



DeWayne Lumpkin relaxes at Home Economics inside H Street Antiques in Grants Pass on a wing chair and ottoman upholstered with vintage British bus sign fabric. Lumpkin sells the fabric, as well as pillows and upholstered furniture to retailers and interior designers nationwide.

Vintage bus sign fabric creates stir among designers

Ashbury and Kingsgrove, Abbots Langley and Hemel Hempstead. These and other names evoke images of quaint English vil-

Story by
Susan Goracke

Photos by
Timothy Bullard

to announce destinations.

In recent years, those vintage route

They're listed on rolls of black and white calico fabric and were displayed on British buses between the 1940s and 1970s

signs could be seen and purchased in Grants Pass, first at DeWayne Lumpkin's Park Place Antiques, then at his Home Economics store. Lumpkin had discovered them at an English wholesaler's shop and envisioned their potential as graphic design.

"You're taking a completely utilitarian item and elevating it to an art form," Lumpkin says. "I just find that interesting."

Last year, after Lumpkin had downsized his inventory of antiques and collectibles and moved in with Karen and Jeff McGowan of H Street Antiques, he took his

idea of using those vintage bus signs as upholstery fabric on the road.

He showed them draped over dowels, as pillow covers and on pieces of upholstered furniture at gift shows in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle and New York. Designers across the country liked his concept, and Lumpkin began taking orders.

Earlier this year, Lumpkin's vintage bus sign fabric caught the attention of a New York Times home and garden writer. Her article and a photo of an upholstered ottoman appeared on the newspaper's Web site on March 17 — it's available at www.nytimes.com/2010/03/18/garden/18dec

or.html — and Lumpkin's phone began ringing in earnest.

The reporter pointed out that Lumpkin's fabric sells for \$175 a yard and varies in width from 24 to 38 inches. An 18-inch-square pillow sells for \$110, an upholstered wing chair costs \$2,500, and a 48-inch-long bench goes for \$950.

"I'm trying to bring the price down for the local market," says Lumpkin, in Grants Pass recently between gift shows. "Pillows here cost between \$50 and \$100. I have also sold smaller footstools here in