



Beauty Restored

Who needs a furniture restorer when it's cheaper and more fun to Do-it-Yourself? / **carol Goldin**

My mother-in-law passed away last year and I inherited her old Singer sewing machine and table. I had always admired it so she knew I wanted it. It was an old piece that her mother bought in Tel Aviv when they first came to Israel from Kiev in the 1920s. It wasn't in good condition and I planned to get a slab of marble to put on the top to cover the wood. Then I saw a notice on our community Internet site for furniture restorer, Jeremy Zetland. He came over to see the table and quoted NIS 4000 to restore it but added that for half the price I could do a furniture restoration workshop in which I could do the work myself and learn a new craft. The only DIY experience I had had was about 10 years ago when I removed paint off a nightstand and painted it. I am not a person who does arts and crafts but I decided to try.

The Workshop

Jeremy Zetland's workshop is located in Batsra in a citrus grove. There are six people working on their projects. These range from a large piece of furniture someone is planning to put in a kitchen to dresser drawers that a woman found on the street in Raanana and wants to restore. One man is

working on restoring cane furniture that he brought with him from South Africa. Jeremy is a very good teacher. He is enthusiastic and also sees that we are working in the right position to prevent backache or muscle strain.

The Restoration Process

I worked on the table for nine weekly sessions of three hours each. First I had to dismantle the entire sewing machine. This meant unscrewing 30 screws and separating the metal from the wood. Then Jeremy taught me how to label each piece. You scratch a line or symbol onto the piece you are dismantling and the same symbol on the place where it fits. As an English teacher, I preferred using letters. Then I took the metal parts, the Singer sign and two sides, to a sandblaster in Petah Tikva to remove the old paint. I then brought the pieces back to the workshop and learnt to use a spray paint gun so that I could spray-paint them with rust proof paint and a finishing coat of black paint. You have to put on a mask like we had in the Gulf War, as you need full protection. Then I started on the wooden parts of the table. Some of the wood was chipped so we filled it in with a paste of the same color and now its impossible to see where the imperfections were. Old shellac also had to be removed from the wood with metal scrapers. You have to do this with a certain wrist movement in the direction of the grain of the wood so you don't scratch it. After this I used paint remover with steel wool to remove the last bit of shellac. This took one whole session. Then I used coarse sandpaper to sand it and then finer sandpaper. Luckily my son, Oren, was here on his vacation from the University of Florida to help me sand. We used an air gun to get rid of all the dust. The final step was French polishing the table. You have to apply polish in a thin layer 40 times and it took two sessions of work. This is what makes the furniture look absolutely gorgeous again.

Hooked

After I finished the sewing machine table I didn't want to stop with the workshop so now I am onto my second project, restoring two leather chairs from my father's clinic in Miami. I love both chairs. They are from his consultation room and whenever he had to let someone know if they were pregnant or if they had a terminal disease they sat opposite him on those chairs. Unfortunately they had sustained much abuse over the last 26 years since I came on aliyah with them. The upholstery is torn, the springs are maladjusted and one of the chairs is not too stable. Disassembling them has taken six hours already, as I have had to remove 800 staples from the upholstery.

The sewing table is now in full working order but I don't think I will be using it. It's really a remembrance of a woman I loved. Furniture restoration is for me a little like therapy. You have to be prepared for hard physical labor; I have the blisters to prove it. I now look at furniture differently. I went to an antique store recently and had new appreciation for the craftsmanship involved. ✿