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Scenic Design for an Original Script: Dinner With The Louminauts

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Scenic Design for an Original Script:
Dinner With The Louminauts

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts
Scene Design

By

Jessica Diane Cook

B.A. Arkansas Tech University, 2003

December 2007

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Acknowledgements

Creating the world and home for the dysfunctional Louminaut family proved to be challenging and rewarding. This project enabled me to open my mind and truly test myself. The entire project, the design, process, execution, and this written portion of my thesis would have been impossible without the help, encouragement, and support of many people.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1	
Biography of Jason Cutler	4
Chapter 2	
Play Analysis of <i>Dinner with the Louminauts</i> by Jason Cutler	6
Chapter 3	
Absurdism within <i>Dinner with the Louminauts</i>	10
Chapter 4	
Collaboration and Process.....	17
Chapter 5	
Journal Entries	30
Chapter 6	
Evaluation of Self, Process, and Conclusion	48
Bibliography	54
Appendix A	
Research.....	57
Appendix B	
Preliminary Sketches and Models.....	73
Appendix C	
Construction Drawings	79
Appendix D	
Ground Plan and Final Model.....	87
Appendix E	
Process Photos	88
Appendix F	
Production Photos	94
Appendix G	
Student Critiques.....	99
Vita.....	114

Abstract

This thesis examines the process for the scene design for the production of *Dinner with the Louminauts* by Jason Cutler. The University of New Orleans produced the show in the Fall of 2006. My graduate committee chose this project for me as partial fulfillment of my Masters of Fine Arts degree. This paper will serve as a record of the process, execution, and response of the scene design for this production. The text will be accompanied by all of my research, renderings, drafting's, and other supporting materials that are applicable to the design process.

Introduction

My first real experience with theatre was in my Introduction to Theatre class as a sophomore at Arkansas Tech University. The professor, Kate Brugh, offered extra credit to anyone in the class for attending production labs and assisting with the build of the upcoming production of *The Three Musketeers*. I did not need the extra credit, however I was curious to see what went on in “the shop.” After the rehearsal, I found Kate and introduced myself as her student, and informed her that I was there to help with the production. That very night, I not only learned how to use various tools; I also helped construct a platform that would serve as a bedchamber for D’Artagnan and his seductress, Lady de Winter.

I was completely enthralled with producing scenery for the theatre. I engaged myself in any tasks that were available; taping cables, arranging plants on the staircase, painting the underside of a platform black, and painting the words, “The Shoulder of Mutton” on a sign. I felt privileged when Kate asked me to paint “The Shoulder of Mutton,” although I thought she was crazy. It was truly a defining moment in my life. She trusted me to do a job and I was honored. I was anxious. I misspelled the word shoulder. I left out the letter u. I apologized repeatedly and thought that was the end of my career in theatre. Instead, it was at that moment I learned anything is repairable in theatre.

Opening night, I felt a great sense of pride because I was going to see what I had put my hard work and time into upon the stage. The first time that the sign came out on stage, I was overwhelmed. Sitting in my seat quietly, I beamed with pride. This was a turning point in my life. Shortly after this experience, I decided to change my major because I wanted to learn more about this art known as Theatre.

I promptly threw myself into the ATU Theatre department with full force. I wanted to know everything associated with the building of set pieces...how to operate all of the equipment, how to incorporate the many different painting techniques, and to understand the basics of set construction. I soon learned theatre wasn't just an amazing art form, but also a wonderful way to express myself and use my creativity. Having found my place in this world, I knew that I would always be a part of this remarkably artistic community.

I have always had a desire to teach. I wish to be an educator of theatre as well as a theatre artist. I want to be an inspiration to others and introduce them to the world of theatre. Robert Edmund Jones says it well. "The theatre is a school. We shall never have done with studying and learning. In the theatre, as in life, we try first of all to free ourselves, as far as we can, from our own limitations. Then we can begin to practice this noble and magical art. Then we may begin to dream" (Jones, 23).

My dreaming began when I started graduate school. I opened myself up to learn and share my ideas with others. My own aesthetic began to take shape, and my understanding of all aspects of design increased. I started making new discoveries about the art of theatre and about myself as an artist. Those discoveries shaped me dramatically.

Assistant Professor Kevin Griffith, my mentor, has been an integral part in molding me into a strong designer. He was the one who taught me to think for myself, break the rules if necessary and most importantly, to believe in myself. It is my passion for the art of theatre that drives me. "Passionate love for the Theatre; and I can say to you without any fear of being thought profane: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his work'" (Craig, 207). Designing scenery is what I love. It is my passion.

When designing scenery for the theatre, I am completely immersed in the process and the world of the play. I am constantly looking for new ideas and ways to materialize my ideas. When involved in the collaborative process, I look forward to pushing the boundaries of the audience and also myself. By focusing on the element of design, I have learned a great deal about many different aspects of design, not only those associated with theatre. Robert Edmund Jones writes in his book, The Dramatic Imagination:

A stage designer is, in a very real sense, a jack of all trades. He can make blueprints and murals and patterns and light plots. He can design fireplaces and bodices and bridges and wigs. He understands architecture, but is not an architect; can paint a portrait, but is not a painter; creates costumes, but is not a couturier. Although he is able to call upon any or all of these varied gifts at will, he is not concerned with any one of them to the exclusion of the other, nor is he interested in any one of them for its own sake. These talents are only the tools of his trade. His real calling is something quite different. He is an artist of all occasions. (Jones, 69)

The theatre experience can begin as the audience enters the building. The scenery is an integral part of the audience's first impression with which I am involved. What is visible on the stage can set the mood of the play for the spectators. Scene designers create environments that are placed inside larger environments: the theater itself. "When the curtain rises, it is the scenery that sets the key of the play. A stage setting is not a background; it is an environment. Players act in a setting, not against it" (Jones, 70).

I believe the element of surprise is powerful and engaging, and I incorporate these elements when appropriate. My tenure at the University of New Orleans has helped me to fully develop my aesthetic. I am more confident as a designer, I greet challenges with enthusiasm and am every eager to confront the empty space of the stage.

CHAPTER 1

Biography of Jason Cutler

An original script, *Dinner with the Louminauts*, by Jason Cutler, was selected, as the second show of the 2006 – 2007 season at UNO. The play was a full participant production for the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) in 2006. Jason graduated with a MFA in Playwriting from the University of New Orleans in 2006 and currently resides in New York City. In 2001, Arkansas Tech University produced his first play, *Cherry Cordial: Interviews with those who killed it*. Coincidentally this play was an entry for KCACTF in 2001.

Dinner with the Louminauts was written during a time of political, religious, and social change in our society. During this time, Jason's unease about the current state of the world began to grow. To express his apprehension, he took to writing. This play signifies his growing disgust of the world in which he resides and his thoughts are very obvious. Jason wrote this play during two different periods of his life. He first started writing six months prior to Hurricane Katrina. At this time the state of the nation was poor, America was at war with Iraq, President George W. Bush's public approval rating was the lowest it had ever been, and people across the nation were loosing faith in the current administration.

After Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast on August 29, 2005, the problems with the nation became clear to everyone, especially for the people of New Orleans. After moving back to New Orleans in January 2006, Jason experienced first-hand the loss of faith in the society and government around him. His feelings towards the current state of the nation changed for the worse. At this time, the people of New Orleans were rebuilding and losing faith in the government, the

nation was still at war with Iraq and now itself, and there was talk of change, but nothing was happening. In spring 2006, Jason continued to express himself in writing and completed this script for an Advanced Playwrighting course he took at UNO.

Throughout Jason's writing his style remains consistent. He takes pleasure in shocking his audience with his words and the actions he wants portrayed on stage. Jason is also the author many twenty-minute plays, a couple of ten-minute plays and several full-length plays. *The Robot Play*, one of his twenty-minute plays, was featured in the 2007 Riant Strawberry One Act Theatre Festival in New York City. The play advanced to the finals of the competition. Jason's most recent accomplishment includes the New York premier of his play, *An Apology for the Play Suicidal Algorithms*, which debuted April 20, 2006.

CHAPTER 2

Play Analysis of *Dinner with the Louminauts* by Jason Cutler

As called for by the playwright, *Dinner with the Louminauts* is not set in a specific time period. The set or characters cannot determine time. There are no specific references in the script that set a date with the play. The characters are from a variety of time periods ranging from Victorian to modern day. In my opinion, specifics are not needed because the topics brought forth in the play could be extracted from any time period. This is to show how the path of man has not changed a great deal since the beginning of time.

Politics is the major underlying theme in this play. While some of the views expressed are very political, there are no specific names or dates with which to correlate the play with reality. The voice of the play refers to the state of the nation at the time that the play was written. George W. Bush was President of the United States, the nation was at war with Iraq and becoming increasingly more divided about the war, Hurricane Katrina devastated the coastal region, the public was not pleased with how the Federal, State, and Local Government reacted to the hurricane, and New Orleans's recovery pace was slow. It was as if nothing was being done to mend these problems. The concerns of citizens were being voiced, but the words were falling on deaf ears.

The state of the nation is important to this script because the main character, Jeremy Louminaut, serves as a metaphor for the playwright's idea of this America. Jeremy Louminaut is the vision of what the playwright felt America had become: charming, ravishing, and whole on the outside, but down deep greedy, prideful, and deceitful. Jeremy is the patriarch of the Louminaut family. His wife, Susan, serves him diligently and follows all of his orders blindly. His only son,

Geordi, is slowly becoming his father by following in his footsteps. Jeremy's pride and greed consume his life to the extent that whatever Jeremy wants; Jeremy gets, no matter the way he goes about it. Hurting innocent people does not bother him as long as he gets what he wants.

. The world of this play is dismal, dreary, and reveals a family with no known status of earnings or work, time, or place. Being blinded by their individual belief systems, the Louminauts live inside their heads and feel they are above everyone else simply because they are Louminauts. This family is very proud of whom they are and what they do to get what they want. The Louminauts will not back down from anyone at any cost, even if that means their life.

The Louminauts want power without earning it. They want what they can take from others, expect everything to be handed to them, and will not give in to anything. They are a greedy and prideful family. A major dilemma with the mentality described above is that these ideas are being passed on to the next generation. Children are learning how to act from their parents and their environment. They are a product of their environment. The children of today are following in their parent's footsteps, as Geordi is doing with his father, Jeremy.

The Louminauts are not a family of givers. They are a family of takers, which is apparent from the beginning of the play when Geordi is having a discussion about the buttons he gathered for his father. Jeremy asks, "How much did you pay for them?" Geordi replies, "Nothing, I took them from him and told him if he had anymore, I wanted them too." They pride themselves on being "Louminauts" and look down upon those who are not. Geordi tells his grandfather, "You can't speak to me that way, I am a Louminaut!" If one is weak, they will be exploited for being weak, and if you challenge the family, be prepared for the consequences that follow.

The Louminaut family will never change because they feel they are perfect. However, they will try to change others if they feel challenged or threatened. Their behavior resembles animals in

the wild. Meaning, they are constantly on the attack looking for poor, helpless creatures. The Louminaut family pride themselves on taking from the helpless because the helpless will eventually give in or they will suffer extreme consequences.

The Louminauts live as if it were truly “survival of the fittest.” “Survival of the fittest” is a phrase for a concept relating to competition for survival or predominance that was originally applied by Herbert Spencer in his *Principles of Biology* of 1864. Mr. Spencer drew parallels from his ideas of economics with Charles Darwin's theories of evolution by what Darwin termed natural selection.¹ The way the Louminauts live is an example of Social Darwinism because just as competition between individual organisms drives biological evolutionary change (speciation) through "survival of the fittest" (not a scientific term itself), competition between individuals, groups, nations or ideas drives social evolution in human societies.²

The concept of family in the play is similar to a united front, which is an alliance of political parties that band together to achieve a common goal. This is comparable to how patriotic members of a nation stand as one or how a pack of wolves live together and stand by one another during an attack. The strongest member is the leader of the pack: the Alpha male. In *Dinner with the Louminauts*, the head male is Jeremy Louminaut. His values and ideals are forced into his family's way of thinking and living.

One of the most prominent themes in *Dinner with the Louminauts* is spirituality. This topic is the basis for the conflict. The subject of religion does not fall beneath the surface of the play. Religion is discussed throughout the play. The Louminaut family worships the “Holy One”, while the Bunson family, the Louminauts' guests for dinner, worships the “Sacred Essence.” The two opposing sides argue about which deity is superior. This discussion is similar to modern-day

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Survival_of_the_fittest

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_Darwinism

religious debates that occur between the many different religions that exist. Both families refer to their deity casually, i.e., Jeremy states in the play, “By the Holy One if we don’t eat soon I am going to perish.”

CHAPTER 3

Absurdism within *Dinner with the Louminauts*

Dinner with the Louminauts is heavily influenced by and follows the ideas of the Absurdist plays. However, it cannot be classified as an absurdist play because it was not written immediately after WWII or during the Absurdist era of the 1950's and 1960's. This play is better classified as Neo-Absurdism. The genre of theatre, Neo-Absurdism, continues with the ideas of the Absurd. The only difference being that the play is written during contemporary time. The play, *Dinner with the Louminauts*, fits into the genre of Neo-Absurdism.

The "Theatre of the Absurd" is a term first used by critic Martin Esslin, who used the word for the title of his book in 1962, The Theatre of the Absurd. The term refers to a particular type of play that first became popular during the 1950s and 1960s. The plays that Mr. Esslin refers to presented the ideas and beliefs that were expressed by the French philosopher Albert Camus. Mr. Camus wrote an essay in 1942 titled, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in which he defines the human condition as basically meaningless, absurd, and absent of all purpose. In his essay, Mr. Camus introduces his philosophy of the absurd: man's endless search for meaning, unity, and clarity in an incomprehensible world without a God or an eternity. Mr. Camus argued that humanity had to leave itself in order to recognize that a fully satisfying and rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach. This meant that the world must ultimately be seen as absurd and that life is essentially without meaning.

Martin Esslin used the term "Theatre of the Absurd" merely as a device used in order to bring attention to certain fundamental traits apparent in the works of a variety of playwrights during

that time. The playwrights that were loosely grouped under the label of the “absurd” tried to convey their sense of confusion, anxiety, and doubt in the face of an unexplained universe. According to Mr. Esslin, the five defining playwrights of the movement are Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter. Interestingly, many of these writers were not always comfortable with the label of “The Absurd” and sometimes preferred to use terms such as "Anti-Theater" or "New Theater".

Theater of the Absurd came about as a reaction to World War II. It took the basis of existential philosophy, which claims that individual human beings create the meanings of their own lives and combine it with dramatic elements to create a style of theatre that presented a world that cannot be logically explained. Life was, in one word, absurd. The Theatre of the Absurd openly rebelled against conventional theatre. It truly was anti-theatre, being surreal, illogical, and without conflict and plot.

This new genre of theatre took time to understand and be accepted because it used techniques that seemed to be illogical to the theatre world. The plots often deviated from the more traditional episodic structure, and seemed to move in a circle, ending the same way as it began. The scenery was often unrecognizable, obscure, and the dialogue never seemed to make any sense. This is because these aspects of the plays are what makes the audience members think beyond the realm of their normal thinking. The deep meaning of the play is usually intertwined with and may be found within the peculiar dialogue or uncharacteristic scenery.

One of the most important aspects of The Theatre of the Absurd was its distrust of language as a means of communication. At this time, language became a standard of conventionalized, stereotyped, meaningless exchanges. Words failed to express the soul of human experience and were not able to penetrate the shell of the soul. As a result, absurd plays assumed a highly unusual,

innovative form (which seemed to aim directly at startling the viewer) shaking him out of his comfortable, conventional life of everyday concerns.

The Theatre of the Absurd was also a reaction to the disappearance of religion from modern day life. The Absurd Theatre can be seen as an attempt to restore the importance of myth and ritual, by making man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition, and by instilling in him a lost sense of wonder and distress. The Absurd Theatre hoped to achieve this by shocking man out of an existence that had become worn, mechanical, and content. It felt as if there were a mystical experience in confronting the limits of human condition.

Absurd plays have the following in common: meaningless plots, repetitive or nonsense dialogue and dramatic non-sequiturs often used to create dream-like or nightmare-like moods. A non-sequitur is a comment or statement that is absurd to the point of being humorous or confusing because of its lack of meaning connected to the comment it follows. It can be used deliberately or unintentionally. However, there is a fine line between the careful and artful use of chaos and non-realistic elements and true, meaningless chaos. Even though many of the plays that fall into this genre seem to be quite random and meaningless on the surface, an underlying structure and meaning is usually found in the midst of the chaos.

Dinner with the Louminauts shares characteristics with the Theatre of the Absurd because they both depart from realistic characters, real situations, and from all of the associated normal theatrical conventions. Time, place and identity are ambiguous and loose. The elements of time, place, and identity show no specifics in this play. These elements are never revealed. The true beauty of this script is that due to the non-specific nature of this play, *Dinner with the Louminauts* could easily fit into any time period and these characters could be connected to basically anyone at any given time.

