

A FOUNTAIN AND STAIRWAY DESIGN FOR THE OPEN-AIR  
THEATER BEHIND THE MUSIC BUILDING

by

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A Thesis

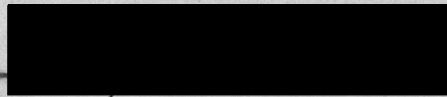
Presented to the Department of Sculpture  
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

December 1935

APPROVED:



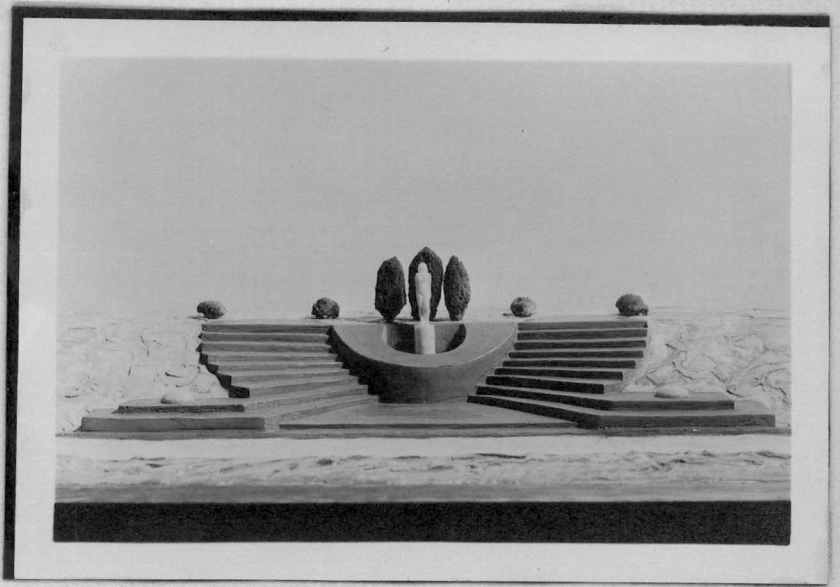
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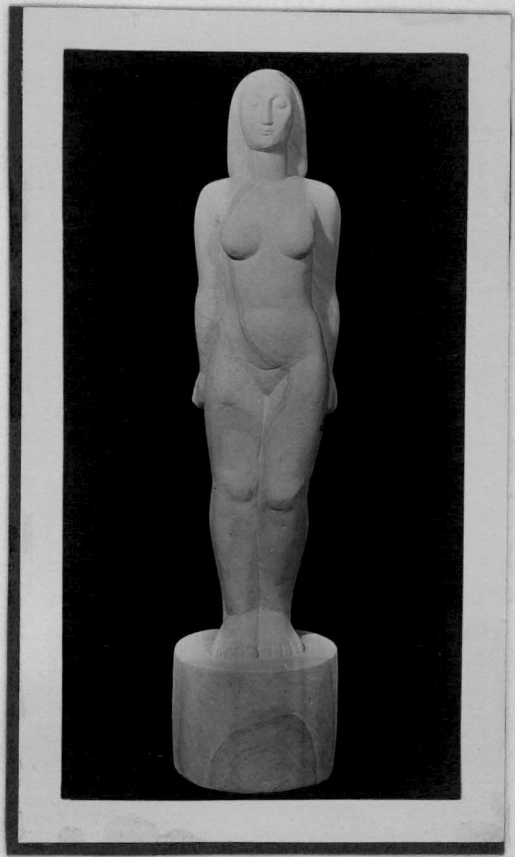


For the Graduate Committee  
of the School of Architecture  
and Allied Arts

as shown on page 91







PHOTOGRAPH BY THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK



Architecture deals with the relation of mass against space. Sculpture is pure form which deals with the relation of parts to itself. When sculpture relates to other objects in space it becomes architecture.\* Modern sculpture is architectural in conception and function. Hence I will use the terms architecture and sculpture as defined in the above statement. Architecture at present deals not with eclectic styles and outworn modes of past civilizations, nor with expressions of ideals or sentiments that no longer exist. Modern architecture has become the expression of our spirit and of our lives; orderly, efficient, functional, and having to do with emotions that govern our own civilization. It is not the purpose of art to give pleasure by offering a momentary escape into old experiences, by recalling old memories, but to give a permanent escape upward into a new experience -- that is, into ideas which cannot be rationalized in words. The natural inertia which tends to grip the mind is the reason for the advance of art before mass appreciation. Perhaps this seems a bit harsh to you who have loved Classicism and Ideal Beauty. What other qualities than these can be expected in the art of a generation born into a war, reared in a wonderland of science, disillusioned by a depression? We are the

