



The History of Furniture: Twenty-Five Centuries of Style and Design in the Western Tradition

By John Morley

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" The entire story of furniture is presented as it never has been before. Written with great verve and in a highly accessible style, The History of Furniture conveys a vast knowledge of history and design with stunning intellectual clarity. In surveying the development of furniture from antiquity to the present day, John Morley focuses on the Western traditions, but he includes the outside influences of China and Japan, India, Egypt, and Africa. His bravura analysis reveals connections between pieces of furniture, such as the direct line from antiquity to a neoclassical French commode, a Biedermeier dressing table, and a twentieth-century bois clair cocktail cabinet.

The story is shaped by a conflict between "classical" and "anti-classical," order and fantasy, and includes the wild extravagances of exotic styles. We see how the simple challenge of making a chair to sit on could generate a huge variety of forms, depending not only on changing fashion in interiors, as well as motifs, ornaments, and ideas from the worlds of politics, religion, architecture, and the fine arts. Works by famous designers-Boulle, Chippendale, Riesener, Makintosh, Eames-appear clearly in the context of the stylish ideals of their times, and nearly 700 illustrations are closely integrated into the text.

The result is not only an essential reference tool for everyone concerned with collecting, selling, or studying furniture and the decorative arts but also a tour de force of scholarship that will enthrall anyone with the least interest in the traditions of Western culture."

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This outstanding publication could serve as a primer for the history and development of furniture. Organized by overlapping and common styles rather than chronologically, it explicates the use of various design features, motifs, and ornaments throughout history. The 12 broad sections, which focus on such categories as antiquity, classicism, neoclassicism, eclectic revivalism, functionalism, and non-Western styles, are subdivided into individual chapters. While the highly informative text is sometimes dense, the use of illustrations is excellent, tying in themes and examples from the other decorative arts as design supplements. The illustrations feature exquisite details in ornamentation and serve to highlight unusual features and materials. This book is invaluable to most reference collections focusing on the decorative arts. Highly recommended for all types of libraries.

-Stephen Allan Patrick, East Tennessee State Univ. Libs., Johnson City

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