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REVIEW

Minimalism as an architectural language: Analysis and perspectives

El minimalismo como lenguaje arquitectónico: Análisis y perspectivas

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ABSTRACT

Objective: the article examines minimalism in architecture, from its origins to its contemporary applications, highlighting its aesthetic, functional and emotional benefits. It aims to analyze how this philosophy can contribute to sustainability and improve quality of life through simplicity and efficiency.
Method: this was a comprehensive narrative review of scientific literature published between 2020 and 2024, in databases such as Google Scholar, Archidaily and SciELO. Specific terms related to minimalism were used and 11 relevant articles were selected after applying exclusion criteria.
Results: minimalism eliminates the superfluous to highlight the essence of spaces, creating functional and harmonious environments that encourage reflection and connection with the environment. Its applicability in diverse contexts was observed, integrating environmental, social and psychological aspects to improve well-being and sustainability.
Conclusions: minimalism promotes spaces that contribute to emotional well-being and balanced living. It is recommended that professionals and urban managers adopt this approach, considering its multidisciplinary implications to optimize the human experience and quality of life, recognizing that physical space significantly influences perception and well-being.

Keywords: Architecture; Minimalist; Minimalism; Architectural Language.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: el artículo examina el minimalismo en la arquitectura, desde sus orígenes hasta sus aplicaciones contemporáneas, destacando sus beneficios estéticos, funcionales y emocionales. Su objetivo es analizar cómo esta filosofía puede contribuir a la sostenibilidad y mejorar la calidad de vida mediante la simplicidad y eficiencia.
Método: fue una revisión narrativa exhaustiva de literatura científica publicada entre 2020 y 2024, en bases de datos como Google Académico, Archidaily y SciELO. Se emplearon términos específicos relacionados con minimalismo y se seleccionaron 11 artículos relevantes tras aplicar criterios de exclusión.
Resultados: el minimalismo elimina lo superfluo para resaltar la esencia de los espacios, creando ambientes funcionales y armoniosos que fomentan la reflexión y conexión con el entorno. Se observó su aplicabilidad en diversos contextos, integrando aspectos ambientales, sociales y psicológicos para mejorar el bienestar y la sostenibilidad.
Conclusiones: el minimalismo promueve espacios que contribuyen al bienestar emocional y a una vida equilibrada. Se recomienda a profesionales y responsables urbanos adoptar este enfoque, considerando sus implicaciones multidisciplinarias para optimizar la experiencia humana y la calidad de vida, reconociendo que el espacio físico influye significativamente en la percepción y bienestar.

Palabras clave: Arquitectura; Minimalista; Minimalismo; Lenguaje Arquitectónico.

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INTRODUCTION

Minimalism seeks to improve the quality of life by eliminating superfluous elements, favoring simplicity and functionality in spatial design.[1] This approach has gained relevance in contemporary architecture for its ability to combine the aesthetic dimension with utility, promoting harmony and visual clarity in built spaces.[2] Minguet points out that the fundamental elements of architectural minimalism are geometry, compositional organization, and precision in its execution to generate a perception of spaciousness and order in buildings.[3] Likewise, for some authors, minimalism represents a refuge from everyday chaos, providing calm and serenity in the domestic environment.[4] Stefany and Chilquillo argue that minimalism transcends its aesthetic condition to become a philosophy of life oriented toward creating simple and peaceful spaces that favor emotional well-being.[1] Nowadays, minimalist principles are also linked to sustainability, seeking to minimize environmental impact by consciously reducing resources and materials.[5] In Europe, minimalism has left a significant mark, especially in Nordic regions such as Denmark, Iceland, and Norway, where its influence is powerful.[6] A paradigmatic example is the 9/11 Memorial in New York, whose abstract and minimalist conception emphasizes the absence of the Twin Towers and the void they left behind, thus preserving their memory. Michael Arad configures this space as a theatre of memory, simultaneously encouraging collective congregation and offering the visitor an experience of 'intimate isolation'.[7] In Peru, during the modernization process that began in the 20th century, minimalism already showed a significant presence in different sectors, a trend that is still in force today.[8] However, the country faces limitations in infrastructure for large-scale art exhibitions and a restricted offer of institutions dedicated to professional art training. In this sense, the Escuela Nacional Superior Autónoma de Bellas Artes del Perú stands out for its proposal of an innovative architecture that invites not only contemplation but also reflection to enrich the cognitive experience by integrating architecture and art, thus broadening the social perception of architectural minimalism.[9] This article analyzes the main theories, approaches, and practices of minimalism in architecture, from its historical origins to its contemporary manifestations. A comprehensive literature review examines minimalism's aesthetic, functional, and emotional benefits, as well as the challenges involved in its implementation in various architectural contexts. Furthermore, it discusses the contribution of minimalist philosophy to the sustainability of design, emphasizing the optimization of the use of space and the improvement of quality of life through simplicity and efficiency. This review is justified in an urban context characterized by increasing complexity and saturation, where architectural minimalism is presented as a relevant response to creating more orderly, functional, and pleasant spaces. By analyzing the potential of minimalism to improve the quality of life through simplicity and efficiency, the article contributes to the knowledge and appreciation of an approach relevant to social well-being in dense urban environments. From a historical and current perspective, the study of minimalist theories and practices provides a solid basis for understanding their principles and effects in architecture. This methodological approach facilitates the identification of patterns, advantages, and limitations, offering a holistic view useful for researchers and design practitioners. Reviewing trends and applications of minimalism provides valuable guidance for architectural practice. By highlighting its contribution to sustainability and spatial optimization, the article offers tools and practical examples that architects and planners can implement to develop projects that integrate functionality and aesthetics in a balanced way.

