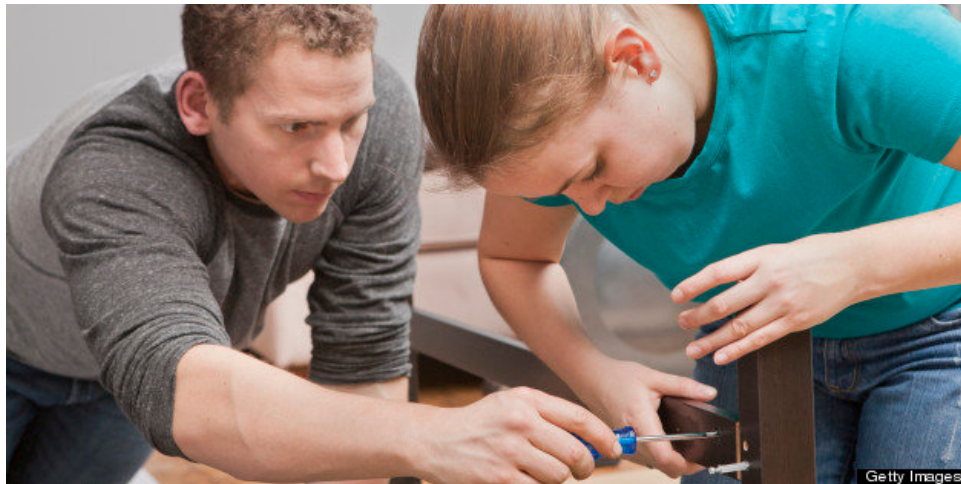


PIONEER	REVEL OBI...	MUSE ASTI...	REVEL KEA...	PORTLAND...	GUSTAVE B...	REVEL CRE...	REVEL BEL...	RAY-BAN 70...	
OTTOTO BU...	LA SALLE B...	RAY-BAN 70...	REVEL ODI...	RAY-BAN 52...	MUSE REV...	LEWIS GOLD	MILES BLACK	RAY-BAN 70...	
REVEL OW...	REVEL MO...	REVEL CAR...	REVEL DO...	ANNEX BLA...	LACOSTE L...	OTTOTO CE...	MUSE M807...	MUSE ASTI...	

Brian D. Cohen , Contributor
Artist, educator, writer

Assembling a Chair

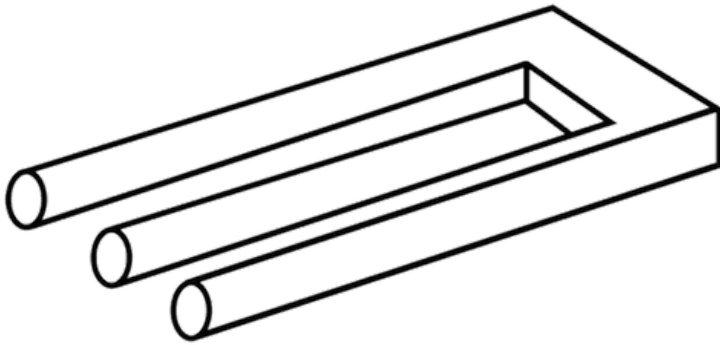
05/07/2013 09:22 am ET | Updated Dec 06, 2017



A young couple assembling a flat pack coffee table.

I just finished assembling an office chair purchased from a big box store on the local strip. I was able to make it look pretty much like the chair pictured on the box, and have been able to sit in it successfully.

It seems that assembly instructions are now entirely visual, after all those poorly translated, exasperating (and inadvertently amusing) verbal directions. While you might expect this would eliminate some errors and ambiguities, it's made assembling things as hard and much less funny. Turns out it's difficult to remove ambiguities from images as well, especially from perspective cues.



The most helpful bit of visual information is the photo of the completed chair on the box. The diagrams of the parts never look enough like the parts themselves for me to be sure and it's hard to tell whether things are facing towards or away, so I'm guessing, wrong most of the time. There is really only one way to put the chair together right; I seemed to explore every possible wrong way before my chair resembled the one on the box.

Making art isn't like assembling a chair. Art isn't problem solving. Back when I got my MFA in the early 1980's, art-making intended to resolve a particular visual problem, as if each painting worked out a mathematical equation or social ill that had been puzzling thinkers for years. If these problems did exist, I can assure you no one was in the least troubled by them, except a few graduate students who thought them up.

Art causes even more problems than it solves, when it questions foregone conclusions and assumptions. And unlike assembling a chair, there isn't one way to do it right and you can't know what it's going to look like by studying the box.

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