Dinner with the Louminauts at first seems to be about a family having another family over for dinner. However, in the progression of the script, it is revealed that politics and religion are the real underlying messages within this world of chaotic behavior and complete randomness. The Louminauts live in a constant world of chaos that they bring upon themselves. This script relates to the audience with comedy, while having them question who they are as individuals and what kind of world they live in.

The script aims at provoking the audience to figure out what is being presented to them, making them think for themselves and not rely on what they are being told to think. This play is not realistic and is not an easy to follow script. The language is cryptic at times, mainly with the character of Miss Tigerlily. She speaks in sentences that seem more like riddles rather than sentences: “Jaundice rots the lower region,” and “Why mail yourself Chlamydia?” She is the only character in the play to speak in sentences without real meaning.

One tactic used by the playwright that coincides with the characteristics of The Theatre of the Absurd is to shock the audience. The first technique he used was having the characters range in time periods. When the audience first notices Susan Louminaut enter wearing an evening gown circa 1850 and then sees her son, Geordi Louminaut enter, in 1920’s college boy’s attire, they start to notice something is out of place and this confuses them. The characters wearing costumes from different time period is something that the audience was not expecting and was hard for them to understand because the idea surrounding this choice is something unknown and never revealed.

Another audience shocking tactic used by the playwright was the “pissing contest” that takes place between Jeremy Louminaut and Charles Bunson. This event is something that the audience did not foresee and again, they become shocked by what they are witnessing on stage. The dialogue before the contest begins is non descriptive. The men are going outside argue. They

appear to be going outside to fight, but the playwright chose to stun the audience with a comedic moment that had an underlying message of childish ways of settling disputes. Another moment of audience shock is the off stage explosion of the Bunson's home followed by the onstage explosion of the Louminaut home. These explosions are not accidental. They are caused by the detonation of bombs by use of remote control.

The events stated above are far from the cycle of everyday life to which we, the audience members, are accustomed. These series of events cause the audience members to question themselves. This provokes the audience to think about the present day setting and the play by asking the question, "Why"? The playwright chose these events as a way to show the audience how the human condition truly is: meaningless, absurd, and completely devoid of all-purpose.

The play shares another characteristic with Absurdist Theatre: the use of a circular plot. During the final moments of the play, the Louminauts home has been destroyed due to the explosion, however minutes after the explosion, the stage directions read: "The set moves back into place as it was before the explosion." This signifies to the audience that nothing changed; everything went back to the way it was at the beginning.

Jason's writing style is similar to those playwrights most famously known as being absurd: Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, and Harold Pinter. Samuel Beckett is the most well known of the Absurdist playwrights. His plays focus on themes such as the uselessness of human action and the failure of the human race to communicate. Jason shows his ideas about the human condition by the lack of communication. Jeremy Louminaut makes statements but never listens. Mr. Beckett's work is stark, fundamentally minimalist, and deeply pessimistic about the human condition. Samuel Beckett and Jason Cutler use their wicked sense of humor throughout their scripts.

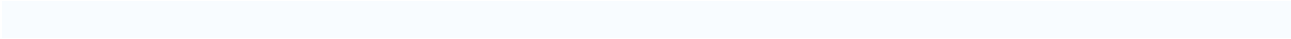
Another playwright associated with the absurd movement is Eugene Ionesco. His plays

illustrate the solitude of humans and the insignificance of one's existence. Jason shows this with his character of Gramps. Gramps is insignificant and considered to be a burden to his family, who doesn't care if he were alive or not. Gramps repeats the phrase, "I want to be alone," throughout the script. This shows his alienation and solitude. Mr. Ionesco's plays reject a conventional story-line, instead using accelerating rhythms or cyclical repetitions: Jason also uses a cyclical story line. Eugene Ionesco also disregards psychology and coherent dialogue, instead depicting a dehumanized world with mechanical and puppet like characters who speak in non-sequiturs, similar to how Jason portrayed the character, Miss Tigerlily. Both playwrights reject the logical plot, character development, and thought of traditional drama. Both men use an inappropriate and chaotic form of comedy to convey the insignificance of existence in a universe ruled by chance.

Harold Pinter is another playwright for whom the Absurdist movement was named. Mr. Pinter is most well known for writing plays that were very deemed "political." The plays he wrote reflected his own political interests and changes in his personal life, similar to how the Jason chose to have the script for *Dinner with the Louminauts* reflect his. Mr. Pinter publicly shunned the term "political theatre" and did not want the term associated with his work. The plays often involve strong conflicts in which the characters fight for dominance. In Jason's script, Jeremy Louminaut and Charles Bunson have a major conflict trying to establish who is dominant. Jeremy is always trying to establish his dominance to everyone he encounters.

Jason's style of writing is similar to Mr. Pinter's. Both styles are marked with theatrical pauses, silences, comedic timing, provocative imagery, witty dialogue, ambiguity, irony, and menace. Mr. Pinter never finds it necessary to explain why things occur or who anyone is. He believes that the existence within the play itself is justification enough, just as Jason does in his play. Nothing is explained in *Dinner with the Louminauts*.

Critic Irving Wardle called Mr. Pinter's earlier plays "comedy of menace". The term refers to the many attempts people have made at trying to "tame" his works. Mr. Pinter's plays begin with an apparently innocent situation that becomes threatening and absurd as Pinter's characters behave in ways often perceived as inexplicable by his audiences. Jason followed in Mr. Pinter's footsteps by writing a script that at first seems harmless; a family invites their neighbors for dinner. This event may seem undisruptive at first, but chaos ensues and quickly becomes threatening and absurd. One thing that sets Mr. Pinter apart from his peers, Beckett and Ionesco, is that Mr. Pinter's world within the drama seems to be at least somewhat realistic. Jason creates realism by depicting a family who is having dinner guests.



CHAPTER 4

Collaboration and Process

“This is precisely the aim of stage designing, to bring the audience into the atmosphere of the theme or thought” (Jones, 136). Designing the scenery for a play is essentially the melding of a visual statement, the basic intent of the playwright, and vision of the director. The job of a scene designer is to effectively create an environment in which the action of the play takes place. Providing a set to accompany the words being spoken will help the audience understand the story and ideas being presented to them.

During the initial meeting with the director, fellow graduate student, Lori Dewitt, we discussed in detail, who the Louminauts were, how they portrayed themselves, where they lived, and the themes associated with this script. The ideas of animalistic behavior surfaced, as well as Darwin’s *Survival of the Fittest*. Greed, power, and anger were also ideas we associated with the family. The discussion lead to Lori and I being in agreement of the direction the production should take. Most importantly, we both agreed that the playwright’s vision of America would be used as the central metaphor. (See Chapter 3)

With the decision of the central metaphor behind us, our discussion became more in-depth about the scene design itself. As the discussion progressed, the idea of voyeurism surfaced. We wanted the audience to experience first hand how the Louminaut family was behind the closed doors and how that image differed from the initial image presented. We came up with the idea of having the audiences look in on the Louminaut family, watching this play take place from their kitchen window. Lori and I first talked about having the entire stage framed with a window frame

that would push the idea of voyeurism onto the audience. Considering the idea of this family having a façade, the idea grew into having the image of the exterior of an impressive mansion cover the entire set during pre-show. The image was taken away when the show began. This established the idea of this family having a shell. The audience saw something entirely different on the inside as opposed to what was on the outside. This action fooled the audience and also served as a metaphor for the Louminaut family, meaning that what you see on the outside is not what is on the inside.

Continuing with the discussion of the scenery, Lori and I conversed about the interior of the house. After showing her my preliminary research of images of burned houses, peeling wallpaper, wallpaper patterns, crown molding, baseboards, and the interiors of Victorian homes, (See Appendix A), we discussed the differences between our ideas versus those of the playwright. The playwright stated in the initial description that the setting is a home: the home of the Louminaut family. Jason wrote “this ensemble should all appear to be the set for *Death of a Salesman* after the audience gets pissed and burns it and the actors and crew come together to salvage what they can from the wreckage.”

As a designer, I feel stage directions can heavily influence the choices that are to be made by a scene designer. With that being said, I feel scene designers should not read stage directions until after reading the script thoroughly and forming their own original images. Designers need to experience the script without any outside influences so they are able to view the environment as they see it and use their initial reactions and instincts. This is known as the “Fresh Eye Concept.”

From my first reading of this play, I always envisioned the home of the Louminaut family to be a grand and large classically Victorian home with high ceilings, which lead to long and lean walls. Even after reading the stage directions, I was never able to envision the Louminaut’s living

in a home similar to the home of Willy Loman. Willy Loman lived in an average house in the late 1940's and this was not a suitable living environment for the Louminauts. The Louminauts are a family who are grand, prideful, and in their minds, magnificent. These ideas should be reflected in their home. After presenting these ideas to director, we both agreed that the home of the Louminauts should be a large Victorian home instead of a small suburban type home.

Once the architectural style of the Louminaut home was decided, the next issue that surfaced was the interior of the house. The design of this play is centered on the interior of the Louminaut home. In order to break up the stage/acting area and to show the broken home and the broken souls of the Louminaut family, I chose to have the walls not be connected to one another. This allowed the director to utilize the spaces as entrances and exits for the actors. The director proposed the idea of the walls moving around on stage, with the idea that the motion of the set pieces would add chaos to an already confusing world. Technically speaking, the set pieces were placed on castors and moved around the stage during scene breaks. The walls reconfigured at the beginning of each scene.

We decided we wanted the walls to be built tall so that in comparison to the actors on stage, the walls would appear very long and lean. The difference in size would provide a sinister atmosphere. To further emphasize the broken home and lives of the Louminauts, I talked to Lori about having the tops of the walls jagged with sharp angles; resembling the teeth of a shark. The Louminaut family is a family of animals, who prey on the weak and again, this, should be reflected in their home. The jagged tops and varying heights would also help break up the empty space above the walls and add visual interest to the design.

Another element of the wall design that needed to be addressed immediately was explosion that takes place at the end of the play. This was the first "hurdle" that the director and I had to

overcome within the script. The playwright wrote an on-stage explosion, which takes place at the end of the play. During this explosion, the walls collapse only to reassemble to how they were. Having the walls actually fall or shake during the explosion not only caught the audience by surprise, but it added to the absurdity and theatricality of the play. We started addressing this explosion in the beginning of the process. We all knew that making the explosion happen was going to require special rigging or a special building technique if we wanted to achieve these ideas.

We discussed many ideas about how the walls would collapse: false corners built into the walls, suspending the walls with airline cable on the fly rails, and even having the walls made of fabric. We eventually decided on the idea of cutting the walls at various heights and hinging the two pieces back together. When the script called for the explosion, the tops of the walls would be opened, pushed forward, or pulled back depending on their location on stage. The reconfiguration of the walls would be smoother and easier to control.

Another visual element we decided on during this initial meeting was the chandelier. The chandelier is something not referred to in the script, nor asked for by the playwright. I have envisioned a chandelier in the Louminaut home from the first reading of the script. The chandelier hung over the set throughout the play. During the explosion, the chandelier shook and fall. The chandelier looked as if it were pristine, polished and grandiose, but it is obvious that no one has ever taken care of it, nor wanted to; a reflection of the Louminauts.

I was fortunate to have a director who not only trusted my creative vision, but who shared my visions of the ideas and themes for the play. Lori and I talked extensively about the underlying message with this script in our initial meeting, and we both agreed that *Dinner with the Louminauts* has the influence of absurd plays, (See Chapter 3). With the initial meeting behind us, both Lori and I were able to start our journey into this chaotic and strange world of the Louminauts.

After our first design meeting, I promptly began sketching rough ideas. From those initial sketches, I came up with a medley of ways to design this set, (See Appendix B). I explored the idea of having three separate areas in which the action would take place: a kitchen area, living room area, and outside area. The areas would be separate from one another but still loosely connected. The words that kept running through my head were “funhouse”, “broken”, “dirty”, and “messy”. I produced a couple of sketches that illustrate the idea of having the doors shaped oddly, being thin on the bottom and wider towards the top.

I eventually settled with an idea and started work on the first model for the set, (See Appendix B). Initially I chose to place the set down on the extension, or lower part of the stage, of the thrust. I chose to do this because having the set divided between US and DS areas would leave a large amount of empty space. Due to the US area of the thrust being smaller than the DS area and because the visual distance from the audience to the upstage audience is about 24’, action rarely takes place in the US area.

The set was designed to have the set pieces placed on top of platforms. The platforms were arranged in a geometric shape, similar to a pentagon. The platform covered most of the stage extension and would serve as the primary acting unit. No acting was to take place off this platform. Another smaller platform was placed on the USR corner of the larger platform. This platform served as the kitchen area and added levels to the design.

As per the discussion I had with the director, the walls were jagged, burnt, and had textures applied to each. There was space allotted between each wall for entrances and exits. I had a total of eight walls, all of which had the maximum height of 8’. The low height was due to the sightline problems of the thrust. If the walls were taller, the audience would not be able to view the set in its entirety. Two of the walls had French doors built in the frames, which would lead to the

outside/patio area. One wall had a window built into it, and one set piece was a stair unit leading to the upstairs. I chose to use a total of eight walls because that number allowed me to utilize the space to the fullest in creating an interior for the home.

The walls were joined together in groups of two to create interesting visual angles with the angles of the walls ranging in degrees from 54 degrees to 135 degrees. This created a total of four sets of walls that were hinged together. The walls were staggered around the stage to give the general idea of the interior of a home. After placing the stair unit SR and then CS, I thought it was more visually appealing for the unit to sit off to the SL side.

A kitchen area is also referred to in the script many times and I chose to create an island that would serve as the kitchen area. This island was placed in the center of the pentagon shaped platform unit and consisted of a refrigerator, an “L” shaped countertop, and microwave. By designing the kitchen area in this way, a space was created in which the actors could move freely within and throughout the rest of the set. The kitchen area was open which allowed for easy movement all through the space.

I presented this model to the director the next day. We felt the ideas for the setting were coming together, but both ideas needed to be tweaked. We talked about making the walls taller than 8’ and progressing in height. Having the walls differ in height would not only break up the top line, it would also make the home more menacing. During this discussion, we came up with the image for the home: The Adams Family’s house or The Munster’s house. The director said the walls should not be joined together and I agreed. Adding even a small space between the walls added depth and visual interest to the design.

Then next problem we discussed was the wall placement and height. This was a problem simply due to the theatre space. From that conversation, we developed the idea of adding a false

proscenium to the lip of the stage and not using the extension, except for audience seating.

Building the interior of a home in the thrust theater would be difficult due to the seating on three sides of the stage, which made for problems with sightlines. The thrust theatre has an extension that extends into the audience and the audience is seated on three sides. This extension is connected to the backstage area or lip. Forcing our thrust stage into a proscenium stage would prove to be very beneficial because we were able to create the best of both worlds: the intimacy of the thrust space with the straightforward viewing of a proscenium stage. We placed the walls of the house on the apron and the action would take place in that area. This decision also allowed me to utilize the SL ramp. The Bunson's entered the Louminaut home from the ramp, as if entering from the outside.

Lori and I chose to do away with both sides of the thrust seating and make the theatre into a small proscenium stage. By extending the lip of the stage, I was able to fully expand on the idea for the scrim. I talked over the idea of having the scrim pulled close during preshow, which completely hid the set, with the exception of the added extension. The scrim had a projection of a beautiful Victorian home, which covered the entire scrim. The slide was projected from the light booth, which is directly in front of the stage. By projecting the image from the front the scrim appeared opaque. When the show started, the house lights went out and the projection became fully visible. I discussed with the director the idea of having the stage lights come up on the set before the scrim was pulled away to show the interior of the home behind the projection of the house. This allowed the audience to see the overall image of having something on the outside attractive, and the inside being decayed.

Due to the change in location within the thrust, my design had to undergo a few minor changes as well. Because the apron of the thrust is roughly about 20' deep and 32' wide, there was

not much space to work or move. The kitchen area was no longer a large unit or island. I brought up this concern with the director and we came up with the solution of making the kitchen a separate unit altogether, (See Appendix C). The unit rolled on stage when needed and roll off stage when not being used. The kitchen unit only consisted of a countertop with shelf, set of drawers, and a refrigerator; the microwave sat on top of the refrigerator. A kitchen window was placed above the unit, which helped convey the idea of voyeurism.

From the conversation about the kitchen unit, we came up with the idea of having the kitchen unit serve a double purpose. When the unit was turned around, the backside was designed to resemble the outside of the house, complete with siding and bushes. This was the area in which Geordi and Marilyn went to “cavort” with one another. The unit was placed on swivel castors to ensure easy movement. We also discussed the idea of the kitchen unit being turned around with the backside (outside) facing the audience during preshow to give the audience the feeling that they were looking in on this family.

Unfortunately, the director had to cut this idea because we didn't have the proper amount of crewmembers. We also decided that the show shouldn't start with a scene shift. The kitchen unit stayed as a fixed unit sitting CS. Lori suggested the notion of having the kitchen appliances come from different time periods. We decided that the refrigerator should be an icebox circa 1850 because it provided a good contrast with the microwave, circa 1985. The shelving units and drawers were from the 1950's.

