DEVELOPING THE MODERN SCENE DESIGN PROCESS: COGNITION AND THE NEW STAGECRAFT

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This dissertation examines the working processes and professional activities of American scenic designers between 1910 and 1950. Beginning with the assertion that a common idea of design process has persisted among American professionals for much of the century, my case studies probe the history of "the process." Previous historians have noted that the modern scene design process was heavily informed by the New Stagecraft movement and promulgated its aesthetic values: simplicity, unification, collaboration. Inspired by European modernist production, especially the work of Edward Gordon Craig, Adolph Appia, and Max Reinhardt, New Stagecraft artists produced simplified or abstract settings, unified design concepts, and introduced a more collaborative production model. This dissertation argues that the New Stagecraft revolution was not only an aesthetic shift, but also the beginning of theatrical design as a profession. I do so by analyzing ways in which New Stagecraft designers defined and defended their professional status. They developed new tools for script analysis and documenting their work, published books and articles demonstrating the value of good design, and strategically allied themselves with organized labor and major universities. They also institutionalized their practices in labor regulations, entrance exams, and educational curricula. The perceived stasis of the design process can be attributed to the preservation of specific design behaviors in these institutions. Methodologically I draw on studies of designing based in the cognitive and design sciences. Archived remnants of past designers are analyzed through

principles of situated and extended cognition, such as offloading, affordances, and artifact use. I then develop my conclusions through concepts of professional expertise, including reflective practice and practicum education, and finally link individual practices to social change by applying the history of professionalization as it has been developed by sociologists. In total this dissertation charts a method for applying cognitive studies research to theatrical design history, and a way of linking private creative practices to larger changes in theatrical production methods. By studying the behavior of influential scenic designers, both in the studio and in their professional networks, I show how strategically placed individuals' processes came to define the field.

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PREFACE

I would like to thank the many individuals who read, inspired, and guided this project. They helped me grow as a scholar, researcher, teacher, and person while I wrote, and I can't help but mention them by name.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION: DESIGN, COGNITION, AND THE NEW STAGECRAFT

In May 2011, I attended the 17th ASSITEJ[1] World Conference and Theatre Festival in Copenhagen and Malmö, Sweden. This conference of practitioners, administrators, and scholars working with theatre for young audiences was formative for me for many reasons; it was my first major international conference, the first time I had served as a teaching assistant on a study abroad course, and my first up-close encounter with Scandinavia. Of the fifteen or so performances I saw, the most memorable were those that innovated in visual storytelling. Large props swiveled, puppets and objects came to life, and evocative scenic environments created full imaginative worlds. Actors shuffled hand-held shoes to represent movement of refugees. Silent figures in playing card-inspired costumes led audience members in immersive sensorial explorations. Cars became Communist Berlin, steel jungle gyms became the deserts of Iraq, and expanses of white fur and feathers invited toddlers to a colorful game of peek-a-boo. I came back to Pittsburgh renewed, having seen so much quality theatre. Study of these designs inspired a seminar paper and conference presentations, and combined with my similarly growing interest in cognitive studies. What is happening in the minds of the child, and the designer, when creating and receiving the well-designed performance?

[1] Association Internationale du Théâtre pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse, or the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People.

This dissertation is not a study of such contemporary performances. Its historical subject is instead an exercise in applying principles of cognitive science to historical design examples. In my responses to ASSITEJ I considered both creation and reception. Within cognitive theatre studies what work has been done on creation mostly investigates the work of the actor and, to a lesser extent, the director. Few works, with the notable exception of Teemu Paavolainen's *Theatre/Ecology/Cognition*, consider the role of theatrical design at length. In selecting a dissertation project that would build upon my interest in with design, situated within the fields of theatre history and cognitive studies, I crafted a project that investigated the historical and social worlds of theatrical design through a cognitive perspective. This dissertation, the result of two years' inquiry into the history of design cognition, remains grounded in but is not limited to theories of theatrical cognition. I balance cognitive-level work on individual designers' practices with the social history of organization, development, and cultural change. I combine cognitive and sociological theories with archival evidence of designer's past processes to investigate the historical genesis and development of scenic design methods. Strategic case studies of influential designers' processes anchor two primary conclusions.

This dissertation argues that a common concept of theatrical scenic design existed among American professionals for much of the twentieth century. I call this the modern scene design process; it is colloquially referred to as "the design process" or simply "the process." It arose in the United States around the advent of theatrical modernism, in the years immediately preceding World War I. It was heavily inflected by New Stagecraft and its new aesthetic values of simplicity, unification, and collaboration. It was popularized by men who came to a sort of celebrity status previously unfamiliar to theatrical scenic artists. It appealed to a concept of design, as distinct from painting or visual artistry, by incorporating methods and theories

borrowed from the plastic arts and architecture. Inspired by European modernist production, especially the work of Edward Gordon Craig, Adolph Appia, and Max Reinhardt, New Stagecraft artists founded a new method of designing scenery, approaching the playscript, and working with producers, directors, and actors. This new method revolutionized the working procedures of theatre artists, inspired them to pursue freelance work, and necessitated the use of new types of documentation and collaborations.

As they developed their aesthetic revolution, however, many of these same artists claimed a new career identity; no longer scenic artists or painters, these men (and they were almost all men) were now scenic designers. Designers asserted professional status, defended this status through association with labor unions and the weight of their own professional networks, and institutionalized their practice in labor regulations, entrance exams, and educational curricula. This dissertation further argues that the scenic design process has changed little since the New Stagecraft era because designers archived and standardized processes through these significant institutions. This second part of the story of design process demonstrates that the same major figures whose designs were most lauded and influential also sketched the boundaries of theatrical design as a viable, if not particularly lucrative, profession.

1.1 WHAT IS DESIGN?

One of the first empirical studies of design process, conducted by psychologist Herbert A. Simon in his work on artificial intelligence, noted that “everyone designs who devises courses of action

aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones."[2] Through the development of objects, buildings, spaces, computer programs, or procedures, design aims to better the environment or the individual as a part of the environment. Simon's definition is simple and broad, yet it also points toward a key aspect of twentieth-century design – the identification and solution of a problem in the world. For Simon design is ultimately useful; New Stagecraft theory was based in part on theatrical designers' discovery of new ways to make the built onstage environment useful, and in particular, useful for interpreting scripts and contributing to the performance.

Simon's definition does not explain design in terms of cognition or behaviors, however. One more comprehensive definition, from the work of Willemmien Visser, contends that

> Design consists in specifying an artifact (the artifact product), *given requirements* that indicate – generally neither explicitly, nor completely – one or more functions to be fulfilled, and needs and goals to be satisfied by the artifact, under certain conditions (expressed by constraints). At a cognitive level, this specification activity consists of constructing (generating, transforming, and evaluating) representations of the artifact *until they are so precise, concrete, and detailed* that the resulting representation – the "specifications" – specify explicitly and completely the implementation of the artifact product."[3]

In her definition, design is the creation of representations of an artifact yet to be, and through successive processes of idea generation, transformation of that idea (editing), and detailing all possible aspects of the idea, a complete, executable vision of an object or process is created. For the purposes of this dissertation, I have chosen to accept Visser's characterization of design because it reflects current work in cognitive studies, especially within the field of extended cognition. It also accurately reflects the separation between specification and execution that arose in the theatrical scenic artistry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Design is

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[2] Herbert A. Simon, *The Sciences of the Artificial* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), 111.
[3] Visser later distinguishes between the "artifact product," by which she refers to the final "product" of design, the specifications for production, and the series of intermediate artifacts (cognitive artifacts) that allow the designer to create the final one. Willemien Visser, *The Cognitive Artifacts of Designing* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 116.

invention, specification, and arrangement, generally separate from the final object (that which is designed) in both time and in the nature of the representation. Designs are typically produced before the final artifact (Visser's "artifact product") is created, often communicated through drawings or other schematic representations, and are frequently created by an individual who does not perform the final fabrication him/herself.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I use "scenic design" to refer to the post-New Stagecraft process of interpretation, planning, and authority executed by a designated individual. I use "scenic artist" to refer to either the older method of design for painted drops and formulaic scenery production, or in a more contemporary context, the craftsmen and artisans who do the physical work of painting and decorating sets after the design has been completed. I do not use the term "scenography," even as it is becoming more popular in critical work on theatrical design. Arnold Aronson notes that scenography "implies something more than creating scenery oor costumes or lights. It carried a connotation of an all-encompassing visual-spatial construct as well as the process of change and transformation that is an inherent part of the physical vocabulary of the stage."[4] Indeed, what Jones and his New Stagecraft peers were doing was scenography, even if they preferred to call it design. However, as the term "scenography" was not widely used in the interwar period, and it fundamentally refers to a synthesis of technique, design, and execution that I am attempting to dissect in this work, I bracket it for another time, and remain committed to "scenic design."

[4] Arnold Aronson, *Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 7.

1.2 THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

This dissertation draws on three theoretical traditions: embodied and extended cognition, empirical research into the design process, and the sociology of professions.

What is cognition? The MIT Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science states simply that "human cognition is the set of processes and mechanisms by which we come to know the world, whether it be through learning, perception, or thinking and problem solving."[5] The study of these processes has fueled debates across the disciplines; among the most important divides in the study of cognition are questions about the source of knowledge and the role of the body and environment in constituting that knowledge. The first debate, on whether knowledge is discovered through intuition and logic (rationalism) or developed through sensory experience of the world and its manipulation through conceptual representation (empiricism), is a debate obviated by an appeal to embodied cognition. The second debate, relevant to my work, is between mind-body or Cartesian dualism and the broad philosophical and theoretical orientation of embodiment. Proponents of embodied cognition disavow separation between the body and the mind, and find that meaning constituted by the mind's interaction with and exploration of the physical world. Rationalism and empiricism both implicitly accept a mind-body dualism that embodiment theorists reject. Embodiment theories further reject an information processing model of cognition, popularly summarized in the metaphor of the mind functioning like a computer. Thinking does not only take place within the brain; to quote Mark Johnson's *The Meaning of the Body*, "our consciousness and our experience depend on our brain operating

[5] H. Plotkin, "Human Cognition," *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2005).

within our body and our body operating within the world."[6] There can be no brain (or mind) without a body, as the constitution and organization of thought is learned, organized, and made meaningful through interaction with the body at all levels.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I turn to embodiment and its associated hypotheses of embedded and extended cognition[7] for their ability to describe linkages of the mind, the artifact, and the environment that cannot be accounted for in information-processing models. I am interested in the ways designers think with and through their tools, artifacts, designs, and theatre environment – the latter including both the physical stage environment and the social world of the theatre. Theatre artists in particular know and work through their bodies, and we would do well to reflect this same bodily knowledge in the epistemologies that undergird our mental models of artmaking. A view of cognition that sees the individual, the body, and the environment together is essential for achieving a better understanding of design process.

A particular subset of cognitive studies on which I rely theorizes extended cognition. In this view thinking is done not only in the brain and body but through continued association with the environment. Inspiration for my perspective is interdisciplinary. I draw from the work of Tim Ingold, an anthropologist mostly interested in an ecological or systemic approach to cognition; Edwin Hutchins, another anthropologist whose study of navigation and the skilled behavior of

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[6] Mark Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 12.

[7] Cognition is embodied, meaning that it relies on the presence of the human body for meaning-making, as has been articulated by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson; embedded, meaning that it is inseparable from its context as a part of lived experience, as in the enactive theories of Alva Noë and the affordance theory of J. J. Gibson; and extended, meaning that cognition can be said to be a part of the environment as much as a body-bound phenomenon, as in Andy Clark's idea that cognitive acts can be offloaded onto the environment. See George Lakoff, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Johnson, *The Meaning of the Body;* Alva Noë, *Action in Perception, Representation and Mind* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004); James J Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986); Andy Clark, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension* (Oxford University Press, 2008).. For summary of these positions, under the broader framework of "situated" cognition, see Philip Robbins and Murat Aydede, "A Short Primer on Situated Cognition," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 3-10.

groups identified cognition as distributed within an environment; J. J. Gibson, a psychologist most known for his theories of direct perception and affordances; and Donald Norman, a cognitive engineer who has applied affordance theory to design critique and user experience design. To varying degrees, all four of these theorists emphasize relationships between objects, environments, and social cognition. Ingold's tool-use anthropologies led him to theorize an "ecology of objects," while Norman's consideration of user interfaces applies Gibson's perception theory to the ways in which things, that is, designed objects, "make us smart." My consideration of design builds upon these ideas, seeing the conceptualization of theatrical sets as a designers' situated practice in the studio. Designers manipulate and think through objects; designers are embedded within material and social frameworks that they both build and are constrained by. As Hutchins has said of his own work, "cultural practices are a key component of human cognition;"[8] the environment, the object, and the artifact are an effective location to study the relationship between mental/cognitive structures and their social manifestations. Within design histories, extended cognition theories allow the historian to study ecologies and objects as material components of past designers' thinking.

A second theoretical frame I use is the notion of design expertise. Empirical research in design has identified specific phases of contemporary design process shared among industrial designers, architects, and graphic designers. I rely on these studies to help me identify the aspects of the process in developing designs. Similar to my use of cognitive concepts, design expertise research provides a set of identifiable categories with which I approach my sources. For

[8] Edwin Hutchins, Personal Website, http://hci.ucsd.edu/hutchins/

example, design studies by Nigel Cross and Bryan Lawson have identified the component skills and behaviors of design.[9]

Cross and other design researchers have also identified major aspects of design expertise as they currently exist in designers today. Though their subjects vary widely, several underlying cognitive acts of expert designers remain relatively stable across disciplines. From Cross' 2011 compilation of many of these studies, I draw the following conclusions: First, the design problem is divisible into identifiable stages based on the type of activity the designer is engaged in. Each of these stages requires a different kind of thinking about the design problem, and encourages specific strategies. Early analysis identifies constraints and goals of a design, and yet it is most often the designer who establishes the givens of a particular design problem. In a middle stage of design, design experts often use partial solutions of a particular problem to identify further aspects of the problem itself. Scene designers engage in the same process of reflective practice, that is, recursive engagement with a potential design solution from different vantage points, as has been articulated by Donald Schön. Continued testing and reframing throughout the design process became prominent among New Stagecraft designers. Finally research into the ideation process has shown that creativity is not a sudden flash of inspiration, but the result of productive connections between restatements of the problem and potential design solutions.[10] Creative insights occur when conceptual bridges occur between the problem set – in this case, the script

[9] Behaviors are observable activities performed by the designer – writing a script breakdown, sketching thumbnails, building a model, explaining the design verbally to others, for example. Skills are those cognitive capabilities that allow these behaviors to be accomplished successfully: analysis of dramatic texts and of visual representations, divergent thinking, abductive reasoning, the transformation of visual stimuli, problem framing, forming mental representations of a design problem, as well as the ability to draw, measure, cut, glue, paint, and manufacture in various media. Skills can be taught and learned through educational; behaviors are observable phenomena and often lead to documentation in the archive. Nigel Cross, *Design Thinking :Understanding How Designers Think and Work* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011); Bryan Lawson, *What Designers Know* (Abingdon: Architectural Press, 2004); *Design in Mind* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 1994).

[10] Cross, *Design Thinking*; Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987).

and the production – and the potential solution, the scenic design. Part of the reason New Stagecraft practice took hold was its ability to develop a process that reliably encouraged creative "leaps" through the concept of the visualized design idea. As with my cognitive theory influences, design studies also provides the historian with new analytical concepts for approaching documentation, such as phases of the design process, or reflection-in-action.

Finally, I turn to the sociology of professionalism to help explain how designers popularized and standardized their new methods. Megali Sarfatti Larson's *The Rise of Professionalism* is the seminal text in the field; she states that professions are constituted by their exclusive claim on a particular sort of work. Larson explicates the various characteristics of professional groups, in particular their standardization of common knowledge, conferral of expertise through testing, membership, and peer criticism, and the professions' association with the university. She also identified the unique class status of the profession, in which prestige (Bourdieu's cultural capital) reinforced economic power to aid a profession's claim to higher class status. Such tensions over class and profession are a major component of chapter three. Larson's materialist approach has been furthered in works by Eliot Friedson, who has argued that professionals are individuals trained primarily in discretion and decision-making, and Andrew Abbott, who has theorized "jurisdiction" as the theoretical and occupational "ground" on which professions stake their exclusive claims. The more that professional organizations can effectively mobilize the needs for their exclusive knowledge, training, and practices, Abbot argues, the more effective a given jurisdictional claim. The very concept of the profession as an object of study has been critiqued, notably by Bourdieu, who takes issue with those who refuse to see the

profession as a constructed and contested social phenomenon, subject to consistent change.[11] With this in mind, I borrow the concept of profession to draw attention to the processes by which theatrical designers made exclusive claims to their specialized knowledge, training, and group membership. By making design a profession – work that was simultaneously being done in other fields, such as graphic and industrial design – designers articulated, standardized, and policed the practices and ways of thinking that are the subject of this dissertation.

1.3 RELATED WORK IN THEATRE STUDIES

Within theatre studies there are two sub-genres of cognitive critical work relevant to my project: those which take on a historical problem using cognitive concepts, and those which offer explanations of contemporary theatrical events from a cognitive perspective. Among examples of the first are: Teemu Paavolainen's *Theatre/Ecology/Cognition*, which uses the concepts of affordances and ecological cognition to critique the stage environments of Vsevolod Meyerhold and Tadeusz Kantor; Evelyn Tribble's *Cognition in the Globe*, which uses attention and memory studies to explain how early modern companies were keep many plays in repertory; and Bruce McConachie's cultural history *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, which deploys embodiment and metaphor theories to provide a cultural history of Cold War theatrical performance. These histories appeal to transhistorical cognitive processes in order to form more precise historical conclusions. Another strand of cognitive work uses concepts from the cognitive

[11] "'Profession' is a folk concept which has been uncritically smuggled into scientific language and which imports into it a whole social unconscious. It is the social product of a historical work of construction of a group and of a *representation* of groups that has surreptitiously slipped into the science of this very group…" Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc JD Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 242-43.

sciences to contextualize the work of the performer and other theatre artists. Richard Kemp's *Embodied Acting*, Rhonda Blair's *The Actor, Image, and Action*, and John Lutterbie's *Toward a General Theory of Acting* all incorporate theories developed in the cognitive sciences: embodiment, consciousness, and emotion for Kemp, image-streams and consciousness studies for Blair, dynamic systems theory for Lutterbie. I blend these two approaches with my dissertation, as the bulk of my project attacks a specific historical problem by appealing to cognitive concepts. In order to do so, however, I will need to explain design process through the lens of cognition. Chapter one answers the question of what design process is, while the rest of the dissertation addresses its development.

Among the work that has been already completed on this area of scenic design history, three books address the specific changes to the practices and discourse of the profession between 1915 and the 1960s. The major study of the field is Orville K. Larson's 1989 *Scene Design in the American Theatre 1915-1960*, which takes a textbook-style survey approach to the history of scenic design. Larson finds that American scenic design really "began" with the importation of European ideas of scenic art to the fertile bedrock of the art theatre/little theatre movement in the 1910s. I share Larson's general attribution of New Stagecraft to European inspiration. Larson only glancingly discusses process, however, preferring to discuss the sequence of successful dramatic productions and their designs rather than the changes to the understanding of and practice of stagecraft. Larson states that "the history of scene design is the history of successful theatrical productions."[12] I disagree; the birth of the professional designer is not only the result of commercially successful productions, but also the changes in thought and practice popularized equally by doing the craft, discussing it, and institutionalizing it.

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[12] Orville K. Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 84.

Two contemporary design historians who speak specifically about practice in this period are DeAnna Toten Beard and Christin Essin. In articles and her book-length study, Toten Beard discusses the ways in which critics cultivated a network of artistic appreciation outside the confines of a rather conservative Broadway and touring audience. Exhibitions of scenic design work began in 1914 with a large display of set designs in Cambridge and later in New York, legitimizing the stage designer as artist, rather than craftsman. *Sheldon Cheney's Theatre Arts Magazine*, Toten Beard's anthology and analysis of the first five years of the progressive *Theatre Arts Magazine*, provides an important selection of primary documentation organized by subject. Toten Beard's work, however, is a history of the magazine and its influence on the critical discourse of the time period, focused on Cheney as publisher and critic. Toten Beard's work is useful in its attention paid to the critic and the gallery owner as fostering the work of New Stagecraft designers, and the text has been productive in establishing my sense of how practices circulated in print with design networks.

Christin Essin takes a cultural historical approach to New Stagecraft in *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America*. Through descriptions of New Stagecraft designers' work onstage and offstage (in architecture, fashion, exhibition and industrial design, among others) she demonstrates how such figures not only revolutionized the state of stage design, but brought a new form of modernism to the attention of the American public. Designers performed many functions other than artists or craftsmen; they were also authors of new scenographic languages, cultural critics, activists, entrepreneurs and global cartographers. For Essin, it is no coincidence that a time of greater artistic freedom coincided with greater economic and cultural influence on American society. While her scholarship greatly inspires my own, and we share some figures and touchstone texts, my emphasis looks inward rather than outward. Designers operating (in

particular) as authors and cultural critics were not only speaking publicly, but also to each other about their own internal concerns of practice and process.

More general histories of the development of scene design include books by Denis Bablet and Christopher Baugh, both of which take a longer-range, international approach. Bablet articulates changes in scenic design as a series of "revolutions," largely dividing his history by schools and influences regarding different types of scenic environments. Baugh's study shows how changes in the way the technology of scenography was developed came to be known as scenic modernism. While these two studies reinforce the most important changes in scenographic practice, effectively mapping the landscape of theatrical modernity within which my project functions, neither discusses practice or the work of the designer individually, instead conceptualizing the designer as the creator of product rather than a historical agent.

Other clusters of relevant design history writing include many single-designer monographs and studies. These books are historical narratives of a single designer's process and personal development, and while they frequently reflect their subject's professional and artistic contributions to the field, their biographical approach renders their contributions quite different from my study. Often, their collection of images and archival documentation has been very helpful. Significant works include Ralph Pendleton's *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones*, Mary Henderson's *Mielziner: Master of Modern Stage Design*, Arnold Aronson's *Architect of Dreams: The Theatrical Vision of Joseph Urban*, Anne Fletcher's *Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik*, and Christopher Innes' *Designing Modern America: Broadway to Main Street*. Similarly, books of design theory and interviews with current practicing designers and directors, including Tony Davis' *Stage Design*, Christine White's *Directors and Designers*, Babak Ebrahimian's *Sculpting Space in the Theatre*, and Aronson's *Looking into the Abyss*

provocatively investigate design as it is currently practiced. These books helped initial phases of my project, and may help connect the historical conclusions of this dissertation to their more contemporary practitioners.

Finally, a very new strand of theatrical history is writing histories of backstage labor, the economics of theatre, and the materiality of modernism. Marlis Schweitzer's excellent and thorough economic history of theatrical fashion before World War I, *When Broadway was the Runway*, began this trend. Timothy R. White's *Blue-Collar Broadway* continues Schweitzer's economic history approach, narrating the rise of fall of New York businesses that built, painted, fitted, and supplied Broadway's post-1940 Golden Age. Christin Essin's "An Aesthetic of Backstage Labor" explores the cultural impact of photographs of backstage workers as arguments for the value of theatrical labor, and coincides with her ongoing work to direct scholarly attention to labor and union practices. This dissertation's linkage of cognitive practices with social networks and labor practices contributes within the same theoretical and historical field.

1.4 DESIGN OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation's case studies pose two key questions. From my primary investigations into the scene design process, completed for the prospectus, I hypothesized that "the process" was similarly practiced throughout most of the twentieth century. What was that process, and why has it remained dominant for so long in a period of frequent stylistic change? These two questions reflect two levels of inquiry, both important in creating a history of changing artistic practice. I acknowledge that my main research questions address different levels, and I suggest

that cognitive and social-level explanations are both necessary to explain the history of the scenic design process. Individual, idiosyncratic design practices became influential through their translation into the social patterns.

As noted above, my research has been inspired by sociologists who see cognitive and social structures as linked and mutually influential entities. For example, Pierre Bourdieu has observed that "there exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world…and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to them."[13] Megali Sarfatti Larson similarly attests that "changes in ideas and styles correspond to (and attempt to make sense of) structural changes lived through and perceived by strategically located groups of people."[14] This dissertation uses cognitive studies as a tool to identify and analyze one specific mental structure, embodied in what I have termed the modern scene design process, and traces its dissemination and standardization through the social changes wrought by several strategically located individuals. It is necessarily incomplete; with my selection of a studies I have attempted to address the most familiar and influential American scenic designers through a historical method that links cognitive and sociological concepts.

This study is not without limitations in scope or the applicability of its findings. In focusing my attention on major figures of theatrical design, I have chosen to focus on the processes of men who have already received much attention. Donald Oenslager and Lee

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[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power*, trans. Lauretta Clough (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 1. Bourdieu's work emphasizes the embodied, practical nature of knowledge and mental categorization. Though his work does not directly invoke empirical studies of embodiment in the cognitive sciences, he develops ideas drawn from the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Husserl, among others. Both thinkers are philosophical forebears of situated and embodied cognitive philosophy. For a more explicit linkage of Bourdieu's thought with contemporary cognitive philosophy and studies, see Omar Lizardo, "The Cognitive Origins of Bourdieu's Habitus," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 34, no. 4 (2004).

[14] This quotation references her later work on the sociology of postmodern architecture. Magali Sarfatti Larson, *Behind the Postmodern Facade: Architectural Change in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6.

Simonson are less commonly studied than Jones or Mielziner, and yet I acknowledge that my study does not explore the less well-documented figures of interwar American design. My primary justifications for choosing my figures were both the size of their extant archives and the figures' apparent historical influence in institutions and discourses of the period. In many cases the lack of documentation and critical success can be trace to additional barriers certain designers faced due to gender, race, or sexual orientation. I look forward to further studies that might apply a similar method of cognitive-sociological design work to sparser archives.[15] The dissertation also assumes that even those designers whose documentation has been maintained or were published heavily in their lifetime could accurately assess and describe their own methods. Where possible, I have tried to supplement writing about process with evidence from the archive, to test whether designers actually sketched or modeled as they claimed to have done. In some cases, however, I have had to rely on the printed account rather than the no-longer-extant archival evidence.

This study focuses on the modern stage design process as a US-based phenomenon, primarily between 1910 and the beginning of World War II. The interwar period marks the period of greatest change in American design process. The demarcation "American" is of course murky, as American designers frequently traveled to Europe for inspiration, work, or both, and European directors and designers frequently produced in New York and elsewhere. I have selected the American scene design process out of interest in American institutions and

[15] Some designers who made important contributions but need further study include Perry Watkins, an African-American scenic designer for the Federal Theatre Project and Broadway in the 1940s; Aline Bernstein, teacher and costume designer of the interwar period; James Reynolds, a gay costume and scenic designer whose "out" status in the industry cost him jobs; and Milia Davenport, costume designer and builder who, while she was good friends with Robert Edmond Jones, has yet to command theater historical narratives of her own outside of costume-specific genealogies. Some of these figures are now receiving more scholarly interest, such as Bernstein (see Christin Essin, *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America*), others such as Watkins and Reynolds have yet to garner more than paragraphs and short entries in scholarly writing.

genealogies, especially in terms of labor and educational practices. Geographically my emphasis on New York production reflects the increased centralization of theatrical labor there in the first half of the twentieth century. Indeed, it was the geographic proximity of so many working designers that smoothed their accession by the scenic painter's union, for example. My research has concentrated on New York-based, English-speaking, Broadway and art theatre productions. The contributions of designers and unions to the Yiddish theatre, for instance, are significant in this period but outside the scope of my study. I hope to push past some of these boundaries of geography, language, and nationality in future iterations of this project.

One final assumption to address is the understandable tension involved in applying cognitive methods to historical figures. I cannot, much as I might like to, subject historical figures to neuroimaging studies, nor can I pinpoint what any one figure was thinking at a specific point in his design process. For this reason I have thought of my writing as cognitive-inflected theatre history, and not an experimental, strictly falsifiable study of historical cognition. Even conversations, such as my informal discussion with Henry Heymann, bar immediate access to cognition due to the effects of time, memory, and social self-presentation. By focusing on design documentation, I have attempted to illuminate the plausible cognitive processes of these past figures, and suggest what historical effects may have resulted on productions or institutions. By theorizing design documents, I aim for plausibility, not empirical proof. Considering cognitive theory is important because it directs our attention to the processes whereby art is created, instead of the product. Drawing from design and cognitive studies allows the historian to propose different concepts as the important elements of historical change – such as problem-setting, artifact use, or studio pedagogy. An interdisciplinary approach that blends concepts from the

sciences into narratives of historical change and sociological analysis is, for me, an exciting new method for research into visual and embodied arts histories.

In addition to its interdisciplinary method, this dissertation contributes to the field of theatre and design history in several additional ways. First, it identifies a standing assumption of design history, voiced by practitioners and historians alike: American designers have worked in the similar ways and under similar theoretical constructs for many years. By writing a cognitive and institutional history, I propose reasons for this perceived stasis. On a broader scale, this dissertation investigates design as a process, not a product of artistry. As academic writing on theatrical labor is becoming more prevalent in this decade, I feel that historians ought to take individual and cultural processes of artmaking as intentional objects of study more frequently. This dissertation also contributes to historical questions of the interwar period, locating the role of the theatrical designer with respect to modernism, labor, and the role of theatre in the university. I identify points of rupture created by strategically located designers in each of these fields, and in the following four chapters I suggest partial answers to such large historical musings. Simply put, this dissertation asks the question, what changed, and why? In the interwar period, New Stagecraft designers crafted responses to several major concerns of their day: the status of modern arts across genres, a new relationship between organized labor and professional organizations, and the adoption of theatre training by the American university. By focusing on the way specific designers responded to such changes in their art, their relationships, and their institutional lives, this dissertation assembles a history of a new and influential cultural process: modern American scenic design.

1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARIES

What is the modern scene design process? How was it practiced by specific designers in history, and what were its component tasks? I take up these questions in chapter one, which demonstrates the stability of the scenic design process across three different case studies: textbook explanations of the design process, a "broad" look at the design practices of Pittsburgh-based scenic designer Henry Heymann, and a "deep" look at Jo Mielziner's design process for *Death of a Salesman*. I theorize each by appealing to the concepts drawn from cognition-based theorists of design research: problem-setting, reflective conversation with the materials, and the use of cognitive artifacts. This chapter concludes that while the exact artifacts specified in textbooks and created by Heymann and Mielziner differ, all three articulations share a similar general shape. First, designers analyze and "set" or "frame" the problem by imposing a metaphorical or interpretive order on the situation. Then, they engage in a series of engagements with the tools of their design, sketches and models, to test, converse, refine, and edit their designs. A view of design as interaction with intermediate representations, here conceived as cognitive artifacts following the theory of Donald Norman, Willemien Visser, and Edward Hutchins, best describes the way in which designers interact with their designs as an emergent, embodied process, extended into the environment. This chapter asserts the stability of the design process, grounds that stability in a series of theoretical design stages or processes, and outlines their application across several production examples.

In the second chapter, I question the genesis of the modern scene design process. From where did it arise in the United States, and what differentiated it from earlier models of scenic artistry? Chapter two considers published accounts of scenic artistry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as well as image collections detailing the history of design. I conclude

that a major shift in design process occurred with the adoption of New Stagecraft aesthetics into American theatre production. Unlike previous accounts, which argue that the major change resulted in the adoption of abstracted scenic forms and simplified, unified scenery, I argue that the modern scene design process became prevalent when the designer assumed authority over the visual composition of the stage image in space. With New Stagecraft, scenic renderings begin to be produced (and reproduced) with much greater frequency. These renderings included representations of the posed actor's body as a major compositional element of the picture. Seen as an artifact, a useful tool for changing cognitive abilities, the rendering allowed designers to claim collaborative parity with directors and designers by demonstrating the set in use. Robert Edmond Jones' drawings are the major case study of the chapter. I trace the lineage of this development to Jones' observation of European modernist theatre production techniques, especially the work of Ernst Stern and Max Reinhardt in Berlin.

Finally, I take up the question of how this modernist process came to be the dominant method of scenic design. Chapters three and four follow two additional significant figures, Lee Simonson and Donald Oenslager, through their extended interactions with social institutions that lent legitimacy to theatrical design. Chapter three argues that design process was formulated most strongly in designers' negotiations with the scenic painters' union, United Scenic Artists Local 829. Of the New Stagecraft group, Lee Simonson was perhaps the most active union member, and he established of the rules of the profession. In this chapter I turn to the sociological concept and critique of the profession as it has been detailed by Larson and Andrew Abbott as a method of analyzing how designers made social claims for their disciplinary exclusivity and labor value. By writing the standard union contract that paid designers for the intellectual labor of planning scenery, Simonson transformed the interpretive role of the designer

into a professional expectation. Union membership policed the boundaries of professional status, and an entrance exam established high standards for professional knowledge. The designers' union is a unique historical subject; while designers aimed for a freelance professional status, akin to the growing status of corporate industrial and product designers, they found themselves in conflict with craft unionist principles. The results of the negotiation between white-collar professionalism and the collective, protectionist values of Depression-era unionism parallel the same tension between art and craft that continues to characterize (and frustrate) designers today, throughout the commercial, nonprofit, and educational theatres.

With education in mind, the fourth chapter considers a second important source of legitimacy that stabilized and disseminated the modern scene design process: the university. Like professional organizations, the development of specialized schools is another way in which professions make exclusive claims on a domain of specialized practice.[16] The primary case study in this chapter is the Yale School of Drama, founded in 1924 by George Pierce Baker. At Yale, the first graduate professional training curriculum was established, and Donald Oenslager built the first multi-course curriculum in scenic design. This chapter's study of Yale's methods relies on two concepts of design practice and art pedagogy. First I return to Donald Schön's work, using his concept of the practicum to link design education with the development of professional expertise (and reflection-in-action). I argue that George Pierce Baker's 47 Workshop, a Harvard undergraduate seminar on playwriting and play production, became a practicum when Baker translated its principles to the new Yale curriculum. Then, to analyze Oenslager's contributions

[16] "The providers of services had to be controlled in order to standardize and thus identify the 'commodity' they provided. For this, a cognitive basis was crucial…the proved institutional mechanisms for this negotiation were the license, the qualifying examination, the diploma, and formal training in a common curriculum. The typical institutions that administered these devices were, at first, the guild-like professional organization, and later the professional school, which superseded the association in effectiveness." Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 15.

to Yale, I turn to the studio model, as theorized by Lois Hetman and Cynthia Winner. Inspired by Baker's example, and under his supervision, Oenslager added a distinctly practical element to Yale's education in his development of the design curriculum. The studio model of education was already in practice at Yale's architecture department, and while Oenslager did not directly create architectural pedagogical methods, his curriculum closely resembled that of the architecture studio. I conclude the chapter by contrasting Yale's educational models – Baker's practicum and Oenslager's studio – with the craft-based, production-centered education at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. In part because of Yale's advantages in status and geographic location, but also in part due to Carnegie Tech's emphasis on acting and production at the expense of design theory or studio education, Oenslager's curriculum set a pattern for design education and practice for generations. As Yale graduates were hired by other universities and turned to design work in New York and elsewhere, Oenslager's heavily New Stagecraft-inspired views on design process, script interpretation, and the proper professional role of the designer deeply affected practitioners and university leaders in the post-World War II period.

2.0 FINDING AND DEFINING DESIGN PROCESS

*"Only about fifteen per cent of a scenic artists' work on a production is really creative – the studying of a play script in order to determine what it will need visually, and then the exercise of his imagination to meet those n*eeds. The rest of the time is spent in ensuring that the designs are properly executed, that neither *boredom nor carelessness nor lack of attention to any detail has lowered the quality of the original conception."*[1]

Jo Mielziner's frustration with his bored, careless group of painters and builders reveals a deep divide in thinking about theatrical creativity. It is a common myth of creativity that idea generation is the only truly "creative" aspect of art, regardless of its physical realization in the world.[2] Upon more careful and perhaps less conversational circumstances even Mielziner might admit that for the practicing artist, it is often the process of executing the design that quietly and unconsciously leads to the final result. The above quotation is particularly apt for a discussion of design process thinking, because it tidily encapsulates a division made clear by the historical transition from previous design methods. Before New Stagecraft, scenic artists would have seen less of a division between the two types of work Mielziner describes. Only with modernism does the boundary between intellectual and manual labor sharpen within theatrical scenic artistry.

[1] Jo Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre; a Memoir and a Portfolio*. (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 23.
[2] R. Keith Sawyer, *Explaining Creativity: The Science of Human Innovation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 12-14.

Several key values arose as a result of accepting this division, among them the viewing of scenic designs as interpretative artworks attributable to the designer, and the relative autonomy of the designer as a collaborative artist. In this chapter I identify the most important elements of the design creative process most subject to historical change around the coming of New Stagecraft, and demonstrate their use among New Stagecraft-trained artists.

Considering design from a process orientation, questions emerge. What are the shared behaviors, skills, and products of scenic design? What makes New Stagecraft process different from earlier historical forms? What causes and contexts led to the adoption of New Stagecraft principles in America? Whereas previous histories of New Stagecraft in the United States have demonstrated its influence on the aesthetic theory and stylistic output of the movement, I argue that the New Stagecraft principles form a coherent, theoretical perspective on what theatrical designers "ought" to do. This process derives from a particular view on the role of the designer in the theatrical collaborative process as an autonomous and attributable artist. It is supported by a framework of expected processes and documents which structure the designer's work on a problem. By developing a reproducible series of design artifacts, the designer can both work efficiently and support his/her artistic authority within the context of a theatrical production. Throughout the four major phases of design production – analysis, idea generation, refinement, and specification[3] – the creative process consists largely of the creation and use of artifacts which direct the designer toward certain types of design behaviors. This process, which I am calling the New Stagecraft process, was dominant in American professional and academic theatre for the majority of the twentieth century. This chapter considers the design behaviors aided by the different types of artifacts created in the process, and demonstrates the consistency

[3] These four categories derive from the work of design researcher Vinod Goel, discussed in detail in the next section. Vinod Goel, *Sketches of Thought* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 122-23.

of the New Stagecraft process among mid-twentieth century American designers by showing similar artifact use across designers.

I begin by claiming a roughly identifiable, prototypical entity known as the scene design process. This is a prototypical and shared conception[4] of the design process, from which designers may individually depart, but to which many working designers adhere in many, if not all, of their practices. Designers may argue with this statement, insisting that creativity is ineffable and there is no consistent pattern to their processes. It is certainly true that exceptions to general tendencies exist, and there are as many methods of beginning a creative process as there are designers who engage in them. Some begin with extensive text analyses, others through a series of intuitive rough sketches, and still others by responding to period research or music. Some designers, for example Tony Walton (*Pippin*, *Chicago*, *Hurlyburly*), further argue that the beginning of a project is dependent on the project itself; not all style, genres, and historical periods begin with the same sort of work.[5] While I certainly don't begrudge these designers their right to speak about their own process, the desire to highlight differences of approach, likely deriving from competitive pressure to distinguish one's own art from others, has caused writers to overlook their broadly shared qualities.

There are industry standards for the creative output of scenic designers in the early and late phases of design, and especially in the specification of final technical drawings for construction and scene painting. Sketches, collages, models, renderings, and draftings are some

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[4] George Lakoff defined the term radial category to refer to a category in which "the center, or prototype, of the category is predictable…and while the noncentral members are not predictable from the central member, they are 'motivated' by it, in the sense that they bear family resemblances to it." George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal About the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 65. Vinod Goel has identified design situations and professions as one such radial category, as some fields are more prototypically identified as design, and other peripheral fields partake of some, but not all, qualities of design. Goel, *Sketches of Thought*, 85-87.

[5] Lynn Pecktal, *Designing and Drawing for the Theatre* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 54.

of the most common documents produced, and as such have been standardized in visual and linguistic modes: contractual language, textbooks, theories, and in the archive. Most designers also describe their work in terms of phases, which at the very least can be described in terms of initial, private responses, a collaborative engagement over rough drafts, and a refinement and detailing phase before final drawings are submitted for execution by shops and artisans. While individual designs will often claim to practice a unique process, the standardization of behaviors, skills, and products (what Willemian Visser would call design artifacts) validates the idea of modern scenic design as a normative and prototypical process.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. First, I begin with a snapshot of theatrical method drawn from midcentury textbooks for young designers. After this overview I turn to two case studies of Henry Heymann and Jo Mielziner. Together they demonstrate two examples of the New Stagecraft process *in situ*. They also provide the examples through which I explicate my framework for studying design process as cognitive behavior. Specifically both Heymann and Mielziner engaged in the same steps of design process, produced similar types of documentation, and used the production of artifacts to scaffold and aid their own design processes and collaboration with others. My study is based on categories, processes, and divisions theorized by design researchers Donald Schön, Vinod Goel, Henrik Gedenryd, Nigel Cross, and Willemien Visser. From this application, I hope that future historians can begin to make more reasonable assumptions about some of the cognitive processes that were most present while these designers were creating designs.

2.1 A SNAPSHOT OF MIDCENTURY PROCESSES

Among designers writing about their process, especially in educational materials aimed at young designers, there is a basic consistency of approach. At present, the field views "the process" as one of highly individualized techniques employed by experts, yet professional agreement over the general sorts of products expected. As Tony Davis writes in the preface to his 2001 collection of interviews with stage designers, "at best it is possible to say that most designers sketch, that they usually create scale models and that they draw up plans to enable the scene shop to build their designs. Otherwise, diversity of approach is the rule."[6] Despite this diversity, however even the rough phases Davis identifies constitute a general, prototypical method. Sketching, modeling, and specification are the some of the most basic components of the modern scene design process.

A short survey of textbooks on design illuminates an academic perspective on the "phases" of the design process. W. Oren Parker's *Scene Design and Stage Lighting*, first published in 1963, was the first to formally list drafting principles in an instructional form targeted at scenic design students in universities.[7] It is primarily a practical book, filled with instruction on drafting technique, detailed procedures for scenic construction and painting, and a comprehensive description of lighting design theory and practice. However, its discussion of design fundamentals and the expected procedures of design evidences both Parker's individual teaching practices while he was a scenic design professor at Yale (1940-1963) and Carnegie

[6] Tony Davis, *Stage Design* (Crans-Près-Céligny. Hove: RotoVision, 2001), 8.
[7] Block, Dick. "In Memoriam: W. Oren Parker," *USITT*, April 2007. http://sightlines.usitt.org/archive/v47/n04/stories/MemoriamParker.html

Tech (1963-1976) and also the "principles that lie behind what is generally accepted as good practice in modern stage design."[8]

Parker's method of teaching design draws heavily on New Stagecraft principles of aesthetic unity. For him, the purpose of scene design is "a fusing of the visual effect and the basic intent of the play into a single dramatic impression,"[9] a general concept explored in the book's first chapters. Other initial principles include concepts drawn from the visual arts in painting and sculpture – line, shape, form, color – and compositional principles such as harmony, balance, variation, scale and proportion. In the fourth chapter, Parker describes the productive design idea as "the result of logical yet imaginative thinking and intuitive feeling expressed through an idea or central theme."[10] The yoking of logic, that is, analytical thought about the function of the set, and the imaginative expression of feeling is a philosophical position grounded in New Stagecraft philosophy. The scenic artist, newly responsible for the creation of meaningful interpretative art on the stage, must balance function and artistic expression.

Parker's most concrete explanation of process explains the types of documentation designers are expected to produce. He writes, "an idea may first appear in the form of an interesting floor plan to be developed later into a related elevational drawing, or the reverse—as a decorative shape or historical form that must be adjusted to a workable floor plan." Parker identifies three major components to the design process – the sketch, model, and floor plan – and explains them in terms of the design functions each representation performs. For example, the sketch is more suited toward the expression of an idea but lacks the model's ability to show

[8] W. Oren Parker, *Scene Design and Stage Lighting* (New York: Holt, Reinhardt, and Winston, 1963), 11.
[9] Ibid., 6.
[10] Ibid., 48.

dimension and the relationship of masses on stage.[11] The rest of the text describes methods for drafting and building these design artifacts. As early as Parker's text, design is seen two ways: philosophically, as the expression of an artistic idea, and practically, as a series of artifacts created in order to develop that idea from internal impulse to a full-scale set in collaboration with other artists. Intermediate design artifacts assist both purposes; the sketch, model, and rendering aid the dual roles of the designer as artist and logistical planner by each focusing attention on one or more relevant design tasks.

Parker's steps are reiterated by designers writing other textbooks in later decades. Darwin Reid Payne's 1981 text, *The Scenographic Imagination*, shares Parker's focus on the designer's dual vision.[12] Payne describes both a "conceptual" and "actual" sequence of events in the designer's process. Conceptually, designers start from an "initial impetus," provided by the playwright, to which designers respond with specific images. These images are transformed by the designer into a "visual interpretation," which is combined with the performer's aural interpretation of the text in the finished theatrical event. [13] In actual practice, though, the designer engages in four tasks:

> 1. He attempts to ***form visual images*** during and after the reading of the play…most of these images are based on the internal needs (both explicit and implicit) of the text.
> 2. He then attempts to ***set these images on paper in rough scale***…the activity helps him to clarify and give priority to the needs of the text based on his initial images.
> 3. He then attempts to ***combine his diagrams and visual images into some related sequence*** by which he will be able to demonstrate the effectiveness and appropriateness of his ideas to the director who must bring the vision of the scenographer into phase with his own.

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[11] Ibid., 61.
[12] *The Scenographic Imagination* reproduces much material Payne included in his 1974 book, Design for the Stage: First Steps, which was the first book on scenic design process to exclude craft and construction matters and to focus exclusively on process, theory, and philosophy. *The Scenographic Imagination* expands many of these original ideas, and is quoted here as a fuller expression of Payne's ideas.
[13] Darwin Reid Payne, *The Scenographic Imagination* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), 29.

4. He must then ***make concrete plans and decisions*** so that his images can be rendered into stage forms and devices.[14] [bold italics mine]

Here Payne acknowledges a progression of steps in the scenic design process delimited by particular types of documentation and ordered from most to least abstract. The process can be roughly categorized as the creation of image, the scaling and combination of ideas, and final selections of certain plans. Payne's process expands, constrains, tests, and decides. Throughout these tasks are aided by specific artifacts: drawings on paper, the application of scale and sequence, and the transformation of ideas into plans.

Lynn Pecktal's *Designing and Drawing for the Theatre*, first published in 1995, combines interviews with working designers with detailed descriptions of construction techniques and professional practices.[15] Pecktal lists eighteen steps in a design process, from the initial contact with the production to the adaptation of the original design for second and touring companies. Of the pre-build phases of production, Pecktal emphasizes a sequence of events that range from initial meetings, through sketching and preparation, and finally supervising execution on the shop and on stage. Contractually, union designers are obligated to produce specific materials which constitute a complete design: models, color sketches, storyboards, perspectives, necessary working drawings, and painting schemes, sketches, and models.[16] A practical book, *Designing and Drawing for the Theatre* sees the set design process as the total product of the prescribed behaviors and documents, generally occurring in the same order.

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[14] Ibid., 28.

[15] Versions of a closely related but even more technique-oriented textbook by Pecktal have been in publication since 1975 under the title *Designing and Painting for the Theatre*.

[16] Pecktal divides her tasks into two phases, before and after studios bid for building contracts: First, the designer must meet with the creative team, do background research, complete rough sketches and rough models, prepare draftings for bid sessions, hold the bid session, adjust the design to fit budget, and visit the scenic studio. After the bids, the designer attends rehearsals, visits the load-in process at the theatre, and attends technical and dress rehearsals. Pecktal, *Designing and Drawing for the Theatre*, 15-16, 37.

Across these three statements of process, the authors agree that design process is best described through the actions performed and types of design representations produced. Why such consistency? The reason that this model is so effective, and has been adopted so readily by theatrical designers, is that the nature of the artifacts in question – breakdowns, sketches, models, renderings – excel at aiding the designer to problem-solve in a particular way. These artifacts also support the New Stagecraft philosophy of a designer as autonomous and attributable. By studying the documents themselves, it is possible to uncover the cognitive and philosophical underpinnings of the design process.

2.2 PHASES OF THE DESIGN PROCESS

The process as described in the textbooks can be understood as a process of design. Design processes begin with the identification of a need – in this case, for some scenic environment – and progress to successively detailed phases of idea generation, testing, and refinement before the end product is created, the specification for the production of an object. Outside a theatrical context, "design" consists of specification only, the creation and testing of the plans for production elsewhere. Theatre artists have been "doing design" for centuries, in the broad sense;[17] however, in the early twentieth century, modernism linked up design as an industrial-process based phenomenon with the goals of artistic production, creating in the theatrical

[17] I do not mean to argue that earlier stage designers did not plan, sketch, or model their drawings; the extensive sketches of Inigo Jones' masques and the modeling practices of de Loutherberg in 1770s London are two of the most prominent counterexamples.

designer a new type of artist, the "jack of all trades" praised by Robert Edmond Jones.[18] Few designers considered their work in terms of industrial or product design terms, however,[19] and so I turn to explanations of design process based on other fields for new explanatory tools. Especially since the mid-twentieth century, the question of the design process has been explored in cognitive psychology, design methods research, and industrial design. Such studies have been both experimental and observational, attempting to study and codify productive sequences of behavior. By drawing on this research and applying it back to the study of scenic designers, I chart one way for theatre historians to use the remains of design processes to discuss past design behaviors.

Design as defined in the introduction is the process of artifact development and specification, following Visser. However, Visser's work does not describe the work of design itself, instead focusing in the artifacts that are produced in the act of designing. Other theorists and researchers choosing to look at design process itself – the behaviors and qualities that design work shares across disciplines – have commonly described design as a specific type of problem-solving. Seen this way, design is a type of thought that is prompted by a particular type of situation. Certain professions specialize in the creation of these solutions. Seeing design fields such as architecture, engineering, software, interaction, and graphic design as variations on a prototypical "design problems," cognitive neuroscientist Vinod Goel has detailed common characteristics shared by the problems solved by design experts. They are:

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[18] Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination; Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941).

[19] Several notable theatrical designers turned to interior or product design later in their careers. For Norman Bel Geddes, for example, there was a direct link between design fields. He explained it this way in lecture notes for a design course he taught in 1928: "Design is mental conception of something to be expressed. It is organism of correlative parts, the relation of part to part and the parts to the whole. Principle of designing buildings, painting, music, poems, or drama the same." "Notes from Lesson II: The Objective." Box 150, Folder K.1, Norman Bel Geddes Theater and Industrial Design Papers, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin..

- the relative incompleteness of information provided at the outset
- a high degree of complexity and the lack of clear right or wrong solutions, only better or worse
- the interconnectivity of components within the design problem
- the reliance on individual experience for solution rather than an algorithmic or heuristic process (as in a math problem, say long division), and
- a difference of time and kind between the end product of design (the drawing, the specifications) and the delivery of the final product (its real-world realization).[20]

The more a given problem contains these aspects, the more it tends to be considered a problem of design. Furthermore, design typically involves abductive reasoning, which differs from other types of reasoning in that abduction examines phenomena and hypothesizes claims or solutions without relying on the logical rules of deduction or the comparative reasoning of induction.[21] Given the complexity and uniqueness of design problems, only conjectural, creative thinking (abduction) can generate novel solutions. From these criteria it becomes clear that design (in a broad sense) is in fact a way of thinking, a mode of cognition that centers around problem solving and solution generation.

Briefly applying Goel's schematic suggests that scenic design as widely practiced is a type of design problem. Scenic designers face incredibly incomplete information at the outset of a project, and there are constraints on successful (or "better") designs placed by the script, directorial concept, architecture of the space, and the budgetary and technological restrictions of the project, among others. Parts of a scenic solution are interconnected, often in complex ways that are not immediately apparent to the designer. (How often changes approved weeks ago yield unexpected complications in tech!) To work around this, designers oscillate focus between detail and the big picture, and often work on both scales at the same time. The best solutions often arise

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[20] Goel, *Sketches of Thought*, 84-87.

[21] Nigel Cross has argued that design consists of "abductive" reasoning, as opposed to deductive or inductive reasoning. Invoking C. S. Peirce's theory of abduction, he states that "it is this hypothesizing of what may be, the act of producing proposals or conjectures, that is central to designing." Nigel Cross, *Design Thinking :Understanding How Designers Think and Work* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011), 27.

from a combination of experience, or having solved similar problems before, and novel insight. Scenic designs are also specified before their execution in the real world, while intermediate representations are produced by the designer in the process of executing the design. Finally, to reconsider Cross' concept of abduction, designers abduct most often in the initial phases of the processes described in the first section, such as Payne's formation of visual images or combination of images into related sequences. Thus it is reasonable to study theatrical design as a typical design problem following Goel, Visser, and Cross.

Just as scenic designers generally agree on the basic contours of their process, design researchers in other fields approach agreement on a basic sequence of stages. These studies, often conducted through *in situ* observation or protocol analysis,[22] identify a given behavior dominating each phase. These categories seem to be organically integrated into an expert designer's work; that is, individual designers observed did not typically think of themselves as following a sequence of steps, yet researchers did identify a fairly consistent progression. Occasionally, groups of designers did establish a shared process among themselves. A team design study conducted by Nigel Cross showed that in order to structure collaborative design activity, designers modeled an "ideal" process and attempted to follow this sequence of projects: Quantify the Problem, Generate Concepts, Refine Concepts, Select a Concept, Design, and finally Present.[23] These can be combined into rough phases of problem analysis, concept generation, refinement and selection, and detail specification. In two other protocol studies,

[22] One of the more popular methods for studying design process, protocol analysis consists of studying designers at work in laboratory environments, instructing them to speak and "think aloud" as they design. The experimenter prompts during periods of silence, and then codes the resulting utterances to determine the behaviors being performed at each moment of the experiment. Protocol experiments are frequently conducted in a compressed time frame, with projects taking place over hours, not days. Discussion of the procedures and limitations of protocol studies can be found in *Designerly Ways of Knowing* (London: Springer, 2006), 77.

[23] *Design Thinking*, 121-22.While it is not suggested in Cross' analysis of the study, I interpret the "Design" portion of this structure to refer to the specification of details in the chosen solution concept, rather than the total process of design as I have been using it up to this point.

