

Minimalist coexisting

Modern architecture inherently embodies minimalist principals that later that later developed into its own way of thinking that took over the 21st century. The term Minimalism refers to the act of stripping something down to its essentials. It started in post war America in the 1950s amongst creatives, but in the beginning it was predominantly painters and sculptors. As minimalism was and still is a controversial topic it is important that we understand the terms multifaceted meaning? How has it developed and effected modern way of living?

As minimalist principles started to influence architecture and design the next coming decades it quickly went from an esthetic experience to a privileged way of living capitalizing on anticapitalist principles. Introducing: The «minimalist lifestyle» (1) - Intentionally living with fewer things, but more specifically only having things around you that adds value or meaning.

«Minimalism is a tool that can assist you in finding freedom. Freedom from fear. Freedom from worry. Freedom from overwhelm. Freedom from guilt. Freedom from depression. Freedom from the trappings of the consumer culture we've built our lives around. Real freedom.» (2)

This change brought minimalism from being about attaining a pure experience to being



about calculating value in the things and people around you. The focus on value destroyed the original meaning of the word so it could now be used to justify quantity. As long as it is valued and designed following minimalist principles there is

suddenly more space for it. This results in bigger, cleaner, more affordable and easier structures to be mass produced and sold as a premium.

As minimalism was picked up by corporations and manufacturers it became the new status quo. It was no longer about slow, simple and accessible, but fast, easy and cheap which has resulted in a space that is silenced, gray and stripped of any and all value.

And thus the «urban» (3) environment was created. The space modern minimalism exists within.



The urban environment isn't owned by modern minimalism, but it was vital in creating the urban environment and the tensions you can see between a city and the people that live in it. Tension for better and worse becomes visible as the people react to the notable changes happening in New York and other fast growing major cities between 1930-1980.

Graffiti instantly becomes a permanent fixture in the city. Not something entirely new as people have painted on walls for hundreds of years, but because it happened here it became graffiti. Suddenly conceptual vandalism is competing with societies new way of life

where everything is designed to be as easy, helpful, valuable and assisting as possible, meant to be a seamlessly integrated part of your life.



Minimalist artworks often operates with the same sense of intrusive qualities that the big skyscrapers surrounding us. Using these qualities Richard Serra created a number of sculptures using big rusted metal plates either placed against each other to make a tower like structure or as a tilted wall cutting through the public space. As a direct result of Richard Serra using minimalist architectural language the same tensions you see between the city and the people could be found expressed in bright colors or piss stains on Serras work.

In 1980 the T.W.U consisting of three ten meter high steel plates were installed in Tribeca, New York. When the artist Richard Hammons saw the artwork covered in graffiti, trash and posters after a year he performed two works documented by Dawoud Bey, Pissed off and Shoe tree. The pictures show Hammons at the artwork, peeing in a corner and talking to the police. Later that year «Shoe tree» was performed. Hammonds threw tennis shoes, sneakers, work boots and heels over the sculpture reminiscent of shoes you find on telephone wires in urban areas.

Minimalism has grown from an aesthetic goal of experiencing pure intensity to a way of living, thinking and designing that gave the modern capitalist a new way of making money on the way we live not just the things we want to have in it. This also made a new divide where it no longer was about owning things, but the right ones. While rich people could now make money on having one pair of 600\$ shoes while poor people living the same «minimalist lifestyle» were still not allowed in the club.

Minimalism didn't turn out to be the accessible but still highly effective tool that it promised to be. What it did do was to put on display the relationship between humans and the city and by proxy those who build, tear down and «lead» the city. This resulted in artist using this new urban space to further emphasize the intruding nature of modern minimalism and its effect on us.

Footnotes

(1) (...is intentionally living with fewer possessions — focusing only on the ones you need.)

Chase, «4 Ways to Adopt A Minimalist Lifestyle»

Accessed May 16, 2024, <https://www.chase.com/personal/credit-cards/education/basics/minimalism-tips>

(2) «Minimalism is a tool that can assist you in finding freedom. Freedom from fear. Freedom from worry. Freedom from overwhelm. Freedom from guilt. Freedom from depression. Freedom from the trappings of the consumer culture we've built our lives around. Real freedom.»

The Minimalists, «What Is Minimalism?» August 05, 2022

Accessed May 14, 2024, <https://www.theminimalists.com/minimalism/>

(3) «... areas are in cities and town. An urban area is often the main area of employment. Urban areas have the most human-built structures. This built environment creates opportunities for health such as sidewalks and public transit.»

Tennessee State Government - TN.gov, «Suburban Areas.»

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Richard Serra, Tilted Arc, 1981. New York, USA. Film still from Richard Serra, Excerpted From ART / new York No.14: Public Sculpture, directed by Paul Tschinkel & Marc H. Miller, 1982.

David Hammons, Pissed Off, 1981

Photo: Dawoud Bey/greg.org

David Hammons, Shoe Tree, 1981

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