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HAWAII'S SUSTAINABLE LIVING MAGAZINE

DECONSTRUCT

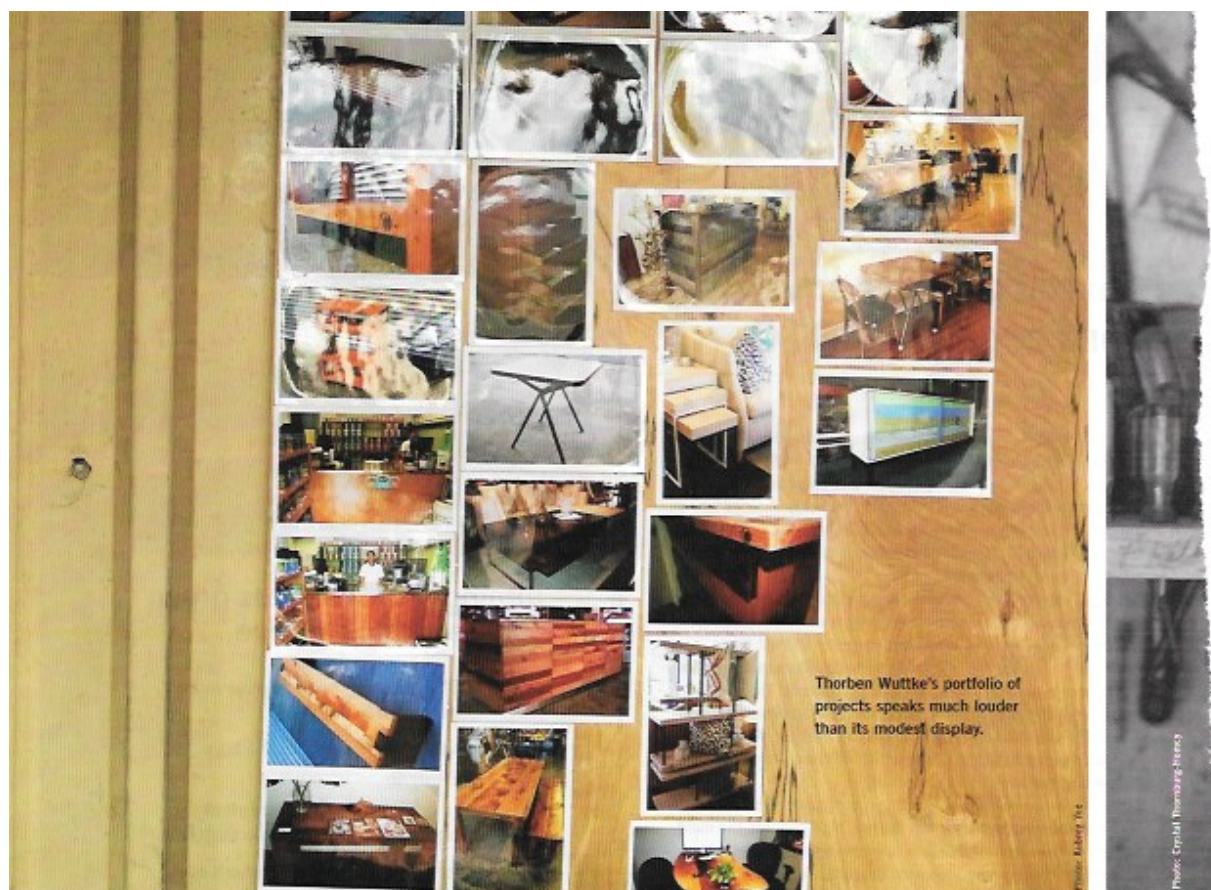
Tearing down the demolition paradigm

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FOOD SECURITY
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With The Grain