Joachim Günther analyzed the type of activities performed at various stages of both individual and team design processes. Günther's categories for analysis parallel those articulated by Cross' team; both the team and individual designers studied begin by "clarifying the task," involve themselves in a middle period of the design process by "searching for concepts," and spend most of the last third of the process "fixing the concept."[24] Günther further demonstrated that while each of these phases occurred roughly in sequence, there were several short bursts in which the team, for example, would begin to search for concepts before returning to the first large tasks, to clarify. Such interactivity is more pronounced in the early stages of a design process, and was also more pronounced in team or collaborative design than in design processes conducted by a single individual. These phases appear to be stable across all prototypical domains of design. [25]

The phases I will apply to the design process are borrowed from Vinod Goel, based on his study of prototypical design fields: problem-structuring, idea generation, refinement, and detailing. First, designers determine the nature of their problem, then generate possible solutions, test and refine them, and then create specifications for the final product. Goel's work further links each of four phases of design to types of documentation, specifically in terms of the language and symbolic/visual representation created in each phase. As designers move from early phases of design to later ones, Goel argues, the symbol systems used to represent meaning also change. Early design takes place in natural, conversational language, while preliminary design and design refinement take place in visuographic forms, especially sketching. Final specification takes place in a coordinated system of specific drawing styles (technical drawing)

[24] Ibid., 122-3.
[25] Ibid., 2., Goel, *Sketches of Thought*, 95, and Willemien Visser, "Design: One, but in Different Forms," *Design Studies* 30, no. 3 (2009).

and precise, technical language.[26] A similar pattern of expansion and transformation accompanies the design artifacts created – analysis is carried out in written lists and charts, idea generation in the sketch, refinement in successive sketches and models, and finally specification in the technical documentation. Among sketches, earlier design activity is concerned with lateral transformations of ideas, or the jumping from one idea to a slightly different one, while later design activity consists of many vertical transformations, restatement of a single idea in an increasing level of detail. In the remainder of this section, I will connect each of Goel's phases to the theoretical concepts I use to unpack Heymann and Mielziner's work. Attaching concepts to phases instructs me where and how to find designers' use of these concepts in their archives.

2.2.1 Analysis and Problem-Structuring

The first step, problem structuring, refers to "the process of retrieving information from long-term memory and external memory and using it to construct the problem space."[27] Such behaviors include reading the design brief and speaking with the client, identifying possible ways of solving the problem (seeing the problem in light of a given type of solution), and gathering information to detail all of the constraints that a successful design solution must satisfy. In the scenic design process, this generally refers to the reading of the play and the script analysis phase of design. Designers in this analysis phase are engaged in "setting up" the problem, both in terms

[26] Goel's larger project is an inquiry into the nature of symbolic systems, and overall argues that linguistic models of symbolic communication are but a subset of all possible symbolic systems, and that the use of sketching in design is an important example of a symbol system that functions to create thought, but does not rely on computational logic or semantic rules. Writ large, models of thought based on comptutational models of cognition (thought as symbolic processing) cannot fully describe all of the symbolic systems involved in the solution of open-ended or ill-structured problems, of which design is his primary example. Sketches are symbolic, but not linguistic; therefore they comprise thought and communication that is meaningful but not based in a computational or semantic logic. Like Lakoff and Johnson's theory of embodied cognition, Goel too is attacking computational models of cognition. Goel, *Sketches of Thought*, 190.
[27] Ibid., 125.

of what the set must represent (say, a beachfront resort home) and what the set must do (house a live shark in a tank upstage).

This "setting up" of the design problem is a frequent topic of study among design theorists. One of the most influential thinkers about design process is Donald Schön, whose book *The Reflective Practitioner* includes case studies of professional behavior across fields. Schön's book suggests that professionalism, and design expertise in particular, is dependent on problem structuring or problem-setting behavior. The professionally competent designer "constructs the design world within which he/she sets the dimensions of his/her problem space, and invents the moves by which he/she attempts to find solutions."[28] While Schön chooses to call this process problem-setting, it largely coincides with Goel's problem-structuring phase. Problem setting is "a process in which, interactively, we *name* the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them."[29] When a designer picks up a script, there is no universally applicable method to apply toward a design's solution, and for that reason designers must develop their own methods for transforming the latent problems into the script into solvable criteria. As Goel indicated this work is not algorithmic or systematic, though designers do depend on systems (such as the listing of verbatim information) in order to streamline their own processes. Modern scenic design depends on the transformation of dialogue and stage direction information into representational, thematic, and functional descriptions.

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[28] Donald A Schön, "Designing as Reflective Conversation with the Materials of a Design Situation," *Knowledge-Based Systems* 5, no. 1 (1992): 11.
[29] Donald A. Schön, The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 40.

2.2.2 Idea Generation and Abduction

The next phase, preliminary design, is one in which "alternative solutions are generated and explored. Alternative solutions are neither numerous nor fully developed when generated. They emerge through the incremental transformations of a few kernel ideas."[30] In this phase, designers create potential solutions, externalize them onto paper in the form of thumbnails and conceptual sketches, and engage in lateral transformations of ideas. Preliminary sketches, rough drafts of ideas, and notes from early design meetings are the theatrical equivalent of the preliminary design phase. Unlike the analytical phase of problem structuring, taking place in verbal, schematic, or chart-based artifacts, preliminary designs are often visual. The idea generation phase is also the primary location of abductive reasoning. Given the representational and functional demands of the script, what possible solutions could exist to satisfy those demands? Of special attention to New Stagecraft practitioners were the functional demands of the script, which began to be seen as constraints on a design solution. Successful ideas were those which best satisfied all conditions of the script – representational, thematic, and functional.

Functional criteria are best described with reference to the theory of affordances. Gibson's theory of affordances, drawing from his work in evolutionary and perceptual psychology, states that we first understand an environment through the perception of potential behavioral interactions with it. Gibson terms these characteristics of the environment its affordances, or "what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill."[31] Simply put, one understands an environment not through its qualia (size, color, shape, mass,

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[30] Goel, *Sketches of Thought*, 125.
[31] James J Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), 127.

etc…), but through its affordances – what sort of behavior it permits.[32] As the style of design moved toward more abstract sets, designers needed to analyze scripts less in terms of their representational needs and more in terms of their function – what sort of actor movement and scenic spectacle could be accomplished by a set. Idea generation, undertaken in the sketch, is the phase in which verbal statements of functional requirements become visual attempts to manifest affordances in line with the other constraints of the design. From Goel's point of view, these sketches would evidence many lateral transformations, variations on initial ideas which might be tested against each other for suitability given the full list of design constraints.

2.2.3 Refinement, Specification, and the Cognitive Artifact

After a number of alternative solutions are generated, the designer in Goel's theory selects the best solutions and commits to them. Unlike previous phases, which operated on abstract levels and engaged in lateral transformation, refinement displays vertical transformation, a renewed focus on the "concrete nature" of information.[33] Refinement considers how a given design solution functions and decides on its exact features, whereas detailing indicates both dimensioning and the inclusion of surface detail, ornament, and exacting specification of form and shape. The movement from the rough draft to the finalized ground plan or model is a process of refinement and detailing – for only through specification of dimension can the designer build accurate artifacts. The development of working drawings, paint elevations, and detail examples comprise the detailing phase of design, which in some cases extends beyond the designer's studio and into the execution phase taking place in the scenic construction shop.

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[32] Ibid., 134.
[33] Goel, *Sketches of Thought*, 126.

Goel's main project investigates the sketch, and thus *Sketches of Thought* has less to say about the refinement and specification phases of design. Theories of design inflected by work in embodied cognition, such as Visser's cognitive design artifacts and Clark and Chalmer's theory of cognitive offloading, pick up where Goel leaves off. In the design situation, the creation of external representations (models, sketches, notes) creates a highly specific, embedded environment. Representations such as draft designs and models function as thinking objects, in the sense of cognitive extension described by Andy Clark and David Chalmers.[34] For Clark and Chalmers, the mind and the environment are a "coupled system," and through engaging particular elements of the environment to perform cognitive tasks, the cognitive act itself can be extended from the individual mind into external objects – a process called cognitive offloading.

Cognitive offloading refers to the process by which thinking itself takes place out of the skull and in the environment. Rather than storing information about items or concepts in the world, it is possible to store problem-solving information in the environment. As Wilson notes, these tasks help us perform more complex tasks by "leaving information out there in the world to be accessed as needed, rather than taking time to fully encode it."[35] Cognitive offloading in its most basic form refers to the assignment of information to a given aspect of the environment. While short-term information storage of information is an important aspect, it is not the whole purpose of offloading; using cognitive artifacts can simplify or transform the tasks that the subject must perform.

The creation of cognitively useful representations, for the designer and for the client, is the creation of what Visser terms a cognitive artifact. Not only the "end products" of a given

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[34] Clark and Chalmers argue that this external information storage system (memory) is philosophically indistinguishable from internal memory because of the accessibility and automaticity with which Otto consults the notebook. Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind," *analysis* (1998).
[35] Wilson, "Six Views of Embodied Cognition," 628.

design, artifacts are "constructed and used throughout the design process."[36] A representation that functions as a tool in a cognitive activity is a cognitive artifact, and they may be mental (rules of thumb, mnemonics, mental lists) or physical. External representations, however, are the most available for study. Some of the purposes Visser proposes for artifacts are for storage of intermediary and final ideas, to advance understanding, to derive implications from results already obtained, to anchor hypothetical reality to material objects, to organize one's own work, or to communicate one's work with other.[37] Design sketches and notes are artifactual in most of these senses. They also afford the testing of ideas and the comparison of competing ideas. In this way, the creation of artifacts helps the designer better understand the implications of a given solution. These drafts enable reflection and interpretation, permit the designer to posit more detailed elaborations of the solution as s/he moves toward the final, detailed specification in the technical drawing.

To sum up, the key ideas from design studies that guide my inquiry into scene design process are the following:

- Design is a cognitive activity (not a profession) that consists of the creation and manipulation of detailed representations, often with the purpose of later execution (Visser)
- Design behavior tends to fall into specific phases, each of which is accompanied by a particular set of cognitive behaviors and symbolic languages associated with that stage (Goel)

[36] Willemien Visser, *The Cognitive Artifacts of Designing* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), xvii.
[37] Ibid., 120-1.

- Early phases of design are marked by a period of structuring the problem itself, called problem setting, in which the designer names and frames the problem through analytical behavior (Schön), and
- Later design phases include idea generation, which involves abductive reasoning (Cross) and attention to affordances (Gibson). Refinement and specification are made meaningful through the use of artifacts (Visser).

These ideas, taken together, support the use of scenic design documentation not merely as the results of a then-incomplete creative process, but as the material remains of past cognitive processes. By studying design artifacts, it is possible to make educated guesses about the problems confronting designers in their processes, to characterize typical paths taken as they conceived a project, and, on a larger scale, to suggest changes in cultural conceptions of design process by demonstrating changes in the documentation of different periods.

2.3 A CASE STUDY IN ROUGH DRAFTS: HENRY HEYMANN

A process-driven perspective necessitates a look, as much as possible, at the actual materials of design, not only end products, but also intermediate design artifacts. Rough drafts are not merely discarded ideas about process, but in fact evidence of past acts. Designers think on the page, and through that conversation with external representations some find that they can better articulate what their ideas on a text are, or will be.[38] Studying sketches as evidence of process, though, is

[38] Such is the perspective of Guy-Claude François, frequent scenographic collaborator with Ariane Mnouchkine: "it's in making this transposition from the text that I learn to understand the text better, what's in the lines and between the lines – or, more exactly, with my sketch, I find out what I understood and made of the text!" In Davis, *Stage Design*, 52.

not a technique that has been systematically applied to studies across designers, in part due to the difficulty of comparing one designer's process to another, even within the same time period. Through Heymann's archive I show how studying artifacts can uncover the processes of creative thought that animated past design processes.

Henry Heymann designed professionally in Western Pennsylvania and maintained longtime collaborations with opera and ballet companies locally and nationally, including the Pittsburgh Opera, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, New York City Opera, and Cincinnati Opera. Heymann taught theatrical design at the University of Pittsburgh from 1968 to 2000 and designed over sixty productions for the University of Pittsburgh Theatre. Heymann trained at the Yale University School of Drama from 1958-1960, studying under Donald Oenslager and W. Oren Parker. There, Heymann studied first as a costume designer, for which he passed the Local USA 829 union entrance exam in 1962. Many of his first designs were for costume, including the national tour of Gore Vidal's *The Best Man* in 1961, for which Oenslager did the sets. While perhaps first a costume designer, he also designed scenery early in his career, especially for the Santa Fe Opera, with whom he worked for five years before coming to Pittsburgh.[39]

As a working designer between 1968 and 2000, Heymann represents the New Stagecraft design process in its maturity. The productions I consider range from academic to professional, and are preserved at diverse levels of detail. Among the most well-documented in the Curtis Collection are 1977's *Balyasnikov*, produced at the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, Pitt's 1981 *She Stoops to Conquer* and 1982 *All the Way Home*, and the Three Rivers Shakespeare Festival's 1990 *The Tempest*. A significant subset of his work was for ballet and opera, both costumes and sets, but I bracket off this work as the spatial needs of both forms are quite different from

[39] "Curriculum Vitae," undated, Front Matter, Henry Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

theatrical productions. In particular, Heymann's scenic designs for opera tended to reflect fewer three-dimensional elements and more flats and drops, which might result from the need for many more performers on stage than in traditional plays, even musicals.[40]

I am looking at Heymann as a representative, breadth-based case study of a particular type of design process. Heymann's recently donated papers contain a large amount of roughs and supporting material. Heymann and his assistants collected and organized the papers, and so the selection pressures are purely his own; no archival sorting has yet been undertaken with this collection. As a result, it becomes possible to identify characteristic patterns across different iterations of Heymann's process. In particular, I conclude:

- Heymann's archived designs demonstrate a consistent series of design phases similar to Parker and Goel's model, especially in the early phases of a project,
- Heymann's analytical and idea generation phases depended on the establishment of areas for action and established firm topological schemes early,
- Heymann used sketches to inquire about the nature of the design problem, and
- Heymann refined his designs through the use of specific cognitive artifacts to solve individual difficult problems.

By considering his sketches in this way, I demonstrate a real-world application of cognitive design theories, and provide one example of New Stagecraft-inflected design process in action.

A typical design deadline schedule from Pitt's season of 1981-1982 provides a first glance at Heymann's order of operations.[41] The first document deadline was for the floor plan,

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[40] For example *Elixir of Love*, which toured for several years with the Cincinnatti Opera, contained male and female choruses of 10-12 each. Costume Breakdown and Renderings, 1968, Production Folder 2, Henry Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

[41] "'81-'82 Mainstage Production Schedule," "She Stoops to Conquer '82," Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

which was completed seven weeks before the opening of the show. A scenic rendering was then completed five to seven days after that. From there, prop lists were created in the next week, and then working drawings for the shop (front, rear, and large prop detail elevations) three to four weeks before opening. The first meetings between the director and the designer occurred approximately three weeks before the floor plan deadline in both *She Stoops to Conquer* (opening November 1981) and *All the Way Home* (February 1982). Notes indicate that at least one major design meeting took place between Heymann and the directors, Kathleen George and Stephen Coleman, respectively. First meetings took place after Heymann had had time to generate his own concept of the script, and he often began meetings with his own ideas. In all, the design process lasted between nine and ten weeks from the initial meeting to opening night. In the professional theatre, his time frame was similar; documents from his 1977 design from *Balyasnikov* are dated between September and December 1977, with most of the design work being completed before November.[42]

2.3.1 Analysis and Problem-Structuring

The analysis process for Heymann began with reading and notating a script. As he began to approach a project, Heymann listed scenic elements called for by the playwright or by the action of the play. Extant notes indicate that Heymann was primarily concerned with the big picture; his analysis documents list the complete number and kind of scenic areas called for in a text. For example, early analysis notes from Pitt's 1977 production of *The Merchant of Venice* contain a

[42] While sketches are undated, in the case his 1977 design for *Balyasnikov*, the name of the production changed during the rehearsals. Edward L., Blank, "Bubble Brings Her Here," *Pittsburgh Press*, December 17, 1977, H-1. All of Heymann's conceptual sketches and working ground plans are labeled "Once Upon a Time," so it is reasonable to assume that the majority of Heymann's work on the production occurred at least more than four weeks prior to its opening.

simple list of scene numbers, locations in fictional Venice, and short, atmospherically descriptive phrases such as "late summer autumn" or "twilight."[43] Production meeting notes from 1981's *All the Way Home* list five primary acting areas for the script, spaces in and around the central family house, in relative chronological order with respect to the play.[44] *What the Butler Saw* (Pitt '90) was first analyzed through the architectural needs of the combined clinic/examining room, and focus primarily on the individual areas within the space – the table, the curtains, the skylight – and the doors leading out into other rooms.[45] From these lists, Heymann began to network places together in space and time, to determine which areas needed to be close to each other to facilitate scenic action. Both information in the text itself and suggested by dialogue is incorporated into these documents.

In all cases, the primary concern was the relationship of a given scenic area to the other spaces of the stage, though the challenge of spatial analysis was different with each play. In *Merchant*, Heymann's major task was to provide flexible, frequent changes of scenery and mood, and thus his descriptions of space are minimal – a place and a seasonal feeling. In *All the Way Home*, Heymann arranged acting spaces in relationship to each other within the spatial logic of a 1910s farmhouse with bedrooms above and parlor below a central staircase. *What the Butler Saw* takes place in a single room, yet Heymann arranged his notes on space according to potential architectural arrangements of the various areas. *Balyasnikov*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Spring Awakening*, and *She Stoops to Conquer* all contain this same division of space into more or less

[43] Script Breakdown Notes, "The Merchant of Venice '76," Henry Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.
[44] Production Notes, "All the Way Home '81," Henry Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.
[45] Notes, "What the Butler Saw '91," Henry Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

permanent acting areas. Typically, there were more than two of these areas, yet not more than eight to ten.

No documents in the Heymann archive contain both sketches and analytical notes; sketching pages are set up in an orthographic format,[46] and analysis pages are written entirely in natural language. This suggests that Heymann separated his analysis phase from the visual thinking of sketching, at the very least onto separate pages. While the basic cognitive tasks of verbal and visual processing are, of course, involved in both reading text and developing possible worlds out of that analysis, the separation of analysis notes in sentence fragments from his idea-generating sketches suggests that Heymann viewed these tasks as separate phases of his design process.

After analysis was complete, Heymann seems to have imposed a topographic structure on the production fairly quickly. All extant early thumbnails are variations on the same general approach to the stage space. Once Heymann developed a workable scheme on paper, it did not change; the lateral transformations he undertook were options within a theme, rather than total competing approaches to the design of a play. Heymann's tendency to early commitment may be seen as both a help and a hindrance. Nigel Cross has indicated that early commitment can add efficiency to a design process, but can also hamper later creative leaps.[47] Given Heymann's academic and professional output in this period, while also teaching on the Pitt faculty, a systematic, early-commitment approach is understandable. It is possible that none of his testing documents were preserved, or that Heymann developed his spatial topography without using

[46] In this style plan, elevation, and side views share the same sheet of paper, and the plan and elevation are aligned so that lines from the plan correspond to the same part of the set in elevation. Typically, Heymann's plans are on the bottom half of the page, with elevations above.
[47] Cross, *Designerly Ways of Knowing*, 82.

external representations. Whatever the reason, Heymann's "problem" was likely "set" fairly early, to borrow Schön's term, and his solution concept was firm from the outset.

In another production, analysis and problem setting led to scenic metaphor. Other productions include rough drafts which focus on the spatial relationships, as well. *All the Way Home*'s sketching phase contained the orientation and reorientation of rooms of the central house. The design was intentionally inspired by Mielziner's interiors, at director Stephen Coleman's request. Two pages marked "first meeting" indicate both the central metaphorical image of the production – the butterfly, playwright Tad Mosel's image of the transcendent quality of a death in the family, and vertical ascent – and the list of rooms in the house.[48] Here Heymann's notes show that in addition to spatial planning, aesthetic concerns entered into his analysis very early. A second leaf, also labeled "first meeting" was either prepared for this initial design meeting or produced in the meeting itself. Small thumbnail sketches on this page contain multiple options for platforming of the house, a conglomeration of odd angles and dimensions.

The staircase is central on the set for both metaphoric and functional reasons. The butterfly is the central scenic image, and the staircase visually resembles the insect's body around which rooms emerge like butterfly wings. The orientation of rooms and the staircase also literalized the theme of vertical ascent. From the director-prompted concept, Heymann developed a solution in which the set functions as a metaphorical representation and a functional equivalent that accommodates the action suggested by the production concept. As before, analysis and idea generation happened quickly upon each other, though in this case Heymann was able to develop a clever linkage of the thematic and functional needs of the set, perhaps in the heat of the design meeting itself.

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[48] Production Notes, "All the Way Home '81," Henry Heymann Designs and Papers, Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

Heymann's process of beginning a production with a spatial analysis aligns Heymann with New Stagecraft practice. Mielziner, Oenslager, Howard Bay, and other major New Stagecraft designers all approach the analysis of a text through some language-based list or chart first, though perhaps without the same degree of early commitment to a firm topographic organization of space. Heymann's area-centered analysis method is evocative of the New Stagecraft style, given its consideration of spatial function and the possibility of doubling or superimposing areas on one another. Heymann's analytical process prioritized the mood and thematic content of the play, the need for multiple representative scenic areas for action, and the use of visual metaphor.

2.3.2 Idea Generation and Conversation with the Sketch

Not only did external elements of Heymann's analytical process show consistency, but his sketching behaviors also demonstrated a consistent approach. Progressions of sketches show that Heymann returned to the same sketch repeatedly throughout his process. To explain this quality of design, I rely on Gabriela Goldschmidt's idea of the sketch as a conversation between the designer and the problem. The rough drafts of Heymann's process indicate that sketches were not merely records of ideas, but a way of externalizing an idea outside of the body so that the designer might approach it anew or compare it with others.

In his discussion of problem setting in professional practice, Schön suggests that workers in "professions" such a law, medicine, counseling, and design quickly oscillate back and forth between actions and observations when performing their practices. Designers make a "move," articulate a concept, or attempt a solution, and then "step back" to see what effect that move has

on the whole.[49] Gabriela Goldschmidt's studies of architects reveal that a similar "pattern of pictorial reasoning" occurs in their design processes. She has identified the "dialectics of sketching," which refers to "the oscillation of argument which brings about gradual transformation of images."[50] Designers work this way, and the rhythm of observation, attempted move, appraisal, and further action is itself a sort of "conversation" with the sketch, or, perhaps, that the designer has with herself. Henrik Gedenryd reinforces the ideas of sketching as a conversation when he notes that "sketching is made up of very small and simple incremental steps, which yield local control and high sensitivity to feedback. This, in turn, makes sketching into a highly fluid and efficient process, which supports the open-ended and conceptual nature of design work which sketching is typically used for."[51] By considering the conversational quality of sketching when looking at the document, one can see how a given design positioned the sketch as an intermediate, useful design representation.

The *Balyasnikov* rough draft sketches indicate a high degree of such conversational interaction. In Heymann's original conception the set was divided into three regions: two large circles in a long, arena space and a neutral area in the middle. The play was set in the apartment studio of an old Russian puppeteer who falls in love with a young muse as his career was declining. The two-circle arrangement – a solution concept Heymann held onto from his analysis phase – underscored the tension between the puppeteer's public persona and tumultuous inner life. This tension between circular areas, public and private, serves as Heymann's "frame", in Schön and Gedenryd's sense, for this play. Three conceptual sketches, containing different orientations and relative sizes of the circles, test different options for the script.

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[49] This concept is termed "reflective practice," and is the hallmark of the traditional "professions" for which one requires advanced schooling, such as law, teaching, medicine, etc… Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 132.
[50] Gabriela Goldschmidt, "The Dialectics of Sketching," *Creativity Research Journal* 4, no. 2 (1991).
[51] Henrik Gedenryd, *How Designers Work* (Lund, Sweden: Jabe Offset AB, 1998), 145.

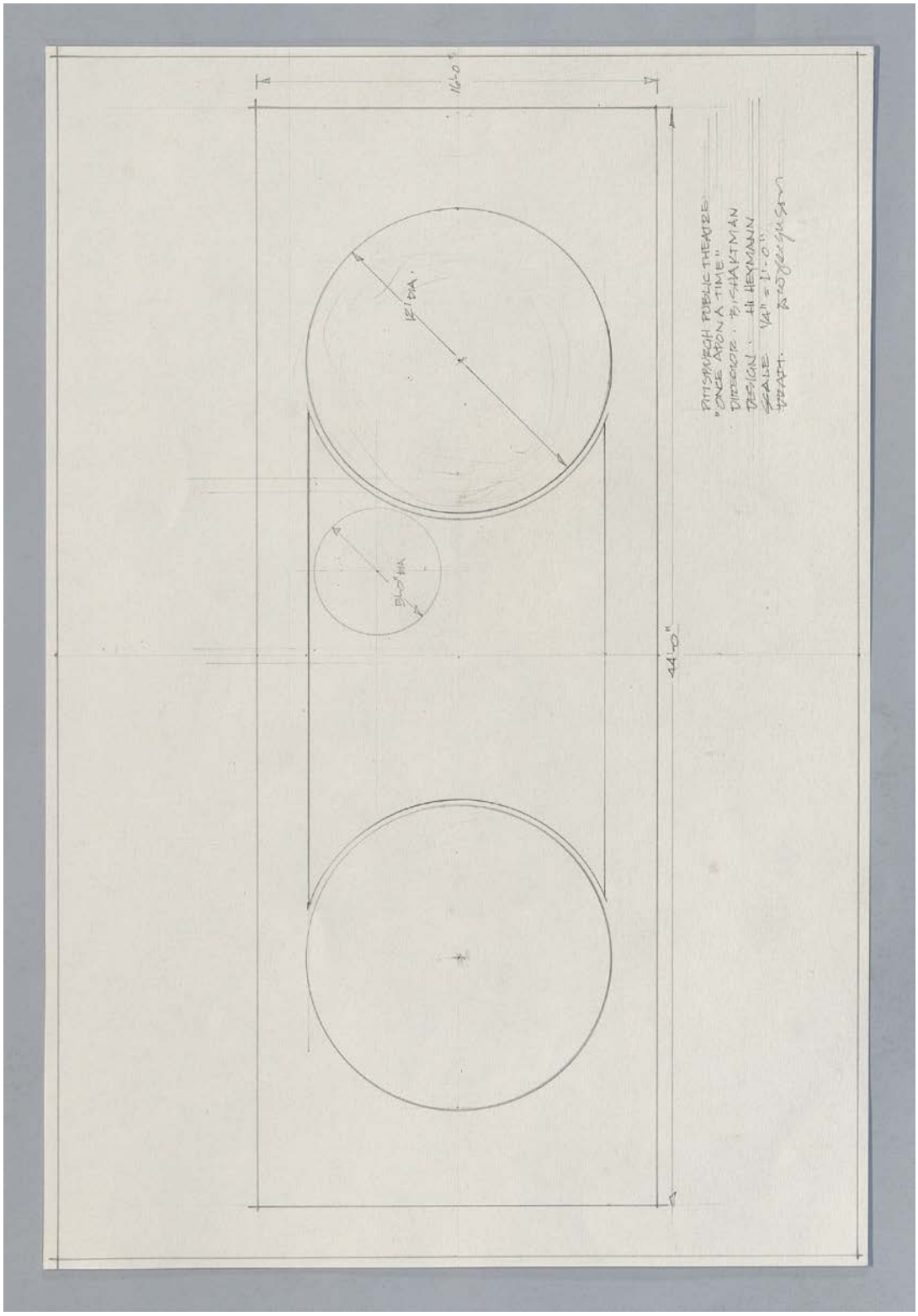

Figure 1. *Balyasnikov* Concept Sketch #1

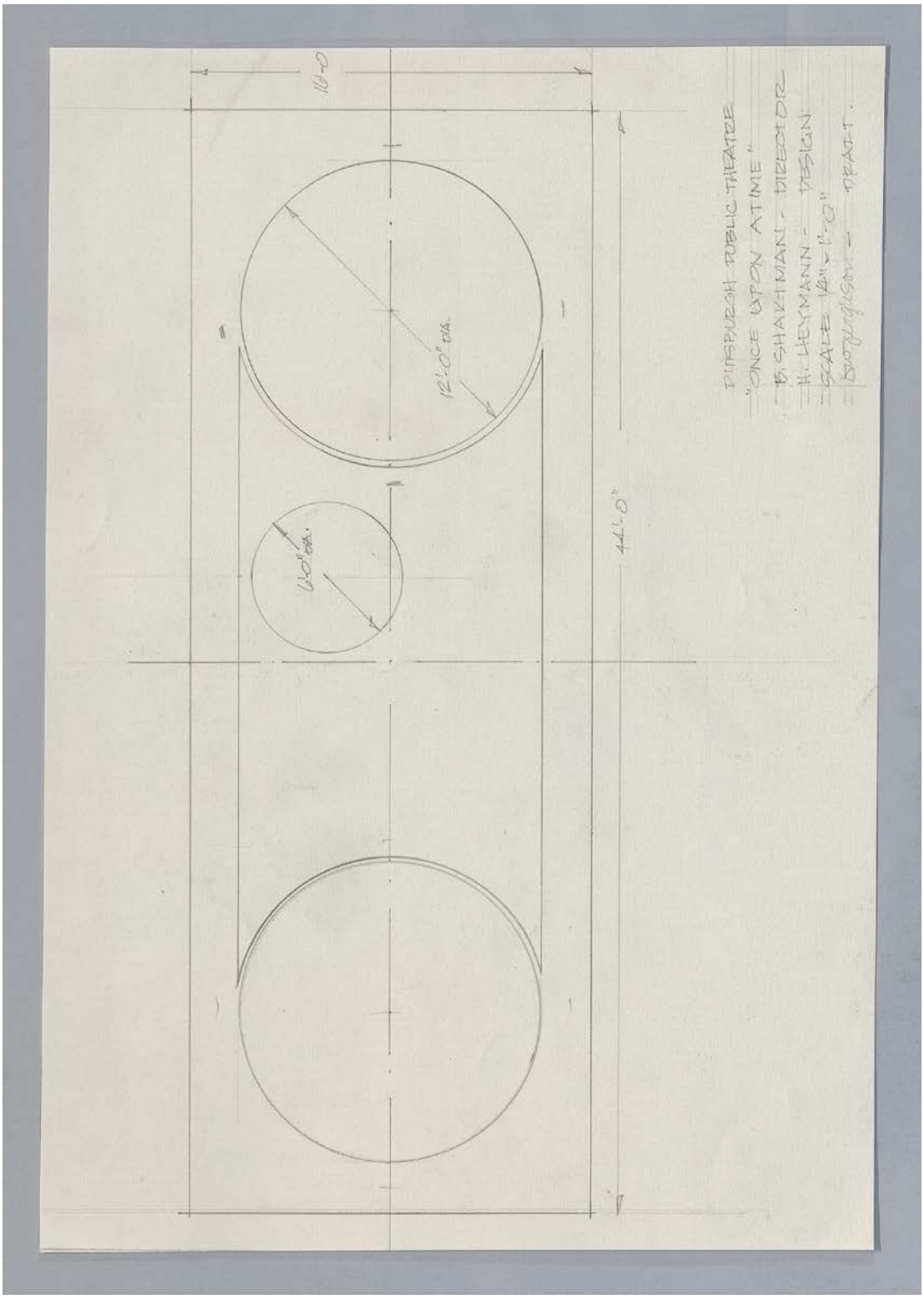

Figure 2. *Balyasnikov* Concept Sketch #2

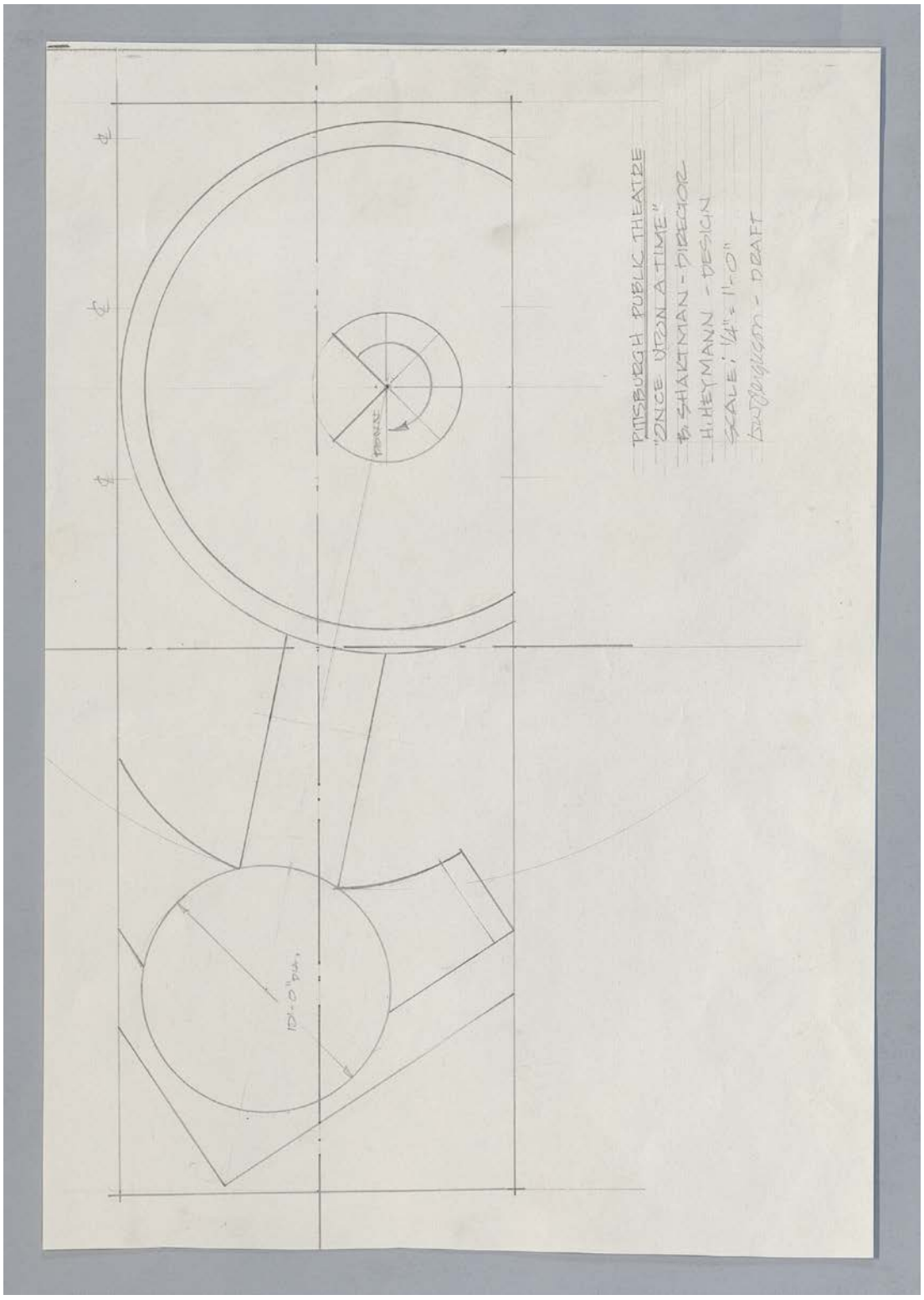

Figure 3. *Balyasnikov* Concept Sketch #3

The first sketch shows a symmetric arrangement of circles in the space, while the second enlarges both circles and moves the onstage staircase to a less balanced position off-center. The third and final sketch greatly distorts the relative size of the circles and places the staircase inside the larger circle, creating a strong diagonal pushing from the center of the larger area into the smaller one. This strong and dynamic composition was the product of "playing with" the areas Heymann had established earlier. While it could have been accomplished intramentally, using the sketches as a visual prompt likely eased Heymann's process and perhaps opened up new design possibilities.

In another series of roughs, also for *Balyasnikov*, Heymann's conversation with the document is a literal comparison of options. Having decided to use the more dynamic orientation of the space, Heymann then began to populate each area of the set with the furniture, producing two competing rough drafts. Penned on the same sheet of vellum, the roughs are two possible options for the ground plan.

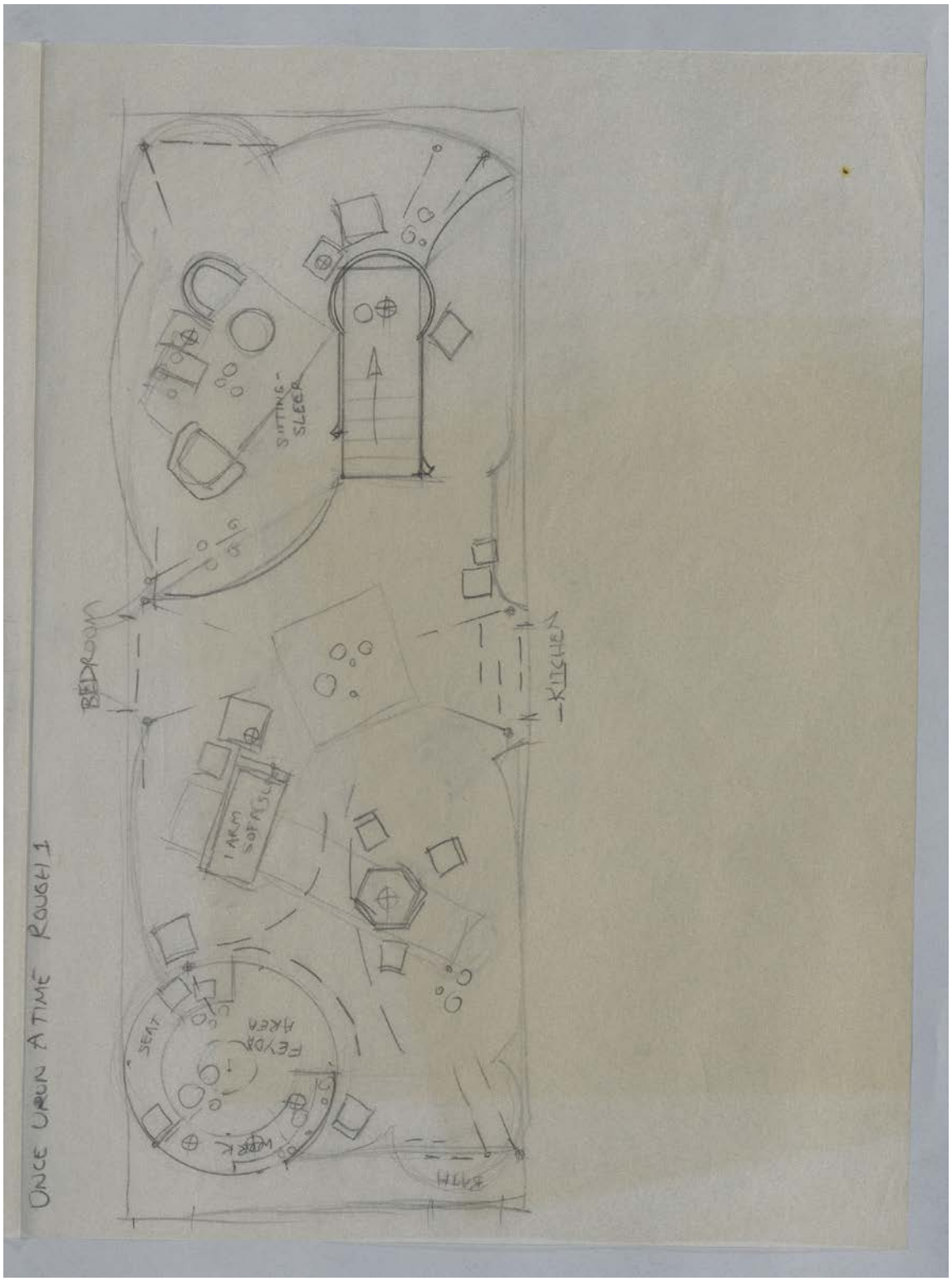

Figure 4. *Balyasnikov* Ground Plan Rough #1

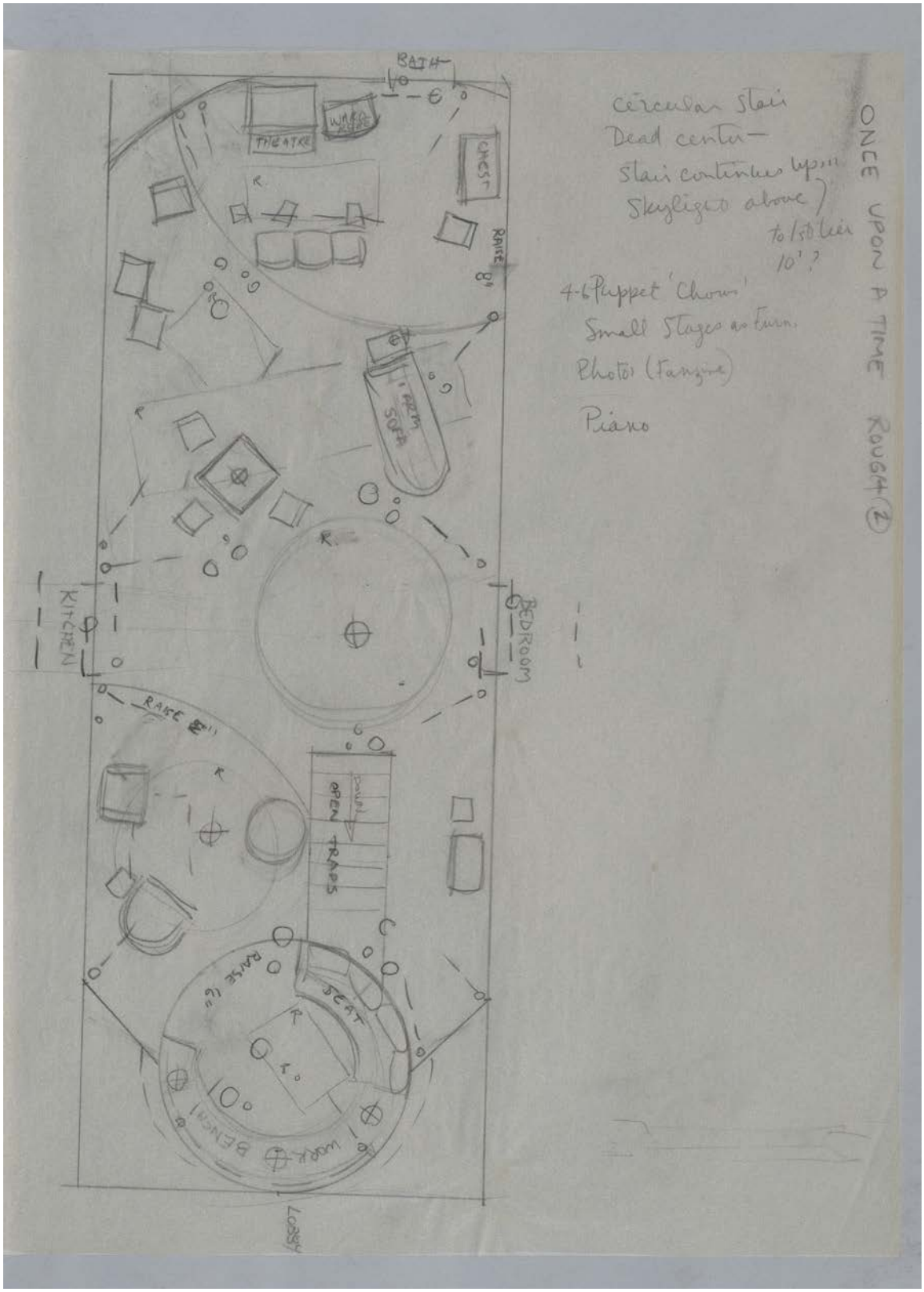

Figure 5. *Balyasnikov* Ground Plan Rough #2

The consistency of the frame is apparent in the drawings: a similar figure-eight usage pattern of the space is maintained, with objects anchoring both ends of the stage, and movement pathways around each anchor. The tension between two circular acting areas is similarly preserved. However, the contents of each area are juxtaposed, with the living and puppet studio/workshop areas flipped in each. Between roughs Heymann also changed the central axis of the playing space, moved staircases, and experimented with table and chair placement. Both of these roughs were working drawings, evidenced by the many erasures and tentative pencil lines on each. Notes alongside the second rough name elements of the set that are not present in the drawing, yet appear on subsequent sketches, suggesting literal conversation with the document. A light pencil circle in the center of the rendering suggests that this sketch was not merely a one-way communication to the director, but a working document. Heymann may have drawn this second circle in the middle of the drawing after he had completed the sketch in its entirety. This is precisely the way Goldschmidt suggests that designers interact with their sketches, as an impetus for conversation with previous iterations of ideas.

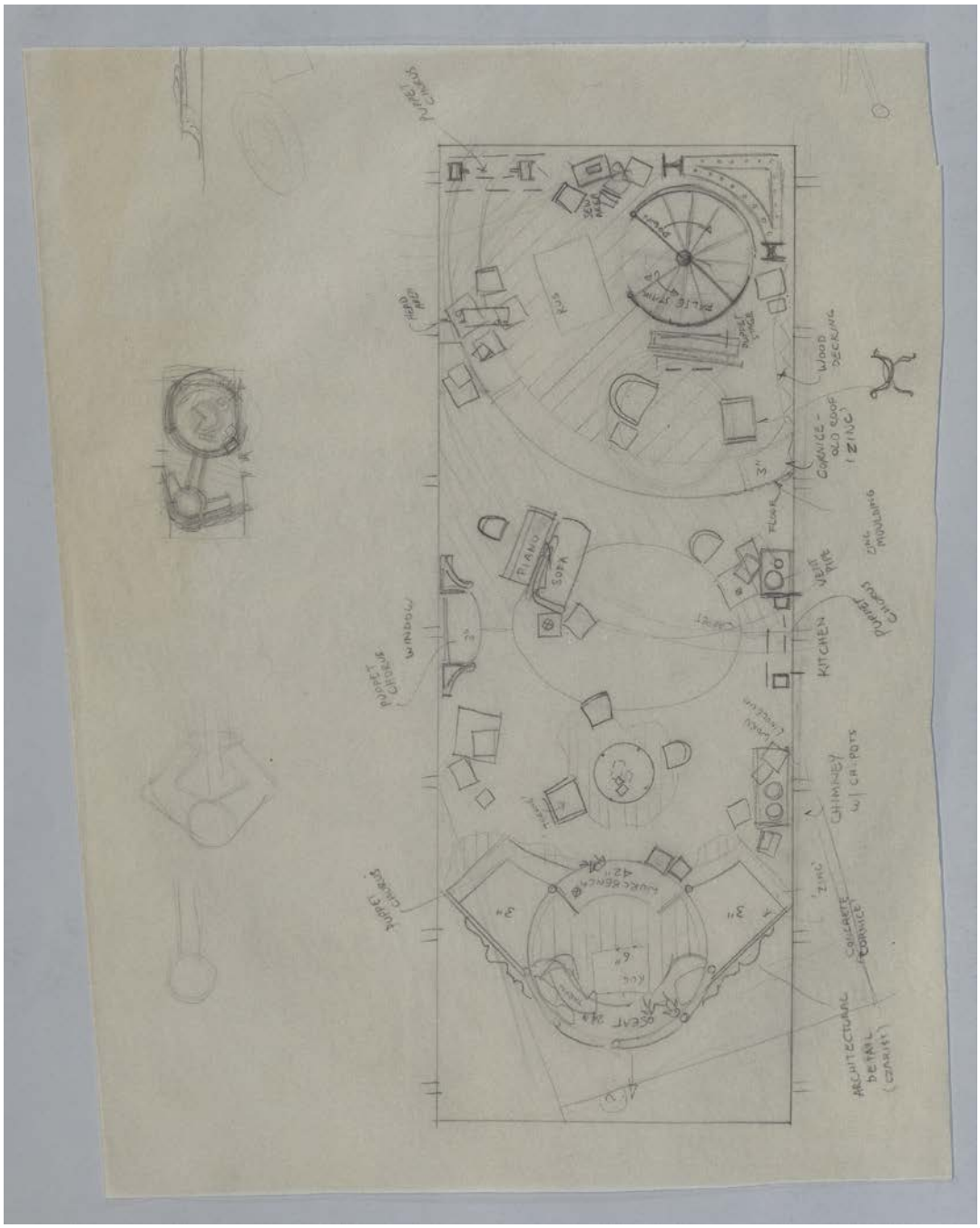

Figure 6. *Balyasnikov* Ground Plan Rough #3

A third rough draft combines elements from the previous two drafts – the strong circular studio area from the first rough draft, and the right angle and circular staircase position from rough draft number two. Together with other notes on the page – the inclusion of a piano and small puppet stage – the final decisions of the collaborative team become clear. The third rough draft clarifies the purposes of each space and finally develops the spatial orientation that would carry itself through until the final production.

Though such evidence is rare and requires a degree of interpretation, rough drafts such as these can be direct evidence of changes. Sequences of roughs or sketches provide the most information about what was being adjusted by the designer at a given phase. For Heymann, in the sketching phase, he first arranged the spaces themselves, and then massaged that arrangement through elaboration in more detailed sketches, with furniture. Both of these interactions were direct results of having multiple sketches with which the designer could interact conversationally.

2.3.3 Artifacts in Problem Solving

Ground plans and schematics were not the only sketches Heymann used to solve problems of the script. In some cases, Heymann used sketches and models as artifacts to compare and test different solutions for all sorts of problems. Erased elements on ground plans for *Balyasnikov* and *All the Way Home* indicate that Heymann tested his designs on the page in multiple placements and orientations before deciding on a particular solution. In their ability to compare dimensions, compare and contrast versions of the same idea, and to manipulate representations through folding, drawing, and cutting, the paper sketch is an effective cognitive tool. Among the

tasks aided by the use of sketches are memory, visuospatial processing, closure and pattern recognition, and idea fluency/the generation of novel ideas. By anchoring the idea in space and affording it capabilities to be manipulated and to interact with other representations in meaningful ways, sketches are eminently useful artifacts.

Two working pages of notes for *Balyasnikov* indicate how sketches could be used to compare different options for solving what became both a directorial and budgetary problem – the staircase. In one sketch, Heymann compares the stage space footprint of linear, square, and circular staircases in the set, to determine which would best balance aesthetics and pleasure.

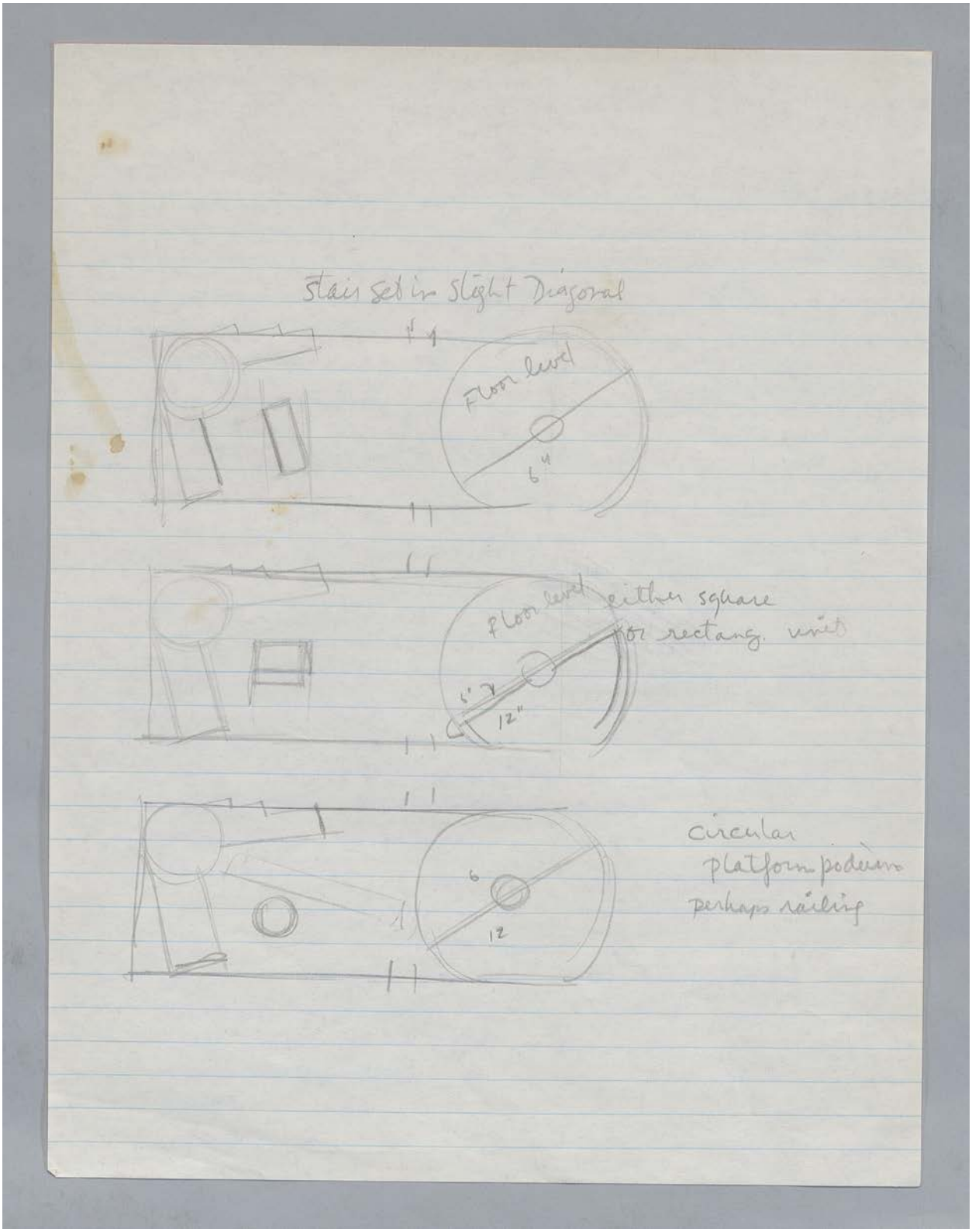

Figure 7. *Balyasnikov* Staircase Completion Sketch

Another working drawing compares the size of three different rectilinear staircases, with dimensions to determine the most economical option. With these, the presence of the sketch in the archive indicates a much more workaday problem to be solved on paper. When looking at design documentation such as this, the elaboration of alternative options may indicate that the designer needs the external representation of the sketch to compare options, or to determine the exact specifications of a given design object. Heymann went with the square staircase, the cheapest both in terms of cost and stage real estate; he worked out this detail through sketch use.

Across sketches, Heymann set up his page in order to optimize his testing of candidate ideas. One page of working notes from *All the Way Home* is representative of this.[52] A list of scenic needs (furniture, walls, stairs, platforms) runs down the right hand side of many of his pages, and sketch versions of ground plan and elevation of the set often sit in roughly isometric relationships to each other, with ground plan/overview above, elevation below, and details to the side. Heymann's use of the page shows that he used orthographic projection to organize three-dimensional thought on the page, even in the planning phases of the design. Further, the schematic plan contains many hastily labeled and relabeled dimensions and calculations. While working, Heymann was concerned about how much space was available, and how much space the sketched house unit would occupy. Rather than working from abstract shapes, as he appears to have done with *Balyasnikov*, for *All the Way Home* Heymann saw the need for explicit calculations and dimensioning even in the sketch phase. With strong thematic and metaphorical content identified early, Heymann's sketches focused on the translation of the idea into possible realities. The dimensions and heights of the platforms changed from the sketch to the finalized reality, yet the general organizing concept did not.

