



# Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement (1918–2018)

Toward a New Perception and Reception



WOMEN'S CREATIVITY SINCE  
THE MODERN MOVEMENT

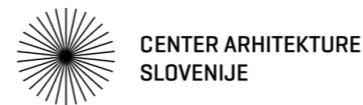


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# Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement (1918-2018)

## Toward a New Perception and Reception

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models of themselves and their respective furniture, but of the spaces in which they lived that became showcases, showing all of what they had collected and accumulated.

### **The Feminist Drawing Attitude but an Antifeminists Discourse Position**

Nowadays we consider Lina and Ray as twenty century creators that change the role of women in society. But how did they consider themselves? There is a contradiction point of view in how they are seen today and how they had seen themselves.

Both have similar goals, for instance, they studied higher education when women shouldn't do it. They followed their professional interest. Both married a divorced man with child. Both didn't have child. All of these items weren't considered standard in their time. They broke the social principles about women behaviour.

They belonged to a women generation that changed the rules in the thirties but after the second world war, in the fifties, they were called to come back home and to lead a family daily life in order to make progress their countries.

When the new feminism rose, in the late sixties, they didn't join the new theories; whereas they preferred to follow their own path. Lina had a clearer position expressed in text and interviews, but Ray didn't.

One unpublished interview with Lina in the Salvador de Bahia Newspaper in 1960: 'Lina Bardi (architect) speaks with (basis) of divorce' reflects a position of those who deny the need for feminism because she believes in the defeated of the male chauvinism.

Ray Eames always kept her in a cohabited position. She understood herself in a partnership, not alone. But she didn't feel subordinated either. Since the interview by Arlene Francis to Ray Eames (and Charles) during the *Home* show, host of NBC, in 1956 "America Meets Charles and Ray Eames" she appeared in the screen, not reclaiming her position but she didn't refuse it either. She played her role and she was comfortable with it.

Lina and Ray played continuously with modern philosophy concept 'I, an object'.

Voluntary they altered themselves into an exhibition object. They created an image of themselves.

### **Starlight Vattano**

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Faculty of Education | Italy

## Graphic Aalysis of the Project Kina by Teresa Żarnowerówna, 1926

### **Introduction**

Talking about the cultural and artistic renewal in the postwar Poland one links the issue on the creation of the new generation of architects, artists, sculptors, filmmakers and poets who, coming from easturope areas enriched by new culture of Cubism, Constructivism, Suprematism became pioneers of an eclectic culture. Among main objectives there was that of broadcasting a multiplicity of groundbreaking ideas giving shape to an artistic attitude toward the image rebuilt accornding to the new vision, which was totally expressed at the First Exhibition of New Art in Vilnius in 1923.

It was a turning point for that avantguard combined with architecture, which played a relevant role, in some cases matching with the figurative and plastic art.

The new artistic international researches were collected into the catalog of the exhibition, together with the studies and early theories of the new Polish avantguard.<sup>1</sup>

### **Education and Thought**

Teresa Żarnowerówna (1895) graduated from the School of Applied Arts, she exhibited for the first time some of her works in Vilnius, precisely during the chance she had in 1923 at the First

<sup>1</sup> Michał Wenderski, "Mutual exchange between Polish and Belgian magazines: a case study in cultural mobility within the interwar network of the avant-garde," *TS: Tijdschrift voor tijdschriftstudies*, no. 37 (June 2015), 40, <http://doi.org/10.18352/ts.329> (accessed June 4, 2018).



Exhibition of the New Art. She also participated in several occasions in which artistic and cultural values of the new generation flew, such as the works exhibited at Sturm Gallery in Berlin (1923), in Bucarest (1924) and at Polish Artistic Club in Warsaw (1924–1925).<sup>2</sup>

The spirit connected to the avantguard of Polish figurative arts started to take shape with the intervention of Mieczysław Szczuka, Rudolf Świerczyński and Szczesny Rukowski through a sort of manifesto *7 Arts*, then converging into the work carried out within the journal *Zwrotnica*, that first showed particular interest in the structuration of the artistic image aimed at the international thought which offered the artistic culture of time.<sup>3</sup> Parallel to the creation of these new ideas we are witnessing to the formation of artists groups in line with the Polish avantguard spirit in 1924, such as in the case of 'Blok' group, which emphasized its principles in the namesake journal edited by Mieczysław Szczuka and Teresa Żarnowerówna, turning into means of cultural, social and political Polish propaganda expression.<sup>4</sup>

Monika Król, arguing on the role of female Polish artists who played a relevant role in the definition of the East European avantguard highlights how the contribution of Żarnowerówna was important within the group not only according to the methodological and organizational point of view, aiming at identifying ways of divulgation of the new artistic values by exploiting technical possibilities offered by mass production systems and the communicative power of the photomontage, but also according to the economical point of view, financially supporting it.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Żarnowerówna was particularly active also in the cultural development of another Polish avantguard artistic group, the 'Grupa Kubistów, Konstruktywistów i Suprematystów Blok' (Group Blok of Cubists, Constructivists and Suprematists), to which she gave the name, supporting the publication and broadcasting of ideas of the rising group, as stated in the digital Jewish Women's Archive.<sup>6</sup>

So exactly the cultural heterogeneity characterizing the Blok group was the element that determined the rising of two ways of thought, starting from 1925, identifiable in the positions taken by Władysław

Strzemiński and Mieczysław Szczuka. The first one, together with Katarzyna Kobro carried out the idea according to which the art had to be conducted to the social and production order, while the second one, together with Żarnowerówna identified in art a means of expressions able to be declined into the daily life within which the artist could revenge his own role during the process of production, in the social and work issues.<sup>7</sup>

