Introduction ~ Part One ~ Design in Context

Within the realm of film and theatre, there are countless roles. One can't help but imagine the actors, directors, ect. But much deeper than the typical examples, there are designers of every single visual aspect of visual media. These visionaries have shaped countless lives, influenced culture, and made history. All of them are important, and all of them are designers.

What can be done, then, if we are to become designers ourselves? We must observe, respectfully mimic, study and teach the history of not only the fields we have chosen to study, but as many related sources as possible. In this work log, I hope to document my journey of understanding design philosophy in my chosen field.



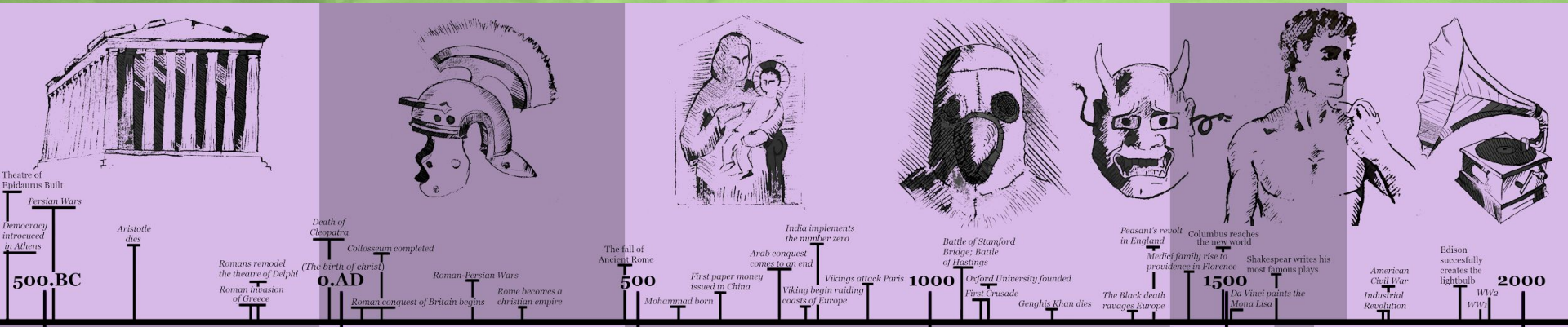
Introduction ~ Part Two ~ My Roots in Design

As the son and great grandson of stonemasons and ship makers, my understanding of design has undoubtedly been shaped by their works and philosophy. I am fascinated by how form follows function, and I try my best to create both aesthetic and functional pieces. My field is joinery, both through official education and as a self-taught pastime/obsession. Though this module I hope to achieve a much higher understanding of what it means to design something with an intricate historical knowledge of what has come before. We must try to add to this grand conversation, rather than operate within a vacuum of design bigotry.

As for my taste in visuals, I am a big fan of undulations left by tools and such. For me, the imperfections of a work tell the story of the person who created it. And thus, I do sometimes find machine made products to be a little sterile. For this reason I am not afraid to make mistakes, to leave an impression of my existence on the objects I work with. I see my style and methods as more of a blank canvas than any specific existing ‘maker type’.



A brief history of theatre (mostly in the West)



Greek Innovation

(See slide five)

Its difficult to be ignorant of the historical impact of Ancient Greece. Through putting and emphisis on the importance of philosophy, technology, and culture they managed to become the cradle of modern civilization for many empires to come.

Because of Greece's hilly geography, it only made sense that they carved their early theatres into hill sides to aid with creating the iconic circular seating we can still visit today. This was partially born of the need to have good acoustics as no methods of boosting the spoken word existed at the time.

The Roman Empire

(See slide six)

The romans were known for their great conquests and battles, but through the violence and bloodshed emerged great periods of peace and prosperity to those to pledged their allegiance.

The romans took heavy inspiration from the semicircular grecian theatres, and expanded upon the design exponentially. This allowed for more seating, better views, larger stages, and much better acoustics.

The Dark Ages/Middle ages

(See slide seven) The fall of the Roman empire caused what is known now as the dark ages in europe, for a plethora of reasons. The lack of a common ruler meant the once unified towns, cities and regions now had to try and rule themselves. What resulted from this was a complete lack of any enforced learning system. The quality of life declined, as technology, philosophy, culture and hygene were neglected compared to the standards the roman and greek civilizations had upheld. Disease became rampant, as observed with the spread of the plague. Superstition did nothing but hinder people's ability to fight the disease.

On top of this, christian rule made theatre a shadow of its former self. Productions could only portray religious stories, and up until more permanent stages were built, most plays were performed on small wagons.

Despite all these events in europe, the rest of the world was going through a golden age of discovery. The middle east was inventing algebra, China was experiencing immense economic growth amongst the many achievements of the different nations.

But more significantly to theatre, Japan had developed a type of traditional theatre called Noh plays from the 14th century. These productions took place on distinct open stages where all the actors could be seen at all times.

Renaissance

(See slide eight) Between the 14th and 17th centuries is a period where europe, but most significantly Italy, experienced a time of fantastic cultural progression for the arts, the sciences, and much more.

By looking back to the greeks and romans, philosophers and artists alike made new discoveries and improved the quality of countless lives.

Theatre made a grand recovery from its dark haetus and blossomed into new forms, such as opera.

Contemporary History

(See slide nine) With the advent of steam engines, and then electricity, nations worldwide entered into the industrial revolution. Everything changed, aided by this new and exciting power. The space of time shortly before and after the two world wars is known as contemporary history.

A notable form of contemporary theatre is musicals, though very archaic in concept they are a relatively recent form of theatre production. They usually consist of big soundtracks, and an all singing/dancing cast that frequently break into song.

Slide V – The Ancient Greeks and Theatre

Due in part to Greece being a hilly landscape, theatres would usually be carved into the hillside. This aided the iconic semi-circle designs we can still visit today.

The limited number of actors made the use of gesture, voice, masks and costumes very important, a trait of all theatre to come. Most iconic of Greek theatre was their style of theatre, where an open-air semi-circular set of seats known as the theatron would look upon the 'orchestra' where the performance would take place. To the sides of the seating and performance area was the pardos, these were the passages to either enter or exit. And behind the orchestra was the skene, a tent or structure that served as a backdrop, and storage.

Theatre in Greece began around the 6th century BC in Athens, this being through tragedy plays at festivals. Eventually this would lead to Greek comedy plays. Both types were immensely popular, as they spread through the mediterranean, and would go on to influence Hellenistic and Roman theatre. So in this perspective, the works of Sophocles and Aristophanes can be seen as the bedrock to which all modern theatre is based. (*Cartwright, 2016*)



Situated on the same hill as the temple of Apollo, the theatre of Delphi boasts an amazing view of the valley below. It dates back to the 4th century BC; constructed from limestone quarried from Mount Parnassus. (*Greeka.com, 2020*)

Slide VI – The Ancient Romans and Theatre

Whereas most Greek theatres were carved into hillsides, the Romans built their theatres and theatrons on flat foundations, affording them the ability to display their feats of architecture and craftsmanship through grand structures and designs. This meant they could increase the amount of seats, the size of the performance areas, and improve acoustics tenfold. A staple of Roman theatres was the Scaena, a permanent roofed structure behind the stage. Their strict class system of Patricians and Plebeians meant the best seats were not available to the common worker.

“Roman theaters were typically constructed in large, open, public areas. They were usually built in areas with a larger population so that many could attend performances. Because of the height of the scaena frons, these theaters had to be high-rise buildings of sort, and these could be built because of one of Rome’s greatest inventions: concrete. The skill of Roman builders and large size of its structures are plainly seen in the Colosseum, which held 50,000 attendees, far more than any Greek theater.” *(Carina, 2020)*



(Ergo, 2011)

Left: the Roman theatre of Bosra, Syria. Right: The Colosseum Amphitheatre, Rome, Italy.



(Carina, 2020)

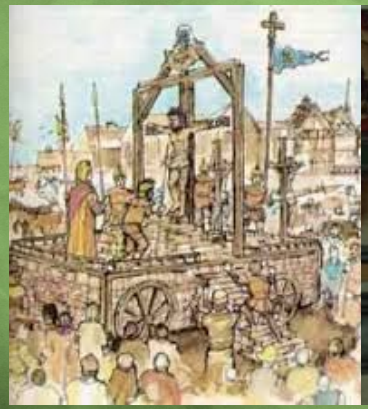
Slide VII - Theatre in the Dark ages (And Noh)

The Dark and Middle ages marked a time of limited cultural progress. Theatre continued, but within Europe it was a chritian ordeal, as anything not belonging to god was seen as satanic. Thus much Greek and Roman architecture, literacy and art was destroyed in the name of Christian righteousness.

Slowly, the drama moved from church to the churchyard, and from there to the marketplace. And though more non-religious influences were able to sneak in, the themes remained essentially religious. (Taylor, 1970, p.182)

When J. Taylor speaks of the 'marketplace', he is referring to a type of wagon that the performers would use. These temporary stages would evolve into semi-permanent ones, usually depicting biblical iconography such as heaven, purgatory, and hell.

Meanwhile across the pacific, Japan (around the beginning of the 14th century) had developed a kind of theatre called Noh. Noh plays are performed on a distinct open stage, with a long slanting walk to the left side which the actors enter and exit from. The stage has no scenery, and all the actors, chorus members, stage hands, and musicians can be seen at all times.







From left to right: A medieval wagon stage (Unknown, 2013). A 'Mansion' set for the production of Valenciennes Mystery Play, (Jokinen, 2007). A Noh production (King, 2018).

