

Brief Analysis of “Minimalism” Design Style via Work

Yadi Wang^{1*}

¹ Department of Fine Arts, Taiyuan Preschool Teachers College, Taiyuan, China

Email Address

714176342@qq.com (Yadi Wang)

*Correspondence: 714176342@qq.com

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Abstract:

The minimalism, created in the 1960s, is an important school of art in the USA. The minimalism complies with the design concept of “Less is More”, which have a profound impact on many artistic fields, including the architectural design, decorative design, fashion and painting, etc. The minimalism design style is analyzed via several design cases in this thesis to work out that the minimalism design conforms to the quick pace life of people in current society a lot. The minimalism design style is researched for us to better combine the design with the actual life and to remind us to abandon complex and cumbersome design and advocate concise design at any time.

Keywords:

Minimalism Design Style, School of Art, Concise Design

1. Analysis of “Minimalism” Design Style Background

Current society is progressive in science and technology are progressive, and complex in information. Living in such quick pace of life, people are stressful every day, and gradually long for a kind of simple and pure lifestyle. The rapid development of human civilization also brings great shock to various arts. From the relatively broad perspective and field of vision, the minimalism and its application situation are discussed, and the development trend of minimalism in the future is explored and analyzed to attempt to open up a quiet and comfortable poetic space in complex art environment.

Since the beginning of minimalism in the 1960s, extremely pure creation way and artistic style have affected many art categories, and it has occurred in the field of clothing design, building design, landscape design, etc. by virtue of its unique features. Minimalism brings a kind of simple, unsophisticated and tranquil artistic feeling to current society after occurrence, and profoundly affects people’s life concept and aesthetic mode.

1.1. Concept of “minimalism”

Minimalism, one of important tendencies and genres of western modern art in the 1960s, originates from the abstractionism and belongs to the direct descendant of abstract expressionism. Minimalism artists strive to simplify and purify the modeling

language, handle the schema, image or space still existing in the abstract expressionist painting on the principle of Dusan's "reducing, reducing and reducing", and reduce the scene to the most basic geometric shape. Color is purified to the basic primary color, and space is compressed down to the lowest two-dimensional form. The scenes after extreme change offer people the pure visual stimulation and psychological agitation.

Minimalism is artistic tendency or genre engaged in artistic expression with a kind of objective, calm and non-narrative vision and form, owns a kind of neutral or non-personal artistic characteristic together with "post-pictorial abstraction", "hard-edge abstraction", etc., and is corresponding to the impromptu impression, passionate and irrational concept of "pop art" and previous generation of romantic abstract expressionism style in the artistic technique. Its painting advocates the "pure nothingness", pursues the most concise art effect, and only owns the simplest color and form without space, texture, emotion and atmosphere. Its sculpture only reflects the simplest geometrical formation, so, it is called as "art" or "primary structure".

"Minimalism" is a derogatory term proposed by British philosopher Richard Walham in 1965 to criticize those artistic experiments which deliberately reduced the artistic contents for aesthetic effects. Although minimalists don't approve the above purpose, they don't deny it urgently. The slogan and label of minimalism gradually spread in the USA. As the last important genre of modernism, the minimalism winds up the modernism. In the eyes of minimalists, art is a kind of concept and ubiquitous geometric figure.

Minimalism can be said to be the image after artists remove any vision of art. There isn't personal subjective interpretation in the creation process of art, and the art reaches the substantial minimalism like skeleton. Minimalism adopts the simplest geometric figure and the art language without personal emotion, and is treated as the rebellion to high emotion expression of abstract expressionism. Minimalism excludes the concrete image and visional image space, is preferred to single image, and often contains minor identity element arranged in respective shapes. Minimalism tends to the composition of picture with mathematical law, but its style is still extensive. From near-monochromatic scene to simple and rigorous geometric composition, minimalism is the first art movement which is completely developed by American artists, with international significance. Minimalism generates considerable degree of influence in the painting, literature, building, music, etc., further deriving many important artistic schools in modern times.

Minimalism can be called as a kind of school of art (translated into minimalism or the simplest school this time), and can also refer to a kind of lifestyle or style (translated as simplicity this time). It proposes to reducing the painting language to the relationship only between color and shape, simplifying the scene with few colors and very simple form, and abandoning all unnecessary things interfering theme. As a kind of lifestyle or fashion style, the minimalism became trendy till the 1990s.

1.2. Generation background of "minimalism"

The art and design in the 20th century belong to the product of machine civilization. After rapid development, the science and technology, commercial culture and large-scale industrial production replace the nature and classical humanistic tradition, and become important creative source of artists. After two world wars, the modern art broke apart. In addition to the reform in visual art and design field, many artistic

thoughts and creative techniques revealing their importance for the first time before two world wars, present extreme development.

