

Stage Design Realisation

1902309
Jevon Mckenna

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/Commitment

Introduction to The Adding Machine

The Adding Machine (1923) is a play by Elmer Rice, about an office drone (Mr. Zero) who goes haywire after losing his job. His job consists of adding numbers together, while he daydreams about his wife being dead, and the life he could have pursued with his colleague - all while making rude remarks to both parties inside and out of work.

After murdering his boss in an act of pure, unadulterated rage, he is swiftly tried in court and given the death sentence. However, once dead, he finds out that this life is one of many that his being has lived through.

His colleague, heartbroken, after the loss of her friend, ends her life and meets him in the 'limbo' that they now both inhabit. Although, for a brief moment Mr. Zero is finally free to enjoy himself and his co workers company, without any subconscious snags, eventually he gets insecure about what strangers may think of him.

As it turns out, the protagonist has the the kind of soul that never gets any better after each reincarnation. Mr. Zero struggles to comprehend that he will be reincarnated again, and be just as flawed a human being as before; perhaps even more so this time. Ultimately, the play is an allegory of humanity's hubris.

"Rice's play has left its impact on a wide variety of works, from Chaplin's Modern Times to Tony Kushner's Angels in America. But what is striking is the bilious inclusiveness of its attack on a machine-driven society that not only exploits its workers but robs them of their souls. Mr Zero and his neighbours are all rancidly xenophobic; and, when the hero is offered a place in the Elysian Fields, he flees in horror from a paradise filled with art, music and love." (Billington, 2004)

/Commitment

The task

The main task for this module was to use the provided script to manifest a single scene as a fully realised set piece, either by building it in full scale or miniature form, or completely virtually... the end game here was very open to interpretation (Much like expressionism!)

In order to maximise creative potential, we would create work as a meta-group, a sub-group, and as individuals. This way ideas drafted up early on would not be so easily discarded, even if they were incompatible with the final products.

Our only definitive constraints, were that it had to execute a scene from the given script, and include influences of German expressionism throughout.

One main goal of this module, however, was to ‘exceed the ambition of the previous set build’. This meant going beyond what we had done for the Liverpool set. I was both excited and intimidated by that notion.



/Research

Introduction to German expressionist film

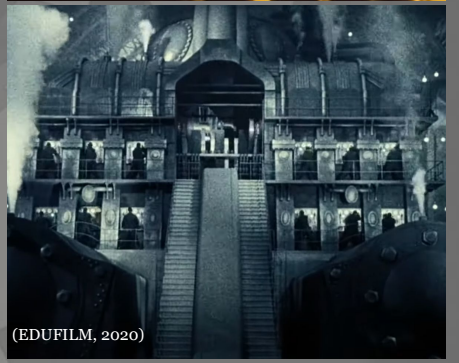
German expressionism was an early 20th century German art movement, notable for its emphasis on how the artist would express their inner feelings rather than replicate reality. Like many other movements before and after it, German expressionist ripples can be felt even today, in many forms of art and media.

“The movements under the umbrella of German Expressionism bore vivid and influential fruits in architecture, painting, sculpture and especially film — The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Nosferatu, and Metropolis, to say nothing of their countless descendants, will come right to the minds of most movie-lovers” (Marshall, 2017)

Indeed, once you start looking, it can be hard to stop seeing how far the implications of the movement have travelled. Almost all of classic film noir features German Expressionist DNA. Tim Burton, is also a well known fan of German expressionism - as can be observed in his films. Other notable examples include Seven (1995), Silence of the lambs (1991), Sin City (2005), and many more.

“German film *(After WW1)* especially became stranger and darker as film makers attempted to disorient the audience and immerse us in the heads of their main characters” (Crashcourse, 2017)


(TwiTV, 2015)


(EDUFILM, 2020)


(Timeless Classic Movies, 2020)

/Research

Nosferatu (1922)

F.W. Murnau (right) was originally an art historian before becoming a filmmaker. As an avid fan of Bram Stocker's Dracula, Murnau wanted to make a film adaptation of the classic book. However, as somebody who was not yet well enough financially established to afford the rights, he instead changed some names and altered the narrative to create Nosferatu which was released in 1922.

Murnau took influences from Dr. Caligari's Cabinet (1920), but instead of a focus on warped sets and props, he instead focused on lighting, makeup, and special effects in order to achieve his vision.

"The 1922 film was not the earliest exponent of German expressionism, but a crucial one. Murnau's killer move was to take expressionist design and render it truly disturbing by extricating it from the painted sets of a film such as The Cabinet of Dr Caligari (1920) and applying to the exterior world." (Hutchinson, 2015)



(Johnson, 2015)



(Timeless Classic Movies, 2020)




(Timeless Classic Movies, 2020)




/Research

Metropolis (1927)

Operating during the Weimar period of German history, Fritz Lang (right) was an architect turned film director/ producer who's most well known film is the epic sci-fi Metropolis (1927).

"So much of future cinema and TV, I now realise, steals from Lang's masterpiece. Not just Face/Off: the central conceit of John Woo's film is anticipated by Maria's face being copied by Rotwang on to his Frankenstein's-monster-like metal robot during the kind of surgery you can't get on the NHS. Robots from Dr Who's Cybermen to James Cameron's early terminators depend for their existence on Lang's cybernetic prototype" (Jeffries, 2020)

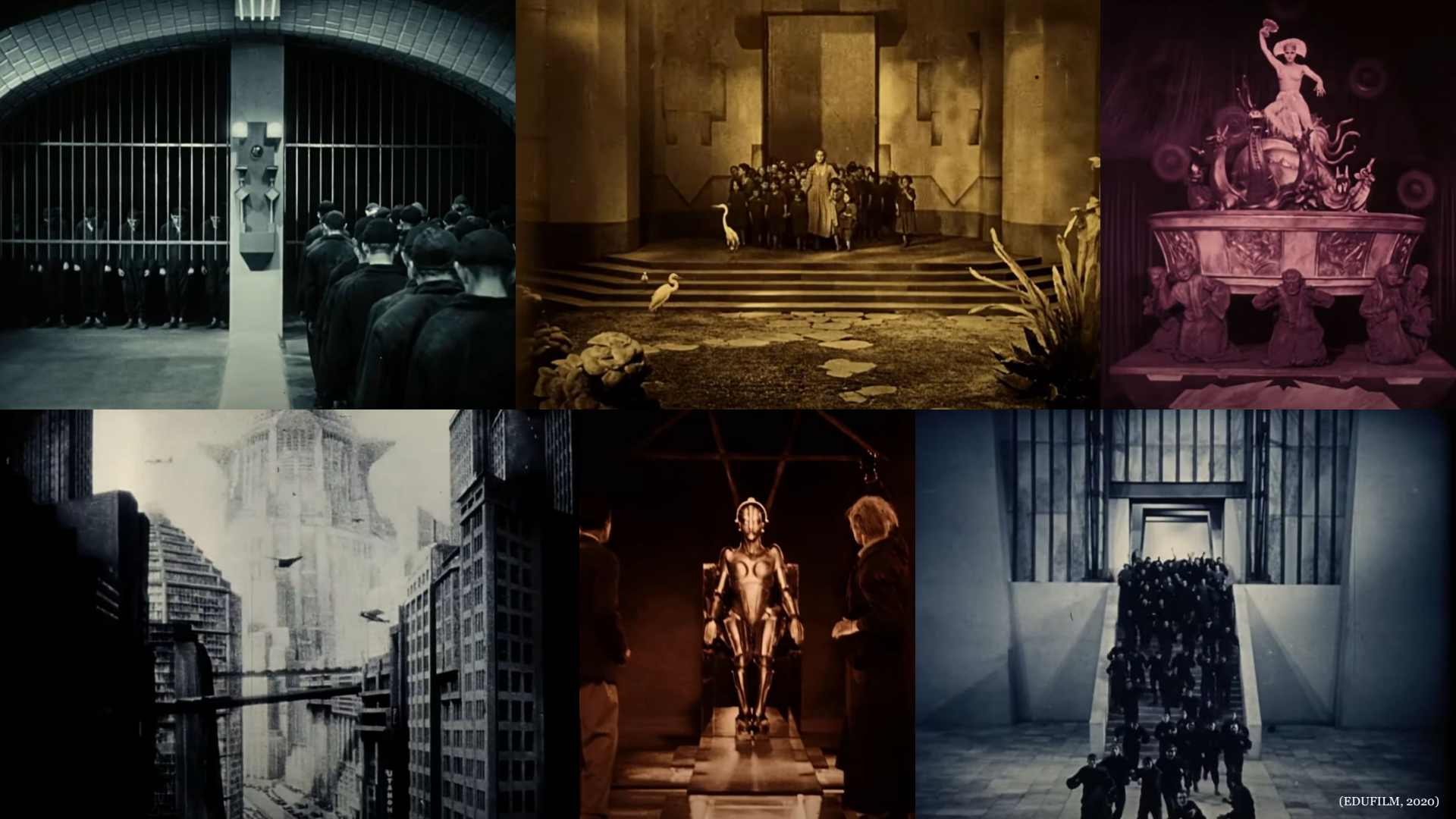
Lang borrowed many aspects of the mise-en-scene from Dr. Caligari's Cabinet, but used his architectural roots to create sets and props of size and mechanical capacity that never seen before.



(Barson, 2020)



(EDUFILM, 2020)



(EDUFILM, 2020)

/Research

The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920)

Released in 1920, Robert Wiene's (right) film would be the first of, what would become known as, the true German Expressionist films. Its success broke new ground for the film industry and the overall art movement.

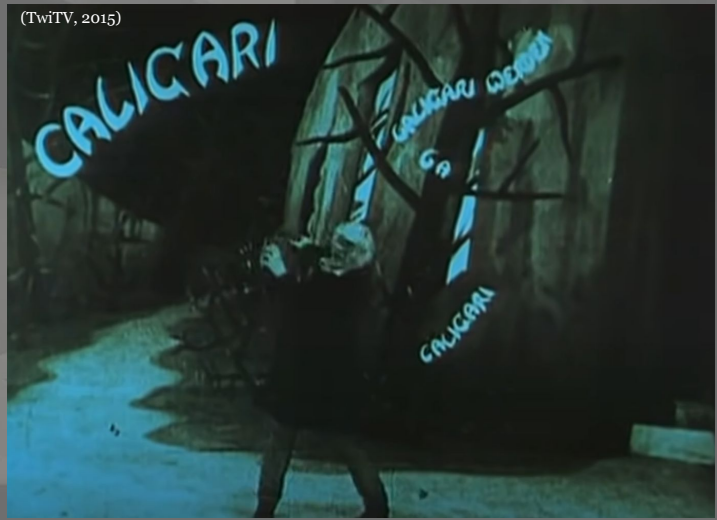
"Written by Hans Janowitz and Carl Mayer, this film was thematically based on their experiences as soldiers in World War I and their distrust of authoritarian leadership." (Crashcourse, 2017)

Utilizing deliberately warped sets and disorienting lights and shadows, along with exaggerated acting and facial movement, it's no wonder that so many artists have taken inspiration from this nightmarish masterpiece.

"The film draws on the eerie, occult experience of early cinema itself, whose flickering ghostly images – such as Caligari's cabinet, and all kinds of fashionable table-rapping and fortune-telling – were often to be presented in fairground tents. Caligari is a crazy black mass all on its own, a mute opera of fear." (Bradshaw, 2014)



(Jung & Schatzberg, 1993)



(TwiTV, 2015)



(TwiTV, 2015)



(TwiTV, 2015)

/Analysis

My initial ideas I

I have seen *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* before, and upon rewatching it, I was once again drawn to one specific prop, amongst other things. It was these chairs (featured right), their height and repetitive visual pattern make them perfect for this genre. They appear multiple times throughout the film too. Something about the 'ladder back' emulates a thin skeletal figure to me. The way light hits them is always just right.

Additionally, they are not modified at all, unlike much of the walls and ceilings and floors featured in the rest of the film. They are simple, ordinary everyday chairs. Taken away from this scene they still look perfect in any kitchen or dining room - and that fascinates me.

I began doing research into chairs, to follow this notion of uncanny furniture that can fit so seamlessly into German Expressionist visuals.







(TwiTV, 2015)



/Analysis

My initial ideas II

After some preliminary sketches, it occurred to me, that I could design furniture for my set that was especially uncomfortable - like the sensation of having to see your own family members go to trial.

I warped the basic structure of early American ‘post and rung’ style chairs, as that seemed to be the closest style I could obtain to match the one seen in *Dr. Caligari’s Cabinet*. The woven seat, the multiple rungs along the back, and the lack of arms all match up very well.

As somebody who makes furniture to sell frequently, it’s worth noting that simple objects like hand-made chairs are always made with so much care and attention towards the person who will sit on them, from the ergonomics of the shape, down to the scientific mechanical forces that must be resisted if the chair is to last a long time.

I imagined my chairs to be made as if somebody followed flat pack instructions wrong, or as if they were made with malicious intent for the end user. The sketches found in slides 18 and 19 document this process.



(1stdibs.com, 2022)

/Research

Charles Rennie Mackintosh

Mackintosh was a well known Scottish architect and designer who's interest in Art nouveau, modernism and Scottish tradition led him to develop his own style, now known the world over. Having worked in both the UK and Europe during the turn of the 20th century, his artistic repertoire reaches even into the arts and crafts movement, as well as the previously mentioned influences in the other movements.

"His reputation was founded not on his architectural designs alone but also on his interiors, which demonstrated his ability to integrate furniture with its setting. To him, his role as an architect encompassed fine art and craft as well, the relationship between the three being inextricable." (Blake, 2001, p.8)

What draws me to Mackintosh's various chair designs are the ways in which the backs often go much higher than the ordinary domestic chairs seen elsewhere.



(Blake, 2001, p.191)



(Blake, 2001, p.169)

/Research

Mackintosh and additional chairs

While looking in a different furniture book, I found a very clear illustration of Mackintosh's famous Art Nouveau chair. This one also has the high back, but does not conform to the early American style in the way I'd like it to, in order to pursue it's design further.

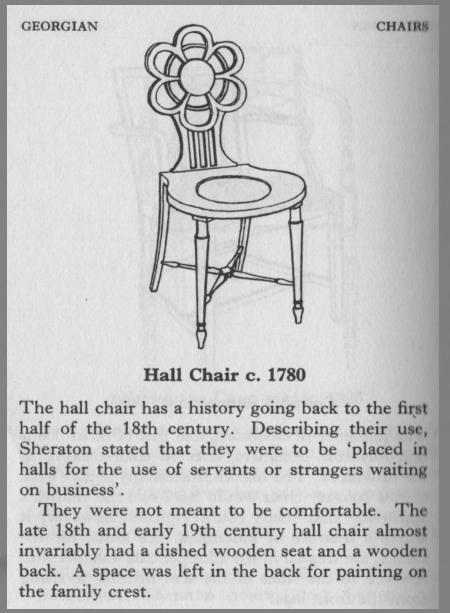
However, in the same book, another unusual chair appeared. The corresponding description was parallel to what I was saying about designing uncomfortable furniture. It's fascinating that just when I think it's impossible for somebody who design domestic furniture with malice, I'm proven wrong.

on business'.

They were not meant to be comfortable. The late 18th and early 19th century hall chair almost invariably had a dished wooden seat and a wooden back. A space was left in the back for painting on the family crest.



(Blake, 2001, p.209)



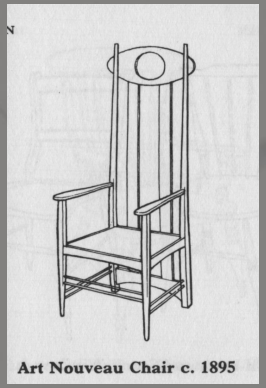
GEORGIAN CHAIRS

Hall Chair c. 1780

The hall chair has a history going back to the first half of the 18th century. Describing their use, Sheraton stated that they were to be 'placed in halls for the use of servants or strangers waiting on business'.

They were not meant to be comfortable. The late 18th and early 19th century hall chair almost invariably had a dished wooden seat and a wooden back. A space was left in the back for painting on the family crest.

(Woodforde, 1970, p.90)



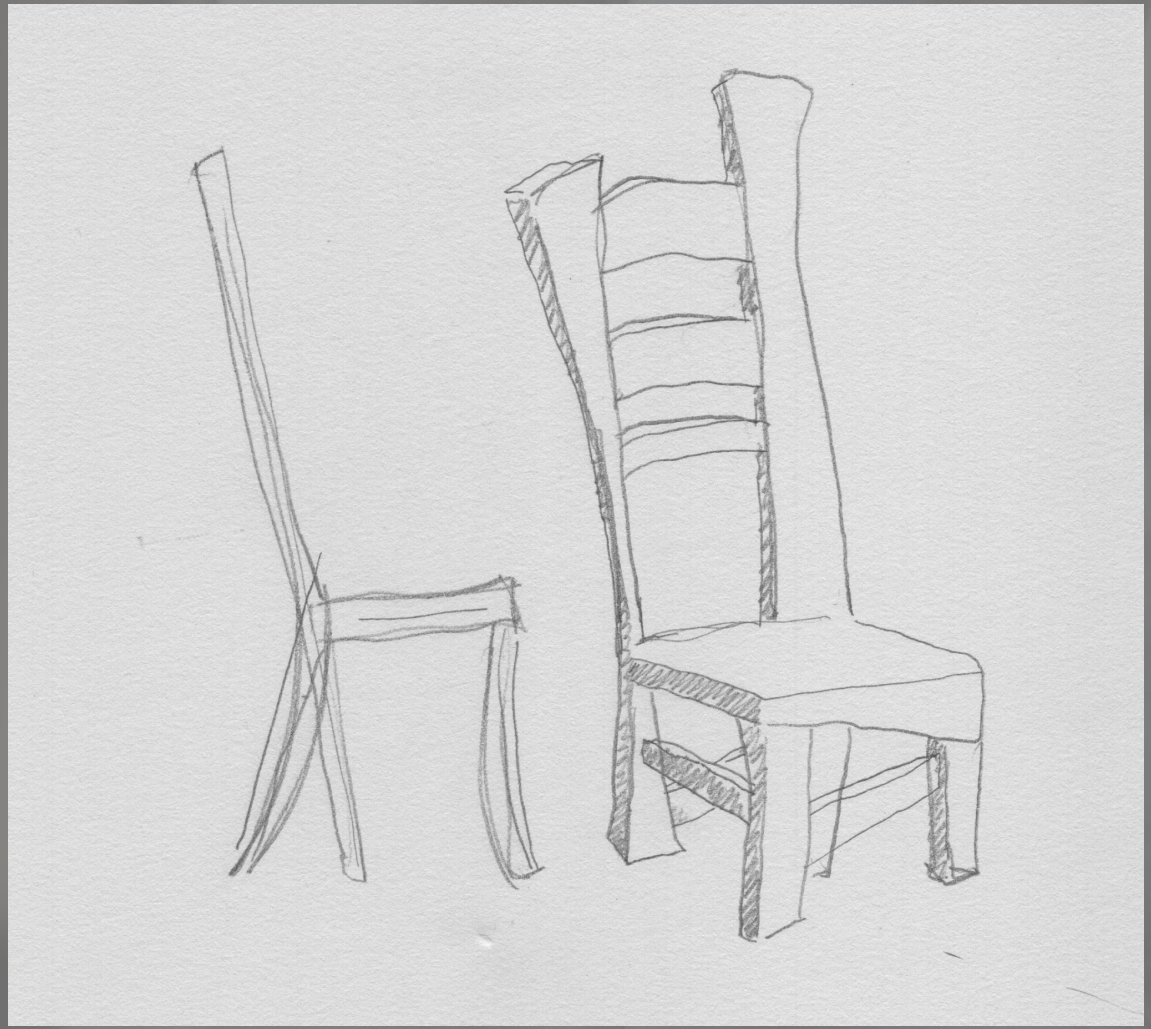
Art Nouveau Chair c. 1895

(Woodforde, 1970, p.195)

