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Steps of Theatrical Design: A Resource for Activating Educators to Teach Design in High Schools

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STEPS OF THEATRICAL DESIGN: A RESOURCE FOR ACTIVATING EDUCATORS TO
TEACH DESIGN IN HIGH SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

As a designer and educator, I am continuously gathering more resources for personal knowledge and to share with my students. Yet there is currently a lack of literature when it comes to design pedagogy for all design areas, specifically for high school aged students. How can we teach theatrical design in a tactful and meaningful way to high school students throughout the United States? *Steps of Theatrical Design: A Resource for Activating Educators to Teach Design in High Schools*, is for educators to learn about the process of design and spread that knowledge to their students. This thesis will act as an academic resource to guide educators towards the best methods of teaching theatrical design.

I argue design should be a much more critical piece of the curriculum than it is currently being presented in most high schools around the country. Through design, students gain many valuable skills such as: critical thinking, creative expression, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and troubleshooting. I have found the best way to teach design is to practice design. This thesis is broken up into chapters that mirror the steps of the design process. Chapter One (Step One) will cover script analysis and critical thinking, Chapter Two (Step Two) will explore different types of conceptual research, Chapter Three (Step Three) asks readers to apply various influential "isms" from history of 20th Century Design, Chapter Four (Step Four) defines style and aesthetic for design and Chapter Five (Step Five) will cover designer deliverables and design meetings. As a bonus for educators, the Appendix provides assignments that can be paired with each chapter to activate the theories presented.

For my soul dog Carmelo. I miss you every day. Your life gave purpose to mine.

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INTRODUCTION

During my time in graduate school, I have taught theatrical design master classes in several high schools and educational theatre programs. My background as both an educator and designer has given me the unique privilege of being able to share my passion for design with students. When talking to high school teachers, I found hesitation around teaching theatrical design and having student designers for school productions. Most teachers studied acting and directing in their education and had to either teach themselves design with little prior knowledge or hire a designer to come in; both of which costs time and/or money that the educator may not have available. There were a few rare occurrences where schools had two theatre teachers, one dedicated to acting and directing while the other headed design and technology (tech). This was generally the case with the schools that had more money that could be dedicated towards theatre arts. I found that most high school teachers had to take time to learn how to design a show and be mentor to help students implement that design. Educators were learning and problem solving along with their students. When asked to present to educators at a GIFTS (Great Ideas for Teachers) professional development day for high school theatre teachers, I asked what they felt like they needed more help/support with. Almost all of them answered design; I knew I wanted my thesis to be a resource for educators.

This thesis, of course, is not only a resource for the educators who feel lost when it comes to theatrical design. It can also be for educators who need a bit more knowledge in one specific part of the process. Is there a part of the design process that is challenging? Do you find yourself needing more resources? Because each chapter dives into a different part of the process, we are

able to go into the chapter that relates to our personal gaps in knowledge for additional resources. For example, an educator who feels comfortable with the design process but needs more information on the tangible deliverables, may want to specifically focus on Chapter 5. This chapter includes a breakdown for deliverables for each designer. This educator can then head to the appendix for more specific examples of some of these deliverables. I wanted to create a resource that not only included a step-by-step design process, but also had examples for each theory and tool discussed. This way, educators are getting the best parts of what we could get from a design book, without having to skim through hundreds of pages of information.

Design books aren't always the best resource; there is a gap in literature when it comes to theatrical design for high school curriculum. In my own teaching practice, I have struggled to find a resource that that is specifically aimed for high school educators and their students. It is my goal to provide a resource that teaches teachers, so they then feel empowered enough to teach this information to their students. In this thesis I am essentially creating a process that is heavily practical and resource based and provide a start to finish breakdown of how to approach each new design.

This project stems from my belief that theatrical design should be a more important piece of the curriculum being taught in high schools around the country. Design teaches many valuable skills such as, critical thinking, creative expression, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and troubleshooting. These are all skills that we want present in our students for their all-around success. Throughout this thesis I will introduce many different theories. Students will learn design by activating these theories through theoretical paper projects and the assignments given to our students. For further understanding student designers demonstrate Practice as Research

(PaR) through working as designers on school productions. A simple way to define practice as research is, we learn the thing we need to learn by doing the thing. This is true in many disciplines, but especially in theatre design and technology. When leaning into this idea of practice as research, the best way to teach design is to practice design. In-class projects and the sample assignments I offer in the appendix are a first look into activating the theories of design; in these activities students will be able to explore design further by designing a production. The addition of stakes within a design process adds another layer of learning by doing.

There are many ways to approach a new design for a production. I have come up with a 5-step "game plan" that provides both background knowledge and examples for each step in the design process. From here, I encourage teachers to pass this knowledge on to their students and to help the growth of high school theatre programs throughout the United States. My goal is that we will be able to see a surge of design/tech students who feel set-up for success when it comes to approaching a new production. In this thesis, I have devoted each chapter to one step in the design process. By presenting these different moments in the design process as steps, I am creating a more manageable way to teach and scaffold the information. Because my intended audience is educators, I prioritized the National Core Arts Standards for high school and connected them to each of the steps outlined herein. These standards serve as learning objectives for students and can act as a reference point when creating curriculum. I know not every school uses these standards, but they serve as a good connecting point to all kinds of mandated curriculum and how new design-specific curriculum might fit the bill.

In each chapter I showcase the design objectives that help to meet those different standards. The chapters act as a streamlined resource for educators to gain more knowledge and

understanding into each part of the design process. Because educators use various teaching styles and know what works for them and their classroom, I found it best to provide the information as an available resource in leu of explaining exactly how this information could be taught. From here, educators can fit this information into their curriculum/classes however they see fit. The assignments provide a hands-on approach to emphasize the important moments throughout the design process to students. Throughout the chapters I will refer to educators as "the designers". By addressing the educators "as if" they were the designers, I provide the reader with more of a hands-on approach to further their knowledge and imagine themselves as experts. This way, practice as research is being used for educators to connect to new material. It is our job as educators to either step into the role of designer for productions or act as design mentor for our students. As I stated above, I find a hands-on approach is the best way to learn design. Because of this I have decided to introduce this material as if we are designers looking to begin the design process for a new production. Readers will start at the beginning and go through each step until we end with our goals and deliverables for each design meeting. While the chapters of this thesis are intended for educators to gain more knowledge and understanding, Appendix A is a concrete way for this information to be passed on to our students. This appendix section is composed of assignments I have created to provide students with a deeper understanding of the material.

After I begin each chapter with a look at its alignment with National Core Arts Standards, I introduce background knowledge, theories, and examples on how to be successful in each step of the process. I ultimately want to make sure the educator has all the information they need to be both a designer for their shows and teach their students to be designers. Because each type of designer approaches the process in a similar way, I am not focusing on one area over the others.

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Throughout the chapters and in the appendix, there will be examples from each of the design areas. Chapter One/Step One covers script analysis for design. I discuss the benefit of multiple script reads and what objective each new reading should hold. I then introduce different tools that can be used during this part of the process. The script contains important information that influences design choices; these tools inform designers how to extract this information. Next, I break down a script analysis outline that effectively activated critical thinking. Lastly, I introduce a scenic map for designers to gain a bigger picture look of their setting and the environment in which it lives. This is usually made by the scenic designer or in collaboration with the creative team. It serves as a reference point for everyone to establish the world around the characters/set. In the design resources appendix, I have included a link to the outline I refer to throughout this chapter. The assignment for this chapter is a creative assignment that asks students to create a scenic map based on some questions I included.

Chapter Two/Step Two dives into conceptual research. I first talk about the overall benefits to research and the different types of research that fall under the conceptual research umbrella. I then give background knowledge into each of the different types of research. These include dramaturgical research which contains historical research, visual research which contains world building images and emotional response images, and technical research, which helps to problem solve and help us make decisions. Next, I explore an example of how to apply analytical research to designing a particular play. The assignments that accompany this chapter ask students to address each type of research. The first assignment is about the types of questions we need to ask ourselves and how that leads to further exploration. The second assignment is a creative

assignment that has students use their emotional response images to create a storyline of the play through these images.

Chapter Three/Step Three explores a few of the different European/Western theories associated with the History of Design. To best understand where we currently are with design, it is important to know where design has been. I introduce many of the different "isms" we look at both when exploring history and when thinking about how to place our design within the world. An "ism" refers to a movement in art, literature, and/or philosophy throughout history. I then go through an example of applying three different "isms" to a specific design object in relation to a play. I define each theory and give the properties unique to each one. There are creative examples for each one to help further explain each "ism." Lastly, I touch on how design aesthetics assigned by the creative team dictate which theory may drive our design. The first assignment directly ties into the example I gave throughout the chapter. I ask students to read the definition and main ideas from each theory and sketch their own version of the scenic object. How does the scenic object change in relation to each "ism"? The second assignment requires further research into each "ism." Students will be able to find the main ideas for each historical design theory and explore whichever one they find the most interesting. This assignment is a combination of dramaturgical research and design history.

Chapter Four/Step Four is about how to define aesthetics by exploring the themes of the script. I start this chapter with defining collaboration, one of the most important words when it comes to design and working with a creative team for a production. I then talk about the importance of letting shows have a "dream period" when it comes to design, making sure there is time to dream before logistics and budget comes into play. Next, I talk about how the creative

team's connection to and excitement for the script drives the design. I then explore how the different themes and connections lead into defining the overall aesthetic for the show. From here, the aesthetic starts to dictate different choices in the design concept. I introduce a few examples from shows I have designed, as well as conversations from the design meeting, and themes the creative team was drawn to, to show how the design concept was formed. I also use these examples to talk about how aesthetic choices lead to tangible design choices. These choices will ultimately lead to what the audience will be seeing onstage. Lastly, I briefly touch on the elements and principles of design and their importance to the tangible design items. The first assignment helps students make the jump from aesthetics to imagery. I ask students to take LAIKA studios, a design studio for animated movies, as an example to help guide them during this process. Their filmic aesthetic is easily identifiable and animation can make objects exaggerated in a very specific way. The second assignment explores the elements of design. Students will take a scenic object or prop and change one element of design to create something new. This will help students understand how the manipulation of the various elements can change how we view or interpret the same object.

Chapter Five/Step Five offers a breakdown of deliverables in relation to each designer (scenic, lighting, costume and sound). I have created a meeting breakdown which states the goals of each design meeting and what designers should be ready to present in these meetings. I also created a design deliverables list that states what information is needed for meetings vs what goes to shops for every design area. I then offer a few examples for some of the deliverables in the breakdown and provide a first look at what some of these may look like. For a further look into what these deliverables look like, I have included a case study in the appendix with

examples from myself and the creative team from when I designed *Evil Dead the Musical* at the Connecticut Repertory Theatre. The assignment for this chapter reads more like a checklist and can be given to students as a resource for creating a show binder. The checklist ensures they will include all the important information gathered from each of the steps throughout their design process.

I organized this thesis based on one priority; that it is important that educators have the resources they need to make themselves and their students more successful. It can be tedious for educators to go through enough resources to compile all the information needed to be a successful designer. This thesis will act as a more direct resource to provide educators with this information. At the end of each chapter, I have provided a "takeaways" section that serves as a recap of the important pieces of the chapter. It can also be shared directly with students. I have also created a unit overview for each chapter. Each unit overview is paired with a sample lesson plan that covers day one. We all have teaching strategies that work best in the classroom, and these sample lesson plans are one example of how to apply some of the tools throughout the chapters. When approaching a new topic in design or an educational production, let the steps I have created be a baseline. When educators feel comfortable with this information, it can then be passed onto students to create a new generation of designers.

Background

To better introduce myself as both an educator and designer, I thought it best to give some background on myself. I grew up in upstate New York. The high school that I went to did not have a theatre program nor did it offer theatre classes for students. The school produced one

big musical a year that created the only opportunity for students to explore theatre. I attended undergraduate school at SUNY Potsdam where its generalist program exposed me to more sides of theatre. My required Introduction to Design class opened my eyes to the excitement and creativity of design. It was here that I fell in love with theatrical design and switched to a technical theatre major when I transferred to Flagler College my junior year. From then on, I immersed myself in scenic and lighting design. I found the creativity and technical skills I was getting to exercise were helping me to be a more well-rounded theatre practitioner. One of my professors told me that it was better to learn everything you can while in undergrad, so you become more marketable after you graduate. Attending a generalist program was the key to becoming that type of individual.

After graduating, I moved to Nashville where I worked as an Event Lighting Technician and an Entertainment Lighting and Video Wall Technician. I was able to gain new skills in troubleshooting and problem solving. I also took a part time Teaching Artist job where I was able to teach Intro to Design type classes to high schoolers. Aside from the few Teaching Assistant jobs I had in undergrad, this was the first time I had the opportunity to teach technical theatre and design to a group of students. Providing these classes was new for this company and there was a growing want for these types of classes from the students who participated. After a few years in Nashville, I moved back to Florida where I spent more time as a Teaching Artist and both Scenic and Lighting Designer. I wanted to continue to help high school students discover design and the different skills they could gain while participating in a design process.

It was during my job running the lighting and sound for Florida School of the Arts where I got to fully commit myself as both lighting designer and educator. I was able to mentor students

in both the design and technical side to lighting design. This helped me start to create a step-by-step design process I could then share with the students who I worked with. After a year of teaching classes, running labs, and designing six productions, it was finally time to go to graduate school to see what else I could learn. I received my MA in Dramatic Arts where I focused in Lighting Design and my Graduate Certificate in College Instruction from the University of Connecticut. Here, I was able to immerse myself into learning more about design and about how to become a better educator/facilitator.

After two years at UCONN I wanted to continue my education to learn more about how to teach design to high school students specifically. I wanted to make more connections and have opportunities to work directly with high school students and teachers. It was during my time at the University of Central Florida that I was able to connect with more teachers and become exposed to the difficulties and challenges they faced in relation to design. I taught master classes in several high schools around central Florida and saw the passion that students had for learning more about design. I also taught a master class to theatre educators where I was able to hear their concerns and needs firsthand. It was from here that I knew I needed my thesis to become a resource for educators to uplift both themselves and their students in relation to design. So, to my fellow educators, this is thesis is dedicated for you.

STEP ONE: SCRIPT ANALYSIS FOR DESIGNERS

As a designer, I know that the most important way to begin any collaborative design process is to read the script and keep note of my initial responses to the text. What is my first reaction after reading it? How did I feel? What did I connect to? What were my likes/dislikes? Why do I think I had such a reaction? The script becomes the blueprint for each member of the creative team to begin their journey into the production. It is a staple of the design and production process. Everything starts with the words on the page, and we become intimately entangled with the story. With each read, the production team becomes more informed by clues from the script, which then help support our design. Part of the designer's role is to find answers to the questions and needs of the current production being worked on. script analysis provides the building blocks to form responses to those questions through direct information gathering from the text itself.

While exploring the different ways to teach this step of the design process, I started by looking at the National Core Arts Standards for High Schoolers. One can see the importance of text analysis to the learning process. Text analysis promotes deeper learning within students because we are asking them to think critically within the text. For "HS Advanced" the National Core asks for students to be able to "present a drama/theatre production for a specific audience that employs research and analysis grounded in the creative perspectives of the playwright, director, designer, and dramaturg" (National Core Arts Standards 5). Text analysis is just a piece of the puzzle for overall design work but is one of the most crucial steps within the process. As designers we want to be sure the work we are doing is grounded in the text and specifically addresses the needs being put forward. There are many effective tools one can use during this

process that will later help to inform design choices. The tools I have found to be most effective to this process are:

 1. The initial reaction we have to the text,

2. The needs clearly being presented,

3. An analysis outline, and

4. A scenography map.

A combination of these tools helps to promote a deeper understanding and connection to the text which will later help to inform the choices we make when we design a production.

In this chapter I will use the tools mentioned above to provide a deeper look into the script analysis process. I will start by defining script analysis. Then, discuss the importance of a 3-read process and the different information being focused on during each read. Next, a Script Analysis Outline and the questions designers should be asking themselves throughout the process. Lastly, I will introduce scenic maps and share their importance for the creative team.

<u>Script Analysis Defined</u>

Script or text analysis is the process of diving into the script (or other piece of story) to gather all the important information designers may need to truly understand the story. Some of the original ties to script analysis comes from Stanislavsky's acting method:

Stanislavsky proposed that actors, working in collaboration with directors, should build their performances through a methodical process of script analysis that reckoned with four fundamental elements: the characters' *given circumstances* in each scene and at the outset of the story; the *objectives* the characters seek to achieve in each scene and by the

end of the story; the *actions* they will use to try to obtain their objectives; and the "beats"

or *units of action* in each scene that reveal the series of actions the characters employ to

reach their respective objectives (Baron 29).

How can we, when in a designer role, use the script to help us within this process? As designers,

we are looking at all the different parts of a story as we start to gather information from the

script. One wants to further analyze the given circumstances, objectives, actions, etc. Many new

theories for script analysis link back to Stanislavsky's method. Although Stanislavski's method

is coined as an acting method, the table work portion is universal to all members of the creative

team.

<u>3-Read Process</u>

Before diving into analyzing the script, we must do our first read. More than one read of

the script is required, and "very few theatre designers, even the most observant, can collect

enough details to begin the design process after a single reading. In the first reading, all readers,

including theatre designers, simply turn each page in order to find out what happens next"

(Ingham 46). Yet it is important that the first read isn't the only one. There is no set number of

times designers should read through the script. A lot of design or technical theatre books mention

a minimum of three reads before exploring this type of work. I like to use this rule of three for

my students. Having a concrete number to have them aim for, with having different goals for

each read, makes this process feel more rewarding to their later design choices. This differs from

an actor read-through, but this type of read can be important for designers to attend. Being able

to hear the words in the voices that will later speak them on stage, can help form different

choices in relation to character and speech. Let's be honest - most students don't like to read the script even once. It can be tricky to get them motivated enough to read the script once, let alone three times. I like to be honest with them, saying that I too struggle with reading a script multiple times. Present the benefits; once on the other side of this process, students will be able to see the effectiveness in their designs. I like to give examples on how more successful I have been when doing the 3-read process than when I haven't.