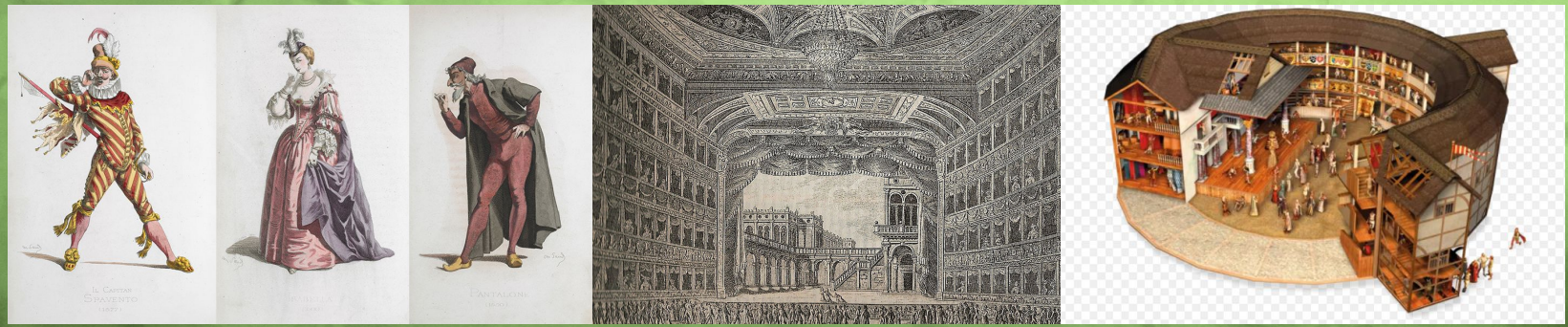
Slide VIII – The Renaissance

“Just before 1500, Italian amateur actors were performing classical comedies on stages with no decoration except for a row of curtained booths. By 1589, complex painted scenery and scene changes were being featured in production in Florence. And by 1650, Italy had developed staging practices that would dominate European theatre for the next 150 years.” (Izenour ,2020)

Between the 14th to 17th centuries, an interest in classical Greek and Roman philosophy, culture and theatre caused a golden era of history known as the Renaissance. In italy, two major theatre design traditions were developed: the proscenium arch that separates the audience from the stage, and the process of painting large cloths as backdrops for scenery. Additionally, an influential form of theatre called *commedia dell’ arte* emerged from Italy. It was an improvised, quick witted performance by wandering players. The renaissance also saw theatres develop stage technologies, such as trap doors in the stages, and a new obsession with perspective.

In 1637 *the Teatro SS. Giovanni e Paolo* was opened in Venice, becoming the first public opera house. Opera differs from conventional theatre in some significant ways. There are individual boxes for the audience, and an orchestra pit for the musicians. Additionally, the stage was much larger than typical theatre, some being almost as long as the length of the auditoriums themselves. This allowed for decadent, elaborate sets with large detailed props.

England had its own renaissance of theatre, and constructed its first permanent theatre structure in 1576. The Rose, and the Swan, were built shortly afterwards. These venues were circular in shape, and were made especially famous when a young Shakespeare would have his works performed in them. This brief but wonderful era for british theatre would continue to flourish up until Puritan rule closed all of them in 1642.



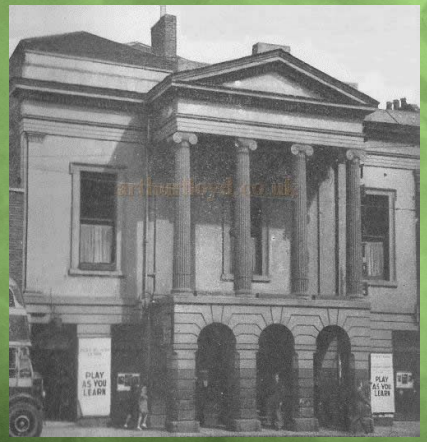
From left to right: Characters of *commedia dell’ arte (Unknown, 2017)*; Gran Teatro La Fenice (Hugill, 2017); A 3d recreation of the Globe theatre (DK Ltd, 2020)

Slide IX - Pre-Modern theatre

The 18th century featured hundreds of theatres being constructed across europe, and the art form itself was evolving into specialized niches, instead of a single format that all would watch in the past. In 1876, Wagner designed a building specifically for opera productions, and once it was completed in Germany, it was the first designated Opera house, as opposed to a concert hall. Mechanisms such as 'fly towers' (a space above the stage for curtains to go up and into) and intricate mechanical devices started to be used to enhance the show. In England, once puritan rule had subsided, this time in history began with what came to be known as a 'restoration' period for british theatre. London's population was bigger than ever before, and the young restless population was hungry for entertainment which theatre producers were more than happy to satiate. Theatres across england saw redesigns including as much seating as possible for maximum profit, more doors for ease of movement, and some theatres even employed the use of water sprinkler systems and 'iron curtains' to help reduce the risk of fire damage. The early 18th century saw the beginnings of American theatre, which up until then the Protestant settlers had strongly opposed.

"The eighteenth century was the great age of theatre. In London and the provinces, large purpose-built auditoriums were built to house the huge crowds that flocked nightly to see plays and musical performances. A variety of entertainments were on offer, from plays and ballets to tightrope-walkers and acrobats. Theatre began to establish itself as an art form not only for the sophisticated upper classes, but for all levels of society." (*Unknown, 2020*)

With the turn of the 19th century came Romanticism, melodrama, Naturalism, Realism, Symbolism, and Proto-Expressionism to name a few of the artistic movements. Technical innovations included the replacing of candle light with first gas, then electric lighting; which facilitated the refinement of the artistic use of light in stage design. Overall, this wide time span saw theatre 'reclaimed' by the lower classes, as evident in England with the many smaller theatres repurposed from older buildings.



(Garrat, 2011)

Pictured is the Theatre Royal, Leicester. It was one of the aforementioned theaters that would receive a 'makeover', whereby its old carpenter's shop in the loft was removed to make way for the iconic Fly tower that so many theatres have today, along with some other new technical innovations from the industrial revolution.

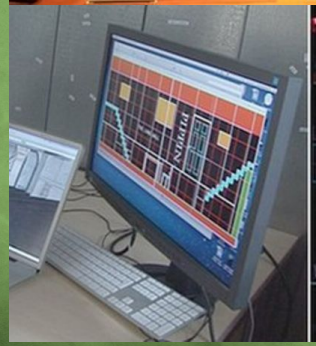
In 1888 a fly tower was installed by building the stage walls 16 feet higher, and a further extra storey added to the dressing room block. Prior to this the scenery had consisted of flats, which were inserted into grooves in the stage floor and also by hinged grooves above the stage, which could be lowered for use of sliding shutters. The old scene dock was also removed and a ramp made to give direct access from the marketplace for scenery delivery. Iron pass doors were also installed and a new Asbestos Fire Curtain hung.

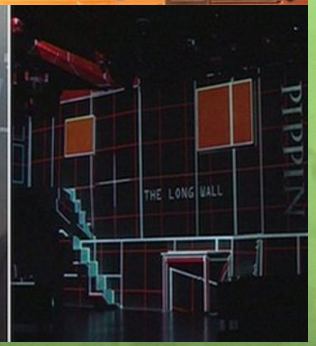
(Garrat, 2011)

Slide X - Modern theatre

Modern theatre sets have access to all the past technologies at their disposal, plus some radical new additional ones because of the soaring progress of computer technology. Much like Film and Television, Theatre, and therefore everybody involved in these industries, is experiencing a golden age of possibility and expression. No matter what creative sector you belong to, the world is truly your oyster right now.





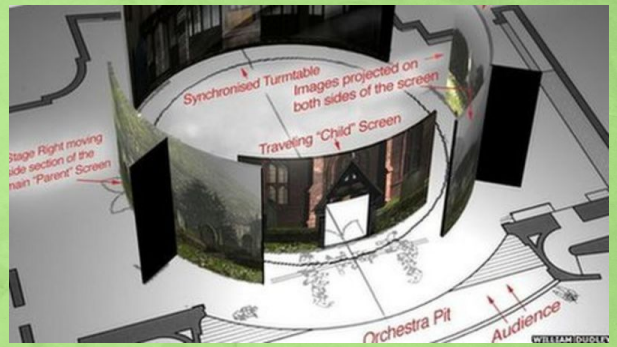


Pictured here on the left is some of the work done by Mr Bird and his team at knifedge productions. They utilise technology to enhance the theatrical production in ways that were never possible before.

With advanced projector technology (top left), the stage gains essentially the power of a film green screen. What takes this even further however, is the (bottom left) where using a precise computer system, props as well as the background are projected onto, meaning that not only the backgrounds but the physical objects themselves can be visually changed.

“The real digital revolution, says Mr Bird, is that you can now map your 2D projections onto your particular stage set in a venue - rather than merely project onto a flat surface.” (Shaw, 2012)

In addition to this new and powerful tool in storytelling, another individual by the name of William Dudley, who uses digital projection in



conjunction with moving set pieces to create breath -taking visual effects (above). Using the projectors placed on the stage, the actors can walk right in and out of the projection. Mr dudley refers to this effect as a similar one to the one featured in *Purple Rose of Cairo* (Woody Allen, 1985).

Above: Stage plans for The Woman in White (Shaw, 2012)
Left, top: 2007 Musical production of Sunday in the Park with George (Shaw, 2012)
Left, bottom: A display of projection from computer to final product. (Shaw, 2012)

Visionaries of ancient history – Vitruvius

Due in part to the lack of similar work from the time period, one man's teachings have become and invaluable source of information regarding Greek and Roman architecture. That man's name was Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (Born around 90.BC), and his life's *magnum opus* was a set of teachings and rules regarding building projects, a treatise known as *De Architectura,* written around 30-20 BC. It also covers a broad array of other topics such as mathematics, philosophy and medicine.