The Polish artist recognized in art a primal instinct that, through the human work, as a sort of imprinting, could be distilled from every form of unnecessary decoration, functional aiming to the beauty. Such as means of daily use, Żarnowerówna affirmed that 'the only rational declaration: no decoration, only function-determined shape of the object'.<sup>8</sup>

Next step was to get close to the issue more linked to architecture and urban planning, pursuing the utopian idea of garden houses into the garden cities, as became a true synthesis process into the social and urban revolution answering to the social needs.<sup>9</sup>

'A building shouldn't be perceived only as a heavy structure, but rather it should be seen as composition of different colors and surfaces',<sup>10</sup> with these words in the numbers 6 and 7 of *Blok* journal, Teresa Żarnowerówna started to deal with matters that identified in art and architecture an exchange and integration relationship, according to compositional dynamics for which architecture became the maximum plastic expression of the artistic object.

Starting from the number 10 of the journal *Blok* theatre, architecture and possible technological experimentations issues were dealt, which offering production processes, showing more and more the change in direction of the avantguard group.

Avantguard art and architecture melted in a synchronic partnership with the creation of the 'Praesens' group, founded by Helena Niemirowska and Szymon Syrkus, giving life, starting from that moment, to the collaboration among artists and architects with the common objective of overpassing the cultural tradition in favor of an international architecture.

In 1926 Teresa Żarnowerówna collaborated with Szymon Syrkus at the elaboration of several projects presented in Warsaw during the First International Exhibition of Modern Architecture.<sup>11</sup> Together with the first reasonings on research and experimentation of *nowy byt* (new forms of daily life) in the Soviet Union, starting from the 1927, the same when the Exhibition of Contemporary

7 Wenderski, *Mutual exchange*, 12.

8 Teresa Żarnower and Mieczysław Szczuka, "Czy sztuka dekoracyjna?" *Blok*, no. 10, (1925), 2.

9 Silvia Parlagreco (ed.), *Costruttivismo in Polonia* (Bollati Boringhieri, Turin 2005), 55.

10 Król, *Collaboration and Compromise*, 351.

11 Agata Malczyk, "Tracing Praesens: Roots and Context of Modern Movement in Poland" (Master thesis, Warsaw University of Technology, 1994), 61.

2 Monika Król, "Collaboration and Compromise: Women Artists in Polish-German Avant-Garde Circles, 1910–1930," *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930*, edited by Timothy O. Benson (Los Angeles: MIT Press/Los Angeles, 2002), 349.

3 For further insights on the historic-cultural condition of Warsaw in the period between 1926 and 1965 see A. Boscolo, "Varsavia 1916–1956: Modernizzazione e ricostruzione di una capitale dell'Europa centro-orientale" (PhD dissertation, Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, 2007).

4 Starting from 1924 eleven numbers of the avantguard journal *Blok* were published. The last number was printed in 1926.

5 Król, *Collaboration and Compromise*, 349.

6 For further insights see: "Teresa Żarnomer (Żarnomerówna)," *Encyclopedia*, Jewish Women's Archive, <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/zarnomer-teresa> (accessed December 10, 2017).

Architecture in Moscow was held, Teresa Żarnowerówna participated entering in contact with others easteuropean avanguard exponents and with new typologies of transitional dwelling.<sup>12</sup>

Adhering to the new architectonic spirit, the research line adopted by the avantguard group linked with the idea in which plastic parts depend on architecture directly. It is strongly connected to the human life conditions and, so it constitutes an immediate answer to the social needs. These matters were expressed in the journal *Dzwignia*.<sup>13</sup>

Add to this cultural renew process also the relevant role taken by the graphic language linked to the topography, cinematography and photomontage technique, visual landing through which numerous artists developed new ideas on the image composition at service of the communication and the information exchange of the cultural reality of the time.<sup>14</sup>

The approaching of Teresa Żarnowerówna to the architectural issue configured with several graphic reasonings through which the architect, investigated on balanced geometrical elements of the representation on surfaces by dynamically appearance by compositional expedients recalling suprematis and constructivist theories on the construction of the image, thinking on the possibility of the development of a flexible architecture to trace a repeatable in time and space.

The thought carried out by Żarnowerówna moved from the architectonic polish tradition which was obstructing the evolution process of the city and contemporary house which had to be in line with three principles: 'order, light and function'.<sup>15</sup> answering to the basic needs of man of eating, working and sleeping with functional and elegant spaces. After taking part at the International Exhibition in Paris in 1925, according to Żarnowerówna, Poland hadn't taken into account current issues linked to the technological development, industry, broadcast and cinema. It became necessary to get close to the idea of a new utilitarian art with respect to the daily requirements of the society of that time.<sup>16</sup>

### Redrawing of the *Project Kina*, 1926

Even if a lot of Żarnowerówna's projects remained on paper, her design logic was always very strong, aimed at the functional and spatial answer compared to the human body.

Graphic analysis carried out in this paper deals with the project of the cinema published on the number 11 of the journal *Blok*, on March of 1926, which Teresa Żarnowerówna elaborated together with Piotr Koziński and Antoni Karczewski.

Drawings on which graphic analysis is based include a longitudinal section, two plans on ground floor and first floor and two elevations.