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[52] Ground Plan w/Basic Platforms," "All the Way Home '81," Henry Heymann Designs and Papers. Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

Occasionally, artifacts can be shared among collaborators to enhance understanding of a concept. For example, the set of *She Stoops to Conquer* consisted of a large false-proscenium unit nearly the full width of the Charity Randall theatre proscenium. In Heymann's design, the false-proscenium moved upstage and downstage in different positions for each scene; some, such as parlors, would be quite shallow, while outdoor scenes encompassed whole deck of the stage. One of the artifacts Heymann used to visualize this complex device was quite simple – a piece of card-weight paper the same shape and dimension in scale as the moving unit. To plan scenic changes, and to communicate this concept to director Kathleen George, Heymann moved this card upstage and downstage on top of a ground plan of the rest of the set. Notations on the card unit and on the ground plan, both archived, confirm their use together, and further indicate furniture positions in the various scenes of the play.[53] The plan even contains a small scenic breakdown in the corner to remind the user which positions go with which locations.

With this process Heymann built and used an elegant artifact. Rather than sketch all of the positions on the same ground plan, or in multiple versions, Heymann used the paper card to store and manipulate information: here, the size and shape of the wagon. With the secondary piece in place, he and director Kathy George were able to model the amount of space within a given scene, and to place furniture for given scenes both on and off the sliding platform. Heymann's artifact use also allowed him to plan changes more quickly and to identify where upstage lighting sources might be obstructed by the unit's back wall. In this case, even the medium is designed; paper is readily available, disposable, easily shaped to specifications, and is easily written upon. With this simple device, Heymann developed an effective cognitive artifact

[53] "Sliding Platform Positions Rough," Production Folder for "She Stoops to Conquer," Henry Heymann Designs and Papers. Curtis Theatre Collection, University of Pittsburgh.

to both develop the sequence of moves taken by the scenic wagon and to communicate that progression to collaborators.

Cognitive artifacts touch all facets of the production, inside and outside the design process. Tips and tricks of the trade, from cue sheets, the specific language and notation of blocking in rehearsals, the placement of objects on a prop table backstage, and even the designation of psychological stage spaces within a given design all extend cognition out of the body/mind and onto the environment.[54] Models, too, are designed artifacts that aid theatrical creativity. As tools for moving a design off of the page and into space, models allow designers and directors to visualize space. The task is simplified from the mental imagination of a three-dimensional space and its change over time to the significantly easier one of perception of an environment and the manipulation of objects within an environment. None of Heymann's three-dimensional scale models exist in the archive, and production schedules suggest that Heymann preferred to work in orthographic and perspective-rendered drawings.

By moving cognition outside of the body through offloading and artifact use, designers consciously enlist the environment into their processes. Heymann was not the only designer to use artifacts in this way; almost all design makes use of external representations during and after the process. Studying Heymann's artifacts, however, allows me to conclude that Heymann's process is generally consonant with models of design found internal and external to the field of theatre. Heymann's analysis, idea generation, testing and artifact use illuminate not only that he designed, but how. Across selected productions of his career, his process seems broadly the same. Now, I turn from breadth to depth in an exceptional process from thirty years earlier, Jo

[54] Evelyn Tribble has demonstrated the effectiveness of cognitive offloading in a historical context, showing how door placement, the posted scene plot, and linguistic prompting within the Elizabethan theater permitted actors to perform remarkable memory tasks – performing multiple lengthy plays in rolling repertory. Evelyn B. Tribble, *Cognition in the Globe: Attention and Memory in Shakespeare's Theatre* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Mielziner's design for *Death of a Salesman*, to show how the New Stagecraft process was deployed and shaped by one of America's most influential stage artists.

2.4 JO MIELZINER'S *DEATH OF A SALESMAN* DESIGN PROCESS

What did the New Stagecraft method look like on Broadway? Did process function differently with a celebrity designer and a new play? By looking at Jo Mielziner's work in detail in this section, I show that the same elements of process listed in the previous section hold true for Mielziner's method in the 1948/9. This consistency suggests that a paradigmatic model of design has influenced much of midcentury American theatrical design. While Mielziner's artifacts differ, the overall sequence and underlying cognitive acts of design are remarkably similar to Heymann's and those indicated by Goel and Cross. As a major production seen as the height of modern American scenic design, strongly influenced by Jones, Simonson, and other "fathers" of New Stagecraft technique, *Death of a Salesman* crystallized a working method for scenic designers. Not only was the concept of poetic realism in scenic craft fully articulated but also a stable model of commercially and artistically successful design process emerged.[55] Looking at this production allows us to see the process of a designer working at full-tilt, at a high point in his career with full mastery of the technique.

While Mielziner may not have used the same set of procedures for all his designs, Mielziner did feel that the process used for *Salesman* was representative of his best work. Well-

[55] Liam Doona, "Hope, Hopelessness/Presence, Absence: Scenographic Imagination and the Poetic Spaces of Jo Miezliner, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller," in *Theatre Design: Exploring Scenography*, ed. Malcolm Griffiths (Nottingham: Society of British Theatre Designers, 2002), 61, Mary C. Henderson, *Mielziner: Master of Modern Stage Design* (New York: Back Stage Books, 2001), 172.

publicized in public-interest and industry-specific press, Mielziner felt the project and his collaborators brought the best out of him. He knew that "this kind of artistic contribution is only achieved when working with the most competent director and the most creative dramatist."[56] The production is heavily featured in Mielziner's portfolio memoir, *Designing for the Theatre*. Together with Jones' theoretical writings it has been regarded by design scholars as the ideal coordination of the scenic design idea with the playwright intention and directorial concept.[57]

My treatment of Mielziner's process designing Salesman applies the same categories and terminologies as I explored with Heymann. By examining the phases, behaviors, and instrumental role of artifacts in the Salesman archive, I draw four major conclusions:

- Mielziner's process contained analysis, sketching, testing, and specification phases,
- Mielziner's analysis used artifacts to bridge textual and graphical representations, explicitly structuring a problem through visualized script breakdowns
- Mielziner tested designs in the sketching phase, and
- Mielziner's process was highly collaborative with Kazan and Miller, and Mielziner's contribution streamlined the play, emphasizing the scenic metaphor of the house.

By looking at Mielziner's process of analysis, the role of representations, and his collaborative contributions to the piece, I show that the design process was used by Mielziner and was recognizable as a professional practice among his Broadway collaborators in the late 1940s.

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[56] Letter to the Wesleyan Film Program, 18 January 1973, Box 10, Folder 7, Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.

[57] Henderson, *Mielziner*, Christin Essin, *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America: Artists, Activists, Cultural Critics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

2.4.1 Overview of *Salesman* Design Phases

In March 1949, Jo Mielziner recalled the stages of his development of *Salesman* in the fall of 1948. These notes were typed in response to a James Proctor at the *Herald Tribune*, who had planned an article on *Salesman* which was never published.[58] This schedule, reworked to minimize the laborious aspects and emphasize amusing anecdotes, was printed in Mielziner's 1965 publication. From these sources and other letters and notes in the Mielziner archive, a timeline of the *Salesman* design process can be reconstructed.

On September 2, Mielziner received a call from Kermit Bloomgarden, with whom he had worked previously on Lillian Hellman's 1941 *Watch on the Rhine*. Kazan followed up with another phone call on September 9, indicating that he was interested in reading the script. Bloomgarden called the script a "toughie," and Kazan indicated early on that a scenic solution to the sprawling, complicated first draft of *Salesman* would be necessary for the unity of the production.[59] This concern, for scenic unity, would have weighed heavy on Mielziner's mind when he finally received the script on September 17.[60] Mielziner signed a union contract for the production on September 22, by which time a unit setting was already planned for the production, as this determined the overall fee Mielziner would be paid for the production.[61] Between receiving the script and the first design meeting two weeks later, Mielziner read and

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[58] "Outline of Progressive Stages in Development of Production of 'Death of a Salesman,' James Proctor, March 10, 1949, Box 31, Folder 1, Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.
[59] Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre*, 23.
[60] Proctor, 'Outline of Progressive Stages…'
[61] $3250, paid in thirds, a high but not exorbitant sum compared to the minimum union rate. By 1948 Mielziner could command higher rates, but often chose to take lower fees in order to negotiate for other benefits, such as additional royalties for subsequent productions, or to have his name removed from marketing on subpar touring productions using versions of his designs, as happened with the road company of *Salesman*. Contract Dated 22 September 1948 between Jo Mielziner and Kermit Bloomgarden/Walter Fried, Box 31, Folder 1 of the Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.

analyzed the script. His first text breakdown was completed on September 20, and soon after Mielziner began translating the 7-page list of scenic information into spatial constraints. This analysis phase was completed within a week, and Mielziner took his text analysis, a basic schematic of stage space, and a few thumbnail drawings into a design meeting with Kazan, which took place in Boston on September 28.[62] Coming out of this meeting, Mielziner had determined a basic scheme for production, most notably that the set would be "highly simplified" and played with the Loman house as the primary scenic element.

Early sketches document the idea generation phase, in which Mielziner developed competing schemes for accommodating the production's needs. Mielziner's initial drawing phase took place between October 1 and 15, during which he prepared "about twenty sketches."[63] Many are studies of individual elements of a scenic problem – the silhouette of a character, the lighting mood of a given area of stage space, the detail of the roof line, or the details of a backdrop. This sketching phase led into the creation of a ½" scale white model between October 20 and 29. As Mielziner's primary assistant John Harvey worked on detailed lighting plots, Mielziner and his staff created scaled ground plans, elevations, and prop schedules. This second round of design documentation was air-mailed to Elia Kazan in Hollywood on October 29. Kazan returned the model with his comments on November 4. Kazan's responses were primarily concerned with actor movement and visibility on the set, suggesting that Kazan's major purpose at this phase was to simulate actor motion on the set. In notes returned with the white model, Kazan asked for more space in the kitchen, to reduce the size of the water heater, and to reconsider large, neutral flats which were originally placed on the sides of the central house.

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[62] The following dates and phases are drawn from notes, scenic breakdowns, estimates, and letters among Kazan, Bloomgarden, and Mielziner in Box 31, Folder 1 of the Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.
[63] Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre*, 31.

From these comments, Mielziner adjusted his drawings, and the script was revised before rehearsals. After Miller rewrote portions of his script at Kazan and Mielziner's request, Mielziner returned to the new script with analytical questions. A second breakdown dated November 28 includes a list of detailed scenic questions, questioning planned actor business, the details of scene changes, and the location of characters' entrances and exits, and bears written notes in Kazan and Mielziner's hands. From this breakdown Mielziner also planned the lighting scheme for the production; these notes divide scenes into lighting schemes labeled "night apt," "leaf projection," "day apt," and "real scenes in one," for the scenes such as Howard's office that would have taken place on a downstage apron.[64] Also in November, Mielziner sent his designs out to three scenic shops for bidding. An estimate from Vail Scenic Construction Company, which eventually produced the set and soft goods, came in to Bloomgarden on December 7. Mielziner produced painting notes for the shop on December 5, which included instructions, samples, and elevations for the backdrops, scrim, and gauze effects. By this stage, the visual look of the design was largely completed.

Lighting, too, was being budgeted and installed, and a letter to Bloomgarden dated December 20 justifies the need for an increased lighting budget, which was quoted at nearly three times the set construction budget. While the set cost only $12,500, the total expense for lighting equipment was $31,700 with half for controlling devices. Mielziner's plan for the production rested heavily on the projected scenery, which not only projected summer and fall leaves onto the scenes taking place in Willy's mind, but also highlighted the city backdrop in key moments, accenting the "solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming

[64] "Acting Areas," 1949, Box 31, Folder 1, Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.

home."[65] The planned design required 26 2,000 kilowatt projection units, and both the controlling and cabling required to execute such an ambitious design was considerable. The final cost was about half of Mielziner's original quote, approximately,[66] yet Bloomgarden acquiesced to the now-famous lighting design. The traveling company, the only light plot of *Salesman* available in the archive, featured 8-10 projectors.

After a few revisions, Mielziner's tasks turned to supervision and execution. Mielziner spent January and February working on *South Pacific*, set to open April 1949, while John Harvey supervised the installation of lighting at *Salesman*'s out-of-town tryout in New York from January 16-20. Mielziner arrived on the 18th to compose some 150 cues on January 19.[67] The opening at the Locust Street Theatre on the 22nd received a promising reception, and the transfer to the Morosco Theater for the February 10 opening only required small adjustments to account for the comparatively smaller Morosco. Mielziner's assessment of the work was modest: "The performance was technically perfect…contrary to custom, I even stayed up that night and went to a party."[68]

The rhythm of Mielziner's process is familiar: analysis, idea generation, refinement, and testing, followed by the "eighty-five percent" of specification and supervision. Documentation is familiar: Mielziner sketched, modeled, rendered and drafted. Goel's progression of representational systems is also familiar: Mielziner moved from natural, somewhat ambiguous language to non-semantic, ambiguous sketches. From those sketches Mielziner created precise, non-ambiguous technical drawings and paint elevations with detailed instructions.

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[65] Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (New York: The Viking Press, 1949), 11.
[66] Henderson, *Mielziner*, 171.
[67] Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre*, 53-56.
[68] Ibid., 62.

2.4.2 Mielziner's Spatial Analytics

Mielziner's analytical process began with the extraction of relevant information from the playscript. The use of a unit set for the *Salesman* design had been on the table from the first discussions among Mielziner, Kazan, and Bloomgarden, though the nature of the unit set was up for debate. The analytical task before Mielziner was to determine what the play's needs were and how best to accommodate them in a single set. Taking each unique combination of time and place as its own scenic requirement, Mielziner's original analysis demonstrated that the September 1948 version of the script required 13 different locations.[69]

The *Salesman* analysis and conceptualization process was aided by several specific artifacts. In this case, they took the form of lists, charts, and diagrams. Mielziner completed his first 7-page breakdown on September 20, 1948, listing every line of the script that contained business which would need to be supported by scenery or lighting. This work could have been performed by Mielziner himself, but would have been equally appropriate for either his main associate, John Harvey, or another of the assistants and interns that Mielziner regularly hired in his studio.[70] On this original typed document, specific elements necessary to fulfill Miller's scenic vision are underlined in pencil: "kitchen," "cement stoop," and "on a level over their heads." In this way, Mielziner developed a list of the scenic needs of his script from a shortened,

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[69] Scene Breakdown dated September 20, 1948, Box 31, Folder 1, Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.

[70] John Harvey joined Mielziner's firm as a full-time assistant in 1946. Most of Mielziner's finalized designs and working drawings, including those for Salesman, are in Harvey's hand. There were also other assistants in the firm, especially young designers. Mielziner enjoyed a relationship with the then all-female Bennington College, who between 1949 and 1966 sent a series of young scenic designers to work with Mielziner during their winter service term. End of internship evaluations and letters of request indicate that clerical and script-reading duties were typical intern/assistant jobs, as Local 829 union regulations prohibited non-union members from performing any formal design work.

though still quite complete, statement of the absolute necessary criteria for a successful design – that is, one which fully accommodates the action of the play.

From this list, Mielziner compiled a chart for each act of the play, noting each scenic location in order. He assigned a letter to each "acting area" inside and outside of the Loman's house, and indicated whether each scene would take place in the present or the past. This analysis was handwritten by Mielziner himself. Reducing the play's locations to a string of letters, Mielziner could then identify which areas needed to be permanently assigned, and which could double. For example, the kitchen and bedrooms are used so frequently that they could not be used as any other acting space, while others, such as the wash room, Heiser's office, and either of the woman's locations could occupy the same physical space at different times. Mielziner then made a schematic of relationships between areas, which determined possible networks of location – which areas needed to be next to which others. By reducing the play to a geometric puzzle, Mielziner could experiment with solutions on paper in simplified form.

These documents represent some of the earliest thinking about Salesman, and they confirmed his hunch about the necessity of the unit set. Proctor's meeting notes collected for the *Tribune* indicate that even before at the first meeting with Kazan, Mielziner's mind was firm:

> Recommended to Bloomgarden that in view of both the economic and time elements (time), it was advisable to work out some unit scheme. J. M. present schematic analysis showing first act requires 7 different locations or sets, Act II required 10 different locations or sets. In other words, regardless of repetitions, there were still 13 different sets indicated.[71]

The schematic also evidences that Mielziner is thinking first in terms of spatial/topographic organization. The grave site is at the bottom of the image, and the upper level on which the (later cut) "giant Biff" scenes would play was located at the top. Scenes taking place further away from

[71] Proctor, 'Outline of Progressive Stages…'

the house are marked in red and distributed on the periphery, as opposed to the more central and often-used locations, which are clustered in logical groupings (the bedrooms next to each other, the kitchen below) based on typical domestic geography.

These artifacts also guided Mielziner's first sketches of the set, as they contain the same lettering system from the chart. By organizing the necessary scenic locations in his chart and using the schematic representation to remind himself of the necessary spatial relationships between areas (that the boy's room was above, or the adjoining garden and kitchen doors, for example) Mielziner's could explore options that fit the script's needs. Among the options considered were a scenic revolve and a two-story tower structure for the office buildings placed next to the Loman house. Neither of these options was seen as elegant enough to suit the unit set, and so Mielziner decided to place the out-of-house scenes on the periphery of the space, and keep the Loman house as a single, large scenic element.

The process by which Mielziner analyzed this script was methodical, took advantage of external tools and design artifacts, and was spatially engaged throughout. Mielziner's problem setting strategies were first text based, and then translated into graphical representations through the aid of the artifact, which in this case allowed Mielziner to store information about location and the relationship of spaces in a visually compact format. Mielziner's can be considered a design process because of this extensive phase of preparatory work in analysis, problem-setting, and the generation of competing schemes. Treating the set as a problem to be solved in a new and innovative way was the hallmark of New Stagecraft ideas, and Mielziner's extensive analytical method demonstrates a similar line of thinking.

Other rough drafts from the same period as Salesman, such as *South Pacific* and a never-produced opera version of *Desire Under the Elms*, demonstrate that Mielziner's spatial analytics

were a common strategy. He developed a similar rhythm of many rough drafts in early phases of planning, spatially organized, followed by the later detailing of the same elements. *South Pacific*'s design was not a unit set, so the "conversation" that Mielziner engaged in was the relationship of a given scenic unit (a wagon, a hut, a foliage drop) to the overall look of the set in a given scene, produced in thumbnail form. In both plays, analysis documents begin with a linear analysis of stage locations, after which Mielziner soon began to sketch ideas for spatial organization based on his analysis. Mielziner assigned letters to spatial locations in his *South Pacific* breakdown, as he had for *Salesman*¸ and accompanied each list with a small shape denoting the form and size of the stage space to be used in that scene. For *Elms*, Mielziner did a lengthy verbal analysis, collecting information about each room of the farmhouse before attempting small thumbnails for each room. The continuity of handwriting and thought from page to page in his analysis suggests that the listmaking and first visual interpretations of the script occurred soon after one another.

2.4.3 Mielziner's Use of Sketches and Models

The design phases of idea generation, refinement, and testing take place in visuographic, not verbal modes of communication. Whether presenting thumbnails, sketches, schematics, or models, designers use visual representations of the external world to examine aspects of a design in terms of their suitability for an intended use. The specific types of documentation generated, moreover, focus the user's attention on a particular aspect of the design. Reflecting later on the *Salesman* process, Mielziner publicized the divergent purposes of design documentation:

> A scenic artist has two kinds of drawings and paintings to do, and their purposes are almost totally divergent. One type aims at giving the viewer an impression of what the stage setting will look like: the audience view in terms of the three-dimensional stage,

> with depth, lighting, and atmosphere. In the early stages of production these are necessarily sketchy; they may be monochromatic or in full color.
>
> …Similar to this type of presentation is the stage model. It is the custom in the American theater to make a model not for exhibition purposes to even to paint from, but as a scale reference that will provide working three-dimensional views of the stage. A model is usually made of plain white cardboard, with either pencil or pen-and-ink lines indicating rough details of ornamentation. For the most part, models are devoid of mood or atmosphere, color or light, and cannot be taken too literally. Their value is that they show relative scale in depth as well as in height; simple cut-out figures representing actors are used to make the stage picture more comprehensible. Models are particularly useful when platforms and other types of stage elevation are involved. Frequently they are used only by the director and the scenic artist.
>
> …The other, completely different type of drawing and painting the scenic artist must do is what he gives to the craftsmen who are going to execute the scenery. For a Broadway designer to swing a hammer in the carpenter shop or apply a paint brush to the final scenery is almost unheard of.[72]

Here Mielziner's writing shows that he is attuned to the particular usefulness of each type of design document, and in his practice he would employ all three types.

Mielziner gestures toward, but does not fully explain, the cognitive purposes of the sketch and the model. The sketches created in preparation for the first design meeting, reproduced in the section above, include implicit "testing" of ideas on the page. Does the set as drawn accommodate the schematic network of spaces efficiently? Various versions of each solution concept (revolve, two-building, central house) alongside the major thumbnail sketch were attempts to improve upon initial designs.

In his book *How Designers Work*, Henrik Gedenryd reframes cognition as a process of inquiry[73] occurring through the creation and manipulation of representations. By creating external representations of possible solutions, the processes of problem setting and solution

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[72] Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre*, 30-31.

[73] Gedenryd invokes Dewey's opposition of inquiry to logic, that knowledge is not a set of formal, logically deducible positions but refers to "those adaptive and practical, concrete activities where knowing is put to use." Gedenryd explicitly addresses the use/test parity of Dewey's theory of inquiry, and the iterative nature of knowledge production through inquiry. Gedenryd, *How Designers Work*, 79.

generation occur in parallel. Through the production of external representations of possible solutions, that is, sketches, designers come to better understand the problem itself (the play) at the same time as it is being solved.[74] Put more simply, as design progresses and prospective solutions are developed in external representations – sketches, models, schematics, etc – skilled designers enable themselves to see previously obscured elements of the problem. The sketch helps the designer answer the question: Have I asked the question properly?

The suggestion here, one that Mielziner knew well, is that failed designs are not "wrong," but they offer opportunities to see how one might better structure the overall approach to the scene. In the case of Mielziner's early spatial organization sketches, he proposed three different ways of structuring the problem to be solved – that is, three different methods for accomplishing the network of locations demanded by the script. The creation of the sketch is not merely a test of whether *this particular* turntable or two-tower solution will solve the issue, but if *any* structure of this type will suffice. That the earlier two versions were rejected signaled not only that the specifications were off, but the whole solution concept – its structure – was inappropriate. Gedenryd likens this sort of use of problem structuring as an expert strategy of design: using potential solutions as tools for gaining a better understanding of the problem at hand.

Later scenic sketches continued to serve testing purposes. Pages of sketches from early October 1949 test the relationship of part to whole with lighting considered. By drawing different levels of lighting over the same basic set, Mielziner investigated the effect of lighting on the size of the set in relationship to the human figure. Among the "twenty or so" sketches Mielziner did in October, smaller thumbnails were used to figure out movement patterns and details of steps and platforms, or to figure out the best roof line not only on its own, but when

[74] Ibid., 72.

compared with the audience view and human figures and prop furniture in front of it. These scenic renderings are evocative lighting studies, showing that midway through the process Mielziner was already beginning to consider not just how individual spaces would look, but how they could be lit within the scheme of the play. As the production used lighting not merely for mood but also to convey key narrative information about the time of the scene and the state of Willy's mind, thumbnail lighting sketches were an important to consider early on.

Another series of sketches Mielziner undertook in this period demonstrate how elaborations on the final design arose from the testing of space against the human form. Line sketches and inked renderings of the Loman house roofline went through a number of revisions. Through comparing these images Mielziner balanced the placement of the boys' beds upstage, the height of the roof peak in relationship to the standing figure, the amount of ornament in the roofline itself and the overall orientation of the gable and major roof peak. Kazan asked for a very simple line, while Mielziner appeared to be most concerned about how the roofline would look against actor's bodies when standing on the second floor of the set. Through his use of sketches in the refinement phase of the process, Mielziner tested candidate plans and chose the best from among them. The best was not only the simplest, but the one which accommodated all the visual, spatial, and symbolic aspects of the play equally. Deciding on the best one was made possible through a series of inquiring sketches produced in increasing degrees of detail.

2.4.4 Collaborative Artifact Use

Testing was not restricted to sketches, however. Similar testing behavior was present in the creation of the scenic model, which in its construction requires a level of articulation of the design that both describes and tests the progress of the design solution up to this point. By

examining the ways in which the design fails to perform as expected in three dimensions, the designer not only improves his understanding of what a possible solution looks like, but also the nature of the problem itself. The model was most commonly used as a collaborative artifact.

In late October, Kazan examined Mielziner's model and ground plan for its suitability for his needs. Of prototypes used in other forms of the design process, Gedenryd writes, they "give the design a concrete, tangible model that she [the user] can relate to physically and practically, rather than intellectually."[75] By affording both three-dimensional perception of a design without the work of mental projection, and also manipulability, the model allows designer and director alike to better appreciate the mass of the set and its potential mutability over time. Because the set can be adjusted, changed, and moved, unlike a scenic sketch, it can in fact better represent the changes during a production process.[76] Sketches are static, while models open up the possibility of dynamism. The model for *Salesman* convinced Kazan of the appropriateness of the craggy, ghostlike trees beside the house, and inspired the creation of the X-Ray metaphor of the set, which first appears in Kazan's writing, not Mielziner's.[77] The idea of the house as an X-Ray further inspired Mielziner's skeletonic setting, and led him to simplify the roof line and the walls of the house, to use the scrim as a view behind the Loman's bedroom wall, and to reveal the hot water heater via scrim as well. In this case, the creation of the model as a test of ideas spurred further creative leaps among the team, and allowed Kazan to develop his ideas even further visually. Finally, Kazan began to see the ways in which the forestage area could be fully realized in its simplified manner, with a desk that would double and suggestive props for each area, nothing more.

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[75] Gedenryd, *How Designers Work*, 160.
[76] Payne, *The Scenographic Imagination*, xxii.
[77] Letter to Jo Mielziner from Elia Kazan, November 4, 1948, Box 31, Folder 1, Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theater Division.

The collaborative artifact also supported Mielziner's critiques of the play, effectively convincing Miller to revise. Perhaps the most notable difference between Heymann's typical method and Mielziner's process of designing *Salesman* was Mielziner's direct influence on the script itself. Working on a new play with established collaborators, Mielziner had a greater hand in the development of the script itself, and the working-through of scenic ideas could contribute back to later drafts of the piece. Mary Henderson writes of the first meeting with Miller, Kazan, and Mielziner, which occurred before the Boston meeting, between September 22 and 29:

> Miller and Kazan listened intently and at the end of Jo's discourse, they realized that they would have to rethink the production in terms of Jo's plan, but were willing to try it. Miller would get what he really wanted: transitions from flashback to the present without interrupting the action. Kazan quickly realized the use of cinematic technique in Jo's scheme and saw how the set would dictate his direction…for Bloomgarden, it meant revising his production schedule, postponing the opening—and losing revenues from seats. Yet Jo was told to proceed.[78]

Mielziner's scheme for the production, drawing from his schematic analysis, demonstrated the centrality of the house, the need for efficient and speedy transitions between areas, and the clear demarcation between the present and the past, which would be accomplished by projections of leaves. This prompted revisions of the script and the elaboration of a directorial concept, the X-ray into Willy's life, that further drove the scenic concept toward "skeletonization" of the roofline and other edges in the house.

One of the most significant changes in the script has to do with the removal of the "giant Biff" scenes, which occurred near the end of both acts of the play. From Mielziner's breakdown, the original intention was to present

> a giant figure—Young Biff, clothes [sic] in a gold helmet, a gold jersey and football pants, appear[ing] in a luminous light, prancing about as though warming up on the field, charging a few steps, springing up and down, doing a duck walk…and Willy is staring at

[78] Henderson, *Mielziner*, 169.

> the spot from which Biff and Happy walked out. The light on Willy fades. Willy gets into bed.[79]

At the end of Act I, this giant Biff represents Willy's memory and vision of his son as successful, and precedes (older) Biff's discovery of the rubber tubing. The same figure appears at the end of Act 2 before Willy's death, performing the same actions before descending to Willy, who puts his hands on his fictitious son's shoulders and they walk off together. "Giant Biff" was cut from the performance version of the play, likely in part due to the scenic impossibility of making this image happen. Mielziner conceived of the "giant Biff" space as separate from and above the boys' bedroom, adding a prohibitive third level to the set. If this memory vignette had occurred in the boys' bedroom above, it would have been awkward; the actor playing Biff could not have been young Biff, and at the end of Act 1 both boys are in bed, which would have made for a crowded platform and a confusing use of space. The appearance of "giant Biff" in early analysis documents and the disappearance of the third level and references to the figure in later breakdowns prove that the cut happened while Mielziner was collaborating on the production, and since the cut occurred during the period of Mielziner's primary influence (Kazan and Miller were already familiar and quite happy with the script), it is reasonable to conclude that Mielziner was at least in part responsible for cutting the giant Biff character.

As it drew inspiration from Mielziner's earlier work with Tennessee Williams, most notably *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the idea of the house as a metaphor for Willy's deteriorating, permeable mind was mostly Mielziner. Mielziner had practiced using metaphoric, evocative settings in *Summer and Smoke*, which he was working on concurrently with Salesman, and throughout the 1940s experimented with ways that spaces and spatial

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[79] Scenic Breakdown Dated September 20, 1948, Page 3, Box 31, Folder 1, Jo Mielziner Papers 1903-1976, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theater Division.

organizations can be evocative of character. As he was not merely an executor of a set, but a full participant in a designing process, Mielziner's expert strategies of dramatic analysis served *Salesman*'s success. Without his early design inspiration, the fluid temporality and the spatial organization of psychological depth that have come to define the play (and perhaps a whole genre of American poetic realism) may not have come about. His use of sketches to simplify and test solutions, and his persuasive manner with Kazan and Miller led to the enshrinement of the play as "the fullest and finest manifestation of the New Stagecraft…the setting for *Salesman* inextricably became the play and the play became the setting."[80]

The contributions of Mielziner's technique and theory are difficult to underestimate. The *Salesman* design is not only a high point of New Stagecraft practice, but it also became an organizing concept around which Mielziner himself and later design historians have begun to articulate mid-twentieth century scenic design principles. His use of the skeletonic, suggestive set was powerful enough for Stephen Coleman and Henry Heymann to refer to a "Mielzineresque" approach to *All the Way Home* in 1981, referring to both an open floor plan with exposed wall frames, and the centrality of metaphor to spatial organization and movement patterns. The aesthetic of simplification and suggestion, begun with Jones, came to full expression in Mielziner's established practice of "designing with an eraser," or to selectively edit sketches until only the most evocative and appropriate detail remained.[81] Hoping to be a model of professional practice, Mielziner publicized his work in interviews, guest lectures, and his own portfolio publication, and cantankerously challenged his peers in union decisionmaking, standing

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[80] Henderson, *Mielziner*, 172.

[81] Doona, "Hope, Hopelessness/Presence, Absence: Scenographic Imagination and the Poetic Spaces of Jo Miezliner, Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller," 59. Mielziner took the same minimalist, subtractive approach to his lighting design too, surprising his collaborators as he painstakingly determined the least amount of light necessary to illuminate each scene. Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre*, 54.

up for the role and rights of the creative scenic design artists against more commercial interests from the 1930s until his death. The process he employed was emulated by apprentices and studied by peers, and has come to represent a high point of American scenic design integration into the process.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Over the course of this chapter, I have shown that the basic steps of the design process and the use of artifacts have been relatively stable across several examples. In *Salesman* and after, designers engaged in an extended analysis phase, determining the functional as well as representational needs of the production before beginning to generate and test ideas on the page. Relevant cognitive artifacts to the design process include analysis documents, sketches, and models, each of which direct the designer's attention toward a particular type of problem within the developing design. This permutation of job division and creative practice is itself historically dependent. The idea that a designer could be publicly responsible for his own productions, and that a scenic design concept could be separated (at least theoretically) from the playscript itself was a new idea in the first decades of the century. Seeing the design as a part of an interpretative statement on a play, one production among others which might have been produced given a different collaborator, was dependent on the creation of the designer as a more or less autonomous artist who worked in collaboration with, not as an employee of, producers and managers.

In the 1910s, pioneers of the New Stagecraft brought building techniques, visual styles, and theatrical philosophies from European modernist art theatre traditions to the nonprofit, and

soon the commercial stage in America. Joseph Urban, Lee Simonson, and Robert Edmond Jones, among others, established the "new style" on stage, while critics and exhibition owners such as Kenneth Macgowan, Sheldon Cheney, and Sam Hume publicly supported, explained and extoled the new movement. This movement would revolutionize the "look" of American stages first, but as New Stagecraft became established it also transformed the working process of the designer. No longer was the designer charged with precisely reproducing a realistic vision of the playwright and the actor/manager. Newly responsible for his own creative response to the script, the designer began to assume collaborative parity in production negotiations through the design of specific moments of integrated action and design. These moments, often demonstrated in lit models or more often in drawn, three-dimensional renderings, were proof of the designer's ability to support the thematic context of the play by placing the body of the actor in the composition of the lit and composed stage image.

The story of the modern scene design process has its own phases of formation. After an initial excitement about the new method of staging, designers sought a collective organization to advocate for their new position and responsibilities in the theatre market. Before unions could form and act on behalf of the designer, though, several key designers demonstrated the possibilities of nonrepresentational, simplified, and suggestive design to the American public. One of the most important and influential figures of this vanguard was Robert Edmond Jones, whose development of the scenic sketch into the scenic rendering pushed the boundaries of conceivable designs. Jones' dynamic renderings, full of abstract shapes, shadowy bodies, and striking lighting schemes, comprise the major case study of the next chapter.

3.0 FROM MODEL BOXES TO RENDERINGS: ROBERT EDMOND JONES' DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN RENDERING TECHNIQUES

In the beginning of his essay "Hand in Glove: The Designer as Director as Designer," scenic designer and theorist Charles Erwen writes, "As a serious design student in the early 1970s, I, like many other stage designers, adopted artistic goals set down by Appia and Craig at the turn of the twentieth century and brought to the United States by Robert Edmond Jones."[1] This simple statement goes unchallenged in Erwen's chapter, and the basic truth of it is assumed in a host of other writing about theatrical design. Considering this statement from the theatre historical and cognitive point of view, I ask, "yes, but how?" For Erwen's part, he lists these goals as the rhythmic connection of light and scenic composition to the "dramatic conflict and movement" of the script, citing a lineage beginning with Jones, passing through Donald Oenslager to Erwen. The search for origins and the genealogy of influence are seductive and common themes in both theatre history and writing about and for theatrical designers. The longstanding mentor-apprenticeship model, still alive in both academia and professional design training, attests to the stickiness of the genealogical model. My own research, too, began and continues in part to be a search for origins, the passing-down of ideas, and moments of beginning, rupture, and paradigm shift.

[1] Charles Erwen, "Hand in Glove: The Designer as Director as Designer," Christine A White, ed. *Directors and Designers* (Intellect Books, 2009), 23.

With this chapter I put pressure on Erwen's claim, not to disprove it, but to attempt to understand more deeply what was borrowed from Europe, and how it affected the early work of Jones and his American contemporaries. Given the shared modernist goals of aesthetic unity and simultaneity,[2] through what practices and methods were these goals realized? Did the assumption of those goals change the mental and physical labor of design? If New Stagecraft birthed the view of the American designer as artistic collaborator, what new work distinguished the designer from the scene-painter and theatrical engineer of the nineteenth century? Through a survey of influential designers' process documentation and statements about design process by the artists and critics, I argue that in order to achieve such new "goals," designers began to use the old tools of sketching and modeling in new ways. Specifically, I use Robert Edmond Jones' technique of scenic rendering as a case study for the incorporation of control and planning for the human body in design. In this chapter, I draw a distinction between drawn renderings and model boxes as tools for the elaboration and communication of design authority and creativity.

European artists working in the new style, such as Appia, Reinhardt, Jessner, and Copeau, saw the process of designing not as a routine production, but a task of planning and visualization over which both director and designer shared artistic responsibility.[3] They produced different types of documentation that aligned their expertise in visual composition with the embodied, kinesthetic expertise of the stage director. Architectural plans, scenic renderings in perspective, and models including representations of the human figure were much more

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[2] Thomas Postlewait identified a modernist theory of simultaneity, or the yoking together of different locations (and emotional registers) into one composite stage design. For Postlewait, simultaneity links the realist and antirealist strands of modern stage design, as both abstract simplified sets and the detailed but multiply staged interiors of Mielziner and Simonson are based in the juxtaposition of time and space against each other within the same design. See "Simultaneity in Modern Stage Design and Drama," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 3, no. 1 (1988).

[3] The collaborative model of creation was influential but not the only new model of designer-director coordination. Both Edward Gordon Craig and Joseph Urban assumed the responsibilities of the artist and the director, effectively placing the designer as directorial authority. Craig and Urban are discussed in more detail below.

commonly used in Europe than in American design between 1910 and 1915, and New Stagecraft designers used such design documentation to claim some directorial authority. Though these visions were not always met with directorial approval, the inclusion of planning for human behavior into design thinking was a defining step in the development of New Stagecraft process.

In this chapter "planning for human behavior" refers to a philosophical stance and process step for the designer. With New Stagecraft, designers experimented with the idea that a physical environment could shape the range of potential actions an actor's body could accomplish in performance. Effective design permitted all necessary stage actions called for in a script, and in some cases, a particular design altered actor movement outright. Before the modern design process, actor movement was a comparatively minor concern for scenic artists; afterwards, it was at the heart of the designer's creative contribution to the performance. A designer's simulation of human behavior, that is, actor movement, was developed through embodied engagement with external design artifacts. This simulation in /through planning became the major difference between old and new methods of scenic design. Though designers accomplished this simulation differently, through different types of artifact, the inclusion of the actor's body and movement into the design concept was a key shared idea among New Stagecraft designers and theorists.

This process would become the dominant model of creation, supplanting the former division of design labor in the theatre. In earlier models a lead scenic artist worked either directly for an actor-manager, largely deferential to his vision, or else worked independently at a for-hire scenic studio or mail-order house. In neither of these models was the designer typically responsible for the planning of actor movement and visual composition during the performance; later, designers began creating environments for designer-generated actor behavior, and

demonstrated evocative uses for them through renderings and models. It was this advance in design artistry and authority, not merely the aesthetic style of "simplification and suggestion,"[4] that caused New Stagecraft to be the major design movement of the American theatre in the first half of the twentieth century. In moving from the model and the paint elevation to the scenic rendering and technical drawing as the primary communicative artifacts (between designer and collaborators and designer and craftsmen/technicians, respectively), New Stagecraft designers took ownership of the visual planning processes of design. They inserted themselves earlier in the process and began to function not merely as the executors of another artist's vision, but also as the creators and demonstrators of their own dramatic vision. They developed authority over the actor's body as a compositional element in space, and asserted that authority through the use of new tools for analysis, planning, spatial visualization, and communication.

For many, this shift grounded itself in the importation of architectural principles into the design process; no longer were artists merely the creators of backdrops, but of full environments. The most successful designers of this period understood that planning for a more complete living environment on stage would involve a different kind of planning process. All of these processes incorporated the physical materiality of the moving body earlier than it had been used in the past. Ground plans, scenic renderings, and architectural models were all used to place the body 'back into the picture' for the designer. The effect of this shift was a much tighter link between the director and the designer, in which the responsibility for the placement and presentation of the actor's body and movement onstage is essentially shared. This sharing, in turn, required more advance planning and collaboration. Process had previously been pictorial as opposed to

[4] New Stagecraft was commonly described as "simplification, suggestion, and synthesis", a formulation originated by Kenneth Macgowan in *The Theatre of Tomorrow* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921).

architectural, visual as opposed to body-driven, and relatively separate from the production rather than integrated in both aesthetic and workmanlike senses.

My focus on the design process documentation continues to draw on cognitive and design theories. Of the design studies concepts explored in the introduction, the most relevant in this chapter are the ill-defined process and the cognitive artifact. Seen from a cognitive perspective, the change to New Stagecraft technique was marked by an increase in viewing the design problem as an ill-defined one, and this change can be viewed clearly by considering process documentation as cognitive tools or artifacts. Such artifacts, as Donald Norman has remarked, "maintain, display, or operate upon information in order to serve a representational function."[5] Sketches, models, and renderings are forms of representation developed specifically to aid individual and group cognition, and throughout history their uses varied with respect to the perceived needs of the processes deemed valuable at a given time. By locating important differences between the content of these artifacts across a particular temporal boundary – the coming of New Stagecraft – and identifying pathways by which such new methods of artifact use may have entered the American context, I argue that changes in artifacts indicate changes in the practices of theatrical design.

The objects and concepts designers use to help them plan and execute designs are best described as cognitive artifacts. Cognitive artifacts may be mental or external to the body, and assist with one or more cognitive operations. Most often, the cognitive artifact aids the user in completing a cognitive task with more efficiency, knowledge, or a lesser cognitive load than would otherwise be possible. Seeing the drawing and the model as artifacts, then, can illuminate what types of cognition they were designed to aid or ease. The study of artifacts in the specific

[5] Donald A Norman, "Design Principles for Cognitive Artifacts," *Research in Engineering Design* 4, no. 1 (1992).

context of design work has been theorized by Willemien Visser, who notes that artifacts are not only the "end products" of a given design, but are "constructed and used throughout the design process."[6] Some of the purposes Visser proposes for artifacts are: storage of intermediary and final ideas, advancing understanding, deriving implications from results already obtained, to anchor hypothetical reality to material objects, to organize one's own work, or to communicate one's work with others.[7] In this chapter, the rendering as an artifact allows designers to synthesize scenic and lighting plans with representations of the gesturing, posed human body. They also permit collaborators such as directors and producers to grasp a given "total" design concept visually, rather than through verbal description or ephemeral real-time demonstration. Renderings turn design ideas into manageable objects to be used as references (anchors) throughout a theatrical process. By producing such objects, designers made their contributions to theatrical production into tangible referents and, later, reproducible commodities.

I have also continued to use Goel's description of design problems as distinct from other problem solving scenarios. These types of problems, which have been characterized as "ill-defined" by design methods researchers or "wicked" by public policy theorists,[8] involve a significant amount of problem-setting/framing/scoping behavior at the outset. Among other characteristics, such problems do not have well-defined solution algorithms, are unique and often do not result in a simple true-false answer. Historically scenic artists had ceded responsibility for determining the needs of the scenic environment to the director and the playwright; the problems were defined for them. In New Stagecraft practice, the designer treats the theatrical play not as a problem with a clear answer, but instead as a problem whose parameters and constraints need to

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[6] Willemien Visser, *The Cognitive Artifacts of Designing* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), xvii.
[7] Ibid., 120-1.
[8] Horst WJ Rittel and Melvin M Webber, "2.3 Planning Problems Are Wicked," *Polity* 4(1973).

be defined by the designer him/herself. Such a power-shift was felt among the previous generation of artists in the reaction to New Stagecraft designs and the presumption of their artists. Inspired by European examples, designers negotiated patterns of use and simulated actor movement in the composition of onstage moments, around which they designed their sets. New Stagecraft designers began to see their set not merely as an artistic product, but one over which they had formal and artistic control.

In order to demonstrate the changes in artifact creation and the creative process in general resulting from New Stagecraft, it is important first to get a picture of pre-New Stagecraft design techniques and artifacts. In the next section, I consider both the large-scale context of the scenic art profession in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the type of design process typically undertaken by those artists.

3.1 DESIGN AS MODEL BUILDING BEFORE 1912

"Paradoxically enough, America enjoys at once the somewhat equivocal honour of having elevated scene painting to the highest pitch of artistic excellence on the one hand, and degraded it to the lowest level of mechanical production on the other."[9]

Before the coming of New Stagecraft to US stages in 1912,[10] the role of the scenic designer took a markedly different form. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, where I for the purposes

[9] W. J. Lawrence, "Scenery and Scenic Artists," *The Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1889, 613.
[10] William Leigh Sowers, "The Progress of the New Stagecraft in America," *The Drama*, November 1917.

of comparison pick up my study, a stable approach to scenic design process was becoming established amid changing economic and artistic pressures.

Commercial pressures and changes from a repertory to a touring-circuit model of theatrical production would reorient the scene painter in the period between 1880 and 1910. Railroads, centralization of labor in theatrical centers, and the dominance of touring companies and performance circuits concentrated scenic artists either in association with the most profitable companies, houses, or directors, or alternatively in relationship to independently operated scenic studios. Earlier in the century, scenic artists were often hired by individual repertory companies themselves, whose regular production seasons could support the hiring of a full-time artist with a mix of new and recycled scenic elements. However, with the rise of managerial networks, touring productions, and vaudevilles, the acting market consolidated in the latter half of the 19th century, and those repertory companies that still existed were hard-pressed to justify a full-time artist on staff. Outside of New York and other major theatrical centers, it was easier to purchase scenery from afar than it was to build it on-site, and the staff scenic designer was employable only at the large theatres in regional and national theatre hubs.[11]

In response to these developments, regional scenic studios were founded and engaged a factory approach to scenic design, filling orders by mail and telegraph, and producing scenic catalogs for their most important and popular sets. The economy of transporting standardized sets by rail decreased both the geographic spread and availability of employment for scenic workers. The Armbruster Studio, founded in 1875, and the Lee Lash Studio in New York City,

[11] Robert Suddards Joyce, "A History of the Armbruster Scenic Studio of Columbus, Ohio" (Ohio State University, 1970), 31.

founded in 1898, were two of the most prominent mail-order houses.[12] Such enterprises, while profitable, streamlined the design process into a simple process of variations on an original design. Mailing and shipping scenery became so schematic that one painter suggested it was possible for a scenery shop at top efficiently to receive an order in the morning and have a full drop, thirty feet square, painted and shipped by nightfall. Author W. J. Lawrence lamented that "the days of glazing and second painting are gone for ever."[13] Employed by these scenery houses, head scenic painters did work in positions of creative authority; for customers willing to pay for custom work, in-house designers would collaborate with the producer on production-specific designs. In some cases, sketches and models were sent through the mail for comments and revisions.[14] However, this was more the exception than the rule, and mail-order houses did most of their business on generic designs that could be easily reproduced or minimally altered before shipping.

When scenery was not ordered, it was built on contract, and often based on previously published or researched images. Budget-minded producers rarely valued custom artwork, instead preferring the efficiency of ordering based on catalogs or through referencing previously produced or commonly popular images. William Thompson Russell Smith, a Philadelphia-based landscape painter and scenic artist, noted that directors chided his individualized, bespoke settings. On hearing him discuss his inspiration for a scenic backdrop, one in particular remarked, "You spend much money and time making sketching tours when you could buy

[12] For detailed descriptions of working conditions in scenic studios see Joyce, above, and Wendell Cole, "Scenery on the New York Stage, 1900-1920" (Stanford University, 1951). Lee Lash produced for local productions as well as mail-order ones. A complete Lee Lash studio scenery catalog from 1912 can be found online, at https://archive.org/details/leelashstudiosst00leel

[13] Lawrence, "Scenery and Scenic Artists," 614.

[14] Joyce, "A History of the Armbruster Scenic Studio of Columbus, Ohio," 71-76.

something just as good or better…"[15] This commercial pressure existed on Broadway as well as in other cities; Richard Marston in 1886 explained that in the new factory system "the proprietor gets hold of a number of stencils, patterns, and designs, often by the expensive process of copying from works of established repute…the artist who spent a great deal of time and energy creating the original design is undercut."[16] In a theatrical environment without reliable copyright protections for images, and certainly no means for enforcing the copyright of images being taken from painting and engraving from being used on the stage, it was simply cheaper to copy and produce en masse.

Such tension between commercial forces of the theatre, leading toward economy and industrialized stage production on the one hand, and decreased opportunity for the previously established artistic practice of scene painting, continued into the first decade of the twentieth century. E. J. Unitt, longtime scenic artist for the Lyceum Theater, remembers that "in those days the scene painter was a part of a working staff of the theatre and in daily intercourse with his principals…the method of production is now entirely different. The scene painter is now part of a theatrical staff. He is an employee of a firm. He is required to produce as rapidly as possible the scenery of perhaps twenty plays."[17] In addition to the curtailment of production time in the studio, analysis was similarly truncated by the expected time schedules. "In the rush of affairs now," writes Homer C. Emens, "he may see only one act or perhaps only a scenario."[18] As the time demands on scenic artists grew, scenic studio companies increased in power, and the value of new scenery dwindled, the creative contribution of the scenic artist seemed to be at a low

[15] Qtd in Orville K. Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 8.
[16] Qtd in ibid., 13.
[17] Unitt in Mary Gay Humphreys, "Stage Scenery and the Men Who Paint It," *Theatre Magazine* 8(1908).
[18] Qtd in Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960*, 17.

point. At worst, the painter churned out sets to order, whether destined for specific directors nearby or unknown ones abroad. As a result much of the design work consisted of the copying and rearrangement of research and found material.

Even those artists who remained in close relationships with managers and production organization worked in a well-established process of development. The time savings afforded by the industrialization of stage art encouraged artists to develop efficient workshops, standardized procedures, and a product orientation. After 1900, a growing trend toward efficiency and economy led individual designer-manager pairings to develop their own in-house methods; such an approach could be a reliable box-office draw.

3.1.1 Model-Box Processes

The independent scenic artist of the late nineteenth century was not a designer, either in name or in a modern sense of process. “Scene-painter” or sometimes “scenic artist” were the more common terms for the profession; his role (and nearly all scenic painters were men) [19] was to create appropriate, pictorially composed, at times thematically matching backdrops and scenic environments for producers. Scenery most commonly adopted a wing-and-drop style, with occasional furniture or built-up relief sections. [20] Most of the machining of these devices was left

[19] *The Washington Post* heralded “the first American woman scene painter” in 1909. Inez Kendrick, “one of Richmond’s fairest daughters,” studies composition and art at her father’s engraving plant. Despite her mentor Harry Turberville’s anxiety about her climbing the paint bridge, her “persistency and talent won,” yet it was Turberville’s debilitating injury that led her to head up St. Elmo at the Academy of Music."First American Woman Scene Painter," *The Washington Post*, July 11, 1909.

[20] The major exceptions are the musical spectaculars or multi-act melodramas, for which machines were constructed and conglomerated into complex environments. While special craftsmen were employed to design and build these sets, the visual effect was called for by the script or management. Such complex machine engineering was not the primary responsibility of the scene-painter.

to specialists,[21] and overarching control of the onstage visual environment was given to a lead scenic artist. Such a position entailed the creation and production of drops, wings, and individual scenic units (stairs, doors, building facades, etc…) and the supervision of whatever size shop the company was able to marshal. The lead scenic painter would compose sketches for the major settings of a production, create a series of models for its construction, and supervise the building and painting of the life-size version. In most cases, the lead artist would himself execute more difficult detail work or forced-perspective painting.

The design work that took place in such situations was schematic. The primary communicative tool was a designer's research and the model, with a secondary role played by ink and at times painted elevations. John P. Ritter describes the typical practice of analysis, planning, and scenery construction. First, the artist read the text, prepared preliminary sketches, and then immediately cut out parts for "the foreground of the stage scenery, that is, the wings." Sketches drew inspiration from research images of paintings or reference books, combined in new ways by the artist to suit the play's stated setting. Fitting these pieces into a model box, the artist would then create a backdrop image to suit the wings, and send the whole model to the shop. These wings were built out of canvas flats by the carpenters to be painted later, while a large upstage drop was primed by assistants and finally painted by the lead artist. [22] In essence scenic composition involved deconstructing an image and recomposing it in the model box. These models would then be approved by managers and directors, changes would be suggested, and final drafts of models were created for the shop. At least one model was created for each act

[21] Oscar G. Brockett, *Making the Scene: A History of Stage Design and Technology in Europe and the United States* (San Antonio, Tex: Tobin Theatre Arts Fund, 2010), 163-4.
[22] John P Ritter, "Scene-Painting as a Fine Art," *Cosmopolitan*, November 1889, 43.

of the play, which according to common technique would have been a major shift in location; exacting producers and/or complex plays may have required as much as one model per scene. [23]

These models would be taken directly into the scenic shop and used as the primary reference for building sets. In some cases, painters would develop gridded paint elevations from the model itself, and in others the designer would provide a separate sketch or painting to be enlarged on the drops.[24] In either case, the model, not the drawing, was the primary referent. Translating the design from miniature to life size involved considerable skill. Within the established wing-and-drop tradition of theatrical design, however, detailed technical drawings were not necessary; consistency of construction and painting method assured relatively reliable product creation, and the artist was usually working nearby. Few models from the period stage moments from the play with actors or small furniture, nor do they demonstrate lighting or atmospheric effects. Rather, they were created for the carpenters and painters first, to aid fabrication, and the directors secondarily, who were solely responsible for staging actors.

