

## 2007/02: Legs

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Legs are attracting attention in furniture design. The dark, brown, chunky blocks that served as legs a few years ago are being gradually stretched and whittled into long, tall supports that cry out for a more gracious approach to taking a seat. No rocking back on these chairs. While young women everywhere are honing their workouts so that they might look their shapely best in fashionable leggings, so too are furniture designers now sharpening their pencils in pursuit of a more subtle, engaging leg silhouette.

The recent development of the new slenderized leg has been appearing in the Donghia furniture line, and it is certainly a central part of the Barbara Barry and Thomas Pheasant designs. This chair from the South Hill Home Collection combines, for example, a klismos back rest with an ultra-tapered leg.

And there is something else happening in the leg department. Tall, straight legs are giving way to carefully contrived slim shapes. Here is a chair from the Powell & Bonnell collection that exemplifies this refined and disciplined line.

The inspiration for these weight-defying legs is clearly traceable to the Parisian designers of the 1930s. This snapshot of a Jacques Emile Ruhlman chair comes from the Paris / Montreal co-exhibit of 2000 at the Musée des Années Trente that I was fortunate to be able to visit.

And even more arresting to my eye is a cross-current design direction taken from the rococo, which, radically simplified, lends the leg a very sinuous stretched line. This chaise from the cover of Vogue Living Australia combines the finely tapered front leg with the minimized rococo leg in the back (It has been falsely credited to Christian Liaigre).

Jean Michel Frank, another leading designer of the thirties, experimented with a rococo-derived serpentine line in these sofa legs for Nelson Rockefeller's New York drawing room. The Rocaille Sofa borrows as substantially from Frank as the Années Trente Chair does from Ruhlman. [Note: The Rocaille Sofa and Années Trente chair are from my online showroom.]

Obviously, when it comes to today's décor trends, thin is in.

Note: A version of this article first appeared in the Fall 2006 issue the ASID Upper New York State-Canada East Chapter's newsletter. The original can be accessed [here](#).