

HOW DO WE SEE THE UPHOLSTERY? ... BY CLEVELAND UPHOLSTERY



CLEVELAND UPHOLSTERY *Forever beautiful Furniture*

One of the things we learn early on in CR is that Tico chairs and sofas leave a lot to be desired in the comfort department. The mattress, chair and sofa are the most important pieces in your home. They are where you will spend most of your time typically, and so they need to provide good quality and comfort. But a comfortable, upholstered piece of furniture wasn't always an option.

When did we humans stop sitting around in the dirt or on a convenient rock and start wanting the comfort of something better? Well, nothing happened fast in the history of mankind but about the time Stonehenge was being erected and we were just beginning to work with bronze, the people of ancient Egypt were already enjoying their leisure time with semi-comfortable furniture. If you had the prestige, power and 'purse' to allow some leisure, then there were animal hair-stuffed cushions, fine fabrics draped across daybeds and gilded and decorated chairs to offer relaxation.

"Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful" – my favorite Morris quote!



Unfortunately, too much of a good thing isn't always good, and that was what drove William Morris, father of the Modern Movement, to turn away from shoddily machine-made, mass produced furniture in the mid 1800's and focus on a return to the skills of a craftsman's hand. Morris could not stop the explosive progress of the machine age, but led a movement to re-inspire the aesthetic sense of his contemporaries and bring back quality and beauty.

After the wars, furniture design was bursting with creativity. Design schools emerged promoting new ideas and directions, offering a world of choices. The old ways were challenged and inspirations were drawn from many different places.

Modern furniture focused on the linear look and minimalist aesthetic -seating was firm to keep that look consistent. New materials like plastics, plywood and tubular metal were being developed that offered new design styles and options for furniture.

In the 1950's, ergonomics* was starting to be used to help the way we work and interact with machines in factories. Once it entered the office domain with desks and chairs, the concept spread and naturally domestic furniture benefitted greatly. Furniture was being designed for the comfort of the human body by reducing fatigue by offering 'fit' and support.

We expats have been very spoiled and have never had to think about the comfort of a chair or sofa when shopping back home. Did the style, the fabric and price match our expectations? SOLD!

Talking about the new designers' approach to ergonomics it was said "Eames, in particular, worked through a very iterative process and sought to create unmatched comfort – an outcome of good ergonomics – while exploring new materials and forms."

Traditional upholstery was hugely labour intensive and uses springs, lashings, stuffings of animal hair, grasses and coir, wools, hessians, scrim, bridle ties, stuffing ties, blind stitching, top stitching, flocks and wadding etc. building up each layer by hand.

In contrast, modern upholsterers typically employ synthetic materials like dacron and foam, serpentine springs, etc. However, *the most expensive seating will have traditional 8-way hand-tied coil springs to give continued support. It will also use feather and down stuffing and many other specialty layers and additions. That is why these are the most expensive types of seating, but they will retain the same level of comfort for much longer.*

Adding a slab of foam on top of a flat wooden seat is the other end of the spectrum. These are the pieces we are more likely to encounter in Costa Rica, and partially because of the quality of the foam and the climate, you will likely end up with donut-seat-syndrome after 2 or 3 years.

Investing in key pieces like a good mattress or chair will give you comfort and benefit your body, and you and your guests will appreciate them for years to come.

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