

my coastal home

SPECIAL EDITION

Points of excellence

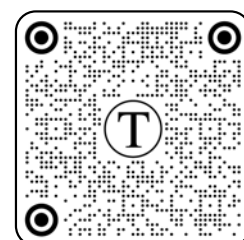
Point Lonsdale SLSC and Jackson Clement Burrows Architects have collaborated to design a building lauded as practical, warm, social, and generous in this year's AIA Victorian Architecture Awards.



Photo: TOM HUNT-SMITH

Inside this issue

Meet the couple who are building their dream life one handmade piece of furniture at a time, and look inside a 1930s house in Lorne that's been transformed into a modern entertainer's dream.



Surf Coast Times

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Bespoke furniture for a more sustainable future



Al and Imo are living the coastal dream, raising their young daughter, building their dream home and running their small business. Photo: SOCIAL FIELDS

BY LUCY CROCK

Al and Imogen Roberts of Al + Imo are a husband and wife duo based at Freshwater Creek leading the charge in sustainable furniture design, building their dream life one handmade piece of furniture at a time.

Alongside making bespoke furniture and raising their 16-month-old daughter, the couple host a podcast discussing the behind the scenes of their business, run an online course for bespoke furniture makers and are mid-way through building their dream coastal home.

Al + Imo furniture is practical, functional, timeless and aesthetic.

"We're both creative and practical people with a very do it yourself attitude towards life, which is how we accidentally fell into furniture making," Imo said.

"Al and I were in our early 20s when we built our first bed because we couldn't afford anything that we

loved online.

"Al was a carpenter and I was working in digital marketing for a fashion brand.

"We built the bed in our share-house carport one afternoon, and I remember watching Al build it just thinking 'there's something here, we could potentially design things together that are built to last a really long time and not just thrown away."

"So we finished our bed then we started building beds for friends and family."

Imo said around the same time she was realising her values didn't align with the fast-fashion industry and neither her nor Al wanted to stay in the hustle of the busy city.

So, the creative couple took a leap of faith and moved to the coast to start a small business crafting bespoke furniture.

Their style, Imo said, is minimalist, modern Australian.

Each piece is made to be practical and stylish, using only sustainable, Australian hardwood.

"We like to highlight the beauty of the

materials we use.

"We focus on timber, bedroom furniture.

"Our design is around functionality, we do a lot of storage beds and beds that look beautiful but they function as well and they're really practical and high quality."

The couple takes orders three times a year and is generally booked out nine months in advance.

"We make to order, which means that we're not actually creating any waste and we don't have extra stock, we don't have showrooms."

Earlier this year the couple launched an online course, "Furniture friends", giving other makers a business blueprint for success.

"It essentially teaches other makers, independent makers, how to successfully run their businesses.

"Rather than expanding and producing more furniture ourselves we know we can have more impact globally if we use our skills to help other makers successfully run their businesses.

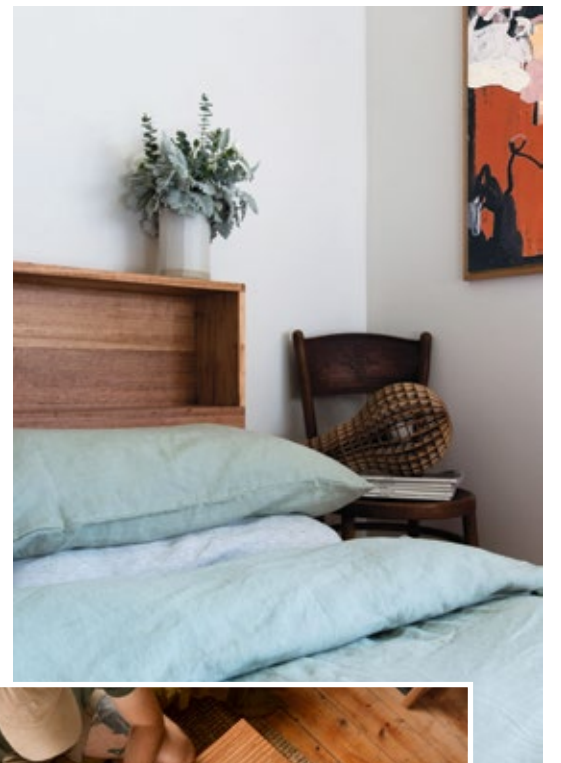


Photo: IMOGEN ROBERTS



Al and Imogen Roberts of Al + Imo are a Freshwater Creek-based husband and wife duo leading the charge in sustainable furniture design, building their dream life one handmade piece of furniture at a time and helping others do the same. Photos: SOCIAL FIELDS

RIGHT: A bookshelf bedhead platform bed, a bed with built-in storage and aesthetic focus on the Australian hardwood.



"We really want people to understand the value of quality and purchasing something with longevity, and I also feel when you buy something that is custom-made for you, you're less likely to throw it away."

Now Al and Imo are tackling their biggest project yet: building their dream coastal 7.5-star sustainable home from the ground up, with a local company Sherriff Constructions, and documenting their build online, "the good day house", to showcase their furniture, Al's carpentry and Imo's design.

But for Al and Imo, dreaming for the future goes beyond a dream lifestyle and coastal home.

"I think for us, our five-year plan would be to create a global community of makers who really connect and work well together," Imo said.

"Our aim is to really encourage people to move away from that throw-away culture, away from fast furniture, to taking a bit longer, saving up, purchasing something whether it's from us or other furniture makers, and using our platform to spread that mission."

To follow Al and Imo's journey, head to alandimo.com.au/our-story or head to furniturefriends.com.au to find out more about their online courses.



Photo: IMOGEN ROBERTS

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