The only goal of the initial reading of the script is to see what happens over the course of the play and understand the plot and basic themes. Take time after the first reading to reflect on thoughts and feelings. These "first impressions are valuable and need recording. A scene that at first appears absurd and exceedingly funny but in later readings seems less so, may need to rely on your initial impression for emphasis" (Thorne 82). Remember that the audience will most likely be viewing the show for the first time. Designers want them to experience the story as we did during the first time we read it. As designers, we spend a lot of time with the script, which can lead to the story eventually feeling repetitive and dull. Being able to remember back to the initial feelings we had after our first read will allow us to delight the audience on their first watch, too. I like to have students write down these first thoughts. This way, these thoughts can always be referred to while continuing through the process.

The script will be read many times throughout the creative process for a production. Get comfortable with the words and find personal connections. Designers may also look for connections within the world around them. For example, was there a character or moment that you connected with? Do you see yourself or someone you know within one of the characters? Have you or someone you know faced similar circumstances? These personal connections help

to relate both creative team and audience to the story. The second read can also serve to help summarize what happens throughout the story. I like to do a mini summary at the end of each page. It helps me keep track of the events without having to do another full read for context. I usually do this by writing a sentence or two at the bottom of each page. My students get excited for this part because it means they won't have to re-read chunks of the script to locate certain moments.

The third time designers read through a script is when they begin to look for clues that can help to inform design choices. Many books that talk through Script Analysis compare this process to a detective looking for clues to solve a crime. If a student is more of a visual learner, here is also where they may start to jot down little sketches that can help put together preliminary thoughts. Certain words/phrases from the dialogue or stage directions will jump out in relation to each design area. We notice these the more we read and comb through the script. This is how multiple readings of the script become extremely important to the design process. Each reading of the process can give us something new,

> In addition to launching the designer's script detective work, second readings often spark clear and specific visual images directly related to the script, which are the building blocks from which the foundation for the design process is begun. As I examined my own script analysis process, I discovered that during the second and third readings I pay special attention to exchanges of dialogue in which characters mention actual, tangible things (Ingham 49).

I recommend taking a writing utensil and underlining any words, in either the dialogue or stage directions, that are related to each area of design. These words are clues to the overall basic

needs of the production. Here we may also start to sketch images that come to mind while reading. These little sketches become the first glimpse into design thoughts for the production. The following is an example of underlined clues for a Lighting Designer from *Endgame* written by Samuel Beckett.

HAMM:

Is it night again already then?

CLOV (looking):

No.

HAMM:

Then what is it?

CLOV (looking):

Gray

(Lowering the telescope, turning towards Hamm, louder.)

Gray!

(Pause. Still louder.)

GRRAY!

(Pause. He gets down, approaches Hamm from behind, whispers in his ear.)

HAMM (staring):

Gray! Did I hear you say gray? (Beckett 39)

In this excerpt, the characters Clov and Hamm are discussing the lack of sun and how the world they are viewing, through their telescope, is gray. We see this in the line, "But it should be sinking. Look again" (Beckett 39). This line, paired with the couple of lines above it, tell us that the sun is not visible in the sky. From this we can infer that the "gray" is overwhelming, and the characters are unable to view anything past this. This section of the script tells us both the quality of light and the overall atmosphere outside of where the characters are located. The following is a second example of this thought process. This is an example of clues for a Scenic Designer from *Endgame* written by Samuel Beckett.

HAMM:

Look at the <u>ocean</u>!

[*Clov gets <u>down</u>, takes a few steps towards <u>window left</u>, goes back for <u>ladder</u>, carries it over and sets it down under <u>window left</u>, gets up on it, turns the <u>telescope</u> on the without, looks at length. He starts, lowering the <u>telescope</u>, examines it, turns it again on the without.*] (Beckett 38)

This line, along with the paired stage directions, gives us quite a few clues about what the scenic needs are. It is important to note that not all stage directions will be helpful. The stage directions in most scripts are notated from the original production. We will want to ignore the stage directions that describe movements, and instead consider ones that relate to the main ideas of the text. By using deductive reasoning, we may infer, (because it says window left), that there may also be a window right. From here, we can look for further indications. Once we do that, we can see an indication in the stage directions of this second window. This research through the script automatically tells us that there are at least two windows, and this is important to the context of

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the story. Because the character needs a ladder to look out of the window, we can also know that

the window needs to be located high enough that one requires a ladder to view outside. We are

told, by this section of the script, that the ocean is located outside of the window. This may not

necessarily mean that we must see the ocean, but it is important to know what is in the outside

world around our characters. Our setting doesn't live in a void with no other life around it, unless

specifically stated in the script or by production choice. Lastly, the script mentions a telescope,

which could either be a scenic or properties item. A collaboration between these designers may

need to be a conversation as the design process begins. As we read further into the script, looking

for more clues, we will find more answers and discover more needs.

Script Analysis Outline

Designers next take the clues gathered from the script and move on to create a script

analysis outline. Michael J. Gillette argues that, "the analysis step in the design process has two

objectives: (1) gathering information that will help clarify and refine the definition of the

challenge you are facing and (2) identifying areas that will require further research" (22).

Designers will also use these given circumstances in order to start breaking down the script into

our Analysis Outline. In *Script Analysis for Actors and* Directors, James Michael Thomas breaks

down given circumstances, which "denote the entire set of conditions in which the play takes

place" (22). The outline should include information in relation to setting, time, character(s),

background information, dramatic action, and theme(s). Many times, directors and actors will

create a similar type of outline when analyzing the script. An example of a helpful script analysis

outline comes from the book *From Page to Stage* written by Rosemary Ingham. This outline can

be used as a jumping-off point, but more information and questions should be added, if the current outline omits important information. This outline can be applied to each script being designed to help gain a deeper understanding of the story. We can have our students use critical thinking skills to analyze the script and help answer the questions provided by the outline. These answers, new created questions and a deeper understanding of the script will become the building blocks needed to start the design process. Collaboration with a dramaturg may help with success in this area. Their research can be an invaluable resource when looking further into what surrounds each script. They can help provide answers that we may want to include as part of the outline. By going through an outline, it will also ensure we have recognized all needs called for by the script. It would be unfortunate to miss something originally viewed as insignificant, when in fact it becomes important to the dramatic action.

As designers break down the outline, it is best to answer the questions by using direct quotes from either the dialogue or stage directions. These should be paired with the page number where the information was found. This way, we can easily jump back and relocate the quote for context. Ingham's outline asks us to explore different aspects of what, who, when, where, and how. In Section One the questions have to do with the where of the script. Where exactly is this story taking place and where are we in comparison to the rest of the world? This section starts to break down our geographical facts. For Section Two we are looking for the when. When does this story take place? Does it all happen in one day or take the course of many years? This will also give us information on the season and time of day. Section Three looks at who. Here, we are looking closer to the characters. Both who they are as individuals, but also their relationships with each other and their surroundings. In Section Four we are answering questions based on

what happened to our characters, or their environment, before this play takes place. What happened before? If the play is based in realism, we may also want to look at the historical events that took place right before the play. These will have a significant impact on life. Section Five dives a little more into character. We are looking for the main characters and their different roles in the story structure. Section Six asks us to look deeper in the way the characters speak. How is the rhythm of the dialogue? This will help us connect more to the overall flow of the story. In Section Seven we are looking at the how, we are pointing out the action of the play. We can create an action chart by writing down the rising action, climax, and resolution. This acts as a little roadmap to break down the main events of the story. Lastly, Section Eight dives a little deeper into the story by asking us to extract the themes. What stood out throughout this play? What is the story that the playwright is trying have us explore? These themes become one of the most important building blocks when it comes to designing a production. We grab onto these themes, and they help to guide our overall aesthetic for the design. These questions can act as a starting point when exploring the script and the answers will be provided within the text.

<div align="center">Scenic Map</div>

Another helpful tool for the script analysis process is a scenic map. It is something not a lot of people do, but I think it can be important to help shape the clues before diving into the design. In *What is Scenography?* Pamela Howard encourages designers to create a map,

First, isolating all the geographical references and creating an imaginary map of the landscape of the play visualizes the writer's imagined world, even if that is not actually

<div align="center">20</div>

seen on stage. From this map, actors can imagine where they have come from and where

they are going to with a sense of logic and purpose (Drábek and Howard 32).

Designers can gather the information needed from the map once we have completed our script

analysis outline. Answers to the outline contain exactly what we need for the map. Information

can be used from any of the sections that are in relation to the world the characters live in. This

map will help all members of the creative team and actors form a visual on how this story fits

into the larger picture. For example, if a play is set in a small town but we only see one home.

Where do the characters go when they leave? Are they able to walk to the different places they

need to go? If a new character, that doesn't live in this home, comes onstage, where did they

come from? How could they have gotten there? Each show doesn't live in a void that is only this

one place separate from everything else. It can become a fun and creative part of our job to

figure out what encompasses those surrounding areas. The Scenic Map helps to create a

universal space, how the locations in the story fit together.

Script analysis is only step one in the design process. It is a designer's first chance to look

at the script and break down all its important elements. Each piece of the script contains

information carefully placed by the playwright to tell the story. We can now use everything we

gained from the tools above to start our design process.

Takeaway Points:

- With each new read of the script, we gain new insight.

- Read One - see what happens over the course of the play and understand the plot and

  basic themes.

- Read Two – find personal connections, things that excite us/draw us to the story. Also summarize every page. What is going on within every page?

- Read Three - begin to look for clues that can help to inform design choices.

- Use a script analysis outline to help gain further understanding into the text.

  o How the script informs the who, what, when, where, why, and how.

- Create a scenic map to help all members of the creative team and actors form a visual on how this story fits into the larger picture. Where do the characters and the locations they visit fit into the larger world around them?

Objectives:

- Distinguish the goals of each read through.

- Effectively locate clues within the script for each design area.

- Demonstrate understanding of the 3-read through process.

Recommendation:

Any script can be used. Start with a shorter script for classroom assignments then building up to a longer script. Begin the process with a 10-minute or one-act play and have students repeat the process with whichever script is being used for your current production.

Materials:

Script

Pencil

Read - Through Goals:

Read One - see what happens over the course of the play and understand the plot and basic themes.

Read Two – find personal connections, things that excite you/draw you to the story. Include a small summary at the bottom of each page (1-3 sentences).

Read Three - begin to look for clues that can help to inform design choices.

Day Breakdown:

Day One:

- Introduce Script

- Define each designer and their roles within the design process.

- Discuss Read Goals

Day Two:

- Read One in class.

- Have students reflect on initial thoughts.

Day Three:

- Read Two in class.

- Have students reflect on personal connections.

- Have students write 1-3 sentences on the bottom of each page to summarize events.

Day Four:

- Read Three in class.

- Have students pick a design area (scenic, lighting, costume, stound) and have them underline all words in the script that relate to their area.

Day Five:

- Have students reflect on the process.

Guiding Questions for Day Two:

What is your first reaction after reading it?

How did the story make you feel?

What were your likes/dislikes?

Why do you think this is the reaction you had?

Guiding Questions for Day Three:

What did you connect to? Do you feel like you had no connection?

What specific examples from your life relate to this story?

What are the most important moments that happen within each page?

Which moments will be the most helpful to your future self?

Guiding Thoughts for Day Four:

Have students pick a design area they find the most exciting/interesting.

As they go through the script, they will underline words in the dialogue and/or stage directions

that relate to their design area.

Guiding Thoughts for Day Five:

What further understanding was gained by reading the script more than once?

Is there a benefit to the three-read minimum?

Prior to this, how many times would you find yourself reading a script?

Lesson Title: Exploring the Script Read – Day One

Leve: High School Students

Duration of Lesson: 50 minutes (one class period)

Lesson Materials: A pencil, a script.

> **Note**: Any script can be used. Refer to the 'Recommendation' section of the Unit
>
> Overview for Chapter One.

Learning Goals/Objectives:

Students will be able to define Script Analysis.

Students will be able to distinguish the goals of each read through.

Students will be able to differentiate each designer.

Bell Work/Warm Up:

(5 minutes) Have students then define Script Analysis. What does this phrase mean to them.

Intros:

(10 minutes) Have students introduce their names, pronouns and say how many times they

normally read the script when working on a play/musical.

Body of Lesson:

(5 minutes) Break down the role and expectations of a Scenic Designer.

(5 minutes) Break down the role and expectations of a Lighting Designer.

(5 minutes) Break down the role and expectations of a Costume Designer.

(5 minutes) Break down the role and expectations of a Sound Designer.

(10 minutes) Introduce the goals of each read of the 3-read process.

<u>Read - Through Goals:</u>

1. Read One - see what happens over the course of the play and understand the plot and basic themes.

2. Read Two – find personal connections, things that excite you/draw you to the story. Include a small summary at the bottom of each page (1-3 sentences).

3. Read Three - begin to look for clues that can help to inform design choices.

Assessment/Closure/Reflection:

(5 minutes) Introduce the script that will be used for the rest of this unit. Discuss the overall goals.

Prior Knowledge:

Students can come into this lesson with no prior knowledge. This will serve as an introduction.

STEP TWO: CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH

In Chapter One, I introduced Script Analysis as Step One in the design process, following the initial readings of the script. Once students feel comfortable with their understanding of Script Analysis and the process of breaking down a script, they then can move on to the next step. While Script Analysis gives us a lot of information about the specifics of the production, Step Two is to compile this information and begin the journey into research. Research is an extremely important step that often continues throughout the design process. Research has its own category in the *National Core Arts Standards* and is integrated within other categories throughout the National Standards. An example of this is under the Development category. HS Advanced states for students to, "develop and synthesize original ideas in a drama/theatre work utilizing critical analysis, historical and cultural context, research, and western or non- western theatre traditions" (National Core Arts Standards 2). Having theatre educators teach research helps students to gain a better understanding on how to be a successful designer.

Research is extremely beneficial for every member of the creative team. I will provide tips on gathering research and introduce what types of research are beneficial to the process in order to guide educators in teaching a unit on Designer Research. I have broken down research and expressed its importance to both the designer and production team as a whole. There are three main types of conceptual research: dramaturgical research, visual research and technical research. Each different type of conceptual research comes together to support the overall design concept. What does research do for the designer within the design process? "In reality, research provides the grounding and inspiration the designer needs in order to imagine any world" (Porter

123). It is the job of the artistic team to put on stage an accurate and truthful representation of the script. Even if the vision for the play ends up not being rooted in historical accuracy, it is still the job of the designer to do that research as a basis for the design. For example, we could see this anytime a show is designed for modern times, but it was originally written/set at a different period of time. We must start with truth from the past, "however abstract the final result may be, it has to start from truth, and good research brings light into the darkness of the unknown. Just make sure the research is not more interesting than the final production" (Howard 82). Research becomes the support for understanding a script. We can consolidate our research; this prevents designers from being overwhelmed and can keep them focused on their emotional connection and excitement over some specifics in their findings. Furthermore, after we uncover a wide range of information, we narrow it down to the things that best help to support our overall vision.

There are three main types of Conceptual Research: dramaturgical research, visual research and technical research, which I will define and analyze in this chapter. The book *Towards Good Lighting for the Stage: Aesthetic Theory for Theatrical Lighting* written by Marcus Doshi provided excellent definitions for the first two types of conceptual research. Doshi states, "Dramaturgical research, as the name implies, has to do with answering a lot of questions that come up in the analysis process" (149). Dramaturgical Research covers the bulk of historical research. This comes from the information we uncovered during the script analysis process. Here we are looking more in-depth into *what/when/why/where*. This information is added to our overall understanding because "historical research is invaluable. Any period referencing adds to the understanding of the play" (Thorne 97). This means when/where the story itself takes place,

but also when/where the play was written. What was the playwright responding to within the world around them?

Visual Research can be broken down into world building images and emotional response images. Visual research is a strong communicative tool,

> having to do with how things look. This can be practical research dealing with diegetic matters such as daylight through a window, light in a phone booth in the middle of the night, etc. Visual research can also be intuitive/emotional research. This includes images that seem right based on either how they make one feel in relation to the piece and/or how one wants the audience to feel (Doshi 149).

Both Dramaturgical and Visual Research are extremely important, and how we decide to combine them will become what we produce with the design.

Technical Research is last and becomes a little more specific to design choices being solidified. It is exploratory research that helps solve problems, leading to design decisions. A lot of this research can be done by hand, starting to sketch out problem areas and using this research to guide us to our solution. I am referring to problem areas as the parts of the design ideas we may have and not know how to accomplish them. They can also be parts of the script that seem technically challenging. Technical Research is when we start to investigate the *how*, putting some of the research into practice to see if it fits the needs of the production.

The research phase is where a design begins to take shape. For an example of how this may look, I will be referencing Part One of *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* as the example to break down each part of the Research process. I acknowledge that this

play may not work in some high school classrooms. I chose this example because of its strong

ties to both realism and surrealism, which will be expanded upon in the following chapter. I also

chose this play specifically because the script gives us a lot of information that helps with

research. While reading through the play I was able to grab many specific examples to help

highlight this step of the process.

Dramaturgical Research

I generally start with dramaturgical research, as it sets up the historical background

information. Historical research,

> research into the historical context in which the play was written and in which it is set,
>
> like dramaturgical research, is most useful in developing initial ideas about a play and its
>
> style and the subsequent development of a point of view toward the work as a whole
>
> (Essig and Setlow 104).

It is best to pair the research process with a completed Script Analysis, (see from Chapter One),

because the script analysis gives an idea of what research needs to be done. A quick look at the

script gathers some basic information. We can easily find that *Angels in America Part One:*

Millennium Approaches was written by Tony Kushner and is set in New York City between

1985-1986. At the ground level, the play centers around the AIDS epidemic. From this start we

have several things that require deeper understanding. Who is the playwright? In this case, who

is Tony Kushner? Information about his background and the reasoning for writing this piece

starts to give us introductory context. Afterwards, we can look at the specific play. What was the

audience response to this production? There are many articles and reviews about this play and

what it meant to different groups of people. We can start with the first production to its most recent adaptation. This research helps to establish the play's background. The play's impact is important to understanding what type of story we are hoping to tell with the production. What makes this play important?

