



Retro chic by the reservoir

Heather Millar meets Pascale Johnstone, one of the drivers of Electric Tractor, a furniture store specialising in relics from the 20th century at the Myponga Market. Photographs by Grant Beed.

As you enter the Electric Tractor – a retro and vintage furniture store at the Myponga Markets, owned and staffed by Luke, Pascale and Adam Johnstone – you notice the funky signage above the front desk. Pascale explains: ‘Luke, my husband, got this old sign from somewhere, which said “Electrical Contractor”. Luke and [his brother] Adam were sitting around one night thinking about names for the store, and they were looking at this sign. They suggested chopping off the ends of it and there it was – Electric Tractor.’

Their store opened in Myponga Market – located on the edge of the Myponga Reservoir and in front of the Myponga Brewery – in October 2012, after Luke happened upon the space on a visit to see Adam, who lives near Cape Jervis.

Luke, who runs his own furniture removal company in the city, was taking the kids for a weekend visit, and they stopped at Myponga Markets on the way. He found that the market had new owners, and some empty space, and that’s when inspiration hit.

‘He thought, well maybe we could try something on the weekends here’, says Pascale. ‘It’s something we’ve always wanted to do – but especially Luke; he’s always had “doing a shop” in the back of his head.’

Pascale, who was born in Marseille and works as a French teacher at WEA in the city, met Luke when they were both backpacking in North Queensland.

‘Luke had been travelling in Europe and the Caribbean, and decided that Cairns would be a nice place to stay for a while; and we met at the hostel. We stayed together; he was doing a bit of part-time crewing on big yachts, and we sailed to New Zealand for the America’s Cup there. We had a ball, and stayed on in New Zealand after that. We got married there.’

‘We came back to Adelaide to settle – and then the kids arrived and we bought a house.’



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*Previous page: Electric Tractor at the Myponga Markets.
This page top: Retro wares to wear.
Left: Pascale Johnstone.*



The family lives in Hawthorndene in a 60s house Luke found when he went there to move some furniture.

‘He just loved the place – the stone work around the chimney, the wood and the glass. He said to the lady who was there “I LOVE this house” and she said he could buy it if he wanted! It wasn’t on the market or anything, but we found a way to get a deposit together to buy it.’

Today, the house is decked out with the couple’s 60s and 70s furniture and eclectic pieces like a barber’s chair.

‘We love the feeling of stuff that you grew up with – pieces that evoke childhood memories. We have a shed-full of furniture at home, which helps to supply the Electric Tractor,’ says Pascale.

They find ‘stuff’ all over the place – at the auction houses in the city, deceased estates, and people’s houses when Luke is working. ‘It’s constantly evolving’, Pascale explains, ‘and every item is hand-picked. We focus on the unusual, exotic, collectable and simply beautiful.’

The store has a mix of industrial, retro furniture, curious and vintage pieces – 1960s coffee tables, couches, table lamps, retro bars, church pews, Danish/teak retro furniture, funky lights and more. Luke and Adam both customise some of the pieces as well, such as distressed finishes on chests of drawers and wardrobes. They also hire out furniture and odd pieces such as 1960s water-skis and the barber’s chair from their home.

‘Initially, we thought we would just test the water, it wouldn’t cost too much, and we’d see how we go’, says Pascale. ‘We thought it might be a bit of a risk – would Myponga be too far for people to come? But it’s turned out we’ve had a really good response. ‘There are retro stores up in town, but not so much down here, so we get people coming down from Aldinga Beach, Sellicks, the whole area. But also people who are coming down to Normanville and Yankalilla for the weekend; they will stop at the markets, just to see what’s in there. It’s handy also that we have a truck so we can deliver pieces.’ >



Above: An eclectic mix at Electric Tractor in the Myponga Markets.

The new owners of the market have plans for a few changes over the coming months. While still retaining the character of the building, they plan to upgrade by painting throughout, and adding new rear entrances, facilities for the disabled and an outdoor eating area. There will be new stalls featuring fresh local produce, an artist's gallery, and of course, the new outdoor eating area. The café at the centre of the market will also get a facelift, with Electric Tractor providing the retro tables and chairs which visitors can use and then buy if they wish!

Electric Tractor also now has a Facebook presence, a website and a blog. 'We will also set up a little shop on eBay. That is our next step – once we find the time to do it!' laughs Pascale. 