METHOD

A comprehensive narrative review was conducted to analyze the current scientific literature on minimalism in architecture. For this purpose, several specialized databases were consulted, including Archidaily, Google Scholar, Scielo, and the Journal of Architectural Lighting. The search strategy was guided by using specific keywords, such as 'minimalism,' "design," and 'architecture,' combined with Boolean operators (AND, OR) to optimize the precision and scope of the results. The period selected for the search covered publications between 2020 and 2024, and only documents in Spanish and English were considered, discarding materials with a less empirical focus, such as case reports, interviews, and theses. In the initial phase, 50 articles were identified, distributed mainly in Google Scholar = 30, Archidaily = 5, and Scielo = 15. After filtering, eliminating duplicates, and excluding eight non-relevant documents and nine that did not meet the established criteria, a final corpus of 11 articles that meet the requirements for a rigorous and relevant analysis was selected.

RESULTS

Minimalism seeks to highlight the essential information of each architectural element while emphasizing its functionality to communicate the purpose of the design.[11] This approach enhances visual simplicity and offers an adaptable perspective, allowing minimalist architecture to respond effectively to different contexts and contemporary needs, driving development and innovation in architectural design today.[12]

Table 1. Narrative review of articles

Author	Title	Year	URL / DOI	Summary
Stefany, S., Y Chilquillo, W.	Minimalist architecture and the design and construction of beach houses in Punta Hermosa, 2023	2023	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12692/143132	The research analysed the relationship between minimalist architecture and beach house design in Punta Hermosa (2023). With a quantitative approach and correlational design, 50 professionals were surveyed. Spearman's Rho analysis showed a strong correlation, with validity and reliability (0,831-0,896) of the instrument.

Radha, C. H	Biophilic Design Approach for Improving Human Health in the Built Environment	2022	http://TUENGR.COM/V13/13A9T.pdf	Biophilic design connects built spaces with nature to improve well-being and reduce stress. This study reviewed practices in public buildings, homes and offices, highlighting that natural light, ventilation and living elements promote health. Integrating landscapes and water is recommended for restorative environments.
Pachas García, Cristopher Jesús	Art School in the district of la Victoria, Lima	2024	https://repositorio.urp.edu.pe/bitstreams/b36c1916-b531-4ff7-bc5f-41630b476ed1/download	Minimalism is a way of thinking about space that seeks to reduce everything to the essentials in order to achieve perfection and quality. It emerged in the 1970s as a response to the crisis of modernism, emphasising dematerialisation and the absence of ornamentation. Its main contribution is to create sober, concise and functional works, based on simplicity and deep reflection.
Alejos Benavides	The art of minimalist rebranding and its elements as perceived by Peruvian perceived by Peruvian coolhunting companies	2023	http://hdl.handle.net/10757/672992	The text argues that minimalism in advertising uses simple and direct elements to facilitate brand recognition in a world saturated with information. Its main contribution is to achieve a clear, modern and tangible communication, which generates greater visual recall and better connects with current consumers, especially Lima-based women aged 25-30 in advertising agencies.
Angelique Trachana; Ioana-Georgiana Şerbănoiu	Violence, memory and architecture. The forms of objectification of the of the memory of the violent events of the last century in the space of the	2020	https://oa.upm.es/64322/1/Violencia_memoria_arquitectura_AIS.pdf	The article argues that minimalist design in memorials, such as at Yad Vashem, creates atmospheres that foster knowledge and empathy through museographic techniques. Overhead lighting and cave-like forms induce hope, not despair, facilitating a sensory experience that impacts emotions and awareness without imposing rigid interpretations.
Luis Ángel Morales de Vega	Looking at minimalism	2023	https://doi.org/10.22201/fa.14058901p.2022.49.84601	The article argues that minimalist design not only reveals practical function, but connects with the deep roots of the psyche through archetypal images, revealing the character of architecture before logical discourse. Thus, minimalism allows for deep aesthetic experiences, acting as an event resulting from the intersection of forces and not only as forms or containers of meaning.

CONCLUSIONS

Minimalism in architecture transcends formal simplicity to consolidate itself as a paradigm promoting a conscious and sustainable lifestyle. By purifying the superfluous, this trend emphasizes the functional essence and material quality, promoting spaces that invite reflection on the essentials and strengthen the relationship between the user and their built environment. Thus, minimalism is a relevant architectural response to contemporary challenges to achieve balance, harmony, and spatial quality.

The findings of this review have implications for both design praxis and architectural theory. In the professional sphere, it is recommended that architects, designers, and urban planners integrate minimalism as a key strategy for designing living spaces, considering the specific needs of users and the environmental, social, and psychological factors that affect the spatial experience. Adopting these principles can generate functional, coherent, and harmonious environments that optimize the quality of life and foster a meaningful connection with the environment.

From a theoretical perspective, this review enriches understanding the interrelationship between architectural minimalism and human experience, highlighting the need for multidisciplinary approaches that integrate architecture, environmental psychology, and other related disciplines. It also reaffirms that built space is not neutral but an active agent in the perception and well-being of its occupants. Consequently, minimalism offers significant potential for the design of environments that support mental clarity, emotional well-being, and a deep and balanced relationship with space

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

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