Now, we can look at our script analysis for the next portion of this research. Beginning with the *where* and the *when*. It is best to use all resources at our disposal, the Internet, books, newspaper articles, physical archives, and to museum exhibits, for the research gathering phase. Each resource has its pros/cons and isn't without limits. Using as many different resources as possible will give us the most well-rounded perspective. Looking at our example, knowing the time and place of the play, we can ask the following questions. What was New York City like during the early-mid 80's? What was the AIDS epidemic like in New York City during the early-mid 80's? We are obviously no longer living through the 80's, it is important to understand what life was like during this time. Next, we look at *who*. Are the characters based on real people? This play has a character, Roy Cohn, who is based on an actual New York City lawyer. We can find this information in the Playwright's Notes at the beginning of the script.

> A DISCLAIMER: Roy M. Cohn, the character, is based on the late Roy M Cohn (1927-
> 1986), who was all too real; for the most part the acts attributed to the character Roy,
> such as his illegal conferences with Judge Kaufmann during the trial of Ethel Rosenberg,
> are to be found in the historical record. But this Roy is a work of dramatic fiction; his
> words are my invention, and liberties have been taken (Kushner 5).

From this statement, we should look more into these historical records to gather information on this character. The other characters were experiencing very real circumstances which we can

also back with research; there are hundreds of first-hand accounts of the AIDS epidemic during the time where this place takes place. With proper research we can see these characters are personifying the time period. Without that research we would not be able to truly understand the motives of the characters and the overall themes that add to our design.

What did that look like? What did the AIDS epidemic mean to the real people who were affected, like the characters in this play? The more information we gather during our research, the more accurately we can bring these characters to life onstage. We, of course, can never truly know what this was like. We can, however, be empathetic and do our best to uplift these voices. Having empathy in the design, will help to create a more truthful account of the story being told. It will also help us to create a connection not only to the play, but the design we will create for it. In relation to character, we can also do research into their spirituality and socioeconomic status. We'll have to know these things in relation to the time period and location. In Act One Scene One: Bad News, we can note the date given. This part of the story takes place in October-November 1985. For our example, we could look at this first scene and know we need to learn about Jewish culture in New York City in 1985. We can get this clue from this script in the stage directions,

> The last days of October. Rabbi Isidor Chemelwitz alone onstage with a small coffin. It is a rough pine box with two wooden pegs, one at the foot and one at the head, holding the lid in place. A prayer shawl embroidered with a Star of David is draped over the lid, and by the head a yarzheit candle is burning (Kushner 9).

This not only is a chance to research Jewish culture, but also the culture in relation to death and the various Jewish traditions. There is also a question about the angel who visits Prior. Even after

research, we are still left with subjective research such as, where do we see angels in religion? What do they represent? How are we ultimately going to represent the angel within our production? However, because we researched and empathized with the characters, we can use that knowledge to make artistic choices that drive our design.

Designers must take a deeper dive to uncover the themes a playwright has hidden within the text. There is a need to reveal the play's purpose and underlying meaning. This can help us understand what the playwright was hoping their audience would take away from the story. We also consider this when asking ourselves what we hope for the future audience viewing our production to takeaway with them. It will be helpful to the design process to take theme into consideration when conducting research. Going back to our example, one of the many themes in *Angels in America* is the characters' struggle with their mental health. What did that look like during this time in New York City? The way our country has handled mental health in the past, and even today, is an extremely important piece of the puzzle. Ultimately, design choices are subjective, this theme may become the basis for the design. Is this specifically something we want the audience to care about? This is even more apparent, when we bring in the specific characters themselves.

These conversations are just the start, a few examples of dramaturgical research for design. There is much more information waiting to be researched in each play. The most important takeaway is that scripts require deeper understanding in order for the design to be respectful to the voices represented in this production. Therefore, we must ask ourselves; what are the needs of this play, and how can dramaturgical research help to answer those needs? Most of this research is done at the beginning of the design process. This research can support

discussions with all members of the creative team and inspire the overall design concept.

Because design is a collaborative experience, having everyone on the same page and swapping

research will only aid in everyone's general understanding of the play.

<div align="center">Visual Research</div>

After the information gathering from the dramaturgical research, we can move on to

visual research, which "is by far the most directly applicable form of external input to the

designer's decision-making process regarding composition, color, texture, and the like" (Essig

and Setlow 106). I believe the best way to approach visual research is broken up between

emotional response images and world building images. A play's purpose is to evoke an

emotional response. How one feels about a specific play and its themes, leads directly to

emotional response images. These images often tend to be very abstract. Their purpose is to

capture that initial response to the script. Students can often feel intimidated by this part of the

process because it is the first moment of individual creativity. I like to suggest having them look

for visual art for these images. Some designers have a love/hate relationship with Pinterest, but I

personally have found it to be an extremely effective resource for this part of the process.

Continuing with our example of *Angels in America Part One: Millennium Approaches,*

emotional response images will visually encompass our reactions to reading this piece, aided by

any personal connection. These images can fuel inspiration for the design, since "visual research

feeds the idea-making process. A productive research process is about finding images that will

inspire your imagination, images that resonate with themes and ideas from the play. Researching

is also about gathering images that will ground the production in a specific environment" (Porter 121).

The second type of visual research that helps designers to uncover specifics are world building images. These are the specific images we gather in relation to what we want to see on stage. They can be used for both inspiration and specific details, "inspirational objects are those things that convey a sense of style, color, atmosphere, mood, density, ornamentation and overall feel. Detail sources are specific documented objects that we will try to recreate or stylize in the features of the actual design" (Bergner 148). When inspired by our emotional response images, designers may also want to find real world images that share a relation to them. What are the qualities of the abstract images that we are drawn to? What could those look like in the real world?

For a scenic example, these world building images could be research into the different locations described in the script. In *Angels in America,* what did New York City look like at the time this play takes place? The story takes place in several different locations, what do those look like? We are starting to create a baseline of images that represent the different spaces called for in the script. Some of this research could also send us back to dramaturgical research, what types of building materials were popular for these types of spaces during this time? If any part of the play takes place outside, how do the different seasons affect the surrounding? Fall in New York City looks very different from fall in the south. These regional specifics help to compose a more accurate representation of the world. For a lighting example, one can look into images during different times of the day, as they relate to the script. Lighting directly impacts each location. Light is specific and can dictate atmosphere. Designers may want to look at the

different practicals being used in these spaces, to see if they are something we want to incorporate into the design. For a costume example, designers will need to research how each group of people dressed for each different location and occasion throughout the script. Both in relation to each other, and individually. We, again, need to consider the season. This is a great example of where socioeconomic status may come into play. A member of the upper 1% would wear something very different in comparison to a character who is struggling to get by. Each season calls for a different wardrobe, especially if the play is set in the north or west. For a Sound example, this process looks a bit different. Sound designers also lean into emotional response images to express how they feel about the shape of the sound throughout the play. There is less specific world building imagery, but there is a need to know where exactly sounds come from. Knowing specific locations and what in the world makes the noises in the surroundings, will push the designer into a more concrete direction.

From here, the design is starting to take shape. We can start to see the world unfolding. It is a good idea to keep notes of what specifically we are drawn to, during this process. This visual research will be extremely helpful when presenting design thoughts and ideas to fellow designers and the creative team. It is easier to explain ideas through imagery than expecting someone else to see what we are thinking. The thing I usually say to my students to explain this is, the green I have in my head may not automatically be the same color green you are thinking of in yours. Visual research helps to eliminate those types of miscommunications, like the example above, it helps to bring everyone onto the same page. This is an opportunity to collaborate and lean into imagery that everyone finds evocative and exciting.

In the next chapter I will cover a few of the different "isms" that connect to the history of design and how to find the aesthetic of each production. What is uncovered in that process will directly impact the research. Designers will want to spend time in the visual portion of research discovering imagery to support the aesthetic in our design concept. For our example play, we may want to have it based in realism, which "provides a truthful representation of the real world; it is based on direct observation of contemporary life and manners; and authors must be impersonal in their attitudes toward their subject matter" (Brockett 209). Imagery would need to align with exacts of the time and our artistic interpretation based on these images. If the design concept is more abstract, we will need to discover the connection to the script and the research will follow those ideas. I will go into more detail about this in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. I wanted it to be noted that the decisions made in those next two steps will create more research opportunities.

<u>Technical Research</u>

Many designers use sketching during this part of the research process. Decisions are being made on how exactly the research can come together into what we want to see. It starts to come together, somewhat like a puzzle does when fitting in each individual piece. We are starting to get to the overall picture with each piece we put down. Sketching can help solve issues within the space and its interaction with the characters. technical research starts with wondering how we can accomplish our design within the space and with the equipment we have access to. If we want to create a certain look, we need to look at what tools we need to achieve this. This will ultimately lead us down the road to making decisions to support our design

choices. For example, if designers want to create a certain lighting effect, we will need to look at the tools available. For instance, there are many different lighting fixtures, if we desire an effect, we will need to research which fixture can produce that effect. This would then directly link to what light fixture goes into our light plot. Each design area will use technical research when moving from design thoughts/choices to implementation of concept. I have found this can also help students learn how certain elements can be incorporated through different construction/electrical techniques. The information we uncover during our technical research pairs with what we put into our later drafting and renderings. This becomes the time where we can try things out! In most high school locations throughout the country, teachers and students act as both creative team and technical crew. We are going to want this information to know what materials and technology are best for the implementation within each specific space. If we uncover more questions during this part of the research, we can always jump back to dramaturgical or visual research to give ourselves more information.

Step Two of the design process requires comfortability with questioning the script and seeking out a deeper understanding. As educators, we ask our students to be active readers when confronted with new materials. Research helps to create a way for students to understand and evaluate the script. There were a lot of questions throughout this chapter. My purpose is to mirror this part of the process. We are seeking answers to the problems presented by the script. It is important to realize that the research step of the design progress can always be taking place, "*Good research requires strong commitment*. This is a common refrain throughout the design process. Accept the fact that the research process is ongoing, and you will continue to seek out images throughout the design process" (Porter 124).

<u>Takeaway Points:</u>

- There are three main types of Conceptual Research: **Dramaturgical Research, Visual Research and Technical Research**.

- Dramaturgical Research - will cover the bulk of our historical research.

- Visual Research – Emotional Response Images and World Building Images.

  o Emotional Response Images - will visually encompass our reactions to reading this piece, aided by any personal connection.

  o World Building Images - the specific images we gather in relation to what we want to see on stage.

- Technical Research - starts with wondering how we can accomplish our design within the space and with the equipment we have access to.

<u>Unit Overview</u>

<u>Objectives:</u>

- Identify the three types of Conceptual Research.

- Differentiate the main goals of each type of research.

- Collect research from each category to demonstrate understanding.

<u>Recommendation:</u>

Any script can be used. Start with a shorter script for classroom assignments then building up to a longer script. Begin the process with a 10-minute or one-act play and have students repeat the process with whichever script is being used for your current production.

<u>Materials:</u>

Script

Access to the Internet or research books

Scrap Paper

Pencil

<u>Background Knowledge:</u>

- Dramaturgical Research - will cover the bulk of our historical research.

- Visual Research – Emotional Response Images and World Building Images.

  o Emotional Response Images - will visually encompass our reactions to reading this piece, aided by any personal connection.

  o World Building Images - the specific images we gather in relation to what we want to see on stage.

- Technical Research - starts with wondering how we can accomplish our design within the space and with the equipment we have access to.

Day Breakdown:

Day One:

- Introduce the three research categories.
    1. Dramaturgical
    2. Visual
    3. Technical
- Introduce Script

Day Two:

- Introduce Dramaturgical Research.
- Have students do this type of research in class.

Day Three:

- Introduce Visual Research. Both Emotional Response Images and World Building Images.
- Have students do this type of research in class.

Day Four:

- Use this class as a research day to finish up the first two research categories.

Day Five:

- Introduce Technical Research.
- Have students do this type of research in class.

Guiding Questions:

Use the *Angels in America* example from the Chapter 2, to create guiding questions for this unit.

Assignments:

The assignments from Appendix A can be paired with this overview within the individual

lessons.

<p style="text-align:center;">Sample Lesson Plan</p>

Lesson Title: Exploring Conceptual Research – Day One

Leve: High School Students

Duration of Lesson: 50 minutes (one class period)

Lesson Materials: A script, access to the internet or research books, scrap paper and a pencil.

> **Note**: Any script can be used. Refer to the 'Recommendation' section of the Unit
>
> Overview for Chapter Two.

Learning Goals/Objectives:

Students will be able to define the three categories of Conceptual Research.

Students will be able to distinguish the goals of each type of research.

Students will be able to collect research from each research category within a script.

Bell Work/Warm Up:

(5 minutes) Have students reflect on a time they have used research either within theatre or for another subject in school. How did they go about gathering this research? How was this research helpful?

Intros:

(*10 minutes*) Have students introduce their names, pronouns and say what school subject they are used to doing research for.

Body of Lesson:

This first 15 minutes below will be used as lecture. After this lecture, students will be able to define these research categories as vocabulary words.

(5 minutes) Break down the goals of Dramaturgical Research.

- Dramaturgical Research - will cover the bulk of our historical research.

(5 minutes) Break down the goals of Visual Research.

- Visual Research – Emotional Response Images and World Building Images.
  - Emotional Response Images - will visually encompass our reactions to reading this piece, aided by any personal connection.
  - World Building Images - the specific images we gather in relation to what we want to see on stage.

(5 minutes) Break down the goals of Technical Research.

- Technical Research - starts with wondering how we can accomplish our design within the space and with the equipment we have access to.

(10 minutes) Show examples of each type of research.

Assessment/Closure/Reflection:

(5 minutes) Introduce the script that will be used for the rest of this unit. Discuss the overall goals.

Understanding:

(5 minutes) Check for understanding.

Prior Knowledge:

Students can come into this lesson with no prior knowledge. This will serve as an introduction.

STEP THREE: USING THE "ISMS" TO DETERMINE GENRE

> A setting is not just a beautiful thing, a collection of beautiful things. It is a
>
> presence, a mood, a warm wind fanning the drama to flame. It echoes, it
>
> enhances, it animates. It is an expectancy, a foreboding, a tension. It says nothing,
>
> but it gives everything.
>
> - Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination,* 23.

Jones' reflection on scenic design in *The Dramatic Imagination* inspires me because it is a lovely visual of the goals of a designer. As a designer and educator, I have the unique pleasure of creating environments for each different production while also inviting my students to be part of this process. I have found that a particularly effective way to approach design pedagogy is through historical theories, or what I will call "isms". I define an "ism" as the different theatrical, art, or philosophical movements spanning from the 1300s through the twentieth century. These theories opened the doors to different types of design and broke convention to introduce new ideas. "Isms" are an important lens through which to view different ways to design any given production. By including these theories in design pedagogy, students will be able to understand a bit of the history of design as well as drawing inspiration for their own designs. History of design plays an important role in the history of theatre. The history is an important foundation for our students. When looking at the National Core Arts Standards, there is a lot of emphasis on the function of history. For example, HS Advanced asks students to, "research and synthesize cultural and historical information related to a drama/theatre work to support or evaluate artistic choices" (National Core Arts Standards 8). In theatre, the "isms" are used as a way to track the history of design. The trends in art and culture help to define these different theories throughout

our history. In this chapter I will define three of these theories and show their practical application to design. It should be noted that I cover just a fraction of the different "isms" that occurred from the 1300s through the twentieth century. I have selected only a few European "isms" to define and explore, but there are several other important "isms" that had and continue to have an impact on theatrical design. I will break down futurism, dadaism, and surrealism. These three theories will be explored further by looking at how they could impact a specific scenic element. I will be touching on a way to approach design that uses history to help both define an aesthetic and inspire design choices. I have chosen Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* because it is a popular play that has few, but important scenic elements. Having a play that can be open to interpretation lets designers have more creative freedom as they approach this new world. This way, there can be an emphasis on the theories and the application to one scenic object as opposed to several.

When looking at a script set in a specific period, it is best to research what discoveries were being made in theatre and art during that time. Leaning into these theories can help the design to be historically accurate and more visually interesting to the audience. These theories can also help to create different moods to marry the design to the underlying themes of the play. What qualities that are unique to each "ism"? Which could be best to help convey important themes to connect with the audience? This dramaturgical and visual research leads designers to creative discoveries for their work.

It is best to start with a background on a selection of foundational "isms" and their importance to the world of visual art and theatre. The book, *...isms: Understanding Art* written by Stephen Little, includes a chronological breakdown of the "isms" starting from the

Renaissance period and ending with Postmodernism (156-157). Some of these theories made more of an impact on the world of design than others. One can be inspired by many different movements from the past. If a production team wishes to place the design concept for a production into a certain time period, this is a great place to start. I will define a few that I have found to be the most influential when looking at how genre inspires design choices. This should act as a brief first look into a few of these theories.

Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism

Futurism, dadaism and surrealism are just three of the theories that could be applied to the design of the tree in Beckett's absurdist play, *Waiting for Godot*. These theoretical frameworks serve as the best introduction of applied theory through design because of the connection between absurdist theatre and anti-realism. In Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* the tree is the main focal point and anchor for the play. It also serves as a symbol for the world around the characters. The way in which this tree is designed depends on how the artistic team chooses to interpret the specific production they're designing. *Waiting for Godot* is often categorized as Theatre of the Absurd, which was a term invented by theatre scholar Martin Esslin. In his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* he argues of the genre, "not only *do* all these plays make sense, though perhaps not obvious or conventional sense, they also give expression to some of the basic issues and problems of our age, in a uniquely efficient and meaningful manner, so that they meet some of the deepest needs and unexpressed yearnings of their audience" (Esslin 4). What would the tree look like through the lens of futurism, dadaism and surrealism? Each

"ism" becomes the aesthetic for each different version of a production. This same thought

process can be used for both in-class theoretical design assignments and school productions.

