



INTO THE WOOD

WHAT'S OLD IS SEEMINGLY NEW AGAIN WHEN BROOKLYN-BASED DESIGNERS TRANSFORM RAW MATERIALS INTO AVANT-GARDE STAPLES IDEAL FOR ANY LIVING SPACE.

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Every piece of Uhuru Design's furniture has a story to tell. The decade-old Brooklyn design firm has a knack for infusing its creations with a sense of innate familiarity by repurposing wood and creating avant-garde furniture for a new generation. For their acclaimed Coney Island line, co-founders Bill Hilgendorf and Jason Horvath use 70-year-old reclaimed boardwalk panels to create their designs. "Coney Island has such a rich history, so we felt like we just had to do something with it," says Horvath. It doesn't take long to recognize that the iconic Cyclone roller coaster—with its undulating curves and interweaving geometric stilts—is the inspiration behind Uhuru's Cyclone lounge. A budding icon in its own right, the piece is now part of the permanent collection in the Renwick Gallery at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C.

Several years ago, the duo partnered with Daniel Husserl to elevate the company's ethos. "I'm motivated by the idea that what we do helps people reconnect with nature," says Husserl, now Uhuru's COO and resident sustainability expert. "A giant slab of wood or an antique pine coffee table is a constant reminder that the natural world is out there." In addition to crafting a new line of concrete-casted outdoor furniture and a soon-to-be-launched bois-chic jewelry line, the team have also commissioned such prestigious projects as the interior redesign of the Vice offices in trendy Williamsburg and the dining space of the Michelin-star Saul restaurant at the Brooklyn Museum. "They wanted the space to be warm and cozy, but also clean and modern because it's inside of a museum," says Hilgendorf.

Despite their eclectic and ever-changing client roster, the company continues to exude the type of organic beauty that blends the past with the present—literally fusing aged wood with modern polished metals. "Working with natural wood is a very methodical and meditative process," says Hilgendorf. "Once you cut or shape it, there is no going back." And whereas woodwork is subtractive, metalwork excels in its immediacy. "This ability to join materials in the most elemental way drives ideas," adds Horvath. "It's art with electricity." ■



Uhuru Design's Essentials collection, top, is meant to be effortlessly mixed and matched. The War Craft coffee table, left, was inspired by camouflage that was used on battleships to confuse enemy war ships. The Stitched Table, opposite, uses locally mined and sustainably harvested slab wood to create a truly one-of-a-kind piece.

ESSENTIALS COLLECTION AND WAR CRAFT IMAGES: COURTESY UHURU.



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