Character in cloth and concrete: a costume and scenic design portfolio

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CHARACTER IN CLOTH AND CONCRETE:
A COSTUME AND SCENIC DESIGN PORTFOLIO

by

Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Fine Arts
degree in Theatre Arts in the
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Thesis Supervisor:  Associate Professor R. Eric Stone
To my Mayka, who shared her love of art, knowledge, and humanity and inspired me to first pick up the pencil, the paintbrush, and the clay in order to put my mark on the world.

The rest is history.
They see poetry in what I have done. No. I apply my methods, and that is all there is to it.

— Georges Suerat
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First, I would like to thank my parents, Mark and Pamela Kuhn for providing me with all of the raw stuff I am made out of. Thank you, Dad, for instilling in me my profound sense of duty and justice—for being my compass. Thank you, Mom for fostering my love of and compassion for all walks of life—for being my heart. Without these gifts you have given me, I could not be the person that I am today. I would also like to thank my sisters, Hannah and Kylea, for giving me countless reasons to keep working hard. I hope I have made you proud.

In addition to my family, I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues, both those at the University of Iowa and those who are all around the world. I could not have done this without your support and encouragement. Thank you to the students who came before me who gave me someone to look up to, and thanks to Akeem Celestine for being on this journey with me. Thank you to those students who are coming after me who have been my friends and support through this process.

Finally, I would like to thank to my mentors Loyce Arthur, Catherine Parrott, Eric Stone, Bryon Winn, and Christian Boy. Without your guidance I would not stand where I am today.
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Fashion and architectural history will tell you that modes of dress and the places that we live, work and play in matter. We not only dress ourselves, but we dress the spaces we live in. Costume design provides an intimate view into both the inner world of a character and the outer forces that impact how people present. A costume designer interprets time periods, gender, racial and ethnic identity, and so much more to create a character. A scenic designer takes these factors and translates them to scenery—the color of a wall, the quality of a floor, or how a character dresses their spaces. Scenery and costumes also have the power to become characters of their own. These modes of storytelling presented on stage and in film are integral to our understanding of the world. They help us to answer the who, what, and why of a world while also providing a reflection of what is going on in that society at that time.

This thesis portfolio includes production photos and descriptions of both costume and scenic designs that I have done at the University of Iowa, or abroad with the support of the Department of Theatre Arts. Also included are renderings and sketches from various design courses. This portfolio also includes insights into the creative development and execution of each design and project, including a post-mortem of both lessons learned and triumphs recounted. The entire breadth of my thesis portfolio can be found at the link: http://ir.uiowa.edu/theatre_d_folio/.
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Sunday in the Park with George

Play: Sunday in the Park with George
Composer: Stephen Sondheim
Playwright: James Lapine
Venue: Mabie Theatre
Date: March 2019
Director: Alan MacVey
Stage Manager: AJ Near
Scenic Design: Nic Wilson
Costume Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn
Lighting Design: Bryon Winn
Sound Design: Bri Atwood

Sunday in the Park with George is a musical that centers around a fictionalized version of famous French painter Georges Seurat and his most famous masterpiece A Sunday on La Grande Jatte. The painting, completed in 1884 is the pinnacle of the pointillism style which Suerat created. George struggles to maintain harmony and balance in his personal life while in pursuit of the same principles in his work. The world of the play is populated by the central figures of Seurat’s seminal work brought to life, including Dot, the woman in blue featured in the foreground of the original painting. Dot, a working-class model, is romantically involved with George and pines for the same attention and dedication that he gives his painting. Unable to reconcile their differences, the pair’s relationship falls apart, highlighting the struggle between control and chaos. The second act of the musical moves us forward 100 years in time in 1984, where Seurat’s great grandson, also an artist, struggles to find inspiration and motivation for his work.
As a costume designer, *Sunday in the Park with George* offers up an amazing opportunity coupled with a challenge—to interpret the figures in Georges Seurat’s painting in a way that is meaningful to the style of the individual production. In my case, I wanted the costumes to compliment the director’s vision of these characters as real, tangible people who inhabited a world of color and light. To do so, I employed the use of texture as a means of translating the dots of the pointillism style of painting—rather than conform to the blocked colors of the painting, I drew inspiration form the individual dots of color. Every garment in the first act had some element of texture, whether it was the visual texture of the print on Yvonne’s skirt or the tangible texture created by the mix of different fabrics like wool, tweed, and lace. This can be seen most notably in the bodice that Dot wears for the final moment of Act I, where George brings together the painting for the final tableau. The bodice was built for the show and was made from an under layer of silk brocade containing all of the colors present in Seurat’s original painting. The over layer was a hatch patterned lace with allowed the brocade to shine through.