After the decision to move the set US and not use the thrust, the placement of the walls changed as well. Because there was more space available and moving US solved horizontal SL issues, I was able to place the walls as I had originally intended. The walls created somewhat of a staggered semi-circle on the stage, going along the back wall of the theater and up the sides of the

apron. The center area would be left open to accommodate the kitchen unit. After my discussion with the director, I redesigned the walls ranging in heights from 10' to 14' and also varying in width from 2' to 5'. Doing this broke up the space and offers more variety in composition.

Lori and I wanted to further exaggerate the chaotic and random nature of this script, so we developed the idea of placing the set pieces on swivel castors. During the scene breaks, the walls would change location so that when the lights came up for the next scene, the set had been reconfigured. Unfortunately, this idea never came to full fruition due to lack of crewmembers, lack of space, and issues with the blocking. Instead of having the all ten walls move during the scene breaks, we were only able to have four of the walls move.

After coming to a decision on the layout of the set, the director and I started to discuss the smaller details of the set. The main detail we needed to talk about was the wallpaper because it is a large part of the design because there were at least 10 walls that need to be covered with paper. The wallpaper for this home needed to be elegant but also subtly symbolic. Others notice the smallest details of a home and the details relate the home to its inhabitants. The Louminauts are a family of users and they pride themselves on the power they have over others. This is why I chose the color purple to serve as the background of the wallpaper. Purple is a color that has traditionally represented power, wealth, and royalty. The Louminauts view themselves as such, so it is only appropriate to have this color adorn their home.

The decoration of the wallpaper was designed by the paint charge, Trisha Vitrano, (See Appendix E). Her wallpaper design fit the Louminaut's world perfectly. It was elaborate and ornate with a large "L" placed in the middle of the design. Trisha and I decided that in order to make the wallpaper look more interesting and elaborate, we would turn the stencil around every other time. This idea of design for the wallpaper proved to be very interesting visually. Another

detail of the walls Trish and I discussed was the texture. We applied texture to the walls by peeling the wallpaper, exposing beams, adding cobwebs, cracks, breaking the railings, and applying burn marks. The walls represented the inner beings of the Louminauts.

During this entire process, Lori never held me back and she allowed me to be creative and use my imagination. She didn't come to the table with any preset notions of how she envisioned the set, which was refreshing because I was able to watch the design grow. She was very open minded about everything and contributed greatly to the process. Her ideas were presented in a pleasant manner; one being her idea of having Geordi enter from a trap door on the extension, instead of the window, as noted in the script. We worked openly from the beginning.

I feel that Lori and I worked well together regardless of the disputes we had. The main dispute that kept recurring was over the "pissing contest". The dispute was not one that we could avoid because the contest was one of the few outlandish events that the playwright wrote and cutting this scene or any actions surrounding this scene would only be very detrimental to the production. This contest was vital to the climax of the play so we had to agree on every aspect of the portrayal of this event.

This is where we encountered the problem. I felt that having the actors move to the SR ramp of the theatre would be the solution to this problem. This area would have been designed to resemble the outside patio area of the house. By having this area designated as the patio area, it would have allowed us to block the other outdoor/patio scenes at that location. In dealing with the specific blocking of this scene, I suggested that the actors could turn their backs to the audience, urinate on the theatre wall, and the water could run down the ramp into a bucket, to control the mess.

The main reason I felt the scene should take place on the SR ramp is because it balanced out the use of the stage. The action was linear and being played on the horizontal. Blocking called for the Bunson family to enter using the SL ramp, so having the men go outside on the SR ramp made sense to me. Both the SR and SL ramps would have been designed as outside areas: the SL ramp being designed as the front stoop of the Louminaut house and the SR ramp being designed as the back patio area. Blocking the contest on the SL ramp, we would have been able to utilize the entire stage and have to search for space on a stage that was already very small, made by the elimination of the thrust.

The biggest problem we encountered with the idea of blocking the contest on the SR ramp was the hiding of the urination devices. I offered a few suggestions such as, using the sound of someone urinating, having catheters built into the costumes, and having tubing built into the scenery. This scene is the one area where the director and I openly disagreed. Each time the contest was mentioned, I became frustrated because we could not reach a solution.

Lori's vision of this scene was that it should take place CS. She wanted the scene to take place in that area so that the actors and their actions were completely visible. She wanted the interior of the house to magically become the outside patio area. Moving set pieces was a technical problem that could not be accommodated due to lack of stage and storage space and lack of crewmembers. Another issue with Lori's idea was that the kitchen area was now stationary and sat CS throughout the entire play and moving the set pieces mid scene would be impossible. We also had to solve the problem of how the urination devices would hide in this setting. With no real solution to this problem in our future, we agreed to use outside help in dealing with this problem.

We needed the flow of the blocking from the interior to the exterior to be smooth and natural. The Technical Director, Kevin Griffith offered a solution to our problem. He suggested

that the scene take place CS and have hoses rigged up behind the kitchen unit. The director and I compromised and agreed that the scene would take place CS. The two walls that are directly US of the window and kitchen unit prior to this scene set side by side. During the scene break, the two walls moved apart from each other and leave an opening of about 5'. When the time came for the actors to begin their contest the actors walked around the kitchen unit and appear to be outside. Behind the kitchen unit were two hoses that ran from a faucet located near the tool room entrance in the shop.

The end of the hose that the actors held had a control nozzle that they were able to turn on, off, and control the pressure of the water flow. The faucet was turned on before the show began and the hoses were rigged up to the back of the kitchen unit. The actors walked around the kitchen unit and stood behind the kitchen window and quietly talked to one another. They simply appeared to be outside. To help control the mess the water created, we cut an 8" PVC tube in half and laid it along the bottom of the cyc. We tucked the cyc into tube so it acted as a trough. This helped eliminate some of the watery mess.

Kevin's solution to this dilemma not only worked amazingly but was also the highlight of the play. The scene was very comedic, which was what the playwright intended. Both Lori and I were extremely satisfied with the outcome of this scene.

The collaboration between the entire design team and me never really happen. I fully trusted the costume designer, Tony French, with his designs. Tony never came to a production meeting, nor did we have a meeting on the costumes or colors. This is the fault of both him and me. As a result of this, Susan Louminaut's dress matched the color of the wallpaper exactly, which we found out during a dress rehearsal. I personally liked that her costume matched the walls of the house, which notes that Susan Louminauts primary place is in the home. Tony's designs matched

the descriptions written by the playwright and he did not attempt change that. Tony did an amazing job on the costumes; I just wish we had communicated a little more with one another.

Darcy Jamison was a hired guest artist to the university specifically to design lights for *Dinner with the Louminauts*. Lori, Kevin, and I met her when she attended the third production meeting. She came into the meeting with many questions about the script and the direction Lori and I were taking with the production. Darcy was very opinionated and relatively inflexible. The lighting design fit the world adequately and accentuated the scenic elements well. She painted the scrim gorgeously with lights and added a green lamp that appeared to be radioactive that glowed when the trap door was open. The only qualm I had with Darcy was her attitude towards the stage manager and the crew. She was rude, at times unprofessional, and belittled members of the crew in front of the rest of the crew, cast, and designers.

The properties master, Kristie Hagstette, was absent for most of this process. This was her first experience being a properties master and it showed. She was present for only one production meeting, never made a props list, and made vital props the night of the show. The props list for this play was very simple and had approximately 15 props, most which could have been bought. The stage manger eventually bought the props, due to Krisitie's lack of involvement. The technical director, stage manger, and I had to perform extra duties because she simply wasn't doing her job.

CHAPTER 5

Journal Entries

The following is a record of the design and production process for *Dinner with the Louminauts* during the fall 2006 semester at the University of New Orleans. I began writing this journal a month before and completed the journal on opening day.

Sunday, October 1, 2006

I started work on my second model. As per the discussion I had with the director on Thursday, September 28, I changed the heights of the walls. Originally set at 8' in length, they now vary in lengths of 10' to 14'.

Monday, October 2, 2006

I finished making my second model and met with Kevin and Lori, showing them the updated ideas for the set. We tossed around a few new ideas. We discussed the idea for the kitchen and counter tops. I brought up the idea of having the kitchen be an island that would consist of a countertop, microwave and a refrigerator. Ultimately, we decided on making the kitchen area a wagon unit that would come on when needed. By doing this, we would free up room on the stage.

We also decided that because of the sightline issues, having walls that extend over 10' would be a problem. This problem was solved because I came up with the idea of making our thrust theatre into a proscenium stage by extending the lip of the stage. Adding the false proscenium would allow me to sit the audience only in front of the stage. They would be seated on

the lip of the stage itself and upon the seating risers that were positioned in the middle of the house. There would not be anyone seated on the risers to the right and left. Lori and I also came up with the idea of making the entire set movable to add to the chaos in this world. The set pieces, walls, doors, and stair unit, will make subtle changes throughout the play. To achieve this will place all of the set pieces on sliders or castors. We also discussed the end of the play, in which the Louminaut's home explodes. I stated my idea of having some walls shake while others actually collapse. Both Kevin and Lori agreed with me and we spoke briefly about the technicalities that would be worked out.

Tuesday, October 3, 2006

Today was our first official production meeting. The meeting only consisted of Lori, Kevin, and me. Kevin and I had discussed that in order to achieve the false proscenium we would need to place six platforms in front of the extension. The platforms would be standard 4' x 8' platforms and would be placed in two rows of three. The length of the extension would be a total of 18' in length. Lori, Kevin and I discussed the kitchen island and decided that it needed to be shortened. We decided that in order to keep the stage open and easy to move about freely, there would be no separate dining area because we wanted the house to be big and empty.

Kevin told us of an idea of how to make the walls fall during the explosion. We would have false corners on a select few of the walls that would collapse when the explosion happened. The walls would be attached to a pulley system that would be untied by a crewmember backstage. Lori brought up the idea of putting holes in the stage extension and in the furniture to show the tattered decay of the home. We talked about the smoke effect that takes place at the end of the show, and also discussed that we would need a hazer in order to achieve this effect.

Tuesday, October 10, 2006

We had another production meeting today. The build for this show has been delayed due to the *Dancing at Lughnasa* set not being struck on Sunday. Our build is expected to start on Wednesday, however, I doubt that will happen because Kevin has to go to Lowe's and Home Depot to get the wood order. I am very upset and feel snubbed because my build has now been pushed back a week. Since the set was not struck on Sunday, we had to strike the set during shop on Monday and Tuesday.

During this meeting, I presented my drawings to Kevin and from those drawings he and I made a materials list of supplies needed for my build. I decided that I wanted the home to resemble a Victorian home and would add wainscoting, baseboards, and crown molding to each individual wall. Lori and I talked about the one main exit on stage and decided that it would be two French doors that would stand alone similar to the other walls. One door would be at 10' and the other at 12'. I discussed my idea to paint a window on one of the walls and I would paint the glass to look broken. We talked again about making the false corners of the walls so they would collapse during the explosion. We decided on how the floor of the house should look and how that would be achieved. We would cover the whole acting area with Masonite, including the extension of the stage.

We discussed putting the walls on jacks so they would be easier for the crew to move smoothly. Sliders would need to be placed on the jacks, also. I came up with the idea of having the kitchen serve another purpose. We would have one side be the kitchen and the other side would be the outside of the house, complete with siding and bushes. This area is where Geordie and Marilyn go to make out. The unit would switch sides during the show: when the kitchen was needed, the kitchen side would be visible and vice versa. We decided that the staircase unit would consist of

the staircase itself, which would be placed on a wagon and would have two walls to serve as masking.

Wednesday, October 11, 2006

Today in shop, we set up the platforms for the stage extension and laid the plywood tops. Also, a new student to our shop this semester, James Jennings, demonstrated a new way of building the frames for the walls, which we started to refer to the frames built in that manner as being of “James Jennings style”. Lori talked to me about not having a modern day refrigerator, but instead having an old-fashioned icebox circa 1850. This idea is in keeping with the notion of all the characters being from different time periods. I made a decision to stagger the kitchen doors to add more depth. I also toyed around with the idea of not having doors, just the doorways, and with having shorter walls on the staircase unit. The team and myself declined both ideas. We decided that we wanted the kitchen window to be suspended from the kitchen unit itself.

Thursday, October 12, 2006

Kevin gave me a location, Causeway Hardware, in which I could get older looking wallpaper. I determined today that I want scrim to be placed on the traveler. It would serve as the sheet over the eyes of the audience. The scrim would have a picture of a beautiful mansion on St. Charles Avenue projected on it. I already have a mansion in mind. Before the show starts, the scrim is to be backlit to show the inside of the house. After the house lights go down the scrim would pull back and the show would begin. This achieves the voyeuristic feeling that I wish to convey to the audience. The last thing I did today was to research more wallpaper.

Friday, October 13, 2006

I spent most of the weekend researching. Included in my research is Boris Aronson and different styles of crown molding, baseboards, and wainscoting. I took pictures of my own house and of The Columns Hotel to serve as examples of moldings that I preferred. I researched ice boxes from the 1950's and also the 1850's to see which would not only serve a better purpose, but which would feel good in the space.

Saturday, October 14 and Sunday, October 15, 2006

I researched more wallpaper. This time I focused more on the American Victorian style and researched more details on the walls of that style, including picture rails. I planned on taking a picture of the house on St. Charles Avenue but I was having problems getting the picture I wanted because of trees. I drew the technical drawings for the staircase, kitchen unit, and walls that are to be built at shop on Monday. I also drew the details of the jagged edges of the tops of the walls.

Monday, October 16, 2006

Today in shop, we started to face the walls with fiberglass board. I decided to do this so the walls would be lightweight and easier to move around the stage. Kevin started work on the pulley system for the traveler as students started the build of the staircase unit. I talked over the drawings with Kevin and after our discussion; I changed the height of the picture rails and wainscoting. I want the heights of each to vary from wall to wall. The students also shimmed the extension platforms and screwed the platforms to the floor. The workday was cut short because of a power outage at 12:20 pm. The power stayed off until about 2 pm but we had already lost the day.

Tuesday, October 17, 2006

Today during the production meeting, we discussed the much-needed running crew for this show, the build of the kitchen area, and we also discussed using the 24' backdrop from the lab to serve as a background. We also started discussing the pissing contest that happens near the end of the play. We tossed around ideas for the location, but didn't commit on one because Lori has a different idea. She told me of an idea she had about Geordie entering from the start of the play from a trap door on the extension of the stage. I liked the idea so I incorporated it into the design.

We discussed having a grandfather clock on stage by the staircase unit to serve as time. The hands of the clock would move around to show different times throughout the play. Playing on the irrationality of this script, we decided that the dining room would not consist of one whole table, but instead would be three separate tables. The Louminauts, the Bunsons, and others would all have a separate table at which to eat. The ideas were two saw horses and an old door for the Bunsons, card table for the kids and something grandiose for the Louminauts. I asked about the scrim closing at the end of the show and Lori agreed this should happen.

We set dates for the first run thru at October 28th and 30th. I also brought up the idea for a chandelier to be hanging from the grid that would hang over the extension. I came up with a to-do list for the following workday. The workday consisted of continuing to face the walls, attach jacks to the walls, finish up the staircase unit and make it sturdy, and build the kitchen wagon for rehearsals.

Wednesday, October 18, 2006

Today I made a day-by-day shop calendar for the next month. Today we also continued to work on the staircase unit, frames, and facing on walls. We added plugs into the edge of the

extension to connect the ramps to the entire stage. I also decided that I needed to angle the floor out by four feet to keep the space visually interesting. Later at home, I started feeling very nervous and unsure of my set design and of myself. I felt very constricted with not enough time to finish the set and not having enough shop students. At this point there was still no set for my director. She was rehearsing without walls. I felt overwhelmed and like there was so much left to do but no time to do it.

Thursday, October 19, 2006

We laid down the pieces of wood to give the placement of the walls so Lori and I could start to plan the movement of the walls. We finished the staircase unit and it was a lot bigger than I actually imagined. In the design, the stairs sit USC, but due to the enormity of the unit, I felt like I was running out of space on the stage. I didn't want the stage to be cluttered, I wanted it open and to have space. I didn't think that I would have enough room for the walls to move once the jacks had been placed on the walls.

Friday, October 20, 2006

Today I came in and met with Kevin. We muslin covered the walls and put a base coat of paint on them.

Saturday, October 21, 2006

I went to rehearsal today and met with Lori. We agreed the staircase was too big and changed the placement. She placed them on SL and put them on an angle. I agreed with her change and we also changed the placement of the walls.

Monday, October 23, 2006

We laid the floor covering today. It was warped beyond belief. We were counter sinking the screws so the screws would not catch on shoes or clothes. We had trouble there because the bits kept breaking. There were so many bubbles and a 4 x 8 piece would not lay flat without about 150 screws in it. We trimmed the excess muslin on the walls and put the walls back up. I cut out the jagged tops on the walls and the trap door was started.

Tuesday, October 24, 2006

In shop today, I questioned the height of the countertop and built a mock up of the kitchen unit. I decided I would further discuss this with Lori at the production meeting later in the day. I put the window height to start at 46". The trap door had to be fixed due to placement of hinges. Michelle started to weld the jacks together out of 1/4" square tubing.

