

NSFW

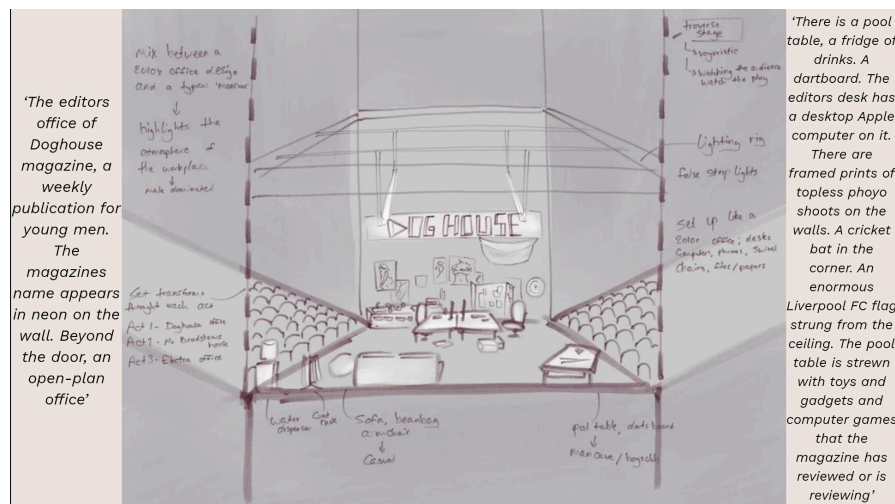
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Gilly Branson,
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My creative team and I studied the farcical and provocative play NSFW as if we were a theatre company proposing to perform this production. The play, written by Lucy Kirkwood and first performed by The Royal Theatre Court in October 2012 focuses around two fictional magazine offices; Doghouse and Electra. Because this play is set over a decade ago and as a six-year-old at the time I was not socially conscious, I began by researching the important historical and political events of the time; studying such things as the overwhelming rise of social media which allowed people from across the world access to communication and the world wide web whose presence was, and still is, rapidly expanding. We, as a group, began to dissect this impact upon the people of the time and their growing addiction towards this lifeline as we find ourselves within a world where our need for technology at the tip of our fingers is expanding faster than ever before. We later discovered that due to the rise of popularity among social media, the presence of 'lads mags' such as the 'Doghouse' magazine began to dissipate. I also looked at the terrorist attacks of September 11th, July 7th, the birth of the black lives matter movement, the election of Barack Obama, the rise of climate change and large number of political scandals across the decade, and how these events affected the rest of the world.

Within the first act, I studied what I could create to generate the most provoking effect upon the audience. As I researched past productions I found very minimal documentation of the set, and what I did find was rather boring. Therefore I wanted to work towards something more evocative. The storyline of the first act works to introduce us to each of the characters within the doghouse office and the very uncomfortable unstable sexism depicted against women specifically; as they are objectified for the profits of the magazine in its attempt to please men and feed their desires. This is all completely acceptable and played off as comedy until we're met with the problem of 14 year old Carrie's nudes mistakenly making their way onto the magazine.

As a stage designer I decided to utilise the darker themes as an inference to use a traverse staging, with the audience positioned either side of the stage. My reasoning behind this was simple; I wanted to separate the audience from the play; usually, you go to a theatrical show to become immersed within the fictional story and forget your own life problems. However, the staging I designed forces the audience out of their comfort zone and contemplate the fact that they're watching a very real show; witnessing these uncomfortable and provocative acts not alone, but observed by other people. Essentially, the audience is forced to watch the audience watch the play- creating this very voyeuristic existential intimacy with the people around them. Using the stage directions I created my moodboard inspired by the offices of the 2000s-2010s intertwined with the very stereotypical 'mancave' feel; with a darts board, pool table and comfortable, almost unprofessional feel to highlight the divide between men and women, reflecting this pivotal theme within the production.

