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## Life

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### ONE OF A KIND

## Keefrider Custom Furniture owners as unique as their designs

By MARILYN MCMAHON, NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER  
February 10, 2018 7:08 AM

With her background as a research scientist, Dr. Sirie Keefrider brings a unique perspective to the custom furniture business she owns with her husband, Jay Keefrider.

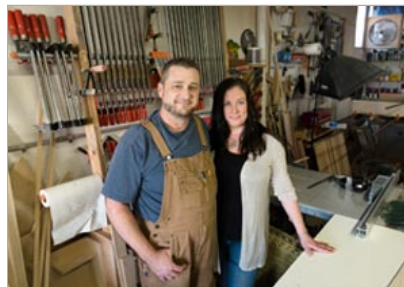
For example, a number of the pieces are designed with Lichtenberg figures, which are "branching, fractal-like patterns that are created by the passage of high voltage through electrically insulating materials," according to Dr. Keefrider. "They were first discovered in 1777 by the German physicist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, who observed their formation as airborne dust settled on the surface of electrically charged plates of resin."

To create Lichtenberg figures in their workshop on East Haley Street, the couple first wet the wood with a saltwater solution.

"Next, a high voltage is applied across the surface, where leakage currents cause localized heating and progressive degradation and charring of the underlying material. Over time, branching, tree-like carbonized patterns are formed upon the surface of the wood called electrical trees. Patterns like Lichtenberg figures are found throughout nature. Lightning bolts, river tributaries, tree limbs and even the branching patterns of your circulatory and nervous systems all share a striking resemblance to these figures," said Dr. Keefrider, 42, who earned a Ph.D. in molecular biology at Yale University.

Keefrider Custom Furniture produces a wide range of woodcraft featuring Lichtenberg figures, including small pieces

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Jay Keefrider and his wife, Dr. Sirie Keefrider, are owners of Keefrider Custom Furniture, which produces a wide range of woodcraft that is built to last for generations.  
KENNETH SONG/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS



Tansu Dresser with Lichtenberg Figures, \$9,600

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such as cutting boards and coasters, as well as large pieces like tables and wall-mounted artwork.

"We are a full-service custom furniture workshop, so we can make just about anything Lichtenberg," said Mr. Keefrider. 43, who has been making custom-designed fine furniture for almost 20 years.

"Why custom? Furniture defines your space. It's a part of your life that you touch and interact with every day. Your bed. Your dining table. Your desk. These are the places where life is lived. They are important," he said. "A unique heirloom-quality piece that truly embodies your personal style in both form and function can change not just your space but the life you live in it."

Making furniture was not something Mr. Keefrider, a native of Abington, Pa., planned to do after graduating from the Buxton School in Williamstown, Mass., and attending Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, N.Y., for two years.

"I wanted to be a writer but found that there was little interest in people reading my work. The feedback wasn't great," he said. "So I took a year off and found myself when I visited a friend in Savannah, Ga. I loved the town and decided to enroll in a furniture design program at the Savannah College of Art and Design. My first real woodworking began when I was a teenager and was a summer apprentice to Jack Larimore Furniture Maker, who recently had a retrospective of his work shown at the Philadelphia Art Museum."

Mr. Keefrider earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts at SCAD in 2000 and a year later, at the urging of a friend, moved to the Los Angeles area, where he started his furniture business in Paramount.

"In addition to making custom pieces, I did set work for videos and commercials," said Mr. Keefrider, who first met his future wife when both were teenagers on the East Coast.

Dr. Keefrider, who was born in Singapore, grew up in Bryn Mawr, Pa., where she graduated from the Baldwin School, and earned a bachelor's degree at Sarah Lawrence College.

"When I moved to Los Angeles in 2010 for post-doc work in molecular biology at UCLA, Jay and I reconnected. We were married in 2014," she said.

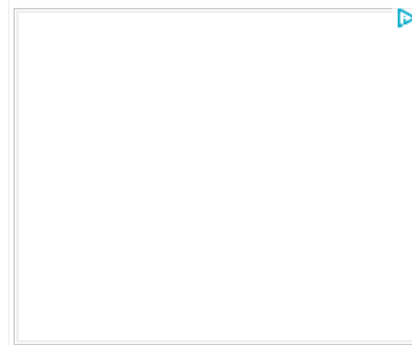
Among the special pieces they have designed are the Queen of Hearts Console Table (\$4,600), Lichtenberg Table (\$2,800), Butterfly Console Table (\$2,840), and Split Triptych Cocktail Table Set (\$2,240).

Cutting boards and servers range in price from \$50 to \$150.

"Our signature piece for kids is the Soleil Children's Rocker, which was first designed and named for our favorite niece, Soleil,"



Bentwood Side Table, \$1,800 to \$4,500  
The Soleil Rocker, \$90 and up



said Mr. Keefrider. "They cost \$90 and up."

The couple are now working on one of their most expensive and largest pieces — queen-size bunk beds with drawers, shelving and a ladder — which will cost \$11,000.

Mr. Keefrider chuckled as he told about a chest of drawers commissioned by a client.

"It was literally a chest of drawers made of solid walnut in the shape of a nude woman. The man loved parties and visual jokes."

Dr. Keefrider pointed out that one of the reasons they take pride as well as pleasure in their work is that the furniture is built to last for generations.

"There's such a culture of disposability in today's society. Furniture has become disposable, and the more disposable it seems, the poorer quality it is made and the more disposable it becomes. This is not only unsustainable and bad for our environment, but it also takes away from the great pleasure that can be had in owning a piece of furniture that really speaks to you, and that you can count on as a constant in your life."

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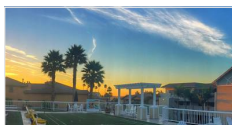
**FYI**

*Keefrider Custom Furniture is located at 434 E. Haley St., Unit C. The owners, Jay Keefrider and his wife, Dr. Sirie Keefrider, are available by appointment daily. For more information, call 617-3342, email [shop@keefridersb.com](mailto:shop@keefridersb.com) or visit [www.keefridersb.com](http://www.keefridersb.com).*



At top, in their workshop on East Haley Street, the Keefriders design and make everything from cutting boards and coasters to tables and beds. Below, Triptych Coffee Table, \$7,300.

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