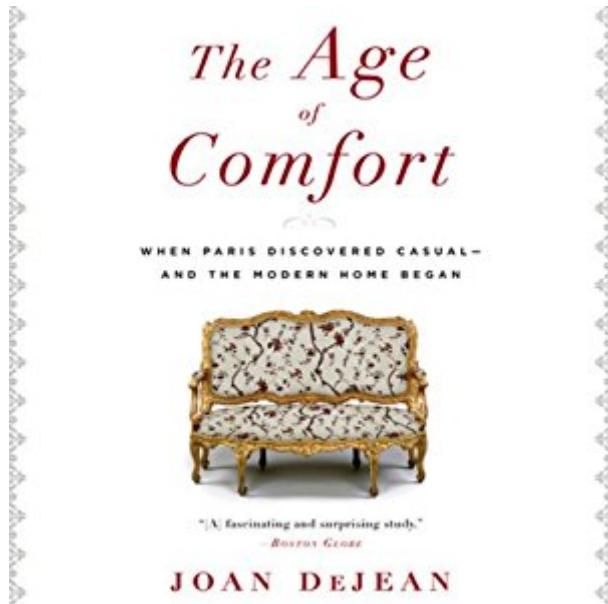


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# The Age Of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual - And The Modern Home Began



## Synopsis

Today, it is difficult to imagine a living room without a sofa. When the first sofas on record were delivered in 17th-century France, the result was a radical reinvention of interior space. Symptomatic of a new age of casualness and comfort, the sofa ushered in an era known as the golden age of conversation; as the first piece of furniture designed for two, it was also considered an invitation to seduction. With the sofa came many other changes in interior space we now take for granted: private bedrooms, bathrooms, and the original living rooms. None of this could have happened without a colorful cast of visionaries-legendary architects, the first interior designers, and the women who shaped the tastes of two successive kings of France: Louis XIV's mistress Madame de Maintenon and Louis XV's mistress Madame de Pompadour. Their revolutionary ideas would have a direct influence on realms outside the home, from clothing to literature and gender relations, changing the way people lived and related to one another for the foreseeable future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

How much is too much? Joan DeJean addresses these questions in her history of 17th and 18th century French architecture and design, "The Age of Comfort." The story begins at the grandiose court of Louis XIV. Essentially since the renaissance, rulers had been building bigger and less comfortable edifices. When news of the Florentine Renaissance reached the popes in Rome, they wanted much the same thing only bigger. When France discovered, under its late 15th century kings, the innovations of Italy (during wars with the Holy Roman Empire to gain control of it) they

wanted the same thing. Buildings became bigger and more grand and at the same time less comfortable, harder to heat and more and more oppressive. Versailles was the crescendo of these attempts at royal grandeur making. It is very likely that during his lifetime Louis XIV never ate hot food in his life, the kitchens were so far removed from the dining room. While it set the standard for regal living quarters, every ruling house built something along its lines, Versailles with its uncomfortable furniture made out of silver, and its lack of comforts sent people in a radical new direction. The novel approach was to build and design for comfort and not just show. This meant houses with flush toilets, smaller easier to heat rooms and more effective chimneys, bathing. Furniture was to be upholstered instead of wood with no padding. The arm chair and the sensual sofa came into vogue. This desire for comfort by the courtiers of Versailles was seen as the thin edge of the wedge in terms of standards declining. Had not one of Louis's mistresses, the formidable Madame de Montespan, this 17th century comfort craze might have died on the vine.

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