



In Vampt Vintage Design's new Brookvale showroom, a treasure trove of heirloom-worthy pieces is waiting to be discovered. This carefully cultivated collection is due to owner David Beeman's eye and passion for original design. His latest prized finds are these original 1957 Arne Jacobsen 'Grand Prix' chairs, which he calls "true antiques". Also on show is a mix of Spanish, Italian and Danish pottery on a Kai Christiansen rosewood desk and shelving unit. David and his family recently moved into a 1950s cedar weatherboard house nearby, where some of his discoveries can be found. "I guess it's every decorator's dream - we literally shop from the showroom floor, and can change the pieces whenever we want," he says.



## *a fine vintage*

The thrill of hunting for an original Eames may be a weekend hobby for some, but for David Beeman, owner of Vampt Vintage Design, it's the thread that weaves through the fabric of his life

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“Just wait till you see this one! Oh, she’s a real beauty.” David Beeman’s voice is muffled as he rummages through the Vampt Vintage Design storeroom for his latest find, but there’s no need to ask him to speak up. The passion that punctuates his joyful exclaim says it all: we’re in the company of a bona-fide designer junkie; a man who talks about the mid-century masters of design – Charles and Ray Eames, Arne Jacobsen, Hans Wegner – with a hushed reverence, paying them the kind of respect one usually devotes to a beloved grandparent.

As the owner of Vampt Vintage Design, Sydney’s largest on-display boutique collection of mid-century designer furniture, David is a veteran vintage hunter with an enviable eye for quality. “When I see something, I know immediately whether or not it’s coming home with me. If you go away and come back it will be gone, trust me. It’s all about the find and

the hunt,” he says. But he’s quick to admit that his designer instinct wasn’t always this honed. “The first piece of furniture that an old girlfriend and I bought together was a \$2000 set from a chain store,” he says. “My excuse is that we were young and broke. We tried to sell it two years later and surprise, surprise, no one wanted it. Needless to say, when I met my wife

Maxine, our first furniture buy was a Parker lounge.”

David, an electrician by trade, initially fuelled his burgeoning design addiction by buying vintage Art Deco lights at auctions and selling them at Spec Gallery, a now

defunct indoor market in Darlinghurst. The buzz of the auctions tempted him into bidding for bigger furniture – Parker, Chiswell and Featherston pieces – and then mid-century Danish designs. “When you get involved in something you get pretty active; your taste evolves the more you look, and the more you realise is out there to be found,” he says. >

**“Classic pieces are design pieces that hold value; not only are they a monetary investment, they’re a legacy that you can pass on to your children”**

**Above left:** David may travel to Europe to find quality vintage wares but can spot a design classic in the most unlikely of places – he snapped up this Art Deco print from a Sydney pub before demolition. “Thankfully, people are starting to realise that the throwaway culture is just not sustainable,” he says.

**Above right:** An appreciation for design runs in the family. “When Flynn [pictured with David and Maxine] was almost three, he was obsessed with an Eero Aarnio ‘Ball’ chair. He loved curling up inside and being spun around. When I told him I’d sold it, he threw himself on the floor and cried for hours. In the end, the sale fell through and the chair has been Flynn’s ever since. The things you do for your kids! I’m sure it’s building a passion inside them too.”



Below: David's finds include classic Danish pieces such as this Hans Wegner 'GE236' sofa and a Gunni Omann Brazilian rosewood sideboard.

Right: An Eames lounge chair and ottoman in Brazilian rosewood and a '70s wall sculpture on show at Vampt Vintage Design's Brookvale showroom.



Right from the get-go, David knew that he wanted to sell more than just second-hand pieces. "We decided to deal in proper designer vintage rather than just be a funky retro store. We were, and still are, selective in what we buy and sell," he says. Countless hours were spent trawling auctions and vintage stores around Australia – David cites Bindi's Bazaar and The Centennial Centre in Newcastle as favourites – but nowadays he travels to Denmark, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Norway and Finland to buy up big. "The quality of the pieces, particularly in Denmark, is phenomenal," he says. "During last year's trip, a famed Danish education hall had just been stripped and I scored 34 Arne Jacobsen 'Grand Prix' chairs in original condition. These chairs aren't made anymore; the manufacturing involved is too costly. Already they're worth \$2000 each – in 20 years, who knows how much they'll be worth? These pieces are always going to hold their value; they're the true antiques of the future."

To meet demand, David has just opened a third showroom in Brookvale, a modernist's nirvana nestled between sand and sky on Sydney's northern beaches. It's just minutes from the 1950s cedar weatherboard home he shares with wife Maxine and their three children, Flynn, Mila and Macy. The couple is in the enviable position of being able to fill their home with pieces from the showroom floor. "Our home is just an edited version of the store," laughs David. "My wife always says to me, 'Are you a collector or a retailer?' I say both! The rule is, if it's not in the house, it's for sale. There are a couple of things that I sneakily keep in my office and refuse to sell, so I guess I'm breaking the rules." He even admits to having his heart broken after letting go of several coveted pieces. "There are two [Arne Jacobsen] egg chairs that I regret selling; they were the early 1959 model with the built-in cushion that's getting harder to find. I later saw them redone, one in cognac and the other in black leather, and they were just gorgeous," he sighs. "I'm on the search for one now." For more details, call (02) 9699 1089 or visit [vamptvintagedesign.com](http://vamptvintagedesign.com). 



"I love pieces that have a story, and I love it when people come back and tell me a new story about the things they've just bought"

### David's top 3 mid-century furniture tips

1. "Get to know suppliers and ask for ideas. The better you get to know us, the better you get looked after – you never know what we have in the warehouse to suit your budget or needs."
2. "Restore mid-century pieces with DIY restoration products. The best way to protect tabletops and sideboards is to lightly sand and finish them with a spray lacquer."
3. "Establish a collection of higher quality pieces by iconic mid-century designers. Over the past five years, we have watched prices double in Scandinavia, and as it gets harder to find original pieces, you will have fast-appreciating assets, not throwaway pieces heading for landfill."



Above: A believer in the beauty of the original, David shares the provenance of the items he finds in his showrooms, such as this Brookvale space. "A lot of the materials used in the '50s, like Brazilian rosewood, are now unavailable," he says. "Those pieces can never be reproduced and to do so using a lesser-grade wood doesn't make sense when there's a great supply of quality furniture – it would be disregarding the designer's work."

The showroom's office is filled with more design treasures.

A 'PH5' pendant light by Poul Henningsen casts light onto two Holmegaard vases while two iconic chairs are featured in gorgeous hues – a toffee-hued Arne Jacobsen 'Egg' chair and a vermillion Eames office chair. Another statement piece is the 1950s blue and white Australian-made kitchen dresser.

