



ANTIQUARIANS

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By Sophie Aitken, Jasper Riley & Beatrice Madamba

FOREWORD

The divide between urban and rural life is connected by history, aging and deterioration of living spaces. Both suburban and country towns harbour antique gems that find their way into the collections of now: antique stores in the turn of the 2000's. Antique stores serve as the for-profit museum, which sees the selling and trading of history as commodities. Over the last few decades, the revival of the 'old, dusty store' has been rebirthed through inner-city communities, fuelling historical, aesthetic nostalgia.

But what about the individuals who run these stores? Antiquarians, enigmatic shopkeepers who purchase and collect antique gems, now sit on the brinks of suburbs selling pieces of history and identity, seven days a week.

The three of us travelled across Victoria and visited 5 antique stores, both urban and rural. We created this project with the intention of demystifying the wonderful world of antique stores, to introduce these eccentric antiquarians and give them a voice to tell their stories through audio, photographic and editorial documentation. This book serves as a sensory experience that archives the sounds, texture and lore of the antique community throughout Victoria, Australia.

Beatrice (referred to as I) is a writer and culture editor for Catalyst Magazine based in Melbourne, with an interest in empty spaces and nostalgia. Fifi is a podcast producer based in Brunswick, interested in documentary media and untold perspectives and experiences. Jasper is a documentary photographer based in the Macedon Ranges and a hobby collector of ticket stubs, old photographs and postcards.

How to scan a QR Code

QR Codes are supplied within each store piece that will take you to an audio interview hosted on Soundcloud.

1. Connect Mobile phone to Wi-Fi or a personal hotspot
2. Open the camera app from your mobile phone home screen.
3. Using the back camera, hold a finger over the screen until four edges appear around the square border on the paper.
4. Release finger and wait for a link pop-up to appear at the top of your screen from Soundcloud.
5. Press the pop-up to open Soundcloud on your browser, or through the Soundcloud app.

MAINE SECONDHAND

Castlemaine, Victoria



The **BIKE VAULT**

TONKS BROS.
EST. 1895
SECONDHAND CENTRE
• Antiques •
• Furniture •
• Collectables •

ANTIQUES
China
Implements
Bottles
Furniture
Books
Toys
Old Tools
Lots More!
Come for a Browse

ONEHAND CENTRE

Maine Second Hand Centre

“From crap to top end!”

There is something undeniably charming about its decaying, off-white brick exteriors and tall arched windows. The quaint signage plastered on the store reading, “Second Hand” in large serif font was all it took for us to fall in love with this antique gem.

Maine Second Hand is not just an antique store, but a deceased estate management service. That is, a business which both buys and sells items from deceased estates, items that no longer have a home to go to after their owners have passed. It sounds as if I’m talking about a newly orphaned pet.

I am talking about artefacts of the past, once loved and waiting to be loved again. There is no denying that this antique store houses everything - quite literally everything. From furniture, tools, kitchenware, to clothing, books and art, Maine Second Hand is your reliable source of discovery.

Co-owner, Bob Brown (aka. “Sometimes The Boss”) has been in the antiques business for 35 years. He

knows the ins and outs of the industry, from sourcing, pricing and selling antique items. Just before we conducted our interview, co-owner Danielle climbed up the stairs and asked Bob what to price the newly sourced chairs.

“Whatever you want.”

“How much?”

A sigh. “\$20 each,” Bob decides.

The irony in the conversation is amusing - pricing ‘new’ furniture in a store where nothing is really new.

The physical building itself epitomises the potential of finding beauty in dilapidation. Out of all the sections of the store, the second floor is by far my favourite, mostly because it’s quite hidden. The floor is accessible through an inconspicuous staircase that leads you to a grand expanse of room. One’s eyes are overwhelmed with where to look; from the stacks upon stacks of dusty books scattered amongst the floor (because the shelves are simply too full to harbour anymore), to the endless selection of framed artworks, either

displayed on the floor-to-ceiling metal racks or lined up in random fashion along the room's decaying walls. This space, in all its unorganised grandeur, garners an abundance of charm and beauty.

"This is a work in progress here, got to make a mess before anything happens," Bob jokes, gesturing to the mess of books and art. This place hadn't changed at all since our last visit a mere two weeks ago. In fact, the place hasn't changed within the entire year according to Bob. It seems like things have remained untouched, almost as if patiently waiting for a pair of curious hands to pick up a dusty item and disrupt the stagnancy of undiscovered history. It makes me wonder just how long this 'work in progress' has been admired, let alone touched by the browsing customer.