\*John Martin, Modern Dance.

primitives of a new civilization, a United States that is being born as a nation from the last of her frontiers. We demand in our architecture and sculpture unity; unity in its relation with space, with landscape, and with other buildings which surround it. We demand that it function according to its use. Let this age see the last of such monstrosities as universities housed in Gothic cathedrals, banks plying business in Greek temples, some weak shade of Michael Angelo's tortured surfaces, or some too smooth Aphrodite. And lastly we demand that our architecture glorify the universal function of all architecture -- the post pushing upward, the lintel desiring gravity; the human body growing upward, struggling against gravity. At this juncture lies the romance of architecture and the essential quality of life. We will not decorate nor artfully conceal this function. We will enoble the function; we will beautify the struggle. This thesis which I am presenting to you is born of my philosophy.

And now for a practical consideration of the problem. Here is a small outdoor theater for which I am to furnish a convenient entrance and exit. The group of people that will assemble here will be small. For this reason I have created by curved volumes, intimacy and informality. By horizontal lines I have created a mood of rest and seriousness. There will be no need for a group to rush either into or out of this area -- this I have said with



curved stairways. In formulating my idea I first built to scale a five foot bank with a ten foot slope as actually exists. Into this I sculptured or cut the volumes to coincide with the functions I have stated. The volumes illustrated emerged.

The second consideration is to unify the thesis with the surrounding landscape and buildings. Immediately behind the stage is a long narrow frame building. This building will probably in time give way to a brick structure that will make it an integral part of the building to which it is attached. On the left is a driveway and parking space for cars. On the right is the long side of the brick Music building. The theater is laid out with paths parallel to the brick building and a main path at the back parallel to the stage. The stairways arise from this main path. I have unified this design with the landscape and other buildings by the dominance of horizontal movement in the volumes, and by the use of the same material as used in the Music building. The stairways furnish a transition between two levels thereby creating an incentive for landscaping beyond. Thus the design is unified with space and with objects in this space by design, material, and color.

The third consideration is to furnish a dramatic balance to the action that will occur on the stage. To achieve this I have used violent contrasts of texture

and color-- the light smooth stone figure against dark green foliage; the warm-red of rough textured brick against green turf. The use of running water is another dramatic element. A small flood light concealed in the front of the basin will dramatize the forms of the figure. The stairs are lighted from the curved forms on either side of the stairs. About one third of the form reveals light. The portion of stone cut away is on an angle with the top and bottom of the stairs. The light is diffused over the stairs but does not reach eye level.

For a central figure the design demanded a rising cylindrical form. The attempted use of an abstract form was unsatisfactory. The whole design being abstract, I could find no forms without meaning that would draw the eye to the center and upward. Hence to compel the eye, an old experience -- the human figure; a new experience in the relation of parts to the whole. The figure is four feet in height and is cut into a seven foot cylinder, leaving three feet for base as is illustrated. In approaching the problem in this manner I have not lost the feeling for the whole cylinder. The figure is distorted in parts to intensify its growth from the cylindrical base. In the figure itself I have attempted by arrangement of forms the 'push upward' that I have mentioned before, architecturally, to draw the eye from the stairways to