Not much is known about his day to day life, but between the years 58 and 51 BC he worked as a military architect and engineer for Julius Caesar - He was considered to be very knowledgeable regarding ballistics. Among his architectural works was a type of church called a basilica that he built in Fano in Umbria, Italy (Historically Fanum Fortunae) in 27 BC. In his book De Architectura, he give an intricate personal recollection of older famous works, including those of the greek writer Hermogenes who was a writer some 200 years before. (Cartwright, 2015)

More prominently, however, is Vitruvius's influence on Roman theatre design, as described By Haddad and Akasheh in their 2006 journal *Vitruvius and ancient theatres:*

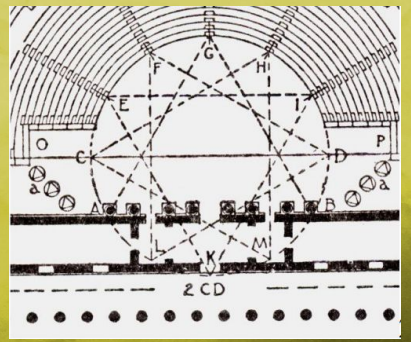
"Vitruvius explained how to lay out a theater of the Greek and Roman type. He mentioned that two factors were taken into consideration while choosing the site of the theatre, the healthy place and good orientation for the theatre."

In addition to this, Vitruvius even advanced the sciences of acoustic technologies in the theatres of his time, some even through the use of bronze vessels around key points in the auditorium:

"from the mixing of mortar from proper materials, to the acoustics in a stone theatre, and even to the art work such as fresco style which was used to decorate the villas. There is little that Vitruvius did not touch upon, one way or another. Actually, Vitruvius is our sole source of information on classical architecture and at a technical level." (Haddad and Akasheh, 2006)

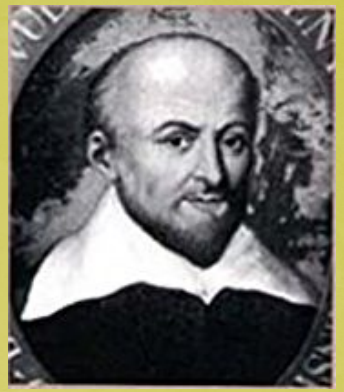


(Daniel, 2016)



(Haddad and Akasheh, 2006)

Pioneers of theatre - Giovan Battista Aleotti



(Scherf, 1998)

Born in 1546, Aleotti was an Italian architect of the Renaissance era. He was also a cartographer, set designer and mathematician, amongst other things.

Many credit Aleotti with the invention and widespread use of stage flats, now commonly seen in theatres across the world (Luebering, 2020).

He is most known for the Teatro Farnese, located in Parma, Italy. Its stage has a permanent proscenium arch, making it the oldest surviving examples of a theatre that had its viewers watch the production through a frame for the first time, back when it was a new construction.

Its 'horseshoe' seating shape is partially derived from Greek and Roman theatre styles, as shown.



Commissioned in 1617, the building site was a space inside of the first floor of Ranuccio's vast Palazzo Pilotta, which because of its size also accommodates the city art gallery, the archaeological museum, and half the municipal office of Parma. Thus the design for the long rectangular theatre was not actually a free choice on part of Aleotti's designs. He was denied the option of a more manageable square. However, this did not stop the now 71 year old Aleotti from creating one of the most iconic, distinct and beautiful theatres of his era, he had already built a theatre nearby - the Teatro degli Intrepidi, though it had burned down in 1679. (Tidworth, 1973. p.65-68)

In light of that, how many people would go back and design an entirely new venue so near to where their greater work was lost? It seems his passion staked a place in history for this individual.

A brief history of Film set design

1895 - The begginings of documentary film tradition, the Lumiere brothers hosted public screenings of their short films that focused on everyday life

1903 - Edwin S. Porter mixes painted backdrops with real locations in *The Great Train Robbery*. Studios begin building bigger sets

- Technical progress allows the camera to be free from the non moving master shot, permitting multiple view points and three dimensional sets

1914 - Italian Giovanni Pastrone portrays ancient Carthage utilising multiple levels, perspective and realistic surface effects

1916 - The film *Intolerance* features a massive set that had a 165-foot-high wall as the Tower of Babylon

1920 - The film *Way Down East* becomes the first film to give credit to the 'art director'. Before this in early cinema the role of the designer was not fully recognised. What started out as technical director became interior decorator, which became art director

1924 - French modernist architect Robert Mallet Stevens studies and develops camera angles using lens focus. This inspires Jean Perrier to develop a set of rules and ratios regarding camera positions to help aid with working out what will be in the shot, enabling a more calculated set to be built

1927 - Metropolis becomes a landmark film of German expressionism, and continues to impact upon the science fiction genre today.

1920s - 1950s - The Hollywood studio system creates a production line where responsibility is divided between the supervising art director (who creates the concept) and the unit art director (who realises the design). Through their leadership skills, the art directors succeed in branding their studios with identifiable styles.

1930s - 1940s - The mid 30s see colour much more involved in cinema, colour becomes ingrained in film language. Early limited technologies result in distinct colour pallets and hues tied to their respective eras.

American film noir turns expressionism into a recognisable style in support of the crime genre, utilizing low lighting and shadows as metaphors for the dark underbelly of society. Examples include *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *Cat People* (1942).

Musicals such as those done by Busby Berkeley modified the typically theatrical sets to showcase the performance rather than the continual background of the narrative. Examples include *Footlight Parade* (1933) and *Gold Diggers* (1933).

1960s

During the mid 1960s the big Hollywood studios that emerged decades before found their distinct styles diminish with an additional loss of coherence, due to more diverse styles and looks evolving.

The rise in TV and many new wave filmmakers altered the status quo of the moving image. Television formats that were popular offered a different look and feel to audiences. These studios had budgets, equipment and process that created a different aesthetic.

1980s - 1990s

Art movements such as postmodernism find their way into the visual style of films made in the 1980s and 1990s.

Certain filmmakers and brands make their own unique styles - for example Bond films employ amazing sets for the dramatic effects.

Movies are made documenting the process of set design. They also feature a look behind the scenes, examples include the 1992 film *The Player*, and *Sunset Boulevard*. The making of movie worlds is celebrated with movies that frequently utilise the iconography of the back lot.

In 1995 an art movement known as Dogme 95 emerges from Danish filmmakers. They created a set of guidelines on filming, especially regarding location shooting, and using only props that could be found on location being shot.

1900

1896 - Frenchman Georges Melies developes a way of intergrating images such as matte paintings using glass that could then be utilised in live action. His work signifies a departure from the documentary format.

1915 - *Birth of a Nation* set designer Frank Wortman puts emphasis on creating exact reproduction 'interiors - Which displays the prominence of the realist art movement

1919 - The Cabinet of Dr Caligari, part of the German expressionist art movement employs unusual angles and colours to reflect the inner psycology of the characters.

Design from here on can be categorised into either expressionism or realism. Film becomes to take shape by moving away from theatre

1922 - The films Robin Hood and The Thief of Baghdad are realeased and are considered America's first masterpieces of art direction - and feature sets heavily influenced by Islamic design

1925

1928 - The first Academy award given for the art direction in *Tempest*.

The rise of Nazi rule causes a movement of talent - immigrants find work in europe and Hollywood. This goes on to impact the visual style of sets internationally

1939 - *Gone with the wind* recieves critical acclaim. The art director William Menzies made a thousand detailed sketches, shot by shot, and therefore visualised the script to the camerawork, including the size, angle and movement. Through his innovations he is given the title Production Designer.

Wizard of Oz - A fantasy musical that starts in black and white and shifts to colour when Dorothy is transported to the magical world of Oz. The pioneering use of colour makes history

1950

1940s - 1950s - Industry veteran Edward Carrick writes and publishes two books: *Designing for Moving Pictures* (1941) and *Art and Design in the British Film: A Pictorial Directory of British Art Directors and their Work* (1948).

A French film magazine founded in 1961 called *Cahiers du Cinema*, present a manifesto that put emphasis on the idea of the *auteur* - director as responsible for the *mise en scene* of a film. This idea potentially disrupts the job of the production designer as crucial to the realisation and creation of the visuals and style of a film.

Art movements like Italian Neorealism (Examples include *Bycicle Theives* (1948)) and French New Wave (Includes the 1959 film *Quatre Cent Coup*) reject the film studio as a false imitation of reality. Films start to film much less in the studio and more on location i.e. city streets.

The 1954 film On the Waterfront recieves an academy award for its art direction. The film was shot entireley on location. The film's composition, costumes and locations succesfully create an authentic and gritty setting for the story. Through this, it was established that the designer should be responsible for the decisions and adaptations of the real locations used.

Invention of the videotape in the late 1950s facilitated pre-recording of television productions that were previously live broadcasts - increasing the possibilties of the designer.

Disneyland opens in 1955, designating a celebration of the imaginary worlds of the cinema screen.

1975

1970s

The 1970s mark the birth of computer-generated imagery, a significant hallmark in future design choices in the industry.

In 1976 Leon Barsacq publishes *Caligari's Cabinet and other Grand Illusions*, which was originally published in french under the title 'Le decor de film'.

The 1978 exhibition 'Designed for Film: the Hollywood Art Director' opens at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Its showcases celebrate the pioneers of early Hollywood design.