Is that not the charm of antique stores? Discovering an artefact of the past, not knowing when it was made, when it was used. Not knowing how it found its way into this curated for-profit museum.

Before we said our goodbyes, a conversation ensued with Bob. He asked us what other stores we were documenting in our project. It was only until then when we realised, like with all other niche industries and small businesses, there is definitely a small network of antique shopkeepers - and for the most part, everyone knows everyone. Are they friends? Rivals? Friendly competitors? Who's to say.

But as Bob highlighted, Maine Second Hand yields itself to stand apart

from the sea of antique stores across Victoria. Down to earth shopkeepers and a store that accumulates such a wide range of artefacts, "from crap to top end."

Bob, Danielle and Jason are the co-owners of Second Hand Maine Centre located at 53 Templeton St, Castlemaine Victoria.



LICENSED
SECONDHAND DEALER

CLEAR

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Shed

Storage

Home

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FINE CHINA, HAND-
WOVEN RUGS,
COPPER LUNCH
TINS, BAMBOO
BOOKS, BONE
HANDLE KNIVES,
LOSTI PINS &
PATCHES, ARTS &
CRAFTS & DESIGN.

FUTURIST ITALIAN
HOMEWARES,
RAW ORGANIC
SOAPS, LOCAL
ARTISTS' GOODS,
POTS, PLANTS &
GARDENALIA & AN
ENDLESS WALL OF
GAMES & GIFTS.

HOPE STREET

Furniture, Homewares,
Collectables
& more

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HOPE STREET SPACE

Brunswick, Victoria

Hope Street Space

“Basically, if I like it, I’ll buy it.”

The first thing you see upon walking through the open warehouse entrance is a forest of green. Potted plants of all shapes and sizes hang gleefully from the ceiling by way of metal chains or placed on tables and shelves. *Is this an antique store?* you may wonder (for I certainly did). But a glance to your right will reveal that this is anything but a mere plant shop.

Recycled pop art guru and store director, Sandy started this four-year-old business inspired by the variety stores of his childhood. I can only imagine the wonderment and awe of a young child, dwarfed by endless aisles harbouring an eclectic assortment of knick knacks and other miscellanea. I did not grow up in the time of such stores. But in walking through Hope Street Space, I can almost say that I have had a small taste akin to what that world may have been like.

The atmosphere indeed did emulate that of variety stores, if not through its layout, then through its wide range of items. Sandy describes it

perfectly: “It’s third parts potted plants, third parts vintage items and third parts toys” - and everything in between, really. It is a curated mass of collectables, ceramics, homewares, books and jewellery. Because of this, it can perhaps be described as a hybrid antique store as a product of its items, both old and new.

What is it exactly that draws us city folk to these antique stores, I wonder? Perhaps it’s due in part to our collective human desire to return to nostalgia. We have become so good at romanticising the past because we don’t want to succumb to the ennui of the present. Hope Street Space offers an escape, a unique pocket of the past that is seldom experienced in urban areas.

Sandy does not source his vintage items in Melbourne op-shops, but instead travels rural, visiting places like Bendigo and Ballarat. Isn’t there something far more appealing, even magical, in discovering items that have travelled far distances and have lived mysterious, unknown pasts before

landing into the hands of the city-dwelling customer?

But it's not just city folk. According to Sandy, many customers travel far distances from way beyond Melbourne just to visit the store. It seems that many people have heard about Hope St. Space and are keen to pop by.

As I wandered through the store, I overheard a browsing customer exclaim, "How have I never noticed these before!" approaching an assortment of gemstones. There are two things that I derived from this: one, Hope Street Space is very large, so much so that one needs to spend a solid amount of time to get a sufficient look at everything. And two, her surprise at discovering an item she had not seen before may mean that she has been here previously. Perhaps she was a regular.

I think that's what I like about Hope Street Space: the well-established community here. Sandy knows his customers, and by the same token, they know him. When I asked him if he had any regulars, he responded,

"You two walked in ten minutes ago, and in that time, I've spoken to about six people and addressed them by their names."

And it's true - I noticed right away the warm nature with which he greeted every customer as if he'd done it a million times before; not out of necessity, but simply because he was well-acquainted with each and every one of them. I heard the gratitude in his voice as he spoke of the loyalty of his local community, the regulars who

come back every so often in support of the store.

