

# Finding Forgotten Furniture

From the telephone table to the bar cart, what's old is chic again

BY JENNY TZESES | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON APRIL 1, 2021 | [MANSION GLOBAL](#)



*Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Finn Daybed*  
COURTESY OF MITCHELL GOLD + BOB WILLIAMS

How many times have you purged your home of hand-me-down family relics, only to regret it when a few years later they become all the rage?

“Interior design, much like fashion, is cyclical, and pieces that were considered passé for a while do tend to return and enjoy a new wave of popularity,” said Charu Gandhi, founder and director of London-based interior-design firm Elicyon.

These pieces are both popular in their original form as antiques as well as in modern reproductions and reinterpretations. “The appeal of antique iterations is their imperfection,” Ms. Gandhi said. “Our clients increasingly appreciate the variations, patina and authenticity found in antique or vintage furniture and accessories.”

Benoist F. Drut, owner of Maison Gerard Gallery in New York, noted a renewed interest in antiques and 20th-century design. “People are looking for pieces that will last and that are durable. Quality, craftsmanship, authenticity and functionality have never been more important. People want things that are special, important, and rare,” he said.

He also finds clients are spending money in more measured ways. “There is less focus on increased value and more on having something exceptional in your home. It’s about finding things that are authentic and make you happy,” Mr. Drut said.

Here, seven long-lost furniture pieces that are finding their way back into the collective consciousness.

### **The Bar Cart**

Also known in England as the drinks trolley, this rose to fame during the cocktail culture of the Old Hollywood era. A lovelier cousin to its dowdy descendant, the tea trolley—a clunky wooden cart that was wheeled out to ladies of leisure in Victorian England during afternoon tea—the bar cart is decidedly more elegant. Often iterated in gold or bronze with multiple open shelves, the mobile bar on wheels is designed to display a curated collection of libations and the ingredients needed to make them—as well as the glassware in which to serve them.

“They offer a practical purpose as well as being beautiful pieces of furniture,” Ms. Gandhi said.



Neoclassical Brass Drinks Trolley, 1960

*Courtesy of 1stDibs*

### **The Secretary Desk**

First appearing in 18<sup>th</sup>-century France, the secretary desk is equal parts armoire with shelving and/or cubbies above and a dresser with drawers below, and is traditionally crafted from wood. The piece is often divided by a flat pullout slab that forms a workspace or writing desk.

“Secretaries have definitely become more popular, especially now that we are no longer tied to large monitors and most of what we do can be done on small laptops,” Mr. Drut said.

Functional pieces of furniture, they can easily be incorporated into many spaces, including living rooms, bedrooms, and even kitchens, Mr. Drut said. And because they offer so many uses in one, they are a good option for apartments where space may be more limited. “These desks have the ability to be closed up and items neatly tucked away by shutting the top,” Mr. Drut said.



Jules Leleu Secretary designed by Phillip Thomas;  
*Photograph by Eric Piasecki*

## The Daybed

While the daybed has been around since ancient Egyptian times, it perhaps received most of its fame in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century England, when women clad in too-tight corsetry were prone to fainting and took to a form of this settee—with a curved frame and raised back—to recover. Not quite a loveseat or a bench, the daybed is more of a bed-sofa hybrid. And in today’s world, it’s the perfect expression of modern comfort, said Bob Williams, co-founder and president of design, Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams.

“With our homes performing multiple functions, we see the versatile daybed having a revival. It’s about having rooms and furnishings that are adaptable to the way you and others live in and with your home,” he said.

Suited to living rooms, bedrooms, home offices, and cozy nooks, the daybed is fit for lounging solo or as seating for two. “It’s well loved by a fireplace and also sits beautifully in front of a window without blocking the view. And it can be a great design focal point,” Mr. Williams said.



Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams Finn Daybed  
*Courtesy of Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams*

## The Slipcovered Sofa

The perfect solution to making a used couch look like new (let alone presentable), a slipcover certainly gets points for utility. As for style, however, the drapery, droopy sheath has always seemed more function than form. However, the slipcovered sofa is having a revival of sorts in a modern way.

Companies like Maiden Home are introducing versions suited for the 21<sup>st</sup> century thanks to some bespoke details. “With our Dune Sofa, we’re leaning into the casual, beachside vibes that a slipcover style brings, but giving it a fresh take with down-filled comfort, artful details, and chic tailoring,” said Nidhi Kapur, founder and CEO of Maiden Home.

What makes this iteration more stylish than its predecessors are chic, hand-sewn touches that look tailored and more like livable luxury—all while still machine washable. “We typically see the Dune Sofa in relaxed living rooms thanks to its sink-in comfort and family-friendly, washable slipcover,” Ms. Kapur said.





Dune Sofa by Maiden Home

*Photo Courtesy of Maiden Home*

## **The Wingback Chair**

Born from necessity, the wingback chair came into being in early 18<sup>th</sup>-century England before the invention of central home heating. Designed with two wings, or “cheeks,” on either side that often extended down through the armrests, this mode of seating was meant to protect from drafts and trap the heat from a nearby fireplace. “It saw now-iconic reinterpretations in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by such Danish greats as Kaare Klint, Frits Henningsen, and Borg Mogensen,” said Anthony Barzilay Freund, editorial director and director of fine art for 1stdibs, an upscale e-commerce antiques and design marketplace based in New York.

One of the most famous modern wingback iterations was the Egg Chair, designed by Arne Jacobsen in 1958, which utilized nubby fabric or smooth leather and a chrome base, cocooning the sitter like an egg. A stodgier perch later served as an ideal spot for *Masterpiece Theater* hosts in the 1970s and '80s. “We’ve seen an uptick in interest in wingback chairs,” Mr. Barzilay Freund said. “I can only imagine the form, inherently embracing and protective, is appealing to people seeking refuge and safety in their homes from the dangers and uncertainties of the past year,” he said.

Maiden Home’s Perry Chair takes the classic silhouette to cozier proportions thanks to plush cushioning in the back and seat, and fabric options like shearling and performance velvet. “As a nod to mid-century Danish design, the Perry Chair marries iconic craftsmanship with sophisticated comfort,” Ms. Kapur said.



Wingback Micro Sofa with Black Legs by Tom Dixon  
*Courtesy of 1stDibs*

## The Game Table

Before the internet, television, and even radio, people spent their leisure engaging in pursuits such as chess and backgammon. And with these pastimes came game tables, dating back centuries, which were handcrafted with noble materials and inlaid with marble or wood boards. Most of these tables are round or square and include drawers for stashing game pieces. “An old-fashioned furniture form if ever there was one, game tables have been selling particularly well on 1stDibs, a trend we believe owes both to people looking for at-home activities and the popularity of *The Queen’s Gambit* on Netflix, which sparked a newfound interest in chess,” Mr. Barzilay Freund said.



Tuttuno Leather Edition Mahjong Game Table  
*Courtesy of 1stDibs*

## The Telephone Table

When using the telephone actually required a cord, it also required a place to sit in order to use it (this was also before the extension cord). Enter the telephone table, a small bench with a table attached to one side, where one would sit to chat on a rotary phone. Popularized in the 1930s, these “gossip benches” were meant to be put in the hallway where there was a bit more privacy for rousing conversation

These days, we barely have time to sit while chatting—and the mobile phone has made the walk- or drive- or cook-and-talk possible. Yet these handy little nooks are gaining momentum. “They are quite structural pieces that influence the feel and flow of a space but also serve a function,” Ms. Gandhi said. For instance, she recently worked on a private apartment where she incorporated a bespoke small chest of drawers with an adjoining upholstered bench—a contemporary take on the traditional telephone table.



Designs by Elicyon

Photography by Michael Sinclair