According the study of plan geometry it is possible recognize a formal composition of simple figures, four circumferences concentric in twos and an oval figure that constitutes the fulcrum with respect to those circular ones. As in the façade, the shape of the plan recalls the idea of two eyes in the act of seeing; the concentricity of figures activates a dynamic perception of the obtained composition. The geometric sequence develops along the major axis of the oval figure, that defines also the symmetry axis of the whole composition. The same symmetric rollover principle is maintained in elevation, in fact, both in facades and in the longitudinal section the issue of the compositional rule is marked by the correspondence among volumes compared to the symmetry axis which rotates of 90° determining the rule of the main façade. The low volume, where the entrance hall is placed, opens on a cylindrical space compressed by the curved surface generated by the intersection and extrusion of the oval figure corresponding to the audience and the true screening room. The two side volumes, generated by the trace of two circle arches determine two wide spaces totally glazed and sheltered by a protruding shelter that follows the curved development of the two volumes at a lower height compared to that of the entrance hall. An almost antropomorph figure recalling the construction of a face with eyes corresponding to the two wide glazed walls of the low volumes interrupted, in the centre by a slot for the whole height of the central space. In fact, the symmetric rhythm of the façade is marked by the big parallelepiped placed in correspondence of the central entrance, rising to the maximum height riched by the body of the screening room. The geometric rhythm constituting the issue of the formal composition adopted by the three architects is further highlighted by the texturing of glazed walls which maintaining uniform modules among each other dimensionally and proportionally varying the passage from a volum to another, obtaining optical effects figure-background through which to generate a combination of full and empty formalizing the compositional identity fo the cine-theatre.

Such as in the section, the first 'eye' represented in plan corresponds to the projection room reachable through a spiral staircase and developing into the crossing parallelepiped on the symmetry axis of the oval figure. The reference to the functioning of the retina of the eye is readable into the projection machine showed in the drawing of the section of the project, in this way the cornea, iris and pupils

12 With the institution of the worker cooperatives (*NEP* and *WSM*, Dwellings Cooperatives of Warsaw) we are witnessing to a period during which artists and architects work in close collaboration aiming at the solving of social issues through a common language. In this direction the group *Praesens* was founded, which determined the theoretical structure of the modern architecture in Poland.

13 See Mieczysław Szczuka, "Art and reality," *Art and Social Change: A Critical Reader* edited by Will Bradley and Charles Esche (London: Tate Publishing; Afterall, 2007), 78–85.

14 See Esther Levinger, "Return to figuration: Władisław Stremiński and the move from Idealism," *Art history* 24, no. 1 (February 2001), 103–131

15 Levinger, *Return to figuration*, 8.

16 Żarnower and Szczuka, *Czy sztuka*, 2.

become parts of the compositional system in plan and elevation. Here, the audience constitutes the big social body receiving visual informations, reworking them. So the central part corresponds to the brain able to mediate the flow between perceived information and those deduced formal and conceptual ones. Adrian Anagnost recalls the words of a Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov dealing with the machin-eye, cine-eye 'I, cinemaeye, I, the mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you the world as only I can see it';<sup>17</sup> adhering to such theory Żarnowerówna recognizes in the modern technology a new visual experience able to emphasize images coming from external world (Fig. 1).

Observing the two facades, in correspondence to the screening room it is possible reading the development of a higher volume compared to that oval-planned one, but this is not identifiable neither in the section representation, that according to the cutting plane it should intercepted, nor in correspondence to the othe façade. For this reason, in the graphic reconstruction and in the digital model, the formal choice coherent with others elaborations has been chosen.

Being an unbuilt project, the presence of incongruences falls within that process of formation and construction of the idea through images that in the developing of the drawing traces a complex path undertaken by the thoughts in the formulation of the spatial composition.

With respect to the volumetric composition, according to Teresa Żarnowerówna, three conditions exist: one linked to the optimization of space that needs for a lot of light and has to be characterized by easy connections; another one deals with the unmasking of the building, in favor of the exaltation of the function that makes beauty the form; at last, the use of materials that have to allow a continuity of the treatment of surfaces between the inside and the outside (Fig. 2). In this regard, particular attention is shown by the architect for the color that 'fuses in the construction of an indissoluble whole with the ground and atmosphere'.<sup>18</sup>

Her architectural systems are thought to allow the enlargement of buildings and the infinite repetition of elements according to a disposition of vertical and orizontal planes delimitating the volumes.

The geometric matrix from which the volumes derive is rectangular, figure that according to Żarnowerówna and Szczuka 'has the potential energy to be multiplied indefinitely',<sup>19</sup> while a description on furniture shows the utilitarian attitude of the architect who, for the inside reduced to the necessary and functional, uses sliding panels, retractable tables, bed and cupboard set in the wall, demanding to the color the substancial role of completing the architectural work.

The relation between architecture and man, between the house and the perception of spaces,

gives shape to elements that express their own sign and sound, plasticly manifesting 'the balance between logic and emotion'<sup>20</sup>.

The project of Teresa Żarnowerówna analyzed represents a brief parenthesis and at the same time a moment concluded in itself of reflection on architecture and on its relation with the cinema, art and in particular that visual dimension linked to typographic, broadcasting and filmographic processes of composition of the image that the polish architect translated through bidimensional contrsuctions of straight lines, sliding surfaces and curved shapes controlled by the repetitive rhythm of the rollover, the radial evolution and the chromatic black and white contrast.

Her architecture was always influenced by the artistic reflection, the implications of the easteuropean avantguards and the combination machine-drawing into an interpretation of the human body that took shape of a kinematics mechanism becoming an exploration device of space from which generating the graphic-compositional thought.

