

## Flush fittings

Melbourne

[BENJAMIN BALDWIN]

Ten years with marine conservation group Sea Shepherd (working as an on-board carpenter and ship manager) has given designer Benjamin Baldwin his sustainability thrust. "It's not just about doing the right thing environmentally: it is also about good, honest design, and understanding our needs and limitations," says Baldwin, who has a degree in industrial design.

Using restored vintage machines and heirloom hand tools to fine-tune joints and smooth surfaces, Baldwin has been making chairs and stools since 2014. His joinery techniques also help minimise the amount of



timber used. Two tables – currently in prototype stage – will soon join his small but handsome range. "When there is an aesthetic choice to be made I usually opt for simplicity," he says. — CHR [benjaminbaldwin.com.au](http://benjaminbaldwin.com.au)

**Q&A**  
**Andrew Morgan**  
Managing director,  
Hydrowood  
Hobart



At the bottom of the dammed Lake Pieman on Tasmania's west coast, whole forests have remained submerged for 28 years. Last year, Hydrowood started salvaging this precious rare timber for designers and architects to work with.

**Q** How did the project come about?

**A** I'm a keen fly fisherman and familiar with lots of Tasmania's lakes – I knew many of them still had trees in them. We consulted historical aerial photographs of the site and chatted to foresters; after much research a team was sent into the dimly lit waters to extract our first samples.

**Q** What kind of material can be found there?

**A** The dam has been flooded since 1987 so the timber has been preserved for more than 28 years: species we are recovering include Huon pine, celery-top pine, myrtle, blackwood and sassafras, many of which are native to Tasmania. Not only are they incredibly rare but we have them in quantities not seen for nearly 25 years.

**Q** What are the specific properties of this water-soaked wood?

**A** The water replaces the sap in the wood's cells and that makes timber more stable to work with; it has been described as like working with butter. The wood also has a beautiful, unique colour, as if it has been lightly wash-stained. — CHR [hydrowood.com.au](http://hydrowood.com.au)



## Model homes

Brisbane

[LITTLE BUILDING]

This miniature celebration of Australia's architectural vernacular is the handiwork of Brisbane-based Englishman Marcus Bree. It was born from his exploration of heritage homes on the northeast coast and he started crafting models from eco-friendly US cherrywood in 2014; they are now sold as easy-to-build kits.

"I was interested in Queensland vernacular buildings because they seemed like single-skinned fancy sheds and their method of construction is clearly visible," says Bree, who expanded the range to 10 Aussie icons, including a miners' cottage and Richmond townhouse. They are popular among design aficionados and Bree has made more than 20,000 models in his workshop; he recently added a pint-sized Sydney Opera House. — LA [littlebuildingco.com](http://littlebuildingco.com)



## Perfectly on track

Melbourne [DOWEL JONES]

Dale Hardiman and Adam Lynch of Lab de Stu launched studio Dowel Jones in 2013 with an ethos of simple aesthetics and superior materials. Their latest Hurdle collection takes its cue from the athletics course. The Half Hurdle chair has a two-part metal frame hand-wrought in Melbourne, is paired with an oak or plywood seat and finished in four colours. But don't be fooled by the delicate appearance: the stools, chairs and side table are more than sturdy enough to withstand the great outdoors. — MCH [doweljones.com](http://doweljones.com)



## Eastern promise

Adelaide [LIAM MUGAVIN]

Though based in the South Australian capital since 2013, furniture designer Liam Mugavin's four years spent living in Japan are the genesis of much of his work. "I slowly absorbed a Japanese way of doing and seeing things," says Mugavin, adding that this sideboard draws on the Machiya lattice-work found in Kyoto's old merchant shops.