Act II provides an interesting design challenge. Taking place in 1984, the audience sees all the same actors inhabiting different roles but offering the same commentary and critique on the process of making art. To show the contrast between these two time periods, I used to color-blocking in lieu of visual and physical texture to capture the essence of the 1980’s. Each performer has details which harken back to their former life in the first act, although not all characters are necessarily connected.

Our *Sunday in the Park with George* had 17 actors and a total of 40 full costume looks. In order to achieve the look of the painting, there were 7 full period costumes build in the University of Iowa Costume Shop. In addition to the costumes that were built in the shop, fabric was purchased to have custom menswear made elsewhere for several characters, including
George and Jules. The remaining costumes came from a combination of rentals, purchases and stock at the University of Iowa Costume shop. In total there were nearly 400 pieces in the show with a budget of $8,250.

Looking back on *Sunday in the Park with George* I find that the use of texture to honor the integrity of the original painting proved to be a strong choice to unifying the overall production. The textures and colors of the costumes related both to Seurat’s original painting, and also played into the texture of the other design elements. I used fabric as my way of ‘painting’ the world, relying on patterns and fabrics to tell the same visual story that George’s Suerat strived for.
Figure 1. *Sunday in the Park* Production Photo, Act I

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Figure 9. *Sunday in the Park the George* Production Photo, Act II
**FUN HOME**

Play: *Fun Home*

Composer: Jeanine Tesori

Playwright: Lisa Kron

Venue: Mabie Theatre

Date: December 2017

Director: John Cameron

Stage Manager: AJ Near

Scenic Design: Nic Wilson

Costume Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Lighting Design: Bryon Winn

Sound Design: Bri Atwood

*Fun Home* is a 2015 Tony Award-winning musical adapted from Alison Bechdel's 2006 graphic memoir of the same name grapples with themes of the author’s sexuality, upbringing, and specifically her relationship to her deeply closeted gay father. The musical encompasses almost 30 years of Bechdel’s life, fluidly following her journey at three distinct ages by three different actors, representing Bechdel at ages nine (1969), nineteen (1979), and in her forties (2003) as she reflects on her upbringing and how it shaped her relationship with the world as a lesbian.

As the costume designer for *Fun Home*, my primary focus was to capture Bechdel’s development throughout these three distinct times in her life and to capture the family dynamics which were critical to the shaping of her story. It was important to not only stay true to Bechdel’s visual identity as a masculine presenting lesbian, but to also represent her process of coming out and her acceptance of her identity as described in the text. I connected the three
Alison’s costumes through color, and also related them directly to visuals from the graphic novel, which were present on stage in the form of projections in our production. Having the direct parallel between comic panel and the stage action helped the audience understand the character relationships, and reinforced the autobiographical nature of both the musical and the memoir for which it is named.

In order to capture the essence of family dynamics in the Bechdel home, I relied heavily on research of both the Bechdel family themselves through family photos and the representations in Alison’s memoir, but also in researching photos of middle-class Americans in the 1960’s, 70’s and the 80’s. Alison’s relationship to her father was also critical, which I highlighted by drawing parallels between the two with both colors and patterns. The adult Alison is connected to her father through stripes and dark navy-blue color of both her trousers and his sport coat and sweaters. However, Small Alison contrasts with her father, as the two clash because of their differences—on one side, a young woman growing into her sexual identity and on the other side an adult man in denial of his own.