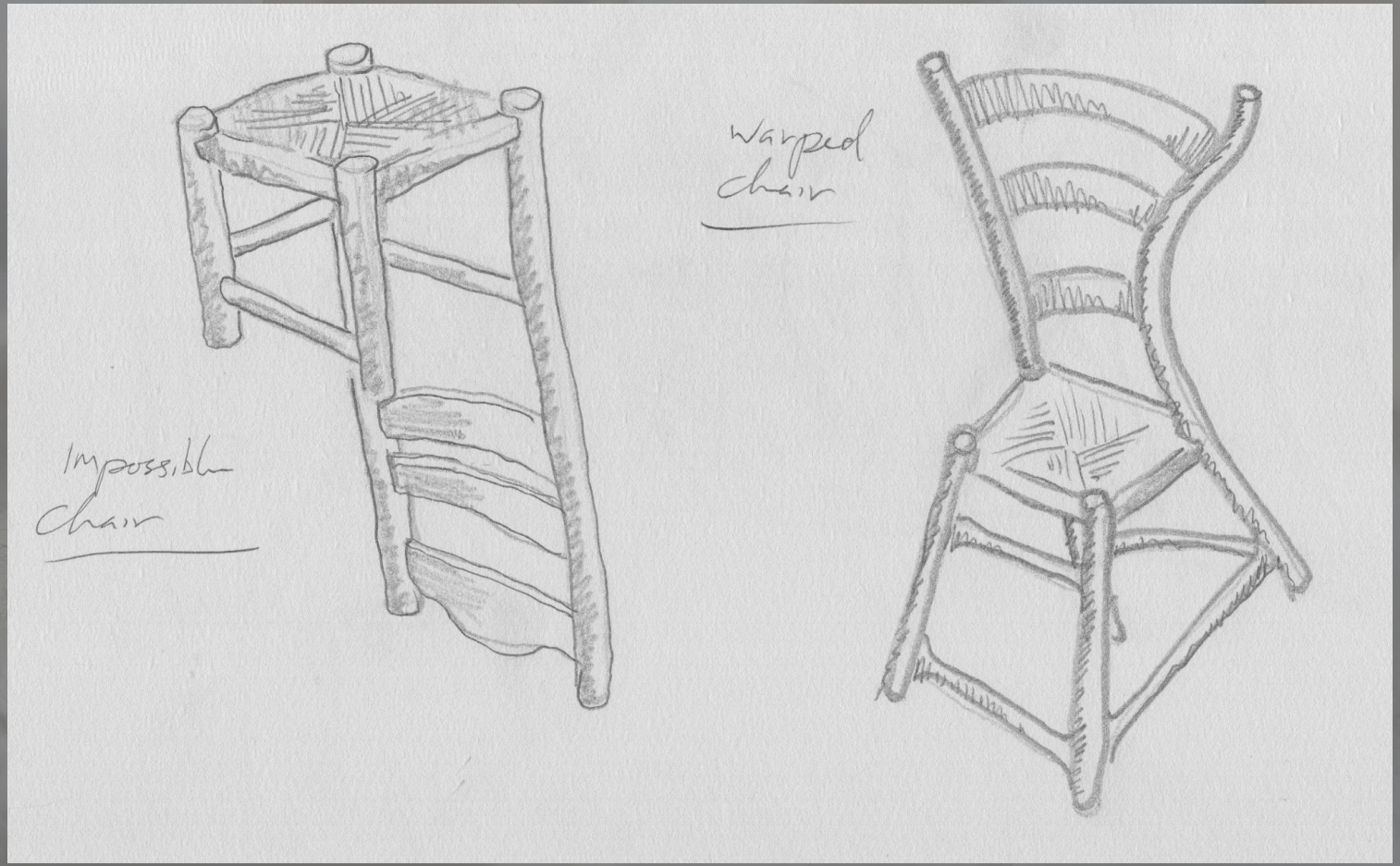
/Analysis

My initial ideas III



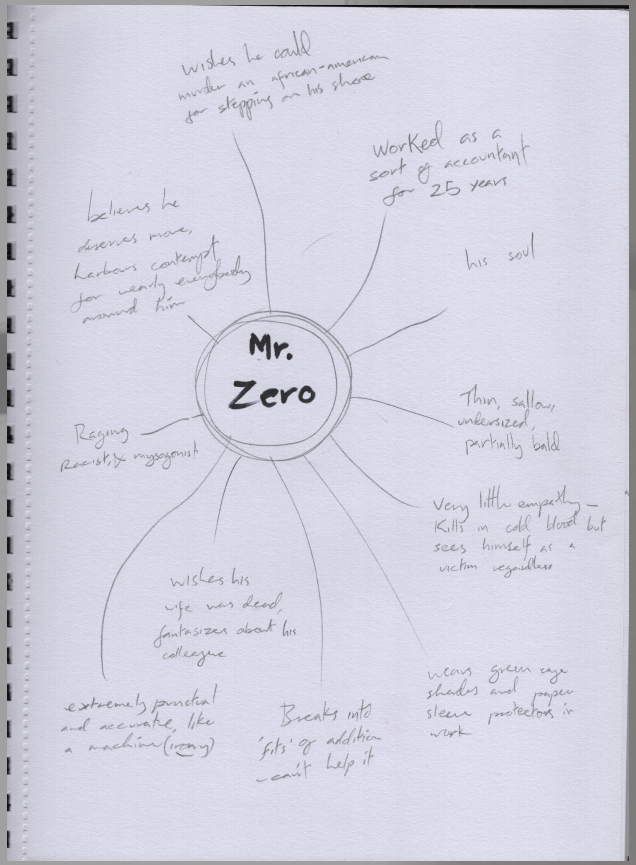


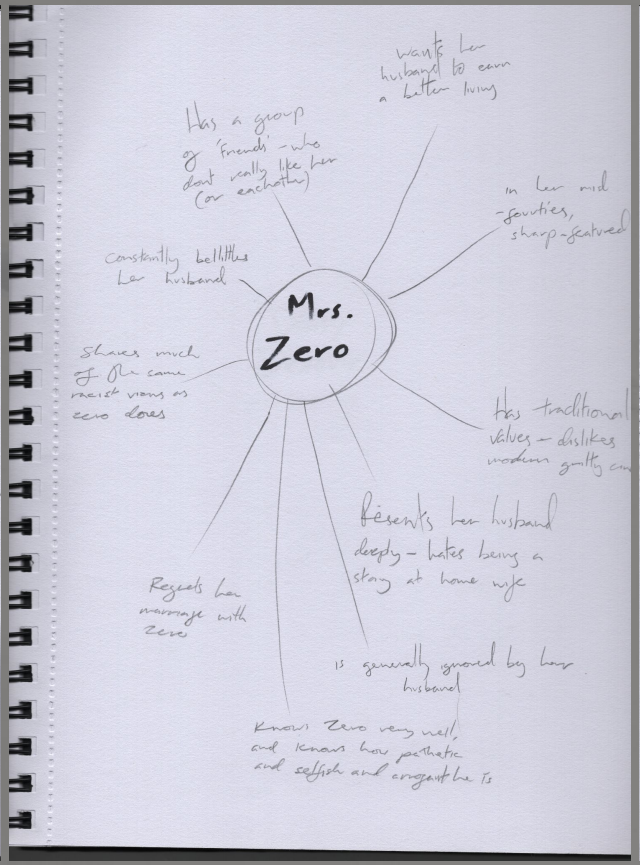
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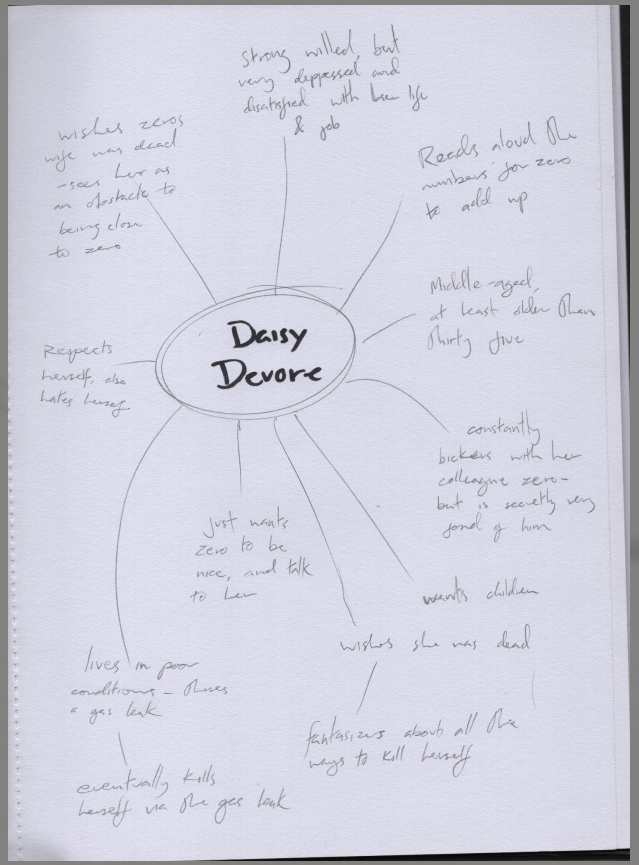


/Analysis

Character analysis























Carmarthen Courtroom



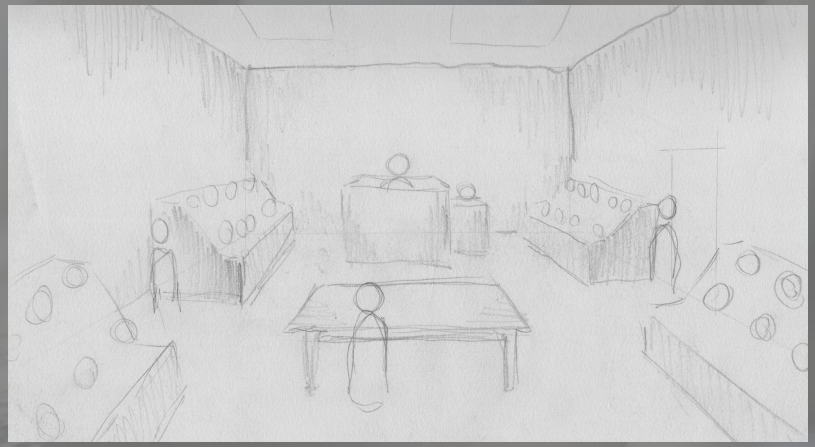
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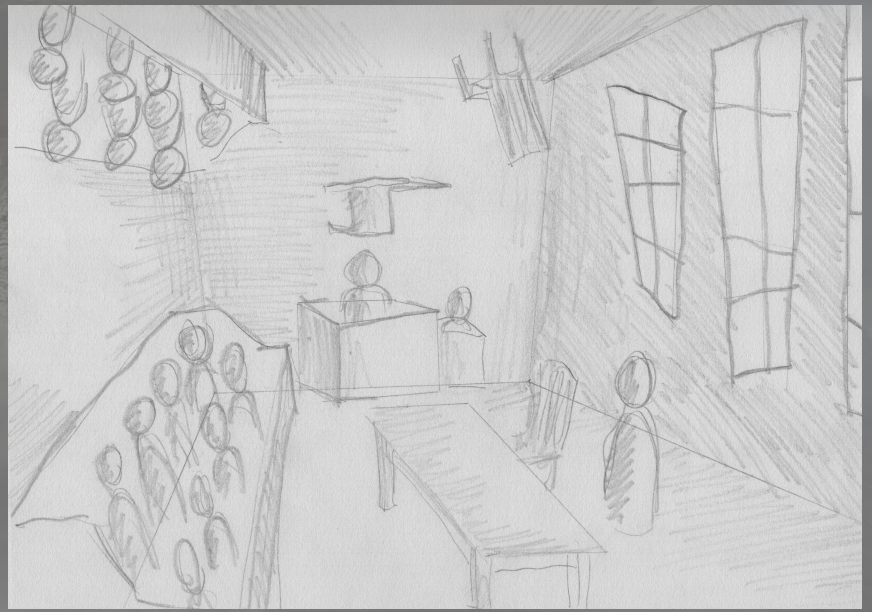
My initial ideas V

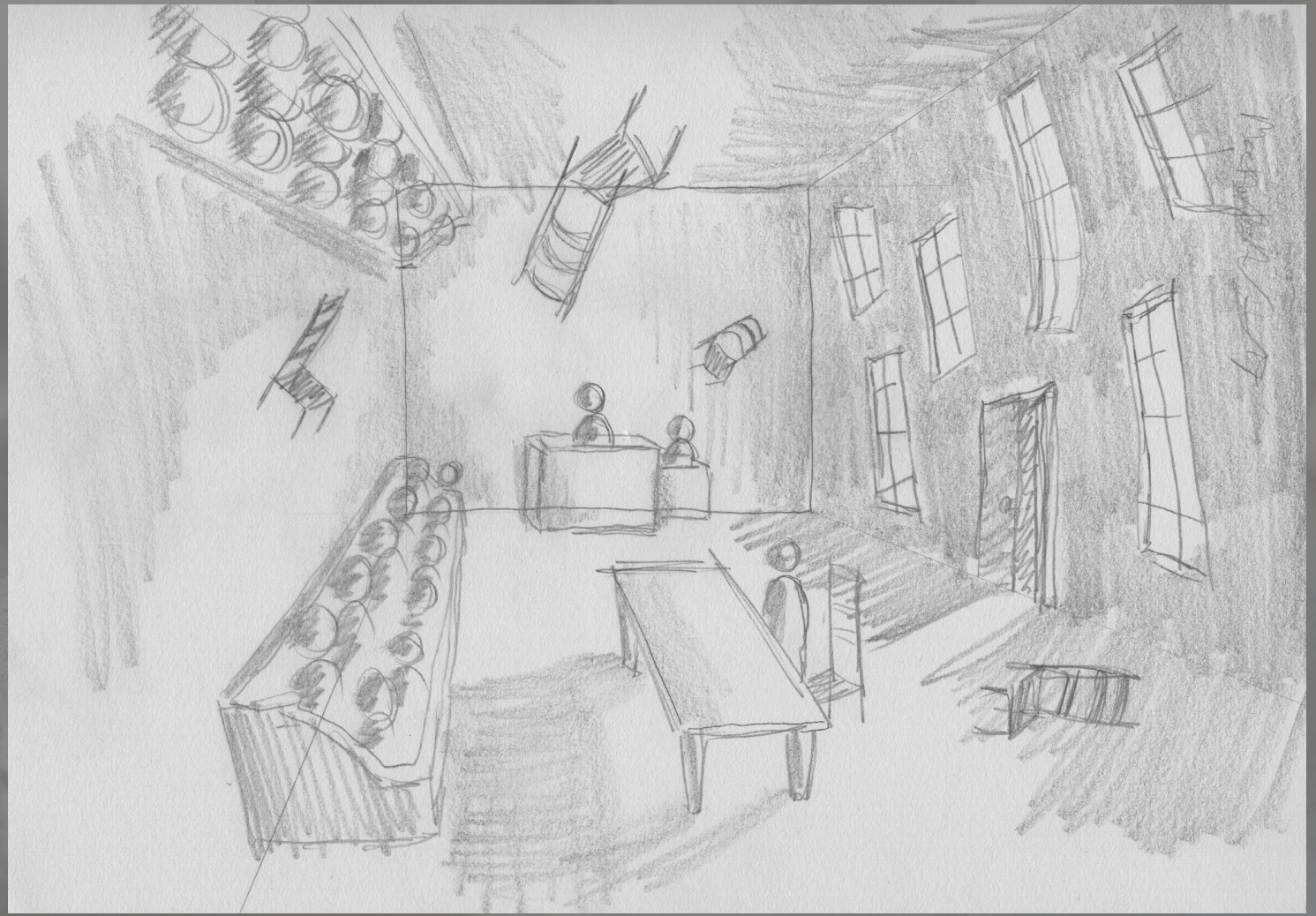
Before any groups were formed, I was very interested in the courtroom scene from the Rice's script. I'm not sure exactly what made me want to interpret it over the other scenes, perhaps something subliminal about how the last year of my life has featured family trouble and a court case.

I tried interpreting it from what the script said alone, and found it very lacking. So after that, I took the creative liberty of applying some of the visual warps and such that I frequently found in the German Expressionist works, and this appealed to me greatly.

I felt a special attraction to the use of suspended objects in this, namely chairs. This obsession with chairs would remain present throughout the rest of the task for me.

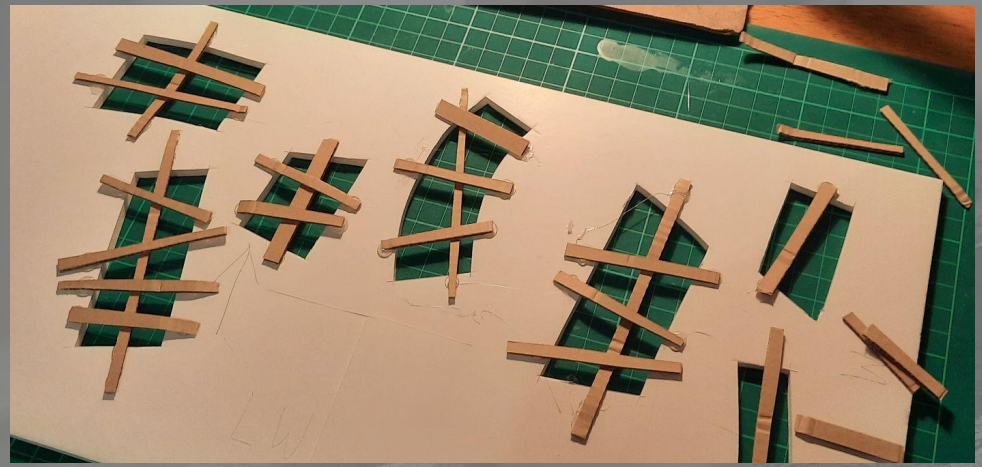


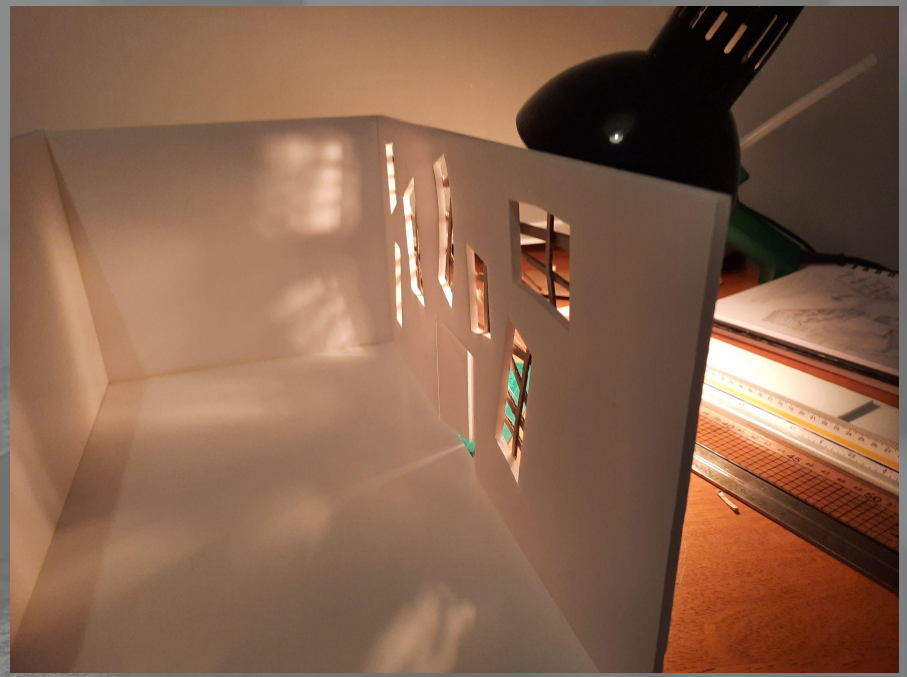




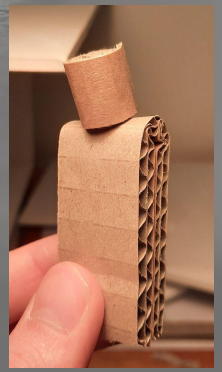
/Analysis

Initial ideas manifested I





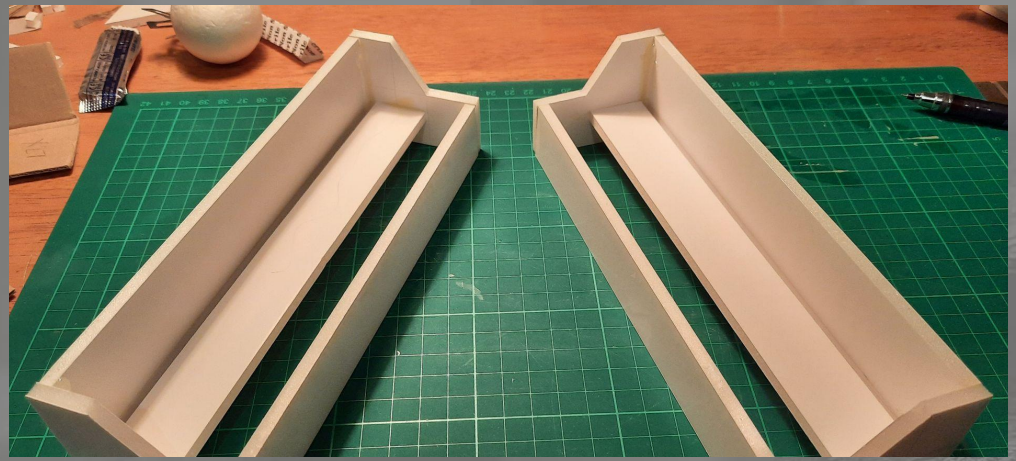


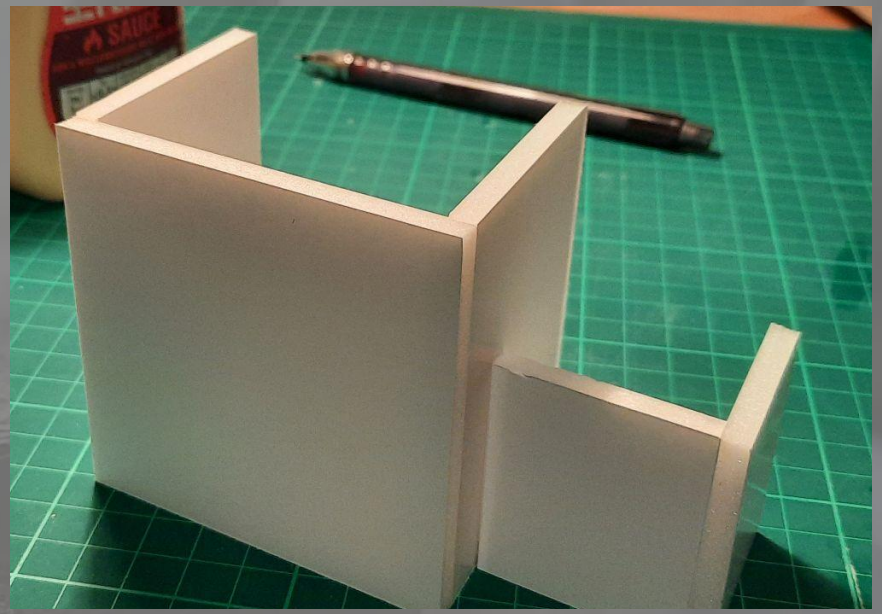




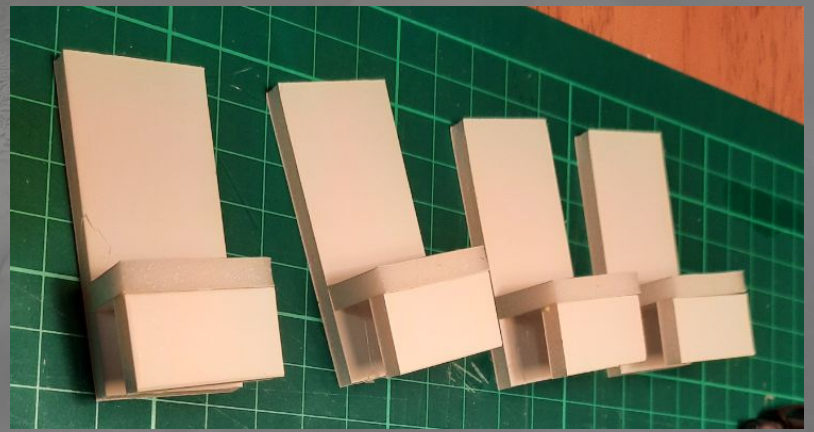
/Analysis

Initial ideas manifested II



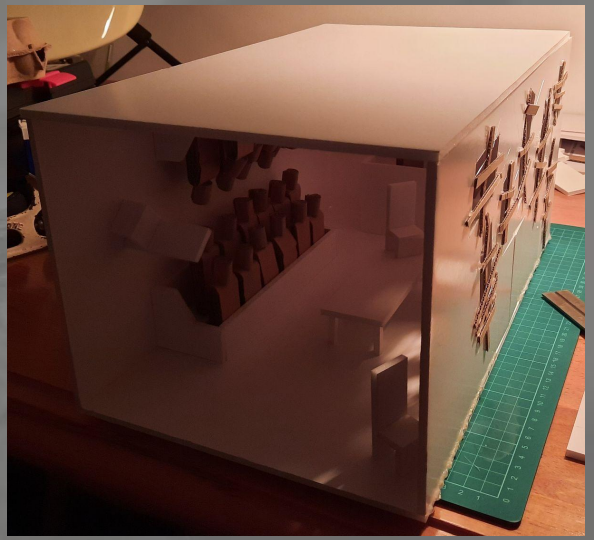







BRAMWELLS
CHILLI









The role I felt like I should try

I chose the specialisation of Lighting Designer for this task, because I've become quite fascinated with the way it can enhance and exaggerate every other role in theatre design and German Expressionism seemed to present the most obvious opportunity for this. Moreover, I knew pretty much nothing about the discipline and I thought this would, therefore, act as a great opportunity for me to try something new. I know I would be much better at say, set design or construction, but I expected there would already be a lot of people choosing that role. Hopefully this module would give me the opportunity to delve further into understanding lighting design.

