

“THE CREATIVE PROCESS NEVER STOPS.”

-Oscar de la Renta

The Aging Process

WOODEN DUCKS | CONSERVATION ACT | THE MUSEUM GUARDS | GROWTH RINGS

Celebrating those whose creative processes revolve around taking care of and conserving the past, while being ever patient and always learning.

Wooden Ducks

WORDS Nicole DeMarco PHOTOGRAPHS Marnie Hawson



“It’s tedious, finger-numbing work, but with every scrub you can see the process as the muck fades and the timber is exposed.”



For this husband and wife duo, it was easy to find meaningful work. Slaven and Jean share a passion: “We are both long time collectors of antiques and had a vision that one day we would open a shop and just fill it with the type of things we love,” Slaven says. And that’s what they did. Slaven and Jean opened The Wooden Duck in the historic village of Trentham, Australia, in 2009, and they have put in many hours of hard, dusty work ever since. They specialize in vintage and industrial pieces, namely rustic farmhouse type furniture, that is sourced from all over the Australian countryside.

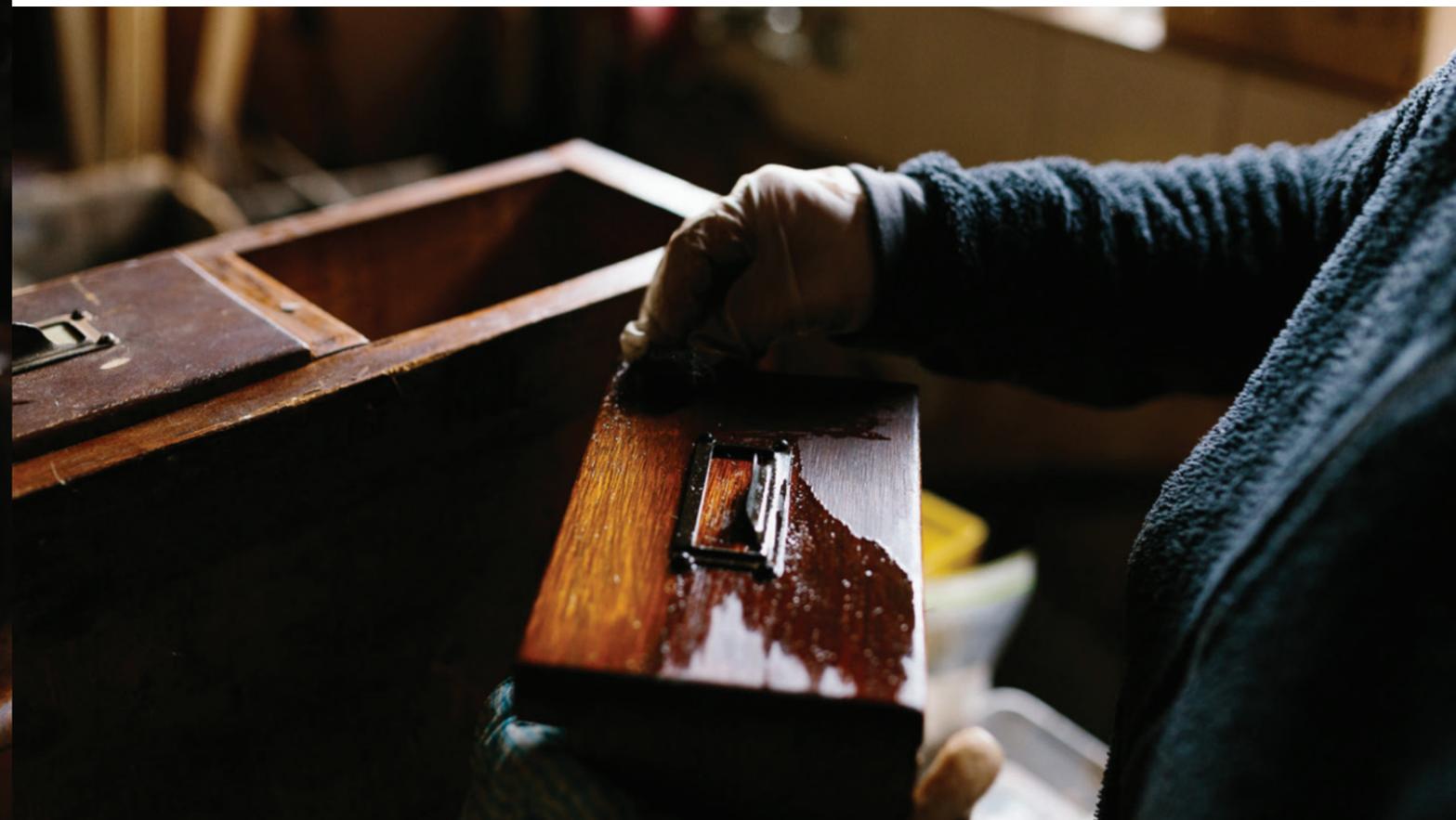
Slaven and Jean spend their days going out on buying trips and loading up their van to maximum capacity in order to bring home as many treasures as possible. “It is an adrenaline buzz when you find cool stuff. It doesn’t matter that we’re going to sell it, it’s a buzz to uncover it and it’s a

