian timber-building methods and the full-cycle delivery of bespoke timber houses. His work is rooted in craft-led construction, Norwegian log-building traditions, workshop-led fabrication, assembly logic, and a deep understanding of the long-term behaviour of timber.

Through his built practice he has developed a technical and authorial approach in which timber is treated not only as a building material, but as a structural, spatial and cultural language. He works with his own hands and his own head — from concept and joinery through fabrication to a finished, inhabited building.

Key professional background

- More than 15 years of full-cycle timber construction practice.
- Founder of an independent timber construction practice and carpentry school.
- More than 40 bespoke timber buildings designed and delivered, 30+ carrying his own structural detailing.
- A flagship timber house exceeding 700 m², project value above €2.5M.
- A carpentry school active since 2019, with 25+ participants trained in Norwegian log construction and Diamond Notch joinery.
- 243 documentary films of fabrication, assembly and completed works.

TRAINING AND CRAFT LINEAGE

Alex learned his craft in the Norwegian dry-laft log tradition, training under master log-builder Ottar Romtveit at Rauland, Norway (2013), and in the Stavlaft frame tradition. He cuts the corners of his log walls with a hand-forged axe made for him by master smith Øyvind Klausen (2013) — a tool and a method he has refined over more than a decade.

CURRENT DIRECTION

Alex is developing THE SAPIENS GARDEN as a long-term cultural and architectural practice oriented toward the United Kingdom, and plans to relocate to London in late autumn 2026. Its first public step is the Greenwich Weather Beacon, a 14-metre timber prototype. EVERHELG is proposed as the project's UK charitable vehicle (not yet established). A personal reforestation programme — the hand-planting of 170 pine trees — forms part of the ethical context of the practice, linking construction with ecological responsibility.

THE SAPIENS GARDEN — PROJECT SUMMARY

THE SAPIENS GARDEN is a cultural and architectural initiative bringing together timber architecture, landscape, living heritage, public culture, education and long-term stewardship. At its centre is a proposed 42-metre timber-frame lighthouse, conceived as the vertical axis of the project and a contemporary beacon of cultural memory. It is accompanied by a 77-tree Memory Garden, dedicated to figures whose work has shaped human culture, science and the arts. Together, lighthouse and garden form a living cultural landscape where architecture, ecology and intellectual heritage intersect.

The project is conceived as a phased ecosystem, beginning with prototype development (the Greenwich Weather Beacon) and extending toward public education, landscape stewardship, institutional and intergenerational continuity, and future architectural delivery.

THE GREENWICH WEATHER BEACON

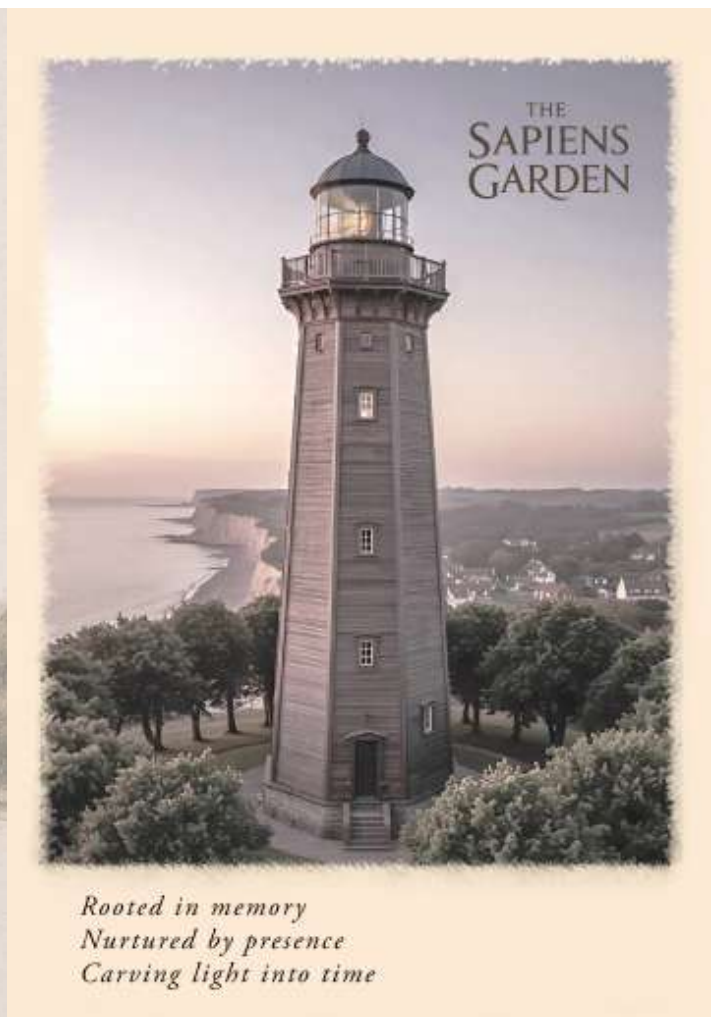
A 14-metre public timber lighthouse prototype — the first public step of THE SAPIENS GARDEN

