

## The Home Designer

# Furniture Buying 101

By Brandon Neff

Yes, Virginia, there is a better sofa – or chair for that matter. When shopping for upholstered furniture you truly get what you pay for. And, in this era of eco-friendly, sustainable and value-conscious purchasing nothing fits that practice more than well-built home furnishings. Knowledge of how products are made will yield a better understanding of what will last, and what you can expect to replace in short order. Do you know what you're buying?

It seems nothing is made to last these days. My family has had furniture pieces handed down over generations that still look and work beautifully today. I seriously doubt you'd be able to hand down half of the stuff I see being offered up from those self-help big box stores, and that sad furniture you purchase next to the oversized detergents and tube socks. Well, maybe you could hand down what's left of them.

Truly, something that endures and performs well, year after year, is the definition of value. So, before you click "add to cart" on that flashy furniture website you're surfing, step away from the computer and take a few notes – knowing what you're buying, and why, will make your decision a lot easier.

For starters, quality has nothing to do with the fabric a piece is upholstered in – looking under the hood is the key. Whether your taste runs to the more contemporary, or is planted in the traditional, the key is to look beyond the shape and dig deeper. Like many of my clients, most consumers get sidetracked by the color and texture of furniture rather than taking the time to find out what lies beneath the fabric. Knowing

what the pros know about furniture basics will help you become a more savvy shopper, and help guide you through the labyrinth of options.

Terms like eight-way hand-tied springs and kiln-dried hardwood are infinitely more important to your deci-

sion than kid-friendly stain-resistant fabrics and oil-rubbed bronze nail head trims. Will buying a sofa, or chair that's built right cost you more? Of course. However, will that piece last longer, maintain its integrity and support over time, and cost you less long-term? Ab-

solutely!

Sometimes, furnishing a room properly can seem counterintuitive – many homeowners shove the cheap pieces into the rooms that take the most beating – not a good idea.

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*A pair of custom designed sofas made of kiln dried hardwood frames.*

*Photos courtesy Brandon Neff Design*