

We love LUCY

Graffiti'd lounges, punk-zebra chairs. Lucy Loneragan's revamped vintage furniture is energising interiors, says **HANNA MARTON**

There's a reason Sydney's design (and social) scene is talking about Lucy Loneragan. Yes, she is unbearably talented at just 29, but the interior designer is also warm, eloquent and laughs a lot. She's wearing a black Zara blazer, slouchy pants and a tousled ponytail when we meet in her chic-but-cosy office in Sydney's Surry Hills, and her face lights up when she talks about her home town of Mudgee.

"We lived on a property and as a three-year-old I would get up in the morning to walk 20 minutes to visit my 'best friend', an old man called Snow," Loneragan recalls. "Dad would watch me walking barefoot up the gravel road, in a nightie, with a doll hanging from my hand," she adds, laughing. This desire to explore, to "see what's beyond the gate", and her love of timeless country homesteads spawned Love at 1st Sight (www.loveat1stsight.com.au), Loneragan's blossoming collection of restored vintage furniture.

The pieces are bold and luxe, juxtaposing old with new. Loneragan is always looking for neglected pieces and has sourced them online, at garage sales, even by the side of the road. "Every piece has a story to tell," she says. "With a bit of tender love and care they can be brought back to last another lifetime. It's the same piece, just in another outfit."

From where does the confessed adventurer glean her inspiration? Travel, of course. The show-stopping Zebra in Heels armchair — complete with a mohawk of black hair down its back — was inspired by some Yves Saint Laurent heels Loneragan saw in Paris last year. Berlin, being a veritable outdoor gallery, fuelled her passion for graffiti art. She created Graffiti Stole My Heart, a three-seater lounge and matching



Love at 1st Sight founder Lucy Loneragan with her Peacock on Heat chair.



RESTORATION SENSATIONS

From left: Love at 1st Sight's Zebra in Heels chair; Patchwork chair; Graffiti Stole My Heart lounge.

armchair, with internationally acclaimed graffiti artist Set1, whose identity can't be revealed. "I wanted to prove that a taboo art form could co-exist quite beautifully with traditional furniture," she says.

Loneragan tells me the chair I'm sitting on is an homage to her grandmother. "She was amazing at patchwork quilts. Each piece of fabric [a mix of old and new designs] has been hand-stitched, then stitched as one whole piece and upholstered onto the chair. I think she would have loved it."

The fresh-faced designer (she doesn't need a lick of makeup), melds contemporary essentials with vintage finds in her own wardrobe, as well.

"I love sass & bide, Miu Miu, Collette Dinnigan and a beautiful new label, Metias. I go to [Sydney's] Bondi and Paddington markets and raid my grandmother's jewellery box," she says, clutching her necklace.

If she could live during any design era, which would it be? "The roaring '20s, New York; women expressing themselves, taking charge of both their femininity and masculine side, wearing loose clothing and hemlines designed to suit their style of dancing. Gold."

Loneragan left Mudgee with her family 10 years ago for the "bright lights of Sydney", eventually settling in Bondi. Her interior design résumé features stints at Woods Bagot and Altis Architecture, and she cites a pop-up Zimmermann store as a milestone. "We went for a 1950s, breezy, beachside look. I loved collaborating with these two creative, wonderful people," she says of

the Zimmermann sisters. Her hospitality work includes the refurbishment of Flying Fish restaurant, in Sydney's Pyrmont, and Dedes Group's latest venture, Deckhouse, in Woolwich.

Love at 1st Sight officially launched in November, at a whimsical evening soiree. "It was a nerve-racking moment when the clock hit 6.30pm," says Loneragan. "It was the biggest night of my life; it was me doing something on my own, for the first time." Not entirely on her own. Loneragan's mum made a colossal leg of ham — the glaze is a secret recipe — which was carved by "Dion", a

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beefy, bald and bearded artist who's a fixture on Bondi Beach. A duo filled the warehouse with classical music. Loneragan's partner, front-of-house doyen Miro Kubicek, ensured everything went to plan.

I discover Kubicek — director of Miro House and seating manager for Rosemount Australian Fashion Week — hiding behind an Apple Mac in the workspace he shares with Loneragan. How would Kubicek, who was raised in the Czech Republic, describe Loneragan in three words? "I'm not good with words; it's your interview," he protests. "But she is creative, she's feminine and ... very nice." Loneragan melts. "Aw, he does have a soft side," she jokes, explaining it took a decade of friendship and flirting before the planets aligned.

How would Loneragan describe herself? "Creative, hopefully, and open to whatever opportunities come my way ... Fascinated with people, humble and, um, happy." Not unlike that little girl dragging her doll down the road. ■

YOUNG MODERN

Artist's talks, cocktail parties, private views ... gen up in style with the MCA's new Young Ambassadors program, writes **SUSIE BURGE**

When the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney launched its Young Ambassadors program, it did it with a bang: the first event was a private viewing of Patricia Piccinini at Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, the next an invitation-only viewing and talk by Tracey Emin at LoveArt, followed by the opening night of Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life 1900–2005 (one of the hottest tickets in town) at the MCA.

Hard acts to follow? Maybe, but with up to 50 events hosted for Young Ambassador members, featuring unique events with local and international artists, public exhibitions and commercial shows, private talks and tours, the year is bound to be big. For those in the right demographic (aged 18 to 40, Sydney-based, curious about contemporary art), it's a fabulous chance to be part of the scene.

Architect Nick Tobias and fashion designer Bianca Spender are key supporters of Young Ambassadors. Tobias sees contemporary art as a portal into what's happening in culture today and the program as a way to tap in, to be inspired to think creatively about crucial issues. (He also likes the social aspect, joking at the launch party that with so many events on the calendar, members would have no trouble eating and imbibing their way through the joining fee.)

Spender loves the dynamism of the MCA. "I'm actually really passionate; I kind of nag my friends, have they seen the latest exhibition," she says, laughing. "It's a wonderful way to connect, to really engage with people, to have a common experience to share," she says. "Art is a precious resource that we all appreciate, it's an avenue to create ideas, and for clothes (for me), nothing is more inspirational than art."

MCA Young Ambassadors annual fee, \$500. For more information, visit www.mca.com.au.

MCA Young Ambassadors supporters Bianca Spender and Nick Tobias with artworks by Julie Fragar.

