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Polish calligraphic parks in the countryside

Abstract. In the second half of the 19th century, Polish architects actively joined the pan-European trend of finding new solutions in landscape art and created a large, but relatively unknown to the general public, group of Polish manor parks, which can be considered as a specific type of naturalistic style. In modern landscape design, more and more attention is paid to the protection of cultural heritage, in particular, the reconstruction and conservation of historical buildings, gardens, parks, and green areas. From the standpoint of protecting cultural heritage and revalorising historical projects, it is advisable to conduct a study of calligraphic parks as an important group of projects separated from the naturalistic (landscape) style. This confirms the relevance and practical focus of this study. The purpose of the study was to analyse the calligraphic manor and palace parks that are numerous in the territories of present-day Poland and Ukraine. To fully disclose the topic, a research methodology was developed that was based on general scientific and special scientific methods. Based on the analysis and comparison of samples of landscape gardening, the prerequisites for the transition from clear geometric forms to refined, smooth forms in various branches of art, including landscape art, were identified. Based on graphic comparison and architectural and planning analysis, the most characteristic compositional features were identified, including the calligraphic contour of lines, the way trees and other types of greenery are decorated, various types of landscapes, and architecture (including, in particular, the residence and its immediate environment). This study revealed the patterns of “calligraphic parks” through one of their most important features – a characteristic smooth system of paths that evokes clear associations with Polish calligraphic writing. Although, at first glance, their space seems quite natural, nevertheless, it is created according to strict rules of composition. The practical significance of this study lies in the fact that the principles of environmental protection activities, recommendations for conservation and basic provisions for the reconstruction of such objects are proposed to recreate the characteristic features of calligraphic parks

Keywords: history of garden art; naturalistic park; palace complex; manor house

INTRODUCTION

The end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries is characterised as a difficult period in the history of Poland: three divisions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

and the loss of independence prompted the establishment of its own national style. The palace and garden complex – a noble estate – was one of the main features of “Polishness”, a

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kind of “fortress” of Polish tradition and culture. In previous studies, I. Pohranychna (2019) and E. Rośłon-Szeryńska *et al.* (2020) note that a park becomes a balancing element in the residence of estates built in the territories of modern Ukraine and Poland. The artistic appearance of the park environment of the palaces has never been repeated. Residences were powerful economic systems and at the same time an exceptional cultural and historical phenomenon of the region. A major role in the development of palace and garden complexes was played by noble families – carriers of culture, who built high-art estates and residences with the participation of artists, architects, and sculptors of the highest level of classical art. The researchers determined that among the 16 thousand manor houses that existed before 1939, only 3,433 objects remained, including 1965 – residential parks without a dominant in the form of buildings. It was established that numerous studies and activities were carried out to preserve, restore, maintain, and adapt these facilities to current needs. However, parks require special attention and detailed study.

A description of individual palace and garden complexes and recommendations for the preservation of such architectural examples can also be found in the papers by M. Yasinsky & I. Zhmut (2019) and O. Khorosha & A. Subin-Kozhevnikova (2021). It was determined that due to significant transformational processes of socio-political structure and changes in the general social requirements of the population, palace and garden complexes have lost their original function and require comprehensive programmes to preserve park areas. M. Omilanowska (2019), analysing the palace and garden complexes of Poland and Lithuania, determined that when designing calligraphy parks, planners used Western European experience and spatial solutions. Along with local manors and palaces that were noble residences located in the countryside, Polish calligraphy parks are considered the most beautiful form of naturalistic parks in Poland.

Due to its associations with Polish calligraphy, the terms “calligraphy of forms”, “calligraphy parks” or even “calligraphy style” are often used in modern literature when analysing the group of manor parks under consideration. They presented the same character as in the way the lines were formed. “The beginnings can be found in the intricate knot of paths in English books, the completion of development in French concepts and the modern continuation in national and regional directions”, concluded Professor J. Bogdanowski (2000), a leading Polish researcher, specialist in landscape design and the history of landscape art. The works of Polish planners who designed calligraphy parks were accurately summed up by Professor E. Jankowski (1923), a Polish expert in rural landscape design of the interwar period, who wrote: “Although we did not create our own style, these gardens, created from local elements of the landscape, trees and shrubs, bear the imprint of preferences and concepts of beauty in the nature of the Polish people [...]. Indeed, although the layout was similar and built on foreign models, but the views of the

surrounding nature, villages and churches, hills, canyons and our fields give them a special beauty. In addition, home trees contribute to the fact that they are always the basis for each cluster”.

