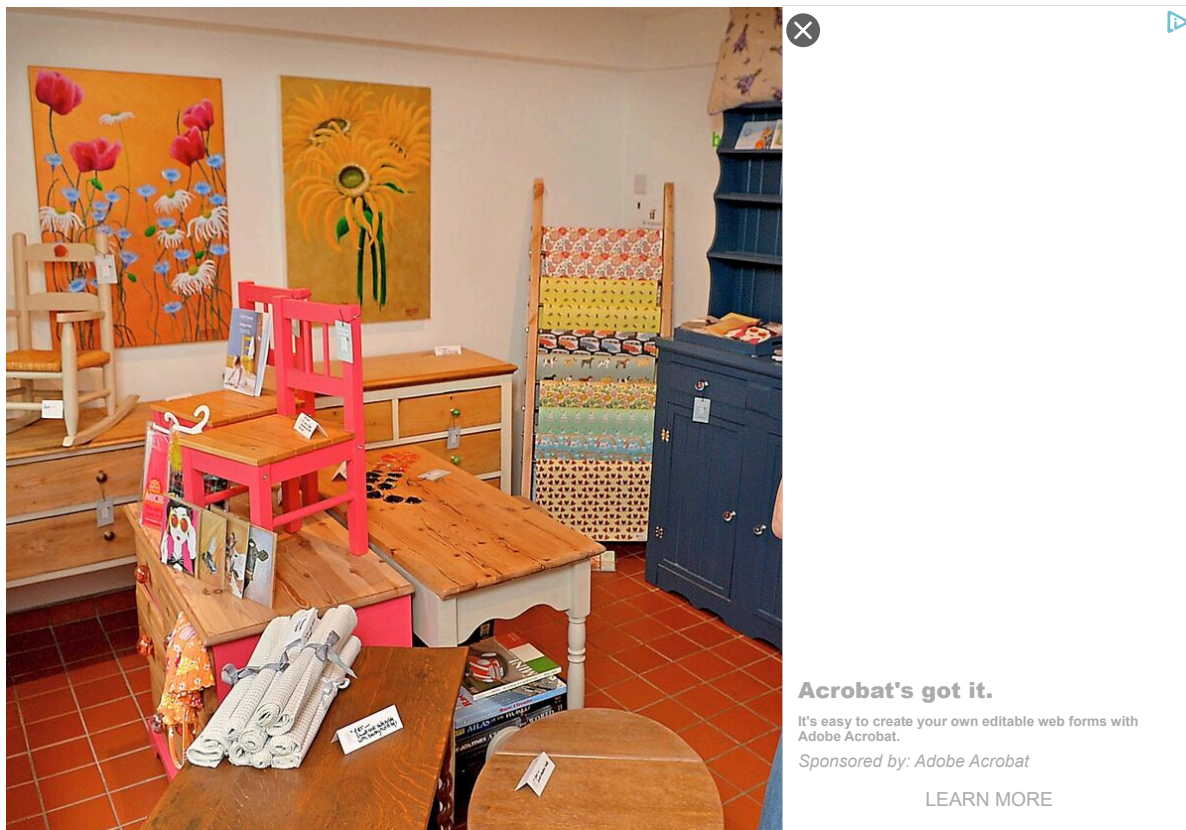


Salvaging the unwanted: meet Vanessa Dee who gives furniture a new lease of life

Every year around 22 million pieces of furniture are discarded from our homes with many items going straight to landfill.

By **Heather Large** | Published Apr 26, 2020



Vanessa Dee who runs Condoover Furniture which upcycles and repairs furniture and turns it into unique pieces

For the sake of the environment and to avoid going to waste an upcycling revolution has been born. Giving tired items from tables and

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look to expand its lifespan
more eco-friendly option

By re-using something to
make it more appealing,

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When it comes to interior decorating and furnishing, many people have turned to upcycling to help make their home unique but still in style with the current trends.



Among those who have embraced the upcycling trend is Vanessa Dee who believes furniture should be “funky and fun and not something that’s just utilitarian sitting in a room”. She is passionate about reinventing furniture to not only prolong its life but to also make it fun and desirable again and set up her Shrewsbury-based business Condoever Furniture in 2018.

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“Our family moved back to the UK after 20 years in the US in August 2017 and I was shocked at the amount of waste generated during the move. And we were just one family moving on that one day. Some of the packaging was taken away by the removal company at the end of moving day but then the residual that we were left with after unpacking all our items after they had left was staggering. A mountain of cardboard, paper packaging and plastic wrap which we recycled by making multiple trips to the local waste facility. Then once we were settled there was potentially more waste as a lot of our furniture didn’t complement our new home which has a lot of oak and painted wood, the fashion of today. So I started to sand and paint our current stock as we also didn’t have enough money to simply discard it and buy new at that time,” says Vanessa.

