Design Process

Nights at the Circus

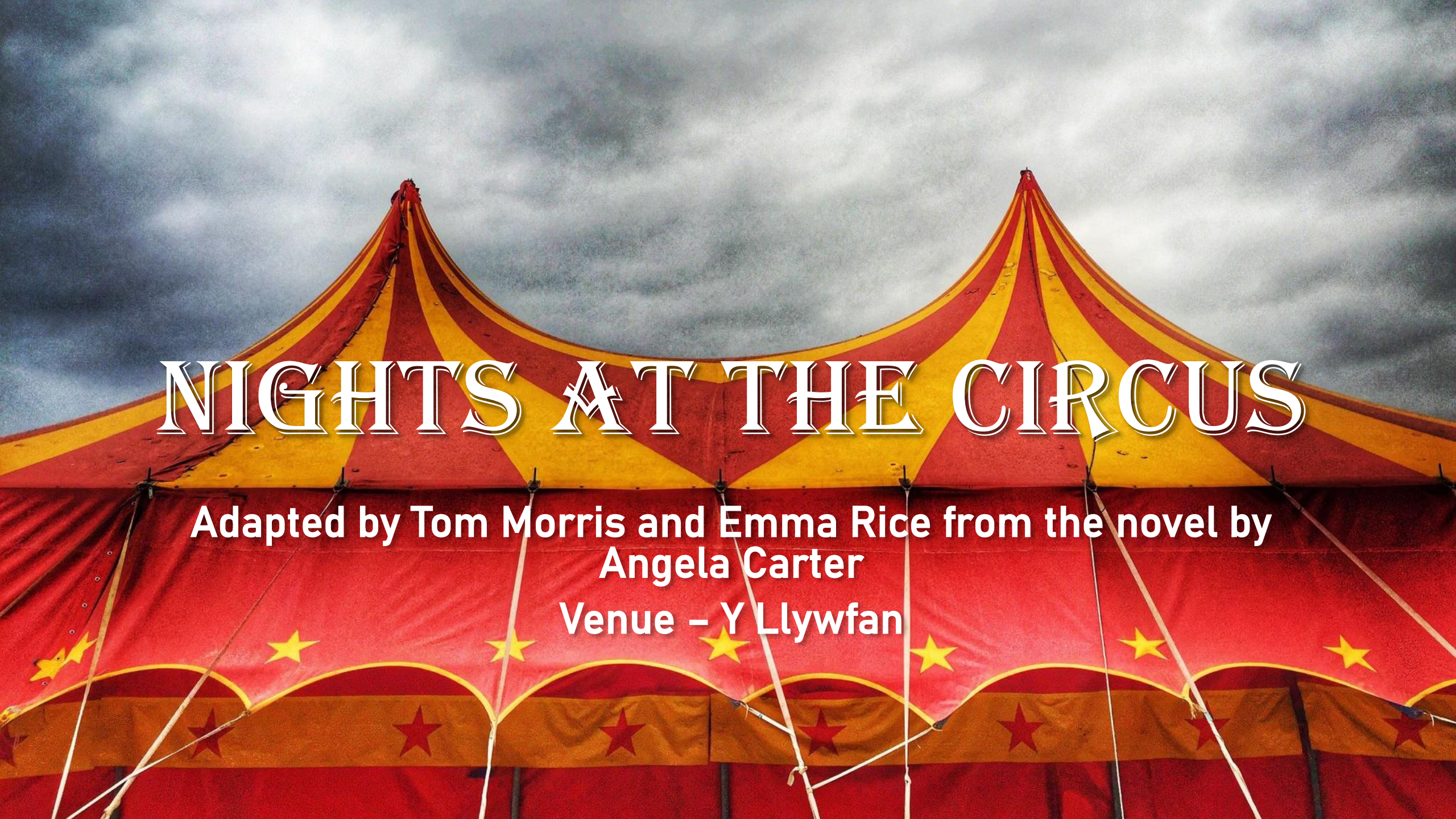
- Deploy knowledge and understanding of the application of design within specialised roles such as set, costume, props, lighting, sound and AV
- Critically analyse the role of the designer/maker in the process of creating design ideas for stage or screen
- Apply design, production and technical practices as appropriate to each design area

Design Process

Module Brief

- Task 1 - You will focus on compiling a process workbook – a record of all the areas covered in your lectures along with ideas on how this newfound knowledge contributes to your methodology.
- Task 2 - As a production company, generate a design pitch for the given script and present it to a panel of industry professionals in order to ‘sell’ your company’s idea. Venue – Y Llywfan
- Task 3 - The presentation will inform the audience about how you have solved the practical problems demanded by the script and brief, focusing on production technique and methods

Task 4 - Reflect upon what you have learnt and commit those thoughts and reflections to a five-hundred-word evaluation.


NIGHTS AT THE CIRCUS
Adapted by Tom Morris and Emma Rice from the novel by Angela Carter
Venue – Y Llywfan

GROUP NAME

ACE

MY ROLE

Set Designer

7 Steps of Design: One → Commitment

My group consists of three people, Anne as the Props Designer, Eva as the Puppetry Designer, and myself as the Set Designer. We eventually settled on the team name ACE a few weeks into the module, changing it from the previous name Parable.

As the set designer my responsibilities involve creating and understanding a representation of the world in the script. Doing this through producing a model box to scale, finished coloured designs with mood boards to reference, and accurate drawings. I will have to understand how the set will be made and to link design choices back to my research the group's discussions and collective direction.

Role Applications and Reasons:

After the table read, we made our applications for roles. I applied for the role of Set Designer, Lighting Designer, and Prop Maker. Below are my reasons. I was given the role of Set Designer!

Set designer:

I would love to take on the role of Set Designer for 'Nights at the Circus' as it presents so many logistical challenges around space that I would love to explore and solve. The large variety of locations and fast paced scene changes would make for very exciting design possibilities, my initial thoughts are exploring automation and revolves in order to achieve these changes in as chaotic a way as they're written. I think this would also be a great opportunity to improve my CAD skills. While I really enjoy making models, I struggle with CAD-like programs and would like to get better.

Lighting Designer

I would also really enjoy the role of Lighting Designer, in the same way the set will be used to divide space and create locations, I would like to see how effective I could make the lighting be to aid this. I think the peculiar nature of the play/musical would make for some creative lighting choices, exploring a circus location as well as creating a cliche 'performance' of her life. Dramatizing certain moments of Fevver's story with tracking spotlights and using a monstrous shadow for Mr. Sugar instead of ever seeing him. It would be interesting then to maybe program a section of the play in the Llywfan to play at the presentation.

Props:

The last role I'm interested in would be Props, as there's quite a range you could explore here with the logistics of Lizzie's bomb handbag and Fevver's wings. I would enjoy the challenge of making something like this as well as figuring out how it could work (in terms of maybe attaching to someone's body or how to make the bag obviously a bomb to the audience).

Team Name:

Our initial choice for a team name was Parable, this was in reference to a movie of the same name, whose story follows a Clown Jesus. We eventually changed our team name to a more neutral one, as we didn't want our production company's name to come from the script we were adapting. ACE is an acronym of our names (A for Anne, C for Cameron, and E for Eva). We then each chose our favourite card symbol, mine being the diamond, Anne's being the club, and Eva's being the heart. In the bottom corner of our presentation slides, we used these symbols to signify whose turn it was to speak.



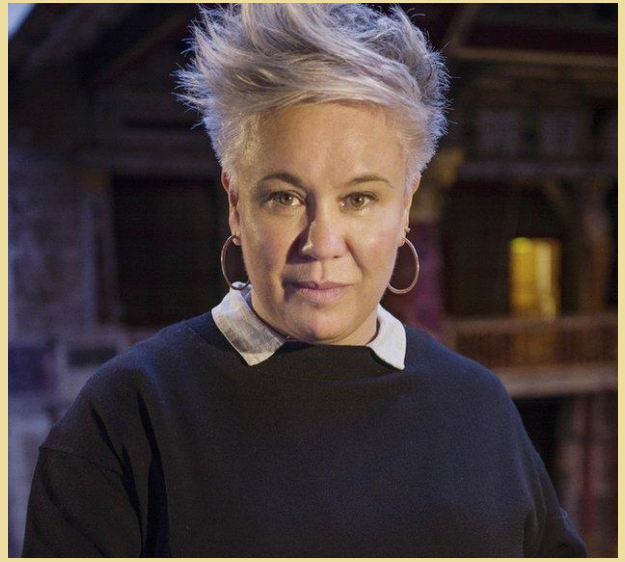
Nights at the Circus by Tom Morris and Emma Rice, 2006.
Adapted from the novel by Angela Carter, 1984.
Set in 1899.



(The Booker Prizes, Year Unknown)

Angela Carter was a British, feminist author. Known for using mythology and fairy tales in her stories to create humour and eroticism. She was previously a journalist, possibly influencing Jack Walser's role as a journalist turned creative. She gained popularity in the 1980s, when Nights at the Circus was written, her books often study female characters. *Britannica (2024, a)*

According to *Bristol Old Vic (Year Unknown),* **Emma Rice** is an actor, director, and writer. She was briefly artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe (2016-2018). She is artistic director of her own company, wise children. She directed the adaptation of Nights at the Circus, which she turned into a play with Tom Morris, as well as directing Little Match Girl. She's been in the news lately for Wise Children becoming the Emma Rice company and a partnership with Theatre Royal Bath, one of their upcoming shows being A Child's Christmas in Wales *(News Team, 2025)*. Emma Rice has also adapted and directed another of Angela Carter's novels, Wise Children.



(Youngs, 2017)

According to *Dr. Semmelweis (2024*), **Tom Morris** is the director of the royal national theatre, was previously the artistic director for the Bristol Old Vic, and is an award-winning director, writer, and producer. Best known for co-directing war horse. *(West End Theatre, 2025)*

(Williams, 2019)



Act One Overview:

- We meet Jack as he's pulled onto stage and introduced to Fevvers, the winged woman of London and her guardian Lizzie
- We follow them back in time to her childhood, when she was found on the doorstep of a brothel, hatched from an egg, and adopted by Ma Nelson and Lizzie
- She grew up at the brothel and this is where she takes her first flight after her wings grow at the age of 14
- We also first meet Mr. Sugar here, after Fevvers' first flight he approaches her to buy her wings and reveals he has been watching her and will return
- Ma Nelson then dies in an accident and the brothel is passed to her brother who kicks all the girls out, the girls mourn and Lizzie sets the brothel alight in revenge
- We learn Fevvers and Lizzie are going into show business, and are now going to join Colonel Kearney's circus, Jack makes the decision to follow them, as much so for his identity as for the story he's writing – he abandons himself and becomes a clown

My Initial Thoughts:

→ *Act One, page 21*
I love the comparison created around selling your body, using Fevvers' wings instead of sex, and how the older women are trying to protect someone innocent from the same fate.
"She shall bring pleasure to the eyes and imagination not to the bodies of men." - *Ma Nelson, (Nights at the Circus, 2006, p. 21)*
→ there are strong themes of *feminism* established and the empowerment of women that was not seen in the 19th century
→ there is a desire to move forward towards *women's rights* and freedom in the 20th century, they all want change
→ Is there any connection between Ma Nelson *and Lord Nelson*?
→ burning down the brothel is meaningful and symbolic, removing all the traces of their tragic past in order to move forward
→ *Act One, page 26*
"did you think that paint and grease could make you feel so clean" – *Vesta, (Nights at the Circus, 2006, p. 26*)
An idea that disguising yourself can hide your identity/old self and you can become a brand new person (theme of *change*)

Act Two Overview, Part One:

First Movement:
- Colonel Kearney introduces his famous circus and his companion, a psychic pig who spots his talent for him
- Jack asks to join the, he is then introduced, to the rest of the circus performers: Buffo the clown, the Princess of Abyssinia, and Strongman Samson
- Fevvers arrives and confirms her contract with Kearney, becoming top of the bill
- We meet Mignon through the sound of Buffo beating her and learn of her tragic past and how they met

Second Movement:
- Strongman and Mignon have sex, a tiger gets loose and nearly kills Mignon but Jack manages to save her – he is accused of sleeping with Mignon

Third Movement:
- Buffo takes Jack to clown alley and reveals his depression and pain, Buffo discovers Jack slept with Mignon and beats them both up

Fourth Movement:
- Jack takes Mignon to Fevvers' hotel to seek refuge (Mr. Sugar makes another appearance and takes a photo of Fevvers)

My Initial Thoughts:

→ *Act Two, page 38, Second Movement* Manipulation! →
The same way they manipulate their bodies and do tricks to entertain an audience on stage, they manipulate each other and events to entertain themselves. As seen when Jack is made to seem like he slept with Mignon, and when Strong Man is made to shoot Buffo.

→ "The greater the humiliation the greater the clown." - *Buffo, (Nights at the Circus, 2006, p. 39)*
Their pain is entertainment, whether physical or emotional. Similar to the brothel where the pain of their sexual exploitation brought their customers pleasure.

Act Two Overview, Part Two:

Fourth Movement Continued:
- Lizzie takes Mignon to bathe and comfort her
- Fevvers and Lizzie put Jack and Mignon in the Bridal Suite, nothing happens between them and Jack
- Samson appears on Jack's way out and beats him up for sleeping with Mignon

Fifth Movement:
- Fevvers and Lizzie find Jack has left and take Mignon to work at the circus
- They introduce Mignon to the Princess and Mignon's singing becomes part of a new tiger act, Jack arrives and is forced to join the act

Sixth Movement:
- It's the last performance of the 19th century and Kearney introduces his circus to the crowd
- Buffo is furious that Fevvers is top of the bill and is determined to sabotage her act by cutting the rope of her trapeze, Samson is helping him
- The tiger act begins and Jack argues with Buffo
- The tiger goes for Mignon and is shot by the Princess, meanwhile Buffo gets Samson to shoot him three times, killing him
- Fevvers is sent on, Jack intervenes to save her from an accident and the crowd love them together, she is furious at him and Lizzie for stifling her independence
- Mr. Sugar arrives and tries to take her wings more forcefully, using Fevvers' dagger to cut them off
- Lizzie arrives and throws the bomb she's been building at him, a big explosion ends the second act.

My Initial Thoughts:

→ I dislike that in the *fourth movement* Lizzie and Fevvers send Mignon off with Jack to have sex, it feels contradictory to their emphasis on *freedom, independence, and a change for all women*. Even if they're under the impression Jack and Mignon have already slept together, they have seen how bruised she is and shouldn't even consider leaving them alone (in the case that it was Jack who had done it)

→ Revealing that Sybil doesn't like Fevvers could mean she psychically saw the trouble Fevvers would bring and the inevitable downfall of the circus, everything in the sixth movement is a domino effect of Fevvers joining Kearney's circus

Act Three Overview:

- The third act takes place in a white void, we are uncertain of time and location
- Kearney appears and is talking to Sybil about the loss of his business only to find Sybil is dead
- Strongman apologises to Mignon
- The Princess speaks with Mignon, the first time she speaks in the play, it is revealed her identity is a lie
- Fevvers enters calling for Jack to see if he has survived, Lizzie follows criticising her consideration of him,
- They discuss marriage and how she wants to transform Jack into a new man, Lizzie is mad at her for throwing away her independence
- Jack appears from the void and declares his feelings for Fevvers and desire to be close to her always
- Lizzie finds a radio and turns it on, it is playing a Nina Simone song
- Jack and Fevvers fly away together
- Vesta returns to close the play as she opened it, telling the audience how Fevvers is happy with Jack

My Initial Thoughts:

→ I'm unsure on whether I agree with Jack and Fevvers ending up together, I feel like it contradicts the main subject of the whole play (her freedom). I also think it clashes as, in my opinion, neither are written to have romantic chemistry or interest in one another

The Table Read – Act One Notes and Research



(Campervan Reykjavik, 2023)

• Fevvers' song reminded me of Tim Burton's story 'Voodoo Girl' (which we looked at in first year), who has pins stuck into her back and so can't ever touch anyone as it will hurt her as the pins push further in. Fevvers sings "I am only a bird in a gilded cage with a lock that is copper and steel (...) with no one to touch and to feel" *(Nights at the Circus, 2006, p. 12).* This allusion creates an idea of her loneliness and distance from everyone she meets, possibly accurate as she is seen as a 'freak'.
Tim Burton's poem Voodoo Girl can be found in his 1997 poetry book, 'The Melancholy Death of Oster Boy & Other Stories'.
(*Lands of Magic, 2013)*



Voodoo Girl (Burton, 2020)

<u>Notes from the first Table Read (my third read through)</u>
<u>Act One</u>
•T he beaches in Iceland are black, the opening voice-over describes us as being at the 'fag-end, the smouldering cigar-butt, of the nineteenth century' and 'the ashtray of history'. As Jack is Icelandic it could be referring to his history and how integral he is to the story.

Iceland is a volcanic island and, according to *Pomrenke (2023)*, the black sand on the beaches comes from basalt fragments following a volcanic eruption, this is eroded into sand over time. Because Iceland is still volcanically active the black sand is replenished often.

"She has many coloured pins sticking out of her heart"
"To hypnotise guys"
"For if someone gets too close to her, the pins stick farther in"
(*Burton, 1997, p.5)*

Vesta describes the places Jack Walser has been and how he has 'never been touched by any of it', suggesting he'd detached and untraumatized. Whilst Fevvers can't be touched and has been emotionally affected by everything that's happened to her. Is Jack completely free because he has no emotional attachment, and is this the freedom Fevvers is really looking for?

Act One Notes and Research Continued



Tesco (Year Unknown)



Wilde & Romantic (Year Unknown)

Emmeline Pankhurst speaking at a Women's social and political union in 1912
Beginning of the 20th century, Suffragettes were those who used 'deeds not words'
Such as window smashing, damaging landmarks and art, and arson attacks.
Image and Information from *Dr. Berry-Waite (Year Unknown).*



Baby Sham is being drunk by Fevvers and is offered to Jack but he refuses, Baby Sham logo of a baby sheep suggests a childish element to Fevvers or a vulnerability and innocence. She drinks playfully in contrast to Buffo who drinks violently. Is Buffo what she might become if she continues down the circus road?

According to *Babycham (Year Unknown)* Baby Cham's logo is a skipping baby water deer. Meant to be endearing and graceful, a symbol of sophistication and yet there's an innocence and vulnerability to it → perfect for Fevvers.

According to the *UK Parliament (Year Unknown),* there were regional suffragist groups which held meetings, at a national level key people were Millicent Fawcett and Lydia Becker. Fawcett led the NUWSS and was a public speaker, married to MP Henry Fawcett. Suffragists believed change would come through parliamentary means and lobbying.



•Cat vs. Bird imagery, Fevvers' movements are compared to a cat or like a cat, whilst her name and body all revolve around birds. Is she a danger to herself?
•The chorus sing that Fevvers must fly 'for all of us', referencing Fevvers becoming a path to freedom for all women, and the push of independence and rights all women wanted at the time

Before 1918 women couldn't vote.
The picture above depicts Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett hiding 1st women's suffrage petition under an apple stall in Westminster hall for John Stuart Mill to collect it (signed by 1,500 women in 1866)
John Stuart Mill was the first candidate to include women's suffrage in his election address (MP for Westminster in 1865). He attempted to have the reform act amended to include women but was rejected.
The NUWSS in 1897, term suffragist was associated with them. Used peaceful methods to campaign, petitions and marches. Image and information from *Dr. Berry-Waite (Year Unknown).*

Sources on Suffragettes from Anne Hyde

Act One Notes and Research Continued



21st May 1913, bomb attack on the Royal Observatory in Edinburgh, part of a wider suffragette's campaign targeting government institutions.
→ bomb fragment
A ladies' handbag was left behind, a paper found nearby stating 'votes for women'
Image and Information from *Davies and Goldschmidt (Year Unknown)*.

According to the *BBC News (2013)*, the bomber was never caught, the bomb did not damage the telescope, no one was inside and it happened at 1am so no one was injured
"We don't intend that you should be pleased." – Pankhurst

Feminist figures of the time:
Sarah Grand - feminist writer (1854-1943), a political activist from youth, expelled for protesting.
First novel Ideala 1888 about a woman struggling to leave her unfaithful husband, giving her the ability to leave her husband in real life
Ma Joad grapes of wrath, John Steinbeck, matriarchal figure, 1940s? 1930s?
Emily Davies, Pankhurst, Elizabeth Garret, Millicent Fawcett, and Lydia Becker

Sources on Suffragettes from Anne Hyde

Men hiding behind female talent

Watson and Crick taking Franklin's data, they were then published in the same book, ahead of her section. (*Cobb, 2015)*

Pimps and Prostitution

→ Mr. Sugar embodies the seediness of a pimp-like character

The *British Literature Wiki (Year Unknown) suggests there were* three types of prostitution: streetwalkers, brothels, and military encampments
Numbers of prostitutes in Victorian England were suggested to be 8,600 but are now thought to have been closer to 80,000.
Streetwalkers were often subject to poverty, physical danger, alcoholism, disease and police harassment.
Women working on the ports of sailors had more security as there were less women around these areas.
The number of women living in brothels was low, although any customers behaving inappropriately were unwelcomed and turned away
→ more safety and a sense of community/respect?

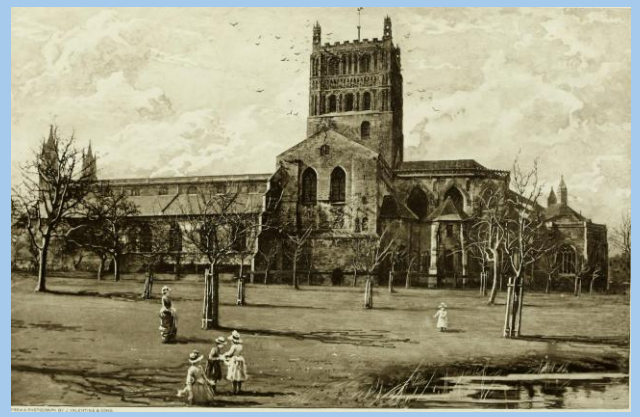
Procuress + Pimps + Panders:
Jackson (2001) describes Procuresses as women who have a house of their own and find women for men who pay them. Often taking in women to lodge and board
Not many pimps, mostly women pimping for men → In my opinion, the research I did later, on the unknown world of sex trafficking, would say otherwise.

Act One Notes and Research Continued

•Ma Nelson's sword symbolic of women's strength and independence and power, a lack of reliance on men for protection
•The death of Ma Nelson impacts everyone's future and safety, Lizzie and Fevvers resorting to performing for money, if we followed any of the other Brothel Girls on their journeys after Ma Nelson's death, what would we have seen?



Coming Home Network (2015)



Wikimedia Commons (2014)

• 'Gospel grinder' a churchman, cruelty of kicking them out of their home contrasting what religion teaches, the alliteration of gospel grinder is quite violent and suggestive of someone churning through Bibles without taking anything in- being religious in a performative manner.

• Why does Jack choose the circus? It doesn't feel as though it's for Fevvers or for his article, has he lost his identity or is he bored with his freedom? Does he himself feel trapped in his job/world According to *Mustafina (2019)*, several popular theatre magazines of the 1890s were Artist (1889-1895) and Teatral (1895-1898), playing a significant role in theatre criticism due to their way of analysing the stage and new styles emerging.
Kiiskilä (2021) talks about how the New York Times newspaper published theatre reviews regularly in the early 19th century, was in wide circulation, and reached people of all social classes. Their reviews are usually brutally honest. This supports Jack's set up as a theatre critic at this time and helps

• Act One is as if we're walking through their memories, surreal
• Constant use of the curtain → like Fevvers' life is always reduced to entertainment and a performance

The Hema Shop (Year Unknown)





Nelson and the Sword

Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson 1758-1805 was a British Naval commander and hero.
Famous for his victories against the French in the Napoleonic wars.
Joined the navy aged 12 (would Ma Nelson have fallen into the brothel work young?) and became captain at 20 (Ma Nelson is captain of her ship)
Lost sight in his right eye in battle at Calvi (1793), later lost his right arm in the Battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (1797)
Known for bold action and disregard of orders, brought victories against the Spanish in 1797.
His most famous accomplishment being at Cape Trafalgar, saving Britain from threat of invasion by Napoleon. (BBC Archive, Year Unknown)
Ma Nelson is named after him to show her defiance, bravery, and leadership.

Act Two Notes and Research



(Marsh, 2018)

Act Two

•Sybil the pig, even Kearney is using someone else's talent to do his own job, all these 'business men' are using others for their own gain (Mr. Sugar wanting Fevvers' wings). Does Kearney hide behind Sybil?

•They discuss her contract in a tango, could this be like the phrase 'it takes two to tango' so both Kearney and Fevvers are at fault for all that is about to happen? Is it to suggest a tension between them, as Fevvers wants luxuries and respect and the circus is notorious for having the opposite?

•Mignon's traumatic childhood leads her to accept any form of love, whether that's the abusive relationship with Buffo, the meaningless sex with Strong Man, or the expectation to reward Jack for saving her.

Childhood impacting adulthood relationships - psychology

A paper by *Sun, et al. (2021)* looks into how trauma in childhood can manifest as negative adult romantic relationships

Childhood trauma can result in serious cognitive, emotional, and behavioural consequences → more depression and suicidal tendencies, and more likely to suffer from mental disorders → more likely to then create a cycle of abuse with their children

A study suggests that whilst a positive relationship in adulthood can help heal from the trauma, a negative/abusive relationship will not impact their processing at all (won't make them worse or better) → almost as if they're numbed to it and this is what they're used to

Mignon is numbed to Buffo's behaviour due to her childhood trauma, this is what she knows and is comfortable with → someone treating her right would be stepping out of her comfort zone but would eventually help her heal (will the women of the story help Mignon heal? Or will she revert to another partner who mistreats her?)

•Why does Mr. Sugar take Fevvers' picture? To own a part of her, even if he can't own her body?

•Lizzie's bag is consistently mentioned throughout the play, has she kept the same bag that Fevvers arrived in for sentimentality? Her bag saves people throughout, providing chocolate for Mignon after she gets beat up, and becoming a bomb at the end of this act to save Fevvers.

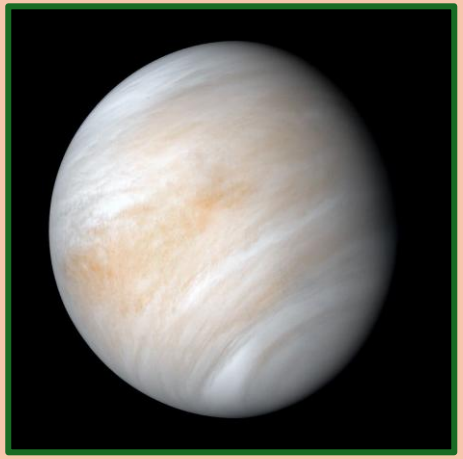
•Despite Lizzie and Fevvers' developing views, they still offer Mignon up to Jack for sex after he brings her back from clown alley. Do they still believe kindness should be repaid in sex, and is this a result of their time at the brothel?

Act Two Notes and Research

- Nightingale imagery for Mignon, angel imagery for Fevvers
- Repetition of “I know what he’s after. And he’s not going to get it” by *Lizzie (Nights at the Circus, 2006, p. 36)* towards Jack, Lizzie wants Jack’s downfall
- “The Cockney Venus” – *Colonel Kearney (Nights at the Circus, 2006, p.31)*

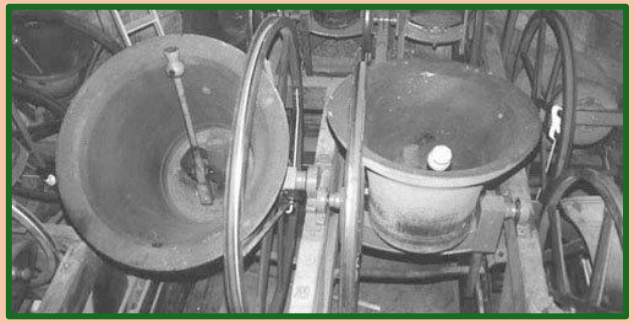
(Botticelli, 1482-1485) →





(NASA, Year Unknown)

(Regan, Year Unknown) →



Cockney Venus

According to *Green (2010),* the word Cockney's origins are uncertain, in 1362 it meant a ‘cock’s egg’ and a defective one, this could be connected to the Bird and Egg psychology of bird’s abandoning their eggs when they know there’s something wrong with it or that it won’t survive. Meaning Fevvers was a defective egg, would struggle to survive and would be seen as a ‘freak’.
Green (2010) goes on to discuss another definition first seen in Chaucer and defined in 1989 as a ‘child tenderly brought up’ → referring to Fevvers’ nurturing childhood with Ma Nelson and Lizzie, two people who cared about her a lot and would do anything to protect her.
A Cockney is someone who was born within the sound of the Bow Bells, referring to the church of Saint Mary le Bow, Cheapside, in London.
The area estimated they can be heard includes Wapping, where the brothel is located and where Fevvers is supposedly born/hatched. She is Cockney by the locational definition and by the symbolic definition.

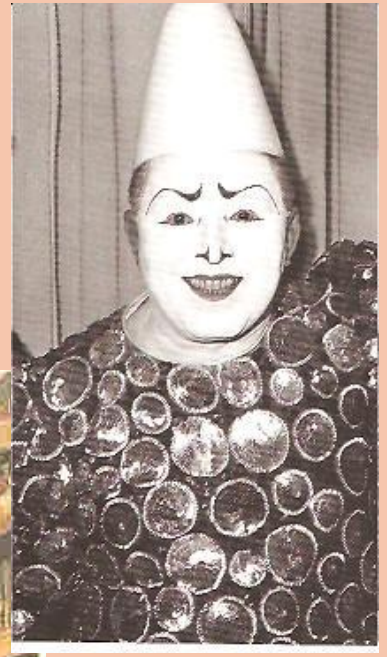
Merriam-Webster (Year Unknown) states **Venus** is the Roman Goddess of love and beauty
Whilst *Britannica (2025, b),* discusses how Venus was supposedly not worshipped in Rome, she had no appointed priests or temples, however she was important to the Latins, who had two temples dedicated to her.
Supposedly also the mother of Cupid → Fevvers is both called Venus and Cupid
She was charged with the protection of chastity in women → quite a connection to how Fevvers never sells her body for sex only as a performance, she is charged with the responsibility of never selling her body and remaining pure by Ma Nelson (suggesting connections to Zeus/Jupiter)
The Romans named the planets after Gods, Venus was supposedly named thousands of years ago by the Romans, often called Earth’s twin → suggesting how close to everyone Fevvers is as she’s human but then is still different due to her wings
Venus is the only planet in our solar system named after a woman → Fevvers is top of the bill and the most important female character in the play

So for Fevvers to be called a ‘Cockney Venus’ is almost an oxymoron but not quite, it’s suggestive that she is the embodiment of beauty and love and purity, objectifying her despite the desperation for a change in how women are perceived in society. This is then compared right alongside to the fact she is a defected egg and grew up in a poorer area. She is special and extraordinary and still down to Earth and relatable?

Act Two Notes and Research Continued

• Buffo's death → his pain is the ultimate comedic act by his logic, the most amount of pain he could be in would entertain the audience the most

All Images and information sources from *Clown Bluey (Year Unknown)*





Clowns Throughout History

In Ancient Egypt, their version of clowns would dress in masks and animal skins and imitate the Gods
Ancient Rome had several types, a mime called Sannio, Stupidus (colourful outfits and pointed hat) innuendos and riddles and slapstick style comedy
Court Jesters in the 14th century → providing humour on demand (court fools)
They represented free speech in an age where that was not possible.



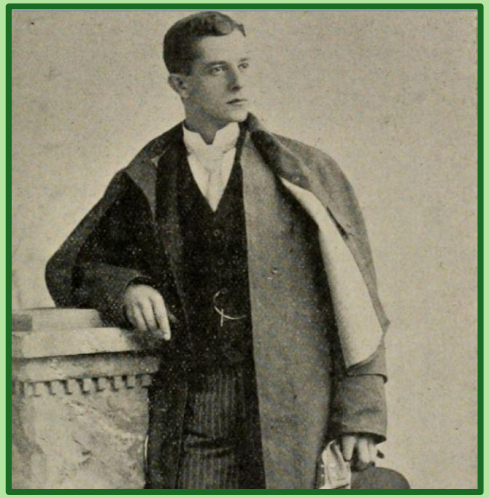


Term clown first appears in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet', describing the character of the gravedigger
Joseph Grimaldi (1778) was the first clown to use makeup instead of a mask, all clowns today are nicknamed 'Joeys' because of him
Circus is Latin for ring or circle, hence the connection to a circus stage.
First modern circus in Europe premiered in the late 18th century, in London.

Image above is Astley's circus in 1812. Other circuses began opening.
In the image to the top right we can see how in the 19th century we saw the beginning of the modern whiteface principal clown

Act three notes and research

(Mrs. Daffodil, Year Unknown)
→



Act Three
- Happy endings in history aren't happy for women + other historical unhappy endings we find in books/real life, etc.
- Did Jack ever even want to be with Fevvers? Maybe she is the vain coward she accuses him of being
- Fevvers wants a new kind of man, a 20th century man, I believe Jack shows the traits throughout of already being this man
- Is the stereotypical ending reversed as Jack ends up with someone he displays no romantic interest in?

Masculinity and the New Man

Masculinity:

Jobbins (2017) theorises that toxic masculinity may have begun in the Victorian period. From 1837 to 1870 masculinity was outlined as an idea of spirituality and earnestness, becoming an idea of strength and stoicism from 1870 onwards, developing into what we know it as today - pushed forward by ideas of manliness created by the two world wars. Athleticism became important and praised in the late 19th century, developing our ideas of strength and physical labour making a man.
Men were the breadwinners of the house and the predominant workers, in working class families this usually consisted of physical labour. Whilst in the upper classes women didn't have to work usually.

According to the *BBC News (2014)*, the term 'new man' began in the late 19th century, and spawned from the idea of a new woman. The 1882 novel 'Doctor Zay' written by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps follows a female doctor, Phelps writes that a marriage with such a new woman requires a new kind of man.
Suggesting the 'new man' created a concept to support the 'new woman' that feminists, or suffragists at the time, needed to push women's rights and gain the independence and respect they desired.
Throughout the play, Jack Walser exhibits the required traits of a new man to support Fevvers' new woman - but does she express those traits?

Act Three Notes and Research Continued

(*Franklin, 2019)*
→





(*Brandman, 2020-2022)*

Femininity and the New Woman:

Hughes (Year Unknown) describes how with industrialisation, men's place of work became a commute
→ once working from home (a business or trade or farm) they now work for larger companies usually in cities. Women could no longer be part of their husband's trade whilst completing domestic duties and gender roles became more defined and separated.
Women and men began to live in separate circles, coming together in the mornings and evenings.
Seen as better suited to domestic work, cooking, cleaning, raising children. Upper class women were given an education but were instructed to soften their intellect in order to attract the opposite sex and adjust to their future role, isolated in the house rather than going out into the world.
Women needed to marry but not pursue sexual satisfaction. Marriages usually had an age gap, supporting the hierarchy and idea of the man being in charge.

Rabinovitch-Fox (2017) asserts that the new woman is a term describing the change in attitudes from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, women were no longer complicit and wanted change.
Challenging gender norms and asserting a presence in work, education, entertainment, and politics.
Associated with the first wave of feminism and the suffragists, soon to become the suffragettes.
This included free expressions of sexuality, a desire for education and positions in male dominated fields, votes and positions in politics, and independence (financial and social)

Nina Simone

1933 to 2003
Singer, pianist, songwriter, civil rights activist. Mostly a jazz singer, also blended gospel, blues, folk, and pop
By the age of six was a church player for the piano
She became vocal in Black activist groups and for change, writing politically motivated songs
Most popular songs being 'Feeling good' and 'I put a spell on you'
An important figure in women's history as well as black history.
Brandman (2020-2022) and Nina Simone (Year Unknown)

Thoughts after Table Read/Progress of my Understanding

After the table read, I definitely picked up on a lot more things than I did before, it really helped me to begin picking apart the script after hearing it all read aloud by a 'cast' of sorts.
Although it made me like the ending less, as I really don't understand why Jack and Fevvers end up together, maybe it's a comment on the pointlessness of traditional endings.
I then did another read through alone after the table read, here are some new thoughts I had whilst reading, before the analysis:

- Jack trying to put the brothel fire out → he's always trying to help in the wrong ways/in ways that backfire on him
- Jack hasn't been through the pain required to be a good clown, he's too detached to be funny, this could mean those that are good clowns are sensitive and affected heavily by everything they go through
- One of Fevvers' top priorities is an education around the world for her and Lizzie
- Mignon is doing what her mum did, sleeping with those she works with and facing violent revenge from her partner → she is mirroring her parents' relationship, something that happens a lot. Although she is not killed at the end but saved by other women.

I read the play again in order to have three read throughs and a good understanding before our analysis together. My first two reads felt quite chaotic, a lot happened in a short amount of time, I felt I caught onto a few themes and meanings throughout the play but on my second read I found I had missed quite a lot of the action whilst trying to understand the dialogue.

<u>Things to Consider when designing for this play:</u>

•How do you want the audience to feel?
•Things are obvious for a reason, use this to guide the audience
•Look at the way the songs in this play could change the tone, and how the absence of sound can
•How can you depict Act Two with the speed it goes at?

Reactions to the Book and the Play:

When it was published in 1984, *Jordison (2017)* recalls critics' negative reviews of the book:

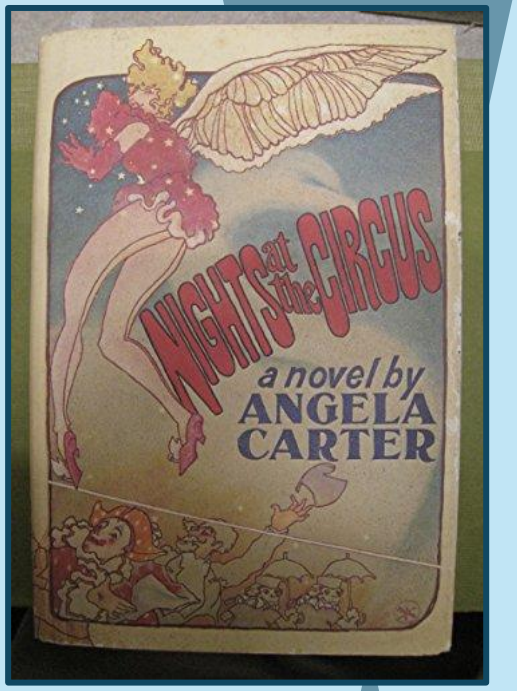
London Review of Books: Michael Wood said it was a 'disconcerting narrative'

Times Literary Supplement: Adam Mars-Jones enjoyed the first act and then worries about the 'impossibilities' during the rest of the play

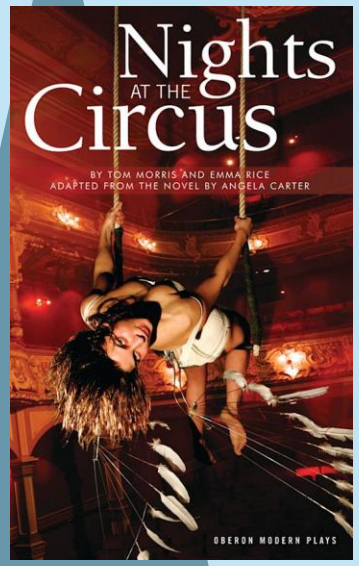
New York Times: Carolyn See, 'page by page, even chapter by chapter, Night at the Circus is delicious, a sweet for the mind, but after a while, it's hard not to get a little queasy.'

The Guardian writer suggests Jack Walser was inspired by Jack London, American Novelist and Journalist

I understand reviewers' concerns, as it's a very overwhelming play so I can imagine the novel is a lot more chaotic and gritty, as there's more content. But I think Mars-Jones is the Jack Walser in Act One and who Carter might be criticising.
→ Angela Carter described her book as a 'psychedelic Dickens' → is the play meant to be focused on morality and the class/social divide?



(Abebooks, Year Unknown)



← *(Pattison, 2006)*

Susannah Clapp's reception of the 2006 play Adaptation:

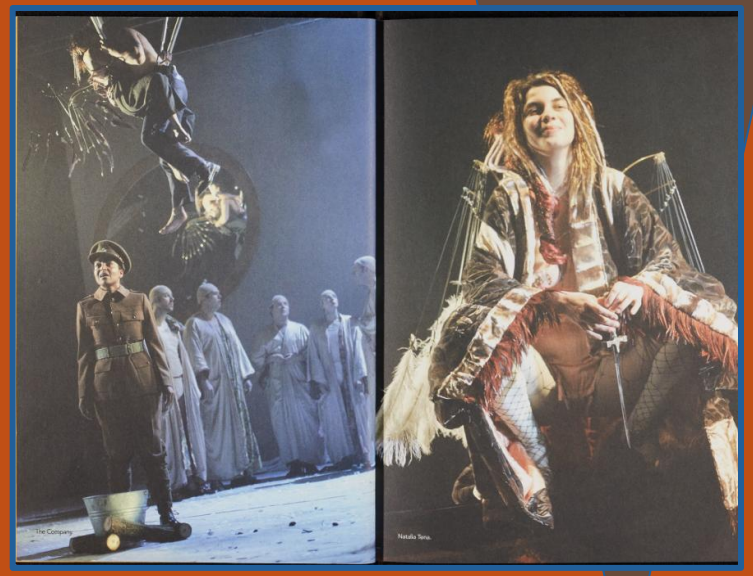
Carter was a theatrical writer, interested by circuses, pantos, and music halls - Angela carters literary executor, Susannah Clapp
On watching the play adaptation in 2006, Clapp declares that despite the amount of plot they cut out the narrative thread still needs tightening
Other audience members declared it was like going to see a real circus, they loved the design, it was confusing but the atmosphere was incredible, and they think it will do well.
Clapp (2006)

Adaptations of the play:

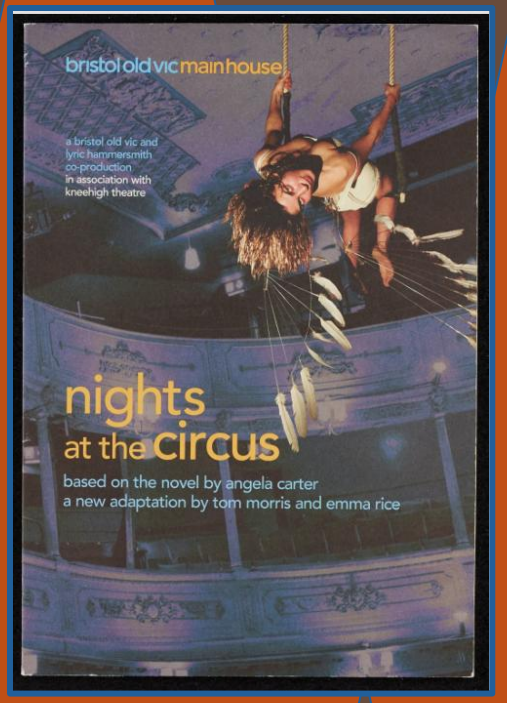


Nights at the Circus has only been adapted twice, first in 2006 by Tom Morris and Emma Rice, according to *Billington (2006)* Emma Rice went on to direct the play at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre.
Her direction is described as 'overflowing theatricality'
Stylistic choice of nudity for Fevvers' character throughout the whole play, what impact does this have on how we view her character?

← *(Pattison, 2006)*



(Bristol Old Vic Main House, 2006)



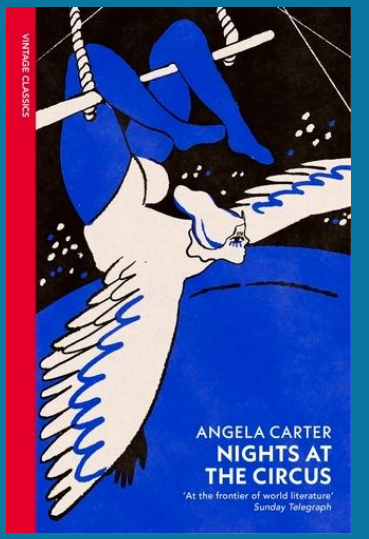
(Coveney, 2012)



Coveney (2012) writes how throughout August 2012, Nights at the Circus played in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, adapted by Steven Green and Sarah-Jane Moloney. This version seems to include the section of the novel where they travel through Siberia.
The image depicts one of the clowns from the play.



Plot of the Book and How the Play Differs:



(Penguin Books, Year Unknown)
→

Plot Summary taken from *GradeSaver (Year Unknown)*

London: The beginning of the play follows the same story as the book, although in the book Jack is not pulled onto the stage but interviews Fevvers after the show in her dressing room- she might have already joined the circus at this point. The 'Gospel Grinder' brother in the book has plans to convert Ma Nelson's house into a home for 'fallen women' but the women burn the building down. This detail is an interesting omission, as although I'm sure the brother's intentions were cruel and misogynistic towards these women's profession, it is a kinder act than merely kicking them out.
The book then differs after this, instead of going straight to the circus, Lizzie and Fevvers move in with Lizzie's sister and help run the family ice cream parlour (a reference Lizzie makes in Act Two where she imagines Mignon working in an ice cream parlour).
Fevvers then goes to work for Madame Schreck (not a character in the play), working in a freak show and brothel. After being sold to a customer called 'Christian Rosencreutz' who wants to sacrifice her in order to gain immortality, she escapes and returns to Lizzie. They then go off to join the circus (leading us to the end of Act One). Walser tells his London office that he is going to follow Fevvers.

The **St. Petersburg** section of the book begins similarly to Act Two, although through Jack's recount of it. He is given the role of clown by Kearney instead of asking for it- are Kearney and Sybil labelling him a fool? In the book, Buffo and his group of clowns do not beat up Jack in the alley, but he abandons Mignon. The Charivari family (not in the play) attempt to kill Fevvers and are kicked out of the circus. Buffo goes crazy and tries to kill Jack.
After the performance Fevvers goes to meet the Grand Duke (Mr. Sugar?) and narrowly escapes his advances into a Fabergé egg (jewelled egg) as the train leaves the station.

Siberia: A section completely omitted from the play, the circus is now in Siberia. Their train is attacked by people who think Fevvers can help them contact the Tsar. The whole circus is taken to a convicts' encampment, but Walser is rescued by some escapees. Walser has amnesia, he flees into the woods and is taken in by a shaman. Meanwhile Fevvers reveals she cannot help them, Lizzie makes the clowns put on a show for the now depressed convicts. A blizzard comes and blows the clowns and convicts away. The circus tries to find civilization and come across a music school, taking shelter with the Maestro. Fevvers and Lizzie leave to search for Walser. Kearney leaves to find civilization in order to build another circus. Mignon, the Princess, and Samson remain at the music school. Fevvers finds Walser and the book ends with them together as the new century arrives.

