

## **Sofa History**

Upholstery technically dates back to ancient Pharaohs' tombs were furnished with comfortable appointments preserved to last a millennium. In the West, upholstery as we know it today developed slowly as building architecture improved. Prior to the 1500s, woven artifacts known as tapestries were the main source of insulation, protecting inhabitants from the damp and cold, that seeped in through their walls.

## **Raw Materials**

**The frame** is made most often wood, though newer options include steel, plastic, & laminated boards or a combination of the above. Kiln-dried maple wood deemed free of knots, bark, & compromising defects is used under the upholstery. The show wood of the legs, arms, and back can also be maple, but sometimes mahogany, walnut, or fruitwoods are used for carved legs or moldings.

**Padding** is primarily made from animal hair, particularly hog or horse. Other paddings used in mass production are foam and polyester fiberfill wrap. Some preprocessing may be necessary, as with the pre-matted rubberized hair, where animal hair is arranged and bonded into shape with glue.

**Cushions** are fashioned from polyurethane foam, polyester fiber, down, cotton, latex, or cotton-wrapped springs. A sofa may be covered with any choice of synthetic, natural, or blended fabric. Exterior fabric may be finished with a protective anti-stain coating. When used, springs are made of tempered steel.

## **The Manufacturing Process**

A single sofa takes up 300 to 600 hours of skilled labor to make. Even companies & individuals avail themselves of power saws & other motorized machinery, yet specialized hand tools are still applied to detail work. These include the regulator for stuffing, the "ripping tool," & a type of pliers called diagonal cutters.

## **Framing**

First the frame is constructed, arms, back, or back sections, seat, & legs are attached. The preferred method is with clean-cut, fitted double doweled glue joints reinforced with corner braces, glued and also screwed into place. Each major part of the sofa will have to have springs attached separately, and also be padded separately. Consequently, they are "framed out" with reinforcing slats, arranged around the seat section.

## **Webbing and springs**

The foundation is then set for padding. Jute, Strips of this material are interwoven, stretched across the frame, and tacked down. Flax twine is then used to strap the springs onto the webbing. Two lines of twine are tacked into position and then tied around a spring back to front. Another pair of lines will run side to side on each row of springs after all the springs have been lashed into position individually. If heavy-gauge springs are used in the "front row," these are further tied down with a length of wire. This process is repeated for the back, with special attention to the springs at the base, which are treated like the front row of seat springs. to minimize movement. This is to prevent the springs from wearing through the burlap over time.

## **Padding**

Each part is separately padded as well, chosen material. The padding is placed in a burlap envelope, arranged on the edge of the seat, pinned into place, and stitched down. As the stitching progresses, the pins can be removed one by one. This roll is then shaped according to design requirements and stitched with special needles and more twine. After this is secured yet still pliable, a layer of about 15 lb (6.81 kg) of padding is distributed over the whole area of the seat, extending over the roll. The layer is basted into place with long, loose stitches and covered with lighter weight burlap. Tighter stitching divides the seat into two areas called the platform and the nose or front edge. This front part is reshaped with hand stitching. After the shaping is completed, a final, thicker layer of padding is added to fill in dips left by stitching in the burlap, and basted like the previous layer. A muslin sheet of covering is applied, stitched into the break between the platform and nose, tightened across the front edge and back across the platform; its edges are tacked into place. Anomalies in the padding are addressed before proceeding. 4 The arms are done next in the same basic fashion. After inspecting and making any adjustment to the padding, the exposed wood parts can be stained and finished to taste or design specifications.

## **Fabric**

Every piece & panel that will be fabric covered must be measured and recorded in a cutting list. The panels are then plotted out in chalk & any of the panels and pieces need to be sewn together before being attached to the padded frame. The seat is covered with panels for the platform & nose and hand-stitched into place along the break between them over a layer of cotton batting. The covering is fitted over the back or platform end & secured. The arms are covered next after being prepped with their own layers of cotton batting. A fan-pleated arm is a classic look. The fabric is folded into place around the front roll, The top, bottom, back, and pleated front are operated on in succession. Other parts to be covered, like the back or its sections, may require machine sewing & the attachment of pull tabs that will allow the fabric to be stretched between frame slats & secured. Cotton batting is layered on as well, and the appropriate panel of fabric laid down, basted, stretched fully into place & fixed with tacks. The outside is the last part to be padded and covered, starting at the arms. The open area is covered with a layer of burlap, an outside cotton padding & finally the finishing fabric. Covering is fabric-stitched on top and tacked into place on the bottom, front & back. The covering is basted, then sewn at the top and tacked at the bottom as with the other par

## **Finishing**

After the sofa is flipped and covered at the base with a cambric (dust cover), finishing touches are then applied. The sofa may be fitted with one of several choices of skirt. Arms may be supplied with welted panel covers. Cushions are made separately to cover the seat. These are constructed most often from a jacket of ticking, encasing two pads that in turn frame an inner core of foam. Each one is covered with finishing fabric panels supplied with a back zipper, so the case can be removed for dry cleaning.

**Upholstery** is the work of providing furniture, especially seats, with padding, springs, webbing, and fabric or leather covers. The word *upholstery* comes from the Middle English word *upholder*, which referred to a tradesman who held up his goods. The term is equally applicable to domestic, automobile, airplane and boat furniture. A person who works with upholstery is called an upholsterer; an apprentice upholsterer is sometimes called an outsider or trimmer. Traditional upholstery uses materials like coil springs animal hair , coir, straw and hay, hessians, linen scrim, wadding, etc., and is done by hand, building each layer up. In contrast, modern upholsterers employ synthetic materials like dacron and vinyl, serpentine springs, and so on.

**Upholder** is an archaic term used for upholsterer in the past, although it appears to have a connotation of *repairing* furniture rather than creating new upholstered pieces from scratch .In 18th-century London, upholders frequently served as interior decorators responsible for all aspects of a room's decor. These individuals whose traditional role, prior to the 18th century, was to provide upholstery and textiles.