You Can’t Sit in a CAD Chair
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There’s furniture and then there’s furniture. Two people can look at a table, bench, buffet, wine rack, etc. and have honest opinions about whether they like the item or not – and why. So, when someone asks a wood worker to build them a custom XYZ, the client probably has something in mind and can show the woodworker examples of what he/she likes or doesn’t like. The maker can create design drawings around multiple themes for the customer to review, and possibly show the customer 3-D versions or even animations. In the end, the woodworker or craftsman can often come close either on paper or in virtual reality to an agreed endpoint design (and finish) before firing up the table saw and mortising machine.

When it comes to chairs, however, the uncertainty is huge, and not because most of the joints are at non-right angles and the calculation can require a post-doctorate degree in solid geometry. No-no-no, the big unknown is COMFORT. A chair must be comfortable, unless of course the purpose of the chair is strictly for show, like a painting or sculpture. And like so many other things in life, comfort is strictly personal. What you find comfortable to sit in, I may find unpleasant or even wretched, despite its interesting grain pattern, unusual 12-layer French-polish finish, and fine upholstery from the Worcester foothills.

So, how do you know your client is going to like the chair you are building? Truth is – you don’t.

That’s why I don’t build chairs.