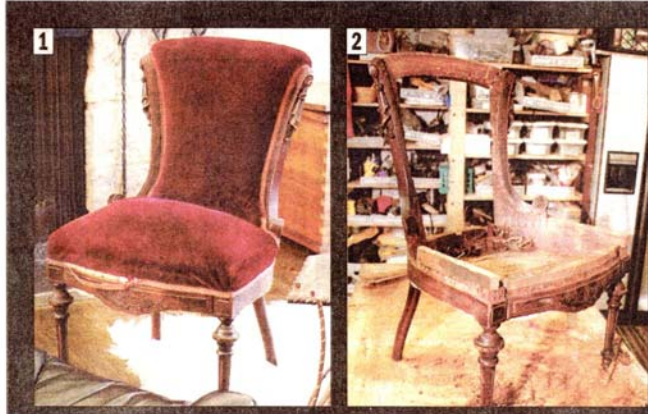
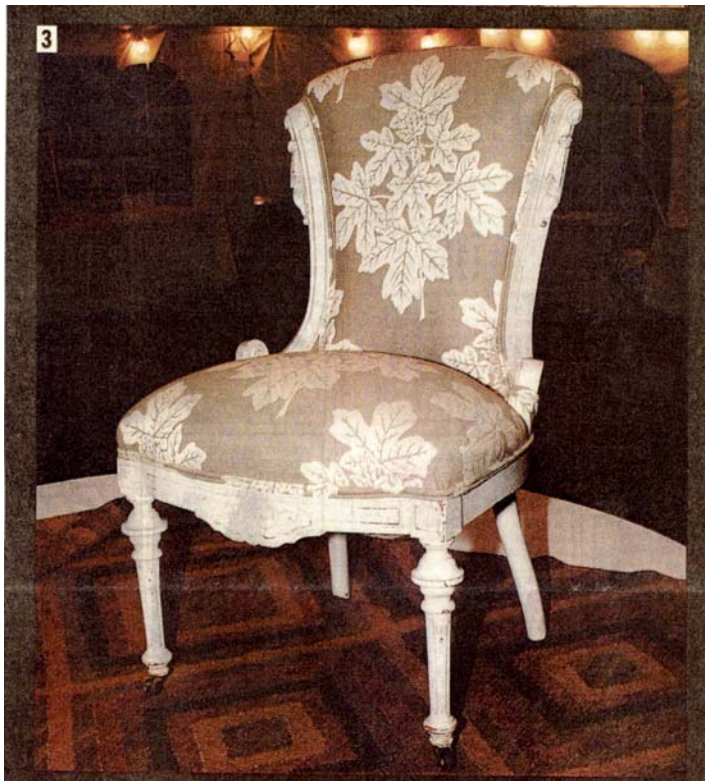


Life&Style

The Journal News | Monday, June 18, 2007



New fabric, new life



From faded to fabulous

This series of photographs charts the progress of a reupholstering job completed by Kaja Gam Design in Ossining for an auction.

The firm took this slipper chair, from its original stain and with velvet covering (1), and did a complete re-upholstering job that included new bands and

padding (2).

The finished piece (3) features thin layers of China red lacquer visible through a slightly distressed cream-colored top layer that offers a fitting backdrop for a cotton jacquard in an oak-leaf motif. It was purchased by a Bedford woman for use in her summer home in Maine.

Mary Shustack

Reupholstering rejuvenates tired furniture

Mary Shustack
The Journal News

The couch is frayed from hosting one too many burly football fans. The dining-room chairs are covered in fabric that was hip back when people still used that word. Realizing it's time for a furniture facelift isn't always easy, says Kaja Gam of Kaja Gam Design in Ossining. "Most of us can't see that," Gam says. "We get used to something. We don't see things get tired."

But they do — and that's when reupholstering can provide a stylish alternative to buying new. Sometimes it even encourages people to buy old.

David Cooke, an owner of the Cold Spring Antiques Center, says more people are recognizing the potential of vintage furniture.

They look beyond stains and sags if they see good lines and quality workmanship.

"People are more savvy about decorating," Cooke says. "I think today — more so in the last five or eight years than 20 years ago — it's easier to get things reupholstered."

Just recently, Cooke says, the Cold Spring shop sold a 1920s camelback Chipendale-style couch to a woman determined to draw out the elegance obscured by a dull stretch of fabric.

"They were going to do it up in some kind of Victorian colors," Cooke says.

The couch, he adds, sold for between \$300 and \$400, with the reupholstery likely adding another \$700 or \$800.

While similar pieces could fetch more than \$3,000 new, the benefits go beyond the financial.

"She's going to have a great piece," Cooke says.

Sometimes, a job ranges from the simplest replacing of fabric to more elaborate scenarios that branch out into repairs, painting and refurbishing the entire interiors.

