

Rob Axtell

Placement

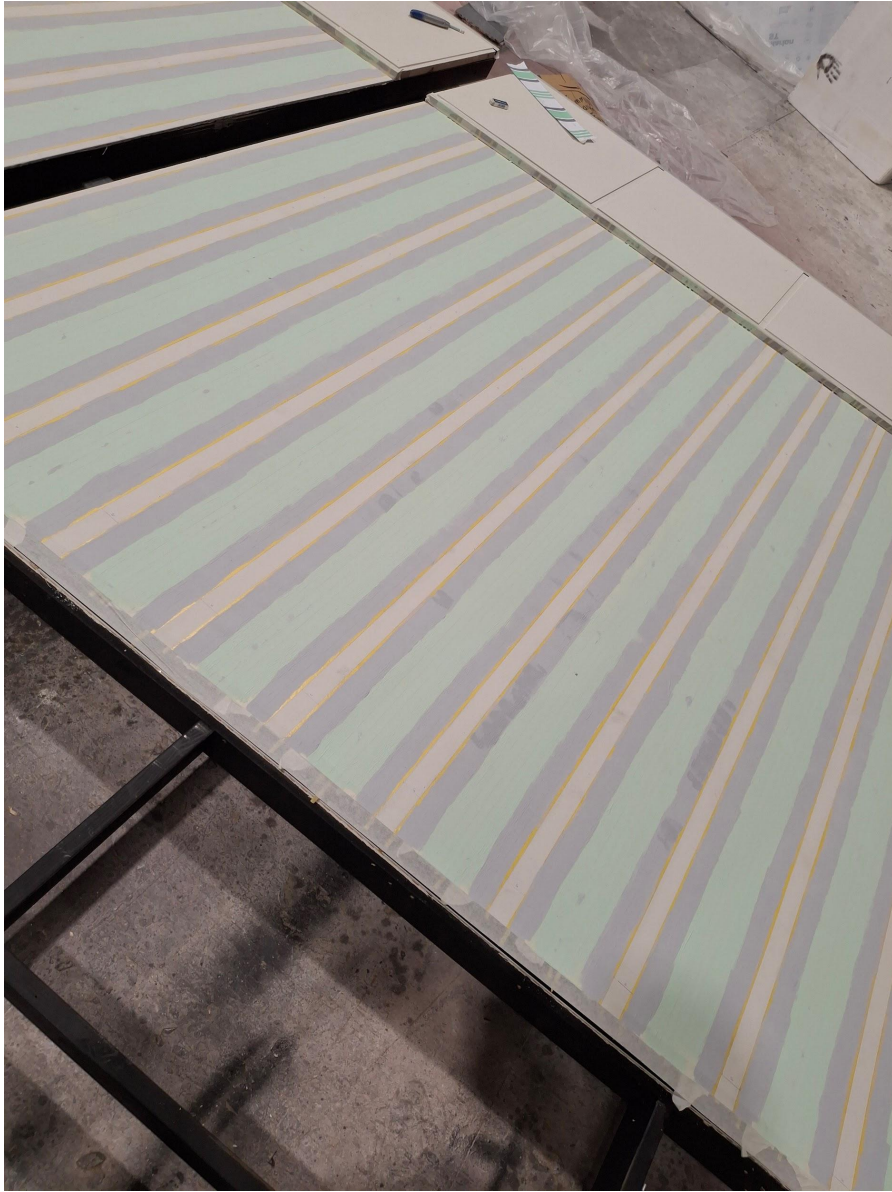
Introduction

I decided as my final module to do a work placement at Bay Productions in Cardiff for 5 weeks to work alongside industry professionals and learn new skills which they were kind enough to agree to.

Bay productions create for the opera, theatre and even tv events. They have 4 main departments within their large scenic workshop which consist of a design room where they use 3D modelling software to create a digital scale model which fits to the clients vision. They have a fabrication department where they use different metals such as steel and aluminium to create all manner of frameworks which is welded together. They have their carpentry department where they will build all kinds of flats, stairs and anything else that might be required to clad onto the steel framework. Finally they have the scenic art department where everything that has been designed and built can be textured and painted as sometimes it requires plywood to look like stone. All these departments come together to push the boundaries in attempt to create the vision of the client.

