

BOOKS



Secrétaire Bookcase, c. 1850, Australian cedar and rose mahogany, imported mahogany

Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938

by Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson. Published by Casuarina Press, Sydney.

This beautiful bound and cased book, containing over 1,000 illustrations, 600 of them in colour, spread across 528 pages, is an essential reference for collectors, curators, dealers and historians of



Miniature Chest of Drawers, c. 1879, Australian cedar and pine

all varieties. Some seven years of intensive research have produced a companion volume to the now – impossible to acquire – *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* by the same authors.

Andrew Simpson, the foremost dealer in Australian colonial furniture founded, Simpson's Antiques in Woollahra in 1978 and a number of the pieces illustrated have passed through his hands. This hands-on expertise and skill with a camera has been combined with Kevin Fahy's many years of meticulous research into colonial furniture – his crusade long before it was fashionable.

The introduction is elegant and expressive, interspersed with contemporary quotes that add colour to the text. For instance, 'Chairs



Chest of Drawers, c. 1875, casuarina



Davenport, c. 1880, Tasmanian Huon pine

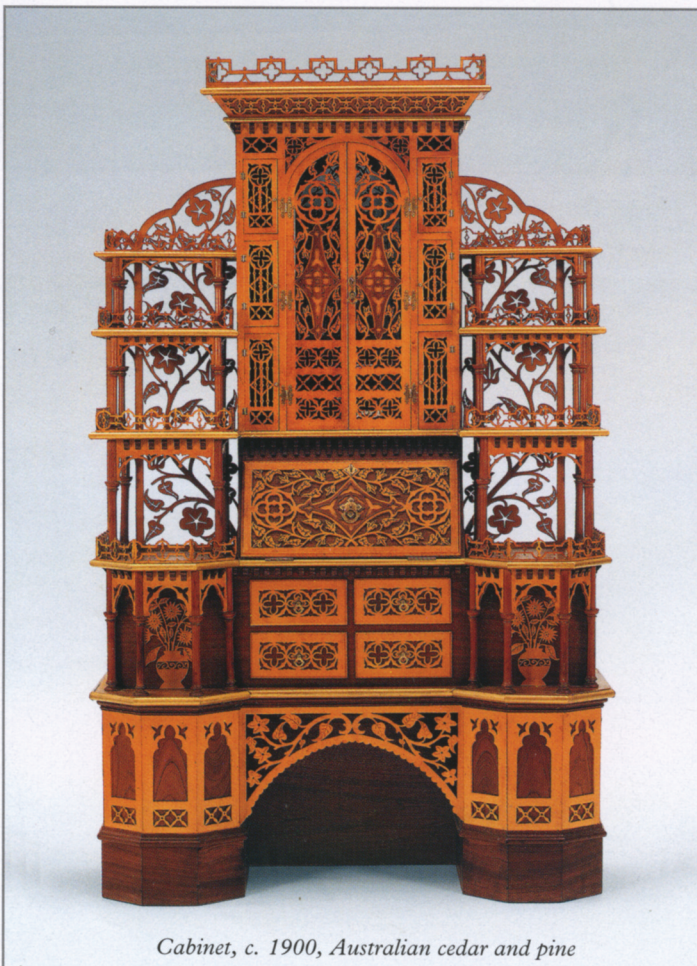


Sofa, c. 1835, Australian cedar

grow abundantly in New South Wales forests, as any moderately sized tree cut into two-foot lengths will testify' was quoted from J.B. Earp's *Gold Colonies of Australia* (London, 1852). The works illustrated in this book are, however, not of this ilk. They are strictly by cabinetmakers or the occasional amateur artist.

The authors are at pains to refute the notion that there was a major time lag before new styles were introduced from England, but point out that, as elsewhere, styles continued to be made long after their original introduction. A useful summary of known English pattern books is included in the text as a guide to what was being manufactured in the colonies that became Australia.

The book is divided into two parts. The pictorial history is arranged by type of furniture listed in alphabetical order. Within each section the illustrations are arranged in



Cabinet, c. 1900, Australian cedar and pine



Easy Chair, c. 1835, blackwood

chronological order. Bedsteads, bookcases, boxes, chests, chairs for all purposes, davenports, desks, dumb waiters, sideboards, sofas, couches and settees, not to mention tables of all sorts and even "whatnots", all have their sections. Captions include the source and relevant literature referring to style,

pattern book or catalogue references and the history of the piece and its provenance where known. These are fastidiously presented. Furniture is the most extensive of the applied arts to have been produced across the continent from the beginnings of European settlement. Not unnaturally, the book is weighted towards the eastern seaboard where the majority of Australians, including the authors, live and where the major manufacturing centres are situated. However, a surprisingly large proportion of the illustrations come from Tasmania. Generalising, these pieces appear to be more classically elegant and subdued than examples from NSW.

Among the highlights is a red cedar sideboard made by Andrew Lenehan for Government House in Sydney. Lenehan is arguably the best known 19th-century cabinet-maker in Australia. Other pieces include a veneered casuarina bookcase made for Philip Gidley King, Governor of NSW during 1800–1806; an elegant red cedar bookcase made in Sydney around 1840, featuring a glazed lozenge and diamond-shaped glass set in fine curved glazing bars; and an 1850 inlaid workbox now in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney. This institution also holds the much-travelled *Macquarie Chair*, upholstered in wallaby fur and carved with the Macquarie emblem of a raised dagger.