As a result, at this time praiseworthy scenic design was aligned with the values of the Fine Arts, especially painting. Foremost among the values of this period were detailed research and period knowledge, authenticity grounded in location, and visual composition of an image with multiple points of interest. Interviews and articles detailing the “forgotten” or “neglected” work of the scene painter appeared periodically in trade and public-interest journals.[25] In most, interviewers remark on the physical environment of the designer’s studio, combining piles of research material with scores of completed and in-progress model-boxes. For many artists in this

[23] Actor/manager and director Richard Mansfield is said to have required completely detailed models from his scenic artist, Joseph Physioc, during the 1880s and 1890s. Stanhope Sams, "How a Play Is Staged," *The New York Times*, Aug 21, 1898.
[24] Brockett, *Making the Scene*, 213.
[25] See Ritter, "Scene-Painting as a Fine Art.", "A Scene Painter's Work," *The New York Times*, June 15, 1884; C. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Scene Painters at Work," *The Washington Post*, Sep 1892; Alexandrina Ramsay and John Rettig, "The Art of a Scene-Painter," *The Monthly Illustrator* (1895)., and Sams, "How a Play Is Staged."

period, the knowledge of period styles of dress, architecture, and ornament featured heavily in authors' descriptions of the scenic artists' expertise. Effective scenic artistry had to do less with creative invention based on a theme than on the judicious application of correct period ornament and style. Given the progression of scenic locations and actor movement determined by the manager, the designer was engaged in creating an evocation of an historical place. The expertise of the designer was primarily a combination of artistic technique and the preparatory understanding of historical period styles necessary to execute a naturalistically rendered, accurate background.[26]

Most accounts acknowledge that scene painting imposed far greater strictures on the artist than the easel painter. Consciousness of their second-class status continued among scenic artists from the 1880s until the advent of New Stagecraft. In *Theatre Magazine* E. J. Unitt was quoted saying that "the principles are the same as in miniature painting. The only difference is that you have forty feet of canvas." The privileged artwork, however, continues to be that of the free painter, as "to say that a picture [painting] resembles scene painting is to make a disagreeable criticism."[27] Even the artists themselves could not avoid feeling tainted by the extraneous concerns of their profession. Unlike the artist who "consults no ends but his own," Mary Gay Humphreys continues, the scenic artist's work "furnishes only the background, and this as a picture is likely to be thrown out of key because the other parts, of which he has no control, are not consistent with it." Because of this the scenic artist was effectively out of control of the visual aesthetic and less refined in comparison to his academy peers. This, despite the fact that

[26] "That art today exacts not only imagination and ideality, but a wide knowledge of history and architecture. The public of the present time, which is a traveled public, is familiar with things as they should be, requires that every detail of theatrical scenes, interior as well as exterior, shall be presented in a state as nearly approaching perfection as the exigencies of the stage will permit." Ramsay and Rettig, "The Art of a Scene-Painter," 329.
[27] Qtd. in Humphreys, "Stage Scenery and the Men Who Paint It," 203.

many scene painters working in America in the first decade of the twentieth century in fact trained as painters first before transferring into the business of painting for the theatre.[28]

This combination of viewpoints led to a general view of scenic design as a well-defined, if underappreciated process. From the proposal of the script through the drawings to the final execution in the shop, scenic artists were expected to innovate through the production of elegant pictorial compositions, strikingly accurate renderings of foreign lands, and the creation of multiple points of interest within the painting.[29] Success was measured in terms of pictorial composition, beauty, accuracy, and interest with respect, qualities which reflected the painting-based values of the community out of which scene painting grew. The problem of creating scenery was one of determining the demands of the manager or producer and executing them in the most beautiful and accurate way possible. Artists had a relatively limited means of executing the design; their work was confined to scenery only. The problem to be solved was met through equal measures of painterly composition and craftsmanlike execution. When artists created notable paintings, they were acclaimed for their technical ability. Artistic contributions were rarely taken to be reflections on the quality of the play, production team, or organization – except, perhaps, the savvy manager. Scenic painters did not need to take responsibility for the interpretation or visual imagining of the script, merely of the locations represented and scenic affordances indicated by playwright and manager. More importantly, few designs radically changed the overall function of the play or actor movement. Plays were not written with designed spectacle in mind, with the exception of purposefully included "spectacular" scenes in

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[28] "He is, first of all, an intelligent artist, trained by a long, general schooling in the most famous academies; his pictures may hang in the most current exhibitions, winning honors in the realm of art for art's sake." Henry Wilson Carlisle, "Where Dream-Worlds Become Pseudo Realities," *Theatre*, Feb 1910.

[29] C. Sadakichi Hartmann praises the work of the Bucker Brothers, a European scenery house who built for Saxe-Meiningen, among others: "as the spectators can look in all direction the concentration of the subject in one point is not necessary; there must be several points which excite the attention anew." "Scene Painters at Work," 9.

larger revues and melodramas. The key difference between early methods of stagecraft and the model inspired by New Stagecraft techniques is the viewing of the production process as an interpreted event, one in which the whole production seeks to convey a consistent aesthetic point of view, mostly within a vision of the director (or the playwright).

3.1.2 "Belasco Realism"

The coming of the box set to American stages in the late 19th century began to move the scenic artist away from being interested in creating pictorial representations to becoming engaged with the decoration of onstage space. Naturalistic settings attested to the suggestive and symbolic power of well-appointed rooms, and both designers and managers became exacting their choice of detail. As early as 1899, Joseph Physioc wrote that "the 'problem' play has done away with the old wing scenes and replaced them with box sets." [30] The three-walled box set necessitated the placement of actual furniture, architectural detail rendered in three-dimensions, and the creation of full rooms rather than scenic vistas and painted interiors.

For specific pairings of directors and artists, valuing the authenticity of the scenery became an important part of the audience draw. Naturalism, with its tight linkage of particular elements of the scenic environment to the social and psychological location of the play's characters, dominated many of these pairings. Between 1900 and 1910, David Belasco and Ernest Gros were probably the best known and most influential, but other such pairings included Richard Mansfield and his designer Joseph Physioc, and somewhat earlier (1885-1900) Augustin Daly

[30] "Some New Stage Effects: Old-Time "Wings" Have Been Superseded by Box Settings," *The Washington Post* Jan 8, 1899. The "problem play" refers to issue-based domestic dramas whose interior location and minimum of scenic changes made the box setting possible.

and Henry Hoyt. Mansfield and Physioc in particular worked very similarly to Gros and Belasco.[31] The "services" of the scenic artist would be called upon once the script was complete and the director had determined the overall look and physical needs of the production. As the so-called "Belasco realism" was both the most influential competing theatrical design trend and the one most immediately preceding New Stagecraft's debut, I consider the working method of Belasco and Gros as transitional phase between the old method of scenic collaboration and New Stagecraft innovation. Within Belasco's complete control over the scenic image, Gros created three-dimensional, realistic spaces in period detail, but engaged mostly in the process of problem-solving, rather than problem-setting. Gros solved the problems that Belasco set forth with elegance and speed, but stopped short of determining novel solutions to the design problem himself.

What set Belasco apart from his contemporaries was his exacting control over details of the stage design. To this end, his collaboration with Gros was consistent and strong. While designers were still subordinate to the demands of a manager, they had comparatively more freedom to contribute their own ideas to the process. Naturalism did not fully free designers from seeing their problems as well-defined, as the artistic effort remained rooted in the evocation of realistic interiors designed elsewhere, rather than the devising of novel solutions to problems of staging and composition. On the whole, designers such as Physioc and Gros did not suggest possible uses for his settings in the design process, emphasizing instead the completely accurate and plastic evocation of place. The usage of the set as a method of accentuating stage action remained the province of the director/manager.

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[31] Hoyt worked regularly for Daly, though he also maintained a freelance sensibility, working with other managers as well in the 1890s. Hoyt was an anomaly in this arrangement, as noted in Ritter, "Scene-Painting as a Fine Art," 43. Physioc regularly worked with Mansfield until his death in 1907, after which he founded his own scenic equipment and constructions studio in 1916."Vaudeville: New Production Co.," *Variety*, July 14 1916, 6.

Belasco's method of design conceptualization has been fairly well documented in his own writing and elsewhere. It began with visual interpretation in private. After imagining the play – planning for human behavior – he sketched with an eye toward the "necessary arrangement of the furniture and other properties, and considering how the characters can be maneuvered to best advantage." At this point, it seems that Belasco had formed a scheme of production, both in terms of the style and of the functional demands of the set – that is, what the actors should be able to do. Belasco then would "send for" his scenic artist, itself an evocative turn of phrase which underscores the sense in which, unlike those artists working in scenic production studios, Gros worked for Belasco's pleasure. And then, Belasco took the stage, acting out "the whole play, making every entrance and exit and indicating my ideas of the groupings of the characters and their surroundings."[32] Such a process consumed evenings for a week, and appears to have been a process of staging refinement for Belasco as much as it was communication to Gros. Mansfield appears to have engaged in similar demonstrative processes for Physioc. Messy and time-consuming though this process was, both Gros and Physioc seemed to prefer the reading and demonstration of plays to their own interpretation because it allowed them to get a better idea of what was expected of them.[33] For both designers, control of the production, and especially the movement of actors on the sets, was the domain of the director/manager. Their most successful and sustained work was collaborative within such a hierarchical structure.

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[32] David Belasco, *The Theatre through Its Stage Door* (New York: Harper & bBrothers, 1919), 54.

[33] Gros: "I am at liberty to make suggestions. Perhaps these are accepted, perhaps they are not. But the consultation is exhaustive. Mr. Belasco is exacting. He wants results, and these are only obtained by hard work on his part and that of everybody else." Humphreys, "Stage Scenery and the Men Who Paint It," vi. Physioc: "The artist must read the play, or, better have it read to him by the author or producer. In the latter case the artist has an opportunity for discussing the scenes with the reader, and, perhaps, getting a better idea of just what is wanted than he would if he read it alone." "Some New Stage Effects: Old-Time "Wings" Have Been Superseded by Box Settings," 24.

Whereas Belasco and Gros' process was based primarily around the model, Physioc and Mansfield worked in a two-part process of sketches preceding models. After Belasco planned the production by acting it out, Gros listed what Belasco wanted in terms of particular scenic features – entrances, windows, staircases, etc… - and went to sketching. Few of these sketches survive, though Belasco notes Gros worked from his Belasco's thumbnails, which he handed to the designer during the demonstrations.[34] Sketches provided what Belasco called a "definite starting-point," yet the true working document for the team was the model. As changes to the design developed, the models – which could extend to full four feet in length – were built and rebuilt to reflect changes arising during the rehearsal process. By contrast, Physioc and Mansfield worked in a two-part process of sketches and models. Physioc, writing a few years earlier (1899), remarked that his sketches typically evoked preliminary approval, and he and Mansfield made early adjustment based on the sketch. Model building was saved for a later phase, likely due to the use of the scaled laboratory lighting design system which Physioc employed regularly. With this technique, Physioc brought the completed scale model inot a small dark room, where lighting effects were mocked-up with smaller versions of actual lighting instruments. Neither artist, however, created color renderings of the set.

For both designers working in this close collaboration with actor/managers on naturalistic plays, successful design depended on the understanding and execution of elegant miniatures. Photos of the model boxes are some of the most numerous extant artifacts of Gros and Physioc's designs.[35] To both the designers themselves, and the public when they got the chance to view these methods through publication, the model was the final product of the design. It allowed

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[34] Belasco, *The Theatre through Its Stage Door*, 55.

[35] Images of Gros models and other boxes believed to be created by Physioc for Gros productions are available online at the Museum of the City of New York. Physioc began working for Gros after Mansfield's death in 1907.

others to manipulate the designs with a minimum of interpolation by the designer; in the model the design spoke for itself.

The reliance on models seen in Belasco's theatre and by earlier scenic artists epitomizes thinking about design before New Stagecraft. By relying on the model as the primary design document, the scene painter is mostly concerned with matters of construction, surface finish, and accuracy at scale. The finished product is a tool for demonstrating the relationship of scenic objects to each other, and to approximate a sense of space for the director. However, models also de-emphasize the role of the designer as demonstrator. While some artists, such as Physioc, did light their models and create a sense of temporal progression through their plays, the model is a flexible and manipulable model of a scenic space. There is little evidence of scale figures being used in the model boxes at this period, even in the lighting rehearsals of Mansfield and Physioc.

Unlike the scenic rendering, which approximates the look of a given performance moment through color, perspective, and value, designers working with models create a device for the creation of all the moments of a given set. That is to say, whereas the scenic rendering demonstrates and indeed is built toward a very specific image that the designer proposes for a given moment, even designs *toward*, the model is a miniature of a tool for the director to use to develop his own moment-to-moment rendering of the play. At issue here is control; in adding a visually realistic rendering of a moment in a play to his contribution to the performance, the designer is in command. This is in contrast to the model, especially the models as built by Gros and others before him. In the case of Belasco's preplanned set, the demonstration of the set in use is a function of the director, not the designer, and the designer creates a working system that accomplished those stated goals. Neither Gros nor Belasco (nor Physioc) indicate a moment that was directly attributed to an idea from the designer; rather, the designer served the

actor/manager/producer, and the set is seen only as a sufficient means of providing a background and the necessary scenic exits, entrances, and “sittables” to accommodate director-designed action.

Preference for the rendering over the model is most characteristic of Robert Edmond Jones, though other New Stagecraft designers such as Joseph Urban, Norman Bel Geddes, and Lee Simonson also relied to some extent on the rendering to communicate within a design process. Renderings are costly elements of a design; in order to produce a fully rendered image, a design idea must be completed, and the designer must produce a realistic perspective drawing of a scenic environment, color it, and provide a sense of lighting through some type of darkening or chiaroscuro technique. They differ from sketches in their relatively ‘finished’ appearance and typically evoke a specific moment in the production, demonstrating a possible “look” for the set. Jones was one of the first American designers to use renderings in his own process, and is notable for his tendency to submit renderings of his designs instead of photographs to exhibitions of his work. Jones felt that the drawings better encapsulated his pure idea for the scenic design. He also circulated drawings of European productions in his illustrations for Kenneth Macgowan’s 1922 *Continental Stagecraft*. In both of these cases, the mobility of the rendering mirrored a change in the purpose of the designer, and in the location of the design idea itself.

3.2 NEW STAGECRAFT TECHNIQUES

With the coming of New Stagecraft in the early 1910s, the production of scenic renderings increased markedly. A survey of several collections of design images before and after the period reveals a marked increase in the indication of the human form, of lighting effects, and in pictorial

representation of onstage moments after 1915 among American artists.[36] The contrast is especially strong if images produced after the design was built and production mounted, such as engravings and posters, are excluded. This survey technique cannot firmly prove that renderings were not used prior to 1915, and so this conclusion may be a historiographic point cultivated by the organizers of these collections–many of whom are themselves New Stagecraft designers—rather than a complete survey of what exists unpublished in various designers' archives. However, given what has been made available through publication, and the unpublished work I have viewed in designers' and scenic artists' union collections, the emergence of the actor's body as a dominant aspect of American scenic design planning images can be dated to the 1910s and 1920s. This timing is related to, but likely not caused by, the increase in circulations of pre-performance scenic design images such as those found in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, *Theatre Magazine,* and other increasingly popular periodicals.

The promulgation of renderings has multiple causes, among them a rise in the public visibility of the artist, the increased use of lighting in design composition, and the consolidation of visual artistic authority in the single figure of a designer. All would result in the greater use of renderings and drawings that demonstrated the use of a set through the incorporation of the human form. It also roughly coordinates with the relative emancipation of the designer's work from the director's vision, bringing the artist and the director together as collaborators rather than as employees. Rather than the creation of sufficient, effective environments within which the director could stage action, the designer became occupied with the development of design ideas himself, which could exist independently of a directorial concept, production, or organization.

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[36] Collections surveyed include Donald Oenslager, *Stage Design: Four Centuries of Scenic Invention, A Studio Book* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), Brockett, *Making the Scene*, Lee Simonson, *The Art of Scenic Design; a Pictorial Analysis of Stage Setting and Its Relation to Theatrical* Production (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1973), and Howard Bay, *Stage Design* (Drama Book Specialists, 1974).

One of the defining features of the New Stagecraft rendering is the prominent inclusion of the human form. This is not to say that earlier designers didn't acknowledge the fact that a human figure (the actor) would perform in front of their settings, though this was a charge laid upon them by the New Stagecraft pundits and provocateurs of the late 1910s and early 1920s. In extant images of theatrical design planning from New Stagecraft artists, specifically those produced before the building phase, the human form takes on a compositionally significant role in the rendered image. Jones, Stern, and Appia planned theatrical stage images which included the human figure as major compositional elements. As a manner of design process thinking, however, there is an important difference between the two types of pictorial composition.

With renderings of the human form, design process increasingly begins to incorporate a visuomotor, rather than a purely visual, form of cognition. The distinction between the visual and visuomotor systems has been well-explained by Jacob and Jeannerod.[37] Visuomotor thinking in the brain takes place when one views, anticipates, or even imagines the intentional movement of an animate, in this case human, body. While visual process involves only the visual cortex and the memory networks of the brain, visuomotor thinking engages the motor pathway for comprehension; to understand movement is to re-enact it in the brain, in a small way. The system under discussion here is the mirror neuron system or mirror network, a frequently-studied and often-applied aspect of cognitive studies in the humanities. Mirror networks have been applied by neuroscientists to explain such emergent qualities of social group dynamics as mindreading and empathy, most famously by Vittorio Gallese. Others working on visual mirror networks

[37] A perception of intentional, biological motions "automatically triggers, in the observer, the formation of a motor plan to perform the observed movement." Pierre Jacob and Marc Jeannerod, *Ways of Seeing: The Scope and Limits of Visual Cognition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 227.

disagree.[38] With my application I am not including any of the social ramifications of the mirror network; rather, Jacob and Jeannerod's two-systems model indicated that in certain cases, when moving or gesturing bodies are involved, visual information is processed differently than a nonmoving, non-intentional stimulus.

Furthermore, while Jacob and Jeannerod restrict their argument to observable actions, not those represented in static images, subsequent work on mirror networks suggests that similar pathways may also be involved in the comprehension of past intentional actions, such as the movement of an artist's hand in brush strokes or visual stimuli that invoke a relationship between two quasi-intentional objects, such as two trees grown to touch each other.[39] Other studies have demonstrated motor activation from visual stimuli (images) alone, when there is a strong active component suggested by either a body or an object with a pre-primed use.[40] Does a scenic rendering "qualify" as a sufficient visual stimulus to activate the visuomotor pathway? I cannot answer this with my historical study or methods, and I have not found research which has specifically studied the rendered body. Nonetheless, the distinction between visuomotor and visual processing, and the mirror network, is a prompt to think more about the relationship between past design artifacts and their processing pathways.

Designs created by the European influences on Jones' drafting style – Stern, Appia, Craig, even Saxe-Meiningen – emphasize the posed, moving, gesturing body of the actor as a

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[38] For a summary of Gallese's early position, see Vittorio Gallese and Alvin Goldman, "Mirror Neurons and the Simulation Theory of Mind-Reading," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 2, no. 12 (1998). Jacob and Jeannerod's objection to the social cognition conclusions of Gallese and others can be found in Pierre Jacob and Marc Jeannerod, "The Motor Theory of Social Cognition: A Critique," ibid.9, no. 1 (2005).

[39] D. D. Cinzia and G. Vittorio, "Neuroaesthetics: A Review," *Current Opinions in Neurobiology* 19, no. 6 (2009). , and Sjoerd JH Ebisch et al., "The Sense of Touch: Embodied Simulation in a Visuotactile Mirroring Mechanism for Observed Animate or Inanimate Touch," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 20, no. 9 (2008).

[40] In this experiment, participants were instructed on the use of a particular object, and this priming effect increased mirror network activity. Anna M Borghi et al., "Are Visual Stimuli Sufficient to Evoke Motor Information?: Studies with Hand Primes," *Neuroscience Letters* 411, no. 1 (2007).

part of the design. As such they engaged the brain and the planning processes in new ways, with motor representations on the page earlier in the design process. Of course, I cannot state precisely what was happening in Jones' brain when he designed, yet the neuroscience of visual perception related to art suggests that when bodies are involved, our brains respond differently. It is reasonable to at least suspect that the inclusion of human forms in design process documentation changed thinking about the role of the actor's body in design planning. Perhaps the "shift" into New Stagecraft technique had a brain-based corollary, alongside its sociocultural causes. New Stagecraft, and its emphasis on human movement as a temporal, changing component of the visual composition of images is consonant with a modernist emphasis on the body as the center of performance, rather than the text of a play.[41] Placing bodies in their designs for the stage led designers to align themselves with directors and choreographers, rather than visual artists, and also with architecture and industrial design, both fields which engage in the production of art in relationship to human forms, and the simulation of human interaction.

The technique of using human forms in drawn representations of the set was derived from design techniques already in use in Europe. With the next section I explore the European genesis of rendering techniques and, in particular, the year Jones spent abroad. Theoretically, the importance of the rendering can be traced to Appia and Craig, and their publication of unrealized theatrical images unattached to any given production. These works created the idea of the artistic value of the designed theatrical image apart from its onstage realization. Mechanically, they can be traced to specific influences of European designers and directors who, through discussion of and demonstration of these new principles, inspired New Stagecraft designers in America to experiment with the role and value of design documentation.

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[41] For a recent study of the relationship of the body to American modernist theatrical performance, see Julia A Walker, *Expressionism and Modernism in the American Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Most of the major New Stagecraft practitioners spent time in Europe during their early career. In 1912, Boston-based Livingston Platt and Joseph Urban were the most publicized figures. Platt, who was known for his work on flexible, reusable settings at the Boston Toy Theatre, spent a year in Bruges practicing scenic design for the opera.[42] Joseph Urban was born and studied in Austria before coming to the United States, and was well-publicized in his application of architectural principles of the Vienna School to the practice of designing stage settings.[43] Both men employed "Continental methods" or the "influence of Germany," referring to the tightly organized, well-funded style of European production. Among prewar American artists, the European tour was somewhat *de rigeur*, an artistic *wunderjahr* believed necessary because so much new work had recently toured from the European art theatres. Lee Simonson traveled to Paris first, looking for inspiration for his easel painting, but was directly influenced by the close relationship between modern painting trends and the translation of those ideas to European stages.[44] Sam Hume, a somewhat less famous designer now best known for his arrangement of stagecraft exhibitions in Boston and New York, spent 1909-1912 working for Edward Gordon Craig and collecting images of scenery and scenic technology, which he would

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[42] Platt developed the theory of scenic unity on his own, while managing his own company in Bruges, inspired by German methods. William Pritchard Eaton remarked in American Magazine that Platt built in Bruges, "learning his methods, of course, from Germany." William Pritchard Eaton, "Carrying on the Torch," *The American Magazine*, October 1913, 46. See also Edwin Carty Rance, "An American Stage Wizard," *Theatre Magazine*, August 1915, 93., and Clayton Hamilton, "Scenic Settings in America," *Bookman*, March 1916, 28.

[43] Arnold Aronson finds parallels between his architectural and theatrical methods in Arnold Aronson, *Architect of Dreams: The Theatrical Vision of Joseph Urban* (New York: Mirian and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2000). More details of his architectural training in Vienna can be found in John Loring, *Joseph Urban* (New York: Abrams, 2010).

[44] "My first sense of modern décor and what the painters' and designers' vision could do to revivify the theater came during the summer of 1909 with the first season of the Ballets Russes to Paris and a week of Reinhardt's repertory at the Künstlertheater in Munich, en route to Venice." Simonson remembers Cézanne, "a genius without talent, that is, without graphic facility' as the dominant influence on his early artistic thought. Matisse and Picasso were also important to the young Simonson. Lee Simonson, *Part of a Lifetime; Drawings and Designs, 1919-1940* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), 14-21, 23.

display for the first time his 1914 Boston show.[45] Robert Edmond Jones, not to be left behind, left his intermittent New York drawing and poster jobs in 1913. With the help of fellow classmate Kenneth Macgowan, Jones collected donations from friends and family into the "Robert Edmond Jones Transportation and Development Company," and left for Italy to study with Edward Gordon Craig.[46]

The influence on Jones of Reinhardt's method of collaborative creation and especially his designer Ernst Stern's use of sketches and renderings as compositional tools was strong. This, I argue, is what set apart Jones' drawing from his peers, and one major reason that Jones came to be the progenitor of New Stagecraft method. Upon his return from Europe, he sold his talent by displaying his renderings, and he drew beautifully. He successfully advocated for the New Stagecraft aesthetic, effectively obliterating the influence Joseph Urban and Livingston Platt had developed for the three years prior, and remained the only straight-theatre designer to fully embrace the new aesthetics of Europe. The key to his success was in his development of the rendering as a multivalent artifact that served him personally, in collaboration, and in public.

In the following sections, I explicate Jones' design technique, drawing together sources written by him and criticism of his work by apprentices and observers. Many of his ideas are, in fact, derived from techniques and attitudes held by Reinhardt and his designers. Tracing the lineage of these techniques to their European forbears demonstrates the importance of Jones' year abroad to the formation of his approach to design work.

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[45] Interestingly, Sam Hume built the model version of the famous screens for Craig's Moscow Art Theatre Hamlet in 1911-1912. Deanna Toten Beard, "'The New Art of the Theatre': The Aesthetic Discourse on Theatrical Modernism in the U.S, 1911-1922,' Unpublished Dissertation (Indiana University 2001): 46, 88.
[46] Larson, Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960, 53.

3.2.1 Design Techniques of Robert Edmond Jones

The working method of Robert Edmond Jones is not easily uncovered. Unlike Urban and Simonson, both architecturally minded and industrious in their approach to the craft, Jones thought of himself as a poet, and his statements of his art explicitly deny the importance of process to the creation of good art. For Jones, the content of his production and his means of producing it can, and must be, separated: "All of us designers work the same way," Jones explained in a 1936 interview. "Nobody in interested in these processes; the important things are the deeper ones, things that have to do with our ideas about the theatre, the ideas and the dreams that motivate our work." Jones went on to express that Houghton's design methodology interview series[47] ought to "extract the essence of each of us. That sort of thing is significant, but has little to do with methods."[48] Jones never discounted the value of hard work, especially when talking about the relative acclaim that scenic designer ought not to seek. In Jones' calculation, the play itself, and to a lesser degree the playwright and the director, were the proper targets for critical acclaim.

By focusing attention on the design practices, aesthetic theories, and even individual proclivities of Jones' work in the studio and in the shop, I am not merely attempting to expose the mystic-hermit Jones to undesired scrutiny. Rather, I acknowledge Jones' important contributions to the teaching and practices of theatrical design based on New Stagecraft

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[47] Charles Norris Houghton contributed several articles to *Theatre Arts Monthly* between 1936 and 1937. At this early point in his career, Houghton stage managed professionally, and his article on Nikolai Akimov and the particularities of Russian scenic design methods in May 1936 garnered such interest in the readership that he was commissioned to produce a series of interviews explaining how the most famous designers went about their work. By the time Jones was interviewed, Lee Simonson, Donald Oenslager, and Norman Bel Geddes' interviews had already been published. Jones alone in the series was reluctant to discuss his actual working practices.

[48] Qtd. in Norris Houghton, "The Designer Sets the Stage V: Robert Edmond Jones," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 20, no. 12 (1936): 966.

principles, and suggest that it is not only his writing, but his process itself and use of design tools that led future designers to cite him as such an influence. With this section I address the steps of Jones' process, which rely heavily on analysis as envisioning, as well as the evocative properties of image and the actor's body. I suggest one primary conduit through which these ideas were transmitted to Jones – his year in Germany visiting the Reinhardt theatre, which alone separated Jones' lackluster performance as a poster designer in New York from his early influential period beginning with *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*.

The Jones archive has been heavily processed and edited, and does not offer as many opportunities to look at rough drafts as either Mielziner's or Heymann's archive. This may be because Jones did not produce as many rough drafts as other designers, or perhaps simply that he destroyed his rough materials when later, more polished versions of designs were created.[49] Renderings exist in completed form for many of the major productions Jones designed, while roughs remain for only a few: *Lute Song* (1946), *Richard III* (1940), and a never-realized production of *Medea* (1946). By combining the analysis of these rough drafts with written accounts of process from the time and after, it is possible to develop a sense of his late process, which coincides with his lecture and writing periods. While these are separated in time from his 1910s projects, they maintain the same emphasis on the actor's body and the scenic rendering that his earlier published and reviewed design work suggests.

[49] Jane T. Peterson has suggested in *Staging Desire: Queer Readings of American Theater History* (University of Michigan Press, 2002) that the state of the Jones archive was a result of Jones' latent homosexuality, expunged by his family and executors of the estate. Whether Jones was a closeted gay man is not conclusive, though perhaps not relevant to the lack of design rough drafts in the major Jones collections. He was something of a perfectionist, as indicated by the relative completeness of early drafts. The lack of rough drafts may be attributable to Jones, his executors, or the biases of librarians and holding collections, or some combination thereof.

Though it evolved over the course of his career, Jones' working methods broke down in a similar series of phases to the design model suggested in chapter one.[50] In many respects his approach broadly resembled those of the scenic artists preceding him. However, Jones' ideas for the work to be done in a given phase differed significantly. When beginning a project, he did analyze the playscript, sketch preliminary designs, and occasionally build models. Once approved, he shopped and sewed, built and painted his productions in a supervisory capacity, though in the first phase of his career he built and made more than he supervised. Unlike previous designers, Jones engaged in a process he termed "envisioning," in which, through careful analysis of the playscript, Jones claimed to have produced near-fully detailed designs for the production, which he then transformed into initial sketches; he vastly preferred the sketch to the model as a design tool.[51] Taking Jones at his word, for now, this leaves four segments of the production process to explore, each of which differ in their realization from the nineteenth-century design model: analysis, envisioning, sketching, and construction.

Jones' analysis of a playscript emphasized emotional and thematic content. It was performed in private, before much discussion of the individual production approach with the director. He did not, as Gros did, "solve the problem" of the play first. Rather, Jones aimed to "sense the atmosphere of the play with unusual clearness and exactness."[52] The theme of atmosphere is dominant in Jones' writing about the theatre; he saw his purpose as one of finding

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[50] This raises the question of whether the models of design process outlined by Goel and Cross, among others, are historically contingent or stable across historical periods. That is, is design behavior constructed by culture and fashion, or is it more fundamentally a part of human behavior? The historical sweep of this question places it outside the breadth of this dissertation, though it is interesting. I suggest that what constitutes design behavior in theatrical design changes as a result of New Stagecraft thinking, which implies that design processes themselves are subject to cultural change. As far as I have read, no design studies work takes up this historical approach.

[51] Jones makes his last reference to a model in his, "Nijinsky and Til Eulenspiegel." Originally published in 1945, republished as "Nijinsky and Til Eulenspigel," in *Nijinsky, Pavlova, Duncan: Three Lives in Dance*, ed. Paul David Magriel (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 52. There are no extant models in the Jones archive.

[52] Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination; Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), 74.

"unhackneyed ways whereby he [the designer] may establish the *sense of place*," and "to bring the audience into the atmosphere of the theme or thought."[53] Such statements – both from the 1941 edition of *The Dramatic Imagination* – aren't simply poetic reinterpretations of a life's work, but support a general theme that sustained Jones throughout his career. In 1916 Jones remarked that "we begin with an idea" and that "the idea is always master…the decorator, like the actor, should be translucent—like a medium."[54] Lee Simonson's retrospective interpretation of Jones' process emphasized that "what he searched for in every script…was the *elan vital*, the rhythmic throb of life in a living organism, plan, animal, or man."[55] Shared across all of these accounts, and others, is the emphasis on idea, rhythm, atmosphere, and theme.

Jones' analysis depended heavily on his personal investment with the themes of the play. Finding the theme was a near-mystical account in the work on Jones, so tied up in an artistic creative act of the self that "…he has tried, whenever possible, to design only for plays with which he was in love."[56] This emotional fusion of the self of the artist with the world of the play, to "live in it for a time, immerse himself in it, be baptized by it,"[57] is one of the chief methodological steps attributable to Jones. He attacked designs as "not the problem of an architect or a painter or a sculptor or even a musician, but of a poet."[58] As a result, the analytical behavior of Jones was mostly internal, not something to be figured out on the page but to be imagined seamlessly from contemplation and immersion in a world.

For Jones, "immersion" in research meant specifically immersion within a given historical period concept. He relied heavily on research images to inspire his designs, and while

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[53] Ibid., 135-6.
[54] "The Decorator," *The New York Times*, December 12, 1916, X6.
[55] Simonson, Lee, "Legacy," in *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 16.
[56] Houghton, "The Designer Sets the Stage V: Robert Edmond Jones," 969.
[57] Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination; Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre*, 74.
[58] Ibid., 77.

he didn't copy historical originals verbatim, he was specific about the images he surrounded himself with in the early, analysis phase of the process. Both costume and set designs in the Jones archive are attached to reference images pulled from magazines, historical prints, and books of historical art and fashion. Jones' files for *Redemption* (1918) and *Richard III* (1940) consist entirely of period research,[59] the sketches themselves having been removed for publication and exhibition elsewhere. In *Redemption*, the research consisted of period interiors for the adaptation of Tolstoy's short story, and for *Richard III*, Jones was preoccupied with creating a realistic rendering of the Tower of London, which remained the primary scenic element of the unit setting.[60] In both of these productions from the beginning and end of Jones' career, the fidelity between the images attached to the designs and their simplified, but faithful rendering in the details of architecture and the line of the costumes suggests that Jones' "immersion" into the process was heavily dependent on research in addition to thematic, "idea" analysis.

Further evidence for the importance of research in Jones' method can be found in an odd piece of the archive. Between January 1944 and September 1945, Jones recorded his own dreams while he underwent Jungian analysis. These dreams found their way into the archive, and provide an unorthodox way of looking into the beginnings of Jones' process. Only one of the extant dreams addresses the beginning stages of design work, yet the dream too belies the importance of correct and suggestive research images. In the dream Jones finds himself in

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[59] This was Jones' second design for Richard III, having previously tackled it with Richard Hopkins in 1920. Ralph Pendleton Collection of Robert Edmond Jones Papers, 1916-1973. Box 4, Folders 5-7. Held by the Special Collections of Olin Library, Wesleyan University.

[60] All action took place outside the metaphoric tower, and included the projection of lighting effects in space above – the vision of the crown and the royal rose in the first scene of the play, and a ghost of Lady Anne in V.iii. Images reproduced in Pendleton, *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones*, 32-33, 100-04.

> … a big building with many young men. A great mass of materials has been sent to me relating to the forthcoming production to HENRY VIII. I see great scrap-books of samples, tiny squares and diamonds of velvets in all colors, albums of photographs, etc. I look at one of them. It is wrong. I wanted English materials. This is a book of Italian pictures – Michelangelo's LAST JUDGMENT, paintings by Da Vinci and Veronese – important, but irrelevant and useless to me. Now I see a book with a photograph of an actor wearing a kind of crown with jeweled pendant hanging from it at intervals. Ah! That is what I want! I call Philip Huston, a pale, sensual, good-looking actor (a friend of mine, a rather good actor) to pose for me. He obligingly comes over to me and sits down before a mirror. I see his face reflected. I put an embroidered band around his head and place jewels at intervals against it.[61]

Leaving aside the implicit erotics of this dream, more relevant to the question of design process is Jones' source for inspiration. In this scene the scanning of materials and the discovery that they are wrong – Italian and not English – strongly suggests that Jones had at least a preferred way of engaging with research. The discovery of the jeweled crown is an instance of selection from among the research, and the recreation of a portion of that image for theatrical use. Jones' design expertise in this moment is predominantly the selection and highlighting of evocative elements, being able to "point to" the quality of an object without necessarily verbalizing its appropriateness in a given theme. This selection, a familiar sensation for designers and directors,[62] encapsulates the type of creative knowledge and expertise that, underneath of all of his preaching and poetry, Jones fought for. The valorization of design knowledge through selection and amplification, the perfect line, prop, costume, or vision, drove his process, especially in the latter half of his career.

Indeed, it was a similar attitude toward the utmost correctness of the perfect prop or ornament that drove recollections of Jones' design work. Jo Mielziner's posthumous

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[61] Robert Edmond Jones, "Dreams," Ralph Pendleton Collection of Robert Edmond Jones Papers, 1916-1973. Box 1, Folder 31. Held by the Special Collections of Olin Library, Wesleyan University

[62] Anne Bogart invokes Wittgenstein in her advice to directors, "If you cannot say it, point to it." *A Director Prepares: Seven Essays on Art and Theatre* (Routledge, 2003), 48. Such a statement is as much a principle of design as in direction, as Bogart also notes in *The Viewpoints Book* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005), 173.

remembrance of Jones cites his supervision of the construction of *The Buccaneer* (1925), which Mielziner assisted him on. Rather than hand off the drawing and let the painters see it as "simply the job of executing a large painting," Jones and Mielziner brought in evocative objects to inflect the designers' state of mind as they worked: a period bench, a swatch of yellow cloth, a large red flower, a Spanish Renaissance tile. For Jones the seventeenth-century Spanish room needed the "living things" that made up its world; as Mielziner remembers it, "Jones wanted – for himself and for all who were working with him – to be conscious of the relationship of this painting to its final achievement and appearance on stage."[63] These objects were not a part of the set to be used, but placing the scene painters in the mind of artists was worth the expense.

Compared to the research conducted by nineteenth-century painters (such as William Thompson Russell Smith, above), Jones' research provides a foundation from which he selected representative elements. Rather than aiming to reproduce a visual experience, Jones emphasized the evocative qualities of an object beyond its visual representation in paint. The act of design is in selection, and not the skilled recreation of a visual panorama; by refocusing attention on the object or sensory experience alone as bearer of (here, period) meaning, Jones enacts a modernist approach to scenic design. He redirects the attention of the viewer, be it director, craftsman, or theatrical audience, to the qualia of the object, which is defamiliarized and framed to stand for both its symbolic qualities but also the design ability of its maker.

After analyzing and researching the production, Jones turned to his own idiosyncratic design phase, envisioning. Rather that working out the production mechanically, Jones dreamed. In speaking about this process, he claimed that "all at once the people, their groupings, their

[63] Mielziner, Jo, "Practical Dreams," in Pendleton, *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones*, 22.

clothes, the light, the background appear to me complete in detail."[64] Houghton, the interviewer, notes that the "accuracy of his imagination may be judged by comparing the finished production with his sketches," and based on my own viewing of the archival rough drafts of Jones' drawings, I agree with him. Whether this is because Jones' original sketches are remarkably effective at first glance, or if instead Jones refused to entertain ideas that strayed far from his original conception, is unclear; likely it was a bit of both. Even when aspects of the scenic design change in part during the process, they consist of minor variations in the original conception, rather than complete revisions to the overall design. Roughs for *Richard III* (1940) lessened the size of the central Tower in order to accommodate a larger projection screen, and in *Medea* roughs Jones experimented with several different divisions of stage space between a quarter-circular staircase and a large temple unit affording a shallow, relief-style playing space in front. In these cases, as others, both the emotional content and general visual composition of the stage was worked out first in his head and remained in the design from the earliest sketches. Nonetheless, there is a striking and unusual similarity between the rough sketch and the finished product in Jones' work, which seemed to be a point of pride for Jones.[65] Donald Oenslager attests to the fidelity of the rough to the final, too: "Jones had the gift of embodying his fully developed idea for a scene within his first chiaroscuro sketch, and it was extraordinary how invariably right that scene was for the play."[66]

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[64] Jones quoted in Houghton, "The Designer Sets the Stage V: Robert Edmond Jones," 969.
[65] "…it's apt to come to me suddenly. I see the whole thing, and I see the room and I see how large it is and I see what color the wallpaper is…in other words, I don't sit down with a paper and figure it out, work it out—let's see, well now I think she ought to have a pink dress, maybe the skirt should be eight inches off the ground—you see that dress. I think that's not very usual, I must say frankly." Robert Edmond Jones and George P. Crepeau, "Robert Edmond Jones on the Creative Process: An Interview with a Group of High School Students," *Educational Theatre Journal* 19, no. 2 (1967): 127.
[66] Donald Oenslager, "Settings by Robert Edmond Jones," in Pendleton, *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones*, 133.

Jones' commitment to the early sketches he developed are contextualized and explained by two aspects of his design practice. First, almost all of Jones' design documentation is in sketches, renderings, and elevations; that is, rarely did he work from a ground plan, model, or other type of planometric notation. From the beginning, the images on which he promoted his own art – most crucially to Granville Barker in 1915 and Nijinsky in 1916[67] – were of full stages in strong, evocative moments of production. Jones didn't merely demonstrate what the set would look like, but how the set would function within the production. From a series of these sketches, a producer or director would gain the sense of the whole production. This technique neatly parallels the system Reinhardt used to plan his film and theatre work, as I will discuss later. Essentially, Jones was storyboarding. This is not to say that Jones didn't produce working drawings for artisans, painters, and carpenters, but they were not primary artifacts of communication. As the guidebook for a 1950 exhibition put it, "A Jones set, in fact, is actually a Jones sketch magnified, and shows the clarity of his intention."[68] Using the rendering of the scene in use as a primary communication artifact of scenic design was one of Jones' most important and successful innovations, and one which he learned from his time studying in Germany.

Jones' tendency to work in full-stage renderings is unusual among designers of the period. The architecturally-engaged Urban and Simonson thought mostly from ground plans and patterns of spatial use, while earlier scenic designers produced designs of the set alone, not the set in use. Among compilations of designs from the early New Stagecraft designers in historical

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[67] Being mostly unproduced, Jones was hired by Barker for *Dumb Wife* and Nijinsky for *Til Eulenspiegel* on the promise of his renderings alone, especially the ones he completed for *The Merchant of Venice* in 1914 at Reinhardt's theater.

[68] *The Harvard Theatre Collection in Cooperation with the Fogg Art Museum Presents Three Designers for the Contemporary Theatre: Robert Edmond Jones, Donald Oenslager, Lee Simonson*. Exhibition Book. Cambridge: Harvard Art Museum, 1950. Papers for Three Designers for the Contemporary Theatre Exhibition (MS Thr 589). Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

studies and even in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, Jones is the only artist with scenic designs represented fully by renderings and no photographs. Few photographs of his designs exist in the archive, as well, while Simonson and Bel Geddes frequently snapped pictures of their completed, lit work. Jones actively opposed photographs of his design work, preferring to send the scenic sketches themselves to competitions and exhibits of stage art. From Mielziner's point of view, Jones "saw to it that the record of his work could be reproduced with vitality and beauty,"[69] which involved the substitution of the dramatic, better-reproducible drawn image for even high quality photographs. Jones perfected the use of high contrast and detailed chiaroscuro for the maximum reproducibility of his images, which also attested to the arresting use of light in his expressionist and expressionist-inflected designs. Later on in his process, Jones' rendering style took the particularities of newspaper printing into account, emphasizing high contrast and dark linework. In some cases, such as *Dumb Wife*, Jones redrew early renderings after the production after the production had closed.

Sketches in hand, Jones supervised the execution of his designs. Though he did produce a few models, notably one for *Til Eulenspeigiel* (perhaps at the behest of his continental employer)[70], more often Jones made working drawings and paint elevations for the shops. As long as he was able, Jones built the productions himself. Macgowan notes that what sets Jones apart in addition to his design ingenuity, was "his actual in person touch" in creating the pieces of scenery. It was the handmade, artisan quality of his work that Jones attempted to inspire in the work of others. Through detailed specifications of prop and costume drawings, often

[69] Mielziner, "Practical Dreams" in Pendleton, 22-23.
[70] Jones described his process and the tyrannical fervor of Nijinsky as producer in "Nijinsky and Til Eulenspigel."

accompanied with swatches and the occasional wry note to the artist working for him.[71] Jones handled lighting rehearsals with marked speed, likely due to the fact that Jones had already worked out the best lighting for a given set in the composition/storyboard phase. When Jones set out to execute the lighting for his production, the design work was already complete in his head, and communicable through his sketches.[72] A visionary in the literal and figurative senses, Jones not only described the visual world of his designs, but completely envisioned it in his head, and systematically (and whimsically, idiosyncratically) inspired that same vision in others.

3.3 RENDERING AS EUROPEAN TECHNIQUE

In the first years of Jones' theatrical design career in New York, commenters noted the influence of German ideas on Jones' designs, but were reluctant to assign influence directly to Reinhardt. Hiram Kelly Moderwell touted Jones as the singular American artist "free from foreign bondage…what he got from Germany was not any concrete luggage of artistic ideas and methods." Rather, Moderwell attributed the influence of the Reinhardt theatre to his newfound "sense of something constantly doing."[73] It was the ethic and "idiom" of the German theatre, itself theatrical and distinct from pictorial art that influenced Jones most strongly. Among writers

[71] "Sometimes a quote from the play or a line from a poem was tastefully written in Jones' strong and vivid handwriting in just the right spot on the page. If Bobby were asked, 'Do you think Adam Tait, the carpenter, will really understand it?' he probably would laugh and say, 'Perhaps he won't.' And then with a serious look in his eye he would add, 'Perhaps he will.'" Mielziner, "Practical Dreams" in Pendleton, 24.

[72] "Producers and directors who worked with Robert Edmond Jones for the first time were often surprised at the smooth and quick perfection with which he lit the show." Kenneth Macgowan, "Jones as Director and Film Designer" in Pendleton, 139.

[73] "If he acquired the technique of Stern and Orlik, or Reinhardt's sense of showmanship, he has mostly shed them by this time. What Berlin really gave him was the sense of something constantly doing. He learned to appreciate the technically education of the German craftsman. He came to know the idiom of the theatre, which is often so different from the idiom of decorative or pictorial art." Hiram Kelly Moderwell, "The Art of Robert Edmond Jones," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 3: 53.

at this time, “methods” generally refers to the production process itself, such as the “methods” of Urban in painting and scenery construction, rather than design planning or attitudes toward creativity. Jones frequently referred to Reinhardt, and even to Stern, in his later reflections on his career. While few commentators at the time probed the extent of Reinhardt’s contribution to Jones’ personal and influential techniques,[74] I align design as it was practiced in the 1913-1914 season between Reinhardt and his then-principal designer, Ernst Stern, with many of Jones’ characteristic approaches to designing, especially the emphasis on the human form in the abstract, plastic setting, the subjugated role of the designer to the director and the playwright, and the prominence of the storyboarded scenic sketch as the primary communicative design tool.

3.3.1 Ernst Stern and Max Reinhardt

Max Reinhardt took over directorship of the Deutsches Theatre in 1905, and between 1905 and 1930 engaged in staging and directorial experiments which advanced the “new stagecraft” of the Continent. American critics and historians frequently cited Reinhardt as one of the foremost innovators engaged in experiments with modernist production techniques, alongside Craig, Copeau, the Ballets Russes, Stanislavsky, and Jessner. Major productions of the Deustches Theatre in this period included a number of Shakespeare productions, famously *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* with its naturalistic, plastically rendered forest (1905), *The Miracle*, first staged in 1911, and *Sumurun*, first staged in 1910, with tours to London (1911) and New York (1912).

[74] Charles Meltzer, like Moderwell, observed that after briefly sitting “at Reinhardt’s feet,” Jones “has drifted far from Reinhardtian practice.” Charles Meltzer, "Stage Decoration as It Is and Used to Be " *Arts and Decoration*, April 1920, 440. Lee Simonson only hints at direct connection between Reinhardt and Jones, noting that it was the intervening year in Germany that separated Jones’ obscure early beginnings from Dumb Wife, and that Germany likely introduced him to the aesthetic of unity that would become the hallmark of New Stagecraft. Simonson, “Legacy,” in Pendleton, 14-15.

Maintaining a rotating repertory of available performances, Reinhardt was consistently in production, making new work while also maintaining and remounting previous shows. A full-scale analysis of Reinhardt's output is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and so I will focus on the design aspects of his work before World War I.

Unlike other directorial greats of the modernist period – especially Craig – Reinhardt established a collaborative model for his productions. That is to say, while his visual senses and own design sensibility were highly developed, as his sketches and drawings in the *Regiebuch*[75] attest, Reinhardt invited the contributions of other artists – especially when it came to design. He sought out the talents of those designers best suited for the feeling and sensibility of a new production; among his most frequent collaborators aside from Stern were Alfred Roller, Emil Orlik, Oskar Strnad, and Edvard Munch.[76] While Reinhardt's vision was often dominant, the expert artistic knowledge of the designers counted for much in Reinhardt's theatre. As Huntly Carter wrote in 1914, "Reinhardt's contribution to the problem of the theatre is co-directorship…the expression of the Will of the Theatre by co-ordinated minds, each artist taking the keenest interest in promoting the artistic work of the theatre, each artist desiring to attain the best effect, not only for his own sake, but also for that of his fellow-artists."[77] For this reason I yoke together Reinhardt and Stern in their influence on Jones during his year abroad. It is likely that Jones spent more time with Stern than with Reinhardt at that time, as Jones later referred to

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[75] J. L. Styan, *Max Reinhardt, Directors in Perspective*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 120.
[76] Huntly Carter contrasts Reinhardt's approach to selecting design collaborators whose expertise matched both the three-dimensional style and atmospheric attitude with the earlier work of Wagner and Craig: "Wagner's scene-painter belonged to the German Royal Academy, while his animated properties come out of the Ark. Reinhardt has gone beyond this in his search for a simplified scene. He was the first to call to the service of the scene the aid of distinguished plastic artists and painters, selecting with judgment those who are specially gifted from the work: such as Arnold Böcklin, with his wonderful sense of atmospheric form, Emil Orlick, with his love of Japanese form and colour; Edward Munch, the Ibsen of Norwegian painters; Ernst Stern, with his mastery of bold colour." Huntly Carter, *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt* (New York: M. Kennerley, 1914), 84-5.
[77] Ibid., 20.

his “good friend” Stern yet comically suggests that those who apprentice with Reinhardt “must pay for the privilege,” which Jones did not do.[78]

Stern had been with Reinhardt since 1905, when, according his diary, a biting newspaper review of Reinhardt’s production of *Midsummer* (“the lovers were still the stereotyped stage Greeks”) brought a letter from Reinhardt himself, asking for an interview, and then a job designing an upcoming production: a challenge to do better.[79] Prior to this Stern had been a moderately acclaimed portraitist who had attracted the attention of Munich painters’ associations, especially “Die Jugend” and the Munich Secessionists. Like many designers, Stern did not imagine himself a scenic painter or theatrical designer until the opportunity presented itself. For Stern, the opportunity was with Reinhardt. Though it took some time for Stern to adapt to the practicalities of stage decoration and costume design,[80] he soon found himself handling multiple productions at once, and busy with supervision of the shop and the storage. After a successful production of *Orpheus in the Underworld* in 1906, Stern was promoted to head art director of the theatre, a position that not only entailed design responsibilities but also executive supervision of the shops and other designers.

Jones arrived at the Deutsches Theater in 1913. Through the good will of Baron von Schlippenbach, whom Jones had met in Florence while on set for Reinhardt,[81] he was permitted to stay in residence from October indefinitely. During the year he spent there, Jones was allowed access to rehearsals, the company library and storerooms, and to observe Stern, Roller, and

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[78] Robert Edmond Jones, "The Gentleman of the Decoration," *The New York Times*, February 14, 1915, X4.
[79] Ernst Stern, *My Life, My Stage* (London: Gollancz, 1951), 63.
[80] “When I came to design the costumes I made the usual beginner’s error of forgetting that men and women had to wear them and that they must therefore, from that point of view at least, be strictly practical. My designs were too much influenced by my experiences as a cartoonist and illustrator. In addition, I didn’t know that the designs were then handed over to a theatrical costume firm for execution and that every detail had to be explained on them.” Ibid., 65.
[81] Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960*, 54.

others at work. Stern was the friendliest toward Jones during his stay, perhaps sensing a fellow aesthete and dreamer, and shared (among others) his plans for *Sumurun*, which Jones had not seen in 1912 but with which he was familiar. Several aspects of the method Jones observed in the working relationship between Stern and Reinhardt planted seeds in his mind. Reinhardt modeled the collaborative-hierarchical mode of production, the value of suggestion through precise, material imagery, and the overall importance of the dramatic text. From Stern Jones gained a respect for the craftsmanlike discipline of the design studio, an emphasis on the human form in creating stage pictures, and the value of the design sketch as the primary communicator of scenic meaning. By looking more deeply at the collaborative process of Stern and Reinhardt, another possible point of origin for some of Jones' seemingly idiosyncratic ideas emerges.

As art director Reinhardt often shared his initial thoughts on a production with Stern directly. The typical process, Stern wrote, was consistent through his fifteen years with the company:

> In the first discussion he [Reinhardt] would let me know in a few words what visual impression he had received in reading the play, and what he considered to be the essential and striking characteristics. He never talked for long; all he had to say was said briefly and very much to the point. After that he let me do the talking. I would then carefully study the play, making innumerable sketches and trying out various ideas before I placed any definite plans before him.[82]

Reinhardt's model of collaboration, then, emphasized the "essential" characteristics and "visual impressions" of the script, though in the same meeting allowed for the exchange of ideas from the designer as well. The director set the overall tone, yet the designer was allowed to have significant input not merely on the way in which his vision was to be realized, but the details of the vision itself, within the bounds of the original impression. Of course, Reinhardt guided this process by both selecting characteristically oblique responses, suggestions of specific materials,

[82] Stern worked for Reinhardt from 1906-1921. Stern, *My Life, My Stage*, 75.

as well as selecting lead designers particularly suited to the type of production Reinhardt had in mind. Even so, Stern participated in determining the production needs, and developed actor-centered models for communicating with Reinhardt – something Belasco would never have permitted.

Reinhardt's guidance underlined the importance of thematic suggestion via prop use to Jones. Both Stern and Reinhardt felt strongly that the particularity of a given object, sensation, or color could encapsulate the "spirit" of a production, and that the incorporation of that object could be itself a design statement. Speaking about Reinhardt's early thoughts for his 1906 production of *Ghosts*, Stern cites a discussion about a black leather armchair to be used in their Munch-designed production,[83] then well underway in the production process. In this set design, the chair sat in the middle of a sad, tan room, and Mrs. Alving alone is dressed in color, mid-conversation with a group of black-clad individuals. When Stern criticized the lack of other furniture in the room, Reinhardt replied, "Maybe, but the heavy armchair tells you all you want to know. The dark coloring reflects the whole atmosphere of the drama. And then look at the walls: they're the color of diseased gums. We must try to get that tone. It will put the actors in the right mood."[84] The armchair was the suggestion from which the rest of the design sprouted, and Stern internalized the same sensitivity to the evocative properties of objects: "Instinctively he always hit on the right thing, whether it was the color of a costume, or even the material of

[83] At this point, Stern was a new art director at the Deustches Theatre, and Munch had been commissioned to design for Ghosts, the opening production of the Kammerspiele, Reinhardt's smaller, more intimate Berlin theater. Reinhardt felt that the Norwegian expressionist could best capture the emotional tenor of Ibsen's play. This design is currently held by the Munch Museum in Oslo, and can be viewed electronically here: http://www.glopad.org/pi/en/record/digdoc/288

[84] Stern, *My Life, My Stage*, 74-75.

which it had to be made."[85] This strain of thought and design method would later send Jones out late on a search for the perfect candlesticks, lace, or pens to inspire his craftsmen.

Reinhardt's planning for productions began with a process of visualization, recorded in his prompt-books. Like the preparatory sketches of Saxe-Meiningen, whose notes and prompt books are replete with planning sketches that above all plan out the arrangement of human forms in relationship to simplified renderings of the scenic environment, Reinhardt's *Regiebuch* contained many series of notations and drawings, often combining the two types of documentation to capture a three-dimensional scenic effect. The books themselves recorded Reinhardt's thought throughout the often years-long runs of a productions, distinguishing between old and new thoughts by ink color; Reinhardt scholar J. L. Styan noted six separate marking colors in the 1916 *Macbeth Regiebuch*, beginning with his "ideas and suggestions about the production" to the positions, movements, facial expressions and intonations of actors and detailed descriptions of the scenic environment.[86] Stern aligned his own image production with Reinhardt's storyboard sensibility, creating a series of sketches to demonstrate the changes of scenery he expected to create in a given production, even when staged on the revolve, when a model would have given a more technically accurate view of the design.[87] Stern used each of these methods for different ends; the sketch to organize the visual aesthetic of a frozen onstage moment, and the model to determine the details of set dressing and the mechanics of moving scenery. The storyboarding technique is likely one Reinhardt and Stern developed from film technique, in which the composed visual "shot" requires pre-planning of the visual space to

[85] Ibid., 75.
[86] Styan, *Max Reinhardt*, 122.
[87] Carter, The Theatre of Max Reinhardt, 236.

accompany moments of high drama.[88] From Reinhardt's methodical documentation, Jones began to understand the value of storyboarded sketching, and the power of the limited frame and idealized view imposed by the sketch as a tool for communicating meaning efficiently.

