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Athens 1933.
A new theatre on the urban scene

Abstract

A small open-air theatre, designed by Dimitris Pikionis, appeared on the Athenian urban scene at a critical moment for the capital: the arrival of refugees from Asia Minor, the resulting housing problem, the ineffective policies of city expansion. In this context, the interwar architectural debate in the capital became complex, contradictory and full of ideological conflicts, and episodically found a way to develop, in particular in the construction of key architectural sites for the new neighbourhoods: open spaces and collective spaces, schools. Adding to the complexity of the debate was Pikionis with concrete responses to the unrestrained reconstruction, the savage destruction of traditional architecture, and discourses on the standard. In the same year, the 4th CIAM arrived in Athens with unexpected turns.

Keywords

Athens — Tradition and the Modern — Theatre

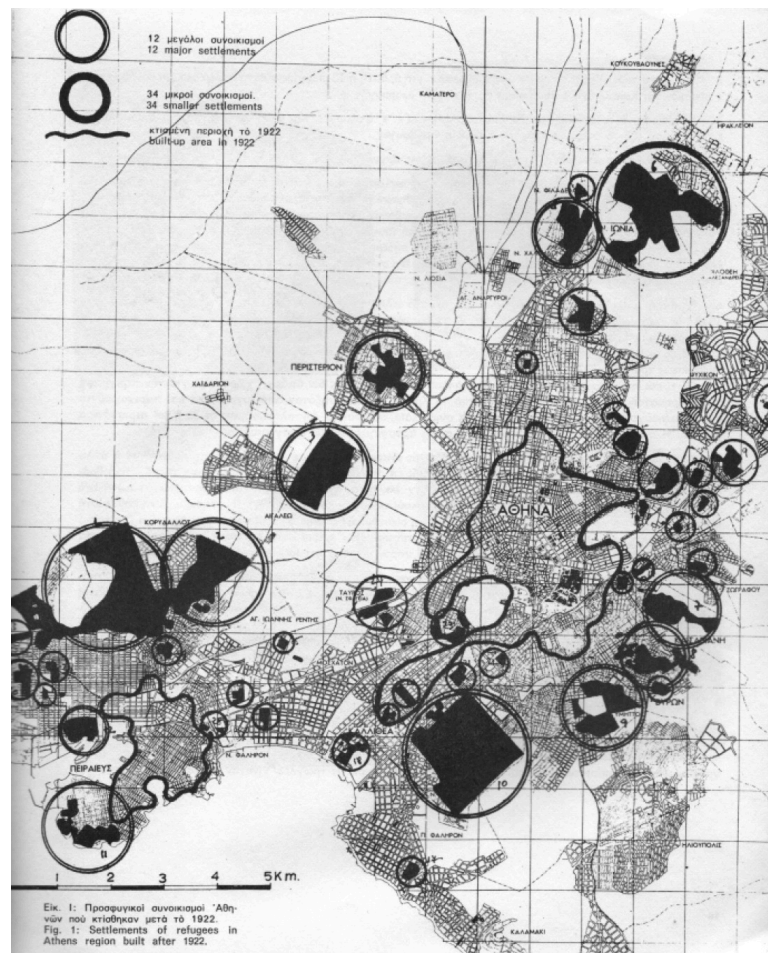
We have a theatre now: an open-air theatre, fully equipped, modern and built on up-to-date principles and concepts hitherto unknown in the Greek theatrical world. [...] On the corner of Heyden Street and Mavromataion Street - which is the first street on the right-hand corner of Patision Street after Alexandras Avenue and on the corner of the Field of Mars, a cool and quiet corner - in less than a month a veritable new world has been created (Kotopouli 1933).

The location of the theatre was not accidental, it was a well-placed move in the Athens under construction. After all, theatres have always been a significant presence in cities, both symbolically and physically. Place (location) is a constitutive element of theatre identity. Moreover, throughout history, we find the theatres, not always in a proper building, but also in fairs, markets, farmyards, and in the gathering spaces of a community. Thus, along with theatres as clearly identifiable building types places, it is the organization of urban space itself that very often acts as the background of representations. In other words, the relationship between the theatre space as a place of performance and its surroundings is always dialectical and multiform, and above all never too neutral. Only recently has the term “environmental theatres” been coined, built in poor or transitory spaces, often in out-of-the-way neighborhoods. This is research theatre (which had already begun with the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century) conceived in close relation to the surrounding context (Brook 1968, Cruciani 2005).

