

# [An focuses on creating that idea to](https://assignbuster.com/an-focuses-on-creating-that-idea-to/)

An ongoing debate in Architecture: functionality or aesthetics..

. which comes first? In the 1st Century before Christ, Romanarchitect, Vitruvius, believed there were three main aspects of design: Strength, utility(functionality) and grace(beauty). Although he wasn’t of anymajor relevance, the architect’s philosophy continued to flourish into thetwentieth century where American architect Louis Sullivan, the ‘ father ofmodernism’ established the architectural principle ‘ form follows function’.  ‘ All things in nature have a shape, that is to say, a form, anoutward semblance, that tells us what they are, that distinguishes them fromourselves and from each other. Unfailing in nature these shapes express theinner life, the native quality of the animal, tree, bird, fish… It seems everas though the life and the form were absolutely one and inseparable… Whether itbe the sweeping eagle in his flight or the open apple blossom the toiling workhorse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, thedrifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, form ever follows function, andthis is the law.’ (Louis Sullivan) The quote meaning that the aesthetics of something is decidedby its purpose, and in context of designing a building, it means that anarchitect should base the design on the requirements of the client and what thebuilding is used for as a space. Architects such as Le Corbusier, Van Der Rohe, Louis Kahn and Walter Gropius also believed in this theory, with Adolf Loos'(1908) ‘ ornament is crime’ which both came to create Modernism in Architecture. Le Corbusier, being one of the first to apply and use this philosophyeffectively such as in his Villa Savoye (1929-1931) in which his idea of thebuilding as a promenade, a ‘ sequence of roots’ and so focuses on creating that ideato be functional followed by its form.

As timepasses, this theory is being held by a thread in this era, however thearchitect Ieoh Ming Pei has continued to build upon this theory, as a student ofLe Corbusier, he too is more concerned with function than theory. In theworld of Islamic architecture where modernism and Islamic traditionsare paralleled, IM Pei seems to have gotten the perfect balance to where theyboth coincide with one another harmonically in his Museum of Art in Qatar – Anattempt of a contemporary expression of Islamic architecture which incorporatesthe beautiful Islamic architecture in the building but still grasps uponmodernism and his beliefs within the lively urban style of the city of Doha. However, Pei’s approach to the museum seems to have been influenced heavily by by lateLe Corbusier; Brutalism, the powerful, heavy, rough style but within brutalismhe aspired to refine the style, making the building mighty and solid yetelegant and smooth, eliminating all the roughness. ‘ modernism that was actively geometrical, yet solidly monumental’– Due to Pei’s style of architecture, the building is unique yet exudes formalityand assertiveness. The Museum of Islamic Art is representative of Islamic architecturein an abstract vision and has come to symbolize art and its accessibility, itconsists 2 buildings; a main five storey building and a two-storey education buildingthat are connected by a fountain courtyard and surrounded by muscular trusses.

‘ A geometric matrix that transforms the dome’s descentfrom circle to octagon, to square, and finally to four triangular flaps thatangle back at different heights to become the atrium’s column supports’ (IM Pei) Both composed of simple geometric shapes of modern limestone(inspired by Islamic architecture) and stacked on top of one another and isplaced on a man made island isolated from other buildings and from the city centre. From some angles we’re reminded of the Santa Maria Della salute (baroque churchin Venice) as it expresses the same effect of looking as if itsfloating on water. The diagonal entrance to the building strongly declaresits connection to modernism in a soft and subtle way, thus making the geometricforms seem more sharp and highlighting the distinction between light and shadow. Within the building, a central atrium in a domed tower connects all the granitegalleries with a stainless steel domed ceiling, representing the Islamic artand playing with the game of light and shadows where patterned light shinesthrough the centre of the dome, above a Michael Angelo like staircase acting asthe centre piece of the interior and transforms the architectural quality. The domehowever, is covered from the outside so the true shape of the interior ishidden –creating an exterior that is whole and which is a reaction to theinterior, in my opinion. On the north side of the building a 5 storey glasscurtain wall (an Ieoh Ming Pei touch) provides panoramic views of the west bayarea of Doha.

‘ My father’s vision was to build a cross-culturalinstitution’ (Sheikha al Mayassa)’It is to reconnect the historical threads that have beenbroken, and finding peaceful ways to resolve conflict.’ (Sheikha al Mayassa) ‘ form followsfunction’ has proven that it can be depended on, as of years of successfulbuildings and architects whom follow the principle. In the case of this museum, as a building inspired by Islamic architecture in which ornamentationis key, while not being important in modernism, Pei was said to be hesitant onembracing Islamic architectural precedent, and in which Islamic architecture doesn’tidolise or celebrate interior space, as in Pei’s own work, does. Nevertheless, this issueis well executed where IM Pei’s minimalistic approach to ornamentation aslearned by his influencers (ornament is crime) while harmonizing the differentcultures. The artefacts within are a replication of the building, where the concept that Modernism and Islamic culture do not have to be paralleled, but can be celebrated together as if taken out of the same historical book.

Themuseum of Islamic art inevitably reflects the culture of Qatar and the purposeof the building in priding the Muslim society of their artefacts andachievements, just from the exterior of it, and as of playing an important rolein reshaping Qatar’s cultural identity, the ideals it embodies of the country’spast, present and future.’A building that brings the modernworld to Islamic culture, and brings Islamic culture to the modern world.’