Demand for Mugavin's work has spiked after he scooped the prestigious Clarence Prize and the South Australian Emerging Designer Award in 2015. He is now setting up a studio in Sydney, where he will be launching a solo exhibition and crafting interiors for a café and roastery as well as a restaurant. — JWA [liammugavin.com](http://liammugavin.com)



## Cinematic appeal

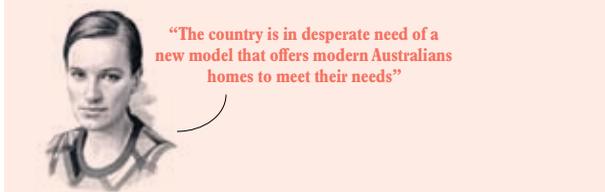
Sydney [THE OFFICE SPACE]

For its second project in Sydney's Surry Hills, The Office Space has converted the art deco former Australian headquarters of Paramount Pictures into a shared office space that celebrates the building's modernist heritage. Inside, the elegant curves of the dark US cherry-wood joinery are the work of master builder Boris Tosic. The scheme, by architecture firm Woods Bagot, creates 22 work booths fitted out with furniture by Bassam Fellows, Walter Knoll and Molteni & C. This moody mid-century interior with an intimate boardroom is a welcome antithesis to the unattractively lit industrial-style communal office. — JEP [theofficespace.com.au](http://theofficespace.com.au)

## Naval gazing

Hobart [HERE DESIGN]

Sophia Holmes is inspired by a childhood spent on the Tasman Sea. A trained ocean engineer, her venture Flotsam/Jetsam specialises in nautical-inspired furniture, textiles and lamps such as this Buoy Light. Holmes' studio, Here Design, has recently collaborated with Ashley Woodson Bailey on wallpaper. — JEP [heredesign.com.au](http://heredesign.com.au)



"The country is in desperate need of a new model that offers modern Australians homes to meet their needs"

## Making room

With so much space down under, Australia has been careless with its housing. But how is it fixing the issue?  
SOPHIE GROVE

When I was a child my family moved from England to the Melburnian seaside suburb of Sandringham. Life was quintessentially Australian. At Half Moon Bay lifesaving club we took to paddle-boarding around the *HMYs Cerberus*: a rusting Australian navy ship. We barbecued in the long grassy backyard of our white single-storey weatherboard house and skipped to school via the milk bar under eucalyptus trees.

When I returned to the house a few years ago, the bosky garden was gone and an ungainly new dwelling was in its place. It's a fate many suburban homes have met in recent years as house prices rocket and cities densify. In a country roughly the same size as the US – and with 0.3 per cent of its territory considered urban – surely there is another solution? Back gardens are diminishing and Supersize McMansions are the scourge of many Aussie neighbourhoods. It is a sorry sight.

One problem is the Australian penchant for roomy detached homes. Census data from 2011 shows that 74 per cent of the nation's homes are detached (with a further 10 per cent classed as "semis"). Meanwhile, apartments make up 14 per cent. It wasn't always so. Pre-1945, some Australian cities were pioneers of medium-density architecture. You only have to look at the deco apartments in Manly with their breezy terraces, awnings and white stucco façades – or indeed the low-rise brick flats in Bondi with curved balconies and leafy surroundings – to see how Mediterranean-style apartment living is suited to Australian life.

Our main design feature (see page 137) is a homage to the ingenuity of the Australian vernacular with its creative use of weatherboard and corrugated metal, and its crucial link to the outdoors. And yet the country is in desperate need of a new model that offers modern Australians homes to meet their needs (and desires) without diminishing the eucalyptus-lined suburbs. Thankfully Australia's wealth of design talent may come to the rescue: the continent's architects have been pioneering new forms of homebuilding. Many Australians are looking to a more compact future as green (and quintessentially Aussie) as my time on Port Phillip Bay. — (M)

Architects and urban thinkers leading the charge:

**Andrew Maynard Architects:** Maynard is a pioneer of the small home. His prefab houses are stackable and charming. His wooden shingle-clad house is a benchmark in compact living.

**Libby Watson-Brown, design director, Architectus:** The iconic Queenslander with its breezy verandas, "sleep-outs" and elevated outlook is a dream to live in. Yet not everyone can do so. Watson-Brown is imitating the local vernacular in high-rise form.

**Otherothers:** Founded by architectural curator Grace Mortlock and designer David Neustein, the Bondi Junction-based group has put forward a way to retrofit the McMansions springing up in Aussie suburbs by removing brick veneer walls, adding space and installing rainwater tanks to make them ecological.

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