

SCENOGRAPHIC IDEAS OF FREDERICK KIESLER IN THE PROJECTS OF LVIV ARCHITECTURE SCHOOL

*Lviv Polytechnic National University, 12, S. Bandera Str., Lviv, 79013, Ukraine,
yanchukkatya1708@gmail.com*

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Abstract. The article presents search projects of the department of architectural environment design in Lviv Polytechnic National University where Frederick Kiesler's ideas on scenography and architecture of "landscape" theatre buildings of futuristic directions are used and developed.

Key words: search projects, scenographic solution, architecture of theatrical buildings, "landscape" theatre.

1. Introduction

Creative work of Frederick Kiesler influenced generating of innovative ideas, creating futuristic shapes, whole architecture of the 20th–21st centuries and landscape architecture in particular. The ideas of Kiesler's scenographic solutions created the preconditions for organizing scenic space for the audience in natural environment that is extremely important component in the process of designing "landscape" theatres.

The following architects, artists, researchers belong to those who dedicated their scientific activity to studying scenography of theatre buildings – O. Antonova, V. Bazanov, P. Bosyi, F. Kiesler, Ye. Lysyk, G. Lytvynov, V. Proskuriakov, A. Shvetsov, B. Blessner, R. Brett, J. M. Gillette, R. Kogler Carver, R. Larman, R. Napoli. Ideas of organizing the interaction between a spectator and object and architecture environment of the exhibition what has nowadays become the base for theatre art creation in general, occupy significant place in the works of mentioned above artists.

2. Basic Theory Part

The article researches artistic work of F. Kiesler in theatrically-scenographic design of futuristic buildings in the open space, it shows the influence of the ideas of his co-realism theory for project decisions of landscape theatres scenographic spaces, implemented in the works of students of the department of architectural environment design of Lviv Polytechnic National University in 2015–2017.

3. Result and Discussion

During his lifetime Frederick Kiesler worked in different countries: Austria, Germany, France, The USA and Israel. Nowadays only a few people know his real birthplace. Having revised numerous foreign sources we can read that Frederick Kiesler is Austrian, American, Romanian, and is, practically, no mentioning of him being born in the Ukrainian city Chernivtsi which at that time was a city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Just there he got his primary education. Various archival sources state this fact, in particular, it is journal of the class where Frederick Kiesler studied.

Ukrainian roots influenced cut off reality imagination of a young Frederick Kiesler who after a few years of studying in Vienna and not having a degree yet started his creative work, as an artist-portraitist at first and it was in 1924 when a young artist presented himself as an architect-scenographer: F. Kiesler participated actively

in preparing and holding an international exhibition of a new theatre scenography equipment in Vienna. It was his first experience where he himself had designed original spatial scene where the performance of hundreds of avant-gardism solutions in theatre concepts, costume sketches and other artistic projects took place.

It was exactly after mentioned above pilot artistic project when F. Kiesler started popularizing his radical system of conceptual cosmic scene-transformer L+T which was artistically comprehended and developed by him in the project in 1925, which he organized at the invitation of Josef Hoffmann in Paris in the scope of theatrical exhibition "Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes". In the design F. Kiesler stunned the world with the project "cities in space" where he implemented space structure with integration of scene-transformers models and declared the idea of horizontal skyscraper and futuristic spiral building. For the first time, in Paris, real Ukrainian pysanka (painted Easter egg) appeared on stage: in a way universal building of endless egg-shaped theatre, which would later go through all his creative life [1].

Plans of creating Raumtheater (dimensional, "cosmic" theatre) with F. Kiesler's authorship became unique example of Wagnerian "Kunstwerk der Zukunft" in the conditions of new theatre aesthetics. Innovative perception of reality as a process of reflecting spatially-communicative phenomenon of human existence got implemented into scenic decoration of theatre performances. Samples of a theatre of the future (Raumtheater, Universal Theatre) seemed at the first sight similar, and not only externally to fantastic cosmic objects (Raumtheater quasi Raumschiff). It is not accidentally that F. Kiesler named the project of Festspielhaus for Woodstock "space theatre". Another model of "theatre of the future" in the shape of an egg, which was connected with biotechnical boom of the 20s, manifested ecological enthusiasm of the idea of endless natural self-generation of theatrical correality. Idea of "dimensional theatre" opened new architectural and scenographic perspectives to F. Kiesler. During all his life the artist was searching the shapes of "a perfect theatre of the future". One of them was implemented in a new architecture complex Endless (Universal Theatre). This new type of correlation between visual and acoustic beginning was supposed to occur as a process of artistic communication between actors and spectators [2].

