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work careers

How four careers led Charlie O'Donovan and Monique Boseley to each other and their passion

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Monique Boseley and Charlie O'Donovan. Source: Supplied

RESEARCH suggests we will have five careers over our lifetime.

This couple, has already had five between them.

Charlie O'Donovan and Monique Boseley run their own online furniture business, Senkki Furniture, designing, building and restoring quality pieces.

But it didn't always start out this way.

Mr O'Donovan actually studied finance at university, a world away from the creative world of furniture design. But after six months in the industry, he decided it was "wasn't him".

"The job I got into wasn't very challenging and didn't enjoy being in an office," he told [news.com.au](#). "I thought about trying to get into stockbroking, which I did very briefly, but it's a long road to get anyway and, at that age, I was a little impatient and I didn't want to put in the hard yards."

Mr O'Donovan's uncle had been a cabinet-maker so he knew his way around wood and was self-taught at carpentry.

He'd also been around sail boats frequently, so when he got wind there was work in the Mediterranean so he packed up and moved across the world to start in the boat building industry.

For the next six years, he moved all over the Mediterranean from shipyard to shipyard and boat to boat.

He sailed, did boat fit-outs, and managed boats and marinas – pretty much anything that was boat related.

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Happy sailing. Source: Supplied

On one of these boats, Mr O'Donovan met his future partner, Ms Boseley.

Ms Boseley, from Adelaide, started her working life as a professional photographer. She had worked with two top photographers before setting up her own studio.

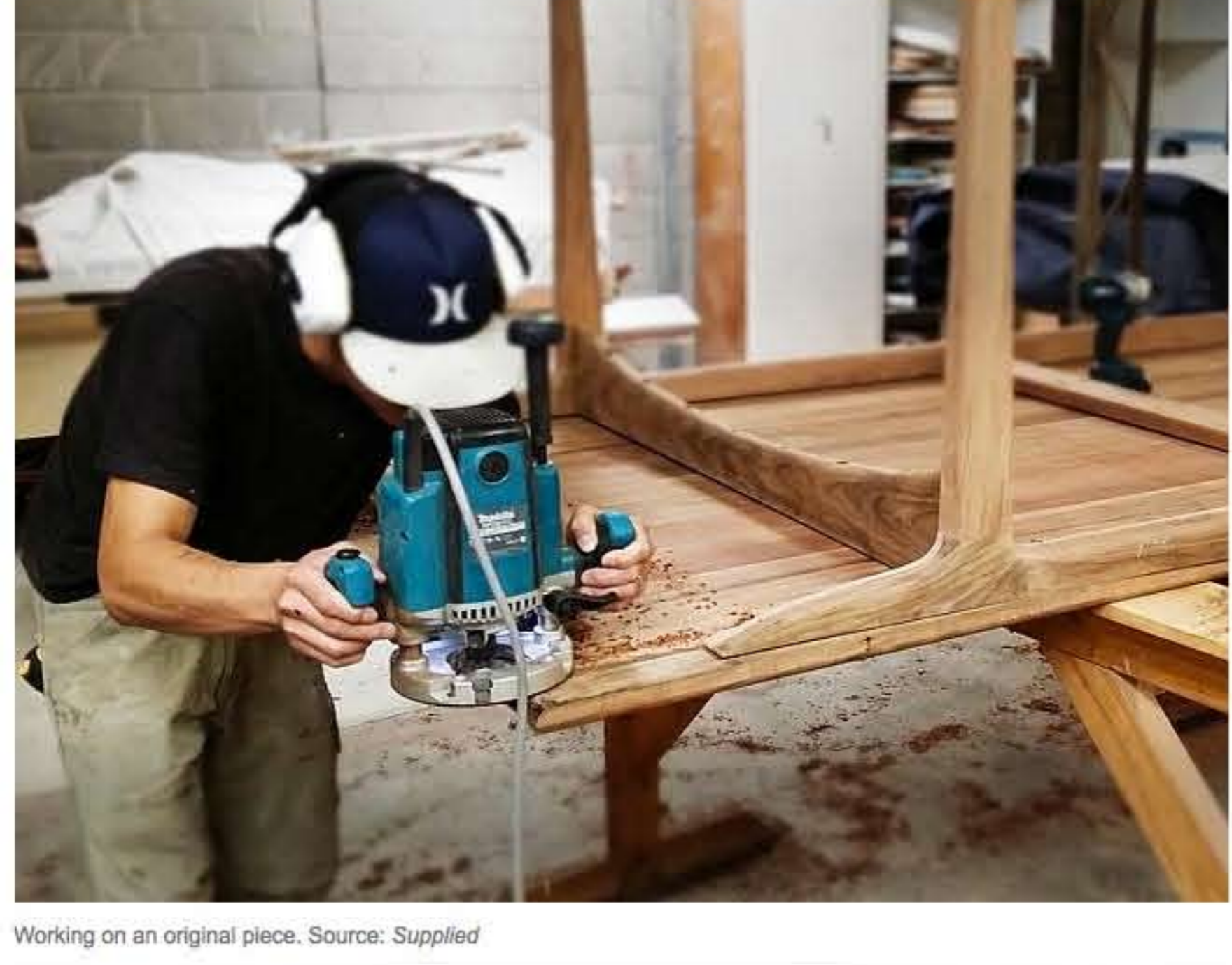
But photography is a notoriously difficult business and the money dried up.

