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WEEKEND - COVER STORY



Angela Gannaway (left) and Sue Cawte at their shop, J'adore La Maison.

'Doing it yourself can look amazing'

As the economy struggles, thrift is king and upcycling furniture and homeware has become more and more popular. MISCHA ALLEN finds out about the art of giving new life to old items.

FEATURE

There are flowery tea lights that were once wine glasses, crocheted fabrics that are now wall lights. Old vintage fabric has become a lampshade and old brown wooden furniture has been transformed into a pastel-coloured centrepiece.

J'adore La Maison, a small shop in Wickham, is bursting at the seams with remodelled and recycled items.

It's run by Angela Gannaway and Sue Cawte - and they've fallen in love with the art of upcycling.

Recycling is nothing new. For the past decade or so there has been a worldwide focus on trying to re-use and rescue anything before it ends up as landfill. But it can seem harder than ever when we live in a throwaway age

where replacement seems easier than repair.

But in recent times people have become disillusioned with this idea, especially as the state of the economy has meant a lot of belt-tightening. Many have decided to make old objects or furniture into something they love with a lick of paint and a bit of creativity.

Angela, 52, who lives in Fair Oak near Eastleigh, says: 'Initially, it all started with my sister-in-law coming home from France and saying she had found a lovely clock, but she couldn't find it anywhere over here and she felt that someone should make similar things.'

'Me and Sue worked together at the time and we thought it was quite a good idea. We started making things at my dad's place in an old stable, and then we were offered the shop and we thought it

would be good on our own, it's a great location.'

She adds: 'Then we discovered the Annie Sloan paints and we quickly began stocking them, even though we did wonder who would want to buy paint from us!'

As well as making their own cushions and lampshades, and various objects for the home, Angela and Sue use chalk paint on old furniture. It won't need sanding or priming beforehand and the paint will go on surfaces from wood to metal and matt plastic to terracotta.

They now run their own courses at Wickham Community Centre once a month and also hold some in the shop.

Angela says: 'We realised we were on to something because they were proving so popular. I think what has happened is that people can't afford

to move, but they can afford a tin of paint.'

'Sometimes you can't afford Laura Ashley furniture, but you can get something and do it yourself. I just love the idea that you're saving chopping down trees to make more furniture. I don't like places like Ikea because I don't think the furniture is quality, but doing it yourself can look amazing.'

The courses include interior decorative paint techniques, a memory box workshop, or the 'take a seat' workshop where you paint a chair they provide. You can learn how to distress, texture, stipple, glaze, decoupage, stencil and gild different surfaces.

Angela and Sue even offer free consultations for people's homes when it comes to re-decorating. But they do believe you

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Sally Tickner runs Liberty Rose Interiors with her husband Jim.



Sue Cawte decoupage a paint tin at her shop in Wickham, J'adore La Maison.



Vicky Swift uses her shed as a workshop.



Rescue and Revive is run by Vicky Swift, who works from her home in Stubbington.

'I LOVE RECYCLING'

Mother-of-three Vicky Swift runs her own upcycling business, Rescue and Revive, from her home in Stubbington. The 45-year-old has been creating something new out of something old for most of her adult life, but it was only a couple of years ago she thought about selling anything. She says: 'I sold a few bits on eBay and then it kind of developed from there really, I did it more and more and I love recycling and re-using things. I have done a bit of website work, but basically this is my main work now. 'It's great to do something that you really enjoy and it constantly challenges you. It's always interesting and I love going to markets and getting feedback about everything.' Vicky will be at the Love Southsea Market in Southsea

today with some of her objects, and also sells on folksy.com, a website which offers people the chance to sell what they've made. She says: 'I have chalk boards made out of old picture frames and I've got signs too. I also decorate old vintage spoons and flower pots. I always scour charity shops for things, and I love the fact that I can turn that into a business.' She believes the practise is getting more and more popular because people are tightening their belts, and thinking of alternative solutions to buying: 'You really focus on what you're spending your money on. If you can personalise something without it costing the earth, in both terms of money and the actual earth, then it's exciting.' Go to rescueandrevive.co.uk for more information.



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WEEKEND - COVER STORY

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have to be passionate about upcycling if you want to start making your own objects.

Angela explains: 'It's hard work sometimes. You can pick up things easily though from charity shops, whatever catches your eye. All you need is a tin of paint and a tin of wax.'