Urban Scene

Modern Athens, that of Nivasio Dolcemare in Alberto Savinio's stories, was a village. A city reduced to its essentials, where the traditional contrast

Fig. 1
Distribution of refugee settle-
ments in the metropolitan area of
Athens and Piraeus, post 1922.



between town and country was stripped of meaning: it was no surprise to see herds of transhumant goats from the Pentelicus pushing their way into the centre. The crucial date was undoubtedly 1922 (the Asia Minor catastrophe, the genocide against the population of Pontos and the forced population exchange), when things changed drastically: the mass arrival of refugees completely subverted the urban policy implemented until then. (Clogg 1996) In the face of this enormous drama, it was unclear what values should find expression in the urban landscape. The city adopted the idea of a break with the nearest past: modernism became a sign of optimism and prosperity and left a wide-ranging legacy unparalleled in Europe. The orientation of architectural thought definitively degraded the role of typological invention in housing policy. For people of the shacks (poor and refugees), the price for a more humane life is the apartment block, which spreads impressively according to the logic of the market economy, the engine of a promised prosperity. This process was either self-perpetuating and transcended any urban planning programme. Beside the cultural role and architectural direction of the Modern Movement was replaced by a current "modernist" style, which became the most widespread in post-war Greece, even more than Neoclassical style.

While the Neoclassical started from the monumental models of official architecture and in minor constructions became an expression of continuity with the popular typological tradition, the modernist style distanced from the principles of cultured and refined rationalism, which sought mediation with history, as well from the heritage of tradition. Construction tended towards an international style and became a model for master builders and



Fig. 2
Athens 1933 plan, re-elabora-
tion by L. Ferro.

Fig. 3

The Patision-Alexandras Avenue crossroads is highlighted in the state plan. The first (north-south) connects the large archaeological area, the geometric figure of the neoclassical city, the quadrilateral of the Athens Polytechnic with the new neighbourhoods to the north. The second (west-east) the rationalist neighbourhood for refugees (Fig. 6) with the self-built neighbourhood of Ambelokipi, in which the school designed by Mitzàkis is located (Fig. 7). In the centre of the crossroads is the theatre by Pikionis. (Elaboration L. Ferro)



constructors, leading to the complete negation of the past in the name of modernization. Alongside master plans never truly realized, the vast and unplanned extension of the city advanced (Christofellis 1987, Filippidis 1999, Giacomacatos 1999, Ferro 2004).

But let us proceed in order. Let us begin with the figures revealing the extent of the wave of refugees arriving in a short period and settling in Athens and Piraeus: the population increased by 30.6 per cent, according to the 1928 census. In Athens, refugees represented a quarter of the population, in Piraeus a third. The already existing housing crisis increased dramatically. In 1928, 244,929 refugees settled in the Athens metropolitan area; new expansions required the mobilization of multiple institutions and funds.

The main actors in charge of providing solutions to this colossal humanitarian crisis and organizing its spatial footprint were the Greek state and foreign charitable organizations such as the Red Cross and the Near East Foundation. Initially, the situation was perceived as temporary, so refugees were housed in public buildings or in private buildings occupied or requisitioned for the purpose. The great need for immediate accommodation led to the creation of temporary slum-like structures in open spaces in and around the urban fabric. Later on, having realised the permanence of the situation, a series of legislative measures attempted to solve the housing problem by planning new settlements.

Several institutional bodies were founded at that time: the Refugee Assistance Fund (in Greek TPP, 1922), later replaced by the Refugee Settlement Commission (in Greek EAP, 1923-1930), financed by the League of Nations in the form of an international loan. The EAP was supposed to act autonomously, without the involvement of the government or any administrative authority. However, the Ministry of Welfare, already involved in



Figg. 4-5

Two photos taken in 1933 by the painter N. Hatsikyriakos-Ghykas during a study visit to the self-built refugee settlements. (Hatsikyriakos-Ghykas Archive, Benaki Museum).

settlement construction, took over the work of the EAP after the land under its jurisdiction had been used (Kairou and Kremos 1983-84, Mandouvalou 1988, Hirschon 1989).