At the production meeting, we first talked about the dining room area. Kevin came up with the idea of having a grand piano top with legs serve as the table at which the Louminauts would eat. I decided to have a mixture of different chairs, instead of having all eight be the same. Lori and I discussed the design for Jeremy's chair. I decided we should make actual picture rails, baseboards, and wainscoting instead of painting it on the walls because it would add depth and texture to the design. I wanted it to be 3-D. I tried to bring up the height of the picture rails and all, but the topic was tabled again. The pissing contest was brought up again and we decided to have the water hoses hooked up under the scenery.

We discussed the walls on the stair unit. The schedule for the light hanging and tech was determined. The date for the light hang was Friday, November 3 and the tech schedule was set for Saturday, November 4. On that Saturday we would have scene shift rehearsal for 10 am and the

tech would take place at 2 pm and again on Sunday at 7 pm. I brought up the idea of having curtains on the doors and the window and we left the topic open. We need to find a microwave that is new but that looks old, circa 1983.

The first run thru is set for Saturday, October 28 for around noon. The need for a projector was brought up. We also discussed the need for pyro and what we would use to make the effects happen. In the script, it says that Jeremy punches a wall. Lori and I discussed this situation and decided he wouldn't hit the wall. We need a black flat to go on the SR side of the staircase unit. Lori came up with the notion of having the Bunson's bring over metal TV trays and that would serve as their table and I agreed.

Wednesday, October 25, 2006

The jacks were added to the walls and they weren't sturdy enough by themselves to move, so we had to add a piece of plywood that would form a stabilizing base for the jacks. The students finished laying the floor covering on the stage. The French doors were added to the unit today and the SL door had to move more SL so it could be seen. I talked to Trisha Vitrano, the paint charge, about the design of the wallpaper and we decided to make our own wallpaper out of painted brown paper and stencils. I decided that the kitchen window needed to be lowered because there was too much space between the counter top and the bottom of the window.

Thursday, October 26, 2006

Trish and I decided on a wallpaper stencil and the color and technique that would be used to make the wallpaper. The scene painting class painted the wallpaper during class. They each made their own stencil and painted the wallpaper. After the paper was dry, we glued it to the flats. The

staircase wall frames were built and I added more detail to the kitchen unit that included the microwave. I decided that the wainscoting would be made of raised panels instead of painting the panels.

Friday, October 27, 2006

I faced the staircase walls and finally decided the actor playing Gramps would get some escape stairs on the unit and I attached the escape stairs to the main unit because he kept bitching. I pulled the platform that was used for masking on the side of the stair unit. Lori also brought in a chair that would serve as Jeremy's chair. I also drafted the technical drawing of the refrigerator, which we decided would resemble an 1850's icebox.

Saturday, October 28, 2006

Today was our first complete run thru. While watching the performance I made notes of things I needed to fix before the show opened. I noticed that I needed to contain the projection and make it smaller. Lisa needs sandpaper on the side of her chair so that she can strike a match to light a cigarette. I needed to find out if the mirror was a set piece or a prop. Darcy, the lighting designer, told me I would need to cut a hole in the side platform of the staircase unit so she could place a light there that would be for Gramps' window. I thought that maybe the set could use some practicals, i.e., sconces or lamps. I noticed that there was overhang of Masonite on the extension that would need to be cut. I wondered about placing a red throw on the back of Jeremy's chair, to show power. The rug covering the trap door wasn't working and one solution was to try attaching the rug to the door. Abby lies on the piano table so I needed to make sure that the table will

support her weight. Lori told me an idea of maybe having the piano table decline, by having one leg shorter than the other.

Another idea for the pissing contest came up, and that is to have Hudson bug sprayers hidden in the kitchen cabinets. The spouts would stick out from behind the kitchen unit, so that the actors could operate the amount and flow of water and still mask themselves from the audience. Lori and I decided that there was no need for an outside anymore, which got rid of the idea of rotating the kitchen island. I also decided against having a kiddie table. The four who would be sitting at that table would instead sit at the TV trays.

The front of the stage extension needed to be faced. I knew that I didn't want fabric, so I tossed around luon or fiberglass board. The wall moldings needed to be attached, a SR tab needed to be built, the scrim needs to be rigged, and the wall tops needed to be attached. After the run thru I added kitchen counters I found in the VOM's and I noticed that the top part of the front staircase wall needed to be replaced because it was too short.

Monday, October 30, 2006

Today in shop, we distressed the wallpaper and added the baseboards and rest of the wall details to the walls. Students faced the front of the stage with the fiberglass board. I decided to take the kitchen off the wagon and it would be a permanent fixture on stage. The window would hang from the batten. The refrigerator was started and I added a small shelf to the kitchen unit, in between the drawers and the refrigerator. The front of the newly added shelf would be covered with fabric that would hang in the front. We added the SR plug to the set. Kevin found a chandelier for the living room. My whole idea of the set looking as if it were floating died. Lori

wanted to turn two movable flats around for an outside and wanted to change the placement of the French doors. Later that night we had another run thru.

The notes I came up with during this rehearsal included the need for a floor lamp beside Jeremy's chair. The seam on the FOS needed to be gaff taped. There should be some masking on the staircase and the rug needs to be pulled. I also started to question if the walls should even move. There is no time and not enough space to do so. More chairs need to be pulled for the dinner scene. The music department needs to be contacted about borrowing their black chairs to set in front of the actual stage. I was also thinking that maybe the dinner table should be two separate pieces, the base and then the top, and coming out in two pieces. Lori and I were still butting heads about the pissing contest because our ideas differed, and I wondered if the French doors could move places again.

Tuesday, October 31, 2006

Today I played with the slide projector and tested it to make sure that a normal slide projector would work, and surprisingly it did. The refrigerator was finished for the most part. At the production meeting later in the day, we discussed again where the outside was going to be and still had no solution. The pissing contest subject was brought back up and again, nothing changed. The dining room table needs to be found and should be distressed and have candle wax dripped on the top. We toyed with the idea of having the tabletop decline at a slight angle and decided that we would load out the set Thursday and use the scene painting class again to paint the floor. I finally decided not to have wainscoting, just baseboards and a chair rail. I also decided to have a floor lamp, have no clock, and not put up a painted backdrop. Instead of the backdrop, we would use the cream colored backdrop and have Darcy "paint" it with lights.

Wednesday, November 1, 2006

We continued to screw down the Masonite until it was smooth. We added the tops to the walls and distressed the tops and bottoms of the walls. Students gaff taped the seam on the FOS and faced the SR plug. Kevin and I dropped the scrim lower to the ground by adding longer chain. I also asked the music department about using their chairs and they graciously agreed.

Thursday, November 2, 2006

Today I muslin covered and base painted the three flats for the staircase unit. The set was loaded out to paint the floor and also for the light hang to take place on Friday. The window was placed and hung from the fly rail. The scene painting class painted the floor using a technique I showed them. The refrigerator was also painted to look like wood grain.

Friday, November 3, 2006

I finally finished painting, detailing, and distressing all of the walls. I also cut out the tops for all the rest of the walls. The stage and walls were set for what seemed to be the last time. The slide projector was fixed and the floor and icebox were coated with a clear coat. After the light hang, in which I worked on the set, we had another run thru.

I decided that a mirror should hang on the staircase wall to add more character to the set and also give the actors something else to play with on stage. I noticed that the trash can needs to be distressed, a curtain needs to be added to the kitchen unit, a handle needs to be added to the trap door, the underside of the trap door needs to be painted black and black paint needs to be added around the hinges. There needs to be a flat added to the staircase unit, the FOS and SR plug needs to be painted black, the SR plug must be faced, and the table top needs to be distressed.

Table legs still need to be found, the counter top and drawer situation really needs to be resolved, and the window definitely needs to be dry brushed or painted. The wallpaper excess needs to be removed, sliders need to be added to the two walls that move, and under the staircase itself needs to be faced like the lower part of the walls. I also need to bring down masking on both sides of the stage, add handles to the refrigerator, and I wondered if maybe the rug needed a slit cut in it because of the rug not going back into place.

Saturday, November 4, 2006

The scrim was rigged to open and close and the table was built. We attached and rigged the tops of the walls. A crew rehearsal was scheduled and it didn't go too well. We finally figured out how the pissing contest would work and we need to add a trough of some kind under the backdrop to catch most of the water. The curtain was added to the kitchen unit.

Sunday, November 5, 2006

Today, we had another run thru. Before the run thru, I ran around the Uptown area and took pictures of various houses, looking for one to serve as the Louminauts home. Before the performance, Kevin and I got together and rigged up the water that would serve as the urine during the pissing contest.

While watching the performance, I took notes stating that a curtain needs be added to the back of the kitchen unit, I need to paint the underside of the table, and also hang the chandelier. I also need to make sure that the baseboards and all are secured to the walls. Masking issues surfaced with the staircase unit and on the SR side of the stage. I noticed bleeding from under the FOS due to the trap door light and will take care of that tomorrow.

I felt, while watching the show, that the light was too dim. I need to secure the sticks that controlled the tops of the walls to the wall itself so the wall didn't fall open while the show was in process, and need to move the floor lamp from beside Jeremy's chair to the staircase and treat the black walls on the staircase unit like the tops of the other walls.

Monday, November 6, 2006

The students in shop today put castors on the walls, painted the FOS, including the plugs, black, put up the masking flat on the staircase unit, and painted it like the other walls. We finished the tops of the walls, put a shelf inside the refrigerator, hung the chandelier, and added a mirror to the wall on the staircase unit. The lamp was moved, scrim was fixed, and the areas around the hinges were painted. I ordered the slide today. It should be ready by Wednesday. Kevin, Darcy, and I also experimented with the pyro.

At the first dress rehearsal, later that night, I noticed that we could use a hanging clock instead of a grandfather clock. The underside of the kitchen unit needs to be painted black, the kitchen drawers need to be distressed to look burned, and there needs to be a hook for Geordi to hang his hat on when he arrives home. I need to paint the belts and sticks black that open the walls and stain the kitchen curtain, and paint the edge of the stage and plugs black. I still need to figure out what is going on with the SR masking. I need to check the window and pissing contest components, paint the staircase unit floor and steps the same as the floor, and Jeremy needs a place to hang his jacket. The chandelier needs to be rigged to drop during the explosion, the cords need to be wrapped around one another, and Jeremy's briefcase needs a big L painted on the front in red, white, and blue.

Tuesday, November 7, 2006

Today in shop, I fixed the scrim once and for all. I decided that the scrim would not close at the end of the play. I attached the mirror frame and mirror I found together and placed them both on the wall to create one big, ornate mirror. The chandelier also was rigged to fall when the explosion happened.

During the production meeting, we talked about the stick that was built to hold the hose during the pissing contest, and how it should be removed due to the lack of space. We need to put a backsplash on the window, tell the wall movers to pull low when moving the walls, move the clock to the far SL wall, and put fabric at the back of kitchen unit. The dropping chandelier will not drop after all. Instead it will shake. We still need buttons. Kristie Hagstette is not doing her job as props designer. I am making all of her props, it seems. Kevin needs to find a female Edison connector and I toyed with the idea of finding Victorian lamps.

Later that night, we had our dress rehearsal with show conditions. Jason showed up today. I was nervous about seeing him and having him see the design for his play. It was nerve-racking to have my friend see my design for his show for the first time. He told me that he was impressed and also surprised at how good the set looked. Jason also joked that the set becomes the ninth character of the play. I took that as a compliment.

I noticed that the backsplash needed to be painted, the pulley needs to be oiled to prevent noise, and the under the drawer in the kitchen unit needs to be painted black. I need to talk to Lisa about her sightlines while she is on the staircase unit. The tablecloth needs to be attached to the table, the masking flat needs to be painted and maybe have a top added. I played with the idea of facing the stairs and decided against it. A hole needs to be drilled closer to the edge of the trap

door for easier finding. A piece of wood needs to be added to wall #1 to hold the stick to the wall and I need to look at what is wrong with wall #3.

The preshow line-up was finally determined as follows:

House to half, projection up.

House to black, projection up for a few seconds.

Projection out.

Voice over.

Backlight house.

Lisa enters.

Scrim opens.

Wednesday, November 8, 2006

I am pleased to know that the show is opening tomorrow and I don't have anything that is burdensome hanging over my head. My mood is pretty calm and I am relaxed right now. I am not worried about the set and I know that I am ahead of schedule. However, the slide still hasn't come in but I will be able to pick it up tomorrow.

In shop today, the students helped me clean the lobby and theatre, take away the side seating, paint under the kitchen black, and distress the whole kitchen unit. A piece of wood was added to Amanda's flat and the staircase was painted like the floor, a new hole was drilled in the trap door, and I cut the top of the masking flat to look like the tops of the other walls because I placed the flat in front of the light used as Gramps' window. Right before final dress began, I was notified about Lori's idea for confetti falling at the end during the song, so Kevin rigged that up and I bought confetti.

Later that night, the final dress rehearsal began. The notes I took that would be taken care of the next day in shop included the need to paint the side of the masking flat on the staircase and touch up the black paint. The theatre needs to be painted black and so does the inside of the trap door and the finger hole, too. I need to find something permanent for the projector to sit on, the traveler track needs to be oiled, and I want a 2x4 to be placed around the entire FOS to create a border or frame. The “legs” need to be painted black also.

Thursday, November 9, 2006

This is the day I have been waiting for. It is opening day and I only have a few mundane jobs to do. I did everything on my to-do list from last night’s final dress rehearsal and was completely finished with my set by noon. The secretary in the main office, Mrs. Pat, called me and said that I have a present in the office. I went upstairs, not knowing what to expect and I saw three long stem red roses. My scene design professor from my undergrad, Arkansas Tech, Kate Brugh and her husband, Daniel had sent both Jason and I roses for our accomplishments. I have never felt as proud as I did today. Michelle stayed and painted the entire theatre black. I picked up the slide after finishing up in shop and I returned it back to the theatre and did one last check with Kevin, Lori, and Darcy. I took one final look and went home to get ready for the show tonight. Now I sit and wait for the curtain to go up, literally. My mom, sister, and Carla are on their way down to share this special moment with me. Unfortunately they will miss the show tonight, but they will be here to watch the show tomorrow night. This show means the world to me.

CHAPTER 6

Evaluation of Self, Process, and Conclusion

I am satisfied with the finished product and the path taken to accomplish the design for *Dinner with the Louminauts*. Lori and I had similar ideas about almost every aspect of the show from the very beginning of the process. The time frame in which we had to build the set was 4 weeks. This amount of time seemed to be tight at first, but in the end, the timing couldn't have been better. The build wound up being ahead of schedule. Kevin and I had a flawless relationship, not only as scene designer and technical director, but also as mentor and student. I was also blessed to have the addition of two hard working and inventive shop students, James Jennings and Michelle Thiberville.

I was privileged to be designing the set for the first production of this outrageous and original script. I was also very thrilled because the playwright, Jason Cutler is a dear friend of mine. Both he and I graduated from Arkansas Tech University (he in 2002 and I in 2003), and we attended the University of New Orleans together. I know Jason's writing style, sense of humor, and personality very well and see that they are all intertwined throughout this script.

This entire process was new for everyone involved: designers, the playwright, the director, and actors. Designing a set for the first production of a play was intimidating. I had to focus solely on the script. There were no formal criticisms, no previous productions, and no analyses from which to draw ideas.

Overall, the design and process I experienced was better than I had imaged. However, there are a few circumstances in which I feel that I could have handled the situation better or contributed more as a designer. The main circumstance I feel I should have dealt with differently was the

collaboration and communication between the entire production staff and myself. I trusted the production design team so much that I failed to contact them on a weekly basis, which is something I should have done. If I would have communicated more with the design team then maybe certain issues could have been avoided; Susan Louminauts' dress wouldn't have matched the wallpaper, we wouldn't have had the issues concerning the lack of props, and maybe the lighting designer would've been more professional with the crew. This was an error on my judgment and I have learned that communication is the key for a successful collaboration.

Another area of the design I felt I could have improved on was with the placement of the walls. The director and I had ideas about wanting the set to constantly change so we never really settled on the placement of the walls for each scene. This was a mistake because with the absence of the walls during the first two weeks of rehearsal, the blocking never really took shape and the actors were being lead blindly by the director. Lori never expressed to me the immediate need for the walls to be up and I assumed that everything in rehearsal was going smoothly. Luckily, when the walls finally went into place, the actors maneuvered around the walls with ease. We should have set down early on in the production process and laid out a ground plan for each scene so we would both have an idea of where the walls would be placed.

Another issue we had that proved to be somewhat detrimental was the lack of a stage crew. Lori and I had envisioned the walls moving around, set pieces collapsing, the chandelier falling, confetti, and the scrim opening and closing. Unfortunately, many of these ideas had to be cut because we simply did not have the crewmembers needed to make these actions happen. We exhausted every outlet for recruiting crewmembers and still ended up having only the bare minimum number of people needed to make the performance happen. Sadly, we had to search for and beg students to run the light board and soundboard. We were unable to do the scene shifts as

we wanted, the scrim was not able to be closed at the end of the show, and instead of having all ten of the walls collapse during the explosion, we had to cut the number to four. I do not know what else I could've done to make this better other than compromise the design and that is something I was not willing to do.

