

BAUHAUS

in modern design

By Alex Salvador

Design movements of the past are still prevalent today. One of the most influential design movements was the Bauhaus. This movement began as a school, the teachers and students of this school created a legacy that changed the world of design. Even though the Bauhaus closed down almost 90 years ago the design principles of that movement can still be seen in everyday life, from buildings to graphic design, to even tiny birdhouses. At your left, you'll be able to see one of those birdhouses. This tiny structure follows many of the rules of the Bauhaus, geometric shapes, minimalism, and functionality. By using principles from the Bauhaus movement I will show the influence that the movement has had on this modern design object.



The Wildlife Garden Birdhouse and Feeder was designed by the MoMa Design store, with the help of ornithological experts. This piece is entirely handmade with wood. It features a minimal asymmetrical design, with strong lines, and the use of primary colors. Most structures that are made for wild birds are either homes for birds or feeders. This particular object is designed to do both, which is an unusual feature. All of these features are influences from the Bauhaus, minimalism, asymmetry, geometric shapes, and functionality are all prominent in the designs of the movement.



MoMa Wildlife Garden
Birdhouse and Feeder

Three of the main philosophies of Bauhaus design are "form follows function," "less is more," and "truth to materials." Architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, a professor at Bauhaus, believed that designs should be "clean" and "honest"(Smock,9) they should embody their intended purpose, where the function of an object should come before its design. Mies, just like most Bauhaus designs were minimalistic. He wanted his designs to be "Striped off ornament, symbolism, gesture. What's left is the bare bones:

texture and color, weight, proportion, silhouette."(smock,11) he believed that less was more and that in order for modern design to prosper it would have to rid itself from previous ornamental design aesthetics. The Bauhaus also believed that material used in a structure should stay true to themselves "Let each material be itself— no plastic disguised as wood, chrome, fabric or leather. No particleboard masquerading as oak." (Smock, 10) Objects should be as they are in their rawest form. The minimalism and functionality from Mies philosophy as well as the thought that no material should look like another are all seen in the MoMa birdhouse.

MINIMALISM

The Bauhaus was known for its minimalist approach to design. Walter Gropius, the creator of the Bauhaus movement designed the building for the art school. The building features an asymmetrical minimal design with abstract shapes, similar to that of the birdhouse. The design is composed of main rectangles that, that although asymmetrical, are well balanced.

Similarly, Herbert Bayer, a prominent graphic designer at the Bauhaus used minimalism, rectangles, and asymmetry in his designs. Bayer also included the use of primary colors as seen as the birdhouse. Both Gropius's architectural style and Bayer's use were heavy influences in MoMa's design.



Bauhaus Art School
Walter Gropius



American Line
Herbert Bayer

FUNCTION

“We must know vocabulary
and grammar in order to
speak a language”

-Gropius, 312

It is evident that the carpenter for the MoMa birdhouse was either a designer or had knowledge of design history. Their design for the house was clearly influenced by the Bauhaus movement. Gropius's main philosophy for the Bauhaus school was that “The musician who wants to make audible a musical idea needs for its rendering not only of the musical instrument but also a knowledge of theory” (Gropius, 313) If a musician wants to make music he must also know about music theory. Similarly, a carpenter who wants to design a birdhouse must know about design theory.

In this particular instance, the designer did not know enough about birds so they recruited ornithological experts in order to make the birdhouse functional. The school of Bauhaus' aim was to elevate the artist by teaching them multiple art forms, so that, the designer is able to manifest his ideas. The Designer, in this case, was not a scientist but used the help of one to make the design functional, before the creation of the design function was made a priority. Form followed function.

MATERIALS

The materials of the Birdhouse are made of Cunninghamia Wood. In the online description for the house, it states that “Due to the nature of the wood grain and texture, some slight blemishes may be present on the birdhouse's surface” The materials of this piece stay true to themselves they do try to imitate any other material such as metal or plastic. It is so to itself that blemishes are present from the wood that was used.

We still see the influence of the Bauhaus everywhere. In modern architecture, graphic design, interior design. This little birdhouse is no different, every aspect of it screams Bauhaus. Not only do we get to experience the beauty of Bauhaus design. but now so do our little bird friends.