Character List and their Name Meanings:

7 Steps of Design: Two → Analysis

1. **Vesta** → Named after Vesta Tilley + the Goddess of the hearth, home, and family (*Ancestry, Year Unknown)*
2. **Curtain finger** → unknown (chorus?)
3. **Windjammer** → a merchant sailing ship, or a musician playing a wind instrument, or a person who talks excessively but says nothing of value *(OED, Year Unknown)*
4. **Jack Walser** → in the book he is from California originally
5. **Chorus of Creatures of the Theatre**
6. **Fevvers** → in the book she is Sophie Fevvers, described as 6 feet 2 inches tall, curvy, and with peroxide blonde hair. Her name is spelt in the cockney pronunciation of the word 'feathers' *(Green's Dictionary of Sland, Year Unknown)*
7. **Lizzie** → short for 'Elizabeth', meaning 'God's promise', in the Bible, Elizabeth if the mother of John the Baptist *(Bagg, 2024)*
8. **Ma Nelson** → connection to Lord Nelson and Ma Joad (from Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck)
9. **Chorus of Whores**
10. **Mr. Sugar** → a fused character from the book of both The Grand Duke and Christian Rosencreutz
11. **Colonel Kearney** → derives from Cearnach/Conall, meaning victorious + triumphant *(Roelofs, 2012)*
12. **Sybil**
13. **Ma Nelson's brother**
14. **Strong Man** → Samson from Hebrew Bible, champion of the Israelites, he has supernatural strength in his hair which his mistress cuts off *(McNamara, 2024)*
15. **Princess** → in the book, Mignon and the Princess are confirmed love interest, 'princess' has elegance and a separation, whilst 'Rhodora' is a type of flower
16. **Buffo the Clown** → a clown/buffoon, an Italian name, a male singer of comic roles in opera *(Merriam-Webster, Year Unknown)*
17. **Mignon** → name means small, pretty, dainty, could refer to her as a piece of meat *(Collins, Year Unknown)*
18. **Tiger 1 and 2**
19. **Mignon's mum, dad, sister, and the soldiers living in her town**
20. **Buffo's monkey**
21. **Chorus of clowns**
22. **Buffo's dead mother, dead wife, and dead child**
23. **Buffo's barmaid**

Vesta:

(Peskett, Year Unknown)



- Talks in the voice of a man
- Dressed immaculately like a man: top hat, tails, and cane
- Is a woman (goes by she/her)
- Has a woman?
- Only interacts with Jack → is she real? She could be a narrator and separate from the story
- Is she omnipotent? As she knows everything about Jack. Is she controlling things? She introduces Jack to Fevvers (she is the tempter)
- Vesta makes Jack into a clown (make up)
- She sings
- Vesta means a match → she sparks events
- Vesta Tilly is a singer from 1864-1952, who dressed in male clothing
- She appears at the beginning and the end and lets the events play out in between
- Vesta appears when Mignon gets beat up, is she a symbol of female endangerment/empowerment?
- She appears to always be on stage as she only enters at the beginning and never exits
- She is like a ringmaster (she disappears when Kearney's there)

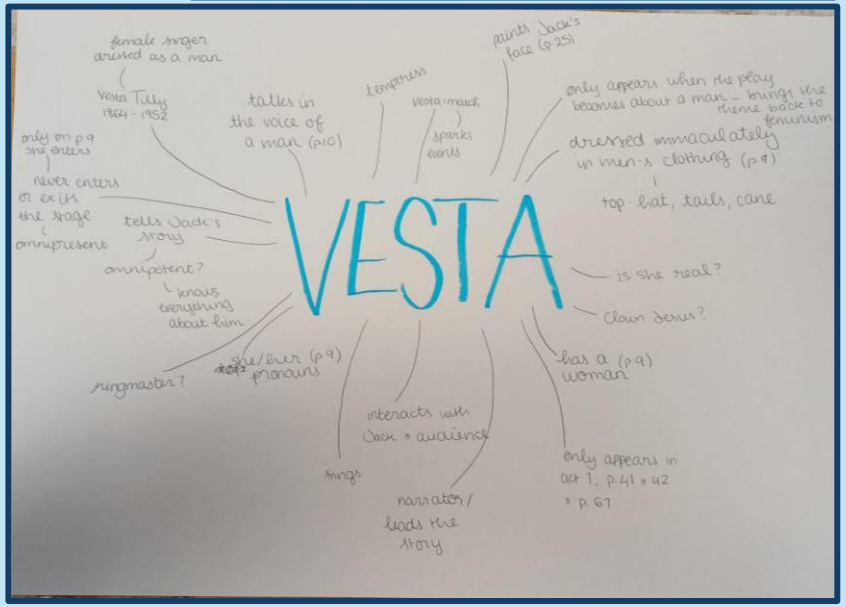


(Peskett, Year Unknown)

Vesta Tilley

According to *Peskett (Year Unknown),* Vesta Tilley, originally Matilda Powles, was born 1864 and died 1952. She was one of the most popular and successful stars of the Edwardian Music hall. Her act was to dress as a variety of male characters. She was a comic performer who did skits and songs. Vesta was the most highly paid female entertainer in Britain before the first world war.
Started performing at 3 and by 11 she was the main breadwinner. She chose the name after the popular match brand.

Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton →

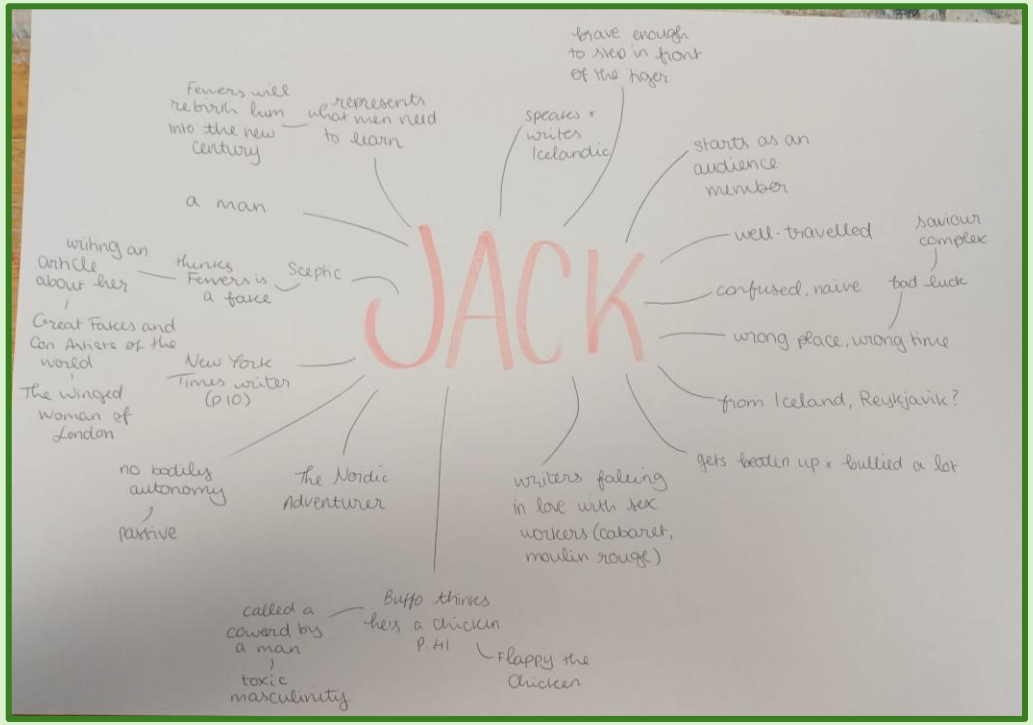


Jack:

- A theatre critic/journalist for the New York Times
- Begins as an audience member
- Is from Iceland and described as a ‘Nordic Adventurer’, writes in Icelandic
- He’s travelled many places and seen a lot but is unfazed
- A sceptic writing about fakes and cons, critical and cynical of tricks and magic
- Never understands and is always confused, or is he always misunderstood?
- Buffo sees him as a chicken and Fevvers calls him cowardly, although the only one to really display bravery
- Jack is comfortable displaying vulnerability, naked a lot of the time but never has sex, does he also have no autonomy over his body?

- Fevvers wants to transform him, I think he is already the modern man she wants
- He went to New York in search of more or the American Dream
- Brave and morally right, saves Mignon and doesn’t sleep with her when she offers herself to him (he doesn’t want to be ‘rewarded’)
- Aware of time and questions the clock being wrong
- Bad relationship with Lizzie
- Works for free, he is exploited and beat up a lot

Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton
→



Windjammer:

- Genderless?
- Only 2 lines, both ‘no’, claims to not see the fire, is he supporting their decision or can he really not see the events happening?
- Why does he choose to only speak then? He also only interacts with Jack, Vesta’s assistant?
- Windjammer is a button accordion instrument, and also a merchant sailor ship
- Windjammer can be a person who plays a wind instrument in a war
- Last Irish commercial vessel 1899 ??
- Windjammer can be someone who talks a lot but says nothing of importance, the Windjammer does the opposite
- Replaced by a radio at the end, showing the move into the new age and automation of everything
- Nina Simone (singer and civil rights activist, 1933-2003) → out of their time period, is the void timeless?

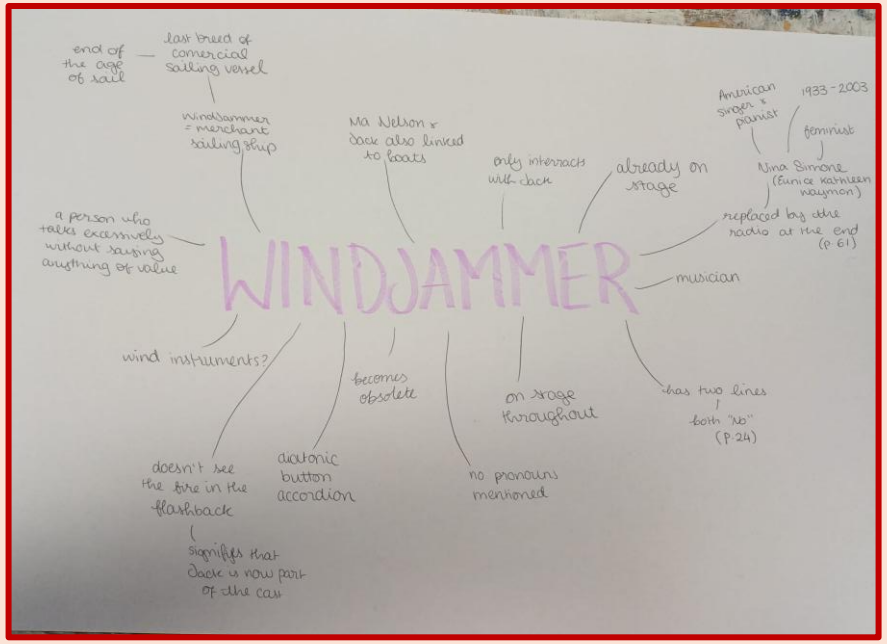
Sources on Windjammer from Anne Hyde

The Maine Windjammer Association (2022) states that Windjammer vessels are traditionally rigged - everything can be done by hand. Significant as the windjammer character represents the old age and a time before automation, shown through his replacement at the end with a radio.



(Bordogna, 2020)

Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton →



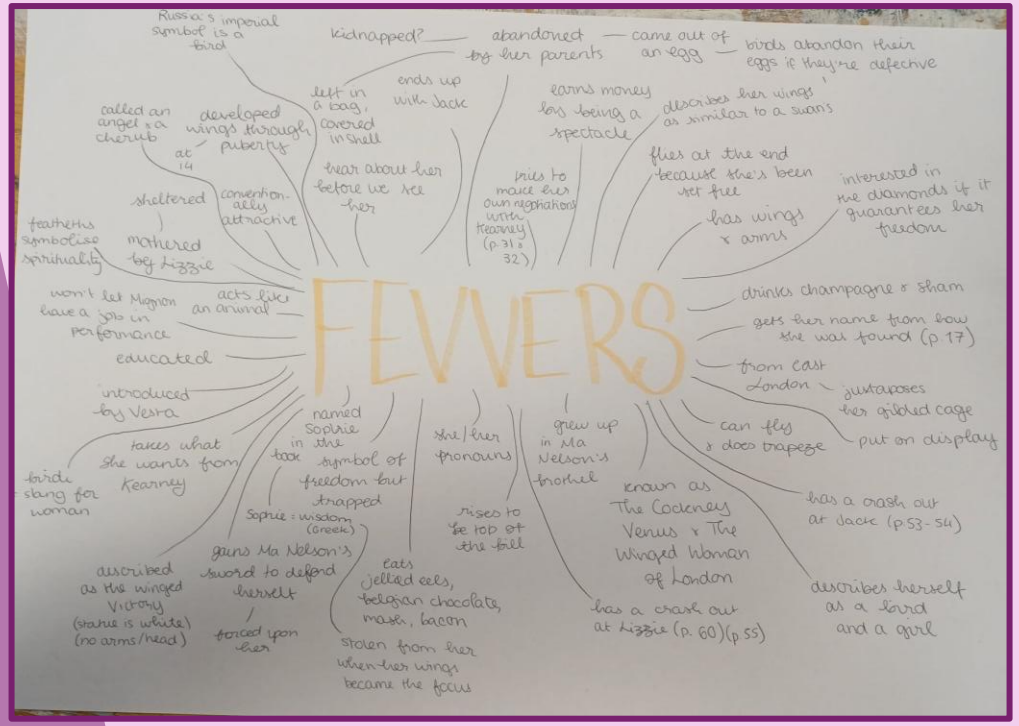
Fevvers:

- Has wings, she grew them at 14, a part of puberty, she has arms as well as wings
- Called the ‘cockney Venus’ and the ‘winged victory’ and the ‘winged woman of London’
- We hear about her before we see her, she is the mystery of the show, she is Jack’s subject as well as ours
- Grew up in a brothel in East London, found on the doorstep, adopted by Lizzie and Ma Nelson, no parents
- Hatches from an egg, birds abandon their eggs when people have tampered with them, they know they won’t survive, or they know something is wrong with it
- At least 18, talks of adulthood
- Her name is also her special attribute, she is reduced to her wings
- She sings of a cage and dreams of freedom, constantly fighting against limitations and Mr. Sugar + other controlling men
- She also does the trapeze in her act, does she have room to fly in performance spaces?
- Ma Nelson gives her the sword to defend herself and become a symbol for female empowerment and freedom, forced into this position therefore trapping her in who she should be for them and all women
- Contradicts herself by marrying Jack/going off with him at the end
- She wants security and independence
- Has a child tantrum at the end, shouting at and insulting everyone, even starts to consider selling her wings
- Acts like an animal, eats like one, has she been dehumanised through her objectification?
- Eats jellied eels, champagne, baby sham, Belgian chocolate
- They want to ‘powder her white’ trying to create an illusion and emphasis of purity and angelic nature

Winged Victory

The Winged Victory of Samothrace, a Greek Hellenistic art piece (statue)
Made as an offering to the Gods
Originally placed at a height so people could see her from afar
It's a beautiful and powerful piece and is a perfect analogy for Fevvers’ character. The lack of head on the statue centres the power on her wings and her body. *(Louvre, Year Unknown, image and information)*





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Lizzie:

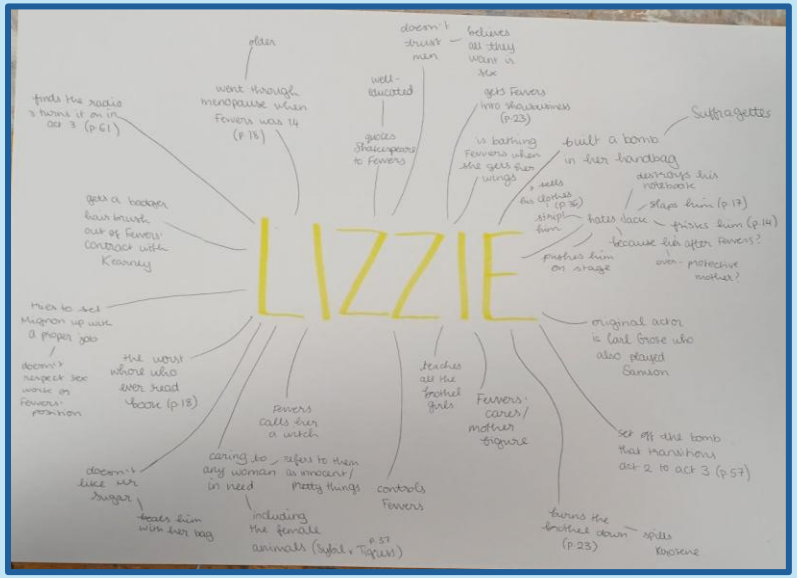
- Used to be the ‘worst whore who ever read book’ but retires to become Fevvers guardian, dedicates her life to looking after Fevvers, foreshadows the ending as she claims she will look after her until the world is blown to bits
- Builds a bomb → connection to the suffragettes, creating shock in society to get their message across
- Referred to as a witch by Fevvers, possible misandrist, dislikes Jack a lot
- Gets something out of Fevvers contract without working, is she also using Fevvers?
- Bomb handbag - carries this bag throughout, has she kept the bag Fevvers was found in?
- ‘Menopause’ she’s roughly in her 40s/50s
- Seen as a mother pigeon the way she pushes Fevvers off the roof to fly
- Wants Fevvers to be single and avoid male control, overprotective
- Original cast has a man playing her
- Caring towards Mignon and bathes her, calls her pigeon the same way she sees Fevvers
- Manipulates Jack sleeping with Mignon causing many problems
- In commando costume at one point, like a soldier
- Enters like ‘zorro’
- Caring towards animals too, like the pig
- Repeats ‘I know what you want and you’re not going to get it’
- Destroys Jack’s notebook, protecting Fevvers
- Strips Jack down to sell his clothes, exposing him
- She is the one that starts the brothel fire, any suffragette fires?
- Teaches the brothel girls that men deserve punishment
- The one to find the radio and turn on Nina Simone
- Alludes to education and financial independence for all women

(McArdell, 2021)
→



According to *Sanderson (2025)*, Zorro is a fictional character created in 1919 by Johnston McCulley
He is a masked character with a sword who defends the poor, a vigilante
Lizzie is compared to him as she herself is a vigilante protecting women, although her weapon is a bomb, very similar to the suffragette

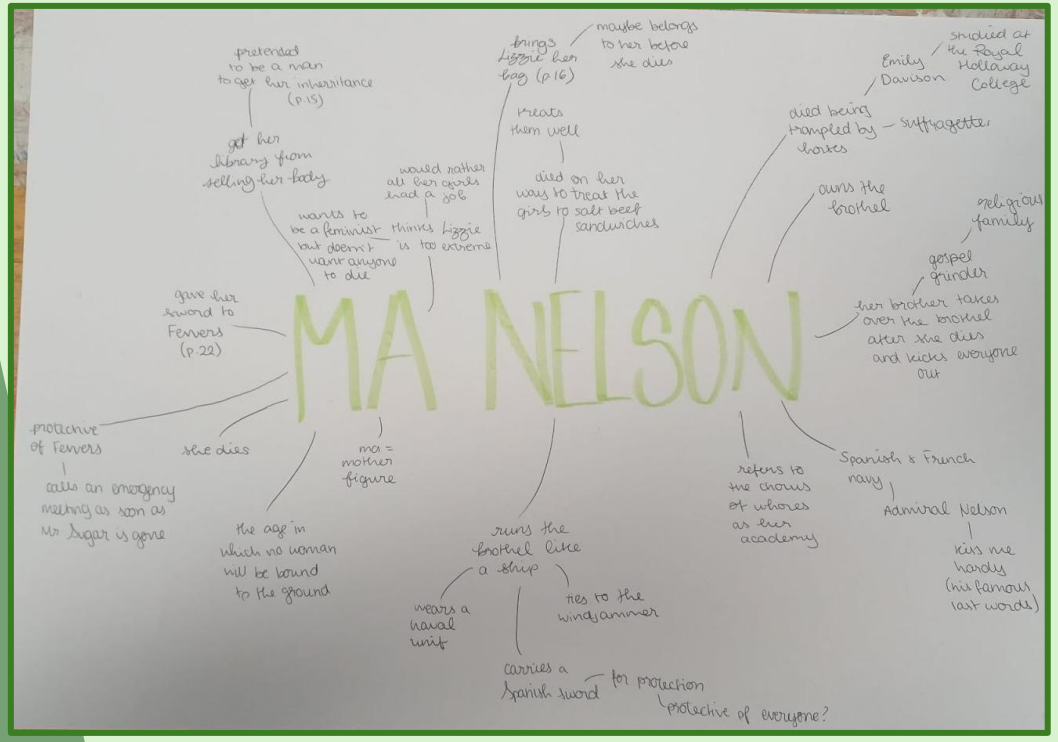
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→



Ma Nelson:

- Referred to as the ship's captain and has a sword
- Owns a brothel and runs it like a ship
- Connection to Admiral Nelson, who beat the Spanish navies - she has a Spanish sword
- 'Kiss me hardy' Nelson's famous last words, Ma Nelson dies in a simple but tragic accident
- Run over by horses like one of the suffragettes (Emily Davison), she dies going to get the girls food, one last good intention
- Gets her library from a guy she sleeps with, even her education is from selling her body
- Ma Nelson is the one who brings in Lizzie's bag
- Celebrates Fevvers first flight but delegates parenting duties to Lizzie
- Gives Fevvers her sword, new women are not bound to the ground
- A matriarch to the brothel girls
- Her brother is a 'gospel grinder', from a religious family and contrasting lifestyles

- Makes the decision that Fevvers will never sell her body
- Calls Fevvers an angel, sees her as a miracle
- Refers to brothel girls as her academy, not reducing them to their work, encouraging them to want an education and a stable life
- Sees Lizzie's views as too extreme and criticises her teaching the young girls, prioritising women's safety over the misery of men



Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton

Kearney and Sybil:

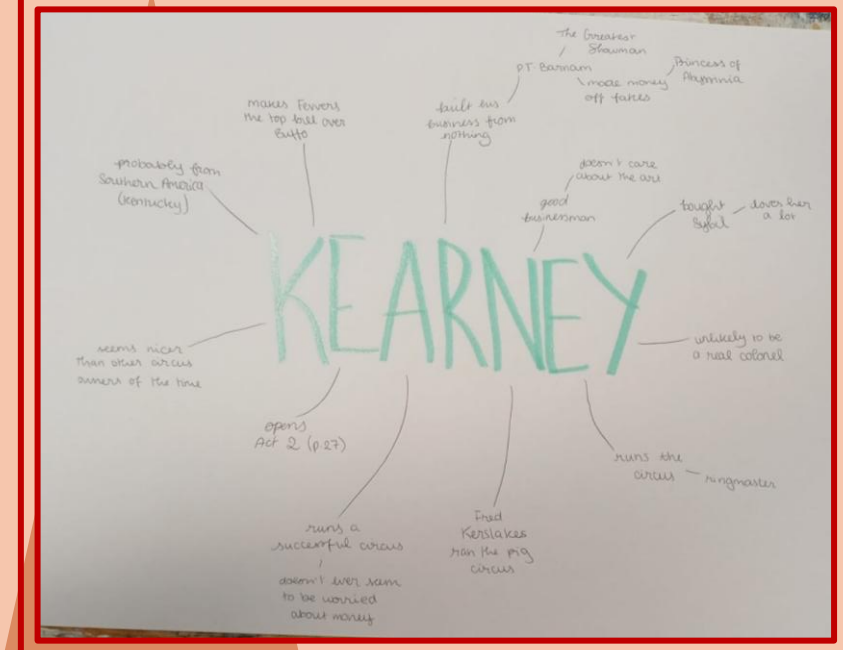
Kearney:

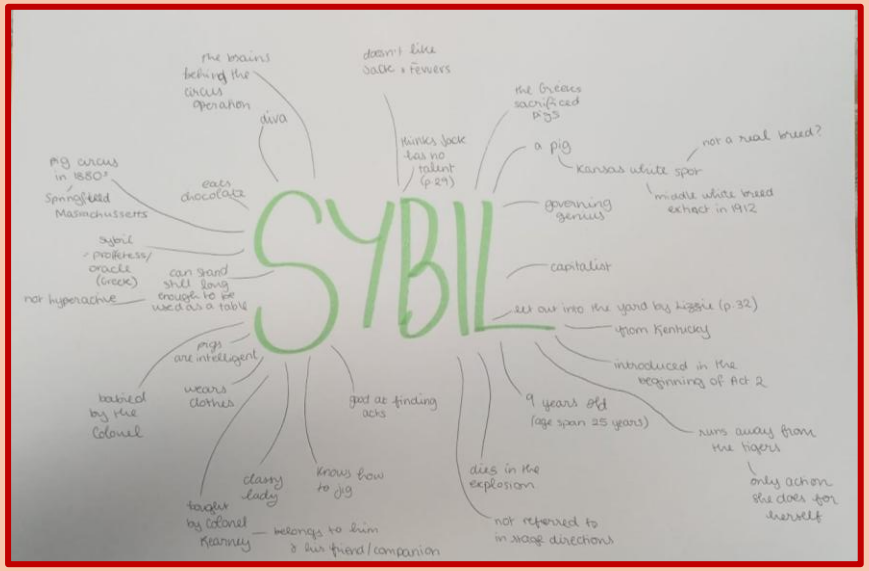
Circus owner/ring master → quite rich now as can afford Fevvers' requests

- Not as stereotypically abusive as other circus owners of the time
- Loves his pig genuinely
- Pig circus ran by Kerslakes → similar to Kearney
- Probably American, maybe from Kentucky
- Liar for entertainment, a bad influence and gives Buffo alcohol → a businessman at heart
- Is he that dissimilar to Mr. Sugar
- Built his business from nothing, suggesting a poor upbringing
- Barnham and other circus owners of the time
- Risks tensions by making Fevvers top of the bill
- His name's meaning suggests he will continue to be successful after the explosion

Sybil:

- A pig, Kansas white spot → her breed doesn't exist, is it a lie to make her seem a special breed?
- Belongs to Kearney, bought by him, close relationship with him
- Dies at the end from the explosion
- Is a psychic pig, can spot talent
- Doesn't like Fevvers, can she see the trouble Fevvers will bring?
- 9 years old
- Her name in Greek means Prophetess or Oracle
- She is the brains behind the circus
- Knows how to jig but doesn't perform
- Gets given chocolate and let out into the yard and used as a desk - well behaved
- Pigs are extremely intelligent



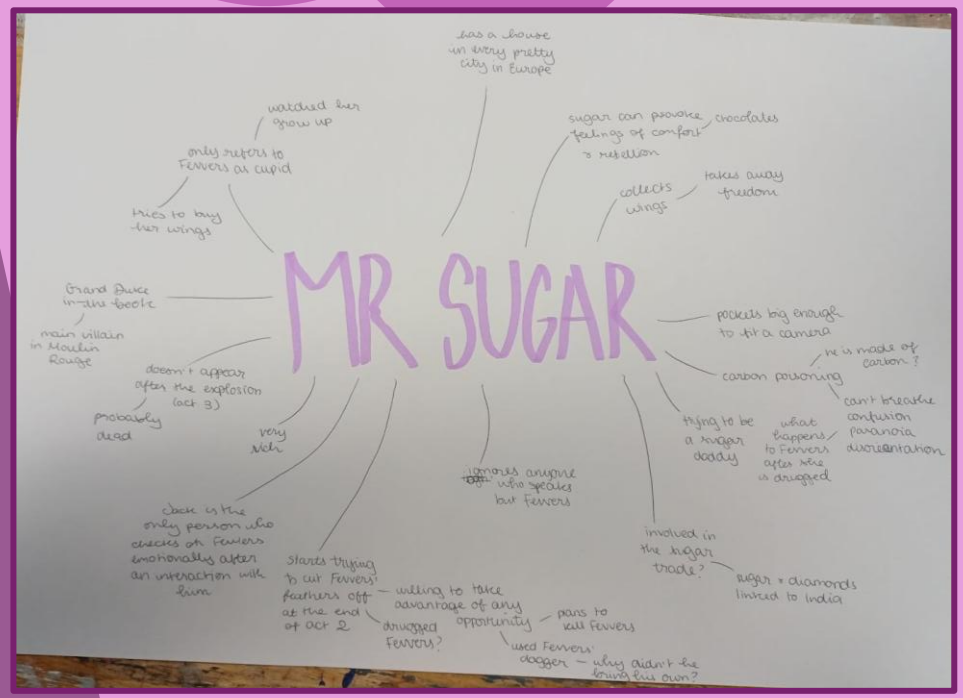


Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton

Mr. Sugar:

- Is a collector of wings, taking away animals' freedom and power
- Has a lot of money/diamonds → or does he? As we never see them
- Always calls Fevvers cupid, suggested he drugs her drink at the end
- Ignores everyone else and only addresses Fevvers
- A stalker who watches her grow up and follows her everywhere, he has an obsession (realistic to performers gaining stalkers)
- Not forceful towards her until the end when he hears her declare she doesn't want her wings
- Sees money as being able to buy anything he wants, he is greedy
- Attempts to cut off her wings with her own dagger
- Is he in Fevvers' head? Always appearing randomly and at appropriate times, always where she is
- Died by Lizzie's bomb?
- Has a house in every country in Europe
- Diamonds were found in India at the time, he could be in the sugar business which would have been extremely profitable at this time
- In the book he is called the Grand Duke, in Moulin Rouge the villain is the Grand Duke
- Brings a gag to silence her
- He takes her picture, to prepare for his collection? To threaten her? To always own a piece of her?
- Jack is the only one to check on Fevvers emotionally after the first interaction

Mr. Sugar → the use of the word sugar creates connotations of sweetness but also a vulgarity to the character, and a fictional/hyperbolic element making him feel exaggerated and overwhelmingly villainous



Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton

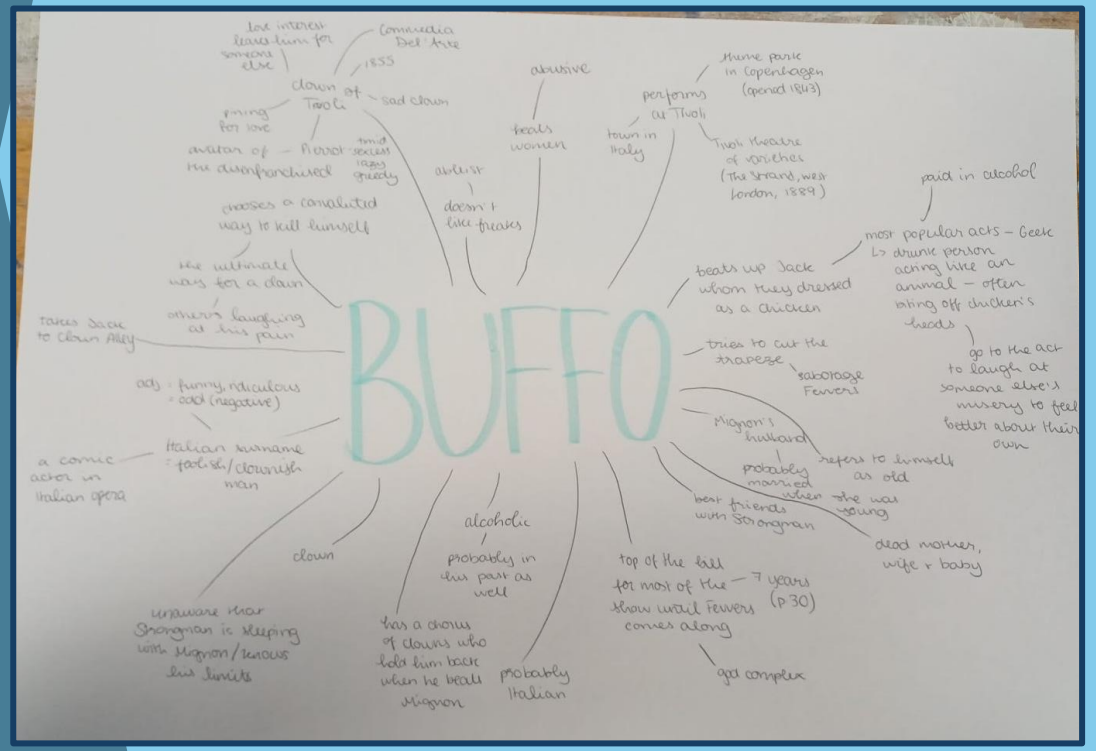
Buffo:

- ‘Geeks’ in the circus were people forced to behave like animals, their main trick being to decapitate chickens with their mouths for audiences to laugh at, they were paid in alcohol, this is very similar to Buffo (who dresses Jack as a chicken → toxic masculinity)
- Physically abuses his girlfriend/wife Mignon
- Beats up Jack but not Samson, for sleeping with Mignon, he knows Samson is stronger than him
- Depressed and an alcoholic
- Wife died in childbirth along with child, mother died the day he buried them, he has a lot of grief and history
- His death is the ultimate clown joke for people to laugh at the ultimate amount of pain he could be in
- Has a huge ego, his praise is all he has, needs to be top of the bill, sabotages Fevvers, this leads him to suicide
- Been in Kearney’s circus 7 years
- Jealous and violent
- Buffo means foolish and clownish man
- Talks a lot about heaven and God in a cynical/curious way
- Tivoli is a town in Italy, a theme park in Copenhagen, and a theatre of variety in 1889
- Buffo adj. Induces laughter due to its peculiarity/in a funny and negative way
- Possible age gap relationship → to feel power
- Tivoli clown (Pierrot) love interest leaves him for someone else, popular pantomime character
- Sexist and greedy

(Hreno, 2015)
→







Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton

Mignon:

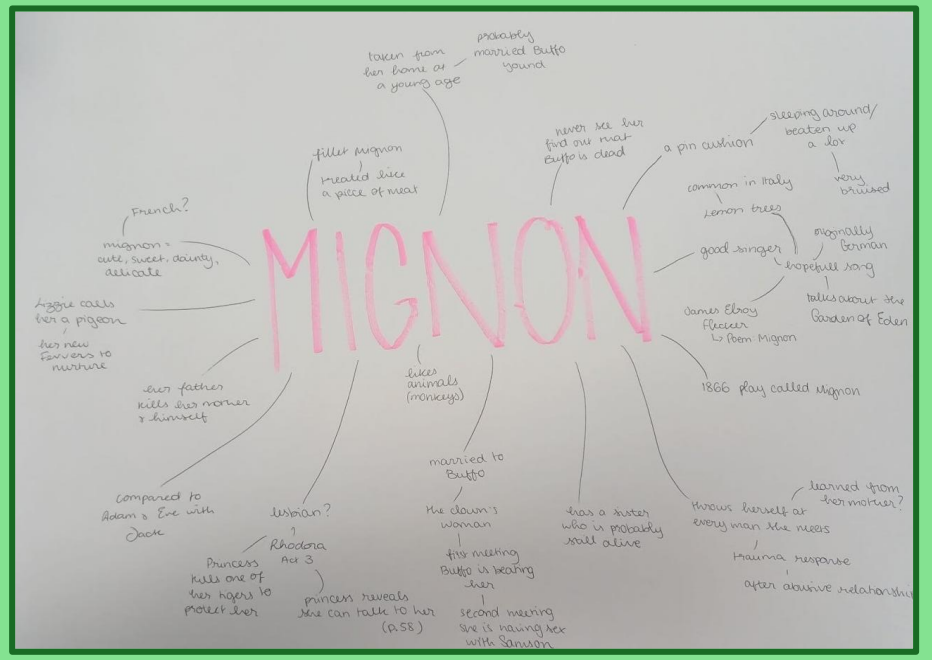
- We meet her through Buffo beating her up, she's in an abusive relationship
- Her dad murders her mum and then kills himself, her mum cheated on her dad
- Mignon liked Buffo's monkey
- 1866 Mignon → about Stockholm syndrome, does she feel this way towards male saviours due to her childhood
- Described as delicate, dainty, cute, sweet
- The song she sings is a German song and from a poem also, where is it referring to, Italy?
- Filet Mignon, gets treated like a piece of meat and the tiger goes for her constantly
- Described as a pin cushion, could be someone sleeping around or someone who takes anger and abuse from everyone without giving back
- Princess comforts her after tiger attacks her
- Good singer, her song is hopeful of a better place
- A paragraph dedicated to the layers of bruising she has from being used and abused by men
- Finds safety in women
- Compared to Eve and mentions the garden of Eden

Collins (Year Unknown) defines Mignon's name as delicately formed, this relates back to the things she went through in childhood creating a fragile adult. Mignon is also an 1866 opera by Ambroise Thomas, in which the character Mignon is bought by a man and as a result is given her 'freedom'. (*Buja, 2021)*



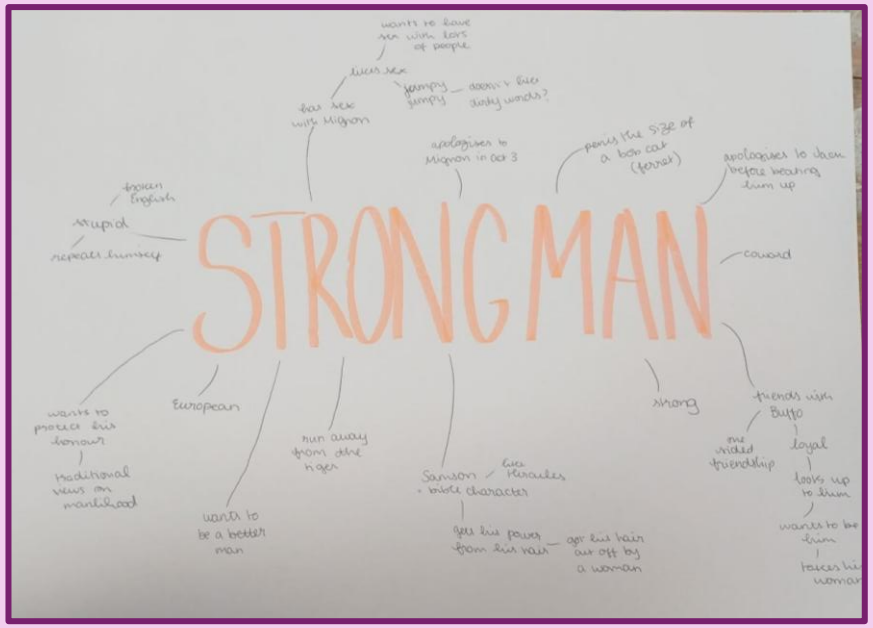
(*Mary Evans Picture Library, Year Unknown*)

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Strongman Samson:

- From Europe, probably Eastern Europe, maybe Slavic
- Has a lot of muscle, and a big ego/lots of vanity
- Penis the size of a pole cat
- Kills Buffo without realising → is he lying about being dumb and playing it up as part of his act and in order to get what he wants?
- Second language difficulties in communicating
- Wants to protect his honour but runs away from the tiger putting Mignon at risk
- Apologises to Mignon at the end, does he go through a character arc?
- He has loyalty, apologises to Jack before beating him up
- Same name as a Bible character, might have long hair

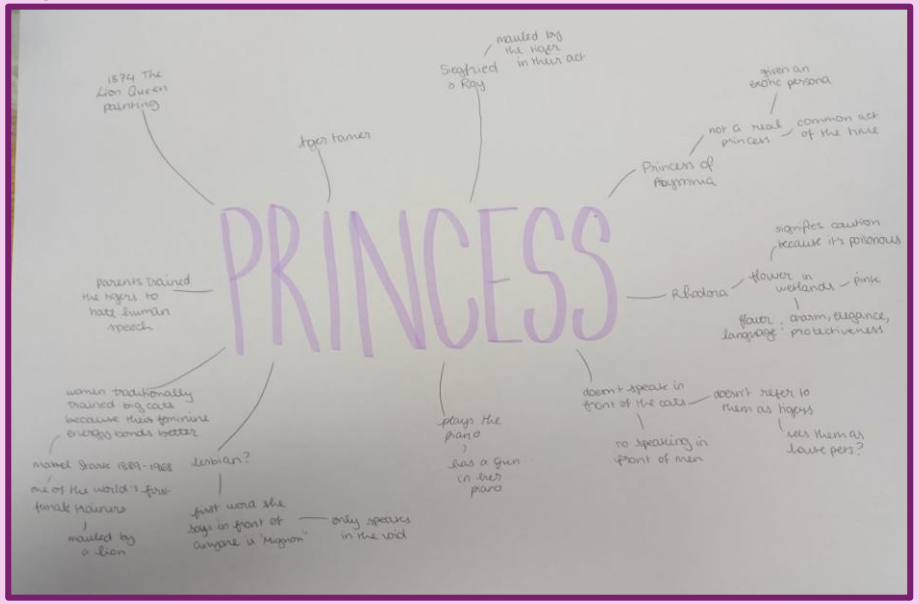


Mind maps created as a class, drawn and photographed Annie Picton

← →

Princess of Abyssinia:

- Real name is Rhodora → a toxic flower
- Actually from Marseilles
- Princess remains silent for the cats like women remain silent for men
- Loves her tigers but kills one to protect Mignon
- Using Abyssinia to add mystery as a land not well known to most
- 1899 small war where Italy tries to take the land and fails, if Buffo is Italian then the Princess wins in saving Mignon
- Claimed to have her tongue bitten out, is it not true? Or is the void not real and so she can speak there?
- Very calm in stressful situations, spraying water on the tigers and calling them cats (domesticated)
- Charm and elegance
- Is a pianist



Chorus:

Chorus of Clowns:
- They don't speak in this scene, why?
- Only in clown alley, accompanying Buffo and inaudibly interacting with him
- Like henchmen or a gang, restraining Jack on Buffo's orders
- They tell Buffo the lie that Jack slept with Mignon, they are gossipers or troublemakers, like the original creatures they push the story along
- Are they offspring of the creatures or are the creatures evolving throughout to fit the story being told and oversee events.
- Are they all connected to Vesta or separate entities?

Chorus of Creatures of the Theatre:
- Interact with Jack, criticising him for criticising them, call him bitter
- Interested in the meaning of theatre
- Are they born out of the theatre?
- Push importance of suspending your disbelief, a detached entity from the story, they are involved with the concept of theatre itself
- Nothing in the room can happen without them, do they create all of the theatre?
- 'Creatures' + creators
- They repeat the songs others sing, maybe they don't create they just provide people with platforms to tell their stories

Chorus of Whores:
- Interact with Lizzie and Ma Nelson to reenact the moment Fevvers arrived on their doorstep
- Accompany the brothel scene, acting as the brothel girls
- Having their education in the library
- Create a song for Fevvers' first flight: 'fly for all of us' signifying how she will become a symbol of freedom for all women
- They repeat what Ma Nelson says for emphasis and encouragement, 'She will carry Ma Nelson's sword'
- Repetition of 'we will be free. Amen', almost like a religious choir

Locations Throughout The Play:

1. London, Wapping (high street), the Theatre/Playhouse (dressing room), London Hospital, the Brothel (garden, library, doorstep, street, roof, parlour)
2. Europe
3. Iceland, Reykjavik in 1899 and time of publishing
4. Calcutta Market
5. Kathmandu
6. Setzuan
7. Morocco
8. Bedouin (Syria)
9. Damascus Road
10. New York
11. Music halls of Europe
12. Cabaret of Europe
13. Circus (circus ring), yard, backstage, upstage, offstage
14. Russia, St. Petersburg



(*Hreno, 2014)*

(*Saint-Petersburg, Year Unknown)*
→



15. Kansas
16. Lexington, Kentucky (Kearney's school + home
17. Abyssinia, Abyssinian Jungle
18. Ireland
19. Bridal Suites in hotels, foyer of Fevvers' hotel
20. Mignon's town square, home, pond, town
21. Clown alley
22. Tivoli
23. Copenhagen
24. Bar (Buffo visits)
25. Land where the lemon trees grow
26. Eden
27. Marseilles
28. Void

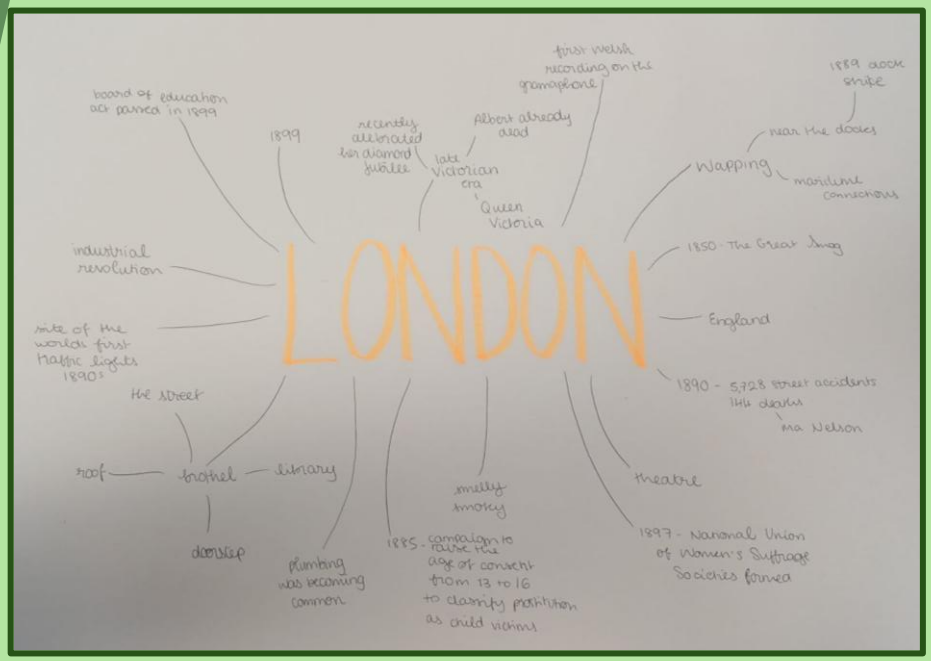
London:

7 Steps of Design: Three → Research

1880s and 1890s General Aesthetic and History:

- Wapping is East London, near the London docks
- End of the Victorian era (Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, death of Albert)
- 1850s smog
- Industrial revolution = pollution and factories
- Rapidly increasing population
- Lack of hygiene in the working class and in the streets, *Grigg (2008)* states cleanliness was seen as a display of respectability and social standing (not accessible to working classes), soot, ash, and smoke filled the skies, whilst slaughterhouse waste was chucked into the streets, and overcrowded graveyards stunk of rotting corpses dug up to make space for new ones.
- Plumbing becoming more common in middle and upper class households
- Small pox, measles, and cholera prevalent in these conditions (at epidemic rates in 1832 and 1848)
- Regular bath time was a habit of middle class families
- Extreme class divide = children working in workhouses and factories, unhealthy and unsafe working conditions
- 1899 board of education passed (*Education in the UK, Year Unknown)* the president appointed by the Queen, including inspections of schools
- Plumbing becoming more common
- London society for women's suffrage, uniting in 1897 to become the United National Union of Women's Suffrage Society

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→



(Augier, Year Unknown)
→

Travel Bath, 1852



According to the *Wellington College Hangzhou Library (2022),* in 1881, Peabody built an estate in Whitechapel to house working people, although this was not enough to solve the problems faced in the East End

London:

(*Transport for London Museum, Year Unknown*)





(*London Walks, 2025*)



(*English Heritage, Year Unknown*)

(*Transport for London Museum, Year Unknown*)





London Walks (2025) states Victorian London had a gothic revival and an eclectic new style different to the previous refined Georgian era
Bay windows, elaborate entrance porches
Roof tiles and fireplaces

English Heritage (Year Unknown) suggests:
- More people were benefitting from cheaper imported foods
- More prosperous working-class people may have even been connected to water
- Brothels probably weren't connected to running water or gas
- Education became compulsory up to the age of ten in 1880!
- The Victorian age was the first age where childhood was seen as a precious thing

Fleet Street around 1880:
- Lots of brick housing and building
- Cramped and small streets in working class areas
- Wide roads for horse and carriages
- Cobblestones

Brothels:
According to *Mayhew (1862)* some girls obtained 20 to 30 pounds a week, those who frequented theatres and music halls obtained 10 to 12 pounds a week

Unfortunately, *Boudoir (2016)* suggests many of these women were not choosing to work in a brothel, some were trafficked and trapped there through alcohol and money
The desperation of poverty led many to believe it was their only choice, and some to be manipulated into thinking it was the best choice
These brothels were run by men and their wives
Stories like Adeline Tanner's led to the advocation on a law to protect young girls in 1881-2
- Although this might have still been happening around Fevvers and Ma Nelson's time, Ma Nelson's brothel is rare as it is run by a woman who respects her workers and wants them to have as much a normal life as possible



(*Revisiting Dickens, Year Unknown*)



(*Revisiting Dickens, Year Unknown*)

Russia - St. Petersburg:

General aesthetic/architecture/lifestyles:

- Tsar at the time was Nicholas II and he was the last Emperor of Russia
- The capital city was St. Petersburg
- 1899 students strike (*Kassow, 1989, Chapter 3, p. 89)* lasting until 1905
- The Ciniselli circus, first permanent circus built in stone, 1877
- Train from London to St. Petersburg *(Wikipedia, 2024)* they would have had to get a ferry and several trains but would have been able to travel by rail all the way to Russia
- Massive growth in cities *(Matgamma, 2024)* experiencing something similar to London, industry expanded along with populations in cities, many of the working class were still half-peasant and retained control on some peasant landholding, often only temporary workers from the countryside. The works of Marx were circulated and reception of them began to increase. The 1891-92 famine swept across Russia. 1896-97 St. Petersburg workers staged mass strikes
- 1849 Russia opened training schools for circus performers, so they weren't predominantly travellers anymore
- Capital city of Russia at the time
- Tsar Nicholas II, the last Emperor of Russia
- Wintertime, December = snowy, dark, and cold

Zakharova (Year Unknown) says The Ciniselli family came to Russia in 1846.
Lejars comes to St Petersburg and builds his circus next to theirs, an idea of competitive culture in the circus world.
1877 permanent circus built for Ciniselli family - success found - most popular circus founded in St Petersburg (of the time)

(Monovisions, 2015)





1672-1725 – Peter the Great

According to *Nikiforov (2025)*, during the second northern war (1700-21) Peter the Great/Peter I, launched attacks and gained control of the delta. In May 1703, he laid the foundation stones for the Peter Paul Fortress himself. This date is now the founding date of St. Petersburg. Around the shipyard and fortress Peter began building a new city to serve as his 'window on Europe'.
In 1712 it became the capital of Russia.
In 1726, St. Petersburg was handling 90% of Russia's foreign trade.
He reigned as tsar jointly with his brother, Ivan V, and then alone from 1696 until his death



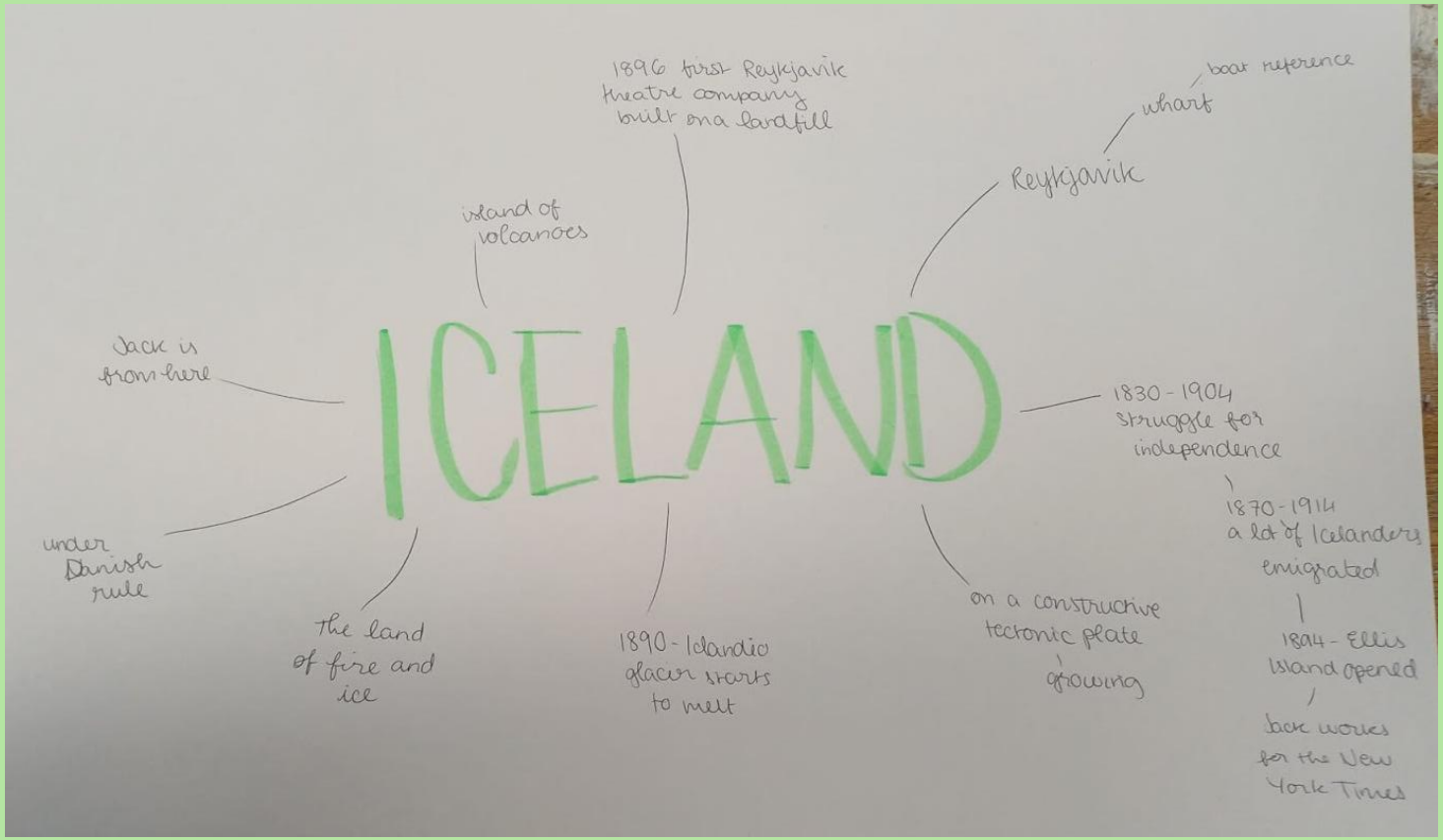
(Monovisions, 2015)



←*(Zakharova, Year Unknown)*

Iceland – Reykjavik:

- Reykjavik is the capital city
- Jack Walser is from Iceland
- 1830-1904 struggle for independence (*Kristinsson and Mattíasson, 2025)*
- 1896 built the 1st Reykjavik theatre company on a landfill (*Forsås-Scott, 2021)*
- Wharf mentioned, after 1880 fishing became the biggest export, the 1880 lifting of Danish trading monopolies meant the growth of Icelandic merchants (*Hanson, 1928)*
- On a tectonic plate so constantly growing/shifting (*Campervan Reykjavik, 2023)*
- 1890 Icelandic glacier begins to melt
- Mass emigration from 1870-1901 to North America, New York specifically popular, which is where Jack moves to. (*Büntgen, Eggertsson, Oppenheimer, 2024)*



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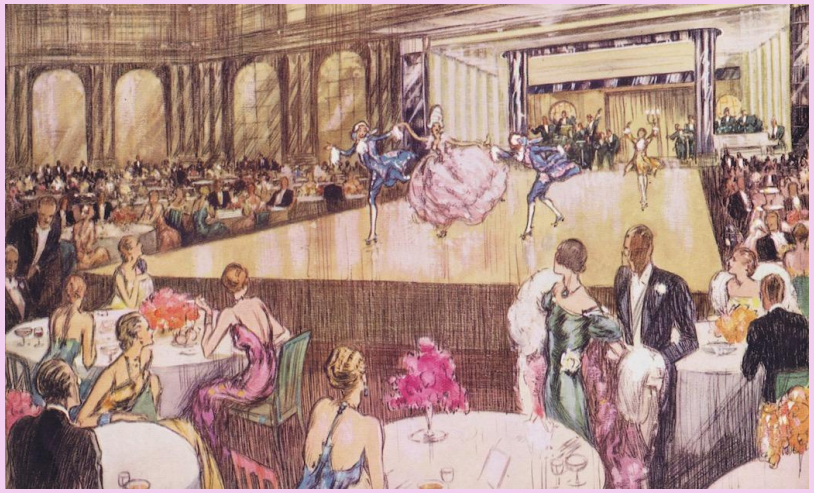
Music Halls and Cabaret:

According to *Odden (2017)* music halls came about mid 1800s, had a lot of hidden trouble of scandals, fires, crime, concerns about alcohol and prostitution.
They developed and grew from taverns/pubs
By 1866 London had 2-300 small music halls and 30 large ones
Although beautifully decorated, until the 1890s audiences were primarily working and lower-middle class, mostly men but all ages could go. The performances tended to be full of spectacles and outrageous costumes
Outside of London in areas women were employed, they were a usual customer at music halls, inside London any woman unaccompanied was assumed to be a prostitute.



(Scott, Year Unknown)

By the 1870s a star system was in place, and some people were well known performers. (*Scott, Year Unknown)*



(Jazz Age Club (2010)

Cabaret

Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2025) say Cabaret possibly began in France in the 1880s
Began as a small club with an audience seated closely around the stage. Similar to music halls, acts and performances were mocking the upper classes. It had a variety of acts, not just music, including poetry and comedy skits. The most famous French Cabaret being Moulin Rouge opening in 1889 as a dance hall where the first can-can was performed.



(Anarte, 2018)

Circus:

- A circus ring is ideally 42 feet in diameter. This is the optimum size to enable the use of centrifugal force to balance on a horse's back! 1780 roofs were introduced to help enjoy performances all year round. Philip Astley (1742-1814) was the 'father of modern circus'.
- Mr. Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) coined the word 'circus'.
- Those that were permanent buildings were incredibly ornate inside.
- Andrew Ducrow (1793-1842) who introduced scenery changes, beautiful costumes and dramatic effects (e.g. thunder). Image from the link above.

V&A (Year Unknown)



(*V&A, Year Unknown) and (Jando, Year Unknown)*



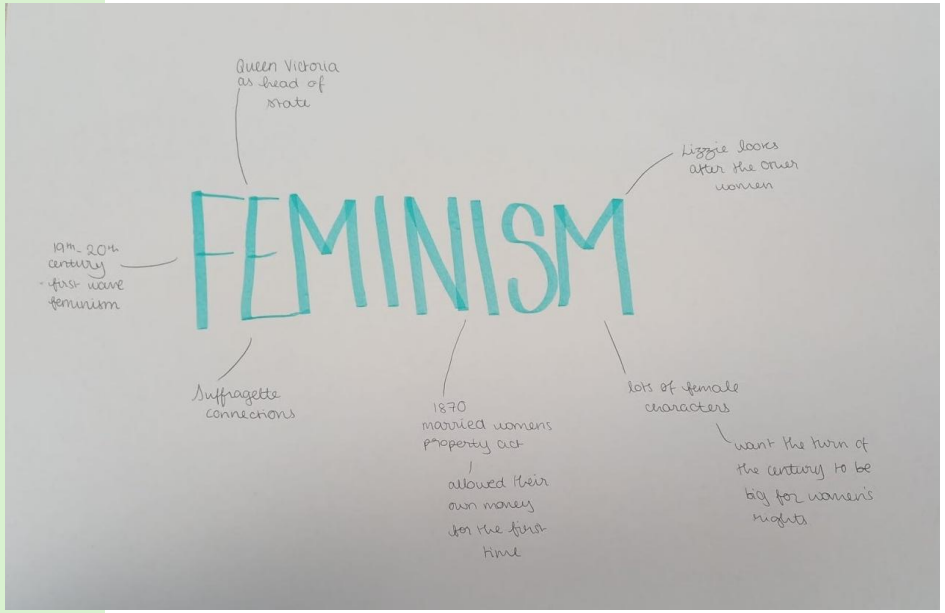
Themes – Feminism:

Feminism:

- Queen is the head of state, although she did not approve of suffragettes and feminism
- Suffragette connection to the play, societies formed
- A lot of female characters wanting the new century to be a new start for women's rights
- 1st wave of feminism
- Married women's property act in 1870 meaning they can own property and keep their own money



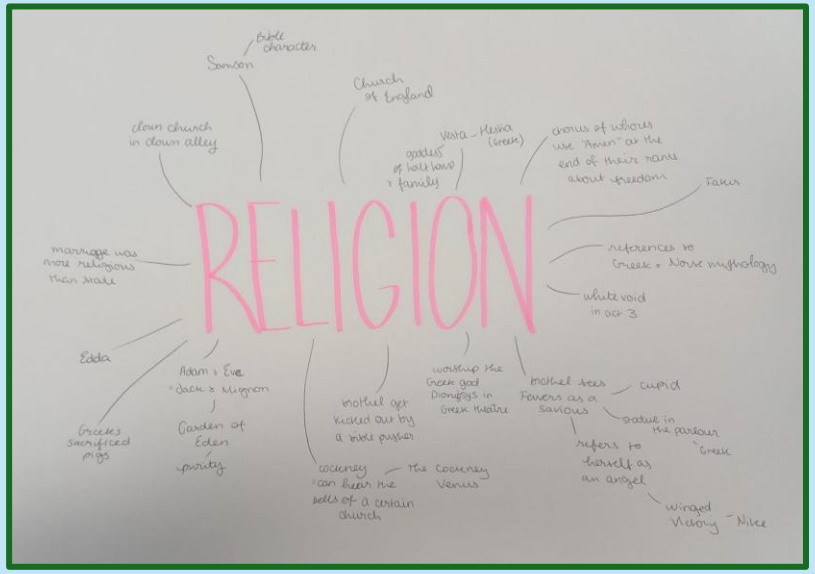
(Williams and Veldman, 2025)



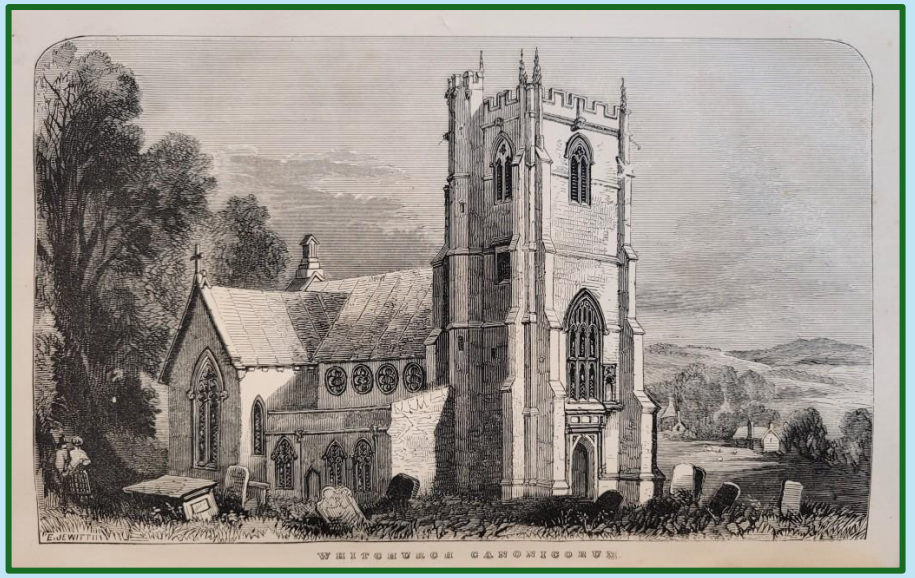
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Religion:



(Webb, 2022)



- Purity + Adam + Eve + Eden all referenced → suggesting an innocence and vulnerability
- Chorus of whores say 'Amen' when discussing freedom like a church choir
- Fevvers is seen as a saviour figure for women
- Buffo's cynicism with religion is due to his unhappiness
- Mysterious white void → any connection to religion and the afterlife?
- 'Gospel grinder' brother kicks all the girls out
- Church of England's prominence at the time
- Marriage is still seen as a religious act
- Many biblical references throughout
- Lots of mythology throughout: Venus, Cupid, Vesta, Winged Victory, Helen of Troy

Religion in 1899 Russia and England

According to *English Heritage (Year Unknown)* the Victorian period saw the largest peak of church building since the middle ages
By the end of the 19th century it wasn't just the Church of England at the forefront, it was many different denominations also.
The number of Jews in Britain rose from 60,000 in 1880 to 300,000 by 1914, but England remained a christian country
The government gave money for more churches to be built
In 1820s they removed legislation preventing Christians outside the church of England (Catholics) from degrees at Oxford and Cambridge and positions in public offices
First century in England where a substantial number of people declared they had no religious beliefs at all, atheism gaining footing

Imperial Russia 1721-1917 (*Astafieva, Year Unknown)*
Three important factors in Imperial Russia were: the state, the Orthodox Church, and non-orthodox religions
2 key moments:
1.16th century → non-Russian and non-Orthodox lands to east of Moscow were conquered, introducing Russia to Islam and a diverse range of religions
2.Peter the Great → made himself Emperor of Russia in 1721 (beginning of Imperial Russia), reformed the Russian Orthodox Church and abolished the patriarchate (like a pope) replacing with Holy Synod
3.By the 19th century having been conquering land for 300 years, Russia became an Empire of Religions

Freedom:

- Fevvers is desperate for freedom
- Cage imagery
- Bird imagery
- Trapped animals (tigers and pig)
- Misogyny and sexism that women want to escape
- Lizzie supports Fevvers freedom and lets the pig out to run around



(The Music Box Shop, Year Unknown)

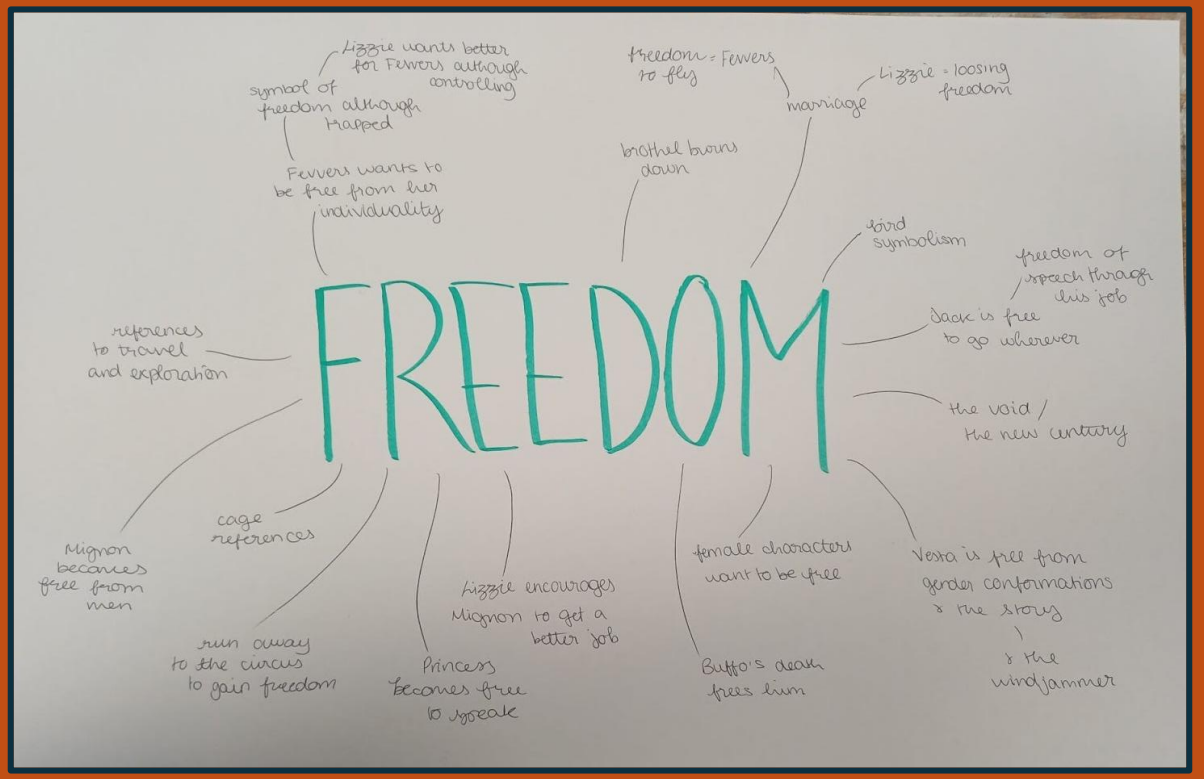
←



(Four Paws, Year Unknown)

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→



- Lots of travelling and talk of travelling
- ‘Nordic Adventurer’
- The Princess is free to speak at the end
- Vesta is free from gender norms and the narrative
- Idea of Fevvers getting married trapping her instead of freeing her
- Buffo’s death frees him from his pain of living
- Circus people, run away and join the circus to gain freedom

Patriarchy Vs. Matriarchy:

Dickel (2023) states that patriarchy emphasises male authority and lineage whilst matriarchy emphasises female-centred power dynamics and authority → usually associated with more equally distributed roles in society whilst patriarchs can be uneven

In the 19th century, the scholar Johan Jakob Bachofen theorised that all prehistoric societies were matriarchies → beginning of social structures, creation of civilisation, beginning of agriculture, and that agriculture led to the beginning of a patriarchy. Many writers from the late 19th century onwards began to criticise patriarchies and discuss matriarchies in their writing, notably Virginia Woolf. Some predict the world will soon evolve into another matriarchy.



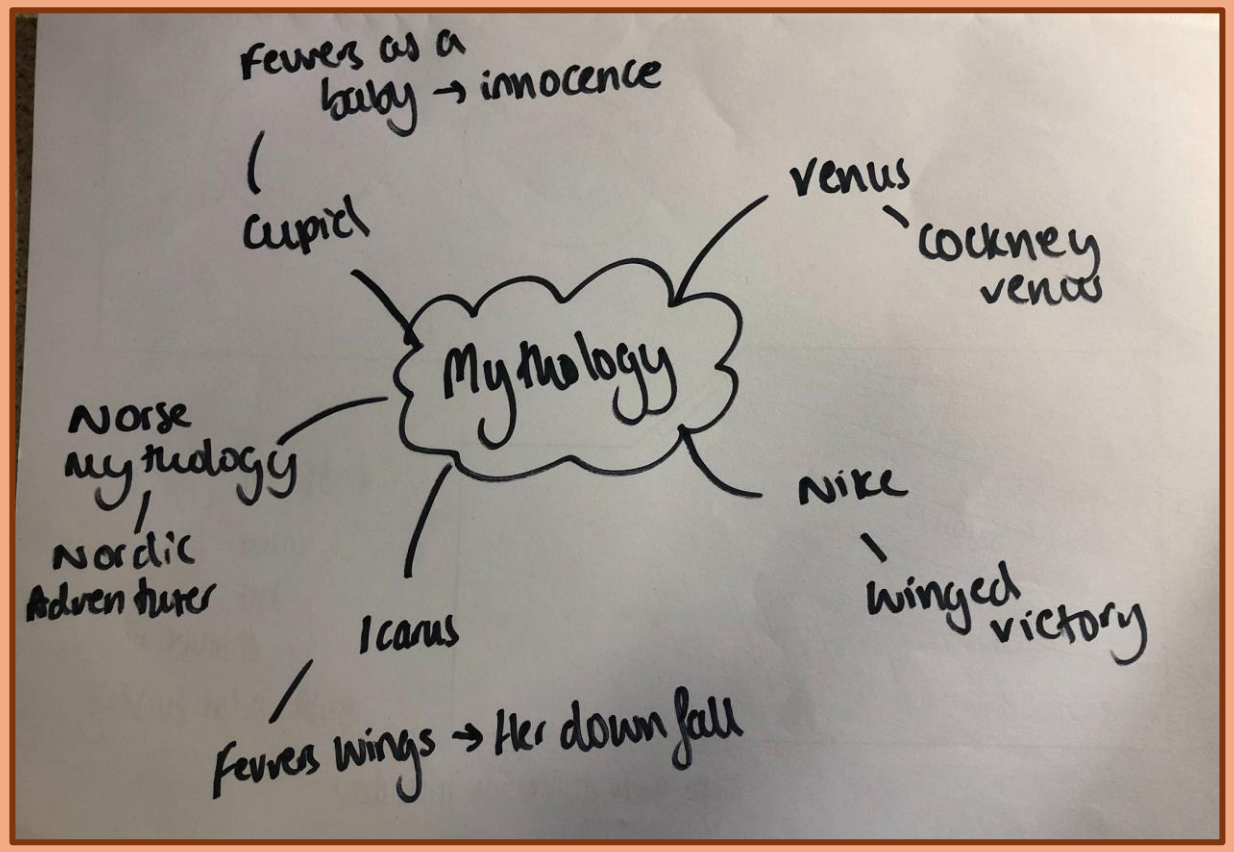
(Eisler, 2022)

I find it Interesting that the hypothetical world of a matriarchy, perhaps not hypothetical in some places, suggests a more equal spread of contribution, roles, and opportunities (for example, both females and males in the same roles), whilst a patriarchy displays a longing to put men at the forefront in these roles and opportunities and scrutinise women for their contributions whilst restricting them. It feels similar to the way Ma Nelson criticises Lizzie's misandry in the play. In Ma Nelson's world she wants equality and safety for everyone, whilst in Lizzie's world a matriarchy would be the exact opposite of a patriarchy by putting women first.

Mythology:

The next theme I decided to expand on was Mythology, as my group was specifically interested in drawing from the recurring references and themes within the play, mainly of Greek Mythology! I made the mind map below of key references within the play, which I go on to research later in my workbook. I was specifically drawn to the parallels between Fevvers and Icarus, I find it interesting that she has wings as her 'peculiarity' and that these are her downfall. I also think there are a lot of suggestions of fables within the characters that mirror mythological stories, both myths and the characters within the play have a moral or lesson within them. Such as Jack who is shown to embrace things that seem unbelievable, so he can live life to the fullest, Fevvers whose fight for freedom is trapping her, and Lizzie whose prejudice towards men prevents her from seeing Jack cares for people and wishes no harm towards women.

Nordic Adventurer → reference from page 10
Cockney Venus and Helen of Troy → reference from page 14
Winged Victor and Nike → reference from page 22



Analysis Questions:

1.What is the Plot?
Nights at the Circus follows a theatre critic, Jack Walser, being pulled into the chaos of a peculiar girl with wings' world, Fevvers. We Follow Jack as he enters Fevvers' childhood in a brothel in London, where she first grows her wings and learns to fly. We then follow her to the circus in Russia where the play comes to its climax. Meeting various other circus performers, Jack himself loses his identity in the thrill of this world. All coming to conclusion after one explosive performance into the new century, Jack and Fevvers unite at the end and fly off together.

2.What is the theme/message?
I think the overall message of this strange play is to trust in your own judgement, morals, and goals in order to reach them. And that chasing freedom can sometimes trap you in a life you thought you wanted.

3.What is the logic? Does the story make sense?
The story is very twisted and convoluted so that the audience may struggle to make sense of it. The play is extremely surrealist on purpose so as to push its themes and peculiarities. I think the play lacks logic, in its timeline and use of space. Like Jack is mocked for at the very beginning, we must suspend our disbelief so as not to be a cynic about it.

4. What is the exposition? What are the characters thinking/doing?
Jack → goes from attempting to find a good story for the NY Times, to trying to live the story and help/save the show. His thoughts go from detached and critical to immersed in their world and problems.
Fevvers → her thoughts are clear and consistent, she desires true freedom and independence for herself. She doesn't want to be tied down to anything and in an ideal world, doesn't really want her wings. Throughout the play her actions speak otherwise, she is trapped in a performing role in order to pay her way and claims her wings give her freedom despite this, although they're only used at the end.
Lizzie → her thoughts are uncertain, we know she dislikes men, specifically Jack, and only trusts women. She loves Fevvers as her own and her only actions are for her or to protect women, although she encourages show business which contradicts her supporting Fevvers' freedom (is this for selfish reasons?)
Colonel Kearney → a straight-forward businessman, he wants success and money, he finds the best deals to improve his show
Buffo → a depressed alcoholic, his thoughts revolve around his pain and need for people to laugh at him. Whilst his actions are violent, he takes his repressed emotions out on women and Jack. His envy of Fevvers leads him to his eventual suicide.
Strongman Samson → appears to be friendly at first but his thoughts become clear as impure. Although he considers everyone a friend, he uses Mignon then abandons her, beats up Jack, and is cowardly throughout. He is forced to kill Buffo, but he may not be that ignorant.

Analysis Questions Continued:

Question 4 Continued:

Princess → a silent mystery until the end, claiming she's mute. We are unsure of her thoughts but by the end we find she wants to protect women and is extremely close to her animals. She is heroic in her act of saving Mignon.

Mignon → traumatised and stuck in an abusive relationship, her main thoughts appear to revolve around survival

Ma Nelson → thinks and acts to protect the brothel girls no matter what, keeping them safe and educating them

Mr. Sugar → wants wings at any cost, he is greedy, dark, and cruel

5. What is the complication/drama?

In the second act there are several complications: Jack and Mignon's manipulated relationship, leading to Buffo and Samson beating Jack up. Fevvers' request to be top of the bill leading to Buffo sabotaging the show and his death, and Mr. Sugar's final attempt to claim Fevvers' wings. It is a very tense night at the circus.

6. What creates the tension?

The tension is created through the miscommunication and vast amount of parts to the circus going wrong in a domino effect. It all culminating in one night builds the tension until the last moment.

7. What is the main question?

The main problem to be solved is how to save the show and free Fevvers. As we come mainly from Jack's perspective all he wants is to fix everything that goes wrong, coming from Fevvers' perspective the main issue is her independence and need to be free.

8. What is the main action?

I think the event that hooks the audience is the beginning of Act Two when we are introduced to Kearney's circus. Act One builds our knowledge and understanding but what really grips us is the people we then meet and follow at the circus.

9. What is the cause of the action?

The main character flips between Jack and Fevvers, both are equally important. Jack causes the action through his investigation and curiosity, he propels Act One with his questions and then jumps into Act Two physically pushing the plot. Fevvers' causes the action through the story following her life and her decision to join the circus, her wings propel events.

Analysis Questions Continued:

10. What is the resulting action?
The show is saved by it being destroyed completely by Lizzie's bomb. All elements of the show were so problematic it needed to end to be saved. Fevvers gets her freedom by leaving show life and flying away with no Lizzie to guide her, but instead with a character who wants nothing from her.

11. What is the conclusion?
The story ends in a liminal, interpretive space, a lot of characters have died and we are uncertain where or when we are. Fevvers and Jack leave together. Princess and Mignon become closer, Strongman apologises to Mignon, and Lizzie sits and accepts that her bird has left the nest. Whilst Kearney mourns the loss of his business and his pig.

12. Who is the protagonist?
I would say the protagonist is Jack Walser, as the story begins because of him and we follow him throughout, whilst he pushes the narrative forward.

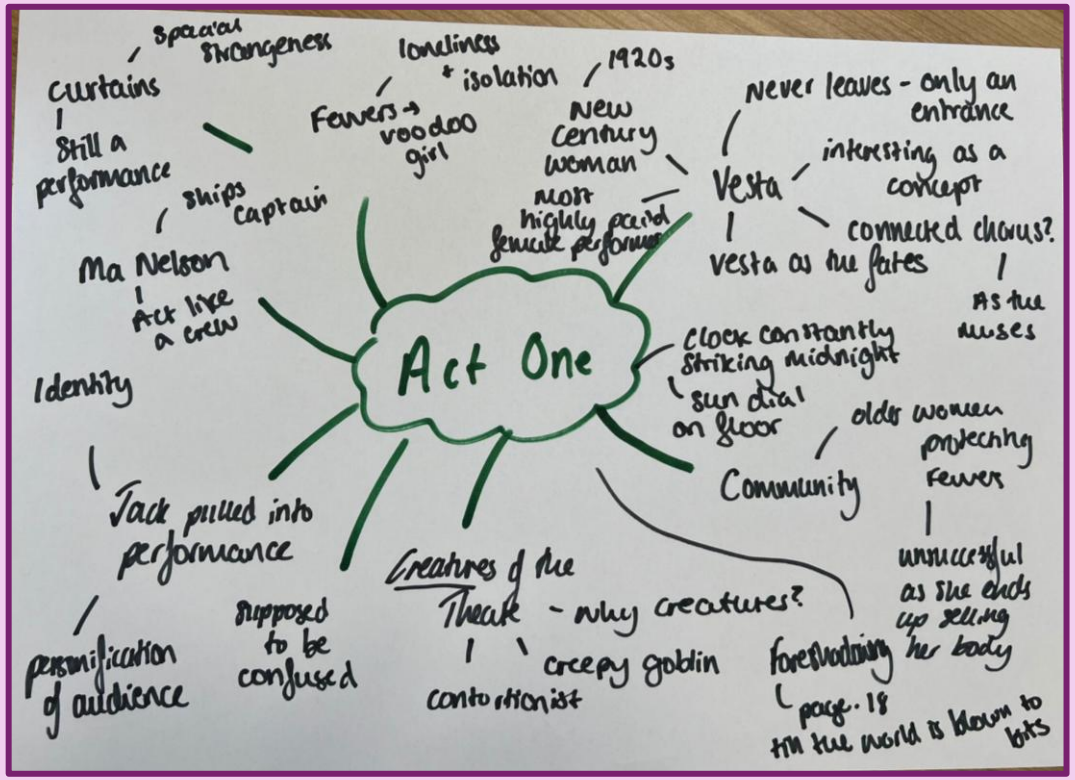
13. Who is the antagonist?
I think the antagonist could be both Mr. Sugar and Buffo, both men. Both have bad intentions and actions.

14. Who is the most interesting character?
I think the most interesting character is Buffo the Clown, as although he is a disgusting person, he has so many layers to him and his ending is so strange it's gripping.

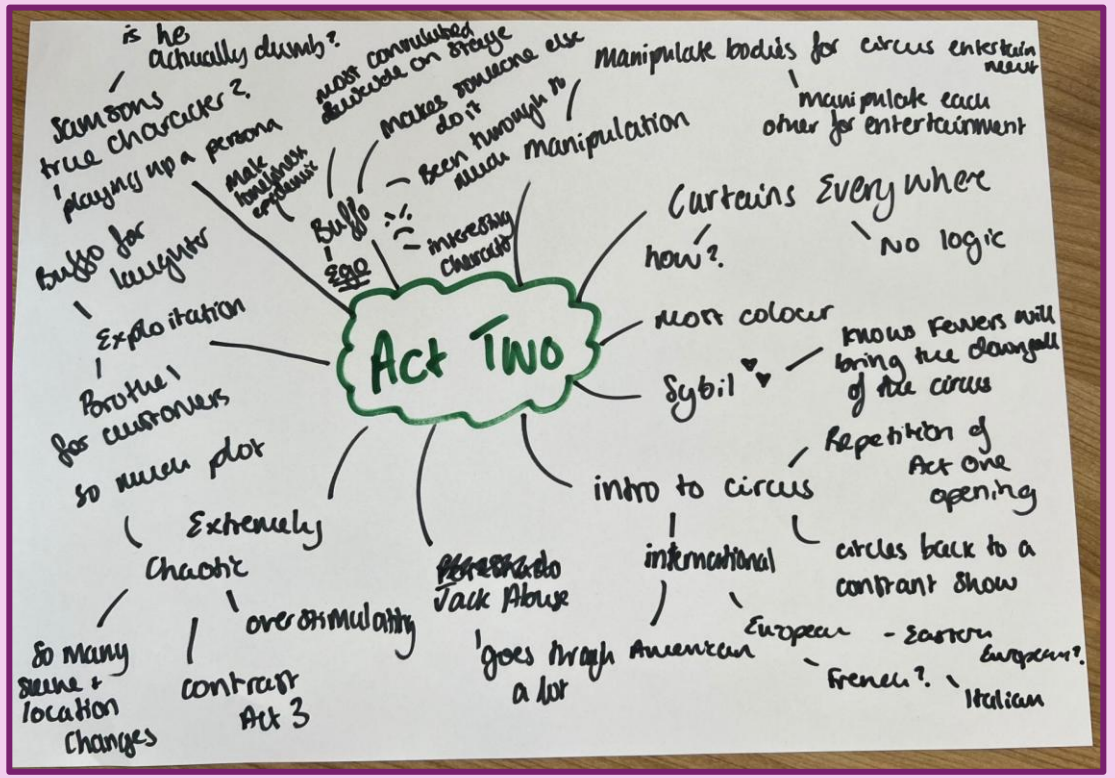
15. Where does the story take place?
The play dances around locations and times.
Act One starts in the present day, in a theatre in London 1899. We then have a flashback to Wapping, London at the Brothel they grew up in, probably around the 1880s. It then returns to present day 1899, moving from London to St. Petersburg, Russia in December. Events unfold (with a few flashbacks around a similar period to the 1880s) until the final performance on New Years Eve 1899 into 1900. Act Three takes place in a white void uncertain of time but a Nina Simone song suggests they are way out of their timeline.

Initial Discussions With My Group:

Meeting as a group for the first time, we decided to go through the play together, picking out key themes/aspects that really stood out to us individually. This was so we could see where our takes on the play overlapped. We did this through creating a mind map for each act. I feel like this helped us find a rhythm as a group, going from a big discussion and analysis as a class, to this, made it easier to pin-point the directions we were interested in going in.



Mind maps created as a group and drawn by me.



In Act One, we focussed on Ma Nelson and the connection to the Suffragists, Vesta's character, the personification of the audience, and the 'Creatures of the Theatre'.

Whilst in Act Two, we focussed on the chaos, constant use of curtains, Buffo's character, whether Samson can be trusted, and the return to it all being a performance.

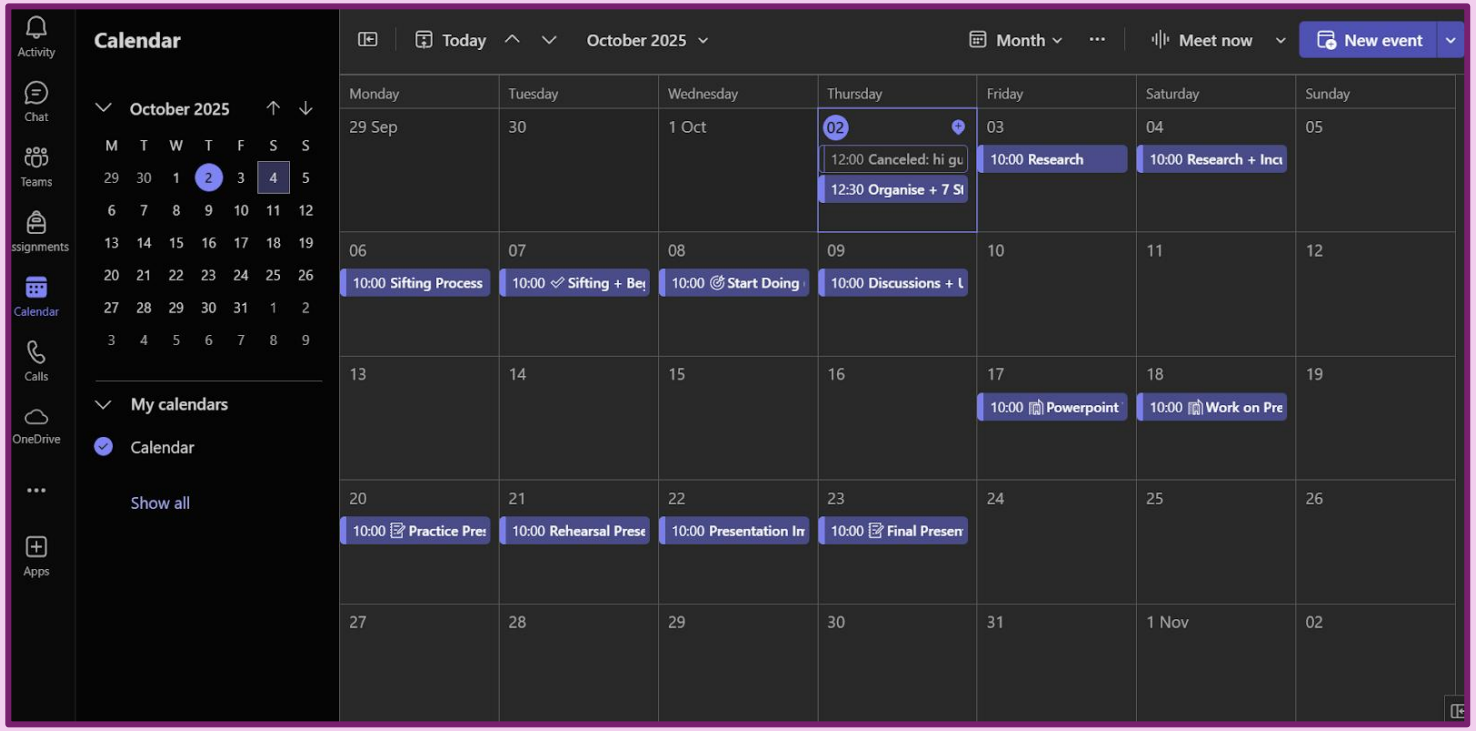
Initial Discussions With My Group:



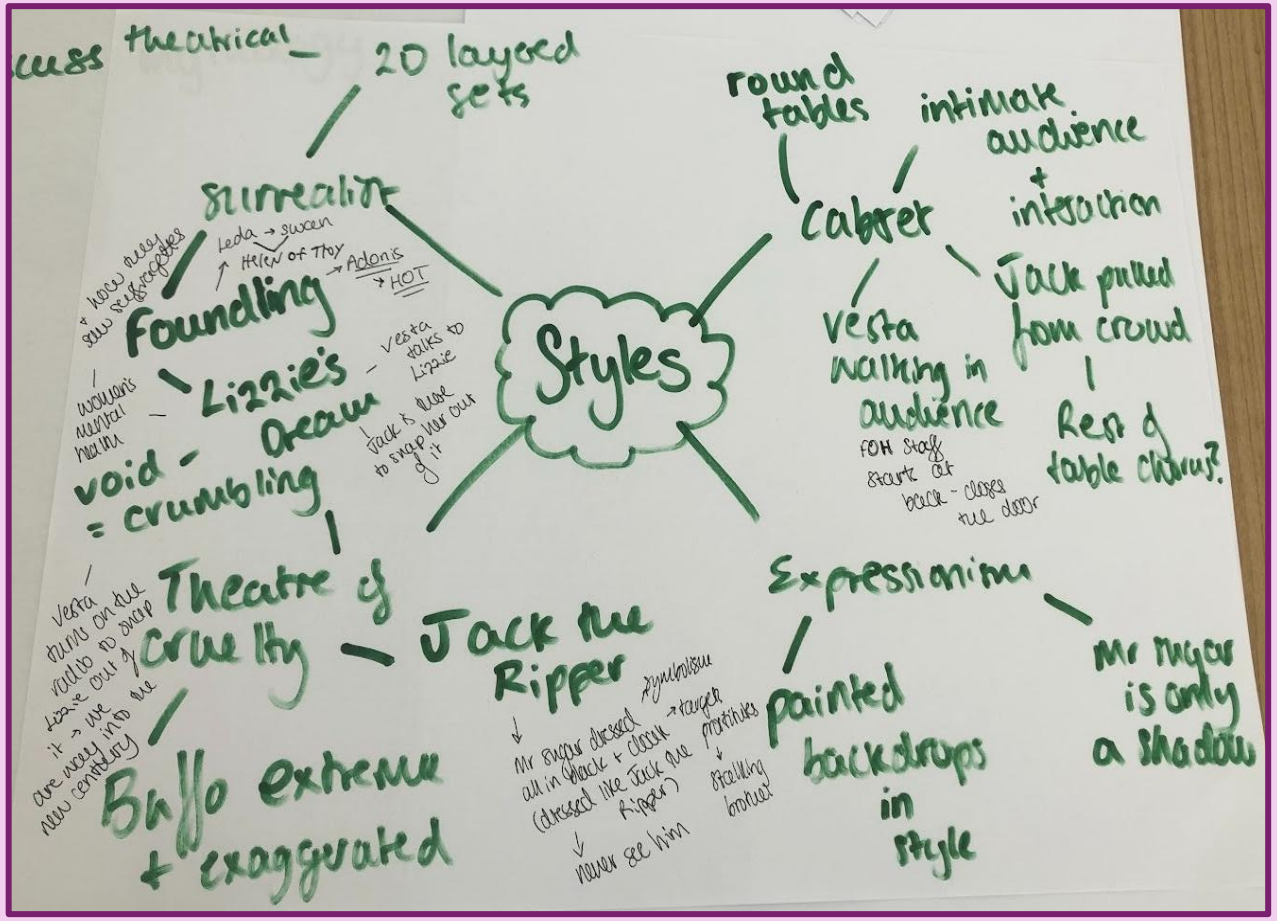
Finally, for Act Three we focussed on Jack and Fevvers ending up together and whether we liked this ending, the void as a location and where they might be, and Fevvers flying again for the first time since Act One. Throughout these mind maps we added various design ideas we had so that we could return to them later on.

Mind maps created as a group and drawn by me.

After discussing the play for a bit, we began creating a rough schedule for the next three weeks. Putting in deadlines and end dates, so we had perspective, and then putting in the 7 Steps of Design so we had structure to our first week. This was really helpful in getting us started in a productive way, we knew what goals we wanted to meet and when. We made a Teams Group and a joint calendar. Within the Teams we also made folders for notes and research we wanted to share.

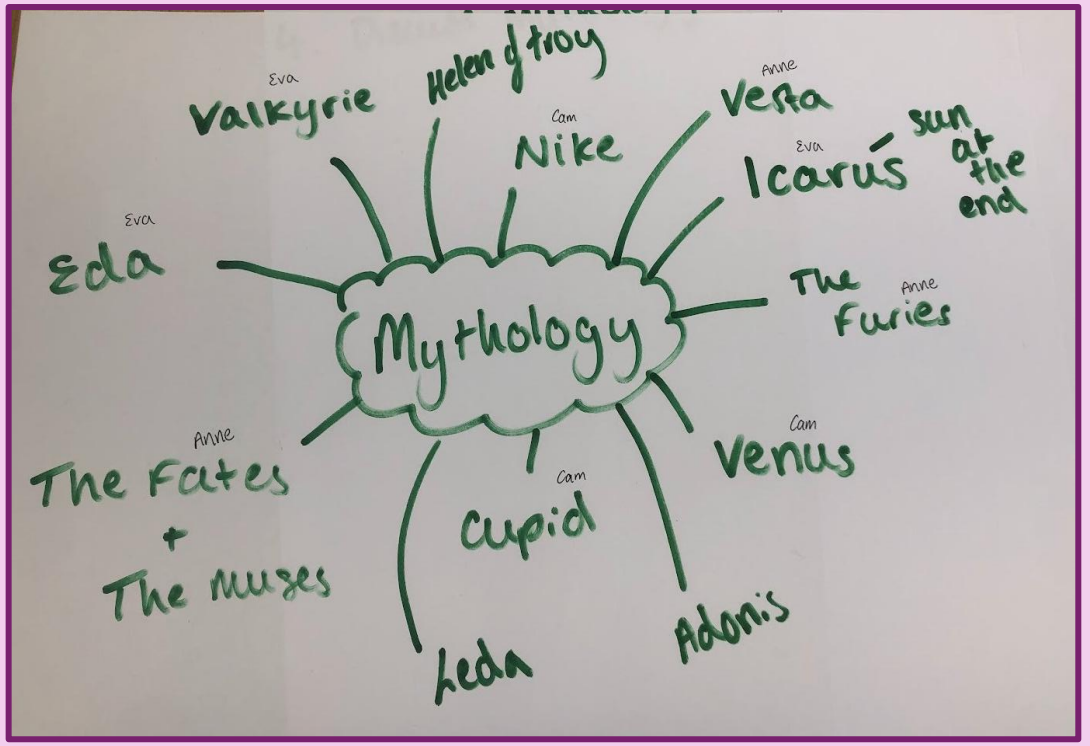


Initial Discussions With My Group:



Mind maps created as a group and drawn by me.

Before and throughout the research stage, we delegated out certain topics to find sources quicker and continued this research, which I have included throughout my whole workbook, during lesson time and independent time. In the research stage we kept coming back to connections and references to Mythology and decided to explore this further.



Before we could move further, we had to decide on a style of theatre, we each researched and narrowed it down to four styles we wanted to explore and then discussed and compared these for a few days, adding new ideas to the mind map continuously.

