

# **FORM DOESN'T (AND SHOULDN'T) FOLLOW FUNCTION**

- does form follow function?

## does form follow function?

On the surface, “form follows function” seems to make a lot of sense — the way something **looks** should be determined by its **purpose**.

In terms of UI design, it’s applied like this:

- ➡ “**Gather**” the product’s requirements from the client, and then
- ➡ Determine the **aesthetics of the UI** based on those functional requirements.

**It’s not that simple.**

## does form follow function?

This approach delivers products that **FAIL** — they’re not purchased, not used and do not deliver a *shred* of ROI.

**Why?**

Because “form follows function” has been:

- ➡ co-opted
- ➡ misinterpreted
- ➡ misapplied

## does form follow function?

It’s a lot like the game of ‘**telephone**.’

In order to understand how to properly apply the principle, you first need to understand how it came to be.

And how it came to be so very terribly **misinterpreted**.



## **louis sullivan started it all in 1896.**

“

It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and all things superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognizable in its expression, that form ever follows function.

**THIS IS THE LAW.**

”

## **sullivan was essentially a rebel.**

At the time, technology, tastes and economics were rapidly changing.

The forms of late-19th century buildings were still based on ancient Greek and Roman architecture.

Sullivan believed a **new form** for buildings was needed — one derived from the **function** of the building, not historical precedent.

This new form became the modern structural steel skyscraper.

## enter the intern: frank lloyd wright



Wright took Sullivan's idea and evolved it, stressing the need for **integration** between the two.

His application of the principle was the **Guggenheim** museum: the spiral shape was intended to allow visitors to easily view the artwork within.

Wright started us down the right path.

Extremists, however, always find a way ;-)

## a ripple effect was created.



In 1908, Austrian architect **Adolf Loos** proclaimed that architectural "*ornament was a crime*." This was a reaction to the extreme ornamentation of the time.

Modernist architects such as **Le Corbusier**, **Walter Gropius** and **Mies van der Rohe** adopted both "ornamentation is crime" and "form follows function" as moral principles and applied them to design.

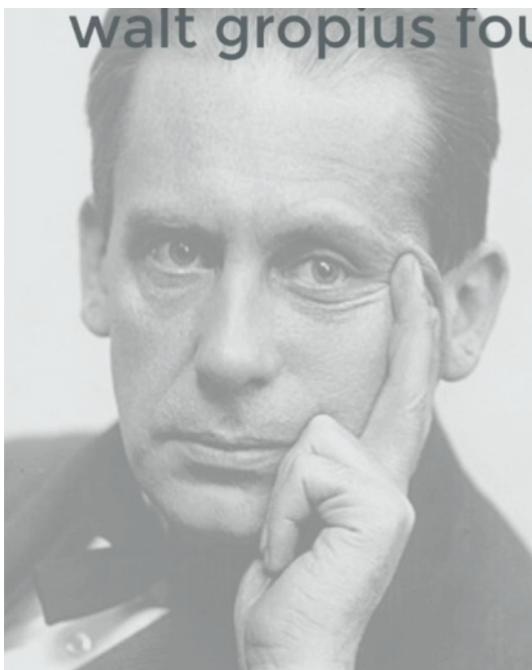
**Modernism** in architecture emerged from both principles. Its goal was to determine the form of a building solely from functional requirements — not traditional aesthetics.

## walt gropius founded bauhaus.



“ Architecture begins where the **engineering ends**. ”

## walt gropius founded bauhaus.



The Bauhaus was a school of multidisciplinary design — industrial design, art, typography, graphic design, photography and architecture.

- Form had to reflect the function of the product.
- Communication and meaning should never be sacrificed in favor of visual design choices (design, not decoration)
- Artistic devices were used only to increase the utility of the work.

## bauhaus was the foundation for modern graphic design.



- Connection between color and shape (*Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky*)
- Clean, powerful typography (*Herbert Bayer*)
- Spatial relationships and integration of shape, color and typography (*László Moholy-Nagy*)
- Core principles of visual design such as harmony, balance, rhythm, proportion, symmetry and synthesis (*Josef Albers*)

# modern graphic design is the foundation of UI design.



- you should own the book: [universal principles of design](#)
- **UI design mantra 3: form doesn't (and shouldn't) follow function**, rather none trumps the other, they should have a form of integration and harmony