



INDOORS

Corner sweet

BY Karen McCartney

WE ARE IN the interior decorating era of the chair as talking point. To qualify, it needs to have a rare and intriguing pedigree that can't be easily pigeonholed. As such it has permission to be a tad quirky, even a little awkward. It cannot be a production item, no matter how expensive. And this is the joy of the character chair – it can be found on the side of the road, at a vintage shop or sourced on Etsy.

I have one. It was bought in a student furniture show in London in the late 1990s and is a contemporary throne fashioned from strips of steam-bent timber held in place with copper rivets. While more sculpture than seat – it isn't very comfortable – it never fails to draw a compliment.

Alexandra Ponting of AP Design House, who is responsible for the interior pictured above,

understands the appeal of the character chair. "This kind of oddity speaks to my design ethos, as I don't think everything needs to be so serious ... for me it is functional art."

This particular piece ticks all the boxes, in that it was found at an auction house in Sydney's Woollahra. Try as she might, Ponting can't find out who designed it. "Those arms contain all the character and it is beautifully made," she says. "The frame is hand-carved into a bold yet fluid form, while the seat and back are hand-woven from natural rush."

It occupies a place in a grand formal dining room where each element, from the art to the lighting and other furniture pieces, is big and bold. "This chair did push the envelope," says Ponting, "creating an element of surprise among the traditional foundations."

This cushion is made from organic cotton grown and spun in Gujarat, India.

INJIRA "AHIR" CUSHION, \$230.
SPENCEANDLYDA.COM.AU



OUTDOORS

Second fiddle

BY Richard Unsworth

FASHION IS such a fickle thing, isn't it – what's hot, what's not, and do we really care? On that note, can you believe there are even trends in the indoor plant world?

The fiddle-leaf fig (*Ficus lyrata*) has been the hottest indoor plant for quite some time now. It's everywhere in the interior magazines, and all over Instagram – search #fiddleleaffig and you'll find more than 68,000 posts. Some would say it's had its day, that it's the French bulldog of the plant world, but there remains a strong following.

Often, however, the lush plant you brought home from the nursery ends up looking sickly and sad. Perhaps the glossy leaves are now dull and limp, new growth is weak, and most have dropped onto your sisal rug (it's normal for some of the lower leaves to fall). So what's the best way to care for it?

Water. Fiddle-leaf figs love to be drenched, but need to dry out between watering. Carry it outside and soak well, allow to drain then bring inside again. As a rule, do this weekly. If very dry, leave it to soak in a bucket of water overnight.

Light. They love a bright, filtered-light position, so no dark bathrooms nor full afternoon glare – morning sun is best. You can give it a holiday outside but never in the hot sun. If a fig has been in a dark space for a long time, put it outside under a tree.

Food. Use a liquid house-plant fertiliser every month in spring and summer.

Repot. If you've had it for more than a year, chances are it needs to be transferred into a larger pot. Easy to do, but be sure to use a good-quality potting mix.

Brown spots. This is usually a sign of over-watering. The good news is that you can cut these off as new leaves start to emerge.

STYLE

BY Anna-Lisa Backlund

There are two circles in this 1967-designed bangle – the piece itself, and the armhole, cut at a diagonal through the perspex – hence the name.

GIJS BAKKER "CIRCLE IN CIRCLE" BRACELET, \$560;
GALLERYFUNAKI.COM.AU



This cute, bohemian cross-body bag has Chloé's signature leather detailing and ornamental clasps. It comes in a diverse palette of pastels, neutrals and rich colours.
CHLOÉ "MARCIE" SMALL BAG IN AIRY GREY, \$995; PARLOURX.COM

This bowl's just one result of the 24-piece link-up between two fantastic Australian companies – design-forward boutique Incu and homewares brand Mud Australia.
INCU X MUD AUSTRALIA NOODLE BOWL, \$68; INCU.COM



THEY NY is a New York unisex footwear company founded by three friends who share a love of minimalist design, Bauhaus geometry and Japanese architecture. To them "each shoe is a blank canvas".
THEY NY "CIRCLE" SNEAKER, \$460; DAVIDJONES.COM.AU

ART

Guy Warren

BY John McDonald



↑
AGE 96
LIVES GREENWICH, NSW
REPRESENTED BY KING STREET GALLERY ON WILLIAM, SYDNEY;
NICHOLAS THOMPSON GALLERY, MELBOURNE

His thing

Works on paper, landscapes, abstracts, memories.

Our take

Guy Warren is an institution in Australian art. Loved and respected by his peers, he is a much underrated artist who has never been inclined to push himself forward. Warren served in the AIF during World War II and went on to study at the National Art School. During his long career, his work has been acquired by all the major Australian museums. In 1985, he won the Archibald Prize for a portrait of sculptor Bert Flugelman. Now in his 90s, but with an eternally youthful outlook, Warren is still working with great vigour. His show at Sydney's King Street on William – a survey selected by younger artist Luke Seiberras – brings together a range of works on paper. There are vivid watercolour landscapes such as *High Pastures* (2013), and more minimal pieces. *Emu nest Tibooburra* (2016), for instance, is a mixture of watery smudges and thin, spidery lines on white paper. The idea is to convey an

impression of dazzling heat.

Track to the hut on the hill (2004) is an experiment in colour, with contrasts of turquoise and ochre.

Can I afford it?

The smaller drawings in this show are priced at \$2200, the larger watercolours at \$4800. This is ridiculously cheap for an artist of Warren's standing. One could pay a whole lot more for a picture with only decorative value by a flashy nonentity. The record price paid at auction for a work of Warren's is a mere \$18,000, for *Wingman and Mountain*, sold at Sotheby's in 2007. It should soon be broken.

Why so cheap?

The relatively low prices for a senior artist are a particular feature of the Australian scene. It's a perennial source of dismay for artists and dealers, but a great opportunity for new buyers. This is bound to change as we become part of a globalised art market. *Where can I have a squiz?* In Sydney, King Street Gallery on William has an exhibition until February 24. In Melbourne, Nicholas Thompson Gallery stocks his work.

FELIX FOREST; NICHOLAS WATT; TRAVELLING NORTH (1989) BY GUY WARREN; CHARCOAL & CRAYON 56.5 X 77CM