The purpose of the study was to analyse palace and garden complexes to confirm the rule of using Polish calligraphy as a characteristic national accent when creating gardens and parks around magnate residences of the late 19th century in the territories of present-day Poland and Ukraine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the goal, a research methodology was developed based on general scientific and special research methods. During the processing of scientific literature and determining the level of research on the topic, collecting iconographic and cartographic materials, the following general scientific methods were used: analysis, systematisation, and generalisation of the accumulated materials. At the next stage, special methods of scientific research were used, namely: the method of full-scale research (for visual inspection of the monument and determination of the state of preservation), typological classification (for highlighting typical schemes of parks), stylistic analysis and historical periodisation (for conducting architectural, planning and compositional analysis of objects), and graphic comparison (for designing schemes of parks with the imposition of letters of calligraphic writing).

When studying parks in the system of palace and garden complexes, the method of analysis (based on primary sources) was used, which helped to determine compositional and planning characteristics and to reveal the patterns of “calligraphic parks”. The use of the method of comparative analysis (for different-time cartographic materials) established the prerequisites for the transition from clear geometric shapes to refined, smooth forms in various fields of art, including landscape gardening. Based on graphic comparison and stylistic analysis, the most characteristic compositional features were identified, including the calligraphic contour of lines, the way trees and other types of greenery were decorated, various types of landscapes, and architecture (including, in particular, the residence and its immediate environment).

Iconographic materials and descriptions of parks, that is, the material base of the study, mainly consisted of data from the papers by Z. Czartoryski (1896), R. Aftanazy (1994) and G. Ciołek (1978). A more recent study by W. Brzezińska-Marjanowska (2010) also helped to supplement the knowledge about the historical development of garden and park art in Ukraine and Poland, and to deepen the understanding of the chosen field of research. L. Majdecki (1964) showed that since the 1800s, a new attitude has been developed towards historical urban centres and monuments of landscape art. The preservation of palace and garden objects of architecture, which has its roots in the protection of monuments, covers the heritage space as a whole, forms legislative provisions, and often influences the development of new methods and technologies for



the preservation of gardens and parks. In addition, archival documents and a large number of papers in periodicals from different countries were also considered in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the 19th century, Polish designers made an active contribution to the Europe-wide trend of searching for new solutions in garden design. In the 1880s, they developed

their own variety of this trend in the similar way to the most countries of the European continent. The significant influence of mentioned French creative thinking on Polish designs is indisputable – Edouard André – French botanist and landscape architect (Fig. 1). He has even designed the private gardens (in present Lithuania and Poland) in Połaga, Landwarów, Honorówka and Zatrocze (André, 1879; Texier, 2001; Majdecki, 2008).

