

A look inside: Unique items fill market

BY PAM HAYNES

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HIGH POINT – Bland beds, dressers, chairs and tables may sum up the thoughts about the High Point Market for those who have never been inside the home furnishings trade show.

But the things you'll find at the furniture market this fall – and the story behind them – might surprise non-marketgoers.

Take New York artist Bill Finks, an exhibitor in the Suites at Market Square, for example. Finks has a small space filled with "spirited doll heads," as he calls them, or doll figures made from recycled cans. They aren't exactly your run of the mill furniture accessory, but creating them is a unique hobby the artist took to after being fired from his job 20 years ago.

"Things were looking bad at that time," he said. "My garage was full of junk, so I started making sculptures."

He formed a business called Primitive Twig and began selling sculptures globally. At the April furniture market, he said he sold every piece he brought to the show.

The sculptures fall in line with some unexpected products shown at the High Point Market. Others include jewelry and purse collections.

Having products that stand out is necessary to compete in the current business climate, said Kyle Watts, a senior sales representative with AntlerWorx Inc. The Texas-based company has eye-catching light fixtures and furniture made out of naturally shed deer and moose antlers in its space at Showplace.

"It's been a good market," Watts said. "We're hanging in

there in the economic downturn, but business is relatively strong for us (because) we have a unique product."

But sometimes, an old favorite will resurface as a new trend at the market, as exemplified by some of Hooker Furniture's new wing chairs. Wing chairs have been around since the 1700's and were designed to keep the wind from sideswiping one's face, said company officials. The company unveiled several of the chairs at the fall market.

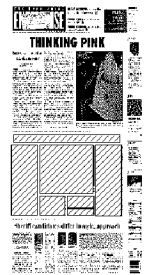
Furniture covered in cursive script with words like "Believe" also are a popular item at the show. A dazzling wall accent of the word "Love" caught the eye of interior designer Lisa Montague from Virginia in the Three Hands showroom in the IHFC.

"Designers come looking for very specific things like this," Montague said.

But that doesn't mean case goods still aren't the heart of the furniture market. Hooker Furniture's largest launch this fall was its 55-piece Trilogy collection, which includes sleigh beds and dining room tables.

"We have a target audience, but we're expanding (product lines) because we need a larger share of their business now," said company CEO Paul Toms.

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Bill Finks shows off one of his doll sculptures in the Suites at Market Square at the fall market. Finks said he sold out of the sculptures at the April show.