

**FORMATION OF THE THEATRICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM IN UKRAINE  
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XX CENTURY  
(through the example of Les Kurbas and Mark Tereschenko)**

**Purpose of the research.** The purpose of the article is to study the formation of the theatrical Constructivism in Ukraine at the beginning of XX century through the example of Les Kurbas and Marko Tereschenko. **Methodology.** The methodology of the research consists of the scientific methods such as analysis, synthesis, art-criticism and historical-comparative method. All of them allow the author to study the formation of Ukrainian Constructivism in the theatres of the 1920s. The analysis is used to research the main tendencies of the theatre's development at the beginning of the XX century. Historical and comparative method help us to analyze the creativity of L. Kurbas and M. Tereschenko. Art criticism allows us to review the main performances of the directors-constructivists. **Scientific novelty.** The author proves the great influence of Ukrainian Constructivism on the development of the theatrical art and the contribution of Les Kurbas and Marko Tereschenko to this process. **Conclusions.** Thus, at the beginning of the XX century, many theatrical directors used the ideas of Constructivism in their performances. L. Kurbas and M. Tereshchenko were the most popular among them. Their innovations of the theatrical art were the collective method of creativity, plasticity and action as the main elements of the performance.

**Key words:** constructivism, theatre, Les Kurbas, Marko Tereschenko, futurism.

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**Зародження театрального конструктивізму в Україні на початку XX століття: на прикладі творчості Леся Курбаса та Марка Терещенка**

**Мета** статті полягає в аналізі процесу формування театрального конструктивізму в Україні на початку XX століття на прикладі творчості Леся Курбаса та Марка Терещенка. **Методологія** дослідження ґрунтується на різних наукових методах. Метод аналізу було використано для дослідження основних тенденцій розвитку театру на початку XX століття; історико-порівняльний – для дослідження творчості Л. Курбаса та М. Терещенка; мистецтвознавчий – для розгляду найвідоміших вистав режисерів-конструктивістів. **Наукова новизна** полягає у розкритті впливу українського конструктивізму на розвиток театрального мистецтва та внеску видатних режисерів Леся Курбаса та Марка Терещенка у цей процес. **Висновки.** На початку XX століття у театральному просторі України працювала низка режисерів, які втілювали у своїх виставах ідеї конструктивізму. Зокрема, Лесь Курбас та Марко Терещенко вибудовували свої спектаклі за принципом "театру дії", ритміки, пластичності та методу колективної творчості.

**Ключові слова:** конструктивізм, театр, Лесь Курбас, Марко Терещенко, футуризм.

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**Зарождение театрального конструктивизма в Украине в начале XX века: на примере творчества Леся Курбаса и Марка Терещенко**

**Цель** работы заключается в анализе процесса формирования театрального конструктивизма в Украине в начале XX века на примере творчества Леся Курбаса и Марка Терещенко. **Методология** исследования базируется на использовании разных научных методов. Метод анализа использован для исследования основных тенденций развития театра в начале XX века; с помощью сравнительного проанализировано творчество Л. Курбаса та М. Терещенко; искусствоведческий позволил рассмотреть самые известные спектакли режиссёров-конструктивистов. **Научная новизна** статьи заключается в раскрытии влияния украинского конструктивизма на развитие театрального искусства и вклада выдающихся режиссеров Леся Курбаса и Марка Терещенко в этот процесс. **Выводы.** В начале XX века в театральном пространстве Украины работала плеяда режиссеров, которые воплощали в своих спектаклях идеи конструктивизма. В частности, Лесь Курбас и Марко Терещенко выстраивали свои спектакли по принципу "театра действия", ритмики, пластичности и метода коллективного творчества.

**Ключевые слова:** конструктивизм, театр, Лесь Курбас, Марко Терещенко, футуризм.

Actuality of the Topic. In the XX century, the Ukrainian theatre joined the tendencies of the European stage art. The main one was the synthesis of Ukrainian folk traditions and the newest achievements of the world theatrical space. The terminology of the beginning of XX century defined it as the "process of getting the European character". The directing as the author's synthesis of the all aspects of the performance was the main trend in the development of world theatrical art. Les Kurbas and Marko Tereshchenko were the brightest figures of the Ukrainian theatre, who belonged to that tendency. Today, Ukrainian theatrical art is looking for new forms, which need the revision of the theatrical experience of Ukrainian directors at the beginning of XX century.

