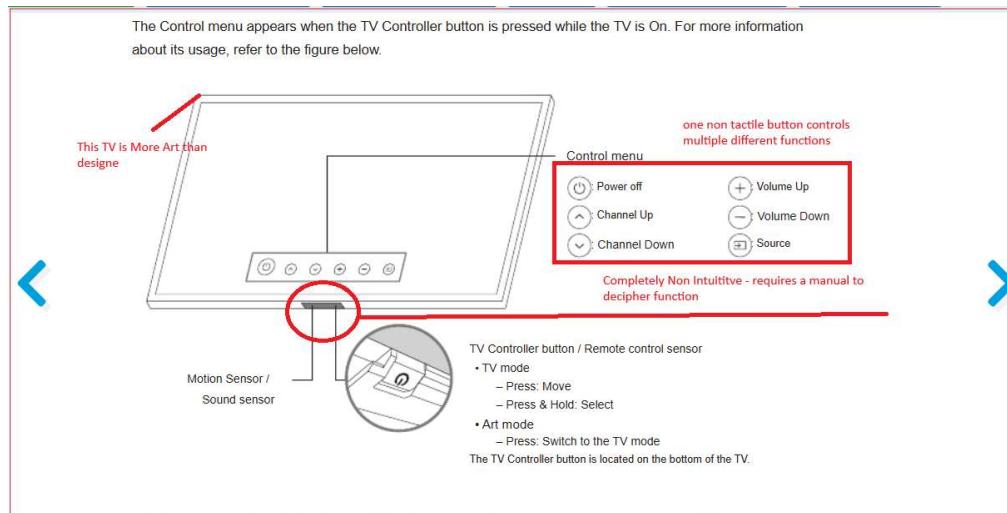


Great Art – Poor Design: Example: Samsung Frame TV Hidden Control Button



The Samsung Frame TV is supposed to be an “elegant, minimalist product,” but its lack of visible controls makes it an example of the manufacturer confusing “good” art with “good” design. The television seeks to double as a wall frame for digital art. In an effort to reduce visible distractions, it hides a small multi-function control button beneath the bottom bezel. However, there are no visible signifiers that indicate the button’s presence or purpose, and most users, myself included, never even knew it existed. This violates Norman’s principle of *affordance*, since the TV gives no physical clue that it can be controlled without a remote. In fact, it does not even have visible indicators that the button is functional. It looks like (signifies) a power-on indicator. This also fails *mapping*, because the single button performs several unrelated functions with no form of intuitive or visual guidance. Without labels, icons, or a predictable layout, I could not anticipate what pressing or holding the button would do. In fact, I did not even know I could pull up an on-screen menu until I did this research for the class.

The issue becomes worse due to a total lack of feedback. When I attempted to turn the TV on using this hidden button, there was no click, light, or immediate screen response. Of course, being impatient and unobservant, I was unsure whether it actually turned on the TV when I pushed it. So of course, I pushed it again, effectively turning the TV off before it had a chance to boot up. The TV provided no real-time signal confirming it was even turning on, leaving me to guess at its behavior. This also violates Norman’s *feedback* principle, which requires systems to communicate the results of actions clearly and immediately. The design could be greatly improved by adding a small LED that flashes when the TV receives input, placing buttons on the back side of the TV where one could find them by running their fingers along the bottom, or (not really much of an improvement) including an on-screen indicator showing which command is being triggered. Some form of simple tactile or auditory response, maybe a beep, would allow the user to understand the process had started and might prevent repeated actions and confusion. In its current form, the Samsung Frame’s “hidden” button achieves aesthetic minimalism at the cost of usability. This is a true example of art, not design.