I chose to do a placement as I believe it was better for me to work within the actual industry for my last module as I also had the opportunity to work within different departments and learn new skills from industry professionals that have been doing the jobs for years. I also wanted to make new contacts and hope this would lead to more work after I finished university as well as getting to understand what it takes to be freelance.

I got to work on 3 shows while on my placement which were Bank of Dave and High Society which I had come into my placement half way through so it was very busy from the start. I then finished my placement on a show called Something Rotten which gave me a view of what it's like to start a project and allowed me to see the design process on the software they use called Rhino as well as having the free time at the start to go into the fabrication workshop and learn a little about MIG welding and how it's done. I didn't find out exactly where the shows were going to be shown but I know that a team had to go to London to finish the sets when they are installing so it is definitely London based theatres.



On my placement I was working on the set for the show Bank of Dave. I drew lines using a large ruler on wall sections to mark out for stripped wallpaper design took most of the day. Once this was done I applied masking tape onto the lines of different widths ready for painting. It was painted using rollers in a green and grey done in stages. There was a lot of different techniques used on this to make it look weathered over a few days to get it right.



I spent a lot of time texturing columns using idenden. This was for a production called High Society. To do this method I applied idenden with a brush and then used a separate wet brush to soften and remove brush lines with removing texture.



More texture added but I used a trowel to apply this also.



This is part of the set for High society which as you can see it is a massive set which have me real world I site to the vast scale of which some productions work at when I have only worked on ones that are less than half this size.



All the backs of the sets are painted black and as you can see there is steel frame used here which is used instead of wooden frame.



I got the chance to do some canvassing with canvas that had clouds printed on them. This was a slow process as each section had to be matched up to the next because of the print. Each one was then pulled tight, clamped and stapled on the underside all the way along.



This is the floor for a project called Something Rotten. It is all plywood that was made to look like random slabs using a CNC machine. I used a paint with some idenden in it to create texture a make wood grain using a rocker



I had the chance to go into the welding and fabrication workshop where they showed me techniques of tacking and welding the metal box section pieces. I was tasked with making a test frame which involved cutting the metal to the exact lengths before welding it together. Fabrication I found easy but the welding was more challenging.



I learned a new texturing technique using graining combs and sawdust with idenden where I would use water and a trowel to smooth it out without removing grain.

Evaluation

I enjoyed my placement and I would definitely recommend it to anyone else. The areas I usually stick to are within construction and design so I'm glad I got to experience the variety of techniques I learned within the scenic art department. Yes a lot of the days were repetitive but I found it the best way to get better as different people had different methods of doing the same thing which was interesting to see and try. The weeks were broken up as I also had the opportunity to go into different departments like construction where I did canvassing, welding which I thoroughly enjoyed and plan to get better at and also I spent a morning in the drawing room learning to use the 3D modelling software they use called Rhino. The travelling was long but worth it. Everyone was so welcoming and helpful. I don't think there was a day where someone wouldn't say good morning. I also met a variety of different people as most were freelance and wasn't there all the time but learning about how they do things and how they got to where they are was valuable as well as the things I learned in the departments. I am so glad I did this even though the last couple months have been difficult for me but this has definitely put me on the right path for where I want to be so I would thank everyone at Bay Productions.

Going forward from what I have learned and the people I have spoken to I plan to register myself as a freelancer as the majority of employees at Bay are freelance as they have said that I am welcome back which I am pleased about as it means I can hone my skills even more and learn new ones while doing the odd couple weeks here and there when they need me. My ideal area of work is still within film and tv but I still plan on keeping in touch with Bay as well as reaching out to other companies while I also reach out to film and tv. I think the nature of freelance is that sometimes you will only work for a few weeks at a time before you have to find your next job so I plan on networking a lot and travelling to where I need to be as best I can.

There are still plenty of skills I plan to learn to improve myself and make it so I am multi skilled for all departments. I am going to improve my welding as I really think it's a good skill to have. Model making I never got to do as it was already built but I will keep learning. There are so many skills within scenic art that I didn't even think about and I will continue to learn and improve those skills so I can be better. SFX is my next goal after as the art department and SFX kind of cross over and to be freelance in the art department and SFX for film and tv is my goal over the next few years so doing this was definitely a good start.

Bibliography

<https://bay-productions.co.uk/creation/>