The development of Ukrainian theatre was analysed in the works of many scientists. They are V. Vasylenko, G. Veselovska, S. Efremov, B. Kozak, Yu. Mezchenko, H. Mylenka, M. Popovych, A. Chuzchyi, Yu. Yurchenko etc. The European constructivism and its influence on the theatre was considered by

E. Vasilieva, T. Goryacheva, A. Ikonnikov, V. Nikonov, E. Sidorina, V. Furer, S. Khan-Magomedov and others. The variety of scientific researches are devoted to the directing of the Ukrainian artists such as Les Kurbas and Marko Tereshchenko, whereas their attitude to the constructivism is little known. It make us analyse this issue more properly.

The purpose of the research is to analyse the formation of the theatrical Constructivism in Ukraine at the beginning of the XX century through the example of Les Kurbas and Marko Tereschenko.

Main part. The Ukrainian theatre of XIX century preferred realism, whereas the theatre of the XX century used the avant-garde aesthetics and variety of styles.

In the early 1920's, the theatrical studios of futurists were the main impetus to experiment with theatrical forms. The artists used different archaic stage forms and modern kinds of media such as cinema or photography. After the Bolsheviks came to power, in Ukraine members of the Theatrical Department of the People's Commissariat of Education controlled the art. The most part of its members had belonged to the left wing movements before the revolution. Their creativity was characterized by ephemeral forms and the anti-bourgeoisie nature. The opposition art became an official way of the theatrical development in the Soviet Union. The new authorities began using those reformers and artists.

Until 1923, the Soviet Union had not become the totalitarian state yet. Therefore, it had some liberal and democratic tendencies such as opened borders. At that period, the Ukrainian and European artists could free exchange their ideas and innovations. Many of the representatives of art left the Soviet Union, though many of them returned home and brought the newest world artistic tendencies.

Ilya Erenburg was one of the artists, who had decided to return. He went to Germany and became the ideologist of Constructivism. He together with El' Lysytsky, an artist-constructivist, published the magazine "The Thing". Their perception of Constructivism was the result of the technological revolution of early 1920s. The glorification of technology did not have any serious ideology. According to the aesthetic and theoretical points of view, Constructivism was not a monolithic phenomenon. The scientists divided it into two groups – European and Soviet.

In the early 1920s, Ukraine got the news about constructivist innovations, and modern avant-garde projects from the West and the East. Therefore, the Ukrainians, who had emigrated to Europe, sent new magazines and books. They were politicians, artists, writers etc. In Odessa, the union YUGOLEF – the branch of the Moscow Avant-garde group of the LEF, led by O. Brik and V. Mayakovsky, acted. The Ukrainian artistic environment was ready to create the avant-garde art. At that period, Constructivism had rather aggressive character and played the leading role in the Ukrainian artistic space. We can see it in the monumental and fine arts.

In the second half of the 1920s, the constructivist ideas began getting popularity among theatrical directors, actors and decorators. In 1923, Constructivism became a factor of artistic and social life in Kharkiv. It was declared, proclaimed, studied and considered on the pages of the local magazines and newspapers. The centre of the Kharkiv Constructivism was "Decorative and production workshop", headed by G. Tsapok. It was opened in the winter of 1923 at the Social Museum named after Artem.

The formal beginning of Constructivism in Ukraine was the article of M. Johansen, the poet and one of the founders of the VAPLITE. It was entitled "Constructivism as the Art of the Transitional Age". In 1922, the Kharkiv magazine "Ways of Art" published it. Mike Johansen defined that the construction had primarily an ideological task and not a formational one. The constructivists of the LEF futurist branch were opposed to such position. "Art is a worldview. Communist art is the communist worldview. Its form is the same as its content. Its design is the same as its construction" [6, 110].

At the end of the 1920s, the representatives of the "industrial art", which replaced the "formal" Soviet constructivism at the leading positions, proposed to withdraw the artistic imagery. A. Mazaev said: "Art as the production of material things, art as a modelling of the forms of social life were the general program of Proletkult and the "Left Front", which got the name "industrial art". It opposed the perception of art as a form of ideology, as the recognition of life and a figurative creativity" [5, 37].

It is clear that such position contradicted the aspirations of L. Kurbas and O. Dovzhenko. The followers of the "industrial art" stated that art could exist without art. They thought that the art did not have any hedonistic functions. In addition, they interpreted the creating of ideology as the productive function, which could transform a personality and his/her social views.

Aleksei Gan, an ideologist of Constructivism, said that the theatrical constructivism appeared as the result of the fight between the professional theatre and the constructivist theatre. It was declared by the First All-Russian Congress of Labour-Peasant Theatres in 1920. The congress proclaimed the following tasks of the proletarian artists:

- to struggle with the professional theatre;
- to guard class cleanliness, independence of artistic forms and methods of the proletarian theatre;
- to develop the experiments with the "mass theatre";
- to prevent spreading the bourgeois culture among proletarian socialist theatres..." [7, 51].