What does a/the tree look like to a futurist artist? What does a dada tree look like? What

does a surrealist tree look like? It is important to know what qualities are unique to each of these

theories and how the same scenic element can be interpreted differently depending on which

theory is being applied. To me, the tree symbolizes this world that is barren, lifeless and without

purpose. It is also important because all the main action, or inaction, happens around the tree. As

stated above, the tree serves as both focal point for the audience and anchor point for the

characters. The tree also obeys the rules of emphasis, one of the principles of design. It helps to

guide the audiences' eyes to a specific point on stage. This helps to create balance between

characters and scenery. It would be best to start to explore each of these theories by defining the

"ism" and revealing the unique qualities held by each. The Beckett estate is very particular about

how each production of his shows can be done, so in true Theatre of the Absurd fashion, we will

uplift the individuality of each tree rendition and reject the rules that are put in place.

There is absurdity in the way this play questions both existence and our purpose in life.

This play can also be seen through the theme of insanity. Estragon and Vladimir spend the entire

play waiting for someone or something that never comes. Yet, despite this, they continue to wait.

They even end the show by Vladimir saying, "Well? Shall we go?" (Beckett 85) and Estragon

responding, "Yes, let's go" (Beckett 85). After this, in the stage directions, it says, "*They do not

move*" (Beckett 85). This is another interesting layer when thinking about the themes. Waiting

for Godot also has uncertainty regarding time. The only clue we get from the script is in the stage

directions. In act one, the tree is supposed to be barren, but in act two the stage directions say, "*The tree has four or five leaves*" (Beckett 47). This would indicate some type of passage of time. If we think about time in a linear sense, the leaves will fall off in fall/winter then grow again in the spring. Other than this, there is no specific mention of time passing, though we do know they are waiting. It is best to, after reading and analyzing the play, ask questions when starting to create a design. How would it be best to portray these absurdist themes on stage in relation to this production? How can the tree be the connection between themes and the environment around the characters? Looking through the different "ism" lenses under the anti-realism umbrella, we can dive into these different possibilities to best support this play.

<div align="center">Futurism</div>

Futurism emerged in Italy in 1909 and was announced in a manifesto written by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Futurists were inspired by the machine age and glorified the new advances in technology that were taking place. They expressed a desire to look towards the future and abandon what came before, and

> first conceived their new art as an attempt to show the world, not as it really was, but as it was *really experienced*. But though their theory called for a 'sharpened and multiplied sensitiveness', in practice they replaced the conventions of the museums with those of photography and a current theory of colour (Nash 181).

There was an obsession with race cars, locomotives, and the idea of speed. Futurists were exhilarated by the feeling of excitement, danger and violence that were present during this time

of the first world war. They called for an art form that matched their heightened senses and what was to come, and "developed techniques in order to express speed and motion. These techniques included blurring and repetition. They also made use of lines of force – a method which they had adopted from the Cubists" (Wolfe). In futuristic theatre, there was emphasis on architecture and abandonment of the naturalistic movement that came before. Futurist designers introduced scenic elements that went through some sort of change during the live performance. For example, one of the main futurist designers was Enrico Prampoloni. This designer, "who designed more than one hundred productions, also wrote a number of manifestos that demanded painted scenery be replaced with 'dynamic stage architecture that will move'" (Brockett 247). This unique element makes Futurism an interesting lens to view the tree. Like futuristic designs, the tree in *Waiting for Godot* will have to undergo some type of change as the play moves through act one to act two.

Through application of Futurism to the tree, we can think about how to represent the themes of the play through the Futuristic ideals. This could mean abandoning the thought of having the tree look anything like the trees we see outside on any given day. We need to create a tree that leans into technology and the machine age. With that in mind, the tree should be made from a type of material that could be found in the factories that were manufacturing goods in the early 1900s. If futurism started in 1909, we should start our research on Italy in 1909. What were the major advances in technology during this time? Because the futurists were driven by the idea of a race car, we can also research what they looked like during this time. These research items become the basis for our design. There are a couple of things that come to mind when thinking

about a tree made in the image of futurism. First, we think of the race car, which was highly influential to this movement. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti states in *The Futurist Manifesto* that,

> We declare that the splendor of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath…a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun tire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothracev (Marinetti 3).

While leaning into this theme, designers can see the tree made up of different internal parts of a car. The different components that give the race car its speed, will be the base holding up the tree. Another, maybe slightly more modern evolution of this design would be through steampunk. Steampunk is a way to mash steam-powered machinery with design. The big difference is futurism leans on advances in technology, while steampunk is more heavily influenced by fantasy. I do think they have an interesting connection, which would make steampunk a unique view of Futurism for this design of the tree.

Students can use this thought process in application of their own designs and draw inspiration from the Futurists ideals. When creating example renderings for this piece, my collaborator and I leaned into cyberpunk and steampunk for our interpretation of a Futuristic tree. Cyberpunk, defined by Merriam-Webster is, "a science fiction dealing with future urban societies dominated by computer technology" (Merriam-Webster). This (Figure 1) tree and surrounding world leans into the main ideas of Futurism in a modern way. Futurism may be the best choice to approach a design when the script seems to be heavily influenced by industrialization and machinery.

Figure 1: Sample Rendering for the tree designed within Futurism.

Created by Chandler Caroccio and Jacob Sikorski

<u>Dadaism</u>

Dadaism was an anti-art movement that was started in Zurich, Switzerland in 1916. In *A History of Stage Design and Technology in Europe and the United States* the authors state, "dadaism was grounded in contempt for a world that had produced a global war. Its adherents sought to replace logic and reason with calculated madness, spontaneity, freedom from constraint, and all-inclusiveness" (Brockett, Hardberger, Mitchell 248). According to the *Dada Manifesto* written by Tristan Tzara in 1918, "Dada Means Nothing" (1). It criticized the world in a funny and chaotic way. Dada theatre leaned into the absurd and went against normal theatre structure. Dadaism was a way to be free of the former rules of theater and the art that had come

before. There were two main art styles that came out of the Dada movement, readymade sculpture, and collage:

> The artist Marcel Duchamp famously created Dadaist readymade sculptures by manipulating found, prefabricated objects in a simple way, then presenting them in a gallery as art. Artist Hannah Hoch is famous for her use of collage. She pioneered photomontage, in which elements of different photos are pasted together to create a new image" (MasterClass).

Readymade sculptures invited viewers to question, what does it mean to call something art? Duchamp wanted to elevate the everyday object and lift it from the box we usually place it into. The collages were about spontaneity, a way to leave the art up to chance. There were many poems being produced by dadaists during this period that were formed from mixing around newspaper clippings and organizing them randomly on a page.

When thinking about dadaism, we want to lean into the chaos and calculated randomness of the theory. We could use either of the characteristics of dadaism to create the tree. We could lean into a found object to create a readymade sculpture, which could be used in place of the tree. Another approach would be to lean into the collage and form the tree from random pictures. If we choose to go with the readymade sculpture, we will lean into the symbolic meaning behind the tree.

For a readymade piece designers would want to find an object that represents the same themes the tree in the play needs to represent. As stated above, the tree serves as a symbol for the world

around the characters, barren, lifeless and without purpose. A good example of what object may be best, in the world of dadaism for this tree, is an empty damaged vase. A vase does not have purpose until we place purpose upon it. We also wouldn't normally see a vase in this setting. For my example (Figure 2), my collaborator and I leaned into the idea of the readymade sculpture.

Figure 2: Sample Rendering for the tree designed within Dadaism.
Created by Chandler Caroccio and Jacob Sikorski

Another way to approach the design for the tree through a dadaist lens would be to lean into the randomness of a collage. Go through an old magazine and pull images that either lean into the themes of the tree or don't. Dadaists were driven by their passion to make a statement and use their art to make people question everything. The randomness of having nothing tied into the tree's themes could be very dada. We, as the designer, can decide which side of dadaism to

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lean into for this collage version of the tree, because it "turned into two directions, on the one hand to a nihilistic and violent attack on art, and on the other to games, masks, and buffoonery" (Nash 204). A collage in the shape of a tree, but it doesn't have to be. We want to embrace the nothingness of dadaism any design inspired by this genre.

<center>Surrealism</center>

Surrealism was a movement which started in Paris in 1924. It started to come to the surface as, "internal bickering led to the abandonment of Dadaism, and it was soon replaced by Surrealism, a movement championed by Breton, who wrote its manifestos, which were heavily influenced by Sigmund Freud" (Brockett, Hardberger, Mitchell 248). Surrealism was drawn to dreams and our unconscious state. According to Dawn Ades in, *Modern Art: Impressionism to Post-*Modernism,

> one must remember that the dream for Freud, and also for Breton, was a direct path to the unconscious; the way in which a dream deals with its subject, condensing, distorting, allowing contradictory facts or impressions to exist side by side without any conflict – what Freud calls dream-work – is characteristic of the process of the unconscious (Ades 242).

Surrealists were interested in creating a whole environment with their designs, not just one specific object. Salvador Dalí was one of the most influential surrealist painters and scenic designers. Most people know him for his famous surrealist paintings, most notably is his painting titled, *The Persistence of Memory* (1931), which plays on the meaning of time. The Salvador

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Dalí museum states the melting clocks symbolize, "the lack of meaning and fluidity of time in the dream world" (dalínian symbols). The Surreal version of the tree, if using *The Persistence of Memory* as inspiration, could be an interesting way to portray one of the main themes. Because this painting leans into the meaning of time, we can use this tree to parallel the uncertainty of time throughout *Waiting for Godot*. The main object of this painting is melting clocks. Clocks could be incorporated in both the tree itself and around the world around the tree. My collaborator and I used both pieces by Dalí as a reference to create the example (Figure 3) for a surrealist tree.

The Surrealists looked not only at the object itself, but the environment around the object. A surreal design shouldn't only be about the tree, but it would have to spread to consume the entire stage. Everything would have to flow together in a way that makes the tree the focal point, but not the entire purpose of the design. An example of this can be found in an art series for *Alice in Wonderland* illustrated by Salvador Dalí in 1969. The one that caught my eye, in relation to surrealism is titled *A Mad Tea Party*. This would be interesting if the design calls for a brighter aesthetic. This, however, may not be the correct fit if we are trying to convey a darker aesthetic through the design. This can easily be adjusted by changing the colors to a darker color palette or having the colors be more saturated.

Figure 3: Sample Rendering for the tree designed within Surrealism.
 Created by Chandler Caroccio and Jacob Sikorski

The artistic team determining aesthetic is important to help shape the design. Whichever "ism" lens we decide to apply to the tree, propels the underlying aesthetic of the design. This will also link to the production as a whole. The entire artistic team will need to collaborate on the direction and through this, the different elements of design will start to form. An understanding of these 'isms' helps to provide historical context. It is important to know what came before us and how design got to be where it is today.

Takeaway Points:

- "Ism" - different theatrical, art, and/or philosophical movements starting as early as the 1300s and continuing through to the twentieth century.

- Naturalism - "characterized by a general, overall impression of fidelity to natural appearance. This is achieved by conveying light, texture, colour and tone in all their variety, but with complete consistency" (Little 37).

- Realism – "provides a truthful representation of the real world; it is based on direct observation of contemporary life and manners; and authors must be impersonal in their attitudes toward their subject matter" (Brockett 209). – From Chapter 2

- "Realism claimed that the artist should represent the world as it is, even if this meant breaking artistic and social conventions" (Little 80). – From this chapter

- Futurism – "characterized its aggressive celebration of modern technology, speed, and the city life, and by the vigour with which it poured scorn on the traditions of Western Art" (Little 108).

- Dadaism – "all received moral, political and aesthetic beliefs had been destroyed by the war. They advocated a destructive, irreverent and liberating approach to art" (Little 110).

- Surrealism – "more explicitly preoccupied with spiritualism, Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism than Dadaism was. It aimed to create art which was 'automatic', meaning that it had emerged directly from the unconscious without being shaped by reason, morality or aesthetic judgements" (Little 118).

Unit Overview

<u>Objectives:</u>

- Define "ism".

- Differentiate the main qualities of each "isms" covered.

- Apply "isms" to a scenic element.

<u>Recommendation:</u>

Any scenic element can be used. Start with one element for classroom assignments then build up to doing multiple scenic elements. Begin the process with a sample scenic element and have students repeat the process with whichever set pieces are being designed for your current production.

<u>Materials:</u>

Scenic Element Example(s)

Sketch Paper

Pencil

<u>Background Terminology:</u>

- "ism" - the different theatrical, art, or philosophical movements spanning from the 1300s through the twentieth century.

- Realism – "claimed that the artist should represent the world as it is, even if this meant breaking artistic and social conventions" (Little 80).

- Futurism - "characterized its aggressive celebration of modern technology, speed, and the city life, and by the vigour with which it poured scorn on the traditions of Western Art" (Little 108).

- Dadaism – "all received moral, political and aesthetic beliefs had been destroyed by the war. They advocated a destructive, irreverent and liberating approach to art" (Little 110).

- Surrealism – "more explicitly preoccupied with spiritualism, Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism than Dadaism was. It aimed to create art which was 'automatic', meaning that it had emerged directly from the unconscious without being shaped by reason, morality or aesthetic judgements" (Little 118).

<u>Day Breakdown:</u>

Day One:

- Define an "ism".

- Present the Chronology of "isms", pointing out which will be covered further throughout the week.

  <u>Note:</u>

  A helpful chart can be found in the book *...isms: Understanding Art* written by Stephen Little.

Day Two:

- Introduce realism and naturalism.

- Define what elements are unique to each.

- Show examples of both art and theatrical designs done through this lens.

Day Three:

- Introduce symbolism and futurism.

- Define what elements are unique to each.

- Show examples of both art and theatrical designs done through this lens.

Day Four:

- Introduce dadaism and surrealism.

- Define what elements are unique to each.

- Show examples of both art and theatrical designs done through this lens.

Day Five:

- Introduce the scenic element(s).

- Have students pick one of the four "ism".

- Have students work in class on transforming the scenic element within the rules of their selected "ism".

Guiding Questions:

What qualities that are unique to each "ism"?

What would this scenic element look within the world of each of these theories?

Note:

For a sample assignment for transforming a scenic element, the *Waiting for Godot* assignment can be used. The tree from this script was the example used in the chapter.

<u>Sample Lesson Plan</u>

Lesson Title: Learning Design History Through The "Isms" – Day One

Leve: High School Students

Duration of Lesson: 50 minutes (one class period)

Lesson Materials: A scenic element, sketch paper and a pencil.

> **Note**: Any scenic element can be used. Refer to the 'Recommendation' section of the
>
> Unit Overview for Chapter Three.

Learning Goals/Objectives:

Students will be able to define an "ism".

Students will be able to define six different "isms".

distinguish the unique qualities of each "ism".

Students will be able to apply their knowledge of an "ism" to the design of a specific scenic

element.

Bell Work/Warm Up:

(5 minutes) Have students reflect on what theatre history fact they remember the most and why.

Intros:

(*10 minutes*) Have students introduce their names, pronouns and say their favorite play/musical.

Body of Lesson:

(*10 minutes*) Define an "ism" and their place in the history of design.

- "ism" - the different theatrical, art, or philosophical movements spanning from the 1300s through the twentieth century.

(5 minutes) Present the Chronology of "isms" from *...isms: Understanding Art* written by Stephen Little. A chart can be found on pages 156 and 157.

Assessment/Closure/Reflection:

(5 minutes) Share which "isms" will be covered throughout the unit.

(5 minutes) Discuss the overall goals of this unit.

(5 minutes) Give students time to brainstorm what scenic element they would like to use for this unit.

Understanding:

(5 minutes) Check for understanding.

Prior Knowledge:

Students can come into this lesson with no prior knowledge. This will serve as an introduction.

STEP FOUR: DEFINING AESTHETIC BY EXPLORING THEMES

When looking at Reading Standards for Literature for grades 6-12 one of the main student objectives revolves around analysis. We, as educators, want our students to develop a deeper understanding and personal connection to the materials they read. In all the previous steps in our design process, there has been a link to further knowledge and analysis. We can also see this emphasis on analyzing a script in the *National Core Arts Standards* for grades 6-12. Step Four asks designers to explore the themes of the play, to aid in creating a production's aesthetic through their design choices. We can let everything we uncovered up to this point help to guide our further exploration of the text. As a designer, one's main goal should be supporting the needs of the play and uplifting what they find important about a particular story. Referring to the *National Core Arts Standards* for grades 6-12 we can see a direct link to this next part of the design process. Looking specifically at HS Advanced we see, "synthesize ideas from research, script analysis, and context to create a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant in a drama/theatre work" (National Core Arts Standards 3). In this chapter I will define collaboration and its importance to the design process. I will then provide an important question when it comes to how to approach bringing a design on its feet that will establish the basis of our research and analysis. Next, we will explore specific script needs and how to support those needs through design choices. Examples from shows I have designed will show an in-depth look into this step of the process. Lastly, I will touch on the elements and principles of design and how to use them to your advantage to create design aesthetic choices.

A designer's job is to support the text by giving it the proper envelope in which to be viewed. When beginning to think about how to accomplish this,

One guideline works for all plays: the design should be expressive of the mood and spirit

of the play. Within this context, mood usually refers to the dominant emotional quality of

the production. Spirit is generally interpreted to refer to the production concept-the way

in which the production design team (producer, director, and scenic, costume, lighting,

and sound designers) decide that the play is going to be presented (Gillette 162).

The common denominator that will help form the design concept for the production is

collaboration between the director and the other members of the creative team.

Collaboration

Collaboration is defined in *Introduction to Theatrical Design and Production: A*

Collaborative Journey as, "the willingness to freely exchange ideas and to make choices based

on the needs of the production and not just a personal opinion. There is a give and take of ideas

and is related to compromise" (Ryerson 44). A design will only be successful if all members

from the creative team are working together towards the same goals; this way, a design will be

cohesive. My high schoolers always joke about how much I use the word collaboration, but its

importance to design is unmatched. There may be times when one design element may have

more emphasis than the others, but all elements must work together to create the whole picture.

Because of the creative team members, each production will be designed differently. There will

be certain moods and themes that the team will want to bring forward. What does the creative

team find most important about the story that they want to tell? We will collaboratively decide

how to portray the conceptual ideas from the text through the production's concept. This is how

there can be many different interpretations of the same text. We could see several different

productions of the same show and see different design elements each time. It boils down to a production's overall aesthetic which is, "the meshing of the aesthetics of the creative team into a joint aesthetic is what makes that joint aesthetic unique, and that is one reason why we can see a 20 different productions of Hamlet, and none of them will be designed the same way (Doshi 152).