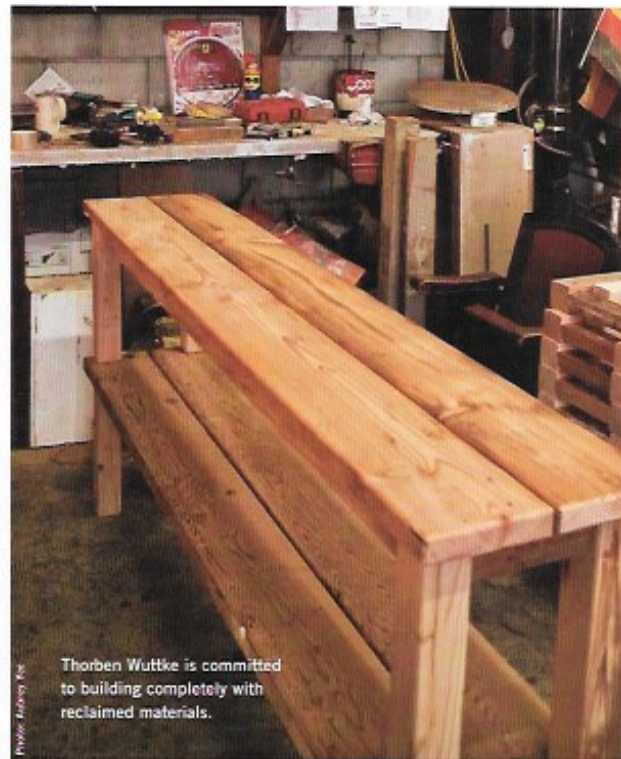
Creating art and furniture with reclaimed lumber

Every piece of wood carries a unique history of the tree that it once was, a fingerprint of its immediate environment. Within its rings, built over stretches of time, there is evidence of the lean years and the good years, telling a story of a slow and beautiful growth. When a tree stands tall, it provides shade, sustenance and habitat for countless birds and insects. After it is felled, the lumber serves many another purposes, yet each piece of wood from its trunk is not just a valuable resource, but also testament to a living history.

For those who work with reclaimed woods there is an inherent admiration for the material itself, a deep respect for this slow growing, strong and beautiful building material. With wood we have built whole societies, elaborate structures and constructed everything from furniture to musical instruments to writing implements,

all of which communicate thoughts and feelings. Wood is a medium that endures with age. Over time the fibers tighten and become stronger while the grain develops depth and a beautiful patina sets in. Many artisans share a profound reverence for the wood that they work with, a sense that the wood holds within it a story waiting to be told and that their job is to allow this story to unfold through the pieces they create.

Thorben Wuttke, of Forward Thinking Furniture, came to Hawai'i from Germany in 2003 on vacation. Like so many others who have been bitten by the Hawaiian beach bug, he found himself enchanted and decided to relocate for good. Moving first to the Big Island, he relocated to O'ahu in 2009 and began working for Re Use Hawai'i, a non-profit that deconstructs houses and sells salvaged wood and other building materials and appli-



Thorben Wuttke is committed to building completely with reclaimed materials.

ances. Being in that environment inspired him to start working with reclaimed lumber and he hasn't looked back.

Having been in business just under one year, he's already been commissioned for commercial projects at Starbucks, Macy's Pineapple Room and a variety of custom residential projects. Thorben's Kalihi warehouse is filled with carefully organized stacks of reclaimed woods that he has collected, including several thick, old pieces of pine that he is particularly fond of, holding a beauty that only comes with age. Committed to being as eco-friendly as possible, Thorben uses non-toxic stains and finishes whenever he can.

Using reclaimed woods and repurposed materials, Wuttke turned the second floor of his warehouse into a multipurpose loft, a home and office in one sustain-



To minimize his footprint, Forward Thinking Furniture is Wuttke's workshop, office and home.



Framing is an art form in itself, and Jen Homcy has mastered the craft of pairing reclaimed and salvaged wood to specific images to enrich the story of each.

Photo: Crystal Peasapapada



Photos: Jen Homcy

top left: Salvaged curly maple frame.

bottom left: Big Island koa mill scrap frame.

above: This poplar wood frame was once trim lumber from a construction site that was thrown away due to its discoloration.



