

# OUT AND ABOUT

© Copyright 2013, Women's Edition, Inc. All right reserved.  
Reprinted with the express written permission of Women's Edition, Inc.

**W**

ith a passion rarely seen in a world filled with big box stores and home decorating centers, Amber and Brad Unfred have created “pure magic,” as store manager Holly Quinn puts it. Located just north of Colorado Springs, in the heart of Monument, Colorado, sits Shades of Amber, a store so unique that it feels like home from the moment you step through the doors.

I'm not sure if it's the spiced apple candles from one of the local artisans that the couple supports—or the fact that each room feels like you are walking through a small-town home in Europe's countryside. But one thing is for sure, when Holly says many customers “just want to live here,” I believe her.

“You just want to soak up the ambiance,” says Amber as she beams proudly at the storefront she and her husband, Brad, opened only two short years ago. But it didn't start out that way. In 1998, after purchasing their first home, Amber set to creating custom draperies for each room, and the rest as they say “is history.”

Word of her talent quickly spread. Amber's ability to design beautiful draperies and Brad's love of interior design were the perfect combination to launch Shades of Amber over 14 years ago. It's a “home away from home” says Amber; and, like in any household, the entire family gets involved. Even the name, Shades of Amber, came from Brad's mother, Nancy Rose, who came out of retirement to help keep up with the shop's tremendous growth. The couple says the secret to their success and growth is providing customers with an experience that is above and beyond their expectations.

Today, Brad attributes their passion and success to a combination of factors, some of which include Amber's keen eye for detail, taking extra time with customers, and the fact that he grew up with parents in the industry. Extensive knowledge and training in all things interior design have earned the company various awards in the Colorado Springs Parade of Homes, and have built their reputation far beyond the Pikes Peak region, explains Brad. He focuses on the custom drapery side of the business where, he says, he is recognized by Hunter Douglas and top designers in the area as the “go to” expert when it comes to window treatments.

“Our customers appreciate his attention to detail and his incredible ability to make them feel like family,” stresses Amber as she smiles at her business partner and husband.

“Every client has a different style and it's my job to help him or her make their home unique in a way that fits their life,” says Brad.

Amber is also a visionary and says she believes it's the products and exceptional service that keep clients coming back. Her attention to detail, along with her ability to create an atmosphere that is positive, welcoming—and yes, “magical,”—is something to experience firsthand. The items throughout the showroom are so expertly displayed that you feel as though you are transported into a different world, instantly stirring your hidden designer within. You might be surprised to find out that the Unfreds have never actually been to Europe (though they are planning a trip for next year); yet, somehow they are able to capture the European culture perfectly in every arrangement, every piece, and in the ambiance of the entire store.

The style of the items could be categorized as “Rustic Luxe,” according to Holly; but the customers don't seem to put a label on what they see. Though, she adds, they can be heard whispering that everything is “simply amazing.”

The couple says that Shades of Amber caters to a wide range of clientele, from the young couple wanting to transform a rescued table to the discriminating client looking for the perfect piece to complete a one-of-a-kind room. Each display area—or “living room”—is filled with a variety of wares, including the perfect accessories and whimsical-patterned rugs in all sizes imaginable. Finished pieces, rare finds, and odds and ends ready to be customized to a specific palette are among the favorite items for returning clients. In fact, Amber says it is the only store in the county that carries a full line of samples from the Dash and Albert's rug line.

However, Shades of Amber's biggest draw, and what both Amber and Brad feel brings people from all over the country into their shop, is a remarkable paint finishing product by Annie Sloan called Chalk Paint®. Originating in Europe, this finish is so exclusive, says Brad, that the couple has created workshops to showcase the product's flexibility while providing an educational experience for their clients. Whether you want to use Chalk Paint on your next DIY project (they say that it literally transforms any surface) or have the professionals at Shades of Amber customize a piece for you, the staff is with you every step of the way providing instruction, advice, and feedback.

This product seems to have sparked a passion, not only in the staff, but in the customers as well, says Amber, as they often return to take part in the two to four monthly workshops that are offered. She says that many clients that use the Chalk Paint also love the Miss Mustard Seed MILK PAINT, available at Shades of Amber as well. It produces a different look, she says, but with the help of the knowledgeable staff, it is easy to use. It's evident as you look around every inch of this store that one-of-a-kind pieces are at the core of what Shades of Amber does best.

When the company began hosting educational workshops a short while ago, Amber recalls that they were the 13th retailer in the nation to carry the Chalk Paint line; but she says they had no idea that it was “what every homeowner here in the United States has been waiting for.” Both Amber and Brad want to create a positive experience for their customers, not only in helping them decorate their homes, but in the empowerment of taking ownership of the entire experience. When asked why they do what they do, Amber says, “We wanted to create an experience for people and it's humbling to know we have done just that.”

Shades of Amber is one of those hidden treasures that, once you discover it, it beckons you to come back for more. Located at 125 2nd Street in downtown Monument, Shades of Amber is open Tuesday through Friday, 10am to 5pm and Saturday, 10am to 3pm. The shop is closed Sunday and Monday. A second location will be opening in Castle Rock this month. Call the store at 719-265-9921 for workshop dates and registration or visit the website at [www.ShadesofAmber.net](http://www.ShadesofAmber.net).

**WE**

## SHADES OF AMBER Home Decor with A Unique Flair

By Judy Davis



*Shades of Amber Painting Workshop Class*