In Soviet Constructivism, the crystallization of art forms was held in accordance with the ideas of industrial art. It was based on such principles as industrialization and labour movement.

The Ukrainian theatrical Constructivism combined the slogans of the producers, the adaptation of the LEF-constructivism in the Ukrainian theatrical culture of the 1920s, the using of the Bauhaus heritage and the theoretical works of Ukrainian constructivists such as M. Johansen.

In theatres, Ukrainian Constructivism duplicated the well-known forms and ideas, which were not unique. In 1923 – 1930, the constructivist performances were staged in many cities – Kharkiv, Kyiv, Odessa, Poltava, etc.

The Ukrainian constructivist scenography clearly showed that the construction was a self-contained object that had an important function as well as an emotional and figurative content.

V. Meller, Ukrainian avant-garde artist, began promoting the ideas of Constructivism in Ukrainian scenography. In 1910s, he studied in Munich and at the studio of Oleksandra Ekster, where he took an interest in avant-garde art. V. Meller collaborated with the most radical theatrical groups at that time in Ukraine. They were the theatre "Berezil" and theatre of Hnat Mikhaïlichenko. He created a scenography laboratory at the Artistic Association "Berezil". There he trained numerous students, designed unique mobile decors for the performances "Gas", "Macbeth", "October" and "Secretary of the Trade Union".

In "Berezil", the enthusiasm for Constructivism as well as expressiveness was not long. Only the concept of L. Kurbas's creative method continued functioning as a pattern of "life-building". L. Kurbas believed that the theatre had to transform social and life realities into artistic reality. The art should turn into reality and be a form of production. In his opinion, it had to produce necessary and useful things. In practice it meant, that in the process of theatrical creativity we formed a fundamentally different person mentally and physically.

L. Kurbas considered the theory of motion the most effective method to renew theatres spiritually and physically. In his article "The Ways of Berezil and the Issue of the Texture" (1925) L. Kurbas stated: "Transformation has been the main core of the left theatre recently. It is a formula for theatrical means that reveals the imaginary reality in its psychological or social essence. It also makes an audience activate its perception, which is the basis of every theatre. It is the very flexible principle in its capabilities, which corresponds to a complete scientific view of art. It has not got its place among theatrical methods yet, although it is widely used in the left theatres" [4, 247].

In 1924, L. Kurbas with his wife V. Chistyakova, went to Moscow, where they visited the performances of O. Faika, S. Krzhyzhanovsky, O. Tairov and S. Eisenstein. L. Kurbas liked S. Eisenstein's play "Do you hear, Moscow?" by S. Tretyakov. In our opinion, this performance of S. Eisenstein stimulated Kurbas to stage "Gas Mask" by S. Tretyakov in "Berezil" theatre. For the first time the play was shown on March 30, 1924 in the House of the Red Army. V. Meller designed its decorations. L. Kurbas with his student B. Tiagno tried to organize the stage action using the functional method. The actors had to play modern real workers. Then, the theatre gave up using this method, because it was opposed to the conception of L. Kurbas and his troupe.

In 1919, Marco Tereshchenko, the head of the Kyiv State Theatrical College, presented the composition "The First House of the New World" on the stage of the Kyiv Opera. The scenography was created by A. Petrytsky, an artist. The music was written by A. Butsky, a composer, who later created the music to Kurbas's play "Gimmi Gigins" in the style of Expressionism.

The first performance, directed by M. Tereshchenko, was created on the basis of the method of collective creativity. Therefore, it was a complex of individual sketches, prepared by the actors. The scenario consists of the poems of Pavlo Tychyna, Volodymyr Sosyura, Mikhail Semenko and Vasyl Ellan-Blakytnyi. The composition was based on the method of "art of action" and rhythm, fixed in various graphic forms. The rhythm and spatial constructions were synchronized.

In 1924, the theatre named after H. Mikhaïlichenko presented the play "Universal Necropolis". The design of the stage space was created by K. Eleva, the music was written by M. Verikivsky. There were many stylistic and aesthetical methods in the performance. For example, the scene "Meeting with Bambuchi" was staged according to the principle of domino. The female costumes reminded the dresses of N. Lamanova.

In "The Proletarian Truth", V. Furer wrote about the controversial play the following: "It is not just a rhythm or movement – it is the rhythm motion, movement – sarcasm. Machine. Dance of War. It is surprisingly a good meeting of the ministers. ... The chaos of the power in Ukraine is executed extremely economically. It takes 2 – 3 minutes, and the impression is great. Best of all – the tavern. I have never seen better reproduction of moonshine rape and crime before!" [8].