Terminological dilemma of "universal and endless" theatre reflected adequate perception of theatrical space by F. Kiesler, prepared by the previous theatre projects with emphasis on multi-functionality of their scenic realization. In the project Ellipsoid F. Kiesler absolutized dynamics as a constructive principle and implemented it in both ways – generally and in separate architectural details. For instance, ergonomic sketches of the Endless Theatre stipulated not only the flexibility of correlation between stage and audience but the adaptation of spectators' seat in accordance with human anatomy as well. The artist spoke metaphorically about the importance of space around the object and in his opinion "the object breathes out and again breathes in the reality, whatever space it is located, whether it is closed or open, under the open sky or inside". Connected to this F. Kiesler emphasized that "nothing external exists at all, everything around is a substantial component of composition". For optimal presentation of his ideas F. Kiesler prepared an aluminium model of Endless Theatre building, where he synthesized the previous theatrical projections of ellipsoid shape. Endless (Universal) Theatre had recorded in the artist's imagination into the perfect theatre of the future as a corresponding part of organic nature wo Frederick Kiesler considered the shapes in architecture of the 20th century to be a trifle static, thus he dedicated his life to search and implementation of the idea of completely new space into architecture with dynamic, round and spiral shapes. He considered that rectangular lodgings are not natural for a person. However, he was definitely not satisfied with the fact that it is simply easier to build like that. Therefore, sphere became the main element of Frederick Kiesler's ideas. He thought that practically static nature of "a box" and machine controlled ideal of that time modern tendency of modern architecture were not desired by him environment. Frederick Kiesler stated "Functionalism is a term which is dead born [5]. Functionalism is a standardization of stereotype activity. Functionalism releases an architect from responsibility for his conception". Through art, sculpture, poetry and architecture a person can create environment which would be more suitable to their everyday life, nature and not adjusted to the shape of a box which performs functions implanted by the others. Frederick Kiesler considered that it was necessary to destroy the boundaries which separate various types of art and declares that only after this "artists, sculptors and designers, exiled by functionalism will return from exile to be welcomed by architecture". Frederick Kiesler imagined the concept which "embraces a person and their environment as a globalizing system which consists of complex interconnections" and does not divide artistic genres.

Department of architectural environment design of Lviv Polytechnic National University made an attempt to implement the ideas of Frederick Kiesler in projects which follow his futuristic theatric ideas and his conceptual approach to organizing stage space.

Creative group of Lviv architects under the supervision of a Doctor of Architecture, a professor V. I. Proskuriakov, assist. Yanchuk K. V., assist. I. V. Gumennyk together with the students of the department of architectural environment design R. Kisko, O. Svyszcz, O. Rudka, A. Obrubanska, O. Klymiv and L. Kostyk suggested a number of interesting theatre buildings and culturally-performing objects*.

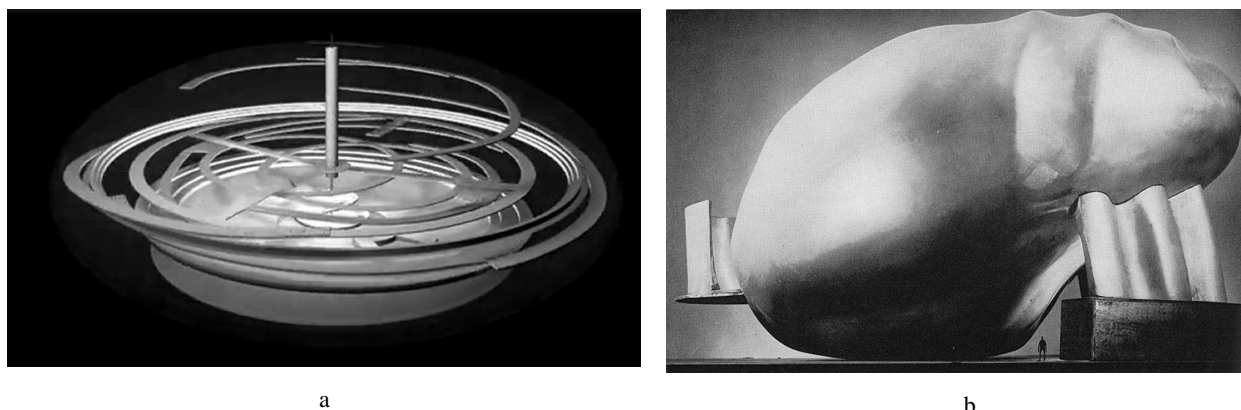


Fig. 1. a) Project Ellipsoid author F. Kiesler [3];
b) Project Universal Theatre author F. Kiesler [4]