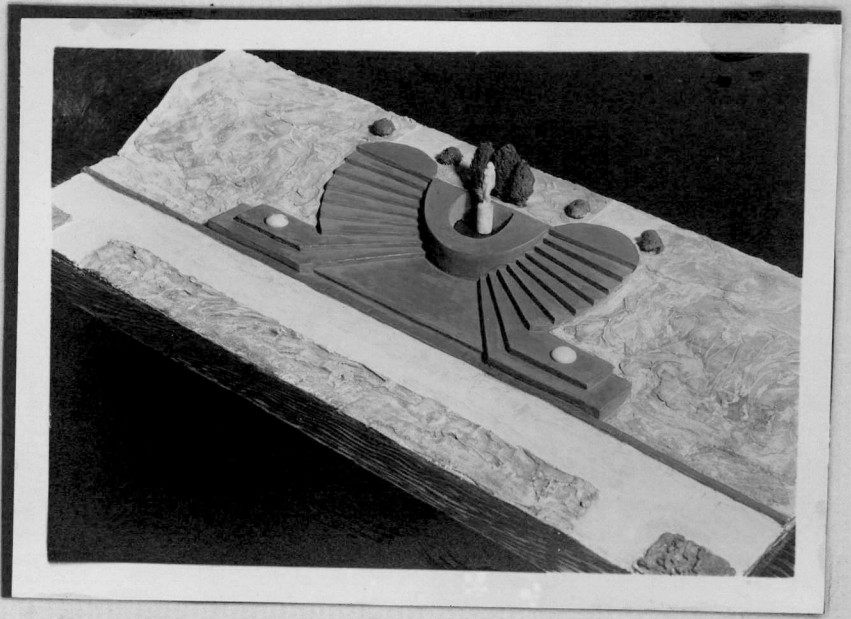


the center and upward; sculpturally to express an intangible idea.

The materials to be used are brick, as is used in the buildings on the campus, with a warm ochre mortar, black tile for the bottom of the fountain, and either cast stone or the stone in which the model has been made for the figure and lighting fixtures. The approximate cost of building both for materials and for a mason (not including the sculptor's fees) will come to five hundred dollars. This estimate was given by Mr. Sam Foot.

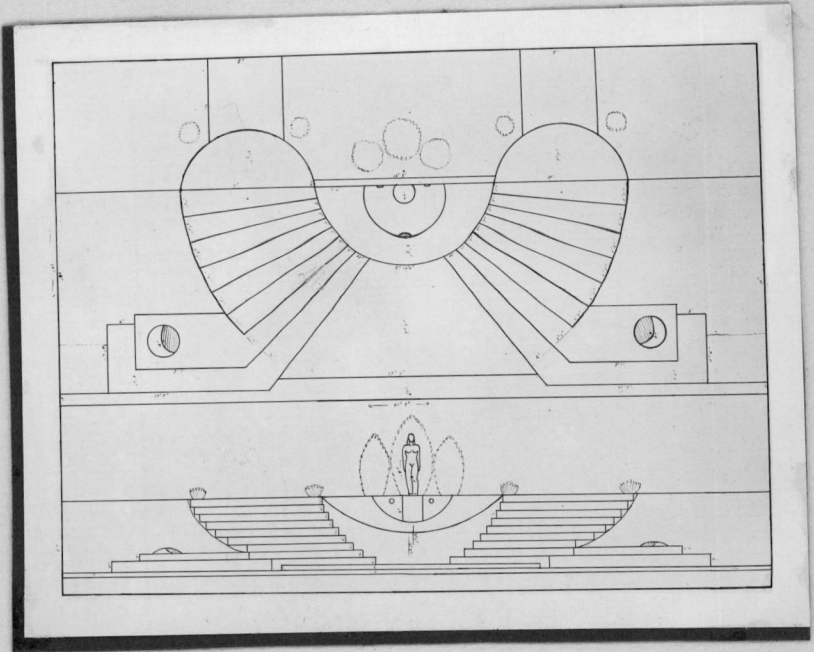
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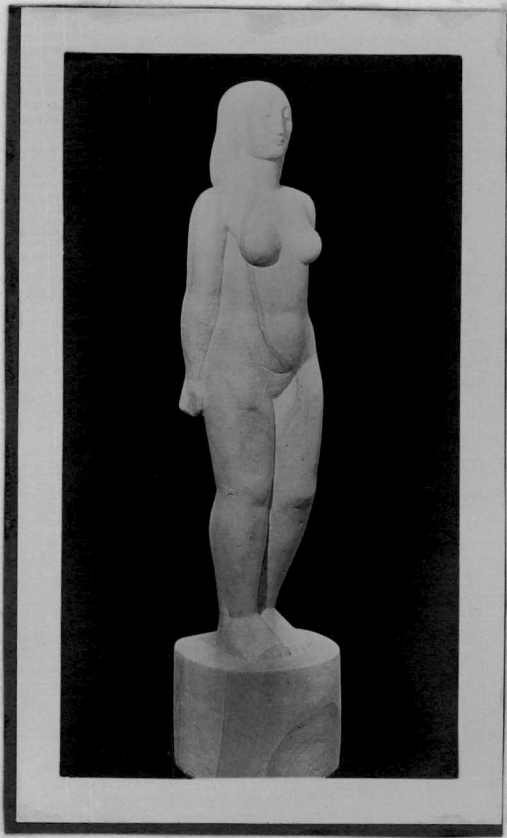
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The following bibliography while not directly used for research on the problem has helped to formulate my ideas and to stabilize my opinions.

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