In a first phase, TPP (later PAE and Ministry of Welfare) built new settlements in peripheral areas, creating new housing and restoring existing properties, or giving land, building permits, subsidies and technical assistance. A second phase, almost parallel to the first, soon took place: landowners subdivided their land by selling it to refugees, to build neighborhoods near organized settlements or wherever they found space, creating new self-built settlements. The settlements had an investment character, not a charitable one. Refugees had contracts for houses in the form of a mortgage, paying the rates and the rest with interest. The location of refugee settlements, in some cases exploited the proximity to industrial-manufacturing facilities. In other cases, the process was reversed. However, the main declared objective was that the settlements should be as invisible and socially isolated as possible. Social segregation was accentuated in the spatial layout of the capital with the creation of purely working-class and popular communities: «they must not disturb the normal life of Athens»¹. As the city grew over the following decades, these satellite settlements became part of the city, the previously uninhabited areas between Athens and Piraeus were completely occupied and the two cities, merged two autonomous entities even morphologically, forming a single urban complex. The settlements layout reflected a complicated and heated debate, whether applying the principles and standards of modernist architecture (a grid system of parallel and perpendicular streets forming blocks of buildings of the same size) or those of garden cities (circular streets and symmetrical squares). The shacks were organized in rows leaving some empty spaces for communal bathrooms, toilets, laundries.

The temporary housing units provided by the OPT and the EAP were: single-family wooden houses, known as “Germanika”, as compensation for the First World War; one- or two-storey houses, single or double; two-storey houses with external stairs, arranged on square plots around a common area; two-storey houses each accommodating two families; a one-storey house with a single room and a kitchenette (about 32sqm per family) with a shared bathroom. (Vassiliou 1936)

In Athens and Piraeus, 56 neighborhoods were formed around the 19th century city, forming a belt of new buildings. The first “prototype” neighborhoods were born, such as Nea Smyrna, Nea Philadelphia, Nea Gallipoli. In addition, there are garden suburbs for middle-class social strata (Psichikó, Filothei...). However, there were very few council houses compared to the need. Thus, a large percentage of the refugees found accommodation in self-built shacks in spaces granted by the state.

Between 1928 and 1932 (Venizelos government) a more organized housing policy was set up. In the 1930s, the use of multi-storey dwellings of which the typical dwelling is about 40 square meters, according to modernist minimum dwelling standards, became increasingly common. These blocks of flats were built to replace temporary housing. The one-room housing type, which can be joined under favorable conditions, followed in detail the standard applied in the Frankfurt municipality’s programmes «for the poorest of the poor». The same standard was applied for two- and four-storey houses, again designed according to German examples (famous are those of Ernst May and Walter Gropius).

**Fig. 6**

In-line buildings for refugee flat blocks on Alexandras Avenue, 1933-35 (architects K. Lascaris and D. Kyriakos).

In spite of the Settlement Law, some very innovative standards were often not respected. In some cases, attempts are made to ease critical social situations through the cheap sale of building land. Thus the most widespread housing type remained that of minimal dwellings (one or two rooms) made of wood, stone or brick with rammed-earth floors, built on expropriated land and parceled out in square blocks bounded by an orthogonal road network (Kandilis and Maloutas 2017, Filippidis 1999).

In this context, the architectural debate between the wars (of the 20th century) in the capital became complex, contradictory and full of ideological conflicts, and episodically found a way to develop, particularly in the construction of key architectural sites for the new neighborhoods: open spaces and collective spaces, schools. Emblematic is the case of schools which became an important testing ground for modern architecture in Greece, not only in the centre, but above all in the suburbs, in the refugee quarters and in the old suburbs. Often built in the midst of undeveloped farmland, the School proves to be the only reference for a different (cultural and urban) use of the city and future development. The open spaces of school buildings became public squares and places for sports in the newly built neighborhoods. (Giacoumacatos 1985, 1999)².

A common theme in the architectural debate was that of *continuity with tradition*, its formal codification in contemporaneity. Thus, at a time when architectural culture strove to assimilate the main international currents, at the same time, in Greece, developed a movement of resistance to cultural imports, giving rise to exceptional works, revolutionary manifestations of art capable of opening a complex dialogue with Greek regionalism. In this sense, the modern transcends those limits that had hitherto been ascribed to it to develop in multiple directions.