In addition to identity issues, there are fantastical elements in Fun Home with upbeat songs about working in the family business, the family funeral home (lovingly dubbed the Fun Home), and an homage to the Partridge Family and 70’s Television pop culture. During the song Raincoat of Love, a pseudo-David Cassidy character literally hops out of Small Alison’s television screen to serenade her. To achieve the upbeat and nostalgic feel of this moment, I utilized research of the Partridge family and various family bands to create the matching green, gold and orange suits for the boys in the band and the complimentary striped jumpers for the women in the number.
To design *Fun Home*, I had a budget of $3935 to create over 30 costume looks. Of the 30 looks in the show, 6 costumes were built in the University of Iowa Costume Shop. The rest of the costumes were either purchased for the production or came from stock. In designing *Fun Home*, I used color and pattern to explore the connection between family members and the development of a person over time. This musical provides a unique opportunity to look at a character at different points in time side-by-side and examine what that time does to their identity indicated by their costumes.
Figure 10. *Fun Home* Production Photo

Figure 11. *Fun Home* Selected Renderings
Figure 12. *Fun Home* Production Photo
Figure 13. *Fun Home* Production Photo
Figure 14. *Fun Home* Production Photo
Play: *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY*

Playwright: Nina Morrison

Venue: Theatre B

Date: May 2017

Director: Nina Morrison

Stage Manager: Sophie Katz

Scenic Design: Savanna Genskow

Costume and Puppet Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Lighting Design: Alex Casillas

Sound Design: Elin Dejus

Based on the playwright and director Nina Morison’s experience directing Henrik Ibsen’s *Lady from the Sea*, the play *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY*, re-examines the “well-made play” structure through a queer lens. Following the titular character Aurora, the play dissects the differences between passionate desire and pragmatic attraction through Aurora’s love triangle between herself, her co-worker and longtime friend Illan, and a mysterious and magical woman named Karine. Further, the text subverts typical structure by blurring the line between character and performer with a play-within-a-play structure. The play’s climax is a literal storm in which Illan is whisked away. Both playful and hilarious, *IBSANITY* also hits home in its honest exploration of romantic relationships by juxtaposing its lighthearted tone with moments of the hard-hitting realities of unrequited love and desire.

In designing *IBSANITY* I worked to create a distinct difference between the pragmatic and the passionate characters through my selection in color, shape and fabric. Specifically, I highlighted these differences by giving Aurora and her coworker Aksel structured garments like
suit jackets, blazers in cool muted colors like greys, blues and greens. On the other end of the design spectrum are Illan, a hopeless and tortured romantic, and Karine, the mysterious woman from the sea, who are both seen in loose flowing garments. Illan floats between the cool corporate world of the play and the mysterious passionate world. Often she looks like an outsider in the office environment, a signal of the fundamental differences between her worldview and Aurora’s perceptions. In keeping with this theme, Karine is dressed in a flowing skirt and blouse which have Scandinavian details, paying homage to the setting of the play, which is located in the small town of Bergen, Norway. I chose garments with lightweight fabrics because of the “storm” we created on stage, which included an industrial fan, where the movement of the costumes was crucial to conveying the chaos and melodrama of the scene.

In addition to establishing the differences between the passionate and pragmatic worlds, I also designed a non-traditional character for IBSANITY. Aurora has a pet spider named Angelica who was a rod puppet manipulated by a single puppeteer. Angelica was comically oversized and treaded the line between adorable and abominable. The design for her look was modeled from a tarantula, and she was made with a paper-mache and felt body with articulated legs. Her look was mimicked by the costuming of the puppeteer—both were predominately black with a single red feature—the puppet had red beady eyes, and her puppeteer had a red bowtie to echo this detail.

