

Moholy–Nagy University of Art and Design Budapest
Doctoral School Design Theory PhD program

STAGE DESIGN
AND RELATED ART PHENOMENA

THESES

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Theses

1.

Theatrical stage design is a frontier of creative work that, when assessed within the traditional framework of the arts, often seems to disappear at the interface between the visual, theatrical and applied design arts. This is also reflected in the fact that its function as far as the public is concerned to this day remains at the level of site marking, mood painting and decorative additions. In theater and visual arts literature, visual design is mostly mentioned tangentially. The interdisciplinary nature of scenic design relegates it to the periphery of the visual arts, but it also offers the potential for a specific artistic method that can inspire creators from other disciplines.

2.

The performative turn, as defined by Erika Fisher-Lichte, represents a change in the visual arts and theater, whereby the process of creation and its presentation is the focus of artistic expression, rather than the product. However, there are only traces of this tendency in visual design. In order to understand performativity in relation to stage visual design, it is necessary to develop a design mindset and a way of working that emphasizes the collaboration of theater makers and the collaborative process

of working together rather than the coordination of object creation and production operations.¹

3.

The starting point for performative design is to reinterpret the space of the stage, to examine the bodies in the space and to adapt to the temporal process of the stage event. I therefore consider performances as a consequence of the body on stage. My hypothesis is that as theatrical performance changes and its primary purpose is to emphasize the presence of the body and the performer-viewer relationship rather than storytelling, so too does the relationship of performers, creators and audience to stage space.

4.

The theatrical spectacle can also be understood as the consequence of the representation of a dramaturgical situation rather than a prefabricated, ready-made playing space, i.e. the temporality of the events on stage can be extended to the spectacle. The play space thus created is directly linked to the movement of the stage, since it is created or takes its final form through the actors' participation. It is therefore necessary to examine the change in meaning resulting from the transformation of the

¹ See Zsófia Geresdi: *A rítus tere*, In: *A színpadon túl, Az alkalmazott színház és környéke /The space of ritual, In: Beyond the stage, Applied theatre and its surroundings/* (eds.: Péter Görcsi, Péter P. Müller, Petra Pandur, Krisztina Rosner) Kronosz kiadó /publishing company/, Pécs, 2016. p. 94.

context of the objects, props and tools already made (as in minimal art or ready-made) on the one hand, and the possibilities of the actual gesture of object-making on the other.

5.

From a design point of view, the theatrical creative process can be understood as a Gesamtkunstwerk in which the representatives of the different artistic disciplines are in direct, equal relationship with each other. However, while there is a clear tendency towards a similar approach in the fields of contemporary dance, *new dramaturgy* or stage music, the possibility of collaboration between the entire cast of a production is less evident in visual design.

6.

The merging of different artistic disciplines and the changing relationship between performers, audience and stage space allow design work to go beyond the visual and to include the somatic effects of the stage. Auditory, tactile, olfactive, and possibly oral stimuli are an integral part of the space, and therefore of the playing space, which also influence the visual experience.

7.

The role of the stage visual and the visual designer in different theatrical forms can vary greatly depending on the specificity of the play, the character of the theater and the director's ideas. This is even clearer in the light of the changes in the role of set and costume design over the last hundred years. One of the frontiers

of scenic design methods is the creation of space, which can be likened to visual art performances. In this sense, the performative scenic design under study is not a generalized concept that changes design attitudes in all respects, but merely a theoretical presentation of a less familiar possibility of the design process.

8.

Based on the above, I have come to the conclusion that the visual designer's activity can be directed not only towards the creation of the stage image, but also towards the creation of the conditions and means of performance and the mapping of visual alternatives that arise as a result of stage presence. At the same time, the creation of stage visuality can be understood as a creative process of visual art in close connection with improvisation in the open scene, in the "here and now".