The ideas of a “Universal theatre” on which F. Kiesler was working during his lifetime have been interpreted by a student Roman Kisko. The project of a center of intercultural dialogue at Soborna square in Chernivtsi (Fig. 2). The interpretation of “Universal theatre” was taken as the main idea. By its shape the building reminds of a sphere, flattened from different sides. The surface of the capsule of the building is absolutely even, what distinguishes it from Kiesler’s project. Planning interior space is also different from Frederick Kiesler’s project. Almost all space in “Universal theatre” is used for needs of audience hall. However, in the project by the student R. Kisko there appear quite a lot of additional rooms for satisfying the needs of a modern visitor-spectator.

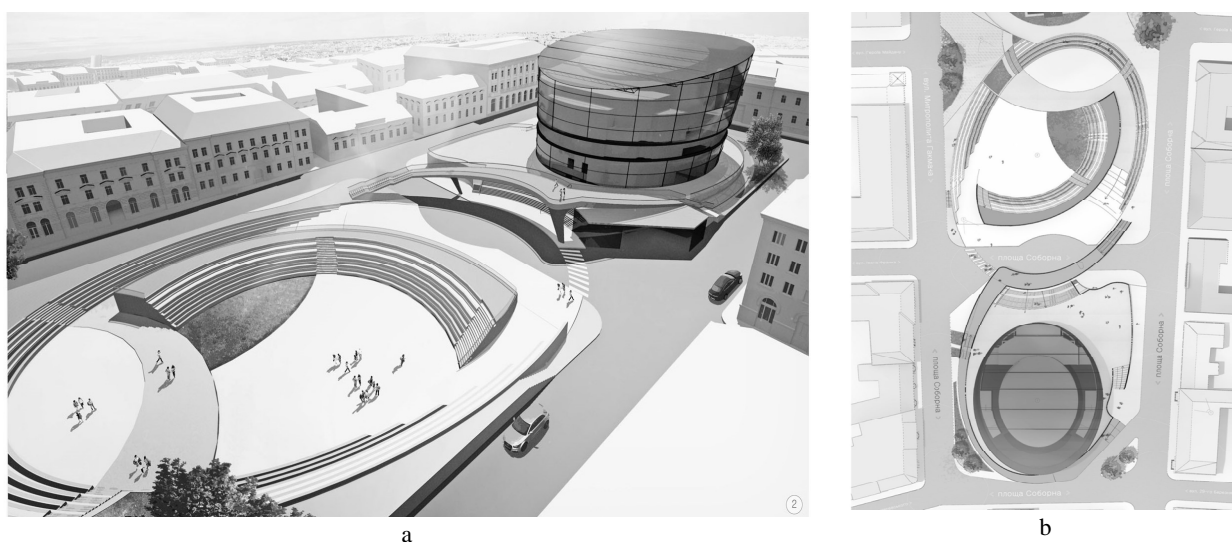


Fig. 2. Diploma project of R. Kisko done in 2016 entitled “Architecture design of theatrically-artistic centre at Soborna square in the city of Chernivtsi” a) overall look of theatrically-artistic centre; b) general plan scheme of Soborna square in Chernivtsi
Source: The V. Proskuriakov and K. Ianchuk archive

* all mentioned in the article educational, search and experimental projects are done under the supervision of a Doctor of Architecture, professor V. I. Proskuriakov and assistants K. V. Yanchuk and I. V. Gumennyk.

The project of a double theatre inspired a student O. Rudka for creating multifunctional complex at Soborna square in Chernivtsi (Pic. 3). Project of a double-theatre was done for Brooklyn, state of New York in 1926–1927. Kiesler’s building was simple from outside and did not have any décor at all, however it was filled with very interesting structure inside: in the theatre there were a big and a small hall for the spectators, stage was situated in the middle between them, diagonal coverings of both halls came together above the stage, thus if necessary both halls could be united into single spatial theatre.