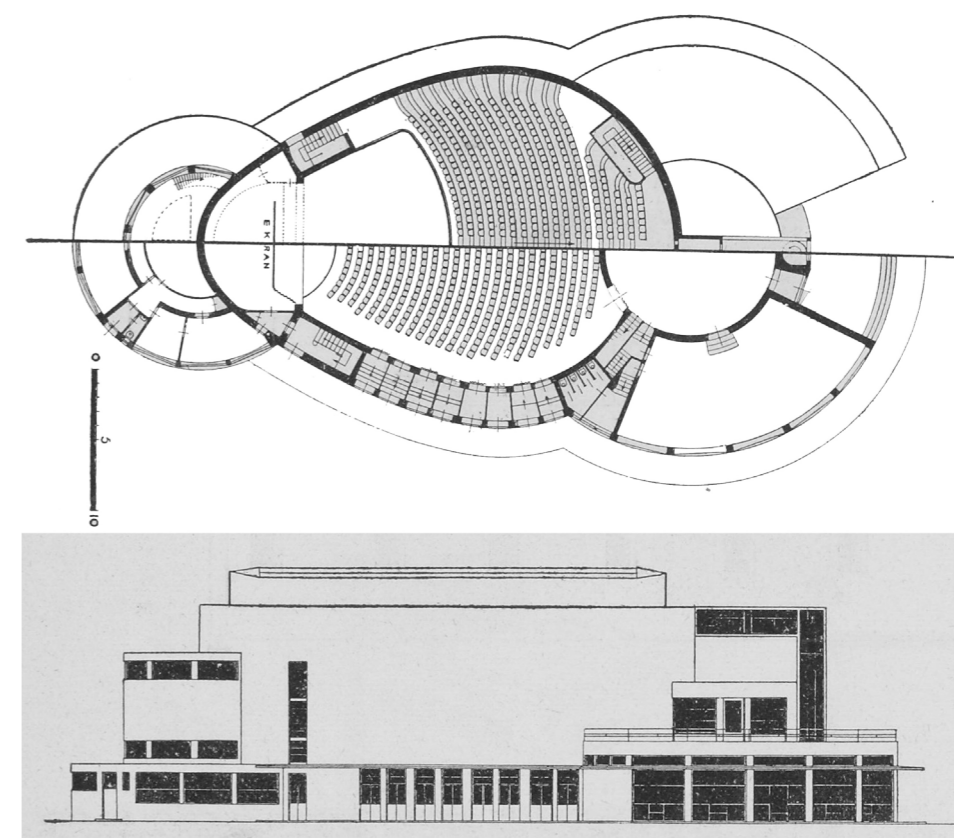


Fig. 1. Original plans of the ground floor and first floor and elevation of the Kina Project, 1926. Source: Teresa Żarnower and Mieczysław Szczuka (eds.), *Blok*, no. 11 (1926).

17 Adrian Anagnost, "Teresa Żarnowerówna: Bodies and Buildings," *Woman's Art Journal* (Fall/Winter 2016), 42.

18 Ibid.

19 Teresa Żarnower and Mieczysław Szczuka, "Architektura Wnetrz," *Blok*, no. 8-9 (1924), 14-15.

20 Żarnower and Szczuka, *Czy sztuka*, 8.



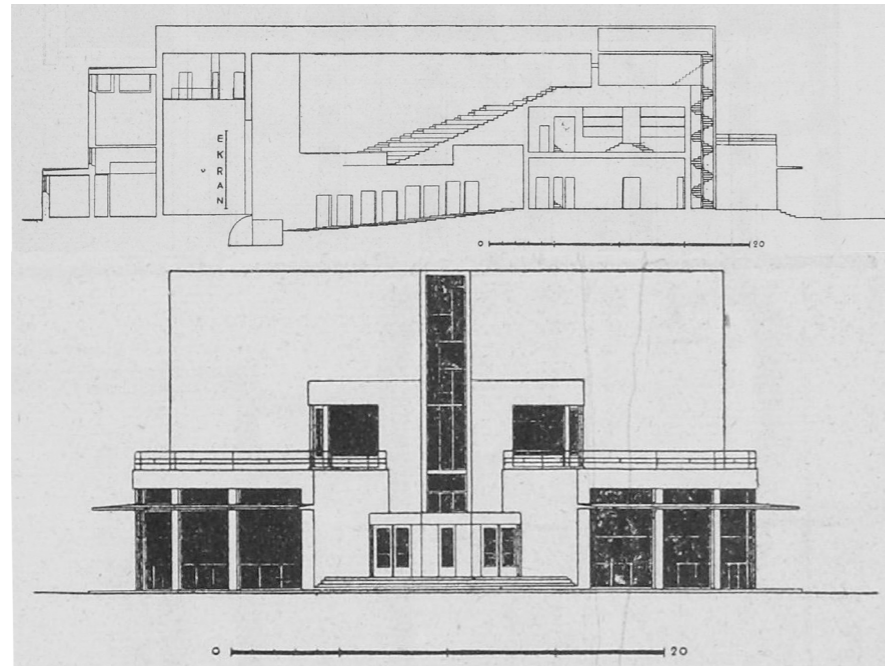


Fig. 2. Original longitudinal section and façade of the Kina Project, 1926. Source: Teresa Żarnower and Mieczysław Szczuka (eds.), Blok, no. 11 (1926).