The Greenwich Weather Beacon is conceived as a quiet public timber beacon in London: an architectural signal translating the weather of the city into light, music, image, text and cultural memory. A timber beacon on the Prime Meridian, translating the atmosphere of London into light, music, image, text and cultural memory.

The Beacon is the first public architectural embodiment of THE SAPIENS GARDEN — a cultural and architectural ecosystem structured around memory, living heritage, timber craft, landscape, education, public culture and contemplation. Physically, the structure remains a calm timber object. Culturally, it becomes a system that changes with weather, time of day and season — and with the voices of the city around it.



The Greenwich Weather Beacon
14-metre prototype — concept drawing



The Sapiens Garden
The timber lighthouse — conceptual visualisation

Why Greenwich

Greenwich is proposed as the primary working site hypothesis for the first public British prototype because it already contains the essential vocabulary of the project: world time, the Prime Meridian, the Royal Observatory, navigation, maritime history, weather, measurement, astronomy and London's public landscape.

Greenwich Park remains a working site hypothesis. The formal route is being prepared through the appropriate channels with The Royal Parks, and the exact location would be determined through a full professional review of heritage, planning, landscape, access and public safety.

The 14-Metre Timber Beacon

The first public prototype is conceived as a 14-metre timber beacon: a temporary, reversible and demountable public structure, entirely handmade — an octagonal timber frame with visible construction logic, in larch, oak and pine from responsible sources; a circular plinth and terrace; a softly illuminated lantern; engraved timber elements carrying short cultural texts; a calm, low-impact public presence at the base.

Its architectural character is calm, crafted, legible and materially sincere.

WEATHER AS CULTURE

city → atmosphere → data → lantern light → cultural interface → music → image → text → memory → public participation

Weather becomes a way of sensing the city. Rain, fog, wind, snow, clear sky and sunset are treated as cultural conditions: climate and weather become visible, audible, readable and culturally tangible through architecture. A person approaches the Beacon during rain: they see a rain-based light mode, open the application, hear music, read a poem, see a drawing. In fog, another state unfolds: milky light, slow sound, Turner, Dickens, Thames recordings.