Student O. Rudka used planning structure of “Double theatre” for her building. Along its perimeter Soborna square is built with a glass building with internal space for hall what suggests the idea which exactly Kiesler’s project the student used as an analogue – double-theatre in Brooklyn. A big hall is situated in the center of the building and around it there are additional rooms and exhibition halls.

In her master’s qualification work O. Svyszcz also used and developed the principles of scenographic solutions by F. Kiesler. Apart from that she also tried to insert into existing environment the prototype of scenographic building by F. Kiesler “Stage space” (Fig. 4). This first version of experimental stage building was suggested by F. Kiesler in Berlin for premiere of the play “Emperor Jonts” by an American playwright Eugene O’Neill (1924) [6]. This stage of a new type is considered the beginning of revolution in traditional conception of theatrical space. Stage space became the environment where F. Kiesler for the first time implemented the idea of avant-garde theatre an unlimited space. Play action was taking place on different levels at the same time on open spiral stage. During conducting experiments on theatre spaces F. Kiesler in 1924 formulated his own definition of “a theatre” as “mechanically controlled light and sound, optical and phonetic entirety” [7]. It was shown in graphic designs of geometrical structures of double spiral, in totality of concentric circles of ellipsoid as well as in “Endless theatre” design.



Fig. 3. Diploma project of O. Rudka done in 2016 entitled “Scenographic ideas of F. Kiesler and their influence on world theatre architecture”: a) overall view of culturally-performing complex; b) interior of audience hall in culturally-performing complex.
Source: The V. Proskuriakov and K. Ianchuk archive

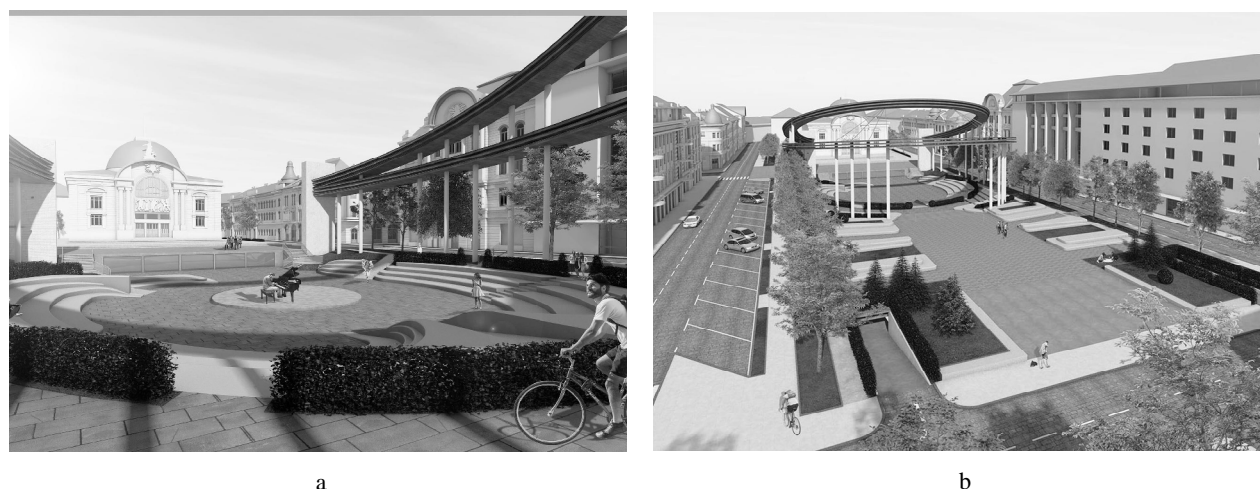


Fig. 4. Diploma project of O. Svyszcz done in 2015 entitled “Architectural ideas of F. Kiesler and their development in modern Ukraine” a) overall view of culturally-performing complex; b) audience hall interior of culturally-performing complex
Source: The V. Proskuriakov and K. Ianchuk archive

The ideas of a scenographer-architect F. Kiesler inspired a student L. Kostyk who in her diploma project designed a landscape park in the suburbs of Lviv, where the whole complex of culturally-performing objects was projected – from places of conducting theatre plays to the entertainment and recreational type of buildings.

Creating a park made it possible to enrich people culturally as environment was created where people could enjoy numerous kinds of stage art, among them theatre play, varieties of concerts and cinematograph shows. Moreover, the concept of landscape allows people to comfortably be directly in the park under open pergolas which grow over and create the atmosphere of coziness (Fig. 5).