Adding to this complex debate was Dimitris Pikionis, a (sometimes uncomfortable) protagonist of the architectural scene. Pikionis intellectual battle (individual and collective³) gave concrete answers to uncontrolled reconstruction (in Athens in particular), and destruction of the traditional architecture. The concept of modernity became increasingly subtle and elaborate, a critical reflection of the legacy of the past (Ferlenga 1999, Ferro 2004 a,b).

Pikionis took a critical viewpoint by using the concept of tradition to highlight the dehumanisation of the contemporary environment. The Greek

**Fig. 7**

Nikos Mitzákis, Liceo ad Ambelokipi, 1930-32, ora parzialmente demolito (Archivio di Architettura neoellenica, Museo Benaki).

idiom was a tragic voice, the spirit of dissent, a kind of “light substance” (Elitis 2005), a true category of the spirit to interpret reality. This “Greekness” had vital roots in the ancient world, going back in time (Yannopoulos 1909, Pikionis 1927, Psomopoulos 1993). And the refugees were not “other” than the Greeks, they were part of it. Figures, types, forms of houses, of life and art, everything expressed the same origin. Pikionis reversed the trend on the figuration of the house, identified the characters of that light matter, that ‘red thread’, which gave continuity to the architecture of the Greek gave tradition (including that of Asia Minor) from the typologies of antiquity to the forms of contemporary spontaneous dwellings (Pikionis 1927). The Greeks were up to Asia Minor now in the suburbs of Athens in barracks.

The meaning of tradition had a very broad scope. Tradition was not a heritage that could be easily inherited; those who had to conquer it with great efforts. Art did not improve but was in constant motion. Places had to be studied in their formal values, in their configuration, in their topography, as a spiritual value for the mental associations they could evoke mythical and archaic images that give meaning to things.

«The architect’s work is not to invent ephemeral forms, but to revise the eternal figures of tradition in the form determined by the conditions of the present» (Pikionis 1925, 1927, 1950-51).

The aim was, on the one hand, to preserve popular art that was falling into oblivion and, on the other hand, to hand down memory in contemporary design. «We must not lower us in the direction of vernacular art, in search of the picturesque or genre fascination, but in order to search for leaven to make our work grow» (Pikionis 1927, 1950-51).

To ignore the rhythm of the landscape, Pikionis often wrote, the demands of life in the name of functionalist slogans is to become an uncritical importer of a culture that demands, on the contrary, to be utilized and transformed by imagination.

In opposition to modernist slogans, he proposed formal principles that enshrined poeticism in minimal spaces, which is not a question of square footage but of variation of type, of working on the autonomy of the pieces of the composition, on the volumes and levels that shape the terrain⁴.

To the standard he opposed the theme of diversification of the universal type:

Infinite are the variations that can thus be applied to the basic form. And the line mysteriously takes you now towards the ancient, now towards the medieval, now towards the primitive, now towards a popular neo-classicism. And it is up to you, if you know the mysterious language of form, to express that particular form that would be the symbol both of the deepest essence of your tradition and of the time in which you live. (Pikionis 1925, 1927, 1950-51; Psomopoulos 1993; Ferro 2002a, 2004c)

Thus, the concept of modernity became ever more subtle and elaborate as a critical reflection of the legacy of the past. Conveying the true meaning of domestic spaces was the task of architecture, that is, to express the poetry of everyday life» and to help Greeks remember that kind of "identity of thought" in which even refugees could recognize themselves.