At this point, it is important to consider the difference between the storyboard, the prompt-book sketch, and other types of visual planning used in the theatre and film. Storyboards, or the simplified visual representation of a sequence of film shots, came into regular use by the 1920s, in both the work of Eisenstein's montage and the animated shorts of Walt Disney.[89] Before the use of visual planning ahead of time, early filmmakers tended to use longer shots with little camera movement or changed camera angles, replicating stage aesthetics. The key difference between film and stage composition, filmmakers found, was the additional degree of freedom afforded by the moveable camera, the cut, and the freedom from static background compositions within a given scene.[90] The storyboard is the one tool that manages differing fields of view, visual compositions, and patterns of movement within the film frame, rather than the proscenium frame.

Reinhardt's *Regiebuch* notations are mostly ground plans, with notations of actor movement, furniture locations, and scenery changes. In this method he followed the same

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[88] French theatre historian Léonie Villard wrote of American New Stagecraft in 1932: "If we compare it with traditional methods of production, the new technique of the American theatre is above all characterized by a preference for tableau effects, and not by strong lines of movement built up through successive stages in the action of the play. This tendency to substitute for the external, and often superficial, dynamism of swift action, an internal dynamism in which the characters seem arrested at the critical moment of their progress, is probably to a large extent a reaction from the methods of the cinema, a medium still in its infancy, and which only exists so far by the traditional methods of the theatre." Léon Moussinac, Gordon Craig, and RH Packman, *The New Movement in the Theatre: A Survey of Recent Developments in Europe and America* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), pl. 115.

[89] Sergio Paez and Anson Jew, *Professional Storyboarding* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2013), 5.

[90] "In this new field the only precedents came from the stage, where characters must be brought on and moved from one part of the stage to another with some degree of pictorial progression…[filmmakers] soon began to find that their carefully developed background compositions were lost of spoiled when the movement in the field of arrangement did not accord in some degree with the scheme of the rest. They learned that, whereas in a still pictorial composition the center of interest was pre-ordained and stationary, with movement therein the eye followed the action, wherever it was." Carlyle Ellis, "Art and the Motion Picture," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 128(1926): 54.

practices that were used by other European modernist directors; Stanislavski used prompt-book sketches consistently in his process and as early as 1896's *The Seagull*.[91] Craig's *Hamlet* annotated script (1911-1912) contains similar ground-plan sketches, worked out in detail with Stanislavski.[92] All three of these directors most often used planometric forms – the ground plan – rather than the scaled perspective elevation. In a sense, this is unsurprising, as the ground plan is the most useful document for the director engaged in managing actor traffic patterns and where exactly a given armchair must sit.

The images that Stern produced, and Jones copied, were elevations of the set in use. Given the opportunities presented by moveable scenery, and especially controllable light, the storyboard tool becomes more effective at managing changing visual compositions on stage than the ground plan. The ground plan depends to some degree on a static background in order for it to be useful; the director must have a sense of the visual background in mind in order to compose bodies and furniture in relationship to it. Rendering sequences such as those produced by Stern provide that information more easily, with less of a need to keep track of the visual background in a given scene; rendering reduces the cognitive load on directors. It was only fitting that the innovators of this new type of visual planning for performance would be the avowed stage artists, who possessed both the artistic skill to create realistically rendered perspective elevations and the facility for two-dimensional composition necessary to make the rendering compelling.

Alongside the collaborative model Reinhardt pioneered, Jones' friendship with Stern also poses interesting parallels with his developing method. Reinhardt's inspirational meetings,

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[91] Nick Worrall, "Stanislavsky's Production Score for Chekhov's the Cherry Orchard (1904): A Synoptic Overview," *Modern Drama* 42, no. 4 (1999); Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1989), 76.

[92] See images reproduced in Laurence Senelick, *Gordon Craig's Moscow Hamlet: A Reconstruction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).

Regiebuch in hand, began the process, but once Stern retired to his studio his own process began. Huntly Carter's description of Stern's method describes Stern's characteristic design innovation, the identification of a "line in character with the motive." Here Carter seems to be referring to an actual line, a contour which encapsulates the mood of a character or the action of a play.[93] In this case, "line" seems to be shorthand for both the imposition of unity on a design and a period concept, which Stern would have developed through research.[94] Inspired by images of medieval costume and architecture for *The Miracle*, or memories of his childhood in Romania for *Sumurun*, Stern selected from research almost as much as he designed, as the saying goes, from whole cloth. For Stern, designing was a process of identification and heightening, finding the perfect image, architectural ornament, or component of a historical costume. Where Stern differed from his earlier stage decorator predecessors, for example, Karl Walser who had built the fully-realistic trees for 1905's *Midsummer*, was in his tendency to excerpt a particular element of a realistic research image and turn it into a unifying motif for a character, production, or architecture.

Across extant Stern sketches from the 1910s, the relationship between the colorfully costumed human form and dramatic, directional lighting is thematic.[95] When representing a given moment in a scene, Stern positioned the characters in dramatic situations, often accenting the curves and form of their body in a shaft of light. Many of the sketches make use of chiaroscuro and shading effects to further communicate not only the intended shape and color of a given costume or setting, but its potential for dramatic realization in the context of the

[93] "If the motive is Gothic the line will have the Gothic energy and flexibility. By the use of this line he anchors everything in the scene; costumes and accessories become part of a design." Carter, 235.
[94] The role of research is emphasized in Stern's discussion of *Sumurun*, in which he notes that the final designs were a combination of research images from "an old book on the Near East" and his own recollections of "the semi-Oriental atmosphere of my Roumanian home." Stern, *My Life, My Stage*, 85-86.
[95] A variety of Stern sketches, in color, can be found in the Global Performing Arts Database: http://www.glopad.org/pi/en/record/person/734

production. The specific style of this appears unique to Stern among Reinhardt's other designers. Whereas other renderings of sets emphasize color and form, often at the expense of realistically rendered stage lighting, Stern's sketches demonstrate where light originated from, and often the color of it as well. Sketches by Walser for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1905) or Fritz Erler for *Hamlet* (1909) are lit in diffuse, general light, and contain masses of human figures with little differentiation of the primary figure from the masses. Images of Reinhardt's productions in rehearsal or curtain call suggest that this was often the aesthetic on stage, especially without the added emphasis of stage lighting and selective darkness. Sterns' drawings, conversely, over-emphasize the lit dramatic moment and the singular dramatic figure within it. Sketches for *Turandot, Die Wupper, Danton's Death, Much Ado about Nothing,* and *Macbeth*, all dating from 1911-1920, each emphasize a primary dramatic figure and set it apart from the others through the use of space, darkness, architectural emphasis, and arrangements of the actor-figures as design elements. Stern produced many of these sketches – likely to varying degrees of completion – before he attempted to build models.[96] Stern's photographs of his model, too, show the same emphasis on a lead figure, lit singularly.

With these sketches, Stern demonstrated the theatrical usefulness of his sets, the intended effect that a given set is meant to evoke. Not only is the purpose of the set to accommodate a production generally, but it is also to facilitate a given dramatic moment, a coup de theatre that is built into the set itself. These demonstrations of use suggest a shift in the orientation of the purpose of the scenographic world, at least inasmuch as it is represented in design documentation. In Stern's sketches the "idea" of the set is coupled with one possible dramatic realization of its functionality, emphasized by the flexibility of controllable electric light. In this

[96] Carter, *The Theatre of Max Reinhardt*, 236, and Stern, *My Life, My Stage*, 91.

way, the function of the scenic rendering is enlarged to show not only the world in which the play sits, but the living dramatic moment around which it is created. This is an important change in the purpose of the stage designer, marking a transition from stage picture-plus-text to the stage composition. By sculpting the human form in such a way, and providing dramatically viable illustrations of the possibilities of his creation, Stern inflects his designing with a sort of directorial authority; the "proper" or at least intended use of the set is built into the planning process itself.

What Jones learned from Stern during his informal apprenticeship was the value of planning a set with usefulness in mind, always including the human form demonstrating the set in use. The earliest Jones scenic renderings, for example, *Dumb Wife, Redemption* (1918), and *The Birthday of the Infanta* (1919), develop the same composition and drawing/shadowing techniques Stern used. Other productions from Jones' early career traveled in photographic form, which troubled Jones for its inability to capture the energy and personal nature of the hand-drawn sketch of a selected moment of his own, so to speak, dramatic imagination.[97] Jones is somewhat unique in his insistence that the sketch, and not the photograph of the finished performance, be included in publicity and exhibition representations of his designs.[98] While there is a touch of arrogance in this – how could reality possibly measure up to the dream? – there is also a sense that the intended effects of the design are best preserved in the planning, and not their actual reality on stage. For Jones the purest idea of the set is the one in drawn on the page, in full color, with the ideal sight-lines and no late-stage construction compromises.

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[97] Photographs of *The Devil's Garden* (1915) and *Til Eulenspiegel* (1916) were published in the first two volumes of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, where they reproduced relatively poorly and pale in comparison to the power of the renderings for *Caliban of the Yellow Sands* (1916), both of which rely on shadow and human form heavily.

[98] "Early in his career, Jones was disappointed to find that his first reproduced designs had lost so many of their values, no matter how carefully the photographer and the engraver had done their work…every time he did a new play, he made drawings with this problem in mind until he had mastered a technique understood only be professional illustrators." Mielziner in Pendleton, 22.

As Jones looked back on his early years, he fondly remembered both Reinhardt and Stern. Reinhardt plays a directly supporting role in Jones' later mythological theorization of the stage designer, and Stern is even mentioned in passing. However, what both critics and Jones himself fail to mention are the important process-based ways in which the collaboration between Reinhardt and Stern was something that Jones sought to emulate in his own life. By the end of the decade, Jones would find a similar relationship in his longtime collaboration with Arthur Hopkins, a director with just enough of an appreciation for symbolism and expressionism (himself a bit of a mystic, to hear him talk about acting methods) to appeal to Jones' sensibility.[99] Immediately after he returned from Germany, though, Jones reflected on his learning thus:

> What interested me in the Reinhardt studio and at the Deutches Theatre was that every one connected with the staff was not only an expert designer, but also an expert carpenter, a master of lighting, qualified as an electrician, conversant with scene building as well as costume making. It was an entirely different viewpoint from one to be had from a study of the American theatre.[100]

It was the expectation of expertise and the blending of artistry and craft that appealed most strongly to the young Jones. The aesthetic of "unity" had begun to take root in the American theatre, but the unity of expertise was still far from accomplished. It was Stern's equal facility in scenic, costume, and lighting design that permitted him to draw with such evocative, dramatic power, and the general knowledge of Reinhardt's entire studio that allowed for expert discourse across departments.

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[99] "The director energizes; he animates. This is what Max Reinhardt understands so well how to do. He is an animator. A curious thing, the animating quality. Stanislavsky had it; Belasco had it; Arthur Hopkins has it. One feels it instantly when one meets these men. One sees in them what Melville calls 'the strong, sustained and mystic aspect." Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination; Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre*, 37-38.
[100] "The Gentleman of the Decoration," X4.

3.3.2 Other European Influences on Rendering

While Jones' technique for rendering the figure and inserting it into his planning processes derived largely from the modelmaking and rendering procedures of Ernst Stern, other European influences also affected the development of his process. Later in his career Jones cited the influence of Craig, Appia, and Dalcroze on this thinking during this year in Europe. Though Jones didn't interact directly with Craig during his time in Florence, he was very familiar with his recent publication, *On the Art of the Theatre*. Jones did acknowledge in 1915 that "the most perfect representations I ever witnessed" were created by Dalcroze in Hellerau, which Jones visited in 1914.[101] Through these experiences Jones came to understand that "unity" of the stage picture as theorized by Craig and Appia could be developed by the designer as well as the director-designer, and began to incorporate demonstrations of scenic utility through his renderings of onstage moments.

Jones was famously denied entrance into Craig's studio in Florence, yet Jones had access to both Craig's theory and some of his images in *On the Art of the Theatre*, published in the US in 1912. These images demonstrate a designer's ability to produce dramatically viable renderings outside of the context of a given performance. By 1911, when Craig first published the work, Craig had begun to move away from the idea that design alone could revolutionize theatre, which led him to create visions for a more unified theatre under a single artist, less beholden to the words of a text and almost approaching pageant or ritual in its simplicity.[102] Accordingly, the images Craig chose to produce demonstrated a total approach to theatrical drawing. Full-stage renderings with human figures in dramatically composed positions dot the book. These figures

[101] Qtd in Ruth Gotthold, "The New Scenic Art of the Theatre," *Theatre Magazine*, May 1915, 251.
[102] Christopher Innes, *Edward Gordon Craig: A Vision of Theatre* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 127.

are in action against characteristically Craig structures – large vertical architectures, mountains, or screens. The images also contain renderings of light, casting shadows on the architecture. More than half of the images published in the 1914 printing are scenic renderings, as opposed to prop sketches. All but two contain figures, and all images contain indications of a theatrical lighting quality through shading or shadow.

Craig's images circulated in drawing form much more widely than in production. Most theatre artists, and especially those in America, came to know Craig's designs through their visual reproduction. Craig's images provided a way for artists such as Jones to conceptualize a style of scene drawing and conceptualization that live outside the traditional sphere of production. Craig's models were photographed as well, but the rendering was the main way his ideas for unrealized designs traveled outside of production contexts, both in his self-authored works and in exhibitions by others. Jones took Craig's example to heart, creating designs for *Les Cenci* while in Florence without anticipating any production. The *Merchant* drawings, one of which was reproduced in the first volume of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, demonstrate the growing influence of European rendering style.

One final strand of practice that I would like to emphasize, in part because it accompanied Jones' year abroad, and also because it adds to the networked nature of these ideas in central and Western Europe in the 1910s, was the influence of Appia and Dalcroze's collaborations on Jones during his year abroad. Jones traveled to Hellerau from Berlin in early 1914, and observed Appia's second major collaborative effort, inspired by the body-mechanics of Eurhythmics. At this time Dalcroze had worked with Appia for nearly a decade, most recently

on *Orpheus and Eurydice*, at Hellerau in 1913.[103] Appia's experiments foregrounded the creation of scenic and lighting environments for the body in motion. In collaboration with Russian lighting technician/designer Alexander von Salzmann, Appia had created "rhythmic" scenic environments for Dalcroze. These designs included a lighting setup optimized for in-the-moment design of lighting schemes, mixed live to harmonize with the movements of the dancers. The sketches that survive from these experiments do not contain human figures as do the renderings of Jones or Craig, though they do show an expected "use" in the compositional element of strongly contrasting light and shadow.[104] Appia felt that the rhythmic alternation of light and shadow created by columns or steps lit at sharp angles from behind and the side created a harmonious environment for the dancing body. As with his earlier experiments with Wagnerian operas – in which the human figure does play a part in the composition of the image – Appia designed for and around the human body.[105]

For Jones, the inspiration was in the observation of the performance itself, rather than viewing Appia's drawn or planned designs. After the success of *Dumb Wife*, a feature article on Jones touted "perfect rhythmic presentation" as the hallmark of modern theatrical production. Unremarked in the article is the influence of Appia on the designs, yet it has been established that Appia and Salzmann collaborated for years at Hellerau. The lighting design drew much from Appia's atmospheric designs initially developed for Wagnerian opera. Appia described his design for *Orpheus and Eurydice*, first premiering at Hellerau in 1913. While it's not known if Jones saw *Orpheus* on his visit, it had been recently added to the Dalcroze repertoire. The

[103] H.D. Albright, "Adolphe Appia and 'The Work of Living Art,'" in *The Work of Living Art: A Theory of the Theatre* (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1960), xvi, and Johannes H Birringer, *Media & Performance: Along the Border* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1998), 40.
[104] Adolphe Appia, "Rhythmic Spaces," *The Work of Living Art: A Theory of the Theatre*, 112-19.
[105] "Stage decoration is regulated by the present of the living body. This body is the final authority concerning the possibilities of realization; everything that is incongruous or inconsistent in relation to its presence is 'impossible,' and suppresses the play." Ibid., 43.

experience was influential on Jones' ideas about light and synthesis.[106] As early as 1915, immediately after his return from Europe, Jones promulgated and praised Appia's atmospheric, dreamlike approach to lighting and connection to rhythm, pattern, and repetition to the ideal components of the designer.

3.4 JONES RETURNS, JONES DRAWS

Later in his career, Jones noted of his technique, "Romance and glamour have always seemed to be to be the very foundation of the theatre…the characters on the stage are Olympian beings…They are themselves glamour."[107] The glamorous and elegant bodies Jones crafted, emerging out of dramatic, shadowy backgrounds into well-composed images of the stage, began in Jones' European travels. The enduring theme of Jones' year abroad was the emphasis of the designed body. Jones discovered how the body could be used as a component of visual composition for the stage, and in multiple venues Jones saw the value of scenic rendering for dramatic effect demonstrated and realized. In his drawings, Jones clearly demonstrates the evocative potential of the design for the human form almost immediately; though the *Dumb Wife* designs contain forms, they are not necessarily composed in theatrical relationship to the architecture and scenic environment, with the exception of the cutaway interior area above. The figures are, however, much more recognizable as bodies in the image than Jones' earlier,

[106] Jones noted "the wonderful synthesis of movement, sound, color, light, to wrap the spectator round, and carry him away on a tremendous emotional wave." Of particular note was the light, operated by Salzmann, whose designs "bathe[d] the actors in a sort of luminosity which it almost agonizing in its spirituality. The room being shadowless, the actors fairly swim in this light." Jones in Gotthold, "The New Scenic Art of the Theatre," 251.
[107] Simonson, "Legacy," in Pendleton, 17.

posterish drawings for *Les Cenci*. Later renderings, however, consistently placed the human form in dynamic, well-composed relationships to the onstage architecture.

After Europe, Jones' drawings represent light more plastically, offering a three-dimensional rendering of forms, especially human silhouettes. However, it would take some years before Jones' characteristic style for representing bodies developed. His drawings for *Les Cenci* use heavy pools of ink to denote shadow and groupings of faceless, featureless bodies. [108] The style is reminiscent of the poster Jones executed for the Paterson strike in 1913, with thick lines and a simplified human form stepping out of the image, toward the viewer in front of a blocky, dark, industrial skyline.[109] Over the months of his time in Europe, however, Jones' drawings began to incorporate a more clearly defined stage area and a finer degree of detail in his treatment of the human form. The drawings for *The Merchant of Venice* (1913-1914, completed in Berlin), were not published or preserved, yet the rendering for *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife* contains more finely delineated figures, clearly separated from the background. Other objects on the first drawing of the set, however, continue to be marked out in flat black, indicating form without depth or shadow.[110] Jones' costume drawings for 1916's *Caliban of the Yellow Sands*, were also presented in elegant black ink silhouettes, rather than renderings that could give a sense of depth. From 1913 to 1916, Jones' dominant style for representing the human body in space was through inky, solid silhouettes and shadows. Contrast of ink and negative space defined the actor's body, and not representations of three-dimensional scenic space.

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[108] Images reproduced in Robert Edmond Jones, Drawings for the Theatre. (New York: Theatre Arts, 1925), Plates 29-32.
[109] An original copy of this poster is held by Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University, with an image at http://www.reuther.wayne.edu/node/11394
[110] This image is reproduced in Pendleton, 31. Jones produced another version after the production with more clearly defined figure lines and better composition, which he published in *Drawings for the Theatre*, Plate 1.

Jones' attention to light and the presentation of a full-onstage aesthetic experience first arises in his drawings for *Caliban* and other productions in 1916. In his designs for *Til Eulenspiegel*, Jones complemented his high-contrast ink approach with drawings of fine linework and chiaroscuro crosshatching. Bright white figures in the center of a darkened but detailed set indicated Jones' intended focus on the actors through directional lighting. His designs for *Good Gracious Annabelle* and the *Caliban* scenic settings, both completed in 1916, begin to show both the sketchy, broken-line solo figures for which Jones has become known, and the use of watercolor washes to give a sense of anticipated lighting effects. The figures in these drawings contain costumed silhouettes, as before, but are composed in more dynamic and revealing relationships to both the onstage architecture and moments of dramatic tension than in previous Jones sketches. By 1918, Jones' drawings fully encompass a 'Jones' look – drawn moments of onstage tension highlighted by a careful shadowing and chiaroscuro effects and an emphasis on the posture of the actors as a major compositional element and focus point of the image. Representative drawings from this period include 1918's *Redemption* and 1919's *The Jest* and *The Birthday of the Infanta*.[111] The most popularly reproduced rendering from *Redemption* splits the stage space in half. A cluster of faceless, posed figures in relative darkness and lit from the front contrasts the two primary figures of the scene, silhouettes arguing against a light, presumably back-lit surface. The horizontal tension between the arguing figures is balanced by vertical contrasts of white and back in the columns surrounding the clustered figures, and the partial wall separating the two rooms and groups of actors. The *Infanta* renderings use similar contrast and balance; here two ornate compositions of arches and tall candlesticks, picked out in white against a dark background, flank a central grated and backlit doorway, with the period-

[111] Images reproduced in Jones, *Drawings for the Theatre*, Plates 4, 10, 11 and Pendleton, *The Theatre of Robert Edmond Jones*.

dress silhouette of the infant slightly off-center. Both critics writing at the time[112] and designers reflecting on Jones' work later saw these as prime examples of Jones' refined technique and promise for the future of New Stagecraft.[113]

Throughout the 1920s, Jones' renderings continued to emphasize contrast and balance through the manipulation of controlled light. Often, one lit figure contrasts with a shadowy mass of others offstage, as in *Hamlet* (1922) or *Machinal* (1928). Alternately Jones would use architectural elements to focus attention on the human form, be it the abstract forms of *Macbeth* (1923), the arches and doorways of *Richard III* (1920) or *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), or, later, the single figure picked out in a beam of light casting shadows on a wall behind: *The Green Pastures* (1930), *Othello* (1937), or *Richard III* (1940). By using contrast, composition, and lighting combined with the space of the theatre, Jones argued in pictorial form for the visual authority of the designer. Such com-posed moments of stage design would be fleeting in performance, yet in the rendering Jones depicted ideal uses for stage space. These artifacts are not only evidence of how past performances may have looked to the audience, but also mark change in the role of the designer in the planning phases of theatrical creation. Balance, contrast, and the actor's body are planned for from the beginning, and in collaboration between designer and director/producer.

Between 1915 and 1920, Jones' images circulated extratheatrically as well, and this affected his rendering style and enlarged his influence on younger designers. Jones' tendency to dramatize moments from the play in his renderings likely induced publishers to agree to

[112] In 1922, critic Stark Young wrote of Infanta that "it is as distinguished as anything he has done so far." Stark Young, "Translations," in *Immortal Shadows: A Book of Dramatic Criticism* (Octagon Books, 1973).

[113] Lee Simonson notes that with The Jest Jones "achieved maturity as an artist completely in command of all of the resource of his craft, displaying the unity of style, characteristic of all his later work, that never congealed into a formula," while Gorelik cited seeing the Redemption renderings in 1920 as the epiphany moment that led him to a career in stage design. Simonson, "Legacy" in Pendleton, 15, and Anne Fletcher, *Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik: Scene Design and the American Theatre* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 16.

reproduce his drawings instead of photographs of the productions considered. As a worker producing objects of value, the designer became a commercially viable producer outside of the closed world of theatrical production. Even though Jones and other designers primarily drew their paychecks from theatrical work between 1915 and 1922, the names of Jones, Urban, Simonson, and Bel Geddes were recognizable by the public and stylistic shorthand for those in the business. Jones was well-positioned to make double use of his drawings, as both collaborative artifact and object of art itself, and continued to work toward this end throughout his career. Lee Simonson remembers him as a consummate rendering artist: 'His drawings, unlike so many designs for the theatre, express the total beauty and impact of his production as performed and help them to remain living memories."[114]

Future designers viewed Jones productions live and in his drawings, and Jones employed many designers as apprentices as well. Through these vectors, Jones' drawing style came to influence not only a style of modernist design, but a whole method of stage production. Three major figures of the so-called "second generation" of scenic designers – Donald Oenslager, Jo Mielziner, and Mordecai Gorelik – worked for Jones as apprentices or assistants in the 1920s. In both their style and their studies; all three men were in Germany during the summer and fall of 1922, concurrent with Jones and Macgowan's sketching tour of European modernism.[115] In style, too, these men sought to emulate Jones, leading each to create studies and renderings in the style of Jones – the dramatic figure highlighted in a pool of light, detailed setting present in the image but secondary to the composition of the dramatic moment in space. Gorelik's designs for *The Power of Darkness* (1922) and *The Emperor Jones* (1924) and Oenslager's *King Lear*

[114] Simonson in Pendleton, 18-19.
[115] Gorelik officially joined Jones and Macgowan on their tour, while Oenslager and Mielziner both traveled on their own, in adjoining circles but at different times in 1922.

studies (1924) demonstrate this influence.[116] Mielziner's renderings continued to exhibit the same attention to light and figure composition through *Death of a Salesman*. As both a model of the New Stagecraft artist and a practical example of how to draw and paint for evocative stage settings, Jones' example shone brightest.

Methods for designing the stage with the actor's body in mind were not restricted to Jones, yet Jones' use and dissemination of the scenic rendering was a major new development for the growing style. By demonstrating the body in activity and in context through the rendering, Jones introduced a new artifact into the American design process. The major, established designers of the early 1920s, Urban, Bel Geddes, and Simonson, used their own characteristic artifacts, primarily ground plans and models, as initial planning documents. Both agreed, and Simonson loudly proclaimed, that 'the stage designer soon finds himself functioning as an architect rather than a painter when he plans his design."[117] Urban, it seems, knew this and applied it automatically. In later years, Simonson's principle that the stage set is a "plan for action" took hold among designers, but in the 1920s Jones' renderings were able to encapsulate and popularize this idea visually. The power of his images, the control he had over them, and the publication of Jones' renderings in journals, newspapers, and exhibition catalogs cemented the role of the rendering as a new component artifact of New Stagecraft design practice.

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[116] These images, all from unrealized productions due to the early stage of their designer's careers, can be found in Fletcher, *Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik*, the Oenslager archive at the New York Public Library, and in brief in Donald Oenslager, *The Theatre of Donald Oenslager* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1978).
[117] Simonson, *Part of a Lifetime; Drawings and Designs, 1919-1940*, 48.

3.5 CONCLUSION

By 1922, European modernist staging, especially German expressionism, was changing the way scenic designers collaborated and planned their productions. Design authority and autonomy was becoming established through the trade and even international publication of Jones' renderings for Provincetown Playhouse productions, Simonson's photographs of productions at the Theatre Guild, Urban's ornate elevations and costume designs for the *Follies*, and Bel Geddes' grandly conceived model photographs for the *Divine Comedy*. All four designers took ownership over some directorial authority through their inclusion of the moving, gesturing, or posed actor's body in their designs. Jones in particular was a pioneer in the use of the rendering as a persuasive object, a material anchor with which to advocate for the raised creative status of the designer. The inclusion of the body made the rendering a different sort of object, imbued with directorial as well as technical information. The New Stagecraft theories of Appia and Craig explained how design could aid performance, and touring European productions introduced the new style to New York audiences. Jones' drawings by contrast introduced the instrumental value of a new process by providing tangible evidence of an integrated design idea, combining set, costume, light, and actor into a creative contribution that was first and foremost the designer's conception.

The growing independence of scenic artists, now beginning to think of themselves as designers, led to disputes over the economics of artistry in the commercial theatre. How ought designers to be paid, and when? To what extent is ownership or copyright held over the images? In 1918, a reorganization of the scenic artists' union prompted the creation of United Scenic Artists Local 829, a union which allowed designers to join in 1923. This created a tense scenario in which the rank-and-file of the union, mostly scenic painters employed in independent studios, shared union membership with the designers, who functioned in part (but not entirely) as a

managerial influence on the painters. In the next chapter, I take up this negotiation and other public developments outside the union as a study of how the New Stagecraft process was standardized. With the acceptance of the Local 829 contact by the New York producer's union in 1925, what the contract stipulated was the dominant model of scenic production for large-scale commercial and art theatre work. In the next chapter, I read union debates and publications about the work of the scenic designer in the 1920s and early 1930s as evidence of tension over the skills and behaviors of a new professional.

4.0 DESIGN PROFESSIONALISM, UNIONISM, AND CLASS TENSIONS

The establishment of the modern design process was dependent on trade unionism and collective bargaining. In 1923, New York scenic designers joined the United Scenic Artists Local 829, a union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and its Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers of America. The group originally represented hired scenic artists and studio operators. Between the inception of its mother organization, the United Scenic Artists Association, in 1915[1] and the beginning of World War II, U.S.A. Local 829 fought ardently for the rights of the scene painter, at times to the frustration of designers who found it necessary, if not preferable, to join an uneasy alliance with the union. Complete control over scene painting – but not construction, draping, or designing – was the most important means of establishing and maintaining design practice. Under their charter from the Brotherhood, USAA and later USA Local 829 had exclusive bargaining rights for New York and East Coast designers; designers working in other regions first belonged to locals in major cities, which eventually consolidated into three locals in Chicago and Los Angeles, as well as New York.

Between 1923, when designers joined the union, and 1942, when Howard Bay became the president of the organization, designers were bound by the rules of an organization in which

[1] The union had been an autonomous local of the BPDPA since 1915, under which they were called the United Scenic Artists Association. The decision to affiliate with the AFL provided the union with stronger regulatory practices and access to the AFL's considerable persuasive and enforcement powers. The name change to United Scenic Artists Local 829 coincides with the reorganization of the union under AFL affiliation, beginning July 18, 1918.

they were the minority. They remained unrepresented on the executive board.[2] In 1922, there were six hundred members working in theatre, displays, and film industry; the first years of designer membership drew approximately sixty designers into the ranks. The number of designers grew between 1923 and 1940, though designers did not attain a majority in the union until well after World War II. A union membership booklet indicates designers represented one-fourth to one-third of the union membership in the 1940-1941 season, for example. At several points in the early history of the union, tension between painters and designers led to disagreements regarding which group would have the most sway.

In this chapter, I investigate how designers established professional practices in the interwar period. Inside the union, designers strategically used the power of Local 829's trade unionism to establish value for the intellectual work of design, to bargain with producers and scenic shops, and to create the framework for freelance design work. Even with these benefits, however, few artists were able to "make it" solely on design receipts. The most successful artists supplemented their income with other types of work. Outside the union, designers published articles and books that emphasized design as intellectual labor, and demonstrated the value of design in commercial venues. In the twenties, designers' association with Local USA 829 established the now-typical practice of paying a scenic designer as a contracted, professional, freelance artist. A hard-won standard design contract specified what sort of design work would be paid when, regulated the availability of the freelance designer with respect to producers and directors, and guaranteed the right to design future productions. In the thirties designers attempted to enforce intellectual property rights over ideas that went beyond federal copyright

[2] Some members were nominally designers and journeyman artists, such as Wood McLean, who served as vice president in the thirties and temporary president in 1937 after the death of longtime president Walter Percival. McLean, however, was not primarily a freelance designer, and often sided with the painters in policy disputes.

protection, which at this time was minimal. Legal appeals, AFL arbitrations, and public opinion helped the designers gain significant power and representation within the union and the profession of scenic artistry. The individuals who sought these debated and wrote union contracts – especially Lee Simonson, Mordecai Gorelik, and Jo Mielziner— and they were directly responsible for crafting the scaffolds on which they and later designers rose in status. Such debates often pitted both designers against the executive board in debates about, for example, the transferability of members into the union, the difficulty of the entrance exam, and whether membership books should be closed in response to the Depression.[3]

Not all designers were active in the union. Many found regulations a nuisance, and were frequently fined for policy violations. Some celebrity designers, such as Norman Bel Geddes and Joseph Urban, had enough status and non-theatrical work consistently available to treat the union as a troublesome detail. Robert Edmond Jones was frequently in arrears with the required fees of union membership, more than once in protest of the union's mandated salary contributions. Jo Mielziner found union regulations on painting and the separation between design and creative labor onerous, and was outspoken about the restrictions rules of union labor.[4] He was especially frustrated by being forbidden from adjusting his settings during technical rehearsals – though that did not always stop him – and he attributed the ultimately conservative and protective stance of the union as discouraging young artists from rising to full professional status.

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[3] Commercial theatrical production in New York took two major dives in the interwar period. Contrary to received narratives of the Depression, theater production actually hit a peak in the 1924-1925 season, and the effect of the Depression was not to curtail a boom but to exacerbate a decline that had begun several years earlier. Jack Poggi has identified three major causes of the mid-20s decline – increased cost of goods and labor, increased risk for producers, and increasing competitive pressure from films. Jack Poggi, *Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968). See also Alfred K Bernheim, *The Business of the Theatre* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964).

[4] Jo Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre; a Memoir and a Portfolio* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), 30-31.

For the theatre historian, such labor concerns are an important rejoinder to the progressive New Stagecraft narrative. The material cost of the transition from painted to plastic scenery is easily overlooked. The simplified stage was not only a step toward more "modern" production, but also an economic measure that reduced labor costs in production. The stakes of having less paint work to be done were especially relevant in this period because of the craft union orientation of theatre work. Scenic artists applied paint and surface finishes, but could not infringe upon the legitimate work of other craft unions, such as the carpenters, metalworkers, or drapers. In writing a history in which the figure of the designer and the receding influence of the scenic artist in the balance of theatrical economics, I note the labor practices of both sides while I narrate the rise of a design paradigm.

The archival research in this chapter draws on the union records and meeting minutes of the United Scenic Artists, held in the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archive of New York University's Tamiment Library. These open files contain the internal records of meetings and executive board minutes, as well as the major official motions and policy statements. These documents of union politics provide an important counterpoint to testimonies of union members as reported in newspapers and in designers' writings. What histories of the union exist are not much concerned with internal struggles, or even the members aside from the influential designers whose names were known outside the profession. While I am not writing a complete history of the union during the interwar years, I establish a more fine-grained account of the development of design process through the union lens, uncovering not only those individuals who have been lost to theatre history because of a bias against recognizing backstage labor, but also critiquing the self-fashioned American designer.

The scene painter's union was unique among theatrical professional organizations in America because of its hybrid organization. When the designers were encouraged (or forced) to join the union in 1923, it was due to a desire for a "closed shop" in which all members of the scenic studio and design room within it would fall under the regulation of a single union. However, this resulted in a union which, in the words of Lee Simonson, was "most peculiar." In its inclusion of scene painters, designers, and studio operators, the union's membership was "identical to the construction company who [sic] puts up the building, the architect who designs it, and the men who put the building up. The employers being the same as the men who paint the same as the men who put up the iron work."[5] Middle management and rank-and-file members were bound by the same union affiliation and regulations. Disillusionment with craft union practices and protective policies led to the designers' frequent disagreements with union leaders.

By leveraging the protections of trade unionism, designers established a widely accepted economic value for design work, and called upon the power of the union to blacklist those designers and producers who attempted to undercut the business. At the same time, they fashioned themselves independent artists analogous to directors and producers, rather than workers in established studios or under the regular employ of director-managers. In current literature, New Stagecraft stylistic techniques are credited with the rise in designer status. While it is true that New Stagecraft style contributed to the popularization and attributability of designs, the designers' negotiation of affiliation and distance allowed them to flourish economically. In this chapter I contrast the union and public personae of the design profession, and argue that

[5] All quotes from the minutes are likely paraphrases of what was actually set in the meeting. They are direct quotes from the minutes as archived. Lee Simonson quoted in General Membership Meeting Minutes from January 21, 1927. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

designers balanced identities as union member and creative, independent professional in order to establish a viable freelance identity.

4.1 UNIONISM AND THE PROFESSION

Before reviewing professional publicity efforts by theatrical designers, some theoretical and contextual framework is helpful. The progressive era, ending with World War I, was one of increasing differentiation between the professional and working class. With the increase of organized labor and collective bargaining in America during the interwar period, there was a growing opposition between an educated upper class that organized around their status as professionals and a working class that in many industries espoused unionism. In my discussion, "professional" artists are more than simply paid for their work, as one common contemporary definition of professional art work suggests. The concept of a professional or a profession has been associated with law, medicine, and theology long before the Progressive Era, but during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial production and corporate organization reached such a point that certain occupational groups began to create societies and enforce boundaries of careers in ways that protected specific knowledge and practices.

In the introduction I discussed Megali Sarfatti Larson's theorization of the profession as the assertion of an exclusive claim over a given type of work. Larson further elaborates that this claim must be over an abstract commodity, that is, a commodity product that is "formally alienable and is inextricably bound to the person and the personality of the producer." The organization and consolidation of a professional market begins with the establishment of a new labor commodity, followed by the creation of "strong and quasi-monopolistic protective

devices."[6] To claim professionalism within law or medicine, for example, is to both acknowledge that there is a particular kind of work for practitioners to do in that field, and for society to observe that only professionals within that field ought to engage in those tasks. The shift of the product of scenic artistry from the comparatively material finished set to the more abstract design, from scenic objects to ideas expressed on paper, induced designers to see their work as more professional than it had previously been.

To claim professionalism was to defend a class identity. Writing from the perspective of literary modernism, Aaron Jaffe notes that professionals "depend[ed] on managing flows of expert knowledge, prestige, and technical know-how for affecting privileged status within certain market exigencies (as opposed to, say, merely hoarding them for class ornamentation.)"[7] Andrew Abbott further supports the idea that professions are built upon defining and maintaining a "jurisdiction," a "link between a profession and its work." This link both "construct[s] tasks into known 'professional problems' that are potential objects of action" and makes a claim for "society to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights."[8] Abbott further explores ways in which such claims may be made and enforced: direct legal action, the building of public opinion, or informal but respected claims in the workplace. Scenic designers in the process of building a profession used each of these methods to "raise the status" of the designer from craftsman to independent, freelance artist. In some ways, jurisdictional claims complicated their

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[6] Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 14-15.

[7] Aaron Jaffe, *Modernism and the Culture of Celebrity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13. Jaffe later argues that literary modernists were not fully professionals, but "aspirants to the status of capital," as they depended on their name and reputation – what Jaffe coins their "imprimatur" as a marker of class status for readers, intellectuals, and others in the know. While I agree that writers such as Joyce and Stein may have functioned in this way, well-known designers such as Bel Geddes and Dreyfuss attained significant economic capital through the production and more easily allied their artistic products with industry than other modernist artists.

[8] Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 20.

relationship with the painter's union; before I address that concept, though, a more basic question needs to be considered – can design even be considered a profession?

The question of whether design can be considered a profession in line with the old professions of law, medicine, and theology or the newer professions of management, the professoriate/teaching, and other forms of knowledge work is still open for debate, even in the twenty-first century.[9] There is historical evidence that both theatrical and industrial designers saw and referred to themselves as professionals in a class-based sense, that is, to distinguish themselves from both amateur design attempts and the wage labor of other types of theatrical work. Mielziner's explanation that designers were "professional men" in March 1936 is a clear example of his attempt to distance himself from other union members. The title of Lee Simonson's memoir refers to designing as a profession, despite its poor earning potential: "At best it is a profession for part of a lifetime."[10] Other designers, such as Jones, rarely used the term "profession" to refer to a formal sense of the occupation's status; more often than not, "professional" was used as a synonym for Broadway, commercial, or simply "important" theatre. Nonetheless, designers did see themselves in specific instances as professional artists, and established many of the same characteristics that define professionals, according to Abbott and

[9] "Design is reaching a transitional moment…the look that will unfold in these pages Is not from the standpoint of design as an object, but from the standpoint of design as process or action—a look from the inside of design by international teachers and practitioners who support a change from craft to discipline." Sharon Poggenpohl goes on to note that "disciplines support professions…profession or its conjugates refers to someone who is expert at his or her work, is distinguished from an amateur by standing, practice, and methods, and has acquired knowledge of some department of learning." Sharon Helmer Poggenpohl and Keiichi Satō, *Design Integrations: Research and Collaboration* (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2009), 3, 9.

[10] Lee Simonson, *Part of a Lifetime; Drawings and Designs, 1919-1940* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), 68.

other historians of professionalism: a professional organization, membership criteria and testing, and educational systems based around a professional orientation.[11]

The professionalization of the designer in the interwar years contrasts with another major change in labor, unionization. Whereas professionalism tended to view practitioners as credentialed members of an occupation, regulated through independent societies which provide entrance criteria and codes of ethics, unionism sought to organize workers as "brothers" in labor advocating for the common good through collective bargaining and action such as strikes, walkouts, or arbitration. For much of the twentieth century unionism and professional organizations were seen as opposed in several ways, especially in the distribution of hierarchy and authority, the tactics for collective action, and the major class constituencies of each.[12] Professionals, crucially, are perceived as autonomous freelancers, in association as individuals, while union members are valuable within a group but may not possess the capital (monetary, social, or otherwise) to "make it" on their own: that is, to negotiate better working terms without the group. Seeing the division between the designers and the scene painters in terms of a battle over the rightful class status of designers and design laborers animates otherwise quotidian debates over contracts and wage schedules. The case of USA Local 829 is particularly fraught

[11] For histories of professionalism as a labor concept, see Abbott, *The System of Professions*; Bruce A Kimball, The" True Professional Ideal" in *America: A History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996); Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[12] This assertion is particularly strong in the American context. Though it has been contested in sociological debates of the past few decades, midcentury scholars had near consensus that unionism and professionalism were opposed forces: "Professional associations have been identified as status bodies, concerned to ensure the reproduction of labor supply, while trade unions have been identified with wider political or class-based interests, alongside narrower economic aims which professional associations supposedly transcend." Peter Meiksins and Chris Smith, "Why American Engineers Aren't Unionized: A Comparative Perspective," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 1 (1993): 60. See also M. R. Haug and M. Sussman, "Professionalization and Unionism: A Jurisdictional Dispute?," in *The Professions and Their Prospects*, ed. Eliot Freidson (Beverley Hilla, CA: Sage Publications, 1973); Eliot Freidson, *Professional Powers: A Study of the Institutionalization of Formal Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

because the painters and the designers maintained shared governance (to greater and lesser degrees) over the course of the union's history, and still do.

Abbott's definition of "jurisdiction" sheds some light on the conflict. Professional societies such as the one forming among the designers make claims for societal recognition of its "cognitive structure through exclusive rights."[13] Unions, too, made jurisdictional claims on professions, though they were conferred by large union organizations such as the American Federation of Labor, rather than the combined consent of a given membership. For much of its history Local 829's actively defended its 'jurisdiction' from encroachment both from other locals, other unions, and nonunion industrial forces.[14] The affiliation with the AFL assured Local 829 of the enforceability of their charter, established the union as the only professional organization of artists permitted to work in East Coast commercial theatres, and vested the union membership with significant authority. Once designers joined, they were no longer able to adjudicate their own professional standards, even though professional or freelance design status became increasingly attractive. Given the benefits they had won from the union, and the relatively small number of consistently working scenic designers in any given year (fewer than ten in a given year, by Simonson's 1943 estimate) made it more economical to stay in the union than to attempt to negotiate theatrical work solo.

Social theorists in the early 1950s noted that with the increasing dominance of white-collar, knowledge work in American industry, collective labor action had firmly split along class lines. As sociologist C. Wright Mills noted in 1951,

> Today white-collar workers and their organization use many dodges to avoid identification with wage-workers and yet secure the benefits of unionism. They call their

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[13] Abbott, *The System of Professions*, 20.
[14] Finding Aid. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University. http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/tamwag/wag_065/

> unions 'guilds' or 'associations;' they have a permanent no-strike policy, et cetera. In the end all this is nonsense as far as the economic purpose of unions is concerned; yet, although their sacrifice of prestige is the sacrifice of a fading value, this value is still real to white collar employees, often more so than their low incomes.[15]

Looking at Local 829 history, a divide between white- and blue-collar work begins to make itself known. Certainly, for designers, prestige and the difficulty of "making it" economically were the two poles of professional designing, a constant balancing act between high points of artistic triumphs and the financial reality of the profession. Artists who made this balancing act possible, such as Simonson, Mielziner, Jones and Bel Geddes, navigated the problem of white-collar union membership (artistic creation being a nominally, if not actually, white-collar pursuit) by turning to the theatrical public and the university.

4.2 DESIGNERS IN THE UNION: NEGOTIATING INDEPENDENCE

Several designers were prominent influences in the union. Lee Simonson, designer and board member of the Theatre Guild, took the lead on union negotiations. He wrote the first designer's standard contract and defended it in union meetings. In the next generation of designers, Howard Bay rose to become the president of the union and in so doing rebalanced the executive board to be more sympathetic to designer interests in the 1940s. Jo Mielziner was active sporadically in the union, but he used his influence among other designers to arbitrate with the union board. Each of these men was an influential and publically recognizable designer, working in collaboration with major producers and directors throughout the interwar period and

[15] C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 312-13.

later. As a result, their union activity carried the most weight both for influencing union policy and establishing profession-wide standards.

This section notes three moments of tension that signpost the struggle between the painting and designing wings of the union. First, I address the accession of designers into the union in 1923-1924, and the conditions under which these designers chose to affiliate with Local 829 in the first place. Then, I consider Lee Simonson's composition of the designers' standard contract, adopted in 1927, as a moment in which designers were able to successfully advocate for specific intellectual labor protections within union bounds. Finally, I turn to the painters' Depression-era attempts to restrict design labor by recategorizing it as hourly wage work. The designers' successful attempt to block this major change, despite the economic pressures facing the union's membership, set the stage for designers to take a more active position in union leadership in the 1940s.

4.2.1 The Economics of Theatre Design after World War I

Before designers joined the union, there were non-professional labor models for scenic design work. Commercial producers either maintained regular, salaried relationships with designers under their more or less exclusive control, or designers headed their own scenic studios. Some of the more well-known designers in charge of their own design and production houses included H. Robert Law (who did many of the Shubert productions between 1906 and 1921), Frank Dodge, Lee Lash, E. J. Unitt, Homer Emens, and Joseph Physioc. These heads of design studios formed a special class within the union, called designer-operators; as employers within a union primarily composed of employees, designer-operators could influence labor policy to a certain degree, though they were also the first to be sanctioned for rule violations. In many cases, junior

designers worked within these larger firms and were paid salaries by the operators.[16] Both heads of the firms and junior designers worked with equal facility on design and painting work. Because they were large and efficient, and had established relationships with directors and producers, contracts with firms encompass a majority of scenic design credits on Broadway before 1920. The practice continued well into the 1920s.

However a different model of design labor was taking hold in the art theatre movement. With partnerships such as Jones' with Arthur Hopkins, individual designers were paid on contract to complete settings for productions built outside the established commercial pipeline. In Jones' original productions, for example, he was responsible for both designing and building the sets. Early Jones work was either built on-site at the theatre, by Jones and fellow theatre members, or else was sent out to shops. For example, *Til Eulenspiegel* was built in a shop that director Vaslav Nijinsky had recommended, and Jones found their European techniques remarkable.[17] Jones had difficulty in finding shops that could execute his work without resistance.

A significant but influential departure from this system of production was Joseph Urban's studio, which he founded in Boston upon his immigration in 1913. Populated entirely with European artists, Urban's studio had the technical skill to execute his intricate and unconventional designs, whereas other studios did not. After Urban's death in 1933, the studio remained in production as Triangle Studios, and continued to produce many Broadway designs well into the century. Urban's studio was the only major scenic production house not stocked with old-style scenic painters. Between the mail-order, large-scale production houses such as Lee

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[16] Orville K. Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 17-18.
[17] Robert Edmond Jones, "Nijinsky and Til Eulenspigel," in *Nijinsky, Pavlova, Duncan: Three Lives in Dance,* ed. Paul David Magriel (New York: Da Capo Press, 1977), 45-58.

Lash, and the local design-focused houses such as Dodge & Castle, Physioc, and Unitt & Wicks, there were few companies that could reliably paint New Stagecraft designs. One Lee Lash painter/designer, Robert W. Bergman, opened his own studio in 1918 with funding from Jones and Bel Geddes, who had just received large painting contracts and were in the market for a friendly studio operator. The Washington Square Players were also interested in Bergman's style, and commissioned him for their last productions that same year. Nearly overnight, Bergman's studio became the primary location for New Stagecraft-centered designs.[18] By founding their own studio, Bergman and his New Stagecraft peers obviated the need to work with older studios, who would have preferred that their own designers be hired, and were often artistically confused by the newer style of output. With a production arm available to them, early New Stagecraft designers had a viable production line parallel to the commercial unit, one which could produce more elaborate and involved scenery than could be produced under the small ventures of the art theatres.[19]

The independent contractor model of designing was not without its drawbacks, however. By removing affiliation with a firm, designers took on the responsibility of paying their own assistants and support staff, and also for purchasing drawing and modeling materials. Competition between designers led to an accepted process of working "on spec," in which producers would entertain proposals from multiple designers.[20] Only the designer who received the contract was paid for his work on the design. This practice put a considerable strain on the designer's energy and resources, though it was not out of tune with booking and management

[18] Larson, Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960, 72.
[19] John Clarke, "Who Puts the Play Across," *The Brooklyn Eagle*, October 30, 1927.
[20] The later regulations paying for work rendered in sketching was noted in 1925 as the "the outcome of abuses by managers, some of whom have ordered sketches indiscriminately, using the designers' creation or not, and paying for the work put in on it or not as they chose." "Minimum Rate Set for Stage Designs," *The Billboard* 37.25 (Jul 18, 1925): 11

practices of the theatrical monopolies. Designers seeking to work independently gravitated toward supportive relationships with benevolent companies and producers, such as Margaret Anglin's support of Livingston Platt at the Toy Theatre.

Scene painters, on the other hand, were effectively unionized from the end of World War I. They had been associated together in the United Scenic Artists Association since 1915. Their numbers grew throughout the latter half of the 1910s. With their vote to affiliate with the AFL in 1918, union procedures regulated all New York-based scenic artists. Meeting minutes from July 1918 indicate that by their reincorporation under AFL oversight as the USA Local 829, they had an established practice of union wages, regulation of job hierarchy (apprentice/journeyman), a regular forty-four hour week, and the practice of naming and banning work at unfair shops until conditions were rectified with the union. For the majority of scene painters who worked for weekly wages in scenic studios, the union system assured them of steady wages, reliable arbitration and grievance procedure, and a level of organization necessary to combat anti-worker pressures. In the early years, USAA was moving toward a "closed shop," in order to be able to negotiate more directly with studio operators and producers. Under the "closed shop" policy the AFL not only required that union labor be hired, but also barred union members from working in shops that employed non-union workers. This was the most powerful weapon of union organizing in the theatre; especially for large-scale operations depending on many scene painters at once, the closed-shop goal, when attained, could seriously slow production should all members strike.

Unlike Actor's Equity, whose contract negotiations with the Producing Manager's Association led to the 1919 Actor's Strike, Local 829 did not enforce general strikes in its early years. Several "strikes" against individual shops did occur, and aided the establishment of new

wage scales and working hours in the summer of 1918. The union refused to allow its painters to work for what they saw as unacceptably low wages, and the shop managers (operators) refused to budge. Five weeks later, the operators relented and accepted the new terms. These so-called "strikes" were of limited effectiveness, though, in part because of the large number of scenic shops still working, but mostly because of the artistic ability of the shop managers, who simply finished where the striking painters left off.[21] Having begun to exercise its union power, Local 829 expanded its reach between 1918 and 1922. In 1919, the scene painters resolved to support Actor's Equity, though stopped short of a solidarity strike. They actively supported a rally to stop the passage of the Duell-Miller Bill, contributing money and participating in a protest march organized by Samuel Gompers.[22] From this point, the union became aware that closed-shop policies and greater jurisdiction over the multiple positions and arts involved in scenic construction would permit the union to negotiate more effectively.

4.2.2 USA Local 829 "Goes After" the Designers

The designers and architects were the last major category of scenic artists to be assimilated into the union. The inclusion of designers in the union was suggested in meetings as early as 1921, as an attempt to bar scenic studios from hiring non-union men in the designing room. Because they did not always paint, nor did they work in large-scale, commercial studios, designers and architects on stage and in New York-based film remained non-unionized. Designers were wary,

[21] "Scenic Artists Arbitrate," *Variety* 51.12 (Aug 16, 1918): 12.

[22] Finding Aid, United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University. This New York State bill would have established a state Industrial Relations Court which would have arbitrated disputes between unions and businesses, barring strikes and enforcing court-determined wage regulation during periods of dispute. The effort was incredibly unpopular with AFL unions, and was defeated in 1922 thanks to coordinated union pressure. See Matthew Woll, "Kansas Plan Defies U.S. Principles," *The Painter and the Decorator* 36 (July 1922): 254-258.

content to forge their own contracts ad hoc and reluctant to accept control by a commercially-oriented union. As a result, several unions attempted to claim theatrical design work. In 1920, a letter from the Allied Designers asking for support for their own collective action mentioned in passing that they sought exclusive charter over the creation of scale models; Local 829 took exception and appealed the decision to the BDPDA leadership. In 1922, IATSE indicated that if Local 829 did not accept stage architects[23] working in theatre and film into their union, they would bring them in to the International Alliance. Fearing shops with two-union jurisdiction, Local 829 decided to bring in architects in the very same meeting.[24] The organization of architects immediately prompted the need to close the shop around stage designers as well. In April of 1923 they adopted a rule that would prohibit union painters working from drawings that were made by non-union members.

This regulation, requiring union work throughout the production process, brought designers into union in droves. At the time of public notice of the law, there were fewer than ten union members who designed – that is, regularly made sketches and working drawings. Most members who designed were also studio operators. The all-union drawing and model strategy was conceived to rein in independent designers such as Jones, most of whom were working contractually. Without the ability to produce in the scenic studios, designers were suddenly deprived of production facilities. The union took an active stance toward recruiting designers into their ranks, openly attesting that they would "force some of the independent designers who do not conduct studios to either join the union or leave the production field."[25]

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[23] Here "architect" is used as a term for artists who drew plans for three-dimensional forms for the stage/screen without overt pictorial "design."
[24] Minutes, General Meeting of July 7, 1922. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 1; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[25] "Scenic Artists' Union Makes Amazing Demand," *Variety* 71.2 (May 30, 1923): 11.

As a result of this move, the designers and the designer-operators became normalized union members, rather than anomalies. Unlike other trade unions, which typically rescinded union membership once a worker became an employer, Local 829 claimed itself to be autonomous from the regulations of the Brotherhood of Painters, Designers, and Paperhangers.[26] The BPDPA specified that employers could not be union members, yet Local 829 essentially forced quasi- managers into their union with the 1923 law. Designers were not yet seen as employers, yet they had important managerial powers, especially supervision of the paint shop's products, and the power to determine how much work a given set required. Without being fully aware of the implications, Local 829 built the tension between art and craft, or professionalism and unionism, into their core membership.

