



Rube Goldberg

At the turn of the 20th century, society was torn between the benefits of new mechanical technology and an increasing dependency on machines. There was a reluctance to change, mistrust and a divide between the few who were able to adopt new technologies and the masses. Sound familiar?

Rube Goldberg was a cartoonist and satirist, originally trained as an engineer. Born in San Francisco in 1883, Goldberg's invention cartoons were influenced by the machine age at the beginning of the new century. At a time when electricity, running water, telephones and the automobile were dramatically changing the way Americans lived, Goldberg was struck by the creation of complex machines being created to simplify life. Goldberg said at the time that the machines were "a symbol of man's capacity for exerting maximum effort to achieve minimal results."

Goldberg drew cartoons of contraptions his entire career, gaining fame with his *Sideshow* series. Awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 1948, he was so famous Webster's Dictionary defined the term "Rube Goldberg machine" as "accomplishing by extremely complex, roundabout means what seemingly could be done simply." An insightful commentary on life's complexities, Goldberg's contraptions delved into the absurd lengths our unfettered ingenuity can travel.

Can you think of a gadget that is Rube Goldberg-esque?