Styles of theatre to explore:



(Concord Theatricals, 2022)



(Thomas, 2021)

Expressionism → specifically German Expressionism
The Cabinet of Dr Caligari



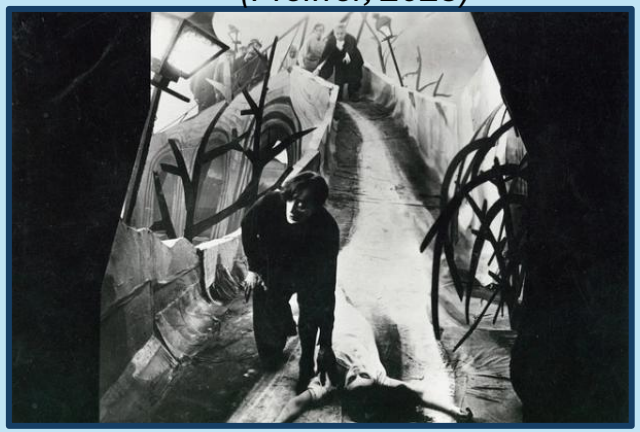
(Hutchinson, 2014)

Designers: Walter Reimann, Walter Röhrig, Hermann Warm



(Sottosanti, 2025)
←

(Pfeiffer, 2025)



Cabaret: *(Wax, 2023)*

- Round tables with chairs on one side
- Promoting audience interaction and engagement
- Casual setting
- Small audiences
- About the atmosphere created and less so the big scenery

Expressionism: *(Bay and Barker, 2024)*

- Distorted and anti-realist
- Overtly political complexion
- Juxtaposition and distortion
- Things like trees can take on shapes for symbolism, etc.
- Alternation between dream and reality

Styles of theatre to explore:

(Central City Opera, 2011)



A comic opera, known as a surrealist play (*Opera National Du Rhin, Year Unknown*) ←









(ElectroAdeptus, 2025)

According to *Surrealism-Plays (Year Unknown)* Surrealism was founded in 1920s Paris → exploring the far reaches of imagination and influenced by studies of the subconscious.

'Notes of a Young Doctor' Minsk Puppet Theatre, or 'A Young Doctor's Notebook' *(Masterskaya, Year Unknown)* → records of this play or varying and unreliable, but the video from which the images above were taken fall into the category of Theatre of Cruelty

Surrealism: *(Cash, 2024)*

Overcome the old traditions of theatre and its restrictions on imagination
Symbolism in scenery, vague scenery
Puppet like characters and movement
Numerous quick scenes
Experimental
Confusing and dreamlike sequences
Disturbing atmosphere

Theatre of Cruelty:
Whilst there isn't a specific group of plays under this style, there are plays associated with it. I would count the Puppet Theatre play as part of it.

Theatre of Cruelty: *(Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015)*

Encourages shock and horror
Proposed as experimental theatre by Antonin Artaud
Use of oversized props and puppets
Screams and incantations
Aim is to rid humankind of repression

Influences:

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen (1988)
Directed by Terry Gilliam, designed by Dante Ferretti

I love Dante Ferretti's production design. I love the layered 2D elements and I think they would fit perfectly for the second act to lean into the theatrical nature of the play, surrealism, and the bizarre quality of events.
The design has a peculiar grandeur to it that the play fits so well, as Kearney's circus is successful and makes money, but it is dark and sinister.

Bottom Right Image → *(JustWatch, Year Unknown)*
Bottom Left Image → (*Drake, 2020)*
All Other Images → (*Creepvibes, 2025)*

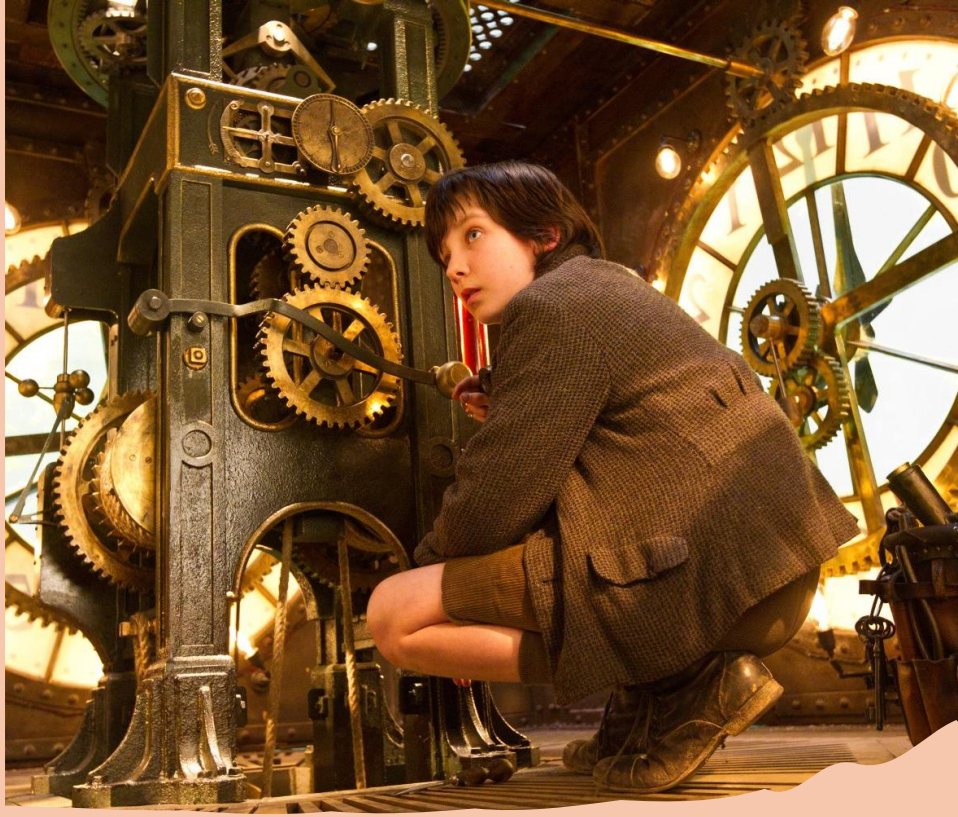




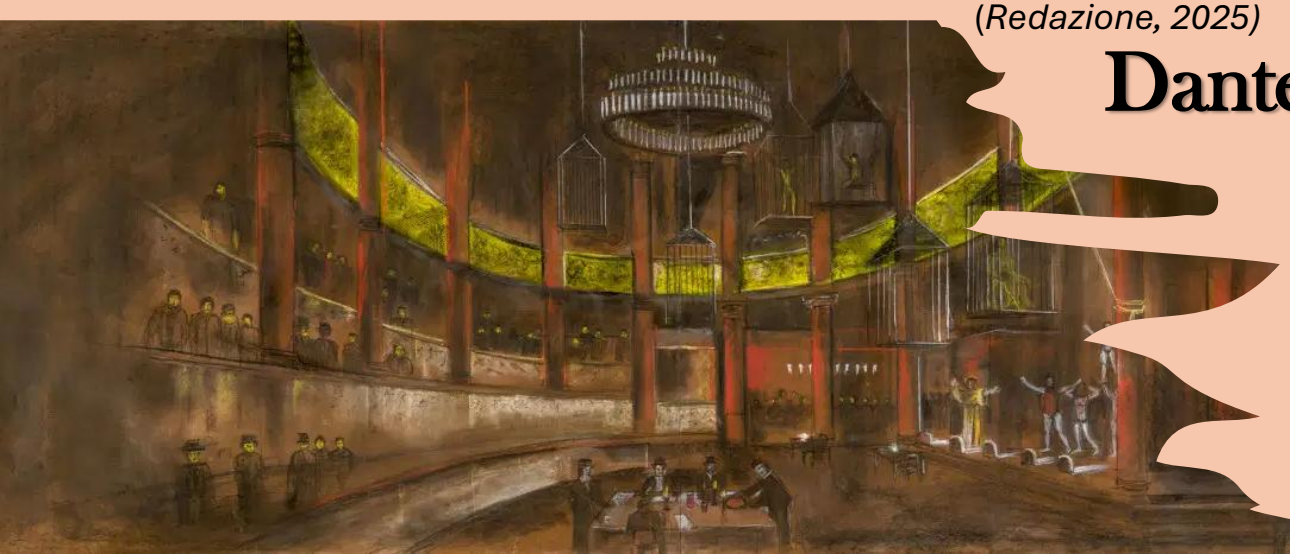





(FilmGrab, Year Unknown, a)



(Seymour, 2011)



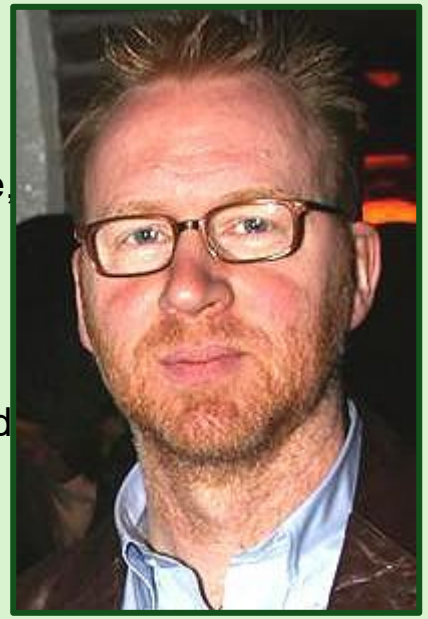
(Redazione, 2025)

Dante Ferretti – Set/Production Designer

Ferretti is mostly known for his design work on Hugo (2011), directed by Martin Scorsese, and Sweeney Todd The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (2007), directed by Tim Burton. I would say his style is eccentric, dramatic, and energetic. I looked the closest at The Adventures of Baron Munchausen (1988), on the slide above, as I want to take the most influence from the surreal and dream-like set design.

Ian MacNeil

MacNeil is a set designer for the stage, I know him from his design of An Inspector Calls (directed by Stephen Daldry, 1992) which I found incredible and life changing, as it inspired me to look into set design as a career. I loved the dollhouse effect and the shock of the whole house crashing forwards, tipping its contents everywhere. Looking into his other work, I found Angels in America, 2017, National Theatre; The Lyttelton, directed by Marianne Elliott



(LGBT Archive, Year Unknown)



(Gilbert, 2016)



(German Light Products, 2017)

Use of levels for power dynamics is really interesting. I think the scale of the house plays into the manipulation of size that I was looking at in the Alice adaptation from 1988



(Hutchison, 2016)

Use of set to create an explosive climax.



(Staging Places, Year Unknown)



(Staging Places, Year Unknown)

I was drawn to the large scale of the set and use of height, as well as the effective simplicity → coincidentally finding this play includes a character extremely reminiscent of Fevvers.

Alice 1988

Alice (1988), surrealist adaptation of Alice in Wonderland
The director is Jan Svankmajer, who is also the production designer. (*IMDb, Year Unknown, a)*
I was drawn to how the set comes to life as a character itself, the distortion of size, and puppetry.



(Mecham, Year Unknown)



(Rotten Tomatoes, Year Unknown)

(Nightflightofficial, 2025)



Czech Films:



(Mubi, Year Unknown) →



The Queen of the Lake (1998)

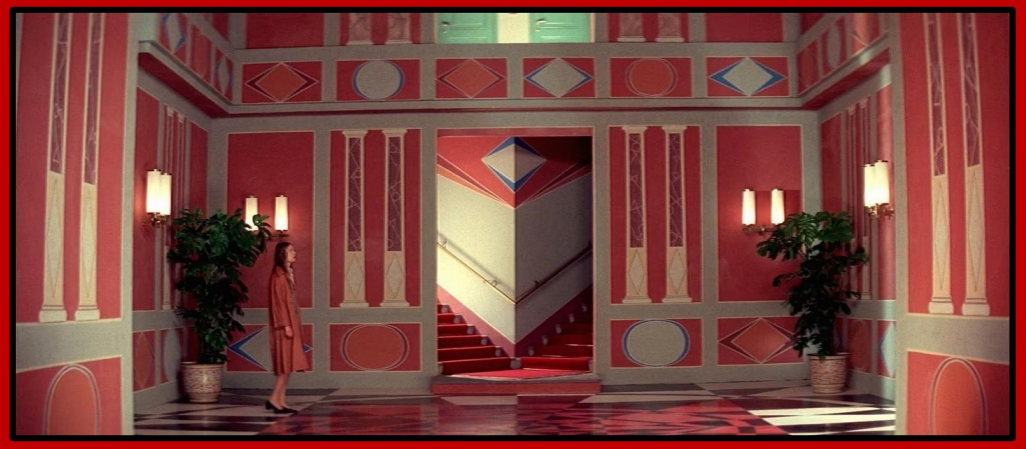
The Queen of the Lake is an adaptation of Swan Lake, directed by Václav Vorlícek and designed by Milan Bycek (*IMDb, Year Unknown, b).* I chose this to include as an influence as it combines a fantastical dreaminess with a softness, in contrast to more sinister atmospheres created by Alice (1988), Suspiria (1977), and Sweeney Todd (2007). So, I wanted to include a calmer effect as a contrast example of what direction I could go in.

Suspiria (1977)

Directed by Dario Argento and designed by Giuseppe Bassan. Suspiria is my favourite horror film due to its use of colour. I specifically chose to look at the colour red from the movie as an influence in my design as it holds many sinister connotations of danger and blood, and I wanted to lean into the sinister side of this play, especially in Act One. I also think the effect of a 3D set painted to look 2D contrasts the 2D flats I was exploring, it creates an uncomfortable and uncertain atmosphere as nothing is as it seems.



(FilmGrab, Year Unknown, b)



(Singer, 2015)

After discussing this film during one of my tutorials, I also decided to look into the use of curtains to create shadows and distorted shapes, in order to make the audience uncomfortable and tense.



(Walecki, 2023)



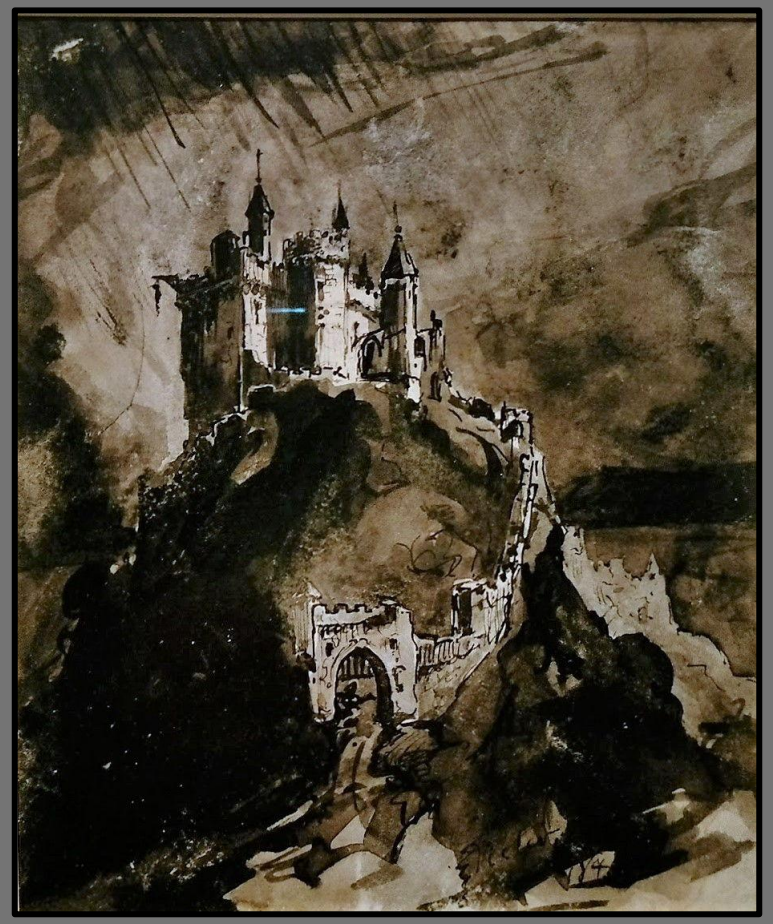
(Filmien, Year Unknown)

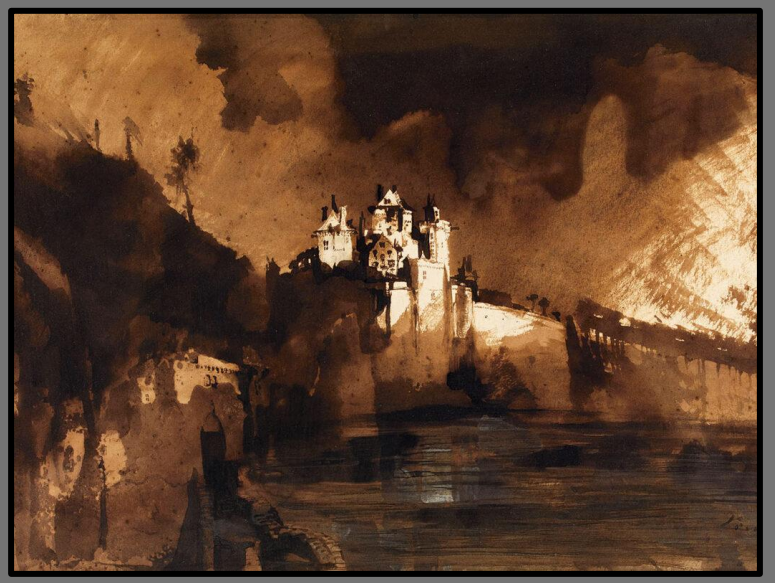
Victor Hugo

1802-1885

I chose Victor Hugo as an artist to explore due to his dark and expressive paintings (shown below). As mentioned on the slide above, in an attempt to lean into a more sinister aesthetic for Act One and to make the audience feel uncomfortable, I feel Hugo's gloomy and ominous distant castles make as a great influence towards a possible painted back drop.

(Hoakley, 2019)





(Prodger, 2022)



(Hoakley, 2019)

I also think his rough style of painting goes well into the dream-like aesthetic and surrealism of the play that we're leaning into. When I look at his paintings I feel like I'm approaching something evil, and that's how I want the audience to feel in Act One, so that they carry that suspicion with them through to the end.

General Aesthetic Mood Board:

Mood Board created as a group on a shared document.



iStock (Year Unknown), Botticelli (1485), Louvre (Year Unknown), Holub (2025), Shutterstock (Year Unknown, a), Creepvibes (2025), Rotten Tomatoes (Year Unknown), Bixio (1844), Assael (2021), Martinovic (2025), Blondel (1819), Cyron (2012), Noahimages (Year Unknown), Whistler (1861), Alohamora (2016), Painter (5th Century B.C.), The Haunted Mansion Wiki (Year Unknown), Levine (2010)

Act One Mood Board:

Mood Board created as a group on a shared document.



The Jack The Ripper Tour (2020), Louvre (Year Unknown), Turner (2005), Prodger (2022), Whistler (1861), Holub (2025), Welcome Collection (Year Unknown), iStock (Year Unknown), Revisiting Dickens (Year Unknown), Sue Stamp Tours (Year Unknown), Hoakley (2019), Jazz Age Club (2010), Filmien (Year Unknown)

Act Two Mood Board:

Mood Board created as a group on a shared document.



Timm (1852), Gibson & Co. (1873), W. Duke, Sons & Co. (1887), JustWatch (Year Unknown), Adobe Stock Images (Year Unknown), Noahimages (Year Unknown), Circopedia (Year Unknown), Calvert Litho. Co. (1890), Aivazovsky (1850), (Morris and Rice, 2006, p. 52), Makovsky (1869), Creepvibes (2025)

Act Three Mood Board:

Mood Board created as a group on a shared document.



Shutterstock (Year Unknown, b), Phakhunthod (Year Unknown), Zemlianichenko (2019), Becket (Year Unknown), Votpuske (2023), Alohamora (2016), PhysOrg (2021), Shutterstock (Year Unknown, b)

Discussions on Aesthetics and Sifting Ideas:



I highlighted my interest in creating a surreal and dream-like atmosphere through distorted and unrealistic sets, distorting size and shape, including 2D set pieces layered to create depth, and expressive painted back drops and how all of these things will push a chaotic and uncomfortable atmosphere for the audience. We discussed how these aesthetic/stylistic decisions could also be shown in the props and puppetry, by the possible exaggeration of size, a 3D prop being painted 2D, and using lantern puppets for the animals!

Creating these mood boards together confirmed we were all heading in the same direction creatively, we saw our colour palettes forming naturally within these images and new we definitely wanted a strong contrast between Act One and Act Two, going from dark and grungy to light and soft. After making our mood boards we presented our independent research to each other, I presented my influences such as Dante Ferretti and his work on The Adventures of Baron Munchausen, Suspiria, Victor Hugo, Minsk Puppet Theatre, Alice (1988), etc.

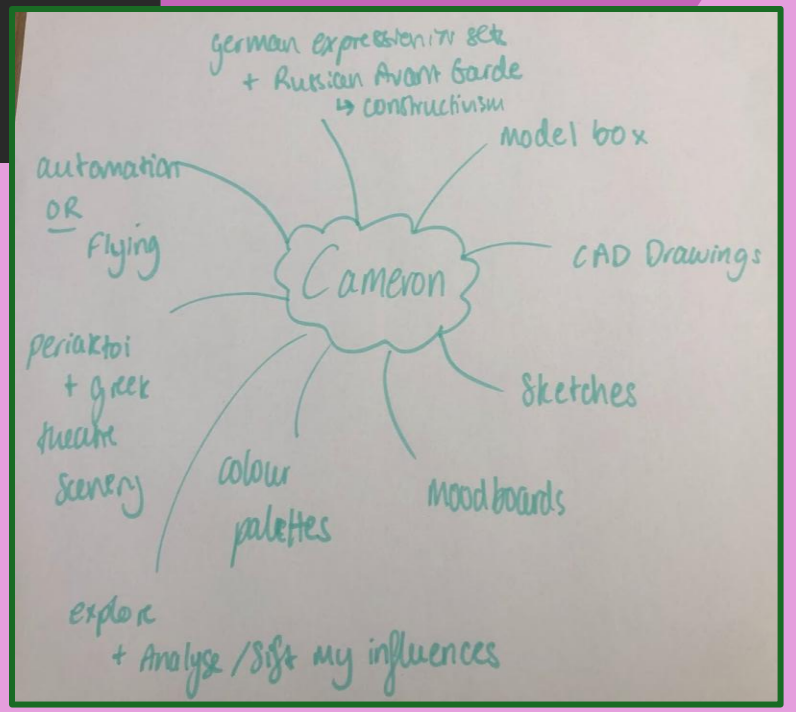


Organisation and Tutorials:

7 Steps of Design: Four → Incubation
Five → Selection

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
29 Sep	30	1 Oct	02 12:30 Organise + 7 Steps of	03 10:00 Research	04 10:00 Research	05 10:00 Research
06 10:00 Sifting Process + Dav	07 10:00 Sifting + Incubation	08 10:00 Start Doing (indepen	09 10:00 Discussions + Update	10 16:00 moodboard + colour 16:00 sketches + research	11 16:00 develop sketches + re	12 16:00 problem solve and re 16:00 rough model making
13 16:00 model box start	14 16:00 model box + cad	15	16	17 10:00 Powerpoint Work	18 10:00 Work on Presentatior	19 16:00 model box + CAD co
20 10:00 Practice Presentation	21 10:00 Rehearsal Presentatic	22 10:00 Presentation Improve	23 10:00 Final Presentations	24	25	26

After tutorials and group discussions, I filled in the gaps of my own personal calendar, mapping out exactly what I needed to do and by when.
We all created mind maps for our roles to go over everyone's responsibilities.



Notes from my first independent tutorial:

- More visual research
- Explain your influences with how they connect to the play and what is artistically interesting about them that inspires you
- Look into what inspired German Expressionism, look into post-impressionism
- Look into Set designers for the circus
- Russian opera and theatre → art forms in Russia, like Avant Garde
- Periaktoi

Jack The Ripper:

Expedia (Year Unknown) →



According to the *BBC Archive (Year Unknown)*, Jack the Ripper was a killer of roughly 5 women (estimated possibly more as his identity remains unknown), in the Whitechapel area of London (East End) between August and November 1888. All the women murdered were prostitutes and were horribly mutilated. Many suggest the killer was a doctor or a butcher based on the weapons and mutilations displaying a knowledge of human anatomy.

Although *Jenkins (2025)* suggests that it is unclear if all his victims were prostitutes, as they have only confirmed one woman was a prostitute.

Was Jack the Ripper targeting women or the profession?

I believe the serial killer was targeting women specifically, and in Victorian London (as well as usually today, unfortunately) prostitutes were seen as 'less than' and disliked by society. They were also usually poor, with little family or friends to notice they were missing. I believe the murderer targeted these women specifically as he saw it as easier and perhaps directed his anger towards women of this profession as he probably viewed them as outrageous and disgusting. Possibly having personal issues with women through his own experiences.

As the killer had anatomical knowledge, most people believed he was a doctor or a butcher. In most theories, he is a middle to upper class man with status and power. There is no evidence to confirm this, but it is unsurprising that a man with power wants to take his violence out on women.

Is Jack Walser connected to Jack the Ripper?

I personally don't think Jack Walser has any connection to Jack the Ripper besides the fact they share the first name. On the other hand, Mr. Sugar has clear connections – following and stalking women in brothels, upper class, mysterious and unknown, dangerous, and willing to get violent.

Foundlings:



(Life in Words, 2024)



(WordPress, Year Unknown)

The *Foundlings Museum (Year Unknown)* describes Foundlings as a term used to describe babies that are abandoned by their parents, usually found in random places or on doorsteps and taken in by others.
By this definition, Fevvers is a foundling.
The Foundling hospital was established in the 1700s, in the 1600s illegitimate children were now prohibited from being taken in by charitable organisations. London lacked a care system for poor families. Families and mothers unable to care for a child due to economic stress were left with little option, leading to the abandonment of their child.

Whilst discussing Foundlings and how there is a direct connection to Fevvers, who is found on a doorstep and taken in by the women living there, we ventured into different avenues that could take us on our interpretation of the play. Taking Foundlings a step further, there are times where living conditions can be so extreme in Victorian London, alongside the stigma of illegitimate children, that a mother may kill their child as they do not know any other way or may be suffering from mental illness. We theorised a reality where Fevvers was left on the brothel doorstep because she was the illegitimate child of a prostitute who used to work and live there- knowing Ma Nelson would take the child in and look after it. Taking this further we imagined the play from the perspective of Fevvers having been killed by her mother, instead of abandoned, the play's fantastical nature and Fevvers' wings would then stem from the fact that none of the story is real and is only a delusion of a life that could have been. This could then change the perspective of the story, following Lizzie, Fevvers' mother figure, and possibly Fevvers' real mother who unfortunately ended her baby's life under the stress and weight of a difficult world. Following the aftermath of her actions and her immense grief, her mind buckled and created a world in which Fevvers had lived and what she could have become.

Greek Mythology Within Paintings:



The Birth of Venus painted by Sandro Botticelli in 1485.
Depicting the Goddess of Love arriving on land.
A useful comparison to Fevvers, who is described as the 'Cockney Venus', and who is described as having blonde hair (in the book). The colour palette has inspired our work and mood board as we want to take influence from classical paintings and pastel colours in Act Two clashing with the darkness of Act One. *(Botticelli, 1485)*

Perseus and Andromeda, painted by Frederic Leighton in 1891.
Depicting Perseus, carrying the head of Medusa, arriving to save Andromeda who is tied to a rock as a sacrifice to Poseidon.
I love the winged imagery in these paintings depicting Greek Mythology, I find a lot of mirroring dynamics and symbolism towards the play. This painting can connect through Jack almost saving Fevvers (in multiple ways), suggesting Fevvers' helplessness. The wings of the dragon around her represent the prison her wings keep her in.

← *(Leighton, 1891)*



Narcissus, painted by Caravaggio between 1597 and 1599.
Depicting the known character Narcissus, who falls in love with his own image mirrored in the water. I think there could be a lot of similarities between Narcissus and some of the characters in the play, like Fevvers and maybe Buffo, who fall in love with themselves and their ego so much that it destroys them. *(Caravaggio, 1597-1599)*



(*Moreau, 1864)* →

Oedipus and the Sphinx, painted by Gustave Moreau in 1864.
Depicting the Greek prince Oedipus confronting a Sphinx who was known to torment travellers with riddles. I find this reflective of Fevvers and Jack's relationship, she confuses him and plays games with him, whilst also bearing wings.
I like the darker and more sinister colour palette used in this painting. It is not as friendly as The Birth of Venus. This can be used to imply a darker side to Fevvers.



(Rubens, 1636) →

Icarus:



According to *Greek Mythology (Year Unknown, a)* the story of Icarus is about a father and son who attempt to escape imprisonment by flying → this could link to Fevvers and Lizzie attempting to escape the poverty.
Daedalus (Icarus' father) was a famous sculptor and architect who was admired greatly.
Daedalus is the one who built a labyrinth for the Minotaur in Greek Mythology. After assisting Theseus in killing the Minotaur and escaping the Labyrinth, he is imprisoned with his son in a tower.
He crafted wings in order to escape and give his son the freedom he desperately craved → is this like Lizzie being determined to give Fevvers the freedom and independence that all women crave and why she fights for their rights?
He warned his son not to fly too close to the sun or the wax would melt, or too low as the feathers would get wet.
As the well-known story goes, Icarus flies too close to the sun, falls and drowns. Whilst his father survives.
I feel Fevvers resembles Icarus, with her wings being used by Angela Carter as an allegory of her desire leading to her downfall. In our adaptation, where all events are Lizzie's creation, Lizzie metaphorically crafted Fevvers wings to give her life, freedom, and a way to move to the afterlife peacefully.

The Fates:

Greek Mythology (Year Unknown, b) states The Fates are three Goddesses who assign destinies to mortals at birth, hence their name. Their names are Clotho (spinner), Lachesis (Alloter), and Atropos (inflexible).
As suggested by Anne, the Fates could resemble Vesta who opens, follows, and closes the story like a narrator or an omnipotent being- but never interfering. Although she kicks the story off by introducing Jack to Fevvers, from then on she keeps her distance → almost as if she is assigning his fate to him.
Vesta could be represented as the Fates in this way by splitting her into three people.



(Schadow, 1790)

The Muses:



(McKenzie, 2024)

Painting is The Nine Muses, painted in the 16th century, artist unknown. Their influence was viewed as essential for any artistic achievement. This could embody the chorus and creatures of the theatre, who claim nothing here can happen without them → meaning they are essential to any story in theatre

The Muses were the daughters of Zeus, looking after the arts and sciences. Starting as three and developing into nine.
Clio (history), Euterpe (lyric poetry), Thalia (comedy), Melpomene (tragedy), Terpsichore (choral dance), Erato (erotic poetry and mime), Polymnia (sublime hymn), Calliope (epic poetry) and Urania (astronomy). (*Laing, 1982, p. 49)*

'Happy is he whom the Muses love' - Hesiod (Ancient Greek poet in the 7th century BC)
According to *McKenzie (2024),* the 9 Goddesses were a divine source of knowledge, creativity, and arts.
Impacting the use of the word 'muse' in art → someone to inspire an artist

The Furies:



(Bouguereau, 1862) →

The *Theoi Project (Year Unknown, a)* states the Furies were three Goddesses of vengeance and retribution who punished men for their crimes against natural order → particularly concerned with murder.
A victim could seek justice through calling the furies onto them
The most powerful curse was the parent upon the child, as the Furies were born from when Uranus was castrated by his son Cronus.
They could torment people with madness upon them, the nation harbouring them could suffer with hunger and disease → can only be solved with atonement

Valkyries:



(Arbo, 1869) →

Valkyries are from Norse Mythology (connecting through Jack being called the Nordic Adventurer).
Meaning choosers of the fallen. They are the female spirit of the God Odin. They choose who gains access to Valhalla and carry them there. They can also be shown as more sinister characters. (*Norse Mythology, Year Unknown).*

Edda:

The Edda is from Nordic Mythology.
It is the main text describing Norse Mythology, a collection of the myths. (*Namuwiki, 2025)*



(Lin, 2017) →

Nike:

The Goddess Nike is the winged goddess of victory (*Kidd, Year Unknown)* → Fevvers is called the Winged Woman and Winged Victory Victory meaning in both war and peaceful competition (*Theoi Project, Year Unknown)*
→ is Fevvers compared to her as she will find victory in her search for freedom?



(Parada, Year Unknown)

Cupid:

→ Roman God of Love.
→ the son of Mercury (winged messenger) and Venus (Goddess of Love)
→ depicted often as a winged baby, carrying a bow and arrow. Who he shot with those arrows would supposedly by inspired by love
→ can also be shown in armour like the God of War, suggesting a parallel between war and love or the strength of love itself
→ seen as mischievous in his match-making (*Matthias, 2025)*



(Jones, 2011)

Research (post-tutorial):

Circus Stage Design:



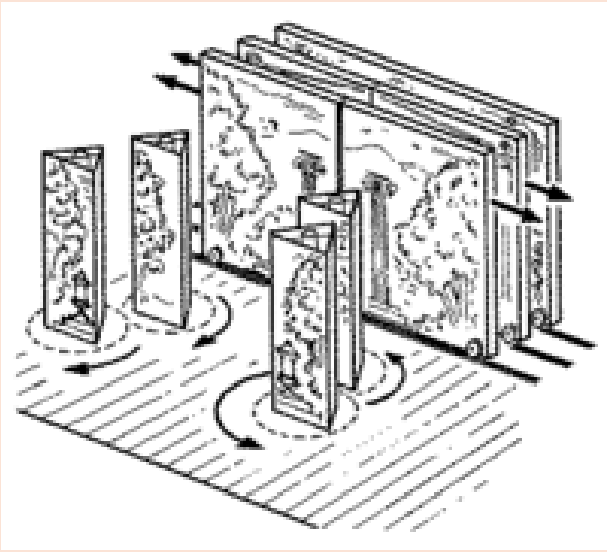
(Iza, 2017)

According to *Cairoli (2020),* Rigas Cirks is a circus in Lithuania, one of the oldest in the world, built in 1888, tigers and other animals were included in the acts

Circle shape is preferred but it can create acoustic singularities like whisper galleries → this is when a quiet sound on one side can be heard on the other, usually happening with domes due to the curve → do I want to do anything with the roof? I am interested in recreating the top of the circus tent but I'm not sure I would want to commit to that as it restricts the space into only a circus location

Periaktoi:

(Grove Music Online, Year Unknown) →

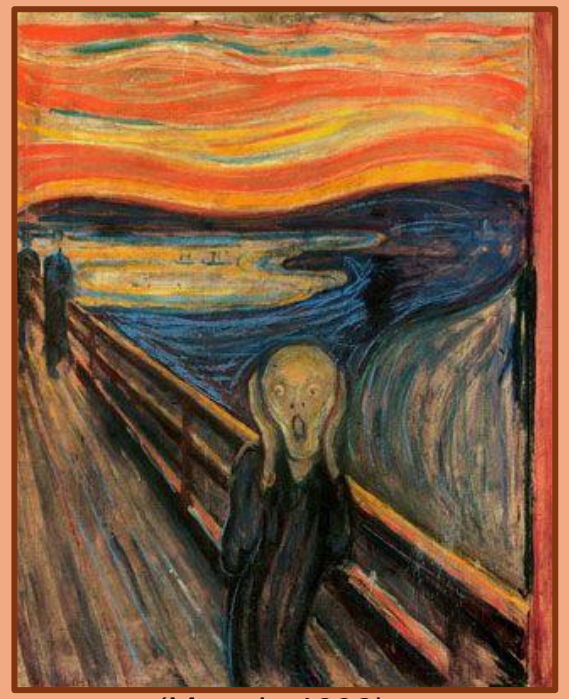


HSTech (Year Unknown
States Periaktoi are triple-sided scenery, which rotate to show the different faces and suggest different locations. They were first invented in Ancient Greece to quickly change the backdrop, ideal for three acts. It is a tall triangular structure. Allowing quick changes without pausing and disrupting the pace. Ideal for Nights at the Circus which involved a lot of location changes. Our group drew a lot on the mythology threaded throughout the play and wanted to lean into mythological references and direct comparisons throughout the adaptation. Periaktoi would be a great element of scenery for Act Two as it originates from Ancient Greece, allows for quick changes and fast paced moments, as well as creating the effect of a dream-like and peculiar reality where everything is not as it seems.

German Expressionism and Post Impressionism:



(Harries, Year Unknown)



(Munch, 1893)

Art movements around the time the play is set were *(DeGuzman, 2025):*

Realism → 1848-1900
Impressionism → 1865-1885
Post-Impressionism → 1885-1910

I want to focus on Post-Impressionism, preceding German Expressionism, as although I'm personally interested in using expressionism as a style in the play due to its emotional and expressive nature, I want to look at an art movement that was relevant at the time the events were happening.

Post Impressionism key artists were Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, and Georges Seurat.

This movement specifically broke free from the previous realism and impressionism movements, seeking more individual styles. They simplified colour and forms.

I think Post-Impressionism would be just as good to look at as Expressionism, as it also focuses on a rejection of realism/naturalism and the communication of emotions rather than just a representation of real life. This fits the play because the plot, use of space, and depiction of time, rejects reality and logic- as well as the play being an extremely emotive and meaningful piece which needs an appropriate art style to take influence from.

An early 20th century German art movement, prioritising the representation of inner feelings over reality. Key features were bright colours and gestural marks/brushstrokes *(Tate, Year Unknown)*

The movement in film focuses on visual distortion and hyper-expressive performance to communicate intense inner feelings. It rejects realism. (*Harries, Year Unknown)*

(around 1905 to 1933)

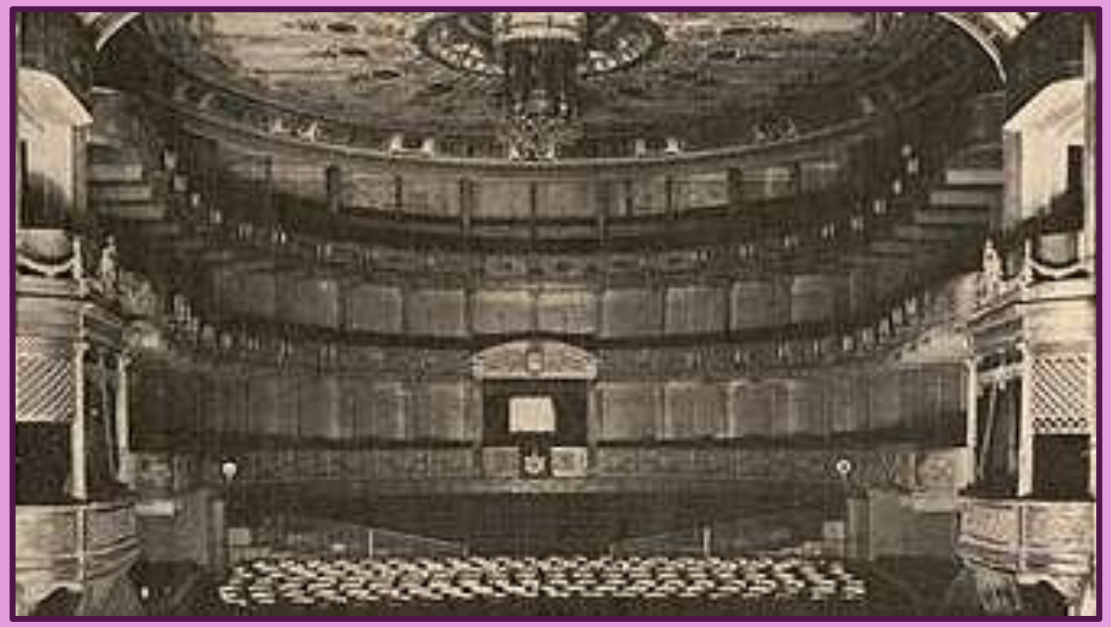
The movement emerged before and throughout the first world war, continuing through to Hitler's rise to power. It stemmed from resistance and the reaction of the public to the world changing around them. Artists wanted to reject the restrictions placed on them with realism as well as communicate their emotions towards the horrors of war. *(Goldmark, 2017)*



(Millet, 1957)
←

Russian Theatre:

According to *Wan (2024)* Stanislavski is one of the most influential figures in acting, still today. Stanislavski born 1863 and died 1938, influencing late 19th century to early 20th century theatre.
His push for theatre to have a moral purpose compliments the intentions of Angela Carter's story, there is meaning throughout and it is not merely for entertainment.
Russian theatre was in decline at the end of the 19th century → following traditions and old ways of doing things, it was stagnating.
Before 1882 all professional ballet, opera, and drama had to be staged in one of the Tsar's theatres in Moscow or St. Petersburg. After this was abolished it made room for the new.
Plays began to be produced to create profit, quick and mindless work. The sets were dull and recycled, placed randomly around when needed.



(Maly Theatre, Year Unknown)



(Goncharova, 1908)
←

Russian Art Movements:

1863 revolt against St. Petersburg Academy, which restricted artists to classical themes and religious history, artists wanted to represent the world in front of them → a new contemporary excitement. The Itinerants prioritised art being for the people, their focus was people's suffering, using ideological realism.
The Neo-Russian movement → Byzantine style of the early 19th century lost its influence. Returning to folk traditions.

Constructivism:

Constructivism in Russia 1920-1923

The rise of Constructivism signified a moment Russia had something big to contribute to the art world in the West, as it is rooted in Russia and social revolution

Early theorists of Constructivism pointed out limitations to Cubism and Futurism that constructivism didn't have. (*Bann, 1974, p. 3)*

Constructivism came to life in the 1917 revolution, allowing artists to construct a new world. The movement is less about a style and more about investigating and dissecting the relationship between art and social revolution (*Bann, 1974, p. 4)*



←*(Hunt, 1967)*

Extension of Constructivist Principles: 1923-1928

Constructivism eventually spread into all art forms, including theatre. Within poetry, constructivism meant you had to destroy syntax and form in order to build it all up again, brand new. (*Bann, 1974, p. 109)*

- → To translate this to set design or production in general, it would involve breaking down the idea of a stage in order to 'construct' something different
- → Although this is the wrong time period for the design, the theory behind it works really well for Act Three, in the destruction of everything making way for the construction of something new for everyone, social revolution specifically being something Lizzie is eager for.

Constructivism Continued:

All Images on this page are sourced from DeGuzman (2023)



Alexander Rodchenko, *'Trekhgornoe Beer Will Drive Out Homebrew!'* (1925)
→ showing bold colours = energy and new life

Constructivism was an Avant-Garde movement. It focussed on objective truth rather than emotions. Typically including geometric shapes, simple + powerful compositions, use of industrial materials, strong lines and colours. It was a way of honouring simple everyday life and factories/machinery. It carried strong themes of creative autonomy and individuality.





Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*
→ use of industrial materials

Alexander Rodchenko, *'Books (Please!) In All Branches of Knowledge'*, 1924
→

Avant-Garde Art:



Photographer unknown.
Scene of 'Dance of the Lads' from Fernand Crommelynck's 'Magnanimous Cuckold', designs by Liubov Popova, in 1922.
(Hern, 2014, p. 17)



Photographer unknown.
Scene of 'Interrogation of Pakhomov the Yardman' from Alexander Sukhovo-Koblin's 'The Death of Tarelkin', designs by Varvara Stepanova, in 1922.
(Hern, 2014, p. 19)

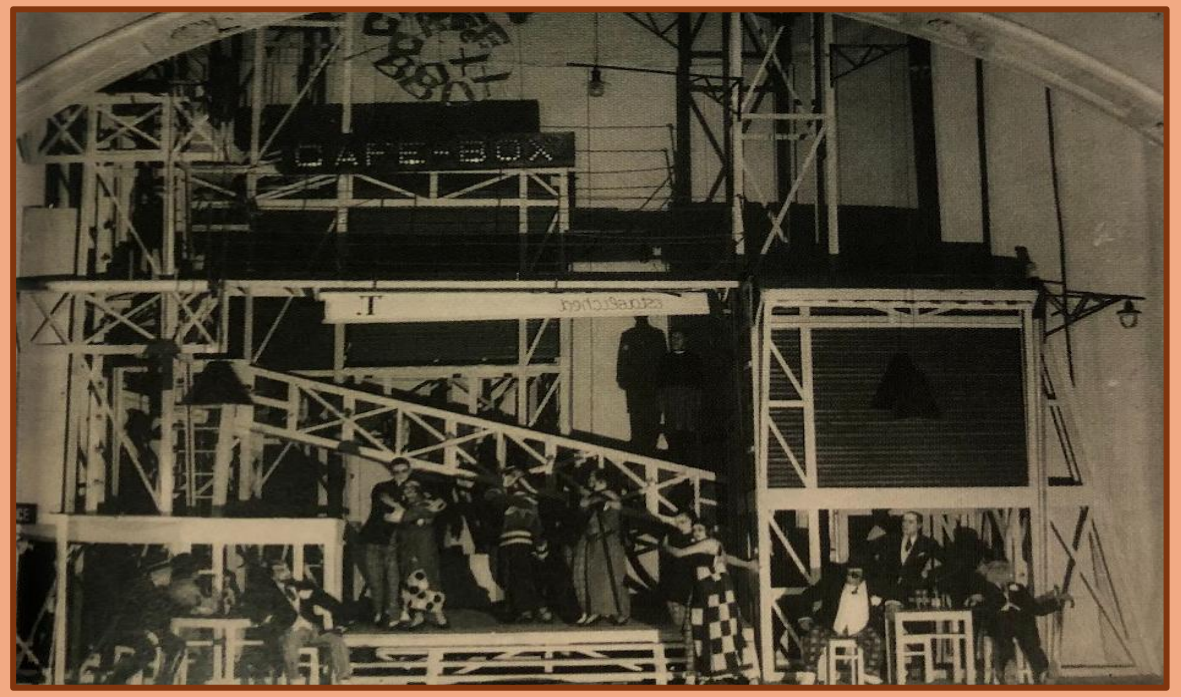
At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian Theatre had a period of creative radicalism against the backdrop of WW1 and the Russian Revolution.
I find the similarities in the use of angles to constructivism interesting, and I think I prefer Constructivism over Avant-Garde, as a movement.