When Lori and I first met about the design for this production, we were both very excited about starting this unknown journey and bounced our ideas off one another at a rapid pace. The enthusiasm we both felt made us believe that we could accomplish anything, regardless of what the reality was. We wanted to make every idea work for this design. It seemed that we kept building on and building on the ideas until it became too much. We basically had design idea overload, meaning that we had come up with too many ideas and didn't know when to say when. This overload of ideas and trying to make them come to life did nothing but add stress to both Lori and I. Many of the ideas, such as the moving scenery, floating set pieces, and the grandfather clock were cut in the end. If we were to have settled down a bit and grounded ourselves to what we knew we were capable of, then things could've run smoother for the both of us.

During this process, I also encountered my own moments of doubt, lack of confidence, and uncertainty. I, at times, began to wonder if what I had envisioned for the design: collapsing walls, moving walls, a falling chandelier, an on-stage pissing contest, the façade at the beginning, would ever happen. I felt very overwhelmed at times and had irrevocable feelings that I would not be able to achieve these ideas for the design. One of the most important lessons I learned during this process is that I am able to stand on my own two feet. For the first time, I felt as though I was able to work by myself. Even though I had the guidance of Mr. Griffith, I truly felt in control of myself and of the design.

Even though there were a few issues that could be labeled as “failures” in relation to this design, I do have my share of “successes.” The first idea that I deem a success would be the transformation of the thrust stage into a false proscenium stage. The seating of the thrust theater proved to be a problem due to the sightline issues with the walls of the set. By eliminating the seating on both sides of the stage and moving the seating to the extension of the thrust theatre, we were able to accomplish the look we were going for without compromising the design. If we had placed the set on the extension of the thrust, the walls would have needed to be shorter, the angles of the walls would have been very awkward, and the design would have overall suffered. I feel this choice benefited the production greatly.

Another issue that I felt went well was the explosion of the Louminaut home. I knew from the beginning of the design process, that I actually wanted the walls to collapse. Many ideas were talked about in how we could realize this: false corners, hanging the walls from rope or airline cable, placing the walls on hinges, and even making the walls out of fabric. The idea we settled on was to literally cut the walls in half and hinge the two pieces together. When the explosion took place, the top pieces would be released and fall forward to simulate the explosion. Combined with the lighting and sound effects of the explosion, the collapsing walls added realistic elements to this script and caught the audience by surprise.

The idea of the façade and having the projection of the beautiful St. Charles mansion is another idea I deem a success. By transforming the stage from a thrust to a proscenium stage, it allowed us to use the traveler and by doing so, we would be able to keep the majority of the set secret until the show began. The audience saw the faint projection of the St. Charles home and when the show started, the scrim was take away to show the decay on the inside of this magnificent home. The façade was a metaphor used throughout the process and the production.

The last idea I feel was a success was the “pissing contest.” Even though the time leading up to the final decision on the location of the “pissing contest” was far from successful, I feel that the final execution of the contest and location proved to be very successful for the production. It added to the comedy and absurdity of the script. By placing the scene CS, the actors were able to manipulate the pressure of the streams and play with the audience reactions. This scene is a perfect example of how the collaboration process works.

Through all of my failures and successes, I believe in the end, this show was a success. Looking back at my time spent at UNO, I couldn’t have asked for anything more. I was given chances and had opportunities that many young designers who are pursuing their graduate degree, do not get. I had the honor of designing a main stage production in my first year as a graduate student. I felt blessed to have the faculty and students at UNO put that much faith in me, not only as a designer, student, and peer, but also as a person.

It is due to this environment that I chose to return to UNO after Hurricane Katrina. Even though my home was lost in the storm, I couldn’t have left my new home, that being the theatre department. If I had made the decision to leave, I wouldn’t have only left the school or this city, but I would’ve abandoned it as well. I would’ve given up not only irreplaceable memories and experiences, but also would’ve given up on the family I made while at UNO.

Since I was a young child, I always worked exceptionally well with hands on projects and inventing creative solutions to problems. “Stage designers, like musicians, are born, not made. One is aware of atmospheres or one isn’t, just as one has a musical ear or one hasn’t” (Jones, 70). It is during the time spent at school that a certain part of you is unlocked; the eye of a designer. I once heard someone say that graduate school is when you strip yourself of everything you learned as an undergraduate and start your whole process anew. I believe this to be true because graduate

school is a time when you build yourself up and find your own path as an artist. From that, you will develop your own style of artistry.

I have always felt challenged to do my best while at UNO, and I believe that I have risen up and beyond the challenges presented to me. It is because of those challenges that I am who I am today. In order to better myself, I push myself further. The best gift that Kevin has given me is the confidence to do what I want to do. He has said to me on many occasions, "I am not trying to make cookie cutter versions of Kevin; I am pushing you to find your own style of design." I take those words seriously and that phrase drives me to do my best at being me, and representing who I am as a designer/artist/person.

In conclusion, I feel I have developed the skills necessary for a young scene designer to begin her career. There were many amazing opportunities and honors presented to me during my time here at UNO. The knowledge that I will take with me is irreplaceable. This knowledge is not limited to what I learned in the area of theatre, but also what I learned about myself. The experiences I had while at UNO will never be forgotten. I feel I earned a valuable education while attending this institution and I now have a better understanding of the world of the theatre and most importantly, of myself.

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Appendix A



What about fabric?
for house...





Good image
of decay





— smoke
damage



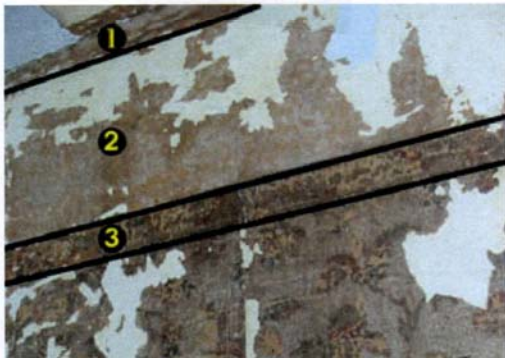
Charred - nice image!



ripped
wall
paper



exposed
boards







Aged
wallpaper





Interior
set up





✓
oak victorian
ice box



F657B Two Door Oak Ice Box use these dimensions*

This ice box has it's original manufacture label that reads: 'Shirk Cork Filled - Shirk Refrigerator Company - Chicago, U.S.A.' The ice box is a two door ice box that measures 29" wide, 56" high, and is 21" deep to the front of the hardware, the cabinet portion of the ice box is only 19 1/2" deep. Has nice paneled sides on this all original oak ice box. - **SOLD**

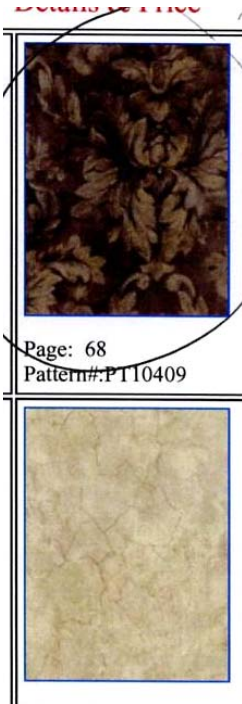


'Monitor top'
electric compression
domestic refrigerator
- circa 1934



Like the
no wall
paper or
panels

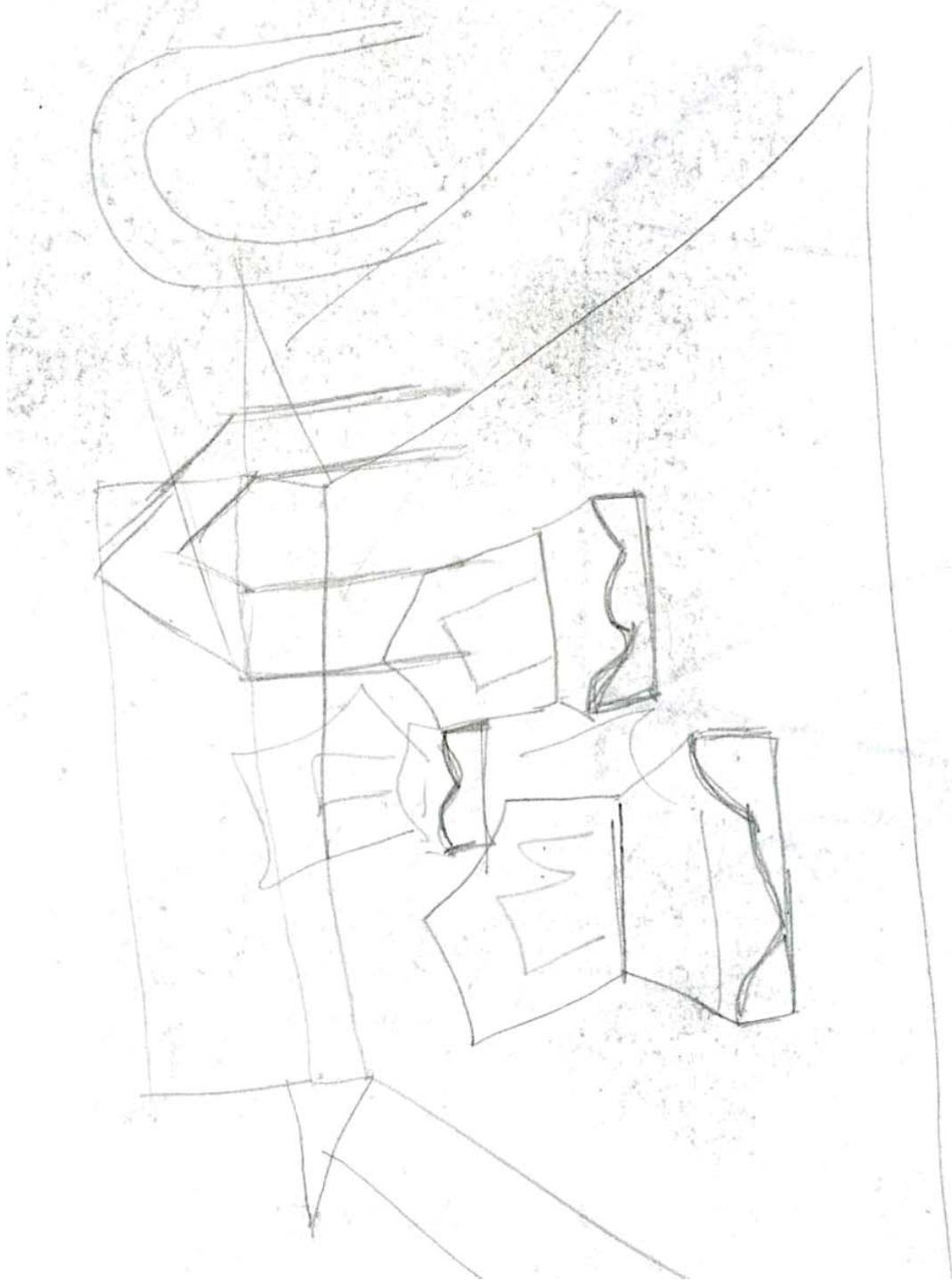
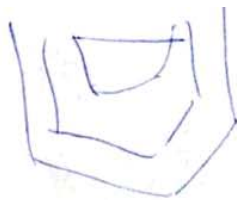






