

## **Design Philosophy**

A profound shift in my design philosophy occurred when I moved to Dallas in 1984 and discovered local design legend Woody Pirtle. At Michigan State University, my graphic design professors had embraced the Bauhaus philosophy, but my interpretation of “less is more” and “form follows function” became a creative straightjacket. Woody’s style inspired me to take a new direction, one without boundaries. His illustrations were simple and clean and his work had structure without being overbearing.

Teaching also has greatly influenced my approach and abilities. I’ve absorbed a variety of techniques from my fellow professors, and guiding university-level students has helped sharpened my descriptions of artistic concepts and criticism skills.

As a designer, I embrace the process methodology. My design philosophy is to let the parameters of the project help determine the solution. I avoid preconceived bias and use ethnography in my research, putting myself in the position of the client. To generate ideas, I seek out a work or short sentence that embodies the essence of what I’m trying to accomplish. Then, marker in hand, I connect thoughts with words and images, resulting in tangible ideas that evolve into the design. The process ends with refinement.

There are many theories we can use to help students evaluate their work. But my approach comes down to a couple of simple questions: Will the finished design engage me? If I were to see this design on the street, would I give it second look? If the answer is no, the work isn’t finished.