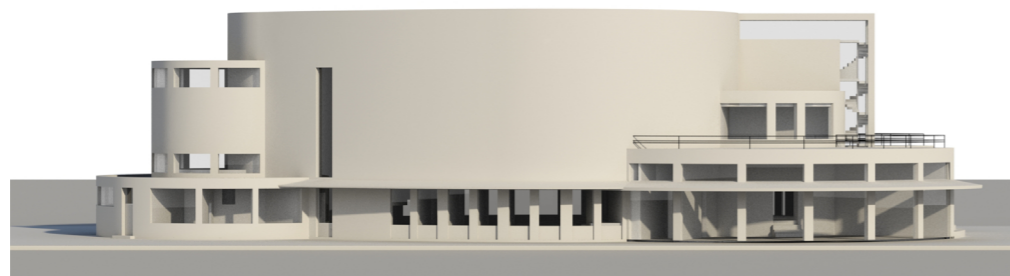
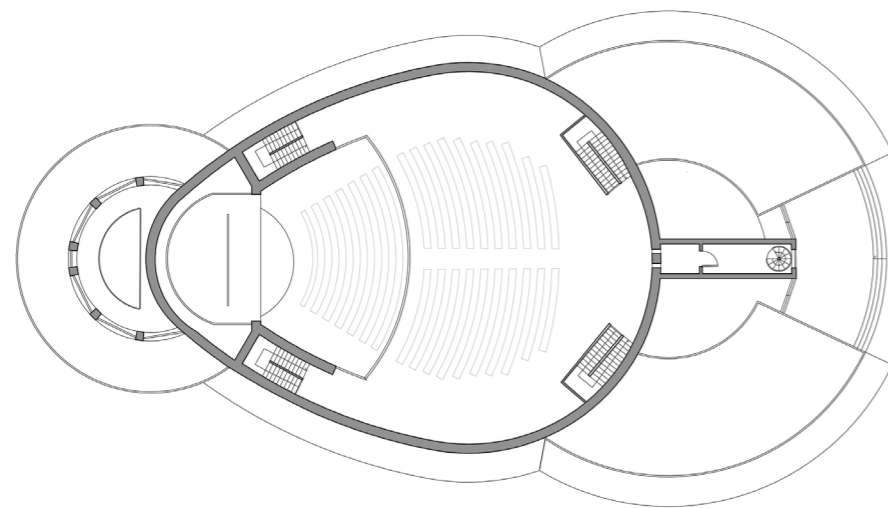
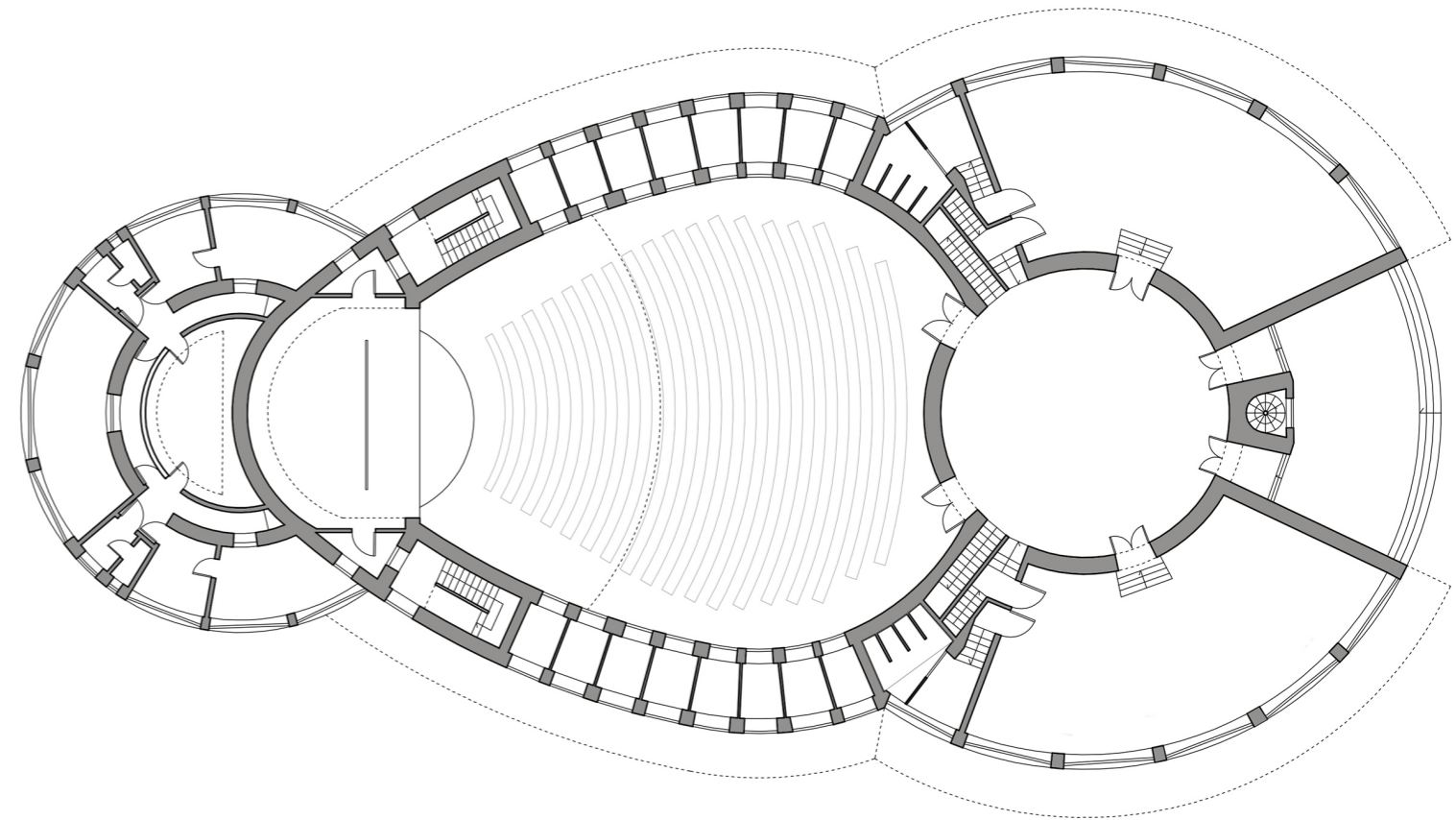


Fig. 3. Plan of the first floor and façade from 3D model of the Kina Project (drawing, 3D model and render by S. Vattano).