The goal varies. Someone with traditional taste might replace a beige silk seat covering with one in pale blue.

"Just as many people say 'Hey, let's do something funky,'" Gam says. And that's when pieces known for nicked wood and dingy velvets suddenly turn up splashed with red lacquer surrounding a bold polka-dot print.

Experimenting is often a choice when a piece isn't deemed an heir-



Seth Harrison/The Journal News
Luz Rodriguez sews fabric for seat cushions at Eva's Design and Decorating in White Plains.

Please see REUPHOLSTER, 3D

Reupholstering rejuvenates tired pieces

REUPHOLSTER, from 1D

loom.

While reupholstery can be a cost-saving venture, it's not always the reason behind the change.

"Sometimes it's not even a matter of whether it's worth it in dollars and cents," Gam says.

A chair or love seat, Gam says, might remind its owner of a particular person or place.

"Sometimes it's worth it for that alone," Gam says. "You do it for yourself."

Adrienne Skinner of Larchmont, a client who's often worked with Gam, has reupholstered many pieces.

And some pieces many times, including a couch first inherited by her own mother.

To Skinner, buying new is an option, not a priority.

"My sensibility is — where I can, I always like to use what I can," Skinner says. "Furniture, the older pieces, are better made."

Even if one comes upon them by chance, such as a street find Skinner had redone.

"Now it's my daughter's favorite chair to curl up on and read," she says.

Making treasures out of these finds is a bonus, adds Lisa McTernan of Lifestyles & Interiors by Lisa, a retail shop and interior-design studio in Croton-on-Hudson.

McTernan gets up from her desk to offer a glimpse into a back room, where a Channel-back chair found at a nearby estate sale awaits its own transformation.

"I think it's also nice when things have a history, especially if it's a nice history," McTernan says.

Some things are just meant to stay where they are, McTernan says.

"When I walk in, if I see a sofa where the proportions are pretty workable, that's one of the first things I suggest," McTernan says.

And she encourages a client to envision more than a simple switching up of fabrics.

"We can change the arms, change the legs," she says. "There's so much you can do to restyle it. It's not just taking something you have and redoing it."

McTernan mentions nails and trims — the space behind her desk



Photos by Seth Harrison/The Journal News

Stacks of fabrics at Eva's Design and Decorating. The store does all of its projects in an onsite workshop.

Sources

To contact the companies featured in the article:

Cold Spring Antiques Center, 77 Main St., Cold Spring, 845-265-5050 or www.coldspringantiquescenter.com.

Eva's Design & Decorating, 206 E. Post Road, White Plains, 914-949-2717 or www.evasdecorators.com.

Kaja Gam Design, 125 Main St., Ossining, 914-923-2393 or www.kajagamdesign.com.

Lifestyles & Interiors by Lisa, 33 N. Riverside Ave., Croton-on-Hudson, 914-862-4163 or www.lifestylesandinteriors.com.

is artfully arranged with countless examples of trims — to really add flair.

She talks of skirts added to dining-room chairs, giving the whole room a new life.

"This is where you can make it more interesting than if you buy new," McTernan says. "You can custom create so much."

And often, it's done fast.

"The turnaround time is also much quicker," McTernan says. Ordering a new sofa, she says, can

sometimes take months. Sources generally agree that most reupholstery jobs are completed within weeks, sometimes at little as two but usually within six.

McTernan says reupholstery seems to be finding new favor.

"Recently, I've also gotten to feel this is the 'green' and environmentally friendly thing to do," she says. "It has such grace to it — why throw it away?"

Ellyn Weisfelner, an interior designer at Eva's Design & Decorating in White Plains, says reupholstering indeed offers a thoughtful alternative.

More often, Weisfelner says, people are prone to treating their possessions in a disposable fashion. "We just constantly want to do something over, throw it away."

But sometimes it makes more sense to preserve something of better quality than to buy a cheap substitute.

"The main difference is your frame may be a better frame," she says. "If it lasted over 20 years, generally, you've got a good piece."

At Eva's, projects are completed in an on-site workshop, another sign of personal attention.

"We're not just ripping it apart, throwing on some fabric and saying

'Have a nice day,'" Weisfelner says. "I personally try to get people out of the box ... I like to use things that are very classic but then put an element of surprise in there."

A room's overall tone might be a cream or tan, so she might recommend chairs that sport pairings of lime with aubergine or blues and browns, with pops of yellow.

"Everything can't sing in the room, that's what I tell people," she adds.

This time of year, she says, is a time for redecorating.

"Kids go away for the summer, camp, and that's when they start doing things to the house," she says.

Of course, Weisfelner helps select a fabric that will be suited for use. The finest silk won't last long around cats, for example.

In the end, though, reupholstering is all about making a personal statement — something that crosses each element of home decorating.

"The fun thing about upholstery is it's custom," Weisfelner says. "... No two pieces will be the same."

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