The decline of the large studios from the previous decade in comparrison to television sparks a new trend in advertising whereby the stars and the director become the focal point of advertising, rather than the studio themselves. This, amongst some other marketing strategies established then, are still in use today.

Advances in technology continue to drive the medium of the moving image forward. It also influences the designer in regard to what and how they build and design their outcomes. All of the innovations widen the creative potencial of the creator.

2000

2000 - Present

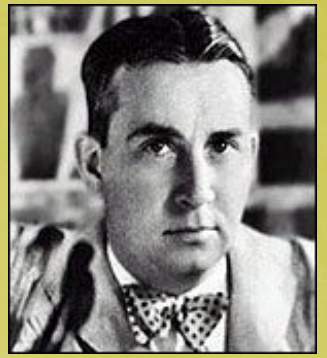
In the 2002 film Minority Report by Steven Spielberg, a fully digital art department is set up, and the first digital artists hired.

A new theme park, *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*, is opened in Orlando in 2010. Its rides and tours are based off of the Harry Potter film series. Two years later, *The Making of Harry Potter* opens at the Warner Brothers studios in Leavesden.

Today film production innovators and designers work within the visual traditions of realism and expressionism. The production design aspects continue to be shaped by technological, political, and aesthetic developments in our culture.

(Barnwell, 2019, p.10 - p.19)

Pioneers of film – William Cameron Menzies



Born to Scottish immigrants in America in 1896, Menzies was one of the first people to be referred to as a 'Production Designer'. Whereas those before him would fall in line regarding their roles in the production of cinema, his work proved so useful that the American producer D. Selznick's memos would go on to mention that: "Accordingly, I would probably give him some such credit as 'Production Designed by William Cameron Menzies' or 'Assistant to the Producer." (Curtis, 2016).

Though his achievements are numerous, he is especially well known for his work on Gone with the Wind (V.Fleming G. Cukor, 1939) where he earned the title *production designer* for his innovations - one being his method of drawing hundreds of sketches which would depict, in colour, each shot in detail. This would become a very common practice in the film industry as is apparent today with storyboards and their necessity in cinema production.



Storyboard for the burning of Atlanta scene in Gone with the Wind by Menzies, ca. 1939. (Curtis, 2016)

"...and made a name for himself as one of the most individual and gifted of cinematic designers. His status was confirmed at the first-ever Academy Awards ceremony, when he won Best Art Direction Oscar for *The Dove* (d. Roland West, 1927) and *Tempest* (d. Sam Taylor, 1928)." (Kemp, 2003)

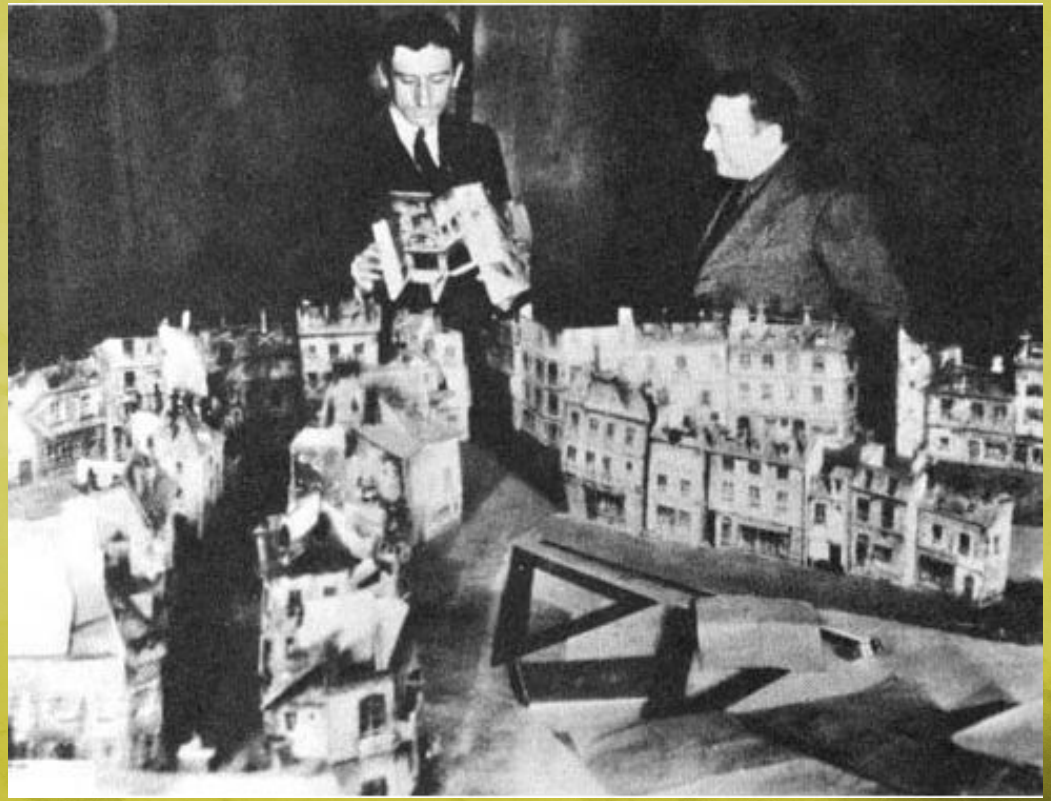
Through his dedication to his craft he carved a new and yet essential role into film making by collaborating dynamically with the director with his designs, thus demonstrating the vital role that the designer plays in the overall visuals of a moving picture.

Pioneers of film - Jean Perrier

R M. Stevens (1886-1945), a French modernist architect was interested in cinema. He studied various camera angles which changed based off of the lens focus, and this set a trend that is still in use today. However, Perrier followed in Stevens footsteps and took it even further - in 1924 he developed a set of ratios, regarding camera positions and lense use that would calculate what could be seen. This helps determine exactly how much of the set needs to be built. (Barnwell, 2019, p.13)

So because of Perrier's and Steven's work, set designers all across the world were able to spend more time focusing on what needs to be seen and made, and less time on things that would never be seen, saving countless hours and resources.

By this time however, he was already familiar with working in the industry. Though not tremendously well known, his work was still influential on today's production design principles. He worked on various films through his career, including *End of the World* (A. Gance, 1931), *Quadrille* (S. Guitry, 1938), And *Les Miserables* (R. Bernard, 1934).



Pictured: Jean Perrier (Right) and director Raymond Bernard (left) amongst models for a set on the film Les Miserables. (Lizcano, 2014)

Veterans of the industry - Adam Savage

"I reject your reality and substitute my own"



The son of an animator who worked on Sesame Street, Savage always had a window view into the television industry through his father. Growing up he featured in a commercial for kitchen towels, and a music video for a Billy Joel song. He would soon drop acting as as he left his teenage years.

A very important career milestone however, was his involvement with Industrial Light & Magic. As a massive *Star Wars* fan, he already knew what the look and feel of the universe he was making models for needed to look like. And he put his skills in modelmaking to use for *Star Wars Episodes 1 & 2*. (Robins, 2020)

His real call to fame was when he hosted Discovery Channel's Mythbusters for over a decade with his old industry associate, Jamie Hyneman. As opposites in terms of their creative processes, they bounced off of eachother in a way that was fantastic for the formula of the show.

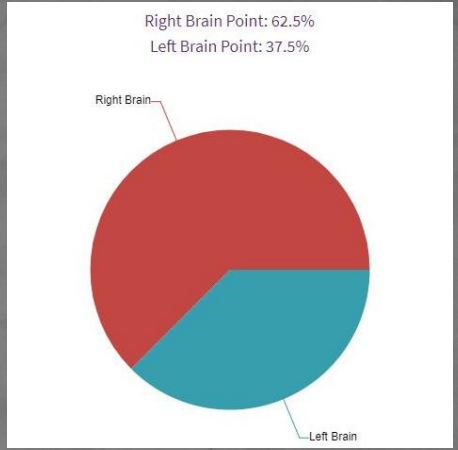
As a master of multiple trades, Adam Savage is an actor, model maker, special effects proficianado, teck geek, and much more. He has worked on films such as *The Matrix: Reloaded* (Wachowski brothers, 2003), *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (J. Mostow, 2003) and *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (S. Spielberg, 2001). He also runs a Youtube channel where he explains how he makes the various props and costumes he has.



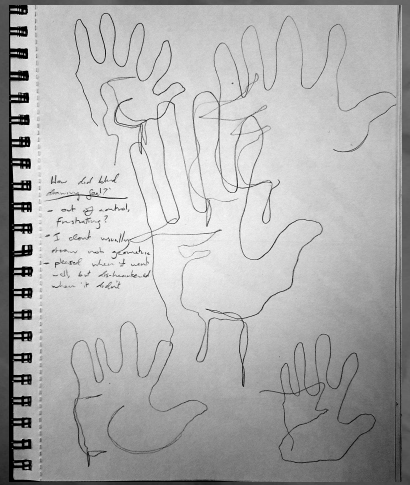
Calling to the exercise in brain hemisphere usage on the next slide, its blatantly obvious what kind of 'maker' Savage is. Using a refined detailed plan, he will follow it through till the end. Perhaps its the skills at his disposal that facilitate this, but I feel it is more to do with the way his brain works.

Left right side of brain + hand drawing

To better understand ourselves, it can be useful to know which sides of the brain we most frequently use as individuals. Online there are countless ways to measure the the way we use our brains, and through one such test I have learned that I am right brain dominant.



The left hemisphere is known as the headquarters of language, and logic. It is rational, and factual. The right hemisphere however, is known as the seat of visual, intuitive and imaginative thought processes. It digests information holistically, and even randomly. I can see why I was given this result, as my creative processes are never too tied down to the smaller details, I solve any problems as they arise, rather than try to fix everything on paper before I've even begun building it. I feel that this process allows me to have 'happy accidents'. And sometimes the unexpected idea is the most useful, powerful one.