Why This Play Now

During a first design meeting everyone from the creative team will talk about what they found enticing about the script. Each designer will talk about personal connections and what themes they want to emphasize within the particular production design. A lot of times during this first meeting students will try to start making design choices. I tell them to hold off on those thoughts; only tell me how you felt about the script. If they didn't like it, I want to hear about it. The creative team will collaborate to answer one of the most important questions, why this play now? Make this a priority with students when exploring design. The answer to this question will be the springboard for further research and an investigation into theme. Design is the backbone, feeling and reaction to the play that drives the other steps that we have previously covered, though it's not seriously drawn out till Step 4. From here, designers can start to imagine in which way the production will creatively evoke the mood of the text. There is constant conversation between the designers and with the director, this will keep everyone on the same page to confirm all elements are living within the same world. This is the most creative and subjective part of the process, where the creative team should be imagining their big dreams for the production. I see a lot in high school settings a need to see how stock materials could be

reused to work for the production. This is done instead of having students dream big first, then seeing if any materials currently owned by the theatre can work for their ideas. I believe this is also because a lot of times our students or ourselves, as educators, are also acting as the technicians. We know the limitations of our space and workers, so we pair down for that.

Let students explore the creativity and emotional response to the text first. Then, in a budget meeting type setting, figure out how to make the design happen with the material and/or money limitations the school may have. Here is when we can ask ourselves, how do we create a similar effect of the dream design with what we have? The biggest struggle in this conversation is how to get someone to think creatively. The automatic limitations will force a designer into a box and limit their imagination and creativity. Thinking creatively can be difficult, especially when it comes to a text that students don't necessarily connect to on the first read. I also see students will only look at the needs and not let themselves think outside of that. Giving space to explore the script free of limitations, will help to create a more authentic design. This will also help to confirm that the design is specifically made for this production, rather than forcing the production to live inside an already crafted technical space.

<center>Specific Script Needs</center>

In conjunction with the director's feelings about what they find important about the story and one's own personal response/connection, a designer must also define the script's needs. What does the script very specifically call for through either the stage directions or the character lines? These act as guides because,

Designers work with two kinds of production limitations: *aesthetic* and *pragmatic*. Many

aesthetic limitations come from your director, who dictates the overall direction of your

design work. Typically, the director's thoughts will provide some kind of interpretation

of the text specific to your production. Through discussion, you and the rest of the artistic

team will collaborate on an overall plan that satisfies the aesthetic needs of the play. Your

design must meet the requirements of the limitations that you and your director have

agreed on (Porter 105-106).

These can be any specific element you discover within the script. This could be location,

time/season, period, specific elements. Some examples of these specific elements could be,

furniture, practicals, specific clothing items, specific sounds, etc.

Example

In the previous chapters, I have used examples that were broader and stayed objective in

approaching the information. Here, I am departing from this structure because the nature of

creativity needs to be flexible based on the creative team and these limitations. To show the

process in which a designer can take all of this information and turn it into a collaborative

design, I will present very specific examples to help define this.

We will be exploring two shows with very different aesthetics, to express the flow for

this part of the design process. The first production that we will explore is from my time in

Graduate School at the University of Central Florida. I was both the scenic and lighting designer

for *Home of the Brave* written by Lee Cataluna. This was our Theatre for Young Audiences

(TYA) tour production in Spring 2023. Our creative team felt that the children's journeys were

important and wanted to use our production as a way to uplift their voices. One major aspect of the director's vision was about defining what the word 'home' meant for the characters. A quote that resonated with many of us was,

> MARCUS: What if that one place is right here (*he puts his hand over his heart.*) You're still yourself wherever you go. Home is where your heart lives, not where you happen to be (Cataluna 29).

Our director was also excited by the thought of having everything feel homemade, like it could have been put together to create a space by the characters themselves. Because of the design conversations we had, we decided to create the sense of whimsy we have as children. The last big piece of this story was that each child in the play was from a military family. Because of this, there was a sense of change that was constantly right under the surface. After doing my script analysis and research, I needed to reflect on what the director had hoped to emphasize with our production.

How would I be able to create a whimsical, childlike atmosphere on stage? The answer to this question would help to define our production's aesthetic. A production's aesthetic is,

> what an Artist brings to the project. It includes the Designer's personal opinion and the definition of the design elements and principles as applied to the storytelling. Aesthetics include the Designer's opinion regarding a script and the artistic vehicle the Designer uses to express the perceived concept of the script (Ryerson 41).

I personally, was interested in the concept of home and giving the character's ownership/control over their space. The script called for a space that had to become a lot of different types of spaces. This meant the space needed to be adaptable to encompass these changes in location. I

also needed to find a way for things to look homemade while not looking messy or chaotic. Because most of the characters in the show have moved a lot, there was a need to create a space that could be manipulated to feel like home for all of the different characters.

This had me thinking about the things I used to do as a child to feel like I had some autonomy over my surroundings. It usually had to do with redecorating my room and playroom to better surround myself with comforting items. I remember building forts in my bedroom or living room as a way to create my own sense of space. This is when my imagination started to work, thinking of all of the different ways I used to build these indoor forts. What was used as 'building materials'? You, of course, had to use whatever you could find around your house. This usually led to using cardboard, blankets, and Christmas lights. My brain then made the connection between these types of materials and the supplies I gathered when having to move. As someone who has moved a lot in their adult life, I keep a constant supply of large boxes and bins on the ready. I would assume that the characters in the play may as well, based on how many times the character expressed having to move. Also, let's face it, who doesn't have a random bundle of Christmas lights hanging around in a random drawer waiting for their time! It was from this thought and the director's wanting to see a sense of wonder on stage, that the design ideas started to come together.

I decided to create a fort-type space out of moving materials that could be manipulated to become all locations in the play. I had many meetings with my director about the needs of the different spaces and how the design would be used to fit those needs. One main obstacle that we needed to problem-solve was that the characters needed places to sit. Usually, with empty moving materials, they are unable to handle any weight being placed on top of them. This was

tricky because we needed to stay within the rules of the world that was being created. If a designer creates rules for the world of the play, they should be followed. The rules establish for the world must stay consistent because, "once a visual characteristic or stylistic convention has been established, particularly in a realistic style, any deviation from that convention has the potential to be disruptive for the audience" (Malloy 29). All materials onstage would be made up of materials used to move. Any type of sturdier material may take us out of believing the children created this set-up themselves. This led to a bigger conversation with my technical director, but ultimately, we were able to build a structure that would be interior to a cardboard box that would make it capable of holding weight. From the outside, it would look like a regular cardboard box, but it would be much sturdier. This was a great way to problem-solve a solution to a direct need of the play. Designers are constantly troubleshooting and have to be adaptable to needs and questions as they arise during the process.

Color and composition for this scenic design was easy because I wanted to stay true to what the audience could connect to. We all can picture the color of a standard cardboard box. All other scenic pieces needed to fit into that same world. I used a lot of neutral colors, the characters themselves brought color and life into the space by interacting and manipulating it. This was a conversation between me and the costume designer about how the characters' clothing could bring color and life into the space. Lighting for this production, however, was slightly a different story. It seemed like there were three very different types of moods laid out in the script. The first were the opening and closing scenes, which seemed almost like a break from reality. In these scenes the characters were speaking directly to the audience so felt very realistic. The characters were attending school, interacting with each other, and hanging out in their rooms.

Finally, each character had a monologue. It was the moment, for each of them, where they could be vulnerable and honest about how they were feeling. Reality states is a phrase that helps define differences in reality within a script. We have our base state for our show, then there are times where we break that reality. It could be natural changes, like the changing of a season, or it could help us define parts where we approach surrealism or abstract ideas. This can help be defined by further research into these changes and what that means for the reality of the production. I wanted the lighting in this production to create these changes in reality states. The base reality state was based in realism with the lighting being used to mirror everyday life. Another reality state was the dream-like world of the monologues. I used the lighting to create a sunrise or sunset effect to show off the dream-word. The last reality state was for the opening and closing number. I used the lighting here to express a separate place. This reality state broke the fourth wall and was completely different than any other part of the play. I thought this was the best way to mirror the emotions of the characters and their reaction to the world around them. This could also be viewed through the lens of style. To define a production style,

> one considers to what degree a real situation may or may not be executed on stage. Most productions fall somewhere on a continuum between absolute reality and absolute abstraction. Determining the style of the work, and collaborating to decide on the stylistic latitude for a specific production, help the designer to locate the design appropriately on that continuum. (Essig and Setlow 93).

In the previous chapter, I covered different "isms". Designers can dissect the themes and see if there is any relation to the one or more of the "isms"'. From here, we can use the different components that are distinct to that "ism" to inform design choices. For example, if the story is

more dream-like we would want to look at the different aspects of surrealism. This would lead the design choices to be softer, with curved edges and avoid harsh/more saturated colors. One could also look at style in relation to a period or historical style. This means, if the text is set in a specific time period, design choices would mirror what was popular during that time. This doesn't mean that we should copy exactly what is being seen from that time, but it should be used as a jumping-off point for the design choices. This is where research will come in handy; "instead of slavishly copying historical designs, designers stylize. Stylization refers to the use of specific compositional elements characteristic of a particular style or period to create the essence of that style or period" (Gillette 76).

Elements and Principles of Design

It is the job of the designer to respond to the needs of the show and create a world that makes sense with the text. We want to clearly see the parallel between design and theme. Designers "inform the action, enhances the dialogue, and turns the play's story inside out. The Designer translates the emotions, moods, and plotline into color and texture choices to influence the Audience's response" (Ryerson 26). As we can see from my example, there is a direct link to the mood and themes of the text to what we will see visually. Elements and principles of design are the tools that help translation from idea into something concrete. The elements of design are both how the audience perceives the design and we execute it. These include line, shape, form, color, texture, and space. When looking at relation to style,

> Designers use the degree of stylization of the scenic, costume, and lighting designs to communicate the level of reality of the production to the audience. Costumes, set, and

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furniture designs that are minimally stylized-that closely duplicate the line, mass, texture, and color of a particular style or period-normally will be interpreted by most audiences as being historically accurate and realistic. As designers depart further from visual reality-exaggerate or simplify line, shape, mass, texture, and/or color-audience interpretation becomes harder to project (Gillette 76).

The principles of design are how the elements work together in space. These include balance, unity, variety, harmony, movement, rhythm, and emphasis. Elements and principles of design are used when making the shift from design thoughts into drawings and sketches.

The Elements are simple to define. How designers decide to use them will translate different ideas. Audience members will be automatically assigning meaning to the design choices we make. For example, we can look at the difference between Disney's classic *Alice in Wonderland* and the version re-imagined directed by Tim Burton. When Burton's aesthetic is added to this story, we are seeing darker themes being brought to the forefront. The colors are darker and more saturated. The shape of things changes, creating items that are oversized with sharper angles. These are obviously just a few examples, but it is easy to see how tweaking the elements and principles of design can pull a story into many different directions. This, of course, is all based on intention. What story are we trying to tell through our design choices? Students have trouble seeing this connection at first. Giving them a specific example from something they're familiar with usually helps this click. The design for *Home of the Brave* would have looked very different if we chose to explore the theme of the characters feeling trapped by their surroundings and having no voice in the world constantly changing around them. I would have changed the shape to make the space feel smaller and more cramped. I would have extended the

lines on scenic elements to make everything taller, so the walls would reflect more of a trapped feeling. If the characters themselves weren't the ones moving around the scenic pieces and things were constantly being shifted, this could create an unsettling feeling within the movement and rhythm of the play. This would be another way to drive home this new choice on style and aesthetic. Slight changes in how designers address these elements and principles of design make all the difference in what is being portrayed.

<u>Example</u>

For a second example of this process, I will talk about a show with a very different aesthetic than *Home of the Brave.* While attending graduate school at the University of Connecticut, I was the Lighting Designer for *Evil Dead: The Musical*. The production itself, unfortunately, was shut down due to Covid. We did, however, get through most of the design process and into some of the drafting. *Evil Dead: The Musical* was an interesting challenge because it is based on a very iconic movie from 1981. Our creative team wanted to stay true to the iconic images seen in the movies, but also wanted to re-imagine them for our stage. This movie is one of my favorites. I knew I wanted to stay true to the moments in the film that I believed were important. What also made this musical interesting was the balance between the campy/fun and the thriller/horror elements. One way our scenic designer wanted to portray the isolation of the cabin and the ever presence of evil in the woods was through the trees. Because of this, the trees became larger than life and would track on/off stage to help create a looming presence. As a lighting designer, I wanted to create a space that could hold both aesthetics of horror and camp. I established horror mostly through my use of shadows and an overall lack of

light within the space. I planned to break this up with color and brightness for some of the funny moments that would occur. The scenic designer and I had to be in constant conversation because I wanted to use the scenic elements to create the shadows onstage. Blood was another important element in all of our minds. How would the costumes, lighting, and set be affected by the blood being used? This led to a conversation about color. Looking at color theory, what color would blood become if we lit it with white vs red or blue? What color would best help deepen this color? This conversation directly affected my choices in color for the lighting design and how the blood itself would need to be lit during moments of low light.

Even though the scripts for both shows were very different, the process for establishing overall aesthetic in design concept is the same. It revolves around the director's vision for the show and conversations about themes with the creative team. The creative team needs to determine a,

> "clear vision, and ideas for the production have to be tried and tested from all points of view, conceptual, aesthetic and practical. Nothing should be out of balance. Collaboration is the battle for harmony on the stage, in which all the players share and seek contributions from each other in order to gain strength through unity" (Howard 111).

The visual research portion of the conceptual research step will be extremely helpful throughout this process. Part of this will be re-imagining images that designers find evocative. Images can be a guide to creating renderings for our design. Renderings are a visual drawing of ideas that can then be presented to the creative team to help convey our thoughts. We will be covering Renderings as part of the designer deliverables in the next chapter.

<u>Takeaway Points:</u>

- Collaboration - "the willingness to freely exchange ideas and to make choices based on the needs of the production and not just a personal opinion. There is a give and take of ideas and is related to compromise" (Ryerson 44).

- Why this play now?

- The driving force for the design is what the creative team finds most important about the play's theme(s).

- Through the designs, the production should be authentic to the story you want to tell.

- Reality states - helps define differences in reality within a script. We have our base state for our show, then there are times where we break that reality.

- Elements of Design:

  - Line, shape, form, color, texture, space

- Principles of Design:

  - Balance, unity, variety, harmony, movement, rhythm, emphasis

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Unit Overview</u></p>

<u>Objectives:</u>

- Define collaboration.

- Extract themes from a script.

- Determine design aesthetic based on script themes.

- Define the elements and principles of design.

<u>Recommendation:</u>

Any script can be used. Start with a shorter script for classroom assignments then building up to a longer script. Begin the process with a 10-minute or one-act play and have students repeat the process with whichever script is being used for your current production.

<u>Materials:</u>

Script

Scrap Paper

Pencil

<u>Background Terminology:</u>

- Collaboration - "the willingness to freely exchange ideas and to make choices based on the needs of the production and not just a personal opinion. There is a give and take of ideas and is related to compromise" (Ryerson 44).

- Elements of Design:

  o Line, shape, form, color, texture, space

- Principles of Design:

  o Balance, unity, variety, harmony, movement, rhythm, emphasis

Day Breakdown:

Day One:

- Define collaboration.

- Split students up into design groups.

- Have students read the script allowed in groups.

Day Two:

- Talk about themes of script.

- Have students pick a theme their group wants to focus on.

- Define aesthetic and how theme drives/determines design aesthetic.

Day Three:

- Introduce the elements of design.

- Have students find images in class that relate to each element.

Day Four:

- Introduce the principles of design.

- Have students find images in class that relate to each principle.

Day Five:

- Have students work in their groups to find images relating to their main theme and aesthetic.

- Have groups give mini presentations on their findings.

Guiding Questions:

What story are we trying to tell through our design choices?

<u>Assignments:</u>

The assignments from Appendix A can be paired with this overview within the individual

lessons.

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: Exploring Themes and Aesthetic – Day One

Leve: High School Students

Duration of Lesson: 50 minutes (one class period)

Lesson Materials: A script, scrap paper and a pencil.

> **Note**: Any script can be used. Refer to the 'Recommendation' section of the Unit
>
> Overview for Chapter Four.

Learning Goals/Objectives:

Students will be able to define collaboration.

Students will be able to extract themes from a script.

Students will be able to determine design aesthetic based on extracted themes.

Students will be able to define the elements and principles of design.

Bell Work/Warm Up:

(5 minutes) What was the last play/musical you saw? Do you remember being impressed by any

of the design elements? Why or why not?

Intros:

(*10 minutes*) Have students introduce their names, pronouns and what their favorite scenic design

is?

It can be for any theatrical production.

Body of Lesson:

(5 minutes) Have students give their own definition for collaboration.

On a board, write down any buzz words you hear in their definitions.

(5 minutes) Define collaboration.

- Collaboration - "the willingness to freely exchange ideas and to make choices based on the needs of the production and not just a personal opinion. There is a give and take of ideas and is related to compromise" (Ryerson 44).

(5 minutes) Give an example of a time where collaboration was effective and an example of a time where collaboration was ineffective.

(5 minutes) Ask students for examples they may have. A class project? A school production?

(15 minutes) Assign design groups and have students read the script out loud within their groups.

Prior Knowledge:

Students can come into this lesson with no prior knowledge. This will serve as an introduction.

STEP FIVE: DESIGNERS AND THEIR DELIVERABLES

The last step of the design process is all about the deliverables. What types of paperwork are being passed around, and to whom? There are many different shops and people involved in the implementation of each production. It is the job of the designer to get the appropriate drawings and/or paperwork to the correct people. This paperwork is how we translate our ideas and research into what fits our production and space. According to the National Core Arts Standards, there are many ways in which this part of the design process is important to learning. When looking under the Envision/Conceptualize section under HS Advanced, it states, "create a complete design for a drama/theatre work that incorporates all elements of technology" (National Core Arts Standards 1). This is where we start seeing the design jump from an idea to a tangable theatrical space. In the Prepare section of the National Core Arts Standards we can see the implementation of technical elements in each of the HS categories. When looking specifically at HS Advanced it states, "explain and justify the selection of technical elements used to build a design that communicates the concept of a drama/theatre production" (National Core Arts Standards 5). In this chapter I will lay out the goals for each design meeting and the deliverables each designer is responsible for. By breaking down the goals for each design meeting as well as the designer deliverables, we can see how these technical elements are implemented into this step of the design process. I have also provided examples for some of these deliverables.