James Sutherland gives texture and style to his work by utilizing some of the original paints and finishes on the reclaimed wood.



Adirondack chair, Sutherland style.

able package. Every bit the repurpose master, he is on a forward-thinking mission. "We all need to re-think if we want to get back into a balance with our very own nature and allow the survival of mankind on this planet." He believes that this conscious choice can come to life with the furniture we select for our homes.

For Jennifer Homcy, each piece of wood has a soul made in a piece of art. Her job is to be the matchmaker, constructing meaningful frames for specific works of art. She finds her wood in many different ways, sometimes feeling like she, "was meant to repurpose it, because it has been rejected by others."

Growing up she was taught by her father not to waste, a seed that planted deep within Homcy. Seeing the intrinsic value in the history of the wood and the story it has to tell, she calls her design inspiration "Art-centric," meaning that each frame is crafted specific to the shapes, colors, lines, textures, curves and the flow of the artwork itself. For this reason, she may hold on to a piece of wood for extended periods of time, until the right artwork arrives to partner with it.

Often using the natural, organic edge of the wood, she tries to show that the wood actually came from a living tree, creating space for the connection of the inert material to the vibrant and complex life it once had. Each piece she creates is understandably unique, the inspiration wrought from a visual cue in the artwork she is framing. "Sometimes when I see a piece of art I instantly see the wood, which happened most recently with a Jim Russi piece," Homcy joyfully explains. "He

opened the art and I ran to my closet and came out with the most perfectly matched color, grain and textured piece."

Living in Kahuku as a retired fireman, James Sutherland found time in his later life to return to his childhood love, woodworking. Growing up in a DIY family, buying wood at the hardware store was always considered a last resort. Instead, they would scavenge and salvage wood wherever they could and make what they needed for their home.

In the 1990s he started building Adirondack chairs, a classic lanai chair made popular on the porches of places like Martha's Vineyard. Taking the wood he finds in places as varied as demolition sites, dumpsters and Craigslist, he carefully uncovers the original beauty of the wood, often leaving bits of the original paint or stain for accent color, a trademark of his chairs and ottomans.

"Woodworking is slowly teaching me patience," says Sutherland. "Wood is beautiful. When you strip the paint off an old piece or plane the grubby rough-sawn surface off to reveal the grain beneath, it's like opening a present every time." — Aubrey Yee

forwardthinkingfurniture.com (Thorben Wuttke)
808.375.7460 (Jennifer Homcy)
pacific-home.com (James Sutherland)

5 THINGS WE LOVE

5 Things We Love is a shortlist of newly discovered stuff you have got to see, hear, wear, use or eat. What are you loving this week? Send a brief description of your latest favorite thing, where to find it and how much it costs, along with your name and contact info to features@staradvertiser.com.

Mother's Day

3 enjoy a gentle movie

If you're like me, you can thank Mom for your taste in movies. In our case, that would be musicals, black-and-white classics and tear-jerkers. One such fave is "Steel Magnolias," the 1989 comedy-drama starring Sally Field, Shirley MacLaine, Dolly Parton, Olympia Dukakis, Daryl Hannah and a pre-"Pretty Woman" Julia Roberts. It's one of those films that'll make you laugh and cry as it examines not only the friendship between these Southern women, but also the complicated mother-daughter relationship between Field's and Roberts' characters. The movie is available via instant streaming on Netflix or for \$12.99 in HD on iTunes and Amazon Instant Video.

