

SHELTER / HOME DESIGN

Good to Know: Places and Products We Coveted in February

Here's a look at what's on our design radar right now, from a smoking hot speaker to a chaise with killer curves.

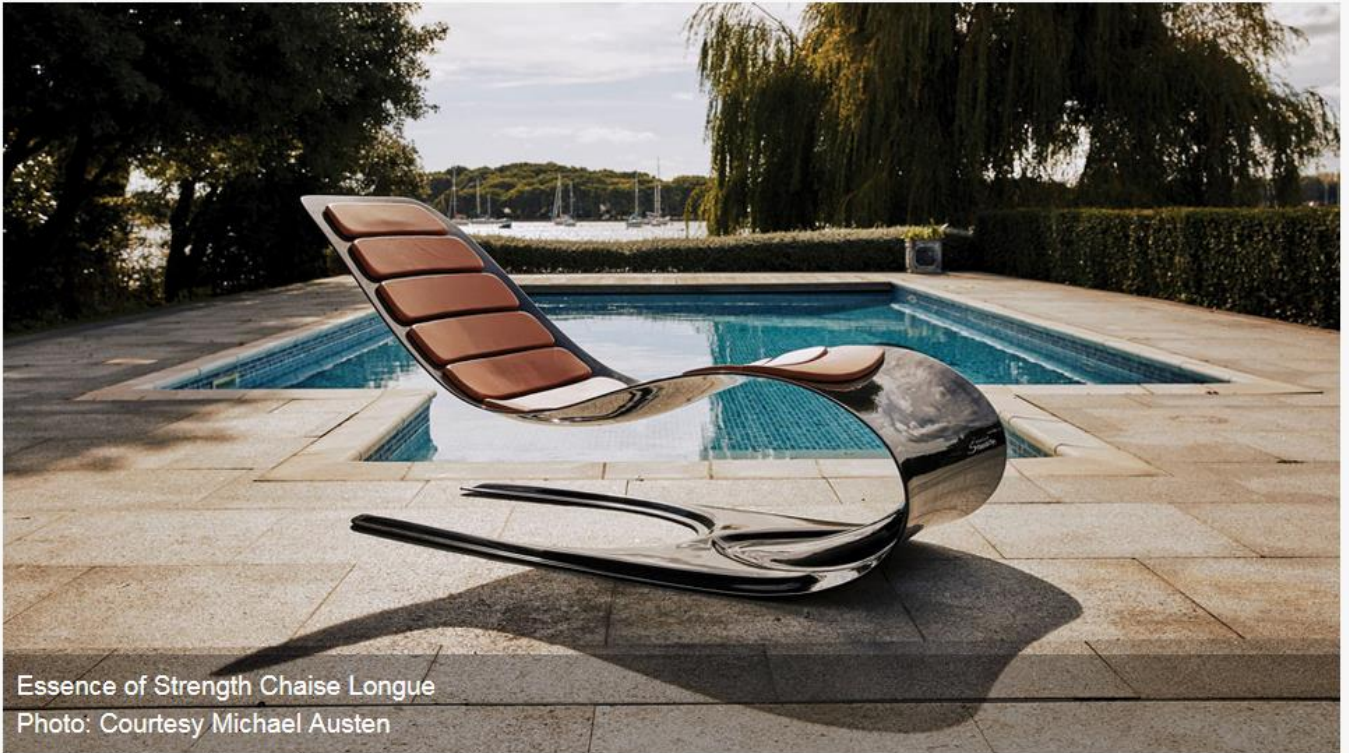
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February means avoiding anything related to Valentine's Day and its steady stream of unrealistic expectations. Real amore means surrounding yourself with good design. We have a few suggestions, starting with a bold premise by British studio Essence of Strength, who believe that carbon fiber is not just for race cars and adrenaline junkies but also Sunday lounging. Their sinuous carbon fiber [furniture](#) is very much part of a new design wave. And not far from the new Sonus Faber Aida floor speakers. Major sound with a new driver system and packaged well—each one has a slanted body that can be ordered in a wenge or red finish. But experiences still matter, and we found a place that gives out major laid-back weekend vibes. The newly opened Troutbeck, a throw-back inn situated in lush upstate New York with literary street cred, has world-class designer Alexandra Champalimaud to thank for its easy, understated style that ask for nothing more than stowing away with a book, a blanket, some good wine...which is our kind of romantic.



Essence of Strength Chaise Longue

With a sinuous body deserving of double takes, the [Essence of Strength Chaise Longue](#) (starting at \$69,000) first appears as a stunning if not elegantly bonkers scribble that leapt straight from concept to construction, sidestepping the typical design checkpoints. It also gives the rest of the furniture in the house an inferiority complex. Conceived by industrial designer Kristian Arens, who cofounded the British furniture brand with engineer Clive Johnson, the dynamic piece owes nearly everything to carbon fiber. The company's use of the lightweight but durable material is in keeping with its design manifesto: "We aim always to push design and structural tolerances in order to produce pieces of furniture that would simply not be possible using more traditional materials."

Inspired by Arens's passion for the sea, the limited-edition chaise longue—finished with hand-stitched leather—resembles rolling waves. Achieving such a fluid shape is a highly technical proposition. "Carbon is the ideal material to do this with," says Arens. "You can have superthin profiles but still manage to cantilever the design due to the strength of the carbon. The chaise has to be engineered to deliver exact flex, bounce, and rock that results in a movement that feels exceptional."

It takes more than 2 months to create one chaise. Each example is customizable, from leather options to the weave pattern seen in the finished, undulating design.