Perhaps to shopkeepers like Sandy, the people themselves are as precious as the vintage rarities sold within their stores.

Sandy is the director and owner of Hope Street Space located at 42 Hope St, Brunswick Victoria.





HAVE A
MAKING
MAZING
BIRTHDAY

happy



BRUNSWICK
MUM



Anna
& F

Brunswick

Dog
TO THE
Keep
on Keepin
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Fair
out
KEEP
TRUCK





\$6.00

SET

RATHDOWNE ANTIQUES & GIFTS

Malmsbury, Victoria



Rathdowne Antiques & Gifts

“That’s what keeps us young at heart.”

Malmsbury is one of the most beautiful places on Earth. In my eyes, this bluestone village is the epitome of a quaint rural town, one that holds undeniable charm and a whole lot of heart.

Along Mollison Street, adjacent to the very popular Malmsbury Bakery (home to the warmest and heartiest of pastries) is a shop that I always make sure to visit upon my returns: Rathdowne Antiques & Gifts.

During my very first visit, I distinctly remember two women sitting behind the front counter: one older with a rather neat, white bob and the other slightly younger. The pair were a mother and daughter I presumed, and the latter greeted us with a friendly smile. My friend had also purchased a lovely smelling beeswax candle from their assortment of soaps, essential oils and candles.

I have always remembered this store, as well as the humble, little bluestone town of Malmsbury. I knew that I would be back.

Three months later the idea of this project first came into fruition. During our interminable process of scouting stores to document, our minds were all of a sudden hit with a memory of a large, black shopfront with four wide windows. We just knew we had to return to Malmsbury.

Rathdowne Antiques wasn’t always in Malmsbury. Their original store was actually on Rathdowne Street in Carlton, which is where the name comes from. Yearning to escape the bustling city life, owners Elizabeth and Richard relocated to Malmsbury in favour of a more peaceful vista, and just 20 minutes away from Castlemaine where their adult children lived. Their daughter Bronwyn also helps run their store.

Working in the antiques business for 10 years means that they know the ropes. In fact, the pair don’t generally source their antiques from auctions, but instead are garnered from people who approach them with something to sell. The store is made up

of an eclectic mix of antiques, giftware and art, most of which are works by Elizabeth and Richard's son in law and artist, Glen Preece.

"What an exciting Monday!" is what co-owner Elizabeth said (the woman with the white bob) when we returned. And it certainly was - what was meant to be a brief visit turned into an impromptu invitation into their home with a guided tour of their favourite antique gems, both in the store and from their own personal collection.

Richard and Elizabeth showed us items so strange, so unfamiliar that ignited our fascination; we found beauty in the unknown. Richard showed us a gill, an old measurement that equates to a quarter of a pint.

"A gill is 5 ounces. You don't even remember what an ounce was!"

It was an absolute privilege to be welcomed so graciously into their little home. Naturally, it was the best location to conduct an interview, away from the noise of the occasional passing car on the main street. But there was something so amiable about the manner in which Elizabeth showed us around their charming residence tucked away behind the front counter. One of her most treasured items is a piece of Chinese embroidery that is now framed and displayed proudly on her wall. She had found it many years ago on the floor of a house next door to the shop. She opened up this piece of rag to find a beautiful, intricate embroidery that once belonged to a Chinese costume. It was this special discovery that sparked

her love for Chinese antiques and later, her Chinese collection sold within the store.

After this act of showing-and-telling, Elizabeth said, "There's always something interesting happening. To keep us lively. And learning."

Elizabeth is 80 and Richard is 89. When you have been in the business for the greater part of your life, let alone live in the residence behind the store itself, perhaps it is easy to forget the rarity in the antiquities that have been collected over the course of their lives. Our visit reminded me of what we can gain from just a single interaction. These shop owners, just like their tangible antique commodities, hold unofficial histories that have yet to be discovered. And I'm glad that we enabled that to happen, if only for a day.

Elizabeth, Richard and their daughter Bronwyn are the owners of Rathdowne Antiques & Gifts located at 73 Mollison St, Malmsbury Victoria.