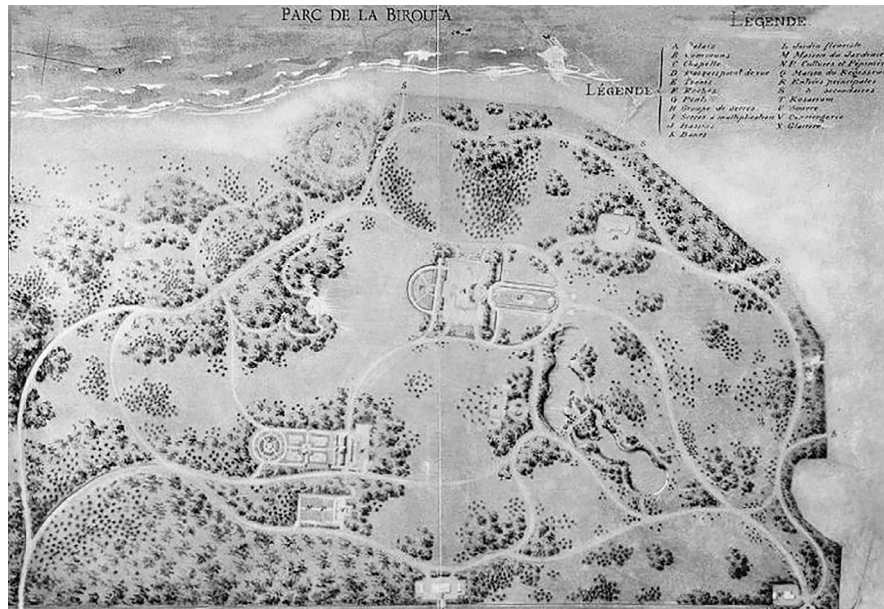


Figure 1. Layout of the park Biruty in Połaga, the only existing layout of Polish park, designed by Edouard Andre, 1898 (?)

Source: M. Omilanowska (2019)

Within their work, the Polish planners were successfully trying to join several dominating trends. On the one hand, they followed achievements and experiences of Western European garden art to a large extent. In their designs, they considered foreign models successfully used in previous styles even taking some solutions from geometric gardens. However, on the other side, they were putting specific conditionings of local tradition and national culture on Europe-wide phenomena which were the focus, the factor that streamlined the search for optimal solutions. Estates that resulted from permeability of current European trends with local tradition of everyday life in the countryside and the appreciation the natural beauty of this area were created. Divergence of Polish calligraphic parks resulted both from visible differences in the form of created parks but also different development of theoretical rules of composition. The basic factor was the shape of a drawn line and the reference to the Polish calligraphic writing. Such characteristic system of lines – calligraphic – is currently considered a special, clearly visible on the plans, dominant feature of the described designs. It was consistently drawn up on the plans-projects of parks, but also visible in the reality. Thereby, a new opinion on the theory of creating gardens and parks was born.

It was frequently emphasised in Polish treaties that park estates should present the harmonious structure, almost perfection of created seemingly natural forms (Stepinska, 1977). There were also notes about striving for maximal elegance of drawn paths' lines. That is why, among other things, searching for the sources was started in the Polish history and the form that was well known for the majority of educated society – calligraphy. Progress of calligraphic forms in Polish garden design went almost perfectly hand in hand with development and promotion of calligraphic writing. Precise coincidence in time of the “golden age” of calligraphy and creation of calligraphic estates and their popularity occurred. In the history of gardens, the calligraphic style predominated for several dozen years and the model of calligraphic writing was used even longer. This is calligraphy that created beauty standards in the art of drawing lines – it was its essence, indeed (Baster, 2012). The famous Polish calligrapher J. Czernecki (1903) wrote about a formed model of Polish writing: “nobody can deny exceptional simplicity to this model and which is even more important – unusual clarity and legibility, these most important benefits of really good writing”. In the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, Poland was one of precursors of creating national writings,

determining the rules of building and drawing individual letters. Polish calligraphic writing maintains optic balance between straight and round lines which is one of the most important features that distinguish Polish writing model from the remaining European ones (Tatuch, 1927).



Figure 2. Construction of various letters of Polish calligraphic writing based on the same basic elements

Source: S. Tatuch (1927)

A drawing-layout of a calligraphic park was characterised by extensive similarity to calligraphic writing. While in previous styles greater importance was attached to the fact of existence of natural plant forms itself or proper artefacts and their arrangement in space, in case of calligraphic parks, properly exposed and underlined system of park lines was of paramount importance. The course of paths underlined by the shape of a pond or stream should have created waving lines with an elegant form and harmonious arrangement. It was only necessary to join park design and calligraphic art in interacting integrity and systematising of this tendency into a homogenous and covered by clear principles ideational model.