Though my official title would be Lighting Designer, I did understand from the get-go that it would be impossible for me to only deal with illumination of sets and props. Indeed, I would realistically have to design and build the props themselves if I wanted to execute my ideas in regards to lighting as well.

In this industry, you have to be able to juggle multiple roles and tasks if you want to succeed.

So, I became a lighting design person with a hard emphasis on props (mostly domestic interior furniture).

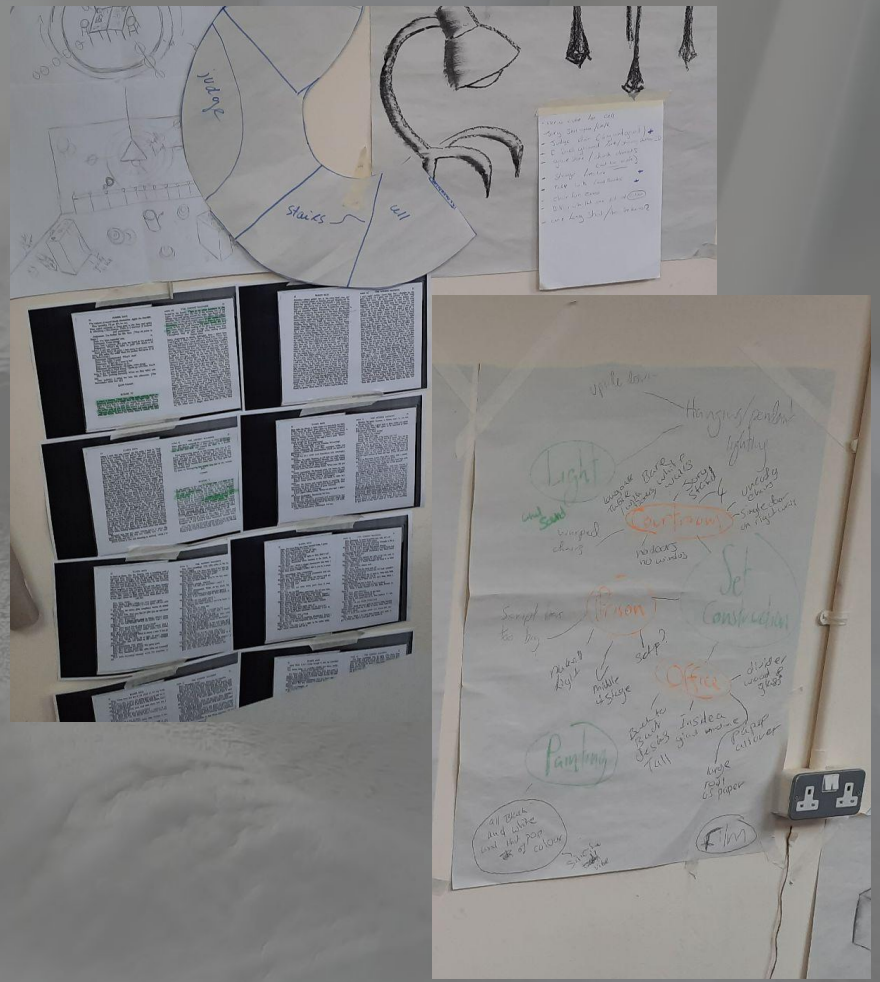
/Incubation

Our Group

Originally, we were put into small groups of 2-3 individuals. My group consisted of myself, Miss Rebecca Evans, and Miss Vanina Guerinon. Vanina was set design, Rebecca was set construction, and I was lighting design.

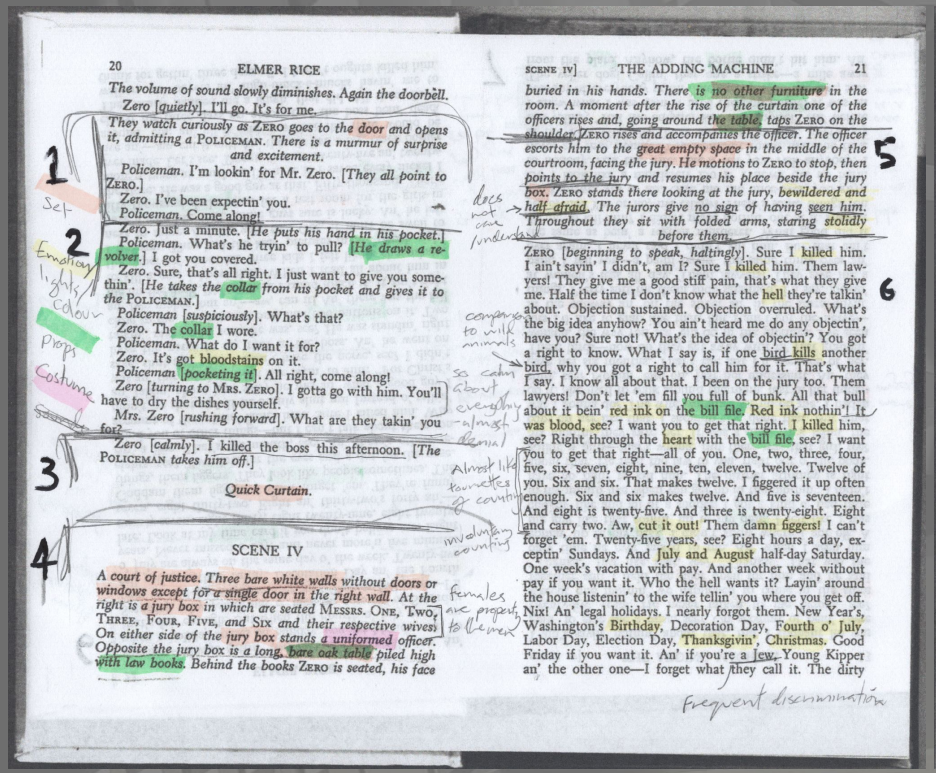
As soon as we knew what our groups were, we rearranged the tables together, and ‘claimed’ a wall by fastening our sketches and photos to it. I believe this helped us as a group, because it was like a massive mood board that we could all contribute to and edit.

Thankfully, our imagery did correlate somehow. Whereas some of the groups had opted towards organic, colourful set designs, we seemed to share visions of sharp, black and white shapes and moods.



/Analysis

Sections of chosen annotated script I



20 ELMER RICE

The volume of sound slowly diminishes. Again the doorbell.

Zero *[quietly]*. I'll go. It's for me.

They watch curiously as Zero *goes to the door and opens it, admitting a* Policeman. *There is a murmur of surprise and excitement.*

Policeman. I'm lookin' for Mr. Zero. *[They all point to* Zero.*]*

Zero. I've been expectin' you.

Policeman. Come along!

Zero. Just a minute. *[He puts his hand in his pocket.]*

Policeman. What's he tryin' to pull? *[He draws a revolver.]* I got you covered.

Zero. Sure, that's all right. I just want to give you somethin'. *[He takes the collar from his pocket and gives it to the* Policeman.*]*

Policeman *[suspiciously]*. What's that?

Zero. The collar I wore.

Policeman. What do I want it for?

Zero. It's got bloodstains on it.

Policeman *[pocketing it]*. All right, come along!

Zero *[turning to* Mrs. Zero*]*. I gotta go with him. You'll have to dry the dishes yourself.

Mrs. Zero *[rushing forward]*. What are they takin' you for?

Zero *[calmly]*. I killed the boss this afternoon. *[The* Policeman *takes him off.]*

Quick Curtain.

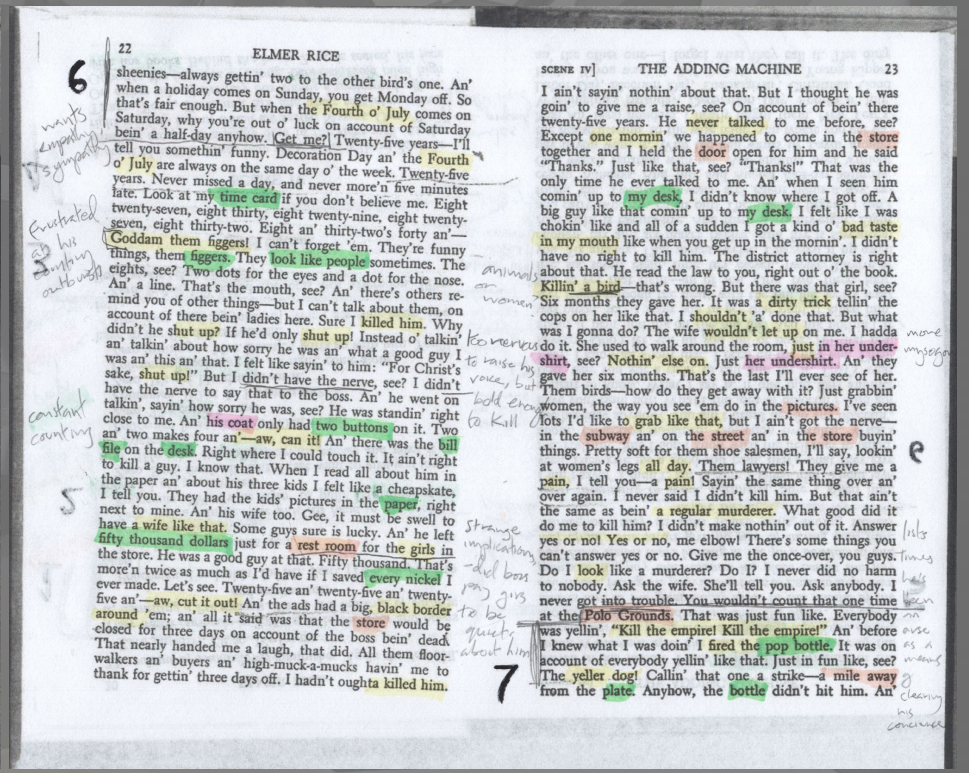
SCENE IV

A court of justice. Three bare white walls without doors or windows except for a single door in the right wall. At the right is a jury box in which are seated Messrs. One, Two, Three, Four, Five, *and* Six *and their respective wives. On either side of the jury box stands a uniformed officer. Opposite the jury box is a long, bare oak table piled high with law books. Behind the books* Zero *is seated, his face*

SCENE IV] THE ADDING MACHINE 21

buried in his hands. There is no other furniture in the room. A moment after the rise of the curtain one of the officers rises and, going around the table, taps Zero *on the shoulder.* Zero *rises and accompanies the officer. The officer escorts him to the great empty space in the middle of the courtroom, facing the jury. He motions to* Zero *to stop, then points to the jury and resumes his place beside the jury box.* Zero *stands there looking at the jury, bewildered and half afraid. The jurors give no sign of having seen him. Throughout they sit with folded arms, staring stolidly before them.*

Zero *[beginning to speak, haltingly]*. Sure I killed him. I ain't sayin' I didn't, am I? Sure I killed him. Them lawyers! They give me a good stiff pain, that's what they give me. Half the time I don't know what the hell they're talkin' about. Objection sustained. Objection overruled. What's the big idea anyhow? You ain't heard me do any objectin', have you? Sure not! What's the idea of objectin'? You got a right to know. What I say is, if one bird kills another bird, why you got a right to call him for it. That's what I say. I know all about that. I been on the jury too. Them lawyers! Don't let 'em fill you full of bunk. All that bull about it bein' red ink on the bill file. Red ink nothin'! It was blood, see? I want you to get that right. I killed him, see? Right through the heart with the bill file, see? I want you to get that right—all of you. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Twelve of you. Six and six. That makes twelve. I figgered it up often enough. Six and six makes twelve. And five is seventeen. And eight is twenty-five. And three is twenty-eight. Eight and carry two. Aw, cut it out! Them damn figgers! I can't forget 'em. Twenty-five years, see? Eight hours a day, exceptin' Sundays. And July and August half-day Saturday. One week's vacation with pay. And another week without pay if you want it. Who the hell wants it? Layin' around the house listenin' to the wife tellin' you where you get off. Nix! An' legal holidays. I nearly forgot them. New Year's, Washington's Birthday, Decoration Day, Fourth o' July, Labor Day, Election Day, Thanksgivin', Christmas. Good Friday if you want it. An' if you're a Jew, Young Kipper an' the other one—I forget what they call it. The dirty



22 ELMER RICE

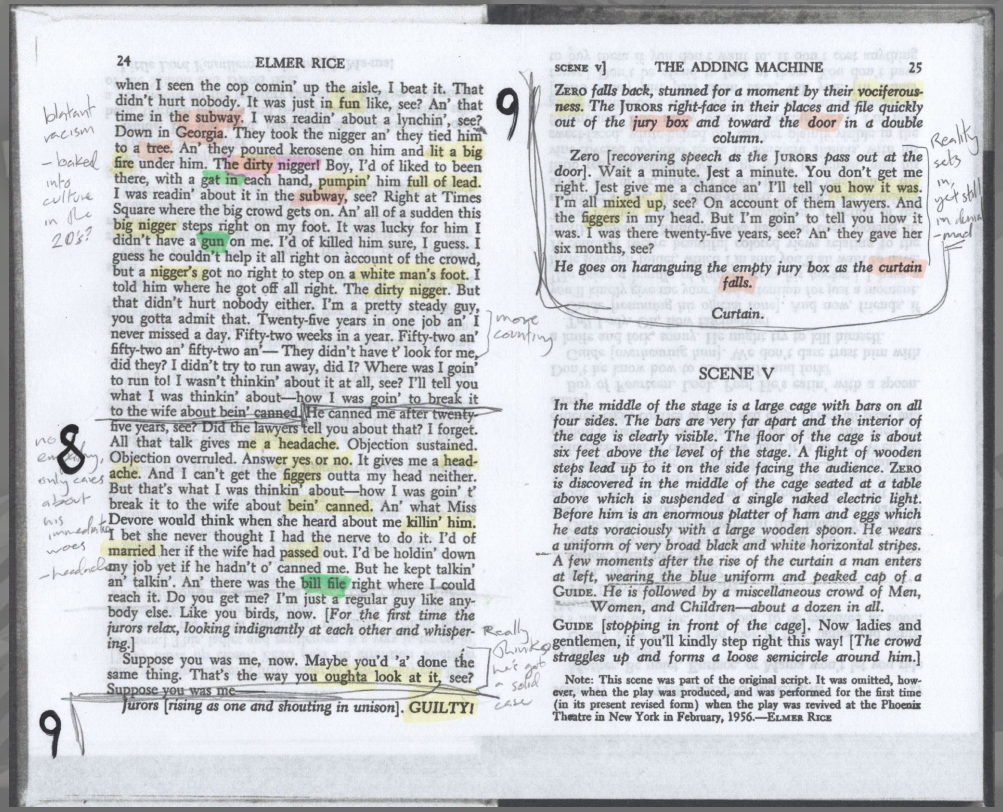
sheenies—always gettin' two to the other bird's one. An' when a holiday comes on Sunday, you get Monday off. So that's fair enough. But when the Fourth o' July comes on Saturday, why you're out o' luck on account of Saturday bein' a half-day anyhow. Get me? Twenty-five years—I'll tell you somethin' funny. Decoration Day an' the Fourth o' July are always on the same day o' the week. Twenty-five years. Never missed a day, and never more'n five minutes late. Look at my time card if you don't believe me. Eight twenty-seven, eight thirty, eight twenty-nine, eight twenty-seven, eight thirty-two. Eight an' thirty-two's forty an'—Goddam them figgers! I can't forget 'em. They're funny things, them figgers. They look like people sometimes. The eights, see? Two dots for the eyes and a dot for the nose. An' a line. That's the mouth, see? An' there's others remind you of other things—but I can't talk about them, on account of there bein' ladies here. Sure I killed him. Why didn't he shut up? If he'd only shut up! Instead o' talkin' an' talkin' about how sorry he was an' what a good guy I was an' this an' that. I felt like sayin' to him: "For Christ's sake, shut up!" But I didn't have the nerve, see? I didn't have the nerve to say that to the boss. An' he went on talkin', sayin' how sorry he was, see? He was standin' right close to me. An' his coat only had two buttons on it. Two an' two makes four an'—aw, can it! An' there was the bill file on the desk. Right where I could touch it. It ain't right to kill a guy. I know that. When I read all about him in the paper an' about his three kids I felt like a cheapskate, I tell you. They had the kids' pictures in the paper, right next to mine. An' his wife too. Gee, it must be swell to have a wife like that. Some guys sure is lucky. An' he left fifty thousand dollars just for a rest room for the girls in the store. He was a good guy at that. Fifty thousand. That's more'n twice as much as I'd have if I saved every nickel I ever made. Let's see. Twenty-five an' twenty-five an' twenty-five an'—aw, cut it out! An' the ads had a big, black border around 'em; an' all it said was that the store would be closed for three days on account of the boss bein' dead. That nearly handed me a laugh, that did. All them floorwalkers an' buyers an' high-muck-a-mucks havin' me to thank for gettin' three days off. I hadn't oughta killed him.

SCENE IV] THE ADDING MACHINE 23

I ain't sayin' nothin' about that. But I thought he was goin' to give me a raise, see? On account of bein' there twenty-five years. He never talked to me before, see? Except one mornin' we happened to come in the store together and I held the door open for him and he said "Thanks." Just like that, see? "Thanks!" That was the only time he ever talked to me. An' when I seen him comin' up to my desk, I didn't know where I got off. A big guy like that comin' up to my desk. I felt like I was chokin' like and all of a sudden I got a kind o' bad taste in my mouth like when you get up in the mornin'. I didn't have no right to kill him. The district attorney is right about that. He read the law to you, right out o' the book. Killin' a bird—that's wrong. But there was that girl, see? Six months they gave her. It was a dirty trick tellin' the cops on her like that. I shouldn't 'a' done that. But what was I gonna do? The wife wouldn't let up on me. I hadda do it. She used to walk around the room, just in her undershirt, see? Nothin' else on. Just her undershirt. An' they gave her six months. That's the last I'll ever see of her. Them birds—how do they get away with it? Just grabbin' women, the way you see 'em do in the pictures. I've seen lots I'd like to grab like that, but I ain't got the nerve—in the subway an' on the street an' in the store buyin' things. Pretty soft for them shoe salesmen, I'll say, lookin' at women's legs all day. Them lawyers! They give me a pain, I tell you—a pain! Sayin' the same thing over an' over again. I never said I didn't kill him. But that ain't the same as bein' a regular murderer. What good did it do me to kill him? I didn't make nothin' out of it. Answer yes or no! Yes or no, me elbow! There's some things you can't answer yes or no. Give me the once-over, you guys. Do I look like a murderer? Do I? I never did no harm to nobody. Ask the wife. She'll tell you. Ask anybody. I never got into trouble. You wouldn't count that one time at the Polo Grounds. That was just fun like. Everybody was yellin', "Kill the empire! Kill the empire!" An' before I knew what I was doin' I fired the pop bottle. It was on account of everybody yellin' like that. Just in fun like, see? The yeller dog! Callin' that one a strike—a mile away from the plate. Anyhow, the bottle didn't hit him. An'

/Analysis

Sections of chosen annotated script II



24 ELMER RICE

when I seen the cop comin' up the aisle, I beat it. That didn't hurt nobody. It was just in fun like, see? An' that time in the subway. I was readin' about a lynchin', see? Down in Georgia. They took the nigger an' they tied him to a tree. An' they poured kerosene on him and lit a big fire under him. The dirty nigger! Boy, I'd of liked to been there, with a gat in each hand, pumpin' him full of lead. I was readin' about it in the subway, see? Right at Times Square where the big crowd gets on. An' all of a sudden this big nigger steps right on my foot. It was lucky for him I didn't have a gun on me. I'd of killed him sure, I guess. I guess he couldn't help it all right on account of the crowd, but a nigger's got no right to step on a white man's foot. I told him where he got off all right. The dirty nigger. But that didn't hurt nobody either. I'm a pretty steady guy, you gotta admit that. Twenty-five years in one job an' I never missed a day. Fifty-two weeks in a year. Fifty-two an' fifty-two an' fifty-two an'— They didn't have t' look for me, did they? I didn't try to run away, did I? Where was I goin' to run to! I wasn't thinkin' about it at all, see? I'll tell you what I was thinkin' about—how I was goin' to break it to the wife about bein' canned. He canned me after twenty-five years, see? Did the lawyers tell you about that? I forget. All that talk gives me a headache. Objection sustained. Objection overruled. Answer yes or no. It gives me a headache. And I can't get the figgers outta my head neither. But that's what I was thinkin' about—how I was goin' t' break it to the wife about bein' canned. An' what Miss Devore would think when she heard about me killin' him. I bet she never thought I had the nerve to do it. I'd of married her if the wife had passed out. I'd be holdin' down my job yet if he hadn't o' canned me. But he kept talkin' an' talkin'. An' there was the bill file right where I could reach it. Do you get me? I'm just a regular guy like anybody else. Like you birds, now. [*For the first time the jurors relax, looking indignantly at each other and whispering.*]

Suppose you was me, now. Maybe you'd 'a' done the same thing. That's the way you oughta look at it, see? Suppose you was me——

Jurors [rising as one and shouting in unison]. GUILTY!

SCENE V] THE ADDING MACHINE 25

ZERO *falls back, stunned for a moment by their vociferousness. The* JURORS *right-face in their places and file quickly out of the jury box and toward the door in a double column.*

Zero [*recovering speech as the* JURORS *pass out at the door*]. Wait a minute. Jest a minute. You don't get me right. Jest give me a chance an' I'll tell you how it was. I'm all mixed up, see? On account of them lawyers. And the figgers in my head. But I'm goin' to tell you how it was. I was there twenty-five years, see? An' they gave her six months, see?

He goes on haranguing the empty jury box as the curtain falls.

Curtain.