Though ostensibly done with the desire to create a closed shop, the peculiarities of the scenic art profession caused factionalism almost immediately. With a ten-to-one advantage in membership, the scene painters saw the accession of independent designers to union membership as one more step toward the complete organization of the theatrical workforce. Independent designers were eased into union membership with the promise of aiding their working conditions and the establishment of a standard contract. As an established union with a history of successful collective activity, the scenic painters were the best option for combating work on spec. Upon publication of the new rules effectively requiring artists to join the union, President August Volz assured the designers that the union would provide protection with a minimum of restriction.[27]

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[26] Ibid.

[27] "Scenic designers should be grateful to the union for taking them in, as they will thus be protected from the free-lancers and the growing army of novice artists now developed in various schools. He said that he present contract, however, would not throttle worth-while innovations in stage designing which may be introduction by new comers in the field." "Scenic Artists' New Contract," *The Billboard* 35.23 (Jun 9, 1923): 123.

The final accession to the union's demand was eased by Joseph Urban's public support for a union modeled after medieval craft guilds. At this point Urban was a powerful brand; he was a household design name as the nearly ten-year designer of the *Ziegfeld Follies* and the most commercially successful designer of the past ten years. "If I should join," Urban remarked in an August 1923 *Variety* column, "I should make certain conditions that I would like to see fulfilled… I would reorganize the union and make of it an artists' guild such as existed in the Middle Ages, the only time when a real artcraft [sic] flourished and developed."[28] Of biggest concern to Urban was the possibility that unionism would impede art and management would trump aesthetic principles. August Volz, union president since 1918, assured Urban that top scenic artists "will continue to have the predominant voice in deciding what is best for the development of the art of scenic design and painting. There will be no dictatorship set up by the less skilled members in the organization to control its policy." Reflecting a world in which Urban and other designers naturally saw themselves above wage labor, Urban painted clear class lines onto the organizational framework of Local 829. "There ought to be several types of membership…at the bottom would come the craftsmen and at the top would be artists, who alone would be members of the guild empowered to direct the affairs of the organization. It seems to me that the real artists should be the leaders of such a guild."[29] Urban's demand was not met immediately, but Volz's assurances that artists would have significant control over union policymaking brought the designers in handily.

The division between what Volz called the "super-artist" and the craftsmen was already a familiar trope, and not only among designers. Art practitioners in general kept some distance from the working class in this period. Whereas producers banded together to negotiate contracts,

[28] "Joseph Urban Would Join Scenic Artists' Union," *The Billboard* 35.33 (Aug 18, 1923): 6.
[29] Ibid.

still heavily influenced by the Syndicate, the scene painters, carpenters, dressers and teamsters were unionizing quickly. For designers, actors, and playwrights, it was difficult to square the process of artistic labor with the labor practiced by trade or craft unionism. Playwrights attempted, but did not successfully achieve a union capable of standing up to producing and management unions. Actors were also more inclined to see their work as worthy of a high status, despite the obvious economic disadvantages of the road and the chorus system. Among successful, leading, or at least regularly working theatre artists, white-collar professionalism was preferable to blue-collar solidarity.[30] The founding of Actor's Equity was fraught with what union historian Sean P. Holmes described as "an uneasy compromise between professional pretension and trade-union practice."[31] Designers found themselves in a similar position in the 1920s. Though the Depression would test Volz's claim that no dictatorship of less skilled craftsmen would interrupt the flow of art, at the time of the designer's joining the union Volz and his administration continued to act in good faith.

4.2.3 Standard Contracts and the Rise of the 'Independent' Freelancer

By September 1923, a majority of the New Stagecraft designers had applied to join the union. Some concern was raised that Urban had not yet applied – perhaps he was waiting to see how many of his conditions had been met – but most were members by the end of the year. A change in union leadership also occurred in late 1923, in which Charles Lessing took over for

[30] For further discussion of professionalization see Robert H Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (Macmillan, 1967). As applied to actors, see Benjamin McArthur, *Actors and American Culture, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 104-12, and Robert Simonson, *Performance of the Century: 100 Years of Actor's Equity Association and the Rise of Professional American Theater* (Milwaukee: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2012).

[31] Sean P Holmes, *Weavers of Dreams, Unite!: Actors' Unionism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), 40.

Volz. Lessing, also a scene painter by trade, was somewhat less sympathetic to the designer's plight than Volz had been, and by any respect wasn't bound by Volz's promises to Urban. Nonetheless, designers began to advocate for the autonomy Urban had envisioned; they began to draft standard contracts and regulations for union designers.

The primary concern was to stop work "on spec." The simple resolution that minimums be established for drawings and concepts was discussed in November 1923. Here designers and painters did not see eye to eye; to add to the problem, no New Stagecraft designers sat on the committee to develop the policy. The original motion suggested minimums of $25 per pencil sketch, $75 for color sketches, and $100 per model. While these figures paid the active time it took to actually make the sketches or the model, they did not pay adequately for the creative time it took to conceive, develop, and plan the design before the artist actually began to sketch. Basic provisions were accepted in January without a permanent wage scale, simply stating that creative visual work such as sketches and models must be paid, contracted in writing, and that the union be informed contracts were signed. While this decision did uphold the right of the designer to get paid for planning and design labor, effectively ending work on spec, it devalued the time that went into creation.

In 1924, a designers subcommittee was formed to discuss wage scale revisions; they took issue with the low wages passed at the beginning of the year. Lee Simonson headed the committee and reported back to the union executive committee in September 1924, with a new wage scale. Rather than charge per sketch, designers were to be paid by lump sum for each act or set that was created for a production, with an additional fee for "art direction," which included supervision of set installation, set decoration, prop design, and sometimes lighting design. The original proposal was for $500 for a one-act, $750 for two and $1250 for a three-act play. These

were high wages, especially compared to the then-standard wage scale for the scene painter: $77/week for a journeyman painter working full time.[32] Under Simonson's schedule, this would mean a one-act, one-set design would be paid at six and a half weeks of the union journeyman rate. This was on the generous side of reasonable, given the real time it took to conceptualize, draft, and execute a design. Somewhat problematically, it would have resulted in significantly higher income for designers than painters. Despite the high wages, the executive committee responded favorably to Simonson's report, and moved consideration of a new standard contract to the full membership. Before the final minimum schedule was adopted, the per-act payments were reduced to $250 each.

A basic set of design minimums, on the per-set basis, was passed in July 1925, but compared to the painters working on a contract basis, they still enjoyed few protections. A revised painters' standard contract was also adopted in 1925; it included payment schedules and also certain conditions designers saw as necessary, such as payment of one third of the total fee at contract signing, liability coverage, and mandatory union arbitration of disputes. Designers, by contrast, were left to draft their own agreements, so long as they were in keeping with the wage scale, and to notify the union of each individual job.

Even with the continued class differentiation, both the union and the designers themselves were happy to see the changes. Billboard noted the adoption of design minimums as a major labor win, and quoted President Lessing who argued for the relative restraint of the new sketch minimums, citing them "a small enough compensation when the taste, training, study,

[32] Executive Meeting Minutes, September 24, 1924, and General Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1925. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 2; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

effort, time and originality are taken into consideration."[33] The growing distinction between the intellectual labor of the designer and the manual, weekly wage labor of the painter is already evident in Lessing's speech. Designers could command larger sums for designs due to their knowledge and skill as much as the effort expended in the process of design. The contract as accepted affirmed what the designers had felt when they joined the union, that designing constituted a separate job identity. Some members did do both painting and designing, such as one-time union Vice President Wood McLean, but on the whole dual-occupation members were painters first and designers second. Freelance designers had no interest in traditional methods of scene painting, or working on the paint bridge, and insisted on being paid by contract. The support the union gave to the professionalization of the independent scene designer separated the weekly wage worker from the contract worker, formalized and regularized these arrangements, and defended them through collective negotiation with producers and managers, and arbitration of disputes under union supervision.

As the twenties closed the cost of running a large union strained the membership. Since 1918, the union had an established practice of charging a dollar or two a week for union dues from its weekly wage members; with a greater proportion of its membership working on contract, in 1926 the union passed the "1% rule" for contract workers, requiring payment of 1% of total contract earnings for union business and reserves.[34] This increase in dues was unpopular among designers, especially those who worked infrequently, and some including Jones and Bel Geddes periodically refused to pay the 1% in protest. Further complicating the divide was a

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[33] Executive Meeting Minutes, September 24, 1924, and General Meeting Minutes, November 6, 1925. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 2; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

[34] Discussed in May 1926, passed in June. General Meeting Minutes, May 7, 1926. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 2; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

concern over the union becoming too large to protect the members' interests. Since the designers joined, the painters were concerned that membership was too easily extended to designers, and that books should be closed to men who could not paint on the bridge.

Tensions came to a head in 1927, the same year in which Broadway's 1920s boom began to contract. Given a fixed quantity of work to be done, a motion was made to exclude new designers "in order to give our members already in, an opportunity of making a livelihood." Simonson again took the floor, arguing that the multiple categories of membership were a benefit to the union. Current regulation did not appropriately look after all members' interests, only those of the painters in the majority. Both the examination and the wage scale discriminated against the contract worker, he argued, and designers ought to be able to regulate their own profession. Having swayed at least the executive board, Simonson was once again put in charge of a committee to draft an examination and other regulations for the designers.[35] Out of the tensions between the designers and the majority painter membership, the designers came to have some autonomy over their own rule setting; approval was subject to votes by all, but Simonson's second committee would present a vision for designer leadership within the union.

The committee developed a draft of a procedure for admitting designers into the union under their own examination, and also a standard designing contract to be used in future jobs. These measures were adopted in March 1927, and through them the union positioned itself as a primary location for deciding and enforcing the boundaries of design labor, intellectual property, and disputes.[36] Under Simonson's leadership, designers constituted a committee on admissions to judge applicant portfolios under new, designer-specific criteria: artistic ability and

[35] General Meeting Minutes, January 21, 1927. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[36] General Meeting Minutes, March 18, 1927. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

professional technical standards, including scale drawing and executive/supervision experience. By legitimating the designers as a component group of the union, this motion solidified the hybrid nature of union membership. Simonson also felt that the union ought to protect designers from the theft of ideas, a recurring issue among producers who often wanted cheap design labor. Designers would now be required to file copies of contacts and drawings with the union office the same day that they were created, or to arrange for a union representative to visit the shop or studio to view the model in progress. Federal copyright protection was deemed not extensive enough for the purposes of theatrical ideas, as small changes to designs invalidated US copyright in the 1920s. Therefore, the union established itself as the arbiter of "priority rights" in April 1927, upon further discussion of the implications of the new contract.[37]

The contract as adopted in 1927 spelled out specific process stages for all designers. While it did not specify how early planning stages of design ought to be accomplished, it established a linear model of process through the specification of specific duties and payments accompanying sequential modes of production. The process, as laid out in the contract consists of: the specification of scale models/renderings and working sessions, presentation of color schemes and sketches for painting, selection of properties, and plotting lighting. The signposting of this process in the contract was further supported by the payment schedule, which separated the design and executive phases of the process with a payment. Designers were to be paid a third of their fee on signing of the contract, a third upon submission of designs, and a final third on opening night. This structure standardized the division of the design into phases, phases which continue to structure the way designers thought about their processes as occurring in two fundamentally different registers. "Only about fifteen percent of a scenic artists' work on a

[37] General Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1927. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

production is really creative," wrote Mielziner in 1965.[38] In the eyes of Simonson and others developing the standard contract, design work consisted of first a phase of creation, and then a phase of execution, both as labor that ought to be paid. In the eyes of earlier designers, the creative idea was separate from the work of bringing it to realization; with the passing of the 1927 contract, designers moved one large step further toward the status of creative professional paid for intellectual as well as physical labor.

Billboard praised this "first important move…to stabilize their craft against managerial dominance," specifically citing the payment schedule, reimbursement of out-of-town expenses, intellectual property protections (such as forbidding design alterations after opening, and assigning title for all drawings to the designer) and credit line billing as particularly new and productive advances.[39] By assuring these protections and effectively requiring the standard contract for all commercial work, the union signaled its acceptance of freelance, contracted work as a viable model of design labor. After joining the union, most of the first generation of freelance designers obtained a significant amount of their income from commercial projects. Though they continued to innovate scenically in the nonprofits and art theatres, the legitimation of freelance work as worthy of the same union protections and rights as painting labor was a major win for the contract design worker.

The standard contract has been an influential document of design processes. The basic contractual obligations between designer and producer, once set, remained unchanged between 1927 and 1950.[40] Reliance on these contracts as a model of professional behavior among

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[38] Mielziner, *Designing for the Theatre; a Memoir and a Portfolio*, 23.
[39] "Standard Form of Contract Adopted by Scenic Designers," *The Billboard* 39.14 (Apr 2, 1927): 9.
[40] Individual clauses and fee schedules were adjusted in this time. Mielziner's contract for *Salesman*, signed in September 1948, contains much of the same legal wording and protections established in 1927. Contract for *Death of a Salesman*, September 22, 1948. Box 31, Folder 1. Jo Mielziner Papers, *T-Mss 1993-002, Billy Rose Theatre

designers established what designer and pedagogy theorist Richard Isackes has termed the "fixed sequential progression" of scenic design practice.[41] The institutionalization of a standard contract changed the time frame of design process adjustments; as standing procedures with organizational support, the design process became slower and more resistant to change. As Larson notes, professional monopoly claims gain legitimacy and coherence through attachment to institutions – professional organizations, the university, and the state.[42] The ideas of New Stagecraft as a process of unification, scenic design as document creation, and the legitimate place of the designer as a theatre artist in nominal parity with other artists derive from the definition of professional design established in 1927.

4.2.4 Depression-Era Protectionism and Class Tensions

As the 1920s came to a close, the union became aware of a general downturn in production that threatened members' livelihood. In September 1929, one member suggested that out-of-work members apply to design and fashion window displays, "since our theatrical season did not look so prosperous."[43] The stock market crash of November 1929 didn't directly cause policy changes, in part because the crash did not immediately curtail theatrical production; the market

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Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Rights to intellectual property, first right on second and touring productions, arbitration by the union or its designee, and the list of design steps of scenic design remain similar in contemporary contracts, as evidenced by the General Designer's Contract 2010-2012 on the USA Local 829 Website, http://www.usa829.org/Portals/0/Documents/Contracts/UPAs/SDA_Theatre_Agreement_2010-2012-C.pdf

[41] Robert N. Schmidt, "Training Scenic Designers for a Changing Aesthetic," in *Perspectives on Teaching Theatre*, ed. Raynette Halvorsen Smith, Bruce McConachie, and Rhonda Blair (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2001)., and Richard M. Isackes, "On the Pedagogy of Theatre Stage Design: A Critique of Practice," *Theatre Topics* 18, no. 1 (2008).

[42] Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*, 16-18.

[43] General Meeting Minutes for September 20, 1929. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

rebounded briefly in the spring of 1930.[44] Contracted productions and relatively high wages insulated the union from the immediate effects of the Depression, though by the end of 1930 the painters were aware of a serious employment shortage. Designers were one popular explanation for the lack of work for the painters – alongside others, including the Little Theatre movement and bad overtime policies. Designers were blamed for not paying the 1% to the union, for not designing sets with enough paint work to sustain demand, or for designing productions with no scenery at all.[45]

The union's first significant response to unemployment was to limit the workweek to 32 hours and to severely curtail overtime pay. The measure passed in January 1931. All members were also now subject to the 1% rule that had previously been only applied to salaried workers. Under protest, the designers had been exempted from the 32-hour, 4-day workweek, but their assistants as hourly wage workers were not. Such a "drastic move" attempted to mitigate the economic hardship among the union members,[46] but it also exacerbated the differences between wage and contract labor. Under the no-overtime rule, studio operators were forced to hire extra men when they were under a deadline; in the eyes of the union, all paint labor was more or less equal, and studios should be able to use any man to finish any other's work. Pushback from the studios resulted in some concessions, such as the designation of "key" men who could work overtime, but doing so cost the studio extra.[47] Designers, like the studios, were able to negotiate exemption from the workweek regulations, since their work could not be adequately replaced by others, nor easily measured by hours. Studio-employed painters were struck by an effective

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[44] Poggi, *Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870-1967*, 56-57.
[45] General Meeting Minutes for September 20, 1929. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[46] "Artists' 4-Day Week Aid to Jobless," *Variety* 101.8 (February 4, 1931): 70.
[47] Ibid.

reduction of their wages, while unemployed members benefited from the sharing of the work. General meetings in February and March 1931 debated the merits of the measure, and often devolved into tense arguments in which supporters of the restriction were deemed harmful to the exercise and spirit of the craft, while those opposed to the measure were deemed selfish and greedy. As would occur later in Actor's Equity, splinter groups within the organization threatened the balance of unionist organization and artistic labor regulation that had been established in the more prosperous 1920s.[48]

Soon after the 32-hour rule was passed, however, designers gathered as a group to once again protest the incursion of union policy. The "Stage Designers Club" met on February 24, 1931. Earlier that month, the Paramount studio in Long Island garnered large overtime fines and the stoppage of design work because the studio had only designated one hour-exempt "head man" while the other assistant designers were illegally barred from working more than 4 days a week.[49] When union leadership read (in *Variety*, no less) that the designers had formed their own advocacy organization to protest the Paramount lockout, they called all members named in the article before the executive board and accused them of forming a dual organization. Simonson and Jones, chairman and president of the organization respectively, denied that they had provided information to *Variety*, insisting that the club was social in nature and *Variety* had published based on its own reporting. As a resolution, Simonson suggested that he and the Theatre Guild negotiate with *Variety* and print a retraction, which was never printed.

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[48] Sean P. Holmes has noted that younger actors raised on Popular Front politics, who identified as artists and workers far more easily than their generational forebears, nearly splintered Actor's Equity with the formation of the Actor's Forum in 1934, which agitated for more aggressive relief and protection policies. Holmes, *Weavers of Dreams, Unite!*, 176-77.

[49] "Union Status Irks Designers," *Variety* 101.11 (February 25, 1931): 58.

This was the first of several major conflicts in the 1930s between the design subset of the union and the membership, each of which indicates a growing discontent within the traditional ranks and a sense of meritocracy among the designers. Earlier in 1931, Norman Bel Geddes was called before the executive board to explain his interview in the *Ladies Home Journal*. In it, he claimed that "talking pictures will take the place of the theatre as we know it" and, worse, "manipulation of lights will entirely eliminate scenery in the theatre."[50] The board found this statement "detrimental to the craft," and while Bel Geddes claimed that his words were taken out of context, he apologized and agreed to avoid repeating the same ideas.[51] In 1932, new contract negotiations further stirred up disagreement between the designers and the artists, as a clause required crediting the scenic artists' name in the same manner and type size as the Designer in programs and publicity. Both Bergman and Jones were opposed to automatically crediting the artist this way, and felt it should be merit-based; the measure passed despite their protests.[52] Minutes of 1933 repeatedly pit Simonson and then vice-president Wood McLean against each other over the two groups' interests.[53] As before, Simonson alleged that new regulations, especially a repeal of the designers' exemption from weekly hour restrictions, were based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the designer's work. McLean countered that designers were willfully employing sets with less painting work to be done and thereby harming the profession.

The divide between the designer and the painter had economic, as well as ideological causes. Ironically some of the most outspoken designers in the union were also the least affected financially by the Depression. Name recognition allowed Jones, Simonson, and Bel Geddes to

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[50] Norman Bel Geddes, "Ten Years from Now," *Ladies Home Journal* 38(January 1931): 3.
[51] Executive Board Meeting Minutes of January 26, 1931. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 4; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[52] General Meeting Minutes of September 8, 1932. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 4; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[53] General Meeting Minutes for January 16, March 6, and June 30, 1933, and August 13, 1934. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 4; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

continue to work in the theatre, and they supplemented their work with outside design jobs as well. At the same time, only 18% of designers were earning over $4000 from contracts in 1933. Much of the growth in design fees was occurring in fields outside the theatre. Jones began his work on Technicolor films with *La Cucaracha* (1934) and *Becky Sharp* (1935). Lee Simonson was well-published as a design and modern art authority in magazines and in 1932's *The Stage is Set*, and had been designing department store windows since the late 1920s. Norman Bel Geddes and Henry Dreyfuss had all but abandoned theatrical design for the more profitable field of industrial design; Bel Geddes' *Horizons* was published in 1932. Still other designers found employment in major design programs at universities, such as Donald Oenslager who joined Yale's faculty in 1925, or in privately contracted architecture (Urban) or illustration (James Reynolds).[54] In general the diversification of the celebrity designer's work portfolio, driven by a decline in theatrical production and the accompanying profitability of design in corporate circles, only raised tensions. Because the union had near-complete control over working rules, and these rules were determined by designers who had comfortable and diversified income streams, the concept of the designer as freelance creative professional began to function as the dominant model. The scenic artists, however, were facing the opposite problem: work plummeted while the union was obligated to support men with little ability or willingness to work in other areas. The union considered more drastic protectionist policies, targeting all possible causes of the work slowdown- including attacking the designers.

The tension over what had now become openly referred to as a "class distinction" among the union members came to a head in 1933 with a report of the "Ways and Means" committee, which proposed radical revisions in the wage scale. 1933 was the slimmest production season to

[54] Simonson, Lee. "Tale of a Scene Designer's Misery," *The New York Times* (Jan 22, 1933): X3.

date,[55] and the union attempted to unify member interests by putting all members on wages. The Ways and Means Committee, which had been tasked in late 1932 with the updating of working rules, hours, and wage scales for painters, instead proposed sweeping reforms. For designers, this meant elimination of contract payments and moving to a scale of designing by the square foot; the report proposed categories of scenery based on their complexity.[56] The idea was to regularize the payment of designers with that of scene painters, who would also be paid by the foot. The resolution mandated a thirty-hour week, union control over contracts through a registration system, and extraordinarily high fines for violating the new rules. The committee felt that all members were essentially the same, and by adopting a per-foot scale the union could distribute more work, "abolish unfair competition," and "ABOLISH CLASS DISTINCTIONS [caps in original], making working the rules the same for every member however employed."[57] At this point painters still comprised the largest section of members, but on the question of revising the contract wage scale to one based on square footage, both the designers and the operators were opposed. Together these two blocs nearly balanced out the painters' vote, but the revision of the contract scale was accepted piecemeal in spring of 1933 amid debate. The only temporary reprieve was Congress' passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act, prompting a complete overhaul of union policy. Simonson made sure he was on the Ways and Means committee for the revisions, and motioned to table the square-footage measure, and it remained on the table throughout 1934.[58]

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[55] Letter to Miss Ellen Woodward, Federal Theatre Project, dated November 28, 1938. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Box 4, Folder 45; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[56] The basic rate was $0.15 per square foot, $0.10 for plain drops, borders, and ceilings, and $0.20 for sets that were "second hand" or built from stock.
[57] Report of Ways and Means Committee, General Meeting Minutes, February 21, 1933. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Box 4, Folder 45; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[58] General Meeting Minutes from June 19, July 7, and July 17, 1933. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Box 4, Folder 45; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

The Ways and Means report was a direct indictment of the class distinction between designers and contractors, who were perceived to be weathering the Depression without much damage. It was also an indirect attack on minimalist and symbolic stage setting in an attempt to preserve the work of the scenic painter. If accepted the report would have further selected against open or minimal set designs, and provided more work for the scenic painters. The revision of design work to payment per unit area conflicted with a new notion of the designer as a creative worker. By shifting the payment schedule back to a measurable quantity, the design idea would no longer be the center of the designer's profession. While Simonson saw some benefits to what would effectively be a small increase in contract schedules, the majority of the designers resisted a move that would essentially turn designing back into manual labor.

In 1934, the union passed other anti-designer measures. As a part of the midyear union elections, the union also approved a measure than mandated the production of models, citing the need for more standardized documentation to alleviate confusion on the paint bridge. By forcing model creation, and outlawing the substitution of the rendering for the model, the measure defended the work of the assistants and paint men who would have to be paid for model work. Some designers attempted to hold up production by refusing to make models, effectively delaying production schedules to the extent that producers missed opening dates. The newly-reelected president of the union, Walter Percival (elected 1933) suspended the model rule, which upset both the proponents of the model law and the litigious vice president Wood McLean. Infighting among the executive board mirrored the disagreement between the factions within the union, each of whom blamed the other group for greedy policy in the light of a declining amount of work. Variety attributed this tension to the odd union status of the organization, still "the only organization in show business in which employers and employees are at membership parity," and

laid blame on a new crop of designers, the "small sketch men" who were in the practice of making tiny sketches for the full fee.[59] Given the going price of $250 for a sketch or model of each act or major set, it was not surprising that many designers, who had to pay for labor and materials out of their fees, preferred to sketch. Ultimately the measure was put to a referendum in September 1934, and came back affirmative by a vote of nearly three to one in favor. Once again the designers organized again to protest the model measure, precipitating a final standoff between management and the new professional group.

A December 1934 meeting summarized the complaints of the designers against the model law. At an executive board meeting, designer Walter Walden was called in to answer for the formation of competing interest group. Woodman Thompson, Mielziner, and Simonson had been elected as a head committee of a group to "register a protest on the new legislation which was contrary to the wishes of the designers." Walden insisted that he represented a "younger group" of designers in attendance at the meeting, and he named Sointu Syrjala, Gorelik, and Arne Lundborg. The older men had also signed a secret petition against the model law and agreed to fund a designer's advocacy group.[60] Though the threat of immediately removing them from the union was leveled, the designers' cards were not seized. Heads of the group Thompson and Mielziner were summoned immediately before Christmas in 1934.

The executive board meetings questioning Thompson and Mielziner are revelatory events for the relative imbalance between designers and painters. As Walden had done, Thompson objected to the union's treatment of designers, especially the model rule. It also came to light at that meeting that the designers had consulted an attorney. This lawyer had attempted to contact

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[59] "Scene Designers Make a Must of Authentic Replica Models," *Variety* 115.6 (July 17, 1934): 46.
[60] Executive Board Meeting Minutes, December 21, 1934. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 5; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

the local union leadership as well as the Lafayette office of the BPDPA, neither one of which had responded. In this document, the tension is clear in the desperate and pointed questions asked of Thompson, and the careful responses given to them. The chair (here, McLean, as Percival was out of town) marveled at the bravado of the designers; McLean stated that

> nothing had ever been asked by way of legislation which had been refused them. When they wanted minimum fees it had been enacted as law, contract forms had been established, publicity on programs, newspaper advertising etc had all come about as legislation and therefore any statement that they had not been treated fairly is erroneous.[61]

Thompson simply replied that their letters were ignored and that they had a right "as citizens" to see that their interests within the union were protected, hiring legal help if necessary.

Jo Mielziner's meeting was even tenser as the executive board probed his involvement in the splinter group. Mielziner remarked that the meetings had been going on for over a year, that "for a long while the designers felt that the organization did not understand their problems and some were not taken up in the proper way."[62] Mielziner supported the creation of the subgroup, in the hope that a group could better interface with the executive board. "When they came into the organization ten years ago," Mielziner explained, "they came in as professional people and had the right to expect protection and have a guarantee that they would be protected." Though neither Thompson nor Mielziner directly threatened seceding from the union or involving legal action outside the normal course of union grievances, they both invoked rights as citizens to legal counsel. The ultimate conclusion of Mielziner's trial was an agreement for the board to meet with the designer's committee and hear out their concerns. Minutes from subsequent meetings demonstrate residual tensions – some designers were crossing out "models" and adding the

[61] Executive Board Meeting Minutes, January 7, 1935. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 5; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[62] Jo Mielziner quoted in Executive Board meeting minutes from January 1935 [undated], United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 5; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

words “models or sketches” to their official union contracts – but the model box difficulty dissipated after the union decided to settle and reverse the rule after designers initiated legal proceedings later that year.

The final decision on the model law and design wage scale regulation came in 1935 with the legal case *Andrews v. Percival*. Andrews, the lawyer for the ad-hoc group, brought suit against the union president for unconstitutional and illegal regulation. In October 1934, a referendum had been approved by the full membership that would have changed the then-current sketch rules of $250 for accepted sketches and $100 for non-accepted ones to a flat daily rate of $25. The suit contended that these rule changes had not been presented in accordance with bylaws. To do so would have required the approval of USA Local 235, the Los Angeles Chapter, which had been defunct for years.[63] In light of the legal costs to be incurred defending *Andrews v. Percival*, the union granted Percival the power to negotiate a settlement.[64] The lawsuit was settled in the designers’ favor, and the compensation scale for design sketches returned to its original orientation in November 1935.

There are several ways to interpret this legal drama. In one sense, it is simply an interunion dispute over how design labor out to be paid. Should the designers be obligated to pay assistants for model building, even when model building had been deemed useful work for union members in a severe work shortage? Given attempts by the union in 1933 and 1934 to strip designers of their ability to independently negotiate contracts, it is understandable how designers would protest out of simple economic interest. Another manner of interpreting this event is as a contest over the proper labor paradigm for the designer: is a designer’s work the same as the

[63] Untitled legal brief. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Box 3, Folder 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
[64] General Meeting Minutes, October 21, 1935. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 5; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

painter? Is he interchangeable with other workers, measurable in the same material steps, worthy of daily salaries as opposed to contract payment? By 1935, designers had optimized their studios and businesses to work on a freelance model of artistry. Twice in his testimony Mielziner refers to the designers as "professional men rather than journeymen."[65] The distinction being drawn here is one of knowledge versus manual work in the arts.

After 1935, tensions subsided. In addition to the resolution of the suit, an increase in work came with to Federal Theatre Project hiring in late 1935 and into 1936. With more work available, the designers were perceived as less responsible for the decline in painting. Designers and painters alike were interested in federally funded work, and the union came together somewhat in advocacy for employing union men on public projects in the theatre and in other exhibitions and public art projects. Designers did not completely escape suspicion, however, as the executive board considered chastising designers for designing paint-less scenery in 1936 but voted down a formal censure.[66]

4.3 DESIGNERS OUTSIDE THE UNION: PROMOTING DESIGN PROFESSIONALISM

Between the entrance of the designers into the union and the start of World War II, the relative power of designers grew within the union. At the same time, designers cultivated a public face of professionalism, akin to other freelance professions of architecture, law, or medicine. As designers organized the craft of scene painting into the profession of design, they were able to

[65] Ibid.
[66] Executive Board Meeting Minutes, March 25, 1936. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 5; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

maintain what the union had attempted to strip them of the 1930s – the authority to determine their own rates, contracts, and rights without interference. In this section, I will explore how designers actively fashioned design professionalism in print media of the interwar period. Through publication of books, articles, and interviews, designers such as Simonson, Gorelik, and Jones delineated a new identity for the designer in the 1930s.

This vision of the designer was distinct from the "design revolutionary" model of the earlier decade, in which photographs, exhibitions, and trade publications cast the New Stagecraft designer as the prophet of a completely new form of theatre.[67] By the 1930s, the fervor of New Stagecraft idealism had faded, and a tempered poetic realism took hold in both playwriting and mainstream commercial design practice. In this new environment, designers looked to the much more promising and successful model of the designer as freelance artist, epitomized by the transfer of Norman Bel Geddes into industrial design work. While all designers dabbled in extratheatrical work, those who went into industrial design made the most headway in explaining how their methods blended good design and economic prosperity.

Norman Bel Geddes was not simply a designer who left the theatre for greener and more lucrative pastures in industry. Rather, Bel Geddes is perhaps the most extraverted and self-fashioned model of what was a rule for theatrical designers in the 1930s and beyond: the need to publicize work outside a narrow (and heavily unionized) profession. In order to run firms and studios, a model which had been effectively mandated by the adoption of the standard design contract, designers promoted their own work. Given a contracting market for theatrical design

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[67] "By celebrating American designers as revolutionaries on the front line of the battle against the commercial theatre, *Theatre Arts Monthly* not only raised the status of the designer for the their immediate readership but also affected the history of American scene design…By cultivating designer as authors and providing a reliable publication space to showcase their work, *Theatre Arts Monthly* gave the New Stagecraft the power to shape its own history." Christin Essin, *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America: Artists, Activists, Cultural Critics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 30.

after 1929, all designers turned to alternate forms of income that competed with if not outstripped their theatrical earnings, with the notable exception of Jo Mielziner.[68] Writing and publicity through print media was a primary vector through which designers who could afford to increased their name recognition and market value. The more a designer's work on a production could add to the anticipated ticket sales and market value of a production, the more valuable his design labor.

As theatrical design sought to distinguish itself from scene painting, it looked to another newly professionalizing design field as an example: industrial design. Industrial designers of the thirties saw themselves at the beginning of a new professional identity, and actively publicized it. In the twenties, "professional" art referred mostly to artists employed directly by industry, especially decorative industries such as textiles, jewelry, silverware, wallpaper, and other interior, domestic, or home products.[69] In 1932 Norman Bel Geddes revolutionized the field by declaring that, unlike other artists who "have been disposed to isolate themselves upon the side of life apart from business," he "was drawn to industry by the great opportunities it offered *creatively*."[70] He further linked designing to professional artistry when he noted that "companies will employ only the best designers…A good man who solves the problem is an economy in the long run, no matter what the cost. He is a parallel to the lawyer who wins his case and the surgeon who saves a life. There is no middle ground."[71] Inspired by his books, his displays, and

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[68] Mielziner made over $10,000 each year between 1933 and 1941, with average yearly earnings of $17,800 over that period. Only one other union designer earned more than $10,000 in a year in that same time frame. Simonson published an anonymized chart of designer earnings in Part of a Lifetime; that Mielziner is the top earner is corroborated by Shepard Traube. Simonson, *Part of a Lifetime; Drawings and Designs, 1919-1940*, 73., and Shepard Traube, *So You Want to Go into the Theatre?* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936), 162.

[69] Charles Russell Richards, *Art in Industry: Being the Report of an Industrial Art Survey Conducted under the Auspices of the National Society for Vocational Education and the Department of Education of the State of New York* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922).

[70] Norman Bel Geddes, *Horizons* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1932), 5.

[71] Ibid.

influence, other industrial designers such as Dreyfuss and Richard Loewy filled out the field and defined it a profession. In 1936 Sheldon Cheney affirmed the status of design as a new profession to compete with older ones,[72] and a 1939 interview article on industrial design in the *New York Times* had Richard Loewy praising the freelance designer precisely for his freedom from the traditional approaches of corporate interests.[73] Between 1929 and 1939, industrial design became a high-status profession composed of independent and influential practitioners, and it made the strongest gains at a time in which American industry was struggling the most. Design represented a way out of the Depression, the hope of industry in clean lines and new, modern silhouettes; its leaders were artists working with, but distinct from, corporate interests such as GE, Western Electric, Westinghouse, Hoover, and General Motors. Such a model of independent artistry in collaboration with corporate interests was an expression of professionalism that theatrical designers aimed to emulate. In much less public ways, major theatrical designers did achieve similar notoriety.

Several specific documents and series demonstrate a shift toward labor, work, and process in 1930s design writing. Simonson published several books that legitimized the process of design labor for himself and his historical forebears. Interest in the working practice of theatre artists peaked in the 1936-1937 series "The Designer at Work" in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, the

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[72] "The soundness of the industrial designer's contribution, the permanency of his place, are to be judged realistically by records of representative work of the past six years. There is ample evidence from industry that the profession has arrived at a place of security and even prestige. This has been realized during a time when all old-established professions were seriously affected by the world depression, when American industry itself was at its most crucial stage, and when the never very stable vocations of the 'dressers' and 'decorators' were (like that of architecture) at a crisis. A survey of today's design studios, laboratories, and offices affords convincing argument that a need of the times is being met, and reinforcement for the conviction that a vital social and cultural contribution is being made in terms which only the artist uses." Sheldon Cheney and Martha Smathers Candler Cheney, *Art and the Machine: An Account of Industrial Design in 20th-Century America* (Whittlesey House, 1936), 20. Art and the Machine was written by the same Sheldon Cheney who started *Theatre Arts*. He, like Bel Geddes and Simonson, considered himself an expert in modern art, theatrical and industrial design.

[73] Daniel Schwartz, "Art for Industry's Sake," *The New York Times*, April 2, 1939, 116.

project of writer and stage manager Norris Houghton. Mielziner was steadily working, but occasionally published opinion pieces that emphasized the working conditions of the designing artist;[74] Jones was engaged in lecture tours in the thirties and condensed his early thoughts into *The Dramatic Imagination* in 1941, which despite its prophetic tone still emphasized basic principles, education, and training. Across these examples, the theme of work is sustained. Apart from their union affiliations, which are almost never discussed in these documents, the design process writings of the 1930s and early 1940s indicate that while designers were fighting for professional standards within the union, they were also engaged in a process of publicizing the designer.

Beginning with *The Stage is Set*, design writing turned toward the theme of work. By implicitly arguing for a view of design as knowledge work, creative labor and design as a systematic practice, Simonson and other designers of the 1930s took a pro-professionalism stance in class negotiations. The major turn from the authorship of the early New Stagecraft period of the early 20s to the writing of the 30s is a one from revolutionary exhortation of products and visions to a more systematic focus on the work of the designer. In this section I track the development of such discourses in writing by and about scenic designers in the 1930s and 1940s. I begin with Simonson's writings, expand to consider *Theatre Arts Monthly* and public-interest theatre books and magazine articles from the decade, and conclude the section by looking at publication activity within industrial design around the World's Fair of 1939. The World's Fair was a focusing event for scenic design history; disillusioned with the Federal Theatre Project, USA Local 829 actively pursued the hiring of designers for exposition work,

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[74] Jo Mielziner, "Scenery: Is There Scenery in This Play?" *The New York Times*, October 22, 1939: 129; Jo Mielziner, "So Little Time: A Scene Designer Wishes More Than a Minute for Creative Planning," *The New York Times*, August 12, 1945: X1.

and a number of high-profile contributions to the fair by industrial designers firmly established the corporation-affiliated designer as a new figure of American fascination. I argue that designers came to articulate process in distinction from, rather than in concert with, the designer's union.

4.3.1 Lee Simonson's Authorial Interventions

Design authorship did not begin in the 1930s. New Stagecraft publications argued for the aesthetic revolution in American design as early as 1915, and by the early 1920s design writing promoted the value of the designer as creator of the innovative design idea (supported by analysis, research, and method). Publications included *Theatre Arts Monthly* (beginning 1918), Macgowan's *Continental Stagecraft* (1923) and *The Theatre of Tomorrow* (1921), Cheney's *Stage Decoration* (1927), and semi-regular trade publications, such as those observed in chapter 2. These works, published by critics and written for admittedly small but very interested audiences, "forged a professional community around New Stagecraft design, forwarding the movement and inspiring newcomers to join its ranks."[75] The emphasis on writing in the twenties was typically in the vein of scenic design criticism; as Simonson noted in *The Stage is Set* in 1932, "criticism of stage settings…overflows into magazines, pamphlets, de luxe portfolios, and elaborately illustrated histories."[76] Emphasizing the designs themselves, these works analyzed, critiqued, and debated aesthetic trends in the designs, but paid attention to the work of the designer only so much as necessary in order to attribute the work and examine the artistry of the stage setting.

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[75] Essin, *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America*, 19.
[76] Lee Simonson, *The Stage Is Set* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1963), 17-18.

The most influential author responsible for the rhetorical turn toward practice was Lee Simonson. Simonson had been figured as a practical, craftsman-like counterpart to the romantic idealism of Jones since his mid-twenties work with the Theatre Guild. Simonson's role as the *de facto* leader of the designers within the union, and his personal experience as the head of his own design firm and a producing board member of the Guild prepared him to defend the designer's economic position. By repeatedly pulling back the curtain on the difficult-to-understand economics of design and technical production, Simonson made a case for the necessity of minimum wages and professional standards to theatre audiences. In so doing he shifted scenographic discourse from one of aesthetics to one of practical needs and visions for the future. He published his best-known book in 1932, and the archive of full-length pieces on theatrical designers is briefly dominated by Simonson's view. In contrast to the revolutionaries of the years before, Simonson's direct, analytical tone, his historical orientation, and his practical vision for a reborn, decentralized American theatre that would bring money and jobs back to the art was likely appealing to theatre folk and a general public facing a depression.

The Stage is Set, first published 1932, is Simonson's best known book. It directly attacked what Simonson saw as unnecessary theology and mysticism surrounding theatrical design, instead answering that the contemporary designer is only the latest version of longstanding tradition that goes back to the classics of Greece, Moliere and Shakespeare. He blasted the unrealized visions of Edward Gordon Craig and he demonstrated that the true work of the designer was that of an artist-craftsman, in service to the production rather than a great visionary who could singlehandedly "save the theatre from encircling doom."[77] The book solidified thoughts that Simonson had articulated in earlier publications, responding to

[77] Ibid., 18.

frustrations with the economic and theoretical landscape of design that grew up around New Stagecraft. Though Simonson did not state it in such terms, *The Stage is Set* implicitly asserts that good design work is one foundation among others on which a solid theatrical market could be rebuilt.

There are four major themes in Simonson's writing of the early 1930s. Each attempts to reposition the designer as a competent professional within a field, integral to the continued success of American theatre production. While design alone could not save the theatre from encroachments by film, geography, and rising costs, the professional expertise of the designer and the technician (curiously, not the painter or the backstage worker) was a necessary component of the functioning, modern American theatre. First, as I have already mentioned, Simonson opposed the mysticism or theology of the craft attached to it by previous generations, instead placing the designer within a historical trajectory of skilled theatre artists. Linked to this was his notion that theatrical design was an applied art, closer to interior decoration or engineering than what he called the "art-artist" model of scenic painting. This theme in his writing recategorized the scenic designer as a modern, forward-looking innovator rather than a figure of the past. A third major theme is the demonstration of the designer's daily work through plain language and day-to-day scheduling. This was particularly relevant when the admittedly high labor costs agreed to by the union were challenged in the press by producers. Later on, designers such as Mielziner and Gorelik detailed their day-to-day behavior in publications, but Simonson was the first major American designer to do so. This further "de-mystified" the craft and aligned designers with knowledge workers in other creative fields. Finally, Simonson argued for a new model of theatrical production based around regional theatre centers as an antidote to the centralized and contracting New York theatrical market of the 1930s. The "new road" for

theatre would increase jobs while still maintaining the professional caliber that had flourished in New York. Together, Simonson's writing in the 1930s was a major argument for the scenic designer as a "necessary workman…as one interpreter of a script,"[78] a professional artist whose expertise was both necessary for and only one part of the aesthetic and economic future of American theatre.

Publicity materials for *The Stage is Set* emphasize the corrective effect that Simonson wished to have on theatrical discourse. In January 1931, Simonson published a major article criticizing Craig's unrealized designs as unworthy. "He has the talent of any sensational journalist for summarizing an artist's problem in a headline," Simonson writes, "…but he has never shown the slightest capacity for the critical hard work involved in analyzing a single problem that he has posed or pushing it to a solution." What the true designer needed, more than anything else, was the ability to translate the dream into reality; Craig's influence on American design was outsized and damaging because he did not execute his vision. Mere renderings were pleasant, but "any design must in the most literal sense be translated to the stage."[79] In truth Craig did produce far more drawings than he managed to realize in performance, his 1928 *Macbeth* in New York notwithstanding. With respect to this production, one of the few Craig designs actually mounted in the United States, Simonson criticizes Craig's design from afar, "sent to this country to be painted, built, and lighted by others with whom he had never worked before."[80] With this article Simonson reorients the major task of the designer from the creation of the idea itself to the two-step process of creating the idea and devising methods for its realization. As Craig rarely produced his work, and did not take pains to always supervise the

[78] Ibid., 10.
[79] "Consider Gordon Craig: An American Scene Designer Weighs His Accomplishment and Finds It Wanting," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1931, X3.
[80] Ibid.

work when it was produced, Craig could not be actually engaged in design as an applied art. At the turn of the decade, Simonson actively argued for the primacy of a practical approach.[81] Theatre critics at the *Times* readily identified emphasis on execution and materiality of design as Simonson's primary contribution to the scenic design theory.[82]

Throughout the thirties, Simonson regularly contrasted scenic design with the fine arts. In order to best appreciate theatrical design, it ought to be seen in context with other decorative or "useful" arts, such as architecture, interior decorating, or engineering. Simonson was among the first to explicitly liken the stage designer's problem to that of the architect, though in practice the link had been strong since Urban and Bel Geddes founded their joint design/architecture studios. As early at 1928, Simonson drew this parallel in his discussion of display design he had finished that year at Macy's: "Scenery is a kind of architecture and architecture a kind of scenery."[83] Lee Simonson continued to expound this theory by paralleling the best training of architects and designers, placing scenic design as an allied but not fully architectural art. Design relied on spatial planning principles borrowed from architecture, yet was also able to harness them in aesthetically pleasing, three-dimensional compositions appropriate to modern art tastes.[84] In 1934, Simonson curated a collection of scenic art for the New York Museum of Modern Art, and his introductory note further theorized his distinction between pure and applied arts in the theatre. He cited past New York Mayor John Hylan, who distinguished between artists and "art-

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[81] "What matters in stage design is not where things come from, but how they are used." Lee Simonson, "The Problems of the Scenic Designer," *The New York Times*, November 17, 1929: X4.
[82] "Mr. Simonson and His Scenic Art," *The New York Times*, November 30, 1930: X2, and Brooks Atkinson, "Lee Simonson Sets the Stage," *The New York Times*, October 30, 1932: BR9. Atkinson: "At its best, which is where Mr. Simonson usually keeps it, scene designing has a great willingness to serve."
[83] "Says Home Planning is Half of Comfort," *The New York Times*, May 16, 1928: 46. See also Louis Mumford, "Towards a Rational Modernism," *The New Republic*, April 25, 1928, http://www.newrepublic.com/book/review/towards-rational-modernism.
[84] "Although stage settings, as structures housing human activity, perform many of the functions of architecture, they are also pictorial in immediate effect. And as pictures modern stage settings are able to provide the kind of aesthetic satisfaction that painting no longer affords." Simonson, *The Stage Is Set*, 102.

artists." While the former "consciously and deliberately produces a work of art that is wholly aesthetic in appeal," the artist (as craftsman, Simonson clarifies) "produces an impure form of art, known derogatively in aesthetic circles as applied decorative art."[85] Stage designers, of course, fell into the latter category, and therefore their designs should be viewed not only with the aesthetic sense, but as evidence of a past realized scenic environment for which they are a poor representation. Meant to contextualize the "unavoidable gaps and omissions" of stage design exhibitions, Simonson's alliance of scenic art with the applied arts of design also served a rhetorically useful function.

Seen in light of the growing professionalism of the scenic designer earlier detailed, Simonson's characterization of designers as artists, but not "art-artists" shored up a new professional status. As in his attacks on Craig, here too Simonson articulated a practical vision of the designer as both idea-generator and executive supervisor. Simonson's applied-art allegiance allowed the designer to be seen in line with more lucrative and integral professions, rather than simply "art." The next year, in 1935, a short article reporting on Simonson's lecture activity explained that artists were "in danger of becoming vestigial, like the appendix." The way forward was not to cling to past practices, but for the artist to "identify himself more nearly with new conceptions of life and modern living…the great works of art today, [Simonson] said, are such things as suspension bridges."[86] Engineering, commerce, and the development of better living standards were the fruits of design practices working within modernist industrial practices – the source for much of the nontheatrical design income among working designers of the period. In 1935, Simonson saw a more prosperous future for the artist by allying with industry, with "new conceptions of life and modern living," than insisting on traditional methods of artistic

[85] "Theatre Art," *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*: 1-2.
[86] "Sees Artist Becoming 'Appendix.'" *The New York Times*, February 9, 1935: 7.

production. Given the then-ongoing disputes within USA Local 829 about design fees by the square foot, removing "class distinction" between designers and workmen, and the legal action taken by the designers against the union, it is easy to see why Simonson would begin to cast the designers' lot with industry and not with the union's traditionalism.

In several of his writings, Lee Simonson articulated a future for the American theatre based on the regional distribution of theatrical labor under the supervision of a still-centralized directorship. In 1932's "The New 'Road'" and "The Theatre: Gambler's Paradise," Simonson expands ideas from *The Stage is Set* to create a world in which theatre can increase its importance, cultural value, and solve the surplus labor problem of the Depression. "Gambler's Paradise," published in September 1932, lays out the problem. Speculative investment in theatre combined with laissez-faire management by producers and landlords resulted in the delayed development of theatrical activity. The only solution, it seemed, was organized business practices between theatre managers and producers.[87] Simonson called for the establishment of new theatre complexes by wealthy donors in major cities outside of New York, supervised by advisory boards of designers, lighting technicians, and technical directors. These theatres "could be run on strictly professional lines," he writes, employing actors and directors out of the surplus New York market and providing educational facilities for professional development in partnership with universities.[88] Standardization of scenic designs and lighting plots in Simonson's model would allow for a single set to be shipped with a minimum of redesign, and identical lighting schemes to be replicated.

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[87] "The profits of putting on a successful play are so fabulous, and the losses of putting on a failure are so catastrophic, that a theatrical producer is not in the business of putting on plays but of finding and producing 'smash hits." Lee Simonson, "The Theatre: Gambler's Paradise," *The New Republic*, September 7, 1932: 93-96.
[88] Lee Simonson, "The New 'Road': One Way to Revive the American Theatre," *Forum and Century* 88, no. 2.

Simonson's model of design labor prizes the "professional," that is, established designer, and takes as a given that design labor need not be distributed geographically as acting and technical labor would. In his fantasy scenario of "The New 'Road,'" Simonson names design experts as centralized advisors, presumably based out of New York; he lists Jones, Urban, and Claude Bragdon along with his own name. Among these experts, there is little place for new design labor, or the sort of labor distribution that the union had proposed in the thirties. The union wanted to make work available, and Simonson wanted to centralize it.[89] The implicit assumption of Simonson's vision is that design expertise is valuable but should be centralized among a small group of established professionals. This distinguished the designer's work from the necessarily reproducible labor of other theatrical workers, primarily actors and stage technicians, and occasionally directors as well.

Simonson's advocacy for more organized producing prompted public debate. In 1933, a series of letters to the editor between Simonson and Broadway producer Brock Pemberton[90] illuminate tensions between Depression-era producers and designers over compensation. Pemberton blamed unions for a sharp increase in labor costs. He alleged that "designers of scenery are asked by their union to demand minimum fees that are ruinous" and "the union scales for painters would lead one of believe that only descendants of Michael Angelo [sic] were employed in scenic studios."[91] The next week, Simonson replied by explaining the economics of his position: out of the minimum $250 per act specified, designers must pay assistants, purchase design materials, maintain the design office, and weather intermittent production schedules. He

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[89] In fact, in 1932, the union was already banning the re-use of sets, as such recycling by producers cheated both designers and painters out of the opportunity for new work, according to the union. "Scenic Men Spilling Knew-It-When Stuff on Storehouse Sets," *Variety* November 29, 1932: 47.

[90] *Six Characters In Search of an Author*, 1922; *Strictly Dishonorable*, 1929; *Harvey*, 1944

[91] Brock Pemberton, "A Dissertation on the Liabilities, and the Few Blessings, of the Depression." *The New York Times*, January 15, 1933: X3.

added that theatrical economics ought to be organized, but "it will not be organized by those managers who…can best be described as the Big Laissez-Faire Boys." Responsible management could be allied with unionized labor practices, leading to "a reorganized theatre [that] will be not only able but glad to pay him, along with every other worker, something more than a minimum wage."[92] Pemberton was not deterred by the reply; in March and April several articles in the *Times* demonstrate Pemberton's attacks on all theatrical unionism.[93]

Simonson's willingness to explain in clear terms how much work design took legitimated the designer as professional. Though this exchange in the *Times* probably did not have a significant effect on the public attitude toward design labor, being so short, it can be seen as evidence for Simonson's rhetorical strategy of demonstrating design labor in hours, numbers, and dollars. In his articles and in his union leadership, Simonson did the most to clarify the work of design in both imaginative and executive phases. In later years, other publication would turn to design labor as the focus of feature articles with design celebrities. Simonson himself would take up a dollars-and-cents approach to his work in the 1943 memoir, *Part of a Lifetime.*[94] Though Simonson began the trend, however, a number of other public-interest and theatrically-focused publications began address design in material and labor terms in the mid-1930s.

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[92] Lee Simonson, "Lee Simonson Takes Issue with Mr. Pemberton Regarding the Cost of Sets and Other Matters." *The New York Times*, January 22, 1933: X3.
[93] This culminated in a radio broadcast debate between IATSE and Pemberton, representing the League of New York Theaters. See "Debate Stage Row on Radio Tonight: Brock Pemberton and Head of Stagehands' Union to Give Two Sides of Dispute," *The New York Times* March 16, 1933: 20 and "Lays Theatre Ills to Union Policies," *The New York Times* April 16, 1933: N3
[94] Simonson, *Part of a Lifetime; Drawings and Designs, 1919-1940*, 67-70.

4.3.2 Publishing Theatrical Design Labor after Simonson

From 1934 until 1942, feature articles on scenic artists shifted their emphasis from criticism of the sets themselves to a series of feature pieces on working. At some points, these addressed the economic and union conditions of scenic design, while at others, they featured specific designers in their studios. What unifies them is a turn from the criticism of the work to the emphasis on the labor and person completing it; no longer revolutionary or political in style, scene design writing turned to consider the unique tasks of the designer himself. Morton Eustis' 1934 feature in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, "Scene Designing as a Business," historicized the designers' relationship with the union, detailed wage scales, and argued that "the scene designer has one of the hardest and most discouraging roads in the theatre to travel."[95] A January 1935 *Times* piece featured Donald Oenslager in a "Salute to a Craftsman," citing him as one of the most prolific and hardest working designers of the time. In this interview Oenslager contrasts varying methods for different types of design jobs, with the central theme being the flexibility and workmanlike dedication of the 33-year old, "rangy," "dark-haired and smiling" designer.[96] These and other feature articles on designers from the period, such as Eustis' and Norris Houghton's series on design in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, developed a theme of the innovative artist at the center of necessarily flexible, creative work.[97] Such a style of feature-writing was reinforced by a pattern of design 'celebrity' authorship coming into its own in industrial and corporate design; Henry Dreyfuss was profiled at length in *The New Yorker* in 1931, Raymond Loewy's "theatrical" approach to department store design was featured in *The New York Times Magazine* in 1938, and

[95] Morton Eustis, "Scene Designing as a Business," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 18, no. 7: 506.
[96] Bosley Crowther, "Salute to a Craftsman: The Man Being Donald M. Oenslager, the Season's First Designer," *The New York Times*, January 13, 1935: X3.
[97] Norris Houghton's "The Designer at Work" series in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, 1936-37 emphasized the creative and material practice of several designers, including Jones, Simonson, Mielziner, Bel Geddes, Bernstein, and Gorelik.

Norman Bel Geddes was writing his own biographical surveys as early as 1932.[98] Implicit in the publication of these profiles is the concept of a designing mind capable enough to determine which of the many design techniques to apply to a given situation. While design style varied by production needs, there needed to be a creative mind at the center of the organization; the designer stepped into that gap by assuming a position as manager of the intellectual labor of strategic planning.