It is difficult to overestimate the activity of Joseph Strumiłło, Lithuanian theoretical gardening pioneer, who planted a huge scientifically managed garden near Vilnius (present Lithuania). His contribution was elaborating the rules of composition of the native landscape, including searching for individuality of garden and park designs, which he expressed in the title of his seven times published and supplemented treatise (Strumiłło, 1883). Discussions led for more than half of a century resulted in precise determining principles of calligraphic parks and creating their ideal theoretical model/layout (Fig. 3). Joseph Strumiłło's model became an inspiration and a certain reference point in the design of hundreds of subsequent implementations, which largely referred to it. Thus, the unequivocal is opinion of J. Bogdanowski (2000), that: "Strumiłło should be considered the nestor and main promoter of calligraphic style in Poland". Although Polish calligraphic parks are the crowning achievement of the naturalistic style, they created the first Polish garden style where geometric and fluid elements were successfully joined together. The layout of Joseph Strumiłło presents the residence surrounded by regular and symmetric forms. From the one side of the building, there is a driveway – an access road in the shape of a circle. From the other side – a flower floor shaped as a regular ellipse where the most beautiful ornamental plants are planted. Connection of these three geometric forms: a driveway – a residence – a flower floor, this is so-called "geometric core of the park", from which the naturalistic surroundings were developing. Actually, it was taking various forms and sizes and sometimes was occupying almost half of the area.

Its beauty was not searched in quantity or variety of ornamental elements. On the contrary – it presented frequently repeated motives and fragments of letters by which its harmony and pleasant text fluency can be assumed (Fig. 2).

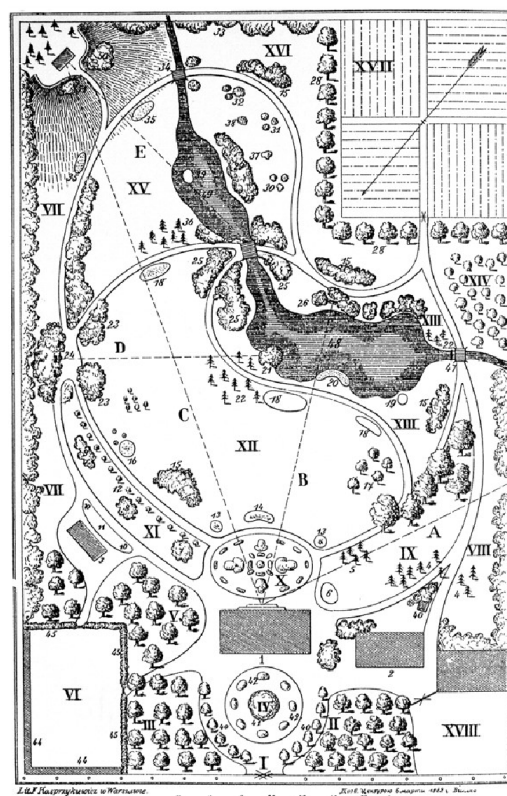


Figure 3. Theoretical model of calligraphic manor park of Joseph Strumiłło
Source: J. Strumiłło (1883)

The discussed ideal layout presents in detail the whole property being a real proof of the possibility of creating parks according to similar guidelines, improved and unified in many respects – general character, park elements, and view connections. It presents almost calligraphic system of paths that lead with fluid curves through the park. It draws attention to water elements – the dark, almost black pond and the stream floating through it with banks also shaped as fluid lines. Such shape of lines creates the most important distinguishing feature and character of this model. It is also clearly visible in Polish calligraphic parks, for example in Czesławice – the most famous and well-known one (Fig. 4a). The arrangement of lines with fluid calligraphic system was at the same time connected compositionally



with trees. The paths' junctions were masked by situating them between trees – compact forest stands within the estate and groups in the middle of the park. In Czesławice and the other precisely designed parks, there are no junctions of paths visible from the above, as they are all covered by the tree canopies. Basic views to be designed were also marked on the discussed layout; three of them were drawn up from the residence: the short view, the long view leading through the whole park in the direction of a little building, and an outside view that shows the area be-

yond the park. In addition to the above-mentioned views, there is the one joining the pond with the little building. Trees are located in so called “blind spots” – the places where they not only do not cover up the above-mentioned prospects but they trace them enclosing their both sides and thereby creating their backstage. Variety of tree species takes attention with the most interesting ones situated in the middle of the park, so that they could be better admired. These rules of composition can be also seen in Czesławice park (Fig. 4b).