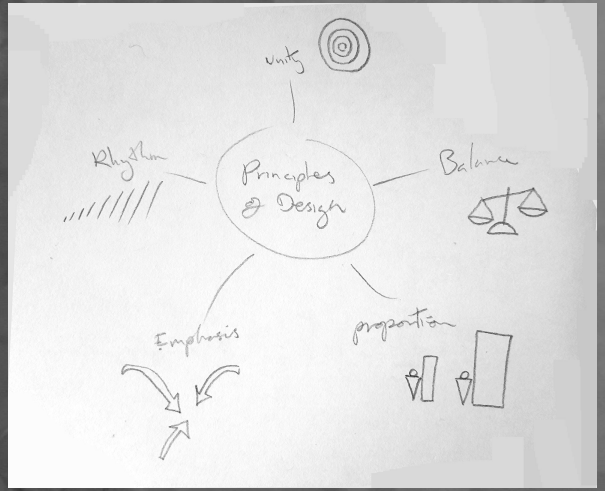
As a mental exercise, we can 'trip up' our brains to see how we react to certain stimulus. One such exercise is to draw a hand, or part of our body that we know well, without looking at what we are drawing.

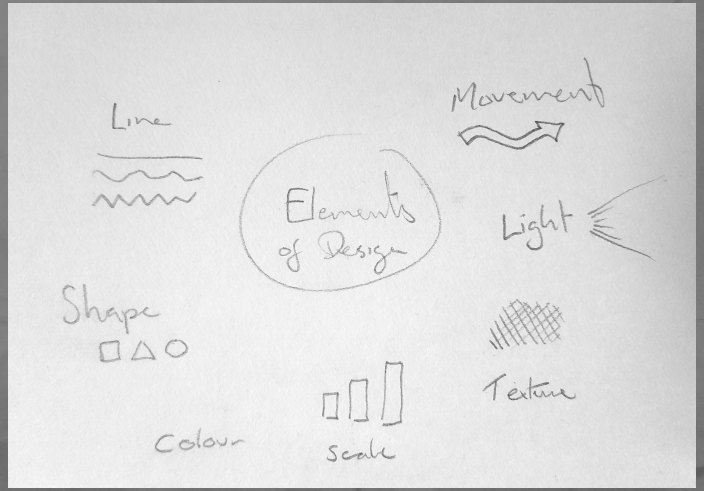
I tried drawing my right hand with my left, with mixed results. The first central one, was definitely the most anatomically accurate. I was pleased when I finally looked down on it and saw that my placement of lines was not far off. However, the process itself was like trying to write with your off-hand. My eyes constantly wanted to look, as I don't think I've ever really drawn without paying attention to my hand's position.

Being left handed probably has something to do with my use of the sides of the brain, as only ten percent of the population of the population is like me in that regard.

Principles and Elements of Design

Design is a broad term, and can be used to describe the creative process behind the creation of anything made my mankind or nature. Design is an ongoing discussion, dating from when the records began to each new day and creative decision of our lives. It encompasses form and function, the balance between aesthetics and usability. Some would argue that visual art is all aesthetics and zero function, but it can be observed that the visuals perform a function themselves, making the viewer think and question them.





As scenic designers of theatre and film, our effect is the visual. But our work is done through the physical. Both are inseparable, and we must adhere (and sometimes disobey) to the constraints and history of art across the modern and ancient world in order to make an impact.

7 steps of design

Commitment
- Commit to your idea (even if you are unsure what will be the outcome)
- Don't bite off more than you can chew

Analysis
- Question your idea, but don't 'pull it apart'
- Don't leave holes in the plan
- Explore the idea, make different versions and further drafts

Research
- Observe what has come before your idea, and what they did before
- Use more than one source of information

Incubation (Most important)
- Let the idea 'simmer' in your head
- take a break, or work on something else for a while
- the idea will filter, obstacles will present themselves

Selection
- Start to commit to the decisions
- You'll know when you're ready
- Prepare your space, and get ready to work

Implementation
- Select your ideas and mediums that you want to use
- Create the object/idea in the way you planned

Evaluation
- Ask yourself what worked and what didn't work
- Observe what you did and develop your emerging style

*"If I had **eight hours** to chop down a tree, I'd spend **six** sharpening my axe."*

- Abraham Lincoln

When I design and create something, it is crucial that I have a clear, thought out and repeatable process behind its creation. This is not just for the sake of replication of plans at a later date, but also so I can observe my thought process, meditate on what my plans and ideas really need, and develop my own personal 'style'

I am not alone, as much of the film and theatre industry's workers use a pattern like this one when they are tasked with creating something. Additionally this process helps to prevent any unforeseen 'road bumps' from occurring mid-way into the construction/creation of the project.

Narrative inspiration (Boiling water)

Being able to create narrative from basic stimulus is a valuable skill for designers, being able to take inspiration from anywhere is easy once you ‘tune in’ your head to a creative frequency.

When contemplating the act of watching water boil, I at first compared my situation to that of the old phrase: ‘*Like watching paint dry*’. But once I gave it some time and focused, the visuals and noises that presented themselves led me to a strange realization that became my inspiration regarding this activity.

All of my life, when I have used an electric kettle to heat up water, I have never thought anything of it. It is a luxury in retrospect, as waiting for water to boil takes significantly longer.

As the water heated up, vapour climbed the walls of the saucepan, and a gentle simmering at first turned into a frequent sharp ‘ticking’ as small bubbles started to constantly emerge. Then finally, larger bubbles in random locations took over the whole of the body of water, as its tempature passed the boiling point and began to convert into steam.

My inspiration was this: these sounds and visuals, they are the sounds of the past. Grandparents and great-grandparents who grew up without this technology must have always had these sounds occurring in their kitchens. Except of course, the distinct whistle of an old style kettle. But more importantly, these sounds I listened to are sounds that no longer have to be listened to by my generation because of the progression of technology.

So many sounds and smells and sensations are lost and found with the passage of time, due to technology, tradition, and the arts. The smells of chemical reactions involved, the ambient sounds of old world technology, these are the sounds of my ancestors.



Narrative inspiration (images)

The following two images are from two seperate film genres (Film Noir and Sci-Fi). Here is what springs to my mind when I observe them, if I was trying to create a cohesive narrative.



It is as though the woman and the man pictured are complete strangers in crisis, or partners in a crime - a heist has just been pulled off flawlessly. Their attire silently indicates the time period and place: America in the 40's. The Man looks almost bewildered, like he does not know what to say or do in that current moment.

The fog and low sky light levels indicate evening/nighttime. The wide doorway to me resembles a warehouse, this idea being reinforced by the wheelbarrow on the bottom left, and the rough concrete floor. This gives the scene an industrial/construction-esque vibe.

Lastly, the use of the dense fog gives the shot an otherworldly feeling, but it's just right in the creation of an imaginary riverside location on the outskirts of a bustling nighttime city.



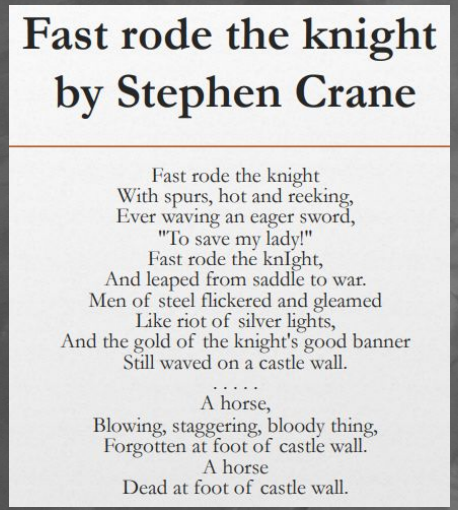
In front of a chinese neon (seafood restaurant?) sign sits a man clad in an ordinary brown raincoat, reading a contemporary newspaper that has the words "FARMING" and "MOON" written on it.

The juxtaposition between technology and a more archaic clothes and newspaper immediately put a distance between the man and the background. His faical expressions are not neutral, there is a slight discomfort to his face, as though what he is reading is unpleasant, or he is just generally unhappy.

Its difficult to see, but there are thin streaks of water driplets over the shot, indicating rainy weather. The use of the blue colours as the background reinforce the sombre, unhappy shot.

Over the left side of the protagonist is cast a shadow from an orange light, probably the shop's sign. This contrasts well with the light blue tones, making it more obviously a nighttime shot.

Narrative inspiration (Poetry)



Fast rode the knight
by Stephen Crane

Fast rode the knight
With spurs, hot and reeking,
Ever waving an eager sword,
"To save my lady!"
Fast rode the knight,
And leaped from saddle to war.
Men of steel flickered and gleamed
Like riot of silver lights,
And the gold of the knight's good banner
Still waved on a castle wall.
. . . . .
A horse,
Blowing, staggering, bloody thing,
Forgotten at foot of castle wall.
A horse
Dead at foot of castle wall.

In Crane's *Fast rode the Knight*, so much imagery presents itself to me:

The beginning features a fairytale knight trope, with all its cliches of righteousness and purity. The way he describes the spurs (a foot mounted device designed to prod the sides of the horse) as hot and reeking, this creates the imagery that they are stinking, and possibly hot from the blood on them (Spurs are often sharp and can easily cause cuts in the horse's skin).

The second four lines feature a change of focus from the individual to the army, as men are described as flickering and gleaming like 'riot of silver lights'. This use of wording makes the armies and knights seem like small metallic objects, as if toys to be disposed of. Or at least, when I imagine this in the context of war, this is what comes to mind.