The Seven Atmospheric Modes

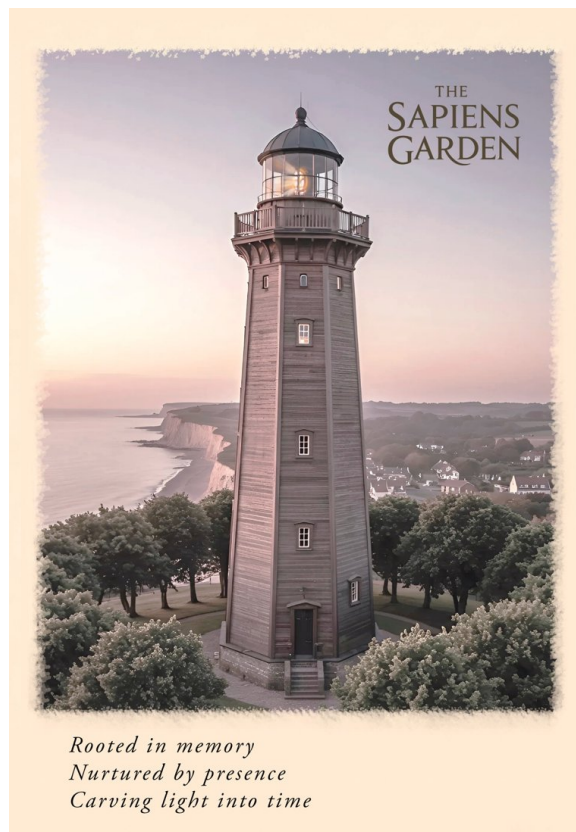
- **Clear sky** — white light; clarity, morning calm, still air. Bach, Satie, Constable, Monet, Woolf.
- **Fog** — milky light; diffusion and quiet. Debussy, Pärt, Turner, Whistler, Dickens; Thames recordings.
- **Rain** — grey light; melancholy and reflection. Chopin, Richter, Hopper; rainy London photography.
- **Wind and cloud** — orange light; squall, downpour, thunderstorm. Britten, Glass; seascapes and field recordings.
- **Storm** — deep blue light; force and resilience. Rachmaninoff, Britten, Turner's storms.
- **Sunset and sunrise** — soft orange-pink light; transition. Sibelius, Arnolds, Turner's sunsets.
- **Snow** — silver light; stillness and fragility. Pärt, Jóhannsson, Friedrich; silent sound works.

THE LIVING ARCHIVE: HISTORICAL AND COMMUNITY LAYERS

The Beacon connects inherited memory and living memory. The historical layer draws on figures connected with philosophy, science, architecture, literature, music, art and contemplation — from Socrates and Marcus Aurelius to Newton, Faraday, Rosalind Franklin and Turing; from Shakespeare, Blake, Woolf and Eliot to William Morris, John Soane, Bach and Britten.

The contemporary layer belongs to the city's own people. Artists, poets, composers, illustrators, photographers, sound artists, students, schools and community groups create works connected with the weather, atmosphere and memory of their city. Each work appears in the application according to the live weather. Every work carries clear authorship, rights status and permission for public use.

Historical figures give depth. Local artists give life. Weather gives rhythm. Architecture gives body. The application gives access. Community gives renewal.



The Sapiens Garden — the timber lighthouse (conceptual visualisation)

THE SAPIENS LAB: COMMUNITY, EDUCATION AND STEWARDSHIP

The Sapiens Lab is the cultural operating base behind each beacon: a craft-and-cultural laboratory in the city, where timber, drawing, sound, word and public culture meet in one welcoming space. The beacon stands in the city and gives its signal; the Lab gathers the people, the making and the care that keep it alive.

The Lab gathers a local community — artists, musicians, poets, craftspeople, students, schools, curators, volunteers, residents and cultural organisations. It runs education and workshops: timber craft, woodworking, architectural model-making, calligraphy, drawing, poetry, field recording, chamber music sessions, sound-and-weather workshops, school visits, and talks on time, navigation, landscape and cultural memory. It curates fairly — open calls, a local jury, clear rights, credit and care.

The first will be the Sapiens Lab London, working with the Greenwich Weather Beacon — the place where prototype development, creative residency, craft education and public cultural programming converge.

Beacon in Greenwich → atmosphere → attention → participation → community → cultural production → living archive → public memory

A UK BEACON NETWORK: CITY-SPECIFIC CULTURAL SCORES

After the London prototype has been tested, the project may develop as a network of cultural weather beacons in selected cities across the United Kingdom — place-specific cultural infrastructure, where each Beacon responds to the cultural, climatic, historical and architectural memory of its own city.

— **London / Greenwich** — time, the Prime Meridian, the Royal Observatory, the Thames, fog, navigation and world measurement.

— **Edinburgh** — stone, literature, philosophy, northern skies, festival culture, hill landscape and winter atmosphere.

— **Manchester** — rain, industry, music, civic energy, innovation, brick, canals and sound culture.

— **Liverpool** — maritime memory, migration, river horizon, port culture, music and public voice.

— **Bristol** — harbour, engineering, craft, bridges, environmental culture and creative city identity.

