

VUE

NEW JERSEY

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INSIDE VUE
HEADQUARTERS

DESIGNING A
WATERFRONT FARMHOUSE



ART
YOU
CAN
USE

BY GORDON WILSON



In an age when convenience outshines craftsmanship and artistry slips further from our daily lives, one man in High Point, North Carolina steers against the tide of change. For the past six years, Jeremy Kamiya has been making art that is minimalist, functional, and made entirely of wood. It's furniture that Kamiya has been making since 2015 and he's making it as art.



It began in December of 2014 when Kamiya and his wife started a new venture together selling furniture. The pieces were imported by the couple from Bali, Indonesia where her family resides. They filled as many unique pieces as would fit inside a 40-foot storage container and sent it back to North Carolina where, in the town of Durham, the couple rented a showroom space from Kamiya's father. There was a lot of interest from potential customers, but the furniture wasn't moving. "It was not tremendously successful," says Kamiya, "otherwise I'd probably still be in the importing business."

On the retail floor of his showroom, his customers liked the furniture but there was an element that was missing. "People would love the stuff and ask me if I made it," Kamiya remembers, "and after a while I got tired of saying no, that I don't make it." In his showroom surrounded by the unsold furniture, Kamiya's disappointment was soon replaced with curiosity. "I wondered if I could take this table apart and make something different," he says, "So I bought a few small tools and that's when I learned." With some private study online, Kamiya acquired the basics of safety and in late December of 2015 he says he, "went for it." By Christmas he had finished piece number one, an attractive live-edge side table he presented as a gift to his wife.



“I’m more of an artist than a salesman,” Kamiya says, candidly. From then on, he used the space below the showroom as a workshop, toiling away in the slow times and developing his craft. “If a customer came in,” he said, “the door would ding and I’d go upstairs.” Gradually he sold off the remaining inventory from Bali.

It’s with an artist’s intent and focus that he conceptualizes his pieces, and it’s as art that he sells them. “I need it to be seen as art and valued as art,” says Kamiya, “it’s hard because furniture is so utilitarian, it’s often difficult to portray.” He began his journey in furniture-making with an ethos to which he continually returns. There are three simple rules for him: no nails, no screws, no stains. “I take a purist approach to what I do”, he says, “I feel it makes it special.” It’s his intention that the absence of these three key items will set his work apart in the marketplace.

“I wanted to have a chance to be known for that,” Kamiya says, “if I get that chance that would be great, mission accomplished.”

As for inspiration, Kamiya says he owes much to oriental minimalism and Danish mid-century furniture, the crux of which is a style that is simple, clean, and uncluttered. “I like the proportions,” he says of mid-century furniture, “not too complicated, not too ornate, just good solid form.” The influences are immediately noticeable in his works that employ a minimalist structure, handsome inlays, and simple brass fixtures. “I like focusing on form,” he says, “it needs to have good form and be something I’ve never seen.” Beyond classical influences though, Kamiya employs elements of creativity and exploration in his pieces. The enjoyment he garners through their manifestation is often revealed in the final work as suspended drawers, removable brass pegs and wedges, or capricious storage areas. Their functionality and use of space is a joy to discover.

Kamiya treats his pieces with a plant-based oil that is durable, non-toxic, and sustainable. He then finishes with an acid-free wax



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developed by the British Museum, called “Renaissance Wax”. On his website he notes that this simple, sustainable approach makes his pieces easy to maintain and care for.

Kamiya first showed pieces in his first showroom in Durham and later at Mill Collective in High Point, North Carolina. Having his work at Mill Collective was an experience that he appreciated for the community it connected him with. “It allowed me to reach out to the real deal furniture makers that have been in it for a while,” he says. He now resides in High Point and splits his time between building his independent collection and making commissioned pieces for clients. He produces about a dozen unique pieces a year, preferring to work on them one at a time. At the time of writing, he is working on piece number 58 of his collection. His work can be seen on his website:

www.kamiyafurniture.com