IBSANITY had a budget of $200 dollars, which predominately went towards the traditional Scandinavian trim on Karine’s costumes and Illan’s dresses. The cost of building the spider puppet also came from this budget. There were 5 actors in the production with a total of 13 costume looks. This production provided a valuable reminder about the importance of fabric
quality in designing modern shows. Ultimately, it was the weight and feel of the costumes in combination with a strong delineation of color which helped to tell the story.
Figure 15. *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY* Selected Renderings

Figure 16. *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY* Selected Renderings
Figure 17. *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY* Production Photo

Figure 18. *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY* Production Photo
Figure 19. *Aurora Fra Bergen, or IBSANITY* Production Photo
THE OUTLIERS

Play: The Outliers

Playwright: The Yokohama Theatre Group Ensemble

Venue: World Peace Theatre

Date: September 2017

Director: Andrew Woolner

Scenic Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Costume Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Puppet Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Lighting Design: Jeremy Plant

Sound Design: Chloe Kwok

The Outliers is a devised play which premiered at the Tokaido Arts Festival in Kawasaki, Japan. In the summer of 2017 I was the recipient of the Erik Ulfers/Margaret Hall Scholarship and the Stanley Graduate Award for International Research to serve as the production designer for the Yokohama Theatre Group, an English-language experimental theatre troupe operating in the Tokyo metro area which produces devised and original works for a multicultural audience.

The Outliers is a series of vignettes performed as if they were campfire stories. These stories are derived from a varied of sources, including Norwegian folklore, Greek mythology and original short stories. The performers in our meta-theatrical event take turns passing around flashlights and assuming the role of narrator.

As the production designer, I was responsible for the design and creation of all costume, scenic and puppet elements of The Outliers. In order to unify all of the design elements under the constraint of performing in a street festival environment, I implemented a trash-art aesthetic which played into the tone of the opening of the piece, where a group of kids gather around an
old rubber tire turned fire pit to swap stories about the world “before”. The world of the play is set in an uncertain land in an indeterminate number of years into the future, where the daily technology of our lives like cell phones seem foreign, relics of a long-forgotten past. The scenic elements were made to be movable pillars which could be rotated to either provide a clean white surface, or flipped to reveal a trash sculpture busting at the seams with discarded electronics and visages of the past.

The costume design for *The Outliers* was in direct conversation with the scenic elements and the meta-theatrical narrative of the production. Characters were dressed as performers in a base costume which was grunge-inspired but neutral enough to serve the actors who were required to flip between different roles within vignettes. Characters for individual stories were created by the addition of a rigged costume pieces hidden on the set that went on top of base costumes. These pieces were simple and inspired by children’s theatre which is simple, yet exaggerated.

Another key element to the design of *The Outliers* was the implementation of puppets for the mythological or inhuman characters of the show. Most notably, I created and crafted a large cardboard puppet to represent Fenrir, a monstrous wolf in Norse mythology. The wolf puppet was constructed with a moveable jaw that could be manipulated by a single puppeteer. There were also several smaller hand puppets, such as the spiders which would occasionally scuttle across the stage and along set pieces.

Designing *The Outliers* was an exercise in maintaining continuity across all design elements to support a specific aesthetic style—in this case, what the world would look like as a trash and found-object installation. Overall, my design used a trash-art aesthetic in order to create a visual vocabulary which could be translated to costume, scenic and puppet elements.
The total production budget was just under $1000 for sets, costumes, puppets, and lights. Of this budget, less than $300 went to building the set and $500 went to costumes and puppets.
Figure 20. *The Outliers* Production Photo, Costume and Scenic Design

Figure 21. *The Outliers* Puppet Sketches
Figure 22. *The Outliers* Production Photo, Costume
Figure 23. *The Outliers* Production Photo, Costume
Figure 24. *The Outliers* Production Photo, Wolf Puppet
SHOE

Play: Shoe
Playwright: Marisela Treviño Orta
Venue: Theatre B
Date: May 2018
Director: Erica Vannon
Scenic Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn
Costume Design: Zamora Simmons
Lighting Design: Courtney Gaston
Sound Design: Wade Hampton