'You can always be more adventurous than furniture and do your kitchen or something, but you really just need something small to get you started.'

One company that has thought big when it comes to upcycling is Liberty Rose Interiors, set up last year by Drayton-based husband-and-wife team Sally and Jim Tickner. They are now selling to customers in Holland and have interest from Australia.

Jim had always worked on re-inventing upholstery for friends and family who asked. But as he works for the fire service, he'd never taken it too seriously. They even made a Union Flag out of jeans, red velvet and Sally's wedding dress for their living room wall.

Now, the couple bring new life to chairs and sofas and keep them in their own home, and keep other stock in their bedroom. At one point, they had 14 sofas in the living room.

Sally, 39, says: 'Last year, we were considering doing something more about the chairs he made, instead of just doing them for us. We started to buy pieces and do it at home, and they're quite different once they're finished.'

'They're wacky sorts of designs, and I think Jim finds that more exciting. There's passion in it, and you wouldn't find that on the high street. I think when you go into DFS and buy a sofa you only want it for about three years, but

upcycling an older sofa can last so much longer.'

Jim uses traditional methods when he upcycles the furniture, which can tend to make it more expensive, but Sally says it's all worth it.

'It gives the furniture an earthy feel too because you're taking something someone has thrown away. We try to use British fabrics too where we can because it's good quality.'

'We like the fact that there's an ethical side to it. We've started doing tables and lampshades too and we're thinking about how they could all fit together, not just the chairs. It's a real mix.'

She adds: 'There's a lot of people who find a cheap table and paint it up quickly, but you've got to spend time on it if you want to make money.'

Sally believes that the trend of individuals upcycling is becoming more and more popular because of what they see on the TV. She explains: 'They go to car boots and pick something up. A lot of people do it for themselves and a lot of people are doing it for their own home.'

'If you want to do it and then sell it, you have to work hard. There are quite a few people who are doing it on eBay, but it's very competitive. We sold a pair of chairs to Holland recently, and we've had interest from Australia.'

'But the challenge is that we make them from our lounge and we're storing some we've sold in our bedroom at the minute. We've very much surrounded by it.'

Go to jadorelamaison.co.uk or libertyroseinteriors.co.uk for more information.

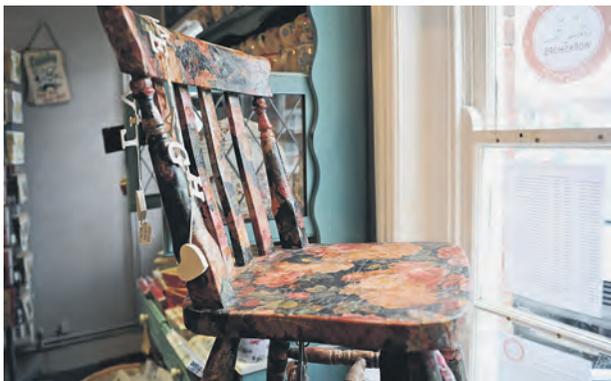
See a video of Angela Gannaway from J'adore La Maison talking about upcycling at portsmouth.co.uk/weekend.



Vicky Swift, from Rescue and Revive, at home in Stubbington with some of her upcycled items.



Two chairs which were upcycled by Jim Tickner for Liberty Rose Interiors.



A decoupage chair in the window of J'adore La Maison.



A upcycled piece of furniture at J'adore La Maison.

'IMPORTANT TO MAKE SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE WANTS'

Antonia Edwards is a freelance writer who runs the blog upcyclist.co.uk, which draws upon all of the upcycling objects she can find online. She was runner-up for Best Blog at the Observer Ethical Awards last year. She started the blog after meeting a neighbour and loving the illustrations she

was creating on furniture. Antonia says: 'She really attracted me to the concept and we started taking photographs and things to try and promote her work. I thought it would make a good subject for a blog. It's been around for a long time and people have done it since the beginning of time, but it's just now

people are beginning to have a conscience about the environment. 'They are aware of what they are throwing away and they are seeing the value of what they already own.' But her advice for anyone who is thinking of doing it themselves is to remain focused. 'It's important to make

something that someone wants, and something they want to keep. 'They don't want something that will break, and everyone should be encouraged to try it because it doesn't take a lot of skill to repaint an old chest of drawers or make it up-to-date.' Go to upcyclist.co.uk.