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Summary Article: **minimalism**

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Movement in abstract art and music towards extremely simplified composition. Minimal art developed in the USA in the 1950s in reaction to abstract expressionism, rejecting its emotive approach in favour of impersonality and elemental, usually geometric, shapes. It has found its fullest expression in sculpture, notably in the work of Carl Andre, who employs industrial materials in modular compositions. In music, from the 1960s and 1970s, it manifested itself in large-scale statements, usually tonal or even diatonic, and highly repetitive, based on a few 'minimal' musical ideas. Major minimalist composers are Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

Minimalism inspired a wealth of writing on art theory, in particular popular aesthetics, and extended its influence into poetry and dance.

Minimalism was the first significant art movement to have been established entirely by US-born artists. The term developed from a comment by US art critic Barbara Rose, who described the artworks as being pared down to the 'minimum'.

Minimalist art removes all representational imagery or similarity to the subject, and works on the belief that art should be like mathematics – rational, simple, and clear – not complicated by personal, social, moral, and philosophical values. Artworks are, therefore, without metaphor, imagery, or meaning. Paintings are often geometric in style, featuring grid systems and single, unified images. Evidence of an artist's personal touch, such as brushstrokes, is also removed in an attempt to make art that bridges the gap between a work of inspiration and an everyday object.

Despite its apparent restrictions, minimal art varies greatly in style from the monochrome (one-colour) paintings of Agnes Martin, to Carl Andre's horizontal structures of stacked beams. Minimalism has also set new goals in art, particularly in sculpture, by attempting to remove the spatial illusions that give artworks space, depth, or perspective.

Leading minimalist artists include Carl Andre, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Richard Serra, and Frank Stella.

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