



A Discussion of Minimalism Style in Interior Design

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Abstract. With the continuous development and progress of economics, science and technology, people's living standard and quality of life have been improved a lot. At the same time, with high intensity of work pressure, people are seeking for better life quality level. Minimalist living environment not only can please people, but also can produce a decompression effect in their life, which can better meet the needs of the development of the times. In the modern interior design, minimalist style is also more popular with the younger generation.

Keywords: Minimalism · Interior design · Sustainable living style · Minimalist design · Modernism style

1 Introduction

Minimalism, in a narrow sense, is considered to be an art form rising in the United States in the 1960s, mainly in painting and sculpture. Its idea is to reduce the artist's emotional expression through the use of basic design elements, choose a simple and logical way of expression, and create a concise external form. Artists often can use limited information to convey thought-provoking meaning and leave a deep visual impression [1].

However, like regionalism, minimalism cannot be simply understood as a design style, but rather an ideological trend and idea. It can be considered that minimalism originated from the rebellion against abstract expressionism. As a design concept that reverts to complexity and simplicity, minimalism has influenced many design fields, including drama, music, and architecture. According to John Pawson, minimalism is the aesthetic feeling when the essence of work is simplified to the most basic things. Simplicity is an in-depth study of the essence of truth, revealing that the core attribute of matter and object is the essence of moral character. According to Tanizaki's writing on the aesthetic of silence, Japanese poetry of "Haiku" is an essential source of "minimalism" [3]. Haiku seventeen-syllable poems can express everything in no more than necessary words, while they almost always open up numerous avenues for readers to further explain and imagine [3].

Minimalism, in terms of interior, aims to provide a simple, clean, and exquisite background and stage. Highlighting a few elements can stimulate the connoisseurs to inject different feelings, such as association, thinking, and experience, into the works to obtain

rich connotations [4]. Minimalist interior design advocates abandoning extensive and luxurious decoration and trivial functions, emphasizing unobtrusive and straightforward, so as to relieve secular life and give people an indifferent, bright and clean, silent and holy space atmosphere [5].

2 The Definition of Minimalism

“Minimalism” comes from “minimal”, which means “minimum” in French and is the root of the term. “Minimum” is described as “the smallest amount of something that can be achieved, achieved” or “needed” [2]. Additionally, for “Minimalism”, there are many applications and blurry definitions. In this vein, the exact invention time and protagonist of the word vary: in the 1970s, musician Steve Reich praised critic Michael Nyman for coining the word and applying it to music (Nyman, 1974) [6]. The 1980s became synonymous with excesses when widespread economic success enabled architects and their clients to develop exquisite, expensive and even decorative structures that were hitherto unavailable to meet the needs of increasingly sybaritic lifestyles. While the Post-Modern Movement promoted some of these designs, by the late 1980s, the Deconstructivist Movement was promoting a different but equally theatrical and aristocratic aesthetic (Frampton, 1992) [7]. It can be seen that Minimalism aims to reduce the “aspects of modernism and frequently ‘interfere’ as a response to abstract expressionism and a ‘link’ to post-modern art practice”. The term “Minimalism” is often used to describe designs that are pared down to their essence. It can be argued that John Pawson defines “minimalism”. In his book *Minimum*: “When the content of a piece of work is cut to the minimum, it will give people a sense of perfection; when all the components, details, and links of the work are reduced or condensed into essence, it will acquire this quality that is the result of discarding unnecessary elements” [8]. Design and architecture are sometimes described as “minimalist”, because the focus is on fewer and more important components [8].

The following are some of the qualities of minimalist design:

- (1) Minimalism is a non-narrative, non-figurative, and non-emotional aesthetic language centered on plain geometric shapes.
- (2) Minimalist design frequently uses monochromatic material surface, with black and white as the primary tones. Actual colors are occasionally used for decoration.
- (3) Minimalism advocates not only non-relevant composition and repetitive and methodical material layout, but also integrity, while rejecting change and the unification of opposites. Minimalism tends to arrange incrementally according to equidistant or algebraic or geometric multiples.
- (4) It makes use of industrial materials such as stainless steel, electrode-position aluminum, and glass to create an aesthetic that evokes the era of industrial civilization [10]. The development of minimalism in architecture and other design industries is relatively different from that in other aspects of art. In contrast to art, architecture is not endowed with absolute rights. For design, the practical significance of objects is tremendous. Apart from the semantic and practical benefits of minimalism in a variety of sectors, function has always been a compelling factor for designers associated with the minimalist movement [11].