The turn toward the practical as opposed to the aesthetic paralleled a larger shift in theatrical book publishing. While the 1930s saw only a modest increase in the number of book-length publications addressing settings and scenery, the largest area of growth was in books targeted at the school and the amateur.[99] English-language writing on design in the mid-1920s was largely focused on professionals, either in the display and criticism of designers' new work, or of studies of other theatres abroad. Beginning in 1927, handbooks for amateur theatres, emulating the little theatre model, and begin to be published. In 1930 and 1931, approximately a third of book-length publications were targeted at the non-professional audience.[100] Few if any of these books were written by important names in commercial design, however. Given the growing interest in theatrical production in universities and English classrooms, as well as community theatres, a general shift occurred from the fruits of the labor to the labor itself.

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[98] Gilbert Seldes, "Profiles: Artist in a Factory," *The New Yorker* August 29, 1931: 22-24; Walter Rendell Stoey, "Shops Take a Leaf from the Theatres' Book," *The New York Times Magazine*, October 2, 1938: 10; Bel Geddes, *Horizons*.

[99] To investigate this, I examined the number of printed book entries under the headings "Theatre—Stage Settings and Scenery" in WorldCat, a globally networked library search engine. Between 1915 and 1925, 66 books are listed, with 10 more publications in only three out of eleven years. Between 1926 and 1937, the next eleven-year period, each year saw ten or more publications, 173 in all. Publication dipped again in 1939 and 1943-1945, likely due to World War II. A complete publication history remains outside the scope of my project; with this bit of data I indicate the marked increase in scenography-focused publication in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

[100] One notable example, 1931's *Scenery: A Manual of Scene Design* was written by Stanford English professor Harold Helvenston, a sometime designer who wrote the book for university classrooms; it combined theory and practice through practical examples and images. The same practical, detail- and process-oriented voice of Simonson's writings prevails.

Other books published in the early 1940s continued to bolster a view of the designer as an articulate professional. Of course, the most prominent example of such authorship is Jones' *The Dramatic Imagination*, which emphasizes the artistic foundation of the scene designer's craft, an ability "to give expression to the essential quality of a play."[101] Aside from general assertions to work hard, diligently, and always with the knowledge that the actors, not the design, complete the production, Jones had little to say about his own process or how others ought to begin. Mordecai Gorelik's *New Theatres for Old* (1940), on the other hand, interfaced with Simonson's perspective more directly, by performing theatrical design expertise. Similar to *The Stage is Set*, the book takes a historical look at production and playwriting techniques from the classics to today, with special emphasis on European modernism, Brecht, and Piscator. Unlike Simonson, whose writing as a historian and art critic was largely separated from personal discussion of seeing and creating theatrical sets, Gorelik integrated practical concerns with a nuanced, theoretical (and Marxist-leaning) historical narrative.[102] As Gorelik had argued before in *Theatre Arts Monthly*, theatre production was a window through which to study "social and economic institutions of its audience;" through his monograph Gorelik demonstrated that a designer's production orientation could more fully inform study of the past and provide an opportunity to critique the growing industrial, capitalist, and scientific influences in American culture.[103]

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[101] Robert Edmond Jones, *The Dramatic Imagination; Reflections and Speculations on the Art of the Theatre* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), 78.
[102] Mordecai Gorelik, *New Theatres for Old* (New York: S. French, 1940), 16-18.
[103] "Theatre Is a Weapon," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 18, no. 6: 420-1.

4.3.3 Design Professionalism Diversifies

The situation for designers in the mid to late 1930s was far from rosy. While the worst of the Broadway work stoppages had passed, and designers were beginning to find work with the Federal Theatre Project starting in 1936, few established designers were making ends meet while new designers were finding it nearly impossible to break into the business. As Shepard Traube put it in his 1936 *So You Want to Go Into the Theatre*?, "If you think you can become rich by designing the scenery for Broadway plays, you are blowing soap bubbles."[104] Traube notes later that what new opportunities do exist for making a living is through working in allied fields of industrial design, theatrical producing, motion picture design, or interior decorating. He concludes, "there is no reason why one must begin as a designer in the theatre to enter any of these other fields, except that winning a reputation helps. However, one can start from scratch as an interior decorator or commercial designer."[105] Traube's comment further points to adjacent fields in which design consciousness was both growing and lucrative.

The Federal Theatre Project did not provide as much relief for designers as it did for actors and technicians. The FTP was reluctant to pay union wages, it prized minimalist and suggestive rather than elaborate settings, and established designers were better off finding work elsewhere. Younger designers benefited more from the program; for instance, Howard Bay gained much of his early experience with the program (most famously for 1938's *One-Third of A Nation*), and lighting designer Abe Feder cut his chops as a young man on many FTP

[104] Traube, *So You Want to Go into the Theatre?*, 162-3.
[105] Ibid., 168.

productions. This younger generation would become influential after the war,[106] but FTP work was not seen as directly relevant to professional design standards. The more immediate effect of the program on the economics of design was negligible; with the closure of the program in 1939 business resumed as usual.

Far more influential on the development of design professionalism was the linkage of industrial design expertise to American industry put on public display at the World's Fair of 1939. Expanding on themes from the 1934 Century of Progress in Chicago, the 1939 fair emphasized the partnership of industry and artistry in the creation of an American "World of Tomorrow." New, visually evocative objects such as the streamlined locomotive, model cities, highway systems, and even nylon premiered inside larger-than-life pavilions. Bel Geddes' Futurama exhibit for General Motors was the largest draw, yet other businesses and their designers backed up the claim: Henry Dreyfuss' locomotives and 200-foot clear "perisphere" were on display, as were Walter Darwin Teague's pavilions for DuPont, Ford, and Eastman Kodak. All three of these men sat on the design board for the fair, and made sure that their work highlighted their contributions as a new, creative, profit-enhancing professional service. A full-page spread in the *Times* demonstrated, in words and images, the contributions of industrial design to the forms of telephones, trains, and automobiles, while simultaneously praising the freelancer as the applied artist uninhibited by the traditions of business.[107] In all, the World's Fair showed that engaging design could draw crowds, who were now willing to spend on new, well-designed (and well-advertised) products. The Fair also proved what designers had been

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[106] Perry Watkins, the first black scenic designer to work consistently on Broadway, and Howard Bay are only two of the designers who experienced career success due to their early work with the FTP. They won these jobs precisely because union designers were expensive. Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960*, 124.

[107] Jeffrey Meikle, *Twentieth Century Limited: Industrial Design in America 1925-1939* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 189-209.

working toward since the beginning of the field: design work, that is, applied artistry, added significant value to big business.[108]

Theatrical designers and the painters' union were quick to jump on the World's Fair. In 1938, the union printed a booklet advertising members and their qualifications to be sent to exhibition managers.[109] As a source of well-paid painting work – and not inclined toward economizing on spectacle, as the FTP had been – the World's Fair provided temporary hope for a strained industry of painters of all types.[110] News reports corroborate the employment of union work at the Fair, and while not all technical painting work was 100% union as Local 829 had intended, it provided a platform from which the union could articulate its contributions in terms of economic value.[111] After the Fair, the union continued to publish the booklet advertising its members' accomplishments; however, in the eyes of the public the emphasis lay on the designers' contributions. The 1940-1941 Almanac (the extension of the 1938 booklet) cites the many successes of the Fair that began on the drawing boards of union members, with images of planned and realized stage and exposition designs, as well as article-length opinion pieces by notable designers.[112] All of the written articles in the Almanac are from the designers' point of

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[108] For further discussion of theatrical design and its relationship to business profits see Christopher Innes, *Designing Modern America Broadway to Main Street* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Marlis Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was the Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[109] General Meeting Minutes, March 21, 1938. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 6; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

[110] Mural artists had been added as an area of jurisdiction during an expansion of USA Local 829 categories of membership in 1937, to include costume designers and painters, diorama workers, and mural artists. Meeting Minutes, July 17, 1937. For reports on the jurisdictional disputes between Local 829 and the Mural Artists Guild, see "Artists' Guilds Disagree," *The New York Times*, July 18, 1938:15, and Arthur Millier, "Brush Strokes," *Los Angeles Times*, August 7, 1938: C7.

[111] "11 Different Unions in On N.Y. Fair's 'R.R.' Show," *Variety* 139.8 (July 31, 1940): 112.

[112] The booklet begins with a piece by Bel Geddes touting the fair, and them transitions to theatrical work with articles by Simonson, Jones, Oenslager, and Aline Bernstein. The impression is that Local 829 does not only specialize in theatre, but in all types of design. The book also contains by a complete list of union members and their contact information: designer lists precede the painters. *Almanac, 1940-1941*, United Scenic Artists Records, WAG.065; Box 3, Folder 9; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University

view, and the foreword to the book emphasizes designers' extratheatrical work. Five years prior to the publication of this Almanac, designers had initiated legal action against Local 829; this booklet stands as evidence of the rising prestige of the designer. After the Fair, Local 829 began to realize that its design members were its most high-profile assets. Through their publication and extratheatrical work in the thirties, designers changed the narrative from dedicated backstage artists to essential creative professionals for entertainment and big business. The union's recognition of this shift in the Almanac signals a change in union attitudes toward designers; within the next five years, designers were seen a major selling point for union work.[113]

4.4 CONCLUSION

By writing about themselves as professional knowledge workers, designers established jurisdiction over creative decision-making, separate from any specific production company or scenery house. This was reinforced by the freelance, contracted model of work they had fought for within the union in the 1920s, as well as the increasing prestige of design as a new profession in the 1930s. By leveraging this prestige against the protectionist interests of the union, designers were able to craft an identity separate from unionism but still reinforced by the trade exclusivity of an AFL-supported union. This unique position was a major influence on the development of process as an independent, creative, and attributable endeavor. Lee Simonson was instrumental in shifting public discourses of design and also speaking for the designers within the union. It is his version of the design process that was written into the rules and developed in debate. When

[113] In the mid-1940s, *Variety* and *Billboard* begin to refer to Local USA 829 as the "designers' union" in shorthand, whereas in previous decades it would have been the "scenic artist's union" or "artist and designer's union." The first *Variety* reference is in "New Union Beef," *Variety* 144.2 (September 7, 1941): 3.

other designers shied away from union confrontations, Simonson welcomed them head-on. He wrote and argued prodigiously, especially during the Depression years. Because his work in the theatre was so varied – historian, producer, organizer, designer – and because he wrote several of his own books, Simonson's contributions to the history of scene design have not been included in as much detail as other designers, especially Jones and Mielziner. By looking at his importance to the profession and its development, rather than his contributions to any one production, Simonson's prominence comes into sharper relief.

This chapter has shown that the celebrity designer of the interwar period, of which Bel Geddes and Simonson are good examples, played into class distinctions for professional gains. Their economic and political strategies increased the craft's status to one of creative, necessary knowledge work. In his discussion of the "new middle class" in *Highbrow/Lowdown*, David Savran notes that contrary to sociologist C. Wright Mills, who saw all artists as "handicrafters and tradesmen of small but independent means," and therefore outside the class system, theatre artists of the 1920s were a specific type of middle-class figure.[114] Eugene O'Neill and John Howard Lawson exemplify this type, artists who "hailed from relatively affluent families, [and] they comprised not a proletarian insurgency but an avant-garde of the aspiring and evolving middle class itself." Such artists disavowed outright economic motivation, especially in experimental and art theatres. They found that the more cultural and symbolic capital they gained through highbrow aspirations, the less financial capital they garnered in ticket sales.[115] Savran has little to say about the economics of design, and the temptation is to read them as having the

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[114] Mills (*White Collar*) qtd in David Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (University of Michigan Press, 2009), 141.

[115] Savran then places O'Neill at the center of a confluence of highbrow taste and economic drive, finding that "the paradoxical triumph during the 1920s of a commercial theater that was constantly insisting it was really an art theater—directed and supervised by 'classless,' modernist intellectual and butter-and-egg men—firmly consolidated the upper-middlebrow status of the legitimate stage." This and the foregoing quotes: ibid., 142.

same status as directors and playwrights, Savran's so-called "classless" intellectuals. With this chapter I have shown how design worked differently, in no small part because of its distinct economic culture. The union affiliation of scenic designers and their need for design work outside of the theatre placed theatrical designers in the center of class negotiations. Letters and articles from the thirties and beyond acknowledge the relative penury of designers attempting to make it on theatre alone,[116] yet commercial success for major designers lay in their ability to market theatrical design expertise as a proving ground. The transferability of design skill to publishing, film, and industry allowed designers to establish a new class status. By the thirties, this relationship was not one of artistic, art-theatre solidarity – though it may have begun there in the Provincetown and Washington Square theatres – but rather one of mobilizing creative labor as the key to a heightened status, while still maintaining strategic alliances with organized labor.

In the next chapter, I turn to a second major legitimizing institution that codified and regularized design process – the university. While Simonson wrote new contracts, Donald Oenslager was fashioning a design curriculum at Yale. Professionalism theorists emphasize the role of the university and professional school as a body of disciplinary knowledge, a credentialing authority, and a necessary step in the "cognitive monopoly" or "exclusive rights" to a type of labor.[117] Yale in particular is important because it was the first professional graduate school of theatre and the first to institutionalize design as a component art of theatrical study. The version of process Oenslager institutionalized drew from his own experience as New Stagecraft protégé (he apprenticed for Jones) and a working member of Local USA 829. More than many other teachers at Yale, Oenslager insisted that his classes prepare students for

[116] Hobe Morrison, "No Design for Living in Present-Day Stage Designing, Sez Howard Bay," *Variety* January 19, 1949: 49, and Simonson, *Part of a Lifetime; Drawings and Designs, 1919-1940*, 68.
[117] Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism*, 15, and Abbott, *The System of Professions*, 20.

professional work in the theatre as designers and creators. He built his classes accordingly. By considering the development of Yale's graduate-level design curricula, and the publications of the thirties and forties targeted at students of design, I demonstrate that influential figures such as Donald Oenslager archived the modern scene design process in a studio-centered curriculum.

5.0 FASHIONING THE "WORKING MODEL:" DESIGN PROCESS PEDAGOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY

"Very shortly what had been a dangerous academic experiment became a working model for teaching the theatre in schools and universities throughout the country. Fashioning the pattern of this 'working model' at New Haven was far from easy."[1]

- Donald Oenslager, "Mr. Baker in His Theatre."

How does one archive a process? So far this dissertation has attempted to recover process from the material archive, the sketches and notes and meeting minutes designers produced as working tools. Memory is not only mediated by physical remains, however; it is also transmitted between individuals through learning, tradition, and embodied practices. Recalling the value of memory living in the repertoire as well as the archive of design, I turn in this last chapter to the world of education in the interwar period. In line with my previous methods, I return again to the archive for evidence of past embodied acts of teaching and curricular planning; however, with this chapter on pedagogy, I engage the social world of knowledge transfer and art education.

One of the most effective ways designers mobilized new ideas of process was to teach future generations. By founding schools, developing curricula, assembling exercises, and holding

[1] Donald Oenslager, "Mr. Baker in His Theatre," in *George Pierce Baker: A Memorial* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1939), 25.

conferences with other teachers of theatre, figures such as Donald Oenslager and Thomas Wood Stevens archived methods of theatremaking in official university documents and in the experiences they designed for their students. As institutions with significant prestige, universities (like unions) were instrumental in the codification of the theatrical designer as a new profession. Schools, like professional organizations and entrance exams, regulate entry into a professional class, cultivate standards of behavior and practice, and protect disciplinary knowledge.[2] The first two schools to institute departments of dramatic arts, Yale and Carnegie Institute of Technology, had the earliest influence on the market of theatre artist production – and especially design.

Recent criticism of design pedagogy has noted the epistemic stasis within design education. Kent State University's Raynette Halvorsen Smith provocatively argues that "the fundamental technique for the design and production of scenery has not significantly changed for close to a hundred years…at its core it has remained unchanged since the practices outlined early in the century by Craig, Appia, and Robert Edmond Jones." For Smith, reliance on a linear model of production, the New Stagecraft values of conceptual unity and harmony, and the assumed authority of the text and playwright "can privilege some artistic voices while censoring others."[3] Richard Isackes, designer and professor at the University of Texas at Austin, acknowledges similar reservations in his own design teaching, noting that his teaching had been "an unquestioned replication" of his own art training, and the linearity of process he taught was not true of his own method. He notes that most teachers fashion pedagogical models out of their own experience and training, which in turn was "deeply influenced by standard pedagogies from

[2] "The ability of a profession to sustain its jurisdictions lies partly in the power and prestige of its academic knowledge…academic professionals demonstrate the rigor, the clarity, and the scientifically logical character of professional work, thereby legitimating that work in the context of larger values." Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Labor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 54-55.

[3] Raynette Halvorsen Smith, "Deconstructing the Design Process: Teaching Scene Design Process through Feminist Performance Art," in *Perspectives on Teaching Theatre*, ed. Raynette Halvorsen Smith, Bruce McConachie, and Rhonda Blair (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2001), 107-08.

other fields."[4] I am in hearty agreement with Smith that current design teachers would do well to consider the assumed neutrality of "the design process;" New Stagecraft's linear processes ought to be complemented by other values, voices, and traditions. I also agree with Isackes that reflection, honesty, community are the best first steps toward building a more robust design pedagogy discourse. Nonetheless, neither Smith nor Isackes plumb the historical conditions of this stasis. Both align the issue with the continued presence of Craig, Appia, and Jones in theatre and design history texts, but this does not fully explain how New Stagecraft became aligned with the university, or how theatrical design itself became a subject of university study. In this chapter, I trace one major strand of design pedagogy institutionalization, through Donald Oenslager at Yale. I also contrast Yale's program with its major competitor in the interwar period, Carnegie Tech. By understanding what made Yale's design curriculum unique and influential, historians and designers alike will be in a better position to contextualize and critique "the process" as a historical phenomenon and, perhaps, as inherited pedagogical baggage.

The Yale Drama Department was founded in 1924 by George Pierce Baker, and inherited the structure of his English 47 Workshop at Harvard.[5] Having been lured away from Harvard with a significant endowment for the construction of a new theatre building and a new autonomous department in the College of Fine Arts, Baker saw to it that the school would be a place where students could train for professional theatre work. To augment his abilities as a teacher of playwriting, rhetoric, dramatic history, and direction, he brought several new faculty to the school in 1925. Donald Oenslager, Stanley McCandless, and Evelyn Cohen were hired to teach the technique and history of scenic, lighting, and costume, respectively. Though Cohen

[4] Richard M. Isackes, "On the Pedagogy of Theatre Stage Design: A Critique of Practice," *Theatre Topics* 18, no. 1 (2008): 41, 52.
[5] The Drama Department would reorganize into the Yale School of Drama in 1955.

would leave after a few years, Oenslager and McCandless became dominant as teachers and practitioners of design in academia.[6] In the interwar years, they taught hundreds of students. Through their publications, lectures, and the whole "working model" of their school, they inspired many more. Both young designers were recent graduates of the 47 Workshop, and firmly established themselves at Yale as teaching artists. I will focus on Oenslager's curriculum in this chapter, though his collaboration with the other design faculty was key to the success of the program, including some others who were hired later, such as Frank Bevan (costume design) and Edward C. Cole (technical production). The scenic design program at Yale was the first of its kind, inspiring many other design curricula. It was also the place where scenic design and the university first came into direct, sustained contact.

In this chapter I argue that Yale's "working model" of theatre education helped professionalize theatrical designers and popularized a New Stagecraft-inspired version of design process. Donald Oenslager's teaching was different from other kinds of education at the school, more in line with the studio education of the architecture department than either the other Drama disciplines or the 47 Workshop. Oenslager built upon the basic model established by Baker at Harvard, but defined his own style by folding in the practices of working designers. He pioneered a studio model for theatrical design education, grounded in a problem-solving ethos and guided by professional values. He was uniquely suited to do this, as Oenslager maintained an active design career in New York throughout his forty-five years at Yale. His intentional blend of the working world with the academy was compelling proof that design should be taught as a separate discipline within dramatic arts departments. In his distillation of New Stagecraft design

[6] Wisner Payne Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 255.

into courses, lectures, and pedagogical techniques, Oenslager archived his design process in his students and in the school itself.

I begin this chapter by reviewing some familiar concepts of professionalism and design cognition, specifically the ill-defined problem and Schön's concept of reflective practice, and add a few new ones. In particular Donald Schön's concept of practicum and Lois Hetland and Ellen Winner's analysis of studio pedagogy help me unpack the Yale curriculum. While practicum, or the structured educational space for professional enculturation, was a familiar part of Baker's teaching methods, Oenslager brought studio-style education to the Drama department. In total, Oenslager's view of design as problem-solving, craftsmanship, and a studio practice set Yale's design classes apart. Next, by connecting Baker and Oenslagers' pedagogies to Schön's conception of design as a professional practice, I suggest that Yale's approach to design pedagogy bolstered recognition of the theatrical design as a professional pursuit in the twenties and thirties. Finally I consider the competitive advantage Yale enjoyed among other universities looking to offer drama and/or design curricula, and compare its methods to other drama schools, especially Carnegie Tech. I conclude with some thoughts on the connection of New Stagecraft philosophy, professionalization within the university, and design commercialism that accompanied the rise of New Stagecraft design process.

5.1 DESIGN THEORIES AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Before turning to consider Oenslager's design pedagogy, I explore four linked concepts from design studies, especially the work of Donald Schön on the relationship between the professions and his concept of reflective practice. Schön's theorization of professional behavior has gained

traction within applied theatre and theatre pedagogy contexts, though his influence has been more extensive in the learning sciences, education schools, and to a lesser extent, art and design pedagogy discourses.[7] Schön's work provides me a way to point to relationships among bodies of practical knowledge. The idea that practicum is a component of professional training connects the historical craft basis of theatrical art, the growing professional identity of the designer, and the role of the American university as a place for professional training. At Yale, Baker and especially Oenslager brought together these previously separated areas of knowledge in one new curriculum. These concepts are design as the solution of ill-defined problems, Schön's concept of design as professional practice, practicum as a historical method of developing design expertise, and the pedagogy of studio technique in design education.

In the introduction, I explored the ill-defined problem as a constituent of design thinking and as an aspect of New Stagecraft's characteristic design process. To review, in short: design can be seen as a process of determining the best solution from (relative) first principles, and determining the confines of the problem itself through analysis of constraints. By viewing design problems as ill-defined rather than routine, more elegant and innovative solutions are possible. In the case of theatrical design, constraints are found in both the playscript and the physical constraints of the space. Historically speaking, designers using the ill-defined problem metaphor opened the door for abstract and unexpected designs that either broke with traditions of pictorial realism or incorporated functional planning into realistic sets. A similar sense of design as

[7] Baz Kershaw and Helen Nicholson, *Research Methods in Theatre and Performance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011); Inger Mewburn, "Lost in Translation: Reconsidering Reflective Practice and Design Studio Pedagogy," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 11, no. 4 (2011); Philip Taylor, *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003).

problem-solving animated Oenslager's teaching and curriculum design.[8] As such, it is important to keep the ill-defined problem in play as one aspect of Yale's design process philosophy.

In the introduction I also explored Donald Schön's concept of reflective practice as distinctive of design work. Through observations of professionals, Schön theorizes that designers adapt to changing situations as they design through empathic connections with materials, the problem itself, and collaborators. In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Schön refines his definition as a "sense of artistry" or the "competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice."[9] Artistry, for Schön, is the ability to deal with scenarios and situations that are ill-defined, to use the design studies term, or situations which do not readily fit schemata formed by previous tasks, problems, or exercises encountered in one's training. All professionals – lawyers, doctors, therapists, engineers, teachers, and performing and visual artists – engage in this artistry. Schön suggests that the ability to reflect on and respond to unique characteristics of situations is a distinguishing characteristic of professionals, justifying their exclusive claim on labor within a given work domain as well as the need to establish schools for professionalization within that field.

Design, Schön continues, is a prototypical example of professional artistry. In its ability to define a problem, to synthesize elements of a solution, and to solve messy, "ill-defined" problems, the action of designing "broadly construed, is the process fundamental to the exercise

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[8] The concept of design as problem solving is most commonly connected with Herbert Simon's school of design process theory, in which design is seen as a more or less linear algorithm (design as a series of "steps"). This model was dominant in the US design discourse of the sixties and seventies; Donald Schön's work prized humanism and expertise, and in some ways rebuts the computer logic of Simon's problem-solving approach. Though neither Simon's linear model nor Schön's reflective practice would have been familiar to Oenslager and his design peers per se, their framing of pedagogy and professional practice reflects elements of both types of thinking.

[9] Donald A. Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987), 13.

of artistry in all professions."[10] In a broad sense, professional work is designing, in the sense that professions use expertise to develop order out of novel situations; often this order is mediated by artifacts. Practitioners of many sorts, and especially those of the established professions of law, medicine, education, and architecture construct plans, documents, regimens, policies, and systems that impose order on problems to solve them. After making potential artifacts, professions "discover consequences and implications of their constructions –some unintended— which they appreciate and evaluate." These evaluations constitute later applications of their professional practice, eventually constituting guidelines or best practices within a given occupational field.

Architecture is Schön's main case study, as it is one of the oldest design disciplines, and one which has maintained a link between function (construction) and theory (aesthetics). Importantly, it also "crystallized as a profession before the rise of technical rationality," and therefore "still embraces its studio traditions."[11] As architects invent spaces for living and working, and separate the reflective practices of designing as distinguished from construction, architecture was a model for other forms of design that would emerge in twentieth-century university curricula in the twentieth century. At Yale, architectural pedagogical technique was echoed in Oenslager's teaching methods.

Schön explains that the practicum is a "setting designed for the task of learning a practice."[12] In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Schön noted that in design fields, reflective practice is most often taught through informal, studio-based classes, organized around problem solving. Most importantly they share a sense of "immersion" or "habitation," in which the

[10] Ibid., 41.
[11] Ibid., 43.
[12] Ibid., 37

student approaches the work of design as a matter of enculturation within a professional field and specific domain knowledge. Design practicum courses contain an "intensity and duration long beyond the normal requirements of a course" and "students do not so much attend…as live in them."[13] In the history of professions, the practicum provided an alternative training model to earlier modes of artistic training. Before design schools were founded, artists could learn craft individually or through an apprenticeship. Both alternatives have their drawbacks, especially within the context of rapidly professionalizing professions. Solo instruction tends to leave the artist isolated from a community – a particular problem for collaborative theatre production – and apprenticeship models are time- and cost-intensive for the mentor, high-pressure for the learner, and leave the teacher's workshop vulnerable to expensive mistakes. Once ensconced within a school, the practicum provides a longer, more economical, and lower-pressure learning environment detached from the economic and time pressures of the studio apprentice. Projects can be intentionally structured in such a way as to develop student expertise, and supervised by knowledgeable, established professionals who are focused on education, not production.

While Schön's analysis surveys architectural education, the immersive and studio-based approach bears much similarity to the way in which design has been taught in other disciplines. Contemporary literature on the practicum approach has shown that it is a dominant model for design education in the UK and the US, and that it functions as an important bridge between the academic and professional worlds.[14] The time commitment of the practicum appeals to a university's demand for academic rigor, assuaging historical conflicts between the university as a place for practical, skills-based education and one for "content" or what has been seen as the

[13] Ibid., 31

[14] Cheri Logan, "Metaphor and Pedagogy in the Design Practicum," *International Journal of Technology and Design Education* 18, no. 1 (2008); Philippa Lyon, *Learning and Teaching through Design: An Anthology of Models, Approaches, and Explorations* (Surrey: Gower Publishing, 2011).

more intellectual world of theory and history. It also provides a strong enculturating environment for designers, who like other professionals tend to feel a strong sense of in-group membership mediated by discipline-specific terminology, practices, and values.

One of the most common pedagogical methods for accomplishing the practicum environment is to develop a studio. The history of studio education develops out of a diverse interplay of forces: the foundation of European arts academies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the rise of the atelier method to compete with the formal art academy, the "democratization" of arts instruction in public education in the nineteenth century, and the influence of academies attached to artistic movements in America and Europe such as the Beaux Arts, Arts and Crafts, and the Bauhaus schools. In the late nineteenth century, American universities began to develop their own art and architecture education programs modeled on European art schools, which awarded academic credit for courses based in humanities and letters, as well as studio courses in which student artists acquired skills.[15] In a contemporary context, the studio approach has been studied by psychologists and learning science researchers in order to identify the skills and competencies developed by the studio approach. One recent version, *Studio Thinking*, is aimed at arts teachers in secondary and higher education. It identifies the elements of studio technique both in terms of pedagogical strategies and cognitive capabilities, and justifies the benefits of studio education without resorting to instrumental arguments. By asserting that the value of the arts in education stands for itself, this recent study

[15] Arthur Efland, *A History of Art Education: Intellectual and Social Currents in Teaching the Visual Arts* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1990), 1-4; Timothy Allen Jackson, "Ontological Shifts in Studio Art Education: Emergent Pedagogical Models," *Art Journal* 58, no. 1 (1999): 68; Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2004), 16-40.

of student learning emulates the move taken by Oenslager and to a certain extent Baker[16] in founding Yale's curriculum on the study of theatrical production and technique for its own merits.

Two concepts explored in *Studio Thinking* are the division of time in the studio model and identification of the cognitive skills taught in visual arts education. Upon observation, Lois Hetland, Ellen Winner, and their co-researchers identified three major pedagogical strategies in the studio. Demonstration-lecture, coaching through working periods, and critique sessions were typically included in most studio classes, with a repeated ABA structure. Teachers demonstrated in short bursts of lecture, often accompanied by tools or a demo of the art medium at work. Then, they encouraged students to work on assignments (the "studio" time) while instructors gave individualized feedback or, occasionally, very brief group reminders. Most units ended with some version of a critique of student work, which was open to all students.[17] Hetland and Winner note that the scale of this ABA structure may vary, from being repeated several times in one class to completing one cycle over multiple days or, in the case of independent projects, months. The time spent in lecture and in critique was generally proportional to the length of the studio time a given unit contained, with longer critiques following longer periods of independent, supervised work. As a pedagogy text, *Studio Thinking* is aimed at educational reform, as a way of validating the intrinsic value of art education practices through observation, comparison, and cognitive skills analysis. As a historical tool, I take Hetland and Winner's definition of studio

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[16] Oenslager saw his job as the teaching of young professionals, a view which from his stance as a working designer validated production knowledge as a matter of course. Baker began his career as a professor of rhetoric convinced of the instrumental value of his subject for "good thinking," but as his playwriting workshop his perspective began to shift toward teaching the art of theatre for its domain-specific rewards, rather than teaching general humanistic skills. See Mark Hodin, ""It Did Not Sound Like a Professor's Speech": George Pierce Baker and the Market for Academic Rhetoric," *Theatre Survey* 46, no. 2 (2005): 231.

[17] Lois Hetland et al., *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Arts Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007), 21-9.

process as a possible template for Oenslager's educational practice. To what extent was the Baker's workshop or Oenslager's design curriculum developing studio techniques and principles in its students? By looking at the curriculum organization, lecture style, and evidence of their teaching methods, I suggest that Oenslager added a studio sensibility to Yale's curriculum.

The cognitive skills taught in studio can be difficult to pin down. Studio Thinking refers to the intrinsic benefits of education in the arts as "habits of mind" encouraged by the studio. While these are not, strictly speaking, cognitive skills identified as discrete components of brain function through experimental testing, they are separable capacities. They have been identified as psychological capacities developed by students through arts education, and may be transferable outside of arts domains.[18] The eight "habits of mind" include facility with craft skills, engagement and persistence in tasks, envisioning phenomena not currently present, expressing a personal vision, focused observation, metacognitive reflection, developing a sense of exploration and stretching, and learning to function within a given disciplinary domain ("the art world"). Of these, six of the skills are task-oriented, that is, they are necessary management skills for artists that are not immediately relevant to either the technique of manipulating materials or the combined social/content knowledge of working within a field.[19]

The six skills of persistence, envisioning, expression, observation, metacognition, and stretch are higher-order techniques, requiring a certain level of self-awareness. They change the relationship of the self to the art object and one's own practice. They can be more difficult to point to in curriculum, and they are not "taught" through direct instruction. According to Hetland and Winner, they are habits best taught through coaching, experimentation, and skillful management of the studio space. These skills are a part of what it means to be an artist, and

[18] Ellen Winner is a cognitive psychologist at Boston College and directs the Arts and Mind lab.
[19] Ibid., 6.

comprise a sort of "hidden curriculum" that has previously been ignored by positivist, technical, or instrumental approaches to the measurement of art education and skill acquisition.[20]

When George Pierce Baker turned to production as a means of teaching dramatic artistry, the inclusion of technical concerns both produced the most friction with Harvard and provided the basis for the foundation of the department at Yale. Baker had been developing his workshop approach to playwriting, and found that a true workshop required pre-professional training in all of the theatrical arts. In the view of Oenslager, and to a certain extent Baker as well, the designer in the theatre was to become a professional artist through repeated exposure to the dramatic workshop and design methods. Techniques of studio thinking and practicum were already manifest in Yale's architecture department. Oenslager and Baker applied similar methods to their new brand of theatre education in order to align it with other growing design professions.

These four concepts – the ill-defined problem, design as professional behavior, the practicum, and studio pedagogy – distinguished Yale's program both as an exemplary "working model" of practical theatre education and allowed it to make a claim on the professional identity of design itself. Turning to Baker's workshop and Oenslager's studio, I argue that both men used a version of the practicum approach to differentiate the process of design from other universities, and even other Yale drama disciplines. While George Pierce Baker was using playwriting predominantly as a workshop from which to teach theatrical practice and viability – to get at the heart of what make drama "work" – Oenslager used the same sense of workshop to professionalize designers.

[20] Ibid.

5.2 GEORGE PIERCE BAKER'S WORKSHOP AS PRACTICUM

In this section, I examine Baker's pedagogy at the time he founded the Yale drama program. Even in his last years at Harvard, Baker's grounding principles for the drama school provided a foundation for design process, paving the way for Oenslager to bring studio practices into design classrooms. Baker and Oenslager both believed in the importance of *making* and *testing* as the primary pedagogical tools for graduate theatre education.

Design education plays an important role in the history of theatre departments and their relationship with other disciplines, especially English. While design (or production) was an important part of Baker's English 47 workshop, as it was necessary for the adequate production of plays, it was not a subject of direct instruction. Students who specialized in the production side of the workshop, such as Lee Simonson, were by the end of Baker's time at Yale straining the edges of a curricular venture that was already on the margins. There were no formal courses in stage design at Harvard during Baker's workshop, though during Oenslager's time at Harvard[21] he and John Mason Brown did convince Fine Arts department to teach a course in "visual theatre,"[22] which Oenslager later supplemented with his own independent seminar course in theatre design under the supervision of Baker and Pope.[23]

Histories of the 47 Workshop tend to ignore the contributions of design to the readings held by Baker's class as well as the importance of production, that is, stagecraft, to the type of

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[21] Oenslager graduated from Harvard in 1923.

[22] Pope didn't have any formal training in theater, nor did he have a text to teach from. Pope's research focused on color and color theory, though he did emphasize integration of theory and practice within the arts curriculum at Harvard. Finding Aid, Arthur Pope Papers 1907-1979. Harvard University Libraries. http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~art00009

[23] History of the Drama School," Box 32, Folder 31, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, 50. Winser Payne Kinne, Baker's biographer, identifies Oenslager as Pope's assistant at Harvard, suggesting that Oenslager's first affiliation was with Art and not the Workshop. Oenslager's memoir provides little clarification of this point. Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre*, 252.

school Baker would found at Yale. Perhaps this is because Baker's legacy in theatre studies is notable, as Mark Hodin has suggested, for the way he marks the boundary between disciplines, markets, and value systems.[24] However, the privileged location Baker enjoys as the man who brought theatre studies out of the English department, or as the man who combined commercial interest with academic expertise, obscures the boundaries he himself was less successful at integrating – the visual and the literary arts, for example. Many histories of Baker emphasize playwriting and performance but elide Baker's contribution to bringing the applied arts to the Yale drama department.[25]

The English 47 Workshop at Harvard began as a "laboratory" for plays, yet over time it became more and more invested in production as a necessary component of testing a script's viability. Such a "laboratory" approach to production was perhaps a logical extension of Baker's previous professorial work in the rhetorical argumentation and the study of Shakespeare as literature for performance.[26] Between 1905 and 1913, there was little "practical" work that accompanied the playwriting workshop, however, by 1924, Baker was engaged in the supervision not only of playwriting, but production as well. Winser Payne Kinne dates Baker's change of heart, from a literary-focused workshop to one based in production, to a silent melodrama, "in the manner of *Sumurun*," written by Sam Hume at Harvard in 1913.[27] The

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[24] Hodin, ""It Did Not Sound Like a Professor's Speech": George Pierce Baker and the Market for Academic Rhetoric," 205, 27.

[25] See Hodin, and Susan Harris Smith, "Did She Jump or Was She Pushed? American Drama in the University Curriculum," in *American Drama: The Bastard Art* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); Dorothy Chansky, "The 47 Workshop and the 48 States: George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre Audience," *Theatre History Studies* 18(1998); Shannon Jackson, *Professing Performance: Theatre in the Academy from Philology to Performativity*, *Theatre and Performance Theory* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[26] Hodin, ""It Did Not Sound Like a Professor's Speech": George Pierce Baker and the Market for Academic Rhetoric," 227.

[27] "G.P.B took the stand which characterized his later teaching. He now said that the theatre must advance as a whole, design along with other elements of production, put that the advance must be balanced and ultimately subordinate to the playwright." Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre*, 181-2.

production element quickly expanded, and it proved to be a much larger venture than Baker had originally planned. John Mason Brown remembers "a fascinating nightmare…cluttered with flats and drops." Baker was ill-equipped to supervise this portion of the work; Oenslager wrote that the visual world was new to Baker during his time at Yale, especially as Baker was a man who "had little visual imagination."[28] Nonetheless, Baker found it extremely important that plays be presented in a reasonable facsimile of professional methods, with attention paid to sets, costumes, and lighting.

The workshop itself was surprisingly simple in its design; John Mason Brown said that "there was not any teaching, as teaching was ordinarily understood, in English 47. The course was as free from pedagogy as is the MacDowell Colony."[29] After several early lectures in which Baker prepared the class for the first assignment, the adaptation of a short story, Baker read new students' plays aloud in the fourth or fifth class. Brown recollected Baker's reading as a key component of the course, one which led directly into the full-class critique. Baker "merely presided over these discussions," and provided his own feedback after the fact. Lafayette McLaws similarly remembers savage feedback from peers in the workshop, and only afterward would Baker identify the positive and negative aspects of a script, suggest places to revise the script, and if there was dramatic talent to be had, invite participation in future semesters of the workshop.[30] At first, Baker helped successful second-year playwrights place their plays in local Boston theatres, such as the Castle Square Theatre. In 1913, Baker opened up the "47 Workshop" to an invited, hand-picked public of Boston elites, who were surveyed for their

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[28] Brown and Oenslager quoted in *George Pierce Baker, A Memorial*.
[29] John Mason Brown, "The Four Georges: George Pierce Baker at Work," in *George Pierce Baker, a Memorial*, 14. The MacDowell Colony is an arts colony in New Hampshire, founded in 1907 under the principle of providing artists with short-term, interruption-free residencies to work independently on their projects. Today, as then, the Colony prides itself on its lack of programming or classes, and the resulting freedom it gives its artists in residence.
[30] Lafayette McLaws, "A Master of Playwrights," *The North American Review* 200, no. 706 (1914): 462-4.

response on the plays. This provided an advanced stage of development for playwrights in the second year of the program, and also aided the development of Boston audiences for a new dramatic paradigm, of theatre as art and not merely entertainment.[31] The distribution of feedback to include not only his opinions but those of peers and audience members engaged playwrights in the development of occupational practices, in addition to course requirements. In today's university, the development of transferable skills and "professional" behaviors is nothing new; at the time of the 47 Workshop, the use of a workshop technique was novel. McLaws noted that "it created a sensation in college and theatrical worlds," as "playwrights, like poets, were born, not made."[32]

Baker encountered resistances of many types at Harvard: curricular, budgetary, and architectural. The reluctance of Harvard's administration to provide funding with which to expand either the theatre's equipment or its physical architecture made Yale's 1924 offer – complete with the financial gift for a newly built theatre – attractive. Moving to Yale would allow Baker to build a fully professional training program across theatre disciplines. Two years before Yale's offer, Baker spoke to Harvard and Radcliffe alumni with the firm conviction that

> what we need, and need very badly, is a teaching of the Fine Arts in our colleges and universities with a view to creation…for such a center we are ready at Harvard, should we only have the funds necessary for a proper equipment by which to develop what has gone as far as it can under cramped and unreal conditions.[33]

In this speech, Baker mentioned lighting, scenery, and stage production (directing) as key elements of theatrical teaching in this Fine Arts education. Baker got his wish in 1924 with a substantial gift endowing the new school and paying for a new theatre building. He trumpeted

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[31] Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre*, 180-1; Chansky, "The 47 Workshop and the 48 States: George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre Audience," 135.
[32] McLaws, "A Master of Playwrights," 465.
[33] Quoted in Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre*, 240.

the new professional orientation of Yale's school in a 1925 *Theatre Arts Monthly* feature: "by the recent gift to Yale University, drama has been placed side by side with her sister Fine Arts in a great centre of education."[34]

Who were the students to come to this school? According to Baker, "young artists" were looking for a home in the university. They needed a place to experiment, a school dedicated to preparing students for work in the theatrical world; a well-outfitted university program with near-professional conditions would train directors, designers, and writers. "Most of its students will later, in one way or another, live and work in the regular theatre world," Baker avowed.[35] By founding a school of theatrical training with the explicit purpose of preparing students for work outside, rather than based on the instrumental value of theatrical writing and production within English education, as it had been at Harvard, Baker cast his lot with the potential of the practicum. "What is the hardest test the untrained, ambitious working in any of the theatrical arts must face?" Baker asked. His answer: "to stand against obvious experience consciously unexperienced oneself…it is in experiment that advance lies."[36] The new school would expand the experimental attitude of the 47 Workshop to the entirety of dramatic arts, not only playwriting.

Baker's teaching approach emphasized experiment as well. Oenslager remembers Baker's characteristic response to the whims of young playwrights, at Yale as at Harvard: "'Very well, we'll risk it,' he would say of something you cared about deeply, 'I hope you're right.'" This attitude is analogous to the Schön's remarks about how design is taught. As it is a process of artifact construction, dealing with unrefined, messy, indeterminate situations, it cannot be

[34] George Pierce Baker, "The Theatre and the University," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 9, no. 1 (1925): 105.
[35] Ibid., 104
[36] Ibid., 105

taught with precision; as Schön says of design (and he might say of art in general), it is something that can only be learned and coached, not taught.[37] In his curriculum design, Baker preserved the workshop itself in his playwriting classes, which produced plays for "major production" in the Yale drama schools. As late as 1945, original full-length plays from the playwrights received first consideration for production in the schools.[38] From the start of the school, however, Baker and the other founders remained committed to the "method of testing in production." Classes typically ended before 1pm and the afternoon and evening were devoted to rehearsals; students were typically engaged in multiple productions at once.[39] Through experiment, coaching, and reflection, Baker anticipated that students would slowly grow to understand how to draw a practice from their repeated attempts at producing theatre. The practicum was not an unregulated or unsupervised space, however; Baker was not shy about challenging sub-par work, whether of his students or his faculty.[40]

The practicum, Schön theorizes, is an educational environment set apart, designed for the acquisition of a skill. Students tend to "live in" the practicum, to see it as extending beyond other types of learning or coursework. Projects are carefully managed, students see themselves as working within a distinct professional field, of which there will be more work after leaving the

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[37] Schön, *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design for Teaching and Learning in the Professions*, 157.

[38] Often, "major production" plays would use the talents of advanced students or faculty in design, direction, and technical production. Other plays, including the historical plays presented by the directing students, were subordinated in importance to the major productions. Occasionally, former students' plays or unusual classic were selected if no suitable playwrighting student had work ready. "Manual of Department Procedure," 1945. Box 32, Folder 19, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

[39] This schedule, in somewhat altered form, is still followed at Yale. Bulletin, 1930-1931, and "Manual of Department Procedure," 1945. Box 34, Folder 46, and Box 23, Folder 19, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

[40] In a letter exchange with Oenslager, Baker chastises Oenslager's supervision of Arthur Wilmurt's design for *People on the Hill* (1931). In Baker's mind, scenic details were unfinished and the design strayed from the details of the text. Baker explained that "this does not seem quite the cooperation I expect from my fellow workers…I beg of you to help me prevent this sort of thing next year." Letter to Donald Oenslager, September 14, 1931. Box 17, Folder 208, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

practicum, and the emphasis is placed on talking through aspects of professional practice over an extended period of time. Major performances and generous rehearsal/crew periods forced Yale students to live in the work. The schedule also encouraged faculty to tailor projects to student needs. In staking a claim for the theatre as a practical art, in the Fine Arts Division of Yale, Baker instituted a different type of pedagogy for the professional theatre artist, one that aligned theatre study with other applied art education practices in its practicum approach.

A design sensibility distinguished the Yale Drama Department from Baker's Harvard workshop. The added departments in 1925 were all in design, and three of the four new faculty hires Baker made were to head up those departments: Oenslager, McCandless in lighting, and Cohen for costumes.[41] The workshop approach, critique sessions, and studio methodology at Yale blended study of the traditional humanities, especially in literature, composition, and history, with the necessary technics of construction, rigging, and mechanical engineering. Production was the crucial wedge that drove Harvard to pull support for Baker, and for Yale to be so welcoming of his work. In fact, fine and applied arts education was one of Yale's strategic priorities in the first half of the century. Yale, at this time, had a thriving Architecture department supported by Edward Meeks, an architect by training and new Dean of the School of Fine Arts in 1922.[42] In 1950 Yale pioneered a program in graphic design, a department that would become similarly influential to Yale Drama.[43] In our own disciplinary histories, it is important to acknowledge how strongly the "applied arts" are responsible for guiding the founders of university theatre education, especially Baker. As Jackson writes, "the history of theatre's

[41] The fourth new member, Hubert Osborne, assisted Baker with direction. Kinne, *George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre*, 255.
[42] A Dean's report on the school of Fine Arts notes that Architecture "has been recognized as among the best in the country and in the late Twenties and early Thirties was the recognized leader." Charles H. Sawyer, "President's Committee on Clearance of Projects," January 8, 1948, Box 34, Folder 49. Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
[43] Rob Roy Kelly, "The Early Years of Graphic Design at Yale University," *Design Issues* 17, no. 3 (2001).

institutionalization suggests that 'the arts' have as much to do with engineering as they do with the humanities."[44]

5.3 OENSLAGER'S CURRICULUM AS STUDIO EDUCATION

When Baker invited Oenslager to come to Yale in 1925, there were no scenic design departments in American universities. There were classes in "theatre production" in at least eight universities, including Stanford, Howard, and Brigham Young Universities,[45] and Carnegie Tech taught basic "technical practice." However before Yale's Drama Department was founded there was no sustained formal course progression in design for the theatre. A narrative history of Yale's drama program, compiled by an unnamed writer in 1965 for internal use, notes that Oenslager

> had to assemble his teaching materials from his work at Cambridge [Harvard], his experiences with Kenneth MacGowan, Robert Edmond Jones, and Eugene O'Neill at their Provincetown and Greenwich Village theatres, and from his observation of European methods of production and design, made during 1923-24 on a Sachs Fine Arts Traveling Fellowship.[46]

As a designer heavily steeped in the New Stagecraft environment, the 24-year old Oenslager brought his professional experience directly into the classroom. The assumptions and responsibilities New Stagecraft theory laid onto the designer played heavily in his teaching. The artist was a creative professional, design contributed to the interpretation of the playscript into a theatrical event, and simplicity, suggestion, and non- or selectively realistic settings could

[44] Jackson, *Professing Performance*, 72.
[45] Donald K. Smith, "Origin and Development of Departments of Speech," in *History of Speech Education in America*, ed. Karl R. Williams (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1954), 589.
[46] "History of the Department," Box 32, Folder 31, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, 50. This history is unsigned, but dated to 1966. This is the same year that Robert Brustein assumed leadership as Dean of the Drama School, and the Yale Repertory Theatre was founded. The history contains individual profiles of teachers in each of the school's departments, often with direct quotations form the teachers or first-hand recollections from students.

highlight action, plot, character, and language. To these ideas, Oenslager added a distinctly historical approach; like Simonson, he saw theatrical design as a continuity of problem-solving, a series of solutions to problems presented by the playwright, the theatre, and the technology of a given period. This combination of New Stagecraft philosophy, historical awareness, and practical/pre-professional orientation defined Oenslager's contribution to Yale's program. More than any other department, the scenic design department disavowed the academic study of theatre in order to engage real problems that might be faced by design professionals. In fact, the concept of the designer as professional arises in both Oenslager's writing about Yale and in other's histories of the department. Put simply, "Oenslager believes that theatre students should be taught by working professionals."

Long before teaching artists became important forces in other theatrical fields,[47] Oenslager built the curriculum at Yale in such a way that he could keep residence in New York and an active design career. He brought a steady stream of first-rate contacts and speakers to work with his students.[48] Oenslager was the most active professional on Yale's faculty in the early years, and continued to keep engaged in the New York theatrical design scene throughout his fifty-year teaching career. This approach, what would turn into the teaching-artist model, was foundational. Regular contact with professionals helped keep students up to date with industry

[47] Stanford attempted an artist-in-residence program in drama in the late 40s, which met with some success though Stanford was unable to attract established, senior artists to teach for any extended period of time. The teaching of practice theatre skills and hiring artist-teachers led, over time, to many theatre departments more populated by MFA-trained artists and practitioners than scholars. This state of affairs was notably critiqued by Joseph Roach in 1999. See F. Cowles Strickland, "Artists-in-Residence as an Aid to Better Teaching," Box 34, Folder 49, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, and Joseph R Roach, "Reconstructing Theatre/History," *Theatre Topics* 9, no. 1 (1999).

[48] After one busy year at Yale establishing curriculum, Oenslager reasoned that he needed to live in New York City in order to maintain his professional status. "History of the Department," 50.

developments, and Oenslager drew from the newest productions in his lectures.[49] Perhaps this sort of teaching could only be accomplished in design, which could be compressed into a lineup of once- or twice-weekly classes, and accommodated a flexible work schedule the allowed for travel time between New York and New Haven. Oenslager also maintained a sizable collection of slides, drawings, designs and models in his New York office, and often brought students in to work with the collections, meet guest speakers, or see current Broadway productions. Few other early design faculty (Bevan, McCandless) maintained professional design businesses with regularity.[50] While the limited time he spent on campus reduced Oenslager's ability to set university policy with respect to curriculum, the area of scenic design remained under his control and the scenic students he taught benefited from the professional orientation he pioneered.

Oenslager's curriculum was also innovative, firmly grounded in studio practices. Both the organization and the method of instruction of these courses demonstrate that Oenslager's curriculum and mentorship promoted craftsman-like dedication, value design as a nonverbal mode of expression, and promoted necessary skills for the freelance professional designer. In his first year, he built three courses for design students taking the MA in design: "The History of Stage Design," "Practice and Theory of Stage Design, and "Advanced Stage Design."[51] The first two courses lasted half the year, and the last a full year; in subsequent years the half-year courses

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[49] Oenslager put it this way: "After setting up and lighting a production and the labors of dress rehearsal, there is stimulation the next morning in catching the early Thursday train to lecture on the art of the theatre and to criticize the work of growing designers at the Yale School of Drama." "History of the Department," 53.

[50] Bevan and McCandless have a handful of Broadway credits listed on the Internet Broadway Database, while Oenslager is credited with over 140.

[51] In the first years of the drama school a two-year MA rather than an MFA was offered. The school transitioned to the MFA with a three-year course of study in 1931. "History of the Drama School," 9. Yale the first school to award an MFA in theatre fields. Before 1930, the MFA was extremely rare, and was awarded by select schools for graduate coursework in arts fields for which professionalizing experience was necessary. Princeton offered an MFA in architecture as early as 1921, and one (unspecified) American university awarded a Master of Fine Arts in music before 1930. Frank E Kidder, *The Architects' and Builders' Handbook* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1921), 1785; Peter W. Dykema, *Survey of College Entrance Credits and College Courses in Music* (New York: National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, 1930), 6.

were combined into one course on the "Background and Practice" of stage design. These courses were required only of design and technical production (stagecraft/stage engineering) students. The first class emphasized written and visual knowledge of past design styles and techniques, while the later classes were project-based. A 1930 catalogue confirms that Oenslager began with a historical approach, emphasizing "the relation between the actor, audience, and stage in the Greek, medieval, Renaissance, and eighteenth century theatre." Students also considered the "fine arts as background for theatre practice" and the "problems of design in stage decoration: color composition, grouping, planes, scale, etc…" In its combination of historical perspective – backed up by Oenslager's impressive collection of slides and exhaustive knowledge of historical production styles – Drama 12 (later 112) linked historical knowledge of play production with the solution of new production problems. In the course description, Oenslager emphasized both "plays of each period…from the point of view of their contemporary method of production and with all the possibilities that the theatre of to-day presents."[52] This translation of Baker's workshop approach to theatrical design education helped develop a curriculum that emphasized pre-professional work more than content knowledge. For Oenslager, techniques were taught through the study of past designers' solutions to the problems presented by a particular play, and through the working through of those problems by the students themselves.

Later classes in the design sequence continued a "problem" orientation.[53] They contain much less detailed descriptions in the school bulletin; in 1930, "Problems in Stage Design" (Drama 22, later 122) simply notes that the course consisted of projects on "various types of

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[52] Yale School of Fine Arts Bulletin, 1930-1931. Box 34, Folder 46. Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, D9.

[53] "In order to make the transition from school to professional work as smooth as possible for his students, Mr. Oenslager lays great stress on the teaching of 'problems' which are as similar as possible to those encountered by professionals in the field.' "History of the Department," 54.

plays" and the main productions of the Department, while the more advanced third year course "Principles of Stage Design" in 1942 simply cited "the problems involve in translating the designer's sketch into terms of stage scenery."[54] This third-year course was added to the curriculum in 1930-31, in the same year that the program expanded from the two-year MA to the three-year MFA. It consisted of "different long projects from each student according to his particular need."[55] The problem approach in its second- and third-year permutation emphasized individual development with Oenslager as mentor and teacher. He often continued that relationship by hiring students as assistants after graduation, either at Yale or in his New York studio.