In bachelor qualification work student A. Oubrubska designed theatrically-performing building in student's campus of Lviv Polytechnic National University. Suggested architectural decisions make it possible to solve the main goal of the project, that is to provide youth with interesting and quality leisure within campus landscape. Rock-concerts, youth festivals, theatre drama performances, open lectures – all mentioned above mass events may be held in the designed building. Possibility of the stage to be transformed brings it closer to those ideas which correspond to architectural tastes of F. Kiesler (Fig. 6).

Suggested in the project open landscape theatre is made for 4300 constant seats and 600 temporary ones. During evening time rock-concerts would be held in the building, during day-time there would be theatre performances and lectures. Evening rock concerts are planned to be organized with spectacular light and sound effects. For lighting the stage the author suggests using two powerful sight towers as well as a group of spotlights which would be situated on the roof of the building in shape of constructions installed on bearing covering.

In his further work on studying scenography of the 21st century and artistic work of F. Kiesler in particular, in her master's qualification work in 2016 A. Oubrubska developed a search project of an open amphitheatre which could seat 2100 spectators in B. Khmelnytskyi Park of culture and leisure in Lviv (Fig. 7).

Building amphitheater is divided into 3 big zones and 6 smaller sectors. Radial aisles which distinguish the surface of sectors and zones have complex evacuation system. According to this system the movement is organized in both circle and radial aisles what ensures self-control of spectators' flow during evacuation. The project provides using covering with spatial system of bearing carcass. On the lower circle of covering construction spotlights, projecting systems and acoustic plated are projected. During unfavorable weather conditions covering spectators' seats with special awning is presupposed. In designed project of landscape theatre both natural-daylight and artificial light are used simultaneously. Apart from that, the project presupposes the system of additional scenographic light which lets create certain light effects and organize multi-colored lighting and projecting the light on the stage and spectators' amphitheater.

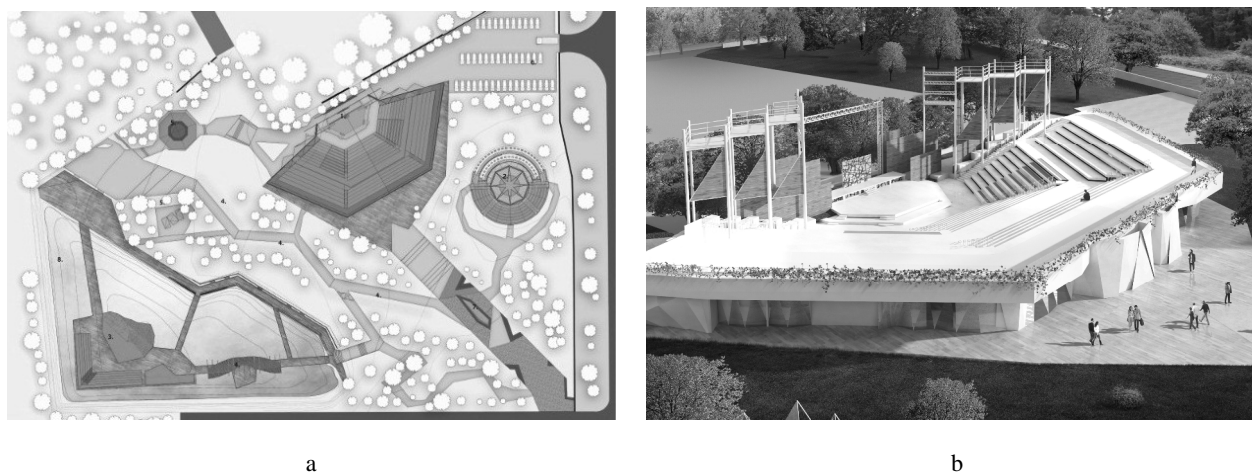


Fig. 5. Diploma project of L. Kostyk done in 2016 entitled “Design of a landscape (theatrical) park with developing culturally-performing objects in the suburbs of Lviv”: a) general plan scheme of theatrical park; b) overall view of culturally-performing object. Source: The V. Proskuriakov and I. Gumennyk archive

Next attempt to implement and develop conceptual ideas of F. Kiesler in theatrical architecture and scenography was made in 2016 by a student O. Klymiv in her bachelor's qualification work.