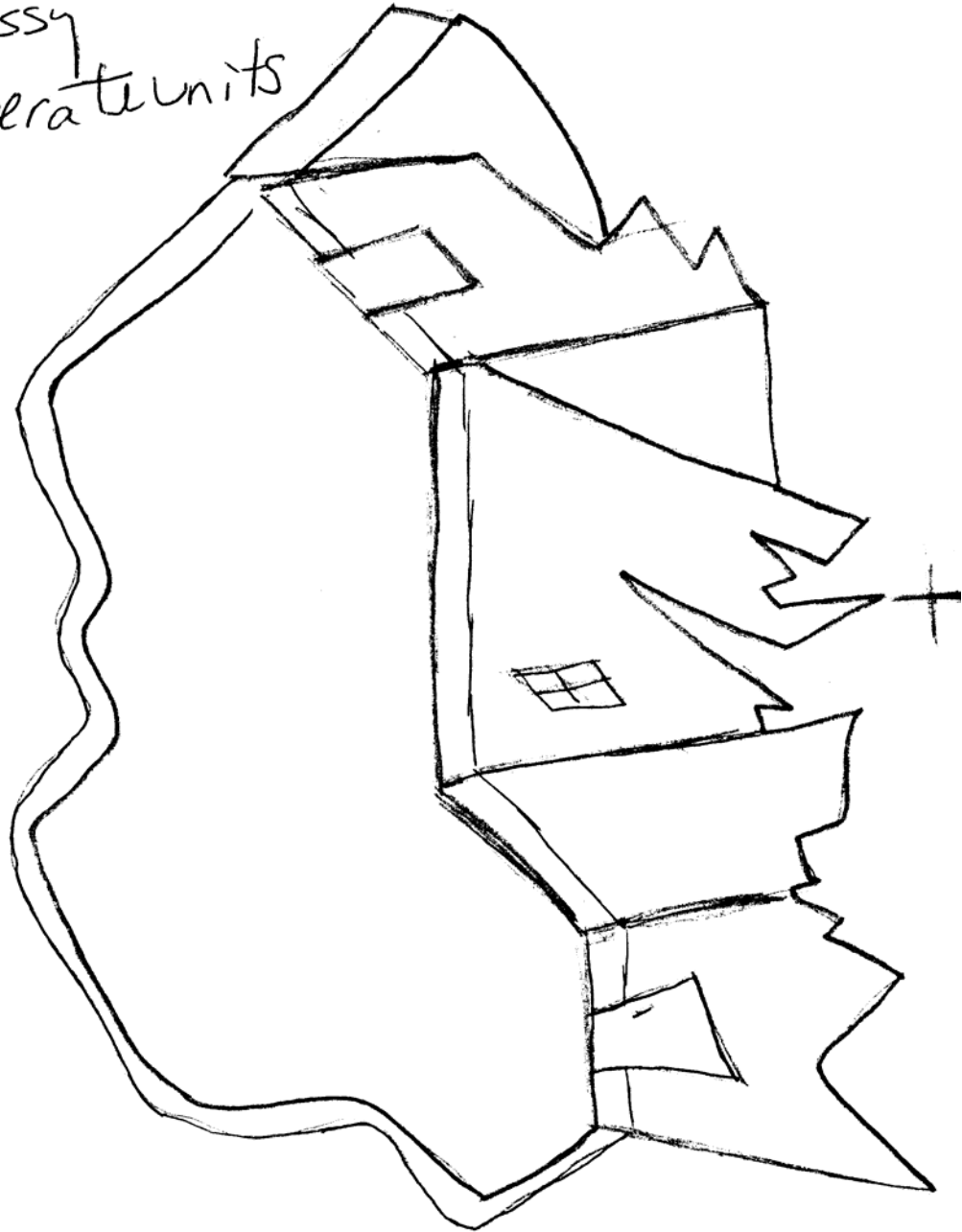
Appendix B

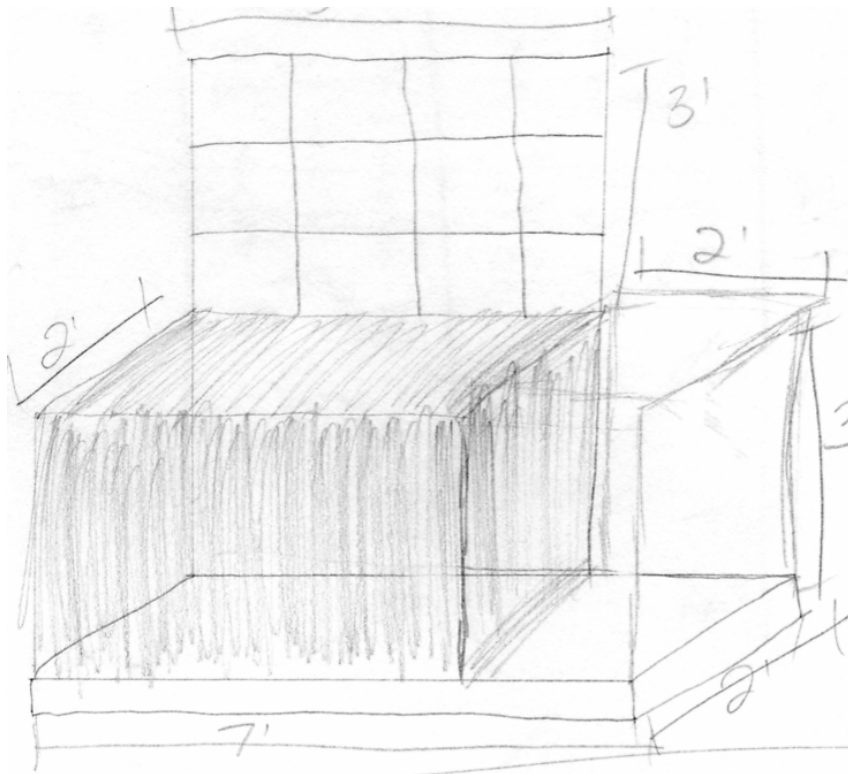




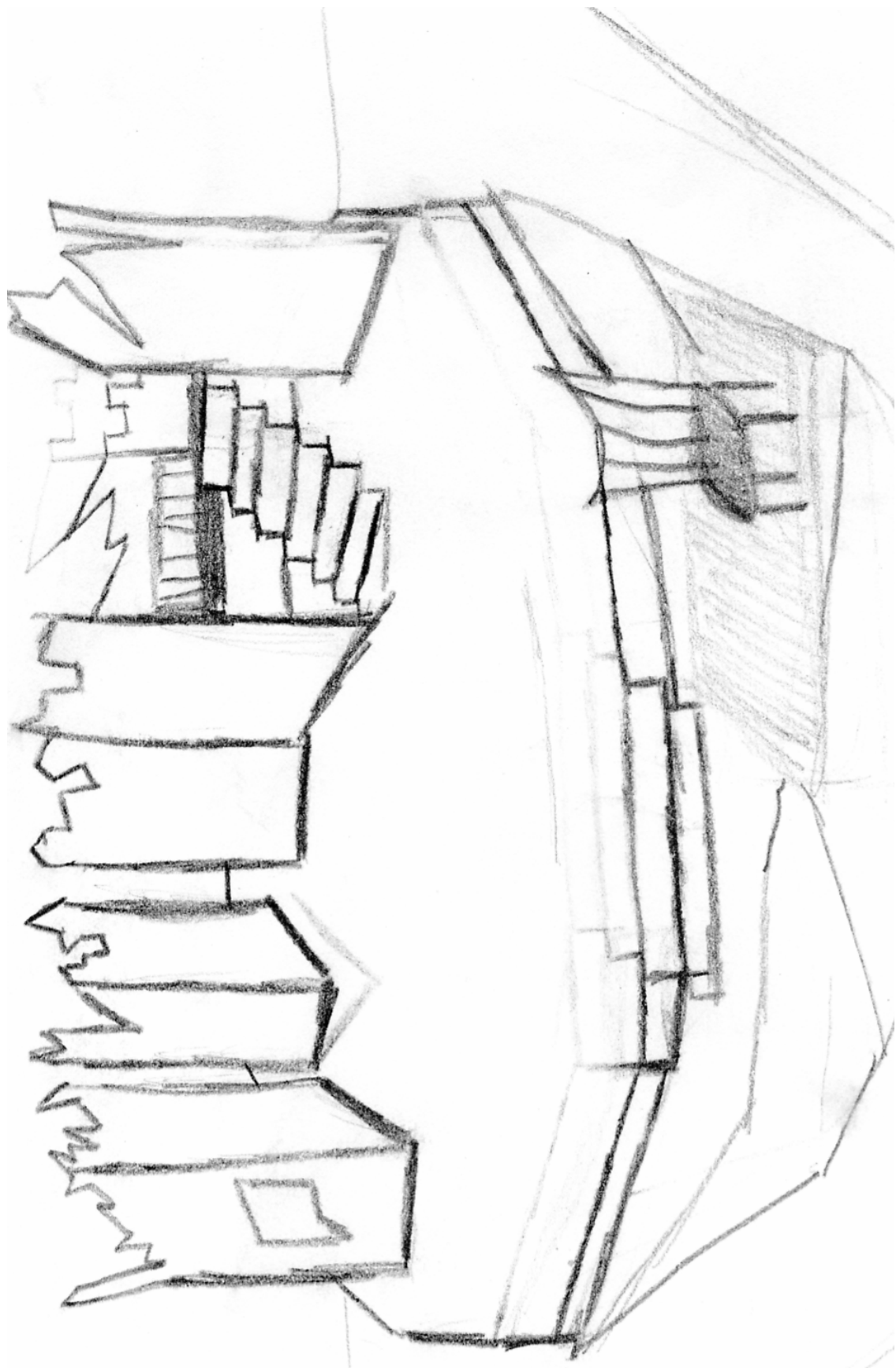
fun house
broken
dirty
messy
3 separate units

French doors to porch



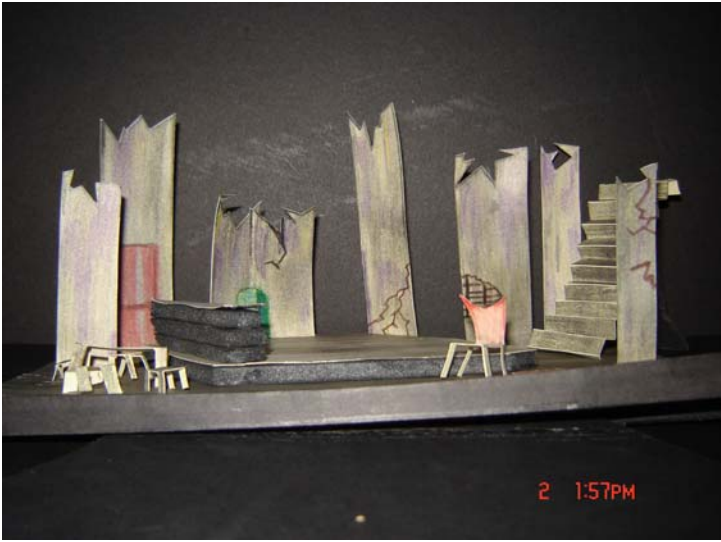


chair plus ottoman
fridge
tables
extra chairs
outside of kitchen unit





Model #1



Model #2

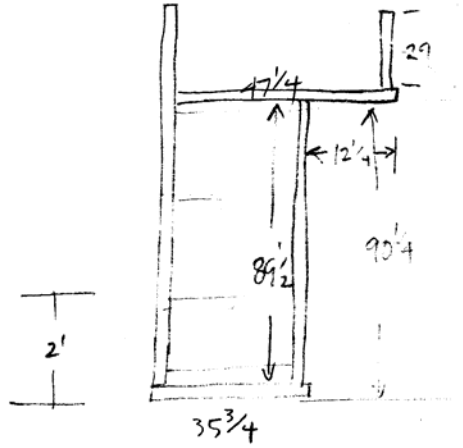


Model #3

Appendix C

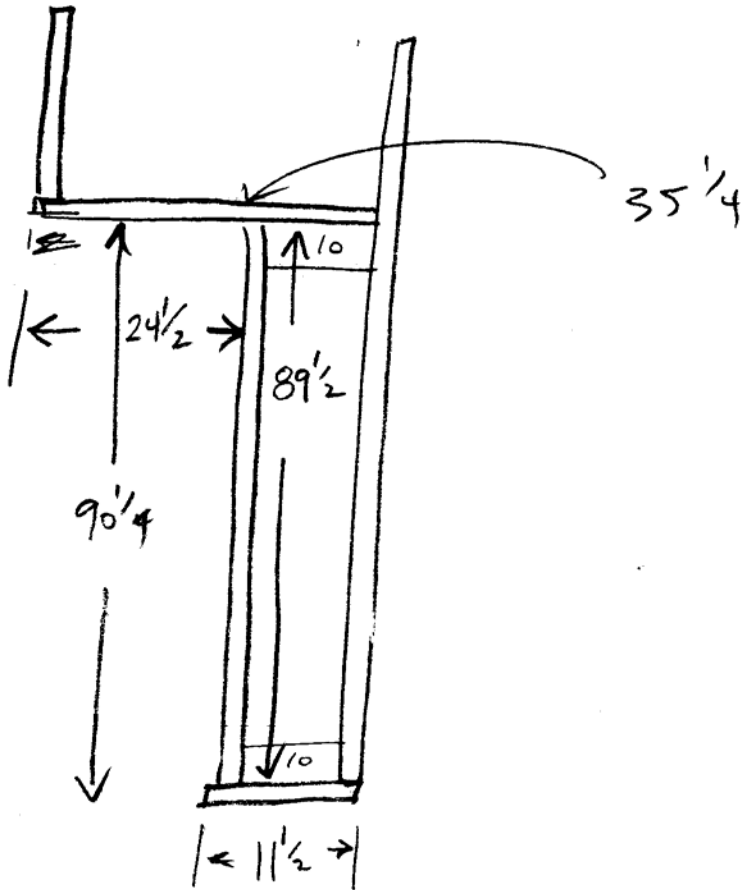
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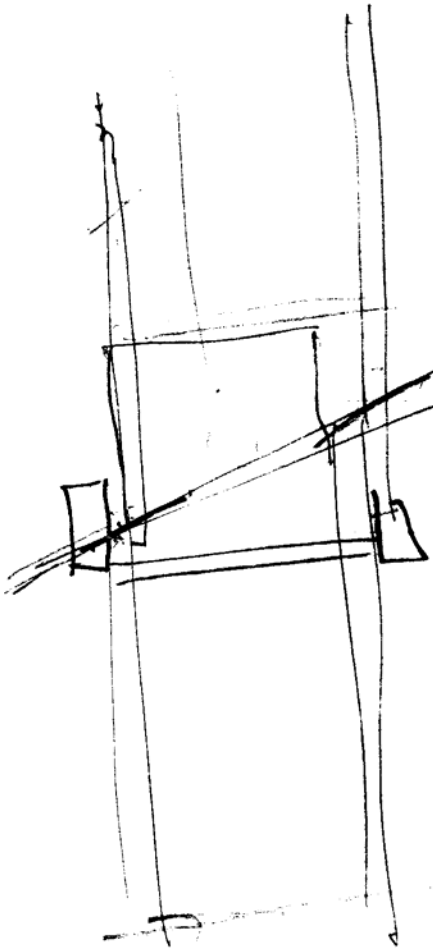
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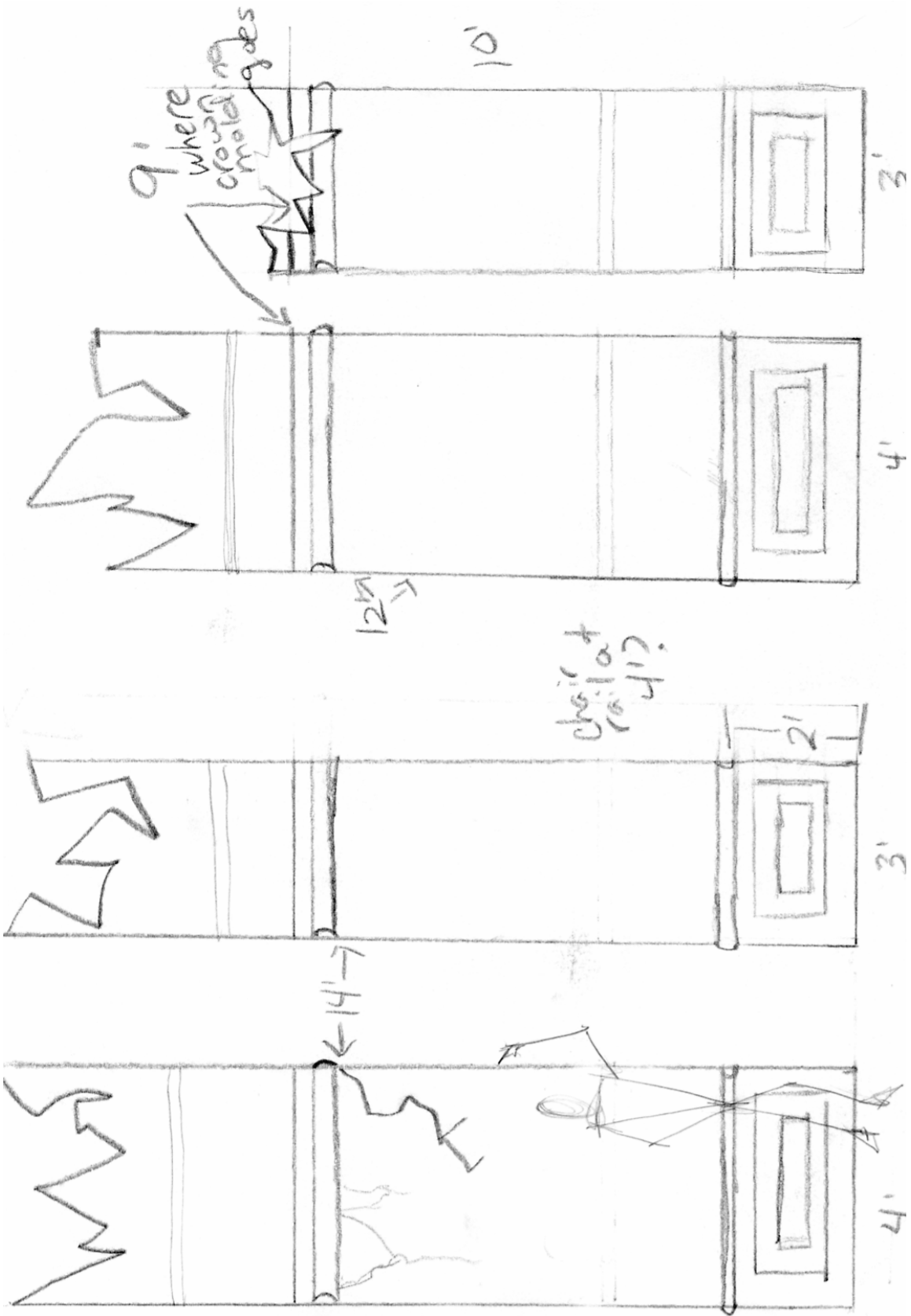
- | | | |
|----------|---|------------|
| | ① | 89 1/2 ✓ |
| Ht. side | ① | 120 ✓ |
| | ① | 47 1/4 ✓ |
| Bottom | ① | 35 3/4 ✓ |
| | ① | 29 ✓ |
| chds | ④ | 34 1/4 /// |

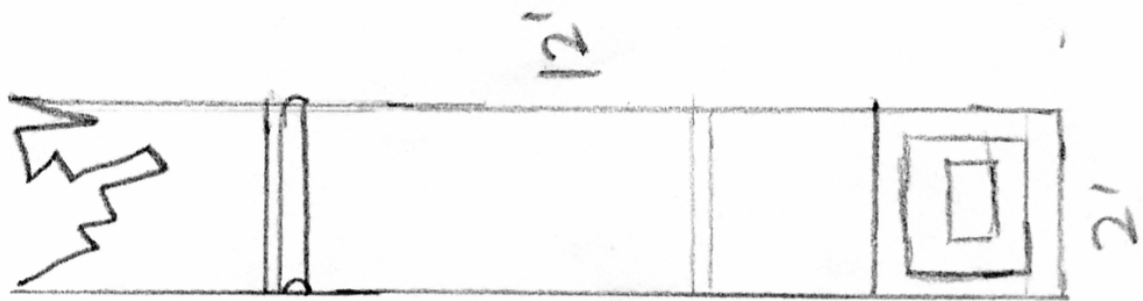
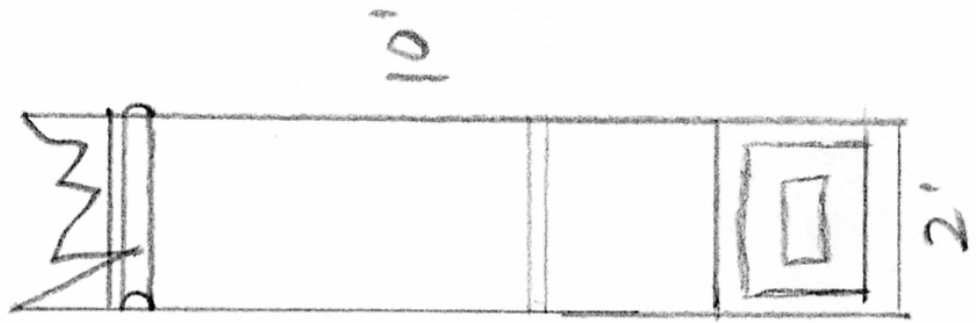
#8

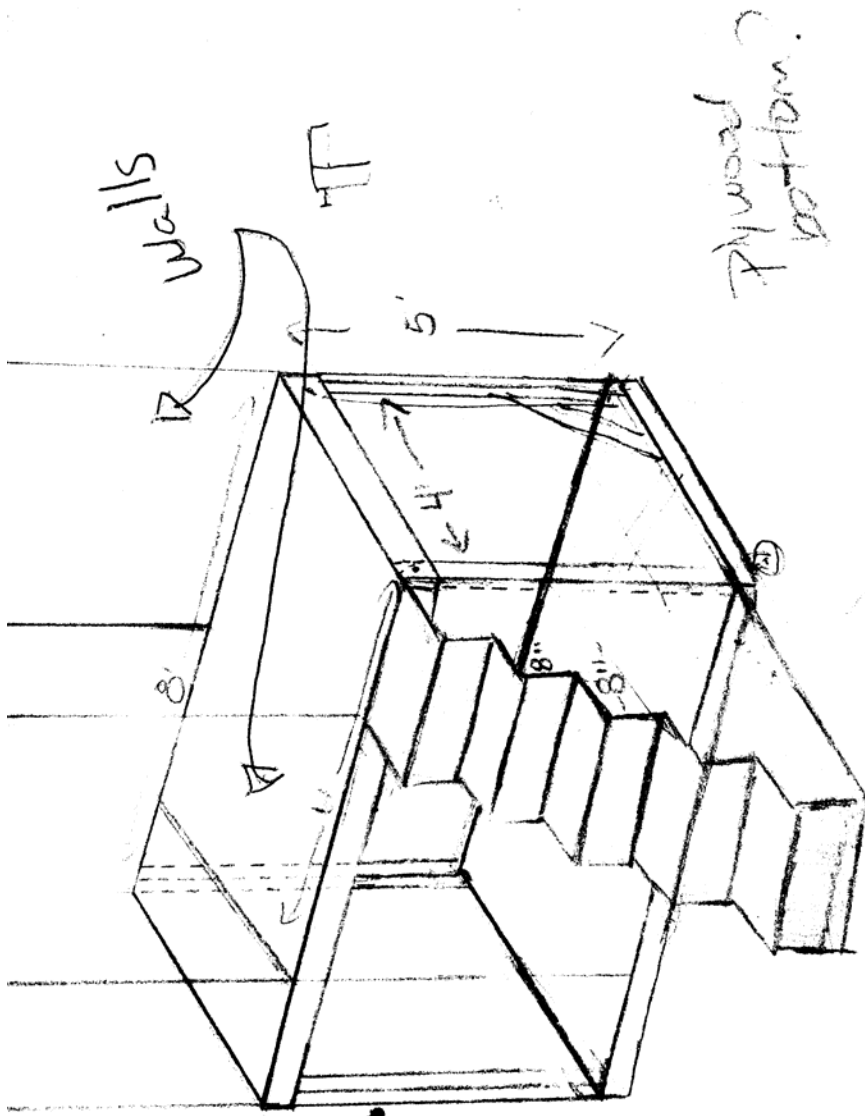




idea of how to
Attach
tops of
walls







3 1/8
LEGS.