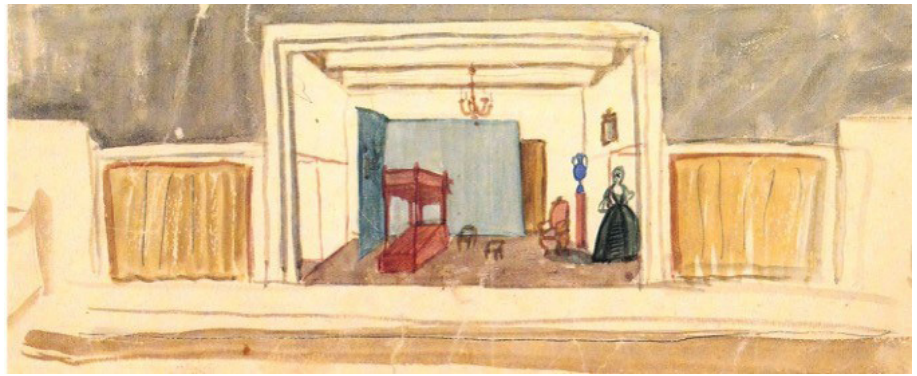
So he studies the refugee villages with their self-built houses, drawing from them a kind of substantial form of human habitation, which basically tells us how cities came into being. He also took into account that many of them had indeed become poor, but they were cultured, well-educated people. «Even in the poorest houses made of old planks and pieces of tin and tar paper, one could find the golden section of Pythagoras. ... We then gained exceptional experiences from our contact with space, a space that confused us, that was neither indoor nor outdoor» (Hatzikyriakos-Ghykas 1934).

The Theatre

As mentioned in the introduction, the location of the new Pikionis Theatre in the city had a very specific meaning. It was located at an important crossroads, the matrix of the future city. The perpendicular axes could have constituted in turn itineraries studded with important urban facts of modernity, specialized places, collective spaces for the city.

Mavromataion Street, run parallel to Patisision (28th October Avenue, the street of the Athens Polytechnic, the Archaeological Museum and the Academy of Art) and with it defined a narrow strip of blocks reaching the Field of Mars, the great green area of the 1920s master plan. Patisision was born from the geometry of the Neoclassical plan for the new capital, the work of genetic engineering, which reshaped the *forma urbis* and compacted in the mesh of the triangle Sintagma, Omonia, Keramikos (Mandouvalou 1988). It was the matrix of an orthogonal (almost Hippodamian) development linking the ancient city to the northern peripheral districts. The design begun with the first expansions (1864- 1909). Following the figure of the orthogonal chessboard, the master plan (Kalligas, Hébrard 1920-25) drew, Avenue Alexandras (north of Mount Lycabettus). The axis connected Patisision with the new neighborhoods to the east, that is Ambelokipi. The design of the planned crossroads was at odds with the rest of the city, which proceeded haphazardly and without coordination (Biris 1966, Filippidis 1999).

These axes line a number of important architectural landmarks: among them the linear blocks of houses, the houses for the "poorest of the poor", shreds of the rationalist city arranged perpendicularly on Alexandras Avenue and facing the green area of the Field of Mars, the Mitzakis school in Ambelokipi immersed in the scene of self-built refugees shacks. And so, in the centre of this important carriage house, the new theatre was established in June 1933, to give new opportunities of entertainment to the neighborhoods under construction, opening up new, even dramatic perspectives, in the city.

**Fig. 8**

G. Steris, *The Theatre M. Kotopouli* by D. Pikionis, 1933 (D. Pikionis Collection, Archives of Neo-Hellenic Architecture, Benaki Museum).

A kind of anticipation of the Biris 1946 master plan (never fully realised): Patision and Alexandras as the new crossroads of the contemporary city. Alexandras connects Kolonos (ancient Academy) with Ambelokipi, Patision the large archaeological area, the design of the capital city with the northern neighbourhoods. New urban places, city design and refugee neighbourhoods within a defined, geometric urban design (Mandouvalou 1988, Filippidis 1999).

In Greece, experimentation with open-air theatres had important contributions.

Despite Greece's marginal position in the theatrical world, Sikelianos, Eva Palmer, the painters Tsarouchis, Steris, Papalukas, Hatzikyriakos-Ghykas contributed, in a way influenced, the changes and experimentation on theatre architecture in the early 20th century (Fessas-Hemmanouil 1999, Ferro 2004b). It was a return to the theatrical tradition of ancient Greek culture and to certain popular performing traditions, a kind of "transmitter of Greek thinking", a factor of identity even for those who came from distant Asia Minor. It evoked a time when theatre was not in a dedicated building, but on moving stage, chariots, raised platforms; spectators were standing or seated at tables, in front of a glass, taking part in the action, replaying the actors; theatre done in backrooms, attics, barns; one-night stands, a tattered sheet pinned to either end of the room, battered panels concealing rapid changes. The problem was not whether a building was beautiful or ugly depending on formal code: the theatre building must become an extraordinary meeting place or it remains unresolved, cold, empty. This was the mystery of theatre and of the architecture of the small theatre by Pikionis encompasses this mystery. It could be a puppet theatre, a shadow play or, as in this case, classical and avant-garde performances (Brook 1968). The theatre consists of the architecture of a stage set (designed as a prototype) within an enclosure that, like the ancient Dionysian theatre, is open to the city:

All around is a high wall with a promenade with a decorative iron railing. A booth next to the entrance houses the ticket office, while a small building in front of us as we cross the threshold contains a large, comfortable bar. But there is nothing else inside the new theatre, and even these few structures are simple, without any particular decoration. Yet the simplicity is imbued with grace and an aesthetic concept. (Kotopouli 1933)

There were no seats. Chairs (old chairs from the Attic Cinema) were available stacked in a corner. Or else they could be brought from home. «There will be 995 such seats in the stalls, with about two hundred at the back, like a sort of gallery, and it will be possible to place another 150 around the stage at each evening performance» (Kotopouli 1933).

Figg. 9-13

Dimitris Pikionis, Theatre Marika Kotopouli, 1933 (D. Pikionis Collection, Archives of Neo-Hellenic Architecture, Benaki Museum)

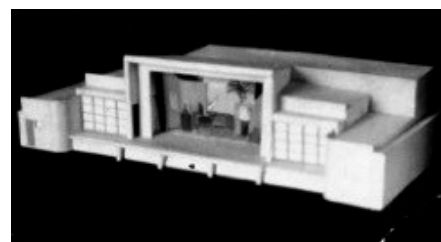
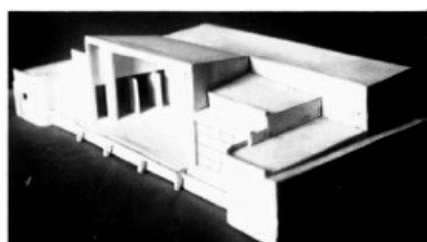
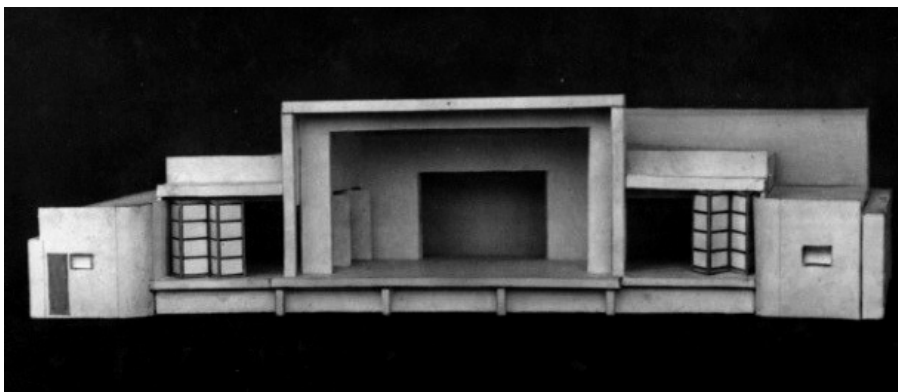
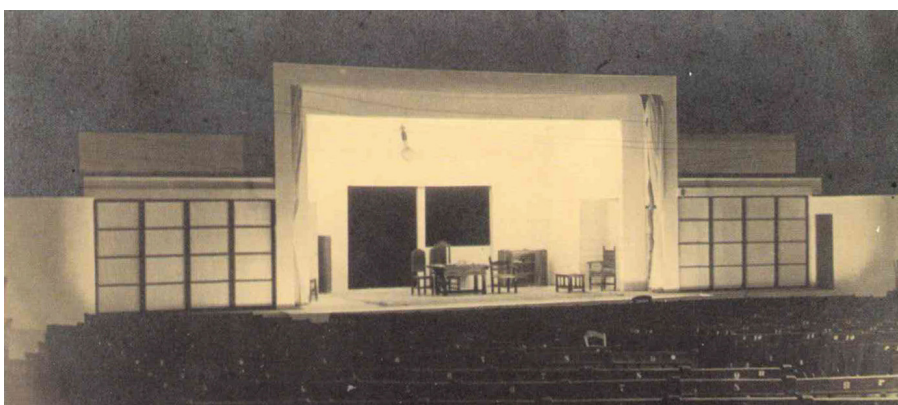
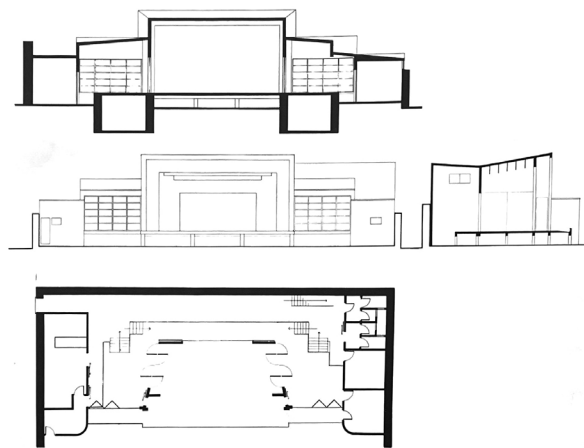