Shoe is a new work written by University of Iowa playwright Marisela Treviño Orta which premiered at the Iowa New Play Festival in 2018. The power of Shoe lies in the authenticity of its story in 21st Century America, in a time where the Baby Boomer Generation is aging and their now adult children are tasked with finding suitable care for their vulnerable parents. In Shoe, this dynamic becomes toxic, following an adult woman from a Latinx family who is trapped in a small trailer with her two adult siblings, her younger sister, and her mother, Renata, who is in failing health. Renata’s toxic domination of her adult children’s lives as the matriarch of the family eventually drives Marta to make a choice to leave despite her feelings of familial obligation.

Scenically, my design focused on creating a full snapshot of a double-wide mobile home on stage. Crucial to the overall design of the production was creating a sense of enclosure for Marta, as she struggles with agoraphobia which leaves her afraid to leave her family home. In order to emphasize the tension between Marta’s desire to break free and her fear of the outside world, I placed the front door to the trailer downstage center, utilizing the existing architecture of
the theatre to support the sense of being in a raised mobile home. This allowed the moments where Marta peers into the outside world to be shared intimately with the audience rather than having the actor facing upstage, a configuration found in a more traditional ground plan. The character of the home itself was critical in the storytelling of this production. The muted beige and brown color palette spoke to both the socioeconomic status of the home, but also the deterioration of both the family and their living situation. Using real-world materials, like carpet and laminate flooring to create visceral sounds as well as color palettes and textures common to mobile homes built in the 70’s and 80’s, I was able to capture the feeling of a house seems to be stagnant and stifling.

Designing Shoe was an exercise in thoughtful world-building through the use of texture and details. In creating a realistic pseudo-box set on a low budget ($150.00) my design relied on my immediate resources to populate all of the walls, cupboards, and surfaces with meaningful set dressing and detailed props. An additional challenge of Shoe was the amount of consumable goods written into the script to convey the importance of these meals to a Latinx family. These details are critical when portraying realism to an audience expecting authenticity.
Figure 25. *Shoe* Production Photo, Full Stage

Figure 26. *Shoe* Production Photo, Living Room
Figure 27. *Shoe* Sketch

Figure 28. *Shoe* Digital Rendering
Figure 29. *Shoe* Ground Plan
REVOLT. SHE SAID. REVOLT AGAIN.

Play: Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again

Playwright: Alice Birch

Venue: Theatre B

Date: November 2018

Director: Lila Becker

Scenic Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Costume Design: Akeem Celestine

Lighting Design: Courtney Gaston

Sound Design: Eric Marlin

Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again is playwright Alice Birch’s frenzied feminist call-to-action play which subverts the form and function of language to explore and challenge the status quo of women in the 21st Century, who are strong-armed by society to be passive, plaintive and pretty. The play is a short, sharp-tongued series of vignettes which quickly snowball from seemingly everyday scenes of domesticity between romantic couples and families to nonsensical and chaotic scenes which blur the line between performer and character. Birch’s play has no character names, no clear distinction between who is speaking, and quickly ditches linear throughlines for rapid-fire, overlapping strings of dialogue and speech. Each vignette is preceded by a supertitle which curtly exposes the underlying tension of the scene. The focus of this feminist frenzy is all about exploring and subverting the form and language which suppresses women and asks that they be “well-behaved”.

Developing the scenic design for Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again, began with analyzing what was central to the play’s message—to revolutionize the body, the work, and the world via language. By letting the playwright’s words take both literal and metaphorical center stage, I
was able to create a set in which the text became a character of its own. Using a single looming swath of white, semi-opaque plastic in the place of traditional black theatre masking, I created a sterile, foreign, and alienating physical space that the actor/performers could destroy and manipulate. Coupled with a full-stage cyclorama, the full back wall of white plastic created a lightbox which was used to highlight and broadcast projected supertitles of scripted scene titles. I worked closely with the lighting and media designer to hone in on moments where the text became the dominate scenic element and to use light to take the world from alienating and sterile to bright and chaotic in an instant. In this way, the set worked to our advantage to chameleon itself to the ever-changing tone of the text. The white set also provided an excellent contrast to the moment of violence where a literal bucket of blood was dumped on the white floor.

