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Macintosh

The first Macintosh computer (seen below), released on January 24, 1984, was the first successfully commercialized personal computer that included a graphical user interface. It was a small, lightweight device for the time's standards. The beige case had a height of 13.6 inches (35 cm), width of 9.6 inches (24 cm), depth of 10.9 inches (28 cm), and weighed 16.5 pounds (7.5 kg). The CRT monitor was only 9 inches wide. It came with a keyboard, a mouse, and a handle



built into the top of the case for easy transportation. Steve Jobs was the man responsible for creating and designing this revolutionary product. The Macintosh was made at a time when computers were huge, complicated to work with, and most of the time, ugly. It was not commonplace for people to

know how to use them, let alone have one for themselves. Even those who were familiar with the technology relied on a complex language of technical terms and codes to get a simple result. The relationship between man and the machine was a servant to its master, respectfully. Steve Jobs is known to have been influenced by Bauhaus designs and principles when designing the Macintosh. His values in simplicity, affordability, and the everyday culture he sought to

improve, parallel many design theories both from the time before the Macintosh's creation and of the modern design era.

The first direct influence from Bauhaus principles to the Macintosh's design was "simple is best." He didn't know it at the time, but Jobs had been influenced by simple, efficient design even as a young boy. His childhood home in California had been designed by Joseph Eichler, an modernist visionary architect who focused on sleek, simple, clean elegant construction for "the everyday man". Known for its bare-bones simplistic beauty that valued easy usability, this relationship between art and function would eventually become the original foundation for

Apple's products and what would separate it from its competitors. Jobs worked with and around technology for most of his youth before officially embarking on the journey to create what would be the beginning of a new era, but the standard for technology in the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s was very different from what we are used to. Computers before the Macintosh (seen right) were



huge, blocky devices made up of many different parts, sometimes even larger than a person. They were not meant to be personal at all. Jobs had to look past what was commonplace in order to change the relationship people had with computers, just like the designers of the avant-garde who began "...looking beyond successful business and aesthetic practices to the broader effects of the culture they help create." (Armstrong, 2012)

At the International Design Conference in 1981, Jobs was exposed to the clean, functional lines and forms of Bauhaus architecture and design. This architecture focused on

rationality and simplicity, but did not lack the expression that came from its designer, Herbert Bayer. “Among the maxims preached by Mies and Gropius was ‘Less is more.’” (Isaacson, 2012) Jobs’ love for the conventional intimidating, black industrial tech constructions of companies like Sony and Microsoft started to fade. Instead, he had a vision for simple, sleek design with artistic sensibility; something that could be both efficient and functional, while having artistic sensibility and soul. This perspective of the standard technology verses the technology Jobs wanted to bring into the world strongly parallels the perspective of the original Bauhaus thinkers. It was about bringing order and unity to complexity. Both decided that the tech being mass produced focused more on manufacturing and completely ignored connection to the world it was meant to function in. This balance between soul and function inspired the design of the Macintosh. Without that balance, the designers of the 70s and 80s found themselves, “...numbered among the social drones, useless, by virtue of their schooling, in the productive life of the nation.” (Bayer, 1975) This description of “social drones” would eventually become the imagery used to represent companies like Microsoft in the Macintosh’s Super Bowl ad in 1984. Microsoft was shown to be robotic, lacking the creativity and design ingenuity that connected the computer to everyday life. This was, what Jobs believed, to be the difference between other computers and the Macintosh.

The second direct influence Bauhaus had on Jobs and the Macintosh’s design was the theory of *gesamtkunstwerk*.

“The Bauhouse strives to coordinate all creative effort, to achieve, in a new architecture, the unification of all training in art and design. The ultimate, if distant, goal of the Bauhaus is the collective work of art... in which no barriers exist between the structural and the decorative arts... It is not enough

to school one or another of them separately: they must all be thoroughly trained at the same time.” (Bayer, 1975)

One of the foundational beliefs of the Bauhaus was that all schools of art and design could and *should* be studied together in a *gesamtkunstwerk*; a total work of art that strives to use all or many art forms. Jobs did not just want another machine. He pulled from his knowledge of technology, industrial design, architecture, art, even his knowledge of calligraphic aesthetic to create a device that both worked well and looked inviting enough to be anyone’s personal object. Neither he nor the Bauhaus thinkers considered there to be a separation between the structural and decorative arts in terms of design. Jobs believed that even the interior set up of the computer, the part that no one would ever see, had to be just as aesthetically pleasing and artistically sound as the exterior. By integrating hardware and software of the Macintosh, which other computers failed to do, Jobs allowed himself to think about more than just the product alone. He thought about how that product would be used by people on their desks. He thought about how to change the dynamic between man and machine so that man could feel like the one in control. “It’s about the packaging and it’s about the counter on which that packaging sits, and it’s about the environment that houses those shelves and the location of that store.” (Cain, 2017) Just like the Bauhaus team, the Macintosh team was a collection of genius minds from different fields who came together to create something that took life into account. The Macintosh did not exist in isolation. It was meant to connect with the world around it, and so it needed to draw inspiration from that world as well.

“Theory is not the achievement of individuals but of generations.” (Bayer, 1975) Steve Jobs was able to successfully break through the conventions of and the dynamic with technology because he was able to build upon the theories of Bauhaus creatives and modernist thinkers. Just

like the founders of the Bauhaus, Jobs aimed to have an impact on the culture of his world by contradicting the established knowledge of his reality. "This new object," he said, "it's going to be in everyone's working environment and it's going to be in everyone's educational environment." (Cain, 2017) He consciously made the first Macintosh with enough simplicity to make it usable for anyone; universally understandable and approachable. "One of Steve Jobs's roles was to keep drumming into us how important what we were doing was going to be to everyone." (Johnson, 2009) Much in line with the principles of "The Designer's Code of Ethics", Steve Jobs valued the impact of his work and made it the purpose of the Macintosh. He took on the full responsibility of his creation, knowing that the work he brought into the world would be his legacy. It would outlive him. And it would speak for him. (Monteiro, 2017)

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