

Original scientific paper
UDC: 747"20"

TRENDS IN MODERN HOME INTERIOR AND FURNITURE

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ABSTRACT

The unique identity of a home is determined by its interior structure and furniture. Changes in social and cultural life have a direct impact on people's needs and ever-changing fashion trends inevitably reflect their tastes and requirements. The drive to simplified living space and forms and the minimalist design that appeared at the beginning of the 21st century are combined with the desire for individuality, the search for new solutions, unusual colors and textures.

Technological progress characterizing our modern times, can be largely observed in the furniture industry as well. The new technologies and materials allow for greater flexibility in terms of shape formation and function, and hence - for unconventional design solutions.

The main objective of the present paper is to track down the trends in home furnishing during the last years and to identify the characteristics of contemporary interior and furniture design.

Keywords: interior, furniture, design, trends

The interior and furniture design is closely related to the art and architecture trends and follows their guidelines and visual identity. They reflect in the mass residential interior as well, although in a lesser extent. It should be noted that this is due to the existing financial or technological constraints, imposed by the specificity of the user group inhabiting mass housings.

During the last 30 years there can be distinguished several trends that can be combined into three larger periods.

The first one continues to the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. It is characterised by a tendency towards over saturation and filling in the space in vertical direction. Storage furniture was designed as a system of cabinets units reaching the ceiling, each shelf being deeper than the one below. The main material used is veneered chipboard, sometimes in harmonious combinations of different front surface textures. Glass showcases and open volumes are combined in one common functional structure.

The end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century is characterised by the drive to simplified living space and forms. The influence of the minimalism can be felt a little bit later in the interior design. It appeared in art at the end of the 1960s, especially in the paintings, as opposed to the abstract expressionism. The pictures of Frank Stella (Figure 1 and 2) can be used as an example.



Figure 1

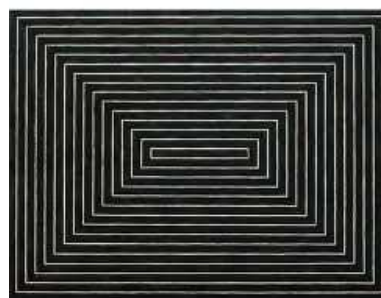


Figure 2

In architecture these ideas were developed during the 1980ies, when the search was to minimize ornamental and aesthetic elements (Figure 3, 4 and 5). The idea is not to totally remove the decoration, but each part, element or joint to be brought to such a point that nothing more could be removed to improve the design.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Light, form and material expressiveness are used as major compositional components in organizing the architectural space in order to achieve an aesthetic impact on people. Minimalism follows the famous motto of architect Mies van der Rohe "Less is more", describing his aesthetic tactic of arranging numerous necessary components to create an impression of extreme simplicity, by enlisting every element and detail to serve multiple visual and functional purposes.

Other principles supporting the same idea are designer Buckminster Fuller's one "Doing more with less," and designer Dieter Rams' motto "Less, but better".

Minimalism was inspired mostly by Japanese culture and lifestyle ("Zen" culture) (Figure 10). An example of that were the principles of "wabi-sabi", that values the quality of conventional and flat objects. Another aesthetic principle is "Ma", which affects the empty and open spaces. According to it, all non-bearing interior walls are removed, thus opening the space between interior and exterior (Fig. 6). An example of this is the Japanese sliding door, allowing bringing the exterior into the interior, which influenced Frank Lloyd Wright.



Figure 6

The following examples illustrate the influence of minimalism on interior design. Typical approaches are the use of basic geometric shapes, lack of detail, large spaces, achromatic colours and mostly wood and natural textures. Glossy surfaces, mostly white, reinforce the minimalist line and give a feeling of cleanliness, spaciousness and freedom. Light, as well as its interrelation with the elements of the interior, is quite important (Figure 7). Together with opposing dark to light colours, it underlines the straight lines and forms and thus strengthens the minimalist vision of the interior as a whole (Figure 8 and 9).