Fig. 4. Plan of the ground floor and perspective section of the Kina Project (by S. Vattano).

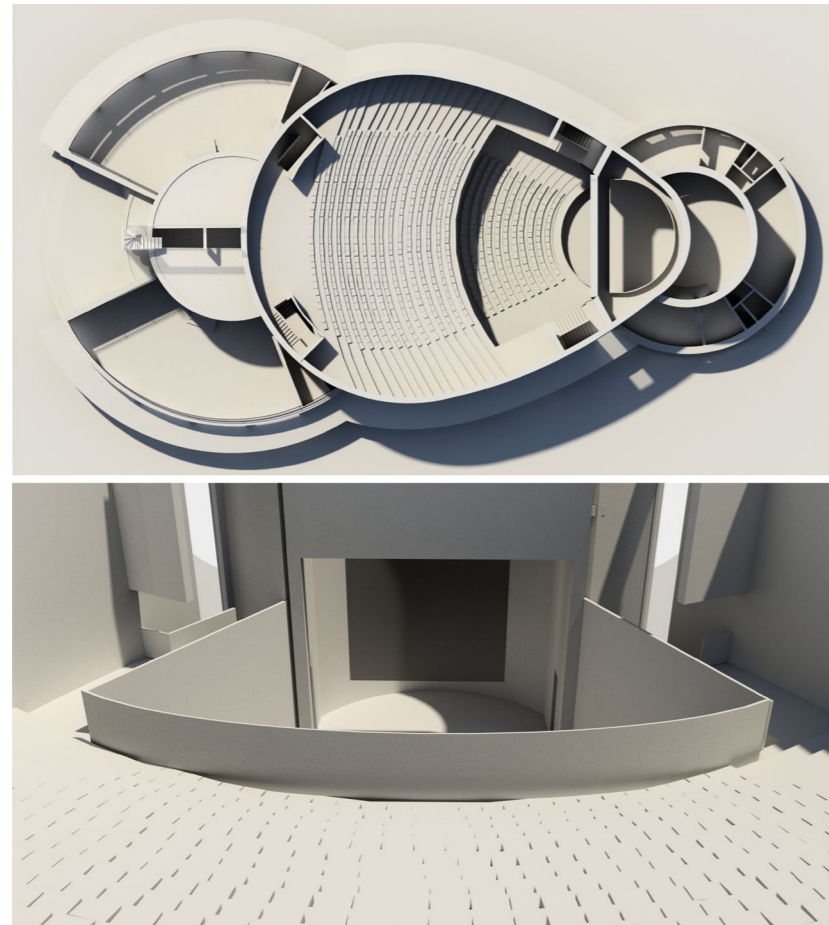


Fig. 5. Perspective views from the 3D model (by S. Vattano).

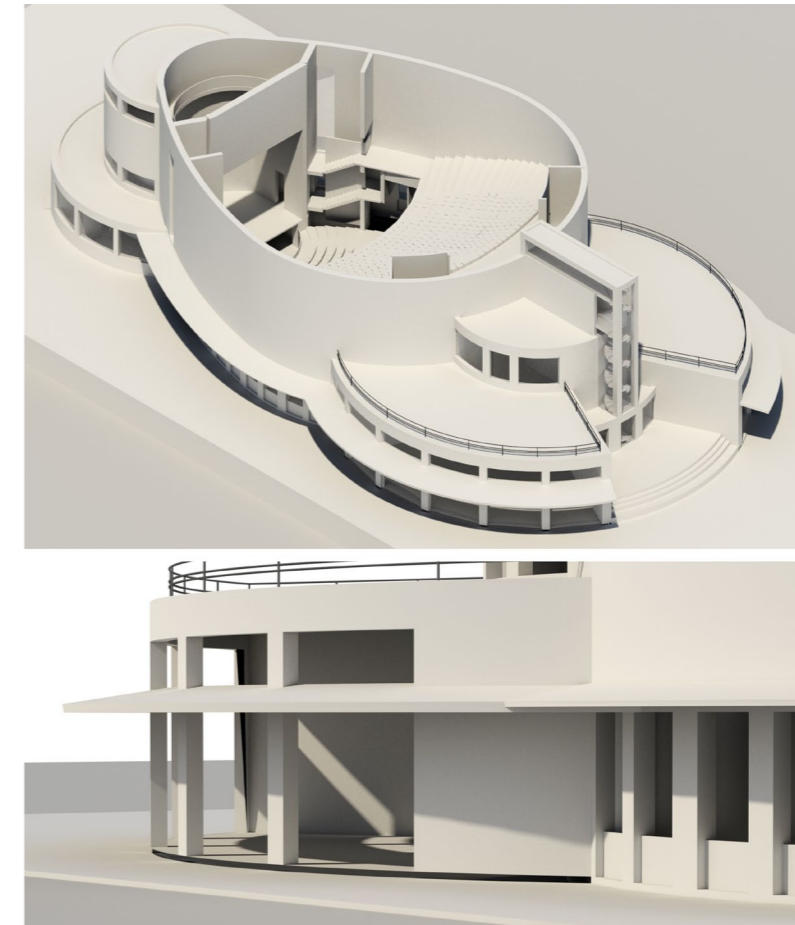


Fig. 7. Axonometric exploded and perspective view (by S. Vattano).