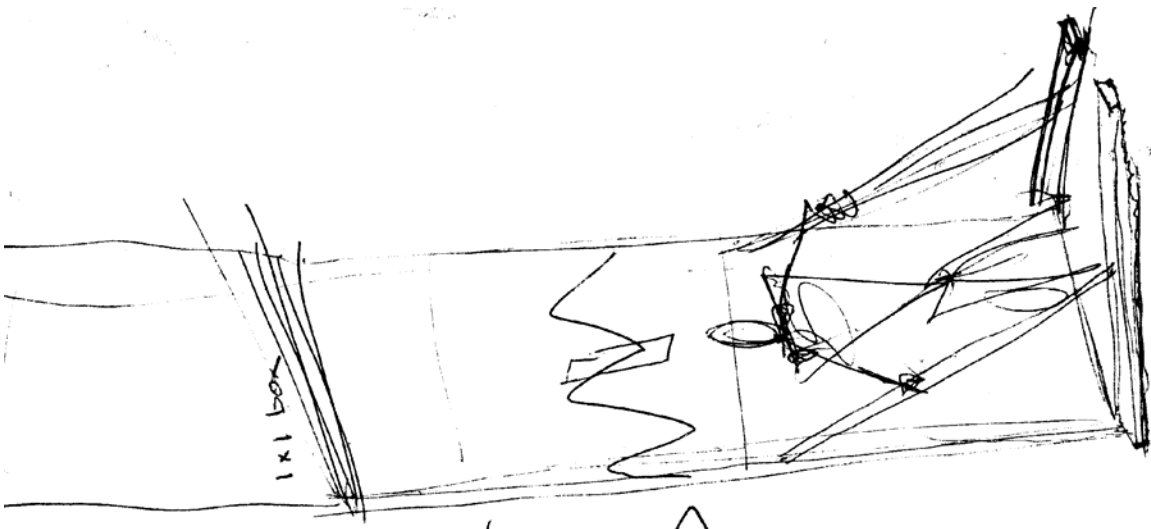
4x4 or
4x6

4x4 Actor
Space
or 6x4?

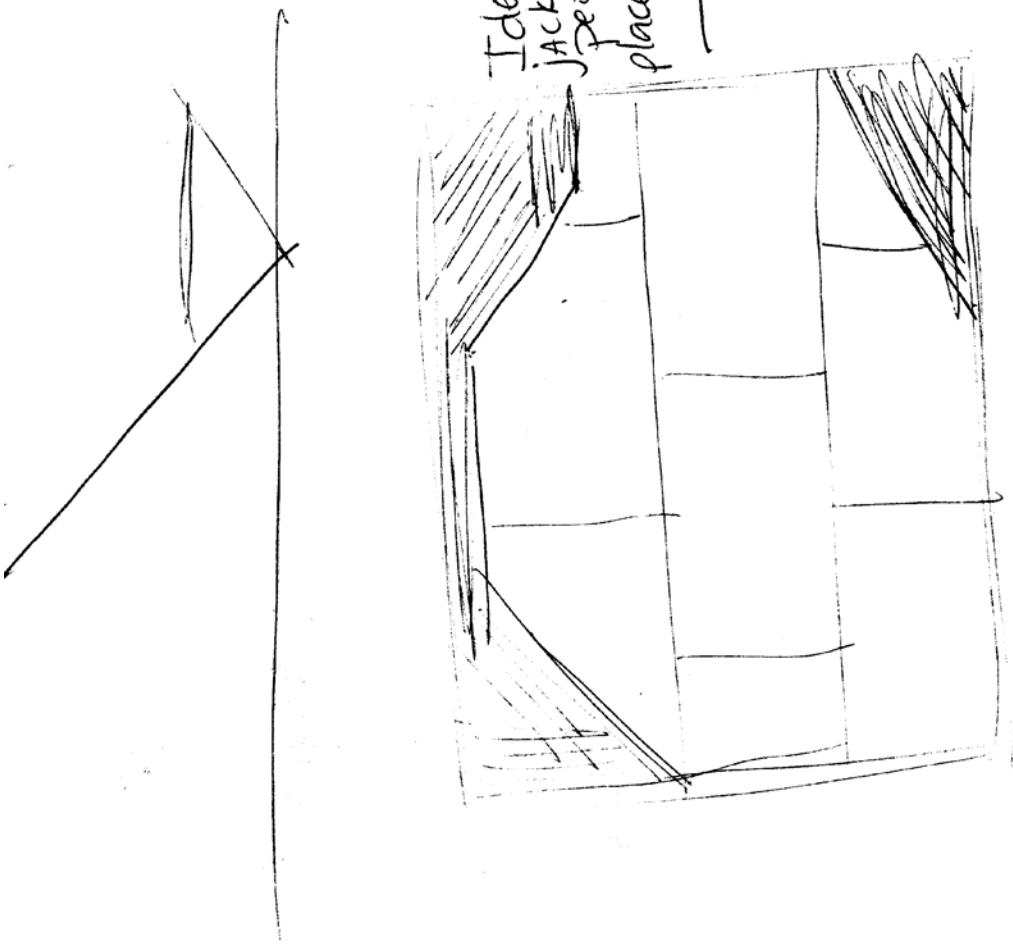
1/2" = 1'

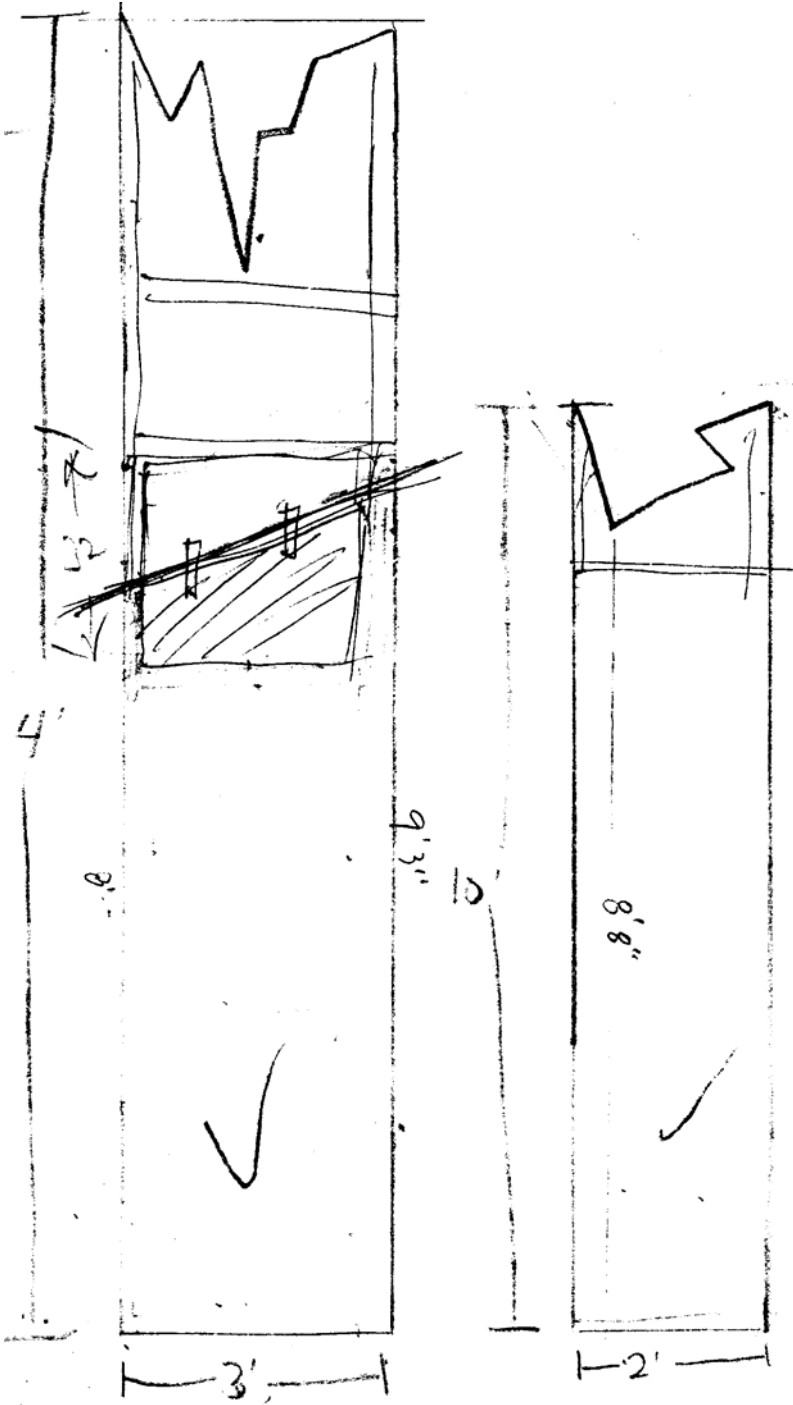
fabric on audience side of staircase
places for people to hide & pop out from
Maybe a round whole unit??

JCOOK



Idea for
jack +
people
placement

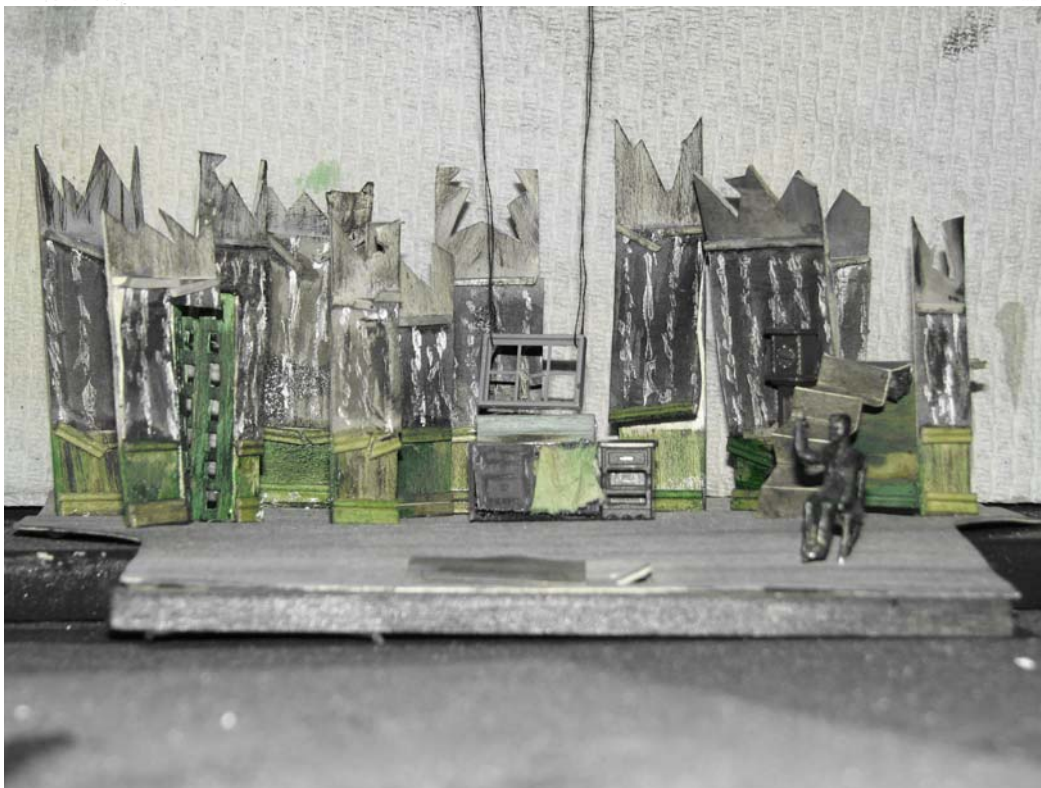
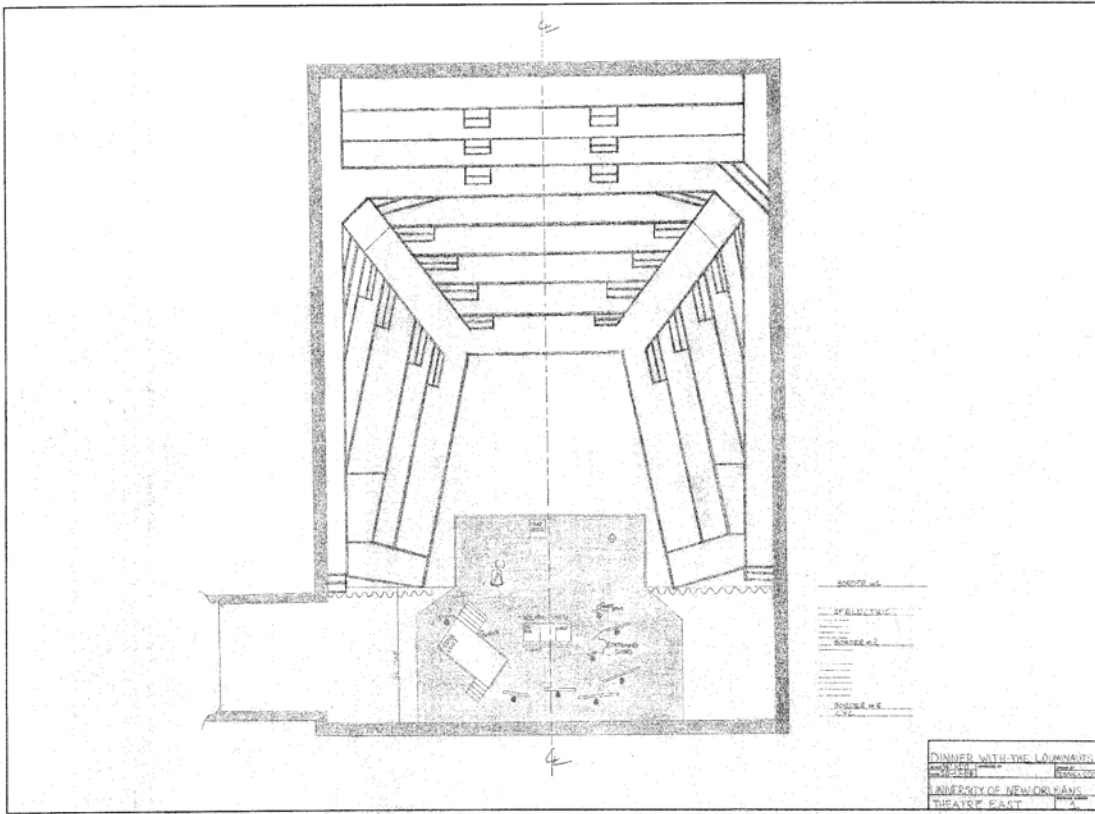




- ① 8' (8'6")
- ① 9'3" (9'9")
- ① 36"
- ④ 34 1/2"

- ② 120"
- ① 24"
- ④ 22 1/2"

Appendix D



Appendix E









CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE # 570-088 100% RUSH 200% RUSH

DIGITAL

- CD ENCLOSED STUDIOMASTER FOLDERS
 FTP IWS OTHER

C-41 PRINT FILM

- DEVELOP FILM ONLY DEVELOP FILM & PRINT
 DEVELOP FILM & CONTACT 3 1/2 X 5 4 X 5 5 X 5 5 X 7 8 X 10
TOTAL ROLLS _____ FILM SIZE 120 220 135 4 X 5
ENCLOSED _____

E-6 TRANSPARENCY FILM

- DEVELOP FILM & MOUNT IMPRINT

TOTAL NUMBER OF PRINTS ORDERED PER PRINT SIZE

2 1/2 X 3 1/2	3 1/2 X 5	4 X 5	5 X 5	5 X 7	8 X 10	11 X 14	16 X 20	20 X 24	OTHER
		1							slide

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

1 - Slide from image

Cook 383

*Print 1-4x6
(crop out date)
& straighten
& make slide*

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Appendix F











Appendix G

J. Cook

FTCA 1110-002

22 November 2006

Dinner with the Louminauts Design

- italics not underline

The six elements of design worked extremely well together within the set design of the play Dinner with the Louminauts. The designs of the walls within the Louminaut house were balanced with each other. They were divided in sections, but the walls provided enough closure for the audience to realize the difference between indoors and outdoors. The element of dominance was shown clearly when the backyard scenes were occurring through the window's frame. Also, the design principle of movement also took place in this same area. The frame from the window allowed the audience to focus their attention to that single area. The set was proportional. The walls, windows, and stairs were all high enough to seem like a real house. The set was unified through its colors and shapes. Everything seemed to flow into each other. It seemed like what ever was on the set belonged up there. Finally, the economy of the set was perfect. It seemed like the designer knew what she was doing and got her point across. There were not that many wall panels, but there was just enough to realize where the play was taking place. Overall, the set was astounding but subtle at the same time, and it did not distract the audience from the actors' performances.