The National Gallery of Australia holds an interesting 1900 cabinet carved in blackwood in the Art Nouveau style. Unfortunately, the name of the maker is unknown. A piece which tickles the fancy is the *Australian Easy Chair*, patented in 1864 by William Stanway, now in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria.

South Australia is well represented by the German Biedermeier and English styles typical of that colony's heritage. An interesting piece from SA is a desk, c. 1900, carved with the name V.D. Drey, who was possibly a student of L.H. Howie at the South Australian School of Design, to whom the piece is currently attributed.

Queensland is represented by several pieces which, on average, are more flamboyant than those from the other colonies and of paler woods, often inlaid with a variety of native timbers. An 1868 yellow wood chiffonier made for Glenallen on the Darling Downs is a particularly fine example of carved work, while a kauri pine sofa by John Mason of Maryborough, eclectic in design and inlaid with several thousand pieces of different woods, exemplifies the flamboyant style.

Only four pieces from Western Australia are illustrated. These are primarily of jarrah in the neo-

Georgian and Regency styles that were favoured by old families in the west. One of these pieces is a 20th-century chair that belonged to J.W. R. Linton, the art master at the Perth Technical School. The chair – a prototype ecclesiastical chair – would most probably have been made by one of his collaborators, ex-student Harold Englund, with the carving by Linton.

In the dictionary section, workers known by mark, label, inscription or contemporary documentation have been included. Thumbnail biographies, quotes from advertisements and illustrations of labels or marks enliven this section. A better index would have made the

book easier to use. Some names, such as Howie, mentioned in the text, are not indexed.

There are omissions naturally, as “positive contemporary documentation”, to enable inclusion when no labels were available, is exceedingly time consuming to obtain. In the WA section, for instance, Smith & Co, managed during the 1880s by James Graves who hired more than 100 workmen, including William Zimpel (who is listed), is omitted as well as the earlier Tchan family of cabinetmakers, upholsterers and carvers who had a substantial business or Locke's Ltd which exhibited in Paris and London at the turn of the century.

Smith & Co won an Award of Merit at the 1881 International Exhibition in Perth.

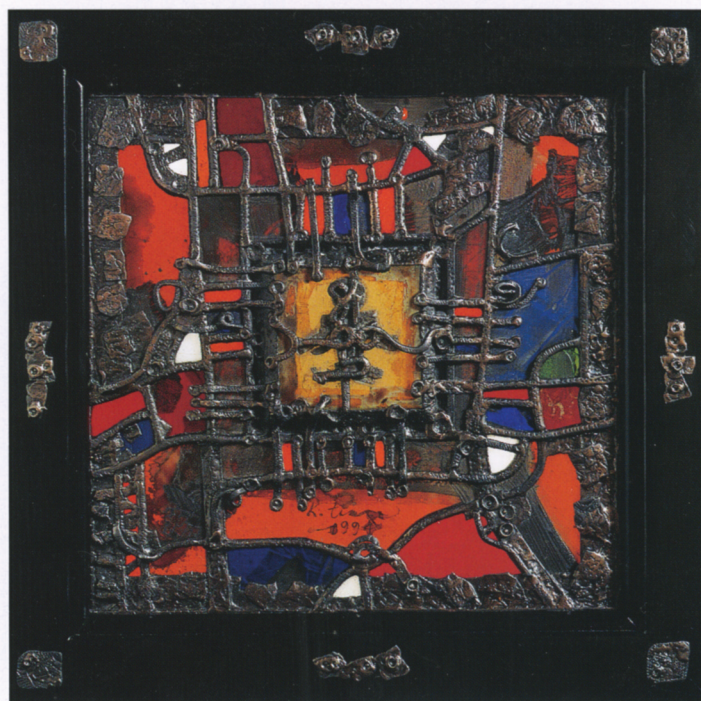
The primary purpose of this book is to assist in the accurate identification and dating of timber furniture made in Australia prior to World War II. In this it will be extremely useful to collectors and historians – an essential in any reference library. It is also a substantial social record and, like its predecessor, will be sought after long after the limited edition has sold out.

Dr Dorothy Erickson

The fascinating reference book is available from Casuarina Press, PO Box 643, Woollahra, NSW 2025.



Klaus Zimmer, 'Script and Illumination – Part 1 and Part 2' (triptych), 1994, stained glass panels, each 40 x 40 cm. National Glass Art Collection, Wagga Wagga City Art Gallery, NSW, Australia



Zimmer: Glass Artist

Published by Macmillan.

Often undervalued as fully representative of the fine arts, stained glass has not always enjoyed the support and recognition that this multi-dimensional art medium has now attained in Australia. Klaus Zimmer has been one of a small number of practitioners and artisans working tirelessly and energetically to infuse this medium with the dynamism and authority that has rescued this art form from long periods of neglect.

The publication *Klaus Zimmer: Glass Artist* is a joyous celebration of the resurgence of stained-glass art through the works and life of this remarkable artist. With essay contributions from leading figures in the contemporary glass world, such as Johannes Schreiter, Geoffrey Edwards, Alex Selenitsch, Patrick Hutchings and Caroline Swash, combined with extensive black-and-white and colour reproductions, this sumptuous Macmillan publication provides a rich and informative insight into the artist and his contextual *oeuvre*. Tracing Klaus Zimmer's life and art from his childhood in Berlin before the start of World War II, through to his arrival in Australia in 1952, these creatively tumultuous times are well and poignantly described in the artist's essay *Remembering*, which combines a photographic montage with autobiographical recollections.