— **Oxford** — learning, libraries, scholarship, river mist, historic urban atmosphere and quiet thought.

— **Cambridge** — science, mathematics, river landscape, colleges, observation, stillness and knowledge.

Later candidates may include Bath and York. Each Beacon becomes a local cultural instrument; each Sapiens Lab becomes the living community structure around it; each application a city-specific archive of weather, memory, sound, image and public participation.

THE 42-METRE SAPIENS LIGHTHOUSE: THE LONG-TERM LANDMARK

The Sapiens Lighthouse is the long-term landmark horizon that the 14-metre prototype is intended to test. Its preliminary architectural logic: a vertical timber lighthouse of approximately 42 metres; octagonal geometry tapering from 9 m base to 7 m summit; oak as a possible primary structural and symbolic timber, with larch cladding; seven thematic levels — Foundations, Science, Form, Presence, Words, Sound, and the Dome of Light and Horizon — rising to the lantern. Seven named timber species: oak, beech, rowan, maple, linden, apple and hornbeam.

Around the Lighthouse grows the Garden of Memory: seventy-seven trees in three rings (12 + 44 + 21), each carrying the name of a philosopher, poet, scientist, composer or artist whose work shaped the path of human thought. The long-term landscape hypothesis is Beacon Hill, West Runton, on the North Norfolk coast. The 14-metre Greenwich Beacon is the responsible first step.

THE SAPIENS DISPATCH: CRAFT AS CORRESPONDENCE

Before any building, the project entered the world through material. The Sapiens Dispatch is a series of seven handcrafted dispatches — handmade, deckle-edged paper, hand-calligraphed letters with illuminated initials, wax monogram seals, embroidered silk bands, and a trace of pine oil released as the box is opened — each composed as an architectural act at the scale of the hand. Meaning is carried by material, and craft is practised as a form of address.

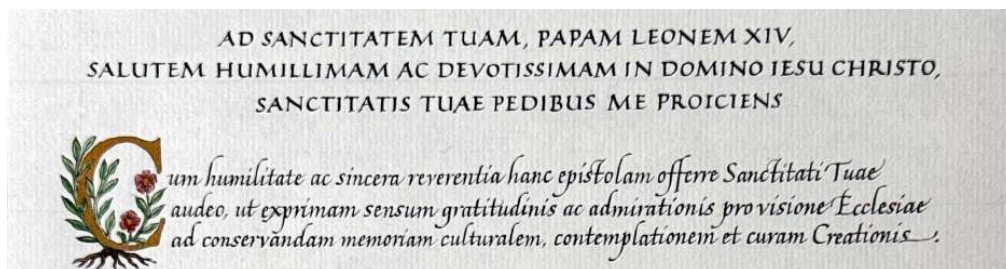
In December 2025 and January 2026, the seven dispatches were delivered by tracked, signed-for courier to institutions in the United Kingdom and France, among them the Royal Household, the Holy See, UNESCO and leading European cultural foundations.



The full authored dispatch set
Seven designed objects, December 2025



Addressed envelopes on an embroidered silk band
The dispatch as a crafted object



Hand-written Latin address to the Holy See — calligraphy and illuminated initial on hand-made, deckle-edged paper

Institutional Correspondence

UNESCO. The project received a formal response from the Secretariat of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Ms Fumiko Ohinata, Ref CLT/LHE/26/277), recognising the "dedication and far-reaching efforts demonstrated through this initiative" and noting that its vision "closely aligns with that of the 2003 Convention", particularly in relation to living heritage, sustainability and the surrounding environment. This is a commendation of alignment only.

BUILT TIMBER PRACTICE

The built practice is based on Norwegian dry-laft log construction and related timber-building methods, with a focus on bespoke houses, large-section timber, structural joinery, controlled fabrication of joints, and full-cycle delivery. It combines Scandinavian craftsmanship with a process in which architectural intent, material behaviour, structural logic, fabrication and construction are held within a single chain of responsibility through to turnkey completion.

Technical signature

- Norwegian Diamond Notch / diamond-laft joinery.
- Kiln-dried structural timber preparation and in-house drying.
- Custom templates, jigs and tooling; precision hand-fitted joints.
- Settlement-compensation systems and winter assembly methods.
- A production base exceeding 1,000 m².

