

# CUTTING EDGE FURNITURE UPCYCLING COURSE

## Choosing a piece to work on

The choice is ultimately yours! However I have some recommendations that I think you can use to guide you particularly a) if you have never done this before and b) if you are looking to make a profit from the furniture you create.

I also want to ensure you enjoy the whole process and can move through each stage comfortably and not be over-faced with tackling it!

My main advice for the best experience is to choose something wooden, un-painted and of average size like a chest of drawers, cabinet, dressing table or small sideboard.

Here are some things to consider additionally when choosing...

### 1. Consider the condition

Particularly if you are new to upcycling furniture you don't want to take on something too damaged initially until you build up your skill level. At this stage I want for you to enjoy creating and enjoy learning so I would select a piece with some minor defects that need sorting out (it doesn't matter if you don't know how yet but smaller areas of damage are better)

For example: crazed and missing paint or finish, chipped veneer, deep scratches, a wonky leg, some missing trim, that sort of thing.

Your piece should be fairly sound and solid - the finish doesn't need to be but if there are large issues to resolve structurally I would consider parking that piece for later as your skills develop and concentrating on the stylistic upcycle first!

We learn with every piece so give yourself the space to learn the decorative techniques before taking on too much on in terms of repairs.

Also if you are looking to sell your furniture you need to consider the time taken to fix vs the amount you can sell for.

It isn't always possible to tell the exact condition and surprises can await us! It happens and it's usually great learning experience resolving those issues but some pieces you may choose to pass given the choice.

One specific thing I would recommend is to aim for brown furniture over already painted furniture if you can.

It's not a no to take something already painted but it will probably mean more work (and more

messy work) so just be prepared for that if you have your heart set on a painted item.

They deserve upcycling as much - if not more than a simply tired piece of brown furniture and we will certainly need to have the skills to upcycle more and more painted items as plainer vintage starts to run out so it's no longer enough of a reason to avoid a job.

However, if you are upcycling for profit you might like to generally avoid painted items unless you can secure them very cheaply, or free which will make up for your extra time and effort spent on them.

## **2. Consider the Cost**

Vintage is getting more and more expensive in general as this industry expands and also certain styles and brands become very sought after for upcycling, perhaps more than they need to be purely because of demand (e.g. Stag is an example of this

My answer to that is to look around and be resourceful and find other options rather than look for items and spending more just to get a name, especially if you are painting it anyway.

No one is looking for Lebus Link vintage furniture for example - they look for the inventively upcycled furniture so don't worry about those lesser known brand names.

If you come across the better brand name furniture and its a steal do some research check it out and see if it can perhaps just be restored for as much with less effort on your part than if you re-style it.

If the market is there for it in its natural state you would do well to move it on quickly and that gives you more time and funds to put toward creative projects.

Be aware of later versions from well known brands where the style and the desirability drops off e.g. GPIan in the 70s and 80s.

Most of my furniture is pretty unglamorous, unnamed vintage that wouldn't have a market as it is alone and then I can buy cheaply and bring all of the value to it.

As a guide I manage to buy most of my furniture for somewhere between £30 and £80. More for the larger pieces, of course, and also when I need to source to order and find a specific thing.

You may have to factor in courier collections on top of that, if it's not local too so do bear that in mind. I've tended to keep my maximum to 120, so I would say on average about 10% of my eventual sale cost - anything up to 20% can be ok but just bear this in mind. .

The great thing is at the lower end of the market tends to be the pieces that need help the most to keep them out of landfill

So if selling we can make a better profit but also really focus our upcycling efforts on salvaging

rather than following trends and doing things to re-style furniture that is quite desirable already and 'doesn't really need us', as I like to say!

If it costs more than £150-200 consider does it need upcycling at all?

Much Mid Century falls in this camp for me, but increasingly older styles of furniture, e.g. Victorian or Georgian, that had fallen out of favour in their original condition are starting to be appreciated more generally not just in the Antiques world.

So I say it's worth hunting around for the unlovable and unloved stuff that there is no guilt attached to breathing new life into.

Check out Charity shops, Auction rooms, House Clearance companies, Freecycle websites, Waste/ Recycling Centres, Facebook Marketplace and Ebay.

As you go along you'll find that people start to offer you pieces for free too and that can be wonderful source of pieces to work on!

## **2. Consider the size**

As this is a 6 week course I would actively recommend not to choose anything too small or too simple e.g. a small side table.

In order to get the most from the course, I would choose something with a least one drawer and potentially a cupboard too so you are dealing with handles and hinges and really getting into some of the problem solving aspects of upcycling and the sequencing of the different stages of the process.

Anything up to a 2/3 door sideboard I think is achievable in the time frame as long as you can commit around 5 hours per week to it, although the complexity of the design might mean you need longer (and if you decide to do the interior too).

Larger dressers and wardrobe size pieces are ambitious within the timeframe but if you have more time on your hands please feel free! You of course also have the scope to spend as long as you need on each stage. .

I have had people complete two smaller pieces within the course so that is another option if you only have smaller items but want to try out different things.

## **3. Consider the style**

Does the piece suit the style of design you have in mind?

I'm all for eclecticism but there is something about furniture for me that works better when you are sympathetic and balance its original style with the new design.

So I wouldn't recommend putting masking tape geometrics on a Antique piece with elaborate mouldings, for example unless you want it to look theatrical or light hearted.

Vintage furniture (which means furniture from the last 100 years) is going to give you the straight lines and flat surfaces you need to create those Modern looks, particularly if you are wanting to create geometric or linear designs.

Very intricate pieces, pieces with panelling, bevelled edges can get quite fiddly if you wish to do something with masking tape or stencils so consider this from the outset and adapt either your piece or your design.

Not impossible but even I might groan a little with the extra work involved to work over features like that so I would recommend avoiding for your first project!

#### **4. Consider the upcycle**

What are you hoping to change to elevate the piece from what it is now and is it achievable?

For this course adding new handles, hardware, trim and of course a brand new design and fresh finishes are going to be our main emphasis.

You could additionally think about mirrors, lighting, replacing existing shelves with glass, as an example.

Big structural changes might be better for future projects where you have a little more time to problem solve!