And finally, Crane takes an ellipse to emphasise his reader's thoughts back to the horse. Its suddenly very apparent that the knight, whose banner is placed upon the castle wall, is no longer near his horse. And the horse is extremely poorly. The last line simply states, that the creature is dead at the foot of the castle wall.

My impressions of this poem, are that of an anti-war one. Its shift from the gleaming brilliance of the knight, to the indifference of battle, so the sudden death (and mistreatment) of the horse make me think of how often human lives, as well as animals, are so easily thrown away in the name of defending and protecting what is deemed right and true.

The grittiness displayed at the end of the poem is like the stillness of the battlefield once war is over. Its utterly grotesque, and very effective in my opinion. The poet's use of language is timeless, even though the medieval age of fighting on horseback with a sword is long over. There is so much to observe within these 16 lines, and all of it leaves a horrible taste in the mouth for those who fall in the beginning for believing in the values and goals of the stereotype knight riding into battle.

Narrative inspiration (Raw imagery)

From a script given to me of a scene from *Damien - Omen II* (D. Taylor, M. Hodges, 1978) I was tasked with generating inspirational imagery as a means of 'brainstorming' ways to imagine a potential set for the scenes depicted in said script. The whole idea is to obtain an outcome of imagery that instead of focusing on detail, instead lacks specific reasoning and detail with the pure objective of letting the viewer think for themselves. It's hard to explain, but it makes sense to me now.

The scene in question was of a port town built on what features crusade-era architecture, juxtaposed with coffee shops and modern cars.

This task proved to be quite difficult for me, but once I caught on to the process, I feel as thought I truly got some useful imagery from it. At first I tried to create some kind of seaside street facade that I could take photos of, though this was far too specific for the activity. I soon realised that only through being deliberately obscure through camera angle and lighting could I 'fool' the viewer into believing it was anything other than a collection of cardboard boxes and tissue.

My true epiphany struck when I was restricting light through an improvised dark room using a table and some panels of foam, I realised that shadows cast from scraps were much more convincing than any directly observed cardboard scraps. And thus I realised, this kind of brainstorming relies on **happy accidents**, and thus one must think outside the box to truly optimise the results available.



Narrative inspiration (Lyrics)

In an effort to create some kind of narrative and exercise my thought processes, I have made storyboards using song lyrics as inspiration.

At first I thought of using the following verse from Bob Dylan's 1976 song *Sarah*:

> *"Now the beach is deserted, except for some kelp*
> *And a piece of an old ship that lies on the shore.*
> *You always responded when I needed your help,*
> *You gave me a map, and a key to your door"*

The song is almost, but not quite a love song. It reflects on how he knew somebody, and never indicates that he still does. However the character in the story saying these words is not upset by the passage of time and his apparent loss. Instead he is simply grateful, and seemingly melancholic. I really like this song because of its elements of acceptance and of unconditional affection.

Aside from just one storyboard, it is helpful to reverse ideas to challenge yourself. So naturally I would not just create the first imagery that sprang to mind, but rather three versions - one of the expected ideas, one of the total reverse, and a hybrid that takes from both. You can probably see how I painted myself into a corner with my lyric choice, as it is so heavy in its use of imagery it left little room for imagining a situation where the opposite of the expected happens. Or at least, not without becoming very abstract, which was not my aim. Although I'm sure it would be interesting to examine.

So instead, I chose a new set of lyrics from another Bob Dylan song: *Just like a Woman (1966):*

> *"When we meet again, introduced as friends,*
> *Please don't let on that you knew me when,*
> *I was hungry, and it was your world."*

Instead of a love song, the above creates a different atmosphere completely, a shameful one. I find it to be very evocative, due to how one can feel after a breakup. Yet there is potential in there for a complete reverse of ideas - was it a relationship, or a work affiliation? Questions like this aid my creative process. Due to the lack of physical imagery provided, I found the above lyrics to be much more accessible.



Storyboards

Storyboards are an essential component of the filmmaking process, and you would be hard pressed to find a studio that did not make a storyboard before any filming commenced. These usually hand drawn, simplified ‘comics’ can span an entire room, showing the whole film shot by shot. This can be where any major changes to the story are done, as the panels can simply be moved and changed there and then. Thus, the ability to effectively illustrate an idea on paper becomes crucial to anybody wishing to be part of the film industry, or any creative design industry.

“It's incredible to see how closely the finished film looks like the original storyboard, which shows just how crucial this step in the process is.” (The Credits, 2016)

Within a storyboard, one must convey as much as possible without words. This challenge creates some amazing artwork, as movement, emotion, sound, atmosphere and so much more must be conveyed with only the visual.

Some storyboards stay in monotone, while others become even more detailed and colourful. Note how on the right image, it is instantly recognisable that the man in the suit is the protagonist. Meanwhile the storyboard on the left has multiple shots all within the span of a couple of seconds, it is of course the famous murder scene from Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psyco*.

Additionally, the last three frames are ‘out of sync’ with the grid of the rest. This ‘tricks’ the brain into imagining their relationship with each other, and quick movement is implied incredibly well as a result.

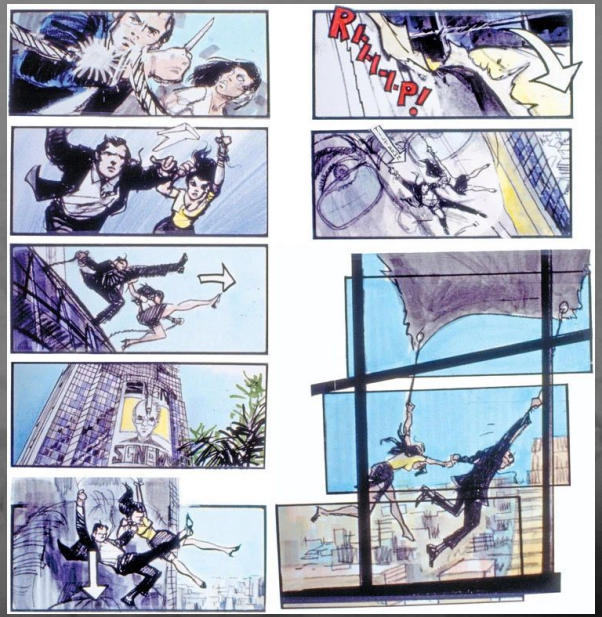


Image credit (twistedsifter, 2020)

My storyboards

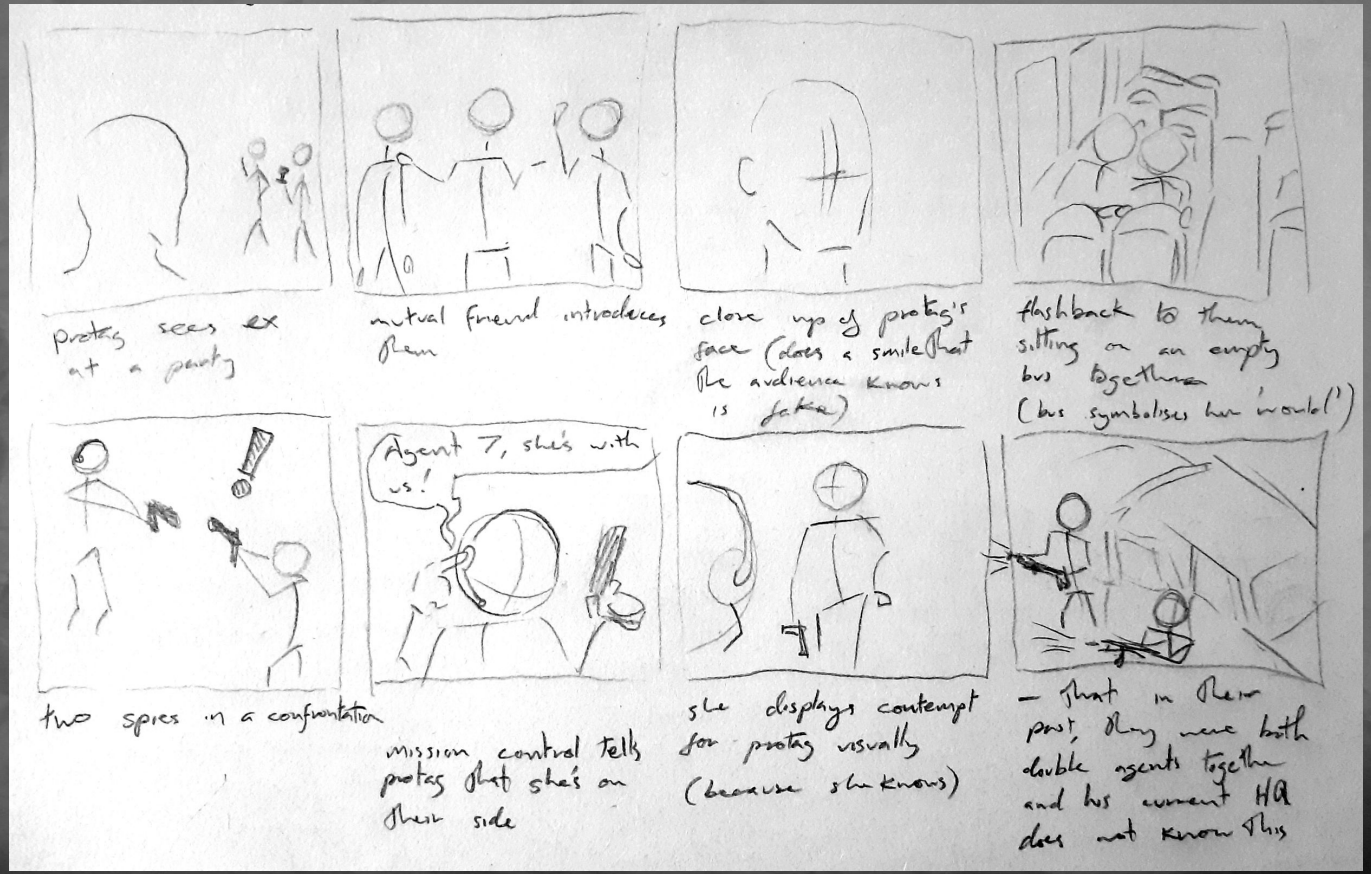
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From the selected lyrics, I drafted up two opposing brief narratives from them.