SCENE V

In the middle of the stage is a large cage with bars on all four sides. The bars are very far apart and the interior of the cage is clearly visible. The floor of the cage is about six feet above the level of the stage. A flight of wooden steps lead up to it on the side facing the audience. ZERO *is discovered in the middle of the cage seated at a table above which is suspended a single naked electric light. Before him is an enormous platter of ham and eggs which he eats voraciously with a large wooden spoon. He wears a uniform of very broad black and white horizontal stripes. A few moments after the rise of the curtain a man enters at left, wearing the blue uniform and peaked cap of a* GUIDE. *He is followed by a miscellaneous crowd of Men, Women, and Children—about a dozen in all.*

GUIDE [*stopping in front of the cage*]. Now ladies and gentlemen, if you'll kindly step right this way! [*The crowd straggles up and forms a loose semicircle around him.*]

Note: This scene was part of the original script. It was omitted, however, when the play was produced, and was performed for the first time (in its present revised form) when the play was revived at the Phoenix Theatre in New York in February, 1956.—ELMER RICE

/Incubation

Group shared resources

Just like in the last module, our group set up online shared resources for us to continue collaborating on throughout the task - and to post stuff for safekeeping if any of us forgot specific details down the road.

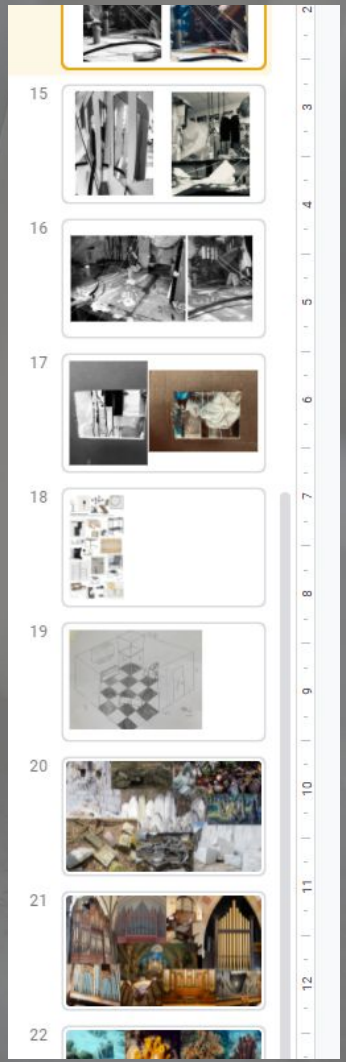
The difference being, this time, my team leaned more towards shared powerpoints, unlike my last group who wanted a shared google drive.

I was skeptical of this idea at first, but, saying that, I realise now, with the shared powerpoint, you have to observe your collaborator's work in order to get to posting your own.

I can understand the benefit of this, as for example with my last group of George White and Lleucu Williams, there were some files within files on our individual sections of the google drive that were by their design and positioning less likely to be thoroughly observed by the rest of the group.

In future, I'm still going to opt for the google drive option, because my biggest gripe with the powerpoint system of sharing is that by the time you've got original and secondary group powerpoints, it becomes harder and harder to find the information you are actually looking for.





/Incubation

Warm Up exercises I

Once in our sub-group, we took part in a few visual exercises to help us ‘think out of the box’. The first one was to create models from scraps supplied to us. I made warped humanoid figures, cardboard machines, and abused bits of clay by throwing them against the floor and puncuring them with spoons and bradawls.







/Incubation

Warm Up exercises II

I tried to get macro shots from these creations, to pick up light and texture. John also helped me obtain much more moody photos from the use of shadows and such. Those can be seen on the following slide.

Though I enjoyed messing around with the materials with justifiable reason, I did struggle to leave the confines of what I expected to see and make from these tasks. This can probably be explained through my history as a construction worker - I usually have a solid plan made or given to me to obtain an end goal to work towards. This is probably why I struggled to come to a palpable conclusion with these exercises.



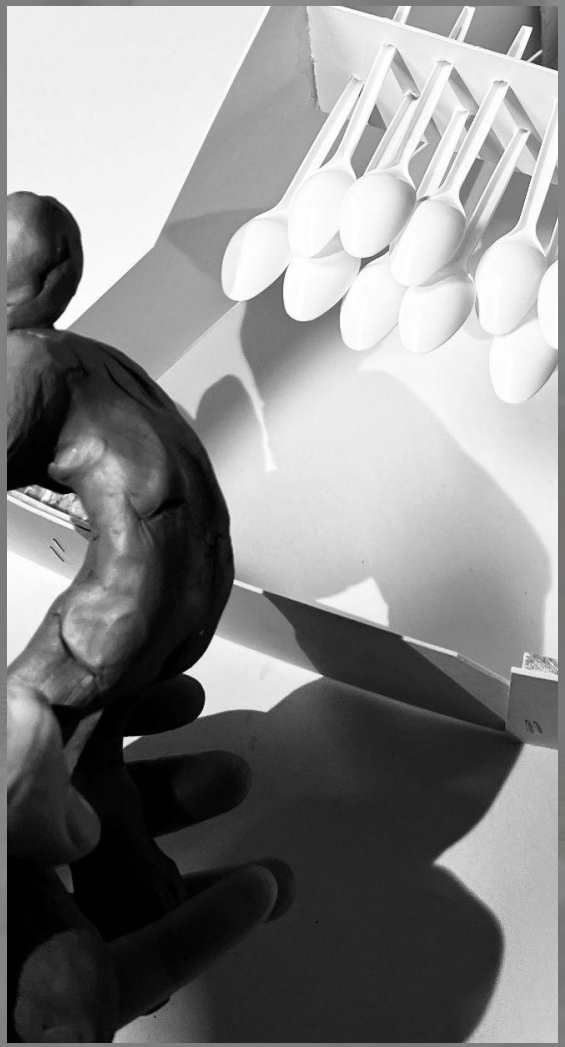




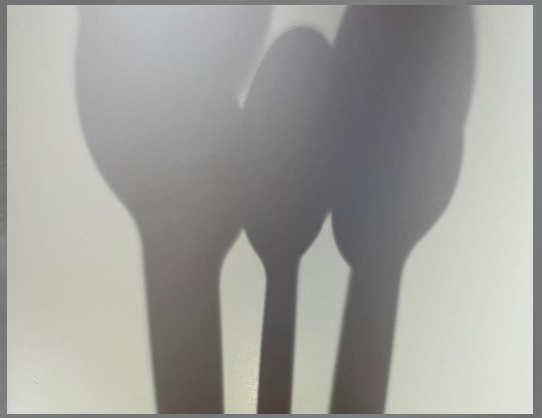
/Incubation

Warm Up exercises III









/Analysis

Drawing accurately with John

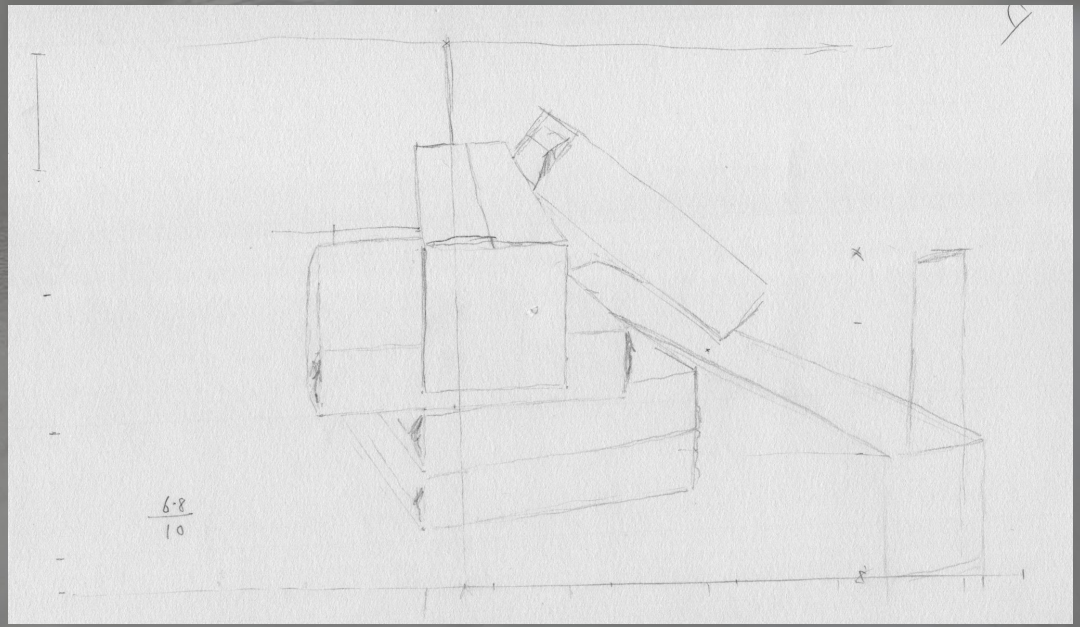
As a means of ensuring that we, as art students, were not neglecting our key skills, John provided drawing class sessions to us individually.

I am not the kind of person to draw from real life, and i have not really done so since I was 17 in art college, but I was very grateful for the tips and tricks.

By using a solid referencial space, alongside the use of horizon lines and a repeatable measuring stick (pencil), I feel like I was able to, promptly and successfully, capture what I saw in front of me on paper.

This would help me any time I wished to convey an idea of a real object to somebody via a drawing, and I appreciate knowing it.





/Incubation

Warm Up exercises IV

Next we made scrap creations as subgroups, with a much larger scale being the goal. We all just threw stuff together on the same table, using scraps of paper and plastic and tissue, and it gravitated towards a prison set somehow. We never really spoke about what we each wanted, but it manifested itself as something I was actually super proud of. We all took the time to have each group talk about their process with this task, and when it came our time, I had a lot to say about the shapes and shadows - and that's what made me realise how much I liked our work. This, to me, was vastly different from the last task, perhaps because of the fact that I had to do my part, otherwise face the concept of letting my team down.








JUDGE


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12

/Incubation

Sub-group's combined ideas I

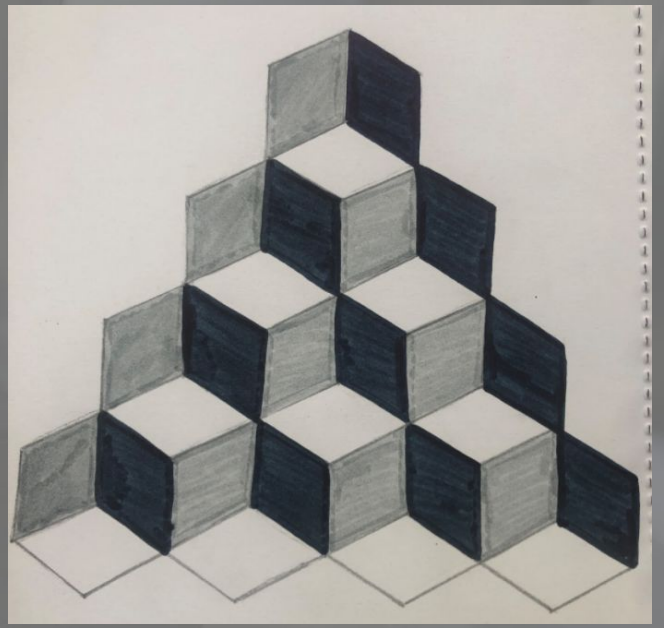
An impromptu presentation was suddenly looming, and so we set about seeing how we could merge all of our ideas. Once we shared what we had initially thought of, it became easier and easier to bounce new ideas into existence.

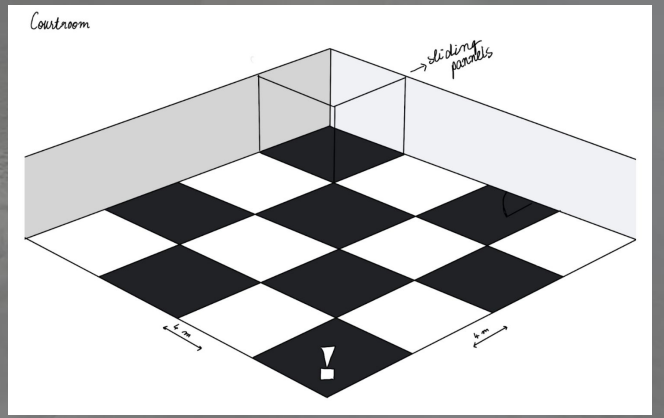
Rebecca had also noted some ideas about the courtroom scene, with a focus on how everything could be black and white, except for the ties and various small decorations of the characters - with a focus on the jury.

Vanina had delved into trying to achieve a solid optical illusion, known as the 'Necker' cube illusion. Since her idea was the only one that could go down that route, we collectively decided to commit to our designs being for the film screen, as opposed to theatre. This would allow us to have the camera locked at the exact position we needed for the illusion to work.

I shared my ideas of the courtroom with Rebecca and Vanina, and they incorporated them into the group's idea by having a courtroom scene be one of the multiple ideas floating in the air at the time.

Vanina and myself used this as a means of combining the illusory wall with the furniture and floating chairs and upside-down jury of the courtroom.





/Incubation

Sub-group's combined ideas II

However, we still needed a real product to present to the rest of the class.

I made myself useful by cutting out and glueing together a scale representation of Vanina's Necker cube room, while Vanina herself painted the tiled floor (essential for the illusion to work), and Rebecca populated the room with various chairs and tables to help boost the notion of the room being a formal office/courtroom. She also made a storyboard to illustrate how the room would work.

With additional walls nearly surrounding the space for the camera, it would be possible for additional shots within the space from different angles, without having to worry about not letting the camera lens see past the edge of the built set.

By having the courtroom transition into the prison cell scene, we could have the illusionary walls give way to reveal a prison cell for Zero to get into, once his monologue about being innocent is over.





/Research

M.C. Escher

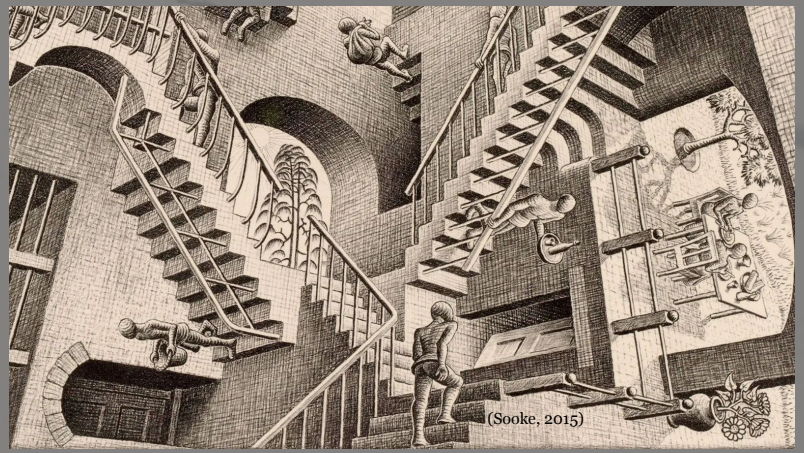
Though his art did not gain significant industry recognition until much later in his life, Escher's work continues to boast belonging to the most memorable imagery of the 20th century. Born in 1898 in Leeuwarden, Netherlands, Escher would take an interest in carpentry and music lessons as a child, but ultimately fail his final school exams - except for Mathematics.

His work did not belong to any art movement, but demonstrated spectacular artistic and mathematical skill and prowess.

"In a 1963 lecture on "the impossible", Escher declared: "If you want to express something impossible, you must keep to certain rules. The element of mystery to which you want to draw attention should be surrounded and veiled by a quite obvious, readily recognisable commonness." This is arguably as true of fiction or music as it is of Escher's brand of geometric sorcery. And it also, in a way, sums up the genius of Escher himself, an orderly man who made inexhaustibly extraordinary things." (Poole, 2015)

(Poole, 2015)





(Sooke, 2015)

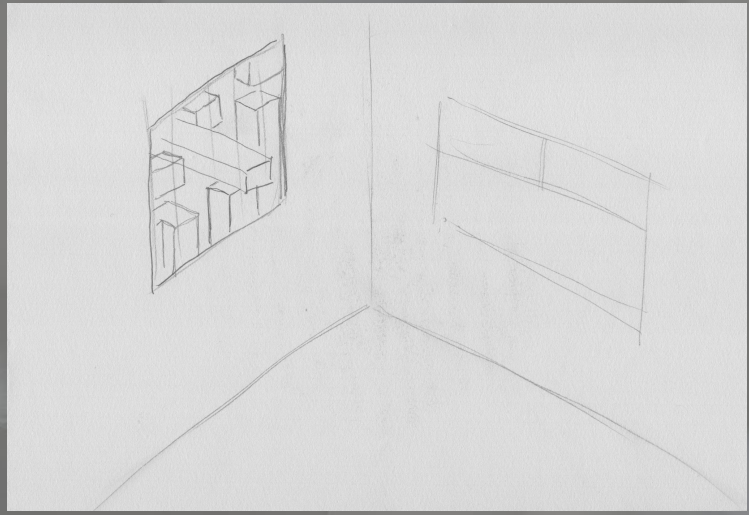
/Incubation

Sub-group’s combined ideas III

While I was thinking of new ways to create interesting displays of light and shadow, I was inspired by the works of M.C. Escher in the way he plays with perspective, and thought it would be interesting to have a city seen through a window in one of the set pieces, and have that city built like an Escher illustration.

We developed it further, with Rebecca saying how the city could be a colourful object through a window in the prison, representing how Zero doesn't want to be in the black and white surroundings that hold him captive.

Additionally, the cityscape could line up perfectly with Vanina’s geometric cube room, further confusing the viewer.





/Research

Sin City's (2005) use of colour

Adapted from the comic of the same name (by Robert Rodriguez), Sin City is a neo-noir film set in a fictional location of Basin City, Washington. Its directed by Frank Miller, Quentin Tarantino, and Robert Rodriguez.

What is great about this film is its extreme hues and sparse colours. Just like the two-tone effects of comic books that were born of a need to save money on ink expenses, Sin City's pitch blacks and whites are impossible to ignore onscreen, and a visual treat to any fan of German Expressionist visuals.

"Everything is constructed digitally and composed in a starkly defined monochrome on which splashes of lurid colour show up like wounds. Someone's eyes, or their lips, or their sneakers, or more probably their blood, are lividly painted on to the Weegee-photo-style black and white. Rodriguez splatters that claret around like Jackson Pollock, but sometimes it's not red but an expressionist molten yellow, and often a gunshot wound will show up glowing white, as if transformed into a splodge of radioactive birdcrap." (Bradshaw, 2005)


(Crow, 2019)


(Gilbert, 2015)


(Hough, 2013)

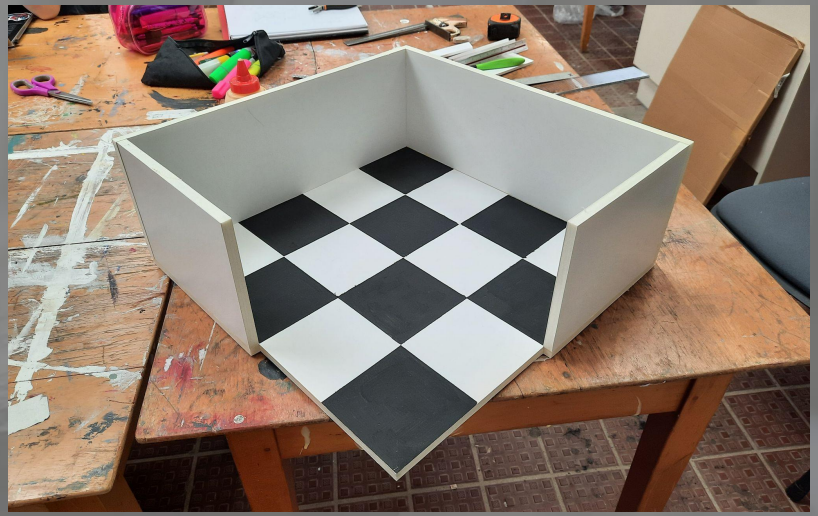
/Selection

Sub-group’s presentation

During our impromptu presentation, it felt like we accurately got across what we wanted to convey.

An especially lovely moment was when we turned the model set towards everybody to reveal the illusion, and there was an audible ‘aah’ amongst our fellow students.

Indeed, it seems to be worth noting that of all the models presented that day, only Vanina had one with an illusory effect that could be easily and instantly observed.







/Incubation

Other Sub-group's work

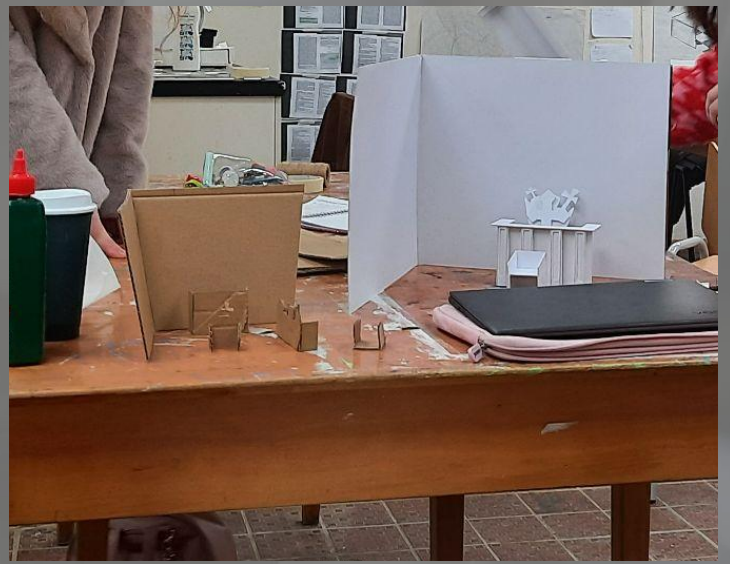
It may seem unrelated, but Ellie (and Courtney) had a model that especially appealed to me.

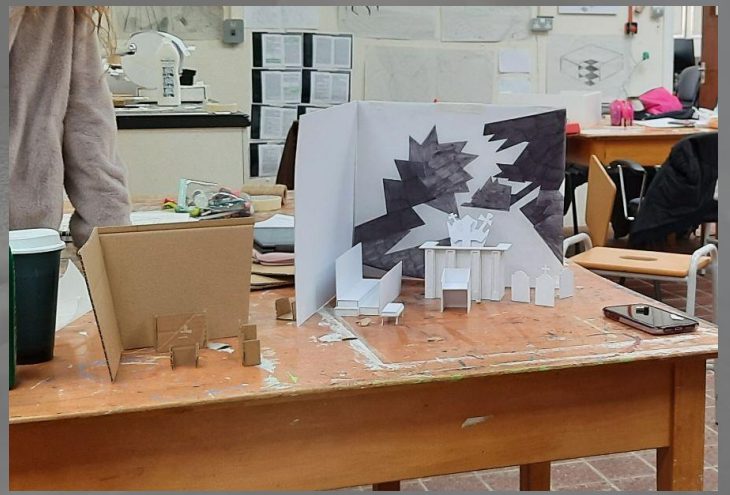
By juxtaposing the graveyard scene with the courtroom, they had arrived at a sort of defacto church setting, with tonnes of atmosphere and foreboding imagery. I was very impressed, and most definitely inspired by this.

