

Brief History of Art and design

20th-21st century

04 Minimalism and Brutalism

(1950–1980)

READING

for English lesson



Co-funded by
the European Union

LAMV
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Empower **ED**

Materials created within Erasmus+ Small-scale partnership project "EmpowerED: Fostering Employability, Cultural Understanding, and Digital Resilience in VET Education" No 2023-2-LV01-KA210-VET-000178458 Implemented from 1.04.2024. till 31.03.2026. by coordinator MIKC "Liepājas Mūzikas, mākslas un dizaina vidusskola" (Latvia) and project partner Střední umělecko průmyslová škola Uherské Hradiště (Czech Republic), total project budget is 60 000 euro.

READING

Read the text below. Highlight the key words and information that you consider being important.

MINIMALISM VS BRUTALISM

While brutalist and minimalist design might not look the same, they do have one thing in common. Both design trends revolve around the idea that less is more. And that every element should serve a clear purpose.

Brutalism" comes from the French word for "raw" and makes sure that is translated in code. It tends to take this "rawness" to another level by stripping a website down to its skeletal framework. A website doesn't have to be a horror show of unordered images and clashing font colours; the way the code has been written is also symbolic of the style. At the same time, brutalism is known not only for the fascination it inspires but the controversy: critics have called it everything from "cold" to "monstrous." It is a style that has never failed to elicit a reaction, for better or worse. That's why if you want to adopt it for your own design purposes, it is important to do so with a full awareness of what you're getting yourself into.

Minimalism, however, aims to balance simplicity with beauty, so the details still matter. Instead, web designers carefully plot out every detail related to spacing, hierarchy, symmetry, and more. In some ways, brutalism is related to minimalism in general philosophy, but there are key differences. Minimalism also takes a less-is-more approach, reducing design to its essential elements. At the same time, it usually doesn't go as far as stripping a design down to bareness.

Brutalist designers tend not to care too much about taste. The goal is to take the resources they have and implement them in a way that effectively gets the point across. Brutalism is truly a content-first approach to designing websites.

Minimalist designers, on the other hand, are more intentional. While the content is the most important component on the site, designers use more UI components and don't shy away from styling or animation in order to draw attention to key areas of the page.

Another big way in which these design trends differ is in how practical they are to use. Minimalism has been a long-standing trend in web design. That's because it is an evergreen approach to design — simple, attractive, and usable interfaces will always be embraced by consumers. For example, a minimalist website will still pay attention to considerations like colour scheme and typography choice whereas a brutalist website can appear to throw out front-end styling altogether, using plain white backgrounds and default computer fonts like Times New Roman.

Brutalism tends to have a much shorter lifespan when it doesn't emerge among the year's design trends. It also doesn't have that many relevant use cases. It's usually a trend adopted by creatives whose works are equally brutalist or avant-garde. Brutalism is a utilitarian aesthetic movement that shuns decoration in favour of exposing and celebrating the raw materials used to construct the design. It largely had its heyday in the architecture of the 1950s to 1970s, but it has recently seen a resurgence in modern digital design.

The reason why brutalism has been able to jump between such wildly different design disciplines is that it tends to describe more of a mindset than visual characteristics. By exposing materials of construction, brutalism has nothing to hide. It trades lofty ideals of beauty for the cold, hard truth. The brutalist approach has less to do with austerity and more to do with celebrating the few design elements that are present. For example, many brutalist buildings use raw concrete in over-

the-top arrangements that would make a minimalist shudder. In this way, a brutalist design can be contradictorily more extravagant and more extremely minimalist than an actual minimalist design.

The visual characteristics of brutalism can be hard to pin down, as they not only vary from designer to designer but from medium to medium. With that said, let's go over some of the common features of brutalism:

- Exposure of materials—concrete for architecture, the default, unstyled HTML for websites
- Monochromatic colour schemes, often black and white or grey
- An emphasis on bare functionality, devoid of decoration
- Modular, repeated design elements
- Layered, articulated or extruded pieces
- Rectilinear edges
- Unedited or as-is design elements

Aesthetically, minimalist art offers a highly purified form of beauty. It can also be seen as representing such qualities as truth (because it does not pretend to be anything other than what it is), order, simplicity and harmony.