VISUAL PORTFOLIO

BUILT TIMBER HOUSES



Scandinavian timber-frame house — evening exterior

Exterior architectural language and material presence of the built work.



Completed timber house — winter exterior

Large-scale timber construction, proportion and façade articulation.



Assembled exterior corner of the log structure

Assembly logic, joint precision and structural character of the wall system.



From visualisation to construction

The completed timber log structure assembled on its foundation.

FLAGSHIP AND STRUCTURE



Flagship timber house, 700+ m²

Bespoke house built from kiln-dried timber beams of 250×350 mm.



Multi-level engineered roof structure

Complex multi-level roofing; ridge exceeding 9 metres, ~800 m² roof area.

INTERIORS — LIGHT AND ATMOSPHERE



Living space with 6-metre ceilings

Generous timber interior with exposed structural rhythm and panoramic glazing.



Evening interior

Timber atmosphere, spatial warmth and material continuity.



Timber roof structure with exposed purlins
Exposed purlins, timber lining and integration of structure and space.



Handcrafted kitchen with island and integrated sink
Craft-led joinery and timber finishing within a completed home.

JOINERY AND CRAFT



Hand-forged axe for Diamond Notch joinery
Specialised hand-forged axe used to cut Diamond Notch joints in log construction.



Assembled log corner — joint precision
Corner detail showing the assembly logic and structural character.



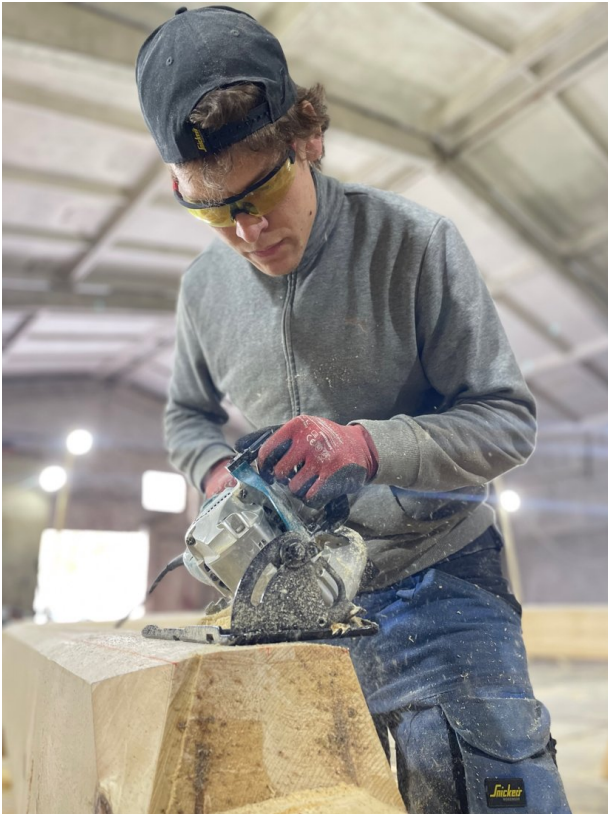
Author at work — preparing structural timber

Hand preparation of structural elements for a stavlaft house.

Crafting a structural timber element

Process image of the hand preparation of a structural log element.

EDUCATION AND VISION



Timber craft training programme, active since 2019

Two-day masterclasses in Norwegian timber construction at an in-house facility.



Hand-tool training with kiln-dried timber

Participants work premium kiln-dried timber with traditional hand tools and axes.

PROJECT ROADMAP

2026	Greenwich Weather Beacon concept development. UK architecture partnerships. Public presentation. Relocation to London.
2027–2028	Beacon prototype design and planning. Sapiens Lab London establishment. First community programme.
2029–2030	Greenwich Weather Beacon construction and installation. Pilot public cultural programme. Living archive launch.
2031–2034	UK Beacon Network development. First city-specific beacons. Sapiens Labs in multiple UK cities.
2050+	The 42-metre Sapiens Lighthouse and Garden of Memory — the long-term landmark horizon.

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