Designed landscape theatre was aimed for holding mass performing events such as theatre performances, instrumental and variety concerts, cinema shows and folklore festivals. Integrating theatre building into natural environment of the park was one of the main tasks of the project. The author suggested the idea of landscape in shape of snail shell which looks naturally and is usually used in modern bionic architecture. The main ally of the theatre creates the shape of a curl. It starts from the northern side of the area from the central ally of the park and leads to amphitheater and administrative building and after that along the curve it finishes with a round stage. A secondary alley joins it and leads to spectator's amphitheater immediately and then to the central ally of the park (Fig. 8).

Only after F. Kiesler's death the author's grand project of scenography for a vast theatre in the open space which had been created near the town of Woodstock (state New York, the USA) on the territory of "Betel" farm was partially realized. This remarkable event took place in 1969 during rock-festival where on the open stages of Woodstock within 3 days there were 500 thousand admirers of modern music. Gigantic scenographic cross systems were set for this purpose and they made it possible for multiple thousands of people to hear and see legendary bands and artists of modern rock and pop music: Joe Cocker, Janis Joplin, Joan Baez, Jimmy Hendrix, Carlos Santana, such bands as "The Who", "Jefferson Airplane" etc. (Fig. 9).

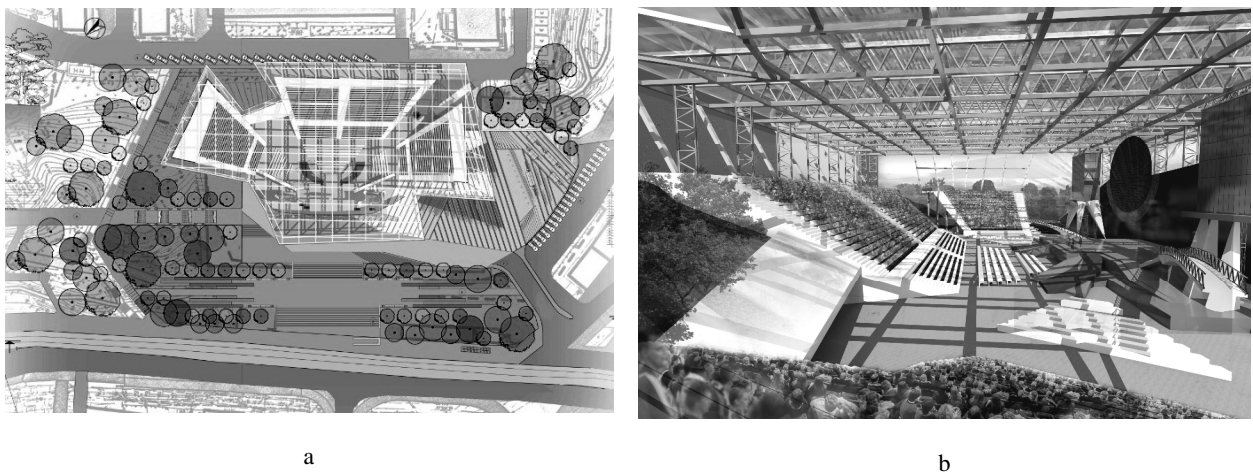


Fig. 6. Bachelor's qualification work of a student A. Obrubanska done in 2015 entitled "Project of architecture of buildings for rock concerts within landscape territory of Lviv Polytechnic National University campus": a) scheme of theatre building plan; b) overall view of theatre building. Source: The V. Proskuriakov and I. Gumennyk archive