The main characteristics of minimalist art include:

- **Geometric Forms:** Minimalist art often employs simple, geometric shapes like squares, rectangles, and circles, arranged in ways that emphasize symmetry, repetition, and precision.
- **Limited Colour Palette:** Minimalist artworks frequently use a restricted range of colours—often monochromatic or neutral tones such as black, white, grey, and earth tones. The goal is to draw attention to form, texture, and space rather than vivid or expressive use of colour.
- **Emphasis on Material:** The material itself becomes a focal point in minimalist art. Artists use materials like metal, glass, concrete, and natural wood, often leaving surfaces unadorned to highlight the inherent qualities of the medium.
- **Absence of Narrative or Symbolism:** Minimalist art aims to present objects as they are, without embedded stories or metaphors. This "objecthood" shifts the focus to the physical experience of the artwork, allowing viewers to interpret it in their own way.

Minimalism and Brutalism celebrate simplicity, honesty, and functionalism in art, design, and architecture, continuing to influence disciplines from graphic design to urban planning. By focusing on essential forms and materials, they create an aesthetic of clarity and resilience that resonates with contemporary values.

TASK 1:

Answer the questions based on the information in the text above.

1. What common philosophy does both minimalism and brutalism share according to the text?

2. How does the term "brutalism" relate to its French origin, and what does it imply about the design style?

3. What are some key characteristics of brutalist design as mentioned in the text? List at least three.

4. In what ways does minimalist design differ from brutalist design, particularly in its approach to aesthetics and functionality?

5. According to the text, how do minimalist designers use UI components differently than brutalist designers?



6. What reasons does the text provide for the enduring popularity of minimalism in web design?

7. How does the text describe the typical lifespan of brutalism in design, and what factors contribute to this?

8. What are some common visual characteristics of minimalist art as outlined in the text?

9. How does the text describe the relationship between brutalism and the materials used in its designs?

What impact do minimalism and brutalism have on contemporary design values, according to the text?

TASK 2:

Answer the questions based on the information in the text above.

Exploring Brutalism and Minimalism in Design

Brutalism and Minimalism are two distinct design trends that share a common philosophy: the idea that less is more. Both styles emphasize functionality and purpose. Brutalism, derived from the French word for "raw," strips a website down to its skeletal framework, often using plain and unstyled elements. It celebrates the raw materials of design, provoking strong reactions due to its stark appearance. In contrast, Minimalism balances simplicity with beauty, carefully considering elements like spacing and colour to create an attractive and usable interface. While both styles prioritize content, Minimalism tends to use more UI components and subtle styling to enhance user experience.

A. Fill in the Blank: Fill in the blank with the correct words.

1. Brutalism originates from the French word for "_____."
2. Minimalism uses a _____ approach, reducing design to its essential elements.
3. Brutalist designers focus on a _____ -first approach to design.
4. Minimalist art often employs simple, geometric shapes like _____ and rectangles.
5. Brutalism is known for its _____ colour schemes, often black and white.

Word bank: raw, monochromatic, content, squares, less-is-more

B. Multiple Choice Questions: Choose the correct answer from the choices for each question.

1. What is a common feature of Brutalist design?
 - A) Decorative elements
 - B) Bright, vivid colours
 - C) Bare functionality devoid of decoration
 - D) Complex UI components
2. Minimalist art often emphasizes:
 - A) Narrative and symbolism
 - B) Complex colour palettes
 - C) Geometric forms and symmetry
 - D) Extravagant materials

3. Which of the following best describes Minimalism?
 - A) An approach that prioritizes decoration
 - B) A philosophy of using only essential elements
 - C) A style that emerged in the 1950s architecture
 - D) A focus on raw, unstyled materials

4. How does Brutalism differ from Minimalism in web design?
 - A) Brutalism uses more styling and animation
 - B) Minimalism often appears chaotic and unordered
 - C) Brutalism exposes the raw code and materials
 - D) Minimalism ignores the use of colour schemes

5. What material is often highlighted in minimalist art?
 - A) Plastic
 - B) Metal
 - C) Fabric
 - D) Paper

C. Open Ended Questions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. Describe how Brutalism and Minimalism each approach the use of colour in design.
2. Explain why some designers might choose a Brutalist approach over a Minimalist one.
3. Discuss the significance of material emphasis in Minimalist art and design.