Fig. 14

Dimitris Pikionis, Theatre Marika Kotopouli, 1933 (D. Pikionis Collection, Archives of Neo-Hellenic Architecture, Benaki Museum)



The important part of the new theatre (the only one) was its stage. And it was this dimension that gave it its character, that made it different, that made it a truly valuable acquisition for the Athens of the time.

The stage building

is unusual, especially in that it is divided into three parts, and is quite dissimilar to what we have so far called by this name in Greek theatre. The Athenian scenic space originated from imported models that, in turn, were connected to a basic concept borrowed from painting: that is, the possibility of creating an impression by suspending scenic backdrops and trying to obtain a maximum of perspective. This concept ignored entirely the structure of the building in which it sought to reproduce the desired impression. However, modern developments in the theatre (Kandinskji for example: light and color instead of scenes, or Gropius with his theatre) have introduced the predominance of an architectural concept, i.e. they aesthetically take care of the envelope and the stage by attempting to achieve the atmosphere sought by the author with simple and clear details, without making use of pictorial effects, but rather by using space and a suitable adaptation of color, form, masses. (Pikionis 1958)

The new theatre will have walls on both sides, like walls, which will enclose the stage and truly give it the form of a room, into which the actors can only enter or leave through real doors. Thanks to a special mechanism they can open in the middle and rotate to act as wings. But in addition to the main stage, there are two smaller stages at the sides, where scenes of secondary importance can be performed. ... When the curtains closing the central stage are open, the three-part stage will form a single unit, with only two pillars to remind us of the partitions. (Kotopouli 1933)

Pikionis quoted Japanese theatre as an example, understood not as a kind of permanence of a universal original form. The architecture of the stage was a return to ancient theatre, even to that of the *Mansiones*, the demountable rooms of medieval theatre. But above all it was a reference to popular theatre, to the white cloth of the hut where the animator of the Shadow Theatre moves: «The shadows of the Karaghiosis theatre descend from the mysterious ancient cinema, from the play of shadows projected on the wall of a cave, to which Plato compared our memories» (Yourcenar 1989). The theatre was demolished to make room for new building lots.

IV CIAM

On the first of August, the steamship “Patris II” of the Neptòs company arrived in Piraeus after three days of navigation, with the hundred congress participants on board. The great spectacle of the 4th International Congress of Modern Architecture begun and they were completely unaware of the Greek context and the ongoing architectural debate (Bottoni 1933; Ferro

2002a, 2004 a,c). True, on this occasion the charter of the rational city was drawn up, but it seemed almost out of place: Athens was already going further, in good and bad.

[...] It is hard to imagine a contemporary city as degraded as Athens. Perhaps nowhere else is the lack of a capable and wise creative spirit, of a will capable of counteracting negative forces, so noticeable.

It is fair to say that awareness of this situation is a matter of individual conscience and responsibility: it is natural and human - but perhaps also necessary - to feel diminished, at least the most sensitive of us, when confronted with the state of our city and the ideal solutions, and the efforts of contemporary urban planning. [...] This land is not just any land. Its spirituality is a supreme model, insistently demanding to be applied by dominating and integrating all other demands of functionalist architecture and urbanism. Of course, I am not just talking about a physical place, but also a spiritual place.