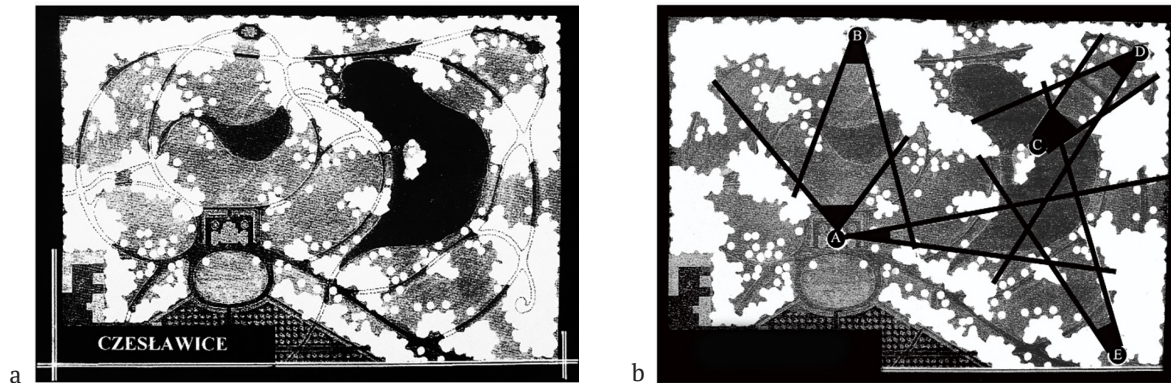


Figure 4. Czesławice park: “the geometric core of the park”

Notes: a – calligraphic shape of paths, masking of paths' connections in forest stands the most; b – important viewpoints: from manor (A), little building in the park (B), little island on the pond (C), corner of the park/forest stands (D, E)

Source: developed by the authors

The arrangement of paths and the remaining elements of the system creates the shapes which are so similar to these presented in Polish calligraphy that the shapes of the whole letters can be read on the projects of the parks.

On the theoretical model of Strumiłło, there is possible to write in a letter “J” (Fig. 5) as it was in case of specific designs such as in the park in Goszczyno – “P” (Fig. 6) or Czesławice – “F” and “D” (Fig. 7).

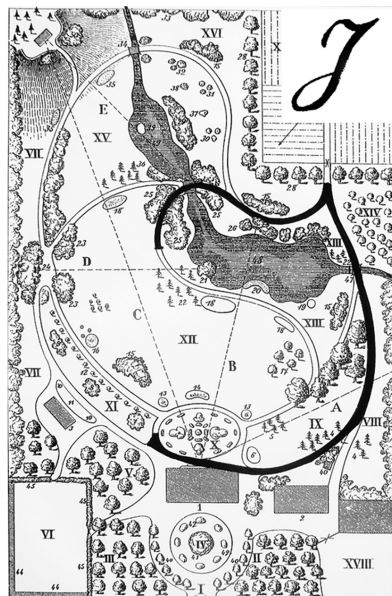


Figure 5. Calligraphic letter “J”

drawn in the model park of Joseph Strumiłło

Source: J. Strumiłło (1883)

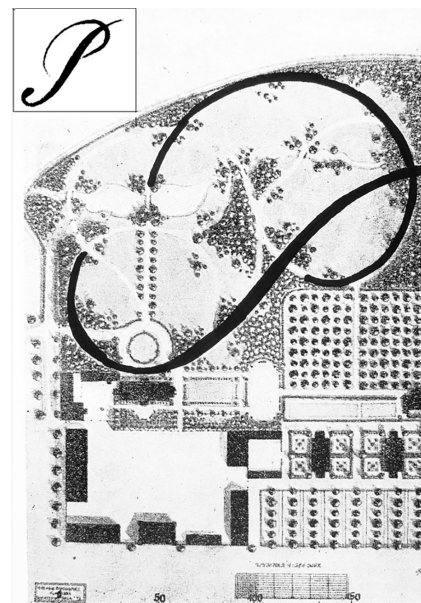


Figure 6. Calligraphic letter “P”

drawn in the layout of the park in Goszczyno

Source: S. Rogowicz (1920)