As soon as their presentation was over, I knew I wanted to bounce ideas off of their group with ours. Ideas of gravestones merging with a courtroom was an immensely unique idea to me, and something I had never thought of before - especially given the nature of how the character Zero gets the death sentence in court.

I'm very glad I took a photo of it, one of the more heartwarming moments for me was seeing multiple groups take their model props and combine them with the other groups, as a means of experimenting with the visuals they could create. It was this interaction between Ellie's furniture and Vanina's box room that made me want to brainstorm many more ideas than what I had originally thought of.







/Incubation

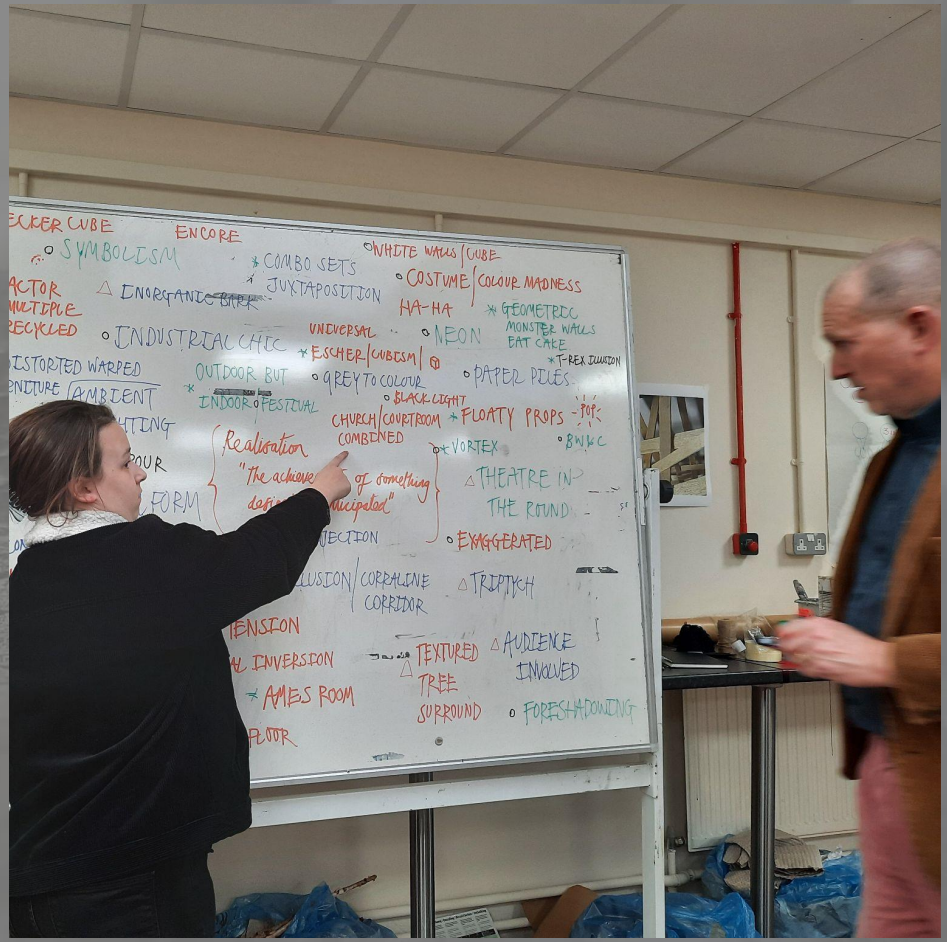
Birth of the Meta-Groups

Due to our groups willingness to merge with Ellie and Courtney's group, we found a way to become a meta-group with John's blessing. This however, retroactively caused the other two groups to also merge, as a means of refining down all the possible ideas so that one could be chosen and made by all of us at the end of the module.

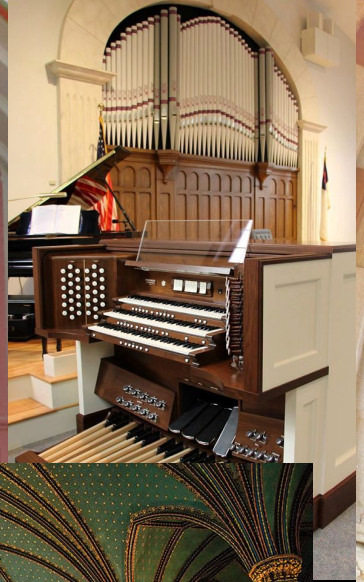
John helped us boil down everybody's key words, colours, themes, and artistic movements onto one whiteboard for us to try to obtain some means of moving forward as a single entity.

However, I believe quite a few people were hesitant to give up on their ideas that they had incubated for some time. That's okay though.

And thus, two 'meta-groups' were created, one focused on sharp edges, and harsh black and white shadows, and the other focused on organic shapes and vibrant colours.





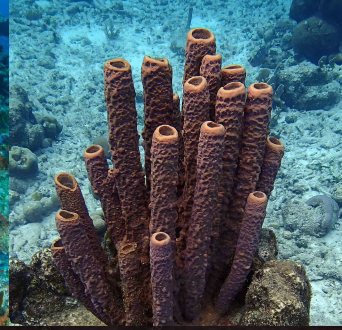
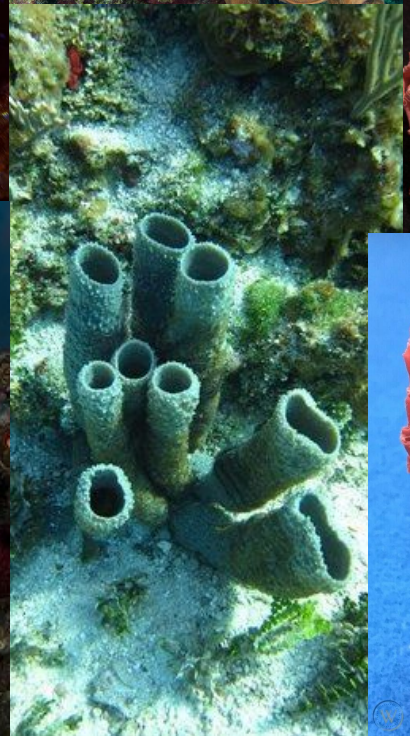
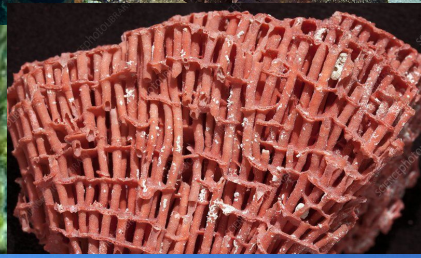


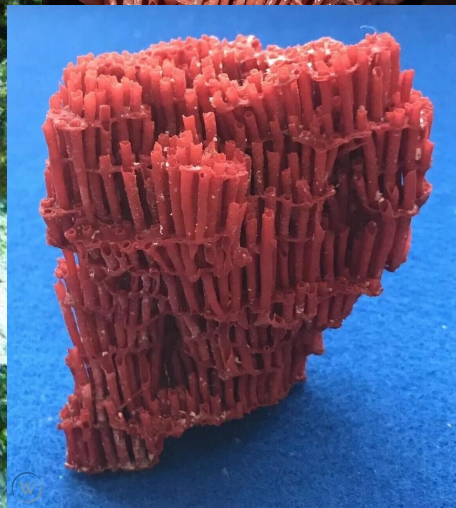















FATHER
EDWARD PETERSON
1864 — 1934



/Incubation

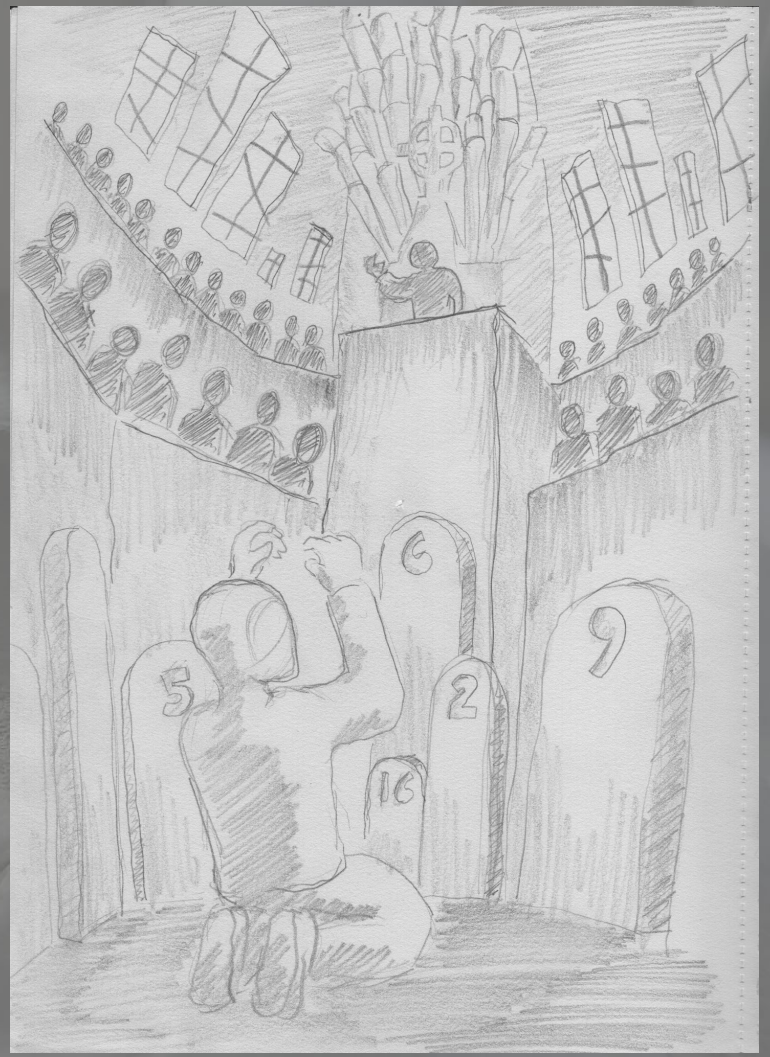
Further sketches

Through being inspired to merge the graveyard with the courtroom, I also thought of having the judge be some kind of twisted organ player, and the organ could then be this organism of chaotic tubes that reach up to the sky like ocean coral.

I tried to manifest these notions in the sketches shown here.

These were not to be replicated for their specific dimensions, but rather to set the tone for what I had envisioned after being so inspired by Ellie's work.





/Incubation

More modelmaking

With time ticking, and a new group order established, we set about making an additional model, one that incorporated both the Necker cube, as well as some further imagery I had sketched up from my inspiration after seeing Ellie's work.

It was difficult to perfectly establish the required geometry to attain the necker cube effect, while still having surrounding walls that warped and allowed for embellishment of the gravestones and organ parts on the walls.

This was not an especially effective model, but by no means was it a failure. We learned that it was possible we were trying to achieve a little too much in such a small confined space, and went back to some more open designs going forward.

And it was still a good exercise in model making, and Rebecca's use of straws to emulate the organ's pipes were especially effective, in my opinion.



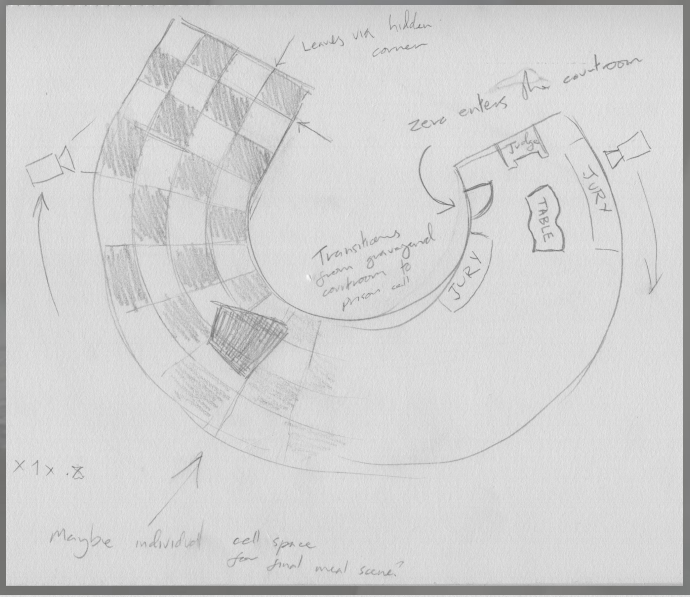


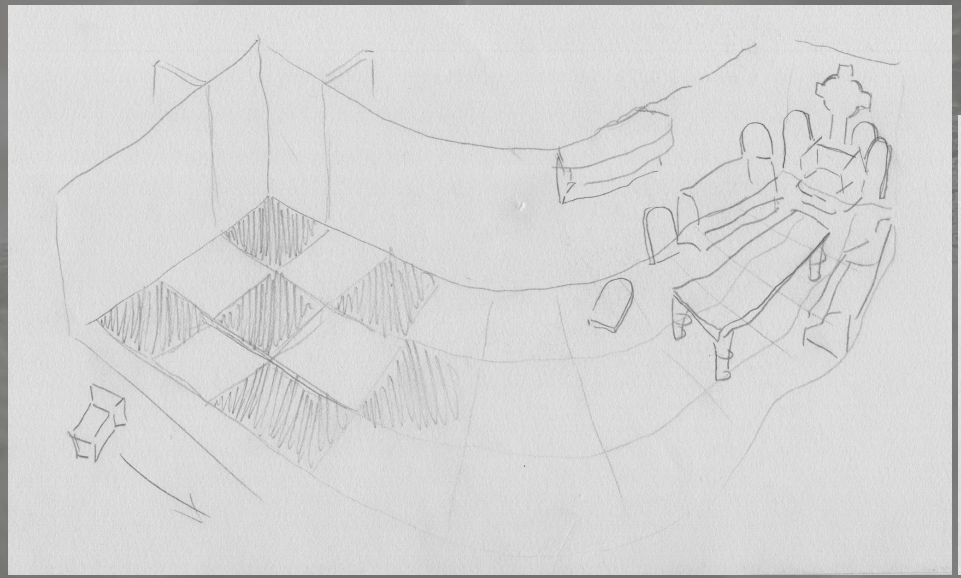
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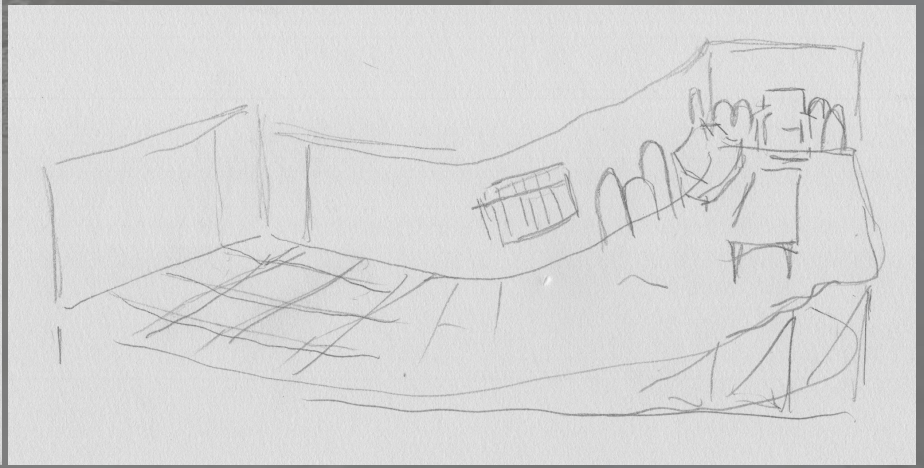
Development sketches

After much conversation about what our end product could be, I drew up some additional sketches. I tried to incorporate elements of what all of us wanted, and Rebecca utilized it as a means of asking everybody to leave and brainstorm the notion of the curved set, and then bring back whatever they had designed or made in 1:20 scale - for us to decide on a final design.

As a basic idea, I thought the camera could dolly alongside Zero as he leaves the courtroom scene, and its 'swallowed' by the walls of the Necker cube illusion, which would represent the prison and the death sentence he is given.







/Selection

Micro modelmaking I

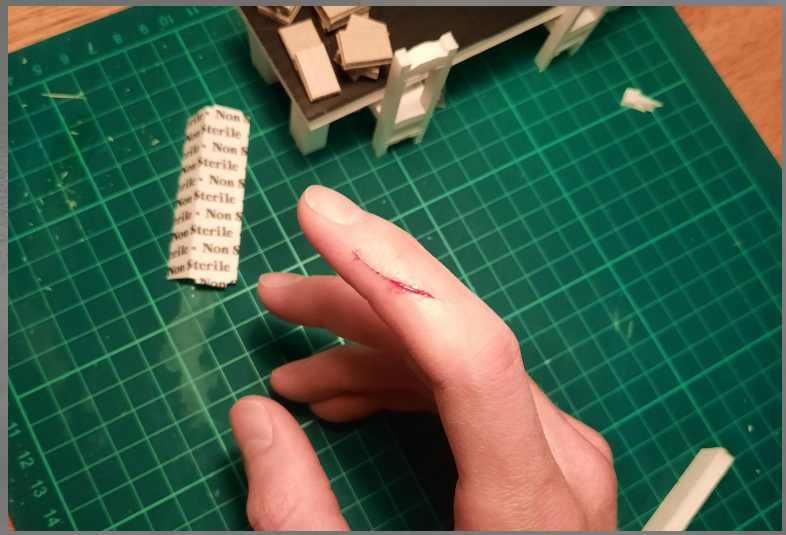
As my official role was not to build the sets, I instead thought I'd help by providing some furniture to my group. So I set to work on making some props in 1:20 scale.

From our online group files, I knew they wanted bookcases, as well as tables and chairs. So I then swiftly cut my finger pretty bad. It was all rather dramatic... as involuntary scalpel cuts usually are.

I feel it's worth noting that my model making set up was much better this time than last year when I made the library, mostly because I was so motivated not to work off of the floor again. I also obtained much better equipment than last time, and aside from the nasty cut, it was a much more enjoyable experience to sit and build micro models. I even ended up using the same methods of whetting cardboard to obtain the corrugation for the books - just as I did with the bookshelves in last year's project.

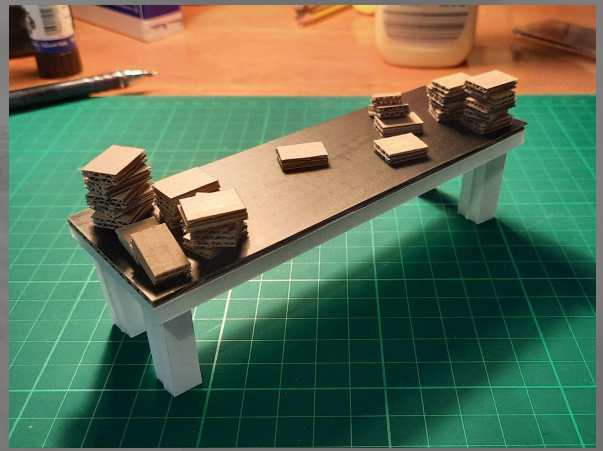
I just appreciate the opportunity to work on something I can wrap my head around and feel myself improve at, though perhaps this is simply because I have such a recent memory of my past attempts to do serious model making.

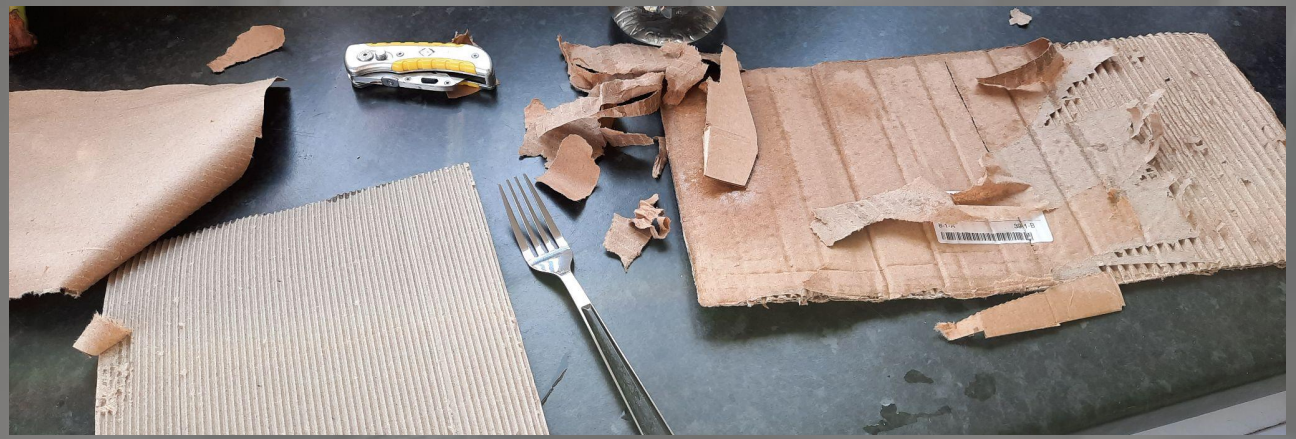




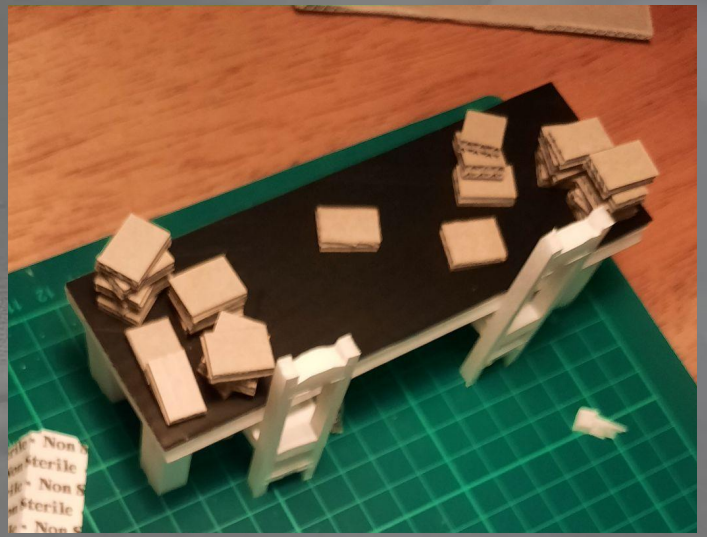
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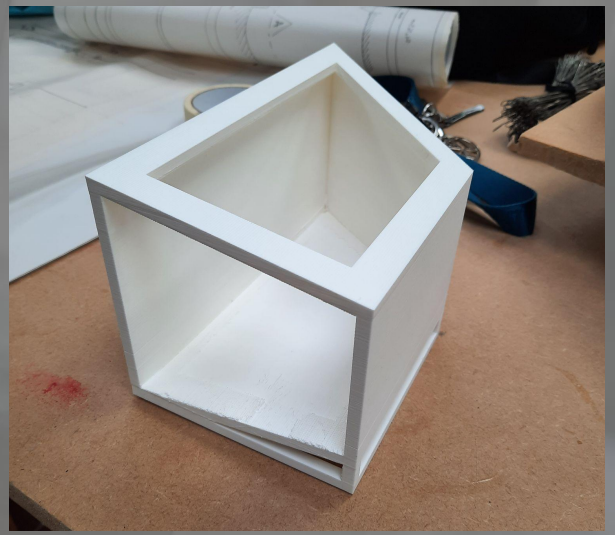
/Selection

Virtual model making I

Earlier in the module, George proudly displayed a 3D printed ‘Ames room’ (top right). This was made possible with Dave’s 3D printer.