Artist unknown.
Poster advertising the Blue Blouse performances in Moscow, 1926.
(Hern, 2014, p. 12)



World war, domestic insurrection, civil war + political dictatorship
→ meant a flourish in the arts
(Hern, 2014, p. 16)
New generation of directors (such as Alexander Tairov + Les Kurbas) paid homage to folklore + <u>circus</u> + bio mechanics
→ restructuring theatre into artistic exploration
(*Hern, 2014, p. 17)*

Avant-Garde Continued:



Photographer unknown,
Scene from G.K. Chesterton's
'The Man Who Was Thursday',
1923.
(Hern, 2014, p. 21)

A fusion of seriousness and ludicrousness became an identifying feature of the constructivist movement. (*Hern, 2014, p. 26)* I love the large scale of the sets and the playground nature of them → so many opportunities for interaction between characters and location



1927-1930,
Designs by El Lissitzky,
Prepared by Vsevolod Meierkhold,
for Sergei Tretiakov's 'I want A Baby'
(Hern, 2014, p. 27)

Advancing stage and set construction
Alexandra Exter reorganised the stage box, constructing rather than decorating the stage
→ Constructivism was a big movement in this time
(*Hern, 2014, p. 20)*

Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty:



(Lesson Resources, Year Unknown)

"If theatre is a necessary part of our lives, an activity we cannot forgo without suffering the consequences (…) that is much more momentous than dabbling in safe formulas"
(Bermel, 1997, p. 9)

- → I didn't think that Albert Bermel's book was very helpful towards my research, although titled Theatre of Cruelty it didn't discuss this style of theatre much at all. I think my research into the '*Notes of a Young* Doctor', from the Minsk Puppet Theatre, a lot more helpful. I think it might also be the case that this style is difficult to define or analyse in depth, but I think I will understand it through examples of plays with this style rather than a definition.
- → Others define Theatre of Cruelty as an intense truth



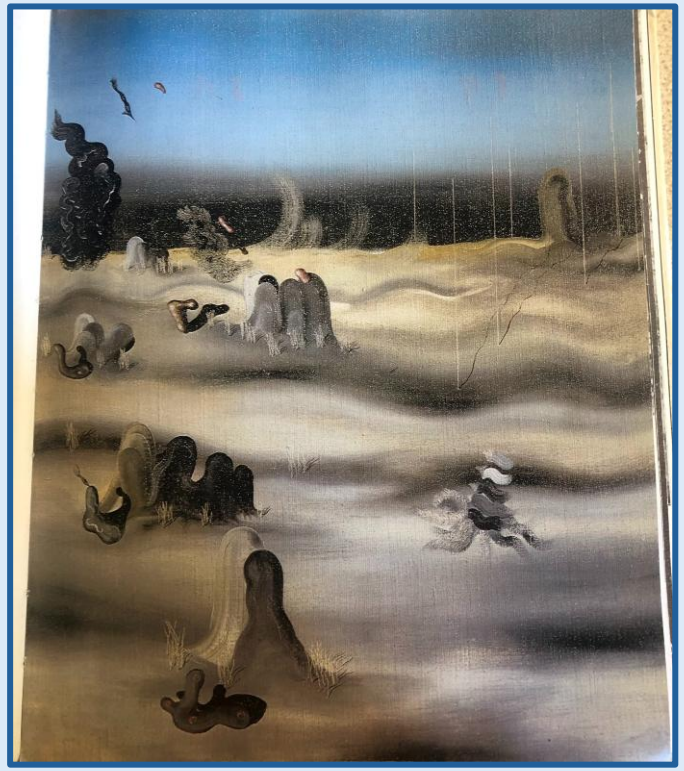
(Theatre!, 2013) →

Surrealism:

"Beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all" – Andre Breton, *Nadja*, 1928 (*Short, 1994, p. 83)*

→ This quote is great for theatre of cruelty's link to surrealism, the exaggeration of horror links into surrealistic beauty

The 'eruption of the irrational' into everyone's world through art was seen as a way towards freedom in everyday life, and the way that the world is viewed. Helping people who struggle in life to find a release and to feel normal and capable



← Yves Tanguy, *'Shadow Country'*, 1927 [Oil on Canvas] (*Short, 1994, p. 85)*

Jindrich Styrsky, *'The Statue of Liberty'*, 1937 [Collage] (*Short, 1994, p. 86)* →



Surrealists saw a changed view of the world as a direct method towards changing the world. (*Short, 1994, p. 84)*

<u>Surrealists wanted:</u>

1. To juxtapose elements in a disruptive and irreconcilable way
2. To explore the unknown, their end goal was not beauty but a journey through the subconscious (*Short, 1994, p. 87)*
3. Surrealistic imagery is the communication between the subconscious and the real world (*Short, 1994, p. 91)*

Surrealism Continued:

Rene Magritte, '*The Human Condition*', 1933 [oil on canvas] (*Short, 1994, p. 114*) →





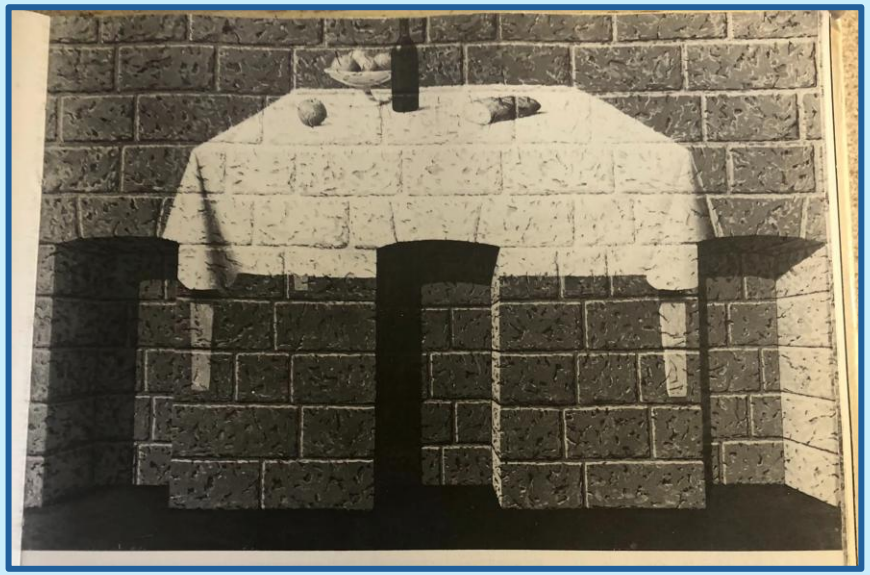
Surrealism is all about the subconscious and desire leaking through to it and the imagination. Also, about the reality that there may be no beauty in that but the result of a raw human experience it takes you through is in itself beautiful.

This research really helped me in my design work as I want Act One to be a direct conversation between Lizzie's twisted grief and horror creating a distorted reimagining of events and the audience.

Her subconscious becomes the set

Salvador Dali, '*The Roses Bleed*', 1930 [Oil on Canvas] (*Short, 1994, p. 108*)

Images on pages 114-115 play with perspective, I like the idea that the forced perspective and 2D tricks play with falsehood and the idea that Lizzie's imagination hasn't properly filled in these blanks, her delusion lacks depth and will not uphold forever.



Rene Magritte, '*The Pleasant Truth*', 1966 [Oil on Canvas] (*Short, 1994, p. 115*) →

The Greatest Showman Circus Spectacular: Come Alive

London, Empress Museum, 2023, Set Design by Ruby Law





(Law, 2023)



→ custom truss to hold circus equipment
→ stage has height and grandeur
→ band plinth styled like a hot air balloon basket
→ circus wagon



Cirque Du Soleil:

Prioritise safety but create an interesting landscape for the artists to work with physically
→ reminiscent of a playground almost

(Cirque Du Soleil, Year Unknown)



No Fit State Circus:

Founded in 1986 → creative reaction to the world around them
Travelling trucks, trailers, and caravans still → like old circuses used to
Combine modern technology and stage design with traditional circus acts
(NoFitState, Year Unknown, a)



(NoFitState, Year Unknown, b)



(NoFitState, Year Unknown, a)



(Kavanagh, 2013)

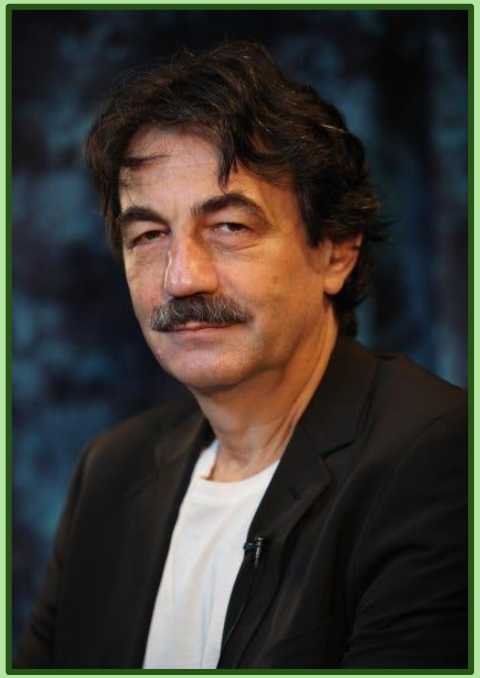
This set is extremely constructivist and interestingly relates to ideas around circus sets being similar to playgrounds with plenty for the performers to work with and work on.



(Gardens, 2022) →

Floating ladder → could be an interesting development on my ladder for the bookcase
One of their acts involved silks pulling a performer all around the stage, called the 'tortured silks performance' → fighting for her freedom of movement, emotional intensity within usually a light-hearted genre of performance, this could be used for Fevvers, combining performance art with our adaptation to communicate Fevvers' fight for freedom in experimental and expressive ways.

George Tsypin



(Kahn, 2019)

According to *Opera National De Paris (Year Unknown)*, George Tsypin is a sculptor, architect, and set designer.
Designing large scale shows such as the musical '*Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*', directed by Julie Taymor and then Philip William McKinley in 2011
Tsypin also designed the opening ceremony for 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi





Scenic model by George Tsypin →
Cashill (2011) describes Tsypin as trying to find a theatrical language to mimic comic books. Looking into the illustrative world which led him to pop-up books. Lightweight, durable carbon fibre made a pop-up effect possible - maybe I should use this for my design.
Windows of skyscrapers each had an LED light in it
His set was free of right angles, such as the proscenium arch
One scene → puppeteers are moving and controlling the walls → this is perfect for the concept of Vesta and the Chorus moving all of the set and staying in control of events.

(Broadwaycom, 2011) →



He mostly designs operas → large scale shows
He wanted to open up the proscenium as he wants to expand the space and change the idea of the small box that theatre can become
He wants to try and 'explode' comic books and graphic novels into the space, which is what led to pop-up books as an inspiration

I decided to create one colour palette for each act, as the aesthetics of each act are extremely contrasting and we wanted to communicate the gradual shift in atmosphere and build of tension until the final release at the end.

Colour Palettes:







Act One: I was aiming for darker and more earthy colours in order to depict Victorian London as depressing and sinister. With a focal point of gold being in Ma Nelson's sword and maybe in Fevvers' wings, in order to communicate the theme of freedom being their last hope.

Act Two: I drew from the soft and pastel colours of the classical paintings we were looking at as a group for the mood boards and analysis of Greek Mythology. I also found a Nina Simone album titled Pastel Blues which I thought was a significant sign to build up to Act Three where we hear one of her songs.

Act Three: I wanted to maintain the void and idea of a barren land.



4evrmia (Year Unknown), Teo (Year Unknown), 123alanna321 (Year Unknown), Kimball International (Year Unknown), SchemeColor (Year Unknown, a), ColorHex (Year Unknown, a), ColorPicker (Year Unknown), Tarabreslin (Year Unknown), iStock (Year Unknown), SchemeColor (Year Unknown, b)



Nina Simone (Year Unknown), SchemeColor (Year Unknown, c), SchemeColor (Year Unknown, d), ArtyClick (Year Unknown), ColorKit (Year Unknown), SchemeColor (Year Unknown, e), DreamsTime (Year Unknown), ColorHex (Year Unknown, b), ColorHex (Year Unknown, c), Alamy (Year Unknown), iStock (Year Unknown), Athena Stonecare (Year Unknown)

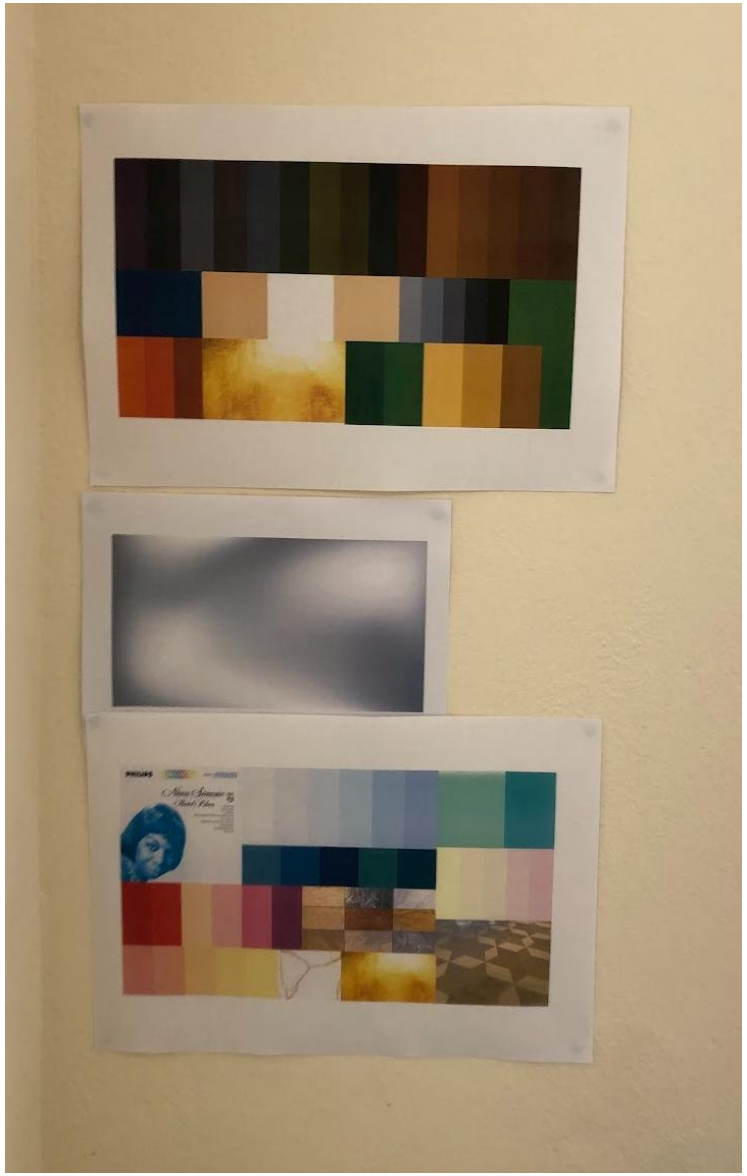


Vecteezy (Year Unknown)

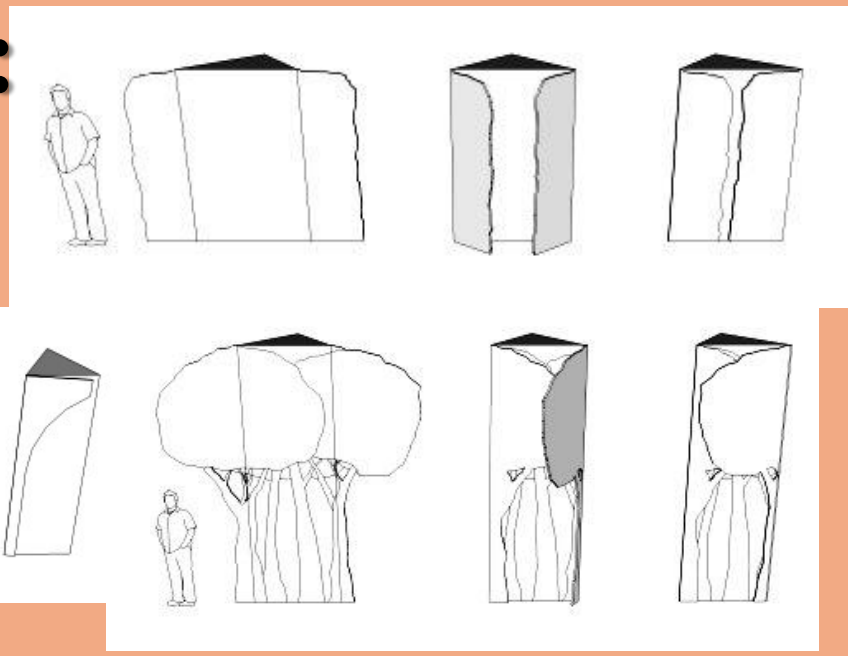
We decorated our workspace with the mood boards and colour palettes so that we would be constantly reminded of the style and aesthetic whilst working.

This helped us stay rooted in our design and inspire/influence us when we were stuck!

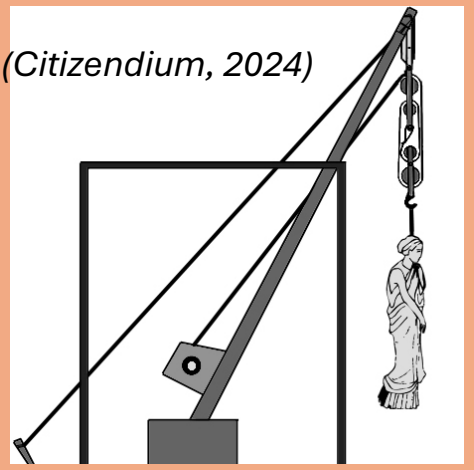




Ancient Greek Theatre Techniques:



Digital Theatre Plus (2022) discusses the Festival of Dionysus → most celebrated festival at the time in Ancient Greece
People travelled in from rural areas, government work paused, and prisoners were released so they could attend



(Citizendium, 2024)

Features: *(Nguyen, 2014)*
They had large spaces, having to sometimes fit 10,000
Circular centre space → similar to a circus ring!
Un upward slope to create a viewing area
Great acoustics → due to circular nature
Skênê = backstage space → came about as characters became more complex and needed space to change, disrupted the circular shape
Then developed to have stone entrances and exits, and episkenion = an upper story
Symbolism in props: red carpet Agamemnon walks on signals the blood he spilt in Troy, weapons/phallic objects used to allude to the masculinity of the character
Mechane = a crane to lift an actor, used often in 5th century B.C.E. → used often to represent deities
Ekkylêma = a wheeled platform used to reveal the dead to the audience
Trap doors to lift and lower people onto/out of the stage
Pictures were often hung as well = pinakes

Mentioned by Roman architect Vitruvius in his *Ten Books on Architecture*
As well as being key in Ancient Greek theatre they were also common in the Renaissance
They have been used on large billboards before LED screens were used, to change adverts
George Ledo presents some really innovative and exciting additions to Periaktoi that you could explore in your set design. (*Ledo, 2016)* I am very interested in incorporating this, specifically an archway/doorway for the audience to walk through.

Ancient Greek Artifacts for Influence:



(ArchaiOptix, 2014)
←

Both sources came from Anne Hyde

(Harrsch, Year Unknown)
→



How can I use these patterns in my set?

Chair set piece → Lord Nelson's chair with gold accents mimicking the ones on the helmet Anne used as reference in her prop research.

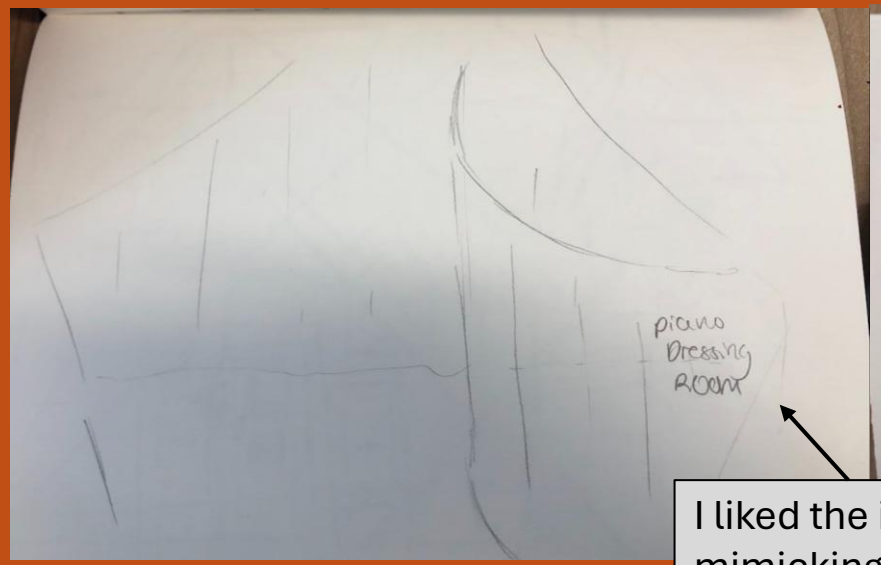
Vase for Periaktoi sides → meander pattern on vase to reference research Anne used in her prop making

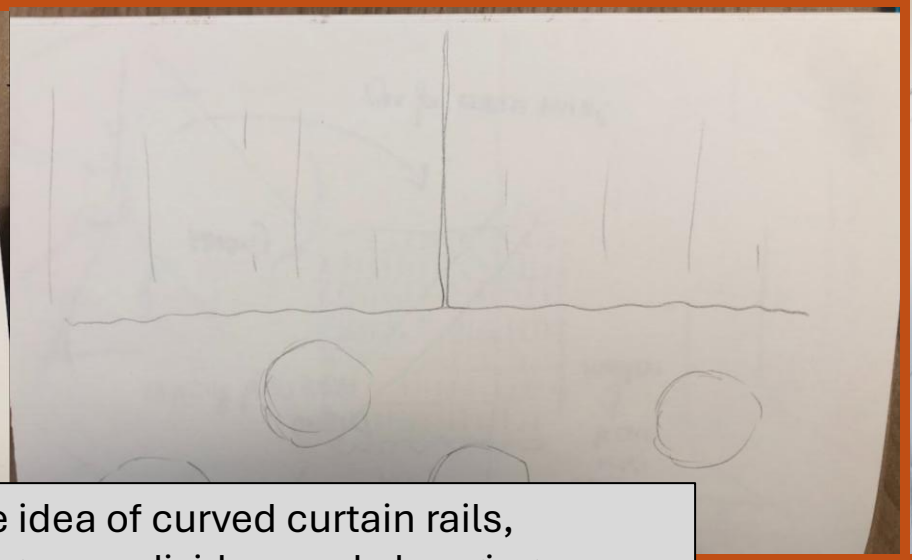
→ Tying together set and props and the references to Ancient Greece

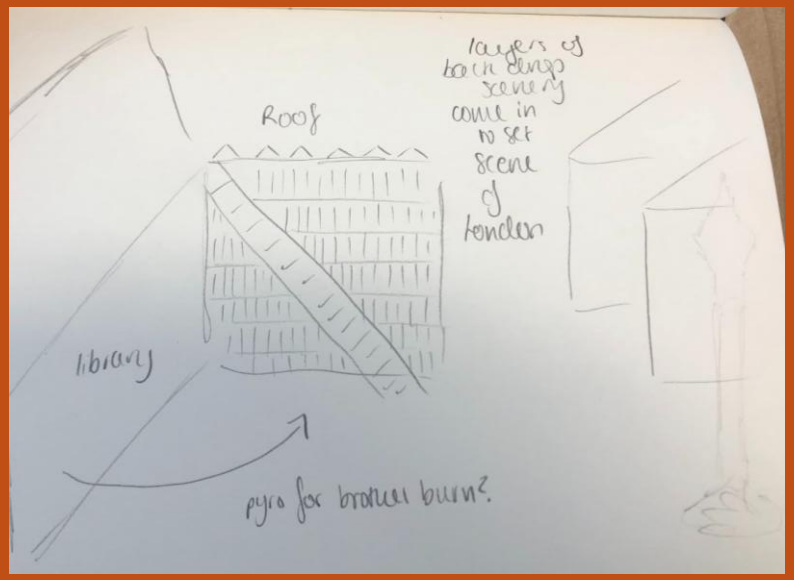
Initial Sketches:

I started exploring my initial ideas with a few small sketches, looking at a wide range of concepts.

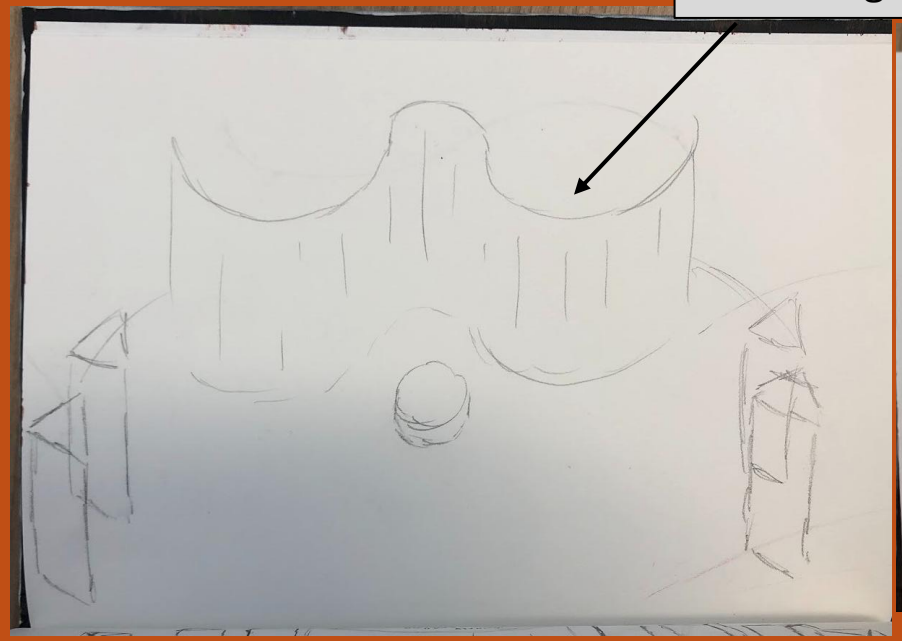
7 Steps of Design: Six → Implementation



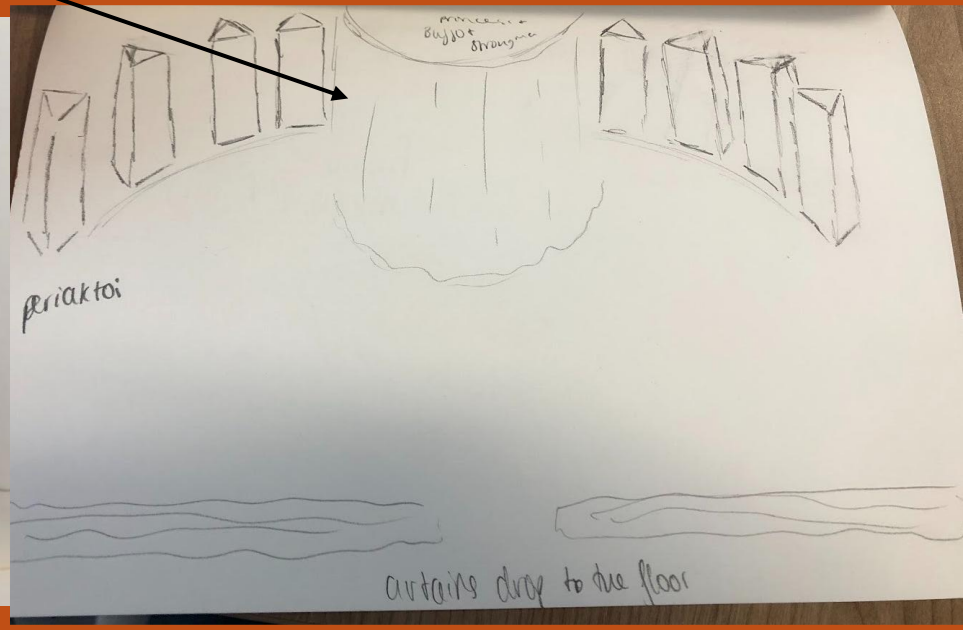




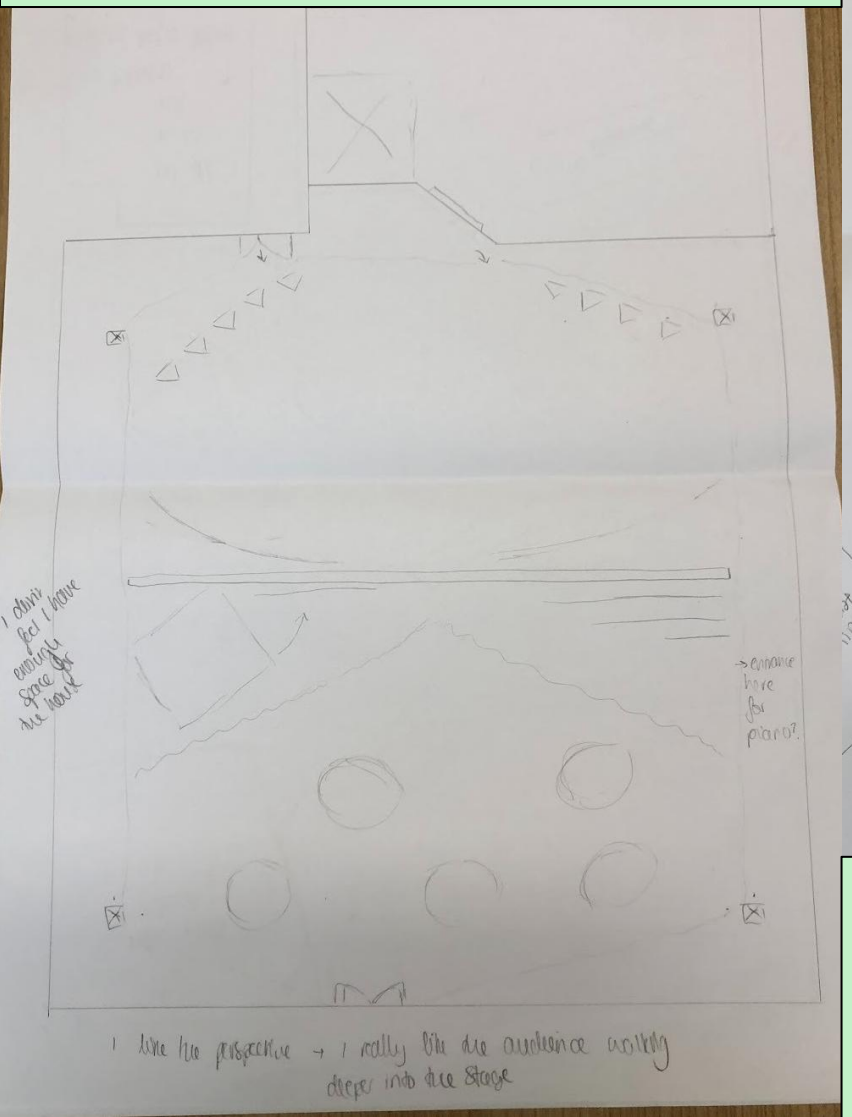
I liked the idea of curved curtain rails, mimicking room dividers and changing rooms



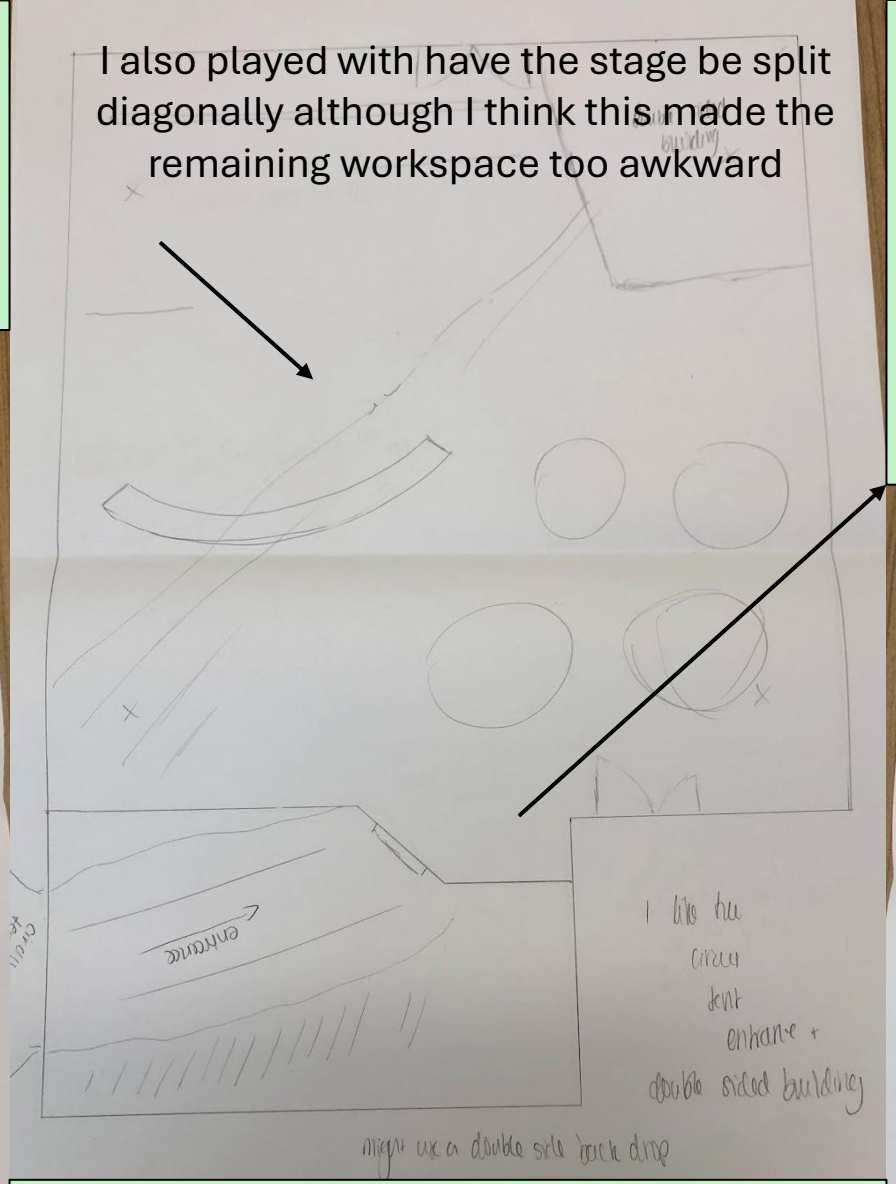




I moved onto doing some rough floor plans, to look at the space as a whole and experiment with how I could use it in a unique/effective way – looking at immersive and interactive styles of moving the audience

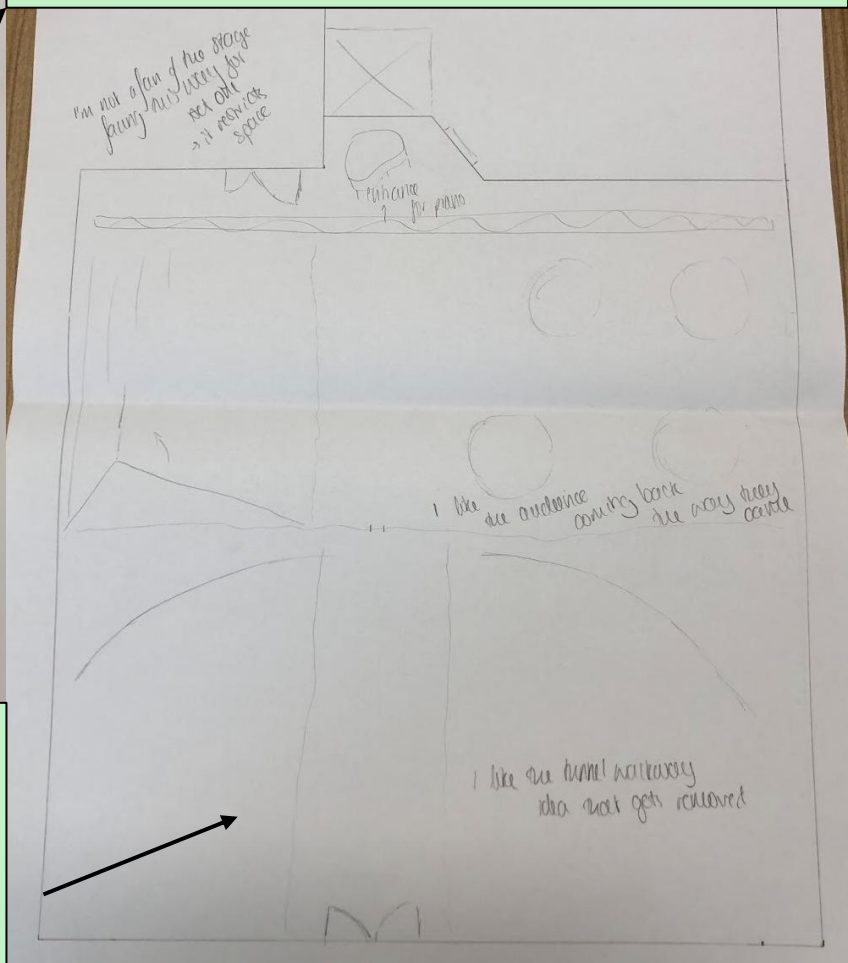


I also played with have the stage be split diagonally although I think this made the remaining workspace too awkward

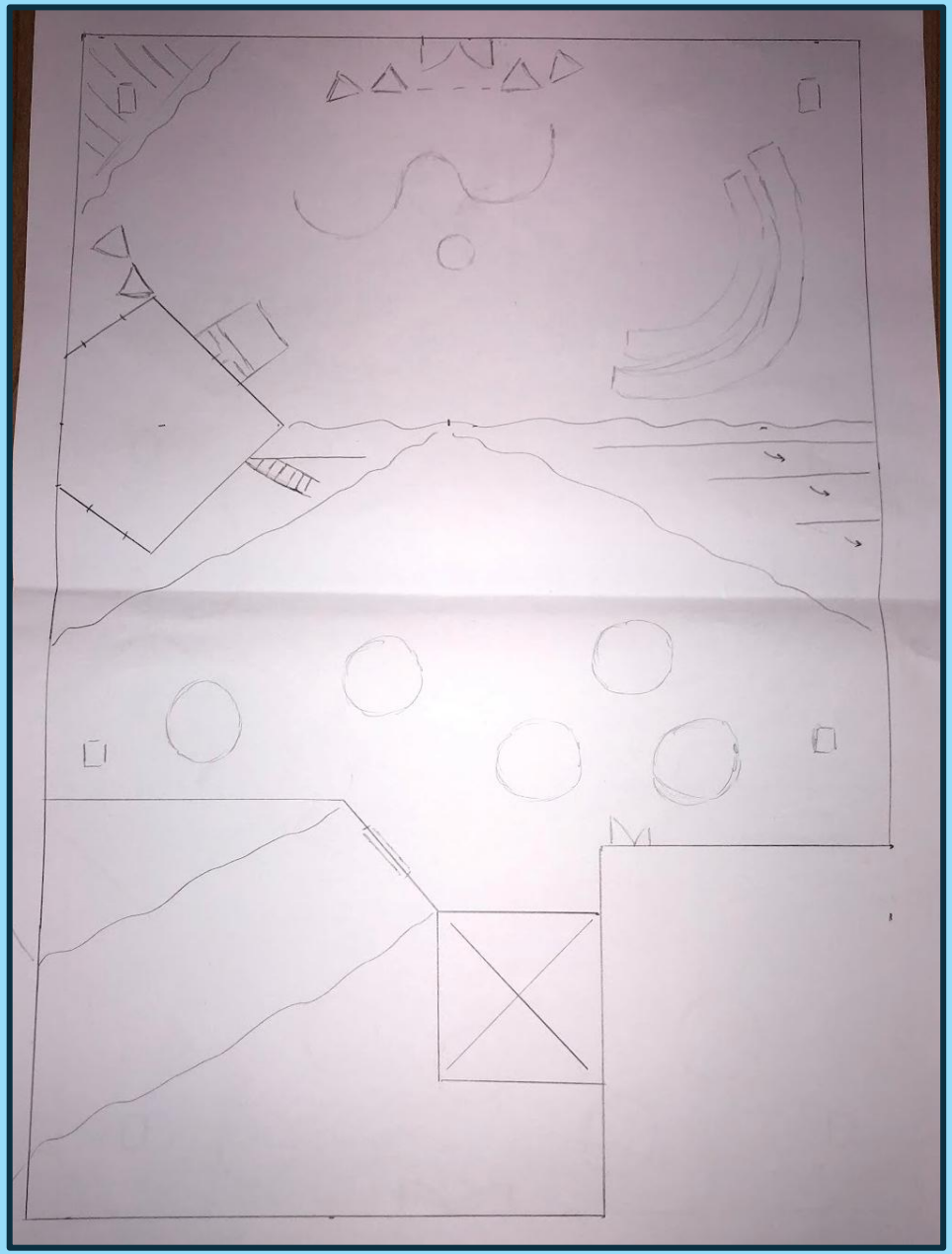


I liked the idea of the audience moving <u>deeper</u> into the space, whilst I wasn't sure if I had enough room for a house at the side of the stage to be hidden. I also explore having the audience enter through a tunnel →

I thought the tunnel would restrict the space too much but liked the idea of playing with distorted shadows behind curtains. One of my favourite ideas was to have the audience enter through the back of Y Llywfan through a circus tent façade, although I ultimately decided this set the audience up with the wrong expectations that I wanted them to have.

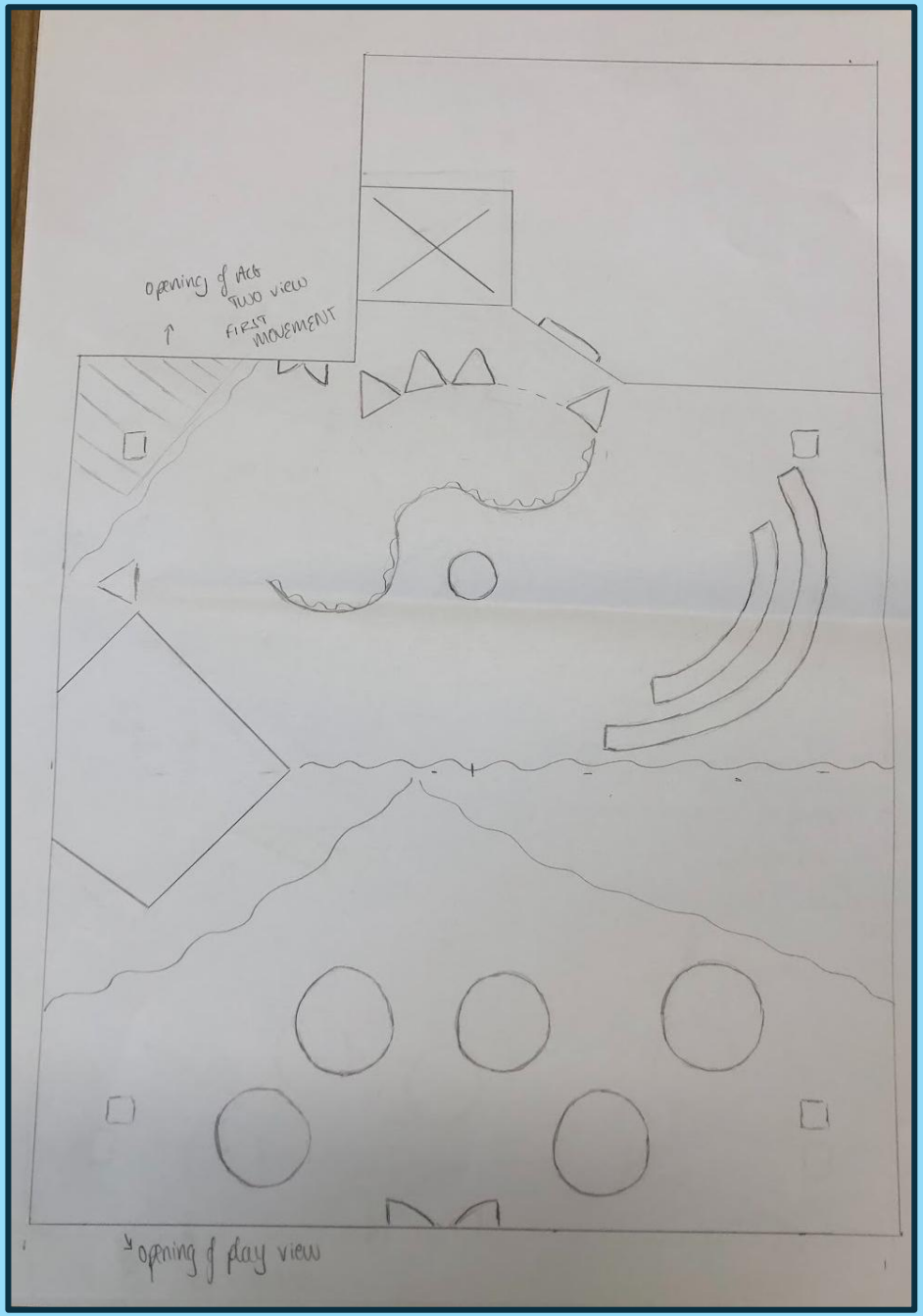


Refined Floor Plans:



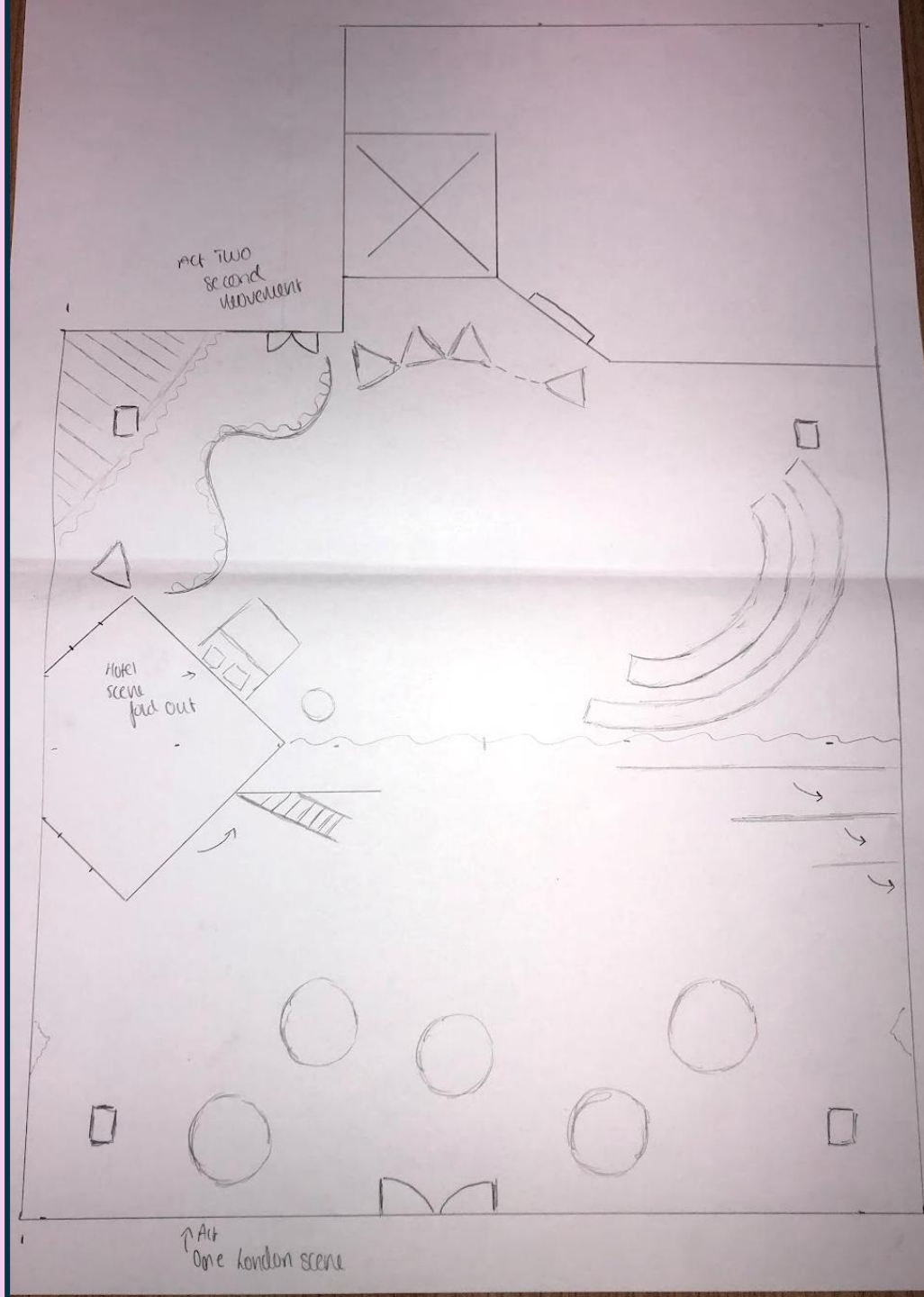
In the sketch on the right, I drew out a more refined version of all the parts I liked in my initial sketches, showing what the audience see at the start of Act One with closed curtains and round tables, and then what they see at the beginning of Act Two with Colonel Kearney willing them forwards

In the drawing to the left, I explored swapping the layout around to have the audience enter through the back door, eventually deciding to not do this as I previously stated that I felt it established the wrong atmosphere.



Refined Floor Plans:

In this floor plan I depicted what the audience would see as Act One went on and the curtains pulled back to reveal set pieces, and what the audience would see as Act Two went on and they moved around more locations/movements. This sketch really helped me in solving a few problems and expanding on my previous ideas. Such as giving me the idea to make the Brothel house a double-sided building so it could be utilised in Act Two and not only take up space for a short portion of the play. I also played with a pull-down bed on the side of the circus building for the Hotel location. As well as including the idea I had in one of my first sketches on one of the walls of the Brothel opening to reveal bookshelves- developing this from Fevvers climbing a ladder behind and jumping from the 'roof', to the bookshelves having a ladder attached that she uses in front of the audience.
I also explore developing the Periaktoi design from the research I did on George Ledo's ideas on creating non-rectangular designs.
I also had the idea here for the layered 2D flats to be hinged from the wall so they could fold away and be pulled out, rather than flown down. I liked this aspect as I felt it used the space more efficiently and added a physicality to the set design as characters would be interacting in a surreal way.



Experimental Models:

After looking at rough floor plans, I next wanted to play around with some scrap cardboard to see how my initial ideas looked and felt around the space and to be able to move things around quickly to compare how it framed what the audience saw → this also helped me to consider if the audience's line of sight was clear enough.