3 Minimalism in Art

As a school of art, minimalism abandons complex rules and regulations and weakens the essence of art. In a brief, minimalism is to get rid of those redundant and complex decorations and express the essence with the most basic and straightforward gimmick. Over time, minimalism has not been eliminated by people. This style of enduring and invincible, and minimalist style has gradually become the mainstream trend in today's art circles.

However, there is no conceptual definition or description for “minimalism”. People can only look at how various designers and philosophers have approached and assessed it. Minimalism conveys a subtle sense of beauty that is basic, but not timid [11]. Kant describes minimalism as a kind of beauty that appeals to reason, pure reason, and precision [11]. In addition, minimalism was seen as much more impersonal, which raises abstraction to a new level. Some works had no title or intended meaning, and considerable effort have been made to hide the obvious signs of the artist's intention [12]. Minimalism first appeared in the geometric abstract art of Bauhaus-affiliated painters Kazimir Malevich, Piet Mondrian, and other artists related to De Stijl Movement and Russian Constructivists [13]. Meanwhile, the British philosopher Richard Wollheim (1923–2013), wrote an article titled “*Minimalist*” in which he observed the exquisite works of art created by the surrounding artists. “Minimalism” is defined in English dictionaries as an abstract painting and sculpture style that emphasizes extreme simplification of form, using the basic shapes and monochromatic color palettes of primary colors, objectivity, and anonymity of style. It is also called art of reductivism, using the smallest and most basic elements or elements also known as [14].

In addition, the Industrial Revolution in Europe throughout the nineteenth century, notably in Russia and the United Kingdom, is another critical source of “Minimalism”. Modernism, as a philosophical movement, had a significant impact on Western civilization at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century [13]. Industrial standardization, product reduction ratios and the power of emphasizing minimum form projects are the inspiration sources of art and architecture pioneers [16].

4 Minimalism in Interior Design

The concepts and aesthetic features of interior and furniture design are distinct from those of art and architecture, although they are intertwined with one other. Interiors of large-scale residential structures also mirror these trends, albeit to a lesser extent. This is due to existing budgetary or technological constraints imposed by the uniqueness of user groups living in large-scale housing [16]. According to Chave [14], the 20th century minimalist paradigm of architecture emphasizes the aesthetic balance between simplicity and quirkiness, that is, the minimum attainable in planning and design [15]. While interior designs lack furnishings, they are essentially practical. In addition, light, shape, and material expressiveness are key components employed to create aesthetic impressions for individuals in the built environment [11]. Architect Mies van der Rohe's famous motto, “Less is more,” describes his aesthetic tactic, that is, by combining each element and detail to serve a variety of visual and functional purposes, arranging a

large number of necessary components to create an extremely simple impression. Minimalism is based on this philosophy [17]. Meanwhile, with the motto of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the architect captured the spirit of his style, which is exemplified in the clean, uncluttered lines and bareness of space of the architecture. Otherwise, Kazuyo Sejima is the most prominent minimalist designer in Japan today. As Luigi Prestinzenza Puglisi Sejima (2008, p. 215) explains, “very intricate things that eventually become simple” are the starting point for her designs, in which she uses transparent or translucent materials slender structures to produce mostly white and visually light constructions [18]. Additionally, minimalism was considered impersonal, pushing abstractness to a new level—some works had no title or intended meaning, and artists tried to hide their intention. “What you see is what you get” summarizes this approach to painting and sculpting. “The role of art is to convey or embody values, visions or feelings.” Music was employed to generate hypnotic attitudes or a singularity of mood, such as young people in the drone phase. The “function” of music is to generate a distinct mood or monotony, typically to improve the consciousness of the audience. In other domains, such as architecture or literature, wide spaces and ellipses help to focus the observer’s attention [17]. Minimalism advocates the use of simple elements for design, including lines, geometry, shadows and other forms of expression. It can be said that minimalism is not based on simplicity and monotony. Besides, minimalist Design uses simple elements to form the visual impact of structural design. The formation of beauty and its forms of expression are often diverse. For instance, in the process of color design, Minimalism advocates the use of neutral and cool colors to achieve harmony. Although some bright colors with strong impact will be less used, often bright colors are a manifestation of visual impact [19]. However, it is a minimalist architectural language, emphasizing the openness and continuity of space, thus forming a horizontal architecture, eliminating details to a minimum, and emphasizing the natural light on the white surface. Therefore, Colquhoun connect functionalist with the minimalist movement. The simplification of the most fundamental concepts such as space, light and quality has long been a symbol of Minimalism [16].