At first I did not contemplate the usefulness of this technology in regards to 1:20 scale model making, but this changed when Vanina approached me with a dilemma she was having with trying to build an old style coat rack (bottom right) for the house portion of the set we were building. Dave had recommended she 3d print some parts, but in the databases she looked in, there were no coat racks in the style she had envisioned.

I realised, after consulting Dave, that I have the ability to fabricate models with the right file extension (.OBJ) to be 3D printed. This suddenly meant that a program I used to use about six years ago was now perfectly suitable to help my group. It may not look like it due to my traditional hand tool woodworking interests, but I used to be quite technologically inclined!



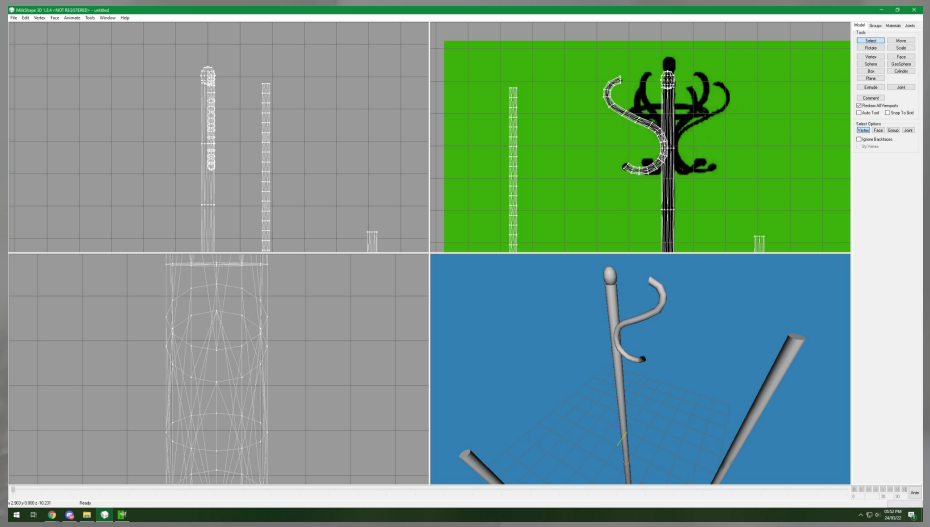


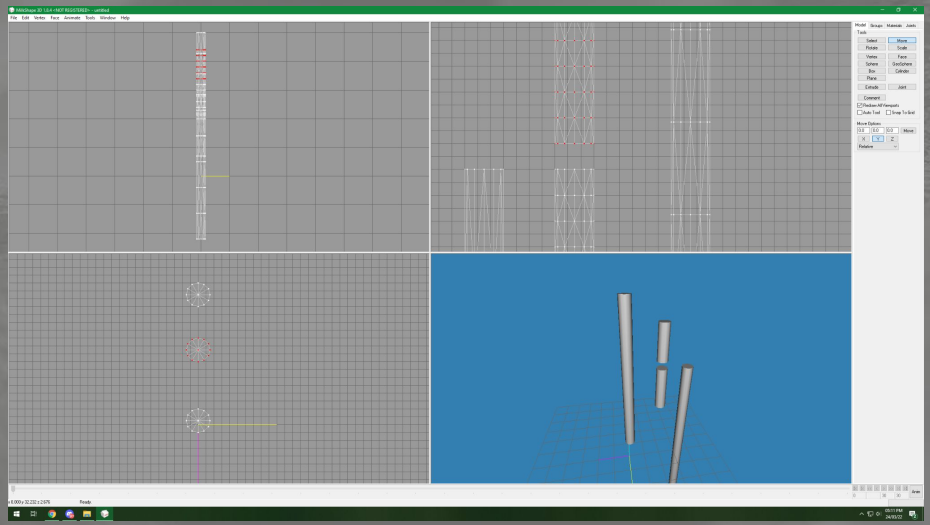
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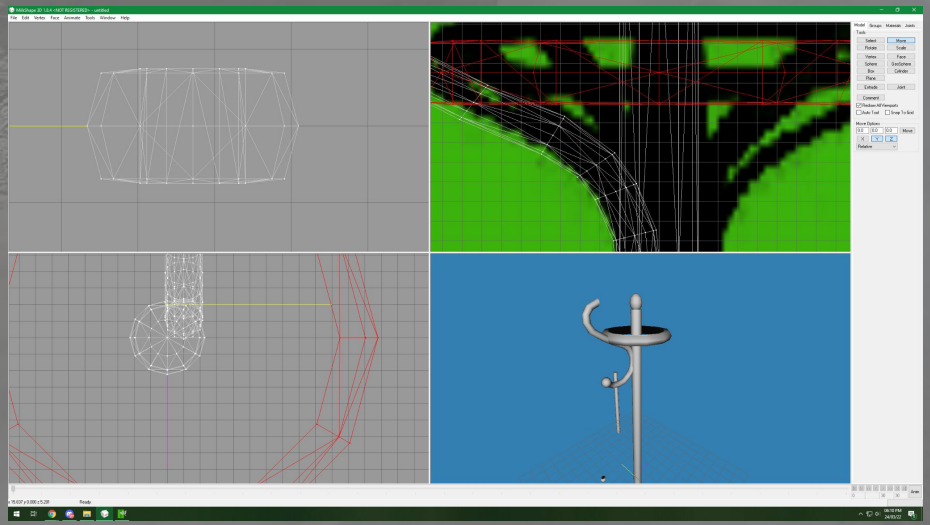
Virtual model making II

I struggled at first to remember how all the keyboard shortcuts and tools worked, but soon enough I had a fully fleshed out coat rack built in a digital format.

I'm very glad I decided to revisit this, as I feel like it adds so much weight to the effort I put into learning this program so many years ago in my spare time. The fact that I can also 3D print anything I made digitally also makes me very excited for the next time I need to make something in miniature!

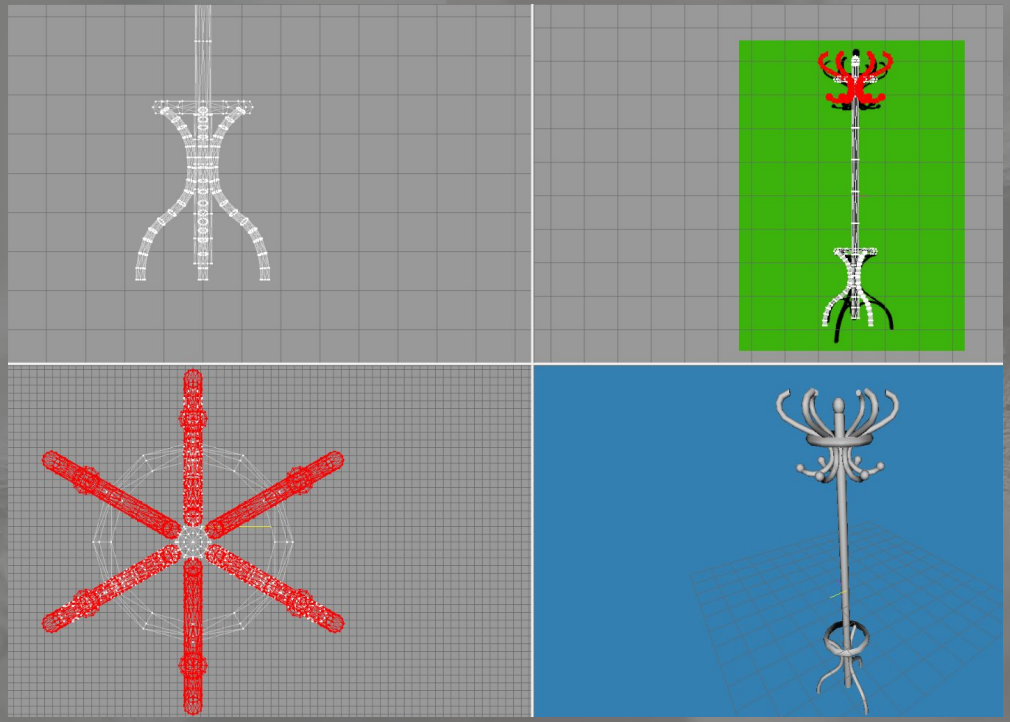






/Selection

Virtual model making III

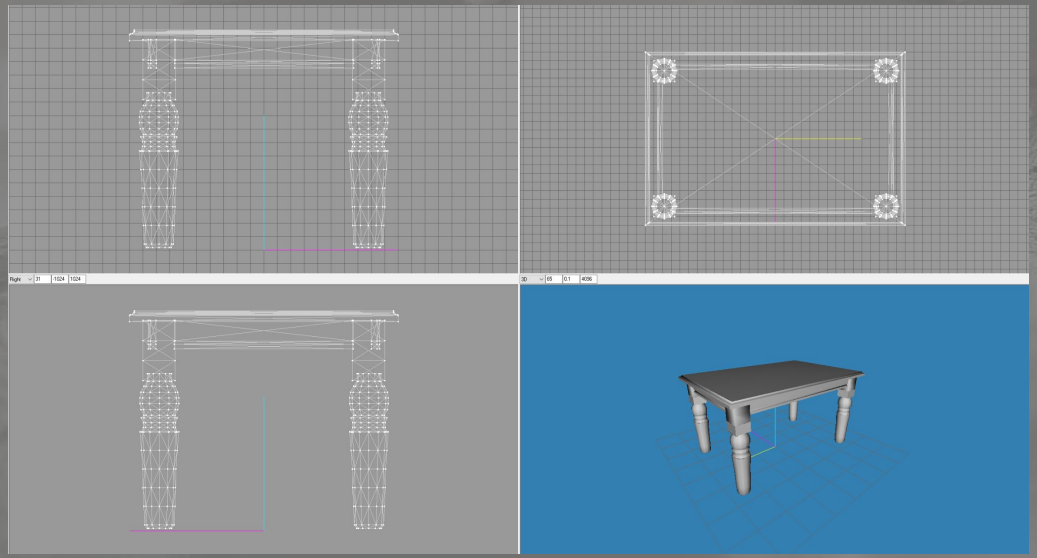




/Incubation

Virtual model making IV

While I was in the groove, I also built a table, based off of the one in my student flat. It's really bizarre to me, going back into an old pastime and making virtual versions of my new pastime. I think in future, when I design an intricate piece of furniture, I'll make a model of it first so I can better visualise it. Writing that sentence made me more excited than I care to admit.



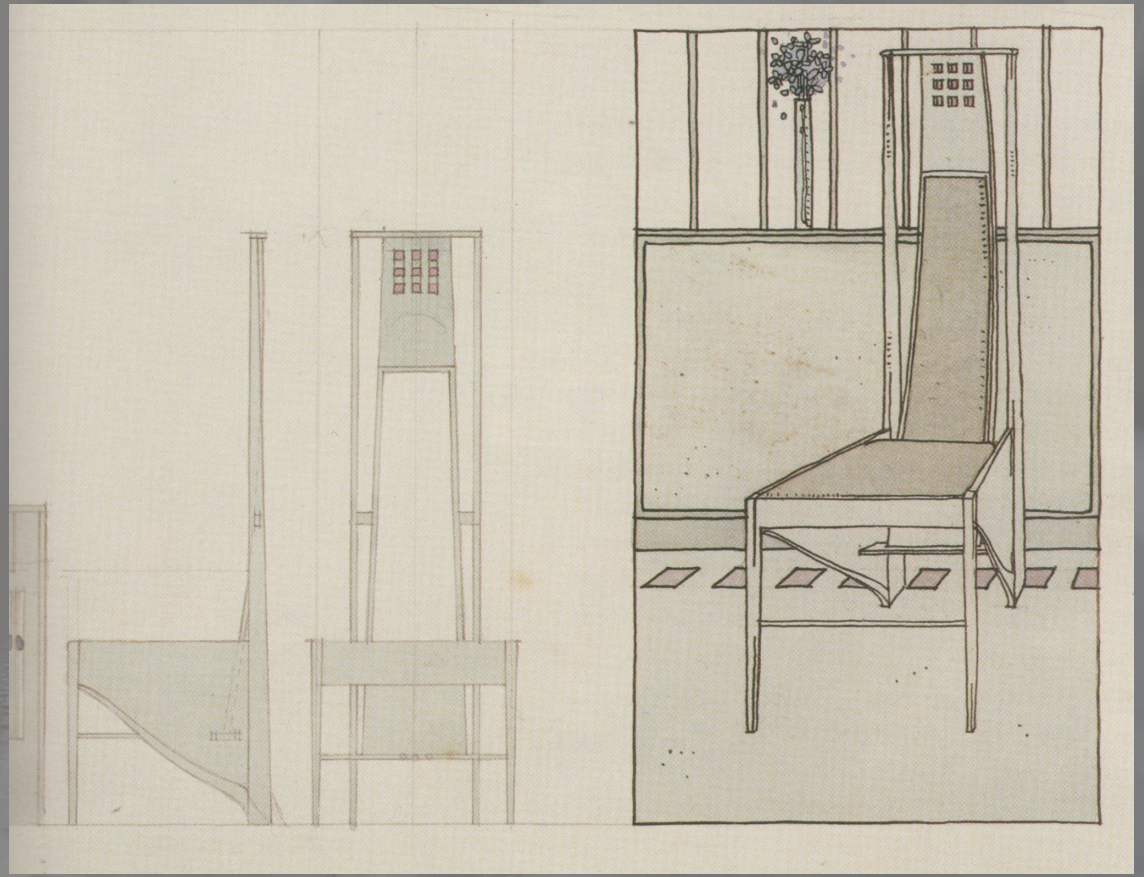


/Incubation

Virtual chair making I

Speaking of making furniture in digital format, another gem I found while learning about Mackintosh's work was a flat plan drawing of one of his high-back chairs. As soon as I saw the illustration, I knew I had to attempt to reincarnate it as a 3D model.

I'm intimidated with the amount of things I want to try to recreate and print off in miniature form.

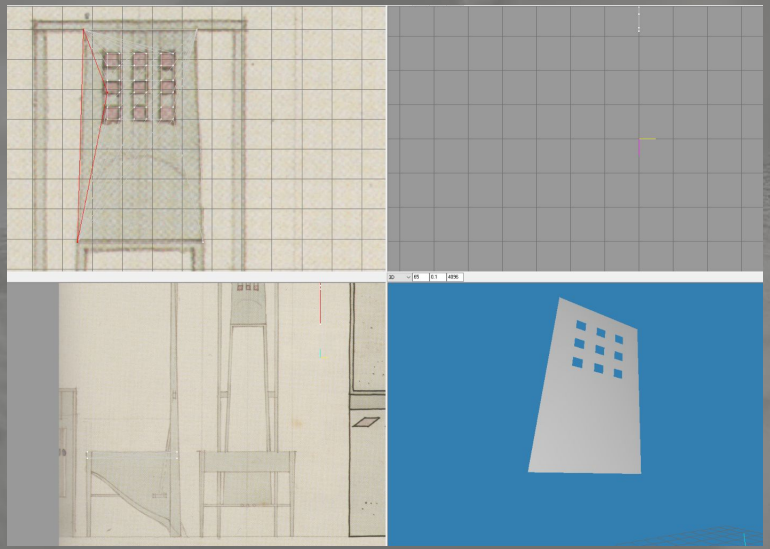


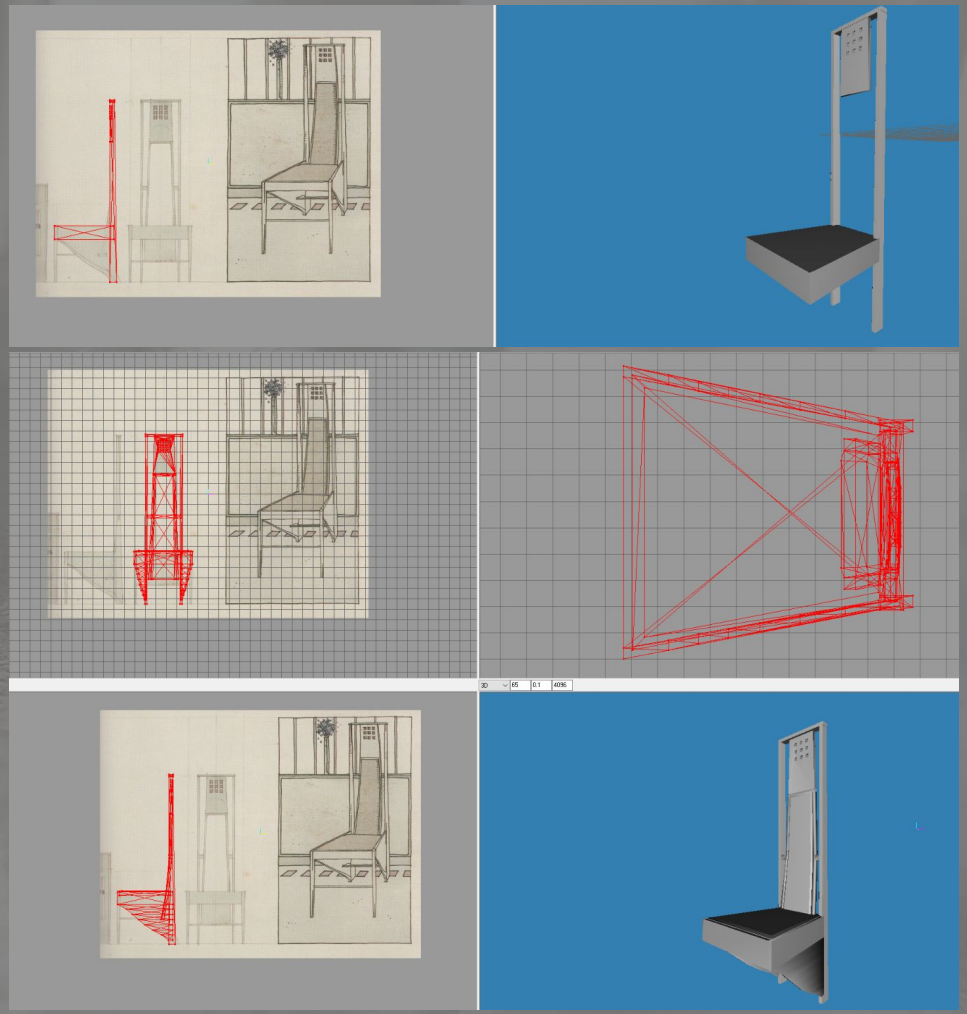
(Blake, 2001, p.189)

/Incubation

Virtual chair making II

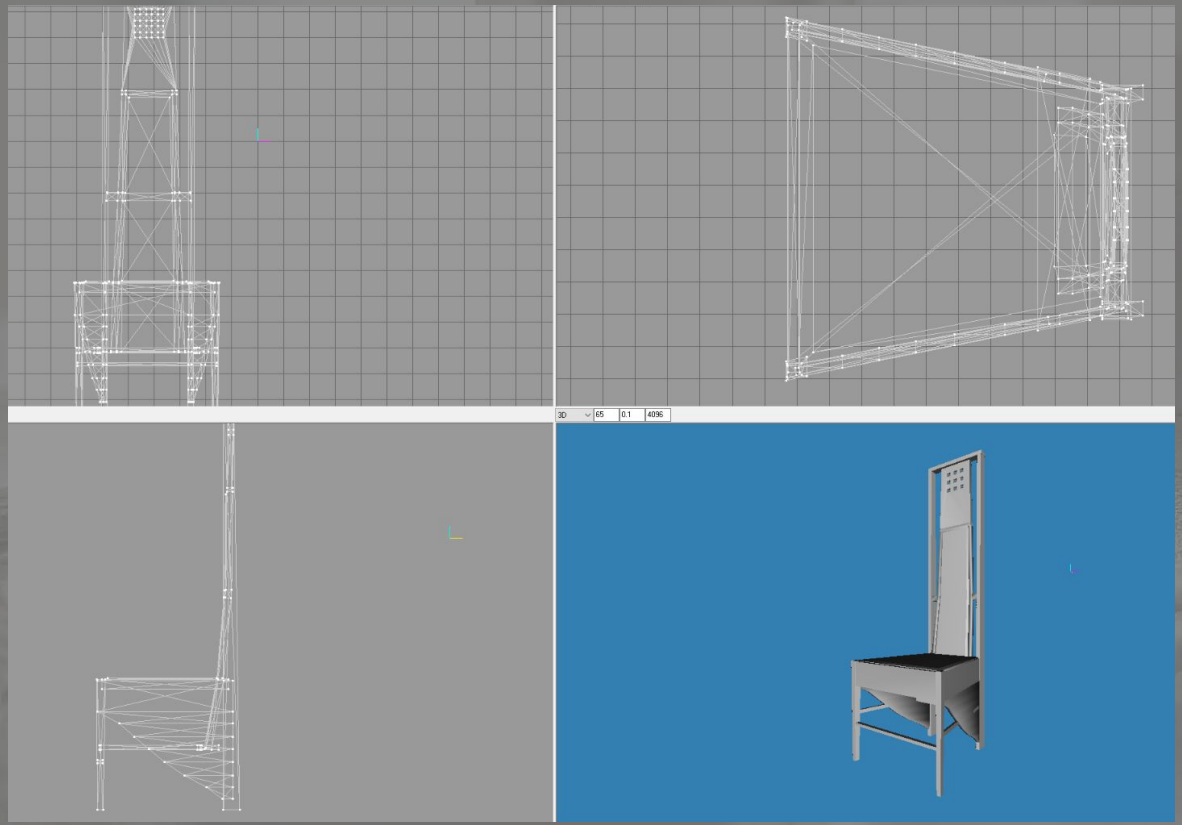
I started by loading this image into my model making program, as a background for both the left and front viewpoints. By positioning them on each face of the illustration, it became possible to ‘trace’ the shapes out with cubes, then simply shape them to conform to the overall dimensions by observing all angles, all the time.