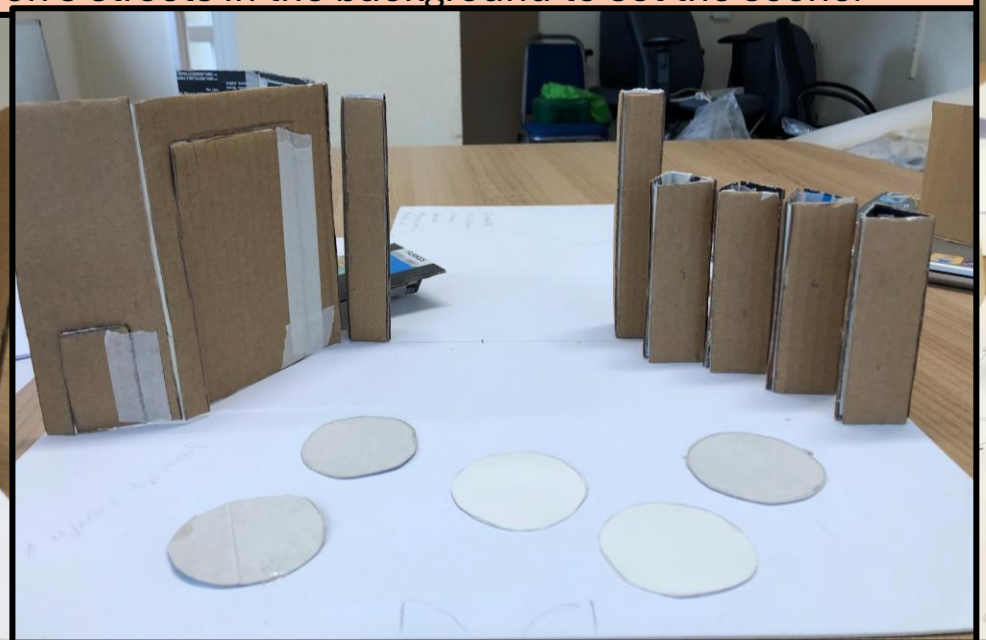




I rearranged Act One's space a few times, as you can see in the pictures on this slide, looking at how the atmosphere changed when I added Periaktoi instead of the layered 2D flats and where I might place the pillars I was interested as having as a recurring set piece. I preferred the layered 2D flats in Act One's space as I felt the Periaktoi would dull the ominous and uncomfortable atmosphere I was attempting to create. I also wanted the storybook effect of London's streets in the background to set the scene.

I felt confident with the house's location in the space but knew I wanted to look more into its shape.



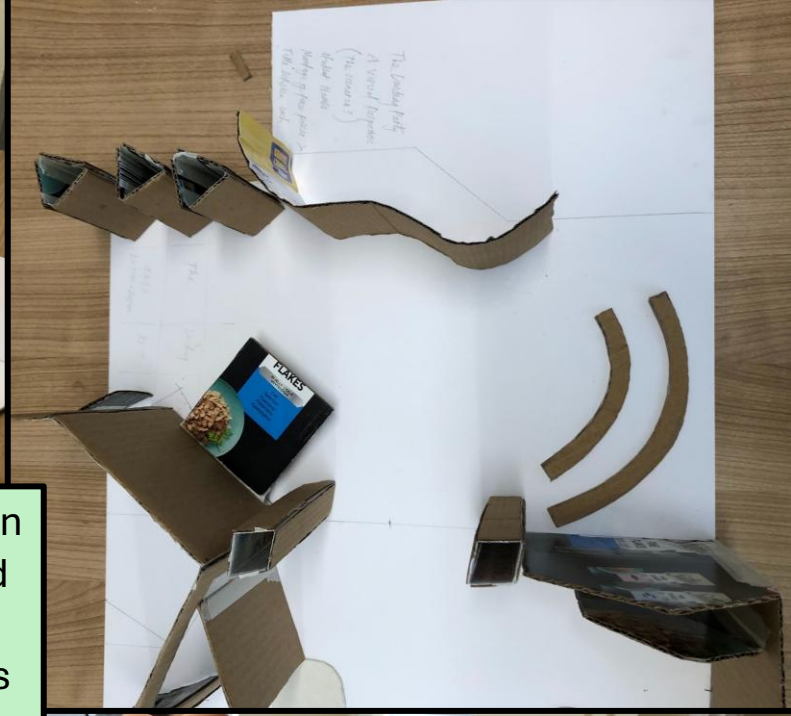




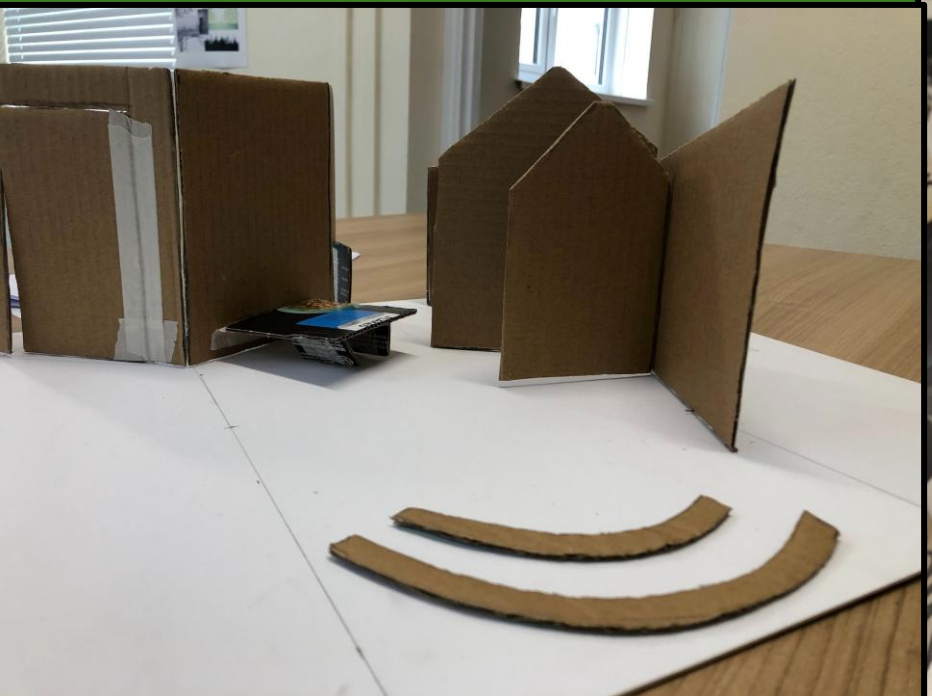
Experimental Model:

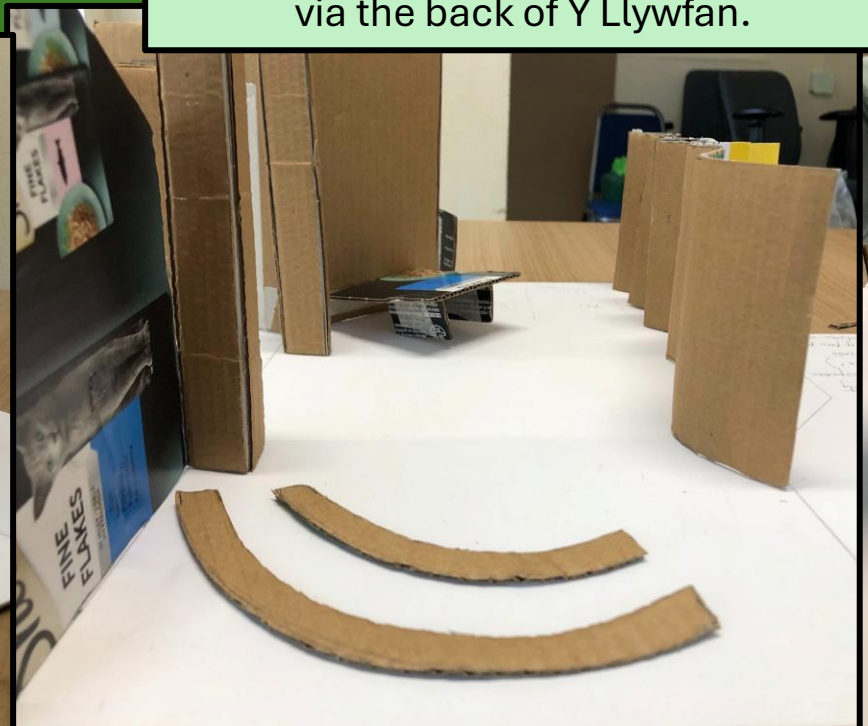
With Act Two's space I did the same thing, moving things around to see if anything new opened up to me. I didn't make many changes to Act Two's space, but I confirmed that the Periaktoi would frame the back of the space in a ring shape rather than in a cascading line. I also decided I wouldn't have Greek Pillars in my set and would only have Periaktoi, instead painting Greek Pillars on one of the Periaktoi sides, as I felt the two shapes were too similar and I could then explore using an Ancient Greek technique to present an Ancient Greek architectural feature.





I briefly looked at the layered 2D flats in this space but it became too crowded so scrapped that idea, I also like that the curtains allow exits and entrances via the back of Y Llywfan.







Immersive and Promenade Theatre:

Immersive theatre removes the traditional proscenium arch and integrates the audience into the performance (*West End Theatre, Year Unknown)*
According to *Woltmann (2023),* it encourages participation and creative engagement. It is a performance art movement. Roland Barthes, literary theorist says this style pushes the audience to create meaning.
Can include:

- Breaking the 4th wall
- Interaction with audience
- Sensory experiences
- Removal of the stage (it becomes all around you)

(Woltmann, 2023)





(Clench, 2025)

A review by *Clench (2025)* describes Whisper Walk, by Asa Wember at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2025. Participants/audience members walk around the city, at different locations there is a phone, exploring the Japanese idea of a wind phone. This phone whispers stories to the listener and connects them to the characters throughout the journey.

Promenade theatre involves the audience moving and walking around, whilst immersive theatre can include promenade. (*Trueman, 2014)*

Immersive Theatre Continued:

58th Street

58th Street, a London immersive dining and theatre experience. Styled like a speakeasy and cabaret, set in the 1930s, as a Jazz club. Founding director is William Kunhurst, designed by Darling & Edge, the production company was founded in 2017. I like the atmosphere of a Jazz Age club with the food and chill atmosphere, I imagine this is contrasted with the drama (it includes strobe, loud noises, smoke). (*West End Theatre, Year Unknown)*

(58th Street, Year Unknown)





(Visit London, Year Unknown)

(Beffshuff, 2021)
→



An adaptation of Dr. Coppelius and his puppet daughter. Directed by Theresa Heskins and designed by Lis Evans, they built a Victorian Village, filling shop windows, behind the New Vic Theatre in Newcastle-Under-Lynne, in 2021 *(Fisher, 2021)*



(PunchDrunk, Year Unknown, b)
←

Punchdrunk is a production company who specialise in immersive theatre. *(PunchDrunk, Year Unknown, a)* I love their use of light and sinister atmosphere that carries their productions.

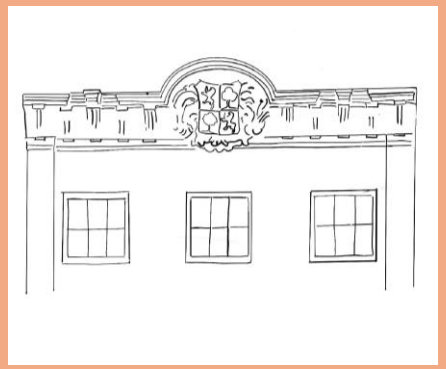
Inspiration for the House:

For the 2D layered flats I wanted to take inspiration from Victorian London streets as well as Amsterdam streets, creating a crowded and jagged effect.

19th century → facades of Amsterdam become straight cornices

Described as a sober style, with no sculptures or carvings





← I personally like the elevated crown cornice, used in the 18th century

I think it's still relevant to the time period of the play

(Grachten Museum, Year Unknown)



(Monovisions, 2018)



← *(Monovisions, 2017)*

I want this crowded look recreated in the painted back drop and the 2D layered pop-out pieces because I feel it creates the tense and uncomfortable tone and setting for the past.

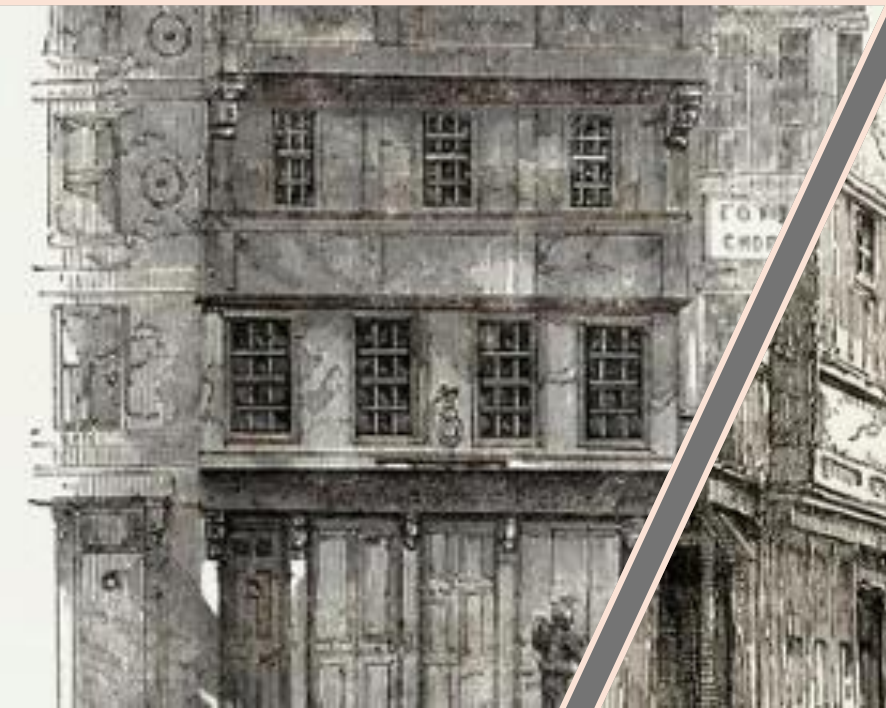
Victorian London Inspo:



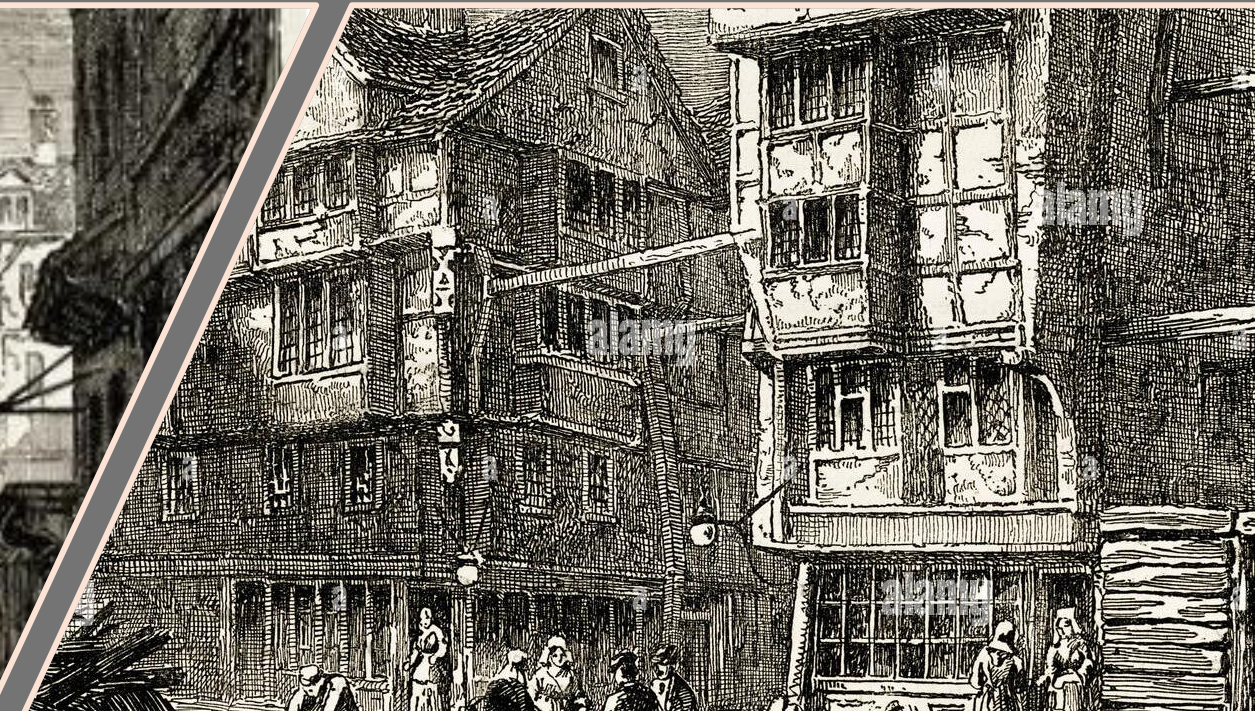
(Alamy, Year Unknown)

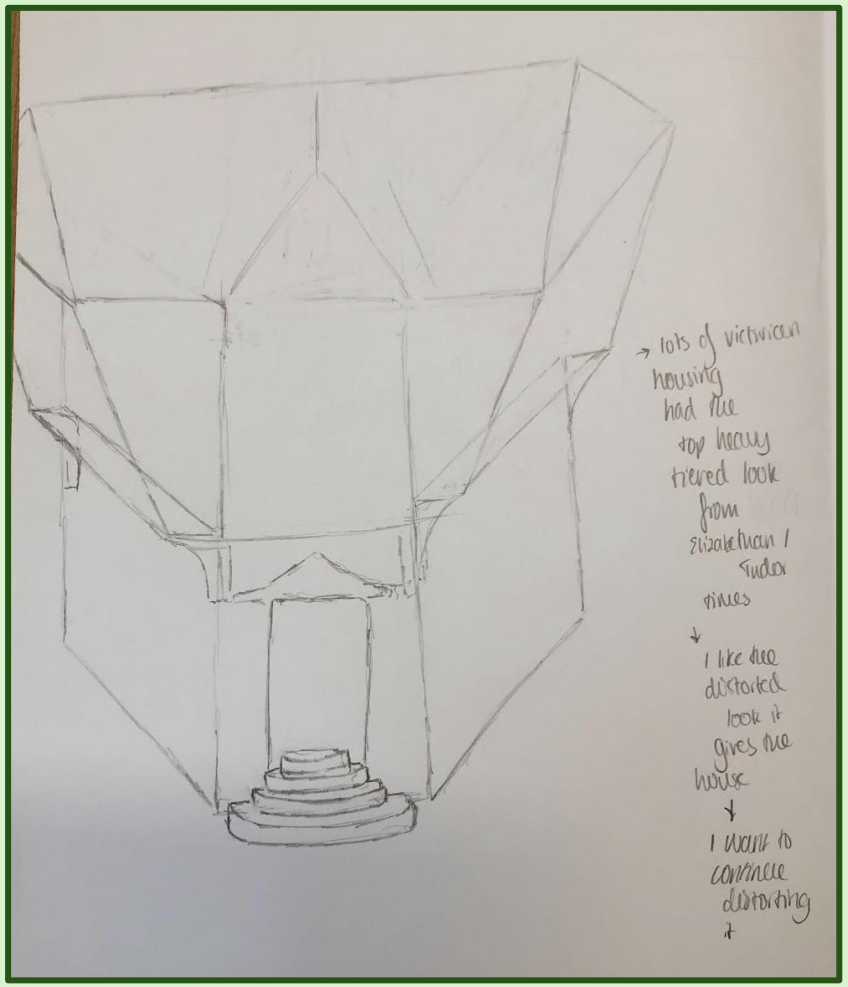


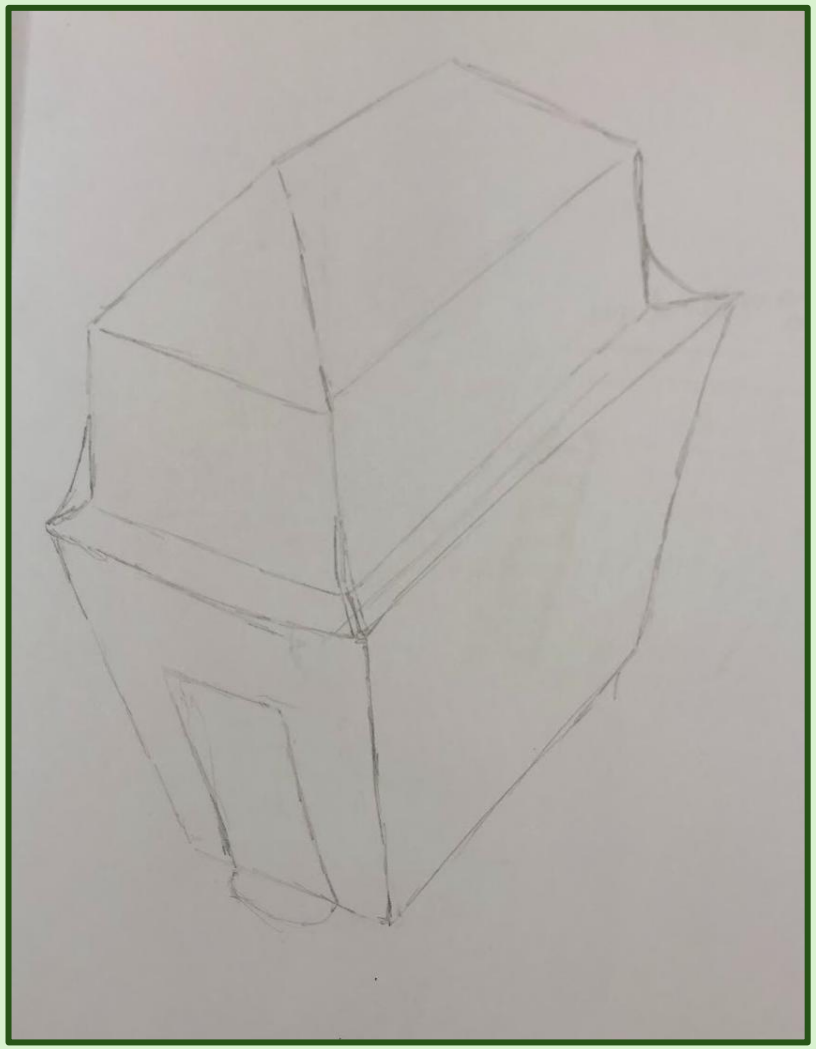


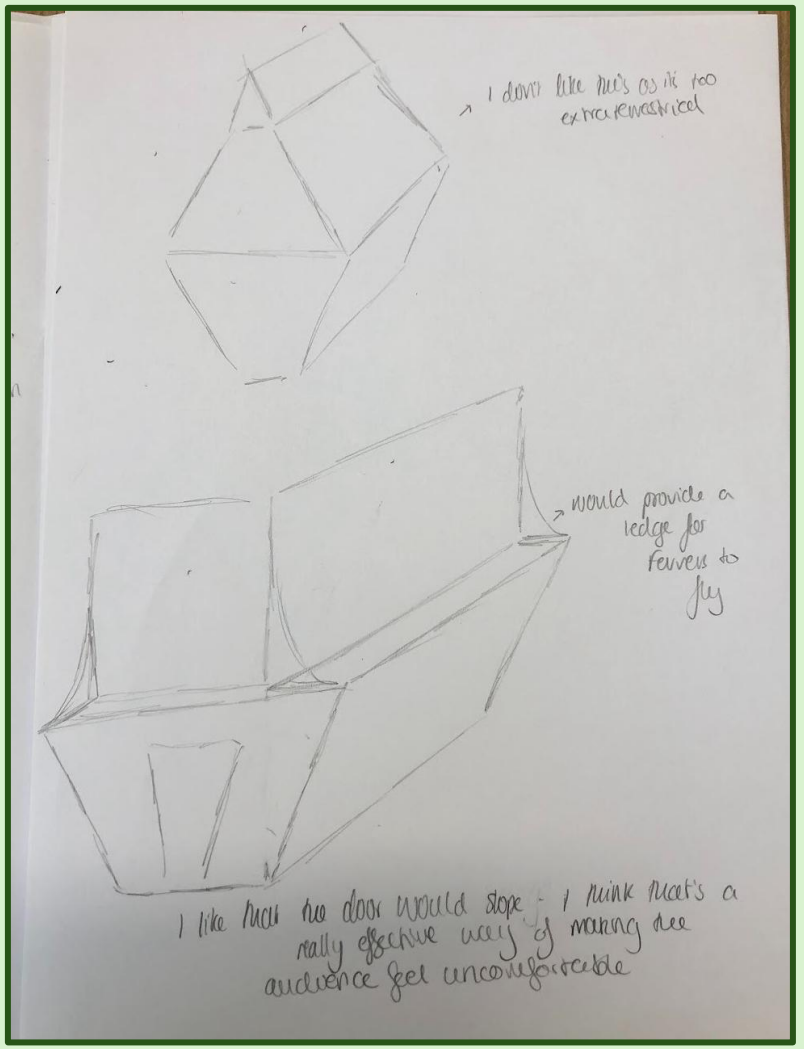












I started by using influences of Victorian houses to create detailed sketches of possible designs, such as the left-hand sketch, for this one I drew from Tudor houses still being around in Victorian times, I liked the jagged structure and the idea that houses were built to become wider at the top, as people were only charged for the land it took up at the bottom.

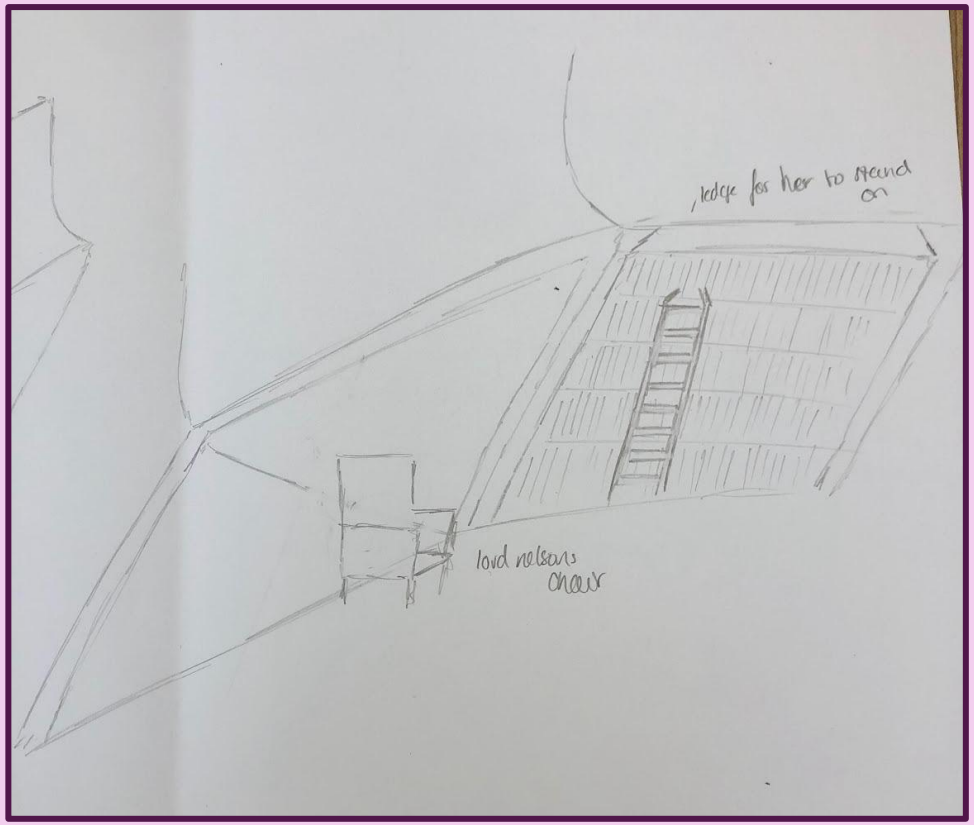
I thought that this structure would be too overwhelming for the space I had, so I explored inverting this to diagonally lean outwards, creating an angular structure to lean into German Expressionism and create a surreal building to put the audience on edge.

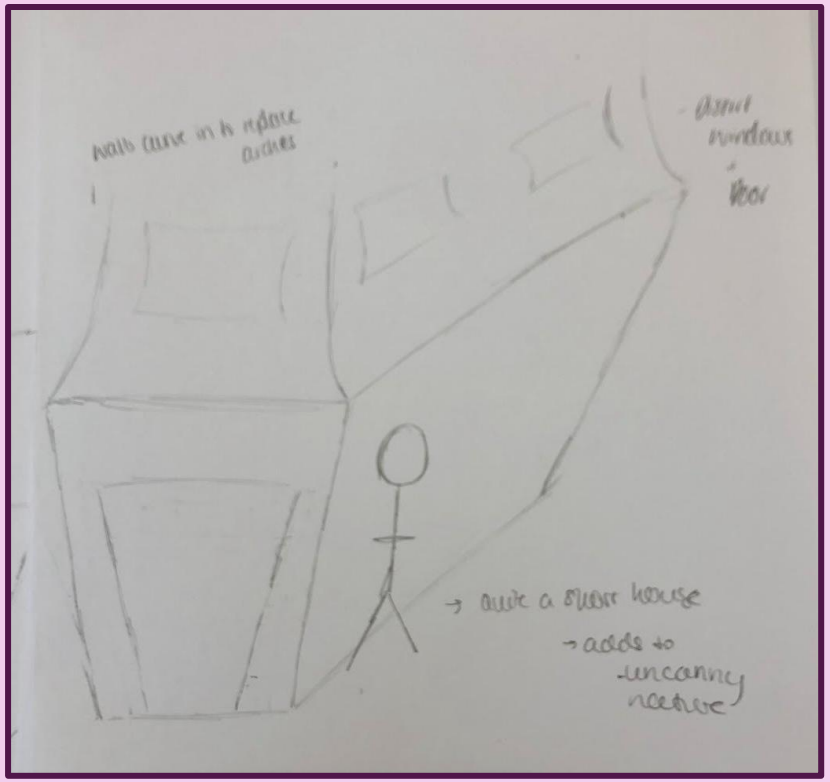
Designing the Brothel:

Refining the Brothel:

Once I knew I wanted the house to lean out I made a few new sketches, including one with a person to scale to play with distorting scale to increase the unease of the set by making the house too small for the people, I liked the idea of characters having to duck under the doorways. I decided two walls would be visible on either stage space, with a door on each side for cast to use as an exit and entrance. I also thought I could curve the second floor of the building to further distort the shapes and emphasise everything is not as it should be.







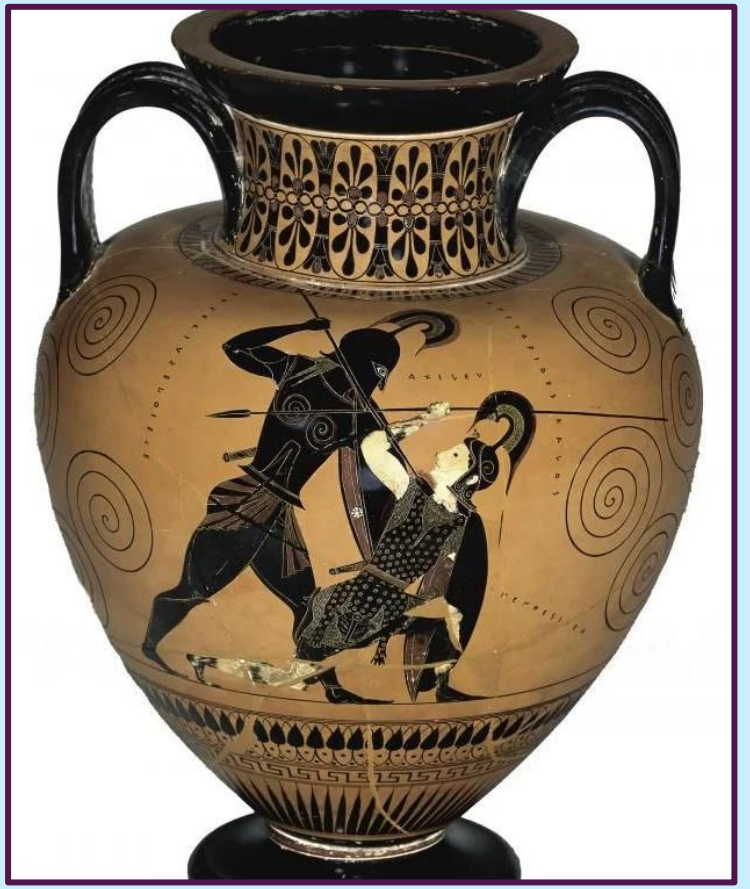
I drew the library wall opening, detailing the bookshelves and ladder, playing with the idea of a chair being there. This chair could be a recreation of Lord Nelson's chair, as I've previously mentioned.

Inspiration for the Periaktoi:

I next wanted to look at my designs for each side of the Periaktoi. On the first side I wanted a Greek Pillar, which would be crumbling on a different side of the Periaktoi, to represent the downfall of the circus and how some traditional values in society are difficult to change, such as the mistreatment of women. On the last side I wanted to take inspiration from Alice (1988) that I mentioned previously, and the vases on the Periaktoi of that movie, looking specifically at Greek vases depicting mythological events, perhaps depicting Icarus to reflect on Fevvers' story.

(Craven, 2024)





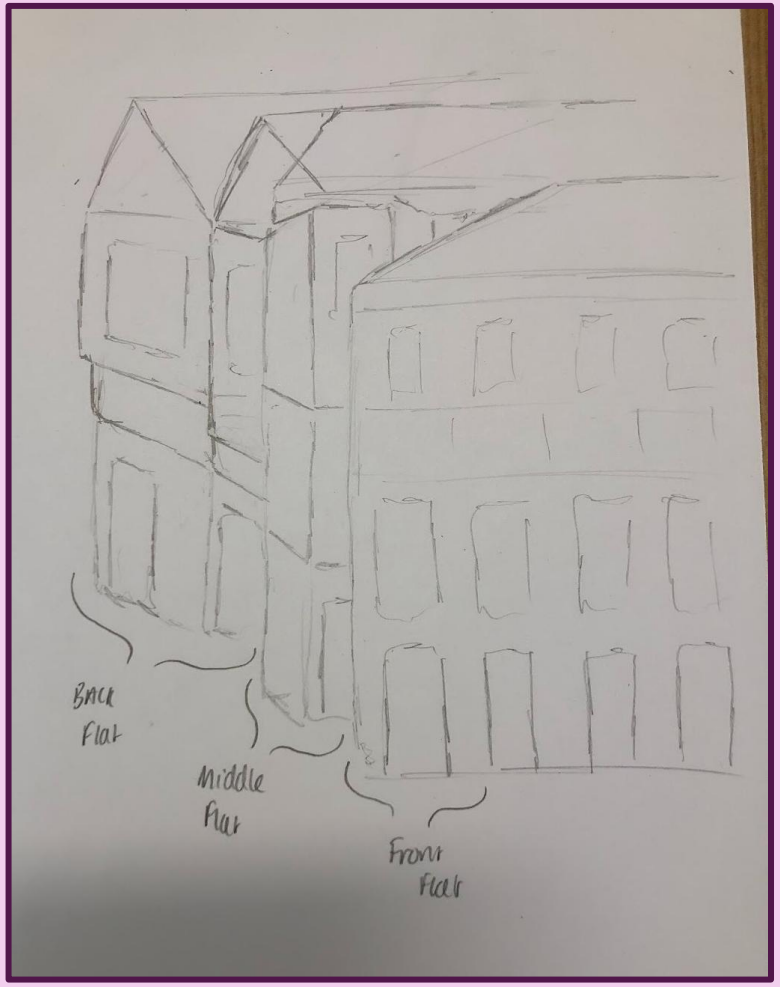
(The British Museum, Year Unknown) →



(Mecham, Year Unknown)

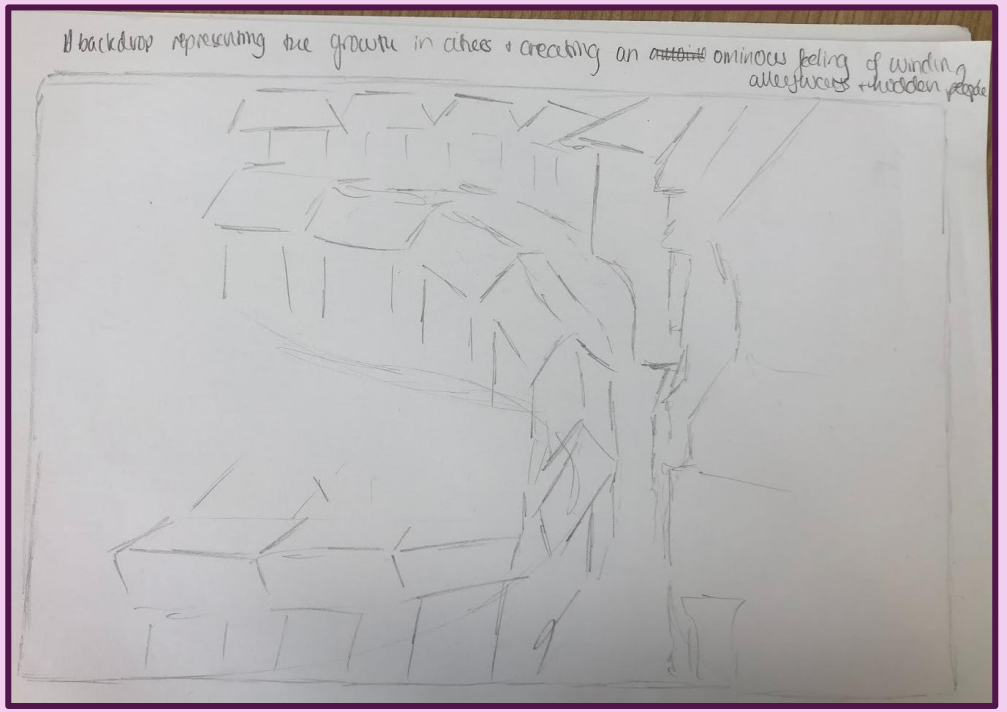
Refined Sketches of Set Pieces:

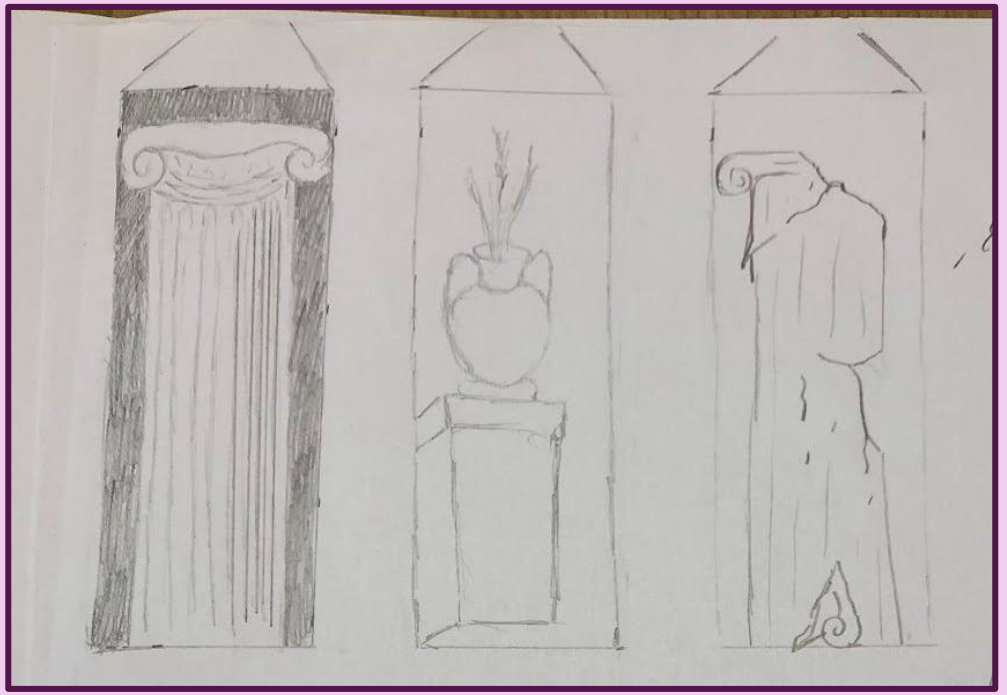
After some more research into influences for the other parts of my set, I did some sketches for the Periaktoi, the layered 2D flats, and the painted back cloth. I took my inspiration for the painted back cloth from the Victor Hugo paintings and the Victorian London street pictures.



I only want three flats for the 2D pop-out feature, as I didn't want to overload the space as my goal isn't to overwhelm their senses yet, I just want to establish jagged sharp angles to communicate exaggerated horror.

I decided to do three Periaktoi, as although the curved ring shape is easier with four I think that would be too cramped for Act Two, which I wanted the set to be more simplified for as there's already so much action.





Vardos:

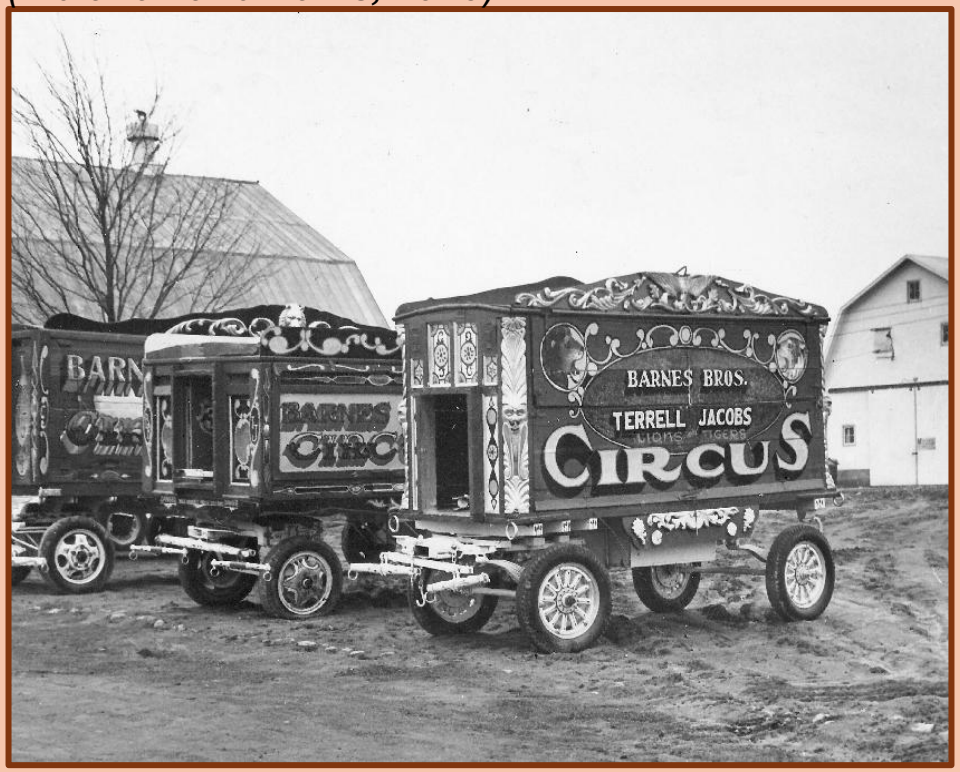
The traditional wagon/cart used by travellers is called a Vardo. (*John Moore Museum, 2022)*

It was in the 1890s that Vardos developed their character/look



It has a distinct look and style, something I am interested in taking inspiration from when it comes to Act Two's set, as everyone in the circus is a traveller. I would like to make the Circus side of the house look similar to a Vardo.

(Indiana Landmarks, 2019)

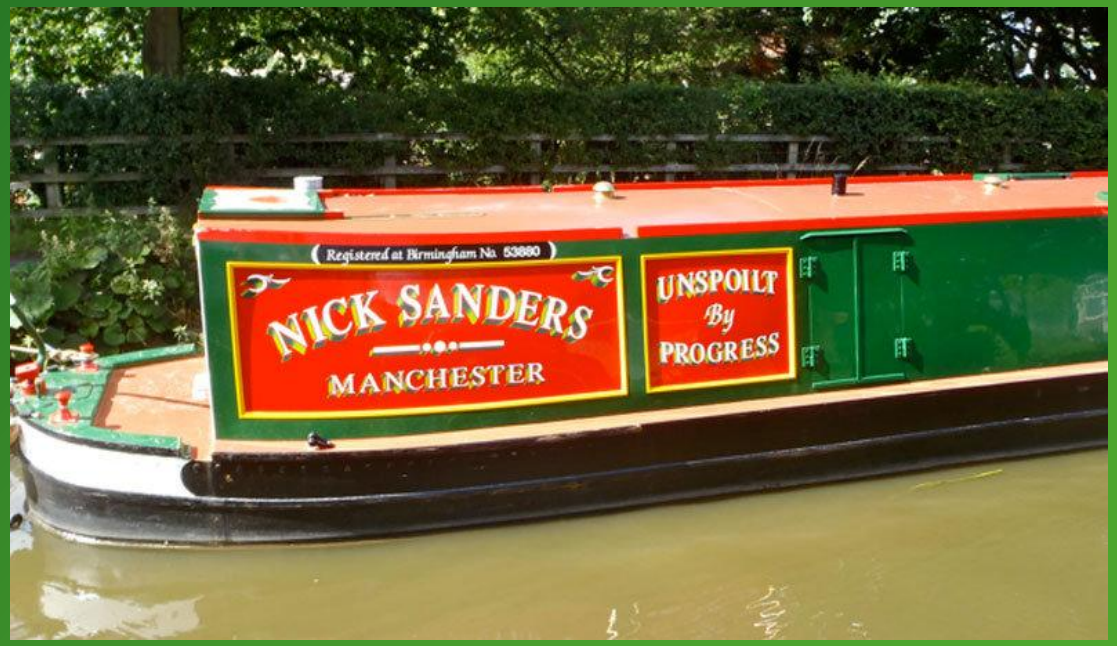




I like the wooden look and the decorative painting style. I think it perfectly recreates a circus atmosphere.







(The Fitout Pontoon, Year Unknown)

Canal Boat Writing/Sign Writing:

Sign writing on the side of Vardos, a font largely associated with fun fairs and the circus, closely links to canal boat writing. According to *Mothership Marine (Year Unknown)*, Narrowboat sign writing is a traditional decorative art on the side of a canal boat, practiced since the 18th century.

During the industrial revolution, canal boats were increasingly used to transport timber and coal, the designs on the exterior helped distinguish the owner, where they were going, and what they were transporting.

In the Victorian and Edwardian era the art style developed to become more ornate and complex, including flowers and birds.

Canal Boat Writing Continued:

Heritage Crafts (Year Unknown) states that the art of canal writing developed from both advertising services as well as becoming identifiable to authorities
Colours and styles communicated financial status and trends of the time.
People who built boats and the boat owners themselves often did the sign writing, becoming an art form significant to their lifestyle.
The art style is thought to have roots in Victorian arts and crafts.
Famous for the ‘roses & castles’ imagery, harlequin diamonds, hearts, crescent moons, and brightly coloured sun-circle.
No one is sure where the style came from.



