

## **The effect of Bauhaus School on furniture and architecture in Egyptian Films during the 50s and till the 70s**

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### **Abstract:**

Throughout the course of history there has been a number of art movements and schools that helped shape the modern and contemporary taste in décor and furniture. One of the most important of which is the Bauhaus school that appeared in Germany in the early twentieth century. The pioneers of the school has left to other countries worldwide after its closure in the 1930s in Berlin (its final destination in Germany) sharing the school ideas.

Egypt hasn't been isolated from what was happening in the contemporary art world concerning modern schools and movements, as this research uncovers the impact of the Bauhaus school on the work of the interior designers and directors of Egyptian films. As per observing Egyptian films that are dated back to the 50s, 60s, and 70s, this research was able to prove how and to what extent did the Bauhaus school influence Egyptian film furniture and décor at the time.

This research attempted to explore the nature of the Bauhaus school influence, as it was influenced by the ideas and characteristics of the school, or a resemblance that can be spotted by comparing the furniture used in the Egyptian films during that period to specific Bauhaus school products.

To achieve that purpose, this research paper analyzed some of the furniture and decor used in Egyptian films produced during the 50s and till the 70s, to be able to spot the similarities between the Bauhaus school designs and the Egyptian film furniture and décor design, as it is a direct resemblance to a specific Bauhaus product or affiliations to the characteristics and modern approaches of the school.

The research concludes that, although some of the decor and pieces of furniture used in the films are subjected to study their resemblance with certain Bauhaus school products, some other items were mere creations, which are creations affiliated to the characteristics, main style, abstract ideas and philosophy of the school.

### **Research Problem:**

The research problem is based on the lack of attention given to what the Egyptian cinema has featured as contemporary décor and furniture in its films, particularly the ones inspired by the philosophy of modern schools of art as the Bauhaus. It can be said that there is little research covering this area and as a result this research was set to cover it.

### **Research Hypothesis:**

The research is based on one main assumption which is the existence of a Bauhaus influence in the way Egyptian furniture and décor used in films of the 50s, 60s and 70s had looked.

**Research Objectives:**

- To identify the influence of the Bauhaus school on furniture and décor used in Egyptian films during the 50s, 60s, and 70s.
- To explore the nature of influence, it was an influence by the ideas and characteristics of the school, or a resemblance that can be spotted by comparing the furniture used in the Egyptian films during that period to specific Bauhaus school products.

**Research limitations:**

The research is limited to the 50s, 60s, and 70s in Egyptian cinema, it doesn't tackle wider range of years or adopt comparisons between two different eras.

**Research significance:**

The research contributes to shedding light on the openness of the Egyptian cinema and its producers to international schools of art, and their contributed effort in coming up with new creations influenced by these schools.

It presents an example of the influence of the German Bauhaus school on Egyptian film interior directors and designers, investigating the extension of the school to outside Europe. Reaching Egypt, the Egyptian artists interacted with the school's ideas and philosophy.

Keywords: Bauhaus- Egyptian film furniture-Egyptian film décor

**Background on the Bauhaus School and Its characteristics:**

There has always been a separation between what was considered "fine art" and what was considered "applied art". But the Bauhaus school, which was founded in 1919 by Walter Gropius, sought to merge between them through teaching its students both arts and crafts.

The school had passed through several phases as its directors were altered and its location in Germany had changed. It was moved from Weimar its original city to Dessau in 1925. Then it was transferred to Berlin (its final destination) under the leadership of Mies van der Rohe. The school was finally closed in 1933 after only seven semesters in Berlin as a result of the Nazi strict rule.

Despite the several phases the school had gone through, it kept some basic characteristics that distinguished it from other modern schools of art.

The first characteristic is the unity between art and technology. This unity has enabled the school students to invent new ways of light fixture, electric equipment and tubular furniture.

It went as far as Moholy-Nagy (one of the professors of the Bauhaus school) saying that in the future chairs will stand on compressed air rather than on four, three or two legs.

The second major characteristic is the unity between art and functionality. The main idea of that unity is that it is not only important to produce something that looks good but that performs its function as well.

The third characteristic is simplicity and abstraction, as the school believed that abstract colors and shapes have some kind of independent power. That's why the triangle, circle and square with the yellow, blue and red comprised the symbol of the school. It is also the reason why the use of ornaments was opted out from the school manifesto.

All other characteristics were derived from those three characteristics which served as the ethos of the Bauhaus style.

## Egyptian movies which are the Subjected to be studied and their Bauhaus style furniture:

### 1-“Saghira ala al hob” (1966) “too young for love”:

Analyzing the style of the furniture and décor used in this movie, it was found that Maher Abdel Nour the décor and interior design director of the movie used several pieces that can be labelled “Bauhaus”.