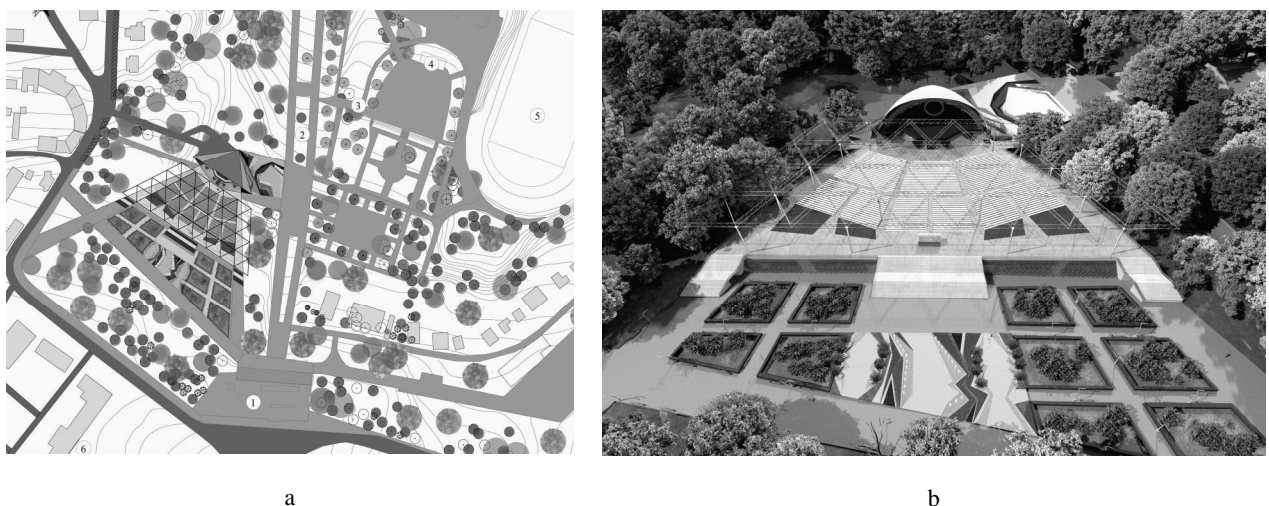


Fig. 7. Master's qualification work of a student A. Obrubanska done in 2016 entitled "Modern tendencies in scenographic organization of performances in landscape theatres with designing the project of a theatre in B. Khmelnytskyi park of culture and leisure": a) scheme of theatre plan; b) panoramic view of the theatre. Source: The V. Proskuriakov and I. Gumennyk archive

For this project Frederick Kiesler back in 1931 for the first time suggested flexible and carefully thought through multifunctional theatre stage. The sketch of his projects shows brightly the mobility of the stage and spectator's hall thanks to using the lift, rails, and mobile panels as well as approved in Europe system Raumbühne. In the composition of the model "The Space Theatre Woodstock" F. Kiesler successfully used the elements of cubism, constructivism and graphic design.

Implemented in such way conceptual scenographic ideas of F. Kiesler in theatre buildings in the open space under the conditions of Woodstock environment opened new borders to his genius: new connection between a human (spectator) – performance (theatre) – landscape (nature) appeared. Harmony of mentioned above three worlds, symbiosis of the sound, light and color during mass theatre performance created new environment for absolute satisfying of cultural needs of a mass visitor.

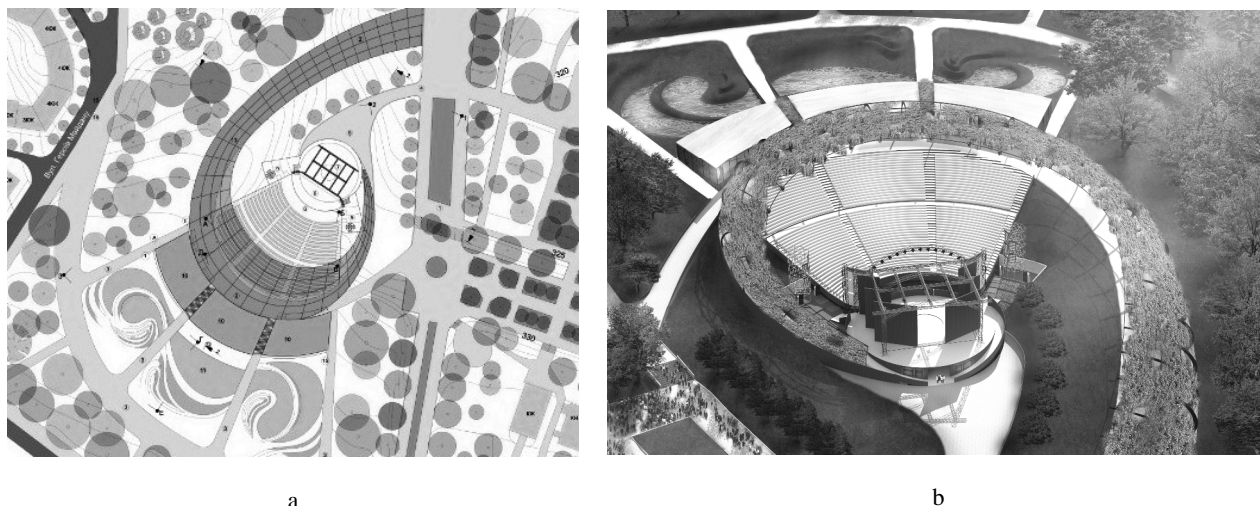


Fig. 8. Bachelor's qualification work of a student O. Klymiv done in 2016 entitled "Design of landscape theatre in B. Khmelnytskyi park of culture and leisure in the city of Lviv. With designing functionally-spatial elements": a) scheme of landscape theatre plan; b) overall view of a landscape theatre. Source: The V. Proskuriakov and I. Gumennyk archive