This design process required me to be constantly engaged with the text, responding to the frustration with the way the world engages with women into set dressing and properties which were scattered throughout the space. One way of addressing this was the use of a series of mirrors which required actors/performers to be constantly engaged with the audience when facing upstage. There were also echoes of points of contention in feminism. Disembodied mannequin parts were scattered through the stage, representative of how the media chops women into parts rather than entire human beings. Symbols of feminine ideals, like high heels were littered throughout the stage and juxtaposed to masculine symbols and materials, such as construction equipment and steel.

Designing Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again championed a bold choice to commit to an unconventional material to create an unconventional production. My success also leaned on my ability to make concise choices in how to stylize the theatricalized scenes of violence on stage given a small budget. With a budget of $150, I was able to purchase the plastic backdrop which
became the primary scenic element for the production. Given the chance to revisit this design, I would further push choices to stylize the properties and implement more hanging mirrors to push themes of reflection and subversion.
Figure 30. *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* Production Photo, Act III

Figure 31. *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again.* Production Photo, Act II
Figure 32. *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again*. Production Photo, Act III

Figure 33. *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again*. Production Photo, Act III
Figure 34. *Revolt. She Said. Revolt Again*. Production Photo, Act IV
MIRROR MIRROR, PERFECTED (FILM)

Film: *Mirror Mirror, Perfected*

Screenplay: P. Sam Kessie

Venue: Studio A, Cinematic Arts

Date: January 2019

Director: P. Sam Kessie

Production Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Costume Design: Zamora Simmons

Lighting Design: Lane Wooder

*Mirror Mirror, Perfected* is a short film written, produced and directed by University of Iowa M.F.A. Cinematic Studies Candidate P. Sam Kessie. The short explores the impact of social media on the life of a young African-American woman named Sissy. In a world that has elevated virtual reality to produce “perfect” digital doppelgangers or “avatars” which can be used to generate both monetary and social gain. As Sissy’s pursuit of perfection in her dance intensifies, she begins to lose herself in her social media reflection. *Mirror Mirror, Perfected* spans several days over a variety of locales.

The design for Sissy’s bedroom served as both the audience’s insight into the mind of the character and also a catered to the unique needs of the short film. As Sissy is a dancer, there are several complex modern dance sequences in the film. The design for this set had to serve as both the dance studio for a young woman trying to gain a social media following but also the personal oasis for the character. I achieved this by integrating set dressing which explored the character’s obsessive nature with pragmatic details, like using a wood flooring to create a space for dance and exploration. The walls of this set are populated with dance awards and recognition, as well as personal trinkets and mood boards which speak to the character’s aspirations.
Based on the primary shooting angle, I focused more attention on the east wall of Sissy’s room, which is a brick accent wall covered with collages, sketches, and notes which all speak to the character’s dedication to dance. Another key feature to the design was the color palette of both the floor and walls, which needed to compliment both the actress’s skin tone and also work with the dim-lit mood of cinematography.

This design set the stage for my interest in designing for film—I found that the attention to detail and nuanced scale of production spoke to my interest in texture and developing character through the smallest of details such as a collage of photos on the wall or the knick-knacks on a nightstand. This design also speaks to how character development must run through all elements of design, and the text must inform both the aesthetic and pragmatic decisions in set design. This budget for this set was less than $300, and predominantly went towards the wooden floor to provide a safe and workable surface for the complicated choreography in the script.
Figure 35. *Mirror Mirror, Perfected* Digital Rendering

Figure 36. *Mirror Mirror, Perfected* Digital Rendering
Figure 37. *Mirror Mirror, Perfected* Production Photo, Overhead