We can conclude that the task of the theatrical activity has changed. Its main purpose became incrimination, but not agitation. M. Tereshchenko did not show individualized images, but he highlighted the types of his contemporaries. The basis of the statement was the movement, and it was a coherent times. There were dynamic and directional movements in the performance, whereas L. Kurbas used only abstract ones in "Berezil". L. Kurbas's movement had the aesthetic character. The theatre named after H. Mykhailychenko interpreted a movement as a realistic industrial process. The press described that difference in such a way: "In L. Kurbas's theatre movement had a psychological significance, the Myhailichektivsi understand it as the industrial movement and working process. The task of the latter ones is to transfer or reproduce the industrial modern rhythm by human movements, whereas "Berezil" wants to reproduce the whole "modernity" [9].

After the premiere of "The Universal Necropolis", M. Tereshchenko staged a play "The Nase" by Y. Lebedinsky. In our opinion, the director chose the story "Week" (1923), devoted to the revolutionary events in Chelyabinsk, because his theatre had changed its political and creative direction – from the agitation to the description. The actors realistically presented the life of the city, where the Red Army tried to repair the railway station in order to bring the seeds for sowing. The performance also showed the representatives of the Soviet party, who organized a workday to procure wood for trains. The local gangsters, who attempted to kill bolsheviks, were played excellently. At the end of the performance, we

could listen to "International" as the symbol of the bolsheviks' victory. Consequently, the theatre reminded the spectator, which party and how won the revolution" [2, 135].

M. Tereshchenko staged three performances – "Whirlpool" by G. Stavovoi, "Sorochinsky Fair" by M. Gogol and "97" by M. Kulish. He used the techniques of a realistic theatre in all of them. The performances included the ideological components of the Communist party. They met all requirements of the political order.

In November 1924, the premiere of "Whirlpool" was held. The play told about the episode of memoirs of V. Zatonsky, who was the revolutionary party activist. Grebinka, the commander of the Taraschanka partisan brigade decided to sell alcohol to the local population in order to improve the material situation of his soldiers. It led to a rebellion of his troops, who had decided to go to Kyiv and join A. Denikin's army. The situation was saved by Volodymyrsky (supposedly, V. Zatonsky).

"Whirlpool" significantly showed life of that period. The performance was rather melodramatic and naturalistic. The basis of the production was the well-known method of the cinematic action. We could see it in the performance "Do you hear, Moscow?" of S. Eisenstein.

Another play "97 The Poor" (the play "97" of M. Kulish) failed. It led to the discussion among artists about the returning of the realistic aesthetics in Ukrainian theatres. In 1924, there were many calls for the utopian ideas of social equality and solidarity. In a review on "97 The Poor", V. Vasilenko highlighted the main disadvantage of the play. It was the absence of the ideological and formal stylistic character [1]. He criticized the final of the performance because there were no revolutionary pathetic and ideological functions. At the end of the play, the spectator could not understand who had won. Some of the poor died, the others went to the kurkuls. The author did not show any positive city's influence on the village. However, the scenography of K. Eleva was amazing: "The performance is staged in the spirit of the modern realism that emphasizes the form of the performance (movements, costumes, makeup, and stage decoration). K. Eleva has made original simplest scenic "pavilions" and "platforms" that only underline its artistic modernism" [1].

Despite the reviewers' critics, they pointed out the excellent directing music and scenography ideas of K. Eleva.

At the end of 1924, the theatre named after H. Mikhailichenko got its own permanent building in Kyiv – the former Troitsky People's House, which had been called Maria Zankovetska Theatre before.

In March 1925, the comedy of S. Gray and Y. Yanovsky "Chamberlain" was the last Kyiv performance of the theatre named after H. Mikhailichenko. The grotesque play had the adventurous content, which was typical for that time. It told that in the USA the people created the "Society of Preservation of Living Culture" to restore the monarchy. In Ukraine, they organized the "museum", where a former chamberlain lived. He was a descendant of a noble family of the Lyzogubs. The chamberlain lived in the palace according to old customs, organized parties, read the pre-revolutionary press. Lyzogub got tired of such life. He gave up everything and returned to selling. Moreover, his daughter married a museum commissar.

