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Luxurious Curves

Rounded furnishings soften rooms, invite conversation, and introduce a sculptural element

BY TRACY KALER



David Patterson

Sculptural, glamorous, even sexy—curved furniture is in the midst of a revival. Curves and waves became wildly popular in the 1980s. These days, designers are fusing curvilinear furnishings with straight-lined pieces in the same room, integrating rounded sofas, tables, and chairs to spotlight their soft, sumptuous curves.

“From architecture to furnishings, curves are all the rage right now,” says Kari Armstrong, CEO and principal at Unscripted Interior Design in Centennial, Colorado, and Santa Ana, California. “We are seeing these striking statement pieces in myriad interior-design schemes.”

Curves are friendly, inviting, and tend to spur interaction between people. For example, Ms. Armstrong says the crescent sofa evokes feelings of comfort, creating the perfect context for connection. “Hence, the intentional nickname ‘conversation sofa,’” she adds.

When curating a space with rounded furniture, Ms. Armstrong claims an artful approach. She explains that curved pieces are often unconventional and dynamic, and can read more like sculpture and should be treated as such.

Julie Soefer



“Curved furnishings are best placed away from walls, and truly take center stage when they are floated, giving attention to their gorgeous form,” she says. “When pairing with a cocktail or side table, consider an oval or rounded shape to complement and not distract from the architectural integrity of the curved lines.”

A high-end contemporary-furniture brand headquartered in France, Ligne Roset has long been admired for its sleek shapes and forms. Many of its top-selling styles celebrate the

curve. Simone Vingerhoets-Ziesmann, executive vice president of Ligne Roset Americas, believes curvilinear furnishings are pleasant and soothing, not only visually but also physically and mentally.

“Think about elements found in nature—the organic, flowing lines of a wave, a piece of fruit, a cloud, or a rolling hill, for example. These are rarely square or rectangular,” she says. “The human body is similarly full of curves and void of hard edges, so interacting with soft, rounded lines feels comfortable and natural.”

A pair of curved sofas invite interaction in this living room, left, by Unscripted Interior Design. Above, Benjamin Johnston Design fuses curvilinear furnishings with straight-lined pieces in the same room.



Interior designer Benjamin Johnston often upholsters pieces in solid, rich fabrics to highlight curves, such as in this room styled by Jenny O'Connor.

Benjamin Johnston of Benjamin Johnston Design in Houston sometimes mingles the curvilinear with the rectilinear to establish an eclectic feel. He often upholsters pieces in solid, rich fabrics to highlight curves, then plays with fun pillows and classic artwork to complete the room.

“A beautiful, modern-feeling sofa paired with traditional artwork or side tables is a lovely way to combine the two styles,” he explains. He suggests merging a transitional, straight-lined sofa and rug with curved-back chairs upholstered in a more daring fabric. “I’ve created

some dynamite looks by going bold with the pattern on the curved pieces themselves. You just need to be sure that your upholstery shop is up to the task.”

Mr. Johnston says he often finds curved sofas on 1stDibs.com, then updates the springs and fabrics to “give them a new lease on life.” Homeowners who can afford the crème de la crème of curved sofas, though, can start at the top with a high-end, luxury piece sold through Holly Hunt.

“There is nothing sexier than a curved sofa perfected by Vladimir Kagan,” he says. “The style continues to be as popular as ever.” Mr. Johnston refers to such a sofa as “upholstered art” because it will surely “add a touch of elegance, glamour, and modernity to any space.”

Personalizing rounded furniture is yet another option, and depending on the room and budget, it could be the most practical solution. Janelle Burns, an interior designer at Maestri Studio in Dallas, suggests customizing curvy shapes to fit your home.

“We work with full-scale templates based off of our initial design intent, then take it to the project site for layout and any desired edits, much like a bespoke piece of clothing,” Ms. Burns explains. “Nothing is as good

Nathan Schroeder

as having it designed and tailored perfectly for the room.”

Ms. Burns recommends determining the space you have available for the custom piece. Circulation (think about the natural traffic patterns) and scale (the new piece should be in proportion to the room dimensions and the other items) are the most important things to consider. “Once you know the general maximum size you have to play with, you can start brainstorming the shape and design details,” she says.

Are you unsure if curves are for you? Curvilinear furniture can work well in almost any space, but approach it holistically, bearing in mind the room’s other design elements.

“When incorporating a curved piece into a room, you have to first think about the moment you’re creating and how that piece fits in,” says Eleanor Trepte, a designer at Dekay and Tate Interiors, located in Palm Beach, Florida, and Denver, Colorado. Furniture with rounded edges can be especially flattering in close quarters, where a curved accent can open up floor space and even make a room feel bigger than it is.

“You’ll still have the wow factor,” she says. But in larger rooms, her advice is to be bold and let the curved furniture be the star. “For

From top: Jenifer McNeil Baker; Courtesy of Ligne Roset



Left, personalizing rounded furniture is another design option, says Janelle Burns, an interior designer at Maestri Studio. Bottom, many of the top-selling furniture designs by Ligne Roset celebrate the curve.

example, a large living room can feel much more intimate and cozy by using a curved sofa as the focal point, then complementing it with some accent pieces,” she continues. “The sofa is the lead, and the accents are the best-supporting roles.”

And for a homeowner who is still on the fence about introducing curved furniture into their life, take baby steps. Mr. Johnston recommends easing into the use of organic, nonlinear shapes by bringing in a small, curvy chair or semicircular sofa, which can marry well with other furnishings while balancing the rectilinear elements in a room.

“The gentle slope lends a subtle softness and added interest to spaces with a multitude of straight lines—for example, a wall of windows or bookshelves,” he says. “You can also call on curved furnishings to set the tone for a room, leaning into the use of round and fluid shapes in other pieces throughout the design.”

Be it that curvy sectional swathed in a plush mohair, or a bespoke pair of barrel chairs covered in a colorful pattern—curvilinear furniture isn’t going anywhere. “This trend has greatly impacted the world of architecture and interiors,” Ms. Armstrong says. “And we foresee softened lines being ‘on trend’ for years to come.” ■

