



BARTLEBY REVIEW

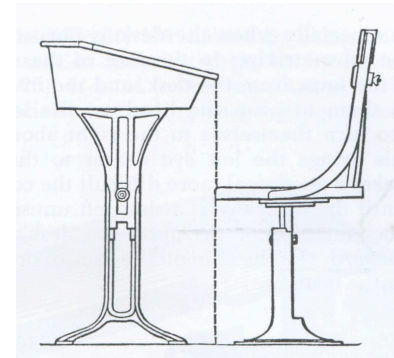
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On Sitting Tobin Gibson

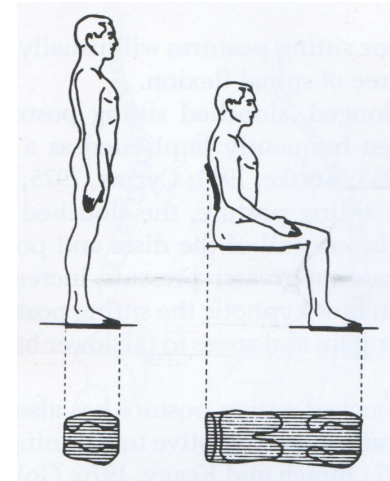
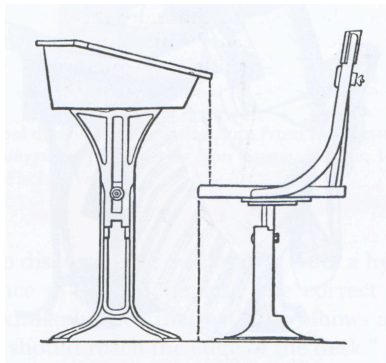
"Indeed, we, not the chair, have made the compromise. We have agreed to adjust our bodies to the dictates of chairs; only rarely do we find a chair that in its design has contracted to fulfill the requirements of the human body. In such ways we have permitted the forms and products of our culture to change our body alignments in order to satisfy their structural requirements. We have accustomed ourselves to habitual modes of use that are literally disfiguring."

- Dennis Zacharkow, *Posture: Sitting, Standing, Chair Design, and Exercise*, 1988



Looking to the rich activity of sitting, the word ostensibly describes an absolute fit and comfort in its expanded definition. The ease in fulfilling this action has always been quite suspicious. It's a position that transcends the human capacity of standing straight, from standing to sitting and from the fully upright to the partially vertical.

The act is elegant, refined and habitual, making it rather enigmatic to determine a perspective that negates the influence of this design object. These objects fully support, as they wait in suspended animation, and are only activated when used. It is this kind of use value that seeks to clarify potential hierarchies or subordinations between the object and the given sitter. Through this action, one physically places their motivations atop of the object being sat on, ruling them with latent control. As noted by Dennis Zacharkow this kind of control can be traced back through the transition to industrialization, where there was a demand for



static and sedentary modes of living based on mass standardization of society.

The chair supports the privileging of the human spirit through its elegant separation from materials such as dirt and concrete underneath its seat. The negative space between our soft rear-end and the ground is a highly political field. Other legs are made extensions of the body; prosthesis for our sorry assess. Dressed as habit, this cultural norm is undoubtedly difficult to condition out of one's mind due to its birth out of systematically repeated conventions. However there is latent risk in the status of both the chair as well as the sitter. It is through this act we discover that these objects do have agency over both our bodies and minds.

Tobin Gibson