(Collings, 2006)

Gifford's Circus:

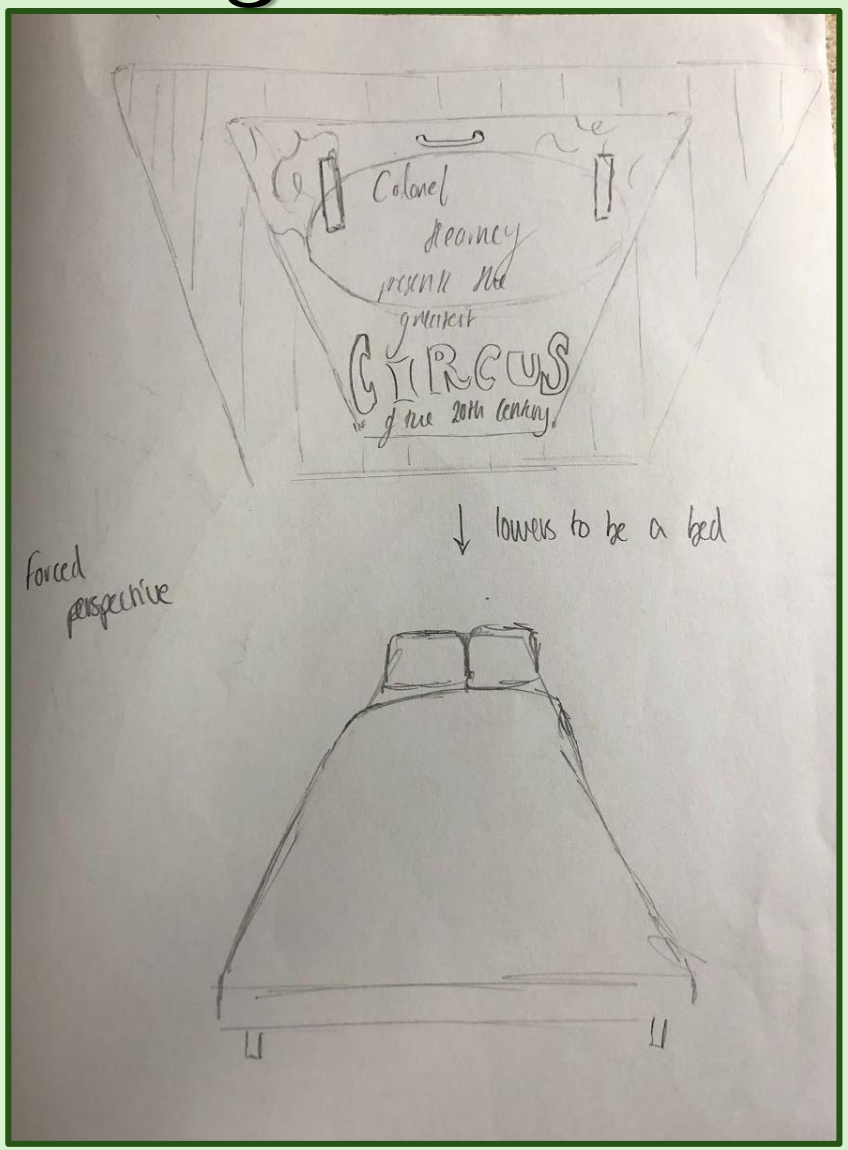
Gifford's circus uses the same font and Vardo for their wardrobe wagon, showing this style is still in use today and is a clear art style associated directly with the circus. *(Gifford's Circus, Year Unknown)*

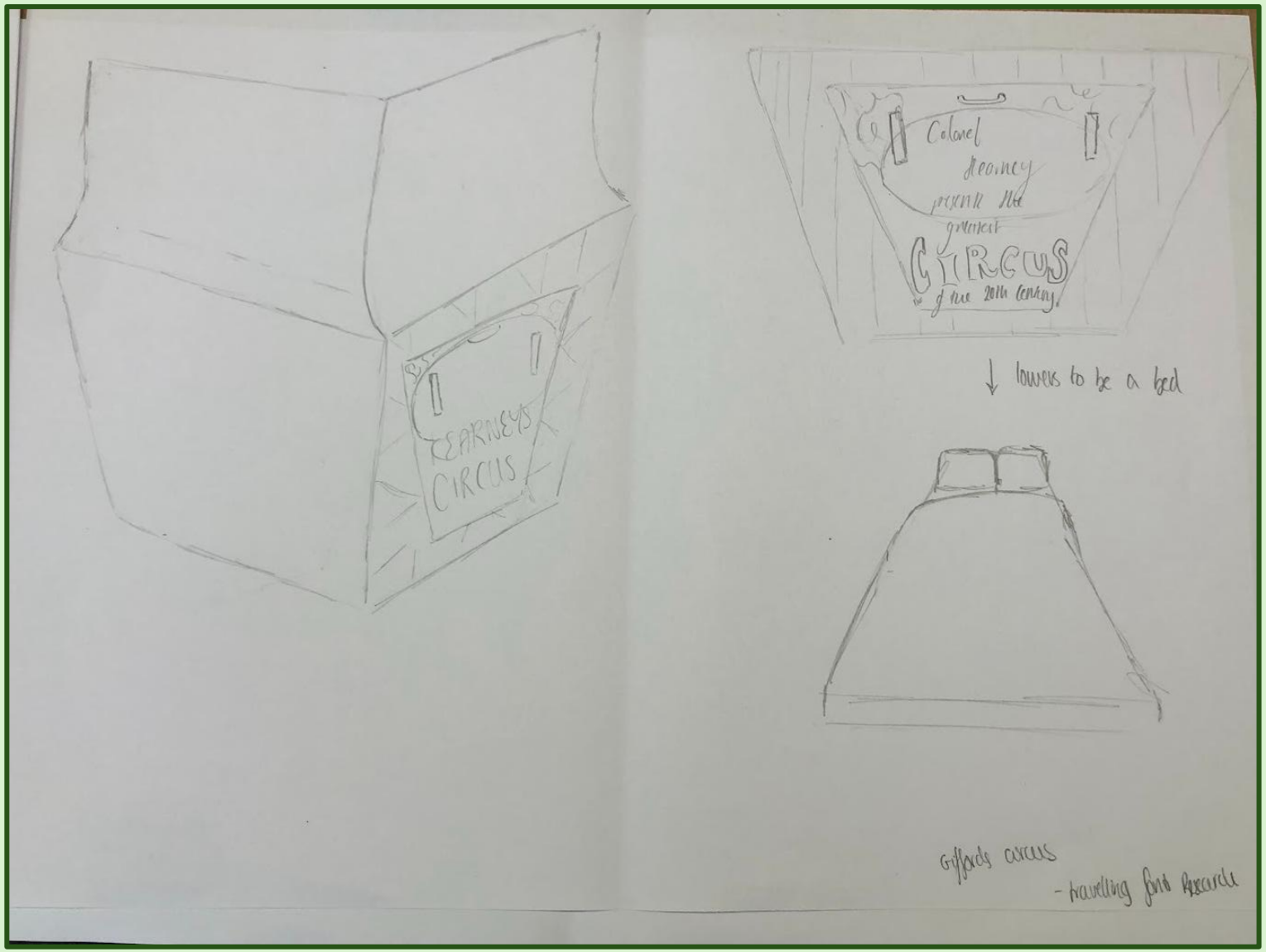




I also believe they have made use of layered 2D shapes to create the clouds in the background of this image. This is really helpful towards my research and influence taken from the Adventure of Baron Munchausen. As well as a possible inspiration towards Act Three's set.

Final Circus Wagon Design:





The circus wagon will be a mirror image shape of the Brothel, diagonally leaning out at the top, I think this works for the circus wagon as well as carrying through the uncanny effect from Act One. In my sketches to the left I sketched a design for the door/pull down bed, which when up-right acts as the opening for an animal wagon or the 'tiger cage' reimagined.



Detailed Influence:

I wanted to include some finer details within the set, as hints towards figures such as Lord Nelson, smaller architectural details of Victorian London, and Mythological references. As mentioned before, I wanted to recreate Lord Nelson's chair for the Library Scene in Act One. I was also thinking that the doorframe of the Brothel entrance mimics the shape of Lord Nelson's hat, or maybe the steps could be the same shape if easier.

I also wanted specific nods to lampposts at the time.

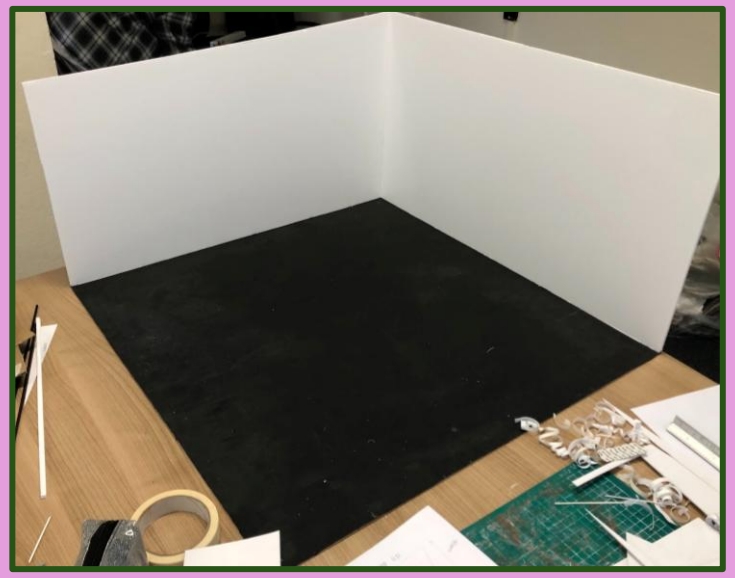
(British Ironworks Centre, Year Unknown)
←

(Express, 2017)
→



Starting the Model Box and Choosing Fabric:







I started by getting my base, reusing one from an old model box and cutting out my walls, I ended up changing which side wall I had up so that I could present my set clearer to the presentation audience. I then laid out my cardboard model pieces to get a sense of scale and start to figure out the exact dimensions I wanted all my set pieces to be and how far apart I wanted them from each other.

I wanted to include curtains in my model box as I envisioned them being used a lot in my design, so I chose three fabrics to have a range to work from. The bottom image of the red fabric is my ideal colour for all the red curtains, but it was very thick and so I got a silk-like wine coloured fabric as a back up in case the bottom fabric wouldn't drape properly. The green fabric was chosen as it has the crushed velvet texture I wanted but was the wrong colour, I kept it aside in case I needed it later.

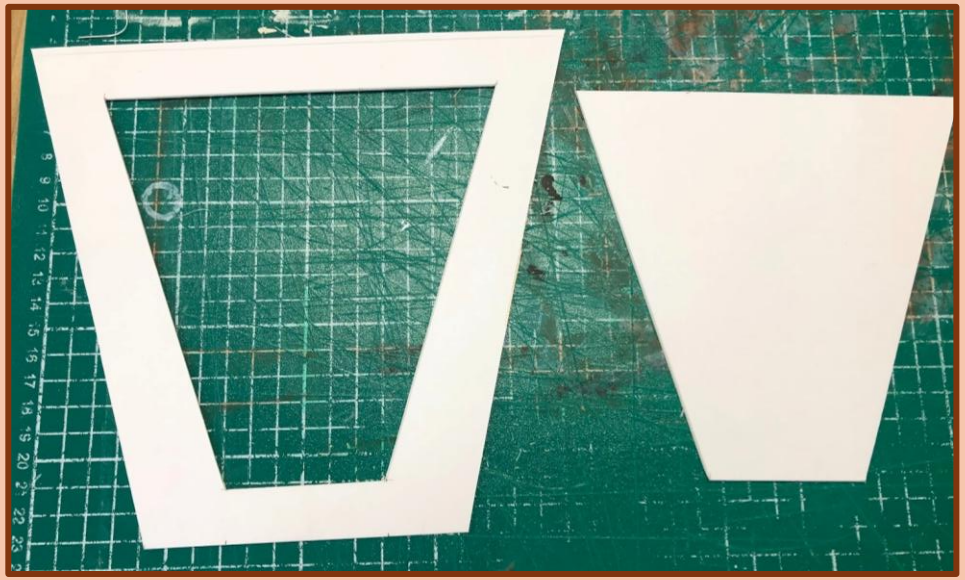




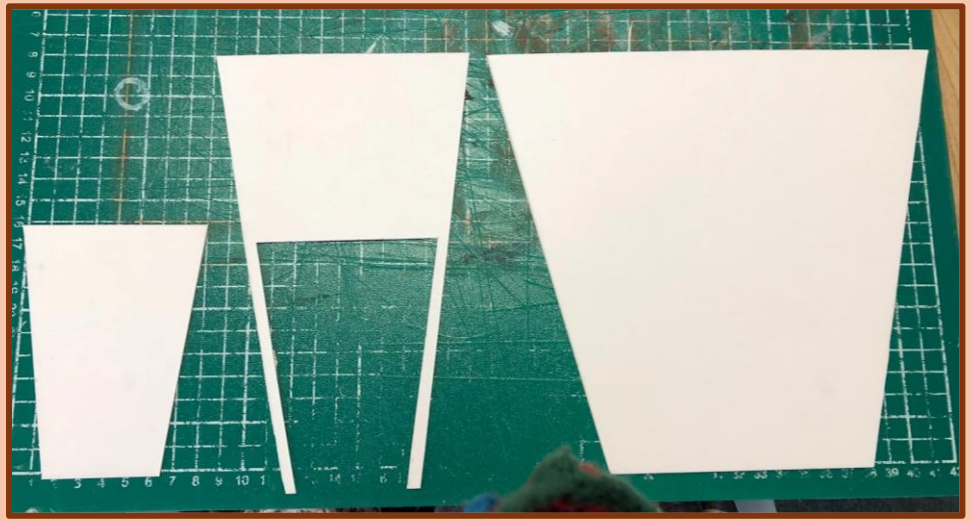


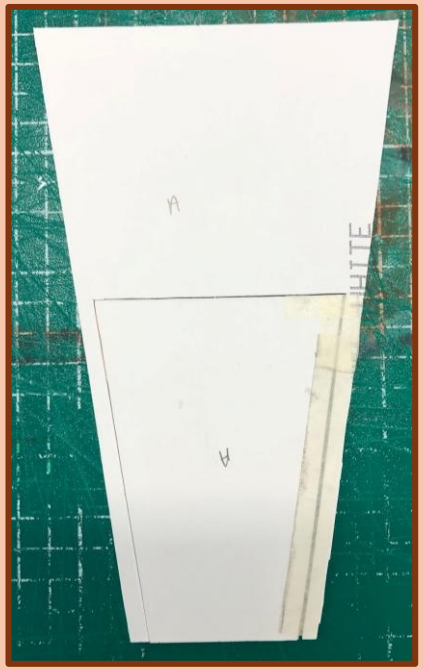
Building the Model Box:

I decided the bed wouldn't have pull out legs so that it would be sloped to create forced perspective.

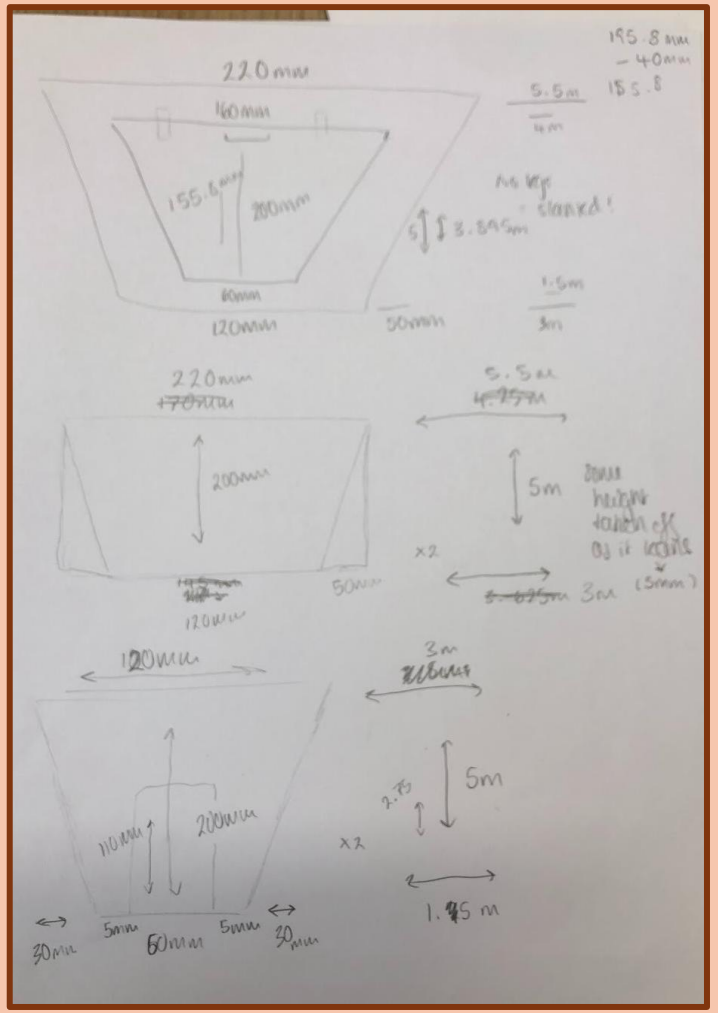






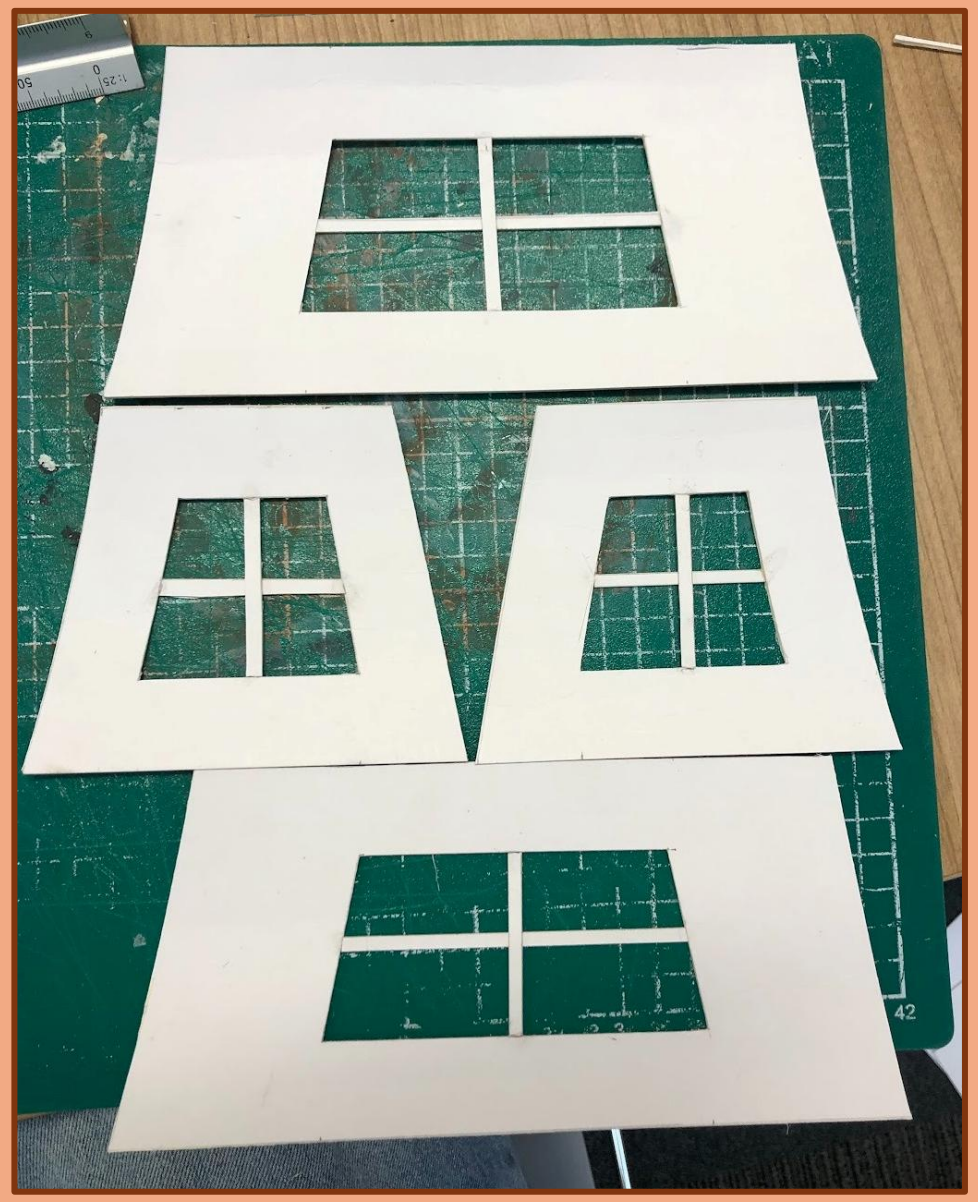


I also hinged the door for the circus wagon, attaching a small handle for it



I started with the house, cutting the doors and walls, hinging the doors with masking tape and a small gap so it wouldn't catch when opening/closing. I cut these pieces with diagonal sides, getting wider at the top so that they would lean outwards, having to re-cut some pieces so that the house leaned at the angle I wanted – not too far out but enough to be noticeable, to create a subtle unease in the set piece.

Building the Model Box:

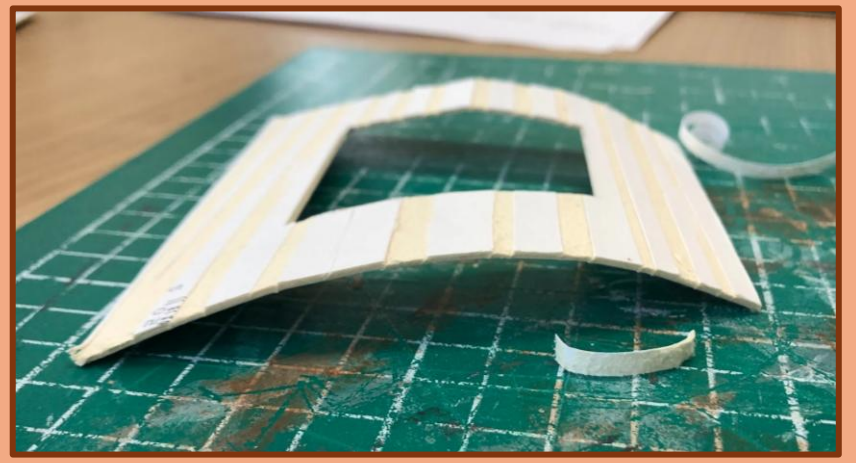


To build the second floor's walls I did the opposite of the ground floor, the sides of each piece were still diagonal, but this time it got smaller at the top. I did this because in my sketches I showed how I wanted the walls to curve inwards, meaning it would need to be smaller at the top.



I then scored the back of each of these four pieces, lightly scoring lines down the back and then peeling off the top layer of paper. This was so that each piece would bend and curve easily, I bent each piece into shape ready for gluing later.

I then made window frames out of scrap mountboard. I made all of the pieces of my set from mountboard, with the curtains being fabric, plastic poles, and wires. I'm really happy with how the second floor's walls came out and think they curved really well.



Building the Library Wall:

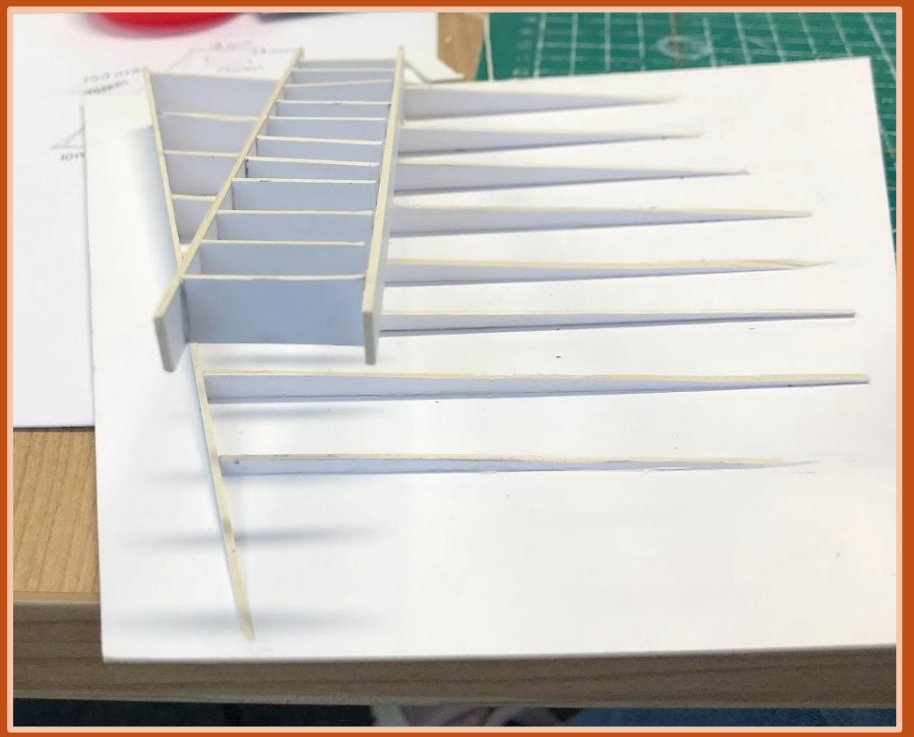
The library wall is my favourite part of my model box as I love the metaphor behind the fading shelves.



I built the interior of the library wall before attaching it to the rest of the house, as I was hinging this wall so it would be attached last, and it made it easier to work with.

I started with the shelves, measuring equal distances and having each piece slope off/fade out. I did this for two reasons, firstly it was great practically as it meant the shelves wouldn't catch on anything when the wall swings out, but mostly because I liked the suggestion...





... that Lizzie's memory is fading away and she can't complete small details like the shelves. I had to alter this piece as the ladder and corner of the wall caught the floor, as the walls lean outwards, so I cut the right side corner off and attached it to the rest of the house, as well as shortening the ladder and sticking it at the different angle.

Attaching the Walls and Second Floor:





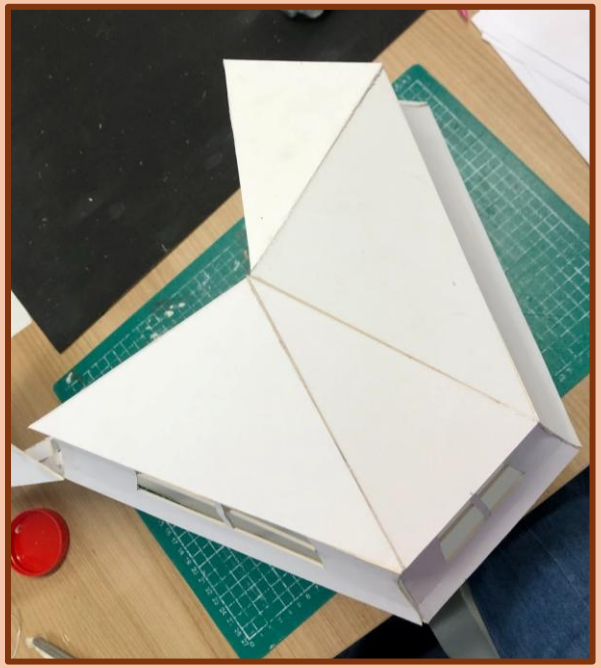
I had to add a back wall to the house that I hadn't previously planned for, as I was hinging one whole side of the house, that meant the Brothel's door had no support. This back wall helped make everything more stable. I used a lot of masking tape in the sticking process of each floor, as the angles made it difficult to hold together, but I'm really happy with how the bottom floor came out, as it's just like I imagined it.



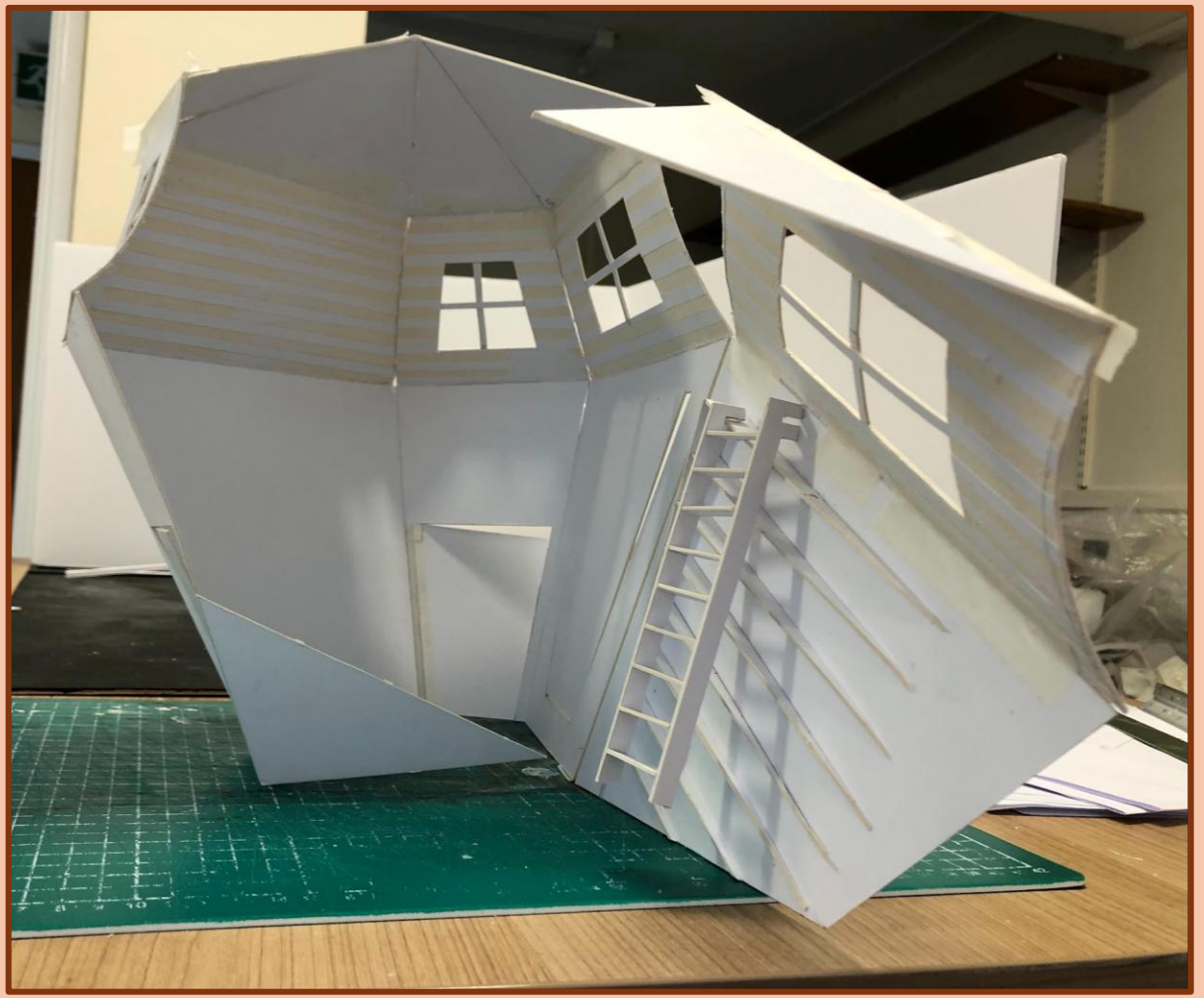
When adding the second floor, I came across a problem as due to the way the walls curved inwards, they didn't meet right at the corners. I decided to fix this through trial and error as the curve was too difficult to predict. I stuck the pieces on with masking tape and marked where I needed to cut. I think I fixed this problem quite smoothly and I like the curve effect, although some aren't as uniform as other corners, I think this adds to the surreal and expressive nature of the set piece.

Completing the House:

The roof was a lot easier to work with than the walls, I wasn't initially thinking of creating a roof, but I think it came out great and tied the whole piece together, making it feel more complete. Unfortunately, as I hadn't had access to the CAD drawing of Y Llywfan due to licensing problems, I forgot to consider the height of the truss. So, in the end I had to remove the roof so that the house would fit underneath. I would then have the top of the house covered in a black cloth so that the audience weren't drawn to the open top.





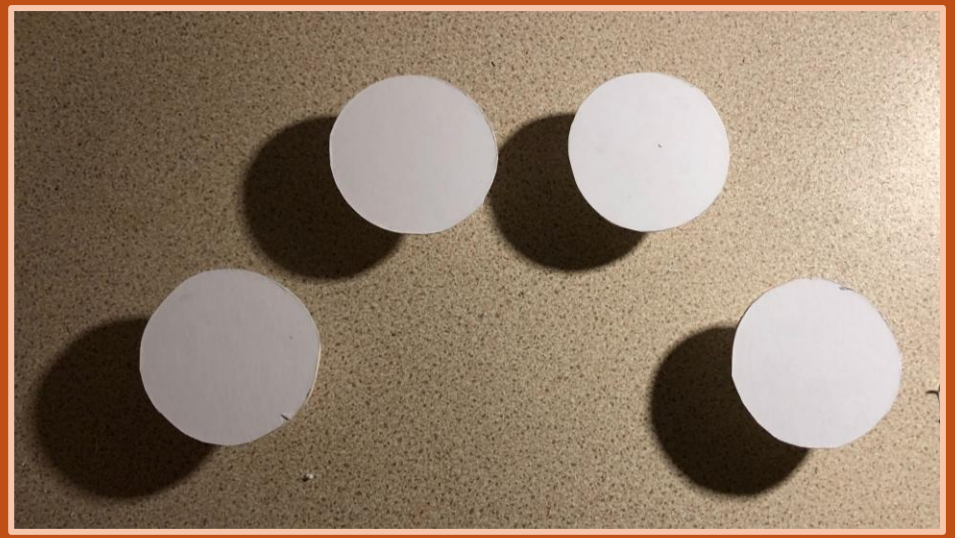


I think the image above captures the house perfectly, with the distorted angles and surreal effect of the building. As you can see above, the wall's corner is attached to the house, I decided I would add a piece of mount board with a metal pin to act as a latch to lock the wall in place when the house was closed.

Building the Tables and Periaktoi:

The tables were very straight forward, after seeing how far the Brothel sits and where the wall swings and ends up, I decided I only had space for four tables.





I made them about 1.75 metres wide (in scale they were 70mm), this meant they could still comfortably fit a decent amount of people, as although we wanted a small audience for a more personal experience, I wanted enough of a crowd for the circus benches.

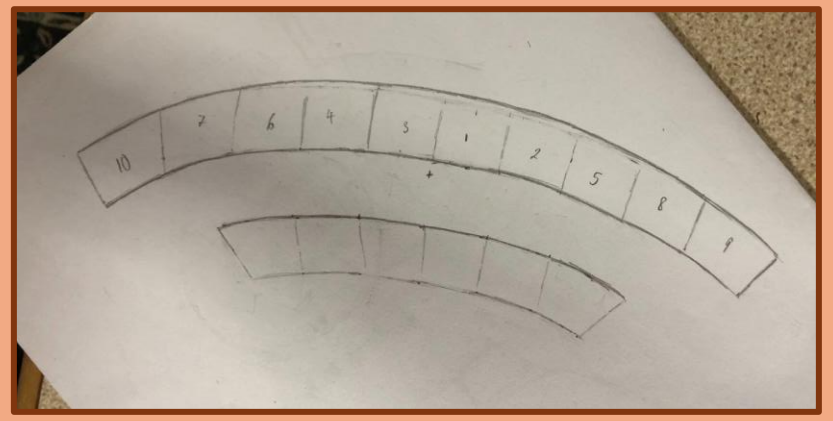
I wanted to make the Periaktoi tall and overbearing, because of this they would probably be on an automated device to be turned mechanically, as they would become too heavy for cast members to spin and would then be a safety hazard. I created only three, as mentioned before I think four overpowered the space and as I wanted them to be intimidatingly tall, three was perfect.



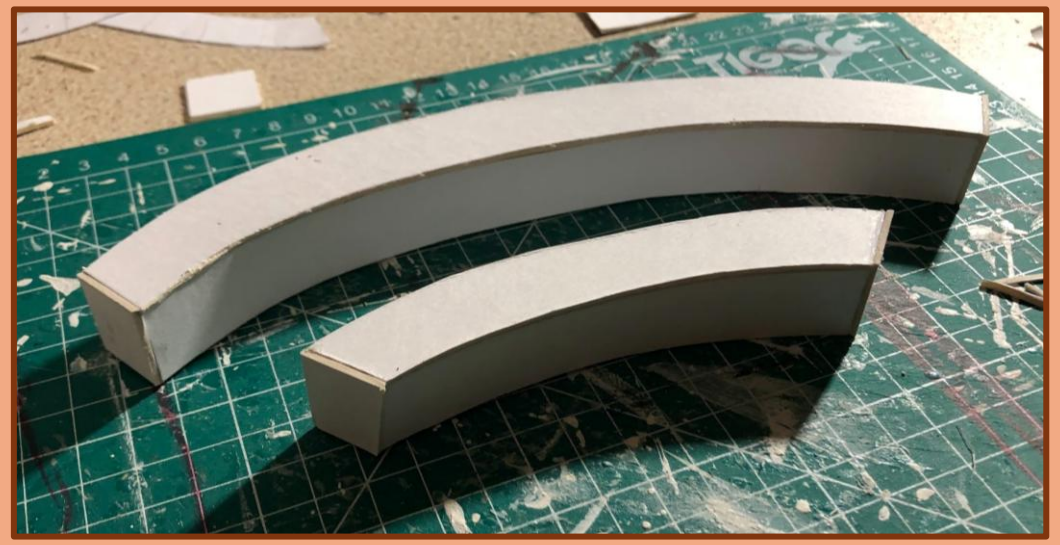


Benches and 2D Layered Flats:

For the benches, I researched the average amount of space one person needed on a bench, and how much leg room they needed. I then estimated there would be around 16 audience members and sketched out the size of the bench. Having two benches, 10 people at the back and 6 at the front, in order to make the audience feel like they were at the circus and not on a park bench.

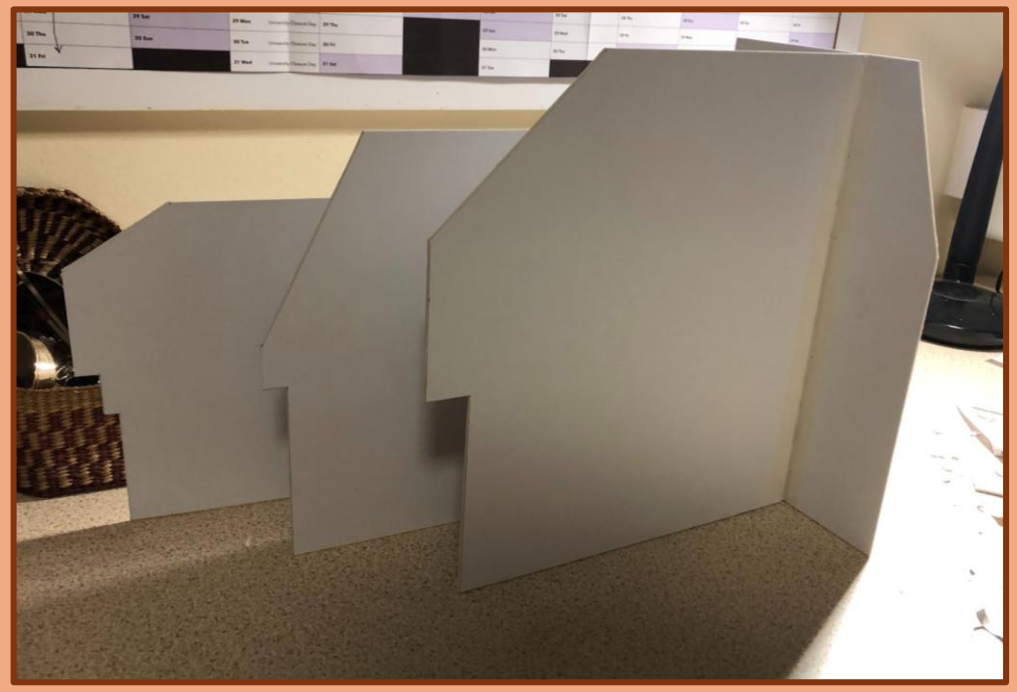


For the 2D layered flats, I measured from the model box to see the maximum it would come out to and the height I wanted it, I would have liked to make the flat taller to be more intimidating, but I left a lot of safety room for the truss.



I hinged these like the door, using masking tape, although I had to make them less wide as after I built the truss, I realised it would knock the truss as it opened. I made sure to have the flats get shorter but wider towards the back, to create forced perspective.





Creating the Curved Curtain Rail:



The curtains were definitely the hardest part of the building process, especially the curved one, as the wire was difficult to work with and get accurate as it's such a malleable material. I used my CAD drawing to help find the total width I wanted. I then curved two pieces of wire along this length, bending them around each other at the centre to connect them.



I connected them at the middle, both for stability, but also as I didn't need the curtain to be moveable in the centre, only at both sides. The next tricky part was attaching the fabric, as the fabric was so thin I was able to stab the wire through without making any cuts beforehand. But when I got to the centre where the wires joined, I had to use a seam picker to work the fabric over the bends. Once the fabric was in place I was extremely happy with the curve it created.



I made stands out of foamboard, with a mountboard base for each one. Piercing the wire through the foamboard and wrapping it around for extra security. The foamboard and wire combination made the curtain rail unreliable to work with but easy to fix as it was so bendable. If I made this again, I would probably make the stands out of something sturdy.

The Truss and Curtains:

I made the truss out of scraps of wooden sticks from previous model, making my truss around 7.5 metres tall. I had a lot of trouble with getting the truss to stick, but once I used a hot glue gun it was a lot easier.





The curtains needed to be easy to move along their rail and not too obstructing of the model itself.



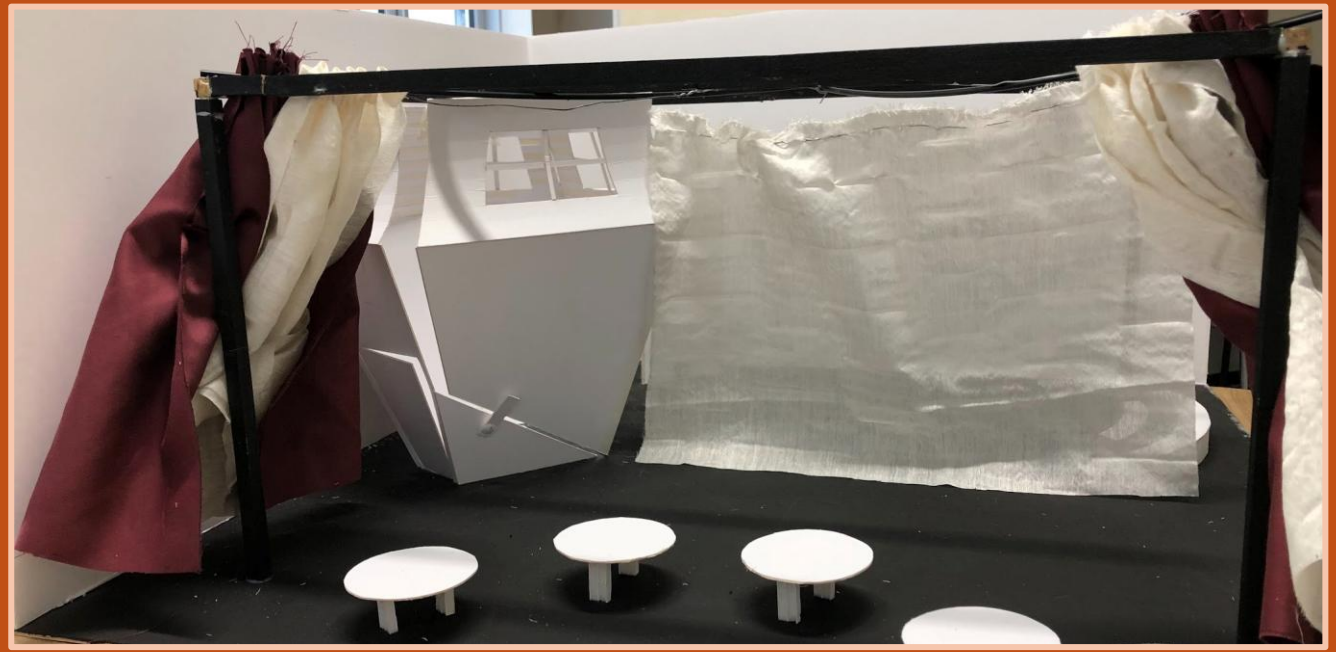
I used the measurements from the CAD drawing to mark out where the legs had to go before sticking them all down. I also re-cut my red and white curtains, as well as my painted back cloth, as I originally cut these for the truss to be 5 metres. I began looking at how I could attach the curtains securely.



Finishing the Curtains:

I found some plastic black poles which were perfect as a rail for the main red curtains at the start of Act One, which I changed to the wine-coloured silk fabric, so that it draped better. I scored crosses along the top of the fabric with a scalpel, at equal distances, so that I could work the pole through. I then moved on to the white curtains that I wanted layered in front of the red curtains, for Act Three. As I decided I wanted Act Three to be true to the script and create a barren landscape with white cloths and a low fog machine. I used leftover wire for these, having to connect two together again so that the wire would be long enough to rest on the other side of the truss (as in real life these curtains would be attached to the truss.





I then decided to wrap the wire around the black curtain poles, as it was more stable than when I connected it to the truss frame. Whilst on the other side of the frame, I pierced the wire through the truss frame. I then hot glued the black curtain poles to the truss, and I hot glued the hole in which the wire was pierced through – this made the curtains a lot more secure to work with, as I wanted to demonstrate the scene changes through my model box. The painted back cloth was a lot easier, I used a metal wire again, connected too, and wrapping this across the centre line of the truss frame, piercing it into the frame at one end. This only needed to be pulled back slightly, so the wire joint in the middle didn't obstruct anything.

CAD Session/Tutorial:

We were lucky enough to have a CAD refresher session. I was really grateful for this as I had forgotten a lot of what we had done last year and would have had to waste a lot of making time on revisiting my notes and watching videos.

We went through all the tools, the scissors to erase overhangs, the circle settings that can be changed to be by diameter or by radius, etc. We looked at the spline tool which can curve corners, although I struggled with this one. Within the scissors setting you can also extend a line. The mirror tool is the two triangles, one blue and one white.

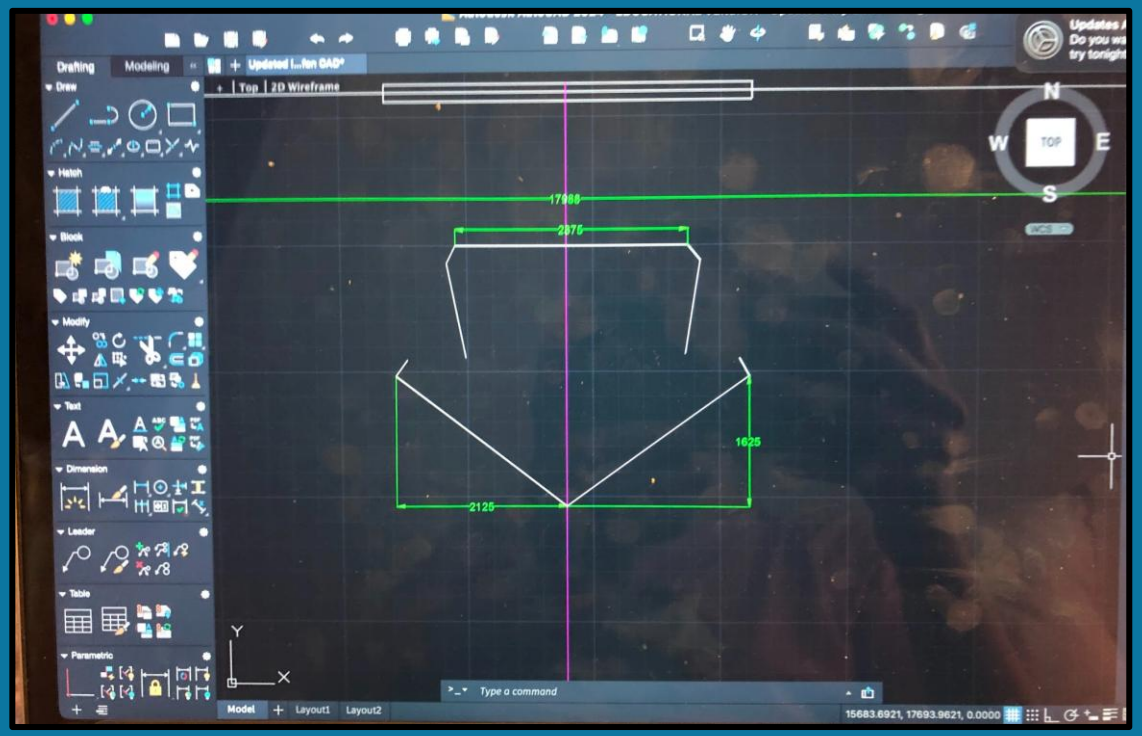
The double ‘C’ is the offset tool, helpful with lots of a parallel lines (such as stairs) and helpful with working from centre points.