In the 20th century, western economy after recovery presented general prosperity, and western industrialization reached the pinnacle, which directly provoked the westerners' anxiety, reflection and rebellion to capitalist modern civilization at that time. Contemporaneous western art circles could be said to be a carnival feast. Since then, the art has lacked structure, center and authority. Under such background, minimalism occurred in the western art field, which overturned the spiritual core of traditional modern art in essence, and its concept developed toward the pure and logic selection. The minimalism opposes the expressionism in formal language after the occurrence of conceptual art as art form. However, the minimalism still lacks clear definition or declaration all the time. Till the later period of the 1980s, minimalism had been generally applied in each field.

2. Analysis of “Minimalism” Design Style Case

2.1. MUJI

MUJI is a minimalism style design brand of Japan, and its products implicate daily necessities, furniture, stationery, costumes, foods, etc. The concept of MUJI perfectly combines the aesthetics of graphic designer Tanaka IKKO with the concept proposed by Seiji Tsutsumi, incontrovertible leader in Japan's distribution industry. The company was founded in the autumn of 1980. Its basic concept is to create a batch of extremely simple and cheap commodities via radical simplification of manufacturing process. The earliest slogan of MUJI was proposed by Ms. Kazuko Koike, namely the “rational low price”. Currently, there are two kinds of products in our production environment, one kind is relatively expensive, and the other kind is relatively cheap. The first kind improves the brand value by virtue of emerging materials, dazzling appearance and scarcity, develop following crowd and is proud of high price. The second kind is composed of the products as cheap as possible, and is produced in the countries with the cheapest labor cost via large-scale product and minimalist production process. MUJI doesn't belong to any of them. MUJI continuously seeks the most suitable materials and production mode, reduce some unnecessary production procedure, and produces the products which conform to the psychological demands of most people after lots of market research.

MUJI represents a kind of rational, natural and simple lifestyle. Many of its admirers love it due to different reasons. Some people adore it due to its simple design, some people like it due to its cheap price and some people think its products are environmental-friendly.

The product produced by MUJI have nothing to do with the fashion trend of current society, but its products bring intangible comfort to our daily life. Simply designed products are essential in our life, and are treated as the “design without design”, which is just the true design essence of MUJI.

2.2. “Less is More” of Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe

Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe, German architectural designer, is one of the quite famous architectural designers in the twentieth century. Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe proposes “Less is More” in design. Over the years, he has persevered in such opinion and has designed many very famous classic architectures, including Seagram Building

(Figure 1), Farnsworth House (Figure 2), etc. Those architectures perfectly embody his consistent claim, namely simple structural system, concise structural members and exquisite structural logic representative are adopted to design a barrier-free large space available for free partition in the architectures. He initiates the precedent for humans to adopt glass as curtain wall, which is a breakthrough in the architectural history.

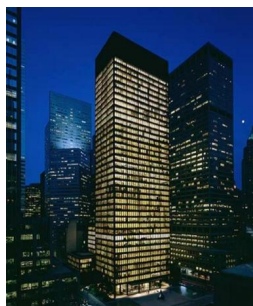


Figure 1. *Seagram Building.*



Figure 2. *Farnsworth House.*

In 1952, he designed and built 38-storey glass curtain wall building in New York, USA, which is the famous Seagram Building, with the height of 158m. In addition to elevator in the building, there is a big open space. It is a modern office building, and reaches to the sky, very eye-catching. The whole building is cuboid, with simple modeling. As the first glass curtain wall building in the world, it will send out dazzling light in the sunshine in the daytime, and seems to be a shining gem from the outside when the whole building turns on the light, very noble and dazzling. Such skyscraper in New York adds unique temperament to very fashionable New York. Such fashion temperament refers to a kind of decent structure, concise space, expensive building materials and accurate construction of workers, rather than precise detail design in common building. The whole design is simple and noble, and is rare. Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe had been 72 years when such building was completed. He confronted many new design tasks on account of the perfect visual and practical effects of such building.

Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe's architectural philosophy of "Less is More" enlightens later generations a lot, especially his precedent of glass curtain wall has changed out life so that our life becomes more beautiful. Nowadays, there are buildings made from glass curtain wall in all cities. Such design can save electricity consumption, present very good daylighting in daytime, and combines with the concept of environmental protection and sustainable development. Moreover, the glass curtain wall changes the cold feeling resulting from reinforced concrete building, can bring a little warmth to people when turning on at night, and can alleviate people's feeling of fatigue after day work.

2.3. Philippe Starck

Philippe Starck is deemed the most important representative designer of minimalism, and is known as the "design genius" of France. He adopts the minimalism technique to design lots of furniture which are very single in modeling, but attach great importance to the application of geometrical shape. The furniture designed by him are basically black, without any redundant decorative patterns. His design owns personal characteristics, not stereotyped and fussy. His design works were affirmed by Francois Mitterrand who was the French president at that time.

Besides, the “Praval” chair used in the conference room of the president’s Elysee Palace was just designed by Philippe Starck. Philippe Starck wants to make our life more harmonious and beautiful via design, opposes “excessive design” and pursues a kind of durable classic design.