- How?

- How?

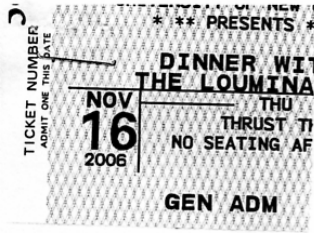
- How?

You should justify your reasonings more. I would like to know how ~~you~~ thought everything worked.

This play is a comedy that only gets better through out its course. I enjoyed the set immensely. The set was well balanced and created a comfortable environment for the performers as well as the audience. The plantation sheet which faded as the lights dimmed to begin the show into the interior set was blended well creating movement and a flow towards the introduction. I felt that the interior of the house complemented the clothing attire and gave me a sense of time of when the play may have taken place. On the other hand, I believe that the interior lacked a variety of colors ^{-why?} which could have made the set even more appealing. In my opinion, despite the set being balanced, there was no dominant organization apparent. Besides the rug and chair, the stage was pretty wide open. Conversely, economy also exists within this opinion. The open space of the set keeps the set calm and not too busy with furniture etc. delivering more movement to the play. With the alley/basement hidden under the rug, there was an extended stretch to the set which I felt complemented and added size to the stage. I also approved of the use of the walls which erupted with the explosions emphasizing the significance of the scene. However, I felt that the bedroom where the grandfather sleeps is just a little too cramped ^{why} affecting the stage's proportion just by evaluating the size from my view. This took away from the overall unity of the set design as well. ^{-why?}

good -

Overall pretty good
I would have liked for
you to explain yourself more on
why you thought these things



Dinner With the Luminauts

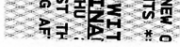
The set design of this play was very interesting and different. The six principles of design, dominance, balance, unity, proportion, movement, and economy, were displayed very clearly and worked together in an organized way.

1. **Dominance.** There were no parts of the set that were overly dominant over the others. There was a chair on each side of the set with a kitchen set up in the middle, so not part was over powering. A very dominant moment in the play was when Mr. Luminaut pressed the red button and blew up the neighbor's house. The flare coming from the right side of the stage drew the audience's attention that way.
2. **Balance.** The scene was very well balanced. Everything on the set was very evenly spread out. Before the families ate dinner together the scene was balanced with chairs on each side of the stage, but when the table was brought in on the left side of the stage, it was balanced on the right by having several smaller tables on that side. Also, all of the columns that represented the walls were very balanced and went together nicely with the differences in height and the way they were spread out.
3. **Unity.** The unity of the set was also very fitting. Everything from the smallest items in the set to the wardrobe of the characters looked as though it belonged together. The Victorian-style chair complemented the antique looking mirror

that hung on the wall. Nothing looked out of place. The whole set had an antique feeling.

4. Proportion. Everything was fairly well proportioned except for the location of Gramps' room. I think that the room could have been set a little bit higher up in the scene because it was in an awkward ^{- How?} position. Everything else was very well proportioned.
5. Movement. The movement within the scenes was very smooth. There were not any confusing elements of the set design, and everything worked well together.
6. Economy. The furniture within the scene was very minimal so it did not draw the viewer's attention away from the action. If there had been more items in the scene, it would have looked cluttered, and the set would have been dominant over the action.

Very Good job explaining
your thoughts.



Dinner with the Louminauts

- "plays it"

The play sets of the interior possesses distinction that obviously points out where the kitchen is—center stage—the way up stairs—stage right—and exits to the backyard—stage left through the glass doors and around the kitchen counter behind the hung window. The pale saturation of the walls make the interior appear old and worn out. Such a choice of color for every set piece could make the whole set appear quite flat. However, instead of making it all perpendicular to the audiences view—creating a 2-D effect—they are angled differently to create a 3-D and more believable interior.

- good observation

- good

On the other hand, dominance is greatly accomplished in the beginning of the play with the light illusion of mansion's exterior. I could not help but notice it. Reason is the psychological closer created automatically catches the viewers' attention and focus.

The visual weight is kept well balanced in the play. Although the pale saturation and old interior with jagged tops suggest a level of madness and filth, the large structures on opposite sides of each other contain enough visual weight to be balanced. Making them the basic structure of the mansion, it is filled in between with added thin walls, kitchen, and a window to complete the interior design while still being balanced.

good

The sets proportional sizes to each other and the actors are clever. I like the idea of some of the set walls more in the foreground are actually thin and long to suggest that they live in a large space to the actors' sizes. And the jagged tops not only suggest insanity—well definitely not calmness or tranquility—but also a level of psychological closer indicating there is more of this disastrous home upstairs. Moreover, the length of

good

the set pieces are better off being relatively the same height to keep a lateral balance in order. ^{good}

The set is well designed to go together with its separate pieces and the actors. The overall balance, color, and position of the set pieces as I mentioned above work well together to create a nice living space for the actors to freely move about. In addition, the texture of the torn and old looking sets with their jagged tops reflects the personality of the characters themselves. Particularly, the Louminaut family, considering it's their home, because they blend in with the houses message: I'm a messed up house filled with disgusting displays, and I'm a poor excuse for a mansion. ^{-good}

However, I find certain details to interfere or can be improved with the overall set.

<sup>4 were
3 tears -
t painted</sup>

Texture-wise, I believe instead of actually painting the tares in for the walls, there could have been actual implanted tares. Furthermore, the very back walls behind the kitchen are designed poorly for certain reasons. One, I hate the fact that they move a lot in the play.

Walls are not supposed to move unless it is a magical house or the director was setting up ^{-good justification} for another scene. However, in this case, they should have been stationary. Secondly, I would have preferred it to be together as one. ^{-why?} Thirdly, the walls are in the way of the window's view, which doesn't make any sense to me. It's supposed to give the illusion or idea that the audience and actors are looking outside. And seeing a piece of an interior wall conflicts with that field of depth and psychological closer. I just don't like it.

Very good job. Good justifications + good observations. I feel that you have a good eye for design.

60

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* ** PRESENTS *

DINNER WITH
THE LOUMINANTS

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GEN ADM

Dinner with the Luminants *- put in italics*

As I walked to my seat about four rows from the front of the stage, I looked upon a sheer backdrop of the perfect picture of an old southern home. The house was huge and plantation style right down to the white coat of paint but it had a dark shadow over it. I wasn't sure if it was signifying night time or a foreshadowing of what was to come.

The sheer silhouette raised and revealed the drab, run down interior of the Luminant home. What I noticed the most about the set was that not one of the walls in the home seemed to meet. Every wall was just a tall jagged dull colored petition, capable of being moved around and seeming flimsy enough to be blown or kicked down. Even the mirror on the wall was crooked and tarnished. Much of the set paralleled the personality *How?* of the family. There was no couch, just two chairs, which is odd of a family home because a couch has a Good. sence of togetherness. The two chairs were even dysfunctional, one was ragged like the inside of the house and the other was clean and well kept like the outside of the house.

The Luminant's tried to give the appearance of a refined and perfect family but the scene design showed their true colors. The dinner table had a weird oblong shape and mismatch table legs. The eating utensils were paper plates and plastic forks. Nothing seemed permanent, well kept or put together. The only picture of perfection was the outer appearance of the house which had a black shadow cast over it.

*You are off to a good start. I would like to have you go more in depth about the set.
Good job.*

Principles of Design Paper "Dinner with the Luminants"

The set design for "Dinner with the Luminants" is one of the most unique I have ever seen. I did not understand the set design right away, but putting my initial reaction to it aside, I considered the principles of design and it all began to come together.

The first thing I considered was the balance of the set. It seemed to be well balanced overall. The placement of the dinner table and the chairs in the family room created a well-balanced living room area. The stairs in the background created the illusion that the house was larger than what was visible. The walls sort of held the whole house together with a sense of balance as well. As my eyes moved from from the interior of the house to the exterior, I noticed that the walls were evenly placed on both sides of the stage. The balance of the house made it easier to move my eyes around the set.

Taking into the consideration the balance of the set, I noticed that the set had a sense of movement. Beginning with the choppy and jagged edges of what seemed to be the roof of the house, my eyes sort of moved with ease into the interior of the house. The placement of the furniture created somewhat of a flow from one part to another, making it easy to move my eyes around the set.

I had some difficulty figuring out the dominance of the set. My eyes wandered around many parts of the set and many things stood out to me. Two things stood out more than everything else. First, the walls of the house. The jagged edges of the roof and height of the walls caught my attention a number of times throughout the play. But more than that, I kept looking towards the window. More so when the action was moved to outside the house, but even when the action was going on inside. The window was large and

seemed to be placed directly in the middle of the set. If I had to pick the most dominant part of the set, I would have to pick the window.

When it comes to unity, I found that my eyes did not have to make an uncomfortable jump from one part of the set to another. The placement of the props between one more dominating prop to another created somewhat of an easy path to follow. For example, when the action moved from the dinner table to the living room, my eyes made the journey from the table to the living room area easily because of the prop that were placed in between.

The proportion of the set was very much in balance in my opinion. The use of large objects and small objects to create some balance seemed greatly thought out. In particular, I noticed that the tall walls of the house in comparison to the people in the house create the image that the house was large. It also helped to communicate that this was an upper class family home.

The economy of the set was a bit confusing for me. When I think of the definition of economy, I could easily say that the set contained more than what was necessary to get the point across. But when I dig deeper into the definition and consider the play, I can see that even some of the smaller things were greatly significant to the story.

Before seeing this play and considering the principles of design while viewing it, I really didn't understand how to consider the principles of design or apply them. Now I find myself taking them into consideration in other situations. Learning them and how to apply them has really changed the way I view things in many different ways.

Great job. You fully explained yourself. Very well done. I am also happy that you learned something from this assignment!

11-20-06

The set for the play overall did a fair job in relation to the principles of design. The set was very complex, and was

like an actual home because of placement of different parts. The dominant theme in the set seemed to be the wall panels. They were just

the first thing that stood out because they surrounded the stage. And simply put, no walls equals no house. That leads into the unity of the

set. For the theme of the play, everything in the set just tied in together from the living room to Gramps' room to the kitchen.

I believe this principle of unity was conveyed stronger than any other from looking at this set.

As far as the economy of the set there were not too many things that could have been taken out without the set having an

important piece missing. The only thing I thought were unnecessary were maybe a couple of wall panels because the set just seemed

suffocating. I thought that the set could do without maybe two panels just to make the house seem a little more open. Overall everything

else in the set seemed to me to be really important.

For movement yes there was movement when the set changed! But seriously, yes movement was presented well in this set also.

This is because at least to me when my eyes grazed the set, I felt like I was walking through an actual house. Everything on the set seemed

to be in great placement, which in turn when you look over the set you feel like you're walking into your home or a friend's home. That is

my opinion on the movement of the set.

Finally, proportion and balance were the most weakly conveyed principles on the set. For balance, the main problem I had was

that everything else in the house seemed so big, but the living room was small in comparison. There was too much empty space in my opinion

and that could have been fixed with moving the chairs or maybe adding something in the middle of the room to make it more comparable to

the rest of the house. And the wall panels are the main issue in dealing with proportion. They just seemed to overpower the rest of the home.

I think the panels could have been a little smaller because they seemed to be a little too dominant of the living room and the kitchen.

Overall, the set was really well done. Other than the issues of proportion and balance, the set did a really nice job in conveying

Page 1

Untitled

the rest of the principles of design. Like I said, the only problems with the set were not too major and could mostly be put on the wall

panel size. Other than that, the set was really great and the play was pretty good as well in my opinion, but that's a different topic.

You did a nice job explaining
your reasonings. Very thorough!
Great Job!

Dinner with the Lominates

- Put name of play in italics

This play was written and made by Jason Cutler. The play was supposedly a metaphor for the present state that we live in. Overall, I didn't quite truly understand all of it. The humorous parts really weren't that funny to me. It jreally just looked like mass confusion the whole time. One thing I did enjoy was the set.

glitter? The set was designed to resemble the inside of a two story house. I liked the glittered walls and rigid tops of the backgrounds. The really interesting thing about these was that they could break at the top, to impose lighting or chaos in the scene. Theses were placed all over to emphasize different rooms. This design really worked because you would see the actors and actresses enter from all different sides of the walls. This made easy to believe that the front door was behind one of them.

The window was another interesting thing. It was hung down onto the set to separate outside and inside. This was designed totally open which really made you feel like the characters were outside. It was placed right above the kitchen in a spot that windows usually would fall. This helped the focus of the play. You could pay attention to the wives inside, but also pay attention to the husbands outside smoking.

One of my favorite set designs was the staircase that was suppose to be a second story. This was really cool because it made you really think that it was an actual upstairs

of a house. The way it did this was by blocking behind the door, so you really felt like it was the actor's room.

I honestly thought the set design was great in the play but, the play itself, could have used a more visually way of explaining things.

Overall good job. But what about the 6 elements I wanted you to write about?
Good job of explaining yourself + reasoning)

The set design in the play Dinner With the Louminauts is very reflective of the Louminauts' duality. They praise themselves and their name almost to the point of boredom and there surroundings do them no such justice. The walls are falling apart, the mirror is broken (with I thought would be the only piece of the house well kept and shiny), they cook with a microwave, and have only one piece of decent furniture, yet they believe themselves to be kings in a castle.

good observation

I believe the set was made the way it was to represent what the Louminauts really are inside. There characters represent the superficial egotism all of them have (except Gramps) and the walls that surround them, which are rotten and dilapidated, represent the real Louminaut family. This could reflect the way the family treats Gramps, or there guests, or the way the son turns on his lover as soon and his family coming into play. The Louminauts don't really care what the Bunson's think or do. The dinner is more a routine of "class" rather than an enjoyable evening. The color of the "food" in the play was also the same color of the paint on the walls. The Bunson's ~~severed~~^{served} green food and the Louminauts severed brownish red. I don't know if this was a coincidence or if it was implied, because there was a green stripe in the middle of the wall surrounded by the brownish red. Could this mean the Bunson's felt overcome and surrounded by the Louminauts, if so bravo.

good observation
AGAIN!

The Louminauts defended what was theirs and nothing else could be as great or right as them. I think this is the reason for the jaggedness of the set. The

wall's came to points and the tops of the walls were very sharp almost like the ^u horns the Louminauts wear on their heads. The sharpness of the tops of the walls represent how dangerous this family can The Louminauts are not just talk, they will take action even if it means blowing your house to smithereens.

The set designer (cough) used the offstage space very well in my opinion. We could see the Bunson's approach the front door and see Mr. Bunson try to storm out after being insulted one to many times by Mr. Louminaut. Keeping the dinner table offstage until it was necessary also kept things uncluttered and clean. I didn't fully understand the sliding walls in the back. I know it was an exit onto a porch or backyard, but the way they moved was a little uneasy. They did suggest French doors for a moment, which I think would be a great idea. Gramps was also kept upstairs and kind of in a corner all his own to symbolize his dislocation, mental and physical distance that he has from the family.

good -

This was a great design for a play with difficult blocking and action. The characters actions and motives could easily be distinguished and keeping sightlines open for the pissing contest was very important and well achieved. The only issue I had with the sightlines was that I could see Gramps reading his lines backstage at the beginning of the play (I was seating extreme up stage left). Good job Jessica I was really impressed.

can't
leave he-
id that!

Good Job Montana! I Am impressed with your paper. You had good observations about how the set fit with the theme of the play. Good eye.

VITA

Jessica Cook was born in Little Rock, Arkansas and graduated from Danville High School in 1998. She later graduated from Arkansas Tech University with a Bachelors of Art in Speech/Theatre in 2003. Ms. Cook plans to further her professional theatre career by working in the New Orleans area. She wishes to continue her academic career by teaching Theatre and Scene Design at a college level.