<u>Design Meetings Breakdown</u>

I have created this breakdown to help students with goals for what should be brought to each design meeting. I have my high school students use it as a base for how to approach each meeting.

Meeting Breakdown:

<u>Design Meeting 1</u>

*Whole team may not be present

Read Script prior to meeting

Emotional Response Images

Solidifying roles

Initial thoughts/response of script

Script things that jump out to you

Themes that resonate with you

Director's connection/thoughts

Some 'big ideas' from designers – thoughts they feel passionate about

<u>Design Meeting 2</u>

Reference images

Images depicting reality states

Initial thoughts

Concept sketches / atmospheric sounds thoughts

Color palette initial ideas

Individual Meetings- in between, designers have outside meetings with each other and/or the director. It is important that the information from conversations get passed to all designers affected.

Design Meeting 3 – Designs are starting to solidify

Colored renderings / playlist

Specific moment/object research images

Sound or lighting practical in set

Rough idea of space – ground plan

Individual Meetings

Design Meeting 4

Designs are solid

Rough ground plan

Mostly done

Fabric swatches

Color for scenic and costumes

Solidified practicals

Finalized renderings

<u>Designs should be FINALIZED</u>

<u>Production Meeting 1</u> – first time production and design teams are together

Present designs to Production Team

Department check-ins

<u>Production Meeting 2</u> – prepping for budget meeting

Production Meetings serve as departmental progress check-ins

3-5 is about the normal average for Production Meetings (depending on the

production).

Steps of the design process covered in previous chapters play into each of the design meetings. Each production process can be different, the meeting breakdown will not always look like this. I usually have high school students ask me what they should try to have ready for each meeting. This breakdown can act as a beginning checklist and can evolve for each production. Having this breakdown also helps student feel more prepared and create more effective meetings. Students know what they are expected to present, depending on which meeting. It is also important to note that the budgeting meetings are currently not listed in this meeting breakdown. Budgeting meetings usually take place after the first couple of production meetings. These can be moved earlier/later depending on the production's overall timeline.

<div align="center">Designer Deliverables</div>

Each designer has their own set of deliverables that they are responsible for throughout the course of the design process. The deliverables are split up into two different categories; what is shown to the director/creative Team and what gets sent off to the various shops. I have created a breakdown for each designer.

The scenic designer is responsible for the visual appearance and functionality of the scenic elements used in the production.

To Show Director/Creative Team:

Emotional Response Images

Research Images

Thumbnail Sketches

Scale Model

Renderings

French Scene Breakdown

To Send to Shop: These deliverables go to the Technical Director and the Props Coordinator and are passed on from there.

Props List

Drafting Package

Scene Change Breakdown

Paint Elevations

The lighting designer is responsible for the way in which the audience sees a production. They make the choices for what doesn't get lit, what does get lit and how it gets lit.

To Show Director/Creative Team:

Emotional Response Images

Research Images

Sketches

Renderings

Color Palette Ideas

To Send to Shop: These deliverables go to the Production Electrician and are passed on from there.

Drafting Package

Specialty Equipment Specs

Instrument Schedule

Channel Hookup

The Costume Designer is responsible for the visual appearance of each actor.

To Show Director/Creative Team:

Emotional Response Images

Research Images

Sketches

Renderings

Fabric Swatches

To Send to Shop: These deliverables go to the Costume Shop Manager and are passed on from there.

Costume Breakdown per character

Costume Flats

Costume Change Tracking Sheets

Detailed Colored Renderings

Hair and Makeup Renderings per character

The sound designer is responsible for everything related to sound for the production. They provide all the designs for pre-recorded music, sound effects and the reinforcement of live voices, musical instruments and sound elements.

To Show Director/Creative Team:

Emotional Response Images

Research Images

Demo Sound Files

Sound Research

To Send to Shop: These deliverables go to the Production Audio and the Audio Engineer and are passed on from there.

Speaker Plot

Specialty Equipment Specs

Microphone Plot (if applicable)

Q-Lab File

Audio Files

There can be more things that may be added to these lists, depending on the needs of the production. For example, if equipment needs to be rented, the designer will help facilitate this process. There will also be different deliverables for dedicated prop or projection designers. Any

other discipline that may be involved in the production will have their own set of deliverables and paperwork.

<div align="center">Sketches</div>

In Chapter 2 I discussed emotional response images and world building images that each designer presents to the creative team. With these images and research, designers are able to share initial thoughts/feelings with the rest of the creative team. This is an important step to make sure everyone starts off on the same page and there is no miscommunication when it comes to individual interpretation. Scenic designers are responsible for thumbnail sketches. These sketches are, "rough drawings, usually made in pencil, that show the general composition of the set but very little detail. They are generally made while the designer is developing various concepts for the set while doing conceptual research" (Gillette 171). It is better to have these sketches be quick and to not spend too much time on them. Because these are done so early in the process, designers won't want to become too attached. During the design process, until the design cutoff date, ideas are constantly evolving due to collaboration with peers on the creative team. These thumbnail sketches (Figure 4) also serve as a first look at how each scene will unfold and lead into one another. Lighting and costume designers also create their own type of quick sketches. When creating a lighting sketch, the lighting designer can figure out how the different lighting angles will interact with the set. This also helps track shadows and see needs that the lighting should address throughout the different scenes. The costume sketches serve as a first glimpse into the different silhouettes and styles of each character.
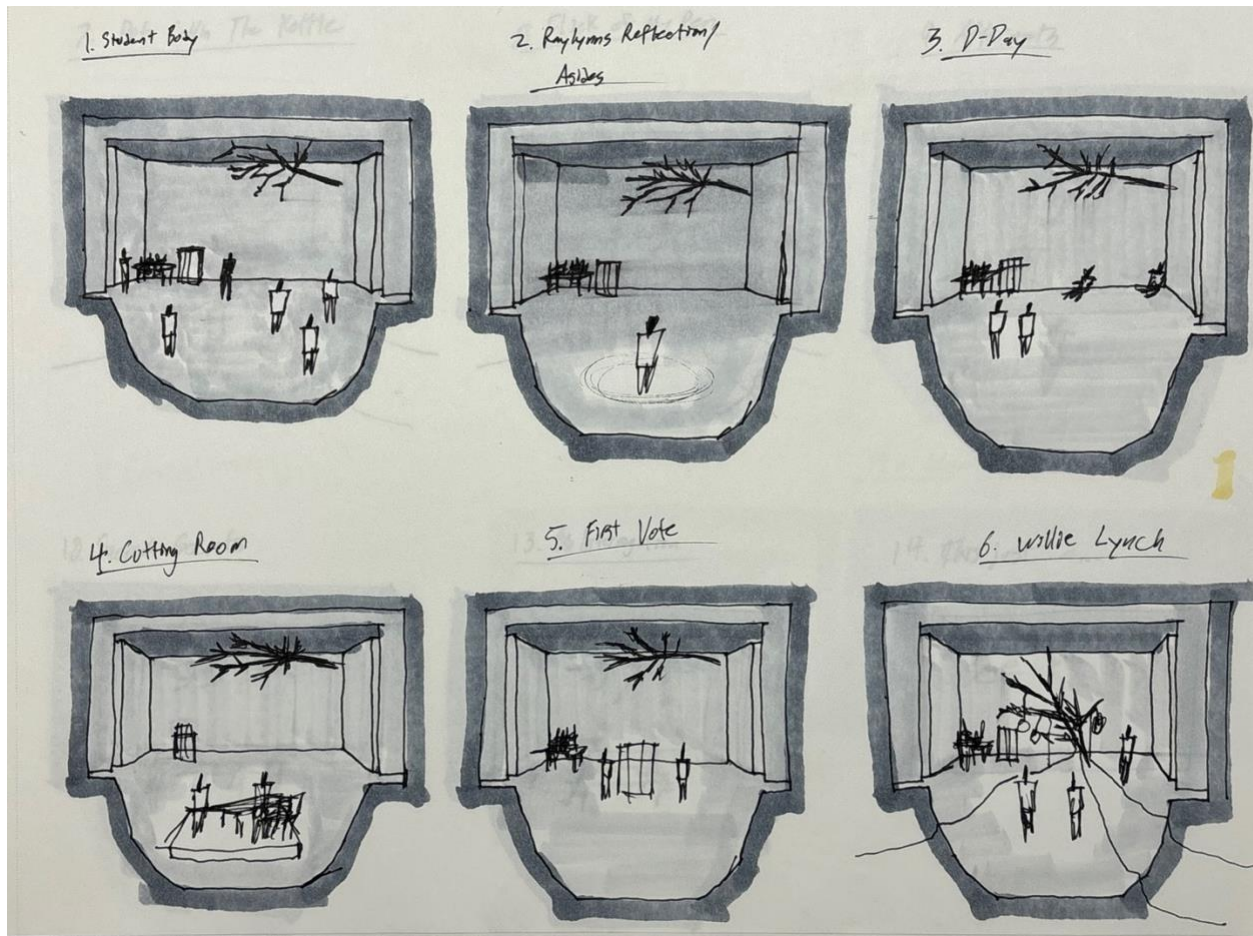
Figure 4: Thumbnail Sketches for Blood at the Root.

Created and designed by Jacob Sikorski

Lighting designer's sketches can often be done through storyboarding which; "visually track the evolution of light over the course of the play. They may be used to figure out how the light might function for a piece, develop ideas for what the play may look like, and communicate those ideas to others" (Essig and Setlow 125). As the process continues, the scenic designer may update these sketches to show the progression of the set through the different scenes.

Renderings

The sketches will then be turned into colored renderings (Figure 5), which will showcase more information and details. Renderings are more finalized, "color sketches of the set. They are normally drawn to scale in mechanical perspective so that they are an accurate representation of the actual size, shape, and color of the setting. The renderings are also complete in terms of the type, style, and location of any furniture, as well as all trim and decorative touches that will be used on the setting" (Gillette 171).

Figure 5: Scenic Process Renderings for The Nutcracker

Created and designed by Jacob Sikorski

Renderings also help the rest of the creative team see each designer's vision. These renderings can be created through a variety of different mediums. There are many programs to create digital renderings; Photoshop, Blender, Procreate, SketchUp, etc. For those designers who prefer to hand-draw their renderings, watercolor, colored pencils, pastels, and other paints are popular.

Both lighting and costume designers also use renderings to help communicate their design ideas. Detail and color are the most important features. Lighting renderings are done over the set and will give an idea about angle, shadow, and texture. They can be done over Scenic Model photos, Scenic Renderings and/or the drafting. This can vary depending on which information is available at the time. I personally prefer doing lighting renderings over scenic renderings or model box photos but have found success when using these other types of scenic paperwork. The example provided are lighting renderings I created over model box photos taken by the scenic designer and myself. (Figure 6).
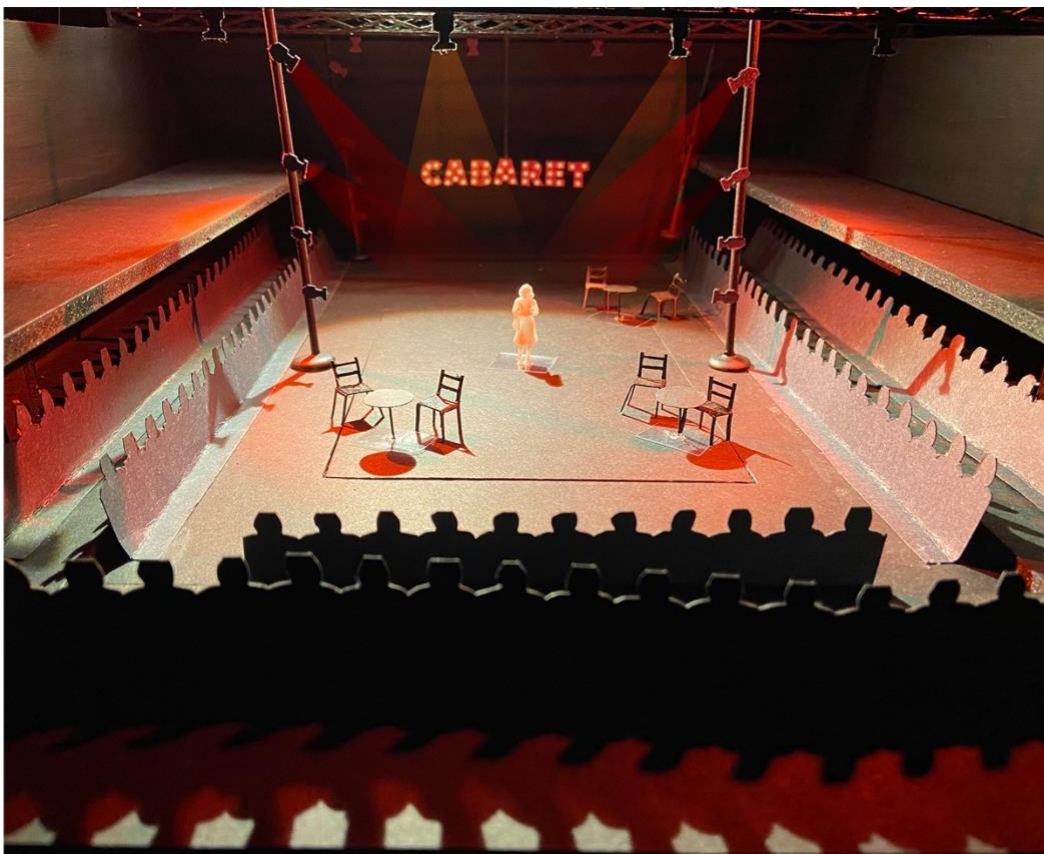
Figure 6: Lighting Renderings for Cabaret

Created and designed by Chandler Caroccio. Scenic design and model box by Elizabeth Olsen.

Costume renderings will often be paired with a fabric swatch and/or the research that was done

per character. The costume designer will create many of these to not only showcase each

character, but also each costume that character wears throughout the production. Each different

costume will require a separate costume rendering to showcase the design. Costume designers go

through a similar sketch to rendering process. Their designs are, "communicated in a series of

sketches that start with rough thumbnails during the design period and culminate with a fully

realized costume rendering that is delivered to the shop for construction" (Campbell 187). These

renderings (Figure 7) need to be detailed enough that the costume shop can use them to build

each costume. By adding the fabric swatches to the costume renderings there is a sample of what

to expect from the costume. The lighting designer can use this to see how the fabric being used

will take light and influence gel color decisions.
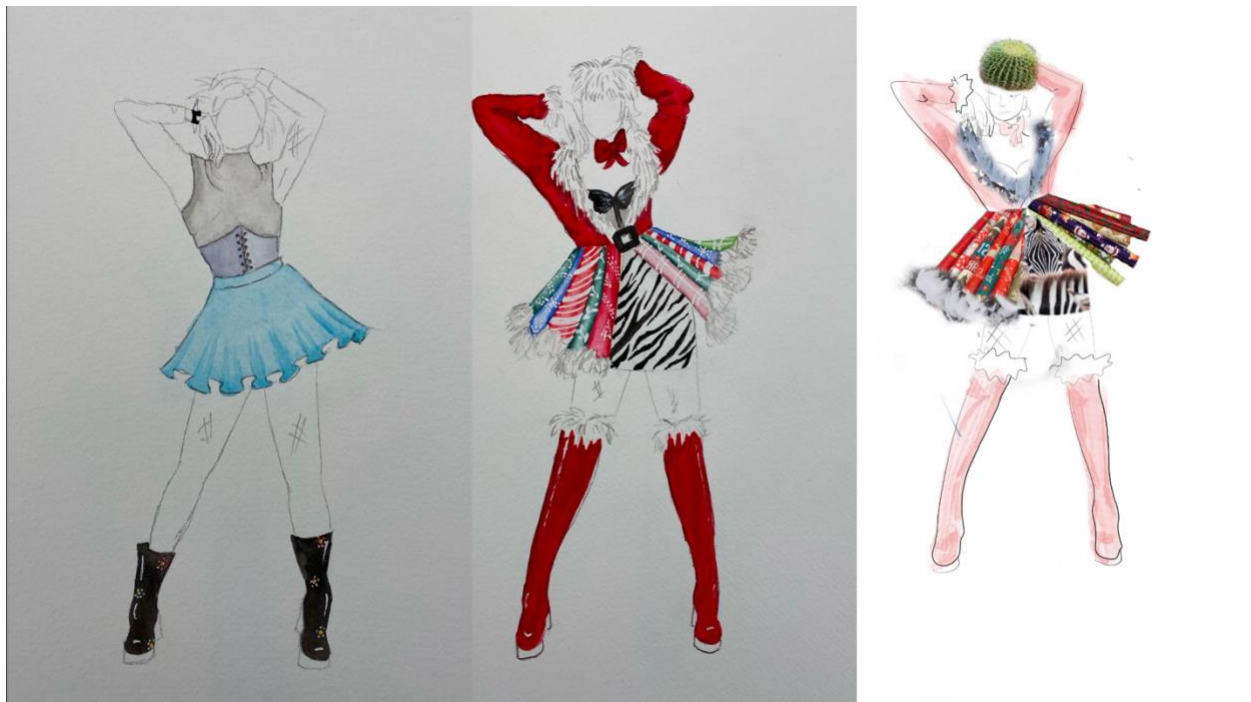
Figure 7: Costume Renderings for RENT.

Created and designed by Sierra Adams.

When all renderings are present in the same meeting space, it is a good idea to look at them all side-by-side. This way the creative team gets a chance to make sure each design fits together and all designs live in the same world. I have found that having students create renderings helps eliminate chaos during the build and tech process. For example, it takes much less time to build a light cue when students have an image of what the cue should look like. There is no new decision-making being made. The visual research, sketches and renderings are part of visualizing what we will see. The drafting and other paperwork passed onto the various shops are how the design gets implemented.