Whether it's this film or other shared favorites, watching a special flick and spending quality time with Mom makes for a great Mother's Day. — *Stefanie Nakasone*



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COURTESY
DAVE HOMCY

Trays and cutting boards made of reclaimed wood

Jennifer Homcy grew up collecting driftwood on the beaches in Florida with her father, who turned them into cutting boards back in the '70s. More than three decades later, the North Shore resident is continuing her late father's work, using reclaimed wood — untreated lumber from trees that have been removed for development — to create one-of-a-kind cutting boards and serving trays that are not only beautiful, but also functional. Heart-shaped boards, starting at \$30, are her best-sellers; other designs include reef fish and abstract shapes. Homcy will be at the Haleiwa Farmers Market at Waimea Valley from 3 to 7 p.m. Thursday and the Kakaako Farmers Market at Ward Centers from 8 a.m. to noon Saturday. Her pieces are also sold at Owen & Co. at 1152 Nuuanu Ave., Noelani Studios in Haleiwa, Nohea Gallery at Ward Warehouse, the WaterShed at Turtle Bay, and Halele'a in Koloa, Kauai. Visit www.foundwoodworking.com. — *Catherine Toth, Honolulu*

Cut Loose line can keep Mom in style

Moms may juggle many duties, but we want to be stylish all the while. To achieve this tastefully, our bodies require clothing designed to skim rather than cling to accentuate the positives. My wardrobe must be comfortable and versatile, something that can go from the office to dinner and also do weekend duty. It's a tall order, I suppose, but the Cut Loose clothing line delivers. For an extensive selection, I head to Tapestry by Hauoli at Ala Moana Center (973-0566), where manager Carmen shares her vast knowledge of fabric, color and fit — she recommended this coral top for my skin tone (\$58). Plus, she's fun. A bonus: Cut Loose is 15 percent off through Mother's Day. Tapestry is also at Pearlridge Center (483-0810). — *Joleen Oshiro*



GEORGE LEE / GLEE@STARADVERTISER.COM



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LOST & FOUND

North Shore woodworker Jen Homcy
creates stunning—and functional—
works of art from salvaged wood

Story by Catherine E. Toth
Photos by Jennifer Binney



There isn't a part of Jennifer Homcy's home in Hale'iwa that doesn't have to do with her woodworking business.

There's almost always a stack of logs in her front yard, dropped off by people who have heard she creates one-of-a-kind cutting boards, serving trays and frames out of salvaged wood.

Her backyard is her workshop, where the cutting, shaping and sanding is done under 'ulu (breadfruit) and mango trees. One of the sheds is filled with rough-edged, mismatched pieces of monkeypod, shower tree and mango, their fate not yet determined. Band Saw, a charcoal-gray stray cat who got his name because the vet bill when Homcy found him totaled the cost of the new band saw she had been saving for, is often perched on the railing, overseeing the work out back.

And inside this 1930s home, which Homcy converted into the ultimate beach escape, is where her pieces of functional art soak in mineral oil and dry, then are stored in racks and on the dining room table she bought at the swap meet 13 years ago.

These are the headquarters of Foundwood, a woodworking company that uses only reclaimed wood to create heirloom pieces for the kitchen and home. It's been a longtime hobby of Homcy's that turned into a full-time business last year (2013), one that has allowed her to reconnect with her father, Dave, who died in 2003.

The senior Homcy started Foundwood in Florida nearly four decades ago. It was his hobby, too, collecting driftwood that washed up on Juno and Jupiter beaches. He turned these salvaged wood pieces into beautiful cutting boards and sold them at art festivals.

"And now 35 years later," says Homcy, tanned and relaxed in a tank top and yoga pants, "I'm going back to my roots."

A scientist by trade, Homcy grew up on the beaches of Florida, collecting driftwood and shells. She wasn't planning on being an artist; in fact, as far back as she can remember, she has always had a love for animals, which ultimately turned into a career in marine biology.

"I rescued a bug out of my grandma's pool when I was two," she says, laughing.

At age 5, she volunteered at a wildlife sanctuary. As a teenager she was actively involved in marine conservation programs. And at the University of Southern Florida, she majored in biology and environmental science. She spent more than a decade working in the field.

But at the same time, she was always tinkering with wood, creating unique frames out of salvaged wood just as a hobby.