The Bauhaus school was represented in the designs, colors and concepts of the pieces of furniture used in the film, as well as the abstraction, technology, movement and art.

One example of the furniture used in the movie is the couch. The couch came out by pushing the wall inwards then drawing the seat from the wall. It combined the use of abstraction (as the couch is simple and single colored) and the use of movement.

Another example is the bed used in the same movie in Roshdy Abaza’s house. The bed works using electric energy by pushing an electric button fixed to the wall, unfolding a basic non-ornamented bed from the wall. The design of the bed combined the use of technology, art and abstraction.



FIGURE 1. FROM SAGHIRA ALA AL HOB MOVIE SHOWING HOW THE COUCH AND BED UNFOLDED

### 2- “Alemony el Hob” “they taught me love” (1957):

Alemony el hob is a movie that can be dealt with as a reference for the way Egyptian film interior designer imagined modern houses.

The bachelor’s house in specific in that movie represented a modern Bauhaus influenced house. The tables in the house took free forms, chairs stood on three not on four as they would usually, they took unusual shapes and arches, beside the legs of the bar that were influenced by a theatrical Bauhaus work called “triadisches ballet” by Oskar Schlemmer.

Alemony el Hob represented an affiliation to a Bauhaus style that united free form, art and functionality.

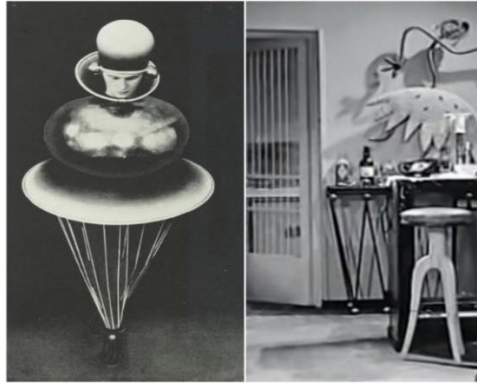


FIGURE 2 SHOWS THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE BAR LEGS AND THE TRIADISCHES BALLET

3- “Ard al Nifaq” and “Mawied Gharam” “land of hypocrisy” “a romantic date” movies: One was released in 1968 and the other in 1956, both movies featured lighting units that could be related to specific Bauhuas Products. The lamp in “Ard Al Nifaq” movie, which appeared in one of the scenes on Foad el Mohndes desk, resembles Wilhelm Wagenfeld with some slight changes.



FIGURE 3 SHOWS THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THE LAMP USED IN THE MOVIE AND THE WG24 LAMP

Also in “Mawied Gharam” the lamp on Faten Hamama’s desk resembled that of Christine Dell.



FIGURE 4 SHOWS THE RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN A BAUHAUS SCHOOL LAMP AND FATEN’S DESK LAMP

4- “Al Tha’alab w al Herbaa” “the fox and the chameleon” (1970):

The décor of this movie resembled Piet Mondrian’s works, it included a full wall with squares like that of his paintings, it also resembled J. Albers (who was a Bauhaus professor) stained glass works.



FIGURE 5 A SCENE FROM AL THAALAB W AL HERBAA MOVIE FEATURING THE SQUARES USED

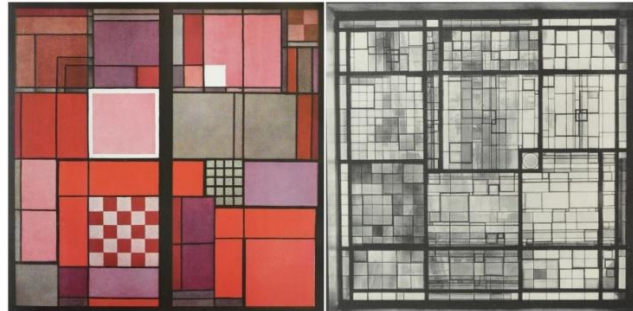


FIGURE 6 SHOWS J. ALBERT STAINED GLASS WORKS

## Conclusion:

The Bauhaus school ideas can certainly be spotted in the films which are subjected to analysis. It is therefore possible to say that some of the Egyptian movies furniture and décor design during the 50s, 60s, and 70s were influenced by the Bauhaus school.

Some of the pieces of furniture can be clearly identified with certain Bauhaus products, like what was shown during the study, and others are believed to be mere creations of the Egyptian film interior design directors and executives, who through their openness to modern western styles were able to build settings with a Bauhaus spirit of their own.

It can be said that the furniture in “Saghira ala el Hob” and “Alemony el Hob” served as major representations for the school’s concepts, characteristics, and philosophy.

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