When the triangle appears on a line it means you’ve found its centre point.

You should do your dimensions in another layer, in the layer settings you can change the line thickness, colour, and type. This is helpful for distinguishing the different materials you have on your drawing and design (such as set vs. curtains).

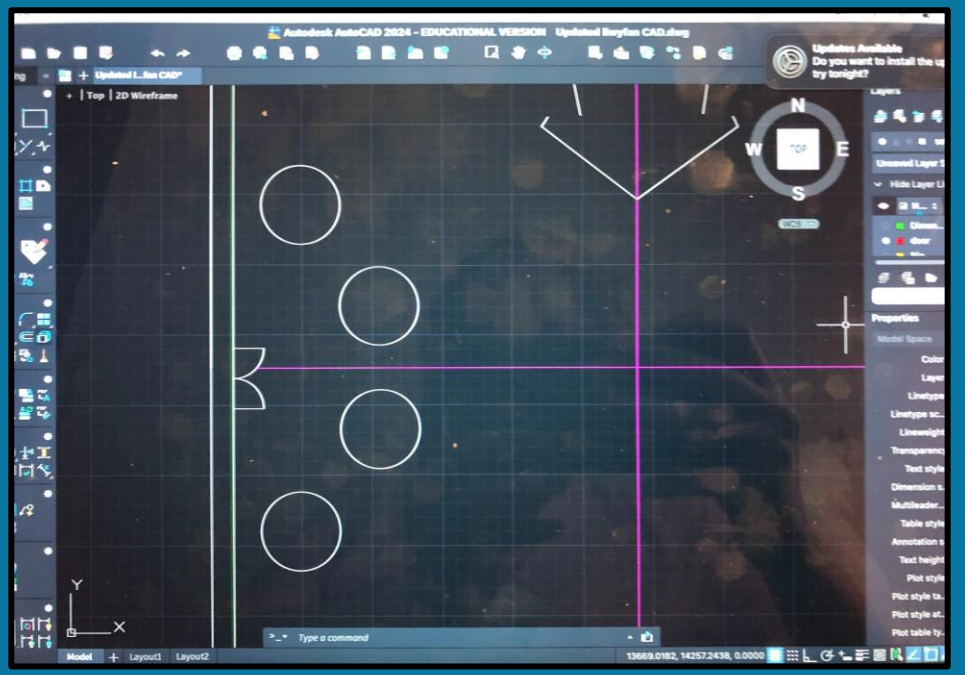
The dimension symbol can be edited to increase the font size and the arrow size.

Starting The Plan View:

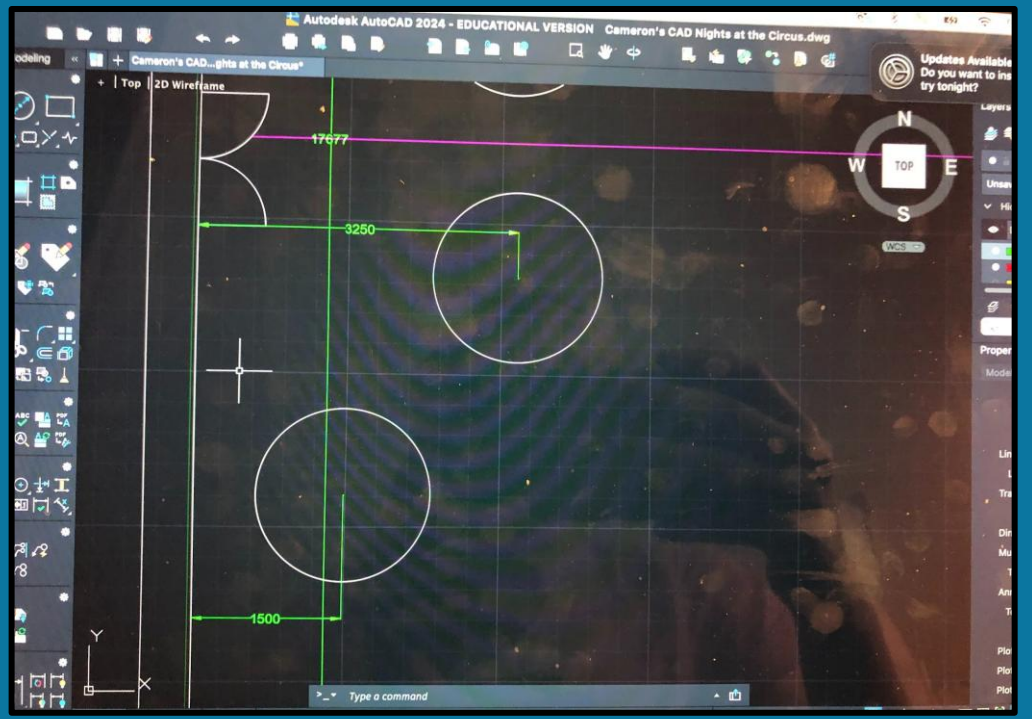


These are screenshots I've taken as I was working on the CAD drawing. I used measurements I had taken of the spacing of my model box, as well as using the measurements I had for building the model pieces, I then scaled these up to start creating the Plan View. I started with the house as I felt like that was the centrepiece of my design. I used the centre line to help me line it up correctly.

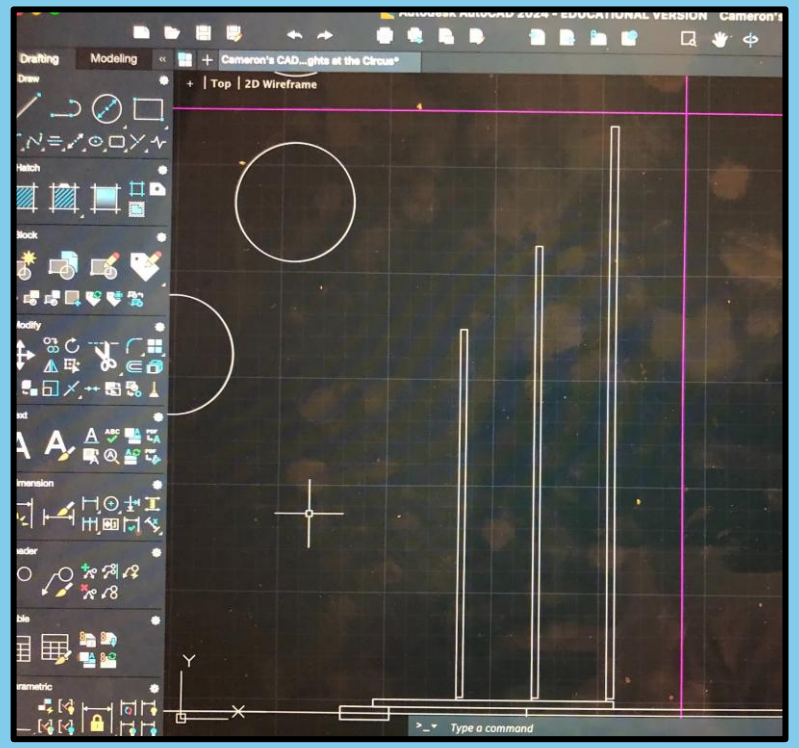
I was able to change the settings of the circle tool, to change it to diameter, so that I could work based off the measurement I took of the tables.



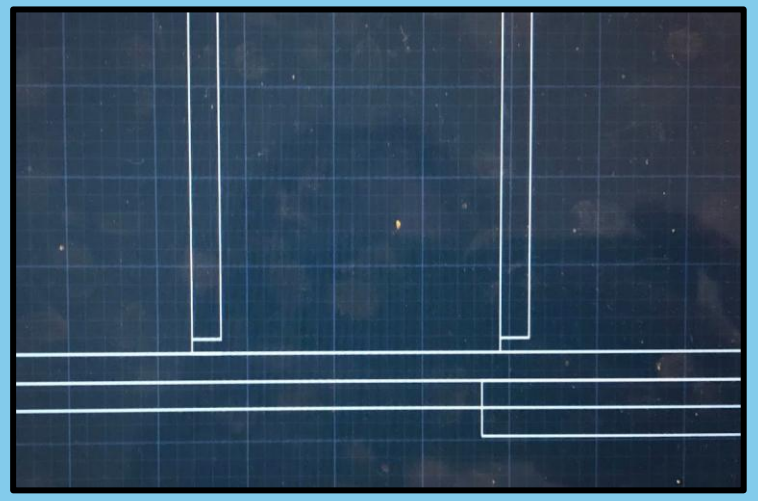
When creating the diagonal lines, I had to remind myself to turn off the 90 degree feature!



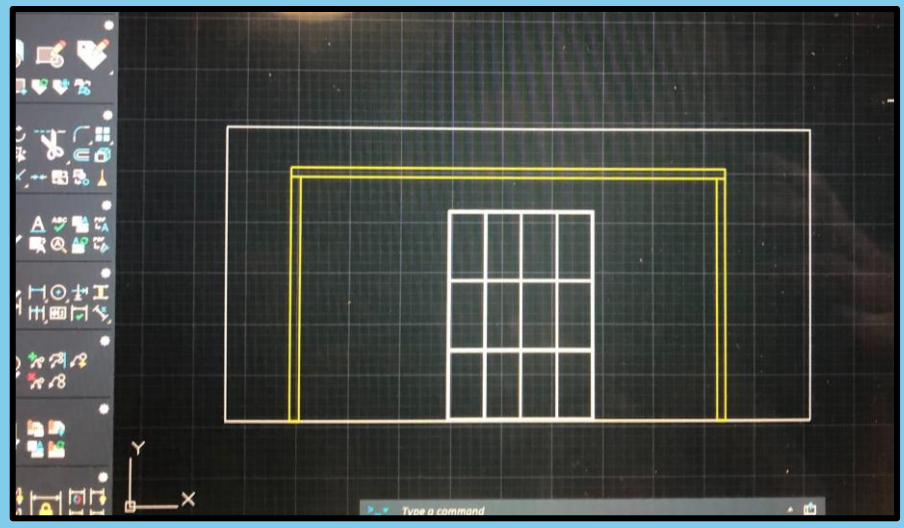
Continuing The Plan View:



The next part I worked on was the pop-out layered 2D flats. I drew them pulled out to show how much space they would take up. Unfortunately, the measurements on the CAD drawing are no longer accurate, as I changed them on the model to be able to close without knocking the truss.

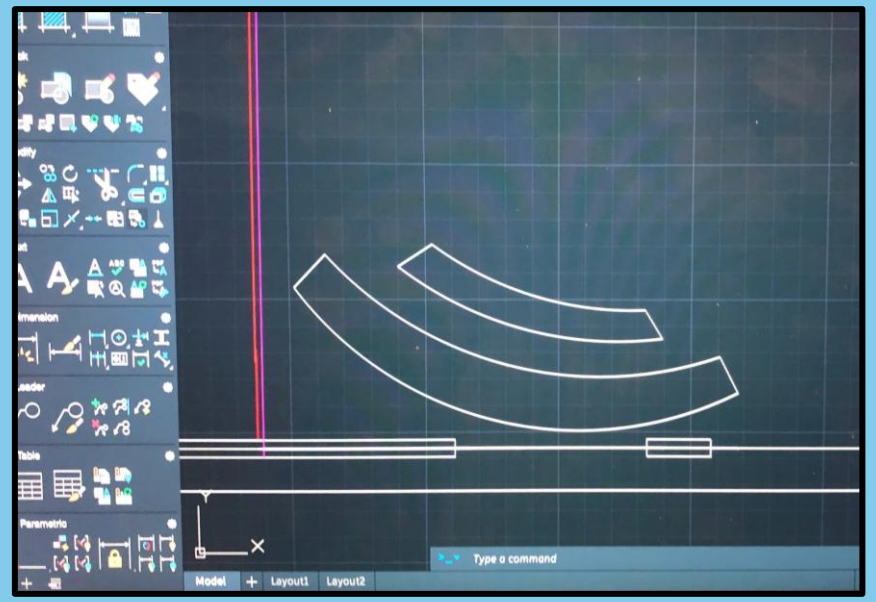


I hinged the flats, showing this though one line connecting them to the wall flat.

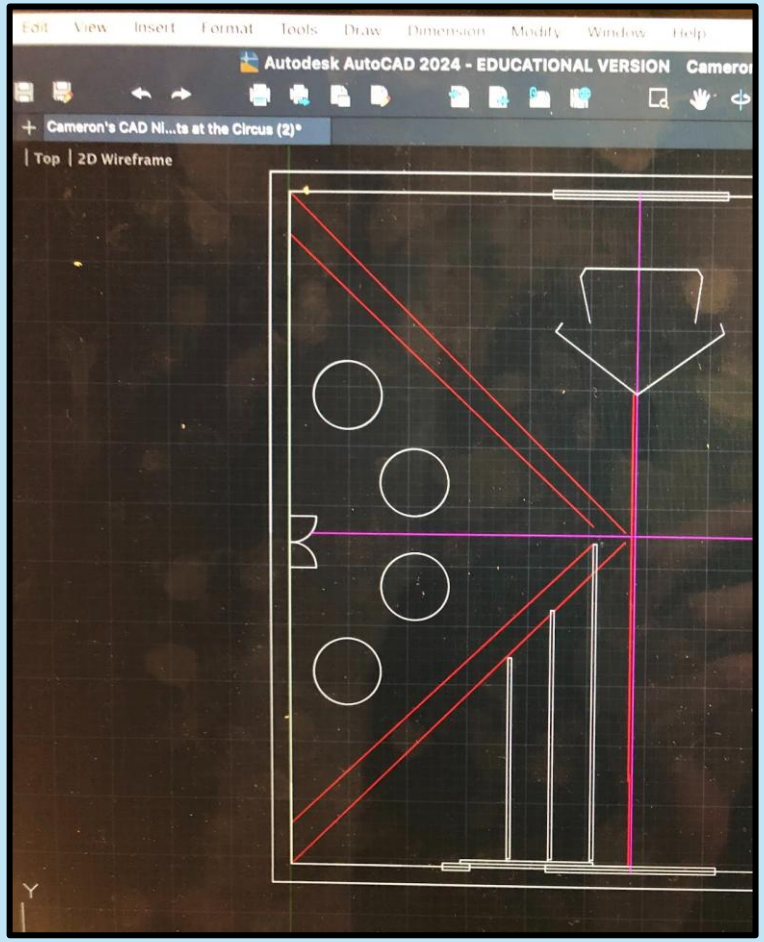


So that I had the height of the truss clear, I added it to the side view plan, in a different layer.

Whilst creating these curved benches, I got more comfortable with the 3-point arch tool, which was extremely helpful in creating a smooth and accurate curve.



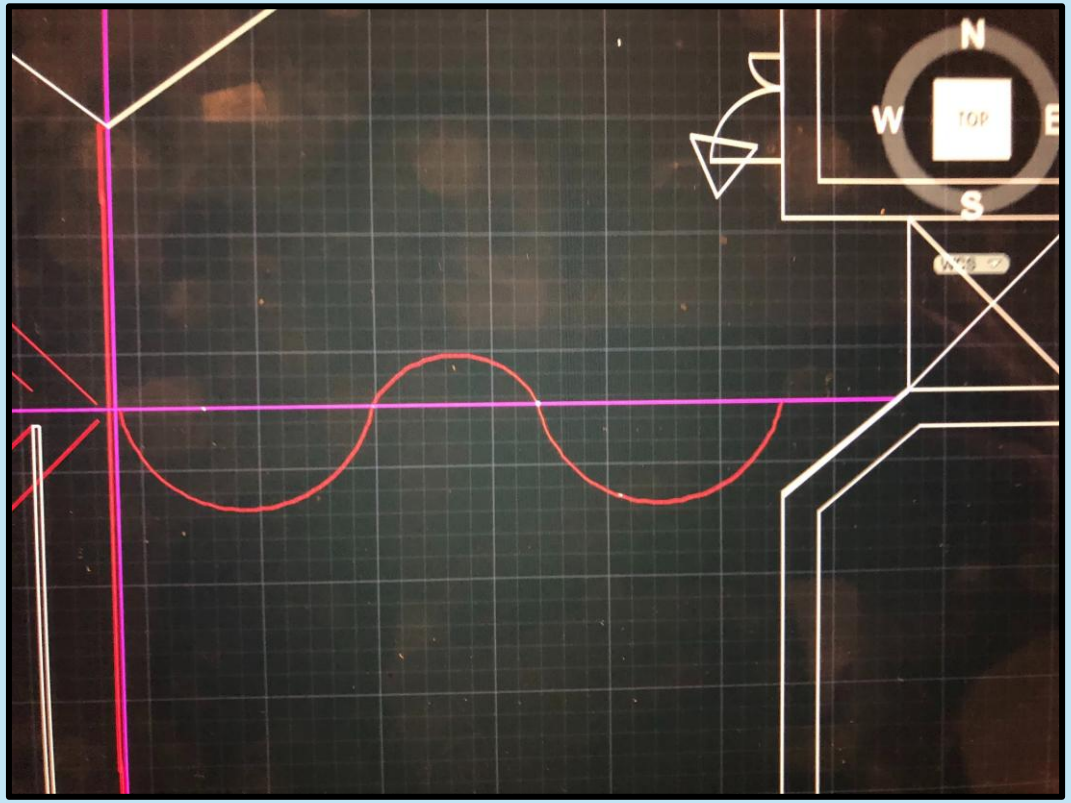
Creating the Curtains for the Plan View:



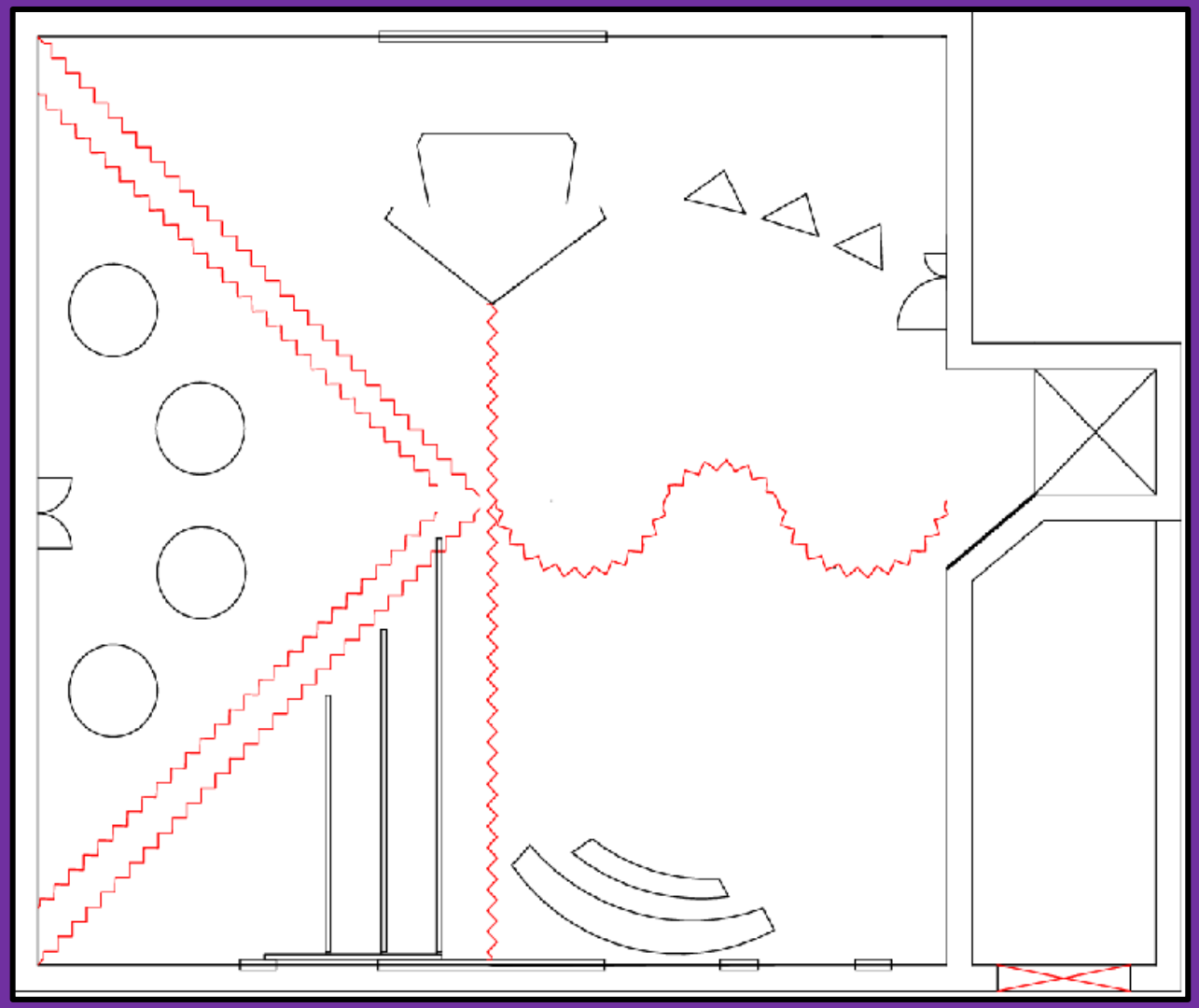
The Periaktoi are not pictured here but can be seen in the Final Plan View on the next page!

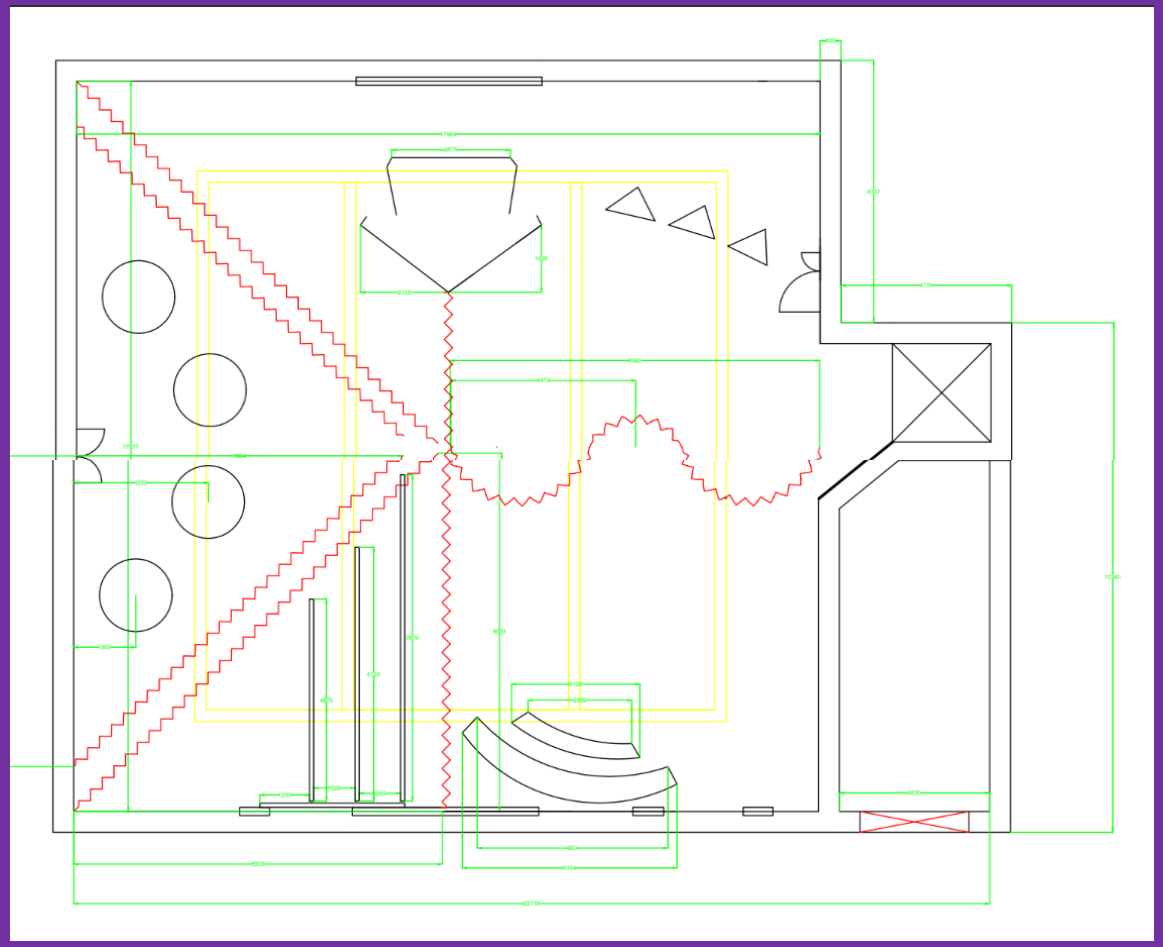
I created the curtains the opposite way to the rest of the CAD drawing, basing my model box curtains on the CAD measurements instead! I found this easier as I could see it was going to be central and symmetrical. I created a new layer for the curtains, making them red to stand out from the white set. I changed the line type of the curtains to a zig zag line but I had issues at first as it wouldn't show up as a zig zag. After a tutorial with Dave, I was shown how to increase the 'font' size to make them visible.

The curved curtain rail took more time than the rest, as I wanted it to be even and symmetrical. I used the 3-point arch tool here again and I'm really happy with how they turned out.

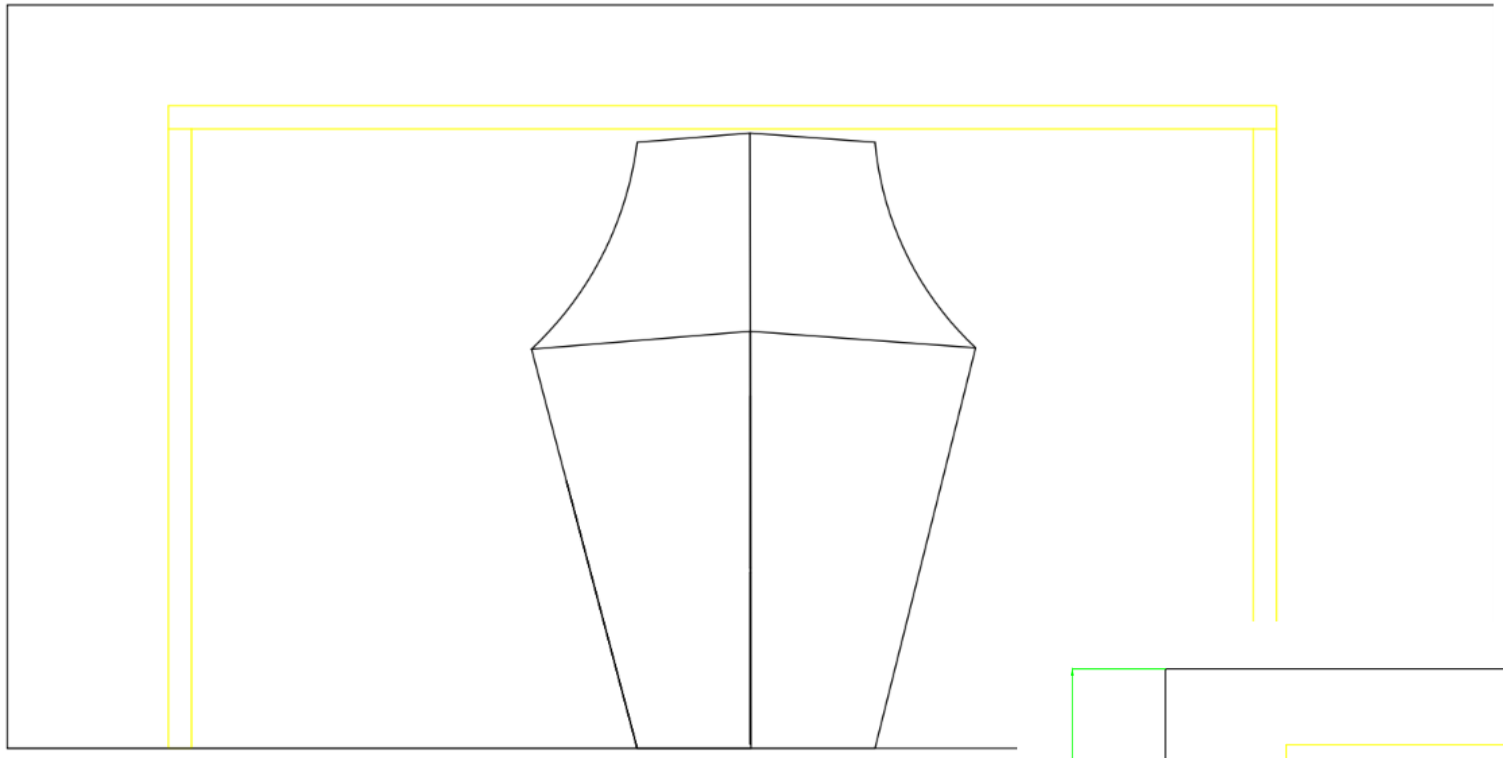


Final Plan View:



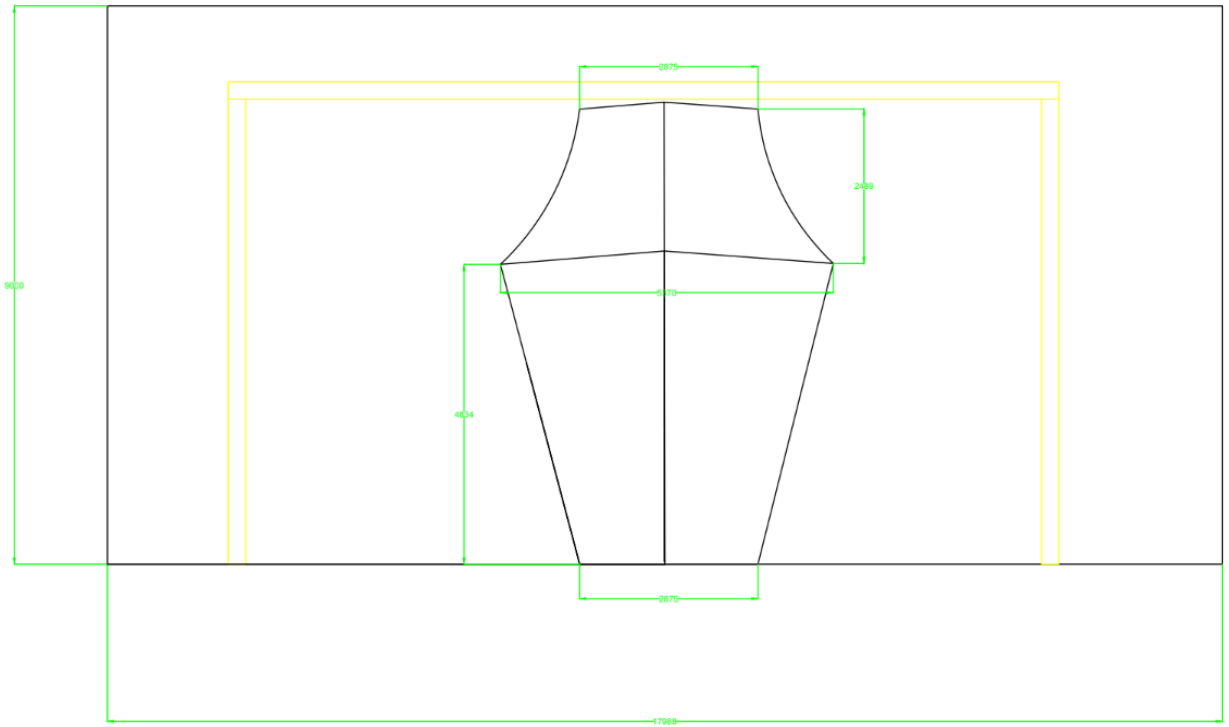


I'm really happy with how this came out, although I could definitely edit the dimensions to be less overwhelming to look at. I particularly proud of myself for the curved curtain rail using the 3-point arch tool.

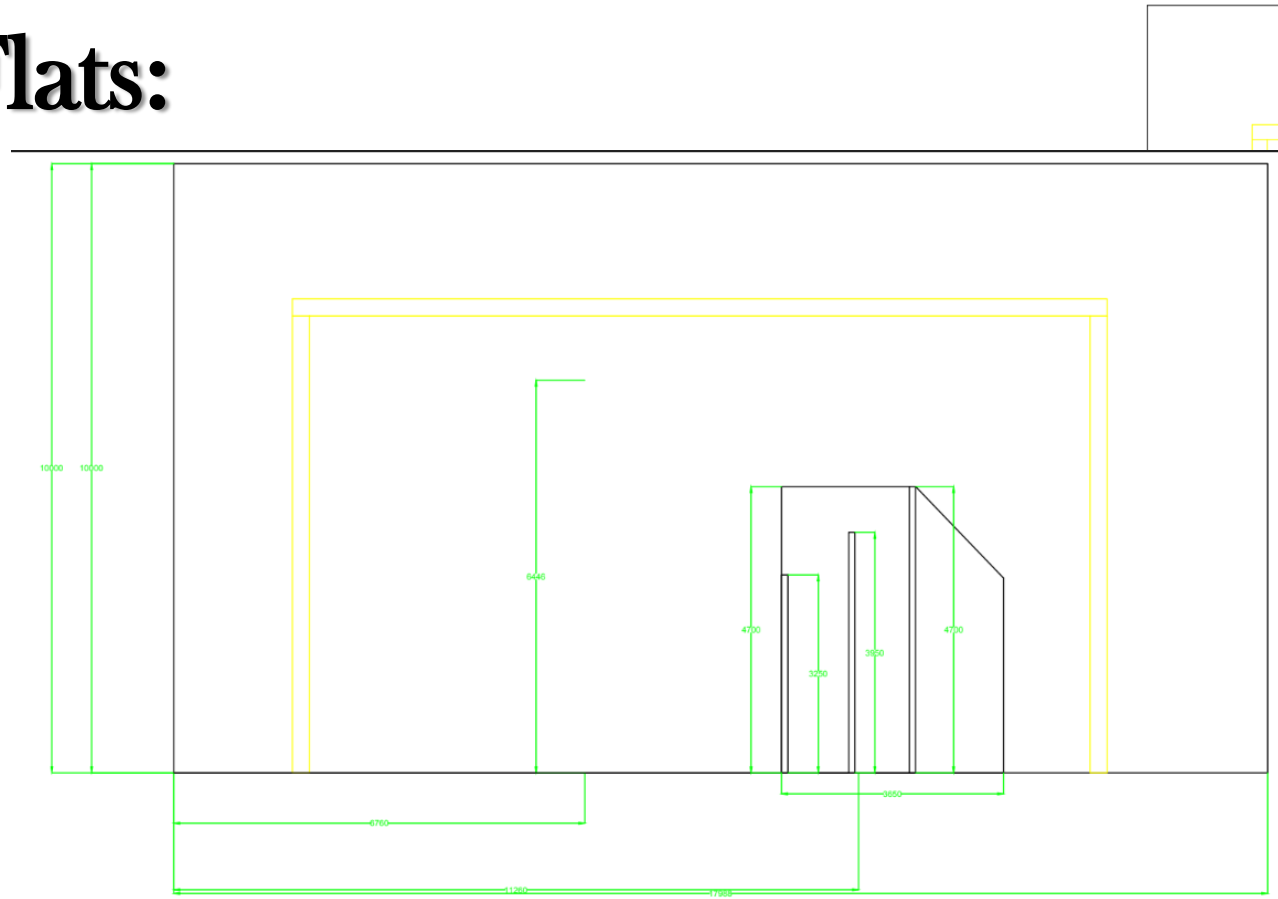


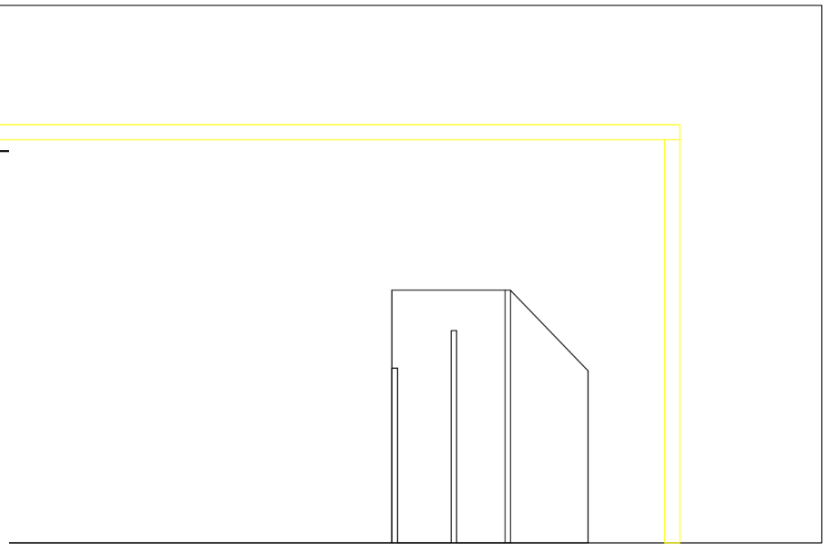
Once I had done the plan view, making the side view was a lot easier, as the 3-point arch tool made the curved walls of the top floor a lot less intimidating. I was considering creating another layer showing the back of the building, but I was uncertain how this would look in terms of perspective. Next time I would like to try that out to expand on my CAD skills.

Final Side View of Building:



Final Side View of 2D Flats:

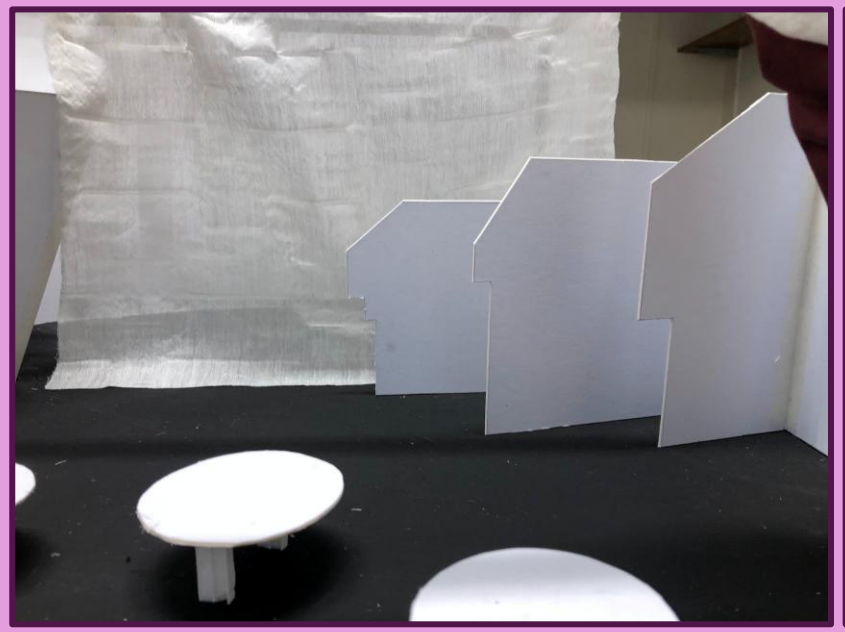




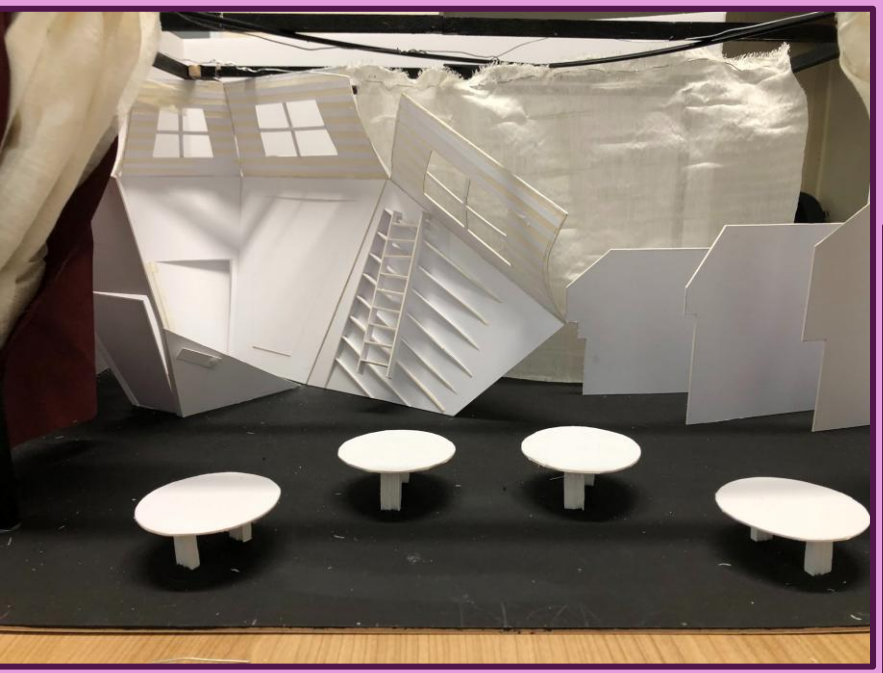
If I had more time I would have also liked to do a front on view of the layered 2D flats, but next time I want to focus on a curved surface like the house.

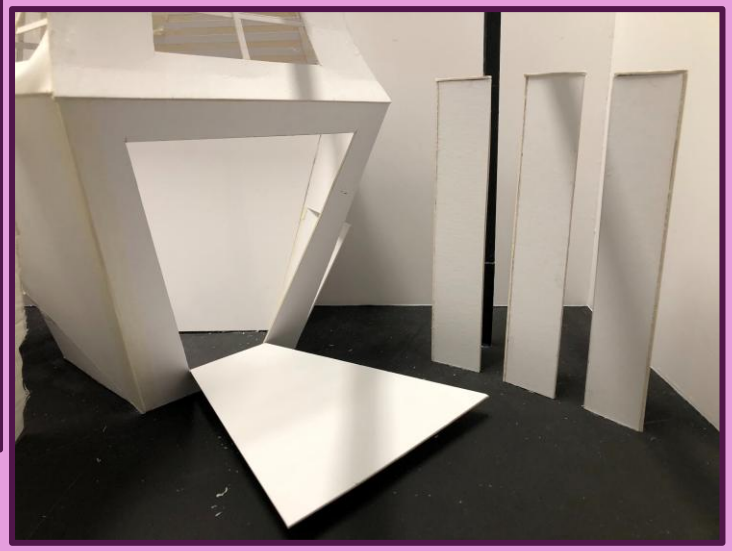
For both of my side view CAD drawings, I removed the windows from them before beginning, as it complicated the drawing as they were layered on top of each other.

Final Images of the Model Box:











Here are the final images for Act One's space and Act Two's space (minus the curtain rail which is pictured on the next slide). Unfortunately, I didn't get a picture with the curtain rail inside the model.



Final Images of the Model Box:

To the left you can see the Act Three stage space completed, I'm really happy with the simplicity of this space and the dramatic transformation it takes is extremely effective.



I think next time I wouldn't have stuck the tables down so that they could have been removed for the Act Three reveal, but they would have been knocked over during the presentation if I hadn't.



I'm really proud of my work on this model box, I feel like I communicated my designs and ideas accurately within it. I also feel a lot more confident and comfortable in expressing my ideas through model making now, as before I have only recreated pre-existing things. I also really enjoyed working with fabric in modelmaking, as I haven't explored this before either, it really tied the whole model together.

Presentation Brief:

→ Speak for 10 minutes each
→ Include an introduction and conclusion
→ Have a brief synopsis of the play
→ Go into design choices for your adaptation and mood boards and colour palettes
→ Keep it simple, it is not like the workbook
→ Consider: how would you sell this design?
→ Have an overview on themes and aesthetics
→ Set Designer: break down three key scenes for discussion, aided by model box, CAD drawing, sketches, colour palette
→ Consider format: physical things for audience to hold? All digital? Will you have a power point in the background
→ Use cue cards, but rely on your memory not the cards, do not read from a script
→ Leave the end open for questions.

Presentation Process:

After being given the brief, my group discussed in more detail what our presentation would include and decided we would be having a PowerPoint in the background and no physical things to pass round, we also specified we did not want writing on our slides and for them to be mainly images, as we personally disliked when there was lots of writing on slides during a presentation as it distracts the audience. We then made the PowerPoint and a filler slide for each topic we wanted to cover, delegating these topics for us to work on and go over together next time we met. In the meantime, we were also writing our own sections for our roles. My slides included discussing the Style of Theatre we chose, the Act Three mood board, the colour palette, my design, and the conclusion.

Rehearsal Presentation Feedback:

In my opinion, our rehearsal presentation went really well. I feel like we were prepared and had practised enough times together beforehand. We rehearsed together around 7 times before our rehearsal, so we all felt comfortable with presenting to each other as well as others. My main feedback from the presentation was to fill in the edges of the model box with black so no wood was showing through, which I did along with going over the black ground and truss with black paint so that the model looked a bit more polished and clean.

The Final Presentation:

Unfortunately, for the final presentation I had a really bad cough and cold and had to take a few breaks throughout. Despite this, I believe I said everything I had wanted to say, expanding on a few points since the rehearsal presentation → such as the gradual increase in choice and freedom that the audience are given with each act, by Act Three they are choosing where to walk.

I am mostly happy with how the presentation went, as I had rehearsed both independently and as a group a lot of times, but also because my model box helped me to communicate my ideas in a clear and concise way. I would have liked to take more time with speaking and have expanded on some things in more detail, but my cough made me feel the need to rush my speaking parts → next time I would like to slow down when I speak and go into a bit more detail on some parts.

Evaluation:

I have really enjoyed this module, and it's probably been my favourite module of this degree, so far! I personally loved the creative freedom we got on this, alongside the mini production team format, as it felt like we were able to work cohesively and realistically towards an actual production, rather than just a hypothetical one. Getting the chance to have in-depth and detailed discussions on a script and the certain parts you're passionate about was really helpful and motivating, as you got to see in real time how the ideas began to develop and solidify. It felt really satisfying and surprising to see the ideas become visible in everyone's designs and the actualisation of each design, as this is the first time we've had complete creative freedom. The freedom felt quite intimidating at first but was really fulfilling once I got started. I found initially getting started with rough ideas quite difficult, as there were so many elements to the play that I felt like I had to achieve at the same time immediately. Once I had taken away that pressure from myself and just focussed on enjoying breaking it all down to build back up, I became a lot more motivated towards developing my favourite ideas.

I think this was the perfect script for this project, as it didn't matter so much whether you liked the story or the writing, because there was so much content to choose from and expand on for each role. Although I personally really enjoyed this script and would love to see an actual production of it. I found the overwhelming storytelling really captivating from a design point of view and liked the challenge of how it could all be achieved.
I think, from my work throughout this module, I need to become more comfortable in widening my research and almost randomising it. I think I can pigeonhole my research and limit what ideas I could be exposed to. Discussions with my lecturers brought quite 'out of the blue' things to my attention, such as Canal Boat Sign Writing, but this research led to the development of some of my favourite ideas. I think I shouldn't be afraid to get experimental with my research as I don't want to limit my options.

A skill I think I've improved upon and want to carry through with me in the future, is my CAD drawing skills. One of the main reasons I chose the role of Set Designer was to push myself to improve on CAD and I now feel a lot more comfortable working with the basics. I want to maintain this skill so that I don't forget, as well as improve on it and become more confident in this program, as it's incredibly relevant in my career path.
One thing within my design I think I could improve upon is Act Two's space, I think that although I like individual set pieces, drawing from Ancient Greek Theatre as well as the Circus wagon exterior being a double for the hotel, I don't feel like they work cohesively in such a narrow space. Although I want the audience to be overwhelmed, I don't really want them to feel cramped. If I could redesign this space, I would probably scrap the curved curtain rail, leaving that centre space more open. One thing I'm proud of in my design, is the Brothel's wall that swings open to be the library. I really like the way this further distorts the reality and leans into the dreamlike qualities of the play.

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