Using only top quality environmentally friendly paints, waxes and oils, she aims to make each piece of furniture she reinvents distinctive and, if possible, unique.

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The aim is to provide customers with an alternative to generic factory-made items by using the quality furniture that is already in existence.



“In a world where choosing eco and wellbeing-friendly products is often a complicated affair – how to create a stylish and individual home without harming the environment can be a very real dilemma.

“It’s a complex issue and many people will end up walking away from their online or High Street shopping experience disillusioned and confused because many furniture retailers’ products look great but tick very few eco-friendly boxes,” says Vanessa, who also displays and sells work by Shrewsbury artist Stuart Edwards in her shop.

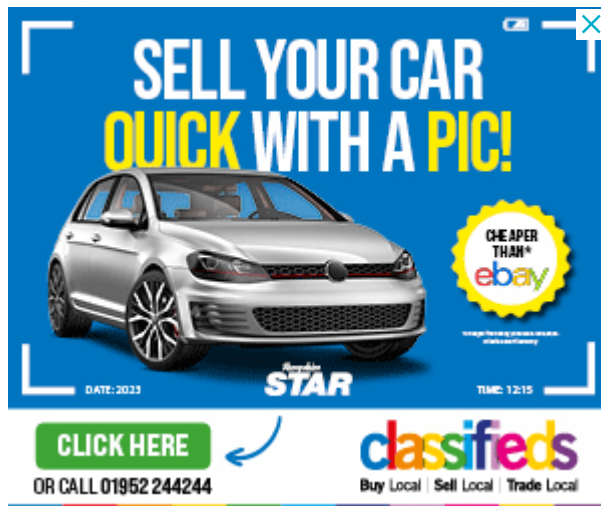
She takes well-made pieces of furniture from the past, restores and repairs them where necessary and gives them a new look to suit the 21st century home.

Pieces for upcycling are sourced from local charity shops including Hope House for Kids, the British Heart Foundation and

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“Condoever Furniture ensures that approximately 20 per cent of the final sale price benefits Shropshire organisations. In our fast-furniture society with in excess of 300,000 tonnes of usable furniture being thrown away every day, this unique approach to reinstating furniture with a provenance perfectly embraces the style in partnership with sustainability mindset,” says Vanessa, who is currently selling her products online. who has previously exhibited at Shrewsbury Flower Show, 100% Design at Olympia, the exhibition halls in Kensington and Grand Designs Live NEC.

And as a creative perfectionist, she has set herself the goal of producing furniture that leaves a lasting impression. This includes adding luxury embellishments to give her furniture a unique appearance including bespoke Murano glass knobs individually hand made in Italy and crystal glass knobs and glass pebbles designed and hand made in Nottinghamshire by designer maker, Ingrid Pears.

“ I love everything to look good and for the pieces to be statement pieces, like pieces of jewellery in a room that people enjoy looking at rather than them being simply utilitarian pieces of furniture. I really am driven by that goal, for someone to want to buy the piece of furniture. I like the idea of the furniture being bespoke for the buyer, almost rewarding them for choosing to buy upcycled. I love both bright colours and earth tones, and the best, of course, is leaving the wood in its natural state if there isn't too much damage,” says Vanessa.

Vanessa has found that Condoever Furniture is popular with a wide range of customers, including millennials, who she says are embracing the ethos of the upcycling for the interiors movement.

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“Young home renters and owners find that buying professionally upcycled furniture offers them ownership of unusual pieces at affordable prices as well as an individuality that won’t be found in the homes of their friends. And because every piece has been carefully crafted by artisans from yesteryear and made from solid, long lasting real wood rather than MDF, there is no urea formaldehyde or plastic coatings to worry about, just beautiful environmentally friendly paint finishes and classic craftsmanship to enjoy,” says Vanessa.

Last year Vanessa won #SBS retweet from retail entrepreneur Theo Paphitis, of Dragon’s Den fame, as part of his Small Business Sunday initiative which helped to spread the word about her upcycling collections and commissions.

As well as doing her bit for the planet, Vanessa enjoys injecting a sense of fun into tired old tables, wardrobes and drawers. “I love that I can be creative in my work. I have a family full of creatives and I had often thought creativity had passed me by. I also love the fact that I am making a difference in this world and encouraging behaviour to change among consumers for the good of all our futures. If I can help others to help the environment by creating something that is functional, desirable and makes a difference then I feel good. Being a new business of course each day is different and a constant puzzle that I am trying to solve to enable me to make this a success.,” she adds.

Visit www.condoverfurniture.com to see more examples of Vanessa’s work

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