

Real Estate

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Shopping Guide: Coffee Tables

By TIM McKEOUGH JUNE 3, 2016



Francis D'Haene, the principal of D'Apostrophe Design, with the Luna Coffee Table, \$6,000 at John Eric Byers. Credit Robert Wright for The New York Times

A coffee table isn't just a place to put down your coffee or put up your feet. It's "like the campfire of the home," said Francis D'Haene, the principal of D'Apostrophe Design.

That's why it's important to find the right one. "It's usually in the center of the room," Mr. D'Haene said, so it's one of the most noticeable pieces of furniture. "And people sit around it to have conversations."

Whether he's designing apartments in Manhattan, houses in the Hamptons or boutiques for fashion designers like Jill Stuart and Rick Owens, Mr. D'Haene, 50, favors clean-lined spaces. "I don't like the word minimal, but we want to be simple," he said. "It's modern and contemporary, but with a warm feeling."

That means including just enough sculptural furniture to make those spaces inviting — so every piece counts, particularly the coffee table. Before you buy a new one, he suggests asking yourself a few questions:

- How does the height compare to that of the seats around it? “It should be at seating height or a little lower,” Mr. D’Haene said.
- Should the table be square, rectangular, round or organic? “The choice depends on the shape of the room and type of seating,” he said. A long, skinny table often works well in a rectangular room, while organic shapes pair nicely with curvaceous sofas and chairs.
- What will you put on top? “You can do a coffee table very low to the ground, if you know you’re going to stack a lot of books on it,” he said. In that case, “it can become more of a display space and conversation piece.”



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“The fact that this table was designed in 1970 is pretty remarkable,” Mr. D’Haene said, because it could easily pass for something more recent. Conceived by the Polish-born, Brazil-based architect Jorge Zalszupin, with wood legs that come right through the limestone top, he said, “It’s a beautiful combination of two natural materials I love.”

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