The first featured the protagonist seeing an ex lover at a party, but nobody except him and her know of ther history. So when a mutual friend introduces them, they both act like they've never met. When infact an expression and a flashback confirms that he was once part of her 'world'.

For an inverse look, I portrayed two spies stumbling upon each other, both ready to kill. Then mission control tells the protagonist that the other spy is working with them on this mission - at which point the other spy takes off her mask and reveals herself to the audience as an old comrade, who used to work with the protagonist as double agents for a rival organisation. The key point to explain is that the current organisation they are working for does not know this, and this amplifies the term '*please don't let on that you knew me when*'.

On the following slide, I will attempt to merge the two potential plot lines together.



Storyboards - Part three

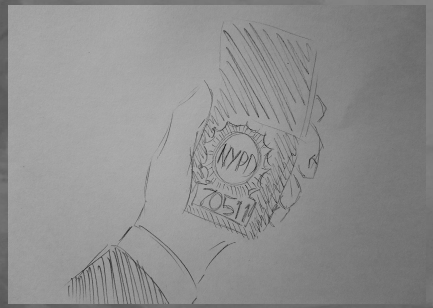


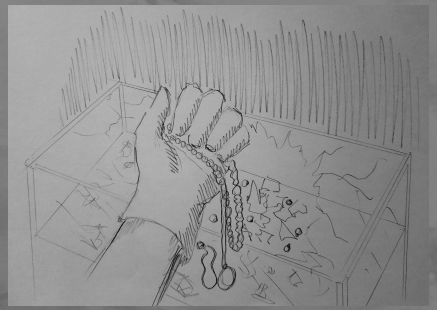














As illustrated, the ‘merged’ storyboard features a cop protagonist going to a new year’s party. He is introduced to a woman he has supposedly never met by a mutual friend, and she looks at him with an expression implying she knows him. He avoids her gaze and looks down at his badge, and has a flashback to his life of crime with her.

The whole point of the protagonist being a cop is that this puts weight on the lyrics ‘*please don’t let on that you knew me when*’, for it is implied that only they know of his previous life as a criminal. Additionally, the emphasis on her being part of his criminal past implies that the crime underworld was somehow *her* world, this matches up with the lyrics ‘*and it was your world*’.

Narrative structures – Freytag's Pyramid

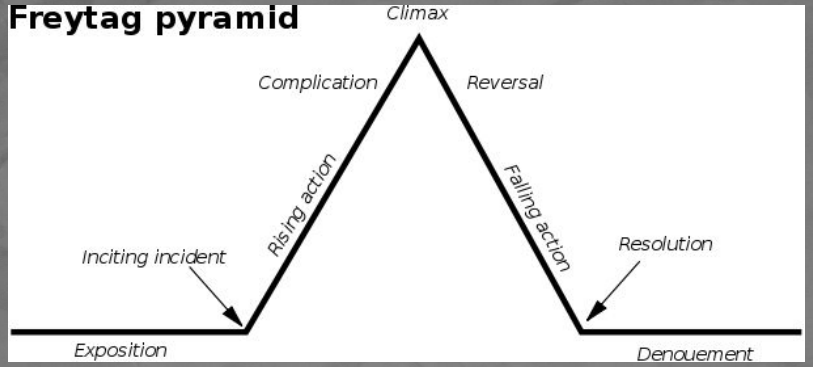
Gustav Freytag was born on July 13, 1816, Kluczbork, Poland, and died on April 30, 1895, Wiesbaden, Germany. He was a German writer of realistic novels.

What made his name famous, was a theory he devised. Using seven key steps, he outlined how to write successful storytelling in a narrative plot. These steps are:

- Exposition
- Inciting Incident
- Rising action
- Climax
- Falling action
- Resolution
- Denouement

The diagram pictured is a very simplified version of what is often a much more complicated drawing in practice. They can, for example, be several points of rising action. But generally, there is only one climax, and one resolution.

This was such an effective way to explain narrative plot, that many sub variations have appeared since he first devised the original theory in the mid 19th century. One such example is Bang's model of linear storytelling.

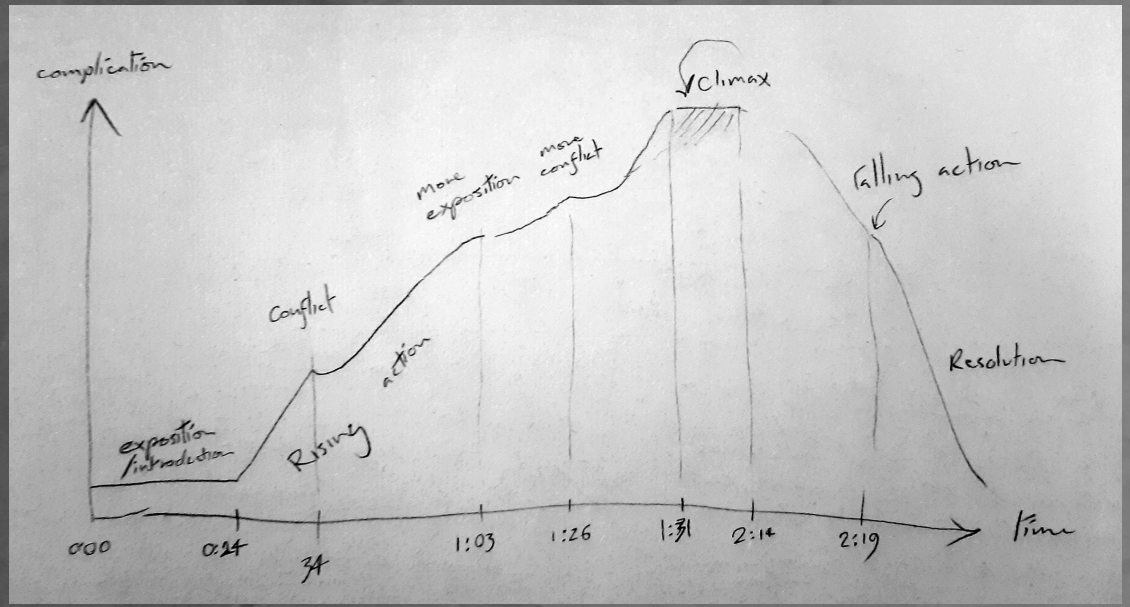


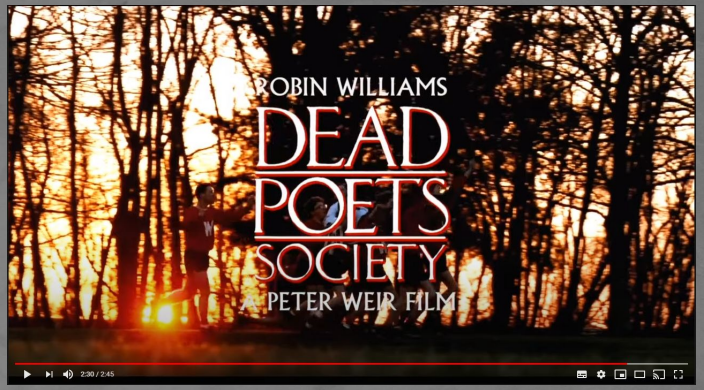


Left: Freytag's pyramid diagram (Hanson, 2020); right: Gustav Freytag (Cunningham, 2020)

An interesting concept is the idea that no matter where you look, adverts for media with plots, tv shows, films etcetera, you will find that they all share those key pivotal points. I aim to try making my own diagram for a film advertisement of my choice.

Freytag's Pyramid continued - DPS Trailer





Please visit this link to see the video being analysed. Thank you.

In the advertisement for Peter Weir's *Dead Poets Society*, I have attempted to assign the key pivotal points of Freytag's pyramid. I found I had to re-watch the video multiple times before I felt I could begin to understand what the director was conveying in terms of the message of the film's plot. Though with many trailers, they often have to omit a certain amount of detail as to not ruin the film and incentivise the viewer actually go out and watch it. As such, I found this trailer to be vague in just the right ways as to make the viewer wonder how *Keaton's* teaching methods will be received by the authority and the pupils of the *Welton Academy for Boys*.

Model making in tv, film and theatre

In cinema, television shows and theatrical performances, set designers often create miniature versions of the proposed sets. This gives the designer space to adapt, confirm and develop an idea without having to spend excessive amounts of money on life-size set pieces. For all three this can aid in knowing what the viewer can see.

However, each industry uses them in slightly different ways. For example, as television and film productions are bound to the camera lens, through this unique method of troubleshooting and testing they can work out exactly what fits in the shot, allowing them to spend more time on objects that will actually be seen, rather than those that will be cut out by the aspect ratio of the film being used.

For theatre, a single set may be used during multiple different scenes set both in and outdoors, day and night. This means they must encapsulate the general feel of these multiple scenarios, and rather capture a 'mood' that can equally portray those emotions through the performance.