buzz to make somebody else happy when they purchase the item,” Slaven explains. All of the found items are brought back to Trentham, where they are cleaned, restored, and eventually put up for sale. Perusing through their handpicked stock one might find a wide array of industrial drawers among other furniture, quirky décor and even taxidermy pieces.

The process lies in preparing the old, aged items for sale, and it varies: “Sometimes the treasure we find just requires a dust off and it’s ready to display in the shop, but other times the process is a lot more time consuming. Wooden furniture that has been painted needs to be stripped, sanded and re-waxed...it’s tedious, finger-numbing work, but with every scrub you can see the process as the muck fades and the timber is exposed,” Slaven says. In this way, gently aged items can retain their charm and character while



others are refurbished. Slaven and Jean’s unmatched appreciation for the natural aging process gives these pieces new life so that they can be loved once more. ✨





Conservation Act

Karen Vidler specializes in the conservation of leather bookbindings, humbly tackling her craft while respecting the natural aging processes of the materials used in construction.

WORDS Nicole DeMarco PHOTOGRAPHS Marnie Hawson

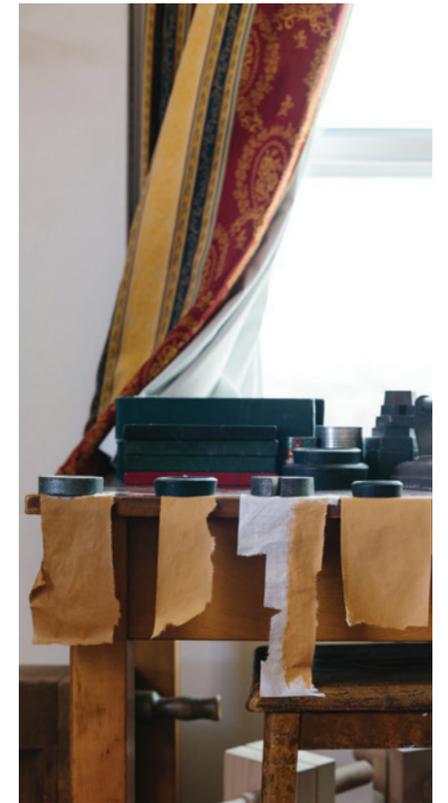
Karen Vidler is a book conservator and the owner of Book Conservation Services based in Castlemaine, Australia, where she spends her days tinkering away in her workshop. She has a degree in printmaking and art history, and she attended graduate studies in librarianship, fine bookbinding, and book conservation. Karen specializes in the conservation of leather bookbindings, but she's constantly learning in order to stay abreast of practical skills and the natural aging processes of the materials used in construction. Just like the restoration and conservation process, each day at work is different. "Within the same day I can be creating a whole new book for a client or carefully conserving the binding structure and text block of

another book," Karen says.

