

# RAW EDGE

STORY BY *Karen McCartney* PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Sean Fennessy*

**T**HERE IS no better real-estate story than when a down-at-heel house with an architectural pedigree finds sympathetic buyers. In this instance it was the Fisher House on Melbourne's outskirts, designed in 1969 by Alistair Knox, a pioneer of Australian bush modernism (think organic materials and native gardens). It had been lived in by a multi-generational Warrandyte family for nearly 50 years before being bought in 2019 by photographer Sean Fennessy, 40, and his interior stylist partner Jessica Lilloco, 38.

"We were living in an apartment in Brunswick with a toddler [Matilda, now 3], and another on the way, when we started to cast the net further afield and look at Eltham and Warrandyte, about 40 minutes from the CBD," says Fennessy.

Several things appealed about the house. "Driving down the dirt road, with its overhanging trees, there was this relaxed sense of arrival," says Lilloco. "It was also a small-scale property, which we felt was more manageable within our budget."

Importantly, it had never been renovated; the surfaces were raw but intact, including the original timber ceilings, hardwood-pannelled walls and brick floors.

Enlisting the help of architect Adriana Hanna, they set about working within the constraints of the building's small footprint, installing a new kitchen and bathroom and lightly bagging the textured brick walls. Taking cues from the original design – they sourced Knox's plans – they blurred the new into what was already there, resulting in a functional family home which retains the character of its former iteration. With baby Ray now a year old, they're enjoying its robust nature.

In terms of furnishings, the couple had collected good pieces and Hanna designed a low built-in sofa (right) with an integrated bookshelf as a space divider. "Adriana also pushed us to choose the large-scale Hotaru Double Bubble light [by London design studio Barber Osgerby], which hangs over the bed," says Lilloco. "Its glow at dusk is one of the things I love most about the space." ■



*Right: in the main bedroom, floor-to-ceiling windows connect to the landscape while the bagged brick wall frames an over-scale paper lantern.*

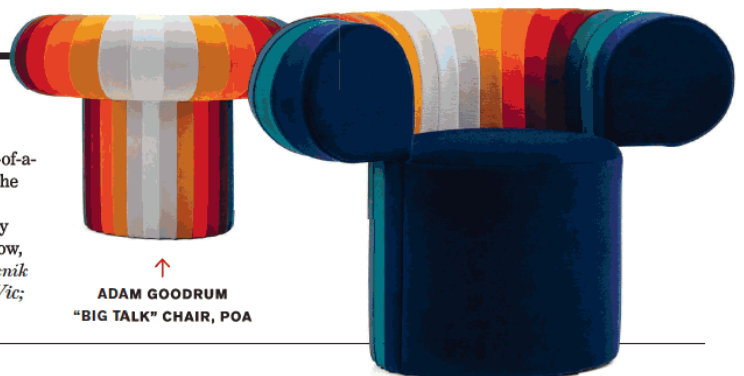


*Above: originally a jungle of introduced species, the garden was cleared and landscaped with native plants.*

*Left: taking cues from the home's raw materials, a timber sofa and shelves were built in.*

## SHOP / PLAY

YOU'LL NEED to be quick if you want to shop the limited-edition, rare and one-of-a-kind collectable pieces at the inaugural Melbourne Design Fair. An initiative of the National Gallery of Victoria, and part of Melbourne Design Week, the fair offers significant works by Australia's leading, emerging and established contemporary designers and design-makers. To learn more about the creative processes on show, there's a program of talks, conversations and films to explore. *Frances Moeck*  
 Melbourne Design Fair, March 16-20; Warehouse 16, 28 Duke St, Abbotsford, Vic; [designweek.melbourne/design-fair](http://designweek.melbourne/design-fair). Tickets \$15 general admission.



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