"A scale model is usually made of the set before it is built. This miniature version helps the director and DoP visualise the set as a three-dimensional space, discuss potential pitfalls and ensure that they are happy before the set is built." (Barnwell, 2019, pg. 37)

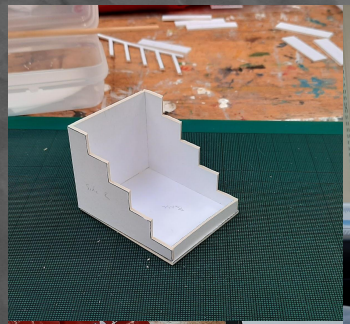


Above: a model for the BBC show *Inside Men* (J. Kent, 2012)
Below: A surreal vision of 'London Below' for the TV series *Neverwhere* (D. Humphreys, 1996) (Barnwell, 2019, pg. 37 - 95)



Model making - my projects

Having now had my turn at making some 1/25th scale models, I can say that it is a very binary outcome regarding the ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ outcome. For this kind of model making at least, the specifications are are strict and demanding of a specific product. The tree was different, as it resembled an organic entity, so the outcome could be as random as the natural world permits. Overall I really enjoyed these tasks, as my background in joinery permitted me to utilise my ability to be precise.









Script reading (Danny Champion of the world by Roald Dahl)

When a theatre production starts, it starts with script readings. This is usually done once all the characters are confirmed for their roles, though it can be done as a means of 'feeling out' the characters for a director to see what available talent is good for what role, ect.

More specifically, in a professional environment, the script reading is carried out as a means to let all the separate departments know what they are going to be roughly working on in regards to their sectors. So for example the lighting crew would be observant of the way the script describes the scenes as each one begins, the set construction department would make notes of the different scenes and how they can integrate as many scenarios into a certain space.

During our script reading of Danny Champion of the World by Roald Dahl, I thought about the many different scenes portrayed, mostly the forest where the pheasants are and the caravan/petrol station. These two sets seemed to have the most time spent in them, and thus I will be focusing on them.

The characters are all clothed from a 1950's era, and so the costume department would simply have to check that they are well stocked with vintage clothing from the past. As there is not an extravagant theme found in the play, the makeup department would only have to think of brightening the actor's faces ready for the show.

The set design would be quite elaborate, or minimalist depending on the budget. The forest scene depicts a great hole in the ground; this could be achieved with a trap door on a more expensive stage, or simply with some kind of floor decoration and a speaker system to portray somebody inside it. The car used could be achieved with a flat, but a more expensive alternative would be a rolling prop designed to mimic a real car, moved around via pushing from the crew. The Caravan/petrol station would be quite straightforward given how none of it changes in any significant visual way, so it could easily be portrayed as a painted background, or alternatively several 'fake walls' could separate the petrol pump from the caravan interior, to the garage exterior.

As for the colour scheme of the background art and set pieces, I have created a mood board for these scenes in the play. The purpose of the mood board is exactly what it says on the tin, to get all the personnel involved to think 'on the same page' as the designer who wants to realise their vision. By using imagery and colour to portray a certain theme or mood, the creator can establish what they envision regarding how things should look. This is a widely used technique in both film and theatre.

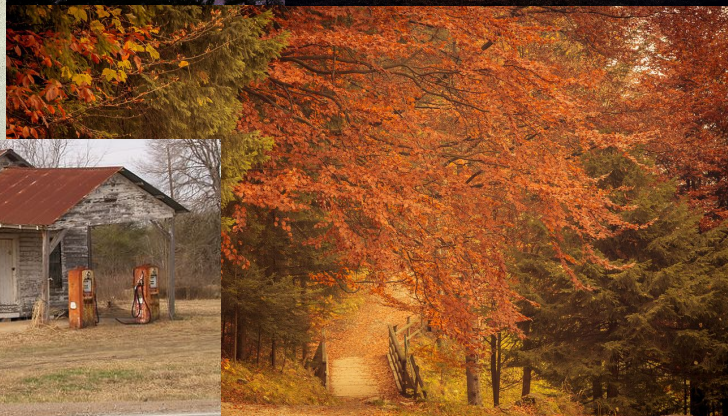








Danny, the
champion
of the world



Script reading pt 2 (My week with Marilyn by Simon Curtis)

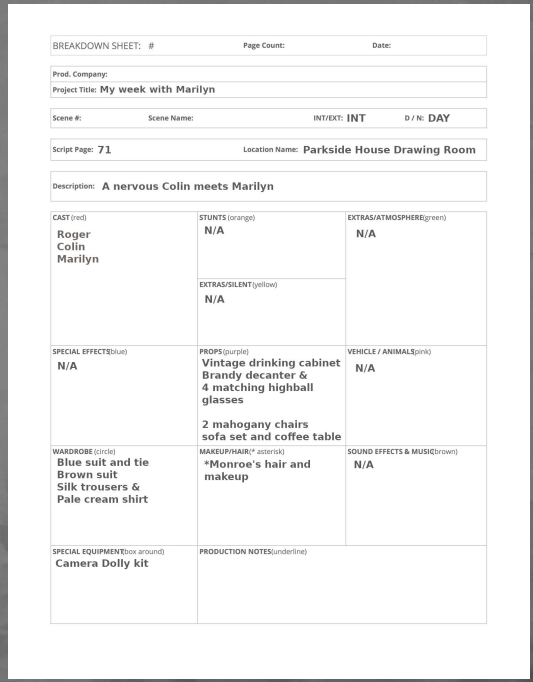
For film, script readings differ slightly from theatre readings. Though the same rhetorics regarding departments listening and taking notes for their respective tasks apply, the set design are instead a group of location scouts, as well as the archaic builders of visual sets. Because film takes place only in front of a camera and not the auditorium, there is not always a need for a set to be built if the perfect location already exists. On top of that, the types of shots are restricted by certain cameras, lenses and equipment. For example, a chase cam is good for that 'down to earth' feel of following a main character, however the glamarous sweeping shots of large sets are incredibly hard to pull off by hand, thus certain tripods and 'dollys' are required.

Additionally, in cinema a special type of document called a *script breakdown sheet*, for which all the departments have different colours assigned. Also, the scripts themselves go through colour variations depending on their edited version. This is so that as the film script changes per the director's/crew's needs, everybody can ensure they are all in the know about what has been added and removed.

The script I was given to inspect was the one from the motion picture *My week with Marilyn* (S. Curtis, 2011). I chose to analyse the pages 71 through to 73.

The scene depicts the character Roger first leading Colin into an ostentatious room, where Marilyn then meets him. Although the scene itself is a simple dialogue based one, I envisioned the use of some decadent pans during the scene, and so I put the dolly kit in the special equipment box. For the clothes, I simply listed the clothes that the script reports Marilyn to wear, and then listed Roger and Colin's outfits as different coloured suits, to symbolise their positions in the situation. The only makeup and hair I could imagine needing special attention would be the leading lady,

The room itself came across to me as very elegant, old fashioned and rich in colour. As the scene is set in london, I envisioned a mahogany clad room with panelled walls, 40's style sofas and classy hardwood furniture.



BREAKDOWN SHEET: # Page Count: Date:

Prod. Company:

Project Title: My week with Marilyn

Scene #: Scene Name: INT/EXT: INT D / N: DAY

Script Page: 71 Location Name: Parkside House Drawing Room

Description: A nervous Colin meets Marilyn

CAST (red)	STUNTS (orange)	EXTRAS/ATMOSPHERE(green)
Roger Colin Marilyn	N/A	N/A
	EXTRAS/SILENT(yellow) N/A	
SPECIAL EFFECTS(blue)	PROPS(purple)	VEHICLE / ANIMALS(pink)
N/A	Vintage drinking cabinet Brandy decanter & 4 matching highball glasses 2 mahogany chairs sofa set and coffee table	N/A
WARDROBE (circle)	MAKEUP/HAIR(* asterisk)	SOUND EFFECTS & MUSIC(brown)
Blue suit and tie Brown suit Silk trousers & Pale cream shirt	*Monroe's hair and makeup	N/A
SPECIAL EQUIPMENT(box around)	PRODUCTION NOTES(underline)	
Camera Dolly kit		

End of Module Group task

As a final task of the module, we have been asked to use all the skills we have learned thus far to create an outcome based off of an initial stimulus.

For my group, the aforementioned stimulus was the poem *Robot Boy* by Tim Burton.

Featuring an electronic baby and a love affair with inanimate objects, the poem is a surreal piece of fiction that speaks of a happy husband becoming distraught when he finds out his wife had an affair with a ‘microwave toaster’, thus leading to her child being mostly machine.

Together we brainstormed, and discussed ideas revolving around religious iconography. We decided after researching works of art such as Piss christ (A. Serrano, 1987), we thought we could pay adage to the anti-religion rhetoric by portraying the mother character as an abstract Virgin mary character. And additionally, I designed and built a cot from black foam.

Based on the historic shaker furniture styles that also belonged to christian ideology, the cot is both a reflection of the honesty of their design rhetoric, while also resembling something uncomfortable through my use of materials.

The purpose of the cot was not to hold a baby however, as in its finished form it resembles cold plastic with silver paint representing electronic circuitry. Its purpose, much like the exercise regarding minimalist photos of scraps to ‘trick’ the mind into thinking creatively, is to ask what should be in the cot, as an empty vessel that is so unwelcoming, yet familiar in shape. Together with the motherly figure and her distorted facial expression, this sculptural outcome is like a twisted modern nativity play, where the absence of the obvious is both the foreboding cause, and effect of the hysteria and modern day technology on our wellbeing.



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