Figure 38. *Mirror Mirror, Perfected* Production Photo, Wall Detail
Figure 39. *Mirror Mirror, Perfected* Production Photo, Bedroom
FOUND

Play: *Found*

Playwright: Margot Connolly

Venue: Theatre B

Date: February 2018

Director: Morgan Grambo

Scenic Design: Lindsey LaRissa Kuhn

Costume Design: Zamora Simmons

Lighting Design: Courtney Gaston

Sound Design: Bri Atwood

*Found* by Margot Connolly is a new work which premiered as part of the Gallery Series for the 2017-2018 season. Inspired by the stories of siblings who were left behind in the wake of a kidnapped and/or murdered child, *Found* picks up on the lives of two women who’s sibling disappeared over a decade ago. Highlighting the grief which comes from being left with no answers to a devastating life event, this play explores how this trauma impacts siblings differently, and the different ways in which they cope in order to be “found”.

The impetus for the scenic design of *Found* was the need to express two explicit locations—the first being the modern-day apartment of the two surviving sisters, and the second being flashbacks to the suburban wooded area where their sibling disappeared one fateful night. The apartment, although functional in its purpose, is a hollow and disjointed place, which inspired me to use pallets to mimic the feel of a stud wall on a minimal budget. Using pallets also allowed for the space to transform when backlit, giving the impression of being lost in the woods. The mood of the set changes under lights when the palettes are back lit, allowing the
audience to key into the feelings of the women as they felt when they were children who were frightened on the night their sister disappeared.

*Found* was an experiment in creating a stylized space with minimal resources with a script that calls for both realism and flashback sequences to a different emotional state. My budget was less than $100, and the money that was spent was used for consumable goods. In sourcing pallets for the walls of this set, I had to be cognizant of where the material was coming from as we had to ensure the safety of the cast and crew. The construction of the pallet walls was informed by how the walls pieced together and the rigging that were able to achieve in the space.
Figure 40. *Found* Production Photo, Full Stage

Figure 41. *Found* Production Photo, The Forest
Figure 42. *Found* Digital Rendering, The Apartment and the Woods
MOON OVER BUFFALO

Moon Over Buffalo is one of many paper projects executed in Costume Design II. As a part of my second year of graduate school, I was still developing the nuance and specificity of the aesthetic that I’m still nurturing today. This project also provided an opportunity to create a full costume design concept unfettered by practicalities such as time and expense.

Ken Ludwig’s Moon Over Buffalo paints a sometimes exaggerated, but oftentimes earnest portrait of the daily lives of actors and actresses living in the early 1950’s and beyond. The wild, unexpected, and dramatic foibles of George, Charlotte, Rosalind, and the rest of their company explore themes of love, passion, and the lifestyles of artists in a way that is both lighthearted and highly entertaining. While there are nuggets of truth regarding human behavior and show business laid everywhere in the text, the primary form of drama at work in Moon Over Buffalo is comedy. The play centers around George and Charlotte Hay, two stars who are quickly descending from their prime. In a desperate attempt to save both their careers and their relationship, comedy and chaos ensue.

In response to a prompt to design the central characters around a specific concept which provided insight into color, line, texture, etc. I chose to relate each character to a star or celestial body in their various cycles. The exploration of star cycles as a means of understanding characteristics began with a look at Charlotte Hay and her husband George, both of which I related directly to red supergiant stars. The reason I selected red super giants as the direct correlation to Charlotte and George is because of their bright, high intensity, high value red color and the scientific explanation as to why they have the shape and color that they do. Similarly, there are also the characters of Rosalind and Paul, both of whom are younger and fulfilling the young romantic roles for the purpose of this production. For this reason, I chose a palette of blues to emulate a star that was in a young part of its life cycle.
Designing Moon Over Buffalo provided me with the opportunity to design exclusively to a concept which I selected and developed. While working designers do not usually get the opportunity to design in such a vacuum, it is helpful to developing the skills necessary to execute a specific concept while still exploring period silhouette and details.
Figure 43. Moon Over Buffalo Costume Renderings