<center>Paperwork</center>

When looking at the designer deliverables breakdown, we can see that each designer is responsible for a type of drafting. Is it important to note that USITT has created drafting standards which should be implemented into the drafting. The use of USITT drafting standards confirms the use of common language between designers and the various shops. The scenic designer is responsible for a drafting package that includes the ground plan, front elevation, section view, paint elevations and a detail drafting of any scenic element containing extended information. Costume designers accompany their renderings with costume flats. These costume flats act as the technical drawings for anything being built by the costume shop. The lighting designer is responsible for a light plot, which will include all necessary views. The light plot is essentially a blueprint of where all the lights will be hung and what pipes they will live on. Lighting designers use photometrics to find the precise spot the light will be hung and what light will give them the effect they're hoping for. Sound designers' drafting is referred to as a speaker

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plot. It is important that the lighting and sound designers are in communication when creating their different plots. Because both designer's equipment can be hung on the same electrics/pipes, it will create a way to check with each other when placing fixtures and equipment. Each Designer is also responsible for the necessary supporting paperwork that goes along with each of their drafting packages. As an example, the most important piece of paperwork to be shared with the light plot is the instrument schedule, which is a list of fixtures used categorized by position and instrument number.

There are various other types of paperwork that are made by the designers but are for their personal use only. These can make different parts of the process easier. For example, the lighting designer will create a magic sheet and cue list to help make the cuing process run smoother during tech. The magic sheet is an in-color representation of the light plot. It can be done in various ways to show which lights can be used for the different areas/set pieces on the stage. I continuously find myself expressing to my high school lighting designers the importance of having a magic sheet. They can always see a world of difference in the speed and smoothness of tech once they create a magic sheet. It can be a quick resource when struggling to light an area; having a visual representation of which lights are in the area/focused to that place. Scenic designers make cue lists for flys, moving scenery, and/or props tracking. Costume designers create a document that tracks quick changes per character. Sound designers will make their own version of a cue sheet and create a list that assigns mics per actor and instrument.

<u>Takeaway Points:</u>

- The Design Meetings Breakdown – found on pages 70-72

- The Designer Deliverables Breakdown – found on pages 73-76

- USITT has created Drafting Standards which should be implemented into the drafting. The use of USITT Drafting Standards confirms the use of common language between designers and the various shops.

Unit Overview

Objectives:

- Identify the goals of each design meeting.

- Recognize the deliverables for each designer.

Recommendation:

Use the Design Meeting Breakdown and the Designer Deliverables Breakdown from Chapter

Five.

Day Breakdown:

Day One:

- Expand on each design meeting,

- What designers should have prepared for each meeting.

- What are the design meeting goals?

Day Two:

- Discuss Designer Deliverables for Scenic Designers.

- Show examples.

Day Three:

- Discuss Designer Deliverables for Lighting Designers.

- Show examples.

Day Four:

- Discuss Designer Deliverables for Costume Designers.

- Show examples.

Day Five:

- Discuss Designer Deliverables for Sound Designers.

- Show examples.

What is the goal of a design meeting?

What is the goal of a production meeting?

Which deliverables are unique to each designer?

Which deliverables are shared by designers?

Assignment:

The assignment from Appendix A can be paired with this overview within the individual lessons.

Sample Lesson Plan

Lesson Title: Meeting Goals and Designer Deliverables – Day One

Leve: High School Students

Duration of Lesson: 50 minutes (one class period)

Learning Goals/Objectives:

Students will be able to identify the goals of each design meeting.

Students will be able to recognize the deliverables for each designer.

Bell Work/Warm Up:

(5 minutes) Have you ever been present for a design meeting? Reflect on your time. If not, what

do you imagine is being discussed?

Intros:

(10 minutes) Have students introduce their names, pronouns and what area of design they are the

most interested in.

Body of Lesson:

(10 minutes) Designers should come into the first design meeting prepared with the following

items.

Read Script prior to meeting

Emotional Response Images

Solidifying roles

Initial thoughts/response of script

Script things that jump out to you

Themes that resonate with you

Director's connection/thoughts

Some 'big ideas' from designers – thoughts they feel passionate about

(5 minutes) Identify what designers should come into the first design meeting prepared with.

Reference images

Images depicting reality states

Initial thoughts

Concept sketches / atmospheric sounds thoughts

Color palette initial ideas

(5 minutes) Identify what designers should come into the second design meeting prepared with.

Colored renderings / playlist

Specific moment/object research images

Sound or lighting practical in set

Rough idea of space – ground plan

(5 minutes) Identify what designers should come into the third design meeting prepared with.

Designs are solid

Rough ground plan

Mostly done

Fabric swatches

Color for scenic and costumes

Solidified practicals

Finalized renderings

(5 minutes) Identify the goals of Production Meetings.

Understanding:

(5 minutes) Check for understanding.

Prior Knowledge:

Students can come into this lesson with no prior knowledge. This will serve as an introduction.

CONCLUSION

How can we teach theatrical design in a tactful and meaningful way to high school students throughout the country? By providing the educators with enough resources and examples to feel supported enough to teach the material to their students. I have created this thesis paper as an easily accessible academic resource for these educators. The chapters read as each step in the design process, including foundational knowledge and examples for further understanding. The assignments give students a way to activate theories to learn these different steps through critical and creative thinking. Lastly, the appendix acts as a case study, giving examples from three design areas in relation to a single production. I have also included a page on further exploration to provide a few online resources that are invaluable.

With more cited research and specific examples that include both renderings and research, I believe this thesis could be expanded upon to become a resource for undergraduate students. I used many different scripts as examples throughout this thesis to show the flexibility of these steps and how they can be adapted to whatever material we may be working with. By reimaging each example section to center around the same script, undergraduate students can explore the design process along with the chapters. They can go through each chapter, apply the theories and let the examples be a baseline for their own process. This could be a way for me to further develop my thesis to become more inclusive of different levels.

I intend to apply the assignments in Appendix A in a high school classroom. Based on the feedback I receive from students and how effective the assignments are in practice; I would love to expand on them further. The goal of the assignments is to both help students gain valuable skills in critical and creative thinking, as well as give them a 'Practice as Research' way to learn

the material. Keeping the assignments as a living document will allow me to evolve them. I would also like to look at how this translates when looking at theatrical productions that schools produce throughout their seasons.

I highly suggest looking through the appendix sections. Appendix B acts as a case study where I provide examples from a Scenic Designer, Lighting Designer, Costume Designer, and Technical Director. I included these examples based on *Evil Dead the Musical,* which was unfortunately shut down due to Covid, but was fully designed. These examples are from myself and fellow collaborators and will help give further exploration of specific Designer Deliverables that were covered in Step 5. Appendix C will be a list of online resources. Because I want this thesis to be an academic resource, I have provided additional resources that I believe are invaluable. Most are mentioned throughout the chapters, while others are more specific to each design area.

The assignments that follow are each directly tied to one of the steps covered in the five chapters. I created a balance between creative expression and critical thinking skills in a hands-on way for the students. They can be used alongside chapters examples or can be applied to any script being used in the class. One of the assignments for Step 3 is specifically linked to *Waiting for Godot*, but it can be used as a base for any script. Besides this assignment, the others are completely universal and free of specific language that tie them to a particular script. I urge creativity and using the assignments to best support the design process being taught.

I lastly wanted to thank educators and provide my continued support to you and whatever classroom you are in. Thank you for everything you do for our students. This thesis is for you.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS TO PAIR WITH EACH STEP

Scenography Map

Think about the world surrounding the central location(s) of your text.

Questions To Ponder:
What else exists within the world?
When the characters enter/exit, where do they go?
Where is the text's central location in relation to these other places?
What other locations in this world seem important to the story?

Be creative while also considering the needs of the text in relation to its setting.
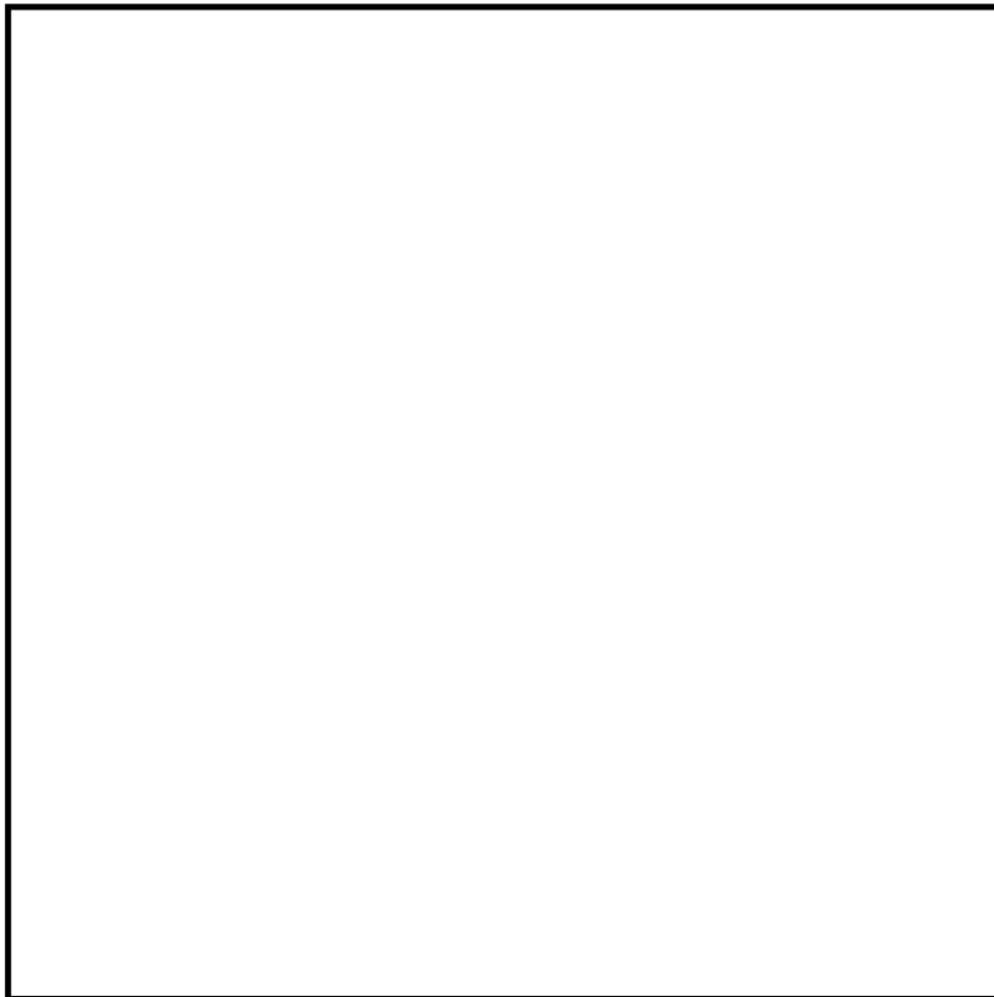
Research Assignment

Find a play to read and fill out each prompt. This can be used as a first step into navigating the research process for a production..

Dramaturgical Research

Find a fun fact about the playwright: _____

What is an interesting headline from the year the play was written?:

_____

Where/when was the original production? _____

What is one interesting piece of information you found when doing research into the plot?

_____

Find a fun fact about the play's location: _____

Visual Research

Find two images that inspire you when thinking about the plot of the play.
Pick one for two of the design areas (Scenic, Lighting, Costume, Sound).

World Building Image   World Building Image
Design Area One: Design Area Two:

Research Assignment

Use Emotional Response Images to convey the plot of a play.

DESIGNING THE TREE FOR
WAITING FOR GODOT

ASSIGNMENT:

Design the tree in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting For Godot* by applying each of the theories below.

DEFINITIONS:

Futurism - There was an obsession with the race car and the idea of speed. Futurists were exhilarated by the feeling of excitement, danger and violence that were present during this time of war. They called for an art form that matched their heightened senses and what was to come. Main Ideas -Advancements in technology, look towards the future.

Dadaism - Dada theatre leaned into the absurd and went against normal theatre structure. Dadaism was a way to be free of the former rules of theater and the art that had come before.
Main Ideas - Anti-art, spontaneity, rebellion and statement through art. Emphasis on the absurd.

Surrealism - Surrealism was drawn to dreams and our unconscious state.Surrealists were interested in creating whole environment with their designs, not just one specific object.
Main Ideas - Dream-like state, diving into the human mind.

TREE MAIN THEMES:

_____

_____

_____

FUTURISM

DADAISM

SURREALISM

Isms Assignment

Each "ism" contains characteristics that make it unique.

Do some quick research into each "ism" and choose a few words that help describe its unique qualities.

<u>Example</u>:

Dadaism: Randomness, chaos, rebel against the norms

Which ones are particularly interesting to you?
What about this ism makes it stand out to you?

<u>Isms</u>:

Naturalism:

Realism:

Symbolism:

Cubism:

Futurism:

Surrealism:

Choose your own adventure! What other "ism", besides these, stand out to you? Define that one below.

"Ism" of your choice:

Design Aesthetic Assignment

LAIKA Studios has a very identifiable aesthetic in their films.
When looking through photos of their work, you can see a similar color palette and overall style.
This is directly due to the design choices they make.

How would one of their films look if it were imagined in a different aesthetic?
Take a scenic location from one of their films and translate into a different design.

For Example:
Take the Pink Palace from *Coraline*. If you imagined this house in a different aesthetic, how might it look?
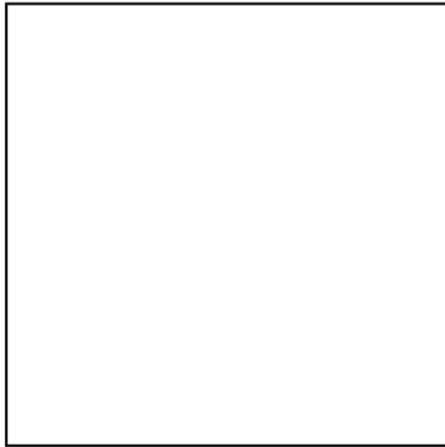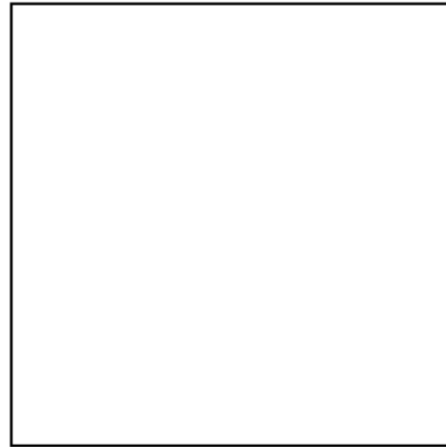
Original Image   Re-Imagined

Questions To Ponder:

What about this scenic piece connects it to LAIKA Studios' aesthetic?

What other aesthetics could work for one of their films? Why?

Do the film's themes relate to any other types of design styles?

Because most of their films aren't set in realism, what could this mean for re-imagining the design for this scenic piece?

Designer Deliverables Assignment

Checklist for Final Design Book

What To Include:

Each Designer:
Emotional Response Images
Research Images
Relevant Research
Sketches
Renderings

Scenic Designer:
Props List
Drafting Package
Scene Change Breakdown
Paint Elevations

Lighting Designer:
Drafting Package
Specialty Equipment Specs
Instrument Schedule
Channel Hookup

Costume Designer:
Costume Breakdown
Costume Flats
Costume Change Tracking Sheets
Detailed Colored Renderings
Hair and Makeup Renderings

Sound Designer:
Speaker Plot
Equipment Specs
Microphone Plot
Cue List with Descriptions
Q-Lab File

Note: This can be used during each design process for productions produced at your High School.

APPENDIX B: NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

NOT HUMAN RESEARCH DETERMINATION

March 15, 2024

Dear Chandler Caroccio:

On 3/15/2024, the IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study, Scholarly/Journalistic
Title of Study:	Steps of Theatrical Design: A Resource For Activating Educators to Teach Design in High Schools
Investigator:	Chandler Caroccio
IRB ID:	STUDY00006574
Funding:	None, None
Documents Reviewed:	• 6574 HRP-250 - FORM - Request for NHSR track changes 3.14.docx, Category: IRB Protocol;

The IRB determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by DHHS and FDA regulations.

IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should changes outside of administrative ones (study personnel, timelines, etc.) be made. If non-administrative changes are made (design, information collected, instrumentation, funding, etc.) and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human in which the organization is engaged, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination by **clicking Create Modification / CR** within the study.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Harry Wingfield
UCF IRB

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX C: COPYRIGHT PERMISSIONS

Hello,

As you know, I am writing my thesis for the University of Central Florida.

I am writing to ask if I am able to use your renderings, draftings, and/or drawings in my thesis as academic resources. They will either be included within my chapter on Designer Deliverables or in the appendix. My thesis will be distributed broadly and I am seeking your permission to be able to use your copyrighted materials. You will still retain ownership of your copyright and are only giving myself and UCF permission to include your work in my thesis paper.
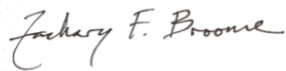
Thank you so much,

Chandler Caroccio

Hello Chandler,

Yes, I give you permission to use my copyright for your thesis paper. I understand that I will still retain copyright ownership.

Thank you,   Sierra Adams

[signature]

1/25/24

Hello,

As you know, I am writing my thesis for the University of Central Florida.

I am writing to ask if I am able to use your renderings, draftings, and/or drawings in my thesis as academic resources. They will either be included within my chapter on Designer Deliverables or in the appendix. My thesis will be distributed broadly and I am seeking your permission to be able to use your copyrighted materials. You will still retain ownership of your copyright and are only giving myself and UCF permission to include your work in my thesis paper.

Thank you so much,

Chandler Caroccio

Hello Chandler,

Yes, I give you permission to use my copyright for your thesis paper. I understand that I will still retain copyright ownership.

Thank you,

Zachary F. Broome   1/24/2024

  Zachary F. Broome

Hello,

As you know, I am writing my thesis for the University of Central Florida.