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SAFETY
REQUIREMENTS MEAN
OUR PATRON NUMBERS
ARE LIMITED

Keeping customer numbers
limited indoors

Keep up to date at [COVID-19](#)

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MARKET
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OPEN
For
inspection



ANTIQUES

DE BRETT'S ANTIQUES
Moonee Ponds, Victoria

De Bretts Antique Market

“The old and the unusual.”

I must admit, my favourite kind of antique store is the warehouse kind. The kind that makes use of an otherwise not-so-aesthetically-pleasing void of empty space by filling every square inch with old and beautiful things. De Bretts Antiques Market is exactly that.

Bryan is the owner and has been in the antique business for 50 years. He describes the contents of his store as “many and varied.” Like with many antique stores, there is simply no limit to exploration in a vast space such as this. Everywhere you look is a new avenue of curiosity: glass cabinet displays of jewellery, cameras, and other bric-a-brac; towering shelves of vintage fabrics, old books and even decades worth of transcribed parliamentary debates; endless vintage light fixtures that hang decoratively from the warehouse ceilings.

I myself tried to avoid the generous racks of vintage clothing located at the back of the store. Not because I had a distaste for them - it was the opposite problem. I had to prevent

a needless splurge (which proved to no avail).

A store with a wide range of old wares lends itself to cater to many niche interests and curiosities. On that particular afternoon, one customer had asked a shopkeeper to unlock one of the many display cabinets. He wanted to have a thorough look at some old books. *Really* old books. The kind of old that is characterised by their fragile hardback covers and brittle spines, hanging on to their dear life.

He spent a long time there, sitting in front of the cabinet and inspecting each and every book. When I made my third round about the store, he was still there, examining the books. From the growing book pile that sat next to him, it seemed that he had garnered a fair number of gems to take home.

It is so exciting to me, that every single item in antique stores was once owned by someone at some point in history. That stack of tattered books found by this customer had once sat on

the shelves of ornate mahogany bookcases. They had been held, read and loved by their original owners. After a long journey of surviving and withstanding the imminent arrival of each new year, they will have found themselves in the hands of a new owner - ready to be read and loved again.

The unfortunate reality is, not many stores like this exist anymore. It was something that I always knew, but it was only until our conversation with Bryan that I really understood. The antiques world is not quite what it once was. Bryan has been in this business for 50 years and has hence witnessed the world of antiques both in its prime and in its dying era of the now.

This reality only enhances the absolute rarity of such stores. For many years, these shopkeepers have worked hard in preserving the past for the present to enjoy. It must be difficult for some to adapt to this ever-changing world. But I am thankful that stores like De Bretts have been able to survive, let alone thrive within this current climate.

Bryan approached us after the interview and asked us about how this project came to be. He was happy to hear that it was our own idea, not one that was merely assigned to us by our tutor.

“Good on you,” he said to us. Maybe it’s nice to see young people with a genuine fascination with history and an appreciation for artefacts of the past. In a world of disconnection between young and old, it is our role to bridge these disconnections and do our

part in helping these beautiful stores live on.

Bryan is the owner of De Bretts Antique Market located at 646 Mt Alexander Rd, Moonce Ponds Victoria.











RENT
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
1970s - 1990s

3 for \$1

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|---|---|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| 8058
236 A LITTLE BOING
POSTROT
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8059
3796 W
DANCE WITH A DOLLY
POSTROT
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8060
1155
CRYING IN THE CHAPEL
SLOW POSTROT
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8061
3392
THE QUICKS BRENDA
POSTROT
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8062
2162
VIENI, VIENI
ROXROY
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8063
2217
BLUE HAWAII
ROXROY
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8064
6217
MOONLIGHT GAMBLER
ROXROY
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8065
2788
THE MOTHER OF ALL
PUT-PUT-PUT
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8066
188
FIVE MINUTES MORE
POSTROT
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8067
8067
KEEP IT A SECRET
WATERMILL
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. | 8068
8068
SATS OF
FRIBBER OF
NORMANDY
Lyrics by Les Lasseur
Music by Les Lasseur
The Applause Music Co. Inc. |
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THE OLD POST OFFICE
ANTIQUES

ANTIQUES

WILKINSON & DEACON

Handwritten graffiti on the wall.

Handwritten graffiti on a ledge.

THE OLD POST OFFICE ANTIQUES

Fitzroy North, Victoria

The Old Post Office Antiques

“We’re antiques ourselves!”