Thus I find the operation that every artist must perform twofold:

1. bring his work back to the rhythm of the landscape; 2. submit it to the sacred demands of life. The first operation requires a harmonization of the potential of the spaces, volumes, forms and themes of the work in relation to the dynamics of the light, the rhythm of the landscape, the nature of the climate. [...] The second operation presupposes acute psychological observation, a sensitivity capable of registering and then giving form to the hidden virtualities of our lives. [...]

This twofold operation has no rules. It is, as El Greco says for painting: action, purely personal inspiration. Judging by the form the new movement is taking in our country, I must say that this is the operation we all need to perform, along with all the others, if we want to be cultured operators rather than importers of civilization.

This alone will make us capable of critically reading the transitory mottos of art, which for reasons of polemics and the need to define an artistic movement (rationalism) limit it, excluding the potential of a multitude of virtues, thus limiting the concept of Art.

It is necessary to reflect better on the solutions that the West offers us, in order to avoid what is fast becoming true: the crystallization of a new banality, the establishment of a new academicism. (Pikioins 1933)

The event of the Congress is well known, yet is important to emphasise a kind of “hidden” debate concerning Greece and the concept of tradition. Anastasios Orlandos’s speech during the ceremony on August 3rd at the Polytechnic and Pikionis’s paper, gave an unexpected twist to the proceedings⁵.

Notes

¹ Updated studies have recently been published, see Myifa and Stavrianakis 2019 and Klimi 2022.

² In 1930, Minister Papandreou reformed the Technical Office of the Ministry of Education by establishing a «Directorate of Architectural Services». Head of this office was Nikos Mitzàkis (1899-1941), whose presence became fundamental in defining architectural character and cultural role of schools in the city. Among the design staff was the architect Patroklos Karantinos (1903-1976, a pupil of Pikionis), one of the main advocates and defenders of Modern architecture in Greece linked to the experiences of European rationalism and manifesting a critical awareness of history rooted in the building tradition of the Greek islands.

³ «And then there were the others: Kòndoglu, Papalukàs, and the architect Mitsàkis, Stratis Doukas and Velmos; and then the younger generation: Ghikas, Tsarouchis, En-gonopoulos, Diamantopoulos. How many fruitful lessons were drawn from the con-

text between these different spirits, from the antitheses that each of them represented! I honestly do not know what I could give them in return. But I am aware of what I got from each of them» (Pikionis 1958).

Pikionis was the protagonist of real intellectual battles. The guiding principles of these battles also became a vital part of his teaching. A large group of artists and architects, who called themselves Omada Filon (group of friends), worked on them. With the magazine *To Trito mati* (The Third Eye, 1935-37) and other events related to it (i.e. the 1938 exhibition on Greek Folk Art), Pikionis clarified the research direction he intended to take with respect to the Modern Movement.

⁴ In the early 1950s, with the Exoni project and the magazine of the same name, Pikionis fine-tuned his way of thinking about living through a renewed idea of the city. Exoni was a manifesto through which didactics, experimentation and the theory of composition became a motif for reflection, but also a philosophy of life. Every part of this small settlement was designed for refugees and homeless people. On this subject see Ferro 2014.

⁵ Le Corbusier himself, after the congress, manifested a new line of research: modern spirit and archaism, human scale and landscape became the new themes of his architecture. The French architect was strongly influenced by his second and last trip to Greece. In 1934, Christian Zervos, editor of the magazine *Cahier d'art*, wrote a book on primitive art in Greece and published Panos Tzelepis' article on the houses of the Greek archipelago. Le Corbusier's article "La ville radieuse" dates back to 1935: «In 1933, the Congress of Modern Architecture was held in Greece: we travelled around the islands, the Cyclades. The deep, millenary life remains intact. We discover eternal houses, living houses, of today, which rise from history and have a section and a plan, which are precisely what we have imagined for ten years. In this place of human measure, in Greece, in these lands open to simplicity, to intimacy, to well-being, to the rational still guided by the joy of living, the measures of the human scale are present... ».

The journey to the islands is also documented in: Hatzikyriakos-ghykas 1987.

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