What is this?

When this becomes " a chair", reality is narrowed down. What was infinitely complex, rich and unique is reduced to a concept. Ask a kid what she can do with a chair. She'll easily come up with 20 different uses. How many can you come up with?

Thinking outside the box is the ability to come up with new and unconventional ideas.

Creative thinking is something we are born with, but learn to forget. Buried under structures and concepts, our inner creativity is imprisoned. Here's how to let it loose.

The reason why you can't think creatively

Thinking outside the box implies a box. This box consists of all your beliefs and preconceived ideas about reality. It is a group of concepts you accept and don't question. For example, you likely take for granted your name, the colour of green or the fact that eating makes hunger disappear. Assumptions like these are useful. They allow you to communicate, make theories and predict events. This faculty has developed science. Humans are remarkably good at creating concepts. They're competent at building well-furnished boxes.

Unfortunately, this tendency to conceptualise reality also has side effects. In fact, this box destroys creativity. It sets fences in your mind. It establishes a perimeter that determines what conscious thoughts can arise. When you think inside the box, you are limited. You copy what already exists. This is not necessarily problematic, but it often is suboptimal.

Ideas are constantly flowing in your subconscious mind. You're not aware of most of them because they are blocked. They fall outside the box. Your mind constantly filters out stuff that it doesn't consider relevant. To develop creativity, you need the ability to suspend that filter. You have to step out of concepts. It's certainly doable. You do it every night ; it's called dreaming.

You shouldn't wonder **how to be creative**. It's dis-empowering. Creative thinking is natural and easy. Children are immensely creative. All the dreams you have at night are innovative and unique. Being uncreative is actually much harder. Seeing through rigid concepts requires a lot of mental effort. It took you years of training!

Instead, ask yourself : "*How do I manage to be so uncreative?*".

Stepping out of the box

To think outside the box, you have to step out of it. That means not judging and labelling everything. It's impossible to be creative if you're caught in prejudice. School taught you to rely on the box to solve problems. It made you remember existing answers to problems. That's a very uncreative approach to problem-solving.
Let's step out of the box.

Look at your hand now. What do you see?
"A hand"?
Where does the hand start?
Where does it end?
What would half a hand look like?
Observe the tendency of the mind to impose a fixed, simplistic label on everything.
When you label reality, you stop seeing it. You only see names and concepts. You separate yourself from the world.
Try to see your hand without commenting it. Don't give it a name. Don't put it in a box.
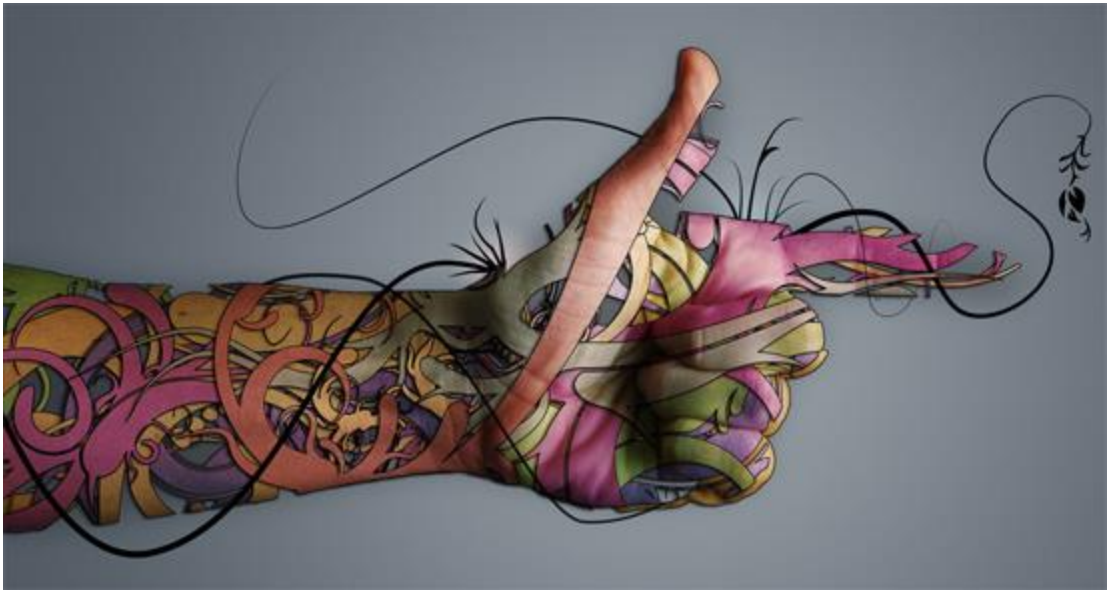If you can't do it, try again.
What do you actually see? A hand? Fingers? Nails? Shapes? Lines? Dots? Colors?
Your hand has a lot to offer you. And that's only the visual part of it.
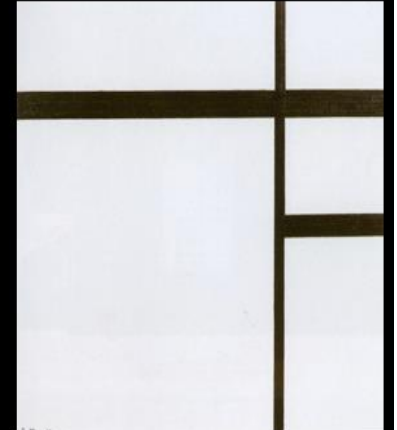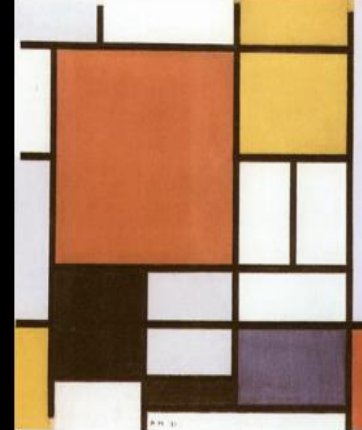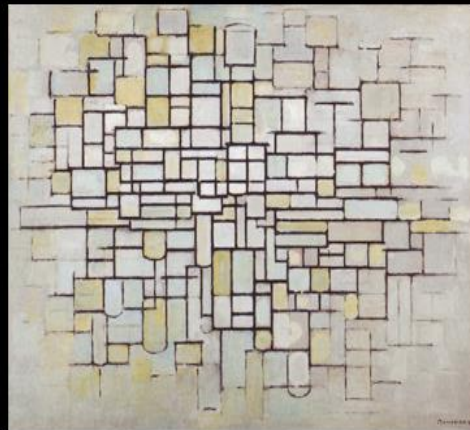
CIRCUIT HAND

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Abstract Art

A trend in painting and sculpture in the twentieth century. Abstract art seeks to break away from traditional representation of physical objects. It explores the relationships of forms and colours, whereas more traditional art represents the world in recognizable image

Piet Mondrian

You don't need to destroy the box, you simply have to open it. When the box is open, you can freely use its content, but are not restricted by it. You're much closer to truth when you see without inner commentary. And this truth is fresh. It is creative.

Next time you need a creativity booster, stop whatever you're doing. Including labeling and wanting. Close your eyes for a moment.

Then look at your hand, and see it. See it for real. The fingers and nails. The shapes. The lines and colors.

Really do it, and you'll jump back where you belong. Outside the box.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

Rene Magritte 1928