As we entered The Old Post Office that chilly Sunday morning, we were met with the jovial face of a staffy cross jack russell, trotting towards us for a wholesome pat to which I happily obliged (the dog’s name is Billy, but more about him later.) The store’s exterior had already caught my eye: the 19th century architecture painted a tasteful shade of charcoal; a shabby awning that perhaps was once a crisp white but has now become fatigued with age; a faded typeface reading: ‘Antiques Bought & Sold’. It was an antique store lover’s dream. Add in the dog to that tableau - and it was *my* idea of a dream come true.

The Old Post Office has been nicknamed, ‘the squeezey antique shop’. Upon a first glance it’s easy to see why. The shop is an amalgamation of antique furniture - bookshelves, armoires, dining sets and more - all tightly compacted into a small space. Some may find it indeed, too ‘squeezey’, but I am drawn to this cluttered, inorganic arrangement of ornate pieces

from different eras. It is almost like a form of time travel with each step that takes you deeper into this marvellous maze of a store.

Frank and Catia are co-owners of the store and have worked at The Old Post Office for 35 years. Like with many antiquarians, their business had developed from a mere interest and blossomed into a full-time career.

There is a genuine fervour that they have for antiques. Anyone could see it, the passion so potent in the way that they speak. To them, these pieces are true works of art. We conducted the interview seated on a three-piece Victorian salon suite from the 1860s, made out of the most beautiful hand carved rosewood.

“If you asked someone to do this today,” says Frank, “they’d probably charge you \$10,000.”

I feel that we don’t get that kind of artistry in modern furniture now. Almost everything now is mass-produced and cheap - cheap for a reason. As Frank pointed out to us, by

the time you replace an Ikea wardrobe five times over the course of 20 years, it will have cost more than a genuine antique piece purchased at the same time. If you consider the time, effort and hard work that goes into these artefacts, they are truly worth every cent.

“It’s just different,” Catia adds. “Things are always different. And you get such a thrill out of finding something really special.”

Frank and his wife Catia are not just co-owners of The Old Post Office. They are also husband and wife, married to each other for just over 50 years. They not only work together but they live together - and they love what they do.

“We fight everyday...But I let her win.”

“That’s a lie!”

Catia spoke more about the job: “You miss it when you’re not doing it. We found that out during last year with the lockdown. We miss the people; we miss the whole business. We thought we were ready to retire until we had that lockdown and then we thought, nah, we’re not really ready to retire yet.”

It’s inspiring, talking to two people who clearly love what they do. I suppose it’s impossible to grow tired of it, not when there is always something new that comes in, to research, to admire. With a passion so contagious, it’s no surprise that the store has established a loyal, like-minded community.

“A lot of retailers sort of get fed up with the public. We actually must be

different kinds of beasts - we actually enjoy it,” Frank says.

And of course, I can’t forget about Billy, the Old Post Office’s unofficial mascot and most loyal companion. If the rumours are true, this dog is a bit of a legend in Fitzroy North. The couple rescued him about 14 years ago and is now a full-time employee at the store, greeting customers as they enter. According to Frank, they have a lot of customers who come in just to see Billy.

“He’s a part of it. He’s an important part of our business.” And without a doubt, he absolutely is.

Frank and Catia are the owners of The Old Post Office Antiques located at 85 St Georges Rd, Fitzroy North Victoria.











ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has truly been a rewarding journey planning, scouting and documenting our material for this little book. For the past three months Sophie and Jasper and I have travelled around and beyond Melbourne to meet the most wonderful, down to earth individuals who so generously welcomed us into their stores and shared their passion and stories. We had some bumps along the way – faulty microphones and car troubles that later make for a funny story. But we made it in the end, and I think I speak for all three of us when I say we are quite proud of our final product.

We'd like to thank each and every one of our antiquarians: Bob from Maine Second Hand, Sandy from Hope Street Space, Elizabeth and Richard from Rathdowne Antiques and Gifts, Bryan from De Bretts Antique Market and the lovely Frank and Catia (and Billy!) from The Old Post Office Antiques. Without your generosity, passion and patience, this book would not have been possible.

We learnt so much from these antiquarians. Speaking to the owners and hearing their un-official histories highlight just how much passion and love goes into their work. The next time you visit an antique store, I encourage you to say hello to the individual behind the counter. If there is one thing that I have learned from this experience, it is that one interaction can go a long way. There are definitely more undiscovered stories to be shared. All you have to do is look.