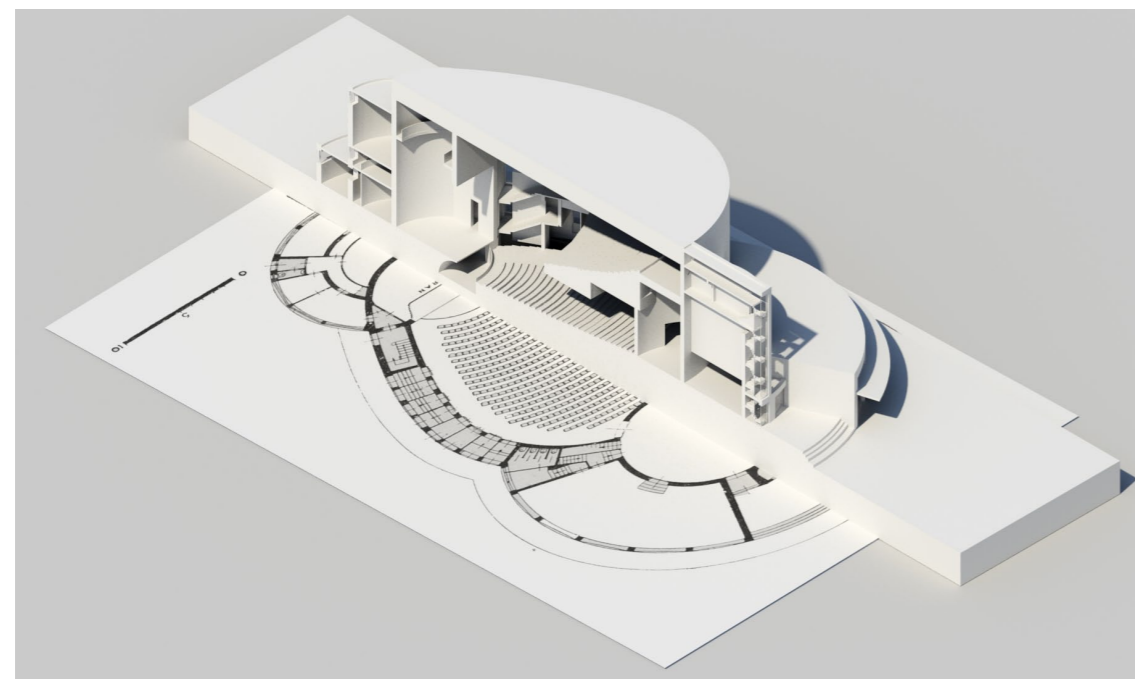


Fig. 6. Axonometric exploded and original plan (by S. Vattano).

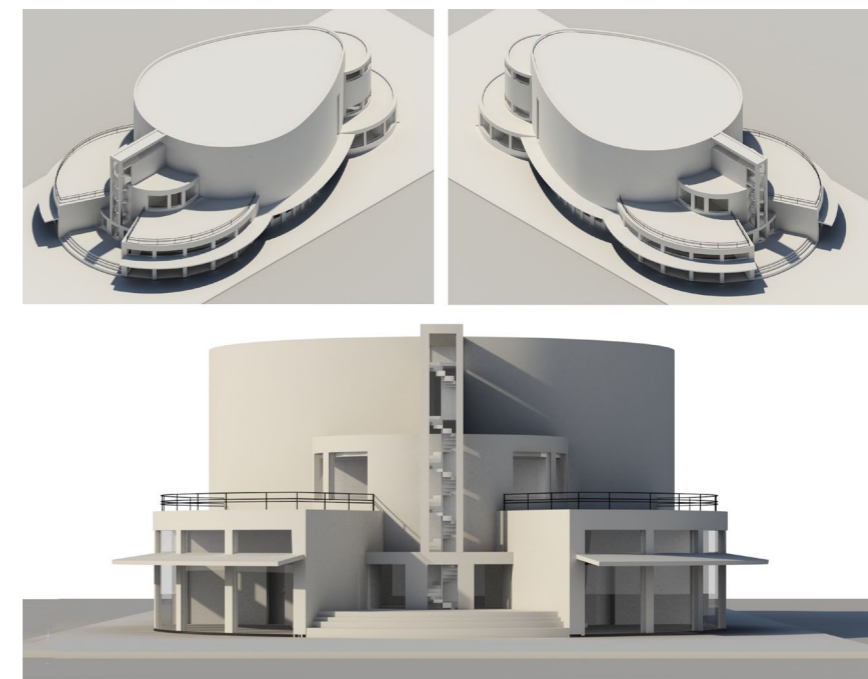


Fig. 8. Isometric views of the model and façade (by S. Vattano).



