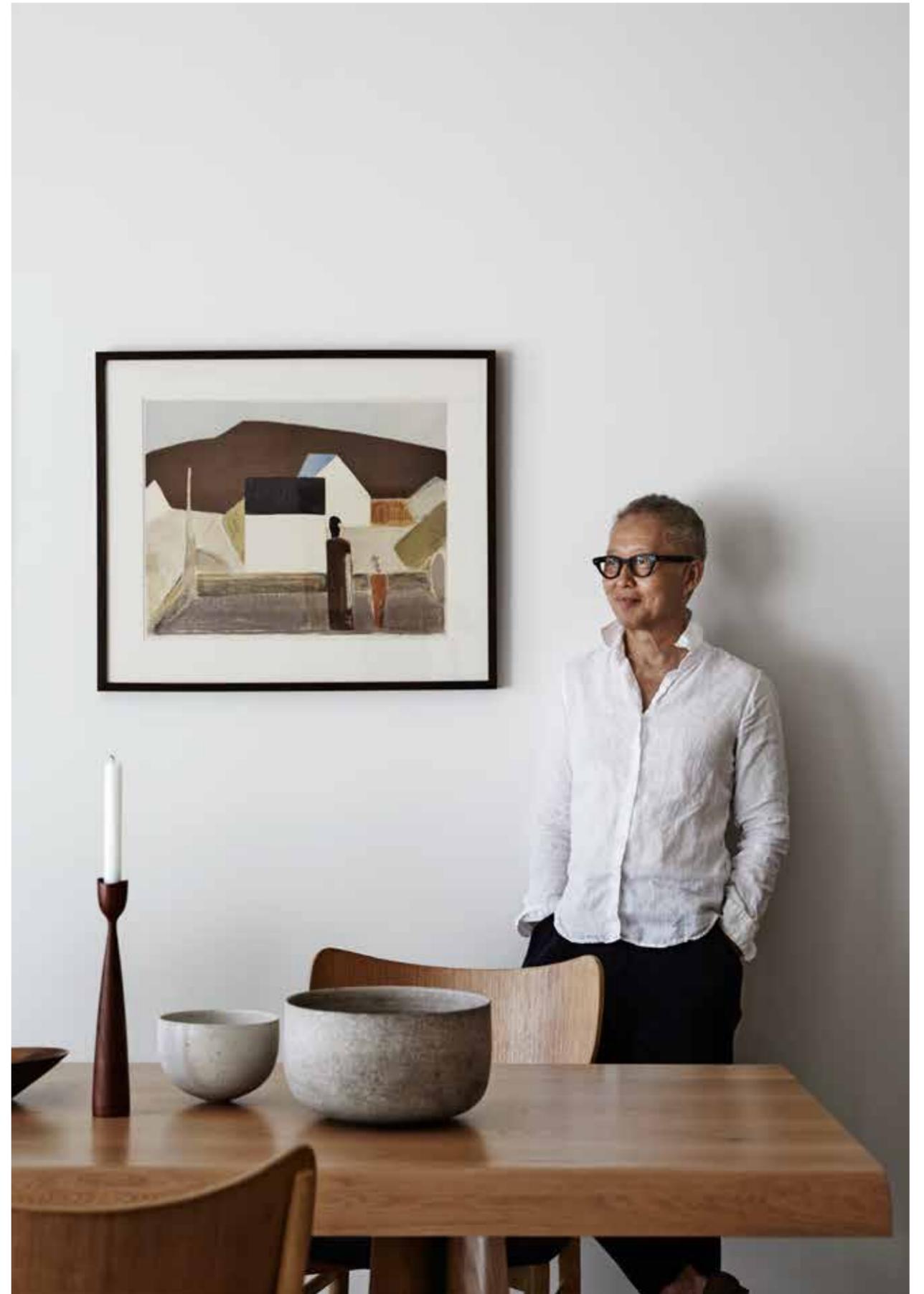


# KHAI LIEW & NICHOLE PALYGA

Many of designer and curator Khai Liew's fondest memories of home are rooted in his childhood residence in Malaysia, which his father built in 1964. "There was a sense of beautiful proportion to the house," Khai says. "Everything about how it sat on the land felt right: The way my father carved out the space instilled a sense of volume and proportion in me." At age 18, Khai moved to Adelaide, Australia, where he currently lives with his partner, Nichole Palyga. "We've worked together for more than 10 years. Khai designs and I manage the practice, though the roles constantly overlap," Nichole says. Khai's formative years as a collector and conservator of early Australian furniture and folk art piqued his interest in the distinctive quality and sense of permanence offered by various types of solid wood, which led the couple to furnish their living space with predominantly wood-based textures. Coupled with the "fortress-like feel" of the home's exterior, these materials provide the reassurance, security and privacy Khai identifies with being at home. "Our house is an orderly one where everything has a place," he says. "Each time I open the front door, I can sense the tranquility." One of the couple's favorite areas is the central indoor courtyard, which brings light and a sense of

space to the house. Khai cooks in the courtyard all year round, so it's very much an additional living area. "The light there is especially beautiful on a late summer evening," he says. "It takes on a magical and intense bluish-gray tone, and its calming effect permeates the whole house." Khai's work as a curator has trained him to be meticulous and disciplined about what he brings into their personal space—objects are carefully selected and placed alongside each other to create a dialogue in the area they sit. "The result is harmonious, and in the harmony there is calm and stillness," he says. Items made by the couple's friends are also interspersed with Khai's own work: His designs are heavily influenced by his eclectic cultural experiences and tell stories about his Chinese-Malay childhood and other groups who have migrated to Australia. "I find inspiration in the slightest silhouette, the fold of a skirt, the face of a Japanese bride in traditional dress, the weave in a basket, the flow of Islamic calligraphy or a dancer's pose, to name a few," he says.

*In the following essay on page 64, Khai elaborates on how his multicultural upbringing has influenced his approach to design.*





Left: The Adelaide-based artist Helen Fuller, who is a friend of Khai's, designed the ceramic vases. Nichole picked up the teak box on a trip to Copenhagen, and the teak chair is by an unknown mid-century Danish designer. André Derain painted the artwork on the wall.

Above: A 1930s Japanese gown hangs from the couple's headboard. The abacus is a piece of 19th-century Australian folk art. Khai designed both the American walnut bedside table and the lamp with a mulberry-bark paper shade.









Above Left: The two paintings are by Danish painter Johannes Hofmeister and the candlestick holders are by Jens Quistgaard. Khai made the dining table out of European oak and the chairs were designed by Niels and Eva Koppel.

Above Right: The triptych on the wall is by Khai's friend Jessica Loughlin, a glass artist. Khai designed the chest of drawers and suspects that the easy chair—which has no maker's stamp on it—is a rare prototype by Jens Quistgaard.



