

Your grandmother's couch — you love it dearly — but it just doesn't work with your lifestyle, space or décor. Rather than give up your sentimental heirloom or put it out to the curb, consider giving it a makeover. It's entirely possible to have an eyesore become a coveted, show-stopping, you'll-love-it-forever sort of furnishing that'll have friends and family clamoring to know where you got it.

TAKE A SEAT

With Stylish Upcycled Furniture

By CHERYL VAN TUYL JIVIDEN

Thanks to businesses like San Antonio's ReNewal Home Décor and Spruce in Austin, you can upcycle hand-me-down furniture into exactly what you want.

AMANDA BROWN, Austin's Spruce designer and owner, is able to recreate existing furniture from antique to modern and find or build frames with exceptional craftsmanship. She's also the author of *Spruce: A Step-by-Step Guide to Upholstery and Design*, one of the most comprehensive books covering the art of upholstery available should you decide to do it yourself. 512.454.8181 | Spruceaustin.com



HEATHER HELSETH, San Antonio-based ReNewal Home Décor owner and lead designer is all about creating something new and beautiful from what was vintage and reclaimed. Her creations are one-of-a-kind, high quality vintage furniture designs inspired by the past with a vision for the future and today's aesthetics. She can also customize new designs to fit your décor. 253.732.3244 | Renewalhomedecor.com
Photos by Meredith Ryncarz Photography

UH – Why upcycle furniture?

HH – As part of my Art degree, I studied sustainability. That inspired me to find existing pieces, reduce waste and give new life to old, neglected furniture. In addition, most furniture today is imported, and while it may look good at first, it is not real wood and will fall apart relatively quickly. Vintage pieces are usually much better quality, use hardwood frames and after we completely gut and redo the frame, springs, batting, etc., it is a high quality piece that will last for many years to come.

AB – Older hardwood furniture is often a better quality than new pieces. New furniture that was designed to be more disposable is often Styrofoam or cardboard construction and therefore not strong enough to take the rigor of the upholstery process. Lots of thought and design go into a reupholster and it's more affordable than high-end furniture. You get a high quality piece with the exact specifications you request.

UH – Tell us about your furniture sourcing.

HH – I can transform customers' own pieces and I source pieces on my own. I've had a customer select a custom chair for their wedding registry and I now build a wingback rocking chair that is perfect for a nursery rocker.

AB – We recreate existing furniture, and find or build frames. Our furniture most often comes directly from the client with us servicing the redo and fabric.

UH – Any especially memorable projects?

HH – One of the more sentimental designs I created was for a local customer who brought me her father-in-law's old military uniforms and duffel bags, and we designed and created two custom club chairs for her. It is a wonderful way to display and pay tribute to military members and their service to our country.

AB – One of our most interesting projects was a 10-foot sofa that the owner had found in Dallas. When he moved to a condo, it was too large to fit into the freight elevator. He wanted to keep the very special fabric from the 1960's-era with its turquoise blue tweed and gold threading. Ultimately we removed 26 inches from the middle section and put it back together, refreshing it, reshaping the arms and keeping the original fabric.

UH – Do you have a favorite style?

HH – My pieces are from a variety of decades and styles. I have had a few antique Victorian chairs, many mid-century club chairs and swivel rockers from the 70's all the way to current chairs that customers want transformed.



AB – I appreciate all styles, especially the clean-lined mid-century pieces, and I like unique antique pieces with unusual shapes that can stand alone. For me, the older pieces that are art deco and art nouveau are more interesting and fun, but not readily available.

UH – Tell us about your fabric choices.

HH – I often use coffee sacks in my designs. They typically come from South America and are only a few years old. I also use American feed sacks and potato sacks which range in age from new to 50 years old. The third option is French grain sacks that I get in France. They are typically 30 to 40 years old and are made out of a tighter weave linen-type fabric. My Fiesta and Adelante Collections were inspired by the vivid colors popular in the Texas area and show a bold mix of fabrics and colors. I have also created a Wild West Collection which features Western prints, leather and hide for a rustic yet elegant design.

AB – Ethnic inspired prints with a handmade quality are in demand as are woven artisanal fabrics with unique color combos.



RENEWAL HOME DÉCOR

Blues of every shade are popular and often requested. We have nearly 30,000 swatches offering an enormous variety of traditional, cutting edge and unique, hard-to-find fabrics, including some small batch textiles and one-of-a-kind vintage fabrics.

UH – These are hand-worked projects; what can clients expect in the process?

HH – My design and production take approximately eight weeks. I create a custom digital color board showing the frame, fabrics and fabric placement for customers' approval. I also have an In Stock Collection that features designs I have created that are complete and ready to ship to most locations throughout the US. I add new designs each month and no two designs are ever the same.

AB – It takes about two months in total, from fabric selection and consult to the production schedule and delivery. We are experts in furniture redesign, textile selection and creating custom soft furnishings, from pillows to draperies. But we also do in-home consultation to discuss ways to enhance your space or provide an extensive design plan for your entire home. There are various pricing structures depending on the project scope. Beyond Austin, we do deliverable work all over Texas.

UH – What's new?

HH – I am now working to open a second location in Redding, California to service my West Coast customers.

AB – We are expanding our business to offer a full range of design services. At our core we will always love creating custom soft furnishings, but we are thrilled to help our clients create a beautifully-layered home through furniture and accessories, as well as permanent design components such as flooring, wallpaper and paint selection. ❖



SPRUCE