/Incubation

Virtual chair making III

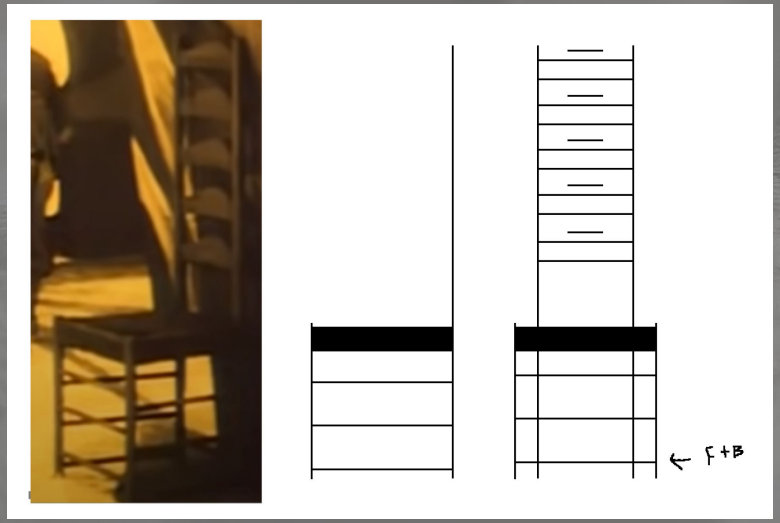


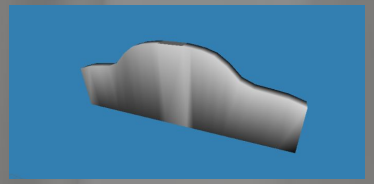


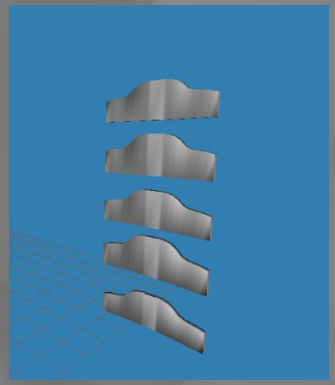
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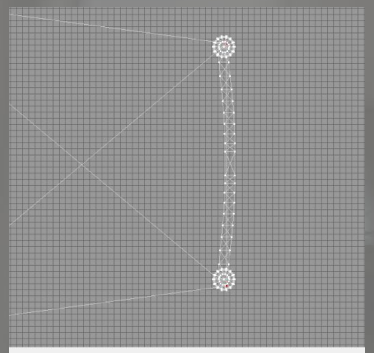
Virtual chair making IV

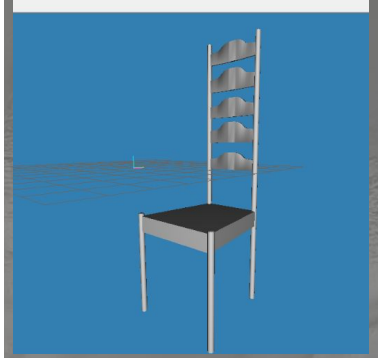
To tackle the Dr Caligari chair, I first made a super basic outline of its components by placing it side by side with a straight line drawing, to see that the ratios were close enough.

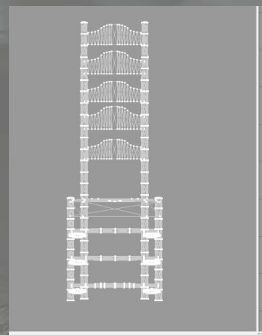


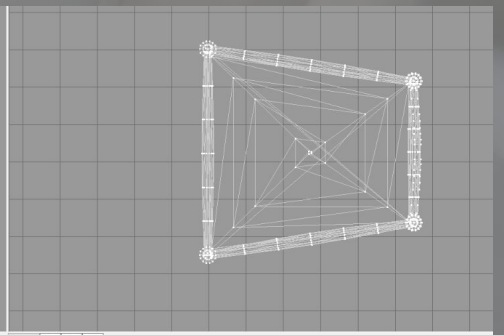


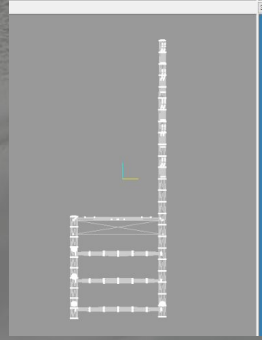


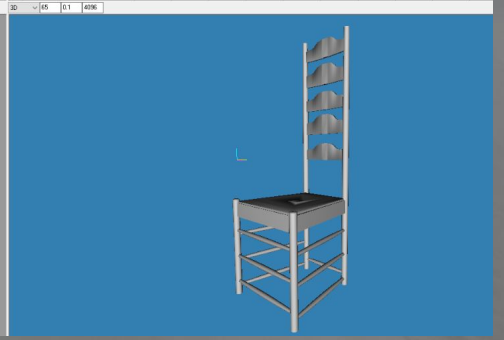






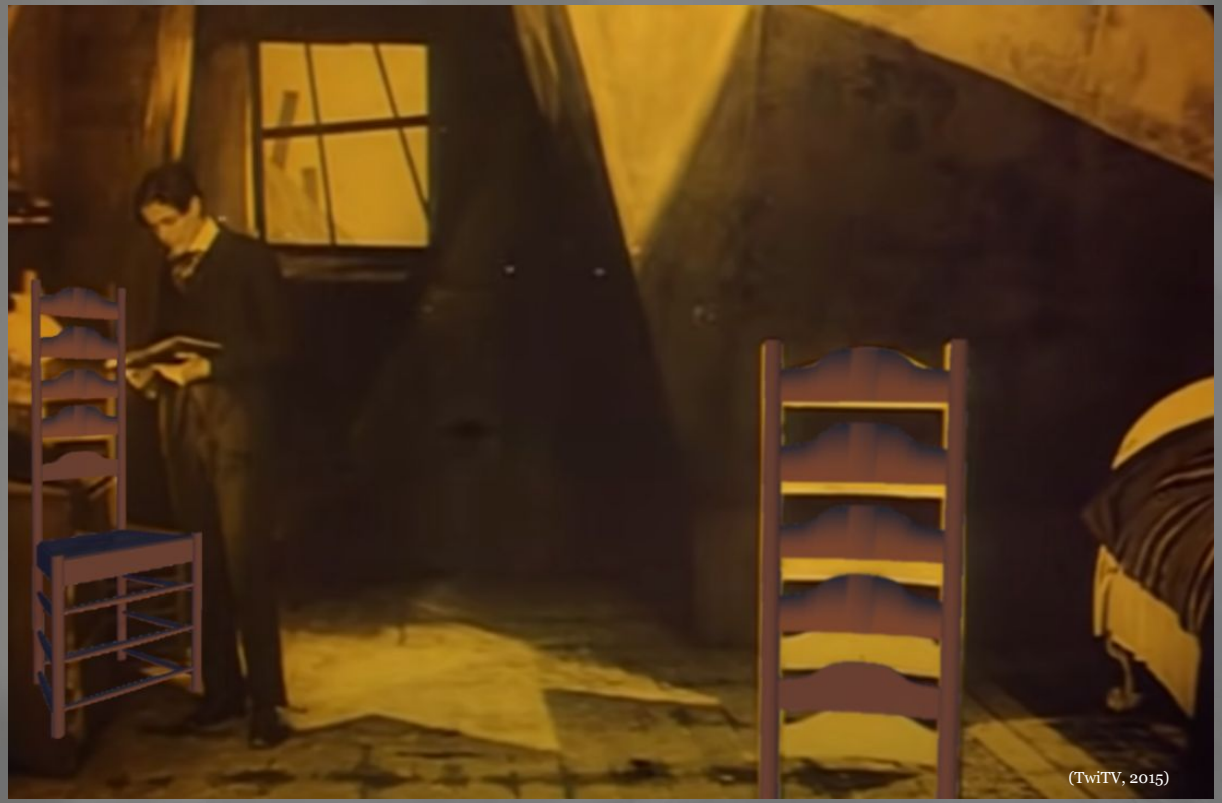






Virtual chair making V





/Selection

A final prototype I

The following monday, my team members brought in their curved models, and swiftly combined them by the following thursday - literally. I'm very proud of them for being able to do that, as I never expected something so impromptu to work so effortlessly. I was sadly absent on that day, but they caught me up without any trouble. I was grateful just to have my props be placed on such a marvelous model set.

The final plan was two semi-circles, one beginning with Zero's house, and travelling all the way through the court into his cell. It would still be one continuous shot, but Vanina's illusion was let go in favour of a more continuous visual flow, without a stringent need for exact angles at the end.

With an emphasis on the colourful inviting familiarity of Zero's house at the start being worked on by Vanina, Rebecca had implemented the warped courtroom jury seats in the middle, with Ellie re-implementing her harsh contrasting shapes towards the end, finally leading to a prison door shutting between the set and Zero himself.





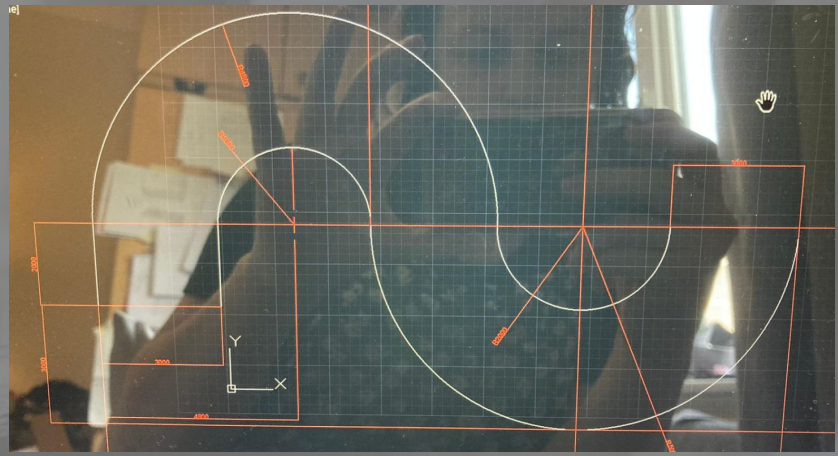
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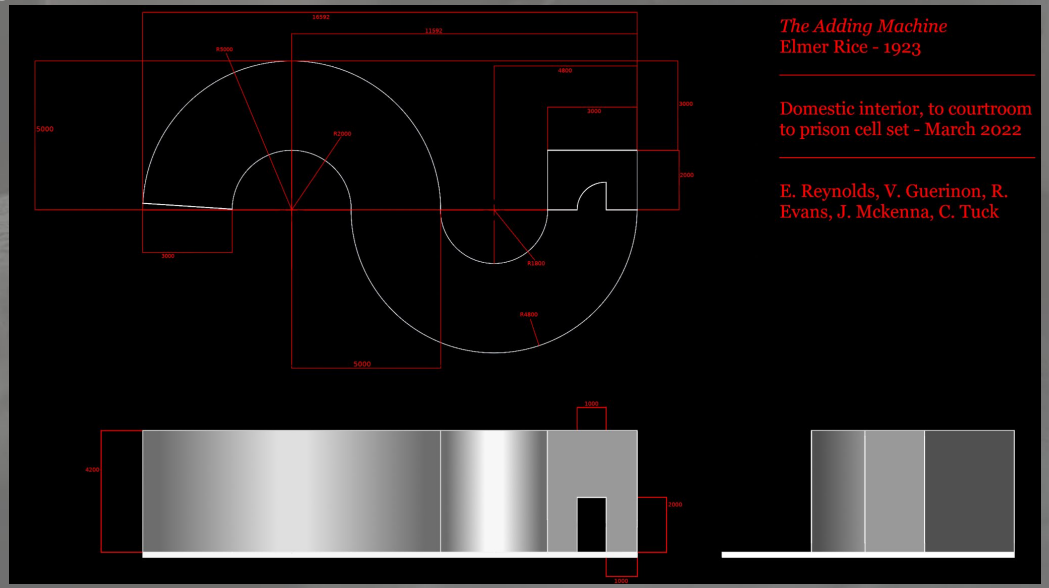
A final prototype II

Rebecca had created a CAD file of this final collaborative model, and with this rock solid information I got to work on creating a platform for my lighting proposal when I was ready.

Using the top down information, I used photoshop to make a representative visual image of the set's walls and floors.

This would come in very useful to me later, when I would make the final lighting plan to go with the storyboard and script analysis.





/Selection

Proof of concept

We took the nearly-final-model into a darker room so I could capture some better lighting with my torch and the gels me and Vanina obtained. I believe, even as a prototype model, this speaks for itself in its narrative capabilities.

We also all played a part in ‘re-enacting’ how the shot for shot process would go, with little foam men attached to bits of wire. This gave me a better opportunity to decide where lights should fall for each que in the script.









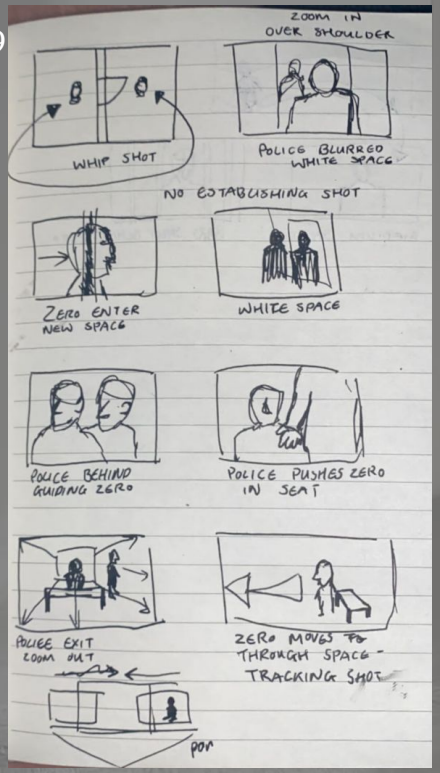


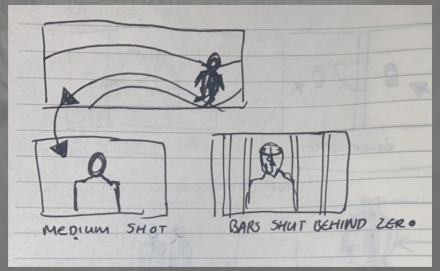
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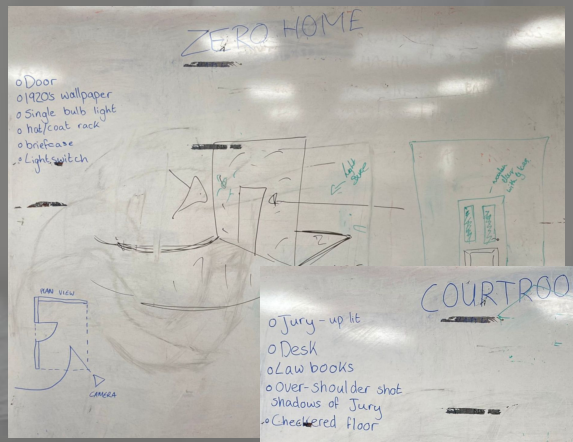
A plan for the shots

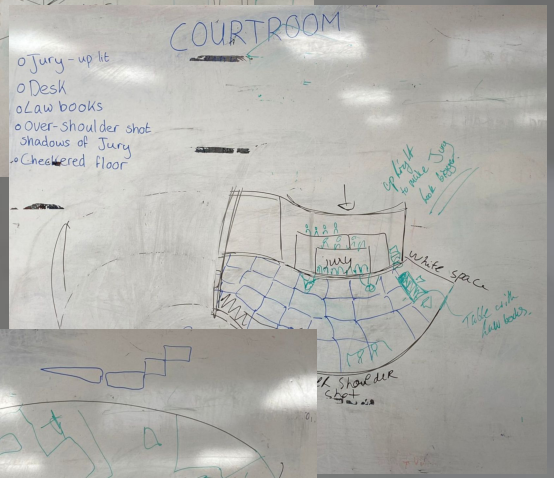
Using the prototype-final model, my group was able to storyboarded exactly how they wanted each shot to be placed when it was filmed, from a brainstorming process where they all collaborated and rounded off the idea until they were happy with it.

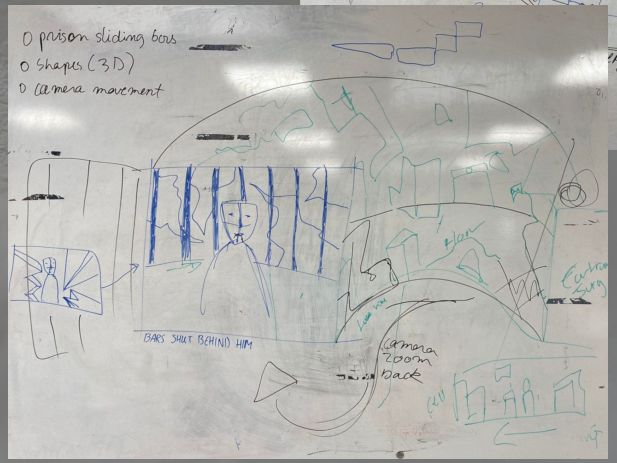
This was essential to me being able to plan where and how each light would be operated and used, based off of what I liked and didn't like when I was experimenting with the prototype set with the gels and my torch.











/Implementation

Final model build I

With the prototype model done, Rebecca and I began building the final model in 1:10 scale. Starting with a piece of ¼ inch ply, reinforced with pine battens underneath. After Courtney filled the holes and painted it white, we proceeded to cut the foamcore needed to make the curvy walls; and clad them with white card.







/Implementation

Final model build II









Now that we had already made the whole model once before, it was much easier to implement positive changes on the final iteration. I made more detailed furniture than before, and utilised cardboard to more realistically represent the actors in the set.

It was really nice to sit amongst my group, with all of us making parts for one giant scale model. Usually scale models are an exercise undertaken in solitude!

/Implementation

Final model build III

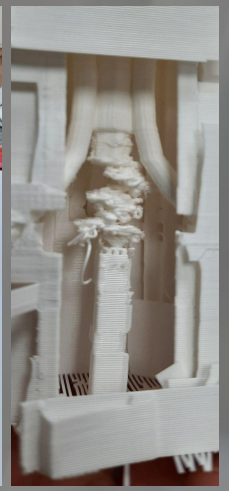
Dave kindly printed off my coat rack, and I finally got to see how possible it is to print very thin components on the 3D printer.

As you can see, he printed two - each in a different orientation. This became a godsend, as parts of both were broken. I had to salvage the most intact parts of both in order to successfully obtain a complete model. Some aspects just flat out did not print properly, which proved to be interesting anomalies in themselves.

This is in no way a bad thing, as I know now that I can get away with some crazy stuff on this platform, and achieve things that would be extremely fiddly if I was to make them from scratch with raw materials myself. I feel like I've opened some new corridors for designing and making in this module, especially in this aspect.











/Implementation

Final model build IV





/Selection

Final storyboard

Before capturing the shots for the storyboard, I cut out a 5x6 aspect ratio viewfinder from black card, and crudely taped it to my phone's camera. This is because I found the 16:9 ratios of today to be a little unfaithful to those old world motion pictures.

Some may say that this was superfluous, as I can change my phone's settings to have a smaller aspect ratio without auxiliary restrictions.

However, I found that the raw power of the black viewfinder outline really lended itself to each shot - and the jaggedness created a sense of authenticity that a normal photo simply does not have in my opinion.

As soon as I took the first blurred photo of Vanina with it, I knew I'd taken one step closer to capturing the essence of those classic german-expressionist films I had watched. I felt like I had re-discovered photography's power all at once!







/Implementation

Lighting plan I

Using the information recorded from capturing the storyboard, I devised a diagram using the previously made image of the CAD set.

The four different types of light fixture are: free standing directional, free standing omni-directional, rig-mounted directional and rig-mounted omni-directional. Each light has a que as to when it lines up with the storyboard, shown in the green numbers.



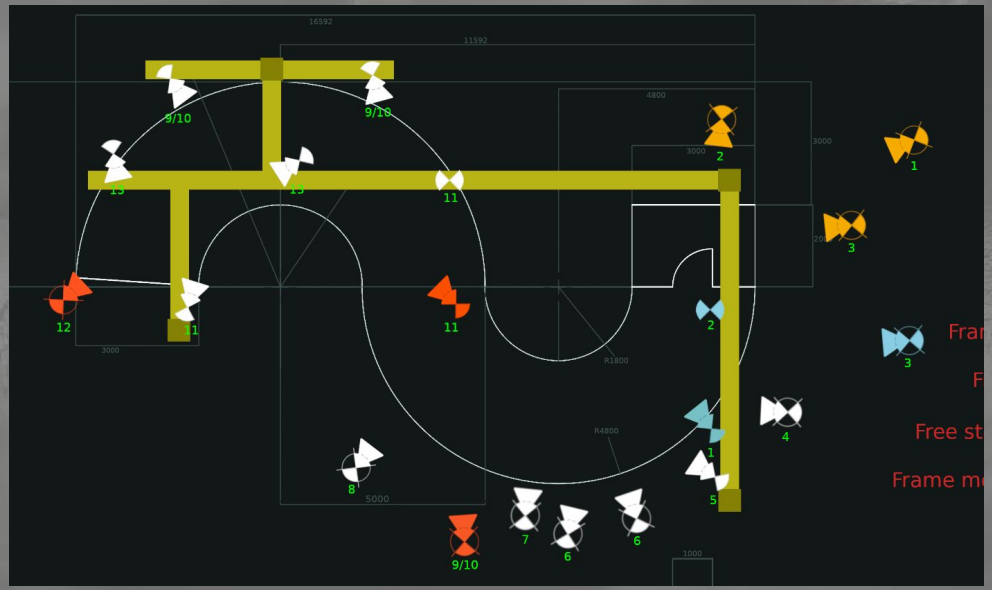
/Implementation

Lighting plan II

Further building on this, I then illustrated where the rigging frame would have to stand in order for the lights above the set to be mounted.

I also had to factor in space for the camera to fit between the feet of this frame, and the set itself into my plans.

