

UPHOLSTERY SKILLS CENTRE

WITH OVER A HUNDRED YEARS PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Newsletter no. 5

This past month—inside and outside at the Centre:



NEWS ROUND UP

NEW Furniture Skills & Heritage Centre

We promised more exciting news in the last newsletter ...

We are really pleased to announce that we have set up a new Community Interest Company called Furniture Skills & Heritage Centre.

For a long time we have been aware of gaps in researching and telling the story of this important part of the UK's heritage.

We have, therefore, set up the CIC to:

1. Research and identify the techniques, skills and materials related to upholstery and furniture making across different time periods;
2. Tell the story and bring back to life this important part of the UK's heritage; and
3. Provide training and experience in these practical skills and traditional crafts.

We plan to start this venture by undertaking a gap analysis. This will ensure that we do not duplicate but build upon existing projects and research.

We will also be embarking on a couple of starter projects that contribute to our overall ideas and aims – we are launching a hunt for older and unusual upholstery tools particularly those made over a 100 years ago; and we are hoping to interview (and video) older and retired upholsterers who were trained by Masters of the trade.

This will help us start to build a picture of techniques, skills and materials used during different time periods.

**WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE
WHO ARE INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED
IN THIS NEW VENTURE!**

**ALSO, IF YOU HAVE A PARTICULAR SKILL
THAT YOU THINK MIGHT BE USEFUL
PLEASE LET YVETTE KNOW.**

SPECIALIST TRAINING COURSES

Please let Yvette know if you would like to book a place on any of these courses.

COURSE

Three Day French Polishing Course



NEXT DATES

Thursdays 4th, 11th & 18th May

COURSE

Three or Five Day Chair Caning Course



NEXT DATES

Monday 22nd & Tuesday 23rd May (plus one day) or week commencing 22nd May

COURSE

Three Day Leather Repair & Restoration Course



NEXT DATES

Wednesday 26th, Thursday 27th & Friday 28th July

NOW AVAILABLE

Leather Repair & Restoration Starter Kit — £185

Includes paints, cleaners & removers, pre-coats & repairers, tools & accessories and toolbox



Spotlight on Past Students

This month we caught up with Vicky Cable

When did you train at the Upholstery Skills Centre?

I started my Stage 2 Craft certificate in February 2014 and studied part time for a couple of years, finishing my Stage 3 Advanced course in July 2015. I was very chuffed to receive a Distinction for my Stage 3.

What was your favourite piece that you upholstered during your training?

I actually really surprised myself, as having spent most of the course learning wonderful but time consuming traditional upholstery techniques (*Vicky was on the previous syllabus that didn't include as much modern upholstery*), I got a bit over excited by foam and staples and their flexibility and speed! My favourite piece was therefore a 1960's swivel chair. I love its curves but I also really enjoyed the stitching.

What are you doing now? How is it going? And how did you get there?

Right now I spend half my time running my upholstery business, Vicky Cable Upholstery Studio (www.facebook.com/VickyCableUpholstery/) and the other half on a fab vintage furniture company called Self (www.facebook.com/selfstudiouk/).

I set up my business in 2015 and started taking on jobs via word of mouth at the same time as working part time for another upholsterer, Dave. As time went on and I began to get busier.. I reduced my hours working for him and spent more time on my own client work.

I met my partner in October 2016 when he turned up at the workshop with some vintage cocktail chairs for Dave to upholster for his business!! We got chatting and aside from the obvious (cough cough!) interest! I really loved what he was doing to the furniture... though he needed a bit of help with the chairs and fabrics, so I offered! A year and a half later I am running the business and we have done 3 trade shows, sold through Liberty and shipped 17 pieces off to a store in Hong Kong.



Our favourite picture of Vicky at the Skills Centre!



Any tips to pass on to students going through their training or just setting out on their own?

I've learned so much over the last few years but I'll stick to my top 4!

1. Don't be afraid to ask for help or even to employ another part time upholsterer or admin person (just make sure they know you want good quality work, I know you will if you've trained at USC!). You will free up lots of time to work on the bits of the business you enjoy!
2. If you can, get some accounts set up with the fabric companies, as you can make quite good profit on fabric sales, every little helps...
3. Keep really good communication with your clients (a really important one!) and by that I mean keep them up to date and in the know on the progress of their project. Don't take on

work if you know you can't start it for a month and don't ever leave them in the dark... they are your best marketing tools! If they like you and you do a great job, they will tell their friends about you.

4. Don't doubt yourself, you CAN do it!! Every piece is different and yes you will mess up occasionally and yes it is bloomin hard work but (yes, I love a good quote!) remember that "the comfort zone is a wonderful place, but nothing ever grows there" and also, very obvious but "Rome wasn't built in a day", just keep taking baby steps! (I have to remind myself of this every single day!)