The performance was successful. Y. Yanovsky, who was a correspondent of the "Bolshevik", wrote: "As for the director's work, we should identify the wide canvas, the high culture of the European master. The scene of the meeting of American capitalists is striking by its completeness, accuracy. The scene with cleaning in the Lyzogub Palace is brilliant. It has no words whereas it is alive and addictive. The old way of life is shown in various grotesque virtues such as the "emblem" of Lyzohub (the eagle on the back), the "medal" of the town head. ... K. Eleva masterfully solved the question of stage constructive design and for the first time connected the site with paints, used the light. Colours are fresh and alive. ... The music of Leslie (noisy) was not new but it satisfied the melodious beauty" [10].

In the spring of 1925, the long tour of Donbass was the end of the creative activity of the theatre named after H. Mikhailichenko. The People's Commissars ordered the theatre to go to Odessa to form the basis of a new team – the Odessa State Drama.

We can see Marko Tereshchenko approached the live theatre thanks to his performances in Odessa – "Dictatorship" (1929) by I. Mykytenko. In addition, we can find some evidence in the memoirs of the famous literary critic S. Efremov. He supported the traditional Ukrainian theatre and critically characterized the revolutionary changes in Ukrainian theatres: "It is said that in Odessa newspapers M. Tereshchenko has already published a renunciation of his "theatre of action". He said that it was a temporary theatre, and the only possible theatre could be realistic one. Now it is L. Kurbas's turn. The answer is the order to return to realism" [3, 254].

Obviously, M. Tereshchenko simply did not have an opportunity to stage modern plays, which had the propaganda and the aesthetics of everyday realism. Perhaps, his futuristic past did not prevent the theatre from saving, because the authorities did not support futurism. Unfortunately, after beginning of the industrialisation policy, the authorities ceased to support the avant-garde and focused on the other artistic trends.

Conclusions. Thus, at the beginning of XX century, there were many theatrical directors, who used the ideas of Constructivism in their performances. L. Kurbas and M. Tereshchenko were the most popular among them.

In his theatre "Berezil" L. Kurbas with V. Meller tried to implement the modern tendencies of European theatre. They are action, music, rhythm and the unusual form of expression and dynamics of modernity. All of them were put in practice in the following performances – "Birth of Giant", "Gas", "Macbeth", "October" and "Secretary of the Trade Union". As for M. Tereshchenko, he developed the theoretical and practical program of "collective creativity" and "art of the activity". It was used to implement the formula of avant-garde art, namely, the expression of the subjective origin of the masses. We can see that the

characteristics of the stage practice of the theatre named after H. Mykhailichenko interacted with the statements of the Futurism ideologists such as Mikhail Semenko (the articles "Art as a Cult" (1924)). The new organizational features of M. Tereshchenko's theatre were the rejection of directorial dictate and the introduction of collective method and plasticity. The method of collective action, declared by M. Tereshchenko as revolutionary innovation, became his main aesthetic provocation in the Ukrainian theatre, which influenced its further development.

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## СТИЛЬОВА ЕВОЛЮЦІЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО КЛАСИЧНОГО ФАРФОРУ-ФАЯНСУ XIX – ПОЧАТКУ XX СТОЛІТТЯ У ПРАКТИЦІ МИСТЕЦТВОЗНАВЧИХ ЕКСПЕРТНИХ ДОСЛІДЖЕНЬ

**Мета статті** – дослідження еволюційних процесів українського класичного фарфору в практиці мистецтвознавчих експертних опрацювань, розробка систематизації характерних елементів, стильових ознак розпису, колірної гами, форм виробів XIX – початку XX століть. **Методологія** дослідження ґрунтується на застосуванні історичного методу – для визначення еволюції стильових особливостей виробів з фарфору та фаянсу України XIX – початку XX століть; історико-порівняльного (компаративного) методу – для зіставлення досліджуваних творів з європейськими та російськими аналогами; культурологічного методу – для опрацювання етичних та естетичних проблем експертизи у мистецтвознавчій і науково-реставраційній діяльності. **Наукова новизна** полягає у проведенні досліджень художніх творів з фарфору-фаянсу та застосуванні практичних методів мистецтвознавчої експертизи у науковій реставрації тонкокерамічних виробів у музеях України, а також у визначенні низки предметів фарфору та фаянсу XIX – початку XX ст. за стилістичними ознаками, функціональним призначенням, їх видовою приналежністю з метою мистецтвознавчих опрацювань. **Висновки.** Формування і розвиток художніх стильових напрямів українського класичного фарфору-фаянсу XIX – початку XX ст. є однією з проблем, які висвітлюються останнім часом у науковій літературі вітчизняними і зарубіжними мистецтвознавцями. Виявлення стильових ознак та оригінальності творів тонкої кераміки з живописним орнаментальним декором є важливим чинником у проведенні комплексної експертизи та атрибуції.