I am writing to ask if I am able to use your renderings, draftings, and/or drawings in my thesis as academic resources. They will either be included within my chapter on Designer Deliverables or in the appendix. My thesis will be distributed broadly and I am seeking your permission to be able to use your copyrighted materials. You will still retain ownership of your copyright and are only giving myself and UCF permission to include your work in my thesis paper.

Thank you so much,
Chandler Caroccio

Hello Chandler,

Yes, I give you permission to use my copyright for your thesis paper. I understand that I will still retain copyright ownership.

Thank you,

1/23/2023
Aubrey Ellis

Hello,

As you know, I am writing my thesis for the University of Central Florida.

I am writing to ask if I am able to use your renderings, draftings, and/or drawings in my thesis as academic resources. They will either be included within my chapter on Designer Deliverables or in the appendix. My thesis will be distributed broadly and I am seeking your permission to be able to use your copyrighted materials. You will still retain ownership of your copyright and are only giving myself and UCF permission to include your work in my thesis paper.

Thank you so much,
Chandler Caroccio

Hello Chandler,

Yes, I give you permission to use my copyright for your thesis paper. I understand that I will still retain copyright ownership.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Olson

Elizabeth Olson (3-10-2024)

Hello,

As you know, I am writing my thesis for the University of Central Florida.

I am writing to ask if I am able to use your renderings, draftings, and/or drawings in my thesis as academic resources. They will either be included within my chapter on Designer Deliverables or in the appendix. My thesis will be distributed broadly and I am seeking your permission to be able to use your copyrighted materials. You will still retain ownership of your copyright and are only giving myself and UCF permission to include your work in my thesis paper.
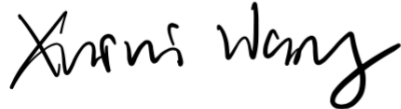
Thank you so much,
Chandler Caroccio

Hello Chandler,

Yes, I give you permission to use my copyright for your thesis paper. I understand that I will still retain copyright ownership.

Thank you,
Jacob Sikorski - 23 Jan 2024

Hello,

As you know, I am writing my thesis for the University of Central Florida.

I am writing to ask if I am able to use your renderings, draftings, and/or drawings in my thesis
as academic resources. They will either be included within my chapter on Designer Deliverables
or in the appendix. My thesis will be distributed broadly and I am seeking your permission to be
able to use your copyrighted materials. You will still retain ownership of your copyright and are
only giving myself and UCF permission to include your work in my thesis paper.

Thank you so much,
Chandler Caroccio

Hello Chandler,

Yes, I give you permission to use my copyright for your thesis paper. I understand that I will still
retain copyright ownership.

Thank you,

01/23/2024   Xurui Wang

APPENDIX D: DESIGNER DELIVERABLES EXAMPLES FROM
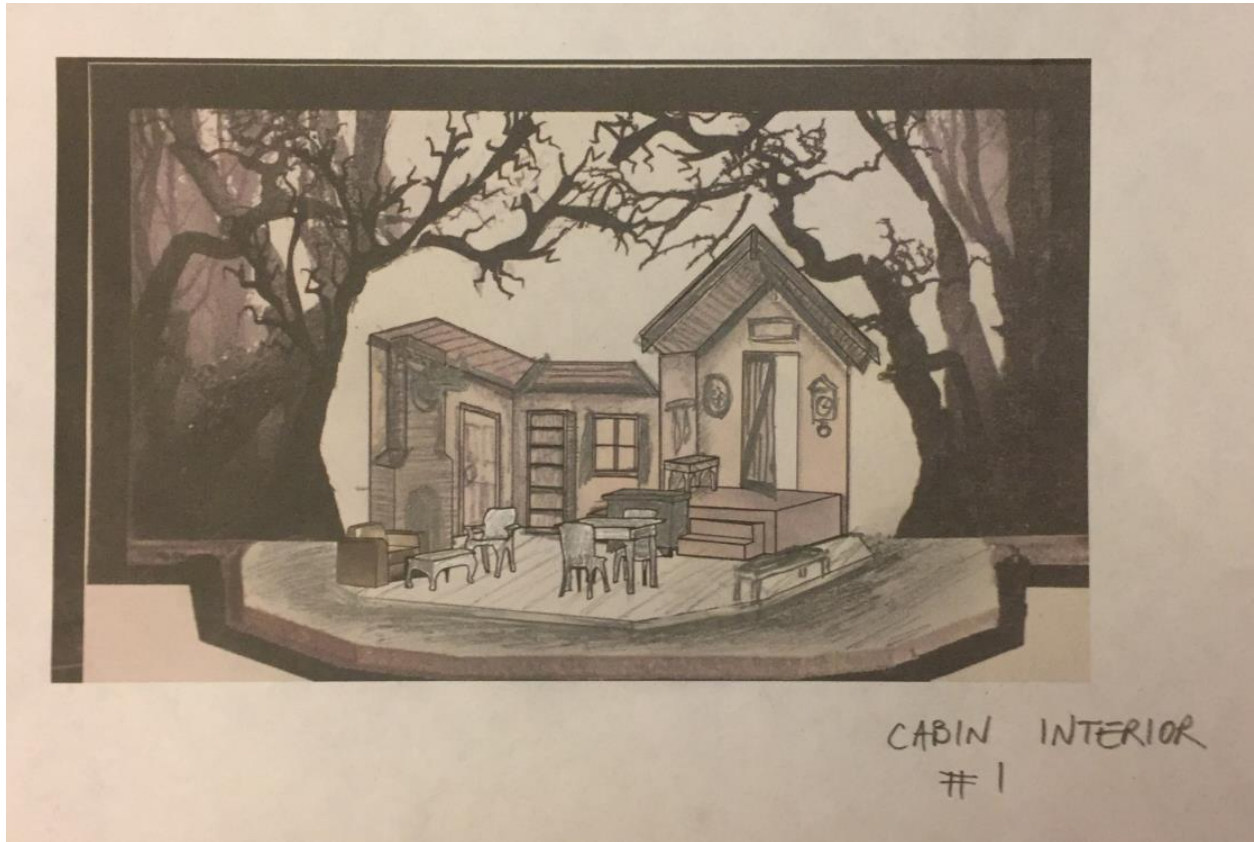## *EVIL DEAD: THE MUSICAL*

Figure 8: Preliminary Scenic Sketch.

Created and designed by Zachary Broome

Figure 9: Preliminary Scenic Sketch.

Created and designed by Zachary Broome

Figure 10: Scenic Model Box Photo.
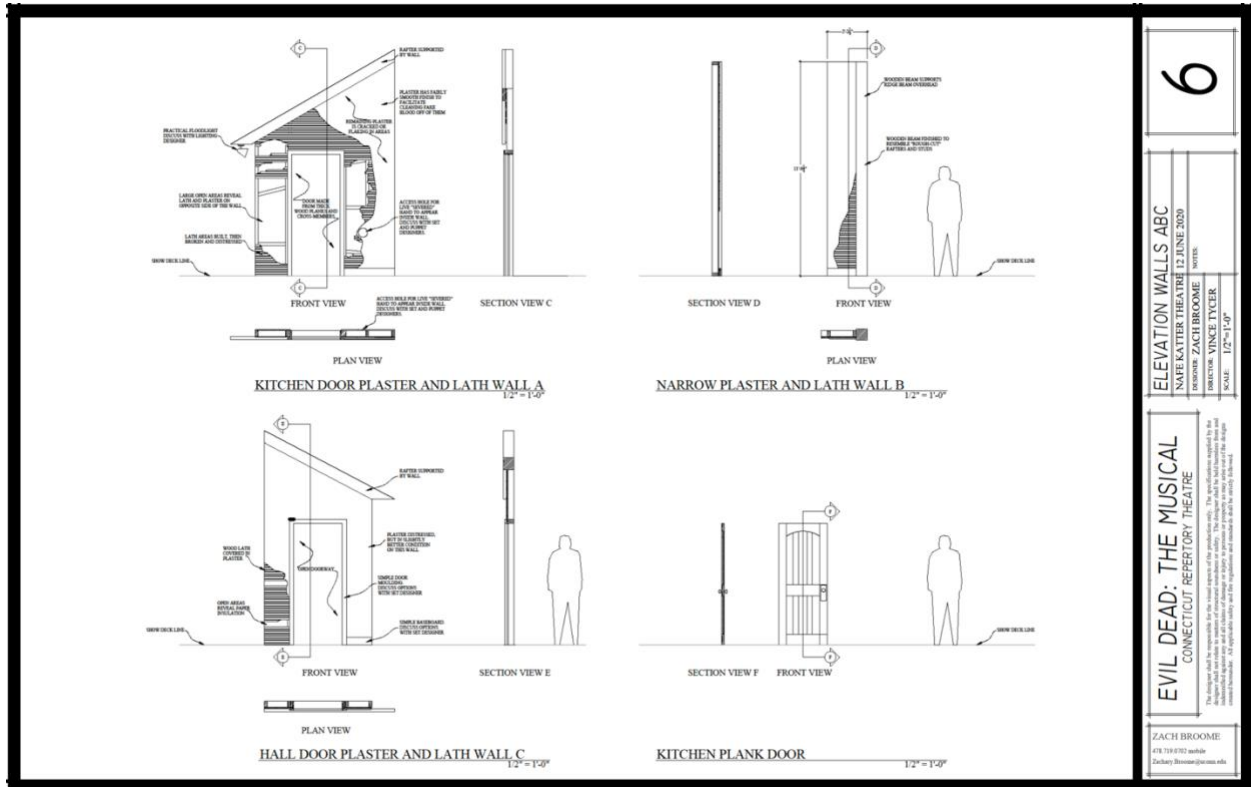
Created and designed by Zachary Broome.

Figure 11: Sample from Scenic Drafting Package.
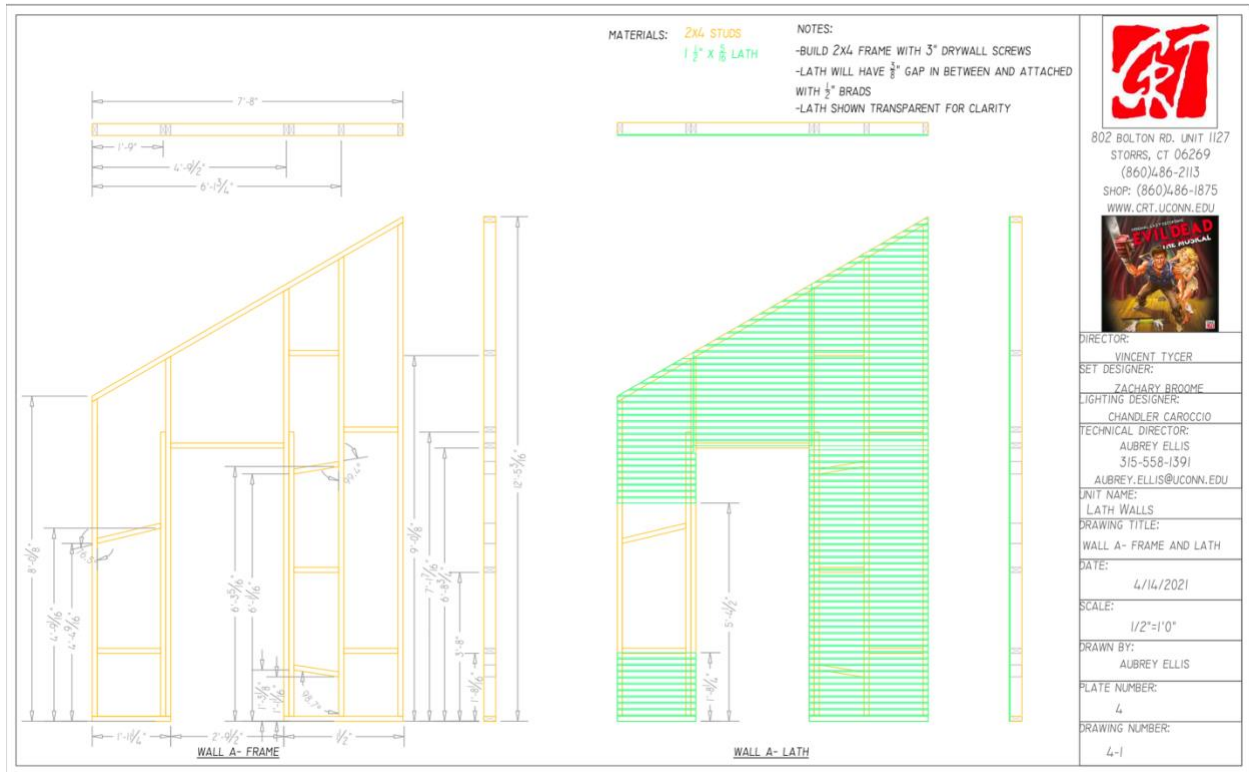
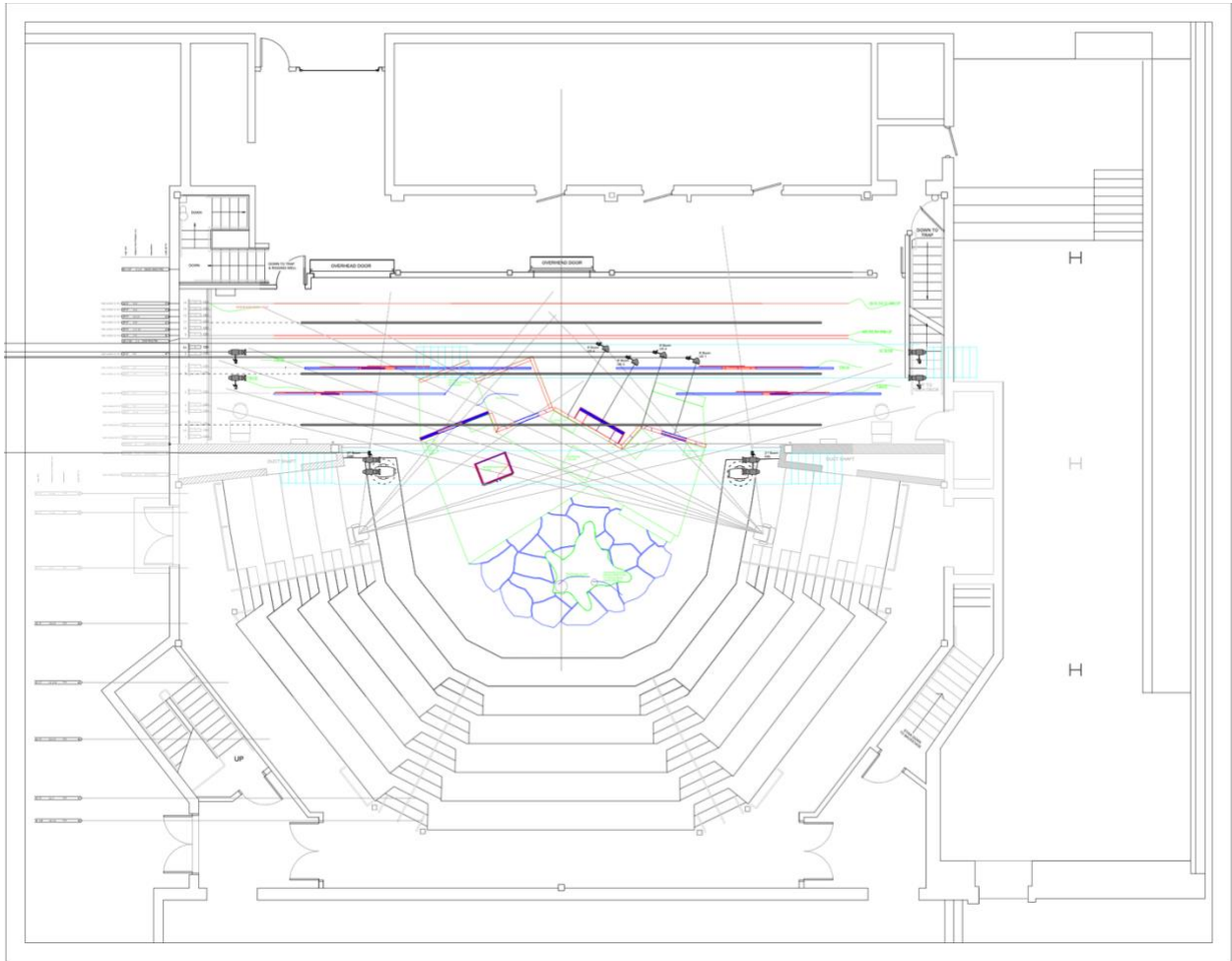Drafted and designed by Zachary Broome.

Figure 12: Sample from Technical Director Build Drafting.

Designed by Zachary Broome.
Drafted by Aubrey Ellis.

Figure 13: Lighting Rendering.

Created and designed by Chandler Caroccio.
Scenic design by Zachary Broome.

Sample from Preliminary Lighting Drafting Package.

Drafted and designed by Chandler Caroccio.

Figure 14: Costume Rendering.

Created and designed by Xurui Wang.

APPENDIX E: LIST OF ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ETC Educational Resources – Stage Lighting

    - https://www.etcconnect.com/Support/Training-Events/Educational-Resources.aspx

- USITT Standards – Best Practices, Scenic

    - https://www.usitt.org/graphicrbp

- USITT Standards – Best Practices, Lighting

    - https://ulife.vpul.upenn.edu/dolphin/pacshop/RP-2_2006.pdf

- *The Costume Team* – PressBooks

    - https://theatreappreciation.pressbooks.sunycreate.cloud/chapter/chapter-9-the-world-of-costumes-bethany-marx/

- *EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play*

    - https://web.mit.edu/jscheib/Public/foundations_06/ef_smallplanet.pdf

- *Working in Scale*

    - https://davidneat.wordpress.com/tag/making-scale-models/

- Helpful YouTube Channels:
    - Mike Wood – Lighting Designer

        - https://www.youtube.com/@MikeWoodld

    - Vectorworks

        - https://www.youtube.com/@vectorworks

    - 30x40 Design Workshop – Model Making

        - https://www.youtube.com/@30by40

    - Figure 53 – Qlab

- https://www.youtube.com/@Figure53

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