

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

REAL ESTATE | DESIGN

Six Chic Recliners That Won't Wreck Your Decor

Think convertible chairs are all overstuffed eyesores? These 6 are so stylish, you'll happily add one to your living room.



RECENT CONVERT Even discriminating homeowners are welcoming today's handsome kick-back-and-relax seats, like Perigold's Four Hands Chance model.

By Kathryn O'Shea-Evans

Feb. 16, 2022 1:46 pm ET

BETH DOTOLO, an interior designer in Seattle, Wash., recently fielded a request from a potential client that could flummox even the most capable décor wizards. “They said they had two traditional, overstuffed red recliners that they absolutely had to incorporate into their space,” said Ms. Dotolo, co-founder of Pulp Design Studios. “I was like, ‘Well, first of all, challenge accepted, but I’m sure I can show you what other options are out there... [some] you don’t even know are recliners until they’re actually put into motion.’”

That's right. The uncouth behemoths that Joey Tribbiani Jr. and Chandler Bing defended on "Friends" have gotten a glow-up. Design Within Reach sells the Vala Swivel Recliner—a pebble-shaped perch that would satisfy James Bond, off the clock and ready to tip back a martini. Arhaus offers the Rowland Leather Motion Recliner, a chicly blocky seat whose supple leather is sewn into natty flanged edges.



Vala Swivel Recliner, \$4,695, [DWR.com](https://www.dwr.com)



Rowland Leather Motion Recliner, \$3,299, [Arhaus.com](https://www.arhaus.com)

“I’m all about recliners,” said Portland, Ore., designer Max Humphrey. “In the days of old, a recliner had built-in cup holders and weighed 700 pounds.” Now they’re as style-forward as any other option—and “just happen to recline,” he said. The technology that makes streamlined-yet-plush a possibility now? Dense yet congenial car-industry foams that have recently become available to furniture makers, said Hlynur Atlason, designer of the Vala.

Recliners can be traced back to the adjustable, armed chairs of 1600s France, “a great moment for new experimental forms of furniture, a lot of them with an interest in comfort,” said Alexis Barr, instructor of design history at the New York School of Interior Design. But by the late 20th century, their progeny had become the furniture equivalent of that stuffed Thanksgiving feeling, after the pie. “There was something almost embarrassing about having one,” Ms. Barr said. “It becomes a sort of symbol of masculinity or slovenliness or something.”



Wells Tufted Leather Swivel Recliner, from \$1,699, PotteryBarn.com



No longer. Even heritage brand [La-Z-Boy](#) got the memo. On average, 25% to 35% of the company's new model releases since 2015 have been sleek and modern, said Chad Adams, product marketing manager at La-Z-Boy. "We are focused more than ever on cleaner lines and styling that is more up to date."

NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP

Real Estate

From aspirational residences to major commercial deals.

PREVIEW



SUBSCRIBE

Mr. Humphrey offers some guidelines. Limit yourself to one recliner per sitting room, he said, and be sure you have plenty of space around it so it will actually recline—otherwise, it's like "a pool table in a room that's too small. You're going to bump the wall with the pool cue."



Fama Mondrian, \$2,100, FamaLiving.com



Four Hands Chance, \$1,999, Perigold.com

The Wall Street Journal is not compensated by retailers listed in its articles as outlets for products. Listed retailers frequently are not the sole retail outlets.