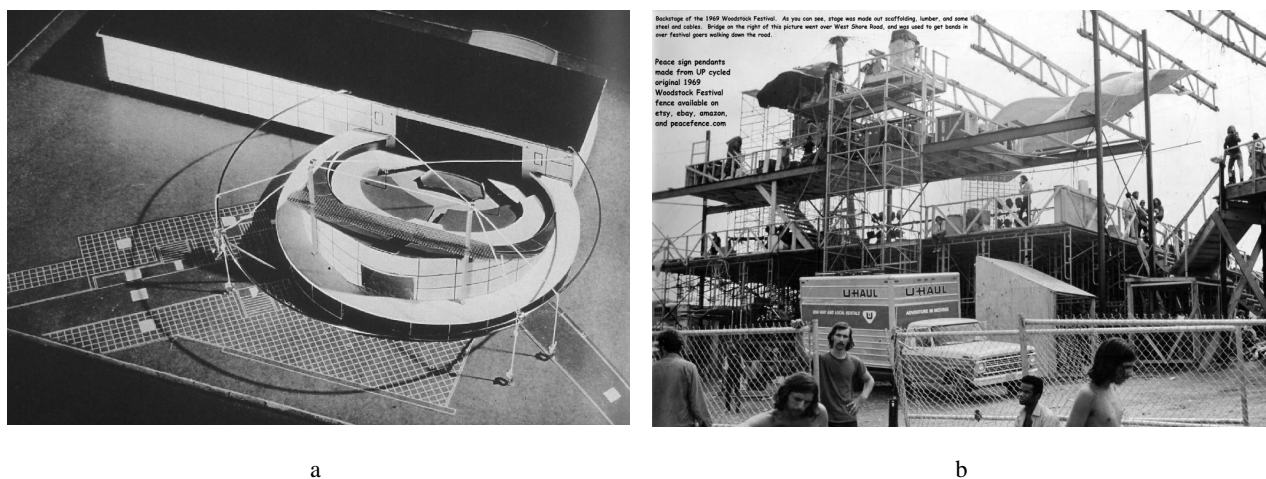


Fig. 9. a) Model "The Space Theatre Woodstock", New York, author F. Kiesler, 1931 [8]; b) Stage of music and art festival in Woodstock in installation process, 1969 [9]

Conclusions

Conceptual futuristic ideas of F. Kiesler, his creativity in theatre scenography were the explosion in consciousness of the whole architecturally-artistic community. Famous Chernivtsi native indeed considered that rectangular lodgings are not natural for a human. And the fact that it was just easier to build did not satisfy him.

Thus sphere became the main spatial element of Kiesler's ideas. He thought that practically static nature of "a box" and machine controlled ideal of that time modern tendency of modern architecture (especially in the creative work of Le Corbusier) were not desired by him environment.

According to F. Kiesler, through art, sculpture, poetry and architecture a person can create environment which is more suitable to their everyday life and nature. Therefore his scenographic searches and conceptual ideas in the sphere of theatrical art found wide response in the projects of landscape theatres to which the representatives of Lviv architecture school have devoted themselves not for one decade – students and teachers of the department of architectural environment design in Lviv Polytechnic National University.

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Катерина Янчук Інна Гуменник

СЦЕНОГРАФІЧНІ ІДЕЇ ФРЕДЕРІКА КІЗЛЕРА В ПРОЕКТАХ ЛЬВІВСЬКОЇ АРХІТЕКТУРНОЇ ШКОЛИ

Анотація. У статті представлено пошукові проекти кафедри дизайну архітектурного середовища Національного університету "Львівська політехніка", в яких використовуються і розвиваються ідеї Фредеріка Кізлера в сценографії та архітектурі "ландшафтних" театральних споруд футуристичних напрямків.

Ключові слова: пошукові проекти, сценографічне вирішення, архітектура театральних споруд, "ландшафтний" театр.