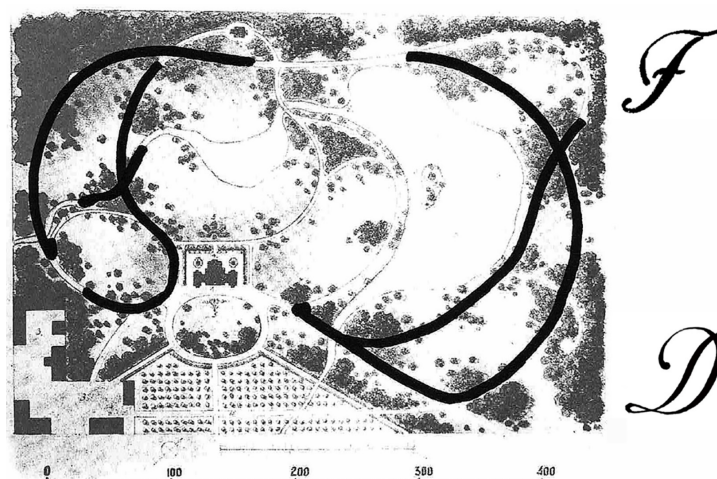


Figure 7. Calligraphic letters “F” and “D” drawn in the layout of the park in Czesławice

Source: W. Kronenberg (1886)

Shaping the system of park paths in the way that they resemble a certain letter of Polish alphabet is not a key point. The way of leading the lines using the described rules of Polish calligraphy is much more important. In the post-war period, in terms of the fight against aristocratic tradition and culture, most of Polish calligraphic parks were nationalised and ruined – the manors were devastated, the trees were cut down, and park elements were destroyed. Moreover, they were deprived of protection which led to unconditioned overgrowing and destruction of these parks (Barbasiewicz, 2007). Indeed, they presented the space based on carefully considered and joined together rules of composition being at the same time extremely fragile. Vanishing over time of even single elements of the composition prevented, as in “the domino effect”, from interpreting the whole idea of park. For instance, when the park path has disappeared, the observer could not reach the place with the especially drawn up view outside the estate and they could not see the designed sequence of interiors inside the estate. When some trees have grown as self-seedings in an unexpected place, they were limiting or completely covering the prospect which was primarily leading the view through the whole estate, etc. In consequence, just about hundreds of such parks survived until the end of the 20th century, both in Poland and Ukraine, presenting various degrees of conservation (Baster, 2013). Only historical plans and descriptions in written sources testify to the location and lost beauty of the other ones.

After analysing the research on this topic, it can be stated that many papers are devoted to the study of palace and garden complexes on the territory of modern Ukraine and Poland. The papers highlight the features of such objects (Aftanazy, 1994), the components of complexes (Barbasiewicz, 2007), and the compositional features of the construction of the complex as a whole (Brzezińska-Marjanowska, 2010). However, previous publications did not cover what territorial features or compositional techniques of building the park were used in general, and

also did not consider specific parts of the park through the prism of Polish calligraphy.

In previous studies, I. Pohranychna (2022) identified the features of classical palace and garden complexes built according to the projects of Polish architecture Jakub Kubicki, analysed ancient images and forms in the architecture of palaces of the late 18th-early 19th centuries. It was noted that the architectural and artistic system of classicism, preserving and repeating stable ancient images and forms, was established in the compositional solutions of palace structures on the territory of Ukraine and Poland, which for a long period of time preceded, coexisting in parallel with other stylistic trends. The development of stylistic trends of classicism in palace architecture developed in the context of the pan-European architectural school and reflected its ideological and artistic diversity. But all previous studies of the researcher relate mainly to palaces, and attention was not paid to a detailed study of parks.

A similar approach to the analysis of the monument of palace and gardening art can be seen in the paper by M. Yasynskiy & I. Zhmut (2019). The paper demonstrates the state of preservation and features of modern use of the palace of Strachocki in Mostyska (Rudniki). However, the park is a special component of the complex, it deserves separate research and publications. Therefore, the authors analysed papers devoted to the study of gardens and parks as components of palace and garden complexes. In the earlier studies by A. Alphand (1885), E. Jankowski (1923) and G. Ciołek (1978), the palace and garden were defined as natural components of the complex, features of compositional construction were highlighted, and a general picture of the development of palace and garden art of the 18th-19th centuries was developed. H. Petryszyn *et al.* (2015) studied the monument of garden and park art of the end of the 19th century on the St. Yuriy Square in Lviv. It was noted that large parks of the city are under state protection, but smaller ones, designed as squares, boulevards, gardens near villas, are constantly being rebuilt and destroyed. However,



these works do not focus on the laws of building a park through the prism of calligraphic writing.

