

BY IRENE TURNBULL

WHETHER WE WANT TO ENJOY THE PLEASURE OF SOCIALIZING with family and friends, curl up by the fireplace with a good book, or simply chill out in front of the big screen to watch a great movie, nothing is more important to our physical and emotional home comfort than the “right” piece of upholstered furniture. Just ask anyone without it!!

Let’s face it, even the best of friendships and the most entertaining of TV shows can be easily undermined by an evening spent in a chair or sofa that has us fidgeting and squirming because we simply can’t get comfortable. Not to mention, the trauma that can result from the reluctant relinquishing of the “power seat” to an unsuspecting visitor!

Yet despite the positive contribution that good upholstered furniture brings to our lives, it remains one of the most misunderstood and poorly chosen of the important elements in home decorating. This is partly due to a general lack of knowledge about upholstery construction because so much of what is important is not readily visible to the buyer for easy comparison. Choices are often made from a price perspective only rather than value based on real performance over time.

UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE – ONE OF LIFE’S OVERLOOKED COMFORTS



WHAT YOU DON'T SEE MAY SURPRISE YOU!

You may be surprised to learn that in our world of fast-paced technological advances, little has changed in quality upholstery by comparison since the late 18th century. Yes, the traditional “natural” cushion and padding materials such as horsehair, and straw-like “tough” have long been exchanged for man-made poly-foams and other synthetics, and the “old masters” who in themselves are a rare breed, have picked up the staple gun in place of hammer & tacks. Nonetheless, some 400 years later in the 21st century, fine upholstered furniture continues to be made in the same basic way, with a high expectation for performance and endurance.

What has changed in today’s marketplace however, is the wide distribution of lower priced alternatives where the cost of the finished furniture is reduced by the substitution of cheaper manufacturing methods and materials, most of which of course are mostly hidden to the purchaser. These pieces are merchandised with a much shorter replacement period in mind, and generally are not focused on performance, as much as a low price point.

The question then becomes, without X-ray vision, how do you become knowledgeable enough to discern among product offerings to make wise decisions? Assuming that most people are interested in getting real value for their purchases, one has to consider that there should be a pay-back on your furniture investment in terms of the actual comfort and durability over time. Will my furniture look as good in five years – ten years, etc, as it does today.

Perhaps knowing what to look for when shopping for good upholstered furniture or when considering whether or not to reupholster an existing piece, might help you make a better choice for yourself.

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