**Functionalism**

Functionalism, a central idea in modernist design, rejects ornamentation unrelated to an item’s function, resulting in design that emphasizes utilitarian purpose. The style was summed up in architect Louis Sullivan’s (1856-1924) popular slogan ‘form [ever] follows function’. Unlike modernist innovations across the arts, Functionalist design sought to simplify, rather than complicate, traditional forms. It drew inspiration from various sources: the beauty of animal forms perfectly adapted to perform specific biological functions, or the aesthetic merit of industrial machinery, which was celebrated by modernist figures such as Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, 1887-1965). Functionalism offered an appealingly rationalist view of design at a time when new materials, mass production and rising consumerism gave design an unprecedented opportunity to reshape material culture but also encouraged the production of useful goods for the general public rather than exclusive and luxurious ornamentation for the wealthy. Functionalism figured prominently in the influential Bauhaus school of industrial design, and the so-called ‘International Style’ of modernist architecture. Its adherents, however, never considered Functionalism a style, but rather a discovery about the essence of good design.

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**References and further reading**

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