Oenslager did not write a textbook on design, and what teaching materials of his practice exists are mostly in the form of notes, slide lists, and versions of lectures from the last few decades of his career. However, he occasionally wrote about the qualities of design he praised in himself and his students in publications about his own work. The version of design that Oenslager taught at Yale sought to balance technical practice and the freedom of artistic imagination. An often-quoted precept was that "not *how* to design or *how to be able* to design…but what to design should be emphasized, above all content. Good scene design is good thinking with freedom of imagination supplemented with reasonable performance in execution."[56] Oenslager could teach the necessary self-management skills and behaviors through the <u>what</u>, the content of the present problem and its past solutions. As Hetland and Winner

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[54] Courses changes titles regularly, but the progression of full-year courses in three successive years remained the same. Yale School of Fine Arts Bulletin, 1930-1931. Box 34, Folder 46, D12, and Yale School of Fine Arts Bulletin, 1942-43, Box 31, Folder 2. Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library, 54.
[55] "History of the Department," 55.
[56] Donald Oenslager, *The Theatre of Donald Oenslager* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1978), 7.

theorize, Oenslager was aware of the "hidden curriculum" of design, the management skills taught implicitly through repeated exposure to studio practices.

This philosophy of balance between freedom and execution developed young designers' ability to draw inspiration from the work of others, and to conceptualize the design problem as open-ended. For Oenslager, though, the conception of the design was taught first and more strongly than the execution skills, especially in the first year. The history and practice courses of the first year structured design as a recursive problem-solving process. Time and again in his Yale course material, Oenslager refers to the "problem" of design, echoing similar terminology in industrial design, architecture, and other applied arts fields. Oenslager's approach emphasized the applied, contingent, unfinished and exploratory nature of design work. His critique emphasized both the elegance and practicality of students' prospective designs. Later in his career, he noted that "the designer is an eclectic and a mannerist. He is always subjected to the criticism of the unfinished sketch, for he can never make a final statement…the designer works within the limitations of the stage."[57]

Oenslager's classroom teaching style varied from class to class. Especially in the first course, the History of Stage Design, Oenslager came to class with multiple pages of lecture notes and thirty to forty slides per class. His slide collection, drawn from his travels in Europe, libraries, publications, and productions as they were mounted, was his primary teaching tool in the first year course. The slides ranged from images of production, to paintings and sculpture, to architecture and theatre buildings of the past. Archived lecture notes from Yale classes and public talks alike indicate that Oenslager would talk through the series of images, crafting his approach to the topic through his arrangement of images. A slide list from the 1966 version of

[57] Donald Oenslager, "Design in the Theatre Today: The Designer's Intention," *Donald Oenslager, Stage Designer and Teacher* (catalogue), (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Art: 1956), 10.

his introductory scenic design class, Drama 112, contained forty slides for the first lecture of the course, "Sketching for Scene Design." This lecture introduced the idea of the sketch as the key component to the design idea and featured design sketches and images of finished designs from Appia to Boris Aronson. Subsequent lectures in this course taught the history of visual representation in the theatre through architecture and painting. Frequently, exploration of past styles would conclude with current interpretations of those periods, such as Bel Geddes' *The Miracl*e in relation to French Gothic Architecture, or Inigo Jones' masques in relationship to contemporary musical theatre.[58] These lectures emphasized the various ways different designers approached similar scenic challenges.

A Drama 112 syllabus indicates that Oenslager divided his class time into three or four sections each. By 1966, Oenslager was well-used to the schedule of teaching one day a week. Drama 112 met for four hours a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays; Oenslager taught on Thursdays, and Frank Bevan, costume designer, taught Tuesdays. Each week contained one or two units' worth of history, taught through slides and lecture, and another portion of practical education in design topics such as Perspective, Foreshortening, Relief and Chiaroscuro Effects, or Designing for Thrusts and Arenas. Reading lists responses and critique sessions of student designs filled in each week. The rhythm of the class was similar to the studio technique discussed above; historical topics were matched to the design techniques to be learned in a given week, and students were given the opportunity to practice techniques for brief critique in the next class periods. Both technique or skill-building exercises and more formal design assignments for a scene or a play were critiqued by Bevan and Oenslager. Though Oenslager himself was not present for both days of Drama 112, and probably took over more of the lecturing than the

[58] Slide Lists and Outline for Drama 112, Box 1, Folder: Drama 112, Donald Oenslager Papers (MS 1416). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

teaching of technical skills, narrative evidence suggests that students saw him as the leader of the studio and their major scene design mentor.[59]

There are some limitations to looking at the 1966 course syllabi as indicative of Oenslager's early practice. To some extent, this is a pressure of the archive. As it was the course with the most standardized content, Drama 112 is overrepresented. It is difficult to determine what he taught in the more advanced "problems" courses in design, as they met in much smaller groups. However Oenslager did compile the slide lists in the first years of his teaching, and revised them continuously throughout his career. When he developed the curriculum in 1925, he adapted the course he had taken from Arthur Pope by adding practice, problem-based assignments. While his slide talks remained a key aspect of Yale design education, they were merely the groundwork from which students could draw and experiment as they grew. More advanced scenic students tackled advanced problems, designed more complete shows, and received more thorough critiques. Occasionally, they competed to have their designs officially mounted. In these ways, Drama 112 set the stage for the more independent but still studio-driven work in future years.

Oenslager's evaluation techniques, on the other hand, are better documented. Unlike most other subjects at Yale, including direction (then called theatre production), history, and even technical matters, Oenslager never insisted on the retention of large bodies of knowledge and texts in his courses. Exams from the 1920s and 1930s contain examples of the sort of tasks expected of masters-level drama students. A directing exam required students to narrate, in prose form, how to direct a swordfight or a love scene, to define and discuss methods for creating style and genre, or to notate a script in preparation for a scene. Frank Bevan, who taught costume

[59] "The 'O', or 'Uncle Don' as his students affectionately call him, believes that the school must focus on the students and on their creativity." "History of the Department," 57.

design and furniture history, required students to draw relevant details of a period costume or historical furniture style from memory, to identify slides, and to narrate histories of stylistic change within a given time period and location. Oenslager appears not to have given exams per se in his classes. The only exam in the archives for a scenic design course derives from one he co-taught with Bevan. This exam from 1938 contains slide identification, matching and ordering exercises, and thematic essays on relevant quotes about design. While other teachers of theatrical crafts based student achievement on the idea that students needed to demonstrate technique through recall and written composition, Oenslager designed rigorous classes that held to a more architectural or design-focused model of feedback.

Oenslager's "crit sessions" emphasized his project orientation over the acquisition of technique. This studio technique more accurately replicated the criticism of art and architecture schools, in which student work would be assessed in real-time by a panel of experts. The history of "crit" is a further marker of the professional status of the fine art or architecture education. Just as designers were subjected to high-stakes, difficult exams to join the scene painters union, or an arts academy, Oenslager replicated the "crit" model of education in his own design classes, rejecting the academic model of knowledge acquisition and verbal composition for the more professional model of peer criticism. At the end of a project period, Oenslager would bring together the class and lead students to question the proposed design from the point of view of technical staff, directors, lighting designers, and playwrights. The narrative history of the department notes the question-based method of Oenslager's teaching:

> Through the years Mr. Oenslager's teaching methods have changed little. The class is given a play to design. The students' renderings are then discussed in a 'presentation." Mr. Oenslager leads the discussion by asking directors in the class if such a set would

> 'work' for a director, asking lighting designers how a particular lighting effect could be achieved, and himself pointing out merits and difficulties.[60]

As it occurred in class, Oenslager was also responsible for "hiring" designers to work on school productions. The history continues:

> The opportunity to design major productions is awarded in competition. After a discussion with the director and playwright, each third-year designer prepares a rendering. Then in a second joint session preliminary designs are discussed. Lastly, on the basis of a final rendering, the designer is selected by the director, playwright, and Mr. Oenslager.[61]

Occasionally, the "bid sessions" for the right to design major productions attempted to replicate professional practices. Oenslager required advanced students to prepare competing designs for the chosen plays, in a process not dissimilar to the work "on spec" that professional designers had resisted in their accession to the scene painter's union in 1924. These bid sessions, however, served a pedagogical purpose; exposing students to the various demands that would be placed on their designs by collaborators and producers was an important professionalizing step.

Not all professors agreed with Oenslager's critique, or his results. In a letter for George Pierce Baker rebutting Baker's criticism of a poorly received design the previous year, Oenslager justified his choice by stating the criteria under which the design was chosen. This 1931 design selection followed the same steps outlined by the 1966 history, including a preliminary discussion and criticism section, and the creation of final sketches by the whole design class for bids. Arthur Wilmurt's design was selected "as the simplest and most practical, and economical [Emphasis in original]."[62] Given the limited budget and time pressures placed on the last production of the 1930-31 academic year, Oenslager explained, the design faculty selected the

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[60] "History of the Department," 57.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Letter from Donald Oenslager to George Pierce Baker, September 15, 1931. Box 17, Folder 208, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

best scene for the production given constraints of simplicity, easy of interest, cost. As a pedagogical exercise, students underwent a selection process that mirrored a professional one. This anecdote is a testament to Baker's exacting standards for his faculty, Oenslager's practicality as a teacher and design supervisor, and the pressures the department experienced in both time and resources at the beginning of the Depression.

The rhythm that Oenslager established in Drama 112 initiated a studio practice that developed in later years. If being a part of the Yale School of Drama in the 1920s was to engage in practicum, then to work in design was to step into studio education. A structured series of historical examples aligned with increasingly difficult design practices, and Oenslager was on hand to critique student work that was done in and out of class. Competitive criticism was a major teaching tool, and one that Oenslager applied from the beginning of his teaching.[63] At the same time, he saw clearly that he was training students for professional work in the theatre, and his teaching values reflected a sense of honor and discipline:

> In my teaching and my work I have always stood for theatre traditions, cultivated standards of craftsmanship, emphasized the values of style and personal taste, and above all practiced discipline. By my own strict way of work I have insisted that schedules be met, and also that rigid deadlines be met by students. This insistence established the close rapport so essential between designer and apprentice.[64]

Such an emphasis on craft, discipline and the designer/apprentice model is a clear evocation of Oenslager's pedagogical viewpoint: students were to be trained to become not only theatre workers, but fellow members of a design profession. Oenslager's curriculum was built with enough rigor to challenge, yet also enough flexibility to provide individualized training at the upper levels. It emphasized discipline and perseverance, the ability to cultivate personal taste

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[63] "Often the best criticism may be the student's comparison of his own work with that of his fellow students. In the beginning they are side by side at the post ready for their arduous three years' race. Competition is healthy and essential to their development." Oenslager, *The Theatre of Donald Oenslager*, 7.
[64] Ibid., 8.

within established styles, and high standards of craft. These reflect Hetland and Winner's "habits of mind," especially what they refer to as "developing craft," "engagement and persistence," "expressing a personal vision," and "navigating domain and field."[65]

As the Yale curriculum changed in the thirties and forties, Oenslager's design sequence remained relatively stable. After Baker's retirement in 1932, subsequent leadership of the school argued for tightened admissions standards, a more academic approach to instruction, and the addition of the PhD in dramatic literature in 1933 directed by Allardyce Nicoll. While the acting, directing, and playwriting curricula were in flux and tension through the war years, design continued to be a highlight of Yale's program. As one touch point, a 1945 internal memo from directing professor Frank McMullen to Fine Arts Dean (and ex-head of the Drama department) Boyd Smith frankly admits that "the place has been going down hill gradually during the last ten years," with directing and playwriting as the weakest programs. "The design and technical departments," McMullen notes, "have suffered little of this criticism."[66] Perhaps this was because design and production enjoyed steady leadership, unlike the directing and playwriting programs, which had undergone significant and frequent changes of faculty in the thirties and forties. The design curriculum maintained its status because it remained connected to the profession through the employment of working designers and visits from prominent guest speakers. It was also a testament to Oenslager's vision and execution of the scenic design curriculum, in collaboration with Baker and McCandless, among others, that design avoided the (real or perceived) dip in status Yale as a whole experienced.

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[65] Hetland et al., *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Arts Education*, iii-iv.
[66] Memo from Frank McMullen to Boyd Smith, December 30, 1945. Box 34, Folder 49, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

Did Oenslager's curricular innovation stem from the studio technique of the Yale architecture program? There is no outright link between architectural practice at either Harvard or Yale and Oenslager's early design sequence. However, Yale did have a thriving working professional/teaching artist model in use. The Architecture programs had an established practice of hiring part-time teachers from New York. Originally conceived as a method for reducing the cost of instruction, "traditionally one of the most expensive subjects to teach," the department found it advantageous to use "part-time teaching personnel from the architectural profession at a comparatively low salary scale."[67] This helpfully contextualizes Oenslager's decision to keep working while he taught. Perhaps the established model in architecture inclined Baker and Dean Meeks to acquiesce to his 1926 request to live and work in New York. By doing so, and bringing his continued experience to Yale, Oenslager kept a bridge open between academia and the professional world. As a working artist, he taught as he worked, and brought students into his own work as apprentices and assistants as needed. The Yale faculty was full of actual teaching artists, according to Boyd Smith:

> In this school an instructor must possess a unique combination of talents. He must have the artistic and theatric flair—he must be an artist, and he must be able to articulate his art, to co-ordinate and organize it into such form as to impart it to his students. This combination of qualities is not easy to find, yet Mr. Baker has succeeded in finding it in his faculty.[68]

Still it was Oenslager's own insistence on teaching the current state of the field that kept his teaching fresh. "During my forty-five years of teaching stage design in the Yale Drama School, I have always tried to set my course to conform with the changing directions of the theatre's

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[67] Yale taught their Architecture courses at "approximately forty percent of the cost per student in the School of Design at Harvard." Charles H. Sawyer, "President's Committee on Clearance of Projects," January 8, 1948, Box 34, Folder 49. Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
[68] Boyd Smith, "The University Theatre," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 17, no. 7 (1933): 524.

compass. In this way, I discovered that teaching can be as exciting as designing. I have always thought that learning to design should be as exciting as teaching it."[69]

5.4 DONALD OENSLAGER'S NEW STAGECRAFT PHILOSOPHY

Oenslager's curriculum at Yale was also heavily influenced by the philosophies of New Stagecraft. As a young designer who took one of his first professional jobs at the Provincetown Playhouse, apprenticed with Robert Edmond Jones, and grew up as a part of the "second generation" of New Stagecraft designers, it might be expected that Oenslager would bring his personal history into the classroom. His classes and lectures affirmed the New Stagecraft as America's major scenic movement, and cast his students as potential new innovators of the form. Oenslager reinforced the modernist vision of the designer as interpretive artist, servant of the text, and eloquent craftsman-of-all-trades in both his own professional work and in his teaching. While critics such as Kenneth Macgowan and designer-writers such as Lee Simonson and Robert Edmond Jones explained modern scenic technique to the literary theatre audience, Oenslager's influence was felt most strongly by his students.

Oenslager's view of recent design history replicated the histories of Macgowan and Simonson, and placed Appia, Craig, and to a lesser extent Reinhardt as the intellectual forebears of the movement. In his introductory class, Drama 112, full lecture periods were devoted to Appia, Craig, Jones, Simonson, and Bel Geddes; most other designers were taught in surveys of

[69] Donald Oenslager, *Stage Design: Four Centuries of Scenic Invention, A Studio Book* (New York: Viking Press, 1975), 251.

periods.[70] Later Oenslager toured a series of lectures in the US and South America, one of which was titled "Contemporary North American Stage Designers." In this talk the "triumvirate" were discussed first – Jones, Simonson, Bel Geddes – followed by a number of influential midcentury painters who did stage work, such as Chagall, Noguchi, and Dali. "Mielziner and Oenslager" comprised the next section, and the lecture ended with a consideration of "younger designers," including Lemuel Ayers, Stewart Cheney, Boris Aronson, Howard Bay, and Mordecai Gorelik.[71] This lecture clearly demonstrates how Oenslager saw his intellectual genealogy as an American designer, and where he belonged in relationship to designers ten years older, who taught him, and several years younger, who were his students. For Oenslager the procedural and philosophical inheritance of New Stagecraft design was the foundation of both good artistry and professional practice.

Clear evidence of Oenslager's New Stagecraft thinking lies in his lecture to Yale students about how to design scenery.[72] In this class, Oenslager explained the whole "process" by couching it in terms of New York working procedures. In all the process is very similar to the way Jones or Simonson discuss approaching the process, and indeed the way that design texts such as Payne's or Parker's do as well. The process begins with the script, proceeds to a discussion with the director and the producer about the budget, and then moves on to the ground plan. Oenslager explained this in terms of his own working methods, which was to do multiple

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[70] Curiously, the only other lecture given over to a single artist was Giotto di Bondone. Oenslager saw theatrical drama and compositional technique in the paintings of this Italian master. Slide Lists and Outline for Drama 112, Box 1, Folder: Drama 112, Donald Oenslager Papers (MS 1416). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

[71] Donald Oenslager, "Contemporary North American Stage Designers," Box 11, Folder 1.Donald Oenslager Papers and Designs, *T-Mss 1996-015, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Library for the Performing Arts. Oenslager gave this particular lecture on a South American lecture tour in 1950; he gave very similar versions of these lectures at colleges and to interested groups from about 1950-1970.

[72] Donald Oenslager, Lecture Notes: "Procedure for Designing Scenery in New York (And at Yale)", Box 11, Folder 21. Donald Oenslager Papers and Designs, *T-Mss 1996-015, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Library for the Performing Arts.

studies of ground plans on graph paper in 1/8" scale. Many of his own archived designs still contain the ground plan studies he stapled to the enlarged (1/4") ground plans and elevations.[73] Next, the designer considers mechanics – entrances, level, storage, and scene changes. Then, the designer considers the mood and the elevation as built from the sketch. In this way, Oenslager's process quite nearly paralleled Lee Simonson, who is said to have mostly worked from ground plans with relatively few elevations.[74] Having selected a ground plan, the lecture continues, the designer goes on to produce the necessary documents to communicate the design idea – sketches, models, and technical drawings – and finally supervises, plots, and completes technical rehearsals with the production.

The perspective toward design that Orville Larson has called the "self-abnegation stance of the designer"[75] was reinforced by the major instructors of design at Yale in the 1930s. Oenslager and costume faculty Frank Bevan both promulgated Simonson's perspective that the designer was a "necessary workman" and Jones' concept that the designer (though perhaps not his design) should fade into the background, to let the director and actors be praised for the final product. The description of the program itself in the Yale School of Fine Arts catalog reads that the scene designer is "not a decorator, a painter, or an architect. He is a craftsman possessing a working knowledge of all these arts…here the student may design his scenery and work as a builder, a painter, a sculptor, an electrician, a jeweler, or an upholsterer."[76] Bevan agreed that a

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[73] Many of the archived pencil sketches take this format, for instance *The Liar* and *Robin's Landing*. Box 6, Folders 3 and 6. Donald Oenslager Papers (MS 1416), Accession 2007-M-055. Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

[74] Norris Houghton, "The Designer Sets the Stage IV: Donald Oenslager," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 20, no. 11 (1936): 885.

[75] Orville K. Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960* (Fayetteville, Ark: University of Arkansas Press, 1989), 178.

[76] School of Fine Arts Bulletin, Department of Drama, 1941, Draft, p 7. Box 31, Folder 2. Oenslager echoed this list of professions throughout his life as constituting the work of the scenic designer as, as Jones put it, a "man of occasions." See "How the Stage Designer Works," Lecture Notes, August 9-11, 1949, and "Washington Lecture,"

play is "what a score of music is to a conductor – a work to be interpreted and made more vivid to an audience, as opposed to an opportunity for the addition of so-called 'original' ideas."[77] This stance derived directly from the new position of the designer under New Stagecraft. It constituted a professional claim in a domain that was at once artistic and rhetorically aligned with material labor practices: builder, electrician, jeweler, upholsterer. From the beginning of the scenic design curriculum at Yale, Oenslager taught students that professional behavior consisted of technical competence matched with artistic deference to the playwright and the director. As students graduated out of the program, they took these same ideas into the working theatre work in commercial, nonprofit, and academic theatres. Further, the sustained education of designers as workmen contributing to—but not in complete control of— the performance event reinforced their professional identity as hybrid artist-laborers. This aligned the theatrical designer with New Stagecraft in the theatre, and with the growing lines of applied arts professionals inside and outside the university.

Seen in relationship to concurrent historical developments in design professionalism, university pedagogy became an important point of articulation for New Stagecraft crusaders. The year before Yale's program was founded, scenic designers had allied with a strong union that restricted the hiring of assistants and apprentices to those already affiliated with the union. Designers also were in the process of establishing higher and fairer wages for the artistic planning work of design, as well as building a new identity of the designer as freelance professional rather than a member of a firm, company, or permanent artistic pairing with a producer. Given this environment, the risk and cost of teaching new designers increased sharply,

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April 11, 1957. Box 10, Folders 6 and 7, Donald Oenslager Papers and Deisgn, *T-Mss1996-015, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

[77] "History of the Department," 62.

and would be borne by the designers themselves, who were now increasingly the managers of their own design studios. Shifting the risk and economic cost of training to universities brought several boons; first, it legitimated the study of drama as a profession, and theatrical design as a necessary component of that profession. The design degree was an opportunity to specify necessary skills for professional practice and union membership; that Woodman Thompson, head of design at Carnegie Tech in the mid-twenties, was also in charge of developing the union entrance exam was no accident. Oenslager's curriculum at Yale became a professional body of knowledge, a curriculum of the profession. Such specialized knowledge and technique, distinct from the work of visual arts or scenic painting, was necessary to legitimize the new profession's jurisdictional claim. While the struggle to legitimate a studio orientation to theatrical design was not always easy, especially given Oenslager's continued assertion that the best teacher of design was a working professional, it was integral to the Yale education. Yale's workshop products and studio practices soon proliferated among university theatre departments as places for pre-professional, practical education as well as theory, history, and literary study.

5.5 YALE'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

In the same year that the Yale School of Drama began classes, *Theatre Arts Monthly* published the first of two Baker Maps, a list and map of George Pierce Baker's influence nationally. Drawn by new lighting design faculty member Stanley McCandless, the 1925 map lists playwrights, directors, and designers who had studied with Baker at Harvard. The English 47 workshop served as a training ground for playwrights, director/producers, and actors. The only designers listed are assigned to New York City, and consist of well-known figures in the design movement:

Lee Simsonson, Robert Edmond Jones, Rollo Wayne, and Donald Oenslager. Bakers' reach was far-flung, noting students who had primarily gone on to teach or work in little theatre from Texas and Montana to Florida and North Carolina.

In 1933 the July issue of *Theatre Arts Monthly* dedicated its issue to Baker to celebrate his retirement. The editors reprinted McCandless' map and supplemented the feature with a new "Yale map," demonstrating "how quickly other younger men and younger colleges in various parts of the country are building their own new theatre worlds."[78] Entries on this map were concentrated in the northeast and Midwest, with only a few graduates working in Texas, California, and the South. As before, the map noted the primary occupation of each graduate, and a similar geographic distribution emerges: most of the designers worked in New York City or nearby – Stewart Chaney[79] in Utica, NY, for example. Several other centers of design activity were in little theatres, such as the Goodman in Chicago, or at large theatre-focused universities such as the University of Iowa, which by 1933 had built up its own production wing within the theatre department. The majority of the names on the Yale Map were either directors or playwrights, with the legend designating their affiliation with Little Theatres or universities.

From this map, two conclusions can be made: first, that Baker (and Yale generally) was aware of its growing influence as a generator of a "new" national theatre network through its graduates, and that its influence was particularly strong in universities and Little Theatres. Out of Baker's classes and into the little theatres went the workshop approach, its practicum orientation to professional practice. These students, playwrights and teachers alike, would have been exposed to Oenslager's design teaching, and certainly would be familiar with his methods as

[78] "Two Baker Maps," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 17, no. 7 (1933): 552-54.
[79] No relationship to Sheldon Cheney, critic and editor of *Theatre Arts*.

channeled through the other students who were taking more extended study with Oenslager. When they left for other theatrical ventures, they took Yale's experimental approach with them.

Seen historically, the Yale drama department was well-positioned to be influential within the field. However, several factors provided Yale preferred status among other schools of design. First, Yale Drama was the only school teaching the practical arts of the theatre associated with a major research university, let alone a member of the Ivy League.[80] Yale's interest in institutionalizing the applied arts set it apart from other prestigious east-coast universities; in 1923, only twenty-eight universities gave any course at all in theatre studies, and by 1930, only three specified a department of drama, Yale included.[81] The other two department-wide programs were at Carnegie Tech, which developed its own production-focused curriculum in no small part due to its missions a technical/agricultural institute, and at the University of Iowa, which developed a literature-based drama department that also offered a PhD. At this time theatre was widely taught in universities; courses in acting and play production were widespread around 1920, and by 1930 three-quarters of American universities offered at least one course in theatre, typically acting.[82] However few schools made theatrical arts a course of major study. Yale and Carnegie Tech were also the only schools to emphasize preparation for professional

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[80] The term "Ivy League," referring to the sports conference, would not come into use until 1933 at the earliest. However, the prestige of old east-coast universities, covered in ivy long preceded the coining of the term. "Ivy League, n." OED Online. December 2014. Oxford University Press. http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/100394.

[81] "Efforts to establish courses and program in drama met opposition in institutions throughout the country, but whereas the newer state and private schools outside of the east yielded either to the persuasion of a determined instructor or to the popularity of his productions, the older eastern colleges and universities resisted more firmly. Yale was the exception to the rule set by Harvard and emulated by the remaining schools of the Ivy League until quite recently." Bernard Beckerman, "The University Accepts the Theatre, 1800-1921," in *The American Theatre: A Sum of Its Parts* (New York: Samuel French, 1971), 351-52. See also Smith, "Origin and Development of Departments of Speech," 462.

[82] Julia A Walker, "Why Performance? Why Now? Textuality and the Rearticulation of Human Presence," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 16, no. 1 (2003): 154-5; Anne Berkeley, "Changing Theories of Collegiate Theatrical Curricula 1900-1945," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* (1997): 79.

work over the instrumental benefits of theatrical activity for humanities-based degrees in English, education, or speech and oratory.[83]

In addition to its status among universities, and its ability to endow Baker's program with the architectural and financial resources necessary to teach theatre professionals, Yale enjoyed benefits of geography as well. Being a train's ride away, Yale could draw on the resources of New York professionals with a minimum of disruption to their careers. In architecture, working professionals taught Yale students at many levels. Oenslager made the New York theatre season a regular part of his student's "required reading," as he noted on the first day of Drama 112: "The stage and what happens on it is the important thing. Not the theatre of old books and libraries, but the daily living theatre of the new season in New York. That is your homework. Transition Yale to New York."[84] Universities within the city did not take on the task of training theatre artists in the interwar period, perhaps because being within the city made it easier to gain on-the-job training as an assistant or shop painter, than a student. Also, New Haven was amenable to the construction of a new theatre building on Yale's campus in 1924, something that would have been much more difficult in New York at the time; production at the school would also not be in competition with the Broadway scene. Yale's proximity allowed guest artists to visit easily; those artists who did teach at schools far from New York City, as Stanford professor F. Cowles Strickland lamented, were more often either mature artists brought in for a specific project only, or junior artists looking for university work after a moderate amount of professional

[83] Beckerman, "The University Accepts the Theatre, 1800-1921," 352; Berkeley, "Changing Theories of Collegiate Theatrical Curricula 1900-1945," 86.
[84] Donald Oenslager, "Drama 112 – Orientation," Lecture Notes, September 30, 1937. Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

experience.[85] From the department's point of view, keeping a senior statesman of design on permanent faculty – even if he was only available on Thursdays – was a huge boon; it made Yale the center of theatrical design education in the United States before 1950.

There were alternatives to university-based education for the young designer in the 1920s. Several design schools opened their doors in the twenties to interested students, awarding professional certificates instead of university degrees. The University of North Carolina hosted the Carolina Playmakers, established 1918, which taught production in the course of a playwriting certification program, focused on "folk plays" inspired by the history of the South. The Pasadena Playhouse added a theatre school to its little theatre operations in 1928, and the Art Institute of Chicago allied with the Goodman Theatre to open a drama school along with its professional repertory company in 1925. Thomas Wood Stevens left Carnegie Tech to start up the Goodman school, instituting a curriculum based on Carnegie Tech's in which students could specialize in design through a sequence of three courses within a larger generalist program.[86] Schools that were unaffiliated with universities, however, tended to offer shorter programs of study, and were hampered by balancing educational needs with those of a producing theatre organization. Stevens, for example, left the Goodman in 1930 after disputes over increasing deficits, and financial pressures plagued the Goodman school until its closure in 1975.[87] The consistent educational mission of the large university kept drama departments stable, especially in times of economic recession. And so, the two dominant educational influences on theatre

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[85] F. Cowles Strickland, "Artists-in-Residence as an Aid to Better Teaching," Box 34, Folder 49. Donald Oenslager Papers and Designs, *T-Mss1996-015, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Library for the Performing Arts.
[86] Brochures from these programs, with dates of foundation, collected from Box 17, Folder 216, Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.
[87] "Our History," www.goodmantheatre.org, and "Goodman Drama School Forced to Close Doors," *Los Angeles Times*. 15 September 1975: e10.

education for the student looking for a professional career remained Carnegie Tech, for bachelor's level education, and the Yale Drama Department at the graduate level.

The Baker maps also illuminate the geographic spread of the workshop method of teaching, and the latter map can also be read as a map of Oenslager's influence as a scenic design mentor. More than Carnegie Tech or other schools teaching drama, Yale marketed and monetized its network by highlighting the professional and little theatre employment gained by its graduates. An approach focused on training designers for commercial theatre work was Oenslager's intention from the beginning; it was only later, once graduates began to find more work in the little theatres and in association with other universities' growing practical interest in theatre programs, that Yale awarded academic degrees such as the MA and MFA.[88] Unlike architecture, which collected its artists in firms and maintained a much larger work force throughout the interwar period, theatrical design contracts in New York remained concentrated in a few major designers. Oenslager and other established Broadway designers did hire Yale grads as assistants, and a few prominent ones would eventually become influential designers in the second or third generation. Most of the graduates of Oenslager's classes moved away from the city, associated with their own teaching jobs at universities, or supplemented a few productions a year with other types of work. By the thirties, when Yale acknowledged the importance of credentialing its drama graduates for the comparatively larger work force of the university and the little theatres, Yale's major effect on American design was as an engine for New Stagecraft theory, and its dissemination throughout the country.

In his 1974 essay "U.S. Stage Design, Past and Present," Oenslager listed a number of "new arrivals on the scene" in the thirties and forties. Of the nine names listed, four graduated

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[88] Larson, *Scene Design in the American Theatre from 1915 to 1960*, 81.

from Yale in the early to mid-1930s, including Stewart Chaney. A similar group listed by Oenslager for the 1950s were "applying their therapy to the Broadway scene." Of seven names listed, four were Yale graduates in scenic design.[89] Of the non-Yale-educated names listed, most derived their experience from either coursework in architecture or apprenticeships at theatres outside New York followed by assistantships with major designers in New York proper. Given the sequenced design education Oenslager put his students through and significant professional networks he curated for them inside the school and after graduation, Yale had a commanding influence on the education of American designers.

5.6 A CONTRASTING MODEL OF DESIGN EDUCATION: CARNEGIE TECH

In 1914, a full decade prior to Baker's founding of the Yale Drama department, T. W. Stevens founded a department of drama at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. This new school, the first dramatic department in the country, would provide comprehensive education in all the arts of the theatre through an extensive production schedule. Combined teaching days featured liberal arts classes in the morning, art technique classes in the afternoon, and rehearsals and crew work in the evenings. Similar to Yale, Carnegie Tech highlighted its professional training; actor Charles Dennis McCarthy remembers that "from the beginning…Stevens had it in mind that we must soon make a living in one of the most demanding professions, and he drove us to learn our jobs." The majority of the students attending Carnegie Tech in the first years intended to become

[89] Donald Oenslager, "U.S. Stage Design, Past and Present," in *Contemporary Stage Design: USA*, ed. Elizabeth B. Burdick, Peggy C Hansen, and Brenda Zanger (Middletown, CT: International Theatre Institute of the United States, 1974), 13-15.

actors.[90] Stevens also recalled considering the economics of theatre labor in his decision to focus on acting and technical work rather than design or other leadership roles. Simply put, the theatre needed more actors than it did directors or designers, and Carnegie Tech would serve students better by preparing them for the current market.[91]

The difference between the two major theatre schools' philosophies was stark. George Pierce Baker's program at Yale built upon his English 47 Workshop, in which playwriting was the primary focus and production subordinated to the study of how plays (primarily as literary objects) work in the theatre. In established narratives of the two schools, Yale was heady and theory-driven, while Carnegie's technical institute heritage has led scholars to conclude that hands-on experience fueled the study of drama as an applied art in Pittsburgh.[92] Seen from the lens of design pedagogy, however, a different picture emerges. In its curricular design, Carnegie Tech emphasized practice, or the workshop approach, to the detriment of studio learning. The design curriculum was taught almost exclusively through practical work in rehearsals, with few classes in either design history or technique. Designers were simply another specialized theatre artist, rather than a unique type of artistic contributor to the production. By teaching through practice, Carnegie Tech's design curriculum neither formalized design pedagogy nor encouraged designers to see themselves as freelance professionals. While Yale developed designers as artist-craftsmen with inside knowledge of a changing field, Stevens' curriculum taught theatre

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[90] B. Iden Payne recalled that "the first small group which formed the drama department consisted of students who were interested solely, or at any rate primarily, in acting." Both Payne and McCarthy quoted in B. Iden Payne et al., "Recollections and Impressions of "T.W."," *Educational Theatre Journal* 3, no. 4 (1951).

[91] "The emphasis on acting was automatic; in any theatre, our included, the employment load works out about twelve to one against scene designers, directors, and playwrights…the inference is plain that the theatre needs trained actors." In this 1939 article extoling Carnegie Tech's achievements, acting and direction receive top billing; the only design achievements Stevens mentions are those of the faculty. Thomas Wood Stevens, "The Background: The First Plan and the Goal," *Theatre Arts Monthly* 23, no. 7 (1939): 494.

[92] Jackson, *Professing Performance*, 74.

generally, emphasizing techniques and skills of theatre production rather than theatrical design as its own type of intellectual labor.

While Stevens' curriculum at Carnegie Tech emphasized practice, it did not embrace a studio approach as fully as Oenslager's pedagogy did. Carnegie Tech had modeled its curriculum on its architecture department, and emphasized basic skills of the theatre artist (drawing, modeling, speaking) rather than a studio approach to focus on design singly.[93] Within the School of the Fine Arts the drama curriculum emphasized production itself, not the study of dramatic literature through production. Most of the plays produced were classic texts and contemporary professional works, rather than student scripts. Most were also directed by faculty or guest directors, rather than students. Bachelor's students were cast as learners of an established production system of theatre experts rather than as artists making a system themselves, as they did at Yale. Both technical work (scenic construction, rigging, props, etc) and scene painting were taught from the school's inception, but the formal recognition of design as separate from scenic artistry or painting did not occur until many years later. Design was not a subject in name until 1949, when specializations in Scene Design were added to the older established concentrations of Acting, Production, and Playwriting.

In Stevens' mind, everything that could be learned was taught by putting up nearly thirty productions a year.[94] Many of the designs for production were done by faculty, in addition to direction, though occasionally students would take on design responsibilities. The key difference between Carnegie Tech and Yale's educational modes, which perhaps maps onto the

[93] Stevens wrote, "For thoroughness in preparing the curriculum we based many thing on the parallel problems in the school of architecture." Quoted in ibid. Carnegie Tech instructor Alexander Wyckoff also recalled that the school followed "a Beaux Arts system," but only "at first." Payne et al., "Recollections and Impressions of "T.W."," 297.

[94] "Stevens saw no need for courses in the theory of theatre or stagecraft, unless a history of dramatic literature could be so construed. All such information was acquired under practical working conditions." Alexander Wyckoff, "Recollections and Impressions of "T.W."," 297.

undergraduate-graduate divide in their missions, was that the students at Tech spent most of their time working in the theatre – in crews building scenery and costumes, learning specialized techniques of voice and armed combat, and acting on stage. In fact, while the initial idea for the school as hatched by Carnegie Tech President Arthur Hamerschlag had been for a school of stagecraft and the technical arts of the theatre, Stevens' counter-proposal was for "not a school of scenery and lighting, not for applied design in the narrower aspect, but for a school of the arts of the theatre—something more comprehensive and more difficult."[95] Himself a trained painter, Stevens "saw the training of the mind *through* the trained hand and eye;" the vision for Carnegie Tech's school was to create a workshop environment that used the theatre production as its own testing ground. Rather than teach the artistic products of design through problems or sequences of exercises in the studio classroom, Stevens applied a technical institute philosophy of trade education to theatrical study.[96]

Stevens' approach was effective at professionalizing students into the theatre world, but it did not encourage them to see the subdiscipline of design as a professional category. Stevens' curriculum de-emphasized specialization in curricular tracks, as Yale did; before 1930, the only divisions in study were acting, playwriting, and production, the last of which combined direction with all design fields. Stevens firmly believed that "whatever the major interest of the student – acting, directing, writing or designing, he must learn to know all phases of production…only in performance on a stage, working with others before an audience, can the student develop

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[95] Stevens, "The Background: The First Plan and the Goal," 491.
[96] An example of this integration: "As he picked up a chair to use in rehearsal, it was the natural thing for Stevens to comment on its design, function, and history; and it became the natural thing for the student to heed such information. No matter what his special field in the theatre, such information was a necessary tool of the student's trade." Alexander Wyckoff, Payne et al., "Recollections and Impressions of "T.W."," 297.

completely."[97] Yale, too, required students to take classes in other disciplines, but both the official curricular descriptions and the pedagogical methods encouraged designers in particular to think of themselves as a particular type of theatre artist, different in kind from their disciplinary brethren. For example, recall the heading Oenslager penned for the Yale Bulletin: "The scene designer is not a decorator, a painter or an architect. He is essentially a craftsman possessing a working knowledge of all these arts…"[98] Perhaps as a result of this philosophical difference, combined with the geographical location of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Tech's graduates tended to become generalist theatre practitioners or little theatre director/teachers after graduation, rather than New York design assistants.

The differences between Yale's studio approach to teaching design and Carnegie Tech's production-heavy model hinge on the role of the designer as a professional. Stevens' model, especially in the first two decades of the school, produced theatre artists, but was reluctant to assign specific intellectual skills or tasks of design. Designing was a part of putting on a play, so-called "play production," but it wasn't framed as a distinct artistic identity. Further adding to the difference was the sheer number of productions completed at Carnegie Tech, most of which were fully mounted; few if any design students completed projects for criticism on paper in the early days. To extend the metaphor into another field, the difference between Carnegie Tech and Yale would be the difference between an architectural school that tested and critiqued student building designs by actually building them, rather than by specifying their details on paper for critique. In the studio method of architecture at Yale and elsewhere, the designs themselves are the final object of the studio, and critiquing the results of design, rather than the results of construction,

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[97] Elizabeth Schrader Kimberly, *A History of the Drama Department of Carnegie-Mellon University, Formerly Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1914-1981* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie-Mellon University, 1981), 4.
[98] School of Fine Arts Bulletin, Department of Drama, 1941, Draft, p 7. Box 31, Folder 2. Yale School of Drama Records (RU 728). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

bring better designing results. Though Stevens drew his inspiration from the Beaux-Arts pedagogical model in use at Carnegie Tech, his emphasis on artistic techniques (as opposed to design artistry) and production could not conceptualize design as a profession. Yale's model, conversely, saw design as a particular art with its own processes and methods that could be taught as its own intellectual work. By dividing design from production, as Oenslager did, Yale led new theatre designers to think of themselves more like the architect, a professional freelancer, and less like the scene painter, a technically proficient but ultimately dependent artist.

Eventually the concept of design as a type of artistry somewhat separated from craft in time, if not in actuality, spread to Carnegie Tech. It firmly planted itself with the hiring of a number of Yale graduates (including Arthur Wilmurt, who had worked with Oenslager) in the 1940s. In the thirties, as the first generation of Tech teachers moved on, the Drama department tended to hire its own graduates once they had achieved prominence in the little or commercial theatres. Lloyd Weninger headed the program from 1930 until 1961, himself Carnegie Tech graduate, though from the Painting and Design department, not Drama.[99] Yale-educated practitioners began to populate the staff in the late thirties, notably with the head of school Henry Boettcher, whose tenure began in 1936 and was marked by a reduction in the production schedule in favor of giving more time to "specific educational exercises." Carnegie Tech continued to benefit from Yale's educational model well into the seventies, especially with the design expertise of W. Oren Parker, a Yale design teacher who came to Pittsburgh in 1963.[100] He reorganized the design curriculum and penned a textbook, discussed in chapter one, that has been widely adopted by university design teachers.

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[99] Kimberly, *A History of the Drama Department*, 9.
[100] Ibid., 11, 21.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Scenic designers working within the "New Stagecraft" intervened in professional theatres, educational settings, and publications in order to set up institutions and systems that would preserve their practices and values. They lectured, taught, organized, and wrote policies to keep design at the forefront of modern theatrical production. Part of this claim was the defense of a new vision of the designer as a theatrical professional, with material value and intellectual capital placed on the execution of designs as separate from the execution of scenery. The story of design legitimization, indeed, the development of the modern scene design process, is one in which designing as a profession became linked to theatrical design in practice. The sequence and working methods of any individual designer may vary, but the fundamental tasks of problem definition, drafting, testing, and refinement generally occur in some fashion with most designers. These aspects of design not only a theatrical phenomenon, but have been observed in design labor in the adjacent fields of architecture, engineering, industrial and graphic design, and film. Theatrical design developed by becoming less like the visual arts of painting and drawing and more like the applied arts of architecture and engineering. This shift is particularly clear in the study of theatre arts at universities; as theatre became its own academic discipline, it adopted the pedagogical practices of the applied arts.

Yale's Drama Department was the most influential design education program in the interwar period. While previous histories have tended to elide design from Yale's contribution to university education, or contrasted Baker's English-based approach and Carnegie Tech's hands-on curriculum, I have argued that design constituted the major shift in emphasis between Baker's teaching at Harvard and at Yale. Conceptualizing the idea of design through the pedagogical models of the practicum and the studio, I contend that the Yale curriculum brought design

thinking into theatrical education. It built upon Baker's already existing practicum of the 47 Workshop, and Oenslager added a studio approach borrowed from architecture and the applied arts as a primary pedagogical strategy. His teaching also helped establish the professional identity of the theatrical designer by affirming a curriculum, a teaching method, and introducing young designers to the networks and standards they would need to become working artists. The institutionalization of theatrical design in Yale's Drama Department was an important step in both aiding the rise of design as a distinguishable, professional identity and in standardizing and disseminating a view of design process based in New Stagecraft philosophy.

The standardization and institutionalization of design labor and practice is important, because it was through appeal to institutions that designing could finally be understood as as a new profession. Unions and universities were two of the first such institutions in which designing as intellectual labor was valued. The struggle to legitimize designers as professionals with such rights continued into the second half of the century. Design scholar Christin Essin draws attention to a legal suit brought by Jo Mielziner over the unauthorized use of elements of his Broadway design in the 1956 film version of *The King and I*. In a deposition, Mielziner carefully explained that while the product of design is not necessarily material, it still is a valuable commodity. Upon being asked to point to the physical aspect of his designs, Mielziner replied,

> I don't think it is physical. I think it is the arrangement, the use. I don't think you create physical things. It is an organic plan, an idea, a scheme. I don't think it physical. You use physical things…[and] other things which are not physical, moods of lighting, which you cannot pack up and ship somewhere, and you cannot break it. It is a creative concept.[101]

New Stagecraft designers and those that came after them understood of design as the production and elaboration of such concepts. Copyright protection had been elusive, as shown by the Local

[101] Qtd in. Essin, *Stage Designers in Early Twentieth-Century America*, 189.

USA 829's new 1927 practice of establishing "priority rights" over designs attests.[102] In teaching design as an intellectual process of planning, of interpretation and conceptualization and the development of an artistic response that would "make tangible the imaginative contribution of the playwright,"[103] Oenslager helped prepare the ground for Mielziner to settle this case with a hefty payment (though without going to trial) and for American designers to be able to assert theatrical design as professional specialization.

Pedagogy is a chief means by which disciplines and professions organize, legitimize, and proliferate knowledge. Though the study of Yale's curriculum may have been limited to a particular time and place, its influence on its graduates was twofold. First, it provided a strong model of design education and practice, reinforced both in the studio and in the production experience that was continuous at the school. For some, Yale taught them how to work; for others, it taught them what to expect from designers in professional circumstances. It may have provided a model for new theatre programs or little theatres. As the first extended curriculum in stage design in the United States, Yale's model of studio practice amplified by workshop experience elsewhere was replicated with varying degrees of success at other universities as well. Even Carnegie Tech came to adopt more of Yale's model as it increased its emphasis on classroom exercises after Stevens' departure. Few new programs had the numerous advantages Yale enjoyed in terms of location, staff, and (sometimes) amenable administration, but many looked at the "working model" of Yale education as one instance of how theatre, and theatrical design, could be taught to benefit the university and the profession.

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[102] General Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1927. United Scenic Artists Records WAG.065; Microfilm Reel 3; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.

[103] Donald Oenslager, Lecture Notes, Art Institute of Chicago Lecture, October 11, 1957. Box 11, Folder 8, Donald Oenslager Papers and Designs, *T-Mss1996-015, Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Library for the Performing Arts.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The New Stagecraft has run its course. All its aims have been accomplished. What was begun 20 years ago is completed. The Theatre of Tomorrow is now The Theatre of Yesterday. The Exhibition at the Architectural League proves this. There is nothing new [there] – no fresh or original idea. All our triumphs are in the past. The Theatre is marking time.[1]

Jones' downbeat quote, above, is drawn from a notebook he used to compose and organize his speeches. This thick, ring-bound volume contains hundreds of pieces of paper, from full letter size to single-sentence clippings. Toward the end of Jones' career, he gave frequent lectures; Jones used this book to tailor his standard lectures to specific audiences. Jones quoted everything; missives from artists and philosophers mingle with pieces of scripts, typed copies of his lectures and articles brush against hasty hand-written thoughts. It reminded me of an exquisite corpse-type book I played with as a child, in which you created monsters by flipping heads on top of brightly colored bodies and various animal feet. If you wanted to, you could mix-and-match a Robert Edmond Jones lecture with this notebook. I doubt Jones actually used this notebook this way; it was probably more of a memory aid than anything else.

[1] Container 20, Robert Edmond Jones Additional Paper, 1933-1952 (MS Thr 201.12), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. This quotation is undated, but the exhibition referenced in the quote opened in 1933. As with the rest of this collection, the quotation dates from the last two decades of Jones' life.

I am not sure we can take Jones entirely at his word. New Stagecraft didn't die completely, even though the abstract forms of Jones' *Macbeth* seem dated, his symbolism too obvious. Yes, the aesthetic excitement of New Stagecraft faded quickly, but the practices and methods it introduced to the American theatre live on. It is difficult to see epistemic shifts as they are in progress. Jones' world of 1933 or soon after was in the middle of the development of the modern scene design process. It was a sort of "trial period": the Depression was at its height, the designer's union and the Yale Drama school were only ten years old, and the various "Golden Ages" of Broadway production and regional theatre expansion were decades away. With a bit more distance from that period, I have attempted to show that contrary to Jones' lament, the "fresh and original idea" of New Stagecraft was of a higher level, an innovation that incorporated freelance design into the work of the stage artist. This revolution was bigger than an individual, though it was driven by several strategically located individuals. It may have looked like stasis. Designers adopted new behaviors naturally and quickly enough so that by 1933, as from 2015, the values and practices of New Stagecraft and design professionalism can be mistaken for eternal absolutes, never having changed. With this dissertation I have suggested that the legacy of New Stagecraft was its new expectations for the processes of design and the incorporation of freelance designing as a professional labor model.

My linkage of cognitive and design science principles to design history emphasizes that sketches and models and artifacts were not only representational, but useful. Thinking in terms of use, of the specific ways that artifacts helped designers accomplish design or professional tasks provides insight to the type of mental work they performed in the past. Working methods changed alongside progressions of style and fashion. Though they can be harder to track, such changes of method are an important subject of study for design history. By drawing attention to

the structures, tools, and new categories that New Stagecraft practitioners used themselves, and taught others, I have identified, theorized, and contextualized the rise of a scenic design working method that has been notably influential in the United States.

The modern scene design process was (and is) a way of thinking about design that values the contribution of the scenic designer as an independent artist. It proceeds in a recognizable set of phases, in what has been called the design process. The modern design process was especially marked by an extended analytical and interpretive phase at the beginning of the process, as well as an emphasis on novel and innovative problem-solving throughout the process. Novelty, seen through the designer's approach to plays as ill-defined problems requiring interpretative solutions, was as much a result of capitalist pressure to sell a new visual world in a centralized and international New York theatre market as a key value of modernist art production. The value of design and designers as producers of novelty was proven through the creation and reproduction of new types of scenic representation, in particular the drawn rendering and, later, the photograph of the set in use. The rendering as used by Jones is a clear example of a designer importing European modernist technique, developing it for the American context, and deploying it strategically to promote his own design vision. In so doing Jones also argued for the importance of the designer as the producer of such aesthetic commodities, making him a necessary collaborator in commercial theatre production.

On a somewhat larger scale, the linkage of new aesthetic forms and a centralizing theatrical market in New York City led to the organization and professionalization of design labor, supported by influential institutions. I have shown how the union and the university helped designers articulate and perpetuate a professional class identity, and how specific individuals spearheaded designers' participation in these organizations. Like Jones, Lee Simonson and

Donald Oenslager's leadership within USA Local 829 and Yale's Drama Department proved designer's value as artists and collaborators, codified processes of designing and professional behavior, and established New Stagecraft philosophy as a dominant value paradigm within those organizations. In these three ways–through the use of new design artifacts, the standardization of labor practices in the union, and the education of new designers in university classes–New Stagecraft designers preached what they practiced. Those practices allowed for individual expression within larger epistemic frames of art, labor, and professionalism, and as a whole constituted the modern scene design process.

This dissertation adds a design-focused history to two ongoing conversations within theatre studies: the role of modernism and the relationship of cognition to artmaking. First, the larger historical context within which New Stagecraft discourse sits is related to modernism. Theatrical design as a professional identity and field of inquiry came to dominate American theatre production in the height of European modernism, and it bears many of its tenets: an emphasis on the methods of making art, the incorporation of and/or reaction to industrialism and urban life, the privileging of the individual experience and the artwork which expressed a particular individual's point of view, an emphasis on juxtaposition through montage or collage, a revolutionary, combative relationship to the art forms that came before in hope for the "new." Furthermore the turn toward design as a type of intellectual labor was concurrent with the turn toward artistic practice as a subject of modern art. One of the strongest proponents for design as planning for action, Lee Simonson, was also the New Stagecraft author who was most vocal about the influence of modern painting on his career.

As an art movement in which the influence of art disciplines on each other increased markedly, modernism drew attention to the processes by which art was created.[2] At times that process of creation became a part of the aesthetic effect and 'impact' of the artwork itself – what Michael Fried would later call "theatricality."[3] For my purposes, I select a portion of the many arguments made about the meaning of modernism to simply point to the reflexive focus modernist art placed on its materials and means of production. By emphasizing simplification and stylization, by drawing attention to the formal qualities of the design as suggestive of character or mood, and by bringing the artistic interpretive process of the designer into focus, theatrical design embraced modernist production techniques aligned with other arts. Attention to the means of production and the intellectual labor of artmaking marked out design as a particular type of labor. Attention to the new labor of design led to the establishment of freelance designers supported by professional and union standards.

Theatre complicates demarcations between the arts, as it necessarily blends them. This, again, is what Fried so despised about "theatrical" minimalism. Design is doubly complicating, as it cannot separate the material, economic, and artistic aspects of creation. While playwrights and director/producers could dream of modernist high culture and the art theatres, designers were tasked with both envisioning those worlds and bringing them into material reality through negotiations with shops, technicians, and laborers. By invoking design as a professional category, New Stagecraft artists connected the economic and cultural capital of designing with the theatrical modernist tendency toward new modes of performance and visual art. Theatre

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[2] "For the advocates of modernism, art was no longer a window to the world; it reflexively commented on its own process, making the materials and means of production part of the image or content of the work." Christin Essin Yannacci, "Landscapes of American Modernity: A Cultural History of Theatrical Design, 1912--1951" (University of Texas at Austin, 2006), 32.

[3] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood (1967)," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

smoothed the transition from the modernist artist to the professional designer, and in many cases provided the launching pad for later designers to market design experience for later employment in architecture, lifestyle, and product design. Design has been a major part of other arts' histories of modernism, yet the history of design in modernist theatre, and especially the role of theatre in commercial and artistic applications of design (architecture, graphic design, etc…) remains under-surveyed. Theatre and performance studies need to claim its place in the genealogy of modernist design, and that means understanding the relationship between commerce and the (theatrical) arts with greater nuance than has been previously done.

The other consideration of the field I have had in mind is the contribution of empirical science to historical research. I continue to be wary of replacing the principles of evidence, argument, and narrative with narrowly defined, falsifiable experiments into the arts of performance and design. We cannot study the minds of the past this way, and to attempt to do so, or even to pin down exactly what a past individual's thoughts were at some point in time, is foolhardy. The interdisciplinary approach I propose takes inspiration from empirical studies to propose new historical categories. With empirical work supporting from the background, I have identified of a process, its components, and the sort of behaviors that may have taken place in historical moments. Cognitive theory, drawn itself from observational and laboratory studies in anthropology, psychology, and the design sciences, aided my theorization of the artifact as a tool for making new processes known. Finally the pedagogy of design benefits from an understanding of skill acquisition and knowledge transfer as a process situated in a physical location and a discursive field of aesthetic ideas. With this dissertation I have attempted to remain faithful to historical argument and narrative as a driving force, while crafting a narrative about cognition and process. Cognition became a key type of questioning that guided my archival work and my

writing. Use, skills, behaviors and artifacts provide an alternative path to art histories of styles and trends, and one which I hope will continue to be developed in design histories.

When I think about the power design has to transform thought, emotion, and human ability through augmentation, cognitive extension, and tool use, I naturally think about the implicit knowledge theatrical designers have had for decades, even centuries. Design allows us to imagine other worlds, and perhaps to change our own in response to the visions appearing in during a theatrical slumber. The important historical and critical work is to consider development and changes within design processes. Design is our new progressive narrative; design offers the hope of overcoming the problems of hunger, poverty, global warming, or healthcare costs, to name a few that immediately come to mind. The positivity of design might remain unquestioned, but as with any market product, it is certainly not value-neutral. Design professionalism came about and today sustains itself through alliances with market capitalism and corporate prioritization of the "new." We must question these. In this dissertation I have tried to link the development of one specific design process to economic, labor, and educational trends, showing that design process was not similar at all times but indebted to New Stagecraft's own aesthetic values and the social context of America in the interwar period. I hope that critics will continue to write design histories with similar attention their social contexts, so that we will not blindly embrace the progressive hope and trans-historical inevitability of any cultural process. Designing has a complex history, and we–in theatre, especially–should know more about it.

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