Karen first heard about her future profession while assisting with a Book Dusting Program at the Baillieu Library of the University of Melbourne in 1993. She was carefully removing a leather bound volume of a Walter Scott Waverly novel from the shelf, when the front board slid off the face of the book entirely and dropped haphazardly onto the floor. This sparked a conversation about what happens to the damaged books and about the shortage of book conservationists in Australia. It was this very conversation that led Karen down the path of book conservation, a path which took her to the United Kingdom as no such training program exists in her native Australia.



“These books in particular have been waiting for someone to assist in slowing or reversing some of their aging processes... I have found them as friends that have been patiently waiting for someone like me to help them.”



Twenty years have passed, but Karen's initial process has not aged a bit. “The conservation of any book begins with the examination of the book to determine both the structure and materials of the book and causes of deterioration to any components,” she explains. Based on the results, a conservation proposal is developed, which can range from a simple stabilization tactic like a leather treatment, to disbanding a book entirely, washing and resizing the text pages and returning as much as possible of the original binding to the book. Each step requires patience and a steady hand, as the books are often

very old and fragile. Karen believes she has grown more patient with the books over the years, better understanding what they want and need. In a way, she says that the books have also grown patient. “These books in particular have been waiting for someone to assist in slowing or reversing some of their aging processes,” Karen says. “In recent years I have found them as friends that have been patiently waiting for someone like me to help them.” ✧



A Most Patient Year

Truffle farming requires patience and time. Ian and Marilyn Woodhouse embarked on this task with the hopes that it would keep them young in mind, body, and spirit. What they found is that growing truffles is an exact science, and they must grow with the truffles to continue learning and perfecting their process.

WORDS Nicole DeMarco PHOTOGRAPHS Marnie Hawson

Ian and Marilyn first met somewhere in the middle of the Indian Ocean while traveling to Europe in 1966, and married in England one year later. The pair tried their hand at dairy farming in Australia and lived on a farm in the Western District for over 37 years, but it was not until later in life that they turned to truffles. Now their farm and business, Oak Hill Truffles, is in its third year of production; and Ian and Marilyn are working to bring awareness to the

potential use of their product in everyday cooking.

It was at peak retirement age when Ian and Marilyn decided that they needed a lifestyle change, but that they certainly would not let age slow them down. With their children grown and out of the nest, they tossed around many ideas like grapes or olives, but ultimately came to one conclusion: “We settled on attempting to grow truffles and to that end bought a suitable sized property in Gordon,





Victoria, that had the right climate conditions and was still an easy distance from Melbourne,” Ian says. Together they embarked on their new adventure with the hopes that it would keep them young in mind, body, and spirit. What they found is that growing truffles is an exact science, and they must grow with the truffles to continue learning and perfecting their process.

Truffle farming also requires patience and time. Trees are planted that serve as hosts to the truffles, but it often takes many years for the truffles to form and grow underground. According to Ian,

“Patience is a virtue because it is rare to go from planting trees to the first truffle in less than five years, and there are many cases where trees have been planted and no production achieved even after more than fifteen years.” The truffles form between December and February, maturing from mid-June to August. This is when the truffles emit their powerful aroma and Sally and Max, their beloved truffle dogs, sniff out the fruits of their labor. Ian and Merilyn produced their first Black Perigord truffle (*Tuber Melanosporum*), one of the most highly regarded species of truffle, in 2012. They keep busy with

routine work while waiting for their truffles to mature, keeping the grounds in order and keeping pests like rabbits or foxes away from their prized possessions. At the end of the day, Ian and Merilyn’s delicacies make their way to local markets and select restaurants, harvested and aged to perfection. ✨