4.1 The Layout

Before interior design, the first problem consider is the overall layout, and the principle to use minimalism in the overall layout is simplicity. Sejima Kazuyo is a representative architect of minimalism. Her understanding of space and the way of shaping space can be used as a reference for minimalist followers [3]. In his Kanazawa Museum of Contemporary Art, he indicated that “a building needs to be like a container, only the difference between the inside and the outside, and the form and appearance of the building need not be deliberately made” [6]. Interior space is the heart of this container, and modern architect Tadao Ando also expressed the concept of “container”. He talked about the basic idea of living in Ji Longhouse: the women’s dormitory was wedged into a concrete container, which creates an escape and simple multiple spatial combination, as well as the dynamic linear combination between them [15].

4.2 Color and Material

Minimalist interior design is concise and accurate because of the simplicity of its space and form; it urges them to attach great importance to the expression of materials. However, minimalist interior design no longer emphasizes the choice of materials; Relatively speaking, it has a wider application of materials, excluding the use of some natural and local material [18]. Thus, it can be shown that minimalism excludes the metaphor and symbol of indoor materials, eliminates the interference of human consciousness, and only regards materials as objective and realistic material existence. According to Umberto Boccioni's sculpture, the manifesto opened the way for the free use of materials in 1912 [17]. He said that minimalism is the attitude and thinking of material selection, and their use of materials is to promote appropriate, economical and localized materials. At the same time, such attention to natural materials makes minimalism have a more lasting living soil. It has a strong tradition, uniqueness, and permanence. The conservative use of materials reflects the radical nature of minimalist thought [15]. According to Mácêl, Minimalist interior design attaches great importance to the selection and application of various materials and colors [20]. The combination of various building materials can realize the rich expression of materials. Its design style is not suitable for the use of large-scale soft decoration or fabric, and the wall is one of the crucial elements to reflect the style.

4.3 The Light

Lighting is the key to interior design [17]. It is proposed that lighting can bring rich visual experience, which cannot be achieved even in material selection and furniture design. According to literature, people have different levels of sensitivity and love for light [18]. Some prefer to stay in well-lit areas, others like to stay in the dark. Minimalists have a strong preference for natural light. Pertičević and Milkić also believed that light shuttle freely in space, takes away everything empty and inflexibly, and is directly close to nature [16]. Light changes with the change of day and night, emitting halos of different angles and intensities, so as to achieve the comfortable and beautiful space experience they pursue. Chatterjee suggested that designers can appropriately use artificial light source to avoid the monotony of color and pattern of natural light source [15].

4.4 The Furniture

Furniture is the most prominent and eye-catching indoor space; It is the soul of interior decoration and should become the main cost of purchasing furniture. Mácêl considered that Minimalist Design takes simple modeling as the primary principle of choosing furniture, and focuses on the design of furniture [20]. Firstly, the furniture decoration needs to adhere to the simple design concept. Secondly, we need to pay attention to the functionality of the furniture decoration.

5 Conclusion

Minimalism is a strong sign of the times and an important style tendency in contemporary interior design practice [16]. However, the modernism style is produced on the basis of

criticizing the Baroque style, which has been revised and edited. Modernism itself is the product of the times and has strong characteristics of the times [14].

Additionally, the minimalist style has abandoned the international style advocated by modernism and pursues the taste of people-oriented, comfortable and environmental protection as the design premise. It absorbs the essence of postmodernism, deconstruction and other design schools, continues the design spirit of modernism, and meets the requirements of the times. Interior design in the 21st century is no longer a simple artistic display. Interior designers need to work with anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers to enrich the diversity and timeliness of interior features. Thus, designing an environment in a minimalistic style necessitates that those in the fashion industry pay more attention to their surroundings, monitor media sources, and keep aware of developments advances and get design inspiration from them.

In sum up, Minimalist design style denies the traditional design concept, the pursuit of people-oriented, to create a comfortable and warm environment for residents as the design premise, drawing on post-modernist deconstruction and other excellent design schools, combined with the current design spirit, in line with social requirements. The contemporary era's speeding pace of life forces individuals to pursue a simple living in a confusing and noisy world, which is the advantage of minimalist style.

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