



A second life

Upholsterer Kim Johnson-Young on her creative success

“My re-upholstery service takes people’s cherished items and breathes new life back into them,” says mum-of-two Kim Johnson-Young, whose respected Kidderminster interiors business has seen her name become synonymous with quality and attention to detail, *writes Natalie Prior*.

The 52-year-old, who founded Designs by Kim Johnson in 2002, loves nothing more than to experiment and apply trends in the world of fashion and home interiors to her custom-made designs

for sofas, chairs, curtains and soft furnishings, which she creates in the on-site workshop at her Comberton Hill showroom.

Kim is a real Kidderminster success story. Born and raised in the Worcestershire town, she first began to learn about upholstery and soft furnishings on a Government-run Prince’s Trust Scheme in the early 1980s. Shortly afterwards she decided to start up her own interiors business.

She said: “I’ve never really worked full-time for anyone else. I started my business with a

small loan back in 1983 working out of a room in an antiques shop with my father who did French polishing.

“Over the years I slowly expanded, firstly starting out in New Road and moving into my existing premises at the bottom of Comberton Hill, near the Severn Valley Railway, in 2002. I branded my shop as ‘Designs by Kim Johnson’, as I do actually design sofas and chairs that I make for clients. I have now owned premises in my hometown for more than 30 years.” Although





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the business has gone from strength to strength as the decades have rolled by, it remains small, niche and family-managed with Kim herself still very much hands-on.

She said: “We have three people in our shop team: my sister Sara, my son George and myself who all work in the shop and on-site upholstery workshop. We also have a curtain workroom with three special ladies who create handmade curtains, blinds and pelmets. This is a very hands-on business.” Kim, who went to school in Wolverley

and college in Kidderminster, offers upholstery and re-upholstery services and makes her own range of bespoke sofas, chairs and headboards, which can all be designed and created to exacting individual specifications.

“We love to give some of them that ‘wow’ factor, if that’s what the client wants,” she said.

“As a discerning person with a special eye for quality, you probably spent a lot of hard-earned money on your three-piece Duresta, G-Plan or Parker Knoll, so why throw it away when we can

work with you to turn it back into a much-loved item? “We are master upholsterers with over 30 years’ experience, so my team and I will make your item look wonderful once more – literally as good, if not better, than new.”

Other services include bespoke curtain and blind making, including fitting, and clients can select from a wide range of fabrics from the handpicked range of designer branded fabric suppliers including Orla Kiely, Sanderson and Clarke & Clarke. From stylish patterns to bright





florals and brickwork designs, the showroom also houses a broad selection of designer wallpapers which are available to order.

She added: "Within my shop I also stock an extensive range of home accessories to compliment a room. These are very much 'on trend' items, as I keep myself up to speed with what is happening in the world of fashion and design. I also have an online shop and an eBay store."

In terms of customer service, Kim says her clients can expect a very knowledgeable and professional experience.

"Being a small business, our customers mean the world to us and we make sure we go that extra distance to provide a service that meets their expectations," she said.

"With over 30 years in business and working in this field I am a master upholsterer and qualified interior designer, although I tend to utilise my interior design knowledge to advise customers rather than as a service in its own right.

"I have lost count of how many clients I have worked with over the years, but I am pleased to say that many of them are returning customers and indeed we now see their family members also coming to us." As well as the public, Kim also

counts interior designers, property developers and other local businesses among her clients and has worked on a number of larger projects.

"We carried out a lot of work for the West Midland Safari Park after the main house was damaged by fire," she said.

"We have also worked on nightclubs and local business premises. All of our clients are special to us and everything can be interesting in its own right."

Despite her success, Kim still views the business as "very niche" and prefers to "remain a specialist rather than generalist" which means she has no plans to expand.

Hard-working Kim lives with her husband Philip very near her shop and has two children in their 20s, including George who works for the business. "In my limited spare time, we do like to eat out and spend time with our friends and family," she said.

Although she says she doesn't have any specific hobbies outside of work, in her spare time she can't resist keeping an eye on the latest fashion and interiors trends. "I am inspired by the things I see around me and fashion has a major influence on everything I do," she said.