



THE BLEND



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IN CLUBLAND, THE VELVET ROPE IS BACK, AND WITH IT A RETURN TO A CERTAIN KIND OF SEATING: CLUB CHAIRS

Words by FELIZIA BERCHTOLD & OSKAR KOHNEN, TUTTO BENE

New members clubs often lean into a kind of *Titanic* neoconservatism – a collage of 1920s nostalgia, with nods to the polished restraint of architect Adolf Loos, the cinematic elegance of Milan's Villa Necchi Campiglio and a generous helping of golden age grandeur. There's a hushed softness to it all – mistaking plushness for prestige.

But the club chair, in essence, was never meant to be modest. This is furniture with formality, with stance. Club chairs are about sitting with attitude.

They originate in France, dubbed the 'fauteuil confortable' (comfortable armchair), and began life as the anti-Louis XV, stripping away the excess curls of rococo to arrive at a low-slung, leather-clad throne of clarity.

What makes a club chair clubby? Proportion, posture, pride. Think of it as a silhouette of seriousness. In uncertain times, we long for definition – and the club chair gives us that. Cubic. Commanding. A place to take up space.

First things first, let's discuss the quintessential club chair by Jean-Michel Frank, which has been reissued by Hermès in a nod to the designer's collaboration with the house that began in 1924. These pieces, crafted with Hermès' renowned artisanal precision, reflect Frank's signature minimalist elegance – an aesthetic shaped in no small part by his mentor, the Chilean style icon Eugenia Errázuriz. Around 1927, she introduced Frank to the refined geometry of late 18th-century furniture, offering him what would become a kind of design credo: 'Elegance means elimination'. In the late 70s, Andrée Putman played a pivotal role in reviving Frank's legacy. Through her firm, Ecart International, she brought his understated modernism back into circulation with a series of authorised re-editions still available today.

Linea A from Poltrona Frau, designed by Peter Marino, is our favourite sibling of this iconic shape. It hits an elusive note: petite enough for home use with an unexpected lightness of scale. It's the kind of chair that holds a room together. And recently, Poltrona Frau has made it available in Alpaca Alto by Dedar – a dense, rich mohair with a tactile depth. It feels like wearing a cashmere coat to make a point, even if you're just staying in.

Then, there's the Jacques Adnet design. At the height of the art deco movement, Adnet introduced a new take on the club chair: stripped of ornament and wrapped in hand-stitched leather. Created in 1937, it remains one of the most enduring expressions of French modernist luxury.

Of course, not all club chairs were born cubic (let's not forget the comfort of the Chesterfields from London's gentlemen's clubs). The original French models featured rounded backs and generous, curved arms – more swell than square.

One of the purest descendants of that tradition is the Vanity Fair chair by Poltrona Frau. First produced in 1930 and later refined in the 80s, it has become an icon of Italian design and a flagship for the brand. With its enveloping form and archetypal proportions, it remains a benchmark of upholstered elegance.

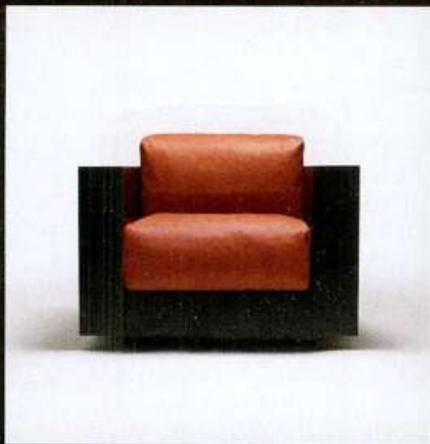
Although this column largely traces the cubic lineage – we'll make an exception for the Fornasetti edition of the Vanity Fair. Because this is the kind of club where the sound of an electric harp playing Metallica makes you want to stay until morning.

Poltronova's Saratoga Chair by Lella and Massimo Vignelli is another kind of modern classic – the club chair reimaged through the lens of 1960s Italian rationalism. Its lacquered wood shell and sleek leather finish evoke the elegance of a vintage sports car, distilled into domestic form. As with all Vignelli work, there's a purity – yet it manages to feel indulgent.

Then there's the 2 Fauteuil Grand Confort – taking the club chair into the realm of architecture, but still surprisingly comfortable. Designed in 1928 by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand, it distilled the club chair down to a radical simplicity: steel frame on the outside, cushions on the inside, like architecture wearing its bones on the sleeve. Cassina's official reissue still reigns, holding court in both apartments and commercial spaces alike. Perriand's role is often under-recognised, yet her influence is felt in the tactile clarity of the piece. That's the club chair after a Bauhaus education. A chair for decisions. Or, at least, decisive posture.

Serious rooms demand serious chairs. And the club chair is staging a quiet return, not as nostalgia, but as a counterpoint to the collapse of edge. Club Chairs invite you to compose yourself.

Still, comfort can also be an attitude. We recently took a seat in Ransom & Dunn's Sparta Chair. Although it's far more maximal than the classic club format, there's something deeply appealing in the way it reimagines the curvature of the original with the stoicism of its more square-shouldered successors. The proportions are generous, the gesture grand – but the intent is clear. Because often the thing stopping us from going out clubbing... is the lure of curling up on a good love seat. ■



Clockwise from top left: Jacques Adnet's club chair in situ; Hermès' Jean-Michel Frank re-edition; Peter Marino's Linea A chair from Poltrona Frau; Vanity Fair XC Imagine Edition armchair by Poltrona Frau, covered with Pelle Frau printed with Fornasetti Sole e Nuvole patterns; Sparta Armchair by Ransom & Dunn; 2 Fauteuil Grand Confort, petit modèle by Le Corbusier, Pierre Jeanneret, Charlotte Perriand - Cassina iMaestri Collection; Saratoga Arm Chair by Poltronova - Lella and Massimo Vignelli