

MINIMALISM

Jasmine McClendon

Theatrical Design Concepts 3050-002

What is Minimalism?

Minimalism emerged in New York in the early 1960s when artists became frustrated with and began to reject recent art that they thought had grown to be dry and academic. Younger artists began to question current limits between various media platforms because of a new wave of influences and rediscovered styles, one example being a freshened knowledge of recent European art. The new art moved towards geometric abstraction and was “cool” rather than dramatic. Artists avoided obvious symbolism and emotional aspects, but emphasized the materials the work was fabricated from. Furthermore, sculptures were mostly made from industrial materials and “emphasized anonymity over the expressive excess of Abstract Expressionism.” By the end of the 1970’s, Minimalism had taken over America and Europe.

Harran II
Frank Stella 1967

Harran II shows the great vaulting compositions and lyrically decorative patterns that are the subject of the Protractor series, which is based on the gridded rectilinear pattern that is formed is superimposed over the decorative arcs.” “Through the device of the protractor and the use of almost It is composed of a full circle formed by two vertical protractors, each of which interlock with a horizontal protractor shape. “...each protractor-shaped area contains eight concentric circular bands—the “rainbows”—that articulate the surface of the canvas.” Even though the dominant concepts of the Protractor series are circular “every shape is actually defined by

pairs of horizontal and vertical lines that intersect at right angles; the gridded rectilinear pattern that is formed is superimposed over the decorative arcs.” “Through the device of the protractor and the use of almost It is composed of a full circle formed by two vertical protractors, each of which interlock with a horizontal protractor shape. “...each protractor-shaped area contains eight concentric circular bands—the “rainbows”—that articulate the surface of the canvas.” Even though the dominant concepts of the Protractor series are circular “every shape is actually defined by



Untitled
Donald Judd, 1967

Untitled takes up nearly three feet of the wall and climbs like rungs on a ladder from floor to ceiling. It is fabricated from galvanized iron boxes that are all identical. The sides are painted with green lacquer paint that is typically used to customize Harley-Davidson motorcycles. The tops and bottoms are also metal. The spaces around the boxes are important as well. Each box is nine inches in height and spaces nine inches apart. This can be changed depending on the wall it is displayed on to maintain proper

distance between the boxes. Donald Judd wanted his work to suggest an industrial production line; furthermore, he had his works made in a factory in order to get a perfect finish without reworking the material. Judd stated that the box was one of his favorite forms because he believed it to be neutral and without any symbolic meaning.



Minimalist Poems

Minimalist poetry refers to a poetry type or movement that doesn't have a clear originator and is loosely defined. It was influenced by concrete poetry, Japanese haiku, and Black Mountain poetry. These poems have a lack of narrative. They don't rely on a storyline; they are as concise as possible and don't include scenes, characters, or descriptions of actions. The focus is on the words. Minimalist poems often provide visual aspects by playing with space in-between letters and sizes of letters. For example, *Missing* by George Swede uses the missing I's in the word "thief".

M S S N G

Thiiief!

Missing, George Swede

balloon!!

Hold on tight to your

Adam Gable

Minimalist Music

Minimalist music is a form of art music that uses few musical materials. According to Richard E. Rodda, it's based on the repetition of slowly changing common chords in constant rhythms. There is little sense of goal or direction. The music doesn't seem to move from one place to another.

Arvo Part - Salve Regina

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1CNNf9iU9Y&list=PLCJ96FurPOpOBITt3UUS1nY2z2mwqvny>

Our Town
David Korins 2010

Our Town is a play about simplicity. It contains simple people going about their simple lives in a simple town. And this play is about the significance of those simple acts. In this scene, the chairs around these characters symbolize the others who inhabit the graveyard and have passed on. They are never forgotten, hence the reason for the chairs, but are not the focus anymore. This is why they are in the darkness while Emily and George are bathed in light. In this scene, George and

Emily are sitting in their respective bedrooms talking to one another. The stage directions indicate that the two actors actually sit on top of two ladders, which enhances the simplicity of the play.



Old Times
Walt Spangler 2011

Walt Spangler created a sort of “floating box” of an all white set that is surrounded by a black reveal lifted from the stage to create an isolated picture that the actors are stuck in. “It gives it a density, a certain weight and gravitas a black portal that falls into the void,” said Spangler. Given the nature of and “loaded meaning” of everything in Pinter’s writing, it became clear that removing all color except for the costumes would allow the actors to give a clarity of expressions that the play demands. In the design shop, Spangler states that everything had to be an exact white. An off-white would change the whole direction of the scenery. They also had to add a lighting “trough” in the ceiling of the boxed set complete with LED lights. This way there were no unnecessary shadows.



*Goon Bandage - An Evening With
Harry Secombe
Alex Robertson 2007*

This play is a one man show about Harry Secombe in his dressing room an hour before a show. Robertson makes the whole set white except for the curtain in the back to symbolize the ultimate goal. All else pales in comparison. He also states that the costume needed to be a recreation rather than a representation. Harry needed to be the only element of real in the minimalist world.



Midsummer Night's Dream Opera
Jayme Mellema 2009

In this scene Hermia and Lysander have stopped to rest on their way to Lysander's aunt's house. By using video images projected onto simple scrims and drops, the designers created the feel of isolation. Without trees looming over them, the audience gets an even bigger feeling of remoteness. Hermia and Lysander are not only alone in this part of the forest, but alone within the city of Athens as well. The dark blue creates a somber mood. The bright light only on the two

lovers, however, creates the hope that they have in their relationship.



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