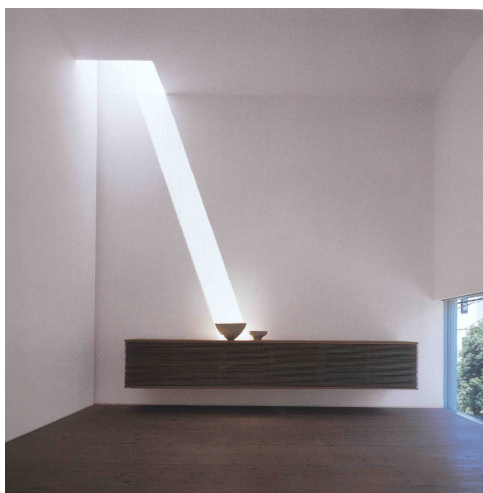


Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

Minimalism influences other arts as well, for example music ("techno" style), photography, poetry (using less words and focusing on the surface description) etc.

During the last 4 - 5 years there can be observed a certain change in the so far stable tendency, influenced by minimalism. There is, however, no abrupt change in the interior design of mass housing; its development could rather be said to be an upgrade, a complementing and individualising the vision. The saturation of the market with various goods allows the user to choose and compose by himself the individuality of his home, while the new technologies and materials allow for non-standard design solutions.

A characteristic feature of the new trends is adding a bright, vivid colour for emphasis, while keeping the basic achromatic ones. The minimalist vision remains, but there is a certain break of the straight lines and search for new forms aiming at a non-standard and original vision (Figure 11 and 12). The glossy finish is still preferred by the majority of users, but the matte effect is also sought for its different aesthetic effect and lower cost. Visible fittings are almost missing, replaced by "push" opening system, discreet grip door handles hidden in the edge or embedded in the door. There is a certain tendency towards usage of natural materials, natural wood, veneer (Figure 13), but still the most widely used material for front surfaces are the medium density fibreboards (MDF), allowing for more options both in financial and in aesthetic terms. Engineers in the field of furniture design tend to use lightweight boards with paper or other filling, and coatings with different visual effects.

Another tendency, which can be observed in the latest trends in mass dwellings furnishing, is connected with the desire to return to the past, presence of authentic elements or entire furniture, and it is defined by the term "vintage". In fact the term is applicable to ancient furniture from 30 to 100 years old. The older ones are classified as antique furniture and those from less than 30 years - as used ones. But technically the term is used to group together old or aged furniture, best representing a given style period or reminding of it. They are characterised by the natural look of the materials (mostly natural), which has been preserved with time, or which is imitated by variety of finishing methods contributing to the aging effect (Figure 14).



Figure 11



Figure 12

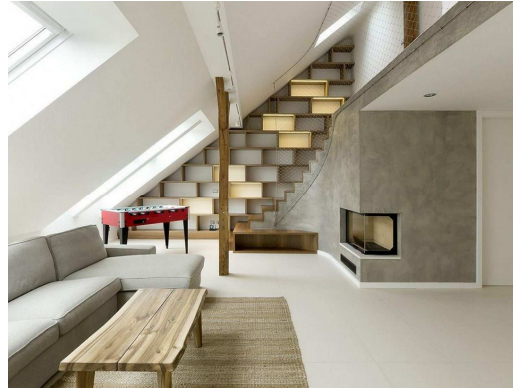


Figure 13



Figure 14

A similar contemporary style in the furniture design is the so-called "rustic" style, which aims at imitating village interior. In Bulgaria the rustic style finds its application in kitchens, bedrooms and living rooms. They are characterised by the use of coniferous solid wood with specific forming of the details in the structural elements with frame construction and panels. Another distinctive feature is the decorative elements - bars, boards, friezes. The fittings are also ornamental and unique; the materials are most often brass or other metal with patina, ceramics, textile etc.

Finally, the following conclusions can be synthesized:

- Based on our review of the last 30 years, the trends in the interior design can be grouped in three periods - transitional, minimalist and individualistic.
- The minimalist trend in art and architecture has its influence on furniture and interior and has imposed itself as a leading factor in the design solutions.
- As opposed to the uniform standard furnishing during the 80s and 90s, the modern mass housing interior begins to feature a desire for individuality and irregularity. Residents wish to achieve a stylish and modern aesthetic appearance of the home in which to present their personal vision and taste.
- There is also another trend in mass residential interiors, characterized by a return to the past, introduction of details, components, accessories or entire furniture in styles from the near or more distant past with their specific aesthetic effect.

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