Figure 44. Moon Over Buffalo Costume Renderings
HEDDA GABLER

_Hedda Gabler_ follows the descent and ultimate destruction of a woman trapped in a life repressed and suffocated by the values of Victorian society in 1890’s Munich. Unable to make meaningful decisions about her own life, Hedda maintains shreds of agency in her life by manipulating her new husband, friends and acquaintances in any way she can. Born in into a wealthy family, Hedda is both intelligent and entitled, unwilling to deal with the cards that life has dealt her. When Judge Barrak tries to turn the tables on Hedda and usurp the small bits of power she has gained, she snatches it back by committing suicide in the final act.

I designed _Hedda Gabler_ as a paper project in Costume Design III in the Fall of 2017. I was prompted to select a well-known text with a keen focus on period detail in order to further explore Victorian costumes. I focused on the power of color and silhouette in a society where appearances are everything, and hold special significance to the titular character. Hedda’s dress develops throughout the course of the play, beginning with her in a flowing and luxurious dressing gown. This design choice provides two things—the first is the sense of Hedda’s unruly and contemptuous attitude at the beginning of the play where she feels less fettered by society, and the second is an allusion to her announced pregnancy, as the garment resembles a wrapper that a Victorian woman might wear. As the play progresses, Hedda’s dress gets more restrictive. Her necklines raise and each garment becomes more rigid in structure as the forces of Victorian repression eventually smother her.

Designing _Hedda Gabler_ was an exploration in creating character while maintaining authentic period silhouettes. Although the colors and fabric combinations may not have been period accurate, the elevation of color and texture in the textiles allows us to peer inside the
minds of each character, and feel the mood shift as Hedda sets off to destroy the world around
her. Overall, my design lends itself to storytelling through color and silhouette.
Figure 45. Hedda Gabler Selected Renderings, Act II

Figure 46. Hedda Gabler Selected Renderings, Act II
**OTHELLO**

Shakespeare’s *Othello* is a tragedy in which the pursuit of revenge in the wake of jealousy and wounded pride lead to a protagonist’s ultimate downfall. Othello is a Moorish Captain in the Venetian military revered for his heroic conquests despite his “otherness”. Although Othello is the play’s titular tragic hero, the action of the play is driven by Iago, another soldier in the Venetian military, whose jealousy and rage drive him to manipulate the other characters and circumstances around him to deceive Othello. It is through Iago’s deception that Othello is led to believe that he is betrayed by his wife, Desdemona. In a bewildered rage, Othello murders his wife and then kills himself.

I designed scenery for *Othello* as a paper project for Scenic Design II in the Spring of 2017. This project included creating a full conceptual design from a ground up, including ground plans for each individual location as well as accompanying scenic sketches, elevations, and digital renderings. In designing scenery for *Othello*, I focused on how an abstracted contemporary scenario could apply to the sense of tragedy that the story evokes. In using the military walls, I created a symbol that is easily recognizable by audiences as the trademark of a militarized occupying force in the middle east. I strived to create a world that seems not-so-distant in terms of distance or time, but was not immediately tangible to the audience. The movement of the walls was crucial to this design. As Othello’s world closes in around him, so do the walls which eventually isolate him from the rest of the world. As the walls close off, the murder of Desdemona because an intimate affair with the audience, set in the trenches within militarized walls. The ‘otherness’ of Othello as a character was also important, so I looked for a theme that would resonate with a modern American audience struggling with what to do with the other in our own country.
Overall, this design allowed me to explore designing for Shakespeare on a highly conceptual level. I found that this project helped me to better understand the conceptualization necessary to capture a production like *Othello*, which includes multiple complex locations both interior and exterior.
Figure 47. Othello Digital Rendering, Act 1.1 – 1.3

Figure 48. Othello Sketch, Act V
Figure 49. *Othello* Digital Rendering, Act 5.2