When her brother, the famed surf cinematographer and photographer Dave Homcy, moved to O'ahu's North Shore in 1995, Homcy started visiting the Islands more often. And in 2001, she made the move official, first taking a job with the

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, then as a boat captain for whale-watching and snorkeling tours. And for a few years, she worked as a science teacher at Kapolei Middle School. But her side business making frames and cutting boards started to take off, and she decided to pursue Foundwood full-time last year.

"It had started to grow beyond my capacity doing this part-time," Homcy says. "It just grew organically."

Homcy started making cutting boards about three and a half years ago. The first time she made a few, she took them to the Hale'iwa Farmers' Market and sold all six before the market even opened. The next time, she brought 15 — and those sold by 10 a.m.

"I started to realize by that point there was something going on here," she says.

Now, her one-of-a-kind cutting boards — all made from untreated reclaimed wood, mostly from trees that have been removed for development and salvaged from the chippers of tree trimmers — are her best-sellers, particularly the heart-shaped boards that start at \$30. In fact, she's so busy churning out these boards — with two full-time helpers, she can turn around 80 pieces a week — she barely has enough time to take on custom orders.

"There's been a reinvigoration of food," she says, attributing

her boards' popularity with the coincidental rise in food and environmental consciousness. "And now it's become an art."

"They're all unique and all made from salvaged wood. Every piece has character."

— Chef William Chen

While the wood types vary on availability, she has used monkey pod, kamani and milo, Cuban mahogany, mango, eucalyptus, sometimes lychee or Malaysian tamarind trees for her various wood projects. And regardless of the wood, Homcy always works with the shapes and grains of each slab to create functional pieces that are venerable works of art.

That's what William Chen, former chef de cuisine of the Beachhouse at the Moana Surfrider in Waikiki, loved about her work. The restaurant purchased more than 30 different serving trays and small plates made from koa and monkeypod.

"The nice thing about it," he says, "is that they're all unique and all made from salvaged wood. Every piece has character. They're just beautifully made but industrial, too. You can put them in the dishwasher."

That's the goal: to create unique pieces that are both beauti-





and functional, that can hang on your wall as art but then be taken down to use as a cutting board or serving tray. That's all of her kitchen pieces — each a different shape, size and color — are soaked for a few days in mineral oil that's non-toxic, odorless and food-safe.

It's about repurposing the wood in a way that makes sense. "Everybody needs a cutting board," she says, grinning. "Even if you don't cook, you still gotta cut a lime for your cocktail." **CHI**

WHERE TO BUY

You can find Foundwood at Noelani Studios in Hale'iwa, Hawaii, and at the following locations: Magnolia in Honolulu, Hawaii, at the North Shore WaterShed at Turtle Bay Resort and Kai Boutique in Kailua.

Foundwood is also sold at the Hale'iwa Farmers' Market (8 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursdays), Kaka'ako Farmers' Markets (8 a.m.-noon Saturdays), Kailua Town Farmers' Markets (8 a.m.-noon, Sundays), and sometimes at the Pearlridge Farmers' Market (8 a.m.-noon, Saturdays).

You can purchase Foundwood on Etsy at www.etsy.com/shop/FOUNDWOODworking.

To learn more visit www.foundwoodworking.com.



competitors. (And now, a moment of silence for Cheapo Music and Tower Records.)

But what makes Jelly's resonate is more than just the yearn for an old school format. "They've not only supported local music and creatives for decades, but they, specifically [owner] Norm, started Radio Free Hawaii, one of the best things that ever happened [here]," says Delve. "It let everyone who thought they were the only ones who listened to underground hip-hop, ska, metal, et cetera, in those days know there were lots of other like-minded people out there." In 2012, you can still find that affectionate crew lurking the crates at Jelly's in solidarity.

—M.D.

