What Upcycling can do for you

Welcome to my presentation. My name is Mercè Benavent and I'm going to talk about the benefits that upcycling might bring to your home and life.

For a start, I'll describe what Upcycling is.
Next, I'll let you know about the 3 main upsides that you'll get from it:
- First, Upcycling will make you happier.
- Second, You'll be more free while saving money.
- And finally, you'll help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Does it sound enough appealing for you?

I've been an Antique furniture restorer for almost 20 years and I usually enjoy myself working alone in my workshop. However it wasn't until 2 years ago, when I started to train to adults and I saw their inmediat enthusiasm and commitment, that did I realize how fulfilling activity Upcycling is.

And that is the reason that I've chosen this topic for my talk. I would like to spark a fire in your head that makes you see old furniture not as old junk, but as the chance to have a funny and green action. Please, feel free to ask me questions at any time.

WHAT IS UPCYCLING? Upcycling is a term coined in 1994 by Reiner Pilz, in opposition to Recycling. Both are similar in that they help create less garbage, yet it differs in that Upcycling old products involves giving them more value, not less.'

Even though upcycling covers all kind of discarded objects and materials, because of my profession, I'm going to focus on furniture and ornamental objects. Which you can restore, fix, refurbish, renovate, mend, repair, paint, drill, upholster, cut, decorate, customize, carve… Summing up: taking action to transform it.

I'm going to start talking about the main rewards of Upcycling.

Perhaps you guess I'm going to talk about decoration, and I am. However I'm going to talk about **personal growth, anti-consumerism and ecology**, as well.

- FIRSTLY, UPCYCLING MAKES YOU HAPPIER

Some go to the gym, some practice yoga, some have a glass of wine with their best friend… See your painting sessions as your breather, even as a therapy. You'll be surprised how healing is being focused on the process for a while, to be immersed in the "Now", in the present moment and to switch off from daily chores and family issues.

Creativity, self esteem and happiness are strongly linked. Don't be afraid to be creative, you really can't mess up, and if you do, you just paint over the problem. Creativity allows you to express yourself, your thoughts and your feelings through your handwork.

Seeing yourself as someone who is able to solve problems for itself is empowering and I wouldn't be surprised if soon you started to do some odd job around the house.

That's the end of the first point. Now I will move to the second point, that is

- UPCYCLING IS ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY

When you make the decision to upcycle, you start to become part of the global solution to the world's crises rather than be part of the problem

Ikea is selling 60 million products every year that derive from the forest, it means about 3% of the certified forest worldwide. Which implies tones of water, pesticides, oil, carbon emissions, electricity, etc... in order that we just can buy our Billy shelf. It wouldn't be nicer not wasting all this resources in the first place?

Don't make me wrong, I do like ikea, and I really praise their success mainstreaming this sensible, inclusive and beautiful lifestyle that we all see in their catalog. However we shouldn't buy their rawest consumerism that push us to buy new furniture every few years because they are falling apart because of their poor materials.

Next, I'm going to tell you what can you do instead. The third main benefit of Upcycling is that:

- YOU'LL BE MORE FREE WHILE SAVING MONEY.

I don't want you to stop using Ikea furniture, I want you to go less to the store and if so, be pickier. The fact of finding your furniture out of the "market" could be anti-consumerism activism. It's a tiny but rewarding victory over the consumer society. So, every time you decide not to purchase a new furniture, you taste a bit of freedom.

On the other hand, you must keep in your mind that older pieces are generally better quality than modern ones… in the first place most of them are made from solid wood and assembled by joins and I'm telling you, that is a guarantee of quality. They may not be fashionable anymore, and that is your chance of getting it for a fraction of the price or even for free.

Apart from there, you have many ways to get low-price or free furniture: Second Hand markets, shops, sites and apps. Let know your acquaintances that you'd be willing to keep the old furniture that they want to get rid off. Take a walk the "dia dels trastos" around your neighbourhood and open your eyes. Streets could be a goldmine!

Of course you save money by not buying new furniture, in fact you may increase your wealth because by upcycling you'll have the key to transform old furniture than others don't value, in the perfect pieces than everyone has dreamed. And you only need to invest on a few materials: basically paint and a couple of good quality brushes. By the way, you could even, create your own paint with pigments and glue, so, money is not a big deal.

Up to this point, we've seen the advantages of Upcycling.

I hope I had sown a seed in your mind and next time you bump into an unloved bed table on the street, you'll see it in a different way. Maybe not noticing their faults and chips, but thinking of it as your first step towards a more sustainable and creative way of life.

In conclusion, your creativity and self-esteem are going to be rocketed at the same time you'll be having exactly the home that perfectly suits you spending little money and by the way you will almost save the planet. (the caricature is noticed enough?)

I hope you have found this presentation interesting, thank you for your attention.
Do you have any questions, please?