She moved to London, as many young Aussies do, and started doing a bit of work in kitchens. She became very successful at it and became the personal chef to many wealthy clients, travelling with them around the world, staying in ski chalets and on super yachts.

It was on one of these fancy sailboats in Genoa, northern Italy that Mr O'Donovan and Ms Boseley met.

"Working like that is difficult. It can be such a transient lifestyle because you move with the work," Mr O'Donovan said. "Most people start to make a choice about whether to keep going or to set up shop somewhere."

"Monique is from Adelaide and I'd been here before and liked it so we thought it was a good place to base ourselves."



Working on an original piece. Source: Supplied

The pair arrived in Adelaide (on a plane, not a boat) in 2008, right after the GFC had hit so meaningful work was scarce.

"I couldn't find a job I really wanted to do so we looked at each other and said, 'let's do something and see if we can make money from it,'" Mr O'Donovan said. "The passion for furniture design was always there. My mum is a quite well-known interior designer and my dad is as well. So it runs in the family."

"We decided on the furniture business because we had a house we were restoring and I'd been collecting old furniture on and off and restoring it."

The couple started off by restoring mid-century furniture, many pieces they would pick up for cheap or for free from auction houses and the like. Mr O'Donovan said he developed a restoration technique that was unique at the time.

They made a website and chucked a couple of pieces up on eBay to see how it would fare and they were snapped up straight away. He said it was a natural progression from restoration to building new pieces as customers started to ask for custom touches.



Behind the scenes. Source: Supplied

They established a workshop and produced their first piece in 2010 — a sideboard.

Fast forward a few years and Senkki is now producing a lot more stuff thanks to more machinery and another staff member.

It's also expanded to smaller items such as shadow box display cabinets and designer clocks, which the couple sells on Etsy.

But not one to rest and take it easy, Mr O'Donovan said: "We want to look into changing our designs, particularly with furniture because when we started off, there were few people doing what we were doing and now there are lots of cheap imports. So we want to try and do something interesting, move into new territories. That is what business should be doing."

Asked if he has any regrets about not sticking it out in the lucrative finance field, he said: "My personality was always going to drive me into doing my own thing — taking a risk and a hit in salary."

"There's something wonderful about waking in the morning and knowing you've got to make the money, rather than just going to an office job — and you're dependent on yourself. There's good and bad in that. I'm always excited and terrified."

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