

DWELL

LASTING IMPRESSION

STAY, Tony Baker's new East Nashville furniture company invites you to sit for a while.

In 2015, Nashville photographer Tony Baker was living in New York, heading Amazon's fashion studio. The job and commute were high-paced and exciting. And exhausting. To recharge, Baker would wander through maker-design shops in Brooklyn. "I was innately drawn to these places that had beautiful, simple design."

It was then that Baker started his next act. Instead of picking up the camera, he picked up a pencil and started designing furniture. His benches, tables, planters, and even a bed are meant to be "legacy pieces," the opposite of the fast fashion and the album covers he had created over his career. They also reflected where the then-46-year-old wanted to be: home with his family.

After two years of sanding, staining, and building, in 2017, Baker, with his business partner and long-time creative sounding board, Beth Lee, launched the appropriately named STAY. This collection of high-end furniture is sourced locally and designed to, well, stay around for generations.

The STAY signature is the STIX line of chairs. They look uber-modern and, honestly, uncomfortable but have a hidden cushion inside so that the wood conforms to your seat. Each stick is made by hand, often in Baker's East Nashville home studio, which is open to interior designers and the public by

appointment. Initially, the STIX line, which also includes a 300-pound four-seater, was designed for residences but will soon show up in local restaurants and hotels.

There are benches made from old Opryland Productions containers, which had been packed away in a local warehouse for decades. A mammoth dining room table invites the scrapes and scratches of a delicious party, which Baker and Lee and their spouses have hosted to demonstrate the furniture in action. Baker sees what others would consider imperfections as part of their character. "Life is meant to happen around these pieces," he says.

Baker's music industry and creative connections have helped make the new venture buzzworthy. A pop-up open house in a borrowed warehouse on Trinity Lane this summer was full of interior designers, decorators, and others clamoring to put \$3,000 (and up) stools in their clients' houses. Turnaround time for orders is six to 10 weeks.

The owner of the warehouse was so thrilled with how Baker and Lee transformed the once-vacant space on the fly, he invited STAY to stay in the space for a few extra weeks. (To schedule an appointment to see STAY, contact Baker: 615-400-3463, tony@stay-home.com, stay-home.com) —Margaret Littman