Jelly's Honolulu, 670 Auahi St., 587-7001, Jelly's the Original, 98-023 Hekaha St. #9, 488-5245, jellyshawaii.net

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KITCHEN/HOSTESS GIFTS- Foundwood

Art meets function in Foundwood's rustic yet refined creations made from reclaimed wood found in Hawaii. Owner/creator Jennifer Homcy collected driftwood that washed up on the beach with her woodcrafter father throughout her childhood. Over the past twenty years, Jen has refined her own woodcraft skills, and now finds wood in Hawaii, mostly from trees that have been removed for development, to turn into multi-purpose kitchen utilities, custom frames, and furniture pieces that last a lifetime. "My father is alive in my craft and I am blessed to have access to the most beautiful materials in the world," Homcy says. Foundwood is sold at Kai Boutique in Kailua and Haleiwa Farmer's Market.

—T.H.

facebook.com/Foundwood

BEST LEI SHOP (EDITORS' AND READERS' PICK)

HONOLULU WEEKLY'S 2013 SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

up for the months you can't change, like flying to the mainland. It works like this: Companies use money from purchased carbon offsets for projects that will mitigate emissions. Hagadone Printing

KMP's reusable water bottle
partnered with natureOffice to sell carbon offsets that led to the installation of a PV system by RevoluSun in 2011. Tr3ees

has also partnered with a local company, Evolution Sage, to sell offsets to the public. Hagadoneprinting.com
Tr3ees.com

Good Green Wood

TIFFANY HERVEY

Despite the myth of the infinitely giving tree, don't contribute to the pillage of endangered species or noble old-growth forests. Choose wood reclaimed from an old building, salvaged from the forest or even removed from an ecosystem area due to its invasive nature there.

For building

The Hawaii Lumber Products Association (HLPAA) recommends building or remodeling a home with reclaimed woods. Not only does this save standing forests, which absorb CO₂ and produce oxygen, but it reduces lumber waste in landfills and incinerators, which also decreases carbon dioxide emissions.

One-third of Hawai'i's waste comes from construction and demolition. Re-use Hawai'i

deconstructs buildings as an alternative to conventional demolition, salvaging material for reuse and keeping it out of the landfill to generate affordable, locally produced resources. Each month, Re-use deconstructs an average of four single-wall houses, usually built between 1930 and 1970 and full of old-growth Douglas fir framing, redwood wallboard and oak floors.

"Occasionally, we salvage 'ohi'a flooring, 'ohi'a posts and if we're lucky, koa," says Quinn Vittum, Re-use's co-executive director. "Woodworkers frequent the warehouse looking for any amount of koa since it has a unique beautiful grain that's dense, gold and shiny."

For serving

"I use a lot of non-native or invasive trees," explains Jen Homcy, owner of Foundwood Working, which makes cutting, serving and sushi boards, their shapes determined by the grain of the wood. "Trees are removed mostly because of construction, development or to replace them. Ei-

ther way, the wood I use was destined for the chipper, dump, compost or fire piles." Her sources for wood, Homcy says, include tree trimmers, arborists and large wood mills.

Salvaging your own

Although there is no official statewide program, DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife (DOFAW) offers salvaged forest products through collection and commercial permits available at district offices, says Deborah Ward, information specialist at DOFAW O'ahu. "Our non-native trees make beautiful flooring, cabinetry, doors, furniture."

Jim Quinn, owner of Hawaii Island Hardwoods LLC (HIIH) in Kea'au on Hawai'i Island, harvests mango, monkey pod, eucalyptus robusta, E. Saligna, E. Torrelliana, Toona Ciliata and tropical ash for use as Hawaiian hardwoods. As CEO of Collins Pine, Quinn brought the first line of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) lumber to the American market. HIIH's Hawaiian Heritage hardwoods are the first locally grown forest products to be certified.

Good labels

The FSC and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) are not-for-profit organizations advancing responsible forest management and transparency of product sources. FSC is considered the top green standard because its certifiers are independent third parties. Look and ask for these labels on wood and paper products. us.fsc.org/sfiprogram.org

Custom jewelry armoire using old teak kitchen cabinet panels, an old clothing rack from a thrift store, glass panels from dumpster diving adventures, African Wenge trim left over from an old project

