

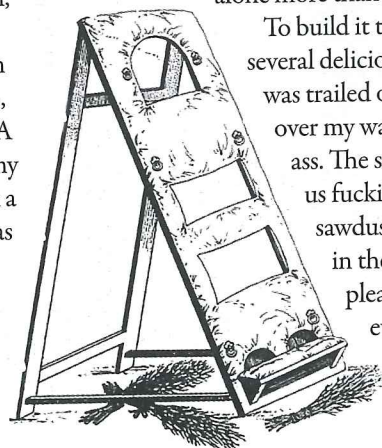
The seat of pleasure



King Edward VII and Catherine the Great are famed for their sex chairs. **Serena Kutchinsky's** lover built one just for her

I am naked and chained to an antique chair in my living room. My lace panties, crotchless but elegant, are looped around my ankles. The only gestures towards protecting my modesty are a vintage pearl and diamond choker, and a pair of perilously high heels – terrible for walking but perfect for leg-trembling fucking. No, this is not some kinky recreation of Kim Kardashian's jewellery robbery. This is what happens when your lover, whose hobby is carpentry, decides to build you a sex chair.

Studded leather restraints snake around my limbs. The chair is a wooden 1970s number which, minus its modifications, wouldn't look out of place at my mother's dining table. I strain against the bindings, testing their limits. So, this is how it feels to be enslaved by desire. A pulse of pleasure travels up from between my splayed legs to the base of my spine. I sneak a sideways glance at my well-dressed captor, as the crack of a leather riding crop stings me back to reality. A moan escapes my lips as a cherry-red stain creeps across my exposed, enthroned ass.



After breaking off an unsuitable engagement, and drawing a line under the passionate affair that sparked its demise, I had embarked upon a journey of sexual self-discovery. Several erotic adventures later, I found myself gagged and chained to my very own sex chair. There were a few drawbacks. It wasn't the most portable of sex toys – the sight of my lover clambering out of a taxi with it was more Monty Python than Marquis de Sade – and the neighbours complained bitterly about the noise as it rocked on the wooden floorboards. But the narcissistic thrill of knowing it had been designed to fit the curve and shape of my body alone more than compensated.

To build it took three months and involved several delicious fittings, where a tape measure was trailed over my bare flesh, wound tightly over my waist and slapped against my bare ass. The session would inevitably end with us fucking on the worktop, the smell of sawdust and wood shavings swirling in the air around us. While he derived pleasure from sawing, polishing and even sewing the red leather seat cover, I focused on the design.

'I felt the thrill of knowing it had been designed to fit the curve and shape of my body alone'

I drew inspiration from the past – educating myself on the history of the sex chair. My criteria were clear: it had to look and feel romantic, integrate into the room when not in use, and avoid comparison with medieval torture implements. One of the most celebrated love chairs was commissioned in the 1880s by the playboy future king, Edward VII, otherwise known as Dirty Bertie. Customised for maximum carnal pleasure, it allowed the prince to indulge his passion for threesomes, without crushing anyone with his enormous gut.

Housed in the notorious Paris brothel, Le Chabonais, this gilded contraption was known as a *cheval d'amour* and reflected Bertie's insatiable appetites. The work of the famed 19th-century furniture designer Louis Soubrier, it resembled a cross between a dentist's chair and a two-tier sleigh, with gilded stirrups, elegant handgrips and a decadent floral covering. Today, a replica resides in the Sex Machines Museum in Prague, while the original is rumoured to remain in the possession of the Soubrier family in Paris.

While the sex-chair market remains niche, desire for these extravagant pieces continues to smoulder, according to Coco de Mer. The erotic emporium recently received a gift from Shakespeare's Globe: a stage version of Bertie's bonking couch used in an anarchic production of *Comus* – a chastity play by Milton. The plot revolves around a young virgin who is kidnapped by a lusty sorcerer. He glues her to an enchanted chair with the 'gums of glutinous heat' and tries to force her to surrender her virtue. Its opulent

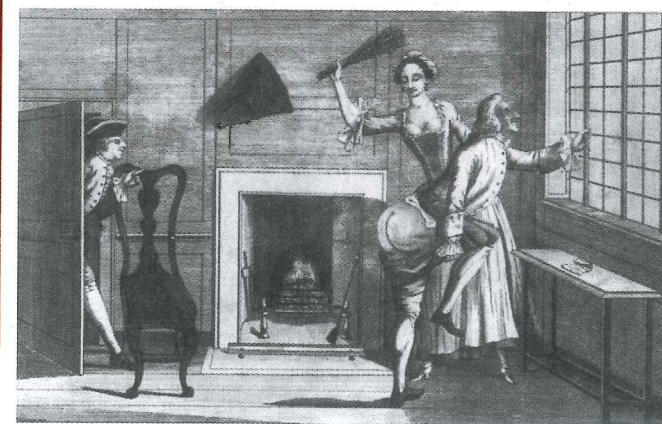
design contrasts starkly with another chair from Coco de Mer – the sleek, black leather Tally Ho that is hung with riding stirrups. It is the work of flamboyant artist Mark Brazier-Jones, and the price of this covetable piece, available to order from the boutique, has risen from over £5,000 to £15,000 in the past six years, due to the increasing cost of luxury materials. Its profile has also risen, as a result of its starring role in the *Fifty Shades of Grey* films, for which Brazier-Jones customised it in lush green velvet.

During my research, I read obsessively about the Berkley Horse, an early flogging apparatus first used in 1828. Designed for Theresa Berkley, the madam who ran London's most famous whorehouse, it sparked a flagellation craze. The ability to angle the device, coupled with the space it created for someone to crouch below and pleasure the occupant, held particular allure. The memory of being clamped to the chair, my body tilted forward, my senses overloaded with pain and pleasure, is moistening my panties as I write.

The history books offered up further aesthetic inspiration. Myths abound about the erotic chamber that Catherine the Great is said to have installed at her imperial palace near St Petersburg. The 18th-century tsarina is portrayed as a woman with strong sexual urges (hence the lurid legend about her dying while pleasuring a horse), and her penchant for taking younger lovers is well documented. But the existence of her racy salon is supported only by an unverified set of photographs that emerged during the Second World War. The images suggest that erotic chairs, cabinets and desks – all carved with penises, vulvas and naked figures – adorned this secret parlour.

What did I learn from my adventures in erotic carpentry? That experimenting with such a beautiful piece opens you up to the infinite possibilities of pleasure. That owning your own pleasure throne makes you feel like a true sex queen. And, more prosaically, that DIY need not be deathly dull. For those amorists inspired to invest in their own sex chair, I recommend rolling up your suspenders, buying some sexy power tools and embarking on your own kinky conversion project. If all else fails, I know a hunky carpenter who's great with his hands.

Opposite, top: a Tally Ho chair; bottom: a Berkley Horse. Below: a replica of Bertie's *cheval d'amour*; right: one of its uses demonstrated by Barbie and Ken; and bottom right: Theresa Berkley in action



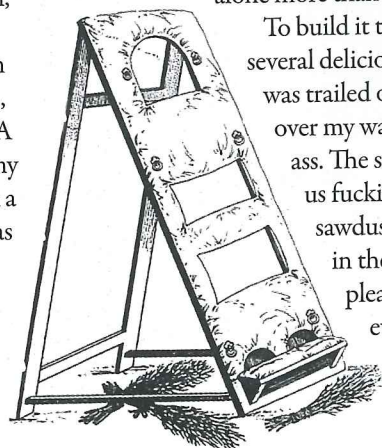
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