

This variation makes *New Suburban's* narrative all the richer and Harrison's neat ordering of all thirty dwellings into three chapters provides a tight editorial framework. The most exciting of these chapters is the last, *The Suburban Remade*, which intrigues because of the hybrid, non-traditional nature of its nine featured residences, such as Andrew Maynard Architects' Hill House. Each is a delicious promise of what's to come as we slowly transition towards other forms of urban living.

When Harrison discusses each residence he is clear and succinct. His description is excellent and although he relies heavily on architectural vernacular his writing is never dense or alienating. For a book that has the concept of family at its heart, however, what surprises is the apparent absence of the family's voice from the overall narrative. Yes, a pull quote attributed to the respective owner is included in each residence's discussion but it functions as a graphic device rather than personalised commentary. Integrated quotes from the owners and architects could have served each discussion very well, injecting greater human interest and insight into each dwelling's unique story.

As with Harrison's previous book, the very well received *Forty-six Square Metres of Land Doesn't Normally Make a House*, Stuart Geddes is again responsible for design. His art direction and layout is much more restrained this time around and it lends *New Suburban* an easy accessibility that immediately guarantees broader appeal. *Forty-six Square Metres* sometimes felt suffocated by its own design, often making the editorial seem secondary. This doesn't happen with *New Suburban* as Geddes achieves the perfect balance between his dynamic style and Harrison's solid content.

There is real joy to be found in this book. From the use of an opening quote from television's *The Wonder Years* to the luscious feel of the matte paper stock and the images of children playing gleefully outdoors, there's a spirit of generosity on each page and it clearly emanates from Harrison's desire to share his passion for high-quality architecture. Even before the first project is discussed, his introduction does a good job convincing us 'suburban' is not a dirty word and living in the suburbs is no reason to be ashamed. We need to find ways to incorporate those traditional suburban ideals into the way we build and ultimately the way we live.

» **Stuart Harrison's *New Suburban: Remaking the Family Home in Australia and New Zealand*** is published by **Thames & Hudson**. RRP: \$70

thameshudson.com.au



Weylandts

BY DANIELLA CASAMENTO

Abbotsford is set to become the prime destination for lovers of fine furniture and décor with the launch this month of lifestyle and living retailer Weylandts. Since 1999 the Weylandts brand has become known in South Africa for its quality, diversity and principals of fine living with products sourced from all over the world. Their philosophy is about enjoying the quality of relaxed, good living. "There is a great sense of that in Australia," Chris Weylandt says.

Weylandt has been involved in the furniture industry for more than 25 years having worked in the family business in Namibia and then moving to South Africa to launch their first destination store. He and his partner Kim have since built relationships with many skilled makers of hand-crafted products from across India, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, South Africa and Europe. They are excited to bring their unique range of furniture and homewares to Melbourne and have spent many long months sourcing and developing new product for this Australian flagship store.

Their odyssey to open an outlet here began two years ago in response to a growing number of inquiries from customers wanting to know "how can we have a piece of it," Weylandt explains. So he and Kim set about searching for a location that had the right balance of architectural quality and scale. They scoured the inner city of both Melbourne and Sydney, walking the streets to get to know the

environment until they came across the old matchbox factory in tree-lined Gipps Street. At 3500m², Weylandt says the industrial building, which has a red brick and rendered façade and sawtooth roof, is the perfect size to display the many room settings and large range of products for which they are known.

"It's a fantastic combination of industrial aesthetic and contemporary design," Weylandt says of the fit-out designed by boutique Sydney practice AN + A. "Architecture is a big part of our retail philosophy."

Growing up in Namibia, a country Weylandt describes as a cosmopolitan former German colony, he was exposed to European furniture through his father's furniture store. Designs by Arne Jacobsen and B&B Italia were influential in honing his appreciation for elegantly simple yet complex designs.

Chris and Kim travel at least six months of the year speaking with local artisans to source and develop new products that cater for the mid- to high-end market. Products are imported in small quantities as new discoveries are made but he says the handwriting is consistent. "The curatorial focus is on products which have an organic, natural quality and combine a high level of skill honed over generations that in many cases is lost," he explains. "Skills such as weaving, embroidery and wood work have a great inherent cultural value that tells a

story about where the product comes from." Weylandt works with the makers to develop products that combine these skills with new technology as a point of difference.

With such a diversity of furniture and decor available, Weylandt says they present a unique collection of products in each room setting which is often made up with items from 10 countries to get just the right balance and design. "We select what we think is the best and then edit it," he says. This level of attention to detail broadens the understanding of design for many first time customers who Weylandt says are inspired to start their home décor from scratch.

After years of experience in the furniture industry, he understands that clients have an appreciation of design, and look for value and quality. "The change in the market has meant that people take time to research their investment in fine furniture and once that decision is made, they don't want to wait weeks for delivery."

Weylandts maintains a separate large warehouse and onsite storage to minimise this waiting time for customers. A range of fabrics and leather is also kept in stock which significantly reduces the waiting time for upholstered lounge suites and other items.

A significant addition to the old matchbox factory is an in-house café called The Kitchen. Like the other destination stores, it is an extension of the Weylandts relaxed good living philosophy and way of life.

» **Weylandts**
200 Gipps Street, Abbotsford

weylandts.com.au