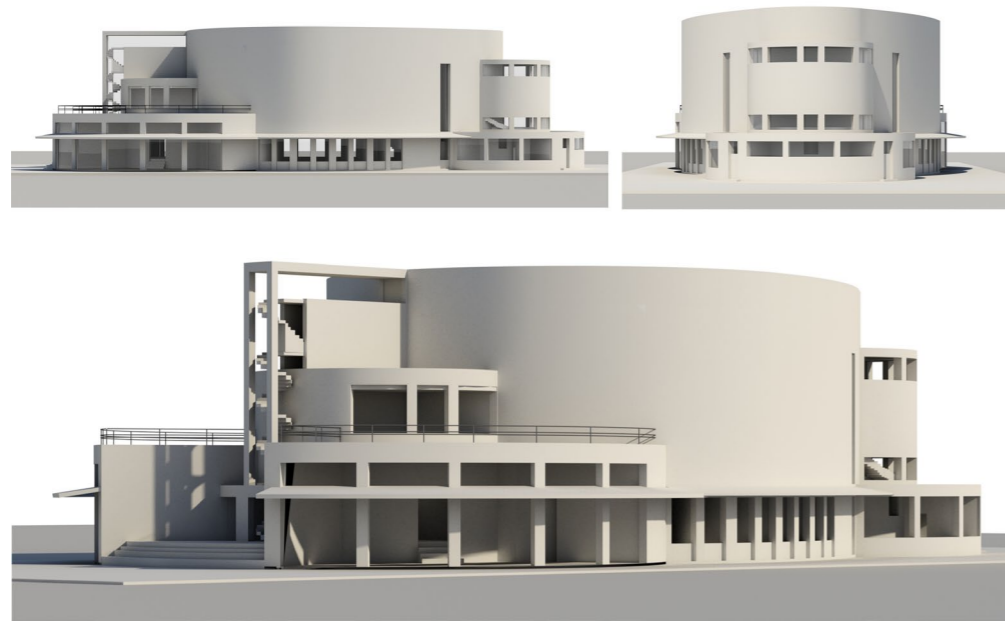


Fig. 9. Facades and perspective view (by S. Vattano).

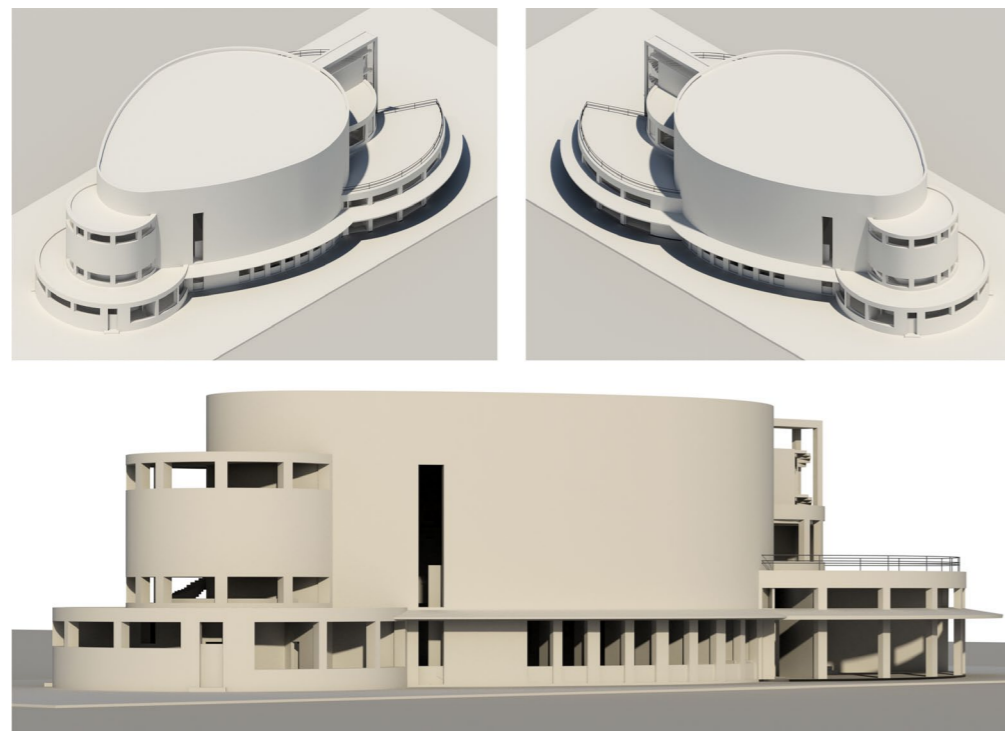


Fig. 10. Isometric views and perspective view (by S. Vattano).

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## Women in Architecture: From Sources of Inspiration to Protagonists on the Architectural Scene

From the ancient to the modern world, that of women is the theme most addressed, most considered, most presented and discussed among all the artistic (and not only) manifestations of man. The female figure has always been a source of privileged inspiration in the architectural and artistic field. Since prehistoric times we find it represented with many facets and invested with multiple roles, from that of mother to that of divinity, etc. The woman evokes life and pushes the artist to look at yourself inside and try to understand his connection with nature, with the earth and with his being a man. The idealized female form aims to represent absolute perfection, above all other living forms, because it is a symbol of beauty, elegance and harmony. Even the terms that we use in everyday language are influenced by the charm that evokes the feminine being for example the words 'art', 'architecture', 'painting', 'sculpture' in Italian language are all feminine, almost to indicate that the genre of a word may suggest something beautiful, for the eyes and for the heart. We think for example the words 'pillar' and 'column': they are two synonyms, because both refer to vertical elements with support function, but only the term column contains in itself a decorative meaning and makes us imagine something beautiful, elegant and with an architectural value. As Vittorio Sgarbi wrote:

It is not only carnality or sensuality, or attraction of beauty; the female figure is the symbol of dreams and desires, it is an evanescent image, which you can never reach to the end: it is the dream, it is the hope, it is the desire.<sup>1</sup>

The Nike of Samothrace, Hellenistic masterpiece that challenges the centuries, is perhaps the most

<sup>1</sup> Vittorio Sgarbi, *Piene di grazia: I volti della donna nell'arte* (Milano: Bompiani, 2011).