



lifetime

"I'M SICK OF GOOD TASTE, it drives me crazy." It's perhaps a surprising sentiment from the owner of a high-end design store, but then John Parker's Format showrooms in Melbourne and Sydney are a tale of the unexpected. Rather than hectares of smooth white crispness, they are repositories of the edgy – the best in avant-garde design internationally: Established & Sons, Hella Jongerius, Patricia Urquiola and SpHaus among them.

They've just become edgier, eccentric even, with the arrival of Sharyn Storrier Lyneham's Edit collection of reworked found items (vessels made out of glued-together Depression glass, for instance) and strong-minded textiles. Edit has just gone on show in Format Sydney in Surry Hills and will follow at Parker's Melbourne outlet next year. Some of the Edit pieces are one-offs, bought at auction and made over. Others are new items that can be replicated.

Storrier Lyneham is a former editor of *Vogue Living*



JUST GET RID OF THE INTERIOR DESIGNER – WHO CARES WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE AS LONG AS IT'S YOUR STUFF AND YOUR TASTE

and pioneering editor of *Vogue Entertaining + Travel*. She's a stylist more than a journalist ("I came up through the eye, not the pen" is how she explains her career).

Parker, an ex-stockbroker, managed Space Furniture's Melbourne premises before striking out on his own. Surprisingly, given the small design world, these two like minds hadn't met until earlier this year at Edit's first outing – a pop-up show at the Shapiro auction rooms in Sydney.

"At *Vogue Living*, I could never find things that were different, that broke the rules or had a sense of humour," Storrier Lyneham says. She trained as an artist and has always been fascinated by the Bloomsbury group's applied arts workshop, Omega. "I love the mix of the clean and the overly decorative, the expensive with the inexpensive," she says. "The juxtaposition has always appealed to me."

Edit was initially going to be a magazine, but talks with a major publisher broke down at the last minute (the company wanted to push the idea in a different direction). "In a way, that's morphed into this," she says.

"It's interesting listening to Sharyn say that," Parker says, "because I always love that idea, too, of challenging beauty and taste. We're on similar trajectories and we were always going to meet one day."

Storrier Lyneham wants us to lighten up about our homes and Parker agrees. "Just get rid of the interior designer – who cares what it looks like as long as it's your stuff and your taste," he says. "That's especially challenging in the industry I've worked in because there is a very rigid idea of what constitutes good taste and largely it's sofas that look like concrete, not fabric."

Storrier Lyneham nods in agreement. "And who's the arbiter?" she adds.

"Sharyn had the bravery and the strength to see beauty and to push things to the fore that traditionally wouldn't have had a look in," Parker says. "To mess it up a bit."

The two joined forces after Storrier Lyneham decided that the cramped studio in Sydney's Paddington that she initially set up as Edit's premises with Belinda Seper wasn't what they wanted; Seper – the luxury-label boutique owner – was busy with other ventures and Storrier Lyneham didn't want to be a retailer. The collaboration with Parker begins with an Edit exhibition at Format until December 14, after which Edit pieces will continue to be sold from the store.

Storrier Lyneham is not alone in moving away from the



From top: Sharyn Storrier Lyneham and John Parker with a selection of Edit and Format pieces; reworked Depression glass; Edit's collection includes painted and upholstered finds.



smooth certainties of most manufactured contemporary design to something more individual. Her assemblages of found items – 1970s china, old glass and ashtrays turned into items such as table lamps – echo a wider trend.

This can also be seen in the work of Committee (English designers who have made standard lamps out of stacks of old teapots and stuffed bunnies in bell jars) and Australia's Suzie Stanford, who has upholstered chairs in souvenir tea towels (which Format also retails) and made pendant lights out of op shop china teacups and saucers.

There's a recycling tinge to it as well, but we're miles away from distressing (in all senses of the word), shabby-chic paint finishes. It is where design approaches art, but maintains its commercial smarts: Storrier Lyneham has already sold a large shipment of her velvets and silks – digitally printed in Australia with chandeliers, church naves and other devices – to Liberty in London and is in talks with Barneys New York and Lane Crawford in Hong Kong. "People want something different, something handmade," she says. "It's like a painting – dreaming something up and bringing it to fruition. It's so exciting when it works."

Parker says that his interest is a continuation of that. "Once Sharyn's process is complete, it needs to be put in the type of store which I want to have in Australia, which is a place filled with interesting, challenging and exciting vignettes and objects."

When it comes to it, they are both editors at heart – curators of a kind – so their collaboration makes lots of sense. "I just hope it will maybe challenge what people expect to see in a tasteful store," Parker says. "I look forward to the reaction."

It might not be a big ask right now, with artful make-do-and-mend rather than conspicuous consumption the go in these crunchy times; Edit's rediscovery of Depression glass could be very *du jour*. Parker for one is feeling the pinch as developers and designers hesitate over specifying high-end product. "In the face of global events, my vision [for the stores] will take a bit more time to achieve," he says. "But it's a fantastic time when something can be beautiful for the sake of being beautiful."

■ Robert Bevan

Format Furniture Sydney showroom, 146 Foveaux Street, Surry Hills. www.formatfurniture.com