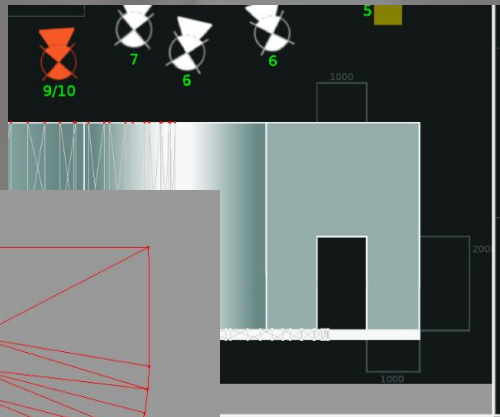
In order to properly visualise this rigging system, that was heavily inspired by the one seen in the Y Llwyfan theatre (pictured), I needed a virtual 3D image. Thankfully due to rediscovering virtual model making in this module, that was not a big deal to execute effectively.



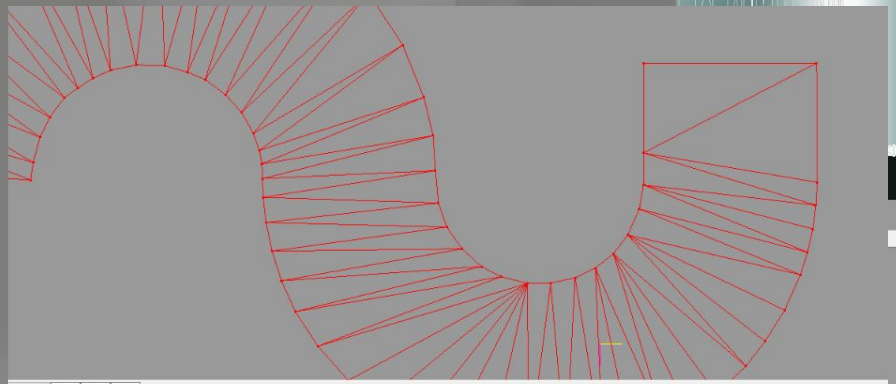


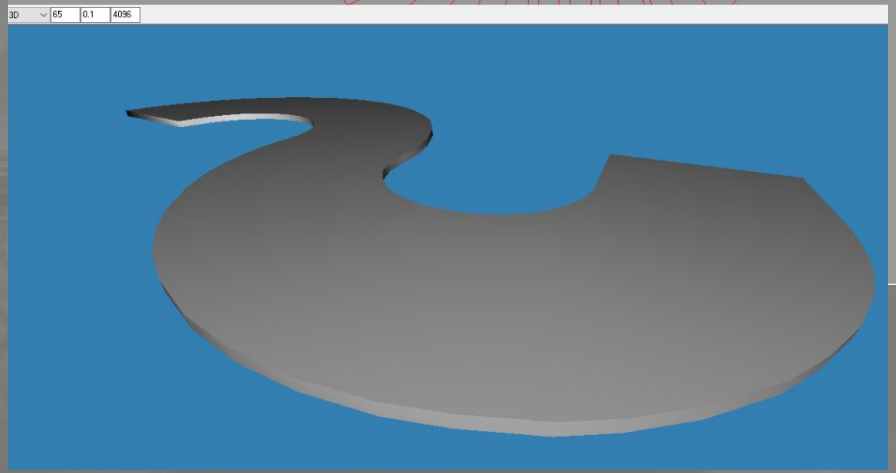
/Implementation

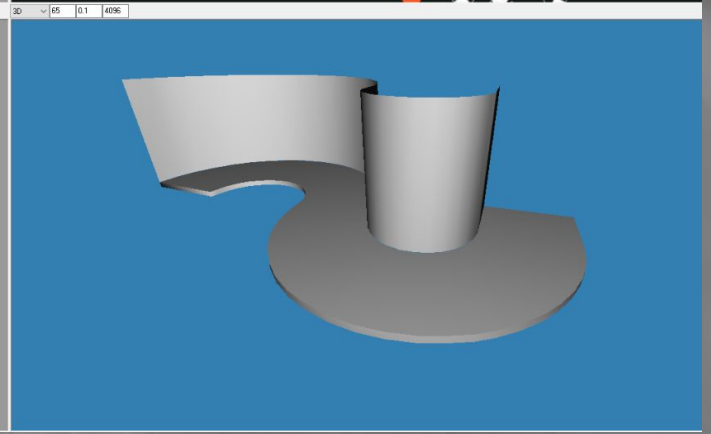
Lighting plan model

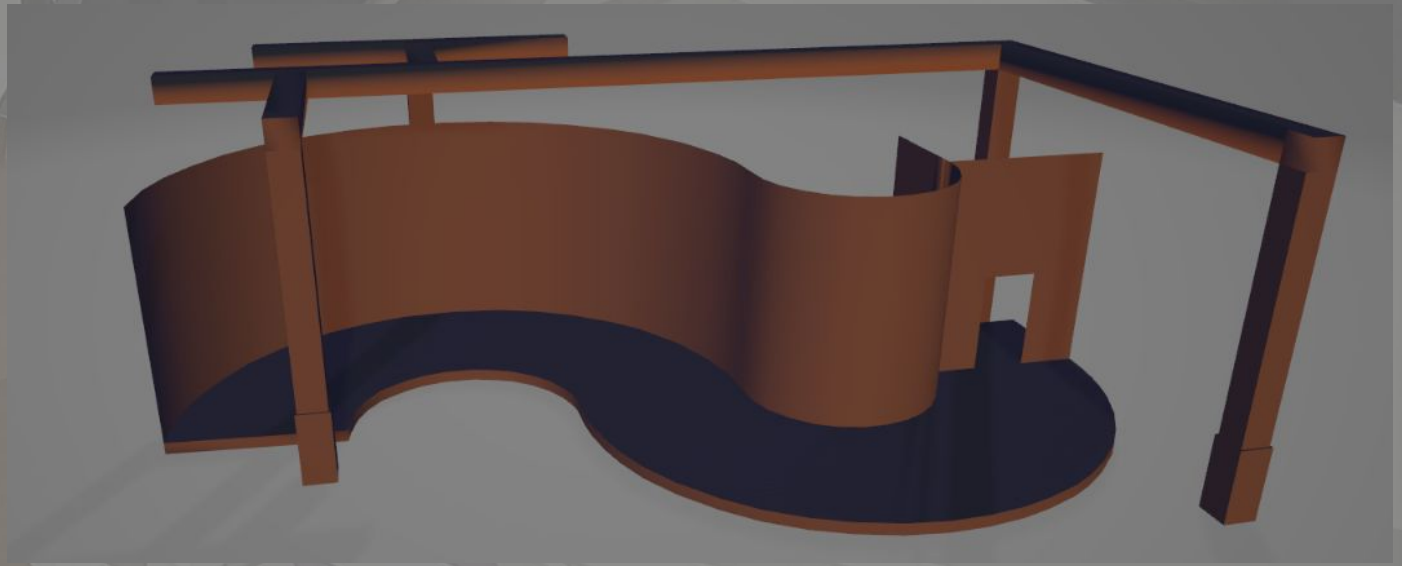


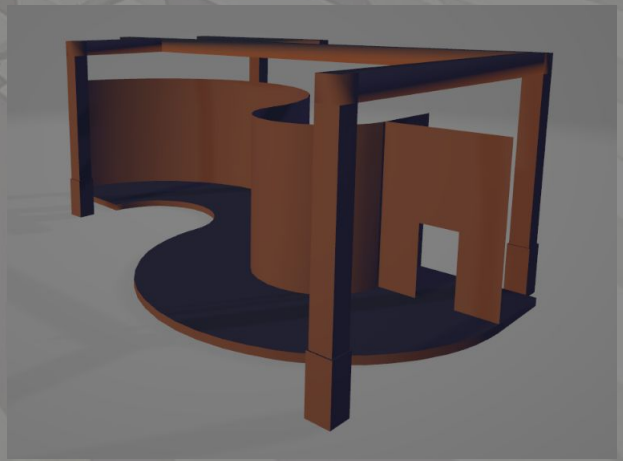


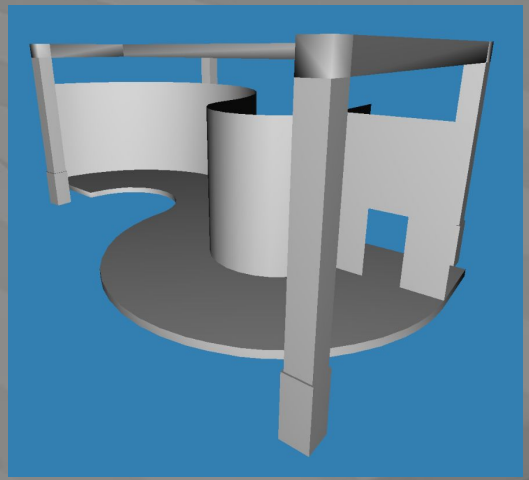




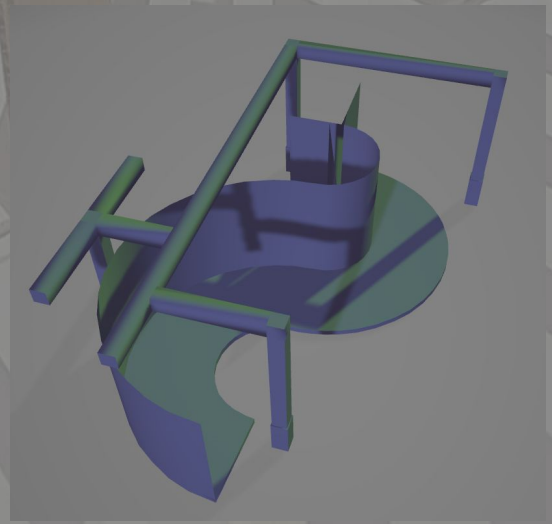


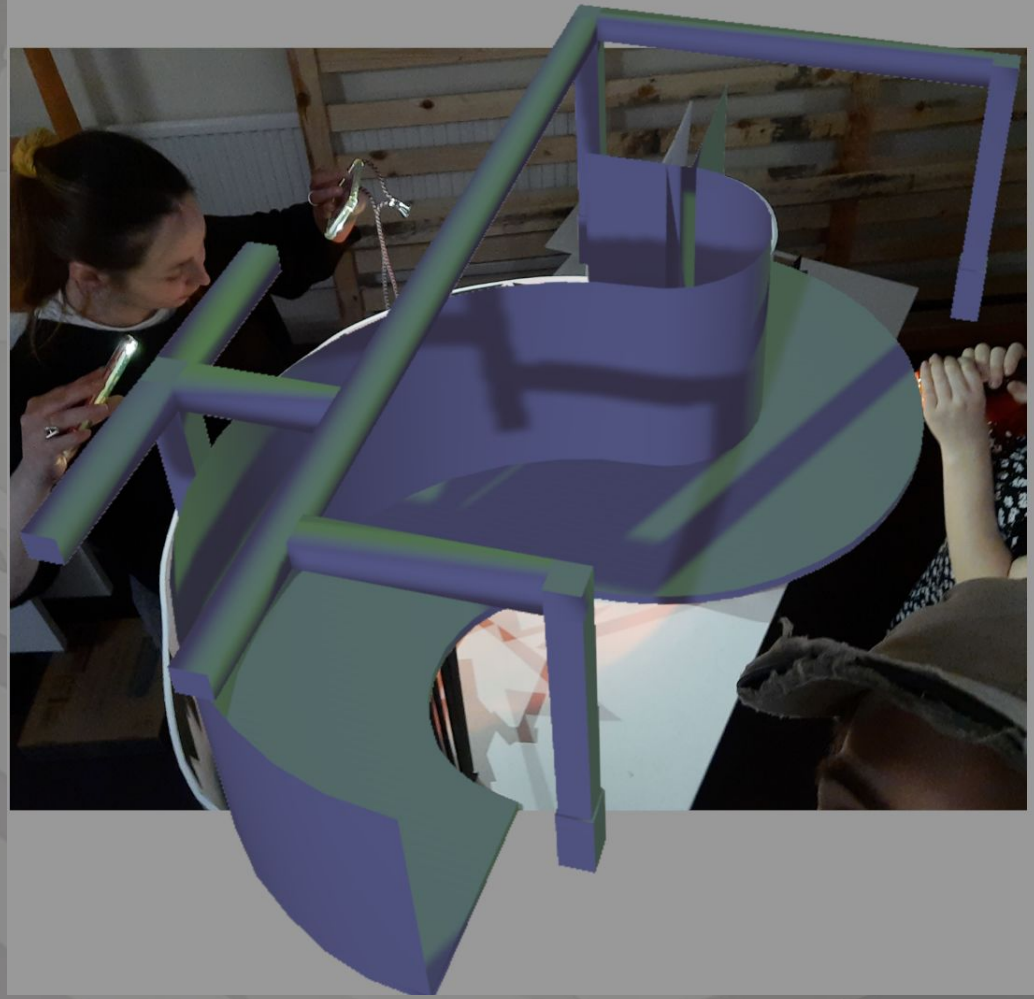












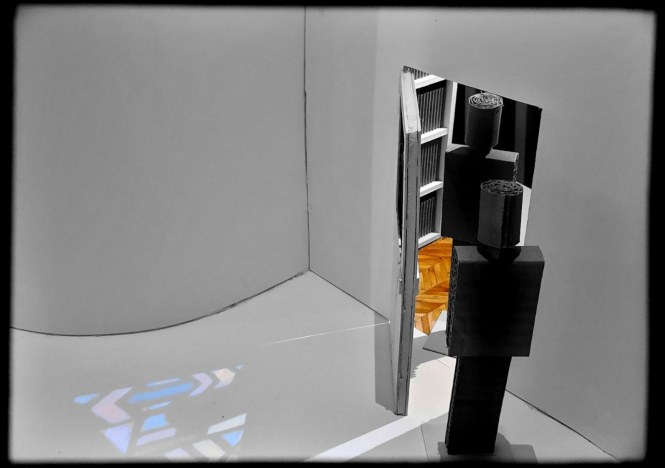

WHIP SHOT

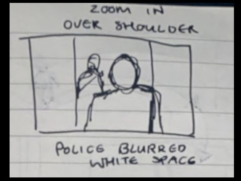
1/2




WHIP SHOT

2/2



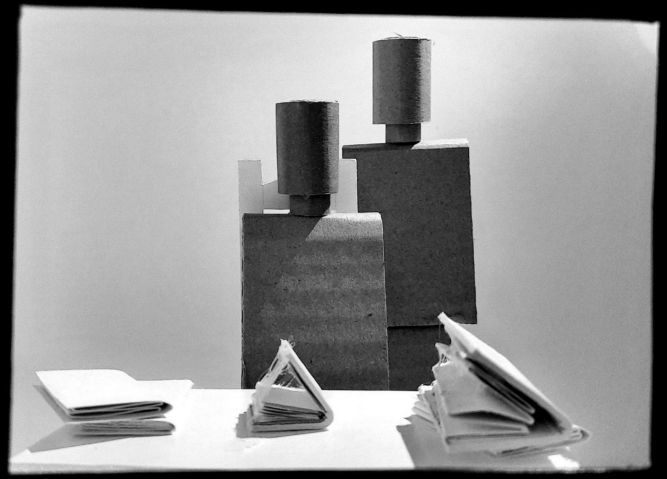

ZOOM IN
OVER SHOULDER
POLICE BLURRED
WHITE SPACE




POLICE BEHIND
GUIDING ZERO

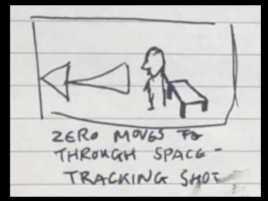



POLICE PUSHES ZERO
IN SEAT



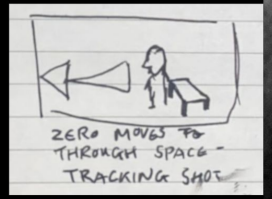

POLICE EXIT
ZOOM OUT




ZERO MOVES TO
THROUGH SPACE -
TRACKING SHOT

1/5



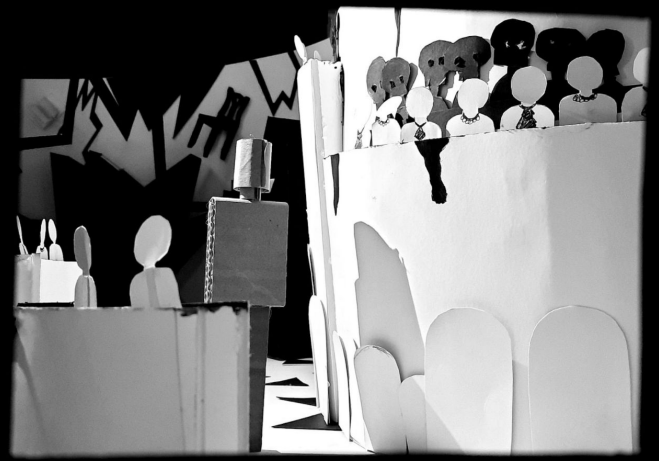

ZERO MOVES TO
THROUGH SPACE -
TRACKING SHOT

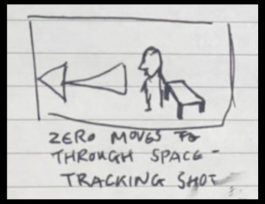
2/5




ZERO MOVES TO
THROUGH SPACE -
TRACKING SHOT

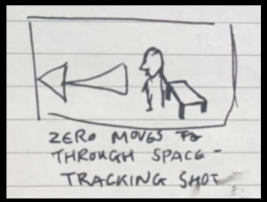
3/5



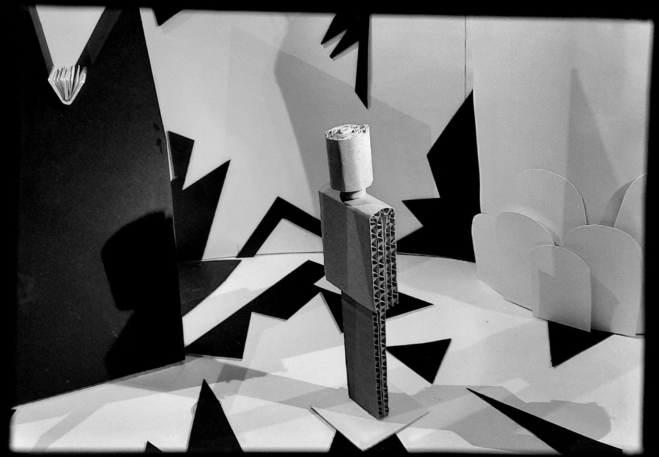

ZERO MOVES TO
THROUGH SPACE -
TRACKING SHOT

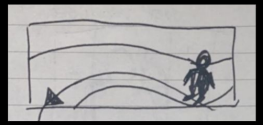
4/5



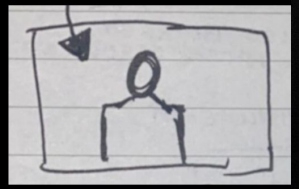

ZERO MOVES TO
THROUGH SPACE -
TRACKING SHOT

5/5












BARS SHUT BEHIND ZERO



/Evaluation

Extra shots

Here, and on the following slides, are some extra shots that I feel very much deserve to be seen, as they totally speak for themselves in regards to their narrative power and emotional punch.







/Implementation

Final Presentation

In order to complete the module, it was necessary to present our work to the rest of the class, as well as all of our lecturers. This was nice, as they were not available to watch our presentations for last module.

We set up all of our preliminary models alongside the TV with a slideshow displaying information about each department's role in the final outcome.

A funny obstacle, was Ellie's inability to be present in person due to COVID. We had her appear via Zoom link on my laptop while we presented, and had to call her name when her slot was due. This was awkward at times, but to me it was a useful way to break the tension amongst everybody, as we were all a little nervous about that day.

After rehearsing multiple times in person and online, I feel like our final presentation was concise, and streamlined. Somethings can always be improved, but I'm happy with how our time displaying our work went.







Evaluation I

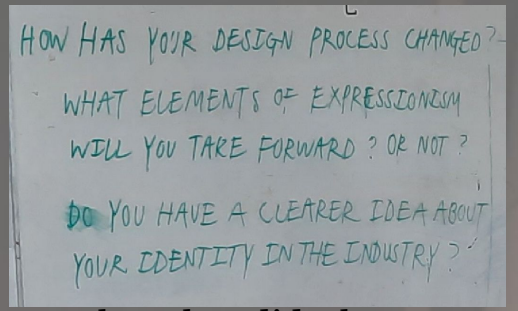
In this module, it's been difficult to know who I am in regards to the project sometimes. I want to help everybody, sometimes to my own detriment. I feel like I've learned the hard way that there are certain things you really have to carry out without your group, just to safeguard your own creative process and not get derailed with their endeavours - so you don't lose track of your own thread back to where your process started, you know?

It's hard to say if my creative process has changed, and I won't know for sure until the next one. But honestly, it feels to me like some of my fears about certain invisible obstacles of unknown processes have been removed. I don't think I'm going to be so hesitant to just go for something now. It's hard to say what happened, and like I said, I'll have to wait to see if this feeling is something permanent or temporary.

I think I really do have a better idea of my place in the industry as a result of this module, because there is no better method for finding out what you do want to do, than to do something and you find out you *don't* want to do it. The technical aspects of lighting are superb and very impressive, and lighting itself is a central column in visual narrative entertainment. But I don't think I am cut out to wrap my head around all of the terminologies and mixing desks and bulb filament types and such that techies are familiar with. I respect them, I just don't envy them of their tasks.

I'd like another chance to be more construction oriented, as on multiple occasions I was on the verge of telling John that I couldn't stand being the lighting person and wanted to do props instead. I stuck with it just because I didn't want to look like a stick in the mud, but I didn't enjoy the total lack of understanding of what my brief needed from me.

Evaluation II



Some aspects of the initial contact with the script make much more sense to me now, than they did when we did Nights at the Circus. Perhaps because we had to do all of the things we did as a group, as individuals - it really cemented what actually has to be done on my part.

The aspects of Expressionism I really adhered to was how artists of the past used it to show how they felt, rather than to show what is necessarily physically happening. That idea of a third reality taking place between the physical and emotional really appeals to me for some reason. I would like to possibly incorporate that into my future tasks.

Sometimes I find it difficult to even comprehend what is being asked of me, and I never ask for help. I need to work on that. Maybe because I'm older than most of the class, I expect more from myself? It's silly but I just feel this way, very frequently.

On a more positive note, my willingness to help Vanina with her coat rack led me straight into virtual model making; which I really hope has shown in this module. I really feel like its a new feather in my cap that I can hone and refine further in future projects - just like how I said I could use it to build furniture before I actually build the furniture.

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