

habitus[®]

#65

bespoke Guest Editor Yasmine Ghoniem Exceptional design

ISSUE SIX OF SIX COLLECTABLES

YSG

George Livissianis

Adriana Hanna

Flack Studio

Schmölzer Architecture

Shabnam Gupta

Nasim Köerting

Louis Barthélemy

Studio Renesa

Yunizar

Luke Malaney

Charlotte Perriand

Nic Fern

Khaled El Mays

Laura Gonzalez

Karim Boumjimar

Rio Kobayashi

Laurids Gallée

Eugenie Kawabata

Palinda Kannangara

habitusliving.com



FEBRUARY - MAY 2026
AUD\$17.95 | NZ\$17.95 | SGD\$13.95



Playing for keeps

WORDS FELL LUKINS
PHOTOGRAPHY TIM ROBINSON

Intentionally designed to be pieces you keep, as the name suggests, this curated collection of furniture delivers an extraordinary degree of quality.

OPPOSITE
The incredible
armadillo-like chair by
Richards Stanisich.

“I thought it would be interesting to see what prominent and successful architects might design outside their usual focus and, in the process and conversation and exchange, what they might bring to the developing texture and layers of the Australian design ecosystem.”





OPPOSITE
Animistic whimsy is ever present in the work of Kennedy Nolan.

ABOVE TOP LEFT
Jonathan Richards and David Clark with the chair in progress.

ABOVE TOP RIGHT
Jonathan Richards and Kirsten Stanisch of Richards Stanisch.

ABOVE BOTTOM LEFT
Rachel Nolan and Patrick Kennedy of Kennedy Nolan.

ABOVE BOTTOM RIGHT
Curator of the KEEP project, David Clark.

The project's genesis was Melbourne Design Week 2023, when David Clark was helping to launch the Kurunpa Kunpu collection — a collaboration between Trent Jansen and Indigenous designers Tanya Singer and Errol Evans, which had been facilitated by the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC). As such, regional director Rod Wiles was on site to view the finished pieces.

Naturally enough a conversation ensued, and Clark put his very particular talent for design thinking into play. “At first, it was to be a project

for emerging designers. There is a tendency in design, and in many disciplines, to always focus on the new. I thought, that as worthy as it is to keep discovering emerging talent, just by way of contrast it could be interesting to see what more established designers might do. My mind went to architects,” says Clark.

He points to the precedence for architects to design furniture, for their own projects or for companies by commission, and gives the example of early modernists such as Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier, Eileen Gray, and Alvar Aalto.





“We can look earlier to Lloyd Wright, Behrens, back to the Arts and Crafts movement to Mackintosh and Morris, for instance. We can look even further back to neoclassical Britain when Robert and James Adam designed highly popular, influential, and ultimately, highly collectible furniture as part of an entire architectural aesthetic,” he says.

In Australia this is less common, with Clark arguing that the nascent Australian furniture industry has only recently provided viable opportunities for local designers. “When I first started in publishing, Australian designers would have little hope of making a living out of designing at home. Many would make the annual (and expensive) pilgrimage to Milan Design Week in the hope of meeting with European companies, showing their work, and possibly (it was a slim chance) having a design picked up and put into production.”

“That there is an opportunity now for a designer in Australia to even think about a viable career is a testament to their perseverance, and to that of the manufacturers, plus some intertwined macro-conditions that helped push things along – a reaction against the economy of globalisation, concerns about climate emissions, the pandemic, and a consumer appetite for ‘Made in Australia’ products, for instance.”

The shift has been tremendous, but Clark wanted to explore the breadth and depth of design ability. “I thought it would be interesting to see what prominent and successful architects might design outside their usual focus and, in the process and conversation and exchange, what they might bring to the developing texture and layers of the Australian design ecosystem,” he says.

OPPOSITE
The table by Neil Durbach is simultaneously architectural and quirky.

ABOVE TOP
Neil Durbach and David Clark with the work in progress.

ABOVE MIDDLE
Detail of the table’s unique joinery.

ABOVE BOTTOM
The organic form of objects designed by Neil Durbach, invite the hand.

OVER
Director of Edition Office, Aaron Roberts with the finished piece.

Selecting Australia-wide, Clark narrowed his criteria to include practices with a substantial and impressive collection of houses amongst their oeuvres. There was also a need for geographical diversity and variation in the type and scale of practice. As such, the final group comprises Edition Office, Kennedy Nolan, Lineburg Wang, Neil Durbach, Richards Stanisich, and Virginia Kerridge, all fabulous and each quite uniquely their own.

Well known for their residential projects, Richards Stanisich approached timber as a malleable and defining material. “We drew inspiration from Japanese armour, armadillo scales, and traditional roofing shingles, developing a series of hand-stitched elements to explore the idea of timber behaving like a draped fabric – more like a skin than a structure,” say Kirsten Stanisich and Jonathan Richards.

The brief also required the domestic pieces be crafted from three underutilised hardwood species specified by AHEC: American red oak, cherry, and maple.

“By working with American cherry, maple, and red oak, the six architects also helped to make best use of the full range of hardwood species and grades derived from the U.S. forest, as too much focus on the best grades of a few popular hardwood species like white oak and walnut increases pressure on one part of the resource and encourages waste,” says Wiles.

For Kennedy Nolan, the invitation to explore these less-familiar timbers resonated with their innate respect for materiality. “We chose cherry wood for our piece. It’s a superb timber with beautiful inherent colour but it’s also stable, hard, and versatile. We explored as many potential qualities of the timber as we could from rustic to refined, including rough-sawn, tooled, and wire-brushed surfaces, in addition to its marvellous capacity for a silky furniture-grade finish. We loved the way its colour could interact with tints and incorporated this as well. Evostyle [the makers] were true partners in this project, their talents and techniques all expressed in superlative manufacture and artistry,” say Rachel Nolan and Patrick Kennedy.









Unlike plantation-grown hardwoods, almost all (97%) of the hardwood lumber produced in America comes from privately-owned land. Most landowners will not clearfell, but selectively harvest, perhaps once or twice in a generation, and allow the forests to regenerate naturally. The sheer volume of the American forests means that the hardwood is growing at a rate of about seven Olympic-sized swimming pools per hour, and the amount of timber used in this exhibition was regenerated in a matter of seconds.

All were free to design whatever type of object they liked, such as a chair, a table or a light, for example, but were encouraged to pursue individuality, expressionism, and quirkiness in the process, and specifically not design for a contemporary furniture catalogue or showroom floor, i.e. not make a 'product'. Some designed for personal use, some experimented with ideas and prototypes, others straddled a line between design and art. The overarching requirement was that the result would be an object with a long life and of quality that is worth handing down through generations. In other words, an object to KEEP.

ahec.org



OPPOSITE
Ever so beautifully, the light glows from the articulation in the joinery in the piece by Lineburg Wang.

ABOVE TOP
Lynn Wang and Michael Lineburg of Lineburg Wang, a remarkable Brisbane-based studio.

ABOVE MIDDLE
Virginia Kerridge and David Clark with Kerridge's work in progress.

ABOVE BOTTOM
The elegant and effortless final piece by Virginia Kerridge.