



august inspiration...it looks like it fell off a truck

Ernest Hemingway was once asked how he felt about movies that were made from his books. His answer went something like this...imagine you are driving through Kansas on a long straight highway. In the distance, you see a car driving towards you. When the oncoming car and your car converge, you roll down your window, throw your book into the other car, and both cars keep on driving." *The point being, he relinquishes all control.*

I often think of that quote when dropping our purchase orders into mail box. Regardless of all the fail proof measures we have in place to prevent snafus from happening, once out of our hands, we relinquish all control. Sometimes, during the order's journey from the mail box to the actual delivery of our client's goods.... **"stuff just happens"**.

Late one Friday afternoon last July, a client left a voice message on our office phone announcing good news - their long awaited outdoor furniture had *finally* arrived. "However", they continued, *"the bad news is that it looks like it fell off a truck"*.

After hearing their message, my first reaction was that they were probably being *a little dramatic* and exaggerating just a *bit*. I actually had a hard time visualizing their furniture, shipped by a very high end and reputable vendor arriving to its destination looking like it was tossed off the back of an 18 wheeler.

To rub just a bit more salt into our client's wound, they had been anxiously awaiting this delivery for the better part of the summer. Memorial Day Weekend and the 4th of July had come and gone, and the summer was now galloping towards Labor Day at breakneck speed. I thought, of course they would be a *bit sensitive* if their furniture arrived in less than perfect condition. I expected perhaps a scratch on the paint finish, or worse, a dent in one of the metal frames. Then we received the photographs.



Excellent packing material



Do you believe this?

To borrow words from my client's email (I couldn't say it better):

"Imagine buying a very poor quality cardboard box from Walmart or Target, putting a chair in a plastic bag with little pieces of cardboard wrapped around the legs, throwing it in the box with no packing material around it to keep it secure in the box and to protect the legs and basic frame, and then shipping it 3,000 miles Absolutely shocking, absurd and ridiculous!"

Out of 11 boxes shipped, 1 box was missing and 9 were seriously damaged. One sofa, 3 dining chairs and 2 ottomans were damaged beyond repair. The other 5 dining chairs and two tables hadn't arrived and/or were missing.

*** I need to step in here and say that the manufacturer wasn't to blame. They, in good faith, sent their items out to be packed and shipped. They were also, throughout this entire debacle, extremely helpful and were as *freaked out* as the rest of us were.

The question was...what happened to this high quality furniture in perfect condition after it left the factory? Did the guy packing the order fall sick with the swine flu? Did his girlfriend call him to arrange a rendezvous? Had he been doing recreational drugs? Were the interns that summer hired from the local Cub Scout Camp? There was just no reasonable explanation. Everyone, including the manufacturer, was completely flummoxed.

So, a new order for the furniture items was placed and....folks, you cannot make this stuff up...

WHEN IT WAS DELIVERED THE SECOND TIME, DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN!

The same cardboard boxes, same packing materials, the same damages. In the meantime, Labor Day had come and gone. School had started and the days were getting shorter and shorter and shorter.

AN ORDER WAS PLACED FOR THE THIRD TIME

49 emails, 3 tries and 3 months later
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The third shipment finally arrived by White Glove Shipping on 10/30, just in time for Halloween. All was received in good order with the exception of one sofa that had a small bend in the leg.

Vendor: Hi Client, Thanks for the update. Do you want me to try and send another sofa?

Client: Hi Vendor, Actually, my husband took a hammer to some key areas of the frame and managed to get it to sit pretty flat. It's not perfect, but **good** enough. I want to thank you for getting things out right. Best regards, **Client**



Damaged sofa

Ernest also said that "courage is grace under pressure", but I think there is something to be said about having a sense of humor. To me, courage is humor under pressure. After all, when all else fails, a good laugh and a cocktail can take the edge off even the most absurd situation. Believe me, after the initial shock, there were a lot of laughs and lots of white wine flowing along this storyline. I'm actually laughing out loud as I write about it now.

I hope you are too....

Happy Labor Day!

President

Debra Blair Design
dblair@blairdesignnyc.com
917-717-5020