2.4. Zeus Design Group

Founded in 1984, Zeus Design Group situated in Milan, Italy, has deeply researched minimalism over the years. Under the leadership of leader Maurizio Peregalli, the furniture, clothing, textile, graphic design, etc. are designed by the Group. In the first few years, the furniture and other products designed by the Group presented minimalism style, and the works were extensively concerned by the international design circle quickly and attracted the attention of lots of designers.

3. Opinions on “Minimalism” Design Style

3.1. Development situation of “minimalism”

Artistic works concerning Minimalism generate sensibility influence. Such beauty belongs to the strongest abstraction, tightens artistry to the minimum possibility, and is known by people as a kind of natural and concise delicacy and balance. Minimalism artists treat the simple purity and simple repetition of form as the inner rhythm of real life. The sundry daily life seen by people via naked eyes isn’t rich and colorful in essence. The concision of removal all decorations and represented in the minimalism works represents progress, and the works with simple and dull appearance embody the artists’ desire and pursuit for the life and social order.

Concision is exactly to be simple and tasteful. Such taste is embodied in the grasp of details. Every fine locality and decoration shall be deeply considered. For example, a product is small and exquisite in design, but strong in functionality, and isn’t simple in technology.

The minimalism pursues the thought conveying in the most direct manner, while many previous histories of art schools emphasize the form more and many of its thoughts are often buried and ignored on account of cumbersome form. Complication to certain extremity certainly gives rise to extreme simplicity. Finally, various artistic forms recover to its origin, and advocate nature and origin in the minimal manner.

However, the art of life is quite different from the real art. Everything in the universe can transform into the beautiful movement and gorgeous scene in the creation of artists, which promotes the truth of life to the truth of art, namely the art originates from life, but is superior to life. In essence, the life is very different. The life could be luxury, plain, mannered, conservative... Regardless of any manner, the harvest would be distinct if you treat life with complex altitude or with simple altitude. We live in the era with numerous and complicated materials and spirits. The information changes instantaneously, and the psychological stress from all directions is confusing. People have been tired of considering the complex life with complicated brain, and they are more eager to a kind of lifestyle which can make the mood peaceful and simple. Minimalism lifestyle isn’t only simple. As Lao Tze says, the greatest truths are the simplest.

Minimalism reflects and shows the current lifestyle to us, which is treated as the realistic interpretation of slogan concerning returning to original life and the only choice of helpless attitude. Current minimalism presents an essential distinction to

simplicity. It is a kind of sublimation after people know the pomp and bustle of the world, and is another expression language of high-quality life. Of course, it is people's proactive response to the current society changing quickly.

Minimalism is another fashion photo worth thinking about, rather than elusion and passivity. Such style highlights the modern aesthetic characteristics and fits the aesthetic demands of modern people, so, it is widely popular. Such artistic style is extensively and deeply practiced and developed in multiple arts, including the fine arts, building, music, literature, etc., and profoundly affects people's aesthetic concepts and lifestyle.

3.2. Opinions on “minimalism” design style

As people's pace of life speeds up, people gradually enhance their consciousness in pursuing simple lifestyle, and the minimalism design is favored by people more and more. During shopping, consumers not only select the goods with minimalism design, but also select a kind of simple lifestyle, a kind of green, low-carbon and environmental-friendly high-quality lifestyle. Nowadays, people's thought starts changing, the minimalism design has occupied the market greatly, and people show relatively strong demands of minimalist design. We shall abandon those cumbersome design, strive to focusing on design practicability, prolong the service cycle of product, and lay emphasis on the product quality to maximize the use of the product, thus reducing the total use amount of articles, achieving true low-carbon environmental protection, protecting the raw materials used for production and the tree foreign resources, and contributing to the concept of sustainable development. On the whole, we shall conform to the policy of environmental protection vigorously promoted in China, oppose unnecessary wastes, praise good designs and disclose and criticize poor designs. As people's pace of life gradually speeds up, people have pursued the minimal lifestyle and the concept of minimalism has gone into the mind of everyone.

4. Conclusions

The design style of minimalism is introduced and analyzed from many aspects in this thesis, including the generation and development history of minimalism, the interpretation of minimalism product design, the analysis of Ludwig Mies Van der Rohe's architectural philosophy of “Less is More”, and the interpretation of current situation of minimalism style in modern design. Besides, it is pointed out that, with the development of society and the acceleration of people's pace of life, the minimal lifestyle is advocated more and more. In the future design, we shall intensify the learning and application of minimalism, because it can meet our aesthetic demands and can make a contribution to the social low-carbon environmental protection and sustainable development. The minimalism style works of MUJI, Seagram Building, etc. are analyzed to propose to the simple and practical feeling brought by minimalism design style to us and high pursuit of “quality”.

The theory and practice of minimalism design style are systematically researched to propose the minimalism design's important significance in current society, which helps the quick-pace life of people a lot and improves people's efficiency of work and life to some extent. In the future design, the minimalism will become the mainstream design recommended by people.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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