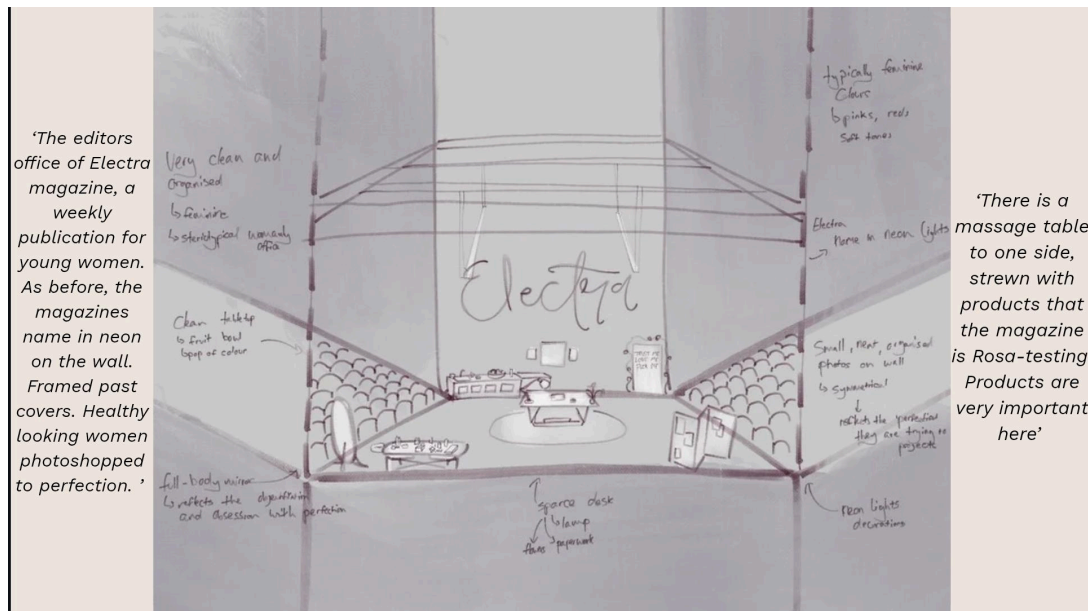


I found I was limited by time and materials but I would have liked to have made my own scale model with its own lighting rig so that I might better depict my vision as opposed to the easily misinterpretable sketch - my amazing teammate did make a scale model but it did take some creative liberties and didn't quite fit the ideals I had formed in my mind. Additionally, I found that while speaking about my decisions for the staging I didn't make a comment on why I made some of the choices I did; such as how the locations of objects in act one are reflected and contrasted in act three, and while I chalk this up to the anxiety of performing I would like to next time make a written note of these points so that I might avoid making the same mistakes again.

The second act's set remains more-or-less the same; merely rearranged to form Adrian's office where he is confronted by Mr Bradshaw: Carrie's father. This scene remains dark and provocative as Adrian seeks to manipulate Mr Bradshaw to avoid a public scandal. This staging I wanted to feel more mancave-esc than the previous office, therefore I would have his main table scattered with old issues; as directed, but also old coffee cups, scrap paper and toys. This reflects his casual attitudes and the uncaring depiction he builds of himself regarding the subject of Carrie. To depict this I made a sketch to reference how I would want his desk to look; I used blue tones to reiterate the gender stereotyping within this performance; effectively creating a further divide between him and Miranda- whose desk I compared it to;



Side by side the difference I wanted to highlight is clear between Aidan; the chief editor of Doghouse as opposed to Miranda, who we meet in the third act as the editor of Electra. In this act we meet the self proclaimed 'women's empowerment' magazine office, although a more appropriate title would be 'objectified, but by women'. This third act is a complete change of pace; while the first two acts depict how men objectify women simply as objects for sex; using the animalistic analogy within the name 'doghouse' to effectively excuse their animalistic intent and an innate natural need for sexual satisfaction. On the other hand, the name 'Electra' evokes these ideas of electrifying; shiny and a brand new perspective. However, this is the last thing the magazine does. Within this sketch I created illustrating how I would interpret her desk, I researched and designed a treadmill desk, looking at different designs of these desks from the 2010s era and the office trends of that time, deciding to fit Miranda's desk with a sleek, modern design to imply her need to maintain the 'perfect' body and reputation she has worked so hard for. Additionally I would decorate her desk tastefully with typically feminine items to imply that she wants her impression on others to be that she is stylish and well intentioned;



I also looked into sound and what would be most appropriate for our production. After a lot of research I came across a 24-7 live london soundscape and found this would be perfect, and after discussing it with my team, I decided to have this play as the audience found their seats and during the scene changes to indicate a change of pace and location and invoke a familiarity among the audience so that they would subconsciously relate the provocative events of the play back to their own lives. However, due to my lack of knowledge when it comes to technology I played this live music from my phone rather than the speakers, which I would have preferred. I fear this made me come across as unprofessional; if I were to do this again I would take the time to understand and come up with a solution to play this through the room's speakers.

Word count- 1198 words.

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