In general, the authors determined that it is necessary to develop concepts for preserving monuments of garden and park art, because these objects are subject to destruction the fastest. A special feature of palace and garden complexes are their parks. The territories of such objects are suitable for organising public spaces, which will allow them to be included in the cultural environment of settlements and create an opportunity for contemplating the architectural monument as a whole. Properties of this type are also attractive for investors. They are small in scale and are admired for their interesting composition and variety of small architectural forms.

CONCLUSIONS

Polish calligraphy parks occupy an important place in the history of landscape art in the country due to their composition and almost perfection in their establishment. At first glance, random smooth lines are built according to a clear compositional scheme, which is based on Polish calligraphic writing (this is confirmed by the diagrams of the parks with the letters of the Latin alphabet). In addition, these were the first Polish parks that developed a “complex” style, that is, a stable and constantly repeating combination of geometric forms of the estate and other buildings of the complex and smooth, free forms of walking alleys. The advantages of this style led to its popularity in practical application in the design of Polish residences, and during

the division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that is, during the loss of independence, Estates and their calligraphic parks were one of the ways to preserve national culture and traditions, and became an important component of authenticity in the Polish Cultural Heritage.

As of 2023, it is important to study and record these objects. Calligraphic parks are subject to faster destruction than palace and garden complexes in general, and therefore, according to the protection of cultural heritage, they require the development of a comprehensive system to preserve an important group of projects of naturalistic (landscape) parks. Notably, Polish calligraphic parks of the late 19th century can be used as analogues in the design of the modern landscape, in which geometric forms often appear together with free asymmetric forms (calligraphic style was the first Polish style to combine geometric and smooth naturalistic lines). The subsequent studies will be devoted to highlighting the principles for fixing the existing state and preserving Polish calligraphic parks, developing detailed projects for revalorisation (recomposition) of several separately selected calligraphic parks, and developing the principles for composing the discussed parks in use for modern landscape design.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Польські каліграфічні парки в сільській місцевості

Анотація. У другій половині 19 століття польські архітектори активно долучилися до загальноєвропейської тенденції пошуку нових рішень у садово-парковому мистецтві та створили численну, але відносно невідому широкому загалу, групу польських садибних парків, які можна розглядати як специфічний різновид натуралістичного стилю. У сучасному ландшафтному дизайні все більше уваги приділяється охороні культурної спадщини, зокрема, реконструкції та консервації історичних будівель, садів, парків і зелених зон. З точки зору охорони культурної спадщини та ревалоризації історичних проектів, доцільно провести дослідження каліграфічних парків, як важливої групи проектів, відокремлених від натуралістичного (ландшафтного) стилю. Це підтверджує актуальність і практичну спрямованість даного дослідження. Метою роботи є проаналізувати каліграфічні садибно-палацові парки, численні на територіях нинішніх Польщі та України. Для повного розкриття теми було розроблено методику дослідження, яка базувалася на загальнонаукових та спеціальних наукових методах. На основі аналізу і порівняння зразків садового мистецтва було виокремлено передумови для переходу від чітких геометричних форм до вишуканих, плавних форм у різних галузях мистецтва, у тому числі садово-паркового. На основі графічного зіставлення та архітектурно-планувального аналізу виокремлено найхарактерніші композиційні риси, що включають каліграфічний контур ліній, спосіб оформлення дерев та інших видів зелені, різних типів краєвидів, архітектури (включаючи, зокрема, резиденцію та її найближче оточення). Дане дослідження дало можливість розкрити закономірності «каліграфічних парків» через одну з найважливіших їхніх особливостей – характерну плавну систему доріжок, що викликає чіткі асоціації з польським каліграфічним письмом. Хоча, на перший погляд, їхній простір здається цілком природним, проте, він створений за суворими правилами композиції. Практична цінність даного дослідження полягає в тому, що запропоновано принципи природоохоронної діяльності, рекомендації щодо збереження та основні положення при реконструкції таких об'єктів задля відтворення характерних рис каліграфічних парків

Ключові слова: історія садово-паркового мистецтва; натуралістичний парк; палацовий комплекс; садиба