

Pillows with pop

Friends Kate Hersch, Lance Avery Morgan create home accessories with a flourish



By Laura Hensley
Staff Writer

Kate Hersch's living room is filled with a bevy of guests. Ballerinas, geishas, a trio of hummingbirds and Jesus and his disciples all sit comfortably on an oversized couch and a toile settee.

Surrounded by the colorful cast of characters, Hersch is most at home.

"I look for things that make me smile," Hersch said, sitting amidst her fluffy pillow creations that depict faces, scenes and creatures in needlepoint or delicate antique tapestries.

For years, Hersch, an avid fabric collector, has been picking up various pieces of eye-catching needlepoint, tapestries and vintage fabrics at estate sales and antique shops around the country.

"I've always been a fabric junkie," she said. "I almost feel like (needlepoints) are orphans. Someone's grandmother spent a long time making them, and here they

are sitting in some bin. I feel bad. I've got to take them home and make them look cute."

Last summer, the stay-at-home mother of two decided to do just that. So she delved into her stash of fabrics and in the process launched her own business.

She teamed up with style maven and friend Lance Avery Morgan, the publisher of the Westbank-based magazine, *Brilliant*. Hersch and Morgan devised a plan to create fashionable one-of-a-kind pillows that range from quirky to elegant.

The team formed their company August/Morgan, which is named for Morgan and Gus, Hersch's 2-year-old son. Hersch is in charge of designing the pillows, and Morgan helps with marketing. They employ the assistance of a local seamstress to sew the creations.

"We just thought of it at lunch," Hersch said about her business idea, which allows her to spend as much time as possible with her two children. "We wanted to take pillows to the next level."

Morgan said it was an easy decision to try the business venture with his friend.

"(Hersch) has a flawless eye," Morgan said. "I'm passionate about making every room more beautiful. It's been so much fun for both of us. Our creativity feeds off one another."

Hersch, a Fort Worth native, received a degree in art history from the University of Texas. She landed a job with Sotheby's in New York working with clients as they chose art and helping run auctions.

"It was very exciting and fun," she said. "I got to see everything."

Morgan and Hersch, a volunteer for organizations and events such as Ballet Austin and the Texas Film Hall of Fame, met through the Austin social scene.

Now pillows are their passion.

"Pillows are like the jewelry of a room," Morgan said. "They're a conversation piece. Every pillow has a story, and they have a name. These are instant legacy pieces."

The duo hopes to one day parlay their success with pillows into a home furnishings collection that might include lamps, furniture and china.

For now, they are focusing on creating what they call, "pillows with provenance."

"If a room doesn't have a personality, then it will with an August/Morgan pillow," Morgan said. "Just add pillow and stir."

August/Morgan pillows can be purchased at Area 117 Lavaca St. or on the Web site, www.augustmorgan.com The company also throws invitation-only special events called Pillow Talk parties, where pillows can be purchased. The pillows range in price from \$150 to \$300.